

RESTORING MEMORY THROUGH ARCHITECTURE: URBAN INTERVENTIONS TO
REVITALIZE CINCINNATI'S WEST END NEIGHBORHOOD.

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A THESIS

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fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

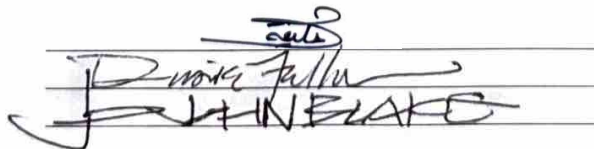
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2026

ABSTRACT

The mid-20th century witnessed a devastating pattern of urban renewal across the United States. The construction of interstate highways systematically fractured and isolated primarily minority neighborhoods. Cincinnati's West End is one example of a neighborhood that has suffered this loss through decades of subsequent urban decay, displacement, and disinvestment. Central to this thesis is the core question: How can architectural and urban interventions simultaneously preserve the neighborhood's rich history, protect current residents, and create new opportunities for meaningful visitor engagement?

By proposing a multi-faceted approach, this thesis introduces programmatic solutions designed to holistically uplift the community. Key interventions include expanding public transportation networks to seamlessly connect the West End with the broader Cincinnati area, developing sustainable low-income housing to prevent resident displacement, and integrating community gallery and art spaces to celebrate local identity. These strategic programs aim to empower marginalized residents while inviting visitors to engage with the neighborhood's history, thereby increasing public awareness and economic vitality.

DEDICATIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with profound gratitude that I dedicate this thesis to my chair, May Khalife, whose instrumental guidance and insightful feedback were vital to the development of this work. Her thoughtful comments not only shaped the direction of my thesis but also fostered the evolution of my thought process, enabling me to pursue innovative and impactful solutions.

I equally extend my appreciation to my readers, Diane Fellows and John Blake. Their expertise in representation and site-specific knowledge was crucial in guiding my research and design. Their perspectives and advice provided invaluable support during the formulation of this project.

Further acknowledgments are due to urban historians such as Anne Steinert, as well as the members of organizations within Seven Hills Neighborhood Houses, City Gospel Missions, and other community groups. Their contributions, collaboration, and dedication have enriched my site research and broadened the scope of my work.

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SEE WEST END FILM HERE:



PROBLEM STATEMENT

Urban centers in the United States have been economically declining since the mid twentieth century. This problem can be attributed to the policies and tax benefits that governments have issued to build the American suburb. This neglect of urban neighborhoods has strained community economies which leads to a lack of infrastructure maintenance and further perpetuates social deficits. There must be an effort to revitalize communities economically with participation of the residents to revitalize and re-establish community identities.

INTRODUCTION

The 20th century has seen many changes in the lifestyle of the inhabitants of the city. This change was brought about by technology, innovations in commerce, and communication networks. Cities are expanding into metropolises with urban centers that have fractured into varying clusters of urban identities. This process is described in Soja's *Postmetropolis*¹. Soja discusses this context of the "lived space", an understanding of a person's experience of any place and time throughout human history. While small

scale urban interventions have the potential to revitalize and bring attention

to a community, it will need to have meaning both spatially and experientially. Aldo Rossi describes this as the "urban artifact"². An urban artifact can be anything; it is simply a manifestation of the intangible aspects of society. Due to this aspect, an object does not become an urban artifact overnight, rather it may take a generation or two. It is for this reason that these interventions must be conceived from authentic characteristics of the community. Critics have argued that there are issues that come with tactical urbanism that need to be addressed. The Stanford Social Innovation Review Organization wrote an article discussing these criticisms. They claim that the efforts may be an "instrument masking as a tool for community improvement that produces privileged outcomes"³. By addressing new innovations of addressing these criticisms, these small interventions can be a crucial tool for members of a community to reclaim their spaces. Urban intervention focuses on addressing sociological and environmental issues within a site. These interventions may range from size and longevity. By

¹ Soja, Edward W. *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*. Milton Keynes UK, Malden, MA: Lightning Source UK ; Blackwell Pub, 2015.

² Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Peter Eisenman, Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, and Aldo Rossi. *The architecture of the city*. MIT Press for the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts and the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, n.d.

³ Milstead, Joe Lee & Terence, Joe Lee, Terence Milstead, and Joe Lee (@JoeLeePhilly) is a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania focusing on urban redevelopment. "Unlocking the Potential of Tactical Urbanism (SSIR)." *Unlocking the Potential of Tactical Urbanism*. Accessed March 5, 2025. https://ssir.org/articles/entry/unlocking_the_potential_of_tactical_urbanism#:~:text=Yet%20despite%20its%20promise%2C%20tactical,of%20the%20greater%20urban%20population.

understanding the different factors within the site, architects can collaborate with various disciplines to create appropriate and impactful solutions.

“The recent past has seen the fragmentation of the physical form of the city. One result of this fragmentation has been a loss of the perception of the city as a place representing the collective shared ideals of society. If we are to regain a richness of meaning in our built form that can make for a worthwhile existence, then there is a need to reestablish a clarity of development in our cities. One strategy for giving order to the city is to recognize the potential of the individual building to develop formal and social relationship that have significance on an urban level.”

(Yarinsky Adam, The Single Building as Urban

Intervention. SOM Foundation.)

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Architecture of a City by Rossi, published in the early 1980's critically analyzes the components and factors that contribute to the growth and uniqueness of an urban setting. They discuss and critique modernist ideas of functionalism, a cities typology, social dynamics, and economic elements. They discussed the manifestations that certain objects within the city contribute to the identity of the city. This personalized and “human centered” connection to the spaces are like other authors whose work lie in phenomenology. Authors such as Norberg-Shulz and Heidegger all discuss

similarities in the concept, however Rossi is more interested in the spatial awarenesses that occupants have in conjunction within an urban fabric. Every space not only has its physical attributes, but also temporal and emotional characteristics that define our interpretations. This is exemplified when discussing the collective memory.

While understanding the work of Rossi and Eisenman may be a great start to understanding to better grasp the issue and critiques surrounding “placeness, and identity” within an urban setting, it is also important to compare this to more contemporary critiques, and those not based on a Eurocentric view. Another promising source of literature may be a paper published by several professors in the College of Architecture and Design in Effat University, Saudi Arabia. The paper *Emergence of New Place Identities through Architecture*⁴, 2022, talks about how contemporary architecture and globalization have caused a shift in the identity language of an urban setting. This change doesn't manifest itself only in the built environment but also in the psychology of the occupants. They highlight the relationship between humans and space through orientation. The short reading also discusses political and economic causes for such identifications and classifications, as well as place attachments.

While the journal from Effat University provides a contemporary and global lens to the situation, authors such as Garcia zoom into specific sites themselves. Through a series of case studies, he examines what aspects of these smaller

⁴ Al-Mohammedy, Leena, Njoud Al-Nashmi, Renad Baabdullah, and Abdel-Moniem El-Shorbagy. “Emergence of New Place Identities through Architecture.” *Civil Engineering and*

Architecture 10, no. 4 (July 2022): 1590–98. <https://doi.org/10.13189/cea.2022.100428>.

scale interventions were successful and what weren't. He studies the implications that various local economy has on the local community members and defines this rebellious style of architecture as "tactical urbanism". A small series of surgical interventions may prove to be more effective than larger scale projects.

ECONOMIC NEED FOR TACTICAL URBANISM

Tactical Urbanism engages local populations into investing in their local communities. By claiming land for use and activating it for a positive purpose, they feel invested in the community's health and wellbeing. By this engagement this could be a leverage for underfunded communities to garner interest in the area, which has the potential to support local business and create a thriving local economy. Rossi describes the current issue as "the movement of people with fewer resources to housing beyond city centers means that employment opportunities, social services, and low-cost transportation options are less accessible and may further increase the widening gap between rich and poor." (Rossi, 88) He describes the issue of gentrification and that while the property values are rising, the people who currently own those properties do not make any profits. These communities that experience this are typically lower class, and by providing an inexpensive way to transform abandoned spaces, there could be a possibility that these communities can still claim their area.

ECONOMICAL IMPACTS

A hallmark trait of tactical urbanism is not just its affordability, but sustainability. Most of these interventions create a park-like atmosphere where pedestrian traffic is not only common but encouraged.

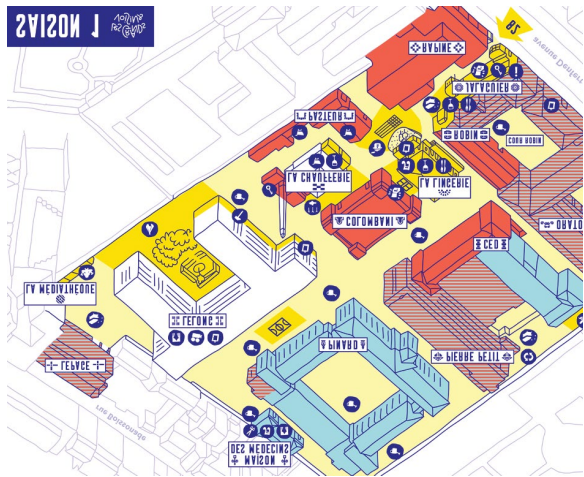


The image above is a small street intervention in Panama City during a festival. Although the festival was only there for a single month, it significantly reduced vehicular traffic since then. By giving the painted region (see fig 1) up to the pedestrian traffic. This will subsequently improve air quality in an area.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Various authors in phenomenology have written many texts about reconnecting with our environment, and how our environment can contribute to our actions, as well as vice versa. The urban artifact is a part of the community's collective memory and giving the space an identity. Urban centers are seeing population declines across the United States, and infrastructure is being abandoned. This may be a solution to empower various social groups with safe spaces and economic power. The Journal of Contemporary Affairs notes a lack of research on the economic implications and effectiveness of urban regeneration and economic empowerment, especially for marginalized groups such as women

and PWD.⁵ This idea of the scale intervention is quite recent in history; however, it can quickly become as rooted as Rossi's urban artifact and serve similar functions to fountain squares or statues that decorate the cities of Rome. While tactical urbanism



Les Grands Voisin, meaning "Great Neighbors" in French. The plan was to take 3.5 hectares of unused land for social events, social work and community engagement activities. While critics argue that the project failed due to the land being purchased for development. The project still stands as a testament for what tactical urban projects can look like.

Potential Risks

While tactical urbanism may be a crucial tool in revitalizing the urban landscapes from city to city, it also carries risks. The entire premise of the movement is rooted in civic engagement, and community members invest in small scale projects. This issue is two-fold. It allows corporations and other wealthy entities to take over sponsorship of these projects under the guise of positive improvement, while discouraging government and public institutions to work with community members. Another problem is in the long-term results that these projects hope to encourage. Some of them simply fail,

such as the Les Grand Voisin in Paris due to not having much connection to the identity of the community. Some interventions are meant to be very temporary and eventually lose interest. Because of this it also becomes difficult to measure the completely positive effect of the project.

POTENTIAL SITE – KENYON BARR

“‘Progress’ swept through Cincinnati’s West End in the 1950’s and 1960’s. In the eyes of urban planners, the West End was a ‘complete slum.’ In the eyes of Charles H. Stamm, Cincinnati’s first urban renewal director, commented 15 years later, all you had to do was drive through it to know that.’ For more than 40,000 people who lived in the West End, more than 97 percent of whom were African American, it was home...” (Paul Henry, 1973, Kenyon Barr Collection Essays, Cincinnati Historical Society)”



The West end district in Cincinnati is a vibrant neighborhood full of shopping locations as well as culturally significant local attractions. The neighborhood was originally settled with Irish, German and African Americans. The neighborhood historically had a predominantly African American population in due to segregation practices during the 19th and

⁵ View of a tactical urbanism and economic inclusivity: Evaluating the impact of Spacena project in a marginalized urban area. Accessed

March 5, 2025.
<https://ijcua.com/ijcua/article/view/405/587>.

20th centuries. While affluent residents resided in the north part of the West End neighborhood, economic incentives in hillside regions of Cincinnati provided circumstances for industries and laborers to relocate out of the neighborhood.

The neighborhood was initially built on a rich cultural heritage and shaped by waves of evolutionary social practices. De-segregation and industrialization provided an integral environment for new urbanization. During this period, Cincinnati was an important trading center based on the Ohio river. During the 1970s, urban renewal projects within Cincinnati, specifically the I75 to I71 interstate exchange, transformed the entire community. During the 1950's, the city, concerned with population loss from the suburbs, began constructing highway networks which saw the expulsion of many residents in the community.

RESEARCH METHODS

Tactical urbanism, a type of urban intervention that is typically small in scale, can be profound if executed correctly. It relies on a community's collective memory and the architect to gauge the histories and culture of the people to provide an effective installation. Because of this, the evidence behind the design is heavily based on qualitative research methods. Interviewing members of the community, examining documents that discuss events that have happened in recorded history, case studies, and descriptive observations of the site are all important research methods in this topic. Due to the social nature of this thesis, interviews and testimonies are the most important data points.

When conducting interviews, it is important to also have a base knowledge of the site so that the testimony can be correctly assessed. The subjective perspectives received in this manner cannot be considered at face value. Due to this reason, reading historical documents and contemporary sources must be done prior to conducting the interviews. This kind of research will not only equip the interviewer with necessary information to develop a baseline when examining responses from the interview but also inform the interviewer of the necessary questions to ask. Other important research includes examining case studies that span across a wide range of locations and time periods, however since tactical urbanism is a newer concept, more contemporary case studies must be prioritized. These case studies can also come from international examples, however because this thesis focuses on Cincinnati as a site, focusing on cases within the US may be more practical to use as a proof of concept. An understanding of the site must also be developed through site observations with detailed notes and sketches of what is observed.

