I, Thomas A Smith, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of:

Master of Community Planning

in Community Planning

It is entitled:

A Tale of Two Communities: Exploring Social Capital in Cincinnati’s Madisonville and Oakley Neighborhoods

Student Signature: Thomas A Smith

This work and its defense approved by:

Committee Chair: Mahyar Arefi, PhD

Margaret Wuerste, MCP
A Tale of Two Communities: Exploring Social Capital in Cincinnati’s Madisonville and Oakley Neighborhoods

A thesis submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Cincinnati in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Community Planning

in the School of Planning of the College of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning by

Thomas A. Smith

B.S. Olivet Nazarene University
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Committee Chair: Mahyar Arefi, Ph.D.
Margaret Wuerstle, MCP
Abstract

In recent years, scholars have begun investigating the value that social ties and networks may have in neighborhoods through the concept of social capital. Social capital within a neighborhood refers to the neighborhood’s networks of trust and reciprocity, its ability to mobilize residents around a particular issue or project, and its aptitude for creating successful, active community-based organizations. This study compares selected aspects of social capital present in Cincinnati’s Madisonville and Oakley neighborhoods, two similarly situated, yet physically and socioeconomically dissimilar communities, to determine whether Oakley, a revitalized community, tends to demonstrate a higher level of social capital than Madisonville, a community presently lacking growth and stability.

Based upon the study findings, Oakley tends to exhibit a higher level of community social capital than Madisonville in most aspects. This claim is based three emergent themes drawn from interviews with community leaders: 1.) prominence of place, the value of maintaining a distinct neighborhood identity and promoting a socially-conducive community environment; 2.) elusiveness of engagement, the desire to connect and involve residents in neighborhood matters, but the difficulty that community groups face in achieving the goal; and 3.) clout from consensus, the need for tight organization and a common vision to most effectively represent neighborhood interests.
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Chapter 1. Introduction

Despite decades of change in the ways people communicate and travel within metropolitan areas, increased mobility has not altered the fact that daily life still happens mainly within the neighborhood (Fried 1986). Property owners depend on neighborhood stability to protect the value of their homes, often the single largest investments they will ever make. And for all residents – renters and owners – the neighborhood is still the place that has the largest impact on their everyday safety and well-being (Rohe and Gates 1986). Strong neighborhoods are venues for social interaction and trust. In socially healthy communities, people are more likely to keep an eye on each other’s property, to watch each other’s children and pets, and to pass along information about job opportunities and other personal and community-wide matters. For these reasons and others, the social strength of urban neighborhoods should be a priority for municipal policymakers, planners, and community leaders.

In recent years, scholars have begun investigating the value that social ties and networks may have in neighborhoods through the concept of social capital. Community capital implies those local assets and resources that can or have been used to promote development and revitalization in an area. More specifically, social capital within a neighborhood refers to the neighborhood’s networks of trust and reciprocity, its ability to mobilize residents around a particular issue or project, and its aptitude for creating successful, active community-based organizations (Arefi 2003; Green and Haines 2008). Several scholars and practitioners have argued that developing social capital in neighborhoods may serve a valuable strategy in combating urban ills such as low economic growth (Putnam 2000), poor conditions in public
housing (Spence 1993), and other common problems. Often, community-based organizations (CBOs) such as community development corporations (CDCs) and neighborhood associations are in the best position to develop capital at the neighborhood level (Green and Haines 2008; Putnam 2000; Temkin and Rohe 1998; Warren and Warren 1977).

Although researchers have speculated about the potential benefits and uses of social capital in neighborhoods, few aside from Arefi and Temkin and Rohe have attempted to assess and compare facets of social capital in communities with different socioeconomic statuses. Following in the footsteps of these scholars, this study will examine social capital through the eyes of neighborhood officials in two adjoining communities: one experiencing the fruits of revitalization and growth, the other struggling to make incremental steps forward.

1.1 The Study Areas

There may be no more striking example of the disparity between Cincinnati’s revitalizing and stagnating urban neighborhoods than a drive along the city’s venerable Madison Road. This heavily trafficked route runs northeast from the picturesque DeSales Corner in East Walnut Hills; through Cincinnati’s Evanston, Hyde Park, Oakley, and Madisonville neighborhoods; to the base of Indian Hill, a suburban village of lavish executive estates. A windshield survey of the six-mile thoroughfare yields a generally attractive mix of well-maintained historic homes and market-rate rental housing, extensive streetscaping, and some of Cincinnati’s most successful business districts and retail hotspots, including O’Bryonville, Rookwood Commons, and Oakley Square.
Just a short drive past Oakley’s mile-long business district – a tidy quarter of high-end home furnishing stores, expensive restaurants, and trendy boutiques – one enters the periphery of Madisonville where a flurry of new office, residential, and retail development is underway. Yet, not a mile from the site of a rapidly developing 30-acre office and retail park lays the historic and geographic heart of Madisonville: a tattered business district marred by boarded up buildings, vacant lots, and according to residents, a reputation as the center of the drug trade in eastern Cincinnati.

These two communities at the end of Madison Road, Oakley and Madisonville, are the focus of this study. Both communities share a political border and a similar geographic location in northeast Hamilton County, and the two were linked in a symbiotic relationship of growth and development that lasted nearly one and a half centuries (Giglierano, Overmyer and Propas 1988).

Despite being such close neighbors, the two communities have diverged over the past fifty years in a series of striking physical and socioeconomic changes by which Oakley rose to be hailed as “one of Cincinnati’s hottest residential and commercial development locations” (Kemme 2007) and Madisonville fell from its prominence as a commercial center of northeast Cincinnati (Madisonville History Committee 2005) to become what some interviewed neighborhood residents have called “divided” and “such a mess.”

Judging by numbers alone, it is clear that the two communities today are on different trajectories toward revitalization. Although “revitalization” is notoriously difficult to quantify, previous studies have agreed that changes in the median sale prices of residential properties serve as an acceptable, if flawed, measure of neighborhood revitalization (Zielenbach 2000;
Newman, S.J. and Introduction to Policy Analysis Students 2000). As seen in Figure 3, a recent comparison of changes in the two neighborhoods’ median home sale prices from the near height of the housing bubble in 2004 through the real estate crash of 2008 demonstrates that Oakley’s cachet and transformation is indeed real and durable, while Madisonville is still struggling to find a path toward stability.

![Figure 3. Change in Median Sale Prices of Residential Properties, 2004-2008](source: Korte 2009)

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2004 med. price</th>
<th>2007 med. price</th>
<th>2008 med. price</th>
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<td>45,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oakley</td>
<td>$174,000</td>
<td>182,250</td>
<td>191,100</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
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1.2 Research Questions

This study aims to compare selected aspects of social capital present in the two similarly situated, yet physically and socioeconomically dissimilar communities and determine whether Oakley, a revitalized community, tends to demonstrate a higher level of social capital than Madisonville, a community presently lacking growth and stability. At the core of this study are the following questions:

- What are some key aspects of social capital in Oakley, a Cincinnati neighborhood that has been able to rebrand and revitalize itself during the past thirty years?
- What are some key aspects of social capital in Madisonville, a Cincinnati neighborhood that was overwhelmed by the socioeconomic changes of post-World War II America and struggles to fully recover even today?
• How are community councils – the chief neighborhood associations in both communities – promoting or impeding the development of social capital in Madisonville and Oakley?

• As Madisonville charts a course for the future, what can community leaders do to build community social capital more effectively?

1.3 Study Overview

To answer the proposed research questions in a systematic, thoughtful, and forward-looking manner, this study will compare and evaluate Madisonville and Oakley on the basis of the two neighborhoods’ social capital, as defined earlier. More information about the evolution of social capital and its applicability in communities is provided in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 will provide a historical context to further familiarize the reader with the Madisonville and Oakley communities and to shed light on past issues that still affect the communities today. Chapter 4 will outline the methods used to assess the levels of social capital existing in both neighborhoods and the possible shortfalls and limitations of this research study.

An assessment of current aspects of social capital in both communities will be reported in Chapter 5. Based upon the study findings, Oakley, a revitalized Cincinnati community, tends to exhibit a higher level of community social capital than Madisonville, a Cincinnati neighborhood that has struggled to achieve revitalization at its core. This claim is based on findings drawn from the three themes detailed in Chapter 5:
• *prominence of place*, the value of maintaining a distinct neighborhood identity and promoting a socially-conducive community environment;

• *elusiveness of engagement*, the desire to connect and involve residents in neighborhood matters, but the difficulty that community groups face in achieving the goal; and

• *clout from consensus*, the need for tight organization and a common vision to most effectively represent neighborhood interests.

In two of these areas, prominence of place and clout from consensus, Oakley clearly excelled, while in the third, elusiveness of engagement, neither community seemed particularly strong.

While acknowledging the unique difficulties and challenges that Madisonville faces, this study will also attempt to offer recommendations that highlight the positive social capital existing in the community today. These recommendations and a conclusion will be provided in Chapter 6.
Chapter 2. Understanding Social Capital in Communities

The first section of this chapter will provide a general introduction to the concept of social capital and its development over time. The second section of the literature review will speak more specifically about the measurement of social capital and indicators that have been suggested for assessing social capital in neighborhoods. The third and final section will briefly explain the neighborhood leadership structure established by the City of Cincinnati and some of the possibilities that exist for local groups to promote social capital within neighborhoods.

2.1 An Overview of Social Capital

Social capital has become one of the most widely studied concepts today and is closely related to various forms of capital that are relevant to community development, including physical, political, financial, and human capital (Green and Haines 2008). At its most basic level, social capital emphasizes the value of relationships and interpersonal trust. A social connection can be considered capital because it is both enabling and constraining: one’s investment of time and energy in another person can help that person achieve her goals. At the same time, the help that person receives may compel her to return the favor to the investor later on. Accordingly, as one devotes more time and energy to other people and broadens his circle of relationships, he develops a larger stock of social benefits that he can draw from later on.

Within communities, individual social networks form a web of mutual social ties among residents and establish a base of neighborhood trust and unity. If the ties are strong and extend across the entire community, cooperative action can thrive. If the ties are weak and shallow, cooperative action may be difficult to achieve. Scholars and practitioners have increasingly
cited social capital as a potential strategy in combating urban ills such as low economic growth (Putnam 2000), poor conditions in public housing (Spence 1993), and other problems.

Although the concept of social capital has been present in scholarly literature for several decades and continues to develop as a popular topic for research and discussion across many fields, it was not until the 1980s that the idea began to circulate widely in academic circles with the works of Pierre Bourdieu (1983) and James S. Coleman (1990).

2.1.1 Developing an Operational Definition of Social Capital

Bourdieu, writing from a Marxist perspective, distinguishes three types of capital: economic, social, and cultural. His intention was to explore how these different forms of capital contributed to power differentials and unequal access to community resources, consequently fostering elitism and divisions of class. Bourdieu defines social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (1983, 249). In other words, he views social capital as an element used by elites to maintain an advantageous power structure and reap the associated gains that may come over time from knowing others with wealth and authority. John Field concludes that Bourdieu “presumed that social capital generally functions to mask the naked profit-seeking of its holders, and is therefore inimical with the open democratic society...” (2008, 22).

Coleman partly objected to Bourdieu’s utilitarian, self-interested concept of social capital because it failed to account for the social contexts and norms that help foster the interpersonal trust and communication essential for strong social organizations and market
systems. Coleman’s view of social capital credits both the internal motives that drive individuals to act, and the external social contexts and norms that shape interpersonal relationships. Additionally, Coleman widened the study of social capital to include non-elites, focusing primarily on the educational performance of adolescents based on familial and community ties.

Over time, Coleman developed a refined definition of social capital as “the set of resources that inhere in family relations and in community social organization and that are useful for the cognitive or social development of a child or young person” (1990, 300). Although Coleman posited that “a given form of social capital that is valuable in facilitating certain actions may be useless or even harmful in others” (1990, 302), some have criticized his views of social capital for being overly “benign” and “optimistic” (Field 2008, 31) without conceding the potential downfalls suggested by Bourdieu.

Following the groundbreaking yet lesser-known theories of Bourdieu and Coleman, Robert Putnam’s *Bowling Alone* brought the debate about social capital from the halls of academia into the home. Putnam approached the topic of social capital by writing in a different manner than had been attempted by previous scholars. By examining social capital in the context of American civic community, analyzing substantial amounts of data about Americans’ social habits, and writing in a style that could be comprehended by a broad audience, Putnam crafted perhaps the most recognizable and hotly contested commentary on social capital yet written.

According to Putnam, social capital can be defined as “connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense, social capital is closely related to what some have called ‘civic virtue.’ The difference is
that ‘social capital’ calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital” (2000, 19).

As the definition hints, Putnam (2000) stresses two major components of social capital throughout his works: civic engagement and trust. Civic engagement is the degree to which citizens seek involvement in political decision-making processes at all levels of government. Examples of civic engagement include levels of voter turnout and involvement in special interest organizations. Trust – Putnam’s second factor of social capital – can be defined as the degree to which citizens feel a sense of reliability and mutual obligation toward one another. In an environment of trust, people feel more comfortable socializing with neighbors and developing new relationships, and feel a greater responsibility to participate and act within the social norms prevalent in their community.

Putnam also explored the work of other social scientists, illustrating the collective versus individual and bright side versus dark side dimensions of social capital previously theorized in the works of Bourdieu, Coleman, and their contemporaries. Although those within networks of trust and reciprocity often experience the benefits of social capital, the potential misuses and negative externalities of social capital – including sectarianism, corruption, and ethnocentrism – beg the important question, how can the positive effects of social capital be maximized and the potentially negative external results be simultaneously minimized (Putnam 2000)? On this basis, scholars have more recently begun to differentiate between the various forms of social capital.
2.1.2 Types of Social Capital

Of the many dimensions of social capital identified, Green and Haines (2008), Putnam (2000), Woolcock (1998), and others have narrowed in on three major types: bonding, bridging, and linking capital. Bonding social capital looks inward at the existing social ties between similar individuals with strong connections, and how those ties can be further fortified. Bonding capital typically occurs between family members, close friends, and sometimes neighbors. For example, close friends in ethnic enclaves may be able to provide advice, support, and even financial assistance to the less fortunate, unemployed, and/or budding entrepreneurial members of their social group.

Bridging social capital, on the other hand, extends outward and brings weakly linked people closer together, such as co-workers, business associates, and acquaintances. Granovetter (1983) found that when looking for employment or forming political alliances, the weak ties that form bridging social capital are often more likely to aid an individual in his job search and help disseminate information about employment opportunities. Bridging capital is an important way for individuals to access new information, build new relationships, and cultivate broader circles of trust and reciprocity with unfamiliar or dissimilar social groups. Putnam cleverly summed up the difference between bonding and bridging social capital when he made the comparison, “Bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD-40” (2000, 23).

Although less frequently cited than bonding and bridging social capital, a third major form of social capital is linking social capital. Linking capital addresses the ties between people holding different levels of power in a hierarchy. Green and Haines more narrowly define linking
capital as “the ties between people in communities and their local organizations” (2008, 113). For example, the interaction between a neighborhood resident and her community council to address local crime concerns would be an example of linking social capital.

