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21 December 2019

Sugar Land Town Centre

Every city of notable size will have an epitome district about which Grady Clay says, “places where one may observe formal and informal rituals, symbolic activities” (in Clay). In other words, this place will be able to represent the essence of the city and by visiting this place one can feel the spirit of its culture and populace. For the city of Sugar Land, the Sugar Land Town Square will be the best candidate for the title of the epitome district. It is bound by Southwest Freeway on the north, Highway-6 on the east and Town Centre Boulevard on the south. Being adjacent to the intersection of the two major highways i.e. Highway-6 and Southwest Freeway, makes the location particularly accessible from almost all the neighborhoods of Sugar Land. The city hall of Sugar Land is situated here along with a bunch of shopping complexes and diners. Although there are very few residential areas in the immediate vicinity, Sugar Land Town Square is always filled with life and joy, particularly during evenings and festivals. Around the time of Christmas and new year one can go here with friends and family to enjoy the various performances and events that take place here almost on a daily basis. Considering the city of Sugar Land is one of the most ethnically diverse in United States and the Sugar Land Town Centre is location of all its cultural activity, makes it a very interesting place to study.

Since there is a dearth of usable land at the location of Sugar Land Town Square, all of the available land had to be very efficiently utilized. Most of it is occupied by businesses ranging

from clothing shops and restaurants to corporate headquarters. The three big structures here are the City Hall, the City Plaza Condominiums and the Marriott Hotel and Conference Center. There are three big parking spots here which use the major share of the remaining area. The city walk passes through the middle and divides it into a northern and a southern section and could be considered the Political Venturi of this area as defined by Grady Clay (in Clay). While going through the city walk, one sees mostly young professionals of very different backgrounds, races and nationalities going through their day which is representative of the general population of Sugar Land. One can also see many groups of young adults haunting the various eateries and bars on either side of the city walk because of its closeness to the Sugar Land campus of the University of Houston and Wharton County Junior College. Although some people may find the lack of grass and open areas to be somewhat unattractive, it is very reflective of the population of the city of Sugar Land which is very urbane itself. The eateries and the stores present here are specifically targeted at the local population and thus lead to a pleasant and enjoyable experience for the Sugar Land residents.

On a random evening, a person can go to the Sugar Land Town Center and participate in an ongoing fitness event or enjoy a band performing in front of the town hall or observe the lightening celebration depending on the time of year. Although town center looks the most vibrant and beautiful during the month of December because of Christmas and new year's celebrations, it is not unlively during the rest of the year. Owing to the diversity of the Sugar Land, there is always something going on at the Sugar Land Town Square, ranging from Diwali festivals celebrated by Hindu Indians to Indonesian festival organized by Indonesian American Chamber of Commerce. While hanging out at this place it is possible to get a feel of cultures of very distant countries and this makes it a very interesting place to anyone who likes to

experience new thing and explore other people's way of life. It gives the visitor a glimpse of remote places and cultures.

Works Cited

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4 January 2020

A Closer Look at Sugar Land Town Centre

Whenever a person visits a new place, there are some things that they tend to immediately notice about it, regardless of if they are paying close attention. These characteristics include the level of noise, the amount of greenery, the number of people and the physical structures etc. On the other hand, some characteristics are only observable after focused inspection of the environment at the location. The significance of these observations becomes apparent only on further introspection and analysis of the facts. Both kinds of observations are required to form a comprehensive and accurate picture of a location. When looking at Sugar Land Town Square, one of the first thing that would catch one's attention and that would come under our first category of observations is the well-organized layout of its elements and the lack of the nature. Another thing that a visitor would notice is the huge number of people haunting the numerous boutiques, bars and grills or walking on the beautifully paved walkways. Upon closer inspection of the various shops at the location and the people frequenting these shops, a careful observer can infer some conclusions about the inhabitants and the history of the city of Sugar Land.

