Prospects of Over-the-Rhine becoming an Appalachian ethnic enclave brightened in the late 1960s because of a surge of interest by a variety of outside parties. The passage of the federal Equal Opportunity Act in 1964 inaugurated a "war on poverty" in Cincinnati that prompted city officials to look favorably on proposals to do something about the inner-city poor, including those in Over-the-Rhine. It also gave Appalachian advocates a chance to conduct studies and develop programs to convince the city government that Over-the-Rhine should be officially designated as Appalachian turf, both to fight poverty and to promote an urban Appalachian identity among all classes of Appalachians, first in the metropolitan area and then nationally. This ambitious campaign failed in part because of competition from anti-poverty warriors who put class above ethnic consciousness, but more importantly because the Appalachianists, unlike African American community organizers in the West End, could not devise a compelling case for their cause.

The war on poverty in Over-the-Rhine focused initially on alleviating conditions without reference to ethnic issues. One emphasis fell on programs to offset the shortage of decent low-income dwelling units and especially to secure better accommodations for blacks who could not find
or afford housing elsewhere. The first of these consisted of a con­
centrated building code enforcement program that sent inspectors into 8,000 of the 8,800 dwelling units in the area, brought 4,200 units up to code, and yielded the demolition of 1,000 others. In addition, the city participated after 1968 in a crash federal program (Operation Rehabilitation) that provided subsidies and technical assistance for the renova­
tion by 1972 of 2,216 units in Over-the-Rhine for low-income tenants.1 And city council sought to reduce the cost of providing “standard” hous­
ing in Over-the-Rhine by creating an “experimental overlay” zoning dis­

tric in a small part of the neighborhood and by waiving building code regulations in the zone to reduce the cost of renovating residential units.2

The war on poverty also provided the impetus for the creation of sev­
eral private, class-oriented community action organizations in Over-the-Rhine that sought to help the poor in other ways. The first of these, the Uptown Basin Council, appeared in 1965 and aimed both to help poor people and to rehabilitate the neighborhood by lobbying for better health care and improved recreational facilities, establishing a blood bank, and assisting individual residents in obtaining social services from both public and private agencies.3 The Council also sponsored an inter­
denominational, interracial program that brought college students from five states into the neighborhood during the summer of 1966 to learn firsthand about the plight of inner-city residents and to help clean up and organize the neighborhood.4

A second community action program in Over-the-Rhine appeared in the fall of 1966. Like the Uptown Basin Council, it avoided an ethnic commitment and regarded the neighborhood as an enclave for the poor, both black and white. In this case a group of local organizers, residents, and social workers devised an agency called HUB (representing the spokes of a wheel reaching out from the axle into the neighborhood) to coordinate the work of various agencies in the area and to expedite the delivery of services. The Community Action Commission (CAC), the war on poverty’s administrative agency, soon took HUB under its wing and assigned special services funds to provide it with community organizing as well as social services foundations.5

The special services project gave the Appalachian advocates their first official recognition by including two of them among the individuals who designed the program.6 This group then established an ongoing
advisory committee composed of representatives from every community
council, block club, and service agency in HUB's target area (which in­
cluded the adjacent neighborhood of Mount Auburn). On their advice
HUB hired Over-the-Rhine residents to canvass the neighborhood for
clients, assess their needs, guide them through the network of available
social service and community organizing agencies, and organize them
into block clubs and tenant councils.

These HUB activities built the morale of Over-the-Rhine's poverty
warriors, including its Appalachian advocates, who expected to receive
an even larger role when they learned about the inclusion of Over-the-
Rhine in Cincinnati's application for a grant under the provisions of the
federal Model Cities Act of 1966, which offered federal funds to cities
interested in devising innovative ways to eliminate poverty. The act espe­
cially encouraged city governments to coordinate and concentrate in one
area a broad range of federally subsidized social welfare, educational, job
training, and community organizing and development programs.

These guidelines made it possible for cities to use ethnic consciousness
and pride programs in treating inner-city neighborhoods. Cincinnati's
application, however, approached the inner-city issue in terms of class by
pointing to the familiar problem of suburban flight by the city's white
middle class and the domination of the inner city by underprivileged and
unemployed people who lacked the power to control their future. These
developments, said the application, undermined the city's revenue base
and burdened it with additional expenses to take care of the inner-city
poor. They also explained why the city government had changed its mis­
ion from defining and meeting the needs of residents engaging people,
including the poor, in processes to define their own and their neighbor­
hoods' problems and to propose and implement solutions to them.