2.1.3 The Decline of Social Capital

Green and Haines, following the ideas of Putnam, assert that “there is growing evidence that Americans are becoming less involved in local associations and organizations,” resulting in a net loss of social capital throughout the nation’s neighborhoods (2008, 110). After exploring the gamut of potential reasons for the decline, including decreased levels of free time, a larger female labor force, suburban growth, generational change, television, and others, Putnam concluded that television and generational effects share the most blame for the erosion of social capital in modern society.

Some have argued that communities of interest are rising to fill the recent void of human interaction and networking, diminishing the need for community ties. Green and Haines reject this idea, stating that communities of interest fail to provide participants with conflict resolution skills and cannot address the broad sets of problems and individual interests that directly affect people in their immediate living environments.

Additionally, membership in advocacy associations has grown (Putnam 2000), giving people a false sense of involvement and civic responsibility. However, rather than including members in decision-making and engaging them in volunteer efforts, these advocacy groups are essentially fundraising entities in which members have only a narrow financial role and are not building social capital.
The rise of the Internet may also seem like a glimmer of hope for social capital in the twenty-first century, but Putnam believes that bonds forged in online groups and virtual worlds typically give rise to extreme homogeneity, by which users coalesce around highly specialized topics and fail to engage with others as they would in face-to-face interactions around the neighborhood and on the street. At the publication of *Bowling Alone* in 2000, Putnam was concerned that the Internet might eclipse TV as a means of passive, private entertainment, further eroding social capital.

Nine years later, the Internet continues to be a rapidly transforming frontier of information and idea sharing. The recent rise of Web 2.0 technologies – user-driven and socially oriented sites and applications like Facebook and Twitter – has altered the way people engage and share with one another, and may suggest that Putnam’s fear of a lonely, unengaged virtual world was mistaken. Regardless, the long-term effects that recent Internet innovations have had on social capital remain to be studied. Although societal and technological changes have brought about new ways of communicating and socializing, they have been unable to render social networks in communities of place obsolete.

### 2.1.4 The Debate Regarding Social Capital and Policymaking

Social capital’s rise in popularity among academics in the social sciences and its ability to speak to the interests and concerns of a wider public have also made it an attractive focus for policymaking among government leaders around the world. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, a policy forum for some of the world’s wealthiest and most powerful nations, and the World Bank, a major source of financial and technical assistance for
the world’s developing nations, have both explored and attempted to implement policies designed to increase social capital in member nations (Field 2008). Following the September 11 attacks on the United States in 2001, the White House consulted extensively with Robert Putnam about social capital’s potential in aiding national recovery. Government leaders in Britain, Canada, Finland, and other nations also conducted large-scale studies to gauge and monitor social capital for policymaking purposes.

Despite policymakers’ lofty hopes for social capital-building programs and strategies in communities, a number of theoretical and practical roadblocks remain between social capital’s potential and its realization. Even Putnam, a strong proponent of using policy to influence social capital development in communities, limited his recommendations in Bowling Alone to the capabilities of the general public, not policymakers (2000). Coleman was more critical of government intervention to influence social capital, believing that social capital rests on the free associations and relationships made by individuals (1990). According to Coleman, attempts by a government to affect, change, or develop the interpersonal relationships that underpin social capital would be mediocre at best, and may even be harmful because of unforeseen and unintended consequences. Fukuyama (2001) agrees with Coleman, claiming that social capital is generally something better left to individuals, and that excessive state intervention can have serious negative influences.

With these valid concerns in mind, reasons remain to consider the positive effects that policy can have upon community social capital. Among the many reasons Field offers, three stand most prominently. First, contemplating social capital in policy decisions can shift leaders’ ideas from a “deficit model of disadvantage” where the less fortunate must be transformed, to
a community asset model of existing resources that can be better supported and improved through relationships with external agencies and government bodies (Field 2008, 141). Second, surveys and reports have demonstrated that the average citizen is concerned about the erosion of social capital in society – whether or not he or she realizes or refers to the concept of social capital explicitly. Rather than allowing a climate of societal mistrust and disappointment to fester, policies regarding social capital offer possibilities to counteract individuals’ concerns and provide prospects of hope and encouragement. Finally, public support for social capital can improve citizens’ abilities to influence governance and decision-making. In a democracy, the link between social capital and governance is crucial, and should be encouraged by policymakers.

Although social capital and policymaking should only be promoted together with caution and restraint, this thesis considers the two concepts differently than most other studies. Rather than suggesting only top-down policymaking approaches designed to alter the interactions of the general public, I offer suggestions focused mainly on addressing the working relationships and governing structure among neighborhood policymakers themselves to improve community governance.

2.2 Measuring Social Capital

Despite the possible applications and benefits of social capital in communities, social scientists have been grappling with how to assess social capital for several years now. At the national level, Putnam was one of the first to construct an empirical analysis observing social capital in the United States. In *Bowling Alone*, he developed an index of fourteen measures of
associational activities and interpersonal trust drawn from various existing national data sources, including the General Social Survey, the National Election Studies, national membership rosters of labor unions and fraternal organizations, and other sources.

Following this groundbreaking study, researchers around the world attempted similar analyses. In Italy, Fabio Sabatini came up with an index of social capital for Italian society based on roughly 200 separate indicators measuring familial ties, memberships, and other factors (Field 2008). Other scholars proposed models of social capital measurement that were as straightforward as a single survey question, and as complex as a stratified analysis of individual social units ranging from a single family to an entire nation. Many of these studies were developed based on the extensive data already collected by various census and statistics bureaus.

In spite of this, Field has criticized these indexes for “retro-fitting concepts of social capital on to existing survey questions rather than developing new questions specifically designed to measure social capital” (2008, 37). Additionally, the massive range of potential indicators may point to different dimensions of social capital, and Schuller has worried that bundling basic social capital measures together into highly complex statistical analyses may corrupt or cast doubt on the “potentially fruitful” concept of social capital (2000, 27). But most critical in regard to the context of this study, these models – while well known and publicized – are geographically broad and fail to shed light on social capital assessment within the individual community.
2.2.1 Measuring Social Capital in Communities

While Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam have been largely responsible for developing the key concepts of social capital to date, very few scholars have ventured to test the efficacy of social capital within a community setting. Potential analyses of social capital at the community level are fraught with many of the same difficulties as analyses made at the national level. Moreover, for the individual neighborhood, the quantity and consistency of demographic and statistical information available to construct empirical indicators is often poor and relatively shallow.

According to Green and Haines (2008), Gittell and Vidal (1998), Sahd (2004) and others, Temkin and Rohe (1998) have offered the most noteworthy and empirically grounded study of social capital in relation to community development and neighborhood stability. In their work, “Social Capital and Neighborhood Stability: An Empirical Investigation,” Temkin and Rohe begin with Putnam’s idea that “social capital is said to be high in areas where civic engagement leads to mutual trust” (1998, 62). Temkin and Rohe believe that neighborhoods with high levels of social capital might develop an effective response when faced with change and remain stable, or even improve. Conversely, areas with low social capital may be overwhelmed by the forces of change and enter a period of decline.

Drawing from Putnam’s work, Temkin and Rohe have been able to further refine the concept of social capital as it applies to community development. For Temkin and Rohe, social capital in communities can be divided into two major concepts: sociocultural milieu and institutional infrastructure. Sociocultural milieu is based on Putnam’s concept of trust and is closely related to the idea of bonding social capital. Sociocultural milieu goes beyond looking at
trust, however, and includes the sentiments of residents toward their neighborhood and whether there is a feeling of specific neighborhood identity within the larger metropolitan landscape.

Institutional infrastructure, on the other hand, finds its origin in Putnam’s concept of civic engagement and is closely related to bridging and linking forms of social capital. Temkin and Rohe believe that aside from the measures of formal political activity explored by Putnam (such as voting and membership in political organizations), institutional infrastructure should examine the level of resident involvement in community matters and the strength of neighborhood organizations in accomplishing community goals.

### 2.2.2 Sociocultural Milieu

In defining the concept of sociocultural milieu, Temkin and Rohe borrow liberally from the constructs of neighborhood social fabric and social structure advocated mainly by Warren and Warren (1977). According to latter two authors, “A neighborhood context refers to the social organization of a population residing in a geographically proximate locale . . . The ‘neighborhood context’ approach communicates a very important idea – that people are affected in a neighborhood by more than their individual actions as neighbors. In turn, the neighborhood into which people enter has a history and an identity – a connection to the rest of the community” (Warren and Warren 1977, 28).

Based on this idea, Temkin and Rohe outline three social structural characteristics gleaned from Warren and Warren:

- Identity, or the degree to which residents feel that a community has an
recognizable symbolic and spatial environment within the surrounding metropolitan area;

- Interaction, or the degree to which neighbors visit each other, borrow items, and work together to solve common local problems;
- And linkages, the channels in the community that allow residents to form social ties with those outside the neighborhood.

In addition to these characteristics, Temkin and Rohe believe another important aspect of sociocultural milieu is the degree to which a neighborhood offers opportunities for recreation, shopping, dining, and other activities that increase neighbor familiarity and encourage community interaction. Green and Haines echo this idea, claiming that residents need common spaces to permit social interaction, and that recreation centers, community buildings, schools, and other public neighborhood structures can be helpful in promoting formal and informal social networks. New urbanists have also stressed the positive effects that the physical design of communities can have on social relationships (Bothwell, Gindroz and Lang 1998; Katz 1994).

Temkin and Rohe hypothesize that neighborhoods exhibiting strong sociocultural milieus may be better equipped to combat threats to community stability through coordinated defensive measures. On the other hand, neighborhoods with weak sociocultural milieus may be unable to register enough collective residential action to prevent downward succession and decline.
2.2.3 *Institutional Infrastructure*

Institutional infrastructure is a construct designed to measure the level and quality of formal organizations in a community (Temkin and Rohe 1998). The concept of institutional infrastructure is made up of two major factors: first, the presence of community organizations that have the potential to coordinate and mobilize local citizens, and second, the real ability of these groups to carry out actions on behalf of residents. Temkin and Rohe support the use of several measures to analyze institutional infrastructure in neighborhoods, including:

- The percentage of residents who say there is a neighborhood group actively dealing with problems in the community,
- The percentage of residents who say they are satisfied with the way a neighborhood organization attempts to solve local problems,
- The percentage of residents who performed volunteer work during the past year,
- The percentage of residents who performed most or all of their volunteer work within the community they live in,

and others.

According to Temkin and Rohe, an effective neighborhood organization can serve as a strong connection between the residents of a community and the policymakers of the city who must allocate scarce municipal resources. If coordinated properly, community groups can direct the right amount of pressure and advocacy at city officials to gain a deserved share of those municipal resources. The key to a strong institutional infrastructure, then, is the ability of community groups to command the respect of local officials and power players, and to
establish good communication between the neighborhood and the larger city.

Temkin and Rohe claim that an effective existing neighborhood group, or the ability of residents to come together and form an organization in the face of an imminent threat, is a requirement for a sufficient neighborhood defense. In fact, the authors believe that institutional infrastructure has an equal role with sociocultural milieu in determining a neighborhood’s stability. The possession of a healthy sociocultural milieu or institutional infrastructure alone is not enough to keep a neighborhood stable (Temkin and Rohe, 70).

Whether a neighborhood declines due to a weak institutional infrastructure, a weak sociocultural milieu, or both, Temkin and Rohe consider the community “defeated” and believe it may experience downward succession and decline (1998, 70). In order for a neighborhood to be “defended,” it must possess both a strong sociocultural milieu and institutional infrastructure (Temkin and Rohe 1998, 70). A defended neighborhood will maintain a stable condition or possibly increase in socioeconomic status. Figure 4 depicts these conjectural paths of neighborhood change as outlined by Temkin and Rohe.

Based on Temkin and Rohe’s empirical analysis of Pittsburgh neighborhoods performed using measures of sociocultural milieu and institutional infrastructure taken from census data and the Pittsburgh Neighborhood Study, the authors found that social capital does play a critical role in neighborhood dynamics. Moreover, Temkin and Rohe’s model, as outlined above, has greater explanatory power than other models based on traditional indicators such as distance from the central business district, age of housing stock, and other variables. The authors conclude that three components of social capital are most responsible for the stabilization of the study neighborhoods:
• Loyalty and attachment to the neighborhood. In neighborhoods that remain stable over time, these sentiments are often higher than in destabilized neighborhoods;

• The belief of residents that the neighborhood is a good place. In stable neighborhoods, there are a higher proportion of residents who feel that they live in a high-quality community;

• A strong institutional infrastructure, as measured by high voter turnout, the presence of an effective neighborhood organization, and other factors. Communities with better-developed institutional infrastructures experience improved stability.
Figure 4.
A Social Capital Model of Neighborhood Change

Source: Temkin and Rohe 1998
2.3 Neighborhood Associations and Community Power Structures in Cincinnati, Ohio

A number of scholars and practitioners agree that community-based organizations (CBOs) such as community development corporations (CDCs) and neighborhood associations are in the best position to develop capital at the neighborhood level (Green and Haines 2008, Putnam 2000, Temkin and Rohe 1998, Warren and Warren 1977). In the context of this study, the most active and empowered CBOs in Cincinnati’s Madisonville and Oakley neighborhoods are the local community councils.

In 1971, the Cincinnati City Council authorized the creation of representative community councils through a resolution aimed at helping individual neighborhoods create plans; receive technical assistance from city staff; disseminate important information to residents; and improve citizen representation in government decision-making, particularly budgeting decisions (Rohe and Gates 1986). Most of the groups that gained official recognition from the city council had previously existed as independent neighborhood associations. Today the organizational format for community councils remains fairly independent and is left up to the individual neighborhood to establish, but leadership is typically elected at general meetings from among membership of the council.

At present, community councils receive modest financial support and opportunities for competitive grants from funds managed by the City of Cincinnati and Invest in Neighborhoods (a local non-profit organization created to assist and support sanctioned community councils). Additionally, councils collect yearly dues from residents and business owners who wish to become members of the council and vote in council elections or run for leadership positions.
The dues are typically nominal: in Madisonville, five dollars for residents and twenty-five dollars for businesses, and in Oakley, eight dollars for residents and fifty dollars for businesses.

There is scant published information available regarding the community councils of the two study neighborhoods, but discussions with current council leaders from Madisonville and Oakley shed some light on the priorities and responsibilities that the two community councils claim to hold. The Madisonville Community Council defines itself as “the organization the City of Cincinnati recognizes as the ‘voice’ of the community,” and believes its purpose is “to enlist residents willing to work to maintain high community standards of health, housing, education, recreation, public safety and the general welfare of the community.” The Oakley Community Council defines itself somewhat similarly, claiming that it is “representing the people of Oakley, and looking out for the interests of the community and its residents, businesses, and property owners.” Although the Madisonville and Oakley councils focus on similar issues, the Oakley council believes that “the most visible activity of the council is our ongoing work in the areas of zoning and community development, which involves working with property owners, developers, and the City of Cincinnati to be sure that proposed changes to property in Oakley are consistent with the goal of improving the quality of life in our neighborhood.” More specific examples of both councils’ activities and leadership philosophies are provided in Chapters 4 and 5.

