This research examines to what extent place attachment influences community involvement in historic downtown revitalization, specifically in the case of Canton, Ohio. Place attachment, defined as the bond between person and place, can be incredibly insightful as to the community desires, especially when dealing with deeply rooted historic sites. Commonly believed to be composed of three major elements - person, place, and process - this breakdown will provide three separate lenses for which to analyze place attachment. The first perspective will look at the socio-cultural influences (person), examining views presented by Sharon Zukin and Jane Jacobs. The second perspective, or lens, is the architectural or built component of the downtown (place), implementing theories of Kevin Lynch and Aldo Rossi. The final perspective is the role of political-economic impacts (process), looking at theories presented by David Harvey and Richard Florida. These perspectives are used to measure the levels of influence of place attachment and its effect on the various aspects at play. The interviews and mapping exercises focus on investigating the bond of place attachment and community involvement, are viewed in three unique ways to assess their importance and influence on historic revitalization.

Keywords: community participation, historic downtowns, urban revitalization, place attachment, sense of place, symbolic interactionism
PLACE ATTACHMENT IN THE REVITALIZATION OF POST-INDUSTRIAL DOWNTOWN CANTON: AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ARCHITECTURAL THEORY

A thesis submitted
To Kent State University in partial
Fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Science in Architecture and Environmental Design

by

Catherine Anne Puleo

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- LIST OF FIGURES ...............................................................vi
- PREFACE ........................................................................viii
- ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ......................................................ix

## CHAPTERS

### I. INTRODUCTION ..............................................................1

- STATEMENT OF PROBLEM .............................................1
- PURPOSE OF STUDY .......................................................2
- SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY ...............................................2
- THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ...........................................3
- CONTRIBUTION ............................................................3

### II. LITERATURE REVIEW .....................................................4

- BACKGROUND ................................................................4
- PLACE ATTACHMENT ....................................................6
- SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF COMMUNITY THAT INFLUENCE REVITALIZATION ......................................................8
- ARCHITECTURE AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AS INFLUENCERS TO REVITALIZATION ...................................................10
- POLITICAL-ECONOMIC GOALS THAT INFLUENCE REVITALIZATION .................................................................12
- CANTON, OHIO ................................................................14
- USING THEORY TO UNDERSTAND CANTON .....................18
- LEARNING FROM COGNITIVE MAPS ..................................22
- LITERATURE REVIEW DISCUSSION ..................................23

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ........................................24

- RESEARCH QUESTIONS ....................................................24
List of Figures

Figure 1. PLACE ATTACHMENT’S THREE COMPONENTS ........................................... 8
Figure 2. HISTORIC UNEMPLOYMENT RATE ......................................................... 14
Figure 3. HISTORIC POPULATION ......................................................................... 15
Figure 4. DILAPIDATED HERCULES FACTORY ..................................................... 17
Figure 5. PRO FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME CONSTRUCTION ................................. 19
Figure 6. UNDERSTANDING OF PLACE DIAGRAM ADAPTED FROM WOOD, 1992 .... 23
Figure 7. PLACE ATTACHMENT AND METHODOLOGY DIAGRAM ........................ 27
Figure 8. MUGGSWIGZ COFFESHOP .................................................................... 29
Figure 9. WORD-CLOUD OF REPORTED WORDS TO DESCRIBE “CHARACTER” ....... 33
Figure 10. FOOTBALL STATUES IN DOWNTOWN CANTON .................................... 36
Figure 11. THE PALACE THEATRE INTERIOR ....................................................... 37
Figure 12. OLD MCKINLEY HIGHSCHOOL ............................................................. 38
Figure 13. THE RENKERT BUILDING ..................................................................... 38
Figure 14. MARKET AVENUE NORTH .................................................................... 39
Figure 15. WORD-CLOUD OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS ..................................... 44
Figure 16. PATH FREQUENCY ................................................................................. 46
Figure 17. BUILDINGS AND URBAN SPACES ........................................................ 47
Figure 18. COMBINED PATH AND BUILDING/SPACE FREQUENCY ....................... 48
Figure 19. SOCIO-CULTURAL BONDS ................................................................. 49
Figure 20. POLITICAL-ECONOMIC BONDS .......................................................... 50
Figure 21. ARCHITECTURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT BONDS ....................... 51
Figure 22. SAFETY BOUNDARIES ......................................................................... 52
Figure 23. MAJORITY OF ATTACHMENT TO DOWNTOWN CANTON .................... 53
Figure 24. BUZZBIN BAR AND ARCADE ............................................................... 54
Figure 25. THE COURTHOUSE .............................................................................. 55
Preface

Before you lies the thesis “Place Attachment in the Revitalization of Post-Industrial Downtown Canton: An Analysis of Social, Political, and Architectural Theory”. It has been written to fulfill the graduation requirements of Kent State University’s College of Architecture and Environmental Design’s Master of Science program. The researching and writing of this thesis took place from August 2016 to March 2018.

This research is of great personal significance to me, not only for the fact that it represents the capstone of my education and the launching of my career, but for emotionally nostalgic reasons, as well. I was born and raised in Canton, Ohio- the city at the center of this research.

I have seen Canton through numerous stages of its evolution. In a way, I feel that my life and the life of this city have played off one another. As I grew up, this city grew down. As I achieved, I saw this city struggle. But now, through the work of many devoted individuals, my hometown is on the rebound and I can say in good faith that Canton is in safe hands. This research examines the efforts and effects of these energies, both from the “insider” and “outsider” view.

I would like to thank my advisor, Bill Willoughby, for his support and exceptional guidance through this project. I would also like to thank the participants, without whose cooperation I would not be able to present this analysis. And I would especially like to thank my parents, who at a very early age inspired me to never stop exploring and to appreciate the small things that life has to offer.

I hope you enjoy your reading.

Catherine Puleo
Canton, November 2, 2017
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“There is perhaps no feeling of mutual affinity, community, fraternity among persons, whether formal or informal, institutionalized or not – nor feeling of diversity, aversion, hostility – that is not in some way related to matters of place, territory and attachment to places.”

-Maria Vittoria Giuliani

“The community is not a museum piece. It is a lively, creative network of active individuals”.

-Isolina Ferré
Chapter I: Introduction

Many of America’s legacy rustbelt cities, both large and small, are faced with post-industrial decline. In order to revive these cities and reverse economic and social downfalls, politicians and planners alike are searching for ways to help these cities in a productive and meaningful manner. Through the utilization of sociological phenomenon, planners and developers can establish a better comprehension of the history and the desires of those who inhabit the cities they renew (Spennemann, 2003, 2003; Manzo, 2006). This paper focuses on Canton, Ohio’s current urban revitalization initiatives. This research examines to what extent the political-economic, socio-cultural, and architectural elements influence revitalization and how place attachment is manifested in each one. By incorporating the community’s sense of attachment to place, the methods for historic urban revitalization have the potential to be more fulfilling.

Statement of the Problem

In the words of Randall Collins, an influential non-Marxist conflict theorist, “The nation’s cities are not healthy; they suffer from unemployment, fiscal pressures, racial tensions, urban disorder, crime, and fleeing capital” (Collins, 1980). A bilateral system has been established in many cases, isolating the decision-making process to local governments and developers (Camacho, 2005). As urban revitalization projects take hold in many of the legacy cities around the United States, it is valuable to take into consideration the needs and wants of the city’s residents. Revitalization efforts are based largely on need, failing to take into account the comprehensive structure and systems that make up a community.
In Canton, the revitalization initiatives are both exciting and concerning to the residents and local business owners. The Comprehensive Plan laid out by the City details a trajectory that the locals are not very aware of. The residents are frustrated that the process is slow, and the business owners are concerned that the goals are not obtainable. Although Canton is experiencing an exciting time of transformation, there are strongly held opinions and true worries that have not been addressed.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to uncover the bonds that people have with buildings and public spaces within the historic urban landscape to better implement revitalization strategies. By showing that residents of the Canton community have social and emotional connections with their environments, urban designers, planners, developers, and preservationists can use this research as a new basis to address historical urban revitalization with a more appreciative understanding of what will most benefit the current population. From it, a guide is produced that assesses viability for revitalization by identifying necessary elements for success.

The research considers all three components of revitalization, while understanding the importance of person-place bonds. Chapter 2 provides a background of theory and practice. Chapter 3 explains the process this research followed, while Chapters 4, 5, and 6 synthesize and connect data. This insight adds to the list developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s tool for assessing success of revitalization projects (Revitalizing, 1988). The tool developed through this thesis will preface this evaluation criteria by providing information for viable starting points for cities, embracing community views and attachment to the city.

**Significance of the Study**

As many cities, particularly those located within the rustbelt, are faced with population decrease and economic turmoil, there is a need for a rethinking of how historical urban revitalization is approached and the legacy it holds. This presents a new viewpoint for historic urban revitalization projects, one that actively seeks out, welcomes, and utilizes the citizen
base. The community has a unique perspective to offer in regards to revitalizing the city (Scannell, 2010). The residents and business owners in Canton have special and unique attachments to the people, places, and processes within Downtown. The theoretical analysis used in this research provides a comprehensive view of complex systems at work in revitalization. By embracing and supporting these attachments in a sympathetic way, locals are able to better appreciate and enjoy what the City has to offer, and in return, they will feel more obliged to support the City.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theory used as a framework for this research is *place attachment*. Based in environmental psychology and sociology, place attachment describes the bonds people have with the built or natural environment in terms of symbolic interaction. This theory is commonly broken down into three parts - the person, the place, and the process of attachment (Milligan, 1998; Brown, 1992; Brown, Perkins and Brown, 2003). These elements provide the organizational format for the analysis, which will look at the data through three lenses - socio-cultural, architecture and the built environment, and political-economic influences.

**Contribution**

This research contributes to the current body of knowledge by exploring alternative ways of approaching historic preservation. Through community input and feedback, planners, architects, and preservationists can recognize the important spaces that are significant to the existing community. With an understanding of place attachment, urban revitalization initiatives can be implemented in understanding and thoughtful ways, rebuilding the city with the identity and concerns of the community in mind. This research strives to comprehend the City of Canton and its revitalization through an understanding of its residents. Their story is a complex one, one that is seeded in hard work and pride, as well as supported with friendship, community, and love. This tells their story in a way that is analyzed with theory and proposes pragmatic suggestions that are sympathetic to their desires.
Chapter II: Literature Review

Background

Historic preservation has recently become a way to improve economic and social issues that plague legacy rustbelt cities, breaking from its long history as iconic safeguarding. There has been substantial research conducted on the effects of person-place bonds as they pertain to natural landscapes and residential neighborhoods (see Williams, 1989, 1992, 1995, 1998, 2001, 2006, 2007 and Schliesman, 2005), but further investigation should be conducted to examine the relevance of these relationships to commercial, downtown main streets.

There are theories based in sociology that encapsulate the relationship between person and place. A major framework theory in sociology is symbolic interactionism. This can assist us in understanding how place attachment is formed. Symbolic interaction concerned with the meanings people associate with things as a result of social interactions (Blumer, 1969). Place attachment theory describes the complex dynamics of people-place bonding (Rollero and De Piccoli, 2010). This is the emotional bond and identity related with an individual and the environment in which they associate. Downtowns and Main Streets symbolize deep heritage and cultural pride for the residents in a unique and personal way (Revitalizing, 1988).

