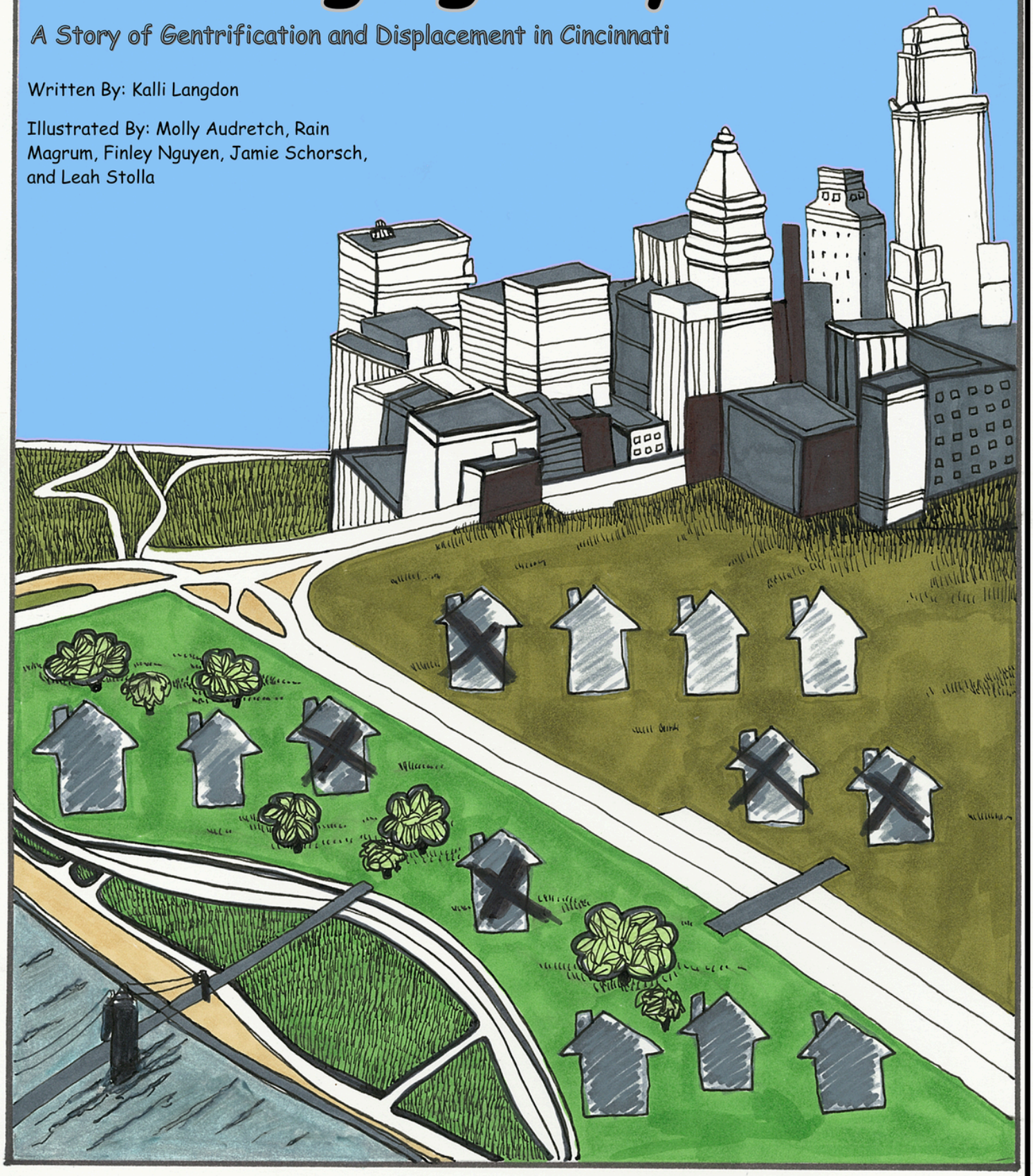
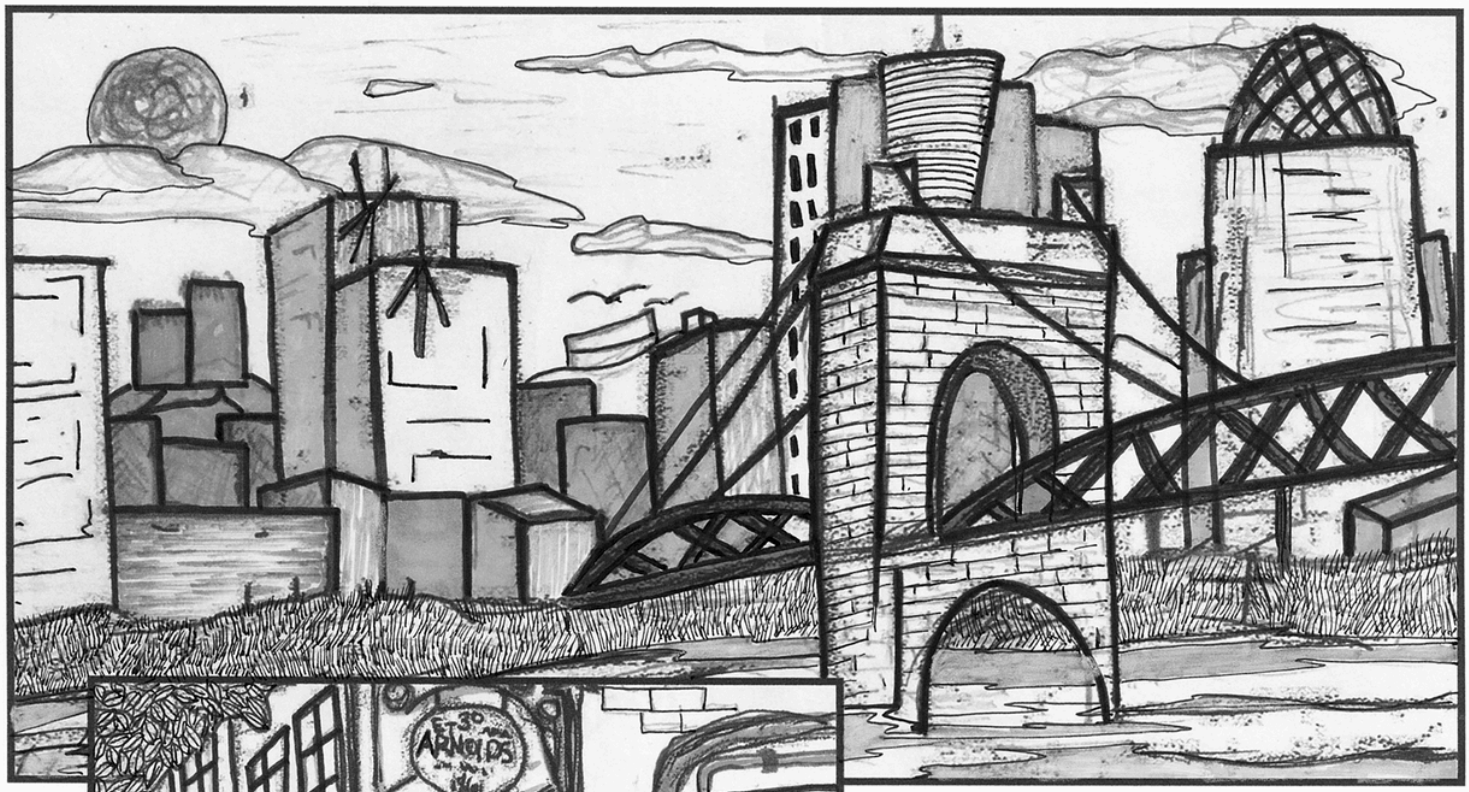
A Changing City