Oropesa (1989) studied the factors that make some neighborhood associations more effective than others. According to her findings, poorer neighborhoods had less effective associations than wealthier neighborhoods, primarily due to a lack of professional leadership. Additionally, neighborhood associations that did not have the backing of municipal leaders and
bureaucrats struggled to make any headway with community goals. Last, Oropesa also studied the effects of democratic decision-making in neighborhood associations, concluding that those associations with larger memberships and greater public involvement tended to be more successful.

2.3.1 Building Social Capital through Community Development

According to Green and Haines (2008), racial and ethnic minorities, the poor, and women are likely to have smaller social networks but a greater need for informal support. This poses a serious impediment to the development of social capital in poor and minority urban neighborhoods, and may reduce their potential for economic development (Putnam 2000) and political organization (Green and Haines 2008). Residents of these communities are typically not well linked with people in other areas of the city or the suburbs, have pessimistic attitudes about work and opportunities for personal advancement, and develop the strongest bonds primarily with family and others in similarly difficult situations (Green and Haines 2008).

Assuming that social capital is in decline and nothing has been able to replace its importance within communities, what can neighborhood associations do to extend and strengthen networks in struggling neighborhoods?

Green and Haines outline the following possible remedies:

- Encourage interaction through the development of public spaces, such as outdoor squares, recreation centers, schools, and other public buildings. Plan social gatherings in these spaces to assist in the development of formal and informal community social networks.
• Harness healthy public debate to build participation. Use community visioning sessions to establish shared basic purposes and common concerns. Experiment with new technologies, especially the Internet, to allow more opportunities for dialogue among community residents.

• Ensure a diversity of leadership in community-based organizations. Rather than consistently relying on the same group of people, foster an expectation of participation and an openness that makes access to neighborhood leadership positions seem attainable.

• Develop arts and cultural programs as a means for increasing social capital. Neighborhood classes and productions in theater, visual arts, singing, and dancing are only a few of the possibilities.

In addition to these suggestions, Green and Haines stress the importance of addressing both micro and macro forces of social capital in community development. Micro factors are the specific social relationships and networks among residents. These micro forces can include both intracommunity relationships, which allow residents to collect strength from within the neighborhood and move forward with a set of common goals, and extracommunity networks, those connections that allow residents to utilize outside resources that are absent from the community to fill gaps and test new ideas.

Two macro factors of social capital can also influence community development: synergy, or the level of social bonds connecting residents with public officials, and organization integrity, meaning the coherence, capacity, and competence of a local government (Green and Haines 2008). In communities with high synergy and high organizational coherence, there are likely to
be higher levels of trust in community officials, stronger feelings of accountability, and high levels of social capital. This ideal balance makes a community ripe for development.
Chapter 3. Study Areas

It’s one of the finest and oldest communities in Cincinnati. There are some people who have felt it has slipped in recognition in recent years. I think there are a great number of young men here who have enough energy and drive to return it to its original importance. Madisonville is meeting the challenge of shopping centers. Merchants still are spending money, and little by little our community is progressing and improving. We have a great cross section of people here... We have two good banks, a post office (which is an essential service) and a well-stocked liquor store, which doesn’t hurt our traffic any. I think we have at least one outstanding business in every retail field.

(Madisonville Sesquicentennial Corporation 1960, 8)

3.1 The Turning Point

These words were spoken in 1959 by Frank Kunkel, a neighborhood businessman and owner of Kunkel’s Apothecary along the once-bustling Madison Road business district in Madisonville. At the time, the neighborhood was celebrating its 150th anniversary and there was much to be happy about. The Cincinnati neighborhood had been annexed to the city some fifty years earlier and remained a strong working class community and retail center for the surrounding neighborhoods and suburbs (Madisonville History Committee 2005). William Memke, manager of Kunkel’s store, noted, “Madisonville is situated so people pass through here to other suburbs on the way home. A good many stop here to shop. We’d like to encourage more to do it” (Madisonville Sesquicentennial Corporation 1960, 8).

It is clear from these accounts and others that the neighborhood’s sesquicentennial marked a time of pride and prosperity for Madisonville. There is an evident sense of satisfaction at having “at least one outstanding business in every field” and a neighborhood retail core on which many depended for their shopping needs. Yet at the same time, these men’s words may
offer the best snapshot of Madisonville’s teeter at the pinnacle of change. One would be remiss not to perceive the cautiousness and creeping uncertainty in these voices: the talk of slipping recognition, the challenge of shopping centers, and the encouragement to patronize Madisonville’s business community when one went out shopping. It seems clear that at least among some residents, there was a fear the community had reached its peak.

Some two miles west on Madison Road lay Cincinnati’s Oakley neighborhood, a heavily industrial blue-collar community with a sometimes shady distant past (Giglierano, Overmyer and Propas 1988) but an increasingly hopeful future. After a long period lagging its western sister in population, business activity, and esteem, Oakley had more or less found equal footing.

![Madisonville Sesquicentennial Parade, 1959.](image)

*Figure 5. Madisonville Sesquicentennial Parade, 1959. Source: Madisonville Sesquicentennial Corporation*
with Madisonville by the latter’s 1959 sesquicentennial. At that time, most residents of both Oakley and Madisonville were homeowners in the middle-income bracket, with the majority working at one of three-dozen factories throughout Oakley and on the border of Madisonville (Giglierano, Overmyer and Propas 1988).

From today’s vantage, it is clear that the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s was indeed a point of divergence for the prosperity and reputations of both communities. Before examining what happened following that period, however, a broader introduction to the neighborhoods and a look into the more distant past may emphasize the significance of the changes that were about to occur.

3.2 The Two Communities: 1800 - 1950

As seen in Figures 1 and 2, Madisonville and its western neighbor, Oakley, are located at the far eastern reaches of the City of Cincinnati. Madisonville is bordered by Columbia Township and the Villages of Mariemont and Fairfax to the south; Oakley to the west; Columbia Township and the City of Madeira to the north; and the Village of Indian Hill to the east. Oakley is bounded by Mt. Lookout and Hyde Park to the south, the City of Norwood to the west, Pleasant Ridge and Columbia Township to the north, and Madisonville and the Village of Fairfax to the east.

Of the two, Madisonville has the longer and more abundant history. In 1809, on a Columbia Township site once noted for its prehistoric earthworks, a group of citizens were permitted to stake out a settlement named Madison in honor of the freshly inaugurated fourth U.S. President. Within two years, the outpost boasted some twenty buildings, and by the 1830s,
the community had become the most developed part of Columbia Township (Madisonville History Committee 2005). Because other Ohio towns were claiming the James Madison namesake, the local post office appended the settlement’s mail station with a “-ville” to keep confusion at a minimum. This new name, Madisonville, became commonly accepted and was made official when the village incorporated in 1839.

By the first years of the 1840s, Madisonville had around 400 inhabitants and 100 dwellings, and was the largest town between Cincinnati and Loveland (Giglierano, Overmyer and Propas 1988). The village continued to grow in prominence and by the start of the 1850s, a daily omnibus was carrying citizens to and from Cincinnati along the new Madisonville Turnpike.

Two miles west on Madison Pike a small stagecoach stop sprang up, and an accompanying tavern, called the Four-Mile House because of its distance from Cincinnati, gave the rural outpost its first official name. It was in this remote location that the roots of a new village took hold. In time Madisonville and Four Mile developed similar businesses and services, but in Madisonville there were more specialized craftsmen and industries, a hotel, and several churches (Giglierano, Overmyer and Propas 1988).

In 1866, the Marietta & Cincinnati Railroad passed through the two communities, putting stops in both. With improved transit to Cincinnati, the rural character of Madisonville and Four Mile began to diminish as speculators plotted residential subdivisions and new residents arrived. One of these speculators, Paul Shuster, purchased a thirty-four-acre tract of Four Mile in 1869 that he named Oakley.
Despite new residential subdivisions and the effects of rail transit in both towns, Oakley was unable to eclipse the growth of its eastern neighbor. By 1880, Madisonville boasted 1,274 residents while Oakley had a population only around 200 (Ohio Writers' Program 1943). Speculators, developers, and builders continued to focus mainly on Madisonville through the 1890s. The Baltimore & Ohio Southwestern Railroad, which had taken over the Marietta & Cincinnati rail line, publicized subdivisions in Madisonville, organized building and loan associations, upgraded streets and sewers, and built a new town hall and waterworks for the burgeoning community (Giglierano, Overmyer and Propas 1988).

By 1900, Madisonville had over 3,000 residents and a mix of retail stores selling everything from furniture to saddlery. A wide cross-section of people lived in the community, including several wealthy families, a former governor, and a U.S. Senator; numerous middle-income commuters; and a sizable African-American population that had been present in the community since at least the 1820s and possibly before (Madisonville History Committee 2005).

Down the road, Oakley had grown much more slowly and homogeneously but certainly not without its own interesting history. By the 1890s, Oakley had developed a sometimes-controversial image as an area for recreation, racing, and gambling. The village’s claim to fame was the Gentleman’s Full-Mile Racing Park, built in 1889 with stables, a grandstand, and clubhouse (Giglierano, Overmyer and Propas 1988; Ohio Writers' Program 1943). The track was wildly successful until complaints about the unsavory nature of gambling and vice going on in the area led to its closure a few years later. Despite the rough and tumble image that certain parts of the community had, the area was also well-known for its family-oriented commercial
recreation centers such as Oakley Grove, a popular spot for picnicking, boating, swimming, and dancing.

At the start of the twentieth century Oakley still lagged Madisonville in population, job opportunities, and cultural institutions, but the tide began to turn only five years later. Around 1905, Frederick Geier, president of the Cincinnati Milling Machine Company, was scouting new locations for a manufacturing plant. Geier purchased 107 acres of open land north of Marburg Avenue in Oakley with the intent to develop a group of industrial plants. The first factory opened on Geier’s purchased plot in 1907, and within seven years, nine additional manufacturers had also set up factories in the village.

By 1910, Oakley was becoming an industrial powerhouse for the region and numerous upgrades, including gas and electric lines and streetcar service, led to a population boom.

Between 1900 and 1910, the village tripled in population to 1,600 (Giglierano, Overmyer and Propas 1988). During this period, Oakley’s boom also fed growth in Madisonville. In the same ten-year span, Madisonville had drawn an additional
2,000 residents, allowing it to incorporate as a city (Giglierano, Overmyer and Propas 1988).

Madisonville’s status as a city was not long-lived since many of the newer residents believed that the larger city of Cincinnati could offer better public services than the Madisonville municipality. Despite the division in Madisonville between the newcomers and the long-time residents who valued the city’s independent status, Madisonville was annexed as a Cincinnati neighborhood in 1911, and Oakley followed shortly after in 1913 (Giglierano, Overmyer and Propas 1988).

The 1920s were a continued time of prosperity for both communities as new subdivisions sprung up, particularly on the open land between the two neighborhoods. After the slump of the Great Depression, the build-up to World War II re-invigorated industrial production in Oakley and led to the construction of new factories all the way to the periphery of Madisonville. Increased employment and the post-war suburban housing boom resulted in a massive housing complex built on the land between Madisonville and Oakley, then called Eastwood. This complex, the stark and modern-looking Stratford Manor, drew hundreds of lower middle-income families to the area beginning in the early 1950s and brought the combined population of the Madisonville-Eastwood-Oakley area to 32,000 (Giglierano, Overmyer and Propas 1988).

Even before the last coat of paint had dried, Stratford Manor bore all the markings of an uninspiring and short-lived success. The developer, Marvin Warner, had conceived the project as a quick way to make a buck, and he built the apartments flimsily to keep rents low. To this end, he even convinced the Cincinnati City Council to revise local fire codes so he could install cheaper firewalls (Keiger 1986).
Shoddy construction may not have been a major concern for planners of the time, given that the federally subsidized 960-unit development had been intended to serve as a short-term stepping stone for middle-income workers on the path toward homeownership. But in reality, the Manor’s low rents drew large numbers of African-Americans and low-income families who had been displaced by urban renewal projects in older Cincinnati neighborhoods, particularly the West End (Giglierano, Overmyer and Propas 1988). For many of these displaced Cincinnatians, Stratford Manor was not a short-term housing solution, but a permanent home.

A graphical history of the events from 1800 to the 1950s can be seen in Figure 8.

3.3 The Two Communities: 1950 - 1980

Following a long mutual history and symbiotic relationship of employment, housing, and retail where the successes of one typically resulted in benefits to the other, it was at this moment – mid-century – when the two neighborhoods reached a turning point described at the opening of this chapter.

One source, The Madisonville Coordinating Committee: A Study of Neighborhood Action, provides perhaps the most lucid and cohesive account of the turbulent period that Madisonville was entering. Even during the build-up to the neighborhood’s sesquicentennial celebration, residents had begun to align themselves with different block clubs, churches, and other social groups (Buczynski, et al. 1982). With no single organization considering the interests of the entire community, leadership in Madisonville was scattered among a variety of special interest associations.
Figure 8.
Highlights in the Development of Madisonville and Oakley, 1800-1959

1809 Settlement that would become Madisonville is staked out.

1840 Madisonville becomes largest town between Cincinnati and Loveland.

1850 Stagecoach stop and tavern spring up in what would later become Oakley.

1866 Marietta & Cincinnati Railroad passes through both communities. Residential subdivisions multiply.

1911 After short-lived status as a city, Madisonville is annexed to the City of Cincinnati.

1913 Following period of tremendous industrial growth, Oakley is annexed to the City of Cincinnati.

1954 Stratford Manor is constructed. Large numbers of African-Americans move to Madisonville.

1907 Frederick Geier opens first in series of massive industrial plants. This leads to extensive population growth in Oakley.

1. Oakley Race Track. Source: Cincinnativiews.net
2. Madisonville B&O. Rail Station. Source: Cincinnativiews.net
In addition to organizational division, the community also experienced racial division (Buczynski, et al. 1982). The white community was generally located to the south of Madison Road and the African-American community to the north of Madison Road. The two halves of the neighborhood only integrated in working situations. This division became glaringly apparent during Madisonville’s sesquicentennial celebration in June of 1959, when attendees noticed that the community’s African-American residents were patronizing only those stands and activities sponsored by African-American groups (Buczynski, et al. 1982). Following the sesquicentennial, many residents entered a period of soul-searching to come up with an organization that could bridge the social divisions in Madisonville and unite the neighborhood’s various interest groups.

For roughly two years, the community was barraged with change and had no unifying voice to tackle the problems at hand. On the business front, a storm of serious competition to the Madisonville business district was brewing. Kenwood Mall had been constructed north in Sycamore Township, and Hyde Park Plaza was magnifying the shopping center threat by locating next door in Oakley (Giglierano, Overmyer and Propas 1988).

On the demographic front, increasing numbers of African-Americans were moving into the community and there was a “mass exodus of certain classes of people from Madisonville” (Buczynski, et al. 1982, 2). Long-time white customers no longer patronized neighborhood businesses, and problems with absentee landlords and a lack of parking along Madison Road compounded the turmoil in the heart of the neighborhood.

