I, Alex C. Wilbur, hereby submit this work as part of the requirements for the degree of:
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Contemporary Image in Urban Blight | Over the Rhine Flatiron Buildings

This work and its defense approved by:
Chair: Elizabeth Riorden
        Rebecca Williamson
_CONTEMPORARY IMAGE IN URBAN BLIGHT | Over the Rhine Flatiron Buildings

A thesis submitted to the Division of Research and Advanced Studies of the University of Cincinnati in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of:

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ABSTRACT

Many cities have experienced the decline of certain inner-city neighborhoods. These areas have largely become ghettos for minority residents of the city, ethnic or racial enclaves. In Cincinnati, Ohio, like in many other American cities, the neighborhood of Over the Rhine has become one of these poor, African American ghettos. The problem with the neighborhood not only encompasses the social factors contributing to this decline, but the decaying of the architectural treasures found there. Over the Rhine is home to the largest collection of late nineteenth century Italianate architecture in the United States and current efforts have been made to restore these buildings to their once glorious state. This thesis examines ways of maintaining elements of the original architecture while adding contemporary additions, saving the original character of the buildings while providing them with a new image for the neighborhood.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Robert Rauschenberg, who passed just before the completion of this document and whose work has been a major inspiration.

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SECTION 01_ INTRODUCTION
Personal Motivation
Overview of Sections and Organization
01 INTRODUCTION

The ghetto - the ‘hood - the slums - the inner city - however the neighborhood of Over the Rhine is classified, these are the negative descriptors of what is a vibrant and diverse community rapidly developing in the heart of Cincinnati, Ohio. Significantly African American in population, many of them poor, there is a small, but powerful population of artists and urban professionals starting to emerge as private investors in the neighborhood. The prospect of inexpensive real estate, urban living, a diverse and vibrant community and proximity to the central business district are only a few of the factors that are drawing people from all over the region to this neighborhood. After years of disinvestment, crime, riots and fear, barriers developed that not only kept residents in but others out. These barriers are beginning to come down allowing both a flow of people in and out of the Over the Rhine. Everything from the released restrictions on the use of Section VII housing vouchers to renovated historic buildings, an art scene and nightlife have all started to reshape the way Over the Rhine is lived in and perceived.

The motivation for this project comes from a somewhat unspoken social barrier that still exists in the neighborhood, one of undue hostility. There is an ambiguity of whether this issue is one of class or race, but the more affluent members of the neighborhood are perceived in a completely different way than the lower classes when it comes to the motivation to live, build, design, work or play in Over the Rhine. There is a negative mantra that the affluent, Caucasian population will move in, develop the entire neighborhood and push the lower class African American residents who have lived here their entire lives out of the area through processes of gentrification. This statement is obviously exaggerated from the realities of what is occurring at this time. The change in population of both race and class would in effect alter the visual, social and demographic makeup of the community. The premise of this project (this is an architectural project, not a development or social sciences project) is that the visual makeup of the neighborhood can take on one that encompasses elements from the original buildings standing on site, the hodgepodge renovations that have been done over time and the new proposed elements resulting in a contemporary image that would then promote diversified living, not only in the realm of race, but also of class. Currently, the neighborhood is very diversified, but there are pockets of each demographic that hardly defines integrated living. By truly integrating the visual element, into a socially depressed
site, the goal would be that the "gentrifiers" would be drawn to the area, not to take over this new developed area of the neighborhood, but to integrate themselves as responsible community members and the existing residents would reciprocate. My experience from living in the neighborhood is truly one of integration and not isolation. Living in the midst of Section VII residents and being the only person of my age, race, class upbringing and education within two blocks of my residence has taught me an immeasurable amount about the complex social conditions existing in Over the Rhine. Based on this experience, I don't feel as though I would ever want to leave the surroundings of living in a truly integrated area and I feel that this type of living is valuable to the contemporary urban resident.

This document will outline the architectural processes for changing the visual identity of an urban neighborhood composed of historically significant architecture, a struggling population, disinvestment, and the prospects of gentrification. Examining existing revitalization plans for Cincinnati, studies on gentrification, visual art from Louise Nevelson and Robert Rauschenberg, architectural theory, and an in-depth study of a site in Over the Rhine, an architectural project will be synthesized and outlined here giving new visual image to selected buildings. This document is organized into sections to give clarity to each element that has influenced the direction of the resulting design.

The first researched section immediately follows this introduction and includes background and history of Over the Rhine. Explained here will be the necessary information to understand the vibrant, hostile history of a neighborhood in desperate need of drastic private investment and architectural and planning aid. The main aim of this project will be to define a new language for these historic buildings that have evolved over the course of their life, but are suddenly restricted to do so because of historic building codes and classifications.
Redevelopment plans and historic guidelines for Cincinnati compose the next section of the document which will define the current state of thinking in Over the Rhine, how redevelopment should occur and what should be done with historic neighborhoods that have resisted gentrification, become ghettos for impoverished African Americans and havens for crime and drug activity. The documents researched were as a reference for the way the brains of the neighborhood see the future of Over the Rhine keeping the city, current residents and integrity of the neighborhood in mind as their goals for redevelopment. The main areas of concentration in each of the plans studied here were the sections dealing with the aesthetic ramifications and limitations for both the renovation of existing buildings and the construction of new buildings on vacant lots. These principles were examined and then critiqued as to what the intentions of the authors were on how to preserve the image of the neighborhood and how there could be a different approach keeping many of the same intentions alive while not strictly following the prescribed rules.

The Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC) has taken a large stake in Over the Rhine investing of money to strategically revitalize areas of the neighborhood. Their first project, the Gateway Quarter is the topic of the fourth section of this document. Located directly opposite the site this project will study to the south, the Gateway Quarter is a section of the neighborhood along Vine Street composed of residences, restaurants and retail spaces and a parking garage using both new construction and existing historic buildings. Creating an identity and image for this area was crucial to the success of this large-scale development, the first phase consisting of over 100 condo units along with the retail and restaurant fixtures along the street. 3CDC, along with other partnering developers were able to create a node in the neighborhood under the blanket of one image that helps unify all the areas of the Gateway. This importance of image will also play an important role in the development of this project at the northern node of the Vine Street corridor.

Visual artists Louise Nevelson and Robert Rauschenberg have contributed greatly to the world of fine art with their collages, paintings and sculptures. Their body of work is featured here as an architectural precedent. Not typically used in this manner, their work will become the basis for how the graphic treatment to applied the facades of the buildings studied. Also taken into account will the elements of
layering, overriding unification of abstract ideas or objects, framing, and the strong idea of depth and continual change. Their work takes on a very urban and contemporary aesthetic, one that helps tell stories about the objects involved or makes a statement using the elements of the artwork. Section 05 is important to this project as it helps outline the basis for the aesthetic principles for the design work done.

The last of the researched section of this paper, Section 06 Architecture and Its Theory as Precedent, is an examination of architectural projects and theory to be used as precedent. This will take into account the work of such architects and theorists like Peter Eisenman, Colin Rowe and Jacques Derrida, who have published theories on architectural intervention, working in urban areas and creating new and exciting images not just in this realm of projects but for architecture in general. Some of the theory work is based on the writing of an essay by Alois Riegel, a writer published about a century ago about the value of our “modern” monuments and where the ideas defining objects as monuments come from. Another discussion combats the ever dangerous word that occurs when large scale architectural projects come in to change the image, buildings, and social conditions of a neighborhood. Gentrification. Lance Freeman’s book “There Goes the ‘HOOD” takes a look at the positive and negative effects of gentrification on two urban, African American neighborhoods in New York City: Harlem and Clinton Hill. The parallels to Over the Rhine with each of these neighborhoods in their development and history is astonishing and Freeman’s book provides interesting insight into the future of Over the Rhine. Luckily, Over the Rhine, being situated in Cincinnati has the benefit of watching similar projects and trends develop elsewhere so it can learn from the successes and failures and try to maximize the former and limit the latter. As Mark Twain said, “When the end of the world comes, I want to be in Cincinnati because it’s always 20 years behind the times.” Freeman’s work is based on recent case studies and was only published in 2006, giving Cincinnati a great example of research done on gentrifying neighborhoods to dispel some of the worries of community leaders and neighborhood residents.
The last two sections of this paper will focus on the synthesis of all the areas researched and how these elements will be translated into one language of design that will be carried out on the studied site in Over the Rhine. Focus will be placed on the fusion of the historic and the contemporary, how these conflicting aesthetics will work together to form a congealed image giving neither dominance, but both presence. It is here that an inventory of the main buildings on the site have been identified and studied. From these influential buildings on site, only a few have been selected for design work that will act as pockets of re-imaging and that will in theory, start to influence the rest of the buildings on site.
SECTION 02_ BACKGROUND AND NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY

History of Over the Rhine
Over the Rhine as a neighborhood of Cincinnati, OH has a fascinating and rich history of architecture, culture and people. With such staples as Music Hall and Findlay Market, the vast open space and tree-lined Washington Park as well as a new School for Creative and Performing Arts, the neighborhood has the necessary institutional presence to promote vibrant urban living. These separate institutions offer a sense of history from Music Hall at the height of the city in 1878 to the new hope in the past decade and the relocation of the School for Creative and Performing Arts from the Pendleton area of the neighborhood to the developing area around Washington Park.

In 1983, the district was listed on the National Register for Historic Places. It was recognized for the exceptional quality and quantity of the nineteenth-century architecture present in the neighborhood as well as the role it played in the waves of immigrants from Germany to America during that time. (http://www.irhine.com/index.jsp?page=history_significance) This designation has both helped and hurt the neighborhood in its current state of development. While being placed on the register ensures that the quality architecture from that period will remain intact, it also limits what can be done outside of the original style of the building. This detours developers and designers from bringing costly rehabilitation projects to a struggling neighborhood where the market value of residences is far beneath the cost of renovation. In many cases, it would be much easier to start anew with development than to improve the existing stock of buildings up to the standards the market demands. Crime and the perception of danger also play a large part in the nature to stay away from Over the Rhine for development. The area is perceived by many as not only the most dangerous in the city, but more likely, in all the Midwest. For these reasons, developers have shied away from the neighborhood and located their efforts elsewhere where the rules governing construction and design are not as strict, and the social aspects of the neighborhood are more stable.

The collection of architecture that is left from the nineteenth century is one of America’s largest and most cohesive surviving examples of such urban building. While many similar neighborhoods in other cities were going through grand schemes of redevelopment and leveling of the existing stock of buildings, Cincinnati never could follow through with their plans for various reasons, thus preserving the neighborhood in its original state. The buildings are dominated by three to five story structures of lot-line extrusions, exuding a dense urban fabric. Most functions of the buildings offer storefronts or retail space on the
primary floor with loft or flat style living spaces above. Buildings generally fall into an Italianate style, with other nineteenth century styles like Federal, Greek Revival, Second Empire, Queen Anne and Renaissance Revival also being present. (http://www.irhine.com/index.jsp?page=history_significance)

Although initially settled mainly by many of the German immigrants to Cincinnati, the neighborhood has taken on a new character over the last 40 years, reflecting its rich Appalachian and African American histories. The Germans modeled what they built after the dense European cities they came from. This autonomous community at its peak provided churches, schools, meeting halls, industrial centers, housing, recreation areas and businesses all conforming the German tradition. These areas took on new meanings when new waves of residents began dominating the neighborhood whether or not the original function of the building was preserved.
Germanic Development

The neighborhood of Over the Rhine has a diverse and interesting history in the development of Cincinnati. Initially developed as a neighborhood for German immigrants in the nineteenth century, it has undergone many cultural changes since that time. The name came with the completion of the Miami and Erie Canal in 1827 providing for a large waterway on the northern boundary of downtown Cincinnati. Merchants were attracted to sites along the canal with served as the southern and western boundaries of Over the Rhine because of the advantages of the proximity to interstate transportation as well as the comparatively cheap cost of land.

German immigrants in Cincinnati were also drawn to the area because of the abundance of housing and low cost of renting or buying property and named the canal the “Rhine” after the river in their mother country. Residents of the city then began to refer to the area north of downtown where all the Germans lived as “Over the Rhine.” At the time of its height and prosperity, Over the Rhine was a vibrant community of over 50,000 residents with multistory row-houses and tenements built in the Italianate or Neo-Gothic style of architecture. The population was as concentrated as 75% German at points in the history of the neighborhood. Storefronts lined the streets and breweries and beer gardens littered the blocks as the social gathering places for all residents of the neighborhood. The German town had its own German-speaking schools and German newspapers. The cultural center of the massive Music Hall building was constructed and provided concerts of German singing societies and space for industrial exhibitions.

