



MidTown Neighborhoods, Parks & Schools

TOTAL AREA - 6 SQUARE MILES

Schools

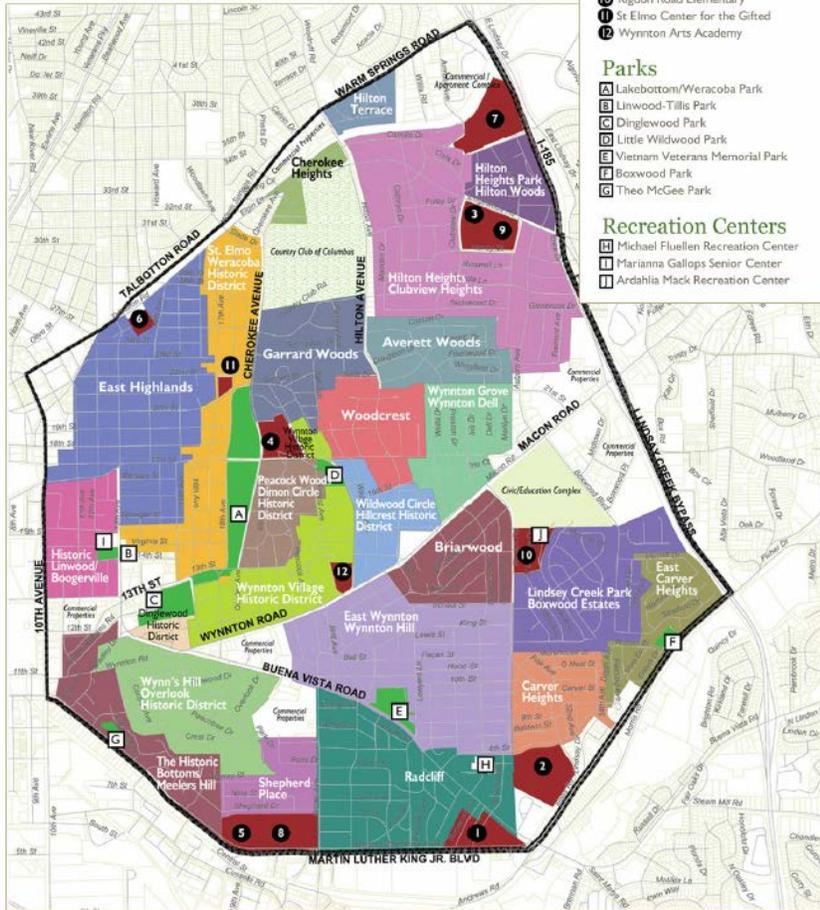
- 1 Thomas H. Brewer Elementary
- 2 G.W. Carver High School
- 3 Clubview Elementary
- 4 Columbus High School
- 5 J.D. Davis Elementary
- 6 Lyda Hannan Academy
- 7 Hardaway High School
- 8 Marshall Middle School
- 9 Richards Middle School
- 10 Rigdon Road Elementary
- 11 St Elmo Center for the Gifted
- 12 Wyrnton Arts Academy

Parks

- A Lakebottom/Weracoba Park
- B Linwood-Tillis Park
- C Dinglewood Park
- D Little Wildwood Park
- E Vietnam Veterans Memorial Park
- F Boxwood Park
- G Theo McGee Park

Recreation Centers

- H Michael Fluellen Recreation Center
- I Marianna Gallops Senior Center
- J Ardahlia Mack Recreation Center



At a Crossroads: MidTown, Inc. 2005-2015

Editor: Dr. Amanda Rees



COLUMBUS STATE
UNIVERSITY
Columbus Community Geography Center

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1 INTRODUCTION

Established in 2005, MidTown, Inc., a self-identified community development organization, celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2016. After a decade's work, the organization is presently reviewing its activities as it takes a moment to consider its future trajectory. To facilitate this process MidTown, Inc. partnered with Columbus State University's Columbus Community Geography Center to support MidTown, Inc.'s efforts. In fall 2015, nine students in CSU's urban geography course, taught by Dr. Amanda Rees, researched and completed this report including: Celeb Ashburn, Cheltzie Brown, Eric Derhammer, Jessica Dixon, Kelsie Hughes, Rachel Knapp, Morgan Robinson, Anastasia Romain, and C.E. Sturgeon. An online report summary is also published at CSU's Archives

In approaching this project, students developed two questions: What is Midtown (the region), and what MidTown, Inc.? To address those questions students prepared a short overview of Midtown's expansion between the 1830s and 1970s and developed demographic data exploring age, racial and ethnic mix, and levels of education in each of Midtown's block groups to better understand the population within this 6-square mile district. Students created a short history of community development in the U.S. to place MidTown, Inc. within that broader context. Having conducted and then transcribed nine oral histories with people involved in the creation and evolution of MidTown, Inc., students drew upon those documents to develop a timeline of MidTown, Inc. along with a narrative history of the organization's evolution.

2 . HISTORY OF MIDTOWN EXPANSION 1830s-1970s

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Established by the Georgia Legislature in 1828, the port city of Columbus, Georgia was laid out in a traditional grid plan as the city's commercial life developed at the fall line of the Chattahoochee River. The region of Columbus now known as Midtown is located east and north of city's historical central business district. It was settled by several wealthy land owners who created estates on a hill overlooking the community interspersed with small farms. These large estates (which would subsequently be sub-divided into suburban neighborhoods) were interspersed with a few small farms. This area developed slowly in this manner in the fifty years between the 1830s and 1870. Since this *Antebellum and early Post Civil War Period* (1830s-1870) there have been three subsequent periods of expansion: the *Late Victorian Era* (1880-1915), the *Interwar Era* (1920-1945), and the *Post War Era* 1945-1970).

These four eras have given birth to Midtown's twenty-four neighborhoods, five of which were established as historic districts in 2001. As this overview of Midtown's development indicates, approximately half the neighborhoods were constructed prior to 1945 while the rest occurred in the 25 years after the end of World War II. These periods of suburban development use the term suburb to mean primarily residential areas dominated by single family homes within a metropolitan area. In discussing suburbs, the history of their development has resulted in the drawing of a line between those developed before World War II or after. Prewar suburbs, developed between the mid-nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries are defined by distinctive architecture, tree-lined streets, walkable commercial areas, and accessibility to public transit. In contrast, post war suburbs contain homogenous architectural styles and produce automobile-centric neighborhoods that lacked the infrastructure to support other forms of movement (walking, biking, public transportation). The term first ring suburb has often been used to define suburban development from 1945 to 1970 which describes half of Midtown's neighborhoods. Thus, the pre and post-world division is perhaps more useful. Specifically, it is useful in considering the implications for the region's focus on strengthening its minimum grid and supporting the multiple modes of transportation including pedestrians, cyclists, a public transportation system and automobiles.

2.1.1 Antebellum and Early Post-Civil War Era: 1830's-1870

Three estates in Midtown became important in supporting the area's earliest permanent settlement but they also became the center of several subsequent subdivisions. Established in

1834, the first was the 100-acre estate of Colonel William L. Wynn. Located at the edge of the hill overlooking downtown Columbus to the west, this estate eventually developed into the Wynn's Hill-Overlook Neighborhood. Just two years later, a prominent Columbus lawyer, John Banks developed a 265-acre antebellum estate known as the Cedars (1836). In subsequent eras this developed into Wynnton Village. Finally, in 1857 Joel Hurt built a 30-acre antebellum estate which would later develop into the Dinglewood neighborhood. All three of these neighborhoods received historic district status in 2001.