No matter what city is on the brink of revitalization, community members may have a wide array of goals in mind; most residents are concerned with quality-of-life changes (Tyler, Ligibel, Tyler, 2009). The residents of Canton, Ohio are no different. To ensure that the outcomes of historic urban revitalization line up with the aspirations of successfully responding to the needs in a deprived area, the planning system should strive to “make it more positive in securing urban change, devolving detailed planning to the level of the neighborhood where local people can get more involved in the decision-making process” (Rogers, 1999).
One of the most concerning issues that need to be reassessed is the lack of community involvement in historic urban revitalization initiatives within legacy cities. The system that is in place in most legacy cities is a bilateral one, with arrangements made between local governments and developers (Camacho, 2005). This type of system focuses on economic interest, and by default excludes seeking input from local business owners and residents. Occasionally there are public meetings held before any final decisions are made, but residents may not be made aware of them. And if the residents are in attendance, it is difficult to say whether their questions will be addressed, or even “engage them in a meaningful discussion about project alternatives” (Camacho, 2005). This mentality can discourage the public from participating, even if they have real issues and concerns they want addressed.

Members of a community have a significant bond with their city (Cuba and Hummon, 1993). The input and support of the public will preserve the integrity of a city with the introduction of a revitalization project. When planning incorporates elements that acknowledge meaning of place, it is better received by the community (Manzo and Perkins, 2006). As the community remains an “underutilized tool for neighborhood revitalization” (Brown, Perkins, Brown, 2003), this thesis will examine the degree to which place attachment is implemented. This will perhaps suggest new methods to increase community involvement through an embrace of this bond. This research looks at how citizens view the historic urban fabric and what meanings they attach to their environment. With this new consideration, urban planners and developers can address the issues of revitalization in a thoughtful way by reviving the elements found to be significant to the community.

Downtowns are shifting in a major way; “i) demographic shifts favoring downtown living . . . ii) settlement preferences of recent immigrants . . . iii) the rise of heritage and cultural tourism and iv) the comparative cost advantages [of living in a downtown setting]” (Burayidi, 2013). As the view of historic preservation is shifting from iconic safeguarding to rehabilitation and reuse, preservationists themselves need to also shift their focus. The value of preserving historic
elements is projected on to those elements by the people who have a connection to them (Spennemann, 2006). It is imperative that cities recognize the cultural heritage and utilize it to the benefits of the residents. This research is intended to bring into evidence the need to include and facilitate active community participation and input.

Historic downtowns and Main Streets represent a symbol of pride, legacy, and culture for the residents of the community (Revitalizing, 1988). These urban stretches are unique and personal to the character of the city. This built environment not only creates the backdrop for which people live their lives, but it becomes a network of connected individuals and develops a sense of identity larger than the singular person. “We become the heirs of the social network into which we are born and in which we are socialized. The environment of community cannot be avoided” (Ferre, 1987). The community includes both the physical and emotional/social attributions.

Place Attachment

Although this concept has its roots as psychological phenomenon, focusing on a single individual's emotion and feeling about place, it has many sociological implications. Place attachment is commonly believed to be composed of three major elements- person, place, and process (Scannell and Gifford, 2009). These collective meanings are passed down through the generations of those who inhabit the place, in this case, a downtown city and its immediate neighborhoods (Relph, 1981). These feelings create and develop ongoing identities, not only of the city, but of the residents who feel a connection with the city.

Place attachment becomes an important phenomenon when considering an urban revitalization project. For the residents, the city’s identity as they know it must be maintained in order for them to remain connected and distinctive (Moe, 1997). When mimicking commonly used urban fabrics, or creating impersonal and generic types of centers such as sprawling malls with big-box stores, the distinctive identity is lost. By understanding the connection people have with place, the urban fabric can retain itsvaluably unique and personal traits, preserving the
pride and integrity of the city. By razing and rebuilding historic downtowns, the identity, and therefore the bond, is compromised.

Place attachment, typically broken down into three contributing components- person, place, process (Lewicka, 2011) -provide something of value to the individual, as well as the collective whole. A sense of security and safety is developed, as well as decreased fear of perceived threats (Brown, 2003; Giuliani, 2003). Place attachment also provides community members the feeling of fitting in, appropriateness, and a sense of stability (Giuliani, 2003; Scannell and Gifford, 2010). These feelings allow for prosperity within one’s environment, successfully enabling the pursuit of goals.

The theory explored is a concept of space. There are a variety of terms that are used to encapsulate person-place bonding, and they vary depending on discipline and context. Sense of place is used as a broad concept which is an umbrella term for several varying person-place bonds. Place attachment is sometimes considered to be a specific and unique aspect of the overall concept of sense of place. Along with place attachment are theories such as place dependence and place identity (Kyle and Chick, 2007; Najafi and Shariff, 2011). All of these concepts are ways in which relationships between people and space are formed.

Place attachment refers to the emotional, cognitive, and practical bonds individuals have with an environment (Low and Altman, 1992). Low and Altman state that “place attachment subsumes or is subsumed by a variety of analogous ideas”. The definition of place is intertwined with “human values and principles” (Najafi and Shariff, 2011). Depending on discipline, place is configured in varying ways. For those in geography, rootedness, the feeling of dwelling, ancestry, and an understanding of geographical circumstances are vital (Hay, 1998). Anthropology considers space to be a cultural symbol. Psychology looks at place as it pertains to personal identity, while sociology examines social processes and place characteristics. For those in leisure studies, space transforms into place once an individual knows and understands the setting. Without an understanding of the significance of places to humans, it is hard to
describe why a place is important, unique, or special (Relph, 1981). The diagram below shows the relationship between the three elements of place attachment.

![Figure 1. Place Attachment's Three Components](image)

With these multiple uses and understanding, there is an ongoing argument regarding place attachment. One side views attachment as a separate form of identity, one that is based solely on physical aspects of space. The counter-argument strives to insert place attachment under a broader concept of social identity, one that is cognizant of sociological phenomenon. This research attempts to prove or disprove one of these arguments.

**Socio-Cultural Aspects of Community that Influence Revitalization**

An important theoretical framework that can be adapted from sociology and implemented into historic revitalization is symbolic interaction. This theory states that reality is shaped by experiences and perceptions (Milligan, 1998; Blumer, 1969). The meanings that we, both individually and on a community-wide scale, assign to places and things are based on ongoing, constant interactions. Symbolic interaction is the fundamental principle for this section of analysis because these meanings can influence attachments to place. Symbolic interaction focuses on the way people give meaning to things, and in this particular case, places that they interact with (Blumer, 1986). By looking at the way people use shared symbols and develop meanings, we can start to identify patterns of place attachment. Place attachment, defined by Milligan as the “emotional link formed by an individual to a physical site that has been given meaning through interaction” (Milligan, 1988).
The value of preserving historic elements is projected on to those elements by the people who have a connection to them (Spennemann, 2006). It is imperative that cities recognize the cultural heritage and utilize it to the benefits of the residents. Part of this heritage manifests as the authentic. "Authenticity refers to the look and feel of a place as well as the social connectedness that place inspires"; the grit or character or diversity of a city is what allows us to bond with it (Zukin, 2011). What determines authenticity is partly generated by collective memory. Collective memory is something that is discussed by Rossi. The “urban artifacts”, as he frequently calls the grit of the cityscape, are a part of the human condition (Rossi, 1982). Barthel states historic preservation helps to expose the deeply rooted culture of a city, as well as the societal structure (Barthel, 1989). These types of associations with historic structures, especially within the public, urban setting, have an important role in “shaping collective memories” (Barthel, 1996). The significance of one’s place is inseparable from human life and lived experience. Not only is the attachment to place so interwoven into our lives, but it can also “motivate cooperative efforts to improve one’s community”. The value of a preserved downtown is placed unto it by the residents, by the community. In order to approach these projects in the most successful and rewarding way, the community’s voice needs to be heard and their contribution is acknowledged.

Attachment can be facilitated by social interactions between individuals. Goffman states that there are unwritten rules for communication in public spaces and that people tend to adhere to these normal routines of interaction. These collective social relationships bond the individual to society, which can enforce their bond to place. The way people engage in public is laid out by Goffman as a series of rituals relations, specifically anonymous relations (such as walking by a stranger on the street) and anchored relations (like knowing the background of a familiar person) (Goffman, 1971).

This concept of implied social etiquette is something discussed by Anderson and his idea of the cosmopolitan canopy. These canopies are urban areas that are welcoming to all
mixtures of race and economic class (Anderson, 2011). This open and public embrace of city-goers creates an experience that develops into meaning and memory for those interacting in the social sphere.

**Architecture and the Built Environment as Influencers to Revitalization**

Not only do social relationships and developed meanings through interaction contribute to attachment, but the built environment and the modification of place further these bonds. The history of architectural preservation is rooted deeply in wealthy Anglo interests. Specifically, preserving places and sites connected to important or influential historic figures. Historic preservation has long provided an opportunity to save historically significant structures. Since the birth of the preservation movement, there have been two distinct paths taken. The divide falls on the border of the private and public sectors. The private, spearheaded by the wealthy white population near the end of the 19th century, concerned themselves with preserving the homes and churches of other wealthy whites (Tyler, 2009).

The public sector focused on preserving natural environmental features (Tyler, 2009). However, as the field of preservation progressed, so did the government’s role. The first piece of legislation put forth by the government pertaining to preservation was the Antiquities Act of 1906. This established sound punishments against those who impeded and damaged federally owned sites. Additionally, it allowed the president to have control in the naming of historically significant sites and objects located on federally owned land (Tyler, 2009). The naming of historically significant sites to listings such as the National Register of Historic Places is a manifestation of symbolic interaction and attachment to place. Although many of the places listed, especially those added at the beginning of the preservation movement, relate to historic figures, many are less well known nationally and speak more to the local sense of pride. This sense of belonging and pride is explored in depth by the National Park Service, as well as smaller organizations, such as State Historic Preservation Offices and Community Development Corporations (Scannell, 2010; Williams, 1995, 2000).
The meanings and bonds that are established between person and place are moderately considered when assessing significance. Those who feel that a place is significant can petition to have it listed as such. As the dynamics of preservation shift from protection to a tool for revitalization, buildings that may not have been “important” enough now have the opportunity to be recognized, not for their role in historical events, but as a vital backdrop to the people who know the buildings best.

Current buildings within a downtown can also be assessed and measured as to whether they are worthy of preservation based on the authentic character and story of the structure. Described by Zukin as character-rich architecture that has a unique power over the city and its resident, authenticity becomes vital when shifting dynamics of city life. For the case of post-industrial decay, cultural identities are unstable and people are judged by their performance rather than by their history or innate character (Zukin, 2011). The argument for the authentic is presented by Zukin as being comprised of two sides. The first side accepts that the current generation feels that the present urban fabric is authentic because it is what they are familiar with and the background to their lives which they have known for their entirety. The second side Zukin presents states that with every new age group that inhabits a space, they create their own, individual view of authenticity.

Authenticity, as far as Zukin is concerned, is deeply connected to our perception of nature because it is holistically based on our experiences. This embrace for the natural or raw experience of a gritty city is a response to modernization, when homogeneity may take over the many facets of our lives. Zukin goes on to describe the aura of grit, claiming that it is the result of a city abandoned due to the rise of the suburb. Although not pretty, grit is appealing because we are able to identify and relate to it in a way that new, modern standardization cannot. We can compare this description by Zukin with Jacobs. Jacobs, also never directly mentioning attachment to place or person-place bonds via interaction, also fails to identify or define the
authentic. However, she uses her own words and defines them with meanings similar to authenticity, such as diversity and character (Jacobs, 1961).

