

BO DIDDLEY COMMUNITY PLAZA: AN EVALUATION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR
REDESIGN

By

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To trees and my cat, both of which I cringe at the thought of dying

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APA	American Planning Association
CBD	Central Business District
CRA	Community Redevelopment Agency
FPSP	Florida Pedestrian Safety Plan
PPS	Project for Public Spaces
RTS	Regional Transit System

Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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The primary purpose of this study was to evaluate the Bo Diddley Community Plaza in Downtown Gainesville, Florida, and offer suggestions for redesign. A case-study approach was used in establishing the key elements of urban plaza design in which a cross-sectional analysis using behavioral mapping, as outlined by Ittelson, was used to evaluate the plaza. It was observed that pedestrian traffic throughout the Bo Diddley Community Plaza left much to be desired. This could be attributed to the clear lack of enclosure about the plaza, a deficiency in seating areas, and the established territoriality of the residing homeless population.

Suggestions were made to improve the sight lines and perceived safety of the plaza, add dynamic seating elements, and create an overall inspired sense of place that will, in turn, draw the much needed pedestrian traffic to the community plaza and surrounding Downtown Gainesville area.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Urban Plazas

Urban plazas can be found in most cities worldwide and offer unique amenities for pedestrian traffic. Plazas are designed open public spaces that offer refuge to pedestrians in an urban environment. Often located throughout the central business district of its respective city, urban plazas provide a traffic-free zone that can be used for leisure activities, events and markets, social gatherings, and cultural experiences.

According to the Project for Public Spaces (2005) a public place is accessible by all, open to all, concerning people as a whole, reflects the city culture and the city image and identity, human contact and interaction points form groups, creates community and consults the social body, a point of exchanging ideas. They convey meanings and opens the minds to new insights, and promote people to understand their places.

Pedestrian movement is at the core of basic transportation and is invaluable when it comes to moving about the city. Whether it is the morning commute, afternoon lunch breaks, or evening entertainment pedestrian traffic within a city needs a plaza and other pedestrian amenities. Urban plazas placed within city centers not only breakup pedestrian congestion on sidewalks but also invite pedestrians into the space with the lure of various amenities, such as benches and water features (Whyte, 1980). Urban plazas provide a form and function that is distinct to walkable environments while beautifying the surrounding cityscape. These natural environments are often considered restorative environments (Kaplan, 1993).

This project evaluates an urban plaza in Downtown Gainesville, Florida. Using pedestrian observation and behavioral mapping, the quality and effectiveness of the Bo

Diddley Community Plaza is evaluated. In addition to this evaluation, factors such as American cultural values, Gainesville's target audience, design qualities of urban plazas, the surrounding features and land-use of Downtown Gainesville, and traffic circulation around Bo Diddley Community Plaza are considered. The objective, therefore, is to use this research to develop suggestions for improvements to the downtown plaza and propose elements for a redesign.

Significance

The area of research within urban design and landscape architecture that focuses on urban plazas has been a topic of concern for years. Since the age of urban renewal and the draw to bring life back into the central business districts (CBDs) of cities, urban plazas have been spotlighted as an area that could provide much promise. Having successful urban plazas, as outlined by many researchers such as Whyte (1980), Rubenstein (1992), Kaplan (1993), and their numerous colleagues, reduces unused open spaces and keeps these areas from becoming blighted.

In the case of Downtown Gainesville, the Bo Diddley Community Plaza is an area with great potential for this city's CBD. Situated near the center of Downtown Gainesville, this urban plaza is adjacent to restaurants, hotels, theaters, and several government offices with Gainesville's City Hall directly north of the plaza. The downtown area is located in a historic district, as identified by the City of Gainesville's Planning Department, and with its historical charm and nearby bed and breakfast district the area has become a tourist destination in and of itself (City of Gainesville, 2012).

An abundant nightlife is present in the downtown area that could benefit from a safe and effective urban plaza. The student population provided by the University of Florida makes up a large proportion of the residents within Gainesville at about 40% of

the population and subsequently frequents the downtown area on a nightly basis. The student population also supplies the area with a constant wave of incoming and outgoing inhabitants that look to the downtown area for such amenities. A college town such as itself, Gainesville needs to be at the forefront in providing lucrative amenities.

Having a successful urban plaza adds to the success of a CBD as a whole. Whyte's (1980) research in major cities throughout the US showed that thriving business districts have flourishing urban plazas. Simply the knowledge that the amenities are present, regardless of whether an individual has experienced these first hand, has a beneficial effect on a city's reputation (Kaplan, 1980, Ulrich & Addoms, 1981). Knowing what a city has to offer draws people in to experience the area for themselves. For Gainesville's small and upcoming downtown area, the importance of an urban plaza as a focus for activity is reinforced.

Questions and Objectives

This study focuses on the adequacy of design elements presented in an urban plaza. By following the guidelines as researched through the literature review, a set of questions and objectives are outlined for establishing the competence of an urban plaza. This thesis addresses the following research question of: *Does Bo Diddley Community Plaza provide the needed urban plaza amenities to reinforce its role as a gathering place in Downtown Gainesville, Florida?*

This fundamental inquiry will be investigated by evaluating the subcategories of an urban plaza using the following questions:

- Is the Bo Diddley Community Plaza able to sustain desirable pedestrian traffic?
- Does the Bo Diddley Community Plaza offer attractive seating environments?

- Does the Bo Diddley Community Plaza provide the opportunity for food vending services and associated amenities?
- Is the Bo Diddley Community Plaza an adequate venue for community events to be held on its grounds?

These questions will be examined using the following research methodologies:

- A review of the literature identifying the successful amenities of an urban plaza and establishing the key elements used to evaluate an urban plaza.
- Observing the plaza in a methodological way to determine the presence or absence of key elements.
- Implementation of behavioral mapping to understand how the plaza is currently being used and how the plaza should be redesigned to ensure the optimum amount of desirable usage.

Scope and Limitations

In any evaluation the scope pertains to its specific environment. For this particular study, the scope is that of Downtown Gainesville and the demographics that it represents. The Bo Diddley Community Plaza will be evaluated as to what the City of Gainesville needs it to be. In identifying the key elements to be studied, thought was put into what would be necessary for this particular study. The fundamentals of pedestrian traffic, seating environments, food vending, and plazas as event venues applies to a variety of urban plazas including the Bo Diddley Community Plaza.

One of the limitations of this study is the difficulty created by the established homeless populations that reside in the plaza and the territoriality that comes with such a population. Special care had to be taken to ensure that the researcher was never in danger when it came to observing the plaza. Some adaptations were made in the methodology after being presented with obstacles arising from this unique population.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Characteristics of Traffic-Free Zones

Pedestrian movement can be considered the most basic form of transportation and is among the most commonly used by patrons in downtown areas. Having successful plazas located in downtown areas give pedestrians countless amenities as well as a destination for tourists, lunch breaks, and cultural affairs (Rubenstein, 1992). Here, previous literature is used to outline areas of analysis. These include the desirable characteristics of traffic-free zones, establishing a sense of place and delimitation of downtown plazas, as well as the form and function of these plazas, and case studies of pedestrian areas. Together this literature is used in determining key elements that are present in successful urban plazas.

The PPS (2005) defines public spaces and states that there are 4 criteria for a successful public place:

- Access & Linkages (connections to its surroundings both visual and physical)
- Comfort & Image (safety, cleanliness, availability of places to sit)
- Uses & Activities
- Sociability

These qualities help public places appeal to a magnitude of people, showcase the culture of a particular region, provide safe and enjoyable meeting places, and significantly increase the quality of pedestrian environments. Public places are at the core of downtowns and successful spaces only add to the quality of cities.

Brambilla and Longo (1977) define traffic-free zones in their book, "For Pedestrians Only: Planning, Design, and Management of Traffic-Free Zones", as public

urban areas where private motor vehicle transportation is limited and priority has been given to pedestrian movements and public transportation. This term can be applied to a wide range of urban spaces such as parks, plazas, and promenades.

Rubenstein (1992) further simplifies these pedestrian urban spaces and puts them into two groups, Festival Marketplaces and Mixed-Use Projects. In his book, "Pedestrian Malls, Streetscapes, and Urban Spaces", Rubenstein (1992) identifies Festival Marketplaces as retail areas anchored by food and entertainment facilities that are oriented toward office workers at lunch time, tourists, and the evening and weekend entertainment users. A Mixed-Use project combines retail uses into the overall development; they are typically anchored by office, hotel, residential, and/or convention facilities (Rubenstein, 1992).

Early traffic-free zones were places that had facilities related to commerce, government, and space for assembly. These open spaces created an image for the city in which they were located and became a common destination for various activities that promoted the physical and social environment. These open city centers first became popular in European cities and were areas for showcasing culture (Rubenstein, 1992). European traffic-free urban spaces continue to play a considerable role in the daily lives of the vast numbers of pedestrians. Rubenstein (1992) states that open urban spaces in the United States do not have the same cultural significance as those in Europe. Despite this, recently there has been an uprising of specialized mixed-use areas such as Festival Marketplaces, providing an atmosphere closer to that of European squares. Separating traffic-free-zones into Festival Marketplaces and Mixed-Use projects assists

with the specific description of given areas. While this is useful, for the purpose of this research, the urban plaza will be the central focus, as it can fit into either category.

Urban plazas. Urban plazas can be defined as an open area in an urban environment (Brambilla & Longo, 1977, Whyte, 1980). These plazas are commonly located within the central business district of their respective cities and offer countless amenities to the pedestrians of the area. In the 1970's a researcher by the name of Whyte (1980) started the Street Life Project in hopes of understanding the dynamic relationship between people and the streets of their city. His research lasted far longer than he expected and encompassed more than he thought possible but in turn he has provided an invaluable resource in understanding relationships between people and their urban environments.

Whyte's book, "The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces" (1980), outlines what characteristics seem to promote the most use of a plaza. First and foremost is an ample amount of seating. Following this basic requirement is the presence of sun and shade (Whyte, 1980). Having a variety of seating that was both open to the elements and shaded by vegetation seemed to influence the presence of people in a plaza far more than any other factor.