In 1962, through the efforts of a few neighborhood organizations, the Madisonville Coordinating Committee (MCC) was established and George Crawford, an African-American,
served as the first president. Crawford suggested that the MCC work to promote and stimulate community improvement both on a business and residential basis; encourage new businesses to locate in Madisonville; plan an annual community-wide activity; promote community beautification; maintain close contact with city departments; and work with area schools and other institutions to promote community spirit (Buczynski, et al. 1982). Although the MCC met regularly for nearly a decade with these goals in mind, it remained a rather informal association and was primarily empowered only to identify problems and ask questions (Buczynski, et al. 1982).

The MCC’s work on various community issues was “uneven” (Buczynski, et al. 1982, 4). Some sub-committees were able to address problems almost immediately, such as establishing a daycare and social services center. Other working sub-groups, like the business district committee, confronted neighborhood problems so complex that answers were not found (Buczynski, et al. 1982). By the late 1960s, some well-established businesses continued to operate in the business district, but the disappearance of two banks, as well as Woolworth, Albers, and other chain stores, demonstrated the serious level of decline gripping Madisonville (Giglierano, Overmyer and Propas 1988).

In Oakley, the 1960s were also a turbulent time, but on a smaller scale and for different reasons. Even though the community had benefited from the development of Hyde Park Plaza within its borders, the new shopping center became a serious challenge to Oakley’s Madison Road business district. Parking had become a nuisance along Madison Road – as it had in Madisonville – and local businessmen gave $80,000 to construct a parking lot for the business corridor (Giglierano, Overmyer and Propas 1988). Despite this effort, the business district
suffered a number of store closings and fell into mediocrity for the next twenty years. By 1980, The Ambassador Theater closed, leaving Oakley without a neighborhood cinema for the first time in half a century (Giglierano, Overmyer and Propas 1988). In addition, manufacturing cutbacks and plant closings led to a population slump in the neighborhood from roughly 15,000 residents in 1970 to 12,800 in 1980 (Giglierano, Overmyer and Propas 1988). Despite these downturns, the neighborhood managed to stay relatively stable.

The years leading up to 1980 were more difficult for Madisonville. Despite admirable and substantive efforts to rehabilitate aging buildings, engage youth in constructive activity, and improve local health services and public safety, concerns about crime and the state of the business district overshadowed the work of the MCC. In fact, the two issues often went hand-in-hand: most neighborhood crimes were concentrated within the business district, causing people to fear for their safety and avoid the area altogether (Buczynski, et al. 1982).

By the mid-1970s, the MCC began looking beyond the Madison Road business district at an opportunity to tackle another major community problem. In just two decades, Stratford Manor, now called Eastwood Village, had fallen into such a terrible state of disrepair that the local media was panning the complex as “bombed out ruins” (Giglierano, Overmyer and Propas 1988, 379). The MCC informed the Cincinnati City Council of its concern about planning for the future use of the area, and the committee worked closely with a later organization known as the Eastwood Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation (ECURC) to ultimately raze Eastwood Village and redevelop the area for light industry, recreation, and housing.

The late 1970s were very active years for the committee, and the MCC grew further into its role as a community-wide coordinating body. Despite growing traction, the structure of the
committee, comprised solely of delegates from member organizations, would create eventual problems for the MCC. Even though regular citizens were encouraged to attend regular quarterly gatherings of the group, the meetings were basically reporting sessions and failed to educate the neighborhood about the MCC’s activities or involve residents in actual planning and decision-making (Buczynski, et al. 1982).

With the resignation and subsequent death of George Crawford in mid-1977 it became apparent that the MCC lacked any continuing leadership or legitimacy (Buczynski, et al. 1982). For eleven years, Crawford had served as either Chairman or Vice Chairman of the committee and upon his resignation the MCC publicly stated that Crawford’s leadership had been so dedicated, selfless, and effective, that it would be difficult to carry on without him (Buczynski, et al. 1982). Regardless, the MCC did press on with the development of a community center; a youth job training program; and the complete redevelopment of the Eastwood site, which opened in 1980 and lured massive new facilities for the operations of Coca-Cola and U.S. Shoe Corporation.

Yet when the MCC returned its attention to the business district at the beginning of the 1980s and attempted to develop a “Master Plan for Madisonville,” the committee could not achieve enough neighborhood support to push ahead with redevelopment plans for the area. In fact, these efforts brought to a head the extreme division that had been escalating in Madisonville since 1975. In that year, a group of residents had banded together to express concern with the MCC’s operating structure, which explicitly prohibited residential involvement in favor of representative membership from neighborhood organizations. This new group of residents began calling itself the Madisonville Community Council and encouraged residents to
become involved with the group to influence decision-making about neighborhood planning and development efforts.

In response, the MCC changed its by-laws to allow individuals a greater say in the organization’s efforts and went as far as considering ways to take over the name Madisonville Community Council (Buczynski, et al. 1982). These bold moves were made because MCC leadership perceived the Madisonville Community Council to be a rising competitor for community development grants, when in fact the Madisonville Community Council had no intentions of overpowering the MCC and had even gone through lengthy periods of inactivity (Buczynski, et al. 1982). The mistaken perceptions of both groups about each other’s intentions and activities demonstrated the lack of communication and hostility that was tearing the community apart.

Efforts by the Cincinnati City Manager to intervene and inquire about the city’s potential role in redevelopment plans for the business district ultimately failed because of antagonism between the two factions. Based on this experience, the City Manager determined that the city would develop and enact its own plans for redevelopment of the neighborhood without the aid of either group.

By 1980, the MCC had fallen into such organizational disarray that new board members were being elected by motions from the floor without any preparation or orientation (Buczynski, et al. 1982). The MCC’s informational neighborhood newsletter was also abandoned in mid-1980 and the communication budget was re-allocated to a youth-produced neighborhood news venture that quickly failed. Other attempts to revive neighborhood pride
and spirit were mixed, and plans for a major community festival in 1980 were dropped after the committee was unable to round up enough volunteers (Buczynski, et al. 1982).

By the publication date of the Madisonville Coordinating Committee study in 1982, the MCC was fading out of existence. After its 1981 elections, the group was unable to fill vacant seats on the board. In desperation, the MCC reached out to the Madisonville Community Council and offered leadership spots on the committee’s board to council members. The offers were met with open derision (Buczynski, et al. 1982).

In 1984, the two competing community organizations finally united (Madisonville History Committee 2005), perhaps out of recognition that they needed to present a common front for the neighborhood, perhaps out of desperation driven by dwindling resources and support. The combined group adopted the name Madisonville Community Council. This group remains the officially recognized leadership body for Madisonville today.

Although community organizations in Madisonville have a deep and extensive published history, there appears to be no published record of the history of the Oakley Community Council. Based on interviews with current council members, it seems that the Oakley Community Council was developed to fill the organizational void of a failed chamber of commerce and neighborhood business association around roughly the same time that the MCC and Madisonville Community Council merged.

3.4 Recent Demographics Trends

According to the U.S. Census and the Cincinnati Department of Community Development and Planning, both Madisonville and Oakley experienced declines in population
between 1980 and 2000. In 2000, Madisonville’s population stood at 11,355, a decline of 14% from 1980 levels. Oakley’s population in 2000 was nearly identical to that of Madisonville with 11,244 residents, down 12% from the 1980 decennial census. Population changes in the two communities mirrored those of the city as a whole: the population of Cincinnati fell approximately 14% between 1980 and 2000, with a loss of 54,172 residents. Madisonville and Oakley also experienced population declines in every age group except the 25- to 64-year-old age range, a sign that adults of working age are moving to both communities, albeit at different rates. In Madisonville, this group grew by a meager 2% between 1980 and 2000. Oakley saw a more substantial increase of 12% among 25- to 64-year olds during the same period.

Significant changes in household types were also experienced in both communities. Between 1980 and 2000, Madisonville and Oakley witnessed major declines in households of traditional married couples with children. In Madisonville, this household type declined by 41%, while Oakley saw a similar decline of 47%. Madisonville experienced the largest housing type gains in female-headed households without children (37%), female-headed households with children (20%), and single person households (20%). Oakley saw losses in every household type.

**Figure 9. Neighborhood Populations, 1980-2000**

Source: Cincinnati Dept. of Community Development and Planning 2004
except single person households, which grew by 90%, hinting at the significant appeal that Oakley has had in recent years for single young professionals. The growth of single person and childless households in both communities also helps to account for the overall population declines experienced by both neighborhoods between 1980 and 2000.

Although Madisonville and Oakley have seen population declines, median household incomes grew in the two communities between 1980 and 2000. In Madisonville, the median household income rose from $14,844 in 1980 to $29,960 in 2000, an increase of 102%.

Similarly, the median household income in Oakley increased from $15,362 in 1980 to $38,793 in 2000, a 153% increase. During the same period, median household incomes across the entire city of Cincinnati rose from $12,675 to $29,493, an increase of 133%. While median household incomes in Oakley rose faster than those of the entire city, increases in

![Figure 10. Madisonville Educational Attainment, 1980-2000](image)

![Figure 11. Oakley Educational Attainment, 1980-2000](image)

Source: Cincinnati Dept. of Community Development and Planning 2004
Madisonville lagged those of the city.

The largest demographic differences between the two communities can be seen in the educational attainment of residents over twenty-five years of age and in community racial composition. Regarding the former, both communities have seen significant percentage increases in the number of residents with some college education and residents with bachelor’s degrees and higher. In Madisonville, the number of residents with some college education has increased from 940 in 1980 to 1,651 in 2000, an increase of 76%. The number of Madisonville residents with bachelor’s degrees or higher has increased 149%, with 1,341 residents falling in this category in the year 2000. Oakley has experienced similar percentage increases in both categories, with the number of residents with some college education increasing from 1,271 in 1980 to 2,027 in 2000, a 59% increase, and the number of residents with bachelor’s degrees or higher growing to 3,882 in 2009, a 134% increase. Although the percentage gains in both communities are similar, the total number of Oakley residents falling in these categories is significantly larger than the amount of Madisonville residents with the same educational backgrounds.

The racial composition of the two neighborhoods is vastly different. In 2000, 40.5% of Madisonville residents were white and 55.9% were African-American. In

![Figure 12. Neighborhood Racial Composition, 2000](image)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000
Oakley, 87.6% of residents were white and 8.3% were African-American. Comparisons with previous decennial census data are difficult to make because of changes in racial categories between the 1980 and 2000 censuses.
Chapter 4. Methodology

To examine the levels of social capital present in Madisonville and Oakley today and to assess how effectively social capital is being developed and utilized in the two neighborhoods, this study relies primarily on qualitative data gathered from interviews with eight of each neighborhood’s community council members, a total of sixteen participants. In some instances, additional qualitative data have been drawn from newspaper articles and my own observations of community council meetings to support or refute the statements of the interviewees.

4.1 Interviews

Because community involvement and human interaction are critical to a proper assessment of social capital, approaches used to measure social capital are often more creative, non-linear, and intuitive than can be understood through interpretations of statistical data alone (Sharpe, et al. 2000). In addition, it can be difficult to locate sufficient quantitative data tailored specifically to individual city neighborhoods.

Accordingly, interviews are a key technique for measuring community social capital at a micro-administrative level, such as the individual city neighborhood. This study relies heavily on information gained through interviews of Madisonville and Oakley community council members. Neighborhood community councils are the official bodies authorized by the City of Cincinnati to represent the local residents, property owners and/or business owners of a community, and to advise City leaders on neighborhood issues like zoning changes, liquor licenses, community beautification, and other matters.
Sixteen participants were individually interviewed for the study, eight from each community council. Interviewees were invited to participate using a “snowball sampling” method, whereby the council presidents were initially contacted and asked to recommend fellow community council members to be interviewed. Those recommended members who agreed to be interviewed were then asked to recommend other community council associates, and so on. The interviews were audiotaped and partially transcribed, and the length of the interviews varied between 45 and 120 minutes. Participants were able to speak knowledgably from two perspectives: as community leaders who could authoritatively discuss neighborhood-wide issues in detail, and also as community laypersons who could provide personal opinions and anecdotes about daily life in each neighborhood.

The participants, while similar in their willingness to serve as leaders of their respective communities, represented a surprisingly broad range of ages and professional backgrounds. In Oakley, the interviewees ranged from roughly thirty to seventy years in age. Some Oakley interviewees had lived and/or worked in the community as little as three years, others more than thirty years. The Oakley interviewees also came from diverse professional backgrounds such as real estate, construction, banking, local government, transportation, and other sectors.

Interviewees from Madisonville also represented a wide range of age groups and professions. The eight leaders selected from this community ranged from approximately forty to eighty years in age and worked in professions including education, the armed services, media production, equipment repair, and others. Some Madisonville interviewees had lived in the community for as little as five years, while others had lived in the community nearly their whole lives. Despite the variety of ages and occupational backgrounds represented, the interviewees
were lacking in other types of diversity. This shortcoming is detailed in the final section of this chapter.

4.1.1 Interview Questions

A standard set of semi-structured, open-ended questions was administered to the sixteen members of the two community councils, but each interviewee’s unique experiences and opinions also led to trailing discussions about his or her areas of expertise, interest, and knowledge about neighborhood matters. This arrangement yielded an interesting mix of common answers that could be compared and contrasted between each interview and across both communities. The format also allowed for a set of distinctive personal anecdotes and facts that gave further insight into various aspects of each community. A copy of the questions used to guide each interview is provided in Appendix A, “List of Interview Questions.”

4.1.2 Confidentiality

In order to obtain the most candid and direct information from each interviewee and to protect him/her from any negative consequences or reprisals based on his/her personal assessments and opinions, confidentiality was strictly maintained throughout the study process. In keeping with the highest standards of human subject protection, I have implemented the following standards in describing the findings from the interviews:

- No interviewee is mentioned by name or title;
- The gender of participants has been protected by referring to all participants using male pronouns (he, him, his);
• Full transcriptions of individual interviews could compromise the participants’ identities and have not been provided in this study; and

• Individual responses have been aggregated when possible, mainly by common themes that arose during the interviews.

4.2 Windshield Surveys and Community Council Meeting Observations

To support the qualitative data gathered from interviews, and to gain a better first-hand understanding of the study communities, observations were made mainly through casual windshield surveys and attendance at two community council meetings in each neighborhood. I attended the January meetings of both councils, the April meeting of the Oakley Community Council, and the May meeting of the Madisonville Community Council.

4.3 Data and Study Limitations

As discussed in Chapter 2, community capital is notoriously difficult to measure, especially in intangible forms such as social capital. With this major caveat in mind, the present study does its best to present qualitative assessments that can offer a loose, but hopefully informative, interpretation of Madisonville and Oakley’s stocks of social capital. That said, given the serious limitations of time and resources available for this research, it cannot be claimed in any way that this is an exacting, exhaustive assessment of social capital in the two study neighborhoods.

Because the interview participants for this study were limited to community council members, the information gathered may not have been representative of all residents of the
communities at large. For instance, in Madisonville, although the neighborhood population is over 60% African-American (U.S. Census Bureau 2000), only two African-Americans agreed to be interviewed out of several who were contacted. A similar demographic discrepancy arose in Oakley because at the time of the interviews, only one female was serving in a leadership position on the community council. In addition, conducting a qualitative analysis using a small sample size of sixteen interviewees from two neighborhoods in one city has very limited generalizability, and results gathered from the limited number of interviewees may have even been skewed since neighborhood residents, business owners, and other community stakeholders not directly involved with the local community councils were intentionally excluded from the interview process.

