The Gathering Place
Over-The-Rhine, Cincinnati, Ohio

A Thesis by Kerry Lucas

Spring 1998
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Dedication

This project is a well-intentioned idea, presented as a gift to acknowledge the value of the people of Over-The-Rhine and their community image.

Acknowledgements

Special Thanks to all of those community members who helped me to understand the neighborhood and showed me its true character:

Bruce Goetzman – Professor of Architecture at University of Cincinnati.

Andy Hutzel – The Drop-Inn Center, shelter for the homeless.

Over-The-Rhine Chamber of Commerce (staff).

Hope Pierson – Pendleton Artist, Expressionist painter.

Charles Behlow – Pendleton Artist, Photographer.

Karen Heyl – Pendleton Artist, Sculptor.

The receptionist at the Verdin Company.

The woman who posed for a picture at Findlay Market.

The shopkeepers on Vine Street.
Architecture may be manipulative, in the sense that it creates spatial boundaries, but I hope that there it will instead be a means of discovery, enlightenment, and of offering. Mostly, may it remind people of their dignity and significance.

Abstract

The phrase, "community architecture," for the purpose of this thesis is an ideal, which has been developed throughout the design process and is brought out in the final design presentation. Community architecture here is about people, and the buildings or spaces that affect them individually and collectively. The real needs of people are the issues in community design. Such architecture must be aimed to discover and meet those needs and to stress the importance of natural human desires for comfort, security, and individual significance. Architecture can lend significance to people by providing place – a destination, a habitation, a thing to be owned, and image – a positive visual reference to the people who are associated with the architecture. This significance attached to people through architecture may be negative, positive, or neutral. This thesis attempts to provide a positive place, The Gathering Place, for the people of Over-The-Rhine, a historic neighborhood in Cincinnati, Ohio. Through that place, a positive image is provided for the building users as a group and to each of them as an individual, whether those individuals are residents, employees, customers or passing pedestrians.

Good community architecture should provide joints where connections can be made to the larger communities surrounding the environment of a place. The Gathering Place is significant not only for its purpose in serving its users, but also because it is part of the neighborhood and city beyond. True community can be as small as the relationship between to people or as large as the social and cultural identity of a city and this thesis spans issues across the depth of that reality. Common purpose and identity are major connecting factors for people in community. Consider political parties, union organizations, professional companies, and even families. All of these community groups are characterized by their relationships and common interests. Residential communities may be organized around those same issues in order to connect the people they have been established for.

In Over-The-Rhine, there is a history, which is deeply ingrained in many community members and connects them as part of a common past. There is also a community image in Over-The-Rhine, shared by all associated with the neighborhood. Socially, this image has tended to be negative and the architecture has gradually declined to reflect this in some areas. This thesis is example of a means to reverse the declining trend and foster a positive community spirit in Over-The-Rhine. The Gathering Place designed is a mixed-use facility, with twenty-one apartments, a small grocery, a café, studio space and an outdoor recreation area. It is an architectural representation of the positive atmosphere of the neighborhood's present. It does not shun or segregate the many people who are surrounded by unfortunate financial and social circumstances in Over-The-Rhine. Rather, it addresses real needs and brings dignity to the people and the neighborhood.
1.
The Gathering Place

Program...
Community Identity
Site Identity
Required Spaces
Design Description
Fig. 1.1. Bridging the Gaps – Class, Race, Tolerance (Ohio/Kentucky Bridge)
People gather together to share events and to create memories and the bonds formed among people in such times of togetherness are what develop into relationships. People are compelled to spend time together, lest they become lonely and unattached. This is true in families and it is true among the different peoples of a community or neighborhood.

Architecture plays a role in the gathering of people. It provides a place for events to happen and it allows people to associate intimately as in the atmosphere created by a small, dimly lit restaurant or a bedroom. Architecture also gives people places to gather publicly. The environment provided by the built structures of a city alley or park may guide people to cross paths, to meet, and to interact with one another. The thesis here is an exploration of a process for developing an architecture that communicates through physical language, atmosphere and environmental impression that, it is a place for people to gather.

The final thesis design entitled, “The Gathering Place,” is architecture for community members to gather in and to share the amenities offered by the building complex, its site, and the programs carried on within. The underlying intent of the design is that the new architecture will spur relational growth among the users of the place, as they share architectural spaces. The design composition of the Gathering Place is pertinent to the architectural environment’s role as a social coordinator, or organizer of community events and individual interactions.

Program

It is endeavored through the art and architecture of The Gathering Place, to compel people to spend time together and to create opportunities for people to watch, listen, converse, interact and enjoy each other’s presence.

Community Identity

The problem in homes, offices, neighborhoods, churches and in almost any other building that people share is that people have become accustomed to self space - that is the idea that a person can act completely independent of others and claim that his/her actions affect no one but him/herself. Though it is important to value self, it is more important to consider that humans are not isolated beings. Actions are not entirely our own. The things people do and say impact others either positively or negatively no matter how much we would like to think that we act alone.

This project deals with the impacts that people’s words and actions have on one another. It is an effort to discover positive differences, to affirm individual identity and to contribute to the development of a community identity. Realizing that the issues surrounding this project are very social, it must be noted that architecture cannot truly compensate for people who don’t care. However, an architect can hope to affect some of the issues by being first, a good listener, and then, by responding individually and holistically to the needs of the people in a community.

The ideas presented here are about stimulating positive human interaction through architecture. It is an experiment in design that tests to see how architecture impacts the personal relationships of the people who use the places created. The building designed will be the measure of the success of this design hypothesis. If it provokes people to interact in positive ways and to learn more about the community they live in, then the project has succeeded, and that is the goal of this thesis.
Site Identity

The site of The Gathering Place is located on two adjoining blocks in Over the Rhine, an inner city neighborhood of Cincinnati (site is further analyzed, illustrated in the chapters to follow). The existing built environment of Over the Rhine is known for its historicity, human scale and richness of style. New architecture in this neighborhood must respond to the character of the architecture that is already there, if the new is to have any relationship with the old. The new architecture ought to compliment the old – creating a dialogue of illustrated culture through building texture, style and form.

Art is an integral part of the defining fabric of Over the Rhine. Like the canal that once flowed where Central Parkway runs today (southern edge of OTR), painting, drawing, sculpture, music, textiles, and other creativities now flow in and out of the shops and galleries of Over the Rhine. This art is a part of the architecture and it is descriptive of the community. The entire neighborhood is a historical composition of life in the city. The marks made by people as they pass through area have sculpted this neighborhood and made it the composition that it is. Any building erected in Over the Rhine automatically becomes a piece of that composition and people will either recognize its holistic value or discredit it as a clash with the original.

Required Spaces

Attic Floor
- Studio space, open with natural light, available to rent.

Sixth Floor
- Open to rent for business or an additional apartment, Community Room.
- Community room for residents.
- Apartment Types B and C.

Fifth Floor
- Apartment Types A, B, and C.
- Laundry and access to roof patio.

Second, Third and Fourth Floors
- Apartment Types A, B, C, and D (2).

First Floor
- Cafe – Include men’s and women’s restrooms nearby.
- Indoor/Outdoor Gallery with café seating – Places to exhibit local artwork and neighborhood productions as well as to converse and eat.
- Access to Grocery and elevator for residents.
- Lounge area with pool tables.

Lower Level
- Exercise Room – Light workout equipment, Men’s and Women’s restrooms with changing areas.
- Vending Machine Area.
Design Description

The semi-public and public spaces, including the lower level up through the first floor, should blend without hard edges or critical dividing walls. Instead, the boundaries should by psychological, perceived by the senses as they react to material changes, textures, and architectural forms. Floor level changes form the only hard architectural boundary. They delineate private (second – attic) from public (first) and semi-private (lower level).

The architectural composition of the Gathering Place should be arranged at human scale, from the detail patterns in the materials to the window proportions, heights of the ceiling and the building.

Historically, Over the Rhine was known as a walking neighborhood. It was planned to accommodate the pedestrian and his or her position and point of view. The human scale aesthetic should be no less in the Gathering Place. In fact, this project should go one step further and produce a human scaled architecture that acts not only in the material dimensions to create a comfortable atmosphere in the built environment. It ought also to act in social dimensions to help break down the barriers of age, race, and economic status, which have kept neighbors apart in Over the Rhine for too long. Unity cannot be achieved completely through architecture, but architecture can provide an opportunity for people to come together and work toward developing community relationships.

