

Wooster Square:  
Revisiting Urban Renewal

by

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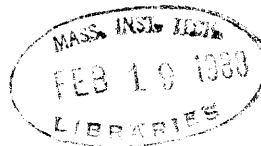
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ABSTRACT

Through interviews with residents of New Haven's Wooster Square, this thesis examines physical, political and social change in Wooster Square since urban renewal. In particular, it considers the failure of the Community School concept in Wooster Square and argues that the failure was the result of unexpected demographic change.

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## **Introduction**

The Wooster Square Renewal and Redevelopment Program assumed that good design made for a good neighborhood. As Mary Hommann wrote in the conclusion of Wooster Square Design, a chronicle of New Haven's first residential redevelopment program of the 1950s and 1960s,

It is safe to say that when all rehabilitation and new construction are completed, Wooster Square will be one of the most desirable neighborhoods in New Haven.... As we have seen, the achievement of good design was paramount, and the realization of this policy will help immeasurably to keep the area in first-rate condition for generations to come. (p.185)

Hommann's belief that the physical environment directly affects human behavior has a good deal of support in city planning literature. The argument assumes that an ordered, physical environment which can readily be understood by its inhabitants, gives its residents "an important sense of emotional security" and "heightens the potential depth of human experience." (Lynch, p. 4-5) Herbert Gans noted that this "approach grew out of architectural ideology, which assumes that buildings, site plans, and other man-made and natural aspects of the physical environment do have direct behavioral and emotional effects on their users." (Gans, p.12)

The Wooster Square Renewal Program involved constructing and rehabilitating housing, building new streets, providing parks, a community school, and rehabilitating commercial shops. According to Hommann, the design of each of these elements had a particular role in creating a good neighborhood. The community school was to be "a focus for the entire neighborhood, a uniting force, an example to the city that a school building

could be used throughout the day, the week, and the year...." (p.24) This was to be achieved by having "something happening immediately upon entering the site from Wooster Place...." The school complex was to emanate a "sense of place" for the neighborhood. (p.99) Each park had a specific purpose. Union Park was "a pedestrian link between the new wholesale section and the existing wholesale area downtown.... It is a park for passive recreation by employees of nearby businesses, as well as a pleasant stopping place for people walking downtown...." (p.149) Russo Park's function was to "effectively unite Wooster Square and its new housing to the square." (p151) The rehabilitated housing was designed to "restore residential character ... making it again an attractive urban neighborhood." (p.26) The new street system will "cut down on traffic and eliminate the blighting influence of heavy through-traffic on residential streets." (p.24)

Returning to Wooster Square twenty years later, two observations are evident. First, Wooster Square is one of the most desirable neighborhoods in New Haven to live. Second, the community school has had little effect on this success.

This paper will study Wooster Square twenty years after the publication of Wooster Square Design with particular reference to the effect of Conte Community School on the lives of neighborhood residents. The Wooster Square Redevelopment Project sought to introduce neighborhood integration through the community school. The neighborhood with a central, physical focus, the community school, was to provide order to the chaotic city, encourage local loyalties, and stimulate feelings of identity. While the Wooster Square neighborhood can be considered a success in terms of the civic spirit developed, this spirit did not emanate from the

community school. Nor did it originate from Wooster Square as a neighborhood unit. Indeed, the success of the neighborhood seems to have come from the very cause of the failure of the community school.

The community school concept failed in Wooster Square because of the area's balkanization. From a largely Italian neighborhood prior to renewal, Wooster Square became a more mixed, though still largely, white neighborhood. Census data reveals that it was not until the late 1950s that the neighborhood's predominantly white character was affected by the growing black population in New Haven. The 1950 census reveals that the black population numbered 683 out of a total Wooster Square population of 7654 in census tract 21. (Wooster Square for census purposes is divided into two census tracts - 21 and 22. Tract 21 runs from Grand Avenue in the south to Olive Street in the west to State Street in the north and the Mill River to the east. Tract 22 runs from Water Street in the south to Olive Street in the west to Grand Avenue in the north to the Mill River in the east. It should be noted that the census tracts differ from the boundaries of the Wooster Square project area. The actual number of blacks in the project area is probably fewer, but the trend is the same. These census tracts and selected census data appear in Appendix 1.) Mary Louise Skerritt reported that these "202 families were dispersed among 17 of the 29 blocks in the neighborhood. There were generally fewer than 10 black families in any given block, although several larger concentrations were noted in areas with a large number of substandard housing units." (p.76) In tract 22, blacks represented five percent of the total population. By 1960, in tract 21 "the total population of 5352 was now 42 percent foreign stock and almost 25 percent black.... The residential patterns of the black population still reflected a dispersal rather than a major concentration within the

neighborhood (except for Farnum Courts, a low income housing project where 112, or 34 percent of all black families lived)." (p.76-77) In tract 22 blacks rose to a high of almost 20 percent of the population. The influx of blacks, especially in tract 21, continued, so that by 1967, they accounted for 40 percent of the residents of Wooster Square and 46 percent by 1970. In tract 22, blacks dropped as a percent of the population to ten in 1967 and 11 in 1970. Thus, given the 1950 census figures, the Wooster Square planners did not expect the large growth in blacks in the neighborhood. Their plan for the community school was based on the continuity of a homogenous Italian neighborhood.

As the Square became more heterogenous in the mid 1960s through the 1970s, residents formed groups and associations, largely around their geographical location and ethnicity or race, to assert their informal consensus as to accepted values and actions. This unexpected demographic change resulted in the community school failing to serve as the focal point of the neighborhood. During the 1960s, the New Haven Community Action Agency or more commonly known as Community Progress Inc. set up its offices in the school and sought to encourage behavior exemplifying tolerance and cooperation between people of different races, and social and economic status. But still the school failed. The emergence of new groups in Wooster Square - blacks and Yalies (who came to the Square in increasing numbers beginning in the early 1970s) - who did not share the same values as the longtime resident Italians, resulted in isolated use of the school by distinct groups. Hence, the Italians and Yalies withdrew their children from the school while blacks sent their children there. At the same time, the Italians dominated activities at the community school and at

community functions. blacks retreated to Farnam Courts and formed their own associations and activities.

Wooster Square was not, however, without advocates working for the success of the community school. These people came primarily from the Wooster Square Neighborhood Corporation (WSNC), set up by Community Progress, Inc. The organization functioned for eight years in the Square but was in constant conflict with Alderwoman Louisa DeLauro. While there is evidence that the WSNC served private rather than public interests, it is also worthwhile noting that DeLauro's actions were not inconsistent with her position in the community - a woman sharing the same values as those living in the balkanized units of Wooster Square.

Regardless of DeLauro's motives, with the passage of the federal Housing and Community Development Act in 1974, the Alderwoman found it easier to cut off funding to WSNC. With the folding of the WSNC in 1978, the community school program effectively died. In 1980, the Conte Community School became the magnet arts school for the city.

Ironically, today, even with the failure of the community school concept, Wooster Square exhibits much of the characteristics which the project was meant to elicit - such as shared values and a sense of loyalty to the neighborhood. These characteristics, however, are primarily due to the balkanization of the neighborhood.

The remainder of this paper is an elucidation of the above argument. First, a brief history of Wooster Square will be presented so as to place the project in perspective. Second, attention will be devoted to the physical design of the neighborhood and the failure of the renewal plan to unite effectively the neighborhood. Third, the failure of the community school



will be discussed as well as the relationship between WSNC and Alderwoman DeLauro.

