This research examines concepts of place mobilized in a gentrifying neighborhood. As redevelopment mixes levels of income within one neighborhood, various representations of place are created. Yet these understandings cannot simply be categorized by income level. Rather, similar populations hold differing or nuanced stances on place. This research identifies and analyzes these subtleties with advocates of a homeless shelter located in a gentrifying neighborhood of Cincinnati. In 2010, a public-private developer offered to relocate the shelter to a new facility away from redevelopment, arguing that it was ‘out of place’ in the changing environment. This proposal sparked debate amongst advocates for the shelter. They questioned the shelter’s ‘place’ in the neighborhood. Some believed it should remain and contribute to mixed-income development, while others believed it no longer belonged and would benefit from the move. This research analyzes both sides of this debate as the shelter considered the offer to relocate.
THE CHANGING ‘PLACE’ OF HOMELESS SHELTERS IN CINCINNATI’S OVER-THE-RHINE

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To the men and women of Drop Inn Center
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Chapter One:  Introduction

Today’s world is marked by an increased importance of place. Globalization and the shift to producer services drive cities to attract flows of people, businesses and investment (Zukin 1991, Sassen 2012). As a result, individuals and development companies are investing in the physical landscape of urban areas to capitalize on these flows (Harvey 1990, Smith 1996, Sassen 2012). Harvey (1990) illustrates this drive with the argument, “Particular qualities of place have become of much greater concern to multinational capital and there has simultaneously been a renewed interest in the politics and image of place” (431). In many cases, this reinvestment in the inner-city causes gentrification (Smith 1996). Gentrification is often located in post-industrial, low-income, working-class neighborhoods where developers are able to buy lots cheaply, pay for their rehabilitation and still make a profit (Lees 2000). As a result, these neighborhoods experience significant increases in the cost of living (Zukin 1991, Smith 1996). Working-class individuals and families who previously depended on cheap rent and low-cost services are therefore pushed out of revitalized neighborhoods. As these place-building processes continue in today’s world, it is important to understand their impacts on the pre-gentrification residents and the community networks they exist within.

This study examines place-building and gentrification actions within one neighborhood of Cincinnati, Ohio. Similar to many older-industrial cities in the Rust Belt of the American Midwest, Cincinnati is struggling with a dramatic decline in manufacturing jobs and population, as well as an increasing wealth disparity between residents in the central city and the suburbs (Leibovitz and Salmon 1999, Schamess 2006, Schilling and Logan 2008). From 1992 to 2002, the city of Cincinnati experienced a 56.7 per cent decrease in manufacturing (Mallach and Brachman 2010). During that same period, the city lost 7.0 per cent employment, while the suburbs gained 28.4 per cent. Following the trend of other Ohio cities such as Columbus, Cleveland and Dayton, the 2010 Census shows the city of Cincinnati lost 10.4 per cent of its population. Conversely, all surrounding counties experienced growth, most notably Warren and Boone counties gaining 34.4 and 38.3 per cent population, respectively (Census 2010). This flight of residents and commerce from the central city is causing significant problems for Cincinnati. Mallach and Brachman (2010) believe this decline is rendering these cities “disproportionately poor, starved of the fiscal resources they need to provide decent public
services, let alone invest for future growth” (35). In total, this decline is prohibiting the city of Cincinnati from investing in its infrastructure and providing resources for its increasingly poor residents.

In order to revive its downtown and attract these residents from the periphery, Cincinnati is focusing its attention one of its neighborhoods: Over-the-Rhine. As you can see in Figure One, the city’s border with the Ohio River to the south limits its growth in that direction. This places pressure on Over-the-Rhine, rather than other neighborhoods such as Newport and Riverside, because it is directly adjacent to the Central Business District (CBD) on the northern side of the river. Further, Over-the-Rhine is one of city’s only intact residential neighborhoods bordering the CBD. Cincinnati believes increased commercial spaces and residential units to Over-the-Rhine will attract new capital, corporations and people to the city center. City Councilman, Chris Bortz, reflects on this significance of Over-the-Rhine in his claim to a local newspaper,
The future of Cincinnati is very much tied to what happens in Over-the-Rhine. That little neighborhood is so important to the long-term health and vitality of our city...It’s so important that we enhance and continue to invest in the renaissance of Over-the-Rhine (L. May 2011d).

As a result, Over-the-Rhine has experienced a myriad of redevelopment efforts in Cincinnati, as the city attempts to regain residents, employment, and a stronger tax base.

Drop Inn Center lies within this rush to attract new flows of people, businesses, and commerce is Drop Inn Center. This homeless shelter in Over-the-Rhine provides accommodation as well as dinner and breakfast to over 200 people every day (Drop Inn Center 2012). Its 40-year existence on the corner of 12th and Vine Streets is a source of physical comfort and emotional support for many local residents as this thesis demonstrates.

As the revitalization of Over-the-Rhine continues, the shelter’s ‘place’ in the neighborhood is being questioned by many in the city. The increased importance of place demands visitors, residents, and potential financiers see the positive factors of investment and renovation; not the neighborhood’s poorest residents. Echoing the notion of not-in-my-backyard (NIMBYism), many individuals in Cincinnati now believe sources of economic blight and homelessness should be removed from Over-the-Rhine so that it may further its redevelopment (Cloke et al. 2010). This places a tremendous amount of pressure on Drop Inn Center. One local developer, Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC) has offered to relocate Drop Inn Center to the adjacent neighborhood, Queensgate, and pay for a new facility. This study analyzes the impact this economic revitalization has had on Drop Inn Center, while also evaluating both sides of the debate as the shelter considered 3CDC’s offer to relocate.

**Study Area: Over-the-Rhine, Cincinnati**

Over-the-Rhine has a long history in the city of Cincinnati. The neighborhood served as a center of German immigration to the city in the mid to late nineteenth century (iRhine 2000, Chamber of Commerce 2012). This heritage is evident today through the surviving businesses, micro-breweries and beer gardens, as well as annual festivals like Bockfest and the largest Oktoberfest in the United States. In 1983, the National Register of Historic Places listed Over-the-Rhine for its connection to these waves of German immigration and its possession of the nation’s largest
collection of Italianate architecture (iRhine 2000, 3CDC 2012, Chamber of Commerce 2012). This rich cultural history and collection of notable buildings make Over-the-Rhine a unique and desirable place among the neighborhoods of Cincinnati for both young people looking for a ‘hip’ apartment, as well as wealthy and established individuals looking for a home close to their employment downtown.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, Over-the-Rhine experienced significant changes from its start as an enclave of German immigrants. The neighborhood struggled to rejuvenate itself after a period of decline in the Great Depression and WWII when a large portion of German occupants and businesses left the neighborhood (iRhine 2000, Chamber of Commerce 2012). Suburbanization encouraged this outward migration of urban residents to less-dense settlements outside of the city (Leibovitz and Salmon 1999, Schamess 2006). Today, this movement is further aggravated by losses of manufacturing jobs in Cincinnati (Schilling and Logan 2008). Finally, the increasing importance of Central Parkway, built as an urban renewal project, leads city visitors right past Over-the-Rhine into downtown Cincinnati (Chamber of Commerce 2012). As wealthier individuals abandoned Over-the-Rhine, investment in its infrastructure declined. The tax revenue and financial resources transferred with its wealthy residents to suburban neighborhoods far from the city’s core, such as Indian Hill, Mt. Adams, and Hyde Park. This caused significant drops in property values, rent prices, and occupied storefronts in Over-the-Rhine (iRhine 2000, Chamber of Commerce 2012). Today, the neighborhood’s residents are predominantly low income black or Appalachian migrants. These residents take advantage of Over-the-Rhine’s low rent prices and proximity to jobs in light industry (Chamber of Commerce 2012). Yet as tax revenue and city funding continued to favor wealthier neighborhoods, Over-the-Rhine’s property values, infrastructure and the integrity of its historic architecture declined.

Late twentieth century city planning efforts, such as the Comprehensive Plan of 1984, called for Over-the-Rhine to be preserved as a low income neighborhood (City of Cincinnati 1996). The plan aimed to increase inexpensive housing and to focus several urban renewal projects there. As a result, Over-the-Rhine gained the largest concentration of poverty and social
services in all of Cincinnati (L. May 2008, Chamber of Commerce 2012). As stated previously, investment and capital improvements leaving Over-the-Rhine caused the neighborhood to fall into disrepair. Cincinnati residents began to fear for the loss of historic buildings and architecture, notably the Cincinnati Music Hall, Ensemble Theatre, Emery Auditorium, and Findlay Market (iRhi 2000). A study in 1996 classified 96 per cent of 1,940 examined buildings as ‘blighted’ (City of Cincinnati 1996). Adding to these concerns of dilapidated buildings were high rates of crime, violence, and drug abuse (Davidson 2012). Over-the-Rhine was deemed the most unsafe neighborhood in all of Cincinnati in 2004, as the police were called 22,993 times for a population of only 9,572 people (L. May 2008, Skirtz 2012). Cincinnati residents linked issues such as panhandling with the high volume of social service agencies in Over-the-Rhine (Leibovitz and Salmon 2007, Gillen 2009, Skirtz 2012).

The dramatic changes Cincinnati planned for the revitalization of downtown and Over-the-Rhine could not be accomplished alone. To further increase its efforts, the Cincinnati City Council ordered the formation of Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC) in 2003 (Mallach and Brachman 2010). The Council gave this non-profit organization the responsibility to “enhance[e] downtown Cincinnati’s position as a regional center of high value employment, housing, as well as arts, culture, and entertainment” (City of Cincinnati 2003). Today, the board consists of eleven of Cincinnati’s top CEOs from the business community (Skirtz 2012). 3CDC began its efforts throughout Cincinnati’s downtown, with intentions to later expand into adjacent neighborhoods (See Figure Two). In 2003, the corporation renovated Fountain Square in the heart of the CBD (3CDC 2012). The $48.9 million project now attracts two million people to its events annually (Fountain Square 2012). In 2006, 3CDC began the
controversial $56 million renovation of Metropole Apartments into the prestigious 21c Hotel (LeMaster 2012). This new facility removed 200 units of Section 8 and low income housing from the city center and replaced them with affluent lodging and conference spaces for downtown which the city believed to be helpful in attracting new business and investment. (Flannery 2011, Ibernard 2011, 3CDC 2012). These high profile projects did much to enhance the downtown area and bring new affluence to the city.

