Preserving the Queen (City's) Crown Jewel:
Historic Preservation in Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine

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Preserving the Queen (City's) Crown Jewel: Historic Preservation in Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine

by Danny G. Klingler

Abstract

Over-the-Rhine is a nationally significant historic district in Cincinnati, Ohio, and one of the City's greatest assets. Despite its tremendous character and potential, for years the district has languished through disinvestment and neglect, resulting in substantial demolitions of the historic fabric. Without an intervention, demolition and insensitive new development will continue, and the opportunity to leverage Over-the-Rhine as a unique asset may be lost.

This thesis represents an attempt to identify the particular threats to the preservation of Over-the-Rhine and, through careful research and analysis, devise a plan that will maintain the district's historic integrity. The thesis begins by detailing the history and significance of Over-the-Rhine, and identifying the specific nature of the threat: demolition by neglect. Following a review of preservation literature, a targeting analysis is performed, resulting in the selection of three priority conservation areas in the district. Next, 7 relevant case studies are presented of buildings that were saved and rehabilitated despite being seriously neglected and "too far gone" in the eyes of many. From this research, it is concluded that: "too far gone" is an ambiguous term dependent on the motives of the building owner; the selection of engineers and contractors plays a crucial role in the feasibility of preservation; community members often provide the initial impetus for preservation; preserving severely damaged structures can be quite profitable; innovation is a key component in such preservation projects; and economics ultimately determine whether or not a project is feasible.

Next, an analysis of existing conditions in Over-the-Rhine is provided. This results in the identification of key opportunities and pitfalls. The conclusions from the case studies are then synthesized with the information gleaned from the existing conditions and other analysis to create a set of recommendations for preservationists. The recommendations combine marketing, advocacy, regulation, and development strategies to form a coherent plan for the preservation of Over-the-Rhine's existing fabric. Finally, the issue of incompatible new construction is addressed, and a set of revised design guidelines is presented to inform new development in the future.

Thesis Adviser: Dennis Frenchman; Professor of the Practice of Urban Design, Department of Urban Studies and Planning

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all who contributed to this thesis by graciously offering their time and insight. The accessibility, openness, and willingness to help on the part of these individuals – both inside and outside Over-the-Rhine – was tremendous. I truly hope that this document can facilitate discussions and action toward preservation in Over-the-Rhine, and help the community to become the vibrant, diverse, functional, one-of-a-kind place that it should be.

I would also like to thank my adviser, Dennis Frenchman for his support and timely insights, and my reader, Rita Walsh.

Finally, I would be remiss not to recognize the impact of my "thesis cubby buddy", with whom I shared the trials and tribulations of countless hours spent in front of a computer wondering if the thesis would ever get done.

Table of Contents

Abstract		03
Chapter I	Introduction and Context	06
Chapter II	Analysis of the Threat	19
Chapter III	Economics and Preservation	28
Chapter IV	Targeting Analysis	39
Chapter V	Saving the "Unsalvageable"	58
Chapter VI	Existing Conditions -- Obstacles	80
Chapter VII	Synthesis and Recommendations	93
Chapter VIII	New Construction	104
Chapter IX	Conclusion	124
Appendix 1	List of Interviews	128
Appendix 2	Over-the-Rhine Conservation Guidelines	131
Bibliography		134

Chapter I: Introduction and Context

Over-the-Rhine is a 110 block National and Local Register historic district located near downtown Cincinnati, Ohio. A gateway for German immigrants in the nineteenth century, it suffered from disinvestment and neglect as the city suburbanized, was never subject to the widespread demolition experienced by many urban neighborhoods. Today Over-the-Rhine is recognized as one of the largest National Register historic districts, one of the most intact surviving examples of a nineteenth century immigrant neighborhood, and one of the largest collections of Italianate architecture in the nation. Many feel that the district has great promise, and that it should be leveraged and taken advantage of as an asset that few cities possess. But Over-the-Rhine has been steadily losing its buildings and its unique character to demolitions, and preservationists worry about the future of the district. The National Trust recently named Over-the-Rhine an "11 Most Endangered Place" in recognition of the threats currently facing its physical fabric. In the eyes of many, decisive action must be taken to prevent further destruction of this nationally significant district. This thesis is an attempt to help those concerned take such action by identifying the threats and obstacles to preservation in the district, collecting and analyzing relevant data, and recommending a set of steps to be taken.

In order to begin to understand the significance of Over-the-Rhine, the threats to its physical integrity, and the motivations for this thesis, it is first important to explore the district and its context in greater depth.

Cincinnati, Ohio

"Here's to Cincinnati, the Queen of the West,
a dirty old city, but still nobly blest,
For it's here that fine arts with the frivolous twine,
a veritable Deutschland just Over-the-Rhine...
The kindliest greetings from all whom we meet,
A good draught of beer every ten or twelve feet"

-A toast to Cincinnati, printed on early 20th century postcards[1]

[1] Grace, Kevin, and Tom White. Images of America: Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine. Portsmouth, NH: Arcadia, 2003. p.1

Like many American frontier towns, the origins of Cincinnati were humble, beginning in 1789 as a tiny trading outpost and a dream in the minds of surveyors and speculators. But a number of favorable circumstances soon converged to bring the fledgling town into a period of explosive growth. Cincinnati was well positioned along the Ohio River between Pittsburgh and New Orleans, allowing her to become a key node in the trade of goods between the East Coast and the Southwest – an advantage which the arrival of the steamboat magnified many times. Cincinnati was also in control of an immensely fertile hinterland, was thus the point of exchange for its vast agricultural output. By the mid-nineteenth century Cincinnati had become the "Queen City of the West", the third largest manufacturing center, and the 6th most populous city in the nation.

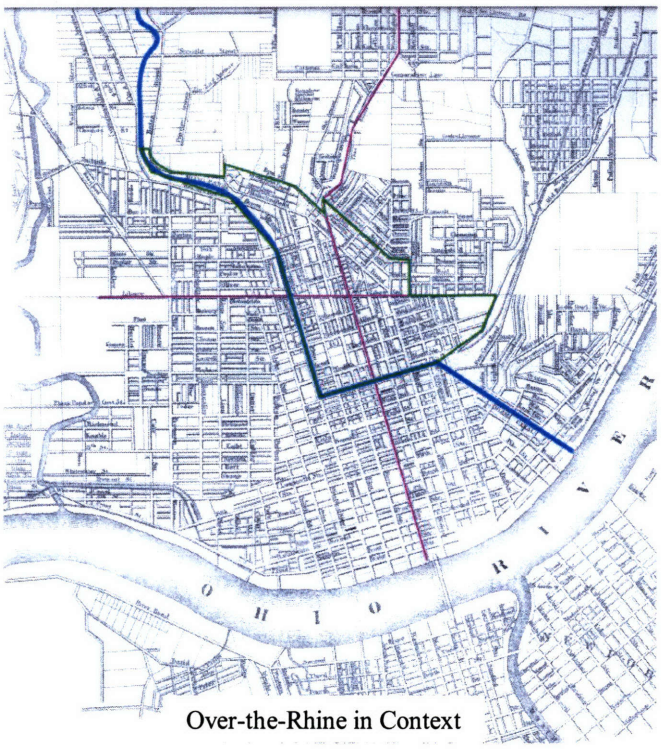
Cincinnati's unique topography contributed to its particular pattern of urban development. With the Ohio River forming the City's southern boundary, and a series of hills directly to the East, West, and North, early development was forced into a relatively small river valley area known as the "basin". Cincinnati became a densely developed urban environment, with shops, residences, and industries packed into increasingly scarce and valuable land. Inhabiting this built environment was a heterogeneous mix of immigrants who had come to the booming Queen City in search of profit and economic opportunity. Natives and foreigners, Yankees and southerners, laborers and capitalists, Catholics and protestants lived together in relatively close proximity. The predominant foreign ethnic groups were Irish and German, with the latter by far the more numerous and influential.

After the Civil War Cincinnati was surpassed by Chicago and its superior trade connections to the north, but the Queen City continued to grow. This growth, in conjunction with new transportation technologies, facilitated the city's expansion into the hills, as more affluent citizens sought an escape from the density of the basin. As this typically American urban process continued into the 20th century, Cincinnati's urban core gradually suffered from disinvestment and decline. By mid-century the population had peaked at 500,000, and with continued suburbanization to areas outside the city proper, Cincinnati began a long period of population decline.

Today Cincinnati has a population of about 300,000, with many of the plights of other Midwestern post-industrial cities, including a declining tax base, a long withered downtown, and the accompanying array of social and economic problems. Fortunately, however, the situation is not all bleak: over the past several years, the Queen City has been experiencing renewed investment in the urban core, and a repopulation of some of its oldest neighborhoods. The historic built environment – much of it dating from the mid-late nineteenth century – as well as skyline views, riverfront amenities, and proximity to downtown, are serving as the infrastructure that is inducing investment in residential and commercial revitalization. While the population of the city proper continues to decline, the urban core is beginning to see increases in population – a phenomenon that could serve as a catalyst for a broader revitalization. In short, the city stands ripe with opportunity to reclaim some of its former glory as a proud and bustling urban place more than a century ago.

Over-the-Rhine

One of the target areas of this reinvestment is also one of the city's greatest assets. Over-the-Rhine is a dense, historic urban neighborhood located immediately north of the Central Business District (See Figure 1.1). It is recognized as one of the largest National Register historic districts, one of the most intact surviving examples of a nineteenth century immigrant neighborhood, and one of the largest collections of Italianate architecture in the nation. Over-the-Rhine was settled beginning around 1827, with the completion of the Miami and Erie Canal connecting Cincinnati with Lake Erie to the north. The canal stimulated



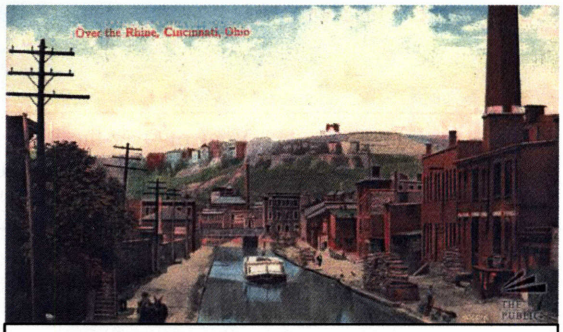
Over-the-Rhine in Context

industrial and residential development to the North, and became an attractive place to move for many of Cincinnati's German immigrants, who were soon to become the city's largest and most prominent ethnic group. As German emigration to Cincinnati increased – especially after the European revolutions of 1848 -- the settlement of Germans in this area became so concentrated that the neighborhood began to take on a distinctly German character that would define much of its legacy.



Scene inside Wielert's Beer Garden,
a renowned point of social exchange
Source: Wimberg, Robert. Cincinnati: Over-the-Rhine

The Germans established not only residences and businesses, but civic, social, political, cultural, and religious organizations as well. German newspapers proliferated, churches sprouted up everywhere, and beer gardens and saloons became centers of conviviality; building and loan associations (Bauvereine) financed the construction of homes, singing societies were common, and socio-political organizations – such as the Turnverein (Turner Society) and Freimaennerverein (Freethinker's Society) – served as points of ideological expression and advocacy.[2] Vine Street, the geographic center of the neighborhood, was the undeniable locus of culture and economy; beergardens with 50 piece orchestras entertained, theatres riveted, saloons lined the street, and small businesses burgeoned.



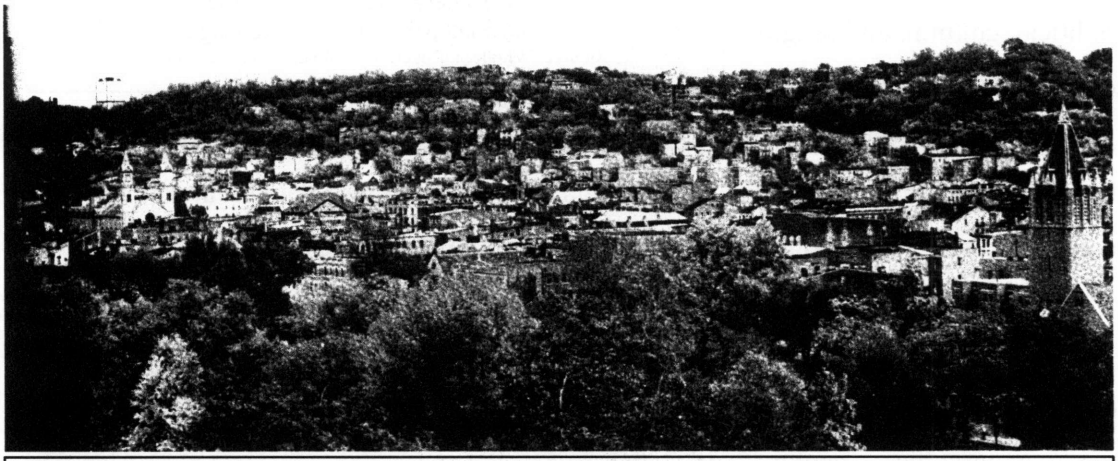
View of the Miami and Erie Canal (the "Rhine")
Source: The Cincinnati Memory Project

Moreover, the German language was openly spoken on the street – Vine Street and beyond. So strong was the Germanic character of the area that the canal was dubbed "the

[2] Historic Conservation Office, Cincinnati City Planning Department. Over-the-Rhine (South) Historic District Designation Report. 1993.

Rhine" by non-Germans in reference to the famous German body of water, and the 360 acre area north of it thus became known as "Over-the-Rhine".

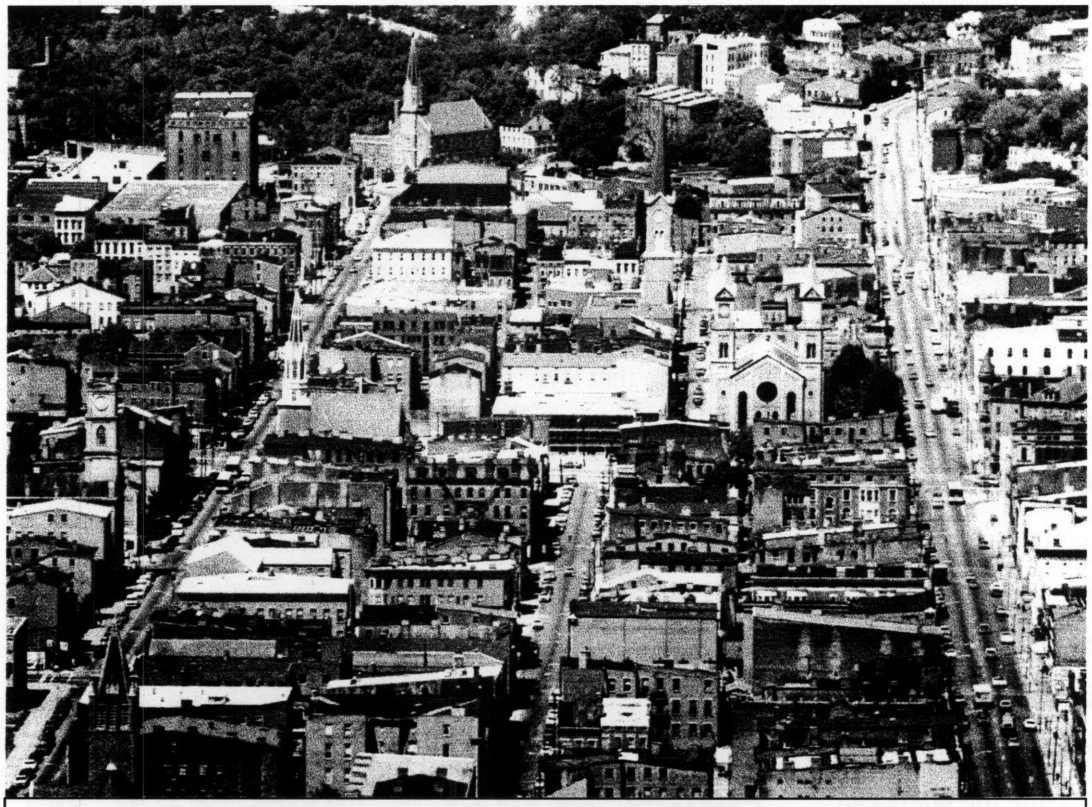
This unique socio-cultural atmosphere arose in tandem with an exceptional physical environment. The area's topographical and infrastructural features laid a framework for its physical development. The Miami and Erie Canal formed the southern and western boundaries of the neighborhood – the water's edge representing a definite line of demarcation separating Over-the-Rhine from downtown and the West End. To the north the hills leading to Cincinnati's earliest suburbs constrained development, thus representing the northern terminus of the neighborhood and a visual contrast with the flat basin of Over-the-Rhine. Taken together, these physical constraints gave the neighborhood clearly defined edges on all sides, and thus a distinct, bounded character.



View of Over-the-Rhine looking northeast.
The district was formed in the city's "basin", bounded by hills to the north
Source: Wimberg, Robert. Cincinnati: Over-the-Rhine

Also conditioning the physical development of the area were its streets and alleyways. A group of parallel streets ran north-south through the neighborhood in linear fashion, before snaking their way up the ravines and into the hills of Clifton and the suburbs beyond. Intersecting these streets were a variety of smaller East-West roads, stopping and starting abruptly, and sometimes intersecting at angles – the result of numerous subdivisions by individual developers.

Development began along the canal itself and spread northward. Industries and commercial enterprises clustered along the canal to take advantage of the transportation access, but to the north development quickly became very mixed in character, built to support a living, thriving community. Because land values were so high, with such a premium placed on front footage, land was divided into parcels typically only 25 feet wide and 100 feet deep, and developers packed buildings onto these narrow lots.[3] The result was an area with a horizontal density rarely found outside of New York City.[4] In 1900 the population density reached 32,000 people per square mile, making Over-the-Rhine and New York the two densest places in the country[5]. Multi-family apartments, flats, and tenements were the dominant building typology; typically 3-5 stories in height



The density of Over-the-Rhine, with structures packed onto narrow lots, is visible in this aerial photograph
Source: Wimberg, Robert

[3] Raser, Jeff. Architect, Glaserworks. Interview, April 2006; Tarbell, James. Councilmember, Cincinnati City Council. Interview, March 2006

[4] Gordon, Steve. Survey/National Register Manager, Ohio Historical Society. Email Correspondence, April 2006

[5] Gordon, Steve. Email Correspondence, April 2006; Grace, K. and Tom White. Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine.

on the main thoroughfares, and 2-4 stories on the side streets and alleys, these buildings were often built for commercial uses on the ground floor, creating a distinct mixed-use character. Adding to this character was the presence of many industries and institutional structures: breweries, churches, theatres, and social halls were ubiquitous, built to serve the largely German community that lived, worked, socialized, and worshipped in the neighborhood. In many instances these buildings were integrated seamlessly with the commercial/residential archetype, creating an interesting visual juxtaposition in terms of height and scale.



Typical commercial structures on Main Street
Source: Wimberg, Robert. Cincinnati: Over-the-Rhine

While evincing an impressive array of uses, structures in Over-the-Rhine followed a common material thread: red brick was standard, with wood frame, stone, and a few other materials employed in a minority of buildings. Architecturally the buildings were predominantly Italianate – attesting to that style's popularity in urban areas in the mid-late 19th century – and exhibited features such as decorative cornices, pronounced lintels, and a common fenestration pattern. Far from being homogenous, each building distinguished itself from its neighbor,



A row of diverse residential architecture on Elm Street
Source: Wimberg, Robert. Cincinnati: Over-the-Rhine

establishing its' own individual identity. Other architectural styles of the period, including Second Empire, Greek Revival, Romanesque, Queen Anne, and simple vernacular were interspersed throughout, contributing gables, mansard roofs, turret forms, and other distinctive architectural features.[6]

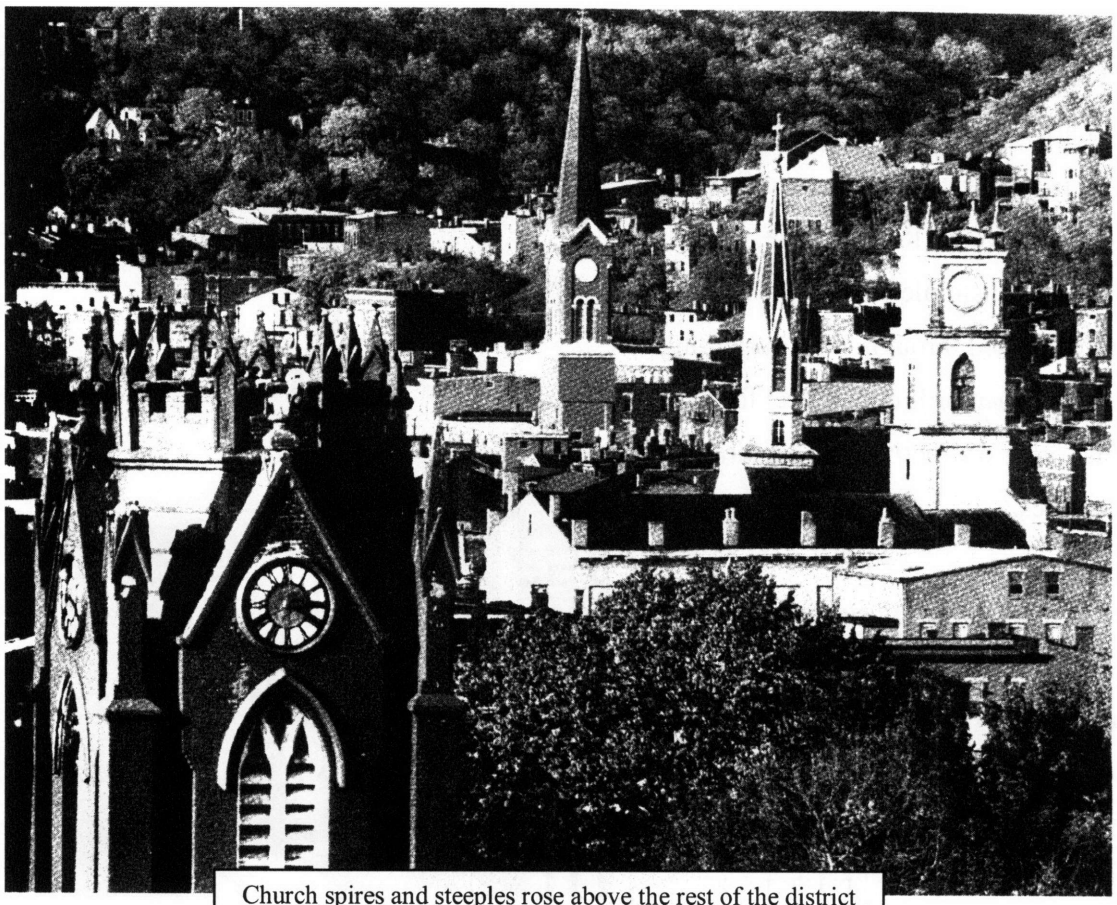


A church among residential structures on Race Street
Source: Wimberg, Robert. Cincinnati: Over-the-Rhine.

A few examples illustrate some of the more notable and distinguishing elements of the neighborhood. There was, for example, the Germania building, an ornately detailed Renaissance Revival masterpiece replete with a statue of Germania that represented the German culture; Music Hall, a monumental Romanesque building renowned throughout the City; and Findlay Market, which together with the row houses flanking it on all sides created a distinctive rectangular urban gathering space. Then there were the churches, occupying key intersections and corners, their affiliations carved into the facades in the German language; built in amazingly close proximity to one another, they punctuated the nineteenth century skyline with a collection of spires, steeples, and cupolas.

In its totality Over-the-Rhine was a dense, variegated yet remarkably cohesive fabric of brick masonry structures knit together by an intricate public realm. Narrow apartments lined the streets at great density, their three-tiered composition, fenestration patterns, and

[6]Historic Conservation Office. Over-the-Rhine (South) Historic District Designation Report



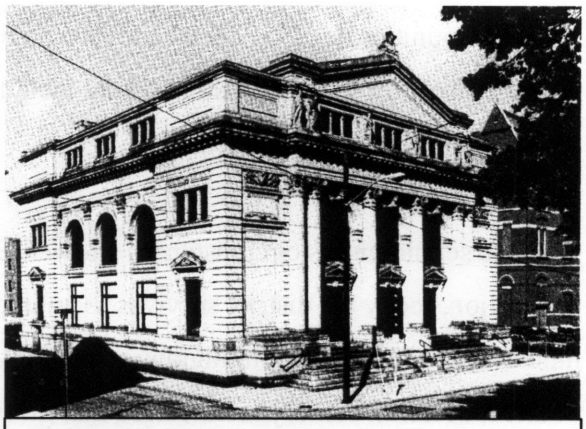
Church spires and steeples rose above the rest of the district
Source: Wimberg, Robert. Cincinnati: Over-the-Rhine

bracketed cornices forming a streetscape of visual continuity; at frequent intervals came development of divergent styles, uses, scales, and materials creating a wonderful idiosyncratic complexity. Bringing the architecture to life was the community itself. This unity in diversity, this singular pastiche of dense, beautiful, living fabric bubbling up from the underlying social and cultural substrate, made Over-the-Rhine a truly one-of-a-kind community.



The Germania Building at 12th and Clay
Source: Wimberg, Robert

The second phase of Over-the-Rhine's architectural legacy began in the early 20th century with the construction of a number of larger civic and institutional structures. Among these were the Hamilton County Memorial Hall, built in the Beaux Arts style to commemorate the veterans of the Civil War; the Emery Building, whose theatre housed the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra for a number of years; and the new Woodward High School building.[7] Far from detract from the integrity of the neighborhood, these new additions actually served to enhance it, contributing and architectural styling.



The Memorial Building on Elm Street
Source: Wimberg, Robert.

Unfortunately, this phase of development also saw an accompanying economic change that was less favorable. Concurrent with other parts of urban Cincinnati and other U.S. cities, middle class residents of Over-the-Rhine were dispersing to the City's hilltops in ever greater numbers, leading to the gradual erosion of the community's economic base. Over-the-Rhine was also weakened by World War I, which caused anti-German hysteria, and Prohibition, which seriously hurt the thriving brewing industry. With increasing suburbanization, the population of Over-the-Rhine declined from 44,475 in 1900 to 27,577 in 1960, and the neighborhood underwent a phase of ethnic succession (1940-1950) with the arrival of a large contingent of Appalachians in search of affordable rents and employment.[8] This new group formed their own social networks, institutions, and sense of community; yet the district had changed, and because it was now an area of overcrowded housing, crime, and blight, Over-the-Rhine became the target of City plans and campaigns for redevelopment. The City Plan of 1948, for example, called for

[7] Historic Conservation Office. Over-the-Rhine (South) Historic District Designation Report.

[8] Ibid

"complete clearance" of Over-the-Rhine and other "deteriorated areas" in Cincinnati. But the City focused its initial "renewal" efforts on the West End neighborhood, and faced such opposition from whites who feared redevelopment would push blacks into their communities, by 1957 they had taken a new approach to urban revitalization. From now on, plans for Over-the-Rhine would include language such as "rehabilitation" and "conservation" rather than clearance[9].

Because serendipitous circumstances allowed Over-the-Rhine to avoid widespread demolition, today the district survives as an impressively intact example of a dense nineteenth century urban immigrant community. The community retains a critical mass of late nineteenth century architecture that gives it a distinct sense of place, and makes it significant nationally. Three to five story Italianate tenements and apartments line the



[9] Miller, Zane, and Bruce Tucker. Changing Plans for America's Inner Cities: Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine and Twentieth-Century Urbanism. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1998.

streets, at a horizontal and vertical density seldom found in other U.S. cities. Interspersed are many of the cultural, civic, social, and religious buildings so vital to the community's original Germanic essence. Adding to the district's national significance is the existence of the nation's first German Methodist Church and the nation's oldest large Music Hall[10] Finally, the presence of granite paved alleys, a cobblestone street, and German inscriptions and advertisements still visible on the facades of churches and commercial buildings augments the nineteenth century ambience, and the feeling that Over-the-Rhine is a veritable time warp.



The well preserved nature of Over-the-Rhine has led many to identify it as a site of great potential, and one of Cincinnati's most important assets. While preservationists and long-time residents have long recognized the significance of the area, Over-the-Rhine has garnered increasing attention in recent years from city leaders and newly emigrated Cincinnatians who see its immense potential for redevelopment. The recent spike in residential development activity, attention of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and grassroots mobilizations of passionate preservationists are all testament to the significance, distinctiveness, and promise of the Over-the Rhine district. Perhaps no greater compliment to the potential of the area can be made than the remarks of the esteemed travel writer Arthur Frommer, who during a visit in 1993 exclaimed:

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[10] Gordon, Steve. Email Correspondence, April 2006

In all of America, there is no more promising an urban area for revitalization than your own Over-the-Rhine. When I look at that remarkably untouched, expansive section of architecturally uniform structures, unmarred by clashing modern structures, I see in my mind the possibility for a revived district that literally could rival similar prosperous and heavily visited areas[11]

[11] Cincinnati City Planning Department. Over-the-Rhine: A Description and History – Historic District Conservation Guidelines. 1995.

Chapter II: Analysis of the Threat

While it is widely held that Over-the-Rhine has great promise, the capture of the district's potential is by no means assured. The neighborhood is currently faced with a two-pronged threat that leaves it at risk of losing significant parts of its character, integrity, and possibility. This chapter examines the nature of these threats in order to establish the need to intervention, and better understand what steps need to be taken to make such an intervention successful.

