The Role of Restaurants in Creating a Space For Community: Explored Through “Willy” Street

Geography 565 Senior Capstone
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Abstract:
This study investigates the relationship between restaurants and the surrounding community. Interviews were conducted with 2 local restaurants, with observations being taken at the two restaurants as well as the surrounding neighborhood. The restaurant's interiors including, layout, décor, food, lighting, colors, and music, were also considered. This study also used the restaurants around the two main foci to build a cuisine and price map of the street. Our analysis shows a strong correlation between local restaurants and the community around them. Restaurants contribute to, and are influenced by, the surrounding community. The owners of restaurants are aware of the dynamics between their business and the community. Restaurants chose to open on Willy Street for particular reasons, often because the overall street fit well with their vision and vibe. Through the design and layout of the restaurants, each can create different interactions and foster different behaviors from customers. From this research, we conclude that restaurants invoke a sense of the surrounding community that is reflected through that restaurant's overall vibe and layout.
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Introduction

We will be exploring the interaction between restaurants on Willy Street and the local surrounding communities, and how these different restaurants tell a certain story about the surrounding neighborhood. The main question we will be asking is how have the restaurants on Willy Street come to represent the community and how has the community been represented through restaurants on Willy Street. In answering this research question we will ask and explore three smaller questions: 1) How do neighborhood restaurants go out of their way to operate with the community in mind? 2) How does a restaurant’s design and layout influence the way customers interact with the space? 3) How large of a role does the area/neighborhood play in helping determine the success of a restaurant? By asking these questions we hope to understand more about the role of restaurants and food in local communities as well as the idea of what makes a “neighborhood spot”.

Site Setting

Before analyzing the different interactions between restaurants and the Willy Street community it is essential that the reader understands the historical context of the Willy Street area and surrounding neighborhoods as well as how this area has changed over time. Willy Street has been a dynamic community for over one hundred years from its beginning as a factory neighborhood to how the community dealt with post-Fordist transformations, the subsequent loss of jobs and industry, then becoming a hotspot for expression, and finally into what it is seen as today: a community restaurant hub (Planning.org, 2020). Throughout all of this, the community has still managed to have a strong voice in shaping the shared values of the neighborhood as well as contributing to the on-going evolution of the area.
The early Euro-American history of Williamson Street, known commonly as Willy Street, began before Wisconsin was even a state. When James Daun Doty, a land speculator, and politician, first passed through the Madison area, at the time called the Four Lakes area, he was shocked by its potential. In 1836 he purchased some of the first land plots in the current-day Madison region, which included the Willy Street area. When Wisconsin was trying to determine a state capital location, Doty advocated for the city he was planning to call Madison after President James Madison. He hoped to sway voters by appealing to their patriotic side (Wisconsin Public Radio, 2020). Not only did he name the city after a government official, but he also named all proposed major roads after political figures, including Williamson Street which was named after former politician and signer of the Declaration of Independence, Hugh Williamson (Wisconsin Public Radio, 2020). Doty although ambitious and effective, was also self-serving and even bribed the territorial leaders to have Madison be named the capital (Levitan, 2006 pg.12). After Doty was successful at establishing Madison as the state capital, Madison as Wisconsin's first state capital, drew people and industry into the area. Shortly after the establishment of the state capital, the University of Wisconsin was founded in Madison in 1848. This led to a population boom as the construction of the city was well underway, bringing in academics and entrepreneurs who wanted to be close to both the university and the capital. Many of the workers and carpenters who were working on developing the east side of Madison were residents of Williamson street, which at the time was mostly a residential area (Tipler 1975, pg.3).

With Madison continuing to grow and becoming more and more of a trade hub, transportation and industry increased quickly with the opening of more and more factories/warehouses in the Willy Street area. Much of this industry was located very close to Williamson Street. This started
with the opening of the Madison Gas and Electric (MG&E) plant in 1905, which brought light to
the city (Global Madison 2020, landmark 3).
Due to the developing industry being so close to Williamson Street, it was no surprise the
Chicago and Northwestern Railway was located (and still is) at 201 South Blair Street, right at
the foot of Williamson Street (although the railway is no longer active). The train system
intensified industry by bringing in coal for the MG&E plant, bringing in raw materials, and
exporting finished goods.
Willy Street in particular was continuing to develop in the early 1900s, earning the name
“machinery row” and “implement row” due to the large amount of agricultural machinery and
businesses lining Williamson Street. Starting in 1920 there was a great deal of development on
Williamson Street, mainly caused by the street becoming a thoroughfare for neighborhoods on
either side of it. As more and more people passed through the area, Williamson Street was
“upgraded”; older buildings were torn down and replaced with new warehouses, commercial
buildings, and some homes (Tipler 1975, 7). With increased traffic, Williamson Street became
the place people went when they needed anything. They had all the food and bakery options one
could want as well as a fair share of services from a barber to paint shops. In the early 1900s, the
demographic makeup of Williamson Street consisted of mostly German and Norwegian
residents. Many of these immigrant families opened and owned shops on Williamson Street
(Tipler 1975, pg.11).
During the late 1890s and early 1900s, the population was growing and so was the sense of
community on Williamson Street which included community members taking action and
expressing their voices in the community. In 1896 in response to a great level of concern from
the community over the urban environment, specifically access to waterways and the desire for
more access to public space, the Madison Parks and Pleasure Drives Association was formed. One of the earliest accomplishments of this Association was the purchasing of park land stretching from Tenney Park to Lake Monona which added a large amount of park space for Willy Street residents (Tipler 1975, pg. 12). The concern and interest in increased green space was fostered by the increased traffic on the roadways as well as America's sewage crisis.

After World War I there was another change occurring on Williamson Street due to the increasing popularity of the automobile. During the early implementation of the automobile, Williamson Street served three main driving purposes. First, it was the route used by rural populations going north, east, and southeast of Madison. Next, it served as the route to new and popular subdivisions, and finally, Williamson Street served as a state truck highway from 1936 until 1946. (Tipler 1975, 13). By 1953, automobiles had another impact on the city: the high traffic led to the decision to widen Williamson Street, resulting in the cutting down of trees that had lined the street (Tipler 1975, 14). This, in a way, was the start of the decline of Williamson Street as decisions were made by city planners with money in mind rather than with the community in mind.

In the 1970s things hit a “low” for Williamson Street with the closing of factories due to changing technology and the change of function of the city of Madison. Some homes were abandoned, falling apart, and infested with bugs and mice. Williamson Street was quickly becoming a place known for crime and illegal drugs (Madison.com, 2020).

Even though this was seen as a down period for Williamson Street, many people felt like this was the “real” Williamson Street. With the decline in industry and the spread of people to the suburbs, rent prices declined and Williamson Street became affordable to entirely new and
different types of people. Students, artists, writers, and all different sorts of people were calling Willy Street home. Martens, who moved to Williamson Street in 1969, talked to the Isthmus newspaper about the “down” years of Willy Street stating that "We had greasy spoons, welding shops, little grocery stores, bars, and they all kind of blended together, people tended to congregate and work together more in the ‘70s. I think that's really when the reputation of Williamson Street - of the new Williamson Street - began.” (Isthmus, 2020). People needed the community as they relied on each other to keep each other safe during this time and for that reason, the sense of community flourished and continued to have a strong say in what happened in the neighborhood.

![Aerial view of Williamson Street 1953 by John Newhouse](Newhouse, John : Photographs, 1945-1974)
In hopes to save the neighborhoods and prevent their community from further decline, the neighbors of the areas surrounding Willy Street created Madison's first-ever neighborhood association called the Marquette Neighborhood Association. This was an effort by the neighbors to regain control of their main street (Willy Street) and transform the area into a place that they could feel safe in. (Planning.org, 2020). Soon after its formation, the Marquette Neighborhood Association released the first-ever neighborhood written plan for the neighborhood (Planning.org, 2020). The community involvement continued to increase and in 1979 the neighbors and community members formed The Common Wealth Development. The Common Wealth Development was a group that helped make sure affordable housing was present, community business could thrive, and developed training/mentorship for young members of the workforce (cwd.org, 2020).

Willy Street has stayed true to its community-led values, holding on to its diverse community and action-orientated spirit. During the Vietnam War, Willy Street was a hotspot for protests and for people to spread their voice. More recently, however, there has been a shift on Willy Street where rents are getting higher and diversity is diminishing.

The result of the gentrification on Willy Street is seen as both positive and negative, depending on who you ask. Some see Willy Street as shifting away from what made it special: the diversity and sense of community, whereas others see the development as a way to make the neighborhood more vibrant and a more desirable place to live. The higher rents are one factor that is impacting the feeling and character of the neighborhoods with Martens a community member stating "To have the ability of someone who can pay only $700 a month as opposed to $1,200 is an important part of this community” (Isthmus, 2020). Many of the older residents on
Williamson Street see the Neighborhood Association as having become too power-hungry and wanting to make the community as popular as possible instead of remembering its personality (Isthmus, 2020).

Today Williamson Street is filled with restaurants and community shops. From the sidewalk, any passer-by will be able to appreciate the life and voice that the neighborhood holds with gigantic murals on the sides of buildings and political posters lining the shops and homes along the street. Something that is clear throughout Williamson Street is the impact the community has had on how it has developed as well as how the sense of community was always present within the neighborhood.

Figure #3 Map of Williamson Street (open street maps)
Literature review

Throughout this literature review, we will explore what constitutes a neighborhood, the influence and effect of community relations, and the role gentrification can have on a community. Finally, we will explore the interaction between restaurants and the community, as well as restaurant behavior looking specifically at how placemaking has found a place in community restaurants.

What makes a good neighborhood?

The idea of what makes a neighborhood thrive has been something city and town planners have been trying to figure out since their jobs were created. Cities and even neighborhoods are places of organized complexity (Jacobs 1961, 432-434). You can plan it out as much as you want but there are always unknown variables that are exposed when altering social dynamics. For that reason, people have different beliefs on whether neighborhoods should be planned, or even if neighborhoods are necessary at all, let alone the discussion of what an ideal neighborhood should be. So that leads us to ask the question of what is a neighborhood and are neighborhoods inevitable? Lewis Mumford defines a neighbor as “simply people who live near one another”(1954, 257). Mumford writes about these neighbor relationships describing them as “nothing forced” stating that “neighborliness rests solely on the fact of local cohabitation”(1954, 257-258). With this in mind, a neighborhood should appear to be a collection of groups of people living in specific areas.

But what about the idea of neighborhood voice and neighborhood associations? Neighborhood groups and associations are a result of what Mumford terms a neighborhood unit (1954, 262). A
neighborhood unit requires a shift in thinking from the city as the central continuous area and instead to the idea that a neighborhood should be able to fulfill functions independent from the city unit. The neighborhood unit aligns with the idea that necessities should all be within walking distance to people's homes and the neighborhood should have some say in how it governs itself. One could say Williamson Street went through this change in the 1920s; the street could fulfill the needs of the neighborhood almost as if it was unattached to a larger city. Perry, who was the creator of the idea of a neighborhood unit, defines his ideal unit as one with an elementary school, with the diversion of major traffic routes (an area that the community has battled for on Willy Street), and at least ten percent of the neighborhood unit dedicated to parks and playgrounds (Mumford 1954, 263). Perry was not alone in valuing the importance of neighborhood meeting places and parks, and this idea of the neighborhood unit went unchallenged for a number of years. Neighborhoods were built with the community in mind, traffic went around the neighborhood, not through it, parks became a necessity and an elementary school and recreational fields belonged to each community (Mumford 1954, 263).