Additional factors that also prove to enhance the quality of plazas and the frequency of visitation are the presence of food and a sense of enclosure. In contrast to common conception, Whyte (1980) discovered that aesthetics did not necessarily play any role in a plaza's popularity. While an eye-pleasing plaza is commonly thought to attract more people, this is not always the case. Observations conclude that what is most important is what is seen at eye level; the number of people that are present, what

seating is available, the perceived safety of the area, and the level of comfort that can be experienced (Whyte, 1980).

When it comes to seating the most popular plazas' seating area nearly equals the perimeter of the space itself, meaning that the amount of seating must be adequate for the size of the space. It does not matter where seating is located but that people tend to sit where there is a place to sit (Whyte, 1980). Whyte (1980) suggests that when designing an open space seating should be placed where it would be socially comfortable and to maximize inherent features by making them suitable for sitting. Trees ought to be related to sitting spaces and combining trees with places to sit should be encouraged. By integrating trees into sitting spaces, the impact of the sun is optimized by allowing an individual to have a choice of sitting in the sun, the shade, or in-between. Plazas with these features prove to be regularly and consistently used (Whyte, 1980).

A plaza's most effective market radius is about three blocks and its relationship to the street is essential in its marketing (Whyte, 1980). Whyte (1980) explains that streets are a critical design factor in plazas and that a good plaza will be located on a street corner that is situated in a marketable area. Here the basic theory of supply and demand is at work. If a pleasing open space is supplied then people will be drawn to use it. In turn, if people see happy pedestrians in a space they too will be drawn into the space and thus the demand for the space is established. A good space builds a good constituency and stimulates people into habit (Whyte, 1980). People want to be where there are other people and especially where people seem to be enjoying themselves.

A quotation from William K. Reilly (1980), the President of the Conservation Foundation at the time of the publication of Whyte's book, states it best; "if we learn to take advantage of our small urban spaces, if we design new ones well, and fix up the old ones, we will keep the streets alive" (p.7). With the elements highlighted here, designers can do just that.

Establishing a Sense of Place

In his book, "Pedestrian Malls, Streetscapes, and Urban Spaces", Rubenstein (1992) states that well designed urban plazas create a sense of place or identity for a particular area. This can be coupled together with Whyte's (1980) research which expresses the idea that people enjoy having a sense of enclosure, to know that they are "somewhere". Establishing an urban plaza as a "place" can be confusing. It is possible to consider this from a concrete point of view, and focus on the absolute delimitation of the area. However it is also possible to center judgment on feeling and what you might perceive as a meaningful border.

Timothy Oakes from the Department of Geography at the University of Colorado wrote an article on "place". In his article, "Place and the Paradox of Modernity" (1997), he states that defining place is most easily done by first establishing what place is not. Oakes (1997), in relation with Pred (1986), Agnew (1989), and Anderson & Gale (1992), proclaims that place is not "community" and not "locality", nor simply a more local version of "region" or "nation". These terms assume a distinct territorial quality and are defined by a specific entity. Delimitation does not ensure an area to be classified as a place, nor do unifying characteristics. There is more to what makes something a place than a clear defined area.

Place can be conceived as having two key elements: meaningful identity and immediate agency (Oakes, 1997, Lefebvre, 1991, Massey, 1993). Oakes (1997) explains that the latter is what differentiates place from a region or nation. While a region or a nation can command a sense of identity, this sense is an imagined abstraction for an individual. A person identifies themselves as belonging to or residing in a region or nation. What establishes a place is that a person can recognize a distinct and original identity of an area and that this area can be immediately put into use according to this identity.

Likewise, meaningful action cannot be territorially delimited in the same way that a region or nation can. Rather, it is derived from linkages that are made across space and time. These linkages are what make a place a dynamic web and more than just a specific site or location (Lefebvre, 1991, Massey, 1993). Place becomes the geographical expression of the relationship between individual actions and the abstract historical processes that prevail (Oakes, 1997). This is why urban plazas often become a cultural hub or representation of the respective city.

An urban plaza that ignites a sense of place in people is successful and becomes a destination. These urban destinations become popular and with popularity come people from a variety of demographics. With this diversity comes an air of culture. Successful plazas are those that are becoming more comparable to European plazas and significantly display a growing culture. Communities are beginning to own their nearby plazas and use them for more than a place to relax. Across the United States we are seeing plazas being used for farmers markets, concerts and community events,

venues for rallies and demonstrations, and many other creative operations (Rubenstein, 1992).

Form and Function

Form and function can most simply be defined by Webster (1993) in that form refers to the “shape and structure of anything”. Function can be interpreted as the “natural, proper, or characteristic action of anything”. Cohen and Lewis (1967) use these definitions in their article “Form and Function in the Geography of Retailing”. In reading this article it is possible to make direct connections between shopping and plazas and urban plazas, the only difference is the type of goods that each plaza is producing. For example, Cohen and Lewis (1967) state that an element of form is the shape of retail buildings that, combined with access ways, comprise the shape of a shopping area, and that an element of function is the action of selling. Related to urban plazas we can say that the shape of the plaza, combined with its amenities, comprises the form of the plaza and that its function is the actions of the pedestrians in the space.

In theory, plazas are urban areas that produce goods; successful plazas produce goods in which people want to invest. While plazas do produce goods, they are not always tangible. Plazas frequently produce common goods such as relaxation spaces, enjoyable meeting grounds, eating areas and a zone for cultural encounters. Cohen and Lewis (1967) suggest that goods must be within reach of their customers, they must be easily available and accessible, and they should be displayed in way that is visible to the customer. Pedestrians’ mode of transportation is walking and much like window shopping where retailers show off their most exciting goods to draw in the consumer, plazas need to be able to show off their most exciting amenities. Successful urban

plazas should be able to draw people in by adequately providing and exhibiting lucrative goods that are amenities.

Amenities

The form of a plaza is not only its overall shape but what its shape provides in the way of amenities. The American Planning Association (APA) published a report, primarily written by Stephen Davies, in 1982 entitled “Designing Effective Pedestrian Improvements in Business Districts” that has since been used as an unofficial handbook. As explained in the report (1982), pedestrian amenities can also be called “street furniture” since they make a street more pleasant and comfortable in use. Seating, bus shelters, and vending are among the core of plaza amenities, while trash receptacles, information kiosks, fountains, sculptures, and signage are frequently provided as well. Amenities should be visible, accessible, convenient, comfortable and useable if they are to be used as intended (Davies, 1982).

Davies (1982) maintains that in order to design and position amenities effectively, it is important to evaluate how people use open spaces, their preferred activities, and how any existing amenities are currently working. The report presents three main design questions that should be addressed when designing and locating pedestrian amenities:

- What kinds of amenities are needed?
- Where should amenities be located so that they are well used- not misused, abused, or under used?
- How should amenities be designed so that they are the most useable and functional?

To answer the first question it is necessary to decide what will serve the people who use open spaces most frequently and effectively (Davies, 1982). This can be done

by using the research tool of behavioral mapping. Observing the behavior of people in a space will give you a keen insight into what is used and what is not. It will also provide the observer with an idea of what is needed and what could be changed (Ittelson, Proshansky, Rivlin, & Winkel, 1974).

When dealing with the second question, location is of the utmost importance. Location is a critical factor that affects how an amenity is used. Amenities in a bad location can be underused or abused (Davies, 1982, Whyte, 1980). The evolving streets are also an important factor (Davies, 1982). One of the most common mistakes is that designers fail to realize that streets are dynamic and progressing and that this in turn will affect the neighboring plazas. Amenities should be capable of responding to change. Creative ways to plan for modification is encouraged. Designers must also realize that there are functional ties between certain amenities and that these relationships should be clearly identified and reinforced (Davies, 1982, Pushkarev & Zupan, 1975). By using smart design and observations made from behavioral mapping one can insure optimum use of amenities with the lowest amount of misuse and abuse (Ittelson, et. al., 1974).

The third design question posed by the APA can be simply answered with understanding. Many problems with initial design or improvements made to an open space can be traced back to a simple lack of understanding about how an amenity is actually used (Davies, 1982). Observing people using established amenities can provide invaluable information on how future amenities should be designed. Watching pedestrian behavior is key in designing successful urban plazas (Davies, 1982, Ittelson, et al., 1974, Whyte, 1980).

Plazas as Event Venues

A very distinct amenity that a plaza can exhibit is its ability to serve as an event venue. Being that not all plazas can function as a venue, the importance of this capability deserves to be explained. Public spaces are in demand for various organized events and for different durations and periods of time. This demand has been increasing and public spaces are hardly responding to this need (Senyol, 2010). When a public space such as an urban plaza can be used as an event venue there is an increased stress put on the area to be accommodating and dynamic.

In a study done on the temporary usage of urban public places as event venues it is noted that accommodating local groups and their events can enhance the collective identity of the urban community and that the types of activities that are present in public places are usually a reflection of the success of a space (Senyol, 2010). With this being said, it is important to notice that using an urban plaza as an event venue is just one of its potential amenities and, as aforementioned, plazas need to be designed to be fluid and dynamic to house a variety of uses without alienating another.

As an authority, Kevin Lynch (1972) expresses that value is placed on a space that has some degree of continuity and stability when it comes to the ever-changing aspects of temporary event usage. A good design accomplishes just this (Lynch, 1972, Carmona, Tiesdell, Heath, & Oc, 2003). As outlined by the study, there are 6 elements that an urban plaza must have to serve as an adequate temporary event venue (Senyol, 2010):

- Applicable functionality of space
- Adequate size of an area for events
- An acceptable relation of parking to the number of participants

- Power sources
- Sufficient lighting design
- Restroom facilities

At different times of day and night an urban environment is perceived and used differently (Senyol, 2010, Lynch, 1972, Carmona, Tiesdell, Heath, & Oc, 2003). A thriving urban plaza uses smart design and remains fluid so that it may become what it is needed to be. Having the amenities to accommodate daily activity in addition to housing events without being overwhelmed by designed elements demonstrates a successful urban plaza.

