PLACE & DISPLACEMENT:

A CREATIVE STUDY OF THE ALPINE AVENUE

RENOVATION IN MCMINNVILLE, OREGON

by

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A THESIS

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The purpose of this study is to investigate placemaking in public spaces with an emphasis on how creative placemaking insights might inform development in one specific rural community: McMinnville, Oregon. Using a transdisciplinary approach, I will examine of the 2018 public space renovation of Alpine Avenue in McMinnville, Oregon. Beginning with a summarized case study introduction, this thesis will proceed with a literature review defining and exploring creative placemaking. Lastly, I will examine findings from community interview responses and propose recommendations stemming from collected data. At its core, both the investigation and synthesis of this thesis aim to explore how places are made, and in the future, how design process might strengthen (and not displace) local communities. Further, this thesis will contribute to the recognition of creative placemaking in academe- informing those outside the field on the potential for arts and culture to build better places. Specifically, this document proposes creative placemaking and arts-based research as a way for planners to address barriers in community participation through creative means.

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CHAPTER I: Introduction

A Story About Alpine

The first thing you need to understand about McMinnville is, it's a boomtown. Think Wild West, gold rush, opportunists loosed on unfettered opportunity. It all started in the eighties when the sleepy, Turkey Festival town was invaded by (no, not UFO's) but young California dreamers in overalls armed with cuttings of French Pinot Noir grapes. Forty years later, those nouveau riche stuff their money bags with grape-stained bills, not gold dust.

McMinnville now claims to be the center of the Oregon wine country. Those early wine speculators? Rich grandparents who attend the International Pinot Noir Festival as royalty, held here annually on the oak-studded lawn of Linfield College. Yes, they put McMinnville on the vintner map and at the same time rekindled a familiar cry heard round the country, "There's gold in them thar hills!"

Two hundred vineyards later there still rustle the sound of prospectors beating the bushes for ways to jump on the wagon train of prosperity. Luxury services like spas, Air B&B rentals and "epicurean" restaurants are available, and trendy products can be found in the wildly popular downtown (voted second-best, small-town downtown in the nation.) And don't forget the saloons, or, I mean wine bars and breweries.

So, when is enough, enough? As Getty said, "With one dollar more." In that spirit, Alpine was born—conceived as the brightest and newest youngster in town. Abruptly, a concrete strip bulldozed its way through an industrial and depressed housing area of town. Wide enough to drive two stagecoaches down side-by-side, the road had an industrial air of girded arches and hardy street lights. Soon community members were called to buy-in with an invitation to plant and manage vegetable planters (some of which were previously horse-watering tanks.) A feature business opened, Mac Market, a gathering hole opened for cow-guys and gals to wet their whistle at the bar, buy French pastries or a plant, shop for organic vegetables or consume Bibimbap at a Korean food truck.

Entrepreneurial enthusiasm has only just begun. Shops, tiny house rentals and food venues are raising their walls as this is typed. Heaven only knows the future stabilization of a boomtown. Will McMinnville, and Alpine in particular, grow to be a cosmopolitan and sophisticated city in which only the wealthy can afford to live, or perhaps a ghost town of whispers about the origins of the founders? Only time will tell.

(Anonymous, 2022, "A Story About Alpine").

This poetic reflection takes the form of a story, likening McMinnville and Alpine Avenue to the classic Wild West. In doing so, the piece grounds those unfamiliar with the area to a well-known substitute. The work touches on themes of development, gentrification, industry, and local culture. Most interestingly, the author speculates towards the future in a stark binary: either McMinnville grows for benefit of the wealthy or becomes a ghost town. This framing reflects one local perspective, that the town is fated towards an undesirable future.

Chapter Summary

This first chapter will preface an introduction to the case study of Alpine Avenue with a brief examination of place, public space, and McMinnville, Oregon. This context is necessary for understanding the role of Alpine Avenue as part of a small, rural community. Then, the chapter identifies the problem of ineffective public space and presents my study overview, methodology, and limitations.

A Guide to Place & Public Space

Places exist everywhere- from the familiar boundaries of one's bedroom to The High Line greenway in New York City. Most of us move from place to place with little regard to how places function in our lives and even less regard to how these places are made. Places made for the public, also called public space, include plazas, parks, and streets. At their best, these are dynamic spaces that cultivate community interaction in diverse ways. A plaza might be used for an open-mic series, or a street to host a farmer's market. Successful public places effectively act as a stage upon which community users foster connection.

In *The Art of Gathering*, placemaker Priya Parker defines a successful place as one that captures, changes, or connects us (Parker, 2018, p. 9). Author Germaine R. Halegoua (2020) expands upon this definition by saying,

> Making place can be read as sites where the expression and documentation of human experience happen and are contested. These performances are creative and critical, controlling and resistive, symbolic and tangible, poetic and traumatic, and they are always about the inscriptions of power, bodies, and meaning. (p. 15)

Halegoua's definition is riddled with inversions, showing how dynamic and expressive places can be. Despite the grandeur of this definition of place, as acclaimed urbanist

Dolores Hayden reminds us, there is a need for "public places to celebrate the history of ordinary citizens" (1995, p. 237). It is this ethos, a celebration of the ordinary as collective, connective history, that results in truly inspired placemaking.

Well-maintained, unique, and accessible places are not only a cultural asset, but an economic one. Neighborhoods and downtowns alike benefit from the existence and use of public space. A pedestrian-friendly roadway brings more customers out walking and exploring, thus accelerating business development in an area. A park might bring a sense of community cohesion and safety to a neighborhood. Though economic benefit can certainly be derived from places, Hayden urges us to consider that "one can't simply turn to economic geography (or any other kind of quantitative analysis) because there the human experience of place is often lost" (1995, p. 17).

Places are created and sustained by collaborations between artists, city planners, and the public. A mosaic of perspective helps drive "an incubating conversation" that invites nuanced expression and use (Courage, 2021, p. 3). Through facilitating patterns of activities and connections, a well-made place propels its own evolution and community relevance.

But not all public places are successful. Many exist, intended for civic engagement, but were designed without direct purpose or connection to the surrounding communities who would use them. Similarly, most cities in the United States were developed to prioritize automobile efficiency over daily human interaction. Without fully assessing the dynamic and diverse needs of user communities, beyond mere efficiency, public spaces meant for connection became few and far between. By effect,

in the United States, most public spaces exist as isolated destinations without deeper meaning, dull spaces that are not integrated into the habits of everyday lives.

The failure of public space in the United States can be attributed to many root causes. Sometimes places lack accessible, usable design choices. Other places are more visual than functional, meant to be appreciated but not touched. Still others exist in non-walkable zones with dead areas outside the boundaries of the space (Kent, 2019, p. 128). Behind the creation of these spaces are city staffs. Many of these city-professionals have been sold a narrow view of the possibility of cities. Instead of centering the creative, human-nature of the city, professionals are often trained to focus on unfeeling physical infrastructure, rigid zoning codes, and local politics. This has only worsened with the rise of technology, resulting in the recent term "Smart Cities", under a wave of critique as abandoning a people-first mentality.

In response to failed mega-scale urban renewal projects, the placemaking movement first emerged in the late 1950s to re-envision the field of planning by enhancing human interaction instead of stifling it. Jane Jacobs and William Whyte wrote the founding critiques of suburban sprawl and top-down decision making in cities. Their writing created impetus for the public space placemaking rebellion to come decades later. As Silberberg summarizes, "Placemaking may have come naturally to human societies, but something was lost along the way; communities were rendered powerless in the shadows of experts to shape their physical surroundings (p. 2). This history will be discussed further in the literature review of this document.

Today, in the year 2022, city planning resides in an usual spot. The critique of poor planning has been named; the rebellion already begun. We understand the

problems and often, the solutions. Still, in many cities, placemaking has not existed professionally as much more than a trend. It is rarely a city planner's primary focus or even listed as a desired skillset on job applications. Regardless of if named, placemaking, both detrimental and revitalizing, will continue. This begs the question, what is the next step for the movement?

According to urbanist activist Liz Ogbu, the placemaking movement continues by staying relevant. In her TedTalk with over 984,000 views, Ogbu calls placemaking by a different name: spatial justice (2017). As she describes, places made to affirm a community identity or culture are vital to the collective wellbeing of a city and the healing of a people. As the Routledge Handbook of Placemaking (Courage, 2021) says,

> Through placemaking, people have their love of place confirmed, renewed, valued; their place attachment activates as place stewardship; which leads to increased social cohesion and wellbeing; which in turn results in the genuine formation of the vibrant, livable places that administrations, planners, and developers the world over are working to create or secure. (p. 3)

This text theoretically frames successful placemaking as a long-term method of improving civic and social wellness through a people-first design approach. Ogbu agrees, saying her career has been spent asking, "How and where do people live and connect with each other?" (2017).

Meet McMinnville, OR

Selected for its proximity and familiarity within my own life, and to scale-down my project focus due to the pandemic, this thesis localizes the national challenges of city planning and public space design to the rural community of McMinnville, Oregon. Ideally, I would have liked to construct a complete historical narrative of McMinnville,

and by extension Alpine Avenue. However, the gap between my vision and the historic documents to which I had access, only allows for the following.

McMinnville is located within Yamhill County and the lush Willamette Valley on traditional Kalapuya homelands. The area was formally colonized by farmer-settlers with the Great Migration along the Oregon Trail in the mid-1800s. Between 1885 and 1912, most of the historic business structures were built using bricks. According to the McMinnville Downtown Association, "Building activity peaked in 1928, with McMinnville's commercial center extending from City Park on the west to the railroad tracks on the east" (Quandt, 2015, p. 4).

By the early 20th century, technological advancements were booming. McMinnville grew to be the largest city in Yamhill County. In 1902, the first automobile was owned in McMinnville, and in 1912 the downtown was paved (Quandt, 2015, p. 7). Also in 1912, the Southern Pacific Railroad was constructed providing service between Eugene and Portland.

This was a period of significant Chinese immigration to the state of Oregon and to the town of McMinnville. The majority of Chinese immigrants who settled in McMinnville were from the Guangdong Province, and because of exclusionary practices and state policies, were forced to live in shacks along the Yamhill River. Until 1964, Chinese residents were prohibited to own or operate businesses within McMinnville city limits. As a result, these residents worked a variety of temporary manual labor and industrial jobs, often for little pay.

For many years, the town of McMinnville was defined by industry and agriculture, namely the production of timber, hazelnuts, wheat, dairy, and turkey meat. Though now famous for viticulture, grapes weren't planted in the area until the 1970s.

As of 2020, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, McMinnville is home to just under thirty-five thousand people, 70% of whom identity as White and 20% who identify as Hispanic or Latino (2021). Additionally, 87.5% of people over the age of 25 have graduated high school, while 25.8% have earned a bachelor's degree or higher (2021).

Today, McMinnville is a charming, kitschy, tree-lined place with a downtown heart often likened to somewhere fictional. Here, you'll find a Saturday farmer's market, frequent brown bag outdoor concerts, a vibrant arts and culture scene, over 20 tasting rooms, a community theater, and a handful of restaurants serving everything from the Bistro Maison's "Escargots en Croûte de Bourgogne" to the Wildwood Café's "Hobo Breakfast Scramble".

Downtown McMinnville is also home to several annual festivals, including Turkey Rama to celebrate the feathered history of the area, and the massive annual UFO Festival and Alien Days Parade commemorating when a local farmer snapped some photos of a flying saucer in the 50s. In 2014, Third Street was even named the second-best downtown in the nation by Parade Magazine (Parade). The historic street has also been recognized by the American Planning Association as one of America's Top 5 Great Streets on the Great Places in America List.

Of course, a town is not only its downtown. Greater McMinnville also boasts many parks, hiking trails, and river access points. One popular natural attraction is

Erratic Rock, a state-recognized site featuring a 40-ton glacial rock deposited from the Missoula Floods during the Ice Age. Plus, McMinnville is the location of the world-class Evergreen Aviation Museum housing the Spruce Goose airplane and an indoor waterpark where you can slip-and-slide out of a Boeing 747 jumbo jet.

McMinnville is not solely idyllic. In the past decade, a housing shortage has dramatically increased the number of unhoused residents across town. It is common to see areas inhabited by RVs, tents, and in the past several years, a small, portable local invention known as Turtledove shelters. In 2019, 17.3% of the town's population fell below the poverty rate (U.S. Census).

Like many places in the US, increasingly, the town has suffered from political and cultural division. Current County Commissioner and local farmer Casey Kulla was quoted in a recent article detailing a nature walking trail project, saying, "We don't talk about abortion in our community, or guns. We talk about if you support the trail" (Sottile, 2021). As Commissioner Kulla knows, in small communities, projects pertaining to the public often become battle grounds for veiled urban-rural politics. In McMinnville, where many residents have generational history, the land is a form of heritage. And as Hayden (1995) warns,

> Places suffer from clumsy attempts to market them for commercial purposes: when small towns in Iowa that once seemed to embody everyday life in the Midwest developed "themes" to make them more attractive to tourists, the places became caricatures of themselves. (p. 18)

The prevalent fear in McMinnville, related to urban development, is that if the community encourages or supports any type of change, it opens the door for the town to become an extension of Portland. While it is difficult to assess how realistic such a threat is, perceived fear nonetheless guides decision-making.

Eager to prevent a caricature-fate, McMinnville's "Destination Marketing Organization", Visit McMinnville, a tourism branch founded in 2015, has made a conscious shift away from the term "tourist". In 2020, residents were encouraged by the local paper to use the word "visitors" and "visitor economy". Though perhaps a bit performative, the driving ethos behind Visit McMinnville is rooted in impact: tourists, or visitors, will infuse the town with money that can be reinvested for public space projects. Executive Director Jeff Knapp wrote for the newspaper: "Think of what we might be able to accomplish…We could focus on developing rural bike lanes, river access enhancements, hiking and biking trail projects…foster additional rural arts and culture opportunities" (2020, para. 23).

Despite obvious community hesitations towards change and an increasingly tense political environment, McMinnville is growing. Since the 1960s, the population has steadily increased. From 2010 to 2022, the population grew by 11% (U.S. Census). This influx in new residents, combined with the existing unhoused population, makes public space matter now more than ever. According to the Project for Public Spaces, engaged public spaces require limited financial and infrastructural resources to foster expansive community cohesion and pride (Placemaking, 2016). In small communities especially, the limited costs of public space are worth the rewards.