References

Over the Rhine Chamber of Commerce. '1317 Main Street, Cincinnati, Ohio 45210. (513) 241-2690.


2. Site Observed

Cincinnati...

Neighborhoods...

The University of Cincinnati
Mt. Adams and Eden Park
Hyde Park
Others
Downtown
Over The Rhine
Project Site
Fig. 2.1. See Inner Beauty—a typical worn façade in OTR.
This chapter is a discussion of the environmental context, the city and neighborhoods that surround the site in Over-The-Rhine and are significant influences in the physical design of the project. The cultural and social atmospheres provide inspiration for the details of the architecture and the programming and function of the space.

Cincinnati

Known as the “Queen City,” greater Cincinnati follows the banks of the Ohio River and encompasses a tri-state area that spans from the hills of southern Ohio down into northern Kentucky. If you have never been in Cincinnati, you may at least remember the skyline, visible as you pass by on interstate 75, the major U.S. route running from Michigan to Florida. It would be hard to miss the city’s signature architecture and the famous bridges, which carry interstate travelers and pedestrians over the Ohio River. Watching the city from a car window, while traveling at 65 miles per hour gives only a brief view of the architecture of Cincinnati and does not reveal the human character of the city.

A visitor’s guide describes Cincinnati as... a beautiful city nestled on the banks of the Ohio River in the heart of America. Friendly, yet sophisticated... Serene but saucy... a city of contrasts whose diversity makes it difficult to characterize or categorize. But it is this very diversity that makes Greater Cincinnati such a unique destination... (4)

While this description is flashy, seeking to advertise the city as a tourist destination, it also begins to highlight some of the inherent traits that make Cincinnati such a rich cultural and architectural center. The city is a solid example of Middle America – traditional and moderately conservative. Charles Luken documented the city’s atmosphere in a published photo journal, Cincinnati: Crowning Glory. Luken claimed that the people of Cincinnati were willing to try new things only after those ideas had been tested and proven elsewhere. Let Chicago, New York, and L.A. do the experimenting, and then Cincinnatians will invest to adopt and develop new, but sure, ideas.

Cincinnati is a comfortable city – meaning that it offers a broad range of styles and almost anyone ought to be able to find something appealing in Cincinnati. There are sports arenas, concert halls, colleges and universities, waterfront activity areas, shopping malls, and museums and historic sites to name just a few of the area attractions. Perhaps most intriguing to an architectural connoisseur visiting Cincinnati would be the city’s neighborhoods. There are nine or ten distinctly identifiable and unique neighborhoods in Cincinnati, which illustrate the character and human identity of the city.

Neighborhoods

Cincinnati is truly a city of neighborhoods, a family oriented town. The focus here is on neighborhoods which are renowned for their schools, safety, and stability. (Luken, Bowen 14)

- The University of Cincinnati

Located on the hillside bordering the northern edge of the city, is the University of Cincinnati, known for its architecture and engineering colleges and the big university hospital. The Arnoff Center for Design and Art, designed by Caesar Pelli was awarded by Time magazine in 1996. This, in addition to the Architecture building by Peter Eisenman, exemplifies some of Cincinnati’s taste for design. Faculty and staff at the College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning are actively involved in city life, often offering participation in local projects to students in order to give them the
opportunity to take advantage of the professional resources the city has to offer.

- Mt. Adams and Eden Park

Mt. Adams and Eden Park offer the best scenic views of the Ohio River, northern Kentucky and Cincinnati’s downtown. As you wind your way around the hills and up the narrow streets of Mt. Adams, you’ll see why it is compared to San Francisco. Mt. Adams has been described as somewhat of a “yuppie” neighborhood, historically occupied by Irish Catholics. Mt. Adams has been boasts a variety of restaurants, boutiques and a very social atmosphere. Buildings there are predominantly wood construction.

Eden Park is the site of Cincinnati’s Art Museum, the Krohn Conservatory and an unusual public attraction, Playhouse in the Park, complete with a Book Fountain (this fountain is literally made of giant sculpted books).

- Hyde Park

Fortune and prosperity characterize this neighborhood. The shopping and restaurants are high end and very tasteful. Multi-million dollar homes are typical in this neighborhood. The food, the people, the architecture and the businesses in this neighborhood are all about having class.

- Others

Clifton Heights- on the northwest side of the city, Mt. Auburn – east of there, and Walnut Hills – still further east are other noticeable neighborhoods in Cincinnati, and they are each distinct in community style and cultural flavor. Walnut Hills is recognized for its many historic buildings, and it houses mainly young, middle class residents.

- Downtown – Central Business District

Cincinnati’s downtown is laid out in a grid, similar to many other large American cities. It is located near the river, where it was historically rooted in commercial trading via the waterways. Carew Tower shopping center draws thousands of shoppers and the Central Business District is where many of Cincinnati’s business people commute to go to work. There is a large convention center for conferences and city events. A pedestrian skywalk system connects downtown hotels with major department stores, restaurants, businesses, banks, etc.

Cincinnati was not always the bustling modern city that it is today.

Cincinnati had its beginnings on December 26, 1788, when a group of pioneers embarked from a flatboat at Yeatman’s Cove, now the site of the Cincinnati Riverfront Stadium. In 1789, the little community, then known as Losantiville, was chosen as the site of Fort Washington, which served as the major U.S. military outpost in the Northwest Territory until 1808. Cincinnati’s first buildings clustered around the Fort near the Ohio River.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the city grew rapidly with the rest of the county and by the mid-1800’s it had become the nation’s fifth largest city. Growth was spurred by the Ohio River traffic and by the opening of the Miami and Erie Canal (now the route of Central Parkway) connecting the city to the Great Lakes, and finally by the arrival of the rail system. The downtown moved uphill, away from the riverbanks by the early twentieth century and suburbs spread beyond the hillsides surrounding the downtown. New building technology and rising property values made the construction of downtown’s taller buildings possible and necessary. Today, the streetscapes and building facades reflect this history.

(Historic Walking Tour of Cincinnati 1)
Fig. 2.2. Map of Cincinnati - Regional site and context. (Over-The-Rhine is just north of the downtown grid.)

Fig. 2.3. Close-up map of Over-The-Rhine (Central Parkway on the west and south, Liberty and McMicken on the north.)
Over-the-Rhine

North of the Central Business District (CBD)
is one of the most expansive collections of historicarchitecture. The neighborhood is unique in the Midwest,and today the whole area is on the National Register.

"Uber dem Rhein," Over-the-Rhine - the nameconstitutes both the river and a country. Germany. Cincinnati's "Rhine," the Miami and Erie Canal, flowed, and subsequentlystagnated where Central Parkway now runs (see map). Many of the district's originalinhabitants emigrated from Germany - chieflyfrom the Rhineland, Baden-Wuerttemberg, andBavaria - in the three or four decades after1930. Other immigrant groups also clustered inOver-the-Rhine, including Irish and (later)Italians; but Germans predominated... Native-born and other nationalities came to constitutemore than half the population. Yet, theGermans stamped Over-the-Rhine, creatingan ethnic enclave that, with its ownarchitecture, language and lifestyle (Clubbé,197).

Today, the residents of Over-the-Rhine arepredominantly African American, many of them originallycoming from the Appalachian areas of the South to thecity of Cincinnati to look for jobs. The character of theneighborhood residents has changed from working classGerman population to today's neighborhood of mainlylow-income or homeless American who inhabit less than25% of the available buildings in the area. With the onsetof prohibition, in the early part of the century, many ofthe German breweries and restaurants sustaining theneighborhood culture were forced to close. Thus beganthe migration of the German population away from theneighborhood.

Over-the-Rhine's four and five story buildingsare dramatically different from the twentieth-centurydowntown architecture. Most of Over-the-Rhine'ssurviving buildings are either substandard or vacant, aquarter of them are livable, but need repairs and a baretwo percent are in good condition.

in recent decades, Over-the-Rhine's future hasoccasioned much debate. Local groups haveagreed among themselves: some wanted newdevelopment and low-income housing preserved,others thought high-income development theanswer. The issue boiled down to whether the cityshould bolster Over-the-Rhine's economic base orrenovate its housing stock. It pitted shopkeepersagainst the poor. The factions involved agreed only todissagree. But in spring 1986, after a decade ofcontroversy, Over-the-Rhine's leading groups came together on a $10 million, five-year plan thatreceived city council support. The 1.3 million dollarsappropriated the first year called for renovating 300housing units, a streetscape program, andimproved lighting in the Findlay Market and Vine St. business districts. Eventually the city hopes to reverse Over-the-Rhine's population decline. (Clubbé 202)

Controversy is still in the atmosphere of Overthe-Rhine today. The Chamber of Commerce, theCoalition, the Neighborhood Council and many othergroups and individuals are still vying to decide what isbest for the neighborhood's residents and architecture.The challenge of this thesis is to reconcile some of thesechanges through a design project that inspires people to live and work together while sharing a common vision for the neighborhood.

