

ICOA986: LOCAL CULTURAL HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT SUPPORTS COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

Subtheme 01: Integrating Heritage and Sustainable Urban Development by engaging diverse Communities for Heritage Management

Session 1: Sustainable Development and Community Engagement

Location: Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre

Time: December 13, 2017, 10:10 - 10:25

Author: Kathleen H. Crowther

Kathleen H. Crowther is President of the Cleveland Restoration Society, a partner of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (US). Under her leadership of a 14-person professional staff, the organization has developed a wide range of heritage programs which support sustainable community development. She is educated in Art & Architectural History and Urban Studies with Bachelor of Arts and Master of Science degrees. She is an Adjunct Instructor at Cleveland State University.

Abstract: This presentation details a local initiative which blends cultural heritage with conservation of a mid-century modern neighborhood for the goal of achieving a sustainable community. The initiative has won the support of Ohio Humanities and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

In Cleveland, Ohio (USA), the Cleveland Restoration Society is leading a multi-faceted project to ensure the continued vitality of a remarkable urban neighborhood called Lee-Harvard. During the 1940s – 60s, African-Americans circumvented systemic obstacles to achieve the dream of home-ownership and a better education and social environment for their children in Lee-Harvard.

What started as classic historic preservation work – surveying Lee-Harvard for eligible landmarks – expanded to include oral histories with community elders. Survey work indicated that Lee-Harvard is a “suburb in the city.” Oral histories revealed remarkable stories about the Great Migration of African-Americans to northern industrial cities for jobs. Through black agency, families escaped urban ghettos by “moving-up” to Lee-Harvard, a leafy “urban suburb” with middle-class amenities. This project includes:

Public engagement – oral histories, public story-telling events, digitization of historic photographs for a public image collection, publication of the stories and images of Lee-Harvard.

Local historic district designation of two subdivisions, one of which was built by blacks for blacks.

Scholar Advisor: Urban historian Todd Michney, PhD, author of ‘Changing Neighborhoods: Black Upward Mobility in Cleveland, 1900-1980’, is a paid advisor to ensure historic accuracy.

National designation – Lee-Harvard is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

A specialized, free Conservation Guide for mid-century homes.

Free expert conservation advice and low-interest loans to homeowners to preserve the built environment.

Curriculum development with the local high school to educate teachers on local history and develop research projects for students.

Key words: *sustainability, cultural heritage, African-American*

Introduction

This presentation details a local initiative which blends cultural heritage with conservation of a mid-century modern neighbourhood for the goal of achieving a sustainable community.

In Cleveland, Ohio (USA), the Cleveland Restoration Society is leading a multi-faceted project to ensure the continued vitality of a remarkable urban neighbourhood called Lee-Harvard. During the 1940s – 60s, African-Americans circumvented systemic obstacles to achieve the dream of home-ownership and a better education and social environment for their children in Lee-Harvard.

Cleveland

The city of Cleveland is a post-industrial city of the American Midwest. Located at the confluence of the Cuyahoga River and Lake Erie, it is one of several American cities established in the late eighteenth-century on the shores of fresh water lakes.

By 1920, Cleveland was the fifth largest city in the United States. Its economic power was in steel production and manufacturing. In 1950, Cleveland's population began to decline due to de-industrialization. By 2010, Cleveland became a majority-minority city – the population of African Americans superseded that of Caucasians.

Cleveland's infrastructure of buildings had been built for a larger population than exists today, creating a weak real estate market and pervasive vacancy.

Heritage has been lost in the downtown in favour of larger, more lucrative development schemes. Downtown heritage buildings have also been renewed through assistance from government tax breaks.

Outside of the downtown, city neighbourhoods also reflect both positive and negative heritage conservation narratives. A skilled network of community organizations supported provides on-the-ground support to physical development projects that provide needed commercial services and affordable housing. Despite their best efforts, the needs in most of Cleveland's poor neighbourhoods far outweigh local capacity.

Some neighbourhoods close to the downtown have revitalized due, in part, to their heritage infrastructure and the successful efforts to re-make these previously fragile neighbourhoods into trendy places. Now the subject of spot zoning for higher density, accusations of gentrification and lack of affordable housing, these few neighbourhoods nonetheless are Cleveland's interpretation of successful urban communities.

Still remaining on the periphery of Cleveland are outer-lying communities that might be described as "middle neighbourhoods." These communities are at the tipping point between vitality and vacancy - as they struggle to retain residents and social cohesion.

It is this type of neighbourhood that is the subject of this presentation which illustrates my organization's effort to uncover recent history from its residents as we also attempt to preserve the built heritage which houses this history. Thus, our effort can rightly be called cultural heritage in that we are engaged firstly with humanity and secondly with the built environment.

