

**Northeast Ohio Planning History Project:
Documenting the Qualities of Place in Northeast Ohio**

**SUBMITTED TO THE NORTHEAST OHIO RESEARCH CONSORTIUM
by
KENT STATE UNIVERSITY URBAN DESIGN CENTER
and
YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR URBAN AND REGIONAL
STUDIES**

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Introduction

The "quality of place" increasingly is understood to be a significant factor in the economic development of a region or place. Unique characteristics of place act as "attractors" of the talented workforce that are key to community prosperity in a post-industrial economy. This shift in the factors that generate growth redefines the new landscape of competition between cities and regions and suggests major revisions to the array of public investments and incentives that traditional economic development strategies have offered. In a speech to the National Governors Association in Washington, DC in the winter of 2000, Carley Fiorina, CEO of Hewlett-Packard, is reported to have said: "Keep your tax incentives and highway interchanges; we will go where the highly skilled people are." And, the highly skilled people, according to Richard Florida, are consistently choosing quality of life over corporate position or compensation in deciding where to live, with lifestyle and the unique physical characteristics of an individual place playing a significant role in their location decisions.

Northeast Ohio has a unique landform, defined by its rivers, streams, and lakes and by its position on the southern shore of Lake Erie. While the use of these natural features for industrial purposes has largely defined Northeast Ohio's relationship to the natural environment, contrary trends which recognize these natural features as "place making" assets have long existed side by side with the industrial ethos: For over 100 years, selected landscapes such as Rockefeller Park in Cleveland and Mill Creek in Youngstown, have been the subject of parks planning and design initiatives that seek to preserve and develop these places as amenities for the citizens of their respective communities. These initiatives have produced the country's first metropolitan parks systems--including the Emerald Necklace around Cleveland and the Mill Creek Park system in Youngstown. More recently the historic parks along Lake Erie and Doan Brook have been rediscovered and restored and the importance of the Cuyahoga River and the Mahoning River as accessible greenways through their urbanized areas has been the focus of sustained community planning efforts.

Northeast Ohio communities also have enjoyed a long history of planned development, from the original planning by Moses Cleaveland and his survey party, which laid out his namesake city as the capital of the Western Reserve and the development of the New England-style town squares in communities throughout the region, to the Group Plan of 1903 and the development of Shaker Heights--one of the country's first planned communities--during the first half of the 20th Century, to the ambitious urban renewal efforts in the region's principal cities--Cleveland, Akron, and Youngstown after the Second World War. Taken together, these planning initiatives left their mark on the region's physical form, defining, in large measure, the "qualities of place" that define Northeast Ohio's urban centers.

The Northeast Ohio Planning History Project (NEO-PHP) takes as its central rationale the premise that changing the future requires understanding the past. Designers seeking to improve the qualities of

Northeast Ohio's urban places must understand how these places evolved to become what they are today. The central question to be asked and answered is "how did this place work- when it worked?" In planning for the future of Gordon Park as a restored urban lakefront park, for example, it is important that the designer understand how the park worked in its original form, before it was bisected by a freeway and buried under acres of fill. Understanding the original designers' intentions and constraints provides a starting point for examining existing conditions and imagining a new future for this important property. Designers proposing to "daylight" Doan Brook through University Circle and make it, once again, a natural amenity to that institutional district would be enormously benefited by having access to original drawings from the late 19th Century which show the Brook, and the uses next to it, before it was buried in a large culvert under Sterns Drive.

The availability of historic archives, in a form suitable for contemporary computer-aided design, is essential to developing a robust and authentic design that understands and builds upon the work of prior designers. Understanding how Walker and Weeks planned the "Lower Mall" and placed the Cleveland Municipal Stadium on this site was invaluable as the City undertook the planning and development of the district now known as North Coast Harbor and the design of the new Cleveland Browns Stadium. Having access to historic photographs and plans of Buchner Boulevard before its brutal transformation into the West Shoreway has been invaluable to designers and engineers seeking to quiet the freeway and bring it back to its original form and function as an urban parkway.

The NEO-PHP seeks to preserve an archive of rare and irreplaceable park and planning maps from the City of Cleveland and make them available to the design and planning community and to the general public. The proponents of this grant expect that the availability of these unique archives will instruct the civic debate about the future of the city's urban form by giving insight into its form in the past. The NEO-PHP also seeks to expand beyond the initial City of Cleveland archives and to develop partnerships with other Northeast Ohio parks systems and planning agencies. The intent of these partnerships will be to identify critical historic planning documents and to develop strategies for preserving these documents and making them available for future generations. In this manner, the lessons learned from the effort to preserve the Cleveland archives can be shared with communities throughout the region and enrich the quality of the unique places that make up Northeast Ohio.