2.1.2 Late Victorian Era: 1870-1915

Several sections in Midtown saw the beginning of suburban expansion in this period including the following neighborhoods: East Highland; Weracoba-St. Elmo; Hillcrest and Wildwood; and, Linwood and Boogerville. The area now known as East Highland (the largest neighborhood in Midtown) was first developed at its most southern edge in the 1870s. This large district in Midtown saw expansions to include the smaller subdivisions of Hill House, the Bowers, Bonny Doon, Dudley, and Hawkins. The Weracoba-St. Elmo Historic District, home to the Wildwood/Weracoba Park, was first developed in 1890 by the owners of Columbus Railroad Company, John Francis Flourney and Louis F. Garrard. Weracoba Park became known as the city's primary street car park. Flourney extended the railroad to Wynnton in 1867 in order to connect with property he was developing that became Hillcrest and Wildwood subdivisions. This era also saw the development of Historic Linwood and Boogerville districts. While Linwood was established for wealthy white residents, Boogerville provided housing for mill workers who would easily walk to Swift Mill was subsequently transformed into an industrial area in the 1970s.

2.1.3 Interwar Era: 1917-1945

In the interwar period Midtown saw rapid expansion in residential development with a variety of neighborhoods that would subsequently receive historic district nomination. One year prior to the end of World War I, Midtown's Hurt estate gave birth to Dinglewood. In 1922, renowned landscape architect Earle S. Draper designed Peacock Woods, while subsequent subdivisions were created in the Peacock Woods-Dimon Circle neighborhood. This period also saw the development of the Weracoba-St Elmo neighborhood with its distinct Craftsman and Tudor Revival homes developed in the 1930s and 1940s. The Wildwood Circle-Hillcrest Historic District saw expansion in the 1920s. Wynnton Village saw various subdivisions from 1919 to the 1940s. Wynn's Hill also saw the majority of the neighborhood developed using the Draper as its landscape architect. Briarwood saw some early development in the 1930s. Other smaller subdivisions including Cherokee Heights and East Wynnton/Wynnton Hill. In considering the periodization of Columbus' suburban development, this interwar period (1917-1945) is often referred as the era of first-ring suburban development. These first-ring suburbs

are often distinguished by smaller lot size that often resulted in a greater density of homes in contrast to the large lot size of the mid-century suburban development.

2.1.4 Post-World War II Era: 1945-1970s

After a long development gap that began in the Great Depression and carried on through World War II, a flurry of post-war housing occurred. This development occurred in two phases. Neighborhoods developed in the late 1940s and early 1950s often contained smaller homes on somewhat smaller lots, while in the later 1950s and 1960s sub-divisions were home to larger lot sizes and larger homes. On the whole, earlier period developments were laid out on a grid or modified grid plan that created a street system that supported access between neighborhoods. Later developments often emphasized curvilinear streets that discouraged traffic through the neighborhood. Neither development periods saw the inclusion of sidewalks.

The *Early Post War Period* (1947-1950s) saw a rich expansion of sub-division development to include: Briarwood, Hilton Terrace, Wynnton Grove/Wynnton Dell, the expansion of Shepherd Place, Lindsey Creek Park-Boxwood Estates, Carver Heights (the first middle-class subdivision developed for African American residents), and Garrard Woods.

Later Post-War Period 1960s-1970s saw the expansion of Shephard Place and the development of Boxwood, Hilton Woods, Hilton Heights Park, East Carver Heights, and Carver Plaza. Perhaps in part in response to the economic downturn of the 1970s, development slowed and Carriage Estates was the only major development in this decade.

In conclusion, though Midtown's 24 neighborhoods rarely have one developmental period, this historic overview of development reveals that Midtown can roughly be divided into two periods, with almost half of its neighborhoods being developed prior to 1945, and the other half being developed in the post-1945 period. This split has some implications for the future of Midtown as pre-war homes are typically laid out at higher densities (though not always). However, they almost all have sidewalks as part of their neighborhoods in contrast to post-world War II homes. Mid-century subdivisions are rarely laid out on a traditional grid system. This split certainly has implications with MidTown, Inc.'s focus on the minimum grid and making the public spaces of Midtown streets accessible to pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transportation users.

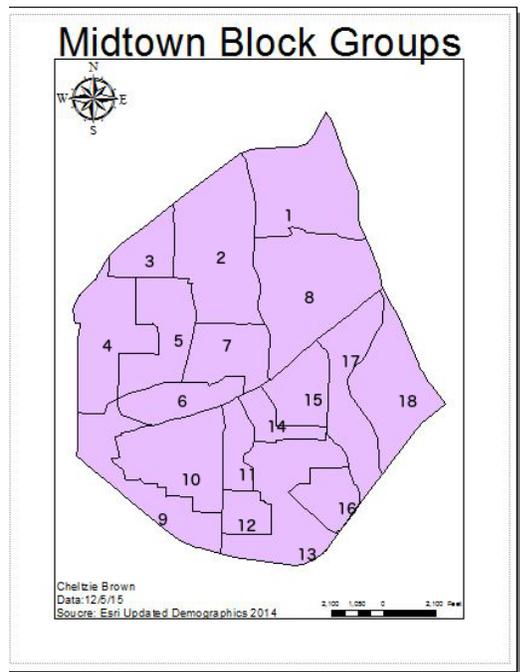
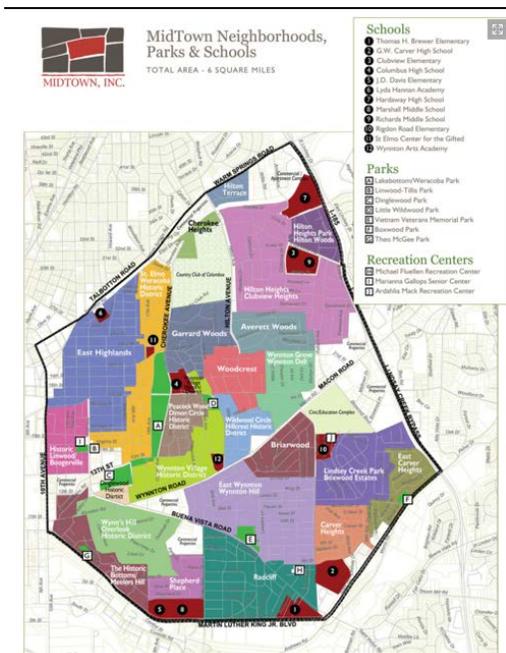
3 DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF MIDTOWN, COLUMBUS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

To understand the demographics of Midtown, Columbus this report includes five maps. Figure one shows a map of the 24 Midtown neighborhoods to help orient readers to the district. This map was created by MidTown, Inc. and the boundaries between neighborhoods were identified using the historical boundaries of subdivisions. Figure two shows a map of Midtown’s block groups. Block groups are a “scale” of census data that combines several blocks of housing. This offers the most detailed level of data for this assessment. There are 18 block groups in Midtown. Each block group often crosses over several different neighborhood boundaries so table one links each block group with appropriate neighborhoods. This may be of use to readers, though it is assumed that once a reader can compare the Midtown neighborhoods and the block group map this table will be less useful. Figures three, four and five are demographic maps of ages, racial and ethnic mix, and levels of education. Each demographic map shows a pie chart in each block group with data from the 2010 census.