3CDC is the biggest player in the current redevelopment of Over-the-Rhine. Since 2004, it has invested over $255 million into Over-the-Rhine (Chester 2013). As you can see in Figure Three, the company focused much of its attention on Main and Vine Streets. It developed 91,038 square feet of commercial space that now host several upscale restaurants, cafés and boutiques (3CDC 2012, LeMaster 2012). Above these business are newly renovated housing units (3CDC 2012). In total, 3CDC facilitated the construction of 186 condominiums and townhomes, as well as 68 apartments for rent (LeMaster 2012). Most of these new units were leased or purchased before construction was complete, resulting in a nearly 100 per cent occupancy today (3CDC 2012). More recently, 3CDC expanded its efforts further into Over-the-Rhine to purchase properties off the neighborhood’s main commercial district. This includes Washington Park and the School of Creative and Performing Arts (SCPA), which are the corporation’s most expensive and arguably most successful ventures in the neighborhood. In addition, construction on Mercer Commons is scheduled to begin in 2013. This development between 13th and 14th Streets will include 125 rental units, 17,600 square feet of commercial space and a large parking garage (3CDC 2012). These improvements will certainly continue several years into the future, as 3CDC claimed to a local newspaper, “The work is never done” (LeMaster 2012).
Figure Three: Map of 3CDC projects in Over-the-Rhine. Source: <www.3cdc.org>
While many residents praise the redevelopment work of 3CDC, strong criticism exists around its interactions with low income residents and social services in Cincinnati. When the city decided to reverse its concentration of poverty from the Comprehensive Plan of 1984, it called for mixed-use housing (City of Cincinnati 1996). The new Comprehensive Plan (2002) aimed to create 20 per cent of homes at market-rate while also encouraging minimal displacement of the existing low-income households (Cincinnati City Planning Department 2002). However, as Over-the-Rhine’s Planning Department was dissolved the next year for budgetary reasons, these goals never came to fruition (Skirtz 2012). Planning duties shifted to the Cincinnati Department of Community Development who discarded the plan in favor of 3CDC’s development agenda. Over the next year, 230 units of assisted housing for single adults were removed from the neighborhood. At the same time, renovations by 3CDC and other investors rented apartments and sold condominiums well above market rate values (L. May 2011a, Glaser 2012, Zillow.com 2012). These actions moved low income individuals out of Over-the-Rhine, away from the place where they had long depended on cheap housing and proximity to employment. To combat the concentration of social services near new expensive developments, 3CDC is now systematically moving facilities. The corporation moved both Lighthouse Youth Services and the Talbert House to Walnut Hills within its first few years of activity in Over-the-Rhine. 3CDC is currently building a new $14.5 million facility to relocate various services located in Over-the-Rhine to Queensgate, including City Gospel Mission, Lord’s Gym, and Jobs Plus (L. May 2012a). Skirtz (2012) describe the recent times in Over-the-Rhine as a battleground for relentless removal of ‘economic others’ whom she describes as “[m]en, women and children who experience intermittent or intractable ravages of economic poverty or rejection - repulsion by mainstream society, placing them in jeopardy or social disposability” (18). In effect, the ‘economic others’ of Over-the-Rhine have been left out as 3CDC and Cincinnati place more emphasis on high income workers and consumers.

Again, Drop Inn Center lies at the center of this conflict. The current pressure to move proves the shelter, which has existed in Over-the-Rhine for 40 years, is now ‘out of place’ according to developers and incoming gentrifiers. This raises several theoretical questions in urban geography. While 3CDC’s offer to relocate Drop Inn Center would place it near the new
facility for City Gospel Mission, Lord’s Gym and Jobs Plus, the move would take it from the larger network of social services still in Over-the-Rhine (L. May 2012a). This affects not only residents of Drop Inn Center, but also many other social service agencies who interact with the region’s largest homeless shelter. This conflict is therefore a modern day case study that illuminates the aspects of place and how it can be affected by urban development. This is especially relevant today, as social services are redistributed across cities in attempts to redevelop key neighborhoods and attract flows of residents, businesses and investment.

**Research Question and Framework**
The current pressure on Drop Inn Center to move is an outcome of gentrification in Over-the-Rhine. My goal in this research is to examine how this conflict over place affects networks of social services and the individuals who rely upon them. Therefore, my primary research question is: *How have socio-economic changes in Over-the-Rhine affected the Drop Inn Center’s role within the neighborhood?* This question studies the relationship between gentrification, social services, and low-income individuals. The question is expanded with two sub-questions:

1) **What is the “place” of Drop Inn Center in the social services community of OTR?** This question justifies the importance of Drop Inn Center in Over-the-Rhine. It examines the daily functions of the shelter and the services it provides its clients. This question analyzes how this place connects to other people, places and services within the neighborhood. It is important to note that Drop Inn Center does not exist in a vacuum; it is connected to a large, functional network of social services within the neighborhood. This sub-question therefore examines the role of the Drop Inn Center for its individual clients as well as within the network of Over-the-Rhine. The conceptualization of the shelter as a node within a network is important in investigating what becomes of a place if it is displaced, or in this case, relocated.

2) **How is gentrification impacting the Drop Inn Center and its role in the neighborhood?** This question addresses the concepts of gentrification and displacement currently affecting the shelter. It identifies the groups who argue the Drop Inn Center should leave and those who believe it should stay, while also capturing the key arguments from each group. Through these
inquiries, I document both the obvious and subtle actions the local development forces of 3CDC are taking to encourage the Drop Inn Center to leave for Queensgate. This information is important to understanding why the shelter is now ‘out of place’ in Over-the-Rhine.

I understand that my perspective in this research is biased. In collecting personal narratives of shelter advocates, I interviewed individuals who are directly connected to its position in Over-the-Rhine. This includes founders of the shelter, current and past employees, volunteers, and community members who rally local support. Despite my efforts, I was not able to obtain an interview from an employee of 3CDC or Washington Park. As a result, this research provides evidence of the importance of the shelter and narratives from the individuals who most support it. Yet these one-sided narratives are arguably just as revealing, as there are sharp internal divisions of opinions on the shelter’s potential move within the group. In addition, the policy implications of this research are applicable to similar situations across the US, as cities decentralize their social services to the disadvantage of their economic others.

Overview of Chapters
The structure of this thesis is as follows. The review of literature in Chapter Two covers three broad areas of study in urban and cultural geography, including place, gentrification and homelessness. Chapter Three discusses the participant observation, interview, and discourse analysis techniques used to collect data for research. Chapter Three documents the history of Drop Inn Center within Over-the-Rhine and discusses the current acts of gentrification surrounding it. Following in Chapter Four is an analysis of the opposing opinions between members of the community dedicated to Drop Inn Center. While both groups have the shelter’s best interests at heart, their suggestions for the future of the agency are quite varied. Finally, Chapter Five concludes the analysis with a summation of the current conflict over place in Over-the-Rhine, as well as a discussion of possibilities for renovating a neighborhood suitable for all populations.
Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

Situating the Literature
I use several bodies of geographic literature to answer my research question: How have socio-economic changes in Over-the-Rhine affected Drop Inn Center’s role within the neighborhood? First, I analyze the concepts of place and network, as they help to explain the position of the shelter as well as its connections to the surrounding neighborhood and social services. Gentrification literature places the recent developments surrounding Drop Inn Center into context and reveals how these changes affect the low income residents of the shelter. Finally, literature on homelessness within geography provides further knowledge on the shelter’s role and effects on residents. A strong comprehension of these topics provides the best basis for my research question and understanding of the changes in Over-the-Rhine to the fullest extent.

Place and Networks
Place is an important concept in geography as the discipline investigates the human position and interaction within the places of the world (Sack 1988). Geographers assign more significance to place today than they did in years past. They explore how changes in cultural ideology over time create conflict or a ‘politics of place’ (Anderson 1987, Cresswell 1996, Oakes 1997). Geographers also study why these conflicts occur by analyzing ways residents are attached to place (Oakes 1997, Tuan 1977). My research draws upon all of these techniques of studying place. Drop Inn Center today exists within a place of conflict and change. Those involved in the struggle differ over the correct usage of place in the process of bringing residents, investment, and business back into Cincinnati.

Marxist, feminist, and poststructuralist geographers argue place is created and represented by the conflict that occurs within it. This struggle typically occurs between the culture in power, called a hegemonic force, and its outsiders. According to Derrida (1994), every place relies upon a central organizing principle. In many cases, this principle surrounds an ideology deemed common sense by the dominant social group (Rose 1993). Acting upon that center is an outside periphery which challenges the standard and alters it in some way (Cresswell 1996). This outside action is often referred to as transgression, which is “an act of crossing
accepted limits, of breaking rules or of exceeding boundaries” (Gregory et al. 2009: 770). These cultural politics therefore both create and modify the characteristics of place. This occurs when hegemonic forces determine the definition and use of place. Alteration from this ideology then occurs when unrepresented groups transgress and demand changes be made. These cultural politics of place are important to understanding the situation of Drop Inn Center within Over-the-Rhine today. Large investment companies like 3CDC can be envisioned as a hegemonic force, whose goals for the future of Over-the-Rhine are becoming reality. Acting upon that center are those dependent upon the social services of the neighborhood and their social justice advocates. The conflict between each group forms a unique place where one can witness wealth and extreme poverty on the same street corner.

Geographers also argue domination over place shows social power. They illustrate how hegemonic forces control the way we perceive and experience place (Rose 1993). Cresswell (1996) highlights several cases of this authority. One notable example follows several ‘hippies’ in a struggle to use Stonehenge for a summer festival. Cresswell argues citizens of the UK would not typically contest this act, but the cultural and historical significance of the monument caused them to vehemently oppose the celebration. Public opinion in newspaper columns feared the festival would physically damage the place. Cresswell argues this underlying fear is connected to the UK’s distaste for hippies. Their mobility and ‘lack of place’ situated the wandering group outside of mainstream society. This conflict illustrates what Cresswell calls the “geographical order of things” (96). Since the UK’s hegemonic culture believed Stonehenge held special meaning, they fought to preserve its integrity against the wishes of the non-dominant group. The geographical order permitted those in charge to define place and restrict its usage, while those without power could not alter or influence it. This concept is exemplified by Harvey’s argument: “Representations of places have material consequences insofar as fantasies, desires, fears and longings are expressed in actual behavior” (Harvey 1993: 22). Over-the-Rhine’s own hippie population exists within persons homeless. As I argue later, Cincinnati residents show fear of the homeless population while using public spaces such as Washington Park and prefer them to be ‘out of sight, out of mind’. This distaste and desire for removal is evident in the movement of several social service agencies away from the new retail and housing
developments. Similar to Cresswell’s example, the citizens of Cincinnati believe their new definition of Over-the-Rhine does not include the low-income population.