For example, with a limited scope and small number of interviewees, some community council members may have been tempted to describe their neighborhoods in the best light possible to increase chances of reelection and enhance positive community perceptions. On the other hand, some council members who are not in agreement with community leadership may have been tempted to portray their neighborhood in an excessively poor manner to promote neighborhood change. Instead of serving as neutral community informants, this may have led some interviewees to exaggerate or understate achievements and problems in the two neighborhoods, thereby skewing the results of the study.

In addition, because the interviews were targeted to such a narrow range of individuals, the findings are likely biased in comparison to the broader experiences and sentiments of Madisonville and Oakley residents. In Madisonville, the interviewees were more often white, likely better educated, and probably wealthier than the neighborhood populace. In Oakley, the
interviewees were most often men, and there was no minority representation. These biases should be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings of the study, as they likely do not fully account for the views of minorities and women, those with lower incomes, and those who are less educated.

In order to be more reflective of both communities and a wider set of viewpoints, future studies exploring social capital and asset-building strategies in Madisonville and Oakley should be more pursuant of the opinions and views of a larger number of citizens from all social classes, ethnic groups, genders, and age groups. More anonymous, less intrusive information gathering techniques such as mailed surveys or telephone interviews may encourage wider, more diverse participation.
Chapter 5. Findings

5.1 Interview Themes

At the conclusion of the interview process, it became clear that many of the sixteen interviewed leaders of Madisonville and Oakley had provided similar statements, opinions, and anecdotes about the two communities. These related accounts made up six minor topics that could be grouped into three major themes, namely:

- *Prominence of Place*: the value of maintaining a distinct neighborhood identity and promoting a socially-conducive community environment;
- *Elusiveness of Engagement*: the desire to connect and involve residents in neighborhood matters, but the difficulty that community groups face in achieving the goal; and
- *Clout from Consensus*: the need for tight organization and a common vision to most effectively represent neighborhood interests.

When applicable, the findings described for each of the themes have been compared with measures of community social capital discussed in the existing literature, particularly from the social capital model of neighborhood change espoused by Temkin and Rohe (1998). These comparisons may help to establish whether each neighborhood tends to exhibit relatively high or relatively low levels of some key aspects of community social capital.

5.2 Prominence of Place

Each of the sixteen interviewees spent a significant amount of time describing his neighborhood in terms of its identity as a spatial and symbolic environment that differed from
surrounding communities and the city as a whole. The most common responses were closely aligned with aspects of Temkin and Rohe’s concept of sociocultural milieu as outlined in Chapter 2 and were divisible into two components: first, *defense of community identity*, and second, the *social conduciveness of the neighborhood environment*.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, defense of community identity suggests the level to which residents feel that their neighborhood has an identifiable spatial and symbolic environment, and whether citizens value the neighborhood identity enough to protect and nurture it. Green and Haines (2008), Temkin and Rohe (1998), Warren and Warren (1977), and have promoted the idea of identity as one way to gauge social capital in communities.

The second factor, the social conduciveness of the neighborhood environment, examines the physical atmosphere of the community to determine whether the neighborhood environment encourages or discourages social interaction among residents. Furthermore, this factor examines how community residents and leaders make use of the physical environment to promote social interaction. Opportunities for recreation, shopping, worship, the arts, and other social activities may be useful in advancing social capital within communities. As referenced in Chapter 2, Bothwell, Gindroz and Lang (1998), Green and Haines (2008), Katz (1994), Temkin and Rohe (1998), and others cite the social conductivity of neighborhood spaces as an important characteristic of community sociocultural milieu.

**5.2.1 Defense of Community Identity**

In March 2007, the Cincinnati Enquirer printed a glowing article that extolled Oakley as a neighborhood “on the rise” (Kemme 2007). However, the story began by reminding readers,
“For many years, middle-class Oakley lived in the shadow of its more affluent, flashier neighbor, Hyde Park. Realtors selling houses in Oakley often omitted the community’s name from newspaper ads and touted the location as ‘Hyde Park, near.’ That kind of snub seldom occurs these days” (Kemme 2007).

In fact, the trend of comparing Oakley with its neighbor to the south, Hyde Park, has been used as a lead for local media coverage of Oakley since at least the 1980s. An article from Cincinnati Magazine’s July 1986 issue opened with a frank and lengthy contrast of the two neighborhoods, describing Oakley as “prosaic,” “industrial,” “functional,” and “vacant,” while trumpeting Hyde Park as “fashionable,” “preppy,” and “tony,” with an “unmistakable air of the upper crust” (McKay). By the mid-1990s, the outlook for Oakley’s future was brightening, but the neighborhood’s unflattering past was still frequently mentioned. A 1997 article from the Cincinnati Post led with: “It wasn't so long ago that Oakley's business district, that strip of shops along Madison Road, looked like a poor waif in the shadow of its glamorous neighbor, Hyde Park Square” (Foreman). Another Post article from 1998 started, “For years, Oakley has been considered a poor stepchild to its wealthier neighbor, Hyde Park” (Andry).

Although recent media coverage and popular opinion have been much kinder to Oakley, a majority of neighborhood interviewees discussed the struggle that the community continues to have in distancing itself from its image as “the poor man’s Hyde Park,” as one participant put it. In the past, residents of Oakley let slide a number of significant development projects and real estate transactions that technically fell within Oakley borders but masqueraded under the Hyde Park name. Nearly all of the Oakley interviewees provided specific examples of this phenomenon, such as the Hyde Park Plaza shopping center and the Hyde Park Country Club,
both of which are located in Oakley.

In recent years, the community council has recognized the mistake of letting high-profile developments enter the community claiming to be anything other than Oakley. One interviewee claimed that the neighborhood became more defensive of its identity at the end of the 1990s when a major upscale apartment complex, the Drexel at Oakley, was proposed across the street from Hyde Park Plaza on Madison Road. The community council worked closely with the developer for a couple of years toward an end result that “was a product of compromise, and based on feedback directly from the community and the community council.” Among a number of agreements forged between the project developer and the community council, the interviewee noted that, “We said, ‘You can do this on the condition that you don’t name it Hyde Park.’ And that was the first high-profile project, upscale project that said Oakley on it. It was the Drexel at Oakley, it wasn’t the Drexel at Hyde Park.”

Since then, the neighborhood has become increasingly bullish about developing and maintaining an image that distinguishes it from any other community in Cincinnati, especially Hyde Park. At both of the community council meetings I attended in Oakley, the council president spoke about having “Oakley pride” and suggested that citizens remind neighborhood businesses bearing a Hyde Park name that they are located in Oakley. Although this recommendation was given lightheartedly at the public meetings, it turned out to be a serious topic that surfaced repeatedly in individual interviews.

All of the Oakley interviewees recognized that there has been a positive change in the community’s identity, with many saying that they felt “proud” and like “Oakley is coming into its own.” As one interviewee put it, “There’s a lot of Oakley pride here that didn’t exist some
fifteen years ago.” When asked why the change had occurred, every participant cited “young professionals” or “young people” or “young families” moving into the neighborhood as part of the answer. Similarly, most participants mentioned that the community council had transitioned to a more youthful leadership in the past few years and taken a strong “business-oriented” stance. One interviewee said that the current attitude of neighborhood leadership is that “development in Oakley is welcomed across the board – as long as it’s smart.” According to another interviewee, this open and adaptable viewpoint has, in part, managed to draw businesses such as Voltage, a regionally acclaimed modern furniture retailer, from Hyde Park and other wealthier communities to Oakley. Accordingly, revitalization of the business district has “snowballed.”

For these reasons, the general feeling of the interviewees was that Oakley has mostly embraced its identity as a young, fresh, and open community, while Hyde Park remains a fervently traditional, “old money” neighborhood that “goes out of its way to prevent development.” As an indication of how much the tables have turned for the two neighborhoods over the past twenty years, one interviewee flatly said, “There’s a lot about Hyde Park we don’t want to be” while another claimed, “We differ drastically from our friends in Hyde Park.”

As Hyde Park has become less affordable and more adverse to new development, Oakley has – whether by chance, intent, or some combination of the two – been able to cash in on its proximity to Hyde Park while also learning more recently how to define and assert its own identity. Through a series of smart, business-friendly moves by neighborhood leaders, more aggressive community promotion, and openness to change, Oakley has transformed its modest, unassuming identity from a liability (low-end, inexclusive, jejune) into an asset that has
made it a trendy, progressive, and upwardly mobile neighborhood.

Although Oakley has been able to break free from Hyde Park’s shadow in recent years, Madisonville continues to fend off assaults on its geographic and perceptual identity from all sides – and even from within the community – with mixed results. Although most Madisonville interviewees spoke of a “new level of optimism in the community” and believed that “this is Madisonville’s year,” only one of the eight interviewees expressed concern that high-profile developments entering the community are mostly being marketed with the Oakley, Kenwood, and Hyde Park namesakes. According to the concerned interviewee:

When new buildings go up – that Barrington that’s going to be assisted living, they want to be known as Barrington of Oakley . . . but it’s in Madisonville. Up on the hill, that big building they’re building [The Stratford at Kenwood]? That’s Madisonville, and they want to be known as Kenwood . . . Circle Development is now – it’s called Madison Circle. It started out being Hyde Park Circle. Now when that guy brought that to the [monthly community council] meeting – and, some people say, ‘What’s the difference if it’s over here?’ I said, ‘There’s plenty of difference as far as I’m concerned!’ . . . The big apartment complex that was built over on Erie Avenue and Red Bank [Centennial Station]? You know, there’s 300 units . . . They advertised being in Hyde Park, obviously! Naturally. Well, we got after the guy who was doing that, but they don’t do it now – they don’t say it’s Madisonville, but they don’t say it’s [Hyde Park] either. But yes, we’ve had lots of that because there’s a poor conception – perception – of Madisonville.

Indeed, three of the upcoming or recently finished developments that the participant mentioned are located within the Madisonville borders, but two have taken the names of neighboring communities and one attempted to use the name of a neighboring community before relenting to community disapproval. Madison Circle, a roughly $30 million mixed-use development in Madisonville was initially proposed as Hyde Park Circle (Baverman, Drive-in site will feature office, retail 2005). Although developers backed down and changed the name to Madison Circle, an assisted living community called The Barrington of Oakley has nearly been completed as part of the Madison Circle development (Baverman, Oakley plans face several key
hurdles 2007). Additionally, a fifteen-story, $110 million upscale retirement community being constructed on twenty acres in Madisonville has taken the name Stratford at Kenwood (Baverman, Stratford expands design for Madisonville senior housing 2007).

Other interviewees acknowledged that new developments within Madisonville are being marketed otherwise, but there was little concern expressed about challenging the present situation. According to one interviewee:

We’ve got some huge development on Red Bank Road [Centennial Station, Red Bank Crossing], but – and at the top of Kenwood Hill [The Stratford at Kenwood] – but unfortunately, we don’t try to pull those into the neighborhood with some of the synergy from those. They’re going to be able to exist on their own. Nothing, in their mind – positive or negative – is being put in Madisonville.

Another said that he was bothered that development was entering the community under different names, but “I would rather see the business come in – no matter what their name is – then to not have it, so I wasn’t going to fight them too much.” Still another interviewee spoke vaguely of the need to better integrate future development into the neighborhood, saying, “So now Oakley has been redeveloped and everyone says, ‘We’re in Oakley, we’re not in Madisonville.’ Our goal, eventually, is for people to actually [want to] be in Madisonville.” He did not follow up with specific ideas of how this might happen or what the community might do to change the situation.

Though many interviewees, when asked for their personal views, spoke warmly of Madisonville as a place of “endurance,” “diversity,” and “opportunity,” there was a pervading belief that the general populace of the neighborhood is “complacent,” mired in “apathy,” and pulled down by people “who take no pride in the property where they live.” Reflecting on the community’s difficulty in establishing a pervading positive identity, one interviewee effectively
summed up the sentiments of other interviewees, saying, “We’re surrounded by affluent communities, you know, like Mariemont, Madeira, Indian Hill . . . Hyde Park, Oakley . . . Kenwood . . . and it’s almost as if we can’t get it together down here. But I wish we could.”

5.2.2 A Socially Conducive Environment vs. A Socially Void Environment

When asked what drew them to own or rent property in the community, Oakley interviewees frequently cited walkability and the diversity of retail and dining options in the community. According to one interviewee:

What brought me here was the buzzword that now is walkability, and it [the Oakley community] had 100 percent from what I realize now. I didn’t know the word walkability when I moved here, but now that I’ve been living here, you can literally – I could probably work out of my home, get rid of my car, not even own a bike, and still be just fine.

Others agreed. One participant likened Oakley to vibrant communities of the past, saying, “This is like an old-time neighborhood. I can walk to the grocery, I can walk to fifteen different bars and restaurants, I can walk to the hardware store, the post office, public library . . . shops. Whatever you want is really in this area. It’s very unique in the city as far as that’s concerned.”

This dynamic, vibrant community environment became the foundation for Oakley After Hours, a community festival held the last Friday of every month from April through September along the Madison Road business district. The event became a topic of discussion in every Oakley interview. As one participant described it, “The biggest thing we have going now is Oakley After Hours . . . The Oakley Square businesses stay open late – this is sponsored by the community council . . . We hire bands, we get donations from businesses, sponsorships, we bring in some music . . . and [we] try to get walking street musicians if we can, and just make an
evening out of it. And that’s been real popular.” Another described how After Hours has had a positive effect on local business and encouraged social interaction: “I’ve gone to a few of them, and I think it’s great that so many people get out and are just – it’s so easy to just drive by these little things and go to the mall, but I think that really gets a lot of people to stop by and shop locally and support the area.”

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Oakley After Hours is that it was not implemented by community leadership in a top-down fashion, but instead bubbled up from the grassroots efforts of Oakley business owners who came together to employ the idea. As the Oakley interviewees explained, a handful of highly enterprising shopkeepers in the Oakley Design District (an area of art- and design-oriented shops located at the western end of the Madison Road business district) came together “loosely as a unit [and] approached community council about helping to support the effort of it.” At that point, the community council decided to back the event, helped raise funds to stage it, and even hired a public relations professional to promote the event. Since that time, a working committee of business owners and community council members has been established to ensure that the event receives consistent attention and preparation. Many interviewees felt that After Hours has been “successful” in supporting the local business community and creating a positive environment for social interaction.

At the conclusion of the interview process with Oakley leaders, I observed a second Oakley community council meeting in April 2009. At the meeting, there was an introduction of a new council chair for social activities. Although the appointee was new to the position and there has been no legacy of a leadership position for social events in Oakley, there was a
discussion at the meeting about organizing a pub-crawl around neighborhood bars to foster
social interaction among neighborhood residents. The effects of this new leadership position
remain to be seen but demonstrate that there is a concern and recognition of the need to
enhance social interactions among Oakley residents.