Figure One: Midtown Neighborhoods

Figure Two: Block Group Map



3.2 AGE MAKEUP IN MIDTOWN BLOCK GROUPS

Figure three shows a map displaying a range of ages in each of Midtown's 18 block groups. The map shows three age ranges: 0-19, 20-59, and 60+ years of age. The legend shows an additional range, and though the map contains two age ranges 0-9 and 10-19, the same color is used to indicate that these two ranges should be read as one (0-19).

Five block groups show more than 25% of the populations in the 0-19 age range. These block groups are located in the west and southern sectors of the district (block groups 4, 9, 10, 16, and 18 shown in Figure Two). In examining the spatial distribution of the largest age range (20-59 years), there is a distinct east-west split. Most of the neighborhoods in the western half of the district indicate that 60% of their residents fall within this age range, while the eastern half of the district trends shows a trend of about 50% of the population this age range. In examining the spatial distribution of the older adult age range (60+ years of age), four block groups had a population of 25% or more of their population in this older adult range (block groups 12, 15, 17, 18).

3.3 RACIAL AND ETHNIC MAKEUP IN MIDTOWN BLOCK GROUPS

Figure four shows the racial and ethnic breakdown in the 18 block groups across Midtown in three categories: white, black and "other." The last category includes: Native American, Indian American, Pacific Islander, and Hispanic American. The "other" category is most likely made up primarily of Hispanic residents, however this hypothesis needs further testing. The map in figure four shows three distinct trends. First, in the north eastern section of Midtown, seven block groups have over 60% white residents with three of those block groups having at least 75% white residents. Midtown's southern region is the location of higher percentages of black residents. In this region 9 block groups having over 75%, with eight block groups having 90% black population and 10% other population makeup (block groups 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18). The Midtown region with the greatest racial and ethnic diversity is the west. The "other" category is in its greatest numbers in the north-western sector of the region. Finally, in the southwestern sector of Midtown we see the most mixed block groups with block group four being the most balanced of the district.

3.4 LEVELS OF EDUCATION IN MIDTOWN BLOCK GROUPS

Figure five shows the level of education attainment in the 18 Midtown block groups with categories of education: those with a high school diploma as their highest

level of educational attainment, those with bachelor's degree, and those with graduate degrees. Note: The map does not show the distribution of residents with no high school diplomas. Block groups with more than 50% of the population with a high school diploma as they are concentrated in the western and southern sectors of Midtown. Indeed, five block groups saw 80% of residents with only a high school diplomas (11, 12, 13, 15, and 17). Degree-holding residents in Midtown can be found in all block groups throughout the district. However, seven block groups have over 50% of their population holding a degree (bachelors and graduate degrees) located primarily in the north central and north eastern sector of the district. There were five block groups (1, 2, 7, 8 and 10) over 25% of the population holding graduate degrees.

3.5 CONCLUSION

This demographic overview of Midtown reveals a diverse population in terms of age, race and ethnicity, and education levels. The age range map shows several district themes with the higher levels of working age population (60%) living in the western half of the district while only 50% of the working population lived in eastern half of Midtown. Larger percentages of young people (under 20) in the western and the southeastern sections of Midtown. Block groups with 25% or more of residents 60+ years of age were located in eastern half of Midtown. The distribution of race and ethnicity shows Midtown has a racial diverse population with the most diverse neighborhoods in the center west. The map revealed high rates of segregation with nine block groups with 90% of one dominant racial/ethnic category. Eight of these block groups show extreme segregation with 90% or more black (located in the south and southeastern sectors of Midtown). One block group saw 90% white residents located in the extreme northeastern sector of Midtown. The most racially and ethnically mixed sectors of Midtown are located in the western and north central regions. Spatial distribution of resident's highest educational attainment levels reveal that the greatest number of high school diploma only recipients were located in the south and the south central areas. The central and northwestern sectors of Midtown have the higher number of bachelor and graduate degrees.

