I, Daniella Beltran, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Community Planning in Community Planning.

It is entitled:
Unraveling a Place-Based Experience: Mapping a Commercial Evolution in Over-the-Rhine, Cincinnati, OH

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Committee member: Christopher Auffrey, Ph.D.
Unraveling a Place-Based Experience: Mapping a Commercial Evolution in Over-The-Rhine, Cincinnati, OH

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ABSTRACT

We, as shoppers, homeowners, employees, company executives, and onlookers, have been convinced that Over-the-Rhine (OTR) is where we should be and where we want to be. This is made evident by consistently rising retail sales, condominium/town-home development and sales, employment increases, company relocations, and media attention. These indicators of a growing economy contrast with the devastated circumstances experienced throughout the neighborhood’s history. OTR seems to have instilled a renewed sense of place, made up by a pleasing physical setting, a distinct image, and a range of activities for people to participate in. As the current commercial scene undergoes dramatic changes, it becomes increasingly worthwhile to understand how the commercial experience being created today compares to past experiences. An investigation of patterns in commercial use over time can provide context to our understanding of OTR’s evolved sense of place.

This study documents the spatial arrangement of ground-floor commercial spaces, organized by product and/or service type, as listed for the years 1930, 1961, 1993, and 2017. The patterns of changes observed demonstrate an organizational difference between commercial development that occurs “naturally” and that “instigated.” Growth and decline of ground-floor commercial spaces experienced incremental decline between 1930 and 1993, while the period between 1993 and 2017 shows the effect of large-scale influence. The businesses that maintained through decline show optimal locations and the capacity of an area to support multiples of a type. For retail types of businesses, a location on a core north-south street, and at an intersection, facilitated ongoing active commercial use over time. Industrial and wholesale businesses tended to locate at the edges of the communities in the neighborhood. Commercial uses with cultural significance also tended to last.
The commercial make-up that existed in each year experienced changes over time as well, where the proportion of daily goods and services located in OTR was higher historically than the proportion found today. Now, uses like bars/restaurants, leisure goods, and parking take up more space. This shift in predominate commercial uses reflects a correlated shift in who is being accommodated by OTR’s commercial businesses, namely outsiders to the neighborhood with access to discretionary spending. This is an outcome of a pervasive decrease in neighborhood population which caused the decrease of business operations.

The state of vacancy, paired with social pressures for change, provided an opportunity for OTR to serve a new role in the metropolitan area. A concerted effort has led to a creation of an experience-based economy which offers a unique urban lifestyle for visitors and new residents, but which does not offer the daily needs of a socio-economically mixed resident base. While the establishment of a new economy has been critical to instigating change, movement toward production that is linked to current and future types of consumption will create to a commercial network that contributes to a local economy that can be sustained over time.
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I want to thank Dr. Conrad Kickert for encouraging me to take on a thesis project, since the early days of my pursuit of a Master’s degree. His guidance throughout this project has been much appreciated. His personal research of retail patterns over time for different cities was critical to my development of a methodology for this research. I would also like to thank Dr. Christopher Auffrey whose eagerness to learn as much from me as I have learned from him has been rewarding. His years of experience in Cincinnati was a helpful source of reference. In addition, his ability to relate my findings to his experiences in Denver, CO, strengthened my perspective on the relevance of this research. I am extremely thankful for the time and insights provided to me by Kathleen Norris and John Yung, with Urban Fast Forward, and Lann Field with 3CDC. I have further valued the encouragement received from my classmates and others who have learned about my research along the way. Lastly, thank you to Kristina Fancher for her critical help in securing my first-choice presentation room for my defense of this work.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

Commerce has long had a critical role in society, as demonstrated by settlement patterns of early civilizations. Land that was fertile allowed the growth of crops and production of goods. Proximity to infrastructure, like waterways, or other societies permitted exchange of such items. As settlements began to be designed, the marketplace was often centrally located, serving economic, political, and social functions, as exemplified by the Greeks’ agora. For urban societies, stronger connections to other production hubs later encouraged specialization of offerings, as is discussed by economic base theory. As an economy develops, the potential for invention and/or innovation becomes more likely, allowing for growth to happen. Technological advancements have been shown to increase the efficiency of production so successfully that less people become needed to perform the work. This redirects human resources toward continued innovation, until a new industry is created or a current industry enlarged, and the cycle repeats. The employment shift from agriculture to industry to services demonstrates this pattern.

Various sources since the 1980s suggest another shift is transpiring, or already has, from a service-based economy to an experience-based economy. This shift implies significant repercussions for the places that direct efforts to establishing an experience economy. A critical component to this economy is being in or being able to create a distinct place, where the physical setting is appealing and navigable, people have opportunities to engage in a diverse range of activities, and where traditions and local culture contribute to an expressive conception. In such a place, a business participating in an experience economy will profit from their offering of “a steady flow of fantasies, feelings, and fun.”

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2 Elizabeth C. Hirschman and Morris B. Holbrook, “The Experiential Aspects of Consumption: Consumer
Historic urban places are a logical option for this type of economy to grow in, given their typical strengths and weaknesses. Many old cities and towns have vacant buildings accessible through existing infrastructure, along with a sense of culture and symbolism created through activities of past residents. Current use of these assets involves the need to modernize and improve spaces and features, however, this is not an overbearing obstacle. Historic preservation has been shown to be a viable strategy, with funding opportunities, for making improvements to the existing physical setting. Additionally, rather than create a theme for an experience, new development located in a historic urban fabric have a ready-made theme to work with. These places that once had a strong sense of place during their early history, but lost it over the course of past shifts in the economy, like the mid-20th century flight of people and commerce to the suburban areas, for example, now stand to regain competitiveness and market growth.

This shift into an experience economy can be witnessed in the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood of Cincinnati, Ohio. An economical change was desperately needed in this space with a broken sense of place, but with the pieces still available. Economic growth is materializing as an identifiable place is being created. This identity takes advantage of a discernible historic building stock and relics of a unique cultural history that new activities can use to establish meaningfulness. The word “rebirth” is often used to describe the redevelopment taking place in this neighborhood, but just how similar is the new experience of this place to the experience a long-gone resident may have had? How have the activities offered in this neighborhood evolved?

This research focuses on the role of activities to the identity of a place by unraveling what the commercial experience has been across time for this historic neighborhood in Cincinnati, Ohio.

1.2 BACKGROUND

Over-the-Rhine (OTR) is a neighborhood in Cincinnati, OH, located just north of the downtown central business district. The city of Cincinnati has a 2015 estimated population of 298,550, 30.5% of whom are living in poverty. The racial make-up of the city encompasses about 53.6% White residents and 45% Black residents, with the remaining portion other. The business community consists of 26,855 firms, as calculated in 2012. Of these, nine are Fortune 500, per a 2016 list, and two are Fortune 100. Procter and Gamble, established in Cincinnati in 1837, and Kroger, established there in 1883, represent the two highest revenue hometown companies, and thus hold a great stake in the city’s success.

All real estate classes are represented in OTR: residential, commercial, mixed-use, institutional and industrial. OTR is like many American central urban neighborhoods in that it is currently experiencing dramatic redevelopment aimed at changing perceptions of the downtown area and offering a new lifestyle for urban residents. The peak era for OTR is considered to have been during its early years of growth in the middle of the 19th century when Cincinnati was a highly-ranked industrial hub. Factory-work offered wage opportunities, a large population offered opportunities for entrepreneurial ventures, and a growing brewing industry provided both profits and a memorable social scene. The demise of OTR began with the temporary death of production and distribution of all alcohol, it continued through the Great Depression, and into modern day. A critical low point was reached in

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5 “Cincinnati City QuickFacts.” U.S. Census Bureau.
7 “Over-the-Rhine (South) Historic District,” Designation Report, Cincinnati City Planning Department, September 1993.
April, 2001 when a young black man with misdemeanor warrants to his name, was shot and killed by a white police officer. Four days of violent rioting ensued, much like the race riots experienced in Miami in 1989 and in Los Angeles in 1992, where anger and frustration manifested into physical destruction of the community. This event, which prompted a civil rights investigation and a strict curfew to curtail further unrest, showed the city, the nation, and the world that Cincinnati was a segregated and socially deprived place in need of attention and change.


As businesses owners feared, the negative perception of Cincinnati endured much longer than the...
riots lasted. Leaders in the corporate community began to work with local officials to develop an implementable strategy for bringing change to the city. In 2003, the Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC) was created by large Cincinnati-based corporations and tasked with the mission “to strengthen the core assets of downtown by revitalizing and connecting the Fountain Square District, the Central Business District, and Over-the-Rhine.”

Perceptions of OTR as a crime ridden neighborhood were slow to change, and were even supported in 2009, by a neighborhood assessment company that listed Over-the-Rhine as the most dangerous neighborhood in America. The marketing and development strategy focused on the ways in which the neighborhood was distinct from other urban neighborhoods. Pervasive demolition of OTR’s Italianate and other historically stylistic, 19th century buildings was avoided while the city focused on clearing other neighborhoods. Thus, it’s historic urban fabric is largely intact, characterized by narrow streets and small block sizes, which supports pedestrian traffic and mixed-use development. It was also helpful for 3CDC that control of multiple blocks was possible through the opportunity to purchase

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contiguous parcels. These aspects, in addition to a decision to lease commercial space only to local businesses, have contributed to what seems to be a changed urban neighborhood.

In 2016, as part of Politico Magazine’s What Works series, the story of Over-the-Rhine was described to showcase how the neighborhood went from “the most dangerous neighborhood” to the place to be. Allen Woods, co-founder of a business incubator located on Vine Street in OTR affirms that, “if you’re from out of town, this is where you go. If you’re from [here], this is the neighborhood to be in.” This changed perception is supported through consistently rising retail sales, condo/townhome development and sales, employment increases, and media attention. For example, Empower Marketing Media, Incorporated, one of Cincinnati’s largest marketing firms, is currently building a new, 64,000 square-foot headquarters in the heart of this neighborhood on E. 14th Street, between Vine and Walnut. It will bring its 150 employees, contributing to a running total of about 1,000 recent (since 2015) and expected employees (through 2017) coming in to OTR.

**1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Over-the-Rhine’s retail scene dominates the imagery of the neighborhood, a result of significant investment in commercial development. Consumers flock to take part in the urban experience; a symbiosis of commercial uses within a preserved historic environment. This has fostered dramatic change to the neighborhood, with more and more boarded-up storefronts turning into operating ventures. Consequently, social and cultural shifts are taking place, as indicated by the demographic

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changes of OTR residents and expanding tourism.

Connections to the neighborhood’s history are being incorporated by long-standing offerings, like the annual celebration of Bockfest, but also through new business ventures. History has become part of OTR’s experience. For example, American Legacy Tours guide participants through historical narratives in the places where notable events have taken place, and recently established is an OTR Brewery District, featuring the new Rhinegeist Brewery, and a new beer garden, housed in a former service and radio installation company, called Queen City Radio. However, beyond the physical remnants of historical buildings and published accounts of the social circumstances, an understanding of the form and function of historic commercial uses across the neighborhood is not currently readily accessible. An expanded knowledge of how commercial patterns have evolved could provide insights relevant to future commercial planning.

To achieve this clarified understanding of OTR’s commercial evolution the following questions will be addressed by this project:

1. How has the organization of commercial uses within Over-the-Rhine changed since 1930?
   1.1. What has changed, regarding patterns?
   1.2. Why has it changed, regarding forces?

2. Does the current commercial development strategy follow historical patterns?
   2.1. Have patterns of commercial transformation changed?
   2.2. Why has it changed?

1.4 APPROACH

This first question, regarding changes to the physical state of commercial uses since 1930, seeks a comparative analysis. Historical business data was applied to a physical representation of Over-the-Rhine, creating historical commercial use maps that could be compared with a current commercial use map. Given the limited time available for this research, and based on the desire to uncover patterns, the period between 1930 and today, 2017, was divided into three intervals and four years of measurement. The years chosen were based on overlapping data available from the mapping and business directory sources.

Historical geographical data provided documentation of the built environment. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Cincinnati, OH, which were historically used to assess buildings for fire insurance purposes, offered this data, but with limited years available in which data was not altered. Changes to buildings and surrounding context were often made on top of previously drawn maps, until a decision was made to draw a new map. While a Sanborn Map began, for instance, in 1904, the data reflects information accurate to the year 1930, when the map was shelved and a new map created the following year. Therefore, the first two historical years selected for study are 1930 and 1961. After this time, Sanborn Maps were no longer being produced for Cincinnati. To keep the spacing between the years being analyzed as consistent as possible, the next year selected for study was 1993, at which point the United States Geological Survey (USGS) provided high-quality aerial imagery. The 1993 aerial image was compared with the 1961 Sanborn Map to identify and draw changes to the built environment. Google maps was also referenced to support this identification process. For the current, 2017 map, base layer data was gathered from the Cincinnati Area Geographic Information System (CAGIS) database, with drawing files updated in 2015. Accuracy for this latest map was confirmed through street observations and Google satellite images.
The descriptive data, which provides the name of the business and type of product sold was referenced from both the 1929-1930 and 1961 Williams’ Cincinnati Directory, and the 1993 Polk Directory. For the 2017 map, this information was referenced from the OTR Chamber of Commerce, compared with Google Maps, and confirmed through an on-the-ground walking analysis.