In Madisonville, interviewees frequently cited a lack of shopping, dining, and
entertainment options as a major neighborhood weakness. As one interviewee explained it,
“Outside of church and the recreation center, we don’t have a lot to really offer here . . . not an
awful lot of restaurants, you know, where you can say, ‘I can always go here and see a lot of my
neighbors.’” According to another community resident, “There’s two bars, and pretty much
zero restaurants, unless – I guess that’s not accurate – but the restaurants that are here are
more drivable, suburban style. It’s not like you can walk to them. But if you think about the
stuff you use on a daily basis, if you cook at home or need toothpaste or things like that, you
can’t buy them in Madisonville.”

On the other hand, interviewees consistently mentioned the Madisonville Recreation
Center, a complex constructed in 2002, as a bright spot for social interaction in the community.
Every interviewee spoke positively of the center and cited it as a well used “gathering place” for
the community. Regarding the recreation center, one participant said:

I think the single biggest change I would point to would be the community center . . .
and you see a lot of activity there, a lot of people from the neighborhood using it . . . I
don’t know if it’s because we don’t have a Y [YMCA] in the area or what, but they really
treat it like a neighborhood club. Go by there in the summertime and every bit of it’s
being used . . . It’s a busy center. Busier than any of the other centers I’ve had much
experience with.

A few interviewees also had high hopes for the Madisonville Arts Center, a relatively new small
arts venue located near the community’s central intersection at Madison Road and Whetsel
Avenue. At the time of the interviews, the center had been open for less than a year; participants had not formed concrete opinions about how the performance space was being received in the community and whether it would become a major neighborhood institution. The early general consensus seemed optimistic, however, and those participants who did mention the Madisonville Arts Center believed that it does have the potential to become a significant physical and social asset in the neighborhood’s future.

Two Madisonville interviewees looked beyond the character of the neighborhood business district and spoke of possibilities for social interaction in Madisonville’s residential areas. These participants believed that the residential sectors of the community, given their many historic homes and smaller lots, were designed in a way that makes social interaction easy if residents are open to it. As one resident described it, “Everybody knows if we’re out in our backyard cooking or sitting on our patio having a drink in the afternoon, come on over. You know, we all do that. We take turns going to each other, and people don’t do that anymore. But I think it’s because no one sits out on their front porch anymore . . . It’s because they started building houses without front porches.”

Overall, the Madisonville interviewees seemed to believe that although local shops and venues are scattered “almost like islands” throughout the neighborhood and that the Madison Road business district hasn’t reached a necessary “critical mass,” there are some promising developments like the Madisonville Recreation Center and the Madisonville Arts Center. These bright spots seem to have given local leaders hope, but significant work lies ahead in converting Madisonville from an auto-oriented bedroom community to a vibrant, walkable, socially conducive neighborhood.
Figure 13. Comparison of Social Conduciveness of Neighborhood Environments

OAKLEY

MADISONVILLE

Oakley NBD

Madisonville NBD

Oakley NBD Side Street

Madisonville NBD Side Street

Oakley Residential Street

Madisonville Residential Street
5.3 Elusiveness of Engagement

Civic engagement – or the degree to which citizens seek involvement in addressing problems of communal concern, particularly through volunteerism and political participation – has regularly been cited as a key factor of social capital since Putnam published *Bowling Alone* at the beginning of the present century. Temkin and Rohe adopted Putnam’s concept of civic engagement into their own construct of institutional infrastructure, as described in Chapter 2. One of the factors the former two authors utilized to assess institutional infrastructure in their Pittsburgh test communities was the level of neighborhood volunteerism.

In both Madisonville and Oakley, community leaders cited the extreme difficulty they have in convincing residents to donate time and energy toward neighborhood matters. However, interviewees in the two communities provided very different reasons as to why they believe the neighborhoods struggle to engage residents. These reasons are explored below.

5.3.1 Lack of Volunteerism and Civic Involvement

A point of similarity between Madisonville and Oakley came to light when interviewees were asked to describe the levels of interest and participation among community residents in neighborhood-wide matters. Interviewees from both Madisonville and Oakley expressed frustration that neighborhood citizens are often difficult to engage and rarely step up to help with an initiative unless they are directly affected. The sixteen participants also widely agreed that the burdens of maintaining the community and providing adequate political representation are falling on too few people.
In Oakley, the general sentiment could be summed up in the words of a couple of respondents who offered direct statements such as, “The biggest struggle for an organization like ours is getting people involved. No one will spend the time,” and, “It’s always hard to get people involved.” When asked why increased resident participation seemed so hard to achieve, Oakley participants typically offered two types of responses. First, roughly half of the interviewees mentioned that lower rates of citizen participation were likely a negative result of demographic changes that have occurred since becoming a desirable neighborhood for twentysomethings and young professionals. These interviewees described the new generation of Oakley residents in terms such as “transient” and “migrating.” One interviewee said that membership in the community council remained steady at around 400 households (approximately 1,000 persons), but that the 400 member households were always changing because “people are moving out all the time, so we have to keep gaining because we will . . . keep losing as people move and migrate.”

There could be a number of reasons for the phenomenon of frequent residential turnover in Oakley. One interviewee said that the community had become a popular place of residence for Procter & Gamble employees transplanted from other parts of the country. Perhaps since these residents feel less allegiance to Oakley and have less of a history in the area, there is not as much to keep them grounded locally. Another interviewee said that his once-single friends who now have families and small children are leaving the community because they believe the city school district is inferior to suburban school districts. Hence, some residents may view Oakley as a short-term stepping-stone toward eventually having a family and moving to a suburban community. For these reasons and others, certain Oakley citizens
may be apathetic about contributing to a community they view as a transitory place of residence.

A second pattern that emerged from the Oakley interviews was the belief that lower participation in neighborhood affairs might be chalked up to residents’ satisfaction with the status quo. One interviewee said that although there is “very little” interest and participation among residents, “I don’t think that’s a negative thing to the community. You’ll see some of these neighborhoods . . . where the more perceived problems you have in a community, the more activism you get in that community. But we don’t have many crime issues [in Oakley].” Others offered similar responses and said that community interest and involvement has been high in the past when galvanizing neighborhood issues have surfaced.

When explaining troubles associated with lagging volunteerism and weak resident involvement, several Oakley participants referred back to the After Hours festival as an example. Although local business leaders had initiated the idea for a monthly community event, interviewees said that over time, control of the event had been slowly pushed onto the community council. According to one interviewee, the council member who had been heading up the After Hours steering committee had to hand off the responsibility to another council member because it was becoming “too much” for him. To compound the burden, local business leaders have been increasingly hesitant to donate time or energy toward the event. As one interviewee explained it, a couple of business owners remain involved in coordinating the event, but “the rest are happy to sit back – and they tell us they will contribute money. They say, ‘I’ve got money, but I don’t have time.’ . . . They’re not community-oriented folks.” The interviewee went on to say that he believed “we may be at some watershed this summer . . .
with our representation where we need to – to some extent – say, ‘Look, we need more help or we may not be able to keep doing this.’”

Madisonville interviewees felt similarly discouraged by the lack of volunteerism and involvement in their neighborhood, although the rhetoric used to explain the problem was more extreme than in Oakley. Four interviewees said that Armstrong Chapel, a church in Indian Hill, was the biggest source of volunteers for community initiatives. In the words of one interviewee, “There’s a lot more volunteers from Indian Hill than there are from Madisonville.” Others said it was “sad” that people outside the community were mostly responsible for community improvements like a police substation constructed in a formerly boarded-up storefront. Other interviewees agreed that low resident participation is a problem, but felt that Madisonville is not alone in the difficulty. As one interviewee said, “At one time I thought that Madisonville was falling short on volunteerism . . . but I found out that it’s difficult in all communities to find people that will step up and get involved in something.”

When asked what was at the heart of the problem, Madisonville interviewees provided a common response that was different from those of the Oakley interviewees. One participant summed up the opinions of his peers best when he said, “We have seen a major decline in attendance, a major decline in volunteerism and participation . . . It has been lost in a lot of the – I’m going to call it the turf issues and political issues.” More specifically, the interviewee went on the explain that “Madisonville is a very diverse community, it’s a very separated community, sometimes in terms of either economics or race . . . I think there’s physically a division and I think there is a mental – social division.” Another interviewee agreed, saying that he had gone out of his way in the past to avoid involvement in the community because “frankly, I didn’t
want to get involved in the politics . . . The political turns personal . . . We haven’t moved beyond that.” He went on to say that once he realized “I couldn’t enact the changes I wanted . . . without becoming a part of it,” he finally stepped forward.

Others agreed that there had been a history of racial and socioeconomic tensions in Madisonville, and that community council meetings in the past had been “contentious,” causing many members of the community council to become disillusioned and drop out. At the second Madisonville Community Council meeting I attended in May 2009, it was stated that council membership was at seventy-eight households. One interviewee estimated that membership had been as high as 300 households in the past.

Although there were no signs of divisiveness or hostility at the council meetings I attended, it seemed that attendees remained highly sensitive to the internal strife of the past. The May meeting opened with a reminder to be “civil” because “we’re all adults,” and that attempts to keep things respectful “seem to be working lately.” One African-American attendee made an appeal to those in attendance that “we have to live together . . . we have to love one another” as a “Madisonville family.” Another meeting attendee commented that she was “proud of the progress we’re making . . . we’re acting like a big community.”

Yet even as Madisonville seems to be mending socially and racially, concerns about volunteerism and community interaction remain high. For example, a public appeal was made at the May council meeting to utilize the local library branch because, according to library officials, Madisonville has one of the least-used facilities in Hamilton County. At the January meeting, the council president expressed dismay that there were no Madisonville volunteers tutoring neighborhood children at an after school program. And during extensive discussions
about community bicentennial events in June and July, one meeting attendee nervously attempted to rally other attendees to volunteer and participate in planned events, asking, “Are we a community? . . . How do we get to be a community? People come to stuff and people volunteer!”

5.4 Clout from Consensus

One of the core elements of Temkin and Rohe’s social capital model of neighborhood change is the idea of institutional infrastructure, meaning not only the presence of community groups, but the ability of those groups to act effectively and communicate information from neighborhood constituents to city leaders, and vice versa. Even in a neighborhood with a strong sociocultural milieu, poor institutional infrastructure is enough to drag the community downward to defeat (Arefi 2003; Temkin and Rohe 1998).

Perhaps the greatest area of difference between Madisonville and Oakley lies in the highly effective institutional infrastructure of the latter and the weakened institutional infrastructure of the former. Based on recurring statements provided during interviews with the sixteen neighborhood leaders, the following three elements of institutional infrastructure demonstrated the most notable contrasts between the effectiveness of the two community councils: communication vs. confusion, or the ability of neighborhood leaders to interact effectively with the populace of the community; controversy vs. conflict, the ability of community leaders to interact effectively with one another; and determination vs. defeatism, the ability of neighborhood leaders to interact effectively with those outside the community and at higher levels of power.
5.4.1 *Communication vs. Confusion*

Although the effectiveness of communication between community leadership and neighborhood constituents was rarely a topic of discussion during the Oakley interviews – presumably because there are relatively few community-wide communication problems in Oakley – it was a consistent point of concern for many of the Madisonville interviewees. The common sentiment among the Madisonville participants was that the community council is not adequately asserting and broadcasting itself to gain the attention and respect of neighborhood residents.

Even before my first interviews in either community, a contrast in the communication proficiency of the two councils became evident. I had planned to attend the January 2009 council meetings of both neighborhoods to observe the proceedings and introduce myself to potential interviewees. In order to learn the times and locations of the meetings, I first turned to the Internet for information. The Oakley Community Council Web site, located at http://www.oakleynow.com, clearly listed the time and location of the meetings. Additional resources such as community news, archived meeting notes, interactive surveys, and other community information were also available online.

By contrast, the Madisonville Community Council’s former Web site, http://www.historicmadisonville.com, had been vacated without offering any basic contact information to assist residents or visitors. My next step was to call the Madisonville Recreation Center, the most visible community institution I was aware of, and ask for information. Although staff at the center provided me with the correct meeting location and date, I was
given the wrong time. This led to significant confusion on my part when I arrived to the empty meeting hall nearly two hours early.

Without knowing my personal difficulty in finding information about the community council and its public meetings, nearly every Madisonville interviewee expressed concerns about the lack of a community Web site and other similar communication problems that have plagued the council. Almost all of the interviewees felt that having an Internet presence was vital to the council’s efforts. In the words of one, “Because people are busy and things like that . . . what community council can concentrate on – what we’re trying to do is use other technologies like Web sites and things like that for people to be able to be involved at a distance.” Another said that the community Web site “. . . has not been a place where you could go to get up-to-date information. However, we’re hoping to change that in the very near future.”

Indeed, after months of delays and difficulties working with the Web site developer, the council has, as of this publication, posted a new community Web site located at http://madisonvilleontheego.com. The ability of the council to adequately publicize and familiarize residents with the new site and maintain a relevant Internet presence is undeterminable at this point, but leaders were optimistic about using technology to reach a wider segment of the community. As one official put it, “It would be much easier to communicate to 10,000 people with a Web site than it would to get them in the same room.”

Perhaps more problematic, half of the Madisonville interviewees were worried that the quarterly community newsletter, a traditional mailed pamphlet communicating council information to every neighborhood household, has been slowly falling out of existence. One
participant said she was upset that “we have a newsletter from the community council, but last year we were only able to get out one [issue], and we should be getting out three. And that’s what a lot of people have been dependent on for some information from the council . . . We only had one last year and none so far this year.” Another said, “I understand that it costs money to send out a flyer to everybody in Madisonville when we’ve got 10,000 residents, so people may not even know that, ‘Hey, you guys got a community council? You meet when? Where?’ Nobody knows.” Others went on to say that the many area residents without computers or Internet access were essentially being cut off from community leadership. Most interviewees seemed to believe that the only way information was getting out was through word of mouth and flyers posted at the recreation center.

When asked what communication channels the council might consider to distribute messages more effectively, two of the eight interviewees mentioned that the local churches were an untapped resource, especially in reaching African-American residents. As one participant explained, “I think a lot of communication goes on there, and that’s probably a tool that we have not used to our best advantage in communicating information to the people in the community, because there’s a lot of people that are associated with a particular church . . . We just have to get the message to them and let them know what messages we want to get out there.” Another believed that the lack of a council chair for communications is also hampering the organization’s efforts to reach neighborhood residents.

As mentioned earlier, Oakley participants seemed to be content with the state of the council’s communication efforts. In fact, a couple of the interviewees said they believed one of the most important duties of the community council is “relaying effective messages to help
residents become aware of [a] problem and how to deal with [a] problem.” These interviewees believed that the community has been effective at meeting this goal. In addition to the community Web site and regular monthly public meetings, the Oakley Community Council maintains a quarterly newsletter mailed to residents. The council also has an active membership chair who monitors data from the Hamilton County Auditor’s office and sends neighborhood information to every new Oakley resident.

5.4.2 Controversy vs. Conflict

Controversy, or disagreement, is a natural and healthy occurrence in a community where residents espouse different ideas and have diverse backgrounds. A more serious problem arises when persistent disagreement leads to conflict, or unresolved controversy causing permanent rifts between differing groups (Flora 1998, 492). In Oakley, disagreements between community leaders appeared to remain safely within the bounds of controversy, while Madisonville leaders seem to struggle with disagreements leading to long-standing conflict.

