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I, Brittany Catania, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture in Architecture (Master of).

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(Re)connect: Transforming Vacant Urban Spaces and Historic Buildings

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

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by

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Abstract

The deterioration of the urban core of cities necessitates the revitalization and reuse of vacant urban spaces and existing historic buildings. These vacant spaces exist as a source of blight for historic neighborhoods. The presence of vacant spaces within the dense block of buildings effect the adjacent buildings, and due to inactivity and lack of occupation, these buildings fall to abandonment and deterioration. In order to reverse the rate of demolition, the simple initial step is occupying these spaces with a variety of uses to prevent further deterioration. As gaps in the historic fabric of a city, these spaces provide the greatest potential for green, outdoor space or new construction. The preservation of row houses as the dominant housing type in American cities is critical since they have the potential to provide dense urban housing or can be adaptively reused for new purposes to serve the community. In many cities across the United States, entire city blocks of row houses remain in a deteriorated condition. This phenomenon persists particularly in Cincinnati within the urban neighborhood of Pendleton. If these vacant buildings are not renovated, they will be in a deteriorated state past the point of reuse and must be torn down due to structural integrity and economic issues. By developing architectural and urban design strategies to reuse vacant spaces and preserve row houses, it will contribute to the overall revitalization of the neighborhood. The revitalization of urban neighborhoods consists of renovating vacant buildings and spaces for a variety of uses. To effectively revitalize the Pendleton neighborhood, a network of paths to (re)connect the vacant spaces is necessary to provide usable outdoor space for both residents and visitors. By preserving the historic fabric of the city, these residential districts provide a livable neighborhood for its residents and can connect with the neighboring commercial areas of the city.
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Introduction

The reality of deteriorated and vacant urban neighborhoods produce damaging effects to the vitality of a community. Most notably, the predominately historic structures that occupy these areas are physical evidence of abandonment, especially noted within dense residential blocks. Many factors created and contributed to the problem of vacant urban spaces. Throughout the 20th century, a common trend in US cities was a shift in population as people moved from the city center to the suburbs. This mobilization trend greatly affected the economic vitality of the dense urban core, resulting in businesses closing and widespread vacancies in residential buildings. The effects of this phenomenon still persist, but many cities have experienced a renewed interest in preserving the historic and abandoned buildings, with a significant population increase and introduction of new businesses. Maintaining the culture and social organization of these areas is fundamental in revitalizing the life of the city, a critical issue to the residents of urban neighborhoods, design professionals who work to preserve these buildings, business owners, local activists, community leaders, and all visitors or tourists.

Image 1- Row Houses Along 13th St. Pendleton
The National Trust for Historic Preservation provides the majority of information for preserving historic buildings through resources and articles for both property owners and design professionals. This organization is the main advocate for the entire historic preservation movement, and provides connections to other local, state and federal organization addressing the policy aspect of preservation. The National Park Service through the Department of the Interior created design standards for all historic preservation work, which are the “best practices” for the profession. Historic designation is a key component to protect historic properties, and exists in different forms such as the National Register listing, local historic district designation or National Historic Landmark status. These various entities provide the framework for preservation. Many planners and preservationists have analyzed these issues of urban revitalization and the degradation of cities, since the 1960’s to 1980’s, when these movements started. The start of the federal government supporting preservation was with the National Preservation Act of 1966, and exists as the defining law of the preservation movement. Critics and leaders of the movement such as Jane Jacobs, Kevin Lynch and James Marston Fitch effectively analyzed the city, and determined the philosophy and methodology for preserving urban environments.

