This diagram represents the working method that the Niehoff Studio used to develop the contents of this book. A consistent set of issues, shown at left, were studied each week at different scales, which are listed at right. By situating our exploration of Uptown within these contexts, we were able, through discussion and research, to derive a field of concepts, which provided some answers to the simple question: “What is Uptown?”
Special thanks go to Buck and Patti Niehoff for their support. Special thanks also go to Martha W. Reese and Jim Tarbell, who gave critical input about cities and cultures. Francis Canlas and Charlotte Zureick also provided support. Thanks finally to the Uptown Consortium and the Avondale Community Council for their input and interaction.
Over the past decade, many city planning departments in America have been either neutralized or completely disbanded. Cincinnati’s planning department was closed in 2002, only to be reconstituted six years later. This vacuum of oversight has allowed market forces to take over the role that planners and architects once played in shaping development. Corporate entities like the Uptown Consortium are reorganizing and reconstructing whole districts of Cincinnati and cities all over the country. Now developers plan the communities that their marketing departments invent.

So what is left for architects and planners to do? In the competition between public good and private interests, whose side are we on? Do we even have a choice?

Such is the context in which we have studied Uptown. Neither a single community nor even a neighborhood, Uptown is an invention. Uptown is not real, but rather a virtual entity: an urban brand superimposed onto an assemblage of several adjacent districts. Uptown contains five of the most significant institutions in the entire region. In 2003 these institutions formed the Uptown Consortium, a collaborative organization designed to protect their collective interests as well as those of the community within which they exist “with the idea that together they could accomplish more - for themselves and the community - than they could working individually.”

But who is the community and what is their relationship to the consortium? Is it even possible for their interests to be protected when they have no official seat at the table? As a somewhat independent interlocutor among these often competing interests, the Niehoff Urban Studio has been able to ask these questions, but also occasionally provide some answers. The Niehoff Urban Studio is a joint enterprise between the School of Architecture and Interior Design and the School of Planning at the University of Cincinnati. Students and faculty from both disciplines join forces each quarter to work on urban planning and design problems in the city. The studio recently moved up to its new home just off the University’s main campus after being based down in Cincinnati’s Over the Rhine neighborhood for many years. The relocation came with a shift of focus as well: the studio was asked to turn its attentions away from Over the Rhine to Uptown.

As the literal new kids on the block we have attempted to turn our collective ignorance about this new territory into an opportunity. We spent seven weeks in the winter of 2008 asking the simple question, “What is Uptown?” Our ambition was to construct a body of intelligence that could inform the Niehoff as it moves forward, while also providing positive challenges to the diverse and competing interests that the studio serves. This book is the result of our collective study and speculation.

Most of our ideas about urbanity still originate from the model of the concentric city – a dense downtown of commercial activity surrounded by a sparse periphery of housing, industry, and agriculture. Even though this model of development has been under constant assault for the past fifty years, planners and architects have continued to make various attempts at its rescue. As the metropolis continues to disperse, most contemporary urban design is still focused on reconstructing the false opposition of center and periphery.

In Uptown we found the possibility for alternatives to the concentric city. Uptown is situated on a plateau above Cincinnati’s old downtown. It falls away at the south into a series of steep ravines. The east and west are bordered by highways and the northern edge is defined by the Mill Creek corridor. These hard and soft boundaries define Uptown as an urban enclave – reliant on downtown for almost nothing; commercially and culturally self-contained. Uptown has its own entertainment district (with a movie theater, which the downtown currently lacks). And there is a broad range of housing types from single family to high rise that accommodate various lifestyles. Parks and recreation of all types is also provided in abundance. And due to the presence of the Uptown Consortium, jobs are in potentially ample supply.

But Uptown is not a suburb either. It sits well inside of Cincinnati’s first real suburban developments. Highway access to Uptown is neither direct nor easily located. University students compete with Fairview and Clifton Heights residents for space. Massive parking structures are disguised with thin layers of retail and commercial space that support a minimum of pedestrian activity. There is an abundance of public space, but a shortage of urban dwellers willing to claim it. This ambivalence toward urbanity may be Uptown’s defining characteristic – it is downtown’s other – a serendipitous mash-up of towers and villages; estates and slums; parks and strip malls.
Surrogate City

Recalls “the Good Old Days”

Parking over there and under here

Chimney equals “home”

Welcome Home

Town Square Main social and public space of the city

Edges contain and control the flow of goods and people

Cobblestone “Old, classic, luxurious”

Mix of Uses

Home Work Fun

City Garden
Urbanity is a state of mind in 2008. Entire neighborhoods are developed on the premise that the suburbs can design and offer their own calibrated slices of urbanity.¹

Shopping centers are impersonating the cities they abandoned decades ago. Lifestyle centers promise the “downtown lifestyle without the hassles of downtown living.” However, these “hassles” - weird people on the street, trash, litter, gridlock, and the shortage of parking - are what constitute the urban environment.

Recent development projects in Uptown are like suburban lifestyle centers. Emphasis is placed on creating a safe, benign and somewhat urban environment for current and future residents. The vision for Uptown promises neighborhoods with regional retail stores, restaurants, entertainment venues, office space, hotels and residences, all supported by an abundance of parking. Is Uptown slated to become a true urban neighborhood or a playground for commuters and tourists?

---

The “Square” as Brand

**ISLAND**
- **focal point**: Centrally located monuments are the “spectacle” / point of interest
- **vegetation**: Centrally located in the island, characterized by heavy plantings
- **pedestrians**: Pedestrians generally stay on the periphery because of traffic

This space encourages small groups to stroll and rest in certain areas, but discourages large groups from assembling because of traffic flow.

**CROSSING**
- **focal point**: People and activities are in the center of the square as the “spectacle” / point of interest
- **vegetation**: Vegetation and heavy plantings are on the periphery
- **pedestrians**: Easier pedestrian access into the square

This space encourages small groups and large groups to use the square as it is more accessible on foot because it is not bound on all sides by traffic.

**TRIANGLE**
- **focal point**: Central monument is the major focal point. Large groups of people can congregate around the periphery of the square.
- **vegetation**: Vegetation and heavy plantings are on the periphery
- **pedestrians**: Pedestrians flow around and into the center more easily

This triangular space is visible from all sides of the street and usually has a monument. It is the focal point, but because of size constraints, large groups can only gather on the periphery.
In Cincinnati, town squares have evolved into branded retail experiences. The intersection of Burnet and Forest Avenues is a place in Uptown that could potentially be a good site for a new square which could reflect the community and promote social gathering.

The highly commercial character of Cincinnati’s town squares, such as the ones in Hyde Park, Oakley, and Mariemont, encourage certain types of activities like shopping and but perhaps discourage protest, performance, or gathering in large groups because they are essentially traffic intersections.

The centers of these spaces are often oversized traffic islands with fountains or monuments or even parking, isolated from pedestrians by traffic — not European style plazas framed by architecture that one normally associates with the notion of “square”.

The Best Laid Plans...

1. The Banks  
   TOTAL SQ FOOTAGE 2,800,000

2. Fountain Square West  
   TOTAL SQ FOOTAGE 2,800,000

3. Contemporary Arts Center  
   TOTAL SQ FOOTAGE 82,000

4. Findlay Market  
   TOTAL SQ FOOTAGE 20,000
Effective Cincinnati projects are best done at an incremental scale, as was done in the McMillan Park development in Uptown. While a master plan for the whole area calls for developments along several blocks, the project has been broken down into different pieces that will be completed in phases. This approach to Uptown development is the best way to realize projects because it allows for flexibility.

Successful examples of this smaller scale development include Findlay Market and the Contemporary Art Center. Meanwhile, larger developments such as the Banks have run into problems because of complexities related to their scale. Fountain Square West encountered similar issues in the 1990’s and was never realized.

Small projects would encourage diverse development that would allow both the community and developer more control over the project. Breaking a large plan into smaller pieces can also help prevent monopolization of interests on contested sites. Allotting different blocks to different developers could also be a way to bring multiple designs and schemes into a plan.
An Informal Garden City

Diagram of Cincinnati as a Garden City
Uptown is a Garden City within a Garden City. Ebenezer Howard viewed the ideal city as one that mixed the benefits of city life with country life. This was accomplished by separating communities with different functions by a system of green buffers, thus creating a geography similar to that which already exists in Cincinnati.

Downtown is the business and cultural center. Uptown is the institutional district. Cumminsville functions as the industrial and manufacturing district. Fairmount is a multifamily housing district. Price Hill is a single family residential district along with Norwood. Another district in Cincinnati is Mount Lookout, which is a "hilltop cottage" district.

In Uptown, a similar organization exists. The University of Cincinnati is the city center. CUF and Corryville are the predominant student districts. Clifton is a cultural and family district. Avondale is a residential enclave and Mount Auburn is another family district. Most of these communities are separated by green space or parkways like Howard’s Garden City.

[1] www.sociallysustainable.com
Polycentric City

- Downtown
- Fairfield
- Mt. Healthy
- College Hill
- Cheviot
- Uptown
- Newport
- Covington
- Downtown
- West Chester
- Norwood
- Hyde Park
- Kenwood
- Blue Ash
- Montgomery
- Loveland
- Milford
- Mason

Connection to Work
Connection to Play

Live
Work
Play
For decades Cincinnati has tried to continue as mono-centric city with all organization and resources focused toward downtown. Cincinnati is part of a complex metropolitan region and doesn’t have the power to annex outlying jurisdictions thus having to coordinate its operations with other municipalities.

The city provides sewer and water to areas outside of the city boundaries. One of the reasons jurisdictions would want to be annexed into the city is because of the services provided by that city.

Because Cincinnati already provides those services, the jurisdictions have no desire to become annexed into the city. Because Cincinnati cannot expand its boundaries, it relies on the people who live in the surrounding jurisdictions to work downtown. If Cincinnati did not have these communities to rely on for workers, downtown would not exist.