Before beginning, a few words should be said about methodology. To get an idea of what residents felt about their neighborhood approximately 70 residents of Wooster Square were randomly selected to be interviewed on the physical design of their neighborhood. (A copy of the letter sent to residents appears in Appendix 2.) Approximately twenty of these residents were interviewed. (A list of interviewees appears in Appendix 3.) A number of other residents were interviewed at the suggestion of the targeted interviewees. Still others because of their notability, such as former Mayors Lee and Logue and Alderwoman DeLauro, were natural subjects to interview. Thus, the paper is based on selected residents's recollections of the past twenty years, supplemented by newspaper articles.

### **Historical Background**

Wooster Square, or Newtownship as it was originally called, was first settled in the early 1800's by wealthy New Haveners and became one of the most fashionable residential sections of the city. Newtownship, not surprisingly, bore a striking resemblance to the New England village. At the center of the area was the green, called Wooster Square, bought by the city in 1824. On all streets abutting the green were elegant mansions and Congregational, Baptist, and Episcopal Churches.

During this period New Haven was dependent economically upon its port. Many of the residents of Newtownship were merchants and traders dependent upon the harbor for their livelihood. The residents, thus, felt a

special attachment to the harbor and designed their neighborhood so that the water was in clear view from the park.

Beginning in the 1860's, the physical design of Wooster Square began to change. Attracted to the neighborhood because of its proximity to the harbor, industry transformed Newtown. As in other manufacturing towns, factories (in the case of Wooster Square, carriage, rubber, clock, and corset factories predominated) situated themselves closest to the fastest means of transportation. Factories, thus, located in Wooster Square and sometimes found themselves situated between residences. Wealthy residents responded to the encroachment by moving out of the neighborhood. Factory owners, in turn, purchased some of these homes and used them to house immigrant, especially Italian, industrial workers. By the late 1920's most of the wealthy New Haveners who had lived in Newtown had moved to other neighborhoods within the city and now Wooster Square was oriented both physically and demographically towards serving the industries.

From the early 1930's to the start of the Wooster Square redevelopment program, Wooster Square was characterized by a high density of residents and a disproportionate number of walkup, cold-water flats. The industrial base of the neighborhood was crushed by the depression and the physical plants of the industries were derelict. Residences were often covered by the soot from nearby industries and much of the housing stock was in poor condition. The neighborhood further deteriorated as unemployed homeowners were unable to make mortgage payments and necessary improvements to their homes.

It was in this context that planning for the redevelopment of Wooster Square began. The planning was important from an historical perspective

for the City of New Haven and for the United States. Up until this time, development had gone on fairly haphazardly in Wooster Square. In the Newtownship period, the neighborhood was developed by wealthy merchants with remarkable aesthetic vision. In the industrial period the neighborhood was reshaped by industrialists who paid little heed to the vision of the earlier settlers. The redevelopment and rehabilitation of Wooster Square, then, is important because it is the first time in Wooster Square's history that a city agency thought about the neighborhood's physical design. The redevelopment of Wooster Square also is historically important for the development of planning in the United States. The residential redevelopment program was one of the first of its kind in the country.

The redevelopment staff consciously attempted to reorient the neighborhood back to the Square, much like the neighborhood in the Newtownship period. Anchors were placed at each of the midpoints of the rectangular green. On the Academy Street side of the green, Court Street was refurbished. Balancing Court Street on Wooster Place, the Conte School was built. On Greene Street, the Townhouses - low to moderate income housing - were constructed. Russo Park, along Chapel Street, replaced a car lot and served both to balance the Townhouses on Greene Street and to connect the Columbus Mall houses on Wooster Street to the green. The placing of I-91 along the eastern border of the site, kept the Square small, provided a definite eastern border, and helped to stabilize the neighborhood (especially since earlier drafts of the highway's alignment called for sending it right through Wooster Park). (See Appendix 5)

## **Wooster Square Design**

Mary Homann concluded Wooster Square Design with the prediction that "[i]t is safe to say that when all rehabilitation and new construction are completed, Wooster Square will be one of the most desirable residential neighborhoods in New Haven...." Twenty years later her words couldn't be closer to the truth. The success of this project is even more stark when considering that thirty years ago Wooster Square as an identifiable unit did not exist. The Redevelopment Agency created Wooster Square by establishing boundaries - I-91 to the east, the railroad cut to the west and north, and Water Street to the south. This by itself was probably not enough to create a neighborhood. But Wooster Square had more to offer - distinctive architecture and distinguished residents. The brownstone row houses on Chapel are fine examples of the architecture of the post-Civil War period. Henry Austin designed a number of the mansions surrounding the green. The row houses on Court Street are reminiscent of Georgetown or Beacon Hill.

Historically, too, Wooster Square coheres. The great men of New Haven's past - Abraham Bishop, John English, Max Adler, Dr. Paul Russo, and a host of others - lived in the Square. The Square's residents, also, accurately reflect the changing economic base of New Haven, from a port city in the 1820s to the 1860s to an industrial city in the 1860s to the 1930s, from a depressed city in the 1930s to the 1950s to a service-centered city today.

Wooster Square has all the elements necessary to be a coherent neighborhood.

However, Wooster Square today is not one neighborhood. It is a collection of neighborhoods. As one long time resident of Court Street described her neighbors on Wooster Street: "Wooster Street is separate from Wooster Square. They're like two different islands. You could have a bridge or a canal running between Wooster Street and Wooster Square. That's how different they are." The same resident said her neighbors living on St. John Street "could be living in New Jersey".

The informal balkinization of Wooster Square, in part, is paradoxically a result of both success and failure in the design process. Rehabilitation and preservation around Wooster Square was so successful that the four blocks surrounding it and the east side of Olive Street became its own enclave. Thus Wooster Street was separated from St. John Street. The failure of Grand Avenue as a commercial shopping district has further divided the neighborhood. Lyon and Williams Streets form their own neighborhood, distinct from Grand Avenue and St. John Street. While the isolation of Farnam Courts can be attributed to the placement of the highway, it might also be argued that its separation, ironically, was caused by the very public facility which was meant to unite the neighborhood - the community school. The isolation of the Friendship Houses might also be attributed to the same cause.

Wooster Square then is composed of seven distinct neighborhoods - Wooster Street, the Wooster Square Historic District, St. John Street, Grand Avenue, Lyon and Williams Streets, Farnam Courts and the Friendship Houses. Wooster Street, including Brown and Warren Streets is the last stronghold of this formerly largely Italian neighborhood. It has been

referred to in the New Haven Register as "Little Italy" and in 1981 a Little Italy Block Association formed there. In addition to its ethnic cohesion, architecturally the area is distinct from the adjacent Historic District. In particular the houses on Brown and Warren Streets are single family, duplex, aluminum sided or clapboard dwellings. The houses are not very different from those on St. John Street or Lyon and Williams Streets. Indeed, when interviewees were given a photo of the houses on Brown Street many remarked "Those houses could be from anywhere around here". But because these houses are separated from those on St. John Street by the Historic District and from Lyon and Williams Streets by Grand Avenue they form a distinct unit connected by ethnicity, interest and history to Wooster Street.

In the 1950s Wooster Street was a thriving, alive, commercial and residential neighborhood. One resident commented that prior to renewal there were "five drug stores, half a dozen grocery stores, a shoe store, fish markets, chicken markets, pizzerias, bakery shops." Today Wooster Street is still the hub of activity. But it is more commercial than before. There are now three pizzerias, five restaurants, one bakery, and one grocery store on the street. There are virtually no children living on the street. The residents are primarily older Italians or young, single professionals or students.

