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Welcome to Tacoma, Mr. Florida. Have a Beer.

The purpose of this study is to examine a hypothesis about urban economic growth proposed by Richard Florida that is centered on attracting a demographic he labels the “Creative Class” and the Street Level Culture this class inhabits. In regards to Street Level Culture, micro-breweries will be a focal point. However, the literature behind this study reaches beyond this demographic and discusses the effects urban nightlife has on the local community and economy. The subjects of this literature include nightlife culture, safety, and consumption.

Richard Florida’s piece, The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It’s Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life, discusses and defines the Creative Class. This class includes young, small families with excess income (2002). This class is often a staple of urban nightlife. This study of microbrews offers insight into whether or not the Creative Class is part of micro-brew culture and whether or not strong micro-brew culture is a viable characteristic of Street Level Culture.

There is also considerable literature on micro-brew culture’s place in the economy and community. Stauffer’s paper, “Microbrewing: a lesson in agile manufacturing,” discusses the high production capacity micro-brew has as a light manufacturing industry, which would make it a good candidate for urban manufacturing (1997). In “The importance of focus to market entrants: A study of microbrewery performance,” Wesson shows how micro-brewers have a better chance of success if they target a narrow market (2001). Finally, Schnell and Reese

attribute a surge in micro-brew start ups to something they call 'neo-localism:' an attempt to reclaim community through entrepreneurship in, "Microbreweries as Tools of Local Identity" (2009).

Nightlife literature is prevalent in urban studies. Hae exposes the dichotomy where a robust nightlife culture can simultaneously build community and spur gentrification (2011). Williams explores how urban spaces are traversed and contest change at night creating 'night spaces' (2008). Jayne et. al. turns a critical lens on how alcohol affects social and economic aspects of communities (2008). Micro-brew culture cannot escape this lens.

Planning Process and Methods

The planning process for this project was necessarily and deliberately flexible. Much of the planning process was structured through peer reviews, seminars, and diagrams. Over the first ten weeks of the planning process ideas surrounding methodology, the thesis, and the analysis involved in the project were routinely shared with a body of peers fluctuating around twenty-five people and feedback was produced.

At first, these workshops revolved around ironing out a statement of goals. Through this process, it was decided that this research would be focused around the availability of micro-brews throughout Tacoma in order to study micro-brew culture in an urban setting. The audience for the study was focused on economic developers and hobbyists because a popular urban growth hypothesis by Richard Florida is being tested through the lens of a relatively small craft culture. The most difficult decisions to make in the goal stating process concerned scope. The New Tacoma, Central, and North End neighborhoods of Tacoma were selected in order to sample different demographics found throughout the city. It was necessary to limit the scope to three

neighborhoods because of how much time it would take to collect data. These neighborhoods sample a significant amount of Tacoma serving varying demographics within a manageable proximity of each other.

The next workshop gave peers a second chance to hear how the study had evolved and voice any concerns about methods and implementation. Feedback on these subjects was crucial in working through worries about total workload and the effectiveness of the analysis. A grid system used to systematically plan data collection was an invaluable tool that came from these talks. The scale of data and where to find it was also discussed. Most of the demographic data would be easily found through the Census bureau, which made the micro-brew data collection slightly less daunting. Analysis and method details were illustrated in a graphic workflow. This workflow would ultimately serve as a template to help drive and organize the analysis after data was collected.

Implementation

After the workflow was drawn, methods were set and remained unchanged until data collection and implementation started. The workflow provided a visual priority for data collection. Foremost was the collection of micro-brew data. Names of bars and their respective address were found through a variety of sources including the Yellow Pages and websites like Yelp, and by physically driving throughout the selected neighborhoods. A data table was built with nine fields: A point ID, the name of the bar, the street address, city, state, ZIP code, number of micro-brews on tap, total number of beers on tap, and the percentage of tap used for micro-brews. The address, city, state, and ZIP codes were entered into an address locator in ArcGIS to geocode them as points. This turned the data table into a useable points shapefile. Upon creating

the points, there were several instances of redundancy that needed to be corrected. Since bars can have a frequent turnover in ownership, management, and location, some bars were recorded more than once under different names and some bars were no longer open. The data table and shapefile were continuously updated as the redundancies were discovered and data was collected.