Over-the-Rhine today consists of 110 blocks ofnineteenth-century housing. It is bounded on theWest and South by Central Parkway, on the northby McMicken Ave., on the east by Reading Road.With the single largest grouping of Italianate urbanbuildings in the United States. (Clubbé 198)
CINCINNATI / OVER-THE-RHINE
Gateway Monument
Fig. 2.5. View approaching the site from the East.

Fig. 2.6. View approaching from the West. Boarded-up building is the building to be renovation in this project. The parking lot adjacent is the site area for new construction.

Fig. 2.7. View of the Central Business near the site.
Fig. 2.8. The site for the Gathering Place includes the six story building, adjacent parking lot and west alley.

BUILDING SITE

Fig. 2.9. West Alley, site for café.

Fig. 2.10. East-facing elevation of the Gathering Place site.
Fig. 2.11. Existing park area in front of St. Paul's. Basketball hoops are frequently used. Formal picnic areas do not work so well as they do not provide shelter, or comfort.

Fig. 2.12. Park area—view looking south (opposite above). New design needs to focus on safety and providing activities that community members are interested in.

Fig. 2.13. This low wall works as a popular seating area. Neighbors gather here along the edge of the street to share conversation.
Fig. 2.14. Francis Housman building – a recently renovated apartment building separating the front and back sites.

Fig. 2.15. St. Pauls (Verdin Co.) and the adjoining boy's school, currently owned by Verdin and rented to area businesses, frames the eastern edge of the recreation area. The brick plaza is rarely used by community members for recreation.

Fig. 2.17. Low-income housing units west of the back site. Many families in OTR rent in units similar to these.
Fig. 2.18. A formally designed shelter that gets little use by area neighbors (located on the back site in front of St. Paul’s).

Fig. 2.19. A set of unused steps in front of St. Paul’s - the Verdin Co. has probably erected the gates to separate its boundaries from the plaza area that it shares with residential neighbors.
Project Site

The site chosen for the project is located on the northeast corner of the intersection of Spring Street and Reading Road. Reading Road is a busy thoroughfare carrying traffic from I-75 to downtown and then turning into Central Parkway, the southern and western edge of Over-The-Rhine. It currently consists of a parking lot, surrounded by a chain link fence, an old retail building, six stories in height and built of brick, and the alley between the brick building and its newly renovated neighbors to the west.

The site was chosen for its proximity to downtown — access to jobs and services, and its significance for Over-The-Rhine as a potential showcase for what renovations and thoughtful new design could do to improve and enhance living conditions in Over-The-Rhine. In addition to the site just described, the recreation area currently in the shadow of St. Paul’s is also a place for desired study and renovation. It is considered part of the Gathering Place, as an outdoor recreation area and a social bridge to the neighborhood in the vicinity of the Gathering Place. Safety and providing appropriate play space for the children in the neighborhood are the primary issues of this site. For the thesis, several plan studies were worked out in attempts to address these issues (see examples in project drawings in chapter 5).

A detailed site map is included on a fold-out page following this one. North is to the right. Downtown is to the left and the thirty-foot tall retaining wall shown in the bottom left corner separates street parking off Reading Road from a large parking lot below. This lower lot has been designated by the city as the site for "Broadway Commons," Cincinnati’s proposed new baseball stadium.

References:


"Historic Walking Tour of Downtown Cincinnati." Cincinnati Historic Conservation Office.


SITE PLAN (FOLD-OUT ON NEXT PAGE)
3. Design Proposal

Thesis Topic
Issues and Positions
Project: The Gathering Place...
  Description
  Design Objectives - Methodologies
  Project Location
  Social and Physical Context
  Residents
Goals
Processes
Fig. 3.1. The Emery Theater is currently a subject of debate in Cincinnati. Citizens are trying to raise support for its renovation and reprogramming. "Passed over for decades, a historic downtown theater might finally have a shot at redemption" - was the description on this local newspaper cover.
THE GATHERING PLACE: KINDLING MEANINGFUL HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS IN OVER-THE-RHINE, CINCINNATI, THROUGH ARCHITECTURE WHICH PROMOTES POSITIVE SOCIAL INTERACTION.

I went to achieve the goals listed here. Beyond that, I would like to present a thesis that makes a valuable statement about life. It should communicate a positive, yet convincing, message, be professional (a stepping stone to the beginning of an architectural career after graduation), and my thesis should be an example of how people can relate to each other in caring ways through architecture and design.

Thesis Topic

It is known that architecture is a medium for community development through infrastructure; it follows that the built environments created by architects ought to promote the development of positive relationships among the people of the community.

Issues, and Positions

The main issues to be addressed through this investigation are the concept of neighborhood, the idea of community and personal relationship as they are stimulated by architecture, and the possibility of strengthening community spirit by promoting positive human interaction through the built environment. Questions concerning these issues are: how can architecture promote/stimulate human relational bonds among diverging, yet co-existent peoples? Can architecture affect the personal relationships between people? Can architectural space encourage relational growth and development within the community and change misperceptions or negative attitudes in people outside of the community? How/What does an architect physically design to achieve these ideals? Architects can impact not only the physical environment, but also the characteristic and relational environment of a human neighborhood. By providing spaces for shared recreation and community activity mixed with functional, supportive business and residential areas, architects can impact the way neighbors view each other as individuals and as residents of a significant community.

The neighborhood under investigation for this thesis, Over-The-Rhine, was chosen largely because of the combination of its existing architectural substance, historical and cultural, and its human identity, which may be described generally as controversial. The neighborhood is distinguishable from the rest of the city of Cincinnati that surrounds it by its consecutive four and five story, rectilinear, street facing buildings, most of which contain (or used to contain) shops or restaurants on the first floor and apartments above. The neighborhood was developed at the turn of the century by German immigrants and flourished until prohibition closed many of its business doors. Presently, the neighborhood is predominantly low-income and African American. Many of the current residents have moved to Over-The-Rhine from Appalachian areas looking for a better life. The buildings they now inhabit look are the same German established places that defined Over-The-Rhine a century ago, except now, most of them look a century old.

As this is not a concentrated historical renovation thesis, the historic architecture will act more as a descriptive frame of reference for the human character of Over-The-Rhine than a strict architectural example. The city of Cincinnati has several public interest issues, the impacts of which weigh heavily on the residents and regular users of Over-The-Rhine. Two
of the most significant of these issues are Broadway Commons, and Music Hall. Broadway Commons is the new Cincinnati Reds baseball stadium planned for a site immediately adjacent to an edge of Over-The-Rhine. Music Hall is the existing, and historical, performance arts building in the heart of Over-The-Rhine that is a valuable art commodity to a city who loves to entertain and be entertained.

The people to whom Over-The-Rhine is most significant and to whom this thesis is dedicated are the homeless - who wander near the Drop Inn Center, the families and singles - who inhabit the buildings badly in need of renovations, the artists - whose talent contributions help to distinguish the neighborhood, and the business people - who draw visitors from near and far to walk on the sidewalks, shop in the shops and in Findlay Market. These are the people and their differences that the thesis project will endeavor to bring together through community architecture.

**Project: The Gathering Place**

**Description**

The object is to be designed is really an environment to be defined by architecture. This environment will be a mixed use complex, a meaningful place, where Over-The-Rhine residents and users can come together to share life experiences and cultivate closer relationships. The gathering place to be defined architecturally will consist of a building or cluster of related buildings and by the landscape or green space that these buildings touch. The neighborhood where the site is located, Over-The-Rhine, is a valuable historic district. New architecture must relate to the existing historic infrastructure, just as new residents and neighborhood users must relate to the established community of people. In addition, new architecture must reach to inspire new interests where old ones have died out and it must instill a true sense of character and a strong sense of pride in the community.

**Design Objectives - Methodologies**

The objective of the thesis project is to produce an architectural thesis design that effectively responds to the issues raised by the thesis investigation. Specifically, this means that the design should explicitly illustrate how architecture may promote community unity and encourage the development of positive and meaningful relationship within the context of the community of Over-The-Rhine.