Project Description

The Kent State University Urban Design Center (UDC) and Youngstown State University Center for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS) are requesting support of the Northeast Ohio Research Consortium (NEORC) in implementing the Northeast Ohio Planning History Project (NEO-PHP) at the Urban Design Center of Northeast Ohio. The purpose of the Project is to encourage the preservation of the graphic and written archives of public sector planning and parks agencies in the Northeast Ohio region. It is the intent of the project that these records become available to design professionals, educators, students, researchers, and the general public. The resultant body of information will be a permanent, significant, and accessible record of over 100 years of city planning and urban parks design in Northeast Ohio.

The long-term goal of the NEO-PHP is to document the history of urban design and parks planning in the region from the late 19th century in the City Beautiful and parks movements through two world wars, the urban renewal era, the development of the region's suburbs and the reactions to suburban sprawl known variously as "new urbanism," "green design," and the "back to the city" movements. The initial core documents to be archived consists of a significant inventory of historic maps, plans, and other documents from the Cleveland Department of Parks, Recreation, and Properties (dating from the late 19th Century to the mid 20th Century) and the City Planning Commission (dating from 1942 to 2001). The project will identify other document collections suitable for archiving in the region's municipal and metropolitan parks systems and its major cities.

The initial phase of the NEO-PHP is being undertaken in cooperation with the City of Cleveland, the Cleveland Public Library and the Intermuseum Conservation Association, a regional conservation laboratory serving museums and institutions throughout the Midwest. As a result of the project, these materials will be professionally preserved, catalogued, and digitally documented. The conserved materials will be archived on behalf of the City of Cleveland by the Cleveland Public Library and will be available to the public in both electronic and archival form. This collection will compliment the urban document collections maintained by Cleveland State University and will be a unique and invaluable resource for future generations.

The NEO-PHP is an exploratory initiative that will serve as a model for communities, such as Akron and Youngstown, which have a long history of city planning and urban parks, and to the region's several metropolitan parks systems. It is the intention of the project proponents that the lessons learned in the initial project will be shared with other interested parties in the region and will form the basis for subsequent phases and partnerships.



NEO-PHP Principal Researcher, Kate Reed (center), with UDC Graduate Interns, Mirjani Siljanoska and Dong Jai, examining Cultural Garden map

First Year Activity

The NEO-PHP commenced formally on July 1, 2002 with funding made available by the Cleveland and Gund foundations. By the end of the first year of the proposed three-year project, office space was secured and approximately 1500 Parks Department maps were moved from the attic of City Hall to the project offices. Research and cataloguing protocols were developed, and negotiations commenced with the Cleveland Public Library for the permanent archiving and preservation of these one-of-a-kind documents in the Library's renowned map collection.

The first year of the NEO-PHP has been one of exploration and challenge. The scope of the work became apparent as 2003 began. The inventory of maps, some extremely fragile due to years of neglect, was examined, many for the first time in decades. An initial group of maps, consisting of the largest and most fragile, was sorted into broad subject areas. Initial cataloguing was undertaken with the expectation that this task would be completed by the Public Library upon transfer of the maps to the permanent collection.

After research of appropriate library cataloguing protocols, a NEO-PHP cataloguing program was developed. The cataloguing format is compatible with the Library of Congress system used by the Cleveland Public Library. It is designed to provide the City of Cleveland a complete and accessible inventory of map contents that will allow the City to meet the requirements of its public records disposal procedures as it transfers these documents to the Library for permanent archiving. Each map record contains important basic information on each map and provides a clear, concise, and retrievable record of the contents of each map.

Appropriate conservation techniques and protocols for the management of large-format documents have been developed in cooperation with the Cleveland Public Library and the Intermuseum Conservation Association. Techniques for cleaning and repairing fragile and badly deteriorated maps have been

developed by the skilled technicians at both institutions and an initial batch of representative documents has been selected to develop detailed estimates of the costs of restoring and archiving the maps and plans.

The NEO-PHP staff inventoried approximately 100 maps representative maps during the first year of operations. The staff has investigated computer-scanning services available in the Cleveland market and has reviewed the results of the work to date with potential end users of the scanned maps-the City of Cleveland and University Circle Incorporated. Based on the results of this exploratory year, the NEO-PHP is now prepared to commence a two-year effort to complete the inventory and archiving of these materials and to make them available to the professional design community, the university community, local governments, and the general public.



Cleveland Public Library Staff, Ann Olszewski and Elizabeth Bardossy, with conserved map of the Cleveland Park System

Second Year Activity (NEORC Grant Year 1)

In the second year of the Grant, the NEO-PHP made a successful inventory of 150 maps pertaining to the Doan Brook Park system (Wade, Rockefeller, and Gordon Parks), bringing the total catalogued to 250 maps. The system of cataloguing maps was developed by the principal researcher in accordance with the Library of Congress rules. This has two distinct advantages. It provides a clear and complete record of previously unknown maps. It also allows the Cleveland Public Library to directly transfer the information to any inventory that it will make of the maps in the future without needing to recatalogue specific details regarding the maps.

