



Photo by Will Dickey Photography

**St. Augustine Views and Voices:
Identity, Environmental Change and Adaptation**
Final Report on Online & Phone Surveys
conducted by Flagler College
in collaboration with City of St. Augustine
November 2021 - January 2022

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Introduction

Between Nov. 19 and Dec. 17, 2021, an online survey was distributed to City of St. Augustine residents titled *St. Augustine Views: Identity, Environmental Change and Adaptation*. The purpose of the survey was to collect qualitative feedback on conceptions of a (place-based) St. Augustinian identity, gain historical/current knowledge from residents on observed/experienced environmental changes and impacts, gather perception levels regarding threat of climate change and adaptation and to provide Flagler College students with an opportunity to engage in qualitative research. The online study provided the foundation of an analysis conducted by the students for the January 2022 course, *Climate Change Archives: Stories of Place, Memory & Identity in St. Augustine*. As part of the two-week intensive course, students further investigated online data findings by conducting phone interviews between Jan. 6 to Jan. 9, 2022.

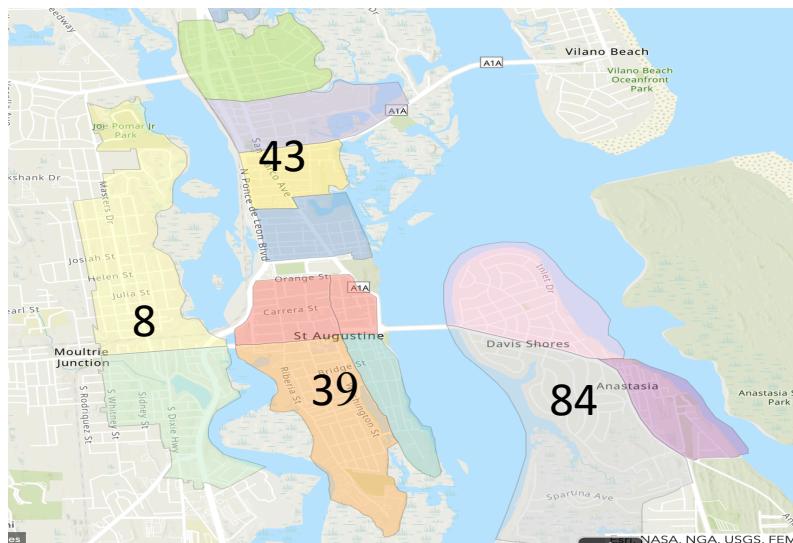
Notes on Survey Data

- A maximum of 176 respondents participated in the online survey
- Respondents could respond to as many/few of the prompts as they chose
- Responses were submitted anonymously
- Twenty residents participated in the phone surveys

Survey Prompt: Which neighborhood best describes where you live in the City of St. Augustine?

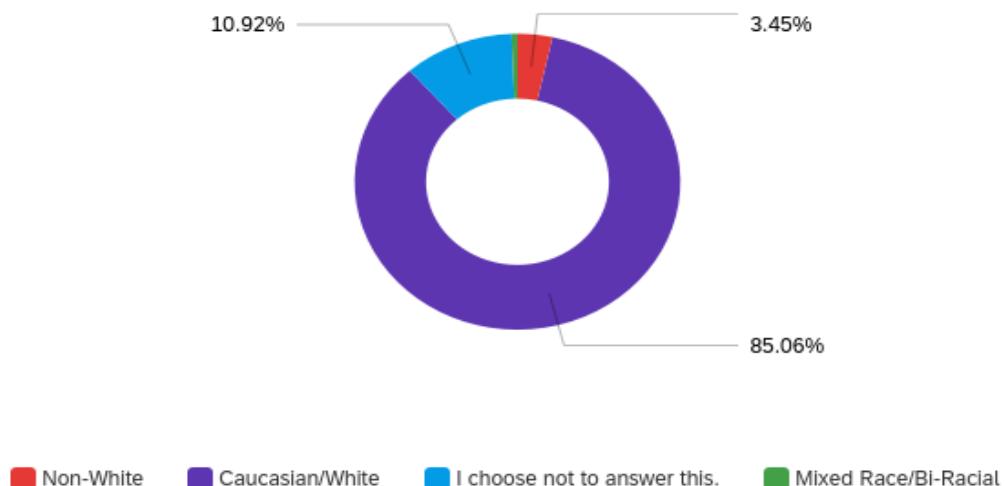
#	Field	Count
1	Downtown	21
2	Lincolnvile	18
3	Anastasia Island: Lighthouse Park	21
4	Anastasia Island: Davis Shores	27
5	Anastasia Island: Other	36
6	Oyster Creek	2
7	North City area	28
8	Ravenswood	6
9	Uptown	15
TOTAL		174