Findlay Market, a large open-air market on the northern edge of the neighborhood was vibrant with fresh foods was only one of several markets in the neighborhood [image 02.01]. With the changes in transportation at the beginning of the twentieth century and the implementation of the streetcar connecting the downtown neighborhoods with the developing suburbs of Mt. Auburn and Clifton, the more affluent German Americans began migrating to these less crowded neighborhoods. With the negative connotation to German citizens during the first World War, many more left the neighborhood because of social pressure. Other factors led to the decline of Over the Rhine as a German neighborhood when the city Americanized the street names, banned the teaching of the German language in elementary schools, and boycotted against the German-language newspapers. When prohibition went into effect it killed the breweries and beer gardens, destroying the livelihood and social constructions for the German Americans still living there. It was also at this time
that the Miami and Eric Canal had lost its major importance as a transportation route because of the refinement of the railroad system bypassing Cincinnati and connection Chicago to the rest of the country. By 1940, the neighborhood was in one of serious decline, fueled by the wars, the drained canal and the Great Depression. Becoming cut off from the rest of the city by the new Central Parkway over what was the canal and the widening of Liberty Street for a major traffic thoroughfare, the isolated neighborhood led to the city acquiring many properties in the neighborhood and pressures were mounting for development in the from the growing downtown area to the south.
The Appalachian Influence

With the migration of the German Americans out of the neighborhood and the depression of the 1930s, Over the Rhine became a haven for new residents from Appalachia primarily from eastern Kentucky. Poorer families from Kentucky and West Virginia moved into the neighborhood to try to secure manufacturing and industrial jobs in the nearby factories while living in the cheap tenement buildings. The beer gardens that once played German music now turned into saloons playing bluegrass and country. (http://www.irhine.com/index.jsp?page=history_new_identity) Other residents of the city began to associate the neighborhood at this time as one of poverty. During this time period, there was a drastic loss of manufacturing jobs along the Miami-Erie Canal because of its lack of effectiveness to make Cincinnati the great inland city of the United States. With the utilization of the rail system and a booming Chicago as the center of the Midwest economy, Cincinnati could not support the number of manufacturing jobs that it once had and had predicted for the future. Eventually these Appalachian residents began moving out of the neighborhood into the outlying neighborhoods and African Americans from the deep south and the freeway-torn neighboring communities of the West End and Queensgate began moving into the neighborhood throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The demographics of the community were once-again shifting. The African American population in 1970 was 42% and by 1980 had risen to 63%. (http://www.irhine.com/index.jsp?page=history_new_identity5) This figure continued to rise and has since developed as the most common association with the demographics of the neighborhood.
The African American Ghetto

Federal housing policies cemented the low-income and socially struggling image of the neighborhood in the late 1960s locking many African Americans in place. Landlords were given enormous tax-credits if they rented to low-income tenants. African American tenants from the West End neighborhood were at this time displaced because the I-75 interstate highway project and other urban renewal projects and moved into Over the Rhine. Many landlords looked to lock in this federal program, signed 30-year contracts and by the rules of the agreement installed metal bars on windows and doors of the first floors of their buildings, ruining the historic street-level building features of the neighborhoods. Once tenants moved into the subsidized housing projects, legally they were not allowed to leave unless they agreed to give up their government subsidies. (Miller 45) This furthered the makings of the low-income African American ghetto that the neighborhood was turning into.

The overall population of the neighborhood continually decreased in the two decades of the 1960s and 1970s, while the demographics of the neighborhood were continuing to rise in reflect to African American residents, rivaling the percentage of residents of German decent at the height of the neighborhood. In 1990, the population hit a low of 9,572, of which 71% were African American. (http://www.irhine.com/index.jsp?page=history_new_identity5) At this time, many residents of the neighborhood were poor and undereducated, the median household income being less than $5,000 a year, less than 25% of the median household incomes of the rest of the city. (http://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/cdap/downloads/cdap_pdf3623.pdf)

Institutional presence has increased to help address the needs of the residents through housing networks, schools and churches all aimed at raising the standards of living in this impoverished neighborhood, but support is still low. Because of the lack of funding, six public schools have closed in the last 30 years alone. (http://www.irhine.com/index.jsp?page=history_new_identity6)

The social problems in the neighborhood with respect to education and income have caused other problems to arise. The neighborhood and its residents have been plagued with the difficulties of many other inner-city neighborhoods like alcoholism, prostitution, drug dependancy and trade as well as homelessness and a lack or adequate living conditions. One of the institutions supporting the neighborhood that has had a major affect on the area is the Drop Inn Center Shelterhouse. The Drop Inn Center provides for shelter each night, as well as food and counseling for the homeless residents of the area. Many organizations in the community focus on reinvestment and attracting residents and businesses to relocate to Over the Rhine. Groups like ReSTOC (a low-income housing self-help group) are
rehabilitating buildings, organizations like 3CDC (Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation) are providing development and master planning strategies and are actively implementing them in the neighborhood, and the Over the Rhine Chamber of Commerce is working on ways to bring small business to the area. Main Street has had mild success as an arts and entertainment area with a regional draw.

With the perception and reality of being a neighborhood of crime and housing projects, there was no draw for anyone outside of the area to move into Over the Rhine, let alone invest any money in any sort of substantial development. The neighborhood continued to decline with various moves done by landlords and developers hoping to hold large amounts of property as speculation for the revitalization of the neighborhoods. Parties representing different sides of the issues in the neighborhood came together with the City Planner, Elizabeth Blume to talk through issues and produce a comprehensive plan for development.

These meetings and plans came together in 2000, but were never implemented as quite possibly the largest blow to the neighborhood happened in April of the following year.
Timothy Thomas, a 19-year-old African American from Over the Rhine, was shot and killed by a white Cincinnati police officer during a foot chase in April 2001. Thomas was a convicted criminal and wanted on other charges and appeared to be reaching for a gun from the police report but was found to be unarmed. When no reprimand came from the police department as a result of the actions of the officer, neighborhood riots ensued, stalling any sort of business and development. Images of fires in the streets, broken storefront windows, and general rioting littered the newscasts of both local and national stations. Mayor Charlie Luken was quoted at a press conference as he declared a state of emergency and citywide curfew, “Despite the best efforts of the good citizens of our city, the violence in our streets is uncontrolled and runs rampant.” The state of the neighborhood was in major turmoil. The national president of the NAACP, Kweisi Mfume, said, “Cincinnati is a microcosm, the belly of a whale. It's important for the nation to focus here on ground zero. If we can fix it here, we can fix it elsewhere. But if it doesn’t get fixed here, it turns into anarchy and all of us are left wondering, ‘Is justice blind?’” During the riots, the mayor compared the gunfire to Beirut. The shooting caused the largest civil and racial unrest in the United States since Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr was assassinated. All of this violence, looting, and unrest was concentrated in the .61 square miles that is Over the Rhine. The blow to the neighborhood was catastrophic. The police department became the target of cries of corruption and racism. Social issues actually pressured the city to patrol the neighborhood less in an attempt to try to alleviate the concerns and allegations of racism. Many people not only were drawn out of Over the Rhine, but also downtown. Like most people, Cincinnatians formed their perception of the neighborhood by what they saw on the news or read in the paper. This presented problems after the riots because much of the crime that occurred in any of the downtown neighborhoods was being reported as happening in Over the Rhine. This only compounded the problem of the perceptions of many people thinking that the neighborhood had simply become too dangerous to live in or visit. While crime rose, especially in homicides, many of the creative professionals, artists, and urbanists that had resettled the neighborhood before the riots were forced to leave because of the state of social unrest. The population of the neighborhood plummeted to under 6,000 people, down from its initial high over 50,000+ at the turn of the century. With rampant civic budget cuts, Elizabeth Blume and her entire department were cut leaving no city department geared specifically for neighborhood development.
Before the City Planning Department was eliminated, the 2002 Comprehensive Plan for Over the Rhine was published outlining specific areas needing intervention within the neighborhood. The 250+ page report is a thorough investigation into the neighborhood, its buildings, people and potential. Part of the plan identified four gateways into the neighborhood as key areas for development and investment, one of which this thesis will address. The plan identifies goals and recommendations for economic development, safety and cleanliness, transportation and quality of life.

With the dismemberment of the Cincinnati City Planning Department and disinvestment in Over the Rhine, corporate leaders in the city banded together to finance and help form the nonprofit development company, Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC). Since its formation in July of 2003, 3CDC has become the largest land owner in Over the Rhine and its most energetic developer. Their focus is on preservation of the existing but elegant vacant buildings in the neighborhood. By doing this they can add a new economic element with urban lofts appealing to the middle and upper middle class without evicting any of the existing population and reducing the gentrification scare that exists with many urban renewal plans. Their main goals as an organization are to develop Cincinnati’s urban core as a regional center of valuable employment and real estate. To accomplish this, they are targeting the goals of having a diverse mix of housing, cultural and entertainment. As taken from their website, 3CDC defines their primary responsibilities as such:

- The implementation of real estate development and programs that strengthen the core assets of downtown
- Set overall strategic direction and priorities for development in the Center City with input from a broad range of stakeholders and foster public-private collaboration
- Put development deals together and oversee project implementation to ensure public and private accountability for the successful completion of Center City projects (http://3cdc.org/content.jsp?sectionId=2)

While the organization has not formally taken over for the disbanded City Planning Department, it has unofficially assumed the responsibility for all development in the downtown region of the city. While this may be seen as a positive action since there have been so many problems with investment, the actions of 3CDC have come with some scrutiny since they are a privately funded firm assuming the role of a public entity.
They have recently opened a new area of development at the southern end of the Over the Rhine, the Gateway Quarter, where they partnered with other developers and designers to add nearly 100 units of lofts and condos along with new street-front retail space along Vine St. The area is being well received by tenants, both commercial and residential showing the most marketed improvement in the neighborhood to date. The vibrancy of the area is prevalent much more so now than in any recent history, especially since the riots and civil unrest of 2001. The relocation of a major institution, the Art Academy of Cincinnati, directly adjacent to the Gateway Quarter has done nothing but help both the Quarter and the neighborhood since it opened. The addition of residents, whether transient students, or more long-term professors has promoted an increase in rehabilitation efforts of area buildings. The presence of the Art Academy has also helped with the struggling image of the area as an arts district and added galleries, artists and courses open to the public.
SECTION 03_ URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS
2002 Over the Rhine Comprehensive Plan
Conservations Guidelines for Over the Rhine Historic District (July 2003)
As a collaborative effort between civic leaders, designers, campus think tanks and community stakeholders, the 2002 Over the Rhine Comprehensive Plan was authored as a guideline for the future development of the neighborhood. The plan focuses on all facets of the redevelopment of the neighborhood addressing issues of housing, businesses new and existing, transportation, safety, appearance, quality of life and support. This document was to serve as a model for developers, designers and city leaders to use in the redevelopment efforts of the area and includes feasibility studies, economic analysis and cost estimates, and an inventory of the existing assets of the area.

The goals for the plan are high and set to make Over the Rhine a model for diverse business development; a safe, clean and visually appealing neighborhood; as well as improvements to public transportation, encouraging pedestrian-friendly walkways, maintaining and creating new open and green space with parks and recreation areas, and continuing to encourage a strong diverse institutional presence as support to the residents. (OTRCP 7-11) These are lofty goals for a neighborhood in dire need of help. The plan says this about Over the Rhine, “At various times, it has embodied the best and worst of Cincinnati, and maybe urban America.” (OTRCP 19) The vision of the plan is based on a “neighborhood that celebrates the diversity of its people and cultures in a community where the architecture and character provide a nurturing, enriching environment for everyone who lives, works and visits there.” (OTRCP 20) It is obvious from this statement that the neighborhood wants to embrace what it has but celebrate and progress forward both socially and culturally which will include its built environment.

The plan identifies four key community issues which have had a “lack of consensus on how to deal with them [which] have hampered redevelopment in Over the Rhine for more than a decade.” (OTRCP 22) These issues being: Lack of Investment, Displacement, Crime and Its Perception and Sense of Community. All of these issues have some bearing on this study in particular since it deals with the redevelopment and re-imaging of a major area of the neighborhood.

On the issue of the lack of investment, the main question is how to attract new money into the neighborhood when it has experienced such an exodus over the past 50 years. Over the Rhine lost almost 20,000 people in 40 years, more than one person permanently moving
out of the neighborhood everyday during that period. (OTRCP 22) This flight of residents in the neighborhood definitely has a profound affect the economic investment into residential buildings, both new and rehabilitated, as well as commercial buildings. Disinvestment in the neighborhood has left over 500 buildings vacant as well as unoccupied lots where buildings used to stand occupied. The downward spiral has been one very difficult to turn around or recover from. (http://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/25/us/25cincy.html?_r=1&n=Top/Reference/Times%20Topics/Organizations/N/National%20Trust%20for%20Historic%20Preservation&oref=slogin)

Displacement is an issue that gets attention in the local media and with residents of the community. The scare every time a new plan is produced or a developer calls for new construction is that the market value will drive prices throughout the neighborhood up too high and the residents that have called Over the Rhine home for years would be forced to leave unable to combat gentrification. This issue is one of the most controversial in the redevelopment of the neighborhood. My contention is that the disinvestment in the neighborhood has actually helped combat this issue by leaving so much vacant property in the area prime for development. Large scale development in the neighborhood could occur without even touching existing inhabited dwellings or businesses. The concern with this being that these developments would raise the overall prices of units by commanding higher rents for new units and consequently raising rents in surrounding buildings, displacing existing low-income residents. One issue along these lines that is never really addressed is that the current impoverished residents of the neighborhood have ghettoed themselves there and have made it where no one other than them is welcome and market-rate projects have very little chance of success. Considering personal experience and speaking with residents of Cincinnati that are not residents of Over the Rhine, this is a very common sentiment. There seems to be very distinct social lines that many people cannot overcome to even visit in the neighborhood. Over the Rhine is seen as a place for the lowest levels of society, a place of poverty, crime and danger that would never be a place to live. While in my experience, this is not true, there are those elements prevalent in the neighborhood that could, should and do detour visitors and investment.