The irony of Over-the-Rhine is that the fabric survived the ravages of urban renewal, only to fall victim to a much slower and gradual form of destruction. Over the past 75 years, Over-the-Rhine has been losing its physical fabric incrementally. Beginning in the 1920's with the advent of the automobile, gaps developed in the fabric as buildings were demolished by private owners to make way for filling stations and parking lots. But much more damaging were the actions of the City, which demolished large groups of buildings for public parks, and razed one side of Liberty Street to allow for the expansion of the thoroughfare. Though far from large scale clearance, these actions created large gashes in the fabric. The City also damaged the district's integrity by paving over the its most identifiable boundary, the Miami Canal, in 1919, and by covering with asphalt most of Over-the-Rhine's Belgian block streets and alleys.[1]

The Threat, Part I

By the 1970's much of the government sponsored improvements had come to a close, and an even slower, more insidious threat had emerged. Disinvestment had taken deep root, and demolition by neglect became the primary force behind destruction of the fabric – a force which remains strong today.

This threat began with Over-the-Rhine's loss of an economic base as residents moved to the suburbs in ever greater numbers after 1900. Having reached a low of 27,577

[1] Grace, Kevin and Tom White. Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine. Portsmouth, NH: Arcadia Publishing, 2003; Pape, Kevin, Gray & Pape Cultural Resource Consultants. Telephone Interview. April 2006

residents in 1960[2], the community continued to decline in ensuing decades. The neighborhood entered another period of ethnic transition, as poor blacks from the rural south and the recently "renewed" West End of Cincinnati migrated to Over-the-Rhine in large numbers. Lacking the education and skills to obtain meaningful employment, and afflicted by a deep seated, institutionalized racism and an increasingly post-industrial economy, this new demographic was poorer and on a lower socioeconomic rung than the preceding group. Two important phenomena occurred in response to this situation. First, social service agencies propagated to address the growing social problems. One such agency was run by a charismatic young white activist who vigorously advocated for the poor and staunchly opposed any market rate development. Second, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) targeted the neighborhood as a site for project based Section 8 housing, and devoted substantial resources to securing hundreds of low-income housing units[3]. These two factors, combined with continued disinvestment in Cincinnati's core as a whole, contributed to a situation where Over-the-Rhine became a haven for the poor, drug-addicted, homeless, and destitute. The population declined to 15,025 in 1970, and 9,572 by 1990.[4] Prostitution, drug use, violent crime, and open drug trafficking became the order of the day. Vacancy, blight, and abandoned buildings proliferated.

The effect on the fabric was immense. Buildings were sealed and boarded up, only to be vandalized, inhabited by squatters, or left open to the elements. Over a period of many years the fabric deteriorated, and Over-the-Rhine began to suffer from demolition by neglect. The district had been placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983, and in 1993 it achieved local district status, thereby conferring real protection from gratuitous and unnecessary demolition. But demolition by neglect was one thing that could not be tightly regulated by the ordinance. When buildings became a public safety

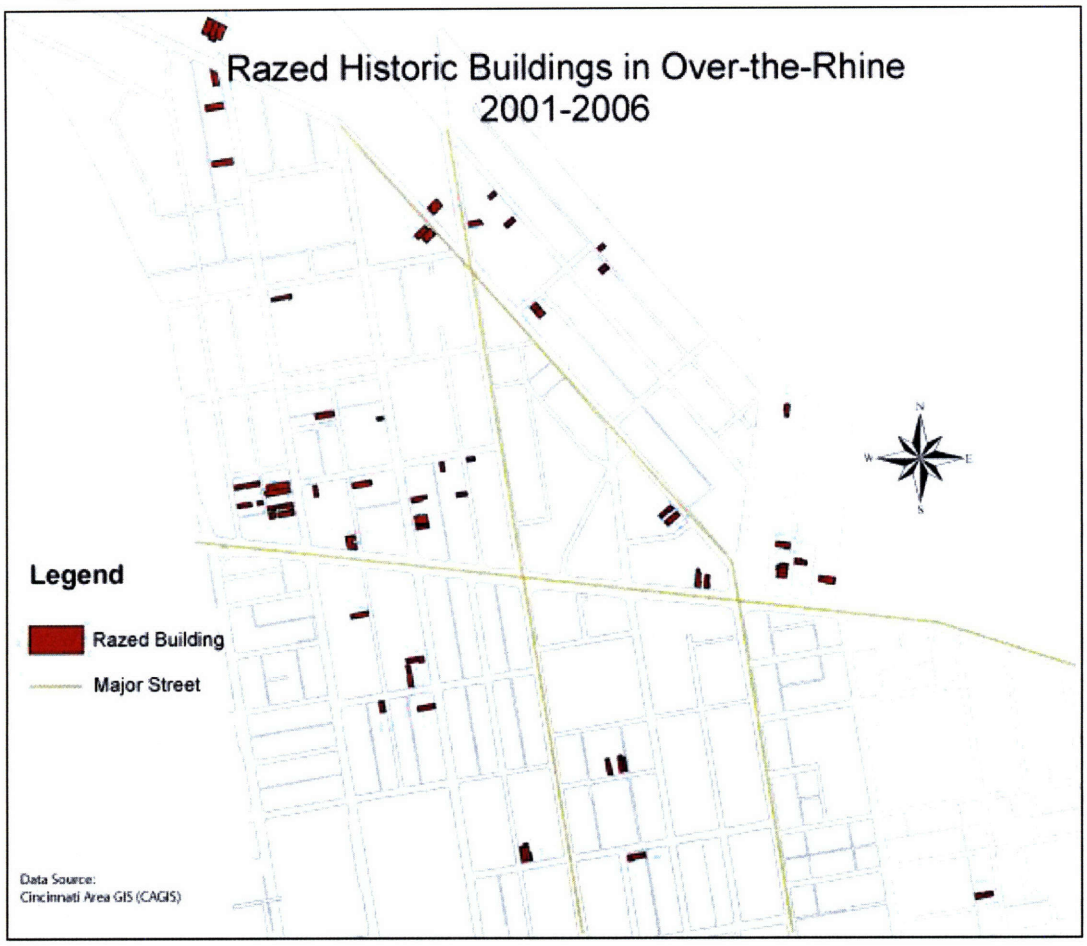
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[2] Historic Conservation Office, Cincinnati City Planning Department. Over-the-Rhine (South) Historic District Designation Report. 1993.

[3] In the process, many buildings were subject to sandblasting, window sash replacement, and unsympathetic renovations, thus damaging the integrity of some of the fabric

[4] Historic Conservation Office. *Over-the-Rhine (South) Historic District Designation Report*

Figure 2.1



hazard, and in "imminent danger of collapse" according to the Buildings and Inspections Department ("B&I"), that agency stepped in to ensure that they were demolished[5].

This gradual erosion of fabric has continued for over twenty years to the present day. While data on the dates and locations of most of the demolitions themselves are not available, beginning in 2001 the City began recording applications for demolition permits, thus allowing an accurate assessment of the amount of buildings razed since that date. Between 2001 and February of 2006, 56 buildings in Over-the-Rhine were razed[6];

[5] There is evidence to suggest that B&I does not always make accurate determinations in assessing the "imminent danger" of structures. According to one building owner, after B&I put an emergency demolition order on his building, he hired a structural engineer who determined that the building was not, in fact, at risk of collapse. Part of the problem is that B&I often assesses buildings from street level, and thus does not necessarily obtain the level of information necessary to make a truly accurate determination. Anonymous developer. Personal Interview. March 2006.

[6] City of Cincinnati Historic Conservation Office, Record of Applications for Demolition Permits. note: This number is approximate, and includes only those demolitions carried out legally

of these, 4 were non-contributing buildings, whose demolition was approved by the Historic Conservation

Board ("the Board"); 2 others were historic resources sacrificed by the Board to facilitate a larger rehabilitation project, with the hope that the effort would help stimulate development[7].

The remaining 50 historic resources were "emergency demolitions" by order of B&I.[8] These buildings were deemed in imminent danger of collapse by B&I, at which point the Board no longer had control, and demolition permits were summarily granted.

Figure 2.1 displays 51 of the 52 historic buildings demolished in Over-the-Rhine between 2001 and 2006.[9] Though they are clearly on scattered sites, the demolitions tend to be concentrated in the southern Findlay Market and eastern Mullberry-McMicken subareas. There is also a cluster in the North-Central portion of the district near the Little Five Points intersection. The accumulation of demolition over the past 5 years has created more than just sporadic missing teeth in these areas, and has in fact caused disruptions in the integrity of the fabric.

But to understand the true cumulative effect of the gradual processes of demolition in Over-the-Rhine, it is important to look back over a longer period. To this end, Sanborn fire insurance maps from 1930 were examined to assess the amount of fabric that has been lost since that date. 1930 is an appropriate date because it is an approximate threshold for buildings considered to be "contributing" to Over-the-Rhine's historic and architectural character. In the late 1920's the last large, institutional buildings – many of which have become important parts of the fabric – were built in Over-the-Rhine. Thereafter, many buildings constructed were of a new and quite divergent style that did

[7] The ordinance is structured so as to allow the Board to grant demolition permits where sacrifice of a resource is deemed necessary and justifiable as part of a larger development effort.
[8] City of Cincinnati. Record of Demolition Permits
[9] The 52nd building, located on Broadway Street in the Southeastern quadrant of the district, was excluded in order to focus on the areas of greatest demolition.

not cohere with the neighborhood's physical integrity. To select a date prior to 1930 would be to exclude many of the districts' significant 20th century buildings, while any later date would include buildings whose demolition has not necessarily been detrimental.

Figure 2.2

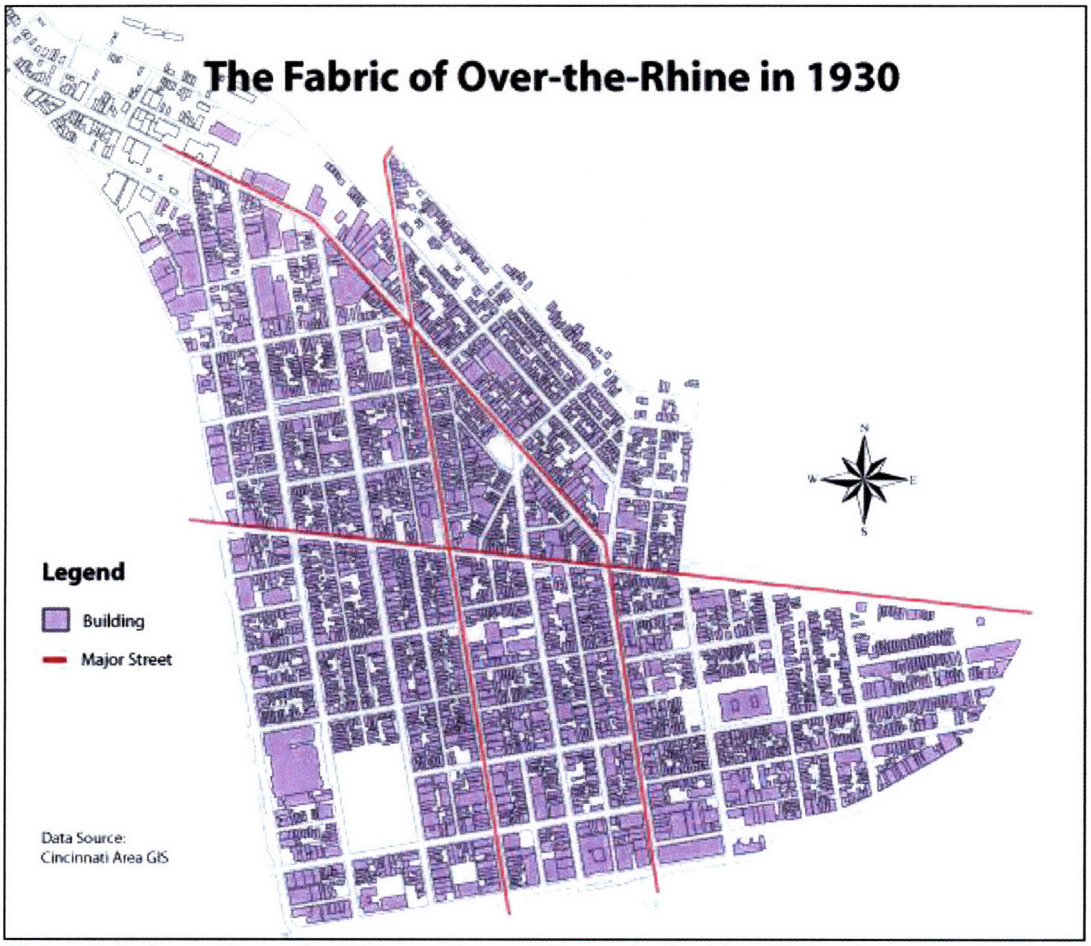
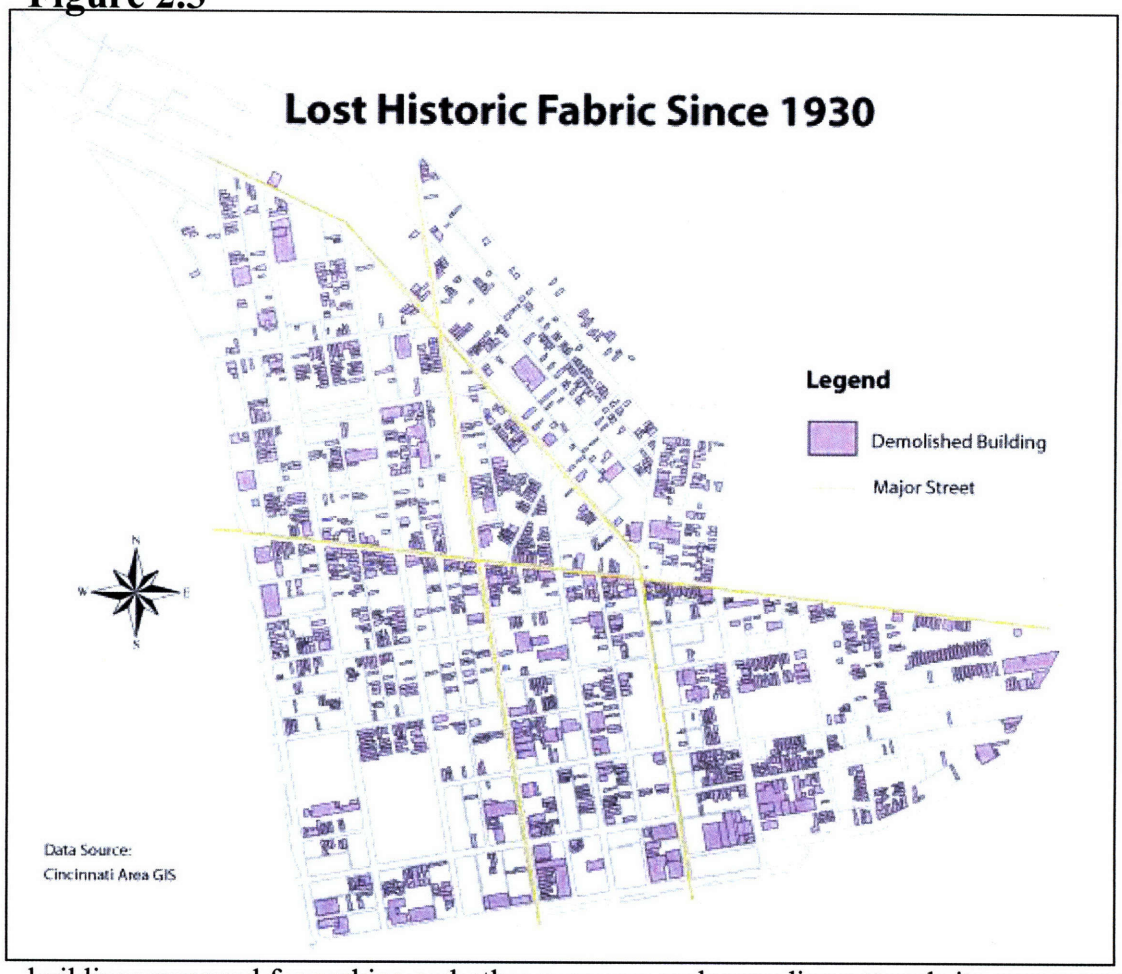


Figure 2.2 shows Over-the-Rhine as it would have looked in 1930. Figure 2.3 displays the fabric lost since that time.[10] Clearly the cumulative effect of demolition in the district has been very substantial, and much of the physical fabric has been lost. The map is testament to the power of real estate markets, investment patterns, and government intervention to transform the built environment absent any large-scale clearance. It is also visual evidence of the dual nature of demolition in Over-the-Rhine – both groups of

[10] A number of the structures displayed in Figure 2.2 were wood frame houses, small wood frame or brick additions, or brick automobile warehouses. Some may debate the significance of these losses. The vast majority of structures displayed, however, were brick apartment buildings and other masonry structures of indisputable importance to the physical integrity of the area.

Figure 2.3



buildings removed for parking and other purposes, and sporadic scattered site emergency demolitions.

Disturbingly, absent any future intervention Over-the-Rhine will likely see continued losses of its fabric via continued demolition by neglect. Nearly three hundred buildings are currently ordered vacant by B&I, and of those some thirty have been condemned. Although the promise of redevelopment and investment are greater than ever, without a formal plan or strategy for preservation, it will soon be too late for important parts of the fabric to be saved.

The Threat, Part II

A second threat to the existing fabric of Over-the-Rhine comes not from neglect, but from the actions of well-meaning local non-profits. Since the 1960's the neighborhood has been the focus of discussions about revitalization through gentrification. Much of

this was inhibited early on by the severity of the disinvestment, and the staunch opposition of the advocates of the poor. But over the past 15 years the momentum for investment and market rate development has gradually increased (see Chapter 4 for a broader discussion). The neighborhood now stands primed for a broad revitalization, fueled by the market but also largely by a new quasi-public entity. Following the recommendations of a city economic development task force, the Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation ("3CDC") was created in July of 2003 with a mandate to stimulate reinvestment at three downtown foci – one of which is Over-the-Rhine. 3CDC has acquired large swaths of property in the Washington Park section of the neighborhood and is moving quickly with its plan for revitalization. 3CDC has also been working cooperatively with the Cincinnati Public Schools ("CPS") to help facilitate their plans for the construction of two new facilities.

These events hold huge potential for Over-the-Rhine, which is about to see its largest investment in decades; if allowed to run amok, however, groups such as 3CDC could also cause serious damage to the remaining integrity of the district. 3CDC has clearly expressed their intention to pursue preservation of the buildings they control in Over-the-Rhine, and have begun the first phase of rehabilitation. However, 3CDC has taken an approach that is perceived by some in the community to be top-down and autocratic. It has been accused of planning without community input, acting in opposition to the 2002 Over-the-Rhine Comprehensive Plan, and failing to create open lines of communication and dialogue. Consequently, there are suspicions that anti-preservation activity will be promulgated, and eventually carried out, contrary to the desires of the community.

There is evidence to back these fears, as 3CDC (along with CPS) has been responsible or complicit in plans for demolition and insensitive new construction.[11]

Three examples illustrate this point:

- In attempting to identify for CPS an appropriate site for a new public elementary school, 3CDC recommended an area just east of Vine between 13th and 14th

[11] The issue of new construction will be addressed in Chapter VIII

Streets. Originally targeted for housing development, the site contains 22 buildings whose demolition would be necessitated to make room for the new school. Strong community opposition has led CPS (with the backing of 3CDC) to withdraw the proposed plan.

- CPS is well advanced in its plans to build a state of the art, K-12 Arts school – the new School for the Creative and Performing Arts. The site they have targeted is largely vacant, but will require the demolition of 5 historic buildings important to the character of the Washington Park area.
- 3CDC has stated its objective of rehabilitating historic buildings under their control *except* where it proves to be economically unfeasible; they have not defined or revealed their threshold for economic feasibility, leaving open the possibility for greater demolition than is currently anticipated.[12]

Taken together, these two phenomena – emergency demolitions and the actions of non-profits – threaten to weaken the remaining integrity of Over-the-Rhine. Using past demolition patterns and projecting forward, a reasonable estimate is that 40 historic buildings – many of them key parts of the fabric – stand to be lost over the next 3 years. While not an extremely large number in absolute terms, it is the cumulative effect (as has been shown) that is most damaging, and the loss of 40 more resources could severely harm the integrity, significance, and thus the potential of Over-the-Rhine. A "tipping point" could be surpassed where the district is no longer the tremendous asset to the city of Cincinnati that it is today, and can no longer garner attention as a regional heritage tourism destination. Careful preservation planning is needed if this is to be avoided, yet a concerted effort at a strategic preservation plan has yet to be undertaken. The 2002 Over-the-Rhine Comprehensive Plan (understandably) focuses on other issues, identifying preservation of Over-the-Rhine's architectural heritage as a key principle, but relegating actual preservation planning to the listing of important buildings in an appendix.

This thesis seeks to fill this critical gap by completing a well-conceived strategic preservation plan for Over-the-Rhine. The following chapter moves toward the initial

[12] Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation, Presentation Before the Community. April 2006

formulation of this plan by examining literature on historic preservation, and attempting to build the argument for the importance of decisive preservation action in the district.

Chapter III: Economics and Historic Preservation

Addressing the threats to the fabric of Over-the-Rhine is a desirable course of action because of the value the district can create for residents, business owners, developers, visitors, city leaders, and Cincinnatians in general. The latent value contained in the historic built environment is tremendous – as seen in the attention given the neighborhood by countless constituents – and only waits to be actualized. The value of Over-the-Rhine, like that of historic districts and sites in general, can be expressed in terms of two primary subtypes traditionally distinguished in the literature:

- *economic value* – the value generated through the exchange of currency and goods in markets;
- *cultural value* – the more intangible yet equally real and important value represented by social and subjective well being and defined independently of markets[1]

David Throsby makes note of six types of cultural value: aesthetic value, spiritual value, social value, historical value, symbolic value, and authenticity value. Each is a legitimate cultural value, and each can be measured in various ways.[2] However, these cultural values are extremely elusive and defy easy quantification; thus arises one of the central dilemmas of the arts and culture sectors. For example, at its core historic preservation is about creating and maintaining the cultural values which inhere in the historic built fabric, and which are lost or diminished when buildings are razed or inappropriately altered. Yet without a mechanism for measuring or quantifying this value, preservation advocates are often forced to rely on vague notions of the beauty and the irreplaceable nature of historic buildings. Economic value provides a partial solution to this problem, and one that is increasingly relied upon by proponents of cultural value.

The goal of this chapter is to explore the concept of the economic value of cultural goods in order to determine whether there is an economic basis or foundation on which to build

[1] Throsby, David. *Economics and Culture*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001
[2] Ibid, 28-30.

the argument for decisive preservation action in Over-the-Rhine. Advocacy for preservation of Over-the-Rhine on purely cultural grounds can only be taken so far. Ultimately fiscally constrained cities like Cincinnati must act to ensure financial sustainability, and such cities are thus more likely to be persuaded by economic arguments. If the potential and preservation of Over-the-Rhine can be tied to the economic development of the city, the chances of successfully implementing a plan for preservation in the district will be greatly increased.

Before exploring the issue of the economic value of preservation, it is important to first give a brief history of historic preservation in the United States.

History of Preservation

The historic preservation movement in the U.S. has changed and evolved considerably since its origins nearly 200 years ago. In the beginning, preservation was undertaken almost exclusively by private individuals and groups who wished to save buildings of significance to national history. It was an activity dominated by the elite, and one in which women played a major role. At the time the historical associations of buildings were paramount, and architectural significance and aesthetics were largely ignored. The threat to buildings with Revolutionary War associations acted as the catalyst for the very first preservation efforts; the most notable such endeavor was the successful bid to save the old statehouse (later independence hall) in Philadelphia. In the mid-19th century a group of women organized what is widely regarded as the first preservation group in the U.S., the Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the Union. Formed to preserve George Washington's historic residence, their actions spurred the formation of a number of other "house museums" to honor and celebrate nationally prominent figures such as Andrew Jackson and Robert E. Lee[3]

[3] Lea, Diane. "America's Preservation Ethos: A Tribute to Enduring Ideals." Stipe, Robert E., Ed. *A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation in the Twenty-First Century.* Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003; Tyler, Norman. *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to its History, Principles, and Practice.* New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2000.

The Federal Government was generally not involved in the 19th century movement to preserve historic buildings; their activities at the time were more focused on the preservation of western landscapes (e.g. Yellowstone Park), the acquisition of historic battlefields, and the preservation of ancestral ruins[4]. In 1916, however, the government increased its involvement in historic preservation through the creation of the National Park Service, intended to assist with the preservation of sites too large to be managed by private groups. And in 1935 the Historic Sites Act was passed, which spurred the documentation by the Secretary of the Interior of various national historic landmarks.

Preservation in the early-mid 20th century had evolved to become focused not just on individual structures of great national significance, but on the salvation of greater numbers of buildings for their architectural beauty and merit. Aside from the Historic Sites Act, two other events of the late 1920's and early 1930's had tremendous import for preservationists. First was the reconstruction of Colonial Williamsburg, which catalyzed heritage tourism and led to the creation of several other "museum villages" in the United States. Second, the City of Charleston in 1931 reacted to a threat to its buildings by instituting the nation's first preservation ordinance, which regulated the demolition and alteration of buildings within Charleston's Old and Historic District. This unprecedented legislation was crucial in legitimizing local regulation of historic districts; by helping the preservation field to embrace the notion of the tout ensemble – the idea that the sum of the parts is important as well as the individual resources – entire districts in other cities would come to be recognized as well for their valuable cultural contributions[5].

The decades following World War II saw some of the greatest threats to America's historic resources, including suburbanization and automobiles, federal highway construction, urban renewal activities, and oil exploration. In response to these and other threats, the federal government created the National Trust, designed as a quasi public advocacy group to bridge the gap between the public sector, and the actions of private preservationists and organizations. Even more important was the passage in 1966 of the

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[4] Tyler, Norman. *Historic Preservation.*, p.35
[5] Lea, Diane. "America's Preservation Ethos"; Tyler, Norman. *Historic Preservation*

National Historic Preservation Act, "the most far reaching preservation legislation ever created in the United States"[6]. The act established the National Register and expanded its scope to include sites of both state and local significance; encouraged the creation and regulation of local historic districts; created a mechanism to allow for the funding of state preservation activities; and encouraged the creation of State Historic Preservation Organizations (SHPO's)[7].

Also crucial during this time was the establishment of a legal basis for historic preservation land use controls. Berman vs. Parker represented the first legal precedent, providing a foundation for preservationists to argue that aesthetics alone were a legitimate reason for regulation. But Penn Central was by far the most important piece of case law for the preservation movement. In it, the Supreme Court voted 6-3 to uphold the decision of a lower court that the rejection of Penn Central's application to build an office tower above the historic Grand Central Terminal did not represent a taking without just compensation. This monumental decision established that historic preservation – an activity which had nothing to do with nuisance or other traditional reasons for land use control – was completely justified under the police power[8].

The 1970's and 1980's saw further shifts in the U.S. preservation movement. The definition of preservation was expanded to encompass sites of importance to different ethnic groups – for example African Americans. The Tax Reform Act of 1976 introduced some incentives for private sector investment in historic preservation activities, and the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 made these incentives large and substantial. As a result, historic preservation during this time became more of a business – something that could be undertaken by the private sector for motives of profit. Although the 1986 Tax Reform Act reduced the value of federal rehabilitation tax credits, the business aspect of preservation had been firmly entrenched, and continues today[9].

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[6] Lea, Diane. "America's Preservation Ethos", p.11
[7] Lea, Diane. "America's Preservation Ethos"; Tyler, Norman. *Historic Preservation*
[8] Ibid
[9] Ibid

Also during this time, increased interest in downtown revitalization helped spur revitalization of historic buildings. The National Trust's Main Streets program created a formal mechanism to integrate preservation with center-city reinvigoration, and it has since become the Trust's most successful initiative.

As the millennium came to a close, the threat to historic resources had moved from the actions of the federal government to the actions of private developers. Around this time the movement began searching for a new mandate, and principles such as multiculturalism and economic development emerged and came to the fore[10].

Economic Value

The economic development power of historic preservation has become an especially popular subject of research in recent years. As preservation advocates searched for a more convincing argument with which to influence government and others, many turned to economic benefit studies. More and more, aesthetic arguments about the "beauty" of historic buildings were viewed as insufficient to influence public policy. The question to be answered by preservation advocates was therefore whether the cultural values widely acknowledged to exist in historic structures was also productive of some economic value. The answer has been a resounding "yes".

Cultural goods, or goods that are productive of cultural value, are often traded as private goods in markets. Such goods might include admission to see a professional symphony orchestra, admission to view a collection of art at a local museum, or an historic building for sale as real estate. Because these goods are traded as commodities in private markets, they are subject to an easily measurable, easily accessible economic value. While this value may not (and probably does not) accurately reflect the true cultural value of the good in question[11], it can be a useful way to inject objectivity into debates over cultural policy. The literature on the economic benefits of preservation has grown prolific over the past two decades, and the results have been nearly unanimous: historic preservation

[10] Lea, Diane. "America's Preservation Ethos"., p.17-18.
[11] Throsby, David. *Economics and Culture*., p.34

provides real and substantial economic benefits – benefits that are tangible and observable in markets – and is an effective policy tool for stimulating local and regional economies.

One type of study, the basic cost study, typically involves the straightforward financial calculation of the costs and benefits of a particular preservation project. The work of Donovan Rypkema is most notable here; his "Economics of Rehabilitation" uses real estate financial analysis to demonstrate the feasibility of historic rehabilitation vis-à-vis an alternative investment in new construction. This and other studies show that in purely financial terms, historic preservation can be an effective mode of investment and generate comparable financial returns[12].