These conflicts over place are illustrated frequently in other literatures. In the study of homelessness, for example, conflicts over place can be examined in the geography of where panhandling can occur (Pleace 1998, Amster 2003, Collins and Blomley 2003). This is a clear instance of a hegemonic force dictating what actions are deemed appropriate in public places. Similar to Cresswell’s Stonehenge conflict, space is limited to panhandlers because they are distasteful to the general public and lack social and economic power. These experiences are echoed by people who are experiencing homelessness when they are criminalized for performing private acts in public settings. These instances link to concepts of displacement and the rendering of individuals as ‘out of place’ (Anderson 1987, Cresswell 1996, Smith 1996, Johnsen et al. 2004). There are similar crossovers in gentrification literature, with the increased importance of place encouraging cities worldwide to invest in low income, inner-city neighborhoods to attract flows of people and capital (Lees 2000, Sassen 2012). This changing of place through gentrification then creates conflict between the wealthier, incoming group and long-term residents (Lees 2000, Doucet 2009). My research will draw upon these concepts of place and conflict as Drop Inn Center is a large part of the debate on what is proper behavior within the gentrifying Over-the-Rhine.

It is important to note these previous examinations of place and conflict analyze place as a discrete, self-contained entity. I argue this is an inaccurate portrayal of place. Places have no clear bounds and are continuously adapting and changing in both character and composition (Massey 1994, Smith 1996, Oakes 1997). Places are connected to flows of people, products, capital, information and ideas (Zukin 1991, Amin 2004, Jessop et al. 2008). They are also connected to other places. Leitner et al. (2008) argue the relationship between places is crucial in geographic studies, because “Not only do spatialities exist alongside one another, they also shape one another” (158). It is therefore a belief that disregarding these connections will produce disconnected and one-dimensional analyses (Amin 2004, Leitner et al. 2008). Jessop et al. (2008) further support this argument, claiming this ‘place-centrism’ fails to consider how
“processes of place production are constitutively intertwined with the territorial, scalar, and networked dimensions of socio-spatial relations” (391). In order to properly examine a place, Amin (2004) suggests ‘politics of propinquity’ that include “everything that vies for attention in a given location” (39). This views place as it is connected to other places and networks, allowing geographers to create a relational sense of place.

Geographers most often apply concepts of networks to regionalism, commodity chains, local and national governments, as well as relationships between cities and nations (Amin 2004, Jessop et al. 2008. Paasi 2001, Paasi 2004). Leitner et al. (2008) links the concepts of networks to contentious politics and social movements. I argue these linkages can also be made for individual places, such as Drop Inn Center. I believe the current conflict over place at the shelter cannot be fully understood without acknowledging these connections. Drop Inn Center participates in several networks of people, places and services within Over-the-Rhine and Cincinnati. It is therefore critical to include literature of networks in geography in my research.

Concepts of networks can be similarly applied to literature on homelessness. Cloke et al. (2010) argue the territory of people experiencing homelessness is nodal. They each have complex notions of places to sleep, places to eat, places to receive donations, and places to work. People who are homeless rely on these networks. They often create daily routines to and from each of these places (J. May 2000, Cloke et al. 2010). My research therefore considers the Drop Inn Center as a node in the network of those who are homeless. This conceptualization of the shelter underlines the importance of this social service in Over-the-Rhine, as it is linked to other people, places, and services within the neighborhood. This network must be taken into consideration when discussing if the shelter should relocate to another part of the city.

Gentrification
The process of gentrification is strongly linked to the push for economic redevelopment in the inner-city. Today’s cities are in direct contest with one another to attract global flows of people, businesses, and investment (Zukin 1991, Sassen 2012). Cities attract global flows through new consumption spaces and activities in downtown. Highlighting the consumer and improving consumption spaces is increasingly important today, as Sack (1988) argues consumption is
“among the most powerful and pervasive place-building processes in the modern world” (653). If a city is able to provide a strong, successful commercial district, it will attract business, residents, investment, and therefore more consumers. This is especially important in US cities, as downtown centers have been torn apart by deindustrialization and suburbanization (Zukin 1991, Zukin 2012). Revitalizing consumption spaces in these cities encourages people to visit the city and spend money there, rather than in the enclosed shopping malls and large plazas found in suburbs and edge cities (Sack 1988, Sorkin 1992). Cities are therefore investing in themselves to attract globalization’s flows and become a more important node in the local circuit.

These new spaces are directly linked to the increasing importance of place. Individuals and development companies invest in the physical landscape to capitalize on these global flows (Harvey 1990, Smith 1996, Sassen 2012). In the process, land values within the inner-city increase. To capitalize on profits, investments in place are most often located in low-income, working-class neighborhoods where developers are able to buy lots cheaply, pay for their rehabilitation and still make a sizeable return (Lees 2000). The result is gentrification, where an inner-city neighborhood is recycled or upgraded into a new, more affluent space (Smith 1996, Doucet 2009). In addition to renovated housing-units listed well above local market prices for incoming residents, gentrified neighborhoods host new consumer spaces like shops, restaurants and entertainment for higher-income groups (Doucet 2009, Zukin et al. 2009). These investments have the potential to dramatically change the physical and social landscapes of inner-city neighborhoods.

Gentrification is often portrayed in black and white terms in the literature (Lees 2000, Doucet 2009). In most cases, there are distinct winners and losers in the neighborhood shift. Incoming gentrifiers are typically the winners. They are portrayed as the saviors of decaying urban spaces and benefit from their investments as more wealth and development enter the neighborhood (Mitchell 2003, Doucet 2009). Low-income residents are often the losers. They suffer from a loss of affordable housing as property values increase (Atkinson 2004). Rising land values also push out local stores that cannot afford high rent prices. These residents
especially lose when higher-income residents and expensive businesses move into these vacated spaces.

Research on gentrifying neighborhoods focuses on the conflict between these winners and losers (Lees 2000, Doucet 2009). Many low-income residents carry negative attitudes towards gentrification in their neighborhood (Smith 1996, Atkinson 2004, Doucet 2009). They lament the loss of neighbors and familiar stores. They also feel separated from the development, claiming the investments are not intended for them and are therefore not a part of their community (Doucet 2009). Conflict within gentrifying neighborhoods also occurs over ‘proper’ behavior (Doucet 2009). Activities considered normal in low-income groups, such as barbecuing in the park or large social gatherings on the sidewalk may be considered offensive to incoming gentrifiers. Smith (1996) refers to this as a ‘locational conflict,’ where groups of residents disagree over the correct uses of space. This touches upon issues of social justice, investigating who has the right to occupy and use spaces of the city (Smith 1996, Collins and Blomley 2003, Mitchell 2003). These conflicts cause tensions between each group, further fueling conflicts on either side.

Geography literature today places an increased emphasis on the gray area of gentrification. Doucet (2009) and Amster (2000) argue there are instances where low-income residents can benefit from the neighborhood change. They enjoy the improved quality of buildings and services, as well as greater access to services and resources (Amster 2000). However the losses from gentrification keep residents from wholly recognizing these gains (Doucet 2009).

Homelessness

Literature on homelessness in the United States gained significant momentum after 1980’s with the nationwide deinstitutionalization of mental hospitals and large cuts to social service funding. Today, this literature focuses on the perception of homelessness in Western culture, including the negative stereotypes against panhandling and conducting private actions in public (Pleace 1998, Amster 2003, Collins and Blomley 2003, Mitchell 2003). Geographers also discuss legislation
against homelessness and how these restrictions affect daily life and access to public space (Smith 1996, Mitchell 2002, Johnsen et al 2004). This literature will provide an understanding of the clients of Drop Inn Center, as well as the reactions of incoming gentrifiers to the shelter.

Western culture carries negative stigmas against people who are experiencing homelessness. They tend to view their actions as ‘out of place’ in the city (Cresswell 1996, Collins and Blomley 2003, Sibley 2010). This can be viewed through the public’s disdain for begging on streets and subways, since their ‘proper’ use is for commuting from home or the office. This is also true for public space, which the general public believes are intended for recreation and consumption, not loitering or sleeping. These negative opinions of homeless populations transfer into damaging stereotypes. Western culture often describes homeless people as inferior, dangerous, diseased, and deserving of their fate (Amster 2003). The idea this lifestyle is a conscious choice and that it is the individual fault of the homeless person also radiates through public opinion (Pleace 1998, Sibley 2010). Politicians and businesses only encourage these stereotypes, highlighting the moral failings of panhandlers who could get a job if they wanted, but prefer to collect ‘easy money’ from city residents (Collins and Blomley 2003). These negative labels cause a deep-seeded disdain and fear of homeless people. People are afraid they will cause harm to themselves, loved ones or their property (Amster 2003, Mitchell 2003). They therefore encourage homeless people to be pushed out of sight and out of mind (Pleace 1998, Amster 2003).

These negative stigmas of homelessness in Western culture lead to an emphasis on criminalization. Instead of increasing funding to social services to resolve the social issues that create homelessness, cities direct money towards policing and regulation (Amster 2003, Mitchell 2003). Geographers document many Western cities’ anti-panhandling laws, which effectively limit how, when, and where a person may ask for money (Pleace 1998, Collins and Blomley 2003). Other laws make the actions of homeless people illegal (Amster 2003, Collins and Blomley 2003). These restrictions are designed to limit conduct rather than status by claiming, for example, any person, rich or poor, is forbidden to sleep on city benches. While these rules apply to all individuals, it is very obvious for whom they are most intended (Amster 2003,
Mitchell 2003). This emphasis on regulation rather than a solution for homelessness is only increasing the difficulties for all parties involved.