What about the problems with a neighborhood unit? Even though it has been widely accepted that the neighborhood unit has had more success than alternatives, such as cities functioning as one centralized unit, there are still problems that occur with a neighborhood unit model. First, there is a worry about the isolation of neighborhoods, especially when people can grow up never having to leave their neighborhood. This includes some people not even having to leave their neighborhoods for further education. The idea of only ever being exposed to things that are familiar is definitely something that should be thought about closely when thinking about the potential effects of isolated neighborhoods. In addition to this are questions about how zoning
will impact these neighborhood units. There is a worry that certain neighborhoods would continue to develop based on race and social status like many of the neighborhoods in the United States. Reginald Issac was in clear opposition to the idea of the neighborhood unit for this reason (Dewery 1950, 504-507). As the idea of the neighborhood unit was popularized, segregation became something that was in a sense “plannable” and easy to do both consciously and unconsciously (Dewey 1950, 504-507). Issac even went as far as to say that neighborhood units were being developed out of hopes for segregation and as a way to split up people based on factors like race, and income (Dewery 1950, 504-505).

One area that is highlighted when considering the neighborhood unit is how parks and nature are included in the neighborhood. As stated in the site setting above the creation of parks and nature areas has been something the residents of Willy Street have fought for since Willy Street’s neighborhood formation. The impact of nature on neighborhood and community satisfaction has been studied closely as developers are still looking for ways to create the most optimal neighborhoods. It has been found that high density housing surprisingly, and contrary to popular belief, does not have a negative impact on neighborhood satisfaction. This challenges the popular trend towards people purchasing larger home lots (low-density areas) thinking that it will increase their satisfaction. One reason for the appeal and increased life satisfaction on smaller lots may have to do with the sense of community that high-density areas offer. Another important influence on neighborhood satisfaction is the close proximity of public nature settings and being able to see nature from their homes. It is important to note however that this data was not influenced by high or low density housing (Kearney 2006, 22-26). In other words, no matter what type of lot you have (high vs low density) access to public nature in proximity to your
home is a bigger determinate of satisfaction than type of housing. Although how we build and think about neighborhoods is evolving it is important to understand the role that nature plays in determining satisfaction, as well as how the importance of nature is addressed in Perry's ideal neighborhood unit.

**Community relations**

Something that almost every neighborhood unit seeks is a sense of community within the neighborhood. This is not surprising as a sense of community is something that all people want, and that in many ways people need. Feeling a sense of community is found to increase life satisfaction and for that reason, it is important to explore if neighborhoods can provide a community feeling and connection. Neighborhood community is a key component of overall sense of community and therefore a component of life satisfaction. In addition to this, it has been found that having a neighborhood sense of community does not limit levels of community elsewhere but actually the opposite. By identifying one’s neighborhood as part of a place where neighborhood residents feel a sense of community it is found that they are more likely to feel more comfortable pursuing different things outside of their neighborhood (Glynn 1986, 350-351).

The physical type of neighborhood in which one lives also has an effect on the level of community one feels. When comparing two types of neighborhoods, with relatively similar housing prices, for instance a new urban planned neighborhood consisting of high-density housing with small lot sizes, to a traditional suburban neighborhood with larger lots, it was found, that those in the new urban community valued community to a much greater extent than
the traditional suburban neighborhood (Joongsub and Kaplan 2004, 323-324). With this in mind, it is interesting to note that the traditional suburban neighborhood did not include a church, elementary school, children’s center, or green park spaces. This is significant when thinking about the effect of neighborhood design on the effect of the community because the areas that the traditional suburban development lack are all aspects that Perry identifies as necessary elements to the ideal neighborhood unit.

How do restaurants play a role in the community?

Now that there is a basic understanding of how a neighborhood is assembled, and how strong neighborhood design can influence the sense of community within neighborhoods, it is time to tie in the role restaurants play in fostering a sense of community in the neighborhood and how restaurants are used as gathering spaces for the community within the neighborhood.

Each individual restaurant has a different role within its community. In addition to this, the role the restaurant plays within the community can be different depending upon the community members and also varies from person to person. As stated in After Modernism: Global Restructuring and the Changing Boundaries of City Life, Smith says that the restaurant is a space that processes new social identities and that this can apply to the people that work there, as well as to the restaurant customers (Smith 1992, pg106). This is important as restaurants can act as a way for different cultures to expand and a way for people to experience those cultures in a place that is within their own neighborhood. That is not to say that all restaurants are like this, some as noted earlier, vary in that community role depending upon the individuals and this applies to all restaurants. Each restaurant is a unique experience to the individual and as such is really defined by the role it plays in the community as a whole.
The first and potentially most well-known type of restaurant that is used as a community gathering space is the English Pub. To those all over the world, and especially in England, the pub is seen as a place that not only is a space for the community but it is necessary for the community. Every community has a pub and it serves as the meeting place for the community, serving drinks and sometimes food. People spend minutes all the way up to days at the pub, even with some pubs serving as hotels. In other words, the pub is essentially the basecamp for every community. For lots of communities the attachment to pubs fosters community identity, interaction and cohesion, resulting in limiting antisocial behaviour in the community (Sandiford & Divers 2019, 268). The pub has always had a significant role in the community, but as norms change and neighborhoods develop it is necessary to see if pubs still hold influence in villages (neighborhoods).

In a case study conducted by Hunt and Satterlee (1986, 62-74), they focused on the changing dynamics of pubs. They looked at how often one frequented a pub based on one’s social class. The working class was seen to use pubs as primary/sole meeting places where they would go to be with their friends, On the other hand, the middle class used pubs as one of the many places they would go to with their group of friends. As explained in the case study, it was not strange for middle-class families to have dinner at someone's house and then all head to the pub together (Hunt and Satterlee 1986, 68-72). Although the pub had different uses in each group it continued to have a daily impact on the community. In other words, the pub was still a gathering space just at different times for different people.

The idea of a community and gathering space represented as a restaurant transfers over the pond and America has developed its fair share of community centered restaurants. One of the most
historical is the idea of a neighborhood tavern. A tavern is a place predominantly serving alcohol, and limited food. Taverns in Wisconsin are especially prominent with Wisconsin having more taverns than all but three states coming to a grand total of 3,043 taverns (non full service kitchens) (The Cap Times, 2020). As stated in “Bottoms up: A Toast to Wisconsin's Historic Bars and Breweries by Draeger and Speltz, “Wisconsin is a Tavern State” (Draeger and Speltz 2012 1). One of the reasons for the high rate of taverns in Wisconsin is thought to have to do with the immigrants that first settled in the state, coming from central European backgrounds, many of which have a history of social drinking. Historically taverns in Wisconsin also served as lodging and a pit stop for travelers on their way westward in the mid 1800s. There was even a statute of 1839 that required every tavern owner to provide at least two spare beds as well as stabling and hay for travelers (Draeger and Speltz 2012, 3). Taverns soon became a place where tavern owners were the leaders of the community, as stated by Draeger and Speltz, “In many early communities, the tavern was the first and principle public space - a center of community and a key point in connection to the broader world.”(2012, 5) Taverns have stayed true to their original purpose and continue to be a place for the community where people drink together to bond and learn about their community.

One key element of Wisconsin food culture comes through in the Wisconsin Supper Club. Supper clubs are found in the midwest and are primarily a Wisconsin phenomena. Supper clubs, although they differ a great deal from a pub and a tavern, they still act as a gathering place for the community. Simply put a Supper Club is a high class restaurant that acts as a community hub. As highlighted by Dave Hoekstra (2013, xi-xxi) a supper club fulfills every aspect of place, natural, built, cultural and social. The idea of a meal is one that over time has become rushed and
impersonal but this is the opposite of a supper club. Supper Clubs serve to make you feel like you are part of the community through a meal that is stretched out over many courses allotting you plenty of time to gather and socialize.

Although the ability of restaurants to create gathering spaces for the community may be its largest addition to the community, the process of opening people up to new cultures is another positive impact that they hold. In a case study focused on how Chinese food has shaped American culture, researchers explored the dynamics that are present at ethnic restaurants which have developed over time to serve the white community. The article discusses a contradictory period in the 1870s through the 1890s when Chinese immigrants were not welcome in the United States while at the same time Asian cuisine became popular in American households (Barbas 2003, 669-670). The text identifies that this dynamic might be taking place because of the submissiveness associated with the process of feeding someone. By having the dominant group (white American men) come into Chinese restaurants and get food from what was seen at the time as the “inferior” group, Chinese restaurant owners were conforming to the role Americans wanted them to play (Barbras 2003, 684). This in turn enforced the social dynamic that was already in play. This idea is reinforced by the Americanization of several Chinese food dishes which are now unrecognizable to much of the Chinese population (Barbras 2003, 678-679). Americans wanted Chinese food that tasted like American food, so that is what the Chinese immigrants provided. This same pattern is present with other groups who have also been considered as outcasts when entering and settling in the United States including Italians who fostered the pizza and pasta craze and even Mexicans where Mexican food has become a staple in many homes (Barbras 2003, 684). In both of these cultures, the food has been Americanized
resulting in entirely different dishes. Although the integration of ethnically diverse cuisines has rocky roots it has become a way to share and honor communities different from our own. It is interesting to note that in the ethnic cuisines that are popular in the United States (for instance Mexican, Italian and Chinese) all have a wide range of different regional cuisines in their own country however only a few dishes have been introduced, accepted and Americanized by the United States.

**Role of gentrification in the community**

Similar to how Americans have Americanized many cuisines, restaurants often play a role in gentrifying different areas. Gentrification is the process and development of certain areas to the point where they are no longer financially affordable to those originally living in the community. This works through restaurants by having new “trendy” restaurants move into lower-income areas and having more and more restaurants pop up until people and restaurants who used to serve the community can no longer afford to pay rent. The problem with this type of gentrification (new restaurants coming in) is not that it necessarily brings more people into the area but that the restaurants are not serving the people of the community (Philip, Edlynn, and Davis 2006, 10). People who have managed to stay in their communities are often unable to afford the new shops, restaurants, and luxuries that have moved in and are left with a significant reduction in their sense of community. This is highlighted by Philip, Edlynn, and Davis in the case study “The Differential Impact of Gentrification on Communities in Chicago”, where a man was asked how he felt about the changes in his community and answered, “I remember about a month before we moved we walked into a restaurant, looked at each other, we walked out . . . we were the only black people there, people kind of stopped. This is a place we had eaten at a
number of times, we used to eat there quite frequently. We got to a point that we didn’t want to go to any restaurants.” (Philip, Edlynn, and Davis 2006, 23). Gentrification not only removes people from their community but it acts as a form of cultural displacement replacing old restaurants with new restaurants who do not serve the original local community.

A large portion of the process of restaurants entering new low-income areas and contributing to gentrification (which we will refer to as restrainti-fication) develops from the new and evolving desires of “foodies”. Instead of high-class small plate fancy meals, there has been a movement toward more local ethnically diverse cuisines. Hyde (2014, 341-359), the author of “Omnivorous Gentrification: Restaurant Reviews and Neighborhood Change in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver”, refers to the process of gentrification by these new types of foodies as “omnivorous gentrification”, meaning the new foodie is someone who eats food from a number of different cuisines and is seen as new and innovative for doing so (Hyde 2014, 341-343). Although this shift may seem like a win for all, with more people getting to experience different cuisines, and cuisines that are often unknown becoming popular, it is important to realize that businesses (restaurants) are not catering to the original community in the area. Very different businesses are coming in and trying to help the community but are catering to other sorts of people, taking up a spot that could be created deliberately for the community and by the community.

