
O V E R - T H E - R H I N E



C O M P R E H E N S I V E P L A N

JUNE 2002

THE OVER-THE-RHINE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A consensus-based plan by people who care

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Prepared by the City of Cincinnati
City Planning Department in collaboration with

OTR Community Council

OTR Coalition

ABCD Resident's Table

Other Community Stakeholders

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Department of Community Development

Department of Transportation and Engineering

Cincinnati Recreation Commission

Cincinnati Park Board

Division of Employment and Training

Design consulting by Kenneth Cunningham and
Associates, Inc. in association with the University of Cincinnati
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However, including their names is not meant to imply that they agree with or endorse all recommendations in this plan.*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Over-the-Rhine (OTR) Community Plan that follows was created out of the passion, drive and commitment of many existing neighborhood residents, business owners, property owners, social service providers, development corporations, community business interests and the many other stakeholders who love OTR. It is also a plan that was developed during a time of great stresses and pressures in the community.

The plan recommendations focus on revitalizing the neighborhood using the many significant assets of this community:

- Committed residents and stakeholders
- Rich and diverse arts and cultural community
- Distinct historic architecture
- Place in the city's heritage as the home to Findlay Market and Music Hall
- Location in between downtown and the University/ Medical Complex

The plan's recommendations also directly confront challenges facing the neighborhood:

- Disinvestment
- The loss of population and economic activity
- Crime and the perception and reality of an unsafe and unhealthy environment
- Concentrations of poverty
- Lack of mutual respect and community cohesion in a racially and economically diverse neighborhood

The plan's recommendations are designed to rebuild the housing and economic infrastructure of the neighborhood in a way that will create an economically and racially diverse community that can be sustained over the long term. The public and private investments being made in public schools, the arts, parks and the Findlay Market revitalization enhance rebuilding the housing and economic markets.

Phase one housing projects are designed to take advantage of the public investments in schools and parks, as well as Findlay Market. Economic improvements are targeted to Vine Street, the Loft District and Main Street. In addition to the bricks and mortar improvements recommended, there are support services recommended for expanded homeownership opportunities and rental assistance in the area of housing. There are job and personal financial management training recommendations along with business development and retention strategies in the economic development arena.

Plan implementation focuses on the central management of the process in the community by a development corporation that has as its membership the many stakeholders that have been working in the neighborhood for years, both for profit and non-profit, residents and business. The plan focuses new funding tools like TIF district designation and the Urban Living Loan Pool (a private fund) along with better focused and packaged existing tools like the Housing Round, Cincinnati Neighborhood Business Districts United (CNBDU), rental rehabilitation and homeowner assistance programs.

The following Future Land Use Map and Strategic Plan Map illustrate this plan's recommendations spatially and its vision for the neighborhood's revitalization.

The **Future Land Use Map** illustrates six kinds of areas in OTR:

1. The **residential and commercial mixed-use** areas include a large percentage of buildings designed with office or retail space on the first floor and housing in the floors above. Densely packed, these buildings are generally three- to five-stories in height with long, narrow floor plates. The future land use plan for OTR respects these building types and therefore envisions higher-density rental housing and, in some cases, condominiums in these areas. Provisions for commercial and office uses in street level storefronts, as well as alternative uses of the upper floors for office and studio space, are also made in these areas.
2. The **residential/medium-density** areas represent places where residential reuses will be created at a lower-density level. The buildings in these areas lend themselves more to single- and two-family housing, and homeownership will be encouraged. Since there are fewer opportunities for commercial concerns, the overall character of these parts of the neighborhood will be strongly residential.
3. The **loft district** is intended to encompass a wide variety of businesses and housing opportunities including office/commercial, light manufacturing, artists' studios, and housing. Older manufacturing and industrial buildings, with their large open floor plates and massive windows, present limitless opportunities for creative and unique developments. The loft district extends west out of OTR into the West End where similar recommendations are being made in that neighborhood.
4. The social, educational and cultural **institutions** illustrated in the Future Land Use Map represent some of the community's most important anchors. The continued presence of these organizations is essential to its overall revitalization.
5. The **retail mixed-use** zones target Main Street, Vine Street and Findlay Market. These areas are OTR's focal points, the location of many local and regional businesses. Main Street, Vine Street and Findlay Market are envisioned as active, lively business zones that also include housing. Vine Street includes the core of the neighborhood's local businesses, while Main Street is a destination for entertainment, arts, and specialty goods and services. Findlay Market is a food and flowers district that is eventually seen as a daily market for residents of Over-the-Rhine and outlying neighborhoods with additional restaurants and housing.
6. **Open spaces** in the neighborhood are very important gathering spaces and places to slow down in this otherwise dense neighborhood. Open spaces utilized for gardens and parks also provide food, greenery and color to street faces.

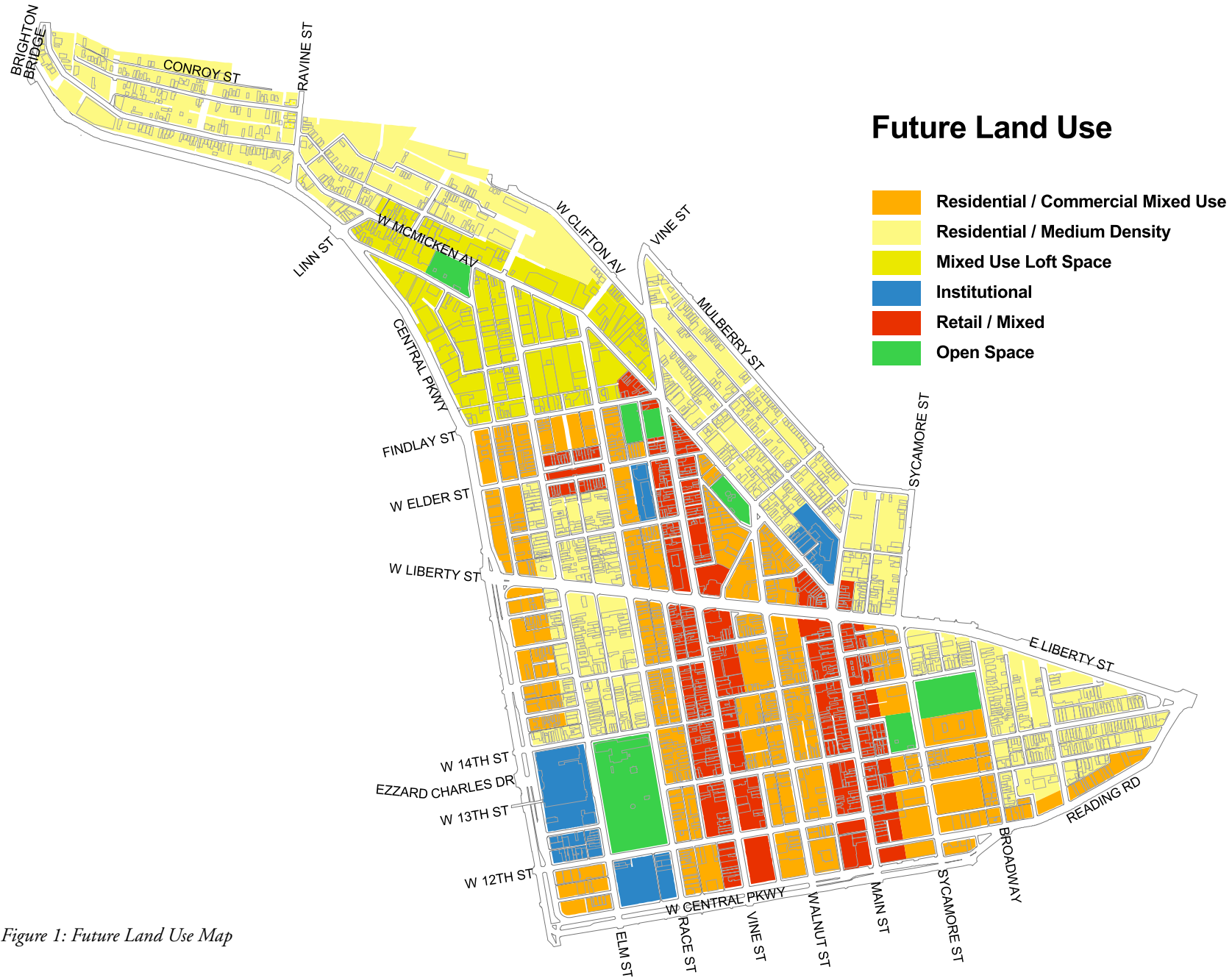


Figure 1: Future Land Use Map

The **Strategic Plan Map** identifies those areas in which to focus initial redevelopment efforts. The project locations shown begin to implement key recommendations in the plan, and a review of this map shows that every part of the neighborhood plays an important role. Plan recommendations are designed to build on both existing assets, such as Music Hall, and future investments, such as those planned by Cincinnati Public Schools. Recommendations are also intended to target rehabilitation and new construction to take advantage of vacant land and existing building types.

Plans for the “Loft District” include the rehabilitation of a series of buildings for mixed-uses including housing, commercial office space and studio space. The plan also includes improvements to Hanna Park as part of the Armleder Trust through the City of Cincinnati Recreation Commission. The illustrations included in this plan give an indication of the opportunities for associated parking and open space.

The “Infill Housing” proposed in the northern part of the neighborhood involves the construction of new single- and two-family housing on the many available lots along Mulberry Street, Clifton Avenue and smaller streets extending up the hillside.

Improvements in the “Rothenberg Area” will center around a newly renovated Rothenberg elementary school. This will include expanded green space and parking for the school. This area is also targeted for housing renovation and in-fill development. Housing developments undertaken nearby Rothenberg school should incorporate larger units to accommodate families with children.

The future “Melindy Square” project will take advantage of the mixed-use buildings in this part of OTR to create approximately 80 new mixed-income housing units.

The “Washington Park Area / SCPA Area” encompasses a new Washington Park School and a new K-12 Arts School. Recommendations for this area also include some targeted mixed-income housing rehabilitation that will include buildings along Race Street and Republic Street.

The 1700 block of Vine Street is one focus for retail and commercial rehabilitation activity. The block is undergoing improvements because of improvements to Smart Money, and the stabilization of the old Kauffman building. Additional improvements will include shared parking and retail space renovation. There are also improvements proposed to better connect Vine Street to Findlay Market in this location.

Findlay Market is the location of another targeted renovation project. The market house renovation is well underway. The expansion of the market space will also spur expanded hours of operation and a new management structure for the market. In addition, renovation of the buildings around the market house for retail and residential use is also underway.

The Pendleton Mews housing project will provide 20 new single-family units in a part of the neighborhood identified for those types of new uses. The streetscape and lighting improvements associated with this project will also be included.

The south Vine Street area includes a number of renovation projects that will provide new retail and housing space. The ReSTOC project in the 1300 block will provide 35 new affordable units while the activity on the 1200 block will provide additional new market rate units and both will provide renovated retail space.

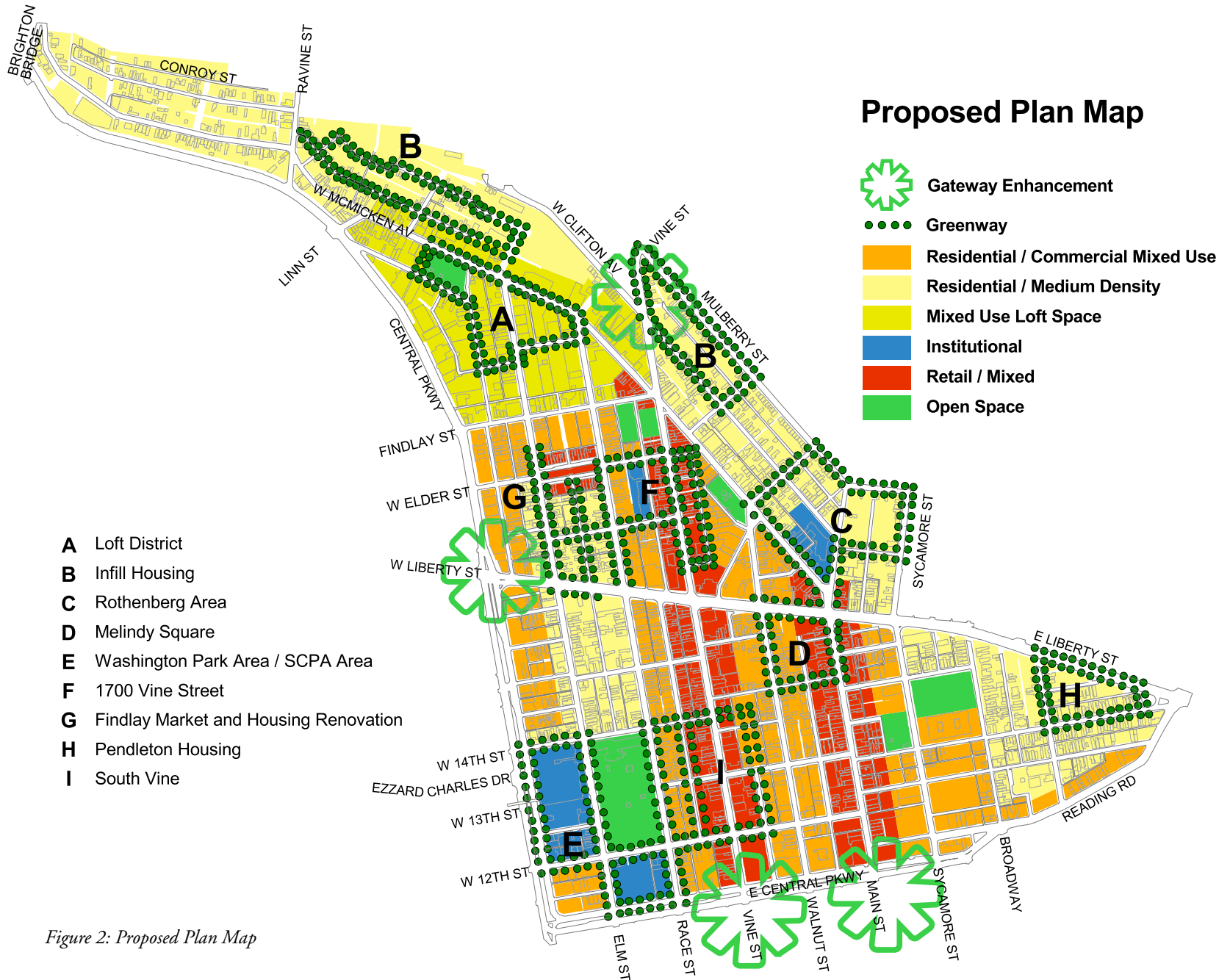


Figure 2: Proposed Plan Map



Policy measures should focus on retaining existing commercial activity wherever it exists in accordance with the general intention of maintaining an active mixed-use environment in OTR. Concentration of commercial opportunities along certain streets should be encouraged to create a critical mass of commercial activity that may be better self-supporting, can benefit from shared parking, and is in a smaller area, rather than spread thinly about the district.

Even along designated commercial streets, focus complementary retail development and retention efforts in smaller stretches that may be supported by their own “critical mass.” For example, land use around Findlay Market and the spine of Elder Street constitute the OTR Findlay Market District’s most important commercial activity. Commercial vitality along Vine Street north of Liberty is intermittent. New retail commercial activity should be concentrated near Elder Street on Vine Street, to maximize the critical mass of business here and to capitalize on retail traffic generated by Findlay Market.

Providing parking throughout OTR is critical to the vitality of all neighborhood business enterprises, especially Findlay Market, as well as to the viability of existing and new housing opportunities. Small areas of surface parking are acceptable uses in each sub-neighborhood, as long as they are compatible with surrounding buildings and pedestrian spaces. Dispersing all types of parking promotes pedestrian traffic that may support business activity and street vitality throughout. Wherever possible, parking should be located underground below other uses, such as housing. Independent aboveground parking structures may be appropriate in areas that are more commercial. Such parking concentrations should be distributed strategically in locations that serve the highest demand. The location and design of parking should be related to the neighborhood uses.

In areas of highest concentrated demand, (along Vine, Main, Elder, 12th and Liberty Streets, and Central Parkway) shared parking should be provided through lot consolidations and parcel assembly for structured parking. Ideally, these locations would be located mid-block, shielded from street frontage, perhaps by other uses, and situated in existing urban service areas away from concentrated housing districts. Illustration provided by the design consultants.

Figure 3: Concept map created from charettes. By Consultant - Design team..

SUMMARY OF PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a summary of the recommendations presented in the plan.

Key Issues

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

Existing Conditions

1. Significant population losses (38% between 1980-2000) occurring at all income levels
2. 80% of families living below the poverty level in 1990
3. Very dense, mixed land use patterns
4. Approximately 5200 existing housing units in varying states of repair, with the capacity for up to 7500 (new and renovated)
5. Historic Districts and Urban Renewal District in place

Total Housing Units In Over-The-Rhine				
Rental or Mortgage Costs	1-5 Years	5 - 10 Years	10 - 15 Years	15 - 20 Years
Market Rate Housing				
Unlimited	20%	20%	20%	25%
61% to 100% of AMI (\$60,500 in 2001)	20%	20%	30%	25%
Affordable Housing				
31% to 60% of AMI (\$36,500 in 2001)	20%	35%	25%	25%
Up to 30% of AMI (\$18,150 in 2001)	40%	25%	25%	25%

Figure 4: Proposed Housing Strategy

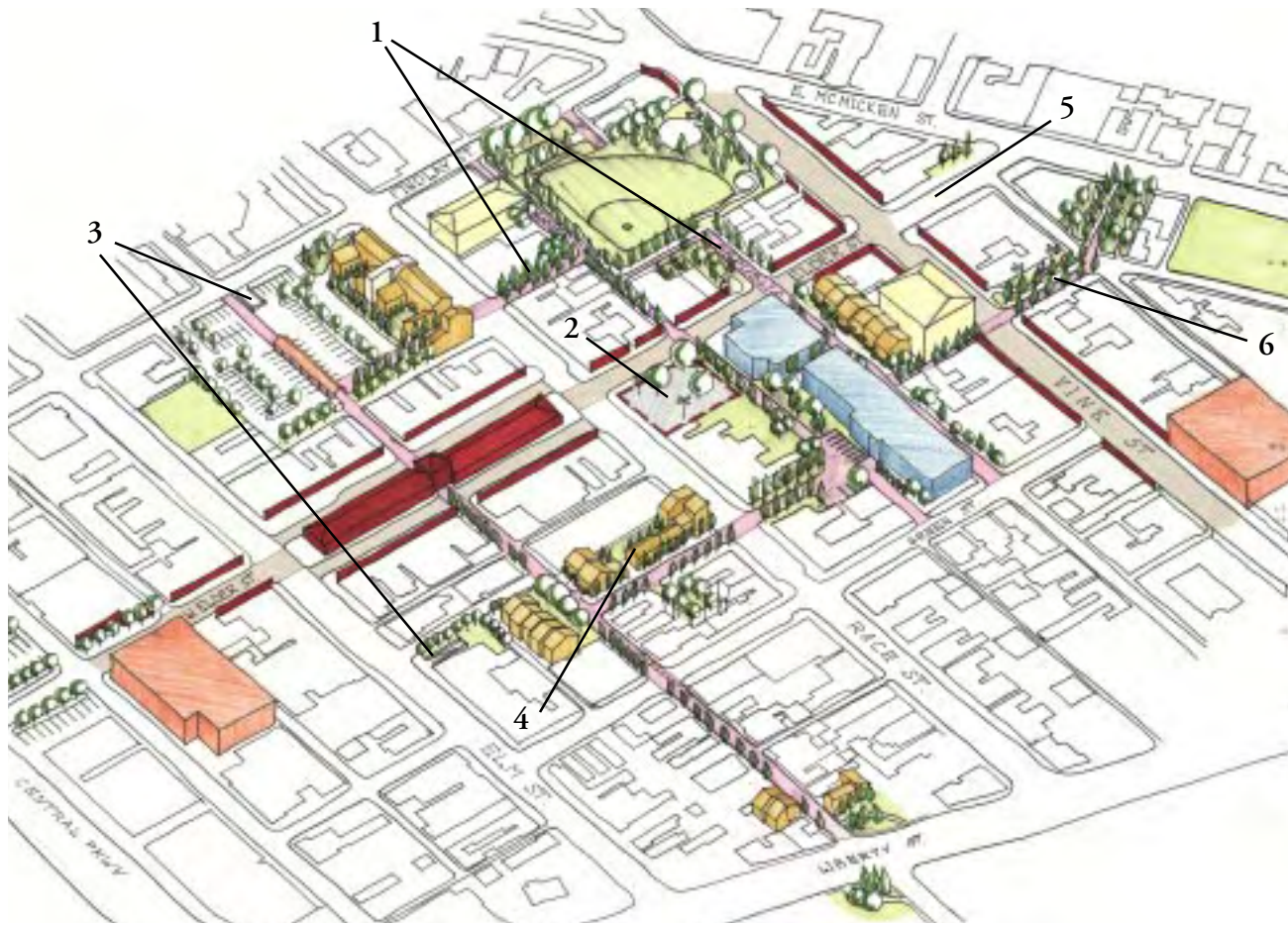
Housing Goals and Key Recommendations

Goals

1. Encourage and welcome new investment at all income levels of the housing market and ensure the long-term sustainability of enough affordable housing to house current residents
2. Provide appropriate housing-related services for all residents
3. Protect, preserve and enhance the significant landmarks and areas of OTR's historic, architectural and cultural heritage without displacement

Key Recommendations

1. Establish the Mixed Income Housing Model that provides for balanced housing opportunities (see Figure 4)
2. Give priority to Mixed Income Projects.
3. Provide homeownership opportunities at all income levels
4. Support the rental housing market by upgrading rental housing
5. Create larger family units at all income levels
6. Project Improvements
 - Vine Street - 1200 block
 - Vine Street - 1300 block ReSTOC
 - Pendleton Mews
 - Melindy Square
 - Washington Park
 - Mulberry/Rothenberg Area infill
 - Findlay Market Area Housing



1. Reinforce network of pedestrian oriented alleys and tertiary streets
2. Future public plaza for extension of market activities
3. Underground parking
4. Existing new infill housing clusters with secure internal courtyards
5. Reconfigure east end of Elder Street for better connection to McMicken Street
6. Reconfigure Benton Street to accommodate outdoor public space for use by proposed restaurant

Figure 5: Promote the redevelopment of existing buildings or the development of new buildings in clusters that provide both a critical mass of improvement, and semi-public green spaces in the numerous internal courtyard spaces present throughout the district. When created by the surrounds of a cluster of 4-6 buildings, the inner block spaces may be controlled by the residents, providing a “defensible space” improved with landscaping, play areas and other resident amenities. The result of this arrangement promotes a sense of “ownership,” and becomes the building blocks of community identity. These potential clusters are plentiful in the Findlay Market residential district and in the northern portion of the Washington Park residential district. In other areas of the Washington Park residential district, block geometry is more suitable to a “mews” type linear clustering of semi-public green space, and private “back yards garden district” along existing mid-block alleys that may function similarly.

Carefully define and periodically adjust the delineation of public, semi-public, and private residential spaces in accordance with ongoing growth and development. While the pedestrian through-block network of alleys, pathways, and tertiary streets proposed is intended to promote connectivity between residential “clusters” and other parts of the district, a subtle delineation of public, semi-public, and private residential spaces must articulate this network to ensure resident comfort and safety. By Consultant - Design Team.

Economic Development

Goals

1. Make OTR a model for diverse and inclusive business development
2. Establish a better link between the OTR workforce and the job training and employment opportunities in the neighborhood and throughout the region
3. Strengthen and create cultural and other destinations that attract and encourage neighborhood and regional participation
4. Ensure the opportunity for OTR residents to become financially literate and independent

Key Recommendations

1. The Vine Street Project
 - Façade Renovation Program
 - Smart Streets
 - Neighborhood Pride Center
 - Vine Street Coordinator
 - Streetscape and pocket parking improvements
 - Vine Street 1700 Block Improvements
 - Empire Theater Renovation
2. Renovation of Findlay Market
3. The Loft District
4. Job Training and Linkages
5. Create Entrepreneurial Opportunities
 - Historic Building Trades
 - Food and Related Industries
 - Arts Industries
6. Support Technology-Based Investments
7. Create Additional Parking

Safety and Cleanliness

Goal

1. OTR will be safe, clean and visually appealing for residents and visitors

Key Recommendations

1. Improve appearance
2. Rebuild trust between community and police
3. Increase jobs and recreational activities for neighborhood youth
4. Weed and Seed “type” program
5. Support Community Problem-Oriented Policing (CPOP)

Transportation

Goals

1. Facilitate both local and through travel
2. Improve public transit access for residents
3. Encourage more pedestrian friendly roadway and pathway networks
4. Increase off-street and on-street parking opportunities without impacting the urban fabric or historic character of the neighborhood

Key Recommendations

1. Endorse some sort of rail transit in the neighborhood
2. Endorse the MetroMoves Plan
3. Seek inclusion in the Central Area Loop Plan
4. Support a transit hub at Liberty and Vine Streets
5. Enhance streetscape and pedestrian environment on Liberty Street and Central Parkway
6. Improve pedestrian crosswalks and stairways throughout the area
7. Support construction of two parking structures (Music Hall and Main Street/ Ziegler area)
8. Create small scale parking lots on Vine Street and in other locations where appropriate
9. Make a series of specific traffic improvements



1. New Washington Park Elementary School with greenspace connection to Washington Park
2. Mixed-use and parking in Vine Street Gateway Project
3. Proposed location for Art Academy of Cincinnati
4. Shielded internal block surface parking in transition zone between Vine Street and Walnut Street
5. Maintain street frontage and provide mixed-use infill development on Vine Street
6. School for Creative and Performing Arts
7. Parking below extended Washington Park
8. Through-block pedestrian alley connections
9. Structured urban landscape in residual spaces on south side of Liberty Street
10. Existing and new infill housing clusters with secure internal landscaped courtyards
11. Landscape alley mews

Figure 6: Opportunities to expand and add to existing community green space should be pursued. This includes situations where major new public facilities are developed (such as the possible new Washington Park School). The incorporation of new public green space in the development is encouraged, especially where it can be connecting to other green spaces. Pocket parks are important at strategic locations throughout the neighborhood that support both passive green space and playgrounds. These are especially important in more densely residential areas and would enhance the smaller scale residential tertiary streets such as Pleasant, Republic, and Clay (along which some already exist). Pocket parks on tertiary streets where they cross Liberty will provide pedestrian gateways to residential districts from this major arterial.

The less formal and fractured street frontage of Liberty (especially on the south side), can, because of residual spaces created by irregular geometry, accommodate small proprietary convenience surface parking lots that serve the needs of auto oriented retail

and service business. (see commercial themes) These can also be provided on the part of Central Parkway north of 14th. Wherever possible proprietary convenience parking should be situated behind buildings. Using residual spaces along the length of the street, a densely structured urban landscape can be created on the south side of Liberty than can not only screen and buffer, but provide spatial character as a pedestrian friendly green border for the street.

Parking for residential use should be provided in each sub-neighborhood, with particular attention paid to how it may be configured to support multifamily building clusters and single family owner occupied housing. Small "pocket" shared surface parking lots can support some multi-family building clusters. "Pocket" shared surface parking may be substituted for infill development in some, but not all cases, of the secondary and tertiary streets, depending on location, benefit, and existing density of the surrounding built environment.

By Consultant - Design Team..

Quality of Life

Goals

1. Create and maintain open space and green space that serves the whole community
2. Establish parks and recreational areas and centers that are accessible, well maintained and meet the needs of the community
3. Establish OTR schools as community anchors that provide outstanding educational opportunities that meet the needs of all residents, young and old
4. Encourage and support a diverse mix of cultural organizations and destinations
5. Create a clean visually appealing neighborhood

Key Recommendations

1. Renovate Rothenberg Elementary School as a school
2. Construct new Washington Park Elementary School
3. Construct new School for the Creative and Performing Arts
4. Improve existing parks and recreation areas
5. Renovate OTR Recreation Center
6. Create new greenspace at the old SCPA and add additional community gardens
7. Plant trees on key pedestrian streets
8. Promote OTR as an arts and cultural hub
9. Coordinate the SCPA/Music Hall /Washington Park complex
10. Relocate Art Academy of Cincinnati
11. Enhance and promote Pendleton Arts Center



Figure 7: Landscape screening and buffers are important throughout the neighborhood where they can screen and separate parking and other uses. This is especially true where existing and new surface parking is proposed. Surface parking should always be screened from street view with landscaping and wrought iron fencing as prescribed in the historic conservation guidelines. Along the south side of Liberty Street, irregular geometries allow for landscaped screening for existing parking lots (between Main and Walnut Streets) and possible new proprietary surface parking lots. By Consultant - Design Team..

Key Implementation Strategies

- Create an umbrella Community Development Corporation to initiate and oversee plan implementation
- Package financing tools to facilitate housing and economic development projects
- Support early start projects
- Support the school planning and construction activities
- Develop a property acquisition program and Land Banking
- Establish a TIF district as a long-term targeted funding mechanism
- Engage existing service providers with a role to play in implementation

OVER-THE-RHINE PRIORITY PROJECTS

The City is committed to the implementation of this Plan. The following projects are consistent with the recommendations, are currently underway and are expected to be completed within the next 2-3 years.

Housing Recommendations Phase One Committed Projects Completed by the end of 2004

Complete Pendleton Mews (OTR Foundation- Verdin)

20 single-family homeownership units (17 market rate, 3 affordable)

City to furnish infrastructure improvements and streetscape enhancements

City investment: \$859,000

Private investment: \$2,900,000

Scheduled completion: To be determined

Complete Melindy Square (Miami Purchase Preservation – Urban Sites)

61 rehabilitated homeownership units, market rate

Project under review

Scheduled completion: To be determined

Complete 1200 Block of Vine Street

Rehabilitation of a series of buildings that will include up to 25 market rate housing units and commercial space. The project will be put out to bid by Cincinnati Development Fund (CDF) and also includes a number of private owners.

Investments and schedule to be determined

Model Management Tax Credit Project

Project to renovate buildings on Vine and Race and reduce the overall density of low-income units

24 affordable units

Project under review

Scheduled completion: To be determined

Community Views

15 efficiency to four bedroom units on scattered sites throughout Over-the-Rhine and Mohawk. (5 market rate, 10 affordable)

Project under review

Scheduled completion: To be determined

Complete 1300 Vine Street (ReSTOC)

30 rehabilitated, affordable rental units

City provided gap financing

City investment \$770,000

Other investment: \$3,675,000

Scheduled completion: 2003

East 15th Street Project

28 rehabilitated units, 5 affordable

City investment: \$69,900

Private investment: \$1,500,000

Scheduled completion: 2004

Complete Findlay Market Housing (Scheer and Scheer)

Rehabilitation of 10 homeownership units in 7 buildings and 4 market rate rental units in 1 building

City investment: \$1,072,523

Other investment \$2,780,000

Scheduled completion: 2004

Miscellaneous Smaller Housing Projects

City is working with a number of housing developers on over 8 other smaller housing projects including; Reading Lofts, Conroy street, Park Hill, Mulberry Views, Christian Stollmaier Building, 13th Street, 1400 block of Walnut Street and Mercer Street

These projects include 53 additional units; 4 affordable

Total City investment: \$1,751,300

Total private investment: \$9,826,000

Summary of Housing Investments

Total city investment: \$ 4,922,000

Total private investment: \$23,581,000

Economic Development Phase One Committed Projects

To be completed by 2004

Façade Improvement Program

Smart Streets/ Lead Remediation

10 Buildings funded for façade improvements, lead work and retail space improvements City investment:

\$300,000 Façade

\$92,162 lead abatement

\$396,000 additional lead grant from HUD (pending)

Total public investment: \$788,162

Scheduled completion: Winter 2002

Neighborhood Pride Center

Includes offices of Vine Street Coordinator

Coordination of Police, Buildings, Public Services Economic Development, and other City services (a commitment to Clean and Safe in OTR)

Scheduled completion: Summer 2002

Findlay Market, Market House Expansion and Public Improvements

Expansion will double the size of the market and add food vendor space

City Investment: \$12,000,000

Scheduled completion: Summer 2003

Neighborhood Craft Market

Outdoor Vendor Space for residents to sell homemade crafts at Findlay Market

Anticipated investment: \$50,000

Scheduled completion: Summer of 2003

Empire Theater Renovation

Theater Renovation for live music and arts performances

City Investment: \$150,000

Private and State of Ohio Investment: \$850,000

Scheduled completion: End of 2002

1700 Block of Vine Target Renovations

City providing site assembly and building stabilization

RFP to be issued in summer 2002 to include proposals for rehabilitation and in-fill construction at 1701,03,05,07 – 1712,1714,1718 – 1721,23,25, and 1735,37,39.

