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INFILLtrate: Reconstructive Tactics for Over-the-Rhine

A thesis submitted to the
Graduate School
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Master of Architecture

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

by

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Cincinnati’s Over-the-Rhine is in the midst of a rapid reinvestment process that, among other things, has caused a significant shift in the social, political, and economic borders of the neighborhood. Strategic redevelopment plans attempting to establish a “diverse, economically-mixed” neighborhood are occurring in tandem with a global collapse of the economy, placing future development in jeopardy. This thesis identifies unintended consequences of strategic planning – the removal of public resources, the further fragmentation of the landscape, and the potential loss of cultural heritage from resulting population shifts – and responds by embracing the concept of tactical urban planning. Specifically, the design project will subvert the strategic planning process through the temporary occupation of underutilized, land-banked urban space for the production of energy and food.

In rejecting Over-the-Rhine’s current process of reconstruction, the project questions both the need to erase the damaged building stock, and the attempt to restore the city to what it once was. Both of these processes deny the historical events that contributed to destruction. The proposed interventions embrace destruction as an honest and natural condition of the city, and suggest the desire to restitch the urban fabric through a series of reconstructive tactics.

Lebbeus Wood’s *Radical Reconstruction* provides a departure point for the articulation of scabs and scars in the obsolete and damaged urban landscape. The *scab* constitutes a temporary layer of program with the sole purpose of generating capital for the wounded city. Photovoltaic arrays, agricultural containers, and commercial advertisement space immediately generates a surplus of energy, food, and revenue for the depopulated neighborhood block. The *scar* is identified as a timeless artifact remaining in the landscape for multiple generations. While historic scars can be revealed through excavation of the landscape, contemporary scars resulting from the structural remains of the scab will provide a framework for future growth. These old and new systems of order in the city will be appropriated in the creation of new tissue for the urban fabric. Architectural additions to the built environment will be parasitic in nature, opportunistically plugging into existing openings providing necessary circulation or utility upgrades for the damaged building stock.
The following people have generously contributed their time and ideas to this local research and design project. The resulting work has embraced the spirit and passion inherent in the attitudes of Over-the-Rhine’s most valuable asset: it’s people.

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I would like to also thank my parents, Phil and Nancy Stoughton, for their incredible support throughout my education at the University of Cincinnati •
PLACE: cincinnati’s over-the-rhine

the (utopian) gridded city 2.3
cincinnati’s historic basin settlement & industrial expansion 2.5
1920-1950: the cultural engineering movement 2.6
vehicular infrastructure and the pedestrian city 2.8
liberty street as historic and contemporary “urban connector” 2.11
liberty street as historic and contemporary “urban border” 2.11
locally oppressive, regionally successful 2.12
1950-1980: the cultural individualism movement 2.13
1980-1992: the controversial people’s movement 2.15
1992-2000: utilitarianism and self-transcendence 2.18
2000-2009: a struggle for control 2.20
visions from over-the-rhine 2.23
a contemporary transitional era? 2.24
bibliography and images 2.27
URBANISM: strategies vs. tactics

3.3 conflict in the city
3.7 strategies and tactics
3.9 defining urbanism
3.11 tactics of invasion
3.15 temporary use of urban space
3.22 operational strategies influenced by everyday urbanism
3.27 social agency of art
3.29 tate modern: successful example of an accessible institution
3.33 the quaternary sector
3.35 understanding other infill responses to the shrinking city
3.35 towards a democratically designed public space
3.39 bibliography and images

INTERVENTION: urban scabs and scars

4.3 cognitive mapping as design tool
4.8 design intent
4.10 the proposed reconstructive process
4.11 implications of the design project
4.13 bibliography and images
This document takes the form of a “survival guide” in reference to the militarization of the inner city, both in terms of the criminalization of the poor, the methods of reconstruction underway in the neighborhood, and the wide-spread fear of violence and crime catalyzed by media representation, infrastructure decay, drug trade, and allocation of public safety resources to concentrated areas of the neighborhood. The purpose of the thesis is to generate alternative tactical planning methods intended to supplement strategic development initiatives already underway in Over-the-Rhine. Working towards 3CDC’s goal of creating a diverse, mixed-income community, it becomes the responsibility of the architect to represent the public interest. In the case of Over-the-Rhine, this means exploring innovative ways to inject community-shared resources into the public realm at a time when resources for the wealthy are emerging.

Similar to U.S. Army-issued field survival guides intended for wartime situations¹, this document is intended to be a manual for the community of Over-the-Rhine. The underlying question of how to preserve the small, and relatively low-income population an existing residents and business owners in the shadow of multimillion dollar investments, the influx of the wealthy into the neighborhood, and impending gentrification. Research is presented in the first and second chapters, cataloging the history of the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood, major planning responses to the shrinking city, and emergent forms of urbanism currently being debated today. Each chapter is presented through a body of text, followed by a selection of images corresponding to the text.

Part 1: PLACE begins with a discussion of the origin of the American gridded city, referencing William Penn’s idealistic visions for Philadelphia as a departure point for an inherently

¹ specifically, FM 21-76 Survival, Evasion, and Escape, and FM 31-21 Guerrilla Warfare and Special Forces Operations were referenced as embodying distinct parallels between military operations and the operations of the American capitalist economy involving, among others, developers, planners, and architects.
Americanized urbanism. The thesis traces Cincinnati’s rapid growth as a frontier town; a gateway to future westward expansion during the industrial era. The section continues by analyzing Cincinnati’s future collapse, presenting initial causes of decentralization, responses to the persistent spread of urban poverty, and major changes to the city over time. The section dramatically concludes by describing a contemporary state of crisis in the city’s inner city neighborhood of Over-the-Rhine. Specifically, the thought of an urban landscape existing within a permanent transitional state is an important concept that will influence the remainder of the research and design work.

Such a pessimistic conclusion drives the investigation forward into Part 2 of the research, a study in URBANISM. This chapter focuses on cities in crisis scenarios, touching on intersecting issues of war and violence along with the issues of political, social, and economic forces. A discussion of strategy and tactics identifies a potential new role for the architect operating within this complex urban environment: a departure from the traditional role of strategist, into a new tactical role favoring increased social and environmental responsibility. The research continues by identifying survival tactics for crisis scenarios, the rising importance of the public domain in the transitional city, and institutions that inherently facilitate and reinforce a democratic exchange of dialogue and knowledge.

The final section of this document, titled Part 3: INTERVENTIONS introduces the design project by describing the contextual analysis of the study area. Derived from this analysis is the design intent of the thesis, followed by the proposed phasing of the interventions. This final section concludes with a chronological sampling of work produced in coordination with the research •
The greatest moral dilemma that has ever confronted humankind is how to achieve social justice for all the cultures of the planet within a context of environmental responsibility [...] Architects should shift their role from fashioning the facades of power and become the guardians of the Earth’s resources.

Sharon Sutton, 1994 AIA National Convention
What is the city but the people?
William Shakespeare

The faces of people, not the facades of buildings.
Reverend Maurice McCrackin

Every party is trying to do what they think is the right thing, so there’s inherent conflict. Right now there is clearly a movement to get this thing right. What is right, I’m not so sure. But I think everyone acknowledges that the way many things exist today is unacceptable.
Stephen Leeper, president of 3CDC

Our experience of mixed-income so far is that it has been generally focused on the market rate and the new people moving in. It doesn’t necessarily value the current residents.
Mary Burke, executive director of OTRCH
Upon Cincinnati’s conception as a city, the practice of planning was well under way. In the United States, urban planning arguably first originated in Philadelphia whose gridded city became the model for future cities throughout America. Such was a model built around in organization and perfection – Philadelphia, after all, was an early experiment at utopian society building. William Penn’s Frame of Government (1682) was an expression of these utopian ideals, and was powerful enough to have inspired the American Constitution, which was written 100 years later.

Within the document, Penn sought to mediate between individual liberties and public order by using the Quaker Meeting Hall as an inspirational typology.¹ In the traditional Quaker meeting, a community becomes bound together socially rather than forcefully, contradictory to religious oppression of Penn’s childhood in seventeenth century London. Frame of Government called for the citizens to establish their own physical and political structure rather than having a framework of rules

forced upon them by a governing body. Perhaps most interesting and visionary was the idea that people think of their private life and community based on a series of symbolic meanings creating a holistic “world view”.\(^2\) Penn proposed to create a free and symbolic exchange of ideas through the principles of the Quaker Meeting, embracing innovative, socially shared change without counterproductive conflict. In acknowledging that reform was a natural component to the evolution of society, Penn’s Frame of Government was intentionally left open-ended to allow for future change without violence or revolution.\(^3\)

The envisioned city to embrace such ideals was named Philadelphia (philia, love; adelphos, brother: hence the “City of Brotherly Love”). In stepping away from London’s fortress city, Penn intentionally decided to design the city as transparent and open as he could. The individual houses were to be designed with ample garden space, creating what Penn called a “green country town”.\(^4\) Furthermore, Penn designated an area of 10 acres in the center of the city to be used as a market and town hall, manifesting the ideology of Frame of Government into the very heart of the city.

The rectangular street grid pattern was perhaps seen as a response to Europe’s organically generated maze of streets. In reality, the highly ordered system was most likely a byproduct of Penn’s concerns and directions. This becomes evident through his instructions to Thomas Holme (surveyor) specifying that major roads from town to town, and convenient roads within the city should be established first, allowing no builder to encroach on the territory.\(^5\) By specifying the legal decisions of allocating land to purchasers, Penn arguably became the first to practice designing a city before it was built.\(^6\)

William Penn’s ideals and utopian visions demand revisiting

\(^2\) Fantel, 154.  
\(^3\) Fantel, 156.  
\(^4\) Fantel, 185.  
\(^6\) Tatum, 20.
especially in times of crisis and conflict, providing a timeless view of community and society building.

§ CINCINNATI’S HISTORIC BASIN SETTLEMENT & INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION

In the westward expansion and settlement of the country, the grid plan became almost universally employed. Influenced by the geography of the Ohio River, Cincinnati’s streets were organized in two separate grids - the central business district (CBD) grid is slightly skewed compared to the grid to the west of the CBD. This allowed all north-south streets access to the river, which provided transportation for goods and people. Roads, in accordance with the standard practices of the times, were built around 66 feet wide (approximately 4 modern day traffic lanes wide) and intersected by roads of equal width at an equal distance apart. While Penn’s city was sandwiched between two rivers, it was organized inward: idealistically focused on a central public space. Where Penn’s city streets were hierarchically arranged to serve the symbolic town center, Cincinnati’s streets were established to serve the Ohio River. Perhaps this variation in town organization is due to Cincinnati’s growth depended on the river for commerce and transportation, while Philadelphia’s development was rooted in idealistic visions of religious tolerance and freedom. As a result, early organizational planning decisions provided the framework for rapid growth and expansion in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

It is important to note that emergent technologies and building methods constantly challenged the historic standards by which the city had been created. Subsequently, alterations, demolitions, and creative retrofitting practices became quite common over time most notably regarding transportation technology which will be returned to later.

Cincinnati experienced rapid growth as an industrialized

city in the late nineteenth century, followed by nearly a century of population shrinkage which continues to this day. Population loss in Cincinnati can be attributed initially to the continued expansion of the country westward, and later to the development of automobile-oriented suburban communities. The phenomenon of “shrinking cities” is not unique to Cincinnati, but rather is quite common to cities worldwide. Detroit’s Metro Times newspaper cites 370 major cities that have experienced significant depopulation in the last 50 years.\(^8\) Out of those cities, more than 25% can be found in the United States (the majority of which are found in the Eastern-half of the country).

The value of studying Cincinnati lies in its isolated, land-locked geographical terrain. It was the first major “boomtown” to emerge in the heartland of the country, and for this reason scholars attribute the city and its evolution to be wholly “American” dispelled of eastern American cities’ largely European influence.

§ 1920-1950: THE CULTURAL ENGINEERING MOVEMENT

In the early twentieth century, Cincinnati was in the midst of a major population crisis demanding the intervention of city planners and policy makers. The dangerously dense living conditions were paradoxically caused by the very geographic features – surrounding 300-foot hillsides and river valleys – that attracted settlers and immigrants in the first place. Such conditions prevented widespread movement out of the basin. A scene of chaotic land use, heavy pollution, and overcrowded walking conditions created a demand for improvements in transportation technology. The priority for planners and city officials during this era was to decentralize the basin by any means necessary. Zane Miller and Bruce Tucker’s Changing Plans for America’s Inner Cities: Cincinnati’s Over-the-Rhine and Twentieth-Century Urbanism identifies the 1920’s-1950’s

as a time defined by destructive and reconstructive tactics dominated American planning practices. Cultural engineering was the practice of attempting to control and manipulate both social and physical urban conditions. During this time planners and sociologists embraced the concept of cosmopolitanism which is understood as the sharing of behavioral traits among diverse groups of people without the destruction of each group’s distinctive cultural identity.

During a time when Western Europe was rebuilding after World War I, American cities were waging war against themselves, engaging in slum clearance tactics in an attempt to both depopulate existing areas of the city and dictate future growth in outlying areas. A prime example of deconstructive-reconstructive planning is evidenced by the 1933 plan for Cincinnati’s West End. **145 blocks of housing were to be demolished and replaced by 16 residential superblocks.** At that time, Cincinnati’s Lower West End was in such poor condition that the neighborhood was described as physically and socially irredeemable. Federal policy contributed to demolition efforts around the country by stipulating that for every new housing unit created, one “slum” unit must be destroyed. The densest of neighborhoods within the basin, such as Over-the-Rhine and the West End became targets of a domestic, self-imposed war against the inner city.

One of the most significant causes of destruction was the evolution of transportation technology. Horsecars, and later streetcars certainly facilitated mobility throughout the city’s unpaved and uneven streets, however at the same time caused major overcrowding issues. The construction of the subway to alleviate such conditions in the 1920’s which was notoriously

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9 Zane Miller, Changing Plans for America’s Inner Cities: Cincinnati’s Over-the-Rhine and Twentieth-Century Urbanism (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1998), 23.
never finished (still remaining non-operational to this day) resulted in hundreds of documented damaged buildings and foundations along the route. Thirty years later, expressways tore through urban neighborhoods further isolating and destroying the original historic neighborhood fabric of the basin.

It was feared disinvestment in urban neighborhoods would spread into the central business district, threatening downtown’s status as the economic and geographic core of the region.\textsuperscript{11}

“Proposals for Downtown Cincinnati [...] proposed the development of a new metropolitan master plan that would include proposals for the rehabilitation of the old stock of housing around the central business district and improved transportation facilities to make downtown more accessible to people from the city and suburban neighborhoods.”

The Metropolitan Master Plan of 1948, and the Motorways Plan contained within fundamentally changed the landscape of the city to this day by proposing a new way to move about the city: by vehicle. However, the 1948 plan is more notoriously known for contributing to the preservation and strengthening of existing racial and socioeconomic segregation within Cincinnati’s rapidly growing surrounding neighborhoods.

The 1948 plan represents the climax of cultural individualistic thinking, for it reveals the extent to which planning and policy decisions attempted to control the migration of people and the social outcomes of an evolving city.\textsuperscript{12} The purpose for studying the plan today is to observe the process of retrofitting Cincinnati’s historic basin with modern automobile infrastructure. Such work provides insights into the successes and shortcomings of such ambitious city-wide planning and suggests how future technologies and infrastructure should and should not be incorporated into the urban core.