Much more important and impressive is the economic impact study. These studies look beyond the individual project level and attempt to assess the impact[13] of a given amount of preservation activity on a range of economic indicators. The preservation activities studied generally include so called direct impacts, such as rehabilitation activity, heritage tourism, and Main Street investment, while the outcomes include the total jobs, income, wealth, and taxes that are leveraged from these investments. The methodology employed essentially amounts to a measurement of "multiplier effects" – those indirect or induced effects of a given amount of economic activity[14]. Myriad state and several local studies have been carried out in recent years employing this methodology. A study on the economic impacts of preservation in Florida provides a representative example. That study concluded that direct preservation activity in the state[15] resulted annually in the creation of 123,242 jobs, $2,766 million in income, $5,266 million in gross state product, and $657 million in local and state taxes, for a total of a $4.2 billion impact. Moreover, the public investment itself (which leveraged the direct impacts that in turn led to the multiplier effects) was tremendously efficient: Florida's historic preservation grants were

[12] Mason, Randall. Economics and Historic Preservation: A Guide and Review of the Literature. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, 2005., p.12-13.
[13] Impact is typically assessed at the State level, but can also be measured at the local and National levels.
[14] Mason, Randall. *Economics and Historic Preservation.*, p.13.
[15] The investments/expenditures were: $350 million in historic rehabilitation; $3.721 billion in heritage travel related expenditure; $64 million in construction through the Main Street program

found to leverage twice the investment, while a tenfold return was achieved for each $1 invested in the Main Street program[16].

While these types of economic impact studies demonstrate convincingly a very positive net effect on the economy from preservation, one common criticism is their failure to address the opportunity cost[17] of the preservation investment. This issue was addressed in a study on preservation in New Jersey undertaken by Listokin, Listokin, and Lahr in 1998[18]. The researchers presented quantitative evidence that preservation in the form of rehabilitation is a more effective economic generator than new construction: "$1 million spent on non-residential historic rehabilitation creates two jobs more than the same money spent on new construction. It also generates $79,000 more in income, $13,000 more in taxes, and $111,000 more in wealth"[19] According to the authors, this makes preservation "a somewhat more potent economic pump primer than new construction"[20]. Fundamentally this is because rehabilitation requires a higher degree of craftsmanship, and thus a substitution of labor for capital; because labor is more specific to the U.S., whereas capital is more likely to be imported from abroad, this substitution creates relatively greater economic benefits for the U.S. economy[21].

In the same study, Listokin, Listokin, and Lahr present even more powerful evidence of the economic importance of preservation, establishing its greater economic leveraging efficacy versus similar investments in other types of economic activity. Compared to a $1 million investment in various other areas – from book publishing, to pharmaceutical production, to mining, to auto manufacturing – an equal investment in preservation was demonstrated to generate more jobs, more income, more taxes, and greater wealth[22]

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[16] Center for Governmental Responsibility, University of Florida Levin College of Law. *Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation in Florida.* 2002. <http://www.law.ufl.edu/cgr/pdf/historic_report.pdf>.
[17] Opportunity cost is the economic value that is foregone when a decision is made among mutually exclusive alternatives
[18] Listokin, David, Barbara Listokin, Michael Lahr. "The Contributions of Historic Preservation to Housing and Economic Development". Housing Policy Debate, Vol. 9, Iss.3, 1998.
[19] Mason, Randall. *Economics and Historic Preservation.*, p. 9
[20] Listokin, Listokin, & Lahr. "The Contributions of Historic Preservation", p. 457
[21] Ibid p.457-459
[22] Ibid p.459

While often subsumed within the types of impact studies discussed above, heritage tourism deserves its own mention here for the sheer magnitude and potential of its economic impact. Heritage tourism has been found to represent one of the fastest growing segments of the already booming U.S. travel industry. In the aforementioned study of Florida, heritage tourism was demonstrated to create by far the greatest economic impacts of the various preservation investments (Main Street Program, rehabilitation activity, etc.), including 84% of the total state preservation generated income, and 87% of state preservation generated wealth[23]. In addition, it has been shown that cultural and heritage tourists spend more and stay longer than other travelers, making their marginal investment in the local economy greater than the average tourist [24]. The implication of these facts is that by drawing heritage tourists, historic preservation efforts can generate very substantial returns for the economy, including greater returns than investments in other types of tourism.

Property values represent another important arena for the study of the economics of preservation. Numerous studies have been conducted measuring the impact of historic designation on property values. Methodologically, these studies are quite distinct from impact studies, employing rigorous regression techniques in a scientific fashion, rather than using economic input-output models. Similar to impact studies, however, this literature "clearly comes down in favor of a positive effect of historic districting"[25]. For instance, a study in Texas concluded that, in seven of nine cities, designation of historic districts increased property values between 5%-20% compared with neighborhoods of similar stock and characteristics but no designation. A somewhat more impressive result was found in Philadelphia, where Asabere and Huffman discovered a 131% price premium on residential property located in historic districts.[26] A number of other studies

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[23] *Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation in Florida*, p. ix
[24] United States. Dept. of Commerce, President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. "A Position Paper on Cultural and Heritage Tourism", 2005. p. 2-3.
<http://culturalheritagetourism.org/documents/WhitePaper_001.pdf>
[25] Mason, Randall. *Economics and Historic Preservation*, p.7
[26] Ibid, p.7

have also found that historic district status is associated with higher property values, as well as greater rates of appreciation over non-historically designated properties[27].

Based on the above, the underlying cultural value of historic preservation is clearly translatable into an economic value as well. However, private economic data is inevitably an imperfect tool for capturing the full cultural value of historic resources. The fact that some cultural values are private goods makes them amenable to easy, objective quantification; but the other component to cultural value is that it is also a public good. Similar to national defense, clean air, or public parks, cultural amenities are often open to public consumption without a fee or price. This means that they create value for consumption by the public, but that value is not recorded through economic transaction. This makes it extremely difficult to measure or quantify the public good value of these amenities. In historic preservation, for instance, there are several types of value that elude private economic measurement, including: option value – the value that results from having the option of visiting an historic site at some future date; existence value – the value in simply knowing that an historic resource exists; and bequest value – the value that comes from the preservation of resources for the enjoyment of future generations[28].

While measurement of these values in economic terms is difficult and problematic given the lack of private market data, several methods have emerged that attempt to put a dollar value to them. One of the most prominent such methods is contingent valuation, whereby respondents are surveyed and asked to express their willingness to pay for a given cultural (or environmental) amenity[29]. The underlying idea is that the aggregate willingness to pay for a given cultural amenity can be taken as a proxy for the total value

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[27] See, e.g. Government Finance Research Center, "The Economic Benefits of Preserving Community Character: A Case Study from Fredericksburg, VA".; Athens-Clarke County Planning Dept., "Economic Benefits of Historic Preservation in Georgia, A Study of Three Communities: Athens, Rome, and Tifton"; and New York City Independent Budget Office, "The Impact of Historic Districts on Residential Property Values".

[28] Throsby, David. *Economics and Culture*, p.37.

[29] Mason, Randall. *Economics and Historic Preservation*, p. 15-17.

placed on that amenity by a certain group or population[30]. Several such studies have been undertaken specifically with regards to historic preservation, many of them concluding that a given resource has a much higher value than its market value alone might indicate.

Taken together, the above literature provides a solid framework for making an economically based argument for preserving the fabric of Over-the-Rhine *in every case possible*. The following conclusions about the economics of historic districts – and thus the economics of Over-the-Rhine – can be drawn from the literature.

- Demolition of each contributing structure in an historic district has a negative impact on neighboring property values. This can be deduced from the property value premium found in historic districts, at least some of which must be attributable to the security the district provides for property owners against alteration of neighborhood character. This implies that the (historic) character itself has an economic value, and it is reasonable to assume that that character is based upon an aggregate of individual historic resources. Therefore, the loss of each resource should theoretically impose a negative externality on nearby property values.
- The economic implications of rehabilitating an endangered structure go beyond just the immediate costs and revenues, and include the powerful, less observable impacts that rehabilitation has on a local and regional economy. This is another way of saying that the value of an historic building goes beyond the market value of the building itself, and includes an externality value through the effect of its rehabilitation on the economy. This value is very potent in historic buildings, and often outweighs the value generated by alternative economic development investments.
- Districts that become heritage tourist destinations serve as powerful economic pump primers for their respective local and state economies. As is the case with property values, it can be assumed that part of the drawing power of a heritage

[30] If this aggregate is large enough, it may theoretically warrant a public expenditure sufficient to secure the existence of the amenity for the public

area or district is its unique historic character or ambience. Therefore, it stands to reason that demolition of resources in such areas reduces the character of those areas, which in turn reduces their economic generator capacity.

These conclusions provide solid economic evidence of the need to be vigilant in protecting Over-the-Rhine's remaining fabric. A very significant part of Over-the-Rhine's potential is its potential to serve as an economic development generator for the City of Cincinnati. Rehabilitation activity, heritage tourism, and property taxes are all areas in which Over-the-Rhine has a tremendous competitive advantage over the most other community's in the nation. If these inherent qualities are leveraged appropriately, the economic impact on the city could be huge. The full market value and economic benefit to the resource constrained City of Cincinnati through high value real estate, economic development, and heritage tourism in Over-the-Rhine waits to be captured. Conversely, if historic buildings continue to be lost, this potential for impact will be diminished, or even partially destroyed[31].

Having established economic grounds for the preservation of Over-the-Rhine's fabric, the next step is to zoom in on both the specific nature of the threat and the specific nature of resource, and identify particular targets for preservation.

[31] It should be noted that the arguments presented in this chapter are not to be taken as a dismissal of the importance of Over-the-Rhine on cultural grounds. It is the author's opinion that the cultural value of Over-the-Rhine is immeasurable, and ultimately the thing that really matters in Over-the-Rhine. The purpose of this chapter, however, was to make the case for the transmutation of cultural value into economic value, which is much more likely to garner sympathy toward preservation efforts, and influence public policy decisions.

Chapter IV: Targeting Analysis

A multi-step methodology was employed in order to select those parts of the fabric of Over-the-Rhine most in need of attention, and begin to formulate a plan for preservation. The first step was to perform a detailed and specific assessment of the threat to the buildings. This was done by mapping building vacancy and condemnation in Over-the-Rhine.

Mapping the Threat

Under the Cincinnati Municipal Code, owners of property are required to meet certain minimum standards of maintenance and repair on their buildings. Those that fail to do so are cited with code violations by the Cincinnati Department of Buildings and Inspections, and ordered by that department to keep the building vacant until it has satisfied the City's requirements. Owners are given a limited amount of time to either completely redress the problem or apply for a vacant building maintenance license (VBML). The license allows an owner to keep the building vacant, conditional upon the building being kept in structurally good condition, weathertight against the elements and trespassers, and safe for entry by emergency personnel[1].

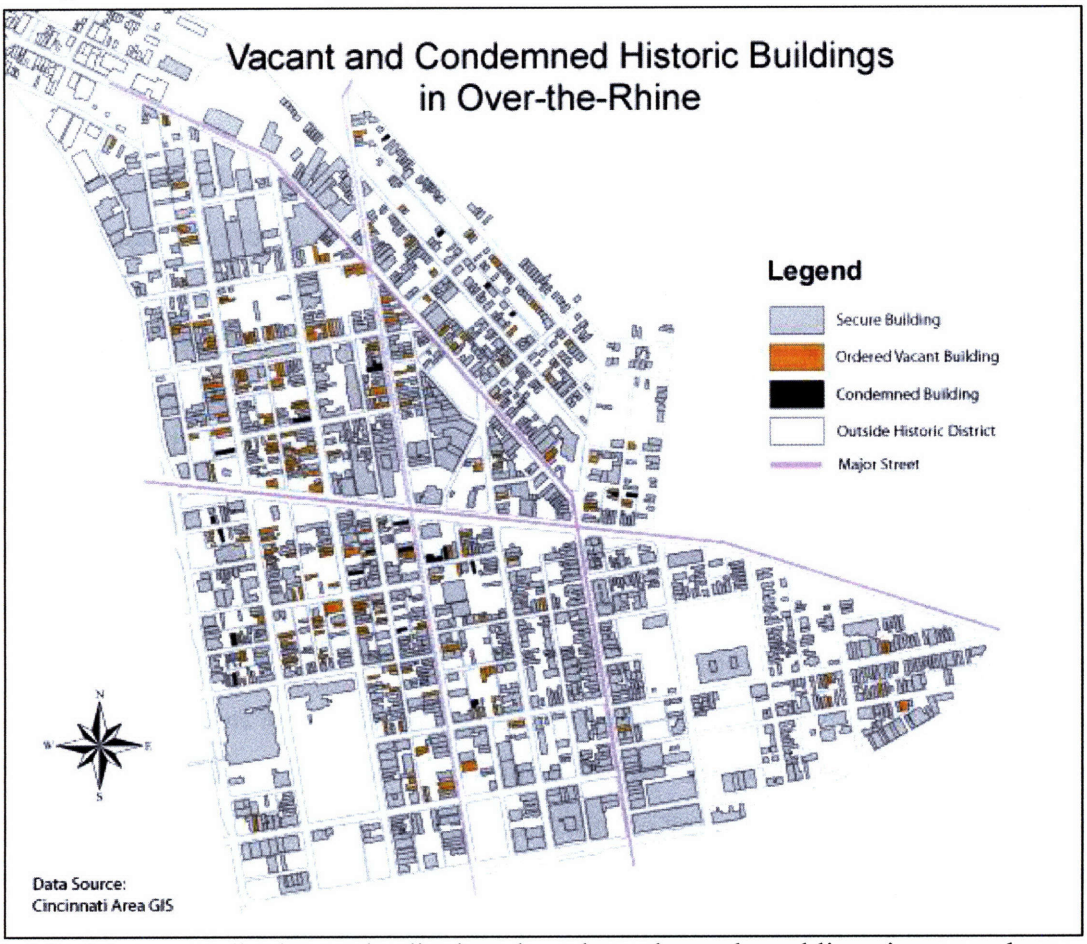
As noted previously, Over-the-Rhine has experienced a problem with vacant and abandoned buildings for years, one that was brought on by the neighborhood's steep population decline. The Department of Buildings and Inspections ("B&I") finds it extremely difficult to enforce compliance on these buildings. Many owners are reluctant to invest in non-income producing properties[2], while others are absentee owners and do not respond to citations[3]. As a result of these circumstances, vacant buildings typically languish and deteriorate. Though many owners barricade their buildings, and the City barricades others, vagrants, prostitutes, and drug users often destroy the barricades and squat in the buildings. This situation makes buildings extremely vulnerable to the

[1] City of Cincinnati Municipal Code, Sec 1101-77
[2] Abandoned Buildings Company. *Report on the Over-the-Rhine Pilot Receivership Program.* May 2001.
[3] Part of the problem is that until recently, fines imposed for failure to comply were not severe enough to cause compliance. Cincinnati City Council recently passed a resolution that escalates the fine schedule for failure to comply, in an effort to address the City's vacant buildings problem

elements, and to other threats such as fire. Over time, these buildings deteriorate until they reach the "emergency demolition" stage.

Currently there are approximately 210 buildings that have been ordered vacant. Of these, approximately 200 are considered as contributing to the district's integrity[4]. 30 buildings

Figure 3.1



– 27 of them contributing to the district – have been deemed a public nuisance and condemned[5]. Condemned buildings have been judged to be structurally unsound, and are thus at particular risk of demolition. Figure 3.1 maps ordered vacant and condemned buildings in Over-the-Rhine. Clearly most of the vacant and condemned buildings are in the Findlay Market and upper Washington Park subdistricts.

[4] The city, following standard practice, divides the district's buildings into "contributing" and "non-contributing categories". The usual line of demarcation between the two is the year 1936
[5] Cincinnati Department of Buildings & Inspections. *Vacant Buildings Report.* February 2006

In order to further refine the identification of endangered buildings, analysis was performed on the 250 buildings that are vacant but not condemned. This was important because different vacant buildings have different levels of risk of demolition, depending on their owner. 3CDC, for instance, owns a number of vacant buildings, but has taken great pains to clean, seal, and monitor them to prevent further deterioration. Other owners, as mentioned before, are completely unresponsive and even intentionally pursue demolition by neglect.

An analysis was carried out the approximately 200 vacant contributing buildings using 5 criteria[6] to determine whether they should be deemed a level 1 or a level 2 risk:

1) *Owner Identity* – Does the owner have a history of neglect? Is the owner known to be taking positive steps toward repair?
2) *VBML Application* – Has the owner applied for and obtained a Vacant Buildings Maintenance License?
3) *Status of Violation* – Is the City in process of bringing criminal charges against the owner on the basis of non-compliance?
4) *Responsiveness to Initial Orders* – Did the owner respond quickly to the initial orders?
5) *Tax Delinquency* – Are there non-trivial outstanding taxes on the property?

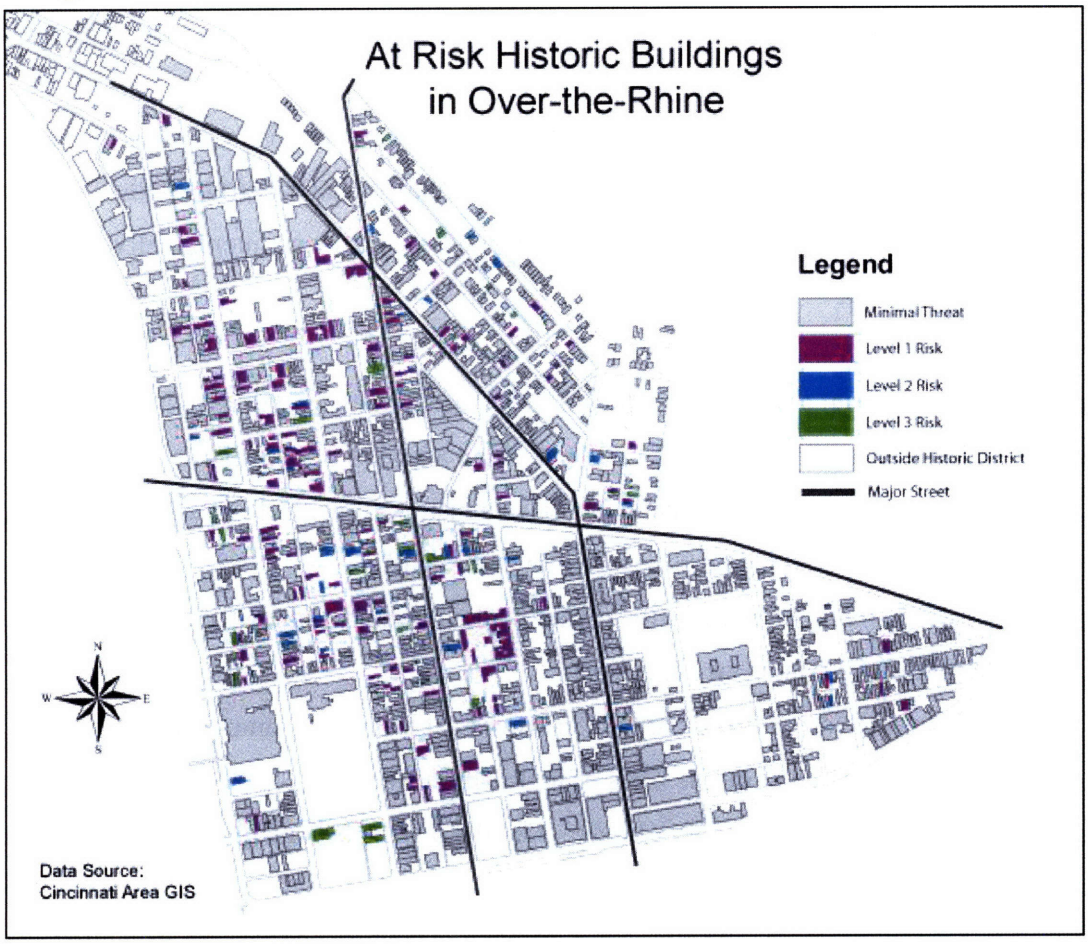
Also considered were factors unrelated to vacancy, such as plans on the part of the owner to demolish the property. For, example, it is known that Cincinnati Public Schools and 3CDC plan to demolish 5 non-vacant historic buildings to make way for the development of a new school.

This analysis resulted in the identification of approximately 170 level 1 risk and 30 level 2 risk buildings. Level 1 represents the lowest level of risk, level 2 the intermediate level, and level 3 – designated only for condemned buildings – the highest level. These distinctions are depicted geographically in Figure 3.2.

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[6] Criteria suggested, and data provided by Edward Cunningham, Department of Buildings & Inspections, City of Cincinnati. March 2006.

Figure 3.2

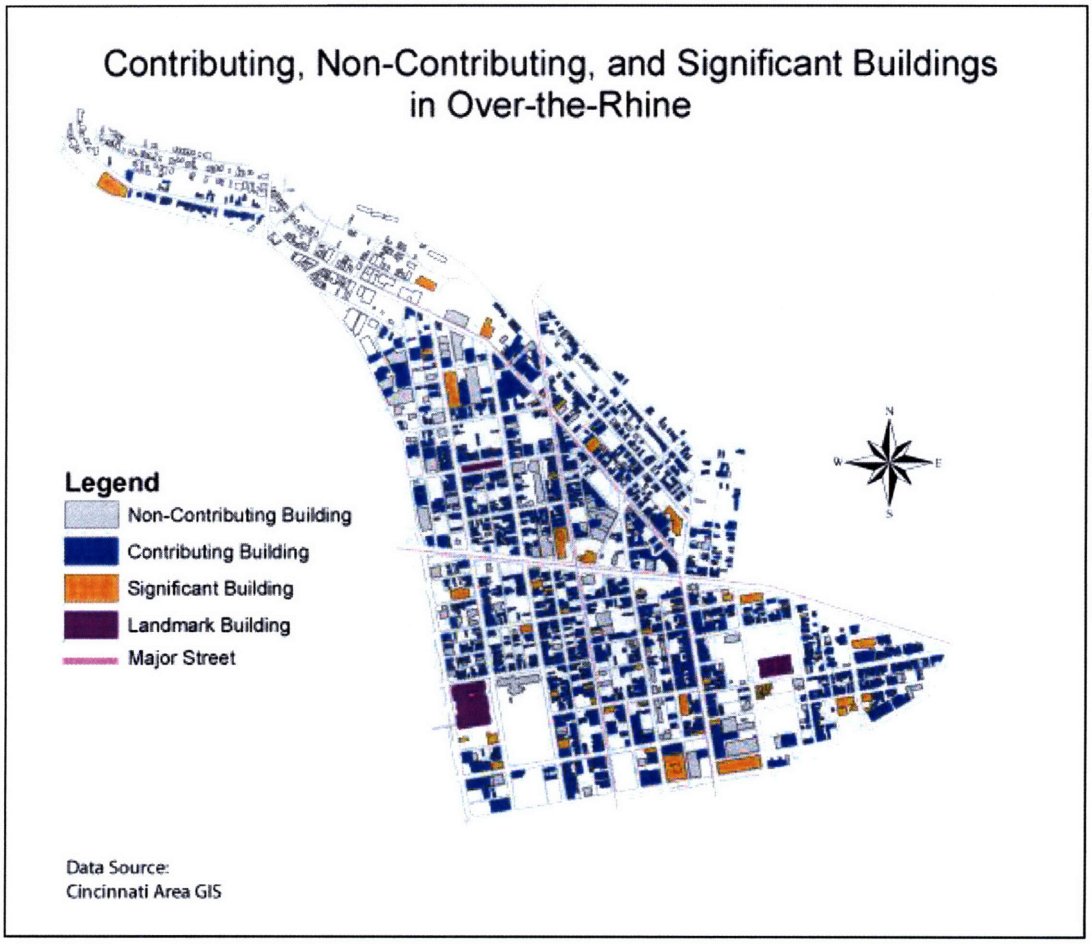


Mapping the Resource

The next step in the process was to identify and map those parts of Over-the-Rhine which still exhibit high integrity, and should therefore be prioritized for preservation. Several evaluative criteria were used to make the determination of integrity:

1) *Proportion of Contributing Buildings*
2) *Presence of Intrusive Buildings*
3) *Size and Frequency of Gaps in Streetwall*
4) *Presence of Architecturally or Historically Significant Buildings*
5) *Presence of German Language Signs or Markers*
6) *Relation to the District as a Whole*
7) *Historical Sense of Place (as experienced subjectively)*

Figure 3.3

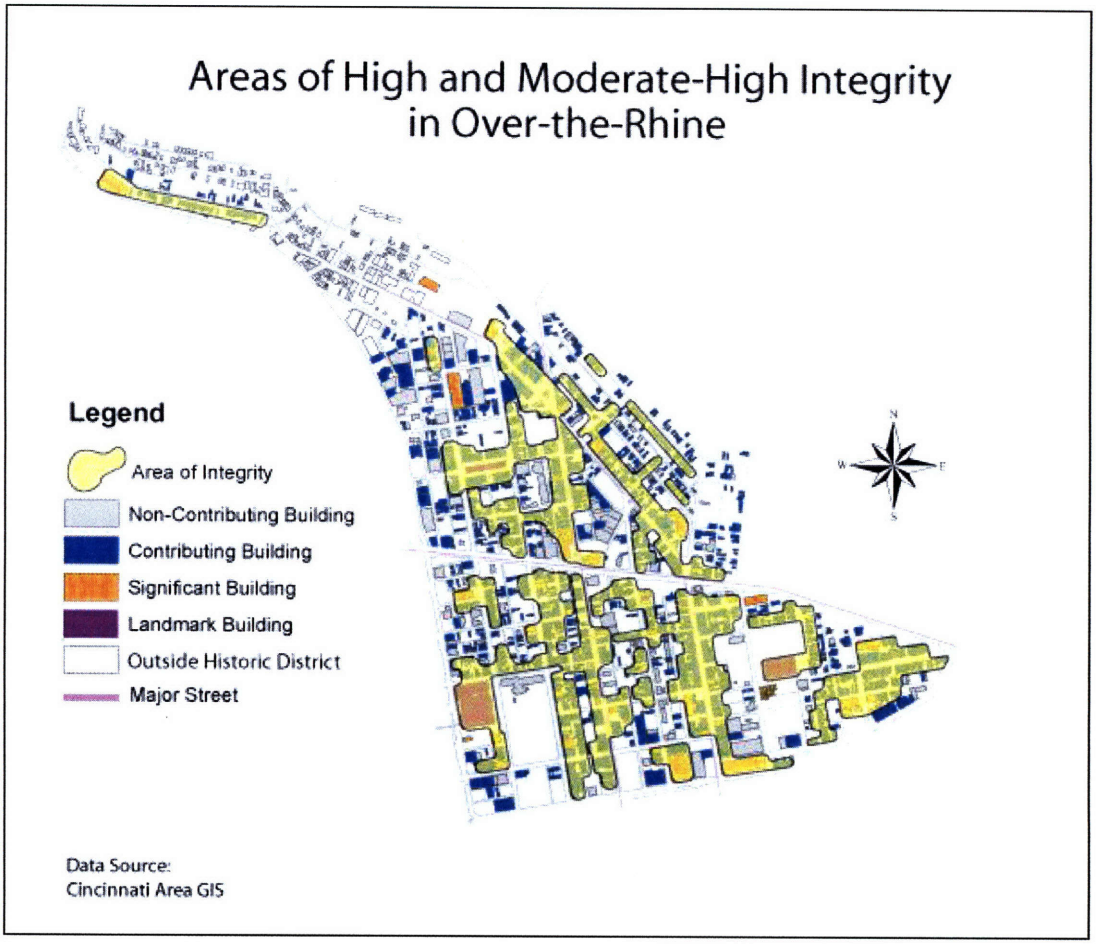


These criteria were applied first by mapping contributing, non-contributing, and significant[7] buildings in Over-the-Rhine[8].(see Figure 3.3) Following a thorough exploration of the district on site, and an assessment of the sense of place experienced on each street and in each part of the district, the map in Figure 3.3. was used to encircle the chosen "Areas of Integrity". The results of this process are displayed in Figure 3.4.

[7] Three criteria were used in determining building significance: 1)distinguished architectural character, 2)important cultural associations, and 3)associations with prominent individuals

[8] The mapping of contributing/non-contributing buildings was performed by the City; the City map was then modified to include significant buildings was well

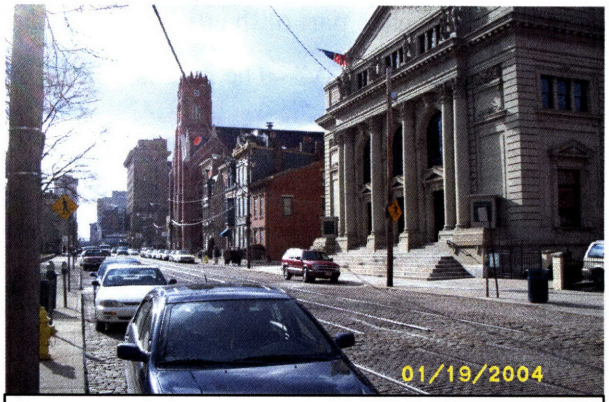
Figure 3.4



Integrity Subdistricts

The identified areas of integrity can be further broken into the following integrity subdistricts, displayed graphically in figure 3.5

Washington Park- One of the most impressive, cohesive areas in all of Over-the-Rhine. The 150 year old public park is framed on three sides by nineteenth century streetwalls, providing a sense of being surrounded by an historic community. In terms of diversity of uses the area is quintessentially Over-the-Rhine, with row houses



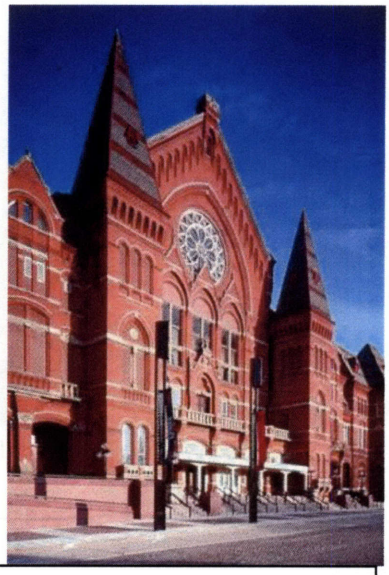
Looking south on Elm Street between 12th and 14th
Source: Danny Klingler, 2004

coexisting effortlessly with churches, theatres, and meeting halls. Architecturally it is also varied, drawing primarily on Italianate and Gothic elements.