Introducing Alpine Avenue

Alpine Avenue is a partially paved "festival street" of mixed-uses located several blocks away from McMinnville's downtown. Renovated as public space in 2018, in addition to having residential homes, the road contains local businesses and manufacturers. Alpine is bookended on the north by The Granary District, home to Flag

and Wire, a coffee shop, and the south by Mac Market, a commercial gathering space. Between the two locations, is a swath of open pavement, designed to slow and reduce traffic while retaining a central route for semis to access industrial locales and winery facilities. It is an unusual space clearly intended for a variety of uses, and yet, with little shade, limited seating, and no cultural context or connection to the community, it has failed to thrive. The most inhabited areas of the street are the ends, two businesses that act as beacons of gathering. However, both the Granary District and Mac Market fall outside the official boundaries of Alpine Avenue. Therefore, both primary sources of energy in the place cannot be claimed by Alpine itself.

Despite its prominent role in the town's history as an industrial and agricultural throughway intersected by the railroad, Alpine Avenue, or Park Avenue (as it was known prior to 1928), was not catalogued through the Historic Resources Inventory of historically significant structures and sites as completed by the City of McMinnville in 1987. However, one residential home along Alpine was included in the inventory, 1078 NE Alpine Avenue, which was purchased in 2018, renovated, and repurposed as an Airbnb farmhouse listed for rent by Boutique Retreat owner Sarita Springer. The four-bedroom currently costs $277 a night.

Meanwhile, Houck's Flouring Mill, today known as the Buchanan Cellers Mill, a historic flour mill built in 1888 and turned feed and grain store located within the Granary District, was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2012 (McMinnville, 2015, p. 35). This addition, combined with the renovation investment in 2018, reflects a cultural shift towards valuing industrial history alongside residential and architectural sites of significance.

Today, Alpine Avenue acts as the glue connecting a conglomerate of industry, private property, and commercial business. It is public space known by some communities and detached from others. Alpine is not a festival street, as designed, but nonetheless a place of potential.

Project Summary

This project centers on the problem of ineffective or failed public spaces. Drawing from creative placemaking practices, my research uses creative methods of oral and poetic interview responses to gather community expertise on both how Alpine currently functions, and how Alpine might be reimagined.

While the history and process of Alpine's 2018 renovation deserves further analysis, this study is most concerned with the social motives and implications of the renovation. Rural areas often lag behind urban counterparts in progress towards inclusive community practices. If designers and planners fail to investigate the histories and experiences of rural citizens, we fail both to represent a full picture of American history and to inspire celebration of small-town Americans.

Research questions stem from seeking to understand how placemaking functions in public space and in rural communities. Primary questions include:

- How do residents of McMinnville perceive Alpine Avenue?
- Did the Alpine renovation displace anyone or anything?
- Can the renovation of Alpine Avenue be considered an example of placemaking?

This investigation also prompted secondary questions including:

- What causes a place to be successful in the eyes of one community and not in the eyes of another?
- Who are the major placemaking actors in a rural setting?

- What are the challenges and advantages of placemaking at the rural, local level?

The following study examines the renovation of Alpine Avenue, which was planned and executed between 2011 and 2018. The study places forefront attention towards the perspectives of community participants and professionals, as experts of their own experiences. Through analysis of this public space city redesign project, I will explore what makes placemaking effective, and inversely, how it can be detrimental.

The site is of moderate cultural significance, existing historically as an industrial area. Today, it contains approximately 15 private residencies (an unknown number of which have been purchased and renovated as short-term rentals). Through the renovation, the district is being transitioned to a mixed-use function. Currently, no physical detail denotes the site of any particular historic importance, though with the new distinction of being a crafts district, many have begun to articulate the value of the area and reclaim pride in an industrial past and maker's future.

My research is conducted through historical analysis, interviews with placemaking experts (such as city planners, project coordinators, and urban designers), interviews with community members, and unobtrusive, first-hand observations of Alpine Avenue and those inhabiting the space. My fieldwork was originally planned to include attending community events relating to the location but due to the scarcity of in-person events in 2020 and 2021, this did not occur. Finally, to supplement traditionally qualitative methods of research, I incorporate poetic interview submissions received as a form of arts-based research that reflects on the local impacts of renovation.

The primary goal of this study is to make recommendations that might be applied to the case study and to similar sites of rural placemaking.

The Role of the Researcher

This research is informed by my personal perception of place, influenced strongly by my childhood residency in McMinnville, Oregon. Though over the past decade, I have also observed a shift in the tone of McMinnville as a place. Once called "McMethville" by locals, today, McMinnville has been rebranded as the, "Land of Plenty", as displayed proudly on billboards across Oregon. Having completed my undergraduate degree in Planning, Public Policy, and Management (PPPM), I have an acute understanding of how local governance can influence the marketing of place for political and economic advantage.

Conversationally, many describe frequented places as having "character". It is my belief that "character" and the core of what makes an effective, successful place, is a design that empowers the interests and needs of community members at every step of the project timeline. Unlike "build it and they will come" attitudes, in my experience, the best places are created with a high degree of community advisement and propelled into use by the momentum of civic participation and involvement. Though the making of places is an invisible process to many, I have seen placemaking advocate for the emotional, nuanced human in projects that might be otherwise framed as strictly budget or aesthetic centric or pursued solely by the logistics of construction. As such, I believe creative placemaking has the power to tangibly realize and historize the cultures, backgrounds, and hopes of a people through built environments. In this way, my research is innately personal and informed by my professional endeavors in the field.

Methodology

      This thesis is transdisciplinary, drawing from existing research in city planning, community development, and cultural geography. Using a mixed-methods approach, I reviewed academic journals, newspapers, historical archives, and other online media, supplementing fieldwork observations along Alpine Avenue and interviews with local community members and professionals related to the renovation. My research took a wide scope, though it is necessary to mention that land use documents and internal documentation connected to planning the project were not easily publicly obtainable. I address this challenge in my limitations and my findings.

      Complimenting traditional modes of research, my thesis will creatively build upon qualitative fieldwork and interviews with poetic interview responses from community members. The use of arts-base methodology in this thesis aims to amplify what is available from traditional research methods, inviting a fuller representation of community participation. These poetic reflections are found as vignettes at the beginning of each chapter section and again in order of appearance in Appendix C. I purposefully do not provide a formal creative analysis of these poems. Instead, I provide brief commentary on thematic insights while inviting readers to reflect themselves.

Interview Types

      This study uses primary data from oral interviews conducted in-person and virtually. Voluntary interviews were chosen for this research to provide first-hand perspectives on the local perception of Alpine Avenue and to understand how professionals went about planning the renovation. I interviewed 8 community members

and 4 professionals. For both affiliations, I asked 14 questions, purposefully open-ended to invite reflection. Interviews ranged in length from 30-60 minutes. As a large portion of my thesis is about positioning storytelling and creative expression as a form of community-building when placemaking, these interviews aim for individual truth-telling, with special highlight of resilient and optimistic narratives.

Additionally, I created an open call document for poetic interview responses. This document can be found in Appendix D. Poetry expanded community participation using arts methodology, encouraging local writers to reflect creatively on Alpine Avenue and the effects of redevelopment. The open call was shared across social media platforms to 5 local arts groups: the McMinnville Center for the Arts, the Working Draft Writer's Workshop, the Oregon Writing Circle Writing Group, Oregon Writing Circle Exchange, and the Oregon Poetry Association. These groups were selected as the only writing groups still active online throughout the pandemic. I also contacted 5 professors associated with Linfield University's English Department in the hopes of having them share the prompt with their students.

However, these methods proved to be lacking, when two weeks prior to the open call deadline, I had still not received any submissions. I then shifted my methodology to a more active, relational recruitment process. I virtually canvased to over 20 social media acquaintances with known interest and/or participation in the arts. From this, I received 5 poetic interview submissions.

From both interview techniques combined, one traditional method and one creative, I collected a total of 17 individual responses. Abbreviated transcripts of selected quotes from these interviews are located in Appendices A, B, and C.

Table 1: Interview Data

Professionals associated with Alpine Avenue	Community Members	Poetic Responses	Total Interviews Collected	Conducted Virtually	Conducted In-Person
4	8	5	17	8	4

*Poetic Responses were received by mail (2) and by email (3).

Interview Process

Because McMinnville is a tight-knit community to which I belong, I employed a snowball-interview technique to identify and contact the initial round of oral interview participants. I first selected a random assortment of community members I knew. After completing an interview, I asked each to recommend additional community members they believed would be willing to speak with me. This strategy was effective for gathering responses from those outside my personal circle. I collected 8 general community member responses. Quotes that appear in this thesis from community member interview transcripts are located in Appendix A.

I identified professionals associated with the project through seeking out widely known city leaders. Unfortunately, many of the core professionals behind the Alpine Avenue renovation have since retired (some even abruptly during the course of my research). This turnover in staffing meant some of my interviews were with professionals who had inherited parts of the project and were unclear on the initial vision and/or outreach done to seek community input. I collected 4 oral interview responses from professionals associated with the project. Quotes that appear in this thesis from professional interview transcripts are located in Appendix B.

Limitations

  This research falls in the shadow of a catastrophic moment in global history: the novel coronavirus, or COVID-19 pandemic. Though the pandemic is not a key focus of this study, it has nonetheless influenced every aspect of the project.

  The sprawling impacts of the virus, from March 2020 to June 2022 (when this project will be complete), have altered urban progress. Across the United States (US), people have moved in mass exodus from city centers. Local and state government funding priorities have shifted, resources once available for creative and leisure uses are now paying for health and safety accommodations. Many organizations and governments have moved operations online to minimize the spread of sick employees needing to quarantine. Understaffing has created global supply-chain issues. Internal disorganization threatens to tank surviving management. These challenges minimized the original scope of my study, preventing me from studying abroad and conducting my research across multiple countries. Even after localizing my research focus, I have found that no place has been immune to repercussions of the pandemic.

  What has the pandemic meant for public space? Shortly after the virus was detected in the US, many Americans stayed home. Schools and workplaces went virtual, effectively making the confines of the home replace the network that was once the city. On the West Coast, during this early quarantine period, many took to walking around their neighborhoods for exercise and a change of pace. Outdoor spaces previously overlooked became a commodity. But what might have become a radical repurposing of space and large-scale shift to outdoor community gatherings, has not come to fruition.

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In McMinnville, these national and regional trends were similarly reflected. Though the detriment of the pandemic has been especially hard felt in rural cities, as their economic ecosystems are smaller, and communities more interconnected. These challenges are not new. Most rural towns have been in a state of economic recovery since the 1980s. Still, as the Portland Business Journal (Bjorke) reported in August 2020,

> Rural Oregon has felt the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on its economy in the same way urban areas have, but they have fewer resources and less diversity in their economies to absorb the fallout. (para. 4)

Along Alpine Avenue, the pandemic was severe. Anticipated development all but paused, leaving the city and community alike to wonder what the space would become. Though I lived in McMinnville and spent time along Alpine prior to the pandemic, all formal observational assessments for this project were completed during COVID times.

However, this study would be remiss to not mention the positive affects the pandemic has had upon city planning. Because of the global, media-heavy scale of the pandemic, there has been a surge of public attention towards matters of governance. Challenges of public policy have gained global visibility as their relevance and proximity shape our lives. COVID-19 has made it increasingly difficult to abstain from politics, those previously uninterested in government now acutely feel the effects of the sector: some declaring oppression in the form of mask mandates or concern for the unavailability of testing and vaccination sites. Regardless of politics, civic participation has increased.

Plus, many cities have turned their focus towards improving public amenities to attract a new wave of residents working remotely. The walkability of school zones, parks, and streets are a defining factor in where people want to live, and by extension, work. These are sites with the potential not only improve residents' quality of life, but also foster community healing after several years of distancing.

Yet, as it relates to this thesis, because of COVID-19, large gatherings have been discouraged (and at times banned), making the intended use of Alpine Avenue as a festival street impossible to witness. To minimize my own travels, I was unable to observe the avenue as frequently as I would have liked. Throughout the entire duration of the project, I was unable to meet with my advisors in person and generally had less educational support than I likely would have in a typical school year. Accommodating the Institutional Review Board's (IRB) protocols, I was also unable to canvas in-person with random users of the space and needed to restrict my data to what users themselves reached out to provide.

An additional limitation involved the availability of accessing city records. Despite consistent communication over the period of nearly two-years, via email and phone call with the City of McMinnville Planning Department, I was unable to gain access to internal archival documents pertaining to the history and renovation of Alpine. Specifically, I desired access to the findings from stakeholder workshops, the open house conducted, and door-to-door interviews. I also attempted to review land-use and zoning documents through the Yamhill County Clerk's Office but was informed these documents were organized in a way where I would need to hire a specialist to obtain the

document code titles. Such practices exclude the public from public documents. I address these challenges further in my findings.

Finally, in conjunction with limited access to documents, I also had limited access to the individuals who worked on the inception of the project due to high staff turnover rates primarily caused by retirement. Key retired individuals I desired to connect with included Doug Montgomery, former Planning Director, Larry Sherwood, former Project Manager with the Engineering Department, and Mike Bisset, former Community Development Director - all of whom remaining city employees did not have a way of contacting. Mike Bisset unfortunately retired during the course of my research, after agreeing to an interview but finding his last months with the city too busy.

CHAPTER II: Literature Review

Alpine St. just across the tracks
There is something that it lacks

Alpine St. what will it be?
Brighten up our fair city

Alpine St. buildings to restore
Can't profit from an eye sore

Alpine St. add some outdoor art
Just a few blocks from downtown's heart

Alpine St. for a music venue
With brews and grub on the menu

Alpine St. as never before
Just needs some effort, maybe a little more

Alpine St. a tourist draw?
Is that what the planners saw?

(Anonymous, 2022, Excerpt from "Alpine Revisited").

Stylistically, this poem, "Alpine Revisited", employs an anaphora of "Alpine St." along with a couplet rhyme scheme dispersed with questions. The piece opens with allusion to the location of Alpine Avenue as "just across the tracks", serving as both a physical indicator of place and a social indicator towards the emotional distance of the site. Quickly, the author identifies "profit" as a driving force behind renovation. The work also alludes to the space needing "some effort, maybe a little more", perhaps referencing the unfinished nature of the renovation, though whose effort is needed, remains undefined. Finally, the piece asks if planners intended or anticipated the site as a tourist draw. This question comes innocently, without condescension, as if to demonstrate bluntly, how ill-informed community members were to the true intentions of the project.

Chapter Summary

Given the varied success of public spaces, creative placemaking emerges as a

field and philosophy for designing meaningful, purpose-filled locations. This chapter

will explore existing literature on creative placemaking to inform insights on the

placemaking of Alpine Avenue.