Building Typology

The archetypal precedent of the row house comes from the urban house of cities such as Rome, with the multi-unit apartment building called the insulae. Although the architectural form of this type of building is not exactly like the attached, but individual row houses, it is one of the
earliest types of dense urban housing. These structures could be built inexpensively and provided running water and sanitation to the residents who could not afford to live in the large, single family domus where wealthy families lived. The ground floor of the building was often used for operating small shops and businesses, providing income for the residents who lived above the shop. While this building typology is typically associated with the later mixed-use building, the insulae were the majority of urban houses. The site arrangements of the buildings parallel similarly with the later development of the row house in Europe. The proximity to the urban center of the city provided many positive benefits for people, such as easy access to various public buildings (markets, temples, forums, etc.) and their place of work. These aspects were also prevalent in urban housing when cities were established in the US and continue to be strong elements in both retaining population in urban areas and attracting new residents.

Urban Design Discourse

The field of historic preservation and its situation within the context of the urban environment consists of a variety of factors. From the broadest view of urban space, the city generally changes over time due to the time-place continuum, as outlined by Kevin Lynch in the text *What Time Is This Place*. During this evolution, social and environmental forces leave different meanings and layers of history, which physically accumulate on the structures of the city. The effects of time have contributed to the degradation of urban cores of city, leaving many buildings abandoned and in disrepair. This accumulation of changes over the course of a buildings life is a major concern of preservationists as, “…they are the only building professionals with a pragmatic interest in the long term effects of time on buildings” and “…they
work creatively with the economics and changing uses of buildings”¹. When evaluating historic buildings in the present day, preservationists and designers should acknowledge the cultural meanings and context of a place. The sense of place that current residents of these urban environments possess provides an understanding of urban neighborhoods. In rehabilitating historic buildings, it is important to not displace the current population, but to evaluate their needs and incorporate them into any future revitalization plans.

The main preservation challenge, which faces many cities, is that the housing stock is substandard and buildings are deteriorating, while the urban core holds prominent architectural treasures. The fragmented, complex physical structure of the city presents many challenges in the regeneration of the city. According to prominent preservationist James Marston Fitch, in *Historic Preservation: Curatorial Management of the Built World*, “…the regeneration of such districts involves simultaneously two quite different sets of the requirements: the conservation of the physical fabric of the quarter (i.e., the container) and the protection of the interests of the population (i.e., the contained)”². Defining the context for the buildings in a specific district or neighborhood requires expanding the scope of determining factors beyond visual and formal characteristics, to include cultural meanings, sense of place and abstract relationships between all the buildings. While visual continuity is especially important when renovating an entire block of row houses, preservation work must accommodate contemporary additions, transform vacant buildings for new programmatic uses, and add new layers to the existing patina of the urban core.

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Chapter 1

Proposition:

The development of an architectural solution to renovate and reuse abandoned properties is necessary, to revitalize communities and preserve the historic fabric of the city. Specifically, by creating strategies to revitalize a specific site in the Pendleton neighborhood, this design can effectively be applied to other vacant, urban sites. The overall site plan and specific building design will address the neighborhood’s vacant land and buildings, with the goal of creating usable spaces for the current residents. In the life cycle of any building, there is a critical point, “…that comes at the time of the rehabilitate -or- demolish decision, brought on by real estate pressure or building obsolescence- usually both”. To effectively preserve the historic character and context of residential neighborhoods, it is important to address the issue of vacant lots and buildings. Vacant land in between existing row houses presents both a challenge and opportunity for the community. It adds to the blight and deteriorated state of the area, but is also physical evidence of the evolution of the neighborhood. As a gap in the dense urban environment of an historic neighborhood, these spaces have great potential to be reused and can become the source of new development and revitalization. Although past peak population densities may not be attainable again, there is an opportunity to reuse this land for community space rather than infilling with new and cyclical residential construction. Any design intervention will be somewhat temporary and flexible solution, to accommodate any future changes to the neighborhood and allow for the possibility of adding permanent buildings at a later time.

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3 Brand, Stewart. page 93.
This proposal of design solutions includes reusing both vacant lots and row houses to revitalize the neighborhood, by providing renovated interior spaces and dynamic exterior spaces. To transform the vacant spaces, a network of pathways will connect the previously unusable spaces. This pathway will extend the artistic identity throughout the neighborhood beyond the boundaries to connect to the surrounding areas. By providing spaces for the residents and attracting visitors, new activity can occur during different times of the day and throughout the year, renovating and reusing both interior and exterior spaces, thus effectively revitalizing the neighborhood.