The reality of Cincinnati is more of a poly-centric city with many hubs of activity. Currently these hubs are not connected as well as they could be and thus not functioning as a network prospering together. There is also a flow between these hubs based on their main functions. For example, downtown is where people work, so from 8:00AM to 6:00PM downtown is bustling with activity. The people then leave downtown to return to their place of living further out, away from downtown. Other hubs are known for their social and recreational activities. Uptown is one of those hubs that serves many functions of work, live, and play.
Density and the Ivory Tower

One of the biggest drivers of development activity in Uptown Cincinnati is the University of Cincinnati. This is seen in their participation in the Uptown Consortium, independent development, and through neighborhood community development corporations. As developable land within the University campus is limited, the University pursues initiatives in adjacent neighborhoods. The Niehoff Studio is located in the neighborhood of Corryville and the new development along Calhoun and McMillan Streets is in Clifton Heights.

How necessary are these peripheral projects? When put in the context of Universities worldwide, not very. The University of Glasgow, in Scotland, has twice as many students per acre. The difference is even more pronounced when compared with a University in Eastern Asia, The University of Hong Kong. There the density is over three times as high. The University has reached an artificial limit in terms of campus development, one that could be exceeded if building patterns more closely resembled their academic counterparts in other regions of the world.
### How Many Students Per Acre?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Students Per Acre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Cincinnati</td>
<td>152.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Glasgow</td>
<td>317.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Hong Kong</td>
<td>478.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[5] The University of Glasgow, Facts and Figures  
[6] The University of Hong Kong
Historically, walls around cities provided protection from siege and invasion, but declined as other military strategies developed. Sometimes they incorporated topographical features, and were often built of masonry. In modern times, the Berlin Wall divided two ideological/political regions, rather than protecting the land and goods of the city from invasion and pillaging—a characteristic shared with other modern city walls, such as Belfast’s and the West Bank’s. A district perimeter which is clearly defined differs greatly from the sprawling, well-connected grid of many modern downtowns, like Los Angeles.

In Uptown Cincinnati, the steep topography, highways and rail yards create regions of limited accessibility around the entire district. To the south and northeast, many potential points of entry dead-end into hillsides or retaining walls. Several pedestrian stairs wind up hills and walls and offer portal entry to uptown from downtown. To the west and east, I-75 and I-71 create a moat-like phenomenon. Streets such as Sycamore Street, Ludlow Avenue and Clifton Avenue offer point entry up hills or across the interstates. Notably, the southeast edge is more porous.

**MOATS**
create voids that prevent pedestrian access into Uptown.

**STAIRS**
allow pedestrian access at the perimeter of Uptown.
GATES allow vehicle point entry into Uptown.

WALLS utilize height to block access into Uptown.

Uptown Cincinnati as a Walled City

All photos by author unless noted otherwise.
Local institutions have had a significant presence in Uptown and continue to play a major role in shaping the physical, social and economic development of the area and surrounding regions.

Education, Healthcare and Tourism are critical to state and national policy. These institutions have far reaching interest in continuing to shape Uptown and the region beyond. Uptown must stay competitive with global development to continue offering the economic and social influence that is expected of it.

In Uptown development often involves large-scale financial partnerships. Understanding the increased influence in operating together the major institutions of Uptown work together to implement a collective vision. But as partnerships form between once separate institutions around a common vision what interests are envisioned?

In order to contextualize these interest we should consider whom the partnerships involve, their financial significance, where development is targeted and what it involves. By doing this we can begin to situate the nature of Uptown’s development and our place in it to determine Uptown’s significance at the local, regional or global scale.
“Uptown is a five-way,” declared Liz Pisciotta, a graduate architecture student and Niehoff studio participant. She cleverly summarized the multiplicitous nature of Uptown by comparing it to the infamous Skyline dish that combines chili, spaghetti, cheese, onions and beans (see “Chili Culture”, p.52). Like the grocery list of ingredients that go into the chili, Uptown’s individual neighborhoods offer a fairly diverse, yet conventional array of characteristics. But when combined, the mixture produces on an entirely new set of hybrid qualities.

Uptown could become substantially more than the sum of its parts – a sort of heterotopia in which an alchemic mash-up of housing, commerce, entertainment, cultures and institutions is activated by a simple redrawing of existing maps. Michel Foucault defined heterotopias as “real and effective spaces which are outlined in the very institution of society, but which constitute a sort of counter-arrangement, of effectively realized utopia, in which all the real arrangements, all the other real arrangements that can be found within the society, are at one and the same time represented, challenged and overturned: a sort of place that lies outside all places and is actually localizable.”

The dense residential neighborhoods of Clifton sit directly adjacent to shopping and hospitals. Elephants in the zoo can be heard in Corryville bedrooms. Bourgeois “Cliftonites” and their working class neighbors in Avondale rarely mix. University students compete fiercely with Fairview families for space. Though they have been thrown into a common bowl, the neighborhoods of Uptown are not internally coherent, nor are its denizens culturally homogenous.

Uptown’s value could be in that it provides choice. One can live like an aristocrat in the hills of Avondale and Clifton, or as a bohemian down in the Ludlow Gaslight District. The Parkside building, a landmark apartment building at the edge of Burnet Woods accommodates young families, singles, students, and retirees alike. This multiplicity comes by virtue of the fact that Uptown has been designed retroactively: it was created by the Consortium from a group of already existing neighborhoods. Rarely have planners or architects been able to develop anything with comparable diversity and complexity by planning in advance. Modernist planning segregated the city into separate zones of living, working, leisure and production. Suburban non-planning produced monocultural enclaves where total privatization excluded any possibility of public life. And more recently, New Urbanist Planning has been useful in its critique of both of the previous paradigms, but unable to produce anything more than a nostalgic retreat to some imagined state of pre-1960’s urban innocence. But with apparent ease, the Consortium has been able to successfully create a new urban entity where there was none before. But rather than relying on invention, they have accomplished it through appropriation, combination, and reinvention.

Painted Ladies, Or Painted Bricks

- Three colors at least
- Should be a house
- Owners choose colors
- Victorian style

Painted brick detail, Corryville, Uptown Cincinnati

Mute Painted Lady, Avondale, Uptown Cincinnati

Painted brick house, Clifton, Uptown Cincinnati

Painted Ladies detail, Tusculum, Cincinnati
Painted Ladies started in San Francisco in the mid of 19th century. It is mainly a term associated with painted Victorian houses. Each house should have at least three different colors. These colors could be strong or muted.

Columbia Tusculum, a neighborhood at the east side of Cincinnati, has many “real” painted ladies, though, uptown and downtown area have many “painted brick houses”. They have vivid colors but many of them are not Victorian style. Some of them are not even residential buildings.

When painting bricks, the whole character of the material changes including hiding texture and camouflaging the joints, so the question that arises is: Are These Painted Ladies?

There are many deteriorated houses in uptown Cincinnati, inhabitants find in painting them a great solution. Painting is inexpensive and will cover the old brick.

Sources: Elizabeth Pomada and Michael Larsen, Daughters of Painted Ladies, American’s Resplendent Victorians. All photos taken by author unless otherwise noted.
We’re talking about Ohio’s favorite pastime. It is especially prevalent on college campuses and at bars and is usually accompanied by heavy drinking. The fact that anyone can play cornhole, regardless of age, gender, and athletic ability, as well as the fact that cornhole takes up very little space (and could really be played within the alleys of Uptown), contribute to the popularity of the game.

Cornhole is typically played in teams of two, with teammates standing opposite each other. Each player tosses a corn-filled bag underhand, attempting to get it in the hole on the opposite board. For every bag that lands on the board, the team receives one point. For every bag that goes in the hole, the team receives three points. The game becomes more competitive as players try to knock off their opponents’ bags. The winning team is the first one that reaches exactly twenty-one points.

In addition to the recreational and social advantages of the game, players can even customize their boards to be symbolic of their individual identities. All things considered, cornhole could become the national sport of Uptown and provide the community with one dimension of its identity.
Some believe that cornhole was created by midwestern farmer Jebediah Magillicutty.

Many Kentuckians believe that their ancestors founded cornhole less than a century ago.

The westside of Cincinnati also takes credit for the founding of cornhole. This claim has only augmented the battle between the east and west sides of the city.
Uptown Tattoo, Many Identities

Uptown Cincinnati is the nucleus of body modification/beautification in the city. Tattooing is a permanent way for people to visually demonstrate their identity. Tattoo design is as wide and varied as the communities from which they originate, and can therefore be an insightful lens through which to study culture.

Meaning behind tattoos vary. In traditional tribal cultures, tattoo declare belongingness and status. They can be expressions if individuality, memorial, or affection. Or sometimes, tattoos “just look cool”.

Tattoos in Uptown have an infinite range of variation and are often colorful, dynamic, gaudy, and animated. One Uptown tattoo artist gives insight: “You see a lot of Japanese style koi fish: big back pieces like that. There’s a lot of Day of the Dead stuff, Asian characters, heavy metal skulls, gangsta bulldogs, anything.”

When asked who was getting what, he illustrated a wildcard mentality: “White chicks getting Japanese art: it doesn’t matter. There’s a few normals - like African-Americans will get hip-hop images, white dudes like heavy metal stuff- but mostly, people just get what they want.”

Note: “Most-Commonly Tattooed Areas” diagram summarized from several similarly-shaded diagrams completed by Uptown tattoo artists collected during field research, who wish to remain anonymous.
Cultural practices and celebrations have evolved and adapted as time goes on. It is no surprise that activities that revolve on different cultures’ unique identity continue to be celebrated long after the original immigration. Although the celebrations still theoretically celebrate the original culture, some significance been lost as time passes and cultures become increasingly integrated.