Understanding Creative Placemaking

Creative Placemaking is a term coined by Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa in a

white paper distributed by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in 2010,

drawing upon the critiques of Jane Jacobs and William Whyte. Placemaking was then

defined as connecting,

> Partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors to
> strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood,
> town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative
> placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures
> and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and
> brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired.
>
> (p. 3)

Creative placemaking is as much a process as it is an outcome, recognizing that arts and

culture can aid a community in solving problems pertaining to place.

Importantly, readers should understand creative placemaking is not a "process of

discovery and colonization whereby place-makers disregard or ignore preexisting

histories, people, and ways of life as they make way for an exclusive future" (Halegoua,

2020, p. 187). Such critiques indicate a detrimental practice of placemaking, one which

fails to recognize the people already existing within a place. Instead, at its ideal form,

creative placemaking is the opposite: a process of honoring existing histories, peoples,

and ways of life through the use of arts and culture.

After significant funding from the NEA, creative placemaking became a buzzword in many design-related sectors, including arts and culture, community development, and urban planning. Through this recognition, creative placemaking is increasingly understood as a unique and legitimate field of its own. However, the lack of a unified definition for what constitutes "placemaking" has muddled the cohesion of the method in academia and the professional world.

Placemaking projects are informed by the communities, artists, designers, and culture-bearers involved in planning and community development. As a result, it can be a challenge to articulate a widespread definition for what creative placemaking is. Particularly for organizations investing money into placemaking projects, setting a clear definition that offers constraints, is vital to receiving desired applicants. As Grantmakers in the Arts notes, often, these definitions are "tethered to a meaning of 'place' manifest in the built environment" (Bedoya, 2013). While this emphasis on the built environment is sufficient for some placemaking projects, it excludes ideas that focus on less concrete methodology. This raises an issue of ethics as definitions have the power to favor those most compliant with their creators.

The Kresge Foundation's 2019 report entitled, "Creative Placemaking: Rethinking Neighborhood Change and Tracking Progress" takes a less rigid approach to definition continuity within the emerging field, stating that placemaking is fundamentally, "attempting to strengthen comprehensive approaches with arts, culture and community-engaged design elements" (Jackson, 2019, p. 3). While this improves upon more constraining definitions, "community-engaged design" leaves the unique role of people in relation to place, vague. Because placemaking rests upon an urban

design history fraught with expunging and erasing communities, definitions that deny a community-centered approach exist with a massive blind spot.

In *The Digital City* (Halegoua, 2020), creative placemaking is referred to as the belief that:

> Arts can improve the meaning, significance, and quality of a place- that cities and communities can embrace the arts to drive innovation and economic development, spark urban renewal, attract talent, and reproduce a sense of place for visitors and residents. (p. 184)

This framework is preferable as it reaches beyond an immediate effect of placemaking, towards lasting innovation that drives cultural identity and economic recovery.

However, a challenge for the creative placemaking sector is the current ability, or lack thereof, to measure project impact, excellence, and success. Because creative placemaking exists at the intersection of multiple fields, there is no one system that adequately assesses a metric of success. For decades, the bulk of design research has been geared towards understanding the conventional, quantitative economic benefits of arts and culture informed designs. Unfortunately, this denies the countless other areas of understanding value, such as user sense of belonging, safety, inspiration, and cultural vitality. Consequentially, adequate resources for examining and analyzing creative placemaking are extremely limited. Without a framework for ethical and impactful design, many designers learn through trial and error at the expense of the communities they serve. As the field is constructed on notions of creativity and artistic risk, new metrics must similarly reflect innovative ways of acknowledging impact and value. As the Ford Foundation (Callanan, 2014) identified, creative placemaking involves risk because it innovates:

> There has been a clear shift over the last 10 to 20 years in the leading
> thinking about places and what makes them vital and attractive. It has
> gone from a near obsession with the hardware of place—the physical
> systems—to a much deeper appreciation for the role of human capital,
> knowledge, and creativity. (para. 5)

New methods of evaluation should resonate with trailblazing research on the various roles of art and culture in communities. These methods should consider the value of knowledge and creativity.

As the Kresge Foundation's report identifies, although creative placemaking struggles with metrics of success, this does not mean there are no ways to measure creative placemaking impacts (Jackson, 2019, p. 10). Studies on social cohesion and community agency can assist in determining if a given project is making a difference. Scholar Ian Moss promotes a more "rigorous theoretical foundation" for judging the success of projects (2012). Moss argues that without a consistent form of measurement, coincidences and direct causations are confused. This leads to a murky road map for grant writers and grant awarders to select investments most likely to make a difference. Though not all scholars agree on this point, Roberto Bedoya believes the current focus on accumulating urban capital is a key source of destabilization for local communities (2014). Rather than putting energy into an economic structure of livability that valorizes gentrification and dollars reinvested into the community, Bedoya argues for success to be guided by those who live there and utilize the space.

To gather these stories, interviews and observations can be important and valuable disciplines. The Kresge foundation likens qualitative modes of research as "indications" that provide signals and insights to guide policy and project development (Jackson, 2019 p. 10). This does not discount the value of quantitative research methods

but offers an alternative and supplement for when the subject matter is a poor fit for conventional methods, as it is with placemaking.

Consistent with investing in new metrics of value measuring, the next wave of creative placemaking projects must also reflect upon the troubling legacy of placemaking resulting in displacement. Beginning with the forced removal of Native Peoples from their ancestral lands, their subsequent confinement to reservations, the internment of Japanese Americans during WWII, the urban redevelopment movement that razed many ethnic neighborhoods, to the 21st century militant ways of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement division (ICE). As designers, city planners, and community developers, we must ask, how is creative placemaking "different or complicit" with history (Bedoya, 2013)?

As Stephen Marshall (2015) of the University College London writes,

The compass of urban design could be pushed yet further, beyond the ambit of physical design, to address civil society and broader processes of urbanism, to tackle a broad range of concerns of growing urgency and complexity from local communities to the regional or even planetary scale. (p. 9)

Here, Marshall speaks to the possibility of built design to move beyond aesthetic principle. He describes a field with the power to affect and reckon with the social conditions and events shaping our intellectual and political histories.

All this begs the question of how to sustain and grow authenticity in a developing practice with an unclear definition. Bedoya (2013) advocates approaching placemaking as innately tied to an "ethos of belonging". This term has roots in the field of spatial justice and is achieved by putting people first. Though what people-first design-firms often lack, is an awareness and intentionally to know the local, affected

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demographics. Placemaking is not merely designing for people, but for unique, specific

peoples, with diverse histories. As Bedoya (2013) continues,

> The blind love of creative placemaking that is tied to the allure of
> speculation culture and its economic thinking of 'build it and they will
> come' is suffocating and unethical, and supports a politics of dis-
> belonging employed to manufacture a 'place'. (para. 1)

Valuing belonging then, needs to be forefront in future placemaking practices. Creative

placemaking should not merely be viewed as an economic strategy, but as actions to

encourage spatial justice and support healthier communities.

Placemaking in Rural Communities

What does creative placemaking offer for small, rural communities? As Clarke

states, arts and culture "bind" communities to place (2017, p. 20). Though still under-

researched, in small communities, creative placemaking has potential as a platform, a

forum, a modality of engagement that is low-cost, encourages new collaborations and

ideas, and visualizes and historizes lived experiences. By extension, creative

placemaking can spur development that reflects the stories and lives of those in

proximity.

Creative placemaking is a tool a rural city might employ or might even find

themselves experiencing without strategic planning. In Paris, creative placemaking has

grown organically to be a driver of development in the lesser inhabited suburbs due to

the density of the city itself. The availability of industrial architecture in the suburbs

appeals to artists as a less congested, less competitive canvas by which artists might use

(Berman, n.d.). This points to the unique position of smaller communities as inviting

practitioners of arts and cultural to inhabit the space and leave their creative mark.

And as Phil Myrick (2020), the former CEO of the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) states, as the world emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, creative public spaces provide a glimmer of hope. Myrick describes how streets are a frontline asset waiting to be activated for economic and social recovery. In small communities, Myrick (2020) anticipates public space as an "unfulfilled promise" for activities and programming that celebrates a place's unique talents. The PPS's motto: lighter, quicker, cheaper, offers a touchstone for immediate action– such action is desirable for communities bogged by slow government processes. This should appeal to rural locations uniquely, who are planning recovery efforts with fewer resources than their urban counterparts.

One group of researchers from MIT describe creative placemaking in rural communities as "deliberate", "ambitious", and "optimistic" (Silberberg, 2013). Additionally, for politically fragmented communities, creative placemaking in public spaces invites necessary "social friction" by which commonalities are uncovered and a greater social cohesion is revealed (Silberberg, 2013). In places struggling with the urban-rural divide, or a mosaic of political identities, engaged public spaces might provide healing.

CHAPTER III: Case Study

II.
Autumn was when Alpine awoke
tons of grapes
dropped at the heels
of custom crush facilities
the café coddled
college students
slogging through
first-of-term exams
and fueled
winery workers
wandering between shifts
community-run
community-owned.

when I remember
my time on Alpine
it is wreathed
in the colors of harvest
never the place
of parades or parties
reserved in its work
Alpine had its season of plenty
and its season of rest.

(Anonymous, 2022, Excerpted from "Before it was Alpine").

"Before it was Alpine" takes shape as a list poem, broken into 3 sections. Within this excerpt, taken from sections II. and III., the author reflects on how the seasons change the use of Alpine Avenue. In Fall, Alpine is alive. Workers within the wine industry are described alongside an influx of college students attending nearby Linfield University. It is a place of movement, of "slogging through", being "fueled", and "wandering between shifts". For this author, physical movement at the site connects to a sense of community ownership. The concluding lines reflect on Alpine in memory, and how that vision differs from the city description of the site as a "place of parades or parties". Finally, the author speaks to a familiar sentiment: the culture of McMinnville as rural, "reserved", hardworking, and "restful". It is an identity worth celebrating.

Chapter Summary

This chapter describes the history of the Alpine renovation, as revealed through mixed-methods research. Then, observations and collected interview responses document community and professional perspectives on the design and use of Alpine Avenue.

Figure 1: Alpine before renovation.

(Photo by SERA Architects, n.d., https://www.seradesign.com/projects/northeast-gateway-district-streetscape-plan/).

Renovation History

Since 1885, Oak Park Avenue (renamed Alpine Avenue in 1928) has been used as a thoroughfare for the Historic Granary District. Only in recent years, has the area welcomed wineries, breweries, and creative craft businesses. Prompted by the promise of urban renewal funding, with increasing development and location proximity to downtown, the site became focus for city investment.

In 2010, the City of McMinnville contracted Portland-based OTAK Architects, under the leadership of then Planning Director Doug Montgomery, to create a "unified public realm brand" for the emerging Northeast Gateway District (Northeast, 2019). The first iteration of Alpine as we know it today, was presented as the Northeast Gateway Plan, a redevelopment brief prepared to address current and future transportation needs. Figure 2 is a visioning image created in the original plan and shown to the public at a later open house event.

Figure 2: Northeast Gateway District mock-up.

(Photo by SERA Architects, March 2012, https://www.mcminnvilleoregon.gov/cd/page/alpine-avenue).

In 2014, the Northeast Gateway Plan was then identified as one of five Capital Improvement Projects passed through a Transportation Bond approved by McMinnville voters. According to the City of McMinnville (https://www.mcminnvilleoregon.gov), the funding promised to:

Improve a portion of NE Alpine Avenue in the City's Northeast Gateway District. Improvements include street surfacing, pedestrian facilities, bike lanes, utility upgrades and attractive landscaping to encourage economic vitality and community vibrancy. (para. 1)
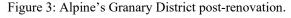
The project also aimed to improve pedestrian accessibility and comfort along the street, while giving vehicles access to existing businesses.

After the City of McMinnville secured funding, updated zoning to allow for mixed-use development, and implemented an urban renewal district to incentivize tax-increment funding, HDR Engineering and SERA Architects were contracted. SERA appointed Martin Glastra van Loon as Project Manager for the renovation. Though not from McMinnville, Martin had worked previously on the Northeast Gateway District plan with OTAK and was familiar with the city's vision for the space.

To orient the design process, SERA created two committees to oversee project development: a Stakeholder Committee and a Technical Advisory Committee. These groups were comprised of those with land ownership in the area, members of the Urban Renewal Advisory Board, utility providers, and city staff. Over a series of workshops, the committees influenced early sketches for the project, with SERA transforming their ideas into a physical model and virtual reality rendering showed to city staff. Then, the schematics were presented publicly in an open house event for the community. Finally, Martin's team canvased the first 3 blocks of Alpine, going door-to-door with the project plans to gather community feedback.

Beginning in March 2017, NE 7th Avenue to NE 11th Avenue went under construction by Emery & Sons Construction Group. After seven years of strategic planning, in April 2018, the $4.3 million, quarter mile 5-block streetscape was revealed.

The first 3 blocks were outfitted to be a festival district, followed by 2 blocks of a crafts district. Figure 3 demonstrates looking south down a completed Alpine Avenue.

Figure 3: Alpine's Granary District post-renovation.

(Photo by Anna Pearl Johnson, August 23, 2021).

From the inception of the project, planners advocated that Alpine would become a low traffic, pedestrian-friendly connection between McMinnville's historic downtown on Third Street and destinations within the district. However, a more accurate project goal was to re-pave Alpine, and then work on the downtown connection through a subsequent wayfinding project, designed by Visit McMinnville and funded separately by the city. For two years post-renovation, wayfinding efforts stalled and then COVID-19 hit. The city paused these wayfinding plans due to insufficient funding. Nearly every local I spoke with mentioned the original promise of a walkable downtown connection, now four years later that still does not exist.

Below, Figure 4 demonstrates the unmarked entrance to Alpine, presumably where people would walk from downtown to enter the district alongside Buchanan Cellers Mill.

Figure 4: Wayfinding to Alpine Avenue.

(Photo by Anna Pearl Johnson, August 25, 2021).

Instead of a creating a "spine to the downtown", or a "festival street", Alpine Avenue today is an isolated district, with successful aspects, but also design choices and maintenance issues that have led to the degradation of infrastructure, and the general disarray of the space. Visitors to the site today will encounter run-off spilling dirt and gravel across paved paths as park benches continue to face empty, fenced-off lots, or at points, people's residential homes, as illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Alpine planter boxes in front of residence.

(Photo by Anna Pearl Johnson, August 20, 2021).