Literature on homelessness links closely to those of gentrification and place. Just as gentrification creates a sense of normal and abnormal, this literature focuses on the perception of homelessness in Western culture. This includes the negative stereotypes against begging and conducting private actions in public (Pleace 1998, Amster 2003, Collins and Blomley 2003, Mitchell 2003). Literature on homelessness also analyzes how people experiencing homelessness understand place and create networks within the city (J. May 2000, Cloke et al. 2010). Through this, geographers discuss legislation against homelessness and how these restrictions affect daily life and access to public space (Smith 1996, Mitchell 2002, Johnsen et al. 2004).

The combination of negative stereotypes and reactions to homelessness cause people in Western culture to push economically disadvantaged residents out of their neighborhoods (Pleace 1998, Collins and Blomley 2003, Johnsen et al. 2004, Cloke et al. 2010). In the Drop Inn Center’s case, I argue this is related to stigmas against social services for homeless people (Cloke et al. 2010). Local residents and authorities do not like to see these facilities because they serve as a reminder of society’s economic polarization and social marginalization (Johnsen et al. 2004, Cloke et al. 2010). This is especially relevant in a neighborhood like Over-the-Rhine, where local economic forces are attempting to gentrify the neighborhood by investing in spaces like Washington Park, the Cincinnati Music Hall and businesses along Vine Street. Incoming gentrifiers want the social services to be pushed out, thus leaving the neighborhood free from signs of homelessness and the blight associated with it.

**Literature Contribution**
The combination of place, gentrification, and homelessness provision will allow me to extend a line of inquiry about place-building and networks. The Drop Inn Center is a modern day case study that illuminates the aspects of place and how it can be affected by gentrification. This is especially relevant today, as social services are redistributed across cities, affecting the networks of people who rely upon them. This research study contributes to geographic literature by
studying place through the provision and distribution of social services in a city. In addition, it
examines the microgeographies of the Drop Inn Center, by capturing its participation in the
network of people, places and services within Over-the-Rhine. Finally, this research advances
gentrification literature by examining its effects after economic redevelopment has occurred.
These contributions are only possible through the combination of the aforementioned literatures
and the perspective of place within a network.
Chapter Three: Methods Review

In order to gain the greatest understanding of Drop Inn Center’s role within Over-the-Rhine, I volunteered at the shelter for several weeks. This provided the best information on its daily operations and the resources it provides to residents. My volunteer sessions also allowed me to conduct participant observation, which includes spending time with a group of people in order to better understand them (Laurier 2006). To triangulate these periods of volunteering and participant observation, I used the qualitative methods of interviews and discourse analysis. My understanding of the geographic literature suggests this combination of methods is best to investigate my research question and understand the current changes in Over-the-Rhine to the fullest extent.

Conducting Personal Interviews

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of changes taking place in Over-the-Rhine, I conducted interviews with individuals connected to Drop Inn Center. Dunn (2000) recommends interviews to capture personal narratives. This technique allows researchers to delve deeper into the qualitative analysis. They also help to reveal a variety of opinions, while capturing the stories and experiences that formulated such opinions. Interviews also illustrate how differently people respond the same stimuli. The information I gathered from founders of the shelter, current and past employees, volunteers, and local community members will be an integral part of answering my research question. It also served useful to triangulate findings with those from my participant observation and discourse analysis.

Geographers conduct interviews in three fashions: Structured interviews, unstructured interviews and semi-structured interviews. Structured interviews follow a set list of questions, with the researcher unable to stray away from that list. Unstructured interviews choose the opposite pattern. The interviewer has a list of themes to cover, but no cemented list of questions. Semi-structured interviews fall as a compromise between the two former methods. These have a list of questions but allow the researcher to deviate away from them if a condition warrants further exploration. Longhurst (2006) argues semi-structured interviews are the best method for human geographers. They create a conversation-like atmosphere and allow the respondents to
elaborate on particular topics they feel strongly about, while also skipping over topics for which they do not have the same fervor. I used semi-structured interviews to answer my research questions. This style was best for those connected to Drop Inn Center because each individual holds a different set of experiences or expertise in Over-the-Rhine. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to cater each interaction to the specific respondent. In addition, the conversation-like characteristics of semi-structured interviews allowed participants to feel more comfortable with interview formalities. It created a more casual atmosphere to speak.

Following the geographic literature, I utilized purposeful sampling, on-site selection and snowballing in the process of selecting research participants. Purposeful sampling involves the intentional selection of respondents. This is very different than random sampling which involves unsystematic participant selection. Secor (2010) proposes this to be the best method because respondents are the ‘experts.’ She argues it is beneficial to choose respondents who know the most about a research topic. They will, in turn, provide the most detailed and accurate personal narratives. I followed Secor’s advice and used purposeful sampling. This is relevant to my study in Over-the-Rhine as I considered those connected to Drop Inn Center act as the ‘experts’ on the area’s recent changes. On-site selection is the most efficient way to purposefully sample. This involves visiting locations where you are most likely to find the ideal respondents (Longhurst 1996). I employed this technique in my research by volunteering at the Drop Inn Center to meet those most integrally linked to the shelter. Finally, I utilized snowballing methods for making a network of new interview contacts. This involved asking respondents if they know of additional people who would help on the researcher’s quest to answer a question (Longhurst 1996). This was fitting for my personal research, as I am a new and uneducated member to the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood.

In order to gain the greatest understanding of the array of opinions on Drop Inn Center’s potential move, I asked similar questions to each participant. Each question correlated directly to my research sub-questions:

- How would you describe the character of Over-the-Rhine to a person who has never been here before?
- What do you believe is the most important role or function of Drop Inn Center?
How does the shelter connect to the community - including people, places and services?
How has Drop Inn Center been changed by the gentrification of Over-the-Rhine?
What would Over-the-Rhine be like without Drop Inn Center?

This small group of questions allowed participants to elaborate on each topic, providing more in-depth information for each than they would have for a longer list.

While I employed all of the above methods, it is important to remember critical reflexivity. This idea, proposed primarily by England (1994), suggests there are power relations between every interaction. In my personal example, the outward facts that I am a young, white, educated female who is not from Over-the-Rhine or even Cincinnati could potentially have altered my interactions with respondents. This was important to remember in selecting participants, formulating questions, analyzing research and writing the final product (Dowling 2000). I followed Dowling (2000) suggestion to keep a research journal and frequently reflect upon my interactions. I attempted to be constantly aware of my position to the respondent and ensure that no biases entered our discussions.

I believe interviews were the best technique to gather information from the community members of Over-the-Rhine. These conversations best revealed personal narratives that are often hidden from newspaper articles and official announcements (Johnsen et al. 2004, J. May 2000). In addition, individual conversations allowed each respondent to elaborate on topics they are ‘experts’ on, which is not possible in other techniques such as surveys. By conducting these interviews, I am confident I gained a strong understanding of Drop Inn Center’s role within Over-the-Rhine from the individuals most connected to the shelter.

Performing Discourse Analysis
In order to further understand the political, social and economic background of my research questions, I utilized discourse analysis. This involved analyzing various written works, such as newspaper articles, online blogs, and opinion pieces. I also used discourse analysis in the transcriptions by transcribing and coding conversations from the interviews (Cope 2006). This
aspect of discourse analysis helped me to gain the greatest amount of information possible from those interactions.

There are two ways to conduct an analysis on written work (Forbes 2008). Some geographers use content analysis. This involves selecting certain key words and phrases that are important to the research question. The scholar then analyses newspapers, blogs, documents, TV programs, and other forms of media to see how often they are used. Content analysis is often more quantitative because it involves counting the number of times a word is used, timing how many minutes a topic is covered in news broadcasting, or adding how many inches of newspaper articles it received.

Geographers use discourse analysis as a more qualitative approach. This involves interpretation of word usage and phrases. They often practice semiotics, which studies the usage of symbols and allusions. I used discourse analysis to answer my research question. In studying written media such as newspapers and opinion pieces, it was crucial in analyzing how local news sources describe Over-the-Rhine, the Drop Inn Center and its residents. Discourse analysis was also useful on the transcripts of the interviews. My research will be enriched by examining the semantics and symbols that those linked to Drop Inn Center when describing the shelter’s place in Over-the-Rhine.

Hodder (2008) argues that discourse analysis should be used as supplementary data to other research methods such as interviews, focus groups and surveys. He notes that discourse does not provide a different view of the situation, but rather should enrich what is already collected. This is because discourse analysis is highly biased. Hodder claims that ten people could read the same writing and produce ten different interpretations of it. He also claims researchers have the ability to overemphasize word choice or to expand an author’s meaning further than intended in order to fit a specific research goal. It is therefore important to be critically reflexive while conducting a discourse analysis (England 1994). Hodder encourages researchers to recognize the social, historical and cultural standing of the author or respondent. Reading texts from 1970 through the lens of someone from 2012, for example, has the potential
to insert bias. Following this suggestion, I frequently reflected upon my personal perspectives and potential biases. I also considered important questions about the writer/speaker: Does the person have a personal connection to the story? What is their agenda in stating this? Was that word choice intentional? These pieces of information are crucial elements to understanding the current situation of Drop Inn Center.

In conducting this research, I anticipated finding negative references to Drop Inn Center and its residents. As stated earlier, people who are experiencing homelessness and the services that support them are often criminalized and demonized in Western culture. Geographers use discourse analysis to discuss these negative stereotypes. Cresswell (1996), for example, studied newspaper articles’ depictions of graffiti in New York City. He found they used words like ‘garbage’ ‘filth’ and ‘disease’ when referring to graffiti on city walls and subways. Smith (1996) used similar techniques to study gentrification on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. He found newspaper references to the ‘urban frontier,’ with many articles referring to ‘yuppies’ ‘taming’ the poor neighborhoods through gentrification. In Cincinnati, these negative references were numerous. The Cincinnati Enquirer, the region’s largest newspaper, posted many articles that praised the work of 3CDC without questioning the negative responses for economic others. This is linked to the fact that Margaret Buchanan, president and publisher of the newspaper, sits on the board of directors for 3CDC (Lopez 2012). In this situation, as well as many others, discourse analysis was crucial to understanding the unspoken information in each newspaper article. In the end, this information served as important background information in answering my second sub-question: What are the place-based pressures on the Drop Inn Center? In addition, the data triangulated information gathered from participant observation and interviews.
Chapter Four: The ‘Place’ of Drop Inn Center

Foundation of Drop Inn Center

Drop Inn Center opened in 1973 to combat alcoholism for men. Its foundation was spurred by a need within the Over-the-Rhine community. As one respondent claimed:

The shelter house was founded by the neighborhood people here. It was our people that were struggling with homelessness. It was our wisdom that said ‘This is something we need’ (Personal Interview 2012).