\section*{§ VEHICULAR INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE PEDESTRIAN CITY}

The juxtaposition vehicular infrastructure within the

\textsuperscript{11} Miller, 26.
\textsuperscript{12} Miller, 35.
The 1948 Plan describes the need to cater to the automobile by illustrating the growth of the region from 1920-1940. During this time, car ownership increased 350% while the developed land of the city nearly doubled.13

"Such figures point up the well-known fact that the life of a modern city runs on wheels. Every year it is more and more dependent on the free movement of people and goods over an ever-widening urban territory."14

Once the majority of people were moving through the city as drivers rather than pedestrians, downtown streets became extremely congested, harming the efficiency of the CBD. The historic streets, at their original 66-foot width were only wide enough for two lanes of traffic and two lanes of parking. As a result, many of the older urban roads were converted into one-way streets to accommodate two lanes of cars traveling in the same direction. By 1946, parking on the majority of streets in the core of the CBD was prohibited the entire business day, allowing for the maximum four lanes of traffic to be realized. The 1948 Plan recognized these temporary measures did little to relieve such major urban traffic congestion. It proposed a hierarchical motorway system consisting of freeways, modified expressways, and thorofares attempting to create a utopian modernized environment where ultimate freedom of movement throughout the region could be achieved at any time desired.

**EXPRESSWAYS**

"The expressway, or freeway, the backbone of this system, is designed for safe, fast, uninterrupted vehicular traffic flow."15

One freeway in particular, Interstate 75, bisected Cincinnati’s African-American West End neighborhood. This

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14 1948 Plan, 79.
15 1948 Plan, 83.
extremely poorly planned expressway\textsuperscript{16}, while responding to the plan’s acknowledgement of the need for expressways, brutally ignored specifics regarding the implementation of the system. To clarify, the plan stated:

“Expressways must be conveniently accessible to residential communities but insofar as possible should not cut through or disrupt them because an expressway’s wide right-of-way and prohibition of access from abutting property tend to make it an appreciable barrier to community continuity.”\textsuperscript{17}

Unfortunately, the plan eerily foreshadowed the effect of expressway construction in the basin, as Interstate 75 effectively destroyed the West End, displacing 15,000 to 20,000 citizens. This event remains one of the most significant social injustice cases in Cincinnati’s 200-plus year history.

**MODIFIED EXPRESSWAYS**

A modified expressway was designated to be, in essence, a large road with a right-of-way up to 250 feet. Such roads would be categorized as not to exceed the capacity required for freeway infrastructure. Today’s state routes more or less constitute the scope of the modified expressway, representing a high speed road without the medians and on-ramps of expressway construction.

**THOROFARES**

Thorofares are perhaps most important to this analysis because they quite intimately integrated into neighborhoods of the city. This direct relationship with the surrounding urban fabric contrasts with expressways which develop similarly despite contextual variation. These designated “community roads” were to be capable of handling large volumes of traffic and functioned as feeder routes for expressway and modified expressway systems.

“Expressways and modified expressways form the basic network of the motorways system but they must be supplemented by a network of thorofares as feeders and to provide for the movement of local traffic, thus to complete

\textsuperscript{16} Among other serious design flaws, two exits occur within two city blocks. Fifty years after being built, plans to redesign Interstate 75 interchange through Cincinnati’s basin are currently underway.

\textsuperscript{17} 1948 Plan, 84.
The 1948 Plan proposed an intricate system of radial and cross-town routes for the city and surrounding neighborhoods. Downtown thorofares, where additional right-of-way space was limited, were adapted by either converting to one-way use only with limited parking scenarios (as employed prior to 1948) or expansion into the historic building fabric. The latter method proved time consuming and costly – both economically and socially impacting the surrounding community while benefiting the larger metropolitan neighborhood.

§ LIBERTY STREET AS HISTORIC AND CONTEMPORARY “URBAN CONNECTOR”

As downtown’s major east-west thorofare, Liberty Street can be characterized as both an “urban connector” and an “urban border”. Before Liberty Street’s expansion into a major barrier-like artery, the road was a very symbolic connector, transgressing from Mount Auburn to Price Hill, bending sharply just before entering into Over-the-Rhine. After the 1960 expansion of Liberty Street into a thorofare, the road fed into the freeways to the east and west of the basin, connecting downtown to the developing, far-reaching suburbs.

§ LIBERTY STREET AS HISTORIC AND CONTEMPORARY “URBAN BORDER”

Monumental civic architecture can be found along Liberty Street, however many more impressive buildings have since been razed. Churches, prominent homes, and the likes were sited along this corridor perhaps as a response to the significance of Liberty Street as a social and political boundary for the city. From 1802 until 1849, the road formed the city’s northern boundary and jurisdiction limitations. In fact, the land to the north of Liberty Street was named the Northern Liberties. For quite some time, this area remained farmland, agriculturally

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18 1948 Plan, 85.
19 A viaduct once connected Liberty to Price Hill over the Mill Creek Valley, while present-day Liberty Hill was the original path of Liberty.
serving the adjacent city which was not uncommon for the time.

“…the paleo-industrial city was still largely self-sufficient: it produced part of its food in addition to industrial products, and did this in order to survive sieges, epidemics, and economic crises. Even in cities like Paris in 1870 produced some food…”.

Cincinnati’s officials could not enforce their ordinances in the territory to the north of Liberty Street, establishing the corridor as a significant political boundary between civilization and “frontier land”. The road naturally became a social boundary as a result of the political distinction of the divided lands: “Those who wished to drink, gamble, or break Cincinnati’s severe Sunday “blue laws” simply stepped across the line.”

Today, the road’s importance as a border continues – but not solely due to the fact that a six lane vehicular corridor with all of its associated billboard advertisements and parking lots represents a severe physical boundary for the pedestrian. Liberty Street’s significance is due to the rarely discussed fact that it exists as the maximum northern extents of the redevelopment efforts underway. In this regard, **Liberty Street may one day embrace the role Central Parkway recently had as a boundary between gentrified and un-gentrified districts of the city.**

§ LOCALLY OPPRESSIVE, REGIONALLY SUCCESSFUL

A series of articles from local newspapers, The Cincinnati Enquirer and The Cincinnati Post, reveal a unique insight into the expansion process catalyzed by the 1948 Metropolitan Master Plan. The articles catalog the details of the project from 1937 to 1968, providing an explanation of the need to expand Liberty Street, financial difficulties associated with the project, occasions when maps and reports were submitted to the City Manager, disputes between the government and

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citizens regarding property acquisition, the opening of the newly widened street, and subsequent protests regarding the final outcome of the project. Such a lengthy, controversial, and expensive public works project which solely benefits those outside of the community impacted illustrates first-hand the negative consequences of the freeway and metropolitan sprawl era on America’s urban core.

In addressing the rise of the automobile and the growth of suburbia, Cincinnati only created a partial solution to the problem of urban obsolescence. Where the Plan set out to make Cincinnati a “better place to live”\textsuperscript{22}, it ultimately failed. While planners succeeded in devising an incredibly creative and intricate hierarchical road system to increase the freedom and efficiency with which motorists moved throughout the city, they neglected to address the impact on the quality of life of those living within the basin. While one freeway displaced up to 20,000 residents from a basin neighborhood, a thorofare effectively isolated and limited the mobility of residents from another basin neighborhood.

In the future, such radical changes to the dynamics of the city must undergo a more democratic and inclusive process to ensure the impacted local community benefits rather than is harmed by public works projects. The effects of oppressive governmental planning projects without the approval of citizens in the city brought about a paradigm shift in the social attitudes of the city’s residents – perhaps playing a leading role in the prominent rise of the individualist movement during the second half of the twentieth century.

\section*{§ 1950-1980: THE CULTURAL INDIVIDUALISM MOVEMENT}

While cultural engineering tactics were effective in decentralizing Cincinnati’s basin population, the concentration of poverty within the historic city did not subside. 1920’s cosmopolitanism never entirely caught on: we sorted ourselves
by creating enclaves of sameness on a massive metropolitan scale. The growing threat of the spread of unfavorable urban conditions into the CBD, coupled with the inherent similarities of ideological movements such as fascism, Nazism, and communism in a post-war society contributed to a paradigm shift in the way American cities approached their urban environments. This era promoted the empowerment of the American citizen, encouraging an exploration of lifestyles and cultures in the search for a solution to poverty in the city.

Historic preservation quickly became a successful tactic in the fight to prevent the planned destruction of Cincinnati’s urban neighborhoods. In 1960, the Lytle Park area, east of the CBD was saved from demolition due to expressway construction as a result of the efforts of its residents and community organizers. Four years later, the federal Equal Opportunity Act shined new light on substandard housing conditions in fringe neighborhoods like Over-the-Rhine. A remarkable 4,200 of the 8,800 residential units in the neighborhood were brought up to code in less than 10 years. Thousands of more units were renovated or torn down due to unsafe structural issues. Grassroots organizations became established, fostering a sense of civic pride and empowerment, further defining the rise of the individualism era.

In 1970, while still struggling to come to grips with expressway construction from the 1960’s, the Queensgate neighborhood (Queensgate is located west of Interstate 75, while the West End is located to the east of Interstate 75) enthusiastically embraced a plan for renewal.

The Queensgate II plan aimed to boost ethnic pride by demolishing existing buildings in favor of a revitalized “town center” approach. Mixed-use development in the form of housing, business, educational and cultural centers sought

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23 Miller, 44.
24 Miller, 55.
25 Miller, 73.
26 Miller, 69-70.
to promote the area’s rich and influential African American heritage. Furthermore, the plan proposed to reconnect the neighborhood to OTR, the CBD, the rest of the West End community and the metropolitan area in general.

"In the past Queensgate and the Over-the-Rhine communities had recognized, first the canal, and then Central Parkway, as the boundary between them. They had always been two distinct communities. This separation was reinforced over the years as Queensgate became, not only poor, but black. [...] In selecting a site on Central Parkway at Music Hall where the Parkway could be bridged, the Task Force found a location which could not only act as a joint focus for Queensgate and the Over-the-Rhine, but could be a metropolitan focus as well.”

Widely praised by the mayor and media, the plan ultimately folded under severe federal funding cuts implemented by the Nixon Administration. Despite failure of Queensgate II, ethnic pride became a new way to combat poverty.

While African Americans in the West End were promoting their cultural identity, Appalachians in Over-the-Rhine scrambled to become organized. The Heritage Room, a small temporary space in Washington Park Elementary School and later a permanent space in an adjacent building, was a place designed to promote ethnic pride. It focused on cultural studies, community organization, and general education. Most significantly, the Heritage Room was successful at bringing together blacks and whites following an era of civil rights struggles. A collective “urban Appalachia” identity emerged out of this program, however its significance was shortly felt. Appalachians began migrating out of the basin area one year later as a result of landlords participating in the federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) program who favored renting to African American tenants.


28 Miller, 81.
If cultural individualism spurred a shift from physical to social reconstruction, then the People’s Movement is the manifestation of those individualist beliefs taken to the extreme. Cultural individualism had bred an environment where community activism played an incredibly influential role in shaping urban policy and planning, most evident during the 1980’s in Over-the-Rhine. Arguably one of the most controversial and obstreperous leaders of the era was buddy gray who advocated for improving the conditions of low income residents in the neighborhood. The subsequent People’s Movement operated under the slogan, “the faces of people, not the facades of buildings.”

The empowerment of community leaders as a result of the cultural individualism movement initially unified under the tactic of historical preservation to save their communities from destruction. Now, the leaders of these same neighborhoods were vehemently opposed to the outcomes of preservation. This became a critical and paradoxical turning point in the cultural individualism movement, a realization that Miller and Tucker fail to point out. Perhaps more significantly, for arguably the first time in the twentieth century, efforts to improve the condition of the urban environment shifted from a focus on the built environment to a more humanitarian focus on social and cultural identity. For example, in the wake of possible gentrification, buddy gray and his followers began purchasing abandoned houses for minimal amounts of money, creating a critical mass of “community-controlled” housing. The production of housing was trumped by the production of social service programs designed to assist a population segment which had been stripped of it’s resources (e.g. quality education and public services, etc.).

Miller and Tucker describe buddy gray’s efforts in a

29 It is important to note that followers of the People’s Movement were fundamentally opposed to historic preservationists because the “historic” designation of a district was understood to be a catalyst for gentrification and forced eviction of powerless residents.
controversial manner – as a negative obstacle to the progress of the city in the renewal of its basin. Gray and his followers were labeled as “Separatists,” supporting the segregation of people based on their socioeconomic status. In their text, Over-the-Rhine was described as a community on the verge of becoming a “reservation for the poor”:\(^{30}\)

“\[The Gray faction, like the metropolitan planners, loved homogeneous neighborhoods [...] the Gray faction did not worry about nurturing cooperative and coordinative intergroup relations based on mutual understanding, empathy, and cordial coexistence.\]”\(^{31}\)

Miller and Tucker’s claims of the People’s Movement embodying a separatist attitude are contradictory to those who worked with gray in the 80’s. Tom Dutton, a follower of the People’s Movement and architect in the community, argues that buddy gray fought for racial and economical mix in OTR by exploring methods for introducing community control within a gentrified context. His personal interactions with gray directly oppose Miller and Tucker’s assessment which leads to questionable conclusions in their text. Dutton looks to the colonization of Native American land as a reference point for the gentrification of Over-the-Rhine.

“What happened to the Sioux was that two irreconcilable positions - assimilation and extermination - became conflated: assimilation came to be extermination. The Over-the-Rhine People’s Movement cannot allow a parallel conflation: that economic mix comes to be displacement and dispossession. [...] Economic mix sounds well and fine, but it’s more like a Trojan Horse - seemingly a gift for OTR residents to include them in their own neighborhood undergoing drastic transition, but really harboring a sinister force plotting their demise. [...] Separatism has never been the goal of the People’s Movement. [...] the issue is not spatial distinction per se but the uneven distribution of wealth and material privilege that takes form in exclusionary spatial processes. [...] Instead of focusing on moving people from one place to another, [...] urban policy should focus more on the movement of resources.”\(^{32}\)

\(^{30}\) Miller, 161.  
\(^{31}\) Miller, 152-153.  
In the quote above, Dutton argues that the People’s Movement did not support the segregation of classes, or “separatism” as Miller and Tucker worded it. Rather, this grass-roots movement argued that the redistribution of wealth and resources would be ultimately more successful than a policy which requires “the members of the segregated group to change their lives and conform to the expectations of the dominant group.” As a result of the controversy surrounding this conclusion becomes troubling from an academic point of view, because the integrity of the text has been challenged.

§ 1992-2000: A NEW CULTURAL MOVEMENT EMERGES

The inaccuracy and controversy surrounding the Miller and Tucker’s perspectives of the People’s Movement overshadows key conclusions derived in the Epilogue of their book. Perhaps a new era of urbanism in Cincinnati began in 1992 when Karla Irvine, a local equal housing advocate, suggested that a multi-directional migration is desperately needed in our metropolitan region. The effects of a capitalist economy have led to decades of social sorting practices as evidenced by the evolution of urban form in Cincinnati. Acknowledging the negative effects of such a stratified society, Irvine suggested the migration of low-income people into the suburbs where middle and upper class dwellers predominantly reside. Likewise, she recommended the (re)association of middle and upper class people into the city’s urban neighborhoods. Essentially, Irvine was calling for a reintegration of society - the diffusion of diverse social classes into a strictly heterogeneous environment. Miller and Tucker add that this new approach should engage in a culturally individualistic, yet holistic vision of the prosperity of the city and region as a whole:

33 Dutton, 6.
34 For instance, once migration out of the basin was possible, those who could afford to get out did (economic sorting), and before this the basin and immediate hillsides consisted of ethnic enclaves (OTR, German; Mt. Adams, Irish; Bucktown and the West End, African American).
It is important to note Irvine’s suggestions mark the transition from cultural individualism to “cultural awareness,” because her ideas represent a new approach for combating a history of persistent urban poverty. Questions arise in response to such an approach: Do we all have a right to choose which neighborhood we live in? Should government subsidy facilitate Irvine’s call for heterogeneity? How could such a massive reorganization of society be realistically achieved? Last but not least, how would this metropolitan shift differ from the 1920’s-era failed attempt at cosmopolitanism and cultural engineering?