These research methods will help illustrate a detailed model of Cincinnati, specifically in the OTR community that will act as a base during the design phase. Once a specific site is selected based on the data collected, a more nuanced understanding of the immediate site will be required. To gain the nuanced understanding, similar research methods will be used but at a more surgical scale to create the intervention. By the end the goal is to create something similar to a case study found in Kumamoto, Japan. Omoken Park is a successful small-scale example of an urban intervention that addresses the collective memory of the

community. While the lessons learned from this case study are valuable, accumulating more case studies closer to the site is crucial to create a more appropriate response.



Omoken Park in Japan was built in 2019. It was built and designed in response to the 2016 Kumamoto earthquakes. The building sits in an alley which used to be another building. The intent was to build a pavilion that can be used by the public for a multitude of events

CONCLUSION

The small-scale intervention, or tactical intervention, comes with potential risks that would further exacerbate the problem it is designed to solve. By taking advantage of various economic, social, and cultural drivers of a community, designers have the potential to reuse and create engaging spaces within neighborhoods and streets that gives the opportunity for the inhabitants to use and express an identity. This will just bring interest and character in the urban site and over time may become a monument. This would require a more culturally sensitive reference the space is meant to represent and for inhabitants to engage with. Over time these “monuments” will become a part of the collective memory and an urban artifact.

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- ¹ Soja, Edward W. *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*. Milton Keynes UK, Malden, MA: Lightning Source UK ; Blackwell Pub, 2015.
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THESIS ADDENDUM

Since the summer, I have realigned the focus of my thesis to encompass additional scopes and methodologies. Initially, I planned to employ tactical urbanism as a primary mechanism for enhancing economic and sociopolitical relations in the West End. However, this direction revealed complex policy challenges within Cincinnati that would be difficult to address meaningfully within the available timeframe. Consequently, I shifted my approach to prioritize the restoration and reimagining of historical urban artifacts that have shaped the character of the West End over multiple decades. Through the application of tactical urbanist methods, my objective is now to establish an outdoor museum featuring small-scale interventions at strategically chosen sites, thereby illustrating their historical narratives and cultural significance.

SHIFT IN PROPOSAL

The proposal according to these shifts is to serve 2 overarching user groups I have identified during my research. Firstly, I want to engage with community stakeholders who reside in the West End to create meaningful changes. It is often that community program initiatives that serve underrepresented and economically neglected communities emphasize material needs. While these initiatives are appropriate investments, they are prone to neglecting the need to gather political power; in a sense, they sometimes they do not provide agency and voices of certain user groups. While this issue is not intentionally committed, it offers a

picture into our political structures of grants and compliance protocols needed by these organizations.

Urgent, or basic, needs are often taken care of first when dealing with community engagement initiatives and it is one of the most cautionary steps organizations take to provide material and equity to these communities. However, the adverse effects of meeting the basic needs of a community without implementing building political power of the same user groups keep communities dependent on the same systems that can be used to neglect them socioeconomically. For example, the Freestore Foodbank, located in the Over-the-Rhine district in Cincinnati, is the 3rd largest foodbank in the state of Ohio. It operates distribution programs giving food to lower income residents around Cincinnati, provides training and capacity building programs for other similar organizations in the area. While the work the foodbank does is beneficial and effective, like other relief organizations, it does not implement nor cater to building political power for community residents to influence city policy.

While the Freestore Foodbank does work with other organizations to offer employment and housing services to vulnerable community members⁶, an argument can again be made that these services are relief based and reactive rather than proactive to giving agency towards residents and community members across the West End's diaspora. Secondly, the other user group that I am interested in addressing are non-residents that visit the West End. These user groups are made up of tourists, office workers in the nearby downtown area, and day-to-

⁶ *Stabilization program*. Freestore Foodbank. (2025, October 29).

<https://freestorefoodbank.org/stabilization-program/>

day commuters that may visit local gathering hubs such as the Cincinnati History Museum, or the TQL soccer stadium etc. These groups may offer necessary economic stimulation that then can be reinvested back into the community. By doing this, the intent is to create an environment for local residents among the various neighborhoods in the West End to appreciate the history of the area, provide spaces for co-authorship by allowing for the commissioning of community art which empowers voices that were previously neglected; and for the nonresidents, there is an opportunity to showcase and present the history of the West End in a way that is educational and thought provoking as an effort to restore the area to its once historical significance.

PROBLEM TO BE ADDRESSED

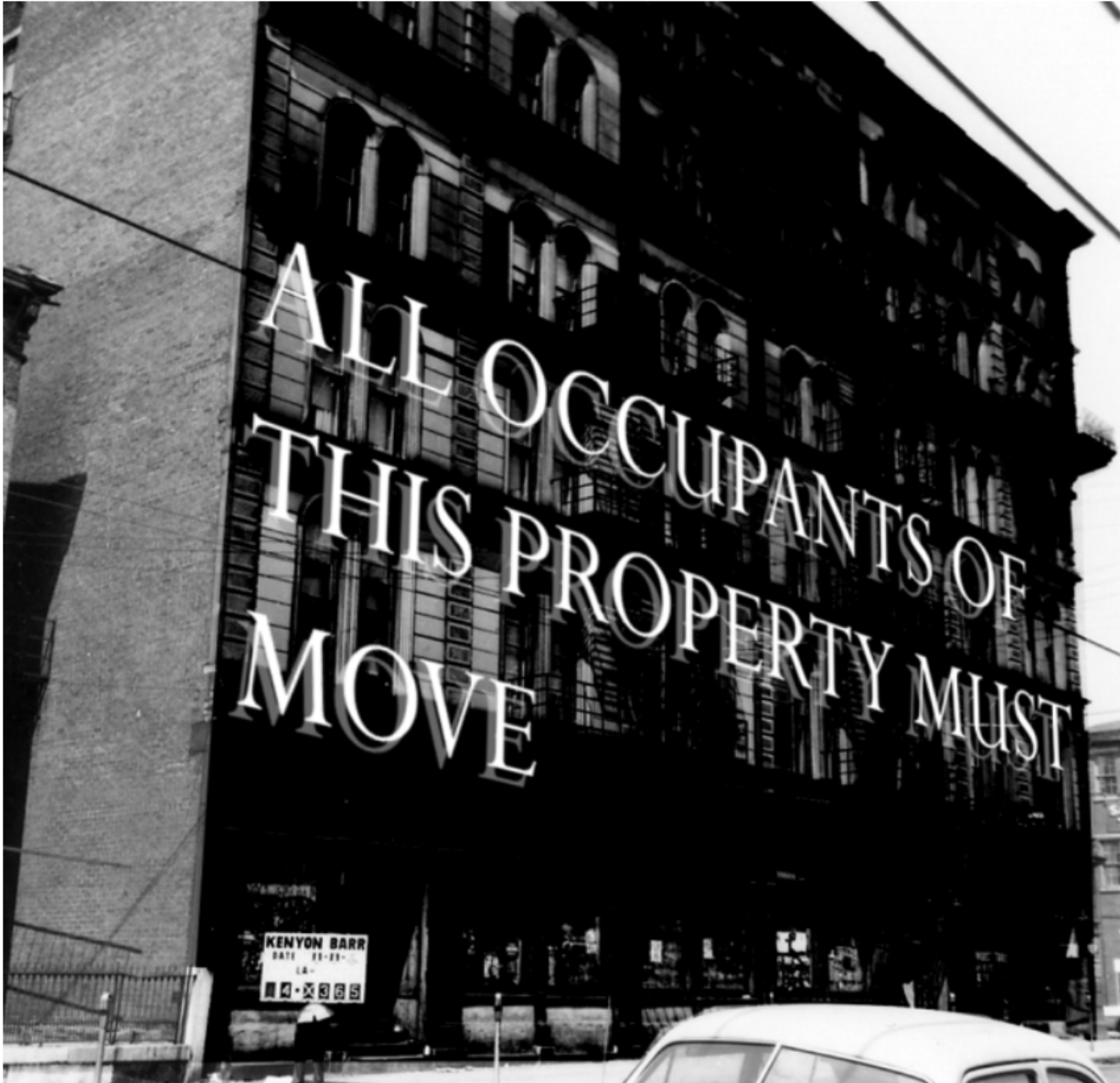
This proposal, I would argue has one epistemological flaw that I wish to address by design in the coming months; it can be made vulnerable to gentrification, an issue that is critical to the success of the thesis. By refining and providing cultural spaces that enhance the West End physical characteristics, it allows for an increased interest that can then be co-opted by developers and real estate agencies to enter the area and raise property values. Actions such as these have historically pushed out the local populations out of an area due to increased costs of living. Because of the nature of these forces within the market, new policy assumptions must be made within economic reform and ownership rights. These policies, I believe, are very difficult to circumvent, and create larger discussions in the overall principles of city planning. For example, if we talk about the usage of alleyways within Cincinnati's neighborhoods that are

dominated by row house architecture, there are ownership complications. They are often used as easements or driveways for additional parking situated in "backyards". These alleys were intentionally designed to be used as pedestrian traffic ways, or parking spaces that create a network of private spaces within the urban block. A change of this scope creates critical discussions about the right to ownership.

POSSIBLE SOLUTION

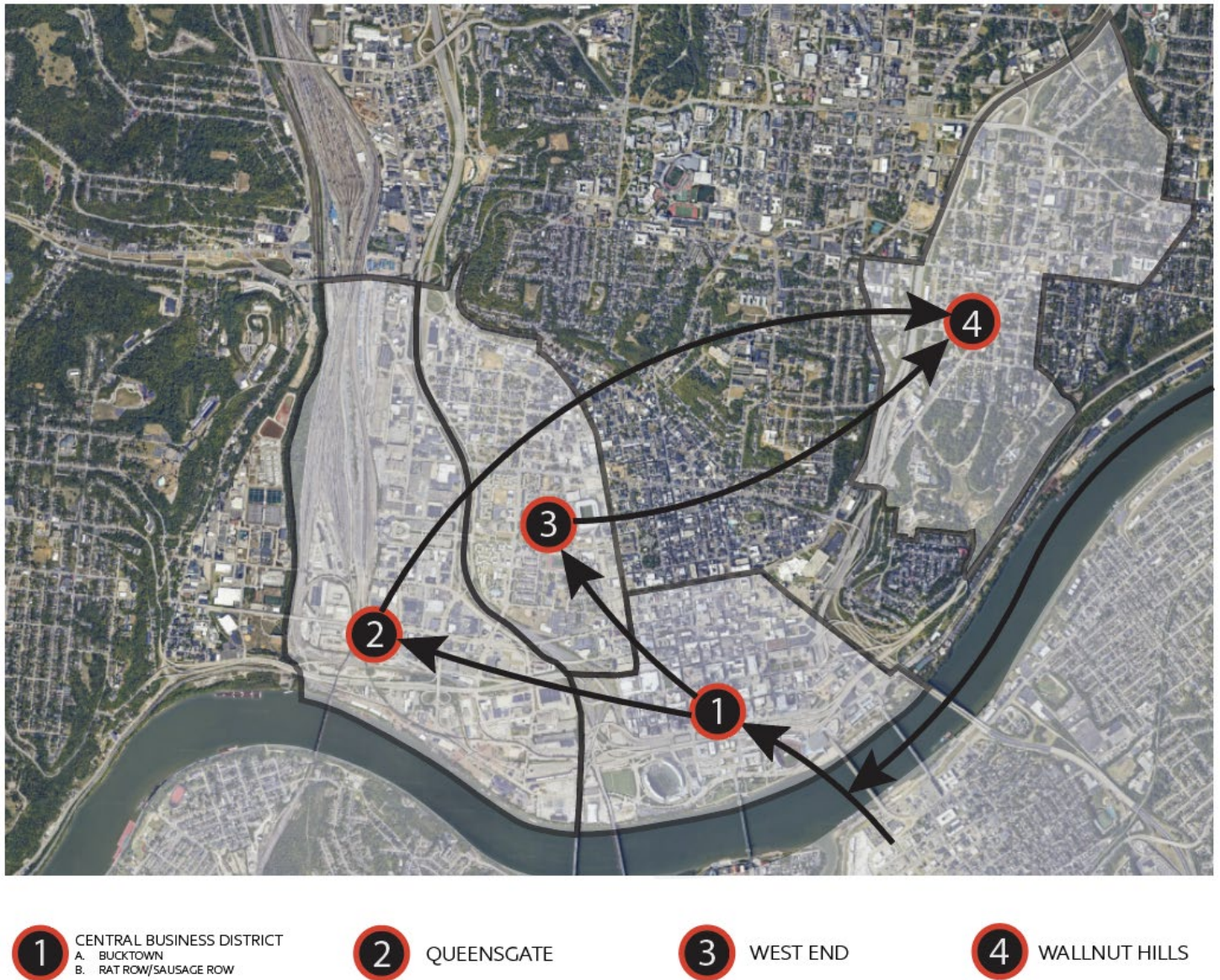
By creating a new framework of development utilizing an overlay district as a proof of concept, city planning regulations can be catered to control ownership rights of alleys, basements, and backyards. This may be the basis to use available land and resources within the West End to address the issue of ownership. I am currently in correspondence with various community organizations and leaders to dissect this complex issue and learn more about how to manage this problem. The anticipated result thus far is a masterplan, with specifically designed examples of interventions of the West End using the frameworks and contextual information I will gather from my discussions with community organizations.