Figure Three: Age Distribution in Midtown Block Groups

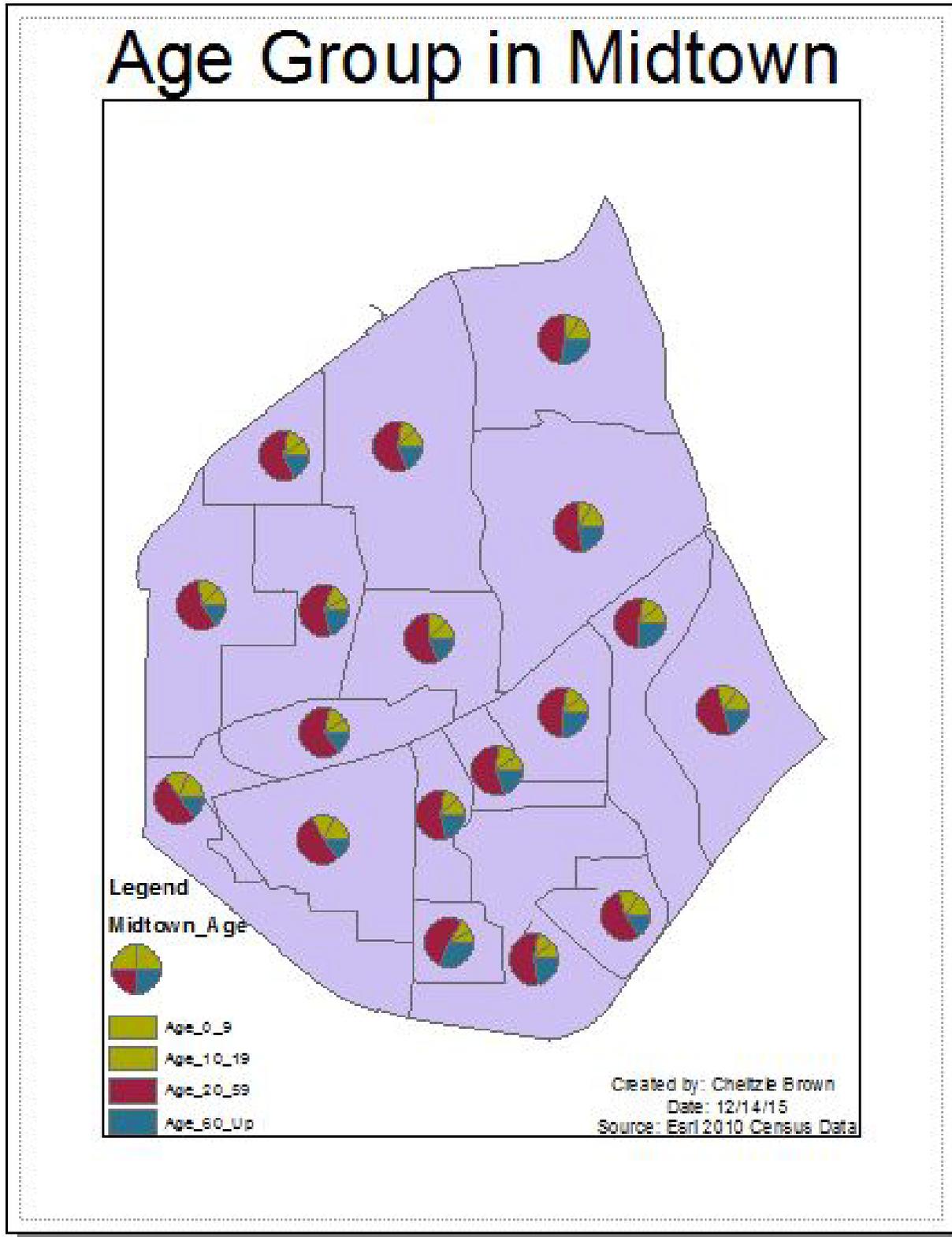


Figure Four: Race and Ethnicity Distribution in Midtown Block Groups

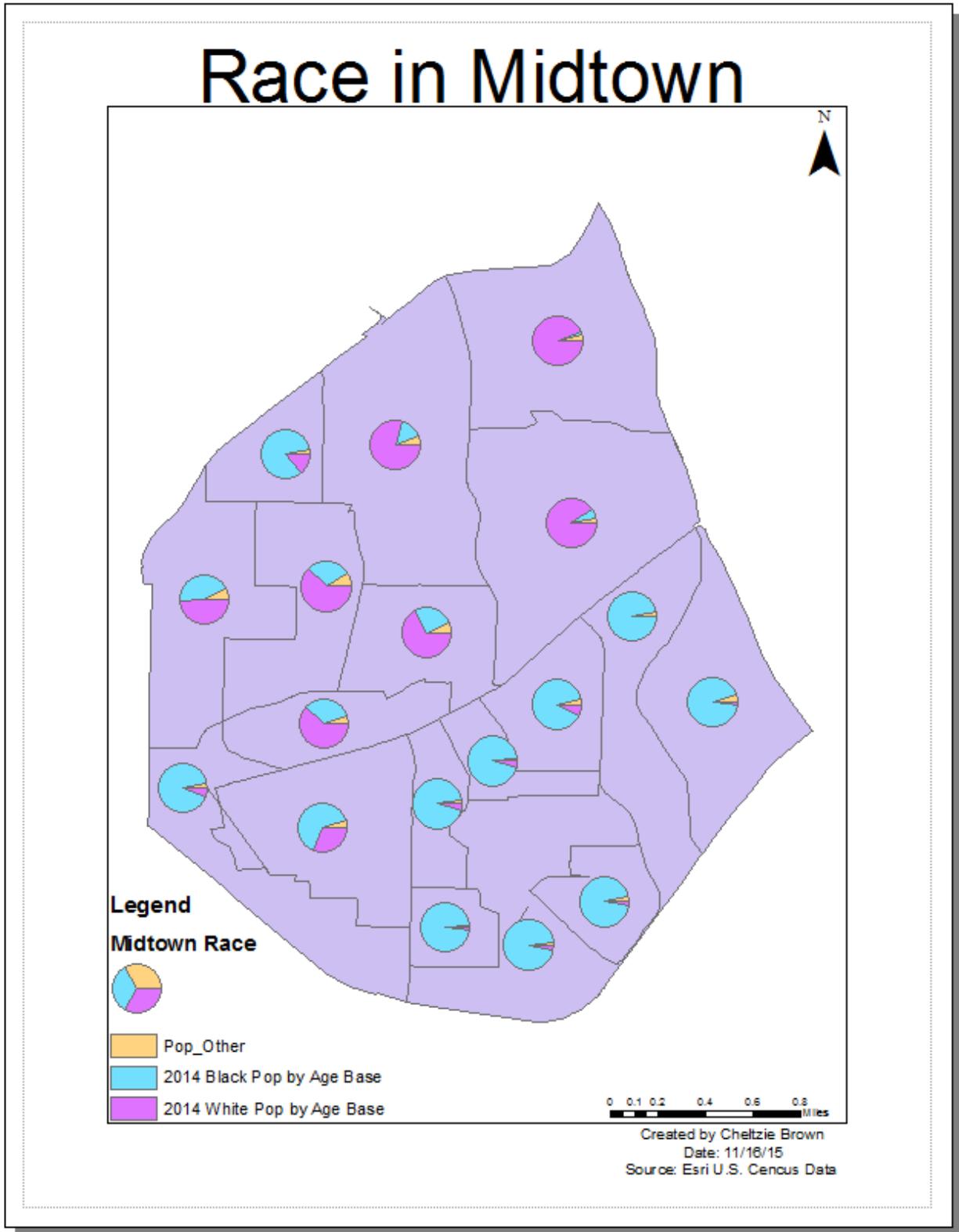


Figure Five: Education Level Distribution in Midtown Block Groups

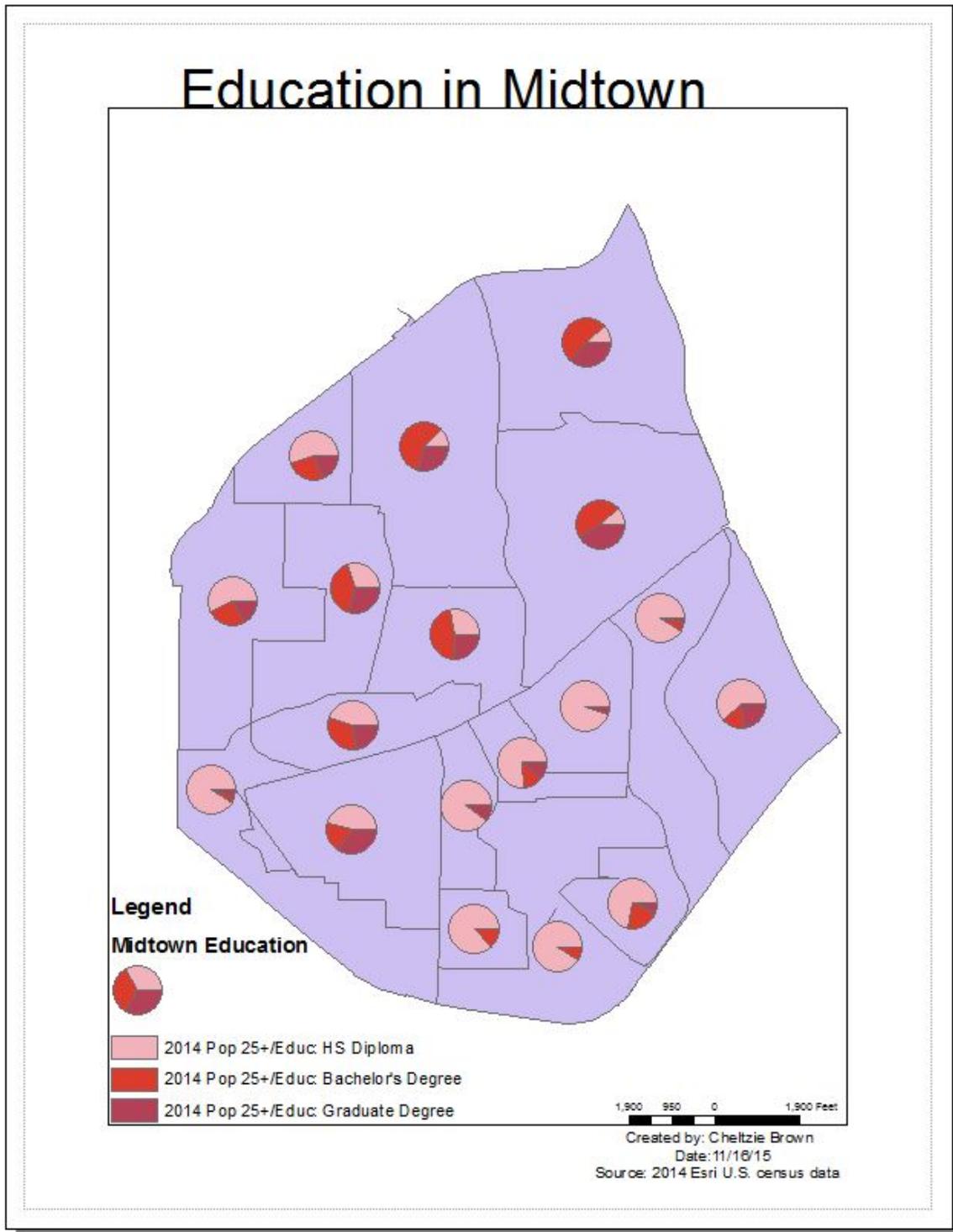


Table One: Midtown block groups and neighborhoods

Midtown Block Groups Note: Numbers have been assigned by cartographer and are not those used by the US Census Bureau	Neighborhoods
Block group 1	Parts of Hilton Terrace, Hilton Heights Park/Hilton Woods and Hilton Heights/Clubview Heights
Block group 2	Parts of Cherokee Heights and Garrard Woods
Block group 3	Parts of northern East Highlands and St. Elmo-Weracoba Historic District
Block group 4	Parts of eastern East Highlands and Historic Linwood/Boogerville
Block group 5	Parts of St. Elmo/Weracoba Historic District
Block group 6	Parts of Dinglewood and Wynnton Village Historic District
Block group 7	Parts of Peacock Woods/Dimon Circle and Wynnton Village Historic Districts
Block group 8	Parts of Averett Woods, Wynnton Grove/Wynnton Dell, Woodcrest and Wildwood Circle/Hillcrest Historic District
Block group 9	Parts of Historic Bottoms and Meeler's Hill
Block group 10	Parts of Wynn's Hill Overlook Historic District and Shepherd Place
Block group 11	Parts of East Wynnton/ Wynnton Hill and Shepherd Place
Block group 12	Parts of Shepherd Place and Radcliff
Block group 13	Parts of Radcliff and East Wynnton/Wynnton Hill
Block group 14	Parts of East Wynnton/Wynnton Hill and Briarwood
Block group 15	Parts of Briarwood
Block group 16	Parts of Radcliff and Carver Heights
Block group 17	Parts of Lindsey Creek Park/Boxwood Estates and Carver Heights
Block group 18	Parts of East Caver Heights and Carver Heights

4 HISTORY OF U.S. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

MidTown, Inc. characterizes its work as community redevelopment. Community development historians Bernard Ross and Myron Levine (2012) identify three threads informing U.S. community development: historic preservation, community organizing, and ‘good’ governance. Both historic preservation and community organizing have informed the work of MidTown, Inc.

4.1 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Amanda Rees and Anastasia Romain

One of the oldest threads influencing community development is historic preservation. Historic preservation in the United States goes back to early efforts to preserve locations associated with George Washington and other prominent revolutionary era leaders. Led by private individuals and groups, local, state, and federal governments took little interest in preservation until the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) (1966). This act connecting federal, state and local levels of government along with private and non-profit sectors. Historic preservation as community development has been divided into two: residential and commercial.

4.1.1 Residential Historic Districts

The 1960s and 1970s saw extensive large-scale urban renewal projects that often destroyed the historical fabric of numerous communities through the NHPA. Historic preservation has also become part of maintaining historic districts in urban and suburban regions of cities and historic districts (areas in which historic buildings and their settings are protected by public review). Local organizations identify historic districts that are then assessed at the state level (in state historic preservation offices or SHPOs), and if deemed appropriate they are then assessed at the federal level by the National Park Service before being granted federal historic district status. The Historic Columbus Foundation (HCF), established in 1966, is Columbus’ local organization that develops historic district nominations. Their first nomination was the Columbus Historic District in 1969. By 2001, six new residential historic districts were established: Dinglewood, Wynn's Hill–Overlook, Peacock Woods–Dimon Circle, Hillcrest–Wildwood Circle, Wynnton Village, and Liberty Heritage), the first five of which are located in Midtown. Historically, residential historic districts have not been

