

PLACE-IDENTITY IN BEAVER FALLS (Summary)

Eastern University

Wendy Van Wyhe

## **Introduction**

The days of prosperity and wealth still loom in the memories of long-time residents of Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. For most of the 20th Century, the economy of Beaver County was rooted in the American steel industry. Beaver Falls, the county's largest city, was a hub for restaurants, theatres and department stores. The early 1980's, however, brought a collapse in the steel industry followed by significant population and economic decline. Today Beaver Falls is marked by dilapidated buildings, vacant homes, a rampant drug trade and a culture of poverty. While its image may have changed in recent years, the city, its neighborhoods and gathering places along with stories and memories continue to provide meaning for those who live in Beaver Falls.

In response to the needs of the community, several human service agencies and faith-based initiatives have established programs in Beaver Falls including soup kitchens, after-school tutoring, re-entry programs, drug and alcohol recovery, and Habitat for Humanity. While these services provide necessary resources, it remains uncertain how they help the community re-imagine its future, not in terms of the American dream, but in ways that honor the past, redefine the ideal, and provide a sense of dignity, life, and hope in the midst of decline. Have traditional community development efforts ignored our very human need for rootedness, a common narrative, community, and permanence?

These are the questions that have prompted this study. As a community developer, the study has uncovered not only physical and social needs of the city, but some very deep psychological needs of neighbors and friends. These challenges of the urban poor must be acknowledged in attempt to serve, empower, and restore deteriorated neighborhoods.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Throughout history, people have been defined by the land and places they inhabit. Jerusalem had historic meaning for the Israelites; the earth and sky are central to the identity, existence, provision and spirituality of Native Americans; and countless records depict immigrant groups striving to belong in a new world while longing for their homelands. Clearly, places and land provide significant meaning and

have shaped the identities of people groups throughout history. The question remains, however, as to how this intimate relationship between people and their land or the cities and neighborhoods in which they live continue to shape individuals and communities today.

In a culture increasingly marked by mobility, anonymity and convenience, perhaps we have neglected to see the ways in which places offer meaning, influence behavior, and shape our perceptions of self. High mobility rates confirm that Americans are no longer bound, behaviorally or psychologically, to their places of residence (Feldman, 1996, Bouma-Prediger et al, 2008). Much research and numerous authors have reported trends such as that of Edward Relph, cited by David Seamon et al (2008), who argues that our sense of place in America is gradually overshadowed by “placelessness” which he describes as “standardized landscapes” arising from “an uncritical acceptance of mass values...and the overriding concern with efficiency as an end in itself” (p. 4). Leech (1999) describes modern Americans’ sense of longing for continuity, stability, and “confident attachment” to place: “We live longer but emptier, without those nurturing habitats or places which remind us where we came from and, therefore, who we are” (p. 8). The implications of this sense of placelessness and negligence will undoubtedly take their toll on the formation of our identities.

The significance of place for our understanding of self, as well as broader sociological changes and issues, cannot be denied or ignored by those concerned about justice, dignity and restoration. If places matter, the decline of social ties and rootedness to place in America must be of serious concern since they undoubtedly take a toll on the perceptions of our cities, neighborhoods, and self. Further, in regards to the field of community development, perhaps the significance of place for identity formation has for too long been ignored or dismissed in attempt to provide vital resources or services to those in need. Nonetheless, a deeper understanding of the connections between place, interaction, and identity will surely enhance the ways in which we build and maintain human environments, develop communities and work towards restoration in the urban context.