Methodology:

In order to develop a design strategy that addresses the various research goals and specific site issues, it is necessary to determine the factors that should influence this project. The first step is to analyze and understand the demographics of the Pendleton community. To effectively revitalize this neighborhood, it is important to provide usable spaces for the current residents while establishing Pendleton’s identity, especially in relation to the surrounding areas. It is critical in the development of this design project, to test several options to arrive at the most effective and appropriate scheme that addresses the overall goals and outcome. By creating a matrix of all possible design solutions for dealing with the vacant space, the most effective ones can be applied in the most appropriate situations. While this is not a strict preservation approach in terms of the specific design intervention, the overall purpose is to preserve the character of the existing buildings, to reuse vacant buildings to prevent further deterioration and to eventually revitalize the neighborhood. An adaptive reuse treatment is critical for the success of the design
because it offers greater flexibility for the intervention, while maintaining the historic existing shell of the building.

Chapter 2

1. Site

After considering several different urban neighborhoods throughout Cincinnati, consisting of historic row houses in deteriorated conditions, the Pendleton neighborhood best aligns with the research ideas and design goals of this project. Pendleton is a distinct neighborhood part of the encompassing Over the Rhine Historic District listed on the National Register of Historic Places, filled primarily of row houses and smaller residential buildings than in the adjacent area of Over the Rhine.

Image 2- Overview of Pendleton

Approximately 35% of housing units in Pendleton are vacant and large open spaces remain where buildings once stood. Most of the vacant lots and buildings are located along 12th and 13th streets, in the block between Pendleton St. and Reading Road. These lots exist within a block of row houses, and are evidence of where a house once stood. The eleven different houses in Pendleton ordered to be kept vacant by the City of Cincinnati are mainly located adjacent to
these vacant lots. The location of vacant spaces and buildings is a layer of open space within a still fairly dense building stock, which can be reused for new construction or can remain open. This area is close to the cultural institutions and local businesses of the neighborhood, such as the Pendleton Art Center, and is the primary residential section of the neighborhood. There a great potential to provide renovated spaces for the existing residents to live in and hold community meetings and events, while connecting to the nearby cultural organizations and amenities. This site also provides interesting forces adjacent to this neighborhood, that certainly affect this specific community, like the more commercial development in Over the Rhine along Vine Street and the presence of the newly opened casino. The block along Reading Road directly across from the casino consisted of commercial buildings, which has the potential to be renovated to connect to the visitors of the nearby casino.
This commercial connection is an opportunity to respond to the strong economic potential of the casino, while providing the primarily residential area with new and varied uses. These nearby elements influence the primarily residential area of Pendleton, but it remains somewhat isolated by major streets like Liberty Street and Reading Road, which creates a boundary for the neighborhood.

2. Community

The historic preservation of row houses in an urban neighborhood, such as the Pendleton neighborhood of Over the Rhine, renovates the existing building stock and provides a new use to the abandoned buildings. Many original row houses were built as working class or middle class housing, since one contractor would build an entire block, providing dense houses in cities, which were fairly inexpensive options for people. The preservation and renovation of row houses has started to become a more common practice, as developers, local organizations and individuals initiate these efforts. The high amount of vacant buildings in the Over the Rhine historic district, and lack of affordable housing options in the neighborhood led to the creation of Over the Rhine Community Housing. This organization was formed from the merging of two well-established affordable housing organizations, ReSTOC and Over the Rhine Housing Network, to maintain affordable housing options and create community based development.