Demographic data was compiled throughout the micro-brew data collection process. Median household income, household age, and household size data were collected from the Census Bureau. Income data was available at the block group scale while household age and size could be found at the block scale. Land use parcel data was collected from WAGDA. In order to conduct the analysis needed, all of this data needed to be interpolated and reclassified. All of the data was interpolated with a mask within the three neighborhoods.

The results were reclassified with 5 classes in natural breaks and symbolized with a red to green color ramp. The household age data was broken up into four rasters. The data was interpolated three different times. The first raster shows the percentage of each household between the ages of 15-24 years. The second raster shows the percentage of each household between the ages of 25-34 years, and the third raster shows ages 35-44. Each raster was reclassified into 5 classes with natural breaks symbolized with a red to green ramp. Having this data separated into three rasters allows them to be weighted differently in the raster calculator depending on the age ranges that best define the Creative Class.

A similar method was used with household size data. Four separate rasters were created by interpolating the household size data four different times showing what percentage of the households on each household block contains one person, two people, three people, and four

people. Each raster was reclassified with 5 classes and natural breaks and symbolized with a red to green color ramp. Each raster is weighted differently favoring single households with rasters losing weight as people were added to the households.

The reclassification process for the land use data was wholly different. A field was added to the land use attribute table called "Class." Each parcel was given a rank between 1 and 5 depending on how much its land use favors a bar, 1 being unfavorable and 5 being favorable. For example, a land use designation of "Industrial" would earn that parcel a 1 since that land use designation does not allow for the opening of a bar. The data was interpolated based on this Class field and symbolized using a red to green color ramp.

Results

While the results were not conclusive, they were informative and encouraging. This demographic data suggests that the Creative Class not only exists in these neighborhoods, but some of the areas outside the Creative Class are close to being a candidate for it. Given that there are corporations in Tacoma such as Davita, BCRA, and the University of Washington – Tacoma that potentially offer professions that lie within Florida's criteria, the city possesses a strong asset in this demographic.

Furthermore, this study showed that micro-brewery culture is thriving in Tacoma. A severe majority of the bars explored used at least half of their tap for micro-brews. In fact, the average ratio of tap handles displaying a micro-brew was 79.5%.

The Creative Class has found their way into Tacoma, and they are enjoying the Street Level Culture supported by a vibrant micro-brewery culture. Tacoma has an opportunity to capitalize on these strong assets by marketing them to FIRE industries and facilitating the growth

of these micro-brews to increase the health of a light industry that contributes to street commerce and community building.

Discussion

A discussion of these results must answer two questions: 1) what opportunities does the validation of a micro-brewery centric street level culture offer Tacoma, and 2) what does the emergence of the Creative Class mean for the economic development strategy in Tacoma?

Micro-breweries currently have no place in the marketing strategy of Tacoma; however, it is clear that micro-breweries are a significant part of Tacoma's local economy. Not only are there businesses in Tacoma like the Harmon that are brewing beer in multiple locations throughout downtown Tacoma, Tacoma bars are helping support micro-brewers from all over the Pacific Northwest and beyond. Cities like Denver and Milwaukee have noticed activity in this industry and embraced it with good results. Currently, Tacoma has put substantial amounts of money into attractions like the Lemay Car Museum in order to bring in tourism and entertain residents, but the same effect could be had in the process of strengthening the local economy, keeping money in the community, and creating jobs through a growing micro-brewery industry.

Milwaukee is seen as a global beer capital and attracts significant tourism as a result. Tacoma as a Pacific Northwest beer destination would achieve many of the goals the city yearns to achieve. Tacoma has a good amount of industrially or commercially zoned but underutilized property that is primed for beer production with a little help from the city. Many light manufacturers are discouraged from populating these light industry parcels because the buildings occupying the land are derelict or expensive to repurpose. There are buildings in Tacoma, like the old Pacific Brewing and Malting Co. building, which are waiting for subsidies from the city

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to retrofit as micro-breweries. If Tacoma let it be known that they support the micro-brewing industry and would offer financial help in the incubation of micro-breweries in certain derelict parcels, it could further establish the city as a Pacific Northwest beer destination that rivals Seattle and Portland while filling empty parcels and revitalizing undesirable derelict buildings.