## **Review of Literature**

For many reasons, places matter. Not only do the places we live provide a sense of orientation and belonging as well as a context from which our lives and memories take root, but perhaps the very tangible stuff that allows us to be fully human in an increasingly chaotic world. Edward Relph, cited by Seamon et al (2008) concludes that people will always need a place regardless of any geographical, technological or social advancement because “having and identifying with place [is] integral to what and who we are as human beings” (p. 8). Gillian Rose (1995) emphasizes that places are significant because they are the focus of personal feelings which develop from and pervade every aspect of individuals’ life experiences (p. 88). Further, the author ascribes identity formation to place since it involves all the “subjective feelings associated with everyday consciousness” like the feeling that one belongs, feels comfortable, or at home in a particular place (p. 88). According to Steven Bouma-Prediger et al (2008), to be “placed” is to have a sense of connection, loyalty, affection and identity within a particular context such as a location, a house, a community or nation (p. 45). The places we live root us and offer a sense of orientation from which we see the world and understand our position within it. It is, according to the authors, the most important and least recognized need of the human soul (Bouma-Prediger et al, 2008).

Walter Brueggemann (2002) shares these convictions and turns his attention to the stories of displacement and yearning for place described throughout the scriptures. He states: “the Bible promises precisely what the modern world denies...*land*” (p. 2). According to the author, place is a primary category of faith and is defined as “space” that has historical meaning (Brueggemann, 2002). Our natural yearning for place brings us to enter history. “Humanness”, says Brueggemann (2002), is found in belonging to and referring to a location where the “peculiar historicity of a community has been expressed” (p.5). Unlike the recent “urban promise” of freedom and self-actualization, which glamorizes “detached, unrooted lives of endless choice and no commitment,” our humanness is always in regards to “placement” (Brueggemann, 2002, p. 3). Brueggemann’s (2002) text is a thorough depiction of land as God’s promise of new life to the Israelites which becomes a foundation for their security and identity as a chosen people. Although the Israelite community experienced the loss of land during periods of disobedience and rootedness, placed-ness, according to Brueggemann (2002), symbolized life and hope

for the people of God: “Israel is always on the move from land to landlessness, from landlessness to land, from life to death, from death to life” (p. 12). Describing periods of sojourning, wandering and exile, Brueggemann’s (2002) description parallels our own contemporary problems of displacement, “hunger for rootage” and a “yearning for turf” (p. 13).

Unfortunately, however, while we long for rootedness in place and a deep sense of community, we find ourselves distracted by the conveniences and empty promises of the modern culture. In place of honoring our innate humanness and dignity, we opt for the cheap, disposable knock-offs which inevitably distort the places we live. Consequently, when people and places are perceived as “nowhere” they are treated as “nowhere” and become disposable as soon as they are no longer of use.

In his text, *Ecological Literacy*, David Orr (1992) distinguishes between “residents” and “inhabitants.” Inhabitants, according to the author, cannot be separated from their particular habitat:

A resident is a temporary occupant, putting down roots and investing little, knowing little, and perhaps caring little for the immediate locale beyond its ability to gratify... Good inhabitation is an art requiring detailed knowledge of a place, the capacity for observation, and a sense of care and rootedness (p. 102).

With this said, we would be wise to nurture and educate “inhabitants” in place of “residents” not only for the sake of beauty or utility, but rather because physical structures and land sustain social networks, our physical needs, and our basic humanness. There is an important connection between the places we inhabit, how we receive and nurture these places, and who we are as a people of God.

In attempt to understand the significance of place in the shaping of identity, several important theories were found helpful. In particular, place-attachment theory, place-identity theory, and urban-identity theory informed the author’s understanding of how the community of Beaver Falls provides meaning, affects behavior, and influences residents’ level of investment by pointing to critical factors of place-identity formation. The social and physical environment, the identification one feels to their surroundings, his or her level of attachment, the ability to adapt and manage daily routines or tasks, and

the degree to which they feel satisfied in their environment emerged as the most significant factors contributing to place-identity.

First, both the physical and social characteristics of a particular place provide clues in regards to who lives there. Hauge (2009) emphasized the significance of physical structures by suggesting that buildings are associated with meaning and memories that not only tell us who other people are but also who we are. Additionally, the quality and maintenance of buildings, streets, sidewalks and structures communicate how one is to act in a particular setting and therefore influence behavior. According to Gallagher (1993), healthy urban environments can reinforce good behavior while boarded-up buildings and vacant lots communicate change in urban ecology and contribute to downward spiral in terms of persons' behavior, expectations, commitment, and satisfaction. "Slum" according to Gallagher (1993) is really a psychological phenomena – a state of hopelessness – and despite what they look like, places labeled that way can be filled with hope (p. 197). Further, the social image of a particular place, including stereotypes and media coverage, along with one's sense of belonging, quality relationships, and level of interaction shape persons' perceptions of the places they live.