Respondent Clusters by Neighborhoods



Survey Prompt - Please select the category with which you most closely identify:

#	Field	Count
1	Caucasian/White	149
2	Non-White	6
3	Mixed Race/Bi-Racial	1
4	I choose not to answer this.	19
	Total	175



Survey Prompt - How many years (total) have you lived in the City of St. Augustine?

#	Field	Count
1	Downtown	21
2	Lincolnvile	18
3	Anastasia Island: Lighthouse Park	21
4	Anastasia Island: Davis Shores	27
5	Anastasia Island: Other	36
6	Oyster Creek	2
7	North City area	28
8	Ravenswood	6
9	Uptown	15
	Total Reporting	176

Insights: Longest-Residing Residents: Anastasia Island and North City
Newest Residents: Anastasia Island and Downtown

Survey Prompt - What is your annual household income?

#	Field	Count
1	\$0-\$25,000	8
2	\$26,000-\$45,000	16
3	\$46,000-\$60,000	12
4	\$61,000-\$80,000	23
5	\$81,000-\$100,000	17
6	\$101,000-\$120,000	17
7	\$121,000-plus	44
8	I choose not to answer this.	39
	Total Reporting	176

Survey Prompt - How has the environment, climate/geography, and the "sense of place" of St. Augustine shaped your identity as a St. Augustine resident?

Data analyzed and grouped into themes

Themes from Comments Fields

- Landmarks
- Quality of Life
- Experiences
- Sustainability
- Community
- Connection with land
- Freedom
- Growth concerns
- Mobility issues

Excerpt Quotes

“My identity is shaped by my love of the outdoors, in particular, it’s orientation to the ocean and natural habitat.”

“We fear flooding in our neighborhood.”

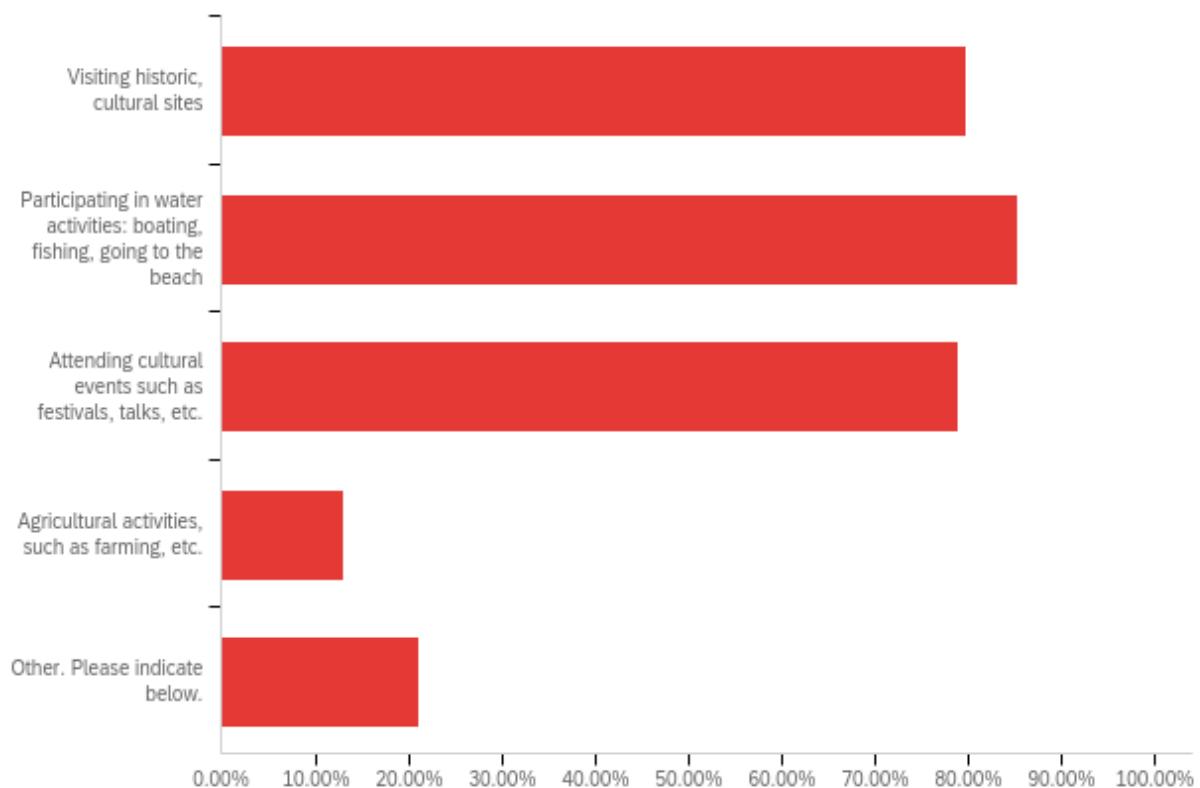
“Hideous, cheap, and ugly hotels have sprung up crowding the once open-air feeling.”

