

# OHIO VALLEY HISTORY

*A Collaboration of The Filson Historical Society, Cincinnati Museum Center, and the University of Cincinnati.*

VOLUME 5 • NUMBER 3 • FALL 2005



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*Ohio Valley History* (ISSN 746-3472) is published in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Louisville, Kentucky, by Cincinnati Museum Center and The Filson Historical Society. Periodical postage paid at Cincinnati, Ohio, with an additional entry at Louisville, Kentucky.

Postmaster send address changes to The Filson Historical Society, 1310 S. Third Street,

Louisville, Kentucky, 40208.

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*Ohio Valley History* is a collaboration of The Filson Historical Society, Cincinnati Museum Center, and the Department of History, University of Cincinnati.

Cincinnati Museum Center and The Filson Historical Society are private non-profit organizations supported almost entirely by gifts, grants, sponsorships, admission and membership fees.

Memberships of Cincinnati History Museum at Cincinnati Museum Center or The Filson Historical Society include a subscription to *Ohio Valley*

*History*. Back issues are \$8.00.

For more information on Cincinnati Museum Center, including membership, visit [www.cincymuseum.org](http://www.cincymuseum.org) or call 513-287-7000 or 1-800-733-2077.

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# OHIO VALLEY HISTORY

Volume 5, Number 3, Fall 2005

A Journal of the History and Culture of the Ohio Valley and the Upper South, published in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Louisville, Kentucky, by Cincinnati Museum Center and The Filson Historical Society.

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*Cover: Cumberland Gap, ca. 1862. The Filson Historical Society*

# A Whole New Ball Game: *Sports Stadiums and Urban Renewal in Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis, 1950-1970*

AARON COWAN

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In the latter years of the 1960s, a strange phenomenon occurred in the cities of Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis. Massive white round objects, dozens of acres in size, began appearing in these cities' downtowns, generating a flurry of excitement and anticipation among their residents. According to one expert, these unfamiliar structures resembled transport ships for "a Martian army [that] decided to invade Earth."<sup>1</sup> The gigantic objects were not, of course, flying saucers but sports stadiums. They were the work not of alien invaders, but of the cities' own leaders, who hoped these unusual and futuristic-looking structures would be the key to bringing their struggling cities back to life.

At the end of the Second World War, government and business leaders in the cities of Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and St. Louis recognized that their cities, once proud icons of America's industrial and commercial might, were dying. Shrouded in a haze of sulphureous smoke, their riparian transportation advantages long obsolete, each city was losing population by the thousands while crime rates skyrocketed. Extensive flooding, ever the curse of river cities, had wreaked havoc on all three cities' property values during 1936 and 1937, compounding economic difficulties ushered in with the Great Depression. While the industrial mobilization of World War II had brought some relief, these cities' leaders felt less than sanguine about the postwar future.<sup>2</sup> In 1944, the *Wall Street Journal* rated Pittsburgh a "Class D" city with a bleak future and little promise for economic growth. In the immediate postwar years, downtown Pittsburgh property values as a whole were dropping by ten million dollars per year.<sup>3</sup> Cincinnati experienced a similar fate. Many of its downtown properties lost more than forty percent of their tax value in the years from 1924 to 1943.<sup>4</sup>

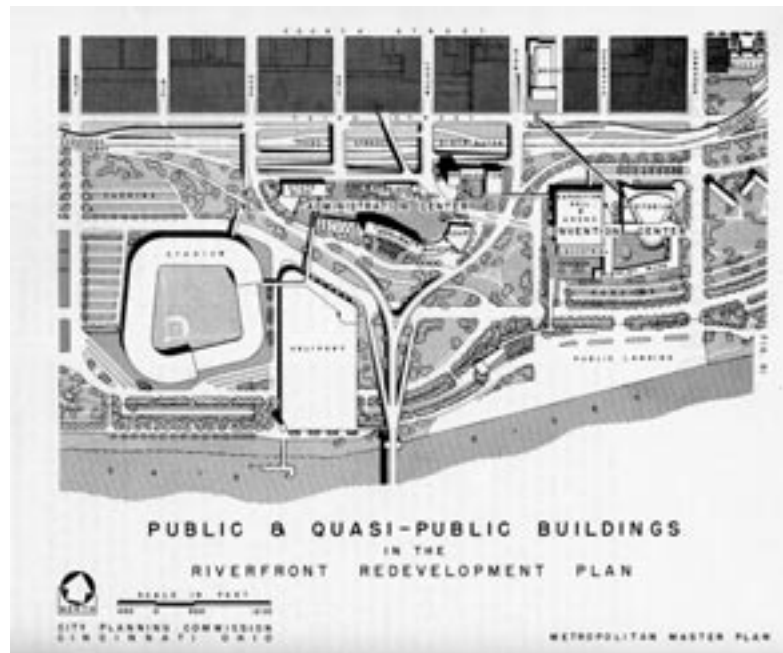
In many ways, it seemed that the era of the industrial river city was



*Riverfront Stadium in  
Cincinnati. Cincinnati  
Museum Center, Cincinnati  
Historical Society Library*

over; the suburbs reigned triumphant as the new haven of the middle class. Perhaps it would seem only logical to abandon the old downtowns as obsolete artifacts of a bygone era and turn each city's financial and commercial energies outward. But, the river cities' leaders could not do this. Rather than seeing in their dying riverfronts the remains of the cities' past, local leaders saw hope for their future.

Between 1950 and 1970 all three cities remade their riverfronts by replacing dilapidated industrial and commercial facilities with parks, convention centers, and—the focus of this study—sports stadiums. All three cities built remarkably similar multi-sport stadiums in their downtowns during the latter years of the 1960s. Though these gigantic round structures have been reviled as sterile concrete “ashtrays” by architectural critics and criticized as publicly financed boondoggles by economists, they were originally hailed as saviors for their struggling cities.



*The 1948 Cincinnati Metropolitan Master Plan showed a new baseball park on the riverfront, Cincinnati Museum Center, Cincinnati Historical Society Library*

tion in the historiography of urban renewal. Because these stadiums have been insufficiently studied, scholars have underestimated their fundamental importance to each city's efforts to remake itself in the postindustrial United States.<sup>5</sup> This study seeks to correct this oversight and demonstrate that the downtown stadium was central to the renewal of each city and served as a symbol of the effort to re-attract the middle-class family to downtown.

The relatively sparse study of stadiums also obscures changing concepts about the purpose of downtowns in the decentralized postwar city. Each of the three cities studied here sought salvation in remaking their downtowns as centers of tourism and recreation. Urban leaders invested in projects such as parks, convention centers, and coliseums to make downtowns more appealing to an increasingly recreation-minded middle class. Such projects served the dual purpose of clearing out “blighted” areas of cities while making the central city attractive and (hopefully) economically productive. Thus, the story of the construction and planning of these river cities’ “cookie-cutter”

**D**espite their massive size and the extensive effort required to plan, design, and build them, the so-called “cookie-cutter” stadiums of Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis have received relatively little atten-

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stadiums may help us understand them as major elements of each city's urban renewal. It may also modify existing arguments about the rebirth of downtowns as places of recreation.<sup>6</sup> Finally, and perhaps most significantly, this article suggests that the design of these stadiums embodied the ideals of their planners and the middle-class suburbanites. Although they rose in the heart of each city, all three stadiums were designed to separate visitors from their respective downtowns, insuring that suburban fans would feel comfortable and protected in what they perceived as a crime-ridden inner city.

**W**hen considering the problems city leaders in Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis faced in the postwar years, one might expect that a sports stadium would have been a low priority. Pittsburgh faced a massive air pollution problem, even as its economic position as one of the world's great industrial cities began to slip. St. Louis lost more than 100,000 people in the 1950s alone and still faced a serious housing crisis in its inner city. Indeed, all three cities did embark on efforts to address these pressing social and economic problems, with varying levels of success.<sup>7</sup> And yet, even in the earliest postwar years, city leaders spoke of a sports stadium as a possible "anchor" to the renewal of their respective downtowns. Cincinnati's Master Plan of 1948, a comprehensive blueprint for remaking the city, envisioned a stadium in nearly the exact location it was built more than twenty years later.<sup>8</sup> And proposals for a new St. Louis stadium had been around since 1935.<sup>9</sup> After the war, in a time of apparent fiscal, political, and social crisis, why did city leaders even consider something as seemingly trivial as a sports stadium? An examination of each city's stadium planning process reveals the complex network of decisions and compromises that led each to pursue the construction of a multi-purpose downtown sports stadium.