Gentrification can come in many other forms, one of these being art; interestingly, this has become an area that Willy Street has become known for. Whether you see it through the sidewalk chalk, the gigantic murals on sides of buildings, or the poems etched into sidewalk planks, Willy Street plays tribute to its artistic roots in a number of ways but it is essential to
understand the role that this may be having on gentrifying the area. Authors Carl Grodach, Nicole Foster, and James Murdoch III (2014, 21-35) write about the impact art can have on gentrification splitting art into two categories. First, there are fine arts which include performing arts, museums, and art schools. In contrast are commercial arts which include film, music, and design-based industries. Based on research from 100 metropolitan areas with a population of 500,000 or more they found that fine arts correspond to slow neighborhood revitalization whereas commercial arts are tied to faster speed gentrification (Grodach, Foster and Murdoch III 2014, 21-27). Art overall is almost always seen to have positive effects on neighborhoods but it is important to remember the different variables that art brings into play and in some cases, this is the gentrification of communities. Art can also relate to restaurants, restaurant owners by decorating their restaurants, designing their menus and creating their food have become a form of art. Restaurants and the creation of food have always been a form of expression so it is important to think about how these art forms are changing communities. Comparing restaurants like Paul Pariets Ultraviolet which he describes as “turbulent, unpredictable, unconventional” to a neighborhood McDonald’s it is easy to see the difference (Ultra Violet, 2020). These two types of restaurants attract different people and have dissimilar price ranges so how does this affect the areas these restaurants are located in.

**Restaurants: what influences how we interact with them?**

Once inside a restaurant, there are many different ways that we interact with them, and the way that they are designed influences how we act, both while at the restaurant and when we leave the restaurant. Inside a restaurant things as simple as background music can change how long people dine and how much they eat. A study conducted by Ronald E. Milliman (1986, 286-289) found
that when background music was slow-paced people not only spent more time at the restaurant but they also purchased an average of 3.04 more drinks (Milliman 1986, 288).

Another factor that can impact how long you stay in the restaurant is if you are eating alone compared to in a group. In an observational study, researchers found that customers spent an average of 46.8 minutes dining whereas lone customers spent an average of 35.2 minutes dining (Sommer and Steele 1997, 25-30). In other words, groups of diners were seen to have spent more time at restaurants than lone diners and a reason for this may be associated with the stereotypes attached to eating alone. Many restaurants have become aware of the different stereotypes associated with eating in restaurants and have changed their layouts to make all customers feel more comfortable. Different ways they may do this include increasing bar seating and communal tables. One area that we will explore while analyzing restaurants on Willy street will be how they are designed to cater to different groups and if they have thought about solo diners.

Once people leave the restaurant there are still ways that they interact with the restaurant. One way is through electronic word of mouth, or in other words how positively you talk about the restaurant once you leave it. In a study by Jeong and Jang (2011, 356-366) they were able to identify the factors that led to electronic word of mouth. These included food quality, a positive interaction with restaurant employees, and finally the ambiance of the restaurant (Jeong and Jang 2011, 363-365). Interestingly research found that electronic word of mouth was not influenced by the price of the restaurant (Jeong and Jang 2011, 363-365).
When looking at why customers return to familiar restaurants Anna S. Matilla (2001, 73-79) argues that restaurants create loyalty in larger ways than just offering discounts to repeat customers and that the loyalty that restaurants seek is loyalty rooted in strong emotional attachment to the restaurants. She documents her reasons for believing this through her study where she found that the three reasons why customers may return to the same restaurant is food quality, service, and atmosphere (Matilla 2001, 76-77). However, when customers who ranked high in emotional bonding shared their reasons for returning they said that personal recognition, a feeling of familiarity, or having had a memorable experience drove their opinions about the restaurant (Matilla 2001, 76-77).

Overall how customers interact with restaurants comes down to a number of factors, many of which are present in the space whether you consciously process them or not. These factors may include the interior design, ambient light, color, music, background noises, space and layout, aesthetics, and tableware (Pecotic, Bazdan, and Samardzija, 2014).

**Place attachment within restaurants**

Place attachment can be viewed in a number of different ways whether this is through a person, a process, or a place organizing framework. The dimension that stands out while looking at place attachments with restaurants in mind is the place dimension. This dimension focuses on the place characteristics of attachment, including spatial level, specificity, and the prominence of social or physical elements (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). The role of restaurants is one that is ever expanding, taking on different roles to different people and being different in a multitude of places. Thus, the role of a restaurant changes depending upon the location and the surrounding neighborhood. As such, we first must understand the important roles that the interior of the
restaurants hold in terms of the social structure within them. To begin, restaurants have a varying number of different layouts, patterns, decors, and overall feels. Unless someone is walking into a chain restaurant, it is unlikely that the experience will be the same as any other restaurant they have been to. This is purposeful as every divider, piece of art, and color of chair helps to build an overall aesthetic for the restaurant that is completely unique to that restaurant's experience. These individual differences are oftentimes geared towards the different communities that these restaurants cater to and appear in. For instance, a Chinese restaurant is unlikely to have an American casual aesthetic whereas a local sports bar would be more likely to have that décor and overall ambiance. Both the ambiance and the community influence the way that the space is used. The location of that restaurant also plays a pivotal role in the community’s response to a specific restaurant. Not only is this important but it also influences who from the community is using it, as well as, if that person feels an attachment towards that restaurant.

The role of the interior of the restaurant is also important. One of these important pieces is place attachment and how the use of local values can support it. Yuni Maharani defines the individual attachment to a restaurant as a manifestation “in objective quality that includes; satisfaction, service acquired and time consumed, and also in subjective quality that includes; developing feelings towards the place, sense of belonging, assuming the place as a part of oneself, familiarity and continuous use of the place.” (Maharani 2013, pg 181). The idea of place attachment is something that is extremely relevant given the importance of social dynamics that are taking place between the restaurants and the communities. Maharani’s research concluded that “interior design is one of the main factors that attract visitors and create attachment through the nostalgic feelings they offer” (Maharani 2013, pg 187). For restaurants in the Willy Street area, this is something that must be considered.
Place attachment is what drives people to keep going back to the same restaurant. They are the repeat customers and from them one can gain a lot of insight into what the community restaurants really are. Places that see a high number of repeat customers from the community are going to resonate more with the community. So it’s really just setting apart what makes the restaurants have high place attachment and have that high number of repeat customers. A study conducted in 2007 found that place attachment “significantly impacted consumers’ desire to return to an establishment.” (Brocato 2006 pg 97). In addition to this “design had a direct effect on several dimensions of place attachment, while ambient and employee factors influenced place attachment indirectly. These results underscore the importance of physical service settings to the customer experience.” (Brocato 2006 pg 96). The importance of the physical qualities of the restaurant such as lighting, layout, and décor have more impact on the place attachment within the communities.
Methods

One must first set up the methods with which the research will be performed. Specifically, for this research question, it is important that the restaurant community is involved in the process. For this, the research was broken up into two separate parts. The first was interviewing the owners of two local restaurants. Secondly, making observations about Willy Street and also observations about the two restaurants. The interview questions are posed in a way that gets at the foundation of what makes a restaurant within a community important to that community and why it is that the community finds these restaurants to be important to them. The goal is to figure out what the restaurants are doing both internally and externally within the community. Observations will be made about the restaurant’s layout, décor, menu, lighting, food, etc. The goal of the observations is to delve into what makes these community restaurants unique and what makes them popular. These experiences tell a lot about different social dynamics and in conjunction with the interviews will help to answer the research question.

The interviews are designed in a way to gain more understanding into the dynamics between the community and the restaurant. They are also going to be used to understand how the restaurant is designed and how it plays into the social spatial relationships within the restaurants. How people use the space is very important and given the pandemic going on, interviews are going to be a main source in understanding how the restaurant traditionally is and what happens within it. In addition to the general interview questions that will be used at all of the restaurants, each will
have more personal and more free flowing questions. This is to keep the conversation flowing naturally and also to provide an opportunity for the interviewee to talk about things that they feel are important. Also, having a more normal conversation about the importance of their restaurant is something that will probably lead to a lot of in-depth answers that may need a bit more unpacking which is why having additional questions is important to the research. Each restaurant also has its own role in the community and its own ideas, so the same questions won’t always apply in the same way to each restaurant. These questions will also give us more information on the personal impact that the restaurants feel that they have on the community and that the community has had on these individuals. For example, interview questions 1-4 (See Appendix A pg 56 for the full list of questions) get at the Willy Street experience and the observations of the restaurant’s owner over time. These questions start at the beginning of their business and work through the community dynamics that have affected them since. Questions 5-8 get at the neighborhood trends, starting with if they have a deeper personal connection to the neighborhood and then talking about the members of the community. For these questions the goal is to gain insight into what the neighborhood is like and to talk about the community that comes through the doors. Questions 9-12 are more focused on the social spatial relationships. How people use the space to how they are catering to those spaces. Question 12 in particular really aims to gain a better understanding of the social special relationships that are happening inside the restaurant and specifically if those were planned interactions or if it was the community that changed the restaurant's interactions.

For observations, photos of the interior as well as descriptions of the normal arrangements are going to be paramount to getting that firsthand evidence on how the community uses the space and the relationship that happens between the restaurant and the people of the neighborhood.
Some of the things that will be focused on include the lighting of the restaurant and how this lighting affects the mood. The seating arrangement is the restaurant more separated or is the dining experience a more public one. By this, is it more of a counter service elbow to elbow with a stranger or is each group separated and how does this impact the overall feel and dynamic? Another aspect is the color scheme of the restaurant and how that plays into the overall feel. Since colors play so much of a role in emotions, how is the use of color and shape within the restaurant affecting the social aspects of it. For instance, what are considered fine dining restaurants usually have darker colors with a more somber lighting mood as opposed to bright and white deli’s that have a completely different feel. Another thing to look at is artwork or art pieces, the use of art can tell a lot about how the restaurant wants to be seen by the customers. Is the artwork more local in nature? Maybe they have a lot of old pictures from the restaurant's history or maybe of the neighborhood. Each of these differences can help to tell the story of the social dynamics which occur and can help to give a better understanding of the relationships and social interactions that happen within each restaurant.

Along with interviewing the different restaurants and observing them, the actual food of the restaurant is important as well. Things like the menus, the pricing, and honestly whether or not the food is good are other important factors to take into account. The goal is to try some of the community favorites to really figure out what the community enjoys and what the restaurant does that makes the relationship between them. Menus can also give a lot of insight into the restaurants themselves, as they can sometimes include information on the community and the building that the restaurant is housed in. The types of food included on the menu is another way to understand a restaurant. Each unique type of food is another story that the restaurant has such
as how those menu items came to be and why they are included? Food is an important aspect that should not be overlooked at the two restaurants.

Another important piece to look at is the community. The observations focus primarily on the people and the places, but a broader scope is needed. For this piece, compiling a list of other restaurants is very helpful to learn about each restaurant’s role within the community. With this information maps of the neighborhood can be created and from it data such as restaurant age and cuisines can be used to determine the neighborhood makeup in terms of other restaurants. Being able to compare and contrast location, price, and cuisine helps to answer the social and spatial relationships part of the research question.