The Pendleton Art Center is one of the most significant institutions in the Pendleton neighborhood. Through the establishment of this space for artists’ studios, known as the
“world’s largest collection of artists under one roof”
the art center is both regionally and nationally recognized. First Friday, the gallery walk during the first Friday of the month in Over the Rhine, is the only community event that the artists of the Pendleton Art Center participate in. Apart from that event, the Pendleton Art Center does not interact with or connect with the surrounding residents in the Pendleton neighborhood. This disconnect between the art community and the local residents has been recognized and addressed by community organizations. ArtWorks, an organization that creates public art and murals, decided to address this issue during the summer of 2012, when they developed a public art project for Pendleton. They were awarded an Our Town grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in conjunction with tax-increment financing from the Horseshoe Casino Cincinnati development to commission a series of site-specific public works of art to be incorporated into the adjacent neighborhood of Pendleton as part of the streetscape redesign. Streetscape improvements include new sidewalks, street-trees, street lighting, street furniture, and four landscaped plazas appropriate for public art. Several community meetings and workshops have been completed, and when implemented the Pendleton Public Art Project will emphasize creative

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4 Pendleton Art Center website. [http://www.pendletonartcenter.com/](http://www.pendletonartcenter.com/)
place-making through public art, including vertical elements at key intersections and creating a vibrant public identity for the neighborhood.

In order to connect to the art institutions and new community projects, it is important to understand the demographics of the people who live in the neighborhood. The specific Census track data for Pendleton offers beneficial insight about the residents there. While this numerical information does not describe the qualitative aspects of the community, it certainly outlines the general factual information about the residents. The neighborhood is quite diverse and varied, due to age, household composition, income and education. Information regarding the different housing situations is important in developing a design strategy for the neighborhood. For example, 162 households have an income of less than $10,000 (184 people below the poverty line), while 82 households earn between $100,000 and $199,999\textsuperscript{5}. Out of the amount of people living below the poverty line, 102 are single women with children and 17 are single men with children. From the 419 total households, 189 are families, while 230 are non-family households, with the majority living alone. The date that residents moved to Pendleton provides evidence of

\textsuperscript{5} Department of Planning and Buildings, City of Cincinnati. US Census Report, 2010.
the stability and evolution of the community, as 190 householders moved in 2005 or later while only 32 moved in from 1980 to 1989 and 20 moved in from 1970 to 1979. There are 234 vacant housing units out 653 total units, with 202 lacking complete plumbing or kitchen facilities.

These statistics and demographics indicate the varied population, and the condition of the housing stock. As one of the most socioeconomically diverse neighborhoods, a design must include and serve the entire community. There exists a great opportunity for this design to unite the residents by providing flexible outdoor space, to address all activities, events and interactions within the neighborhood. Although Pendleton currently operates as a neighborhood within a neighborhood, due to large roadway boundaries forming the dense residential buildings within, there is a potential to reach out beyond these physical confines and to better connect the institutions within Pendleton.

3. Case Studies

In developing a design strategy to address the issue of the future reuse of abandoned row houses, specific aspects of the overall problem needs to be analyzed. The urban context in which this type of building is located is a critical component to understand, because this environment contributes to the evolution of this architectural typology. Past efforts to successfully revitalize other urban neighborhoods provide a model for potential action in the Pendleton district. Understanding the original design intentions and characteristics of the row house typology will also lend insight into the constraints and the opportunities for changes to the existing building. In providing a new use and life for the abandoned structures, an adaptive design continues the evolution of the row house, both architecturally and historically. By analyzing other innovative
design interventions to existing row houses, such as an addition, facade, or connection and
circulation core, this informs a comprehensive solution for adaptively reusing the building. In
understanding the existing elements and constraints of the typology and the potential for
adaptation, the next step in the evolution of the row house will be discovered.