Uptown’s population has three cultural celebrations that are enjoyed by a large and heterogeneous population; Saint Patrick’s Day, Oktoberfest and Cinco de Mayo. These celebrations that were once a part of a culture’s identity have been adapted by Uptown residents, not only in its geography, but also in the mix of people that celebrate it and in the strictness of the traditional practices. After all was it the true intention of Saint Patrick’s Day to drink green beer? Or Cinco de Mayo to flip cars? Or Oktoberfest to do the chicken dance? Whatever the evolution, these functions have become part of the celebration of Uptown’s unique mix of identities.

CULTURAL CELEBRATION MORPHOLOGY

Eat, Drink And Be Merry
Painted Ladies started in San Francisco in the mid of 19th century, mainly it is a term associated with painted Victorian houses during restoration process, each single house should have at least three different colors, these colors could be strong or muted, at the end it depends one inhabitant's mode.

These days, painted ladies exist all over the country, people on the west coast are braver in choosing colors than people in the east cost, however Cincinnati painted ladies have strong and vivid colors as if they are located in the west.

Ohio has a surprisingly diverse stock of contemporary architecture. Jay Chatterjee, former Dean Emeritus of the University of Cincinnati College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning, was a key figure in the implementation of most of these new buildings in Cincinnati. His shepherding of the U.C. master plan has resulted in Uptown’s ascendancy as one of the prime locations for experiencing contemporary architecture in the region, if not the entire country. It took some effort to inform the politicians and clients that building “good architecture” should be a focus. The tangible result is a declaration of “civic-oriented civic pride.”

Professor Chatterjee says, “good architecture is always the intent.” Even though these buildings become emblazoned with the donors’ names, the bulk of the projects are often paid by tax payers. The investment may be worth it if architecture becomes a locus of civic wealth and pride.
Multiplicity | 37

Total Donations

$5 million - Vontz Center for Molecular Studies (UC), Albert W. Vontz, Jr.

$12 million - Wexner Center for the Arts (OSU), Leslie H. Wexner

$5 million - Lois & Richard Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art (UC), Lois & Richard Rosenthal

$10.2 million - Richard E. Lindner Athletics Center (UC), Richard E. Lindner

$39.6 million - Weatherhead School of Management (CWRU), Peter B. Lewis

THE PATRONS

The Cost of Living in Uptown

100 Scale of Housing (30%), Food (15%), Transportation (10%), Health (7%), Utilities (6%), Misc (32%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Overall Cost</th>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>Income*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>$44,684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cincinnati</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>$33,334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avondale/N. Avon (45229)</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>54%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clifton (45220)</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>$28,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUF/Mt. Auburn (45219)</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>$24,151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uptown**</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>$25,602</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Median Household
**Averages of previous 3
Although Uptown has some of the lowest median household incomes in Cincinnati, the lower cost of housing allows for a generally lower cost of living. The range in costs of housing allows for more opportunities for lower income families to find housing in Cincinnati.

In general the largest cities in Ohio average a 20 percent lower cost of living than the National average. This is in large part to the cost of Housing, which makes up 30 percent of the overall score. The other factors include Food (15%), Transportation (10%), Health (7%), Utilities (6%) and Miscellaneous (32%) which comprise of clothing, restaurants, repairs, entertainment and other services.

The Housing portion considers all types of housing styles when creating its score. It is calculated from the average cost of an area's housing, which includes mortgage payments, apartment rents and property tax. The other categories were generally on target with the national average.

Sources: www.Bestplaces.net
In the 1800s, Cincinnati was said to have had three personalities: that of the North, South, and West. Northern in its geography, southern in its economy and politics, and western in its commercial aspirations.

Cincinnati has had the segregation of the North, racism of the South, and frontier mob mentality of the West. Ohio’s position as a free state brought many slaves who sought their freedom by crossing the Ohio River. However, once in Cincinnati, they were hardly free. Today, Cincinnati faces an identity crisis again.

It would like to believe that it is a thriving cosmopolitan city that may someday rival great cities like Chicago. Cincinnatians tend to believe that their city is more Yankee but when one looks at the components that make the city what it is, it appears that there is more of a Dixie influence.

Which way does Uptown swing? The University of Cincinnati and the hospitals are a progressive driving force, which would like to be seen as having more Yankee goals and aspirations; yet they are surrounded by a community filled with Dixie character. Could Uptown do more to embrace this aspect of its identity? Should Cincinnati embrace its southern heritage and stop pretending to be something its not?
Mason Dixon Line: Originally drawn to settle a property dispute in the 1700s, the Mason Dixon line came to be known as the dividing line between slave and free states during the Civil War.

Ohio Black Laws 1807: This law was passed in order to discourage African American slave migration to Ohio. Even though Ohio was a free state, many Ohioans came from southern states and were not willing to grant rights to African Americans.

Underground Railroad: Cincinnati’s Underground Railroad played a large role in helping runaway slaves from Kentucky attain their freedom. However, even after arriving in Cincinnati, their freedom was not secured since slave hunters patrolled the area and kidnappings were common.

Fugitive Slave Law 1850: Considered one of the most controversial acts of the 1850 Compromise, the Fugitive Slave law gave southern owners more rights to retrieve runaway slaves from the North causing an onslaught of violence and riots in Cincinnati.

Segregation & Racism: The majority of African Americans in Cincinnati lived along the river in deteriorating buildings and slum conditions. They were forced to live in an area prone to flooding and in close proximity to low-paying unskilled work opportunities. African Americans were segregated and excluded from better housing and job opportunities.

Morphology of Cincinnati’s Regional Identity

1800s

2008

20??

The Invisible Minority

University of Cincinnati President, Nancy Zimpher, accepts her 2007 Kinship Award by playing "Down by the Banks of the Ohio" on her guitar. Born and raised in Galipolis, Ohio, she is a true child of Appalachia.

- African American
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Native American
- Hispanic American

APPALACHIANS??

Red: Appalachian District >18% below poverty line
Pink: Appalachian District <18% below poverty line
Light blue: Uptown

1 - Riverside
2 - East Price Hill
3 - Lower Price Hill
4 - South Fairmount
5 - Camp Washington
6 - Winton Place
7 - Fairview/Clifton Heights
8 - East End
9 - Linwood

High Drop-out Rate
High Unemployment
Poverty
Substance Abuse
Poor Housing Conditions
Teen Pregnancies
Lack of Health Care
Since WWII, hundreds of thousands of Appalachians have migrated to cities in Ohio in search for better job opportunities. Cincinnati is home to a large number of Urban Appalachians who are being discrimination due to their accent, place of residence, and culture. Because this community is not distinguishable by the color of their skin, they are often overlooked as a group in need of help. Some of the problems Cincinnati Appalachians face are high levels of substance abuse, high school dropouts, teen pregnancies, unemployment, and poverty. Because they are not classified as a minority, they are not eligible for federally funded job training and placement programs. Considering that Uptown’s hospitals are situated directly next to Appalachian dominated neighborhoods and that the President of the University of Cincinnati is an Appalachian herself, more could be done in terms of offering scholarships and health care services to this overlooked population. Thirty-four percent of Cincinnatians are descendants of Appalachian migrants and more could be done to make their plight known. Uptown could acquire the role of bringing more of Appalachian culture to the forefront and giving this underrepresented community an identity.
University Brings Diversity

Above: The column on the left shows the percentage of American and international students in the University of Cincinnati 2006-07, the column on the middle shows the rank of international students enrollment by countries in the same year while the right column shows the same thing but by continent.
Uptown is home to Cincinnati’s most culturally diverse population, because it has big institutions that attract an international population.

According to the 2006-07 Annual Report published by ISSO at UC, international students in 2006-07 who participated in the university came from 110 countries with a number of 2500 students. Although Uptown has a large number of international students, yet there is not enough interaction between Americans and the international community.

This problem is generic around the nation for different reasons. Firstly, the United States imports more international students and exports fewer Americans. Secondly, Americans typically do not speak more than one language which means less interaction with other cultures. To a certain degree, America’s geographic isolation has translated into a kind of cultural isolation as well. Uptown could buck this trend if it finds a way to foster stronger connections among its diverse communities.

WHAT DO YOU CALL SOMEONE THAT SPEAKS...

3 LANGUAGES? TRILINGUAL

2 LANGUAGES? BILINGUAL

1 LANGUAGE? AMERICAN!
A university, some hospitals and a zoo, these are the big businesses in Uptown:

The University of Cincinnati is the largest employer in the region, “with an economic impact of more than $3 billion.”
The Cincinnati Zoo is the second oldest in the country and has an annual economic impact of $90 million.
Cincinnati Children’s Hospital is a world-renowned institution with total operating revenues of over $1.1 billion.
Tri-Health has nearly ten thousand employees, half of which work in Uptown.
The Health Alliance is the Cincinnati area’s third largest employer and largest health system.

Together, these institutions function as a massive service economy. However, much of the business that they do is internally focused and takes place within the bounds of their individual campuses. Shopping, dining, and other indicators of a vibrant economy are in short supply in all of Uptown’s neighborhoods. Unfortunately, the vast majority of institutional employees also do not live in Uptown, so their dollars depart to the suburbs with them every evening and weekend. Large pockets of poverty and disinvestment still exist in Uptown despite the massive revenues being produced by the Consortium. Therefore our research led us to search out other scales of commerce and other forms of exchange.

We recognized that commercial spaces are also social spaces. Commerce is an important way of developing communities and local networks. At this point, Uptown lacks an energetic commercial culture. Partly because of the presence of the University, as well as some of the poverty that exists, Uptown has a highly transient population, so the lack of these networks is of even more concern. The Clifton Gaslight District and the McMillan retail corridor support a smattering of commercial activity while the businesses on Short Vine and Burnet Avenue have struggled or altogether disappeared. For an urban center producing billions of dollars in revenue, this is a tragically missed opportunity. The living is easy in Cincinnati. Domestic life tends to dominate, thus challenging one to look even harder for the spaces of commercial and cultural exchange. These spaces don’t necessarily announce themselves, but have to be searched out in barbershops, diners, and on street corners.