The Wooster Street Memorial Park, dedicated in 1955 to the boys of Wooster Street who lost their lives in World War II, is today rarely used by the residents of the Street or the Square. The park was designed by landscape architect Dan Kiley in 1969. In 1975 and part of 1976 it became the home of a roller skating hockey rink. But due to neighborhood resistance -- the noise level disturbed residents on Chapel and Wooster Streets -- the rink was moved to Conte School where it is now in disrepair.

In 1979, playground equipment was placed in the park. Today the equipment is corroded and in need of replacement. The only users of the park appear to be children from St. Paul's Church day care program. But use is sporadic. The children also play in the Square itself. In 1983 Maresca's funeral home, located on Chapel Street with parking facilities abutting the park, requested to purchase a 100-foot stretch of the city-owned playground and convert it into additional parking facilities. The request was apparently denied. While there may be better uses for this piece of land, especially in light of rising real estate values in the Square and the success of the commercial establishments on Wooster Street, most residents are pleased with this pocket park. They like having a small green strip in their midst.

The request brings out an important problem in Wooster Square today - parking. With the restaurants on Wooster Street doing extremely well and the five funeral parlors (recently the funeral parlor on the corner of Chapel and Academy closed -- it is being converted into condominiums) surrounding the Square also doing extremely well, parking is at a premium. Residents are particularly upset over this.

The Columbus Mall housing co-op has been a great success. Though I have yet to speak with anyone living in the project, numerous interviewees said they knew people living in the housing. They commented that the people living there liked it quite a bit and that very often people used it as a way station during which time they would save money to move into a house of their own. People also commented that the housing was well maintained.

The elderly housing project, also a part of the Wooster Street district located off of Warren Street, is a disaster. From the outside it looks

prisonlike with its long, thin windows barely breaking up the dull, cement facade. Inside the hallways, even five floors up, are musty and dark. It was reported that people in their forties on welfare are living in the project. Something must be done to correct the problems of this facility.

Wooster Street is the public space of Wooster Square. As one resident put it: "If anyone has lived in the neighborhood and comes back, that's where they go. There are a couple of things in the neighborhood that draw people back to it like St. Michael's church, Wooster Street is one of those things." New Haven residents or outsiders will frequent one of the restaurants or pizzerias on Wooster Street if they go to the Square. They will see activity and people of all ages in the restaurants and waiting on lines to eat. The proprietors of the restaurants are all local Italian families, so the image the outsider comes away with of Wooster Square is of Italian families. The city fosters this image. Inside New Haven's Neighborhoods, published by the City of New Haven, stated that "No one can doubt that Wooster Square's tradition is one of strong families, or that family feeling infects the entire neighborhood." (p.44)

But the residents of Wooster Square feel their family is slipping away. Resentment over displacement of hundreds of Italian families during the renewal and recent changes in neighborhood composition surfaced recently in 1981 around the disposition of a vacant tenement on Wooster Street. Signs appeared on the building reading: "Redevelopment stay out of our neighborhood. You destroyed enough." And, "Attention Developers and Goldiggers! There is no more gold in Little Italy. This project will not work in our neighborhood". (New Haven Register, "Wooster tenement center of battle", August 31, 1981) One long time Italian resident was quoted in the same article as saying, "This is our neighborhood. This is our birthright."



Ultimately, the tenement was bought by a local restaurateur who demolished the structure and built luxury condominiums.

This story of changing neighborhood composition is told on every street. One long time resident of Court Street put it this way:

Mr. Lamberti .... He owned the big mansion across the street. The New Orleans house. He finally sold that. He was a most wonderful man. He just died recently. He was a fabulous guy. He had about twelve apartments there. He was renting them to little old Italian ladies for \$85 a month including heat. Until he sold it, which was about four years ago. The new owners redid it into condominiums and I heard that some of the condominiums were \$160,000. They renovated the coach house in the back. Made another three or four out of that. I don't know anyone who lives there now. Not one person.

The house next to it, the D'Onofrio family. Mike D'Onofrio was the funeral director. His step daughter is like a daughter to me. He had a very successful funeral home. All of his family grew up and they scattered all around. He sold their homestead. Now its all condominiums and I won't know a person who lives there.

Across the street on Chapel Street a friend of mine just bought a condominium. The one on the end, condominiums. And they're going to be priced at \$125 - 140,000 a floor.

We've come a long way from Mrs. Amodio hanging her laundry out of the window.

The Wooster Square Historic District was established in 1971 and encompasses Chapel Street from Olive Street to Chestnut Street, Wooster Place, Greene Street, Academy Street, Court Street and Olive Street from Chapel to Greene Streets. Incorporation as an historic district is contingent, among other things, upon 75% of the owners giving their approval.

As an historic district, the historical integrity of the neighborhood is preserved. Any owner who wishes to change the appearance of his/her property and the change is visible to the street must file a certificate of

appropriateness to the Wooster Square Historic District Commission (composed of two architects, a lawyer, and an historian). The effect of the historic district status has been to raise the value of the property. So houses which were sold by the Redevelopment Agency in 1962 for \$21,500, today sell for \$150,000.

The upper class air that pervades the historic district today was not always the case. In the 1960s and early 1970s, Court Street was filled with assistant professors at Yale, students and young struggling professionals. One long time resident commented that in 1971 her husband was "the only attorney in Wooster Square. Now," she added, "if you walk out the door you'd run into five attorneys, eight psychiatrists, four architects and a host of others."

The townhouses built during the renewal were converted from moderate income rental apartments to luxury condominiums in 1980. While the outside of the townhouses have remained intact since their construction, the interior had to be entirely gutted. As the New Haven Register reported:

...One of the ironies is that it has always looked pretty from the outside...But inside, it was a different story. The building was getting old long before its time, for a variety of reasons.

There was relatively little insulation under the roof and in the outside walls, needlessly adding to the heating and cooling costs at a time when energy was becoming terribly expensive.

The 'mechanicals' - the heating and air conditioning equipment, the kitchen appliances and the like - were in such bad shape that they ultimately had to be replaced. ("\$450,000 to buy - twice that much to fix", June 1, 1980)

The mansions surrounding the Square remained predominantly in the hands of Italian families and many still do today. But many Italians unable

to resist offers of huge amounts of money sold their homes. Ted DeLauro tried to stop Italians from selling. It is reported that he had the minister of St. Michael's Church announce during Mass that Italians should not sell their homes. "Hold on at any cost", was the cry. Wooster Square Speaks, published by the Wooster Square Concerned Citizens, Inc., echoed a similar plea:

In the early 1900's the Italian immigrant came to live in the Wooster Square area. The Yankee residents left in a hurry, horrified by the horrible people who were invading their preserve. In the late fifties the same horrible people spent \$3.5 million of their hard-earned money to make Wooster Square a better place to live in . The Yankee wants to come back now, and push us out. Wake up, paisanos. (Vol. 1, No. 1, December 1968)

Recently, there was talk of turning the St. Joseph's guest home on Greene Street -- a boarding house for working, single women -- into more condominiums. The neighborhood vehemently opposed the sale, afraid that it might decrease the value of their property. The sale went through anyway and the new buyer raised the rents on the rooms from \$240 a month to \$595. It is rumored that the sale agreement prohibits any use other than the present one.