The overall context of an urban residential area influences the existing physical state of
row houses as a dominant urban housing type. The history of various urban neighborhoods,
specifically in medium sized cities located in the eastern half of the United State, have a similar
evolution due to analogous social factors and events. The typical historical evolution of such
areas followed a sequence of constructing new housing, causing more people move to the city
center, which created dense living conditions. Then, various overarching national events cause
people to leave the urban core and move to suburbs, causing neighborhoods to deteriorate and
become dangerous. In the aftermath of the deteriorated condition of urban housing, the overall
solution was urban renewal consisting of mass slum clearance. After the concerned public and
preservationists were left with this serious loss in the historic building stock, a renewed interest
in preserving the buildings and revitalizing urban neighborhoods occurred. By focusing on a
primarily residential area near a commercial section, past successful revitalization efforts of
comparable urban neighborhoods to Pendleton provide insight about strategies to adopt.
Evaluating what was effective for Fells Point in Baltimore and Society Hill in Philadelphia,
informs future revitalization efforts and strategies for Pendleton. This urban renewal
phenomenon and strategy, of using historic preservation to revitalize the area, consists of
renovating deteriorated or vacant buildings to more adequately accommodate its original or a
different use. The essential element of this strategy for these successful neighborhoods is a mix
of uses, including commercial, industrial, and various residential types. By having a variety of
uses, people fill the area at different times throughout the day, following Jane Jacob’s analysis in
The Death and Life of Great American Cities. The success of revitalization is measured by
occupying vacant buildings, preventing them from further deterioration, renew long term
investment by owners and businesses, and greater activity.

The strategies used in Fells Point and Society Hill did not conform to the typical, urban
renewal action in the 1950-1970’s of destroying deteriorated buildings. Instead the city sold these
buildings at an inexpensive price to home and business owners, and they could help renovate the
structures, investing into the neighborhood. Society Hill introduced larger apartment buildings,
thus creating a variety of different housing types from different time periods. Fells Point focused
on making use of abandoned warehouse buildings for industrial purposes and retail spaces. The
strategy used in both of these revitalization movements was to first, occupy the vacant,
deteriorated buildings with new residents and businesses who by inhabiting the buildings,
become a stable investment force. By inserting new tenants and businesses into the historic
structures, the original use of the buildings changed, diversify these zoned uses. In these
examples, this strategy was successful in that the neighborhood was so vacant and the structures
were in such a deteriorated condition, that simply using the spaces was the critical first step and
stimulated the complete revitalization of the neighborhood. The mix of different types of uses
within a primarily residential area of row houses has proven to successfully increase activity and
investment in these neighborhoods. While Pendleton has some commercial buildings along its
boundaries on Liberty St. and the western side towards Over the Rhine, this area mainly consists
of residential buildings. The previously commercial buildings sit vacant, or were destroyed
leaving a vacant lot and gaps in the existing historic building stock. A similar revitalization of Pendleton can occur when new residents and businesses occupy the vacant buildings and the outdoor spaces are programmed for different uses.

By focusing on the specific building typology of these historic neighborhoods, the row house is the existing building type central to this design proposal. An understanding of the history of this typology and architectural variations of it is critical in analyzing this precedent. While the basic elements of the row house remain the same for each variation, such as adjoining party walls, narrow building footprint, limited outdoor space at the rear, and a connected facade, there are slight changes depending on the time period and location. A major architectural variation involves the exterior and interior arrangement, which essentially changed the typical narrow, rectangular layout. In order to provide more daylight in interior spaces, front to back party walls that run the length of the building, were jogged to provide additional walls for windows. This change improved the interior conditions, while creating a more unique footprint, greatly informing the exterior space behind the house. This departure from the typical row house configuration marked a change from the primarily working class housing type to an efficient, livable housing option for middle class families. As the next wave in row house construction throughout Baltimore and Philadelphia, this type was also predominately built in Pendleton.

