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Boal Street Perspective

john schmidt

The designated project site on Boal Street participates in a larger tract of meadow and wooded hillsides. This undeveloped area west of Drake Street forms the center of an extraordinarily sparse neighborhood on the north side of Boal. Specifically, there are ten structures: a three-family, 2 two-families, and 7 single-family dwellings, scattered in clusters of two or three, over 5-7 acres of the fast falling southern face of Mount Auburn. Most of the buildings are occupied by their owners. In four of the houses closest to the project site, the average length of stay is well over 30 years. The racial balance is close to even. There have been no structural changes on this tract in over 40 years. Thus it is a balanced neighborhood demonstrating steadfastness and consistency amid the fast-changing urban environment.

Most recently this frontier of urban development has become the subject of attention by developers interested in the northwestern rim of this invagination of Mount Auburn. And now, the southern lowland is the object of our Mayor's gaze. It is healthy to gaze at this attractive frontier. It inspires the best of our commonly shared interest in worldbuilding--that generative thrust like what's found in the busy, nest-building robin. It is a thrust that in the human realm requires concerted efforts by many to achieve. It is good to be among this many. We all relish this feeling of the goodness in building.

My question is, What about those that come after? If we act to build, the frontier subsides. So? The frontier has subsided since early Americans deboarded. In Cincinnati the frontier began subsiding on 21 September 1788 when John Filson sited the new Queen and notched trees for street layout. Every city has a peripheral frontier, however much that frontier becomes merged into that of an adjacent town. What we have here is a very central frontier. If Fountain Square is the heart of the Queen City, it is this hillside wall that is closest to Her heart. In every city, that which can be considered frontier land is fast becoming extinct. In Cincinnati, because of Her hillsides, we in 1984 may enjoy the scene of this old Prospect Hill frontier.

It is my hope that the City take seriously and responsibly its function to protect the land for use by later generations. With respect to the project at hand, we are dealing with a most special part of the Queen. It is perhaps the essence of Cincinnati's femininity.

If the Central Business District can be thought of as the Queen's chest, then Over-the-Rhine is the Queen's abdomen. Her arms would be Columbia Parkway and 50 West, and Her sinuous legs, I-71 and I-75. Then perhaps Her belly-button might be located very near the Diner on Sycamore Street (right below the buckle of Her chastity belt, i.e. the Alms and Doepke Building) and thus is John Filson's Woods best seen as the Queen's Womb.

Let us thus ponder deeply in due respect to those who come after us the lasting significance in what we might do in violation of our beloved City's most private part.

Your comments are invited.

751-3618  
3239 Bishop Street  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45220  
owner, 425 Pueblo Street