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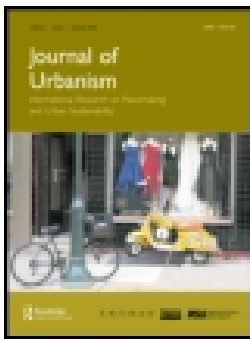
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Bereitschaft, Bradley, "Do “creative” and “non-creative” workers exhibit similar preferences for urban amenities? An exploratory case study of Omaha, Nebraska" (2016). *Geography and Geology Faculty Publications*. 39.  
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# Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability

ISSN: 1754-9175 (Print) 1754-9183 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjou20>

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To cite this article: Bradley Bereitschaft (2016): Do “creative” and “non-creative” workers exhibit similar preferences for urban amenities? An exploratory case study of Omaha, Nebraska, *Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability*, DOI: [10.1080/17549175.2016.1223740](https://doi.org/10.1080/17549175.2016.1223740)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17549175.2016.1223740>



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## Do “creative” and “non-creative” workers exhibit similar preferences for urban amenities? An exploratory case study of Omaha, Nebraska

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### ABSTRACT

Research into the locational decisions of creative class or knowledge workers has indicated that “classic” or “hard” factors, particularly employment opportunity and social connections, generally take precedence over “soft”, “quality of place” amenities such as art and cultural venues, historical assets, and tolerance/diversity. However, “soft” amenities are expected to shape where creative class/knowledge workers live *within* cities, and potentially whether they remain in the community long-term, or seek opportunities elsewhere. In this study, an online survey and questionnaire were employed to explore whether residents living in downtown Omaha, Nebraska with “creative” occupations exhibit stronger preferences for urban amenities relative to those with “non-creative” occupations. Generally in support of Richard Florida’s creative class thesis, the results suggest that creative workers may exhibit a stronger affinity for certain, primarily “soft”, urban amenities and characteristics, such as dining establishments, “third places”, arts/cultural venues, unique sense of place, and the hip, trendy, and youthful feel of Omaha’s downtown neighborhoods.

### KEYWORDS

Creative class; creative workers; knowledge workers; urban amenities; residential choice; quality of place

### Introduction

In the creative-knowledge economy of the early twenty-first century, cities and city-regions compete for human and financial capital on a global stage (Peck and Tickell 2002; Turok 2004; Florida 2005). To remain competitive, cities throughout the urban hierarchy have taken an increasingly entrepreneurial role in recruiting and retaining professionals with high-skill, and often high-pay, creative or knowledge occupations (e.g. science and engineering, technology, art and media, business and finance, law, medicine) (Harvey 1989; Florida 2002a; Malecki 2007). These so-called members of the “creative class” (Florida 2002a, 2012) are expected to play an important role in advancing local economies through innovation, cultural production, and job creation (Gertler et al. 2002; Florida and Gates 2005; Boschma and Fritsch 2007; Florida, Mellander, and Stolarik 2008).

Research conducted over the past decade has suggested that members of the creative class, though constituting a large and diverse cohort (Mo 2012; Frenkel, Benedict, and Kaplan 2013a) prefer cities and city-regions with thick labor markets and a rich variety of amenities that contribute to “quality of place” and “quality of life” (Brown and Meczynski 2009; Landry 2000). At the intra-urban scale, there also appears to be a strong life-course element, with those members of the creative class with children exhibiting

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a preference for family oriented suburbs, while those that are single or childless often favoring older urban environments (Frenkel, Benedict, and Kaplan 2013a; Lawton, Murphy, and Redmond 2013). Over a decade ago, Florida (2002a, 286) posited in *Rise of the Creative Class* that the economic turnaround and re-population of America's urban centers is "driven in large measure by the attitudes and location choices of the creative class." More recent demographic and economic analyses of neighborhood change within central urban neighborhoods tend to support the notion that members the creative class, as well as "creative city" policies, have played a key role in inner-city gentrification (Ponzini and Rossi 2010).

Despite the transformative (and disruptive) potential of the creative class in the re-population and revalorization of America's urban centers, there remains limited knowledge concerning what specific amenities, if any, disproportionately attract members of the creative class to particular neighborhoods and whether a clear distinction in amenity preferences actually exists between individuals with "creative" and "non-creative" occupations living in close proximity. This exploratory case study utilizes an online survey and questionnaire to examine the amenity preferences of creative and non-creative workers living in downtown Omaha, Nebraska. Based on Florida's creative class thesis, it is expected that respondents with creative class occupations (referred to herein as "creative class workers" or simply "creatives") will exhibit an enhanced preference for cultural, entertainment, and social amenities, as well as other "soft," "quality of place" locational factors (e.g. vibrant street life, diversity, historical buildings), relative to those with working or service class occupations. Such a finding would suggest that Florida's creative class is capable of exerting a unique and distinguishable developmental pressure on the American urban core.

The section that follows provides an overview of the relevant literature, first framing the creative class within the context of urban economic development and regeneration, then exploring the various "hard" and "soft" factors expected to attract creative class workers both between and within cities. Presented next is the methodology, followed by a combined results and discussion section. Finally, the conclusion highlights the main findings and suggests the need for additional research.

## Background

Following two decades of economic decline associated with a shrinking manufacturing sector, the urban core of many U.S. cities began to experience a rebound in residential population in the 1980s or 1990s (Sohmer and Lang 2001; Birch 2002). With the strengthening and maturation of knowledge-based economies, violent crime fell while demand for urban amenities grew in step with rising wages and education (Birch 2005; Glaeser and Gottlieb 2006; Ehrenhalt 2012; Wilson et al. 2012). Today, vibrant urban neighborhoods with a unique historic heritage and distinct personality are commonly regarded as key cultural assets, capable of attracting human and financial capital (Gotham 2007; Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2007; Ponzini and Rossi 2010). To catalyze economic growth and promote urban regeneration, struggling neighborhoods with "potential" are often identified for governmental assistance in which creative-cultural actors and neighborhood organizations are granted financial assistance or other resources to expand their activities, sponsor events, and promote initiatives designed to enhance the "cultural production and consumption scene" (Ponzini and Rossi 2010, 1048; Borggren and Ström 2014) while also strengthening neighborhood identity and appeal. The growth of these activities and amenities, including art and music scenes and specialized/independent retail establishments (e.g. street cafés, coffee shops, antique stores, bookshops), are, according to Florida's creative class thesis, expected to spur additional growth at both local and regional scales by attracting high skill, high pay creative class workers particularly sensitive to "quality of place" (Florida 2002a, 2012).

Critics of Florida's creative class thesis have argued that creative city policies may further marginalize low-income groups and amplify inequality (Maliszewski 2003; Peck 2005; McCann 2007). Peck (2005) has argued that, far from offering a new paradigm in urban economics, the creative class and creative city theses align seamlessly with the orthodox entrepreneurial policies and neoliberal strategies that have been embraced by pro-growth urban elites since the 1970s. Grodach (2013) noted, for example, that cultural economy planning and policy in Austin Texas has been unified under the language of the

creative city paradigm, but was well established prior to, and in fact helped inform, Florida's creative class thesis. The benefits of such creative city policies, it is argued, are likely to accrue mainly to the affluent, including the "esteemed dignitaries of the creative class" (Maliszewski 2003, 77), while low-income groups and those unable to participate fully in the new creative-knowledge economy are further marginalized (McCann 2007; Storper and Scott 2009).