In addition to preserving the facades on the historic homes of Wooster Square, the Historic District Commission has beautified Wooster Park. In 1974, the Commission planted seventy Yoshino cherry trees along the border of the Square. In late April or early May, the trees bloom. The Register has described them as "garlands of tissue paper dressing the branches of the trees along Wooster Square." ("Wooster Square in bloom", April 26, 1984) Up until this past year the Historic District Commission has

sponsored the Cherry Blossom Festival which more or less coincides with the blooming of the trees. At present, Alderwoman Louisa DeLauro has taken over the reins. The popular festival has become an event for all of New Haven. There is a concert in the park; people picnic and sit on blankets; concessionaires sell flowers, pizza, calzones and baked goods.

The planting of the trees, though executed by the Historic District Commission, was the inspiration of the late, landscape architect James L. Skerritt, Jr. These trees were part of a master plan for planting many types of flowering trees in the park which was never fulfilled. The city might reconsider the plan in light of numerous residents' comments that, though they loved the park, they felt it was "cold". A group of residents calling themselves the Friends of Wooster Square Park have recently taken it upon themselves to spruce up the Park, though most residents complimented the City's Park Service for its maintenance job. Thus far they have repaired and repainted a number of park benches.

The Park, rivalled only by St. Michael's Church, is the major landmark for residents of Wooster Square. Nearly everyone said that they enjoy walking around the Park or sitting in it on warm afternoons. Many residents, however, lamented that the park was often littered with dog droppings. At the same time, many said that by bringing their dogs to the Park they met their neighbors. One went even so far as to suggest a theory of redevelopment based on neighborhood friendships formed through dog walking.

The Conte Community School has failed to serve as a center for the community. When mapping their neighborhood nearly everyone included the Park and St. Michael's, but almost none included the school. The senior center seems to have survived very well, continuing in existence today.

The Community Library was removed in the early 1970s and replaced by the offices of the Board of Education. It appears that numerous neighborhood meetings are held in the auditorium or the school building. But it also appears that meetings are held in St. Michael's or in St. Joseph's. In 1980 the school became the magnet arts school for the city of New Haven. It is now a grade 5 through 8 school which integrates basic academic instruction with required courses in the arts.

Other neighborhood associations have popped up in the Historic District. There are two Block Watch Associations, one on Greene Street and the other on Court Street. The Court Street Block Watch is part of the Court Street Association which has existed since 1962. The Association has concerned itself at various times with the appearance of the street, providing legal aid in preparing common clauses for landlords, and giving a neighborhood block party. The party is the big event of the year. In some years the number of guests each person invited was limited due to the party's popularity.

Another event taking place in the Historic District is the shooting off of fireworks from Russo Park. Prior to renewal, fireworks were launched at Waterside Park. When the Park was razed to make room for the highway, the annual Fourth of July event moved to Russo Park. A number of residents likened the display to World War II. At present, a loosely knit group of young men are said to be the organizers of the event. New Haven police are on hand, though they have not always played a passive role. One resident recalled, "When Ahern was first police chief there was an attempt to stop the fireworks. The police, arm-in-arm in riot gear, cleared the street and loaded about thirty kids into buses. But the kids were at it again the next year."

Other than that, however, Russo Park, which was built as a passive recreation area for mothers with very young children, is rarely used by the residents of Wooster Square. At present there are not many mothers with young children in the area. Even if there were, they would most likely not frequent the park owing to drunks and the rough kids who are said to congregate there. During the interviews two suggestions for reuse emerged. One suggested converting the portion of the park abutting Wooster Street and making it into a municipal parking lot, thus alleviating parking problems. The other suggested converting the cement walkway portion of the park into a one-way road running in the opposite direction from Brewery Street. The two streets would be divided by trees, creating two aesthetic, shaded lanes. Parking would be allowed on the east side of the new street alleviating the burden on Wooster Street. Further, neighborhood people might feel more comfortable sitting on the benches knowing that they are closer to pedestrians on the now much narrower walkway.

Adjacent to the Wooster Square Historic District, lies St. John Street. While physically similar to the housing structures on Warren and Brown Streets and on Lyon and Williams Streets, the street is cut off from these neighborhoods by the Historic District, on the one hand, and Grand Avenue, on the other. St. John Street is also demographically similar to Warren and Brown, Lyon and William Streets; it is predominantly populated by older Italians and other people who have lived in the area for some time, though gentrification is evident.

Lenzi Park, on St. John and Jefferson Streets underwent a face lift in 1970. Dan Kiley designed the park. In 1976, Elizabeth Mills Brown in her New Haven: A Guide had this to say about it:

One of the New Township's stylish new playgrounds. Whether children enjoy playing in it as much as adults enjoy looking at it is perhaps a question that should not be asked. Notice especially the strip that runs along Jefferson Street - a garden fantasy of concrete stumps, poplar trunks, and shadows against a concrete wall. In winter it is as engaging as in summer - a composition of gray on gray. (p.193)

It appears that at the time of Brown's writing the park was well used. Today, however, the park is physically different from the interesting picture in New Haven: A Guide. Only the concrete stumps remain. Without the poplar trunks hanging overhead the stumps seem without meaning as a structure for play. Only a few children use the park today.

Grand Avenue, while physically abutting St. John Street, is a completely separate district. In the 1940s, the area was a thriving commercial thoroughway. It paralleled Wooster Street to the south in diversity, convenience and activity. Prior to renewal, though, the street was in disrepair. Wooster Square Design details the attempt to make Grand Avenue a "furniture shopping center" with ample shopping spaces. The discussion of Grand Avenue concludes that "[a]lthough it will be improved visually and will undoubtedly be successful from the business point of view, and although the blight has been removed, Grand Avenue cannot be called a success in civic design." (p.153)

Grand Avenue, indeed, is no success in design. The "thinning" of the dense commercial area to provide better off-street parking facilities produced large gaps between buildings. At the same time, the street has not become a successful business district, despite its excellent location as a major connecting link between Fair Haven and downtown.

Today there is a major effort underway to make Grand Avenue a viable commercial district. The area from Olive Street to the I-91 overpass, became the City's twelfth Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization District (NCRD) in 1982. Designation to a NCRD became a reality when a majority of business and property owners signed letters of commitment and completed a development plan. With NCRD designation the businesses on Grand Avenue "are eligible for facade and building improvement grants. In addition, the district becomes eligible for public improvements such as sidewalks and curbs after half the businesses carry out facade renovations." ("The City of New Haven Annual Report", New Haven Register, November 3, 1985, p. J7)

Playing off the appeal and the success of Wooster Square, the businesses on lower Grand Avenue have formed the Grand Avenue off Wooster Square Association. The connection to Wooster Square is an attempt to gain some of the prestige associated with the historic district and to distance itself from the perception that Grand Avenue is an unsafe street. Physically, the project involves the conversion of old row-type buildings to new uses as free-standing structures and the renovation of many "bland concrete block-type" renewal buildings. ("Development Plan & Design Guidelines", Grand Avenue off Wooster Square Association, October 1985)

Unlike the previous business owners who wanted to create a "furniture shopping center", the current owners feel that in order to expand their clientele, the businesses on the street should be diversified. This desire was one of the primary motivations for becoming a NCRD. As the "Development Plan & Design Guidelines" for Grand Avenue off Wooster Square clearly states:



The current businesses felt with the effects of the Commercial Revitalization Program they would attract additional firms that would draw new patrons who would shop on a daily basis at several businesses. Some examples of these new firms would be: pharmacies, grocery stores, restaurants, banks, newspaper stands, tailor shops, shoe repair shops and professional offices. These new businesses would attract more local patrons to the area. (p.3)

The diversification of businesses and the rehabilitation of the buildings aims at bringing out the character of the neighborhood. The Association identifies the task of revitalization as refining the "character into a unique identity which will make the area a stimulating 'theatrical' experience as well as a satisfactory market for goods and services." (p.11) This attempt to create a "theatrical experience" is currently in vogue in New Haven development. It can be seen in Shubert Square, along Chapel Street, or upper State Street. While visually pleasant, the design appeals to an audience distinctly different from the "civic design" of urban renewal. While we should not expect to hear this phrase from private developers, we can only hope that the new services will appeal to the "local patrons" of Farnam Courts as well as the Historic District. A revitalized Grand Avenue can only benefit Wooster Square. If the Avenue upscales so as to serve the neighboring streets - St. John, Lyon, and Williams - and Farnam Courts, the development may unite neighborhoods separated for the past twenty years by physical and psychological boundaries. If the Avenue upscales to the level of upper State Street, the development may also unite the neighborhood. But in so uniting, it will gentrify the surrounding streets to match the condominium-ridden streets surrounding Wooster Square. The best solution would be to appeal to the local patrons in both neighborhoods.