Miller and Tucker termed Irvine’s strategy as “self-transcendence,” referring to the need to look beyond our localized issues in favor of solutions that benefit the region as a whole. This mentality seems uncomfortably similar to the 1948 metropolitan master plan where oppressive planning decisions from the perspective of urban neighborhoods were celebrated as beneficial from a city-region point of view.

In a similar manner, Dutton feels the existing Over-the-Rhine community is not represented when it comes to a citywide vision for future development. Ultimately, the long-term strategic planning of the city encounters criticism and debate from an array of competing political jurisdictions, organizations, and residential communities. In the end, this overly politicized process, if nothing else, defines who the powerful and the powerless are in the city. Ironically, Irvine’s plea for “cultural awareness” may in fact contribute to the marginalization of basin neighborhoods by limiting their voice even more rather than addressing the spread of urban poverty in Cincinnati!

In studying the neighborhood of Over-the-Rhine, effort must be reserved for a tactical response to the city’s long term

35 Miller, 168.
strategic vision for the future. Time and time again, the history of Over-the-Rhine teaches of the negative implications at a localized level of urban planning and development.

To conclude, Miller and Tucker’s text provides examples of how planning in Cincinnati has changed throughout the twentieth century, yet provides only an opinionated, editorial version of late-twentieth century developments in Cincinnati. Community leaders born out of the cultural individualism era are dangerously misrepresented as opponents cynical of investment in Over-the-Rhine. Rather than down playing and attacking the efforts of buddy gray in the 1980’s, a discussion about his motives and goals should be occurring in the city at this very moment. Similar to the conditions of the 1980’s, displacement due to gentrification presents a major threat to families residing in Over-the-Rhine today, yet no mention of gray’s efforts to operate within the context of gentrification from a low-income, community-based approach have been discussed. Instead, Miller and Tucker’s text vaguely denounces the People’s Movement, arguing nobly (yet naïvely) for a utopian vision of a Greater Cincinnati which is class-less. This conclusion ironically ignores a history of specific problems in the city (failed cosmopolitanism, oppressive planning developments, persistent spread of poverty, etc.) after criticizing previous planning strategies for not addressing these fundamental urban issues.

§ 2000-2009 A STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL

Perhaps no other neighborhood in the city of Cincinnati has been plagued by such an intense and lengthy struggle for control and ownership as much as Over-the-Rhine. While resources (i.e. money/access to loan financing, positive media attention, and education) remain limited in Cincinnati’s basin neighborhoods, competition between similar locally-based non-profits also exists at a noticeable high:

PEASLEE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER (1984)

Provides a peaceful place where Over-the-Rhine residents and youth create and participate in dialogue based educational programs that foster
creative expression, self-determination, personal voice, and social justice.

UPTOWN ARTS (2001)

Education and activity center for kids offering free classes in dance, art, theater and music.

ART IN THE MARKET (1998)

Employs youth to work with artists in the creation of public works of art installed in the Findlay Market District of Over-the-Rhine. Uses art as a catalyst for promoting grass-roots changes, capitalizing on human and material assets available in the local community.

Supports community development through job training and investment in “aesthetic infrastructure.”

ART WORKS (1996)

Connects artists of all ages with opportunities in the arts through inspiring apprenticeships, community partnerships and public art.

OTRCH (1978)

Works to build and sustain a diverse neighborhood that values and benefits low-income residents.

Focuses on developing and managing resident-centered, affordable housing in an effort to promote inclusive community.

CINCINNATI CENTER CITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (3CDC) (2003)

Purpose is to develop Cincinnati’s Center City as a regional center of high value employment and real estate, sustained by a diverse mix of housing, culture and entertainment. Working to transform Over-the-Rhine into a diverse, mixed-income community where people from all walks of life choose to come to live, work, and play.

The last comparison is perhaps the most critical because the two organizations are focused on ownership of property in the neighborhood, and both concern themselves with the production of residences for particular communities. It is important to note the goals of these two parties are not aligned, however at times they work together out of necessity. 36 This relationship is most clearly visible in the Washington Park district of the neighborhood. A recent shift in power from grass-roots community-based organization to city-backed economic

36 Such was the case in the City Home project. OTRCH owned the land while 3CDC had the financial resources to develop the project. As a result, 5 out of the 25 residential units were designated as “affordable” to meet OTRCH’s desire to produce more low income housing in the neighborhood.
development is most symbolic in this southern Over-the-Rhine’s district. While development and gentrification was successfully deterred in the 1980’s, avoiding what the community considered to be their greatest threat, today construction and rehabilitation is booming. A new School for Creative and Performing Arts anchors the south end of the district threatening the homeless’ Drop Inn Center next door, while 3CDC’s new condos inject market-rate homeownership to the north and east of the park. As a result of this investment, the park itself has been heavily policed, which has resulted in widespread criminalization of the homeless. A new parking garage will be constructed to the west of the park, contributing to the loss of a local elementary school and the only deep-water swimming pool in Over-the-Rhine.\(^{37}\)

3CDC’s disputes with OTR residents over plans for the redevelopment of Washington Park have generated a negative, unaccommodating view of investment in the neighborhood by those who use the park. One could conclude that the community does not own Over-the-Rhine today. Rather, the powerful corporate elite of 3CDC and city officials now own the neighborhood. While an improved tax base is long overdue, one must consider the social effect such a change to the neighborhood brings.

In the case of Pleasant Street, OTRCH, representing the low-income community, owned property that 3CDC intended to develop. The two organizations working together – 3CDC obtaining the land, OTRCH receiving new low-income housing units as a result: a political partnership where two inherently opposed groups have found a way to work together.

One concern over 3CDC is their failure to abide by recommendations in the 2002 Plan (the very plan that called for their organization to be realized) that housing in the neighborhood should be carefully controlled in an effort to avoid

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see Strategies and Tactics, 3.8
negative displacement effects of gentrification. A representative from the organization stated the recommendations, while officially adopted by the city were “too difficult to actually monitor.” The troubling fact remains: how are we to monitor the progress of 3CDC’s actions in the neighborhood without understanding if they are abiding by the comprehensive plan? Concern stems from the fact that this recommendation was specifically made to protect current residents from becoming displaced through gentrification, and supports 3CDC’s mission of creating a “vibrant, diverse, mixed-income community.” No precedent cases of neighborhood “economic-mix” have been identified or are being followed by 3CDC which adds to the concern.

§ VISIONS FROM OVER-THE-RHINE

The lessons from forty to fifty years ago teach of a need to communicate with neighborhood throughout any transformative process. In 2006, the Niehoff Studio at the University of Cincinnati conducted field research in Over-the-Rhine, questioning various community about their personal visions for the neighborhood. The 22 people interviewed represented artists, business owners, developers, long-time residents (most of whom were elderly), and civic sector/non-profit workers. Generally speaking, a major division occurred between those who have an economic investment in the neighborhood (namely real estate investors), and those who have a personal investment in the neighborhood (namely residents and non-profit civic sector professionals). While these two groups predictably disagreed on topics (e.g. gentrification, resource distribution for local schools and families, ownership of the neighborhood, resource distribution for the needy), agreements surprisingly exist. These shared visions included the idea of a “self-sustaining,” melting pot neighborhood, where public transit is improved. Also popular was support for a neighborhood fully saturated with the arts and local businesses, nostalgia, and

diverse housing options. While multiple communities exist in Over-the-Rhine, it is important to embrace these shared values, exploiting them to their fullest potential through future urban design interventions.

§ A CONTEMPORARY TRANSITIONAL ERA?

A crisis is emerging within Over-the-Rhine. While development via 3CDC has been occurring since 2002, a significant collapse of the global economy threatens the continuation and completion of the 2002 strategic plan. This could not come at a worse time for low and middle-income residents of the neighborhood, as Phase IV of 3CDC’s development promised a shift from largely market rate, “luxury”-branded development towards more affordable rental property.

As residential and commercial development slows to a halt around the country, the idea of Over-the-Rhine under permanent transition emerges as a possible reality.

Liminal (transitional) space constitutes threshold space, borderlands, as well as the space occupying either side of a border. Liminal zones in Over-the-Rhine can be identified through recent disruptions to the neighborhood’s social, political, and economic borders. Shifts in these intangible borders have intensified a highly politicized and contested struggle for ownership of the neighborhood. Such spaces can be mapped out over time and can be characterized as conflict-producing scenarios. Just as Central Parkway, Washington Park, and parts of Vine Street have been liminal zones in the past, the Liberty Street corridor is identified as the neighborhood’s next major liminal space due to its status as a significant historic and contemporary border zone through the center of the neighborhood.

“3CDC, the acknowledged developer, has no plans to expand past Liberty Street, leaving stakeholders to wonder whether revitalization efforts will succeed or fade there.”

As a result of the current economic recession, countries around the world have in fact entered a liminal state. Such a condition is marked by “ambiguity, openness, and indeterminacy” and undoubtedly is perceived by many as a time of crisis. So if indeed strategic planning in Over-the-Rhine has been disrupted by these uncertain conditions, the thought remains: Over-the-Rhine and 3CDC’s land banked property in particular are entering a permanent state of transition for the unforeseeable future.

“People, places, or things may not complete a transition, or a transition between states may not be possible. Those who remain in a state between two other states may become permanently liminal.”

Architecturally this condition creates a very rich, opportunistic environment. It becomes feasible to intervene by capitalizing off of the momentum 3CDC created; to subvert “oppressive” strategic development in favor of community-strengthening tactical development. Shifting borders in the neighborhood can be captured and manifested through programmatic space. Regardless of the architectural response, the fact remains Over-the-Rhine is undergoing a unique transitional phase that may be around for quite some time.

PRINT


ELECTRONIC


IMAGE CREDITS (John Stoughton unless otherwise noted)

2.32 Changing Plans for America’s Inner Cities: Cincinnati’s Over-the-Rhine and Twentieth-Century Urbanism


2.35b “ “

2.34 The Cincinnati Metropolitan Master Plan of 1948

2.35a “ “
2.36 *Cincinnati Enquirer*
2.37 " "
2.40 " "
2.41a " "

2.38 local photographer Jimmy Heath
2.39 " "

2.41b WCPO news footage

2.42 Data from Hamilton County Auditor, (http://www.hamiltoncountyauditor.org/).
THE GRIDDED CITY: Philadelphia (above) vs. Cincinnati (below)
THE MEAN CENTER OF POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES shows the westward migration of settlers referencing Cincinnati as a major hub during the country’s expansion.
AERIAL IMAGE OF THE OVERLY DENSE WEST END CIRCA 1933 AND THE PROPOSED URBAN RENEWAL RESPONSE TO THE POOR LIVING CONDITIONS
AERIAL IMAGES OF THE WEST END SHOWING EXPRESSWAY INTRUSION, HOUSING PROJECTS AND CURRENT NEW URBANIST DEVELOPMENT.
THE PROPOSED NETWORK OF THOROFARES FOR CINCINNATI TO ESTABLISH A “free movement of people and goods over an ever-widening urban territory.”
THE DESTRUCTIVE IMPACT OF THOROFARE CONSTRUCTION IN THE HISTORIC, PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED CITY
Residents of this neighborhood complain new Liberty street is isolating them.

Residents Protest Liberty-st Road Project, Say It Cuts Them Off

Residents of the neighborhood around Pendleton street believe a wider, straighter Liberty street is cutting them off from the rest of the city.

Work on the $1.5 million Liberty project — from Smokey Street to Reading road — is going on now. To improve Liberty, four northbound streets have been eliminated. Between Natesmore and Reading the only northbound lanes are in the neighborhood.

Clinton Evans, of the St. Paul Community Center, argues that the fire and police departments will have difficulties in getting to and from the area during an emergency and that the proposed crossing on Liberty street would be a hazard to children, especially during the school term.

In local concerns and the blocked-off streets are causing a more difficult problem,” he says.

"The people are really mad about this." Father Sickles says. "The Liberty residents are cut off from the rest of their community, and that is important to them."

The city manager’s report suggested an "independent improvement" at a later date in which the people would raise the money for the construction.

"The suggestion is an insult to the people," Father Sickles says. He charges that "the city did this without first consulting the people, then acted after the fact in consulting us about the project."

A BIG PROBLEM in connecting the streets is the fact that there is a 38-foot difference in grade which would produce an extremely steep street that the city considers undesirable.

Evans noted that though there are only a handful of businesses now operating in the area, the lack of a central north route would kill these remaining businesses. "The Post the city is going before again.

LIBERTY STREET TO HAVE SIX LANES

Widening of Liberty Street in the vicinity of Vine Street has reached the stage where workmen have begun laying concrete street. Between Natesmore and Reading the street will be widened from two to six lanes. Plans call for eventual widening of the street west to John Street and extending it east to Reading road at 13th Street for a juncture with the proposed Northeast Expressway. —Enquirer (Bob Fees) Photo.
Official Defends Property Price
In Widening Of Liberty Street

The city's assistant assessor in charge of real estate yesterday defended the price paid by the city for property at 1420-42-43 Main St., as "fair market value.

The assessor, Frank Irwin, said a price of $155,000 for the property, needed for the widening of East Liberty Street, was reached after the independent appraiser made the Cincinnati real estate reports.

Irwin said the independent appraisals were $159,000 and $166,000. This was between the city's original offer of $112,000 and the owner's price of $175,000.

The final price was above our figure, but in view of the independent appraisals and the fact they would insist on $150,000, we felt it fair market value. Irwin said.

Irwin said the independent appraisers were A. W. Bowers, Jr., and Theodor M. Schriber, of the "Bowers and Schriber" firm.

The property is on the main parcel for the Main Street properties, which included the old Main Theater, now before the commissioners. If the sale goes through, the city will buy out the remaining parcels and the lot will be widened.

The sale was made by the owner, who was not present, to the city, which will take over the property for the widening.

The price paid was $155,000, with a deposit of $25,000, and the balance payable in 30 days. The owner of the property was represented by his attorney, who was not present.

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The property is on the main parcel for the Main Street properties, which included the old Main Theater, now before the commissioners. If the sale goes through, the city will buy out the remaining parcels and the lot will be widened.
THE “PEOPLE’S MOVEMENT,” AT THE CLIMAX OF THE CULTURAL INDIVIDUALISM MOVEMENT, WAS LED BY BUDDY GRAY.
THE MILITARIZATION OF THE INNER CITY ARGUABLY OCCURRED IN RESPONSE TO THE CULTURAL INDIVIDUALISM MOVEMENT.
CINCINNATI: A YEAR OF UNREST

2001

Looking back, there were warning signs. Citizens complained about police officers, protesters hollered and hauled signs at City Hall, community leaders demanded change.

But no one fully understood the danger of Cincinnati’s deep racial divisions until a white police officer shot and killed an unarmed black man in April.