Given the quantity of businesses observed in the study area, the business listings have been organized into categories and color-coded on the four maps. This informs the changes that occurred for the type of products and/or services offered by the commercial spaces. Furthermore, changes to the square footage calculations for each category, for each year mapped, can be analyzed and compared since the markers annotate the ground floor building footprints. The categories used for this study reference those described in work conducted by Dr. Kickert whose studies, “Active Centers-Interactive Edges: The Rise and Fall of Ground Floor Frontages” and “Retail Critical Mass” analyze retail changes over time. The categories, which come from research in The Netherlands, are defined as: “Fun,” meaning non-daily comparison or shopping goods; “Destination,” meaning non-daily, non-comparison goods and services; “Run,” meaning daily goods; and “Bar/Restaurant.” A few additional categories were made to differentiate “Entertainment,” which describes non-food entertainment such as theaters and bowling alleys, “Wholesale,” “Auto-oriented,” “Industrial,” and “Parking/Garage.” The table below further outlines these categories and the types of businesses they describe.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>FUN</strong></th>
<th><strong>DESTINATION</strong></th>
<th><strong>RUN</strong></th>
<th><strong>BAR/RESTAURANT</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department store</td>
<td>Home goods</td>
<td>Groceries</td>
<td>Bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>DIY/hardware</td>
<td>Convenience store</td>
<td>Café</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure goods</td>
<td>Electronics</td>
<td>Specialty foods</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewelry/luxury goods</td>
<td>Furnishing</td>
<td>Personal care</td>
<td>Night club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and antiques</td>
<td>Books</td>
<td>Drugstore</td>
<td>Billiards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifts/novelty items</td>
<td>Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pawn shop</td>
<td>Barber/salon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Categories of goods and services used to organize the retail businesses on maps. Other categories used by this study are self-evident: auto-oriented, parking, and industrial.

With these four commercial uses maps in combination with relevant external sources, the second question can be addressed through comparisons and interpretations of the physical patterns. This analysis will be discussed in Chapter 3 of this report. These interpretations consider discussions from Dr. Kickert’s previously mentioned research and other works, in addition to qualitative information provided by professionals in the development field. This qualitative information supports an understanding of the intentionality of the businesses shown.

1.5 **SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS**

This research contributes digital documentation of commercial uses, organized by type, as they existed in 1930, 1961, 1993, and 2017. Presenting this data spatially allows an interpretation of physical patterns to be drawn and comparisons made between the specified time periods. The findings will be limited to the study area shown below, consistent with the study area used in a 2015 Housing Inventory study of Over-the-Rhine and Pendleton\(^\text{19}\), and the neighborhood’s definition used

in Miller and Tucker’s *Changing Plans for America’s Inner Cities*. Population data relies on years when U.S. Census surveys were conducted, which do not coincide exactly with the years selected for study. Since population data is used to provide context to the study data collected, populations numbers provided are taken from the closest year a survey was conducted. The map below outlines both the area of study and the U.S. Census tracts that make up the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood. These tract outlines have changed somewhat over time. This will also slightly skew the accuracy of a comparison of population data between the study periods. The population trend, however, can appropriately be compared.

Figure 3. Over-the-Rhine is bounded by the CUF, Mt. Auburn, Central Business District, and West End neighborhoods. Within OTR are the West McMicken, Mohawk, Findlay Market, Washington Park, OTR Central, and Pendleton community areas. Population figures can be approximated based on survey data from U.S.
The data is also limited by the availability and accuracy of information provided by The Williams’ Cincinnati directories, the Polk directory, and Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps.

The Sanborn Maps were drawn across many pages to create a complete city map, so the physical maps were scanned, scaled, and stitched to create a cohesive historical map of OTR. Minor discrepancies, due to this process, exist in the maps created, however they are not significant enough to impede on the research conducted. The data most affected by this limitation is the calculations of commercial square footage. Since the data is aggregated, and not considered individually, the result will still inform the trend of the changes in commercial square footage.
CHAPTER 2: NATIONAL TRENDS IN COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

2.1 SHIFTS IN COMMERCIAL STRATEGIES AND URBAN IMPLICATIONS

Prior to World War II, large department stores commonly located in the center of a city because it was viewed as the most central and hence desirable location for a regional market. They became associated with the identity of the city, even a source of pride. In Cincinnati for example, Shillito’s department store, which encompassed 17 acres of floor space in 1955, served as a long-standing contributor to the community, offering space for events such as a “Craft Shop of the Handicapped.”

A mix of public and private commercial uses, offered by banks, cinemas, department stores, supermarkets, and automobile dealerships, created a strong commercial draw to city centers during the 1950s. A drop from this era occurred with the introduction of new, wider and bypass roads that redirected traffic around city centers. Main streets that once experienced 30,000 cars in a day were seeing less than 5,000. Furthermore, developers saw the bypass roads as opportunities to build new shopping centers, often incorporating retailers who had previously been located downtown.

“Between 1954 and 1977, the total retail market share in American city centers dropped by 77 percent.” With wealthy residents now primarily living in suburban neighborhoods, small and midsize retailers, restaurants, and some offices followed. Many industrial companies relocated to take advantage of access to open land to use for expansion. The retail businesses that managed to stay were well-established and purpose-driven, self-owned, and carried low overhead. Manufacturers involved with apparel and printing, for example, continued to do well in the center, during the 1960s. Some were owned or controlled by entrepreneurs or hobbyists who engaged in the business for

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21 “Craft Shop of the Handicapped,” The Cincinnati Enquirer (Cincinnati, OH), May 21, 1933.
23 Gibbs, Principles of Urban Retail, 45.
enjoyment purposes and whose livelihood was not tied in with the success of the retail business. This series of circumstances was typical across American cities throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

A consequence of the departure of the centrally-located department store has been a lack of name brands and products and services that match the competitive prices of those found in peripheral shopping centers. Retail in downtowns are instead based primarily on entertainment, dining, tourism, or are so specialized they cannot rely on nearby residents for adequate profits. This has created a situation where urban residents have no places within walking distance or a short drive to purchase their primary goods and services. If downtowns keep to this model, the suburban centers will continue to see urban consumers.

In his handbook on urban retail, planner Robert Gibbs lays out ten principles that have shown to influence the success of a retail business across retail and location type:

- Sustainable shopping centers and urban centers should sell the goods and services that people desire and need
- Shoppers do not need to shop
- Convenience retailing needs to be convenient
- Street-front retailing requires on-street parking
- Form follows freeway and finance
- Shopping centers over 30,000 SF in area require anchor stores
- Parking must be well planned and convenient, but it does not need to dominate the center
- Anchors are essential for downtowns and most shopping districts
- Retailers must sell merchandise and earn profits

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24 Gibbs, Principles of Urban Retail, xxi-xxii.
Many of these principles inform either the environmental factors that are created around newly
developed commercial spaces, or describe characteristics that an existing environment should
address in some way. An ability to sell the desired goods and services requires a commercial balance
between consumer demand and the supply of offerings. Strict land use regulations, which limit
suburban development, as shown across many small European towns, exemplify how short
distances between supply and demand facilitate this balance. It is more common, however, for
towns and cities to experience dramatic ebbs and flows of consumption due to a disassociation
between the two.

The concept that shoppers do not need to shop, the second principle, touches on a relevant
incompatibility between market and place. Retailers must be relevant to be visited, so they achieve
this by frequently changing aspects of the shopping experience, and tailoring it to current consumer
interests. The real estate development process, and product inventory cycle, however, favor stability.
Given this dependence on trends that often change, a higher risk factor is associated with retail
types of commercial uses compared to other types, such as office or industrial. The response to this
risk is the opportunity for higher reward, which increases in urban areas with mixed uses, where
more uncontrollable factors exist, like nearby vacancy or unwanted retailers.

If implemented and managed well, commercial businesses can generate positive side effects for a
community. The business will provide a maintained space along the street, the owner will be able to
take care of employees, contribute to active streets through extended hours, and provide the
commercial needs of the community.
2.2 FROM COMMODITIES, TO GOODS, TO SERVICES, TO EXPERIENCES AND TRANSFORMATIONS

Gibbs’ ten retail principles coincide with a concept called the “experience economy,” described by Joseph Pine and James Gilmore in their 1999 book, *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre & Every Business a Stage*. The concept frames experiences as a type of economic output, evolved from commodities, goods, and services. Experiences happen on a stage, seek to be memorable, are personal, are revealed over a duration of time, view buyers as guests and are marked by how sensational they are. No two experiences can be the same because how a guest reacts to a staged event involves their prior state of mind and being. The price, and therefore value of commodities, goods, and services can be increased when incorporated into an experience.

Drivers for the experience economy include technological advances, the increasing need for businesses to differentiate, and overall rising affluence. This last driver is what causes more people to seek out notable experiences, more often. To be memorable, an experience should incorporate opportunities for both active and passive participation, and immersive and absorptive connections. Educational, escapist, esthetic, and entertainment types of experiences are described by these aspects. Club Disney in Thousand Oaks, California, is an example where comprehensive experiences can be had, offered in “a place in the community where children and their grown-ups have fun and bond with one another through enriching activities and imaginative play.”

Worthwhile experiences are thought to require distinctive places, to which Pine and Gilmore offer these suggestions:

- Theme the experience

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- Harmonize impressions with positive cues
- Eliminate negative cues
- Mix in memorabilia (connect goods to experiences)
- Engage the five senses

Movie theaters that charge a premium because the venue has become a place worth experiencing, in and of itself, has found a way to engage the market in this way. Shopping malls have followed suit, and will need to offer revolving experiences to get customers to keep coming, as Gibbs acknowledged.

Customization and individualization are also important and can be scaled up to suit larger ventures by creating systems that engages customers and allows them to interact with the purchasing process. Through intentional interactions, businesses can better offer what a consumer specifically desires and can gain the opportunity to surprise a customer by surpassing expectations and building suspense into what will be offered in the future. Pine and Gilmore foresee successful businesses will be ones that literally take on the model that theater implements to create a performance, incorporating drama, scripts, a stage, and audience. The behaviors currently experienced during interactions with helpful customer service representatives demonstrate the basic skills that will be added to by performers of the experience economy.

A repercussion of this economic evolution is that things we have expected to receive for free will begin to incur a fee. Furthermore, experiential offerings are not the end of this anticipated evolutionary trajectory. Pine and Gilmore expect the experience economy to become commoditized in the future. When this occurs, it will be the individualization of experiences that will set the ground for transformations as the highest level of economic offering. Where the staging of an experience sought to be memorable by engaging the customer in an interactive way, guidance through a significant and
long-lasting change will be the goal of the transformational economy. Rather than being a guest to a performance, the buyer in this economy becomes an aspirant to a change. The business involved in this will be responsible for diagnosing aspirations, staging experiences, and following through to assure a transformation. To be successful this offering will require a new level of individual commitment, care, and trust. The connection across the evolution of economic offerings is one in which commodities create goods, goods support services, services are operations for experiences, and experiences are events that will guide transformations.

2.3 EVOLUTION OF CONSUMER SPENDING

Commissioned by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Michael Dolfman and Denis McSweeney compiled data on consumer spending, economic status, and family demographics of U.S. households, provided by Consumer Expenditure Surveys, to discuss changes in these areas over time.

National influences on the data shown for 1934-1936 include an increasingly aging and urbanizing U.S. population, which was also recovering from the 1929 stock market crash. Unemployment reached 23.6% in 1932, but dropped to 16.9% in 1936. The average family income remained about the same, in the 1930s, as it was at the start of WWI in 1914, for an average family of 3.6 members. Advances in technology helped to lower

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the costs of food and clothing significantly; other expenses, like rent, furnishings, and electricity went down somewhat, while coal increased. The amount spent on food was considered sufficient to avoid hunger, but not enough for good health. In terms of housing, 40% of families lived in one-family detached homes, with 25% in apartments, and the remaining were in semidetached, row, or two-family houses. Employed women were the largest contributors to the clothing expenditure figure. The other category includes transportation, which considers the 40% of families who owned automobiles. In addition, healthcare, entertainment, personal care products/services, reading and education, and cash contributions made up this fourth category.

After experiencing a strengthened national economy in the early 1950s, 27 1960-1961 saw a minor recession, with unemployment peaking at 7.1% in 1961,28 compared to a 4% average between 1948 and 1953. The average family size was at 3.1 and the under-15 age cohort was increasing. Many of the heads of household, 38.7%, were employed as a craftsman or machine operator, and those in the manufacturing or mining industries were experiencing substantial wage increases. Family earners were also in professorial, managerial, and proprietorial positions, at a rate of 26.6%. Both family incomes, on average, and expenditures increased since 1950. Less of these expenditures went toward necessity items, indicating an increase in the average standard of living. Housing was the largest proportion of the expenditures, supporting a homeownership rate at 53%.

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This changed the proportion spent on food, which had been the largest share of family expenses since 1901. Within the food expenditure, 21% was for food purchased and consumed away from home. Purchases making up the other expenditure category included the same items as previously mentioned, with the addition of tobacco and personal insurance expenses.

The national economy in the mid-1990s experienced inflation due to stock market response to the dot-com boom.29 A significant shift in which employment sector people were working occurred as now 20.8% of employed heads of household were managers or professionals. Eighteen percent were in tech, sales, or clerical positions; 11.8% were machine operators, fabricators, or laborers, and the remaining were in services, construction work, self-employed, retired or not classified. Unemployment was at an average of 5.4%. Average family incomes and household expenditures, both grew since the 1960s, although incomes were increasing faster than families were spending. The proportion of spending on both food and clothing decreased, while the share spent on housing increased. This can again be attributed to a rising rate of homeownership, now at 64%. Within the food category, the amount of non-grocery food purchases, as in food consumed outside the home, rose to 39.4%. Regarding transportation expenses, 85% of families owned at minimum, one vehicle, with the average owning 1.9. Expenses considered in the other expenditure

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category remained the same types of items.

While Dolfman and McSweeney’s report only goes through to 2002-2003, the 2013-2014 Consumer Expenditure Survey results show largely similar figures, even with consideration of the end of 2007 to mid-2009 recession from the housing bubble fallout. The 2014 data shows household incomes have continued to increase, along with expenditures. The average family size was 2.54\textsuperscript{30}, and the average unemployment rate was at 6.2\%\textsuperscript{31}. The expenditure categories that experienced the highest increases were entertainment, clothing, which took a dive between 2011 and 2013, and healthcare, in comparison to 2013. Housing, however, remains the largest portion of household expenses, although the homeownership rate is beginning to decrease based on the 2014 62.7\% rate.