Pedestrian Safety

Evidence shows that when areas, such as neighborhoods or city blocks, are designed at a human scale to support pedestrians and their walking trips, there is an increase in community interaction and involvement (Florida Pedestrian Safety Plan (FPSP), 1992). The Florida Pedestrian Safety Plan also states that walking provides free, immediate, healthful and energy efficient motion. It is because of this that urban city centers become a popular destination. They are free destinations with free transportation that promotes human interaction. There is however, a measure of safety that must be considered when designing these areas.

When it comes to functionality of an urban plaza, the pedestrian not only wants a plaza to function in an appealing way but they also want to feel safe when going to, residing in, and leaving such a destination. Sidewalks provide a barrier between streets and urban plazas and are one of the main focuses of the Florida Pedestrian Safety Plan. Sidewalks provide a distinct separation between pedestrians and vehicles and serve to delineate an area that is reserved for the pedestrian only. This separation

increases pedestrian safety and the clearly defined border enhances pedestrian movement (FPSP, 1992).

Because urban plazas are a free destination in their respective cities, they are often tourist destinations. When visiting cities, tourists need walkable places, and to insure that urban plazas fall into this category they must be equipped with adequate sidewalks.

Case Studies

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The APA (1982) conducted a study on the Chestnut Street Transitway in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Chestnut Street was converted to a transit mall in 1976. Much of the land-use around the area is non-retail with the bulk of its use being parking lots, office buildings, banks, a hospital, and the United States Courthouse. The design concept for Chestnut Street was straightforward although no prior research was conducted to aid in the process. Sidewalks were widened for 12 blocks to provide space for amenities. Private vehicles were prohibited along the entire mall at all times with the exception of one block being used as an entrance to a parking lot. Taxis were permitted during the evening with buses having full access at all times.

Multiple problems were found when conducting the study. The first was that the relationship between the amenities and the pedestrian flow was not conducive. Little thought was put into the unique pedestrian flow that the mall exhibited because this flow was not mapped prior to the transformation. The use of seating was also an observed issue. There were 64 possible places to sit on benches as cataloged by the study. Approximately half of these seats were being used on a regular basis with just as many people using alternative surfaces as seating areas. The problem here is that the

benches were made of concrete and were not easily adaptable to the flow of pedestrians. The final issue was with the bus shelters. They were generally successful in housing the people waiting for the bus but there had been no provision for seating. No information was posted at the bus stops and information kiosks were located in another area. Plantings near the shelters also inhibited access both entering and leaving the buses (Davies, 1982).

The APA (1982) concluded that this design had several implications for the planning and design of improvements for transit malls. Demonstrated here is the importance of clearly identifying pedestrian needs and making clear objectives for the improvements. Also, to be sure that proposed amenities can be easily changed or modified if they do not work well in the newly designed area.

Boston, Massachusetts

The APA (1982) conducted a study on Summer Street in Boston, Massachusetts. Summer Street is at the heart of Boston's "Downtown Crossing", a street improvement project that was completed in 1979. The design of the crossing was different in that the way the streets were used by pedestrians and vehicles could be flexible. Summer Street was completely closed to traffic and 66 wooden benches were arranged throughout the area. The area became immediately popular but with some areas working better than others.

It was observed that the position and use of the benches was unevenly distributed. The original design called for three clusters of seating with some of the benches completely out of relation to the pedestrian flow. The position of the benches also obstructed the entrance of a nearby subway. The space also lacked programmed

activities. When compared to other spaces very similar in nature it was determined that the area was not being used to its full potential (Davies, 1982).

Here the APA (1982) offers recommendations. It was suggested that there be three basic clusters of amenities and that the more active functions be placed in the middle with the lighter functions being spread to the ends. Reorientation of the benches was proposed to accommodate pedestrian flow and an outdoor café was recommended near the front of a department store.

New York, New York

Whyte (1980) used the plaza of the New York Telephone Company's building as an example of how to effectively deal with undesirables. As expressed in his book, undesirables can be those that are considered as "drunks, derelicts, hippies, teenagers, vendors" etc. By observation he concluded that undesirables prefer empty places. The New York Telephone Company's building is located at 42nd street and the Avenue of the Americas and was used by the undesirables. The president of the telephone company wanted to people to enjoy the plaza so he decided to enhance the place by adding tables, chairs, and a buffet. It was an immediate success that attracted employees and passersby to use the newly added amenities. With the increased crowds, it was noted that most of the undesirables had moved somewhere else.

These case studies provide examples of redesigned urban plazas. Both the APA and Whyte used these projects to convey aspects of redesigns that should be considered when evaluating an existing urban plaza. Prior research should be conducted in any case to ensure that proposed amenities will match the needs of the intended audience. Amenities should be dynamic and modifiable to allow for changes and optimal use. These case studies show that simple changes can make a large

impact on urban plazas and turn around the most dismal public spaces into successful destinations.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Context of the Research

For this project, the research design focuses on a case-study approach to the Bo Diddley Community Plaza in Downtown Gainesville. The method is a cross-sectional, prospective, non-experimental evaluation of the plaza. A review of literature is used to identify successful amenities that an urban plaza should be comprised of and key elements are established as guidelines for evaluating the plaza. Using these objectives along with behavioral mapping the plaza is evaluated. Utilizing the evaluation in accordance with the local governing bodies and Gainesville's Community Redevelopment Agency suggestions are made on aspects of a redesign.

Before describing the methodological framework for behavioral mapping a brief context description of Gainesville and the regulatory framework of the local governing bodies is presented to assist in understanding the Bo Diddley Community Plaza.

Gainesville and Its History

The City of Gainesville was initially established in the mid-19th century and developed into a moderately prosperous urban area that became an agricultural marketplace for its region. The early 1900s brought the University of Florida to Gainesville and the city experienced a large influx of students. The introduction of the automobile introduced the city to a new form of transportation and between 1930 and 1950 the city saw exponential growth and a demand for new services.

Even with these periods of noted growth, the downtown area of Gainesville remained the central business district and it was not until the post World War II era that the city saw a draw of business to the west. With this, subdivisions and shopping areas

moved the activity away from the established commercial core and Downtown Gainesville declined in productivity and became obsolete.

Downtown redevelopment became a topic of concern in the 1960s and efforts were made to improve the area. New government buildings were constructed and public investments were made in new library facilities, street system improvements, and development of a downtown community plaza. Since the initial call for redevelopment, there have been several further demands for revitalization of the downtown area and advancements have been made in making Downtown Gainesville a bustling and accommodating destination within the city.

To further familiarize the readers of this study it is helpful to describe the background and history of Gainesville, Florida which is located in Alachua County in the region of North Central Florida. Figure 3-1 shows the location of Gainesville which is situated in the center of Alachua County east of Interstate 75. The city is home to both the University of Florida and Santa Fe College and expresses the many characteristics of a college town. According to the Census taken in 2010 the most current population is 124,354 people with the median age being 24.9 years old (Figure 3-2). A large proportion of the population, at approximately 43.5%, can be attributed to academia with the University of Florida employing 4,215 faculty members and student body close to 50,000 (University of Florida, 2012).

The downtown area of Gainesville is located east of the University. This region is a mix of history and charm with registered historic districts of both commercial and residential composition (Figure 3-3). The area houses government buildings, businesses, restaurants, and retail. Downtown Gainesville also boasts a thriving

nightlife which draws large amounts of the student population to the area on a regular basis (Figure 3-4).

As a historic college town, Gainesville is unique in the type of visitors that it receives. Tourism is not only centered around the University and the amenities that it supports but its visitors also frequent the area to experience the city. Collegiate events draw large amounts of alumni, guests, and visitors to the region. Gainesville sees a constant ebb and flow in the number of people in the city at any point in time with the seasons, both natural and sporting, affecting this number.

Gainesville's Community Redevelopment Agency

The Gainesville Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) operates in four areas of Gainesville working to redevelop and better the community (Figure 3-5). In each district the CRA has designated projects that are designed to improve the respective area as a whole. Initial interest to improve Downtown Gainesville began in the 1960's and culminated in 1981 with the City Commission designating a 171-acre portion of the city as the Downtown Redevelopment Area. In 1999 the City Commission voted to expand the Downtown Redevelopment Area to include surrounding neighborhoods and address additional issues that would affect the progress of the region's redevelopment (Figure 3-6).

The Gainesville City Council adopted the official Downtown Gainesville Redevelopment Plan in 2001 that outlined specific initiatives and budgets that were proposed for the downtown area. Among these propositions was a call to redevelop the Downtown Community Plaza and repurpose the historic Bethel Station. According to the redevelopment plan, the downtown plaza has been subject to various improvements since the adoption of the plan in 2001 however; there is still a need and opportunity for

improvement in this and other important outdoor “rooms” throughout the Downtown Redevelopment Area (City of Gainesville, 2001).

Enhancements can be made in the form of water features, lighting, landscaping, seating, and walkways. The City would like to see these improvements bring the downtown area back to its historical charm and increase the usage of the various amenities that the plaza offers. In addition to suggesting improvements for redevelopment, the plan also outlines what the CRA would like to see happen when constructing any improvements. Environmentally friendly, functionally adequate, and aesthetically pleasing upgrades are in high demand for the district (City of Gainesville, 2001).

Behavioral Mapping

As a research tool, behavioral mapping provides data that leads to the development of general principles concerning the use of a space. The technique is reliable and rigorous enough that categories of behavior can be used as dependent variables within an experimental framework. Behavior maps enable the prediction of behavior and thus make it possible to design specific amenities more effectively before they are put into use (Ittelson et al., 1974).

As outlined by Ittelson (1974) the standard procedure for behavior mapping is:

- Identification of observational categories.
- Identification of the physical area to be mapped.
- Preparation of observer materials.
- Preparation of an observation schedule.