African-Americans were outraged. Within days, the anger and frustration that had been building for years spilled into the streets. Rioters broke windows, looted stores, burned trash bins and threw bricks at passing motorists. A city once known as a good place to live and raise kids was embarrassed and stunned.

When the violence ended, Cincinnati took its first tentative steps toward change. The mayor formed a commission to study race relations. The Department of Justice investigated the police division. A mediator tried to resolve a dispute over racial profiling.

But at year’s end, the old warning signs remain. There still is concern about the resentment and entrenched passions that led to the violence. There still is fear it could happen again.
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY RACE RIOTS DRAMATICALLY REVEALED THE CONTINUING DECLINE OF THE INNER CITY
OVER-THE-RHINE IS UNDER SIEGE FROM OUTSIDE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL FORCES
THE OVERLY CONTROLLED PUBLIC SPACE OF THE INNER CITY IS CLEARLY VISIBLE IN AND AROUND TODAY’S LIBERTY STREET CORRIDOR
THE ENVISIONED NETWORK OF VACANCIES ALONG A COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO LITERALLY RESTITCH THE URBAN FABRIC
Everyday Urbanism celebrates and builds on the richness and viability of daily life and ordinary reality. It has little pretense about the perfectability of the built environment. Nor is it about utopian form. But it is idealistic about social equity and citizen participation, especially for disadvantaged populations. It is grass-roots and populist.

Douglas Kelbaugh

Quaternary praxis is the tool of society to survive in critical situations: guerilla survival.

Yona Friedman

In the spaces voided by destruction, new structures are injected.

Lebbeus Woods
Upon entering the twenty-first century, we have reached a point where urbanization and militarization collide, for the battlegrounds and the projects bear uneasily similar conditions.¹ Take, for instance, the following 2006 news release describing the Cincinnati Police Department’s operations in Over-the-Rhine and the city as a whole:

“We are increasing the police patrols in our neighborhoods. There is no substitute for increased police presence in our neighborhoods,” Mayor Mallory said. “The level of violent crime is unacceptable. The goal is to make people feel safer and to make it harder for criminals to operate.” […] “City Council provided the department with additional funding which allows us to expand patrols and make the Vortex Unit permanent. These resources afford us with the opportunity to be flexible in deploying patrols whenever and wherever necessary,” Chief Streicher said.

Last Sunday, the Vortex Unit became a permanent unit within the Police Department. Vortex is a specialized unit that is deployed to aggressively target high crime areas with a zero tolerance approach to street crime and drug trafficking. The unit has 50 officers, including one captain, one lieutenant, and

¹ Operation Vortex by the Cincinnati Police Department in Spring 2006 deployed 60 officers to arrest nearly 1,000 people in less than a month (http://www.wlwt.com/news/9468787/detail.html). Video surveillance cameras installed in public places downtown has nearly doubled in three years (http://notbored.org/cincinnati-2008.html).
five sergeants. The Vortex Unit began in May as the Over-the-Rhine Task Force and was so successful that it expanded first to Walnut Hills and then to Price Hill. Over the summer, the Task Force developed into Operation Vortex and expanded into all neighborhoods of the city.²

The physical condition of the built environment, the lack of resources coming into and out of today’s urban neighborhood, and the persistence of a deteriorating social condition paints a very bleak and hopeless picture of the American inner city. In the case of Over-the-Rhine, the condition intensifies at the possibility of permanent transition, or unresolved change. Such conditions constitute a crisis that has not yet been resolved, presenting opportunity for new experimental approaches to urbanism.

The capitalist yearning for consumption and material wealth has generated surprising parallels between planning in the modern era and war. Lebbeus Woods concerns himself with architectural response to urban crises:

“The early twentieth-century modernist architects […] embarked on a war of their own, employing the violence of what would later be called “urban renewal” against the presumed chaos of old cities […] some cities were already partially cleared by massive aerial bombardment, and others, through not bombed, begged for grand plans.”³

Capitalist destructive practices are further discussed in Paul Virilio’s Overexposed City. Virilio comes to the conclusion that it is not possible to tell the difference been a city undergoing a recession and a city at war:

“the destruction of 300,000 lodgings over a period of five years would cost 10 billion francs per year, but would provide 100,000 jobs. Better yet, at the end of the operation demolition-reconstruction, the fiscal receipts would be six to ten billion francs more than the sum which the public originally invested. […] One last question must now be asked: during a crisis period, will the demolition of cities replace the major public works of traditional politics? If so, it would no

Something seems inherently flawed with an economic system that feeds off of war and destruction, however the architect often plays into this warped construct of commodification and destruction. One approach to urbanism is to consider the inner city as a battlefield, constantly under siege from external social, political, and economic forces.

Detroit is arguably the model of the modern industrial era, a product of the destructive qualities of the capitalist system. Success in manufacturing cars through an increasingly efficient Fordist process has contributed to an urbanism of decentralized city cores and sprawling suburbs. Paradoxically, Detroit’s success led to its own death. In a symbolic move of the perilous state of the postindustrial city, the Detroit City Planning Commission (1990) publicly articulated a plan for the destruction of the most vacant areas of the city. In this extreme scenario, entire districts now rendered obsolete and vacant were to be demolished, returned to a natural feral state.

“Detroit was the only city that dared publicly articulate a plan for its own abandonment and conceive of organizing the process of decommissioning itself as a legitimate problem requiring the attention of design professionals […] As Detroit decamps, it constructs immense empty spaces, tracts of land that are essential void spaces […] curious landscapes of undefined status. In this context, landscape is the only medium capable of dealing with simultaneously decreasing densities and uncertain futures.”

Anthony Fontenot, a New Orleans native, writes about urban autarchy⁶, destruction, and survival within the built environment:

“Whether executed by war or the bulldozer, planned destruction – the intentional effort to destroy the urban fabric – has been an intrinsic part of the urban development and restructuring throughout the twentieth century and

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6 Autarchy is defined as economic independence or self-sufficiency as defined by Apple Dictionary.
He continues by articulating a contemporary role for the architect-planner operating within the context of a shrinking city:

“A new kind of urbanism will be responsible for conceptualizing ways of incorporating grand-scale urban mistakes, accidents, and by-products of an advanced capitalist system. In short, this new century will be asked to make sense of a political-economic space that produces destruction as a systematic by-product of its development. This new kind of urbanism will become the medium through which we not only conceive of the renovation of the postindustrial city, but begin to reconcile the ongoing destructive processes of late capitalism.”

In *Radical Reconstruction*, Lebbeus Woods explores the urbanism Fontenot describes, considering a reconstructive approach to the “damaged city” (whether caused by militaristic, environmental, or social forces). He proposes a sensitive, yet separatist, intervention through a sequence of operations that respects the historical integrity of damaged structures, yet seeks to embrace the old as an armature for the new.

“Whenever building are broken by the explosion of bombs or artillery shells, by lack of maintenance or repair, by fire or structural collapse, their form must be respected in its integrity, embodying a history that must not be denied.”

The process employed by Woods is an analogy for the body’s natural healing process. The *scab* comes first “shielding an exposed interior space or void, protecting it during its transformation.” In the case of Over-the-Rhine, buildings have been damaged over time mainly due to a lack of maintenance, although some environmental forces have accelerated this process of decay. In the case of damaged buildings, scabs have begun to form: unused storefront and residential widows have been boarded up, or in extreme conditions bricked over, while leaky roofs are patched with tarp. Other buildings remain vacant and exposed to the elements.
Woods’ second phase is the **scar**, which represents a deeper structural fusion of the old to the new. He poetically describes the scar as:

> “a mark of pride and of honor, both for what has been lost and hat has been gained. […] To accept the scar is to accept existence. Healing is not an illusory, cosmetic process, but something that — but articulating differences — both deeply divides and joins together.”

The result of such interventions is **new tissue**. “Freespaces”, as he calls them are new spaces of discovery, spaces of oppositional cultural intervention for those who have been deeply affected by the destructive by-products of a city in crisis.

> “For the most part it will be people who find the old, hierarchical orders too uncomfortable, too oppressive, too unworkable to stay within their dictates of custom or law, and are driven — from within or without — to take their lives more fully into their own hands.”

Fontenot and Woods, in considering the decline of urban centers and the reactionary role of the design professional, provide a theoretical framework directly applicable for operating in Over-the-Rhine.

§ **STRATEGIES AND TACTICS**

Strategies and tactics can be understood as operating **dependently** or **independently** of each other. While strategies represent preferred outcomes to a specific problem, tactics represent the necessary actions required to achieve the solution. In this manner, tactics exist to facilitate strategies, or in other words, strategies are dependent upon tactics to be successful. For example, Cincinnati’s 1933 Plan for urban renewal of the West End contained the strategy of improved living conditions in the basin and alleviation of the spread of “blight”. To accomplish this strategy, **deconstructive-reconstructive tactics were proposed**, specifically articulated by widespread demolition of tenement housing in favor of and superblock construction.

It is interesting to observe that the strategies of professional planners and city politicians have not changed drastically in the

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10 Woods, 15-16.
past hundred years. Generally speaking, strategic city planning aims to improve the health and safety of the citizens, whereas tactics to achieve these visions seem to vary over time.

On the other hand, tactical urban planning can intentionally subvert the strategic planner by working to quickly and flexibly exploit the opportunities created from strategic planning.

Florian Haydn, in her book *Temporary Urban Spaces*, suggests strategies and tactics operate independently of each other. Where urban strategies come to represent a top-down, comprehensive planning approach to conflict resolution, urban tactics come to embody a bottom-up, guerilla-inspired approach. In this example, tactics and strategies dynamically compete with each other, with strategies ultimately facilitating tactics.

“Strategy is, like tactics, a term from a military context, where it refers to long-term war planning in contrast to short-term, more flexible battle planning. “Strategy” means an approach that emerges from the planning desk and the sand table; it works from a position of power that is in a position to force its opponents to accept its conditions and to ignore limitation imposed by circumstances. Strategy plans for its own space, and that is a space of autonomy, where the objects, whether enemy soldiers or one’s own, can be manoeuvred at will. The urban-planning equivalent of strategy is the master plan.

[...] Tactics means an approach from the weaker place, which is not in a position to dictate conditions to an opponent but is compelled to try to exploit relationships to its advantage, by waiting for an opportunity and exploiting it flexibly and quickly. Tacticians have to work in others’ locations. The urban-planning equivalent of tactics is temporary use.

A strategic approach to urban planning, like that seen in the twentieth century, is no longer possible today. The alternative is tactical urban planning: goals must be formulated and partners sought for their implementation who have similar, or at least compatible, goals.”

In Over-the-Rhine today, city hall and 3CDC represent a twenty-first century version of strategic planning, following the most recent Comprehensive Plan of 2002. Those concerned with displacement from gentrification constitute an approach from the tactical planning front. Non-

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profit organizations and academic think tanks such as Over-the-Rhine Community Housing (OTRCH) and Miami University’s Center for Community Engagement embody the organizational structure of this secondary group. In a politically and socially sensitive arena, such as Over-the-Rhine, should tactical urban planning work to subvert strategic planning, or attempt to coexist with the well organized, economically powerful institutions implementing such plans? Further examination into the forms of urbanism and tactical urban planning will address this question.

§ DEFINING URBANISM

Urbanism is “the study of cities, their geographic, economic, political, social, and cultural environment, and the impact of all these forces on the built environment.”¹² In other words, urbanism is an umbrella term representing the collective discourse on the relationship between us and our built form. To further break down this topic, multiple “perspectives” on urbanism can be identified. An internalist perspective of urbanism focuses specifically on the spatial and social order within the city, while an externalist perspective is a broader view of the city as a node within globalized networks of exchange. While the latter of the two is much more relevant to contemporary discussions today, a third, hybridized perspective on urbanism questions how the two ideas can be reconciled. That is, how does social order of the city influence global forces, and likewise, how does globalization influence individual cities? This interstitial perspective provides insight into the forces shaping city development in contemporary society.

In January 2004, a series of three debates held at the University of Michigan explored three unique examples of urbanism that arguably constitute the majority of contemporary theory and practice within urban planning and its affiliated disciplines. It was certainly no accident that the discussion was

in a lecture hall less than an hour away from Detroit, and its problems of postindustrial decentralization. These lectures are significant because they clearly define three distinct forms of urbanism within our contemporary society: everyday, new, and post urbanism.¹³

**Everyday Urbanism** “celebrates and builds on the richness and vitality of daily life and ordinary reality. It has little pretense about the perfectibility of the built environment. Nor is it about utopian form. But it is idealistic about social equity and citizen participation, especially for disadvantaged populations. It is grass-roots and populist.”

**New Urbanism** “the most civic and idealistic - a compact, mixed use, walkable town of city with a traditional hierarchy of public and private architecture that is street oriented and conductive to face-to-face encounter.”

**Post Urbanism** “the most heterotopian and least idealistic, it is anti-urban, just as postmodernism was anti-Modern accepting Post-structuralist theories of knowledge and new hybrid possibilities and programs. Form is predictably unpredictable. It attempts to wow an increasingly sophisticated clientele and public with provocative and audacious architecture and urbanism.”

Such an array of paradigms leads to very distinct differences in the physical expression of resulting architecture in the city. For example, Everyday Urbanism yields spontaneous and informal, yet practical responses to everyday necessities (e.g. a ramp constructed over a stair case in a public plaza, a flea market in an empty parking lot, drinking fountains for dogs in public parks, etc.). New Urbanism yields a very traditional and historically-inspired order, assimilating the new into the historic vernacular language of the existing city. Finally, Post Urbanism exhibits the most excitement with explosions of computer-generated geometries and bold architecture which, if built, would be “over-scaled, windswept, and empty of pedestrians.”¹⁴

“A healthy ecosystem will simultaneously host the full range of forest types. Likewise, a healthy metropolis may encompass all of these urbanisms, with Everyday Urbanism taking root in informal settlement on the margins; New Urbanism and Re-Urbanism infilling the downtown and commercial centers and neighborhoods; and Post Urbanism exfoliating in exceptional places like the convention center, entertainment district, the sports arenas, airports,

¹⁴ Everyday Urbanism, 9.
The everyday urbanism paradigm is especially difficult to pin down because it is abstract in nature, existing as a philosophy rather than as a style. A house could be expressed as a response to new urbanism while specifically addressing everyday people and their everyday needs. Nevertheless, recent development in Cincinnati reflects both New and Post Urbanism paradigms while neglecting to fully embrace an everyday urbanist attitude. Such a philosophy belongs in Over-the-Rhine’s politically and socially contested terrain, functioning as a much needed alternative 3CDC’s top-down ideology. Everyday Urbanism exists as an outlet for the public to implement their most passionate visions and necessities.

§ TACTICS OF INVASION

Borders define our urban environment - whether they exist in abstract terms through social segregation and economic disparity, or in the physicality of walls, motorways, and rivers. One of the most relevant architects responding to borders in contemporary society is Teddy Cruz. He observes that socioeconomic segregation is occurring on a massive scale along the San Diego-Tijuana political border.

“At no other political juncture in the world does one find one of the wealthiest housing subdivisions in the United States only twenty minutes away from some of the poorest settlements in Latin America.”