A Story of Gentrification and Displacement in Cincinnati

Written By: Kalli Langdon

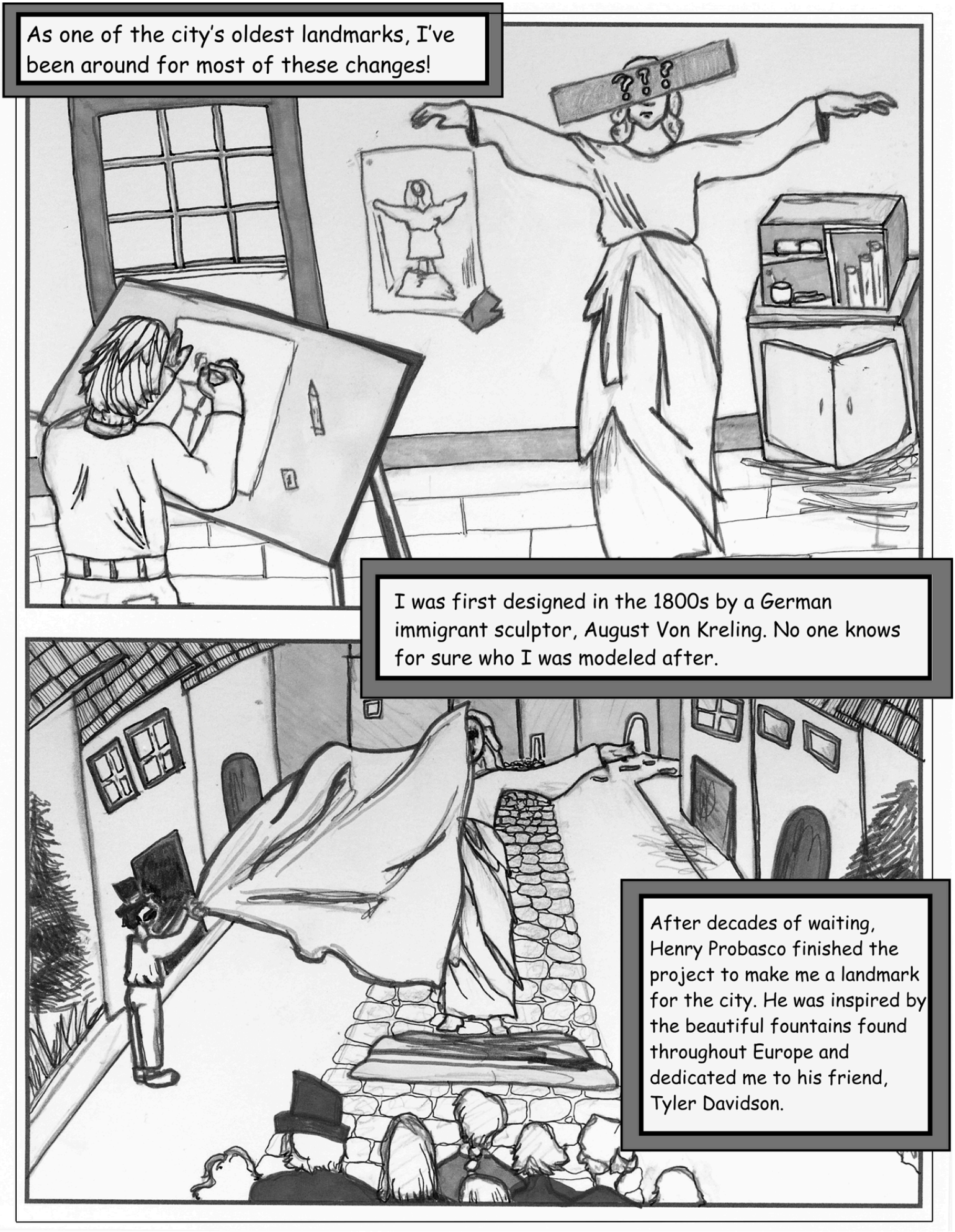
Illustrated By: Molly Audretch, Rain Magrum, Finley Nguyen, Jamie Schorsch, and Leah Stolla