SITE RESEARCH & INTRODUCTION



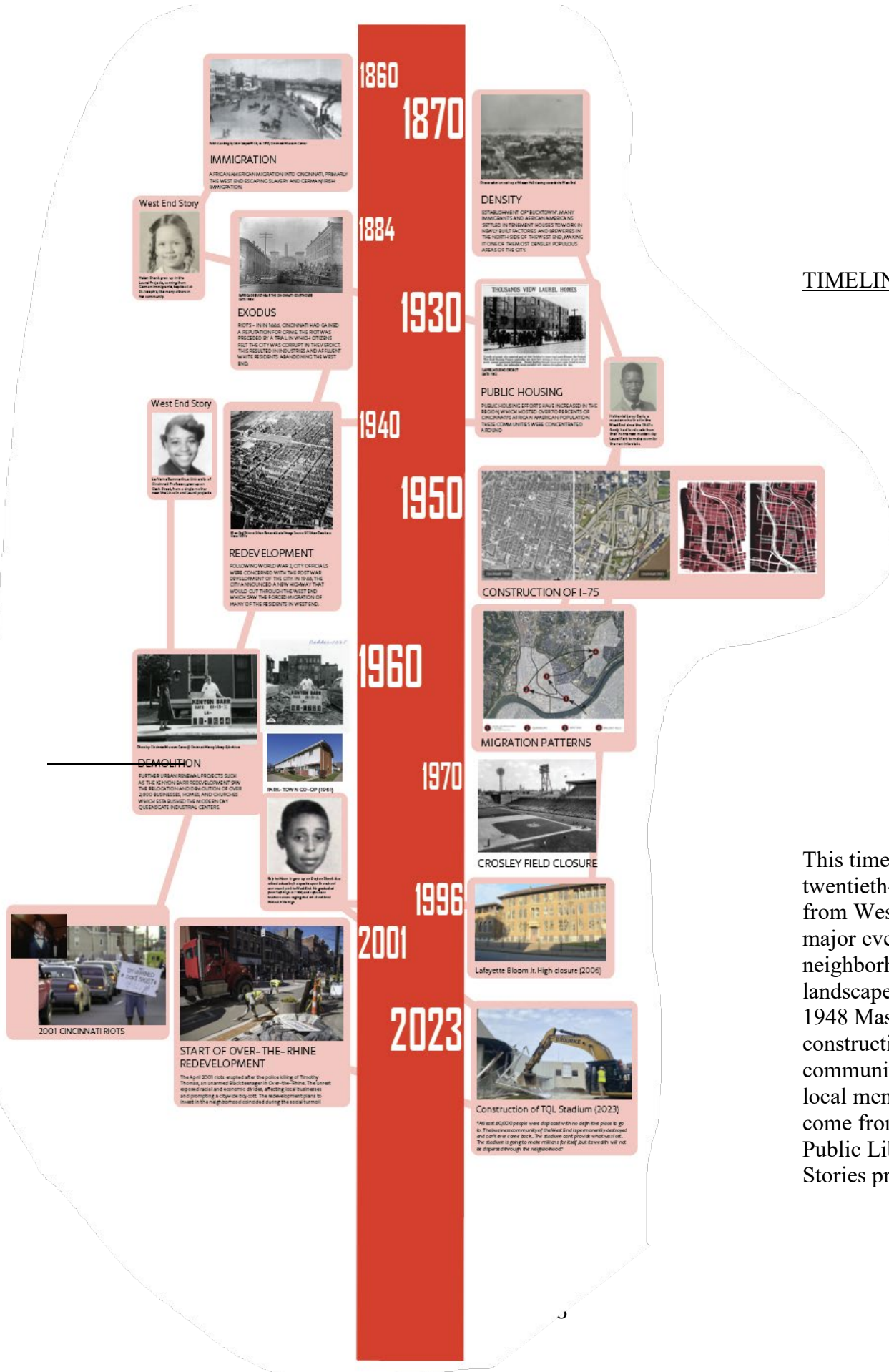
This collage presents the message conveyed by the City of Cincinnati to residents regarding their required relocation. The acquisition of properties to accommodate highway construction resulted in the displacement of residents.

HISTORICAL MIGRATION



Cincinnati's location on the Ohio River drew German, Irish, Italian, and African American immigrants, many of whom settled near today's Riverfront Park. These dense neighborhoods, including Bucktown, became early cultural centers, especially for African Americans seeking freedom in the mid-19th century.

The 1948 Cincinnati Metropolitan Masterplan spurred suburban growth and targeted areas like the West End for slum clearance to build I-75 and public housing. This displaced over 25,000 residents of which were 90% African American who relocated to neighborhoods such as Avondale and Walnut Hills.



TIMELINE STORES

This timeline highlights twentieth-century accounts from West End residents and major events that changed the neighborhood's urban landscape. It shows how the 1948 Masterplan and I-75 construction displaced communities and shaped local memory. The interviews come from the Cincinnati Public Library's West End Stories project.

INTRODUCTION OF I-75

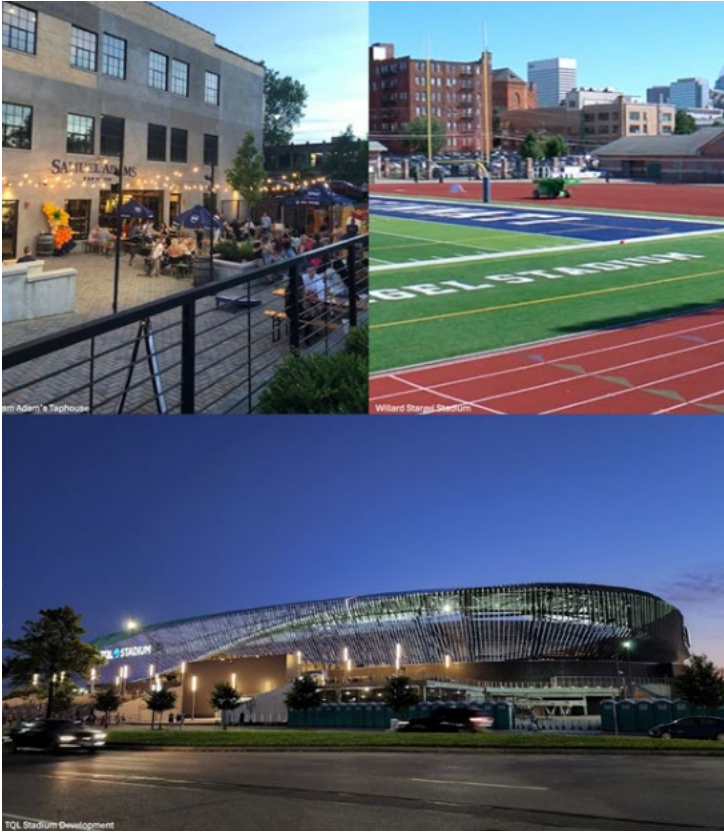


This image shows the change over time in what was known as Kenyon Barr, west of downtown. Currently the area contains mostly warehouses and other industrial facilities over what was once a dense urban landscape with homes, businesses, churches and schools.

By the 1950's, the city introduced the interstate I-75, bisecting the dense urban neighborhood and trading the urban fabric of the neighborhood for an industrial fabric to support the city's economy, however this superimposed change caused the displacement of over 40,000 people by the 1960's.

City proposals at the time noted existing conditions of the neighborhood, tabulating the number of buildings, uses, demographics etc. They noted demographics in the area with the first sentence of its occupancy characteristics section stating: "The area is occupied almost entirely by Negroes." Which in that period of history political and power structure, this meant less protests from those who called the west end home. By the 1950's, the city introduced the interstate I-75, bisecting the dense urban neighborhood and trading the urban fabric of the neighborhood for an industrial fabric to support the city's economy, however this superimposed change caused the displacement of over 40,000 people by the 1960's.

CURRENT CONDIIONS

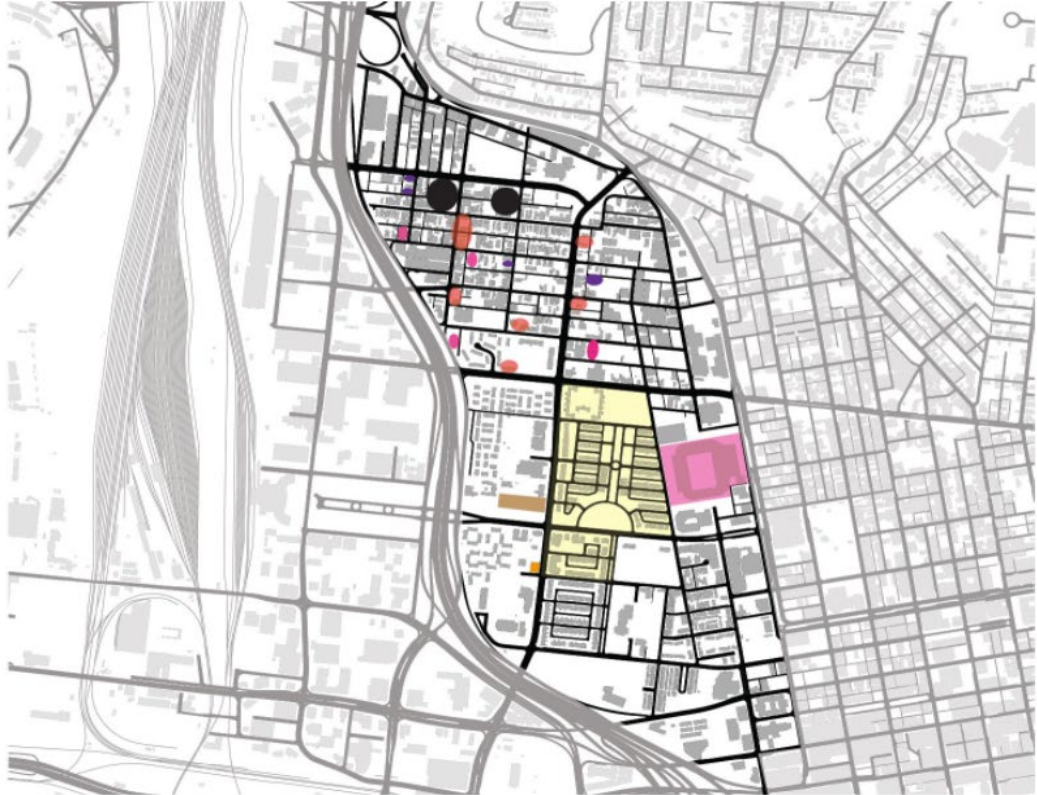


While projects such as the new TQL Stadium and new businesses opening in the area increase local revenues in the neighborhoods, critics of the process claim that it makes it very difficult for lower income residences to keep up with increasing expenses in the area, thus forcing a new migration to other parts of the city.

” Atleast 40,000 people were displaced with no definitive place to go to. The business community of the West End is permanently destroyed and can’t ever come back... The stadium can’t provide what was lost. The stadium is going to make millions for itself ,but its wealth will not be dispersed through the neighborhood.” – Ralph Moon Jr, an educator in the West End. (West End Stories Project, Cincinnati Public Library, 2021)

DEVELOPERS

HAMILTON COUNTY PORT HOLDINGS:



Current developers such as The Port Authority serve as key players of the urban development within the neighborhood, holding many properties under their control by engaging in practice known as Land Banking.

The purpose of this practice is to streamline development by removing a lot of the bureaucratic red tape of vacant properties, stabilize the land value and sell to developers when conditions are favorable. While the practice does allow the market to enter these systemically neglected neighborhoods, the practice lacks transparency and prioritizes financial incentives over the occupants of the neighborhoods.

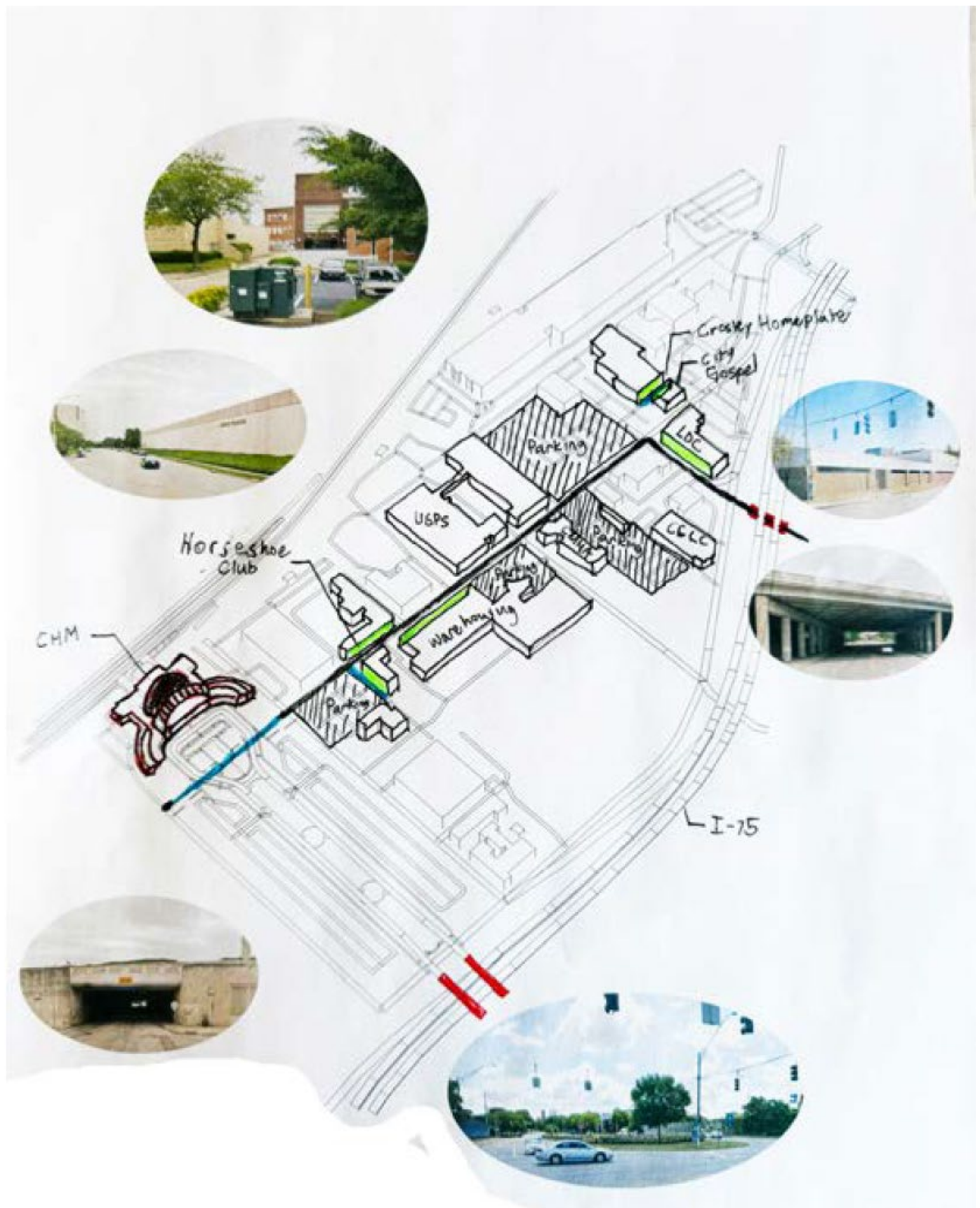
West End school's slated renovation sparks memories of neighborhood's

history of gentrification: 'Most communities want investment. But they don't want to be displaced'