By exploring the relationships that both of these restaurants (Ho Long Bay, Weary Street Traveler) have with the Willy Street community we hope to understand what makes a “neighborhood restaurant” and the different purposes that they serve within the community. Willy Street is one of the most historic areas of Madison and the community has played a significant role in its survival and through interviews and observation we hope to understand how restaurants serve as gathering places for the community.
Results and Analysis

Visiting Willy Street: Observations

Before visiting Willy Street everything we knew about the area was based on what we had read and heard from people second hand, so we had a lot to take in and see for ourselves. After calculating the safest and easiest route, I decided to take the bus from my apartment in downtown Madison to the east end of Willy Street. It was about 5:30pm on a Wednesday night, after agreeing to pay for their dinners, I was able to drag along some of my roommates. After we had been on the bus for about 15 minutes which was entirely empty except for us, the bus driver called us up to the front over his loudspeaker, which concerned all of us. Once we were all there, he said, “I’m not trying to be rude, but do you know where you are right now and do you know where you are going?”. I responded saying that we were going to Willy Street and that we would be getting off soon. Looking a little bit more relaxed he said “oh ok good I just wanted to make sure. Lots of times people get on this bus and don’t realize where it goes and they end up really far out and in the middle of nowhere, but even on Willy Street make sure you girls are careful”. This put us on edge almost instantly. After getting off the bus we walked around Willy Street and headed towards Ha Long Bay. About 3 minutes in we were stopped by a woman outside of the Willy Street Co-op, which is a community grocery store. She told us that she was freezing, in a
terrible domestic violence situation and did not want to go back home to be treated as a punching bag. She told us that she worked at the Social Justice Initiative just down the street and was well-known in the community. She said that she was just looking for enough money so she could find somewhere to sleep with her son for the night so she wouldn’t have to go back home to her husband. On the road next to her was a rundown looking car with the entire front windshield smashed. It looked as if someone had taken a baseball bat to it. After giving her some cash, we continued onwards toward the restaurant. At this point I could see that my friends were wondering what I had gotten them into. Everyone felt quite uneasy, especially because it was so dark and the sidewalk was poorly lit. The street was quite busy but it was mostly filled with homeless people collecting items and asking for money. Something to note is that these were not people that were sitting with signs as you passed by; they were actively approaching you and telling you their stories. This was only my first experience on Willy Street at night, but it was already apparent that there was a much larger story playing out on Willy Street - something we hoped to learn about this through the restaurants that we would be visiting and interviewing.

On our second trip to Willy Street we had a similar experience. This time we were dropped off right outside the restaurant, but this did not stop us from getting stopped by a man right outside the restaurant. He told us that he had just been released from prison and was trying to make a change in his life and he needed a little money so that he could make something of himself. Yet again, these were people that were sharing their stories and, in a way, forcing you to listen.
From figure 4 it can be seen that Willy Street has a unique group of restaurants. The street is almost a mile in length and along it are some 24+ restaurants. Of those 24 the cuisines rarely overlap. The largest demographic of restaurant cuisine are bars, which is to make sense given that Willy Street is less than a mile from the State Capital of the drinking state. Even then with only four of one cuisine the rest of the restaurants make up a surprising mix from Laotian to Tex-Mex. On top of that the overall pricing of the restaurants is relatively affordable. The two restaurants used in the project had menu prices that would see a full meal at around $15 dollars. Given the location, the number of competing restaurants, and the image of Willy Street, that’s a very affordable evening. These prices also are similar along the whole street which has
restaurants evenly spread up and down it. The spatial component of these restaurant locations means that they are close to the neighboring restaurants but far enough away that these restaurants are able to complement each other’s businesses as opposed to rivaling.

Restaurant Observations (See Appendix B)

Throughout this paper we emphasize the fact that restaurants serve as more than just places for food; a restaurant can be an integral part of the community and can influence one’s perception and experience of the community beyond the physical area of the restaurant itself. There are many stages that impact how we view and how we use restaurants. Some of the main stages that determine how we view restaurants include the reason we frequent a restaurant, the way we order food, how the restaurant makes us feel once we enter, and then finally what our impression is of the experience. As stated above we will be focusing on two different restaurants located on Willy Street, each which offers something different to the community. These restaurants are Ha Long Bay and Weary Traveler freehouse.

Ha Long Bay

Ha Long Bay is located on the far end of Willy Street (see figure #4) and serves traditional South Asian cuisines including Vietnamese, Thai and Laotian menu items. Owner Jean Tran and her family have been running the business and serving the Willy Street community after opening in 2009. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, Ha Long Bay has closed their dining space and customers are only permitted entry to retrieve their carry-out orders. By looking specifically at my experience ordering and picking up food from Ha Long Bay, we can begin to understand how this restaurant is used by the community.
Menu

First, when looking at the menu, which included over 150 dishes and was gigantic by anyone’s standard, it was apparent that Ha Long Bay was looking to serve anyone who had ever tried Thai, Laotian or Vietnamese cuisines before. On the menu you can find common dishes like Lo Mein or Drunken Noodles located right next to something that may be completely foreign to you and unknown in most Americanized Asian food.

Ordering

When calling ahead to place my order at Ha Long Bay, the phone line was busy for each of my 10 attempts calling. Usually this would make me annoyed, however this time it made me feel more excited about the food I was going to try. Something about having to call instead of just order online made it seem more old fashioned and personable. I can see how not being able to place an order may be very frustrating for many people but in a strange way it made me more
excited, because if this many people were calling to pick-up food it must mean that the food is worth the trouble.

**Interior/Layout**

Upon entering the restaurant you were met with a counter where people placed and picked up their orders. To the left was a large dining space, primarily filled with booth style seating (see figure #8). Instead of traditional cushions, the booth seats were made from planks of wood to match the look of the restaurant. In terms of seating, there were very few single tables in the space. Although this space would most likely look different if we were not in a global pandemic, I was still able to imagine and visualize how the space would be used regularly. To make up for the large amount of take-out orders they had converted dining tables by pushing them together to create an assembly line for pick up orders. The room was filled with bright colors, with some walls being lime green and others being a soothing orange. To counter the colors there were tapestries and pictures that seemed related to Southeast Asian subjects hanging on the walls as well as long curtains draping the sides of the windows.

Figures #6 and #7: Interior of Ha Long Bay, photo by Isabel Warner)
Insights about the layout

When looking at the sketch of the interior of Ha Long Bay (see figure 8) there are a number of things that stand out. First the visibility among tables in the dining room is high which creates the chance of meetings between diners. The space of the dining room is also laid out in a way that is accessible to many different types of interactions due to the large open space. This leaves space for social networking and community organizing. In addition the positioning of the counter requires that everyone passes by requiring an interaction with the host or hostess.
Vibe/Atmosphere

After taking in the space, I began to pay attention to the energy within the restaurant. There was one person taking and handing out orders from the desk. He would run back and forth from the kitchen to check on timing, picking up the ringing phone while darting back and forth. Next to the desk was a shelf that was packed with food waiting to be picked up and it became clear why I had to wait so long for the phone line to be available. As I waited for my food I sat on a bench and watched different people come in to retrieve their food. What was interesting is that people of diverse ages and races came into the restaurant. Most importantly, everyone seemed to carry the same level of excitement. It seemed like people never stopped coming—there was always someone going in or out, and food was certainly coming out of the kitchen fast. I encountered one man who came back into the restaurant about 10 minutes after he had left saying he had just picked up a large order and he thought that they might have forgotten two of the dishes. The man at the desk quickly nodded, went back to the kitchen and came back with another bag. What was interesting about this situation was that no one was upset; instead, it was just a matter of getting the right items. When I had secured my food and was on the way out another situation stood out to me. Two college-aged students entered and said they had tried to call to order ahead but the line was busy so they were wondering if they could order now instead. I had heard them talking as they entered, and one friend was promising the other that it was worth the wait and it was the best Asian food in Madison. The man took their orders and they sat and waited. The fact that students came all the way to Willy Street to order their food, knowing that they were going to have to wait up to 40 minutes once they ordered, showed me just how beloved Ha Long Bay is, not just in the Willy Street community, but also all over Madison.
Weary Traveler Freehouse

The next restaurant that we looked at was Weary Traveler Freehouse, which is located in the middle of Willy Street (see figure #4) and is co-owned by brothers Christopher and Bowe Berge. Weary Traveler first opened in 2002 and has seen the Willy Street area transform throughout the years. This restaurant serves many different cuisines while offering a gastropub-style atmosphere to the community. Above all, this location is known to be a place that fosters conversation and is a real neighborhood spot.

(Figure #9: Weary Traveler Freehouse, photo taken by Isabel Warner)

Menu

The menu at Weary Traveler is unique and, quite honestly, I have never seen a menu that pairs so many different traditional cuisines together while still creating a sense of coherence and unity. The menu, although surprising, does not feel disjointed. The menu has items like the “Bob's Bad Breath Burger” placed right next to a traditionally Indian dish called “Mulligatawny” which is next to a “Hungarian Goulash”. It is also interesting to note that the menu only has 13 items,
which is a shortened version due to the pandemic. This is very different compared to the number of menu items at Ha Long Bay emphasizing the fact that these two restaurants serve two purposes within the same community.

**Ordering**

Similar to Ha Long Bay, the only way to order carry-out food was to call on the phone, which proved to be a very easy experience. I called the restaurant right before I was set to head out, spoke to a man who quickly took my order and was on my way.

**Interior/Layout**

Almost instantly as I entered the restaurant I was greeted by a woman on the other side of the bar who smiled while saying “hello friends”. As I approached the bar I instantly noticed the photos and pictures all over the walls and the odd objects clustered in different parts of the room, as well as a plentiful supply of plants scattered around the restaurant. The photos were of all different subjects ranging from Martin Luther King Jr. to posters Korean olympic skiers. After our interview with Christoper Berges, the co-owner of Weary Traveler Freehouse, we learned that almost all of the art on his walls has been commissioned by people in the neighborhood. There were life size chess pieces directly above a board game corner, where people were free to settle into a board game as they ate their food. In other areas there were skis hanging from the walls as well as a bicycle and even some old fishing rods that had been made into lamps. The layout of the restaurant was quite unusual and was in an upside down U-shape, with doors at either branch of the U and the bar connecting the two ends. Above the bar was a glamorous yet elegant chandelier, which served as the center point of the restaurant. In addition to the board game
corner, there was a long table lined with old books that you could simply peruse or, if you found one you really enjoyed, you could buy it. Most of the seating was booth-style with a lot of large round booths, which appeared to be great spots for competitive board games. The booths made the space seem more cozy and approachable while also elevating the space.

(Figures #10-12: Weary Street Traveler interior, photos by Isabel Warner)

(Figure #13: Sketch of Weary Traveler Floor plan by Mary Torine and Isabel Warner)
Insights About The Layout

Looking at the layout of this restaurant (Figure #13) we can see that the restaurant is divided into three sections with high visibility within sections and low visibility between sections. The low visibility within each section creates a space for more intimate social networking and makes people feel like they are at their own dining room table. The large tables and board games promote small group social networking and create a feeling of familiarity. In addition the photos on the walls as well as the boardgames provide an opportunity for conversation within the intimate sections. The visibility of the bar and kitchen encourages conversation between customers and restaurant workers.

Vibe/Atmosphere

The result of the interior decorations and layout of the space was the feeling that you were in someone’s cozy living room. It was easy to forget about everything else when you were inside the restaurant. The music was just soft enough that it added to the excitement of being there, but was not loud enough to hinder any of the conversations that were being had. The staff seemed like they were your friends who actually wanted to be there, rather than people who were just doing their jobs. Scattered around the restaurant were lots of different types of people; some having full course meals and others just having a drink with friends.

Restaurant Interviews (See appendix C)

A key piece of our research for this project includes interviews with two different restaurant owners, Jean Tran from Ha Long Bay and Christopher Berge from Weary Traveler Freehouse.
Our main goal of this project was to understand how restaurants see themselves as parts of the community, as well as how they want to be seen by their community. The only way we felt we would truly be able to understand this relationship was by talking specifically to the restaurant owners and learn firsthand how they rely on and serve their community.

**Restaurant Interviews: Ha Long Bay**

The first interview that we conducted was with Jean Tran the owner and founder of Ha Long Bay (see Appendix C). Through this interview we were able to learn about how she sees her restaurant as a member of the Willy Street community and why she was attracted to Willy Street in the first place. Below are some subsections that highlight our findings from the interview.

**Community**

Jean mentioned that the relationship that she had with the community was present even before her restaurant opened, stating:

“For 2 months people would come up to us and peak in the windows, knock on the door and talk to us and they were very excited. It made me feel very welcome in the neighborhood even when we were not open yet so I said this is will be happy place for us when we open.”