Rossi is another influential voice in the discussion of the urban fabric and its value to the character of a city. Rossi makes the connection between the city and the passage of time, which helps to construct and develop the city throughout history (Rossi, 1982). This draws on the concept of symbolic interactionism as the way meaning is developed through time and experience. To Rossi, these meanings are a product of time, and it is the buildings' experiences that help shape meaning and the interaction of people with that building support that developed identity. Not only is there a strong connection between the built environment and history, but a strong link between people and the city they inhabit. He states that the city is a collection of history and personality which is “inseparable from civilized life and the society in which it is manifested” (Rossi, 1982). Rossi would be a proponent of historic preservation during urban revitalization because to him, the value of the city comes from the story of the architecture located within it. One example Rossi frequently uses is the city of Rome. The history of the city makes the buildings even more rich and unique to the people.

In similar thinking, Lynch discusses the importance of public image. This image is not only a social construct developed through continuous interactions, bonding, and experience, but it is identifiable through the cityscape itself (Lynch, 1960). Lynch, in a method parallel to Rossi, expresses the perception of the city as something that changes with time. The importance of the city's image is one that provides some sort of mental or emotional security to its citizens. This concept is important when we talk about catering to the population, again showing how vital it is to understand the current community and their unique vision of the city and what they want this image to “say” about them.

**Political-Economic Goals that Influence Revitalization**

However, this image is not always reflective of the community's desired image. This bilateral system has been established in many cases, isolating the decision-making process to
local governments and developers (Camacho, 2005). This concept is discussed in detail by Harvey, a Marxist geography theorist, who believes that we are constantly being influenced by our political position within the city (Harvey, 2005). This ideology makes it impossible to separate our experiences and relationship with the city from our own experience, much like the symbolic interaction described by Milligan. Harvey questions this bilateral arrangement in his discussion of the “right to the city” (Goodman and Harvey, 2009). The city is a reflection of society, the people that live and work there, the ideals that are of value to them, and the relationships they wish to have. People of the city should be able to have the freedom and ability to recreate and change their city as they see fit, following Lynch’s notions of image. This collective right is being dictated by profit and inhibited by private property rights (Harvey, 2003).

The decision-making process of the city is vital, and its development should be made a collective endeavor. The value of place attachment is shown in increased efforts to improve one’s own community (Manzo, 2006). Money, in Harvey’s view, is the factor that is determining major aspects of the urban process. The transferring of money is a circle that is hard to penetrate, since “financial operators are working both ends of this game” (Goodman and Harvey, 2009). The economic and political forces driving urban processes are developed in such a way that capitalism is preserved and class struggle is still prominent (Harvey, 2003). One reason this method is common is due to increased globalization. This leads to more chain and big-box stores and corporations taking over cities, which in turn, jeopardizes the authenticity of the city.

Harvey also uses the political-economic lens to investigate gentrification, stating that desirable urban life is reserved for those with money. With new industries taking over the urban economy, such as cultural outlets and educational institutions, it has become a place for “market niches” and a “contemporary urban experience” (Harvey, 2003). This is similar to Zukin’s view of the new urban lifestyle, or the “cappuccino culture” (Zukin, 1987, 2011). Harvey labels this gentrification as “creative destruction”. The restructuring of the urban process is focused on
generating capital, which means driving out the lower-class through the flexing of political power. This displacement is accepted because it is supported by financial power.

Institutions, both business and educational, have a major role in revitalization. In an attempt to remain one of the major employers in the area, many institutions will participate in revitalization projects in order to attract young, talented individuals (Florida, 2002). In particular, Florida believes that universities in particular can act as the stimulus that revitalizes a city (Florida et al, 2006). As universities move to the forefront of innovation, creativity, and technology, Florida argues that these institutions are propelling economy’s forward in growth. However, simply bringing a university into the city is not enough. The city in which it is brought into needs to have the ability and desire to utilize the outputs of the creative class. This is broken down into three major factors contributing to the success or downfall of a city. Florida’s “3 T’s” of technology, tolerance, and talent (Florida et al, 2006, 2004).

The backbone of all three of these aspects is the same. Humans. The value of people, or human capital, is essential for any growth (Florida, 2004). People create the technology. People establish the culture of tolerance and expansion. And people are the talent force (Florida, 2004; 2006). These are not just any people, though. The one’s that stimulate growth are educated and tend to group together in places that possess all three “T’s”.

**Canton, Ohio**

The rise and fall of Canton follows that of most post-industrial downtowns. The chart to the left shows the unemployment rate, detailed with specific and significant occurrences in the most common workforce environments to the City. Founded in 1805 by Bezaleel Wells, Canton developed as an
industrial and agricultural hub early on. From iron production to watch making, Canton’s population grew throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, which is shown in the chart below.

In 1920, Canton established the first professional football league, which grew to create the Pro-Football Hall of Fame. Also during the first half of the 1900s, manufacturing companies, such as Diebold, Timken Steel, and Hoover Vacuum Cleaner Company, set up shop in Canton, Ohio. These companies, and many others in the area thrived, helping to foster a booming economy with high employment rates and high populations. However, as the modern age took over, many of these industries were faced with the inevitable. The timeline to the left details the major economic shift that took place in Canton and the subsequent decrease in unemployment.

In recent years, the City of Canton has been determined to get back on track as an important area within the rustbelt. The start of the preservation and revitalization in Canton began with its listing on the Register;

“The center of downtown Canton has been designated a historic district and has been added to the National Register of Historic Places by the U.S. Department of the Interior effective June 7, 2006. The official name of the district is the Upper Downtown Canton Historic District, which includes approximately 30 city blocks. The designation was determined by conducting a survey of historic and architecturally significant buildings in the center city. Sandvick Architects of Cleveland was commissioned by the Downtown Canton Land Bank to perform the survey because of their knowledge and experience in historic preservation, restoration, and renovation. The street boundaries of the district generally comprise 2nd Street South to 6th Street North and Walnut Avenue.
Northeast to Dewalt Avenue Northwest. According to the study, there are approximately 89 buildings in the district, of which, 59 are noted as contributing buildings or ones that have historical significance. One of the benefits of a historic district is that owners of buildings will not have to apply individually to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places and incur the expense associated with this process.” (Downtown Canton Historic District, 2013).

One of the major issues that faced the City of Canton was the sheer size of what is considered to be the downtown area. In a report to the Downtown Partnership in 2013, it was stated that Canton is made up of 195 city blocks (Downtown Development Plan, 2013). The significance of it goes unknown until it begins to be compared with other downtown districts, both local and afar. The ideal downtown district is comprised of thirty-five, fifty-five, or seventy-five blocks (Downtown Development Plan, 2013). The City of Canton has too many blocks, too many buildings, and too many large structures impeding on the street fronts. What this shows is that Canton had, essentially, spread its wings too far in trying to develop a successful “Main Street”. Part of Canton’s revitalization plan looks at re-establishing what is considered the downtown, in an effort to pinpoint focus.

When trying to redevelop an area this sprawling, it is vital to establish boundaries. In addition to the sizing issue, there was a low sense of orientation (Downtown Development Plan, 2013). As Canton expanded to become more and more suburban, the focus of the city got lost in the transition. A city center is essential in getting people to explore the area. The lack of a successful entry points with presentable and welcoming roads were missing. As people begun moving out of the city center, the housing deteriorated and fell into disrepair. However, a lot of these homes and buildings were left in shambles, unaddressed by community and government. The chart below shows the decrease in population within the City of Canton, compared to Stark County’s population. Canton’s rate of decrease is staggering, showing that people have not been moving out of the county, but have instead been relocating outside of Canton City limits.
Hand and hand with the dilapidated conditions are crime rates and an overall loss of community presence. Downtown Canton transformed from a shared community to one of uncertainty, inhospitable, and most significantly fear. It is vital to the success of any rehabilitation project that the area projects a sense of stability. Not only is comfort and safety necessary, but an underlying feeling of pride in one’s place is just as important (Downtown Development Plan, 2013).

Perhaps the most obvious claim to the downfall of downtown is the simple fact that it lost its economic stronghold. This is not to say that Canton does not have things to offer, but instead the city’s center is underutilized. Aside from a few recognizable events, such as the Pro Football Hall of Fame and “First Fridays”, the downtown area is not a place to be unless you have something to do there. This lack of entertainment, whether it be shopping or eating, breeds a contentious space. The revitalization plan of Canton hopes to reverse this trend by making downtown a destination of its own.

The downtown blocks of Canton, and any city, need to be pedestrian friendly. This does not mean just making sure sidewalk are accessible and in good condition, but instead is tied to more of a sensory experience. This means that people need to feel comfortable, but also encouraged to explore. These dead spaces need to be welcoming and engaging. Destination spots are a great way of encouraging people to walk around the city. And by getting right up next to the buildings themselves, people will be more likely to feel connected and proud of where they are. The major goals presented to the Downtown Partnership included stabilizing and renewing.
The Arts District was the first undertaking. This included the addition of new galleries and studios that made the district a vibrant destination. However, many of the surrounding storefronts and houses were still left in the less than desired condition. Throughout 2013, many new and artistic businesses have made their way into the storefronts of downtown. “Obviously, the arts district has really become a primary draw downtown, for people who are looking to be entertained and stimulated and to get a sense of what urban renewal looks and feels like . . . [it] has given people the realistic belief that you can live downtown” (Molnar, 2013). The premise of this method is that by introducing a creative, artsy mass of people, it will help to change the downturn the economy has faced in the past few decades.

In the 2014 Annual Stark County Regional Planning Commission Report, it states that Canton is implementing a “fix it first” strategy in an attempt to heal the failing infrastructure. The area of focus is 12th Street and the Mahoning Road Corridor. The project was executed with government funding, including partial funds from the Ohio Public Works Commission (Annual Report, 2014). As these projects still unfold, the future of Canton hangs in the balance with the residents holding their breath.

Using Theory to Understand Canton

To analyze Canton, Ohio, it is useful to use these three lenses with which to look at the data that was collected during the interviews and participatory cognitive mapping. These lenses are 1) the concept of the built environment as the basis for city life; 2) the political-economic system as a driving force; and 3) the social construction of culture in urban downtowns as major influencers of revitalization. The lenses can be utilized to organize the major influencers of urban revitalization. Although data has yet to be collected, there are specific cases within the revitalization of Canton thus far that can be looked using the concepts described above and Zukin embrace the imperfect city environment. In Canton, this grit is obvious. One goal of the interviews was to get at the root of the appreciation for this particular aesthetic. Zukin, though never directly stated in these words, sees the results of person-place bonds and interactions in
what we consider authenticity, stating that it is formed from experiences. It is through this process of interaction between person, place, and process the data can identify the instances of attachment within Canton, determining whether or not these experiences formed the attachments and to what extent these places are considered authentic. The Plan for Canton, although beginning with infrastructure improvements, still recognizes this significance and the Preservation Society has made efforts to embrace the grit by bringing older structures into usable condition, instead of starting anew. However, it is difficult to say at this point whether this view is shared with the political and financial players in the revitalization. For such financial contributors, specifically the Pro Football Hall of Fame (pictured on the right), their plans look at new structures with shiny, new, streamline material- completely contradictory to Zukin and Jacobs' approach for embracing the authentic.