The application contained a lengthy catalog of potential programs
for this purpose but emphasized especially a participatory inner-city
planning effort that would involve Over-the-Rhine for the first time in
comprehensive neighborhood planning. Over-the-Rhine seemed a good
target for this treatment, argued the application, because it had once
been the home of "good, solid German middle-class residents" but now
ranked as "the 'cheaped out' section of the city." Crime, delinquency, and
"skid row type" alcoholics dominated the area, which also contained
more "pre-delinquent" and battered children than any neighborhood in
the city. In addition, said the application, “'hidden' oldsters’ huddled in single rooms, ill, undernourished, preyed on for their social security checks, and unknown to social and health service agencies.¹²

The description of Over-the-Rhine included rhetoric that pointed to Appalachians as a special people with problems peculiar to them. It described the area as the city's premier “port of entry” for migrating Appalachian whites who now lived in a “closed” society with different customs, values, and habits than city-born and -bred people. Many refused to seek social and geographic mobility, large numbers of parents failed to participate in school affairs, and “Southern migrant mothers” balked at bringing their children to early childhood education programs. In addition, according to the application, Appalachian young adults seemed virulently racist, hanging out in the streets and mixing it up with blacks so often that the police worried about a race riot erupting from one of the frequent brawls.¹³

Yet the application’s discussions of planning for who might live in a revitalized Over-the-Rhine contained no reference to an Appalachian ethnic component. The section on housing, for example, proposed the mixing of land uses, races, socioeconomic groups, and types and forms of housing through both redevelopment and rehabilitation programs, including historic preservation projects, especially in the Music Hall and Washington Park area. Another section argued for the establishment of an even broader range of services for the unemployed on the grounds that Over-the-Rhine would remain for a long time a poverty neighborhood. Still another part of the application suggested that residents themselves should decide what kind of people should live in the area.¹⁴

The absence in the Model Cities application of the legitimacy of Appalachian-ness as an anti-poverty tool discouraged Cincinnati's urban Appalachian advocates. But the reference to neighborhood autonomy gave them hope because community control became the keystone of Cincinnati’s inner-city planning program under Model Cities auspices. The urban Appalachian advocates as a consequence launched a drive to secure official sanction for their effort to turn Over-the-Rhine into an Appalachian enclave. This campaign drew on methods that had proved so successful in gaining for militant blacks the attention and deference of both local and federal authorities. The strategy included a statement that Appalachians, like African Americans, comprised a distinct category of
oppressed people who nonetheless possessed the capacity to become autonomous with a self-defined way of life and the will and ability to define and solve their own problems.

The urban Appalachian campaign attracted considerable local attention and support for several reasons. In the first place, Cincinnati's population contained a large number of second-, third-, and fourth-generation Appalachians scattered in neighborhoods throughout the metropolitan area. Second, the current migration seemed likely to persist. Third, the contemporaneous rediscovery of Appalachia itself as a region set apart by its desperate poverty helped to revive nationally a dormant interest in Appalachian-ness that reinforced the notion of migrant Appalachians in inner cities as a peculiar people. Indeed, these factors led one confident and assertive urban Appalachian activist to boast that the establishment of Over-the-Rhine as an urban Appalachian center would represent the first step in the ultimate recognition of Appalachian migrants as the legitimate inheritors of Cincinnati's inner city generally.

In this optimistic context Cincinnati's Appalachian advocates built their case for the necessity and feasibility of developing an urban Appalachian identity and the appropriateness of anchoring it in Over-the-Rhine. They pointed particularly to the apparent inertness among Appalachians in Over-the-Rhine—not only their poverty, poor health, and low levels of attendance and achievement in the city's schools, but also their disinterest in the social and civic activism and ethnic self-consciousness that seemed so characteristic of inner-city blacks. But the urban Appalachian advocates depicted the migrants as malleable, for contemporary social theory held that the decision to migrate itself, whether by Appalachians or blacks, represented a self-conscious first step toward the abandonment of old ways and a sign that mountaineers possessed the capacity to define and solve their own problems, including that of establishing a satisfying identity leading to satisfactory behavior in an urban context.