-Jean Tran Interview, 11/20/2020

In addition, one of her favorite things about having a restaurant on Willy Street is that there are a range of people from different cultures, ages and ethnicities that choose to eat at Ha Long Bay. Specifically, she stated that she loves to see people coming into the restaurant in large groups and being able to offer them food from all different regions of Asia. In terms of her current attachment to the community, she stated that when asked to donate food for festivals or donation banks she “never says no” as she knows how important the Willy Street community is in making
her business thrive. In addition to this, she talked about her regular customers and how this has created a more personal bond to the community, stating, “we even have some neighborhood people that will come back to Ha Long Bay a couple times a week and we get to know them as friends; we have become really close to them.”

**Willy Street Dynamic**

In terms of making her business succeed on Willy Street, there are a number of different areas that let her business excel. She first talked about why she chose to open on Willy Street. In her answer she expressed that a large part of this had to do with the fact that she was seeing other multi-cultural restaurants boom in the area, so she felt like not only would community members be intrigued by her food but she would complement the other businesses well. In explaining why customers keep coming back to Ha Long Bay she stated that “good food and friendly service” were the secret to keeping people coming. Above all she stated that she “trusts her food”.

(Figure #14: Image of Jean Tran, photo provided by Jean Tran)
Restaurant Interviews: Weary Traveler Freehouse

The final interview that we conducted was with one of the co-owners of Weary Street Traveler, Christopher Berge (see appendix C). As a resident of Willy Street himself for over 30 years, Berge was able to give us insights about the community from the perspective of someone living in the neighborhood as well from the perspective as one of the most well known business owner on Willy Street. Throughout our discussion, we learned not only what the restaurant meant to the community, but also how the community has changed in recent years.

Change in the community

As mentioned above, Berge has been in the Willy Street area long enough to be able to notice and see the patterns of change throughout the years. When speaking about the change he witnessed on Willy Street he emphasized the fact that new development projects were changing the dynamics of the area stating:

“Here's a diversity of housing choices that wasn't here before. 20 years ago, a 10-story building two blocks away didn't exist. High density housing has been one of the main changes. And whereas before we had like these three level apartment buildings which were the high-density housing for this neighborhood. The rest of the housing are single family homes that were turned into multi units in the 60s 70s and 80s. And now though, those have been turned back into single family homes as the property values went up, and it became this desirable neighborhood.”

-Christopher Berge Interview, 11/23/20

In addition to new developments, he highlighted the rising rent prices and how “the number of street people has gone up”, which he says is in large part due to the recent increasing disparities of wealth in the area. In his words, “there's more desperately poor people, and many qualified people moving into the neighborhood” that are creating the gap. In explaining the homelessness
situation currently on Willy Street, he spoke about the fact that their entire park is filled with tents and that the homeless people routinely make laps at all hours of the day around the restaurant, which often deters customers. In one sense he sympathetic to the people on the street and wants to help them in any way he can but he is also aware of the fact that the increase in the homeless population on Willy Street may be hurting his business, stating:

“The dumping of like, just a lot of the city's problems in this neighborhood. The street has like four rehab centers, Riverview group, the loop house, I mean, within four blocks of here, there's four things and it's not like I'm not empathetic to them. I do as much as anybody to try to be supportive to people at risk in the neighborhood. But you have to think about the business. I had 40 employees and now I am at 12. You know, those people's livelihoods are at risk if I can't maintain some activity here.”
-Christopher Berge Interview, 11/23/20

Another key change he has noted in the community is the influx of festivals during the summer lasting from Memorial Day all the way until Labour Day, stating:

“Unfortunately the American psyche has this no off-switch to which makes bigger better and it started as a neighborhood festival which is ok but is a successful neighborhood more successful if it has 1000 people or 10,000 people? People think 10,000 is more successful but bigger isn’t always better. The dollars made by venders may be higher but it’s no longer a neighborhood festival and we're just the festival grounds.”
-Christopher Berge Interview, 11/23/20

From a resident and business owner perspective, Berge sees the repeated large scale festivals as being unfair to the community, especially when the restaurants and other community spaces cannot cope with the amount of out-of-town people that the festivals bring in. In his eyes, the festival is no longer for the community. Instead, the festivals are taking advantage of the Willy Street community as a resource.
**The role Weary Traveler Plays in the community**

Focusing specifically on the role Weary Traveler plays in the community, Berge calls his space “the living room of the neighborhood”. He goes on to explain this dynamic he has created by stating:

“We're the place where people come when they don't know what they want. When they don't have a plan. And it's always here; it's not the big time but a good time for games or chess. People come in and talk politics and you know a lot of a lot of a lot of things that have happened in the neighborhood started here as ideas. This is a little bit of an Idea Factory again and we keep everything simple and fair.”

-Christopher Berge Interview, 11/23/20

From the beginning, Berg knew that he wanted the space to serve as a gathering place for the community and a place for conversation, and that did not just come about naturally. Berge and his brother had to make decisions early on to create an atmosphere where conversation could naturally occur and the community could feel safe. This also meant that they had to create a place where women felt safe coming to the restaurant, whether they come alone or in groups. While talking about this, Chirsopher mentioned how sadly uncommon it was for women to feel comfortable going places alone and how much work they had to put in the first couple of years so that people knew some behavior was not permitted at Weary Traveler.

The most important thing they saw their space as being was one for conversation, and they had to alter things spatially to allow for this to happen. One way they fostered conversation was by omitting all televisions and inside advertising within the restaurant. The thinking behind this was because lots of times those things distract from conversation. Instead, they filled the restaurant with things that fostered conversation and would help you out if you needed help starting up the conversation. This included a board game corner, random items hanging from the ceiling and art
covering the walls. The art is another way that Christopher intentionally tied the restaurant to the community by having almost all of the art represent some part of the community. He further explains the art by saying:

“I mean this was originally a hippy neighborhood and you can see this on the walls. The iconoclast classic left-wing neighborhood, you can find that all in the walls. Yeah. You know, there are nods to gay culture. If you were to look around, you would see Andy Warhol on the wall, you can see a nod to Asian culture. There are photos of this building from over 100 years ago. Many of the paintings on the walls are commissions from people in the neighborhood. Just sitting in this one spot I can see 22 photos that reflect this neighborhood.”

-Christopher Berge Interview, 11/23/20

Not only does the space come to represent the community through its art and purpose, but so does the menu. When asked what food menu item he believed represented the Willy Street community best he responded saying that it's not just about one item but instead the combination of all the menu items together. He further explains this by saying:

“It is the juxtaposition of a tom ku tofu with a carne asada with a Hungarian goulash and a burger. It is food favorites from all over the world and because Madison is a university town and a port city for intelligence, we get to bring in smart people from all over the world who have eaten all different types of food. The beauty of our menu is not a single item but the juxtaposition of completely different recipes and food sources.”

-Christopher Berge Interview, 11/23/20

**Willy Street Dynamic**

Berge credits the complementary businesses present on Willy Street as one of the reasons for his business success so far. In other words, there are things on Willy Street that not only bring life to the community but also help Weary Traveler run. Berge explained this by saying:
“This is a factory, this is a living room, there are all these things that need to be fixed and changed all the time. . . . I can walk to a grocery store and I can walk to a hardware store. And there's a SRA tailoring that does some sewing stuff for us.”

-Christopher Berge Interview, 11/23/20

It is not just that it makes things more convenient for Berge to have resources that help his operation run close by; small businesses can also work together. While we were interviewing Berge, he left for a little bit before coming back and apologizing. We had witnessed the relationships of complimentary business. There is no better way to put it then how Berge described it:

“This goes back to the other question but the guy over there owns Cafe CODA, which is a jazz club, which is a perfect, perfect balance. Like I walked out to say hi. They don't serve food. They serve jazz, right? So he has a live show at 10 o'clock. And nine o'clock, and they come here at 7:30pm and yeah, dinner, you know, 50 bucks, 100 bucks, going out to dinner. And then they go over there. That's the chemistry that you need in small business. That's, that's one of the best forms of complimentary business.”

-Christopher Berge Interview, 11/23/20

In addition to retail that Weary Traveler can use, they also benefit from other restaurants. This is stated quite clearly by Berge:

“And complimentary retail also can be another type of independent restaurant that appeals to a different group of people. Like we got Baraka across the street, it's East African food restaurant, right. And you know what 20% of those people on a different day would come and eat, you know, maybe 50%, right. So they're putting out all there, you know, their marketing into the world and bringing them there. And they do well but every person going to that restaurant sees me here. That's why I think complementary retail is one of the most important things for small independent businesses, retail needs retail.”

-Christopher Berge Interview, 11/23/20

This was not just a one time thing. Berge had relationships all over the neighborhood like this, the businesses help each other. Because of the diversity on Willy Street in terms of businesses, this occurs all over.
Discussion

Through observations and interviews it is clear that there is a relationship between the restaurants and the communities surrounding Willy Street. Especially given that during the time of the interviews these restaurants were struggling due to COVID-19. Restaurants are a cornerstone of the community and communities are what make restaurants able to succeed. Community and neighborhood restaurants reflect the identity of the people that make up the community because without them they have no purpose. This level of commitment, where the community supports the restaurant, is ever more present due to COVID-19. As Christopher Berge from Weary Street Traveler stated “our regulars are keeping us open right now. I’m not doing it for the general public” (see appendix C). Without the community, restaurants do not succeed. As a result the two restaurants that we visited made sure to offer and support the community in ways that ordinary generic restaurants are unable to. Weary Traveler positioned themselves as “the neighborhood’s living room”, where people can come to eat, play, read, and converse (see appendix C). Whereas Ha Long Bay came to the area knowing how much the
Willy Street community loved international cuisines and restaurants and they looked to serve the community in that way.

Our findings link restaurants and the community in another way, specifically the idea of what makes a neighborhood unit. As stated in the lit review, a neighborhood unit is a neighborhood that is able to fulfill all of the necessary needs of the community within the neighborhood itself. Restaurants are a key factor in creating the neighborhood unit as having them there allows people to stay within the neighborhood. The idea of the neighborhood unit is not just beneficial for residents but also for the businesses within the community. One of the reasons Christoper Berge of Weary Traveler chose to open his restaurant on Willy Street was due to the level of complementary businesses on Willy Street. He was able to walk to get everything that was necessary for his business whether that be a grocery store, a hardware store or even a sewing shop. Berge was able to benefit from owning a business in a tight neighborhood unit while also serving a major role in creating the unit as a restaurant owner.

The nature of this project meant that there were limitations to what we could and could not do. Ideally we would have been able to talk with every restaurant in the Willy Street neighborhood. This would have allowed for much more data and information on how the neighborhood acts in relation to restaurants. We learned a great deal from the small number of interviews that we conducted, so by conducting more interviews with different types of restaurants on Willy Street would allow us to understand the dynamic present to a much greater extent. In addition it would have been beneficial to reach out to different community members of different socioeconomic backgrounds to understand how the change in demographic impacts how certain restaurants are viewed. Part of the reason why we were unable to conduct our research in this way had to do with time constraints, but even if given more time there are many
limitations given today’s social and political climate. The way that restaurants function has been entirely flipped on its head due to COVID-19, and they are having to learn a whole new way to do business. In addition to this, we were unable to see the ways that community members would usually interact inside restaurant spaces and the atmosphere that these two restaurants have been known for. At the same time, due to recent social and racial injustices throughout the country, the ideas of how communities do and should function is changing.

Restaurants can serve as essential spaces for the community and, based on our research, we have been able to see a number of ways in which both the community and the restaurant benefit and come to serve each other. Restaurants, especially those that are immersed in the community, come to resemble what makes the neighborhood special. This was especially the case for Ha Long Bay and Weary Traveler Freehouse on Willy Street.