As the background of preservation and revitalization was laid out, we can see where Canton falls on the spectrum of public-private interest. This historic value can be preserved through adaptive reuse, or the changing of a buildings purpose into something more useful, such as the Onesto Hotel renovation in downtown Canton, which was transformed from hotel to luxury apartment lofts. Rossi’s critique of function presents a view that classification is not necessarily a healthy method for the city. Classification of building types restricts their use and can lead to vacancy and eventual disappearance. These constructed meanings and purposes of buildings can limit what people see as possible uses. By embracing the value of a buildings identity as a work of art, urban revitalization is assisted by using space for new and varied functions, instead of being dictated by a single classification, which may be outdated. By
breaking away from labels, architecture regains a purpose through meaning. The interviews and mapping help point to which buildings are being looked after and why. This will allow one to understand the role of political and social phenomenon.

The central theory for this discussion focuses on place attachment within broader theoretical frameworks. These ideas can be used in determining which aspects of a downtown cityscape are considered valuable and important to the members of a community. In Canton, this research will determine which sites hold meaning to the community and can develop revitalization strategies that better integrate and appreciate this insider view. It is not just the personal, individual connection that is important, but the overall community disposition to method and approach for revitalization, as well. This view of the city is developed through social interaction and experience. Canton, through events such as First Fridays and festivals, as well as the creation of accessible public spaces (cosmopolitan canopies as discussed by Anderson), strives to create settings that promote civility and communal bonding. All groups within the city are encouraged to join in these spaces, in the hopes that social bonding will occur. It is vital for the current population to feel as valuable in these areas as tourists feel. These should not be segregated places, but instead neutral and humanizing. These types of relationships are present in Canton, as they are in every city. However, with the data that will be collected, we can identify to what extent the city's residents feel the deeper, intimate relations with their fellow residents. Perhaps one of the underlying goals of Canton's revitalization initiative is to instill a deeper sense of connectedness.

These types of social, community-wide interactions are part of Goffman's understanding of norms. Goffman's discussion of social routines is used in analyzing causes of patterns of social behavior found in Canton. The data collected attempts to pinpoint the aspects of social life that are influential and memorable to the residents of Canton. This allows for planners and developers to comprehend the meaning, significance, and emotional bond people have with the city.
The importance of community involvement and understanding of the current population is something that has been examined by Harvey (Harvey, 2003; Goodman and Harvey, 2009). He believes democratic control will produce better results for the city as a whole, instead of just protecting the interests of big business. Presently, Harvey states, our right to the city is controlled by “private or quasi-private interests” (Harvey, 2003). These are not just billionaires or corporations that are dictating how the urban process shifts, but it is also being controlled by educational and medical institutions. This is an interesting aspect that is examined through the case study. Canton is home to the four of these mega-institutions: Mercy Medical Center, Timken Steel, the Pro Football Hall of Fame, and Aultman Hospital. Their role in the political-economic side of revitalization is present in the data analysis.

Harvey would argue that Canton’s process is being driven by economic players, and less by public interests (Goodman and Harvey, 2009). However, Harvey sees that the people of Canton need to be involved and active participants, and perhaps take measures to become a political entity themselves. A method of increased community involvement is something that would surely be supported by Harvey. The in-depth case study looks at the role of these establishments and attempts to uncover how much of an influence they have in the revitalization of downtown Canton.

In Florida’s discussion, educational institutions also act in a manner similar to Harvey’s critique of big business. Florida believes that educational institutions are a viable option for igniting growth downtown. Even though there is no university in downtown Canton, we can see that there are attempts to cater and draw in these types of individuals, what Florida refers to as the “creative class” (Florida, 2002). For example, the creation of the Arts District is a prime drawer for the educated and creative class. Additionally, small cafés and coffee shops stay busy. For example, Muggswigz (a small, locally owned and operated coffee shop, adorned with rusticated worn furniture that is always mismatched) is constantly seeing customers flowing in and out. They are young professionals who go to the location to work on their laptops in solitude.
or join a group of friends to chat. This specific coffee shop even has open-mic-nights, which is a prime example of creative class entertainment. The operation of this coffee shop seems to cater to this unique niche crowd.

As the city of Canton undergoes a process of change, one has to wonder “what will the city become? Who are we now?”. Not only are these questions raised in a psychological identity or a sociological community sense, but in an architectural sense, as well. Of course, the inflow of new types of people into the city can create a string of events, as Florida discusses. However, the built environment is at risk for rebranding. Public images are very important in Lynch’s argument; “the common mental pictures carried by large numbers of a city’s inhabitants: areas of agreement which might be expected to appear in the interaction of a single physical reality, a common culture, and a basic physiological nature” (Lynch, 1960). So the question is, does Canton want to create a new public image? Or is the city trying to maintain a current or past image?

Learning from Cognitive Maps

Lynch denotes the elements that form the basis of a person’s orientation in space (Lynch, 1960). Through cognitive mapping, this research allows for insight into the minds and connections that people have with places. The character of a place is defined by how things are, the phenomenon of life within these spaces. It is vital that planners, architects, and preservationists understand how people perceive the spaces, the presence of a space becomes linked with its character as soon as someone interacts with it. The spatial structure that is represented by these maps helps pinpoint the orientation and objects of identification that gives a place its identity. Although people may live in the same city, they can construct the space with different mental images.

These differences can be pieced together since no single person is able to know every view of a city. Mapping is “fundamental to the process of lending order to the world” (Wood, 1992). According to Denis Wood, maps have a unique place in our understanding of space. The
map lies between extra-significance and intra-significance. The following diagram denotes this relationship.

![Diagram](image.png)

**Figure 6. Understanding of Place Diagram Adapted from Wood, 1992**

The map lies between being a sign and an expression. “The map is the product of a spectrum of codes that materialize its visual representations, orient these in space and in time, and bind them together in some acceptable form” (Wood, 1992).

**Literature Review Discussion**

The value of an historic downtown is placed unto it by the residents, by the community. In order to make the approach these projects in the most honest and rewarding way, the community’s voice needs to be heard and their contribution treasured. The most authentic cultural presence of a city is located in the downtown. The appeal of an authentic downtown is just that, its authenticity. A historically preserved downtown is unique, interesting, and alluring (Burayidi, 2013). A modern-day downtown may be plagued with an excess of issues. Perhaps the most pertinent of causes is the rise of suburbia. Local pride of place is being overwhelmed with the rise of urban sprawl. The effect of sprawl can be felt all over our cities.
Chapter III: Research Methodology

Research Questions

Theory suggests that place attachment has an important role in the lives of people, no matter where they live (Low and Altman, 1992; Manzo, 2006; Williams and McIntyre, 2001). In approaching this research, it was helpful to have some guiding questions in an effort to target specific discussions. For this research, the main question was as follows:

Does place attachment influence factors in the revitalization of historic downtown Canton, Ohio?

This overarching question was then broken into several other factors, derived from theory and the manifested revitalization taking place in Canton:

What are the actions of the community in Canton’s revitalization project? How does the community view this process?

What are the processes that facilitate attachment? How are these attachments manifested?

Are there certain types of environments or interactions that generate bonds?

Where are bonds established within Canton’s Downtown and what types of bonds are most widespread?

What are the most valued aspects of Downtown Canton, in the eyes of the community?

These research questions helped shape the interview guide and mapping prompt. By understanding the theory of place attachment, as well as possessing knowledge of the Master Plan for Canton, these research questions were able to steer the analysis in a way that yielded information pertinent to theory and practice. As the research progressed, questions pertaining to the value of Downtown and the facilitation of attachment began to manifest. This allowed for comparison of theory with this new, additional feedback. This new information into the reasoning of bonds, whether consciously or not, began to formulate new aspects of this research.
Data Sources

The qualitative data was collected through interviews conducted by this researcher. This approach is appropriate for preservationists, urban planners, and public-sector entities because it is a beneficial way to get the firsthand experience of the process (Creswell, 2003). The researcher, for qualitative approaches, acts as a key instrument by providing insight through rigorous firsthand data collection that takes into consideration the human characteristic. The interview is a way to understand the human element in research, which is valuable for a study that looks into human bonding habits. It is within the dialogue between researcher and interviewee where the connections between person and place surface. The interview allows for deeper probing and explanation that a survey or questionnaire may not be able to obtain (Creswell, 2003; Lalli, 1992). Since place attachment is being evaluated as a sociological phenomenon that deals with emotion, the interview was the best strategy to relate emotion to the community. One-on-one interviews were conducted with those who work first-hand with Canton’s revitalization project, residents of the city, and local business owners, allowing for greater insight into the processes and methods and providing a chance to witness how community members view the project. This answers the research questions pertaining to how and why bonds and attachments are formed, as well as the current role of the community.

Participatory cognitive mapping exercises were also used to identify the built environment as the residents see it. This provides a unique way for individuals to express their views that verbal conversation may not be able to achieve (Walker, 2011). By pinpointing which buildings and public spaces are important to the members of the community, planners and developers will have a first-hand, personal view of the city that can assist in organizing revitalization efforts (Walker, 2011; Lefebvre, 1976; Lynch, 1960). This data helps to address the research questions regarding the valuable aspects of Downtown Canton. Fourteen individuals were interviewed. The reason for this number is because of the fair amount of data saturation
that occurred at this point. Out of the fourteen participants, thirteen agreed to engage in the mapping exercise.

By looking into Canton’s revitalization approaches paired with urban planning, sociological, and political economic theory, the interviews and mapping were able to be assessed in a way that understands what is happening in Canton and why the residents express the views that they do. This leads to new information into the community of Canton, one which possesses a deeper understanding of bonds. With this information, Canton’s decision makers are able to gain insight, while providing a new way of understanding community and the built environment.

Research Design

Through evaluating the role of place attachment in the revitalization project currently in progress, I was able to draw conclusions that the public has a desire to be heard and that with their input, revitalization projects will be better catered to the community’s needs. The downtown revitalization case in Canton is located within the once industrious rustbelt of the United States. This research presents a background for the city, the tactics for revitalization in the downtown area, and the outcomes to date. The close analysis of community members’ level of attachment to place helps determine to what extent the public is being represented and listened to, and what benefit this can provide to the overall revitalization project.

By utilizing the theory of place attachment, we can better assess the value and significance the community places on historical buildings and other public spaces downtown. Much of the research that has been conducted on place attachment has taken a phenomenological approach, lacking connection to a large-scale context. Community planning, historically, has overlooked emotional connections to places, instead focusing on “participation with empowerment” (Manzo, 2006). This provides sensible, comprehensive, humanistic view of revitalization.
Data Analysis Strategy

The interview data was analyzed using the theory of place attachment for the resident/community member and local business owner interviews. This method allowed for a theoretical base to compare the outcomes of Canton with some of the leading research in the topic of place attachment. The interview data, which was recorded with an audio recording device, then transcribed and coded, was analyzed through three lenses: socio-cultural theory, architectural theory, and political-economic theory. The diagram below details the method and analysis strategy for this thesis.

Figure 7. Place Attachment and Methodology Diagram

The themes for this research emerged from the coding process and categorical groupings, as well as utilizing word repetition. This allowed for the most important themes to become apparent. The codes that developed from the transcripts were grouped together if there was a connection between them. These connections were identified through a cutting and sorting process, where the interview transcripts were broken into coded groups and were laid out and connected with similar groups. It was within these connections large-idea themes were manifested.
The word-cloud software Wordle (2014) was utilized to identify the most frequently mentioned words, as well as a way to create a visual representation of responses to certain questions. The word-cloud is a tool for configuring word count and repetition in a visual manner. Words such as “the”, “and”, and “it” were excluded from the generated image. This allowed for the significant vocabulary to emerge, while providing another way to identify common topics. The larger the word appears in the cloud, the more times it was mentioned within the interviews. This also assisted by pointing out themes that may have been missed or overlooked in the coding process, which could then be explored further. However, this tool does not allow for long phrases, so it was best used to identify the most commonly used words, instead of complex explanations.