Elm Street between 12th and 14th deserves special mention as a component of Washington Park. It is the only street in Cincinnati that retains its original cobblestones, and is lined with distinctive buildings – including St. John's German Protestant Church, an array of row houses, Memorial Hall, and the monumental Music Hall.

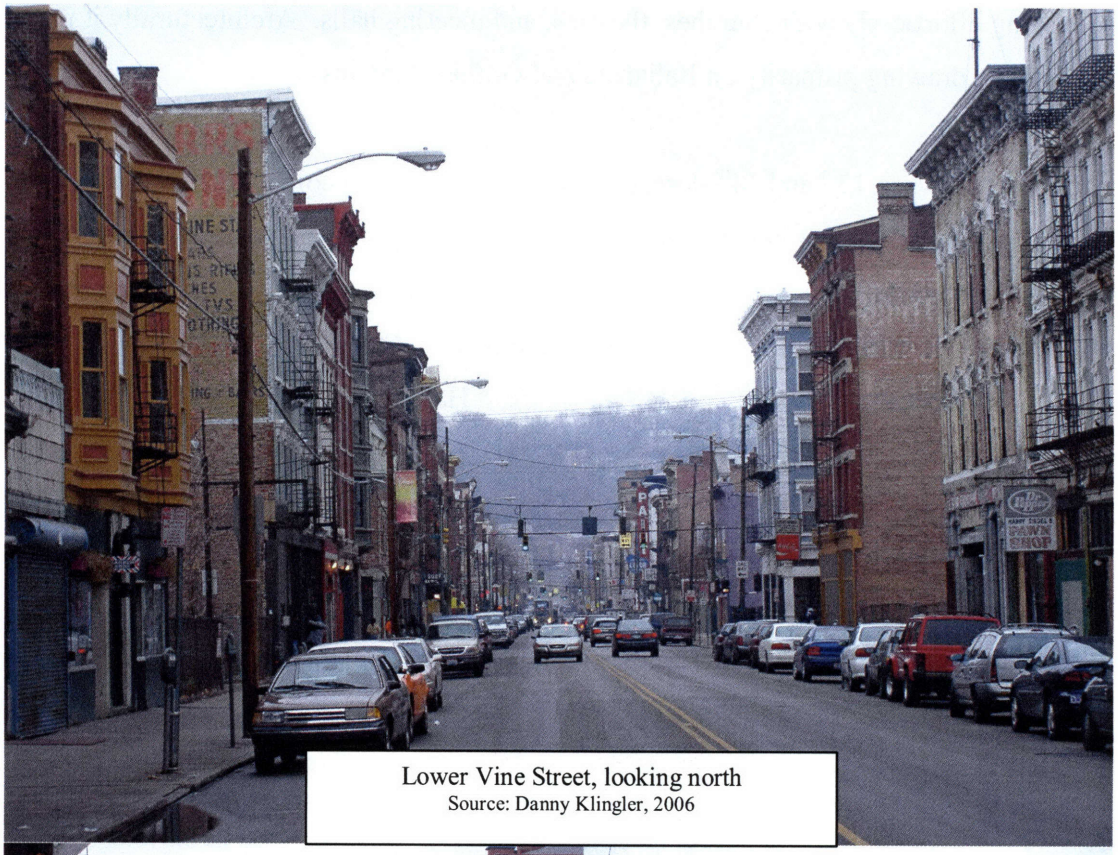


View north on Race Street on the eastern edge of Washington Park
Source: Danny Klingler, 2006



The iconic Cincinnati Music Hall
Source: Ran Mullens

Vine Street –Historically the City's most important thoroughfare, Vine Street can be divided into two sections. Lower Vine (between Central Parkway and Liberty) is lined with a relatively intact wall of beautiful, ornately detailed structures. This area is notable for its mixed use character, diversity of building heights and widths, and pronounced lintels, cornices, friezes, windows, and other architectural features. A number of historically significant individual buildings also make their home here, including Heuck's Opera House Saloon, and Wielert's Beer Garden. Though the East side of Vine is far less intact, it nevertheless constitutes an important part of the Vine Street gestalt.



Lower Vine Street, looking north
Source: Danny Klingler, 2006



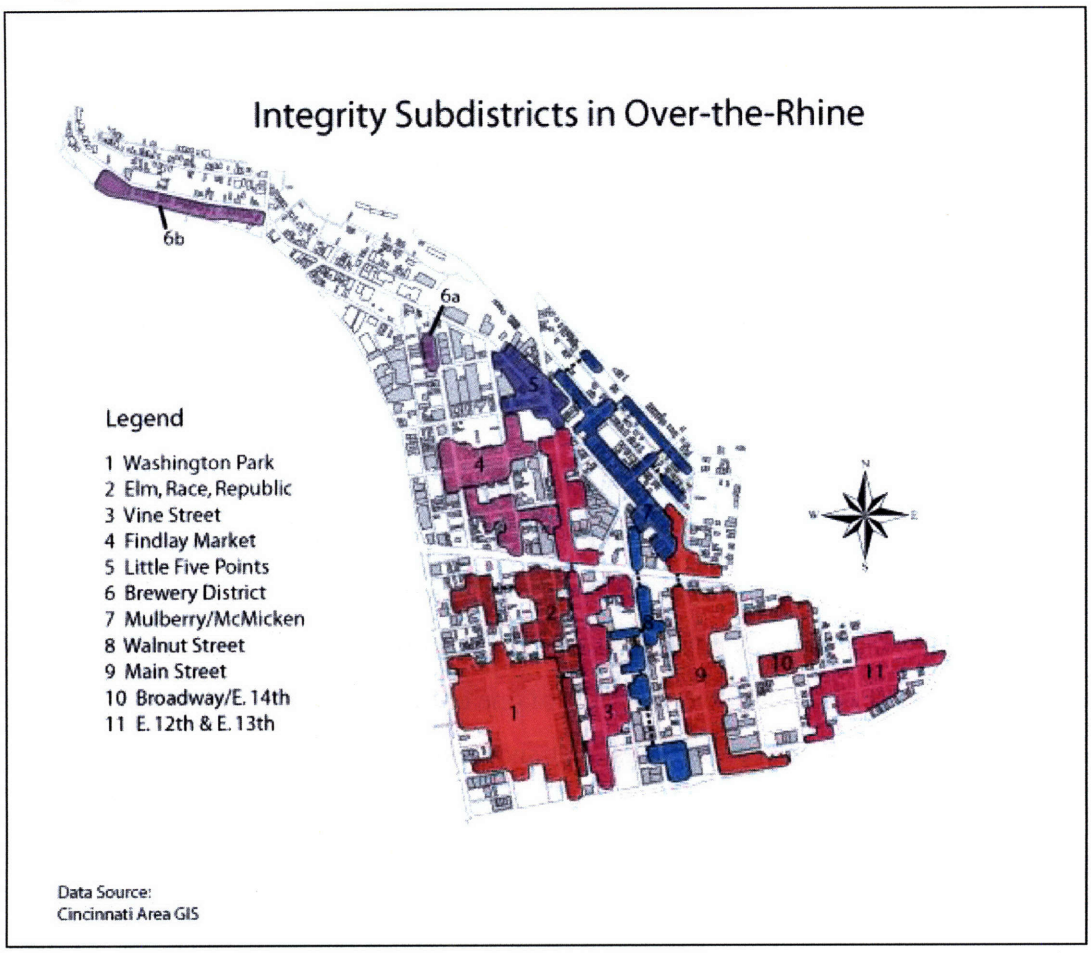
Upper Vine Street looking south
Source: Danny Klingler, 2006



Lower Vine Street, view of western street wall
Source: Danny Klingler, 2006

Upper Vine possesses lesser scale and architectural ornamentation than its lower counterpart, but is equally intact, characterized by an impressive streetscape of Italianate mixed-use structures. Upper Vine is particularly important for its relationship to other parts of the district: it connects lower Vine to the hills of Clifton, forming a grand linear entryway to the historic neighborhood; and it anchors the eastern portion of the Findlay Market subdistrict, providing a definable and cohesive edge.

Figure 3.5



Broadway/E. 14th –Upper Broadway is characterized by single family housing typologies that make it Over-the-Rhine's most notable residential area. Broadway was once home to several prominent Cincinnatians, and their homes remain remarkably intact, with no gaps or intrusions in the street wall. The residential character of the street is augmented by wrought iron fences, and by the front and side setbacks of the buildings, which allow for small yard spaces.



Broadway north of E. 14th
Source: Danny Klingler

14th Street east of Sycamore forms a perpendicular intersection with Broadway. The street is prominent for its cohesive streetscape, mix of building styles (including second French Empire, Italianate, and Greek Revival) and ages[9], and gentle sloping topography.

Both Broadway and 14th are augmented by the grand Woodward High School, an imposing Renaissance Revival Structure that houses the School for the Creative and Performing Arts.

Five Points – Over-the-Rhine's most important intersection. The convergence of 3 streets, each corner building still intact, provides a strong sense of place and a unique urban experience. The experience is enhanced by the architectural diversity and distinctiveness of the corners, and the presence of the word "Apotheke" (Apothecary) painted in German clearly visible on the side of one of the buildings. Also part of this area is a stretch of fairly intact structures of an industrial character along McMicken, terminating in the St. Phillipus Church.



Five Points intersection, looking west down McMicken
Source: Danny Klingler, 2006

[9] Wimberg, Robert. Cincinnati: Over-the-Rhine; A Historical Guide to 19th Century Buildings and Their Residents. Cincinnati, OH: The Ohio Book Store, 1987.

Findlay Market – One of the oldest continuously operating public marketplaces in the country, Findlay Market is one of the district's gems. The market itself is enclosed on 3 sides by dense, cohesive fabric, creating an exceptional nineteenth century ambience. Architecturally the surrounding buildings demonstrate a strongly Italianate character; taken together, they also show the asymmetrical roof lines found throughout the district.

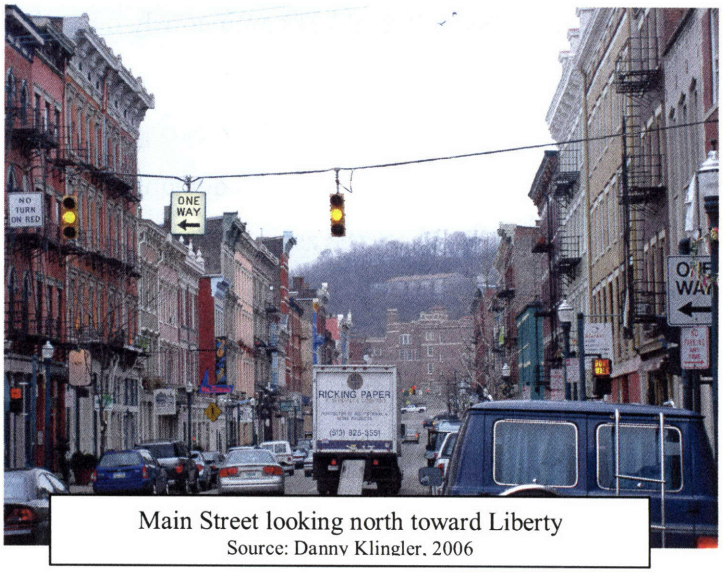
The southern portion of the Findlay Market subdistrict also retains sufficient fabric to warrant an area of integrity designation. Portions of Race, Green, Pleasant, and Republic street remain largely intact, displaying dense, Italianate mixed use and residential character.

Two intact streetscapes also extend North of the Market; on the West side of Elm Street, and on the East side of Race Street.



Looking West at Findlay Market
Source: Danny Klingler, 2004

Main Street – The single most intact street in Over-the-Rhine. Remarkably few demolitions have occurred on Main Street, resulting in a mixed use commercial district with a very strong sense of place. Main Street is also the only section of the district to demonstrate continuity on both sides of Liberty street, as the street wall continues relatively uninterrupted before terminating at the imposing Rothenburg school.



Main Street looking north toward Liberty
Source: Danny Klingler, 2006

Several tertiary streets demonstrate high integrity as they intersect Main, thereby adding to the feel of the main arterial. Orchard Street is one such street, and could also stand alone as an area of integrity because of the unbroken string of historic single family homes on its South side. Main Street is also augmented by the presence of Over-the-Rhine's oldest church, Old St. Mary's.

13th Street (East of Broadway) – This area is distinctive for its nearly unbroken Italianate row house streetscape on both sides of the street, enhanced by the sloped nature of the street. These features provide for a striking view down the street, culminating in the Old St. Mary's Church spire and the rest of the district beyond[10].


E. 13th Street, looking west toward Old St. Mary's Church
Source: Danny Klingler, 2006

[10] Cincinnati City Planning Dept. *Over-the-Rhine (South) Historic District Designation Report*, 1993.

Elm, Race, and Republic (South of Liberty) – each of these residential streets within the Washington Park subarea exhibits sections of undeniable integrity. The cohesive Italianate character is boosted by the presence of the St. Paulus Church, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, and the Sixth District Public School building.



The German Evangelical St. Paulus Church (Deutsche Evangelische St. Paulus Kirche)
Source: Danny Klingler, 2006

Walnut Street – Walnut Street contains several pockets of high integrity fabric. Buildings of substantial significance to the district anchor these pockets in many instances, including Grammer's restaurant and saloon, and the Germania Building.

Mulberry/McMicken – The Mulberry/McMicken subarea possesses less integrity than other parts of Over-the-Rhine due to demolitions, less consistency in materials, and to the fact that it was never fully built out[11]. However, there are several noteworthy strips of high integrity.

McMicken is the most significant example of the area's integrity, with an intact mix of commercial, residential, and industrial uses which in some cases extends to both sides of the street.

Mulberry and Clifton each contain small linear pockets which display less cohesiveness and scale than is characteristic of Over-the-Rhine, but which nevertheless provide a sense of place.

Frintz is an intersecting cross street at a fairly steep gradient that retains a critical mass of nineteenth century corner buildings. This allows for an impressive sloped streetscape vista, punctuated by the St. John the Baptist church steeple in the background[12]

[11] City of Cincinnati. *Over-the-Rhine (North) Historic District Designation Report*, 2001.
[12] Interestingly, the steeple is all that remains of this church; the church structure itself was razed in the 1970's to allow for the construction of the Over-the-Rhine community center, which incorporated the steeple into its design. Pickford, Bob. President, the Corporation for Findlay Market. Personal Interview. March 2006.



View east on E. McMicken
Source: Danny Klingler, 2006

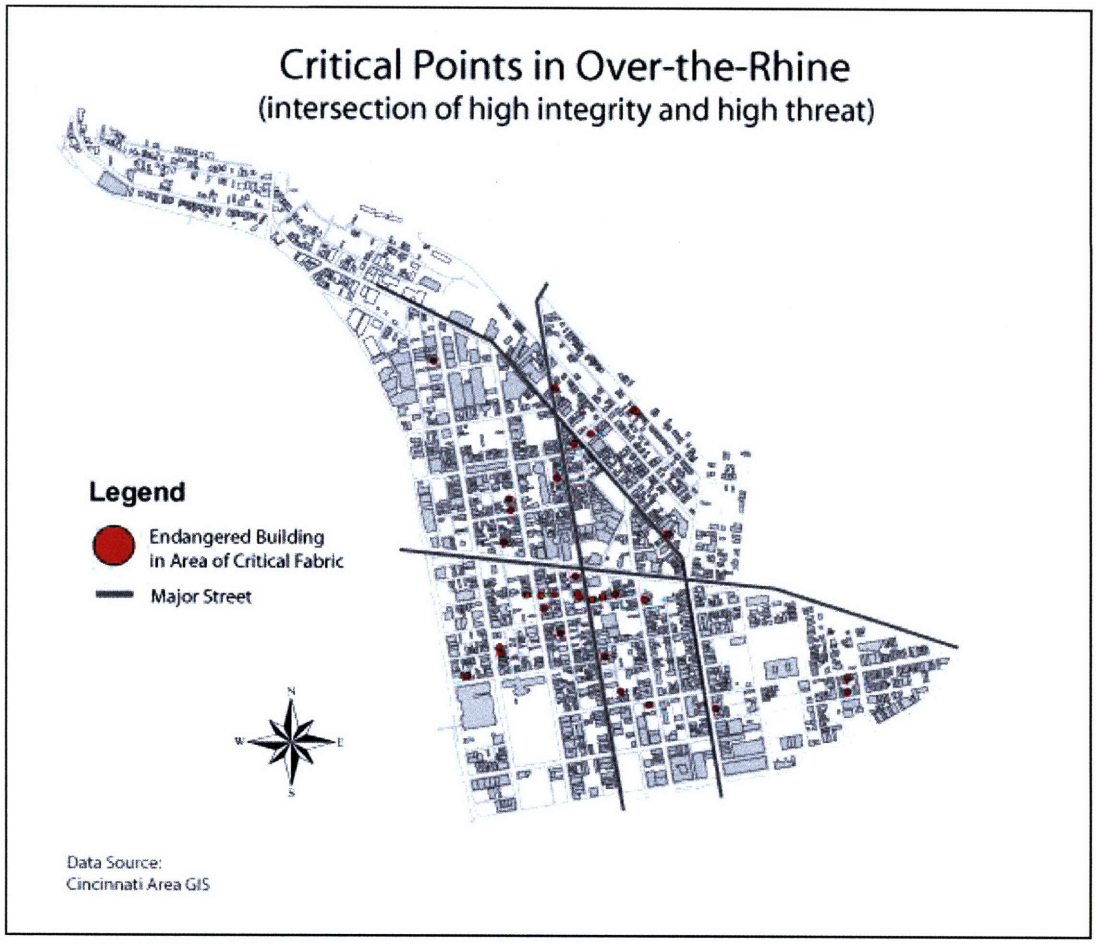


View into the basin from the intersection of Peete Street and Frintz Street
Source: Danny Klingler, 2006

Overlay Analysis

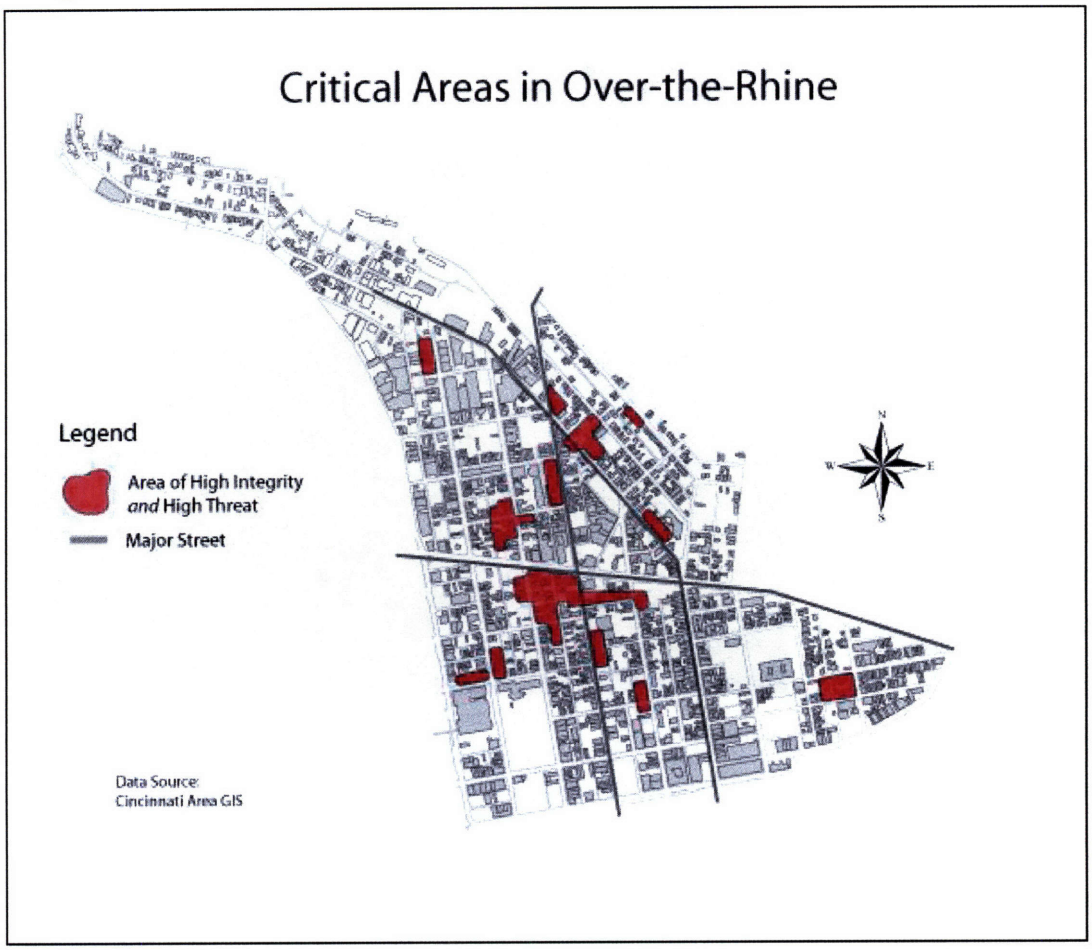
Having mapped at risk buildings, identified areas of integrity, and further identified particular integrity subdistricts, the final step in the analysis was to overlay the areas of integrity on the endangered buildings. This overlay allowed for the identification (Figure 3.6) of *endangered properties lying within particularly cohesive, important parts of Over-the-Rhine, whose demolition would have an adverse impact on the character of the district.*

Figure 3.6



In total, 32 such properties were identified. These individual threatened properties were then encircled to display areas of critical fabric in Over-the-Rhine (Figure 3.7). These areas were drawn to include not just threatened properties themselves, but also the surrounding fabric that would be damaged if these properties were lost.

Figure 3.7



Target Area #1

The results of this analysis suggest that there are three critical areas of special concern, *that should be targeted as a top priority for historic preservation.* The largest and most prominent area stretches across several of Over-the-Rhine's most prominent streets just below Liberty. The loss of any number of endangered buildings in this area would impugn the integrity of very significant, cohesive parts of Over-the-Rhine, including the streetscapes of Race, Vine, and Republic between 15th and Liberty, Walnut Street just below Liberty, and the very intact streetscape on 15th between Vine and Walnut. Particularly damaging would be the loss of the four endangered resources on Vine. These buildings anchor what is left of the fabric of this section of Vine – a section which is the terminus of lower Vine, and a connector to upper Vine and the spires of St. Seraph.

Their destruction would seriously impugn the integrity of the geographical heart of Over-the-Rhine, and the symbolic spine of Cincinnati.



View of critical buildings on Vine near Liberty
Source: Danny Klingler

Target Area #2

The second critical area encompasses much of the southern portion of the Findlay Market sub-district. Three endangered buildings in this area threaten the character of parts of Race, Green, and Pleasant streets. Of these three, the building at the northwest corner of Race and Green warrants special attention. A five-story Italianate structure with side bay windows, arched fourth floor lintels, and other interesting features, it anchors the intersection, tying together the streetwall on Race, and representing the most important element in a nineteenth century intersection that is ¾ intact. The loss of this building would be detrimental both in terms of its individual character, and its context.

Target Area #3

The third critical area is upper Vine street between Green and West Elder. This area has only one threatened resource, yet that resource is significant enough that its demolition would seriously harm the character of the area. Known as the Kaufmann Building for its associations with the nineteenth century brewery of that name[13], the large Italian Renaissance Revival structure is both an individually significant building, and a crucial

[13] Wimberg, Robert. *Cincinnati: Over-the-Rhine.*

component in the cohesive upper Vine street wall. Due to fires and extensive structural damage, the building is perhaps the single most endangered resource in the entire district.



The Kauffman Building, shown in context on upper Vine Street
Source: Danny Klingler, 2006

Several smaller areas are threatened as well, including parts of 14th, Elm, Lang, McMicken, and Walnut; these areas should not be ignored, but rather should be given careful attention following preservation of the aforementioned priority areas.

These three target areas form the core around which a preservation initiative can be built. By honing in on the most important endangered fabric, resources and efforts can be directed to the most pressing preservation needs. The next chapter explores the fundamental question confronting the preservation of these target areas: the issue of the point at which a building is "too far gone".

Chapter V: Saving the "Unsalvageable"

The selected target areas are endangered because of severe disinvestment and neglect. Although there are questions about whether B&I takes action on buildings that are absolutely in imminent danger of collapse, there is no question that many of the buildings threatened with demolition are in very poor condition. To some, the condition of many of these buildings makes them "too far gone" to rehabilitate. They are in such bad shape that they are quite unattractive to even the most risk tolerant developers, leading these individuals to argue that they should simply be removed on the grounds that they are not worth saving.

Thus arises one of the fundamental questions confronting preservation advocates in Over-the-Rhine: at what point is an historic building "too far gone"? Are the buildings in the target areas so badly damaged that they cannot be saved? What strategies can be employed to save the "unsalvageable"?

Current Research

Unfortunately, there is a gap in the literature in regards to the point at which a building is "too far gone"; existing research has little or nothing to say about the threshold at which individual buildings, for all practical purposes, cannot be saved. This chapter arose out of the need to address this gap in the literature by exploring the concept of "too far gone", with an eye toward applying the findings in making recommendations for the target areas in Over-the-Rhine.

Methodology

Numerous emails were sent and phone calls made to State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO's), Historic Tax Credit managers, preservation listservs, and other preservation related organizations and individuals. These entities were solicited for examples of small older buildings, preferably within historic districts, which were severely dilapidated and thought to be "too far gone", but nevertheless saved and rehabilitated. The intent of this request was to identify cases of buildings that had been rescued from the brink of

destruction, and to study the factors that went into the preservation of the particular building, and the determination that it was not, in fact, "too far gone". The criteria that buildings be small and located within historic districts were included for applicability to the target areas in Over-the-Rhine. Large and highly significant buildings – such as city halls, theatres, and mayoral mansions – are often saved due to their high profile nature, and are thus anomalies that would bias the results of the study away from the type of endangered buildings typically found in Over-the-Rhine.

A nationwide search yielded seven examples of cases which best fit the parameters of the study. All of these cases were selected on the basis of the great and imminent threat to the historic resource, as well as the lack of extraordinary size, significance, or beauty. The cases were chosen to represent a variety of regions within the U.S., as well as a balance between for-profit and non-profit sponsorship. Data was gathered on the cases through interviews, email correspondence, and documentation.

Case Studies

CASE I
CONECT Project: St. Louis, MO

Context

The CONECT Project represented the dramatic rescue of nine historic structures in the Old North St. Louis Historic District. Consisting mostly of old Federalist style brick masonry structures dating to the 1850's and 1860's, the buildings had fallen into such disrepair that demolition seemed imminent. Roofs and masonry walls had collapsed, leaving



CONECT project building "before"
Source: Old North St. Louis Restoration Group

gaping holes and threatening the structural stability of the buildings. The buildings had been spared the wrecking ball only because they were sufficiently isolated that the City had not yet identified them as a public safety hazard[1].

The Developer

The Regional Housing and Community Development Alliance (RHCDA) is a not-for-profit entity with a mission to help build strong and healthy neighborhoods in the St. Louis Metropolitan area. They function as both a capacity builder and provider of technical assistance to other community based non-profits, and as a developer of affordable and market rate housing in underserved neighborhoods. Their core values include the promotion of diverse, mixed incomes communities, and historic preservation[2].

Preservation

The impetus for preservation and rehabilitation came primarily from the community, and its formal body for historic preservation, the Old North St. Louis Restoration Group (ONSLRG). ONSLRG had considered the fate of the nine decimated buildings for some time. Their main fear was that if the buildings were lost, the neighborhood – which had relatively few remaining historic resources – might be delisted from the National Register. This, in turn, would eliminate the possibility of using Historic Tax Credits as catalysts for rehabilitation and investment[3].

When it became known that RHCDA had taken on the task of eliminating the blight caused by the nine properties, ONSLRG expressed its concerns and advocated for a preservation alternative. Despite a generally pro-preservation perspective, RHCDA had initially determined that the buildings were simply too deteriorated to save, due in part to the reports of structural engineers that stabilization would be cost prohibitive. In the end,

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[1] Dodson, David, Deputy Director, RHCDA. Telephone Interview, March 2006
[2] Ibid; Regional Housing and Community Development Alliance Website, <http://www.rhcda.com/>
[3] Dodson, David. Telephone Interview, March 2006; Thomas, Sean. Executive Director, ONSLRG. Telephone Interview, April 2006.

however, RHCDA were persuaded by the advocacy of the community to pursue restoration instead of demolition[4].

The costs associated with rehabilitation were enormous, led by the masonry restoration costs due to the destruction of the exterior walls. Interestingly, the bids from contractors for masonry restoration ranged from $1 million to $3.2 million. Despite these huge costs, according to David Dodson, Deputy Director of RHCDA, "where there's a will, there's a way". When it comes to historic preservation, any resource can be saved if one has sufficient money[5]. Ultimately RHCDA was able to structure an elaborate and complex financing package by which it became financially feasible to rehabilitate the buildings. Financing included Federal and State Historic Tax Credits – a subsidy mechanism whereby the government offers generous tax benefits to investors in qualified rehabilitation projects, which induces equity contributions to those projects that do not have to be paid back; Federal and State Low Income Housing Tax Credits – a mechanism whereby the government similarly induces private sector investment in low income housing developments by offering tax incentives; an innovative "eligible basis boost" in the maximum allowable amount of the Low Income Housing Tax Credits, made possible by the project's location in a high poverty census tract; State HOME funds – federally allocated grant monies designed to subsidize affordable housing; and tax exempt bond financing[6].