In this perspective, the problem of inertia seemed responsive to a properly framed stimulus, a situation that suggested to the Appalachianists the utility of reminding migrants of aspects of their mountain culture that might bolster their pride in themselves as a distinct people.
In this way the urban Appalachian advocates hoped both to catch the attention of migrants and to create a foundation for the development of an urban discipline, the will and ability to acquire education and jobs, build families, and become social and civic activists as part of the process of defining their own life styles. The Appalachian advocates hoped to demonstrate that both migrants and suburban Appalachians could retain a sense, but not necessarily the substance, of their Appalachian-ness, and that they could together exercise that sense in Over-the-Rhine by studying and celebrating Appalachian history, listening to mountain music, and practicing or purchasing the products of mountain arts and crafts.

Michael Maloney, a community organizer who had grown up in eastern Kentucky, took the lead during the early 1970s in selling the urban Appalachian idea. Maloney had trained as a Catholic seminarian, volunteered in the Main Street Bible Center in Over-the-Rhine, and cut his teeth as a community organizer with HUB. Now he began to build the institutional infrastructure for the urban Appalachian movement by starting an organization called United Appalachia Cincinnati to promote ethnic solidarity among all classes of urban Appalachians, outer city as well as inner city. The organization’s bylaws made this explicit by committing its members to the promotion of “the self-awareness and self-activity of the Appalachian people in Cincinnati, to encourage our urban institutions to respond to the needs and interests of Appalachians, and to show the community at large the power and beauty of our culture.”

Maloney and his recruits also decided to push their cause by making Over-the-Rhine the anchor of urban Appalachian-ness, for which purpose they started a variety of additional organizations, some of them housed in the neighborhood and all of them active there. One of these, the Appalachian Identity Center, concerned itself principally with the problems of young Appalachians and aimed to empower them to live freely as urban individuals. Activists at the Identity Center thought that excessive high school dropout rates, high levels of unemployment and juvenile delinquency, and turf wars between blacks and Appalachian young people signaled a crisis stemming from the alienation of Appalachian youngsters from both urban society and their own roots. As a consequence the Identity Center took the form of a drop-in facility with cultural identity programs to lure young Appalachians off the streets so
they could “be affirmed in their own identity, then moved toward mean­
ingful contact with blacks, and with institutions in the city.”

While starting the Identity Center, leaders of United Appalachia Cin­
cinnati also pulled together a coalition for the purpose of creating an agency to conduct research on the Cincinnati Appalachian community and to advocate its interests to the public. This group persuaded the Cincinnati Human Relations Commission (CHRC) to set up a meeting of the mayor, members of the Cincinnati Board of Education, and representa­
tives of the Model Cities program, the Junior League, the Catholic Hu­man Relations Commission, and the various Appalachian organizations to explore the proposal. The groups balked at the idea of creating an in­dependent operation, but did agree to establish within the CHRC an Ap­palachian Committee to study inner-city Appalachians and to devise solutions to their problems, particularly the prevalence of negative ste­reotypes about the characteristics and behavior of Appalachians gener­ally and inner-city Appalachian residents in particular.

Some members of the Junior League wanted to do more. They de­cided to take the lead in educating migrants and other Cincinnatians about the positive aspects of Appalachian culture and to launch the cam­paign from Over-the-Rhine. League members first organized an Appa­lachian festival, a presentation of mountain culture through the display of handicrafts in Music Hall, then established the Appalachian Com­munity Development Association to “provide a variety of mechanisms through which the broad-based goals of social, cultural and economic development can be achieved.” Association members decided to concen­trate particularly on “the improvement of the migrant’s self-image,” first by assisting in the planning of another festival in Over-the-Rhine and then by taking over full responsibility for the event and making it a yearly affair.