Using this as a guide, the Bo Diddley Community Plaza in Downtown Gainesville was put under scrutiny and evaluated.

Identification of Observational Categories

The first step as recognized by Ittelson (1974) was to identify observational categories. Research by Whyte (1980) was used in helping to categorize what aspects were important to observe and through this process pedestrian traffic patterns, seating areas, and food service amenities were deemed appropriate. These three amenities will be at the core when observing the behaviors of people in and around the plaza.

Identification of the Study Area

The next step was to identify the study area as the physical locale to be mapped. For this case-study, the Bo Diddley Community Plaza is identified as the main focus point. To observe every aspect of the study area four observation sites were chosen. Preliminary scouting was used to determine where these sites should be located. Figure 3-7 shows the location of the four sites that were chosen as denoted by red stars. Site 1 located across the street from the plaza to the north, site 2 located on the eastern side of the stage, site 3 located near the middle of the plaza towards the southern edge, and site four located across the street to the south west of the plaza. Only four sites were chosen based on the size of the plaza and the clarity of the line of site throughout the plaza. The four sites were selected because they encompassed all the viewpoints that were needed to see pedestrian traffic in and out of the plaza as well as the existing amenities.

Site 1 (Figure 3-8) is located at the bus stop across University Avenue to the north of the plaza. From this location there is a clear view of the bus shelter that is located behind the plaza stage. There is also a view of pedestrian traffic that is entering the plaza from the north. Gainesville City Hall is located directly north of the plaza while city offices are located to the North West. From this site, the behaviors of pedestrians

using the bus shelter and entering and leaving the plaza from the north entrances can be mapped.

Site 2 (Figure 3-9) is located directly east of the plaza stage where there is an elevated planting box. From this location there is a clear view of the plaza lawn as well as the area in front of the Alachua County offices and Circuit Court that directly butts up to the east side of the plaza. From this site, the behaviors of the pedestrians entering and leaving the County offices, entering and leaving the plaza from the southeast end, and the plaza lawn can be mapped.

Site 3 (Figure 3-10) is located near the middle of the south end of the plaza. From this location there is a clear view of the plaza as a whole. The plaza stage, lawn, and inclined lawns on either side of the main lawn can be seen. There is also a view of the back seating area of The Lunch Box, the restaurant located in the repurposed Bethel Station situated in the southwest corner of the plaza. This view includes the majority of seating areas and amenities the plaza has to offer. From this site, the behaviors of pedestrians throughout the plaza can be seen and mapped.

Site 4 (Figure 3-11) is located across SE 1st Avenue adjacent to the businesses that lie south of the plaza. Hotels, restaurants, and small businesses thrive in this area to the south of the plaza and offer easy access to the area. From this location there is a view of the front of The Lunch Box and its side seating area located to the west. There is also a view of the south entrances to the plaza and pedestrian movement from the business district into the plaza can be seen. Government buildings to the west of the plaza and a parking garage to the south east also provide a source of pedestrian movement. From this site, the behaviors of pedestrians entering and leaving the plaza

from this direction can be seen. In addition, the activity The Lunch Box receives can be monitored and mapped.

Observing Materials

The third step was to formulate the materials to be used when observing the area to be mapped. An observation sheet (Figure 3-12) was prepared to be used when conducting the behavior mapping. The site, date, time, and whether or not an event, i.e. farmers market or concert, was occurring was noted. A basic map that had been created for this project was present on the form so that anything that may have been seen and sketched could be recorded. Below the map was an area for written observations to be used for recording the behaviors that were observed. Space for the three core objectives, pedestrian traffic, seating areas, and food serve, was fit into a table for organization of thoughts. When needed the back side of the form was used for additional thoughts.

Observation Schedule

The final step was to establish a schedule for the research. The observation time was conducted between the months of September and October 2012. Observations were scheduled for times during the morning, afternoon, and evenings and on various days of the week to encompass as many different uses as possible. Observations were made and noted every fifteen minutes to include the number and nature of participants and the behavior that was being exhibited. Rotations were made between the observation sites to ensure that all areas were being mapped (see Table 3-1).

In combination with the observation form, pictures were to be taken every fifteen minutes to provide additional material to be used when evaluating the area. A Canon EOS T1i DSLR camera was set up using a tripod to remain stationary next to the

observer during the two hour intervals. At the onset of the fifteen minute period a picture was taken to capture the relative viewpoint of the observer. When initially conducting this portion of the observations, the researcher experienced highly negative attitudes by the resident homeless population. For this reason, this part of the methodology was rejected.

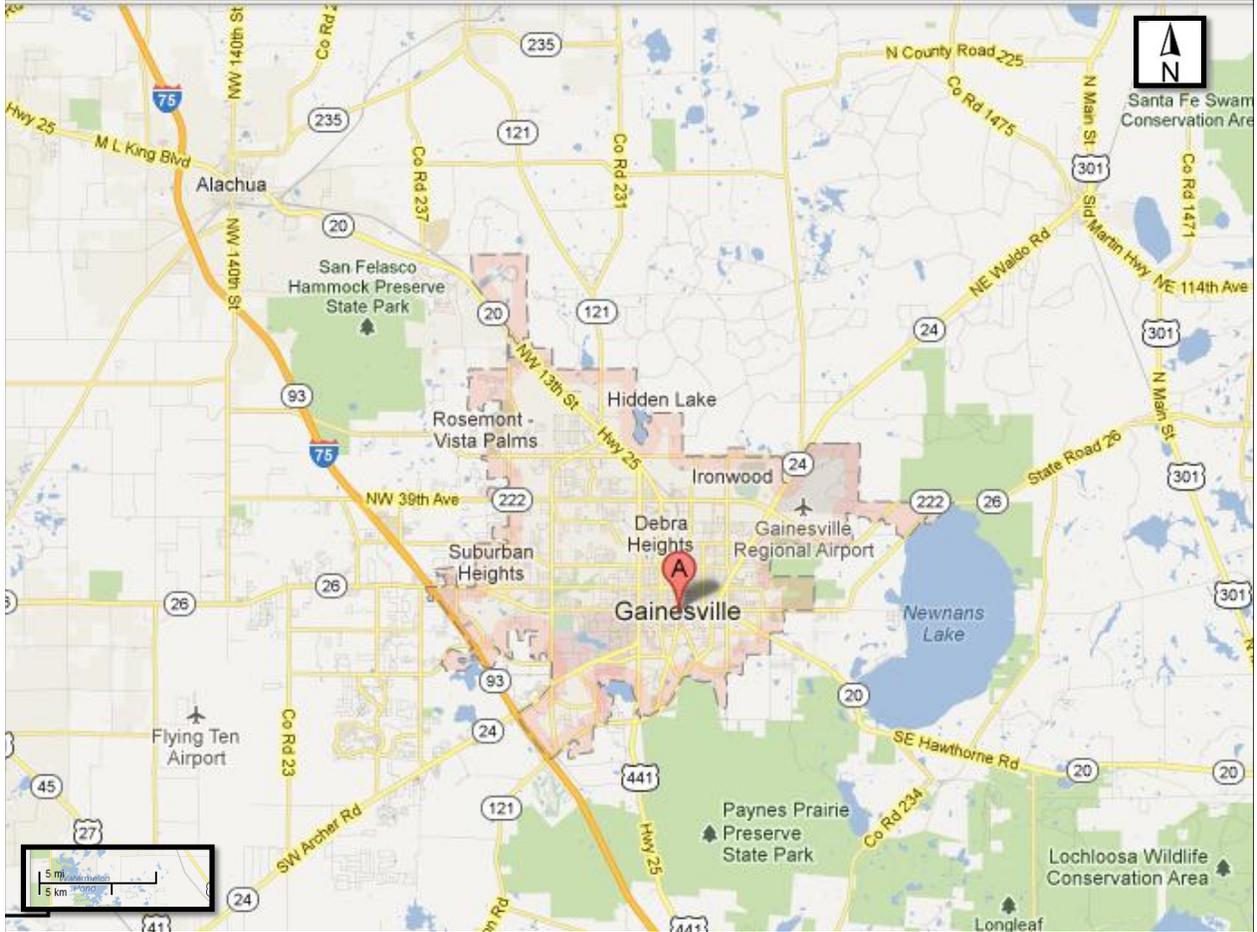


Figure 3-1. City of Gainesville. (Source: <https://maps.google.com/maps?hl=en&tab=wl>. Last accessed December, 2012).

Category	Number			% in Total Population			% Change 2000-2010		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total	124,354	60,212	64,142	100.00	48.42	51.58	6,022.80	5,444.38	6,687.51
Median Age	24.9	25.2	24.7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
• 16 and Over	109,708	52,744	56,964	88.22	42.41	45.81	N/A	N/A	N/A
• 18 and Over	107,742	51,760	55,982	86.64	41.62	45.02	5,585.59	5,019.68	6,232.81
• 21 and Over	86,649	42,700	43,949	69.68	34.34	35.34	4,586.26	N/A	N/A
• 62 and Over	12,842	5,350	7,492	10.33	4.30	6.02	1,739.83	N/A	N/A
• 65 and Over	10,339	4,172	6,167	8.31	3.35	4.96	1,578.41	1,363.86	1,763.14
Under 5 Years	5,504	2,850	2,654	4.43	2.29	2.13	13,324.39	N/A	N/A
5 to 9 Years	4,301	2,192	2,109	3.46	1.76	1.70	11,524.32	N/A	N/A
10 to 14 Years	4,050	2,032	2,018	3.26	1.63	1.62	11,150.00	N/A	N/A
15 to 19 Years	15,106	6,636	8,470	12.15	5.34	6.81	28,950.00	N/A	N/A
20 to 24 Years	33,450	16,040	17,410	26.90	12.90	14.00	26,660.00	N/A	N/A
25 to 34 Years	21,049	11,476	9,573	16.93	N/A	N/A	6,259.21	N/A	N/A
35 to 44 Years	10,070	5,102	4,968	8.10	N/A	N/A	3,548.55	N/A	N/A
45 to 54 Years	10,525	5,016	5,509	8.46	N/A	N/A	4,076.59	N/A	N/A
55 to 59 Years	5,484	2,588	2,896	4.41	2.08	2.33	4,118.46	N/A	N/A
60 to 64 Years	4,476	2,108	2,368	3.60	1.70	1.90	3,215.56	N/A	N/A
65 to 74 Years	5,154	2,248	2,906	4.14	N/A	N/A	1,480.98	N/A	N/A
75 to 84 Years	3,519	1,372	2,147	2.83	N/A	N/A	1,514.22	N/A	N/A
85 and Older	1,666	552	1,114	1.34	0.44	0.90	2,213.89	N/A	N/A

Figure 3-2. Gainesville population demographics. (Source: <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/popmap/ipmtext.php?fl=12>. Last accessed December, 2012).