Cruz is inspired by the landscape of Tijuana: an evolving

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15 Everyday Urbanism, 10.
16 New Urbanism in Cincinnati: City West, an entire “infill neighborhood” of housing being built on top of the remains of failed public housing projects on the city’s west side.
17 Post Urbanism in Cincinnati: iconographic projects like the city’s two riverfront stadiums, the upcoming Banks Project, the new convention center, and Zaha Hadidís Contemporary Arts Center.
18 Avondale still exhibits traces of everyday urbanism on a building, or architectural, scale from fifty years ago when large estates of Cincinnati’s gentry were subdivided to meet the more practical needs of displaced African American’s from the city’s West End.
collection of informal, nomadic settlements. The use of the land is important because it represents creative, ecological solutions to housing a growing population which blur the lines between urban, suburban, and rural typology.

“By bridging the planned and the unplanned, the legal and the illegal, the object and ground, Tijuana’s informal urbanism might anticipate the patterns of density and programmatic intensity that are already re-defining the American metropolis and contemporary notions of housing and urbanism worldwide.”

By acknowledging the reinvestment of the urban core, Cruz anticipates the displacement of the service sector on a massive scale. His attention is drawn to nearby first-ring suburbs as places for migrant workers to appropriate. Resulting “plug-in programs” in these retrofitted neighborhoods temporarily use the public domain for micro-economic activity. The by-products of such development are new social relationships and encounters: the strengthening of the neighborhood’s economic and social capital. Cruz criticizes investments that cities such as Cincinnati have made in the urban core, claiming that private developers and politicians are incorrectly pursuing beautification and new urbanism projects to solve deeply social urban issues. The sobering conclusion Cruz draws is that American cities are in a “crises of representation, caught between style and process.” Most importantly, Cruz realizes that architects and planners must be able to acknowledge the multiple forces which shape the city, and mediate between conflicting top-down urban strategies of professional development (e.g. 3CDC) and bottom-up tactics of grass-roots organization (e.g. the non-profit “civic sector”).

Cruz is appropriately critical of current market trends regarding urban revitalization in American cities. Beautification tactics coupled with infill new urbanist development fails to solve serious issues or social stratification deeply embedded into the urban environment. Cincinnati’s West End neighborhood is a prime example, built on top of the ruins of the city’s failed

20 Cruz, 75.
notorious segregated housing projects Lincoln Homes and Laurel Court. Called City West, 1,085 new mixed-income housing units (686 apartments and 210 single-family homes) will replace 1,850 low-income housing units. This new urbanist development ironically celebrates the past on a site where some of Cincinnati’s worst living conditions once existed. It represents a paradoxical situation recalling the conditions of early twentieth century cultural engineering. New Urbanism treads dangerously close to cultural engineering in the fact that it is a utopian (collective is more important than the individual) and structuralist (claims a relationship between physical form and social behavior). This philosophical approach to urbanism is exactly what failed Cincinnati’s basin neighborhoods and so many others just like it in the early twentieth century, however it continues to gain momentum as a celebrated market-driven typology.

While the improvement to the city’s overall housing stock quality should be celebrated, the quantity of affordable housing has been severely impacted. With a net loss of over 800 low-income housing units, where have the residents relocated to and at what (social) cost did this displacement occur? The result of such planning decisions ultimately impedes the functioning of the city because of this loss in “service-sector” housing. Teddy Cruz elaborates on this very topic:

“practically no one is asking where the cook, janitor, service maid, bus-boy, nanny, gardener, and many of the thousands of immigrants crossing the border(s) to fulfill the demand for such jobs will live, and what kinds of rents and housing markets will be available to them.”

The distribution of people in Cincinnati and similar small to mid-sized American cities is another key factor influencing urban housing and development. While Cincinnati’s downtown contains around 3,000 to 4,000 people, the city limits contain around 360,000 people. Compare these numbers to the metropolitan population of 2,100,000 people and it is easy to see why developers find it profitable to work solely in the

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21 Cruz, 77.
surrounding suburbs.

Cruz approaches the difficulties surrounding fragmented cities from outside the box. To operate on a site where economic capital is not competitive to the surrounding region, Cruz turns to investing in “social capital.” His observations of Mexican migrant worker communities, where creativity and commerce generate extremely active environments, reveal unique tactics of invasion which undermine the strategic efforts of professional planners and designers. Highly organized and sophisticated practices effectively transform public or private vacant land into an illegal informal colony. Urban guerilla dwellers, called Parachuters by Cruz, invade the discovered land, building housing from recycled urban debris. Urban Pirates are the organizers who deploy the Parachuters onto the land and request for city services to be delivered such as water and electricity. To those familiar with American urbanism, such a concept most likely sounds far fetched, yet often water and electricity make their way to the new settlements. Cruz describes this process as a successful negotiation of boundaries and resources responding to the most fundamental needs of a community: drastically different from the rigidity of American developmental policies where zoning and building codes clearly define what can and cannot be built on a site.

LIVING ROOMS AT THE BORDER

To challenge the American building policies, Cruz’s Living Rooms at the Border experimentally applies the lessons of migrant worker urbanism to the American border city of San Ysidro, California. This architectural project functions as a “political instrument” advocating for the deregulation of American zoning policy to meet the practical housing needs of the city. Cruz says there is a:

“need to foster the relationship between socio-political and economic strategies and spatial tactics in order to shape a new notion of affordability.”22
The project proposes 5 different uses supportive of each other, acknowledging the concept of density as a social phenomenon where the exchange of information and collaboration is valued. **The emphasis of social over economic capital is an intriguing concept in a society dominated by capitalist values.**

The project becomes an exploratory model to visualize what may occur if rigid policy regulations are broken down. Cruz designed a pre-fabricated structural frame to serve as an armature for housing units to be built over community-shared space on ground level. Details regarding the construction of these pods of living space, which are inspired by informal, haphazardly pieced together found objects are lacking. How these fragile conditions and processes will inform the fabrication process, materiality, and form of professionally planned spaces still remains to be realized.

§ TEMPORARY USE OF URBAN SPACE

Teddy Cruz, with his investigations into socially equitable housing, provides a framework for architectural response to everyday urbanism. The desired transformation of Over-the-Rhine into a diverse neighborhood make today, more than ever, an incredible opportunity to expand upon the ideas of everyday urbanism. Unlike other neighborhoods, “luxury” branding of stores and housing can be found next to social service organizations catering to the needy. It is not uncommon to see high-end condos next to crack houses, schools next to homeless shelters, and playgrounds secured by barbed wire fencing. This is pluralism at its most extreme. Multiculturalism pushed to its most uncomfortable limits.

Everyday Urbanism represents a struggle to reconnect design of the built environment to the very social and practical needs of the users of the city. This approach to development, especially in contextual situations where colonization and stratification have historically devalued the localized community, is an incredibly sensitive practice that represents a departure from traditional
roles embraced by design professionals. Everyday Urbanism labels architects, planners, and developers as equal participants privileged to enter the public debate on the future of the city. By de-emphasizing the professional expertise of the architect/planner, this post-modern ideology suggests that professionals operating within unknown cultures should be engaged with the indigenous culture to learn significant information pertaining specifically to the locality.  

3CDC, with their tactics of securing financing for initial development in Over-the-Rhine, emerged at a time when funding for the Planning Department was cut. As a result, community leaders in Over-the-Rhine lost a significant public forum where their voice could be heard. The American Planning Association voiced their concern over the city’s decision:

“Efforts to abolish Cincinnati’s independent planning department will give developers undue influence over the City’s future growth at the expense of citizens groups.”

All decisions regarding initial investment and development in the neighborhood between 2002 and 2007 (Phases I and II) were made privately by 3CDC. In 2007 the Planning Department was reopened by Mayor Mark Mallory, who said:

“We need a department that is focused on long term strategic planning for the city. Everything that the city does is interconnected, and we need to make sure that it is all moving toward the same vision.”

The public had been given back it’s democratic forum, however the damage had already been done. The decisions were made, and the projects were built. Perhaps the city had

23 This suggests an influence from the late-twentieth century cultural individualism movement where the empowerment of the impoverished community was conceived of as a tactic to fight urban poverty.


learned its lesson after buddy gray’s accumulation of power at the peak of the individualism movement. Recognizing such outrageous moves on behalf of the City warrants a much more sensitive approach to community design - far from the activist roots of buddy gray and the People’s Movement. The role of the architect becomes to embrace a tactical planning stance operating in accordance with the City Hall’s strategic visions for future growth. Any departures from this direction will be at the mercy of the city and 3CDC’s unmatched political and economic resources.27

The temporary use of urban space emerges as an architectural response to tactical urban planning, best illustrated by two German texts studying the reuse of underutilized land primarily located in Eastern European cities around the time of the dismantling of the Berlin Wall. A 2005 study of “temporary use” projects titled Urban Pioneers, by Klaus Overmeyer and his firm Urban Catalyst, documented over 100 examples in Berlin alone. This work, along with Florian Haydn’s Temporary Urban Spaces, paints a picture of how everyday urbanism is being implemented in the fragmented city today.

WHAT?

Urban Pioneers, and their temporary use of vacant space, informally address urban planning from a bottom-up, community-based approach to redevelopment. They respond to underutilized land, social relationships between diverse organizations, and local needs of the community. While the goal of temporary use is to establish long-term, sustainable solutions for the targeted locale, the process of arriving at the solution differs greatly from traditional strategic planning practices. The appropriation of once-public space is explored, new possibilities for use of the city emerge, and the social capital of the endangered community becomes strengthened. These experimental ventures often contain some degree of artistic, educational, or entrepreneurial content. Examples include

27 personal thought: If you can’t beat them, join them?
community gardens within vacant city plots of land, golf driving ranges on post-industrial sites, and temporary beaches along urban waterways.

**WHO?**

Overmeyer identifies four key parties involved in temporary use:

(1) **Property Owners** who own vacant land forge a short-term lease with an entrepreneur allowing for organized activity to occur on their land. In exchange for the temporary use of land, the “urban pioneer” is often responsible for maintenance and control over the space. The temporary use process is naturally complicated due to incompatible interests between the parties involved. Thus...

(2) **Key Agents** assume the role of mediator, initiator, and organizer. Their responsibilities include, but are not limited to, seeking out potential uses and untapped resources in an effort to enhance the feasibility of experimental proposals. By identifying the organizational networks to be built upon, architects commonly take on the role of key agent by proposing (and designing) new uses for the urban environment. Key agents often approach their experience as a type of start-up venture, testing what does and does not work on their affordable, borrowed land.

(3) **The State**, or local government, should adopt the role of facilitating and expediting these guerilla practices. While this may seem unlikely to the casual observer at first, it is important to note that vacant property constitutes a major liability for the City currently. Vacancy attracts crime and drug use, costing the City money for preventative measures such as costly (and ineffective) security cameras, barbed wire fencing, lighting systems, etc. Also, these projects have been documented as being “catalysts of urban and location development.” Finally, coordinating new uses on vacant land with local law enforcement strengthens the bond between community and government,
playing a key role in the safety of the at-risk neighborhood.

(4) Consumers are defined as the general public: those who live, work, and play in the area. These citizens engage in experimental uses, contribute to the revival of the surrounding area, and strengthen the social and economic capital of the locality.

WHEN?

From 2000 to 2005, Cincinnati surpassed Detroit in becoming the nation’s fastest shrinking city. This startling statistic represents a critical need to experiment with new approaches to urbanism. This concept is a flexible, bottom-up approach to development that can be deployed immediately unlike strategic master planning where a significant and lengthy process creates unfortunate gaps between idea and implementation. The strength of temporary use lies in the fact that its practices can work in tandem with comprehensive planning. For example, 3CDC’s standard operating procedures in the revitalization of Over-the-Rhine consist of targeting the properties where the most police calls have occurred. Property acquisition on a massive scale early in the planning phases has resulted in the accumulation of buildings and empty land waiting to be developed. The process is further delayed by permit approval, design development, and other administrative tasks. The accumulation of property where no use will occur for several months or years represents an incredible opportunity for temporary use to be explored. When long-term development and use finally begin on the site, the temporary users simply move to another location. This is a nomadic, guerilla practice, aimed at influencing potential developers and fellow citizens of the potential of vacant urban space.

WHERE?

Temporary Use occurs on borrowed property, which is

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currently underutilized for one reason or another. These urban vacancies present opportunity for the creative entrepreneur to test experimental uses. Cincinnati includes a wealth of underutilized urban space including a startling 500 vacant buildings and hundreds of vacant lots in OTR alone. Temporary use intends to release these spaces, returning them back to the public sphere where commerce, social interaction, and public discourse can flourish.

**WHY?**

Most importantly, temporary use represents a way for economically struggling neighborhoods with available vacant land to create micro-economies of activity. The interventions operate under the acknowledgement that social capital can be just as important, or at times, more important than the economic capital of the fragmented community. Controversial, but critically significant, issues of power and control are explored through these guerilla projects. This contributes to a much-needed discussion about public space in American cities today.

“…What could be more political than the question of who has control over resources, especially public resources and public spaces?”

**HOW?**

By exploring existing networks in the city, the interim user is able to discover a matrix of potential uses and users “whose productive overlapping can lead to surprising possibilities.” In many cities, entire offices are dedicated to facilitating the temporary use process, negotiating the barriers between government and citizen. With permission from the property owner, and support from the local government, Urban Pioneers realize their vision and observe the reaction and effect their intervention has on the surrounding context.

30 Haydn, pg. 107.
31 Haydn, pg. 13.
CONCLUSIONS

Often, the uses devised for a temporary use project will generate little to no money, requiring the participation and cooperation of all parties, especially the site-owner who provides and stipulates access to the vacant building or land. 175 listings in Over-the-Rhine are owned by 3CDC\(^{32}\) - many existing as underutilized, land-banked property awaiting future development. The fact that one organization so closely tied to the city owns potential sites suggests temporary use as a district-wide concept can be more realistically implemented.

Also, it is important to remember temporary uses on vacant lands emerge largely because they are perceived by the creator as experimental and risky ventures. The vacant land is seen as an urban laboratory: a testing ground for new partnerships, new uses, and new discoveries of how the city works and can be experienced.

What makes temporary use so appealing is the fact that its essence lies in transforming the most negative aspect of a community into the most unique and creative contributor to the day-to-day operation of the city: recycling and reusing at a citywide scale. These ideas arrive at a time when ecology and sustainable practices have emerged as prominent and influential global themes.

Currently, the majority of discourse pertaining to temporary use cites examples in Europe as successful. With few case studies in American cities, Cincinnatians can embrace this program as uniquely their own. If implemented, what would the reaction to such projects be? Will an American government facilitate such experimental planning tactics – especially in historically conservative cities like Cincinnati? Recent negative histories of drug trafficking and street crime have demanded the militarization of the city, however with minimal organizational effort, designers can lead the effort to re-humanize the urban

\(^{32}\) Data as of November, 2008 (source: http://www.hamiltoncountyauditor.org).
core. It is unclear whether the removal of barriers will be a practice endorsed by the local police force - despite the wonderful opportunity and potential success that awaits such decisions. What is clear is the fact that the removal of such barriers and the resulting appropriation of public resources (namely the use of land) for the public’s exploratory use would be an incredibly symbolic and optimistic act of retribution by the government. This would come at a time when the public opinion of the State, already incredibly weary from a century of failed planning policy, is skeptical of 3CDC’s local investment and development patterns. For example, Mary Burke, executive director of OTRCH, had the following to say:

“Our experience of mixed-income so far is that it has been generally focused on the market rate and the new people moving in. It doesn't necessarily value the current residents.”

Supporting organized tactical urban planning at a time when strategic comprehensive planning efforts are well underway would supplement, rather than conflict with the city’s efforts to revitalize the neighborhood and serve as a dramatic example to other American cities that the process of investment can be an inclusive event.

§ OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES INFLUENCED BY EVERYDAY URBANISM

To continue an analysis of Everyday Urbanism and suggest potential models for intervention in Over-the-Rhine, three inspiring “Key Agents” are identified: Public Space With A Roof (PSWAR), Free Radical Gallery (FRG), and Mobile Installation Projects from the architect Teddy Cruz and the artist Nicos Charalambidis.

**PSWAR: COMMAND CENTER MODEL**

Public Space With A Roof represents the command center
model for its emphasis and exploration of the “art gallery” typology. Their headquarters is described as a non-profit gallery, used deliberately as an interior public space. At PSWAR, a relationship between gallery space, the artwork, and the public is explored through their showcase exhibitions.

“For this reason, the gallery space sometimes becomes more like the headquarters from which a project can be coordinated than a which cube in which art is hung.”

PSWAR emerged from the yearning to create a dynamic, flexible representation of the gallery. With little to no budget, the gallery space can only provide creative shelter to artists who have no art facilities or space to exhibit. Above all, PSWAR is “a building which sees itself as a place for interaction.”

The organization is composed of a group of curators who create projects to raise awareness of our relationship to the physical environment. PSWAR is influenced by public art’s ability to engage the public in a dialogue about local, national, and global issues through art installation. Examples of media used include performance art, installation, drawings, video art, street art, interviews on FM radio, and lectures.

**FRG: CONNECTIVITY MODEL**

The Free Radical Gallery appropriates underutilized urban space, converting vacant storefronts into alternative art venues. The project, according to its website, attempts to “reconnect art and artist with the larger community.” FRG’s goal is to empower artists in the activation of vacant city space and underdeveloped communities through the implementation of weekend art walks through specific neighborhood business districts. The process by which these events are created is innovative. Building owners of targeted vacancies loan their underutilized space to FRG who organizes and distributes artists into their appropriate spaces. The event is open to the

35 PSWAR website.
general public, allowing anyone with any skill level to exhibit their work. This policy allows for community members with a heightened sensitivity regarding the meaning of place to visually communicate their (often unheard/unseen) voice, along with professional artists responding to new and unique contexts.

FRG bridges the divide between property owner, business owner, community resident, and artist to transform an otherwise under used neighborhood into a large-scale open-air gallery. This framework is particularly interesting because its principles can be applied to any neighborhood facing similar deteriorating conditions. Most significant, the resulting art events reconfigure existing stereotypes and perceptions. The underused NBD storefronts transform from symbols of a shrinking and disinvested city to symbols of an active and vibrant community - a showcase of local creative talent. In respect to architectural practice, FRG shuns the creation of new structures in favor of reusing the existing urban fabric. The idea that the historic, and now unused city, can be retrofitted with new uses is especially significant in respect to the contemporary world-wide ecologically sensitive context.

**MOBILE INSTALLATIONS: NOMADIC MODEL**

Temporary, mobile spaces function as information kiosks and archival spaces for the organization inSITE. Teddy Cruz designed these to be cheap, attractive, and functional, made from recycled materials. After the project is complete, the infoSite frame will be sent to a migrant settlement near Tijuana where it will be adopted as the structural framework for a residential living unit. The concept of the work is to conscientiously rearrange the flow of people and goods by inserting this object into a public space within the city, allowing people to experience the impact of changes to their physical environment first hand. Cruz’s infoSite took up 26 parking spaces reclaiming humanistic urban space that had been appropriated by vehicular machines, providing an interesting commentary on environments we have all grown too used to.
NICOS CHARALAMBIDIS’ SOCIAL GYM

The country of Cyprus is the European Union’s eastern most country and, due to its close proximity with the Middle East region, it is called upon to be a cultural bridge between the two regions. This powerful role as a “crossroad of civilizations” has defined Cyprus for thousands of years, and has caused a rich and complex layering of language, culture, and artistic tradition to be tightly packed onto an island with a population under 800,000 people. “A European Cultural Season” is a celebratory event to mark the current presidency of the EU in France. Within this event the work of Cypriot artists is presented, engaging an intercultural dialogue exchange in a neutral, third-party setting. This event is a prominent example of the emphasis currently placed on cultural identity and the necessity for investing in social capital throughout Europe.

Nicos Charalambidis is a Greek artist who grew up in culturally-divided Cyprus. His installation, located on the heavily-used urban plaza adjoining the Pompidou Centre in Paris, is titled Ledras Barricade. The temporary structure is a replica of the militarized barrier located on the main thoroughfare (Ledra Street) passing through the Nicosia, the capital city, where Greek and Turkish cultures prominently collide. Nicosia is the only divided capital city in the world by the demilitarized UN “Green Line.” This created space essentially functions as a mobile educational and informational center, telling the story of Ledra Street and engaging observers in a discourse about the public domain of the city, oppression, and potential for change.

Ledras Baracade is a small piece of the artist’s larger repertoire, which collectively is called the Social Gym. Charalambidis is interested in the notion of the museum from an ancient Greek perspective. This suggests the role of the museum is to be a laboratory of ideas, and a place

for social meetings to occur. He developed the idea of a Rumbling Museum, which becomes a nomadic installation within politically charged contexts. These mobile spaces crucially function as “a platform of contemplation and interaction between individuals.” 38 Charalambidis creates a dialogue between the built environment and its effect on the masses, questioning the social environment which results from specific interventions.

In 2006, Charalambidis transformed his role from reflective artist to activist, successfully negotiating permission from the United Nations to dismantle three parts of the barricade. The powerful imagery and symbolism resulted from witnessing soldiers shifting their militaristic role along the border to perform an inherently antimilitaristic act of dismantling and deconstruction of the barrier. 39 One year after parts of the wall were dismantled for the biennial of Sao Paulo in Brazil, the entire barrier was officially knocked down speaking to the power of art in a socially complex world.

The concept of the Rumbling Museum can certainly be exploited in Over-the-Rhine due to the wealth of vacant and politically charged spaces. For example, near 13th and Republic St., the parking lot where police shot Timothy Thomas in 2001 sparking days of race riots is an opportunity for intervention. Reflection of the times we are in, the social inequalities embedded into the urban fabric, and the discussion of our collective histories can bring together a community especially within emotionally charged environments.

A project such as this or any of Charalambidis’ installations certainly speaks to the collective memory of “place,” designating specific space as opportunity for dialogue and debate. Perhaps more significantly, the work provides a much-needed outlet for diverse communities to come together to construct relationships. In neighborhoods and cities where cultural divisions create

concern and conflict, such spaces are critically necessary to establishing and building the concept of a healthy community.

§ SOCIAL AGENCY OF ART

Historically, the museum and the gallery were distinctive spaces: a semi-private comprehensive collection vs. a smaller interstitial public space. In an article titled *When Worlds Collide*, Christopher Marshall argues for the necessity for museums and galleries to borrow from each other, leading to the emergence of a creative synergistic space containing the strengths of both exhibition spaces.40 For example, Marshall observes the function of the museum is to present “projective space,” that is, the encyclopedic containment of all objects relating to a central topic or theme. Conversely, the function of galleries has always been, on a more personal level, “committed to the ideal of a more self-contained and reflective space.”41

How does the Cincinnati’s Contemporary Arts Center (CAC) respond to Marshall’s categorization of the art institution? The Zaha Hadid-designed CAC is composed of interlocking galleries that seemingly float above an open lobby space. An intricately designed circulation system connects the ground floor to the upper spaces, emphasizing the desire to welcome the public up into the exhibition spaces. The spatial components of the museum certainly respond to the characteristics of the gallery because the interlocking exhibition spaces are isolated from the ground level, representing self-contained places for self-reflection. The use of windows and views out of the museum further contribute to this idea. Rare glimpses out of the museum occur during circulation or upon the conclusion of the exhibition space, strategically framing unique views of the surrounding cityscape.

The “gallery experience” in the CAC is also supported through the way artwork is presented. For example, the CAC

41 Ibid.
explicitly does not contain a permanent collection of work in an effort to present the most current contemporary work in the field. The underlying value of temporal exhibition removes the museum for the confines of a traditional role of becoming an all-inclusive, one-stop shop for the entire genre of contemporary art. Rather than being a museum projecting the comprehensive genre of contemporary art, the CAC is an institution that provides a comprehensive view of the artist. A unique series of programs, as identified earlier, dissect the current exhibiting artist, getting to the fundamental core reasoning and values behind the artwork. The CAC, thus, is a fantastic example of Marshall’s “collision of worlds.” What results is a creative juxtaposition of two historically distinct ways to present artwork. The museum is reimagined as a “dynamic conjunction between the projective space of the museum [...] and the reflective space of the gallery.”

While praise is given to the CAC for being at the forefront of such an innovative interpretation of the museum, criticism must be applied to its lack of leadership in facilitating and expanding on the local discourse pertaining to urbanism. Specifically pertaining to Over-the-Rhine’s recent gentrification. Such unprecedented massive reinvestment raises questions about the future of the neighborhood which must be debated and discussed in a democratic manner.42 The CAC, which was constructed during a time between major race-related riots in Over-the-Rhine and initial investment in Over-the-Rhine, sits a mere five blocks from the boundaries of the transitioning neighborhood, yet has remained eerily silent regarding the shifting dynamics of the city and its inner city. Opportunity still exists for the art institution to assume the role of becoming a public forum for the exchange of information.

The role of artists, and especially the institutions responsible for presenting the most cutting edge contemporary work, should

42 Note: The closing of the Planning Department upon the conception of 3CDC serves as an extreme shortcoming of Over-the-Rhine’s strategic planning process.
be to **question the inherently unjust power structure of the existing American city, not contribute to it.**

The killer combination of an inherently unjust and oppressive hierarchical membership structure, and the hesitance to respond to profoundly serious racial and class segregation in the city of Cincinnati leads me to question the integrity of the Contemporary Arts Center. It seems as though the institution is playing the safe card by catering to those with money rather than truly questioning the irony of its contextual situation. The economic needs of the institution outweigh the responsibilities and ethical values leading contemporary artist would argue are key to the practice. Why we are living in times of extreme socioeconomic segregation, unbalanced distribution of public resources (i.e. schools and public infrastructure)? The art institution, whether a museum or gallery, should critically analyze the social and physical environment of the city and foster an active atmosphere of active questioning and social engagement. Most importantly, the contemporary art institution should not lose sight of the ancient Greek interpretation of museums as laboratories for new ideas and places fostering social interaction. As innovative as the CAC desires to be, it could certainly learn something from this historical idea. In our contemporary post-9/11 context of terrorism, global warming, and economic crisis, museums must represent safe places for conflicting cultures to come together to engage in discussion, debate, and dialogue.

§ **TATE MODERN: SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLE OF AN ACCESSIBLE INSTITUTION**

If the Contemporary Arts Center fails at creating a truly accessible and inviting space for the public to become engaged with contemporary art, despite the best efforts of a world-renowned architect, what is an example of a successful institution and perhaps more importantly how was accessibility achieved? The answer: The Tate Modern’s new home in Southwark in the Bankside district along the Thames River. Since its reopening in 2000, Tate has been the most popular modern art gallery
in the world, and already plans to expand by 50% by 2011.\textsuperscript{43} The most exciting aspect of the Tate’s story is the fact that as they planned and prepared to become a great world venue for major contemporary art, they succeeded at integrating into and engaging the Southwark residents and businesses sparking the redevelopment of an otherwise depressed borough.\textsuperscript{44} The project is particularly applicable to this thesis because of the environmental similarities between Southwark and Over-the-Rhine. Both are places of disinvestment – left behind after an industrial boom last century. Both of the neighborhoods struggle with social problems such as unemployment and lack of educational resources. Most importantly, both are undergoing a process of investment. The Tate becomes a critical institution to study for its commitment to \textbf{a socially responsible agenda during an time of internationalist ambitions}. In a very fascinating way, the Tate has strengthened the surrounding local community while emerging as one of the world leaders in museum attendance and quality exhibitions. Their success must be embraced by similar transitioning neighborhoods and institutions – art related or not – as a model for avoiding social injustice during periods of gentrification.

The Tate desired to be an art museum which broke down the traditional barriers of the high-art institution, operating outside of its walls. Such an attitude symbolically parallels similar situations in Over-the-Rhine. Consider Liberty Street and its illustrious history, whereas the road invaded the private realm and now private use has begun to invade the public space of the road. Such is an environment of borders and barriers – constantly being challenged and transgressed by competing communities and uses. The extension, or outreach, of the art museum outside of its walls seems to be a perfect application to the Liberty Street corridor.

\textsuperscript{44} Cochrane, 8.
This observation aside, the Tate’s success resides in its 6-step framework for opening up the museum: information, involvement, education, employment and training, artist interventions, and annual festival. While some of these decisions were the result of innovative programming on the behalf of the Tate Staff, others had extremely spatial implications.

**INFORMATION**

One of the Tate’s primary goals was to establish a dialogue with the local public – an exchange of information. This strategy was largely achieved through the tactics of construction. A Visitor Center contained a small exhibition space and information about the renovation of the building into a new museum. The space was understood as an important meeting point for local businesses and social organizations, functioning as an access point between the institution and the public realm. Additionally, a newsletter published every four months explained the project’s process and was appropriately delivered to everyone in Southwark.

**INvolvement**

Engagement with the community happened in two distinct phases: (1) the community was invited to help in the construction and operation of the museum, and (2) the museum embraced the opportunity to become a facilitator – or key agent – in the revitalization of the borough. The inhabitants of Southwark appropriated the public space around the museum’s building during construction and renovation phases. Their “ownership” of this outdoor space was strengthened when the Tate collaborated with community organizations and residents in the landscape design for the grounds outside of the museum.

**EDUCATION**

While under construction, the Tate Modern reached out to local schools in Southwark – contributing to their arts programs and establishing year long artist residency programs.

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45 Cochrane, 8.
in select schools. The institutions collaborated with other arts organizations engaged with local schools as well, becoming a key player in the strengthening of local schools and colleges.

**EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING**

The Tate called on the local unemployed population to assist in the construction phase of the project and established a Trust Fund to support the training of local unemployed workers. Perhaps most exciting, the Tate actively sought out local artists to fill any vacancies in their exhibitions once the museum was complete and open to the public – offering a local flavor of creativity to become intermixed with contemporary artists from around the world.

**ARTIST INTERVENTIONS**

Possibly as a hint of what was yet to come, the Tate organized several pre-opening interventions in nearby public spaces. Exciting examples included nighttime film showings on the side of the museum’s building, a open submission archive of local artists work, and a Thames River found objects community art project.

**TATE ANNUAL EVENT**

This last project aimed to introduce a contemporary art-weary public to the discipline in a family friendly festival celebration atmosphere. Where artists were once at the periphery of the community’s activities, they have now been embraced as leaders of the annual event, contributing their creativity to the community.

**REFLECTIONS**

Upon completion and re-opening of the Tate Modern, this community-engaged framework was further developed. While most of the Tate’s projects were introduced during the pre-opening phase of the museum, the manpower and attention to community engagement intensified upon completion of the new space. A full staff, composed of a significant portion of local
Southwark residents, continued in the same spirit of pre-opening activities. As a result, attendance at the museum was notably high, proving that attention to context certainly improves the public’s otherwise lackluster perception of contemporary art. Perhaps the best clue of the success of the Tate comes from a quote from the chair of a community council organization during the construction of the museum:

“Tate has established a close working relationship with residents in Bankside by creating a new model for consultation and involvement - integrating the local community into the development of the new museum.”