To supplement this annual promotion of urban Appalachian-ness in Over-the-Rhine the CHRC’s Appalachian Committee established an Appalachian studies program in a “Heritage Room” in temporary quar­ters at Washington Park Elementary School. Staffed first by a student in­tern from the urban affairs division of the College of Community Services at the University of Cincinnati, the program involved parents, community organizers, and school personnel in the presentation of
workshops on quilting, mining, whittling, agriculture, and music. By the end of the first year children and volunteers had organized a small library of books and slides and produced an exhibit of Appalachian culture artifacts.²⁴ These small successes encouraged the Appalachian studies proponents to search for and secure a permanent home for the Heritage Room, from which they launched an extraordinary effort to get around the problem of the rising proportion of African Americans in the Over-the-Rhine population. They did this by defining blacks from Appalachia as Appalachian rather than African American and by launching a racially integrated program to validate that contention. Activities at the new site included not only cultural studies but also courses on community organization and general education, public forums on social and civic issues, and efforts to involve parents and students in addressing such problems as drug use, truancy, and dropping out of school. In addition, the staff provided legal assistance for tenants in their conflicts with landlords and aided residents in satisfying their social service needs.

These varied programs earned the lavish praise of the Heritage Room organizers. The institution, they claimed, demonstrated that blacks and whites could be brought together around the idea of urban Appalachian identity, an accomplishment of which they seemed most proud. But they stressed, too, that the Heritage Room experience validated the idea of linking community organizing to ethnic pride campaigns and that even the most desperately poor people could be reached by and would respond to the right combination of cultural, educational, and social service activities.²⁵

Building on these successes the Appalachian advocates established in 1974 an independent research and public relations agency in Over-the-Rhine. Called the Urban Appalachian Council (UAC), it devoted its research, advocacy, and cultural affirmation activities to developing a distinctive ethnic identity that would persuade other urban institutions to deliver culturally specific services to Appalachians. The UAC particularly stressed the ineffectiveness of traditional casework methods in dealing with urban Appalachians, insisted that social workers should understand and empathize with Appalachian culture, and prepared a working paper on social welfare practice (written by Maloney) that described
urban Appalachians as ineffectual in “collective action, personalistic when others want functional relationships, [and] traditionalistic and fundamentalistic in an age of pragmatism and relativism.”

The process of creating organizations and programs around the idea of urban Appalachian-ness culminated with a systematic attempt to understand the origins and persistence of poverty among inner-city Appalachians and to spread the information to a broad audience. In January 1974, Maloney, working then as a research specialist for the Cincinnati Human Relations Commission, published *The Social Areas of Cincinnati*, a “scientific” mapping of the quality of life in all the city's neighborhoods as the first step toward the development of a comprehensive plan for the provision of appropriate social services for each neighborhood. Maloney argued that the municipal government should develop such a plan, and he proposed “a Human Services Information system” to provide “mechanisms to determine need, to monitor programs, and to measure both efficiency and effectiveness.” As a basis for this, he attempted to determine patterns in the distribution of twenty variables—including race, poverty, housing, employment, education, and ethnicity—that defined both the quality of life in the neighborhoods and the special characteristics, including ethnic ones, of each neighborhood.

Maloney used this system to divide the city's forty-four neighborhoods into four quartiles and listed Over-the-Rhine among the thirteen most dependent on social welfare services. He also noted the interest of the Cincinnati Human Relations Commission in ensuring the distribution of services to “all elements of the population,” a premise from which he argued that Appalachians should be recognized as a distinct ethnic group and that the problems of poor Appalachians ought to rank with poverty and racism as top priorities for Cincinnati's social welfare agencies. He suggested, moreover, that this would be a long-term task because poor Appalachians constituted a majority of the population not only in Over-the-Rhine but also in five other neighborhoods well removed from it.

By 1974, then, activists had built a variety of institutions to organize and represent urban Appalachians and had promoted the idea of urban Appalachians as a distinct and persisting ethnic group in the metropolitan area. They had mobilized white community organizers and activists
who could no longer participate in the "black power" phase of the civil rights movement of the late 1960s and recruited others who legitimated the idea of urban Appalachians among a broad range of Cincinnatians. In their patronage of the Appalachian festival and support for the growing interest in bluegrass music, particularly at a nightclub called Aunt Maudie's Kitchen in Over-the-Rhine, these Cincinnatians indicated their appreciation of Appalachian culture and became willing consumers of Appalachian music and handicrafts and supporters of special programs to make Over-the-Rhine the center of urban Appalachian cultural life.