These groups of ideas and views were analyzed for common underlying emotions or reasonings, then compared with theoretical views and the tangible workings of Canton’s revitalization. With the interview data analyzed, it was then able to be layered in with the mapping study. The mapping exercises were analyzed individually, tied to the verbal interviews, and then compiled and layered in various methods to identify significant spaces, paths, and buildings for the residents. With these data sources and methods for analysis, the research questions could be addressed from multiple standpoints, allowing for the data to support itself and providing enough feedback to compare theory with reality.
Chapter IV: Interview Analysis

Coding Analysis

Crime, Drugs, Prostitution, and Violence

Ideas of crime were mentioned in every interview and appeared early in the coding process with words such as “safe”, “drugs” and “violence”. What is most interesting is that the interview guides never explicitly mention “crime” and the interviewer was never the first to bring up these topics. Instead, the interviewees tied in perceptions of crime, real or imagined, into the discussion. There was much talk about the “old days” where one mother “used to worry about hookers picking up [her] son after school”. However, most of these worries seem to be a thing of the past, many stating that the overall safety factor has improved over the last decade. All except two respondents stated that they feel no sense of danger or fear Downtown. In fact, many noted the increased police presence, especially during public events, there is “a police presence always so I suspect that kept a lot of shenanigans in check”.

Authentic or “Real”

Another code that emerged came from mentions of “realness” and “grit”. Not only are there exquisitely designed buildings, but there are buildings that maybe are not so aesthetically pleasing but offer comfort and familiarity in the midst of the Downtown. For example, Muggswigz (pictured on the right) was described as a “hole-in-the-wall” location with its

Figure 8. Muggswigz Coffeeshop
own unique “vibe”, “It was about being in this little unique coffee shop and the experience of just being in there”. This authentic environment, described heavily by Zukin, was discussed across the board, especially in the comparisons between Downtown and the larger shopping centers of Canton- The Strip and Belden Village (Zukin, 2011).

The larger shopping centers of Canton “aren’t as real in some ways…they’re big chain restaurants or big chain stores, they’re always exactly as they are. You know exactly what you are going to get every time you are there. But they lack character. They lack a sense of history. They just lack character. “Downtown has more of a friendly feeling… it’s more real”. This sense of realness is Zukin’s quest for the authentic. Through the recognition of the authentic, Canton has the chance to maintain its historical integrity.

People have bonded with locations in Canton based on how they relate to the environment- whether it is because of an experience, memory, or feeling they have within the space. Most have claimed that they have “nothing but pride for my city”, despite the image held by “outsiders” or the rapidly changing identity of their home.

Community and Belonging

Sense of community is strongly tied to the residential neighborhoods and places of business. This code was noticed in the interview transcripts through phrases such as “my home”, “the community” and “love for my City”. These relationships first develop at these points yet foster and grow through exposure within Downtown. “The sense of community begins in the neighborhoods . . . I’ve lived in my neighborhood a very long time so I have a great sense of community here. Some neighborhoods are very transient because they’ll rentals, so you can’t have a sense of community when you’re only going to be there for a little bit . . . don’t make the effort”. Some respondents, like this one, feel that attachment to place and community bonds
develop over time. However, another respondent stated there is an “immediate sense of belonging”.

Many describe a “hometown feeling” within the Downtown corridor. “People seem to have a great time” while exploring Downtown Canton. These experiences are not only for those who live in or around Downtown but include people who worked downtown, many who describe the love of going after work and socializing.

*Taxes, Government Spending, and Cost of Living*

The interviewees who discussed government spending and taxes the most tended to be the business owners. This code emerged with mention of “taxes”, “government waste” and “affordability”. The transcript sections that possessed these codes were compiled and analyzed to present a viewpoint of the current economic and political status of the City. The cost of operating a business Downtown was compared to operating the same business in areas such as Belden Village and The Strip. All the business owners chose Canton for similar reasons, “rent is still reasonable here . . . if you compare the same size space to Belden [Village] it’s a lower cost”. Also, there was a promise of hope and success for the Downtown when these businesses were started, “we knew we wanted to be in downtown. We saw that it was definitely doing a pretty good upswing”.

Although there is this optimism, business owners also realize that the build-up of Canton’s downtown may be overshot, “The Onesto (Lofts) are sold out, but the Bliss (Bliss Tower Apartments) still have ones available, at like $1,200 a month for a studio. Kind of seems like the cart before the horse”. Business owners and residents alike feel that money has been spent in ways that do not necessarily compliment the current population but instead build up an environment to draw in those with money as an attempt to rejuvenate.
Businesses in the Downtown corridor were also discussed in great depth with all the interviewees, the majority of which would prefer small, locally owned businesses that were able to provide goods and services that are needed often, as opposed to niche boutiques. This, as well as the other money-making establishments, were critiqued by the respondents, “There are a lot of cool properties, it’s a cool downtown but I don’t know if it has enough stuff to make it. The Art Museum is awesome for the size of it, it’s a pretty cool museum, but the fact that they’re moving the Charge from the Civic Center up it feels like another sign that well, maybe they’re not as interested in the downtown being something, except maybe just a place for dining and drinks kind of place, but as far as retail, I don’t know if it’s going to be a forever place”. This lacking sense of longevity progressed into concern for not only business survival, but the Pro Football Hall of Fame expansion and its effects on Canton.

*The Pro Football Hall of Fame*

The Pro Football Hall of Fame surfaced as a code by itself. Many business owners were concerned that the government initially wanted to allocate funds for the revitalization of Downtown but are skeptical that this is enough or that the funds are being put towards the most successful methods. There was also talk of “rumors” about the real trajectory of the Downtown. “I’ve heard all kinds of rumors, like this whole area actually moving a little closer to the [Hall of Fame] Village. And this would just become a relic. That’s just a barroom rumor, but I will say I’ve seen some signs maybe the whole NFL draft downtown being this whole new crazy thing I would be surprised. If it was that imminent people would’ve bought all of this property by now”. These types of worries make the business owners unsure about remaining in Downtown, even though they enjoy their location, the buildings, and the people.

Residents stated that the Hall of Fame is overrated, in fact, over half of the residents interviewed had never been inside the Hall. However, there is a general consensus that it is good for the economy if Canton harnesses it and uses it to its fullest advantage. By increasing
the industry and developing the City via the Hall of Fame, it will benefit the locals in an economic sense.

**Theme Analysis**

*Understanding Canton’s Image and Identity*

Residents and workers in Canton have shown to possess a shared understanding of place similar to the theories developed by the many theorists described earlier (Giffels, 2014; Milligan, 1988; Spennemann, 2006). The word-cloud below visually represents the words used to describe the characteristic of Downtown Canton.

![Word-Cloud of Reported Words to Describe “Character”](image-url)
The number one most reported word to describe the character of downtown was “historic”. This shows that the residents both understand and appreciate the sense of history that is conveyed through Canton’s architecture. Also, most residents and businesspeople within Downtown were able to list a handful of notable historical events or figures that are tied to the City of Canton. These historical connections fed into the perceived image of what Canton was, is, and who it’s people are. There is an “appreciation of the history”.

Another popular characterization of Canton is “growing”. This, in part, is due to the increased attention by the City to refocus efforts in the Downtown corridor. Also, the expansion of the Pro Football Hall of Fame was widely discussed as being a major cause of this growth. “Artistic” was used by many, who also talked about the Arts District, local artists, galleries, and studios, live entertainment, and other activities for the creative class, or those who just enjoy the arts. “Quaint” was also a popular word to describe the character of Downtown Canton, showing the appreciation for Zukin’s notion of the authentic. The spaces, buildings, and people of Downtown are considered authentic, charming, and somewhat traditional. Other words include “drunk”, noting that the majority of events Downtown are alcohol based, and “promise”, showing that there is a sense of hope for the area.

These characteristics help to develop other images. Some images for the city include being the home of President William McKinley, a resting place for mobsters during prohibition, and national nicknames such as “Little Detroit”. For the residents, they feel that their image is largely created but the surrounding suburbs, that the residents of Canton have a “chip on our shoulder”, a lot to prove, looked down on by surrounding suburbs (specifically mentioned were Jackson Township and North Canton), Canton’s pride comes from being “tougher”.

With this image as being the “tough” city, Canton is also victim to negative assumptions. Namely, the words “drugs”, “hookers”, “crime”, and “violence” were used to describe how an
outsider might view Canton. Although Canton’s inhabitants are proud of their roots, they are struggling to overcome the widely held beliefs of criminality, fear, and danger.

The image of Canton is both rapidly shifting, while still being stuck with past identities. Historically, Canton was considered “a place to get a job”, thriving with industrial opportunities. Not only were the economic prospects appealing, but the social groups within the Downtown also influenced the city.

There are widely held views of Canton, some of which have negative connotations that are hard to break from. Hookers, drugs, and crime were prominent topics of discussion throughout this project. However, the conversation was rarely centered on the fear of the Downtown corridor of the city, but instead on the perceived image of fear and how that affects the revitalization efforts. It is acknowledged that these views were once based in reality, “Before you used to see hookers on the corners down there, now you don’t see much of that anymore”, but “we are not crackheads, we are decent people . . . people say they’d never live in Canton, people say they’d never send their kids to Canton City Schools, but why do they think that everyone is having sex in the halls and shooting up in the bathrooms?! It’s all perception. It’s ALL perception. And Canton needs to get rid of that crap.”. The revitalization efforts laid out in the Comprehensive Plan set to reverse this way of thinking, and the residents are beginning to see a change, “There’s still a stigma to go down there, ‘what do you go down there for? Aren’t you scared to go down there?’ So, I think First Fridays changed a lot of that for a lot of people because you go down and it’s just fun and people are walking all over the place and yeah, there’s still crime down there and still people that are scared and won’t come but I think that has helped the city and the downtown a lot”.

35
As the growth of the Pro Football Hall of Fame is imminent, residents and business owners alike recognize this shift in Canton’s identity. Many residents interviewed see this expansion as a positive thing for the city. However, there were mixed reactions as it pertained to local businesses. Canton was compared to Cooperstown, the popular “Baseball City” in New York, numerous times, with residents stating that this sort of identity transformation would be a good thing, allowing for Canton to become a national tourist attraction. “I don’t think the City of Canton ever cashed in on the fact that we got the Hall of Fame”. The Pro Football Hall of Fame should become the sole identity of Canton, to some interviewees, who recognize that the once industrial side of Canton has declined, so the Hall of Fame should rise to become the main identity of Canton.

The public events and activities that take place within the Downtown corridor deeply impact the identity of the city. The annual summer festivals and year-round First Fridays have become fused with the identity of Downtown Canton. As the identity of Canton is shifting towards the positive, it is trying to overcome the non-flattering current images. With the help of the improvement district and community building activities, the identity of Canton can influence its image to the outside world.

*Place Attachment: Person*

The social connectedness was deeply explored throughout these interviews. Residents and business owners alike feel a deep tie to those they interact with in Downtown Canton. This feeling of connection is perpetuated by a sense of belonging, stemming from both neighborhood communities and public events that draw people together, “I love my home. I love my neighborhood. I feel comfortable and safe”. The community and relationships between
neighbors are some of the influencers really helping to keep Canton together during this transitional period. As more of Canton’s residents shift into transient dwellers, the neighborhood connection stems from the home and into Downtown. The Downtown becomes a socially active, lively place for relationships to blossom.