Furthermore, in order to preserve this building typology, renovation and adaptive reuse strategies must be adopted to provide a continued use for these buildings. While row house renovation is constantly done by new homeowners, architects or developers, the typical practices focus on minimal changes to interior finishes and bringing the building up to current codes. There are several precedents that go beyond the typical home renovation, and are innovative
solutions that work with and exploit the existing structural constraints. These designs challenge the boundaries of the existing shell of the row house, while improving living conditions and allowing for new spatial arrangements. The basic concepts of addition, connection, and circulation introduce new elements into the existing box and break the party wall boundaries to connect interior spaces across units. Another strategy focuses on the planar surfaces that create the exterior of the house, by introducing a new rear facade and creating connections between interior and exterior spaces. One example of a project that adds a circulation element is the Lorber Tarler house in Washington, DC, designed by Robert Gurney. This renovation provides a new circulation core to better connect interior spaces and introducing natural daylight, as this element also functions as a light well. The success of this design is that it works within the existing structure to drastically improve the interior spaces, while these changes are not visible from the front facade, thus avoiding disruption to the historic character. The concept of addition also incorporates a new rear facade in the Barcode house project. This design removes the rear facade, which was typically not the architectural focus of row houses, and usually has a few windows without any ornament or detail. The opaque facade does not provide visual connections from interior to exterior. This project, along with the Flip House by Fougeron adds a completely new facade, with floor to ceiling glazing, thus updating the houses use for contemporary living and prioritizes the need for outdoor, more private living spaces. A local precedent breaks the boundaries between row house units, to create more flexibility in how the interior spaces are used. The Parvis Lofts connect multiple adjoining mixed-use buildings along an entire block of Vine Street in Over the Rhine. While the businesses occupying the ground level of the buildings remains contained in the existing wall designation, the residential units on the upper floors often
span between two buildings. A newly constructed connector is visible from the alley at the rear of the building, which is added to the existing brick walls and operates as a corridor for circulation between many residential units. Even though these precedents accommodate a continuation of the original residential use of the building, they provide unique solutions for working with or breaking the architectural constraints of the row house, thus inspiring new interventions to allow for a different use of the building.
Finally, the design for this project also consists of determining flexible, low cost urban design solution, in order to quickly transform vacant spaces. A variety of precedents exist, that essentially achieve the similar goal of allowing and encouraging activity in the previously unused space. The majority of project examples include some type of seating element, made from either recycled or inexpensive materials that can easily be assembled and removed, thus allowing for future changes to the site. Another urban design strategy, addresses how to reuse underutilized spaces like parking spaces or street corners, such as the Parklet concept by Rebar Design Studio. This idea has become a national movement called Park(ing) Day, different days throughout the year in cities across the country, where artists and designers assemble a park like environment within the narrow dimensions of a parking space. While this usually simply consists of a piece of faux grass with a table and chairs, it proves exactly how little it takes to create a usable outdoor space for people. Some of these project have turned into more permanent installations, such as the Walklet project, a modular system that are integrated within parking spaces or sidewalks. The value of a project like this shows how a simple built intervention can quickly adapt these in
between spaces for new uses. Often these tactical or user-generated urbanism strategies jumpstart the future use of a space, by testing intervention at a smaller scale, leading to a more permanent responsive and informed design.

While these projects are flexible and temporary, they have the power to eventually inform long-term planning processes and city planning policies, by showing creative solutions for how to reuse underutilized urban spaces.

In conclusion, the value of reuse strategies, both for renovating row houses and transforming vacant urban spaces, can inform the design intent for this project. Urban design consists of testing out different options, as there is not one correct solution, because different combinations will effectively activate a space. In analyzing what these different design interventions accomplish, this matrix shows how these simple forms can create a variety of built elements to be combined and applied to the sites in Pendleton. Depending on the time of year,
and different events and activities, these urban elements can be moved and assembled accordingly. By creating an overall plan for the design elements of each exterior space and connecting to the adjacent interior space that will be renovated, these vacant spaces of Pendleton can be reused and revitalized for the community.