(According to Cincinnati Public Schools' Kathleen Crable, the Heberle School and the nearby Lafayette Bloom School on Bank Street were sold to Eli Alkobi in 2012 for \$60,000 each. Alkobi did not respond to WCPO's efforts to contact him for this story.)

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DALTON STREET SKETCH



TRANSPORTATION

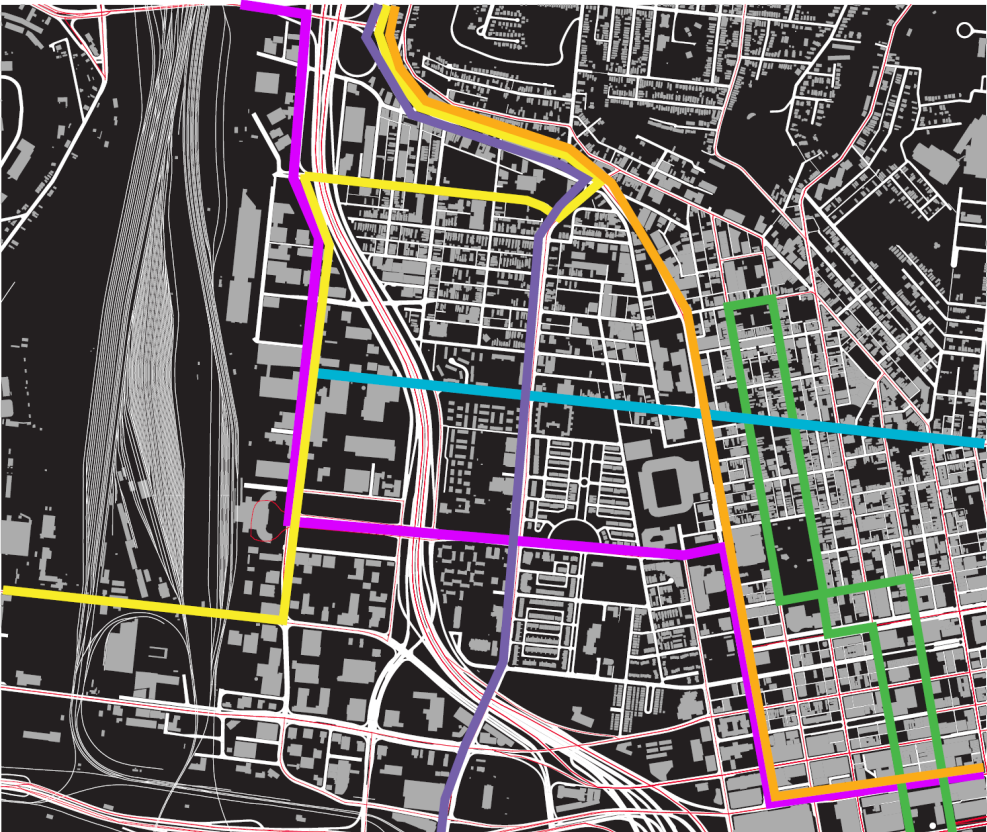
BUS ROUTES :

FARE: \$2.20
STREET CAR: FREE

- 49 ROUTE
MAIN STOPS AT MUSEUM
- STREET CAR
MAIN STOPS AT
- FRIDLEY
- WASHINGTON PARK
- GREAT AMERICAN BALL PARK
- 16 ROUTE
MAIN STOPS AT COURTHOUSE
TO SPRING GROVE (NORTH OF CLIFTON)
- 31 ROUTE
MAIN STOPS AT LOWER PRICE HILL
TO CLIFTON
- 20 ROUTE
MAIN STOPS AT WINTON ROAD
AND DOWNTOWN
- 27 ROUTE
MAIN STOPS AT LINN STREET AND CENTRAL
BUSINESS DISTRICT

BUS ROUTES

0 500 1,000 ft



FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The new Metro bus shelter wraps, as well as West End neighborhood markers, leverage community art to establish a sense of place for residents and visitors to the West End along the West End Linn Street neighborhood business district. Central to this work is creating a consistent and welcoming civic identity, elevating community pride, and celebrating the history of the neighborhood. Bus shelter improvements also create enhanced access and ease of use for Metro riders.

"Metro is proud to have worked with community and civic leaders to create bus shelters that not only better serve our riders but also create a beautiful and historic sense of place to the important West End neighborhood," said Darryl Haley, Metro CEO and general manager. "This project illustrates our commitment to transforming public transit in our region through our Reinventing Metro initiative. What an honor to be able to pair those efforts with public art depicting the West End and its people such as artist Robert O'Neal – and to have his daughter, Tollynn O'Neal Turner, join us today."

- CINCINNATI ENQUIRER (2023)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Access to Jobs

West End residents depend on buses to reach jobs outside their neighborhood. Neglecting the need for better routes continues to foster socioeconomic disparities.

Essential Services

Buses connect people to groceries, healthcare, and schools. The community wants routes that make these basics easier to reach.

Equity

Public transit is vital for low-income residents. Without it, they are cut off from opportunities available to car owners. Programs like Cincinnati Metro's Reinventing Metro help by offering subsidized passes.

Freedom of Movement

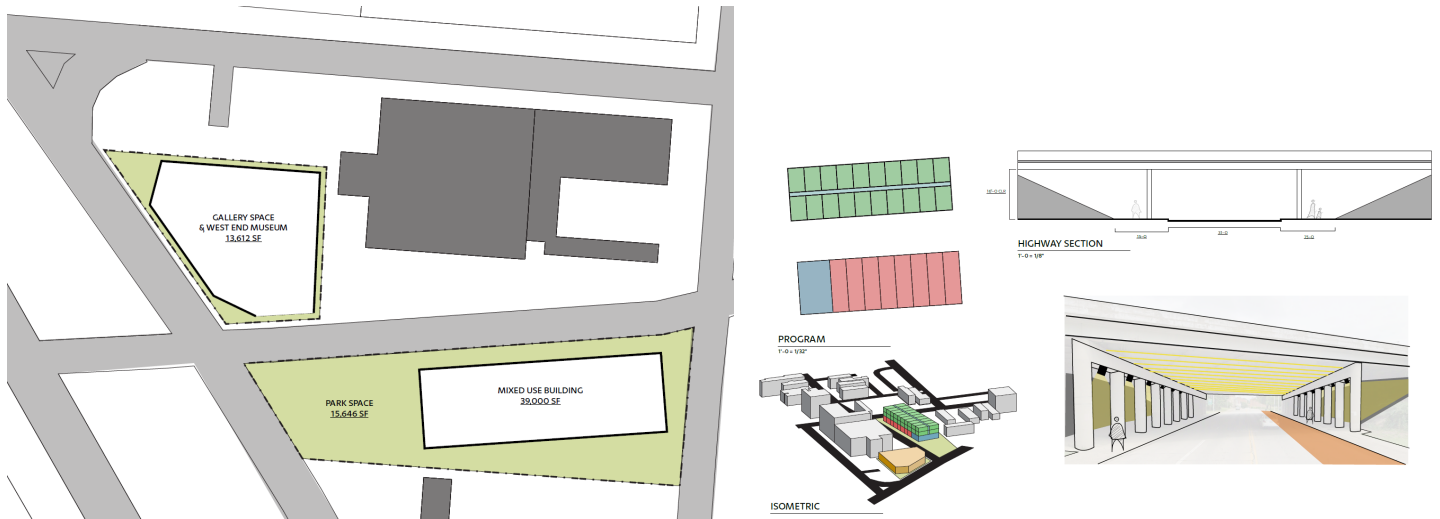
Buses allow people to get around the city without the hassle or cost of driving, parking, or owning a car.

BUS STOPS

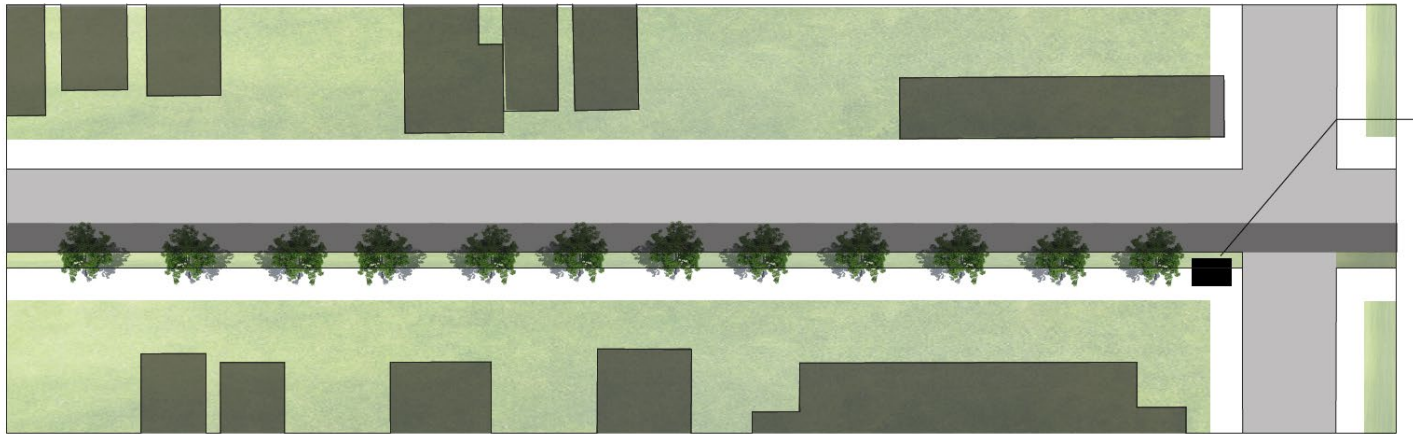
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PROGRESS SKETCHES

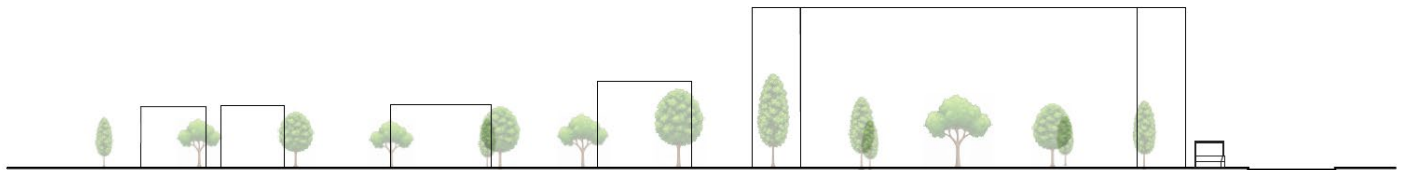


SITE PLAN



STREET PLAN

1"=0 = 1/16"



FINDLAY ST ELEVATION - S

1"=0 = 1/16"

STREET SECTIONS

The significance of addressing challenges related to transportation, housing, and community engagement was clearly articulated. As a result, public transportation systems were streamlined, additional affordable housing units were constructed, and workshops were organized to facilitate local participation. These initiatives collectively contribute to improved mobility, increased residential options, and enhanced community involvement.

DESIGN PROPOSAL & PROCESS

Thesis Question:

How can using tactical urban strategies revitalize the West End by preserving the history and local residents that currently make up the community, and increasing visitor opportunities to engage with the community?

Thesis Statement:

By introducing programs that increase public transportation opportunities to connect the neighborhood to other parts of Cincinnati, providing low income housing to residents, and community gallery/art spaces, the West End can be uplifted from the urban decay it has suffered from for decades. Both empowering local residents and engaging visitors to increase awareness.

Why Is This Important?