Nonetheless, the prospects for making Over-the-Rhine the "mother neighborhood for the Appalachian community," as Maloney put it, dimmed in the mid-1970s, due in large part to the continued increase in the number of blacks and a decrease in the number of Appalachians in the neighborhood. One Appalachian activist attributed this setback to Operation Rehabilitation, the housing renovation program funded by HUD beginning in the late 1960s. Landlords in this program, he claimed, preferred black tenants to white Appalachians, a situation aggravated by federal housing officials who refused to track down former white occupants as their rehabilitated apartments reopened. Maloney, too, held landlords responsible for the black insurgency, but he also indicted city government, which, he asserted, consciously or not pursued policies that displaced white Appalachians from Over-the-Rhine.

That may have been the case, but clearly the city government in 1974 neither acknowledged nor accepted the idea of making Over-the-Rhine the mother neighborhood for Cincinnati's Appalachians, a failure on the part of Maloney and his allies that may be best understood when compared to the position of blacks. Appalachian activists, like their black counterparts, lobbied city officials and organized demonstrations at city hall, but they could not assume that the white power structure feared Appalachians and could be intimidated by aggressive public confrontations. Moreover, Appalachian activists could not, like blacks, draw on a long history of experience in Cincinnati that stretched back into the early nineteenth century and that stressed not only their oppression but also their endurance in building a lively early-twentieth-century ghetto. Thus the Appalachian claim as the rightful inheritor of the late-twentieth-century inner city, or at least a part of it, did not carry the same
authority as similar claims advanced by blacks. And the existence of several small and scattered Appalachian enclaves gave them no concentrated political base, a problem exacerbated by the rising proportion of blacks in Over-the-Rhine.\textsuperscript{33}

In this perspective, then, the drive to make Over-the-Rhine the city's Appalachian mother neighborhood faced long odds. And the prospects looked even grimmer in 1974 when city council adopted a housing policy based on the welfare of the whole city that intended to eliminate homogeneous neighborhoods defined in either class or ethnic terms. That policy stemmed from a complaint in 1971 by the Avondale Neighborhood Association that the location of forty-eight public housing units in North Avondale would contribute to racial segregation by bringing more blacks into the racially integrated neighborhood and would also bring even more children into the neighborhood's already crowded schools.\textsuperscript{34} City council responded by proposing the establishment of a "comprehensive strategy for the development of housing resources for all groups, and household sizes" but expressed particular concern for the problem of low- and moderate-income housing. To work out the details of the strategy the city manager appointed a large and broadly based Working Review Committee on Housing and hired Anthony Downs, a Chicagoan and a nationally prominent consultant on urban problems, to work with it.\textsuperscript{35}

As the Committee on Housing took up its assignment, the Nixon administration decided to encourage racial residential integration and the scattering of low-income residents by mandating the dispersal of federally subsidized low- and moderate-income housing. In this context Downs and the Committee on Housing decided to develop ways of achieving a balance of racial and income groups in all neighborhoods of the city, including inner-city ones, with a plan that mandated both displacement of some poor white and black people from their neighborhoods and the racial and class integration of prosperous white neighborhoods in the outer city.

Downs's program consisted of three parts. The first included a moratorium on the creation of subsidized units in the inner city, incentives to encourage low- and moderate-income residents to move out of inner-city neighborhoods, and a program of demolition and construction to attract middle- and upper-income residents into the inner city. The second part
included other proposals to make inner-city neighborhoods attractive to middle- and upper-income residents who now feared to live there, proposals that precluded the creation of "predominantly black new housing projects in or near the downtown area" while supporting the creation of predominantly white but integrated housing. The third part of the strategy called for the administration of welfare programs to prevent large numbers or high percentages of welfare families with children from concentrating on any one block or in any one school.  

City council responded to these propositions warily. It adopted a resolution encouraging but not mandating the development of balance in neighborhood housing, "including efforts to attract middle and upper income households into central core areas," but without passing legislation of any sort for the implementation of the policy in the city as a whole or in any of its neighborhoods. The compromise brought the city in line with the federal government's dispersal policy but created a dilemma. The resolution not only favored balance for the welfare of the whole city but also restated city council's commitment to dealing with neighborhoods through processes of maximum feasible participation for their residents, processes likely to yield neighborhood programs and plans antithetical to the idea of achieving balance. And in 1974 the Model Cities program in Over-the-Rhine stood just one year short of producing a comprehensive maximum feasible participation plan for the future of the neighborhood, a plan that sought to place control of Over-the-Rhine securely in the hands of its poor and increasingly black population.