4. Program

The row house building type requires specific sizes of interior spaces, based on the exterior dimensions, especially for a project in an existing building. While the row housing type varies in the interior sequence of functional spaces and circulation, there are several standard elements that define this typology. The narrow building layout, high ceiling heights and the passageway from the sidewalk to back alley that is specific to Cincinnati row houses, are all elements to incorporate and emphasize in this design. The interior space of the existing, vacant
row houses is reused for artistic, community and educational programmed uses. Specifically, the ground level of each building is used for various purposes that will include an art gallery, community meeting space, studio space, classrooms, and event space. The upper levels of the buildings are used for office space, as support for the businesses below, and residential space. One functional connection between the ground and upper levels is that it is live and work space for artists. An important aspect of this design is to connect between the interior space of the vacant row houses to the adjacent exterior vacant lot. The exterior space is used for community events, outdoor space, and the location for public works of art.

The experience of moving through the vacant spaces along the Art Walk is defined by overarching concepts for each space. While the functions and activities will change throughout the year for each space, there is an initial idea guiding the design of each space, following the process of moving from the Pendleton Art Center to the Casino and vice versa. While the path is designated, people can stop and occupy the space or can stray away from the path to another part of the neighborhood. Since the path makes use of the North-South direction counter to the emphasized East-West orientation of the major streets, there is a greater potential for residents to experientially come in contact
with the network of pathways. The space closest to the Pendleton Art Center is focused on “exhibit” or displaying art, serving both the artists occupying the center and the local residents. This can include an outdoor art gallery on displaying work on flexible panels, projecting films on a blank wall, or an interactive art installation. The next space further south exists as the “creating” or making space, where built interventions serve as seating and work surfaces. This environment fosters collaboration by providing a variety of flexible seating elements, and also serves an educational purpose, by accommodating art workshops for residents. As the central location within the residential area, the program is integrated and easily accessible in the community. The final space along the path closest to the Casino is the bridge between the residential area of Pendleton on the northern side of Reading Road and the commercial area on the opposite side. This is the first space that most visitors experience and is about “performing” by allowing different entertainment possibilities to attract people from outside Pendleton. Although this space is not clearly visible from Reading Road, the start of the path is a visual cue leading to the performance space.

Image 15- Urban Activity Scenarios
Chapter 3: Design Solution

In following the programmatic requirements, site selection, and design precedents, the solution consists of a flexible strategy of temporary and permanent interventions. The pathway connecting the three designated spaces seeks to create a pedestrian oriented zone perpendicular to the orientation of the major streets. This direction is delineated by a frame system ranging from 10 to 12 feet high to align with the top of the window openings of the existing buildings. In order to clearly connect in terms of spatial proximity to the existing buildings forming the boundaries of the vacant lots, the paths go along the side facade of one building for each space. The frame system along the path is the first piece of the transformation, as other elements can attach to the structure, such as a canopy, balcony for the second floor, lighting and foliage. Visual continuity is key for the cohesiveness of the overall design, so the path will continue across sidewalks and roads by painting stripes the same width as the concrete path through the vacant space. The frame system will be repeated to create the built elements to define the programmed space. This structure is literally the frame work for additional elements to be added, and the simple wood construction can easily be assembled and disassembled. In order to connect to the interior spaces, the frames follow the height of the floor plates of the existing buildings, thus allowing for balconies to by constructed. This also allows for the window openings to be used as open portals to move between interior and exterior, and visually extends the existing levels into the open, vacant spaces.

While the frames are an orthogonal element, a contrasting element is crucial, to add a level of whimsy and flexibility for a space that is so defined by the dense arrangement of narrow row houses. A curved, organic element is the contrast, which can effectively attach to the
existing frame system. By creating a unit that can be made of a variety of materials depending on the element’s function, they can be moved and plugged into the frame structure. As a seating element, the curved piece is made out of small wood planks, which meets the ground and existing facade at different points. The seat can curve up to make a table, or flatten to become part of the ground. When the piece meets the building, it appears to be part of the facade being peeled away. From a technical perspective, where the curved element attaches to the brick facade, a layer of insulation can be added to increase energy efficiency of existing wall. When a building within a row of attached structures is demolished, the energy performance of the wall is compromised, because it was never intended to be an exterior walls. These party walls are particularly susceptible to heat loss due to the one to two wythe brick layer. Any opportunity to add insulation integrated with the curved element is necessary. Another material that can be used to create the curves is a screen of different colors to provide shade and a colorful element that transforms the space depending on the sun angle. As shading, shelter, seating, tables, ground surface, the curves are a unifying organic element that interact and contrast with the orthogonal frame system.