Although Pittsburgh's Three Rivers Stadium was the last of the stadiums to open, Pittsburgh served as a model—to cities like it, anyway—for urban renewal in the postwar period. The planning and construction of the city's stadium came near the end of the city's postwar urban renewal commonly known as the "Renaissance." Beginning in 1944, the city embarked on a renewal program that included comprehensive smoke control legislation, construction of the Greater Pittsburgh Airport, and remaking the downtown skyline with steel-and-glass skyscrapers. The principal agency through which Pittsburgh's renewal was directed was the Allegheny Conference on Community Development (ACCD), a group of the city's corporate leaders headed by the massive influence—both capital and political—of the Richard K. Mellon family. In the process of remaking Pittsburgh's landscape, the Mellons (and other members of the ACCD) sought to reposition the industrial city to be competitive in a technology-driven post-industrial economy.<sup>10</sup>

Central to the ACCD's plan for making the city a center of technology was the expansion of the city's universities into major research institutions.

To that end, the Board of Trustees of the University of Pittsburgh, chaired by Richard Mellon's son-in-law, began to seek ways to expand the university's facilities. University Chancellor Edward Litchfield outlined the crucial role the university's expansion would play in a 1964 speech titled "The University and the Economy." Litchfield argued that the growth of the university was crucial to the city because "the institutions making up the education-research-health complex . . . are not only participants but prime movers in shaping the economy of the region they serve."<sup>11</sup> Because the University of Pittsburgh was (and is) an urban campus, space for new buildings was tight. Forbes Field, home of the Pirates baseball club since 1909, was located immediately adjacent to the university and seemed the perfect place for new campus growth. Such an expansion would obviously require the construction of new sports facilities for the city.<sup>12</sup>

**T**he ACCD formed a subcommittee to study possible locations for such a stadium, as well as outline potential characteristics and uses of the new structure. By 1962, the ACCD, the city of Pittsburgh, and Allegheny County had reached an agreement on a location in the neighborhood of Northside, just across the Allegheny River from downtown Pittsburgh. The area was occupied by abandoned railroad tracks and deteriorated warehouses. But it also was home to sixty-three families. A federal urban renewal grant of \$14,400,000 and grants of \$5,500,000 each from the city and county provided funds for land acquisition, demolition, land preparation and construction of parking lots and access roads.<sup>13</sup>

In 1964, City Council authorized the newly formed Stadium Authority to borrow \$28 million from local banks and issue forty-year revenue bonds to repay that amount after construction had been completed. By mid-1966, City Council had successfully negotiated forty-year leases with both the Pirates and Steelers. After numerous delays and adjustments to reduce costs, construction finally began on April 25, 1968. Costs for construction rose almost in proportion to the structure itself, and strikes by workers on the project delayed the opening even further.<sup>14</sup> Finally on July 16, 1970, with parking lots unfinished and access bridges and highways still not connected, Three Rivers Stadium opened. The final cost of the stadium would be more than \$40 million.<sup>15</sup>

Remaking the St. Louis riverfront began in earnest during the 1930s, when the National Park Service announced plans to build a national park and memorial to westward expansion on the riverfront. This plan culminated in the famous Gateway Arch, approved in 1948 and completed in 1965. Announcement of the National Park Service's plan motivated city officials to rebuild the surrounding downtown. In 1953, civic and corporate leaders collaborated to found Civic Progress, Inc., which became the driving force behind the city's subsequent urban renewal for decades to come. Modeled after Pittsburgh's Allegheny Conference on Corporate Development, the group was headed by

a board of directors made up of eight of the city's most prominent corporate executives.

While ideas for a new stadium had been proposed as early as the 1930s, serious consideration and planning began in late 1958. Charles L. Farris, executive director of the city's Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority, studied plans for the city's renewal and decided that, despite the magnificent Gateway Arch and national park, something else was needed to draw people downtown.<sup>16</sup> Farris called a meeting and pitched the idea of a downtown sports stadium to a group of representatives from Civic Progress, Inc., the Cardinals baseball team, and the City Plan Commission. All parties in attendance gave enthusiastic support to the idea. The Cardinals wanted to leave the rapidly deteriorating ghetto surrounding Sportsman's Park, and the stadium matched the goals of the city's renewal leaders perfectly—i.e., clear “blight” out and bring in dollars.<sup>17</sup> Cooperation between baseball and urban renewal interests was made easier by the fact that August Busch, owner of the Cardinals since 1953, also sat on the Board of Directors of Civic Progress.

From the beginning, St. Louis stadium supporters insisted that the structure be built with private capital. After voter approval of a \$6 million municipal bond issue to construct access streets, street lighting, and other necessary infrastructure, Civic Center Redevelopment Corporation (CCRC), a newly formed sub-group of Civic Progress, secured \$20 million in private subscriptions. These funds were combined with a \$31 million loan from the Equitable Life Assurance Society to raise the \$51 million needed for Phase I of the proposed project. While St. Louis did not have such a commanding source of capital as the Mellon family in Pittsburgh, St. Louis' corporate citizens played a central role in the construction of Busch Stadium and in shaping the new city as a whole. An editorial published in May 1964 in the *Globe-Democrat* proudly declared that the city's stadium and other projects “show, for all the world to see, that a city can rehabilitate itself without incessantly running to Washington, the State Capitol, or City Hall, for the remedy to every ache and pain.”<sup>18</sup> Under the leadership of these business interests, the stadium and four adjacent parking garages were completed in 1966.

The idea for a riverfront sports stadium in Cincinnati originated with the



*Forbes Field, ca. 1940. Older ballparks were integrated into the urban fabric; ballpark patrons intermingled with passersby on the street. Library and Archives Division, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh PA*

1948 Master Plan, which was sponsored by a group of Cincinnati businessmen known as the Citizens Development Committee.<sup>19</sup> A preliminary study published by the City Planning Commission in 1946 had argued that the city required a new ballpark because Crosley Field, the city's current ballpark, had the smallest capacity of any park in the National League and lacked adequate parking. The study also called the area surrounding Crosley, a primarily African American neighborhood known as the West End, "particularly unfavorable in view of the increasing trend toward night games." Based on a city Convention and Visitors' Bureau estimate indicating that Cincinnati lost over a million dollars annually for lack of tourism and recreational facilities, the authors of the 1948 plan claimed that improved recreational and convention facilities would be an economic boon to the city.<sup>20</sup>



*Aerial view of Crosley Field. Cincinnati, OH. Cincinnati Museum Center, Cincinnati Historical Society Library*

Momentum for building a stadium lagged for several years afterward, as the city sought to address more pressing postwar problems. By the mid-1950s, however, city leaders began to fear that the inadequacies of Crosley Field would lead to loss of the Cincinnati Reds to another city. In 1957, the Hamilton County Commissioners established a Stadium Citizens' Advisory Committee to explore the feasibility of a county-built stadium. This committee decided that the best solution to keeping the Reds in Cincinnati was not a new stadium but expansion of parking around Crosley Field, funded by the city. The city agreed to construct 2,600 additional parking spaces providing the Reds signed an agreement to stay in Cincinnati through the end of 1962. Reds owner Powel Crosley privately confided to friends that he never intended to move the Reds, but he fostered uncertainty in the press in order to pressure municipal authorities. With the parking problem at least temporarily addressed, city leaders put the stadium proposal on a back burner as they embarked on the planning and construction of a convention center in 1960.<sup>21</sup>

**I**n the spring of 1961, Powel Crosley died unexpectedly, bringing a time of chaos and uncertainty to the Reds franchise. William DeWitt, a native of St. Louis, purchased the team in March, 1962 and again resurrected the call for a new stadium. Debates about location and financing dragged on for several years. City officials found a publicly financed stadium a hard sell to taxpayers; and new Reds owner DeWitt strongly objected to plans for a stadium located on the riverfront. An end to the deadlock finally

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came in December 1965 when it was announced that Cincinnati was one of eight cities being considered for a National Football League expansion team. This was a major step forward because a two-team lease made a new stadium financially feasible. Cincinnati mayor Gene Ruehlmann and other city leaders recognized the importance of keeping the Reds in Cincinnati, but knew that a single sports team would be unable to produce the kind of revenues necessary to justify the construction of a publicly financed stadium. The city's Chamber of Commerce began aggressively pursuing the franchise, marketing the city's advantages to the NFL while trying to grease the wheels on stadium construction. When owner Bill DeWitt still refused to sign a thirty-year lease on the proposed stadium because of objections to its design and location, a group of twelve leading businessmen organized themselves as "617, Inc." and purchased the team in 1966.<sup>22</sup> While most of the members of 617, Inc. had little interest in managing a baseball team, they realized the importance of keeping the Reds in Cincinnati and moving the stadium project forward.