The shelter established its mission as “Housing is a basic human right and neighborhood people have the right to staff and run their own shelter” (Neumeier 1998). This reflects the integral role community played in the activities of the shelter. In addition, the mission statement echoes an open-door policy, of which Drop Inn Center is known for across Cincinnati (Personal Interviews 2012).

Community involvement and open-door policies have been part of Drop Inn Center since its foundation. The one-room storefront at 1171 Vine Street was initially purchased to aid individuals struggling with alcoholism (Neuimeier 1998). It offered overnight shelter, food, and treatment. Yet almost immediately, community volunteers saw need to also help those evicted by changes in the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (Skirtz 2012).

The new policy provided funding for large, communal apartment buildings to be converted into individual units. This displaced single, low-income individuals who rented weekly rooms that shared a bathroom and kitchen. Coupled with this change in HUD policy were massive cuts in federal funding for rent assistance (Skirtz 2012). Drop Inn Center accepted the new residents until they were able to find new housing options. Two years later, Drop Inn Center sought to help yet another group. In 1975, thousands of individuals were deinstitutionalized from state mental hospitals. This act intended for individuals to return to the community but rather left them jobless, homeless, and helpless (Skirtz 2012). Again, Drop Inn Center accepted these individuals into its doors. With these three groups residing under one social service, it is clear how the open-door policy became standard for Drop Inn Center. To this day, employees and volunteers of the shelter continue this policy and express their pride of being the lowest-barrier shelter in Cincinnati (Personal Interviews 2012).
With the addition of these new groups, Drop Inn Center faced growing pains in its small one-room storefront. Five years after its foundation, the shelter moved to its current location at the intersection of 12th Street and Elm Street. This new building allowed them to serve 250 single men and women (Neumeier 1998). The expansion was met with sharp criticism from the rest of Cincinnati. They argued the larger shelter would bring even more homeless people into the city (Personal Interview 2012). One week after moving to its new location, Drop Inn Center faced immediate eviction in court. Signifying the shelter’s deep connection to the community, 120 allies came to defend the shelter in 14-inches of snow (Neumeier 1998). Drop Inn Center won its court case and was permitted to remain on 12th Street, but the scrutiny did not end. In her recount of the shelter’s move, Bonnie Neumeier, an original founder, describes,

The inspectors came in like storm troopers. When we had complied with all orders, new violations were cited. Inspection after inspection, and we still could not pass the test. It was clear to us that we were selectively being harassed by the Health Department. We would never pass inspection because the powers at be did not support community people running a community program at Drop Inn Center – we were not professional enough in their eyes (Neumeier 1998). One respondent echoed this scrutiny, claiming “it was like a TV soap opera for several years” (Personal Interview 2012).

Despite these pressures, Drop Inn Center persevered on 12th Street. Reflecting its strong connection to the local community, the shelter raised $80,000 to buy the building outright from the landlord (Personal Interview 2012). Just a few years later, it also purchased the adjacent parking lot and built an expansion that doubled the size of the facility. Both of these acts were strongly objected by the city. One interesting portrayal of this cyclical struggle is found in the following excerpt of a song written by Neumeier titled “It’s Time you Realize that We are Organized.”

*It’s time you realize*
*That we are organized*
*And our spirits can’t be killed*
*By your lies and underhanded deals*
...
*Your underhanded Master Plan*
*To force us folks from our land*
*It will never go your way*
*Cause we will fight you day after day.*
With its deep links within Over-the-Rhine, Drop Inn Center became an important hub for community activism. As one respondent claimed, “Even though we are just a homeless shelter, we were the champions of the poor in Over-the-Rhine” (Personal Interview 2012). Drop Inn Center helped to found and fuel the People’s Movement, described as an “ensemble of neighborhood organizations based in non-profit housing development, social service, and community arts and education that confront injustices and human rights violations” (Dutton 2012). The People’s Movement today includes organizations like ReSTOC, Over-the-Rhine Community Housing, Peaslee Neighborhood Center, and Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless, all of which are located in Over-the-Rhine.

Through these acts of fundraising, rallying, and community organizing, it is clear that the initial ‘place’ of Drop Inn Center was integrally linked to Over-the-Rhine community and its other social service agencies. As one respondent put it, “Drop Inn Center is Over-the-Rhine, and Over-the-Rhine is Drop Inn Center” (Personal Interview 2012).

**Drop Inn Center Today**

Drop Inn Center currently houses and feeds an average of 222 men and women every day at its location on 12th Street. Despite the city’s initial complaints the shelter was not professional, Drop Inn Center appears to run very smoothly today. During my time volunteering at Drop Inn Center, I learned residents are divided into four separate shelters or ‘dorms’ to better cater to individual needs. Men, for example, can enter the Safe Shelter, which is an entry-level dorm, and then advance to the Step-Up Shelter, that is a more intensive program to ready longer-term residents for housing. Drop Inn Center operates with very structured daily patterns for its residents. Three meals are served at scheduled times of the day. Arrival, departure, and sleeping times are regulated. Residents are required to attend several meetings each week, as well as regularly meeting with their case manager.

Today’s profiles of residents are similar to those 40 years ago, however the shelter has decreased its emphasis on detoxification. According to a study conducted in 2010, 41 per cent of residents are chronically homeless (Drop Inn Center 2012). Similar to the large amount of
residents struggling after the deinstitutionalization of state mental hospitals, 55 per cent of residents today are mentally ill, 17 per cent are physically disabled, and 10 per cent are developmentally disabled (Drop Inn Center 2012). One aspect of Drop Inn Center residents that has changed over time is their area of origin. Multiple respondents claimed most homeless individuals were directly from Over-the-Rhine in its early years, but that group only comprises 30 per cent of residents today (Personal Interviews 2012). This reflects not only the expanding range of influence Drop Inn Center has, but also the dismaying increase of homelessness in the greater Cincinnati area.

The most recent catalyst for change at Drop Inn Center is the Homeless to Homes (HTH) Plan. The HTH Plan originated in an emergency ordinance from the City of Cincinnati. The ordinance called Strategies to End Homelessness, a collaborative organization of social services, to “immediately address the inadequacy of the current provision of services for single homeless individuals in the City of Cincinnati, and to put in place a comprehensive plan to implement such services” (City of Cincinnati 2009). The resulting HTH Plan highlighted several needs for improvement within homeless shelter facilities. Its highest priorities included the expansion of shelters, the construction of a women’s shelter, and the addition of 200 beds of both Transitional Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing (Homeless to Homes Plan 2010). In total, the HTH Plan has been labeled as a colossal success by both city officials and Cincinnati media outlets as it continues to ensure homeless individuals receive the best possible aide (L. May 2011c, Mercum 2012).

Drop Inn Center experienced many changes with implementation of the HTH Plan. It formally separated the men’s shelter into the three ‘dorms’ mentioned previously to comply with the new 100 person limit within one shelter. It also created programs to enrich its services and lower recidivism rates (Personal Interview 2012). Most respondents believe these changes are positive additions to the shelter and noted Drop Inn Center clients also approve of them. The most notable negative reactions to the HTH Plan come from the increased oversight from external forces over the shelter. As Strategies to End Homelessness pools all monetary resources for homeless shelters into one location, Drop Inn Center must comply with its standards in order
to receive funding (Personal Interview 2012). One respondent noted this brings pressure to show decreases in the amount of time clients stay at the shelter. This focus on statistics, the respondent claimed, creates more of a business-like atmosphere, rather than one of caring and compassion. Another respondent described changes in Drop Inn Center’s board of directors. Since its origin, the board consisted of 1/3 community members, 1/3 employees, and 1/3 homeless clients. Now, the shelter is encouraged to become ‘more professional’ and change that make-up. As a result, the respondent believed the board lost its base roots with the homeless population and the community. While the political debate surrounding the HTH Plan is not the primary focus of this paper, it is important to note the effects this external force has upon Drop Inn Center’s actions today.

The ‘Place’ of Drop Inn Center
I argue the debate to move the shelter to a new location must acknowledge the relationships and connections it holds with other people, places and services in the neighborhood. As stated previously, Drop Inn Center cannot be considered as a discrete, self-contained entity. It is connected to flows of people, products, capital, information, and ideas (Zukin 1991, Amin 2004, Jessop et al. 2008). I will therefore examine the networks Drop Inn Center participates in.

Drop Inn Center’s physical location in Over-the-Rhine places it within the largest concentration of social services in the Tri-State area (L. May 2008, Pugh 2011). This conglomeration of facilities is important for the homeless population because they create complex networks and daily routines to and from their social services (J. May 2000, Cloke et al 2010). Drop Inn Center’s proximity to these buildings provides its residents a short, walking commute to many of these locations. Multiple respondents listed this proximity as beneficial to residents, as it allows them to utilize various services in one centralized location (Personal Interviews 2012). Participation in this network solidifies Drop Inn Center’s role within the social services community of Over-the-Rhine as one of great importance. If the shelter were to relocate to another neighborhood, it would be placed outside of this network.
Drop Inn Center serves the role as the largest and lowest barrier shelter within these social services of the Tri-state region. These two features were listed almost unanimously by respondents as the most important aspects of the shelter (Personal Interviews 2012). Other shelters in the area have restrictions on residents for which they will provide service. Caracole Shelter, for example, specializes in care for HIV/AIDS victims. Lighthouse Youth Services and Anthony House help homeless youths from ages 18-24. Other shelters serve significantly fewer residents, such as Jimmy Heath House with 25 beds and City Gospel Mission with 46. Lighthouse offers 28 beds for youths, but since Drop Inn Center hosted 317 youths in throughout 2011, it is clearly a more significant resource for that particular population (Curnutte 2012). Drop Inn Center contributes to the network by offering services to those who do not fit these specifications or cannot find space in smaller shelters.