“Now I feel we are losing St. Augustine to flooding and we are planning to move away.”

“The influx of overdevelopment, traffic is shocking, and concerns me greatly in how it will negatively affect the environment and quality of life.”

“The worst part is all of the land lost. St. Augustine used to be an oasis surrounded by nature and now there’s almost no large tracts of land left unmolested from the human touch.”

Survey Prompt - Please select the activities that you participate in, in and around St. Augustine, that you feel strongly reflect a St. Augustine identity (check all that apply):



Respondents: 123

Choice Count (the number of actual selections made; respondents could choose all options: 342)

Themes from Comments Fields

Data analyzed and grouped into themes

- Visiting historical sites
- Local entertainment
- Outdoor recreation/water activities
- Community/cultural events
- Art appreciation

Excerpt Quotes

"All of the activities I choose are getting increasingly hard to do as the town is over loved and over promoted."

"St. Augustine is steeped in history and old-world charm."

"Great breweries and restaurants – they're probably here in part because of the lovely climate."

"St. Augustine has three parts to its identity: its tourism, the beach, and its historic relevance."

“I grew up surfing and riding bikes on the beach.”

For “Other Activities Not Listed”:

Q7 5 TEXT - Other. Please indicate below.



Words largest in size and more prominent indicate responses most often typed by respondents.

Related Phone Survey Prompt: What three physical/geographical places in St. Augustine are special to you? How do you engage with those places (activities you do there)? And what values or feelings do you attach to those places, and why?

Data analyzed and grouped into themes

	Activities	Meaning/Values Ascribed
Downtown	Historical sightseeing, walking, restaurants and entertainment	Social center, Representation of town history/heritage, desired aesthetic appeal
Bayfront	Running, biking, walking, sightseeing, working, entertainment	Family, aesthetic appreciation, hard work ethic
Lighthouse	Birdwatching, relaxing, boatwatching, community garden	Community symbolism, longstanding iconic structure
Beaches	Surfing, fishing, swimming, kayaking, paddleboarding, biking, relaxing, walking, reading, pets	Relaxation, outdoor appreciation, community symbolism

Survey Prompt - How would you describe your relationship to the land/water in St. Augustine? (Check all that apply.)

The land/water is for my benefit and I may use it/them as I see fit.	27
The land/water is a place of religious or spiritual connection for me.	38
The land/water is a fragile resource that I should try to protect.	99
The land/water is important to me because of my family ties here and my personal, ancestral history/stories that have happened here.	21
The land/water is the home of my community of people.	41
The land/water is a financial resource to me; in other words, I rely on it for financial gain.	2
Other ways to describe your relationship to the land/water? Please indicate below.	15

Respondents: 121

Choice Count: 243 (the number of actual selections made; respondents could choose all options)

Themes from Comments Field

Data analyzed and grouped into themes

- Land/water as fragile resource
- Land/water as subject of misuse/mismanagement
- Land/water as recreational resource
- Land/water as threat site

Excerpt Quotes

"We need to completely stop hardening of any shorelines."