Perhaps the greatest point of concern regarding the Alpine renovation is that of ownership. Alpine Avenue was funded by taxpayers, designed by a firm based out of Portland, and organized by the City of McMinnville. As public space directly attached to commercial, industrial, and residential land, ideally, the surrounding community would pitch in to keep the space vibrant and well-kept. However, without clear city guidance or community organizing, what many residents call McMinnville's latest "boondoggle" project, has been all but untouched by those who inhabit the space in their day to day.

One exception to this lacking public involvement, is Mac Market (Figure 5), which bookends Alpine a few blocks down from the redevelopment, on a still unpaved portion of street. The Mac Market building was originally a 10,000 square-foot manufacturing warehouse for Huberd's Shoe Grease, built in 1929 and purchased by

Diana Riggs and Todd Severson of Seattle in 2016. The design-minded duo renovated the dilapidated structure into a chic industrial gathering space home to several trendy vendors where locals can purchase organic vegetables, a lavender latte, a bouquet of flowers, or even a steaming bowl of bibimbap from the Heart & Seoul food truck run by Diana's mother. Though transplants to McMinnville, the family integrated into the community, highlighting and honoring what existed before them, while infusing their own backgrounds into the fabric of town. Diana has big dreams for the future of Alpine, including a weekly "Roll Down Alpine" event, a carless allotment of time where Mac Market will incentivize locals to bike, skate, or walk. She also plans to resurrect an Alpine neighborhood association she had begun working on, but that fizzled with the onset of the pandemic (Diana Riggs, personal communication, November 10, 2021). Such an association, community-driven, might encourage the sense of ownership and responsibility currently lacking from the structure of the space.
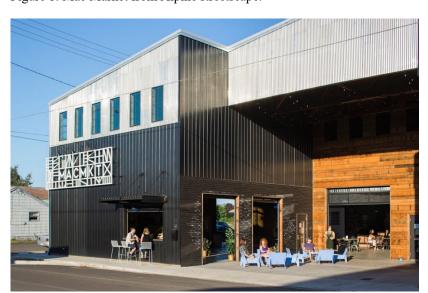
Figure 6: Mac Market from Alpine streetscape.

(Photo by Mac Market, n.d. https://www.macmkt.com/gather).

In the meantime, questions of ownership remain surrounding the infrastructure of Alpine. In large planters along the street, fruits and vegetables were planned to grow- so planned that informational signage about the corresponding plants was placed in each raised bed. Four years later, the signs no longer match what is growing there. A "Children's Garden of fruits and vegetables" is home to stalks of sunflowers (Figure 7). Unripe tomatoes peak out from a bin labeled as compost (Figure 8). Residents of Alpine wonder if they were responsible for the upkeep of these mini public gardens, of which they didn't request. One resident, "Jeb", laughingly told me how he and a neighbor had harvested a single red pepper from a "salsa box" before the veggies rotted and the planter became overgrown. Rather than inspire use from the community, Jeb perceived the planters to be a burden on residents, given by the city.

Figure 7: Planter box of sunflowers.

(Photo by Anna Pearl Johnson, August 20, 2021).

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Figure 8: Planter box of tomatoes.

(Photo by Anna Pearl Johnson, August 20, 2021).

Still, the area continues to develop. In August 2016, the City of McMinnville

Planning Department approved a conditional use permit submitted by Rhoda Thomspon

to allow the operation of Little Roots Preschool on a C-3 PD (General Commercial

Planned Development) zoned property within the Northeast Gateway District. The

property is located on NE 7th Avenue (between NE Alpine Avenue and NE Lafayette

Avenue). In the City of McMinnville's final report, text states:

> A neighboring property owner commented to the Planning Department
> that the planting around the subject site is often a place where a transient
> population establishes camps and areas to sleep. The property owner was
> pleased to hear that the subject site would be developed, activated, and
> maintained, thereby creating a safer and more pleasant pedestrian
> experience. (p. 14)

This text is one of the few, if only, city documents identifying Alpine as a destination for "transient populations", otherwise known as the houseless residents of McMinnville. As covered later in the interview portion of this chapter, development planning for the purpose of displacement is an unaddressed area of concern for many community members.

Post renovation, the McMinnville Urban Renewal Board also developed a Property Assistance Program to encourage new construction and significant redevelopment projects in the area per Resolution No. 2017-03, which encompasses a Development Loan and Grant Program. In February 2022, the Renewal Board awarded a $25,000 grant for a Boutique Retreat construction project of rentable vacation tiny homes, organized by Kevin Kump and Sarita Springer. Though this project falls under development, it does not support the need for residential housing in McMinnville as identified by both community members and professionals associated with the design of Alpine.

Alpine Today

Stretching from NE 5th to NE 14th Streets, Alpine Avenue is slowly becoming the urban renewal zone and crafts district promised to taxpayers a decade ago. The south end of the stretch houses the Granary District: the site of several wineries, a brewery, and a coffeeshop. Northwards is The Eyrie Vineyards, Remy Wines, and the Heater Allen Brewery. At the far north lays Mac Market. In between, lays Basile's Woodworking Workshop, Colt Bowden's Gold Hand Signs shop, and Blue Raven Pies. Alongside residential homes are rentable vacation cottages. Despite the plethora of businesses, Alpine remains largely disconnected from the greater city and downtown.

Outside the local community, the Alpine Avenue renovation has garnered acclaim and recognition. In 2019, the American Council of Engineering Companies of Oregon presented both the Engineering Excellence Grand Award and the National Recognition Award to the City of McMinnville and HDR, the partnering engineering firm. In a city council meeting celebrating the award, a moderator said proudly, "We got it done. We've built it, and now we're watching things come" (McMinnville, 2019).

Observations

As part of my research, I conducted a week of on-site observations in the summer of 2021, across varying times of the day, placed at various locations along the streetscape.

Over the week, I recorded sensory details in a field log. Visually, Alpine is a long stretch of concrete, neutral grey and brown in color, with sporadic development intermixed alongside unoccupied land. It is common to see empty storage units, gravel, chain link fences, graffiti, weeds, exposed power lines, and electrical boxes. Details of the street's decay are less noticeable at the street's ends as bright, mixed-material seating areas distract one's eye. These shaded seating areas are points of gathering; nowhere else along the street did I see people pausing or meeting. Alpine is a place of frequent movement and activity. Audibly, seated along the street one can hear traffic in the distance, semis unloading wine shipments, light chatter of visitors, and frequent birdsong. Kinesthetically, the area is not friendly to the touch: a lack of maintenance has made metal beams rust and flake, and left wooden benches and planters splintered.

During my observations, I made special note of the ways individuals interacted with the infrastructure of Alpine. People visited the space alone and in groups at

approximately the same rate. Many appeared to use the space for lunch breaks and work meetings. I noted facetime calls, laptops balanced atop wine barrels, and pairs of individuals meeting at infrastructural landmarks and shaking hands before getting coffee. I also observed frequent dog-walking, where if owners entered a shop, they would tie their animals to benches or concrete posts. I watched several individuals struggle to attach their dog's leash to the infrastructure. Oddly shaped trash cans resulted in trash being left on the ledge of the can and not deposited inside. I also noticed that people instinctively shifted from biking to walking with corresponding pavement changes. The bike rack was a frequent point of use. The few children I saw gravitated towards the Granary District stage.

The instinctive pull of visitors towards Mac Market and the Granary District can be explained by analyzing what these spaces have, and inversely, what Alpine does not. Both ends of the street have paired seating that face each other, establishing subtle boundaries of place within the larger street. The two gathering points also are noticeably brighter in color with an array of quirky, found materials that provide character to the landscape. They additionally have shade and quick access to eateries.

Meanwhile, Alpine Avenue itself, has isolated seating, such as singular benches most of which face planter boxes or private properties. Due to the open nature of the street, there are few if any sheltered areas for gathering. Visually, the street is exclusively neutral hues with industrial detailing.

Throughout interviews with professionals associated with the design of the renovation, it was frequently mentioned that Alpine Avenue was meant to be a "walkable" "extension of Third Street". As part of my observations, I attempted to

uncover the intended walkway between these two destinations. There was no obvious path or signage.

Resident Observations

On August 24th, 2021, I left 7 typed letters at homes along Alpine, inviting residents to interview with me for this study. I provided both my phone number and my email address. There were additional residencies along the street, though as a lone researcher, I did not feel safe distributing letters at the more shaded properties whose front doors were not visible from the street. As I left a letter with one resident, Jeb, we had a conversation about his experiences living along the redevelopment. I have included these responses, with permission, as an interview. Several of Jeb's quotes appear in the interview section of this chapter, though due to the conversational, unrecorded natural of the interaction, I consider his statements as partial observations since I was not able to document his quotes word for word. No other residents reached out to schedule an interview.

Because I deposited the invitational letters by bike, Jeb was eager to connect with me over his own bike. Welcoming me with a fist bump, as he quickly explained, the Alpine renovation resulted in different residences receiving different sized driveway allotments. Showing me his own sliver of driveway, Jeb described frustration that because he did not own a car, the city would assume he did not need the space. Jeb articulated a distrust of the city for altering his property. He told me of his dissatisfaction with receiving access to the planter boxes and how useless a box of green peppers was for realistically making a salsa, as the box claimed to provide.

Interviews

As Hayden wrote in her 1995 book, *The Power of Place*, "Residents are often more expert than historians by virtue of daily life in the area" (p. 231). Employing this assumption, I collected 16 interview responses: 8 oral interviews from community members, 4 oral interviews from professionals associated with Alpine's renovation, and 5 written poetic reflections. Interviews were conducted virtually over the phone, over Zoom, and in-person along Alpine Avenue.

Though every participant was given the option to remain anonymous, all involved professionals requested their names be attached to their responses. For anonymous community member responses, interview quotes appearing in this section are attributed by an alphabetical code (i.e., "Interviewee A), and ordered chronologically in correspondence to the date of their interview.

As dictated by the University of Oregon IRB, of which this study was reviewed and approved, for both community members and professionals, participation was voluntary. Demographic information was not collected. Participants were invited to answer the following questions but were allowed to skip any questions they did not wish to answer. Questions included:

1. Are you a resident of McMinnville? If so, for how long?
2. What does community mean to you?
3. Based on what community means to you, how would you categorize the community or communities of McMinnville?
4. In your opinion, what makes a physical space welcoming and supportive of community?
5. Please summarize your understanding of the Alpine Avenue renovation. What motivated the renovation? What was the space like before? After?

6. Prior to the renovation, did you agree or disagree that renovation was necessary? During? Immediately afterwards? Now?

7. Describe community input and expertise in the design process of Alpine Avenue.

8. Describe your involvement or relation to the renovation of Alpine Avenue.

9. In relation to the renovation, characterize your participation in the process. Were you an independent participant or did you participate on behalf of an organization, community group, governmental body, etc.)?

10. Do you believe that the renovation was responsive to your participation in the planning process? If so, how. If not, how so?

11. Thinking back on your comments about "community," does the Alpine renovation strengthen community in McMinnville? If so, how, If not, how so?

12. Is there anything about the Alpine Avenue renovation you believe is unique? Particularly successful? Should be emulated by other municipalities? Your response may be associated with process of planning the renovation or the results of the renovation.

13. Is there anything about the renovation that is dysfunctional or that hinders community in McMinnville?

14. What is your vision for the future of Alpine?

Professional Interviews

In August and September of 2021, I interviewed City Councilor Zach Geary, former News-Register Editor Jeb Bladine, and City Manager Jeff Towery. In May 2022, after several attempts to meet with a representative from SERA, I secured an interview with Project Manager Martin Glastra van Loon. The same above list of questions asked of community member participants was used to guide their responses.

Professionals, On Community

In asking professionals to reflect on community in McMinnville, responses covered the intangible sense of togetherness, characteristics of McMinnville, as well as the unique physical city assets of McMinnville.

> Community is the opposite of being alone, its people working on a common goal or project and ending up with something great. Community in McMinnville? It's great. (Zach Geary, personal communication, August 25, 2021)

> McMinnville has small businesses, good people, people to serve, churches, community gatherings, parks, a library, our community center, art galleries, and really yummy food. (Zach Geary, personal communication, August 25, 2021)

> Community is the combination of people, places, and things that make up where you live. In McMinnville, community is top-notch. It's a place that's willing to grow. (Jeff Towery, personal communication, September 16, 2021)

> Community means a physical place of commonality, a people of common interests. Cultural and historical place of common experience. McMinnville is supportive and involved. (Jeb Bladine, personal communication, September 1, 2021)

Professionals, On Alpine Avenue

I then asked professional participants to consider the renovation of Alpine, including what motivated the renovation and what elements factor into creating a welcoming physical space. Reflections from Zach Geary and Jeff Towery could not include Alpine prior to renovation efforts, as neither individual was involved in the initial planning of the renovation. Instead, these responses described their understanding of the renovation as its construction occurred. Functionality and beauty were both mentioned as indicators of a welcoming space.

A space is welcoming of community when its multifunctional, inclusive, well-thought out, and flexible. With taxpayer dollars, it should be a beautiful structure that really screams what we stand for and what we are. It should be a sum better than its parts. (Zach Geary, personal communication, August 25, 2021)

Alpine was all planned for and done when I got on Council. I wasn't a decision maker on the process. I didn't attend any of the walkthroughs or meetings. But I understood that McMinnville was landlocked by farmland and had a charming downtown. Alpine had this crummy lumber mill that was crushed in a snowstorm… the owner chose to reinvest and rebuild, and it became this Saturday market community space. The future thinkers got together and realized we needed to expand that idea and have a progression of downtown into a district though long-term investment. (Zach Geary, personal communication, August 25, 2021)

Expertise was... you know. The city hired a consultant, SERA architects. It's a pretty common practice- you don't know how to build a pool until you build a damn pool. So, you bring in the consultant, the expert. (Zach Geary, personal communication, August 25, 2021)

There was concern at the first open house, whether this could work in a community like McMinnville. We went door-to-door and met business owners and residents along the first three-block, taking inventory of their needs, constraints, plans for the future, et cetera. (Martin Glastra van Loon, personal communication, May 8, 2022)

I was here for the groundbreaking. I inherited the project. Any community involvement happened before I got here. Generally, we make sure to communicate with affected users and owners way before we get too far into design. I would presume they went about it in a transparent way. (Jeff Towery, personal communication, September 16, 2021)

I was a member of the advisory committee that launched the project, a member of the transportation advisory committee that funded a substantial amount of the project, and I was a member of the urban renewal program that first included Alpine in the district and then provided funding for the project. (Jeb Bladine, personal communication, September 1, 2021)

The motivation was to expand the downtown into a specialty district of mixed-use. Before, the area was unpaved with older homes and industrial uses. Half of it still is. Half was converted into an unusual, paved district. It's in an ongoing state of development. (Jeb Bladine, personal communication, September 1, 2021)

Professionals, On Alpine & Community

Inviting comment on the successful aspects of Alpine, professionals noted the

garden and flower boxes, intentional efforts to include the perspectives of business

owners, and traffic calming measures.