North of Grand Avenue lies Lyon and Williams Streets. The streets form their own separate neighborhood, having their own Block Watch. The composition of the residents is diverse. Old Italians, hispanics, Yalies and middle income people all live in relative harmony. Their major concern is crime and for the most part - like their counterparts on the other side of Grand Avenue - blame the kids living in Farnam Courts.

Small scale rehabilitation continues in this changing neighborhood. This past year thirty to forty homes on the two streets were repainted through the Office of Housing and Neighborhood Development housepainting program. The program provides for a cost split of 50-50 between the City and qualified owners.

Farnam Courts and the Friendship Houses form two other separate neighborhoods in Wooster Square, connected only by their low income housing status. Farnam Courts built in 1942 was, at the time, a very nice place to live. A large number of the Italians displaced by the construction of I-91 moved in to the project in the late 1950s. At that time, also, Farnam Courts was a very nice place to live. In the mid 60s, Italians began to move out of the project and into Fair Haven, the East Shore, Fair Haven Heights and East Haven. Blacks, some of whom were displaced by the Oak Street project, moved into Farnam Courts and today it is all black. At various times throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the project had an active tenant's association.

The physical structure of the buildings has apparently been in varying states of disrepair for the past twenty years. There have been numerous attempts to refurbish the project, none of which have been a great success. There is no doubt that the decision to isolate Farnam Courts on the

industrial park side of the Wooster Square project had some effect on the continuous direpair of the structure.

In 1971, Dan Kiley designed a park on the front section of Farnam Courts. Elizabeth Mills Brown referred to it as "the most elaborate of the distinguished series of pocket playgrounds which the Redevelopment Agency has been putting on vacant lots around the New Township." (p.194) In 1972 the park was dedicated to the memory of Ted DeLauro.

The Friendship Houses, located on Olive Street, were constructed in 1969. The low and moderate income housing project was fiercely opposed by the residents of Court, Olive, and surrounding streets. Originally, the sponsor of the housing, St. Paul's Episcopal Church on Chapel and Olive Streets, planned on developing only fifteen units of housing. Ultimately, sixty units were built, much to the chagrin of neighbors.

In terms of design, the houses are appealing. Mills had this to say about them: "Built solidly on the building line, this is an example of the urban ... type of housing project: all open space is reserved for the interior, away from the street. Arcading and stucco provide an Italianate allusion for a traditionally Italian neighborhood." (p.191) Still, residents of other portions of the Square do not consider the Friendship Houses as a part of Wooster Square.

The balkanization of Wooster Square, with the exception of Farnam Courts, is not the result of the Redevelopment Agency's renewal plan. The neighborhoods emerged out of the different types of people who live in them and the distinctive architecture in each. The failure of Grand Avenue as a commercial thoroughfare aided the division between St. John Street and Lyon and Williams Streets - streets with similar housing types and

people. Perhaps the current rehabilitation efforts on Grand Avenue will bring these two neighborhoods together.

In the future the City may well concentrate some effort on Water, Olive, and State Streets. Water Street is the strategic connecting link between the new Maritime Center at Long Wharf and downtown. Further, residents have voiced interest in seeing the light industry softened on the west side of Olive Street, so as to make the street more residential in character. State Street has always been of interest to the residents of Wooster Square, having at one time served many of the residents' grocery needs. With the success of upper State Street, many residents are hopeful that the lower portion will again offer a diversity of goods and services.

### **The Community School**

The physical renewal of Wooster Square has been an overwhelming success as indicated by rising property values, active neighborhood associations, and a feeling by homeowners and renters that Wooster Square is a good place to live. But, by all accounts, the Conte Community School, like all the community schools in New Haven, failed to become the focus of the community. Whether this is attributable to the general climate in New Haven in the 1960s and 1970s or to circumstances particular to Wooster Square is debatable. It will be argued here, however, that the failure of the community school is a result of unexpected demographic change and the Balkanization of the neighborhood. The school when originally conceived was expected to serve only Italians. Conte was never intended to serve Italians, blacks and Yalies. While planning was progressing in the 1950s,

there were virtually no blacks or Yalies in the neighborhood. Blacks did not begin to live in Wooster Square in noticeable numbers until the late 1950s and Yalies, not until the late 1960s.

Ira Lowry has argued in "The Dismal Future of Central Cities" that suburbs have been much more successful as social systems than central cities. The residents of most suburbs agree on matters of values and lifestyles to live peaceably together. They have developed an informal consensus, supported by the local government, which "enables them to control most deviant behavior among their own residents and expel intruders who have no legitimate business there." (p.192)

Wooster Square, as argued in the introduction, has developed many neighborhoods each with its own settled internal consensus. These neighborhoods transmit accepted values and lifestyles through informal organizations, neighborhood associations, and family networks. They have been highly successful in their task. Many residents commented that they feel entirely at home in Wooster Square. One even said that finally after achieving middle age she can say she belongs somewhere. This feeling of belonging appears to be the element which sets Wooster Square apart from the rest of the neighborhoods in the city. As one resident commented upon being asked how Wooster Square relates to the rest of the city, "It doesn't. It's entirely separate." Another referred to Wooster Square as its own "enclave". Perhaps it is these stable social systems then that keeps these people, many of whom could just as easily live in the suburbs, in Wooster Square and accounts for the success of the neighborhood.

At the same time, however, the successful development of a number of stable neighborhoods has resulted in the failure of the community school. Conte served so large a constituency that it was impossible for a number of

groups within the Wooster Square community to feel behavior they disapproved of could be controlled. These groups, primarily those with the financial resources, thus removed their children from Conte.

It does appear, however, that for a while Conte succeeded as the central focus for the neighborhood. The description of activities at the Conte Community School in Wooster Square Design reflect the school performing at its best. The words are worth repeating:

The dream of all those who envisioned the Conte Community School has come true in a remarkably short time! The program is becoming more vital, more robust, and more advanced as the months go by. The timid are becoming more flexible, the unschooled are becoming enlightened. It is not an exaggeration to say that new worlds have opened up for many people in Wooster Square - new worlds for the very old men as well as the very young. Elderly Italian men, who were determined to devote their entire free time to card playing when they first entered the Senior Center have found themselves signing up for trips to the United Nations, the World's Fair, and Old Sturbridge Village. Elderly Negroes who weren't sure they were wanted at the Conte Senior Center found courage to go to the parties and mix with other members. (p.178)

These words reflect the energy and resources working to make ideals into reality in Wooster Square. Community Progress, Inc. described the ideal in this way: "As a common denominator, serving all races, creeds and classes, the schools will be a unifying force in their neighborhoods." ("Opening Opportunities", p.5) It is worthwhile to note here that the community school embodies these "human" goals in its design. The school complex is designed so that a sense of its presence is felt by those in the neighborhood. Its civic design is an attempt to integrate the neighborhood through activities and meetings in the school buildings.