On the first glance the Sugar Land Town Square looks like a well-balanced mix of quaint and modern. It is a perfect hybrid of a cultural hub and a business center. The streets and the walkway running through it are mostly paved with bricks instead of concrete and asphalt and are sidelined by tables and benches which gives the location an old school feel. Contrasting it are

interiors of the buildings of the City Hall, the Sugar Land Marriott and the Conference Center which are fairly modern and beautiful at the same time. Although the architecture of the buildings at the Town Square may seem historic, they are fairly new and thus have all the modern amenities. The streets intersect each other at right angles and most of the buildings and structures are equidistant from the streets and look fairly uniform. The color and trim on the outside of various structures and the lights on the streets and sideways are all in the same style. All of this points to careful planning and consideration before construction instead of a natural development. This becomes apparent when we look at the history of Sugar Land Town Square and realize that all of it was constructed very recently and after much deliberation. The idea of Sugar Land Town Square as the commercial and cultural center of the city was first suggested in 1996 and the development was finished at around 2000 (Dawson). These observations are consistent with the rest of the city of Sugar Land which itself is very well planned with most of areas recently developed. The majority of inhabitants of the city of Sugar Land are people who moved here sometime in the last three decades, either from the densely populated neighborhoods of the city of Houston or from other countries. Furthermore, by looking at the Town Square one can tell that a lot of resources went into its planning and development. It is reflective of the demographic of Sugar Land which is one of the most affluent cities of Texas.

Another thing that an observer would be quick to notice at the Sugar Land Town Square is the dearth of natural scenery. There are some trees along the sidewalks, but the majority of the greenery consists of potted plants in front of the various shops. The only unpaved ground to be found at the location are some patches of grass in front of the City Hall. The few trees that inhabit the Town Square are decorated with colorful lights most of the time, especially during the holidays. Although the lighting makes the trees and the whole surrounding look beautiful, it

takes away from their naturalness. There are hardly any birds to be seen in the skyline and one rarely sees a squirrel on the trees unlike in other locations in the city of Sugar Land which have an abundance of wildlife of small and medium statures including raccoons and possums. In similar vein, the sounds that a visitor hears at the Town Square are mostly artificial, including but not limited to the sound of music either from the performances and events in front of the City Hall or from the numerous speakers fitted along the sidewalks. Another common sound to be noticed here would be the sound of the traffic on the adjoining highways. The extant of organization in the street patterns and structure of buildings further reminds a visitor of the lack of nature. All of this is in accordance with the general population of the city of Sugar Land which is very urban and mostly consists of college educated professionals. Another factor that has contributed to lack of natural elements here is the scarcity of land at the location. Because of the accessibility of this location from the different neighborhoods of the city of Sugar Land, the land here is in very high demand. So, one can conclude that the lack of scenic beauty of the Town Square is because of a mix of necessity and choice.

If a visitor pays attention to the buildings surrounding them at the Sugar Land Town Square, they will quickly realize that most of its area is occupied by businesses and there are no residential units at this location. There are some office complexes and the businesses range from restaurants, bars, clothing stores and even includes a five-star hotel. The only major non-commercial building at the Town Square is the City Hall. Because of its accessibility, the Town Square is a prime location for businesses. Since the area was developed as a whole and very recently there are no structures remnant from the time before the development, as generally happens in the case of downtown areas of other cities which develop organically. The most common type of businesses at the Town Square by far are restaurants and bars. The restaurants

range from bistros, grills and fast-food centers to fancy diners serving a wide variety of foods.

On observing the shops and eateries at the Town Square and comparing them to others, one realizes that they are very diverse and caters to a very broad range of demographic. This is also reflective of the diversity in the city of Sugar Land. One can also see that the number of businesses that serves people in their leisure time is more than the office complexes and other types of businesses at the Town Square. This suggests that the primary goal in the development of the Sugar Land Town Square was the entertainment and enjoyment of the inhabitants of the city of Sugar Land.

All of the observations made so far proves that the Sugar Land Town Center can be considered the representation of the spirit of Sugar Land, which is urban, diverse, young and happy. It also shows that the city of Sugar Land still has a lot of scope to grow and expand both demographically and economically.