**W**ith friendly leadership in place and the NFL franchise secured by early 1967, completion of Cincinnati's Riverfront Stadium was assured. The stadium's cost (ultimately over \$44 million) was financed by issuing public bonds to be paid off by a twenty-five cent surcharge on game tickets, as well as a portion of parking and concessions revenues. After several delays, cost overruns and labor strikes, the stadium finally opened on June 30, 1970. In that same year, the stadium hosted baseball's All-Star Game as well as the World Series. A common pattern of leadership emerges out of the alphabet soup of committees, conferences, and authorities of each of these efforts. In all three cities, business and financial leaders outside the professional teams' ownership drove stadium building efforts forward. In Pittsburgh, for example, nearly all downtown renewal came to be linked in some way to the Mellon family. And the city's Chamber of Commerce publicly supported the stadium, asserting that loss of the city's sports teams "would mean a substantial loss . . . to business in general."<sup>23</sup> Such business community leadership was not unusual in urban renewal projects undertaken during the postwar period. Historian John Teaford has demonstrated that in almost every aging American city during the 1950s, corporate leaders served as "one of the principal engines of the renewal crusade." This effort moved beyond traditional roles of philanthropy and boosterism and involved direct participation in city planning and government.<sup>24</sup> Widespread support for a stadium among businessmen in each city suggests both desperation produced by decay in the urban fabric and confidence in the power of stadiums to draw people back to downtowns.

Leaders in each of the three cities pursued similar solutions to very similar

problems. All three cities were in serious danger (real or perceived) of losing their professional sports teams due to the inadequacy of their old ballparks. In an era when new sports stadiums regularly seated 50,000 or more, small parks like Crosley Field, Forbes Field and Sportsman's Park—each with a maximum capacity of approximately 30,000—could hardly provide the gate revenues that major league teams considered necessary. With cities of the “Sunbelt” and other burgeoning metropolises seeking the prestige of major league sports franchises, team owners in Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis found themselves besieged with attractive offers to relocate their teams to new cities with larger stadiums. Before getting the expansion Mets in 1962, New York boosters had attempted to lure both the Reds and Pirates. The Reds also listened to proposals from San Diego city officials.<sup>25</sup>

**F**ear of losing “major-league” status among America’s cities drove city leaders to action. Indeed, as much as the loss of a team might hurt a city economically, the effect on a city’s reputation could be just as damaging.<sup>26</sup> In a word, loss of a professional sports franchise amounted to a tacit admission that a city was dying. As one commentator has noted, “Without a Major League team and the stadium to match it, a city simply does not count.”<sup>27</sup> Pittsburgh’s progressive mayor David L. Lawrence echoed this sentiment at a public hearing on the proposed stadium on December 11, 1963. Lawrence asserted the Steelers and Pirates left the city as they had threatened, “community morale would be struck a devastating blow.” “Although it may not be clearly recognizable,” he continued, “there is a distinct relationship between the caliber of a city’s sports enterprise and the caliber of its educational and health institutions,” as well as “its business structure, its recreational and entertainment facilities.”<sup>28</sup> Leaders in other cities concurred and believed that their aging ballparks threatened to undermine their fragile position as “major league” cities. “Old-time baseball towns like Cincinnati and Washington,” wrote a Cincinnati columnist, “have suddenly become aware that they could wake up some morning and find their own teams missing if they don’t act. The axis on which a franchise shift turns is the availability of a modern big-league park, with plenty of parking space.”<sup>29</sup>

Older urban ballparks had several limitations that made them ill-suited for the postwar recreation-oriented city. As indicated by the columnist above, parking was a common problem in all three cities. Each city’s ballpark had been constructed in the first decade of the twentieth century, when most patrons walked or took a streetcar to the ballpark. The parks were built into urban neighborhoods, and existing streets and lot dimensions often dictated their shape and configuration. Thus, space was at a premium and little or no automobile parking was provided in original plans. In the 1910s and 1920s, those few but increasing number of fans who drove cars to the ballpark could

find parking on adjacent streets. As early as the 1930s, parking became an increasingly difficult problem and by the 1950s had reached crisis proportions.<sup>30</sup>

Besides changing modes of transportation, neighborhoods surrounding the cities' ballparks had also undergone dramatic transformations. The problem of crime presented serious challenges for sports teams in each of these cities, and across the nation. Baseball had seen a serious drop in attendance in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>31</sup> This loss was in part

a result of the deteriorating inner city, which left centrally located ballparks surrounded by neighborhoods that made many middle-class fans uncomfortable. Fears about pickpockets, muggings, or even more violent crime were quickly becoming a standard part of attending games at old city ballparks. An article in a 1962 issue of *Sports Illustrated* titled "Keep Your Eye on the Ball . . . And a Hand on Your Wallet" warned readers about a "growing fraternity of thieves who are devoting more and more of their larcenous attentions" to sports fans. A columnist in *The Sporting News* decried the increase in sports-related violent

crime and declared that "complete protection for the public had better come fast. People will not risk a beating or worse to watch baseball or any other sport . . . a crackdown can't come too soon."<sup>32</sup>

Crime was an especially pressing problem at Cincinnati's Crosley Field, located in the city's poor and predominantly African American West End. Cincinnati Mayor Eugene Ruehlmann described the West End as "a part of town where you paid a kid to watch your car and still worried about your tires getting slashed."<sup>33</sup> Reports of muggings, vandalism and theft, and complaints about illegal parking rackets around Crosley Field became regular features in the city's newspapers.<sup>34</sup> Crime was also a serious concern in the neighborhood of St. Louis's Sportsman's Park, just north of downtown. A college student attending a night game there in 1964 was stabbed to death, a crime the national press blamed on a "teenage wolfpack." Forbes Field, located in close proximity to the University of Pittsburgh, had less of a crime problem, but violence during a youth admission day in 1964 led to multiple injuries and three teens were arrested after assaulting another youth in a ball-park restroom. This event drew the attention of a *Sporting News* columnist who cited it as proof that "hoodlums have no qualms about destroying property



*New stadium in Cincinnati under construction. Cincinnati Museum Center, Cincinnati Historical Society Library*

and roughing up spectators.”<sup>35</sup> It was rapidly becoming clear to team owners and city leaders that fears of violent crime could have serious consequences in the form of decreased attendance.

The rapid growth of professional football also complicated the sports picture in all three cities. It was one thing to keep the Pirates in Pittsburgh, for example, but now the city also had to consider accommodating the increasingly popular Steelers as well. St. Louis had drawn the professional football Cardinals franchise from Chicago in 1961 and feared losing it to another city if it could not make good on its plan to build a multipurpose stadium. In Cincinnati, the possibility of attracting an NFL franchise made the stadium a reality; a lease from only one professional sports team would have made the stadium financially unworkable. The city’s old baseball parks were simply insufficient for the cities’ needs. Problems such as parking and the needs of multiple sports made the old ballparks logistically impractical; increases in crime and changes in urban racial demographics made them culturally unacceptable.

Once the need for a new stadium had been established, the next obvious question was the structure’s location. Why, when their middle-class population base was located primarily in outer suburbs, did Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis all choose to build their stadiums downtown? The decision about the respective stadiums’ locations was certainly up for debate. In all three cities, announced proposals to build downtown stadiums drew criticisms and counterproposals. The St. Louis debates in many ways represent positions represented in all three cities. After the Civic Center Redevelopment Corporation announced its planned location for Busch Stadium in 1959, a group of St. Louis businessmen who owned property in the proposed stadium area voiced vehement opposition to the declaration of the area as “blighted.” They therefore attempted to delay the city’s Board of Aldermen from voting on the issue. When legal action failed to stop the declaration, an anonymous group calling itself the “Stadium Relocation Association” (likely composed of the same group of businessmen) appealed to the court of public opinion by taking out a full-page ad in the *Globe-Democrat* on November 21, 1961. The advertisement argued that “the Stadium is a privately operated business enterprise . . . designed to produce large profits and ownership of a major part of St. Louis for a comparatively few people.”<sup>36</sup>

Arguing that a downtown stadium would burden taxpayers (due to the \$6 million bond issue for infrastructure) and remove tax-paying businesses from the central city, the Association proposed an alternate site in the city’s Mill Creek area, an impoverished, predominantly African American neighborhood. Civic leaders quickly dismissed the “belated and ridiculous idea,” contending that downtown was the only option for the new stadium. “If we don’t save downtown,” argued LCRA executive director Charles Farris, “we might as well fold up the city.”<sup>37</sup> While some downtown business owners continued to

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challenge the location, it seemed most St. Louisans, especially those in position of power, agreed with Farris's position: downtown was central to the fortunes of St. Louis, and the stadium was an essential part of downtown's rebirth.