Figure #17: Comparison of different features from interviews with Jean Tran (Ha Long Bay) and Christopher Berges (Weary Traveler Freehouse) by Isabel Warner (See appendix C)
Conclusion

Throughout this project we have learned a lot. The main question we were looking to answer through this paper was “how have the restaurants on Willy Street come to represent the community” and based on our findings we can say that the two restaurants we looked into strongly contribute to and are influenced by the feel of the community. This comes through in Ha Long Bay by their involvement in community festivals and commitment to donate to the community (see appendix C). While at Weary Traveler not only is the community represented through the art on the walls and the construction of the menu but the space also serves as the “neighborhood living room” (see appendix C). Restaurant owners are aware of the dynamic between themselves and the community and they try to make something of this. Each restaurant tries to offer something to the community whether this be through the physical space or the food that they serve. In addition the restaurants we looked at chose to open on Willy Street for a particular reason, the locations of their restaurants are more than just a location to them. At Ha Long Bay Jean Tran saw how accepting Willy Street was in trying different types of cuisines, she saw business booming and made her decision because of that (see appendix C). For Christopher Berges he chose to open Weary Traveler Freehouse on Willy Street as a community member of the neighborhood as well as the neighborhood unit that he perceived (see appendix C). Finally through design and layout each restaurant was able to create a different interaction and foster different behaviors from their customers within their given spaces. Ha Long Bay encouraged casual eating, creating a space that could function to perform take away orders, and in person dining. At Weary Traveler they went out of their way to create a space that fosters conversation, deciding to only decorate the space with items that may lead to increased conversation. Overall our findings were overwhelming, when a restaurant is considered a
neighborhood spot it is for a reason. A neighborhood spot is one that goes out of its way to build a relationship with the community to the point that they influence each other. We found this to clearly be the case at Ha Long Bay and Weary Traveler Freehouse.

Acknowledgements

We would like to take a moment to thank a few people who made this project possible. First thank you to Jean Tran and Christopher Berge, without taking the time to talk to us and learning about your restaurants we would not have a project. We loved seeing and learning how your restaurants have come to represent the Willy Street Community. The food was also amazing! A big thank you to Professor Bill Gartner for all of the feedback and great conversations that helped guide us through this project. We especially loved hearing stories and experiences you have had at different restaurants in the Madison area. We would also like to thank everyone who gave encouraging words of advice along the way as well as the UW-Madison Geography department for giving us the skills needed to complete this project.
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Appendix A:

Interview Questions

1. Why did you decide to open your restaurant on Willy Street? What is your favorite part of the Willy St neighborhood?

2. What has your experience been on Willy Street?

3. How do you think your restaurant fits into the Willy Street dynamic?

4. In what ways does your restaurant reflect - and shape - the character of Willy Street?

5. Do you live in the Marquette-Willy St neighborhood?

6. Do any of your employees live in the neighborhood?

7. Do you have neighborhood residents who are “regulars”?

8. Why do people like to come to __________ regularly? Why is your restaurant so popular in the community?

9. What changes have you witnessed within the Marquette-Willy St community since your restaurant opened here?

10. Are you involved with any of the annual neighborhood events such as the Neighborhood yard sale (June), Waterfront Festival (June), La Fete de Marquette (July), Orton Park Festival (August), Willy Street Fair (September), or the Marquette Neighborhood Association Meetings?

11. Is there a specific menu item from your restaurant that you think embodies the Willy street community to you and why?

12. How do customers typically use your space (quick in and out, do people come and stay, is it a popular location for specific events?)
   a. And was this something that you planned for or did it happen naturally?
   b. Have you tried to cater to this use? (pictures of locals on walls, free drinks for birthdays?)
Appendix B:

Observations from restaurants field notes

- Ha Long bay
  - General
    - Tried to call ahead but the line was always busy
    - They were doing carry out/delivery only
  - Interior/layout
    - All of the seating was closed off but most of it was booth/bench seating.
    - Not many solo tables
    - Desk was right in the front to take orders/give orders to people
    - Bright colors
  - VIBE
    - Entered the restaurant, 1 person working taking orders/retrieving orders
    - Insane amount of food waiting to be picked up, created an exciting atmosphere
    - Had to wait a little for food but was helpful because I was able to watch the different people who came in
    - All different types of people came in, students, adults, older people-people never stopped
    - Food coming out of the kitchen fast

Weary traveler

- interior/LAYOUT
  - Was directed forward towards the bar to pick up food
  - Restaurant in a U shape with the bar serving as the central connecting location
  - Photos all over the walls, Skis
  - Board game collection
  - Old books for sale
  - Mostly booth seating and a diagonal layout

- VIBE
  - Upon entering greeted with “Welcome friends”.
  - Instantly felt the warm environment
  - Asked to look around and they said definitely and that they knew it was really cool
  - Lots of different types of people eating
  - Soft music playing
  - Seemed like they were actually really happy to have us there
Appendix C:  
Ha Long Bay Transcript: Interview with owner Jean Tran: 
11/20/20, Over Zoom. 
Transcribed by hand from voice memo

AH: Why did you decide to open your restaurant on Willy Street? What is your favorite part of the Willy St neighborhood?

JT: I was looking for an area that had a lot of other multicultural restaurants and has different areas with people that would be accepting and interested in trying new types of food. Right when I saw the Willy Street location, I fell in love with it and knew it was the right place for Ha Long Bay. We even had to battle out another restaurant for the property, but I knew that it was the one.

AH: What has your experience been on Willy Street?

JT: Even before we opened for 2 months people would come up to us and peak in the windows, knock on the door and talk to us and they were very excited. and it make me feel very welcome in the neighborhood even when we were not open yet so I said this is said it will be happy place for us when we open.

AH: How do you think your restaurant fits into the Willy Street dynamic? Is there a specific group that your restaurant caters to?

JT: Everybody comes to the restaurant we offer Thai, Laotian, Vietnamese so lots of different types of food. It is fun to see people come in in different groups of 4 or 5 because each person is able to order food from a different region. Some people will get pho, one might have hot Thai curry, or Vietnamese noodles and some just want stir fry so we really have all of the options.

AH: In what ways does your restaurant reflect - and shape - the character of Willy Street?

JT: I would say that we cater to other community and the community caters to us. Before I opened, I had the idea of Ha Long Bay in my head for 10 to 20 years and I would always talk about how Madison would be the perfect place to open but I did not know about Willy Street. I thought that Madison would be perfect for the kind of food that I create so I thought that Willy Street area was perfect because I saw many cultural restaurants in the area and so everybodies business booming so I thought my giant menu would fit to the area.

AH: Do you live in the Marquette-Willy St neighborhood?

JT: For me I really like the neighborhood area, but my husband really likes cars and there is not enough parking in the Willy Street area, so we live about 10 minutes away from the restaurant instead.

AH: Do you have neighborhood residents who are “regulars”?

JT: Yes, yes, we do we have many regulars. We even have some neighborhood people that will come back to Ha Long Bay a couple times a week and we get to know them as friends. We have become really close to them.

AH: Why do people like to come to Ha Long Bay regularly? Why is your restaurant so popular in the community?

JT: I think first you have to have good food and friendly service otherwise they will not
come back again and again. Good food and friendly service see I open I trust my food I trust my menu. I think I created something that people will enjoy because I grew up with these foods and I enjoyed them so much growing up.

AH: What changes have you witnessed within the Marquette-Willy St community since your restaurant opened here?

JT: I can’t really think of many big changes but right in front of my restaurant in that area before Covid it was an extremely creative area where people walk around it a lot. I think a lot of them (our customers) would place an order and then it would take us 45 minutes to an hour for us to make their food and we would see them walking around looking around the neighborhood.

AH: Are you involved with any of the annual neighborhood events such as the Neighborhood yard sale (June), Waterfront Festival (June), La Fete de Marquette (July), Orton Park Festival (August), Willy Street Fair (September), or the Marquette Neighborhood Association Meetings?

JT: Because I have many events, I can’t remember all of them, but I get calls that ask if I can donate my food for a festival and they will sell it for fund raising and I do this many times. I never say no. And we also do the Yum Yum festival yeah, we have done that multiple times, but I donate a lot of food for festivals.

AH: How do customers typically use your space (quick in and out, do people come and stay, is it a popular location for specific events)?

JT: As of March 16th we have been closed for in person dining and we have not opened in person dining since just for safety. So people have to pick up the food as carry out. So the dining room is now shut down completely and stand 6 ft apart so people don’t need to stay close inside for long.

AH: Well those are all of our questions thank you so much for taking the time to meet with us!
Weary Traveler Freehouse Transcript: Interview with co-owner: Christopher Robin Berge
11/23/20, Transcribed by hand from voice memo.

CB: So the Geography Department?

AH: Yes, this is our senior capstone thesis like project.

CB: I also had to write a thesis for this university

IW: Oh what was your topic on?

CB: It was on the regencies of the British Raj after the fall of the Raj. Basically my thesis statement was Britain didn’t lose the countries between Britain and India after they lost the jewel to the crown they basically abandoned them, that would be how I would sum it up and I actually believe United States was a I mean like if you knew the economics of the day in the 1770s Jamaica and Barbados and these other colonies were way more lucrative than the American colonies and I would say they more abandoned rather than lost the war of independence and it's too much too much to tangle with for little gain. And they ended up being a market for English goods and an income. And we still had one more war with them, the war of 1812.

AH: History department?

CB: Yep, I have a degree in history

AH: I love history courses I've taken like four of them now I think so it's like my secondary favorite topic

CB: Once you get a good history professor you look forward to it definitely

AH: So we have a couple things for you to fill out it's just really the privacy statement and it's what I emailed you initially so it's just basically like you can read through it.

IW: So this just says that if you don’t feel comfortable answering any questions you don’t have to

CB: The interesting thing is that this is academic so I'm doing it but I'm not doing any interviews with the media or news or anything. You know the whole thing is that in such a highly contentious year there is no right answer. For example back in June after being closed for three months and trying to bring my staff back together and get all the equipment running after it's been shut down pressures and stuff are finicky also reloading our coolers which means that I dumped like $10,000 worth of food in June meaning gave it away or threw it away or donating right. We invested 50 grand in the place to reopen. Soon after I gave an interview to channel 4, or 15 NBC or whatever one of those it was where we talked about like the street eatery program which I helped craft with the city in the middle of May and of course I talked about things about the restaurant like OK we put the tables out here it's very important that we adopt our seating and the other with 50% or 25% of restriction to ourselves. But what is wrong with the picture given the time? I got extreme blow back on Facebook and media because I didn't do a shout out to BLM. Because that was the only thing I was thinking about when I was trying to put...
together my staff, reload my coolers, work like 5 or 6, 12 hour days in a row to get home and then all I was thinking about was the strong social inequity of antebellum America throughout Jim Crow and then the lynching era and then through civil rights and everything like that because that's all I could think about. See I am being facetious and I'm a history major, so I get it I'm also someone who has had Martin Luther King, Frederick Douglass, and Toni Morrison all on my wall for 15 to 20 years demonstrating where I stand socially. But I didn't say anything about BLM, so I got totally attacked. This is why I find the vulnerability of the digital age to be a curse and not an honor. The curse is that Amazon is going to replace our Brick-and-Mortar storefront businesses and delivered food services and chains are going to dominate the next era and it could not happen without the fluidity of the of the digital age. It just couldn't, you know what I mean. Yeah, if you couldn't just order everything from your bed, your food and other stuff, guys like me are in trouble. I would prefer to be a dinosaur that gets killed off then to live in an era where I genuflect to the new reality and I'm going to be a survivor in this. I will survive this era, protect my asset but I will not participate in the next round, I might be the mayor of the city in the future but I'm not going to be a Covid cautious business with an internet based planned based marketing format. But going into your questions, I bet you can tell I have opinions.

IW: Yeah, so our project is mainly, I think Alex might have already told you but we're looking at how different restaurants play into community life and the relationship and dynamic between them. So we're focusing on Willy Street, mainly just because we found it to be a really fascinating location.

Willy street? And kind of like what were the steps that led to that?