- Thorough investigations of the neighborhood and its residents and users will be made over the course of the thesis year.
- In order for the architect to best understand the culture and personalities of the neighborhood.
- This understanding should be applied to the design process and it should be explicitly understood in the final design product.
- Through programming, the thesis will explore the invention of a new mixed use building type to test its effectiveness as a human community relationship developer.

**Project Location**

The site for this design investigation is located at the Northwest corner of Spring Street and Reading Road. Reading Road runs East/West in front of the site and forms the Southern-most edge of a neighborhood called Over-The-Rhine (OTR) in Cincinnati, Ohio. Central Parkway, the busy boulevard that forms the Northern edge of the downtown and the Southern
boundary of Over-The-Rhine, used to be a canal used for commercial shipping when Cincinnati was developing as an industrial city in the late part of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. A large population of German immigrants had settled in the neighborhood now known as OTR. The area was first dubbed "Rhine" because of the Germans and the canal. Later the phrase, "Over-The-Rhine" caught on to describe more accurately the location of the area North of the canal and the name has been used ever since.

Social and Physical Context

The social make-up of the neighborhood is an interesting mix of different people groups. This make-up is directly linked to the physical context of the community as is apparent in the social functions of the neighborhood architecture. It may be easiest to explain the characteristic demographics by classifying the people of OTR into four groups: (Note: the architecture of the neighborhood correlates with the groups of people who use it.)

Residents

Residents of the neighborhood can typically be further classified into two main groups, low/no-income and moderate-income. The low-income groups include many African Americans who have migrated into the area from the Appalachian region, attracted by job market and affordable housing. A considerable homeless population thrives in OTR and the area has become known as the gathering place for this population in Cincinnati. Most of the homeless in OTR hang out around Washington Park and the Drop Inn Center, the prevalent shelter in the area. The YMCA is not far from W. Park. The moderate-income group consists mainly of young single people who are attracted by the style of the neighborhood. This is especially illustrated by Main Street, which has been developed lately by the community and hosts a number of bookstores, unique boutiques and European style cafes, restaurants and bars. Nightlife on Main Street is quite active. Findlay Market, the early century market that has been fully restored, offers a bazaar-style shopping atmosphere for residents and visitors to buy fresh meat, produce and other edible goods. The market is a popular place to buy groceries. Apartment are plentiful in OTR as most of the buildings were built three to five stories high and meant to hold first floor shops with living space above.

Further resident groups may be distinguished by examining the similarities and differences among the people who live in, work in and/or visit OTR. A key to good architectural design in this neighborhood is understanding these groups and the characteristics of the people of which the groups are composed. The people necessarily define the neighborhood through the opinions they hold, the actions they take, and the lifestyles they choose (or are stuck with). The architecture produced in their behalf ought to represent their views and hold up as important the ideas which are supported by the concerned people of the neighborhood.

- Artists

This group includes the active music community tied to OTR by Music Hall, an impressive historic performance building. Dancers, musicians and other talented performers frequent OTR and there is a word out that a wealthy musician wants to finance the construction of a secondary school in OTR especially for gifted and musically talented students. Another group of artists in OTR is more material than performance oriented. Pendleton Art Center, about two blocks North of the project site, advertises itself as the home of the world's largest collection of artists. It hosts studios for painters, sculptors, multi-media artists, photographers, fabric designers, wood workers, and many others. The building, which houses these artists, was constructed in
Visitors/Users

These are the people who can help to make or break the reputation of OTR. Currently, due to the age and lack of upkeep of many of the buildings in OTR and because of the down and out populations, which inhabit the streets and unkempt buildings of OTR, many visitors have a negative perception of OTR based on its appearance. Some, who know the history and appreciate the uniqueness of the area, have shown more interest in revitalizing OTR and consider it a valuable part of the city for both historic and cultural reasons.

Investors/Owners/Business People

Landlords, business owners, employees and private citizens make up this group. They have a lot to do with what becomes of the community. Their input can easily be used negatively or positively to influence the city politics and financial climate of the neighborhood. It would be important to have their support in developing this neighborhood. There is in fact a neighborhood council made up of many of these people which have lately been planning for the area in conflict with OTR’s Chamber of Commerce. A sensitive balance needs to be found between these two groups in hopes of finding a comprehensive and majority supported plan for future neighborhood development.

Politicians

This group includes city government, the OTR Neighborhood Council, the C.O.P.S. who police the area, city planning departments and boards and any other affiliated groups that is able to impact the development and care-taking of OTR.

These groups may attempt to uphold the views of a majority of Cincinnatians, but this is often at the price of a few underprivileged individuals. Most politicians are
currently in favor of building Broadway Commons next to the Central Business District. They also have consistently kept all Section 8 housing designated to OTR - making OTR literally the poorest neighborhood in the city. It would be important not to greatly disturb the agenda of Cincinnati’s politicians by not considering their views when designing in OTR. However, it would be easy to let their authority guide the decisions. For the thesis, the focus should be on the common people.

Goals

- Conduct a complete investigation of the site and its different contexts - architectural, geographical, environmental and otherwise.

- Research, mainly through reading and personal interviews, the social and historical context of the neighborhood and its most relevant needs as expressed by those whose lives are most impacted by this neighborhood.

- Continue to develop a specific design program based on research findings and geared toward developing community relationships, architecturally, between individuals and among the entire community.

- Respond through design to the needs expressed by the neighborhood and pursue a course of deeper recognition of the needs that might be implied, but not so much expressed.

- Create architecture that meaningfully and significantly touches people and encourages them to reach out to each other.

Processes

- **Investigation** - absorb as many related images and reading, which can be reasonably found in the course of the semester, dealing with OTR, community architecture, and meaningful/personal architecture.

- **Visitation** - Make at least two trips to the neighborhood to find contacts for conversation, and to research/record my own discoveries and experiences of the place. Use photo journalizing as a research and discovery tool.

- **Interview** - Conduct a series of personal interviews by with key people who have special knowledge or insight about the quality and character of OTR because of their own connection to it or experience with it.

- **Design** - Sketch, model, paint, photograph - to exercise the mind and funnel thoughts into graphic representation that can be reacted to by other people. Use my artistic capabilities to relate to the artists in the community, test design solutions and communicate with my peers, critics, and with the people I am designing for.

![Memorial Hall](image)

Fig. 3.3. Memorial Hall - Example of historic architecture in OTR.
References


Fig. 4.1. Watercolor collage by a Pendleton Artist – painted for the Verdin Company to illustrate some of the bells and clocks they have designed.
This chapter was a research paper for a class about the history of architecture in the Midwest. The paper focused specifically on the history and a description of the various architectural styles existing in Over-The-Rhine. The research presented in this paper was an important premise for design in the thesis. The observations made here describe and classify the physical context of the Gathering Place. The social and environmental contexts presented in earlier chapters provide an understanding of the community part of "Community Architecture." This chapter reveals the architecture, its role in the neighborhood and how it is important to new design and construction in Over-The-Rhine. The Gathering Place is a design effort to achieve community architecture, and how this architecture fits into all of these contexts - social, environmental and architectural is vital to its success.

Introduction

A street wall displays the material cultural fabric of a neighborhood. It is the tangible composition of the characteristics that define a specific neighborhood. Beyond the geographic boundary descriptions given by a community, these characteristics are what establish neighborhood identity and make that identity recognizable to residents and others.

The historic neighborhood, Over-The-Rhine, has been described on the map in terms of its physical boundaries as follows. McMicken Ave marks the neighborhood's northernmost edge. The Western side is bounded by Central Parkway (the site of the old Miami and Erie Canal) and this major thoroughfare turns east near Cincinnati's Central Business District, where it becomes Reading Road. Reading Road then curves northward and intersects Liberty Street, which forms the Northeast diagonal boundary until it intersects with McMicken Ave. Such is the loop that defines the neighborhood in physical terms (Goetzman) and distinguishes Over-The-Rhine on a map. To someone walking the city streets, however, the description would be observed much differently. Such an observer would determine boundaries not by the streets as they lie, but rather, in the buildings as they appear against a backdrop rolling green hills and the skyline of a modern city.

The styles, shapes and details composed in the buildings of Over-The-Rhine are the elements that articulate and emphasize the street wall, and this wall has become the recognizable boundary that most clearly separates Over-The-Rhine as its own entity (past and present). Understanding the arrangement of parts and the overall composition of the Street Wall is key to interpreting and appreciating the architectural integrity of the neighborhood.