> The street pavement patterns were inspired by the fields of Yamhill
> Country. We wanted easily moveable furniture pieces as buffers to guide
> vehicles and planters as walls to also guide cars. The pieces could be
> moved by forklifts to change the street furnishings depending on needs.
> The trellis structures were inspired by the industrial nature of the area,
> providing shelter and enclosure since, at that time, the street lacked
> building facades. (Martin Glastra van Loon, personal communication,
> May 8, 2022)

> There's a nice little salsa garden, beautiful flowers, a kid's garden.
> There's been just absolutely magnificent use of it. They also did a great
> job acknowledging and understanding the needs of business owners with
> the semis that drive along Alpine. You go to Portland and all those cool,
> hip, neighborhoods are just like this. I like that it's not just this mass of
> horrible concrete: it's concrete, pavers, and decomposed granite. (Zach
> Geary, personal communication, August 25, 2021)

> The street was designed intentionally as a festival street to support a
> mixed-use of residential and business uses. You have large planter areas
> that are traffic calming. It was sensitive to long-term users of the street.
> (Jeff Towery, personal communication, September 16, 2021)

> The meandering road was designed to be like the Pearl District in
> Portland. As a concept, it could be emulated by other cities, but in
> practice, there are lessons to be learned from what McMinnville
> experienced. (Jeb Bladine, personal communication, September 1, 2021)

Additionally, I asked professionals to reflect on the dysfunctional or failed

aspects of the renovation. Responses acknowledged issues of community dissonance,

ownership and maintenance, difficulty conveying the design to the community, along

with concerns about amenities.

> Alpine currently strengthens community to a very minor extent. The
> project has not been a success towards what was hoped. It has been the
> subject of considerable differences of opinion, whether it should have

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been done in the first place. It's been subject of strong community feelings that it was a waste of money. The anticipated development just didn't occur. (Jeb Bladine, personal communication, September 1, 2021)

Architects design for the moment. Now we gotta pay someone to maintain it long-term. It's pretty overgrown right now. We can barely mow the playgrounds and parks, let alone going to Alpine and picking the weeds out of the thing. (Zach Geary, personal communication, August 25, 2021)

I've heard concerns about getting it wired and plumbed and set up for multi-use things. It's a double-edged sword. If we made it available for groups to use for festivals and events if would also be used by seedy characters, however you want to phrase that. As the rest of the district develops, so will it. (Zach Geary, personal communication, August 25, 2021)

It was a different design concept than what we had ever used in the community. For some, it was hard for some to imagine how it would be used, until it was built. (Jeff Towery, personal communication, September 16, 2021)

At a food truck event held on Alpine, we found out that there were pipes in the ground with no power, the first two blocks were powered but the rest of the blocks didn't have plug-ins. Food trucks had to bring their own generators or borrow power from adjoining property owners. I suspect it was a cost issue. We also had some planters that kept getting hit by cars, so we moved them. (Jeff Towery, personal communication, September 16, 2021)

We basically put concrete right up against people's properties, so businesses don't have to worry about curbs and driveways add that sort of things. I haven't taken any complaints about the street. Most folks are supportive or neutral about its' impact on the community. (Jeff Towery, personal communication, September 16, 2021)

A lot of the project required the acquisition and demolition of housing which is expensive. People would have had to sell their old and ramshackle homes and storage facilities. It still might happen, but it's stuck in time right now. (Jeb Bladine, personal communication, September 1, 2021)

The rubber plant and storage units hinder development. And there was probably too much separation from downtown. There was a wayfinding project where designs were made, but the project fell through. It needed several-hundreds of thousands of dollars of funding, and it lost the priority of people in town. (Jeb Bladine, personal communication, September 1, 2021)

You can design it, but the community needs to embrace it, love it, and act as stewards to bring the staged space to life. That's beyond our influence as designers. It has happened to some extent, but there is still a lot of opportunity for community-led activation. There was talk of using the trellises for temporary art installations or seasonal banners. I'm still waiting for someone to become the ambassador of Alpine Avenue, organizing people. (Martin Glastra van Loon, personal communication, May 8, 2022)

Professionals, On The Future

Finally, I prompted professionals to envision the future of Alpine. All responses included a mention of McMinnville's overall growth and development.

You know, someone's going to come along and redevelop, and all the little houses there, they've already got people banging on their doors. Now we bring up the scary icky g-word, right? It falls into gentrification, or the churn associated with capitalism and development. Someone is going to come knock on those doors with a bag of $300,000 and you're gonna take it eventually, or you're not. You'll hold out and be that one weird little house, like the guy from *Up*. (Zach Geary, personal communication, August 25, 2021)

In 2030, hopefully there's a dozen more of these projects up and down Alpine. It's a mentality, we need to keep growing. (Zach Geary, personal communication, August 25, 2021)

We own this forever. And everybody needs to take care of it. We need to value the beautiful things. You just hope that it works out in the end, and that it's all for the greater good, and that you're not the one that has the lever in their hand, pulling the lever, making a tough choice. (Zach Geary, personal communication, August 25, 2021)

Alpine could be, with careful design and acquisition of property, a nice pedestrian experience with internet and nouveau, eclectic shopping. It could be culturally diverse. (Jeb Bladine, personal communication, September 1, 2021)

There were opportunities to reflect the stories of the space, we wanted lit, seating elements with tabletops to be a surface for murals or art installations. We thought the trellis columns could be used for interpretive signage. In the late 1800s, Alpine was planned on a brazen belief that McMinnville could be an economic center. There are a lot of historic stories to tell. And even just the design story, everyone should

know how Alpine came to be. The street deserves it. (Martin Glastra van Loon, personal communication, May 8, 2022)

At the conclusion of my interview with former *News Register* Editor Jeb Bladine, Jeb asked if I wanted to know how such a failure could happen. I responded affirmatively and he told the following story:

Alpine had an allure, a possibility. Doug Montgomery had the vision. McMinnville was landlocked with nowhere to expand. No one was gonna fund that. So, Doug got a grant from the Transportation and Growth Management Program for about $85,000. That provided the money for a design plan that would never have otherwise happened. Its chances of being funded were problematic. Along came Urban Renewal. Almost no one understands it. It freezes the renewal area's property taxes, and the increment taxes create this fund to be reinvested. Alpine was on the shelf. But Doug realized that if we built new development on Alpine, and included it in the renewal district, 100% of those property taxes would produce funding to be invested back into our downtown. Alpine was always meant to be a source of funding. Nobody else knows all this. Next came the transportation bond. The same group of people were looking at a city-wide bond to fix our streets. What if we throw a few million from that bond into Alpine? So, they did. Nobody hardly noticed it. It was a means-to-an-end process. Alpine would raise money for the downtown through Urban Renewal. But it didn't happen. Ironically, downtown got those major investments without Alpine's help. The concerns about downtown were false, and the hopes for Alpine were also false. Now, Alpine is gonna sit there until someone with vision, and a whole lotta money, decides to do something. It's a story in the making. Alpine is stuck in time. Twenty years from now, no one is gonna know why this crazy, overgrown street is here. There were good intentions. (Jeb Bladine, personal communication, September 1, 2021)

Reflecting holistically on my interviews with professionals, I learned how the politics of funding is often prioritized over giving community input due influence in the design process. Professionals work within tight budgets and deadlines leaving little room for community engagement strategizing. Tying into one of my secondary research questions, "Who are the major placemaking actors in a rural setting?", I heard professionals repeatedly identify the same group of individuals taking on leadership and

volunteer positions pertaining to city projects. These changemakers were almost exclusively older, white men.

Community Member Interviews

I conducted community members interviews from August to November of 2021. Of the 8 community members I interviewed, participants had lived in McMinnville for as few as 6 years and at most 33 years. Though all participants were given the option to remain anonymous, several community member participants requested to be named for their relation to Alpine. As mentioned, quotes in this section are attributed by an alphabetical code (i.e., "Interviewee A), and ordered chronologically in correspondence to the date of the interview. Anonymous community member participants include interviewees A – D. For a transcript of selected quotes used in this thesis, see Appendix A. Named community members include:

Jeb, Resident of Alpine Avenue
Lisa Allan, Daughter of Peter Allan of Peter Allan Brewing
Jeff Knapp, Executive Director of Visit McMinnville
Diana Riggs, Co-Owner of Mac Market

Community Members, On Community

The first several questions I asked, "How long have you been a resident of McMinnville, what does Community mean to you, and what are the communities of McMinnville?", framed participant thinking of my study in terms of their own identity as community members and the impact of Alpine upon community in McMinnville. Responses ranged from broad definitions of community to characterizers of community specific to McMinnville.

The community here has richness and complexity. The connecting point of community to me is the downtown. You'll only be there for a short amount of time before you run into somebody that you know. Not everyone participates in that part of McMinnville, but for those who do, it's a great feeling. (Interviewee A, personal communication, August 20, 2021)

I moved from Kansas to McMinnville with the intention of finding a community that aligned with my values. Here, people love each other hard, like an extended family. We have less and less like it in our society. But here, there is a large cultural change afoot. Historically, we were a manufacturing and agricultural community founded by hardworking folks. They were long-term visionaries. The wine industry has brought a lot of new people to the area. (Jeff Knapp, personal communication, September 21, 2021)

There's a kindness, it's why we moved here. (Diana Riggs, personal communication, November 10, 2021)

I think we have a good community in McMinnville. People are welcoming; many families like mine have been here for generations. (Lisa Allan, personal communication, September 13, 2021)

Community means the people that we build our lives around and with, those we pick to support and make a better world with together. (Interviewee C, personal communication, September 8, 2021)

Communities here have become more divided by people that are really hateful, regardless of what their agenda is, the anger and the fear has been hard to see. It's split the community up. And not even just two groups. (Interviewee D, personal communication, October 10, 2021)

From there, I asked participants to reflect on what made a physical space welcoming and supportive of community. Interestingly, responses focused predominately on tangible design elements, including beautiful architecture, proximity to nature, and access to amenities like bathrooms and seating. Lisa Allan and Jeff Knapp both added that a space should not exclude anyone. Diana Riggs articulated that people should be able to intuit what to do and where to go within a space.

Community Members, On Alpine Avenue

Transitioning interviews away from thoughts on community, I then asked

participants to summarize their understanding of Alpine Avenue both before and after

the renovation. I also asked participants to identify the motivation for the renovation.

Community members described Alpine prior to renovation as "dangerous", "blighted",

"a gravel road", "a problematic area", "industrial" and "a dirt road". Answering to the

motivation of the renovation, several responses mirrored language used by the city, at

times word for word. Responses included, "urban renewal project", "drive

redevelopment", "viable extension of the downtown" and "a place where people can

live and walk". From this, it is clear that key phrases relating to the project goals had

stuck in the minds of community members.

> It was some urban renewal project. It was a blighted area, a gravel road with fenced in storage buildings and empty lots. The purpose was to drive some redevelopment into an area that was rundown. (Interviewee A, personal communication, August 20, 2021)

> It was an urban renewal district, pouring resources into development to encourage investment and having those tax dollars funneled back into the city. The intention was to activate an industrial area of town for greater commercial density. (Jeff Knapp, personal communication, September 21, 2021)

> Alpine was a large industrial area with some residents who had stayed as the industrial area grew. It was a viable extension of the downtown area to expand the centralizing of the community gathering downtown. Over a long period of time, they're hoping to grow it into a place where people can live and walk. (Interviewee B, personal communication, August 23, 2021)

> The goal was to bring the businesses together and create a second downtown to draw that downtown tourism. I know that before, when we first moved here, Alpine was just dirt roads and a lot of industrial businesses. (Interviewee C, personal communication, September 8, 2021)

> Before, it was just a street. The idea was to create a walkable street, a festival street, to be used for community events. All of the businesses

here were informed of that. The festival street aspect was not what actually ended up happening. (Lisa Allan, personal communication, September 13, 2021)

Then, my interviews connected themes of community to Alpine, wherein I asked participants to describe their participation and perception of community input and expertise in the design process. Responses reflected varying levels of personal involvement. Those who did attend meetings referenced an overarching sense of performative community involvement, where "decisions have been made" before the community is ever consulted. Participants noted how design expertise was outsourced to SERA, an architecture firm based out of Portland.

> I definitely was part of part of those discussions. They'll do brainstorming and ask the community what their objectives are, of what they'd like to see encapsulated, and I remember that graphic… this kind of a painted swoosh showing the walking corridor of Third Street up onto Alpine Avenue. I was like, okay, it's gonna be a connected, walking corridor. (Interviewee A, personal communication, August 20, 2021)

> I went to a couple meetings, that were you know, open to the public. But it always feels like by the time there was any kind of thing that's shown to the public, it's done. Like sure they're not the drafted drawings, and there's no, you know, civil engineering involved at that point, but the decisions have been made, the directions have been given, and timelines from that point to when there are committed deadlines is so quick that being in the industry, there's no time to start over. (Interviewee B, personal communication, August 23, 2021)

> As far as I know, community expertise was not a part of the design process. When it all happened, McMinnville had a whole different set of leaders who are not leading anymore. Alpine happened and then everyone retired. (Jeff Knapp, personal communication, September 21, 2021)

> In one public meeting, the architecture firm said Alpine would be like the Pearl District: like Northwest 21st. It makes me want to vomit. It's not that those places aren't great. I lived in Portland. I think 21st is a unique and wonderful area. But it evolved to be that because that's what it always was. That place has that identity because it worked with what already was there. We forget that we have something just as valuable. We have the industrial part town, the more casual nature town. It's less

trendy, for sure, but the slower nature of this area is why people come. (Interviewee B, personal communication, August 23, 2021)

There's so much to this town. McMinnville is a very different population than a suburb of Portland or Portland itself. The way that you then have to approach communication and marketing is with a totally different angle, which I had a hard time believing was going to come from a big organization or firm that's not used to or doesn't relate to the local identity and culture. (Interviewee D, personal communication, October 10, 2021)

Still other community members expressed lack of awareness that Alpine existed. These individuals had no connection to the space prior to renovation or during the renovation process.