In addition to its size and open door policy, respondents emphasized Drop Inn Center’s role as a ‘relief valve’ or ‘safety net’ for homeless services (Personal Interviews 2012). The shelter is a ‘relief valve’ because it works to meet the needs of homeless individuals. In past years, for example, Drop Inn Center opened its second floor office space for a temporary winter shelter when other shelters were full (Personal Interview 2012). When Washington Park closed for remodeling, Drop Inn Center permitted anyone from the neighborhood to use their own green space along the side of the building (Personal Interview 2012). These acts, along with several others, show Drop Inn Center effectively releases the strain on other social services in Cincinnati. As one respondent claimed, “The system is allowed to function comfortably because Drop Inn Center opens up to meet the need” (Personal Interview 2012).

Similar to its role as a ‘relief valve,’ Drop Inn Center holds the role of ‘safety net’ in the neighborhood. Alice Skirtz, another founder of the shelter, claims “In many ways, those who need and use Drop Inn Center [are] the most critically needy of the collectivity of economic others, because they do not qualify for categorical public assistance, employment training, or housing assistance” (Skirtz 2012: 57). This calls back to some of the shelter’s original residents, who lost support when HUD changed its emphasis to families over individuals, and is still true today as residents continue to struggle for funding and aide in the failing economy. Drop Inn
Center is therefore an important resource for those individuals who fall through the cracks of the social services system as it accepts all who enter its doors. As one respondent argued,

We are very important. We are a stabilizing force...We are always reaching out, always participating in some way. We create stability for people who would otherwise be on their own” (Personal Interview 2012).

In addition to other social services, Drop Inn Center is connected to the neighborhood of Over-the-Rhine. Respondents argued it is a source of support for low income individuals in the community.

It’s the place you can always go to. Because it has played that role for so long, the Center has developed tight relationships with thousands of people who know that’s what it does. There’s people who have not been there for years, but know they can go there. There’s a relationship of trust between a large segment of the vulnerable population and this place (Personal Interview 2012).

This quote shows Drop Inn Center not only plays an important, concrete function in Over-the-Rhine, but also provides a sense of comfort and support for low income individuals in the community. Many respondents against moving the shelter also argue it is an integral part of the community. As stated earlier, it helped found and fuel the People’s Movement (Neumeier 1998). The Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless holds its regular meetings at Drop Inn Center. Over-the-Rhine Community Housing and Peasley Community Center, which offers child care, after-school arts programs, and women’s support groups, also owe their origins to workers at the shelter (Personal Interview 2012).

Despite these integral links to other social services and to Over-the-Rhine, some respondents believe connectivity to these networks is decreasing. Drop Inn Center’s fight against gentrification and scrutiny of the local government, for example, has caused it to concentrate inwards. As one respondent stated “the DIC over the last few years has been perceived as focusing on itself…People are all vying for funding and are slowly becoming nonexistent or moving. So we did a lot of fighting for us but maybe have lost touch in how we connect with other agencies” (Personal Interview 2012). In addition to this loss of connectivity, changes in funding for social services have caused a decrease in direct contact with donors today. Drop Inn Center was needed in the community when it was first founded in the 1970’s. Today, there are significantly more services to compete with, as there are 826 nonprofit agencies in Cincinnati alone (Personal Interview 2012). This is only augmented with the decreased level of
support for homeless individuals from local governments and public opinions (Ratnesar 1999). Gone are the times when the homeless shelter could collect over $100,000 from the local community to purchase land and build expansions. Today, Drop Inn Center is losing its ties to the community as that philanthropy is diluted across innumerable other services.

The External Conflict: Local Changes in Over-the-Rhine
Drop Inn Center’s ‘place’ within Over-the-Rhine is also linked to external changes occurring around the shelter. I argue the recent gentrification, including the construction of the School of Creative and Performing Arts (SCPA) as well as the renovation of Washington Park and the Cincinnati Music Hall, are fundamental to understanding that ‘place.’ Drop Inn Center’s physical location in Over-the-Rhine places it within one block of these sites. In the last five years, these three places have received over $280 million of construction and renovation, collectively. This new development places significant pressure on Drop Inn Center, as investors believe issues with crime and homelessness are directly linked to the shelter (Editorial 2004, Gillen 2009, Davidson 2012). I shall therefore describe the external politics of place represented by each of these items before illustrating the internal debate to relocate Drop Inn Center.

The Gentrification of Over-the-Rhine
My research leads me to believe that Over-the-Rhine is currently experiencing a textbook example of gentrification. As stated previously, there is an enormous amount of pressure on Over-the-Rhine, as Cincinnati attempts to revitalize the downtown area, attract residents, and raise the local tax base (Doucet 2009, Sassen 2012, Zukin et al 2009). Gentrification in Over-the-Rhine today is much more powerful than any other effort to pass through the neighborhood in many decades. As one respondent stated,

In the past, it was slowly changing, perhaps an apartment building here and there. Now it’s just boom school…boom park…boom let’s take whole blocks of streets. It was just a little pocket here and a little pocket there. Now it’s just all over the place (Personal Interview 2012).
As a result of these investments, low income residents of Over-the-Rhine, including those who utilize Drop Inn Center and surrounding social services, are experiencing negative reactions to neighborhood changes.

One of the primary changes of gentrification listed by respondents is the new businesses located along Main and Vine Streets. A large majority of these new businesses are small boutiques, coffee shops, and swanky restaurants. Respondents claim the clients of Drop Inn Center do not fit into this new commercial district. For one, they do not adhere to the typical clientele of these businesses that one respondent described as wearing ‘tight jeans and hipster shoes’ (Personal Interview 2012). This causes them to feel out of place, as one individual noted, “I’ve tried to take homeless people out on Vine Street... For example, I’ll take my buddy to the Lackman Bar. And he doesn’t feel comfortable” (Personal Interview 2012). In addition, people experiencing homelessness cannot afford to shop at these locations. This is captured by one respondent, who has lived in Over-the-Rhine for several decades,

Most of the incoming businesses are high end restaurants and contemporary clothing stores. We just need a laundromat, a drug store and a dry goods store. Where can I buy shoes and socks for my kids? Places like that aren’t here anymore. You can’t afford the $6-8 hot dog (Personal Interview 2012). Outside of Main and Vine Streets are locally owned businesses that do cater to low income residents, but it should be noted that very few of these are listed on the walking tour map.

An additional factor in the gentrification of Over-the-Rhine is the rising cost of housing. Despite the collapse of the market in 2008, the neighborhood continues to experience increases in property values and home sales. Homes in 2009, for example, sold for an average of $105,000, while homes in 2012 averaged $225,000 (Zillow.com 2012). This is directly linked with 3CDC and other developers’ actions to build new condominiums and renovate apartment buildings. Somewhat ironically, one newspaper article shunned these pricey developments because they evicted the artists, with no mention of poor families or individuals relying on government assistance (L. May 2011a). This makes it clearly obvious that only certain types of low income individuals are welcome in the new gentrifying neighborhood. Rising housing values are also connected to the designation of Over-the-Rhine as a historic district in 1983
(iRhine 2000, Chamber of Commerce 2012). In many other cities, this act tends to displace low income individuals as they cannot afford to maintain their home’s exterior to comply with new codes, guidelines and restrictions (Bryant and Poitras 2003, Doucet 2009). With new condominiums and historical specifications, those exiting homelessness are finding it harder to afford living in Over-the-Rhine.

The interesting combination of high-end development alongside the greatest concentration social services in Cincinnati causes Over-the-Rhine to be the neighborhood with the most unequal income distribution in the United States. According to a study of 61,000 communities conducted by McClatchy Washington Bureau, Over-the-Rhine has the greatest gap between the highest and lowest income earners (Osborne 2011, Pugh 2011). Sixty-five per cent of households at the time of study earned less than $10,000 each year, while 6 per cent earned more than $100,000. Reminiscent of geographers’ examination of the cultural politics of place, this dichotomy creates significant amounts of tension for Drop Inn Center. The wealthy minority enjoys new storefronts and real estate, while homeless residents of the shelter are forced to look outside of the neighborhood for more familiar, comfortable places. This concept is captured by one respondent’s comment,

We feel unwanted. Eventually we are not going to be welcome. When everything around us looks different, and we look, act, smell, and behave different from everyone else, there will be a point when we have to ask ‘Is it worth this fight? Let’s go somewhere different where we can be who we are.’ It’s a very sad thing (Personal Interview 2012).

The Construction of Cincinnati’s School of Creative and Performing Arts (SCPA)

Cincinnati’s School of Creative and Performing Arts was founded in 1973, coincidentally the same year as Drop Inn Center. In 1996, the school announced it wished to relocate to a bigger facility (Skirtz 2012). Discussions almost immediately turned to the idea of an “Arts Corridor” that would connect the school with the historic, but dilapidating Cincinnati Music Hall. The Hall requires $30-50 million in infrastructural repairs to be brought up to code, which is only a fraction of the $165 million suggested for complete renovation (Gelfand 2012). The SCPA and Music Hall therefore proposed to run a joint fundraiser for both constructions.
Discussions of construction and renovation quickly turned to the school’s proximity to Drop Inn Center. As stated previously, many news articles blamed the shelter for the violence, drugs and crime inside Washington Park (Editorial 2004, Gillen 2009, Davidson 2012). Others linked it to acts of panhandling across Over-the-Rhine and the CBD, which city officials had been fighting since 1990 (Leibovitz and Salmon 2007, Gillen 2009, Skirtz 2012). These negative perceptions of Drop Inn Center through the media enraged parents of SCPA students that the school could be located across the street from a homeless shelter. They claimed children would be assaulted and harassed while outside on the playground (Personal Interviews 2012). They also argued the school would be defaced by those who inhabited the park at night. Recounting these complaints, one respondent noted,

People argued ‘You can’t be next to a school’ - Well, why not? And they responded ‘You just can’t - It just can’t be - In the categories of my mind, it can’t happen’…So it has to do more with mental perception than what was actually happening (Personal Interview 2012).