Micro-breweries are also productive examples of community businesses that keep money circulating within the community. These breweries would get much of their business from bars in Tacoma and surrounding communities. The money spent in these bars, and the brewers bar, would be that of community members. Furthermore, the owners and purveyors need to be close to the brewery, so the nature of their jobs would encourage them to live in Tacoma. This is an instance where money is being spent, earned, and spent again within the community, which is an integral part of a healthy local economy. Beyond that, successful brewers will be able to distribute their beer to grocery stores inside and outside the community and export their goods across the nation.

The jobs created by the expansion of this industry would be invaluable to Tacoma. Firstly, micro-breweries are place-based businesses for the simple reason that they are very difficult and expensive to move. While large finance firms may singularly bring more money to the city, they are not tied to the community. In addition, several upstart micro-breweries bring money and money multipliers that could rival a single firm like Russell Investments while also avoiding negative consequences such as the city having to spend money to retain jobs, and those who fill the jobs have little incentive to live in the city. After all, one cannot telecommute to a micro-brewery. Also, Tacoma is home to two large universities full of students who need jobs. After an up swell in micro-brewery startups, bussing, serving, and bartending jobs will be abound. These types of jobs are perfect for college students who do have the capability or desire

drive long distances to work, need flexible hours, and pay relatively high wages. Jobs that offer the opportunity for one to earn tips result in deeper pockets than that of a minimum wage retail or fast food job. Continuing with the local multiplier theme, these students are likely to spend the money they earn from their new well paying jobs in the city.

This study went a long way toward suggesting that the Creative Class exists in North End. Tacoma often invites Richard Florida to the city in order to evaluate the ways in which the city is attracting the Creative Class and provide ways in which the city could be doing a better job. It is hard to argue that there is no place for the attraction of the Creative Class in Tacoma's economic development plan, but does the city know what to do with a Creative Class anchor community once it arrives? This study provides evidence that North End is such a community.

It is time for Tacoma to start treating North End like an asset. The first course of action should be assessing what industries the residents of North End work in. It is tempting for economic development departments to focus on attracting mobile corporations and hope the employees of the corporations populate the city, but it may be more effective to see what talents currently reside in the city and attract corporations of those industries that can serve as alternative employment for current residents. A resident of Tacoma may be easily lured into a competitive position that does not require a commute.

If Tacoma is successful in attracting these corporations, it is unlikely that the corporations will be fully employed by residents in city. That is why it is important to facilitate the expansion of the Creative Class outside of the North End. The city needs to offer tax incentives for Central Tacoma residents to improve the value of their homes. Data collected in this study suggests that there are already areas in the Central neighborhood experiencing this process organically;

however, many homeowners need assistance and incentives for home improvement. Subsidizing residents can be more economically productive than subsidizing corporations because it builds financial, human, and social capital. If members of the Creative Class are going to expand outside of the North End, homes of comparable quality need to be realized in other neighborhoods. Tacoma has a lot of room for infill and increased density, so it can experience this growth without gentrification or displacement.

Limitations

While this study provides important and valuable information, there is much more to be learned, and the methods can be improved upon. Firstly, there are shortfalls in the data sources. Income data is only available at the block group scale, while household age and size can be collected at the block scale; therefore, it is difficult to accurately assess where small, young households coincide with large incomes. Furthermore, employment information discussed earlier is not available to the public. Given more time, this sort of data could be collected using participatory GIS techniques. However, while it could be done, it would be difficult to effectively integrate this kind of qualitative data into the current GIS because of software restrictions.

Time restrictions also kept bar data from being as dynamic as possible. If this study were to span over months or years, the fluctuations of taps in bars could be tracked. With this data, one could make more accurate assessments of the stability and trends in the micro-brewery culture in Tacoma. In the same vein, trends in bar closures and start-ups could be analyzed. Collecting data on where brewers in Tacoma are exporting their beer and in what quantities would allow for a better assessment of the capabilities of potential start-ups. Finally, bar data

would benefit from the integration of more qualitative data so that street level subcultures could be identified. What aspects of experiences in bars create nuances that effect success? What are different subcultures, and how much demand exists for them? Questions like these add important dimensions in growing a micro-brewing culture and optimizing the existing Street Level Culture.

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