As architects operating in Over-the-Rhine, what can be learned from the Tate’s success? Their framework of community outreach should be implemented, stressing superb communication skills, appropriate spatial allocation, and the inclusion of resources the community will benefit from.

§ THE QUATERNARY SECTOR

In response to the shrinking postindustrial cities of today and underlying global economic struggles, a United Nations University paper from 1979 reemerges as surprisingly appropriate. The paper, written by Yona Friedman, is titled *The Quaternary Sector as Crisis Response: A Scenario of the Impoverishment of Industrial Countries*. In it, Friedman identifies a fourth economic sector that typically emerges during times of conflict (WWII, for instance). This quaternary sector is:

“the fraction of the population called “inactive” (as opposed to “active”) that performs socially useful work, but whose work does not figure in the gross national product.”

For this reason, the activities and productive capacity of such a demographic is traditionally ignored, not sustained nor supported by typical capitalist developmental policies and practices. Quaternary activities, however, become critically needed during times of crisis when outside support for the country’s population is preoccupied with conflict resolution.

46 Cochrane, 8.
practices.

Friedman identifies three major quaternary activities: non-rural agriculture, free exercise of skills, and free sale on streets. Such activities constitute, at a most primitive level, an example of survival during times of extreme hardship. The exchange of goods and services in return for life sustaining resources is the fundamental concept Friedman advocates for. In wake of the failing economy, Friedman cites quaternary activity as a natural solution to the growing unemployed population. He does, however, point out shortcomings of such a system, namely the issue of status and alternative or non-monetary system of production. Neither seems to be major factors in the inner city as perception of such an environment remains by outsiders to be very negative and of “lower” social status, while a micro-economic or subversive economy continues to operate despite a surrounding mainstream economy.

This quaternary sector is typically neither encouraged not supported by cities perhaps because their activities are relatively small-scale and do not factor into the gross domestic product (GDP), however *sustaining such activities during times of crisis has certain architectural implications.* New spaces facilitating such activity must be produced in order to create a self-sustaining environment and the inner city represents a logical place for this experimental urbanism to occur. New land for agricultural food production is needed because old land in the city has been systematically commodified, raped, and poisoned by capitalist industrial processes. A new system of the collection and distribution of (renewable) energy – sunlight and stormwater – is needed to sustain such activities as well as upgrade what is left of the historic building stock. Furthermore, the sale of surplus energy back to the grid strengthens a sense of independence and creates surplus capital for a community in need of economic resources. In essence, supporting quaternary activity through architectural intervention waves the white flag: surrendering and declaring in a most desperate and permanent
manner that the inner city must become a space of survival.

§ UNDERSTANDING OTHER INFILL RESPONSES TO THE SHRINKING CITY

In a most fundamental sense, what should the inner city be used for in the twenty-first century? How can intervention support rather than oppress an existing marginalized population? The *Baltimore Infill Survey* is an electronic, user-generated image gallery of creative interventions for the typical vacant lot, while the “Plant” project imagines the energy-production potential in vacant urban spaces. In nearby Philadelphia, notable public design competitions concerning urban void space have been conducted, including but not limited to the Van Allen Institute’s Urban Voids international design competition.  

**Detroit’s abandonment has already been discussed.** Locally, Cincinnati’s recently commissioned *Urban Gardening Pilot Program* and 13 year old *Land Reutilization Program* both actively seek to find uses for vacant, city-owned land. Such widespread activity not only in the cities list above, but throughout America represents a certain “do-it-yourself” approach to urban revitalization that must continue to be embraced in the future. Notably, many reactions to the shrinking city seem to be in support of a return to feral state—a very serious and radical undertaking for land that was once heavily urbanized.

§ TOWARDS A DEMOCRATICALLY DESIGNED PUBLIC SPACE


49 Within the first approximately ten years of existence, the CLRP had acquired 68 parcels of land. Out of the 68, 10 were sold, and 23 had potential buyers or planned projects. Source: [http://74.125.47.132/search?q=cache:upNOe6Vdf1EJ:city-egov.cincinnati-oh.gov/Webtop/ws/council/public/child/Blab/20878.pdf%3Bsessionid%3DCC04D8C4BB1D50CEC374A7FAB550C965%3Frpp=3D-10%26m%3D1%26w%3Ddoc_no%253D%2727200700819%27%2b+cincinnati+land+reutilization+program&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&client=safari](http://74.125.47.132/search?q=cache:upNOe6Vdf1EJ:city-egov.cincinnati-oh.gov/Webtop/ws/council/public/child/Blab/20878.pdf%3Bsessionid%3DCC04D8C4BB1D50CEC374A7FAB550C965%3Frpp=3D-10%26m%3D1%26w%3Ddoc_no%253D%2727200700819%27%2b+cincinnati+land+reutilization+program&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&client=safari)

50 Note: For a comprehensive sampling of urban strategies to combat the phenomenon of shrinking cities, see The Shrinking Cities Project online at [http://www.shrinkingcities.com](http://www.shrinkingcities.com).
The purpose of Everyday Urbanism within a community design perspective is “to create a wider civic vision that crosses social and physical divides and promotes a broad understanding of social and environmental justice.”\textsuperscript{51}

“This trend toward neoliberalism is characterized by an embrace of market forces and private enterprise; the dismantling of democratic structures and public investment; deregulation that externalizes environmental and social costs; and the privatization of state-owned enterprises and services. In addition, military and foreign-policy objectives are being used to justify state surveillance of everyday life, the sharing of private data between corporations and government agencies, the bureaucratization of dissent through government-sanctioned “free speech zones,” and the institutional monitoring of public communications. The Patriot Act, the Clear Skies and Healthy Forest initiatives, and attempts to privatize entitlements are seen as retreats from the government’s role in safeguarding intellectual freedoms, environmental protections, and social safety nets. The twin agendas of neoliberalism and militarism use the rhetoric of “individual responsibility” and “national security” to override the public good and citizens’ rights, engendering a true crises of the commons.”\textsuperscript{52}

As designers, we must proactively reclaim public space through establishing spaces of recognition, engagement, and materiality.

\textit{SPACES OF RECOGNITION}

The primary role of the design is to identify the various communities and their associated “rights, roles, and responsibilities.”\textsuperscript{53} This is a critical first step, as OTR is an environment ripe with pluralism and struggle between various groups. The Niehoff Studio at the University of Cincinnati studied twelve common “lens groups” within Over-the-Rhine: African American single mothers, children, African American males, bohemian artists, small-business owners, small-scale developer, police, elderly, the homeless, alternative lifestyle, empty nesters, and young urban professionals.\textsuperscript{54} While no

\textsuperscript{52} Aeschbacher., 85.
\textsuperscript{53} Aeschbacher., 87.
singular building can support such a wide array of interests, a series of spaces throughout the Liberty Street corridor can certainly function as a zone of many publics, stitching together these varied, and at times, conflicting groups.

“A politically engaged design that works toward justice will attempt to circumvent boundaries that impede democracy and will lay claim to a central role as an active agent within the community.”

SPACES OF ENGAGEMENT

While communities establish centers of power resulting from shared values and visions, they can more broadly form networks from surrounding centers becoming organized towards larger common goals.

“The true value of these local and global networks resides in what they can achieve through constructive engagement.”

Perhaps the most exciting example of engagement results from the agreements already identified between developers, business owners, civic sector professionals, artists, and the elderly.

SPACES OF MATERIALITY

“Designers materialize claims of citizenship in the public realm, bringing into form the confluence of social relations and material relations, practice and theory, [...] These artifacts embody the multicentric reality of civil society, and they act as snapshots of dynamic democracy.”

DEFINING PUBLIC SPACE

For the case of Over-the-Rhine’s gentrification, the struggle for power seems to have finally been won by outside private interests outside of the neighborhood. Can those who currently live and work in the neighborhood gain anything from this period of rapid investment and transformation? Perhaps by articulating those spaces of recognition and engagement, urban designers can embark on a democratic design process. The

January 7, 2009).

55 Aeschbacher, 87.
56 Aeschbacher, 85.
57 Aeschbacher, 88.

see Visions From Over-the-Rhine, 2.23
idea of agonistic democracy seems to be particularly fitting to the contemporary identity crisis emerging in Over-the-Rhine:

"...the existence of multiple publics and centers requires a conception of democracy that embraces difference and is realized through dialogue between adversarial parties. In this model power is relational, and a 'vibrant clash of democratic positions' is celebrated. Agonistic democracy values a democratic process in which multiple centers and identities advocate for their own interpretation of the common good."

Architects can embrace the perspectives of agonism and the belief that something positive comes as a result of political conflict. Furthermore, the introduction of a hub, or center, for the preservation of cultural heritage and the exchange of ideas, information, and knowledge has the possibility to spark a critically needed public dialogue about the future of Over-the-Rhine while reinforcing 3CDC’s belief that a culturally diverse neighborhood can emerge out of a reinvestment process.


**IMAGE CREDITS**


2.43 Surveillance Camera Players, http://notbored.org/cincinnati-map.jpg

2.44, 2.45 Alex Maclean, in Stalking Detroit.

2.48, 2.49 Lebbeus Woods, in Radical Reconstruction.


2.51 Dmitri Kessel for LIFE Magazine.


2.53 InSite05, http://www.insite05.org

2.54, 2.55 Teddy Cruz in A Dynamic Equilibrium: In Pursuit of Public Terrain.

2.56, 2.57 Florian Haydn and Robert Temel, eds. in Temporary Urban Spaces: Concepts for the Use of City Spaces.

2.58b, 2.58c PSWAR, http://www.pswar.org/Public%20Space%20With%20A%20Roof/
2.59b Flickr user “ocad123,” http://www.flickr.com/photos/ocad123/429931691/in/photostream


2.61 Urban Voids [design ideas competition], http://www.vanalen.org/urbanvoids/ (front website image, Charles Loomis Chariss Mcafee Architects, Front Studio, Interboro, clockwise beginning at top left).
OPERATION VORTEX

“The Cincinnati Police Department Vortex Unit took their Over-the-Rhine show on the road to Price Hill where they nabbed a bunch suspects, processed them in the parking lot of Elder High School and invited the media to watch it all.” - Joe Wessels (quote and photographs).
The Central Business District contains 128 surveillance cameras within a 40-block area. Comparably, Chicago contains 3 per block while New York City contains 4 per block.
Vacancies in Detroit closely resemble the conditions in Cincinnati's urban neighborhoods, yet on a much larger, wide spread scale.
THE RECONSTRUCTION OF OVER-THE-RHINE HAS, UNTIL NOW, BEEN A TRAUMATIC AND DESTRUCTIVE PROCESS FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD - WITH THE INTENTION FOR LONG TERM GROWTH AND PROSPERITY
LEBBEUS WOODS’ DRAWINGS OF A RECONSTRUCTIVE ARCHITECTURE (above and opposite)
STRATEGIC PLANNING OCCURS FROM THE COMMAND CENTER - FROM THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN.
the “comprehensive plan” embodies strategic urban planning
TACTICAL PLANNING OCCURS IN THE BATTLEFIELD - THE EXPLOITATION OF THE POWERFUL ENEMY BY THE WEAKER INDIGENOUS SIDE.

Bert “Yank” Levy, a foremost authority on guerilla warfare at US training school, posing for the cover of LIFE magazine, Aug. 17, 1942.
THREE PARADIGMS OF URBANISM:
from left to right, examples of post, new, and everyday urbanism
TEDDY CRUZ’S EXPLORATION OF TWO RADICALLY DIFFERENT URBANISMS ALONG THE NORTH AND SOUTH OF THE US/MEXICO BORDER.
EXAMPLES OF TACTICAL URBAN PLANNING

informal gathering centers, urban gardening, reuse of industrial land, and mobile newspaper stands provide glimpses of informal responses to everyday conditions.
DIAGRAM OF OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR URBANIST-RELATED ORGANIZATIONS
command center (PSWAR shown above), connectivity, and nomadic models
Photovoltaic fabric suspended from frame creates a canopy for community gatherings and generates power, which is sold to grid. Profits support neighborhood activities and services which help to draw new residents. Rainwater is collected for community gardens. Design adapts to solar orientation.
THE BALTIMORE INFILL SURVEY (opposite) AND PHILADELPHIA’S URBAN VOIDS COMPETITION (above) REPRESENT ONLINE-BASED FORUMS FOR GENERATING CREATIVE SOLUTIONS TO SHRINKING CITIES.
04 INTERVENTION
"A new kind of urbanism will be responsible for conceptualizing ways of incorporating grand-scale urban mistakes, accidents, and by-products of an advanced capitalist system. In short, this new century will be asked to make sense of a political-economic space that produces destruction as a systematic by-product of its development. This new kind of urbanism will become the medium through which we not only conceive of the renovation of the postindustrial city, but begin to reconcile the ongoing destructive processes of late capitalism."

Anthony Fontenot, Planned Destruction

"According to the space of politics, no part of space can or may be allowed to escape domination, except in so far as appearances are concerned. Power aspires to control space in its entirety, so it maintains it in a ‘disjointed unity,’ at once fragmentary and homogenous: it divides and rules."

Henri Lefebvre, The Production of Space
§ COGNITIVE MAPPING AS DESIGN TOOL

In 1970, as part of the Queensgate II Town Center Plan, residents from Queensgate (currently West End) and Over-the-Rhine were interviewed regarding implications for new urban planning proposals. The Planning Commission reported:

“For many citizens, the remaining historic streets were important links to a rich past, representing an emotional anchor for the community, a sense on continuity at the threshold of new dramatic changes in Queensgate.”

Today’s Over-the-Rhine is undergoing similar dramatic changes, and the question becomes what is and what will be the identity of this neighborhood? How will the unfortunate past (the decline of the neighborhood) be remembered in 3CDC’s soon-to-be “vibrant” city? Perhaps more importantly is the question of transition from one state to another – especially a drastic shift from disinvestment to investment. A timely question at this time concerns external threats to the completion of strategic plans for the neighborhood. Just as Queensgate’s three phase plan for a monumental civic space and associated

reconnective urban fabric was never completed due to funding issues, the reconstruction of Over-the-Rhine and the global economic decline are occurring at eerily similar times. **Almost no one is considering the possibility of adopting the historic neighborhood in it’s current state of crisis as decaying buildings and vacant lots endlessly await a revitalization that has fallen victim to the realities of the oversaturated housing and commercial markets.**

In an attempt to understand the neighborhood in it’s current transitional state, cognitive mapping methods were explored and applied to the one block study area and immediate surroundings. Fredric Jameson provides insight into the concept of cognitive mapping, defining the process as a method for the individual to gain an understanding of a larger, indefinable whole. He says:

“In a classic work, The Image of the City, Kevin Lynch taught us that the alienated city is above all a space in which people are unable to map (in their minds) either their own positions or the urban totality in which they find themselves: grids such as those of Jersey City, in which none of the traditional markers (monuments, nodes, natural boundaries, built perspectives) obtain, are the most obvious examples. Disalienation in this traditional city, then, involved the practical reconquest of a sense of place and the construction or reconstruction of an articulated ensemble which can be retained in memory.”

In the spirit of “image” or identity of the city, Lynch’s work provided a departure point for establishing the image of the “historic” city as it exists today. Liberty street was paradoxically chosen for this investigation for it’s undeniably ahistorical and banal commercial vernacular, set within one of the city’s most historically symbolic urban neighborhoods.

Lynch defines five elements that contribute to the image of the city: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. The definitions of these elements will provide a framework for a contextual analysis of Over-the-Rhine’s current pluralist condition of past, current, and future spatial expressions.