Works Cited

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Photo Portfolio

The Urban Celebration





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11 January 2020

The Urban Celebration

The experience of a person visiting the Sugar Land Town Square can be very different from other's depending upon when exactly they chose to visit it. Sugar Land Town Square is similar to an arena where events of very different tastes and types are hosted and depending on the event being performed when the visitor decided to come here and the visitor's personal preference, they can have the best time of their life or can be left utterly bored. There is almost no intrinsic attraction to the location itself. It is the people at the location and the activities they partake in that makes it so attractive. Since the Sugar Land Town Square is the most popular spot for organizing recreational events and activities in the city of Sugar Land, it is bound to be pleasing most of the times. Through the given photographic project, I intend to convey the spirit of celebration in the people of city of Sugar Land and provide an insight into their life. For this purpose, I have taken various photographs of the Sugar Land Town Center at different times.

The first two photographs are the only ones shot during the day. Although the photographs taken in the daylight look a lot better, I chose to include only two of them in the project because as it is apparent from the two photographs, the Sugar Land Town Square is pretty much devoid of life in the daylight. In fact, one of the reasons I chose these two photographs, is to emphasize the contrast at the location between an ordinary hot day when nothing is happening here and a pleasant Christmas evening. The first photograph also highlights another interesting thing that I noted about the location which is the absence of asphalt and

concrete. Instead the walkways and streets are mostly paved with bricks which looks much more refined and aesthetically pleasing. The second photograph shows the Sugar Land City hall with the Stephen F Austin monument in the front. The lack of people in these photographs can be attributed to the nature of demographic of the city of Sugar Land which mainly consist of working-class families. These two photographs are shot during the afternoon when most of the inhabitants of Sugar Land are occupied in their offices, homes or classrooms.

The next six photographs are shot on an evening during the Christmas holidays. In the third photograph we can see three trees whose stems are almost completely encompassed in Christmas lights and groups of people hanging out in the background. We can also see other decorative lights in the background. All of these have transformed the location from almost lifeless to full of life and joy. In the fourth photograph we can see a band performing in front of the townhall and a group of people enjoying their performance. The songs being played by the band are mostly Christmas songs as per the demands of the spectators. In the fifth photograph we see many families just sitting and enjoying the nice evening and each other's company. In the sixth photograph we see two children who are about to start playing catch with a bottle of water. In the seventh photograph we see a child playing with a fake Santa and his mother looking over him. In the eighth photograph we can see an extravagantly decorated Christmas tree being admired by a few people. One common theme in all these photographs is that the people populating most of them are young or middle aged. Sugar Land is one of the most preferred places in Texas to raise a family and thus most of the people in our photographs are here with their family. Another thing of note in the photographs is that the people in it are of very different ethnicities and races which is reflective of the diversity in the city of Sugar Land. One could also not help but notice the abundance of decorations and extravagance in these photographs which

can be attributed to the affluence and the love of celebration and festivals in the general population of Sugar Land.

The last two photographs are shot in the same evening after the celebrations have died down. The ninth photograph shows the empty chairs laying haphazardly when their occupants have left. An interesting thing to note in this photograph is the absence of litter despite the abundance of people who were here just a few hours ago. This points to the maturity and the presence of good social etiquette in the people of Sugar Land. The tenth photograph shows the smoke rising from a firecracker against the light of a streetlamp. This is despite of the ordinance that prohibits the use of firecrackers in the city of Sugar Land. It indicates that Sugar Land has its fair shares of renegades. In these photographs we see the Town Square reverting back to its initial lifeless state although it is barely past midnight. This again can be explained by the working-class nature of the majority of the population of Sugar Land which prefers to be back home in timely fashion.

Through the photographs in this project we get a glimpse in the life of an average person from the city of the Sugar Land. On analyzing these photographs, we can draw conclusions about how people in city of Sugar Land like to spend their free time, what activities they like to do for fun and specifically how they celebrate.