Regarding food spending, purchases away from home increased across income levels, with the third of five income groups showing a substantial 9.4\% increase in spending on this item, compared to 2013. Spending on items that are part of the other category have also increased across all income groups.


The takeaways from the data across this 1901-2014 period demonstrate that as family incomes increase, so does the standard of living. In fact, when adjusting 2014 income data for inflation since 1901, the average family income grew by four times. Accompanying this increase was the overall increase in total expenditure amounts, which grew over three times as much when adjusting for inflation over the 1901-2014-period. They survey results showed households spent an increasing amount on non-essential items, like eating out, entertainment, personal vehicles, and education.

Dolfman and McSweeney note that the shift in eating out changed drastically since the 1970s, when the amount of food consumed away from home measured 26.4% of the total food expenditure, grew to 41.9% by the start of the 21st century. Trends in homeownership have also followed patterns of shift, where in 1901 the homeownership rate was 19%, it became 67% in 2002, but lowered to 63% in 2014. Within the housing expenditure shares, a significant decrease in the amount allocated toward shelter has been experienced with a change from a 62.5% allocation in the 1960s down to a 19.3% allocation in 2002-03. Increased utility uses account for some of the shift in housing.

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allocation. An item that has remained consistent over time has been an allocation of spending on entertainment, which represented 5.4% of discretionary spending in 1934-36 and was 5.1% in 2002-03. A final consideration is the change of items available for purchase, many of which were not yet invented in the early 20th century, but which now receive substantial spending allocations, like smart phones, recreational vehicles, international vacation travel, and retirement funds. The implication is that continued innovation, supported by ongoing discretionary spending, will foster more changes in consumer offerings. It is likely that emotionally-fulfilling experiences and opportunities for new ways to socialize will be sought out to further enhance one’s lifestyle.

**2.4 UNDERSTANDING PLACE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE MARKET**

Considering the evidence of the shifts taking place, another piece to the discussion is the demographics and sectors being left out of the economic growth and how that has reorganized and reconstructed places and culture. The capitalist society that the United States works within has its advantages and disadvantages, which has a long list of associated literature. A critique that is particularly relevant to this research is the concept of creative destruction, which frames the process of growth in terms of consequential loss. Joseph Schumpeter coined this term in 1942 to describe the way in which innovation “incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one.”33 This can be translated into transportation facilitating access of open land, initially by wealthy people, thereby catalyzing a new place of culture in the suburbs, to the detriment of the city center. This indicates the elite class has power to change the relationship a market has with a place. With every transformation comes an act of obsolescence, usually followed by destruction. As space is finite, spatial transformation inevitably

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means the destruction of what came before.

Place can be thought of as a geographical location, a local society with a distinct image, or evidence of a social group dealing with conflict and cohesion, as happens with communities in the process of deindustrialization or gentrification. In this regard, “place expresses how a spatially connected group of people mediate the demands of cultural identity, state power, and capital accumulation.” A problem occurs when large investment, an employer, decides to move, leaving behind employees. The resulting loss of jobs disrupts local ability to maintain its standard of living, generate organizational capacity, and influence its social institutions, all of which are significant to a cohesive place. This exemplifies a pattern referenced earlier, where a place performs best when there is economic stability, which contrasts with a market that seeks to follow opportunities for increase of capital.

A result of this dynamic is that places become more competitive to be able to attract capital. This allows market forces to have a significant influence on the construction of development, restricting architects and urban designers from freely deciding the look, use, audience, and duration of buildings and built areas. Furthermore, the global economy facilitates international investment, which introduces another complexity to the development process. Considering these complexities, it becomes reasonable that when one a formula for success surfaces, such as what has been suggested by proponents of the experience economy, many places become intrigued to reconfigure what is necessary to participate in that strategy. Understanding that image is significant to creating a memorable place, cities will often commission new buildings and urban plans to be designed by a professional with a culturally accepted brand. In effect, cities are adding physical symbols, like an

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iconic skyscraper, intended to create distinction, when it can be found in many other places.

The role of public space in an urban environment is also affected by the market driven economic shift. Across many cities, public spaces have undergone a transition from their original concept as open space for all, toward bounded space for some. The decrease in federal support that many American cities experienced in the 1970s, in addition to increased fiscal problems, facilitated a dependency on private involvement in the management of public spaces and functions. In Chicago and Detroit, for example, both the city’s public works initiatives involve private developers. The effect that this merging of public places with private markets has on the urban environment is an increase in opportunities to generate revenue. Often these opportunities are found in the commoditization of conveniences, like parking or food and beverages within the space. In some cases, new or raised fees may be applied to participation in activities. As this occurs, spaces become more comfortable to those who can afford the amenities, namely the professional, managerial, and service class.

This restructuring of how public space gets used is viewed, Sharon Zukin, as the first stage of a gentrifying market. Based on her field work in New York she offers a depiction of this shift through an anecdote describing the life and death of three night clubs in East Village, by noting the change in users: “instead of artists, rich kids, and literary emigrants who comment with an air of detachment on market culture, downtown is taken over by another kind of market culture, one made by real estate speculators, institutional investors, and big-time international consumers.” As supported by the consumer spending data described in the previous section, the income increase of the new consumer base gets reflected in the extensive variety of what one can buy, which has created a new market for comparing and critiquing the quality of what is available, how it is presented, and the environment in which it is received. To support this evolved demand, jobs are created to facilitate

35 Zukin, Landscapes of Power, 198.
and offer knowledge on the new offerings, often filled by members of the creative class. This added element to consumerism serves to further strengthen its experiential dimension.

Consumption is not an all-together negative component to an economy; it does help to circulate resources. However, the impact of a strong economy can be widened through consideration of social and environmental resources. If consumption occurs alongside production and incorporates local assets, exchanges of knowledge and culture become more valuable which increases opportunities for advancements in the market and distinction of place, as exemplified by cities that are currently nurturing an experience economy.

2.5 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOL

Long-standing buildings and urban infrastructure are often local assets that contribute to a developing market. Use of this asset is not always a straight-forward or evident decision, however. During periods of poor economic conditions, maintenance of these physical items is not the priority and so they become overlooked, which makes use of them more difficult to work with over time. If this situation perpetuates, a decision will need to be made to demolish or invest in rehabilitating the decayed structure. Historic preservationists are among the vocal advocates in these situations who fight for their continued existence, understanding the cultural value such buildings offer. Society has grown to appreciate these ties to history, which has increased the number of salvaged buildings, especially in places that become designated as historic, and thus culturally significant. Rather than all be museums, historic buildings need to useful in modern society and based on demand, now often serve commercial functions. This trend has been facilitated by preservationists who have expanded their discussion to promote the economic values associated with historic buildings and infrastructure.
To take advantage of the economic value of historic structures, preservationists and developers, both public and private, work in collaboration to expand the opportunities associated with these assets. Many success stories can be found, across the spectrum of size of place, that show the ability of historic preservation in growing an economy. One way preservation of a building contributes to this is through the jobs created, which requires more skills and is more labor intensive than new construction. Additionally, authentic uniqueness can be achieved by reintroducing a building with qualities specific to a past period, to the local market. Small businesses, entrepreneurial ventures, and creative laborers tend to appreciate these kind of spaces, which many cities want to have, especially those who understand the value in promoting the history of a place.

Often, there are significant public policy arguments to be made as well. Especially relevant is the notion that historic preservation does not have a specific relationship to change in property value, because contrary to popular consideration, “listing a property in the National Register of Historic Places does not restrict what a private landowner may do with his or her property.”36 This implies that it is the choices made by the landowner and other economic influences that will influence a property’s market value. Another point is that the practice of reusing a building and as much of its material components as possible prevents a city from having to dispose the materials. The addition of residential or commercial space offered by a restored building contributes to discouraging ongoing sprawl development that requires public services. A city’s backing of historic districts can also serve to mitigate the instability that private investment is averse to. From a cultural standpoint, historic preservation offers the opportunity to showcase a group of people’s historic experience in a place.

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The writer of *The Economics of Historic Preservation*, Donovan Rypkema, also reframes the relationship of historic preservation to gentrification, by saying, "‘economic integration’ is a better description for the role preservation can play... ‘economic’ means renovations, increased property values, and middle-income households; ‘integration’ means one economic level is not displaced by another." Rypkema argues that stability is offered to neighborhoods that engage in a historic preservation strategy by reducing vacancy, offering space for housing and jobs, and preventing decline of property values. Subsidies associated with historic preservation also contribute to the implementation of these strategies. A consequence experienced across many neighborhood business districts has been the preservation of commercial occupants, especially small businesses. When this occurs, more goods and services remain accessible to neighborhood residents.

Another way in which historic preservation is tied to economic development is through its role in local tourism. The market for tourism is being fostered by people’s desire to see and learn about new places, in tangent with an increasing convenience associated with travel. Meanwhile it is also becoming more culturally distinctive to be privy toward the variations of architectural styles. Historic buildings easily suit this demand, which can be maximized by incorporating them into a larger strategy, often including themed tours and opportunities for consumption of memorabilia. The consequence of incorporating tourism is outside investment brought to a local economy. If the tourism can be so memorable that new visitors come back, and perhaps back again, a trajectory for stable investment might ensue. Disney World is an interesting example in that Orlando, Florida changed from a temporary place for entertainment for visitors to a permanent place where the theme park is equivalent to a commercial business district.

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2.6 INITIAL CONCLUSIONS

Given the many influences on commercial development and its role in economic prosperity, social cohesion, and sense of a place, incorporating planning strategies becomes increasingly necessary to be able to consider these appropriately. The circumstances are very place-based, so a strategy implemented in one city cannot be directly applied to another, although some of the general trends apply. As consumers yearn to participate in experiences, places that offer them will benefit economically. However, our interactions with our environment are multifaceted, which means the support of a consumer economy can also be the rise of production, which could help spread the benefits across a wider spectrum. The trendy leisure goods that are sought after, like clothing and merchandise, could perhaps be made in the same place they are being sold. The rising “maker movement”, for example, is a potential opportunity to expand the impact of the experience economy by enabling the entire process required for the creation of a product to occur in one place.\(^8\) Creating a local role for makers could enable a larger net of participants in the economy. For this to work, strong financial strategies need to be incorporated, along with political involvement for controlled implementation.

CHAPTER 3: LOCAL ANALYSIS, QUALITATIVE OBSERVATION

This chapter will describe the history of Over-the-Rhine and its commercial transformation, linking the changing pattern of commerce to the forces behind this change.

3.1 HISTORY OF OVER-THE-RHINE BEFORE 1930

The early history of Over-the-Rhine began with developers building small, wooden-framed houses on land north of the Miami and Erie Canal, for the working population of Cincinnati. The canal connected the Great Lakes to the Ohio River and farmland in between, making it a strong piece of the commerce network. It was around 1833, when an early settler purchased a large plat, where Findlay Market is, and built Findlay, Green, Race, Elm, Elder, Republic, and McMicken streets to support the market.39 Elm, Vine, and Main streets were the first north-south connections between here and the center of Cincinnati. All other roads were built slowly over time, as tracts of land were developed with buildings. Regulations were minimal, so east-west streets often did not line up.40 The lack of through east-west pathways would later motivate the widening of Liberty Street.

Political strife and lack of economic opportunity in Germany motivated a few waves of German immigrants to the U.S. in the 1830s, 40s, and 50s. At the same time a significant lifestyle shift was occurring as people moved in large numbers to urban places. During the 1840s, the proportion of Midwestern residents living in urban environment jumped from 3.9% to 9.2%.41 Cincinnati was a logical refuge for immigrants, due to access to opportunities and because German-Americans were

quickly emerging into influential leadership positions in neighborhoods, including OTR. At mid-19th
century, German immigrants accounted for about 60% of the roughly 40,000 residents living in the
neighborhood. Given this distinct majority, it became common for the canal to be referred to as the
“Rhine,” and the neighborhood above it, “Over-the-Rhine.” The name was also representative of
some existing hostility between new Americans and “real Americans” who wanted to make a
differentiation. In 1855 election riots ensued and the fight was between a third-party movement
called The Cayenne Council and the “Know-Nothings” who represented the American Party. These
later dissolved, but the social issues motivating them continued. That April, the first statewide
prohibition law went into effect, beginning, amongst some, a rhetoric between “personal liberty”
versus “prohibition.” The disapproving attitude was not a popular one as Americans, young and old,
poor and wealthy, had already adopted many of the German traditions they were now exposed to,
even Christians who previously abstained from alcohol. Beer gardens and saloons were common
social gathering spaces for a range of Cincinnatians.

Figure 4. Illustrated depiction, 19th C., of Wierlert's Pavilion, located at 1408-1410 Vine Street. The pavilion

42 Morgan, *When Beer Was King*, 54.
The success of breweries soon enabled business owners to begin building larger homes, north of the OTR neighborhood boundary. This began in the 1870s and continued for the next few decades. By 1900, production of beer increased to 1,325,000 barrels and local tax revenue saw earnings of $1,250,000.43 Whereas the city had enough saloons to accommodate one for every 41 people during the late 1800s, the ratio decreased into the 20th century.44 The desire and ability to increase profits soon changed the character of the activity. The authentic German character that built OTR had started to become a theme for tourists and non-German Cincinnati residents. Marketing materials, in 1898, for the city referenced OTR as being past its heyday and informed newcomers that the neighborhoods on the city’s hills were places of “crowning glory.” “Cincinnati works in the valley below, but she lives above.”45

German social institutions and saloons dominated the landscape and would remain much longer than the immigrant population base. OTR’s population peaked in 1900 with 44,475 people.46 The residents were predominately of the working class and were more ethnically diverse. The entertainment district that was created “offered a gaudy array of saloons, restaurants, shooting galleries, arcades, gambling dens, dance halls, burlesque halls, and theaters.”47

In 1913, Ohio legislature passed a bill that limited the number of saloons permitted to exist within a city. This had dramatic repercussions for the nearly 2,000 saloons that could be found across Cincinnati which became used to having “one saloon for between every 160 to 170 residents.”48

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43 Morgan, *When Beer Was King*, 139.
44 Ibid., 76.
46 Miller, *Changing Plans for America’s Inner Cities*, xix.
47 Ibid., 2.
the end of 1914, Cincinnati was down to 778 saloons. With this, pride for German culture took a turn in 1917 when America joined England in the war against German. Libraries removed all German works, German street names were changed around the city, and nationalism motivated violent attacks against German-Americans. The positive perception of Cincinnati’s German societies and seemingly endless supply of local beer was tarnished.