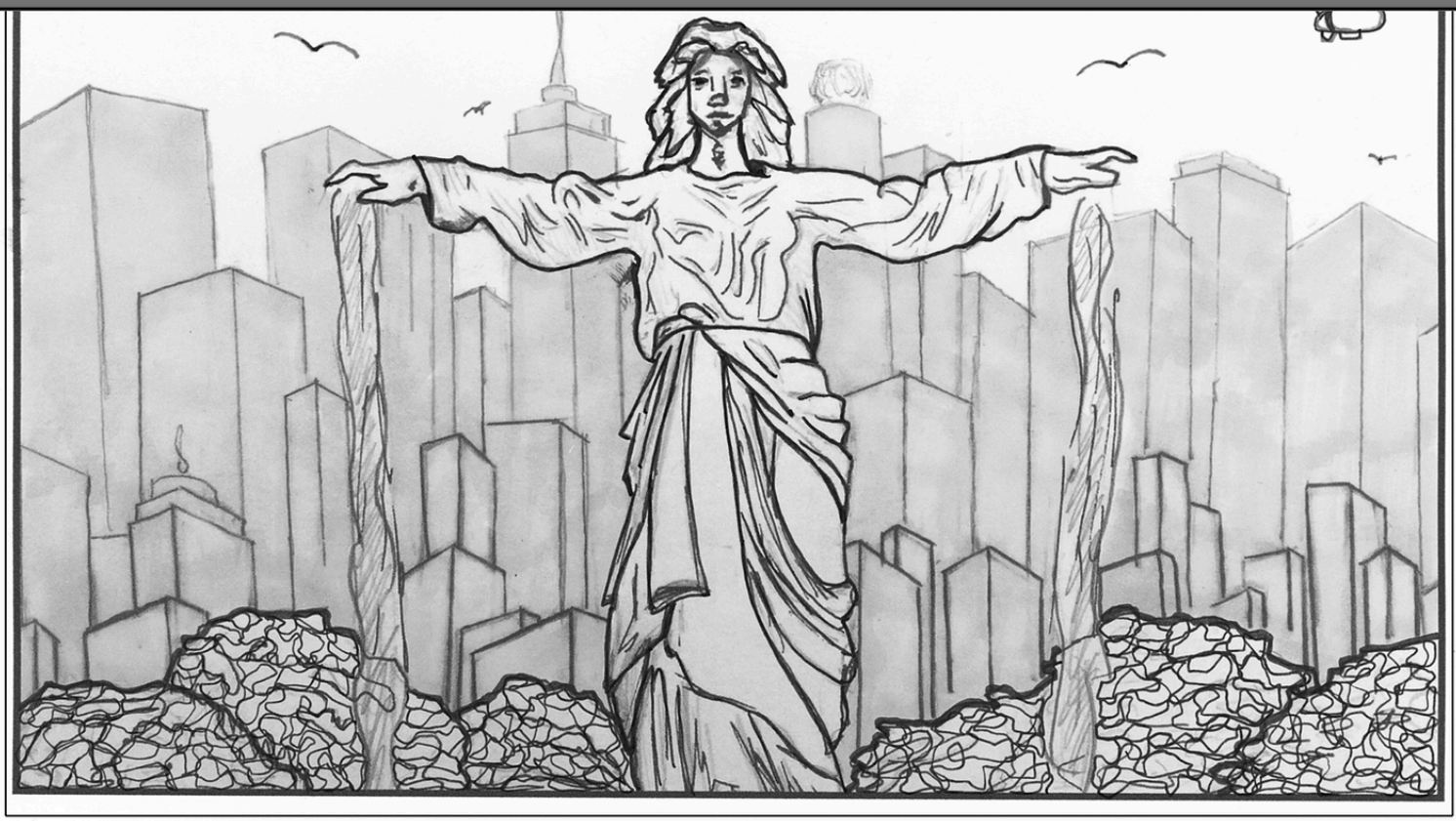


Welcome to Cincinnati, Ohio, a hotbed of creativity and collaboration.

Our city has experienced many changes through the course of its over 200 years history.


As one of the city's oldest landmarks, I've been around for most of these changes!
I was first designed in the 1800s by a German immigrant sculptor, August Von Kreling. No one knows for sure who I was modeled after.
After decades of waiting, Henry Probasco finished the project to make me a landmark for the city. He was inspired by the beautiful fountains found throughout Europe and dedicated me to his friend, Tyler Davidson.

I'm now known as the "Genius of Water" and have been around since 1870. I've seen many changes around the city since my creation, from new businesses to entire neighborhoods being redesigned. While these developments can be exciting, they can also hurt those living in the area. This process, called gentrification, often leads to rising costs and the displacement of residents. Learning about it and its consequences, makes us more aware of those experiencing it.



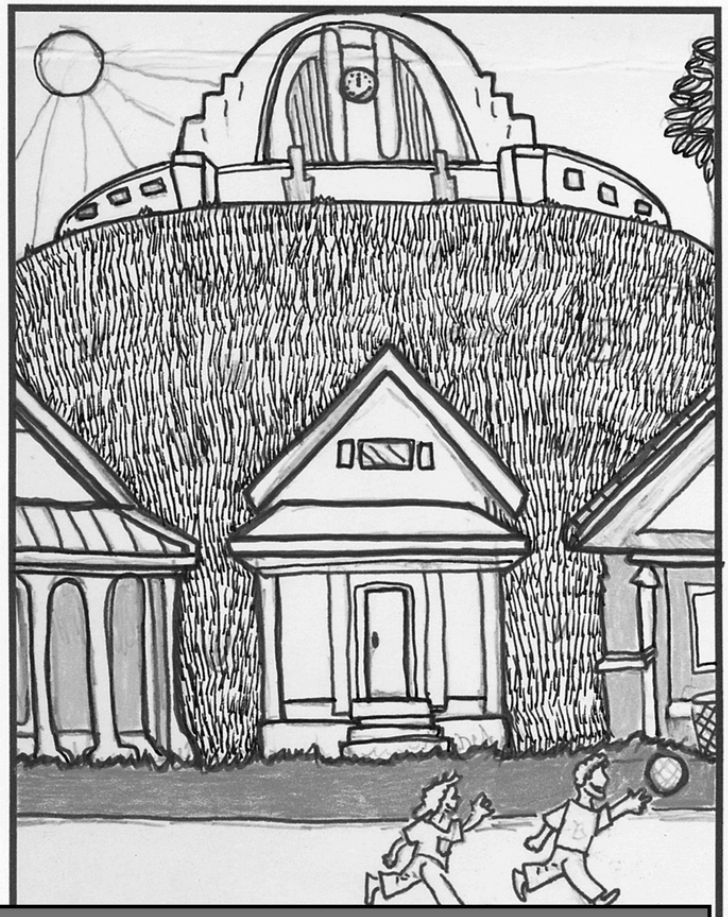
Some of my fellow landmarks of the city will help me tell the story of our city's developments and gentrification.

Meet Union Terminal. Union Terminal was once a massive railroad station with up to 216 trains passing through per day!

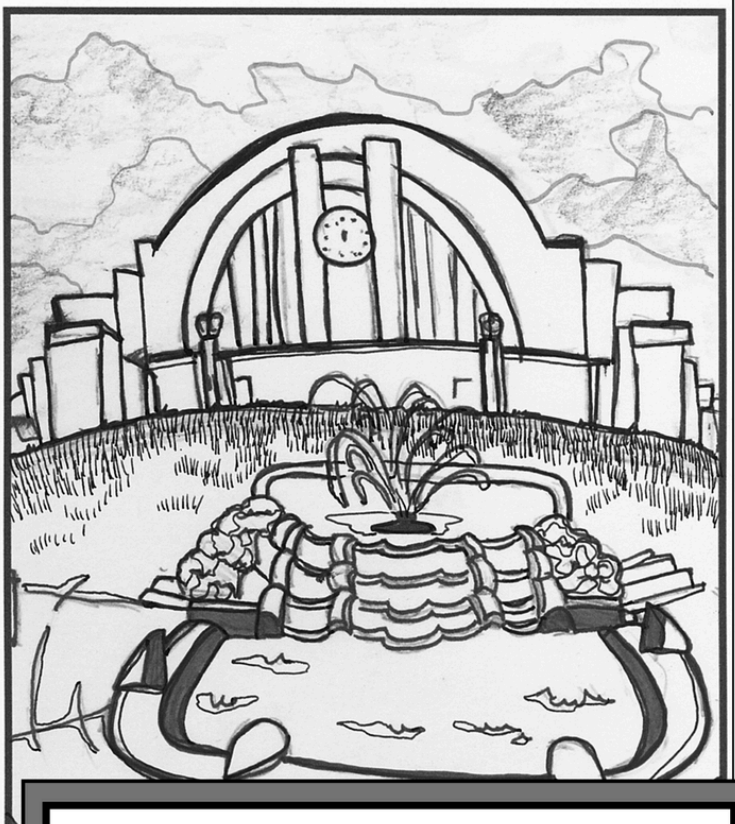
The station closed and was turned into a museum in 1990, exhibiting everything from dinosaur skeletons to life-size caves.