Naturally, crime and its perception would be the next major issue of the community and how it develops. Crime in the neighborhood, as agreed upon by the general public and law enforcement officials stems from drug use and drug trafficking. The problem has been the ineffective nature of the Cincinnati Police Department after the race riots and shooting of Timothy Thomas in 2001. The mistrust in the Cincinnati Police has led them to have to be very cautious about the action they do and do not take in the neighborhood for fear of
prosecution and punishment from higher authority since the local and national African American communities had great interest in the Timothy Thomas issue and began watching Cincinnati very closely. One issue that many people in the city do not agree with is how to eradicate the drug problem from the neighborhood. By simply adding officers and patrol cars to the area, it may only have a marginal effect on the actual crime, but their increased presence hurts the perception of the area. Many people feel that community-based support organizations to help rehabilitate drug abuse will greatly reduce the presence of that unwanted element. There is also the idea that stopping the supply of drugs into the neighborhood will help greatly in preventing its sale and use.

Finally, the sense of community is the last issue raised by the stakeholders as one on which to concentrate. The current residents are worried about how to encourage the existing and new residents to respect each other and form one diverse community. This is not typically a question taken on in planning for development, but the tensions of the community are such that it is necessary to produce what will align itself as one cohesive neighborhood. If this is not created, the efforts of the community and redevelopment are bound to be proven futile. (OTRCP 23)
“Just as Over the Rhine is the best and worst of the City, Vine Street is the best and worst of the neighborhood. The condition of Vine Street is, to many, symbolic of the overall health of the neighborhood. Its image is what shapes people’s impressions of Over the Rhine.” (OTRCP 69) This statement, taken directly from the Over the Rhine Comprehensive Plan truly embodies the goal and aim of this thesis. At the time of the Comprehensive Plan, Mayor Luken designated that Vine Street will be the center of the redevelopment strategy that will signal the resurgence of the entire community. Located in the heart of the community, the function of the street was and is both civic and cultural. Although the specificities of those roles have changed, the generalizations of these roles have remained constant. “From clothes to food to music to hardware, Vine Street has been the central shopping street in the neighborhood. It is also a place where building vacancies, trash, loitering, and drug dealing makes the corridor feel very unsafe.” (OTRCP 69)

The issue of image along Vine Street is critical to the successful redevelopment of the area. The focus of this design study will center on the intersection of Vine and McMicken Streets, one of the northern boundaries of the neighborhood. This will act as a node of redevelopment along Vine Street working with the current re-imaging and redevelopment of Vine Street between Central Parkway and 13th Street known as the Gateway Quarter. As redevelopment is well underway on the southern end of Vine Street, there has been no
action to redevelop or re-image any part of the northern end of Vine Street, giving great importance to this project. With both the southern and northern gateways in and out of the neighborhood along Vine Street redeveloped with a new image, the effect will begin to trickle into the ancillary regions between the two nodes.
According to the ramifications of the designation as Over the Rhine as a historic district, design guidelines have been produced to ensure quality design throughout the neighborhood mimicking the historic Italianate style. These guidelines have certain canons in them that could be interpreted to promote contemporary design, and others that could greatly restrict the creativity of designers. The Conservation Guidelines: Over the Rhine Historic District is broken up into various sections starting with “Intent and General Guidelines” and then “Specific Guidelines.” The intent and general guidelines are very encouraging to developing new images and building types in the neighborhood because of the vagaries of the descriptions of the goals, while the specific guidelines seem to be very limiting in what options are actually available.

Under the first section, “New Construction,” the second point in Intents and General Guidelines, the document calls for “New construction should be well-designed but should not replicate the existing building. The exceptional quality of the existing buildings in the district provokes an outstanding framework for new construction.” As ambiguous as this statement is in its wording, it offers only the condition that new construction should be well-designed. The third point in this section includes some more detail into what this would entail stating, “New design proposals should pay particular attention to composition, materials, openings, rhythm, scale proportion and height.” These general guidelines seem to be offering designers some creative freedom in their choices for the aesthetic qualities of new construction. The specific guidelines for the section on composition then go into much greater detail as to what the authors of the Conservation Guidelines view to be appropriate for the neighborhood. “New buildings should respond to the traditional subdivisions found on historic property, a base, a middle and a top. Most buildings in Over the Rhine are built of brick with the principle facade parallel to the street it faces. The most important features of buildings in Over the Rhine are the arrangement of openings on the principle facade and an overall vertical emphasis of the whole design.” It then goes on to describe in great detail what each of the elements of base, middle and top should entail and how to incorporate the architectural detailing in each of these sections including a change in materials and a cornice line.
The section of window openings seems to be one of the most rigid in its requirements. It states, “Window openings of new buildings should be related to the size and placement of openings found on historic structures of similar use in the neighborhood....The openings are taller and wide (typically in a proportion of 2:1). Window openings, which are typically aligned vertically, usually occupy between 20% and 50% of the principal facade.” By strictly following these guidelines for design, this would ensure an appearance of a facade very similar to those already in existence in the neighborhood (which would seem to be the goal of the authors). Window openings of this size were constructed at the time as a function of the available technology by spanning short lengths with stone lentils and using tall windows to let as much light penetrate the interior of the building as possible. With the current technology available to designers and builders, these requirements are not as strict in terms of functionality because of the ability to frame a window out of steel or other stronger, lighter building materials making this proportion unnecessary. Also, with the available lighting technology, there is no need to strictly rely on natural light from the sun and tall windows penetrating deep into spaces as a the primary source of illumination. While allowing ample natural light is encouraged, the size and shape of the windows are not dictated by that constriction any more.
The conservation guidelines call for new construction to have a very specific emphasis on verticality and visual rhythm with the presence of window groupings, pilasters, columns and piers. It calls for window openings to be tall and narrow and accompanied by slender columns with total heights of buildings not varying more than one story from adjacent buildings. It also calls for very specific use of materials. “Clearly the dominant material in Over the Rhine is brick, but other materials such as limestone, sandstone, cast-iron, slate, wood and sheet metal are important as well.” Additionally it states in regard to renovation of existing buildings, “Missing or deteriorated materials should be replaced with recycled or new materials that match the original as closely as possible with regard to the following: type, color, style, shape and texture of material.” This greatly limits the use of many finishing materials in any type of renovation or new construction. As stated earlier, the dominant material in the neighborhood is brick, but the way bricks are fabricated has changed in the last century finding recycled material or authentic brick to the period very difficult and costly.

Similar language is used describing the door and window sashes of existing buildings, “If replacement is necessary, the new door or window sash should match the original in material, size and style as closely as possible.” This continues with ornamentation, “Make replacement ornamentation match the character of the existing feature as closely as with respect to type, color, style, shape and texture of material.” The most offensive and destructive text comes in the last section which comes under the section for “Non-Contributing Buildings” and states,

Newer Buildings: Most buildings that were built within the past fifty years do not fit the historic or architectural context of the neighborhood. Due to their more recent date of construction, these buildings did not contribute to the development of Over the Rhine as an urban, nineteenth-century neighborhood. The majority of these newer buildings differ architecturally from the district’s historic buildings, especially in scale, building materials, and detailing. (http://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/cdap/downloads/cdap_pdf3720.pdf see Appendix)

This should not necessarily be seen as a problem, but possibly a blessing. The fact is that the current state of the neighborhood functions as a twenty-first century neighborhood and not one of the nineteenth century. There is no need to make the museum a nineteenth century museum of architectural styling. Over the Rhine should embody the principles of a nineteenth century neighborhood, many of those being principles of urban neighborhoods in general: walkable community, inclusive services, diversity and density, individually owned stores and markets and a sense of community. These principles are not necessarily tied to nineteenth century neighborhoods, but to urban neighborhoods. If the people writing the
guidelines and comprehensive plans for the neighborhood understood and embraced that, Over the Rhine could be in a much better place with a brighter path ahead of it, and the documents potentially could be much more effective.
SECTION 04_ THE IMPORTANCE OF IMAGE IN OVER THE RHINE

The Gateway Quarter
The Gateway Quarter

Centered on the southern end of Vine Street in Over the Rhine and extending to the west on the streets of Republic and Race, The Gateway Quarter is a new project developed by Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC). Encompassing nearly 100 new residential loft and flat units which embrace the historic detailing of the existing 15 buildings they occupy and also using urban contemporary design elements throughout the area. The Quarter also includes first floor specialty retail and restaurant units all from local and independent and restauranteurs. To make the project feasible, 3CDC had to take on the role of master planner and delegate the development of specific properties to other local developers who followed guidelines and provisions as to how the new units would be designed and marketed. Collaboration was also sparked with the Art Academy of Cincinnati, sitting only a block away to the East on Jackson Street by starting to develop buildings immediately adjacent to be leased for student housing. The individual efforts of the developers would have proved to have been futile if 3CDC had not united all of them under the blanket of the Gateway Quarter. With this overriding organization, there is cohesion both in the design and location of the properties, but there is also a central leasing and acquisition office that serves all the properties and streamlines the process of looking for available property. The initial success of the Quarter has prompted the addition of another 100 units over the next four years.

To market the project, 3CDC has one set of graphics that are used for all the buildings and units in the Quarter. By doing this, it has helped them create not only aesthetic cohesion of the architecture, but also with the presented materials to perspective lessees and buyers. The area is cleaner and lit better than other areas of the neighborhood. The buildings, since recently renovated are among those in the best physical shape in the neighborhood and because they are all located in close proximity to one another, this give the area a critical mass of positive influence. The gentrified area has added the benefit of new shops and restaurants that mainly serve the imported residents from other areas, but as will be discussed in Section 06d, this is not necessarily a bad thing for the neighborhood.

The success of the Gateway Quarter gives relevance to the proposed renovation project on the site at Vine and Mc Micken Streets. Centered on Vine Street and the
southern gateway into Over the Rhine and the Central Business District, the site
draws many parallels to the gateway site at the northern node between Over the
Rhine and Clifton Heights. The importance of the development of both these nodes
will help Vine Street, the main artery and focal point of the neighborhood, progress
and continue to positively develop. The cohesion between the buildings on the site
at the northern gateway to the neighborhood will have to be as prevalent as it is in
the Gateway Quarter in order for the project to be successful. Efforts will be made
to increase the visual linkages between new construction, renovation and existing
buildings on this northern site of the neighborhood. There will be a larger effort to
provide continuity over a broader range of site and one that is closely tied to Vine
Street as its main effort.
05

SECTION 05_ COLLAGE ART AS PRECEDENT

Louise Nevelson
Robert Rauschenberg
05a COLLAGE ART AS PRECEDENT | Louise Nevelson

Not an architect by trade, Russian-born Louise Nevelson has contributed much to the architecture and sculpture community. As a sculpture artist, Nevelson relies on finding objects, finding their history and distilling all the elements to a single tone, letting their intrinsic form create the beauty that become her sculptures. Taken from a description of her work at the Jewish Museum “...Nevelson constructed her sculpture much as she constructed her past: shaping each with her legendary sense of self as she created extraordinary iconography through abstract means.” (Nevelson, et.al xvi) The themes of her work give evidence to her experiences without any direct connection to herself. The way in which she uses her found objects to assemble a coherent piece of sculpture can be directly applied to the intervention of architecture in historic buildings blending different objects with different meanings together to form one coherent piece of art.

As seen in Tropical Garden II, [image 05.01] her work here begins to take on the appearance of an urban streetscape. She creates boxes around each collection of found material that she uses in her sculpture giving each box a separate identity, much how the facade of buildings would appear in a dense urban neighborhood. There is a very defined ground plane, as would be if these were buildings on a street and the heights are all varied much like the skyline of a city would appear. [image 05.02] One of the things that make this piece of artwork theoretically different than the buildings that appear on the streets of Over the Rhine is that each “building” is composed of different elements and arranged in different manners. Many of the pieces used in her sculptures are similar, but no single piece is identical to another. Streetscapes in Over the Rhine appear much differently because many of the buildings are made up of many of the same elements as their neighboring buildings.[image 05.03] The character of the neighborhood could take on an appearance much more similar to Nevelson’s Tropical Garden II by changing features of each building or by arranging the elements of a building in different ways in specific scenarios. The manner in which the buildings were initially constructed cannot be changed, but the way they are dealt with in the future can be. By adding new and different elements that have no relationship to the original building and using these interventions in different ways and locations throughout the buildings on a site, the character would be much more similar to Nevelson’s pieces.
Elaine’s Party [image 05.04] takes on many of these ideas as well. Only is it here that each box is a set size and shape that does not differ from piece to piece. Nevelson starts using coinciding lines and continuous curves between the boxes to give the overall composition order. Many of the compositions inside the boxes take on a very similar forms and overall appearance with only slight variations between
pieces. Using Elaine's Party is an excellent when dealing with architectural interventions into a historic neighborhood because many of the elements that gave the buildings their original character will still be present after the contemporary intervention is made. This will give the individual buildings the character of a “variations on a theme” series of sculptures of collages.