Next, identification refers to the congruency felt between a person's self image and the image of his or her surroundings. Fleury-Bahi et al (2008) attributes quality relationships and satisfaction to one's degree of identification and suggests that positive evaluations of place and identification are mutually reinforcing: individuals tend to identify with places they like and like the places which reflect the perceptions they have of themselves. Hauge (2007) further suggested that identification as well as satisfaction in regards to place is dependent upon place attachments which emerged as a third significant factor in the formation of place-identity.

Robert Gifford (2002) defines place-attachment as the feeling we acquire towards our sense of belonging to familiar places. When attachments to places grow, persons will begin to identify with those places. Four important principles affecting attachment, according to Breakwell (1986), include continuity, or identifying with the image of the community, owning distinctive marks or traditions within the community, maintaining self-esteem, and generating a sense of self-efficacy in regards to where one lives.

According to Stephanie Riger and Paul Lavrakas, cited by Lynne Manzo et al (2008), place attachment is often impacted by length of residence and has significant implications for improvement efforts as well as one's sense of community which is generated by feelings of mutual trust, social connections, shared concerns, and community values (Manzo, et al, 2008). When people commit to residing in a particular place, attachment grows and has positive implications for both the physical and social qualities of that place.

A fourth important factor shaping place-identity is the ability for persons to adapt in a particular place. Prohansky's concern is for those contending with the annoying aspects of city life such as crowding, air pollution, urban decay, neighborhood conflicts, territoriality, noise pollution, space and job stress, and invasions of privacy. The ability to adapt to city life has created a preference for variability, complexity, and diversity among urban dwellers. Adaptation, according to Prohansky et al (1982), will inevitably change individuals' behavioral patterns, lead to greater satisfaction, and produce the ability to meet particular needs. The ability to adapt or tolerate an urban environment as well as use one's surroundings to meet everyday needs is necessary for attachment and identity formation to occur. When individuals are unable to adapt to a particular environment, they may choose to disinvest or move away from that place.

Finally satisfaction, the final major factor determining place-identity, refers specifically to the level of enjoyment one finds in their neighborhood or community based on relationships, interactions, physical qualities, beauty, or convenience. Satisfaction is deeply tied to other factors like attachment, adaptation, and the social and physical environment. They are each mutually reinforcing so a change in one factor will ultimately change perceptions of the other factors. This interconnectedness inevitably supports the holistic or multifaceted work of community development where efforts can generate change through multiple channels.

## **Methodology**

Based on the review of literature and research questions, this study examined interpretations of place and the perceptions of self among residents of Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. A series of ten interviews was used to compile data related to place-identity. The researcher conveniently selected participants, under the direction of a local sociologist, to reflect a wide variety of age, race, occupation, income level, educational status, and family background. Each participant was a resident of downtown Beaver Falls and has lived in their neighborhoods for more than ten years. Since downtown Beaver Falls covers an approximate area of only .8 square miles, each participant came from the same general location and neighborhood characteristics.

Interview questions were open-ended and based on existing theories focusing on participants' attachment to their neighborhood, satisfaction, ability to adapt, and image. Each interview was guided towards the topics of neighborhood perception, ability to navigate and manage daily routines, level of neighborhood involvement or relationships within the community, reasons for choosing Beaver Falls and remaining in the city, and their connections to the past. Further, questions were designed to uncover personal implications, behavioral expectations, self-perceptions, and participants' interpretations of their neighborhood experience. Through guided discussion, touching on each of the areas mentioned, the researcher was able to uncover common themes and recognize elements and implications of place-identity in light of the current literature (See Appendix A: Interview Questions).