Oakley interviewees were quick to acknowledge that the neighborhood has experienced and dealt with controversy. An anecdote frequently repeated among the participants was the case of R.P. McMurphy’s, a popular neighborhood pub among local young professionals. As the interviewees described it, residents of both Oakley and Hyde Park approached the City of Cincinnati and the Oakley Community Council in 2005 with complaints about fighting, noise, improper parking, trash, and other concerns associated with the bar’s location near a residential area. The complaints were significant enough that the Cincinnati City Council brought a vote to consider recommending the revocation of the establishment’s liquor license.
Oakley’s community council leaders, because they were strongly supportive of local businesses and represented “young Oakley,” as one interviewee described it, sided with the bar in spite of the ill will and negative publicity it generated. Initially, the Cincinnati City Council rebuffed the Oakley Community Council’s support for the pub and chose to recommend that the state rescind R.P. McMurphy’s liquor license. Following this setback, R.P. McMurphy’s appealed the decision and began working with the Oakley Community Council and the Cincinnati City Council, making a considerable effort to mitigate the recurring problems caused by bar patrons.

Interviewees said that the pub owners joined an Adopt-A-Block program, addressed parking issues, and became more assertive in participating with community council initiatives and activities. Following these changes, the dispute faded and the establishment was able to retain its liquor license. In fact, one interviewee said, “The irony of it is, after all that flack we got about that, R.P. McMurphy’s is the only one that attends our meetings regularly . . . I’ve got to give credit to R.P. McMurphy’s for being a good member of the community.” Participants said that to their knowledge, the compromises forged between the bar owners, the community council, and the Cincinnati City Council had led to relative peace over the matter. The interviewees agreed that there had been no further problems with the bar and that “no one has voiced a concern to community council” since.

Additionally, there seemed to be a high level of trust among members of the Oakley Community Council and a strong deference to the council president’s leadership and agenda. This precedent for respecting community leadership seems to have deterred any conflicts stemming from leadership changes. It was the observation of one interviewee that “the council
... tends to take on the personality of the president, especially an active president.” He described how a past female president had been “very inclusion-oriented,” “hands-on,” and “didn’t want to let any problem go until it had been fully resolved.”

After a transition in power several years ago, a male president who was “very business-oriented,” “take charge,” and “driven,” brought a radical shift to the composition of the council, attracting businesspeople from Oakley Square and a number of like-minded men. Although the current leadership philosophy of the council is vastly different from that of the past, multiple Oakley interviewees said that the transition was welcome and that the council is accepting of the idea that “there’s always time for a change, and even if it’s not the top person, at least a better mix of those that report to that person or work with that person to get different ideas and different things going on.”

After successive interviews with neighborhood leadership in Madisonville, it became clear that neighborhood controversies had boiled over into conflicts at some point in the past. Although many of the conflicts seem to have quieted in recent years, interviewees remained hesitant to provide specific examples or elaborate on the difficult relationships that have plagued the community’s past. Despite this, there were a few general, observable patterns among interviewees’ responses on the topic.

The term “contentious” was the most unanimous and consistent description Madisonville interviewees provided when they were asked to describe the nature and atmosphere of interactions between community council members. The word appeared in every participant’s response. Aside from this common descriptor, a number of the Madisonville interviewees went on to describe that the council had, at various points over the past few
years, divided into two – or as many as three – “factions” or “competing groups” over proposed changes to the council’s governing by-laws, results of council elections, and community budget priorities.

Many of the participants who agreed to talk openly about these problems believed that a small number of people involved with the community council were ultimately responsible for the ill will and negativity sometimes exhibited at meetings, although the interviewees tended to cite different individuals as the instigators depending on which side of the argument they personally fell. The results of these controversies, as described by the interviewees, was that “politics turns personal,” there is “infighting,” “some people didn’t trust our elections were going to be fair,” “new board members have quit because they don’t want to be caught up in that,” and “a lot of people walked away from community council and said, ‘I’m not coming back.’”

One of the most troubling outcomes of unresolved controversy and conflict in the neighborhood is that some citizens, because of mistrust and lack of respect for the current political structure of the community council, have acted independently on the community’s behalf without the sanction of community leaders or interested citizens. As one interviewee explained the problem:

A lot of it has to do with feeling trusted and that opinions can be expressed, especially without the negatives. And I’d say a lot of the community – no matter who they are – are guilty of that. You know, somebody says something, somebody shouts out a negative response. You know, it’s tough for people to feel like they’re being heard. And then we’ve had people that . . . have basically gone off and done things on their own, and then that really upsets people when they come back and say, ‘I’ve done this with the direction of the community council,’ when it hasn’t been vetted in front of the whole council. I learned that pretty quickly – that if I wanted to do anything of any importance that I needed to bring it back to council and get a vote on it.
If left unchecked, this belief that one can act independently while using the community council’s name for personal leverage will not only interrupt the designated channels of neighborhood communication and organization established by the City of Cincinnati, but will further ruin residents’ confidence in the council and thwart any hopes of creating a neighborhood-wide consensus and shared community vision.

5.4.3 Determination vs. Defeatism

A final distinction between Oakley and Madisonville lies in the level of optimism and momentum that each community harnesses to create and execute a neighborhood vision. Oakley has cultivated a strong working relationship with city leaders and staff to make their neighborhood vision a reality, while Madisonville leaders struggle to trust city leaders and outsiders and are unenthusiastic about attempting larger neighborhood goals.

The Oakley interviewees were highly confident of their neighborhood goals and use smart political tactics to keep neighborhood projects on track. Interviewees mentioned three major projects that are currently in their sights: Millworks, a massive mixed-use retail and entertainment development planned for a former neighborhood industrial site; the Kennedy Connector, a traffic-alleviating road project that would improve access from Oakley and Madisonville to Interstate 71; and traffic improvements and streetscaping on Oakley Square. Although the Millworks project is currently on hold and interviewees expressed frustration with the uncertain timetable for development, the community is aggressively pursuing a course for the other two projects.
In particular, interviewees mentioned the time and effort that community leaders have spent to save funding for the Kennedy Connector. The City of Cincinnati had set aside several million dollars for the Connector project after it was considered the top priority for eastern Cincinnati in 2002. Furthermore, the Cincinnati City Council named it a top capital budget priority for 2006. However, as the Millworks project stalled, funds set aside for the Kennedy Connector also came into question. At one point, the money set aside for the project was in danger of being recalled and re-distributed to other Cincinnati neighborhoods. One interviewee described how the council came together and spurred action to prevent the city council from re-assigning the money elsewhere:

“It really took a grassroots, letter-writing, email-writing, setting up meetings sort of campaign that I think really made those particular council members back off and say ‘Yeah, okay, you’re right, you’re right. You win.’ . . . It’s been a community council driven process, and everybody on the board knows residents, business owners, and those people know people. You can get a good grassroots together from a board-led effort.”

These efforts were still underway at the community council meetings I observed. Project updates were provided and residents were encouraged to call and correspond with local leaders to make sure that neighborhood projects remained fresh on their minds. The winter 2008 community newsletter also featured a letter from the council president asking residents to contact local leaders and attend city budget hearings to help make sure that the Kennedy Connector project received full funding from the city.

Oakley interviewees believed that the community has a very strong, positive relationship with the city that has been crafted through years of determined, proactive efforts.
The general consensus of the Oakley interviewees was that “if you’re willing to seek out help from the City of Cincinnati, I think there’s a lot of help to be gathered. I think if you expect them to come to you, there’s nothing.” The Oakley participants offered this sentiment repeatedly. As another interviewee explained it, “We treat them with respect and we try to present a cohesive, logical argument. We don’t go down there [to City Hall] with ridiculous requests, and they appreciate that – both on [City] Council and the administrative end. And so, when we ask for something, they listen.”

While Oakley’s community council may be characterized as persistent and aggressive in reaching community goals, Madisonville, perhaps because of the more basic difficulties it has in communicating and resolving conflict, has been more reactive and irresolute in its efforts. Interviewees cited “a victim mentality” and a spirit of “apathy” among some residents that made it difficult for leaders to envision greater things for the neighborhood. One interviewee explained it by saying, “There’s a certain lack of vision. People are looking at a very small pie and they need to get their piece.”

Interviewees cited multiple instances in which Madisonville Community Council leaders attempted to set larger goals for the community but were defeated by neighborhood residents and other council members. One anecdote was provided regarding Madisonville’s involvement in the Cincinnati Soap Box Derby, an annual citywide racing competition among local youth:

We had a great soapbox derby last year . . . [We] didn’t think we were going to get any support at all . . . We ended up with three cars and I think we blew a lot of people away with the impression they got of Madisonville at the soap box derby . . . The thing that blew it up for me . . . was . . . I wanted to get two more cars [this year], and people were telling me how bad the economy was and what we couldn’t do . . . And I’m starting to dig in to taking ‘no’ for an answer. I’m getting tired of that answer.
Another instance given was the community’s efforts to create an ambitious schedule of events for the neighborhood’s bicentennial during the summer of 2009. One interviewee said that when a call was made to develop multiple events and celebrations for the bicentennial, some residents demurred, saying that people wouldn’t want to come to Madisonville more than once during the summer for an event. In the interviewee’s own words: “I get resistance from people that say, ‘Well, they’ll only come to Madisonville once.’ I’m incredulous when I hear those kinds of things. As if we can’t have more than one event a year that will bring them [outsiders] to the community. [We’ve] got to continue pushing against that wall, and it takes a lot of energy . . . if we don’t expect the best, we’re never going to be able to focus on it and obtain it.”

Madisonville interviewees believed that this defeatist attitude was also hindering the community’s relationship with the City of Cincinnati. A majority of the interviewees spoke bitterly of the neighborhood’s relationship with the city, saying that city officials are “lagging in support,” “our community is like a stepchild to the city,” and the city has been “duplicitous” in dealing with neighborhood leaders. Yet in the same breath, many would say that they understood that it was probably partially their own fault for not being more assertive. As one participant explained, “I know that the neighborhood [Madisonville] is not as aggressive. I think the city overlooks the neighborhood, but it’s our fault. I mean, you know, if we’re not willing to step up, why should they?”
Chapter 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

*From this point on, the future of Madisonville lies in the hands of those who live and work here today... As a village, the community had the advantage of a closer association between the people who lived here then. Madisonville and other Cincinnati suburban communities need to regain this closeness which was partly lost when they became a larger part of the city. Most city planners today advocate this as a means of preserving the whole metropolitan area, to protect it from decay and deterioration. Each of us has a part in this vital role.*

(Madisonville's Birthday 1959)

At the outset of this study, I asked four questions related to the state of social capital in Cincinnati’s Madisonville and Oakley neighborhoods. The first three questions sought to discover major aspects of social capital in the two communities, compare those key aspects, and determine whether leaders in the two neighborhoods are promoting or impeding the development of social capital. Based on the findings detailed in Chapter 5, the answers to these questions are summarized briefly in the first section of this chapter.

The last of my research questions asked what, if anything, Madisonville leaders might be able to learn from the ways Oakley has – wittingly or unwittingly – utilized social capital during a period of neighborhood renaissance. Drawing upon anecdotes taken from interviews in the two communities, the self-diagnoses of Madisonville interviewees based on their own observations and reasoning, and the suggestions of other scholars who have studied social capital in communities, a list of recommendations is provided in the second section of this chapter.
6.1 Conclusion

In several areas, Oakley, a revitalized Cincinnati community as defined in Chapter 1, tends to exhibit a higher level of community social capital than Madisonville, a Cincinnati neighborhood that has struggled to achieve revitalization at its core. This claim is based on findings drawn from the three themes detailed in Chapter 5: prominence of place, elusiveness of engagement, and clout from consensus.

6.1.1 Prominence of Place

In Oakley, prominence of place has become a priority for community leaders. After a rocky past combating the Hyde Park cachet, Oakley has made strides in developing and promoting a community identity that distinguishes it from neighboring communities. The neighborhood has, for the most part, openly embraced the young families and trendy boutiques moving into the area and adopted a fresh and youthful neighborhood character. According to Temkin and Rohe (1998) and Warren and Warren (1977), a community that supports and attempts to strengthen its spatial and symbolic identity, as Oakley has, suggests that residents share a common loyalty and sense of pride in the community. If Oakley residents are as united in defense of the community’s identity as study interviewees suggested, it could mean that bonding social capital – the connections linking similarly minded individuals in a community and reinforcing homogeneity – is strong in Oakley.

In addition, opportunities for shopping, dining, recreation, and other social activities in Oakley exemplify another element of sociocultural milieu proposed by Temkin and Rohe (1998). According to the latter two authors, a community with unique and active stores, churches, and
cultural institutions may be more easily distinguishable from surrounding areas, also contributing to a sense of clear neighborhood identity among residents. While a dynamic community environment may be able to contribute to bonding social capital in a neighborhood, Oakley has leveraged its thriving physical environment to reach beyond neighborhood borders through the After Hours street festivals. These events draw a number of outsiders into the community and allow for situations in which bridging social capital – connections that link people of different backgrounds with weak ties – may occur between Oakley residents and citizens of other Cincinnati communities. For these reasons and others explored in Chapter 5, the neighborhood appears to bear some elements of a strong sociocultural milieu.

Madisonville, while not performing poorly, seems to have an erratic record when it comes to fostering prominence of place. In some instances, the community has condoned major new developments that seek to be identified with other neighborhoods. In other instances, the neighborhood has fought to make sure projects and real estate transactions taking place in the community bear the Madisonville name. According to Temkin and Rohe (1998) and Warren and Warren (1977), a community that struggles to define and nurture its spatial and symbolic identity, as Madisonville does, suggests that residents do not have widespread and consistent neighborhood loyalty and pride.

Based on the data collected from Madisonville interviewees, it seems that there are a small number of people defending the neighborhood identity, while other residential groups in the community remain ambivalent or even opposed to establishing a specific community image. Hints of factionalism among different groups in Madisonville demonstrate one of the possible “dark sides” of social capital. Scholars have studied the negative effects of intense
bonding social capital, by which tightly-connected cliques of similar individuals form within communities and actively exclude or oppose another, sometimes with devastating results (Durlauf 2002; Field 2008; Mitchell and LaGory 2002). While perverse bonding social capital in Madisonville does not seem to be extreme at present, the presence of tightly-connected social groups within the community pursuing different ideas may mean that the level of constructive bonding social capital is lower in Madisonville than in Oakley.

The neighborhood has a similarly mixed record on establishing a socially conducive environment. While the Madison Road business district and other shopping districts in the community struggle to attract a strong retail and commercial presence, the community recreation center, local churches, a new arts center, and attractive, vibrant residential streets are well-established or promising venues for social interaction in Madisonville. Despite this, community leaders seem nearly fully concentrated on revitalizing the business district instead of considering how to build capital within tested and proven neighborhood activity centers, then radiating outward. As with Madisonville’s record of defending its community identity, the social conduciveness of the neighborhood environment is also a mixed bag of positive and negative aspects. The community’s inconsistent and unconcentrated efforts in defending a neighborhood identity and encouraging a socially conducive environment demonstrate that, based on the indicators compared, the local sociocultural milieu defined by Temkin and Rohe (1998) – while not absent or poor – is not as strong as the sociocultural milieu in Oakley. By focusing on the existing assets of the community environment, community leaders may be able to encourage positive bonding social capital to enhance community-wide social ties.
6.1.2 *Elusiveness of Engagement*

Putnam (2000) has been one of the most vocal proponents of using civic engagement to gauge community social capital. Drawing from his work, Temkin and Rohe adopted an emphasis on volunteerism and other civic activities as part of their institutional infrastructure construct. In the case of Madisonville and Oakley, leaders from the two communities appeared most similar in that they both have difficulty encouraging residential volunteerism and wider participation in community affairs. These findings were detailed in Chapter 5 under the theme “elusiveness of engagement.”