Nevelson takes everyday objects and makes them the integral pieces of her artwork. She does this not by stripping them to their elemental state and using the raw material or by finding a set of one thing and reassembling them as they were originally perceived, but using them exactly as she finds them. She respects the history of the individual piece and composes multiple pieces together to create one coherent form with a singular theme or emotion. To tie this to intervention in architecture would be to take an existing facade of a building, a building stripped to its shell and to respect that history. Without the necessity of returning an object to its purist state, the history of the object shows through. By juxtaposing other elements from other periods of history as well as the present, the resulting building could be one that both respects the historic and the contemporary with interjections of new pieces that carefully placed and assembled create one coherent piece of design. While her sculptural work is undeniably abstract it offers an excellent image of the effect of layering different histories and elements to create a communicative piece of art respecting both the historic and the contemporary aspects of the pieces involved. She sets the definition of the box in which the piece of her findings fit. Her imposed box represents the new architectural work to be done, adding order and giving an organizing framework. The found objects represent the current state of the building, the history of each brick, opening and space. Nothing is taken away or lost, yet together, they form an incredible overall image. Her sculptural work represents a true synthesis of the part to the whole.
What Louise Nevelson does for sculpture, Robert Rauschenberg does for painting, collage and graphics. Rauschenberg is an innovative artist from Texas who balanced art with everyday life. His works have a sense of collective description and history. Rauschenberg took everyday objects, much like Nevelson, and composed them to better communicate the idea of his topic. His ideas on the collage are intriguing in an architectural sense, especially when looking the histories of buildings. In his compositions, each individual part is important, but has its place as part of the whole. While looking at the history of a building, some parts should be expressed with little alteration, while like in the work of Rauschenberg, some elements are not necessary and therefore need to be altered to benefit the collage as a whole. This alteration is what keeps the idea of the original, but gives it a contemporary touch or aesthetic. Where preservation in architecture falls short is that in many instances, it only recognizes the work of the original artist or designer. Current guidelines do not respect the work of the contemporary designer that must work to alter the original work to adapt it to the current need. Rauschenberg alters what is not needed from his incorporation of text and image into his work.

On the question of the found objects Rauschenberg uses in his sculptural and collage work, the response given was, “They are not found objects, but elements. And the chosen must be chosen because of the potential to be happily added to some other chosen elements.” (Turrell 14) This is essential for the parallel from the collage work of Rauschenberg to architecture and urban design. The elements themselves aren’t beautiful to begin with, but Rauschenberg is able to make them beautiful. Julia Brown Turrell, in her book and exhibit, *rauschenberg sculpture*, she speaks of Rauschenberg,

using the poorest, the most thrown away and rejected things, things that people avoid seeing. It’s almost like a program, maybe of a social kind, or a philosophical kind. In our generation, let’s say, I think it was an important experience or discovery for us that things that are important very often are the least considered, on all levels of life. People weren’t always looking for what as best for them, and the great things in life were sometimes the most simple, and hidden, too; behind conventions. We had been taught certain values, and it took people like Rauschenberg....to show us how hollow these conventions were.(Turrell 18)
This quote is essential to the parallel between Rauschenberg’s work and the goal of this thesis. By taking the most forgotten, dilapidated buildings, the area of town that citizens of the area avoid visiting, the rejected members of the overall community and concentrating efforts to form a unique image for the area based upon conventions of contemporary design and historic elements of the neighborhood that will result in a benefit to the community as a whole.

This poetic fusion of rejected items and uniting them to form a united composition is essential to Rauschenberg in his work. To parallel his ideas with historic preservation with respect to materials, Rauschenberg says, “I respect materials that have already been in their life, and I recycle them. I’m looking now for an old tire that has a history, and it’s going to be cast in glass. I rarely go out looking for something specific, but I do search out elements like something orange or green or glass or steel. It’s like mixing colors or something.” (Turrell 52) He then goes on to offer this about finding beauty in things and how his objective is to create a new way of seeing everyday objects. “People should be able to look at the past as though it’s new. But if you forget about the freshness of the past, then everything is just designed to death.” (Turrell 52) He incorporates ideas for the creation of new things by combining discarded elements he finds to be intriguing. This will prove to be extremely important in the development of the site in Over the Rhine. By synthesizing the seemingly discarded buildings of this area into one cohesive sculpture, the area can be revitalized as the facades of the buildings will take on a similar meaning as the found elements in the graphic collage and sculptural work Rauschenberg creates. The cohesion and synthesis of these buildings is critical to the success of the overall area as well as some unifying element that will tie the architectural elements of the community together. This new unified image will create an image that will revitalize the area for further development.
SECTION 06  ARCHITECTURE AND ITS THEORY AS PRECEDENT
From Contrast to Analogy
Architecture and the Problem of the Rhetorical Figure
The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origins
There Goes the ‘HOOD
The role of intervention into existing pieces of architecture and the treatment of these interventions is the fundamental concern of this thesis and Ignasi de Sola-Morales Rubio addresses this topic in his essay, *From Contrast to Analogy: Developments in the Concepts of Architectural Intervention*. The opening line of the essay helps define the main ideas for the topic studied here.

The relationship between a new architectural intervention and already existing architecture is a phenomenon that changes in relation to the cultural values attributed both to meaning of historic architecture and to the intentions of the new intervention. (Nesbitt 230)

This statement sits at the forefront of the situation occurring in Over the Rhine and many other neighborhoods in the process of revitalization. Currently, there is a disconnect between the developing social make-up of the neighborhood and the buildings situated there. While many of these buildings are deemed to be historic, [attracting many members of the gentry who would be the ones to move in and make necessary changes] they are representative of another time, place and culture. Through specific architectural intervention that maintains the important aspects of that time and place while also defining elements of contemporary design, materials, proportion and scale, a synthesized image of the building can be realized. It is here that de Sola-Morales Rubio talks about intervention in the terms of a single building, but he expands further to include vacant sites that would promote new construction.

The design of a new work of architecture not only comes physically close to the existing one, entering into visual and spatial rapport with it, but it also produces a genuine interpretation of the historical material with which it has to contend, so that this material is the object of a true interpretation which explicitly or implicitly accompanies the new intervention in its overall significance. (Nesbitt 230)

This statement is important in the realm of new construction in historic districts such as Over the Rhine. Allowing pieces of new construction to be designed with their own individual aesthetics and in the context of the time and not the prescribed contextual ramifications of the neighborhood and specific design guidelines. The
The design guidelines for Over the Rhine, as discussed in Section 03, are very strict with their requirements for material, scale, openings, and general appearance of the building to match the existing fabric of the neighborhood. de Sola-Morales Rubio compares this interrelationship of intervention to the visual art of photomontage, which can emphasize the contrast between the old and new architecture as far as the overall image is concerned. “But this contrast which reveal differences in texture, materials, and geometry, as well as in the density of the urban grid, makes no pretense of being a negative judgement, a repudiation of historic architecture.” (Nesbitt 231) The design implications of using collage and photomontage, much like Rauschenberg and Nevelson (Section 06), in their visual art transforms the work of architecture into a piece of artwork and helps relate the conceived building to its surrounding. This relationship gives meaning and importance to the intervention by placing it in the site, defining its own image and relating it to the overall composition of the neighborhood.

The case for the studied site in Over the Rhine is one where this importance of juxtaposing the past and present and having these two identities relate together in harmony that de Sola-Morales Rubio discusses in this article. Having a depressed historic site with a variety of buildings and vacant lots primed for architectural intervention brings the argument into question what the nature of the intervention will be. The debate whether to intervene in the site to match existing conditions, as is the current accepted state of thinking in the neighborhood or to do so with a contemporary aesthetic is one that de Sola-Morales Rubio would side with an intervention featuring a contemporary language.

The phenomenon of meaning in any field of the visual arts is produced through juxtaposition, interrelation, and contrast of fundamentally heterogeneous shapes, textures, or materials. Just as collage and photomontage develop techniques of extracting new and specific meanings from the confrontation of autonomous fragments, architecture, by contrasting ancient with new structures, finds the ground and the form in which the past and present recognize each other. (Nesbitt 232-3)

The conception of contrast that must be produced between the protected historical buildings and new interventions is defended. Not just by recommending that modern materials should be used on certain occasions, but above all by the repeatedly expressed criterion according to which difference is noted in the different arrangement of the added elements, in the use of different
materials and in the absence of decorations in new constructions, in their geometrical and technological simplicity. (Nesbitt 233)

One of the key elements in the resulting design on the site in Over the Rhine will be a major study of materials and how contemporary materials can take on historic forms and how these can be related to the overall historic district. This collage and juxtaposition of periods and styles is where the approach for the design aspect of this thesis will come, taking the art of Rauschenberg and Nevelson, the ideas presented here of de Sola-Morales Rubio and Eisenman which will be discussed later in this section.

As an aesthetic operation, the intervention is the imaginative, arbitrary, and free proposal by which one seeks not only to recognize the significant structures of the existing historical material but also to use them as analogical marks of the new construction. (Nesbitt 237)
In order to reinvent a site whether it be a city or a house, the idea of site must be freed from its traditional places, histories and systems of meanings. (Nesbitt 177)

Not only the studied site in Over the Rhine, but the neighborhood as a whole is being reinvented, whether intentionally or not, through the demographics of the people that the current development is targeting, the interior aesthetics of the buildings or simply the growing interest in the neighborhood. Eisenman argues then that to be appropriately reinvented, the site must be freed of its past relationships and histories. To achieve this for the site in Over the Rhine, the details of the Italianate aesthetic of the buildings, must be forgotten for the design of the interventions. The design would be respectful of the existing elements of the neighborhood, but not mimic their aesthetic details.

In this essay, Eisenman discusses the difference between the meaning of the object and its composition. He compares the visual nature of words and their meanings. He contends that the arrangement of the letters of word defines its meanings and by simply rearranging the elements or letters of a word, the meaning can be completely different. By rearranging the letter of “cat” to “act” the two words take on very different meanings. The make-up of each word is the same in their root form, but the composition of the letters completely alters the meaning. In relating this to architecture and the built environment, the meaning behind the buildings is not as important as the composition of the elements that compose them. By reducing architecture to their root forms, their specific arrangement gives the meaning to the building. The arrangement of the forms completely alters the visual appearance and also the meaning, but their root is composed of the same elements. In this way, Eisenman is in line with the arguments of de Sola-Morales Rubio, Nevelson and Rauschenberg in that the way each root material is visually defined and composed in the overall composition of the art, different meanings can be construed. Pieces of collage art will take on entirely different visual forms and meanings even if composed of the same root elements just by the hand that crafts them, the period in which they are produced and the social context of what is going on in the world around the artist. Such should be the same for architecture and the
In my proposal for rhetorical figures, architecture is no longer seen as merely aesthetic or functional elements, but rather as an *other* grammatical counter, proposing an alternate reading of the idea of site and object. In this sense, a rhetorical figure will be seen to be inherently contextual in that the site is treated as a deeply scored palimpsest... The analogic or rhetorical, rather than the analytic, character of this process dislocates site implications from their culturally predetermined meanings by superposing two old contents to create a new content. In the resulting rhetorically, as opposed to aesthetically, structurally, historically determined figuration, there is the revelation in the site of a repressed text. (Nesbitt 179)

Eisenman’s idea of the palimpsest is one that parallels the theories of collage and photomontage. By thinking of historic architecture as a tablet with a history, a contemporary addition will simply add another layer of meaning to a building. The resultant piece of architecture will have layers of meaning, each having their own history, but through layering, giving the piece of architectural collage a meaning separate from each of the individual meanings. Each element is in itself becomes important to the overall composition and story of the building. By this theory, the building will be every changing and the overall meaning will change with each resulting addition and layer.

Culture, history and ultimately architecture are not fixed and merely additive, but are a continual process of reiteration and simultaneous dislocation which at every moment modifies the previous instant of meaning and structure. (Nesbitt 181)
Alois Riegl was an Austrian art historian and is considered one of the major figures in the establishment of art history as self-sufficient academic discipline. His article on the modern cult of monuments offers an inventory of all the monuments of the time and how to classify these pieces of significance. The arguments center on art and were written during the nineteenth century, but are relevant to contemporary architectural design and the ongoing debate about historic preservation.