(SEE Fig.4: Blow-up map of Over-The-Rhine.)

Several studies have already been conducted and published in effort to record and preserve the special historic, architectural character of Over-The-Rhine. Some of these studies include: Guidelines for Rehabilitation of the Findlay Market Area, as presented by the Miami Purchase Association in 1970-1972; Over-The-Rhine, A Description and History, a booklet coordinated in 1995 by the Historic Conservation Office and the Cincinnati City Planning Department. Urban Conservator, Christopher Cain, partnered with photographer and writer, Daniel Young and selected graphic designers collaborated their written and pictorial research of Over-The-Rhine in this booklet, which discusses a history, description, development.
guidelines, and preservation options; Over-The-Rhine Design Studies Project is another significant publication that documents Over-The-Rhine in a well-illustrated format outlining a research process and design proposal suggestions for the neighborhood. The Community Planning and Design Center, College of Design, Architecture and Planning, University of Cincinnati conducted this study and the Over-The-Rhine Chamber of Commerce sponsored it. The last source, in particular, is an excellent resource, documenting in detail the architectural character of Over-The-Rhine as it exists and offering thoughtful principles for integrating rehabilitation efforts and new buildings into the neighborhood. These published sources (available at Over-The-Rhine’s Chamber of Commerce), as well as notes from personal interviews, visits to the neighborhood, and various books on the subject, helped to build an understanding of the ingredients of the Street Wall in Over-The-Rhine and how they blend together to form the neighborhood composition.

History

A history of Over-The-Rhine is included here to form a context in which to place the Street Wall. Also, this history is a necessary background on which to base an understanding of the social, cultural, geographic and economic influences that prompted the development of Over-The-Rhine as a neighborhood in Cincinnati and contributed to the evolution of the Street Wall. Such a comprehensive history has been excerpted and summarized from John Clube’s book, Cincinnati Observed: Architecture and History. His writing gave detailed descriptions of life in Over-The-Rhine as it might have been.

"Uber dem Rhein," Over-The-Rhine—the name connotes both the river and a country, Germany. Cincinnati's "Rhine," the Miami and Erie Canal, flowed, and subsequently stagnated where Central Parkway now runs. Many of the district's original inhabitants emigrated from Germany—chiefly from the Rhineland, Bnaden-Wurttemberg, and Bavaria in the three or four decades after 1830. Other immigrant groups also clustered in Over-The-Rhine, including Irish and (later) Italian; "Uber dem Rhein," Over-The-Rhine—the name connotes both the river and a country, Germany. Cincinnati's "Rhine," the Miami and Erie Canal, flowed, and subsequently stagnated where Central Parkway now runs. Many of the district's original but Germans predominated. In 1851, out of Over-The-Rhine's population of 19,000, Germans constituted 13, 000, or about 60 percent. As Over-The-Rhine's population grew over the next half of the century, that percentage declined. Native-born Americans and other nationalities came to constitute more than half of the population. Yet the Germans stamped Over-The-Rhine, creating an ethnic enclave that, with its own architecture, language, and lifestyle, became a corner of the Vaterlaend transplant to the New World. (197)

German influence is illustrated throughout the neighborhood in the beer breweries, in the religious and domestic structures, and in the bars and cafes that lined the edges of the streets, hosting the hard-working community of immigrants. The German influence was not always pure. Often it was a remarkable hybrid, an intriguing blend of styles, Old World and new, European and American, that reflected the quality of immigrant lives as they were immersed into America’s melting pot. Over-The-Rhine is unique in the Midwest, for its influences and in its development over time. The cohesiveness of the neighborhood of Over-The-Rhine, though worn, is a valuable record of the layers of history that have developed the Ohio River Valley. The atmosphere of Over-The-Rhine may be compared to the French Quarter of New Orleans, Greenwich Village of New York, or Washington’s Georgetown. All of these places began as exciting urban settlements and then disintegrated to slums. Yet, except for Over-The-Rhine; they have been revived to become historic urban
landmarks, respected as a modern city "focal points." (197) Support for Over-The-Rhine is not completely lost. The entire area of Over-The-Rhine is listed on the National Register, where it has been guarded for preservation in a holistic manner, to be maintained as an important resource representing the community of an era long past.

"Even in the last century, visitors found the streetscape north of the canal different from that south. In contrast to downtown's "huge five-or-six story buildings with gigantic signs," A.B. Lakier, a Russian visitor of 1857, discovered in Over-The-Rhine's streets "small two-story houses intermingled with gardens. This in its own way is just like one of the small German towns with its inhabitants of modest wants, invariable steins of beer, and tobacco pipes." The burghers tended the potted plants on the windowills, cultivated tiny garden plots in the evenings after work, and every Wednesday and Saturday during the warm months whitewashed the front steps of their brick rowhouses. (198)

Over-the-Rhine has inevitably changed over the years, from its "glory years" in the later decades of the nineteenth century to its unkempt condition of the present. (201) Lifestyles changed from the beginning as people adapted to living in America. Many of the immigrants, who had gained prosperity in the neighborhood, moved on to better things outside of Over-The-Rhine. New immigrants filled their shoes and then eventually moved on themselves. It wasn't until the twentieth century, when Cincinnati stopped absorbing the mass of European immigrants, that Over-The-Rhine began its downward descent to inner-city slum. Several factors, in addition to population dispersal, spurred the decline as the world approached war and the machine industry advanced. World War 1 gave Germans and German things a bad reputation and this in turn de-popularized Over-The-Rhine and anything or anyone associated with the neighborhood. Prohibition shut down the saloons and breweries, which had contributed to Over-The-Rhine's success and was the source of its prosperity. The automobile had, perhaps, the greatest impact on the demise of Over-The-Rhine. In 1919, Americans owned 6,000,000 automobiles and by 1929, they owned 23,000,000 and the flight to the suburbs was in progress.

The automobile's dramatic rise in popularity in the 1920's permitted people to wander at will. The suburban brick house, the dream of many Over-The-Rhine residents as of Americans generally, became a reality easier to achieve. The neighborhood lost its cohesiveness; After World War 1 the term Over-The-Rhine was less frequently heard. (201)

After the Second World War, black and white migrant workers from the Appalachian south flocked to Over-The-Rhine seeking jobs in the city. Then, the construction of -75 in the 1950's and 60's displaced many of Cincinnati's urban black population from the West Side and forced them to settle in Over-The-Rhine. Since then, the city of Cincinnati has designated all Section Eight housing to be classified within the borders of Over-The-Rhine. This gives investors little incentive to pursue development plans in Over-The-Rhine and it has attracted many criminals and vagabonds to the area. Also, racial tensions, already considerable in the city of Cincinnati, are magnified in Over-The-Rhine.

Although German and other European immigrants shaped Over-The-Rhine's architecture in the nineteenth century, in the later twentieth century it is a largely black and Appalachian slum...They live in Over-The-Rhine not from choice but from economic necessity. Some do not appear adapted for, or interested in, urban life. Once Over-The-Rhine served as a staging ground for upward mobility. Today it harbors the poor, the elderly, the downand-out, and the homeless. Many people have neither the economic resources, educational training nor work skills to get out. Unlike previous residents, they will not go away unless compelled...But let the present inhabitants feel pride
in their neighborhood and the process of gradual dilapidation might reverse itself. Here and there it has (Findlay Market, Main Street). Over-The-Rhine has the potential for poor and affluent, white and black, old-established and relative new-comer, to come together in a showcase neighborhood. (201)

Author John Clubbe, Urban Conservator Christopher Cain, Architect and Professor Bruce Goetzman, Carl Westmoreland and other Cincinnati historians, planners, architects and politicians, even some of the neighborhood’s residents recognize that Over-The-Rhine has the potential to reverse the process of dilapidation and move on to a better future. Also several organizations have been established with this intent, including Over-The-Rhine’s Chamber of Commerce and the Neighborhood Coalition.

This ends the presentation of the history or Over-The-Rhine as a context for the Street Wall. The picture is sad, yet hopeful, that through careful planning and proper recognition of the neighborhood’s assets - human and architectural, Over-The-Rhine has a bright future as an integrated, historic “showcase neighborhood.”

**Street Wall Composition**

As the buildings create the ‘side walls’ of the street, the intersections imply the ‘end walls’ or ‘doorway’ into the next segment of the street. Each block of the city street then becomes an ‘urban room.’