On May 27, 1919, Cincinnati had officially become a dry city, before the national January 16, 1920 Prohibition deadline. Furthermore, the Miami-Erie canal, which was symbolically associated with OTR’s German influence, was undergoing a transformation where it was drained so that a subway and grand boulevard could be built. Some breweries stayed open to produce beer with low contents.
of alcohol, dubbed “near beers,” and soft drinks. Others continued to make real beer until they were forced not to. Ultimately, the 1920s is when the neighborhood began its decline and the world “slum” began to be associated with the neighborhood. It was written that overcrowding in the basin of the city, which included OTR among other neighborhoods, and lack of open space was breeding “disease and delinquency.” 49 Meanwhile, one man contributed his feelings on this change to The Cincinnati Enquirer:

The fountain is all right and I am glad it is going to stay put, but as a place to get a drink it isn’t in it with the old, Over-the-Rhine thirst-quenching station we used to have. It must give some of the old-timers a queer feeling to enter those places now and ask for a pair of shoes or a necktie instead of merely holding up three fingers. 50

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49 “The Official City Plan of Cincinnati, Ohio,” City Planning Commission (Cincinnati, OH), 1925; Miller, Changing Plans, 17.
50 “Yeah?”, The Cincinnati Enquirer (Cincinnati, OH), March 21, 1930.
A master plan published in 1925 provided ideas on how to address the problems and disorganization of Cincinnati’s inner city. The separation of land uses was suggested, which used zoning to designate areas for commercial, industrial, and civic uses, away from tenement projects. Emphasis was placed on increasing public projects for the sake of inducing civic pride and providing more open spaces, through courtyards, parks, and playgrounds, for example. The plan called for schools to be merged or eliminated. A consolidation of food markets was suggested, except for Findlay Market. As for the residential sector, the 1925 plan took heed from academic sociologists who believed segregated communities would foster unity and cohesion. There was an expectation that the wealthiest families would build new homes far away from the center of the city, enabling a pattern where the next-highest income group would move into those empty homes, and so on. The
thinking was that this would promote organizational activities, participation in civic issues, and trait-sharing. The city was intended to be a place of distinct subcultures that tolerated one another, at least amongst the participatory residents. For those living in slums, on the other hand, they were viewed as “social junk,” and housing options for this group was not addressed.

3.2 CONDITIONS AND CHANGES BETWEEN 1930 AND 1961

There were 30,949 people residing in Over-the-Rhine in 1930, and many were earning low to no wages. It became apparent that a strategy to alleviate a shortage of low-cost housing would be necessary. After resolving to construct public housing, slum clearance was the first step. The Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) was established in 1933 to oversee this process. While the Planning Commission drew up plans, the CMHA developed racially segregated housing projects in the West End, leaving the clearance of OTR as a future project.

Meanwhile, the end of 1933 saw the removal of Prohibition from the U.S. Constitution. By this time, the commercial scene had generally become weakened and only four Cincinnati breweries were still in operation. These breweries, and new ones, did begin to produce real beer again, but most of them closed after various lengths of time. The anti-German stigma

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51 Miller, Changing Plans, 16.
that came with World War I lasted for many years, preventing significant economic growth of the beer industry. By 1957 only Hudepohl was brewing at a commercial level, in OTR.

In 1940, two professional entities were hired to evaluate Cincinnati’s economic predicament. Walter S. Schmidt was hired by the Urban Land Institute (ULI) as a consultant. At the same time, the Cincinnati Planning Commission and the Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission conducted a real property survey to evaluate the topic. The commissions’ study reported 66,100 substandard or overcrowded living units in the CBD. Schmid’s reported that, since 1920, all types of retail businesses in the central business district suffered a 20% drop in sales. The decrease was a large enough factor to cause the large Alms and Doepke department store, located at the southern boundary of OTR, to close its operation in 1955. Overall, both reports showed that the center was not growing nearly as much as the suburbs. Schmidt advised rehabilitation of the old housing stock and investment in transit. The two commissions felt clearance was needed to revive competent community development projects.

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In 1948, the Cincinnati Metropolitan Master Plan was created to articulate and suggest solutions to two essential planning needs: “(1) to provide for the orderly development of peripheral land and the normal processes of expansion, and (2) to restore and maintain the livability and attractiveness of the inner communities.” The steps to achieve this consisted of demolishing the slums, and in their place, build industrial, low density residential, and a new expressway system. Building ages and housing conditions were analyzed across the city. Five categories were used to classify the findings and guide development solutions:

- Deteriorated areas would be cleared out completely
- Declining areas would get rehabilitated
- Middle-aged areas would receive a conservation plan
- New neighborhoods would receive regulatory protection
- Preparation neighborhoods received assessment of future character and structure

OTR and the entire basin of Cincinnati was viewed as deteriorated and therefore obsolete. Complete clearance of these areas was the preferable response of the time. The process to implement clearance, however, included relocating many people, which proved difficult and slow. One obstacle that city officials faced was conducting this work in a non-racial discriminatory way, which civil rights activists brought attention to. In addition, not-in-my-back-yard sentiment, known as NIMBYism, was being directed at the city by residents living in the middle-aged and new neighborhoods who did not want multi-family housing projects to be built or residents from the basin of the city brought in. Such housing projects did get built in the West End, Avondale, and Coryville, which readied OTR for clearing.

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55 City Planning Commission, “The Cincinnati Metropolitan Master Plan and The Official City Plan of the City of Cincinnati” (city master plan, City of Cincinnati, adopted November 22, 1948), 9.
An unexpected shift in national thinking took place at mid-century, which influenced the Cincinnati Planning Commission’s eagerness to complete the clearance strategy. Public awareness of the fascism, Nazism, and communism taking place in European nations pushed an adversative desire for America to be a place of individuals with decision-making power and connections to self-determined culture. Given this changed societal priority, the downtown of the city appeared to local planners as ideal for establishing a place where people could work, be entertained, and even live comfortably. If stylish, contemporary housing units could be developed, alongside new business facilities, the metropolitan center might be able to compete with its suburban areas, and other cities. The Cincinnati Planning Commission soon took on this outlook and prioritized the development of a strategy to make this vision a reality.

New intentions to build on downtown’s cultural assets faced a significant obstacle; a strong association between the city and poor, black residents. The slum areas began to be referred to as the “inner city,” which did little to change the negative connotation of the central part of the city. Planners and other city officials now viewed the mix of uses in OTR as interesting and exciting, and understood that the variety of housing styles offered unique choices to potential future residents. An idea surfaced that OTR could become a chic neighborhood, which would be a way to dispel the negative connotation of the inner city. For other inner city neighborhoods, conservation and rehabilitation would help swell the spread of ghetto communities. A strategy being considered was to use the history of individual neighborhoods to guide a new identity. A consensus on that identity, however, would be difficult to achieve, becoming a point of discussion for the next few decades. Neighborhood activists and concerned residents, at the start of the 1960s, began to take on a stronger role in design decisions for physical and social environments. As this began to happen in OTR, it became clear there were two opposing visions for the future of the neighborhood. One side of the spectrum wanted a culturally varied, chic scene made up primarily of middle and upper income
residents who would move into redeveloped historic homes. On the other side, advocates of long-
time and low-income residents felt OTR should be a hub for social programs that attracted residents
who would use such programs; less care was placed on the building stock, and more on the social
fabric.

Regarding changes to businesses throughout this period, between 1930 and 1961, the total amount
of operating commercial uses was decreased, but not drastically. Closer observation as to the
specific categories that experienced significant change informs a narrative consistent with OTR’s
decreasing population and unstable market. The population went down by about a few thousand
since 1930, to 27,577 in 1960 and there was a shift in racial make-up. In 1930, there were 341
Black residents in OTR, and by 1960 there were 2,720. A significant contributor to this demographic
change was a result of all the development changes occurring in the West End neighborhood,
adjacent to OTR. As large swaths of old development were getting torn down for a new interstate and
new housing projects, residents were forced to leave, and without strong opposition heard in OTR,
many of the residents moved there. Additionally, the White residents experienced change due to the
departure of German immigrants and introduction of Appalachian migrants.

The tables below summarize the findings of commercial uses for this period, and the square
footages associated with the commercial types. Two stark changes emerge from this data: the bar
and restaurant scene, which as discussed previously, was affected by national regulations on alcohol
production and consumption, and by contention against Germans during and after WWI, saw a 108%
growth now that those factors are no longer relevant. Meanwhile, “fun” businesses, those that offer
fashion or leisure items, decreased by 60% between 1930 and 1961. This can largely be attributed

56 Table P-1-General Characteristics of the Population, by Census Tracts: 1960, Census Tracts 9, 10, 11, 16
to the closing of the Alms and Doepke department store. Auto-oriented uses, such as gas stations and maintenance shops, declined a bit, but industrial, parking, and wholesale spaces increased. Highlighted in yellow are the retail types of commercial uses; the darker shade represents the higher number. This portion of the data speaks to the businesses that engage the street and are affected by passerby consumers. The results, which show almost all retail types experiencing decline in operating square feet, communicate the weakened street life, suggesting a downgraded quality of life for the average household in OTR.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>1930 COMMERCIAL SF</th>
<th>1961 COMMERCIAL SF</th>
<th>1930-1961 % Change</th>
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<tr>
<td>Auto-oriented</td>
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<td>Auto-oriented</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bar/Restaurant</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Wholesale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2,666,093</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Square footage calculations for each commercial category for 1930 and 1961, with changes represented by increase or decrease in percent. (Table by author)

3.3 CONDITIONS AND CHANGES BETWEEN 1961 AND 1993

Following suit to a nearly unchanged population count and amount of total commercial space, the building stock across the neighborhood was also largely unchanged. This is significant given the infatuation with slum clearance and the acknowledgement of OTR as a slum since before 1930. While conducting seemingly uncontroversial work, in 1960, the Cincinnati Planning Commission learned, when it proposed the demolition of a building of historic character, there was a vocal public
interest that believed in preservation of such buildings. To avoid future confrontation, a process began to create a citywide inventory of historic sites.\textsuperscript{57} From this study, OTR was shown to have an especially high density of historic buildings and structures, compared to other neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{58} This data informed the new 1963 zoning code, replacing a 1933 code, that instructed preservationist strategies among other regulations viewed as modern improvements.\textsuperscript{59} Objectives for the central business district (CBD) and its surroundings included the creation of a greater variety of goods and services, more physical accessibility and compactness, an intermingling of diverse and concentrated land uses, development that is more pedestrian in scale, and an increase of aesthetical pleasure. In contrast with the former preference for segregated zoning, planners advocated for a downtown that mixed business and fun, because “in a modern city every use needed by a society needed to be permitted somewhere.”\textsuperscript{60} Desires for a 24-hour liveliness was stirring, which would require residents to support. A plan addressing the current occupants, who were predominately poor, was not provided.


\textsuperscript{58} “Inventory and Appraisal of Historic Sites, Buildings, and Areas,” City Planning Commission, 1960.


\textsuperscript{60} Hoffman, “Creation and Development of the Zoning Code,” 10.
Redevelopment projects began in the CBD, and it was intended that work would continue outward toward OTR. Neighborhood activist groups used that time to get organized and kept an eye on its neighbor, the West End, which was also active with organizational efforts. Local leaders there were successfully getting residents to participate in the planning process. Their redevelopment efforts were rooted in an appeal to showcase ethnic pride and a right to a part of the city.

Social agencies, across the metropolitan area, became focused on ways to address self-identified needs of residents. Intending to work with one neighborhood at a time, OTR was identified as being in dire need of support, based on its poverty, crime, and infant mortality statistics. Organizations
interested in playing a role with this effort began to focus on the newest group of incomers to OTR, the mountaineers from Appalachian areas. Concern existed about how this group would behave in the city, given the lack of educational attainment and potential for racial conflict with black city residents.

OTR advocates hoped to be able to follow the West End model of building ethnic pride to create an Appalachian identity that could connect with development plans. This strategy would prove difficult as a parallel anti-poverty campaign was building and finding support from national “war on poverty” initiatives. These efforts focused on class issues rather than those related to ethnicity, limiting the funding opportunities available to Appalachian advocates. Nevertheless, in the early 1970s, a United Appalachia Cincinnati organization was established with a mission to promote “the self-awareness and self-activity of the Appalachian people in Cincinnati, to encourage our urban institutions to respond to the needs and interests of Appalachians, and to show the community at large the power and beauty of our culture.”

The vision of OTR as a strong Appalachian community subsided in the mid-1970’s when it became apparent that the number of Black residents in OTR was increasing while the number of Appalachians was decreasing. Additionally, advocates realized the lack of rootedness of the ethnic group had to the neighborhood, which was a limiting factor. Lastly, the City Council was in a mindset of eliminating homogeneity in both class and ethnic terms, and thereby encouraged neighborhoods to devise plans that would promote a balance of housing opportunities.