Leaders in both communities spoke about frustrations that have surfaced because an inordinate share of neighborhood burdens too often falls in the hands of a select few. Some Oakley officials attribute the lack of volunteerism and participation to the transient, independent nature of the neighborhood’s growing young professional demographic. Others believe that neighborhood residents see no need to become involved in a community where most things are working satisfactorily.

In Madisonville, some leaders believe that residential participation might be low due to historic infighting among community council members and rifts in the community political structure. These power struggles, although no longer evident, have bred longstanding doubt and intimidation in the minds of some Madisonville residents.

On first glance, low civic engagement in Oakley seems to counter Putnam’s assertions that strong communities have high levels of volunteerism and civic engagement, while low levels of civic engagement in Madisonville appear to support the existing literature. However, it should be noted that Temkin and Rohe determined in their empirical analysis of community
social capital that the levels of volunteerism in the study communities were a poor predictor of a community’s social capital (1998). In fact, a number of other scholars have sided with Temkin and Rohe, claiming that Putnam’s concept of civic engagement may not be an accurate indicator of the quality or quantity of social capital in a community (Hall 1999; Paxton 1999). The findings from interviews with Madisonville and Oakley leaders seem to support the broader base of literature opposing Putnam: the existing levels of volunteerism and civic engagement in the two study communities appear to be indistinguishable from one another. However, based on the statements of interviewees in both communities, it does seem that the number of volunteers in each community is not as important as the strength and savvy of those who do volunteer in the two neighborhoods.

6.1.3 Clout from Consensus

Ultimately, the greatest differences between Madisonville and Oakley were explored in the third theme of Chapter 5, “clout from consensus.” In three areas: communication vs. confusion, an analysis of each community council’s interactions with the broad neighborhood populace; controversy vs. conflict, an exploration of community council members’ ability to work with one another; and determination vs. defeatism, a look at the community council’s ability to effectively engage and work with municipal leaders and outside groups, it is most apparent that Oakley has a lean and potent institutional infrastructure as defined by Temkin and Rohe (1998), while Madisonville has a substantially weaker institutional infrastructure, and struggles to overcome internal and external roadblocks toward political success at every level.
The institutional infrastructure of a community is strongly linked with the concepts of bridging and linking social capital – those social connections that can connect groups of people who are different and/or hold different levels of power (Green and Haines 2008; Woolcock 1998). In Oakley, the majority of interviewees spoke positively of the community’s relationships with adjacent neighborhoods as well as the community’s relationships with city leaders and staff. The experiences and beliefs of Oakley interviewees suggested that Oakley leaders have been able to develop high levels of bridging and linking social capital to accomplish community goals and foster goodwill toward the neighborhood. In Madisonville, levels of bridging and linking social capital appeared to be lower than those of Oakley.

Scholars including Arefi (2003) and Temkin and Rohe (1998) have cited the ability to determine common goals, establish trust, and reach consensus as a key factor in whether community improvement efforts will be successful. Additionally, Arefi (2003) notes that failure to discuss and resolve ethnic and racial differences in communities can create significant obstacles toward long-term community growth. This may help to explain the lower levels of institutional infrastructure (as well as bridging and linking social capital) in Madisonville, where almost sixty percent of the neighborhood population is African-American; Oakley, on the other hand, is nearly ninety percent white. Although a number of Madisonville interviewees appeared uncomfortable, uncertain, or unwilling to discuss race relations in the neighborhood, many acknowledged or hinted that it had been a serious problem for community leaders in the past. These unresolved issues and others described in Chapter 5 create serious impediments toward building an adequate institutional infrastructure in Madisonville.
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### 6.2 Recommendations

When comparing and contrasting the characteristics of two different entities, as this study has attempted to do with social capital in Madisonville and Oakley, it can be easy to draw
polarizing conclusions that pit the two entities against one another: good and bad; right and wrong; successful and failed. To make such assumptions about social capital in Madisonville and Oakley would be mistaken. It must be emphasized that the two communities, in terms of social capital, are not binary opposites representing good and bad communities, respectively. On the contrary, the results of this study suggest that while some aspects of the two communities are starkly different, others are more nuanced, and still other aspects are practically indistinguishable from one another.

Madisonville is a resilient community with leaders who, though they may disagree on the best ways to create positive change, appear to have good intentions and earnest aspirations to improve their neighborhood. As mentioned in the study findings, interviewees from Madisonville highlighted a number of promising tools to improve neighborhood social capital, such as active local churches, a heavily used community recreation center, and a group of core citizens who work tirelessly on behalf of the neighborhood. These reasons, and others, are enough to confirm that Madisonville is a place of hope and possibility that may be able to harness social capital-building as part of a strategy for community improvement.

Based on the findings described in Chapter 5 and additional data collected from hours of interviews, my greatest concern is that community council leaders in Madisonville are not working toward a single vision, but anxiously pursuing different paths toward community development, with many focused on the physical or economic circumstances of the neighborhood, particularly the Madison Road neighborhood business district. In fact, the senior-most members of the council seem to believe that economic development and efforts to introduce form-based zoning codes are the solution to neighborhood ills. By my evaluation,
although physical and economic changes are desirable and necessary for holistic community improvement in Madisonville, they are simply bandages hiding a social rift that must be addressed.

The individual interviews I conducted, along with historical accounts of social division in Madisonville dating back to at least the 1960s (Buczynski, et al. 1982; Madisonville History Committee 2005), present the case that perhaps what community leaders should focus on first is resolving the decades-old sociocultural tensions in the community and cultivating a solid base of neighborhood social capital, especially in terms of institutional infrastructure. After pursuing an improved level of social capital in Madisonville, physical and economic development can be sought via a united front, with the backing of the entire community and the sanction of the City of Cincinnati.

6.2.1 Improving Communication to Reduce Confusion

As described in Chapters 4 and 5, the Madisonville Community Council has struggled to consistently and effectively communicate with neighborhood residents since the mid-1980s, when attempts to outsource the community newsletter to a neighborhood youth organization failed. Since then, there have been ups and downs in the council’s communication efforts. With roughly 10,000 residents and a limited amount of funding, it is a daunting task. Nonetheless, strong communication is critical to informing residents, growing council membership, and improving the democratic nature of neighborhood decision-making processes.

Although the council has developed an attractive new Web site with great promise (http://madisonvilleonthego.org), the council must be diligent in promoting the site and
increasing awareness of its existence, especially since it is located at a different Web address than the previous long-time council Web site (http://www.historicmadisonville.com). At present, the City of Cincinnati Web site (http://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/cdap/pages/-6249-/) still references the former Madisonville Web site for contact information. Additionally, signage positioned at neighborhood entrances promotes the former Web address for information about the community. This signage should be updated to reflect the new address. Notices posted in high-traffic community centers, such as the local library and community recreation center, may also increase residents’ awareness.

Perhaps most importantly, the community council Web site must post significant, up-to-date information such as meeting minutes and event schedules, and should allow users to submit ideas, requests, and complaints about neighborhood matters. If harnessed to its full potential, the council Web site can become a new forum for community affairs and gain the broader involvement of neighborhood residents young and old who, for whatever reason, cannot or will not attend the monthly council meetings.

For those without access to the Internet or knowledge of computer use, the community newsletter is a lifeline for neighborhood information and must be more consistently distributed. One interviewee mentioned his concern that efforts to publish the newsletter three times yearly were not being met. Given the time and expenses necessary to produce a paper newsletter, perhaps the format or distribution of the medium should be reconsidered. A reduction in font size, paper size, the number of pages, or the amount of non-critical information provided in the newsletter should be analyzed to streamline costs and efforts while
still offering a basic link to neighborhood information for those residents without computers or Internet access.

Finally, the community council should partner with neighborhood churches to disseminate information, build trust with neighborhood citizens, and increase public involvement in neighborhood decision-making processes. According to multiple interviewees, local churches are some of the most rich and active social venues in Madisonville, especially among the African-American community. Despite this, community leaders said that the council has virtually no relationship with local churches. In the future, the community council should not overlook this untapped resource in its efforts to reach a broader neighborhood demographic.

6.2.2 Confronting Race to Reduce Conflict

Addressing race relations in a diverse community can be intimidating and uncomfortable. However, when kept beneath the surface, race can become a potentially volatile and disruptive issue that impedes trust and stifles communication in a neighborhood. Although nearly all of the Madisonville interviewees cited diversity as one of the community’s greatest strengths, many of the same interviewees also considered it one of the neighborhood’s greatest weaknesses. It seems that even though Madisonville residents value living in proximity to neighbors of other races and cultures, many are unsure how to form significant social ties and a deeper understanding of people from different ethnic backgrounds.

A couple of interviewees mentioned that local residents and property owners have attempted to discuss race at past community council meetings, only to be quickly dismissed.
Although a community council meeting is not the appropriate venue for a race discussion, some interviewees felt that making race a taboo topic is hampering efforts to improve other areas of the community. For this reason, neighborhood leaders should give serious thought to sponsoring a facilitated forum or series of events to address the history of race relations in the community; to educate citizens about dealing constructively with racial issues; to brainstorm ways to improve interracial dialogue and trust in the community; and to establish a perpetual, intentional discourse on race in Madisonville. Because race can be such a sensitive issue, attempts to foster a community discussion should not be attempted by current council members or residents, but rather with assistance of professionals in mediation and racial intervention who can offer neutral guidance as community outsiders.

Green and Haines, Putnam, and Russell and Arefi have advocated cultural events and the arts as a way to promote social capital and create positive transformations in communities. Madisonville has a particular advantage in this respect with the recent completion of the Madisonville Arts Center. As a way to appreciate diversity in the community and encourage different ways of thinking about race and ethnicity, the community council should consider partnering with the arts center to develop a visual and performing arts series exploring these topics. Such events may attract wider participation from neighborhood residents while also drawing outsiders to the community and improving possibilities for increased external social networking.
6.2.3 Harnessing Political Savvy to Build Determination

In order to improve the political potency of the Madisonville Community Council and gain the trust and respect of other neighborhood council members and city officials, there are three steps leaders can take. First, the community council should follow the organizational guidelines established in its by-laws. Madisonville interviewees expressed dismay that current council leadership does not follow the rules and procedures that have been used in the past. Some believed the past precedent of holding meetings using Robert’s Rules was important to provide a fair and common structure for conducting community business. Others believed that use of Robert’s Rules hampered communication and created confusion in council meetings because it forced attendees to abide by unnatural formalities. Ultimately, the particular by-laws and rules used to conduct business are not as important as the sense of legitimacy and continuity that comes from having a codified, official method for carrying out business. Council members should re-examine the rules and methods used to guide the neighborhood association and come to a democratically determined agreement about how the organization should be run in the future.

Second, in my observations of two monthly meetings of both the Madisonville and Oakley community councils, I noticed that Oakley leaders were better at organizing themselves. Oakley leaders assembled approximately fifteen to thirty minutes before the general public meetings began. These brief pre-meeting discussions allowed leaders to run through the evening’s agenda, discuss the business at hand, and set a timetable for how the meeting would unfold. Tasks were appropriately delegated among the leaders and each took his responsibilities seriously. Additionally, key council members were positioned at long tables at
the front of the room, which gave a striking visual effect of order and authority. When the time
of the general meeting arrived, the Oakley leadership appeared confident, united, and well
informed.

In Madisonville, both meetings I attended felt disorganized. Even after the appointed
meeting time had passed, council members were still trickling in while equipment was being set
up. Both Madisonville meetings tended to be dominated by the council president, while others
in leadership positions were either absent or had no prepared statements. Those leaders who
did speak were scattered throughout the audience and talked from their seats among the
general public. The visual and organizational effect of the meetings was that the council
appeared casual, disjointed, and uncertain. Based on my observations of the two communities’
monthly meetings, I would suggest that Madisonville leaders initiate the practice of gathering
to share information prior to public meetings as is done in Oakley, and also that the physical
layout of the meeting space be organized as it is for meetings in Oakley. These measures will
help to increase leaders’ confidence in themselves and the importance of their responsibilities,
while also demonstrating to the neighborhood constituency that the council is effective,
legitimate, and well organized.

Finally – and most importantly – beyond appearing effective, the Madisonville
Community Council must act in an effective manner. One interviewee out of sixteen mentioned
that a document of community needs and assets had been crafted during a community council
retreat held in September 2008. According to that document, the ten retreat participants listed
a number of community assets and needs that have already been mentioned as key elements in
the recommendations above. Among the first items on the page and a half of assets listed were
“good people,” “location – central to many things,” “diversity in people and cultures,” “lots of churches,” “the arts center,” and the “recreation center.” On the other hand, the top two community needs as voted by the group were “more involvement from Madisonville residents” and “racial harmony (more communication and cross-over).” If leaders really believe that the community’s top needs are related to social aspects of the neighborhood, they must find points of compromise, concentrate their efforts, and creatively utilize existing community assets to build social capital.


Appendices
Appendix A: List of Interview Questions

Introductory Questions
What are the strengths of your community?
What are the weaknesses of your community?
What are the goals of your community council?
What do you personally hope to achieve for the community by serving on your community council?

Physical Capital
What are the key landmarks that are or could become assets for your community?
What are the most popular places to meet or congregate in your community?

Cultural Capital
Are there community festivals, celebrations, events, etc.? Are these regularly planned events?
Who sponsors these events?

Social Capital
What levels of interaction and trust are there among neighbors in the community?
What do you perceive to be the level of interest and participation among community citizens in neighborhood-wide matters?
What kinds of partnerships and interactions have you noticed between businesses, social service agencies, churches and other groups located solely within your community?
What kinds of partnerships and interactions have you noticed between businesses, social service agencies, churches and other groups in your community and other local communities?
What is the relationship between local law enforcement and community leaders and citizen groups?
**Media**

What level of media coverage does your neighborhood receive?

What do you perceive to be the tone of media coverage about your neighborhood?

**Political Capital**

To what extent are neighborhood citizens politically and civically engaged (e.g., voter turnout, grassroots political activism, etc.)?

Who are the major power players in the community? How are they asserting their power?

What would you say is the average attendance at a typical community council meeting?

Describe the nature and atmosphere of interactions between local citizens and the community council.

Describe the nature and atmosphere of interactions among community council members (i.e., what is the climate of discussion and debate at community council meetings?)

Describe the level of interaction your community council has with neighboring community councils.

Describe the level of attention and resources given to your neighborhood by local, county, and other levels of government.

**Closing Questions**

What kinds of changes have you noticed during the time you’ve lived and/or worked in your community?

What should the broader public know about your neighborhood that may be typically unknown or misunderstood?

Do you have any remaining thoughts, opinions, or anecdotes not covered in the previous questions that you feel will contribute to this study?