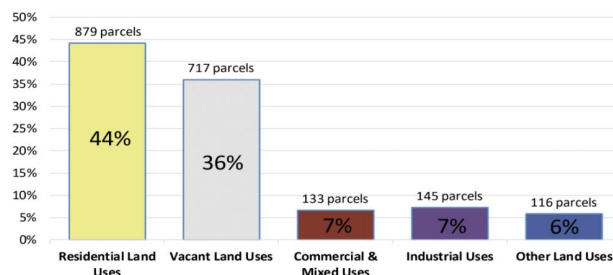
The events that transpired during the mid 20th century that caused urban decay in the West End has been a pattern in many major cities across the United States by introducing highways that separate primarily minority neighborhoods. By using this thesis as a ground study, solutions can be found and replicated to not only revitalize the West End but other cities as well.

LOSS



The reduction in density resulting from the construction of the highway continues to impact the West End, which has experienced a prolonged period of decline until recently. Although the neighborhood still has numerous vacancies, ongoing developer interest is gradually transforming the area.

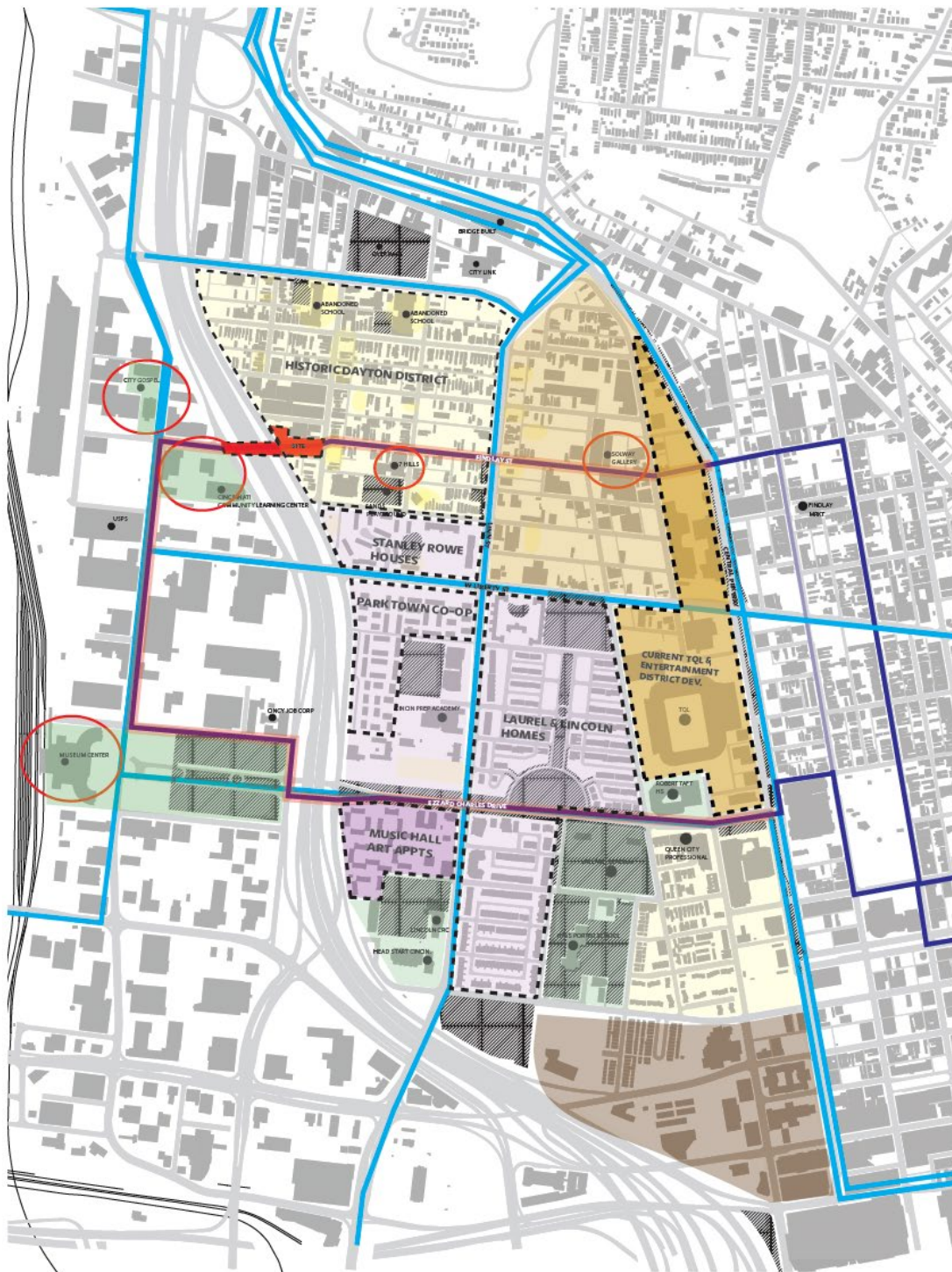
Land Use Type	Count	Percentage
Vacant Lots	641	32%
Single Family	446	22%
Two Family	186	9%
Multifamily	247	12%
Commercial	44	2%
Offices	20	1%
Mixed Use	69	3%
Light Industry	117	6%
Heavy Industry	28	1%
Institution	57	3%
Public Service	14	1%
Education	12	1%
Utilities	6	0%
Parks and Recreation	27	1%
Parking Lots	64	3%
Industrial and Informal Parking	12	1%
Total	1990	100%



CURRENT SITE VACANCY DATA

Land use distribution analysis showing a high proportion of residential parcels (44%) alongside a significant amount of vacant land (36%), with comparatively smaller shares of commercial/mixed-use (7%), industrial (7%), and other uses (6%), highlighting underutilized space and opportunities for redevelopment.

CUMULATIVE MAP



FOCUSED AREAS

TRANSPORTATION

- BUS ROUTES
- PROPOSED STREET CAR ROUTE
- REMOVED STREET CAR ROUTE

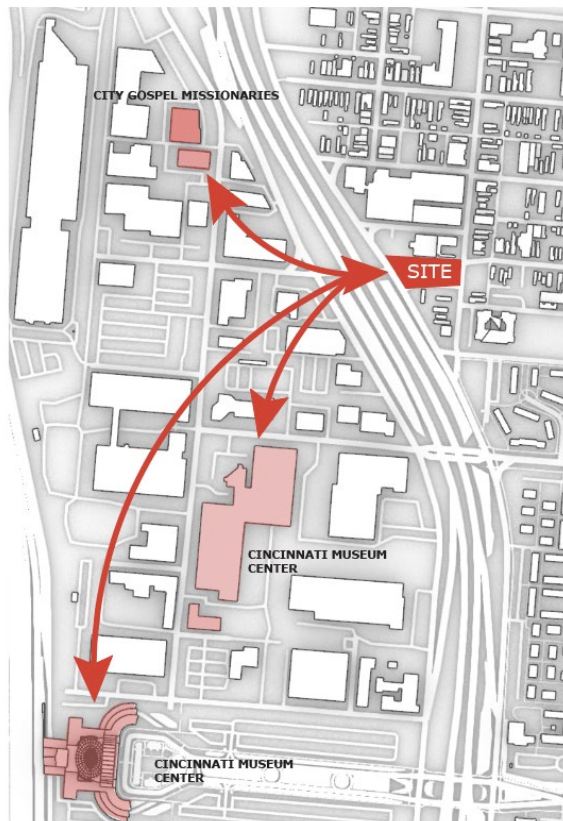
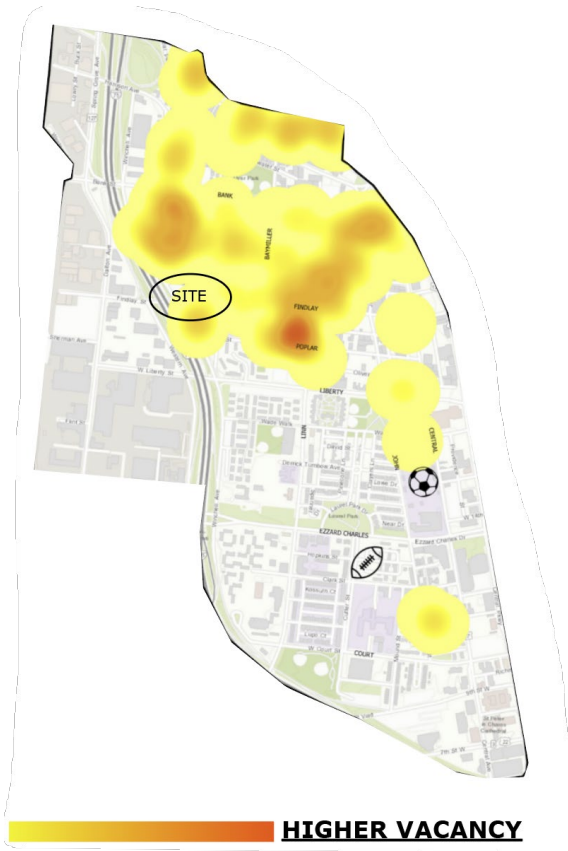
LAND USE

- GREEN SPACE
- MIXED USE
- THREATENED BY TQL DEVELOPMENT
- LOW INCOME HOUSING
- INSTITUTIONAL USE

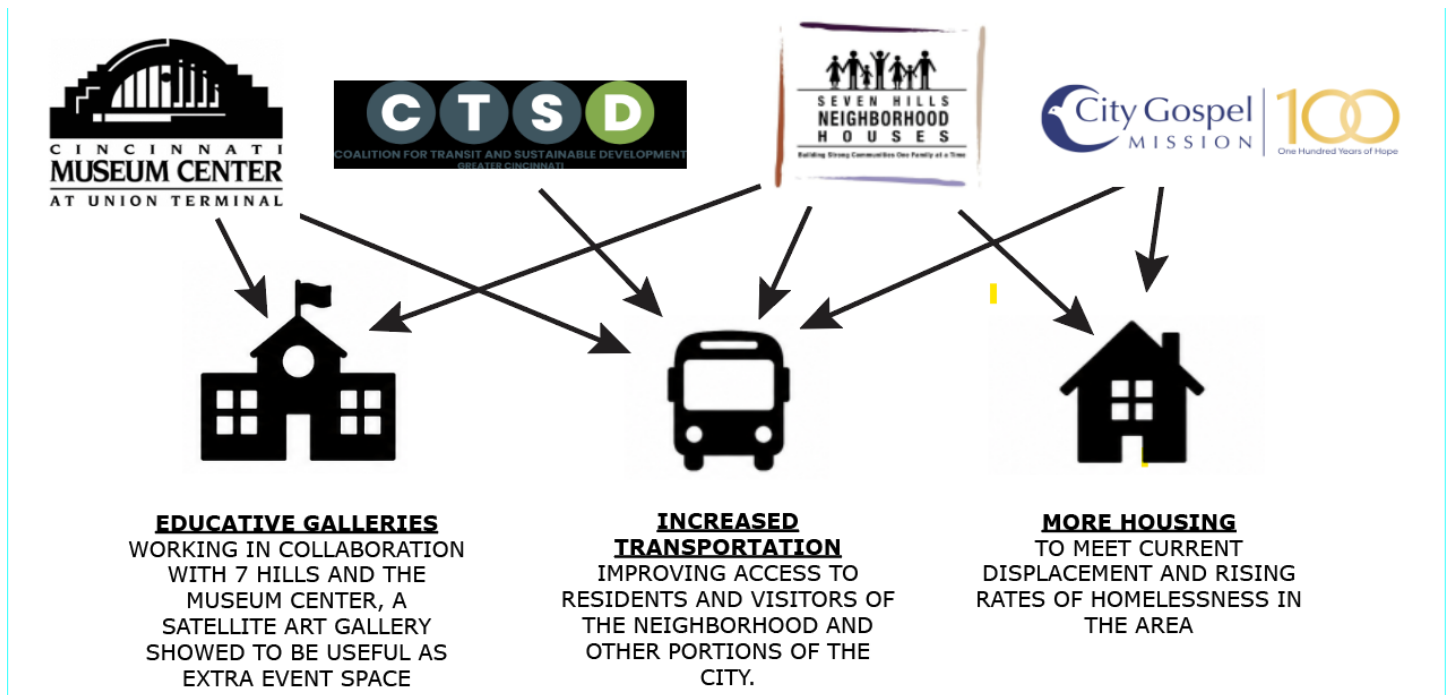
- LANDMARKS
- MULTI-FAMILY

SITE RELATIONSHIPS

- FOCUSED SITE
- STREET INTERVENTION MASTER PLAN
- RELATED PROGRAMS TO SITE FOCUS



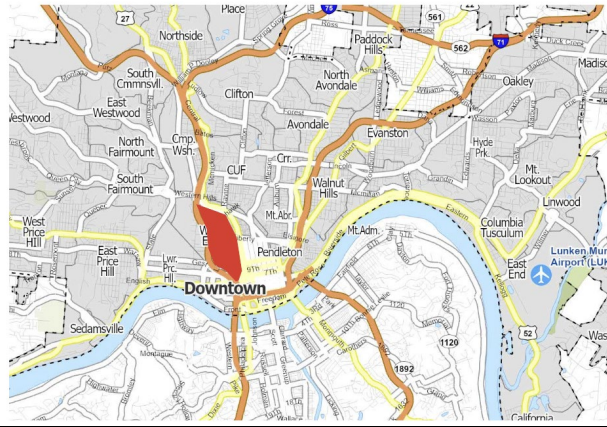
INTERVIEW SUMMARIES WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS



THE CENTER OF IT ALL



SITE LOCATION



SITE PLAN & DESIGN INTERVENTIONS

**STREET CAR
EXTENSION LINE**



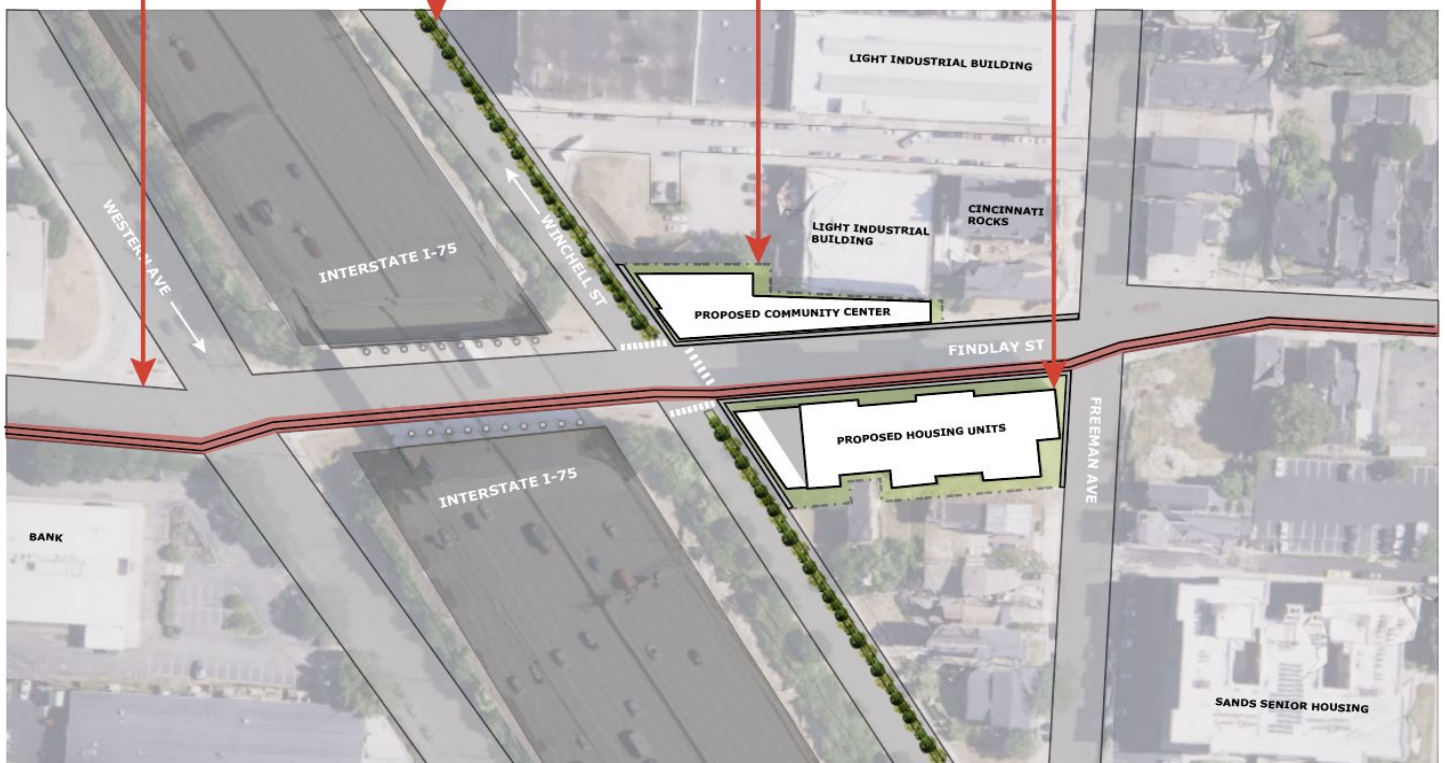
**BIKE LANE WITH
MEDIAN**



**COMMUNITY
GALLERY**



HOUSING OPPORTUNITY



COMMUNITY CENTER

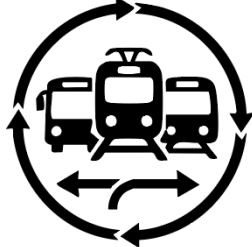
RATIONALE

Given the proximity to prominent landmarks such as the Cincinnati Museum Center, various art studios, community organizations, and recreational spaces like 7 Hills Neighborhood Housing and the Sands Play Lot, a community gallery can function as an inviting gathering place for both residents and visitors, serving as a gateway to the West End beneath the highway.

PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



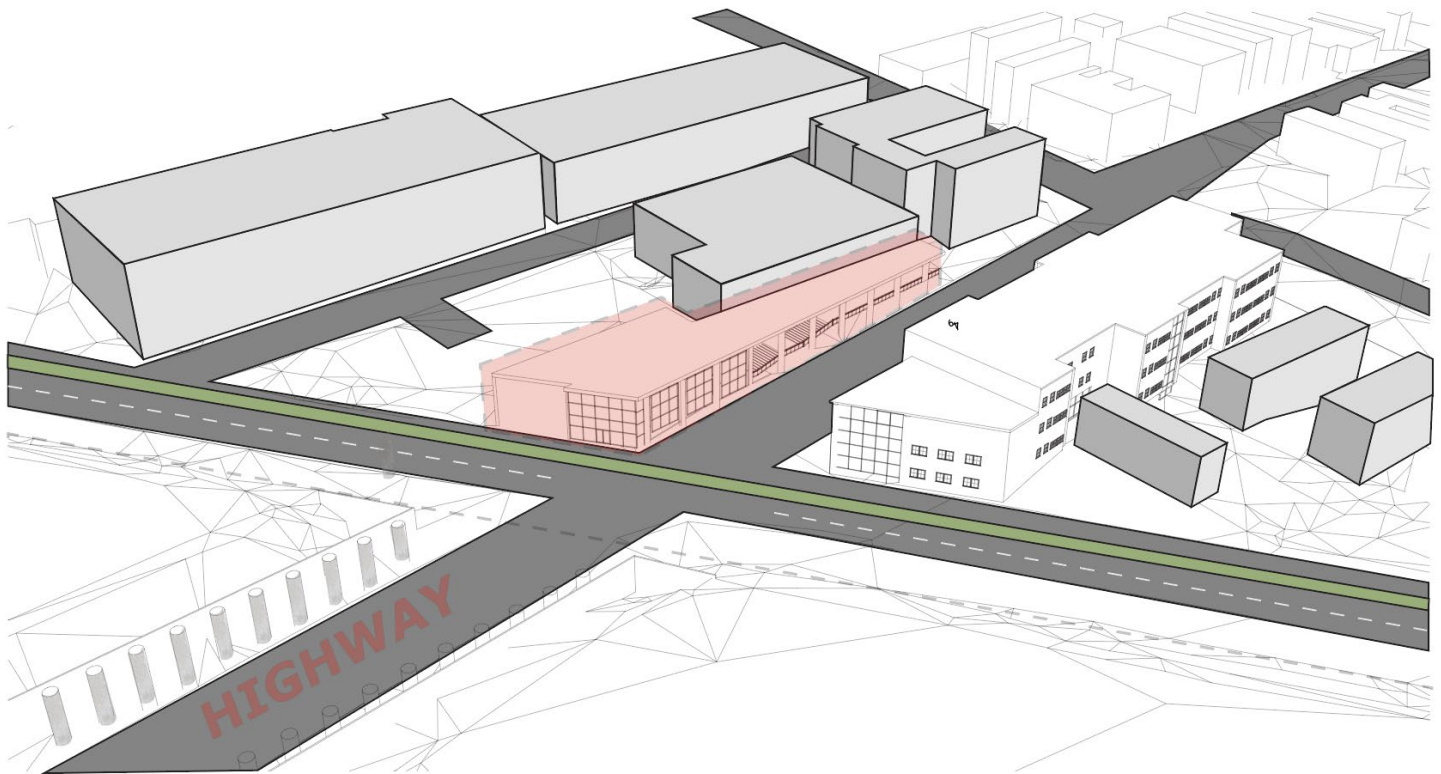
PUBLIC ART



COMMUNITY STRENGTH



SITE AXON

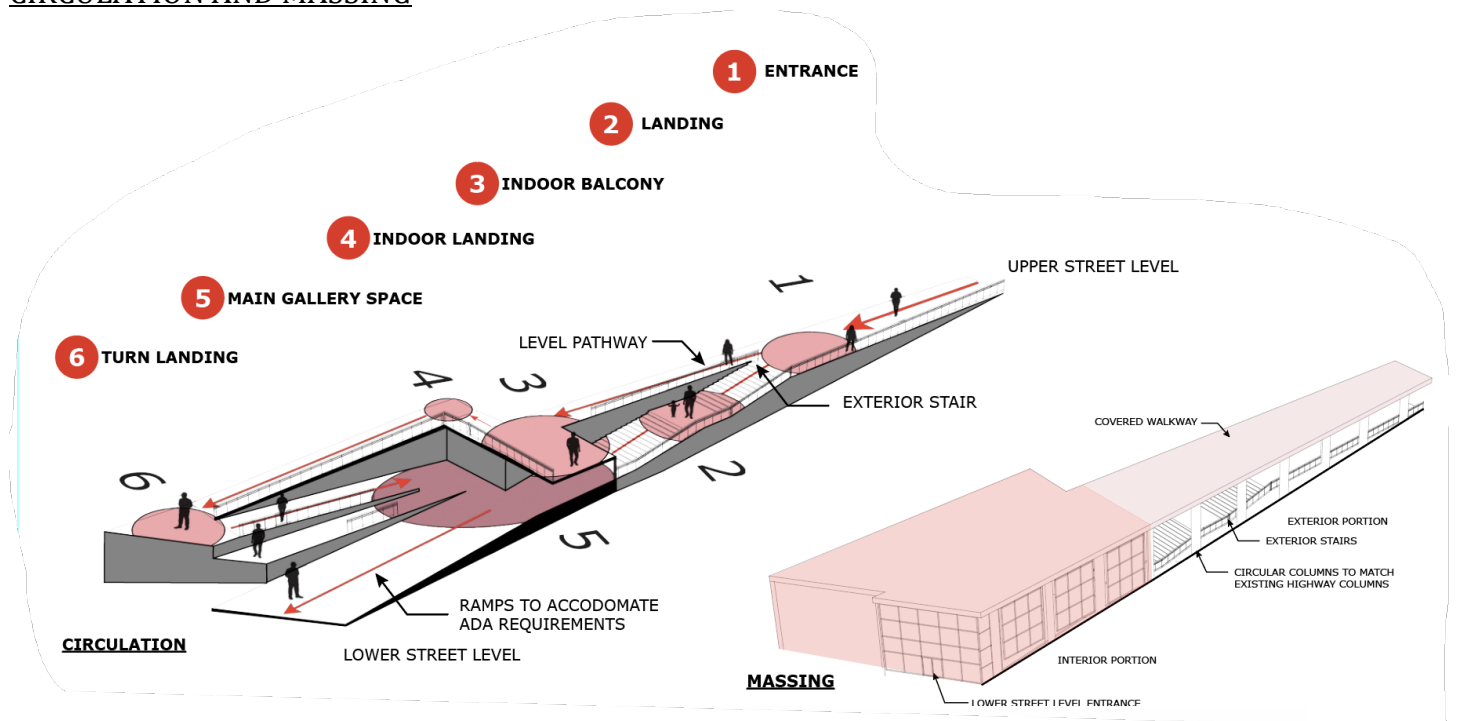


Highlighted in red is the location of the community center relative to the site.

EXTERIOR RENDERING



CIRCULATION AND MASSING



Architectural section drawing showing the building's layout and levels. The drawing is divided into two main sections: the **MAIN GALLERY SPACE** (left) and the **EXTERIOR PLATFORM** (right). The Main Gallery Space has a width of 8'-11" and a depth of 70'-0". It includes an **INTERIOR BALCONY** and a **VESTIBULE**. The Exterior Platform has a width of 131'-7" and a depth of 13'-0". It includes an **EXTERIOR STAIRS (18" TREAD DEPTH)** and an **UPPER STREET LEVEL**. The drawing also shows the **UPPER STREET LEVEL** and the **GROUND LEVEL**. The building is shown in a cross-section view, with the interior spaces and the exterior platform clearly defined. The drawing includes dimensions for the various spaces and levels, as well as labels for the different areas.

Architectural floor plan of the Main Gallery Space. The plan shows an interior area labeled "MAIN GALLERY SPACE 3,848 SF" and an exterior area labeled "EXTERIOR STAIRS 866 SF" and "EXTERIOR PLATFORM 1,645 SF". The plan includes dimensions, an adjacent building, and a north arrow.

The diagram illustrates the Screen Wall system in two parts. The left part is a 3D perspective view of a section of the wall. It shows a 'RAMP' on the left, a 'PERFORATED METAL SCREEN WALL' in the center, and an 'UPPER LEVEL DECK AND RAILING' on the right. A person is shown walking on the 'LOWER LEVEL' in front of the screen wall. A text box points to the screen wall with the text: 'ART INSTALLATIONS MIMIC THE FENESTRATION PATTERNS AS TIME CONTINUES, RECREATING THE EFFECT OF URBAN CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT OVER TIME'. The right part is a 'SCREEN WALL ELEVATION' showing a brick wall with four rectangular openings. A text box points to the wall with the text: 'UNITS ARE MODULAR AND STACKABLE FOR FLEXIBILITY'. The word 'DETAILS' is written in the bottom left corner.