3CDC emerged as a mediator in the situation, vowing to renovate Washington Park if the SPCA agreed to locate on the same block. One Cincinnati Enquirer article noted 3CDC met with Drop Inn Center to “reduce crime in the area and keep Washington Park from being a hangout for the homeless,” reflecting that idea that all problems in the area are linked to the homeless shelter (Editorial 2004).

SCPA followed 3CDC’s suggestion and purchased several parcels of property adjacent to Washington Park and Drop Inn Center. It began construction of its $72 million new facility in 2008 and opened for classes at the start of the 2010-2011 school year (L. May 2011b). Many respondents refuted negative media portrayals and claim the relationship between the school and shelter is a positive one (Personal Interview 2012). There are no recorded incidents of students being harassed or the building being compromised in any way. In fact, the two buildings frequently work together. SCPA students visit Drop Inn Center to perform. Teachers and older students often volunteer there on weekends. The SCPA donates ten tickets to each of its shows so that homeless individuals may attend. Additionally, the President of the SCPA is a member of Drop Inn Center’s board. This positive relationship has little resemblance to the perceptions and fears that ran rampant before construction started. However, the media still berates Drop Inn
Center for refusing to relocate. One popular argument is the shelter allows previous sex offenders to sleep there, even though has never been permitted by the Drop Inn Center (Personal Interviews 2012). So, although the shelter and SCPA have formed a positive relationship, its location near a school is still a main driving point for individuals who want Drop Inn Center to move.

The Renovation of Washington Park
Following the relocation of SCPA, 3CDC began its $48 million renovation of Washington Park (3CDC 2012). Before this construction, Washington Park was a sore sight for the city’s eyes. One satirical CityBeat article noted the park was “synonymous with sex and drugs and for being a way station for the homeless,” as well as “an ominous shortcut to Music Hall you’d rarely see symphony season pass holders using without police escorts” (Wilson 2012). As stated previously, these social ills were blamed almost exclusively on the presence of Drop Inn Center and other social services. This is captured by Cincinnati Attorney J. Hauck’s interview with the Cincinnati Enquirer,

All jokes aside, the poor and homeless flood Washington Park on a daily basis, especially along 12th Street, for a specific reason. They come there from the adjoining social service agencies. There is nothing special about Washington Park that attracts them simply due to the beauty of the park. They are there for other reasons. Take away the social service agencies, and Washington Park would have far fewer visitors on a daily basis. (Quoted in Skirtz 2012, 130)

Similar to parents’ fears of a school’s proximity to a homeless shelter, the arguments of politicians and city leaders that Drop Inn Center spearheaded these deviant behaviors carried no statistical evidence that those inhabiting the park or streets even stayed at the shelter (Skirtz 2012).

3CDC’s renovation of Washington Park sparked much controversy from the low income community of Over-the-Rhine. They especially protested the removal of the deep water pool that was used by the community for swimming lessons, meets, and general recreation (Skirtz 2012). It was the only free access pool in all of Over-the-Rhine. Community activists attended several planning meetings with pins, banners, and petition signatures to protest the removal of the pool, but dissented to deaf ears (Personal Interview 2012). 3CDC continued with its original
plan and replaced the pool with a water spray park. One Cincinnati Enquirer journalist spoke out against this decision and is beneficial to quote at length,

The ongoing mindset to redo Washington Park gave the appearance of a well-intended mindset. In reality, it may actually be a well-crafted transparency to allow the privileged and visitors to Music Hall to no longer see and vicariously experience the monotonous and grueling lives of the inner-city poor, the disenfranchised and eclectic souls to whom the current park serves as a safe haven and friendly place. To suggest that the alleged/proposed improvements like a spray park as opposed to a swimming pool insults their intelligence. Let’s allow the locals to have their park as it is (Rotundo 2012).

Thus, as construction finished in July 2012, many individuals saw the gentrification of Washington Park complete. They argue 3CDC renovated the park to fit the needs of new gentrifiers rather than long term residents of the community.

The effect Washington Park has on Drop Inn Center varied amongst respondents. Several applaud the renovation because it brings more families together to use the park. One respondent reflected on bringing his own children there, claiming “My kids just spent last Sunday playing in Washington Park - And they would not have been playing in Washington Park for an entire day or even at all prior to the changes” (Personal Interview 2012). Others claimed they see more Drop Inn Center clients use the park for recreation, creating a positive mix of ethnicities and income levels. This is reflected in one respondent’s claim, “You see more low income black people in Washington Park now. There are kids. There are teenagers. They didn’t take the park - They made it so everyone wants to be there. No matter who you are, you want to be in that park. And before, you didn’t” (Personal Interview 2012). In several of these positive responses to Washington Park, respondents reflected on the idea of 3CDC attempting to take it over for wealthy gentrifiers. Each of them, in turn, however, argued the park would only be ‘taken’ if they allowed it to happen. They encourage clients of Drop Inn Center to visit the park and be a part of its new splendor.

Negative responses to Washington Park are just as numerous as the positive ones. Respondents claimed the park is exclusive. The new benches, for example, have large bars in the center, prohibiting individuals from laying down on them to sleep. The low walls along the outside of the park have pointed iron fences to keep people from leaning or sitting upon them.
Similar to the architecture described by Davis (1992) in Los Angeles, it is clear this landscape is very controlled and intentional. Speaking out against this defensive design, one respondent argued “It’s a sign that you are not welcome, even though they say everyone is” (Personal Interview 2012). Some respondents also lamented the loss of the basketball court, used heavily by clients of Drop Inn Center. In its place now is a dog park. Dog parks in urban areas are often signs of gentrification, as wealthier individuals are more capable of affording the maintenance of a dog and have the extra time to bring their pet to the park (Tissot 2011). This is a popular addition to Washington Park. Each time I passed it there were at least two to three dogs and their owners. Yet the basketball court was not rebuilt in another location. This loss shows the changing priorities and desired demographics of park users. One respondent echoed this sentiment, claiming “Not that I am against dogs, but the thought is that they care more about the dogs than the people” (Personal Interview 2012). So, while no one can deny the renovated park is beautiful, there are several complaints the park is not wholly inclusive. This exclusivity is felt by many residents of Drop Inn Center. One respondent was told by a resident, “No offense, but they designed this park for white people” (Personal Interview 2012).

A Changing Neighborhood
Amidst all these neighborhood and policy changes exists Drop Inn Center. Its presence in the community dates further back than most of the developments around it, yet it is now considered ‘out of place’. These are the external conflicts facing Drop Inn Center today. One respondent accurately captured the shelter’s situation, claiming

“There is pressure to move Drop Inn Center because they think it’s detrimental to the development plans…With the focus on the redevelopment of Washington Park, on [the] Music Hall [and] on SCPA, there’s the little Drop Inn Center. It’s really little compared to all of this development” (Personal Interview 2012). Drop Inn Center felt these pressures from the outside. It did not fit the new model of development and image of place put forward by the developers and local politicians. But should it stay rooted to fight against these conflicting interests or should it rather escape to a different, more accepting neighborhood?
Chapter Five: To Move or Not to Move.

As I conducted my research in the summer of 2012, Drop Inn Center was at a crossroad. The shelter was on its third year of considering the offer to relocate. It is important to note the proposal to move did not come from Drop Inn Center itself, but rather from 3CDC’s CEO as well as Cincinnati’s Mayor and Vice Mayor (Dutton 2011). This strong backing was only strengthened by the new stipulations of the HTH Plan that placed pressures on Drop Inn Center’s current facility and services. 3CDC, which is responsible for moving several other shelters out of Over-the-Rhine, proposed several potential sites and new designs, but Drop Inn Center had not yet accepted.

Considering all previously mentioned elements that contribute to Drop Inn Center’s ‘place’ within Over-the-Rhine, the decision to move or remain in place is the core of this issue. Unlike most other social services, the shelter owns both the land and building on 12th Street. Drop Inn Center can therefore not be forced to leave, but must choose to do so. As it is the largest social service remaining in Over-the-Rhine, its decision would likely influence all future attempts to relocate social services and low-income populations (Dutton 2011, Personal Interview 2012). It is therefore no surprise Drop Inn Center had taken multiple years to debate its options and make a decision.

Respondents were starkly divided into two camps on the issue to move. One group believes the shelter should stay and weather the storm. Drop Inn Center has resisted previous efforts of removal. It should therefore stand strong to fight the newest aggressor. The other group argues the shelter should take advantage of 3CDC’s offer. Gentrification is winning in Over-the-Rhine. It is effectively changing many of the networks Drop Inn Center relies upon. The shelter is no longer rooted to its place as it was in the past. In addition, this group believes residents would greatly benefit from a brand-new shelter over the current building which needs significant repair and expansion. While all individuals held only the best interests of the shelter and its residents, both of these groups faced difficulties finding a compromise between them.
The History and Rootedness of Place: Drop Inn Center Should Stay

Those most convinced the shelter should remain in its current place are composed of its original founders and social justice advocates. While these individuals do not have daily contact with Drop Inn Center, they show their support for the shelter through various means of activism, as well as submitting influential writings to local news outlets and attending local political meetings. Many are also connected to other social justice organizations or movements within the neighborhood. This group contains incredibly active members within the Over-the-Rhine community.

This group argues Drop Inn Center has a history and legacy within Over-the-Rhine that would be dishonored if it were to move. One respondent argued,

I feel strongly that the history and rootedness of the place is important…I think it would lose a lot if it gets moved out of its foundation. There’s a story there.

There’s a history there (Personal Interview 2012).

To these respondents, the physical presence of Drop Inn Center in Over-the-Rhine is a large part of its existence. The shelter stands as a source of comfort for low-income individuals who know they can rely upon it. It is connected to the People’s Movement, Peaslee Community Center, and Over-the-Rhine Community Housing, all of which it helped to form. Dutton (2011) compares the move of Drop Inn Center to that of General Motors leaving Flint, MI in the 1980’s. Leaving its history and long-established connections behind would severely tarnish the shelter.

These proponents also argue Drop Inn Center should remain to fight against gentrification efforts in Over-the-Rhine. As one respondent claimed,

I think we are being bullied. In our whole history, there was never a moment when we were safe. We never were safe…but I think we are in more danger now. The gentrification has really taken off and we are not in the plan of those who have the power to say ‘this is how this neighborhood will be designed’ (Personal Interview 2012).