There also remains an ongoing "chicken or the egg" debate regarding the casual relationship between creative class in-migration and economic development (Malanga 2004; Glaeser 2005; Marlet and van Woerkens 2005; Storper and Scott 2009; Storper 2013). Simply stated: does creative talent follow jobs or do jobs follow creative talent? While a full discussion of this debate reaches beyond the scope of this study on intra- (rather than inter-) urban preferences, it does call into question the relative importance of "classic" (or "hard") pull-factors like employment opportunities, low taxes, and good schools vs. the "soft", "quality of place" amenities (including a diverse, bohemian "people climate" and "creative milieu") championed by Florida. It also raises the question as to whether the same factors that may best attract and retain creative class workers at the inter-urban scale are also relevant at the intra-urban scale. Ultimately, despite the criticism and uncertainty surrounding the creative city paradigm, a diverse array of cities around the world have embraced Richard Florida's conceptual framework, incorporating the themes and language of the creative class into their branding and promotional strategies (e.g. Zimmerman 2008; Ward 2010; Redaelli 2011; Pierantoni 2015; Kakiuchi 2016).

Much of the work on the role of amenities in attracting creative (or knowledge) workers has concentrated on their migration *between* cities with the explicit or implicit goal of determining the relative importance of "hard" locational factors, most notably employment opportunities, and "soft" factors related to "quality of place" (i.e. openness and diversity, presence of cultural and entertainment venues, quality and character of the urban environment, climate and physical landscape; Tomaney and Bradley 2007; Clifton 2008; Anderson et al. 2010; Musterd and Gritsai 2010; Niedomysl and Hansen 2010). These studies have indicated that employment opportunities remain the most important factor in attracting creative class/knowledge workers at the inter-urban scale, though the presence of particular "quality of place" amenities may also have some influence (Florida 2002a, 2012; Brown and Meczynski 2009; Hansen and Niedomysl 2009; Zenker 2009; Darchen and Tremblay 2010; Musterd and Gritsai 2013; Borén and Young 2013). Borén and Young (2013), for example, documented numerous motivations for the inter-urban migration of artists in Stockholm, Sweden. Although employment opportunities involving specific projects and/or funding opportunities were often cited as primary motivations, respondents also indicated a desire for a favorable environment in which to raise children, connections with friends and family, and proximity to professional contacts and networks. The "attractiveness" of Stockholm, including its cultural and outdoor amenities, were not identified as key motivational factors; however, the authors suggest that these factors are likely to depend greatly on specific national and regional contexts. Furthermore, interviewees indicated that the gentrification of Stockholm's city center and the rising cost of housing may be stifling its artistic scene, and preventing the development of "creative quarters" (Borén and Young 2013).

Based on a series of interviews and focus groups, Florida (2002a, 2010) identified eight attributes of place expected to attract creative people: (1) a *thick labor market*, which provides workers with choice and promotes economic efficiencies and innovation, (2) a *lifestyle* that is engaging and stimulating, with a mix of entertainment, cultural, and recreational opportunities, (3) *social interaction*, or connection with community, which may be enhanced by the presence of "third places" (e.g. cafés, bars, coffee shops, barber shops, bookstores), (4) a *mating market* that, like the labor market, is most advantageous when it offers abundance and variety, (5) *diversity* among residents and an atmosphere of inclusivity, (6) *authenticity* or uniqueness of place that is derived from unique and often historical buildings, a vibrant mix of people, and active music and arts venues, (7) *scenes* that represent distinct agglomerations of creative-cultural activities and talent pools, and (8) *identity*, which refers to the distinct personality and reputation of a place; may be used by residents to express and validate personal identities and status. Florida (2008, 2012) contends that these factors may be as important – or more so – to the attraction of creative workers than such basic needs as city services, quality schools, open space, and public safety.

Largely in support of Florida's "quality of place" hypothesis, Zenker (2009) found that members of the creative class (more specifically, Florida's "super creative core") in Germany exhibited a stronger attraction to a city's "urbanity and diversity," (i.e. tolerance, diversity of cultures, energy, urban image, variety of shopping, and cultural activities) and a weaker attraction to "cost efficiency" (i.e. cost of living, affordability of housing) relative to those with non-creative class occupations. Following an extensive survey conducted across 13 European cities, Musterd and Gritsai (2013) suggest that "soft conditions," which they identified as weather/climate, cultural diversity, tolerance, friendliness, and diversity of the built environment among others, may be more effective and *retaining* highly skilled workers, rather than attracting them. A similar conclusion was reached by Brown and Meczynski (2009) when examining the role of "quality of place" in attracting creative knowledge workers to Birmingham, UK and Poznań, Poland: "quality of place" issues should be considered as 'steering factors' in location choice, while life events (such as starting the first 'career' job, preferences of spouse or family ties) are the actual 'triggering factors' for choices to be made" (249). Other studies have generally supported this view, suggesting that "soft", "quality of place" amenities are likely to play some role in the attraction and retention of highly skilled workers, but that economic opportunities come first, and social connections second, in the initial location decision (Darchen and Tremblay 2010; Niedomysl and Hansen 2010).

Relative to the migration of creative class/knowledge workers between cities, where creative class/knowledge workers have chosen to reside *within* cities, and why, has received limited attention. By examining select neighborhoods in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, Canada, Spencer (2015) concluded that creative industries and their workers both tend to cluster in relatively dense, walkable, mixed-use urban neighborhoods with a high concentration of third places. Mansury, Tontisirin, and Anantsuksomsri (2012) compared the residential locations of creative and "common" (i.e. non-creative) households in Bangkok, Thailand, and estimated the average proximity of the two groups to rail stations, "top schools", shopping malls, and public parks. Creative households were more likely than common households to reside within the city's "inner-ring," as well as live closer to all four amenities. Frenkel, Benedict, and Kaplan (2013b) assessed the intra-metropolitan residential choice of knowledge workers in the Tel-Aviv metropolitan area, first classifying them into five groups based on lifestyle preferences. Using an online survey, the authors found that knowledge workers with "culture-oriented" activity patterns were more likely to reside within the metropolitan core, while those with "home-oriented" activity patterns generally preferred suburban communities. Knowledge workers in general exhibited a strong preference for residing in close proximity to their workplace, whether within the central city or outer suburbs. The residential location of knowledge workers was negatively related to housing price, and positively related to education and cultural land uses, as well as the education level of residents.