While debates about stadium location in all three cities sometimes became bitter, leaders who supported downtown locations consistently echoed Farris's sentiments about the centrality of downtown to their cities. Cincinnati mayor Eugene Ruehlmann, for example, frequently stressed that one of the primary goals of a new stadium was to revitalize the central city and "bring Cincinnati back to the river."<sup>38</sup> These business and political leaders often had to combat the desires of team owners, whose primary goal was increased revenue through higher attendance figures, a goal best accomplished in convenient suburban locations. Pro-downtown leaders had a number of practical arguments for their choice; those arguments reveal much about philosophies of urban renewal, the growing importance of tourism to postwar American cities, and the simple hard economics that so often guide urban leaders' decisions.

Economic factors played an especially important role in the decision to locate stadiums downtown. All three cities' proposed locations qualified by law as "blighted" areas eligible for federal urban renewal funds for the purchase of land and demolition of buildings. Cities could thus allow federal programs to foot the bill for initial land purchase and clearance. While the economic benefits a downtown stadium produced on game day seemed obvious to everyone, stadium supporters argued that massive parking garages to be built alongside downtown stadiums would produce income during off-days as well. A stadium built outside the central business district would not be utilized on a daily basis. The additional revenue stream proved especially important to stadium planners who constantly sought new ways to gain increased income from the stadiums. When St. Louis businessmen challenged the plan to locate Busch Stadium downtown in 1961, city leaders quickly pointed out that the entire stadium financing plan was contingent on daily income from the stadium's adjacent parking garages; if the stadium was not downtown, they argued, it could not be built at all.<sup>39</sup> Downtown proponents in all three cities asserted that in order to reduce construction costs and produce the maximum possible revenue, a downtown location was ideal.

**T**he construction of stadiums downtown also fit within a larger prevailing urban development strategy emerging in the 1950s that sought to make city centers into places of tourism and recreation. "Motivated by the idea that tourism is an industry without smokestacks," writes Dennis Judd, "cities have poured their energies into building a tourism/entertainment infrastructure."<sup>40</sup> The goal of creating what Judd terms the "infrastructure of play" was present in all three cities' renewal plans in the postwar period. Pittsburgh replaced industrial facilities and rail lines with projects like the retractable-roof Mellon Arena & Civic Center and Point State Park. The Walt

Disney Corporation gave serious consideration to building the successor to its Disneyland theme park in downtown St. Louis, an act that architectural critic Ada Louise Huxtable decried as a vision lacking “the traditional values of vitality, variety and humanity that make cities challenging and great.”<sup>41</sup>

The plan for a downtown Disneyland in St. Louis fell through because of financing difficulties, but the prevailing philosophy remained popular among urban leaders.<sup>42</sup> A *Cincinnati Enquirer* columnist, for example, also looked to the Disney Corporation for inspiration in solving urban problems in a 1967 article titled “EPCOT May Be Hint of Cities to Come.” The column described contemporary cities as congested, polluted, “infested with bold criminals” and containing “pockets of blacks” who “embark on guerrilla warfare against whites.” The author noted that even with a riverfront stadium, highway projects, and other dramatic changes taking place, “in the Queen City, as in other large cities, expectations and demands for instant results have far outstripped delivery of solutions.” The columnist then held up Disney’s proposed EPCOT community, with its theme park and complex of recreational facilities, as a potential model for Cincinnati and America’s future cities.<sup>43</sup>

**T**he goal of creating a tourist city implicitly reveals a new attitude among urban planners toward their cities’ relationship with surrounding areas. Specifically, urban leaders began in the 1950s and 1960s to see the economic potential of the regions around their cities in a new way. This new vision was consciously implemented in the construction and location of the cities’ new stadiums. The river cities’ old ballparks had been built in an era when teams drew their fans primarily from the city core. While fans from surrounding rural areas and small towns might occasionally travel to the city to see their team play, limited transportation infrastructure dictated that the majority of fans would come from the city and its immediate surrounding areas.

By the 1950s, however, the situation had changed radically. Rapid growth of automobile ownership and a developing interstate highway system required a fundamental change in understanding how cities worked. Leaders in all three cities expressed a desire to make their downtowns *regional* centers, drawing residents from farther than just the immediate metropolitan area. In this sense highways and the automobile represented both the problem and the most obvious solution to the river cities’ woes. If they took residents out of the city’s center, cars could also bring people *in* on an unprecedented scale. A stadium that was well-connected to interstate highways represented an almost guaranteed influx of tens of thousands of people on a regular basis who would spend their dollars in the city and help rejuvenate downtowns.

Numerous studies conducted in all three cities estimated the potential regional influence of proposed stadiums. The Pittsburgh Stadium Committee’s 1958 stadium feasibility study argued that “a stadium is a regional facility, drawing

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patrons . . . from a vast area outside of the city” and thus the city should build a new stadium “readily accessible by the major segment of the population of Allegheny County, and if feasible, that of a several county area.”<sup>44</sup> Similarly, Preston Estep, a member of the Civic Center Redevelopment Corporation, took care to emphasize the regional impact of Busch Stadium at the ground-breaking of that facility in May 1964. “This is not a St. Louis city project alone,” asserted Estep. “It means security and a greater future for our neighbors across the river. It means even more to our neighbors in St. Louis County. This is their project too, and we hope they will join us in using all the facilities.”<sup>45</sup> Similarly, in Cincinnati in 1966, as plans for Riverfront Stadium were being finalized, a *Cincinnati Post-Times Star* informal survey of fans’ automobiles parked at Crosley Field revealed more fans from nearby Kentucky and Indiana than from Ohio.<sup>46</sup> During the 1960s and 1970s, the Cincinnati Reds expanded their efforts to build a regional fan base by sending Reds players on bus tours of cities in West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky.<sup>47</sup>

Team owners and city leaders were thus well aware of the potential untapped dollars that lay outside the metropolitan region. Cities have, of course, always served as economic and transportation centers for their hinterlands; the rapid expansion of the highway system only perpetuated an already-existing interdependence. However, major league cities like Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis realized that a professional sports stadium offered an experience that could only be found in a select number of cities and thus they had a special advantage in drawing regional populations to their city centers. Any urban renewal project designed to take advantage of the “outside dollars” brought to the city by tourists needed to be centrally located and easily accessible to highway travelers.

**E**ven when one considers similarities in planning and in the three cities themselves, perhaps the most notable thing about the three stadiums is their striking physical similarity to one another. Despite three different architectural firms working in three different cities, each city still ended up with essentially the same stadium—a round, enclosed concrete and steel structure with little architectural decoration, large electronic scoreboards, and an artificial-surface field. The cities of Philadelphia and Atlanta, outside the scope of this study, also built similar stadiums. Pittsburgh Pirates third baseman Richie Hebner once commented, “I stand at the plate in Philadelphia and I don’t honestly know whether I’m in Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, St. Louis or Philly. They all look alike.”<sup>48</sup> While the resemblance of the three stadiums might seem like little more than an interesting architectural peculiarity, their design, in fact, resulted directly from common urban planning strategies, as well as from political, economic and social conditions shared by many American cities in the 1960s. Thus the stadiums should be considered physical embodiments of the goals of the respective city leaders and the problems they faced.

The design and building of these massive stadiums involved much debate and compromise. Stadium architects had to meet the needs of two distinctly different groups—fans attending the games, and city planners who hoped the stadiums would stimulate new commercial development. Also, the need to accommodate more than one sport in a single facility obviously required a new sort of stadium design. Efforts to adapt arenas like Pittsburgh’s Forbes Field and St. Louis’ Sportsman’s Park to use for both football and baseball had been only marginally successful, resulting in poor seating arrangements and problems in maintaining the turf on the field. Stadium planners also struggled to accommodate the drastically different shape of baseball and football fields, and ultimately concluded that a round shape would allow the most flexibility in



*Three Rivers Stadium. Unlike its predecessor, Three Rivers Stadium was separated from the city and surrounded by open parking lots. Library and Archives Division, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh PA*

seating arrangements while allowing unobstructed views for fans and television cameras. The multipurpose nature of the stadium, however, did not necessitate a completely enclosed stadium. In fact, all three cities originally planned open “horseshoe” shaped stadiums. But the needs of an adaptable stadium required a simple design flexible enough to accommodate both football and baseball, and that shape proved to be a circle.