City investment and private investment to be determined

Scheduled completion: To be determined

Streetscape and Parking Enhancements on Vine Street

Installation of street trees, landscape planters, and flower boxes
Improvements to various parking lots
City Investment: \$20,000
Scheduled completion: Summer 2002

Food Venture Center at Findlay Market

Shared use commercial kitchen located at 1638 Central Parkway
(city-owned facility)
FDA and USDA certified facility
Entrepreneurial development for food-based businesses
\$3,000,000 facility
Anticipated partners; City, State, Federal and Private Sources

Summary of Economic Development Investments

Total City Investment: \$12,520,000

The majority of these investments are on public facilities and infrastructure and do not have accompanying private investments. Those projects that will also include private investment are currently being developed.

Safety and Cleanliness Phase One Committed Projects

To be completed by 2004

Implement the Community Problem-Oriented Policing program

The Police are actively implementing the CPOP program in Over-the-Rhine and throughout the City.
City investment: \$1 Million each year for five years city-wide. Although this investment is city-wide, OTR will receive significant benefit.

Provide Additional Level of Clean-up

The City is currently conducting significant additional clean up activity with city crews and contracting with Impact OTR, New Prospect, and other service providers to provide trash pick-up in vacant lots, on Vine Street and other locations in the neighborhood.
City investment: \$800,000

Transportation Phase One Committed Projects

To be completed by 2004

Vine Street Circulation Study

Study to determine the best traffic circulation patterns for Vine Street including consideration for transit and enhanced bus service
City investment: \$33,000

Implement Traffic System Management (TSM) Upgrades

Implementation of a number of specific traffic enhancement including: Mohawk left turn
Investment to be determined

Quality of Life Phase One Committed Projects

To be completed by 2004

Hanna Park Improvements

Enhancements to include a “Sprayground” and other improvements

City Investment: \$200,000

Private Funds, Armleder Trust: \$985,000

Federal investment: \$500,000

Total investment: \$1,685,000

Scheduled completion: Summer 2003

Grant Park Improvements

New equipment, updated basketball courts, additional trees and landscaping

City investment: \$200,000

Scheduled completion: Spring 2003

Washington Park Improvements

Upgrade restrooms, enhance lighting, install “Community Art Bench”

Bench is a project between CRC, Park Board, Contact Center, Peaslee Center, and Art Academy of Cincinnati

City investment: \$17,000

Partners investment: \$15,000

Scheduled completion: Summer 2002

Rebuild Washington Park Elementary School

New school immediately south of Washington Park

Restore current site back into park space

Cincinnati Public Schools investment: \$16,000,000

Scheduled completion: Open for the 2004 school year

Establish the New Entrepreneurial High School

Located with the Cincinnati Business Incubator on Central Parkway

Cincinnati Public Schools/ Gates Foundation Grant

Scheduled completion: Open for 2003 school year

Construct Parking Garage for Washington Park School/Music Hall Complex

Development of additional parking at the Town Center Garage to serve Music Hall, the new School for the Performing Arts, and the new Washington Park School

Partners include the Cincinnati Public Schools, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, the City of Cincinnati, and other to be determined

Investment to be determined

Scheduled completion: Open in 2003-4

Summary of Quality of Life Investments

Total City Investment: \$417,000

School Board and other investments: \$17,500,000

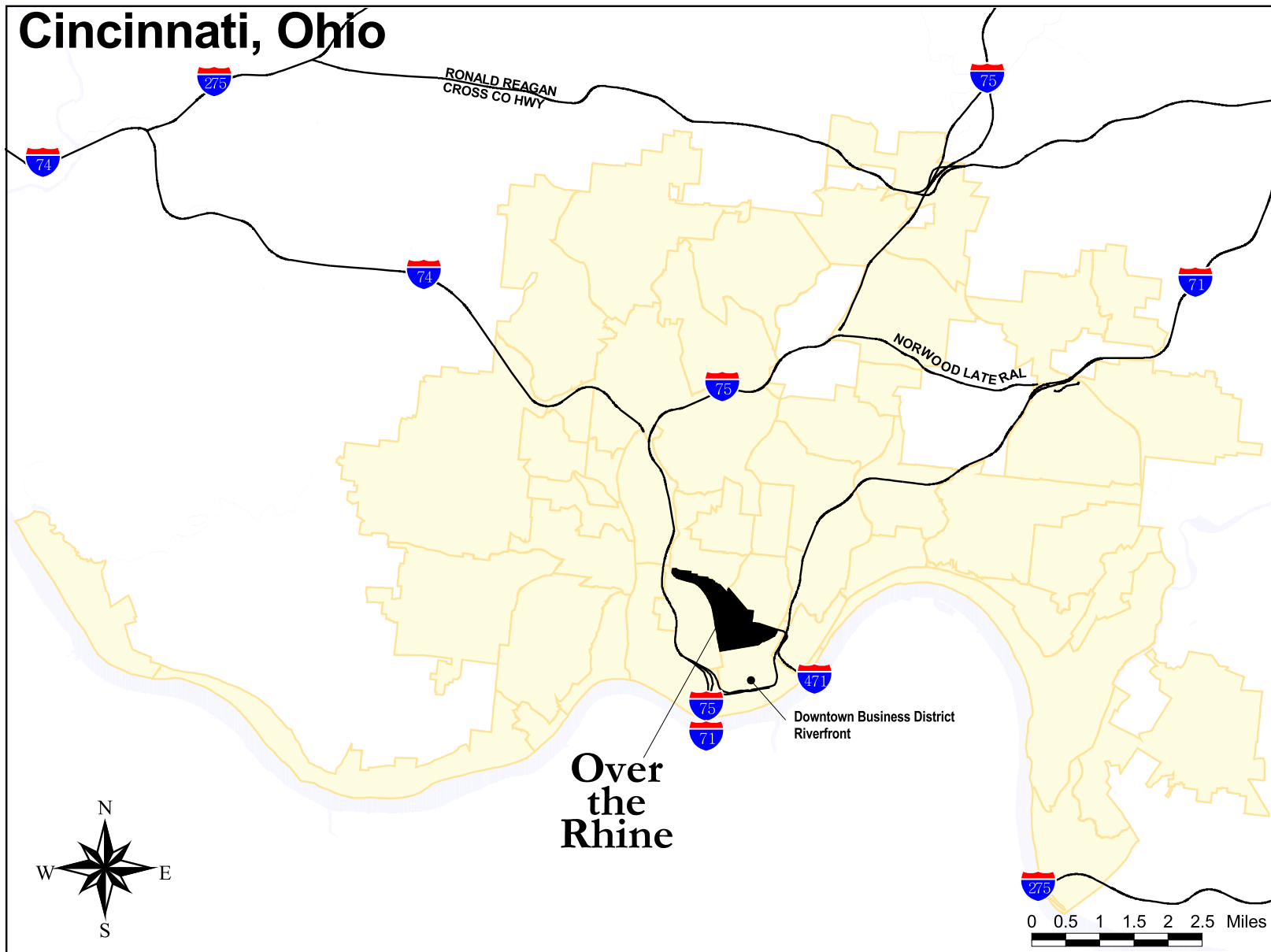


Figure 8: Over-the-Rhine's location in the City of Cincinnati.

INTRODUCTION



Figure 9: An aerial view of OTR. Photo courtesy of Daniel Young.

There have been many neighborhood plans for Over-the-Rhine (OTR) over the last several decades. In fact, there have been books written about OTR and why it is what it is. At various times it has embodied the best and the worst of Cincinnati, and maybe urban America. The architecture and streetscapes, parks and institutions of OTR remind us of a time when cities were king and people of all income levels lived in densely populated neighborhoods just blocks from downtown. The economies of these places were thriving, churches and institutions were busy centers of community life, and people provided their neighbors and friends a helping hand. This may be a romanticized view of life in American cities and in OTR 50 years ago, but that memory is one of the reasons OTR is such a symbol of the power of urban life.

The OTR community is located in the heart of the City of Cincinnati, north of the Central Business District and is surrounded by the West End, Mt. Auburn and Clifton Heights neighborhoods. It is symbolic of many inner cities' challenges - ravaged by economic disinvestment, crime and poverty. OTR has a wealth of individuals and organizations that have invested countless hours working to enhance the quality of life for all interest groups.

This is a different kind of plan. With the support of Mayor Luken and City Council, it sets the stage for the city's commitment to the revitalization of this very important neighborhood. As we create a new plan for OTR, we hope to provide vision and direction to all stakeholders in the neighborhood in order to reestablish it as the symbol of all that can be right with central-city neighborhoods in urban America.

The Plan Vision

The plan is based on the vision of a neighborhood that celebrates the diversity of its people and cultures in a community where the architecture and character provide a nurturing, enriching environment for everyone who lives, works and visits there. Young or old, rich or poor, black or white, it will be a neighborhood where there are economic, social, and cultural opportunities for anyone who wishes to participate.

Planning Process

This planning process was originally initiated based on a recommendation from the Urban Land Institute (ULI). In 1997, the City contracted with ULI to examine the potential development opportunities in the OTR community. One of the recommendations that resulted from their work was “that a coalition organization, which can serve as an ‘honest broker’ between diverse neighborhood factions and build consensus for planned improvements be established.” Following this recommendation, a group of volunteers worked to establish the OTR Coalition. The Coalition opened an office, recruited stakeholders, provided resident training and began to put together a planning process. The City Planning Department provided further assistance to the effort and broadened the planning partnership to include the OTR and Pendleton Community Councils, the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Residents’ Table and others. A Steering Committee was ultimately established to oversee the planning process.

The Steering Committee

The Planning Steering Committee (PSC) is a group of residents, institutions, businesses and other stakeholders who were charged with overseeing the planning process. The committee was established in cooperation with the Coalition, the Community Councils and the Residents Table as the most appropriate and representative groups in the neighborhood. The PSC consists of representatives from the OTR Coalition, Community Council, Housing Network, Resident’s Table, businesses, social service agencies, institutions, and residents. This 27-member committee (please see list of members in credit section) was charged with monitoring the planning process, being actively involved in the issue committees, and soliciting volunteers and community input. The PSC held dozens of working meetings, sponsored several community public meetings, and hosted several visioning charrettes.



*Figure 10: One of the first meetings of the 27-member Steering Committee.
Photo Courtesy of Julie Fay.*

The Community Visioning Process

Over 200 community stakeholders also joined Kenneth Cunningham and Associates, with the UC Community Design Center and Olika Design, in a community visioning process to discuss and create the physical and design recommendations that accompany the policy recommendations developed in the four issue committees and the steering committee.

The process included day long working meetings on several Saturdays with neighbors and stakeholders from all over the neighborhood. People toured the neighborhood together, looking at the area from their own and each other's perspective. After that activity, people attended additional Saturday sessions to create the concepts for each of the target areas identified in the issue committees. Participants worked with a team of urban designers who then translated their ideas into the many urban design solutions that are presented throughout this report.



Figure 11: Community members participate in a Saturday morning charette at the OTR Recreation Center. Photo courtesy of Kenneth Cunningham and Associates.



Figure 12: The charette board after a day of participation. Photo courtesy of Kenneth Cunningham and Associates.

For more detailed information about the Community Visioning Process hosted by Kenneth Cunningham and Associates, please see Appendix A.

The Issue Committees

In addition to the PSC, there were four issue committees that worked to develop recommendations. The committees were the Housing Committee, the Economic Development Committee, the Transportation Committee and the Quality of Life Committee. Membership in these committees was open to anyone who was interested. These committees, chaired by members of the PSC, discussed their issues in great detail. They heard from experts in various fields and neighborhood and city representatives on current projects and future plans. In addition, they shared ideas for change and improvements, identified issues around their topics and developed goals and strategies to address those issues. Countless community meetings were held to address topics diligently and to discuss difficult and often contentious issues. The progress made in these issue committees represents the basis for the recommendations made in this plan.

Community Meetings

Three public community meetings were held to solicit participation in the process and to obtain OTR stakeholders' input about their neighborhood. Throughout the meetings, several strengths and opportunities were discussed. The following chart provides a list of general comments gathered at the public meetings:

<i>Assets</i>	<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Desires</i>
Resourcefulness and commitment of stakeholders	Concern about displacement	Resident empowerment
Sense of community	Employment opportunities	Enhanced youth programs
History and diversity	Government mistrust	Shared vision
Access to services and public transportation	Parking and pedestrian safety	Improved internal & external transportation connectivity

Figure 13: Comments gathered at Community Meetings

Stakeholder Interviews

In addition to community and formal meetings, the City Planning Department staff conducted dozens of one-on-one interviews with other community stakeholders. These interviews were designed to gain information on future plans, impressions and ideas for change, and improvements in the neighborhood. These personal interviews were helpful for people not comfortable with sharing ideas in a public setting.

Key Community Issues

Based on the many means of input into this process, four major issues emerged in many different ways. These issues and the lack of consensus on how to deal with them have hampered redevelopment in OTR for more than a decade.

1. Lack of Investment - How do we stimulate new investment that will help existing residents and bring new people into the neighborhood?

Over-the-Rhine has lost 19,939 people since 1960. The major decrease, 12,552 people, occurred between 1960 and 1970. This loss of population has been coupled with a loss of economic activity. In 1970, there were 527 operating businesses and 76 vacant businesses. Today, there are approximately 326 businesses (2001 Haines Directory). This exodus of both population and economic investment from the neighborhood has left almost 500 buildings standing empty and hundreds of vacant lots where buildings occupied with homes and businesses once stood. The loss of people, dollars, and jobs has meant a spiral of disinvestment that has left this neighborhood with very few opportunities, and in some cases, deep hopelessness.

There are businesses, however, that continue to make investments and residents who have stayed through all the hard times. The committed residents and businesses that remain in the neighborhood today will be the backbone of the revitalization.

2. *Displacement* - How do we ensure that there is room in a revitalized neighborhood for current residents to stay and participate equally in the community?

Does revitalization in OTR mean that current low-income residents will be priced out of the market? There are certainly enough examples across the country of revitalization leading to significant displacement of existing residents. There was discussion throughout the entire planning process that the objective of the process is a mixed-income community that does not displace existing residents. This remained, however, one of the most controversial issues of the process. Those who advocate for the poor were sure that they will not fare well, and had very little trust that the city or for-profit developers had their interest in mind. Likewise “market” interests feel as though the low-income residents and advocates have created a neighborhood where no one else is welcome and market projects have little chance of success.

3. *Crime and Its Perception* - How do we get rid of the crime and violence that plagues the neighborhood?

Crimes, largely associated with drugs and drug trafficking, have been a significant issue for decades in OTR. Keeping existing residents and businesses safe and feeling comfortable in their environment is a critical need in the community. A combination of the presence of many opportunistic outsiders conducting criminal activity and the local and national spotlight on racial tensions make solutions difficult. Cincinnati Community Action Now (CAN), a non-profit group established as a result of a series of civil disturbances that primarily impacted OTR in April 2001, assembled to develop strategies to enhance racial diversity in the City of Cincinnati and the mediation process. Their efforts, as well as those of the Community Problem-Oriented Policing (CPOP) Program, will help to address the issue of

police-community relations. The Violent Crimes Task Force of the Police Department was also designed to address the issue of crime. In many ways, this is the “watershed” issue; if it is not successfully addressed, progress in other areas will be almost impossible.

4. *Sense of Community* - How do we encourage old and new residents to respect each other and form one diverse community?

The issue of how residents, merchants and businesses will get along is not a topic usually addressed in a traditional planning process. But this issue, and its many forms, is at the center of creating a viable, mixed-income community that sustains itself over a long period and is a place where everyone wants to live. Making people feel respected, welcomed, valued and connected is a tall order. It is these very issues that cause many to be distrustful and suspicious; it is this that will be the true measure of success in the long-term.



Figure 14: Community members participate in a design charrette. Photo courtesy of Kenneth Cunningham and Associates.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

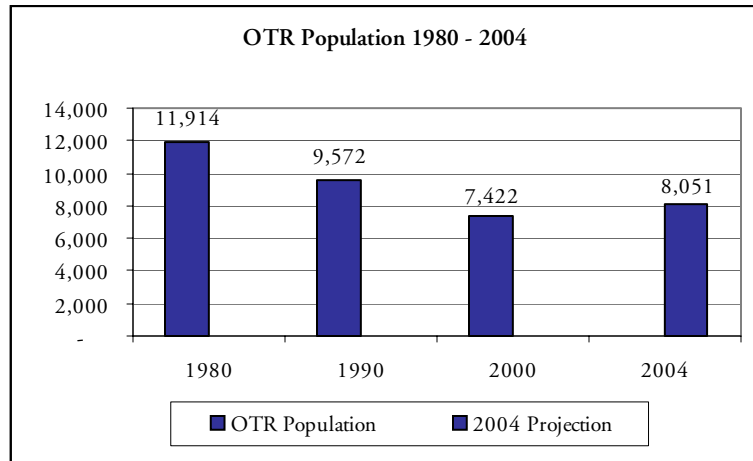


Figure 15: OTR Population 1980 - 2004

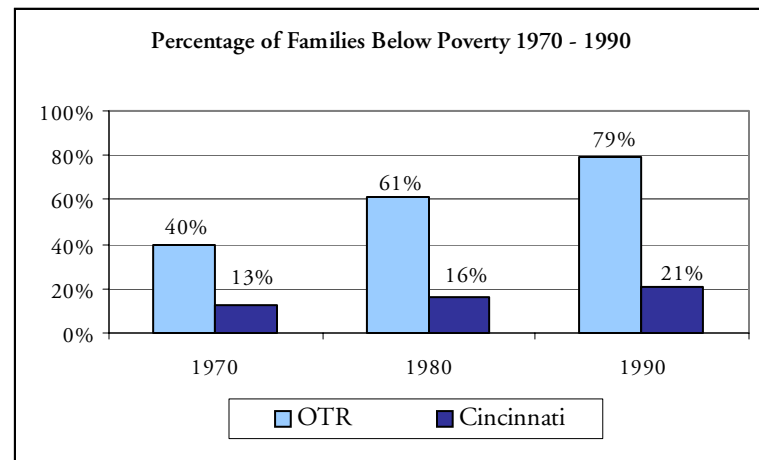


Figure 16: Percentage of families below poverty 1970 - 1990

The disinvestment in OTR is characterized by a significant population loss from the neighborhood's peak population year (1900). This drop in population is partially the result of the movement of population away from the inner city due to modern transportation, social and economic patterns. Within the last few decades, the decrease can be attributed to the disinvestment in the neighborhood.

Another significant change was race. During the 1960s and 1970s, although OTR's population declined, the African American population began to increase. This increase is perceived by many as a result of African Americans being displaced from the West End and Queensgate communities due to the construction of I-75, which began in the late 1950s.

OTR's population tends to be poorer and younger than the rest of the city. In 1990 and 2000, OTR's population under the age of 18 was 35% and 29% respectively, compared to the city's 29% and 24%. By 2000, OTR's under-18 population had dropped to 29%, which is still higher than the citywide total of 24%. At the same time, there are fewer senior citizens in OTR than citywide. See Appendix B for a complete list of demographics for OTR.

OTR's median household income remains much lower (\$5,908 in 1990) than the city's median household income of \$21,006 in 1990. The 2004 projected median income is \$9,042 for OTR and \$32,278 for the city (1999 Claritas Data File). In 1990, the percentage of families in OTR below the poverty level was 79%, which is significantly higher than the city's average of 20%.

The educational attainment of OTR residents has been increasing since 1980. Since 1980, there has been a 15.5% increase in the number of residents who are high school graduates, an 8.2% increase of those who have had some college and a 5% increase of those who are college graduates.

Land Use and Zoning

The OTR Community is a mixed-use commercial and residential community. Distinctive land use patterns are mixed commercial/residential along Vine and Main Streets, large institutional and office uses along Central Parkway and Central Avenue, one- and two- family units in Mohawk and areas surrounding Rothenberg School, and industrial uses north of Liberty Street along McMicken Avenue. Many of the retail and small businesses are located on the first floor of two-to-four-story buildings throughout the neighborhood. The neighborhood has significant open space in Washington Park and several other green spaces and park areas. Some of the most significant institutions from a land use standpoint are: Findlay Market, located north of Liberty Street; Music Hall, located south of Liberty Street; and St. Francis Church, located at Liberty and Vine Streets. Figures 18 and 19 graphically illustrate this mix of land uses.

The community contains 24 zone districts ranging from R-7, High-Density Residential, which permits some business use and housing at a density of 79 units per acre, to 0-2, Office Zone, to M-2, Manufacturing Zone District. (Please see Figure 18.) This is a result of the highly mixed land use patterns in the neighborhood.

There are 703 scattered vacant parcels in OTR based on an inventory conducted by the City Planning Department staff in early 2001. The majority of the sites are small, less than a quarter of an acre. The parcels average from 1,927 to 3,149 square feet of land area. A significant number of the parcels are located in Mohawk, the area surround-

ing Rothenberg School and along major thoroughfares such as Main, Vine, Race and Elm Streets.

Urban Renewal

Almost the entire OTR community is located within an urban renewal boundary. This boundary was established in 1985 as a result of the 1985 OTR Community Plan and a study determining that the area was blighted. The study documented that there were a number of significant buildings and infrastructure in the OTR community that qualified as deteriorating and blighted areas. The urban renewal status provides the city the opportunity to acquire property needed for a public purpose and to use federal funds to improve conditions and eliminate blighting influences.



*Figure 17: A vacant lot on Republic Street.
Photo courtesy of Kenneth Cunningham and Associates.*

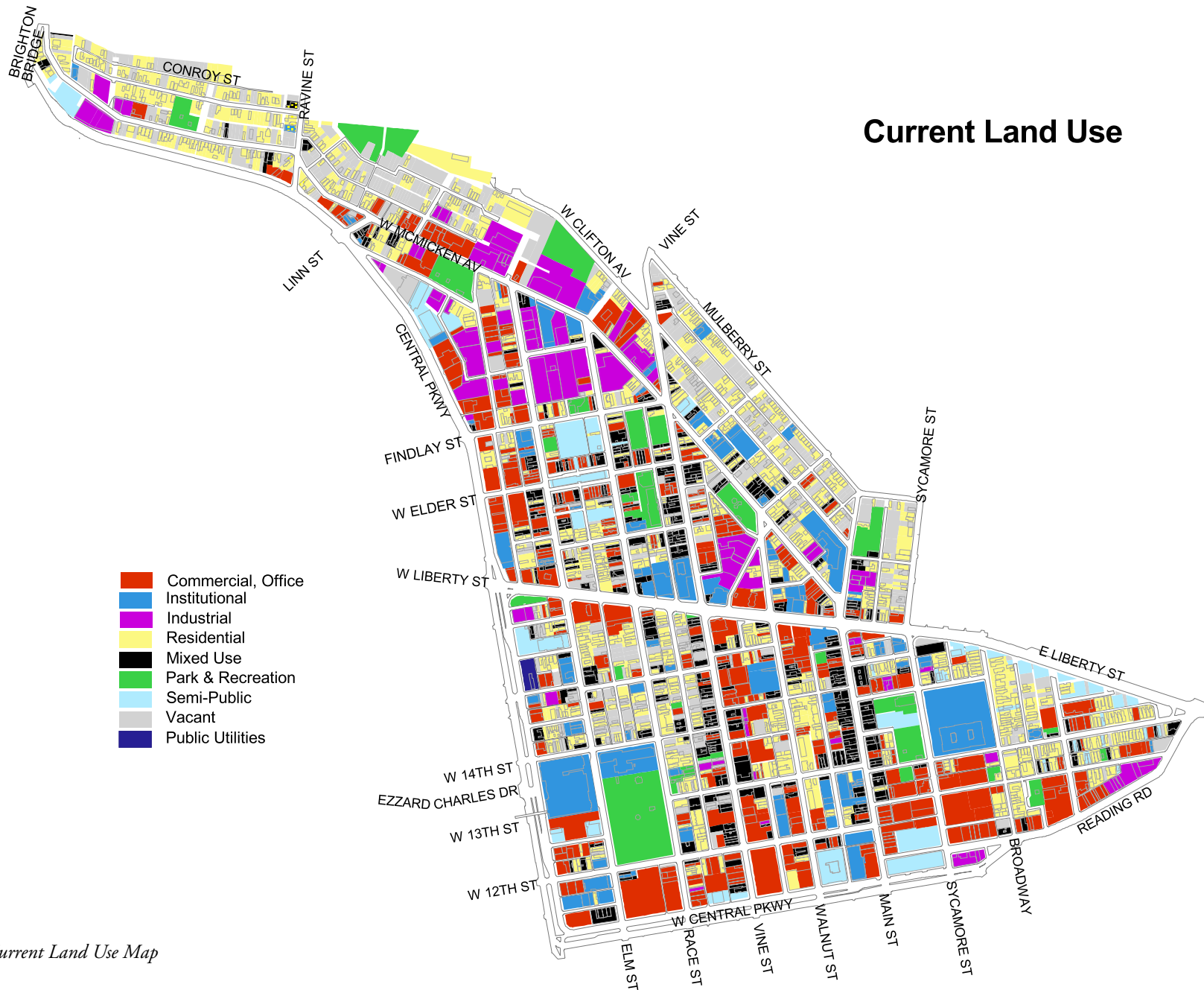


Figure 18: Current Land Use Map

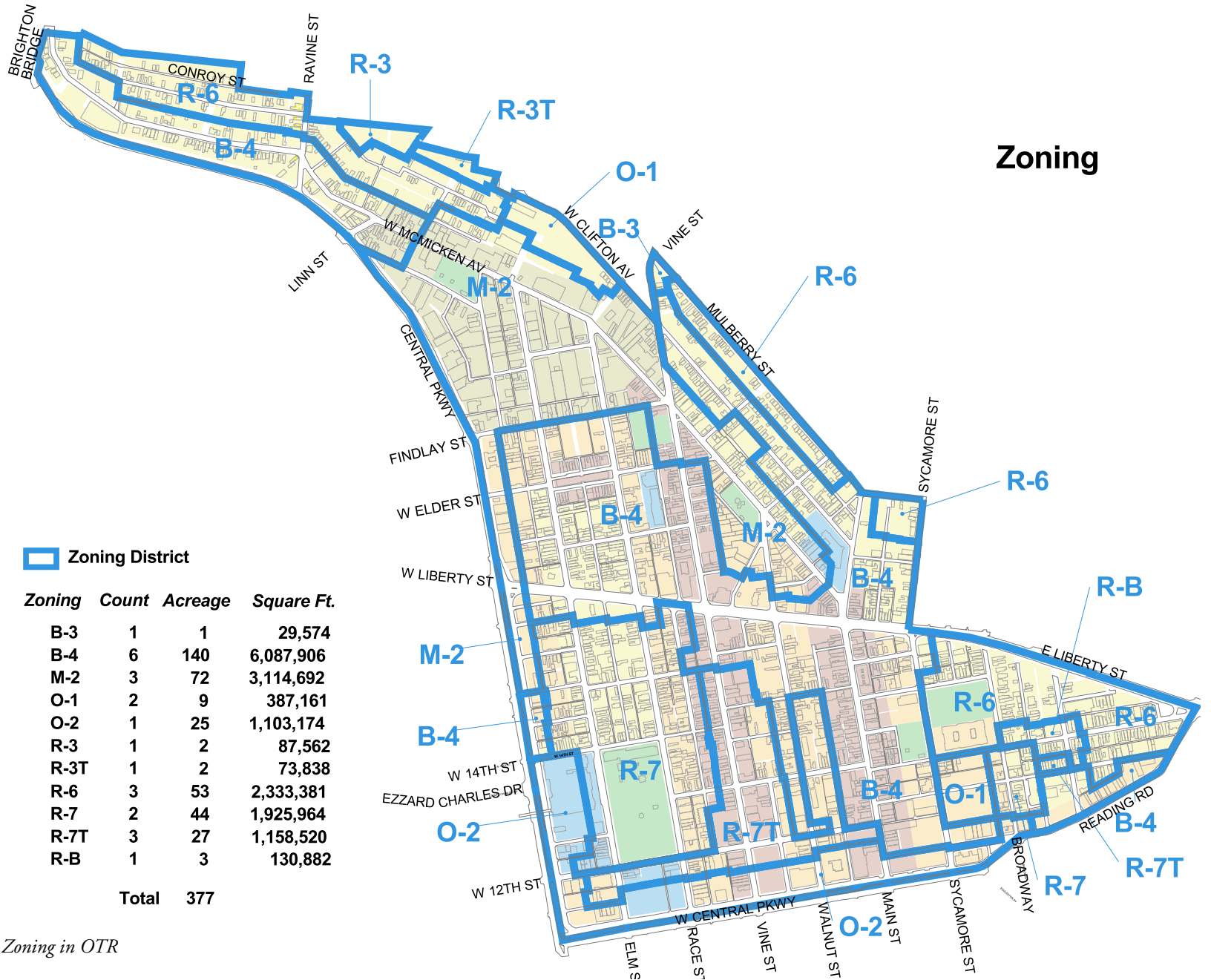


Figure 19: Zoning in OTR

Current Housing Inventory

Because of the importance of this issue and considerable discussion around the facts of housing in OTR, the city contracted with consultant Mark Brunner to undertake a detailed inventory of housing in the neighborhood. The majority of the inventory was conducted in 1999-2000. It identified 5,412 habitable housing units (units that are currently occupied and those that are vacant but could be occupied without renovations) in the neighborhood. The 2000 Census, on the other hand, identified a total of 5,261 habitable units of which 3,594 were occupied and 1,667 were not occupied. (The rent ranges from the 2000 Census are not available at this time.)

Total Habitable Housing Units	
2000 Census	5261
Brunner Study	5412

Figure 20: Total Habitable Housing Units

By either source - Brunner's total count of 5,412 or the Census count of 5,261 housing units there has been a considerable drop in housing units from the 1980 count of 7,406 housing units and the 1960 count of 10,885.

The number of low-income units has been declining for a number of years. The 1985 OTR Comprehensive Plan identified 5,520 units as being low-income. It is not clear if this number reflects only rent-restricted units and/or vouchers. (The 1985 plan did not mention market rate housing, mixed income housing or home ownership in its Goals and Objectives, but focused solely on maintaining and stabilizing the existing low-income housing units in the community.) The Brunner study identified 3,200 rent restricted units. This number has decreased to about 2,400 during this planning process due to Hart Realty's recent decision to opt out of the Section 8 Program. Hart Realty's decision impacted 826 units. It is likely that the trend of gradual attrition in the number of available housing units for low-income residents will continue.



Figure 21: Vacant and occupied housing units on Magnolia Street.