He begins by defining what is historical in broad terms as, “Everything that has been and is no longer we call historical, in accordance with the modern notion that what has been can never be again, and that everything that has been constitutes an irreplaceable and irremovable link in a chain of development.” (Riegl 21) This quote gives insight into buildings being defined as historic and that since they are irreplaceable and irremovable, efforts to replicate these structures should be viewed as futile. Under this idea, all new construction should be in the kunstwollen of this time. Riegl conceives this idea as an effort or tendency of a time which drives stylistic development. He goes on to diminish the idea of the term historic in some ways by saying, “It is important to realize that every work of art is at once and without exception a historical monument because it represents a specific stage in the development of the visual arts.” (Riegl 22) This idea gives less meaning to those artifacts and objects deemed as historic and diminishes their value in a contemporary theater.

The objects that we deem to be historic and monuments of another time, were, for the most part, never conceived to become monuments or historic. These are “unintentional monuments,” built for a function and purpose and not as a memorialization. “It is not the original purpose and significance that turn these works into monuments, but rather our modern perception of them... In the case of the intentional monument, its commemorative value has been determined by the makers, while we have defined the value of the unintentional ones.” (Riegl 22) These statements should make contemporaries of artists cautious about the designation of work as monuments or historic. The buildings in Over the Rhine, for the most part, were never designed to be monuments or deemed historic. They were designed to serve a very different purpose, one of living and function.
Because they were so successful in their original function and the care of the aesthetics, they have all been deemed to be historic and monumentalized by many audiences. Because of this and the ensuing care the must be taken in the treatment of the buildings here, the feasibility and honesty of any sort of redevelopment or insertion of contemporary elements is hindered. “We are as disturbed at the sight of decay in newly made artifacts (premature aging) as we are at the traces of fresh intervention into old artifacts (conspicuous restoration).” (Riegl 32)

Riegl continues to support efforts of contemporary design or a retraction against preservation by saying, “what is modern today and accordingly complete in its individuality is also bound to turn gradually into a monument and to replenish those which nature will inevitably destroy over time.” (Riegl 33) Under this notion, there is little, if no need to put extreme efforts into revitalization of historic monuments because nature will inevitably destroy them at some point and by designing things of the current period of time, considered modern, they will eventually become monuments and continue the cycle. What should be considered that could produce interesting results for the Over the Rhine neighborhood with various layers of historic or monumental buildings? The notion that simply because an object is old or from a different time that it should be deemed historic or a monument simply because they have stood the past of time. “The most simple-minded farmhand is able to distinguish an old belfry from a new one. This advantage of age-value contrasts sharply with historical value, which rests on a scientific basis and therefore is acquired only by means of reflection. Age-value manifests itself immediately through visual perception and appeal directly to our emotions.” (Riegl 33) This scientific investigation is critical in determining which items are essential to preservation or deeming to be monuments. The buildings in the neighborhood have been deemed historic, when in fact, most of them are not, and are just old relics. Many do not deserve the lofty title of a monument. These simple buildings, conceived for function, have very little architectural merit when looked upon in a case by case basis. Another statement reflects the reason Over the Rhine has been classified as a historic district, “We now postulate a certain relationship between the state of decay and the actual age of a monument.” (Riegl 35)

Quite possibly the most important statement of Riegl's entire states, “Most modern creations satisfy the senses and the intellect as well as if not better than older
monument.” (Riegl 39) This statement alone could validate any contemporary injection into a historic district as long as the modern creation is conceived with the same care as the structures it will sit in which it will sit in juxtaposition.
General discourse on the topic of gentrification is never typically portrayed in a positive light. There has been an abundance of literature and discussion of the purely negative aspects of gentrification, so much so that the word itself takes on a decidedly negative connotation. It has come to epitomize urban development that occurs when white gentrifiers from the middle-class begin moving into a predominantly poor African-American neighborhood and “forcing them out” by raising property values insofar as indigenous residents can no longer afford to live there. The added affluence to the gentrifying neighborhood will include added retail establishments, restaurants, housing and public services never experienced before in the neighborhood and not available to the indigenous residents. These residents will inevitably be forced out of their homes and history. Lance Freeman, an assistant professor at the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at Columbia University tackled the topic of gentrification in his book “There goes the ‘HOOD” by focusing not on research of existing studies and perceptions of those removed from the scenario, but as an African-American resident of Harlem who interviewed the very people that the process of gentrification was affecting. He went into this study with no foregone conclusions about what he would find and only hoped to get a better idea “from the ground up” on the topic of gentrification and how two neighborhood in New York City (Harlem and Clinton Hill) have drastically changed in the last 30 years and what that means to the current residents of those communities. Over the Rhine will be compared with Freeman’s studies of Harlem because of the parallels in the histories and developing conditions of these two neighborhoods. Over the Rhine does not compare as well with Clinton Hill for a number of reasons, so most of Freeman’s studies into this section will be focused on what Over the Rhine can do before it is fully immersed into the gentrification process. While gentrification and the social aspects surrounding development are not central ideas to the research conducted in this thesis, the topic can hardly be ignored in any architectural project in a blighted urban neighborhood that aims at changing the image of that place.
Freeman introduces the ideas for his study looking to answer questions of how gentrification came to have an impact on the displacement of residents in the Harlem and Clinton Hill neighborhood of New York City.

Despite years of writing on gentrification and a popular wisdom that equated it with displacement, there was little sound empirical evidence that demonstrated the magnitude of the relationship between gentrification and displacement. Much to my surprise, our research findings did not show evidence of causal relationship between gentrification and displacement. Poor residents and those without a college education were actually less likely to move if they resided in gentrifying neighborhoods. (Freeman 8)

Harlem, much like Over the Rhine, was initially developed and inhabited as a middle-class white neighborhood, somewhat removed from the Central Business District of its greater urban area. What made each of these neighborhoods famous was not the middle and working class families that built the two neighborhoods, but the poor, African-American residents that had come to inhabit them and the drastic decline and disinvestment that seemed to follow. Harlem is described as, “perhaps that most famous black neighborhood in the world...renowned for being a mecca for black culture” (Freeman 17) with Over the Rhine in Cincinnati taking a much more regional infamy with the Ohio/Kentucky/Indiana tri-state area and even in the midwestern United States. The connection to each neighborhood that its African-American residents feel is extremely important when trying to understand the importance of retaining indigenous residents in gentrifying neighborhoods. African-Americans have, more so than any other race, have come to find not only a cultural identity with “ghettos” but specifically urban neighborhoods. The idea of urban and city life has become part of the African-American culture in the United State, most recognizably with the generations of families living in Harlem. Upward mobility is important to the urban African-American, but not in attaining the typical “American dream” of moving to the suburbs and living a life removed from the city, even if the social, financial and class status required for typical “white” suburban living is attained.
Where conventional black middle-class norms required for striving for the single-family home on a cul-de-sac, the neosoul aesthetic might prefer older neighborhoods with charm like Harlem, Fort Greene, U Street and Bronzeville. These neighborhoods have old but elegant architecture, street life, cafes where folks can meet and greet other bohos, and perhaps, most important, a cultural legacy. Many blacks preferred the diversity of urban living and wanted to expose their children to all aspects of the black experience, including the inner city. (Freeman 56)

Gentrifying neighborhoods did not lose their identity as “black” neighborhoods, but that black identity actually contributed to the revival of these neighborhoods as the history and culture of these neighborhoods made them attractive to the gentry. (Freeman 58)

Many arguments against the gentrification of neighborhoods fail to see the benefits to the introduction of private capital into a blighted neighborhood. Many neighborhoods, like Harlem of the 1980s and currently Over the Rhine suffer from a dearth of commercial entities. Residents of the neighborhood typically do not have direct access to stores, markets and groceries to meet their everyday needs and have to make multiple stops in the neighborhood or travel out of the neighborhood to meet these needs. Gentrification and the influx of middle-class residents to an area makes that area more attractive to retail investors. This continues to be a question of which comes first ie. Do people move into an area after services and amenities have been added or are amenities and services added to an area because of an influx higher-income residents? Many indigenous residents of gentrifying neighborhoods are under the impression that because “these people” (the gentry, as they are referred to many times in Freeman’s interviews with indigenous residents) are moving in, stores, services and amenities are being added.

It was not uncommon for a supermarket or a video store to simply not exist in some neighborhoods. Being able to go to grocery shopping or eating out in one’s neighborhood are things that are available in main middle-class and mostly white neighborhoods and are often taken for granted. This is not always the case in recent years in many black inner-city communities. (Freeman 65)

Regardless of the intention, the positive aspect of this is that if a supermarket is added into one of these neighborhoods, all the residents benefit from this, both the
gentry and the indigenous residents. It may be a shame that that supermarket was not available for the indigenous residents for the tenure of their time in the neighborhood, but it is available to them now. All the services, both public and private, that are added once the gentry comes into the neighborhood are to the benefit of the entire community. Freeman found that “residents appreciated the improvement in amenities, even when they were suspicious of why additional amenities were being provided.” (Freeman 66)

Many of the indigenous residents of the neighborhood residents associated the gentrification that was occurring with the white middle class even though many of the gentrifiers were of the African-American middle-class. Race plays a major role in the perception of the changes taking place in gentrifying neighborhoods. A marginal increase in white population in a predominately African-American neighborhood can raise significant suspicions of the indigenous African-American residents. “The increase in whites in Clinton Hill and Harlem was probably the most noticeable aspect of gentrification.” (Freeman 87) This is evident also in Over the Rhine. As a predominantly poor, African-American neighborhood, the presence of whites outside of their prescribed areas of allowance is uncommon and still intimidated by indigenous residents that feel a sense of ownership with the place they live. In reality, gentrification is more an issue of class than it is of race, yet the noticeable difference in the composition of the neighborhood is evidenced through issues of race and not of class.

When asked about the neighborhood changing, many residents pointed to the time when they first noticed whites walking around as evidence that gentrification was occurring. When whites came that meant the neighborhood would improve and that significant changes were under way. Moreover, white were assumed to be gentrifiers - either artists, students, or some other demographic - that fit neatly into preconceived notions of who gentrifiers are. (Freeman 80)

While discussing the differences in his two neighborhoods of choice to study, Clinton Hill and Harlem, Freeman identifies one major difference, home ownership rates. Many residents of Clinton Hill were offered the possibility to buy into coop apartment buildings or the homes they occupied before gentrification started its major upswing in the Brooklyn neighborhood. Because the property values were so low, many residents capitalized and purchased their properties, locking them into a
constant monthly payment that would never fluctuate with the value of the real estate. This high owner-occupancy rate led residents of Clinton Hill to be more accepting of the gentrification of their neighborhood because regardless of what was going on, the value of their property was rising at an alarming rate and they were building great amount so of equity without doing anything proactive. The simple fact that the values of the property around them were rising as the gentry moved into the neighborhood made their property more valuable and in the end they would be the beneficiaries of this phenomenon. It is for this reason that many residents of Clinton Hill were more open to the gentrification that was taking over their neighborhood. Harlem and Over the Rhine residents are not as lucky to have the high owner-occupancy rates as the residents of Clinton Hill. The benefit to the residents of Harlem is that many are tied into New York City-mandated rent-regulated apartments where the owner of the building can only raise the rent 2% a year until the current resident moves out. It is for this reason that many of the residents pass on apartments to relatives because of family clauses in the tenant laws of New York City prevent landlords from raising rents when a family member takes over an apartment from a deceased relative. These regulations occur in New York City because of the drastic housing shortage. Cincinnati is crippled with a housing surplus making it doubly difficult for residents in Over the Rhine to have any leverage against gentrification. There is currently no policy, nor no need for one, that regulates the rate at which rent can be raised in a given year. Over the Rhine also has one of the lowest owner-occupancy rates of any neighborhood in the country at less than 5%. These factors make the residents very vulnerable to the potential fast-changing negative effects of gentrification.

At the beginning of the 1990s Harlem’s homeownership rate was in the single digits. Although this rate has increased in recent years, it is much more difficult for someone of modest means to become a homeowner now because prices are so high. Had efforts to increase homeownership been implemented earlier and with more success, it seems likely that fewer residents would have fears of being pushed out and would also see personal financial benefits resulting from gentrification...Housing policies that allow disadvantaged residents to benefit from the wealth being created by gentrification, such as homeownership, inclusionary zoning, or TIF, would see to have the potential to give residents a stake in the process and perhaps would engender less negative feelings toward gentrification. (Freeman 178)
Once a neighborhood begins its gentrification and the influx of new residents an area, social problems begin to occur from a lack of integration between the existing residents of the neighborhood and the gentry. While these two groups may be living in proximity to one another, close interaction between the two groups apart from the occasional glance or hi/bye was nonexistent. “For the most part, the residents who had lived in the neighborhood for a while, who would not be considered gentrifiers, typically described the gentry as a people who were not interwoven into the social fabric of the community. The two groups were sharing residential space and were cordial, but it seems unlikely that the indigenous residents of the neighborhood would find themselves mimicking the behavior of their more affluent neighbors as the peer effects mode would imply.” (Freeman 133)

Inner-city neighborhood residents are prone to taking behavior and developmental clues from leaders of the neighborhood they associate with. Gentrifiers are more accustomed to being leaders in communities, are typically better educated and lead more responsible life-styles, but because of their race and class, existing residents of the community are less likely to identify them as models for their own development.