## **Discussion**

The ten participants used in the current study provided deep insight, rich descriptions, stories, and examples that gave voice to their physical and social surroundings, actual experience and personal interpretations. As each was heard and analyzed, common themes, in light of what it means to live in downtown Beaver Falls, emerged.

First, without a doubt, each person interviewed referred, often multiple times, to the more prosperous days of Beaver Falls when jobs were plentiful and when people would come from all around to shop, dine and congregate in the city. Most of the older folks interviewed described the past with deep

nostalgia accompanied by sadness for what Beaver Falls has become. The younger interviewees, however, spoke more abstractly about the past as if they were reciting facts from a textbook.

A life-long Beaver Falls resident provided a common depiction of Beaver Falls before its decline: a “bustling metropolis” where “everyone came on Saturday nights to shop...It’s not like it used to be, we had like five jewelry stores...now they’re tearing most of those buildings down...it’s kind of sad.” An elderly woman added, “we were fortunate to see Beaver Falls at its peak, it was a busy, really busy place, you couldn’t even walk down the street.” Perhaps the following statement from a 70-year-old man states it most fully. Referring to the 1950’s, he stated:

the town was more fruitful then, all the industries were active; all the people were working...you had access to theatres and clothing stores, small ma and pop operations, restaurants, hat shops...things were accessible; things were right here in town...this has become a third-class city, it’s no longer much of anything, there’s no production here [and] stores are closing...it’s a mere shadow of what it was fifty years ago, a mere shadow.

Although each participant referred to the city’s more prosperous days, the older generation felt the weight of this loss most significantly.

Secondly, each of the ten participants spoke positively in regards to their friends, neighbors, acquaintances they had around town, their favorite gathering spots, or the small-town feel of the city. For example, three participants interviewed spoke only positively about their neighborhoods. One stated, “This is a great street; we have good neighbors, it’s safe, they have neighborhood watch, that’s just neighbors watching out for neighbors, it keeps people and children safe... I know everybody on this street.” Another woman, a widow in her 80’s, said “it’s been great in Beaver Falls, I have great neighbors, they’ve been most helpful; they look after me.” Finally, a middle-aged man stated, “We have fabulous neighbors, that’s one of the attractions to where I live. There’s a good bit of stability and we’ve had neighbors welcome us and we’ve started relationships that are ongoing and lasting.” These persons seemed to embrace the life of their city and neighborhoods.

Other participants, however, were not so positive about the conditions of Beaver Falls but could still recognize the presence of positive relationships and good people. A married couple in their 70's, who first described their neighborhood as "bad" and "poor" where "most the people, generally speaking, are on welfare [and are] dopers" later discussed how nice it was to "kind of know everyone [in Beaver Falls] because of the smallness of the city." Further, they said they liked that they could call anyone if they needed something and concluded by saying, "I've met an awful lot of good people [in Beaver Fall]."

Another elderly woman talked about the drug problem in her neighborhood but then followed with "but I know a lot of people in Beaver Falls, good people, they're not bad people."

However, throughout each of the interviews, there remained a tension between this positive social experience and the problems that continually tainted residents' perceptions of their community. These troubles included drug activity, prostitution, vandalism, litter, and disruptive youth behavior. One individual spoke angrily: "in the neighborhood now it's a terrible situation, you got theft, your prostitution, drugs, a number of things." Later he stated, "these young people coming out of school...they're like animals, they cause a lot of disturbances and the law has to be called on a lot of occasions." Another individual also commented on the youth in Beaver Falls: "the police have to place their car down 17<sup>th</sup> Street because the middle school is so bad; they're fighting and pushing, screaming at each other".

The most common problem mentioned was drug use in Beaver Falls. An elderly man said, "what has made a big difference was drugs coming into the town; drugs have really taken over." Further, five of the seven participants who talked about drugs in Beaver Falls mentioned their fear in relation to the rampant drug activity. One elderly woman stated, "I would not go out at night anymore in this particular neighborhood, we're surrounded with drugs; there's a lot of people that come into this neighborhood that you don't know so I don't think it's safe." Another said "the people moving in the area were on drugs and there were cars coming and going constantly buying drugs, that part is really scary and every once in a while you'd hear a gunshot, then they moved and another set comes in." The youngest participant in the study, a twenty-year-old African American male discussed the fear of "ratting somebody out" in which

case “them or one of their friends would come back and try to get me for it or something, especially because there’s a lot of people that know you around here and you know a lot of people.” There was no questions that participants felt the burden of these social ills and the lasting effects they bring to their much-loved community.