Vacant and Condemned Buildings

There are many buildings in OTR that have been condemned by the City of Cincinnati. These buildings are considered to be a public nuisance and/or safety hazard because while they are slated for demolition, they are still standing. The city also identifies buildings, vacant in whole or in part, that require a Vacant Building Maintenance License (VBML). A VBML is issued by the City of Cincinnati's Director of Buildings and Inspections and is renewed yearly. For an owner to receive a VBML, the building must be structurally sound, weather tight and secure from trespassers.

The number of vacant buildings in OTR presents both a present challenge and a future housing opportunity. The presence of so many vacant buildings in the neighborhood has a measurable negative impact on quality of life issues. Vacant buildings can be used for various criminal activities including drug trafficking and prostitution. Rows of boarded up buildings rob streets of vitality and create the impression of deterioration and neglect. The investment required to stabilize and rehabilitate a vacant building in OTR is substantial. Renovation of an abandoned building often requires the abatement of hazardous materials and extensive upgrades, including new plumbing, new electrical wiring and the installation of sprinkler/fire suppression systems.

OTR's vacant and underused buildings are indeed assets, and many can be salvaged and returned to productive use. This is largely because the buildings are of historic character and are irreplaceable in their architectural quality. The city's effort to save these buildings was demonstrated by the OTR Pilot Receivership Program, which was administered by the Abandoned Buildings Company (ABC) through the Department of Neighborhood Services from 1997-2001. ABC filed a number of "public nuisance" lawsuits against owners of vacant

and deteriorated buildings in OTR. The purpose of the lawsuits was to compel owners to take action to stabilize their buildings and meet Building Code Standards as a first step in achieving full renovation of the buildings. ABC has recommended that the Receivership Program be continued to stabilize at least 75 of the buildings that are still vacant and not immediately habitable in OTR.

There are vacant buildings in the neighborhood that are not economically feasible candidates for renovation. Buildings that are structurally unsound will eventually need to be demolished, providing space to provide parking or other amenities for nearby historic buildings that can be renovated. These decisions will need to be made on a case-by-case basis.



Figure 22: A vacant building on 13th Street

Historic Resources

Like so many things about OTR, its historic resources are a source of great pride and opportunity, and represent a significant challenge. OTR's historic character holds the potential for a great resurgence and revitalization. It is what allows this neighborhood to set itself apart from so many other places in the region. It also makes renovation extremely difficult, as buildings need new modern systems, structural repairs and upgrades for things never imagined when these buildings were built - air conditioners, computer hook-ups, sprinkler systems or tenants with cars.

OTR's collection of commercial, residential, religious and civic architecture is one of America's largest and most cohesive surviving examples of an urban, nineteenth-century community. The exceptional historical and architectural significance of the neighborhood is recognized both nationally and locally. In 1983, a large portion of OTR was listed on the National Register of Historic Places and contains the city's two largest locally designated historic districts. The City of Cincinnati created the OTR South Historic District in 1993. Less than a decade later, during this planning process in 2001, the city undertook efforts to establish the OTR North Historic District and Mohawk Neighborhood Business District.

Local designation of historic resources provides access to invaluable investment tools for revitalizing OTR. Buildings located in OTR's National Register District are eligible for Federal historic preservation tax incentives. This program, which gives money back to property owners who rehabilitate buildings according to certain standards, fosters private-sector investments. Over 260 tax credit projects have been undertaken in the OTR National Register District since 1983. Of this number, 122 projects have been completed in the project study area.

Similarly, the design guidelines created for the locally designated OTR North and South Historic Districts provide a framework for continual revitalization. They were written specifically to address the community's unique historical, architectural, developmental, social and economic characteristics and are enforced by the City Planning Department's Office of Historic Conservation.

OTR also includes a number of individually significant buildings: Old St. Mary's Church (123 E. 13th Street) and Cincinnati Music Hall (1234 Elm Street) are both local landmarks. Music Hall is also one of the city's ten National Historic Landmarks. Thirteen additional buildings in OTR are individually listed on the National Register. (Please see Appendix C.)



Figure 23: Music Hall, one of the City's ten National Historic Landmarks.

Social Support in Over-the-Rhine

OTR is home to numerous social service organizations, offering assistance ranging from homeless shelters, soup kitchens, medical clinics, job placement and chemical and substance abuse treatment. These agencies provide services to residents of OTR and other nearby neighborhoods. Please see Appendix D for a list of social service agencies identified by the neighborhood.

Through this process, there have been discussions related to the many social service providers in the neighborhood with a varied range of opinions. Some stakeholders had concern that there are too many social service organizations in OTR, thereby perpetuating the culture of poverty in the neighborhood. Others saw that social service organizations work very hard to improve the lives of people in the neighborhood, but do so with limited resources and do not receive enough support. Some reported that some individuals or groups seem to simply want to “sweep poor people under the rug.”

Both sides of this issue have valid reasons for their concern. OTR does carry a significant burden for the city with regard to the number of social service agencies located within the neighborhood (the number approaches 90, including churches that provide services as well). The neighborhood’s extensive selection of social service agencies has made it a convenient place to live for those seeking assistance. OTR residents have explained and are proud of the notion that the neighborhood is a place where things are done differently, where there is a network of community support and where there is a grassroots movement for the rights of the poor. Together, all of these factors attract people who are looking for a second chance.

On the other hand, many feel that by making the neighborhood so convenient for people who are homeless and people with addictions, it makes it less attractive for visitors and future development. Families with young children may not feel comfortable using parks acting as home to large numbers of homeless men, or shopping or walking through areas frequented by drug dealers and users. This situation speaks to the concerns about safety and the perception of safety in the neighborhood as well.

The overarching goal of the plan is to improve the lives of all current residents of OTR. If drastic improvements are made in the quality, quantity and affordability of local housing, the safety and cleanliness of the neighborhood and the availability of economic opportunities, then there may some day be a need for fewer of the existing social service agencies or some may need to redefine their mission.

HOUSING



Figure 24: Housing in the process of rehabilitation. Photo courtesy of Julie Fay.

Who lives in Over-the-Rhine and what type of housing is available in the neighborhood have been the most controversial issues throughout this planning process. The vision of creating a truly sustainable mixed-income neighborhood that serves as a model for years to come is the goal; one that has not often been achieved. There are many examples of neighborhoods across the nation that have never been able to overcome the kinds of poverty and disinvestment that OTR has experienced. There are also neighborhoods that, once begun, the cycle of re-investment has not been able to hold a meaningful place for low-income residents. The recommendations that follow are designed to create a neighborhood where people of all economic, racial, and ethnic groups have a significant, respectful place in the community.

These recommendations have been forged at a very difficult time in this community. Over the course of the planning process there was:

- significant civil unrest,
- a major operator of the site-based section eight program “opted out” of almost 900 units of restricted income housing,
- a neighborhood development corporation was dismantled and left many residents questioning their housing, and
- a major new piece of legislation around poverty impaction changed how the City funds projects.

The fact that these major events in the life of this neighborhood have been taking place and the Steering Committee has been able to continue to meet and develop the following recommendations is truly a testament to this neighborhood and the commitment of its residents and other stakeholders.

The three key housing objectives identified in the OTR planning process were the ability to:

- Stimulate new investment in market rate and affordable housing (rental and homeownership)
- Maintain homes for low-income residents
- Protect and preserve the historical, architectural and cultural heritage of OTR

Housing Capacity

In 1900, the population of OTR reached its highest population of 44,475. Over the following years, the population slowly declined to nearly half that amount by 1960. In that year, 27,577 people lived in OTR and there were 10,885 housing units. Due to current building codes and both the need and the desire for a more comfortable, spacious living environment, it is not desirable to try to recreate that kind of density.

Four indicators were examined to determine a feasible housing capacity for OTR: 1) existing habitable units; 2) renovation of vacant buildings; 3) development of vacant land; and 4) conversion of commercial, industrial and institutional buildings to residential uses.

We can start from the premise that we want to maintain the **existing 5,200 habitable units** (most in some need of renovation). The pool of available housing options can be increased through renovating vacant buildings and developing vacant lots for housing.

As indicated earlier, there are approximately 500 **vacant residential buildings** in the neighborhood. These buildings originally included a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 20 housing units. The units were small and often composed of multiple small rooms. For today's purposes, if we assume that each building could contain between one

and four units, there would be capacity for an average of an additional 1,250 (a range of 497 to 1,988) units created in existing vacant buildings.

The **vacant land** inventory identified approximately 700 vacant parcels in the neighborhood. If those vacant parcels provided for even 200 building sites with one to two units each, there is the capacity for another 300 units of new construction.

Conversion of large institutional and commercial buildings for housing is also a possibility. This is the most difficult capacity question to estimate. Projects like Hale-Justis and the Emery Center Apartments have recently provided 92 new units in buildings not historically used for housing. Potential vacant school buildings, various vacant churches and old commercial buildings are likely to be used as housing locations in the future.

Based on the many assumptions provided above, it is reasonable to consider the neighborhood has the capacity for approximately 7,200 housing units. At an average household size of 2.1, these 7,200 units could house a population of over 15,100 people, which would more than double the current population and be similar to the neighborhood's population of 15,025 in 1970's.¹

Proposed Housing Capacity	
Habitable Units	5,200
Renovation of Vacant Buildings	1,250
New Construction	300
Conversion	500
Total	7,250

Figure 25: Proposed Housing Capacity.

¹ In 1970, OTR had a population of 15,025, a decline of about 54% from 1960.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

There are a number of challenges associated with increasing and enhancing the housing stock to reach the capacity stated above. Among these challenges is the creation of a mechanism that will allow for the retention and/or improvement of housing for current residents, while attracting new residents and businesses to the community. The combination of homeownership, recent changes in Section 8 policies, the large number of vacant and condemned buildings, housing types, and the various interests of residents and stakeholders in OTR creates significant opportunities and heightens these challenges.

Homeownership

OTR is today a neighborhood of renters with a current homeownership rate of less than 5%, which is considerably lower than the approximately 38% homeownership rate for the City of Cincinnati. The low rate of homeownership in OTR is due in part to the neighborhood's small percentage of single- and two-family residences. Attached and semi-attached three- to five-story mixed-use rowhouses and apartment buildings represent the dominant building type in OTR. Ownership of multiple properties by a single entity and real estate speculation has also served to maintain OTR as a primarily rental neighborhood. One of the main objectives of this plan is to increase homeownership in OTR for people of all income levels.



Figure 26: Single family residences on 14th Street.

As indicated earlier in this chapter the population of OTR and the total number of available housing units has declined steadily since 1900. The number of renter-occupied and vacant units has also increased concurrently. For example, between 1970 and 2000, the total number of housing units in OTR dropped 28%. During that same period, the percentage of renter-occupied units increased dramatically, as did the percentage of vacant housing units. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, approximately 96% of OTR's occupied units were rental, and OTR had over 1,600 vacant housing units (see Figure 27). Stakeholders in the community agree that this trend must be reversed and homeownership must be encouraged for current and future residents.

Housing Occupancy in Over-The-Rhine					
Census Year	Total Housing Units	Vacant Housing Units	Total Occupied Units	Owner-Occupied Units*	Renter-Occupied Units*
1970	7,312 (100%)	1,491 (20.4%)	5,821 (79.6%)	255 (3.5%)	5,566 (76%)
1980	6,386 (100%)	1,517 (23.8%)	4,869 (76.2%)	190 (3.9%)	4,671 (95.9%)
1990	5,087 (100%)	1,306 (25.7%)	3,781 (74.3%)	116 (3.1%)	3,665 (96.9%)
2000	5,261 (100%)	1,667 (31.7%)	3,594 (68.3%)	140 (3.9%)	3,454 (96.1%)

* = Number and percentage of owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing units based on the total number of occupied units.

** = Figures for 1980 are approximate since eight housing units were not specifically identified as vacant, owner-occupied, or renter-occupied.

Figure 27: Housing Occupancy in OTR.

The wide spectrum of building sizes and types in OTR presents the opportunity for a variety of homeownership options, from single-family homes to condominiums. Pockets of owner-occupied residences have grown up on Spring, Broadway, E. 14th and Orchard Streets in the southeast quadrant of the community. The buildings on these streets tend to be smaller detached and semi-detached structures, two- or three-stories in height, which are conducive to single-family occupancy. Other areas with opportunities for single-family homeownership include: The east ends of 12th and 13th Streets; Hughes, Republic, Race, Pleasant and Elm Streets north of Washington Park; and Pleasant, Elm and Green Streets near Findlay Market.

Larger buildings throughout the neighborhood also offer the possibility of homeownership through condominiums. For example, the Emery Center Apartments, formerly the Ohio Mechanics Institute/ College of Applied Science, could convert to condominiums sometime around 2006². Narrow four- and five-story commercial buildings in OTR with open floor plates and high ceilings could be developed with one condominium per floor, while more expansive former breweries, light industrial and commercial buildings allow for even larger projects with multiple condominium units and various layouts on each floor. Another option for larger buildings is for an owner to purchase and live in an on-site unit while renting out additional housing units.

² The Emery Center Apartments are located in the Over-the-Rhine National Register District and is therefore eligible for Federal Historic Tax Credits. Receipt of the tax credits requires the project to be income producing for five years.

Section 8 Contracts

In 2000, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) replaced their long-term site-based Section 8 contracts (ranging from 20 to 30 years) for year-to-year contracts. Once the existing long-term contracts expire, owners throughout the United States must decide either to enter into a one-year agreement or to “opt out” of the program. If an owner decides to opt-out, the current tenants are given a portable voucher. This voucher can be used to subsidize the rent for either their current home or, if they choose to leave, the rent in a new location throughout the country.

This is a significant change in the way HUD will administer its Section 8 Program. HUD intends to place financial subsidy with individuals rather than housing providers. The intention of this shift is to allow benefit recipients to secure housing in the private market in less concentrated locations than in site-based project areas that tend to concentrate households in poverty.



Figure 28: The Emery Center Apartments on Central Parkway.

The change in Section 8 contracts will have both short- and long-term impacts on rent-restricted housing in the OTR community. Already, nearly 2,000 of the site-based Section 8 unit contracts with HUD have expired and tenants have been given portable vouchers. Within the next five years, all of the long-term contracts with HUD in OTR will expire. Based on the limited data available, about 60% of tenants whose landlords opted out of Section 8 chose to stay in their current residence. The remaining 40% of tenants elected to take their vouchers and move either to another neighborhood in Cincinnati or to an entirely different locale, or did not qualify for a voucher. The shift in HUD’s Section 8 contracts, which provides for a portable voucher, could result in a substantial number of residents choosing to leave the area, further reducing the neighborhood’s population and possibly increasing the number of vacant buildings. Another concern expressed by neighborhood advocates is that rent-restricted housing, once provided in project-based Section 8 buildings, is at risk of no longer being available for those who need subsidized housing. The bankruptcy of Hart Realty, the largest property owner in OTR, certainly points to problems that housing providers are having in making the switch in programs.

Costs of Producing Housing

The current market does not support the full costs of the work required to bring the housing stock up to current housing codes. This is in part due to long-term neglect by speculators, vandalism, the age of the housing stock, the configuration of units (too small), lead abatement and outdated building systems. The infrastructure needs to be refreshed with attractive lighting, trees and landscaped parking. Cincinnati also has a comparatively affordable housing market and many choose to live in new or already renovated homes rather than restore one of OTR's historic gems. For years, only the most committed urbanites and developers worked to create housing in the community.

Opportunity abounds in OTR where numerous properties, sometimes on adjacent parcels, are for sale and/or vacant. Speculators have bought and continue to buy buildings in OTR, waiting for the payoff a notable rise in market value represents. Non-profit organizations including ReSTOC, Over-the-Rhine Housing Network and Mercy Franciscan Home Development, Inc. are engaged in rehabilitating and/or building affordable housing units throughout the neighborhood. Market-rate and private developers such as Urban Sites Property Management, Middle Earth, and River City Alpine Development Group have also undertaken various small and large housing projects in OTR, and their interest appears to be growing. Based on current figures new and rehabilitated units in the neighborhood are slowly approaching the rent levels necessary to make projects financially viable. In fact, a few recent developments have met or been able to exceed their projected rents. However, despite a growing market and the availability of gap funding through the Urban Living Loan Pool, Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, Federal Historic Tax Credits and low-interest loans and grants through the City, residential development in OTR is still far from an easy proposition.



Figures 29 and 30: Renovation can be time consuming and costly when working with historic structures. The interior of a building at 1410 Walnut Street during renovation. Photos courtesy of Urban Sites Property Management.



The vast majority of vacant buildings in OTR require modest to major stabilization measures due to a combination of neglect, exposure to the elements and vandalism. Upgrading electrical and plumbing systems that do not meet code and the abatement of hazardous materials required by both Federal and state law adds another layer of costs to projects in OTR. The narrow floor plates of the rowhouses that characterize many of the neighborhood's streets pose an additional challenge. Homeowners and renters now expect and/or need larger living spaces – big rooms, spacious closets, multiple bathrooms – with amenities not generally found in nineteenth century buildings – off-

street parking, central air and laundry facilities. On the positive side, since each building is different, developers can create and market unique interior layouts. At the opposite end of the spectrum, architects and/or engineers often must be hired to design solutions. Pre-development loans and funding to determine the exact condition of a building and the feasibility of a project are exceptionally difficult to obtain. The Cincinnati Development Fund is one of the few organizations that will consider pre-development loans. For these reasons development in OTR poses a financial risk for many private and non-profit developers.



As the revitalization of OTR continues, the community's non-profit housing developers (Appendix C) will become valuable in ensuring the continued availability of affordable housing. The desires of property owners and renters are typically in conflict. Owners want to see a return on their investment in the form of increased property values. Renters prefer property values and thus their monthly rent to remain stable. New development and rehabilitation of existing buildings in OTR brings with it a corresponding rise in property values and rents. The result may be the displacement of current residents who cannot afford the increased rent. It is unlikely that private landlords, speculators and market-rate developers not involved in an affordable housing initiative will maintain affordable rents for existing residents on a long-term basis. Incentives and controls must be in place to ensure that revitalization of the neighborhood does not occur at the expense of current residents.

Figures 31 and 32: A before and after photo of the interior of 1431 Walnut Street. Photo courtesy of Urban Sites Property Management.

Housing Affordability

The long-term affordability of the housing stock in OTR, both for homeownership and for rental housing, is an issue as the neighborhood progresses. As a general principle, housing is considered affordable if no more than 30% of income is spent on housing, although many families pay more than this, especially when utilities are included, when there is only one breadwinner, or when incomes are low or fixed.

Using HUD data for **rental housing**, the following table shows the income needed to support various rental-housing types at Fair Market Rent (FMR):

Fair Market Rent –Cincinnati, Ohio ³		
Type of Unit	FMR including utilities	Family Income
One Bedroom	\$430	\$17,200 (\$8.27/hr)
Two Bedroom	\$576	\$23,040 (\$11.08/hr)
Three Bedroom	\$772	\$30,800 (\$14.85/hr)

Figure 33: Fair Market Rent in Cincinnati.

Stated another way, a family that has income of \$17,500 can afford a monthly rent for a one bedroom including utilities of \$430. A minimum wage earner can afford a rent including utilities of no more than \$268 a month. In Ohio, in the last two years, the wage increase needed to afford a two bedroom home went up 12.57%, much faster than inflation, from \$10.10 to \$11.37 an hour.

Regarding **homeownership**, banks generally do not want overall debt (including housing costs but not including utilities) to exceed 40% of income when considering underwriting loans for mortgages.

³ Projected 2002 FMR figures for Cincinnati, Ohio obtained from the National Low Income Housing Coalition.



Figure 34: A house on Mercer Street that is prime for redevelopment.



Figure 35: An example of housing located above commercial uses on Main Street.

Using the 30% affordability principle but without utilities, persons of moderate income may be able to purchase a home. The numbers below are approximate.

The following chart will provide a guide as to what low to moderate-income families might be able to be approved for a mortgage loan if their overall debt does not exceed 40% of their gross incomes and with a 5% down payment. If debt exceeds 40%, the money available for housing costs will decrease, so the price of the home one can afford goes down.

Homeownership Guide For Low- And Moderate-Income Families (Based on an 8% Interest Rate)				
HH Income Annual or Hourly Full Time	Available for Housing Costs Monthly (PITI ⁴)	Other Debt Monthly	5% Down Payment	Maximum Price of Home
\$20,730 (\$10/hr.)	518.25 (30%)	\$172.75 (10%)	\$3,000	\$60,000
\$27,100 (\$13/hr.)	\$677.66 (30%)	\$225.83 (10%)	\$4,000	\$80,000
\$33,500 (\$16/hr.)	\$697.92 (25%)	418.75 (15%)	\$4,250	\$82,000
\$41,900 (\$20/hr.)	\$803.08 (23%)	600.00 (17%)	\$4,750	\$95,000
\$41,500 (\$20/hr.)	\$1036.49 (30%)	\$345.83 (10%)	\$6,000	\$120,000

Figure 36: Homeownership guide for low and moderate income families.

⁴ Principal, Interests, Taxes and Insurance

City's Involvement

In past years, city funding has been allocated for completed rehabilitation projects or for projects currently under construction in OTR. The city also allocates money for emergency repairs for low-income homeowners, for receivership projects and for site control for properties in OTR needing redevelopment.

A balanced approach achieved an almost equal split in the number of units with City funding in OTR with rent restricted and market rate units. The public cost per unit has been higher for the market rent units than the affordable units, due to other sources available for development of affordable units, such as state funding and low income housing tax credits. The use of Historic Tax Credits for developers of rental housing and commercial projects is encouraged.

The average public investment in OTR has been \$19,500 per unit in loans, flexible loans and grants. Rental investments come in the form of loans and flexible loans. Funding provided for homeownership is generally in the form of grants.



Figure 37: Two city-funded housing projects - the Hale-Justis building (on the far left) and the Emery Center Apartments (on the far right). Photo courtesy of Kenneth Cunningham and Associates.



Figure 38: Housing in Sharp Village developed by the OTR Housing Network.

Market-rate housing advocates would like to capitalize on the historical and cultural assets of OTR. The neighborhood includes a vibrant arts community and is home to many of the City’s cultural institutions such as the Ensemble Theatre, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and the Cincinnati Opera. It also has become the center for a growing number of internet and computer-related businesses. The proximity of OTR to the Central Business District is also attractive to many. For these reasons and many others, market-rate developers consider OTR an ideal location for diverse housing including rowhouses, lofts, and condominiums.

Neighborhood Interests

The housing interests that will have a major impact on the housing stock in OTR for years to come range from advocates for the homeless and low-income residents to market rate housing developers. The non-profit housing developers and low-income advocates want OTR to remain a neighborhood that provides housing for its low-income residents while recognizing that a mixed-income community is economically beneficial. Primarily, their focus has been on ensuring equitable spending throughout the neighborhood and for a “no-net-loss of affordable housing.” In addition, many advocates place strong emphasis on increasing the quality of life for low-income individuals by providing improved housing through rental placements and homeownership opportunities. Many of the residents expressed their desire for homeownership opportunities, residential rehabilitation, new development and resident management opportunities.

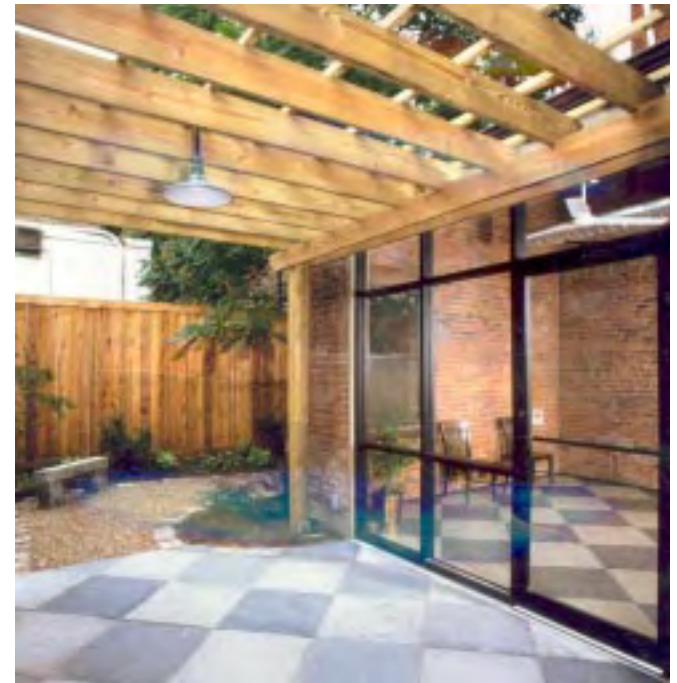


Figure 39: An outdoor patio at a building rehabilitated by Urban Sites Property Management. Photo courtesy of Urban Sites Property Management.

HOUSING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Encourage and welcome new investment at all levels of the housing market and ensure the long-term sustainability of enough affordable housing to house current residents

Objectives:

- Protect current residents
- Encourage new residents
- Improve the production of housing at all income levels
- Preserve and strengthen all residential sub areas through equitable distribution of resources
- Increase financial resources and support for low-income special-needs housing including shelters, temporary and transitional housing
- Increase financial resources for the creation of market-rate housing
- Stimulate the use of abandoned, underused and substandard buildings in OTR
- Remove the bureaucratic and institutional barriers to housing production
- Increase new homeownership opportunities

Goal 2: Provide appropriate housing-related services for all residents

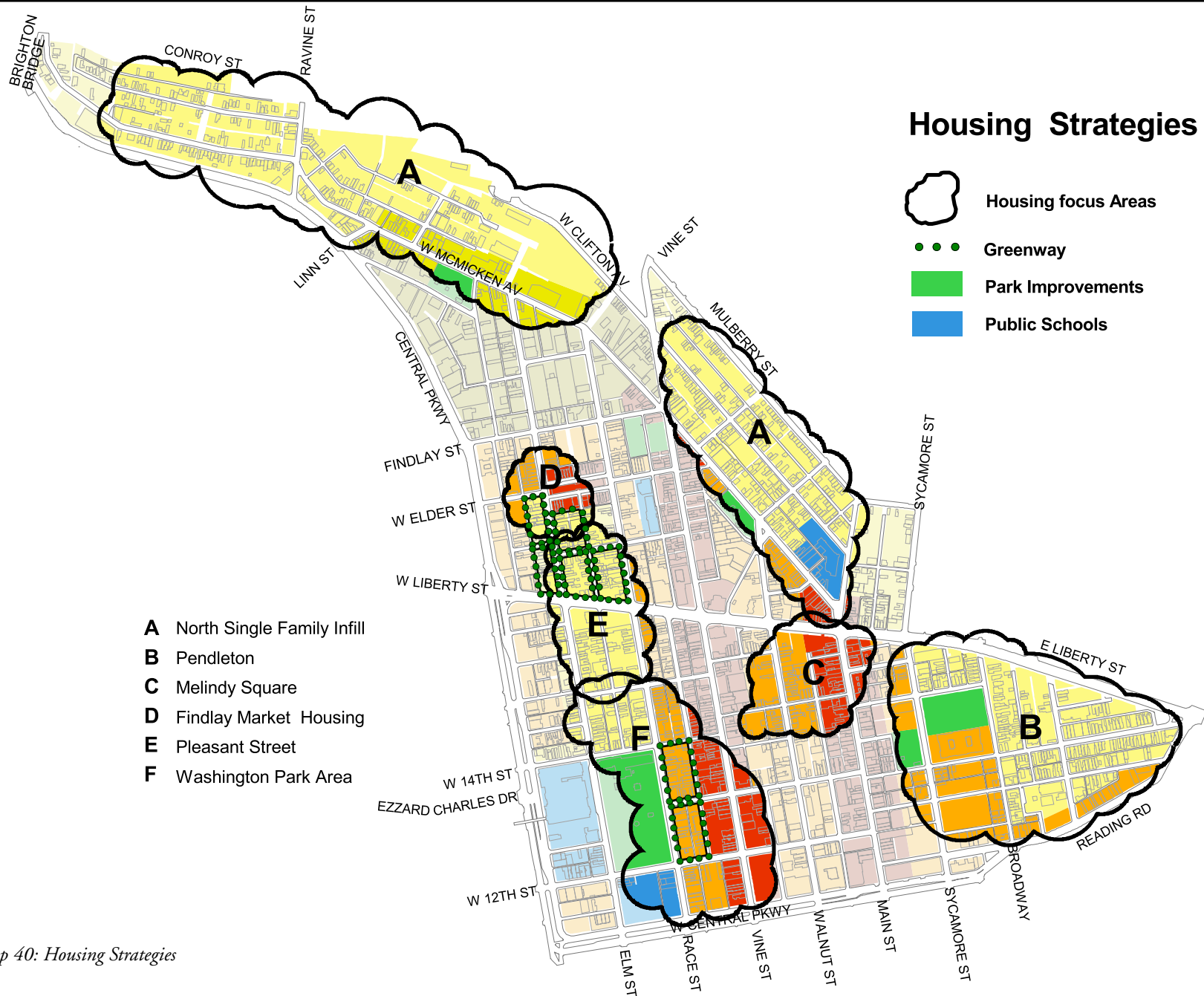
Objectives:

- Identify and market housing services available to residents of OTR
- Provide information on housing-related services
- Use the assets of residents in OTR to enhance economic vitality

Goal 3: Protect, preserve and enhance the significant landmarks and areas of OTR's historical, architectural and cultural heritage without displacement

Objectives:

- Encourage the continued identification and recognition of significant historic, architectural and cultural resources in OTR
- Assure that new construction, additions, alterations and demolitions within OTR are carried out in a manner that is not detrimental to the neighborhood or to its current and future residents
- Encourage the maintenance, rehabilitation and conservation of the existing housing stock to stabilize and strengthen the OTR community



Map 40: Housing Strategies

KEY HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS

A Balanced Housing Stock

The key housing recommendation for OTR is the establishment of an equitable housing stock for a population of diverse incomes by 2020. Soliciting and supporting development and redevelopment that enables the OTR community to reach the following percentages by rental and mortgage costs can accomplish this.

Total Housing Units In Over-The-Rhine				
Rental or Mortgage Costs	1-5 Years	5 - 10 Years	10 - 15 Years	15 - 20 Years
Market Rate Housing				
Unlimited	20%	20%	20%	25%
61% to 100% of AMI (\$60,500 in 2001)	20%	20%	30%	25%
Affordable Housing				
31% to 60% of AMI (\$36,500 in 2001)	20%	35%	25%	25%
Up to 30% of AMI (\$18,150 in 2001)	40%	25%	25%	25%

Figure 41: Key Housing Strategy.

This model is based on the belief that an equitable community that welcomes new residents can be achieved without displacement of current residents and that every effort should be made to assist people in moving from one income level to another.

This recommendation is consistent with the recently approved impact ordinance that declares the City's policy to target public resources to housing projects that do not create new low-income housing in neighborhoods that are already over saturated with affordable housing.

This affordability goal will be implemented as projects move forward and seek public assistance. In the short-term, projects that provide new higher income and mixed income units will be favored. As the proportion of affordable units begins to reach the identified percentages, additional affordable and mixed income units will need to be created. It will also be appropriate to continue to upgrade the existing affordable housing stock over the entire planning period.

A monitoring system will need to be established to provide an annual count of housing units. Both the University of Cincinnati and Xavier University have expressed an interest in conducting this monitoring. There are a number of national research projects currently underway that could accommodate this project.

Housing Production

A successful revitalization of the neighborhood is dependent, in large part, on the successful production of new housing and the rehabilitation of existing housing. The significant number of vacant buildings and the poor condition of much of the existing housing requires major improvements. Existing for-profit and not-for-profit developers will all play a role in stimulating the housing market to produce more units.