Even as development seems to be ready to start in Over the Rhine, it’s possible that the worries of gentrification should be tamed. The neighborhood would certainly benefit from the influx of services and retail opportunities giving residents more viable options for everyday shopping and dining. Property values in the Over the Rhine are very depressed and could use the influx of private investment and a boost in homeownership rates. While the property values are very low and there are a significant amount of vacant buildings, existing neighborhood residents should take it upon themselves to start purchasing property as they are available and limiting the institutional ownership of much of the neighborhood by the city and development corporations will less of neighborhood history at stake.
If gentrification reflects a shift in tastes for certain neighborhoods, this means that the original residents are being outbid for this space. But virtually all housing is allocated in this way. Although it is unfortunate that some residents may not longer be able to afford to live in neighborhoods they grew up in, this doesn’t necessarily cry out for a policy response. Neighborhoods are constantly changing, sometimes to the chagrin of the original residents. Furthermore, given then ugly history of federal and local government intervening to maintain neighborhood character, typically to keep minorities and the poor out, we might be hesitant before adapting a policy that specifically aims to allow neighborhoods to maintain their existing socioeconomic status. The more affluent occupy the choicest real estate and gentrification-induced displacement is just a manifestation of this allocation process. The poor can’t afford to live on the Upper East Side of Manhattan; why should society be so concerned if they can no longer afford to live in Harlem? Unless one is ready to jettison the entire system, this doesn’t seem to be a justification of policy intervention. (Freeman 167)
SECTION 07_ CONCLUSION: CONTEMPORARY/HISTORIC FUSION
07 CONCLUSION: CONTEMPORARY/HISTORIC FUSION

In order to translate the information researched in this document and form a set of parameters on which to base the resulting design project, specific examples from each of the specified precedents will be taken. For the selected buildings on the site in Over the Rhine [all of which are flatiron buildings] the methods of architectural intervention will attempt to synthesize theories from the ideas presented in the previous sections. Elements and principles from Rauschenberg and Nevelon [Section 05] and their ideas on sculpture and collage. The basis of the theory will come from de Sola-Morales Rubio and his thoughts on architectural intervention, Eisenman and his redefinition of site and the meaning of a piece of architecture and how Riegl and perceives the modern monument. [Section 06] The intervention into the selected buildings will only be on their facades, creating the possibility to focus more on the graphics of how the buildings are seen rather than how they are built and function. The primary focus will be to use the precedents studied to alter the image of each facade, creating a fusion of historic and contemporary design features using a similar architectural language for each that will tie all the intervened buildings on site together.

In an attempt to create a dynamic facade, Nevelson and Rauschenberg were chosen as precedent because of the way that each of the artists are able to manipulate different objects in their collages and sculptures and combine them to form a cohesive finished piece of art. Through layering, they are each able to let each piece retain some of its original meaning and importance while producing an entirely new set of meanings through the relationship of the objects to each other. Each artists typically uses some sort of organizing element that is consistent throughout the piece that unifies the individual pieces. For Nevelson, this is her painting of the entire black and boxing or containing smaller pieces that fit the larger part of the composition. Raushenberg will add layers of transparency using different colors of paint that blur the lines between the individual pieces composed in his collages. It is this bleeding that allows each element of the collage to have both their own individual meaning as well as a relationship to the overall composition. The problem associated with using these two artists is how to use their ideas in an architectural manner on the facade of a building that will have various levels of intervention, ones that the facade or “collage” in this relationship is one that has been undergoing change for over a hundred years and will continue to do so. While the intervention is necessary to remove the building from its individual meaning and produce an image that will show its collective meaning across time, it should be minimally invasive so that the next intervention will able to add to the resulting facade for another layer of history and meaning.
The theory discussed in the previous section on architectural intervention provide the necessary precedent backing to intervene in these historic buildings using contemporary design aesthetics and materials. Without the arguments made in those articles, the thought of a contemporary intervention in this area would come with no base and the design would have only be informed by the guidelines discussed in Section 03. The benefit in doing this will add new life an energy into a depressed urban site giving hope not to a vibrant nineteenth century community, but an adapted and growing 21st century community that will undoubtedly be ever changing and will have taken the necessary steps adapt in the future.
SECTION 08. THESIS DESIGN PROJECT: FLATIRON [re]IMAGE

_CONTemporary IMAGE IN URBAN BLIGHT_ | Over the Rhine Flatiron Buildings
Site
Inventory and Assessment of Buildings
08 THESIS PROJECT: Flatiron (re)image

CONTEMPORARY IMAGE IN URBAN BLIGHT | Over the Rhine Flatiron Buildings

The design aspect of this thesis will account for the researched materials discussed thus far as precedent to influence the architectural interventions on the site in Over the Rhine. The specific interventions will occur only on the flatiron buildings on the site. Because of their relative rarity, the fact that there are five of these buildings in one small area brings immediate attention to them. With this inherent attention, the flatiron buildings will bring immediate attention to the intervention and (re)imaging of the site. The fact that the buildings share a very similar typology will also help with their relationship to each other once the interventions are completed.

Design interventions into historic flatiron buildings will feature architectural elements that will change the way that buildings are seen on the site. Contemporary materials will replace some of the older, less efficient materials such as stone and brick. A new vocabulary will be established on the site by replacing what is not historically relevant with a new contemporary aesthetic language. Where historically relevant elements of the buildings are still in tact and effective, additional layers will be added to help the overall image of the project. These additive layered elements will not be intrusive to the existing shell of the building and will preserve the historic features they cover. Through various levels of transparency, the goal will be for the additive elements to screen the existing features allowing for a recognition of both the older, historic features of the building as well as the contemporary added elements. This idea relates directly to Eisenman's theory about the palimpsest and artistically to both Nevelson and Rauschenberg. By intervening in this way, the buildings will still maintain many of the original characteristics deeming them as historic and the identity associated with that; they will also develop a new identity from the contemporary interventions and additions; by combining the two identities, an entirely new identity resulting from the juxtaposition of the two periods will be created that will neither be completely historic or contemporary in nature.

Of the five flatiron buildings located on the site, the Jack’s Grocery building will be the bride of the wedding party with the other four flatirons being her bridesmaids. The Jack’s Grocery building will be the featured building of the lot, receiving the highest level of intervention and attention, establishing a vocabulary that the rest of the buildings will echo in architecturally supporting roles. The decision to feature the Jack’s Grocery building comes from its
existing architectural features, size, placement on the site and potential for intervention. The other buildings all have similar architectural features, but none of them attract the attention on the site of Jack’s Grocery. If any of the buildings were to be dubbed the maid of honor, it would be the Smithall building because of its placement at the entrance to the neighborhood. Much like a wedding party and their attire, the bride will set the precedent for her party, Jack’s Grocery will influence the other interventions on the site.

To establish a clear “front” to the flatiron building, the bulk of the intervention will be on the West facade of the building, fronting Vine Street, giving it a prominence from the neighborhoods main thoroughfare. The building has undergone a series of minor renovations over the course of its history that has removed all the historic elements from the first level. These elements that have replaced the original historic architecture and have no historic architectural merit of their own will be replaced with a contemporary addition of a glass storefront. The corner of the flatiron, which gives the building an awkward placement on the site with respect to circulation and views, will be “eliminated” and the three stories of brick will be replaced with a transparent glass and steel frame in the same shape that will allow a visual connection acknowledging the awkwardness of the corner, but removing the negative connotations associated with a “blind corner” in an urban setting. To further the intervention and add new lines to the building for a contemporary aesthetic, a series of mesh screens will shade the existing windows. This will serve as a shading system, an opportunity for a “green screen” of plant life on the building and the development of new lines on the building reflecting the pattern of north-south flow of Vine Street. In addition, the outdated sign advertising Coca-Cola and Jack’s Grocery will be replaced with a towering neon sign drawing from the signs of the neighborhood that were developed in the Appalachian inhabitance. Linear neon lights will also flow in and out of the mesh screens further emphasizing the new front of the building and again reflecting the scene at night of traffic moving along Vine. A roof deck has been added to give potential users of the building a place from which to view the energy of the street and the public playground across the street. Linear neon lights serve as a railing juxtaposed against the existing Italianate cornice.
**Site**

The site for the study in this thesis is located at the intersection of Vine, Findlay and McMicken Streets, the northern gateway to Over the Rhine along Vine Street running north and south. The site encompasses major features that will prove to be essential to the redevelopment effort of the area. Some of these elements are Findlay Playground, flatiron buildings of mixed-use occupancy with historic architectural elements, as well as a neighborhood landmark in Schwartz's Point Jazz Club. There have been numerous minor architectural interventions that have occurred throughout the neighborhood since it was originally built which has left behind a patchwork of architectural styles. Somehow these styles are synthesized under the umbrella of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Italianate architectural style embodied in most of the neighborhood buildings. As a gateway, the site provides a link to the neighborhoods of Clifton Heights, University Heights, Fairview and Corryville. These neighborhoods house a large institutional and residential presence in the city and Greater Cincinnati Area. Over the Rhine currently serves mainly as a thoroughfare between the Uptown and Downtown districts of the city and not as a destination. For the future success of the redevelopment of the neighborhood, the area has to become a destination for both visitors and new residents. To accomplish the goal of becoming a destination, this gateway has to become a major point of intervention as there is already significant traffic along Vine Street. This intervention must be targeted at specific buildings on the site and create an image that cannot be ignored as passers-by travel on the thoroughfare streets at the heart of the site. With the addition of architectural elements that are outside of the realm of what is expected to be seen in Over the Rhine [brick buildings, Italianate detailing],
Inventory and Assessment of Buildings

There are a number of key buildings on the site that will be studied in depth as to the level of interjection they will need in the overall design. Each plays a significant role in the overall design of the site and neighborhood. A thorough investigation of the available buildings on the site has been taken based on existing conditions and evaluated as to the significance they will play in the overall design and what measures should be taken surrounding their renovation. The design interventions will be focused on the various flatiron buildings that are present because of the three diagonally intersecting streets on site.
Jack’s Grocery

The building that currently houses the bodega simply advertised as “Jack’s” is part of an incredible structure with street fronts on E. McMicken and Vine Streets directly east of Findlay Playground. A focal point of the intersection, this lot-line extruded building currently hosts rental properties on the top two floors and the grocery on the first. The facade has been painted white over the original brick, but a series of maintenance issues with the building have caused the facade to become a sort of architectural patchwork quilt. A history of materials overlapping to fix cracking bricks, leaks, structural problems, or any number of issues that plague aging buildings is evident in many areas on both of the primary facades of the building. Not completely unlike some of the sculpture of Nevelson in that the layers of material have then been unified by a singular element in the white paint. The casual observer knows no difference in the material changes at street level from the street driving by or even walking by on the sidewalk unless specifically looking. White paint used on both sheet metal, brick and plywood unifies these materials all used on the facade. The building is blessed with historic architectural detailing around the windows on the top two levels and at the cornice line at the top of the building. When carefully examining the facades of the building, it is evident that the interior functions have changed over the course of the history of the building as there are relocated doors and windows that are now bricked over and painted to disappear and blend in with the rest of the facade. A sign that extends out over the Vine Street sidewalk stretches the height of the second story advertising bottled Coke products and the State Lottery. Based on the image of the Coke bottle, the sign is out of date at least twenty years and could potentially be a key area of architectural intervention. One of the major unfortunate aspects of the building has nothing to do with the building itself, but with the city and utility companies supplying power to the area. There is a garbled mess of power lines and stop lights running to and from the building compromising views and giving a distinctly negative urban image to the building and intersection it faces.