Cost also played a significant role in the stadiums’ simple design. Whether they relied on public financing or private capital, stadium planners in all three cities were under pressure to keep stadiums affordable and avoid unnecessary expenses.<sup>49</sup> Rising labor and materials costs required design alterations in all three cities, especially in Pittsburgh. The original approved design for Pittsburgh’s stadium was a semicircular shape with the stadium opening out onto a view of the Allegheny River and the city’s downtown skyline. The Stadium Authority

asserted in 1965 that the proposed stadium would provide “an aesthetically pleasing perspective” for those driving past it on the highway, and that the structure would “make a significant architectural contribution to this most vital area.”<sup>50</sup>

Lofty artistic ideals came crashing to the ground in 1966, when construction bids came in more than \$12 million over budget. In evaluating what had gone wrong, the Stadium Authority argued that the original design “required the use of extensive amounts of concrete and steel of un-uniform shapes which, in addition to greatly increasing the . . . costs, proved most complicated to erect.”

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Also, pedestrian ramps to the stadium seemed “too artistically designed” and therefore needed simplification.<sup>51</sup> The key word in the Stadium Authority’s evaluation of the problem was “complicated,” a word used repeatedly in the 1966 report to describe everything from stadium seating to demolition buildings on site. “Pittsburgh still needs and deserves a modern sports stadium,” wrote Authority executive director Burrell Cohen. “Fortunately, there is a step between mediocrity and superiority. It is called acceptability.”<sup>52</sup> The design revisions resulted in the enclosed, bland “concrete bowl” that ultimately came to be built. While such drastic changes were not necessary in Cincinnati and St. Louis, both those cities did have to make significant design changes to accommodate their small budgets and rising construction costs.<sup>53</sup> A simple, uniform design proved in all three cities to be the best compromise between those two pressures.

But cookie-cutter stadiums in Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and St. Louis had to be more than just athletic arenas. Local leaders expected these colossal structures to serve as symbols of their cities’ progressive spirit and modern sensibilities. Therefore, stadium backers consistently spoke of their desire to have a “modern” stadium with “state-of-the-art” facilities. In contrast to today’s nostalgia-driven ballpark designs, city leaders in the 1960s wanted a stadium that would evoke the power of new technology to transform the urban landscape. Indeed, references to technology and modernity came to be infused into every aspect of stadium planning and construction. When Cincinnati broke ground for its stadium, it did so not with the traditional gold-shovel ceremony, but with a series of electronically-controlled explosions that marked the future locations of the field’s bases.<sup>54</sup> Cincinnati newspapers marveled that the new stadium’s traffic flow would be precisely controlled by computers.<sup>55</sup> An article in a St. Louis newspaper proclaimed the new Busch Stadium would have “the world’s most modern playing field, which through the marvels of electronics eliminates all snow and mud and will be capable of drying up a cloudburst in minutes.”<sup>56</sup>

**T**hose who praised the design of the massive stadiums marveled more at their sheer scale and efficiency than at architectural character or beauty. In January 1967, *Progressive Architecture* magazine awarded a citation to the designers of Cincinnati’s Riverfront Stadium. Panelists on the jury characterized the structure as “sensible” and noted that “it’s handsome because it solves the problem.” Another jurist asserted (without apparent irony), “when we start to make big megastructures, it’s time to stop fooling around with things like beauty and human scale and all that jazz.”<sup>57</sup> A 1959 feasibility study for Busch Stadium concluded that the enormity itself of the proposed project should prove a real asset because the stadium would be “of such a magnitude as to capture the imagination, interest, and support of the greatest number of people.”<sup>58</sup> A modern mega-structure, emphasizing technology and efficiency over architectural character, matched the goals

of city leaders who wanted a symbol of their cities' progressive spirit. The stadiums represented the triumph of technology over all sorts of elements: traffic, weather, and, implicitly, even the problems of the city itself.

A fourth, and perhaps most important, factor that stadium planners had to consider was the suburban middle class. If the new structures did not meet the needs and desires of suburban white sports fans, the whole purpose of the stadiums would be undermined. Historians of the postwar period have long argued that a desire for security from the perceived threats of the central city, and the related importance of home and family life were fundamental to suburban culture.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, multipurpose stadiums reflect in their planning and design a desire to cater to these needs and values. Bob Howsam, who had served as general manager for the St. Louis Cardinals during the planning of Busch Stadium and held the same position for the Reds during the construction of Riverfront Stadium, placed special emphasis on this aspect of the new cookie-cutter structures. Howsam asserted that a stadium "should be clean and attractive." "If you expect somebody to spend three or four hours there," he continued, "they should feel as comfortable as in their own homes." Howsam even investigated such farfetched possibilities as installing a system to spray the aroma of freshly-baked bread into Riverfront Stadium, thus promoting an atmosphere of domesticity and encouraging fans to buy more stadium concessions. To his disappointment, he found this idea to be unfeasible.<sup>60</sup> If the goal of stadium planners was to make the city's new stadium resemble a middle-class home, there are some indications they succeeded. At the stadium's opening, *Cincinnati Enquirer* reporters exuded great pride in the "wall-to-wall carpeting" of Astroturf and noted that fans booed the Braves' pitcher when he kicked some dirt from the mound "on the new, clean Astroturf carpet."<sup>61</sup>

Besides being comfortable, suburban fans needed to be assured that their trip to the stadium would be a safe one, especially in light of the pervasive violence around the old inner-city ballparks. The decision to locate the stadiums downtown made that task more difficult than it would have been in a suburb. The very construction of these massive, round, concrete stadiums suggests enclosure, an environment designed to ensure a feeling of safety for middle class fans. This idea was not new to urban planners. For example, an October 15, 1963 issue of *Downtown Idea Exchange*, an information-sharing newsletter for architects and urban planners, advocated the construction of huge domes to "solve spot problems in downtowns" and envisioned the possibility of "vast domes . . . arching over entire downtowns" that would allow cities to make their downtowns controlled spaces.<sup>62</sup> The new downtown stadiums seemed to exemplify this strategy for organizing urban space.

Older ballparks in Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and St. Louis had been built into the existing urban streetscape, with entrances at street level and buildings on

every side. These parks were thus closely linked to the urban space around them. All three of the new stadiums, in contrast, were built on “clean slates” that focused more on connections to interstate highways than to city neighborhoods.<sup>63</sup> Such open, controlled spaces reduced the likelihood of a back-alley mugging as patrons left the ballpark. Pittsburgh’s Three Rivers Stadium, located across the river from Pittsburgh’s downtown, was surrounded by nothing but parking and empty land. Access to Cincinnati’s new stadium was limited by narrow footbridges spanning a sunken highway that divided the riverfront stadium from downtown streets. The stadium itself sat well above street level on a four-story parking garage. Fans who parked in the 4,000 car garage underneath could literally drive to the stadium via interstate highways, watch the game in the enclosed stadium, and return to the suburbs without ever setting foot (or even driving) on a city street. At the level of the stadium’s gates, a vast, windswept, concrete plaza insured a feeling of separation from the urban streetscape.

Similarly, an architectural advisor to the Civic Center Redevelopment Corporation in St. Louis urged that the central design consideration in the new stadium should be to “provide convenient, pleasant, and (if possible), exciting ways to get from one’s seat in a high speed auto on the highway into one’s seat in the bleachers.”<sup>64</sup> Parking in downtown St. Louis and walking its streets at night may have been exciting for suburban fans, but it likely would not have been pleasant or convenient. Four large parking garages surrounded Busch Stadium, insuring that patrons could walk quickly from their cars to the stadium. Thus, the design of these stadiums around the automobile-driving, suburban fan actually undermined city planners’ goal of establishing a middle-class presence in downtowns as a whole.

The circular design of the downtown stadiums reflects this same quest for safety and control. Richie Hebner’s comment about standing in a stadium and not knowing if he were in Philadelphia, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, or Cincinnati is illuminating. Not only did the stadiums look the same, but from inside the stadium the cities themselves were essentially invisible. Encircled by the fortress-like walls of the stadium, fans could easily ignore the city and feel reassured that they were protected from the threats of inner-city crime by a series of lengthy walkways, open spaces, metal gates, and security staff.<sup>65</sup> Clearly crime around the older ballparks, as well as the urban unrest of the 1960s made stadium planners and officials extremely conscious of the need to protect fans.



*An aerial photograph of Riverfront Stadium during the first baseball game played on June 30, 1970. Cincinnati Museum Center, Cincinnati Historical Society Library*

Furthermore, a feeling of safety was essential to draw families downtown who had fled the city in the first place. As ballpark researcher Michael Gershman has noted, “These parks, built in an age of anxiety, were designed to minimize uncertainties of all kinds.”<sup>66</sup> While Gershman wrote of uncertainties on the playing field (minimized by the stadiums’ artificial turf playing surface), his comment could be expanded to include the entire structure of the stadiums.