This change brought new opportunities for the community but also started a trend of rising property values and rents in the area.

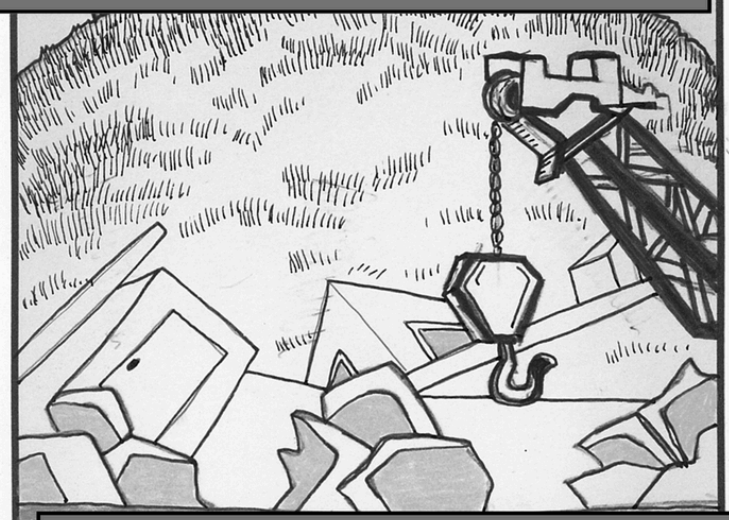
The local neighborhood where Union Terminal is located, the West End, had been a home to many people since Cincinnati was first settled.



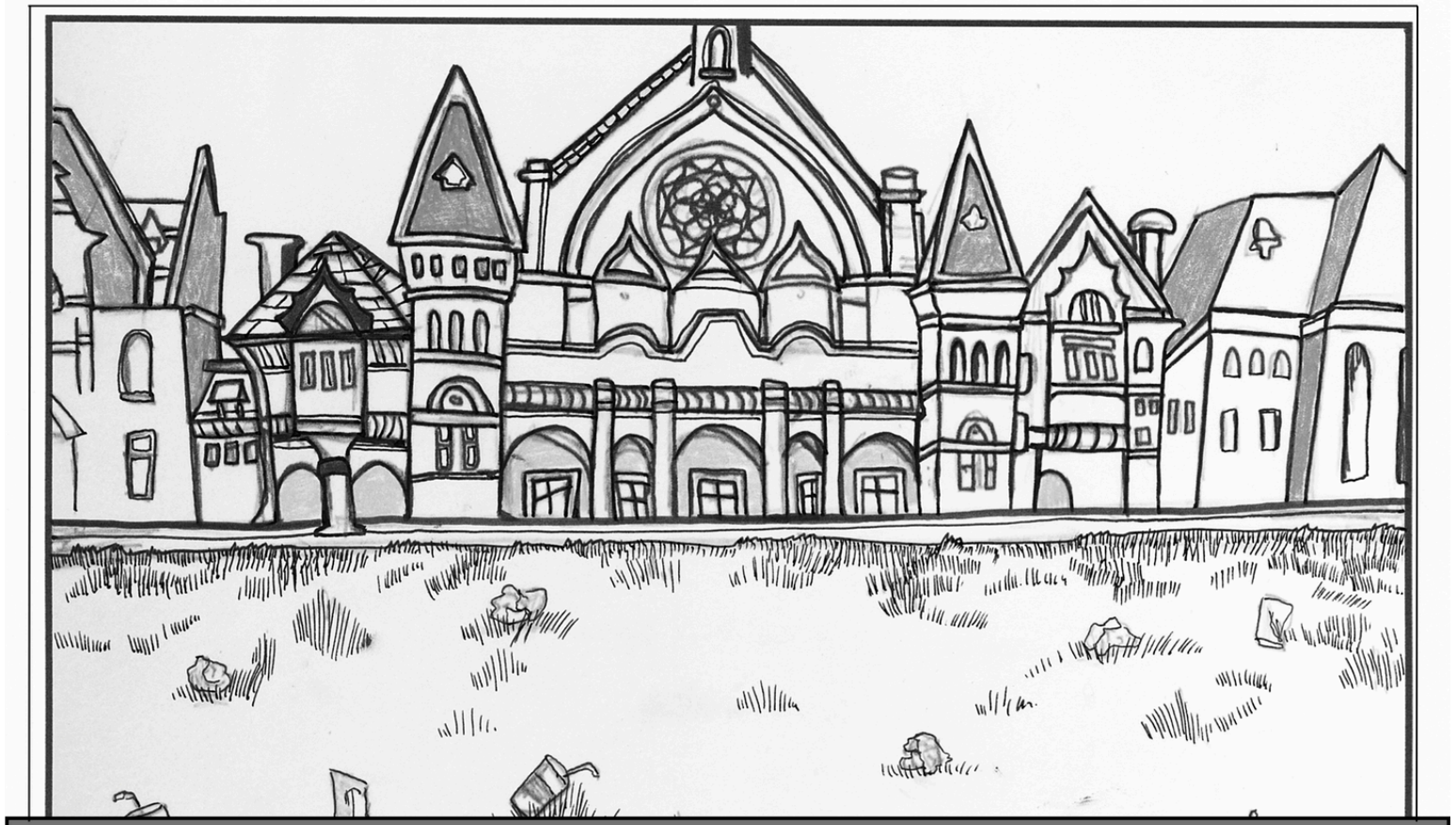
Recently, the West End has seen big changes, with new developments and businesses moving in. These changes have made it harder for long-time residents to afford their homes, forcing many to move out and seek new affordable places to live.