CONECT Project building "after"
Source: Old North St. Louis Restoration Group

At $260,000 per unit, the cost of the project was three times that of new construction; according to Dodson, however, the CONECT project is a success story that "justifies the

[4] Dodson, David. Telephone Interview, March 2006.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

fairly extravagant cost"[7]. It has preserved a valuable part of St. Louis's heritage, promoted diversity through the creation of affordable housing, prevented delisting of the historic neighborhood, and stimulated interest and investment from others.

The project also generated a substantial return for RHCDA. They are an organization which, like any non-profit, must look out for their own financial sustainability, and would not have taken on the project if they were not compensated for the risk it entailed. Dodson notes that the developer fee was sizable enough that it would have been an attractive number to many private developers; the effort and risk involved in obtaining that fee, however, was likely what kept developers away. The project was relatively small, required a great deal of commitment and persistence, and required venturing into an untested residential market – all factors which would have made it unappealing to the private sector[8].

CONECT Project – Key Facts and Conclusions:

- Community driven effort
- Pro-preservation development entity critical
- Restoration bids varied widely
- Innovative financing structure employed
- Partnership between community, non-profits, government, investors
- Projected generated sizable return
- Project too much effort and risk for private developers

CASE II

18-20 Luongo Square: Providence, RI

Context

The property at 18-20 Luongo Square in Providence is a three story mansard roof wood frame structure, fit for commercial use on the ground floor and residential above. Until

[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

recently, the property was in awful condition, and in bad need of attention. The entire mansard roof was badly damaged, and unable to perform its function. The building was at risk of condemnation and subsequent demolition.



18-20 Luongo property before rehabilitation
Source: Jon Ozbek

The Developer

Jon Ozbek is a local developer whose forte is the rehabilitation of historic buildings in Providence.

Preservation

Ozbek took an interest in the property at 18-20 Luongo, and purchased it "without a full appreciation of what would be involved in repairing it"[9]. The building's location at the head of the square, combined with its "hidden character", made it intriguing to Ozbek. Recognizing that the building would likely soon be demolished, and believing it to be critical to the neighborhood's fabric, he decided to rehabilitate it[10].

A number of factors went into making the rehabilitation – which included the high cost of completely replacing the entire mansard roof – a feasible endeavor. First, at the time that the property was purchased, the market was about to head into an upturn, allowing Ozbek to buy low and reap the benefits of appreciation when the project was finished. Also critical was the securing of a commercial tenant for the ground floor, and the availability

[9] Jon Ozbek. Email Questionnaire, March 2006.
[10] Ibid.

of the Rhode Island State Historic Tax Credit[11]. Finally, Ozbek was willing to employ substantial personal funds, and the Providence Preservation Society Revolving Fund contributed a small loan, some project management, and technical assistance[12]. Ozbek was also able to save costs by acting as his own General Contractor, and hiring local tradespeople[13].

Eventually the rehabilitation was completed, and the building now houses a neighborhood bar and a residential tenant. In the developer's estimation, the project has had an immense impact on the community, instilling pride in neighbors, and inspiring similar projects nearby.

"In retrospect", Ozbek says, "the amount of money it takes to make a building that is badly damaged right again is rarely worth spending, financially speaking". One has to make it personal, as "Numbers only will not get it done". According to Ozbek, developers who claim that buildings are too far gone essentially do so for several underlying economic reasons: buildings in very bad shape are very risky and require great financial exposure, primarily because they are difficult for architects to spec, difficult to build, and difficult to finance with banks. "Most are not willing to risk that kind of exposure"[14].

18-20 Luongo Square – Key Facts and Conclusions:

- Building "saved" by individual private developer
- Developer partially motivated by non-economic values
- Project made feasible by market conditions, State tax credits
- Project probably not worth it in purely financial terms; such projects must go beyond numbers

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[11] Federal tax credits were used as well; State credits were critical, however, because they are only available in some states, and had they not been available in Rhode Island, the project would not have been economically feasible.
[12] Ozbek, Jon. Email Questionnaire, March 2006.
[13] Schoettle, Clark. Executive Director, Providence Preservation Society Revolving Fund. Private Email Message to Danny Klingler, March 2006.
[14] Ozbek, Jon. Email Questionnaire, March 2006.

- Financial risk keeps most developers away from such projects.

CASE III

Cadillac Hotel: Seattle, WA

Context

The Cadillac Hotel building is a late nineteenth century 3 ½ story brick masonry structure located in Seattle's Pioneer Square neighborhood. Built as a residential hotel for local laborers, the Cadillac is one of only eight remaining Pioneer Square buildings constructed in the immediate aftermath of the Great Fire of 1889[15]. After years of neglect in the latter half of the 20th century, the Cadillac was badly damaged during the 2001 Nisqually earthquake in Seattle. The building owner, Goodman Financial Services, hired several consultants and subsequently came to the determination that demolition was the only alternative. Goodman claimed that rehabilitation would cost at least $8.7 million, and result in a property worth only $3 million, thus making it unfeasible.[16] According to a source closely involved with the eventual salvation of the property, these estimates may have been partly motivated by Goodman's desire to replace the building with a 6-7 story office tower: "I believe (Goodman) both overestimated the cost of rehab and underestimated the potential value of the completed project".[17]

Goodman applied for a demolition permit in the summer of 2001, putting the Cadillac in a very precarious situation. In the meantime, the financial services company had temporary shoring and stabilization work done, including the removal of chunks of the roof parapet, which further degraded the building's structural integrity[18]

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[15] Historic Seattle. *Cadillac Hotel Media Document.*

[16] George Petrie of Goodman had the following to say about the matter: "The neighborhood would be far better served by a new building that will benefit the neighborhood and is consistent with the character of the neighborhood than by a damaged structure that is infeasible to rehabilitate". Gilmore, Susan. "Owner seeks permit to raze Cadillac Hotel". *Seattle Times Online*, June 21, 2001.

[17] Blatter, Mark. Director of Real Estate Development, Historic Seattle. Email Interview, April 2006.

[18] An engineer would later identify this even as "far more damaging" than the earthquake itself

The Developer

Historic Seattle is a non-profit preservation organization formed in 1974 to protect the architectural legacy of Seattle and King County. Achieving its goals through a combination of advocacy and development, Historic Seattle is the area's largest and most prominent historic preservation group[19].

Preservation

With demolition imminent, Pioneer Square community members mobilized to save the building, and Goodman's application for an emergency demolition permit was blocked by the City Office of Historic Preservation. Critical in this action was a second opinion on the structural integrity of the building offered by engineers from the National Trust for Historic Preservation[20]. Contrary to the original engineering study, which called for the removal of the 3rd floor in order to stabilize the building, Rutherford & Chekene's report concluded that "The brick is rather ordinary, and is not particularly weak...The mortar appears to have reasonably good bond characteristics"[21]. According to Historic Seattle, such second engineering opinions can be crucial, as "experience and the client's objectives often lead to very different solutions and cost estimates"[22].

With demolition temporarily on hold, Historic Seattle began negotiating to purchase the property from Goodman. This was made possible through a $2 million loan given by a supportive City Council, Historic Seattle offering its offices as collateral in the event of a default[23]. Following acquisition, Historic Seattle was able to find a tenant – the Klondike Goldrush National Historic Park – willing to purchase the land and enter into a lease agreement. This provided a crucial equity contribution to the rehabilitation project, and induced other financing. Also used to finance the project were New Markets Tax Credits,

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[19] Historic Seattle website, <http://www.historicseattle.org/default.aspx>
[20] Historic Seattle. *Cadillac Hotel Brochure*
[21] Davis, Harold. Principal, Rutherford & Chekene. Letter to Historic Seattle, 11 September. 2001.
[22] Historic Seattle. *Cadillac Hotel Brochure*
[23] Bennett, Sam. "City loan fuels Cadillac rehab" The Daily Journal of Commerce, April 2004. Several members of the City Council were supportive of the preservation alternative, acknowledging the importance of the building to the fabric of the neighborhood.

a below prime loan from Key Bank, and nearly $100,000 in gap financing from Historic Seattle itself[24].

The rehabilitation work included masonry restoration, seismic reinforcement, and parapet reconstruction, as the building was restored for occupancy by the Klondike Goldrush National Historic Park, and National Park Service Regional support staff. In 2005 the rehabilitation was complete, and the historic Cadillac Hotel had been given new life.

According to Mark Blatter, Director of Real Estate Development at Historic Seattle, a building that may be "too far gone" for a private entity can be salvageable "if there is an economic use, or public support, or a developer with access to public financing and corporate/foundation grants". Ultimately, he says, the definition of "too far gone" may come down to the condition of the resource, and whether it is eligible for tax credit investment. Once a structure has lost so much of its original character as to disqualify it for Historic Tax Credits, a key financing resource has been lost. Moreover, preservation at that point likely entails partial reconstruction, which essentially amounts to creating a facsimile of the original[25].

Blatter also notes the important role that structural engineers can play in determining preservation outcomes. Knowledge of old masonry structures is a specialty in which not all engineers are skilled; this inexperience can lead to over-engineering in order to reduce risk and liability, and this in turn can drive the cost of restoration up to potentially prohibitive levels[26].

Cadillac Hotel – Key Facts and Conclusions:

- Community mobilization crucial
- Property owner motivated by desire to build higher, may have distorted numbers
- Second opinion by structural engineers helped save building
- City Council supportive of historic preservation

[24] Blatter, Mark. Email Interview, April 2006.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.

- Historic Seattle critical as developer, gap financer
- Securing commercial tenant allowed for subsequent financing
- Feasibility dependent on economic use, public support, access to restricted funds, availability of tax credits

CASE IV

Clarendon Street Church: Boston, MA

Context

The Church located at 2 Clarendon Street in Boston's South End is an historic brick masonry structure that, until recently was at risk of demolition. Several years ago the church suffered a fire which caused extensive damage and left the building structurally unsound. The City of Boston put a raze order on the church, and demolition loomed for the old building[27].

The Developer

Roger Tackeff is a private, for-profit developer and founder of Renaissance Properties. He has made a successful career out of rehabilitating historic structures that in many instances have been judged to have no use and no economic life left in them. "I have never ever met a building that couldn't be restored", he says, "and I've heard it over and over again, that building's too far gone...but really you don't *want* to save it because it'll cost a little more to renovate"[28]. Tackeff notes that problems with a building's structural condition, which are often used as justification for demolition, are really no different than other issues or problems in a building; the "structure" is just a normal part of the building, and should not be thought of as "more ominous". According to Tackeff, a developer must decide whether the goal is simply profit maximization, or whether there is a desire to contribute to a social cause as well. If the latter is a criterion in a developer's decision making, it may be the case that slightly less profit is earned. However, higher costs can be partially offset by marketing the project's uniqueness to create potentially

[27] Tackeff, Roger. CEO and Founder, Renaissance Properties. Personal Interview, March 2006.
[28] Ibid.

higher revenues. Renaissance Properties does not generally have to accept a lower return in pursuing their preservationist forte[29].

The Project

The Clarendon Street Church project was perhaps Renaissance Properties' ("RP") most dramatic rescue to date. Following the fire, the church owners put the building out to bid, and RP was selected to redevelop the property. Tackeff and company first had to convince the City not to force them to take the building down, which was accomplished on the condition that RP place large "cradle" around the building to protect public safety. With structural engineers concerned about the how to clean out fire damage while keeping workers safe, RP embarked on a "hugely complicated shoring process". Following this, rehabilitation entailed constructing a new steel shell inside the building, tying the old shell in with the new, and then restoring the old. When the rehabilitation was complete, the church had been converted to 60 condominium units. Although it involved huge expense and risk for RP, the firm still managed to secure an adequate return, and had made a substantial contribution to the community in the process[30].

Clarendon Street Church/Roger Tackeff – Key Facts and Conclusions:

- Social motivations of developer important
- Buildings thought to be "too far gone" can return a solid profit
- Structural condition a normal part of building
- Many developers shy away from additional costs
- Increased rehabilitation cost can produce increased revenue

CASE V

Eagle Block Hotel: Newport, NH

Context

[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.

The Eagle Block is a three story brick hotel structure built in 1825, representative of the transition from smaller taverns to larger hotels, and the only surviving example of such a structure remaining in New Hampshire[31]. Despite its significance, it is a relatively small, architecturally simple building fronting Main Street in Newport. Following years of neglect, the building suffered from an arson episode in the early 1990's, which left it in a vulnerable physical state. The building displayed charred rafters and roof sheathing, water damaged gypsum board walls, cracks in the exterior walls, and a bulge in the south wall[32].

The Eagle Block was subsequently bought at Sheriff's auction by the local Sturm, Ruger Corporation ("Ruger"). An initial engineering report arranged by Ruger concluded that, due to questionable structural integrity, rehabilitation would not be an appropriate treatment for the building[33]. This conclusion led Ruger to pursue demolition as the most viable alternative.

Preservation

From the beginning, preservationists were intensely involved with the plight of the Eagle Block. State and local agencies put substantial time and resources into advocating that the building be preserved, most often by sending letters to Ruger's senior executive officer urging that he consider preservation as an alternative. Despite these efforts, however, Ruger applied for and received a demolition permit in 1996. Just days prior to demolition, the City's decision was appealed by a local businesswoman and community member[34], putting demolition on hold and buying enough time for the New Hampshire Office of State Planning to fund an historic structures report to obtain a second opinion on the building.

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[31] Garvin, James. *Eagle Block Fact Sheet.*

[32] Fischetti, David. *Structural Engineering Report, Eagle Block.* DCF Engineering, Inc. 1997, p.9-10.

[33] Ibid.

[34] According to Bill Ruger Jr., senior executive officer, "We were just desirous of removing sort of a public nuisance and possibly a public danger...to take care of the unsightly conditions prevailing there...the conditions that were assessed (within the building by engineers) remain unchanged and the necessity of tearing the building down remains unchanged...It can't be rehabilitated for any purpose. If it could have been rehabilitated for anything, we would have done it...The time to take care of the building was 75 years ago"; "Eagle Block's Demise on Hold", *Valley News*, p. A2, November 13, 1996.

David Fischetti, an engineer highly experienced with historic structures, was hired to carry out part of the study. Fischetti had earlier deemed the Eagle Block to be "in fair condition...None of the deterioration, the masonry cracks or bulges, are of concern"[35]. In the newly commissioned report, this opinion remained unchanged, Fischetti noting that "The Overall Condition of the building is fair with regard to structural components...foundation walls are in reasonable condition", and that the bulge in the south wall, which probably happened soon after initial construction, was "visually disturbing" but not indicative of "extreme instability in the wall itself"[36] Fischetti estimated total rehabilitation costs at $875,000, compared with $1.3-$1.7 million in the earlier study[37].

In an article later published by Fischetti on the state of structural engineering, he noted innovative solutions to problems in historic buildings are not encouraged by the current system of contracting in America: "An innovative, creative solution...may be beyond the fee structure in the standard contractual arrangement between architect and engineering consultant...Unfortunately, an intrusive solution requiring major intervention may result" The engineer is often forced to "follow the path of least risk, although this approach may result in the highest overall project cost"[38]

Following the new study, Ruger senior executive officer Bill Ruger Jr. commented that it "didn't open any new ground"[39] For Ruger, the fundamental issue was economic feasibility, and achievable rents in Newport were insufficient, in their opinion, to make the high cost of rehabilitation a viable option. However, Ruger took no action on the building for two years, preferring to keep options open. During this time, preservationists continued to advocate strongly for a preservation alternative. The Office of State Planning, for example, sent letters to Ruger offering the possibility of using their funds to

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[35] Fischetti, David. Letter to Dan O'Neill, April 18, 1995.
[36] Fischetti, David. *Structural Engineering Report, Eagle Block.* p.9-10.
[37] Ibid, p.36.
[38] Fischetti, David. "The Current State of Historic Preservation Engineering: One Engineer's Point of View" *The Journal of Preservation Technology.* XXIX. 3-4. November 1998. 55-58.
[39] Lavertue, Cassie. "Eagle Block Owner Keeps Options Open", Eagle Times, April 17, 1997

acquire the property. Ruger were relatively unresponsive, however, and continued to give little indication of their plans or thinking.

In the Spring of 1999, Ruger had again decided to proceed with demolition, and the Eagle Block once again stood just days away from destruction. The preservation community mobilized for one last ditch effort to stave off demolition, and were given three days by Ruger to come up with a plan to purchase the building[40]. $28,000 was subsequently raised in 3 hours of emergency fundraising. This would prove unnecessary, however, as several days later an agreement was been reached for an exchange of land between Ruger and the Economic Corporation of Newport (ECON) – a local non-profit economic development entity – that put the Eagle Block in the hands of preservationists[41]. The State Historic Preservation Office deemed it "one of the most stunning rescues in the history of preservation in New Hampshire"[42].



The Eagle Block building after it suffered from arson
Source: James Garvin

[40] Mountain, Archie. "Eagle Block Saved". *Eagle Times*, April 15, 1999.
[41] Hall, Jeff. "Eagle Block saved by land swap". Argus Champion, April 15, 1999.
[42] Garvin, James. Nomination Application, New Hampshire Preservation Alliance 2005 Annual Preservation Achievement Awards. Appendix A (Project Summary).

Following acquisition, ECON assembled a complex funding package which included a Save America's Treasures (SAT) grant, a HUD Economic Development Initiative grant, an economic development grant from the State Department of Resources and Economic Development, and two HUD Community Development Block Grant allocations. Much of this investment was stimulated by ECON's commitment to use part of the Eagle Block for an innovative Tool and Technology Resource Center, which would serve as an economic development stimulus by providing training for employees in the precision machining and advanced manufacturing trades. After a long and arduous process, the rehabilitation of the Eagle Block was completed in late 2004, and the building now houses both the Resource Center and a family restaurant[43].

Eagle Block Hotel – Key Facts and Conclusions:

- Preservation spurred by community and preservationist mobilization
- Private corporation pursued demolition
- Two structural engineers drew two very different conclusions
- Complex funding package
- Preservation tied into economic development
- Structural engineers often precluded from innovative, cost-effective solutions

CASE VI

111 E. 13th Street: Cincinnati, OH

Context

The building at 111 E. 13th Street in Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine district is a simple 3 story brick masonry structure that anchors one corner of "St. Mary's Square". Having suffered from deterioration and neglect, the building exhibited a large bulge which made an entire exterior wall vulnerable to collapse. The building owner ("Owner"), a corporate real estate subsidiary, performed a cost-benefit analysis on rehabilitation versus demolition/new construction to determine the best course of action for the building. Due

[43] Ibid.

in part to the very high estimated cost of masonry restoration, for which the Owner received bids as high as $133,000, they decided that demolition and new construction would be considerably more cost effective, and applied for a permit to raze the structure[44].

Preservation

Bill Baum and his Urban Sites development company are another example of a private developer that has had success preserving some of the most derelict, desperate properties. Noting community opposition to the demolition application, Urban Sites offered to take the building for free and pursue the rehabilitation alternative. Wanting to be a good corporate citizen in the face of community opposition, the Owner deeded the property to the City, which in turn gave it to Urban Sites at no cost. Soon after acquisition, the bulging wall collapsed, leaving a gaping two story hole in the building, clearly visible from the street. Amazingly, however, Urban Sites was able to find a local contractor to do the masonry restoration work for only $20,000. With $50,000 in City subsidy, and acting as their own general contractor, Urban Sites was able to fully rehabilitate the building and earn "decent returns"[45].

In speaking about severely deteriorated buildings, Bill Baum expresses an optimistic pro-preservation attitude tempered by pragmatism: "Structural things aren't as scary as people think", he notes. "Anything can be saved but it's gotta make economic sense"[46]. Economic realities are determined by such factors as a building's location, the availability of subsidies, and the willingness of the developer/owner to stretch the bounds of financial feasibility by putting "their heart and soul into it". According to Baum, "I guess you could say something's too far gone if any subsidy that's out there doesn't even come halfway toward getting me what I need, and if in the future when there's more subsidy available the building will have deteriorated" to the point where the additional cost outweighs the new subsidy[47].

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[44] Baum, Bill. Founder, Urban Sites Properties. Personal Interview. March 2006.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

111 E. 13th Street/Urban Sites – Key Facts & Conclusions:

- Community opposition initial impetus for preservation
- Corporate owner viewed demolition as more cost effective
- Highest masonry restoration bid nearly 7 times higher than lowest
- Zero acquisition cost and city subsidy critical; no tax credit used
- Developer earned good return
- Feasibility dependent on location, subsidy, developer motivations
- Structural issues not "scary"
- "Too far gone" means available sources don't come close to needed funds

CASE VII

Scharkovsky Building: Cleveland, Ohio

Context

The Scharkofsky building is a two story wood frame structure with a brick annex located in Cleveland's Loraine Street Historic District. Like the surrounding neighborhood, the building was the victim of years of neglect; it had shifted from its foundation, its siding had been removed, its sheathing was gone, the framing was being eaten, and the roof was almost completely destroyed. Without some intervention the building was at risk of being demolished by the City of Cleveland[48].

Preservation

Cudell Improvement ("Cudell") is a non-profit Community Development Corporation in Cleveland, Ohio that specializes in the preservation of some of the most blighted and endangered historic buildings. They have acquired and redeveloped, or been a partner in redeveloping, 8 such structures in the Loraine Street historic district. Their preservation activities are very much socially motivated, and rooted in the knowledge that their presence is required because private investment has largely abandoned the area and will

[48] Brindza, Anita. Executive Director, Cudell Improvement. Telephone Interview, April 2006.

not be able to save these buildings and revitalize the community[49]. Although some of their projects cost more to carry out than they are worth afterward, Cudell have in some instances received significant developer fees as a result of their work.

Cudell targeted the Scharkofsky building for both its importance to the fabric of the historic district, and its precarious condition. Cudell were able to negotiate a purchase price from the building owner, and cobble together financing from diverse sources, including: Community Development Block Grants, the Ohio Community Development Finance Fund, HOME weatherization assistance, below prime bank financing, Historic Tax Credits, and an economic development grant. Bids for the work ranged from $675,000 by small contractors, up to $1.3 million by regional and national firms. Anita Brindza, executive director of Cudell, attributes the high bids to the "fact that they are insecure about historic preservation, and have a whole lot of overhead"[50].

According to Anita Brindza, executive director at Cudell, the deciding factor in determining whether a building is "too far gone" is the availability of sufficient funds to carry out a rehabilitation sensitive to the historic character of the building. If funds cannot be obtained that would allow for a respectful renovation, a project is not pursuing in the eyes of Cudell.

Brindza notes that "too far gone" means something quite different for a private developer. Most developers, she says, have a minimum return which they require in order to pursue a project. If a rehabilitation project offers a return below this threshold, it is not viable in the eyes of the developer. Developers are quite adept at understanding the funding environment, what sources are available, and what it takes to access those funds. They weigh the costs and hassles involved in pursuing different funding sources, and take these into consideration in making their decision. However, not all sources are available to private developers. In addition, developers have a tendency to use regional rather than local contractors, and are not necessarily adept at finding the lowest bids. Moreover,

[49] Brindza, Anita. Telephone Interview, March 2006.
[50] Brindza, Anita. Telephone Interview, April 2006.

other factors such as the market study and the developer's chosen use can affect whether or not they deem a building worth rehabilitating[51].

Scharkofsky Building – Key Facts & Conclusions:

- Preservation catalyzed by non-profit, preservation motivated entity
- Complex financing package used
- Contractor bids ranged from $675,000 to $1.3 million
- Larger contractors insecure about preservation
- Total cost nearly three times post rehabilitation appraisal
- For-profit developers have strict profit threshold

Conclusions

Analysis and distillation of the above cases leads to a number of conclusions about the preservation of buildings thought to be "too far gone".

1) *Economics Rule* – Ultimately, economic feasibility is the underlying force that determines whether a building can or cannot be saved. In order for a building to be salvageable, sufficient funds must be available to cover the costs of rehabilitation. In theory, without at least *some* basic favorable financial circumstances, it may simply be impossible to rehabilitate a severely deteriorated structure.

2) *Ambiguity* – The definition of "too far gone" varies according to the goals and motivations of the owner/developer of the property. If strict profit maximization is the goal, a severely damaged structure may be "too far gone" in terms achieving a given "threshold" return. If profit is not the exclusive goal, the feasibility or rehabilitation expands, and becomes contingent on covering costs. If, on the other hand, the developer – be it non or for profit – identifies some non-monetary value in a project, the feasibility of rehabilitation increases.

[51] Ibid.

3) *Engineer Experience* – The opinion of structural engineers on the structural integrity of buildings and the feasibility of rehabilitating them often varies substantially. Engineers inexperienced with historic structures may tend to "over-engineer", resulting in a less risky, but more intrusive and more costly solution. This variation can have an immense impact on the building owner's determination of whether or not a project is financially feasible.

4) *Social Motivations* – Saving the "unsalvageable" almost invariably requires some kind of preservation motive on the part of the owner/developer. All else equal, these kinds of projects involve greater time and effort than other projects, and thus require that the developer want to make a social contribution.

5) *Contractor Bids* – In many cases construction estimates will vary tremendously depending on the contractor. Small, independent contractors often come in with the lowest bids, while regional and national firms – due to overhead, liability, and perceived risk – sometimes offer much higher bids. . If for-profit developers, many of whom prefer to work with larger contractors, receive unnecessarily high bids intentionally or otherwise, such disparity can mean the difference between "too far gone", and very realistic to save.

6) *Innovation Required* – In nearly all of the above examples, creative approaches were used to solving difficult financial questions, and appear to play an integral role in salvaging the "unsalvageable" In some cases, extremely complex financing mechanisms were employed to cobble together sufficient funds to make a project viable. In others, innovative ways were found to cut costs or increase revenues.

7) *Hidden Profit* – It is quite possible to receive a substantial profit by rehabilitating buildings thought by others to be "too far gone". However, due to such issues as risk (real and perceived), hassle, and the presence of unknowns, these profits generally do not attract for-profit developers.

8) *Community Support* – The support and advocacy of the community is often critical in providing the initial impetus for preservation, and catalyzing a discussion about the alternatives to demolition

These cases, and the conclusions drawn from them, demonstrate not only the ambiguity inherent in the term "too far gone", but also that nearly "hopeless" buildings are quite capable of being saved. This, in turn, indicates that the target areas in Over-the-Rhine should not be assumed to be "too far gone", and may in fact be quite amenable to rehabilitation. Before applying these findings more directly, it is first necessary to investigate the current context of the district itself more thoroughly.

Chapter VI: Existing Conditions – Obstacles

The purpose of this chapter is to explore existing conditions in Over-the-Rhine to get a better sense of the obstacles that will face any preservation effort. The preservation of the identified target areas is inextricably tied to the revitalization of Over-the-Rhine. Ensuring that the existing fabric is preserved, and the potential of the district maximized, requires rehabilitation, bringing in new residents, and giving new birth to a vital, vibrant community. Though the wheels are now in motion for such a revitalization, it is an extremely difficult and complex process, and an ongoing challenge to those involved. In order to understand the challenges and obstacles to preservation in Over-the-Rhine, it is necessary to understand the existing conditions affecting the wider revitalization efforts.

Approximately 20 interviews were conducted and several meetings attended involving stakeholders intimately involved with Over-the-Rhine. Their views and opinions were analyzed, and distilled into three core themes lying at the heart of both revitalization and preservation in Over-the-Rhine.

Existing Conditions

Economics

The fundamental obstacle to revitalization and hence preservation in Over-the-Rhine is economic. Over-the-Rhine is the most socio-economically depressed area in Greater Cincinnati, if not the entire region. The poverty rate is 76%, unemployment is 24% (U.S. Census 2000), and the community lacks anything approaching a stable economy. Consequently, slum and blight conditions abound, including approximately 500 vacant and dilapidated buildings spread over one of the largest historic districts in the country. Preservation of the fabric requires the careful rehabilitation of these and other buildings. However, existing conditions make it extremely difficult to undertake such rehabilitation in an economically viable way. The critical factor is that buildings in Over-the-Rhine cost more to rehabilitate than they are worth once rehabilitation is complete. There are several factors that contribute to this situation:

- *Cost* – The costs of rehabilitating buildings in Over-the-Rhine are high, driven up by the fact that there are lead paint and asbestos issues that often need to be remediated. There are also hidden costs – according to one developer in the neighborhood, the variance in costs is 15%-20% -- that can drive a budget up further[1]. The average cost for rehabilitation in Over-the-Rhine is in the area of $140-$170 per square foot.
- *Achievable Prices* – Land values in Over-the-Rhine are depressed due to neighborhood conditions. This negatively impacts the amount for which a developer can sell or lease a property. The average price per square foot for new condominium space in Over-the-Rhine is in the range of $100-$150 per square foot – which is generally insufficient to cover the costs of rehabilitation.
- *Gap Financing* – The separation between costs and prices means that there is a gap that must be financed if rehabilitation is to be economically feasible for a developer to undertake. Unfortunately, two of the most important sources of subsidy are limited in their availability in Over-the-Rhine: there is a limited supply of City Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) monies, and Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) investors are not interested in investing in the neighborhood at this time.
- *Subsidy Strings* – Those subsidies that are available almost inevitably carry burdensome requirements that reduce their value to a developer. CDBG funds are one example, as they include prevailing wage requirements that increase the costs of development. An even more prominent example are historic tax credits, which many developers in Over-the-Rhine do not use because the accompanying restrictions preclude doing open loft style units, and can thus actually lead to a net loss of money.
- *Owner Expectations* – Because of the flurry of recent development activity, many building owners have high expectations for what their properties are worth. This expectation leads to high acquisition costs for developers that make development infeasible.