For suburbanites seeking more comfortable and prestigious viewing areas, the new stadiums also offered a recent innovation in stadium accommodations, the “stadium club.” Stadium planners viewed these exclusive clubs as a source of revenue to offset the construction costs of the new stadiums. Catering to corporate clients and wealthy sports fans, stadium clubs embodied a new form of class distinction and separation in American sport. While a beer and a hotdog had traditionally been the limit of ballpark cuisine, promoters of Three Rivers Stadium promised “all the luxury of leisurely dining found in the best restaurants in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area” in the stadium’s new “members only” club.<sup>67</sup>

Stadium clubs, however, became controversial. Citizens in Pittsburgh and Cincinnati raised objections to the use of public funds for the construction of facilities available only to corporate clients and the cities’ upper crust.<sup>68</sup> In St. Louis, a Democratic alderman voiced concerns about the legality of Busch Stadium’s club, since the stadium was built on land purchased by the public. There was also apparently some fear that the clubs might be a site of racial discrimination. In affirming the stadium club’s legality, a St. Louis city counselor assured concerned citizens that there was “no evidence to indicate that leased areas of the stadium would discriminate against patrons based on race, religion, color or national origin.”<sup>69</sup>

**I**ndeed, race and class were polarizing issues in all three cities as they planned their stadiums. It was not difficult for minorities and lower-income urban residents to see that “renewal” in the form of new stadiums would do little to solve their most pressing problems. For example, an advertising brochure for the opening of Busch Stadium portrayed a group of six smiling, clean-cut faces surrounding the words “These Are The Bird Watchers.” The faces were all white. The brochure also urged businessmen to “go big league with season tickets” and suggested games would be “a valuable way to build employee spirit and loyalty.”<sup>70</sup> Assumptions about the ultimate benefactors of the new Busch Stadium were thus written directly into the St. Louis Cardinals’ promotional literature: white middle-class businessmen and their families were the team’s first priority.

In Cincinnati, even before Riverfront Stadium had been built, city leaders took a great deal of criticism from black Cincinnatians for their handling of parking at Crosley Field, specifically in the city-funded expansion of 1958. Throughout the 1950s, the city had sought to expand automobile parking around Crosley

Field. Because buildings surrounded the old park, this required the purchase and demolition of existing properties, largely owned and occupied by African Americans. In 1957, the Cincinnati city manager proposed clearing the right-of-way for the Millcreek Expressway (later Interstate 75) early in order to provide parking for 2,600 automobiles. African American city councilman Theodore M. Berry expressed outrage at the plan. “It is most disturbing to me,” he stated, “that we are putting more value on parking automobiles than on housing human beings.”<sup>71</sup> Citizens of the West End organized to stop the demolition, but failed to collect enough support to place the issue on a public ballot.<sup>72</sup>

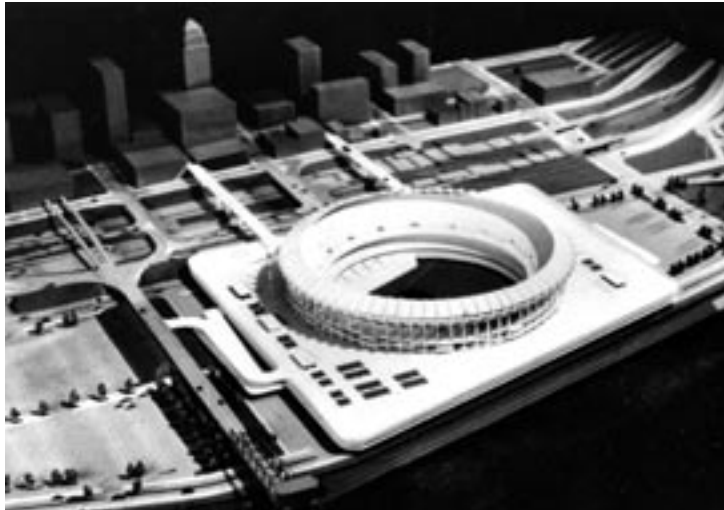
**E**ven with the additional parking spots, parking remained at a premium around the stadium. Enterprising West End youth used the situation to their advantage, stealing police barricades to create makeshift pay-parking lots and offering to guard fans’ cars for a small fee. Tempers flared again in 1966, with rumors still circulating that a new municipal stadium might be located in the West End. In February 1966, members of the West End Community Council marched into Cincinnati City Council chambers, protested the proposed West End stadium, and presented a list of demands for better health care, housing rehabilitation, improved schools, and expanded recreational facilities for the neighborhood’s residents. WECC president William Mallory fumed, “Today’s (newspaper) indicates that the tax payers may be asked to finance a Stadium. Yet we do not have enough money for General Hospital’s operation. We can’t stomach this kind of thinking any longer.”<sup>73</sup>

African Americans in Cincinnati seemed ultimately ambivalent about the city’s Riverfront Stadium. The *Cincinnati Herald*, the city’s African American newspaper, gave positive, though brief, coverage to the stadium’s opening. And, even in the heat of the 1957 fight to stop the expansion of West End parking, Councilman Berry expressed his desire that the Reds stay in Cincinnati. After the debate about stadium location was over, black Cincinnatians perhaps acquiesced on the stadium primarily because it was *not* located in the West End. While the needs expressed by the West End Community Council continued to be pressing issues for all black Cincinnatians, the riverfront location seemed the best alternative to the uprooting and relocation of thousands of West End residents.



*Busch Stadium in St. Louis, Missouri. St. Louis Cardinals*

In Pittsburgh, criticism was more heated. A month after Three Rivers Stadium opened, the *Fair Witness*, an underground newspaper, ran a scathing editorial that took city leaders to task for favoring the suburban middle class over the city's needier residents. Under the defiant headline "You Can't Eat a Stadium," the paper ran an illustration of an African American child holding Three Rivers Stadium on a plate, complete with a decorative party toothpick protruding from the top. The article decried the splintering of the Northside community by the stadium construction and its adjacent highway access points. The columnist went on to point out that workers from North-



*A model of the new stadium planned for the Cincinnati riverfront. Cincinnati Museum Center, Cincinnati Historical Society Library*

side, both black and white, were largely excluded from those hired to work in the stadium, and that stadium employees were disproportionately from more affluent areas of the city.

The *Fair Witness* also criticized plans for an exclusive stadium club, pointing out that newspaper illustrations of the proposed club showed only white patrons, and that general admissions tickets in the new stadium were almost double the cost of those at Forbes Field. "The Three Rivers Stadium," the author concluded sardonically, "was conceived and designed as a show place and a play place for and

by those same benevolent people who brought the city its past renaissance with its lack of care for the community . . . but what they won't say is that another community has been ripped off. The gala opening of the Three Rivers Stadium was not a celebration. It was a wake."<sup>74</sup> While an editorial in an underground left-wing newspaper can hardly be said to represent the views of the general populace, it does indicate that some urban residents viewed the stadium as simply the latest in a string of renewal projects that brought little benefit to those who lived in the city itself.<sup>75</sup>

But, for all their shortcomings, their repetitious, banal design and their sterilized playing environments, city leaders in Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis saw their modern "cookie-cutter" stadiums as proud symbols of their city's rebirth. They argued that each city's stadium should be considered a key component of a larger renewal program. At the Busch Stadium groundbreaking on May 25, 1964, President of the Board of Aldermen Donald Gunn, speaking on Mayor Raymond Tucker's behalf, identified the Gateway Arch project and the stadium as "the keystones of a new St. Louis." He linked those projects to the success of the city as a whole, asserting that "all of our great plans for the future, all of our hopes for a more prosperous

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and greater city have rested primarily on the realization of these two projects.”<sup>76</sup> An editorial in the *Globe-Democrat* the next day expressed a similar enthusiasm, agreeing that the stadium “is a focal point, and indeed, when completed, will be one of the main monuments to the rehabilitation of St. Louis.”<sup>77</sup> Even though it came rather late in Pittsburgh’s overall renewal, city planners there also referred to Three Rivers Stadium as a “focal point of the renaissance” for the entire city.<sup>78</sup> The downtown sports stadiums of Cincinnati, Pittsburgh and St. Louis resulted from three fundamental principles that proved to be as much ideological as economic. The first centered on a belief among city leaders that their cities must retain their professional sports franchises in order to maintain “major-league” status relative to other cities in America. Indeed, sports teams have long played a central role in defining a city’s identity, and as Dennis Judd has noted, teams “carry a substantial emotional charge, so that their wealth is rarely, if ever, calculated in simple economic terms.”<sup>79</sup> Cincinnati mayor Eugene Ruehlmann, for example, called the Reds franchise “a cherished possession: possibly an economic asset but most certainly the emotional heart of the community for ninety-seven years.”<sup>80</sup> And with the growth of televised sports in the postwar era, a professional sports team became an even more important indicator of a city’s national reputation.