*Place Attachment: Place*

The character of Canton was widely explained through the lens of the built environment. Canton was frequently described as having the “sense of small-town, sense of comfort”. Part of this feeling stems directly from the environmental aesthetic. The relations between person and place creates an identity for the inhabitant. The identity of Canton is one of distinctive eclecticism, developed by not only by experiences but through familiarity and exposure. Canton has more than a few beautiful pieces of architecture within its Downtown. These buildings help to magnify the historical significance and the story of Canton. The buildings most discussed in the interviews were the Palace Theatre (pictured on the right), the Old McKinley Highschool (pictured below), the Courthouse, the Renkert Building (pictured below), the Chase Building, and St. Peter’s and St. John the Baptist Churches. These were recognized by the participants as being “gems” for Canton. Many also believed that the preservation of such buildings was “vital to the success of Downtown”.

Figure 11. The Palace Theatre Interior
People tend to describe places based on what they *used* to be. The interview data collected agrees with this theory that people tend to identify buildings and spaces based on what the original use or name (Giffels, 2014). As many buildings in Downtown Canton have changed owners and, in some cases, changed names, but residents and workers still use “original” identifiers. For example, many refer to the McKinley Health Care Center as the “Old McKinley high school”. This makes sense since it has “MCKINLEY HIGH SCHOOL” carved in stone on the front of the façade, but this has become iconic to the city because of its history.

The downtown is “pretty the way the buildings are” and “Market Avenue is beautiful. The older buildings are just beautiful. I just love the older buildings. The older look. I just love it . . . a lot of it had gotten torn down in Canton and it got trashed, but now it’s like . . . people are more aware”. This increased awareness is due in part to the revitalization plan. Together with developers and preservationists dedicated to saving these buildings, Canton has taken steps to improve its built environment and protect it. However, some participants were vocal about this process, “the government involvement needs to be focused on boosting the economy, not just saving old buildings”. This is where this sort of pinpointing strategy can help best use government funds to improve a downtown.
Place Attachment: Process

Although much of the discussions focused on the environment and social interaction within it, there was always some talk regarding the economic viability of Downtown Canton. The picture to the right, Market Avenue, highlights one of the most discussed areas pertaining to process. The residents, and especially the business owners, were incredibly in tune with the economic status of the city, providing insights that would not appear in the local paper or news. When asked if the revitalization was targeting the economic viability of the City and the influence of political pulls, one response was “No question about it. I think the city was staring down the barrel of a budget deficit and they did things . . . that were designed to balance the budget, but not necessarily in the best interest of the downtown long-term”. This feeling was shared with business owners, too, who voiced their fears that the Downtown was the goal at first but has since dwindled to the backburner and is no longer really a priority. There were many concerns that the Master Plan works well on paper and “tells people what they want to hear”, but it cannot and will not transfer to applicability.

This fear grew with the announcement of the Pro Football Hall of Fame growth, “I think that people would see it is an investment in the places that we really want to go to. I know a lot of people that live in Canton and some have never been to the Hall of Fame. Or some have gone once because it’s kinda the thing to do. But those aren’t the people that are going to be habitually going downtown, the tourists I mean. To turn your back on the community in favor of tourism, to me, just doesn’t make sense”.

Many suggestions were made on how to better cater to the existing population as a means of increasing the cash flow Downtown. Suggestions such as a clothing or grocery store were mentioned numerous times, with claims that this would “I do not go downtown to shop at
all. There’s no really shop-shops. They’re big on art galleries. . . but I’m not one to buy that kind of stuff . . . there’s no shops to draw me downtown”. Longtime residents of Canton are more enthusiastic, seeing the shifts over a longer period of time, “I think that is slowly coming back. But it’s circular, everything comes back around”.

Residents also find frustration in the few and similar events that are held Downtown. One longtime resident of the City feels that maintaining, and expanding, the public events are vital for Canton to improve its image and economy; “Because the cost of losing [events] from downtown is far more than a few bucks of overtime for a cop. In my opinion, I think you gotta make the investment in the downtown and not squabble about a few nickels in overtime.” Also, concerns about the cost of living were voiced. One comment about the newly renovated and rented Onesto Lofts – “People can’t afford it. I think you still need to make things affordable . . . nobody’s gonna pay that rent”. There were also worries about real estate changes and home values due to the Hall of Fame expansion. Although most feel that the revitalization is “long past due”, there is well-placed cautious skepticism.

The residents want this Master Plan to work. They want to see the Downtown saved and on the upswing. “My concern is that if we lose momentum on this, then this will just be another plan that never came to fruition. And that’s my concern. Let’s finish this thing out. Let’s give it every opportunity to do what it can do. You know, stay focused on the goal and get something done here that we can look back and say we did this. and if we need to tweak it along the line then we can do that. But my concern is that this stuff tends to get off track, not just in Canton, but cities in general. So, let’s finish what we started.”

Discussion and Critical Reflection

The revitalization of Downtown Canton is looked to as a saving grace, but also with appropriately held skepticism. Residents and business owners are both aware of the financial
and economic value if this plan is to reach fruition. This drives a lot of support and a desire to see the changes being made. There is a call for action. Place attachment is the prominent thread in the interviews. The coding and theme analysis uncovers the driving beliefs behind the actions and emotions of the participants.

Place attachment, especially for the purposes of the interviews, was categorized by social based bonds, environmentally based bonds, and economic outlook bonds. All of these aspects were important in some fashion to all the interviewees. Some respondents felt that the built environment was essential to Canton, while other felt that the presence of small businesses was the most important aspect of a downtown. Others responded with a disdain for government involvement in the revitalization of Canton, but others felt the government was not doing nearly enough in terms of sparking a full-blown rejuvenation. Some believed their bonds with the City grew from relationships and social experiences within the City, while others did not find this aspect as vital to their relationship with Canton. No one interviewee was driven solely by one of these aspects.

These bonds have the ability to be used to support revitalization efforts. Manzo states that these attachments “can motivate cooperative efforts to improve one’s community” (Manzo, 2006). Those interviewed who showed high rates of attachment were some of the most supportive of the revitalization efforts. This demonstrates that if people feel a bond to an environment, no matter the means of that connection, they will find interest and support in making sure the environment thrives. Many residents were irritated at the fact that they did not find Downtown Canton to be as useful to them as they’d like it to be. Many times, throughout this research, individuals mentioned new types of businesses and attractions that would increase their time spent Downtown. These sorts of suggestions, if listened to and followed through with, can help bring money into Canton’s Downtown corridor. This aspect of revitalization is very much based on economic factors- providing the supply for the demand.
However, residents equally suggested ideas that feed into the other aspects of place attachment.

The identity of Canton sparked some concern for many interviewees. There is a pull between what the identity was and what is identity is trying to be. The identity that was died out with the closing of the factories, starting in 1988 with the closing of the Ford Motor Company Plant. Since then, Canton has been trying to hold on to the image of being a tough, hardworking blue-collar people. This identity has not aged well, though, as many admit that “outsiders” look down on people of Canton for this very image. Canton is in a transitional stage of figuring out what they are and what they represent. There was the identity of being an “artsy” small-ish town that took off with the establishment of the Arts District. However, this too has begun to become a less prominent identity with the rise of the power and size of the Pro Football Hall of Fame. A major discussion point that was not explicitly stated in the interview guide, was the fear of violence, crime, and illegal activity. Most participants identified that this is a held belief among “outsiders”, but few felt this unsettling viewpoint personally. This feeds into the identity of Canton. The identity of Canton can help to foster the rejuvenation with the help of damage control and proactive marketing.

The issue with identity is not so much how the residents cope, but instead the marketing and development of a city without an image. For residents, they hold an image created by the “meanings accorded to it by a community of concerned people. . . generation to generation” (Relph, 1981). This is communal, yet personal. These meanings tie them to the place. However, with the Pro Football Hall of Fame beginning to challenge these views, the developers, city workers, and architects alike need to proactively avoid creating placelessness that can be generated through the borrowing of identity (many said Canton was becoming “the next Cooperstown”) or contriving an image untrue to the place.
To avoid this placelessness, the identity of a city can be authenticated by the buildings and urban spaces. For Downtown Canton, the buildings and layout facilitate the bonding of people to people and people to space and place. Many residents are familiar and could locate at least five historic buildings in Downtown. In the interviews, residents and business owners agreed that the historic buildings are vital to the identity and personality of the City. They are comforting, familiar, and tell a story. For Canton to be revitalized in a meaningful way, attention must be paid to these structures. And, thanks to a few major developers who have taken the time to know Canton, this is happening. Many buildings, that may have once been forgotten, and getting a new life breathed into them.

To evaluate the weight of these three factors—economics, architecture, and social experiences, on place attachment in Canton is dependent on the individual person. But, in all cases, there was a mixture of at least two factors. The word-cloud on the following page compiles the interview transcripts in a way that visually explains the most frequently mentioned words. With this, we can truly weigh the aspects of place attachment.
The most used word was “people”. Although all interviewees discussed every aspect of place attachment in some form, the backbone of the discussion is people. This reveals that even though all three components help to create the bond, it is always dependent on the people. The second most used word was “events” Of course, these events are used as social gatherings, taking place within unique spaces, in the hopes of contributing positively to the economy. “Community” and “business” were also used in great numbers. This, again, ties
together two aspects – people and economic wellbeing. Descriptors such as “great”, “positive”, “safe” and “cool” were used a lot, while there are very few repeated words that speak of negativity. This presents the idea that although the City may not be perfect, it is heading in the right direction and the residents are excited about that. So how do those involved in a revitalization know what, or whom, to target? What aspects of a mid-sized post-industrial rustbelt downtown are more important, both to the residents and to investors and future inhabitants?
Chapter V: Mapping Analysis

Figure 16. Path Frequency
The Palace Theatre
Buzzbin Bar and Arcade
The Courthouse
Onesto Lofts
Government Offices
Muggswigz

Figure 17. Buildings and Urban Spaces
Figure 18. Combined Path and Building/Space Frequency
Figure 19. Socio-Cultural Bonds
Figure 20. Political-Economic Bonds

Type of Attachment: Political-Economic
Figure 21. Architectural and Built Environment Bonds
“The Newton Zone”

“no-go zone”

“I don’t feel safe past this point”

“the creepy part of town”

“Unsafe” Zones with Path Frequency

Figure 22. Safety Boundaries
Figure 23. Majority of Attachment to Downtown Canton

Majority of Attachment
Social/Cultural
Economic
Architectural/Built
Discussion

The cognitive mapping exercises completed by the participants helped to visually comprehend the motivators of attachment. In the first map, the data has been compiled and arranged to show the major pedestrian pathways and vehicular thoroughfares used by the respondents. By pinpointing the likely paths taken, revitalization process can begin to focus on these popular areas. Market Avenue was, in most cases, the very first path drawn, and many began the mapping exercise with this corridor. The maps then grew from this path. Market Avenue was present in every map. Cleveland Avenue and Tuscarawas Street were also incredibly common paths, which most participants included. The boundaries of Downtown varied. Some respondents bounded the area with 12th Street North and 4th Street South, while others felt downtown embodied the few blocks between 6th Street North and Tuscarawas Street.

