gather. learn. build.

Architecture to Build Community Capacity as an Alternative to Gentrification

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the issue

The uneven development in historic Over-the-Rhine, Cincinnati is resulting in the rapid gentrification of the neighborhood and the displacement of the city's most vulnerable urban poor. Without the support or participation of the long-time residents, current development practices are perpetuating the cycle of moving wealth and poverty around the city rather than creating sustainable, mixed-income neighborhoods.

Resident empowerment and participation in the development process is critical to breaking this cycle. Rather than building housing for the low-income residents of Over-the-Rhine, this project establishes a framework to empower and build resident capacity. This project allows people to gather to determine their own needs, learn and access resources, and build their own solutions to take control of the development of their neighborhood.

"It is not about building houses."

It is about a community recognizing that they need houses, their ability to access resources, and build their own solutions.
It is about building capacity from within.

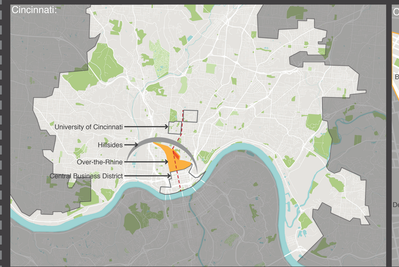
Current Investment Cycle:

The current model of investment and development supports the design of a city with geographically separated economic classes. In this system, the upper classes are able to move to whatever area of the city is more attractive at any given time, forcing poor people out of their neighborhoods. This cycle must be broken to achieve stable, sustainable neighborhoods.

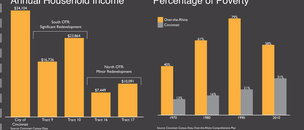
Interruption of Current Investment Cycle: Creation of Regenerative Processes

This intervention breaks the current cycle and shares power between the city, corporations, grassroots organizations, and neighborhood residents. In this approach, all stakeholders create a comprehensive plan that is used to guide development. The building stock is periodically inventoried, analyzed, and adjusted if a prescribed mix is not achieved. This method creates a new regenerative cycle that allows all stakeholders to be involved in the neighborhood's future.

the context



Annual Household Income



Percentage of Poverty

The result of recent uneven development has resulted in economic inequality that is "**the highest of more than 61,000 communities nationwide** (Pugh)." Census data for the project area reveals that while more than two-thirds of the households earn less than $10,000 annually (well below the federal poverty level) 6% of the households earn between $100,000 and $200,000 annually (Pugh).

Advising Organization: Over-the-Rhine Community Housing

- Operates over 400 units of affordable housing in the neighborhood
- Founded over 30 years ago by residents and community activists
- Has significant ownership in this area of the Over-the-Rhine

2012 Neighborhood Vision Study Conclusions:

- Quality housing options for all income levels
- Introducing higher-income residents without displacing current residents
- Stimulate business development and create job opportunities
- Eliminate crime, improve perception of safety, and improve community/police relations
- Encouraging both old and new residents to respect each other and form one diverse community

the approach

Use Architecture and Urban Design to catalyze resident-led redevelopment efforts that prioritize the needs of current low-income residents and minimizing displacement due to gentrification.

Program Details:

Gather to Recognize Needs:
A large community meeting room will serve as a safe space for residents of all income levels to engage in constructive conversation about the future of their neighborhood. The room will be flexible to accommodate a wide range of gatherings, from presentations to charettes to celebrations.

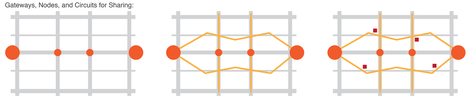
Learn to Access Resources:
Classrooms, offices, and housing for "Partners in Residence" will be used to build resident capacity and skills. The community will invite and host Partners in Residence who will run programs focused on a topic identified by the community. Residency terms will vary depending on the duration of the programs and the need.
- Job training and placement
- Alternative tenancy and housing management strategies, cooperatives, land trusts, etc.
- Financial literacy, navigating housing financing, mortgages, etc.
- Redevelopment processes: the design, permitting, and construction process, etc.
- Community organizing techniques and strategies

Build Solutions:
A reuse-material warehouse will provide access to affordable building materials
A construction-trade job training center will provide working-age residents with skills to become involved in area construction.