**T**he second principle that guided local leaders in Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and St. Louis said that downtowns must be the economic, social, and cultural heart of their cities and *had* to be revitalized if the city were to survive at all. A report used by the St. Louis Civic Center Redevelopment Corporation to attract investors to the stadium project expressed this idea perfectly. “Downtown St. Louis is not simply another section or district,” argued the authors. “It is the heart and the nerve center for most of the economic activity carried on throughout this entire metropolitan area.” The executives of CCRC argued that, despite the growth of the suburbs, the central city was still the most vital component of the region. Renewal planners in all three cities shared the belief that new stadiums had to be located downtown because that neighborhood’s revitalization was absolutely essential to the larger health of their cities. Adapting the philosopher Voltaire’s famous dictum on the existence of God, the CCRC concluded, “If there were no downtown St. Louis, the suburbs and the rest of the City would be forced to build one.”<sup>81</sup>

Finally, the third principle argued that new stadiums must meet the demands of suburban, white, middle class fans if city leaders were to have any hope of bringing them downtown. To that end, architects and planners designed the cookie-cutter stadiums to please mainly suburbanites. The stadiums were closely linked with interstate highways, surrounded by thousands of parking spaces, and, in an era of urban decline and unrest, were designed to protect and separate suburbanites from the downtown as a whole. In this way, new stadiums in Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis functioned as early versions of what

scholars have called the “tourist bubble,” a term to describe urban land use that creates “islands of affluence that are sharply differentiated and segregated from the surrounding urban landscape.”<sup>82</sup>

With these three guiding ideas, civic leaders built stadiums to draw tourists from the suburbs and beyond to their cities and to demonstrate to the nation that their cities were modern, progressive, and successful. While stadium backers succeeded in their goal of retaining and attracting professional sports franchises, their success in spurring downtown revitalization appears less than impressive four decades later. All three cities anticipated that their stadiums would spawn hotels, retail developments and office complexes around them. In Cincinnati and Pittsburgh, no such development occurred, leaving the stadiums surrounded by empty space.<sup>83</sup> The stadium’s supporters quoted impressive numbers about their economic impact on their cities, but opponents have argued that the stadiums’ primary benefactors were sports teams, not city residents.

In the end, the stadium designers’ emphasis on automobile traffic may have produced the most important shortcoming in these three stadiums. Architects repeatedly spoke of each stadium’s connections to highways as one of their chief features, dismissing concerns about “human scale” and the intimacy of traditional ballparks. By designing these stadiums around highways and not people, planners perhaps undermined their ultimate goal of drawing people into *downtowns*, not just the stadiums. The stadiums were designed to make it easy to “get in and get out,” and that is often exactly what people did. Whatever the real impact of the three cities’ sports stadiums, city officials in Cincinnati, Pittsburgh and St. Louis considered them key components of their cities’ rebirths, and perhaps they were correct in one sense. While these three stadiums have often been derided as banal and unimaginative cookie-cutters, they did help keep each of those cities in the big leagues. ♠

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Author’s note: At the time this article went to press, I discovered John D. Fairfield’s “The Park in the City: Baseball Landscapes Civically Considered.” *Material History Review* 54 (Fall 2001): 21-29. Some of Dr. Fairfield’s conclusions are similar to my own, but the two pieces also differ in significant ways.

1. “Riverfront Stadium Will Fade Into Skyline Someday,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, June 30, 1970.
2. For a more thorough treatment of American urban decline during this period, see Robert Fogelson, *Downtown: Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), especially 218-28.
3. Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh, *URA of Pittsburgh: Fifty Years* (Pittsburgh: Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh, 1996), 3.
4. Cincinnati City Planning Commission, *Cincinnati Metropolitan Master Plan* (Cincinnati, 1948), 9.
5. Perhaps the most comprehensive history of urban renewal in the United States, Jon C. Teaford’s *The Rough Road to Renaissance: Urban Revitalization in America, 1940-1985* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990),

only briefly mentions these stadiums even though all three cities play a prominent role in his larger narrative. Steven A. Riess in *City Games: The Evolution of Urban Society and the Rise of Sports* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989) explores the relationship between cities and sports. Riess briefly describes the financial and urban renewal aspects of these stadiums, but they are not the main subject of his work. The scholarship which devotes the most detailed attention to these stadiums is Robert C. Trumpbour, “The New Cathedrals: The Sports Stadium and Mass Media’s Role in Facilitating New Construction,” Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, 2001. Trumpbour chronicles debates around stadium building in Cincinnati and Pittsburgh (as well as Boston and New York) throughout the twentieth century and addresses those cities’ downtown multipurpose stadiums. Trumpbour’s subject, however, is the role of the media in influencing stadium construction, and he thus studies primarily city newspapers.

6. See Dennis R. Judd, ed., *The Infrastructure of Play: Building the Tourist City* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2003); John Hannigan, *Fantasy City: Pleasure and Profit in the Postmodern Metropolis* (London: Routledge, 1998).

7. For general histories of each city in the twentieth century, see James Neal Primm, *Lion of the Valley: St. Louis, Missouri* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Co., 1981), and Roy Lubove, *Twentieth Century Pittsburgh: Government, Business and Environmental Change* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1969). Scholarship on Cincinnati history has been heavily weighted to the nineteenth century, but good general surveys include Karen Regina, et al., *Cincinnati: An Urban History* (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Historical Society, 1989), and David Stradling, *Cincinnati: From River City to Highway Metropolis* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Press, 2003).
8. Cincinnati City Commission, *Metropolitan Master Plan* (Cincinnati, 1949), 149.
9. David Laslo, Claude Louishome, Donald Phares, Dennis R. Judd, "Building the Infrastructure of Urban Tourism: The Case of St. Louis," in Judd, ed., *The Infrastructure of Play*, 89.
10. Lubove, *Twentieth Century Pittsburgh*.
11. Edward Litchfield, *The University and the Economy* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1965), 11. Copy in Library and Archives Division, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
12. Details of backroom negotiations between the Pirates and the ACCD are a fascinating subplot on their own. According to several Pittsburgh city and county officials, the ACCD essentially offered the Pirates a free stadium in exchange for the Forbes Field property needed to expand the university. See especially William McLelland, interviewer unnamed, November 18, 1971, and Frank Denton, interview by Nancy Mason, September 26, 1972, transcripts, Pittsburgh Renaissance Project, Stanton Belfour Oral History Collection, Archives of Industrial Society, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
13. Stadium Authority of the City of Pittsburgh, *The Story of Three Rivers Stadium* (Pittsburgh: December 31, 1969), 3.
14. *Ibid.*, 6-8.
15. "No Field of Dreams," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, July 12, 1990.
16. "Farris Tells How He Got Idea for Downtown Stadium," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, May 26, 1964.
17. Laslo, et al., "The Case of St. Louis," 88-91.
18. "Great Day for a Great City," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, May 26, 1964.
19. Except where noted, my narrative of Cincinnati stadium planning is drawn largely from Joseph Rochford, "The Games Cities Play: Cincinnati's Decision to Build Riverfront Stadium," unpublished research, University of Cincinnati, 1985. Rochford, an MA student in UC's history department, also served for many years in Cincinnati city government and drew on this first-hand knowledge for his study. His work makes excellent use of primary sources, as well as numerous personal interviews with city planners and politicians, which are not available in any other source.
20. Cincinnati City Commission, *Master Plan*, 149.
21. Rochford, "Games Cities Play," 4-6.
22. Robert Harris Walker, "Gene Ruehlmann and Bob Howsam: Designing a Riverfront Winner," *Queen City Heritage* 46, no. 2 (1988): 45. The odd name of the group came from the *Cincinnati Enquirer's* address at 617 Vine Street. Francis Dale, publisher of the *Enquirer*, headed the Reds purchasing group and became president of the team.
23. Chamber of Commerce of Greater Pittsburgh, "Statement on the North Side Urban Renewal Project" (presented before the Council of the City of Pittsburgh, December 11, 1963), David L. Lawrence Papers, Archives of Industrial Society, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh: Box 1, Folder FF-19.
24. Teaford, *Rough Road*, 45-46.
25. Rochford, "The Games Cities Play," 4, 9.
26. *Ibid.* While the idea of the psychological value of professional sports is not original to him, Rochford makes a persuasive argument that Cincinnati stadium planners were motivated by urban boosterism as much as hard economic numbers.
27. Marieke van Rooij, "Stadium Fever," in *The Stadium: Architecture of Mass Sport*, editor Michelle Provoost (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2000), 125.
28. David L. Lawrence, "Statement at Public Hearing on Stadium Renewal Project," December 11, 1963, David L. Lawrence Collection, Archives of Industrial Society, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh. 78:15, Box 1, Folder FF.
29. "The Stadium Race," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, July 12, 1959.
30. "Crowded West End Seeks to Solve Unique Parking Problem," *Cincinnati Post*, July 13, 1957.
31. Benjamin Rader, *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Spectator* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1983), 288.
32. "Teen-Age Hoodlums Must Be Stopped," *The Sporting News*, May 9, 1964, p. 14.
33. Walker, "Designing a Riverfront Winner," 44.
34. See Bob Webb, "Police Try To Prevent Fans' Lament: They Took Me Out at the Ballgame," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, June 21, 1964; and "Brazen' Racket Victimizes Fans," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, August 19, 1962, for two of many possible examples.
35. *The Sporting News*, May 9, 1964, p. 14. Violence outside the stadium was not the only problem. As baseball scholar Ron Briley notes in *Class at Bat, Gender on Deck and Race in the Hole: A Line-Up of Essays on Twentieth Century Culture and America's Game* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2003), on-field and spectator violence was also a primary concern of sports observers in the 1960s. Noting increases in ballpark security measures to prevent such incidences, one columnist speculated, "At this rate, stadiums will take on the appearance of prison farms, which might make the culprits feel right at home." *The Sporting News*, May 16, 1970, p. 16. I am indebted to Briley for directing my attention to this article and the other *Sporting News* items cited above.
36. "Should the Stadium Be Downtown?" *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, November 21, 1961.
37. "Jeers Greet Plan for New Stadium Site," *Ibid.*, November 22, 1961.
38. Undated note, Eugene Ruehlmann Papers, Archives and Rare Books Library, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH: Box 21, Folder 35.
39. "Jeers Greet Plans for a New Stadium Site," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, November 22, 1961.
40. Judd, ed., *Infrastructure of Play*, 4.
41. "St. Louis Success-and Blues," *New York Times*, February 4, 1968.
42. "Stadium Builders Push Entertainment Area," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 7, 1965.
43. "Epcot May Be Hint of Things to Come," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 3, 1967.