Jack’s Grocery will be the primary focus of the design project for this project. Significant areas of the building will be removed and replaced or added to. All of the historically significant architectural details will remain on the building, but those that have already been altered over time and do not significantly contribute to the integrity of the building will be replaced. The goal will be to completely alter and update the image of the building while not removing anything that is of significant architectural worth to the building. Jack’s Grocery will serve as the architectural jewel that the rest of the chosen buildings for intervention will be based on.
Thesis Design Project: Flatiron (re)image
Schwartz’s Point

The poor condition of an eclectic collection of architectural styles and elements on this corner building looking at the Jack’s Grocery building offers very few elements worth preserving along the historic stylistic lines of the neighborhood. The argument could even be made that demolition and construction of a new building would be the most feasible measure for this site, not taking into account the story behind what the building has become to both neighborhood residents and area visitors. The Schwart’s Point building has become somewhat of an urban legend in the Greater Cincinnati Metro area as a hotbed of underground jazz music. Until November 2007, Ed Moss, a local Jazz musician, operated jazz shows on Tuesday nights in speakeasy fashion. There was no cover charge at the door, food, wine and other drinks were offered, cigars were smoked and admittance was by word-of-mouth invitation only. There was a maximum of 50 people in attendance every week, clued into the show by the presence of a dimly lit green light bulb on the exterior of the building. Unfortunately, Cincinnati liquor agents heard of the speakeasy atmosphere and arrested Mr. Moss for serving liquor without a proper license. Moss continues his shows at the Know Theater, another venue in neighborhood, but the character of the speakeasy has left. Prominent architectural features include the clock tower fronting the building and the layered facade materials like the cobblestone base and red clay tile roof not found much elsewhere in the neighborhood. It is in buildings like Schwartz’s Point that the cultural history of what the building means may be more important than the architectural history. Even with its rich cultural history and eclectic architectural unique to the area, the building is in dire need of renovation and substantial work if the overall image of the intersection and gateway is to improve.
Located at the northernmost boundary of the site and neighborhood, the Smith Hall building is another flatiron building on this dynamic swath the diagonally intersecting streets of Vine St. and Clifton Ave. The beige-painted brick building boasts some great potential with the graphics of the building for the company that inhabits its first floor. The multistory identifying sign naming the building provides the best opportunity for graphic intervention for the building. It is also the highest point in elevation of the site, offering the potential for incredible views of downtown Cincinnati. This will be conducive to the development of residential units boasting sweeping city views of both the picturesque neighborhood of Over the Rhine and the bright lights and big buildings of the Central Business District. The layering of exterior elements of new construction offer the potential for contemporary balconies and new materials and the infusion of a new aesthetic while still respecting the historic architectural details around the plentiful exterior windows and the strong cornice line at the top of the facade. The two facades front Vine Street and Clifton Avenue with strong architectural elements on the second and third floors and brick infill of storefront openings on the ground level across the site. As a passageway to the North, the intersection Smithall overlooks proves to be one of great importance for image-based recognition. There is a strong presence of street traffic as Clifton Ave. and Vine St. both are major thoroughfares to the Uptown neighborhoods that have a large institutional and employment presence with the University of Cincinnati and surrounding hospitals. Because of its prominent position at this very busy intersection between Downtown and Uptown, the Smithall building will prove to play an important role in the overall effort to create a new image in this part of Over the Rhine.
Flatiron Building at Vine Street and E. Clifton Avenue

Possibly the building in the best physical condition on the site, the flatiron building sitting on the East side of Vine Street at the intersection of E. Clifton Avenue currently gives hope to the neighborhood as a large building (four and a half stories) currently in good condition by both physical and aesthetic conventions. Located adjacent to a large vacant site, this building will influence new infill construction that will take place here as part of a plan to add buildings and density to the site. In no way should this adjacent vacant lot mimic the original stylistic elements of this building, but major force lines will be drawn upon to influence the design of the new construction to its south and east. Because of its current condition, very little attention will be made to the overall image of the building. There is potential for intervention in a storefront on the first level along Vine St. The importance of this particular building to the overall design is not so much about the architectural elements it possess or physical condition of these elements, but the influence a building like this will have on the new construction in the area surrounding it. Apart from the importance of its designed elements and its physical condition, it also is one of the tallest buildings on the site and is located at the northern node of the site and will truly help define the area as a gateway to Over the Rhine.
**Hust Alley Flatiron Building**

One of the five flatiron buildings on the site, the building along Hurst Alley and Vine Streets offers some of the most intriguing architectural details of all the buildings on the site. Elegantly proportioned, the three and a half story building will prove to be one of major importance to the overall image of the area after the proposed design interjections. Currently there are no signs of inhabitation in the building and the exterior facades is host to posters, spray paint, graffiti and decaying brick, wood and iron. Many of the exterior architectural details of the original design are intact, although decaying, but many functional elements, like windows, downspouts and doors have been long replaced by plywood and boarded up. Hust Alley at its rear, because of its isolation from lighting and major buildings in the neighborhood is considered to be a dangerous place and people are rarely seen here. The potential for intervention in this building is currently the only redeeming element in its standing, otherwise it would probably be fit for condemnation and demolition. Its decaying, unoccupied state gives no current value to the neighborhood and site, but with proper design and redevelopment, could prove to be one of the most visually interesting buildings in the area. It is one of the first buildings seen on site when entered from the North and Uptown, possibly only preceded by the flatiron building at Vine Street and Clifton Avenue. Like many buildings of this period, the past interventions have been on the ground level for storefront renovations. The major area of redesign and intervention for this building will focus on its boarded-up storefront. There is a vacant lot to its south and a new construction project will be designed for this site to accompany the proportions and design principles of the adjacent flatiron building.
**Cincinnati Fire Department, Station No. 5**

A neighborhood substation of the Cincinnati Fire Department, this mid-20th century building serves as an interesting look at the development of the neighborhood before such strict historic aesthetic and zoning laws were enforced. This split-level building has two story and a three story sections and is adjacent to a four story mixed-use building and a lot it uses for parking. This building, while interesting in the history of the site, does not fit into the neighborhood in its current state in the terms of scale and proportion. From certain vantage points, the Fire House could be seen as any typical suburban building, the problem being that it is located in one of the most urban areas of Cincinnati. Being that it is of a different time and aesthetic than any other building on site, it will offer a different set of factors influencing the construction and infill occurring around it. The height of the building should be increased to match the massing proportions of the buildings around it. There should be no effort made to make the current structure more aesthetically similar to the original buildings on site. It is a distinct representation of a different period in the neighborhood and should be kept to reflect that and help tell the overall history of the development of the area. The juxtaposition of contemporary elements and infill with this mid-20th century building next to late nineteenth, early twentieth century buildings will prove to be interesting and important to the overall success of the area. While visually interesting, specific redesign and architectural intervention of the Fire Station will not be a part of this project, but aesthetic clues will be taken from it to influence the new work.
Inventory Conclusion

These buildings represent the best of what is currently on the site, the great possibilities for interjections and will provide the framework for what will become of the area. Considering their architectural quality, the condition of the existing structure and their social significance, no two projects will be treated the same, each getting necessary individual attention, while subscribing to what will be a cohesive overall design tied together by the criteria and elements they all share.
SECTION 09_ WORKS CITED
_Books and Articles
_Web Resources
09 WORKS CITED

Books and Articles


**Web Resources**

http://www.otrfoundation.org/history.php

http://press.nationaltrust.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=68&Itemid=162

http://www.irhine.com/index.jsp?page=history_intro

http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/entry.php?rec=789

http://www.otrchamber.com/about/history

http://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/cdap/pages/-3614/-


CONSERVATION GUIDELINES: OVER-THE-RHINE (SOUTH)
HISTORIC DISTRICT

Development Principles and Conservation Guidelines
Rehabilitation
New Construction
Additions
Site Improvements
Demolition
Non-Contributing Buildings

These development principles and design guidelines provide a framework for the continuing revitalization of Over-the-Rhine. They were written specifically for Over-the-Rhine and address the community’s unique historical, architectural, developmental, social and economic characteristics. The guidelines will assist property owners, architects and contractors who are considering work in neighborhood. These guidelines were approved and adopted by Cincinnati City Council in 1993 and are enforced only in the locally designated historic areas of Over-the-Rhine. Their concepts, however, are valid for the entire community. The Cincinnati Historic Conservation Office (HCO) encourages anyone contemplating work in Over-the-Rhine to consult with the HCO staff early in the planning process. Questions about the guidelines and consultation requests may be directed to the Historic Conservation Office, City Planning Department, Two Centennial Plaza, 805 Central Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202.

DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

In June 1993 Cincinnati City Council adopted the following Development Principles to replace the Development Policies contained in the original Over-the-Rhine Urban Renewal Plan of 1985. These principles will guide continued development in the Over-the-Rhine Historic District.

An updated list of principles is essential as efforts become directed toward designing an aggressive program of redevelopment to serve all income levels and interests in Over-the-Rhine. The Principles are based on the policies contained in the original plan; however, they have been revised to reflect the current "climate" in both Over-the-Rhine and the city. They are essential to form a development strategy that will attract potential developers and provide assurance to funders that investing in Over-the-Rhine is good business.

A. General Development

1. Over-the-Rhine should continue to develop as a mixed-use area (residential, commercial and industrial) with clearly defined and protected residential "core" areas.

2. Establish clearly defined land-use objectives for each sub-neighborhood of Over-the-Rhine, and address the lack of transition between the various uses.

3. Demolition of buildings in Over-the-Rhine should be viewed as a last resort, unless part of a broader plan. Preservation and systematic renovation of all historically contributing buildings shall be a top priority.
4. A complete staff review and public examination of appropriate land uses and zoning regulations for all of Over-the-Rhine shall be undertaken using the 1985 Over-the-Rhine Urban Renewal Plan as a beginning point for discussion.

B. Residential

1. The development, preservation and maintenance of housing should be encouraged for persons of all income levels.

2. The involuntary displacement of residents, especially low-income and/or elderly residents, should be avoided. Proposed private and public developments should be evaluated on an on-going basis to determine the effect that such plans have on the displacement of current residents and businesses.

3. The rehabilitation of the existing housing stock should be the preferred housing development strategy.

4. New construction "in-fill" housing should be encouraged as a secondary means of providing necessary housing.

5. Incentives should be devised for owners of buildings with store-front businesses to utilize upper-story residential units for the provision of housing for persons of all income levels. Added incentives should be devised for development of housing for persons of low and moderate income.

6. Residential development projects that will be adjacent to incompatible land uses should include proposals for minimizing the adverse impact on such uses.

C. Commercial / Job Development

1. Policies should promote the development of varied commercial uses in order for Over-the-Rhine to maintain its mixed-use character.

2. Local and community-serving business uses should be encouraged in and near residential core areas and along Main Street and Vine Street north of Twelfth Street.

3. General commercial and office uses that serve a broader clientele should be located primarily along major thoroughfares in Over-the-Rhine. Existing sub-neighborhoods that are primarily residential in character should be preserved as such.

4. Findlay Market should be developed as a regional marketplace and tourist attraction while respecting the tradition of serving local residents.

5. Public policies, programs and incentives should be devised to promote job opportunities for low- and moderate-income Over-the-Rhine residents.

6. A plan should be developed to promote local businesses along Liberty Street. Measures should be taken to discourage the use of Liberty Street as a throughway connector between I-71 and I-75.

D. Traffic and Circulation

1. Through traffic should be contained to the major arteries of Over-the-Rhine, thus reducing traffic flow in residential areas.
2. Traffic circulation should be improved to facilitate access to all areas of Over-the-Rhine.

3. Residential development projects should include a reasonable plan for off-street parking within or near the site.

4. Safe, off-street parking on centralized lots or parking structures is the preferred means of meeting the parking needs of residential and commercial areas.

5. Pedestrian circulation should link community open space and pedestrian areas.

E. Parks and Open Space

1. There should be a reasonable and adequate supply of open space, and park and recreation facilities in and around residential core areas.

2. Washington, Ziegler, Hanna and Baymiller Parks, and Findlay Playground should be developed to provide increased recreational outlets and accessibility.

3. Unused, vacant lots should continue to be cleared through private and public initiatives, and used for community gardens, parks or recreation.

4. Undeveloped hillsides, which form Over-the-Rhine’s northern boundary, should be preserved as passive recreation areas or natural preserves to the maximum extent possible.

5. Landbanking by public entities, nonprofit organizations or foundations should be the preferred means of preserving hillside open space.

F. Industrial

1. Over-the-Rhine’s two existing industrial areas should be developed for small or light manufacturing and warehousing. Any existing industries located outside of these two areas should be provided incentives to relocate to appropriate sites within one of the two areas.

2. Rehabilitation of vacant industrial building should be the preferred development strategy.

G. Cultural

1. The cultural center in the vicinity of Washington Park and Music Hall should be preserved and enhanced.

CONSERVATION GUIDELINES

REHABILITATION

1. **Materials:** Missing or deteriorated materials should be replaced with recycled or new materials that match the original as closely as possible with regard to the following: type, color, style, shape, and texture of material. The composition, type of joint, size of units, placement and detailing should be appropriate for the building. Imitation or synthetic materials such as aluminum or vinyl siding, imitation brick or stone or similar plastic materials are inappropriate.
2. **Door and Window Openings**: Among the most important features of any building are its openings--its windows and doors. The size and location of openings are an essential part of the overall design and an important element in the building's architecture. Don't alter or fill-in original openings.

3. **Door and Window Sash**: Repair original doors and window sashes rather than replace whenever possible. If replacement is necessary, the new door or window sash should match the original in material, size and style as closely as possible. Vinyl windows are not appropriate replacement sash, due to their bulk and lack of detailing.

4. **Ornamentation**: Significant architectural features such as window hoods, decorative piers, quoins, bay windows, door and window surrounds, porches, cast-iron storefronts and other ornamental elements should be preserved. These distinctive features help identify and distinguish the buildings in Over-the-Rhine. Don't remove or replace ornamentation with substitutes that are of an unlike material or of a different scale or design. Make replacement ornamentation match the character of the existing feature closely as possible with respect to type, color, style, shape and texture of material. [If elements are missing, the new features should be based on historic documentation.]