An additional theme that continually emerged throughout the study was residents’ dissatisfaction regarding the buildings, houses and properties in Beaver Falls. Generally, the participants seemed to feel annoyed by deteriorating buildings and the condemned houses that have not yet been torn down. Five of the nine who mentioned these properties made casual statements such as “There are some houses that are kind of abandoned and those need taken care of” and “I feel sorry for the buildings as they decline.” One homeowner said, “the housing quality varies...there are some that are just hanging in there and there are some that are bad. On our block there are probably one or two that really ought to come down, they’re in bad shape.” Four others, however, were much more frank in regards to their perception of buildings and properties. One stated, “some houses are really bad, they’re condemned and falling apart, in general this is just a lower income area so the houses are probably poverty level.” Another described each house on his block and how they have declined since he moved there in 1988 and an elderly woman further complained about how deterioration affects her own home. She stated: “[condemned houses] make your place look awful...some of them need tore down; it doesn’t help the city, it keeps people from moving here, it’s why you don’t get good people moving into the neighborhood”. Finally, a more angry response from a life-long resident of the city related the quality of physical structures to other social problems: “there’s a lot of abandoned properties in Beaver Falls that are havens for drug activity and God knows what else.” Overall, while nine of the ten participants pointed to the deterioration of buildings and houses, it was only mentioned a total of twelve times and only two brought it up more than once.

Finally, most participants, at one point or another, talked about their sense of being at home where they lived and feeling comfortable in their surroundings. While most mentioned ties to family and church, others simply value the familiarity they feel in the place they live. An elderly woman commented on the familiarity of remaining in a particular place: “It’s something that you’re used to...sort of like

your old car; it's old but I like it." For others, it was feeling rooted and unable to imagine relocating. One participant stated, "this is home, yeah it's home, it isn't fabulous but it's home." Another added, "we just don't know where we'd go...I guess this has been our routine for so many years." Finally, a single mother concluded, "I think it's a good spot to be stuck." While each participant in the study has lived in Beaver Falls for at least ten years, which undoubtedly points to strong social or family ties in the area, it was interesting to hear comments such as this multiple times as if moving on to somewhere new was not a viable option. Further, as comments were offered in regards to feeling at home in Beaver Falls, an overall theme emerged shedding light on a common narrative. While experiencing the tremendous loss at the collapse of the steel industry and while experiencing hardships, problems and general decline, there continues to be an attachment of residents to their homes, their neighborhoods, and to the community of Beaver Falls. Most of these folks love their city and can still imagine better days ahead.

This feeling of attachment among residents in Beaver Falls who have seen the city at its peak validate the frustrations, sadness, and lost sense of belonging expressed in regards to economic and social decline. Since identification and adaptation are closely linked to place attachment, this rootedness to Beaver Falls is at risk in light of the severe social problems and physical deterioration. In fact, three long-term residents interviewed have considered leaving Beaver Falls, despite their strong attachments, due to their feelings of despair. As Beaver Falls continues to face vacant and dilapidated buildings, drug activity, vandalism, and disruptive youth behavior, these attachments and correlating community investments are under serious threat.

Further dampening persons' care or investment towards the community is the level of satisfaction they feel towards the place they live. Satisfaction, according to the literature, is maintained when persons' experience positive relationships, a sense of community, or neighborliness, feel safe, can manage daily routines or tasks, and simply enjoy their surroundings. Satisfaction, it turn, produces greater identification and attachment. However, in light of participants' comments in regards to social problems, the loss of local businesses, deteriorated buildings, and the social image or stereotypes in Beaver Falls, satisfaction

among residents is surely at risk and may generate tension, fear and anxiety among residents causing them to move out or isolate themselves as much as necessary.