African Americans in Cleveland

African Americans came to Cleveland in very large numbers during the Great Migration north to escape racism in the south and seek employment in industrial cities. Cleveland did not offer the “pot of gold” that Blacks had hoped for. Unfortunately racism manifested as a response to the threat for jobs and the disruption of the social order.

Thus, the heritage of African Americans in Cleveland, as in the larger United States, recounts the struggle for equality. Associating this history with physical sites in Cleveland is a challenging endeavour due to a lack of popular interest, deterioration of sites and the preponderance of the American historic designation process which prioritizes architectural integrity over historic integrity.

In 2012, my organization, the Cleveland Restoration Society, enlarged its work to identify and designate sites associated with African American heritage. The Cleveland Restoration Society is a forty-seven year-old, non-governmental organization whose mission is to promote historic preservation. With a staff of thirteen professionals, a headquarters building, a small endowment and a slate of programs, the organization is considered an important local player in housing and revitalization efforts.

Lee-Harvard

Lee-Harvard is a “middle” neighbourhood, a place that could tip to the better or to the worst. The area comprises approximately five square miles with over seven thousand housing units and two hundred and twenty acres of parkland. Many streets are lined with a mature tree canopy and tidy homes well-kept with lovely landscaping. Lee-Harvard has a fifty-six percent voter turn-out, demonstrating strong civic involvement. Yet all is not well behind this façade. Lee-Harvard home values are stagnant in the thirty thousand dollar (USD) value range; vacancy and deterioration are evident. The public schools are in academic distress.

In 2012, we conducted a windshield survey of Lee-Harvard and came to the conclusion that Lee-Harvard is the most complete “suburb in the city” of Cleveland. Rapidly developed from 1940 to 1960, the built environment can be characterized as mid-century modern in style. The neighbourhood features street after street of post-World War Two bungalows. These houses were popular for middle-class families seeking to escape the city for fresh air and green space. While suburbia in America is characterized by the white middle class family, African American Clevelanders yearned for the exact same thing.

Yet Blacks faced enormous problems in obtaining home ownership. Banking practices could legally decline to lend to Blacks with viable incomes. Insurance companies could follow the same practice by not insuring Black-owned homes. When Blacks did achieve homeownership, they were often not welcomed into the neighbourhood.

Despite many obstacles, Blacks moved into Lee-Harvard and created a successful middle-class community. And indeed, the children of Lee-Harvard have grown up to be leaders in Cleveland, in Washington DC and across the country. We heard these stories first-hand, yet they were not formally written by historians nor celebrated locally or widely associated with this place.

Thus, the Cleveland Restoration Society embarked upon a cultural heritage endeavour as a necessary preliminary to conserving the built environment. Our goal is to valorise the Lee-Harvard story for the wider community and to build the emotional commitment of its current and previous residents to this place. With stronger bonds to an authentic history, generations will choose to remain in Lee-Harvard and new residents will be attracted to this place.

Cultural Heritage Strategies

Oral Histories: To uncover the cultural heritage of Lee-Harvard, we conducted fifteen oral histories which were transcribed and indexed. Common themes on the positive values of the neighbourhood emerged, and in particular a deep social cohesion. For example, the men created a community police force that protected children and property. They bought their own uniforms, outfitted their cars, and were perhaps, Cleveland's first community policing effort. Outside of school, the children were well cared for through extensive citizen-organized activities.

Local and National Landmark Designation: Through land research, we discovered a housing subdivision developed by an African American for African Americans. The subdivision features larger, more expensive brick houses, and marketed only in the local Black paper. The developer of these homes, Arthur Bussey, was trained as a bricklayer in a segregated Southern school, coming north during the Great Migration. At the end of his career, he had progressed to the extent that he successfully developed this neighbourhood. This is a remarkable achievement and thus we nominated and gained designation of the Bussey Subdivision as a Cleveland historic district. We are currently working on a National Register of Historic Places designation.

Honoring Bussey: While the architectural qualities of the Bussey Subdivision are notable, the story of this man is of greater interest. It is important to valorise the achievements of Blacks, thus we researched and wrote a biography on the man now being distributed and posted on our website. We convened local programs to share what we had learned. Some still recall Arthur Bussey and provided first-hand stories about him.

Storytelling: We conducted a public storytelling event at a popular local church. The general public was invited to have their stories recorded by the public library. Residents told their stories, and those of their parents and grandparents, in order to honour them and enable the continued memory of their sacrifices. Many touching stories of family life and overcoming obstacles were recounted.

Digitizing Family Photographs: Our next event is a community digitization effort whereby Lee-Harvard residents may have their old photographs digitized. Many of these images will be entered into our Cleveland Public Library system for access by researchers and the general public. By entering these images into the public realm, we will be helping to educate the Lee-Harvard community about its history, and to share this history among a wider audience.