Since the late sixties Stag’s Barber Shop has continued to serve the community of Avondale including the little league team, ‘The Avondale Angels’. Spaces like Stag’s do more than touch up soft fades. They are a social space in between home and work. As one of the most prominent and long-standing spaces of this nature the barber shop is a place to be among the community. The rituals and vocabulary pertaining to the care of hair contribute to the common experience. It was anonymously stated that, “black hair and hairstyling practices can never escape political readings.” This narration of time and talk is an effort to understand the relationship of everyday conversation and hair as an integral aspect of public notice in popular culture.
“Yeah, my uncles’ barber shop wasn’t just a barber shop. It was a gathering place. A gathering of men.”

“If we establish rapport, you start telling me things and I start telling you things. We share. Pretty soon, you don’t think about no other barber but me. I’m telling you, a haircut is an intimate thing.”

“There’s a natural rhythm to barber shop talk. It’s like the call and response between a preacher and the congregation.”

“You could have a killer sittin’ in your chair and never know. But you can’t think ‘bout that. If you did, every head you cut would be whack.”

“Careful with that razor. 9-1-1 don’t rush to this neighborhood. They give our blood time to clot up on its own.”

“The cop’s gonna come. The preacher’s gonna come. The gangsta’s gonna come. The barber shop’s that one place where you can put all the wrong people at the same time. It’s the final black frontier.”

“The barber shop is tantamount to the dinner table. The dinner table is the forum for family members to share their lives with one another, to enjoy fellowship. Well, in the barber shop you have that same dynamic at work. Except nobody’s trying to hide their vegetables.”

“People need places they can turn to, people they can count on. That’s the thing about black barbershops. They never change. They’re anchors in the community. As long as a brother needs his ‘do’ done, they’re not going anywhere.”

“Since way back, black people have gathered in two locations to share news: the church and the barber shop. And you’d be surprised how fast news travels through town that way.”

“The Fourteenth amendment gave African Americans the rights of American citizenship — including state citizenship and the right for men to vote. You could have a killer sittin’ in your chair and never know. But you can’t think ‘bout that. If you did, every head you cut would be whack.”

“Careful with that razor. 9-1-1 don’t rush to this neighborhood. They give our blood time to clot up on its own.”

“The cop’s gonna come. The preacher’s gonna come. The gangsta’s gonna come. The barber shop’s that one place where you can put all the wrong people at the same time. It’s the final black frontier.”

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“Since way back, black people have gathered in two locations to share news: the church and the barber shop. And you’d be surprised how fast news travels through town that way.”
Black Architects

1.7% percent of registered architects in America are African American.

There is a strong representation of African American Architects doing great work in the greater Cincinnati area. DNK Architects, DHArchitects and Moody Nolan are all African American firms doing work in and around uptown.

The presence of University of Cincinnati’s School of Architecture and Interior Design in Uptown cannot be ignored. Uptown has been afforded the opportunity to place African American designers in strong positions and it has done that. The director of SAID, Michaele Pride, sponsors a summer program working with high school students to help inspire young minorities to pursue careers in architecture. Professor Dennis Mann developed and maintains the directory of African American architects to raise awareness.

The question is how to leverage all of this talent. It could be possible to match the large number of vacant properties with high unemployment rates to create opportunities for the development of both the Uptown and its residents.
Markets & Exchanges | 51

Woodward High School
Designed as a beacon for the community by Derrick Howard of DHArchitects

Michaele Pride
Director: School of Architecture and Interior Design
University of Cincinnati


Dennis Mann
Developed and maintains the Directory of African American Architects as a public service to promote awareness

Gateway Condominiums
Designed by David Kirk of DNK Architects in Over-the-Rhine, the architectural style is reminiscent of the historic character of the city without mimicking its architecture, a contemporary version using an historic palette.

Potential for Adaptive Reuse

97% African American Population in Avondale

Design Education

Self Sufficient Residents & An Improved Community

National Underground Railroad Freedom Center
The Freedom Center facility, by Blackburn Architects of Indianapolis was designed for exhibition, education, and research and allows visitors to experience and learn through many interactive exhibits.
Chili Culture

Cincinnati-style chili has stood the test of time and chains like Skyline have spread across the state of Ohio and the region. The combination of comfort food, entertainment, affordable prices and fast service has appealed to many. The main chili parlor in Uptown is also the oldest existing Skyline Chili on the corner of Ludlow and Clifton and they've kept the traditional parlor set-up alive. The combination of efficiency, speed, affordability, customization, and entertainment have proved to make a successful restaurant. The Midwest is known throughout the country for having good, simple, comfort food and Cincinnati is no exception. Cincinnati-style chili has become synonymous with the city and a staple in many diets.

Cincinnati-style chili is rumored to have had several different beginnings but all include origins with recently immigrated restaurateurs from south-eastern Europe who were trying to broaden their customer base by moving beyond strict ethnic recipes. The now famous twist includes chili, onions, kidney beans and cheese spread over spaghetti noodles or hot dogs. The combination of cheap and readily available ingredients proved to be a successful recipe for many.
At the Counter

**AFFORDABILITY**
Cheap ingredients equal food everyone can afford

**SPEED AND ENTERTAINMENT**
The ready-made ingredients are assembled quickly in front of the customer

**CUSTOMIZABLE**
Traditional 5-way includes chili, beans, onions, cheese and spaghetti or coney dogs

**PORTABLE**
Cincinnati chili products are sold at stores and restaurants across the region for home use

Chili parlor = model for urban design

EFFICIENCY + SPEED + AFFORDABILITY + CUSTOMIZATION + ENTERTAINMENT = SUCCESS

All photos taken by author unless otherwise noted.
As one drives along I-75, there are numerous signs and markers along the way distinguishing local attractions from the highway. As you near the uptown area, however, there is nothing special to denote the attractions the area has to offer.

It would be helpful, in a similar fashion to other attractions along the way, to utilize the overpasses and viaducts as a means for advertising the attractions of the uptown area. This would both alert the driver to the features of the area as well as provide a marker for those already looking for the attractions that guides them to the appropriate exit. For example, the University of Cincinnati, one of the most notable residents of the uptown area, has no significant indicator of its presence in the area.

When you take the Hopple Street exit, you are greeted with a barrage of signage yet the only recognition the University has is a small green sign hanging next to a traffic light that is barely large enough to read from the distance of a stopped car. Uptown needs more signage akin to the larger attractions (catalogued above) alongside the road to create an exchange with motorists.
Diners as Social Mixers

BG Restaurant in Downtown Cincinnati

Old brown bar seats: offer comfort and close seating proximity

Booths full of a mix of patrons

Fast Friendly Service

Pick up Counter, can watch food being made by owner at any time

For sharing, the counter is large and familiar

Nostalgia for Customers to share
The diner is a place where race, class and age barriers are all broken down. Old and young catch up with each other, black and white strangers sit side by side and share newspapers and the guy with two dollars to his name is sitting directly behind a millionaire and no one notices or cares.

Fast service and hospitality are mandatory. Bright smiles and warm greetings are the norm, and coffee is endless. You can eat however you want, because in a diner, folks may be people watching, but they don’t actually care about what anyone else is doing. They are too busy soaking in the nostalgia. From neon signs to old broken juke boxes to knickknacks that are just too absurd not to start conversation, there is nothing like the diner experience.

What is diner space? It is small and minimal. There is only enough room for necessary actions. Comfort is a must. Efficiency is evident and there is no place for secrets. It is historic and preserved.
Uptown and Global Retail

Nearly 500,000 square feet of new retail space is planned for Uptown. The current population can sustain only 250,000 square feet of new retail.\(^{(2)}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Uptown (existing)</th>
<th>Uptown (planned)</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail Area Per Person (square feet)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Shopping has evolved from merely being a component of the city to a requirement for urbanity. Shopping possesses the ability to generate and attract public activity.¹

The Uptown Consortium’s Strategic Opportunity Plan calls for a doubling of the existing retail space in the area’s neighborhoods in attempts to provide services for the population of residents, students and employees. Currently 443,000 square feet of retail space exists in the communities of Uptown and nearly 500,000 square feet of new retail space is planned. The current population of Uptown, consisting of 51,000 residents, 35,000 student and nearly 40,000 employees, can sustain only 250,000 of the planned retail space.²

H&M is a global clothing retailer popular among young adults. At the end of 2006, H&M had 1,345 stores in 24 countries on three continents. Above, demographics of a regional area served by an H&M store are compared to that of Uptown in order to begin to uncover the retailer’s strategy in opening stores in new market areas.

What is the formula for viability?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uptown</th>
<th>Dublin, OH (Has H&amp;M)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population:</td>
<td>51,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Median Age:</td>
<td>23 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Income:</td>
<td>$23,247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Home Value:</td>
<td>$102,954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population:</td>
<td>31,392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Age:</td>
<td>35 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Median Income:</td>
<td>$91,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Home value:</td>
<td>$310,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Market Urbanism

Throughout the 18th and 19th Centuries, Cincinnati’s public market scene was thriving. Today, however, only one market remains: Findlay Market, which is located in the heart of Over-the-Rhine, one of Cincinnati’s most blighted neighborhoods. The spatial design of the market has much to do with its success as an urban gathering space that not only attracts socially, economically, and racially diverse crowds but also promotes the exchange of social and cultural capital. The enclosed portion of the Market resembles an urban main street lined with a number of vendors selling a variety of meats, cheeses, spices, and sweets. The long, double-loaded corridor is barely wide enough to pass patrons without brushing shoulders or fortuitously eavesdropping. Yet, it is this quality that defines market culture as an incubator for social interface. The exterior spaces are especially unique because they exhibit the same social qualities as the traditional urban plaza, yet they differ in their resemblance of narrow pedestrian streets. Hence, the urban market offers a lot of bang for little buck. Uptown currently lacks any open air markets, but it has the population and open spaces that could potentially benefit from such an urban amenity.
CORNER OF ROCKDALE & BURNET. An urban market could work on this site because of its location on axis with the street. Furthermore, this site is located near new development on Burnet and down the street from an Avondale school, providing it with a central location.