DETAILS

RAMP

UPPER LEVEL DECK AND RAILING

PERFORATED METAL SCREEN WALL

LOWER LEVEL

ART INSTALLATIONS MIMIC THE FENESTRATION PATTERNS AS TIME CONTINUES, RECREATING THE EFFECT OF URBAN CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT OVER TIME

UNITS ARE MODULAR AND STACKABLE FOR FLEXIBILITY

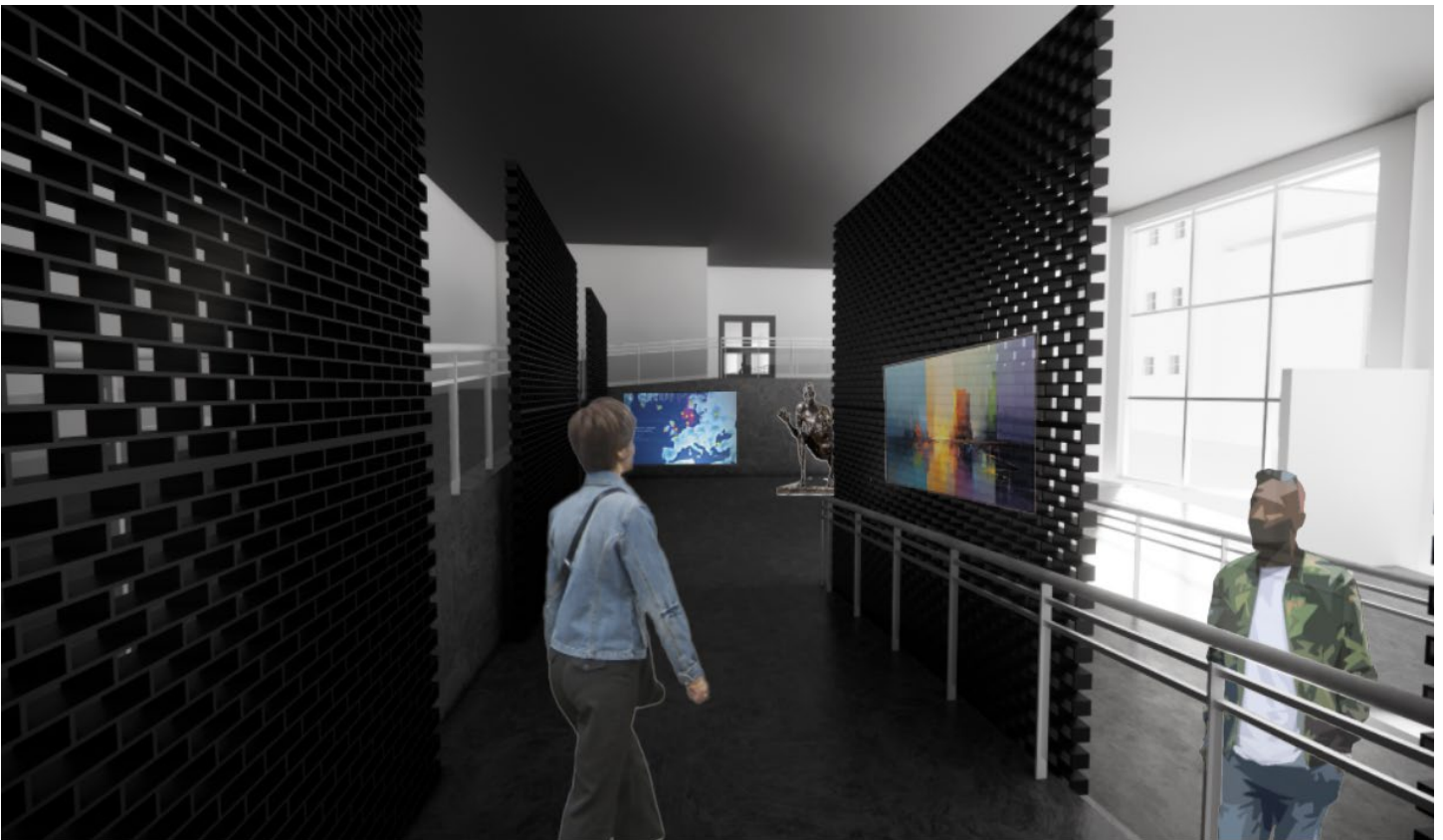
SCREEN WALL ELEVATION

THE “ALLEY”



The railing system mirrors the brick textures found on site, while allowing for light transmission. As individuals move between these installations, the artwork creates fenestrations, offering an experience reminiscent of traversing the distinctive alleys of the West End.

INTERIOR RENDERINGS

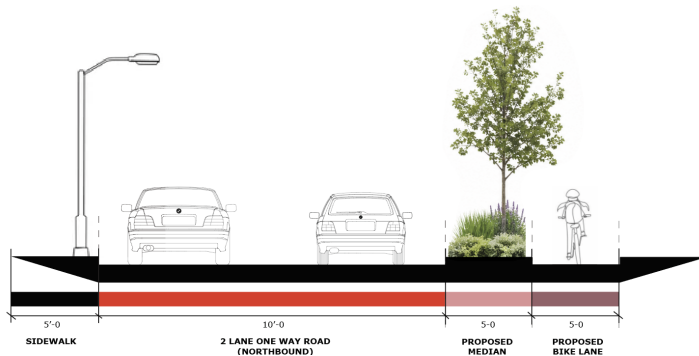




SITE SECTION – FINDLAY ST NORTH



WINCHELL STREET INTERVENTION - N

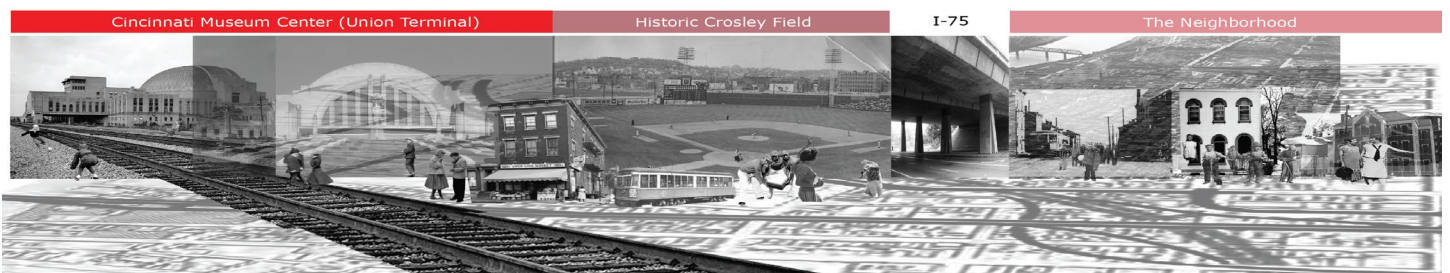


By implementing new interventions along Winchell Avenue adjacent to the art gallery, pedestrian safety can be improved. Vehicles frequently travel at high speeds on this one-way road as they approach the highway. The proposal includes constructing a median and adding a bike lane to support multiple modes of transportation.

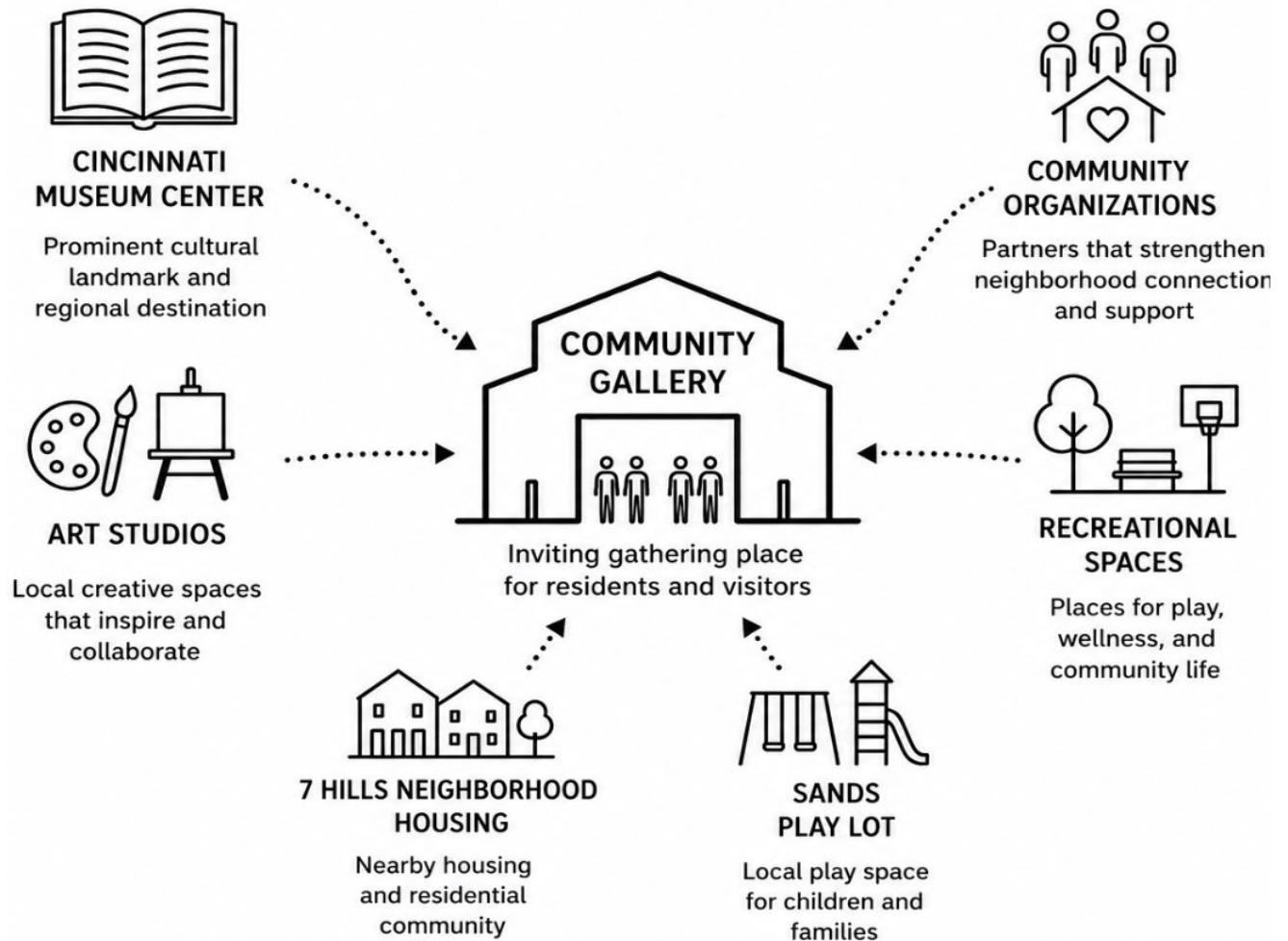
HIGHWAY MURAL



The proposal to install a mural beneath the highway transforms the structure into a visual narrative, depicting the history and events of the West End. Specifically, it highlights the introduction of the interstate, which jeopardized the well-being of residents and resulted in their displacement.