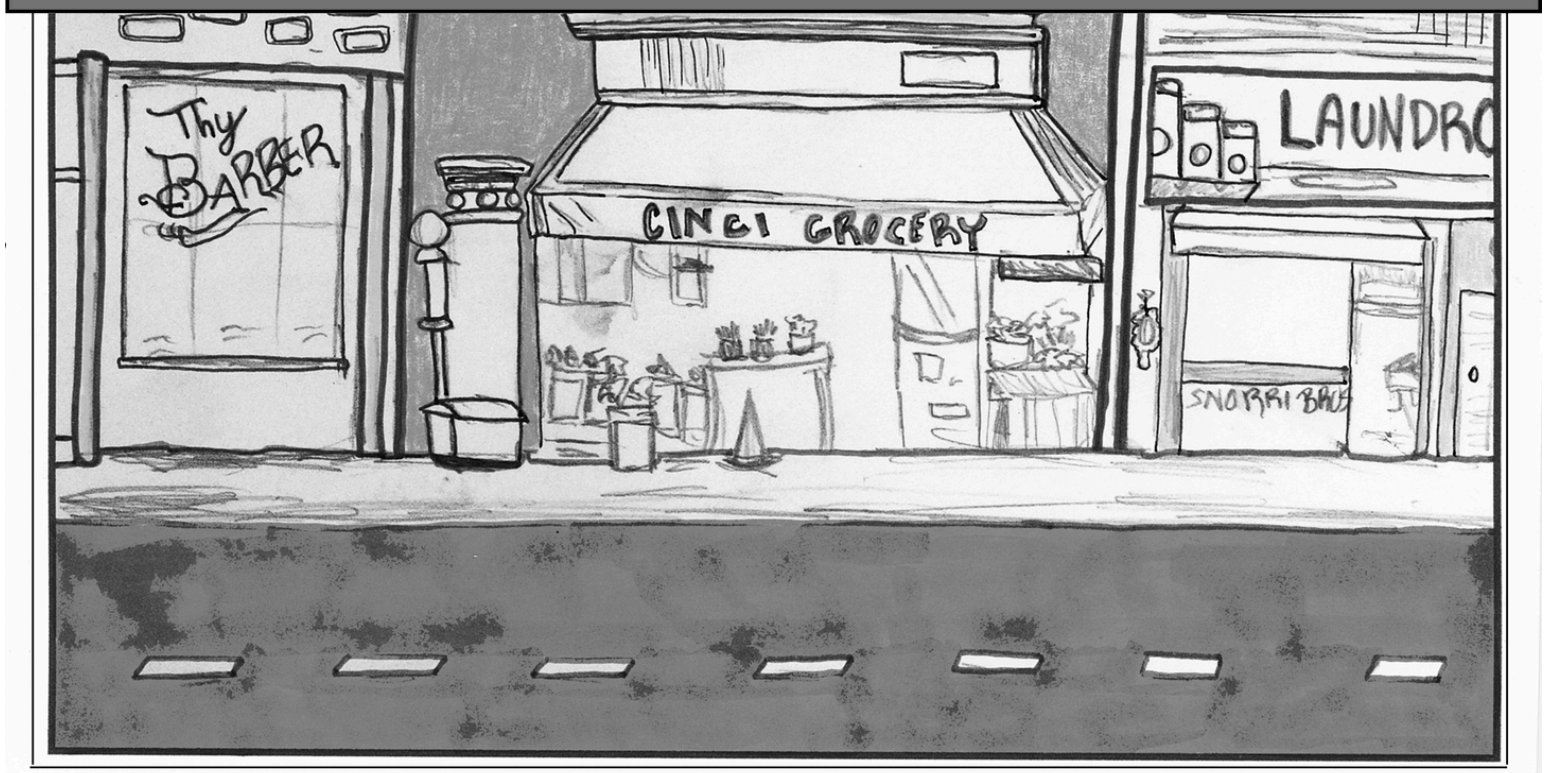
Today, over 4 in 10 of the neighborhood's inhabitants have given up their homes due to rising costs of living in the area.

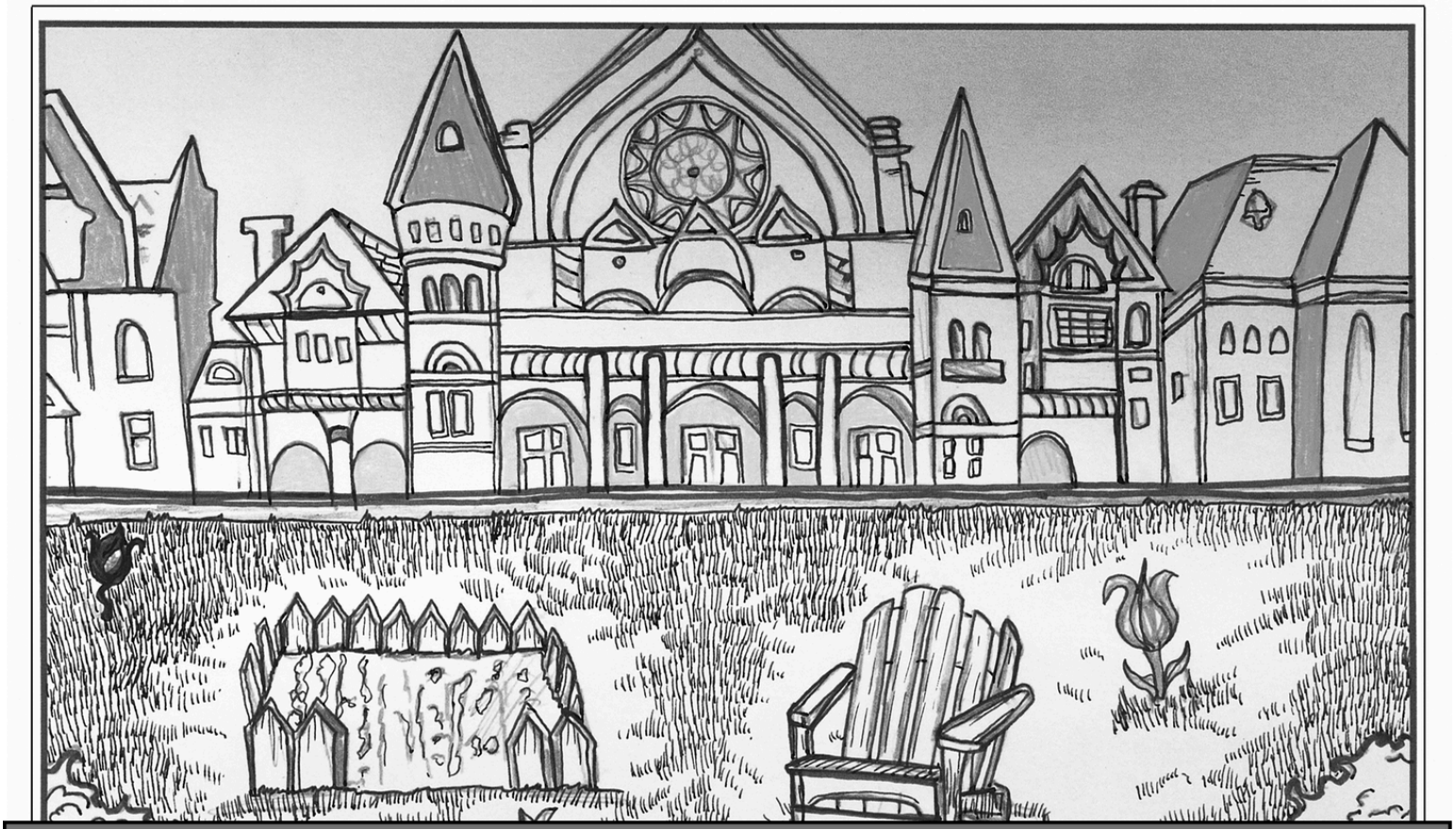


The construction of the new soccer stadium for FC (Football Club) Cincinnati took away housing space and caused rents to increase. This has led to significant displacement, pushing out the original residents of the neighborhood.