"I love its beauty to kayak on or paddle board, I love to photograph or paint it, it gives me serenity."

"We are very respectful of the land and water and everything that lives in it."

"Being outdoors for gardening or walking is vital to my physical and mental health. I am respectful of this fragile piece of real estate we can call Saint Augustine and Florida."

Survey Prompt - Have you noticed any environmental/geographical changes - changes to the land, sea, or air - in St. Augustine since you moved here?

Yes: 90.16 %

No: 9.84%

Respondents: 122

Survey Prompt - Generally speaking, do these effects of environmental change—frequent/extreme natural disasters, flooding, hotter temperatures, saltwater intrusion and agricultural impacts—or others, impact your experience living in St. Augustine?

Yes: 82.64%

No: 17.36%

Respondents: 121

Survey Prompt - Select all the effects that impact your experience living in St. Augustine.

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Frequent/extreme natural disasters	16.53%	41
2	Flooding	36.69%	91
3	Hotter temperatures	17.74%	44
4	Saltwater intrusion	14.52%	36
5	Negative agricultural impacts	6.85%	17
6	Other: list below.	7.66%	19
Total		100%	248

Themes from Comments: Environmental Changes Observed and/or Experienced

Data analyzed and grouped into themes

- Sea level rise, flooding, beach erosion
- Temperature changes
- Frequent, intense storms
- Construction and development
- Tourism
- Invasive species
- Mobility issues

Excerpt Quotes

“My husband and I walked on St. Augustine beach today and loss of sand was enormous.

Flooding of roadways was the worse I have seen in the time I lived here.”

“The small-town atmosphere has changed since I first came here. The traffic increased and keeps me from participating and enjoying city activities.”

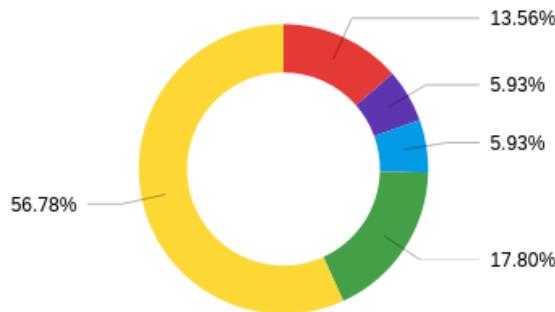
“20 years ago we would annually get at least two good freezes... now that too has changed and we have mangroves overtaking our salt marshes.”

“King tides and rising water threaten the history, livability and commerce of the city.”

“People moved here from the North to get away from the overcrowding and now we have become the same. The land is being destroyed by developers, scenic roads are no longer recognizable and it’s hard to enjoy the beaches and waterways because of overcrowding.”

Survey Prompt - Which statement best matches your feeling regarding the impacts of climate change to St. Augustine? Impacts of climate change to the area can include frequent/extreme natural disasters, flooding, hotter temperatures, saltwater intrusion and agricultural impacts, among others.

#	Answer	%	Count
1	1=I am not at all concerned about the impacts of climate change to St. Augustine	13.56%	16
2	2=I am a little concerned about the impacts of climate change to St. Augustine.	5.93%	7
3	3=I am somewhat concerned about the impacts of climate change to St. Augustine.	5.93%	7
4	4=I am more than somewhat concerned about the impacts of climate change to St. Augustine.	17.80%	21
5	5=I am very concerned about the impacts of climate change to St. Augustine.	56.78%	67
	Total	100%	118



- █ 1=I am not at all concerned about the impacts of climate change to St. Augustine
- █ 2=I am a little concerned about the impacts of climate change to St. Augustine.
- █ 3=I am somewhat concerned about the impacts of climate change to St. Augustine.
- █ 4=I am more than somewhat concerned about the impacts of climate change to St. Augustine.
- █ 5=I am very concerned about the impacts of climate change to St. Augustine.