5. **Roofs**: Chimneys, dormers or towers and other architectural features that give the roofline of an existing building its identifying character should be preserved. Most of the buildings in Over-the-Rhine have flat or single-pitch roofs. The addition of vents, skylights, and roof top utilities should be inconspicuously placed or screened where necessary. Retain and repair the original roof materials such as slate, which is common on churches, institutional buildings and buildings with mansard roofs, and standing seam metal roofs, which are common on smaller buildings with gable roofs. Don't use wood shakes and plastic roofing products, which are inappropriate materials in Over-the-Rhine.

6. **Cleaning**: Clean exterior surfaces with the gentlest method possible. For masonry structures, begin with scraping by hand or scrubbing with a natural bristle brush and mild detergent. Some types of chemical cleaning can be used, but test patches should be carried out in inconspicuous areas first. Don't sandblast or use other abrasive cleaning methods that destroy the surface of brick and stone and shorten the life of the building. Don't use wire brushes, because they can also damage masonry surfaces.

7. **Repointing Masonry**: Repoint historic masonry with mortar that matches the existing in color, content and texture and with joints that match in type and thickness. The mortar joints in masonry construction deteriorate for a variety of reasons. Repointing these joints can significantly aid the rehabilitation of a structure. Generally, buildings built prior to 1900 used a lime-based mortar. A typical lime-based mortar has the following formula: 8 parts sand, 4 parts lime, and 1 part portland cement. This mortar is softer than the portland cement-based mortar of today. Hard modern mortar used on historic masonry causes bricks to crack or spall during the freeze-thaw cycle.

8. **Water-Repellent Coatings**: Don't use water-repellent coatings on historic masonry. Most historic structures have survived without the need of water-repellent coatings. Water-related damage on the interior of buildings is usually the result of a failing roof, deteriorated or faulty gutters and downspouts, deteriorated mortar, rising damp or condensation. Water-repellent coatings will not solve these problems and may make them worse.

9. **Painting**: Repaint buildings that were historically painted. Most buildings built before 1890 in Over-the-Rhine were originally painted. Paint is part of the aesthetic design of these
buildings and should be maintained. Paint also protects porous nineteenth century masonry and masks alterations and inappropriate repairs. Masonry that has not been painted in the past should not be painted. Because color can have a significant impact on the neighborhood, use paint colors that are appropriate to your building's age and style. Historically, most paint schemes were relatively simple. The Historic Conservation Office can provide owners with color combinations that are appropriate for a building’s age and style.

10. **Wood Siding:** Retain and repair original wood siding. When replacement is necessary, the new wood should match the original in size, shape, profile and detail. All wood siding should be painted. Aluminum or vinyl siding is not appropriate for replacing or covering original wood siding. Artificial stone, asbestos, asphalt siding and other similar resurfacing materials are not acceptable.

11. **Shutters and other outside attachments:** Original shutters should be repaired and retained. Many buildings in Over-the-Rhine have or had wood shutters for the windows. Reintroducing missing shutters must be based on physical evidence and the shutters must fit the opening and be operable.

Exterior light fixtures should be appropriate to the style of the building. Colonial "coach" lights are not appropriate. [If there is no precedent for lights, use a simple contemporary fixture.]

12. **Storefronts:** Retain and repair the design and materials of storefronts in historic buildings. First-floor storefronts are common in Over-the-Rhine and are found in all types of architectural styles. Detailing and materials vary considerably. Each design should be considered individually and original materials should be retained. If the storefront has been altered or if none of the original materials remain, old photographs may indicate the original design. Original masonry storefront materials should be cleaned with the gentlest method possible (see section on cleaning). Cast-iron storefronts may be cleaned by abrasive methods including sandblasting. Adjacent materials must be protected and the pressure should be less than 100 p.s.i.

Don't reduce the size of storefront openings. Transparency and scale are very important to storefronts and their relationship to the remainder of the building as well as to the streetscape. Don't cover or remove significant elements such as piers, lintels, transoms, original doors or other similar details.

13. **Signs:** Signs should be designed for clarity, legibility and compatibility with the building or property on which they are located. Signs should be located above the storefront, on the storefront windows or on awnings and should not cover any architectural features. Signs should capitalize on the special character of the building and reflect the nature of the business. Small projecting signs such as symbol signs are appropriate. Billboards, standardized internally-illuminated signs and temporary illuminated signs are not permitted.

14. **Awnings:** The installation of fabric awnings on storefronts is encouraged. Awnings add color and variety to commercial buildings and highlight the businesses. Awnings should be installed so they do not cover or require the removal of any original architectural feature. Awnings of metal, plastic, vinyl (not vinyl coated fabric) or wood are inappropriate. Internally illuminated awnings are not acceptable.
NEW CONSTRUCTION

A. Intent and General Guidelines

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

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

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

4. The new construction guidelines for this district will be used to judge the compatibility of new work. They must be adapted for each project, its specific site and its programmatic needs.

B. Specific Guidelines

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

   If muntins are used in new window sash, they must provide true divided lights. Within the individual opening, window sash are usually divided into two or more lights. In all cases the glass must be clear; tinted or reflective glass is not acceptable.

4. **Storefronts**: New storefronts should relate to the characteristics of existing storefronts on historic buildings. Storefronts in the district are typically taller than individual upper floors; framed by piers and/or columns and have a lintel separating them from the upper floors; are divided into bays which increases their verticality and provides a pedestrian scale and proportion; and have large, fixed expanses of clear (not tinted or reflective) glass.

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

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

6. **Rhythm**: New buildings should incorporate design features, such as window groupings, articulation of wall surfaces, and decorative elements such as columns or piers in an effort to maintain the rhythm that already exists in the district. New construction should avoid creating long unrelieved expanses of wall along the street by maintaining the rhythm of bays found on the district. Most buildings In Over-the-Rhine are relatively narrow, 25 to 50 feet in width. A building facade typically displays vertical subdivisions that establish a visual rhythm. In dense commercial areas such as Main Street and Vine Street, there are no setbacks, creating a solid wall along the street. This wall is articulated by the individual buildings, which in turn are divided by window groupings, changes in wall planes and decorative elements such as pilasters, columns or piers.

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

8. Height: The height of new construction should not vary more than one story from adjacent contributing buildings. Most buildings in Over-the-Rhine are between 2- and 5-stories.

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

ADDITIONS

A. Intent and General Guidelines

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

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

3. Additions should not overpower the original building. [They should be clearly secondary to the original structure.]

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

SITE IMPROVEMENTS

A. Intent and General Guidelines

1. Site improvements, such as parking lots, parking pads, paving, fences, decks, street furniture and trees, should be in character with the contributing buildings in the district and should respond to the colors, textures, materials and scale found in the area of the improvement.

2. The design of any site improvement should be compatible with district buildings and not detract from the character of the district.

3. The design of site improvements should capitalize on the unique character of the area but should not incorporate elements from an earlier or different period. Site improvements should enhance the experience of pedestrians in the district.

B. Specific Guidelines

1. Parking Lots: Cars in parking lots should be screened from public view. Appropriate screening includes low masonry walls in conjunction with planting areas and landscaping, low masonry walls with wrought-iron fencing and planting areas with landscaping and wrought-iron fencing. Chain link fence along side walks is inappropriate.
Parking lots with a capacity of ten or more cars should contain trees within the lot as well as around the perimeter of the lot. Concrete curbs, not rolled asphalt bumpers, are appropriate edges for parking lots.

2. Parking Pads: Parking pads (parking for one or two cars) are permitted at the rear of the property, with access at alleys or existing curb cuts whenever possible. Parking pads in areas other than the rear yard shall be judged on a case-by-case basis and judged by their impact on the property and on the district.

3. Fences and Walls: Wrought-iron or cast-iron fences that are less than three feet in height are encouraged along the sidewalks of vacant lots or where buildings are setback from the sidewalk. Fencing may be set between wrought-iron and cast-iron posts, natural stone posts or pre-cast concrete posts. Fencing may also be set on a concrete curb or on top of a retaining wall. Plain board fences (vertical boards nailed side-by-side on horizontal stringers) or wire fences are appropriate at the rear of the property or along the side of the property. Wood fences should be painted or stained but not left to weather naturally. Chain link, stockade, shadow board, basket weave, lattice and other contemporary designs are not appropriate. Masonry privacy walls are not encouraged.

Retaining walls built along the front property line or along street frontage should be built of or faced with fieldstone or limestone. Retaining walls at other locations should be built of fieldstone, limestone, brick or specialized masonry block designed for retaining walls. Concrete block or exposed concrete should not be used as the finish material for any retaining wall.

4. Decks: Wood decks that are built on the ground should be stained or painted. Decks accessed above the first-floor are discouraged, as are rooftop decks that can be seen above the principal facade.

5. Paving for sidewalks, patios and other similar areas: Materials used for paving should have the appearance of individual units to give the surface scale. Appropriate materials include brick, stone, scored concrete and unit pavers. Concrete should be limited to sidewalks and should not be used in large slabs over big areas, such as driveways and parking lots.

6. Street Furniture and Amenities: Improvements to the right-of-way or in public areas should be simply designed and modest in size. Existing historic elements in the right-of-way such as steps, mounting blocks, fences, paving, natural stone curbs and splash blocks should be retained. Historic materials such as pavers, curbs or steps shall be returned to their same location, even if they are to be paved over, when they are removed to install or repair utilities such as water, sewer, electric, gas, cable, security or for any other purpose. Flower boxes, planters, urns and similar elements are encouraged but should be appropriate to the property where they are placed and with the district as a whole. The installation of these elements should not cover or require the alteration of any architectural details.

7. Trees: Street trees and trees on private property are encouraged. Don't cut down mature, healthy trees. [Location of the trees should be in keeping with the district’s character. Consideration should be given to the type, shape and color of the trees and even more importantly to the characteristics of their root systems.]
DEMOLITION

Demolition of existing buildings shall be permitted only if one of the following conditions exist:

a) Demolition has been ordered by the Director of Buildings & Inspections for the public safety because of an unsafe or dangerous condition which constitutes an emergency.

b) The owner can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Historic Conservation Board that the structure cannot be reused nor can a reasonable economic return be gained from the use of all or part of the building proposed for demolition. The Historic Conservation Office will provide owners with a list of information that may be necessary to satisfy the Board that the building cannot be reused.

c) The demolition request is for an incompatible building, an inappropriate addition or a non-significant portion of a contributing building and the demolition of said structure will not adversely affect the streetscape as determined by the Historic Conservation Board. A list of the non-contributing buildings is provided below.

NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS

A. Intent and General Guidelines

A number of buildings in the district do not contribute to the historic character of the district. The Historic Conservation Board will review the proposed alteration or demolition of these buildings based on the guidelines in this section. These guidelines encourage changes in the district that will reinforce its historic and architectural character, but acknowledge that some buildings are of a different age or architectural period.

Buildings that do not contribute to the historic character of the district fall into two general categories:

1. **Newer buildings**: Most buildings that were built within the past fifty years do not fit the historic or architectural context of the neighborhood. Due to their more recent date of construction, these buildings did not contribute to the development of Over-the-Rhine as an urban, nineteenth-century neighborhood. The majority of these newer buildings differ architecturally from the district’s historic buildings, especially in scale, building materials, and detailing.

2. **Significantly altered buildings**: Some older buildings have lost the integrity of their original design due to substantial, incompatible exterior alterations. Buildings in this category not only have been stripped of architectural details, but have been altered completely in their appearance. The basic design, scale and rhythm of these buildings no longer relate to the historic buildings of the district.

B. Specific Guidelines

1. **Rehabilitation**: The rehabilitation of non-contributing buildings should comply with the guidelines for rehabilitation, as outlined in the "Rehabilitation" section of this document. These rehabilitation guidelines provide a framework for maintaining a building’s basic architectural character; they do not suggest that a building be redesigned or altered to appear older than it is. Alterations to a newer building should be compatible with the original architectural character of that structure or should help the building to relate better architecturally to the surrounding historic district. The rehabilitation of an older, altered
structure should restore elements of the building’s historic character, whenever possible, based on remaining physical evidence, historic documentation, or similar buildings nearby. Alterations to non-contributing buildings should not create a false sense of history. In many cases it is preferable to rehabilitate and reuse a non-contributing building than to have a vacant parcel or parking lot.

2. **Additions**: Additions to non-contributing buildings should comply with the guidelines outlined in the "Additions" section of this document. Additions should be designed to relate architecturally to adjacent buildings and to the building of which they are a part. Additions should not overpower the original building.

3. **Demolition**: Non-contributing buildings may be demolished if the demolition will not adversely affect the character of the district. The Historic Conservation Board’s review of an application to demolish a non-contributing building will include an evaluation of plans for the redevelopment of the cleared site, based on the "New Construction" and "Site Improvements" sections of this document.