CB: I would put them in this order. I lived in the neighborhood. So I was familiar with the surroundings and the demographics without having to read a marketing analysis. Unlike a chain that relies on market analysis to locate their 15th place, so this was only two blocks from my house. So I knew my neighborhood. Knowing the market is fun, yeah, intimately. Number two 9/11 happened (right before I opened) and I don't look at a disaster as all bad for the particular market. If you watch the S & P 500 it had one of the biggest rallies in the history of the American stock exchange between March and October, I mean, that's completely oblivious to the, you know, to all the protests and all the stuff. So, after 9/11 everybody else was closing, and I opened at that time. It was my fifth business, this is the fifth business I have opened, I opened two after that. So number three. So, number one is I was familiar with the market. But here, number two was, was that I was a disaster capitalist, and I didn't flinch. And I raised money at a time when everybody else was holding it. Number three, every time that I've opened a restaurant, it's been after I've usually generally after I've made a really long, extensive trip, which are my own ways of collecting ideas and doing that. And this one is the only the only ones I didn't do that. Yeah, before my first business. My first business when I was 18, I did a bike trip across the US. Before my second, I've been going back and forth to Europe a while, but I went to the Middle East for eight months. And then my third business, I went to South America and did a bike tour for 5,000 miles to 14 countries for eight months. And then a fifth business, which is this, I didn't. I just knew it was 9/11 so I guess that was the travel. So that psychological travel of 9/11. And then my six business I went around the
world, I went to 25 countries. I got my seventh business. I went to Scandinavia; I did a bike trip from above the Arctic Circle back down to Europe. And then the other one that went up to the lower part of Europe. I always connect up with Copenhagen. So yeah, I have less conventional reasons to make a business move mine usually come after, after a long trip. And I recommend that. Like, if you want to decide where you're going, are you guys in graduate school oh you are seniors, right?

IW: Yep, we are seniors

CB: As seniors in between grad school, try to find a way where you can live outside your comfort zone. And where you can travel, even if it's going to that one spot, let's say was just in the Pyrenees in Spain and get to know it. I think what you need to do to be successful in both career and justice type stuff, is to live outside your comfort zone for a while. Be the other? Yeah, see it. That's why I like seeing what you do as the from the customer's perspective. And then suddenly, it's not work, you're not answering to your accountant. Like how much stuff costs and what the numbers are you are seeing it from a customer's perspective because you've been that other. Yeah. Okay, next question.

IW: So what would you say your favorite part about having a restaurant on Willy Street is?

CB: One, I enjoyed the fact that I'm always right next to a grocery store. Because being a restaurant, if you're going to open an independent restaurant where you don't have food delivered at semi-trucks with a huge bunch of coolers, but you're making food every day. We have got to run to the grocery store when we need it. And we're good at guessing but try to guess what we used to be doing the pre COVID. We're doing 1500 people a week. So you guess how 1500 people are going to eat 20 different dishes, plus our brunch stuff on the weekend right? To get to 100 possible choices. Now it's going to be pretty unlikely that all 1700 are going to have our burger. Yeah, or that all 1500 are going to come down to like eating any particular dish. But just the chemistry you're going to run out of some little element or something. So I always want to, I like to have resources around me. Here's the other things. This is a factory, this is a living room, there's are all these things that need to be fixed and change all the time. Willy street also has a hardware store, we have a family run Ace Hardware, I can walk to a grocery store and I can walk to a hardware store. And there's a there's a SRA tailoring that does some sewing stuff for us. And see the thing is, Willy street is particularly resilient, you don't see businesses turnover often here. Because we have a lot of these other complimentary businesses it makes willy street really effective. And complimentary retail also can be another type of independent restaurant that appeals to a to a different group of people. Like we got Baraka across the street, it's East African food restaurant, right. And you know what 20% of those people on a different day would come and eat, you know, maybe 50%, right. So they're putting out all there, you know, their marketing into the world and bringing them there. And they do well but every person going to that restaurant sees me here. That's why I think complementary retail is one of the most important things for small independent businesses, retail needs retail. You want to have the other retail to be different enough and similar enough to draw people, then the sum of all you that you independently draw can be shared with that other group. The beauty is restaurants have food and people like to eat, people have 365
days, they have to eat. And you know, like a regular diner goes out once or twice a week, two, three times if they don't want to go to the same place every day. But if they're always coming, and they know where to park, they know the vibe of the Street. So the complimentary retail is important here. There's no right or wrong answer to this stuff. And sometimes it takes me kind of saying it to realize what were the real motivations.

IW: So how would you say your experience on Willy Street has been so far? This question is quite open-ended on purpose.

CB: It's been, it's been very good to excellent. And during COVID it's been horrible. Because one, we have a park full of tents over here of homeless people that routinely make laps through, like, all day, every day, all the time. And we had a lot of protests because Willy street had the Tony Robinson killing a block away, we had 11 nights where we had the whole street shut down when we were only open for five hours a day. So I had didn't have access to the street, nobody could come by car or not. The other thing to note is we went through a whole well we went through the shootings. Those shootings, the two major shootings near here, depressed the sales and the vibe of the neighborhood. And we had two huge street reconstruction projects Willy street got reconstructed and Jennifer street behind us with few street which is our side street to two different summers. We went for six months where we were an island in the construction zone. So those things are like if you're just getting on your feet as a business, a restaurant that needs a lot of like unique visits, you do not want to be opening just before a major road construction thing, and it's so important that I would advise anybody that was going to open a small independent business to see what the scheduled major construction is like. If the, you know, if I had opened the year before the Willy St. sewer lines were replaced, and this was dug down to this was 10 foot deep. There's a 10-foot-deep hole right up my front door. Here complete Island.

It would have been very bad for us. Fortunately I had been in business for about 14/15 years by then so that people are like, yeah, we'll get to the Weary and I mean, two road constructions, two shootings and then this past eight, nine months since COVID and the dumping of like, just a lot of the city's problems on this neighborhood. The street has like four rehab centers Riverview group, the loop house, I mean, within four blocks of here, there's four things and it's not like I'm not empathetic to them. I do as much as anybody to try to be supportive to people at risk in the neighborhood. But you have to think about the business I had 40 employees and now I am at 12. You know, those people's livelihoods are at risk if I can't maintain some activity here. During the protests I had to police this corner. We had no police support whatsoever. In May, June, July, August. I had these doors barricaded. I sat protecting my windows like until four in the morning at least five or six nights this summer. So yeah, it hasn't been rosy the whole time.

IW: That's really interesting. So, this is kind of similar, but how do you think Weary Traveler fits into the Willy street dynamic?

CB: Which part of it that the social dynamic? We're entertainers every day, and Willy Street, got swept up into a every weekend festival for the past several years. And they actually became a challenge to those of us that had to open our doors every day to be food and beverage and music. You know, like, the entertainers. This goes back to the other question but the guy over there owns cafe coda, which is a jazz club, which
is a perfect, perfect balance. Like I walked out to say hi. They don't serve food. They serve jazz, right? So he has a live show at 10 o'clock. And nine o'clock, and they come here at 7:30 and yeah, dinner, you know, 50 bucks, 100 bucks, going out to dinner. And then they go over there. That's the chemistry that you need in small business. That's, that's one of the best forms of complimentary business. How do I fit into this, this thing? That is that? Why we are the living room of the neighborhood. We're the place where people come when they don't know what they want. When they don't have a plan. And it's always here, it's not the big time but a good time for games or chess. People come in and talk politics and you know a lot of a lot of things that have happened in the neighborhood started here as ideas. This is a little bit of an Idea Factory again and we keep everything simple and fair. We make our food from scratch; we have a bakery in the basement. We make our sauces from scratch, or we use a lot of like locally sourced food as much as possible. Basically, because I know that I, I've turned farmers into my customers, and they come to town and they come to eat. If I bought it from, you know, food from big companies like Dole or Global national, like if there's some foodborne illness or something, which in this hypochondriac world, sorry, you guys have to inherit such as it hasn't always been like this where everything is preventative. You know, we're not, you don't need to have some proper, prophylactic like relationship to the whole world. We buy small and independent, because it's just not the general practice. But there is no one size fits all to try to feed 1500 people a week. We make pretty decent money. So that's how we fit into the neighborhood is the neighborhood. Yeah, we're we're the neighborhood living room.

IW: This kind of moves off of that, but do you think that your restaurant kind of reflects the really street vibe of the neighborhood?

I mean this was originally a hippy neighborhood and you can see this on the walls. The iconoclast elctic left-wing neighborhood, you can find that all in the walls. Yeah. You know, there are nods to gay culture. If you were to look around, you would see Andy Warhol on the wall a nod to Asian culture. There are photos of this building from over 100 years ago. Many of the paintings on the walls are commissions from people in the neighborhood. Just sitting in this one spot I can see 22 photos that reflect this neighborhood.

IW: Did you collect all of this art at once or did it just start one by one?

CB: Well, I started when I first opened, I bought a bunch of art to add to the feel of the restaurant. I bought a bunch of artwork from antique stores and stuff. And then over the last 19 years, I've just started putting up things that I was given or collected. But everything that I added, added a connection to the neighborhood. Almost every single piece that I've added has been either from someone from the neighborhood who painted it or took the picture or older pictures.

AH: That's really awesome.

CB: Yeah, and on the other side, there's even more. So there's 40 there's at least 40 pieces of independent art. One of my latest big addition is a mushroom by the door, it is made from glass and translucent, so it glows during the day. That's a local artist. He mostly works for Judy Wagner from Epic, but she's a billionaire and I'm not but I guess we have similar taste.
IW: So you have already sort of answered this one but how long have you lived in this area and if you are uncomfortable with the question you don’t have to answer.

CB: I grew up in the county probably my first 18 years. And then for last 30 years have been living in this neighborhood. I've watched people's kids be born and raised and graduate from college and stuff.

IW: And then would you say most of your employees also live in the neighborhood?

CB: A little bit less as rent prices are getting more and more expensive but still most do.

IW: Moving on to the next section of questions, do you have lots of people that come in as regulars?

CB: Absolutely, absolutely our regulars are keeping us open right now. I'm not doing it for the general public. COVID has all these different rules to it that pre COVID did not so it seems like there are two answers to all of these questions.

IW: Definitely there is a pre and post covid answer for everything. Why do you think regulars keep coming back? What makes people want to come back to your restaurant?

CB: Well because it's what they used to do at home. But now they do here. Sit down around a meal at a table with friends or family. Play board games, listen and talk to one another for a long time. The number one thing that happens here is conversation and we have no TVs no inside advertising because we want to foster conversation. We have lots of eye-catching things on the walls to foster conversation and to help you out but no TVs and things that can distract from conversation. But you can come in here, especially like pre COVID and have every seat filled with almost everyone in conversation. And that has become so rare in other restaurants. They come here for conversation and the then we can provide them the food and beverage, you know get to throw a couple beers into somebody on a Friday, and all of a sudden, they just get a little more relaxed, a little more talkative, and then they're talking to the whole room. But we don't have any of these handicaps to conversation like TVs flashing. I don’t understand TVs in restaurants, what is that? What is the psychology behind that? You know, I mean it is the new fireplace. But uh I can’t understand how a place turns on all their TVs, and has just nonsense just traveling, it's, it's a sign of like, of loneliness in our culture, someone comes in and they don't, they would rather just stare at a TV without the sound playing something they're not interested in, then to strike up a conversation with one another. And I can see #METOO, makes it difficult for men and women to talk at a bar anymore. Because of all the sort of written rules and everything. So generally, what you see in those other bars is people come in, and they just stare at the TV because they can't talk to one another. But here that is not the rule. And that's like one of the main reasons people come here, it is a social place that is not dominated by TV. And by a glowing screen.

IW: Moving on to the next question, what changes have you witnessed within the neighborhood since you open the restaurant here? I know you said it's getting more expensive and gentrified.