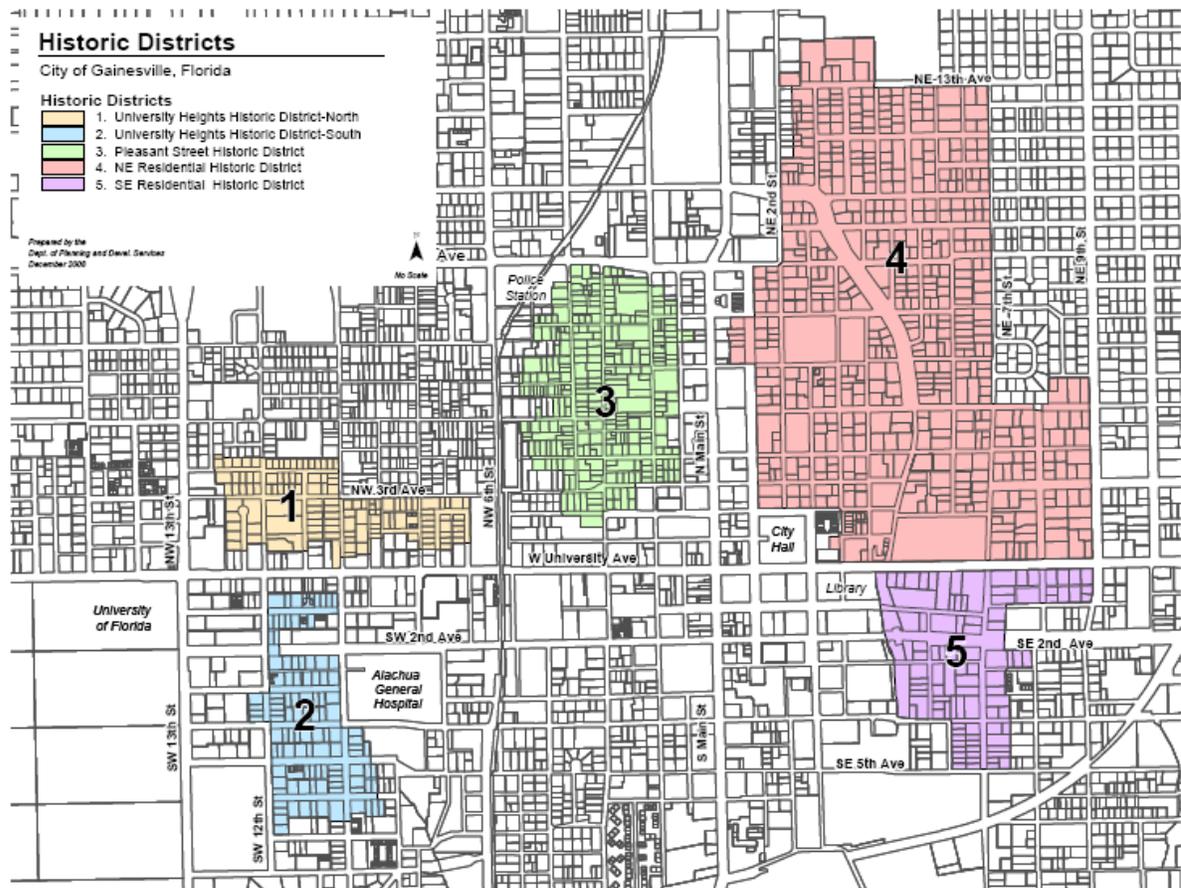


Figure 3-3. Historic districts of Gainesville. (Source: <http://www.cityofgainesville.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=Qfi3xXzGT8E%3d&tabid=250>. Last accessed December, 2012).

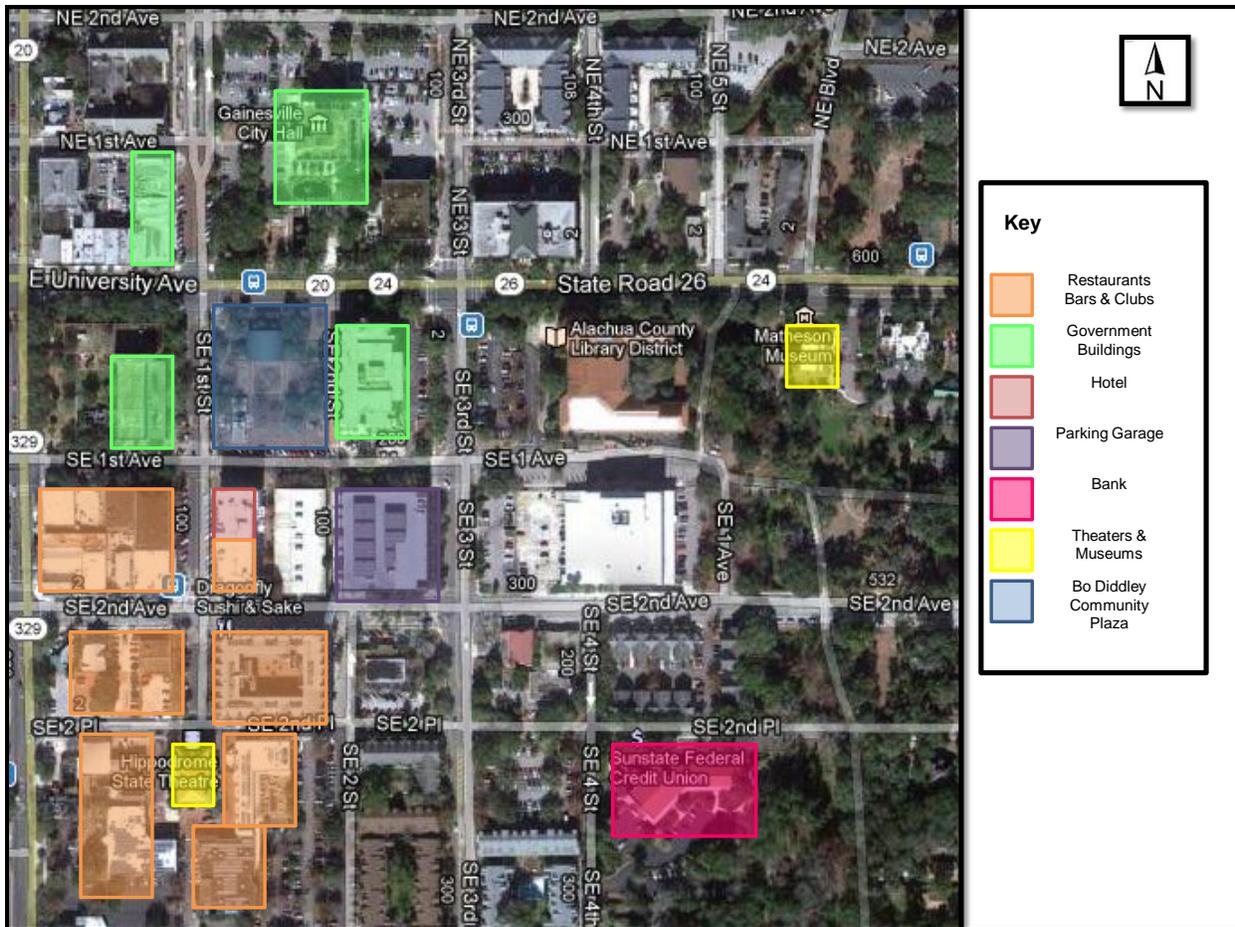


Figure 3-4. Downtown Gainesville amenities. (Source: Adapted from <http://maps.google.com/>. Last accessed December, 2012).



Figure 3-5. Community redevelopment areas. (Source: Adapted from http://www.gainesvillecra.com/redev_index.php. Last accessed December, 2012).