Before it was renovated, I wasn't even aware of it. (Interviewee C, personal communication, September 8, 2021)

We weren't aware of any of the city planning and expertise that went into it. (Interviewee D, personal communication, October 10, 2021)

People that didn't have a direct connection weren't really involved much at all. (Interviewee B, personal communication, August 23, 2021)

Finally, business owners along the redevelopment described a lack of communication between the city and those owning and working in the area:

I wasn't really involved. I don't know that we were approached to participate in any way. We never really knew what was going to happen, we didn't get a correct timeline. I don't know that they had any local input or expertise. They told us what was happening and what it would look like and now we're breaking ground. It seemed really fast. (Lisa Allan, personal communication, September 13, 2021)

Community Members, On Alpine & Community

One of the more pointed sections of my interviews asked directly, "Does the Alpine Avenue renovation strengthen community in McMinnville? If so, how? If not,

how so?" Responses considered both the future possibility of the space, and how the

present lack of development has made the area a relaxing walking and gathering spot. I

also asked participants to reflect on what aspects of the renovation were unique and

successful. For successful elements, participants named an attention to not gentrifying

the area and traffic slowing design elements.

> I find it very relaxing to walk there. More so than downtown, even because there's less people. I have to cross the train tracks to get there- you feel like a rebel, it's fun. (Interviewee C, personal communication, September 8, 2021)

> I like the use of different pavements in different areas to indicate distinct uses. And I do like the meandering path for vehicles that slows people down as they drive through and makes it safer for pedestrians to be on the street. (Interviewee B, personal communication, August 23, 2021)

> I love that idea of these pockets of spaces, and having visitors move down, and the design being about pedestrians and absolutely not about cars, especially in a place like McMinnville where we are really car dependent. (Interviewee C, personal communication, September 8, 2021)

> It's a cool concept. In the US, you don't see a lot of streets set up that way. I'd like if eventually it was walking only. (Lisa Allan, personal communication, September 13, 2021)

> I like the idea of taking a space and making it more livable and safe without necessarily gentrifying it to the point where you're driving out people and making it cost prohibitive. (Interviewee C, personal communication, September 8, 2021)

> Alpine helped me see what was wanting to happen with development. It wasn't difficult for us to see how Mac Market fit into the landscape. (Diana Riggs, personal communication, November 10, 2021)

Inversely, I asked participants to consider what aspects of the renovation were

dysfunctional. Elements cited included the sewer and power systems being too small to

support development, the existence of housing still along the street, and a lack of

ownership and oversight of the space.

There has been an issue with street festivals, or the attempt to have them. There's a lack of power. That feels like a huge oversight. Perhaps there were assumptions made about the private surrounding properties or something like that. It has to be all-encompassing in order for it to work and to be dependable. (Interviewee B, personal communication, August 23, 2021)

There are many things that are cool about the design, but the public use since redevelopment has been really low. Sure, the lack of power is an issue. But that clearly isn't the only issue. I can't help but feel like part of the issue is because the development they expected to happen along Alpine hasn't really occurred. I mean, Mac Market is the most major development, and it isn't even technically on the street. (Interviewee C, personal communication, September 8, 2021)

It's still hard to get people to come to Mac Market. The renovation ended a block before us, and even though we have community partners sending people our way, they don't always manage to find us. They think, this can't be right. You have to remove the guesswork. (Diana Riggs, personal communication, November 10, 2021)

I don't think they've done enough with the street to strengthen community. The potential is there, the attempt is starting, but generally, it hasn't really changed anything. (Lisa Allan, personal communication, September 13, 2021)

In its current state, development isn't progressing quickly. It's trying. There could have been better, proactive planning. (Jeff Knapp, personal communication, September 21, 2021)

It hasn't lived up to its potential. I still think someday there will be cool projects. There's been a lot of wait and see; nobody wants to go first. (Interviewee A, personal communication, August 20, 2021)

It's not that that Alpine was not, or is not about community, it's just always been more about money. It's about how can we make our streets more appealing so people will come here and spend money. (Interviewee D, personal communication, October 10, 2021)

It's a little awkward with the housing along Alpine but I think that's a temporary problem. Those kinds of houses get redeveloped over time and become more commercial in nature. That problem goes away with the redevelopment process but it's kind of slow you know, we'll take time for that. (Interviewee A, personal communication, August 20, 2021)

I've seen some of the people that live there get crowded out of what they used to have. I am sympathetic to that. (Interviewee C, personal communication, September 8, 2021)

They've built the street right up to people's front doors. Because of it, there is an inherent challenge in making a harmonious space. (Jeff Knapp, personal communication, September 21, 2021)

Four-million dollars, for what? They took away half my driveway to put in a flower bed. And if I don't take care of the plants, no one would. (Alpine Resident, personal communication, August 24, 2021)

Who's responsible for it? Did anyone budget for continual maintenance? I thought the planter boxes were temporary. (Interviewee B, personal communication, August 23, 2021)

I don't know that there's ever been a priority to determine who is in charge of Alpine. Or who is the point person. What does that person need in order to actually be that person? Of course, the city can't unilaterally do that. They need a dedicated person who's a mover and shaker in the community. They need young people, and they need funding to make these things happen. (Interviewee C, personal communication, September 8, 2021)

I ride a bike; I don't have a car. Half of the street is still gravel. (Alpine Resident, personal communication, August 24, 2021)

Currently, it doesn't actually work for how most people live their lives. Alpine could work, but who will make it work? (Interviewee D, personal communication, October 10, 2021)

Community Members, On The Future

As a culmination of my interviews, I asked each participant to describe their vision for the future of Alpine. This closing question invited participants to dream, to remain optimistic, and to consider their own proximity to changemaking. Responses centered on Alpine's unfinished nature, infusing the space with energy and intention, creating a defined connection to downtown, adding functional housing for residents, and encouraging civic responsibility.

It feels incomplete. (Interviewee C, personal communication, September 8, 2021)

We have to have a vision for how Alpine continues, or I don't think it'll ever have a phase two. We can't solve the pandemic, but we can be prepared for the things that are now going to be a part of our daily life.

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And frankly, we should all be outside more. (Interviewee B, personal communication, August 23, 2021)

I don't know if there are still plans to do anything with the area. To me, the city was more concentrated on fixing the street than fixing larger issues in the area, like the dilapidated buildings along the street, or the unoccupied lots. (Lisa Allan, personal communication, September 13, 2021)

It's not dead and it's not a failure, it just needs energy and effort. Building the thing isn't enough. Places don't magically become used simply because they exist. (Interviewee A, personal communication, August 20, 2021)

It does feel unfinished… I would love to see fruit trees and a connected walking trail to downtown and other parks. (Interviewee D, personal communication, October 10, 2021)

A city market for the surrounding businesses would be cool… it would only be good and healthy for community to have some sort of gathering now, you know, outdoors. Did you ever see the Alberta Street Faire in Portland? (Interviewee C, personal communication, September 8, 2021)

Businesses were promised a market would be put here, obviously that never happened and I doubt it will. Right now, it feels like we are forgotten about. (Lisa Allan, personal communication, September 13, 2021)

More housing. Reusing the storage spaces for something… it takes a little bit of risk and little bit of imagination. (Interviewee A, personal communication, August 20, 2021)

I'd like to see mixed-use housing built upwards, though I worry its cost-prohibitive to do so. I want it to be a district of makers with restaurants and accommodations. (Jeff Knapp, personal communication, September 21, 2021)

McMinnville has a lot of houseless members. I want to make sure that they're incorporated and not excluded with all of the new development. (Interviewee D, personal communication, October 10, 2021)

We have to start developing places in McMinnville that are for people who actually live here and not just for bringing people in. Especially when we're expecting the people that live here to pay for these projects. (Interviewee B, personal communication, August 23, 2021)

McMinnville has capable humans that care, that could make things better and make things happen. I don't mean to say they haven't already been doing that. But people don't seem to grasp the responsibility of civic voice. It's one thing to sit at a wine bar and bitch about it with our buddies, but that does nothing. (Interviewee B, personal communication, August 23, 2021)

We're forgetting about the middle part where people can communicate
with their city council or send information and feelings and thoughts.
Then it's council's job to listen. Lately, the people barking the loudest get
the most attention, even though that's not necessarily the majority. I don't
know how to fix that. (Interviewee C, personal communication,
September 8, 2021)

I love McMinnville, I don't want to change what's here. I want to
enhance it. (Diana Riggs, personal communication, November 10, 2021)

If you want to make real change in the community, you don't go to the
city council. The community has to do the change. The people need to be
a movement. (Interviewee D, personal communication, October 10,
2021)

Again, taking a holistic look at my interviews with community members, I was able to gain a better understanding of two primary research questions: "How do residents of McMinnville perceive Alpine Avenue?" and "What causes a place to be successful in the eyes of one community and not in the eyes of another?". Everyone I spoke with, answered my questions in ways that were rooted in their unique identities. These identities, though obscured by anonymity within this study, are crucial to understanding what elements of the space people were either drawn to or repulsed by. Broadly, in their responses the community voiced many questions directed towards professionals involved, indicating a lack of clear communication between parties. Still, community members widely agreed that while Alpine Avenue today is not an exemplary space, it was a good initial concept and is still salvageable.

CHAPTER IV: Findings & Recommendations

On Alpine Avenue
The sun is bright.
The air is clear.
A new path lays ahead
and I walk along the paved street.
Sounds of others can be heard,
chatter and laughter.
The days of play live on.
But the walk ends abruptly,
I see its end.
In days ahead, I see a greater path,
where time is filled with more steps
and more sights, more chatter and laughter.
I stand in place and dream to tomorrow.

(Anonymous, 2021, "On Alpine Avenue").

"On Alpine Avenue" is a poem grounded by sensory detail, written in the format of a narrative arc. The piece spans the sights and sounds of a speaker's present walk along a newly paved Alpine Avenue, but also considers what might be seen and heard in the future. The author describes how on Alpine, the "days of play live on", suggesting a continuation of an existing local spirit or ethos: something playful, joyful. But, at the poem's volta, "the walk ends abruptly", referencing perhaps both the literal edge of Alpine's renovation and a failure to create a space that truly thrives on its own. In the final lines, the author muses about "tomorrow", repeating earlier motifs of sight and sound. With a vision of "more steps", the writer indicates both a present incompleteness of the space, and a desire for a coming evolution or development. To close, the speaker stops moving, planting themselves still along the streetscape but imagining something more.

Chapter Summary

This chapter will explore findings as related to my initial research questions:

- How do residents of McMinnville perceive Alpine Avenue?
- Did the Alpine renovation displace anyone or anything?
- Can the renovation of Alpine Avenue be considered an example of placemaking?

Finally, I'll conclude with recommendations for how a struggling space might be revitalized through creative placemaking collaborations. I filter these recommendations through the belief that creative placemaking has the power to tangibly realize and historize the cultures, backgrounds, and hopes of a people through built environments.

Findings

Alpine: Driven by Profit over People

Repeatedly, my research methods illuminated that while Alpine Avenue was designed with pedestrians in mind, the space was more so influenced by economic factors with the hopes of encouraging future development. Both community members, and professionals perceived this hierarchy of desired outcomes. A key issue of stewardship ties into this profit-driven perspective. "Build it and they will come", referred not to the community, but to development. But while development is ever shifting in a place, community is grounded by location. Had residents been consulted and empowered within the design process, Alpine would likely be claimed by the community during and following the renovation.

Displacement through Lack of Cultural Connection

Answering my second research question was outside the scope of this project, though my research would indicate the renovation did displace residents through lack a cultural focus or message. Alpine has a rich industrial history, linked closely with tales of Chinese and Hispanic immigration to McMinnville. Even the early origins of Alpine as "Oak Park Avenue" might be further explored, with attention to how Indigenous peoples were forcibly removed from the area that is now McMinnville. Even the renovation design process had a story to write into the cultural fabric of town history. These stories, and cultures, remain unrealized at the current site.

Alpine as Placemaking, Not Creative Placemaking

Alpine poses a fascinating case study as a place that was intentionally made but sits outside the field of creative placemaking. Residents were consulted, though only after designs were complete, removing local expertise over the visioning of the area. The professional boundaries of the design process excluded the use of arts and culture to connect with locals and instead centered more on reporting back to the town for accountability than truly collaborating with those who live and work at the site.

Recommendations

Merging Chapters II and III of this document, creative placemaking poses a path forward for small communities reclaiming blighted, abandoned, or uninhabited spaces. For Alpine Avenue, creative placemaking could utilize the arts to foster the development of community, spur a sense of livability rooted in local culture, and uplift the voices overlooked by the original renovation process. As Markusen (2006) says,

In American small towns, arts-centered activities are serving as an important growth stimulus for both declining downtowns and the surrounding countryside. By refurbishing older educational, cultural, and industrial buildings to host artists and art participants, these towns have increased export base activities, prompted import substitution and helped to attract and retain artists as residents. Arts and cultural centers often act as anchor tenants in main street revitalization. (p. 1)

The Importance of Community Trust

Perhaps the centerfold finding of my research has been the importance of community trust in conducting research, and in designing public space. I conducted the bulk of my observational fieldwork by bike. When I spoke informally with "Jeb", a resident of Alpine Avenue, our conversation began because his main form of transportation was also a bike. He was drawn toward trusting me because I had something in common with him. Similarly, when I invited poetic responses with an open call document, I received no submissions. Only after reaching out to community members with a personal connection, did I receive responses. We cannot expect individuals to design spaces for people with whom they have never connected. It is not realistic to say all designers must only design for their own communities. Instead, city employees should understand the process of bridging cultures unfamiliar to them and seek authentic conversations from a shared sense of purpose.

The Politics of Belonging

In my interviews with professionals and community members alike, the word "we" was often used without consideration of who that "we" really was. When I asked follow-up questions to identity who was being referred to, it was always a subgroup of the larger population, excluding certain voices. To design inclusive spaces, planners must be intentional with their target users, and equally intentional with who might be

excluded from the space to cultivate diversity that is site-specific. As Parker (2018) states,

> Diversity is a potentiality that needs to be activated. It can be used or it can just be there… When I talk about generous exclusion, I am speaking of ways of bounding a gathering that allow the diversity in it to be heightened and sharpened, rather than diluted in a hodgepodge of people. (p. 46)

Planners and designers working within McMinnville should consider presently underserved demographics, namely youth and teenagers, Latinx community members, and unhoused residents, in addition to historically excluded demographics including native peoples, Chinese residents, and more recently Mexican immigrant residents. Public spaces like Alpine should intentionally draw specific demographics through meeting their needs. And if Alpine is a site for generous exclusion, like Parker suggested, projects elsewhere in the city should attract and benefit those excluded.