(Design Studies Project 22)

These urban rooms are articulated by the details of the street walls and, just as city streets can be mentally divided into urban rooms, urban rooms may be further divided into building facades. The faces of the buildings are edges to the rooms, where applied decoration - doors, windows, signs, trims, etc. - create the atmosphere of the urban room. Each element of the facade as well as the overall composition of the facade acts as part of the street wall to shape the image of the neighborhood.

- **Building Facades**

Building facades in OTR date from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and their details reflect this period of building activity. Since that time, OTR has seen limited new construction and, as a result, bears cohesive architectural features dating from this period. (Design Studies Project 22)

Most of the buildings in Over-The-Rhine are typically three to five stories in height and their facades may be organized neatly into four easily distinguishable parts. Beginning at the bottom of the urban room, on the sidewalk, there is the storefront - the predominant pedestrian face. Signage sits flat, above the storefront, or projects out at that level, and the major window pattern begins above the sign level. The cornice then tops the building and terminates the structure where it meets the sky.

**Storefronts** - the part of the building that is open to the public, filled with windows meant to draw customers inside to buy or to share in the activities offered on the first floor of such buildings, i.e. eating, drinking, reading lounging. The storefront introduces the building to the public and it is the realm where the public is welcomed. Above the first floor, living space or office space generally begins and is considered private. Limestone, cast iron, or wood pilasters often divide the first floor façade into equal (or at least proportional parts) and create bays or windows and doors.

**Signs** - Sometimes found flush with the façade, above the storefront windows, or at the lower edge of an awning cantilever above the sidewalk, the signs in OTR appear in many different forms. Often the most dramatic are the signs that protrude from the face
of a building, projecting out over the sidewalk, attracting
the attention of pedestrians and of automobile drivers
passing at swifter speeds. Signs act as building
identifiers, important because many of the "mainstreet"
buildings in OTR are similar in their façade patterns and
may be hard to distinguish as a particular business or
functional type without signs to label them. Signs
announce the public purpose of the buildings.

Aficionados of street furniture will delight in Over-
The-Rhine: cast iron fronts (often with the
manufacturer's plate still on them), plaques of
metal, marble, or encaustic tile in the sidewalk,
lampposts and merchants' signs. Even when we are
hardly conscious of it, such street furniture helps
shape our impression of the cityscape. It entertains
us visually and, read aright, it can teach us much
regarding the city's history. (Clubebe 205, 206)

Windows — cover most of the street façade at
the first level. From the second level up, they appear in
rectilinear patterns, proportional to the size of the façade
and usually dimensioned a ratio of one horizontal to
three vertical units. Windows are arranged in a balance
fashion, often symmetrically, and evenly spaced with the
space between equaling the width of the window itself.
Details differ in the window treatments, how they are
capped, subdivided and framed.

Yet, they follow very clear principles of articulation.
The clarity is due in large part to common concerns
for daylight, air and standard practices of building
construction of the time. In most cases, these
windows are just one component of an overall
façade design or "logic." (Design Studies Project
24)

Comices — the crown of the building, the top
edge of the urban room — the comice accentuates the
dge, "transitioning between building and sky as well as
adding to the sense of enclosure at street level." (Design
Studies Project 25) As a side note, because comices
project from the buildings, they are prone to collapse in
old age, which makes them a priority for preservation,
ot only for their visual value, but to keep the sidewalks
below them a safe place for pedestrians.

115 Vine, 5 stories and Queen Anne, has a
spectacular metal comice topped by an urn. Such
comices are quite literally the crowning glories of
Over-The-Rhine's late nineteenth-century
commercial architecture. Splendid specimens
abound throughout the district... (Clubebe 206)

(SEE Fig.4.2. The façade and its parts. And
Fig.4.3. A storefront in Over-The-Rhine.)

• Materials
There is a limited variety of materials and building
systems present in Over-The-Rhine, and this is
indicative of the availability of materials to the region
where Over-The-Rhine is located. (Design Studies
Project 22) Over-The-Rhine was dependent upon those
items available in the immediate area or on the things
that could be brought on the Ohio River and the canal —
where the expense of shipping was still a factor. As
evidenced by the buildings in the Street Wall, primarily
brick construction exists, with wood, ornamental stone,
and tin as secondary materials. Cast iron was another
material used, often in storefronts built in the fifty years
between 1850 and 1900. Many of the original cast iron
fronts remain in tact, though rusted, and they usually
retain the manufacturer's plate somewhere on their
vestige. Wood storefronts were rarer.

This limited palette responded to both economic
and aesthetic concerns of the time and, as a by-
product, produced buildings that cohere visually as
street walls...Brick and wood were readily available
and easily handled, making them efficient building
materials for most construction. Inherently, these
materials offered (and still offer) construction
techniques appropriate to traditional building trades,
I.e., masons and carpenters. The relatively simple
technologies employed by these trades offered
opportunities for work to a large population during the
rapid construction of the Over-The-Rhine
neighborhood. (Design Studies Project 22)
• Styles

Perhaps one of the best reasons to preserve and appreciate Over-The-Rhine is that it is such a wonderful collage of building types, expressing examples of the range of styles that crossed the Midwest from the mid-nineteenth century to the early-twentieth century. Though the roots of Over-The-Rhine were deeply Germanic, other European influences contributed to the character of Over-The-Rhine. Also, the architectural trends emerging out of America helped to shape Over-The-Rhine and give it an identity that is uniquely historic for America.

An important aspect of the district’s historic fabric is that the architectural character is not universally Germanic, but rather a German-American synthesis of various architectural styles and elements...

...These accounts do not ascribe to the buildings any architectural characteristics that are uniquely “German,... (Description and History 24)

It would take a lengthy discourse to thoroughly identify, describe and illustrate all of the architectural styles represented in Over-The-Rhine, and they are all important to recognize. Therefore, in order to familiarize the reader with a good cross-sectional description of Over-The-Rhine building styles, the following list has been included to summarize the subject.

(SEE Fig.4.4. Across from the School for Creative and Performing Arts ...)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1109 Vine</td>
<td>A.P. Hauck C. Building</td>
<td>Queen Anne</td>
<td>1890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1111 Vine</td>
<td>L. Schlechten Sons Co. Cin. O.</td>
<td>Italian with Christian pillars</td>
<td>Late 19th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1127-29 Vine</td>
<td>German National Bank (Ensemble Theater of Cincinnati)</td>
<td>Beaux Arts</td>
<td>Late 19th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1315 Vine</td>
<td>Cosmopolitan Hall</td>
<td>Renaissance Revival Style</td>
<td>1865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1331 Vine</td>
<td>The Kirby (Apartment Building)</td>
<td>Red brick Queen Anne</td>
<td>1885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vine</td>
<td>St. Francis Seraph</td>
<td>Romanesque, hint of Greek Revival</td>
<td>1925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1725 Vine</td>
<td>(five-bay) Kaufman Building</td>
<td>Renaissance Revival</td>
<td>1879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1822 Vine</td>
<td>Schuehmann’s - Kaufman Brewery s malt house</td>
<td>Romanesque Revival</td>
<td>1886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1610 Walnut St.</td>
<td>Walnut Street Baptist Church</td>
<td>Romanesque Revival</td>
<td>1896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE corner of Walnut and</td>
<td>Grammer’s Restaurant</td>
<td>German influence</td>
<td>1950’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty</td>
<td>Schiller St.</td>
<td>Neo-Tudor, Tudor Revival</td>
<td>1913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West side of Main St.</td>
<td>Streetscape</td>
<td>Transitional &amp; Italian and Queen Anne</td>
<td>Late 19th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchard St.</td>
<td>Residential cross street</td>
<td>Greek Revival and Italian</td>
<td>Late 19th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty and Sycamore</td>
<td>Salem United Church of Christ</td>
<td>German Gothic</td>
<td>1867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty St. (Hall)</td>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>Greek Revival and Italian</td>
<td>Late 19th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sycamore St.</td>
<td>John Walker House</td>
<td>Greek Revival townhouse</td>
<td>1847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>322-326 Milton</td>
<td>Townhouses</td>
<td>Second Empire</td>
<td>Late 19th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>533-539 Milton</td>
<td>Two-story row houses</td>
<td>Greek Revival</td>
<td>Late 19th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty St. and Highland Ave.</td>
<td>Pendleton House</td>
<td>Second Empire</td>
<td>1870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>412 Liberty</td>
<td>First District Public School</td>
<td>Italianate with Gothic gable</td>
<td>1970’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1342 Broadway</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fiedler</td>
<td>1834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring St. and Pendleton</td>
<td>St. Paul’s (The Vardon Bell and Clock Co.)</td>
<td>Greek Revival or Renaissance- doric pilasters, gothic quaterfaurs</td>
<td>1850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>824 Dayton</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>New style in neo-Baroque</td>
<td>1899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West side of Sycamore</td>
<td>Queen City Diner</td>
<td>Art Deco</td>
<td>1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walnut Street</td>
<td>American Building (offices)</td>
<td>Art Deco</td>
<td>1927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th</td>
<td>Prince of Peace Lutheran Church</td>
<td>Gothic</td>
<td>1871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>810 Elm</td>
<td>Christian Moerlein Brewery</td>
<td>Rundbogensif (round-arch style)</td>
<td>1862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>812 Dayton</td>
<td>John Hauck House</td>
<td>Renaissance Palazzo</td>
<td>1870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>824 Dayton</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>German Italianate with Rococo Revival</td>
<td>Late 19th c.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from John Clubbe’s book, pages 198-141)
Though the information listed above is not an entire account of OTR, it does provide an overview of the styles and types of architecture existing in OTR and it shows the validity of OTR as an important historic resource for the Midwest and the nation.