Local Economy:
Live-work units have studios/retail shops that open onto the Third Floor terrace. These studios will provide permanent space for local crafts or service traditions to thrive and will enhance the terrace as a destination for pedestrians. The building's ground floor and second floor retail flex will complete the activity zone in the terrace and along the building along Vine street as well as on the main staircase. These uses set the framework for future buildings up the hill to McMicken to take advantage of similar pedestrian-oriented uses as an anchor at the end of the neighborhood.

concepts

Gateways, Nodes, and Circuits for Sharing:



Step 1: Gateways and Nodes

Establish 2 Gateways: New Center for Community Development and the existing Rothenberg Elementary School

Establish 2 Nodes: Local shops at significant intersections

Step 2: Pedestrian Circuit

Transform existing narrow alleys into vibrant, active, and safe pedestrian zones to improve connectivity throughout the hilly neighborhood.

Step 3: SHARE box

Place small pavilions called SHARE box's along the pedestrian path to activate the pedestrian space, provide wayfinding and identity, and foster community engagement and a culture of sharing.

Renovation, Green Space, and Strategic Infill:

Step 1: Renovation

Restore existing vacant historic buildings. Use local labor force and incorporate sustainable building technology where feasible. Provide housing for all income levels, with special attention to adequate affordable housing.

Step 2: Green Space

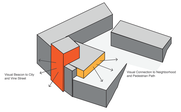
Transform existing narrow alleys into vibrant, active, and safe green spaces and pedestrian circuit.
Program green space for various activities to appeal to a wide range of people, ages, ability, and interests.

Step 3: Strategic Infill

Add new infill buildings along major streets while maintaining the center of the blocks as pedestrian green spaces. Infill buildings should reference historic fabric without mimicking it. Provide housing for all income levels, with special attention to adequate affordable housing.

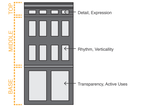
Formal Inspiration: Rothenberg School

Orientation and Connections to Context



The building massing relates to the neighborhood to the East while establishing a beacon at the major intersection of Vine Street and Clifton Avenue. The glass tower is oriented to the intersection, while the primary community room and public terrace are oriented to the neighborhood and pedestrian path.

Conceptual Interpretation of Historic Guidelines



The neighborhood has strict historic guidelines for new buildings, and the most important characteristics were interpreted to influence the design. The definition of a base, middle and top were critical, as was proportions of openings, verticality, and material choices.

Public Terrace from Pedestrian Path

Main Staircase

Market Area/Parking and Loading Zone

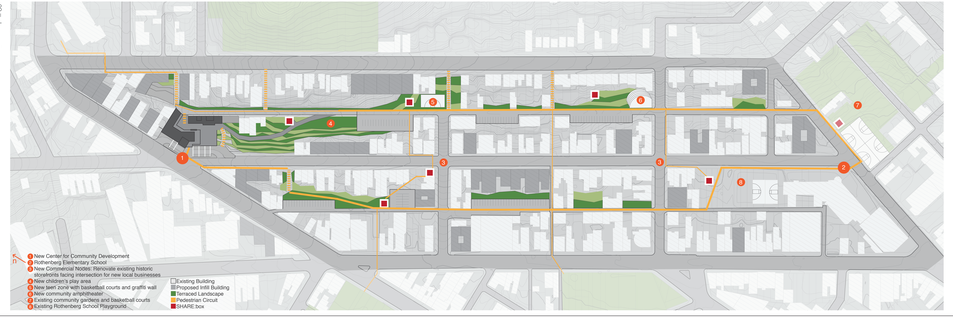
Interior of Main Community Meeting Room

Public Terrace

Interior of Salvaged Building Materials Retail Space

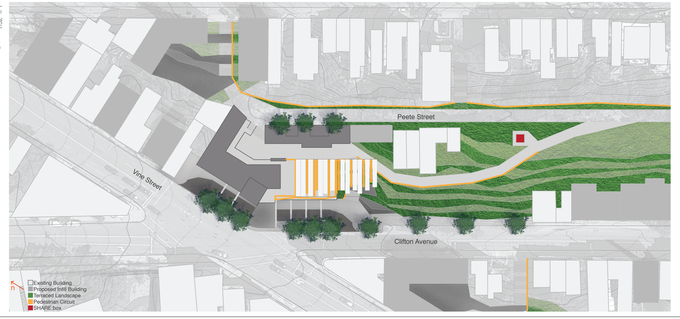
urban plan

1" = 80'



site plan

1" = 40'