While the current study uncovered some important challenges for the community of Beaver Falls, it also highlighted existing assets from which to build upon. First, while place attachments are at risk, they continue to exist and draw people into the community. There seems to be a deep sense of pride in the city and connection between residents that may withstand the more recent social and economic decline if it can be nurtured and preserved. Next, despite social problems like drugs and disruptive youth behavior, there remains a strong social fabric where folks feel connected and among friends. This sense of community is fostered in restaurants, bars, sporting events, churches, and as people run into people they know around town. The ease of walking and navigating the city was also a notable asset among residents interviewed. One stated: “I walk everywhere downtown...the post-office, Rite Aid, the thrift shop...” and another, “I like the convenience; when I want to go to the store, I don’t have to sit in traffic, if you had to walk you could, you could survive just by walking, I like the convenience of living here.” Having the means to complete daily tasks, even by foot, made a big difference for the majority of residents interviewed.

Using these assets while addressing the risks related to attachment and satisfaction must be included in efforts towards community development in Beaver Falls. While providing resources and offering services is a worthy start, it is the author’s belief that restoration in regards to the real suffering and psychological needs of folks in the community cannot take root without addressing the ways in which places provide meaning and identity and the deep needs that arise when a place experiences significant loss.

### **Implications for Community Development**

The needs and conditions of the Beaver Falls community, which have emerged from the current study, point to new strategies in the work of community development. Providing opportunities to restore social capital and improving the physical surroundings of the community are possible places to start.

Moreover, much can be learned from the Uncommon Grounds Café in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania where John Stanley and others look to Walter Brueggemann's text, *The Prophetic Imagination*, as a foundation for their work and ministry. Perhaps the text can provide some groundwork for efforts in Beaver Falls also.

First, since theorists generally believe that one's sense of community or social networks are the grounds for continuity, or identification with a particular place, along with greater satisfaction, providing opportunities to build social capital in Beaver Falls will undoubtedly foster place attachment, identification and satisfaction. Social capital refers to the value or benefit received from social networks. In other words, it is what people get from who they know such as price discounts and job interviews, as well as optimism and greater mental health (Lin, 2001). Nan Lin (2001), author of *Social Capital: A Theory of Social Structure and Action* points to social networking as an essential step in developing a collective consciousness, mobilizing communities, and providing the grounds for social transformation.

There are many initiatives and approaches that could be used towards restoring social capital in Beaver Falls. For instance, creating a "third place" in the community may provide a positive setting for informal gatherings, conversation, the development of relationships, and a place to belong. Neighborhood projects such as a community garden or block parties could become the groundwork for building relationships and investing in both the physical and social environment. Finally, organizing community members to work towards change, strengthen social control, and revitalize neighborhoods will surely result in a deepened sense of self-efficacy and satisfaction. Fortunately, efforts such as these have begun to emerge in the community of Beaver Falls as individuals have recognized this need and have been captured by a vision for revitalization.

In addition to building social capital, improving the physical surroundings of the community will have positive effects in regards to self-concept, social image, and behavioral expectations. Since the conditions of buildings, houses, streets, and sidewalks reflect a community's identity and value, improving these structures will be a necessary step towards a restored place-identity. Tearing down abandoned houses and vacant buildings, creating green space, caring for public sidewalks and parks and

repairing storefronts along the main street would not only make the city look more attractive, but would have a positive effect on the social image of the community. Additional efforts towards beautification, such as planting flowers, painting murals, picking up trash and landscaping would further produce significant change in regards to identification, behavioral expectations, and self-image.

Like the current challenges faced by the community of Beaver Falls, nearby Aliquippa suffers from the loss of industry, economy, and identity due to the collapse of the steel industry in Western Pennsylvania. John Stanley, the director of the café, describes Aliquippa as a community of despair commenting on the sense of hopelessness, apathy, numbness, and callousness among his patrons (J. Stanley, personal communication, November 11, 2010). Plagued by recent decline, the city of Aliquippa faces an identity crisis and finds itself in desperate need of hope, imagination, energy and new life.