Individually, Over-The-Rhine’s buildings were, and are, often remarkable; collectively, they create the essence of the period and the spirit of the district. Neither monuments nor masterpieces, more “street” or “vernacular” architecture than “landmarks,” they constitute a modest but nonetheless vital part of the city’s fabric. Their value is contrast, character, visual and emotional change of pace, a sudden sense of intimacy, scale, all evocative of the qualities of another century and way of life. They provide the impression of a city “in depth,” the richness of past and present side by side. (Clabbe 199)

* Scale

They (the buildings) are based on a human scale that, however unconsciously, paid attention to human needs. (Clabbe 199)

Walking in OTR on a fair weather day is one of those pleasurable experiences that reminds us of the past and brings a longing for simpler times. The architectural trait inherent in OTR that perpetuates this feeling is the scale of the neighborhood — from the window sizes to the alleys and in the details — everything is proportioned to a comfortable, humanly appealing size. Features of the façade, the height and overall sizes of the facades themselves are compatible with the human experience. Storefront windows fill the sidewalk viewing areas of people passing by, and the storefront portions of the building are high enough to suggest their importance and public-ness, yet properly terminated so as not to detract or subtract from private spaces. Residential areas look and feel residential. The entire atmosphere created by the street wall suggests “neighborhood,” - streets for walking and buildings that have meant something to individuals and the community.

Here the close-knit pattern of architectural forms compelled German-Americans to shop, work, play and pray together. The streets offered (and still offer) a satisfying variety of proportion: people to buildings, street width to building heights, heights to widths, solids to voids, business scale to domestic scale, spires to “normal” building heights... (Clabbe 200)

* Streets

It would be difficult to examine street walls without considering the streets themselves as the organizers of and foundation for the street wall. In addition, because of the way the streets have changed since the advent of the automobile, it is important to realize the impact of their presence on human interaction with the street wall. Automobiles have become, in essence, part of the street wall. When parallel parked, they form and edge which separates automobile traffic from pedestrian traffic and creates a buffer from the machine transportation zone to the pedestrian transportation and building zone. The automobile has changed neighborhood — adding another dimension to the street wall composition, one that doesn’t seem to fit; yet remains inevitable. The following excerpt from the Design Studies Project gives an accurate explanation of the street layout in Over-The-Rhine and their organizing role in the neighborhood.

Within OTR there are, by virtue of the original city plan, three distinct street types: the major through streets (Vine, Race, Walnut,...); the cross streets (12th, 14th,...); and the alleyways (Goose, Ridgeway,...). The major through streets such as Vine lend themselves to retail and commercial uses due to their visibility and potential ease of access. In direct contrast to the major through streets are the alleyways. These are tightly compressed passages too small for most of today’s automobiles. They are service oriented in nature and suggest
possible re-use as pedestrian walks for limited retail development as well as secondary (alternate) residential access...street width and traffic flow are key factors in determining use. (Design Studies Project 20)

The streets also form block patterns that are particularly relevant to the street wall. There are basically two types of blocks in Over-The-Rhine. One is divided in the middle by an alley and the other is distinguished by an open space (usually green space) that is surrounded by building lots. Having these block types as guides for building position has kept the streets walls looking uniform with (historically) few vacant lots on the street. Buildings are built up to the sidewalk line with even facades and form the vertical edges of the block patterns. (Design Studies Project 21)

In Entirety

Building facades, materials, styles, scale, and the composition of the streetscape as it brings these elements together is the 'street wall.' The details in these elements, the patterns, textures, and shapes that characterize the street wall and create the ambience of the neighborhood make Over-The-Rhine different from any other neighborhood in Cincinnati. Designed, built and remodeled over the span of one hundred and thirty some years by many participants, Over-The-Rhine has retained a consistent pattern of distinctive qualities, diverging and blending, that exist to form an urban history and an architecture for use in the present. People fit in Over-The-Rhine. Those qualities represented in the Street Wall have attracted them for as long as Over-The-Rhine has existed and will continue to do so as long as it remains a neighborhood composition.

Increasing numbers of residents and visitors to Cincinnati are rediscovering the charms of Over-The-Rhine. Historic Findlay Market bustles with activity on market days. The trees and open space of Washington Park invite passersby to slow their pace. Main Street, with its collection of shops and restaurants, is rapidly becoming a regional entertainment district. The Ensemble Theater on Vine Street attracts national attention with its innovative productions and premieres of new plays by acclaimed playwrights. Music Hall and Memorial Hall host a wide variety of performances and special events throughout the year. The community's remarkable nineteenth-century buildings set the stage for life, work, and play in the community, creating an historical environment that is uniquely "Over-The-Rhine." (Description and History Intro.)

The hope for the future is that any further design or development will contribute to the overall character of the street wall. Renovation is encouraged, rather than demolition or excavation. The Central Business District of Cincinnati, as well as parking for the city has changed the face of Over-The-Rhine. However, by following the good advice offered in the guidelines published by the Historic Conservation Office and the Cincinnati City Planning Department, new development in Over-The-Rhine could add a welcome touch of improvement. With each generation that adds to Over-The-Rhine, or subtracts from it, the neighborhood changes – but (so far), it has never changed enough to lose its integrity as a composition, and that remains the beauty of Over-The-Rhine.

But in Over-The-Rhine the entire district is historic. Significant as are its individual structures, Over-The-Rhine distinction lies less in them that it does in the ensemble. The ensemble's coherence is pleasure to contemplate, and is also a resource not to be overlooked ... it is the overall cityscape that steals the show. (Clube 199)

(SEE Fig.4.5. A sample from the Street Wall in Over-The-Rhine.)
Fig. 4.1. Map of Over-The-Rhine: Central Parkway, Liberty St. and McMicken Ave.
Fig. 4.2. The façade and its parts, a=comice, b=windows, c=sign, d=storefront.

Fig. 4.3. A storefront in Over-The-Rhine. Example: City Art Education Center. (photo 11/26/97)
Fig. 4.4. Across from the School for Creative and Performing Arts along east 14th Street - Three most common architectural styles found in Over-The-Rhine.

Fig. 4.5. A sample from the Street Wall in Over-The-Rhine.
References


Community Architecture: A Design Project for Over-The-Rhine

Design Process...
- Definition of Community Architecture
- Research Presentation: Over-The-Rhine
- Community Character Cross-Section
- Design Concepts
- Final Design – The Gathering Place
Fig. 5.1. Isometric concept drawing
Design Process

The process of design for this thesis project is one of continuously combined research, documentation, application, design, and evaluation. The focus of the research has been to gain an understanding of which the residents and users of Over-The-Rhine really are, individually and as a community. In addition to this, efforts have been made to identify the most prevalent needs among in a specific neighborhood (Broadway Pendleton) that could be met through careful architectural programming and design. The end in mind is a design that fits into the context of the neighborhood and directly affects the needs of the residents and users in positive ways. Realizing that most of the needs in this neighborhood are social and economical, it is a challenge to explore ways for architecture to address such personal issues.

The research that ought to most influence the design of the project shall be termed "active" for the purpose of explaining the motivation behind the design. Active sources include, personal interviewees, site visits, telephone interviewees, and published written information that directly expressed the personal views of OTR residents and/or users concerning the conditions of OTR. Organizational representatives may also be considered active sources when their voice represents the views known to be common among the residents and/or users of OTR for whom speak.