While OTR continued to lack a neighborhood identity and vision, a new code enforcement program, called Operation Chance, started in the neighborhood in the late 1960s. As reported in 1969, the

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first year of the program led to:

- $659,941 spent on building improvements
- 69 buildings with 383 dwellings were vacated due to noncompliance
- 28 buildings with 100 units were razed
- 768 buildings with 3,933 dwellings were inspected
- 751 code violations were processed, 171 of which took the necessary steps to become compliant \(^{62}\)

Figure 11. Vice Mayor Gradison acknowledges that urban renewal is needed for OTR, but will take many years to manifest, so “meantime, we’ve got to preserve what’s good and upgrade the inferior or bad. That’s where enforcement of the building code comes in.” (Bob Otto, The Cincinnati Enquirer, July 30, 1968.)

\(^{62}\) “Over-Rhine Housing Improvement Program Shows Year’s Progress,” The Cincinnati Enquirer (Cincinnati, OH), February 4, 1969.
A lack of contractors willing to work in the neighborhood was cited as an obstacle to improving more of the non-compliant buildings. Buildings that did not provide private toilets, hot water, lavatories and bathtubs or showers were given citations by code enforcement. By 1972 an additional 2,216 units were renovated. Policy was also changed to allow certain areas in OTR to be exempt from the new building code so that renovation could be made at lower cost.

While a strengthened code enforcement contributed to positive outcomes, like increased living conditions for residents, there was also concern around the rate at which building demolitions began to take place. Due in part to the U.S. Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the Miami Purchase Association, a historic preservation advocacy group, began to lay pressure on the City during the late 1970s to designate OTR as a historic neighborhood, in hopes of changing the fate of susceptible buildings. Such a designation would serve to promote adaptive reuse projects and help the historic structures be a local source of pride and serve as integrated relics in a modern context. Another external pressure facing city officials was the trend of first-tier cities to develop mixed-use performing arts centers. This motivated new attention to Music Hall and Washington Park, thereby pulling investment away from the Findlay Market area, which had been undergoing study through a public participation process.

An additional contributor to a new development strategy came in 1977 with the founding of the Cincinnati Business Committee (CBC). This group consisted of 16 chief executives of the city’s largest businesses and their role was to assist the local government in addressing problems that were likely to affect the city’s economic standing. Through funding opportunities made available by historic preservation efforts, the CBC participated in residential development surrounding

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63 Kevin A. Shepard, "Cincinnati Housing Policy: An Analysis of Cincinnati’s Housing Problem and Governmental Response" (Institute of Governmental Research, University of Cincinnati, 1982), 43-44.
Washington Park, which was to be the start of widespread revitalization for OTR. Rehabilitation of this area began to gain speed at a time when City Council was encouraging racially and socially integrated neighborhoods. With this in mind, the CBC vowed no involuntary displacement would occur to the poor residents there. The OTR Community Council, led by Buddy Gray, a local advocate for the poor and homeless, was not convinced. The organization worked hard to vocally stress the likeliness of displacement if historic preservation renovation projects went forward. Gray’s concerns were not unfounded in context of what was seen to be happening in other historic urban neighborhoods during the 1980s, like in New York City.

Sociologist Sharon Zukin has written extensively on social, environmental, and economic changes that have been experienced in New York City’s neighborhoods. She describes gentrification “as a collective effort to appropriate the center for elements of a new urban middle class.”64 Her experiences show that as the new middle class comes in and is made comfortable by city officials, developers, and businessmen who want their economic contributions, the lower class is less able to participate in the new public life. This was the primary concern for Buddy Gray, that integration would take away the decision-making power that the lower class and their advocates felt they still had in OTR.

The Community Council and Gray’s perspective was controversial, however. While many opinions agreed that social responsibility was important, the fear that the neighborhood was on the verge of nonexistence, due to extensive blight and ill-maintained structures, was stronger. Nevertheless, the Council managed to slow the Washington Park project by gaining support to preserve OTR as a place in the city for the poor and increasingly black population. This support was demonstrated in 1980

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64 Zukin, Landscapes of Power, 187.
when 250 protestors vocally opposed adding OTR to the National Register of Historic Places.\textsuperscript{65} Gray came to control the OTR Planning Task Force in addition to the Community Council. The mission was to protect and encourage new, low-income housing development, without the use of historic preservation subsidies.

The Planning Commission, in the meantime, was grappling the city’s mission to have integrated neighborhoods, supported by a Housing Allocation Policy which restricted concentrations of subsidized, low-income housing. This worked against ideas to use the basin communities of Cincinnati as sanctuary places for low-income people. A neighborhood housing retention enabling ordinance was passed in an attempted compromise. This tightened anti-demolition regulation for OTR, while leaving out incentives for new low-income housing development, and helped to maintain the racial and socio-economic status quo.

The anti-historic designation sails turned after an appeal process and involvement from the Ohio governor, when on May 17, 1983, OTR was legally added to the National Register of Historic Places, despite delayed hearings.\textsuperscript{66} The decision was based on recognition of OTR’s 362.5 acres of German heritage remnants, existing in the form of 19\textsuperscript{th} century buildings that are predominately of Vernacular, Greek Revival, Italianate, and Queen Anne styles.\textsuperscript{67} It was also noted that the listing would not determine land uses. Those in support of the designation, including city officials and OTR residents alike, focused on the ways in which the associated subsidies could be used to address the 24 percent vacancy rate.\textsuperscript{68}


\textsuperscript{68} Genevieve Ray, “Nomination of Over-the-Rhine to the National Register” (Historic Conservation Board,
Figure 12. The tension between gentrification and historic preservation was exemplified locally by activist Buddy Gray. Opinions of him and the larger issue at hand ranged from being supportive to his call for increased social responsibility to frustration with the delay in development he and others were causing. (Jane Prendergast and Richard Green, The Cincinnati Enquirer, Cincinnati, OH, May 16, 1993.)

Figure 13. OTR residents, Mr. and Mrs. Kimberly Krause, contribute to The Cincinnati Enquirer to share their perspective that both social concerns and preservation of the unique and valuable structures across OTR can be addressed and the historic designation is a critical step toward that (April 3, 1983).
In response to the designation, city administration drafted a Redevelopment Management Strategy that was heavily modified for two years, largely by the OTR Task Force, but with business leaders as well. City council then approved the Over-the-Rhine Urban Renewal Plan in 1985, which authorized the city to “expend funds to eliminate blighted, deteriorating, and deteriorated areas and to acquire property.” Properties falling into those categories, which encompassed 96% of the observed buildings, were to receive city support for a redevelopment or rehabilitation action plan. Included in the general goals was the immediate need for both commercial and residential development, to counter continuing deterioration. Buddy Gray, the city administration and Planning Commission, and
even city council viewed this plan as a compromise. Jim Tarbell represented a group worried about
the isolationist implications of the plan, given its focus on low-income housing and social programs,
while contradictorily touting a need for economically and socially integrated neighborhoods.70

Demolition managed to occur even with the historic designation, largely due to prolonged lack of
building maintenance. In a study on “inner-city destruction and survival,” researchers Brenda Scheer
and David Ferdelman identified an inventory of 3,695 buildings in 1891, from which 1,195 buildings
were demolished by 1956, and another 40 by 1991, meaning only 1,155 buildings survived the one
hundred year period.71 They noted that whenever redevelopment proposals were planned they
tended to look to spaces where it would be easy to physically make change, like on Liberty Street
and Central Parkway which were built later and much wider than Main, Vine and Walnut streets.
Another pattern was that commercial land uses were the most devastated by the decreased
economic base, compared to residential land uses, and so were more likely to experience changes.

The described challenges can further be demonstrated by the struggles of long-established
businesses to remain open in OTR during the 1970s-1990s. Grammer’s, a German restaurant
established in 1872, described concern in a news article published in 1978 over OTR’s image and
its negative effects on the business. Then businesses owner, Karl Mohaupt, was aware of efforts to
rehabilitate the neighborhood, but felt it unlikely his business would survive in the meantime.72
Another example is offered by the decision made in 1986 by Hudepohl Brewing Co., established in
1885, to merge its company with Schoenling Brewing Co., established in 1934.73 The decision was
an attempt to increase profits, however, in 1997 this last remaining pre-prohibition German brewery

70 Miller, Changing Plans, 155-56.
72 Peggy Lane, “Evening Trade Dropping Off at Grammer’s, Neighborhood Image May Force Restaurant to
73 Jon Newberry, “Cincinnati brewers announce merger plan,” The Cincinnati Enquirer (Cincinnati, OH),
November 4, 1986.
sold to Boston Beer Co., makers of Samuel Adams.\textsuperscript{74}

In 1992, a new approach to urban planning arose, pioneered by Karla Irvine who began a campaign to use policy to serve the public interest of the city at large, whereby individual neighborhoods develop plans in that larger context. For her, “only a citywide policy could improve conditions of life in Over-the-Rhine and make it a safer place for everyone – insiders and outsiders, the homeless, the working poor, and more prosperous individuals who might choose to reside or remain there.”\textsuperscript{75}

The obstacles that stalled any significant development from taking place, physical and social, are


\textsuperscript{75} Miller, Changing Plans for America’s Inner Cities, 168.
reflected by the decrease of total commercial functions in OTR, by almost 50%. This figure represents the change in total square feet of operating commercial space in 1993, since 1961. Nearly every commercial category experienced decrease. The entertainment uses remained essentially the same, while parking uses increased significantly. Music Hall, as one of the well-established entertainment venues has kept a consistent role in the community given its regional significance which suggests the wealth of the larger market is not as constrained as that in the OTR market. Parking has likely increased in part because of vacancy of former commercial spaces, but also because of the cultural priority to be able to drive everywhere. The drastic decline in retail spaces is correlated to the changes in OTR’s population, between 1960 and 1990. Whereas OTR had 27,577 residents in 1960, 24,807 of whom were White, there were only 9,572 people living in the neighborhood in 1990, 2,645 of whom were White. The retail uses that declined the most dramatically reflect the changed local economy. A population with little expendable income is not likely to be able to support a strong bar/restaurant scene, nor “fun” businesses. The bars/restaurants open in 1993 were only 30% of what was open in 1961. Compared to the total amount of retail square footage seen in 1930, only 36% of that amount was open in 1993.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1961 COMMERCIAL SF</th>
<th>1993 COMMERCIAL SF</th>
<th>1961-1993 % Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auto-oriented</td>
<td>167,148</td>
<td>28,650</td>
</tr>
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<td>Bar/Restaurant</td>
<td>188,283</td>
<td>56,814</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>141,552</td>
<td>147,859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination</td>
<td>594,355</td>
<td>263,342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>352,043</td>
<td>69,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>93,680</td>
<td>36,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>233,431</td>
<td>387,462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run</td>
<td>274,812</td>
<td>116,184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale</td>
<td>603,000</td>
<td>276,818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2,648,304</td>
<td>1,383,640</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Square footage figures by commercial type for 1961 and 1993 with changes represented in percentages. (Table by author)
3.4 CONDITIONS AND CHANGES BETWEEN 1993 AND 2017

In a way, the development strategy used to bring change to OTR since the early 1990s was motivated by consideration of the neighborhood’s role in relation to the overall City of Cincinnati, although quite controversially. Historic preservation became a redevelopment tool that created desirable buildings for new commercial uses and new residents, establishing an upscale urban area which has brought new economic growth to the OTR market. This outcome suggests success in terms of having changed the perceptions of those who avoided the neighborhood for decades, but what about an improved lifestyle for those who remained in the neighborhood throughout its turmoil? This measure of success is not as apparent of an outcome from the development strategy that has played out. The local neighborhood dilemma has long been about how to improve it while managing various public interests.

As referenced earlier, OTR has experienced the potential consequences of unaddressed social issues. Racial tensions that were exhibited during the civil rights era were a current point of frustration in Cincinnati, as in cities across the nation, throughout the 1980s and through the new millennium. A social outbreak by the way of violent rioting in 2001 was a “result of Cincinnati not responding and not changing enough,” in Rev. Mr. Shuttlesworth’s opinion. In addition to racial tensions, frustration over a lack of job opportunities for black residents and discrimination by financial institutions were thought to be major factors as well. Consequently, OTR became a site of destruction, as shown in the news clipping below, inflicted by its own residents, forcing many businesses, particularly along Main Street, to shut down. The perception of Cincinnati as a place of chaos was now engrained locally, regionally, even introduced to people across the world.

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Quickly following this event, the OTR Comprehensive Plan, published in 2002, identified four key issues that were preventing OTR from experiencing improved conditions:

- Lack of economic investment
• Potential for displacement of low-income residents
• Crime and the perception of the area as being unsafe
• Lack of a sense of an integrated community

In terms of commercial development, a focus on Vine Street, noted as the connector of downtown to the University area, was viewed as critical because its redevelopment would “signal the resurgence of the entire community.” Main Street, a second backbone to the neighborhood, was referenced as a model for revitalization given its recent economic growth from an emergence of technology-based companies. These office tenants occupied the district alongside bars, restaurants, and residents, making it a compatible mixed-use area. “Digital Rhine,” as it was called, began around 1999 with five such companies located in a cluster around Main and Twelfth streets. The last big company to join the tech hub was Intelliseek in 2004, but the momentum slowed soon after and the companies dispersed.

Regarding retail shops, the 2002 plan described challenges related to consumer preference for big-
box stores to purchase products ranging from daily goods to large purchases, which could conveniently be achieved at such stores. Competitive prices offered by Target, Wal-Mart and the like was also viewed as an obstacle for urban neighborhood retailers, although residents voiced a desire to have more everyday shopping choices in OTR. Overall, the economic development goals were outlined as:\(^81\):

- Make OTR a model for diverse and inclusive business development
- Establish stronger linkages between the OTR workforce and job training programs
- Strengthen and create destinations that attract and encourage neighborhood and regional participation
- Ensure the opportunity for OTR residents to become financially literate and independent

In 2006, OTR made headlines again when the neighborhood became designated as “endangered” by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, based in Washington, D.C.\(^82\) This added to the sense of urgency and pressure on the city to find a way to the pervasive social and physical problems.