Lawton, Murphy, and Redmond (2013) investigated creative class workers in Dublin, Ireland, also using an online survey, and concluded that classic (or "hard") factors (i.e. cost of dwelling, distance to work, size of dwelling) were generally the most important in residential location choice. Furthermore, to evaluate the influence of cultural activities on residential location, the authors had respondents rate their satisfaction with available cultural facilities on a four-point scale from "very satisfied" to "dissatisfied." The average satisfaction of residents did not vary significantly between those in the central city, city outskirts, and periphery, leading the authors to conclude that "... Florida's suggestion [that members of the creative class will locate downtown to take advantage of more abundant cultural amenities] is incorrect" (53). However, the use of the term "satisfaction" may have complicated the interpretation of the results. Simply because the level of satisfaction with cultural facilities did not vary significantly by residential location does not mean that cultural facilities are not a significant factor in the residential location choice of creative class workers. It is possible that central city residents exhibit a higher demand for cultural facilities, yet if there are more cultural facilities available in the central city, their "satisfaction" may be equivalent to those of suburbanites who are equally as satisfied with fewer facilities. Lawton, Murphy, and Redmond (2013) also concluded that life-course stage likely had an influence on the residential choices of creative class workers in Dublin, with younger workers demonstrating a modestly stronger preference for central, urban neighborhoods, while those living along the city's periphery were evenly spread among age cohorts.

Finally, Bille (2010) utilized a survey of cultural habits of the Danish population to test whether the creative class' propensity to engage in particular entertainment and recreational activities differs significantly from those with non-creative class occupations. After controlling for education, income, gender, age, and geography, the author concluded that members of the creative class are more likely to engage in variety of cultural/entertainment activities including attending contemporary concerts, frequenting art exhibitions and museums, engaging in sport and fitness activities, using the internet for leisure, and "visit[ing] urban milieus and cultural landscapes." Bille (2010) also found that individuals with Florida's "creative core" occupations were more likely to engage in creative activities in their leisure time, including writing, playing musical instruments, engaging in vocal and dramatic performances, and working with arts or crafts. It is important to note that neither "urban milieus" nor "cultural landscapes" were explicitly defined by the author, making it difficult to speculate on precisely what facets of these environments creative class workers were most drawn to.

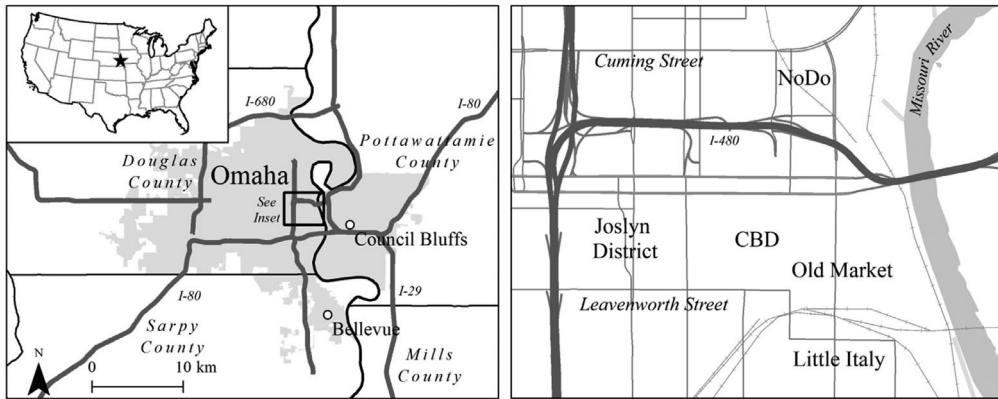
The aforementioned studies on the intra-urban residential location preferences of creative class/knowledge workers suggest two important patterns. Firstly, the creative class/knowledge occupational cohort is heterogeneous in regard to where and how they live. However, in agreement with Florida's (2013) census tract-scale analysis of the creative class in America's largest cities, creative class/knowledge workers tend to exhibit a preference for either central urban locations or outer suburban areas owing in part to their activity patterns and life-course stage. Secondly, creative class/knowledge workers appear to value classic locational factors such as good schools, proximity to work, and housing affordability just as much, or more so, than the "soft" amenities often associated with the creative class and "creative city" paradigm. Crucially, among these studies only Mansury, Tontisirin, and Anantsuksomsri (2012) compared the intra-urban residential preferences among creative and non-creative class workers, and only in relation to a limited set of amenities (i.e. rail stations, "top schools", shopping malls, and public parks). Bille (2010) examined and contrasted the actual use of a wide variety of amenities by creative and non-creative class workers, but did not directly ask respondents what factors attracted them to particular spaces within the city. Because the use of particular amenities does not necessarily guarantee that they will factor prominently in the residential decision-making process, the question as to whether creative and non-creative class workers are similarly attracted at the intra-urban scale to particular urban amenities remains uncertain.

The present study seeks to contribute to the literature on the residential preferences of the creative class, and further elucidate the role of creative class workers in inner city gentrification, by asking whether creative and non-creative class workers living downtown are differentially attracted by proximal amenities. The focus of this exploratory case study is on the amenity preferences of downtown residents living in Omaha, Nebraska, who reside in one of the few moderate-density mixed-use urban neighborhoods within a predominately low-density U.S. metropolitan region. The objective is to evaluate the relative importance of a variety of amenities (i.e. both "hard" and "soft" factors) expected to attract "urban-oriented" creative class workers, and to determine whether creative and non-creative class workers exhibit similar preferences for particular urban amenities. Observed dissimilarities in the amenity preferences of creative and non-creative class workers would support the notion that the creative class exhibits detectable and perhaps even systematic differences (such as a stronger preference for "soft" amenities) in their attitudes and expectations regarding their immediate living environment – one of the pillars of the creative class concept. Distinguishable place-based preferences among this diverse cohort of workers would also suggest their potential to affect, as well as be affected by, the widespread gentrification of the American urban core.

## Methodology

### Study area

With a population of approximately 886,000 in 2012 (U.S. Census Bureau 2012a), the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area (Figure 1) is the most populous urban area in Nebraska and the 60th most



**Figure 1.** The Omaha metropolitan area (“Greater Omaha”) (left) and downtown Omaha (right). Basemap courtesy of Esri®.

populous metropolitan area in the United States. This study focuses specifically on the urban amenity preferences of Omaha residents living downtown, an area described to respondents as positioned “between I-480 to the west, the Missouri river to the east, Cuming Street to the north, and Leavenworth Street to the south” (Figure 1). Residents living just south of the railroad tracks in the Little Italy neighborhood, however, were also included in the survey. Like the center of many other American cities, downtown Omaha has experienced a substantial increase in residential population in recent decades, rising from 1134 residents in 1980 to 3442 in 2008–2012 (Minnesota Population Center 2011; U.S. Census Bureau 2012b). Two downtown neighborhoods in particular, North Downtown Omaha (NoDo) and the Old Market, have undergone dramatic changes. Redevelopment in NoDo has centered around the new TD Ameritrade baseball park (annual host of the College World Series) and the CenturyLink center convention and arena, while the Old Market’s late-nineteenth-century warehouses, located immediately southeast of the commercial core, have been repurposed into an assortment of chic lofts, art studios, boutique retail stores, and numerous restaurants and bars, with several more planned or under construction (Burbach 2013; Cornett 2013).