The boundaries of what was considered “downtown” shifted based on the motivators of attachment. For those who valued the cultural experience and social interactions, bounded the maps with 9th Street North, even up to 12th Street North, which encompasses the Canton Cultural Center for the Arts and the Canton Art Museum. Also, for those participants who enjoyed the cultural aspects of the city, the details of the Downtown blocks were clearly denoted, pinpointing specific restaurants, bars, galleries, and shops. These respondents discussed attending First Friday’s and other Downtown events. This exposure and pedestrian interaction helped them to identify and map many of the locations most frequented Downtown. These places included Muggswigz, Bender’s Tavern, Buzzbin Bar and Arcade (pictured above), Napoli’s, Basil, and Arcadia Grill.

For those who did not attend many events downtown, general areas of purpose were identified in the mapping. With labels such as “Arts District”, “Bars”, “Restaurants”, respondents
lacked the specific names and placement of such establishments but understood the overall layout of the businesses Downtown.

Another area that manifested itself within the maps dealt with the fear and distaste for other aspects of the city. Many made note, either visually or verbally, about the “undesirable” side of Canton. Some labeled this a “no-go zone”, “the creepy part of town”, the “Newton zone”, or “I don’t feel safe past this point”. Through mapping out where this was, there was also discussion about why respondents had these feelings. Many felt that although the crime and fear-factor had diminished within the Downtown corridor, the crime was butting up against this conceived barrier. Concerned a lot with the assumption that Canton is not safe, many offered up a defense to this, which even being provoked with the notion of safety or crime. Although they feel the city is safe, the maps still showed where the dangers lie. These are on the perceived border of the Downtown Historic District. This perception has also influenced the “outsider” views of Canton discussed earlier.

For those who very rarely explored Downtown for entertainment and recreation purposes, the maps identified places where they worked and notable landmarks but did not consider the numerous small businesses in the heart of Downtown. Individuals who believed that the economic and political motivators were most significant to their person-place bond made notes of City Hall, the Courthouse (pictured on the left), and City Government Offices, with less of a focus on the Arts District and cultural points of interest.

Figure 25. The Courthouse
The landmarks, some of which are pictured below, that were included in almost every map were: the Courthouse, the Palace Theatre, the Stark County District Library, the Arts District Corridor, the Onesto Hotel, the Renkert Building, the Chase Building, the old McKinley Highschool, The McKinley Grand Hotel, and the area known as Market Square. These are considered landmarks because they are physically significant and memorable. Downtown Canton has a handful of interesting and inspiring works of architecture, and it is not only noticeable to the trained eye. Many residents of Canton recognize the impact of the built environment and appreciate its contribution to the character of Downtown.

Part of the image of the Downtown stems from the sense of permeance and historic value that these landmarks provide. Canton has “some great buildings and the history is just all around you . . . you look at the Palace Theatre or the Courthouse you just get a sense that there is some greatness there. And frankly, if you look at it and say it’s a little sad in some ways to think that maybe the city is not as great as it once was, these structures are almost a throwback to something reminiscent of a more prosperous time”. These buildings not only shape the identity but provide insight into the past.
These landmarks can help preservationists and planners understand what the current population appreciates and relates to. Historic preservation is a huge undertaking, both financially and time. It is important that for a revitalization initiative if these spots are identified beforehand, the efforts can be best placed on what will benefit the most. For example, every participant mentioned the Palace Theatre, “I love the Palace Theatre. It is beautiful. And it’s historical and it is beautiful inside. I just love going in there”. By identifying these bonds, planners can focus on restoring the Palace, bringing new events, and increasing awareness of the preservation efforts. The Palace not only serves as a spot for entertainment but to many, it has become the backdrop to the City, the iconic image of Canton’s downtown. “I love the Palace Theatre. Absolutely without exception is THE focal point of downtown, for me”. There is a described richness and ornate aesthetic that helps provide a sense of history. “I didn’t care that it wasn’t the most widescreen scene or that it wasn’t the most Dolby whatever sound. I didn’t care about that. The experience was being in this building and looking around you. You know, I would get there early on the days that I was seeing a movie and I would spend more time looking at the walls and the Theatre itself, I didn’t care if the movie started ever. I think it’s a gem. I think it’s just such a gem that we have that. We are so fortunate to have that in our own backyard”. The residents are aware of the unique architecture and identify it as such. Mapping exercises, like the one conducted, can provide a deep understanding of the perception of space and local landmarks of significance.
Chapter VI: Conclusions and Remarks

This research set out to identify the levels of place attachment between the residents and business owners and Downtown Canton. The data collected shows that no single aspect of attachment drives all bonds. Individuals have different priorities and motives, most having a mixture of two or all of the aspects. This shows that revitalization cannot be focused on just one of these aspects either. Instead, plans to rejuvenate a downtown must take into account the social needs, the economic interests, and the built environmental factors within a city. Through discussions with residents and mapping exercises, it is clear what aspects of the City of Canton are more appreciated and valued.

This research collected data that confirms the leading schools of thought pertaining to place attachment. In Canton, it was determined that there are both individual bonds, as well as a meaning for the collective whole. This supports the theories presented by Lewicka, Giuliani, and Scannell and Gifford (Lewicka, 2011; Giuliani, 2003; Scannell and Gifford, 2010). The theories of these scholars’ state that the collective bonds help to establish a sense of community, safety, and stability, all of which were present in the data collected.

Many disciplines view the manifestation of place attachment in different ways. Since urban revitalization is paired with historic preservation within the Canton case study, place attachment as understood by this researcher, blends and meshes the boundaries of multiple disciplines. The configuration of attachments seems to stem from areas including geography, anthropology, and architectural and sociological studies. For some residents, the bond is most strong with the sense of ancestry and generational habitation (Hay, 1998). Many of those interviewed were born in Canton and had either stayed in the City or moved back after a short
period of living elsewhere. This type of bond is geographically rooted. Anthropology is also touched on in this data because Downtown Canton is viewed as a cultural symbol.

Sociological theories were present in all interviews, which look to understand the processes of society and its relation to place. The sociological theories that were looked at for the development of this research dealt mainly with symbolic interaction. Symbolic interaction helps to develop attachments through social experiences. Events and other social gathering spots in Canton help to encourage these interactions, confirming and developing these bonds between person and place. The data collected supports this theory, showing that most residents have been bonded to Canton through the social experiences they have encountered, solidifying the theories developed by Milligan and Blumer (Milligan, 1998; Blumer, 1969).

Goffman's theory regarding unwritten rules of interaction in public spaces could not be confirmed with this research and the data collected was unable to determine if this theory is prevalent in Downtown Canton (Goffman, 1971). The data collection method was not conducive for this type of theory. Future research could utilize observation techniques to look further into the unwritten rules and routines of interaction to better understand if these person-to-person social standards enforce place attachment bonds.

The architectural theoretical base for this research discussed the value of historic structures and their impact on the residents. Spennemann stated that the value of these types of historic elements is projected onto them by those who are connected emotionally, or even financially (Spennemann, 2006). In Canton, the data shows that the most valued buildings are the historic and iconic ones, which also have significant emotional ties.

The theories of Zukin also hold true in Canton. Zukin’s fascination with the “authentic” is more than important to the residents of Canton. Many used the words “authentic”, “gritty”, and “real” to describe Downtown- all of which are analyzed by Zukin as being appealing due to the
familiarity and relatability (Zukin, 2011). In the interviews, Downtown Canton was contrasted quite a bit to the modern shopping centers of Belden Village and The Strip. The data shows that the majority of people interviewed had some level of discomfort and distaste with these two locations, favoring the aura and environment of Downtown.

There are a few notable architectural theories that were manifested in Canton. Rossi’s focus on time and space reflects the views held by the residents and even the business owners who participated in this research. The passing of time is critical to constructing and understanding a city (Rossi, 1982). This passing of time is a buildup of different experiences, all which contribute to the attachments to place. Rossi hints at symbolic interaction, as well as believing that the buildings themselves have experiences. This ever-growing development between time and place connect the environment with a sense of history. For those in Canton, this sense of history is observable through the architecture and appreciated.

Lynch’s ideas on city image were also apparent in this research, specifically through the mapping data. The layout of the Downtown, as the resident’s recorded it, lined up with their experiences and perceptions that were verbally discussed. Very few people could detail parts of the City that they had never experienced. Instead, the image of their Downtown came from their first-hand interactions. On the opposite side of these experiences were the generally labeled parts of the City that people were not familiar with yet had broad ideas about what sort of space these unfamiliar places were. While some made notes of “no-go-zone” or “do not feel safe past this point”, the boundaries of the City ended or faded off where people begin to get unfamiliar, whether based on just not knowing what was there or they felt it was so unimportant that it was not worth the mention or detailed label. Lynch mentions that the importance of a city’s image if one that provides some mental or emotional security (Lynch, 1960). Since these places on the fringes of Downtown offered neither, they did not get noted.
Theories developed by Harvey pressure us to look at the political-economic side to every city. Harvey believes that the city is a reflection of its people, their values, and their relationships. People try to create an image of the city that represents them. In Canton, it could be questioned whether the “new” identity of Canton is really what the residents want or feel. Many stated that the Hall of Fame was quickly becoming the sole identity of Canton, ripping them from their previous images of hard workers or blue-collar Americans. They fear that this new identity is being created as a tourist attraction, undermining their true image of what they want to be known as. This is Harvey’s concern, that the collective right is being changed and dictated in a way that benefits private organizations for the sole purpose of profit (Harvey, 2003; Goodman and Harvey, 2009). The data shows that there is a restructuring of Downtown Canton, for the purposes of profit. Harvey thinks that this can and will lead to displacement, under the assumptions of supporting financial power.

Within the literature review, there were theories pertaining to community involvement. Many times, the residents are cut out from the discussion (Camacho, 2005). However, this research found that it is not that the City is refusing to seek community input, but that the residents either are not interested or feel it would be pointless to attend meetings and provide insight. The residents interviewed had excellent ideas for events and businesses, something that those involved at a higher level might be interested in hearing. There needs to be a way for residents to contribute these ideas so those doing the planning are able to get this “insider” input. Just through the interviewing process, this research was able to determine, as discussed, the aspects that residents want and need in their city.
Critical Questions

*Which aspect of attachment is most forceful?*

It is important to incorporate these aspects of place attachment theory in any revitalization project. Although Canton, like every city, is unique, these types of bonds must be felt across all sorts of environments. People want to bond with people. People want to connect with spaces. And people want to support something that supports them. For Canton, all aspects of place attachment theory were present and strong. Based on the word-cloud discussed previously, "people" was the most used word. This tells us that people are at the root of attachment for Canton's residents. "Historic" was the word most used to describe the character of Downtown. During the interviews, it appears that "historic", or a perceived sense of history, is derived mainly from the built environment. Most of the time, the interviewees used "historic" to describe the buildings of Canton. The architecture has not only been the vital backdrop to the residents but has become strongly tied to the identity of Canton.

These two words, "people" and "historic", shed light on what is most important to Canton's residents. It is the combination of these two aspects that drive most of the feelings of attachment. These two aspects support and feed into one another. The historic buildings provide familiar and comfortable spaces that are appealing and important. These spaces are harnessed for public events, gatherings, and other interactions that reinforce this bonding. There is a deep connection between these two things, even though the residents and business owners discussed them separately from one another. The built environment of the historic structures encourages the social interactions and help bond people to others and to their environment. In return, the experiences people have helped to reinforce the positive views of their environment.
*How does revitalization utilize person-place attachment and in what ways can it be more useful?*

In the case of Canton, the data shows that consideration has been taken on behalf of the person-place bonds in regard to the reported “iconic” buildings. Revitalization efforts in the downtown are focused on preserving and reusing some of the most noted and appreciated buildings, such as the Palace Theatre, the Courthouse, and the Onesto Hotel. These buildings are getting the attention that the residents want to see. However, there is still concern that the businesses being brought in may not be what the residents want.