CORNER OF FOREST & READING. This space has the potential to house a market not only due to its accessibility, but also because of the current urban renewal initiatives that have brought new churches and increased drug resilience to the community.

MARKETability

AVONDALE’S MARKETability

All photos taken by author unless otherwise noted.
Uptown and the Drug Market

Markets & Exchanges

Open Air Drug Markets are almost always associated with a Mom-and-Pop convenience store

Most-commonly sold drugs here are: Marijuana, Heroin & Crack Cocaine

Corner lookouts keep an eye out for police or other suspicious behavior

Graffiti memorials to victims of drug violence

Market is usually staffed by young black men

Young boys look up to the dealers and will often work as lookouts in the market

Customers are diverse: white, hispanic, black, young, old...

Dealers in the Open-Air Drug Market keep their drugs stored in a nearby apartment

Open Air Drug Markets are almost always associated with a Mom-and-Pop convenience store

...it's a legal excuse for hanging out here

...it provides food and shelter for drug market workers

...they sell related paraphernalia: crack pipes, rolling papers, etc.

THE CORNER

Nearby Forest Avenue and Martin Luther King Boulevard provide easy vehicular access

Sources: The University of Cincinnati’s Department of Criminal Justice’s report “Open-Air Drug Dealing in Cincinnati, Ohio” <www.uc.edu/criminaljustice/ProjectReports/FINAL_RECOMMENDATIONS.pdf>

All pictures taken by author unless otherwise noted.
The positive value of open space in cities is one of the most ubiquitous and unchallenged dogmas in urban discourse. Any development or master plan is required to provide for some amount of landscaped space, either paved or carpeted with vegetation. But how is it that the simple lack of building – anti-density – came to be perceived as an inherent good in almost all cases since first: Rarely do American cities even achieve particularly high densities. And second: Despite the anomalous cases of cities like New York, Boston, Los Angeles, and Chicago, most American cities have been emptying out over the past fifty years.

Jane Jacobs, in her typically blunt fashion, summed up the problem:

>In orthodox city planning, neighborhood open spaces are venerated in an amazingly uncritical fashion, much as savages venerate magical fetishes. Ask a houser how his planned neighborhood improves on the old city and he will cite, as a self-evident virtue, More Open Space. Ask a zoner about the improvements in progressive codes and he will cite, again as a self-evident virtue, their incentives for leaving More Open Space. Walk with a planner through a dispirited neighborhood and though it be already scabby with deserted parks and tired landscaping festooned with old Kleenex, he will envision a future of More Open Space.\(^1\)

Open space is a disturbingly vague genre that includes almost any species of landscape: playgrounds, parking lots, lawns, athletic fields, sidewalks, gardens, landfills, etc. In an attempt at diagnosing the problem, we have used voidscape to describe these spaces within our cities that haunt us with their persistent emptiness. Uptown is riddled with gaps in its urban fabric. Some are intentional, like Burnet Woods or the university’s Campus Green. Others are natural, like the ravines that tear at Uptown’s edges, making large swaths of land undevelopable. And then there is the ever expanding supply of parking, driven by municipal codes and consistently diluting the concentration of Cincinnati as a whole.

What is the value of open space in a barely medium density Midwestern city? What is the function of public space in a city with only limited pockets of pedestrian activity? Who desires community gardens on gap-toothed blocks of buildings already stocked with private yards? How much parking is enough when developers and retailers always want more? When are there enough parks and how do we intensify the ones that we already have? Perhaps much of Cincinnati is already a park. There is no shortage of private spaces for engaging nature so it may be no wonder that most public open spaces in the city seem to be under-occupied. The solution to this neglect may lie in the acceptance that for such a place, nature should not be held in isolation, but rather integrated with and energized by everyday life.

Programmed Parks

Community park re-programming can increase park usage and local identity, as well as lower crime. According to Jane Jacobs, parks are not automatically a benefit to communities, and actually need life conferred on them, or else they can readily become a blight.

Parks in remote locations, like Bellevue Hill Park after the incline closed, need to have a reason for people to venture to them, which Jacobs calls “demand goods.”

An entertainment program would be ideal, especially considering the site’s history as a beer hall (Bellevue House) and outdoor dancing venue.

Designers can look to thriving examples, such as NYC’s Central Park restaurant, Tavern on the Green. Burnet Woods does not engage users at the perimeter, so the interior remains vacant. Demand goods, like fishing and boating, need the amenity of a tackle shop to make it truly successful.

A busy boating shop, chess house or cafe may draw users in. A variety of programs around a park, like at Philly’s Rittenhouse Square automatically activate it because people will have a reason to cross. Fleischmann Gardens languishes in unvaried surroundings. Nearby vacant buildings should be adapted into offices, grocers and retail.
Under Programmed Parks.
Opposite: It’s not enough to offer a fishing pond. A bait, tackle and boat renting shop would draw passers-by into Burnet Woods. Right: A multitude of programs around Rittenhouse Square in Philly draw residents across the park, while Fleischmann Gardens stays relatively empty. Below: Bringing back the restaurant and dancing programs to Bellevue Hill Park would enliven it, like NYC’s Tavern on the Green.
Ohio has approximately 3,000 species of plants known to occur in the wild in Ohio. Yet most planned urban areas have a limited diversity of plantings, and use turf - thus depriving these landscapes of a sense of place.

The use of turf in urban landscapes is wasteful of resources and completely unnecessary in some cases. As an alternative, urban prairies could be grown with a variety of native, low maintenance species ranging from hearty grasses to shrubs and wildflowers. Not only will this diversity of planting encourage small insects and birds to inhabit these areas, but the use of local plant species will also give a sense of place - establishing familiar sights, colors and smells that people associate with the location.

Maintenance of lawns on large scales is expensive and sometimes harmful to the environment if herbicides and pesticides are used. The University of Cincinnati, is one such example, and has 73.5 acres of turfed areas that require high maintenance, irrigation (mostly from City water), fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides. Money and effort put in to creating these artificial landscapes could instead be put into diversifying the flora on-campus with low-maintenance indigenous plants. This could also be applied to other residential and commercial green spaces in Uptown.
Burnet Woods
natural lawns
no herbicides
no watering
low maintenance (4)

University of Cincinnati 
transplanted turf
herbicides
irrigation
high maintenance

75% of plants in Ohio are native

Potential replanted areas of low-maintenance native hearty grasses and mixtures of prairie plants

urban prairies on U.C. campus

Sigma Sigma Commons
BEFORE - Turf
AFTER - Proposed Prairie

Void Scapes

Public space guarantees use by anyone without discrimination based on social, cultural, or economic conditions. This contrasts to privately owned space that may be restricted to users doing business or related activities with the owner.

Techniques have been developed to exclude “undesirables” from such spaces by design.

The following diagrams look at open space in Cincinnati in both downtown and Uptown to analyze the organization of both private and public spaces and focus on the quality of such spaces through the promotion or prevention of public occupation.

FLEISCHMANN’S GARDEN
This once privately owned property is now a donated addition to the public park system. Over time this park has become an asset in waiting as the surrounding neighborhood is revitalized.

UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI
On the University of Cincinnati’s campus there are greenscapes that combine to equal nearly one fourth of the entire campus.

FOUNTAIN SQUARE
Fifth Third Bank has worked to re-establish a desire to visit fountain square. Who will benefit? Fifth Third Bank will as they have copious amounts of retail space adjacent to fountain square.

P & G
Proctor and Gamble have turned three city blocks downtown into a battlement against urbanity.
BENEVOLENT

INSTITUTIONAL BUFFER

SOLICITATION

CORPORATE BUFFER

All pictures taken by author unless otherwise noted.
Smart Parking

Growth in Uptown has caused a marked increase in the amount of space dedicated to parking. This brings about the question, what style of development does Uptown want to pursue. In current plans, images convey a walkable, pedestrian friendly environment. However, the impact of existing zoning, which requires large amounts of parking for more development, is more than clear.

This study looks to examine these requirements, as well as compare it with a city that is often associated with strong neighborhoods and smart growth, Portland, Oregon. Portland factors in a variety of transportation modes such as streetcars, light rail, and bicycling while Cincinnati relies almost exclusively on the demands of the automobile.

For the purpose of comparison, these two requirements were applied to two anchors within the Ludlow Business District, Keller’s IGA and the Roanoke apartments. This study illustrates the incompatibility of ample parking and walkable neighborhoods. If Uptown hopes to achieve the advertised goal of walkable neighborhoods, parking requirements are one of the largest stumbling blocks.
**WHAT IF?**

Applying current parking codes to anchors in Uptown’s Ludlow Business District

---

### The Roanoke

- 50 units
- No existing parking

### Keller’s IGA

- 30,000 sq. ft.
- 50 current spaces

---

#### Cincinnati Requirements

- **Multifamily**
  - 1.5 spaces per unit

- **Commercial - Retail**
  - 1 per 150 sq. ft.
  - After initial 2,000 sq. ft.

  - No reduction for proximate transit
  - No reduction based on cycling

#### Portland Requirements

- **Multifamily**
  - No minimum
  - 1 per 2 units maximum

- **Commercial - Retail**
  - 1 per 200 sq. ft. maximum
  - 1 per 500 sq. ft. minimum

  - Transit within 500 ft., no required parking

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Sources: United State Consumer Product Safety Commission (Bicycle), Wikipedia (Cincinnati Skyline, Portland Skyline, TriMET Light Rail Vehicle)

Ravines Shape Uptown

The shape of Uptown is largely influenced by the ravines created by prehistoric glacial expansions.

