The Commercial Evolution of Over-the-Rhine, Cincinnati, OH

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“If you’re from out of town, this is where you go. If you’re from (Cincinnati), this is the neighborhood to be in.”

- Allen Woods, Mortar
Sense of Place Theory

Daniel Canter, psychologist
John Montgomery, urban designer
Loss of Sense of Place, 1920s-2000s

- Prohibition & national economic decline disrupts activities in the neighborhood
- Physical deterioration ensues
- Image of place unravels

Municipal Activities of the City of Cincinnati, 1936
1. How has the organization of commercial uses within Over-the-Rhine changed since 1930?

2. Does the current commercial development strategy follow historical patterns?
Physical Data Across Time via Sanborn Maps

STUDY PERIODS

1930  1961  1993  2017
Activity Data Across Time via Williams' Business Directories
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FUN</th>
<th>DESTINATION</th>
<th>RUN</th>
<th>BAR/RESTAURANT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department store</td>
<td>Home goods</td>
<td>Groceries</td>
<td>Bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>DIY/hardware</td>
<td>Convenience store</td>
<td>Café</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure goods</td>
<td>Electronics</td>
<td>Specialty foods</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewelry/luxury goods</td>
<td>Furnishing</td>
<td>Personal care</td>
<td>Night club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and antiques</td>
<td>Books</td>
<td>Drugstore</td>
<td>Billiards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifts/novelty items</td>
<td>Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pawn shop</td>
<td>Barber/salon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Categories for goods and services used to organize the retail businesses. Other categories used by this study are self-evident.
FINDINGS

Commercial Landscape in 1930

1930 OTR Population: 30,949

1930 Listed Commercial SF

1930 Commercial Uses Based on SF
(Total = 2,666,093 SF)

- Auto-oriented: 27%
- Bar/Restaurant: 12%
- Entertainment: 4%
- Destination: 9%
- Industrial: 19%
- Fun: 7%
- Parking: 7%
- Run: 12%
- Wholesale: 19%

COMMERCIAL USES BY TYPE
OVER-THE-RHINE, 1930
Central Avenue, 1928

Bench workers and machinists at Schreiber & Sons Co., 1889

German notary business

Grammer's Cafe, since 1872

Central Avenue, 1928
COMMERCIAL USES BY TYPE
OVER-THE-RHINE, 1961

1960 OTR Population: 27,577

Commercial Landscape in 1961

FINDINGS
Moerlein Brewery Co., since

Our Daily Bread, former IGA food store in 1960s

Pendleton Art Center, former French Bauer Inc. building
FINDINGS

Commercial Landscape in 1993

1990 OTR Population: 9,572

1993 Listed Commercial SF

1993 Commercial Uses Based on SF
(Total = 2,666,093 SF)

COMMERICAL USES BY TYPE
OVER-THE-RHINE, 1993

Commercial Landscape in 1993
Kroger grocery store at 1410 Vine Street, c. 2002

Emery Auditorium maintains in use since 1911, closes around 1998
FINDINGS

COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPE IN 2017

2015 OTR POPULATION: 5,709

COMMERCIAL USES BY TYPE
OVER-THE-RHINE, 2017

2017 LISTED COMMERCIAL SF
(TOTAL = 2,666,093 SF)

2017 COMMERCIAL USES BASED ON SF
(TOTAL = 2,666,093 SF)
Queen City Radio from 1920 to today has been a gas station, and now bar/restaurant. The building where Nicola’s can currently be found was once a cabinet making company. Before then it was the garage to French-Bauer Inc.
1. How has the organization of commercial uses within Over-the-Rhine changed since 1930?

Current patterns make partial use of historically driven backbones: Vine Street and Main Street

Dominance of uses in one part of the neighborhood (Concentrated reactivation)

Wants are offered more than needs

Bars/restaurants are clustered rather than spread

Commercial uses can be found in spaces previously non-commercial
2. Does the current commercial development strategy follow historical patterns?

Culturally acknowledged uses have maintained

New east-west connection between commercial districts and Washington Park

Commerce is driving population, rather than people driving commerce

Lack of opportunities to build wealth/participate in a consistent or growing economy
• Increase “destination,” “run,” and “fun” businesses

• Increase industrial opportunities to balance consumption with production -maker movement, fashion, distribution

• Establish rootedness - value long-standing residents

• Extend the north-south corridors to full length

• Motivate a corridor along McMicken Ave.

• Include people in the process of expanding OTR’s sense of place (physical, activities, imagery)