In the mid 1960s and the early 1970s there was still a great deal of energy devoted to making Wooster Square an integrated neighborhood. But, as new groups moved into the neighborhood and divisions in values appeared, opinions polarized so that different interest groups politically opposed one another. Norman and Susan Fainstein in their "New Haven: The Limits of Local Control", call this period "street fighting pluralism" because of the large number of interests working at odds in New Haven. (Fainstein, p.52) Because it was the meeting place for these different groups, Conte Community School became the center of the battle in Wooster Square. There were disagreements about how the school should be used. Many of the old Italian families did not want their children to attend the same school as the black children from Farnam Courts so they sent their children to neighboring St. Michael's Church school. One resident commented that he could "remember times when Conte had fifteen to twenty kids in a class with good quality education and in St. Michael's there were forty to a classroom...."

At the same time that Italians were removing their children from Conte, the small Yalie population also removed its children. Coming from families who highly valued education, these children found it difficult attending school with the black children of Farnam Courts who generally came from uneducated families with a different set of values.

The situation is summed up by Maureen Gabriel in an article in Modern Times (published by the American Independence Movement - AIM):

As a parent whose child has been in kindergarten this year at Conte, I have grave doubts about sending him back there to first grade. Fights occur right in the classrooms. The first grade teachers who are there now are all excellent teachers, but they all admit that,

when half their class is disruptive, they cannot teach. None of the three are returning to Conte in the fall. Our principal, George Naples, has been very cooperative, but he is not coming back either.

Conte's problems come from the fact that only part of the community sends its children there. When Conte and St. Michael's (next door) children leave for the day, it is striking. The whites come out of St. Michael's, and the blacks out of Conte. Parents who do not send their children have no stake in improving the school. The school board is unsympathetic, the local political system uses jobs at Conte as part of its patronage system, and educational materials are out of date. Then to make matters worse, three quarters of the black children come from Farnam Courts where housing conditions are deplorable. (Maureen Gabriel, "Parent Views Conte", Modern Times, July 1, 1970, p.12)

The problem was so intense that apparently the City considered sending some of the children at Farnam Courts to the K-8 Hooker-State Street School. The idea, however, was rejected since Conte was not overcrowded. (Files of the New Haven Redevelopment Agency, Memo from Roger Armstrong to Chuck Shannon of the Redevelopment Agency, November 15, 1968)

The school failed to act as a community center. As one woman recounted: "They had that enormous Olympian swimming pool. You'd send your kids over to go swimming and everyone would end up in fights. The black kids, the white kids. Therefore, we stopped sending the kids over there." At the same time the senior center, which still exists, failed to unite older folks in the community. Another resident noted that "When the senior center started it was taken over by the older, white Italian people in the neighborhood and the blacks were made to feel very uncomfortable there. You ended up with a black senior center in Farnam Courts." The



public library closed in the 1970s because of underutilization and now serves as the offices for the Department of Education.

There was discord in the neighborhood which was manifested in the proliferation of formal and informal interest groups. Among the formal groups were the Court Street Residents Association, the Conte School Neighborhood Committee, the shortlived Wooster Square Homeowner's Group, and the Parent/Teachers Organization at Conte. The Neighborhood Nursery, created in 1970 by the parents of the children who attend the program, was another of the many formal organizations formed in Wooster Square.. The goal of the program was working together.

The parents come from all sections of Wooster Square and are extremely diverse in background, income, education and language. Yet all are neighbors and work together for the benefit of their children. In this time of mobility, aimless violence, racial tensions and lack of any established ties to a neighborhood or way of life, this program offers a very rewarding way for people to work with one another. Adults and children are building a stronger community. ("Wooster Daycare Gives Kids, Adults Freedom", Modern Times, January 1, 1974, p.4)

Ted DeLauro writing in Wooster Square Speaks drew the battle lines clearly between two important informal interest groups:

The Wooster Square area is indeed most fortunate in having many physical and cultural facilities at its disposal. The New Haven Boys Club has been at its present location for more than 30 years. The **Wooster Square Urban Renewal Committee** was instrumental in obtaining Conte Community Center with its pool, recreation program for children and adults and services for the Senior Citizens, i.e. a Senior Citizen Building and Branch Library. The services are available to all of Wooster Square without restriction. Unfortunately, some of the people that see fit to live in Wooster Square today now find it difficult to adjust to the Wooster Square area. **The pseudo-liberals from the academic**

**community in their attempt to use Wooster Square as their sociological test tube have succeeded in creating unrest, disharmony and polarization.** (Emphasis added)(December 1968, Vol. 1, No. 1)

So it was the Wooster Square Urban Renewal Committee, the old guard in the Square, against the new Yalies. The divisions in the neighborhood then reflect the balkanization of Wooster Square discussed earlier.

Given that CPI was running its social programs out of the community school, it is not surprising that the CPI organization in Wooster Square should become a source of controversy in the neighborhood. Neighborhood Corporations had been set up by CPI in six other inner city neighborhoods to deal with neighborhood problems. The last neighborhood in New Haven to have a neighborhood corporation was Wooster Square. Modern Times describes events this way:

Nine of us at POINT [People Organized in Neighborhood Trust] were busted by the police last week. Up until the bust we couldn't get any responsiveness from the newspapers, CPI officials and city officials to help out with the programs we're running on Wooster Street.

We were pushed into a corner. The only thing we could do was go out into the street, cause a disturbance and get ourselves busted. Since then, we've suddenly found CPI and state officials have been more responsive. They came up with a thousand dollars for us to buy the equipment they originally promised us long ago.

It all began when a small group of young men, most of us residents of Wooster Street all our lives, got together and decided it was time to do something. We were all pretty certain that the politicians down here weren't doing much for us besides talking and keeping people divided against each other. We were all sure that we had some better ideas about how to use space on the street than the landlords did.

We also knew that there was a lot of boredom, leading to vandalism and drug abuse among the young. The previous attempts to fight these problems had not been started by the people, who weren't even

consulted - so nothing was working. (Joe Alfano and Roger Duncan, "Police Bust Helps Program", Modern Times, August 1-14, 1970, p.1)

POINT soon began receiving funding from CPI, as well as the New Haven Foundation, and Yale University. In August 1970, they had three projects underway:

The Teen Lounge... gives the kids on the street a place to congregate and enjoy themselves. It also serves as a center for Department of Community Affairs (DCA)-funded summer jobs and numerous other things for people of all ages, like film showings and concerts. Classes in filmmaking, photography and arts and crafts are offered by the Creative Arts Center.... Operation Help... provides education and information on topics of vital concern to this community such as drug abuse, educational opportunities, work opportunities, and community events. (Ibid., p.1,11)

Shortly after POINT was formed, the Wooster Square Neighborhood Corporation (WSNC) was created. Its leadership was essentially the same as POINT's. By the end of 1972, WSNC had moved its headquarters from Wooster Square to Grand Avenue. It decided to tackle the problems of "drugs, health, communication and community participation, housing, employment, and education" in the Wooster Square neighborhood. ( As quoted in Yates, p.51) WSNC began to organize a Tenant's Council to help residents "exert some control over their living conditions" and "a Teen program which hopes to give the participants a feeling of pride and accomplishment." (Andy Esposito, "Wooster Sq. Starts New Programs", Modern Times, December 15, 1972, p.2) WSNC instituted arts courses in ceramics, leathercraft, and screen painting in the afternoon and the evenings at Conte Community School. In addition, WSNC worked to make

the school an educational success. As Modern Times reported, "WSNC is investigating ways that the level of instruction at Conte Schol can be improved. By working with faculty members at Conte, the Corporation hopes to bring quality education to the children of Wooster Square." (Ibid.)