More than Somewhat and Very = 88

Not at All = 16

Themes from Comments Field

Data analyzed and grouped into themes

- Rising water and flooding
- Future generations
- Retreat
- Economic concerns

Excerpt Quotes (Online Survey)

"I am very concerned about my disabled son who lives in the area and will be unable to leave or live after I am gone."

"I am concerned enough that I have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars raising my home to help mitigate rising water damage and extend my time living in the community."

"I am concerned about staying here due to climate change risk."

"Saint Augustine hasn't changed much or at all since I was a kid."

"Your questions imply I believe in climate change – I do not."

Excerpt Quotes (Phone Survey)

"I always wanted to be near water, but I never thought it would be a threat."

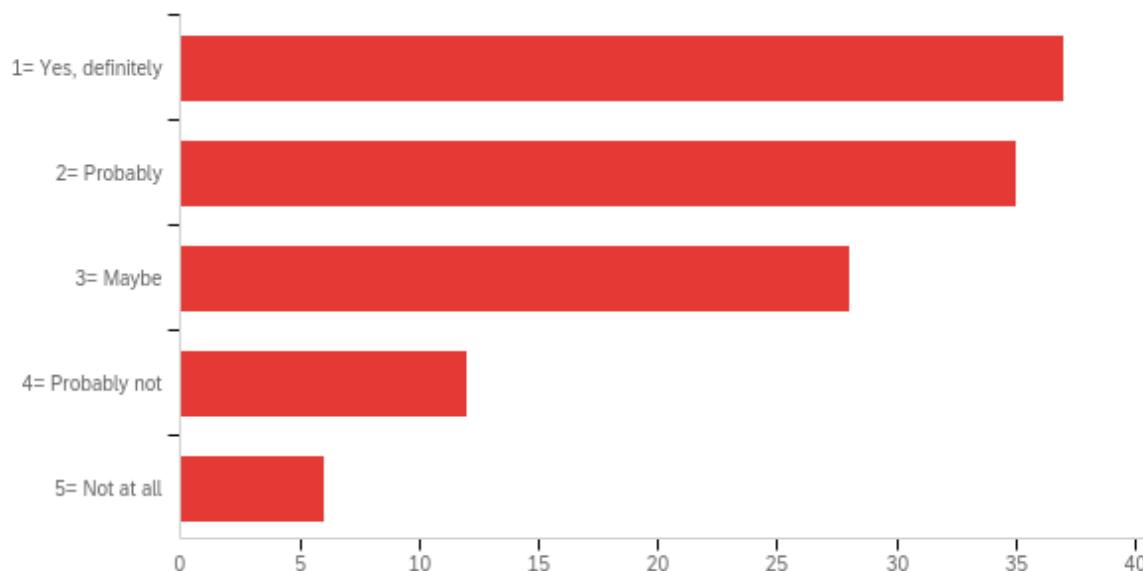
"I always thought this would be my home."

"I have the resources to stay here but it doesn't make sense to continue rebuilding homes."

"Mother Nature will continue to take over."

"How much time is reasonable to continue living here?"

Survey Prompt - Do you feel you have the resources (financial or otherwise) to remain in St. Augustine as the city adapts to the impacts of environmental change?