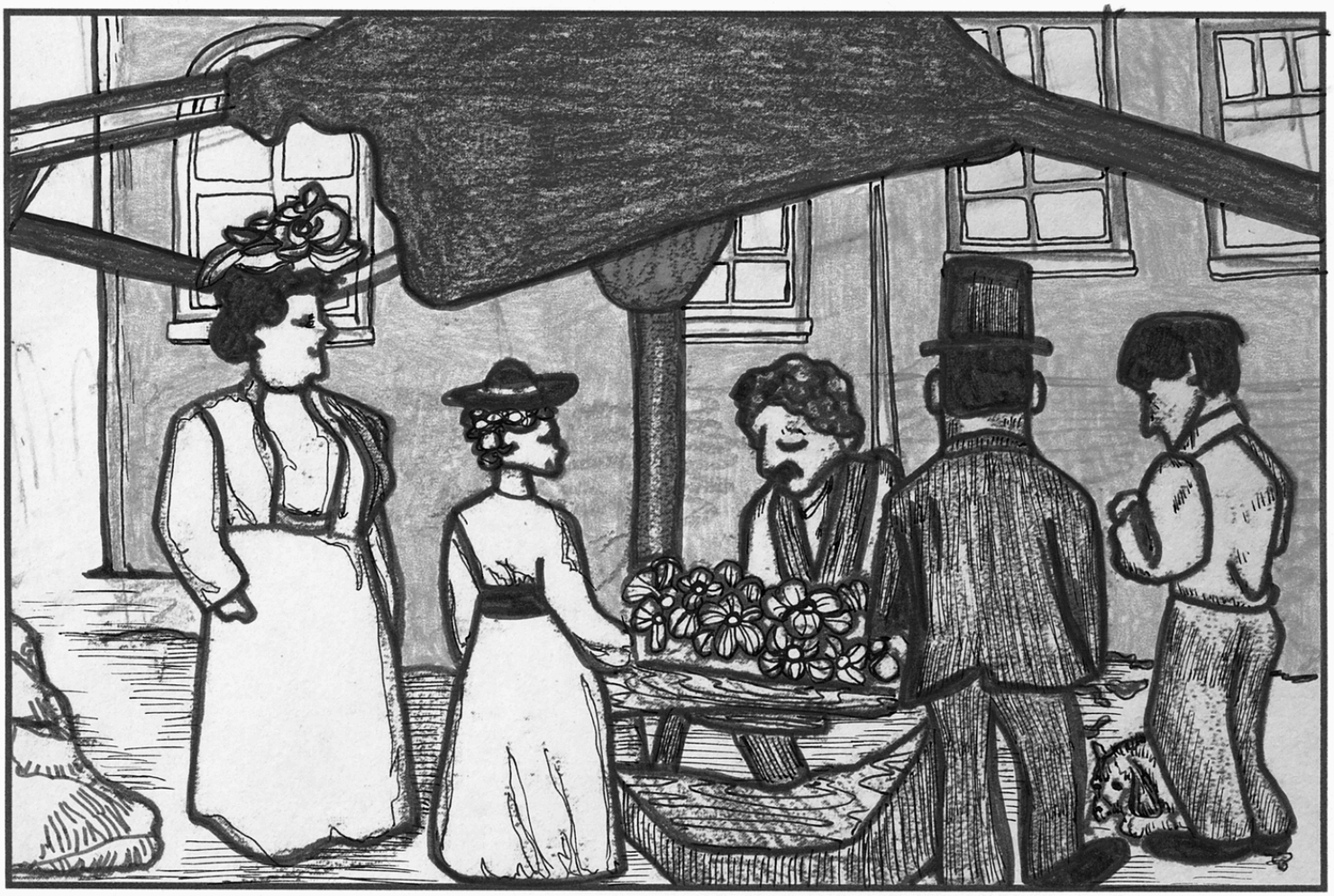


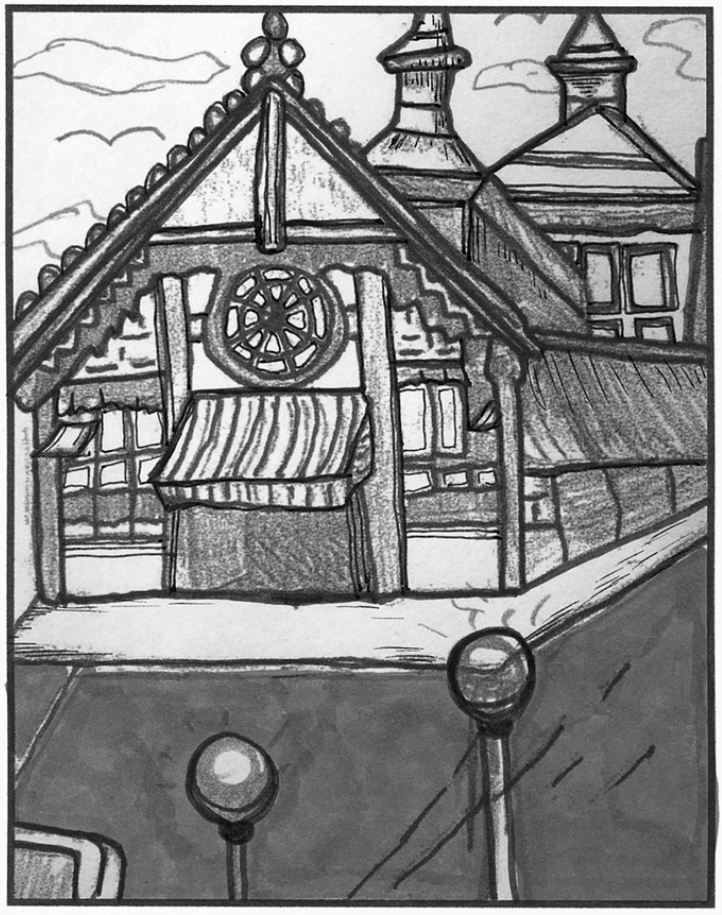
Located nearby in Over-the-Rhine are Music Hall and Washington Park. For many decades, Washington Park was known for drug use and violence, and many people were afraid to go there. However, it served as a rallying place for many poor and homeless people of the city. Over-the-Rhine, one of the oldest downtown communities, was once full of small businesses and community life. It still is today, but looks much different.