To date, much of the research on the locational preferences of the creative class has been conducted outside the U.S., most notably in the context of European cities and regions (e.g. Van Oort 2003; Tomaney and Bradley 2007; Brown and Meczynski 2009; Bille 2010; Niodomysl and Hansen 2010; Musterd and Gritsai 2013; Borggren and Ström 2014). Given that Florida (2002a) initially formulated his creative class concept within the social and economic framework of North America, however, one might expect a stronger agreement between Florida’s conceptual scaffolding and the reality of the creative class within this “home” environment. This study therefore re-positions the discussion of where the creative class lives and why by focusing on Omaha, an “average” American metropolitan area in terms of economic performance, population, population growth, and built morphology (i.e. a primarily low-density suburban realm surrounding a smaller and denser pre-automotive urban core). Although every metropolitan area is unique, and Omaha certainly cannot represent all American cities, the recent revitalization and gentrification of its downtown core concomitant with peripheral, low-density suburban expansion have resulted in an economic, social, and physical landscape similar to many other large and mid-sized North American cities.

### Online survey

A web-based survey consisting of 13 questions was conducted between May and August 2013 using SurveyMonkey.com (Appendix A). Before completing the online surveys, respondents were asked to confirm that they currently reside in downtown Omaha (consisting of the boundaries described above), and were at least 19 years of age (the age of majority in Nebraska). If respondents answered “no” to



either question, their responses were not counted. Survey questions 1 through 7 were designed to collect basic information about the respondent, such as age, gender, housing tenure, and income, as well as establish residential location and assess mobility. To classify respondents as employed in “creative” or “non-creative” occupations, questions 8 and 9 asked respondents to describe their occupation. Responses were then matched with the most appropriate occupational category in the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) 2010 Occupational Employment Survey (OES). Occupations were deemed “creative” if they fell within one of the occupational groupings identified by Florida (2002a, 2012) as comprising either the “super-creative core” (i.e. computer and mathematical, architecture and engineering, life, physical, and social science, education, training, and library, arts, design, and entertainment) or the “creative professionals” (i.e. management, business and finance, legal, health care, and high-end sales). Also included were the so-called bohemian occupations that involve the production of “cultural and creative assets,” such as authors, designers, musicians, actors, artists, and dancers (Florida 2002b).

Question 10 asked respondents to rate how influential 22 separate factors were in their decision to live downtown. Responses were given using a five-point Likert Scale (Likert 1932), in which a rating of one indicated that the factor had no influence on the respondent’s decision, and a rating of five indicated that the factor was very influential. Lastly, Question 11 asked respondents to rate 20 complementary factors, also using a five-point Likert Scale, in regard to how effective they would be in enhancing the quality of life for neighborhood residents (e.g. “additional grocery stores,” “more dining establishments,” and “less noise”). A rating of one indicated that the factor was not important in improving quality of life, while a rating of five indicated that the factor was very important.

Creative class theory served as the primary framework and guide for the selection of the amenities and other factors included in the survey. Therefore, the majority of questions asked respondents to rate the importance of various “soft” factors related to “quality of place”. Florida (2012) states that quality of place includes “what’s there” (i.e. the built and natural environment), “who’s there” (i.e. diversity, community, social opportunities), and “what’s going on” (i.e. music and art scenes, culture, vibrant street life, creative and recreational opportunities). Furthermore, according to Florida’s (2002a, 2012) focus groups, many younger members of the creative class (particularly those in the much-sought-after 25–34 demographic) desire a lifestyle afforded by a mix of entertainment-cultural amenities typical of urban centers, such as museums, theaters, music venues, nightclubs, bars, coffee shops, art galleries, street cafés, and bookstores. Such amenities not only provide spaces of consumption; they are also expected to facilitate the types of frequent, informal social interactions key to the formation of social networks (Oldenburg 1999).

Sampling of downtown residents began with a snowball procedure (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981) in which an initial list of known downtown residents were contacted and asked to complete the online survey then recruit additional neighbors, friends, and family living within the downtown study area. To reduce bias and broaden the sample, a number of developers and landlords within the downtown area were asked to distribute information about the survey among their constituents. The only requirements for inclusion in the survey pertained to age (19 years or older) and residential location, allowing the widest possible net to be cast. In total, 292 survey responses were collected.

As with any survey technique, some bias may have been introduced during data collection. Most notable in this study was the potential for “prestige bias,” in which respondents may have ranked amenities they perceived to be more prestigious, such as arts and cultural venues, artificially high in order to project or reaffirm a higher social status. While the potential for prestige bias cannot be eliminated, the use of an online survey may have had a mitigating affect by physically separating respondents from the researcher and providing a sense of anonymity, thus eliciting more accurate responses (Booth-Kewley, Larson, and Miyoshi 2007).

### **Follow-up questionnaire**

A follow-up questionnaire consisting of ten questions was e-mailed to participants of the survey who indicated a willingness to expand upon their responses (Appendix B). In general, the questionnaire

**Table 1.** Demographic profiles of downtown Omaha (census tract 18) and the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan statistical area (left) using U.S. Census data, and demographics of downtown survey respondents organized by those with “creative” and “non-creative” occupations (right).

Statistic	ACS data <sup>a</sup> downtown	Downtown survey data		
		Creative	Non-creative	Average
% creative occupation <sup>b</sup>	59	172 (59%)	122 (41%)	294 (total)
% female <sup>c</sup>	35	34	43	38
Median age	31	30	29	30
% aged 20–24	15	23	20	22
% aged 25–34	40	44	39	43
% aged 35–64	36	30	34	31
% aged 65+	3.6	3	7	4
% homeowners <sup>c</sup>	15	26	33	29
% moved within 1 year	54	37	34	36

Notes: <sup>a</sup>Source: U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (2008–2012); <sup>b</sup>Management, business, science, and arts occupations; <sup>c</sup>Downtown Survey creative and non-creative groups significantly different at  $p < 0.05$ .

was designed to collect additional information about respondent’s occupations, what downtown residents value most, or find most appealing, about their neighborhood, and what challenges exist, and are likely to arise, as the downtown area continues to evolve. A total of 28 responses to the follow-up questionnaire were obtained.

## Results and discussion

### Demographic profiles

Data were obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (2008–2012) to assess whether the sample of downtown residents in the online survey was broadly representative of the area’s population, and to briefly compare the demographic profiles of downtown residents and those of the broader Omaha metropolitan area. Douglas County, Nebraska census tract 18 served as a proxy for downtown Omaha. Overall, there was good agreement between the census and the online survey, suggesting that a fairly representative sample was obtained (Table 1). In line with the U.S. Census Bureau’s estimate, 59% ( $N = 172$ ) of survey respondents were classified as having “creative” occupations. Relative to census data, however, survey respondents were less likely to have moved in the previous year, though they still represented a highly mobile cohort with 82% having moved in the past 5 years. The most notable discrepancy is that survey respondents appear to have been about twice as likely (i.e. 15% vs. 29%) than the average downtown resident to own their own home. Homeowners may have been more willing to take part in the survey owing to stronger community ties and greater stake in the future development of their neighborhood (Cox 1982). Creative class workers that participated in the survey were significantly more likely to be male than female, and homeowners than renters. The age, age distribution, and mobility of “creative” and “non-creative” workers, however, were not significantly different.