Given the magnitude of the dilemma, a large-scale redevelopment strategy for both OTR and the CBD was needed.

**Figure 16.** Front-page headline of The Cincinnati Enquirer on May 11, 2006.

Since July 2003, a strategy had begun to take shape, to be implemented by a new public-private

\(^{81}\) “OTR Comprehensive Plan,” City of Cincinnati, 75.
partnership called the Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC). The organization had strong corporate support, with executives of P&G and Federated Department Stores serving as Board Chair and Vice Chair in addition to private sector investments of close to $90 million. City backing was demonstrated by its commitment to contribute $100 million over five years. Also, critical to the project financing was the availability of New Markets Tax Credits, created in 2000, which offered thirteen participating private investors a federal tax credit for 39% on investments over seven years.

After a few years of developing the strategy, securing financing, and acquiring properties, 3CDC contributed a significant visible change to downtown Cincinnati with the completion of a $48.9 million renovation of Fountain Square, in 2007. During this same year, 93 new condominium units and over 20,000 square feet of commercial space was developed in OTR, on Vine Street at the 12th Street intersection. This section of OTR served as an important entryway into the neighborhood from the CBD, lending to the project name, “Gateway Quarter.” While the housing piece was the primary goal, new commercial uses brought into empty storefronts was understood as necessary to attracting new homeowners. This commercial development strategy was discussed in an interview with Kathleen Norris, retail planner and owner of Urban Fast Forward, in February 2017.

Based on her role as an involved commercial real estate broker, Kathleen described the driving concept behind the new retail development in OTR relied on shops that offered both essential and high-end home goods, along with stores that would offer lifestyle products. The reasoning was that both new homeowners and suburban consumers wanting a fresh shopping experience would be interested in coming to this new district. Eight commercial tenants signed contracts in 2007; two

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offered home furnishings, one sold urban gardening products, another was a salon/spa, there was one restaurant, and three office tenants. An additional 20,485 square feet of commercial space was brought to the Gateway Quarter in 2008, featuring two more furniture stores, a clothing and accessories shop, and an interior lighting store.\textsuperscript{86}

Some of these did well and are still in business, like MiCA, Incredible Creations, and The Little Mahatma, however others failed, as Kathleen suggests, either because they did not have quite the right concept, they got caught by the recession, or because they were not seeing as many customers as needed. This did not affect the overall district, however, because spaces stayed in use. A shift in tenant type began to occur around 2009/2010 where more bars/restaurants were being incorporated into the Vine Street district as it began to gain momentum. Kathleen sees an incompatibility between the destination retailers and bars/restaurants, based on their opposite peak

hours. This opposition makes it difficult to feed from the same consumers, thereby requiring separate markets.

As more homes, condominiums, and commercial spaces were being brought to the OTR and CBD markets, ripple effects from early projects were being seen. “The Fountain Square facelift led to millions in private investment around the square, and 3CDC’s relentless programming keeps the plaza packed with people to ice skate when it’s cold, listen to live music when it’s warm and watch presidential contenders on the LED screen when they’re in town,” as reported by the Cincinnati Business Courier in 2009.87 This kind of impact was the goal for Washington Park in OTR.

Washington Park is bordered by Music Hall, open since 1878, to its west. To the south is the newly built School for Creative & Performing Arts, open in 2010. Newly renovated condominiums, done by 3CDC, in addition to historic religious institutions, also face the 8-acre park. Renovation of this park was watched closely as it faced various community interests. As reported in 2009, “planners say drastic measures are needed to clear crime from the park; others argue the work is a veiled effort to hide Cincinnati’s homeless and mentally ill who find refuge there.”89 The final plans for the park, which came to completion in 2012 at a cost of about $48 million, included a 450-space underground parking garage, a civic lawn with a performance stage, an event plaza, an interactive water feature, a children’s playground, a dog park, a restored bandstand, and designed landscaping. This project, supported by frequently planned events, enabled the creation of a distinct cultural district. Used by local and regional residents, day and night, the park has served to support the

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surrounding commercial uses, primarily by helping to stabilize pedestrian traffic for those within and near the two core development areas, south of Liberty Street.

![Figure 21. Scenes from Washington Park (Mark Peterson/Redux Pictures for Politico Magazine, http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/06/what-works-cincinnati-ohio-over-the-rhine-crime-neighborhood-turnaround-city-urban-revitalization-213969)](image)

The part of the neighborhood north of Liberty Street has a largely different redevelopment narrative, but is beginning to connect down to Washington Park and beyond. A Brewery District was formulated in 2003 by residents and business owners who wanted to protect and bring awareness to the
nation’s largest concentration of 19th-century brewery buildings.\textsuperscript{90} The group of stakeholders then created The Brewery District Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation in 2005 to organizationally be involved in bottom-up community change. Their projects include a 2011 Brewery District Master Plan, which offers steps for repopulating the district. The group has also been involved in changing city zoning code to enable increased flexibility through “urban mix”\textsuperscript{91} zoning, along with increasing both awareness of the community’s history and safety through partnership with the Cincinnati Police Department. Two active breweries are part of this district, both of which incorporate taprooms. The Christian Moerlein Brewing Company has been in OTR since 1853, and while it closed during Prohibition through 1981, it has been in operation since then.\textsuperscript{92} The Rhinegeist brewery, however, was born just recently, in 2013, located in one of Christian Moerlein’s former buildings. These two companies, in addition to the long-standing Findlay Market, are currently the largest consumer attractors to the northern part of OTR.

Current and future projects are expected to help tie together development efforts taking place in various parts of OTR and the city at large. One example is the Cincinnati Bell Connector which is a streetcar with stops along a primary route in the CBD and OTR.\textsuperscript{93} It is possible that this transportation route will evolve into a network that will link to other areas, like the University of Cincinnati which is a market currently contributing to the OTR commercial scene. Still in its early use, since opening in September 2016, Kathleen Norris and John Yung, senior project executive at Urban Fast Forward, noted their observations of the benefits it brings. “We’re already starting to see development activity around the Findlay Market area because of the streetcar,” John stated in an interview. The significant issue it resolves is the space between the improved pockets of the CBD

and OTR. In addition, significant construction is currently taking place east of Main Street, at Ziegler Park. The potential for this part of OTR to see development improvements like those surrounding Washington Park is high.

Adam Gelter, executive vice president of development for 3CDC, remarks in interview with Cincinnati Magazine in 2015:

Zeigler Park is an under-utilized asset for Main Street. We’re hoping to do a renovation that has the same sort of positive impact that Washington Park did for the Vine and Elm Street area. But the intent of Zeigler is to provide that recreation component that isn’t in Washington Park. We want to build a nice pool and have basketball leagues for kids in the neighborhood. We’re also looking at doing more commercial office buildings. That’s an important component that’s been neglected. And we want to make sure we fill those first floors with retail. The bar and restaurant thing is great, but how sustainable is it? The retail there now is only able to subsist because so many people come down to the restaurants and they end up walking in. Long term, we can build a retail destination that’s local and unique. There still probably aren’t enough bodies for the neighborhood-serving businesses—a dry cleaner, a flower shop, a Laundromat. [But] we’re not that far away.
This narrative informs the changes that occurred in commercial square footage between 1993 and 2017, where a curtailing of declining commercial uses and an unusual circumstance is seen. While the population data shows the number of residents in 2015 dropped by 40% since 1990, at 5,709 people, the amount of total commercial square footage has increased by 26%. In context of the 1930 total square feet of operational commercial space, this 2017 square footage total represents 43% of the that historic total. The 2017 results show that some commercial uses have increased since 1993—bar/restaurant, entertainment, industrial, parking, and fun—while others have decreased—auto-oriented, destination, run and wholesale. The retail uses that have increased support the notion of an emerging experience economy.

Figure 18. A food and beer hall, neighborhood tour office, and donut shop in ground-floor spaces of renovated buildings contribute to the experience of the Vine Street commercial district. (photo by author)
Table 4. Square footage calculation by commercial type for 1993 and 2017 with changes represented in percentage. (Table by author)

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<thead>
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<th>Commercial Type</th>
<th>1993 SF</th>
<th>2017 SF</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auto-oriented</td>
<td>28,650</td>
<td>17,599</td>
<td>-39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar/Restaurant</td>
<td>56,814</td>
<td>171,493</td>
<td>202%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>147,859</td>
<td>197,512</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination</td>
<td>263,342</td>
<td>202,845</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>69,730</td>
<td>117,999</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>36,780</td>
<td>89,878</td>
<td>144%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>387,462</td>
<td>748,374</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run</td>
<td>116,184</td>
<td>94,085</td>
<td>-19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale</td>
<td>276,818</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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The following charts also express the fluctuations in dominant commercial type. The amount of square footage allocated to bar/restaurant use in today’s commercial landscape represents a much higher proportion compared to historical years, at 20 percent, versus four, six, and nine percent. Destination uses have consistently represented a large portion of the commercial market, although it has consistently declined over time. Wholesale uses seem to become a larger portion of the total commercial square footage when the local economy is lower. Furthermore, the data shows that fun uses are now back to the 10 percent proportion mark, as experienced in 1930, after 50% decline during the middle periods.
A focused look at the composition of retail uses emphasizes the economic and cultural shifts that have occurred over time. Whereas historic markets incorporated larger amounts of services and daily goods (destination and run categories), which was 72% of total retail space in 1930, those uses now account for only 39% of retail space. Meanwhile, leisure-type uses (bar/restaurant, entertainment, and fun) shifted from 28% of total retail space to 61%, across that same period.
Chart 7. Comparison of the retail use composition for each study year. (Charts by author)
CHAPTER 4: PATTERN RECOGNITION OF COMMERCIAL USES OVER TIME

4.1 GENERAL PATTERNS OF COMMERCIAL SPACES

Figure 24. 1930 Overall Commercial Pattern Analysis (Map by author)
In 1930, the density of commercial uses is strong across the neighborhood, creating clear districts and clusters of various businesses (figure 24). Vine Street is a significant corridor, consisting of commercial uses almost solidly from Central Avenue at its southern end to Mulberry Street along the norther border. Connected to Vine Street via stores along W. Elder Street is a strong cluster at and around Findlay Market. This cluster creates a distinct quadrant, where many active frontages shape the street’s blocks. Another heavy area of commercial uses is along the southern border of the neighborhood, where both 12th Street and Central Avenue consistently contain businesses, and many are within large building footprints. Connected to this, the portion of Main Street, south of Liberty Street is equally solid with uses, like with Vine Street. East of Main Street, commercial uses continue along toward the Pendleton area, but primarily occupy streets south of 13th Street.

North of Findlay Market, gaps in commercial uses disrupt the cohesive pattern of defined retail streets, as blocks contain a significant portion of the neighborhood’s industrial, warehouse, and parking uses. Along W. McMicken Avenue, near Linn Street is a retail district for the Mohawk community, found to the northwest of Findlay Market, which likely draws residents from the West End neighborhood via the Linn Street corridor. Often, when there are gaps in the commercial rhythm,
the non-commercial space is defined by surrounding commercial uses. A gap tends to inform the location of either a cluster of non-commercial, ground-floor uses or a large non-commercial space, such as the large gap at 12th and Elm street, the location of Washington Park, or the hole at Vine and Liberty streets, the location of a church. Ground-floor residential uses become more ubiquitous in the periphery of OTR, in the Mohawk and Pendleton areas. In general, OTR's larger buildings are occupied by industrial, wholesale, parking or auto-oriented uses. The two exceptions to this are Music Hall on Washington Park, an entertainment use, and the Alms & Dopeke department store on Central Parkway, a “fun” use. These anomalies serve a much larger market than the neighborhood, indicated by their size and location on a primary road. Interestingly, while Music Hall is only surrounded by a small number of commercial businesses, indicating its independent value, the department store anchors the Main Street commercial corridor, indicating a stronger relationship to other commercial uses.
Whereas the 1930 commercial use pattern blurred the distinction between North OTR and South OTR, the widening of Liberty Street has created a distinction between the two, on the 1961 map (figure 25). The arrangement of uses in the northern part incorporate two dominate, yet contrasting patterns. A retail district is evident around Findlay Market and connected to Vine Street, primarily made up of a diversity of “run,” “fun,” and “destination” uses, along with bars and restaurants. These uses are typically found in smaller buildings, except for a few anchor businesses. This district is completely commercial, with shapes of the street grid visible by the stores that line them. In contrast, commercial activity quickly tapers off in the area right north between Findlay Market and the Mohawk area with large buildings occupied primarily by wholesale and industrial uses. The
growth of these non-commercial uses since 1930 along W. McMicken Avenue, has eroded the short retail corridor at the western end of the street in the Mohawk area. The north-eastern area of OTR, near the Mulberry Street boundary, contains the fewest number of commercial uses. The occupied spaces there have a more integrated pattern, where a spectrum of land uses are represented.