*Paths* are the channels along which the observer customarily, occasionally, or potentially moves. For many people, these are the predominant elements in

2 Jameson, Fredric. Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, 51-52.
Edges may be barriers, more of less penetrable, which close one region off from another; or they maybe seams, lines along which two regions are related and joined together.

Districts are the medium-to-large sections of the city, conceived of as having two-dimensional extent, which the observer mentally enters “inside of,” and which are recognizable as having some common identifying character.

Nodes are points, the strategic spots in a city into which an observer can enter … junctions … or simply concentrations … the condensation of some use or physical character.”

Landmarks are simply defined physical objects … some landmarks are distant ones, typically seen from many angles and distances, over the tops of smaller elements, and used as radial references. … Other landmarks are primarily local, being visible only in restricted localities and from certain approaches.”

An analysis of the study area through Lynch’s carefully selected and defined variables will inform the image of the transitioning city. This information can subsequently be used to expand upon the observer’s experience of the city, responding to changes in the built environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paths</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant Street constitutes the most important pedestrian path in the neighborhood.</td>
<td>Liberty Street caters to the automobile with billboards, parking lots, and vehicular-oriented building typologies (e.g. gas stations, drive-thru’s, and mechanics).</td>
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<tr>
<th>Edges</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chain-linked (in some cases barbed wire) fencing. Visually, not physically penetrable barriers.</td>
<td>Facades of buildings – often plastered appropriately with advertisements designed for the driver’s attention.</td>
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<th>Districts</th>
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<td>The zone of original building stock and the modern commercialized corridor.</td>
<td>The neighborhood as a whole constitutes a district that can be entered and traversed quite easily by vehicle.</td>
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<th>Nodes</th>
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<tr>
<td>The remaining buildings of the neighborhood are symbols of the neighborhood’s historical evolution.</td>
<td>Parking lots are interfaces where a shift from driver to pedestrian occurs.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Landmarks</th>
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<tr>
<td>Vacant land along Liberty Street, which contains gaps in the fencing allowing for occupation and interaction.</td>
<td>Church steeples dotting the building fabric within the neighborhood become recognizable symbols of the past. Hillsides to the north and the nearby skyline of downtown to the south further orient the observer.</td>
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to and refining existing elements in the landscape.

Prior to Lynch’s Image of the City, a group called the Situationists, headed by Guy Debord in the late 1950’s, celebrated the dérive or drift through the city as a method for intimately experiencing what the city had to offer. Their spontaneous paths would last days or weeks on end, informally defined by responding to the attractions and repulsions of the city. Debord’s 1956 The Theory of the Derive challenged the homogeneity and overly ordered modern capitalist city where people were “imprisoned by routine.” 

“Cutting freely across urban space, drifters would gain a revolutionary perception of the city, a “rational disordering of the senses” […] encountering both the city’s embarrassing contrasts of material wealth and its clandestine glories of popular culture and history.”

The whole routine of freely wandering through the citiescape can be documented through a cognitive mapping technique known as psychogeography. An understanding of the city as a whole becomes slowly learned through the documentation of a series of encounters and events at the pedestrian scale.

Debord’s drift can be appropriately experimented with in Over-the-Rhine in an attempt to understand how the transitional space of the city is represented today. The most significant reasons for selecting Debord’s method is to (1) celebrate the Situationists’ resistance to the “mythic exaggeration” of the media and (2) support experiencing the city as an authentic and unbiased event. Perhaps most importantly, the Stiuationists’ critique of the overly-rationalized control of the city closely aligns with a desire to question the implications of 3CDC’s operations in the neighborhood.

Jason Young’s Line Frustration, heavily influenced by Debord and the Situationists, embraced the drift as a design tool in responding to the implications of the Federal Government’s “Empowerment Zone” initiative in Detroit. 

5 Jason Young, “Line Frustration,” in Stalking Detroit, (Barcelona: Actar,
space was projected onto Detroit’s surreal empty landscape, considering the implications of establishing an economic incentive zone within a vast and empty landscape. By adopting the philosophy of the Situationists within the context of a shrinking city, Young provides a framework for exploring Over-the-Rhine’s condition. Not nearly as severe as Detroit, yet hardly the densely urbanized Paris from Debord’s studies, Over-the-Rhine provides a new test for the drift. Engaging in the “urban drift” along Pleasant Street, two important issues were discovered: The pathway encounters a surprisingly rich sequence of varied experiences, and the movement of the pedestrian is highly regulated throughout all of these contexts.

One significant aspect of Debord’s work that fails to be explored is the *plaque tournant*, or junction - a significant node along the wandering path of the drifter. Within the Over-the-Rhine/Pleasant Street drift, the Elm Industries building represents the plaque tournant. Situated across the entire block, anyone drifting through the landscape is forced either back out into the sidewalk or through the building. The vacant mixed-use building exists as a critical threshold between the historic neighborhood and the commercial corridor of Liberty Street. Within the building, the first floor is sunk into the ground with 17-foot tall ceilings, containing traces of commercial activity within it’s loading docks and warehouse-esque spaces. The upper floors contain the remains of a tenement and later of industrial use. Staircases have long since been removing leaving open holes in the floor plates of the building. Similarly, partition walls have been stripped down to their wooden structure, remaining only due to their importance as the bearing walls for the building. Curious openings into the masonry partition wall along the north face of the building emerged most likely as a response to the necessity for the movement of goods, however emergency egress standards may be to blame for the adaptations.

This interesting condition where the building has clearly

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2001), 137.
been both added on to in some cases and cut into in other cases - tortured by the varied uses of its inhabitants over time - represents the need for the architect to assume the role of urban archaeologist. A 1993 Harvard graduate project did just that in the proposal for temporary bridges to reconnect the city of Boston during a lengthy construction project. The Interim Bridges Project is considered as a significant civic project:

“The Interim Bridges are designed to be horizontal and vertical connectors that serve to make the public more aware of the relationships between different levels of the city. Changing programs of cultural and historical information about the city, temporary artworks, information about the construction process, and archaeological exhibits will allow the pedestrian to see, hear, and understand the changes that are being made to the city. In this way, the environment of the bridges allows the pedestrian to become a participant in the process of construction, which would otherwise remain hidden underground. The Interim Bridges make clear that temporary structures as urban interventions can influence the future use and perception of reclaimed public land in the city. The project offers a unique precedent for rethinking the role of such temporary structures, and sheds new light on those urban structures that are perceived to be permanent.”

Similar to the Iterim Bridges project, the Infilltrate Project attempts to reconcile previous eras of inhabitation with the realities of the present and future city. While construction in Boston naturally revealed layers of infrastructure for the pedestrian to engage with, the Over-the-Rhine project identifies excavation as an architect-driven process. This planned inscription into the landscape exists as a poetic response to destructive capitalist practices of destruction in the inner city. Excavation becomes a critical tool for the architect in this context, for it allows initial breaching of the secured vacant landscape while also revealing layers of the city’s history that could have been lost forever. The resulting interaction with urban landscape provides a critical learning experience for the pedestrian - a lesson in the cultural heritage of the past - that must not be forgotten during this time of unprecedented transformation and reorganization.

§ DESIGN INTENT

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6 Harvard architecture review 1993, v.9, 105.
The design project’s primary goal and objective emerged from the analysis of Over-the-Rhine’s transitional state. The intention of the design intervention became to restitch the urban landscape, idealistically speaking. In other words, to reconcile the decay and disinvestment of the past century with the lofty (and hastily progressing) visions for the future. In essence, to celebrate the notion of transition, the beauty of a rebirth, and the conceptual idea of a neighborhood at an unprecedented threshold between old and new existential orders. The objective of the investigation is to **activate currently underutilized property to strengthen social and economic capital of the neighborhood.**

Here tactics and strategies are once again a significant issue. Tactical urban planning is envisioned as an appropriate reaction to 3CDC’s strategic visions for the future of the neighborhood. While architectural practice primarily operates within a framework of strategic development, how does the notion of tactical urban planning influence the design of space? The answer lies in the temporal differences between strategy and tactics. While strategic planning is carefully and deliberately designed over a relatively long time frame, tactical planning must be flexible enough to occur rapidly and effectively. Custom-built homes versus Pre-Fabricated dwellings seem to illustrate this idea most directly. The signature home is intricately built, with finishes and the most minor of details obsessively worked out between the architect, builder, and owner. The pre-fabricated house, on the other hand, is constructed of standardized materials in an economical manner, transported directly to the site, and rapidly constructed in a matter of days or weeks. Tactical planning naturally aligns itself with prefabrication, due to the method’s inherent flexibility and adaptability to varied environmental conditions.

Florian Haydn, in her book *Temporary Urban Spaces*, suggests strategies and tactics operate independently of each other - dynamically competing with each other, with strategies
ultimately facilitating tactics. This design project intends to establish community-controlled space within the confines and structure of 3CDC’s strategic operations. The project identifies the practice of “land banking” as an opportunity for response and critique of the practice of strategic planning.

§ THE PROPOSED RECONSTRUCTIVE PROCESS

After an initial excavation of the landscape, the proceeding interventions employ Lebbeus Wood’s *Radical Reconstruction* as a departure point for the healing of the obsolete and damaged urban landscape. The *urban scab* constitutes a temporary layer of program with the sole purpose of generating capital for the wounded city. **Photovoltaic arrays, agricultural containers, and commercial advertisement space immediately generates a surplus of energy, food, and revenue for the depopulated neighborhood block.** This system has been designed by using the typical size of a photovoltaic panel as a module. The 27.5” x 60” panels determine the spacing of an underlying structural grid. Undulations in the grid provide a rhythm to the new landscape, evoking the constantly changing, transitional nature of the city. This structural scaffolding is secured to the landscape using the remains of demolished structures as armatures for a new framework. The joint between the new and the old becomes a critical detail in the project, embodying as Carlo Scarpa would say, the *whole* within the *part.*

The self-sustaining scab is intended to be deployed onto the landscape once acquired by 3CDC, or other strategic planners, remaining until the land is ready to be developed. At this time, the scab is disassembled and transported to other land-banked sites. The next step in the reconstructive process is to articulate, and exploit the *urban scar.* The *scar* is identified as a timeless artifact remaining in the landscape for multiple generations. While historic scars can be revealed through excavation of the

landscape, contemporary scars resulting from the structural system supporting the scab are now exposed on top of the landscape. Lebbeus Woods defines scars as the deeper level of structural fusion between the old and new order. In this manner, the scar remains as a reference point, or datum, from a historical to contemporary condition in the city.

The exploitation of urban scarring results in new inhabitable space, or new tissue. These architectural additions to the built environment will be parasitic in nature, opportunistically plugging into existing openings providing necessary circulation or utility upgrades. The expression of these new spaces suggests a respect for the remaining buildings in the landscape, for they have stood the test of time and against all odds survived an onslaught of planned destruction attempts throughout the past century. In this context, the new grows off of, yet supports the old. The joint between these old and new materials - as first encountered in the landscape - reappears within the intersection of parasitic and existing interior spaces. In approaching the detailing of the joint in the landscape and the building in a similar manner, the design project advocates for the reconnection of the fractured neighborhood, a similar attitude that Carlo Scarpa’s renovation of the Querini palazzo takes:

"After several renovations during it’s 300-year history, the palazzo of the Querini family had become isolated from its physical context, disengaged from the environmental conditions that had supported the logic of its design. Carlo Scarpa’s renovation of the gardens and the first floor reactivates a reciprocity between building and landscape by conceptualizing the building as a receptacle that would contain the highest tide within its walls."8

§ IMPLICATIONS OF THE DESIGN PROJECT

This design project, in deploying architecture as a tool for healing the fractured city, claims the public’s right to the city. The interventions proposed are ultimately an expression of Over-the-Rhine’s unique social and material relations, it’s multicentric sense of community, and it’s status as a transitional

city. Spaces on the northern and southern ends of the block will exist as democratized public space, embodying a sense of citizenship in the public realm. Rather than articulating a set programmed activity for the space, the architect provides simply a framework from which the community can grow - a node where cultural expression and debate will naturally occur.
§ CHAPTER 4 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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IMAGES (John Stoughton unless otherwise noted)
AERIAL IMAGES OF OVER-THE-RHINE AND THE STUDY AREA
lower image credit: Microsoft Live Maps
2001 RIOTS AT WASHINGTON PARK + EXPERIMENTAL RESPONSES TO THE FRACTURED URBAN FABRIC
INTERVENTIONS ON A VACANT SITE
tactically accessed early morning after a storm broke fencing
surrounding the property
THE FORCED MIXTURE OF MEDIA
conceptualizing the overlay of vehicular infrastructure in the historic pedestrian city
THE ENVISIONED NETWORK OF VACANCIES ALONG A COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR
LIBERTY STREET PER LYNCH'S IMAGE OF THE CITY
OVER-THE-RHINE IS UNDER SIEGE FROM OUTSIDE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL FORCES
RECONSTRUCTING THE DEMOLISHED CITY

OLDER CONDITION: 1800-1840
organic, unplanned

NEWER CONDITION: 1845-1900
organized, ordered
HISTORIC AND CONTEMPORARY “INTER-BLOCK” CIRCULATION SPACE
CONSIDERING AN URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY

inscriptions into the landscape, or cultural excavations
SCARRING IN THE LANDSCAPE CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE FOUNDATION WALLS OF A DECAYING PAST
LIBERTY STREET IS A VEHICULAR COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR WITHIN A HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED NEIGHBORHOOD

RADICALLY DIFFERENT INFILL STRATEGIES
replacing and simulating what has been lost
ARCHITECTURAL RESPONSE TO SITING OF INFILL CONSTRUCTION

liberty street orientation = monumental architecture.
race street orientation = vernacular residential response.
FALSE FRONT INFILL
wacky and wild space covered in a veil of historically accurate facades
HONEST AND RESPECTFUL INFILL
building footprints from demolished buildings become the form-givers for new spaces.
COMMUNICATION THEORY APPLIED TO INFILL POSSIBILITIES
a matrix of possible interventions referencing an architecturally static context.
ENVISIONING AGGRESSIVE SEPARATION IN THE HISTORIC CITY
SLICING INTO THE REMAINING BUILT FABRIC
PLUGGING INTO / BREAKING OUT OF THE OLD ORDER
NEW SPACE GRAFTED INTO THE EXISTING STRUCTURES
SCAFFOLDING DEPLOYED OVER THE LANDSCAPE
STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORK OVERLAID ONTO THE DECAYING CITY
THE IMAGE OF THE SELF-SUSTAINING URBAN BAND-AID
THE URBAN SCAB DEPLOYED ON A NEIGHBORHOOD-WIDE SCALE GENERATES A NEW LANDSCAPE FOR THE HEALING CITY
CONCEPTUAL MODELS EXPLORING THE PROCESS OF HEALING
DETAILS OF THE INTERVENTION
INTEGRATING THE SCAB, THE SCAR, AND THE RESULTING NEW TISSUE
WHAT LIES BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THE HISTORIC CITY? THE ARCHITECT MUST PRACTICE ‘URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY’ IN THIS CONTEXT
PSYCHO GEOGRAPHY INFORMS THE OVER-CONTROL OF THE PEDESTRIAN ALONG PLEASANT STREET AND THE DESIRE TO EXPLORE VACANT, VISUALLY ACCESSIBLE LANDS.
DOCUMENTATION OF PROPOSED TACTICS FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE CITY BLOCK, AND SITE INFORMATION