### What influenced your decision to live downtown?

Survey results are presented in Tables 2 and 3. Note that factors are ranked according to the proportion of creative respondents that scored them either a 4 or a 5, indicating a relatively high level of influence. The final column indicates the difference in the proportion of 4 or 5 scores among creative and non-creative workers for each factor. Using this difference as the primary basis of comparison, survey respondents with creative occupations scored 17 of 22 factors as more influential in their decision to live downtown relative to those with non-creative occupations (Figure 1). For both creative and non-creative class workers, the most influential factors were generally “soft” amenities that spoke to specific facets of the neighborhood’s urban character including its “urban feel”; pedestrian-friendly and bike-friendly environment; abundance of third places such as cafés, bars, and coffee shops; its historic

**Table 2.** Proportion of downtown survey respondents that scored each of 22 factors on a scale from 1 to 5 in response to the question: “what influenced your decision to live downtown?”

		1	2	3	4	5	% 4/5	Δ
Access to “third places” – cafes, coffee shops	C <sup>a</sup>	2	5	15	30	48	78	
	NC	19	11	5	33	32	65	13
The neighborhood has an “urban” feel	C	5	2	15	36	42	78	
	NC	5	11	16	33	35	68	10
Proximity to dining establishments	C	4	11	12	46	27	73	
	NC	16	3	35	32	14	46	31
The neighborhood has historic character	C	7	7	13	29	44	73	
	NC	9	16	16	17	42	59	14
The neighborhood is pedestrian-friendly	C	7	7	13	32	41	73	
	NC	5	14	7	32	42	74	–1
Neighborhood has an identity, sense of place	C	6	11	13	28	42	70	
	NC	14	19	18	17	32	49	21
The neighborhood has a youthful feel	C	6	11	25	33	25	68	
	NC	13	19	23	34	11	45	23
Proximity to art/cultural amenities	C	6	12	14	32	36	68	
	NC	19	9	19	37	16	53	15
Ability to walk or ride a bike to destinations	C	7	9	16	19	49	68	
	NC	17	7	11	16	49	65	3
Proximity to work	C	13	10	12	20	45	65	
	NC	29	11	14	9	37	46	19
The neighborhood has a lively or vibrant street life	C	9	15	17	30	29	59	
	NC	12	19	21	25	23	48	11
The neighborhood has a “hip” or trendy feel	C	6	19	20	31	24	55	
	NC	20	31	13	23	13	36	19
The neighborhood is diverse	C	17	11	18	34	20	54	
	NC	18	18	26	19	19	38	16
Proximity to parks, recreational venues	C	13	8	29	37	13	50	
	NC	20	16	23	20	21	41	9
Proximity to sports and entertainment venues	C	12	14	26	25	23	48	
	NC	23	9	17	26	25	51	–3
Affordability or low cost of living	C	34	17	17	17	15	32	
	NC	44	19	21	5	11	16	16
Proximity to friends and/or family	C	30	17	21	19	13	32	
	NC	47	12	21	9	11	20	12
The neighborhood feels safe	C	10	21	37	19	13	32	
	NC	16	9	31	28	16	44	–12
Proximity to retail establishments	C	14	24	31	23	8	31	
	NC	32	21	27	16	4	20	11
Access to the dating scene	C	49	11	14	16	10	26	
	NC	61	11	14	7	7	14	12
The neighborhood is quiet	C	32	28	26	12	2	14	
	NC	25	25	29	14	7	21	–7
Access to public transportation	C	59	17	12	7	5	12	
	NC	55	14	19	5	7	12	0

Notes: 1 = Not at all influential, 5 = Highly influential. <sup>a</sup>C = creative class workers, NC = non-creative class workers.

character and unique identity or sense of place; and proximity to dining and art/cultural amenities. “Access to third places” was scored particularly high by creatives, who may use these spaces, such as coffee shops and street cafés, for casual social interactions as well as secondary offices away from home and work (Oldenburg 1999; Florida 2010). Landry (2000) suggested that the café culture, having its modern roots in the Central European cities of Vienna, Berlin, and Prague, is often key to fomenting a creative milieu in which “a critical mass of entrepreneurs, intellectuals, social activists, artists, administrators, power brokers or students can operate in an open-minded, cosmopolitan context ...” (133). Cafés, coffee shops, and other third places may act as social and intellectual crucibles “where ideas, knowledge and technical expertise [are] circulated” (135). Florida (2002a, 2005) has also routinely identified cafés and other third places as among the primary attributes of “quality of place” and an integral part of street-level culture.

**Table 3.** Proportion of downtown survey respondents that scored each of 20 factors on a scale from 1 to 5 in response to the question: “what could make downtown a better place to live?”

		1	2	3	4	5	% 4/5	Δ
Additional grocery stores/greater access to grocers	C <sup>a</sup>	6	3	11	29	51	80	
	NC	7	10	15	29	39	68	12
More greenery (trees, potted plants, etc.)	C	6	8	13	39	34	73	
	NC	9	16	33	28	14	42	31
More communal or public space	C	3	12	16	34	35	69	
	NC	12	20	25	36	7	43	26
More green space or recreational space	C	5	7	21	36	31	67	
	NC	15	16	31	31	7	38	29
More transit options	C	8	10	19	30	33	63	
	NC	21	20	19	14	26	40	13
More “third places” – cafes, coffee shops	C	5	15	23	26	31	57	
	NC	24	22	31	14	9	23	34
Additional parking	C	6	14	25	26	29	55	
	NC	16	14	28	23	19	42	13
Additional bike lanes	C	19	14	13	25	29	54	
	NC	16	14	28	23	19	52	2
More affordable housing	C	3	19	31	18	29	47	
	NC	9	23	28	23	17	40	7
More jobs/ greater access to employment	C	16	14	23	31	16	47	
	NC	14	21	25	20	20	40	7
More dining establishments	C	18	24	19	22	17	39	
	NC	26	25	26	14	9	23	16
Greater density of housing	C	18	24	19	22	17	39	
	NC	19	28	22	12	19	31	8
Additional “conventional” retail options	C	25	23	15	16	21	37	
	NC	17	30	16	21	16	37	0
More police/heightened security	C	12	21	35	19	13	32	
	NC	17	33	32	11	7	18	18
Less air pollution	C	27	20	22	21	10	31	
	NC	34	37	9	11	9	20	11
Better quality schools or greater access to schools	C	29	15	26	16	14	30	
	NC	30	19	32	14	5	19	11
Less noise	C	24	24	25	13	14	27	
	NC	32	30	16	14	7	21	6
Greater diversity among residents	C	21	23	30	14	12	26	
	NC	30	25	36	4	5	9	17
More up-scale housing	C	20	27	30	17	6	23	
	NC	22	26	27	16	9	25	-2
Lower density of housing	C	41	34	16	7	2	9	
	NC	48	29	16	5	2	7	2

Notes: 1 = Not at all influential, 5 = Highly influential. <sup>a</sup>C = creative class workers, NC = non-creative class workers.