The immediate goal in the design process, as it is affected by the active research, is to apply the information gained and test ways to solve the problems that are mentioned. Design critiques and further studies then reveal whether or not the experiment is successful. Parts of experiments are often considered successful, and these parts many be combined and manipulated in other design so that eventually, a holistic design of working parts should be complete and ready to present for the final critique challenge.

Definition of Community Architecture

Eduardo E. Loranzo gives a definition of community architecture in his book, Community Design and the Culture of Cities.

Community life should span a continuum of experiences, from climactic urban environments to more intimate, smaller-scale settlements. If community life and urbanity are missing from human experience, there is a serious flaw in society... community design affects the environment of almost everyone... community design can fail—indeed, betray—its purpose in societies that ignore urban life.

Community design should be concerned with the organization of human communities—of entire cities and small towns, of central business districts and suburban areas.

This definition could be extended to recognize that even smaller communities exist; blocks, streets, shared buildings, parks—all of these are small communities in their own way and certainly they are community spaces.

Further definition for community and the notion of community architecture were recorded from a group of fifth year architectural students at Ball State University in Prof. Eric Ney's Architectural Thesis Programming class, held during the fall semester of 1997. The class was asked to define architecture, community, and community architecture. Some of their definitions follow.

ARCHITECTURE
- The act of building
- Creation of Space
Place-making, a home for living
Imagination
Ego
Defining space and creating perceptions
The art of building
A catalyst for (intended) response
Manmade environment

COMMUNITY
Group of people with a common interest
Tribe
Body of people living in the same place under the same laws
Family
Organization of a small group
Sense of identity with a group
Geographic location with boundaries
A multi-person symbiotic relationship
Familiar surroundings
Colonies

COMMUNITY ARCHITECTURE
Connection of people through a series of spaces
Suburbia
Not a utopia
A community building process
Vernacular architecture
Series of values and common interests agreed upon by a group of people in a community
Summation of life experiences
Layers

Art or Science of building or planning the interaction of people
You can encourage it through building, but not force it by design.

These definitions are not conclusive, but some of them do suggest important issues to consider when designing in the community realm. It would be difficult to pinpoint an exact list of characteristics that define a community — for each community is unique recognizable for a base of ideas, conditions, etc. that distinguish it from others.

The Gathering Place designed in this thesis as a piece of community architecture incorporates many of these thoughts as well as those identifying ideas that are unique to the neighborhood community and the site.

Fig. 5.2. Sketch
# Research Presentation: Over-The-Rhine

## Community Character Cross-Section

(Categories: A = Artists, V = Visitors, R = OTR Residents, P = Politicians, B = Business organizations, investors, participants, AP = Architects and Planners)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Character Segment</th>
<th>Critical Issues</th>
<th>General References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>Food, Shelter, Safety, Jobs</td>
<td>Andy Hutzel - The Drop Inn Center (Shelter), Bruce Goetzman</td>
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<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Caucasian Americans</td>
<td>Safety, Racism, Neighborhood image</td>
<td>Hope Pierson, OTR Chamber,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>Safety, Rent rates, Jobs, Racism</td>
<td>OTR Chamber, Hope Pierson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Safety, Recreation</td>
<td>OTR Chamber - Jennifer Sizer, Hope Pierson</td>
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<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Families</td>
<td>Safety, Access (same as above)</td>
<td>OTR Chamber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Univ. of Cinci - Students</td>
<td>Shopping, Recreation, Working Laboratory</td>
<td>Bruce Goetzman, Jeff Gearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Broadway Commons Reps.</td>
<td>Baseball Games, Parking, Recreation, Money</td>
<td>Jim Tarbell, OTR Chamber, Bruce Goetzman, Cinci City Planning Dept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Service deliverers/users</td>
<td>Accessibility, Business opportunity/image, parking</td>
<td>Jim Verdin - Verdin Co., OTR Chamber, Neighborhood Council, Greater Cinci Convention and Visitor's Bureau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Non-OTR-Cincinnati Residents</td>
<td>Safety, Access, Recreation (Findlay Market Subarea)</td>
<td>Hope Pierson, Charlie Behnow, Jennifer Sizer, Eric Ney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Verdin Co. (Belas &amp; Clocks)</td>
<td>Roots, Business opportunity, Community development</td>
<td>Jim Verdin - owner *note: Jim Verdin owns the project site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>OTR Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Neighborhood atmosphere, Community spirit, people, information</td>
<td>Jennifer Sizer, Marge Hammelrath, various publications distributed by the Chamber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>The Coalition</td>
<td>Community Vision, ? - it is a newly formed group</td>
<td>Ken Cunningham, Rahime Spencer - Coalition President</td>
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<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>The Neighborhood Council</td>
<td></td>
<td>OTR Chamber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Greater Cinci Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Publicity, Information, Publication, Representation (formed by 76 firms and individuals)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.gccco.com">http://www.gccco.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Grey and Page</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kevin Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>University of Cinci - Dept. of Art, Architecture, Planning and Design</td>
<td>Education, Experience, Community planning and development</td>
<td>OTR Development Guidelines (booklets), Jeff Gearing, Bruce Goetzman, other arch. Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Ken Cunningham (and Firm)</td>
<td>Architecture, Landscape, Neighborhood needs, outside sources</td>
<td><a href="mailto:KCAI@comcast.net">KCAI@comcast.net</a> 1429 Main Street Cincinnati, OH 45210 (513) 861-3621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Cincinnati Historical Society/The Historic Conservation Office</td>
<td>Architecture-preservation, history, documentation, revitalization, tourism, education</td>
<td>801 Plum Street, Room 229, Cincinnati, (Chris Cralin) OH 45202 (Dan Young) (513) 352-3478</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Diagrams and Conceptual Design
Fig. 5.3. OTR
Map
Diagram

6 DESCRIPTIVE SUB AREAS OF O.T.R.
WHICH CENTER ON LANDMARKS OR FOCAL POINTS.

Fig. 5.4.5. OTR has six sub-areas, each with its own style and character. These areas are the Brewery District, Findlay Market Sub-Area, Washington Park Sub-Area, Central Commercial-Residential Sub-Area, Broadway-Pendleton Sub-Area (location of site), and the Mulberry-McMicken Sub-Area.
Fig. 5.6. Example of a site diagram highlighting various functional nodes and site characteristics.

SITE PLAN STUDIES

Fig. 5.7. Building site plan concept (11/67).

Fig. 5.8. Recreation Area site plan concept (11/67).
FLOOR PLAN STUDIES

FIRST FLOOR SPACES: *CAFE*, RESTROOMS, GALLERY, PARKING, *APT. ENTRY* [
OFFICE]

SECOND FLOOR SPACES:
- OFFICE
- PRIVATE RESTROOMS
- APT. LOBBY

Fig. 5.9.

Fig. 5.10.
Fig. 5.12. Site Diagram

Fig. 5.13. Building Section Diagram
Fig. 5.16. Floor and Wall Construction Details

Fig. 5.15. Stair Layouts

Fig. 5.17. Room Size Studies

Fig. 5.18. Elevator Size Studies
Final Design

The images in this segment continue to illustrate the design process, beginning with a proposed recreational site development and ending with drawing of the Gathering Place building. The form of the plan was worked out through a modeling and drawing process, which tested various ways to fit the desired spaces into such a tight site. It was determined that the grocery covering the existing parking lot with a courtyard plan above was the best solution for the site and the design problem. Other scenarios studied included a building covering the entire site up to six floors, a U-shaped building—based on circulation patterns and a few more randomly shaped plans based on function and the relationships among building parts.

The courtyard in the middle of a square building (except for the café) fit the shape of the site without compromising the street wall. It also allowed for plenty of natural light and ventilation to get to each apartment—a feat that was difficult to achieve with other forms. The design provides indoor and outdoor community "gathering spaces" within the safety and privacy of the building. Individual needs for privacy were also of concern and kept in balance with the desire for community. Residents of each apartment have a private, inset entrance and windows facing the courtyard are smaller to give more privacy. Large bay windows on the exterior side as well as generous living room windows bring in all kinds of views of the city and neighborhood beyond.

The drawings in this section should help to explain the design solution and present it in such a way that people will see The Gathering Place as a workable piece of community architecture.
SECTION THROUGH APARTMENT TYPE C

SECTION THROUGH APARTMENT TYPE D
THE TASTEE PALETTE – indoor/outdoor café
THE GATHERING PLACE APARTMENTS – SECTION THROUGH COURTYARD