[1] Anonymous Developer. Telephone Interview. April 2006.

- *Developer Inexperience* – Many of the developers working or interested in Over-the-Rhine have little or no experience. This can lead to problems such as cost overruns, poor planning, inability to get loans, and failure to correctly position their product.

Crime

As alluded to above, new units on the market generally do not generate sufficient prices or rents to make rehabilitation economically feasible without some sort of subsidy. This is attributable to the lack of a viable real estate market in Over-the-Rhine, which in turn is fundamentally attributable to one thing: crime. In conjunction with the economic decline of the neighborhood, it also became a haven for criminal activity, including blatant drug sales and drug use, prostitution, car vandalism, assault, and murder. In 2005, there were 29,000 police calls and 1,956 part one crimes in the 110 block area[2]. Crime is driven above all by the drug trade, which operates in open air markets, and consists of suburban white youths who drive to the neighborhood to purchase drugs from urban black youths. Virtually all of the crime that occurs is drug related.

These facts have an extremely detrimental effect on the market in Over-the-Rhine. Many would-be buyers are deterred, or willing to pay less, due to the fear of being victims of crime. The media has generally fueled the perception that Over-the-Rhine is unsafe, covering murders religiously and failing to note that victims are almost always participants in the drug trade.[3]

Collaboration/Leadership

The third critical issue is the lack of communication, cooperation, and leadership among the various stakeholders in Over-the-Rhine. The neighborhood has a very large number of diverse constituent groups – including developers, community councils, preservation organizations, community development corporations, social service agencies, small

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[2] Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation. *Presentation to the Community.* April 4, 2006.
[3] This practice may be changing; in the April 21, 2006 edition of the Cincinnati Enquirer, an article spoke positively of cleanup efforts in the neighborhood and gave accurate accounts of conditions.

business owners, 3CDC, and the City – who have thus far demonstrated an inability to communicate effectively and work collaboratively toward progress in Over-the-Rhine.

History

This circumstance has its roots in the failure of community planning, consensus building, coordination and leadership in Over-the-Rhine since the 1960's. Since that time, countless plans, committees, coalitions, and task forces have been created in an attempt to determine the future course of the impoverished district – yet none has met with real success.

Coinciding with a broader shift in planning and city policy toward cultural individualism and neighborhood self-determination, activists in Over-the-Rhine beginning in the 1960's debated the proper course of action for the neighborhood. Issues such as historic preservation, integration, citizen participation, displacement, and socioeconomic separatism came to the fore, and would define planning efforts to come[4].

The events surrounding the Model Cities efforts of the late 1960's and early 1970's are illustrative. Around this time the City Department of Urban Development (DUD) was keen on the idea that Over-the-Rhine should be preserved and converted into a chic downtown neighborhood. Among other things, they hired the executive director of the Miami Purchase Association (MPA) – Cincinnati's leading historic preservation agency – to compose guidelines for an historic district in the Findlay Market area of Over-the-Rhine. These guidelines implied the peaceful coexistence of different socioeconomic groups in the district, but said nothing specific about the possibilities of displacement in the wake of historic preservation programs. But the proponents of Cincinnati's Model Cities Program – based on the federal program which sought innovative approaches to addressing poverty – were most concerned about this very issue. The Program in 1971 put together a first year action plan for Over-the-Rhine which included as a fundamental goal that the process be directed by the district's poor residents. This led to a

[4] Miller, Z. and Bruce Tucker. *Changing Plans for America's Inner Cities: Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine and Twentieth-Century Urbanism*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1998.

comprehensive planning process undertaken by a premier civic engagement planner, Harris Forusz, who laid out a complex and detailed proposal which had as its basic premise the control of decisions about the neighborhood by its poor inhabitants. Forusz deliberately postponed decisions about gentrification and the acceptance of more affluent residents in favor of the notion that the poor should first secure control of the neighborhood, and then decide whether or not they wanted middle and upper class residents[5].

Yet the new comprehensive plan, despite being in line with the general principles of Model Cities, was given "short shrift" by the Program's Director, Hubert Guest. Guest, a proponent of concise proposals and measurable progress, saw the plan as too complex and expensive, and eventually dismissed it[6]. Thus ended the Model Cities planning process in Over-the-Rhine. This episode was representative of emerging divisions in the community, and the inability of community groups to work effectively with each other and the city to facilitate progress.[7].

These patterns worsened in subsequent years as Over-the-Rhine saw increasing attention from preservationists, developers, and community organizers. Interest in the preservation of Over-the-Rhine's physical fabric experienced an upsurge in the mid-1970's, as organizations like the MPA undertook historic surveys and pushed the city to provide greater protection of historic resources. The City was nominally in favor of preservation, but concerned about the scale of preservation efforts, and the listing of thousands of buildings as "significant" by the MPA. This led the city to create an Urban Conservation Task Force, whose recommendations included the establishment of historic district zoning, a Historic Conservation Board, and an urban conservator position at the city. At the same time, MPA was finishing a nomination of Over-the-Rhine for the National Register.

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[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.

Meanwhile, 16 CEO's of Cincinnati companies created the Cincinnati Business Committee, which sponsored a plan for the revitalization of the Washington Park area of the district, and formed the Queen City Housing Corporation to carry it out. Queen City Housing had as its objective the revitalization of Washington Park through an integrationist approach which would employ preservation as a means of obtaining subsidy. In order to avoid displacement, they proposed starting with development of low income housing.

A group of neighborhood activists – most of them well educated whites from the suburbs – reacted to the upsurge in preservation and development activity with concern. This group, which controlled the Over-the-Rhine Community Council and was led by a charismatic young activist named Buddy Gray, feared residential displacement through private investment, and held a strong belief in the cultural individualism and self-determination of the neighborhood's poor residents. As time passed and they garnered momentum, they became increasingly vocal and oppositional to preservation and development proposals.

In 1980 Gray's faction mobilized 250 protestors to attend a public hearing on the nomination of Over-the-Rhine for the National Historic Register, at which many spoke out passionately against the nomination, arguing that it would lead to tremendous displacement of the poor. With growing political clout, Gray was subsequently able to get concessions from bureaucrats on other issues of community control, none more important than the agreement to form an Over-the-Rhine Planning Task Force, with the majority of its 19 member board chosen by the Over-the-Rhine Community Council.

From here things began to devolve quickly into vitriolic disputes between development and low income factions. The newly formed Task Force experienced a "nasty squabble" that badly damaged the ability of members to function cooperatively, adversaries began to voice their grievances to the press, and the fight over the National Register nomination became increasingly contentious. The city attempted to mediate, but was plagued by its own politics and lack of cohesiveness. Lines of communication broke down, trust was

shattered, and firm lines were drawn between preservationists and low-income advocates – a phenomenon whose effects on the neighborhood still linger today. All of this taken together served to stultify the progress of the neighborhood from a preservation if not a social standpoint[8].

The Present

The parallels between the past and the present are significant. While most of the overt tensions just described between preservationists and separatists have since dissipated, beneath the surface they are still there, leading to a lack of open communication and collaboration. The recent arrival of 3CDC has also complicated the matter, as they are perceived by many as a group that wants to execute its own plan and agenda, without regard for the desires of the community. They have been accused of being top-down and autocratic[9], causing mistrust among both advocates of preservation and low-income housing. Moreover, changing city administrations and policies, and especially decisions on the part of city officials, has contributed to a general failure to build momentum in the district.

The continuing inability to communicate can be broken into three component problems currently facing the neighborhood:

1) Lack of Consensus – Over-the-Rhine is afflicted with a lack of consensus and agreement about the future vision for the neighborhood. This leads different groups to "sabotage" each other's projects and activities by making negative comments in the media. 3CDC have felt the brunt of this in recent months, and have acknowledged the need to build consensus and create more open lines of communication.
2) Lack of Information Sharing – Groups in Over-the-Rhine tend to operate in silos, working on their own projects without sharing valuable information and resources.

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[8] Ibid.

[9] This view has been fueled by 3CDC's purchase of 80 parcels in the neighborhood without, until recently, revealing their plans for development

3) Lack of Leadership – Related to the lack of communication is the lack of effective leadership. It is generally felt that some entity is needed that can coordinate the different visions, mediate disputes, and facilitate consensus building. The City is typically targeted as the entity responsible for providing this leadership, and thus the entity most often blamed for having failed to create an environment conducive to progress.

Development

Recent Trends

While the impediments to development in Over-the-Rhine are great, the momentum for revitalization has reached its highest point in decades. In the 1990's, a few local developers with high risk-tolerance began converting derelict structures into modest artist lofts and apartments, many of them in the Walnut Street area. Also at this time, significant commercial development occurred along Main Street, as it became targeted by the City and investors as an "entertainment district" with an array of bars and nightclubs. As the decade continued, the Over-the-Rhine residential market garnered momentum, and loft spaces went from very modest to slightly more chic.

The Cincinnati riots of 2001, precipitated by the death of a black youth in Over-the-Rhine at the hands of a white police officer, put a significant damper on the neighborhood's real estate momentum. Activity slowly reemerged, however, and by 2004 Main Street was in the midst of a spate of residential development, much of it driven by the sudden demand for condominiums in Cincinnati's urban core. Some isolated development also occurred in more "uncharted" territory, including 3 properties facing Washington Park, the "Gateway" condominiums on Vine, and a condo development on Dunlap street in the northwest corner of the district.

Also extremely important, the Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC) has been working since 2004, with the aid and support of some of Cincinnati's largest corporations, to facilitate real estate development and revitalization in Over-the-Rhine. Though some of 3CDC's actions thus far have concerned preservationists, they bring

immense resources to bear on the neighborhood, and have the potential to effect change in a manner that no small developer can achieve. Their efforts are focusing on the Washington Park subdistrict, where they have acquired more than 80 properties[10], with the intention of pushing a critical mass of development northward from Central to Liberty.

Figure 6.1

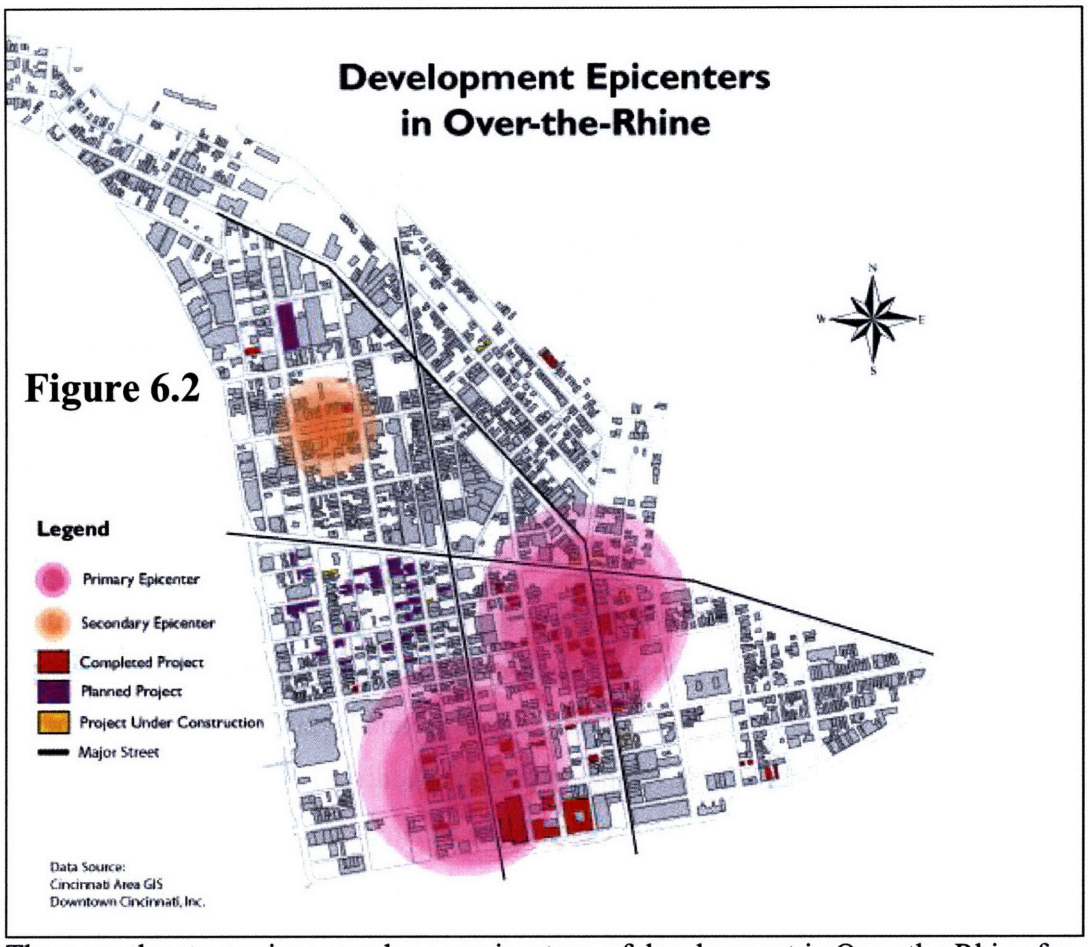


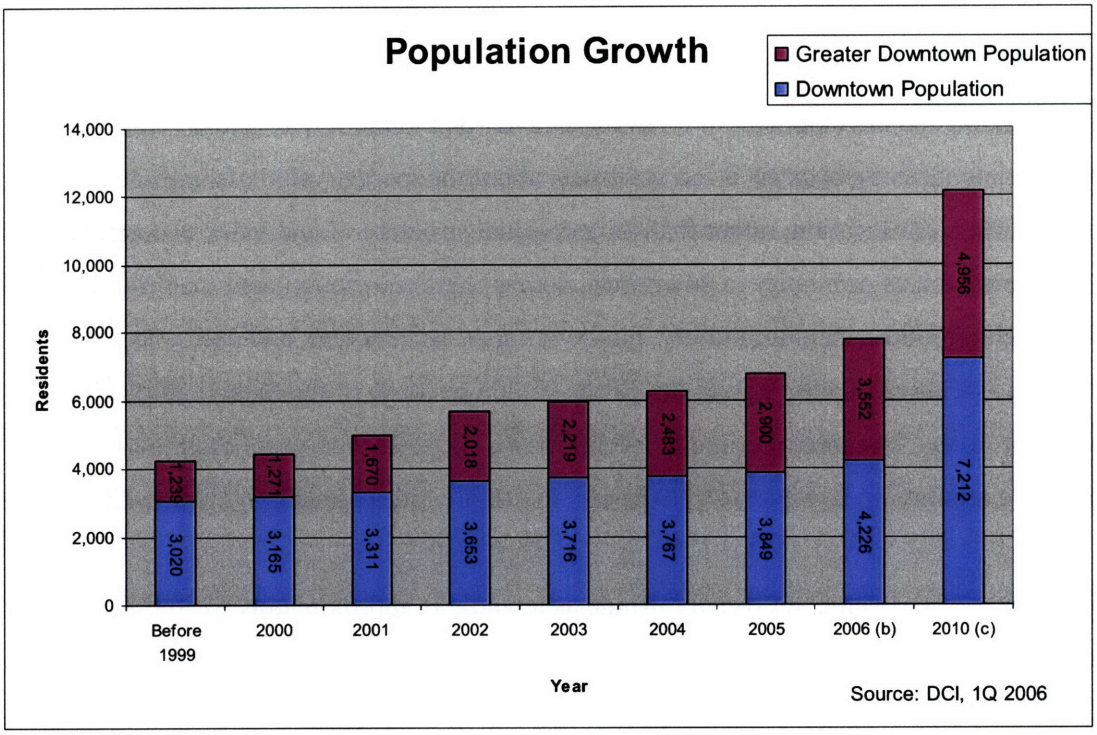
Figure 6.2

There are thus two primary nodes, or epicenters, of development in Over-the-Rhine from which further activity can emanate (See Figure 6.1): the 12th and Vine epicenter, directed by 3CDC; and the Main Street epicenter. If these epicenters continue to push North and West, development will come within reach of the target areas, and these areas will become increasingly feasible to salvage. A third epicenter of smaller proportions is

[10] 3CDC's holdings include existing buildings and vacant parcels; 3CDC have also been designated preferred developer for a number of City owned properties in the area.

located at Findlay Market. This area has yet to see significant development activity, but the wheels are in motion for momentum to be generated[11].

Figure 6.2



Source: Downtown Cincinnati, Inc., as of 1Q 2006

Note: Population growth based on DCI projected estimates of 1.5 residents per unit.

(b): Projected estimates based on number of residential units under construction/renovation in 2006

(c): Projected estimates based on number of residential units planned/proposed as of year-end 2005

The prospect for continued and accelerated development in Over-the-Rhine is very strong today. Despite a rash of condominium projects in the center city, absorption of new product remains solid; and though the rental market has tailed off since the arrival of condos, units continue to have relatively little vacancy. There is a general upsurge in the desire for urban living in Cincinnati, much of it driven by individuals from other cities who relocate to Cincinnati for employment reasons[12], and there are few signs of a slowdown. Although Cincinnati's population as a whole continues to decline, the center-city is registering population increases, a fact that bodes well for residential demand in

[11] Pickford, Bob. President, The Corporation for Findlay Market. Personal Interview. March 2006

[12] According to one broker, 25% of newly relocated Gillette workers from Boston seek residence downtown

the future. Figure 6.2 displays the increase in downtown and greater downtown population since 1999.

Land Values

A brief look at land values in comparable areas provides an idea of the potential for appreciation and development in Over-the-Rhine. (See Table XXX) Land value is an appropriate measure because it is a statement about the market value of a particular neighborhood or location, rather than an individual structure. Land value is determined by factors such as proximity to downtown, access to transportation, and the desirability of the neighborhood – including safety, public schools, architecture, and access to natural or cultural amenities. Land in Over-the-Rhine should be some of the most highly valued in the entire City. Because of crime, concentration of poverty, and years of garnering a negative reputation, however, Over-the-Rhine's land values are largely depressed.

The average land value in Over-the-Rhine as a whole is approximately $250,000 per acre[13]. If properties south of 12th street – where values are substantially higher due to their location on or near central parkway – are eliminated from the analysis, the average land value drops to $225,000 per acre. By comparison, on Court Street[14], just south of Central Parkway less than a half mile away from the heart of Over-the-Rhine, land values are around $1.9 million per acre, more than eight times higher than Over-the-Rhine[15]. And in Mount Adams, a fashionable hilltop district about 2 miles east of downtown, land values on two residential streets are in the neighborhood of $2.6 million per acre, or nearly twelve times the average value in Over-the-Rhine[16].

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[13] Note: these numbers are based on available assessor's data; data are not available for some Over-the-Rhine properties.

[14] Court was chosen as a comparison area both for its close proximity to Over-the-Rhine, and for its similar density development. The area in Over-the-Rhine between Central Parkway and 12th street was not chosen as a comparison area because of its relatively high density development, which pushes land values up and does not make for a good comparison with the rest of Over-the-Rhine.

[15] Analysis was performed on 8 properties located along different parts of Court St. Assessor's data were used.

[16] Analysis was performed on 14 properties located on two residential streets in the area. Assessor's data were used.

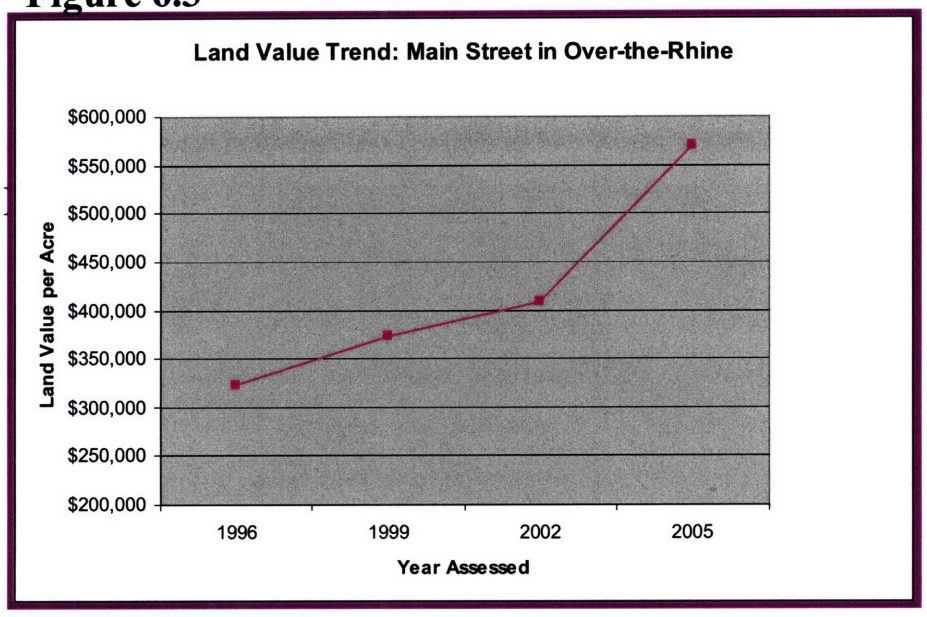
Table 6.1:

Average Land Value (LV) in Over-the-Rhine and Comparable Areas, 2005[17]

	Avg # Acres	Avg LV	Avg LV/Acre	Ratio to OTR
OTR	.07	$16,900	$251,002	---
OTR (N. of 12th)	.07	$15,272	$225,495	---
Court St. (CBD)	.049	$85,763	$1,930,425	8.56 times
Mount Adams	.056	$143,329	$2,657,608	11.79 times

Because of Over-the-Rhine's close proximity to downtown, concentration of cultural institutions and amenities, and collection of late 19th century buildings, land values in the neighborhood should boom if development continues and crime is reduced. Indeed, there is evidence that this has already happened in parts of Over-the-Rhine where recent development has occurred. On Main Street between 2002 and 2005, land values increased an average of nearly $11,000, or $160,000 per acre. (See Figure 6.3) This represents an increase of about 40% in only 3 years[18]. There is also anecdotal evidence which suggests that land values in general south of Liberty Street have been increasing rapidly, driven by 3CDC's activities and a general feeling that the real estate market in Over-the-Rhine could explode.

Figure 6.3



Data Source: Hamilton Cnty Auditor's Office

[17] Source: Author's analysis. April 2006.

[18] Author's analysis. April 2006. Based on analysis of assessor's data for Main Street properties located between Central Parkway, and Liberty. Data not available for all properties. Some outliers excluded.

Even with such increases in land value and development activity, to make assumptions about the trajectory of development in Over-the-Rhine is problematic. Crime and the perception of safety still exert such influence that most development requires substantial gap financing, and cannot be carried by the market alone. Some are less optimistic about the future of Over-the-Rhine, and believe that a single negative event (ala the riots of 2001) could bring all momentum to a halt[19].

But there are also reasons for optimism. The City recently voted to approve $2.4 million in subsidy to support 3CDC's initial projects along Vine, and the new Mayor and City Council appear more organized, cohesive, and development friendly than past administrations. Perhaps more importantly, the police department in the past month has demonstrated increased resolve to combat crime and drugs, undertaking street sweeps resulting in hundreds of arrests. Moreover, $1.8 million was recently approved for the Hamilton County Sheriff's Department to put 19 deputies on patrol in the neighborhood – an action which will increase the police presence and the capacity of officers to deal with the crime problem.

The upshot of all of this is that there are both critical obstacles and an emerging economic momentum, both of which will play a vital role in making rehabilitation of desperate structures feasible. This information will inform the strategies and recommendations presented in the following chapter.

[19] Anonymous Developer. Telephone Interview. April 2006

Chapter 7: Synthesis and Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on a synthesis of all of the information gathered, analyzed, and presented in the previous chapters. They can be divided into a two part process which, if executed correctly, should provide a solid infrastructure for successful preservation action.

Part A – Prerequisite Consensus Building

Successful planning and implementation of preservation (and affordable housing, market rate development, social service and other efforts in Over-the-Rhine) *must* begin with the establishment of consensus. Factionalism and infighting have plagued the district for decades, leading to gaps in leadership and information sharing, as well as a general willingness to sabotage and disparage the efforts of opposing groups. Resolving these issues and creating some kind of consensus is critical to the efforts of each of Over-the-Rhine's groups, *including those concerned about the preservation of the physical fabric.*

Step One: National Trust Intervention

The National Trust for Historic Preservation ("the Trust") should serve as the catalyst for an intensive mediation and consensus building intervention

The Trust's recent selection of Over-the-Rhine to its list of the 11 Most Endangered Places in America has the potential to be a watershed moment in the neighborhood, and to serve as the impetus for a critical consensus building process that could in turn facilitate a cohesive preservation effort. The Trust is concerned not just for the preservation of the physical fabric of the district, but also for the welfare of those who are poor and in need of housing and social services. The Trust thus brings a sufficiently broad motive as to be a potentially unifying force, and has expressed the desire to serve in such a capacity by funding a staff person to act as a mediator and unifier of diverse groups.

The Trust's Intervention should include the following:

- The Trust should communicate its intentions to the city and 3CDC, and solicit support – financial or otherwise – for the intervention
- Due diligence information gathering should be undertaken on Over-the-Rhine and its constituents, with particular emphasis on past planning efforts and the factors that led to their failure
- The Trust should hold preliminary meetings with individual groups to brief them as to the intervention concept, solicit their involvement, and discuss the selection of mediator

Step Two: Establishment of Coalition

The chosen mediating entity should convene all interested parties and establish a multi-partisan coalition

The establishment of a coalition of diverse interests is a critical step in the consensus building process. Groups that have traditionally operated in isolation or opposition to one another must be brought together and forced to reflect on their common goals and interests. In order to successfully establish such a coalition, the following should be undertaken:

- The coalition should be structured so as to include one representative from each group. This will limit potential divisiveness by keeping membership to a reasonable size
- Representatives on the coalition should make a formal commitment to attend meetings and satisfy obligations associated with the coalition for the term of their membership

Step Three: Collaborative Process

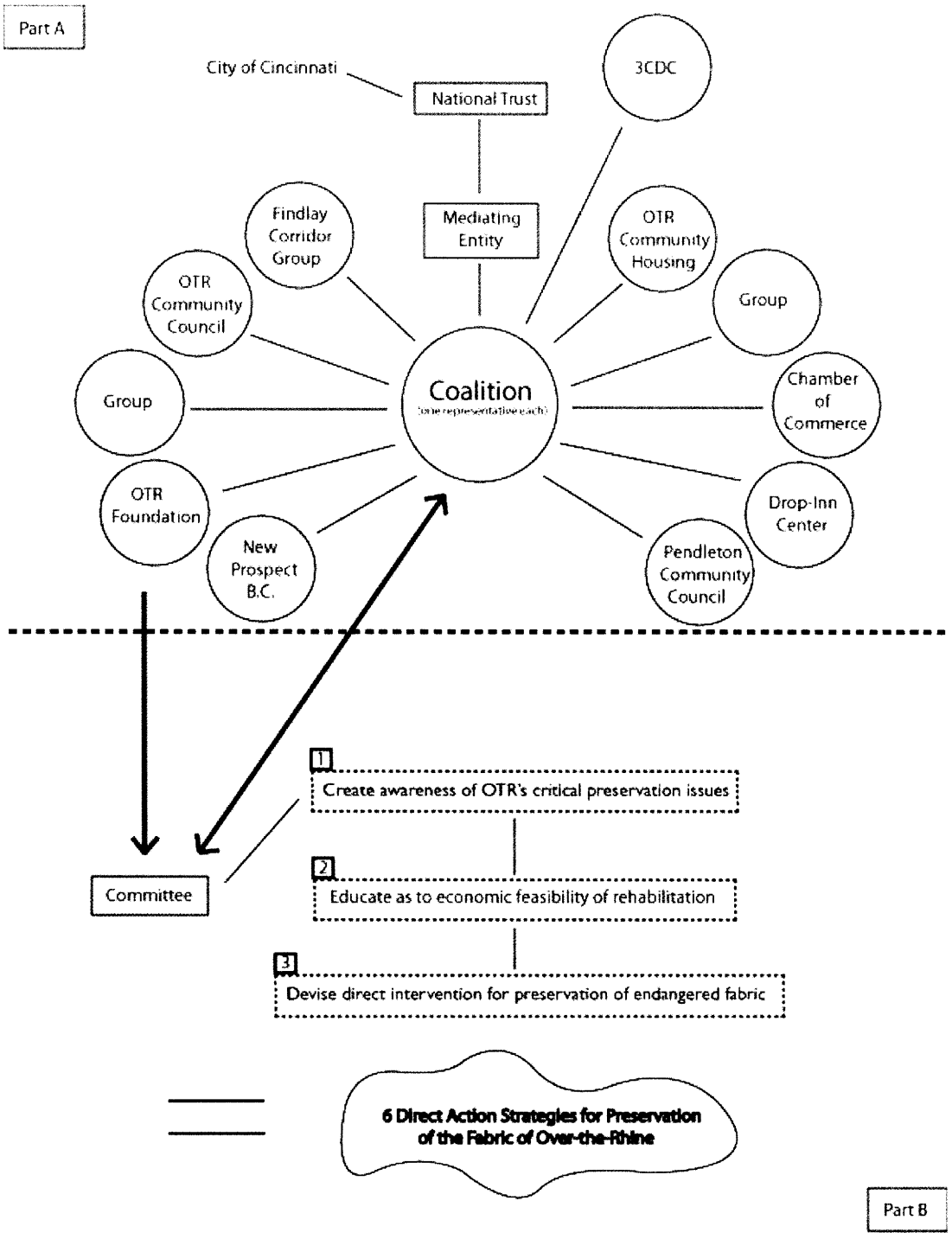
The newly established coalition, with the help of the mediator, should engage in a process of unification and fostering of mutual understanding

In order for the coalition to work effectively, representatives from groups that have traditionally operated in isolation or opposition to one another must work cooperatively toward the establishment of an agenda that will lead to increased cohesiveness
This process should include the following:

- Mediation and conciliation activities should be engaged in that increase mutual understanding among groups. This will be the most crucial and difficult step, as some of the ideologies in the neighborhood appear to lie at opposite ends of the spectrum. It will be the responsibility of the mediating entity to ensure that negative emotions and criticisms are kept to a minimum, and that common ground is established.
- The coalition should establish a set of broadly defined goals that are held by all parties. These goals might include, for example, protection of the historic built fabric, economic development, and retention of neighborhood diversity
- The coalition should work toward an agreement among representatives to support nominally, if not substantively, the efforts of other groups, and a commitment to avoid criticism and negative remarks to the media
- An agreement should be made to share information, make regular reports, and piggyback efforts, and representatives should select a medium for information conveyance. The iRhine website[1], an already established webtool setup to support progress in Over-the-Rhine, is a logical choice and should be given consideration as the preferred medium.