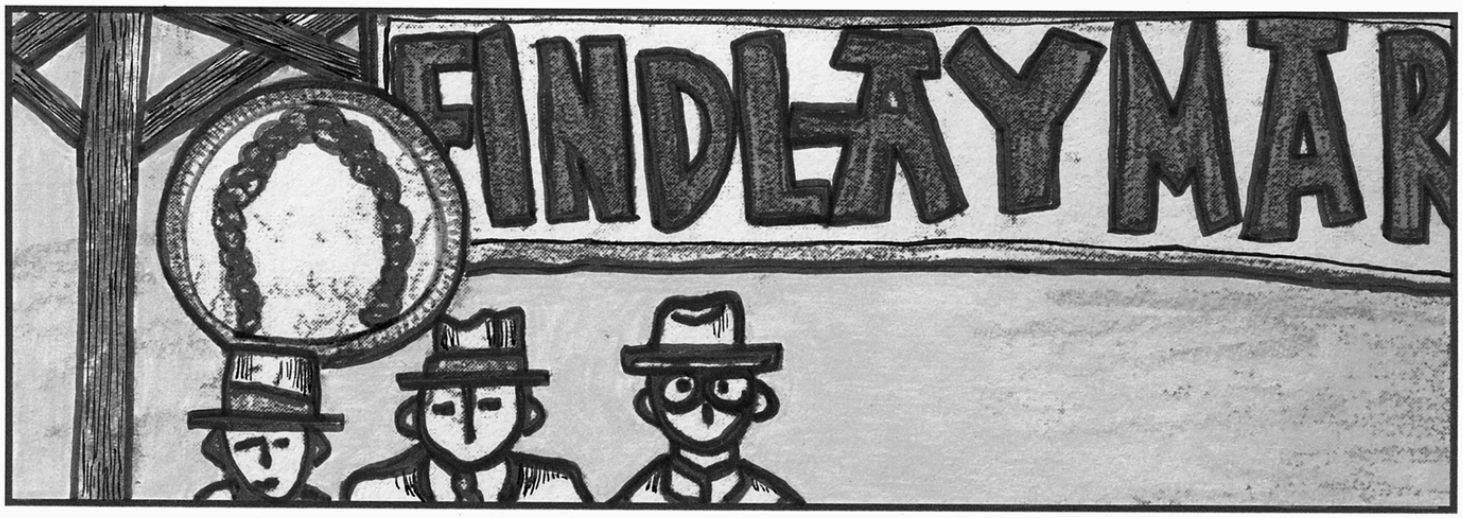


Today, the area is safer, and families of all kinds spend their days there. New businesses have been introduced but they drove up the rent cost for living in the area and forced out the older community-owned businesses who could not compete out. This made it difficult for long-time residents to stay, leading to more displacement.