closely tied to community development. However, this attitude is changing with the focus on the revitalization of first ring suburbs.

4.1.2 Commercial Main Street Program

In the late 1970s that historic preservation of central business districts (often in decline) was linked to urban revitalization. In 1977 Main Street Inc., a privately funded nonprofit organization was created with a focus on the preservation of historic places related to the commercial heart of communities. Created by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, in some states these programs have been folded into state development programs (for example in Georgia, the Main Street Program is part of the Department of Community Affairs). The core of the Main Street Program (MSP) philosophy is to preserve the historical built environment of the a community's commercial district that will then support and renew economic investment into downtowns.

To create preservation-based commercial district revitalization. They support each other and the movement, creating a system to share information and successes, network professionally, pursue training opportunities, and promote the Main Street approach to revitalize downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts. (Main Street Program, no date)

The program identifies community assets (the unique elements of a city's built environment), as well as an assessment of needs to revitalize the core. The goal is to preserve commercial districts that reflect the distinctive heritage of central business districts in contrast to extensive suburban growth with large shopping malls and big box stores that offers little sense of a distinctive place. First applied to small, traditional downtown areas, the MSP subsequently expanded to larger towns and neighborhood districts. One particular National Trust program that MidTown, Inc. took advantage of was the Preservation Development Initiative (2008) that would assist in loan financing costs.

More broadly, Main Street programs have been established by merchants' associations, business improvement districts (BIDs), or partnerships with local city governments. Most recently, Main Street Program partners with housing organizations, for example community development corporations. By 2003, 1,600 communities in 41 states had become Main Street communities. Uptown Columbus Inc. is part of the Georgia Main Street program, one of over 100 communities in the state. Uptown who took part in the Main Street Program in 2009 and was a 2015 Great American Main Street award semifinalist.

4.2 COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

Rachel Knapp and Amanda Rees

While some communities have sought to use historic preservation as a tool for community redevelopment, others have used community organizing. Community organizing

has been defined as ‘what people can do for themselves.’ More specifically, how neighborhood groups can press others for action, build their own capacity to run community programs, change power relations, and get things done. One of the primary leaders in this field in the United States was Saul D. Alinsky. A renowned community organizer in his time, Alinsky began his community organizing work in the 1930s amongst the meat-packing workers in Chicago’s stock yards. He subsequently worked in the black ghettos of Chicago and Oakland in the 1950s. He established the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) (1940), which is one of the largest community organizations functioning today. In reflecting on Alinsky’s tactics, there are a number of parallels in the urban redevelopment strategies used today.