In response to the despair felt in the midst of crisis, the Uncommon Ground Café attempts to provide a place of story-telling and imagination towards a new sense of identity. Using Walter Brueggemann's (1973) text, *The Prophetic Imagination*, as a guide, John Stanley and others envision a restored identity, based on right relationships between people and the places they live, a willingness to hear and value the stories of a marginalized community, and an empowering level of social capital. This effort towards social transformation, or prophetic ministry, according to Brueggemann (1973) involves both criticism and energy. First, while criticism eliminates numbness and creates space to grieve, energy is generated by imagining an alternative vision that moves beyond despair to hope. When despair is intimately tied to one's place, as in Aliquippa, community stories, identification, self-actualization, and glimpses of new life are critical in light of God's restorative promise.

The Uncommon Ground Café is fueled by a vision to rebuild the community of Aliquippa by encouraging criticism and energy towards a restored identity and providing a space where creativity, imagination, recovery and relationships can take root. By providing great food, drinks, a place to gather, artwork, opportunities for expression, recovery meetings and community service the café serves as a platform to spur imagination, renew hope, develop faith, experience healing, and re-build the city.

Urban social transformation takes root in places like the Uncommon Grounds Café. Here, right relationships between people, places, work, food, God, and self are nurtured and re-imagined in ways that offer dignity and life. At the café, traditional approaches to community development are replaced by empowerment and hope for those affected by placelessness, isolation, and a lost sense of positive self-image. Through the acts of criticism, story-telling, building social capital, and envisioning a brighter future, personal and communal identity is being reconfigured, knowledge and understanding are deepening, and a people are becoming agents of change in a city of despair.

Since individuals can often find a sense of hope or satisfaction from their social environment and physical surroundings, providing opportunities to build social capital and beautify physical surroundings will provide adequate starting points for improved self-concepts in Beaver Falls. Looking to models of social transformation, efforts can be taken to provide opportunities for healing and restored identity within the community. The work of community development, in Beaver Falls as well as in cities across the nation, can no longer ignore the social and psychological significance of place in the work of neighborhood revitalization.

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## APPENDIX A: Interview Questions