Downtown Redevelopment Area

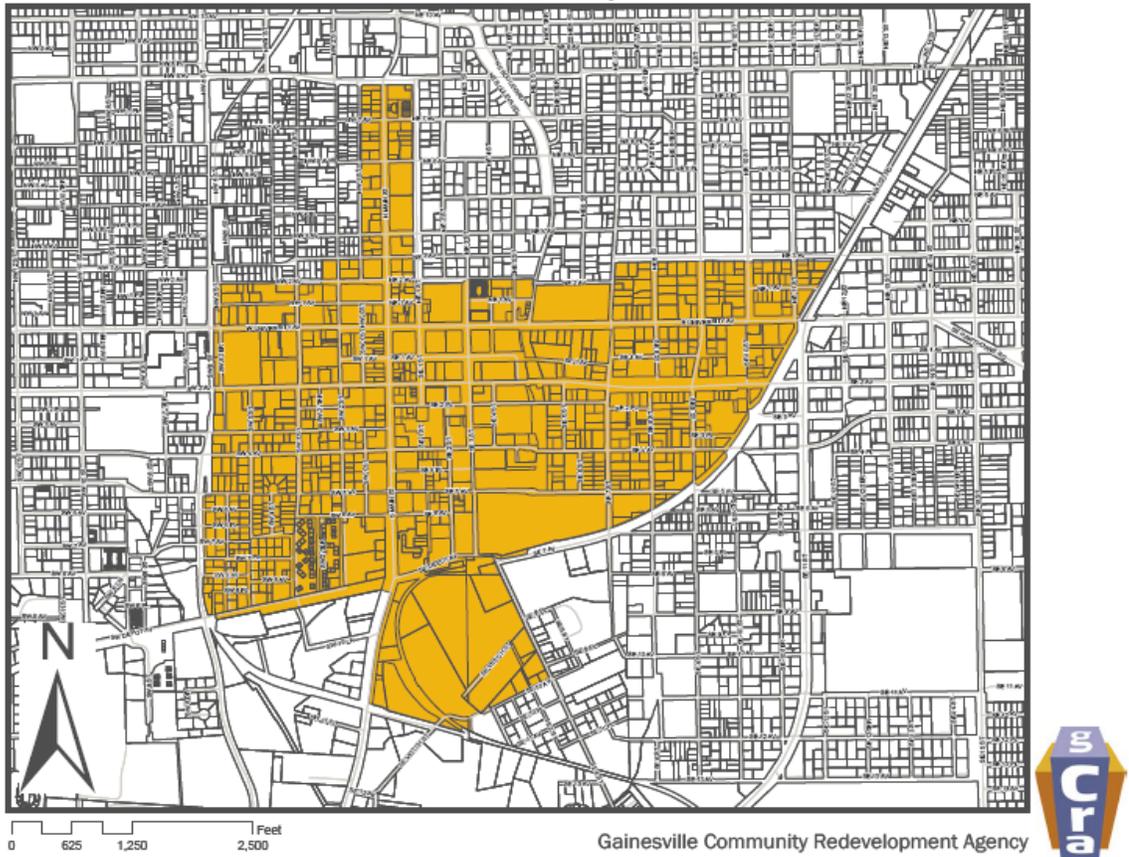


Figure 3-6. Downtown redevelopment area. (Source: http://www.gainesvillecra.com/_pdf/downtown/downtown_website_map.pdf. Last accessed December, 2012).



Figure 3-7. Map of observation site locations. (Source: Adapted from <http://maps.google.com/>. Last accessed December, 2012).



Figure 3-8. Partial view from site one.



Figure 3-9. Partial view from site two.



Figure 3-10. Partial view from site three.

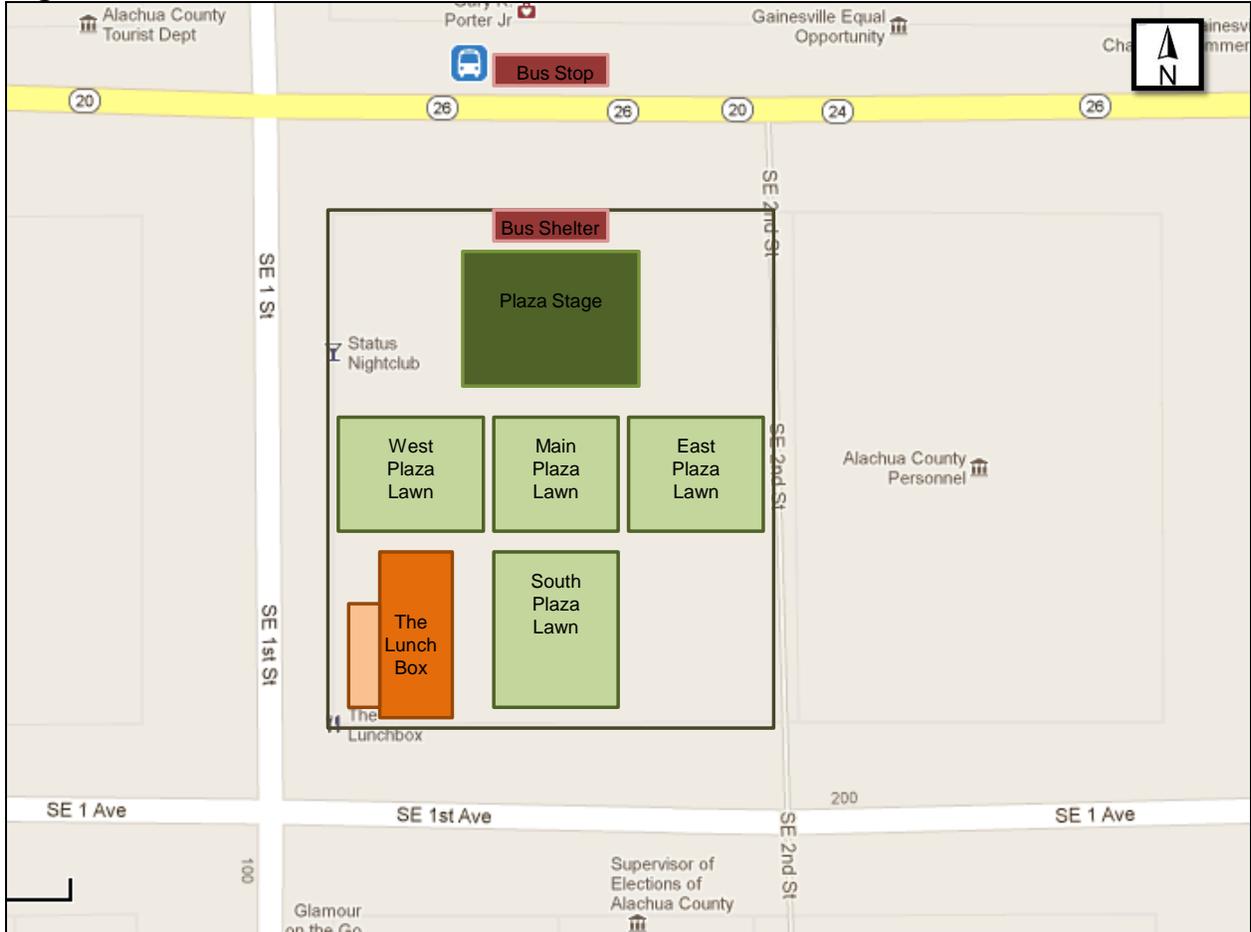


Figure 3-11. Partial view from site four.

Observation Sheet

Site #: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____ Event: Y/N _____

Sight Observations:



Written Observations:

Pedestrian Traffic	Seating Areas	Food Service

Figure 3-12. Observation sheet.

Table 3-1. Observation schedule.

Days of the Week	Date	Time of day Morning (M), Afternoon (A), Night (N)	Event Yes or No
Monday	9/10/2012	M, AN	No
Tuesday	9/18/2012	AN	No
Wednesday	9/26/2012	N	Yes Farmer's Market
Thursday	9/13/2012	M, AN	No
Friday	9/21/2012	N	Yes Concert
Saturday	9/29/2012	N	No
Sunday	10/7/2012	AN	No

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Description of Bo Diddley Community Plaza

Positioned south of University Avenue and east of SE 1st Street, Bo Diddley Community Plaza is an urban open space in Downtown Gainesville. First developed in 1976 with investments by public parties, the community plaza was constructed in response to the call for redevelopment of Downtown Gainesville. The plaza was later renamed in honor of the jazz musician Bo Diddley for his services to the Gainesville community. The plaza, at a size of approximately 6,300 square meters or 1 ½ acres, currently functions as an urban open space, an event venue for concerts and cultural programs, and a site for the local farmers market.

Bo Diddley Community Plaza is rectangular in shape with a mix of hard and soft ground cover. The largest element in the plaza is an amphitheater type structure that serves as the stage for performances held on the premises (Figure 4-1). To the immediate south of the stage is the plaza lawn. The lawn is surrounded on the remaining three sides by disconnected inclining lawns (Figure 4-2). Brick walkways border most of the areas in the plaza with some areas being paved in concrete. There is minimal landscaping in the plaza with most of the planting being located in elevated areas that are in the four corners of the plaza (Figure 4-3).

The southwest corner of the plaza houses the historic Bethel gas station that has been restored and repurposed into a small café (Figure 4-4). There is minimal seating in the plaza with 14 wooden benches located near the top of the three inclined lawns and a picnic table area opposite Bethel Station (Figure 4-5). The café has seating that is

sectioned off from the plaza by fencing. Brick ledges that enclose the elevated planting areas can also be used for seating (Figure 4-6).

To the north of the stage is a relatively large bus shelter for the local public transit system (Figure 4-7). The bus shelter has built in seating and is covered from the elements. Government offices border the plaza directly to the east with parking bordering the south and west sides. Parking can also be found across University Avenue to the north of the plaza. Parking is a mix between free time sensitive spaces and metered spaces (Figure 4-8). Beyond the parking are additional government buildings, a parking garage, hotel, and restaurants (Figures 4-9 & 4-10).

While the Bo Diddley Community plaza has a number of amenities, the space clearly lacks a sense of enclosure. The main element that denotes entrance into the space is the change of hardscaping material from sidewalks to brick paving. With this lack of enclosure comes a weak awareness of place. The observed activity within the plaza was undoubtedly affected by the lack of enclosure.

The plaza houses a distinct homeless population that primarily resides on the north and east sides of the plaza. The bus shelter and picnic area are the main focus areas for this population with varying use of the wooden benches throughout the plaza. The seating area for Bethel Café is not affected by the homeless population. Territoriality was expressed by this apparent population and it was often noted that the bus shelter and picnic area was seldom used by patrons outside of the population.

Pedestrian traffic throughout the plaza was most prominent when there was an event occurring on the grounds. The Union Street Farmers Market drew in much larger numbers of pedestrians than an uneventful day. Varying age groups, families and

individuals could all be seen utilizing the plaza. Most of the pedestrian activity was focused on the southern and western sides of the plaza with Bethel Café being a large contributor to the traffic when there was no occurrence of an event.