[1] See <http://www.irhine.com/>

Figure 7.1


Part A
City of Cincinnati
National Trust
3CDC
Findlay Corridor Group
Mediating Entity
OTR Community Housing
OTR Community Council
Group
Group
Coalition
Chamber of Commerce
OTR Foundation
Drop-Inn Center
New Prospect B.C.
Pendleton Community Council
1
Create awareness of OTR's critical preservation issues
Committee
2
Educate as to economic feasibility of rehabilitation
3
Devise direct intervention for preservation of endangered fabric
6 Direct Action Strategies for Preservation of the Fabric of Over-the-Rhine
Part B

Part B – Preservation Action

A successful coalition of diverse neighborhood interests will provide the critical infrastructure for a successful preservation effort. With the coalition in place or in motion[2], the following preservation strategy will be situated within a larger, more united effort toward community improvement and revitalization, rather than being an isolated and potentially controversial initiative sponsored by one neighborhood faction.

Step 1: Over-the-Rhine Foundation Sponsorship

The Over-the-Rhine Foundation ("the Foundation") should sponsor a concerted preservation initiative

As the leading historic preservation entity in the district, the Over-the-Rhine Foundation is the most appropriate group to undertake a strategic preservation initiative toward the retention and promotion of Over-the-Rhine's historic integrity. The Foundation should structure such an initiative in the following ways:

- The Foundation should form a Strategic Preservation Committee ("SPC"), comprised of members and volunteers, to execute the initiative
- The Foundation should solicit financial support from the Trust for the creation of a paid Preservation Coordinator to head the SPC.
- The Foundation's strategy should be open and transparent, with activities reported to the larger Coalition on a regular basis.
- Members of other groups should be solicited to participate on the SPC so as to promote inclusiveness. To the extent that the SPC is comprised entirely of white, middle class individuals, it will be seen as an elitist entity and its efforts will be less likely to receive broad support.
- The SPC should prioritize efforts by focusing on the 3 "target areas" cited earlier in this thesis.
- The SPC should leverage the iRhine community website as a valuable information clearinghouse and publicity tool. The iRhine site has

[2] Given the time-sensitive nature of the threat to Over-the-Rhine's fabric, it may be infeasible to wait for the Coalition to be fully functional before taking preservation action.

tremendous potential to be used as a tool for dissemination of valuable information on matters relevant to Over-the-Rhine, yet it is currently underutilized.

Step 2(a): Awareness Building

The newly established SPC should act quickly to promote awareness of Over-the-Rhine's critical, time-sensitive preservation issues

With the SBC in place, its first step should be the promotion of awareness of threats to the fabric of Over-the-Rhine, awareness of the resource that stands to be lost, and dissemination of relevant information. Lack of recognition of Over-the-Rhine as a unique asset has long plagued the district. Attention *must* be drawn *quickly* to the importance of the district, and the immediate threats to its fabric. This can be done via two sub-steps:

"Sub-step" 1

The SPC should put together both a presentation and a "media package" of documentation relevant to the significance of, and threats to, the fabric of Over-the-Rhine. This media package should at a minimum be comprised of the following:

- Testimonials from the National Trust and other authorities on the significance of Over-the-Rhine
- Maps (previously presented in this document) of "Areas of Integrity", Vacant and Condemned Buildings, and "Critical Areas".
- Information on "Critical Buildings", including architectural descriptions, current ownership, tax delinquency, code violations, gross square feet, use, structure and land value, and condition.
- Photographs displaying the architectural and historical significance of the district.

"Sub-step" 2

Using the media package, the SPC should undertake a media and awareness building campaign to educate others about Over-the-Rhine and the threats to its fabric. The following methods should be pursued, listed in order of importance:

- Publication of the media package on the iRhine website (or other chosen medium)
- Submission to the city Historic Conservation Office
- Presentation via private audience with the Mayor, if possible
- Presentation before local business leaders, including especially the board of 3CDC
- Contact and submissions to local newspapers and other media outlets to generate follow-up publicity on the Trust's recent activities in the district
- Letters and submissions to County and State elected officials
- Letters and submissions to State Historic Preservation Organizations

Step 2(b): Feasibility Education

The SPC must educate "naysayers" as to the feasibility and value of preserving critical fabric

As the SPC raises awareness of the threat to Over-the-Rhine, opposition will emerge from those who claim buildings are "too far gone" and not worth saving. Therefore, concurrent with its awareness raising efforts the Committee must also be prepared to counteract adversarial claims and advocate for both the feasibility and prudence of saving the "unsalvageable" The following two sub-steps should be employed:

Sub-step 1

The SPC should prepare a second "media package" and presentation which marshals evidence on the feasibility of preserving buildings thought to be too far gone. Most importantly, this "media package" should emphasize the inherent ambiguity involved in making the determination that a building is "too far gone". Specifically, the media package should include information on:

- The variation in the opinions of structural engineers depending on experience, and the role this plays in the determination of whether a building can be saved
- The often large variation in cost estimates on the part of contractors, and the effect this can have on an owner's determination of whether a building is economically feasible to rehabilitate
- The importance of an owner's motives in the determination of economic feasibility, emphasizing that feasibility varies considerably depending on whether an owner/developer is motivated strictly by profit or also by social concerns
- Success stories of buildings saved despite being thought to be "too far gone" – especially cases where this has happened in Over-the-Rhine
- The continued upturn in the market in downtown and Over-the-Rhine and the projected increases in market values looking forward, and the likelihood of increasing feasibility of rehabilitation as time passes
- The role of subsidy in development, and the importance of a due diligence search for subsidy as a prerequisite to determining that a building cannot be saved

Sub-step 2

Because advocating for feasibility is more of a defensive posture than a proactive approach, the level of distribution of the media package recommended under "Sub-step" 2 of Step 2(a) will not be advisable here. However, the SPC should engage in basic dissemination, including publication on the iRhine website,

submission to the Historic Conservation Office and the Historic Conservation Board, and presentation before members of 3CDC.

- The Committee should cite literature on the economic benefits of preservation in making the argument that each historic building is an economic resource in terms of property values, tourism, and other indicators. In particular, it should be noted that rehabilitation is a more potent economic development tool than new construction, as well as investments in manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, mining, and other traditional economic development drivers.
- The Committee should commission a study on the negative externality imposed by the demolition of single historic buildings

Step 3: Direct Action

The SPC should devise a direct intervention for the preservation of endangered fabric

Having established a base of awareness, the ground will be ready for direct preservation action to prevent further losses to Over-the-Rhine's physical integrity. It will ultimately be incumbent on the established SPC to create a mechanism for saving the endangered critical fabric. While education and awareness building are the clear first step in the process, concrete proposals and action must follow-closely on their heels, as those targeted in the awareness campaign will wish to know what practical steps can be taken to address the problem. The following action steps should be carried out, listed in order of priority and importance

- As an initial action step, the Committee should advocate the city to implement a demolition by neglect ordinance or similar such legislation. Two of the primary causes of demolition in Over-the-Rhine are the egregious neglect of buildings by their owners, and the lack of capacity on the part of the Department of Buildings and Inspections (B&I) to consistently make accurate determinations about the public danger posed by

buildings and the imminence of their collapse. Both of these circumstances could be addressed by a demolition by neglect ordinance, which should include the following components[3]:

- Within the new ordinance, owners of historic property should be given specific responsibilities to maintain and protect their property; failing to do so, the City should be granted power to enter the premises and perform the necessary stabilization, putting a lien on the property for the value of the repairs.
- The new ordinance should require that the Historic Conservation Board (HCB) be consulted in all matters pertaining to demolition by neglect. Specifically, all determinations on the part of the Department of Buildings and Inspections that an historic building represents an imminent danger to the public, should be made in consultation with a structural engineer consultant hired by the city who specializes in historic structures.

This alternative would have the single greatest impact in terms of preservation of critical fabric in Over-the-Rhine, as it would reduce the number of city sponsored "emergency" demolitions, and open the door for the city to intervene to make repairs as an alternative to paying demolition costs.

- The Committee should advocate the city for an emergency shoring and stabilization program to forestall the demolition of critical buildings. Using the economic analysis presented in Chapter Vi, the city should be persuaded that such a program would both preserve vital parts of the fabric of Over-the-Rhine, and constitute a fiscally sound investment
- Over-the-Rhine non-profits should be advocated to prioritize stabilization and/or development of critical buildings. Non-profits such as 3CDC and Over-the-Rhine Community Housing have both development expertise and access to subsidies, and should be encouraged to contribute to preservation

[3] Taken from District of Columbia's Demolition by Neglect Laws. See "Saving the District's Historic Properties from Demolition by Neglect"; www.ll.georgetown.edu/histpres/papers/papers_thompson.pdf

by focusing some of their development efforts on critical buildings. This would be the most convenient development alternative, and may be feasible depending in part on the success of the respective campaigns to build a neighborhood Coalition and create awareness of preservation issues

- The Committee should market critical buildings to private developers and prospective homeowners. iRhine (or the chosen medium) should be employed as the primary means of advertising these endangered properties. In addition to information on the importance of the buildings to the fabric, information should be provided on the current owner, the assessed value of the property, the potential future land value, gross square footage, and potential uses of the property.
- The Committee should assume direct responsibility for preservation by creating a non-profit Community Preservation Corporation. This entity would acquire critical buildings via foreclosure and receivership, and engage in redevelopment of the properties. This would put control firmly in the hands of the Committee, and allow access to public and foundation monies that could make rehabilitation economically feasible.
- If the above option is not possible, the Committee should revive the now defunct Abandoned Buildings Company as an alternative. A local non-profit in existence from 1995-2001, ABC operated a city funded pilot receivership program by which it acquired, stabilized, and conveyed to developers threatened buildings, or forced building owners to maintain their property. ABC functioned not as a development corporation but as a catalyst and intermediary. Although the program was somewhat successful, capacity issues and a lack of political will led to its gradual demise. With a concerted effort on the part of the Committee, the program could be revived and made to be a highly efficient and successful preservation mechanism.

Chapter VIII: New Construction

While preservation of the existing fabric is a top priority, the design of new construction will play an increasingly important role as the neighborhood evolves, and deserves careful attention as well. This Chapter seeks to address the issue of new construction by analyzing the threat, and proposing innovative solutions.

The Threat

A number of new developments detrimental to the integrity of Over-the-Rhine have occurred in the district in recent years. The most notable, contentious example is the now infamous "Gateway" garage and condominiums. Built to provide parking space for Kroger employees as well as housing for new residents, the ironically named structure was the subject of much discussion and some controversy, and in the eyes of many stands in stark contrast to its historic surroundings.



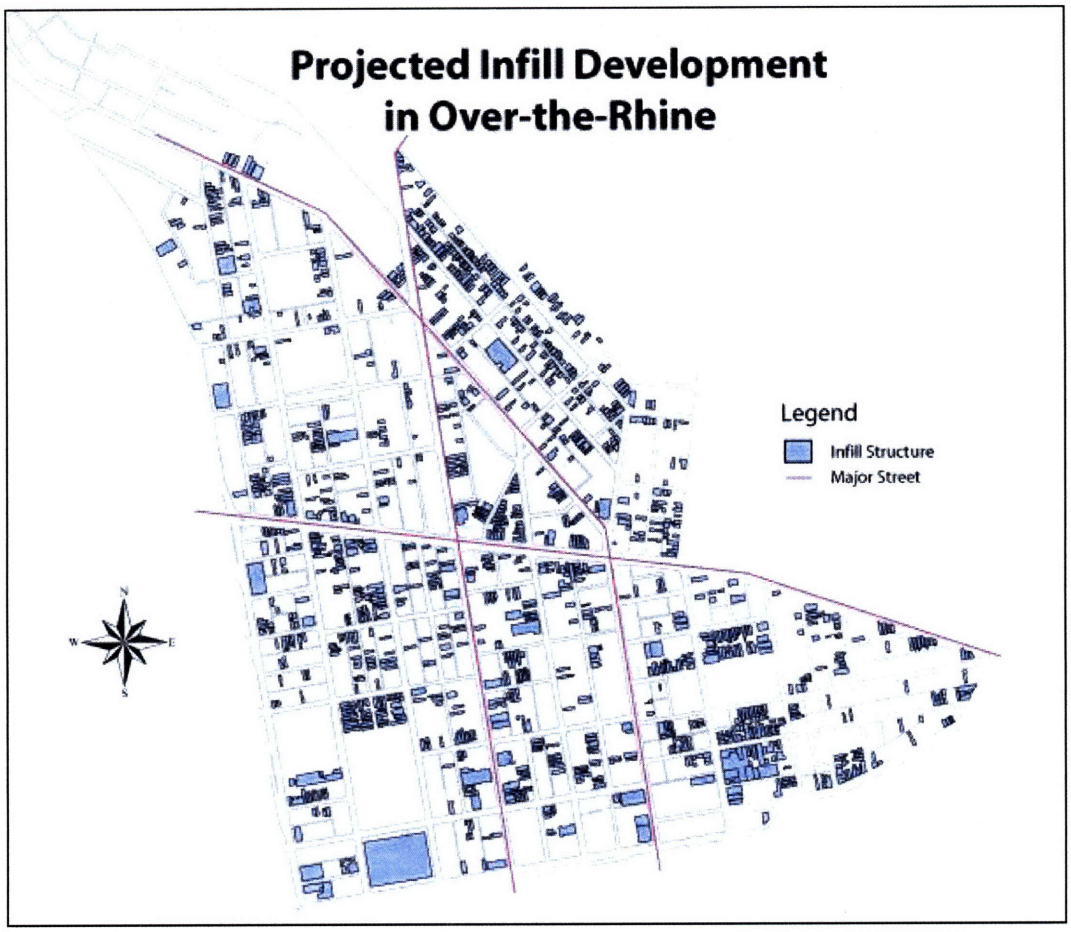
The Gateway Garage and Condominiums (seen above and below) anchor the highly visible corner of Vine and Central Parkway



Though such examples of intrusive new development have been relatively limited due to economic conditions, as land values continue to increase new construction will occur on a greater and greater scale. Demolition has left substantial vacant land in Over-the-Rhine, much of which will eventually be developed. Figure 8.1 depicts the amount of development that

would occur if all of Over-the-Rhine's vacant, buildable land were developed.[1] In this scenario, much of the district's fabric would consist of new construction. Clearly new construction has the potential for tremendous impact on the integrity of Over-the-Rhine.

Figure 8.1



The Obstacles

The primary tool for preventing a negative impact from new construction is the City's historic conservation ordinance. The ordinance allows for the creation of a set of design guidelines intended to protect Over-the-Rhine from intrusive and incompatible new construction. These guidelines are administered by city staff and an appointed XXX

[1] Excluding parkland; projections based on assumption of continued increase in land values

person Historic Conservation Board (the Board) comprised of architects, developers, historians, attorneys, and others. In order to undertake new construction in Over-the-Rhine, developers must first receive a certificate of appropriateness by submitting their proposed design to the Board and going through a design review process. The Board has the authority to suggest changes and recommendations, and to reject an application in the event that the design fails to adequately meet the guidelines. Thus far, however, the review process has proven ineffective at preventing design that, by most accounts, negatively impacts the integrity of the district.

Analysis of the existing guidelines, recent new construction projects, guidelines from other cities, and discussions with members of the Board reveal several factors that need to be addressed if poor or mediocre design is to be avoided in the future.

1) *Economics* – Just as is the case with rehabilitation, economics are the fundamental obstacle in the way of good design. Under current market conditions it is very difficult to achieve the rents and sales prices necessary to make development profitable. Though the historic district requirements are looked upon favorably by most, they impose an additional cost – real or perceived – upon developers. The Board must balance the need for quality design with the applicant's programmatic needs, and cannot be so stringent as to eliminate the possibility of a decent financial return. This limits the extent to which the board can regulate design to ensure an appropriate outcome. Tied in with this is the strength of the property rights movement, particularly in the Midwest. Property owners are generally averse to regulation, and according to one Board member, additional requirements imposed in Over-the-Rhine could create a backlash[2].

2) *Political Will* – Related to the above, political will is crucial to the ability of the Board to execute its function properly. The Board must have the support of City leaders in order to counter the property rights movement and successfully

[2] Sullebarger, Beth. Member, Cincinnati Historic Conservation Board. Telephone Interview. April 2006. Raser, Jeff. Member, Cincinnati Historic Conservation Board. Personal Interview. April 2006.

administer the Historic District ordinance. Recently the Board has been blocked from carrying out its function due to political concerns.

3) *Talented Designer Dilemma* – Ultimately the quality of new construction comes down to the talent and ability of the designer. Design guidelines can prevent poor design, but a talented and creative design professional is required in order to ensure high quality design[3].

4) *Lack of Adequate Guidelines* – The guidelines as currently written[4] are inadequate to protect Over-the-Rhine against inappropriate new construction. This allows for new construction to be permitted which damages the area's historic character. The omissions/inadequacies of the current guidelines can be broken into two components:
   (a) Measurability – The design guidelines currently offer only relatively vague descriptions, with little or no diagrams, drawings, or specific numbers to guide designers.
   (b) Omissions – While the current guidelines cover many of the most important features of buildings in Over-the-Rhine – such as composition, windows, height, setback, rhythm, storefronts, materials, and emphasis – certain critical character defining features are left out. These include definition, façade three dimensionality, spacing, and authenticity.

Recommendations

As evidenced by the above, the problems with design of new construction are varied and consist not only of flaws in the current guidelines, but also the failure of the review process to execute the guidelines and protect the integrity of Over-the-Rhine. The following set of recommendations is proposed to address these issues. These recommendations should be carried out using the same infrastructure and concepts developed in the recommendations for preservation of the existing fabric (see Chapter

[3] Sullebarger, Beth. Telephone Interview, April 2006.
[4] See Appendix to view the current design guidelines

VII). This includes a formal mediation and consensus building process as an essential step in creating the support necessary to make preservation efforts successful. It should also be noted that these recommendations are intended to be *secondary* to the prior recommendations on the existing fabric. Those recommendations are more pressing and thus take priority.

Step 1: Over-the-Rhine Foundation Sponsorship

The Over-the-Rhine Foundation should create an infill committee("IC") to address the issue of new construction in Over-the-Rhine.

Similar to the creation of a strategic preservation committee to address the existing fabric (see Chapter VII), the Over-the-Rhine Foundation ("the Foundation") should form a committee specifically devoted to promoting high quality design in new construction in the district. The following principles should be adhered to in the creation of this committee:

- The IC's strategy should be open and transparent, with activities reported to the larger Coalition.
- Members of other groups should be solicited to participate on the IC so as to promote inclusiveness
- The IC should leverage the iRhine community website as a valuable information clearinghouse and publicity tool.

Step 2: Educate Developers

The IC should reach out to and educate developers as to the costs and benefits of increased design regulation.

The first step of the infill committee should be educational. Developers are likely to represent one of the main adversarial forces to any attempt to impose more strict design regulation. Developers in Over-the-Rhine face great challenges in making projects work economically, and many would likely be averse to any additional regulation that would be perceived as imposing additional costs. The city, on the other hand, will have an

interest in the potential of heritage tourism to generate revenues in Over-the-Rhine. The IC must therefore play the role of researcher and educator in attempting to demonstrate to each of these groups that high quality design and strict regulation are the best alternative for the district. The following two step process should be undertaken in view of this:

Sub-step 1

The IC should research the economics of design standards and compile a presentation and information package documenting the economic benefits of strict design regulation. The following specific actions should be taken:

- Any existing literature on the subject should be examined and analyzed
- Data should be collected from architects and developers on the costs associated with different levels of design. This data should be analyzed to determine the extent (if at all) to which higher quality design is more costly for the developer
- A study should be commissioned on the effect of poorly designed infill on the property values of surrounding properties in historic districts. The Architectural Foundation of Cincinnati could sponsor the study, and a student in architecture or urban design could be commissioned to carry it out.
- A study should be commissioned on the effect of different types of new construction on heritage tourism. This could be carried out in conjunction with the Greater Cincinnati Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Sub-step 2

The IC should publicize its findings on the economic costs and benefits of high quality design to developers and city leaders. The following actions should be undertaken:

- A series of meetings should be convened by the IC to present their findings to developers

- The IC's findings should be made publicly accessible on the iRhine website.
- The IC should present findings on the effect of infill on tourism to the City Department of Economic Development.
- The IC should disseminate information to various media outlets.

Step 3(a): New Guidelines

With the process of education complete, the door will be opened for increased regulation. The infill Committee should advocate city administrators and officials for implementation of a set of revised design guidelines.

One major issue inhibiting quality infill in Over-the-Rhine is the inadequacy of the design guidelines as they are currently written. The current guidelines fail to regulate important aspects of building design, and also fail to provide measurability via pictures or diagrams. The Committee should advocate the city for revisions to the existing guidelines, and demand that these revisions come organically from the community. The Committee should use the following revised guidelines as a template.

Revised Design Guidelines

The following design review guidelines are intended as a revision and improvement of the existing guidelines[5].

[5] Note: these guidelines draw heavily on the existing guidelines, incorporating many of the same ideas and language. Where quotations or paraphrases are used, proper citation is given.

Over-the-Rhine Historic District Conservation Guidelines

New Construction

A. Purpose

These guidelines are intended to ensure that new construction, which is permitted on vacant sites in Over-the-Rhine, promotes and enhances, and in no instance detracts from, the historic character of the district. This historic character must be maintained in order to protect and maximize property values, heritage tourism, economic development, and arts and culture in Over-the-Rhine.

B. Overarching Guidelines

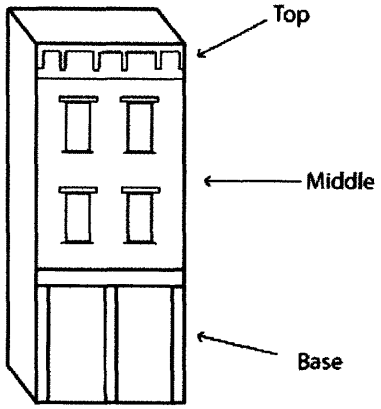
1) **Quality**: Design of new construction should be of exceptional quality to match the quality of the existing fabric. Steps should be taken to ensure that a qualified, talented design professional is involved in the design process.

2) **Compatibility**: New construction must be visually compatible with its surroundings, and respond and relate to the character defining features of buildings in Over-the-Rhine. Unless otherwise stated, visual compatibility will be defined in terms of nearby and adjacent structures of similar use.

3) **Authenticity**: New construction should not attempt to replicate historic buildings or historic designs. Rather, new construction should be representative of its own time, while still responding to its context. Design which imitates existing historic buildings is inappropriate for the district.

C. Specific Guidelines

1) **Composition**: New buildings should respond to the composition typically found in Over-the-Rhine. The quintessential Over-the-Rhine building has a well-defined base, middle, and top. Elements traditionally employed to create these divisions include horizontal banding, changes in materials or scale, lintels, bracketed cornices, parapets, and decorative features[6]. New buildings should exhibit a distinct base, middle, and top that acknowledges typical buildings without attempting to replicate them.



Typical Building Composition

2) **Window Openings** – The window openings of new buildings should relate to the size, spacing, proportion, and definition of openings on existing buildings of the same use. Windows are typically taller than they are wide (2:1 proportion), vertically aligned, and defined with protruding lintels, sills, or other decoration. In residential buildings, they are usually found individually, while in commercial, industrial, and institutional buildings they are often grouped. Windows typically occupy 20%-50% of the principal facade[7].

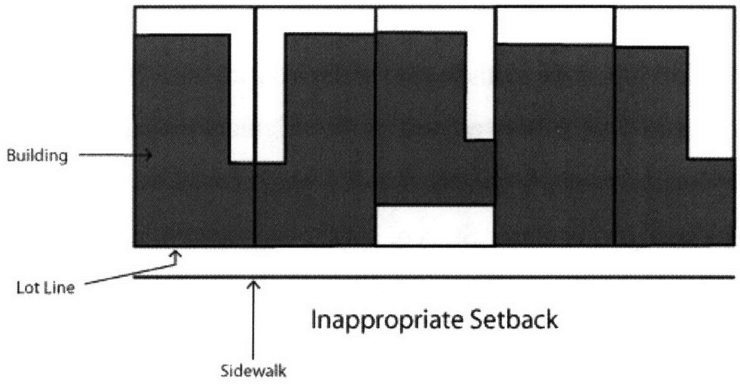

Typical Window Openings

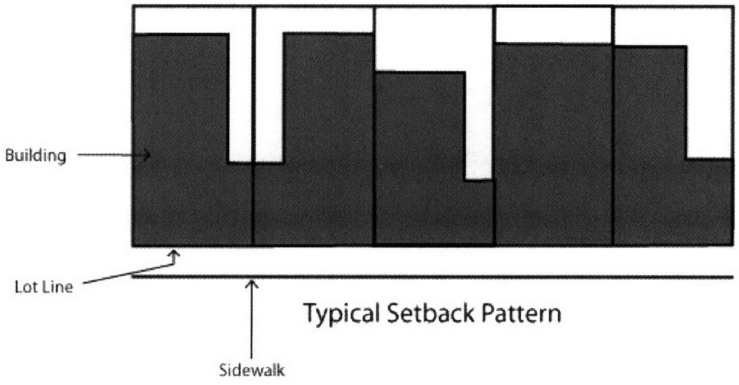

Inappropriate Infill Windows

[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.

Windows glass should always be clear; reflective or tinted glass is inappropriate. Exterior roll down shutters and metal bars are inappropriate as well. If muntins are employed, they must provide true divided lights[8].

3) **Setback** – New construction should be visually compatible with nearby or adjacent structures in terms of setback. Most buildings in the district – especially commercial properties – are built up to the property line and have no setback. In these areas, new construction that is set back from the street is inappropriate.



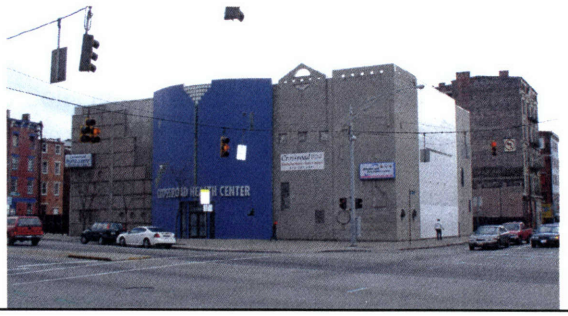


Some buildings in residential areas exhibit shallow setbacks, but retain an edge at the property line using a fence or entryway steps[9]. In these areas, setbacks are not uniform, but rather vary from one building to the next.

[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

institutional buildings display the largest setbacks.

4) **Materials** – Facades and exterior walls should employ materials which are typical of historic structures in Over-the-Rhine. Brick masonry construction is encouraged, as brick is by far the most dominant material in the district. Other materials which are found less often may also be compatible, including limestone, sandstone, and wood frame[10]. Other materials may be approved by the Board as well, upon a demonstration by the applicant that they are visually compatible with surrounding structures. All materials must be of high quality, however. Stucco, synthetic stucco, plastic, and vinyl siding are inappropriate. Side and rear exterior walls are not exempted from these requirements[11].



The Crossroads Health Center at Liberty and Vine exhibits visually incompatible materials

Storefronts should be made of cast-iron or other similar material to honor the existing buildings.

5) **Height** – New construction should be within one (1) story of adjacent buildings. Structures in Over-the-Rhine rarely diverge from adjacent buildings by more than one story. Buildings in Over-the-Rhine are typically 3-5 stories on the main thoroughfares, and 2-4 stories on side streets. New construction should not be less than 2 stories or greater than 5 stories in height, except when located along Central Parkway. Buildings located along this major thoroughfare must be 5 stories in height or greater.

[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.



Typical Building Height



Inappropriate Infill Height

6) **Emphasis** – Structures should relate to the vertical emphasis of buildings that exists almost uniformly in Over-the-Rhine. Residential and mixed use buildings are typically vertical in their proportions, with narrow lot widths, narrow windows, and vertical features such as columns.



Typical Vertical Emphasis



Inappropriate Horizontal Emphasis

7) **Spacing** – New construction should acknowledge existing spacing patterns between buildings, and should not deviate from existing patterns in a way that creates visual incompatibility. Buildings in Over-the-Rhine typically have no space or only very small alleyways between them. In more residential areas slightly wider spaces are observed.