The “hard” factor scored most influential by both creative and non-creative class workers, “proximity to work,” ranked 10th overall with 65% of creative class workers and 46% of non-creative class workers having scored it a 4 or 5. Though it failed to rank among the top factors, it is worth noting that 42% of all respondents scored “proximity to work” as “very influential” (i.e. 5 out of 5). This likely indicates that, for those who work as well as live downtown, the short, and often walkable, commute is an important motivation. This may be particularly true of creative class workers drawn by the area’s dense concentration of cultural- and knowledge-based industries. Due to the prominent role of socializing and networking in many creative occupations, living downtown may represent a strategy to locate “at the core of one’s socio-professional network,” as well as secure “access to the places and amenities where ... finding employment can happen” (Vivant 2013). In support of this hypothesis, Spencer’s (2015) analysis of “creative” neighborhoods in three large Canadian cities suggested that creative/cultural workers tend to prefer dense, mixed-use urban environments where they can cultivate a large number of relatively weak social ties, enabling them to “cast a wider net for knowledge and information.”

Other “hard” factors such as neighborhood safety, affordability, and access to public transportation generally ranked among the least influential factors. Social connections in the form of “proximity to friends and/or family” also ranked relatively low on the list, as did “access to the dating scene,” despite a substantial presence of young professionals and college students. In regard to this last factor in particular, the relatively low proportion of females in the study area and in the sampled survey may have affected the results. Women tended to score “access to the dating scene” as markedly less influential in their decision to live downtown relative to their male counterparts, whether employed in creative or non-creative occupations. Only 7.5% of females, but 28% of males, scored “access to the dating scene” either a 4 or 5 on the Likert scale. Thus, with a more even gender balance (i.e. more women, less men than in the sample), this factor would have been scored even less influential, suggesting that the “mating market” is of limited relevance at the neighborhood scale.

The factors creative and non-creative class workers scored most differently, again by comparing the proportion of respondents that scored the factor as highly influential (i.e. either score of a 4 or 5 out of 5), included “proximity to dining establishments,” “the neighborhood has a youthful feel,” “the neighborhood has an identity, sense of place,” “the neighborhood has a hip or trendy feel,” and “proximity to work” (Table 2). Four of the five factors the two groups scored most differently were “soft,” “quality of place” amenities, and each were scored higher by creative workers. The importance attributed to the neighborhood’s “hip” and “trendy” feel may reflect a strong propensity among creative class workers for self-expression in which the built environment plays a central role in establishing personal identities (Florida 2002a, 2008; Zukin 2008). The desire among creative people to seek out other creative people as well as more “authentic” and experiential environments, are often identified as potential drivers of “creative gentrification” within older, established neighborhoods (Florida 2002a; Peck 2005; Zukin 2008; Brooks 2011). Creative class workers also scored “proximity to art/cultural amenities” and “proximity to dining establishments” markedly higher than non-creative class workers, suggesting that, in agreement with the creative class thesis, creative class workers may be particularly drawn to urban places that facilitate cultural experiences and the routine consumption of creative and cultural products (e.g. art, music, theater, food). Notably, however, both creative and non-creative class workers scored “proximity to sports and entertainment venues” similarly (Table 2), indicating that spectator sports may have a broad appeal that extends across social and economic classes, though there is likely to be some difference among groups when examining support for particular types of sport (Wilson 2002).

As members of the creative class continue to migrate into older, central neighborhoods in many U.S. cities (Bereitschaft 2014), the process of “creative gentrification” is expected to displace existing (and often lower income) residents by raising property values, and transforming spaces of consumption to suit their “bourgeois bohemian” preferences for lattes, organic produce, and assorted boutiques (Brooks 2000; Zukin 2010). Low-income residents in gentrifying areas consequently experience increased costs for housing (as much as 60% of their income) and other amenities (Freeman and Braconi 2004). In addition to the potential for exclusion, the transformative effect of the creative class, and gentrifiers in general, may ironically undermine the very cosmopolitanism and authentic character that attracted them in the first place (Zukin 2010; Douglas 2012). Some “pioneer” gentrifiers, often including artists and other bohemians broadly defined under Florida’s “creative core,” will actively avoid areas that have already undergone an initial wave of gentrification, preferring instead to continuously move outward along the leading edge of gentrification (Douglas 2012; Borén and Young 2013). Vivant (2013) has argued that creative city policies may eventually discourage the in-migration of creative workers and ultimately undermine the development of a creative economy. As prime, central urban locations become increasingly desirable among ever more affluent groups, the lack of affordable housing and high rents may exclude many lower income (i.e. “precarious disadvantaged”) creative workers such as artists, migrants, and young adults, and the fledgling businesses and networks they would otherwise establish (Vivant 2013). This may in turn sap urban districts of their creative milieu and potential as creative hubs.

In regard to the physical layout of the built environment, both creative and non-creative class workers living downtown appeared to value the pedestrian-oriented nature of the neighborhoods, rating “the neighborhood is pedestrian friendly,” and “ability to walk or ride a bike to destinations” similarly high.

This aspect of downtown living – of pedestrianism and walkability – may therefore have broad appeal, and it would likely be a mistake to attribute renewed interest in human-scaled, mixed use environments specifically to the creative class. In the U.S., however, neo-traditional or new urbanist developments, which attempt to recreate the mix of uses, pedestrianism, and vitality of the traditional town or city center, are often marketed directly to creative class-type professionals while offering little or no affordable housing (Talen 2010). Both creative and non-creative class workers also scored “the neighborhood has a lively or vibrant street life” as moderately influential, suggesting minimal difference between the two groups in terms of a desire for the sort of human-oriented streetscape envisioned by Jacobs (1961).

Both creative and non-creative class workers scored “access to public transportation” (a “hard” factor) as among the least influential factors in their decision to live downtown (Table 2). Several survey respondents expressed concern about the safety and convenience of the Omaha public bus system, the only public transportation system in the metropolitan area. Responses to the follow-up questionnaire suggested that some residents may avoid public transit because they are fearful of the people and activities surrounding the downtown bus depots:

There is a considerable amount of drug dealing that goes on within the two blocks of my neighborhood. With the Metro bus routes as they are, people congregate around the bus stops that are not even using the buses, but rather are using them as a front for their illegal activities. (Female, 28, “non-creative” occupation)

Lack of interest in the public bus system is also likely a matter of time and convenience, with private automobiles providing appreciably faster transit times across Omaha’s primarily low-density suburban landscape. Many residents thus feel the “need” to own a private vehicle, and the parking space to store them.