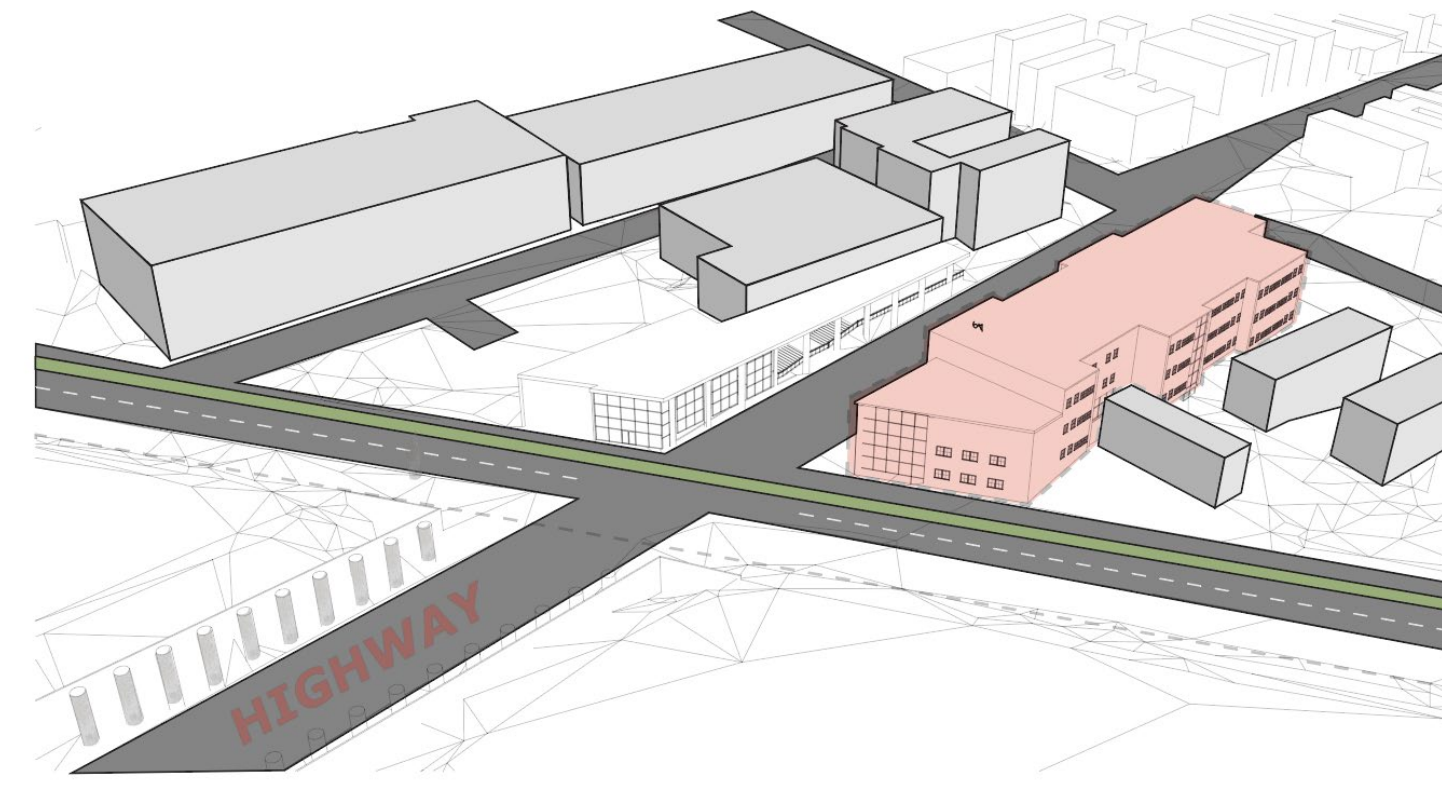


THOUGHT DIAGRAM



HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

SITE AXON



HISTORICAL HOUSING LOST

1940

PRESENT



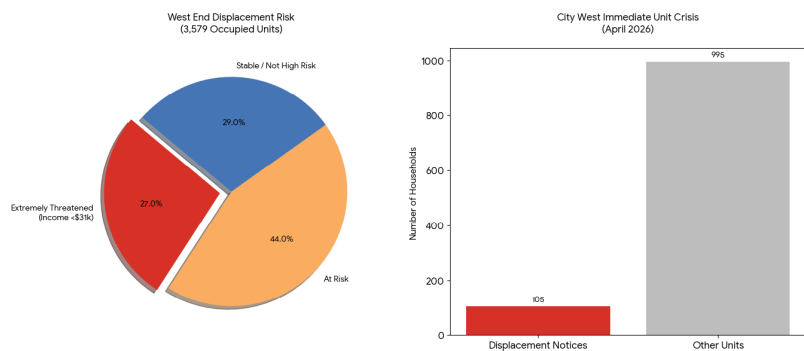
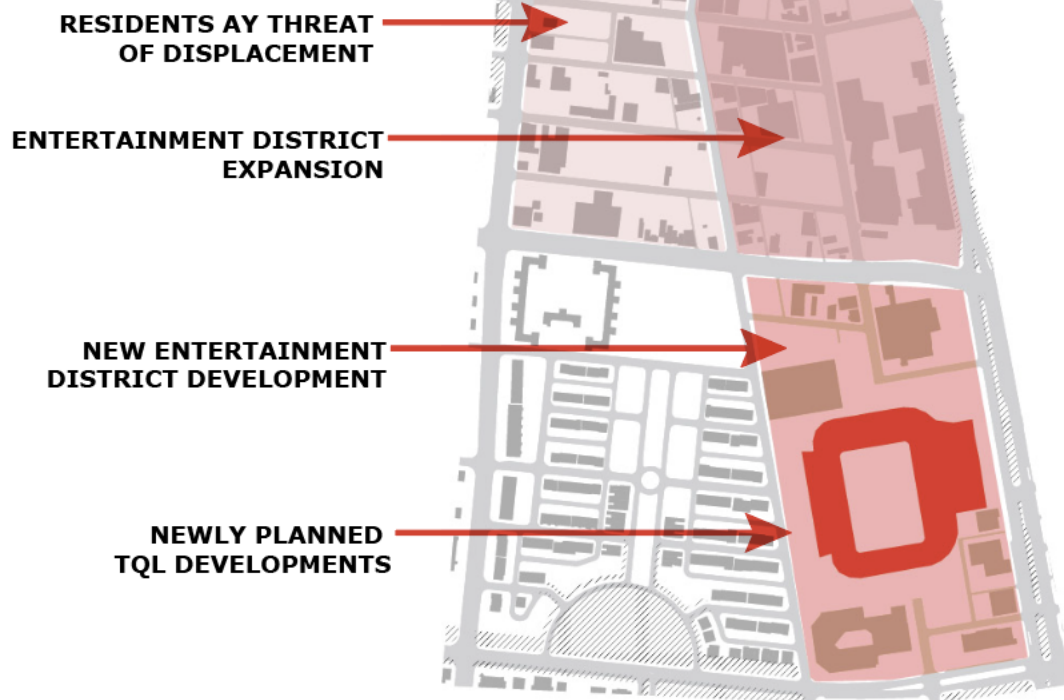
**OVER 25,000
PEOPLE DISPLACED**

The construction of Interstate 75 through Cincinnati's West End during the 1950s and 1960s resulted in significant displacement and enduring social disruption. The highway was routed directly through one of the city's most densely populated and historically Black neighborhoods, which consisted of a closely connected network of residences, businesses, churches, and cultural institutions. As part of larger urban renewal initiatives, extensive areas were cleared to make way for the highway and its supporting infrastructure, necessitating the relocation of thousands of residents. Many affected individuals faced restricted economic mobility due to existing segregation and discriminatory housing practices, often leading them to move into less resourced neighborhoods or overcrowded public housing facilities.

MODERN HOUSING THREATS

MODERN DEVELOPMENTS

DUE TO NEW DEVELOPMENTS ON THE EASTERN END OF THE WEST END ALONG CENTRAL PARKWAY, THERE IS AN INCREASE OF HOUSING COST IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD. THUS INCREASING CHANCES OF FURTHER DISPLACEMENT.



The graphic shows that most West End residents in Cincinnati are at risk of displacement: 44% are “at risk” and 27% are “extremely threatened,” leaving only 29% as stable. Over 100 displacement notices have been recorded, highlighting widespread housing instability and an ongoing crisis.

SITE SELECTION AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS



1 7 HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD

SANDS PLAYGROUND



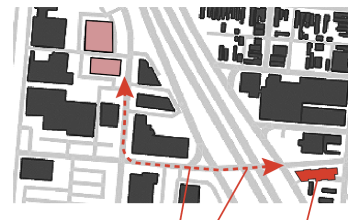
Since 1961, Seven Hills Neighborhood Houses has served as a vital social services center and safe haven for 2,500–3,000 at-risk individuals each year in Cincinnati's West End.

2 CITY GOSPEL MISSION

City Gospel Mission is a Cincinnati-based non-profit that breaks the cycle of poverty, homelessness, and addiction by providing immediate relief like food and shelter, alongside long-term recovery, employment, and youth mentoring programs.



TRANSITIONAL/LOW INCOME HOUSING FUTURE

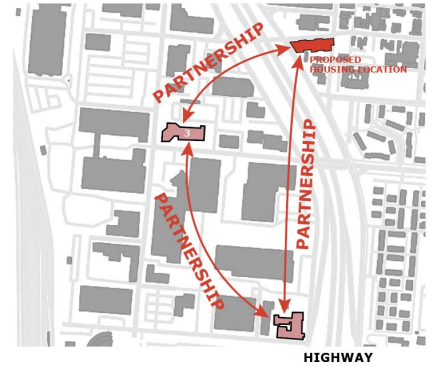


MOVING PEOPLE ACROSS THE HIGHWAY
HIGHWAY

3 CINCINNATI METRO HOUSING AUTHORITY

CINCINNATI JOB CORP CENTER

The Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority's Affordable Housing Initiative works by building and improving housing, providing rental assistance, and partnering with community organizations to support residents. Its goal is to increase access to safe, affordable housing while promoting long-term stability and stronger communities.



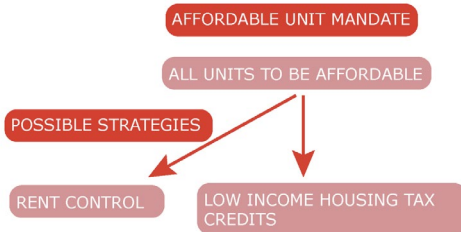
5 CINCINNATI MUSEUM CENTER

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

1. Educational school field trips
2. STEM and hands-on science programs
3. History and cultural exhibits
4. Youth camps and summer programs
5. Adult learning classes and lectures
6. Special events and rotating exhibits

HOUSING PROPOSAL MODEL

PROPOSED HOUSING TYPE

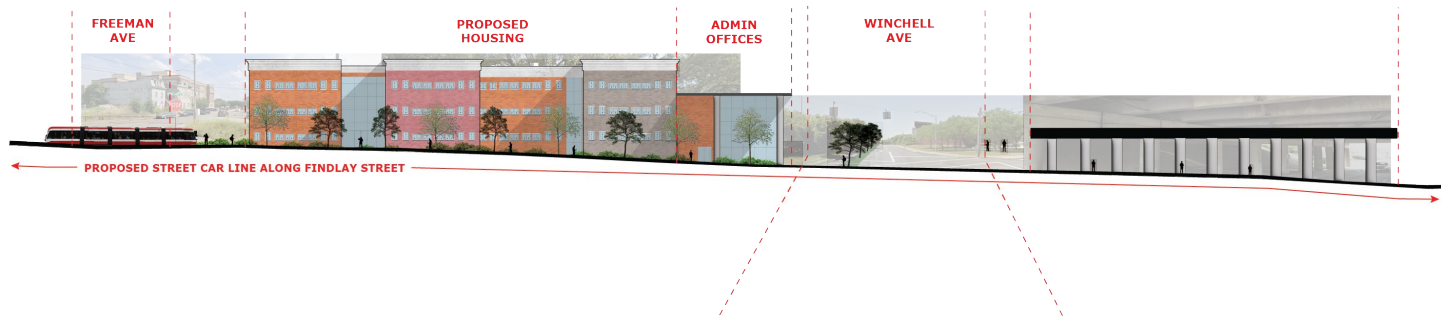


Although housing adjacent to the highway is uncommon, this site is situated close to community organizations addressing local needs and initiatives. The nearby presence of these organizations facilitates efficient engagement with prospective residents. Additionally, convenient access to transportation options enhances mobility for individuals residing in these areas.

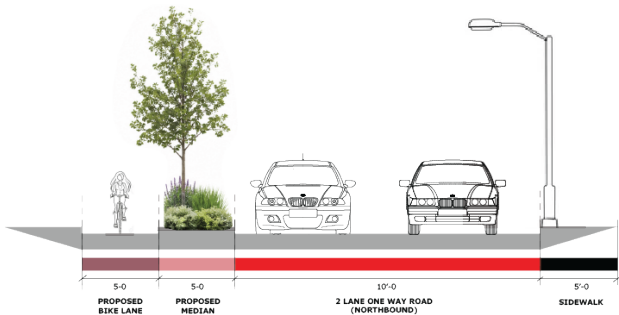
EXTERIOR RENDERING



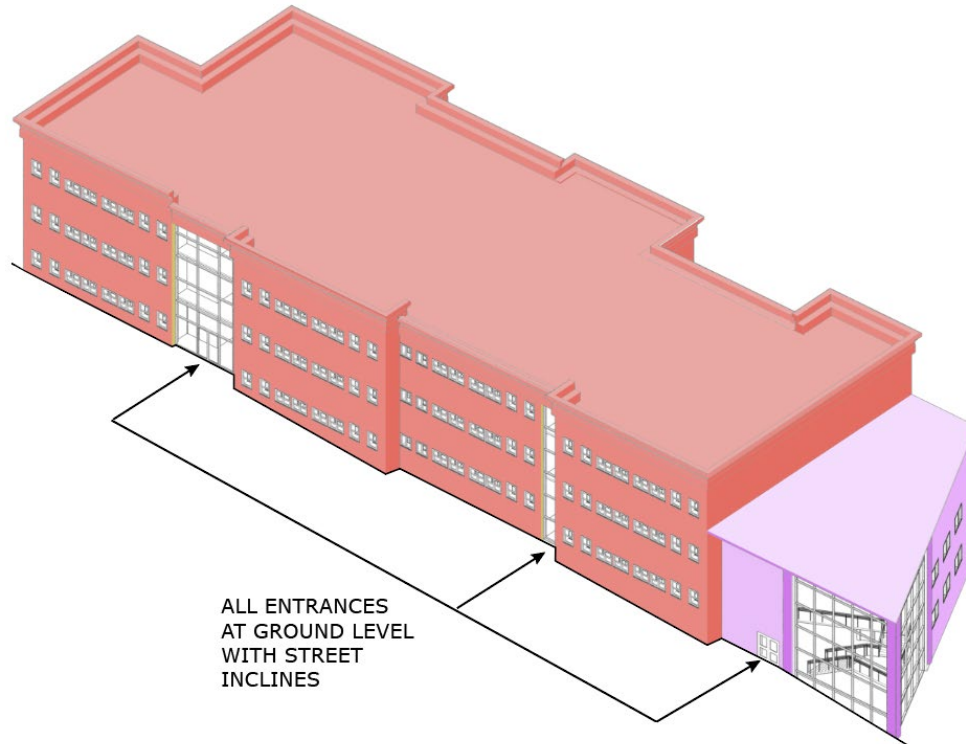
SITE SECTION – FINDLAY ST SOUTH



WINCHELL STREET INTERVENTION - SOUTH



MASSING AND PROGRAM



PROGRAMS BY AREA



RESIDENTIAL UNITS (ALL UNITS 1 BR @600SF)

LEVEL 1 = 14 UNITS

LEVEL 2 & 3 = 15 UNITS

TOTAL UNITS = 44 UNITS (26,400 SF)



AMENITIES (LAUNDRY, TRASH, ETC.)

TOTAL AREA = 1,150 SF



CIRCULATION

TOTAL AREA = 4,800



ADMIN/WORKSHOP SPACE

TOTAL AREA = 3,700

TOTAL BUILDING AREA: 31,256 SF

PROPOSED HOUSING PLANS



LEVEL 1



LEVELS 2-3

PROPOSED HOUSING SECTION