Typical Building Spacing



Inappropriate Infill Spacing

8) **Storefronts** – New buildings should incorporate features of traditional storefronts in the district. Storefronts are typically taller than upper floors, divided into bays by piers or columns, separated from upper floors through use of a lintel, and characterized by large expanses of glass. Glass should be clear, and roll down shutters and metal bars should not be used. Storefronts exhibit the following dimensions, to which new construction should conform:

- *Lintels*: 12-18 feet above grade
- *Window Sills*: 18 inches – 3 feet above grade
- *Windows*: Setback 12 inches from exterior wall



Typical Storefronts

Inappropriate Infill Storefront

9) **Rhythm** – New buildings should complement the strong existing rhythm of Over-the-Rhine by acknowledging nearby and adjacent window patterns, piers and columns, changes in wall plane, width of buildings, and building spacing.

10) **Definition** – Virtually every contributing building in Over-the-Rhine has some definition or architectural detailing. Simple and more elaborate cornices, sills, lintels, parapets, inscriptions, friezes, sculptures, decorative



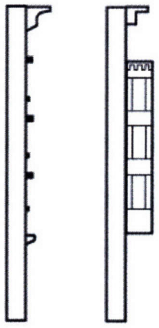
Typical Building Definition



Inappropriate Infill Definition

bands, columns, and piers are some of the elements that help give Over-the-Rhine its distinctive character. New construction should respond to the type and level of definition of nearby and adjacent structures in an innovative way, without copying or imitating them. Buildings with token definition/detailing or no definition at all are inappropriate.

11) **Façade Three-Dimensionality** – New building facades should relate to the projections, or three-dimensionality, of nearby and adjacent structures without creating false reproductions. Building facades in Over-the-Rhine are characterized by projections which give them a distinct 3 dimensionality. Cornices, lintels, parapets, fire escapes, and other features often project prominently from their facades, creating a distinct juxtaposition and negating any monolithic two dimensionality.



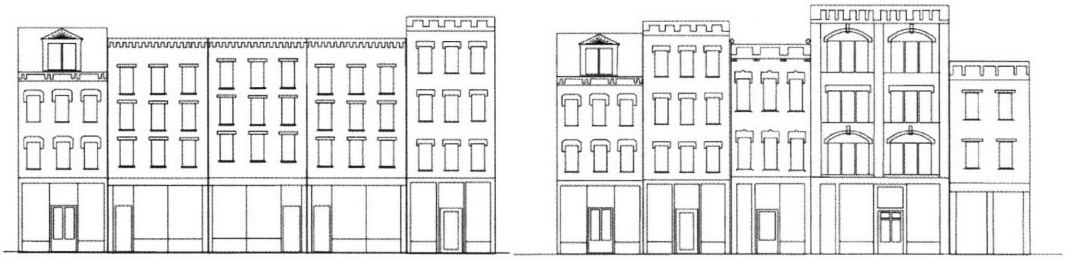
Typical Facade Projections

12) **Differentiation** – Where new construction occurs on multiple adjacent parcels, different designs must be executed for each structure. Homogeneous multi-lot developments, with each building exhibiting the same



The Brackett Village Development on Walnut Street projects a homogeneous feel and lacks differentiation
Source: Danny Klingler, 2006

fundamental design concept, inappropriate for the district. Existing buildings in Over-the-Rhine are differentiated from adjacent structures through variations in materials, height, definition, dimensions, width, projections, and spacing, and new construction should respect this fact. Token differentiation which is clearly contrived is not an acceptable alternative.



Inappropriate Infill Differentiation

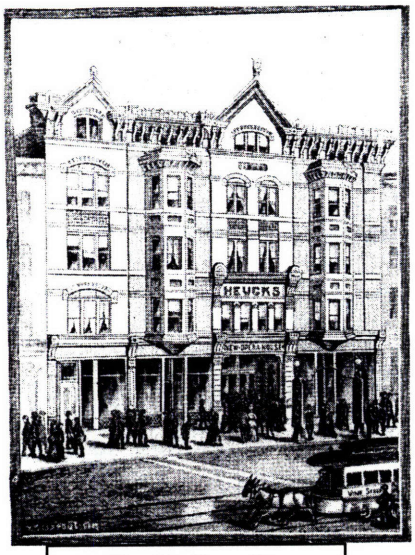
Typical Building Differentiation

D. Historic Zones

In some cases, it is important that new construction respond to and acknowledge the historic fabric previously existing in the area, rather than nearby or adjacent structures. The lost historic fabric should, in certain limited cases, inform new construction so as to promote the character of the district by referring to the past.

1) **Iconic Building Sites** – Seven sites in Over-the-Rhine once housed iconic buildings that have since been demolished. These buildings were such important contributors to the physical, social, and cultural atmosphere of Over-the-Rhine that they should be acknowledged by new construction. New construction on each of these sites should respond to its respective previously existing iconic building by incorporating important elements and features from that building. The buildings are:

    a. *Heuck's Opera House* – Renowned nationally for the quality of its performances in the late 19th century, Heuck's was an impressive Italianate structure and a focal point of the culture along Vine Street.



a. Heuck's Opera House



b. St. Peter's Church



c. Central Turner Hall



d. St. Mattaus Church



e. St. John's Catholic Church



g. Workman's Hall

b. St. Peter's Church – Another important church that fell to the wrecking ball, St. Peter's was an imposing neo-gothic brick structure that once boasted the highest steeple in the City, and anchored the corner of Main and McMicken[12].

c. *Central Turner Hall* – The Central Turner Hall was built to house the first Turner Society ("Turnverein") in the United States, and was also the site of several local political conventions[13].

d. *St. Mattaus Church* – One of many German churches whose spires graced Over-the-Rhine, the St. Mattaus Church was the only one to front on the important Liberty Street thoroughfare.

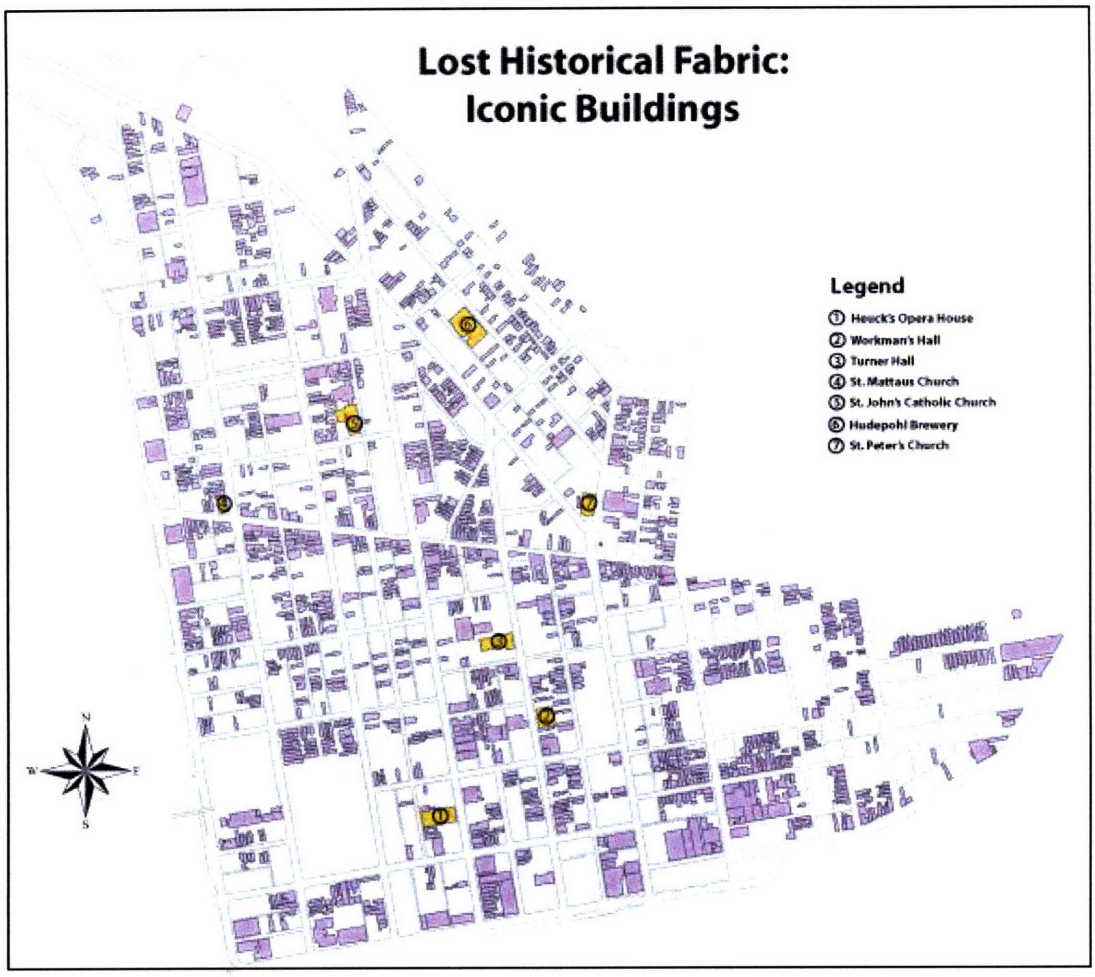
e. *St. John's Catholic Church* – St. John's was once the largest church in Over-the-Rhine. Razed in the 1970's to allow for the construction of a Community center, the steeple was preserved, leaving important physical Evidence of the structure.

f. *Hudepohl Brewery* (photo not available) – The Hudepohl Brewing Company was a Cincinnati institution. The main brewery structure was once located on Clifton Street in the Northeast quadrant of the district.

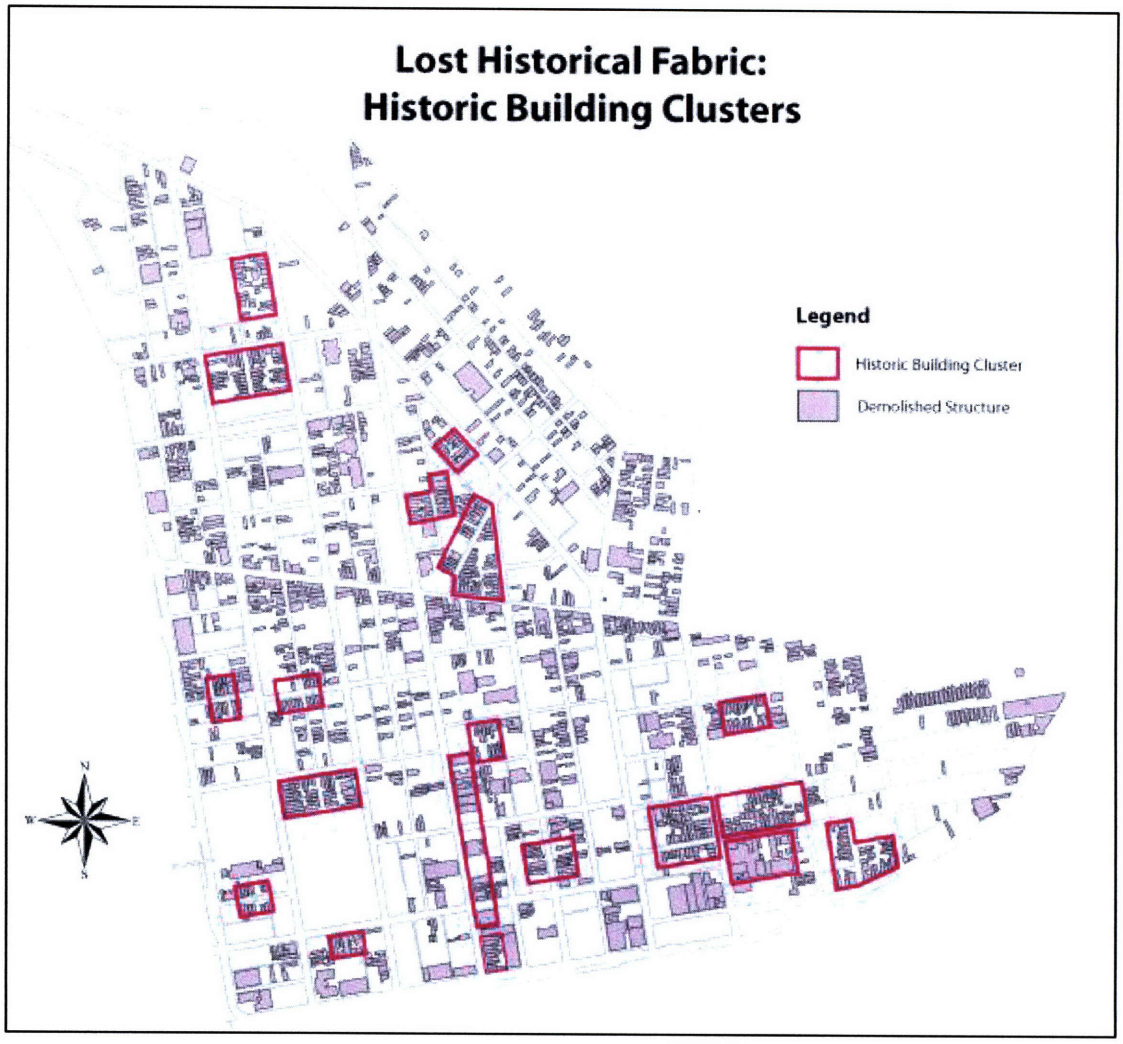
g. *Workman's Hall* – The "Arbeiterhalle" as it was called by its German founders, the Workman's Hall was built by and for local labor unions and housed many important events[14].

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[12] Ibid. p.26.
[13] Ibid. p.34.
[14] Wimberg, Robert. *Cincinnati: Over-the-Rhine; A Historical Guide to 19th Century Buildings and Their Residents.*, p.34. Cincinnati, OH: The Ohio Book Store, 1987.



2) Historic Building Clusters – Several parts of Over-the-Rhine were once Developed with clusters of buildings of similar use, scale, width, and materials. In most cases these areas were characterized by dense concentrations of the type of narrow tenements and residential/mixed use buildings so typical of Over-the-Rhine. New construction located within these areas should use the previously existing fabric to inform characteristics such as scale, use, setback, materials, and especially width.



End of Guidelines

Step 3(b): Early Design Review

The Committee should advocate the city to enact a mandatory preliminary design review requirement for all new construction in Over-the-Rhine.

One of the major problems with design review of the "Gateway" project was that the architects were not required by the city contract to come in early in the process for preliminary review. This meant that by the time Board members had the chance to review the design, substantial time and resources had already been put into the design,

making it politically extremely difficult to alter it in any really significant way. In order to prevent this from happening in the future, preservationists should advocate City Council for changes to the City ordinance which would mandate timetables for preliminary design review for all large projects in Over-the-Rhine

Step 4: Direct Action

The Committee should devise a strategy for direct engagement in the creation of high quality infill design.

With the education and regulatory processes complete, the Committee should focus on direct strategies for the development of exceptionally designed new construction in Over-the-Rhine. The following actions should be taken.

- The Committee should establish a community development corporation with a mission of developing new construction with superior design. This would allow access to public and foundation funds that would help defray the costs of exceptional design, while putting final design authority in the hands of preservationists. It would also allow the Committee to "pilot" a project of exceptional design that could serve as a model for future development.
- The Committee should establish a fund to help cover any costs incurred by developers willing to incorporate exceptional design into their projects. This fund could be capitalized in part by other developers or owners of nearby structures who stood to benefit financially from the development of a well designed structure in close proximity to their property.
- Using iRhine as a publicity tool, the Infill Committee should create an information outlet which includes examples of exemplary, historically contextual design. This will help make real and tangible the idea of "high quality design", thereby facilitating the development of such projects.

Chapter IX: Conclusion

Summary of Findings

Over-the-Rhine is a nationally significant historic district that requires intervention and decisive action if further damage to its integrity through demolition and insensitive new construction is to be prevented. This thesis has attempted to present a plan for preservation in Over-the-Rhine, informed by research into various preservation case studies, as well as an in depth investigation of the neighborhood itself.

Seven case studies of nearly "hopeless" buildings – of the type often found in Over-the-Rhine – were studied in order to gain insight into the rehabilitation of such structures. It was found that, for such buildings 1) economics ultimately determine project feasibility, 2) there is substantial ambiguity in the term "too far gone", 3) engineer experience can play a key role in determining whether a project is deemed to be feasible, 4) social motivations on the part of the developer are a necessary condition for rehabilitation to occur, 5) variation in contractor estimates can be very substantial and thus can play a crucial role in determining the feasibility of rehabilitation, 6) such projects usually require creative problem solving , 7) there is profit to be made in such projects, and 8) community support and involvement is often critical. These findings demonstrate the feasibility of preserving endangered buildings in Over-the-Rhine thought by many to be "too far gone".

In order to better apply these findings, an in-depth existing conditions analysis of Over-the-Rhine was carried out. Specific economic and communication obstacles to redevelopment were identified and explored, and economic data was presented indicating the positive development and land value trends that should make preservation of existing buildings increasingly feasible. Finally, areas of substantial remaining integrity in the district were identified, allowing for the selection of 3 target areas for preservation.

The preceding analysis was applied in the formation of several action steps and strategies. The need for a consensus building process was identified as primary, and

recommendations were made for the establishment of a Coalition of diverse constituents, catalyzed by a National Trust mediator. Using this Coalition as an infrastructure for increased unity and support, an intensive preservation intervention was proposed to address the critical threats to the physical fabric of Over-the-Rhine. This intervention consisted of a series of successive steps – establishment of a preservation committee, awareness building, and feasibility education – each building on the last and culminating in several concrete strategies for direct action.

Finally, the issue of new construction was addressed for its importance to the district moving forward. The threat of poorly designed infill was identified, problems with the current design guidelines and process were analyzed, and a new set of guidelines was proposed. Analysis of the lost historical fabric was performed and included as one specific component of these proposed new guidelines. Specific recommendations were then made to help preservationists take steps to ensure better quality design in Over-the-Rhine in the future.

Research Limitations

While this thesis represents a fairly thorough examination of the problems and potential solutions to historic preservation in Over-the-Rhine, there are several limitations that should be pointed out. These limitations are methodological in nature, and can be divided into two categories.

"Too far gone" Methodology

As a means of investigating the concept of "too far gone", 7 examples were chosen and studied of buildings rehabilitated despite being "too far gone". The primary data collection methods were interviews conducted with the developer, and reading of relevant documents. This methodology allowed for relatively in depth study of a limited number of cases (primarily from the perspective of the developer) which in turn provided for nuanced, qualitative conclusions both about the ambiguity of the concept "too far gone", and the steps that can be taken to preserve severely damaged structures. It must be noted, however, that the selection of the cases was inherently biased toward a preservationist

perspective; a more balanced approach may have yielded different opinions and different conclusions. Also, the small sample size and narrowness of scope in terms of who was interviewed limit the power of the conclusions that were drawn. In particular, the lack of a more multi-disciplinary, comprehensive approach to interviews makes the conclusions about the definition of "too far gone" preliminary at best.

Over-the-Rhine Methodology

Studying Over-the-Rhine is an ambitious endeavor due to the complexity of the issues confronting the neighborhood. This thesis attempted to gain insight into the neighborhood that could inform recommendations, and did so primarily through the study of the integrity of Over-the-Rhine, the specific threats to its fabric, and the obstacles confronting the rehabilitation of this fabric. However, additional research into other facets of the district could have yielded valuable information as well. For example, ideally more time would have been spent investigating the *particular reasons* for the failure of past preservation efforts, as well as the potential organizational and personality roadblocks which inhibit open communication among diverse groups. This information could have contributed significantly to the formation of strategies and recommendations.

Directions for Future Research

Because of the time sensitive nature of the threats currently facing the physical fabric of Over-the-Rhine, substantial further research into conditions in the district itself is not recommended. However, it may be advisable for the National Trust or other intervening entity to go deeper into the roots of past planning failures in order to avoid those mistakes in the future.

There is much yet to study regarding the concept of what makes a building "too far gone". Future research on the subject should focus on the following two questions: 1) to what extent are determinations that a building is "too far gone" based on solid economic calculations by developers, versus calculations rooted in fear and lack of understanding of historic structures? In other words, is the "too far gone phenomenon an inevitable consequence of capitalism and its rational profit maximization behaviors, or rather the

result of errors, distortions, and a failure to see possibility where it exists?; and 2) Can "too far gone" projects yield a higher return on investment for developers than available alternatives? If so, why are they or aren't they taking on such projects.

Future research into these questions will entail a broader methodology that includes a varied and multi-disciplinary approach to interviews and data gathering. A survey methodology may be a particularly good approach, as it would allow for quantitative analysis and thus a much firmer grasp on the notion of "too far gone".

List of Interviews

Argabrite, Joe. City of Louisville. Telephone Interview. May 2006.

Badger, Greg. Founder, City Lofts. Personal Interview. March 2006.

Baum, Bill, Founding Principal, Urban Sites Lofts. Personal Interview, March 2006.

Bello, Eddie. Urban Design and Preservation Architect, City of Charleston. Telephone Interview. May 2006.

Brindza, Anita, Executive Director, Cudell Improvement. Telephone Interview, March 2006.

Dellinger, Denny. Private Developer. Personal Interview. March 2006.

Dodson, David. Deputy Director, RHCDA. Telephone Interview. March 2006.

Frutkin, Chris. Founder, Center City Properties. Personal Interview, March 2006.

Golliher, Jeannie. Executive Director, Cincinnati Development Fund. Personal Interview. March 2006.

Harper, Glen. Certified Local Government and Preservation Services Manager. Telephone Interview. May 2006.

Hauck, John. Attorney at Law. Personal Interview. March 2006.

Hutzel, Andy. Over-the-Rhine Community Housing. Personal Interview. April 2006.

Jones, Ken. Architect, Ken Jones & Associates. Personal Interview. March 2006.

Ozbek, Jon. Private Developer. Email Interview. March 2006

Pape, Kevin. President. Gray and Pape Cultural Resources Consultants. Telephone Interview. May 2006.

Pickford, Bob. President, Corporation for Findlay Market. Personal Interview. March 2006.

Raser, Jeff. Member, Cincinnati Historic Conservation Board. Personal Interview. April 2006.

Schoonover, Christine, and George Verkamp. Brokers, Huff Realty Metropolitan Office. Personal Interview. March 2006.

Stec, Jeffrey. Personal Interview. March 2006.

Sullebarger, Beth. Member, Cincinnati Historic Conservation Board. Telephone Interview. April 2006.

Tackeff, Roger. Founding Principal, Renaissance Properties. Personal Interview. March 2006.

Tarbell, Jim. Member, Cincinnati City Council. Personal Interview, March 2006.

Thomas, Sean. Executive Director, ONSLRG. Telephone Interview, April 2006.

Tiffany Brian. President, Over-the-Rhine Chamber of Commerce. Personal Interview. April 2006.

Ward, Sarah. Staff member, Savannah Historic District Board of Review. Telephone Interview. May 2006.

Voss, Tim. Founding Principal, Middle Earth Properties. Telephone Interview. April 2006.

Walke, Jennifer. Planner, Department of Community Development and Planning, City of Cincinnati. Personal Interview. March 2006.

CONSERVATION GUIDELINES
OVER-THE-RHINE HISTORIC DISTRICT

July 18, 2003

New Construction

A. Intent and General Guidelines

1. Infill construction is allowed on vacant sites in Over-the-Rhine, because gaps due to demolition weaken the streetscape and the overall character of the district. New construction can improve both the physical quality and economic vitality of the neighborhood.

2. New construction should be well-designed but should not replicate the existing buildings. The exceptional quality of the existing buildings in the district provides an outstanding framework for new construction.

3. The Historic Conservation Board's review of new construction will focus on the design compatibility with the surrounding contributing structures. The appropriateness of design solutions will be based on balancing the programmatic needs of the applicant with how well the design relates to the neighboring buildings and to the intent of these guidelines. New design proposals should pay particular attention to composition, materials, openings, rhythm, scale, proportion and height.

4. The new construction guidelines for this district will be used to judge the compatibility of new work. The specific site and programmatic needs of each project will be taken into consideration.

B. Specific Guidelines

1. **Composition**: New buildings should respond to the traditional subdivisions found on historic property: a base, a middle and a top. Most buildings in Over-the-Rhine are built of brick with the principal facade parallel to the street it faces. The most important features of buildings in Over-the-Rhine are the arrangement of openings on the principal facade and an overall vertical emphasis of the whole design. Each building provides its own variations, but collectively they share many basic features.

   Base: New buildings should have a well-defined base. Within the district most buildings have a base that is distinguishable from the rest of the building. This is accomplished through a change of materials, a change of scale, and/or a lintel or other type of horizontal banding. In larger buildings the original base may include more than the first floor.

   Middle: Details on new buildings should relate to the detailing of adjacent or nearby buildings. Buildings in the district often incorporate architectural details such as changes in plane or changes in materials on their upper floors. Decorative, horizontal bands indicating the floor lines, sill heights or lintel heights should not overpower the vertical emphasis of the design.

   Top: New construction must employ a strong element that terminates the uppermost part of the building. Distinctive elements in the architecture of Over-the-Rhine are elaborate projecting cornices, decorative parapets and the expressive use of materials.

2. **Roofs**: Roofs for new construction should be similar to roofs of adjacent and nearby buildings of similar size and use. In the district, buildings of three or more stories generally have low-pitched shed roofs that are not visible above the principal facade. Smaller buildings in the district typically have simple gable roofs on which the gables are perpendicular to the principal facade. Institutional buildings in Over-the-Rhine have a variety of roof shapes, including dormers, multiple gables, hip roofs and towers. Roofs in this district have little or no overhang.

3. **Window Openings**: Window openings are extremely important in this district. The openings of new buildings should be related to the size and placement of openings found on historic structures of similar use in the district. In residential buildings, window openings are typically found individually rather than in pairs or grouped. The openings are taller and wide (typically in a proportion of 2:1), window sash are set back from the wall surface, and openings have some form of definition, such as lintels, sills or decorative surrounds. Window openings, which are typically aligned vertically, usually occupy between 20% and 50% of the principal facade.

   In commercial, industrial and institutional buildings, windows are often grouped within a single opening. These building types may also use a combination of window sash, including double-hung, awning and hopper.

   If muntins are used in new window sash, they must provide true divided lights. Within the individual opening, window sash are usually divided into two or more lights. In all cases the glass must be clear; tinted or reflective glass is not acceptable. Also, roll down shutters and metal bar systems installed on the exterior of the building that cover door and window openings are not appropriate.

4. **Storefronts**: New storefronts should relate to the characteristics of existing storefronts on historic buildings. Storefronts in the district are typically taller than individual upper floors; framed by piers and/or columns and have a lintel separating them from the upper floors; are divided into bays which increases their verticality and provides a pedestrian scale and proportion; and have large, fixed expanses of clear (not tinted or reflective) glass. As with rehabilitated original storefronts, roll down shutters and metal bar systems installed on the exterior of the building are not appropriate elements for new storefronts.

   The storefront lintels are 12 to 18 feet above grade; the window sill height is between 18 inches and 3 feet above grade; and storefront windows are set back from the structural elements approximately 12 inches.

5. **Setback**: Setback is an important issue in a dense urban area such as Over-the-Rhine. The setback for new construction should be consistent with the buildings of similar use on adjacent and nearby sites. In Over-the-Rhine, most commercial buildings are built up to the property line. Some residential property, especially detached buildings, have shallow setbacks but retain an "edge" at the property line with a fence. Some larger institutional buildings such as schools, churches and public buildings are setback from the street to provide public space and to add to their monumentality. In most cases new construction on corner sites should be built up to the edge of both outside property lines.

6. **Rhythm**: New buildings should incorporate design features, such as window groupings, articulation of wall surfaces, and decorative elements such as columns or piers in an effort to maintain the rhythm that already exists in the district. New construction should avoid creating long unrelieved expanses of wall along the street by maintaining the rhythm of bays found on

the district. Most buildings in Over-the-Rhine are relatively narrow, 25 to 50 feet in width. A building facade typically displays vertical subdivisions that establish a visual rhythm. In dense commercial areas such as Vine Street, there are no setbacks, creating a solid wall along the street. This wall is articulated by the individual buildings, which in turn are divided by window groupings, changes in wall planes and decorative elements such as pilasters, columns or piers.

7. **Emphasis**: New residential and mixed-use construction should have a vertical emphasis, because in Over-the-Rhine buildings are taller than they are wide, window openings are tall and narrow, and storefronts have slender columns, which emphasize verticality. Commercial and industrial buildings, which may have an overall horizontal emphasis, often incorporate vertical elements, such as pilasters or vertically oriented openings.

8. **Height**: The height of new construction should not vary more than one story from adjacent contributing buildings. Most buildings in Over-the-Rhine are between two- and five-stories.

9. **Materials**: New construction should use materials that are found on the historic buildings in Over-the-Rhine. Clearly the dominant material in Over-the-Rhine is brick, but other materials such as limestone, sandstone, cast-iron, slate, wood and sheet metal are important as well. Materials such as stucco, synthetic stucco and plastic are not appropriate and should not be considered as exposed finish materials for new construction in this district.

Additions

Intent and General Guidelines

1. Additions are allowed and should follow new construction guidelines. They should be compatible in character with the original. They should be sympathetic but not imitative in design.

2. Additions should be designed to relate architecturally to adjacent buildings in general and to the building they are a part of in particular.

3. Additions should not overpower the original building.

4. The appropriateness of design solutions will be based on balancing the program needs of the applicant with 1) how well the proposed design relates to the original building and neighboring buildings and 2) how closely the proposal meets the intent of these general guidelines and the specific guidelines for new construction.

Rehabilitation

A. Intent and General Guidelines

These guidelines are intended to assure that rehabilitation will maintain significant features of buildings. The guidelines are not hard-and-fast rules, but are used by the Historic Conservation Board as a guide to assess the compatibility and the appropriateness of proposed changes. Reviews are limited to the exterior changes proposed for buildings; alterations made to the interior of buildings are not reviewed by the Historic Conservation Office.

1. Ordinary repair and maintenance which does not change the appearance of the building shall not be reviewed.

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