### *What could make downtown a better place to live?*

To provide a more nuanced assessment of the potential differences in the amenity preferences of creative and non-creative class workers, and to also gain insight into how both sets of residents would like to see downtown change in the coming years, respondents were asked next, “what could make downtown a better place to live?” Similar to the previous question regarding potential pull-factors, creative class workers were more likely to rate 19 of 20 factors as important or very important (i.e. a score of 4 or 5 out of 5) when compared to non-creative workers (Table 3). Fifty-seven percent of creative class workers, but only 23% of non-creative class workers, scored “more third places” as a 4/5, further supporting the notion that creative class workers will exhibit greater demand for the social atmosphere and casual work environment afforded by these places. There also appears to be a stronger desire among creative class workers for additional greenery, green space, and public space (parks, plazas, etc.; Table 3). Florida (2002a, 2005) has suggested that members of the creative class exhibit a particularly strong preference for healthy lifestyles, which often include daily exercise routines such as jogging or cycling, and recreational activities like kayaking or snowboarding. Yigitcanlar, Baum, and Horton (2007) have theorized that knowledge workers seek out “a style of built environment that displays the human body before the public gaze,” in an attempt to compensate for the intellectual nature of their creative/knowledge work. Interestingly, while creative class workers exhibited a markedly greater desire for additional greenery and public space, both creative and non-creative class workers scored “proximity to parks, recreational venues” as moderately influential in their decision to live downtown (Table 2). Thus, the data indicate a clear difference between creative and non-creative class respondents, with creatives exhibiting greater unmet demand for greenery, green space, and recreational space. Though the downtown area contains two parks, they both lack large open spaces for recreational activities such as team sports.

Having chosen to live in one of Omaha’s densest urban neighborhoods, it is not surprising that survey respondents – both creative and non-creative – indicated a stronger desire for “greater density of housing” than “lower density of housing.” Although “low density housing” was rated the lowest of all potential outcomes, respondents were generally not highly enthusiastic about “greater density of housing” either. This may reflect a desire to maintain the historic character of the neighborhood, which

supports a moderate density of mostly 3–5 story buildings. Additionally, as with “access to the dating scene” discussed in the previous section, there was a noticeable gender difference in regard to the response to “greater density of housing,” with 22% of women vs. 37% of men scoring this factor either a 4 or 5. A more even balance of men and women within the downtown sample would likely have further reduced the score and ranking of “greater density of housing.”

In a seemingly contradictory outcome, survey respondents with creative class occupations rated both “more transit options” and “additional parking” higher than those with non-creative occupations (Table 3). The higher demand for parking exhibited by creative class respondents may simply have reflected a higher rate of car ownership. The greater demand for “more transit options” expressed by creative class workers, however, is revealing because both creative and non-creative class workers rated “access to public transportation” (a “hard” factor) as minimally influential (Table 2). Both groups therefore indicated that there exists some room for improvement in the public transit system, yet, as with green space, there may be greater unmet demand among creative class workers. Florida (2005) contends that access to intermodal travel (especially subway, rail, and water transit) is likely to be of prime interest to members of the creative class because transit can save time and boost productivity: “... seated, hands-free transit ... allow[s] one to] work or rest while commuting” (168).

In downtown Omaha, reliance on the automobile is reinforced by the lack of available grocery stores and other standard retail options, which encourages residents to shop outside the area for daily necessities. Respondents of the downtown survey, both with creative and non-creative occupations, strongly indicated that downtown Omaha could benefit from “additional grocery stores/greater access to grocers” (Table 3). With only a few small corner grocers, downtown may be considered a “food desert”; the nearest standard supermarket-style grocer is located approximately two miles away, across the Missouri River in Iowa. The specialty nature of downtown retailers in general can make it difficult to find a variety of “standard” consumer goods, likely precipitating the desire among downtown residents for better access to daily necessities, particularly groceries and apparel.

Creative class workers also exhibited a stronger preference for more police/heightened security (Table 3). In search of “personal protection in a public space” (Yigitcanlar, Baum, and Horton 2007), knowledge workers strive to create “the best of both worlds”; the energy and spectacle of a bustling urban environment combined with the domestic privacy and security of the traditional suburban home. The rapid adoption of neighborhood-scale business improvement districts (BIDs), which often include the provision of public security personnel, speaks to the desire among businesses, civic leaders, and gentrifiers to “tame” urban spaces for middle-class consumption (Ward 2007; Lewis 2010). Accordingly, a 31-year-old software engineer (“creative” occupation) described his neighborhood thusly: “[It’s] very active with heavy traffic. Full of friendly people, but also with vagrants. It is close to all of the downtown nightlife.” He further expressed his current frustration, and hope for enhanced security:

Vagrants are a problem. They tend to hang out around Cubby’s, most likely coming in from the Greyhound bus stop ... The Gene Lehey mall [*sic*] and the 14th street side of the library are often filled with troublemakers during the day. If these areas were cleaned up, downtown could be considered the cleanest and safest place in Omaha to live.

Some residents may not see “more police/heightened security” as the only or best solution to enhancing safety downtown. As the quote above suggests, survey respondents commonly mentioned vagrants, the homeless, and drug dealers as an ongoing source of frustration and potential safety hazard, however most respondents who raised such concerns either did not propose a solution or simply suggested that the area needs to be generically “cleaned up.” Downtown residents may also be willing to forfeit some degree of perceived safety in exchange for other advantages of downtown living, including the authenticity and sense of place that is said to arise in part from the comingling of “gritty origins and shiny new beginnings” (Zukin 2010, 241).

According to Florida’s (2012, 57, 58) assertion that members of the creative class value diversity “in all its manifestations ... gender, sexual preference, race, and even personal idiosyncrasies,” creative class workers were expected to score “the neighborhood is diverse” and “greater diversity among residents” higher than non-creative class workers. Though creatives did score both higher than non-creatives,

diversity was not among the top priorities for either group (Tables 1 and 2). Florida, however, has often referred to diversity in terms of the broad, cosmopolitan character of entire city regions rather than individual neighborhoods. The implication is that creative class workers desire the *possibility* of social and cultural diversity – they want to live in a city open and tolerant of different groups and ideas – yet when it comes to their own “backyards” they prefer a certain degree of homogeneity and predictability; they choose to mingle and associate with those most like themselves (i.e. other creative class workers). As Florida (2012, 294) suggests, “A person’s circle of closest friends may not resemble the Rainbow Coalition – in fact, it usually doesn’t – but creatives want the rainbow to be available.”

## Conclusion

Largely in support of Florida’s (2002a, 2005) creative class thesis, creative class workers residing in downtown Omaha indicated a stronger preference for several “soft” or “quality of place” amenities relative to non-creative class workers. The results depart most notably from those of previous investigations (i.e. Frenkel, Benedict, and Kaplan 2013b; Lawton, Murphy, and Redmond 2013) in that “soft” factors and amenities pertaining to “quality of place” were generally considered more important than “hard” or classic factors related to employment, transportation, or affordability. Although a number of studies have demonstrated that “hard” factors represent the most crucial consideration among creative class/knowledge workers when migrating from one city region to another, the results here suggest that when choosing where to live *within* cities the presence of “quality of place” amenities and the quality/character of the built environment may assume a more prominent role in the decision-making process.