Figure 42: An example of a building renovated into Loft Housing. Photo courtesy of Urban Sites Property Management.

The implementation section outlines a number of strategies to help the development community increase production. These include:

- The City's involvement in site assembly and infrastructure improvements
- Funding through various existing programs
- New loan pool resource
- Capital support for specific projects
- Support for mixed income and reduced density tax credit projects

Specific Project Locations

There are many housing projects currently underway or in the planning stages in the community that meet the objectives described above. There are also additional projects recommended to continue to stimulate housing production in different parts of the neighborhood. The Housing Plan Map shows locations for future development.

Current projects include:

- 1300 Block of Vine Street (ReSTOC)
- Melindy Square
- Findlay Market/Elm Housing Project (Scheer and Scheer)
- Mercy Franciscan Housing Project at Republic and Green Streets
- Pendleton Mews
- 1200 Vine Housing/Parking Project
- Model Management Housing Rehabilitation at 1321-23-25 Vine Street, 1320-22 Republic Street and 1206-08 Clay Street
- Community Views rehabilitation at 122 and 232 E. Clifton Avenue, 223 Peete Street, 1639 Vine Street, 440 W. McMicken Avenue, and 154 E. McMicken Avenue.

Additional Project Recommendations include:

- Washington Park Area Project
- Rothenberg Area Infill
- Loft Housing
- Pleasant Street Housing Project

ReSTOC



Figure 43: A ReSTOC project in the 1300 block of Vine Street.

Findlay Market



Figure 44: View south over Findlay Market parking lot showing new housing clusters over underground parking. By Consultant - Design Team.

Model Management



Figures 45A-C: Model Management projects at 1206-08 Clay Street, 1323 Vine Street and 1321 Vine Street. Photos courtesy of Model Management.

Pleasant Street

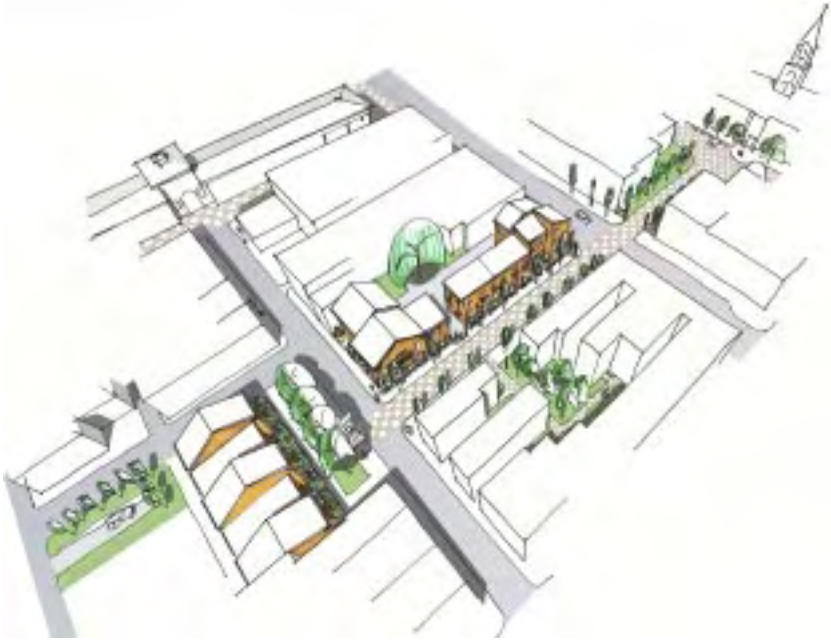


Figure 46: View north over new and existing housing clusters on Pleasant Street. By Consultant - Design Team.

St. Anthony Village



Figure 47: A sketch of St. Anthony Village. This mixed-income development is located at Republic and Green Streets, and developed by Women's Research and Development Center. Sketch courtesy of the University of Cincinnati Community Design Center.

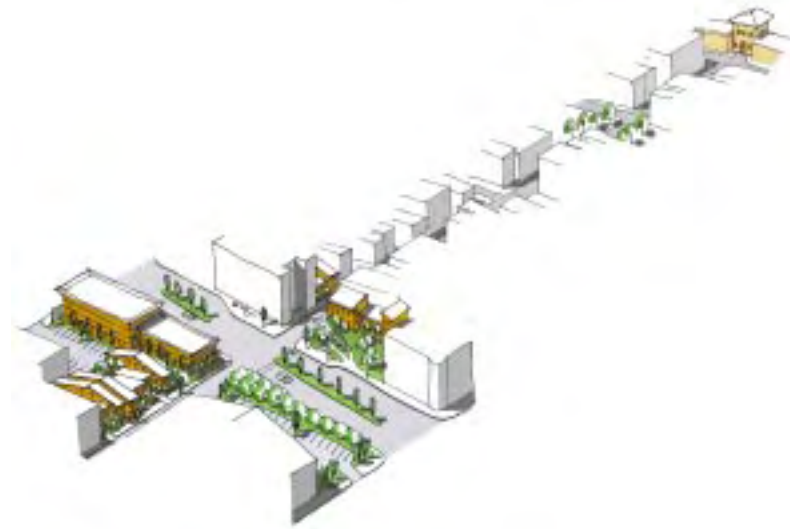


Figure 48: An illustration of proposed housing development on Pleasant Street near Liberty Street. Housing infill on tertiary streets such as Republic and Pleasant is reserved for 2 - 3 story single-family structures scaled in relation to existing buildings on the street. This is an example of clustered housing developed around a secure tenant controlled landscaped courtyard. By Consultant - Design Team.

Melindy Square



Figure 49: An illustration of the proposed Melindy Square Development showing parking lot landscape screening, green space and a transit stop. By Consultant - Design Team.

The Vine Street Gateway Project



Figures 50 A-B: The Vine Street Gateway Project. Located at the corners of Central Parkway, Vine Street, 12th Street, and Jackson Street. As currently designed, this is a four-story parking garage with mixed income, four-story housing along Vine Street. This is an opportunity to leverage new affordable mixed-income housing with the land being subsidized in a public-private partnership with corporate use of a parking garage, as well as the future Art Academy of Cincinnati and the Vine Street business district. Illustrations courtesy of Muller Architects.



Figure 51: Enhance residential spaces with an urban landscape of outdoor private spaces. Decks, balconies, and porches provide residents with much needed private space that also function to enliven and safeguard the semi-public space of courtyards, and the public space of alleys and streets. Privately maintained urban landscapes, including window boxes and stoop entry gardens, provide both beauty and a sense of ownership for the environment.

Housing infill on tertiary streets such as Republic and Pleasant is reserved for 2-3 story single-family structures, scaled to be related to the existing buildings on the street. With both an iron fenced front yard setback and side yard setback on the south side. Private parking may be accommodated at the side of the house or a garage may be situated at the rear with alley access. Alternatively, the house may have a front entry single bay garage with living space over, substituting for the side yard. New construction may require building 2 family buildings to provide the required scale for the neighborhood.



Figure 52: Commercial use concentration areas should never exclude and should incorporate upper level housing. The compatibility of uses should be a consideration in structuring the long-term viability of mixed-use commercial streets such as Vine Street.

Multi-family housing should be promoted above storefront commercial use on commercially designated streets in accordance with the mixed-use objective for OTR land use and accepted principles for maintaining vital urban street life.

Office use is more appropriate than residential use above storefront with/ or adjacent to nighttime entertainment

Historic Preservation

Designating two new local historic districts – Over-the-Rhine (North) and Mohawk-Bellevue NBD – and the presence of the existing Over-the-Rhine (South) Local Historic District and the Over-the-Rhine National Register Historic District will cultivate community pride and an appreciation of the neighborhood’s rich past throughout the city. The specific conservation guidelines established for the local

districts will protect irreplaceable historic buildings and will encourage their conservation, renovation, and reuse. They will also advocate new development that is compatible with and will take advantage of each district’s unique character. As a result, each district will foster the continued viability of the community as an attractive place to live, work and play for citizens of all socio-economic levels.



Figure 53: Historic Districts in OTR.

Homeownership

Increasing homeownership opportunities as a means for stabilizing the community for all income groups is strongly desired. Active participation of neighborhood groups and organizations will be needed to identify and solicit residents who are interested in homeownership opportunities including services offered by the Homeownership Center. The Center is currently working with residents to provide Section 8 homeownership opportunities. Homeownership options in the parts of the neighborhood indicated in the future land use plan as being lower density are most appropriate.

Rental Housing

Rental housing will continue to be an important part of the housing in the neighborhood. Much of the current rental housing stock is in poor condition, but is providing limited housing choices for low-income residents. Keeping a healthy, solid, rental housing market available for people at all income levels is critical to keeping the neighborhood accessible and diverse. Rental units are indicated on the Future Land Use Map on page xiii in the medium-density locations.

Family Housing

Converting the smaller units into large, three-to-four-bedroom housing units that accommodate families is recommended for the areas around the schools and recreational sites. In particular, the housing stock surrounding Washington Park Elementary, Rothenberg Elementary, School for Creative and Performing Arts, and Findlay Market are very suitable for this type of development. Family housing should be provided in both owner and rental options.

Financial Support

1. Solicit participation in the **City's Housing Programs** for development and rehabilitation gap financing. Gap financing refers to the difference or "gap" between the private funding on appraised value and the target income market. Conventional lenders will provide only up to 75 or 80 percent of the appraised value. It can be difficult to close the gap between available and needed funding. Filling this gap will be critical to increasing housing production in the neighborhood. Currently, the City of Cincinnati has a number of competitive financing programs to assist housing development (See Appendix E for listing).
2. Support **Low Income Housing Tax Credit Projects** including mixed income projects consistent with the overall housing goals stated in the housing affordability plan. The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit⁵ (LIHTC) Program created by Congress in 1986 has been instrumental in bringing investment to depressed areas such as OTR. An investor receives the housing tax credit each year for 10 years, and in return, the owner must maintain income and rent restrictions on a property for at least 15 years.

⁵ The Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OFHA), within the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD), has administered the LIHTC Program since 1987 in the State of Ohio. OFHA awards the Housing Tax Credits to applicants on a competitive basis one or two times per year. The chief advantage of the LIHTC Program is that relatively great amounts of equity financing can be raised for low-income housing projects in depressed communities, thus enabling development of low-income housing that otherwise would not be feasible to provide.

-
3. **Financial support for Non-profit Low-income Housing Groups** in OTR. Support for operations and maintenance costs is needed to continue to provide and increase the quality of housing for low-income residents.
 4. Create an **OTR loan fund**. The Cincinnati Development Fund has been established and capitalized to target resources for project development and production.
 5. **Land Assembly** - Remove buildings out of speculation and into active development by purchasing vacant land and buildings to accommodate large-scale development consistent with the surrounding environment.
 6. Investigate the feasibility of establishing a **Housing Trust Fund** for affordable housing by identifying potential sources of funds and operating agency. A Housing Trust Fund commits public sources of revenue to a dedicated, ongoing fund for housing. This fund could provide a dependable source of funding for the creation and maintenance of housing, homebuyer assistance, below-market rental housing, gap financing, start up funding for housing developers, and land acquisition and design costs.

Economic Empowerment

1. Provide **training** on home maintenance, rental management, buying a first home, and potential cooperative ownership structures. Coordinate with the Homeownership Center regarding existing programs.
2. Establish a **Land Trust**. A trust can acquire land that will be leased on a long-term basis to an individual whose home

will be located on the land. The resident will own the home and the organization will own the land. The trust limits and controls future use on the land.

Legislative Actions

1. **Covenants** that require proposed rent-restricted units to remain fixed for a 15-year period for the use of CDBG and HOME Funds.
2. Create **Local Historic Districts** north of Liberty Street and in the Mohawk area.
3. Establish a **Main Street Program** in mixed-use commercial/residential areas such as Vine and Main Streets. The Main Street Program is a national program that provides technical assistance for businesses concentrated in a particular area to organize and hire a business manager primarily for marketing purposes. Once established, the groups become financially responsible for cost for the manager and other activities.
4. Create **Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts**. The establishment of such as district allows for money that will be received from the anticipated increase in tax realized from improvement made in the district to be spent in OTR. We recommend that the funds generated from the TIF district be used for property acquisition and public infrastructure improvements recommended in this plan. Because TIF Districts are limited to 300 acres, two will be created for OTR.

Housing Support Services

1. All of the housing support services could be provided through a central clearinghouse that could serve as a **one-stop shop** within the community.
2. **Support organizations that** provide housing for both rent-restricted and market rate households.
3. Provide educational opportunities that focus on housing maintenance, how to identify and report housing violations, tenant/landlord rights, and economic incentives for historic preservation such as the Federal Historic Tax Credits.
4. **Create and maintain a database** of available housing units in OTR to track the availability of various types of housing.
5. Encourage local groups to create a unified housing marketing plan for the community.



PRIORITY HOUSING PROJECTS

The City is committed to the implementation of this Plan. The following projects are consistent with the Housing recommendations, are currently underway and are expected to be completed within the next 2-3 years.

Phase One Committed Projects Completed by the end of 2004

Complete Pendleton Mews (OTR Foundation- Verdin)

20 single-family homeownership units (17 market rate, 3 affordable)
City to furnish infrastructure improvements and streetscape enhancements

City investment: \$859,000

Private investment: \$2,900,000

Schedule to be determined

Complete Melindy Square (Miami Purchase Preservation – Urban Sites)

61 rehabilitated homeownership units, market rate

Project under review

Schedule to be determined

Complete 1200 Block of Vine Street

Rehabilitation of a series of buildings that will include up to 25 market rate housing units and commercial space. The project will be put out to bid by Cincinnati Development Fund (CDF) and also includes a number of private owners.

Investments and schedule to be determined

Model Management Tax Credit Project

Project to renovate buildings on Vine and Race and reduce the overall density of low-income units

24 affordable units

Project under review

Scheduled completion: To be determined

Community Views

15 efficiency to four bedroom units on scattered sites throughout Over-the-Rhine and Mohawk. (5 market rate, 10 affordable)

Project under review

Scheduled completion: To be determined

Complete 1300 Vine Street (ReSTOC)

30 rehabilitated, affordable rental units

City provided gap financing

City investment \$770,000

Other investment: \$3,675,000

Open 2003

East 15th Street Project

28 rehabilitated units, 5 affordable

City investment: \$69,900

Private investment: \$1,500,000

Open 2004

Complete Findlay Market Housing (Scheer and Scheer)

Rehabilitation of 10 homeownership units in 7 buildings and 4 market rate rental units in 1 building

City investment: \$1,072,523

Other investment \$2,780,000

Completion 2004

Miscellaneous Smaller Housing Projects

The city is working with a number of housing developers on approximately 8 other smaller housing projects including the Reading Lofts, Conroy Street, Park Hill, Mulberry Views, Christian Stollmaier Building, 13th Street, 1400 block of Walnut Street and Mercer Street. These projects include 53 additional units; 4 affordable

Total city investment: \$1,751,300

Total private investment: \$9,826,000

Total Housing Projects

Total city investment: \$4,922,000

Total private investment: \$23,581,000

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Figure 54: A business near Findlay Market.

The economic health of Over-the-Rhine is critical to its long-term success. Improving economic conditions in the neighborhood results not only in developing the climate for doing business and investing money, but improves conditions for people in the neighborhood as well. In order for area residents to improve their lives, they need to have access to good jobs at sustainable income levels that will allow them to increase their personal wealth. In order to attract investment, property values will need to increase, and business investments will need to provide a return in the community.

OTR has many economic assets. Its location adjacent downtown, and just south of the University-Medical complex positions it between the two largest employment centers in the region. The neighborhood is also home to a number of regional destinations like Music Hall, the Ensemble Theatre, and the Pendleton Arts Center. The neighborhood has not been able to fully capitalize on these destinations and the potential spin-off retail activity that could result from patrons dining or shopping in the neighborhood.

Findlay Market, a large city market operating in the neighborhood since 1852, provides fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, cheeses, and breads, including many hard to find ethnic foods, to OTR residents and people from all over the region.

With its many economic assets, this historic 19th century neighborhood has positioned itself very well to take advantage of 21st century opportunities.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Improving the climate for business in the neighborhood and nurturing existing and new economic activity is critical to OTR. Many of the elements for a robust economy are already present in the neighborhood. The successes of the Main Street Entertainment District and the technology industry demonstrate that OTR has the elements essential for creating a healthy business environment.

Space for Business Development

OTR has almost 500 vacant buildings and over 700 vacant lots. These vacancies, which can be more reasonably priced than traditional office space (although renovation costs may be significant), provide the opportunity for businesses to locate to the neighborhood, establish themselves, and expand. Real estate in distinctive, architecturally significant buildings offers a very special opportunity for many businesses. In fact, many in the technology industry cited the uniqueness of the community as one of the reasons for selecting OTR as home. OTR provides a locale where businesses can be close to the area's hub of economic activity, and employees can live close to where they work.

The presence of the high-speed internet capacity in OTR is also a tremendous asset. This presents a real advantage in the neighborhood over many other locations not as well served by digital infrastructure. This is certainly one of the reasons that technology-based businesses were attracted to the neighborhood, but increasingly all types of businesses will see this infrastructure advantage as attractive.



Figure 55: Mixed-use buildings on Main Street.

Economic Empowerment and Job Opportunities

The emergence of business opportunities in the information technology field has opened up new avenues of employment as well. Local groups such as SmartMoney Community Services, Hamilton County Development Corporation, Greater Cincinnati Microenterprise Initiative (GCMi), the University of Cincinnati Small Business Development Center (UCSBDC), the African American Chamber of Commerce, and the Cincinnati Business Incubator provide training and other opportunities for interested residents to take advantage of these new digital, technology-based opportunities.

Since local schools play an important role in preparing students for jobs in this field, Taft High School, in conjunction with Cincinnati Bell, has designated Taft as a special site for computer training. An additional high school, chartered by the Cincinnati Public Schools and the Gates Foundation, will become an Entrepreneurial High School which will focus on training students to create and get involved in new start-up businesses. This high school will be operational in the neighborhood for the 2003-2004 school year.

One of the most critical issues for neighborhood residents is identification and creation of better job opportunities that will provide entrance to the economic mainstream. The lack of opportunities today revolves around the scarcity of economic activity in the neighborhood, need for access to capital, insufficient transportation to jobs, deficient education, discrimination, day care and health care problems, and individual problems with criminal background and employment histories. Creating opportunities and second chances for many people facing these difficulties is critical if this neighborhood is to truly provide the kind of mixed-income and culturally and racially diverse environment that is envisioned.

Resources like the new entrepreneurial high school, Taft's information technology program, the local groups who provide assistance to small businesses, the City's Employment and Training Center, and the Collective Learning Center can all play a role in this issue. Linking these and many other services to the people who need them and to each other is key to making the existing system work.

Proximity to Downtown and Uptown

Downtown Cincinnati remains the largest employment location in the region with approximately 90,000 employees (Source: Greater Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce). The University of Cincinnati and the medical complex made up of University Medical Center, Children's Hospital, Shriners' Burn Center, the Veteran's Administration Medical Center, and Christ Hospital is the second largest employment center (Direct jobs, 1997 UC Medical Center Report). OTR is just minutes away from both with direct public transit and vehicular access.

These locations help drive OTR's economy by creating potential spin-off business and institutional activities looking for proximate locations. They also provide potential jobs for local and future residents who want to live close to where they work. Better transportation integration between these destinations in the downtown Basin and Uptown area are discussed in some detail in the Transportation chapter of this plan.



Figure 56: Vine Street in the early 20th century. Photo courtesy of the Department of Transportation and Engineering.



Figure 57: Vine Street in the early 21st century - Local business Robs Hardware.

The Vine Street Corridor

Just as OTR is the best and worst of the City, Vine Street is the best and the worst of the neighborhood. The condition of Vine Street is, to many, symbolic of the overall health of the neighborhood. Its image is what shapes people's impressions of OTR; as a major corridor between downtown and the University area, thousands of people travel it daily. Mayor Luken has made Vine Street the center of a strategy to signal the resurgence of the entire community.

Vine Street has historically been the primary roadway in the neighborhood, and the buildings and past uses on the street are evidence of this. The architecture of buildings on the street is high-style – buildings are a little taller with more elegant storefronts, they are made of sturdier, more expensive materials such as brick and masonry, and are more elaborate and detailed than buildings on other streets (which can also increase the cost of rehabilitation). The function of the street was both cultural and civic; Vine Street has been home to beer gardens, a post office, an opera house, and a movie theatre.

A perfect example of OTR's pattern of development, the street has been a commercial corridor with some residential uses interspersed between and above commercial uses. From clothes to food to music to hardware, Vine Street has been the central shopping street in the neighborhood. It is also a place where building vacancies, trash, loitering, and drug dealing make the corridor feel very unsafe. The issues of making the neighborhood feel clean and safe are very important to the revitalization of Vine Street.

The Success of Main Street as a Destination

The Main Street Arts and Entertainment District has been, by most accounts, a model of what the community can accomplish in terms of revitalization. The Over-the-Rhine Chamber of Commerce and the Over-the-Rhine Foundation, along with the many individual building and business owners, have created a unique and attractive destination for restaurants, clubs, galleries, and special shopping. This revitalization was certainly bolstered by the many technology-based companies and residential units that have located on the street. Many of the elements identified as attractive for technology companies are also attractive for other users on Main Street, such as interesting historic architecture, proximity to other users, and a pedestrian-scale environment.

Neighborhood business districts that have been successful at re-making themselves have had several key elements:

- Creation of an identified niche and image
- One or two “destination” uses
- A mix of uses that focuses on special offerings and high levels of service (something the big-boxes do not do well)
- Business owners who collaborate on issues like hours of operation, marketing and promotions, and festivals
- A positive physical environment

Many of these elements are present on Main Street, and have been key to its success. Main Street, however, like the rest of the neighborhood, suffers from the real and perceived lack of safety in the area. There have also been some problems with patrons of the clubs being unruly in the early hours of the morning and causing problems in the neighborhood. Here, too, residents have not always felt welcome. The ability of the entire neighborhood to take advantage of the successes of parts of the neighborhood will be important to the long-term sustainability of the neighborhood.



Figure 58: Jump Cafe, on the corner of Main Street and 12th Street.



Figure 59: Kaldi's Coffeehouse and Bookstore, a popular attraction on Main Street. Photo courtesy of Kenneth Cunningham and Associates.



Figure 60: The Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati.



Figure 61: Music Hall during a May Festival performance. Photo courtesy of Cincinnati May Festival.

Core of Cultural Destinations and Institutions

Music Hall, Findlay Market, the Ensemble Theatre, and Pendleton Arts Center are the types of cultural and community resources that communities often attempt to create in revitalization efforts. OTR has these and several other truly outstanding resources, which have existed here for generations. In addition to these well-established resources, there are proposals to create a new School for the Creative and Performing Arts near Music Hall, and a new home for the Art Academy of Cincinnati at Twelfth and Jackson Streets. These uses draw patrons, guests, artists, and residents into the neighborhood. They also provide opportunities for residents to become involved in and experience wonderful cultural offerings.

Residents have sometimes felt unwelcome at these institutions and so they may not have benefited the neighborhood as fully as possible. Likewise, patrons have not felt welcomed in the neighborhood and so did not stay to have lunch, dinner, shop, or spend additional money in the area. These institutions are an important part of the neighborhood. Their presence needs to be enhanced and they need to be open for neighborhood residents to take advantage of the rich cultural experiences they have to offer. Likewise, the neighborhood needs to accept these institutions and create strategies that create economic activity to build upon these uses and their patrons.

The Need for Neighborhood-Serving Uses

In 1950, there were 31,219 people living in the neighborhood; today there are less than 7,500. That loss of population has had a direct negative impact on the number of businesses in the neighborhood, particularly in the retail sector. In this regard, OTR is like thousands of other center-city neighborhoods across the country. As people have left city neighborhoods for farther-out suburban locations, they have left old neighborhood business districts with fewer customers, buying less.

The trend of disinvestment in city neighborhoods is blamed on many things: perceptions of security problems, poor store selection, increased competition from suburban malls and big box stores, old merchandise, and lack of parking. All are certainly in part to blame, but the beginning of the downward trend can be tied directly to population movement to the suburbs.

The retail market in areas like grocery stores, drug stores, shoe and apparel shops, gas stations, car repair establishments, restaurants, laundries and dry cleaners, and other neighborhood-serving uses have largely relocated to the suburbs along major roadways like Beechmont Avenue and Colerain Avenue, and I-275. This exodus has been so complete in some cases that retailers are finding suburban locations over-built and are now looking for new service areas back in center-city locations. The recent activities of chains like CVS and Walgreen's illustrate this point.

*Figure 62: Local store
Globe Furniture, located at
Findlay Market.*



Figure 63: Local apparel store Smitty's.



Figures 64 and 65: Two successful OTR businesses - Ollie's Trolley on Liberty Street and Shadeau Breads on Main Street. Photos courtesy of Kenneth Cunningham and Associates.



People shop differently than they did when neighborhood business districts were the main destinations for convenience shopping trips. Today, people are likely to do all their shopping at big-box retailers like Target, K-Mart, Wal-Mart, Kroger, Biggs, and others. Instead of shopping at the local butcher or florist, they are now getting everything from furniture to eggs at one location. Often prices are more competitive at these locations and shopping can be more convenient, particularly for those with cars who live nearby. The need for people in the neighborhood to have access to good shopping choices for everyday needs has been identified as important to OTR residents.

There are some examples of stores that have stayed and been successful in the neighborhood. Places like Tucker's Restaurant, Rohs Hardware, Smitty's, Deveroes, and the many merchants at Findlay Market have served the neighborhood for decades. Supporting these businesses and attracting new neighborhood-serving uses will be an important challenge.

Residents identified an expanded grocery store, a movie theater, additional restaurants, some sort of family entertainment (bowling, skating, etc.), drug store, laundry and dry cleaners as some of the uses the neighborhood needs.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Make OTR a model for diverse and inclusive business development.

Objectives:

- Strengthen neighborhood retail uses on Vine Street and throughout the neighborhood
- Provide support to a variety of office users including technology-based companies, architectural, arts and other design firms
- Maximize the support and development of digital and technology related business in the community
- Coordinate and enhance small business and microenterprise support programs
- Focus marketing of retail space around Findlay Market for local, specialty, and international food products and services

Goal 2: Establish stronger linkages between the OTR workforce and job training programs and employment opportunities in the neighborhood and throughout the City.

Objectives:

- Create opportunities in industries where OTR has a competitive advantage such as historic building trades, the arts and crafts industry, and food service and products at Findlay Market
- Establish an educational link between technology-based businesses, neighborhood schools and the Employment and Training Center
- Improve transportation options to employment centers throughout the region, including support for Metro Moves

Goal 3: Strengthen and create destinations that attract and encourage neighborhood and regional participation.

Objectives:

- Support regional arts organizations in the neighborhood and maximize their direct economic benefit to the neighborhood
- Use cultural resources to attract people to neighborhood restaurants and other establishments

- Enhance Findlay Market as a regional destination by expanding the Market and targeting renovation of the surrounding buildings
- Support the Main Street Entertainment District as a regional destination that is welcoming to local residents and serves as a neighborhood gathering place
- Provide strong pedestrian links between the Pendleton Arts Center, Main Street, Vine Street and Music Hall along 13th Street
- Enhance the safety of the neighborhood to encourage people to use the resources of the area
- Enhance the grocery offerings in the vicinity of Findlay Market to improve convenience shopping for residents and visitors
- Create safe, clean and maintained “pocket parking lots” throughout the neighborhood focusing on the commercial corridors on Vine Street and Findlay Market, with an additional structured lot in the vicinity of Main Street
- Create a coordinated marketing program to promote the diverse arts, cultural and other destinations on the neighborhood

Goal 4: Ensure the opportunity for OTR residents to become financially literate and independent

Objectives

- Create opportunities for homeownership in the neighborhood
- Make use of SmartMoney Community Services and other local financial training programs
- Provide strong educational institutions
- Support local financial institutions that recycle dollars in the neighborhood

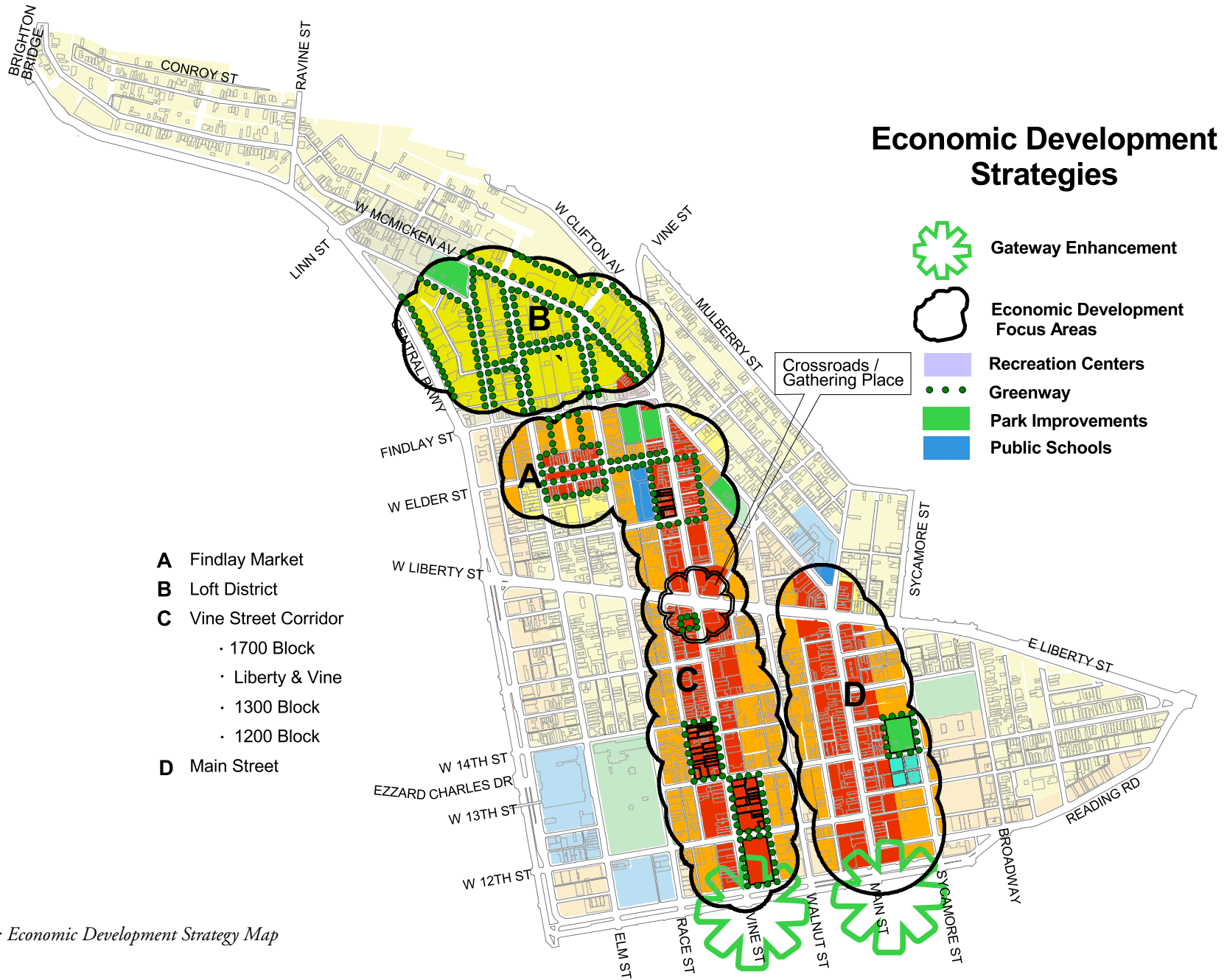


Figure 66: Economic Development Strategy Map

KEY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS



Figure 67: Vine Street between Elder and Green Streets. By Consultant - Design Team.