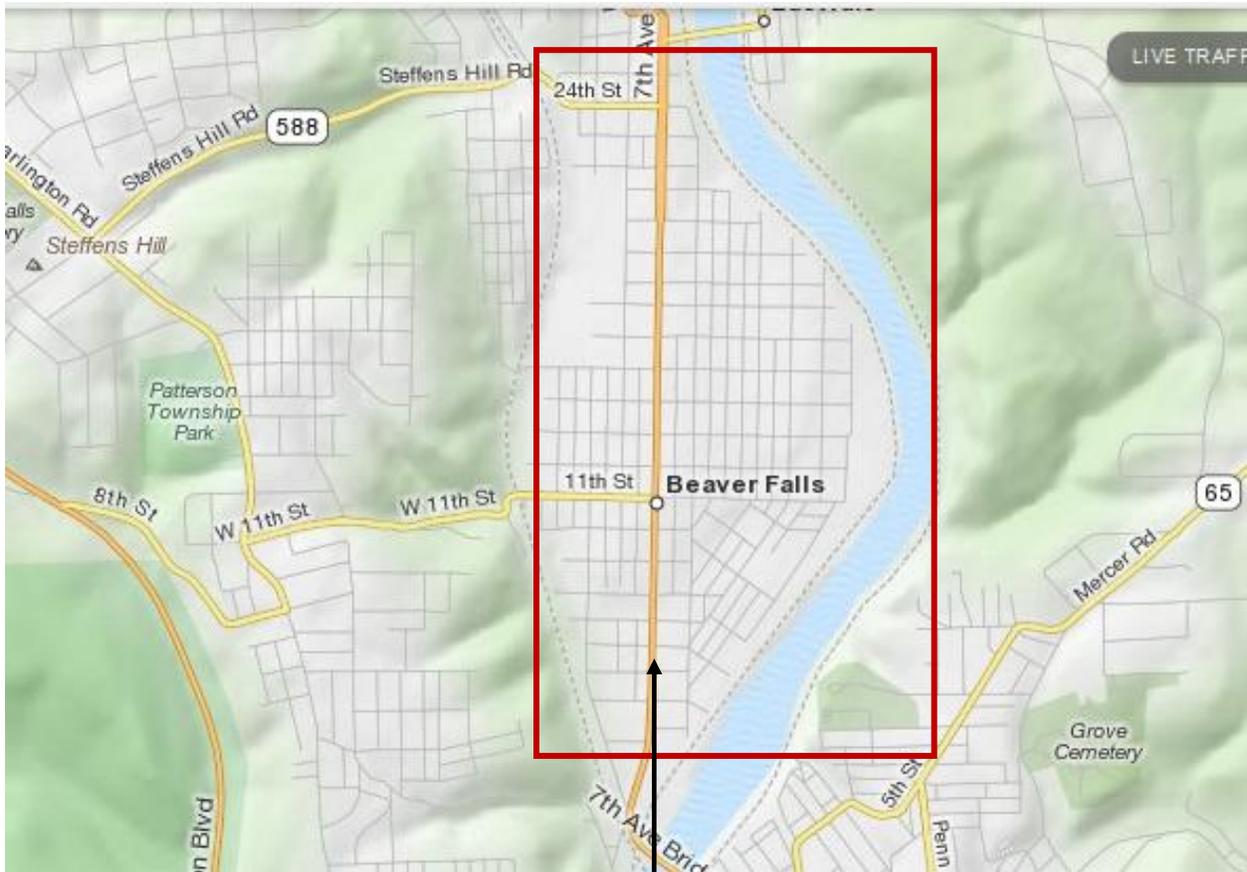
1. How did you come to Beaver Falls?
2. How long have you lived in Beaver Falls?
3. Describe the physical setting of your neighborhood.
4. How would you describe the people that live in your neighborhood?
5. Do you experience a sense of community in Beaver Falls?
6. What are the best things about living in Beaver Falls?
7. What are the worst things about living in Beaver Falls?
8. How would you describe the quality of housing in Beaver Falls?
9. Is there anything unique about Beaver Falls?
10. Where do you go in Beaver Falls? Where do you see people you know?
11. Do you like living in Beaver Falls?
12. Would you choose to leave if you had the opportunity?

APPENDIX B: Unfolding Matrix

Themes	*	#	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Neighborliness	34	10	4	3	5	1	5	3	1	5	4	3
Drugs, Crime & Problems	24	9	0	4	5	3	2	2	2	1	4	1
The Past	22	10	1	1	3	5	1	2	2	1	3	3
Community of the Past	19	7	0	3	6	1	3	2	2	2	0	0
Being at Home	16	8	3	2	2	0	4	1	2	1	0	1
Deterioration	12	9	0	1	2	1	1	1	3	1	1	1
No Where to Go	12	8	0	0	2	1	1	2	3	1	1	1
Navigation & Walkability	11	6	2	1	1	0	0	2	2	3	0	0
Now: Un-Neighborliness	10	5	0	1	3	0	0	2	3	0	1	0
Hope for a better Future	10	4	1	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	2	1
Fear	8	5	0	2	2	0	0	1	2	0	1	0
Property Values	8	5	0	0	2	1	2	0	2	1	0	0
Places to Go in BF	8	6	0	0	1	0	1	1	2	2	1	0
No Work	7	5	1	0	1	1	3	1	0	0	0	0
Beauty	6	4	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
The Poor and Welfare	5	5	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0
Houses too close together	4	6	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Care for Properties	4	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1
Sports	4	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
No Hope	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
* refers to the total number of times this item was referred to during the interviews												
# refers to the number of participants who referred to the item during their interview												

(Padilla, et al, 1997)

APPENDIX C: Map of Beaver Falls



(MapQuest Maps, 2011).

Downtown  
Beaver Falls