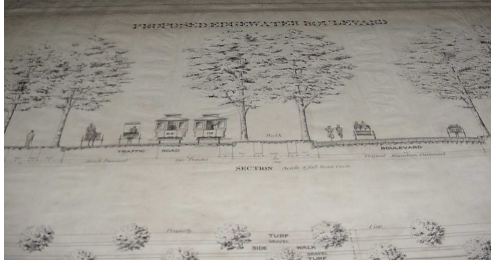
Two interns from the Urban Design Center of Kent State University were trained to assist in the basic cataloguing. In 2005, there will again be interns available to provide assistance in this way.

At the beginning of 2004, in conjunction with the Cleveland Public Library and the Intermuseum Conservation Association, an initial 24 maps were chosen to undergo a preservation process. This process was a delicate one, especially given that some of the documents were badly damaged. At the end of the year, the conservation of the majority of the maps was complete, and a basic record was entered on the Cleveland Public Library's online catalogue under the title "Cleveland Parks Collection." Development of a protocol to facilitate the choosing and transfer of the maps was undertaken between the NEO-PHP and the Cleveland Public Library. In December 2004, a further 14 maps were chosen to begin the preservation process. The transfer of maps will continue during 2005.

During the year, the NEO-PHP undertook substantive research related to the Doan Brook area. A master list was assembled of the maps held by the NEO-PHP that relate to this specific area. Nearly 500 maps fit this description and the resulting information was assembled in the *Doan Brook Watershed Index*.

The Holden Parks Trust has deposited five CDs with the NEO-PHP. These CDs contain a large number of images of scanned maps. A form was developed to allow the notation of information about each map to be recorded and the images have begun to be inventoried. This process will continue during 2005.

The methodical and careful research into the documents held by the NEO-PHP resulted in a discovery that underlines the value of the efforts undertaken by the Project. A map of Wade Park, done by the firm of Frederick Law Olmsted, a famous urban designer of the early 20th century, was found. This map is now being preserved, and its historic value for future researches is significant.



Edgewater Park drawing, Late 19th Century

Third Year Activity (NEORC Grant Year 2)

The project as presently scoped is a three-year initiative that is scheduled to be completed in December 2005. During the third year of the project, we anticipate completing the inventorying of the remaining 250-300 maps and plans pertaining to the Wade, Rockefeller, and Gordon Parks and transferring them to the Library. At the end of this period, we anticipate that the complete archive of maps and plans of the Doan Book parks system will have been inventoried, digitally photographed, and transferred to the Cleveland Public Library for conservation and permanent storage. The results of this effort will provide the protocols for preserving the remaining inventory of Cleveland parks and planning maps and will serve as a prototype for other Northeast Ohio communities interested in preserving and archiving their historic maps and drawings. To this end, the NEO-PHP staff will brief the directors of the NEORC university libraries regarding the project and will invite their participation in discussions regarding the development of similar archiving efforts in other Northeast Ohio communities.

During this third year of operation, the NEO-PHP staff will prepare a Power Point presentation documenting the project and the collection and will make this information available to the design and academic communities at both the local and national level. The staff will also explore the feasibility of mounting an exhibit of preserved drawings and maps at Cleveland State's Thomas F. Campbell Gallery and issuing a formal monograph on the project.

In collaboration with the Advisory Committee, the staff will identify other likely partners and parties interested in the results of this project and will develop a funding strategy for the continued operation of the project after the initial three-year phase. It is a goal of this project to establish the practice of archiving valuable public sector design documents as a normal business practice of the regions' several planning and parks organizations and to assist these agencies in securing the budgetary commitments necessary to undertake such archiving on a regular basis. As a consequence of this initiative, the prior design work of these organizations will be available to their staffs and boards in a useable form and those engaged in the teaching and practice of urban and environmental design in Northeast Ohio will be able to benefit from the lessons of the past as they seek to design the future.

During this third year, the staff will explore the opportunities for publishing the Doan Brook park maps in a manner and quality that does justice to this unique 19th Century urban park system.

Project Staffing

The NEO-PHP project director is **Hunter Morrison**, Director of the Center for Urban and Regional Studies at Youngstown State University and Senior Fellow in Urban Design at Kent State University. Mr. Morrison was Cleveland's City Planning Director from 1980 to 2000. Under the terms of his appointment to Kent State, Mr. Morrison is committed to providing one day a week to be devoted to the project and to teaching a spring semester course on Urban Design and Development at the Urban Design Center.

The NEO-PHP principal researcher is **Kate Reed**. Ms Reed is a professional librarian and editor who has extensive experience working with academics and professionals in the fields of urban planning and architecture. She has been involved in projects in the United States, England, New Zealand, and Malaysia. Under the terms of her appointment, Ms Reed is committed to providing one and one-half days/week to the NEO-PHP.