This group therefore rebels against the prevailing idea that homeless individuals should be kept ‘out of sight and out of mind’ (Pleace 1998, Amster 2003, Personal Interview 2012). If Drop Inn Center relocates, it will take the homeless population with it, effectively creating a more homogenous bubble of affluence in Over-the-Rhine. This is a far cry from the city’s plans in the
1980’s to preserve the neighborhood for low-income individuals. Dutton (2011) again captures this idea,

Because it will be removed from sight ‘from all the new beautiful stuff,’ the values of compassion and empathy so embodied at the Drop Inn Center, and in such short supply these days, may be pushed out of mind. Worse, too many people may actually feel that homelessness has been eradicated.

It is therefore crucial to this group that Drop Inn Center stay in its place. Moving suggests 3CDC and market-rate developments may claim victory in Over-the-Rhine. It suggests it is both easier and better to remove a local eyesore, rather than attempting to do better for vulnerable groups in US society (Personal Interview 2012).

The Change and Growth of Place: Drop Inn Center Should Leave
On the other side of this conflict are current employees, social workers, and board members at Drop Inn Center. While it should be noted this group certainly does not prefer to leave Over-the-Rhine and the vast array of connections the shelter has to the neighborhood, it sees 3CDC’s offer as an opportunity to improve and expand. Similar to the previous group, these individuals work just as diligently to support the shelter and are strong activists within its local community.

This group appears to more easily accept the acts of gentrification surrounding Drop Inn Center. One respondent claimed,

The fact is: this is happening. The reinvestment is happening. 3CDC is here. The park and school are done. [They’re] not bad. You don’t have to like it, but it’s here. The real issue is what are we going to do about it? (Personal Interview 2012).

With the greater acceptance of 3CDC and its redevelopments, these respondents are generally more negative about the losses of community and networks for the shelter. They believe Drop Inn Center is no longer providing the best services possible for its residents with the loss of these connections.

One of the strongest arguments of those advocating Drop Inn Center move is the current condition of the building. The facility needs significant amounts of renovation (Personal Interview 2012). Respondents noted there are no spaces for sick residents to separate from the
main population. They lack amenities for transgender and physically disabled residents. In addition, old climate-control systems and bathrooms that flood all too frequently add significant amounts of stress to both employees and residents. One respondent stated,

The fact is the building is in shambles - It’s not safe and it’s not healthy. Well before any of this happened, Drop Inn Center acknowledged that it was going to have to move someday because it would cost more money to redo the whole building...And now there is this small window of opportunity where there is this pool of cash with people saying ‘We’ll help you move from these redevelopment projects and we will help you move now’ (Personal Interview 2012). Because of the current condition of the building, this group is therefore more willing to consider 3CDC’s offer to relocate, rather than focus on its history and legacy. As one respondent frankly claimed, “I don’t give two shits about a building” (Personal Interview 2012).

Beyond improving the physical space of Drop Inn Center, these respondents also see an opportunity to expand its services by working with 3CDC. The current building, for example, does not have office space for additional social workers. A new facility would allow the shelter to hire more employees and expand its ability to offer personal assistance. In addition, Drop Inn Center offers afternoon classes, such as resume building, physical fitness, and creative writing. A new facility would allow for more of these classes to take place at once, improving the general welfare of residents. One respondent captured this idea of expansion and is beneficial to quote at length:

Yes a lot of people in Over-the-Rhine want Drop Inn Center to stay in this spot. And I wish we could expand in this spot...I love this building. The idea of this building not existing anymore makes me want to cry when I talk about it. But at the same time, I’m not here about me and my emotions. I’m here about the people that I serve. I think a better building that did not take as much to keep up is okay. Growth is growth. If people want to help you grow, even if their motives are not positive, sometimes you still have to accept the help if it is going to give positives for the people you serve (Personal Interview 2012). Again, this group appears more willing to accept the loss of Drop Inn Center’s location on 12th Street if it means they can provide more support for residents.

**The Internal Conflict: A Very Contentious Piece of Land**

With this chapter, I hope to display the complexity and breadth of the current conflict over Drop Inn Center. The shelter not only faces external forces of gentrification and pressures from city
officials, but also large internal rifts amongst its strongest supporters. As one informant stated, “It is a very contentious piece of land. There are a lot of interests vying for control” (Personal Interview 2012). When I began this research, I did not anticipate finding such differing opinions from Drop Inn Center supporters and employees. I assumed all those against gentrification would therefore be against the relocation of the shelter. But, in fact, the conflict is neither black nor white. As in many instances of gentrification, the situation is grey and much more complicated.

It is interesting to consider the range of backgrounds for each of these parties. Those who want the shelter to remain in Over-the-Rhine are the same individuals who helped found the shelter 40-years ago. They stood in 14-inches of snow to protest the courts eviction of Drop Inn Center from its own lot in 1978. They fought alongside the People’s Movement to confront injustices and human rights violations in the 1990’s. They gathered signatures to demonstrate the community’s need for a basketball court and pool in Washington Park in 2011. These individuals may not have daily contact with Drop Inn Center today, but they understand the symbol it represents and the community ‘tapestry’ to which it contributes (Dutton 2011). On the other hand, those who are willing to relocate the shelter have more direct interaction with the building and its residents. They both see and experience its daily functions. They have a greater understanding of the shelter’s services and physical capabilities. To them, the best option is to side with the ‘enemy’ 3CDC and make the best out of a bad situation. As one respondent states, “We may not agree with 95% of what 3CDC does, but that 5% we do. And that 5% is what we need to talk about...” (Personal Interview 2012). In this conflict, both of these sides have equally valid points. And most importantly, each group has the best interests of Drop Inn Center residents and low-income individuals at the center of their argument.

This internal conflict over place is not one between dominant and subordinate populations. There is no clear supreme aggressor acting against an outranked and outspoken minority. Rather, the conflict exists between two groups on equal playing grounds. This type of place conflict is not often discussed in geography. In the literature of place politics, there are distinct hegemons and transgressors. Gentrification identifies clear winners and losers within
neighborhood development. And in homeless literature, those without private spaces are consistently shunned and outlawed away from the general population. This conflict is different. While there are inevitably plays of power within it, the grounds are neutralized. The conflict is not about who owns or controls place. Rather, it is a debate on the role of place. Should Drop Inn Center’s place be one of tradition or function? One group would see the legacy and history of the building remain its core focus, while the other prefers to accept gentrification’s changes and move in order to improve the shelter’s resources.

These internal conflicts over place are of equal importance to the shelter’s external conflicts with Washington Park, SCPA, and the Cincinnati Music Hall. This is because the shelter must choose to move. Its decision to remain a stronghold in Over-the-Rhine or to fall-in with the surrounding changes is directly linked to the internal factors of the conflict. Without consideration of both the external and internal elements, this insight into place conflict would be biased and lacking.
Chapter Six: Conclusion

Drop Inn Center’s position in Over-the-Rhine reflects the increasing importance of place in the modern world. From a purely economic standpoint, local gentrification makes the space the shelter occupies incredibly profitable for a developer. Its proximity to new investments like Washington Park and SCPA only increases that value. 3CDC or a similar company can buy the land inexpensively and continue the vision of an ‘Arts Corridor’ for high profits. From a social or cultural standpoint, Drop Inn Center is experiencing increasing amounts of pressure from the outside world because of its place. Though the shelter experienced many difficulties with acceptance from city officials when it was initially founded, today’s forces are worse. New investment in Washington Park, SCPA and the Cincinnati Music Hall focus significant amounts of attention on the district. Gentrifiers and city officials are linking any remaining troubles within Over-the-Rhine to the presence of these social services. They want to improve the image of place surrounding these new developments by removing the undesirable homeless population to make way for a more ‘appropriate’ public (Mitchell 1995, Dutton 2011). These pressures have already caused the removal of several smaller shelters and services to neighborhoods further from the CBD. Drop Inn Center is the largest that still exists in Over-the-Rhine, so it is experiencing the most pressure to relocate. As one respondent stated,

There is a dichotomy: Development is good. Drop Inn Center is bad. This does not fit. Development is bringing a new sense of normalcy to the neighborhood and Drop Inn Center is this deviant place. This is where the deviants hang out (Personal Interview 2012).

Place is the all-important denominator in this conflict. It is a strong example of a hegemonic force dictating what actions and groups of people are proper for the place they are constructing.

Yet this struggle over place should not be focused solely on Drop Inn Center. It is connected to an array of networks within the neighborhood, most of which are now changing. In many ways, the shelter founded for the community and by the community is effectively losing its community. It provides service for more residents from outside Over-the-Rhine than inside it. Rather than collect donations from local supporters, the shelter receives funding from a centralized pool under the Homeless to Homes (HTH) Plan. Other local social service agencies Drop Inn Center collaborates with are moving to different neighborhoods of Cincinnati. Over-the-Rhine will eventually no longer be the largest concentration of these services. And, perhaps
most importantly, those low-income individuals who fought to build the shelter and gain its acceptance 40-years ago, are now being replaced by wealthy gentrifiers who have significantly less contact with the homeless population. Drop Inn Center relies on each of these networks for the physical and social support of its residents. Their dissolution has negative effects on the services it is able to provide.

As a result of conflicts both internal and external, Drop Inn Center announced its decision to accept 3CDC’s offer and move out of Over-the-Rhine just a few months after the completion of my participant observation and interviews. Its new space is to be located in Queensgate, which is 0.5 miles from its previous location (see Figure One). Queensgate is an old, industrial neighborhood in Cincinnati, far away from the investment and gentrification of Over-the-Rhine. Drop Inn Center’s relocation will place it near three other services: City Gospel Mission, Lord’s Gym and Jobs Plus. Strategies to End Homelessness has since pledged to run a free bus line from these locations in Queensgate to others in Cincinnati, including the general hospital, food pantry, and many social services still located in Over-the-Rhine (Personal Interview). This helps to alleviate fears these new services will be isolated in Queensgate. 3CDC projects the costs for these four facilities is $40 million (L. May 2012b). It is now the task of Drop Inn Center residents, employees, volunteers, and supporters to make this new shelter into a home. While the physical location may have changed, the ideals and charity that lie at its foundation have not.
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