The southern portion of OTR is dominated by two distinct commercial corridors, along Vine and Main streets, with an east-west stretch of intersecting commercial uses surrounding 12th Street. While Vine and Main are primarily a mix of retail uses, and parking, the large buildings along 12th Street and Central Avenue contain some retail and parking, but have a higher number of auto-oriented businesses and wholesalers. Apart from these dominant patterns, commercial uses are spread out around the neighborhood, with more spacing between establishments along smaller side streets. Race Street, near Liberty, and 13th Street, between Vine and Main, both contain short retail corridors. The Pendleton area has a collection of all commercial types, but the neighborhood has lost its clear retail corridor. The southern part of the area along Reading Road contains the most remaining businesses. A small cluster of auto-oriented, wholesale, and parking uses separates the Pendleton area from the Main Street district, near 12th Street.
Between 1961 and 1993, the number of retailers had decimated. The most dominant remaining agglomeration of commercial uses in operation by 1993 is located along the southern boundary of OTR, while parking now takes up the most space in the entire district (figure 26). Wholesale and destination uses tend to surround these parking areas, except in one case where a large “run” business, a Kroger grocery store, is adjacent, and another where a large industrial use is near. The Vine Street retail corridor is barely intact; the frequency of adjacent uses has decreased, resulting in an uneven pattern of scattered stores. The block between 13th and 12th, which used to be dense
with sizable buildings in use, has almost completely been abandoned by retailers. The northern section of Vine Street has become limited almost only to “destination” uses. Findlay Market has remained in operation, and still has commercial uses surrounding it, although there are now fewer. The IGA grocery store located next to Findlay Market has remained on both the 1961 and 1993 maps. Parking has also been added to this cluster, near Central Parkway. The industrial-wholesale area north of the market still contains those uses, although the buildings in use have changed, and there are fewer in operation. Central Parkway, which has always had commercial buildings, mostly distant from one another, appears to have maintained uses better than smaller streets. Additionally, some of the buildings shown on previous year’s maps have stayed in operation, but with a different type of use. To give a few examples, studio space formerly occupied by Warner Brothers Co. transitioned into a travel agency office, a broom manufacturing space became a pre-press service space, a large garage belonging to French-Bauer Inc. in 1961 became a cabinet making warehouse and a former x-ray technicians office became a lounge bar.

Chart 10. The commercial market is experiencing the lowest amount of commercial business experienced in the study period. Parking is the predominate use in 1993. (Chart by author)
Between 1993 and 2017, OTR saw a retail resurgence, mostly as a cluster south of Liberty Street (figure 27). Parking has become an even more prevalent use by 2017. In the northern portion of the neighborhood, parking primarily surrounds the Findlay Market area, with some servicing wholesale uses north of there, along Central Parkway. The southern portion has large spaces of garage or surface parking servicing the Vine Street and Main Street retail corridors, but also exists separate from these. Between Sycamore and Broadway streets, are several large parking allocations that are not near many other commercial uses. This area seems convenient for parking, as a central space between three communities: southern OTR, Pendleton, and the northern CBD. Aside from parking uses, Vine and Main streets have become redefined as retail and entertainment clusters, with
establishments mostly adjacent to one another. For Vine Street, the corridor stretches from Central Avenue, almost to 15th Street. The district is primarily composed of “fun” and “destination” businesses, bars and restaurants, with one entertainment venue. For Main Street, the retail district begins around 12th Street and continues north through the first few buildings past Liberty Street. “Run” uses are integrated into the mixed retail district, and are smaller in size compared to the grocery store on Vine Street, which is somewhat separated from the commercial strip. The Music Hall area has now gained additional entertainment venues that are near one another, which is beginning to establish an entertainment corner. Findlay Market has maintained its surrounding commercial uses, which now seem to encompass more “run” businesses, compared to previous years. The Mohawk area lost a large “destination” use, and now part of that space is used as an entertainment venue. In general, this area and the Clifton Street area still have almost no commercial uses left.

4.1.1 CONNECTIVITY OF STREETS

An assessment made by Brenda Scheer and Daniel Ferdelman describes the street pattern in OTR

Chart 11. In 2017 there has been an increase in total commercial SF, largely due to the dramatic increase in parking space. “Destination” businesses, entertainment venues, and bars/restaurants make-up the next largest uses. (Chart by author)
as largely, “a spontaneously-developed urban fabric composed of smaller planned areas.” This references the historic development method of constructing core streets at the beginning, but then creating others as needed, over time, not following a designated scheme. The result of this is a street network that contains many instances of special or varying conditions which affects commercial development patterns. In the northern portion of OTR, which developed primarily after the southern portion, an irregular street pattern surrounding W. McMicken and in the Mohawk area exists. This has caused commercial activity in these areas to be disconnected from the Findlay Market area. This disconnection between commercial agglomerations creates risk for commercial clusters as they are more susceptible to turnover or change because they rely on a smaller market.

Another pattern resulting from the early street construction is the lack of long east-west streets. This has limited the location of long commercial corridors to north-south streets, establishing a dominate commercial connection to the CBD and almost no commercial connection to the West End of Mount Auburn, and even the Pendleton community in OTR. Additionally, the lack of east-west pathways motivated the widening of Liberty Street, now 80-feet wide, and Central Parkway, which is 122-feet wide. The effect of this has been many examples of business turnover along these auto-oriented spaces that are not suited for retail activity. Many historic buildings along these streets have been demolished, lending themselves to serve as parking.

Overall, the predominately gridded network, which contains a hierarchy of street types, ranging from primary streets to alleyways, facilitates urban commercial development because of the pedestrian scale that has largely been maintained. OTR has also benefited from its physical connections to the CBD. The high number of streets allow more intersections to exist, providing opportunities for commercial visibility, and while through streets that connect in the east-west direction would have

made for a more effective street network, the short east-west streets that do exist promote convenient pedestrian navigation.

4.1.2 CLUSTER PATTERNS

In addition to street access, and thereby consumer visibility, commercial businesses show as generally reliant on proximity to other commercial uses. The only exceptions to this were the ongoing uses of Findlay Market and Music Hall, which maintained the same use in the same location, across the studied period, regardless of what occurred around them. This can be attributed to their exceptional value to the larger region, which warranted special investment. Otherwise, it can be concluded that commercial uses fared better over time in places where there was a collection of such uses. This was especially true for retail stores, as they were more dependent on footfall from surrounding stores and a local consumer base. Within the retail types, some persisted better than others. “Fun” businesses appeared to be most susceptible of all the uses to the conditions of the cluster. Whereas a daily goods store offers products a consumer may need to purchase, and can therefore work as a one-off corner store, the types of products offered by department stores and jewelry shops required consumers with expendable incomes, and therefore need to be visible to lure in customers for a serendipitous purchase. Also, noticed within the clusters is the intermingling of use types, where one type is more often adjacent to a different type. When this does occur, it is most often either a short string of “run” or “destination” businesses that will be adjacent to like businesses, indicating a lower level of competition for sale of product.

4.1.3 INTERIOR V. EXTERIOR

When the local market is strong, a distinctive pattern between use preference to interior versus
exterior location is less apparent since both local and regional demand can support whichever a business choses. In this case study of OTR, 1930 was the strongest episode of reference to a largely integrated pattern of uses, even while it was at the start of decline. By 1993, the pattern represents a decayed version of the 1930 pattern, and now, a distinction between use preference within a local market is clear. Entertainment venues, for example, have become limited, almost exclusively, to an exterior placement, favoring the Central Avenue/Parkway edge. In general, industrial uses and parking space favor edges as well. Meanwhile the interior of the neighborhood is predominately made up by retail uses. Daily goods stores and businesses offering leisure-type products are especially prone to be found in the center of a community. Businesses that are more in the middle of the spectrum, and seem to have flexibility in where they do well despite economic conditions, are “destination” and wholesale types.
4.2 PATTERNS OF “RUN” BUSINESSES

As discovered by the square footage data, “run” businesses that sold daily goods made up the second largest group of ground floor land uses, overall and within the retail types. This category covers nearly the full extent of the neighborhood. The most notable cluster of “run” businesses is the grouping around Findlay Market, where stores of this type both surround the market and create an adjacent north-south line that connects the cluster down to Liberty Street, via Race Street. This cluster most likely served a citywide or even regional audience, whereas other concentrations served the neighborhood itself. Stores along Liberty Street create a distinct east-west corridor of “run”
businesses. Two other prominent north-south corridors exist, from Central Avenue through northern Over-the-Rhine to the Findlay Market area, along Vine Street and Main Street. Between Vine Street and Main Street there is a clear grouping of stores at Walnut Street around the 14th Street intersection. The “run” stores that are nearly comparable in size to Findlay Market are found along Central Avenue, indicating a consumer base that draws from the downtown Cincinnati market. Sparse collections of “run” stores are further noticed in the center of census tract 11, the current Pendleton neighborhood, and along McMicken Street in the northern Mohawk area of OTR. These groupings indicate residential communities within the neighborhood. Also, in the north-east quadrant of OTR there are two lines of businesses that service the Clifton area, found on McMicken Avenue and E. Clifton Avenue. The holes in the “run” pattern have a relationship to where residential uses are not as prevalent. For example, the large open space in the south-western corner is where a large park and large institutions are located. Another space adjacent to Central Parkway, to the north is a prominent area of industrial uses.
The prominent axes found in the 1930 map show to have disintegrated by 1961, resulting in clusters of uses rather than long lines. As the square footage data indicates, only half of the “run” stores existed in 1961 compared to those open in 1930. The Findlay Market cluster is the only distinct remaining cluster of this type of commercial use. It’s former north-south arm that previously ran along Race Street is no longer present, making it an isolated cluster from other parts of the neighborhood. The northern Mohawk community still has access to “run” stores, although fewer. The
same can be said for the Pendleton area to the east of the neighborhood.

By 1993, “run” stores have become much more scattered. The existing stores tend to be most prevalent near the centers of the northern and southern parts of the neighborhood, although they can hardly be recognized as clusters given the spacing between them. A line along Vine Street is almost recognizable, with a gap in the middle around Liberty Street. Also, a new, large store has emerged near the middle of Vine Street. The density of the remaining stores in the southern part of the neighborhood is a bit higher than what can be found in the northern part, perhaps indicating a more regular occurrence of occupied residential units.
While even less daily goods stores exist on the 2017 map (figure 31), there has been a re-clustering of uses in the northern part of the neighborhood, surrounding Findlay Market. Additional stores are in proximity, along Race Street and Vine Street, north of Liberty. Only one store can be found within each of the Mohawk and Pendleton areas. The spine of the neighborhood, Vine Street, has the most consistent pattern of stores, although made up of only six, including the large Kroger store that appeared on the previous map. Main Street, near 13th Street, in the only other area with multiple “run” stores in a short distance.
4.3 Patterns of “Destination” Businesses

The location of destination businesses selling non-daily, non-comparison goods seems even throughout OTR although its central spine, Vine Street, prominently appears on the 1930 map (figure 32). The sizing of these stores is generally larger the closer they are to Central Avenue, and thereby the CBD, indicating an ability to draw from a larger market. Approaching Liberty Street there is a larger store found, however north of the street is a disruption to the line of stores. Main Street, particularly south of Liberty, also contains a substantial density of “destination” stores, which begins to filter out as the street continues north. Sprouting from these streets, a line of stores connecting to...
Walnut Street, along 13th Street, allowing for groupings of stores in the north-south direction. Along Central Avenue, between Walnut and Main, a large, lone store is noticeable and seems to have dominated the area near it. West of Vine Street, along 12th Street is another grouping of “destination” spaces which almost connects to the northern part of the neighborhood via Elm Street. In the east-west direction a line of stores runs along the center of the neighborhood on Liberty Street. Additionally, smaller lines can be found connecting Elm to Race, in this northern part. McMicken Avenue connects the Main Street district to the Mohawk area, with a dense grouping in the middle at Vine. In the Pendleton area, two distinct north-south lines of businesses exist, connected only along Central Avenue. In general, and like the 1930 “run” pattern, the density of the stores is highest and most consistent along the dominant axes. Nevertheless, many stores remain spread out across the entire neighborhood.
The strong lines of “destination” businesses have become more diffuse on the 1961 map, especially outside Vine and Main Streets (figure 33). The long lines of stores along these main north-south streets have broken up into clusters, where a cluster north of Liberty, between Central Parkway and Vine Street, and south of McMicken Avenue is distinctly separate from the Vine Street and Main Street “destination” districts. This northern cluster contains a notably large building on Race Street, near McMicken, which connects to a short but strong line of buildings along Elm Street. While McMicken still has “destination” buildings on it, it is more broken up on this map. In the middle of the neighborhood, the southern part of Liberty contains a few larger building footprints, which bookend the Vine and Main street districts with those found on Central Avenue. An east-west
connect is again found along 13th Street, made up of smaller buildings. Some of the stores along Central Avenue have changed, such as the lone, large building near Main. Now, that area is more filled in with some large buildings surrounded by small buffers of no “destination” uses. The two lines in the Pendleton area are like the previous map, but with additions some smaller buildings removed and a few larger ones added. This pattern occurs in the Mohawk area as well, where there are fewer small buildings, replaced by a new large one adjacent to Central Parkway.

The trend of the removal of smaller buildings and addition of fewer, larger ones have continued onto the 1993 map. This is best demonstrated in the Mohawk area. Meanwhile, Vine and Main streets

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appear the most visible, primarily due to the removal of many “destination” uses throughout the neighborhood, particularly on shorter streets. Where there used to be a cluster of sizeable uses along Central Avenue, there is one large business. In the middle of the neighborhood, at Vine and Liberty streets a new business has emerged. The Pendleton area contain a small grouping of “destination” businesses, although the primary direction has switched east to west.

By 2017, the “destination” businesses have essentially left the Mohawk area. In the Pendleton area, Central Avenue contains most of its few businesses. Most of the larger businesses from the former map have been removed, except for the one at Vine and Liberty streets. A scattered cluster near
Findlay Market exists, although with fewer businesses than on the previous map. Most of the remaining destination businesses are in the southern portion of OTR, primarily clustered along Vine and Main streets. Race and Walnut street, in addition to a small cluster around Elm and 14th street, contain most others.

### 4.4 Patterns of “Fun” Businesses

This pattern is markedly different from both the “run” and “destination” 1930 patterns. Comparison “fun” shops are essentially limited to a cluster in the northern part around Findlay Market, which
connects to a certain extent to the southern part of OTR via a line of “fun” businesses along Vine Street, which is intersected by a barely noticeable east-west line of stores along Liberty Street. Another cluster of fun stores that is barely connected to this pattern is the line of stores along Main Street, which are anchored on its southern end at Central Avenue by two large building footprints, which are used as a department store, with the separate ground-floor uses connected by a skywalk. Apart from this dominant pattern, a few scattered “fun” uses occur, such as a sprinkle in the Mohawk area, a space on Elm Street near 14th, some on Walnut, and a very small space in the entire Pendleton area.