CB: yeah, the buy in to live here is high and the rents have gone up a lot. And a stability has been created but there's also less of the freaky funky part of the neighborhood that people love about this area. The number of
street people has gone up. Because that's what happens when you have a disparity of wealth. So there's more desperately poor people, and many qualified people moving into the neighborhood. And so you there's a diversity of housing choices that wasn't here before, 20 years ago, a 10-story building two blocks away didn't exist. High density housing has been one of the main changes. And whereas before we had like these, three level apartment buildings which were the high-density housing for this neighborhood. The rest of the housing are single family homes that were turned into multi units in the 60s 70s and 80s. And now though, those have been turned back into single family homes as the property values went up, and it became this desirable neighborhood. The other one is that I noticed was, you know, up until COVID, the areas seems to have become a summer festival ground during the summer. There were too many, almost every weekend from Memorial Day until Labor Day. It's a little bit annoying to actually live here. Yeah, but I move around a lot as well. I obviously travel. Yeah, I think it depends on what you consider a country, but I've been to like 70 countries.

AH: Wow that’s awesome.

CB: It takes a lifetime to go 70 countries, you can’t travel that much as a kid unless you are a diplomat’s kid or something. But there is lots of time for you guys to travel.

IW: This isn’t one of our official questions but how old were you when you first started going on these big trips?

CB: My dad knew how to fly so we flew private, but I never flew on a commercial flight until I was 19. But I crossed the country by bicycle before I ever took a commercial Flight. And you know, when you asked me that I just realized that I had rode across the road from here, up to Maine and then down the east coast to New Jersey when I was 18 years old or 17 just turning 18, I turned 18 just when I was going on this trip, and then yeah, and I never flew in a commercial flight until I was 19. So like a year and a half later, I flew my first commercial flight to New York. Yeah, I lucked out a lot. I lived in Europe every summer in college one semester I lived in England. But I lived every summer of college in Europe. And then one of them I stayed out in London for the fall. And then as soon as I got out of college at 24, I was able to travel around eastern Europe and see some of the Yugoslav states without a visa. No one was going to Turkey back then and I had a great time. In 2018 I did a bike trip across America. And then I went to British Columbia and the Canadian rockeries to ski. I traveled in the Middle East for like a long time went to like places like Jerusalem. So my 5-year trips have sort of become a joke, I need to reevaluate mu life every 5 years to make sure I am still doing what I want.

IW: Are you involved with any of the annual neighborhood events such as the Neighborhood yard sale (June), Waterfront Festival (June), La Fete de Marquette (July), Orton Park Festival (August), Willy Street Fair (September), or the Marquette Neighborhood Association Meetings?

CB: Ah, I used to support them all the time. But they became tedious. Unfortunately the American psyche has this no off switch to which makes bigger better and it started as a neighborhood festival which is ok but is a successful neighborhood more successful if it has 1000 people or 10,000 people? People think 10,000 is more successful but bigger isn’t always better. The dollars made by venders may be higher but it’s no longer a neighborhood festival and we're just the
festival grounds. They have got so big like 25,000 people coming through the neighborhood on the big days of the Fed to Marquette and it’s just not a neighborhood festival. It’s a festival particular to this neighborhood but it’s not for the neighborhood. Real neighborhood places like Weary Traveler are your go to places from 11:30 until midnight every day of the week that's we actually serve the neighborhood. That's all I can really say not really big fan I think I think it's more important that we have an Ace Hardware store with a really dedicated family that runs it then then that we have a big festival.

IW: Is there a specific menu item from your restaurant that you think embodies the Willy street community to you and why?

CH: It is the juxtaposition of a tanka tofu with a carne asada with a Hungarian goulash and a burger. It is food favorites from all over the world and because Madison is a university town and a port city for intelligence, we get to bring in smart people from all over the world who have eaten all different types of food. The beauty of our menu is not a single item but the juxtaposition of completely different recipes and food sources. We can do that because the 6,700 people that live in this neighborhood it is really a pretty integrated neighborhood racially and socio economically. Middle class white people from the neighborhood love Asian food obviously (because of all the Asian restaurants on Willy Street). For us at the Weary Traveler a single dish does not define the ethos of the neighborhood but the fact that it's next to a carne asada and Mexican people come to eat our carne asada because it's that good, but the fact is that we can do that, and we didn't have to pitch a full Mexican menu. I've actually experienced most of the menu items in their respective countries. If you go any place in Thailand, you'll see a Tom Ku Tofu curry on the menu, if you go to any restaurant in Mexico, you're going to have a carne asada, if you went to a traditional restaurant in Hungary, I've been to Budapest three different times over 10 years and there are less and less traditional restaurants, but you can still find a Hungarian goulash.

IW: Would you say that you put your own spin on these menu items or are they mostly traditional dishes?

CB: Travel to Costa Brava in Spain and in every single town they serve paella, but each village does it a little bit differently. Some have chicken some don't some have mussels some have they basically all use saffron thread in rice. What I'm saying is authenticity of traditional dishes vary with whatever grandma’s table you're sitting at and likewise ours has its own user variation, but it isn't any less authentic than what I found by having like Hungarian goulash and one restaurant or another restaurant or at somebody's home. In other words there are slight variations and as long as you play by the rules and use the things that you absolutely have to have like Hungarian paprika in Goulash, a Hungarian will dismiss any goulash that doesn't have. We play by the rules of a dish. We don't pull it off the Internet and then just do an approximation of it. For one dish our chef had a friend who was teaching over in Sri Lanka and we paid him his salary to go learn how to cook those types of dishes and now we have them on out menu. Most of the things on the menu are well vetted versions of favorites from around the world. We started this concept since we opened, and it wasn’t until 2010/15 that the term gastropub got popular. It was funny because people were tapping what we had been doing for so many years before. I was fine with this.
because I have been in fine dining for longer than 12 years, before I opened this I was in fine dining and a James beard nominated number one restaurant in Wisconsin for three years.

IW: Do you have any restaurants other than the Weary Traveler that are open right now?

CB: Not really no, I sold a lot of my shares to other places to focus mostly on this one and to spend more time doing things I love. There was one place I had where we never advertised, it's totally underground you can only find it probably by Googling it or hearing about it. But it was next to the Great Dane downtown by the square it's not under normal circumstances now because yeah, I made it my underground restaurant. I was the first guy to put up a DJ booth in the dining room, I saw it over Taiwan. If you have ever heard of barracks I started out with my brother and then I sold out to his brother-in-law. We grind coffee for the University. I have given a lot up recently, but I wouldn’t keep this place around for as long as I have (19 years and 10 months) if I want making good money.

IW: How do customers typically use your space (quick in and out, do people come and stay, is it a popular location for specific events?)

CB: The number one thing this is used for is people getting together to share stories and talk and we serve them. This is a place where people get together with your colleagues after work, the co-op grocery store deli counter workers come down and they have their thing, Broom Street theater actors come after play practice.

IW: Is this something that you had to work at intentionally to create this environment or did it happen naturally?

CB: I would say that it is a little bit of both. We created the space and then people used it naturally. By omitting the TV’s, by hiding inside advertising. The layout of the restaurant has been the same since I started but we added a whole parking lot of chairs. Post Covid, speaking of the layout we opened the parking lot for seating and that is something that I realized we probably should have done way sooner. We did over 200,000 bucks from the sales in the parking lot last summer I would have done that every summer if I had known. I would much rather do that then have a festival. The Festivals are hard on the restaurants because they make them want to expand but they do this the wrong way. When restaurants are really busy, they expand and expand but they don't expand the kitchen to match the expansion of the restaurant and ultimately, they kill themselves off by like you know just giving poor food service. It becomes harder to predict how much food to purchase, it’s just expanding without thinking. The biggest significant change was adding the parking lot out back as a dining area. Actually to tell you the truth from when I opened, I just kept shoving more and more chairs and tables in the space until it was just elbowed to elbow that's how it changed now. But you know what really impacted the use of the space? The smoking bans. I probably added 15% more tables and chairs when the smoking ban went through. After the ban you were serving the very next table available, you weren’t serving the next smoking/nonsmoking table available. Madison went July of 2005 nonsmoking and in 2007 the entire state did. Sometimes you want the state to mandate stuff so that you don’t have to be the one policing them. Before the smoking ban it was hard because
I was the one who had to mandate where people could smoke or not while I wasn’t making any money off of that at all. After the ban we became more about food and less about live music because we realized we had more tables open. Just to make sure you understand the impact the ban had imagine that you're a group of three there's just a few of the tables that you can't get three people around, so the very next table was always available. But half the restaurant was smoking, and the other half was not. So you wouldn’t be seated even if there were 5 empty tables on the smoking side. We would have open tables on busy nights just because of the ban. Our sales went up 15% after the smoking ban because we were able to utilize the entire restaurant. I didn’t make any money off people smoking but I had to mandate it. This is actually kind of similar to the COVID regulations. I don’t get paid to tell people where they can sit, that they need a mask, how long they can stay just like how I don’t get paid to change ash trays. I have to do all of this just to sell my food. But if you don’t do these things, they will bring in no money.

But now this is one of the darkest eras businesswise, I think a lot of people have gotten Covid Cautious and are trying to quarantine before seeing family so this will probably cost me $3,000 personally. Think about what your rent is for your apartment, I pay that out of pocket to be open when it is this slow every single week. But I’m a capitalist so. I take the hit.

IW: Thank you again so much those are all of our main questions.

CB: Have you talked to any other places?

IW: yep, we have talked to Ha Long Bay and we tried to talk to Mickies, but it seems like they have closed for winter.

CB: That is great about Ha Long Bay, yeah, I know the owner of Mickies is having a really tough time right now. Even on a Monday night I would be ¾ full right now and I would definitely be ¾ full in November and defiantly the couple days before thanksgiving. So what is the story at UW? You guys are all online, now right?

IW: Yep, we both have been mostly online and will be online till then.

CB: Well make sure you guys eat good food. Wash hands, wear mask, eat good healthy food. The messaging has been lacking in the food area. An organism without good food cannot survive. The other things won’t make any difference if you aren’t eating good healthy food. That’s one of my reasons for staying open. I serve rich nutritious food that a lot of people aren’t getting, and the community relies on me for that. I have a little bit of a background in nutrition. A year ago I trained for the US national championship in bike racing and I made the front line, so I know a lot about food, and I don’t want to leave my community abandoned. We also have to remember the social aspect. Life is meaningless without some sort of social connection. I saw what happened after we were closed for three months and it looked like we lived in a thugged up ghetto and it finally toned down.

IW: Well this has been extremely informative and will be great information for our project, so we just wanted to say thank you again.

AH: Yes, this has been super helpful.

CB: Yep, and make sure you put in there that we have always been a place where women feel safe and comfortable. The fact
that women feel safe here has without a
doubt helped us. If you look at some of the
other bars around here, they are not places
where women always feel safe. Here we
don’t allow women to be harassed. And the
first couple years we had to throw tons of
people out but slowly after the first 2 years it
became known that that type of behavior
was not permitted. We are a place where
women come in groups, alone, or to meet up
with friends and they feel safe. We also
don’t do drink specials so that encourages a
safer environment. We have specialty drinks
that we make but we don’t have drink
specials. There’s a difference between a
cocktail and a vodka cranberry 3 for the
price of 1.

IW: That’s interesting though that you had
to make that choice so early on

CB: yeah, I mean the first couple months the
corner was full of people that we had kicked
out. There we so many people that would
bounce in and out of bars and we soon
became the go to place for women. My
thinking not in a taudry way was that if the
women were going to go here the guys were
going to come. And it actually worked. You
know, the zip code next to us has the highest
percentage of lesbian women in the country
and they all come here, and it is great. This
is the free house; people speak their mind
and I like to as well. But good luck with the
rest of your project. Hope to see you next
semester.

IW and AH: Well thank you again so much
we really appreciate you taking the time to
talk to us.