Table 4-1 is a summary of the observed actions within the plaza as categorized by pedestrian traffic, seating areas, and food vending. In addition to the summary table, it is important to note the overarching themes in pedestrian movement. In the simplest terms, the desirable pedestrian traffic was observed to be located on the western side of the plaza whereas undesirable traffic was observed to be located on the northern and eastern sides of the plaza. The southern edge proved to be a mixture between the two groups and largely depended on the presence of an event. Direct passage through the center of the plaza to get from one side to another was seldom seen. The center lawn was a destination and not a thoroughfare.

Events and Culture

As previously mentioned, Bo Diddley Community Plaza is host to many different events and cultural programs. From the months of May to October the City of Gainesville sponsors a free Friday concert series. Various performances are held each Friday during these months and are free and open to the public. Throughout the year both the community and the university use the plaza as grounds for festivals and art shows. These events showcase the local culture of the area while bringing life to the downtown plaza. The plaza is also frequently used as a meeting place for rallies of varying political agendas.

Another regular use of the space is the Union Street Farmers Market. On a Wednesday weekly basis vendors set up shop to sell local goods and fare. The market is held year round, rain or shine, and has become a staple of the downtown agenda.

The market draws in crowds from the student and residential populations alike and brings business to both the local vendors and downtown (Figure 4-11).

Public Transit

The City of Gainesville operates its public transit under the Regional Transit System (RTS). RTS provides bus service throughout the city of Gainesville with several routes going through the downtown area. Until the Downtown Bus Transfer Station was built in 2007, the Bo Diddley Community Plaza served as the RTS transfer station. The Plaza now has two bus stops associated with the area for service going in both the east and west direction (Figure 4-12).

Public transit in the Gainesville area is a widely used form of transportation with 33 routes going all throughout the city and the University of Florida campus. Students have unlimited use of RTS services upon presentation of their student id cards. Fees are paid by the student to the University which in turn has a contract with RTS that ensures service is provided to them. The general public can purchase various different passes ranging from a single fare at \$1.50 to a monthly pass (City of Gainesville, 2012).



Figure 4-1. Bo Diddley Community Plaza amphitheater.



Figure 4-2. Bo Diddley Community Plaza lawn.



Figure 4-3. Elevated planter in Bo Diddley Community Plaza.

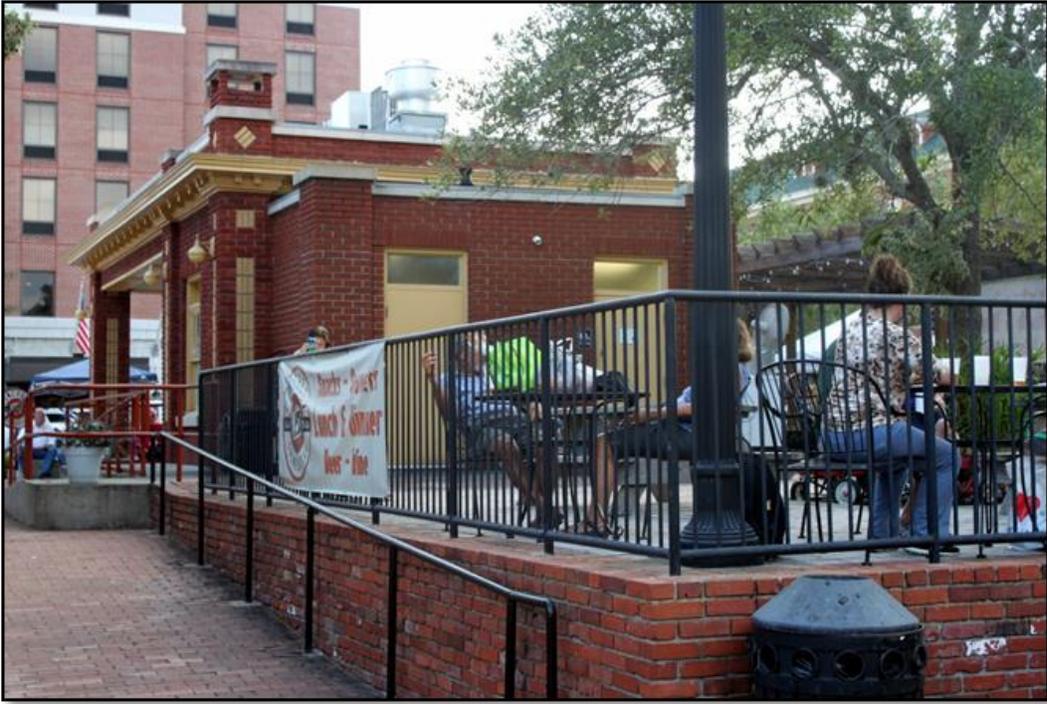


Figure 4-4. Bethel Café.



Figure 4-5. Bo Diddley Community Plaza picnic area.



Figure 4-6. Brick ledging in Bo Diddley Community Plaza.



Figure 4-7. Bo Diddley Community Plaza bus shelter.



Figure 4-8. Metered parking on plaza border.

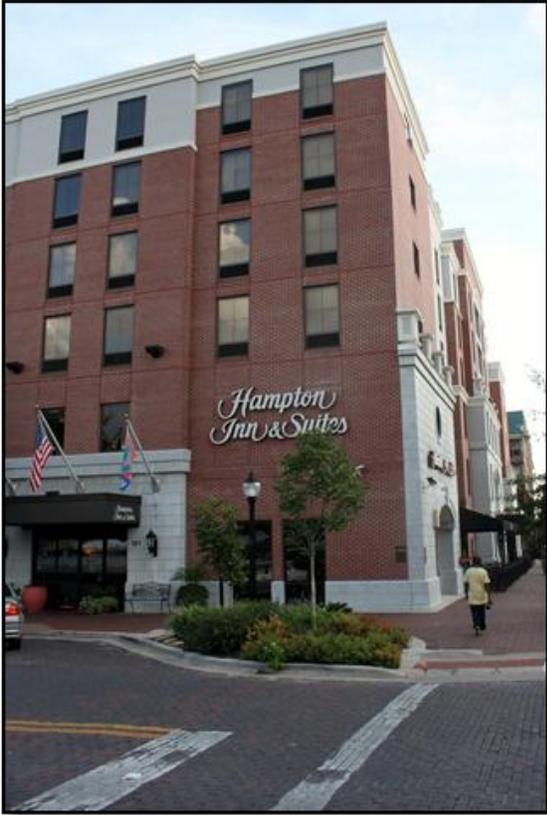


Figure 4-9. Hotel bordering Bo Diddley Community Plaza.



Figure 4-10. Local businesses bordering Bo Diddley Community Plaza.

Table 4-1. Observation summaries.

Observation Objective	Observation summary
Pedestrian Traffic	<p>The highest levels of pedestrian traffic occurred when there was an event being hosted by the Bo Diddley Community Plaza. During the active plaza hours in which an event was not occurring, the most frequent use of the plaza was seen to be during the lunch hours and the early evening. It was observed that there were two types of patrons that frequented the area. These, as defined by Whyte (1980), were labeled as the desirables and undesirables. The desirable pedestrian traffic tended to frequent the southern and western sides of the plaza and move throughout from these directions. The undesirable population tended to claim the northern and eastern sides of the plaza as their own. The center of the plaza was used more frequently when there were events taking place that called for patrons to spread out into this area. If no event were occurring most pedestrian traffic was observed to remain on the borders of the plaza.</p>
Seating Areas	<p>Seating within Bo Diddley Community Plaza can be split into 5 categories: wooden benches, The Lunch Box, the bus shelter, the picnic area, and the brick ledging throughout the plaza. In correspondence with the observed pedestrian traffic, the seating areas located throughout the plaza tended to be used by the groups of people that frequented that location of the plaza. With this being said, there were some differences. It was observed that the desirable population only sat with in the designated Lunch Box seating and the wooden benches and ledging on the western side of the plaza. All other areas were claimed by the undesirable population. Both the bus shelter and the picnic area proved to be the largest concentration of the undesirable population with the wooden benches and ledging being claimed singular undesirable individuals.</p>
Food Vending	<p>It was observed that food vending within the plaza was limited to The Lunch Box café and vendors present during the Union Street Farmers Market. The Lunch Box was observed to have customers during lunch hours but not of a particularly high volume. The Farmers Market attracted large crowds and during which patrons would enjoy the various selections offered by the temporary vendors. It was seldom seen for patrons to bring their own food or food from surrounding restaurants to be enjoyed in the plaza.</p>



Figure 4-11. Union Street Farmer's Market.