As a group, creatives demonstrated a particularly strong affinity for third places such as coffee shops, cafés, and bookstores that provide space to socialize, perform creative work, and both initiate and maintain professional networks. They also indicated a stronger desire to live in a neighborhood with ample art and cultural amenities, social and entertainment options, dining establishments, and a hip, trendy, and youthful feel. Although creative class respondents scored neighborhood diversity higher than non-creatives, it was not rated among the most influential factors despite Florida’s assertion that members of the creative class are drawn to places that are diverse and tolerant. In regard to transportation, both groups were united in their dissatisfaction with the public bus system, citing a perceived lack of safety and convenience. The absence of “conventional” retail options downtown was also a concern for both occupational groups. Creative and non-creative class workers appear to have been equally drawn by the walkable, pedestrian quality of the downtown environment, calling into question the lack of affordable housing in most new-urbanist- and neo-traditional-type developments.

Though this study contributes to the growing body of literature on the creative class by indicating a strong and consistently distinct difference in the intra-urban amenity preferences of creative and non-creative class workers living downtown, it is not without limitation. Foremost, while the snowball sampling procedure is often regarded as an excellent exploratory technique, it cannot guarantee the random sample required for inferential statistical analyses (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981; Babbie 2013). The results presented here were therefore necessarily descriptive in nature. By employing random sampling, future studies could control for such covariates as education and age to discern whether the differences in amenity preferences observed here are more strongly related to occupational differences as proposed by Florida (2002a, 2005, 2008), or rather human capital or life course stage. Furthermore, while Omaha may approximate the “average” Midwestern U.S. city in certain respects, it clearly cannot represent all American cities, nor can the survey respondents that took part in this exploratory analysis speak for all creative class and non-creative class workers living downtown or within central urban neighborhoods. A more extensive study is recommended to examine differences in amenity preferences across multiple neighborhoods and cities with varying typologies.

This study offers a unique perspective on the intra-urban amenity preferences and locational decisions of creative class workers by focusing on downtown residents located within a mid-sized U.S. metropolitan area, and comparing the attraction of both creative and non-creative class workers to particular urban amenities and other potential pull-factors. Though more rigorous inferential-based



analyses are needed, the results presented here suggest that the creative class, as conceptualized by Richard Florida (2002a), may be capable of exerting unique developmental pressures on the American urban core in part through distinguishable place-based preferences. This further implicates the creative class in the process of inner-city gentrification, wherein heightened demand for housing and higher end consumer goods are expected result in the displacement and exclusion of lower income residents (Atkinson 2000; Newman and Wyly 2006). While urban policy often encourages competitive, market-oriented gentrification of this nature (Rousseau 2009; Teernstra 2015), the eventual exclusion of creative class workers and creative industries from prime central locations during successive waves of gentrification may eventually run counter to the creative city imperative. Thus, while city regions concentrate on providing employment opportunities and nurturing lively, social, and culturally stimulating urban spaces to attract and retain “urban-oriented” creative class workers, they would be well served to also establish policy to buffer the inequitable effects of gentrification, most notably by promoting community engagement and ensuring access to affordable housing downtown and in other key central locations.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Funding

This work was supported by the University Committee on Research and Creative Activity (UCRCA) at the University of Nebraska at Omaha [grant number 2013-14-F].

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## Appendix A. Survey questions

- (1) What is your age?
- (2) What is your gender?
- (3) What is the highest level of education you've completed?
- (4) What is your household Income?
- (5) Do you rent or own your home?
- (6) In what ZIP code is your home located? (enter 5-digit ZIP code; e.g. 68138)
- (7) How long have you lived at this location?
- (8) Please describe your occupation
- (9) Do you consider creativity to be an important part of your job?
- (10) What influenced your decision to live "downtown"? Rate each of the following on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 indicating no influence; 5 indicating very influential)

- Affordability or low cost of living
- Proximity to friends and/or family
- Proximity to work
- Proximity to dining establishments
- Proximity to retail establishments
- Proximity to art/cultural amenities
- Proximity to sports and entertainment venues
- Proximity to parks, recreational venues
- Access to public transportation
- Access to "third places" such as cafes, bars, and coffee shops
- Access to the dating scene
- Ability to walk or ride a bike to many daily destinations
- The neighborhood feels safe
- The neighborhood is quiet
- The neighborhood is attractive
- The neighborhood has an "urban" feel
- The neighborhood has a youthful feel
- The neighborhood has a "hip" or trendy feel
- The neighborhood is diverse
- The neighborhood has a pedestrian-friendly environment
- The neighborhood has an identity, a sense of place
- The neighborhood has a lively or vibrant street life
- The neighborhood has historic character and value (older buildings, etc.)

- (11) What could make downtown a better place to live? Rate each from a scale of 1–5 (1 indicating not important at all; 5 indicating very important)

- Additional grocery stores/greater access to grocers
- Additional "conventional" or "suburban-style" retail options
- Better quality schools or greater access to schools
- More police/heightedened security
- More transit options
- More affordable housing

- More up-scale housing
- More dining establishments
- Greater density of housing (more residential towers)
- Lower density of housing (more single-story housing)
- Additional bike lanes
- Additional parking
- Less noise
- Less air pollution
- More jobs/ greater access to employment
- More green space or recreational space
- More communal or public space (squares, plazas, etc.)
- More “third places” such as cafes, bars, and coffee shops
- Greater diversity among residents
- More greenery (trees, potted plants, etc.)

**(12)** If you were to move, where would you likely move to?

**(13)** Thank you for completing our survey. We invite you to participate further in this study by taking part in an interview via e-mail. If you choose to participate, we will send you an e-mail asking you to elaborate on the answers you have provided above. Our goal in conducting these interviews is to understand more deeply what residents like (or do not like) about living downtown. No personal questions will be asked, and no identifying information, such as your name, will be collected or associated with your answers. If you'd like to participate in an interview, please check “Yes” below

## Appendix B. Follow-up interview questions

- (1) Please provide your age and gender
- (2) How would you describe the kind of work you do?
- (3) Have you always lived in downtown Omaha? If not, where did you move from, and how long ago was this move?
- (4) How would you describe your neighborhood?
- (5) How long have you lived downtown? If you've lived downtown for more than 5 years, could you describe changes that you have witnessed? How do you feel about these changes?
- (6) Please describe what it is that you like about your neighborhood (i.e. what convinced you to live where you do)?
- (7) Please describe what it is that you don't like (or like least) about your neighborhood?
- (8) Would you ever consider living somewhere else within the Greater Omaha area? If yes, why might you leave, and where might you consider moving to?
- (9) Would you ever consider living somewhere outside the Greater Omaha area? If yes, why might you leave, and where might you consider moving to (state, city, and neighborhood if you have one in mind)?
- (10) What are your impressions of suburban Omaha, such as “West O”?