In translating this design language and strategy to the interior spaces of the adjacent vacant buildings, there will be a degree of flexibility with determining the arrangement of spaces.
A similar structure of frames and panels will be the intervention to delineate different rooms and spaces. The program of the interior will corollate with the functions of the outdoor spaces and will need to accommodate different events and activities that will change throughout the year. The art gallery, workshop, and community event space require both large and smaller areas, created by moveable panels, requiring no significant changes to the historic buildings. The shell of the existing building remains intact with the greatest intervention occurring at the window openings. For the openings on the ground level, several will become door openings to further connect the exterior and interior spaces. This change will not affect the overall appearance of the facade besides remove a few rows of brick at the bottom of the window opening. Another significant addition to the buildings’ structure will be the emphasis of existing passageway from the front facade to the rear alley that exists for two out of the three existing buildings. These passageways contain the stairwell to connect all levels of the building which will be maintained.
Although the design of the upper levels are not included in this project, they will function as more private, support spaces for the ground level, consisting of offices, classrooms, and some residential quarters for artists. The passageways currently have gates to prohibit trespassing, and while this security is important, it is critical for the success of the community space to allow people to travel through this passage. This issue of security is present currently because so many of the surrounding buildings are vacant, but once the area is slowly revitalized the presence of constant activity from the businesses on the ground level will make it a safer place. The passageway will also operate as a small shelter during poor weather before entering the building.

The goal of this revitalization strategy is foremost to preserve the historic character of the neighborhood and the integrity of the existing building stock. While parts of the intervention is temporary and flexible to allow for the evolutionary changes that occur in urban environments, certain elements are more permanent, like the landscape design of the ground surface. A palette of materials consisting of brick, concrete, stone and grass will be installed to delineate how the exterior space is used. To reference the history of the neighborhood, in terms of existing buildings, the design of the ground cover will be in the pattern of the original and highest building density, from a 1922 Sanborn map. This will be subtle enough to infuse the history of Pendleton into the new interventions, showing that each layer of physical change to an urban space accumulates and should not be destroyed. The shapes of buildings in the plan will become patches of greenery, and stone strips will outline the buildings and roads. This idea is referenced
in another part of Pendleton, in a mural that shows the grid of the neighborhood with existing and demolished buildings highlighted. Although this is one of the most intensive parts of the new design, it will be needed addition to the existing condition of the vacant lots, which are currently large, unmaintained areas of grass, that people avoid walking through.

Image 19- Overall Site Plan

Conclusion

Deteriorated, vacant urban spaces exists as the source of blight for historic neighborhoods. These spaces in the historic fabric of the city have the greatest potential for reuse. Most vacant spaces eventually effect the adjacent buildings, due to inactivity and lack of occupation, these buildings fall to abandonment and deterioration as well. In order to reverse the rate of demolition, the simple initial step is occupying these spaces with a variety of uses to prevent further deterioration. The outlined design strategies to revitalize the Pendleton neighborhood, can be translated to other urban sites. By providing and accommodating a variety of activities and uses for both the interior and exterior spaces, the simple presence of people will start the revitalization of the area. The current lack of usable outdoor space for the residents of Pendleton is dire, especially in order to connect to the artistic presence in the neighborhood. The
pathways and structures serve as the framework for different uses, incorporating the user-generated urbanism methodology to make the space truly responsive to the existing residents and groups of Pendleton. By creating flexible design interventions, these spaces can continue to evolve, adapting to changing residents, businesses and other outside forces. With a variety of these strategies, the neighborhood will eventually be revitalized, thus (re)connecting the previously vacant urban spaces, infusing new life within the existing community in the historic environment.
Bibliography