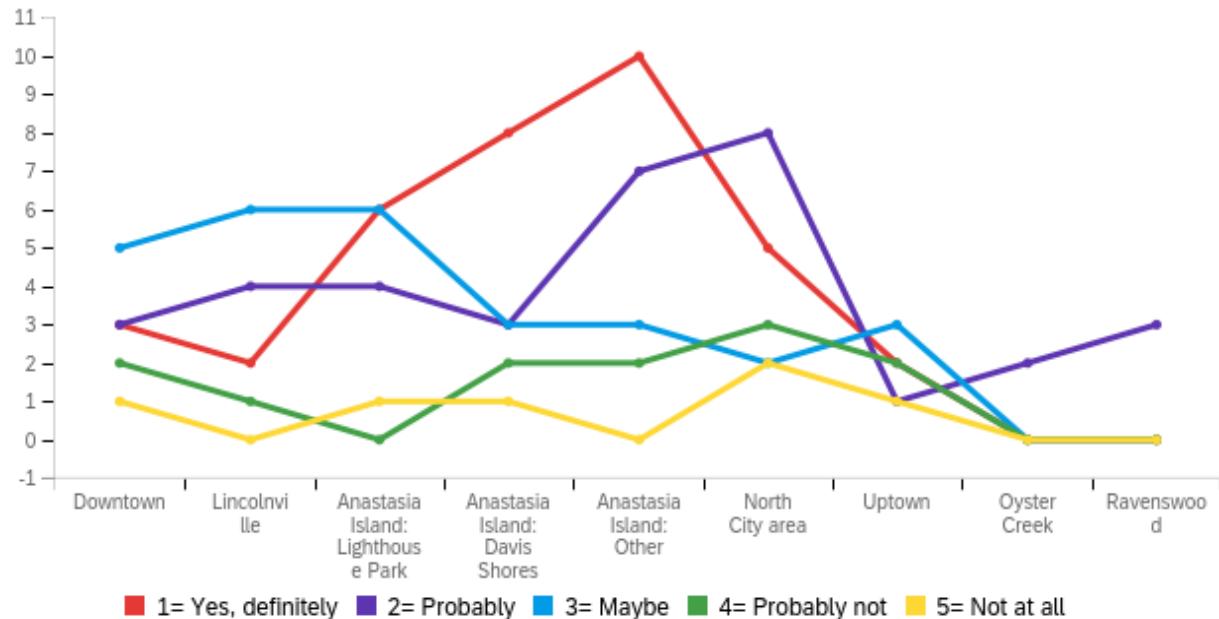


Probably/Yes, definitely= 72

Probably not/Not at all= 18

Total Reporting: 118

Adaptation Resources by Neighborhood



Excerpt Quotes: Perception and Adaptation

“Although I don’t want to leave St. Augustine, I am already thinking about moving before my house value goes down.”

“We have the resources to stay. We’ll have to raise our house in a few years, though.”

“Staying here means being tolerant of the nuisances.”

“I consider myself lucky to have the resources to stay. Adapting means raising homes and learning more about plants.”

“No, I don’t have the option to raise my house. I’m on a concrete slab.”

“I have the resources I need, but a lot of disadvantaged communities around here don’t.”

“I have a good income, job and business. I live in an historic building that cannot be raised. There are no resources for that.”

Survey Prompt - Do you personally know someone or others who had to or chose to move away from St. Augustine due to environmental change impacts (hurricane-related, flooding, rising temperatures, negative agricultural impacts, or other)?

Yes: 58.12%

No: 41.88%

Total Respondents: 117

Follow-up Survey Prompt - If yes, then approximately how many people? (Please count a family as "one.")