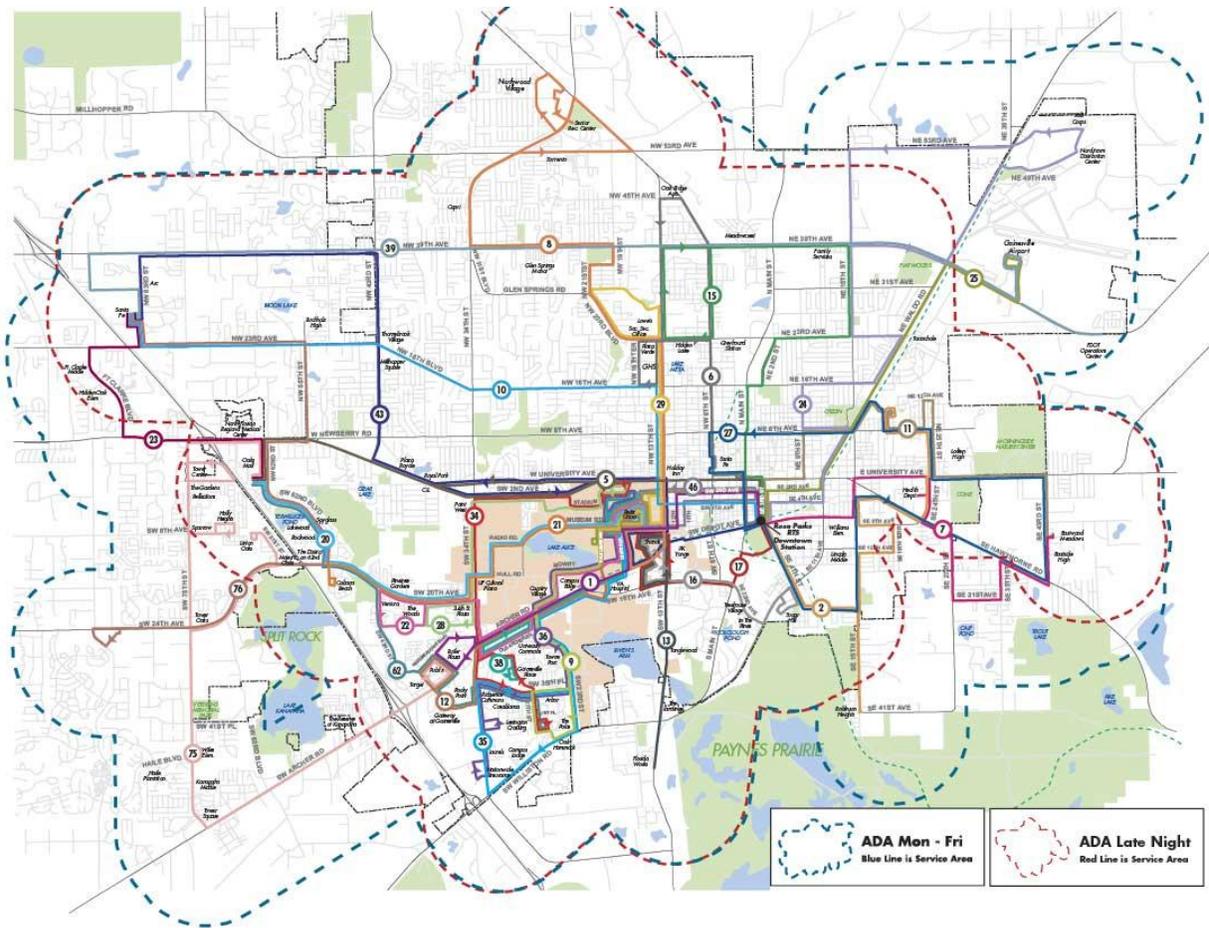


Figure 4-12. RTS bus map. (Source: <http://go-rt.com/schedule.php>. Last accessed December, 2012).

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Pedestrian Traffic

The answer to the question of whether or not Bo Diddley Community Plaza sustains pedestrian traffic lies in what day of the week it is. Observations showed that while there were large levels of pedestrian traffic during the weekly events that were housed on the plaza grounds, an average day left much to be desired. Larger numbers of pedestrians were seen in the plaza throughout the work week than were observed during the weekends. The weekends, not during events, showed that the majority of persons within the plaza were those that belonged to the homeless population. More often than not when observing during these times an air of hostility was present.

The Gainesville community seeks to bring people to the downtown area and to Bo Diddley by having the Farmers Market and Free Friday Concert Series hosted by the plaza. While this is proving to be effective, perhaps improvements in design can remedy the negative presence of the homeless population. Introducing design elements that attract pedestrians to the plaza and others that focus on crime prevention and deter loitering could help in combating what Whyte calls the “undesirables”. As stated in his research, if an open space begins to draw more pedestrian traffic the undesirable population tends to move out (Whyte, 1980).

Suggestions here could be drawn from the successfulness of the enclosed seating area of Bethel Café and the research by Whyte (1980). Adding a sense of enclosure, whether this is accomplished by fencing, a border of trees, varying hardscapes, etc., a clear defined place can emerge. By delimitating the plaza, pedestrians will be drawn to enter the space as it becomes a destination. Whyte (1980)

states that creating a sense of enclosure increases the perceived safety of an area and aids in one's sight lines which draw people into a space.

Pedestrian traffic is sure to increase when persons feel that they are safe and comfortable within an area. As stated before, with the increase of desirable pedestrian traffic comes a decrease in undesirables residing in the area (Whyte, 1980). In the case of Bo Diddley, decreasing the amount of undesirables opens up several areas of the plaza that are currently territorialized by these individuals. This will allow an increase in pedestrian movement throughout and across the plaza.

Seating Environment

A large proportion of research conducted on urban plazas state that seating may be the number one amenity that a public place should offer. When it comes to Bo Diddley, the seating is beyond dismal. Having a total of only 14 wooden benches throughout the area is simply not enough. In addition to the low number, these benches are designed with arm-rest breaks in the sitting area so that lying down is not permitted. They are one-sided with disturbed seating space and not adequate for the space that they are to be serving.

In addition to the benches, the plaza boasts several areas with brick ledges. While this adds to the available seating spaces, a large amount of the ledges border the walkways. It was observed that when persons were sitting on these ledges they were often in the way of others who were trying to walk through the plaza. These ledges also permitted lying down to those who wanted to. This was used by those individuals who were seen as undesirable.

Not only is there a definite need for increased seating areas throughout the plaza, there is also a need for various different types of seating. Persons prefer to have

a choice when it comes to sitting in a public place (Whyte, 1980). Introducing more favorably designed benches, perhaps double sided to encourage interaction, that are distributed creatively throughout the plaza would be a pleasant addition. Designing specific areas that are shaded and un-shaded with varying vegetation will not only give pedestrians a choice but it will also increase the dynamic elements in the plaza and create dimension.

Smoothing out the inclined lawns to the east and west of the main lawn to have a smooth transition throughout this area will remove the obstacle of the brick ledges. Having two seating areas to either side, one shaded and the other un-shaded, creates varying elements that become destinations within the plaza. Introducing shade producing vegetation adds much needed beauty to the plaza. The south lawn could be terraced to add seating and appeal to the concert venue aspect of the plaza in addition to creating a balancing focal point to the stage.

Adding dynamic seating, focal points, and a sense of enclosure to a plaza like Bo Diddley can dramatically increase its appeal to pedestrians. Not only will the pedestrian line of sight, which is a major factor in the successfulness of urban plazas as stated by Whyte (1980), be more pleasing but the plaza becomes a known destination for those who have not even been to the plaza. Having unique and desirable amenities can create a draw to a downtown area based solely on reputation alone (Kaplan, 1980, Ulrich & Addoms, 1981).

Food Vending

Bethel Café was observed to be one of the more successful elements present within Bo Diddley. The repurposed filling station brings charm to the rather plain community plaza. The restaurant also provides food vending services for lunch breaks

in the plaza and to the patrons attending the various concerts that are held throughout the year. Having its own seating area that is fenced off from the rest of the plaza ensures that customers, if they so prefer, are able to enjoy their meal without being bothered by patrons using the plaza in other ways.

There are several restaurants that border Bo Diddley Community Plaza that provide countless opportunities for individuals to use the plaza as a place to eat with friends, however this was seldom observed. If the plaza was redesigned to offer the amenities that would promote this use then there would almost certainly be an increase in pedestrian traffic. The surrounding area is classified as the CBD for the city of Gainesville and there is no lack of pedestrian traffic but this traffic hardly reaches the plaza.

As discussed by researchers throughout this paper, people want options and a desirable sense of place. They want to feel safe and want to feel like they are in a place where people want to be. By redesigning the plaza these elements can be achieved. Adding form and function to plaza that also appeals to the senses is key in attracting higher levels of pedestrian traffic to Bo Diddley

Bo Diddley as an Event Venue

Observations concluded that the highest levels of pedestrian traffic occurred when there was an event being held within the plaza. It is possible that Bo Diddley is currently functioning as merely a successful temporary event venue. The Union Street Farmer's Market is able to use the wide bordering sidewalks as space to house vendors and the stage is a clear amenity when hold concerts on the grounds.

Redesigning the plaza to include some of the aforementioned amenities will only increase the possibilities of temporary events. Smoothing the lawns will provide more

continuous space for vendors to set up shop while adding terracing will increase the seating for concerts. Improving the lighting and adding dimension to the plaza with varying focal points can help to make the area more appealing. Having a more dynamic design allows for a larger variety of events to fit successfully within the plaza. These ideas were clearly expressed within the literature review.

Conclusions

Bo Diddley Community Plaza is a historic centerpiece within Downtown Gainesville. While it was observed to be successful in some areas it was largely lacking in others. There was no clear sense of space and the area lacked in any real creative design. Vegetation was limited and landscaping was minimal. The redevelopment of Bethel Station into a café was an impressive start to bring life back into the plaza but there is still much to be desired. The ever present homeless population does pose an obstacle but through creative design tactics and a subsequent increase in desirable pedestrian traffic this can be combated.

The plaza has an abundant amount of potential that is being ghastly underused. Following the guidelines as set out by researchers, urban planners, and landscape architects the formula for success is ever present and can be executed. The Gainesville community deserves a beautiful plaza and the surrounding businesses will only benefit from an improved space.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the City of Gainesville conduct their own study on the Bo Diddley Community Plaza and work in alliance with the Gainesville CRA. A call has been made to redesign the plaza but little effort has been put forth to do so. By revisiting the Downtown Gainesville Redevelopment Plan and using the resources as allocated by

the city this plaza can be the jewel that the City of Gainesville deserves. Emphasis should be placed on creating a sense of enclosure, increasing the seating areas throughout the plaza with sun and shade relationships, and raising the plaza to lessen the loss of sight lines created by the sunken center lawn. In addition, there should be special attention paid to the initiatives that are currently outlined by the CRA. Sustainable design, creation of impactful outdoor rooms, water features, and preservation of historic qualities should be at the forefront of a redesign.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Hannah Rogers was born and raised in Plant City, Florida. After graduating from Brandon Senior High School in Brandon, Florida, Hannah received a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Florida in geography. During her undergraduate career, Hannah studied abroad in North Queensland, Australia and developed a passion for land-use and sustainable design that led her to pursue a graduate degree in urban and regional planning. During her time in the department, Hannah lived and studied in Paris which led to her interests in urban design and subsequently her work on urban plazas. After receiving her Master of Arts in urban and regional planning, Hannah plans to further her interest in design by working in the private realm as a consultant.