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Over-the-Rhine is far from a forgotten local neighborhood

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The Associated Press article "Emptied and Forgotten" (May 5) focused on deterioration in some of America's rustbelt cities. A better story would have been the rebirth that's under way in urban neighborhoods like Over-the-Rhine in Cincinnati.

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OTR, adjacent to the downtown central business district and Cincinnati's most historic and architecturally significant neighborhood, is far from empty or forgotten.

Since 2004, the city of Cincinnati and the Cincinnati corporate community have invested \$84 million in OTR south of Liberty Street through the work of 3CDC, the Cincinnati Center City Development Corp. At its onset, this investment resulted in the purchase of 152 buildings in serious disrepair and deterioration and 165 vacant parcels. These historic buildings were cleaned, secured and readied for redevelopment. That redevelopment can't happen all at once, but it is under way right now in a huge way.

In the past four years, dozens of these empty, uninhabitable buildings have been or are in the process of being redeveloped. The result: nearly 200 market-rate condominiums and another 12 units of student housing for the Cincinnati Art Academy. In a neighborhood that has the lowest home ownership rate in the city, people are buying. In the first 14 weeks of 2009, 14 units were sold. Another result: a vibrant, stable business district. No fewer than 14 businesses have opened on or near Vine Street in the past two years.

The new homeowners and business owners chose OTR for its diversity, location and potential. They are true urban pioneers, and their decision to locate and make a major financial investment in OTR is the story that needs to be told.

It took 70 years for abandonment and neglect to settle in and spread decay through the neighborhood. But the German work ethic and ingenuity that built OTR remain intact, and these structures and the history they were built on are worth saving. They've housed, entertained and sustained generations of Cincinnatians of all ethnic backgrounds who settled here.

What's happening in OTR isn't about counting empty buildings. It's about reviving a neighborhood, creating home ownership for people of all income levels, establishing new businesses, creating green space and entertainment. It's about bringing long-overdue attention to a much-loved urban neighborhood and all the people who live there.

A tour of the newest condos in OTR will be May 30. Visit www.gatewayquarter.com for details.

Kelly Leon is vice president for communications and community relations of the Cincinnati Center City Development Corp. (3CDC).



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mssammy2008 wrote:

Hope Charlie Winburn is listening. He's against the streetcar and has been using the argument that OTR isn't worth visiting because it's full of robbers and drug dealers, therefore the streetcar won't be used. These scare tactics and unfair labeling of a neighborhood isn't worthy of a potential council member. There has been plenty of crime, including murder, in College Hill where he has his church/business but nobody is labeling that neighborhood. OTR is coming back. Winburn should stick to what he knows, exorcism, and stay out of urban planning.

5/18/2009 7:50:14 AM

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gatewayresident wrote:

CityLink isn't even in OTR, it is in the West End. I do agree with you however that OTR and the West End both have historically been treated as a dumping ground but I think that the point of this article was to illustrate that today, with the investment upward of 84 million, the title dumping ground no longer applies. OTR and the CBD are now a focus of concentrated effort by groups like 3CDC and places like the Gateway Quarter are shining examples of the success they are having. 3CDC has saved downtown...period. I wouldn't be here if it weren't for what they have done, Fountain Sq would not be what it is without them, and OTR would have just spun its wheels for another decade or more without the efforts of 3CDC. They have done a great job.

5/17/2009 10:23:02 PM

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teacherman1 wrote:

Yes, but what about north of Liberty around Findlay Market? It seems to me that 3CDC is in bed with some pretty shady company - Citylink. Citylink will kill any prospect of a bright future in my neighborhood, the West End, Clifton Heights, and the UC campus. I resent that OTR and the West End are dumping grounds for society's problems.

5/17/2009 6:19:32 PM

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BackInCincy wrote:

Thanks for setting the record straight. Since moving back to Cincinnati a few years ago I have had the opportunity to spend a lot of time in OTR and it has been a very positive experience. Everyday I meet people who are glad to be in Cincinnati and working hard to enjoy and promote this city. Mayor Mallory, City Manager Dohoney, 3CDC, the OTR Chamber, business owners, residents, and the Non-Profits are doing their best to save the wonderful assets in OTR and build it into one of Cincinnati's best neighborhoods.

5/17/2009 2:14:22 PM

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TheHemroid wrote:

Great article. We just need to show the bashers that OTR isn't nearly as violent as it used to be. We need to get them to come down and look at the progress. Unfortunately there still will be shootings but not nearly as often as before. Besides, shootings happen in every city and every type of neighborhood...even the wealthy one's. The other thing is the violence in OTR is usually concentrated in one area. It hardly happens where the redevelopment is and that will all be cleaned out too. It's a steady progress down there.

5/17/2009 1:56:02 PM

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