1-5 73.53%

6-10 14.71%

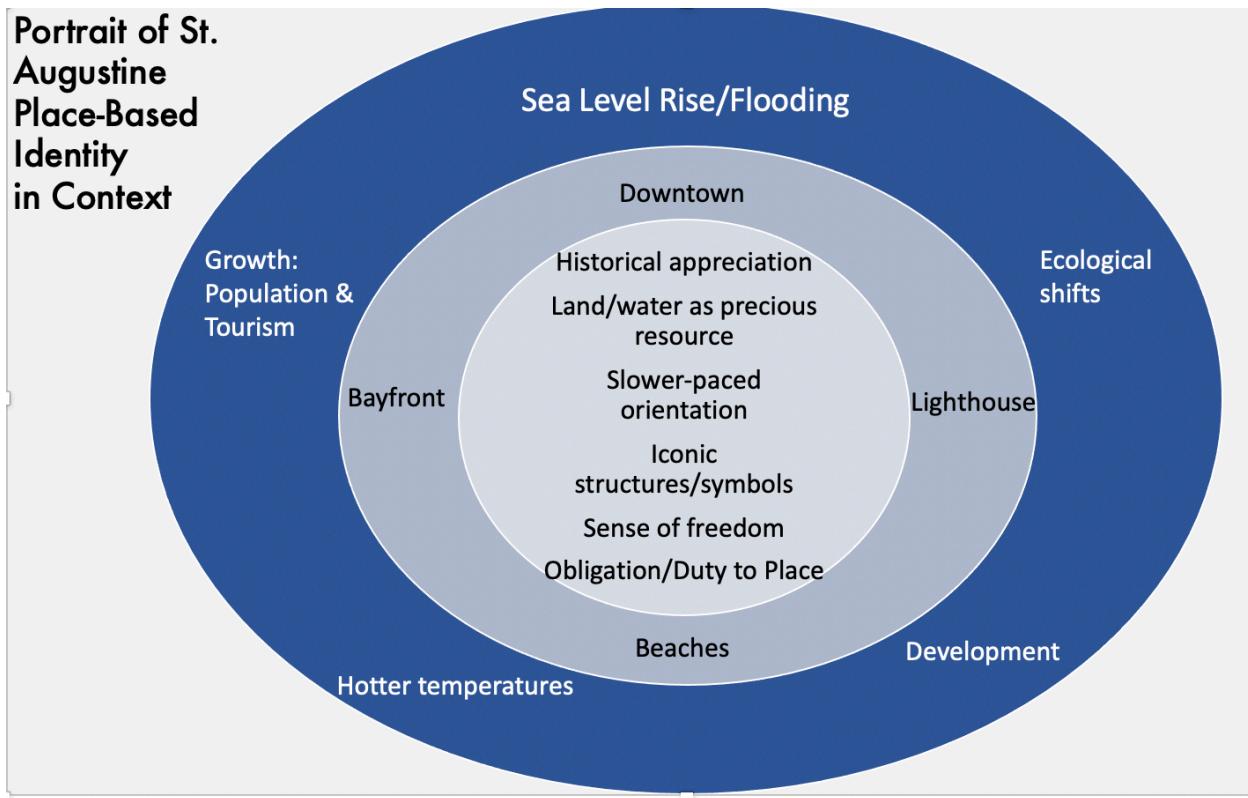
More than 10: 11.76%

Total Respondents: 68

Summary: Takeaways & Insights

- Most respondents (90% or 110/122 respondents) have noticed environmental/geographical changes to St. Augustine since residence began.
- “Flooding” was selected most often (91 count or selections) as the environmental effect experienced in St. Augustine, followed by hotter temperatures (44 count) frequent/extreme natural disasters (41 count).
- When respondents reported on observed/experienced environmental changes to St. Augustine within the survey’s open comment fields, 44 comments reflected themes beyond those focused on climate change and related to quality of life, including overdevelopment, population density, tourism, loss of land and cutting down of trees, excessive traffic, burdens on infrastructure and hotel proliferation.
- When respondents were asked to describe their relationship to land/water in St. Augustine, most (99 count or selections) selected “The land/water is a fragile resource that I should try to protect” followed by “The land/water is the home of my community of people” (41 count) and “The land/water is a place of religious or spiritual connection for me” (38 count).
- 75% of respondents (88/118) report that they are either “more than somewhat” or “very” concerned about climate change impacts to St. Augustine.
- According to survey respondents, the top places of cultural significance include: Downtown, Bayfront, Lighthouse and Beaches.
- 61% (72/118) report either “Probably” or “Yes, definitely” to the question, “Do you have the resources—financial or otherwise—to adapt to environmental change impacts?”
- Most respondents (58%) report that they know others who have moved due to environmental change impacts.

Data was analyzed utilizing qualitative research methods and from those findings emerged a portrait of St. Augustinian identity, in the context of environmental change impacts. See below.



Parting Thoughts: Intersection of Environmental Change and Cultural Identity

“Climate change, and adaptation to it, has significant cultural dimensions.”
— Geographer Carl Sauer

“We see and make landscapes as a result of our shared belief systems and ideologies. In this way, landscape is a cultural construct, a mirror of our memories and myths encoded with meanings which can be read and interpreted.”

“Cultural landscapes represent core values, critical to community cohesion and viability.”
—Dr. Kathryn Frank, Managing Coastal Systems in the Cultural Landscape