The above discussion, dependent on American Independence Movement sources, would be incomplete if it failed to acknowledge that the words of the Modern Times reporters do not always reflect the reality of WSNC's actions. Both organizations had a common enemy - Louisa DeLauro. But the reasons for the rift between WSNC and the Alderwoman and between AIM and the Alderwoman were different. AIM was a radical group seeking social change and Louisa DeLauro was (and still is) a member of New Haven's entrenched Democratic Party and an old guard, Italian resident of the Square. On the other hand, WSNC was a division of CPI, a Lee administration agency, which in all likelihood was encroaching on some of the territory of Alderwoman DeLauro. Hence, both organizations had the same enemy, but for different reasons. This led to AIM using WSNC and to WSNC using AIM. As one resident who reviewed an earlier draft of this paper wrote, "It was always a source of amusement with us to observe the machinations of mutual exploitation between a bunch of street-wise kids and the dedicated intelligentsia of the AIM and Modern Times."

The WSNC continued to operate well into the 1970s. In 1976, it constructed a roller skating hockey rink in Wooster Street Memorial Park. Shortly after the rink was operational neighbors began complaining about the noise from its use. A battle ensued and when the smoke cleared, the arena was moved to the Conte playground. One resident described the events this way.

When they put that skating rink up, it was very successful. They did it themselves and it was used. There was immediate objection to it from the Wooster Square political power structure. I think they objected to its success and then found excuses, like it was noisy and it was dangerous and all the rest.

It appears that the rink did cause a great deal of noise. (Another resident recalled that the kids had hung up speakers and were broadcasting loud music.) More importantly, however, this resident's reminiscence points to the animosity between the established political power in Wooster Square and the Neighborhood Corporation. Louisa DeLauro, longtime Alderwoman of Wooster Square minced no words when speaking of the WSNC.

I wasn't too pleased about them. There was a lot of staff and the money never went down to the poor people who needed the services. I thought this was an injustice to these people. So I had a confrontation going there.... One year there was money going to all the Neighborhood Corporations and we were talking about it in caucus, the Board of Aldermen. They said, ' We'll give Wooster Square so much'. I said, 'I want nothing for Wooster Square. I don't want them to get not one thin dime, absolutely nothing. The people in my neighborhood are not getting any benefit. I don't see why we're paying them. And there are a lot of crooked things going on that I don't like. I will help my people through other agencies in the City. The Neighborhood Corporation gets nothing.'

Louisa DeLauro's complaints about the WSNC appear to have merit. A number of interviewees commented that the Corporation served only the interests of a few. The same comment was generalized to all neighborhood

corporations by Susan and Norman Fainstein: "...[A]s the seventies wore on, [the Corporations] became ever more obsessed with organizational maintenance...." ( Fainstein, p.55) Douglas Yates further substantiates the argument by stating, "In Wooster Square ... a majority of the corporations' low-income board members resigned from the board to get on the summer payroll." (Yates, p.54) At the same time, however, it is important to remember that Louisa DeLauro belonged to the same informal consensus which removed its children from the community school and dominated the activities of the community center. Her antagonism towards the organization then can be interpreted as actions representative of one of Wooster Square's neighborhoods expelling "intruders who have no legitimate business there."

The passage of the federal Housing and Community Development Act (HCDA) of 1974 signals the death of the neighborhood corporation in Wooster Square. Community Development Block Grants became the major source of funding for activities in New Haven's neighborhoods, and the funds were distributed by the Board of Aldermen. Given Louisa DeLauro's earlier comments on the neighborhood corporation, there is little reason to wonder why efforts ceased to make the Conte Community School serve the entire community.

### **Conclusion**

While the physical design of Wooster Square - with its emphasis on balance and carefully defining the community - may have aided in the establishment of a "good neighborhood", the Conte Community School has failed to facilitate this goal. The failure of the school can be attributed to unexpected demographic change - the influx of blacks into Farnum Courts

and the partial gentrification of the Square area. Wooster Square experienced major divisions amongst its residents who formed organizations and associations largely around their geographical location, ethnicity or race.

Ironically, even with the failure of Conte - the institution meant to be the focal point of the community - Wooster Square exhibits in its various balkanized units the types of values the community school was meant to elicit. The social systems of Wooster Square offer much of the same security as those of the suburbs. Wooster Square has, in many ways, realized the "good neighborhood" envisioned by Mary Hommann and the Wooster Square planners.

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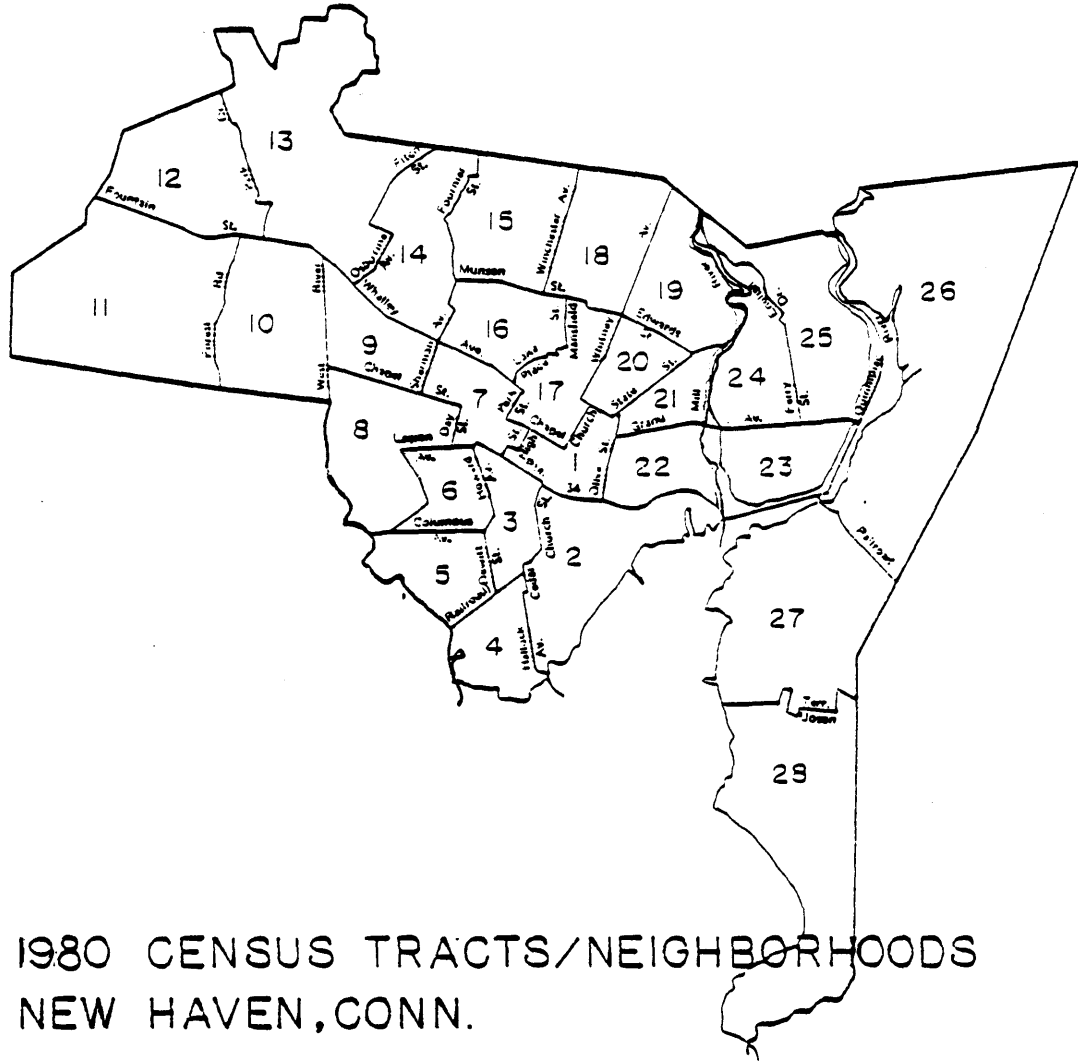
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1980 CENSUS TRACTS/NEIGHBORHOODS  
NEW HAVEN, CONN.

