**Applied Data Science Capstone Project**

**The Third Place**

Assessing the Impact of Community Public Venues

On Individual Life Satisfaction

1. **Introduction**

The “Third Place” is a term referring to social environments that are distinct from an individual’s home (“First Place”) and work environment (“Second Place”). Examples of Third Places shown below correspond very closely with venue categories in the Foursquare database.

Examples of Third Places:

* Cafes, restaurants, pubs, coffee houses
* Parks and other outdoor recreational areas
* Indoor recreational areas such as arcades
* Churches
* Schools, libraries
* Social and community centers

The “Third Place” concept was originally proposed by sociologist Ray Oldenburg in 1991. Oldenburg proposed that Third Places were critical for active civic engagement and effective democratic governance, and function as anchors of community life by facilitating positive social interactions and a “sense of belonging”. The Third Place concept has been widely embraced and developed since it’s introduction by business, local government, urban planners, architects and designers, and social policy advocates.

1. **Problem Statement**

The value of Third Places as an integral component of strong and active communities where members have a shared sense of pride and commitment is well documented.

Life Satisfaction or Quality of Life measurements are typically quantitative by design, and can fail to consider broader measures – often more subjective - which can be equally important indicators of overall social and individual “well-being”, attributes favorably enforced by Third Places.

This analysis proposes to determine if data on public and social venues (Third Places) for a sample of communities can be correlated to more conventional measures of Life Quality or Satisfaction, thereby providing additional depth and insight to assessments of “well-being”.

1. **Background**

The Third Place concept has received considerable attention from academia, business, and governance since first introduced by Oldenburg. The attributes of Third Places are generally summarized as follows:

* Neutral space – no prerequisites on economic or social status
* Accessibility – are inclusive, and readily assessable
* Accommodating – provide for needs of occupants
* Regulars – regular occupants who set the mood and characteristics
* Low Profile – not extravagant or pretentious, but accepting
* Conversation – the primary activity, although not the only activity
* Atmosphere – typically home-like exhibiting warmth, acceptance and belonging

1. **Interest**

The value of increased understanding of how Third Places contribute to individual and community well-being is best illustrated by current emphasis on this topic from a variety of interests, noted in the following excerpts:

**Business** - Long-time CEO Howard Schultz used the concept (Third Place) as a cornerstone in the creation of Starbucks' image of a coffee chain where people are willing to pay a bit more for coffee because of the cache and potential connection that comes with the purchase.

**Workplace** - Recently, Google opened its own coffee shop branded The Coffee Lab on its campus in Mountainview, Calif. The Coffee Lab is evidence of how organizations are trying to provide employees with access to environments that offer some of the relaxed amenities of home, dubbed the “first place” by sociologist Ray Oldenburg, and the energy of a corner coffee shop—an example of a “third place.” Leading organizations are blending these concepts at work, the “second place.” Google’s solution provides workers with the vibe they are craving from the workplace.

**Architecture** - I believe architecture can change people’s lives and change them for the better …. and also instill a sense of pride in one’s community. Civic buildings and public buildings go a long way to represent who we are. They should be commensurate with our pride of place.

**Urban Planning** – “ … by investing in space that welcomes all people and fosters socioeconomic mixing—just like Oldenburg’s third place philosophy—cities can reverse social and economic fragmentation, nurture more trust and inclusion among residents, and increase environmental sustainability”.

**Social Policy** - “Racial equity and inclusion is the key to building successful, thriving cities and the private sector plays a critical role,” Sarah Treuhaft, senior director of PolicyLink, an organization working to advance racial and economic equity, tells Curbed. “Turning their businesses into welcoming ‘third places’ for all people, not only paying customers, is a positive step forward

**Governance** - Community centers, libraries, neighborhood parks and playgrounds, and arts centers are just a sampling of the potential for public third places. Health care clinics and hospitals could become more community oriented—a trend that’s in its nascent stages. Free spaces can facilitate activism and democratic participation so residents and community-based organizations can engage in community planning, development, organizing, and policy-change efforts.

Sources and accreditation for the excerpts above will be provided in the final report draft.