Known to embrace gritty details, Alinsky focused on “unslumming the slum” by empowering the “have-nots” and “have-little-want-mores” to uncover their own resources to pressure city officials for action. His model of community organizing saw organizers work with local leaders and those respected in their neighborhoods to discover the people’s most salient grievances. In addition, Alinsky recognized the importance of understanding community traditions in working with the people and involve indigenous leadership while also opening the process to all members of the community. He believed in people coming together to know each other’s point of view which would lead community members to manage compromise.

One of the hallmarks of Alinsky’s work is his focus on small, achievable targets that can offer small victories, giving the residents a sense of success. Indeed, small victories were more important than large projects that would take a long time to complete and could give people a sense of defeat if they are not completed within an expected period of time. Rather than completing the work for any community, Alinsky believed that any community should do the work itself, that community organizers can only help accomplish a project. This work would then gave the community a sense of ownership and pride. Alinsky was willing to talk openly of racial and religious prejudice.

Alinsky is commonly seen as the father of community organizing and his ideas are still used today, in particular his seminal work *Rules for Radicals* (1946). Indeed, Alinsky’s training informed many later grassroots political organizations from Cesar Chavez’s farm worker organization to Brooklyn Ecumenical Cooperatives. Indeed former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s senior thesis focused on Alinsky’s work defending his intentions though critical of his methods. His work provided inspiration behind President Barack Obama’s desire to become a community organizer in Chicago. Historically MidTown, Inc., has embraced long-term and well as shorter term projects. Most recently, it has been the work of the Gehl Studio and their focus on identifying and delivering small, quick victories in urban design that has impacted MidTown, Inc.’s community development philosophy.

4.3 NATIONAL CIVIC LEAGUE AND COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT

MORGAN ROBINSON AND AMANDA REES

The last thread to the work of community redevelopment occurred with the National Civic League (NCL). Founded in the late nineteenth century by leading thinkers and activists of the Progressive Era including Theodore Roosevelt, Louis Brandeis, Frederick Law Olmsted and Mary Mumford, the organization was originally known as the National Municipal League. It changed its name to the National Civic League in 1986. While historic preservation worked to maintain the urban residential and commercial fabric of communities as a tool for community development, the NCL sought to establish effective political frameworks for self-government in a time of political and economic turmoil.

In 1898 the NCL adopted its first 'Municipal Plan' including a charter that gave more power and autonomy to local officials, a unicameral city council with nonpartisan elections, and a mayor who had the power to appoint and remove department heads. While some local governments began to adopt the "strong mayor" plan for municipal reform, that model was not immediately successful. Some cities sought a commission system and Richard Childs' 1910 municipal reform plan offered a synthesis of the two competing models that mixed a five-member council and a "weak mayor" elected from and by the council. In its Model City Charter publication of 1915, the NCL adopted the city manager, city council plan instead of the "strong mayor" form. More than 150 cities adopted the Model City Charter Plan from 1918-1923. The plan was adopted by one out of every five cities with a population of 10,000 or more by 1930, and it is the most common form of municipal government today. The NCL subsequently published models for county government, voter registration, election administration, and state constitutions while also advocating for proportional representation, regional governance, and fair redistricting.

In 1949, the NCL's National Conference on Government began identifying ten of the best governed cities and the All-America Cities contest emerged. In 1986, along with a name change to the National Civic League, the organization took a strategic route to develop planning for new future directions. Moving from New York City to Denver, Colorado, the NCL developed the Civic Index, an assessment tool for development listing ten components of civic health, which is also used to assess the NCL's All-American City Award applicants and Community Services program. The NCL gives ten All-American City awards each year, the oldest community recognition program in the United States. Since 1949, 6000 communities have been named All-American Cities. Only six Georgia cities have received this award, Columbus, Georgia has never received this award.

In conclusion it would seem that MidTown, Inc., has been most impacted by the community development through the lens of historic preservation, primarily through residential historic district nominations. It may be time to consider the role of the MSP in supporting the redevelopment of historic commercial areas such as Wynnton Village. Historically, MidTown, Inc. has not focused specifically on small goals with quick outcomes. However, recently the focus on small, quick victories has been recognized as important in the

development of the district, in particular articulated by Gehl Studio's proposals for MidTown, Inc.'s minimum grid project. As good governance is focused primarily at the city scale it seems least appropriate to support the work of MidTown, Inc.

5 HISTORY OF MIDTOWN, INC.

Eric Derhammer, Caleb Ashburn, and Amanda Rees

MidTown, Inc. staked out a six-square mile region of Columbus, Georgia as its focus. The organization's antecedents can be traced back as far as the early 1990s, and a particularly strong desire, on the part of some residents for historic preservation. Midtown was to be the site of a large-scale road widening project that would have cut through the heart of several first ring suburban neighborhoods. It combines that preservationist focus with the desire for a strong commercial economy, and greater connectivity that supported all modes of transportation.

When plans to widen 13th Street would have impacted a number of old neighborhoods and the well-loved and used Weracoba Park, the Friends of Weracoba, a community group led by local resident Anne King, successfully challenged that plan. At the same time, Historic Columbus Foundation was working to establish six Midtown historic districts: Dinglewood; Peacock Woods-Dimon Circle; Weracoba-St Elmo; Wildwood Circle-Hillcrest; Wynnton Village; and, Wynn's Hill-Overlook. These were recognized as historic districts by the federal government in 2001. Residents in these historic districts shared a common concern about the economic vitality of the community as commercial investment began to migrate north, closer to newer suburban developments, leaving Columbus' first interior mall, Columbus Square, derelict. Indeed, the Historic Columbus Foundation (HCF) held a community meeting of local stakeholders which lead, in 2002, to the creation of the Wynnton Initiative.

Begun by concerned residents, the Wynnton Initiative executive board met at HCF's Rankin House to work on strengthening the community. Board members represented various neighborhoods including: John Sheftall (Wynnton Village), Anne King (Peacock Woods), Alan Rothschild (Overlook), Steve Gunby (Dinglewood), Jeff Bickerstaff (Wildwood Circle), Mark McCollum (Weracoba), Allison Slocumb (Georgia Regional Development Center and preservation planner), Brian Turner (Wildwood Circle) and Teresa Tomlinson (Overlook) as neighborhood representatives. Richard Bishop represented the city government on the executive board while Virginia Peebles and Elizabeth Barker represented the Historic Columbus Foundation (HFC). The Wynnton Initiative worked with the Georgia Trust's consultant Billy Parrish to focus on developing some goals for the organization. One outcome from these first efforts was that Midtown become a National Trust for Historic Preservation PDI (Preservation Development Initiative) demonstration site. Midtown was one of only eight

communities nationally to receive this designation which was supported by a \$150,000 grant from the Knight Foundation.

5.1 THE BIRTH OF MIDTOWN, INC.

The Wynnton Initiative also established the Midtown Project fund to foster development and re-investment in the Wynnton Village area. In 2003, the Midtown Project steering committee commissioned a 25 year Master Plan for Midtown, subsequently published in 2005. The masterplan was a seminal moment for Midtown as that same year saw the birth of MidTown, Inc., as a non-profit organization. Teresa Tomlinson was quickly appointed as its first executive director for MidTown, Inc. and she led the organization until 2010 when she resigned to run for mayor for Columbus, Georgia. The next five years saw Anne King as the organization's second director. During the last ten years, MidTown, Inc. developed four foci: 1. Sense of Places 2. Sense of Identity, 3. Community Development, and 4. Connectivity.