Placemaking as Engagement, as Responsive to Change

Creative placemaking does not always imply changes to the built environment. Placemaking can be intangible, ephemeral, and temporary. As such, I propose creative placemaking be used by cities as a form of engagement that is responsive to change and to history. In this way, Alpine's renovation does not signal a failed space, so much as a point of potential for future engagement exercises. For Alpine Avenue to exist as the beacon of community that was hoped, creative placemaking offers a people-driven solution. Just as this project employed arts-based research methods, the city should consider the potential of arts and culture to foster community, uplift unheard voices, and create lasting local collaborations and valuing of local expertise.

In discussing the future of Alpine, I was often met with the response that projects on Alpine were inactive because federal funding had stalled or needed to be carefully planned out several years in advance. In the absence of funding, creative placemaking provides a mode of low-cost engagement. The City of McMinnville could organize community events to create temporary wayfinding, on-site art, or even chalk drawings of what residents envision in the space. Most projects through the Project for Public Spaces are low-cost and community driven. Looking at the successes of these and similar existing models, a lack of funding is no longer an appropriate excuse for inaction.

The Need for Organizational Memory in Cities

One key challenge of my research was the high turnover rate in city administration/planning fields. Many of the forefront voices that propelled the renovation of Alpine Avenue were referred to as "old leadership" despite the project being only four years old. Why is this? Often hired internally, city employees are aged to begin with, starting their positions with less than 10 years till retirement. These positions are outward facing, resulting in the community knowing and trusting the individual. However, when that person retires, project legacy is distorted, and at times, abandoned. The replacement employee does not always get trained by their former, meaning their knowledge of past projects is as limited as a general community member. Community perception relies on the longevity of those in the public eye. Jeff Towery referred to "new and old leadership" but when pressed to identify who this new leadership was, struggled. In much of the public realm, city-associated leaders are middle-age or seniors. This begs the question, are young people not pursuing careers in

city planning and local government, or are our cities and local governments not providing a pathway for young leadership to enter and grow within bureaucracies?

Public Access to City Archives

One challenge of this project was that of repeatedly lacking access to the original project notes and files associated with the renovation of Alpine. Cities owe the public access, as a matter of legal right and transparency. In hiring for positions of high turnover rates, cities should consider which staff members have access to archives, and whether that individual has the capacity to communicate with inquiring community members. Ideally, cities should transition to digitized recordkeeping, increasing accessibility and saving their staff from the work of retrieving files from the archives.

The Effects of COVID-19

Future studies of a similar nature should reflect on the long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on public space usage and design, as well the impacts of COVID-19 on rural communities and creative placemaking. Much of what was witnessed in my observations and interviews might only reflect the present moment. However, this project might also reflect the early stages of lasting consequences connected to the pandemic. In time, researchers should analyze how the pandemic altered this field of study.

The Future of Alpine Avenue

Doing this research put me on the edge of change. Though I did not have the capacity to conduct a creative placemaking project of my own associated with the space, I do believe changemakers of the future should consider this document as a

starting point to engage with community voices. In my interviews, the following ideas were dreamt as possible futures for Alpine Avenue. I pose them here, for your consideration:

- Create a budget for a Place Coordinator or Council Organizer to serve as a bridge between the city and the community, assembling programming to maintain and grow engagement along Alpine.

- Add edible landscaping that requires little maintenance, such as fruit trees and native plants.

- Wayfind between Alpine and downtown, as well as between Alpine and other walkable areas in McMinnville.

- Create events that embody the city slogan to create a town where anyone can "Live, Work, and Play". Implement a "Maker's Market" to draw visitors to the area.

- Increase housing. Build upwards to increase density through apartments or townhomes accessible to a variety of income levels. Make space for unhoused residents, maybe an overnight parking zone for Turtledove shelters.

- Maintain and grow the "working neighborhood" aspect of Alpine's identity. Encourage Alpine businesses to open their workshop doors, demonstrate the harvest process, and share their making with McMinnville.

- Convert the storage units along Alpine into something functional.

- Keep Alpine unique from the branding of downtown. Unlike Third Street, Alpine should be working, making, and centered more on industrial experiences.

Finally, the findings and recommendations from this study point towards a plethora of possibility for future research. Topics for exploration include but are not limited to:

- Public perception of city planning departments in rural places

- Public space as sites of community healing

- Public versus Professionals: Looking at bias in rural public space projects

- Who should, or could, fill gaps in rural city capacity to activate public spaces?

- How to empower rural residents as valued experts in the design process

- The role of tourism in arts interventions for rural places

- The evolving purposes of public space

- Identifying and supporting rural stewardship over places

Conclusion

In short, the town of McMinnville, and Alpine Avenue more specifically, is caught in the tension of aspiration, intention, and existing capacity. Professionals and community members alike understand city projects as building towards a still unrealized future. Alpine Avenue was not a failed project, but certainly an incomplete one, inviting opportunity for future leaders to champion and activate the site.

Appendix A

Community Member Interview Responses

Interviewee A, August 20, 2021, select quotes from interview transcript

The community here has richness and complexity. The connecting point of community to me is the downtown. You'll only be there for a short amount of time before you run into somebody that you know. Not everyone participates in that part of McMinnville, but for those who do, it's a great feeling.

It was some urban renewal project. It was a blighted area, a gravel road with fenced in storage buildings and empty lots. The purpose was to drive some redevelopment into an area that was rundown.

I definitely was part of part of those discussions. They'll do brainstorming and ask the community what their objectives are, of what they'd like to see encapsulated, and I remember that graphic… this kind of a painted swoosh showing the walking corridor of Third Street up onto Alpine Avenue. I was like, okay, it's gonna be a connected, walking corridor.

It hasn't lived up to its potential. I still think someday there will be cool projects. There's been a lot of wait and see; nobody wants to go first.

It's a little awkward with the housing along Alpine but I think that's a temporary problem. Those kinds of houses get redeveloped over time and become more commercial in nature. That problem goes away with the redevelopment process but it's kind of slow you know, we'll take time for that.

It's not dead and it's not a failure, it just needs energy and effort. Building the thing isn't enough. Places don't magically become used simply because they exist.

More housing. Reusing the storage spaces for something… it takes a little bit of risk and little bit of imagination.

I saw the design in community meetings and in their published renderings but there was a major oversight in accurately communicating what it would look like.

There has been concern among property owners down there too, that you know, that's not a safe place for people to be driving into, especially coming out of onto the street is a far less concern, but semi-trucks delivering to wineries in that greenery area, I mean, it's, if you look at the corner of union cellars, you can see what happens.

Alpine will fizzle away if energy isn't put into it.

I know the planning department is understaffed. you're always working on. putting out fires. That's what we do to, like 'Gosh, I spent all week dealing with issues that arose and I haven't moved forward with anything'.

There's this political element to it that is stupid. I think that the political element to planning is such a hindrance to the city leaders themselves and community members that were really involved in it, it's like, I sometimes think we get too worried about like, "oh, if we admit this one thing needs assistance or wasn't done perfectly", then the backlash you're gonna get from people being like, "you spent so much money and you don't know what you're doing and so therefore, I'm not going to support your next bond measure", I think is really short sighted,. You have to own up to your failures and move on.

Alpine was a large industrial area with some residents who had stayed as the industrial area grew. It was a viable extension of the downtown area to expand the centralizing of the community gathering downtown. Over a long period of time, they're hoping to grow it into a place where people can live and walk.

I went to a couple meetings, that were you know, open to the public. But it always feels like by the time there was any kind of thing that's shown to the public, it's done. Like sure they're not the drafted drawings, and there's no, you know, civil engineering involved at that point, but the decisions have been made, the directions have been given, and timelines from that point to when there are committed deadlines is so quick that being in the industry, there's no time to start over.

In one public meeting, the architecture firm said Alpine would be like the Pearl District: like Northwest 21st. It makes me want to vomit. It's not that those places aren't great. I lived in Portland. I think 21st is a unique and wonderful area. But it evolved to be that because that's what it always was. That place has that identity because it worked with what already was there. We forget that we have something just as valuable.

We have the industrial part town, the more casual nature town. It's less trendy, for sure, but the slower nature of this area is why people come.

People that didn't have a direct connection weren't really involved much at all.

I like the use of different pavements in different areas to indicate distinct uses. And I do like the meandering path for vehicles that slows people down as they drive through and makes it safer for pedestrians to be on the street.

There has been an issue with street festivals, or the attempt to have them. There's a lack of power. That feels like a huge oversight. Perhaps there were assumptions made about the private surrounding properties or something like that. It has to be all-encompassing in order for it to work and to be dependable.

Who's responsible for it? Did anyone budget for continual maintenance? I thought the planter boxes were temporary.

We have to have a vision for how Alpine continues, or I don't think it'll ever have a phase two. We can't solve the pandemic, but we can be prepared for the things that are now going to be a part of our daily life. And frankly, we should all be outside more.

We have to start developing places in McMinnville that are for people who actually live here and not just for bringing people in. Especially when we're expecting the people that live here to pay for these projects.

McMinnville has capable humans that care, that could make things better and make things happen. I don't mean to say they haven't already been doing that. But people don't seem to grasp the responsibility of civic voice. It's one thing to sit at a wine bar and bitch about it with our buddies, but that does nothing.

Community means the people that we build our lives around and with, those we pick to support and make a better world with together.

The goal was to bring the businesses together and create a second downtown to draw that downtown tourism. I know that before, when we first moved here, Alpine was just dirt roads and a lot of industrial businesses.

Before it was renovated, I wasn't even aware of it.

I find it very relaxing to walk there. More so than downtown, even because there's less people. I have to cross the train tracks to get there- you feel like a rebel, it's fun.

I love that idea of these pockets of spaces, and having visitors move down, and the design being about pedestrians and absolutely not about cars, especially in a place like McMinnville where we are really car dependent.

I like the idea of taking a space and making it more livable and safe without necessarily gentrifying it to the point where you're driving out people and making it cost prohibitive.

There are many things that are cool about the design, but the public use since redevelopment has been really low. Sure, the lack of power is an issue. But that clearly isn't the only issue. I can't help but feel like part of the issue is because the development they expected to happen along Alpine hasn't really occurred. I mean, Mac Market is the most major development, and it isn't even technically on the street.

I've seen some of the people that live there get crowded out of what they used to have. I am sympathetic to that.

I don't know that there's ever been a priority to determine who is in charge of Alpine. Or who is the point person. What does that person need in order to actually be that person? Of course, the city can't unilaterally do that. They need a dedicated person who's a mover and shaker in the community. They need young people, and they need funding to make these things happen.

It feels incomplete.

A city market for the surrounding businesses would be cool… it would only be good and healthy for community to have some sort of gathering now, you know, outdoors. Did you ever see the Alberta Street Faire in Portland?

We're forgetting about the middle part where people can communicate with their city council or send information and feelings and thoughts. Then it's council's job to listen. Lately, the people barking the loudest get the most attention, even though that's not necessarily the majority. I don't know how to fix that.

Today, if Mac market wasn't there, we probably won't go up there at all.

If you base your content on tourism, it's naturally going to displace all the people locally.

Communities here have become more divided by people that are really hateful, regardless of what their agenda is, the anger and the fear has been hard to see. It's split the community up. And not even just two groups.

There's so much to this town. McMinnville is a very different population than a suburb of Portland or Portland itself. The way that you then have to approach communication and marketing is with a totally different angle, which I had a hard time believing was going to come from a big organization or firm that's not used to or doesn't relate to the local identity and culture.

We weren't aware of any of the city planning and expertise that went into it.

It's not that that Alpine was not, or is not about community, it's just always been more about money. It's about how can we make our streets more appealing so people will come here and spend money.

Currently, it doesn't actually work for how most people live their lives. Alpine could work, but who will make it work?

It does feel unfinished… I would love to see fruit trees and a connected walking trail to downtown and other parks.

McMinnville has a lot of houseless members. I want to make sure that they're incorporated and not excluded with all of the new development.

If you want to make real change in the community, you don't go to the city council. The community has to do the change. The people need to be a movement.

Jeb, August 24, 2021, select quotes from interview transcript

Four-million dollars, for what? They took away half my driveway to put in a flower bed. And if I don't take care of the plants, no one would.

I ride a bike; I don't have a car. Half of the street is still gravel.

I think we have a good community in McMinnville. People are welcoming; many families like mine have been here for generations.

Before, it was just a street. The idea was to create a walkable street, a festival street, to be used for community events. All of the businesses here were informed of that. The festival street aspect was not what actually ended up happening.

I wasn't really involved. I don't know that we were approached to participate in any way. We never really knew what was going to happen, we didn't get a correct timeline. I don't know that they had any local input or expertise. They told us what was happening and what it would look like and now we're breaking ground. It seemed really fast.

It's a cool concept. In the US, you don't see a lot of streets set up that way. I'd like if eventually it was walking only.

I don't think they've done enough with the street to strengthen community. The potential is there, the attempt is starting, but generally, it hasn't really changed anything.

I don't know if there are still plans to do anything with the area. To me, the city was more concentrated on fixing the street than fixing larger issues in the area, like the dilapidated buildings along the street, or the unoccupied lots.

Businesses were promised a market would be put here, obviously that never happened and I doubt it will. Right now, it feels like we are forgotten about.

Jeff Knapp, September 21, 2021, select quotes from interview transcript

I moved from Kansas to McMinnville with the intention of finding a community that aligned with my values. Here, people love each other hard, like an extended family. We have less and less like it in our society. But here, there is a large cultural change afoot. Historically, we were a manufacturing and agricultural community founded by hardworking folks. They were long-term visionaries. The wine industry has brought a lot of new people to the area.

It was an urban renewal district, pouring resources into development to encourage investment and having those tax dollars funneled back into the city. The intention was to activate an industrial area of town for greater commercial density.

As far as I know, community expertise was not a part of the design process. When it all happened, McMinnville had a whole different set of leaders who are not leading anymore. Alpine happened and then everyone retired.

In its current state, development isn't progressing quickly. It's trying. There could have been better, proactive planning.

They've built the street right up to people's front doors. Because of it, there is an inherent challenge in making a harmonious space.

I'd like to see mixed-use housing built upwards, though I worry its cost-prohibitive to do so. I want it to be a district of makers with restaurants and accommodations.

Diana Riggs, November 10, 2021, select quotes from interview transcript

There's a kindness, it's why we moved here.

Alpine helped me see what was wanting to happen with development. It wasn't difficult for us to see how Mac Market fit into the landscape.

It's still hard to get people to come to Mac Market. The renovation ended a block before us, and even though we have community partners sending people our way, they don't always manage to find us. They think, this can't be right. You have to remove the guesswork.

I love McMinnville, I don't want to change what's here. I want to enhance it.