Vine Street Revitalization

Vine Street was, at one time, the center of activity in OTR. The future of Vine Street should be no different, acting as the center of neighborhood-serving retail uses. The neighborhood is in need of a place for residents to buy a newspaper, an ice cream cone or lunch. Vine Street should again be the center of that kind of activity.

There are a number of targeted improvement projects and programs that will focus activity on Vine Street:

Neighborhood Pride Center

In order to expedite business development and City processes, area residents and businesses will have access to a Neighborhood Pride Center on Vine Street. The Center will be staffed with City employees from various departments who will be able to address service requests, development needs, business retention issues, and other City issues. The office will also be the home of the Vine Street Coordinator, who will assist existing OTR businesses, and attract potential businesses to OTR, particularly to Vine Street.

Façade Program and Smart Streets Program

A Vine Street façade improvement program coordinated through the City's Department of Community Development will renovate up to ten facades in 2002 and 2003. Additionally, the Smart Streets program, developed by the University of Cincinnati, will address lead issues in the area.

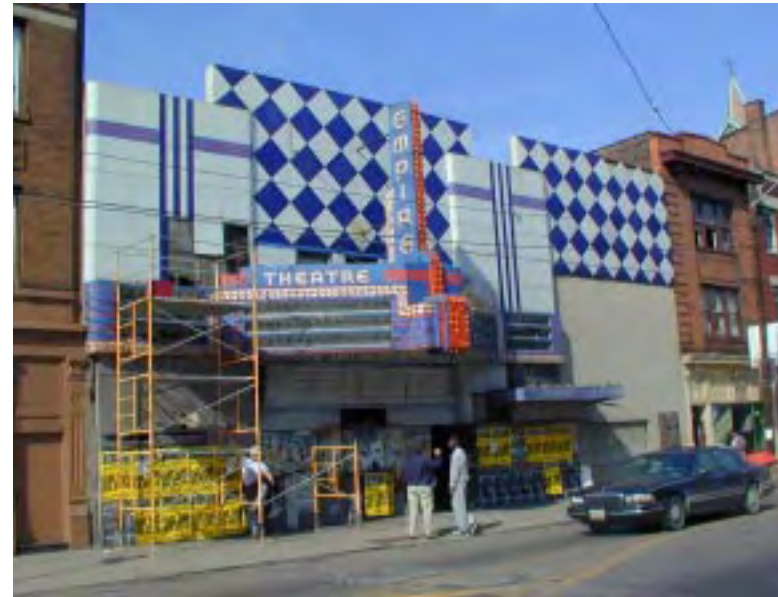
Mixed Use Project Redevelopment

In addition to the façade program, there are a number of other development projects that will be implemented on Vine Street between 2002 and 2004. These include renovations in the 1700 block, housing and commercial renovations in the 1200 and 1300 blocks, and the restoration of the Empire Theater at 1521 Vine Street. These renovation projects will generate activity along the length of Vine Street and establish the foundations for further private sector investment in the neighborhood.

Pocket Parking Lots

Parking for new and expanded retail, residential, and office uses on Vine Street will be provided in a series of “pocket parking lots” along the corridor. These improvements will be accompanied by streetscape improvements including street trees, planters, and flowers.

Site assembly and the completion of various projects, streetscape improvements, and a façade program are just a few of the implementation measures that will be targeted toward Vine Street. The Economic Development Strategy Map identifies several areas to target for rehabilitation of existing buildings and the creation of “pocket parking lots”. Sites were selected because of availability, location at key intersections, and in the case of building rehabilitations, the opportunity for some parking. In addition to these redevelopment activities, Vine Street should be the focus of concentrated city service delivery and code enforcement, coordinated through the Neighborhood Pride Center.



Figures 68 and 69: The Empire Theatre in its current condition (above), and with proposed renovations (below). Illustration courtesy of La Shawn Pettus-Brown.

Develop Job Training Linkages

One of the neighborhood's most important economic concerns is how to provide jobs and job training opportunities in ways that stimulate new economic activity and address current resident needs. There are a number of job training programs and educational opportunities currently available in the neighborhood, such as the City's Department of Employment and Training, City of Cincinnati Department of Community Development, Cincinnati Business Incubator, SmartMoney Community Services, Greater Cincinnati Microenterprise Initiative, University of Cincinnati Small Business Development Center, SCORE (Retired Executives), Hamilton County Development Company, Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky African-American Chamber of Commerce, Taft High School's technology training program and the proposed entrepreneurial high school. These institutions, and others in the neighborhood, provide services that can be better marketed and linked to educational opportunities.

Transportation is an important part of creating the network of support needed for someone to have access to available jobs. Many of the jobs in this region are not located downtown or within the City of Cincinnati. Good public transportation that connects OTR residents with jobs in Hamilton, or even Butler, Warren, Boone Counties or other locations is key. The Metro Moves plan and other methods of improving transportation options for residents is an important step in improving economic opportunity.

Create Entrepreneurial Opportunities

This Plan recommends the creation of entrepreneurial opportunities for people in a number of industry areas.

Historic Building Trades

Business development in historic building trades is recommended. Lead abatement is one area of the construction process for which there

seems to be a shortage of firms and contractors working in the neighborhood. Given the significant redevelopment that is recommended, this may be a good industry segment to begin to develop. UC and the City are sponsoring the "Smart Streets Program," which will provide a good opportunity to develop this idea further. Additional opportunities in the neighborhood similar to the paint reformulation business or the fabrication of historic windows are also options.

Support the Kitchen Incubator

The Kitchen Incubator provides the infrastructure for the development of entrepreneurship in the food products and services area. It allows a neighborhood resident to move from making jam for friends at holiday time, to selling jams at the market, to selling to a wider market. The incubator, "Cincinnati Cooks" trains residents in food service areas, supports job creation, and gives existing culinary businesses a place to start or expand.

Develop the Food Ventures Center at Findlay Market

The development of a shared-use commercial kitchen incubator provides entrepreneurs with time-share access to licensed production facilities and the opportunity to start and expand specialty food and catering businesses. The kitchen incubator would also offer entrepreneurs access to capital, training and technical assistance that is essential for start-up businesses. Properly executed, the facility could also be used for job training for area residents in the food service industry.

Develop Arts Industries

The development of an arts and crafts industry can take advantage of the skills of residents. Quilting, jewelry making, woodworking, and other guild arts are being practiced recreationally by OTR residents. A vendor space recommendation is designed to provide an outlet for residents to sell these products, with a possible location for a vendor mall on Race Street near Findlay Market.

The Loft District

There are a number of buildings north of Findlay Street and south of and along McMicken Avenue that once housed breweries and food processing facilities. Since these buildings originally housed large-scale commercial and industrial businesses, they are well suited for open loft spaces with the flexibility to adapt to changing market needs. These buildings could house a variety of modern uses, including historic building trades, dot.com expansions, and other office, commercial, and housing uses.

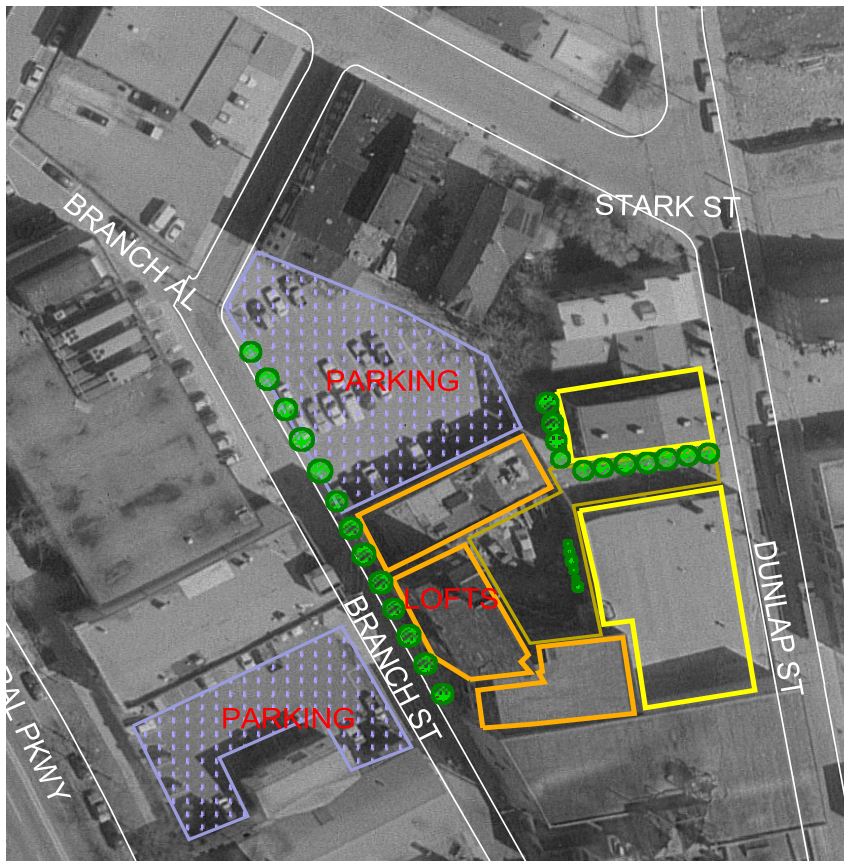


Figure 70: An example of a site plan for a loft development on Branch Street. For illustrative purposes only.



Figures 71 and 72: Two buildings in the Loft District that are prime candidates for conversion to mixed-use loft space. For illustrative purposes only.





Figures 73 and 74: The same two buildings after rehabilitation and conversion to loft space.

Findlay Market Revitalization

Findlay Market is a center of economic activity and a primary destination in the neighborhood for both residents of and visitors to the community. In 1995, the City adopted the Findlay Market Master Business Development Plan that recommended the revitalization of Findlay Market. Since adoption of the Plan, a number of capital

projects have significantly enhanced the visual appearance of the Market District and have created additional opportunities for new business creation. Continued implementation of the Findlay Master Plan, including the development of the Food Ventures Center, renovation of additional parking areas, and creation of additional outdoor vending opportunities, is encouraged.

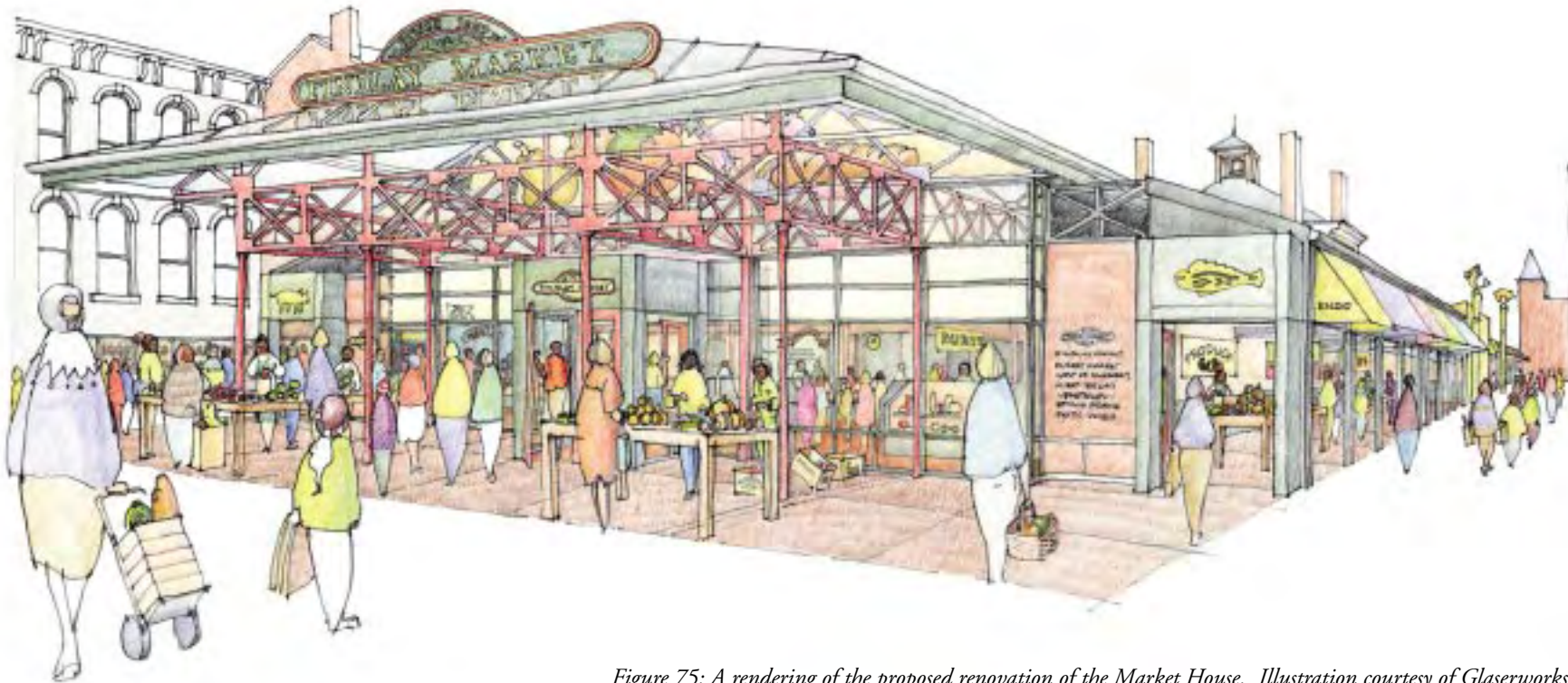


Figure 75: A rendering of the proposed renovation of the Market House. Illustration courtesy of Glaserworks.



Figure 76: A rendering of proposed improvements to Pleasant Street. Illustration courtesy of Glaserworks.

Mixed-use renovation of buildings in the Market District is an important part of the Market Renovation Project, and the success of the Market depends greatly on the activation of these buildings. These buildings are targeted for renovation with food-related retail uses on the ground floors and residential uses above. The City has begun to make strategic purchases of property in the area to facilitate this component of the project.



Figure 77: Improvements being made to the buildings surrounding the Market House.

Support Technology-based Investments

The neighborhood has attracted a significant number of technology-based businesses and there is a need for continued support of those investments. Capital investments including upgraded telecommunications facilities, smart buildings, and support for other technology-based infrastructure will be important to ensure that OTR can nurture these types of new businesses.

Create Additional Parking

There are two main parking recommendations; the first is to build two additional structured parking lots to serve the many patrons of the neighborhood. One is recommended near the Main Street Arts and Entertainment District, and another near Music Hall.

Secondly, safe, clean and maintained pocket parking lots are recommended along Vine Street and in a number of other locations throughout the neighborhood. The notion behind the “pocket parking lot” is that it is a small lot providing enough parking for specific uses in an area. These parking lots will not disrupt the overall streetscape, and should be placed in existing vacant lots whenever possible. The plan map illustrates several potential locations.

These two recommendations should help the many parking needs of resident, employee, and customer parking during both day and night.



Figure 78: Students working in a computer class. Photo courtesy of the Art Academy of Cincinnati.

PRIORITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

The City is committed to the implementation of this Plan. The following projects are consistent with the Economic Development recommendations, are currently underway and are expected to be completed within the next 2-3 years.

Phase One Committed Projects To be completed by 2004

Façade Improvement Program

Smart Streets/ Lead Remediation

10 Buildings funded for façade improvements, lead work and retail space improvements

City investment:

\$300,000 Façade

\$92,162 lead abatement

\$396,000 additional lead grant from HUD (pending)

Total public investment: \$788,162

Scheduled completion: Winter 2002

Neighborhood Pride Center

Includes offices of Vine Street Coordinator

Coordination of Police, Buildings, Public Services Economic

Development, and other City services (a commitment to Clean and Safe in OTR)

Scheduled completion: Summer 2002

Findlay Market, Market House Expansion and Public Improvements
Expansion will double the size of the market and add food vendor space

City Investment: \$12,000,000

Scheduled completion: Summer 2003

Neighborhood Craft Market

Outdoor Vendor Space for residents to sell homemade crafts at Findlay Market

Anticipated investment: \$50,000

Scheduled completion: Summer of 2003

Empire Theater Renovation

Theater Renovation for live music and arts performances

City Investment: \$150,000

Private and State of Ohio Investment: \$850,000

Scheduled completion: End of 2002

1700 Block of Vine Target Renovations

City providing site assembly and building stabilization

RFP to be issued in summer 2002 to include proposals for rehabilitation and in-fill construction at 1701,03,05,07 – 1712,1714,1718 – 1721,23,25, and 1735,37,39.

City investment and private investment to be determined

Scheduled completion: To be determined

Streetscape and Parking Enhancements on Vine Street

Installation of street trees, landscape planters, and flower boxes

Improvements to various parking lots

City Investment: \$20,000

Scheduled completion: Summer 2002

Food Venture Center at Findlay Market

Shared use commercial kitchen located at 1638 Central Parkway

(city-owned facility)

FDA and USDA certified facility

Entrepreneurial development for food-based businesses

\$3,000,000 facility

Anticipated partners; City, State, Federal and Private Sources

Summary of Economic Development Investments

City Investment: \$12,520,000

The majority of these investments are on public facilities and infrastructure and do not have accompanying private investments.

Those projects that will also include private investment are currently being developed.

SAFETY



Figure 79: Improving police-community relations is key to safety and perception of safety in OTR. Photo courtesy of Julie Fay.

During the planning process, members of all the Issue Committees spent dozens of hours discussing potential strategies to achieve the goals of the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood. More often than not, however, committee members came to the conclusion that no strategy would be truly successful if OTR is not perceived to be a safe, clean place where people want to live and do business.

Perception is, indeed, the key. While it is of the utmost importance for the neighborhood to actually *be* safe and clean, it is also important for residents, workers and visitors to *feel* safe, and for outsiders in the Cincinnati region to think of OTR as a secure neighborhood.

For that reason, although no one Issue Committee addressed safety, the issue deserves special attention in a separate section. The Goals and Objectives in this section were actually derived from a discussion in the Quality of Life Committee; and the strategies were culled from various groups: the Quality of Life Committee, the Planning Steering Committee, the Over-the-Rhine Safety Committee, and the Cincinnati CAN (Community Action Now) Commission. The strategies suggested in this section are only a starting point. The OTR Safety Committee, the Plan Implementation Committee, the Cincinnati Police Department and other community groups must constantly monitor their progress in this area and change or add strategies when necessary.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Police/Community Relations

After the events of April 2001, the relationship between the Cincinnati Police Department and the OTR neighborhood has been somewhat tenuous, and sometimes hostile. Since the disturbances, there have been numerous studies, debates and judgments brought forward to suggest systemic changes to the manner in which the Police interact with the community and the manner in which the community interacts with the Police. The Cincinnati Police Department has taken a considerable hit in the theatre of public opinion, but has also been defended on several occasions for the dangerous and thankless job officers perform. Civic and religious leaders have been careful to point out that, as is true in any group of people, there are bound to be some who are less than fair, less than honorable, but that the majority of officers want to do a good job where they professionally and respectfully interact with the community. These leaders, including the CAN Commission and the OTR Safety Committee, are working directly with the Cincinnati Police to address the issues of police-community relations.

Crime and Perception of Crime

Crime is one of the central issues in the neighborhood, as all of the strategies suggested for improving the neighborhood depend on OTR being a safe neighborhood for everyone. Crime associated with drugs and drug trafficking pervades the neighborhood and the nature of this activity has become increasingly violent.

Fighting crime is only part of the equation; the other part is preventing crime and making the neighborhood unattractive for criminals. Physical improvements and additional development are an important part of preventing crime. Some issues directly related to crime, such as building vacancies, adequate lighting and neighborhood ap-

pearance can be addressed through this plan. Additionally, there are steps residents can take to address the issues of crime and incivility in the neighborhood. Some residents and employees take ownership in the community by cleaning the public areas in front of their buildings and telling loiterers that they are not welcome. A strong relationship between area residents and the Police will ultimately be important in addressing the issue of crime in this neighborhood.

Appearance of the Neighborhood

While some parts of OTR are well cared for, other pockets in the community have abundant litter, overgrown weeds, dilapidated and vacant buildings, abandoned cars and broken glass. Poor lighting, unattractive parking lots and the lack of a uniform design scheme only accentuates these problems. It will be an ongoing challenge for all community stakeholders to rid the neighborhood of these conditions. The opportunity lies in the positive benefits that can result from such an effort. The ongoing effort to rid the neighborhood of blight will not only improve the appearance, but will also make the neighborhood less attractive for criminals, safer for children to play, more attractive to businesses and friendlier to pedestrians.



Figure 80: Broken windows in a building on Race Street. Photo courtesy of Ken Cunningham and Associates.

SAFETY GOAL AND OBJECTIVES



Figure 81: Shoppers on Main Street. Photo courtesy of Julie Fay.

Goal 1: OTR will be safe, clean and visually appealing for residents and visitors

Objectives

- Make OTR free from litter and other unnecessary debris
- Improve the perception of the neighborhood's safety
- Foster a culture of mutual respect between community and police



*Figures 82 and 83: Litter and dilapidated buildings in OTR.
Photos courtesy of Kenneth Cunningham and Associates.*



KEY SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

Improvement in the Neighborhood's Appearance

Litter, dilapidated buildings and other physical disorder are common complaints in any neighborhood, but they seem to be more of a challenge in OTR. The neighborhood's appearance can be improved through the dedication of residents, property owners and city departments.

First and foremost, all residents of OTR must take responsibility for one small piece of the neighborhood, whether it is their block or just the area in front of their home. Responsibility does not mean just cleaning up the area, although that is certainly part of it. Residents must act territorially as well. This means asking people not to litter and pointing out that someone else will have to clean it up if they do. Residents, businesses and the Community Council can also take advantage of programs offered through Keep Cincinnati Beautiful.

Property owners, especially those who own rental property and do not live or work on the premises, must be especially attentive to the upkeep of their property. While residents are asked to take ownership of their surroundings, if they are renters, they will not be able to accomplish this unless they live in buildings that are structurally sound with attractive interiors and facades and well-kept grounds.

City departments such as Litter Patrol, the Police Department, and Buildings and Inspections also must be contacted regularly to report illegal dumping, abandoned cars and unsafe buildings. City departments must then respond to those reports. The Department of Buildings and Inspections has developed a list of deteriorated buildings and has indicated that they are willing to fund the demolition of some of these buildings. The Department of Public Services, who already focuses a great deal of attention in OTR, have increased their services in OTR through city crews and private contracts. Additional trash cans in heavily traveled areas will help to encourage proper disposal of litter and these trash cans must be collected regularly to prevent them from overflowing. In addition to cleaning up areas of disorder, many other efforts can be taken to beautify the neighborhood, as was discussed in the Quality of Life chapter.

Rebuilding Trust Between Community and Police

Cincinnati CAN has recently unveiled a list of recommendations to improve police-community relations. These recommendations, as well as all others suggested for the city as a whole, should and will be tailored to the OTR neighborhood in order to respect neighborhood wisdom and derive maximum effectiveness. Some of the components of the plan which have been well received in other City neighborhoods, and which are being presented to OTR for consideration, are as follows.

Ministerial/Grass Roots Outreach with Police – This faith-based initiative aims to build a bridge between the Police Department and the OTR neighborhood, with ministers and grass roots organization leaders as the link. Hopefully, this relationship between police and community leaders will be the beginning of a dialogue between the residents and the police.

Community Safety Initiative - This type of program, such as the one facilitated through LISC, concentrate on creating change through relationships between police and community development corporations. This allows an association to be formed between crime prevention and suppression and economic development activities. This type of program ties these two important activities together. As was stated at the beginning of the chapter, safety, the perception of safety and economic development are interrelated in OTR. If police and community development corporations were to form a bond, they would likely find that they have common goals and work together to achieve them.

Respectful, Safe Encounters Between Police and Community - Building a culture of mutual respect between community and officers.



Figure 84: OTR kids having fun in the summertime. Photo courtesy of Julie Fay.



Figure 85: A crowd gathers at a festival on Main Street. Photo courtesy of Julie Fay.

Focus on Neighborhood Youth

For any safety strategy to be successful, special attention must be given to young people in the neighborhood, in particular age 25 and younger. These Cincinnati CAN initiatives are particularly targeted at youth and young adults:

Youth Street Workers – Two part-time workers would work with youth in an informal setting on the streets, at recreation areas and other places where young people are known to congregate. These street workers would be available to counsel and mentor young people, especially at-risk youth. This position would be ideal for non-traditional workers, perhaps with a minor criminal record or personal experience with gangs, drugs or poverty. These workers would need to be very specialized, since the position requires credibility with young people and police alike.

Mentoring – In partnership with Big Brothers/Big Sisters and the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, Cincinnati CAN is reaching out to the faith community to find mentors, particularly for the most at-risk youth.

Juvenile Community Court – This program would be available for youth who have been ticketed for a misdemeanor, or in other words, stopped by the police but not arrested. A local magistrate would be assigned to meet approximately two times a month in a location determined by the neighborhood in partnership with Juvenile Court. In their neighborhood surroundings, youth would feel more at ease and could bring their parents, ministers or street workers to participate and help set a response plan. In appropriate cases, the magistrate could hear reasons to take the case off the docket, which can prevent the offense from going on the youth's permanent record. The purpose of this program is to divert at-risk juveniles from drifting further into criminal habits. This program was already proposed in other neighborhoods in Cincinnati, such as the neighborhood of Evanston, which is already operating this program at its neighborhood recreation center.

Unofficial Juvenile Community Court – This hearing setting is even more informal than the one described above. Intended for the same purpose, to divert juveniles and nip criminal behavior in the bud, this program would target a lower level of offense: a non-violent, minor misdemeanor committed by a first time offender. This would include status offenses such as curfew violation. A volunteer attorney would staff the program and hearings would be held at a designated location in the community. In many cases, offenders would be eligible for minor community service as punishment. Such a program is now successfully operating in the neighborhood of Avondale.

Police Activities League – A major tenet of most community policing programs, officers are encouraged to interact with youth on a more personal, social level. Activities can range from taking young people to cultural or sporting events, to helping them with homework or playing a game of pick-up basketball at the recreation center. This would help to build a more positive image of police officers.



Figure 86: A young OTR resident paints a pumpkin at a Main Street festival. Photo courtesy of Julie Fay.

Weed and Seed Type Programming

While Hamilton County already has three neighborhoods (the limit for a jurisdiction of this size) funded by the Department of Justice for a Weed and Seed strategy, a similar type of strategy would be beneficial to the OTR neighborhood. The first element could consist of “weeding” out the narcotics traffickers and violent criminals through increased, more intense law enforcement. Instead of returning criminals to the streets with little or no punishment, local law enforcement agencies could concentrate on suppression, adjudication and prosecution of criminals. The “seeding” element consists of neighborhood restoration, such as economic development activities, improved neighborhood services, and prevention, intervention and treatment activities, such as youth programming and other assistance offered by social service agencies. Holding this all together is a strong community-policing program.

Community Problem-Oriented Policing (CPOP)

Other large communities across the country have embraced the “SARA” model of problem-solving, a method of police training already used in Cincinnati’s Police Academy. CAN’s main goal is work with the Regional Community Policing Institute to train both community members with officers in problem identification (“scanning”), analysis, response and assessment (or “SARA”).

The recent Collaborative Agreement (settling a racial profiling lawsuit) also emphasizes this SARA model. The Collaborative Agreement in addition mandates an interdisciplinary approach where many City departments help citizens and Police implement the agreed-upon response to the jointly-identified safety problem.



Figure 87: A children's recreation area in OTR. Photo courtesy of Kenneth Cunningham and Associates.

PRIORITY SAFETY PROJECTS

The City is committed to the implementation of this Plan. The following projects are consistent with the Safety recommendations, are currently underway and are expected to be completed within the next 2-3 years.

Phase One Committed Projects

Implement the Community Problem-Oriented Policing program

The Police are actively implementing the CPOP program in Over the Rhine and throughout the City

City investment: \$1 Million each year for five years city-wide. Although this investment is city-wide, OTR will receive significant benefit.

Provide Additional Level of Clean-up

The City is currently conducting significant additional clean up activity with city crews and contracting with Impact OTR, New Prospect, and other service providers to provide trash pick-up in vacant lots, on Vine Street and other locations in the neighborhood.

City investment: \$800,000

TRANSPORTATION



Figure 88: A brick street in OTR.

Over-the-Rhine's transportation network can be very challenging. The neighborhood's location between downtown and the university/medical complex means that it must accommodate significant non-local traffic that is going from downtown to the University of Cincinnati and parts north. It is also a neighborhood with a strong pedestrian scale and an intention to stay that way. The challenge is to serve through-traffic and local circulation needs which are much more pedestrian and transit oriented in nature.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

There are several challenges associated with ensuring safe and efficient transportation in OTR while maintaining neighborhood scale. The transportation committee dealt with key issues relative to traffic congestion and safety for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians throughout the community. Increased public transit and parking options were also a priority. A few of these issues are described below.

The Street System

OTR has a street grid whose north/south system is a continuation of the downtown grid. This street network serves the needs of local vehicular and public transit travel as well as the needs of through traffic. Vine Street, Central Parkway and Liberty Street provide access from the Central Business District through several Cincinnati neighborhoods and into other municipalities.

Transportation must also accommodate traffic to some important destinations in the neighborhood. Music Hall, Findlay Market, Main Street, Rothenberg and Washington Park Elementary Schools and the School for the Creative and Performing Arts are all destinations that place different kinds of demands on the street network.

An integral part of the vehicular transportation system is parking. As the neighborhood is redeveloped, the demand for parking for housing, businesses and destinations will increase. The complexity of maintaining the pedestrian scale of the neighborhood and responding to the contemporary standard of development is going to mean that parking is always an issue. While this plan makes a series of recommendations about how we can handle the car as unobtrusively as possible, it also realizes that there will not be a space for everyone's car.

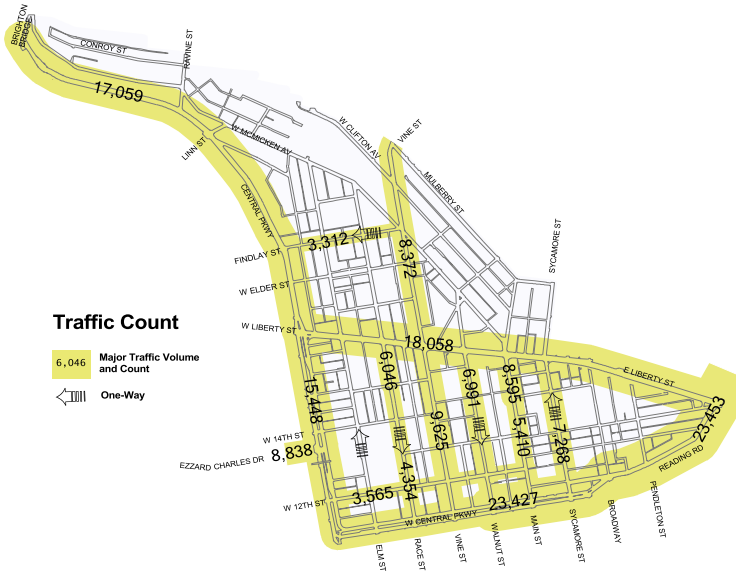


Figure 89: Traffic Volume. Thicker Shading = more traffic volume



Figure 90: Pedestrian Incidents

Pedestrian Circulation

Pedestrian circulation is critical to the needs of the residents, businesses and schools in OTR. Pedestrian circulation should link community open space, housing, schools, shopping, cultural destinations and all of the other amenities in the neighborhood for residents, visitors and the daily work force. Sidewalks, alleys and interior block walkways are all an important part of this system.