Cincinnati topography is called “A Recycled Landscape” as three glaciers, the Kansan, the Illinoian and the Wisconsinan, reached the edge of what is today Cincinnati before melting. About 2 million years ago, the area was an almost flat plateau with a meandering river flowing north.

The Kansas glacier stopped in Northern Kentucky, blocking that river and creating a giant lake in the area. The glacier retreated and began to flow west, looping through what is today Norwood and on north of the Mill Creek. The river and water runoff cut deep ruts in the areas landscape, transforming the flat land into a series of plateaus.

The advantages of the ravines are they provide spaces for the development of infrastructure like road systems, and beautiful vistas. The main disadvantage of ravines are the risk of landslides. The vegetation along the slope reduces the risk by preventing erosion.

OPPORTUNITIES

Scenic views - Mt.Adams

Space for Infrastructure

Hillside gardens in Mt. Adams
CHALLENGES

Landslide at Clifton Avenue⁴

Scarp at Lafayette Circle⁵

Inaccessible place⁶

In the early 1900’s park planning was becoming popular throughout the world as a way to enjoy views and natural landscape. In 1907 the City of Cincinnati hired renowned landscape architect George Kessler to design a park master plan. Kessler noted Cincinnati’s many hills and vistas and opted to create a plan that highlighted these natural views.

Does any open expanse make a view? The views created at Versailles Palace offer a lesson for Uptown as to what makes a successful view experience: focus.

Are Uptown’s views maximized? Are they views at all? Today these views still exist and the park plan has been largely implemented. Was Kessler’s plan successful and is it truly finished? What response do the views provoke from the user?
Potential Enhancements of View seen from Bellevue Park
The hustle and bustle in lively cities is missing in Cincinnati. Despite the recent attempts at jump starting activity, including restricting smoking in bars and restaurants and nearly a half-billion in the construction of two sport stadiums, early bedtimes or closing times of activity centers continues to stifle activity across the board.

Everything from museums, theaters, parks, the zoo and even restaurants cater largely to the early crowds. With no vendors to sell, or street performers to entertain, crowds disperse quickly. With the privately controlled spaces closed, and even the “public” spaces (such as parks) closed, where is an eager crowd to go if not the bars or exclusive haunts?

What happens to a neighborhood lacking substantial evening activities? What can urban design do to create places that fulfill the needs and desires of a socially oriented public?

**Best Cities for Singles**

1. San Francisco-Oakland
2. New York
3. Los Angeles
4. Atlanta
5. Chicago
6. Washington
7. San Diego
8. Seattle
9. Dallas-Fort Worth
10. Philadelphia
11. Boston
12. Austin
13. Minneapolis-St. Paul
14. Houston
15. Phoenix
16. Denver-Aurora
17. New Orleans
18. Las Vegas
19. Columbus
20. Miami
21. Detroit
22. Orlando
23. Memphis
24. Milwaukee
25. Sacramento
26. Baltimore
27. St. Louis
28. San Antonio
29. Portland
30. Indianapolis
31. Buffalo
32. Tampa-St. Petersburg
33. Virginia Beach-Norfolk
34. Jacksonville
35. Pittsburgh
36. Salt Lake City
37. Cleveland
38. Kansas City

**Best Cities for Couples**

27. Milwaukee
28. St. Louis
29. Boston
30. Portland
31. Tampa
32. Philadelphia
33. Memphis
34. **Cincinnati**
35. Seattle
36. Indianapolis
37. New Orleans
38. Miami
39. Providence
40. Cleveland

**Public Urban Park**
Between existing and proposed mixed-use infill these serve as 24-hour support space for events, gathering and leisure activities. Adjacent buildings have possibility for engagement.

**Inhabited Corner**
Plagued with stereotypes, and negative connotation, occupation of these spaces become definitive markers of a neighborhood with limited options.
Most architects and planners remain convinced that economically, politically, and socially just communities can be designed. We see ourselves as stewards of the public domain and so issues of equity tend to be central to our planning efforts. But today our professions must satisfy developers’ demands for profits as much as (or even in spite of) our own ambitions for just cities.

After decades of suburban flight, cities have once again become centers for investment. Corporate entities like the Uptown Consortium have realized their direct interest in urban development. As some cities around the country have experienced cultural and economic renaissance, concerns over gentrification have spawned numerous public conflicts. Resident groups often look to planners to aid them in these struggles, but the growth of most American cities is now market driven and developers typically oppose the interjection of public planning processes in development. Developers and property owners are often accused of reaping oversized profits, so community members demand benefits in return, usually in the form of social services, subsidized housing, or public space improvements. These demands are based on the dubious assertion that urban culture in America has ever been consistently just or equitable.

Today, negotiations between communities and developers tend to quickly devolve into political battles and lawsuits, resulting often in lengthy stalemates that benefit neither side. Design, which is often used by both groups, rarely influences the outcome in development battles once they reach this stage. Cities have always been spaces of fierce social, economic, and political competition. It could be that a certain degree of inequity and imbalance may be necessary to maintain the volatility that enables cities to constantly renew themselves in the ways that we have come to expect and enjoy. On the other hand, cities are also the places from which many of our notions of fairness and civil society have emerged. Besides business and politics, cities are also places where people have historically come together for their mutual benefit and protection.
Who Owns Uptown?

The OOH Factor
Owner-Occupied Housing
% of Cincinnati homes that are owner-occupied, by neighborhood¹

- Norway: 77%
- Argentina: 68%
- Japan: 61%
- South Africa: 56%
- China: 47%
- Saudi Arabia: 45%
- Switzerland: 35%

HOME OWNERSHIP BY COUNTRY²
Like many American cities, home-ownership in Cincinnati is concentrated in the suburbs, while many people in the center of the city choose (or are forced) to rent (see map above). Ownership of property is often taken as an indication not only of the efficiency of a nation’s housing finance market, but also of its general prosperity. But this is a flawed model: It fails to take into account housing quality, changing demographics, traditions, legacy and culture. Switzerland has an enviable standard of living, but housing prices still outpace most people’s earning potential, giving it one of the lowest rates of home-ownership in Europe. In many housing models in the 3rd world, traditional societies can reach nearly 100% ownership due to vernacular housing typologies. In Manhattan, home ownership is prohibitively expensive, but there is also present a type of ‘renter’s culture’ where people give up the ideal of home-ownership for a more vibrant form of apartment living. In Uptown, the housing stock is some of the most affordable in America, but 61% of Uptowners still rent. 77% of housing is owned by absentee landlords. Where do these landlords live? Why don’t Uptowners choose to buy? Is it simply a renter’s culture? Or is it that even lower housing prices are still out of reach of the average Uptown resident?

There is a struggle for power of development rights in Avondale. The Uptown Consortium is an organization with representation from the major businesses in the area: The University of Cincinnati, The Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden, and the Cincinnati Children’s Hospital. Because the Children’s Hospital is such a large, wealthy industry, the poor surrounding community of Avondale has a tendency to be lost amidst its vast expansions. While efforts have been made at finding middle ground, the Avondale Community Council and the Uptown Consortium leave room for improvement; the example for this is the Herald Building on Burnet Ave. While discussions were held about the desired building type, the modern style building currently under construction is far from Avondale’s vision of maintaining a consistent Avondale typology.

Nothing was said to refute the Uptown Consortium’s proposal; if the Avondale Community does indeed feel strongly about maintaining an identity, the community leaders need to band together and raise their voices. Similar steps need to be taken in downtown Cincinnati, where 3CDC, formed and run by big corporations, is taking over the town’s development.
Sources: University of Cincinnati (www.uc.edu), Tri Health (www.trihealth.com), Health Alliance (www.health-alliance.com), Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden, Cincinnati Childrens Hospital, the Uptown Consortium.
Institution as Developer

The student population makes up a large portion of Uptown, so should development focus on their needs? The University of Cincinnati has been involved in recent student housing projects that are making a big impact in Uptown.

Development is typically for profit but most of the recent Uptown developments have been initiated by the university, which is a non-profit institution.

With the help of Clifton Heights Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation and Uptown Consortium, UC has recently developed three planned communities aimed to improve student housing. The recent completion of Stetson Square, Stratford Heights and University Park Apartments have had a major effect on the university's surrounding neighborhoods.

The evolving role of the university as a planner and developer is one that should be studied more closely to understand both the potentials and conflicts that arise when institutions of higher learning plan to play such roles in development.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>STETSON SQUARE</th>
<th>STRATFORD HEIGHTS</th>
<th>UNIVERSITY PARK</th>
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Civil Unrest

Civil unrest is a part of the history in many urban centers of the US. Cincinnati is not unique to that extent. Riots have been occurring in this city, extending back to the 18th century. They have been sparked by many factors, among them religion, race, economics, politics, and justice.

What urban conditions contribute to these urban explosions? In our contemporary culture of sustainability, could environmental justice issues cause future riots?

Riots have generally occurred in the areas where there was a high density of minorities. This may explain why most of Cincinnati’s riots have occurred in the basin, an area that does not have much “elbow room”, and also where most of the external immigration has occurred. It is here where most of the protests, rebellions, and violence have taken place, where the lifestyle of different social groups was out in the open and different activities occurred in the same social space.