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. CBD                         | 15. NEWHALLVILLE                                      |
| 2. LONG WHARF-CHURCH ST. SOUTH | 16. DIXWELL   |
| 3.-6. HILL<br>(4 City Point)   | 17. YALE  |
| 7. DWIGHT                      | 18. PROSPECT HILL                                     |
| 8-9. EDGEWOOD-WEST RIVER       | 19-20. EAST ROCK                                      |
| 10-11. WESTVILLE               | 21-22. WOOSTER SQUARE                                 |
| 12-13. WEST HILLS              | 23-25. FAIR HAVEN                                     |
| 14. BEAVER HILLS               | 26. HEIGHTS   |
|                                | 27-28. EAST SHORE<br>(27. ANNEX)<br>(28. MORRIS COVE) |

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December 2, 1985

Dear Wooster Square Resident:

As you may remember, Wooster Square was the site of New Haven's first residential redevelopment program in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1965, a book called, Wooster Square Design was published by the New Haven Redevelopment Agency. The book chronicled the rehabilitation of many of the beautiful homes in Wooster Square and the working relationship between the Lee Administration and the residents of the neighborhood.

Wooster Square Design is now twenty years old and the rehabilitation of the neighborhood is even older. As part of the republication of Wooster Square Design, I and my staff will be studying the effect of the neighborhood's design on the present day residents. You, and 69 of your neighbors, have been selected at random to be interviewed as part of this study. The interview will take no more than an hour and will be conducted at a convenient location. We would like to conduct the interviews during the first two weeks of January, however, we will arrange our schedule to meet your needs. All interviews will be confidential unless you specify otherwise. The interviewers will be Scott Soloway and Robin Berry.

Enclosed you will find a response card and a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Please check whether you are willing to participate in our study and mail the card back as soon as possible. Wooster Square has always been my favorite project since I began my city work with Dick Lee more than 30 years ago. I will be most grateful for your cooperation,

Sincerely,



Edward J. Logue

### **Appendix 3**

#### *Interviews*

Anna Anastasio, 336 St. John Street

John J. Basile, 119 Olive Street

Beverly Carbonella, 20 Academy Street

Thomas Consiglio, 19 Brown Street

Louisa DeLauro, Probate Court

Lydia DeLeo, 60 Warren Street, Apt. 62A

Nora Devoe, 14 Lyon Street, Apt. 1

Elvera D'Urso, 96 Lyon Street

F. Aldrich Edwards, 87 Olive Street

Len Engel, 605 West Woods Road, Hamden

Eve Harrison, 91 Olive Street

Richard Hegel, 29 Loomis Place

Elaine Hogan, 125 Olive Street, Apt. D-2

Richard Lee, Union Trust

Michael Libero, 10 Academy Street

Frank Logue, 173 Livingston Street

Anthony Lucibella, 40 Academy Street

Lynn J. Mandelbaum, 191 Wooster Street, Apt. 1C

Richard Mazan, 613 Chapel Street

Moira McCloskey, 605 West Woods Road, Hamden

Donald Santacroce, 285 Greene Street

Dolph and Elizabeth Santello, 27 Court Street

Joel Schecter, Yale Drama School

Anmarie Valentino, 6 Jefferson Street

## Appendix 4

### *Interview Questions*

The interviews tended to take a free form, though almost all included an attempt to map the neighborhood by the resident and resident reaction to photos of the Square. Some of the following questions were asked of the residents. Other residents were asked specific questions dealing with the social and political climate of the 60s to the 80s. But almost all were asked about their physical environment.

How long have you lived in Wooster Square?

Where did you live before moving to Wooster Square?

Why did you move to Wooster Square?

What are the first words that come to your mind when you think of Wooster Square?

Please draw a map of Wooster Square. (After map is drawn probe the interviewee with questions about who lives in particular sections and what is located in areas not pictured on their map.)

If you had to get from point A to point B, how would you get there? Please describe what you see, smell and hear along the way.

On a Sunday afternoon where in the neighborhood are you most likely to be found?

If you were the chairman/woman of a neighborhood civic organization, where would you hold your meetings?

Are there artificial or natural landmarks in Wooster Square? What do these landmarks contribute to the neighborhood?

Do you use the Conte School? When do you use it?

(Show photos to the participant) What are the first words which come to mind when you see this place? What does this place mean to you? Do you ever use this place?

In what way is Wooster Square different from your "ideal" neighborhood?

What is the number one problem in Wooster Square?

What do other people in New Haven think about your neighborhood?

Would you say Wooster Square is (a) good looking (b) just ok (c) unattractive? What makes you feel this way?

What about your location within the neighborhood? If you had your choice, would you stay right where you are or move to some other part of it?

Are you pleased with the appearance of your community? With the shape and layout of the community?

What is your neighborhood like? Who lives there? What do you like most about Wooster Square? What do you like least? Would you recommend Wooster Square to someone looking for a place to live?

How much at home do you feel in the neighborhood? Apart from those in your household, how many of your neighbors would you say you know by sight and at least well enough to say hello to? Where in the neighborhood do most of these people live? Where do you usually visit with these people? Is there anything about the neighborhood that makes it an unusually friendly or unfriendly place? (Physical or social characteristics)

Where do your children play outside? Are you pleased with the recreation facilities? Do you think this is a good place to bring up children? When your children are playing can you supervise them?

Are there any areas in Wooster Square where you feel unsafe? What is it about these areas that makes you feel unsafe? Can you tell if a person is a stranger in your neighborhood?

As an older person, are there any special problems which make life a bit difficult or unpleasant? What are these problems? Are there any special things about this neighborhood that make it a special place to live? How has your mobility and use of the physical environment changed since the 1950s?

Are you pleased with the parking facilities?

What do you think of your housing project? If you were project manager at the time of the building of the project what would you do differently from what was ultimately done?

If you had a friend coming to Wooster Square from out of town, how would they know when they had arrived in the Square?

If you were entering Wooster Square from Chapel street how would you know you've gotten there?

What portion of the city is Wooster Square connected to? (Not necessarily physically, but maybe conceptually.)

For residents who have lived in Wooster Square since the 50s, Did Wooster Square feel like a separate district in the 50s. Does it feel the same way today? How is it different?

Where would you take friends if you were giving them a tour of where you live?

What is the relationship of Grand Avenue to Wooster Square? Do you ever shop there? What do you think about the effort to revitalize the street?

Are there any neighborhood characters?