Public Transit

Public transit is a critical system for OTR. It provides transportation for many residents who do not own cars to get around in the neighborhood and downtown. Just as importantly, it provides a vital link between OTR residents and jobs elsewhere in the region. Public transit can be an important transportation choice for people with cars as well. The density and urban character of the neighborhood may make transit the preferred choice of many residents.

Metro bus service currently provides public transit in OTR. 14 bus routes serve the area. Five of these routes converge at the intersection of Vine, West McMicken and Findlay Streets, known as the Five Points Area on Vine Street.

There are many regional policy discussions occurring around transit improvements including greatly expanded and enhanced bus service, a light rail system and a trolley or streetcar system. OTR stands to benefit greatly from these types of systems. The kinds of mobility and economic development improvements that other communities across the country have experienced because of transit-oriented development have been very impressive. OTR has all the characteristics that could make transit oriented development and new transit systems successful in the neighborhood. How any of these improvements will physically impact the neighborhood will have to be studied carefully to avoid any negative impacts.

The discussion below identifies some of the issues that have been identified around the currently proposed alternatives:

MetroMoves Plan 2001

The MetroMoves Transit Plan has an objective to reduce traffic congestion while connecting people to jobs, neighborhoods to neighborhoods and suburbs to suburbs. Southwestern Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA)'s most dramatic plan for change in 30 years, creates new bus routes, all linked by a network of new, conveniently located transit hubs. It also allows for connections with light rail resulting in an improved public transportation system for residents of Greater Cincinnati. This regional effort will enhance transit operation in OTR and area wide.

The MetroMoves plan identifies several bus enhancements for OTR that are supported by this set of recommendations. They include; a transit hub in the vicinity of Liberty and Vine Streets, a new cross-town bus route along Liberty Street, an entertainment-related shuttle to service Main Street and other attractions such as Findlay Market and Music Hall, and upgraded transit-related amenities such as bus shelters.

I-71 Corridor Study and the Regional Rail Study

The Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI) is engaged in a study of the construction and operation of a light rail system in the region. The original proposed alignment for the I-71 route would go through OTR as a connection from downtown to the University of Cincinnati area. Current discussions in the Regional Rail Study have proposed a light rail alignment that would use more of the I-71 corridor and avoid the construction of a significant, expensive tunnel. In this scenario, OTR would be served by trolley service connected to the light rail line.

Central Area Loop Study

The loop circulator, a part of OKI's Transportation System Management (TSM) program, is designed to decrease traffic congestion and improve mobility to downtown Cincinnati, Covington and Newport while remaining cognizant of possible effects on the environment and on the historic neighborhoods. Techniques such as dedicated transit lanes and transit signal prioritization, traffic signal modification, lane stripping, added left-turn lanes and additional signage will be used. Buses will be the dominant transportation mode for the circulator. Additionally, the study recommends that modern trolley or streetcar service for downtown Cincinnati, Covington and Newport be examined further and incorporated into an overall Regional Rail Strategy. Furthermore, the OTR Transportation Committee supports coordinating with the Central Area Loop team.

Business/ Residential Parking Demand

There are many scattered parking lots throughout the district that are used by business patrons and residents. There is a need for additional off-street parking spaces, although a sea of paved parking lots is not desired. The demands primarily stem from business employees and patrons in OTR and the Downtown areas, particularly in the southern part of the neighborhood and along Main Street where there are significant business and entertainment activities. The erection of two new parking structures for commercial use, one in the vicinity Music Hall and the second in the vicinity of Main Street, should relieve specific problems and also free up more on-street parking for residents.

Beyond the structures mentioned above, additional parking needs could be handled with smaller "pocket parking lots." Vacant lots throughout the community can be used for parking to accommodate adjacent residential and business uses. The intention of this proposal is to provide off-street parking on existing vacant lots, some of them

dedicated spaces for residential uses and some open parking for shared use by businesses in an area. Securing properties for parking structures or parking surfaces in a mature inner-city neighborhood can be challenging. The goal is to integrate all parking into the fabric of the neighborhood by integrating it into mid-block lot or alley lots and not fronting it on major streets. Future development such as that on Main Street and along Liberty Street will result in increased parking demand south of Liberty Street. Other areas which will demand more parking facilities are Vine Street between 13th and Liberty Streets, the Music Hall area, the OTR Recreation Center and Main Street north of 12th Street.



Figure 91: Existing Off-Street Parking



Figure 92: Vine Street, looking north toward Liberty Street. Photo courtesy of Ken Cunningham and Associates.



Figure 93: Vine Street, looking south towards Central Parkway. Photo courtesy of Ken Cunningham and Associates.

Vine Street

As part of the ULI study recommendations and with support from the business community, Vine Street was converted from a one-way to a two-way street in 1999. The action was to be evaluated over time to determine its success in improving the climate for business along Vine Street and also to determine its impact on traffic flow. A final outcome on this project has not been reached. There has been much debate over this issue both in the planning process and in other forums. Vine Street is a tremendously important corridor in the neighborhood for many reasons: it carries a great deal of regional through-traffic between downtown and the university area; is the major neighborhood-serving retail corridor in the neighborhood; and it sets the image for the neighborhood and in many respects for the whole inner-Cincinnati area.

Ultimately, fully implementing the two-way system or converting Vine Street back to a one-way system will take additional study and more physical improvements.

The OTR Transportation Committee recommends further study of Vine Street and connecting roadways to weigh the following:

- Street direction and its impact on the overall circulation pattern for adjacent streets, OTR and the CBD
- Vehicular and pedestrian safety
- Traffic flow vs. “beneficial” congestion
- Parking and loading – on-street vs. off-street
- Emergency vehicle response times
- Current and future public transportation options
- Economic impact
- Urban design components

Liberty Street

Liberty Street is very important to OTR as a roadway facilitating traffic that includes automobiles, pedestrians and bicyclists' movement to and from the neighborhood and as a gateway. It is the only major east-west connection in the neighborhood and one of the few in the whole basin area. The city's Department of Transportation and Engineering in conjunction with Ken Cunningham and Associates and the community has created a streetscape proposal intended to improve the balance between pedestrian and vehicular traffic and greatly enhance the image of the corridor.



Figure 94: The Liberty Street/Reading Road intersection with improvements that create a regional auto gateway and larger-scaled pedestrian accessible public space. By Consultant - Design Team.

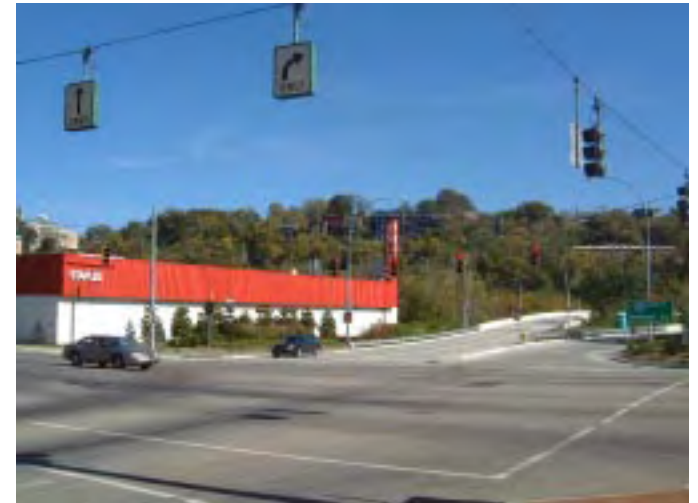


Figure 95: The intersection of Liberty Street and Reading Road.



Figure 96: The intersection of Liberty Street and Reading Road.

Central Parkway

Central Parkway restoration is supported by the community who remembers the roadway as previously designed as part of the Cincinnati Park System by prominent landscape architect George Kessler in 1907. Central Parkway, with more greenery, wider center islands and fewer vehicular lanes, served as a vital feature for nearby residents and pedestrians. Improvements, particularly the greening of the north and south spaces, could be made. However, given the high volume of traffic on this major east-west arterial, the elimination of lanes and widening the center island is not feasible.

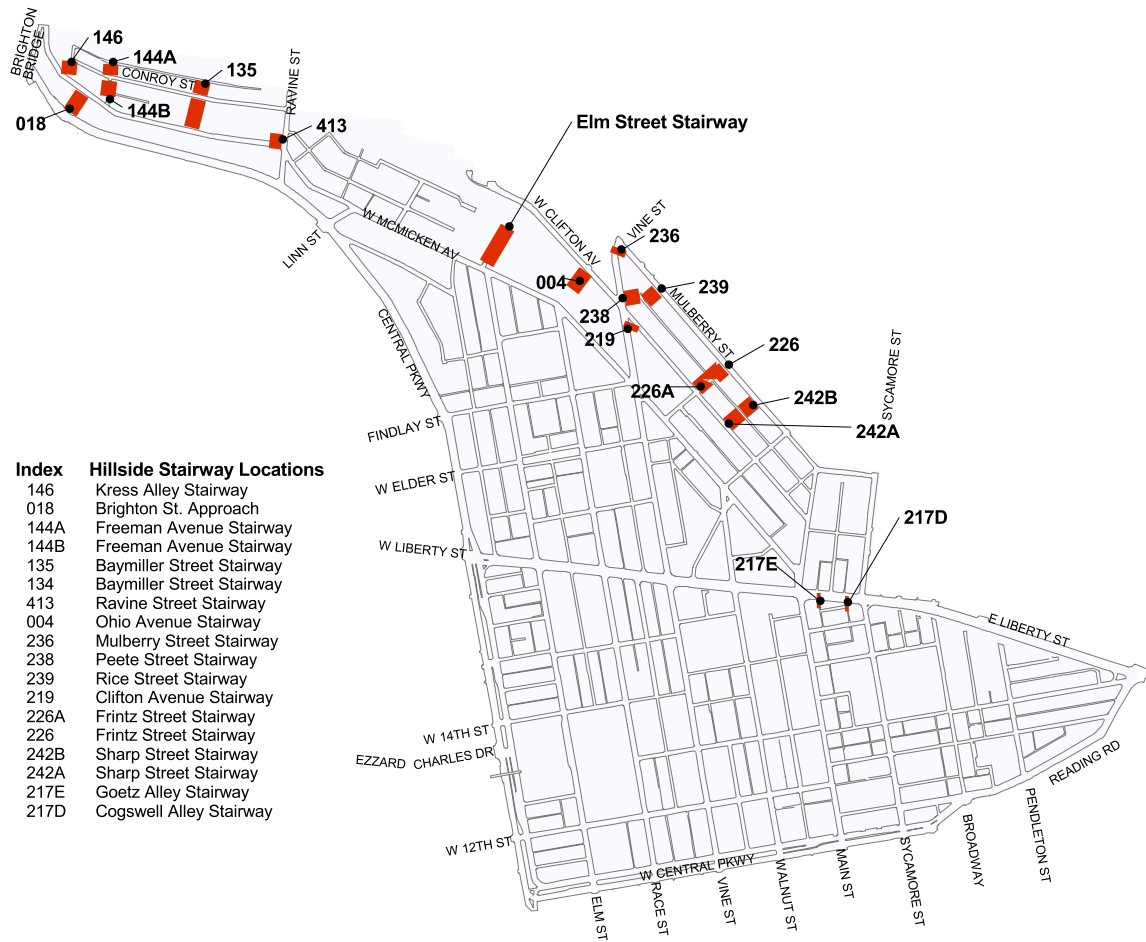
Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation

Walking and cycling are sensible and enjoyable modes of transport in a densely populated area such as OTR. There are also many residents of OTR who do not have access to an automobile and hence travel by foot or bicycle to area attractions including places of employment, entertainment and shopping centers. The plan stresses the importance of projects such as new curb ramps and street calming measures such as the reduction of motor vehicle speed and refuge islands to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety. Already, many people make use of these modes of transportation; the numbers are sure to increase as safety features are upgraded and signage leading to facilities in and around the community is improved.

Specifically, any circulation projects or improvements to major roadways such as Vine, Race, Main and Liberty Streets or Central Parkway should include appropriate signage for pedestrians and cyclists. In addition to facilitating movement between locations, such improvements should decrease jaywalking, risky cut-throughs and increase general safety.



Figure 97: A sketch of improvements to make the Liberty Street/Central Parkway intersection more pedestrian-friendly. By Consultant - Design Team.



Index	Hillside Stairway Locations
146	Kress Alley Stairway
018	Brighton St. Approach
144A	Freeman Avenue Stairway
144B	Freeman Avenue Stairway
135	Baymiller Street Stairway
134	Baymiller Street Stairway
413	Ravine Street Stairway
004	Ohio Avenue Stairway
236	Mulberry Street Stairway
238	Peete Street Stairway
239	Rice Street Stairway
219	Clifton Avenue Stairway
226A	Frintz Street Stairway
226	Frintz Street Stairway
242B	Sharp Street Stairway
242A	Sharp Street Stairway
217E	Goetz Alley Stairway
217D	Cogswell Alley Stairway

Figure 98: Stairways in OTR.

Preservation of Hillside Steps

Stairs are valuable resources in the community, and are considered rights-of-way and therefore fall under the city’s jurisdiction. The city maintains 362 stairways citywide, 18 of them in OTR, under its Hillside Stairway Program in the Department of Transportation and Engineering. In the Hillside Stairway Program, the city staff engages the community before adding or abandoning a stairway. The program also includes a process that enables the communities to prioritize steps for up-keep and closure. Closing and removing steps can be accomplished with City Council’s approval.

Hillside steps in the neighborhood should be preserved and maintained. The Elm Street Stairway between McMicken and Clifton Avenues is on the list to be preserved together with several others in OTR.

TRANSPORTATION GOAL AND OBJECTIVES



Figure 99: A Metro bus with St. Phillipus Church in the background.

Goal: Ensure circulation of pedestrians to, from and within OTR while maintaining a neighborhood scale.

Objectives:

- Facilitate both local and through travel
- Improve public transit opportunities for residents
- Encourage more pedestrian friendly roadway and pathway networks
- Increase off-street and on-street parking opportunities without impacting the urban fabric or historic character of the neighborhood



Figure 100: Liberty Street between Sycamore and Vine Streets in 1955 before street widening.

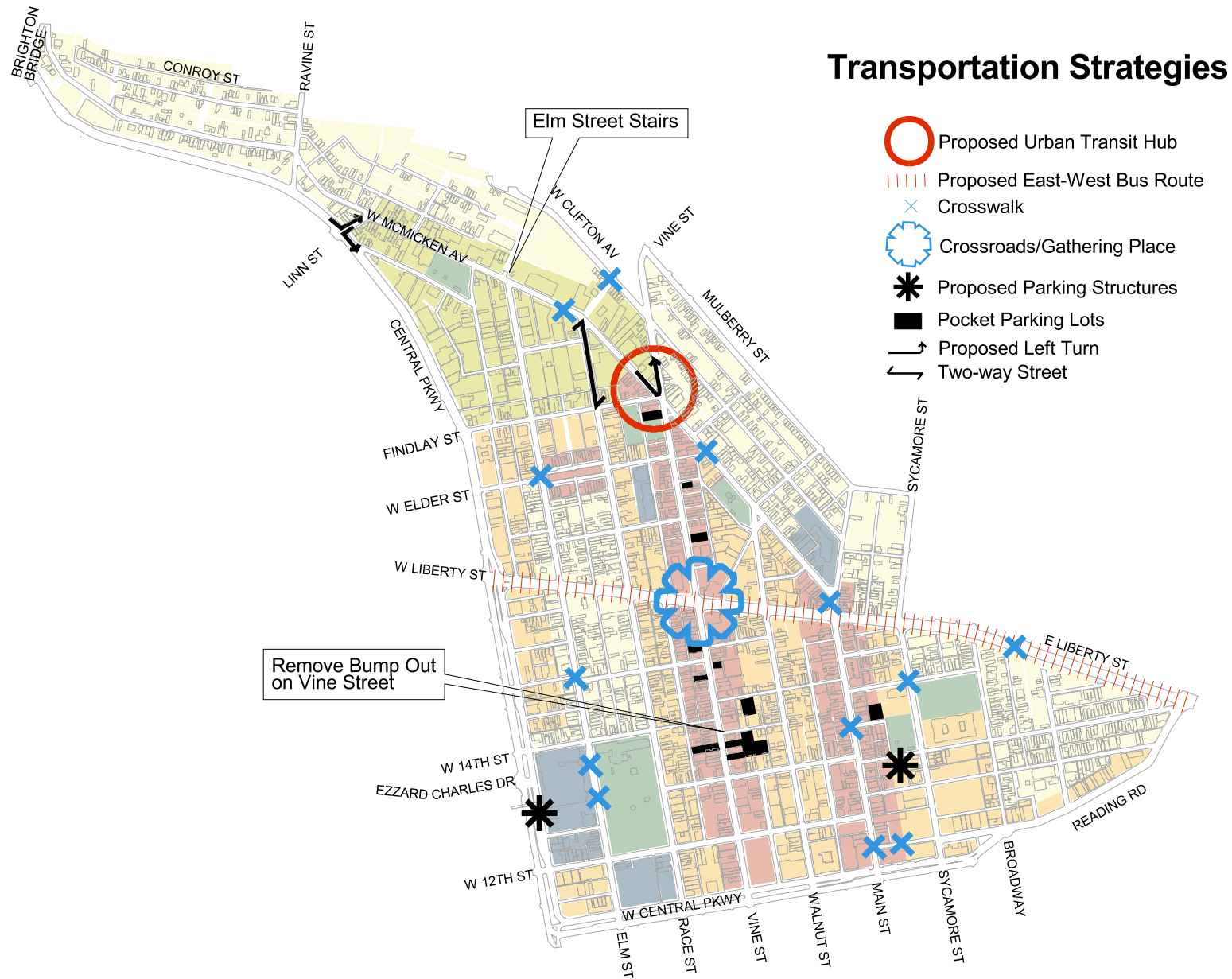


Figure 101: Transportation Strategy Map



Figure 102: Accommodate MetroMoves' proposed new bus hub and possible lightrail line in a redesigned space at the intersection of Liberty and Vine Streets. This public space is designed to accommodate bus shelters that would be dispersed along Liberty rather than concentrated on a single small area such as the CBD's Government Center. This will promote pedestrian movement throughout the intersection and reduce the negative impact of concentrated bus traffic. By Consultant - Design Team.

KEY TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Numerous strategies and projects were identified for OTR. The following is a listing of some of the most significant project recommendations.

Improve Transit Opportunities

Endorse the concept of some type of rail transit through OTR. There is support for some type of new trolley or light rail system to serve OTR. A new system will better serve OTR residents and provide the opportunity for expanded economic development opportunities around transit oriented development locations. As indicated, two key locations for this area will be Liberty and Vine Streets and the Five Points intersection.

Endorse the MetroMoves Plan. OTR supports the increased bus service and transit center or hub concepts as presented in MetroMoves. A shuttle service within OTR and downtown, for day-to-day business, as well as area attractions, is recommended to improve convenience, circulation and vitality for residents, workers and visitors. A Main Street entertainment-related shuttle and other tourist attractions at establishments such as Findlay Market and at neighborhood shelters should be established. The new shuttle should access key destinations for residents, workers and tourists.

Seek coordination with the Central Area Loop Plan. A local circulator or shuttle for the residents and visitors to promote travel between destinations in Over-the-Rhine, downtown, Covington and Newport should be established. Regular buses or trolleys should be used and should connect to the light rail system serving the Greater Cincinnati region.

Support a transit hub at Vine and Liberty Streets as well as improved bus stop amenities with an OTR identity. The hub will provide safer, friendlier stops for riders on several buses connecting at this location.

Improve Pedestrian Network to Support a Walkable Community

Support the design and construction of pedestrian safety measures coordinating with gateways and green space initiatives at the following locations:

- Liberty Street – review geometry and operation of Liberty Street from Central Parkway to Reading Road, introducing bump-outs, islands, street lighting and landscaping elements as needed to facilitate greater use by pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Central Parkway – review geometry and operation of Central Parkway from Twelfth Street to Reading Road, introducing bump-outs, island modifications and landscaping elements as needed.
- Improve street lighting in OTR, where possible, or as part of any streetscape improvements.
- Install zebra type crosswalk markings on pavement at non-signalized or non stop sign controlled street locations such as at Vine and Liberty Streets and Liberty Hill and Vine Streets. Signage relating to crosswalks should be improved where needed.
- Install gateways to enhance the pedestrian character at key intersections at Vine Street and Clifton Avenue; Liberty Street and Reading Road; Sycamore Street and Reading Road; and Central Parkway and Liberty Street.
- Support the retention and improvement of existing and construction of new walkways and stairs as well as the retention of alleys when part of the pedestrian network. Pedestrian and bicycle circulation is important to the neighborhood and should be preserved as a part of construction or redevelopment projects by the City or private developers. We will strive to preserve alleys wherever possible. On a case-by-case basis some alleys may be abandoned as part of new development projects, following full evaluation of the impact on the pedestrian network.



Figure 103: Make roadway improvements and changes to improve the functional and visual connectivity to and within the district. An example of this type of intervention is the proposed widening of the East end of Elder Street. This change provides a direct vehicular and visual connection to McMicken Street. This will allow clear visual access from the north-south arterial streets West to Findlay Market. The market has long benefited from a clear connection to Central Parkway at the West end of Elder. This improvement would allow similar benefits to the East end of Elder Street.

Maximize pedestrian movement connectivity and district cohesiveness through a clear and pleasant network of pathways. Emphasize and reinforce existing system of alleys, pathway, and tertiary streets for through block movement patterns that promote connections between intimate urban areas. These inner-block pedestrian oriented pathways can be, when improved through appropriate landscape, streetscape, and urban design interventions, the focal points of sub-block community clusters of housing. They connect these clusters to the major activity anchors such as Findlay Market, Recreation center, Vine Street Playground and Washington Park. Special paving and an urban landscape are recommended. By Consultant - Design Team.

Support the construction of parking garages and pocket parking lots.

Construct two new parking structures: one on the existing parking lot near Peaslee Neighborhood Center on Sycamore Street and one in the vicinity of the new School of Creative and Performing Arts, near Music Hall and Washington Park. Additional study on these proposed parking structures should be done to ensure the economic feasibility.

Create pocket parking lots along Vine Street. Pocket parking lots should be located on Vine Street. A way-finding system of special neighborhood signage should also be designed for these neighborhood lots and placed to guide motorists to the facilities.

The plan recognizes the key role these parking facilities and lots play and the need to improve the appearance of these lots by providing appropriate landscaping. The plan urges the adoption of specific guidelines for parking lots described for the OTR (North) Historic District recently approved and adopted by the City Planning Commission and City Council.

The guidelines are paraphrased as: Cars in parking lots should be screened from public view. Appropriate screening includes low masonry walls in conjunction with planting areas and landscaping, low masonry walls with wrought iron fencing and planting areas with landscaping and wrought iron fencing. Chain link fence along sidewalks is inappropriate. Lots with a capacity of ten or more cars should contain trees within the lot as well as around the perimeter of the lot. Concrete curbs, not rolled asphalt bumpers, are appropriate edges of parking lots.



Figure 104: Provide more parking in dispersed small surface lots or in large underground/above ground structured Parking. Providing parking throughout OTR is critical to the vitality of all neighborhood business enterprises, especially Findlay Market, as well as to the viability of existing and new housing opportunities. Small areas of surface parking are acceptable uses in the each sub-neighborhood as long as they are compatible with surrounding buildings and pedestrian spaces. Dispersing all types of parking promotes pedestrian traffic that may support business activity and street vitality throughout. Wherever possible, parking should be located underground below other uses, such as housing. Independent aboveground parking structures may be appropriate in areas that are more commercial. Such parking concentrations should be distributed strategically in locations that serve the highest demand, and the location and design of parking should be related to the neighborhood uses.

In areas of highest concentrated demand, (along Vine, Main, Elder, 12th, Liberty, and Central Parkway) shared parking should be provided through lot consolidations and parcel assembly for structured parking. Ideally, these locations would be located mid-block, shielded from street frontage, perhaps by other uses, and situated in existing urban service areas away from concentrated housing districts. (See illustration on page 10).

Structured parking is appropriate fronting Central Parkway, if it is accessed from Central and housed in multi-story buildings that are screened by historically architecturally appropriate cladding and include street-level retail and office space. By Consultant - Design Team.



Figure 105: Parking for residential use should be provided in each sub-neighborhood with particular attention to how it may be configured to support multi-family building clusters and single-family owner occupied housing.

Small “pocket” shared surface parking lots can support some multi-family building clusters. “Pocket” shared surface parking may be substituted for infill development in some, but not all cases, of the secondary and tertiary streets, depending on location, benefit, and the existing density of the surrounding built environment.

On-site parking for new or rehabbed single family structures (proposed on tertiary streets) is essential and should be provided through side yard setbacks for front driveway entry, front entry (single bay only) garage under living space, and preferably through rear yard entries from alleys. Entry to shared parking lots is also preferred from internal block alleys.

Proposed new east-west alley connections as suggested in the Findlay Market District will facilitate access to inner-block parking. The design of existing alleys should be studied to facilitate improvement for auto access, such as enlarging narrow alley curb restraints by lowering the curbs until the alley surface brick is nearly flush with the curbs and preserving the historical materials while possibly adding new material to widen the alley. By Consultant - Design Team.



Figure 106: Public open space with green elements are appropriate to special places in the community, such as at the “community focal point” and transportation hub proposed at the intersection of Vine and Liberty Streets. By Consultant - Design Team.

Support the study and evaluation of the following traffic improvements, with implementation as recommended.

Minor traffic signal changes and other related Transportation Systems Management (TSM) improvements are necessary to better serve the needs of businesses and residents within the community. The recommended TSM improvements are:

- Left turn from Mohawk Street to Central Parkway
- Two way conversion of Race Street from Findlay Street to McMicken Avenue

- Study of Vine Street – economics vs. safety / one-way vs. two-way/ urban design characteristics of both/integration with, and impact on, the entire OTR transportation network, including the potential for future public transportation improvements

- Twelfth Street and Central Parkway southbound left turn analysis – should be studied and any recommended changes should be included with the new K-12 Arts School development



Figure 107 and 108: Green space development can function to enhance major arterial gateways, such as Liberty/Reading and Liberty/Central. Provide clear wayfinding systems and gateways for the neighborhood that facilitates movement within the area and from regional arterials (I-75/71) to the district. This includes improvements at two scales. At the citywide auto-oriented scale, landscaped gateways are proposed at the east and west ends of Liberty with a coordinated auto-oriented wayfinding and lighting system. At the pedestrian scale a pedestrian oriented lighting system, place-makers, and other identity elements that include adaptations for the sight and hearing impaired are proposed. By Consultant - Design Team.

PRIORITY TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

The City is committed to the implementation of this Plan. The following projects are consistent with the Transportation recommendations, are currently underway and are expected to be completed within the next 2-3 years.

Phase One Committed Projects Completed by the end of 2004

Vine Street Circulation Study

Study to determine the best traffic circulation patterns for Vine Street including consideration for transit and enhanced bus service

City investment: \$33,000

Implement Traffic System Management (TSM) Upgrades

Implementation of a number of specific traffic enhancement including: Mohawk left turn

Investment to be determined

QUALITY OF LIFE



Figure 109: Children reading at day camp. Photo courtesy of the Art Academy of Cincinnati.

Retaining and enhancing neighborhood character is key to the quality of life in any neighborhood. In Over-the-Rhine this is especially true, since its residents and other stakeholders take an enormous amount of pride in the community's multi-cultural residential and business population, diverse retail and cultural and entertainment alternatives and pedestrian lifestyle in which the street acts as the neighborhood's living room.

This unique urban lifestyle takes place, in part, due to the neighborhood's exceptional built environment. This environment also creates a new challenge: How does a 19th-century community retain its physical character while adjusting to the needs of modern life? While we make room for modern-day necessities, such as larger sites for schools and parks, and the cars and parking structures that will accompany additional residents, we also need to preserve and enhance those characteristics that define OTR. This would include its historic buildings, existing greenspace, pedestrian focus and reputation as a place for diverse groups of people to live, work and visit.

With this in mind, almost any issue could be lumped under the category "quality of life." Because of this, committee members elected to narrow the focus from a myriad of possibilities to a handful of key issues. The crux of the committee's concerns is the quality of education and recreational activities for local youth. They also discussed ways to improve the appearance of the neighborhood, many of which may also play a role in the level of and perception of safety in the neighborhood. In addition, they focused on the many cultural resources in the neighborhood and how to maximize those institutions and their contribution to the neighborhood and the city.

Schools

Community residents consider OTR's educational institutions, both public and private, to be one of the neighborhood's greatest assets. Dedicated teachers and administrators provide children with excellent adult role models and parents consider the schools to be safe places. Many parents choose to live in a part of the neighborhood that is close to their children's school, allowing their children to walk to and from school.

There are four public schools. *Washington Park Elementary* serves the largest number of children in OTR, drawing children from as far north as W. McMicken Avenue, east to Race Street and south into downtown. *Rothenberg Elementary* serves children living in the central portion of the neighborhood north of Liberty Street and those living in Pendleton. *Vine Street Elementary*, located in Mt. Auburn, serves children from the northernmost streets in the Mohawk area. The *School for Creative and Performing Arts (SCPA)*, Cincinnati's public magnet arts school for students in grades 4 through 12, serves students living throughout the Cincinnati region. Programs at SCPA include music, creative writing, dance, entertainment marketing, technical theatre and visual arts.

In addition, OTR is home to three private schools. *St. Francis Seraph* and *St. Peter Claver Boys Latin School* are Catholic elementary schools and *W.E.B. DuBois* is a Charter School. There will be an entrepreneurial charter high school in the neighborhood as well.

The quality and effectiveness of the schools are a key element to the quality of life in OTR. In OTR, nearly 33% of the population is age 19 or younger, with more than 20% school-age children. Of the 1802 children living in OTR enrolled in public or private school, over 45% attend one of the three existing elementary schools in OTR. OTR parents should want to send their children there not just because they are the closest schools, but also because they offer the highest quality programming and facilities available. For that reason, the decisions made during the Cincinnati Public Schools Master Planning are crucial to the future of OTR's children.