Figure 37. 1961 Map of “Fun” Business Patterns (Map by author)
The 1961 pattern of “fun” uses is even more limited, with stores almost completely retrenching to Vine and Main Streets, with a small cluster remaining along Findlay Marked. Very few “fun” uses exist in isolation, implying a need for proximity to one another for shared consumer bases.

Only remnants of the 1961 “fun” pattern appear on the 1993 map (figure 38). The Findlay Market area contains a scattered grouping of uses, completely disconnected from the rest of the uses found in the southern portion of OTR. Vine Street contains the most uses, south of 15th Street, and only on the western side of the street. Main Street has lost almost all its comparison stres, containing only two buildings with “fun” businesses. The Pendleton area has two, distant businesses, while the Mohawk area has none. Central Parkway and Avenue also contain no “fun” businesses, and Liberty
By 2017, a clear rejuvenation of “fun” businesses has occurred, although limited to the southern portion of OTR (figure 39). The pattern along Vine Street has changed, as it now contains buildings with “fun” uses on the eastern side of the street. The uses appear to expand off Vine Street, near 14th Street and on Central Avenue, which now has a couple businesses. Walnut has a few, but more significantly, Main Street has reappeared with “fun” uses found north of 13th Street, and through the northern part of Liberty Street.
Bars and restaurants are evenly distributed within the interior of the neighborhood, with few on any of the bordering streets. Prohibition prevented the popularity of more bars in the area. The Findlay Market area is marked by a few buildings with this use. McMicken appears as a street with a near consistent number of bars and restaurants, creating a sparse path into the southern portion of OTR. Vine and Main streets are not clearly defined, as has been the case with other commercial use patterns. Instead, bars and restaurants appear sporadic, with an inkling of a line formulated only at the southern part of Vine Street. Separate from the area west of Main Street, the Pendleton area
contains its own sprinkling of such uses. This may indicate that bars evenly served their local neighbors, rather than having to cluster to generate footfall from outsiders.

The 1961 map of bars and restaurants shows a similar pattern to what existed in 1930, with an increased amount of such businesses, which is likely a result of the end of Prohibition. The pattern is now more organized, with both Vine and Main streets visible, along with Elm Street, particularly north of 14th Street. East from Elm Street, the Findlay Market area is visible, along with the diagonal line of McMicken Avenue, which connects the Mohawk area to the rest of the neighborhood. Near Central Avenue, 12th Street appears as an east-west corridor, almost reaching the Pendleton area, which contains its own sparse cluster of bars and restaurants.
By 1993, the number of operating bars and restaurants has clearly diminished, expressed by a sparser pattern of uses. Streets are essentially non-definable on this map, with merely some businesses hovering around Findlay Market, and some south of Liberty Street, primarily along Vine and Main streets, but with large holes between.

Figure 42. 1993 Map of Bar/Restaurant Patterns (Map by author)
A slightly more distinct clustering pattern of bars and restaurants is visible by 2017. A couple large building footprints are quickly noticed; one at Walnut and Central Avenue and the other at Liberty Street and Sycamore. An L–shaped cluster is apparent, with one short line along 14th Street, connecting Race Street with Vine, and its leg along Vine Street, connecting 14th Street with 12th Street. Main Street is visible, with businesses spread from Liberty Street down past 12th, but not through to Central. In the northern portion of OTR, only a few bars and restaurants are scattered around, with Findlay Market surrounded by a few.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the research described by this work, the organization of commercial uses within the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood of Cincinnati has indeed changed since 1930 in a distinctive way. While the correlation between neighborhood commercial business and neighborhood population upheld across the 1930, 1961, and 1993 periods, 2017 showed to be an aberration to this relationship, with a
decrease in population but an increase in total commercial square footage, since 1993. A look at population changes at a more micro level shows readjustment of this dynamic taking place. A turn in the downward trend appears to have taken place in 2014, based on U.S. Census estimates, which indicate the 2015 population increased by 9% since then. This pattern informs a reverse relationship where historically, people drove commerce, today in OTR, commerce is driving population.

Furthermore, the 2017 physical commercial pattern marked a deviation from the locational trends that existed historically. Given the declining state of the local economy over the course of the first three study periods, the changes in commercial patterns show where businesses closed. In general, the closings were not limited to any part of the neighborhood, but happened across OTR, primarily on subsidiary streets and in the middle areas of long streets. The primary paths with connections to the CBD, like Central Avenue and Vine Street, were not unaffected, but maintained commercial uses better than other commercial strips. This pattern indicates that access to consumers from a wider market is especially necessary when the local market is suffering economically. Also, unique to the 2017 map is the concentration of commercial uses in the central, southern portion of the neighborhood.

Through comparison of the listed businesses in 2017 with those in 1993, it was found that the amount of businesses in operation increased, meaning the 2017 maps shows where they have since opened. A rational hypothesis, limited only to consideration of the reverse pattern of how change in commercial spaces has occurred, might be that previously existing spaces have been maintained and additional businesses have filled in where operations most recently closed. This, however, is not what has taken place. Whereas the descent of the commercial evolution shows natural, incremental responses to changing market forces, the ascent, as is taking place in OTR, reflects a formulated, large-scale manipulation of the market. An example of this difference is demonstrated by the
existence of concentrated commercial activities along the east-west paths that connect the Vine Street commercial district to Washington Park. The park had not previously been a commercial draw, but because it has been significantly enhanced, offers fun activities, and even includes some commercial uses in the public space, new mini-corridors have been created.

Chart 12. A combined comparison of the spatial allocation of the studied commercial types across the 1930-2017 period offers potential correlations, such as the decrease of “destination” uses in a mirrored pattern to the increase in parking space. (Chart by author)

Differences amongst the allocation of square footage by type of commercial uses has also been demonstrated across time. Entertainment venues show to be the only commercial type that has remained nearly consistent since 1930. Otherwise, fluctuations have been significant across the commercial type. Notably, the “destination” (non-daily, non-comparison) goods and services once took up the amount of space currently used as parking. This pattern, supported by the similar trend to “run” uses, indicates past commercial uses as being more directed toward local consumers, while the current mix and amount of uses appears to prioritize a non-local market.
Investigation of the influences on commercial development shows its reliance not only to a physical space that offers opportunities to be seen by consumers, but to its role in the larger metropolitan context, the economic opportunities available to existing residents, and the perceived quality of that place by outsiders. For years, OTR was disconnected from any substantial role in the metropolitan area other than as a depository for the powerless, in this case the poor or the newcomer. Its identity hung on to its only distinctive role as a place with breweries and an abundant supply of saloons, however these activities were the result of residents’ ability to gain power where they lived. The predominately German population built wealth from participation in local jobs, established institutions, and in the process contributed to a building culture. That culture unraveled largely due to a restrictive regulation, Prohibition, which stifled the formerly abundant jobs, and to a change in societal perceptions of German culture after World War II. It is possible that without these disruptive events, the association of OTR to German culture might have eventually unraveled due to residents’ movement out of the neighborhood once enough wealth was built to leave the crowded, unsanitary place OTR had become. However, even prior to these events and since, opportunities to participate in a consistent or growing economy have been stagnant, and with limited resources, residents have largely remained powerless and unable to build wealth and culture.

The magnitude of the decline taking place reached a point where it became easier, and perhaps necessary, to create culture and attract residents with wealth, than follow the historical pattern. Through deliberate change, an incubator marketplace has been affectedly created in OTR to service a targeted consumer group. This effort benefited greatly from past achievements put forth by historic preservation agencies that ensured an ongoing life for the physical remnants of a past culture, providing a space to rebuild in and an image to build from. While redevelopment was an intended
component of preserving the historic artifacts, policies to prevent or manage the associated social repercussions were not prioritized. As a result, the injection of a new middle class into OTR, without strong efforts to establish a process for integration, has established a gentrified place.\textsuperscript{95} The targeted demographic for the redevelopment is indicated by the high price points associated with both the condominiums on the market and by most products sold by the new commercial businesses, in a neighborhood whose poverty rate was 52.7\% in 2014.\textsuperscript{96} For example, a one-bedroom loft is currently as low as $175,000 and as high as $300,000; a three-bedroom townhome is listed at $579,000.\textsuperscript{97}

While housing policies and efforts by local non-profit housing organizations mitigate some market influence on housing opportunities, especially with the increasing pressure to avoid displacement of residents, the redesigned public places tend to be primarily for the new group of residents. Washington Park does attract a seemingly mixed crowd of people, and yet a middle/upper-class culture is felt by the pre-selection of organized events and designation of space within the park for food and beverage consumption.

This created marketplace coincides with characteristics of the experience economy, which values quality experiences as an economic output and thrives in a controlled commercial district that incorporates a distinct image.\textsuperscript{98} OTR is evidently a participant of this economy. Media references, research publications, consumer data, and personal experience in the neighborhood provides a sense that value is being placed on the stories associated with the history of OTR and the buildings

\textsuperscript{95} In this statement, gentrification considers Sharon Zukin's definition of it as "a collective effort to appropriate the center for elements of a new urban middle class," as referenced previously.


\textsuperscript{98} Gilmore, The Experience Economy.
that allow people to feel part of the ongoing narrative. The 2013 opening of Rhinegeist Brewery exemplifies a business that is connected to both experiential values. Located in a former beer bottling plant, with a brand that directly calls to OTR’s German-influenced history, a visit to the brewery offers a moment to connect with a past culture that began in this neighborhood. In this experience-driven economy, it is not merely the quality of the products that warrants its worth, but it is the quality of the whole emotional fulfillment that occurs when interacting in a place built to engage a participating consumer.

The decision to use OTR’s assets to create an experience economy is justifiable, given the extenuating circumstances, namely the amount of time that has passed with no other plans for change coming close to the results that has surfaced since the work of 3CDC began. The injection of commercial types that attract wealthy consumers may have been the necessary, short-term strategy for establishing a new market open to a wider following, however, it is unlikely to benefit the neighborhood over time. The calculations of changes in commercial types since 1993, by square feet, has shown a surge of bars and restaurants at a rate of about 200%, along with significant increases in “fun” (non-daily comparison) goods and parking spaces. While this amount of space for bars and restaurants was experienced during the mid-20th century, the overall composition of commercial uses at that time offered a broader mix of “destination” (non-daily, non-comparison) goods and services, and “run” (daily) goods, which are helpful to a local resident base.

Furthermore, the locational pattern of bars and restaurants is different than previously experienced. Today, the bars and restaurants are often adjacent to one another, and predominately found in only the southern, central portion of the neighborhood. Historically, bars and restaurants were more spread out, meaning a concentration of available parking was not necessary, and competition for

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them to attract a passerby was not required. The concentration of bars and restaurants, as seen today, has also been expressed to contribute noise nuisances, which would be alleviated by a more diverse commercial corridor.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

To achieve a broader mix of commercial types across a larger area within the neighborhood, an increase of “destination” type businesses, “run” and “fun” stores, in addition to more industrial or other production-based industries would facilitate a more sustainable commercial development strategy. A risk with an experience-based economy, like retail-based businesses, is the need to keep consumers engaged and coming back. Frequent changes, updates and surprises are necessary to achieve returned customers. However, frequent change often does not typically suit financial planning. Therefore, more need-based uses, like grocery stores and consumer services help balance the businesses directed at shoppers with discretionary spending. Additionally, a neighborhood’s commercial development spread should not be too reliant on consumptive commercial types. A neighborhood that contains operations involved in production will be better able to take advantage of a larger variety of labor skills. A direct connection between production and consumption can also market this relationship, which has shown to be beneficial, to ventures like Rhinegeist and other “Made In [insert place here]” operations.

Based on a reverse pattern of development, from its declining phase, the increase of commercial uses should take more advantage of the north-south street organization. Establishing new commerce along the streetcar route (see figure 16) would establish a mutually beneficial dynamic while strengthening this directional pattern. Reestablishing full corridors of commerce would also serve to begin the process of subsidiary markets and reconnection of OTR’s various communities. This can be
achieved by extending the Vine and Main street corridors, as well as a McMicken Avenue corridor.

Of course, reconnection of communities is not only limited to physical development. Social needs and opportunities for people who have been left out of the growing economy will play a role in the long-term development of a cohesive sense of place in OTR. This has proven difficult to achieve, but prioritizing it as a critical piece to the larger vision is required. A weakness inherent with new arrivals to a neighborhood is a lack of rootedness and attached memories to the place. Alternatively, this can be a strength to be tapped into from those who have resided in OTR for decades. Their stories and experiences, positive or negative, can contribute to the ongoing narrative of the life of OTR. Ideally, efforts can be made to stitch together a neighborhood culture that reflects a variety of lifestyles, and in turn this will be reflected in the variety of commercial goods and services.

Ultimately, the strength of the sense of Over-the-Rhine is reliant on the strength of its physical environment, diversity of activities, and emotional imagery. In its current state, OTR is endowed with advantageous physical qualities, and is using that to attract businesses that offer unique goods, products, and experiences which contribute to a distinct OTR image. Through attraction of more varied businesses, paired with economic opportunities that promote resident involvement in commercial development, an image and sense of place that is more true to the range of current and future residents can be built. This alternative is not only more socially responsible, but offers a stronger likelihood of ongoing increases in commercial development across the long-term.
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Figure 20. Example Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Cincinnati, OH, 1904-1930, Sheet 66
Figure 21. The Cincinnati Bell Connector began operation in September 2016. The transit service offers convenient movement along a primary route between the CBD and OTR, with stops at popular locations. Should the network be expanded OTR would benefit from access to a wider market.