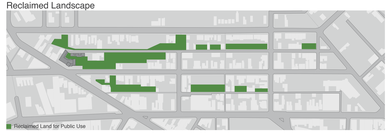
urban diagrams
not to scale

Street Hierarchy

Pedestrian Circuits

Condition of Building Stock

Reclaimed Landscape



Programmed Open Space

SHARE:box
not to scale

Design to Catalyze a Culture of Sharing

Public Pavilions with Varied Uses

Made by the students of the Construction Trade Job Training Program at the new Center for Community Development, these 100 sf pavilions are placed throughout the landscape along pedestrian paths. Their main purpose is to provide a variety of free, public uses to activate the pedestrian circuit with many different types of people. Each SHARE:box will have a unique identity but a common design language will link them together, allowing each box to become a wayfinding device along the pedestrian circuit.

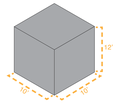
SHARE:box Uses

SOCIAL
- Informal Library
- Board Game Room
- Graffiti Wall for Teens
- Lookout Tower

ECONOMIC
- Community Garden Sales Stand
- Local Art Exhibit Room

STORAGE
- Garden Equipment
- Play Equipment
- Amphitheater Equipment

SHARE:box Locations



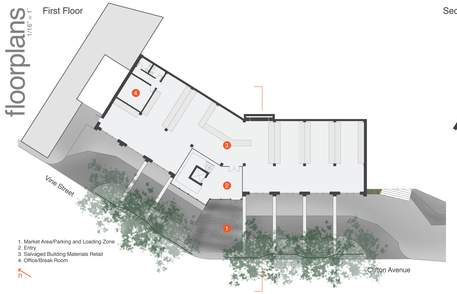
Unified Variety of Design Options

1/4" = 1'

facade details
1/4" = 1'

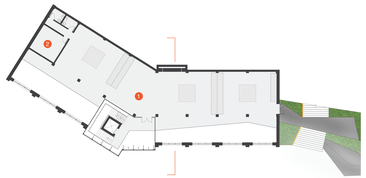
floorplans
1/16" = 1'

First Floor



1. Market Area/Parking and Loading Zone
2. Entry
3. Salvaged Building Materials Retail
4. Office/Break Room

Second Floor



1. Construction Trade Job Training and Mock-up Area
2. Office

Third Floor

1. Public Terrace
2. Lobby and Information
3. Main Community Meeting Room
4. Community Lounge
5. Classroom
6. Office
7. Studio/Shop
8. Cafe

Fourth Floor

1.Co-housing Shared Space: Lounge, Kitchen and Dining, Laundry
2. Studio Apartment: 350-450 sf
3. 1 Bedroom Apartment: 500 sf

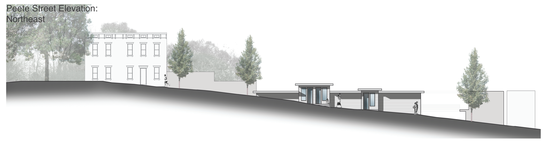
elevations
1/16" = 1'

Vine Street Elevation: West

Terrace Elevation: Southwest

Clifton Avenue Elevation: Southwest

Peete Street Elevation: Northeast

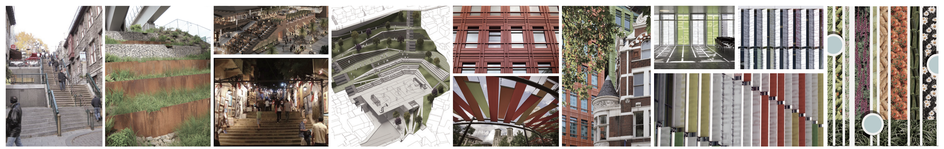


sections
1/16" = 1'

Building Section

Landscape Section

precedents



process