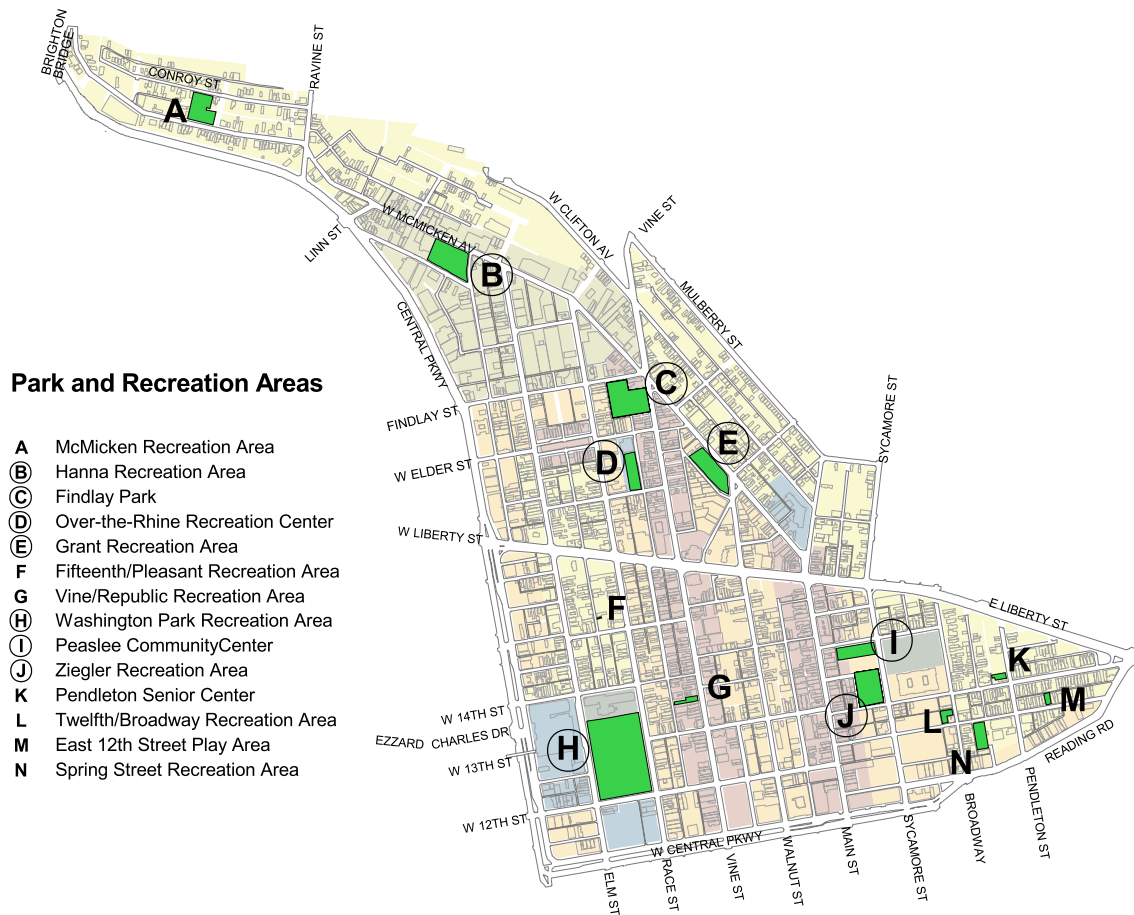


Figure 110: Schools in OTR

According to the Cincinnati Public Schools Master Plan, *Vine Elementary School* will likely be closed with children transferred to either Washington Park School or Rothenberg School. *Rothenberg School* will likely be renovated onsite. *Washington Park School* may be rebuilt in its current location or on property that is currently a parking lot immediately south of Washington Park, between 12th Street and Central Parkway. The *SCPA* is also slated for changes; currently an effort is underway to raise enough money to build a new K-12 Arts campus adjacent to Music Hall. If relocation occurs, the current *SCPA* would likely be closed and available for other uses.

Since schools are a cornerstone in the lives of the neighborhood's children as well as one of the neighborhood's assets, any changes, even when for the better, may cause a certain amount of disruption to the community. In addition, some members of the community do not approve of the proposed relocation of *SCPA*. Identification of these challenges now provides the opportunity for Cincinnati Public Schools to address these issues in their planning process.

Students, teachers, administrators and parents will all be included in decisions regarding the location of schools and the amenities and programming provided. One step in this direction was the formation of a working group made up of parents, teachers, Local School Decision-Making Committees (LSDMCs), school board representatives, this plan's Quality of Life committee and other community leaders. Facilitated by the Children's Defense Fund, using the Concordia process, this group will ensure that all stakeholders are included in the decisions made about the facilities' improvements and programming changes in the OTR schools. This plan makes some specific recommendations regarding school locations and schools as important anchors in the neighborhood.



Park and Recreation Areas

- A McMicken Recreation Area
- B Hanna Recreation Area
- C Findlay Park
- D Over-the-Rhine Recreation Center
- E Grant Recreation Area
- F Fifteenth/Pleasant Recreation Area
- G Vine/Republic Recreation Area
- H Washington Park Recreation Area
- I Peaslee Community Center
- J Ziegler Recreation Area
- K Pendleton Senior Center
- L Twelfth/Broadway Recreation Area
- M East 12th Street Play Area
- N Spring Street Recreation Area

Figure 111: Parks and Recreation Areas in OTR. The circled letters denote sites specifically addressed in this plan.

Parks and Outdoor Recreation Areas

OTR has a total of 12 city-operated parks and outdoor recreation areas totaling approximately 13 acres. These parks provide a number of outdoor pools, recreational play equipment and athletic courts.

Community Centers and Youth Programs

OTR also has a number of community centers providing educational and recreational activities. The *OTR Recreation Center*, located one block southeast of Findlay Market, is operated by the Cincinnati Recreation Commission (CRC). It provides programming for children and adults including an indoor pool, indoor skating rink, weight room and game room. The *Peaslee Neighborhood Center*, operated by community volunteers, provides homework rooms, daycare and arts education, including the Over-the-Rhine Steel Drum Band, which is well known in Cincinnati.

The Salvation Army provides an after-school program, a summer day camp and community service projects for neighborhood children and teens. *Volunteers of America CAN-Do Program* focuses on encouraging local teens to finish high school and attend college. Their teen club provides positive social activities for local youth. The *Boys and Girls Club of Cincinnati*, *Emanuel Community Center* and *Urban Appalachian Council Center* also play a significant role in the lives of residents.



Figure 112: A Community Garden in OTR.

Greenspace and Hillside

While most of the neighborhood is located in a very urban environment with little tree coverage, some vacant parcels on steep hillsides have extensive tree coverage. The OTR Community Council has promoted tree planting along Race and Elm Streets, making those streets particularly pleasant and visually appealing for residents and other users of those streets. Additional trees in other places throughout the neighborhood will enhance areas frequently used by pedestrians.

Greenspace is also scattered throughout the neighborhood in the form of community gardens. These small gardens are surrounded by homes and businesses are tended by local families, children and other residents. IMPACT OTR and the Cincinnati Civic Garden Club, two area community groups, will help to create a suitable place for a garden and educate the residents about planting and tending to the gardens. IMPACT volunteers also work with area youth to teach horticultural skills. Interested youth can enter the program, learn to prepare and cultivate a garden and turn a profit from the harvest at Findlay Market.

Cultural Institutions and Destinations

OTR is home to some of the region's most enduring cultural institutions: Music Hall, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Cincinnati Opera, Memorial Hall and Findlay Market. These and other destinations, like the SCPA, the Pendleton Arts Center, the Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati, Gabriel's Corner, Uptown Arts and the future site of the Art Academy of Cincinnati, provide a rich set of resources to the entire Cincinnati community. These regional cultural destinations draw many visitors from the Cincinnati region to OTR and have the ability to provide residents with unique opportunities.

In addition to these very visible cultural institutions, OTR also houses

an untold number of individuals and community groups who host and participate in both traditional and non-traditional cultural activities. Individuals and groups involved in cultural activities include musicians, writers, designers, spoken-word performance artists, painters, sculptors, photographers and folk artists. Several youth organizations sponsor arts programs. Additionally, outside artists and musicians are drawn to the neighborhood for its studio space, its diverse population and its proximity to downtown, other arts organizations and public transportation.

Such cultural and artistic variety is one of the most unique aspects of OTR as it offers what no other neighborhood in Cincinnati can. The challenge is to make connections between all of these resources and neighborhood residents and between regional patrons and the neighborhood.



Figure 113: Cultural Destinations in OTR



Figure 114: Actors at Ensemble Theatre interacting with visiting students. Photo courtesy of Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Parks and Recreation Areas

While residents often use some of the parks, others are rarely used, either because they have out-of-date equipment or have become dilapidated or are perceived as unsafe. Specifically, *Washington Park* is in need of general updates including modernization of its public restroom. *Grant Park's* basketball courts are in disrepair and the park needs additional trees and other plantings. Some parks and recreation areas are not easily accessible, such as Ziegler and Findlay Market Recreation Areas. Both have facilities that are in fairly good condition, but lack a logical connection between other well-used community centers. *Ziegler* is near the Peaslee Neighborhood Center, but one has to cross a sea of fencing and parking to travel between the two. Such is also the case for the *Findlay Market Recreation Area*, which is located less than a block away from the OTR Recreation Center, but again there is no direct, visible connection. Specific improvements to the parks and recreation areas will greatly enhance the quality of life for the neighborhood children.

Relationship Between Cultural Organizations and Residents

Arts and cultural institutions have been an integral part of OTR for a century. The opportunities they present have always drawn people to this neighborhood. In the last 20 years however, the relationship between arts organizations and area residents has sometimes been difficult. Individual artists and non-traditional artistic and cultural groups have not always had the same resources or patrons as the regional cultural destinations. Some residents do not have the resources to patronize the traditional cultural destinations in the neighborhood. This has caused a strain between the residents and the regional cultural destinations such as Music Hall, Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati and SCPA.

The cultural destinations in OTR have regional significance, but some residents fail to see how their presence can benefit their lives. Some cultural organizations, such as the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and the Cincinnati Opera, have made efforts to reach out to embrace neighborhood residents. Some organizations have not made such efforts, however, and some residents feel that the cultural groups do not respect them. These efforts could be expanded throughout the arts community. If future alliances are forged between residents and cultural organizations, there is tremendous possibility for further interaction and mutual appreciation.



Figure 115: A view of Memorial Hall from the gazebo in Washington Park. Photo courtesy of Kenneth Cunningham and Associates.

Neighborhood Appearance

While some parts of OTR are well cared for, other pockets in the community have abundant litter, overgrown weeds, dilapidated and vacant buildings, abandoned cars and broken glass. Poor lighting, unattractive parking lots and the lack of a uniform design scheme only accentuate these problems.

The city's Department of Public Services has various work crews picking up litter and emptying city-owned cans in OTR from 5 a.m. until 9 p.m. daily. One crew works specifically on Vine Street, picking up litter on foot, and Vine Street is also cleaned with a mechanical sweeper nightly. Some residents, employees and property owners also tend to the area surrounding their buildings. Somehow, the debris continues to be an issue.

It will be an ongoing challenge for all community stakeholders to rid the neighborhood of these conditions. The opportunity lies in the positive benefits that can result from such an effort. The ongoing effort to rid the neighborhood of blight will not only improve the appearance, but will also make the neighborhood less attractive for criminals, safer for children to play, more attractive to businesses and more pedestrian-friendly in general.



Figure 116: An overgrown lot strewn with debris. Photo courtesy of Kenneth Cunningham and Associates.

QUALITY OF LIFE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Create and maintain open space that serves the whole community

Objectives

- Establish well-maintained greenspace throughout the community
- Begin planting trees immediately so that tree canopy is increased from 16% to 25% by 2020

Goal 2: Establish parks and recreation areas and centers that are accessible, well maintained and meet the needs of the community

Objectives

- Improve safety of parks and recreation areas
- Provide a variety of facilities and programs in parks and recreation areas
- Parks and recreation areas should be regularly maintained, updated and assessed

Goal 3: Establish OTR schools as community anchors that provide outstanding educational opportunities and meet the needs of all residents

Objective

- Encourage schools to be resources for the entire community, offering both youth and adult programs

Goal 4: Encourage a diverse mix of cultural organizations and destinations. Destinations should be accessible, affordable, diverse and user-friendly

Objectives

- Celebrate OTR's history and diversity of peoples and individuals
- Increase diversity of cultural offerings and patronage
- Foster mutual appreciation between neighborhood residents, businesses and visitors to the neighborhood
- Recognize the value of local and regional arts and cultural destinations within the neighborhood
- Challenge existing destinations to increase their accessibility to residents of OTR

Goal 5: OTR will be clean and visually appealing for residents and visitors

Objectives

- Make OTR free from litter and other unnecessary debris
- Enhance the neighborhood's character with visual improvements that provide a sense of place
- Encourage public improvements that retain the neighborhood's historic urban character

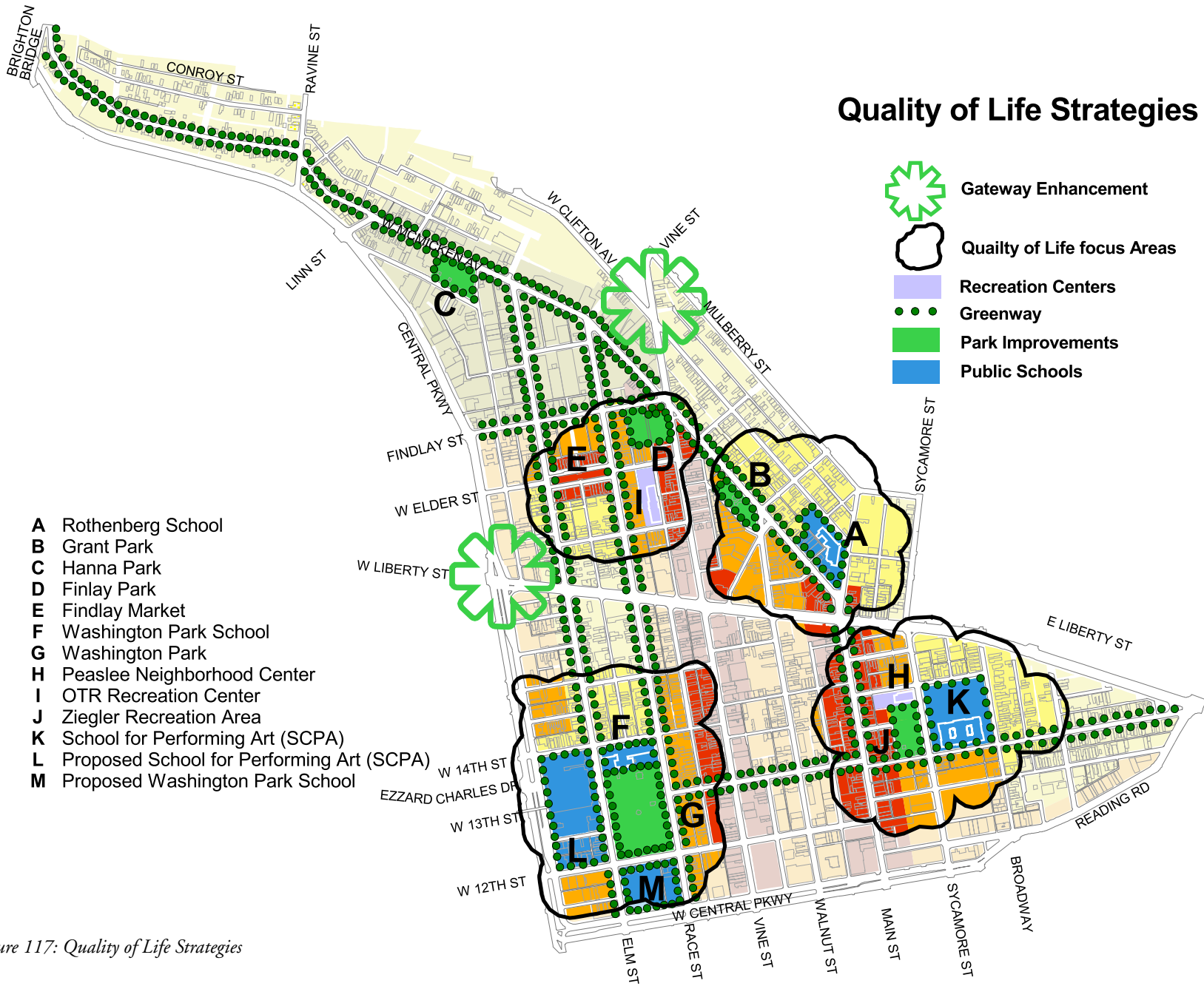


Figure 117: Quality of Life Strategies

KEY QUALITY OF LIFE RECOMMENDATIONS

School Renovation and New Construction

The most significant recommendations focus on major improvements to area public schools. The ability of the two neighborhood schools and one magnet school to serve as anchors for the neighborhood is greatly improved by the plans of the Cincinnati Public Schools. In addition to upgraded schools, this plan recommends further enhancement of these institutions by focusing housing investment in areas surrounding these institutional improvements. This will provide the opportunity to provide a new and stronger environment for families and children in two important locations.

Rothenberg School should be renovated and expanded with additional open space attached to the school and better pedestrian connections to nearby open spaces. This will provide a key neighborhood anchor north of Liberty Street and a focus to targeted housing renovation and new infill construction along McMicken Avenue, E. Clifton Avenue, Mulberry Street and up the hillside.

Washington Park School is a strong school with a committed teacher and parent community. It, too, should provide a strong anchor and focus to its part of the community. The current proposals for improvements include a new school in its current location or a new school immediately south of Washington Park and the community visioning process indicates preference for the new site south of Washington Park. Either site may be appropriate, but each has design issues and problems to resolve.



Figure 118: A map showing the potential new site for Washington Park School south of 12th Street. Opportunities to expand and add to existing community green space should be pursued. Where major new public facilities are developed (such as the possible new Washington Park School) the incorporation of new public green space in the development is encouraged, especially where it can be connecting to other green spaces. By Consultant - Design Team.

Park and Recreation Rehabilitation

Improvements to Existing Parks and Recreation Areas

Of the 12 public-owned parks and recreation areas in OTR, this plan makes specific recommendations for five of the sites with general recommendations for the remaining seven. The five specifically addressed in this plan are *Washington Park*, *Hanna Park*, *Ziegler Recreation Area*, *Grant Park* and *Findlay Recreation Area*. The remaining are primarily pocket parks and recreation areas scattered throughout the neighborhood, which provide passive recreation, playground equipment or vacant land.

Many of the recommended improvements are already in some stage of planning or construction. *Hanna Park* is scheduled for improvements by August 2002 by replacing the out-of-date basketball courts with a pool and “sprayground.” *Grant Park* is also scheduled for renovation with larger trees, new equipment and updated basketball courts. *Washington Park* is in the process of receiving upgrades to its public restroom, enhanced lighting and additional benches and tables.

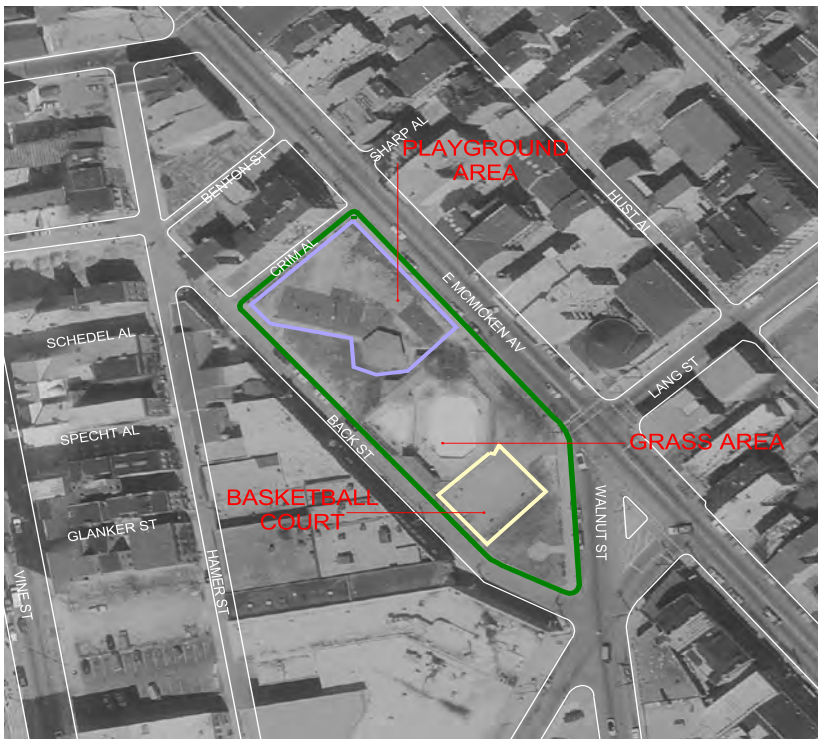


Figure 119: Scheduled improvements to Grant Park.

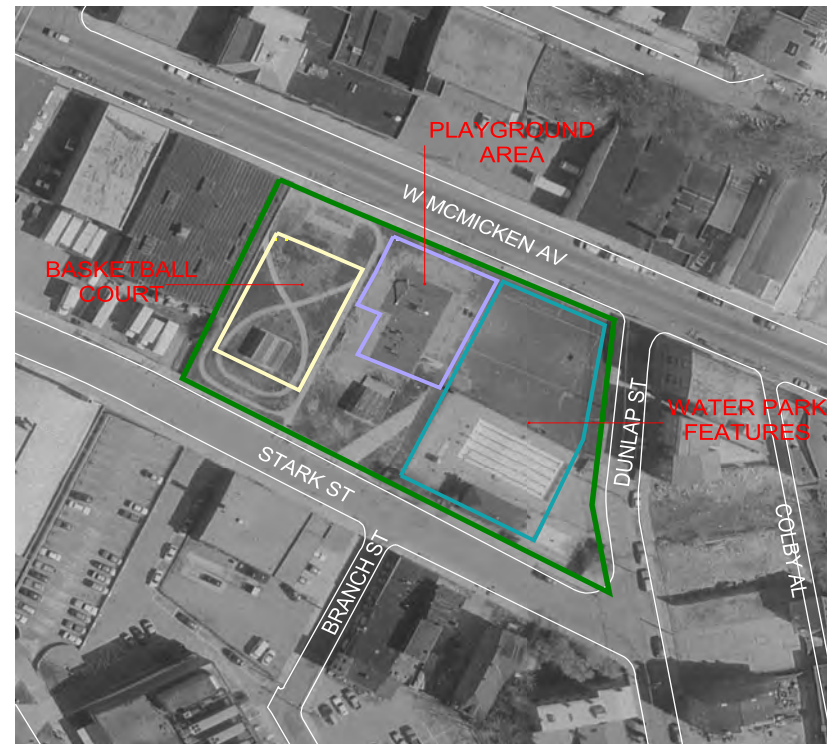


Figure 120: Scheduled improvements to Hanna Park.

The land surrounding *Ziegler Recreation Area* should be reconfigured in order to provide a better connection between Ziegler and Peaslee Neighborhood Center. Moving the Ziegler basketball courts to the site of the parking lot that currently separates the two would help to expand the outdoor play space for the day care center, and make it easier for children at Peaslee to safely access Ziegler Recreation Area. By placing a parking lot in the current location of the basketball courts, local businesses would also have access to much-needed parking. (Please see the Economic Development and Transportation sections of this plan.)

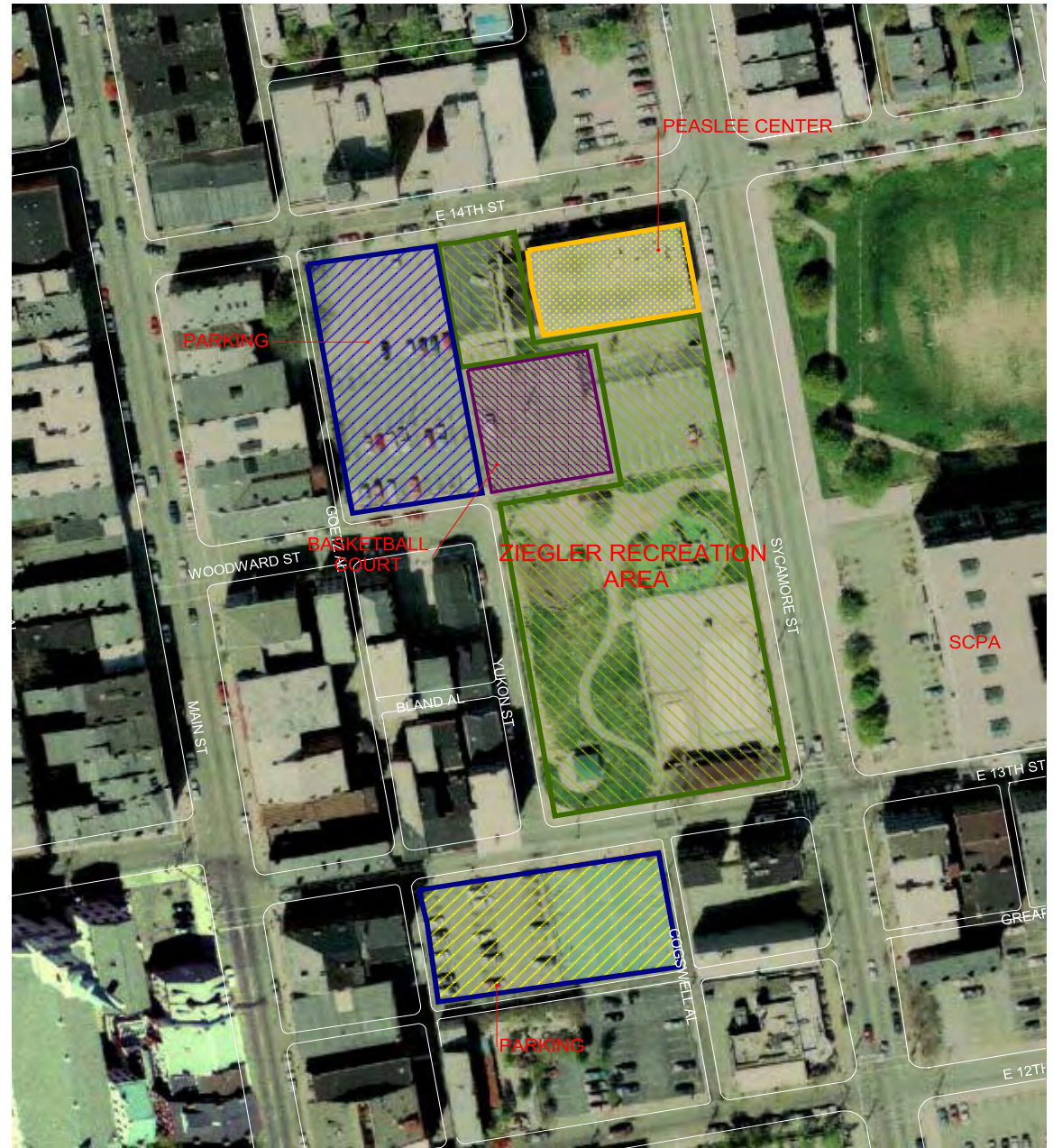


Figure 121: A proposed site plan for reconfiguration of the land surrounding Ziegler Recreation Area. For illustrative purposes only.

The *OTR Recreation Center's* entrance should be made more accessible and visible from Elder Street. This facility should expand further and become more connected to Findlay Market, the Findlay Recreation Area and Vine Street. Integrating the City's Employment and Training Center and the Recreation Center into a more unified building complex and creating a more visible entrance for the complex on Elder Street could accomplish this. The alleyway connecting

the current OTR Recreation Center entrance and Findlay Recreation Area should be upgraded to provide pedestrian-only sections, facilitating safe movement between facilities and area parking lots.

The remaining parks and recreation areas are smaller pocket parks that are under-used or in disrepair. It is recommended that Cincinnati Recreation Commission evaluate these smaller recreation areas to determine what improvements need to be made with regard to the equipment, infrastructure, landscaping, access and safety of the properties.



Figure 122: A view of the entrance to the OTR Recreation Center from Race Street. Photo courtesy of Kenneth Cunningham and Associates.



Figure 123 and 124: View north from the OTR Recreation Center entrance. Public green space that supports neighborhood recreational activities should be maintained and expanded wherever possible. Small-scale single-family owner occupied housing is appropriate for tertiary streets such as Republic Street. By Consultant - Design Team.





Figure 125: The entrance to Findlay Park with the back of the OTR Recreation Center in the background. Photo courtesy of Kenneth Cunningham and Associates.



Figure 126: A proposed view of the entrance to Findlay Park with landscape and lighting enhancements, added building appurtenances, and new housing units on W. Elder Street in the background. By Consultant - Design Team.



Figure 127: A site plan showing potential improvements to the OTR Recreation Center, Findlay Park, and an improved connection between the two. By Consultant - Design Team.

Seeking Out Additional Greenspace Opportunities

Community gardens are already popular in OTR, but there is opportunity to expand this program. Vacant lots can be converted to community gardens, lowering the density of buildings in some residential areas and providing an educational activity for the community.

Any other opportunity to increase greenspace in OTR in small pockets is encouraged. One example of this is the potential conversion of the old Husman's parking lot near St. Francis School. The school is in need of greenspace and there may be an opportunity in the near future to acquire this lot. In a case such as this, the lot should be acquired and converted into greenspace for the school. While the school or another community group would be responsible for land acquisition, conversion and maintenance, the city should be able to assist in helping the community find suitable sites for this type of project.

When the SCPA relocates, the existing open space on the north side of the site will be an important site for an additional neighborhood park. The Cincinnati Park Board has indicated an interest in adding this site to their system.

Greenway to Guide Pedestrians

The Urban Forestry Program of the Cincinnati Park Board's Natural Resource Management Section will work with property owners to plant street trees in the right-of-way. Expand the tree canopy to: Race and Elm Streets, from Central Parkway to McMicken Avenue; on 13th Street, from Race Street to the intersection of Reading Road and Liberty Street; on McMicken Avenue from Sycamore Street to the northwest corner of the neighborhood; on Main Street from 13th Street to Liberty Street; and on all of Findlay Street, from Central Parkway to McMicken Avenue. These locations are designed to connect important destinations in the neighborhood and enhance the character and livability of residential streets.



Figure 128: Semi-public green space created in proposed multi-family building clusters and alley mews is very important to overall residential livability. Private yards where horticulture is promoted are critical to the environmental quality of neighborhood and the attractiveness of single-family home ownership. By Consultant - Design Team.



Figure 129: Map of proposed greenways in OTR.



Figure 130: In some cases new public open/green space can be configured to support anchoring business or major activity generators, such as the proposed public plaza on Benton Street for use by the abutting restaurant. By Consultant - Design Team.



Figure 131: Pocket parks are important at strategic locations throughout the neighborhood that support both passive green space and playgrounds. These are especially important in more densely residential areas and would be enhancements to the smaller scale residential tertiary streets such as Pleasant, Republic, and Clay (along which some already exist). Pocket parks on tertiary streets such as Pleasant Street will provide pedestrian gateways to residential districts. By Consultant - Design Team.

Enhance OTR as an Arts and Cultural Hub in Cincinnati

The diverse cultural institutions, programs and artists who live and perform in OTR are one of the neighborhood's greatest assets. These organizations have been the source of some friction in the neighborhood; they will also be vital to the overall revitalization of the neighborhood. There are a number of important projects included in this plan that will further enhance the existing cultural offerings in the neighborhood and greatly improve existing institutions.



Figure 132: Patrons inside Music Hall during a performance. Photo courtesy of Music Hall.

The Pendleton Arts District

During the last several years, the Pendleton neighborhood has emerged as one of the midwest's most exciting arts community. Each month, thousands of arts enthusiasts visit Pendleton's vast network of converted lofts and studios where hundreds of artists create, display, and sell their work.

The Pendleton arts community is anchored on the west by the SCPA and to the east by the Pendleton Arts Center. Established in 1992, the Pendleton Art Center is the creative hub for more than 150 artists working in studios in six renovated buildings, including the historic eight-story Shillito's warehouse.

The economic impact of a thriving arts community is important to the City of Cincinnati. City staff is now working with developers and neighborhood groups to build a true live-work community in Pendleton. This plan recommends attractive pedestrian connections from this location to the Washington Park / Music Hall area and to Vine Street and Main Street. New sidewalks, streetlights, trees, and other streetscape improvements will spur the development of new homes and the restoration of the neighborhood's large collection of 19th century Federal-style townhomes. Artists and homeowners are coming together to restore Pendleton to an energetic community of shops, galleries, churches and homes. Pendleton is indeed leading the charge to bring homeownership and vitality back to OTR.

New K-12 Arts School

The relocation of the SCPA to the site adjacent to Music Hall will enhance and enliven both institutions. In addition to a new location the program will be expanded to a school for kindergarten through grade 12. This will make this facility one of the few K-12 arts schools in the state. The power of having that type of facility associated directly with Music Hall will add to the strength of both programs. It also presents a wonderful opportunity for children in the neighborhood to have access to arts education and performance art on a national scale. The illustration gives some indication of the project and its scope. The new construction of the Washington Park Elementary School in this same location presents an opportunity to create a wonderful integrated education and arts center in the Washington Park area.