Publication: With a small treasure trove of cultural history on the Lee-Harvard neighbourhood, one of our next goals is to assemble this information in a keep-sake publication providing a portrait of this community for the first time. We believe this will be very important to establishing a lasting memory and valorisation of Cleveland's first African American families who overcame deep racism to take part in the American dream.

History is Alive! Curriculum: With the enthusiastic support of the local high school, we are developing a curriculum that spotlights the historic neighbourhood that surrounds the school. Honours students are preparing to conduct oral interviews with elders. Students are learning about the pattern of development of Lee-Harvard and the styles of houses and churches.

Developing a Sustainable Future: All of these activities are designed to foster an appreciation for the living community of Lee-Harvard. We hope families will stay in Lee-Harvard, not move to more prosperous areas, because they are emotionally connected to this place, it has meaning and a spirit to them. To support them in this endeavour, my organization provides free technical assistance on all old house issues, and low interest loans to modernize them. While our approach is to retain the original

materials to the maximum as is possible, we are very happy to help with those mundane but essential matters such as kitchens and bathrooms. And why not?

In a city where housing abandonment is a significant problem, our approach to heritage development is intentionally multi-faceted. Our goal is to appeal to both the body and the spirit, to achieve a deeper connection to this traditional place. This place called Lee-Harvard is a good place and worthy of a lifetime.

ICOA986: LE DEVELOPPEMENT DU PATRIMOINE CULTUREL LOCAL SOUTIENT LA DURABILITE DE LA COMMUNAUTE

Sous-thème 01: Intégrer le patrimoine et le développement urbain durable en engageant Diverses communautés pour la gestion du patrimoine

Session 1: Développement durable et engagement communautaire

Lieu: Hall Gulmohur, India Habitat Centre

Date et heure: 13 Décembre, 2017, 10:10 - 10:25

Auteur: Kathleen H. Crowther

Kathleen H. Crowther préside la Cleveland Restoration Society, partenaire du National Trust pour la préservation historique (US). Sous la direction d'un personnel professionnel de 14 personnes, l'organisation a développé un large éventail de programmes patrimoniaux qui soutiennent le développement communautaire durable. Elle a étudié l'Histoire des arts et de l'architecture et l'Urbanisme avec une licence-ès-arts et une maîtrise de sciences. Elle est instructrice adjointe à l'Université d'état de Cleveland.

Résumé: Cette présentation détaille une initiative locale mêlant le patrimoine culturel et la conservation d'un quartier modernisé du milieu du XXe siècle, dans le but de réaliser une communauté durable. Cette initiative a reçu le soutien de la Fondation des Sciences Humaines de l'Ohio. À Cleveland, Ohio, (USA) la Cleveland Restoration Society dirige un projet à facettes multiples qui assure la vitalité continue d'un lotissement remarquable appelé Lee-Harvard.

Durant les décennies 1940-1960, à Lee-Harvard, les Afro-Américains ont circonvenu les obstacles systémiques pour réaliser leur rêve d'accession à la propriété, à une meilleure éducation et à un meilleur environnement social pour leurs enfants. Ce qui a commencé comme un classique travail de mise en valeur du patrimoine - en faisant un repérage des lieux marquants de Lee-Harvard - a été progressivement élargi au recueil de la mémoire orale des anciens de la communauté. Ce travail d'enquête a indiqué que Lee-Harvard était une « *banlieue dans la ville* ». Cette collecte orale a révélé des histoires remarquables évocatrices de la grande migration des Afro-américains vers les villes industrielles du nord pour trouver des emplois. Grâce à l'entremise de la minorité noire, les familles ont pu fuir les ghettos urbains en se dirigeant vers Lee-Harvard, une « *banlieue urbaine* » verdoyante disposant des commodités de la classe moyenne.

Ce projet comprend:

Un engagement public - enregistrements des histoires, organisation de table-ronde des anciens face au public, digitalisation de photographies anciennes dans les collections publiques, publication des histoires et images de Lee-Harvard...

La désignation au sein du département d'histoire de la ville d'une double structure dont l'une est construite par des afro-américains à destination du public afro-américain ;

Un conseiller scolaire: l'historien de l'urbanisme Todd Michney (PhD) auteur de *Changer de quartier : la mobilité ascendante noire à Cleveland, 1900-1980* est rémunéré en tant que conseil pour assurer l'exactitude historique de la démarche ;

Le classement comme site historique: Lee Harvard est inscrit sur la liste nationale des sites historiques ;

Un guide gratuit, spécialisé dans la conservation des maisons du milieu du XXe siècle ;

Des conseils gratuits d'architecture et des prêts bonifiés aux propriétaires pour préserver l'environnement bâti ;

Le développement de programmes d'études dans les écoles secondaires, la formation des enseignants à l'histoire locale, l'encouragement de projets de recherche à l'attention des étudiants.

Mots-Clés: *Développement durable, patrimoine culturel, Afro-américains*