44. City-County Stadium Committee, *Report on Proposed New Stadium* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: September 1, 1958), 8.
45. "Ground Broken for Downtown Sports Stadium," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 25, 1964.
46. "Who Are Reds Out-of-Town Fans?" *Cincinnati Post-Times Star*, January 7, 1966.
47. Walker, "Designing a Riverfront Winner," 44.
48. Quoted in Michael Gershman, *Diamonds: The Evolution of the Ballpark* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1993), 191. The quote is often used in books on stadiums and ballparks and its original source is unknown.
49. Stadium planners in other cities faced similar constraints. William Bartleby Brown, in "America's Baseball Stadiums: A History of Technology and Culture," (M.A. thesis, University of Alabama, 1991, p. 28), argues that architects for Atlanta's Fulton County Stadium were limited in their creativity because of the urgency and low cost of the project.
50. Stadium Authority of the City of Pittsburgh, *Stadium Progress Report No. 5* (Pittsburgh, PA, March 31, 1965), pages unnumbered.
51. Stadium Authority of the City of Pittsburgh, *Stadium Progress Report No. 8* (Pittsburgh, PA, August 1966), pages unpaginated.
52. Ibid.
53. "Stadium Bids Top Estimate; Revisions May Be Considered," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 9, 1964; "Esthetics Said to Be Unchanged by Plan Revision," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 22, 1964; "Stadium Project Will Proceed Although Bids Exceed Estimates," *Cincinnati Times-Star*, September 29, 1967. Also see Stadium Review Committee notes of July 22, 1966, in Eugene Ruhlmann Papers, Archives and Rare Books Collection, University of Cincinnati Libraries, Cincinnati, OH: Box 21, Folder 35.
54. "All Done Electronically," *Cincinnati Post Times-Star*, February 1, 1968.
55. "Computer Will Guide Stadium Traffic," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, March 27, 1967.
56. "New Stadium to Have Weather-Proof Field," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 19, 1965.
57. "Fourteenth Annual P/A Design Awards," *Progressive Architecture* (January 1967), 134-35.
58. Sverdrup & Parcel, Inc., "Feasibility Report, Proposed Downtown Sports Stadium Project," (St. Louis: September 1959), 43, Raymond Tucker Papers, Special Collections, Washington University Library, St. Louis, MO: Series 3, Box 18.
59. For two notable examples, see Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), and Clifford E. Clark, Jr., *The American Family Home 1800-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).
60. Walker, "Building a Riverfront Winner," 48.
61. "Reds Lose, But in House of Splendor" *Cincinnati Enquirer*, July 1, 1970.
62. *Downtown Idea Exchange*, October 15, 1963.
63. Phillip Bess, *City Baseball Magic: Plain Talk and Uncommon Sense about Cities and Baseball Parks* (Minneapolis, MN: Minneapolis Review of Baseball, 1989). Primarily an architectural study, Bess's work provides a comprehensive exploration of the changing ideas about ballpark design.
64. Joseph R. Passoneau to Robert Blackburn, April 2, 1962, typewritten manuscript, Raymond Tucker Papers, Washington University Library, St. Louis, MO: Series 3, Box 20.
65. Plans for Riverfront Stadium included a set of holding cells for use by Cincinnati city police. The stadium seemed like such a secure location that the stadium's operations manual outlined procedures for the use of the stadium as a "command post" in the event of civil disorder, and included further instructions for using the stadium as a "military staging area" complete with instructions on the best routes and parking locations for military "heavy equipment." The manual also contained lengthy instructions for stadium staff in the event of a bomb threat. George Rowe, "Riverfront Stadium: An Operational Manual" (Cincinnati, OH: May 1974), Archives & Rare Books Collection, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH, 1a, 3.
66. Gershman, *Diamonds*, 191.
67. Stadium Authority of City of Pittsburgh, *Stadium Progress Report No. 6* (Pittsburgh, PA, August 1965), 9.
68. "Stadium VIPs Have Plush Tastes," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, March 22, 1971.
69. "Stadium Club Lawful, City Counselor Says," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 15, 1966.
70. St. Louis National Baseball Club, *How to Keep Your Eye on the Ball!* (St. Louis, MO: St. Louis National Baseball Club, c. 1965), pages unnumbered. Copy in Library of Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, MO.
71. "Berry Raps Moving of Families to Provide Crosley Field Parking," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, August 6, 1957.
72. "Parking Petitioners Whiff," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, February 22, 1958.
73. "W.E.C. Council Opposes Stadium," *Cincinnati Herald*, February 5, 1966. This event is also mentioned in Rochford, "The Games Cities Play," 19.
74. "You Can't Eat a Stadium," *Pittsburgh Fair Witness*, August 1970.
75. Historical scholarship has been critical of Pittsburgh's renewal projects for many of the same reasons. For an analysis of pre-stadium downtown development, see Lubove, *Twentieth Century Pittsburgh*, especially 106-41.
76. Donald Gunn, Speech at Busch Stadium groundbreaking. Raymond Tucker Papers, Washington University Library, Washington University, St. Louis, MO: Series 3, Box 20.
77. "Great Day for a Great City," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, May 26, 1964.
78. Stadium Authority of the City of Pittsburgh, *The Stadium: A Focal Point of the Renaissance* (Pittsburgh, PA: Stadium Authority of the City of Pittsburgh, 1964).
79. Judd, "Constructing the Tourist Bubble," 252.
80. Walker, "Building a Riverfront Winner," 44-45.
81. Civic Center Redevelopment Corporation, "The Downtown Stadium Project: Why This Is an Essential Investment for Business and Industry Throughout the Metropolitan St. Louis Area," St. Louis, MO, undated, Raymond Tucker Papers, Washington University Library, St. Louis, MO: Series 3, Box 18.
82. Dennis R. Judd, "Constructing the Tourist Bubble," 53.
83. "Land Development near Three Rivers Stadium Never Materialized," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, July 9, 1995; "Come Full Circle," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, March 31, 2002.