Figure 133: A preliminary site plan for the new K-12 Arts School. Illustration courtesy of Cole Russell + Fanning Howey + Moody Nolan.

Art Academy of Cincinnati

A second major addition to the educational opportunities in the neighborhood will be the relocation of the Art Academy of Cincinnati into OTR. The Academy's new home at 1216 Jackson Street and 22 E. 12th Street will bring an undergraduate and a graduate program in fine arts to the neighborhood. Students will be welcome new residents in OTR. The Academy will provide expanded opportunities for arts education to area residents (youth and adults), additional gallery space and new works for people to see, new inspiration to Academy students and a new anchor in the south-central part of the neighborhood. The location of the new facility is very consistent with the future land use plan.



Figure 134: 22 E. 12th Street



Figures 135 and 136: Conceptual drawings of new Art Academy of Cincinnati. Proposed entrance on Jackson Street (left), and proposed view on 12th Street (right). Renderings courtesy of Art Academy of Cincinnati.

Appearance

Many efforts can be taken to beautify the neighborhood further and call attention to the exquisite architectural details. Future development should be well designed and compatible with the neighborhood's built environment. Informational signs should be placed throughout the neighborhood to call attention to historical and culturally significant sites. Building appurtenances such as flower boxes, complementary awnings and banners should be encouraged. Public art such as murals and sculptures can become landmarks as well as provide publicity for neighborhood artists.



Figure 137: A mural on a building near Findlay Market that was created by the Art in the Market Summer Program of the UC Community Design Center.

Encourage infrastructure improvements and preservation to retain the neighborhood's unique character. When possible, utility lines should be relocated underground to offer an uncluttered streetscape; decorative light poles should be disbursed throughout the commercial areas in the neighborhood to provide consistency with Main Street. The granite curbs should be preserved whenever possible. Also, gateways should be considered at the entrance to the neighborhood from the north on Vine Street, at Main Street and Central Parkway, at Liberty Street and Central Parkway and at Liberty Street and Reading Road.



Figure 138: An OTR building outfitted with flower boxes. This movement began during the summer of 2001; it added color and greenery to the neighborhood and improved the appearance of individual buildings.

Figures 139 - 143: *Improve the Pedestrian environment.* Provide additional and well placed trash receptacles, additional historically appropriate pedestrian scale lighting, culturally appropriate place marking and gateway elements, public art, wayfinding/identity signage, banners, and other street graphics, and additional tree canopy as a major part of the urban landscape. By Consultant - Design Team.



Major Gateway Plinths



Boulevard Lighting



Commercial Street Lighting



Residential Street Lighting



Park Lighting

Figure 139: *Lighting improvements to enhance streetscape.* The provision of street and alley lighting is important to the quality of the public space and the livability of the adjacent residences. Light fixtures should be pedestrian oriented and designed to minimize “light trespassing” into upper floor residences. By Consultant - Design Team.

Figure 141: Entrance sculptures. By Consultant - Design Team.

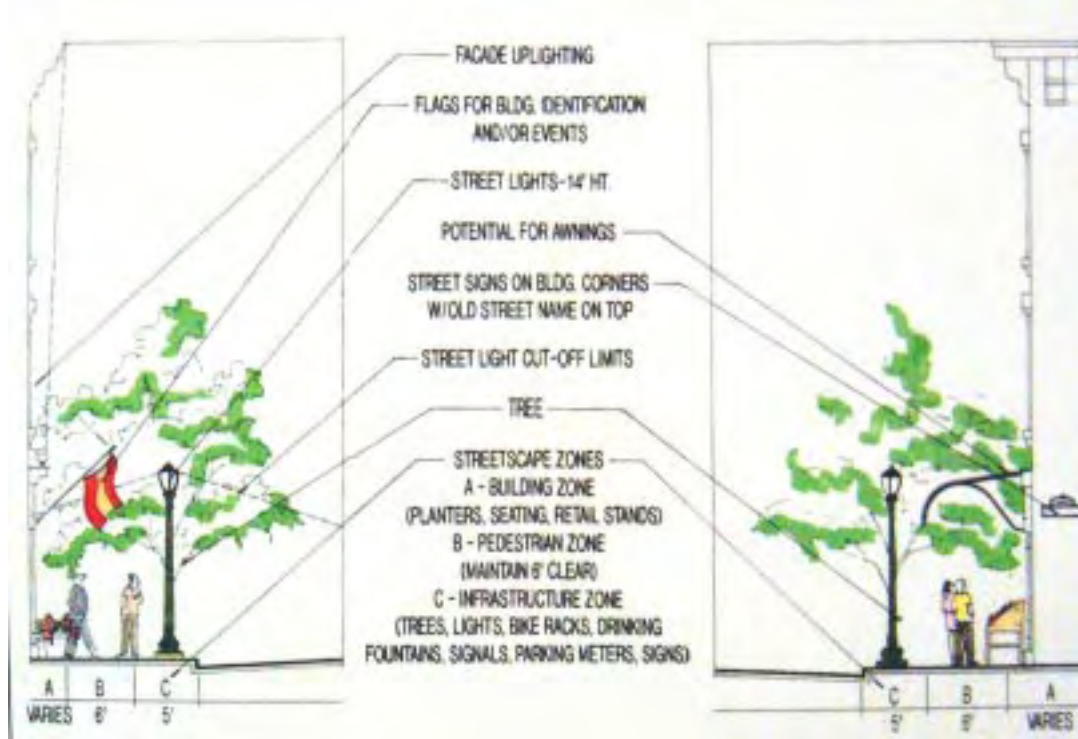
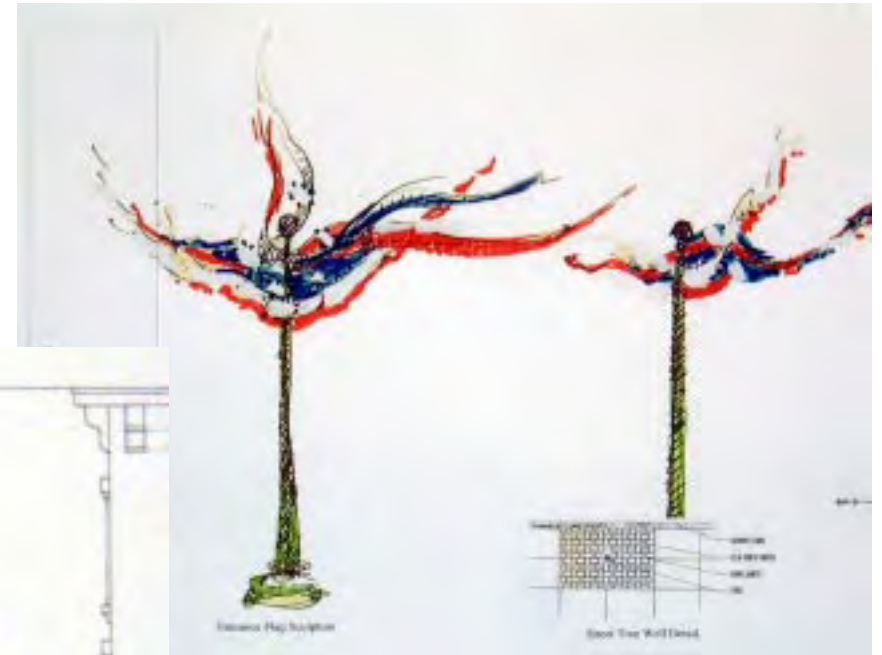


Figure 140: Typical Street Section in OTR. By Consultant - Design Team.



Figure 142: Streetscape details. By Consultant - Design Team.

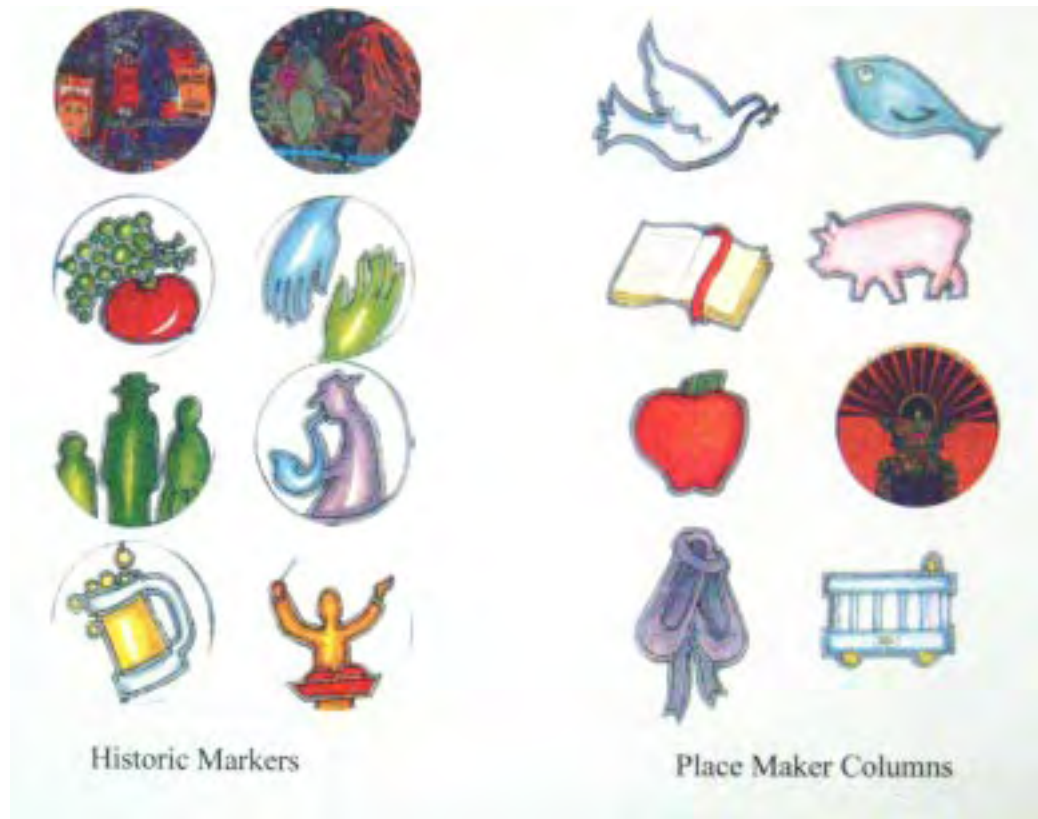


Figure 143: Concept ideas for symbols. By Consultant - Design Team.

QUALITY OF LIFE PRIORITY PROJECTS

The City is committed to the implementation of this Plan. The following projects are consistent with the Quality of Life recommendations, are currently underway and are expected to be completed within the next 2-3 years.

Phase One Committed Projects

To be completed by 2004

Hanna Park Improvements

Enhancements to include a “Sprayground” and other improvements

City Investment: \$200,000

Private Funds, Armleder Trust: \$985,000

Federal investment: \$500,000

Total investment: \$1,685,000

Scheduled completion: Summer 2003

Grant Park Improvements

New equipment, updated basketball courts, additional trees and landscaping

City investment: \$200,000

Scheduled completion: Spring 2003

Washington Park Improvements

Upgrade restrooms, enhance lighting, install “Community Art Bench”

Bench is a project between CRC, Park Board, Contact Center, Peaslee Center, and Art Academy of Cincinnati

City investment: \$17,000

Partners investment: \$15,000

Scheduled completion: Summer 2002

Rebuild Washington Park Elementary School

New school immediately south of Washington Park

Restore current site back into park space

Cincinnati Public Schools investment: \$16,000,000

Scheduled completion: Open for the 2004 school year

Establish the New Entrepreneurial High School

Located with the Cincinnati Business Incubator on Central Parkway

Cincinnati Public Schools/ Gates Foundation Grant

Scheduled completion: Open for 2003 school year

Construct Parking Garage for Washington Park School/Music Hall Complex

Development of additional parking at the Town Center Garage to serve Music Hall, the new School for the Performing Arts, and the new Washington Park School

Partners include the Cincinnati Public Schools, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, the City of Cincinnati, and other to be determined

Investment to be determined

Scheduled completion: Open in 2003-4

Summary of Investments

City of Cincinnati: \$417,000

School Board and other investments: \$17,500,000

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION



Figure 144: Children participating in a community activity. Photo courtesy of Julie Fay.

Throughout this Plan, there is acknowledgement for the many planning processes, policy directions, design studies, and recommendations for Over-the-Rhine over the past thirty years. Some of these past recommendations have been implemented; many have not. This section is designed to lay out the steps that will take this plan beyond just words on paper, to help it become to reality on the street. The key implementation strategies that follow set the general course of action. The implementation matrices on pages 147-165 provide yet another level of detail by identifying specific projects, programs, and actions to be completed, including vital partners and their roles in the process.

The implementation matrices show that this plan includes a very comprehensive set of recommendations. In order for this community to be successful, however, many stakeholders will need to come together and work toward common project goals. The collaboration that is envisioned in this implementation strategy will be critical, and in many ways, the most difficult task to accomplish as this community moves forward.

KEY IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Create an umbrella Community Development Corporation to initiate and oversee plan implementation

Mission

A new Community Development Corporation (CDC) should be privately formed to act as developer, broker, and facilitator, and provide technical expertise in areas of housing and economic development project development. The mission of the organization should be to advance the objectives of this plan through the development and production of real estate development and through partnership arrangements with the many other development organizations in the community.

A secondary focus of the CDC could be to facilitate the identification and coordination of the many housing, economic development, educational, and transportation recommendations of this plan. These services are important to the overall success of the neighborhood and are important recommendations. As the plan indicates, however, there are currently many existing organizations and institutions working to provide these services and programs. It will not be the job of the CDC to provide services, but to help coordinate when appropriate.

Membership

The CDC should be established with a Board and a staff. The Board should include people from the OTR resident and development community, and from the various cultural, business and financial institutions and foundations represented in the neighborhood. The Board should provide the community with the access to the resources and technical expertise that will make it successful.

The CDC needs to start with professional staff that can implement the day-to-day operations based on the Board's direction. The staff needs to have background in development and development finance and have proven experience with successful project management.

Partners

The CDC will work in conjunction with the many for-profit and non-profit developers that are already operating in the community. Partners like the OTR Housing Network, Franciscan Homes Development, Urban Sites, ReStoc, and the OTR Foundation will certainly continue to undertake projects in the neighborhood. The CDC will help facilitate, undertake additional projects, and, along with the City, engage in site assembly and help create partnerships to develop mixed-income projects. The CDC will also be active in seeking funding from many sources for project development.

Establish a Tax Incentive Finance (TIF) district(s) as a long-term targeted funding mechanism

In order to create a dedicated funding mechanism to implement the plan, the establishment of two TIF districts is recommended. OTR is approximately 600 acres in size, and in Ohio TIF districts are limited to 300 acres, hence two districts.

New State of Ohio legislation allows for the creation this new district. A TIF district allows the City to capture all of the taxes above the base level of the district at the time it was established. In other words, as the value of real estate in the area goes up based on new investments, new tax mills and inflation, those increased taxes are captured into a fund that is available only for eligible uses in the district. Over time, this funding source can generate significant resources for a district.

In the case of OTR, the district is devalued and as the plan is implemented, new investments and generally rising real estate values will generate capital that can be used to continue to fund project development in the area.

This is a unique opportunity to establish a funding source dedicated only to the neighborhood. In most other funding sources, both public and private funding requests from OTR are competing with other valid projects, and there is never enough to go around. A TIF fund, by its nature, would be dedicated just for use in the district. The amount of funds available is based solely on the revenue generated in the district. Here too, there will be competition, but the ability to create an ongoing, dedicated funding source available for 30 years is unique among the financing tools the City has to offer.

Package Financing Tools

There are a number of financing and project development tools and incentives available for projects and programs in the neighborhood. The City of Cincinnati, Cincinnati Development Fund, Hamilton County, the State of Ohio, and other private grant-making and financial institutions are all potential partners. All have existing programs that may provide assistance. They have all also indicated a willingness to entertain new requests for proposals to assist in the redevelopment of OTR.

The ability to package assistance on site acquisition, lead abatement, and gap financing will make project development easier. It is incumbent on the various players to work together to create coordinated resources. The Urban Living Loan Pool that is offered by Cincinnati Development Fund (CDF) is an example of where the private sector has funded a loan pool. CDF is also financing projects that will have city support.

Support Early Start Projects

There are a number of housing, economic development, education, and park projects identified in the plan. These projects are not intended to be the only projects that should move forward in the plan. They are, however, projects that are in the first phases of development and are consistent with the plan goals and objectives. Each of these projects is moving through pre-development and development, and the plan is supportive of providing priority resources to them as they move through the systems of funding at the local, state and federal level.

Support the School Planning and Construction Activities

A key component of the plan is the significant revitalization of the public schools in the neighborhood. A committee has been formed out of the neighborhood schools Local School Decision-Making Committees (LSDMC's), parents, students, teachers, and other staff, including some participants in this planning process. This joint committee will be working to further refine recommendations for CPS's Facilities Master Plan and to discuss the details of the partnerships and curriculum of the schools. These efforts are supported and their outcomes will be considered part of this plan.

Resident Training and Empowerment Activities

The residents of Over the Rhine are critical stakeholders in the implementation process. They need to have a meaningful place at the table throughout project implementation. Capacity development will be necessary to help facilitate resident participation. It is recommended that the resident training that began before this process be continued for those who wish to participate. Funding for this training can be gained through a variety of grants. The CDC recommended for plan implementation should make this their first item of business.

Develop a Property Acquisition Program

A critical first step in project development for any residential, economic development, or community development project is site control. This has often been an issue in the neighborhood. One of the important roles the city and the CDC can play is to assemble real estate in areas where opportunities present themselves, and where it is important to make an impact, or to remove a particular blight.

The city is developing a property acquisition program that will provide valuable assistance to all types of projects. One of the important uses of TIF proceeds in the initial phases of project development will be to assemble sites that can be turned to the market for appropriate projects. It may also be possible for the City to take responsibility for demolitions where necessary and for environmental remediation (lead abatement) in some cases. These activities at the front end of a project will significantly reduce the cost of projects to the private developer.

Engage existing service providers with a role in implementation

The implementation tables on pages 147-165 identify many partners who will have a role in implementing this plan. The community will need to work together to identify those partners, make contact with them, and coordinate efforts. In many cases, those identified in the tables have either been part of the planning process or have indicated a willingness to participate. In other cases, there are programs and agencies that could offer a significant contribution but have not been involved. The CDC can play a role here as well, as can the Community Council, the OTR Chamber of Commerce, the Residents Table and others.

Community Marketing

Much of this implementation section has been dedicated to getting projects produced in ways that support the plan recommendations. An important part of success is selling the neighborhood to the wider

community and improving the overall image of the neighborhood. The audience for this is both external and internal. Current residents need to feel good about their neighborhood and in order to be successful new residents, businesses, and visitors will need to be comfortable with OTR. As with all of these recommendations, there are a number of people and organizations that have a role to play here.

Create a Housing Trust Fund

A Housing Trust Fund commits public sources of revenue to a dedicated, ongoing fund for housing. This fund could provide a dependable source of funding for the creation and maintenance of housing, homebuyer assistance, below-market rental housing, gap financing, start up funding for housing developers, and land acquisition and design costs.

There are 170 Housing Trust Funds in operation in the United States today. Each is developed with a similar structure, but is tailored to incorporate the individual housing needs and financial resources of its jurisdiction. Revenue sources for the fund often come from new sources of income so that money is not taken away from existent programs. Sources of public dollars can include real estate taxes or fees, developer fees, TIF funds, repayments on various loan programs, interest from government-held and market-based accounts, and other taxes and fees, such as sales taxes, hotel taxes, and permit or demolition fees. While most Housing Trust Funds are not comprised of private funding sources, some national funds have considered combining public and private funds for certain activities such as land acquisition and predevelopment work. PolicyLink is an excellent resource for additional information about how to establish and manage a Housing Trust Fund.

IMPLEMENTATION CHARTS

Housing Goal 1: Encourage and welcome new investment at all levels of the housing market and ensure the long-term sustainability of enough affordable housing to house current residents.		
Objectives:	Strategies:	Participating Agencies/Groups:
Protect current residents.	Continue to provide subsidies to affordable housing agencies.	City of Cincinnati LISC/Private/Foundation/United Way/Cincinnati Development Fund
	Work with residents to facilitate asset development such as renter equity and co-operative programs.	Community Land Trust, Umbrella CDC
	Identify housing opportunities for residents displaced by Section 8 opt-outs or to accommodate housing rehabilitation.	Proposed One-Stop Housing Center
Encourage new residents	Market the strengths of OTR	OTR Chamber of Commerce, OTR Community Council
	Market the OTR community as a diverse, mixed income, family neighborhood.	OTR Chamber of Commerce, OTR Community Council
	Encourage banking community to make low-interest loans for homeownership in OTR.	Cincinnati Banking & Financial Community, City of Cincinnati, CDF, Umbrella CDC
	Support the conversion of vacant multi-family buildings into condominiums	Umbrella CDC, City of Cincinnati, profit and non-profit developers
Preserve and strengthen all residential subareas through equitable distribution of resources.	Create an OTR Loan Fund	CDF
	Investigate the feasibility of establishing a Housing Trust Fund.	Umbrella CDC, Non-profit developers
	Establish covenants that require proposed rent-restricted units to remain fixed for a 15-year period for the use of CDBG funds and HOME funds.	City of Cincinnati
	Host bi-annual seminars for residents to provide tips on purchasing and developing property for residential use.	Proposed One-Stop Housing Center/Better Housing League/City of Cincinnati
	Continue to seek to identify grants, loans and other financial and programmatic resources available to residents and developers in OTR.	Proposed One-Stop Housing Center/Cincinnati Development Fund - Capitalize Loan Fund, Umbrella CDC
	Establish and maintain an inventory of per unit rental and mortgage cost.	Xavier University

Increase financial resources and support for market-rate and low-income housing providers.	Provide financial incentives for housing development and rehabilitation gap financing for low- to moderate-income individuals and non-profits, and market rate developers.	City of Cincinnati/Cincinnati Development Fund, State of Ohio
	Support Receivership for abandoned and tax delinquent lots and buildings to non-profits agencies engaged in providing housing for low- and moderate-income housing as well as other special needs.	OTR Stakeholders, City of Cincinnati
	Market the City-Wide Community Reinvestment Area tax abatement opportunity for homeownership.	City of Cincinnati/ Community Council/ Proposed One-Stop Housing Center
	Designate OTR as a Tax Increment Financing District.	City of Cincinnati
	Establish a Land Trust.	Umbrella CDC
	Expand OHFA's use of their Link Deposit Program.	State of Ohio, Hamilton County, City of Cincinnati
Stimulate the use of abandoned, underutilized and substandard buildings in OTR.	Work with the City's department of Buildings and Inspections to examine the building codes to determine if modification could be made that will continue to ensure safety but allow redevelopment of older and historic buildings.	OTR Stakeholders
	Remove buildings out of speculation by acquiring vacant land and buildings.	Umbrella CDC, City of Cincinnati, project developers
	Strengthen residents' ability to report code violations through educational programs on how to recognize zoning and housing code violations by hosting bi-annual seminars.	Proposed One-Stop Housing
	Establish a maintenance service hiring local residents to help senior citizens and handicapped in housing repair and maintenance, including exterior painting and general cleaning.	Community Council
	Develop a financing program in collaboration with the Department of Building and Inspections to aid owners in meeting code requirements. This can be submitted through the City Community Priority Request process.	City of Cincinnati, Buildings & Inspections, Community Development, OTR Stakeholder
	Continue the receivership program for vacant buildings in OTR.	Abandoned Buildings Company (ABC), Better Housing League

	Request owners of vacant land and buildings to list and sell their property to individuals or organizations willing to develop/rehabilitate the property.	OTR Stakeholders
	Require and stringently monitor mothballing of vacant buildings.	City of Cincinnati
	Work with property owners and potential developers to rehabilitate the following residential target areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Findlay Market Neighborhood • Vine Street Facades Program • Infrastructure in Pendleton Neighborhood • Washington Park District • Mulberry/Rothenberg Neighborhood • Vine Street Housing • Melindy Square 	City of Cincinnati, Umbrella CDC, CDF, various profit and non-profit developers
Increase new homeownership opportunities.	Develop Limited Equity Housing Cooperatives and other alternative homeownership programs such as rent-to-own, rent equity through affordable housing tax credits, and co-operative programs.	Homeownership Center of Cincinnati
	Encourage realtors to actively market vacancies in OTR.	Cincinnati Area Board of Realtors, OTR Chamber
	Assist neighborhood-housing services such as Habitat for Humanity and other non-profit agencies in marketing their program(s) in OTR.	Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio
	Encourage owner occupied rental property such as mixed use.	Cincinnati Banking & Financial Community
	Target abandoned residential buildings for housing auction or homesteading to provide homes and promote homeownership.	City of Cincinnati, Community Development, Hamilton County

Housing Goal 2: Provide appropriate housing related services for all residents.		
Objectives:	Strategies:	Participating Agencies/Groups:
Identify & market housing services available to residents of OTR.	Create, update and make available to all residents a database of available rental housing in OTR.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over-the-Rhine Housing Network • OTR Foundation • Urban Sites • OTR Chamber • RESTOC • Mercy Franciscan Home Development, Inc. • Preserving Affordable Housing (PAH) • Community Builders • Housing and Urban Development (HUD) • City of Cincinnati, Neighborhood Services • Cincinnati Area Board of Realtors • Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio
Provide information on housing related services.	Provide residents management training to OTR residents.	OTR Community Council
	Hold biannual seminars on renters' rights	OTR Community Council, City of Cincinnati, Umbrella CDC
	Establish a one-stop comprehensive housing related referral service	OTR Community Council, Umbrella CDC
	Provide training/education to new homeowners for maintenance, home repair and disability insurance	Homeownership Center of Cincinnati, Better Housing League
	Create an educational outreach program to provide information to OTR residents on condominium and cooperative ownership opportunities.	Homeownership Center of Cincinnati
Use the assets of residents in OTR to enhance economic vitality.	Work with the City's Employment and training division to match residents' skills with employment and entrepreneur opportunities.	City of Cincinnati Employment and Training, State of Ohio
	Support development that provides job opportunities for OTR residents.	City of Cincinnati, Umbrella CDC, Area businesses, OTR chamber of Commerce

Housing Goal 3: Protect, preserve and enhance the significant landmarks and areas of Over-the-Rhine’s historical, architectural and cultural heritage without displacement.		
Objective:	Strategies:	Participating Agencies/Groups:
Encourage sensitive adaptation of historic properties to modern uses.	Create a local historic district in Over-the-Rhine north of Liberty Street and establish appropriate conservation guidelines for this area.	Historic Conservation Office Cincinnati Preservation Association (CPA)
	Create a local historic district in the Mohawk area of Over-the-Rhine.	Historic Conservation Office Cincinnati Preservation Association (CPA)
Encourage the continued identification and recognition of significant historic, archaeological and cultural resources in Over-the-Rhine.	Prepare walking tours and other promotional materials to educate residents, visitors and potential businesses about Over-the-Rhine’s architectural and historical heritage.	Greater Cincinnati Convention and Visitors Bureau, Cincinnati Preservation Association (CPA)
	Enlist the support of the City of Cincinnati Historic Conservation Office and local preservation organizations to educate residents and potential developers on the benefits of living, working and owning a business in a historic area such as Over-the-Rhine.	Historic Conservation Office Cincinnati Preservation Association (CPA), OTR Chamber of Commerce
	Educate property owners about available economic incentives such as Historic Preservation Tax Credits.	Department of Community Development, Historic Conservation Office
Assure that new construction, additions, alterations and demolitions are carried out in a manner that is not detrimental to the neighborhood and to residents.	Investigate establishing a Main Street program on commercial/residential streets such as Vine and Main.	Historic Conservation Office, Department of Community Development OTR Chamber
	Consider supporting the passage of a state tax credit for the rehabilitation of locally designated historic structures (residential, commercial and mixed use).	National Trust for Historic Preservation, Ohio Historic Preservation Office (OHPO), Cincinnati Historical Society (Cincinnati Museum Center)
Encourage the maintenance, rehabilitation and conservation of the existing housing stock to stabilize and strengthen the Over-the-Rhine community.	Undertake a comprehensive accounting of programs and services offered by private and public agencies/organizations that provide funding for abatement of lead and other hazardous materials.	OTR Housing Network, Building Doctor Program, City of Cincinnati, smarts Streets Program
	Investigate the possibility of employing neighborhood youth in cooperation with a local sponsor to provide low-cost maintenance services for neighborhood residents.	Community Council, Impact OTR, Area Businesses
	Investigate creating a program to train neighborhood residents in building trades and/or abatement of hazardous materials.	Historic Building Trades Entrepreneurial Group

Economic Development Goal 1: Make Over–the-Rhine a model for diverse and inclusive business development.		
Objectives:	Strategies:	Participating Agencies/Groups:
Strengthen neighborhood retail uses on Vine Street and throughout the neighborhood	Site assembly, creation of various project improvements, streetscape improvements, creation of pocket parking lots and a facade program.	Vine Street Coordinator, OTR Chamber of Commerce, Umbrella CDC, City of Cincinnati
Provide support to a variety of office users including tech companies, architectural, arts and other design firms	Market available and newly created spaces to these users	Developers, OTR Chamber of Commerce, Vine Street Coordinator, City of Cincinnati Community Development
Maximize the support and development of digital and technology related business in the community	Provide appropriate infrastructure Enhance business development and job training	City of Cincinnati, Cinergy, OTR Chamber Cincinnati Business Incubator
Coordinate and enhance small business and microenterprise support programs	Focus business start-up on Historic Building Trades, Food Products, and Arts and Crafts	Cincinnati Business Incubator, State Department of Development, Trade Unions, Cincinnati State
Focus marketing of retail space around Findlay Market for local, specialty and international food products and services	Market spaces to restaurant and food specialty establishments	OTR Chamber, Friends of Findlay Market, Findlay Market Merchants, City Of Cincinnati, property owners

Economic Development Goal 2: Establish stronger linkages between the Over-the-Rhine workforce and job training programs and employment opportunities in the neighborhood and throughout the City.		
Objectives:	Strategies:	Participating Agencies/Groups:
Create entrepreneurial opportunities in industries where OTR has a competitive advantage such as historic building trades, the arts and crafts industry, and food services and products at Findlay Market	“Smart Streets” Program	University of Cincinnati, City of Cincinnati
	Redevelop industrial buildings north of Findlay Street and south of and along McMicken for flexible loft space that can accommodate a variety of uses	Property owners, City of Cincinnati, OTR Chamber, Umbrella CDC
	Develop entrepreneurial businesses in the mixed use zone north of Findlay Street	See above
	Take advantage of residents’ skills	Cincinnati business Incubator, Cincinnati Public Schools, Employment and Training
	Provide vendor space	Property Owners, Friends of Findlay Market, Arts Organizations
	Support the kitchen incubator	City of Cincinnati, Area Restaurants, OTR Chamber, Friends of Findlay Market
	Develop job training programs	Employment and training, Cincinnati State, Cincinnati Business Incubator, State of Ohio
	“Cincinnati Cooks” trains residents in food service areas, supports job creation and gives existing culinary businesses a place to start.	Area restaurants, Friends of Findlay Market, OTR Chamber
Establish an educational link between technology-based businesses, neighborhood schools and the Employment and Training Center	Encourage mentoring and skills training	Taft High School, Cincinnati Bell, Entrepreneurial High School, Employment and Training, Cincinnati State
Improve transportation options to employment centers throughout the region, including support for Metro Moves	Good transportation network system to have access to available jobs	Metro, Area Employers