..."it is a kind of ‘Alice in Wonderland’, with the same moving picture re-shown over and over again, the same analysis, the same recommendations, and the same inaction.” - Dr. Kenneth B. Clark, appearing before National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders after Summer 1967 riots
31 soldiers get involved in argument with store merchant
1792
51 citizens impacted

50% of city’s African American inhabitants forced out of city
1829
1200+ citizens impacted

300 African American men placed into “protective custody” after Whites attack neighborhood
1841
400+ citizens impacted

800 German Catholics march against Cardinal Bedini, seen as a “symbol of repression”
1853
800+ citizens impacted

% of Germans from Over-The-Rhine barricade streets into neighborhood
1855
2000+ citizens impacted

56 killed, 200 seriously injured in riot that involves burning of Hamilton County Courthouse
1884
10,000+ citizens impacted

30 officers attempt to control crowd that gathers around a fight initially between two African American women
1955
1000+ citizens impacted

25 officers involved in clash with neighborhood residents, initiated by police’s handling of a woman
1955
500+ citizens impacted

400 people arrested following civil unrest the day after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. visits Cincinnati
1967
1100+ citizens impacted

50 fire bombings occur within first hour of violence in Avondale following assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
1968
475+ citizens impacted

15 questionable deaths of African Americans in two years causes civil unrest in downtown and Over-The-Rhine
2001
900+ citizens impacted

In the past two presidential elections voter disenfranchisement has been an urban issue. Votes were lost through spoiling, tabulation errors, and registration invalidation efforts. Underrepresented or vulnerable populations within certain communities were the focus of many disenfranchisement efforts.

Unfortunately, Cincinnati has been the site of some of these incidents. With this national phenomenon affecting polling places throughout Uptown, where incidents of voting errors were plentiful, this is a problem that could affect Cincinnati’s and Uptown’s identity into the coming years.
Errors in Exit Polls

- 15 Incidents per 1,000 Votes
- Statewide Outcry Attracting National Attention

Total Voting Incidents in Uptown

- Absentee Ballot
- Voter Intimidation
- Machine Problem
- Identification
- Criminal Status
- Provisional Ballot
- Ballot-Related (Other)
- Long Lines
- Polling Place Inquiry
- Polling Place (Other)
- Other

"**348 Total Voting Incidents in Hamilton County - Other 295 Incidents Not Identified by Neighborhood

National Errors of the 2004 Presidential Elections

- Ft. Worth, TX - 2004
  - 150,000 votes counted for 50,000 cast

- Beaufort, North Carolina - 2004
  - Voting machine permanently erases 4,439 early votes cast

- Philadelphia, PA - 2004
  - 5% of voting machines break down on primary day
Urban Fear and Poverty
Boarded up buildings, broken windows, no trespassing signs can all be signs of dis-investment. In fairly close proximity to areas suffering from various forms of blight, Uptown also exhibits wealth, with the universities, hospitals, shopping districts and entertainment.

With such diverse conditions packed into such a limited area, one might ask what conditions promote the fear of occupation or investment of urban spaces? Often the assumption is crime. However, crime in Uptown is not limited to the poorer districts, but also exists around the University of Cincinnati or in other parts of Clifton, for example.

In addition to the fear of crime, potential urban dwellers may also have a fear of poverty. The sight of vacant lots, dilapidated buildings and broken windows can promote a sense that a neighborhood or a city is in some social or economic distress.

Reducing the Fear of Poverty

No More Boarded Up Windows

Fix Broken Windows

More Street Lamps

Create Better Jobs for Ex-Convicts

More Street Sweepers

Add Sidewalk Seating

Plant Trees

Corner Shop in Avondale
Uptown’s Political Clout

Uptown 2008 Political Contributions
The citizens of Uptown could change the world with their next vote. The 2008 presidential race in Ohio should be pivotal to the national outcome. People of Uptown are showing their loyalties with their contributions to the political campaigns. There has been a growing trend this election year to offer small amounts of contributions from students, and these students are voting in record numbers thus shaping the political race. The candidates are taking notice. In 2004, Uptown’s contributions leaned in favor of the Republican party, and they won the presidential race. In 2008, soon to be Democratic nominee Barack Obama held a rally at the Fifth Third Arena on UC’s campus with a capacity crowd. Could a new saying be “As Uptown Goes so goes the nation”?

“Don’t shoot, I want to grow up.”

Amnesty International estimates that there are 640,000,000 small arms in the world. 59% civilian owned and 2.8% police owned.

Of all youth homicide victims of America aged between 10 and 24, 81% were killed with a small firearm.

On average there are 565 homicide victims every day worldwide aged between 10 & 29.

1 in every 6 murders in Uptown are in Avondale.

Youth. youth (youth)

The condition or quality of being young. A period of development or existence: a nation in its youth. A young person, especially a young male in late adolescence. In the first stage of the erosion cycle.
On a warm Wednesday afternoon Cincinnati police arrested Demar Edmonds, 20, after two shots were fired during a funeral procession at Vine Street Hill Cemetery. Edmonds was in attendance for the funeral of Michael Grace, 19, using his 9mm to pay tribute to his fallen friend in military fashion. Gun violence is an issue felt world-wide, but the youth of America stand as the most affected industrialized nation. Among homicide victims 81 percent were killed with a small firearm. Homicide also stands for the leading cause of death for young African Americans at 53.1 per 100,000, the majority being male. If the African American population in the United States stood as a nation, they would have the world’s highest homicide rate. Unfortunately these statistics hold true in Avondale, a predominantly African American neighborhood within Cincinnati. This neighborhood has struggled as it stands with the highest number of homicides, 20% of the city total. Local organizations have come to the aid of the community. Cease Fire’s mission is to reduce shootings in Avondale through a strategy involving community mobilization, a criminal justice collaborative, faith-based leadership, street-level outreach and public education.
1 in 9

Under federal law, care giving facilities (including day-cares and senior housing, and hospitals as a whole), and educational centers (including k-12 and Universities), are legally allowed to discriminate based on criminal record, regardless of severity or type of conviction. Some of the largest employers in Cincinnati which can be found in Uptown all fall into this category. If we cannot stop the crime, what can be done to help bring a marginalized group of people back into the economy?

1 in 9 of our citizens will not be able to vote. 1 in 9 will find it nearly impossible to find housing — even federally sponsored. 1 in 9 are guaranteed to make less than 20k for the rest of their lives. 1 in 9 will be denied Federal financial aid for higher education; and face extreme opposition in procuring state and local funding. 1 in 9 will never be able to hold public office of any form — from community council member to senator or otherwise. 1 in 9 will be convicted of a felony and as a result be rendered socially, economically and politically impotent. The 1 in 9 are African-Americans; for Caucasians it is 1 in 50.

Avondale is 92% African-American. It has the 3rd highest arrest rate, and the 2nd highest ‘call-for-emergency’ rate in a city comprised of more than 40 documented neighborhoods. In Uptown, Avondale dominates every crime and police-related category. With a population nearing 20,000, 18,000 are African-American.
$20k\textsuperscript{[per year]}\textsuperscript{5} average salary cap for Convicted felons

inability to attain license for:

“... many employers have the right to refuse jobs to ex-convicts, and are free from accusations of discrimination”\textsuperscript{7}

55%\textsuperscript{6} est. felon population excluded from work in Uptown institutions

Remaining Employment Options

FOOD SERVICE
- Landscaping
- Painter
- Janitor

CONSTRUCTION (limited)

Time is both the friend and enemy of urbanity. When time generates feelings of nostalgia it increases value. When time generates decay, value diminishes. The charming patina of historic neighborhoods draws the attention of preservationists and tourists alike, but when parts of a city age too rapidly, this patina is preempted by decay and we call it blight.

Blight is a slur – a scarlet letter that we use to condemn buildings and neighborhoods suffering from the ills of disinvestment and neglect. Blight is a weapon – sometimes used by politicians and developers to disgrace neighborhoods to the point where they can be demolished, rebuilt, and sold back at a higher price. Blight is an entirely subjective technical designation that is often a determining factor for whether entire neighborhoods live or die. In debates over blight, it is rarely possible to define the difference between a historic district and a slum or a Ruin and just plain ruined.

At the end of the twentieth century, both architectural post-modernism and the New Urbanism gave us creative ways to feed our collective hunger for an imagined past. It was argued that certain architectural and urban forms are timeless in their ability to provide structure and meaning to public life. Shopping malls became town centres and subdivisions became villages in the hopes that pre-1960’s society could be recreated in the process. Now that we have entered the digital age, even our industrial past has become fertile ground for nostalgia. Factories were turned into lofts by artists and squatters in the seventies and eighties. Now whole loft districts are being fabricated with newly built condominiums posing as old factories and warehouses.

Developers have become increasingly rapid in their ability to turn the recent urban past into new urban lifestyle – producing an urban environment built on transience and fakery. American homes are no longer viewed as places to live, but rather as investments. This culture of speculation led, in part, to the recent collapse of the national housing market. In every city and suburb, new developments sit nearly empty, trapped in an economic purgatory. Now we have a glut of “loft-o-miniums” and “McMansions” littering the landscape, decaying much more rapidly than the villages and factories they were built to imitate, suggesting to us that in the beginning of the 21st century, nostalgia may have become the new blight.
Fight [for your] Blight

The Keep Cincinnati Beautiful Organization recently created a ‘Blight Index’ that citizens could use to judge their neighborhood. The index lists definitions of what qualifies as blight (abandoned buildings, broken windows, etc) and creates a gradient of levels of blight that can be quantified. For residents, this could be a valuable tool to track changes in the neighborhood and create grant proposals for renewal monies. The word blight could just as easily be used by speculative investors, dreamy planners and government officials to take over property for their own designs without consent of the community. The definitions are tricky and volatile, and community members have to ride a thin line of definition that will get them the help they need without giving over the reigns of their community to an outside entity. What types of blight can make a neighborhood valuable, what types can make it more vulnerable? What follows is a chart of possibilities to help master the game.

**WHAT DO WE DO WITH OUR EDGY, AGING URBAN FABRIC?**

**THE VARIABLES**

- Blight
- Ruin
- Real Estate
- Eminent Domain
- Visibility
- Art
- Nostalgia

**THE VARIABLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blight</th>
<th>Ruin</th>
<th>Real Estate</th>
<th>Eminent Domain</th>
<th>Visibility</th>
<th>Art</th>
<th>Nostalgia</th>
</tr>
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</table>

**GLORIFY**

| Eye + Paint = Building |

**REINVENT**

| House + Hand = House |

Poster-child for adaptive reuse: the Power Plant, Baltimore

Eden Park Gate, a constructed ruin

Detroit's Project Orange, a guerrilla art movement to raise awareness of blight and quicken demolition

A stretch of Ohio's 700 miles of abandoned canal infrastructure
More house than we can (h)eat

What’s the Difference?<

age  building materials
sense of community  amenities
garage presence  economic/social diversity
energy efficiency  heritage/history
The range of housing options in Uptown is wide. Especially notable is the abundance of extremely large turn of the century homes. The difficulties with making these large-scale houses marketable are the problems of over-consumption and maintenance.