Appendix B

Professional Interview Responses

Zach Geary, August 25, 2021, select quotes from interview transcript

Community is the opposite of being alone, its people working on a common goal or project and ending up with something great. Community in McMinnville? It's great.

McMinnville has small businesses, good people, people to serve, churches, community gatherings, parks, a library, our community center, art galleries, and really yummy food.

A space is welcoming of community when its multifunctional, inclusive, well-thought out, and flexible. With taxpayer dollars, it should be a beautiful structure that really screams what we stand for and what we are. It should be a sum better than its parts.

Alpine was all planned for and done when I got on Council. I wasn't a decision maker on the process. I didn't attend any of the walkthroughs or meetings. But I understood that McMinnville was landlocked by farmland and had a charming downtown. Alpine had this crummy lumber mill that was crushed in a snowstorm… the owner chose to reinvest and rebuild, and it became this Saturday market community space. The future thinkers got together and realized we needed to expand that idea and have a progression of downtown into a district though long-term investment.

Expertise was... you know. The city hired a consultant, SERA architects. It's a pretty common practice- you don't know how to build a pool until you build a damn pool. So, you bring in the consultant, the expert.

There's a nice little salsa garden, beautiful flowers, a kid's garden. There's been just absolutely magnificent use of it. They also did a great job acknowledging and understanding the needs of business owners with the semis that drive along Alpine. You go to Portland and all those cool, hip, neighborhoods are just like this. I like that it's not just this mass of horrible concrete: it's concrete, pavers, and decomposed granite.

Architects design for the moment. Now we gotta pay someone to maintain it long-term. It's pretty overgrown right now. We can barely mow the playgrounds and parks, let alone going to Alpine and picking the weeds out of the thing.

I've heard concerns about getting it wired and plumbed and set up for multi-use things. It's a double-edged sword. If we made it available for

groups to use for festivals and events if would also be used by seedy characters, however you want to phrase that. As the rest of the district develops, so will it.

You know, someone's going to come along and redevelop, and all the little houses there, they've already got people banging on their doors. Now we bring up the scary icky g-word, right? It falls into gentrification, or the churn associated with capitalism and development. Someone is going to come knock on those doors with a bag of $300,000 and you're gonna take it eventually, or you're not. You'll hold out and be that one weird little house, like the guy from *Up.*

In 2030, hopefully there's a dozen more of these projects up and down Alpine. It's a mentality, we need to keep growing.

We own this forever. And everybody needs to take care of it. We need to value the beautiful things. You just hope that it works out in the end, and that it's all for the greater good, and that you're not the one that has the lever in their hand, pulling the lever, making a tough choice.

Community means a physical place of commonality, a people of common interests. Cultural and historical place of common experience. McMinnville is supportive and involved.

I was a member of the advisory committee that launched the project, a member of the transportation advisory committee that funded a substantial amount of the project, and I was a member of the urban renewal program that first included Alpine in the district and then provided funding for the project.

The motivation was to expand the downtown into a specialty district of mixed-use. Before, the area was unpaved with older homes and industrial uses. Half of it still is. Half was converted into an unusual, paved district. It's in an ongoing state of development.

The meandering road was designed to be like the Pearl District in Portland. As a concept, it could be emulated by other cities, but in practice, there are lessons to be learned from what McMinnville experienced.

Alpine currently strengthens community to a very minor extent. The project has not been a success towards what was hoped. It has been the subject of considerable differences of opinion, whether it should have been done in the first place. It's been subject of strong community feelings that it was a waste of money. The anticipated development just didn't occur.

A lot of the project required the acquisition and demolition of housing which is expensive. People would have had to sell their old and ramshackle homes and storage facilities. It still might happen, but it's stuck in time right now.

The rubber plant and storage units hinder development. And there was probably too much separation from downtown. There was a wayfinding project where designs were made, but the project fell through. It needed several-hundreds of thousands of dollars of funding, and it lost the priority of people in town.

Alpine could be, with careful design and acquisition of property, a nice pedestrian experience with internet and nouveau, eclectic shopping. It could be culturally diverse.

Alpine had an allure, a possibility. Doug Montgomery had the vision. McMinnville was landlocked with nowhere to expand. No one was gonna fund that. So, Doug got a grant from the Transportation and Growth Management Program for about $85,000. That provided the money for a design plan that would never have otherwise happened. Its chances of being funded were problematic. Along came Urban Renewal.

Almost no one understands it. It freezes the renewal area's property taxes, and the increment taxes create this fund to be reinvested. Alpine was on the shelf. But Doug realized that if we built new development on Alpine, and included it in the renewal district, 100% of those property taxes would produce funding to be invested back into our downtown. Alpine was always meant to be a source of funding. Nobody else knows all this. Next came the transportation bond. The same group of people were looking at a city-wide bond to fix our streets. What if we throw a few million from that bond into Alpine? So, they did. Nobody hardly noticed it. It was a means-to-an-end process. Alpine would raise money for the downtown through Urban Renewal. But it didn't happen. Ironically, downtown got those major investments without Alpine's help. The concerns about downtown were false, and the hopes for Alpine were also false. Now, Alpine is gonna sit there until someone with vision, and a whole lotta money, decides to do something. It's a story in the making. Alpine is stuck in time. Twenty years from now, no one is gonna know why this crazy, overgrown street is here. There were good intentions.

Community is the combination of people, places, and things that make up where you live. In McMinnville, community is top-notch. It's a place that's willing to grow.

I was here for the groundbreaking. I inherited the project. Any community involvement happened before I got here. Generally, we make sure to communicate with affected users and owners way before we get too far into design. I would presume they went about it in a transparent way.

The street was designed intentionally as a festival street to support a mixed-use of residential and business uses. You have large planter areas that are traffic calming. It was sensitive to long-term users of the street.

It was a different design concept than what we had ever used in the community. For some, it was hard for some to imagine how it would be used, until it was built.

At a food truck event held on Alpine, we found out that there were pipes in the ground with no power, the first two blocks were powered but the rest of the blocks didn't have plug-ins. Food trucks had to bring their own generators or borrow power from adjoining property owners. I suspect it was a cost issue. We also had some planters that kept getting hit by cars, so we moved them.

We basically put concrete right up against people's properties, so businesses don't have to worry about curbs and driveways add that sort of things. I haven't taken any complaints about the street. Most folks are supportive or neutral about its' impact on the community.

In order to be successful in this work, I believe we need to reflect the hopes, dreams, and desires of the community.

There was concern at the first open house, whether this could work in a community like McMinnville.

We went door-to-door and met business owners and residents along the first three-block, taking inventory of their needs, constraints, plans for the future, et cetera.

We showed up with draft plans, with the desire to listen. Then it got difficult. We wanted the axis of the street lanes to change, meandering to direct the flow of traffic, using planter boxes to guide movement. These planters started to be in a way of people's driveways, front doors, where they wanted parking. It was a challenge to create a geometry scheme that was both cohesive and worked with those constraints.

The street pavement patterns were inspired by the fields of Yamhill Country. We wanted easily moveable furniture pieces as buffers to guide vehicles and planters as walls to also guide cars. The pieces could be moved by forklifts to change the street furnishings depending on needs. The trellis structures were inspired by the industrial nature of the area, providing shelter and enclosure since, at that time, the street lacked building facades.

We (SERA) built a physical model of one black, inviting the committees to move model cars around the diagram, seeing the possibilities. We also created a virtual reality model to demonstrate how vehicles would interface with each other and pedestrians.

You can design it, but the community needs to embrace it, love it, and act as stewards to bring the staged space to life. That's beyond our influence as designers. It has happened to some extent, but there is still a lot of opportunity for community-led activation. There was talk of using the trellises for temporary art installations or seasonal banners. I'm still waiting for someone to become the ambassador of Alpine Avenue, organizing people.

There were opportunities to reflect the stories of the space, we wanted lit, seating elements with tabletops to be a surface for murals or art installations. We thought the trellis columns could be used for interpretive signage.

In the late 1800s, Alpine was planned on a brazen belief that McMinnville could be an economic center. There are a lot of historic stories to tell. And even just the design story, everyone should know how Alpine came to be. The street deserves it.

Appendix C

Poetic Interview Responses

<u>A Story About Alpine</u>

The first thing you need to understand about McMinnville is, it's a boon town. Think Wild West, gold rush, opportunists loosed on unfettered opportunity. It all started in the eighties when the sleepy, Turkey Festival town was invaded by (no, not UFO's) but young California dreamers in overalls armed with cuttings of French Pinot Noir grapes. Forty years later, those nouveau riche stuff their money bags with grape-stained bills, not gold dust.

McMinnville now claims to be the center of the Oregon wine country. Those early wine speculators? Rich grandparents who attend the International Pinot Noir Festival as royalty, held here annually on the oak-studded lawn of Linfield College. Yes, they put McMinnville on the vintner map and at the same time rekindled a familiar cry heard round the country, "There's gold in them thar hills!"

Two hundred vineyards later there still rustle the sound of prospectors beating the bushes for ways to jump on the wagon train of prosperity. Luxury services like spas, Air B&B rentals and "epicurean" restaurants are available, and trendy products can be found in the wildly popular downtown (voted second-best, small-town downtown in the nation.) And don't forget the saloons, or, I mean wine bars and breweries.

So, when is enough, enough? As Getty said, "With one dollar more." In that spirit, Alpine was born—conceived as the brightest and newest youngster in town. Abruptly, a concrete strip bulldozed its way through an industrial and depressed housing area of town. Wide enough to drive two stagecoaches down side-by-side, the road had an industrial air of girded arches and hardy street lights. Soon community members were called to buy-in with an invitation to plant and manage vegetable planters (some of which were previously horse-watering tanks.) A feature business opened, Mac Market, a gathering hole opened for cow-guys and gals to wet their whistle at the bar, buy French pastries or a plant, shop for organic vegetables or consume Bibimbap at a Korean food truck.

Entrepreneurial enthusiasm has only just begun. Shops, tiny house rentals and food venues are raising their walls as this is typed. Heaven only knows the future stabilization of a boon town. Will McMinnville, and Alpine in particular, grow to be a cosmopolitan and sophisticated city in which only the wealthy can afford to live, or perhaps a ghost town of whispers about the origins of the founders? Only time will tell.

Alpine Revisited

Alpine St. just across the tracks
There is something that it lacks

Alpine St. what will it be?
Brighten up our fair city

Alpine St. buildings to restore
Can't profit from an eye sore

Alpine St. add some outdoor art
Just a few blocks from downtown's heart

Alpine St. for a music venue
With brews and grub on the menu

Alpine St. as never before
Just needs some effort, maybe a little more

Alpine St. a tourist draw?
Is that what the planners saw?

Alpine St. is just underway
The renovations are here to stay

Alpine St. will all be well?
I guess only time will tell!

Before it was Alpine

I.
Before it was Alpine
we called it the Granary District
old silos
lined warehouses
turned wineries
the businesses
a patchwork blanket
relying on convenience
everything a walk away
a beauty parlor
packed full for prom
martial arts studio
crammed with sweaty students
Flag & Wire coffee
for local professors
in need of a pick-me-up
these are permanently
imprinted in childhood.

This was the Granary District.

II.
Autumn was when Alpine awoke
tons of grapes
dropped at the heels
of custom crush facilities
the café coddled
college students
slogging through
first-of-term exams
and fueled
winery workers
wandering between shifts
community-run
community-owned
on lunch
crews walked to grab a pint
-unable to stand
the taste of wine any longer-
and gorged themselves
on Tillamook cheeseburgers
and microbrews
until inevitably pulled
back into the arms of labor.

This is now Alpine.

III.
August
September
October
the district acted
as epicenter to agriculture
when I remember
my time on Alpine
it is wreathed
in the colors of harvest
never the place
of parades or parties
reserved in its work
Alpine had its season of plenty
and its season of rest.

What name will it wear next?

<u>On Alpine Avenue</u>
The sun is bright.
The air is clear.
A new path lays ahead
and I walk along the paved street.
Sounds of others' can be heard,
chatter and laughter.
The days of play live on.
But the walk ends abruptly,
I see its end.
In days ahead, I see a greater path,
where time is filled with more steps
and more sights, and more chatter and laughter.
I stand in place and dream to tomorrow.

Alpine

There's a little neighborhood
Just across the tracks

A gentle facelift
Is all it lacks

We can pass it off
As an extension of town

Our little main street
Of some recent renown

We'll lobby for the money
Let's get the job done

Retrofit the buildings
Big moment in the sun

There'll be food and fun
Let's not forget art

Coffee shops and brew pubs
Spaces for café carts

Visitors from all over
Will come to explore

Our economy is booming
Like never before

Pay off still pending
What's the bottom line?

The only thing that's certain
A big improvement for Alpine

Appendix D

Open Call Document for Poetic Interview Responses

January 10th, 2022

In 2018, McMinnville, Oregon's mixed-use residential/industrial Alpine Avenue was renovated with $4.2 million dollars funded by a 2014 Transportation Bond. The redevelopment project envisioned Alpine becoming a vibrant pedestrian-friendly "festival district", extending Third Street's downtown core by drawing economic development to the adjacent area. Now four years post-renovation, this open call asks:

What does community mean to you?
Does the Alpine Avenue renovation strengthen or weaken community in McMinnville?
What is your vision for the future of Alpine Avenue?

Reflecting on the above questions, you are invited to submit original poetry/prose for a research study on McMinnville, Oregon's Alpine Avenue. The goal of this study is to better understand the legacy of the 2018 Alpine Avenue renovation efforts within the local community. This study is being conducted independently by Anna Pearl Johnson, a fourth-year student researcher at the University of Oregon Clark Honors College.

Yamhill County has a rich tradition of literary arts. In asking participants to respond to a research question poetically, this study aims to legitimize art in academia as both a method of inquiry and of analysis. Considering poems as interview responses invites creativity where a more traditional format might stifle it.

Eligibility:
- **You must be 18 years or older to participate.**
- **Your participation is voluntary**.
- **Authors of submitted poetry maintain copyright while consenting to participate in the study. Submitted poems will be referenced in Anna Pearl Johnson's thesis document that will be available through the UO Library.**

Format Guidelines:
- Format your poem in .doc/Word document format.
- If sending multiple poems, please put them in the same document, with each new poem starting on a new page.
- Poems will be included in the thesis without editing so it is up to the contributor to ensure their spelling and punctuation is as intended.
- Specify in your submission email if you would like to remain anonymous.

Please submit your work to *[Author's email here]* by **March 10th, 2022**.

If you have any further questions, you may contact Anna Pearl Johnson, the principal investigator for this study, at [Author's email here].

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