5.2 SENSE OF PLACE

Creating a sense of place for its residents has remained a strong focus of the organization. Instead of working to draw together the whole of Midtown in a single sense of place, MidTown, Inc. focused on the district as a series of places. For its six historic districts, MidTown, Inc., created flags to echo a sense of place for each neighborhood. Residents could hang outside their homes to identify each historic neighborhood, and these flags have become very popular. To expand that sense of place, by 2011 MidTown, Inc. had mapped 24 neighborhoods along with micro-histories of each of the suburban development. These neighborhoods were built primarily between the 1890s to the 1970s. These micro-histories offer a basis for expanding that sense of place throughout the Midtown district. Indeed, the map also provides a powerful and colorful representation of all neighborhoods in the Midtown district that then goes to support a richer understanding of Midtown's identity.

5.3 SENSE OF IDENTITY

Creating a sense of Midtown as a distinct and coherent district in Columbus has certainly been underpinned by the recent map of neighborhoods. However, MidTown, Inc. has sought to brand the six-square mile district with a distinct residential and commercial identity. To engage its residents it has drawn on electronic communications and social media to establish a sense of Midtown community identity. MidTown, Inc. launched an e-newsletter, *Midtown in Motion* (2006), and two years later a Facebook Page. Most recently, it developed an Instagram account. Holding community-wide events has also been an important tool in creating a sense of Midtown's identity. In 2008 and 2010, MidTown, Inc. hosted *Party on the Lawn* events at

the center of Midtown to celebrate the community as a whole, and included free activities, refreshments, and regional music on the grounds of Wynnton Elementary School, the oldest continuously used elementary school in Georgia. MidTown, Inc., continues to help sponsor the Weracoba/St. Elmo Preservation Society's annual spring *Arts in the Park* event, begun in 1996.

One of MidTown, Inc.'s board's first decisions was to focus on the commercial life of Midtown. Concerned about commercial disinvestment that had seen Columbus' first indoor mall (Columbus Square, established in 1965) which had become derelict by the end of the millennium. The area was quickly redeveloped to support what MidTown, Inc. now calls the public commons that includes a large public library, the Muscogee County Education Center, the city's Citizen Services Center, and a new city swimming pool (all developed since 2000). However, in support of commercial investment it quickly established the Midtown Merchants Association (which eventually evolved into the Midtown Business Association) (2006). The Midtown Business Association worked to create a sense of Midtown identity, designing flags and window decals for its business members. In addition, during the winter holiday season, "The Great Midtown Holiday Scavenger Hunt" was held to promote Midtown's retail establishments. Social media has been an important tool creating a sense of place. MidTown, Inc. also launched an expansive print and television marketing campaign under the banner "Come Home to Midtown." In an effort to help brand Midtown for those who live outside the area, in 2014 Midtown partnered with the Georgia Department of Transportation to create directional signage to Midtown on the interstate highway that makes up its eastern boundary. Signage can also be found on Macon Road that directs drivers to Midtown's cultural and civic amenities.

Where MidTown, Inc. has brought together both the sense of place and sense of identity has been in its annual Midtown Mingle. These annual events bring together both the commercial sense of Midtown identity and the various sense of residential places. The first Midtown Mingle worked to raise awareness of the organization and raised over \$35,000 and subsequent mingles are supported by local catering companies for its food and other vendors for raffle prizes. Subsequent mingles, sometimes located in small commercial locations (St Elmo Shopping Area and Goo-Goo Car wash next to Country Club Plaza) draw attention to stores, restaurants, and services; or to distinct historic neighborhoods such as Overlook or Wildwood Circle. The 2015 Midtown Mingle in Overlook raised over \$100,000.

5.4 COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT

Along with that sense of local identity and place, MidTown, Inc. quickly identified strategies to maintain and improve investment in this community with suburbs built between the 1890s and the 1980s. In addition, it sought to preserve the urban fabric of Midtown while also investing in its public spaces. With urban redevelopment concerns in mind, 2007 saw MidTown, Inc. partner with the Knight Foundation, Columbus State University, and the

Ledger-Enquirer (the city's primary newspaper) in a community education effort regarding the question of whether Columbus should be given redevelopment powers under the Georgia Redevelopment Powers Act

Transportation corridors have also received MidTown, Inc.'s attention, including renovations to the intersection of Wynnton Road/Brown Avenue and Peacock Avenue were completed (2009). At that location, drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians were treated to brick stamped crosswalks, black mast-armed traffic signals, and tree-lined sidewalks. 2009 also saw the first annual Bike to Work day as MidTown, Inc. partnered with the River Valley Regional Commission to support healthy, connected, walkable, bikeable communities.

Neighborhood preservation has long been a focus on MidTown, Inc., indeed its very beginnings originated in the fight against a transportation plan that would have bull-dozed numerous historic properties to create a larger 13th Street corridor. [As such, the organization helped co-sponsors for the Historic Columbus Foundation's second annual Preservation for Profit to support local developers accessing tax credits to re-use historical structures and small, no-interest façade loans for individual home-owners in historic districts.] MidTown, Inc. co-sponsored a talk on the Martin House, one of Georgia's 2011 Places in Peril. With over 100 attendees, MidTown, Inc. focused the discussion of the role of vacant properties in diminishing neighborhoods and the potential for revitalization. MidTown, Inc. also helped organize volunteers for a local housing non-profit organization *NeighborWorks* to hold a cleanup week. Volunteers and the Midtown Business Association worked to improve a block on Baldwin Street in East Wynnton by pressure-washing and planting. MidTown, Inc. received Keep Columbus Beautiful Commission's 2010 Urban Forestry Award for Wynnton Streetscape Improvement Project. MidTown, Inc. partners with the city's Department of Parks and Recreation to build Dinglewood Disc Golf Course.

5.5 CONNECTIVITY

In the second half of MidTown, Inc.'s tenure, the focus on creating a healthy, connected, walkable, and bikeable community has been a consistent theme. In 2010, MidTown, Inc. became a pivotal co-sponsor of the International Walk to School Day for community schools, organizing hundreds of volunteers to accompany elementary school children as they walked to school. This event has been held annually each fall. The Walk to School Days are an important tool in empowering each elementary and middle school to access state transportation funds that design safe routes to school.

2010 saw the development of Midtown's bi-annual Midtown Bike Around, when groups of cyclists would explore various neighborhoods in Midtown. In an effort to make the connection between Weracoba Park and the surrounding neighborhoods safer, MidTown, Inc. helped raise funds for the installation of six brick-stamped crosswalks to the greenspace (2011). Building on the International Walk to School Day and to several subsequent successful Safe

Routes to School grants, MidTown, Inc. took the images of children walking to school in the street with no sidewalks as part of their impetus for creating a more democratic transportation network. In doing so it was the recipient of a Knight Cities Challenge grant entitled “Minimum Grid for the Core Community Project” which provides funds to hire architects and landscape architects from Gehl Studios (New York) to conduct community workshops and design a more connected Midtown using newly-designed public spaces.