The social interactions within the City were almost all reported of positively. This interaction, symbolic interaction, provide a meaning of the space for people who inhabit it. For example, First Fridays were commonly discussed as being positive interactions. However, many stated that First Fridays are just a “bar crawl” or “drunk fest”. So what meaning is derived from those types of interactions? By expanding the scope of public events and shifting the focus away from solely alcohol, Canton can start to facilitate the making of new meanings. The perception of crime also contributes to meanings and identity. This is more difficult to reverse because these meanings have been around longer than any event. By expanding the activities held Downtown, a wider array of people can visit and experience new interactions, hopefully altering their previously held beliefs of danger.

For this sort of rebound, the theories of Harvey can be used to identify ways to stimulate productive revitalization. The “market niches” he discusses have the ability to deter the current population through the increased focus on directing markets toward higher economic status individuals (Harvey, 2003). This is apparent in the Onesto Lofts. Residents see that this development is a way to bring in money. However, many reported that they knew people who rented an apartment in this preserved building and left after the first month, “there’s nothing keeping them in Downtown”. Would it perhaps be more beneficial to make these lofts an affordable residence for those already committed to Canton? The worry for Canton, from the
standpoint of this research, is not that the City is at risk for gentrification, which Harvey was concerned with, but instead if it will sink into irrelevance and slowly die out. Business owners are already starting to be concerned with this and have established back-up plans if what they predict comes true.

To see if the needs and wants of the community are being recognized, it helps to compare this to the current plan for revitalization. A big aspect of breathing life back into a downtown is stimulating the economy and figuring out an efficient way to bring and keep money in. The Master Plan for Canton states that “most of the community’s disposable income is going to the suburbs”. The residents admit this fact. It is not that they do not want to go downtown to shop or for entertainment, but instead, they feel there is nothing pulling them there. The Strip and Belden Village have a plethora of chain restaurants and big box stores but the residents do not always want that experience. Targeting businesses to set up shop Downtown that appeals and motivates residents to journey down there could reverse this statistic over time.

By jumpstarting the economy through the integration of more diverse and locally owned businesses, paired with the expansion of types of public events and activities, the Downtown will now have reasons to be relevant. The Master Plan recognizes that there needs to be a system of hierarchal spaces leading to and from Market Square (pictured to the right). These spaces will help identify and draw together the corridor. The City, currently, is working on the infrastructure of Downtown, and there seems to be a lack of attention to the spaces within it. As many interviewees stated, there’s just the empty lot where they sometimes have something going on. There are some destination spots leading up to it, but the mapping exercises show that there is some confusion on the progression and organization of the layout. Only the few blocks south of

Figure 29. Market Square
the Palace are most coherent in the maps, showing that the target area for revitalization is perhaps too far reaching.

A Platform for Future Research

This research has provided a solid case study with a method that can be used and applied to other locations. The questions used for the interviewing process and the mapping exercise directions can be utilized in assessing place attachment of other cities, ones that are similar and dissimilar to Canton. Although the theories and analysis for this research focus on a mid-sized post-industrial rustbelt location, the person-place bonds described and discovered here are sure to be found in other places.

It would be most interesting to see the levels of attachment based on the three components in other cities. From this, we might be able to identify what types of locations people are bonded to, instead of specifics within Canton. Are people bonded to places mainly on social interactions, or does this come about in Canton because of Canton's social community and the planned events that draw in crowds? Are the historic buildings valued because they are seen as architecturally valuable to both those inside and outside Canton, or because they hold personal sentiment and personal history? To an outsider, are Canton's most iconic structures really that impressive? Do people in less historic cities bond to their buildings in the same way? Are the residents in some cities more inclined to care solely about the economic well-being of a community? Is it the size of the city that determines these factors? The age? The culture? The economic standing? For Canton, it is a mixture of three that drive revitalization. Driven by social interaction, supported by the familiar and prideful built environment, in the hopes of influencing the political-economic factors of success.
Remarks

During the interviewing process, it was clear that a lot of the residents took to the defensive when talking about their city. They talked very positively about it, as though trying to sell it or convince me it is a good place to live. This was strange since all the participants were aware that I, the researcher, am a resident of Canton, too. They wanted to dispel all negative rumors and discuss why Canton is underappreciated, undervalued, and undermined and convincingly express why Canton is such a great place to live, work, and have fun. The image of Canton has been so badly damaged, that the residents feel the need to booster their city, even to a fellow resident.

The goal of this research was to identify the underlying motivators for place attachment in Canton, Ohio. For this analysis, the place attachment model was used to break the data down into three components- person, place, and process. The original diagram had all three aspects of attachment equally sized, representing that their importance and influence is of equal value. However, based on this research, for Canton, the diagram is more hierarchal. The figure on the following page is the revised version of the place attachment diagram, based on the data collected and the analysis of that data. It is important to keep in mind that this is unique to Canton and that other possible research on different cities may yield a different outcome.

Based on this research, the socio-cultural aspect of place attachment was most influential in establishing person-place bonds. In Canton, these are facilitated by public events, specifically First Fridays and festivals. This is closely followed by the built environment, namely the historic and authentic locations, such as the Palace Theatre and Buzzbin. Together, these two aspects provide a sense of comfort and community. The aspect least associated with the bonding between person and place in Canton is the political-economic factor. Currently, in Canton, the major economic influence is the Pro Football Hall of Fame, which is seemingly disconnected from the cultural and built environments. However, the utilization of historic
structures, such as the Onesto Lofts, helps to reinforce the authentic and comfortable environment, while attempting to stimulate the economy. When these economic factors are paired with the cultural desires of the City, there are local shops and restaurants that are recognized for both their economic benefit and their social bonding capabilities. At the center of all three of these aspects is identity. Canton is currently trying to figure out who they are, and it is the combination of these realms that will yield the answers.

The residents and business owners have prioritized what they find vital to Canton’s success, but all of these must be utilized to some degree, for they cannot revitalize the City individually. These elements shape and develop the story of Canton, for both the individuals’ story and the story of the City. The places, businesses, and people which individuals have attachments with are shaped by the history of hard work and pride while continuing to be solidified by community ties and local appreciation.

Figure 30. Revised Place Attachment Diagram, Specific to Canton
Bibliography


Yesterday ... Today ... Tomorrow?: Historic Preservation for Canton, Ohio. (1976). Canton, OH: The Canton City Planning Department.


APPENDIX A

Interview Guides

For Residents

Are you a current resident of Canton, Ohio?
   a. How long have you lived in Canton?
   b. Were you born in the area?
   c. Where did you grow up?
   d. Did you spend a lot of time exploring your city as a child?

How familiar are you with the history of Canton?
   a. Does being a resident of this city provide you with a sense of pride? A sense of belonging?

Do you spend a lot of time in Downtown Canton (attending special events like First Fridays or visit Museums for special exhibits, festivals)?
   a. How often do you find yourself downtown?

How would you describe your social experiences in Historic Downtown?
   a. What are the types of interactions you have with others?
   b. Do you feel a sense of connectedness with others downtown?
   c. Can you elaborate on your perception of the sense of community?

Can you tell me if you have visited any of the shops or restaurant downtown?
   a. Which places do you frequent? How often?
   b. What is it about these places that makes you visit frequently?
   c. Do you know anyone who owns a business in the downtown corridor?

Can you tell me your favorite locations in Downtown Canton?
   a. Why are these places memorable?
   b. Do you feel a connection with these sites? (positive or negative?)
Are there any buildings in Canton that you find iconic? Anything that really represents the city or its people?
   a. How familiar are you with this building?
   b. Have you visited it often?
   c. What types of memories do you have within that place?

Can you give me three words to describe the character of downtown?
   a. What impression does the area have on you?
   b. Are there any emotions that come up when you visit these sites?

Do you shop at Belden Village, The Strip, or other large, commercial shopping center?
   a. If so, what draws you to those locations? If not, where do you do the majority of your shopping?
   b. What is the aura of the larger shopping centers?

Can you tell me how involved you are in the local government and/or community meetings?
   a. Have you ever attended a public meeting? What was your experience?
   b. How did you hear about this meeting?
   c. What made you want to attend? (specific event or proposal being discussed?)
   d. Did you participate in the discussion?
   e. Can you tell me if you felt your concerns were heard? Why or why not?

Are you familiar with the Revitalization Plan for Canton?
   a. If yes, how do you feel about the projected plans?
   b. How did you learn about the projects? (from road improvement to Market Square development?)
   c. If not, are you concerned with major changes within the downtown corridor?

How important is maintaining the historic structures downtown to you?
   a. Would you prefer to see new development and new businesses?
   b. Can you weigh this against keeping older buildings and maintained small, locally owned companies?
   c. Can you tell me how you would feel if we lost our small businesses?
For Business Owners

Are you a current resident of Canton, Ohio?
   a. How long have you worked in Canton?
   b. Were you born in the area?
   c. Where did you grow up?
   d. Did you spend a lot of time exploring your city as a child?

When did you start your business Downtown?
   a. What made you choose this location?
   b. Did you operate your business in another location previously? Can you compare Canton to this?

Can you tell me if you have visited any of the shops, restaurants, or other locations downtown?
   a. Why are these places memorable?
   b. Do you feel a connection with these sites? (positive or negative?)

Are there any buildings in Canton that you find iconic? Anything that really represents the city or its people?
   a. How familiar are you with this building?
   b. Have you visited it often?
   c. What types of memories do you have within that place?

Can you give me three words to describe the character of downtown?

Are you familiar with the Revitalization Plan for Canton?
   a. If yes, how do you feel about the projected plans?
   b. How did you learn about the projects?
   c. If not, are you concerned with major changes within the downtown corridor?
   d. Have you witnessed any changes since your business has been here?

What are some of the impacts of the revitalization that you have witnessed?
   c. Do you see an increase in business during public events, such as First Fridays or Festivals?
   d. Are these reactions positive or negative?

What do you see for the future of Downtown?
   a. How do you think the growth of the Hall of Fame will influence Downtown Canton?
   b. Are the current events and activities enough to keep the Downtown corridor thriving?
Mapping

“I’d like you to make a quick map of downtown Canton. Make it just as if you were making a rapid description of the city for a stranger, covering all the main features that you find noteworthy. I don’t expect an accurate drawing- just a rough sketch. Feel free to make a key for identification or label as much as possible.”
APPENDIX B

Interviewees

1. Resident of Canton for 25 years, moved to Canton at age 30.
2. Resident of Canton for 24 years, entire life.
3. Resident of Canton for 45 years, moved to Canton at age 18.
4. Resident of Canton, moved away for work, then moved back to Canton. Has lived in Canton for 19 years.
5. Resident who grew up in Canton, moved away for college, then moved back.
6. Employee with St. Peter’s Catholic Church and Elementary School.
7. Employee with the Arts in Stark organization, has worked in Canton for 22 years.
8. Resident that has lived in Canton entire life.
9. Resident that has lived in Canton entire life.
10. Business owner Downtown and past resident of Canton.
11. Business owner Downtown and current resident of Canton.
12. Employee with the Palace Theatre, has worked in this role for 12 years.

*Out of the 14 individuals interviewed, 13 of them agreed to participate in the mapping exercise.*