In 1974, the average size of an American family was 3.1 people and a house was roughly 1,695 square feet. In 2004, family size decreased to 2.6 people, while the house increased to 2,349 square feet. We’re consuming more housing square footage as families are shrinking. Homes in Uptown are also experiencing housing entropy: Most of the energy consumed by a house is spent to maintain its structure. With these houses being as old as they are, certain maintenance procedures need to be met to adequately heat and maintain the house. Unfortunately, that is not always something a homeowner can afford, leaving many of these houses susceptible to decay.


All photos taken by author unless otherwise noted.
Churches and synagogues are being converted to other uses. There is no longer the need nor the church-going population to support, because of migration to the suburbs. What becomes, then, of abandoned churches? Churches cannot be torn down like other buildings, because they are sacred monuments to religion, realized in architecture. In Cincinnati one can find many churches that have found new uses – bars, retail outlets, technology companies or housing.

In Uptown, Urban Outfitters occupies the former Third Memorial Presbyterian Church, while just a few blocks away Old St. George Church sits vacant following a recent fire that destroyed both its steeples. Debates continue about appropriate or desirable uses for these buildings, but in most cases, their long-term preservation or rehabilitation will require some significant amount of public and/or private investment.
300 non-functioning churches
according to Archdiocese Archives
People do not normally associate infrastructure with having fun, but maybe they should. Roller coasters, bridges, inclines, and sky rides are all infrastructures of enjoyment. Many times this infrastructure is used to attract tourists. For instance, many people visit Kings Island to ride roller coaster. The purple people bridge offers visitors an opportunity to climb the arch. New York City’s SkyRide is one of the city’s best attractions taking tourists and residents on an aerial city tour.

Pittsburgh’s Duquense Incline gives tourists and residents a glimpse back into the past while offering a great view of the city.

There were three inclines built to the Uptown area in the early 1900’s. There is an opportunity for the city to link tourist activity and residents with existing infrastructure.
Locations of the Cincinnati inclines.

A

The Fairview Incline between 1892 and 1923.

B

The Bellevue Incline over what is now W. Clifton.

C

Mt. Auburn Incline was the 1st to be built in 1872.

The Fairview Incline as it stands today.

What is left of the Bellevue Incline on W. Clifton.

The Mt. Auburn Incline is now a staircase.

Urban Wildlife Refuge

- Polar Bear Habitat
- Red Panda Habitat
- Asian Elephant Habitat
- Other Habitats At Risk

Polar Bear
Red Panda
Asian Elephant
The Cincinnati Zoo, located in the heart of Uptown Cincinnati, is an invaluable asset not only to the community, but to the world as well. As habitats are being lost to Global Warming and Deforestation, a number of animal species are on the verge of extinction. The Cincinnati Zoo is home to a number of these animals including Polar Bears, Red Pandas and Asian Elephants who make up a portion of the world’s precious animal infrastructure.

The Polar Bear population is decreasing (25,000) due to the melting of icebergs due to global warming. The Red Panda, with a population of roughly 2,500 in existence, is struggling to survive in the wild. Fragmentation of their habitat due to human encroachment and deforestation practices has left them without shelter and food. Asian Elephants, with a population below 30,000, are being driven out of their land and are left with no place to go.

As humans continue to destroy forests more and more animal habitats will be destroyed. As of September 2007, the World Conservation Union listed 41,415 species on their “red list.” The Cincinnati Zoo in Uptown is a valuable asset in the global fight to protect and reproduce our endangered animal infrastructure.
Old Industry, New Landscape

Restoration Area 1
Restoration Area 2
Restoration Area 3
Restoration Area 4
Enhancement Area

Proposed Green Way Trail for Mill Creek

Retail / Industries
Restoration area
The pollutants being discharged into Ohio waterways include sewage, heavy metals and storm water. Ohio is ranked the #1 polluter in the country and 74% percent of Ohio’s permitted industrial and municipal facilities exceeded their Clean Water Act permits. On average, Ohio facilities exceeding their Clean Water Act permits by 155%, or 2.5 times the legal limit.

The Mill Creek stream flows 28 miles south from its headwaters in Butler County through the heart of Hamilton County and the City of Cincinnati to its confluence with the Ohio River. In 1997-1999, the Mill Creek Restoration Project took the responsibility for launching the implementation of the Mill Creek Watershed Greenway Master Plan.

The Greenway Program helps to reduce urban blight, to restore and protect natural resources within degraded areas of the Mill Creek, to conserve greenspace, and to develop recreational trails and other amenities that communities and watershed neighborhoods want. But the real issue is the existence of the industries and retail upstream continues to pollute. How the greenway will coexist with these persistent conditions is a challenge still to be resolved.

Sources: www.cincinnati-oh.gov/cityparks, www.millcreekrestoration.org
Exploring Uptown?

Urban Exploring:
1. The examination of the normally unseen or off-limits parts of human civilization.
2. Going places you’re not supposed to go.

Urban Exploring Clubs in Ohio
- Cincinnati Discovery - Cincinnati
- Ohio Exploration Society - Columbus
- Westerville Urban Exploration - Westerville
- Ohio Trespassers - Akron
- Great Lakes Urban Exploration - Cleveland

Exploring Abandoned Tunnels
Surf Cincinnati, Forest Park
“During its century-plus life, the district has been a study in contrasts. It’s been home to all classes of people. In the last quarter century, it’s been an award-winning model for urban renewal and a snake’s nest of drug dealers.”
*Cincinnati Enquirer*, Jan 2004

The life buildings live after they have served their time tells the history of a region, an area, and a group. Urban exploring has become an increasingly popular activity among city dwellers and those fascinated by urban entropy. Somewhere between performance art and extreme sport, urban explorers seek the value and beauty in the ruin and left-behind spaces of our cities and suburbs.

The Glencoe “Hole” in Mt. Auburn shows the history of Cincinnati and Uptown. Built as an affordable apartment development in the then exclusive suburb of Mt. Auburn the development soon became vacant only to be redeveloped as a hotel and middle class development. Currently, the Glencoe Hole is ready to tell its next story, but until then it is a pleasure to explore.

Often these buildings and areas have been re-used and adapted to different purposes, the layers of which can only be seen and understood once time begins to peel the empty layers away revealing what once was. Looking at urban entropy and exposing what was can change...
Eminent Renewal of the Urban Domain

Calhoun Street today, a grassy field with few buildings.

Calhoun Street's past retail strip near UC. Source: Jerry Wolter, Cincinnati Enquirer

Before...

...After
And because of UC’s interest in development, Uptown is not immune to developers’ blight. Calhoun Street along the southern edge of UC’s campus is a prime example. Older buildings that had a 89% occupancy rate were demolished to make way for a new development that has been on hold, replacing the site with a grass lawn. Across the street from this site is University Park Apartments (pictured above) with commercial uses on the lower level. UPA has not been as successful as originally intended, leading one to wonder if demolishing these great older buildings to make way for the new is worth it.

Cincinnati has a history of removing older sites to make way for the new. Old houses at the tops of hills created to serve the inclines were all demolished when the inclines closed. Bellevue House, in Uptown, was demolished and the site was developed into a park.

Although change is necessary and natural to cities, “change” does not always only mean “new”. Planning in Uptown has yet to find many effective ways to integrate the desire for new development with existing activities and lifestyles.

Capitalism drives impermanence. It is a cycle of desire-driven demand and rejection, wherein old buildings are rejected because they are old, and therefore difficult and expensive to upkeep. Therefore, while it may be cheaper to purchase an old structure in one of the neighborhoods, high maintenance makes these buildings less affordable.

New construction, on the other hand, is expensive, and therefore not available to the local lower income population. In addition, initial maintenance is low if at all necessary. Because new structures are often designed and constructed with cheaper techniques and materials, they may fall into ruin much more quickly.
New

Quick-Return → Nostalgia → Reject Old → Expensive

Cheap → Artificial → Low Maintenance → Unaffordable to Locals

Old

Authentic → Quality → Unaffordable → Affordable

Long-Term Investment → High Maintenance → Inexpensive
Not So Big Cities

Unlike most other states, Ohio is not home to a single large city, but instead several smaller, “not so big” cities. Once thriving centers of industry, these cities are now redefining their economic and cultural identities to retain people and jobs as they transition to post-industrial economies.

Several factors contributed to the shrinking of Ohio’s cities. These include suburban sprawl, “brain drain,” and fragmented local and regional government.

While there are factors that have had a negative impact on Ohio cities, each city has unique features and characteristics that have been both recognized and utilized to promote map the future of the city.

On the opposite page, the skylines of three large Ohio cities are compared with a collage skyline of Uptown. All are markedly similar in composition and density. Uptown also shares many common features and issues that both help and hinder Ohio’s cities, including sprawl, infrastructure, “brain drain” and tension between various groups of political and economic power.
CINCINNATI  
Cincinnati is trying to polish the tarnished image of Over-the-Rhine and is negotiating for $1 billion in new riverfront development.

CLEVELAND  
Cleveland is using the Cleveland Clinic as the anchor to make the city an international biomedical research and treatment destination.

COLUMBUS  
Columbus has reduced the impact of suburban flight by continuing to annex surrounding neighborhoods.

UPTOWN  
The large institutions of Uptown have pledged assistance towards redevelopment of the neighborhoods they occupy.

Sources: www.UrbanOhio.com