In conclusion, over the last decade, MidTown, Inc.’s work has remained focused on creating a sense of community and sense of place for residents and businesses in the Midtown, Columbus, Georgia. It has supported redevelopment in the urban fabric of the district for commercial development and green spaces, and sought to support both community activities and designs that engage and promote accessible public spaces for all modes of transportation.

6 MIDTOWN, INC. TIMELINE

2001	First Midtown historic districts are established including: Dinglewood, Peacock Woods-Dimon Circle, Weracoba-St Elmo, Wildwood Circle-Hillcrest, Wynnton Village, and Wynn’s Hill-Overlook.
	George W. Bush takes office as President of the United States.
	September 11 attack (New York and Washington D.C.).
	Historic Columbus Foundation hosted community meeting of stakeholders in Midtown area of Columbus, Georgia.
2002	The Wynnton Initiative meets at the Rankin House (home of Historic Columbus Foundation) to focus on creating community and commissions a master plan for Midtown. Wynnton Initiative Executive Committee members include: John Sheftall, Anne King, Alan Rothschild, Steve Gunby, Jeff Bickerstaff, Mark McCollum, Allison Slocumb, Brian Turner and Teresa Tomlinson as neighborhood representatives. Richard Bishop represented the city government, while Virginia Peebles and Elizabeth Barker represent Historic Columbus Foundation (HFC).
	Wynnton Initiative opens the Midtown Project Fund at the Community Foundation.
	The MidTown Project is named a National Trust <i>Preservation Development Initiative</i> demonstration site.
	War in Afghanistan is launched.
2003	War in Iraq is launched.
2005	Hurricane Katrina.
	<i>The Master Plan for MidTown Columbus</i> is published.
	MidTown, Inc. certified as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization.
	Teresa Tomlinson is appointed as executive director of MidTown, Inc.
	MidTown, Inc. begins the Midtown Merchants Association.
2007	MidTown, Inc. partners with the Knight Foundation, Columbus State University, and the Ledger-Enquirer to educate the community on legal redevelopment powers.
2008	Global Financial Crisis.
	Midtown, Inc. begins to identify distinct neighborhoods.
	MidTown, Inc. begins the <i>Community Speakers Series</i> with John Norquist.
	President Obama is elected as President of the United States.

2001	First Midtown historic districts are established including: Dinglewood, Peacock Woods-Dimon Circle, Weracoba-St Elmo, Wildwood Circle-Hillcrest, Wynnton Village, and Wynn's Hill-Overlook.
	The MidTown Merchants Association becomes the MidTown Business Association.
	MidTown, Inc. receives first grant from the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) for the Wynnton Road Streetscape Enhancement.
	The "Great MidTown Holiday Scavenger Hunt" promotes MidTown retail establishments.
	MidTown, Inc. partners with the City of Columbus and property owners to hire engineers to reassess the federal flood plain intersecting Macon Road.
2009	MidTown, Inc. initiates the marketing campaign <i>Come Home to MidTown</i> including television ads and printed publications.
	The opening of the newly transformed intersection at Brown and Peacock Avenues as part of the newly revived Wynnton Streetscape.
	Funding in part by MidTown, Inc. the Lindsay Creek Flood Study was published which paved the way for the commercial redevelopment on Macon Road.
2010	MidTown, Inc. begins Midtown-wide International Walk to School Day for community schools.
	Teresa Tomlinson resigns to run for mayor of Columbus.
	Anne King becomes executive director of MidTown, Inc.
	MidTown, Inc. receives Keep Columbus Beautiful Commission's 2010 Urban Forestry Award for Wynnton Streetscape Improvement Project.
	MidTown, Inc. facilitates the city's public planning process for the Columbus Comprehensive Plan at 2 neighborhood schools.
	MidTown, Inc. co-sponsors the Historic Columbus Foundation's second annual Preservation for Profit symposium.
2011	Teresa Tomlinson becomes Mayor of Columbus.
	MidTown, Inc. partners with the Historic Columbus Foundation (HCF) and the Convention and Visitors Bureau to create a Driving Tour of Midtown's Historic Districts.
	MidTown, Inc. receives a second grant from the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) for the Wynnton Road Streetscape Enhancement.
	First annual Midtown Mingle fundraiser raises awareness and over \$35,000.

2001	First Midtown historic districts are established including: Dinglewood, Peacock Woods-Dimon Circle, Weracoba-St Elmo, Wildwood Circle-Hillcrest, Wynnton Village, and Wynn’s Hill-Overlook.
	MidTown, Inc. holds an Urban Land Institute workshop with stakeholders to examine the revitalization of Midtown’s 13 th Avenue and 13 th Street gateway corridor.
2012	Initiates grant-supported research to refine neighborhood boundaries and histories, and defines five “new” MidTown neighborhood districts. A map with 24 neighborhoods is completed.
	President Barak Obama elected for a second term.
2013	MidTown, Inc. establishes an Economic Development Committee to identify underutilized properties and envision their future use.
	MidTown, Inc. partners with the City of Columbus to rezone 52 non-compliant residential properties in Midtown Historic Districts, stabilizing neighborhoods by stemming commercial creep.
	\$10 million renovation of Cross Country Plaza (Macon Road).
2014	MidTown, Inc. wins the Knight Cities Challenge grant (\$199,195) for “Minimum Grid for the Core Community Project” promoting connectivity through public spaces in Midtown.
	MidTown, Inc. partners with the city’s Department of Parks and Recreation to build Dinglewood Disc Golf Course.
	Redevelopment of the MidTown Shopping Center (Macon Road) and the removal of 100 residential properties from the floodway (a result of the Lindsey Creek Flood Study).
2015	Gehl Studio (New York) conducts community workshops and unveils the Minimum Grid plan.

7 OUR DEEPEST THANKS GO TO:

Our Midtown project interviewees:

- Edward Burdeshaw;
- Betsy Covington (Executive Director/CEO, Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley);
- Anne King (Executive Director, MidTown, Inc.);
- Isaiah Hughley (City Manager);
- Bennie Newroth (MidTown, Inc. Board President, 2015);
- Virginia Peebles (for Executive Director, Historic Columbus and former MidTown, Inc. Board President);
- John Sheftal;
- Honorable Teresa Tomlinson (Mayor of Columbus, Georgia and past Executive Director of MidTown, Inc.);
- Elizabeth Barker (Executive Director, Historic Columbus).

The audio files and typed transcriptions of each over the interviews listed above can be found at the archives of Columbus State University: <http://digitalarchives.columbusstate.edu/items/browse?collection=18>

CSU Faculty:

- Dr. Brad Huff, Assistant Professor, Department of History and Geography
- David Owing, Archivist for Columbus State University

And the hard work of the following cultural geography students:

- Celeb Ashburn (interviewer and institutional historian)
- Cheltzie Brown (interviewer and cartographer)
- Eric Derhammer (interviewer and institutional historian)
- Jessica Dixon (interviewer and timeline)
- Brandon Hatcher (interviewer)
- Kelsie Hughes (interviewer and Midtown district historian)
- Rachel Knapp (interviewer and community development historian)
- Morgan Robinson (interviewer and community development historian)
- Anastasia Romain (interviewer and community development historian)
- C.E. Sturgeon (Interviewer, image archivist, and web designer)

And finally thanks to:

- David Rush, copy editing.



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