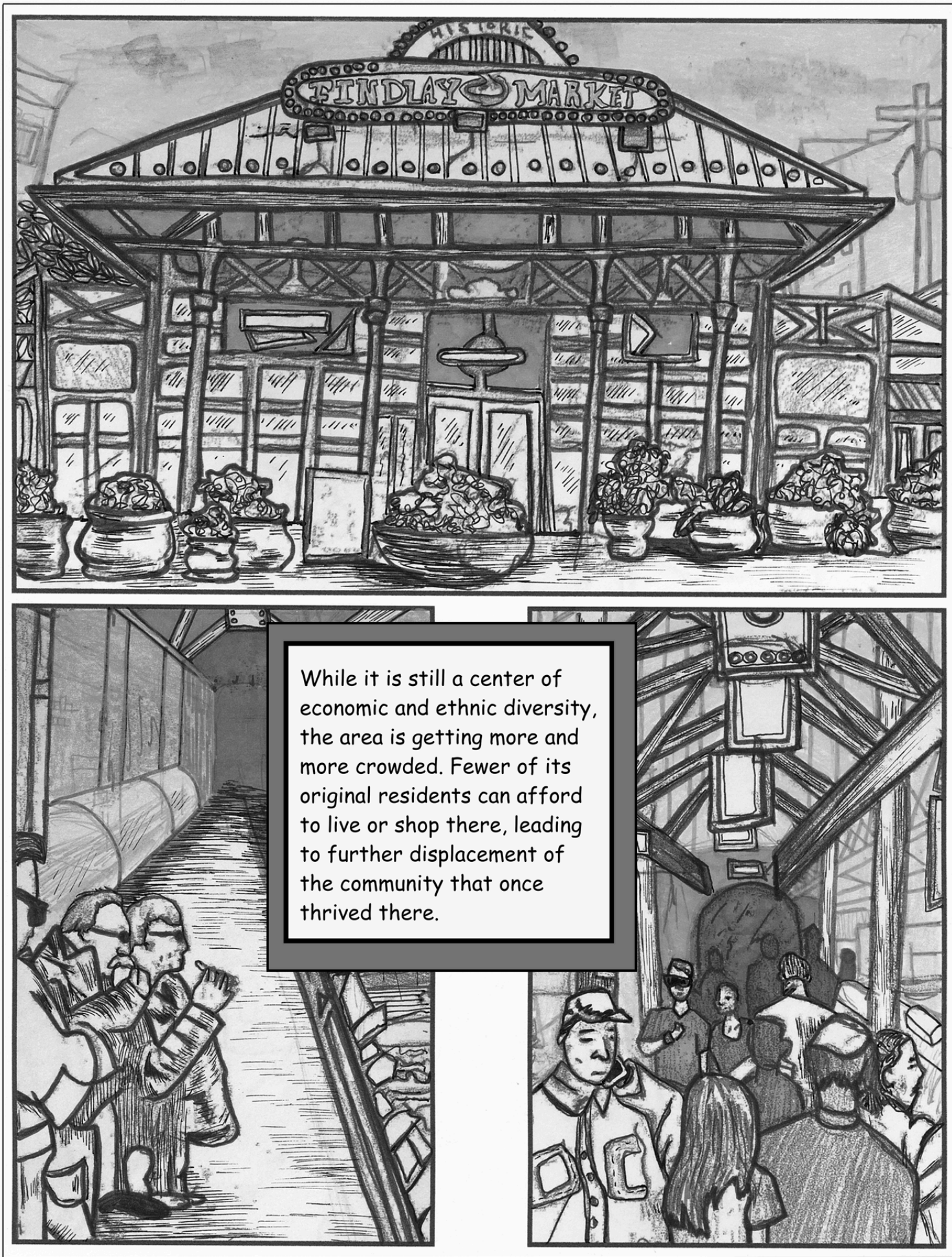


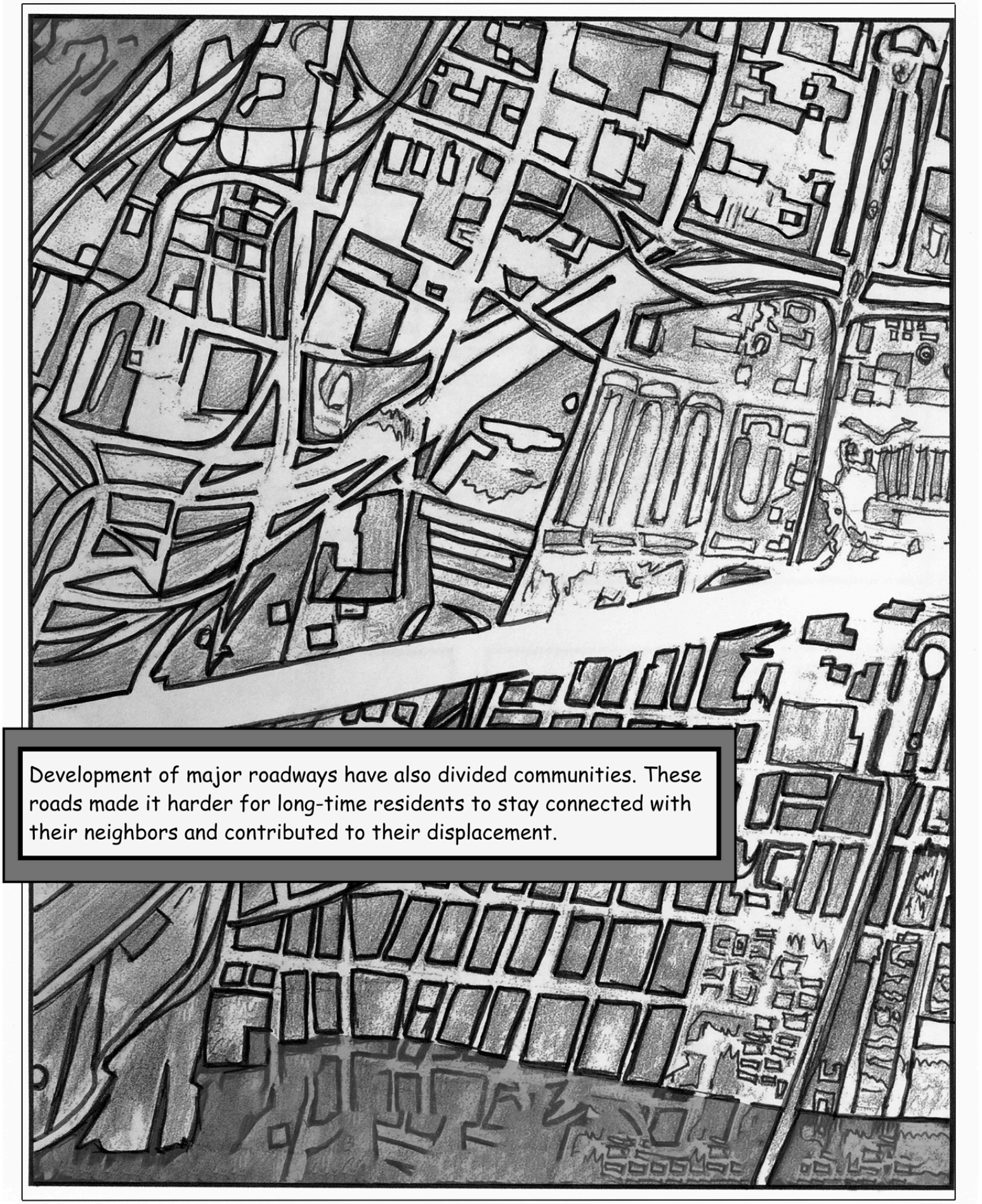


Not far from Washington Park, you can find Findlay Market, a collection of small vendors selling handcrafted goods and produce. Findlay Market opened in 1855 and is one of the oldest operating markets in Ohio!

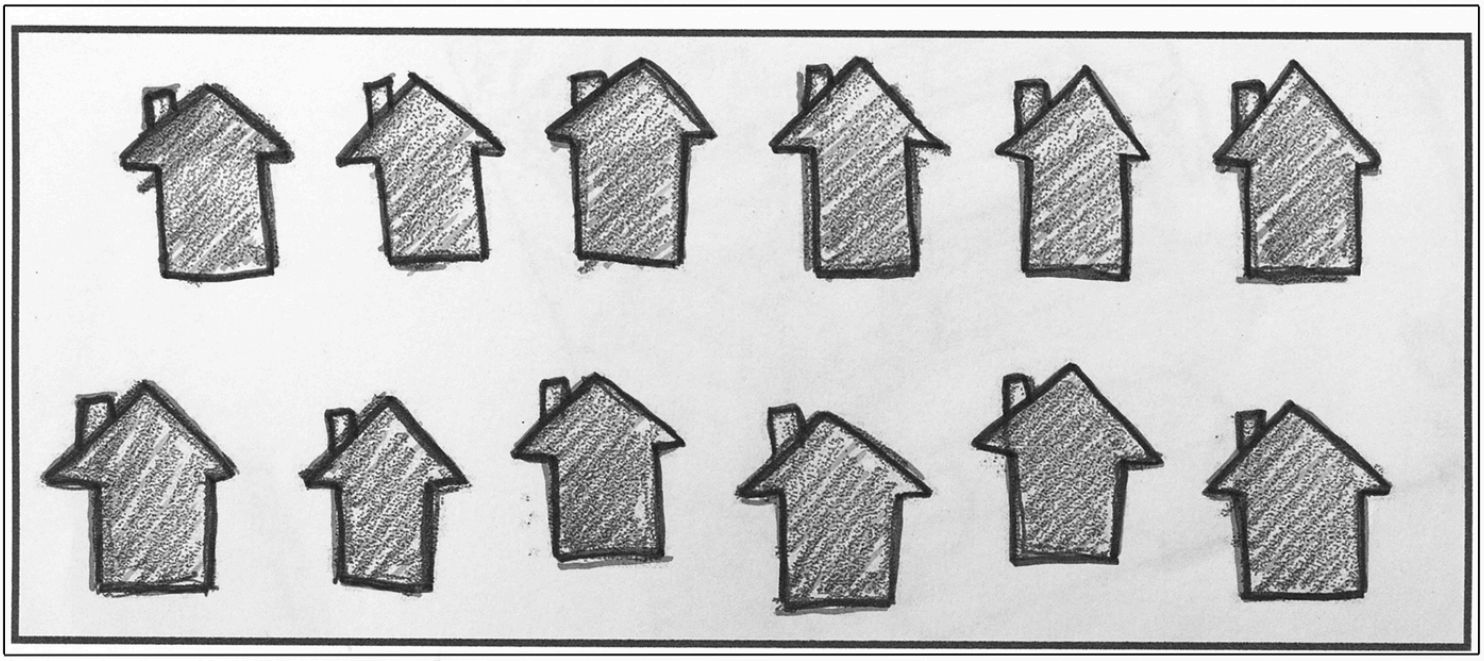


The area has always been full of small, local vendors selling everything from cheeses to flowers. The market has kept growing over the years and was given a $16 million renovation in 2004. This renovation brought more customers and higher sales, but it also increased the cost of renting space at the market.


HISTORIC
FINDLAY MARKET
While it is still a center of economic and ethnic diversity, the area is getting more and more crowded. Fewer of its original residents can afford to live or shop there, leading to further displacement of the community that once thrived there.

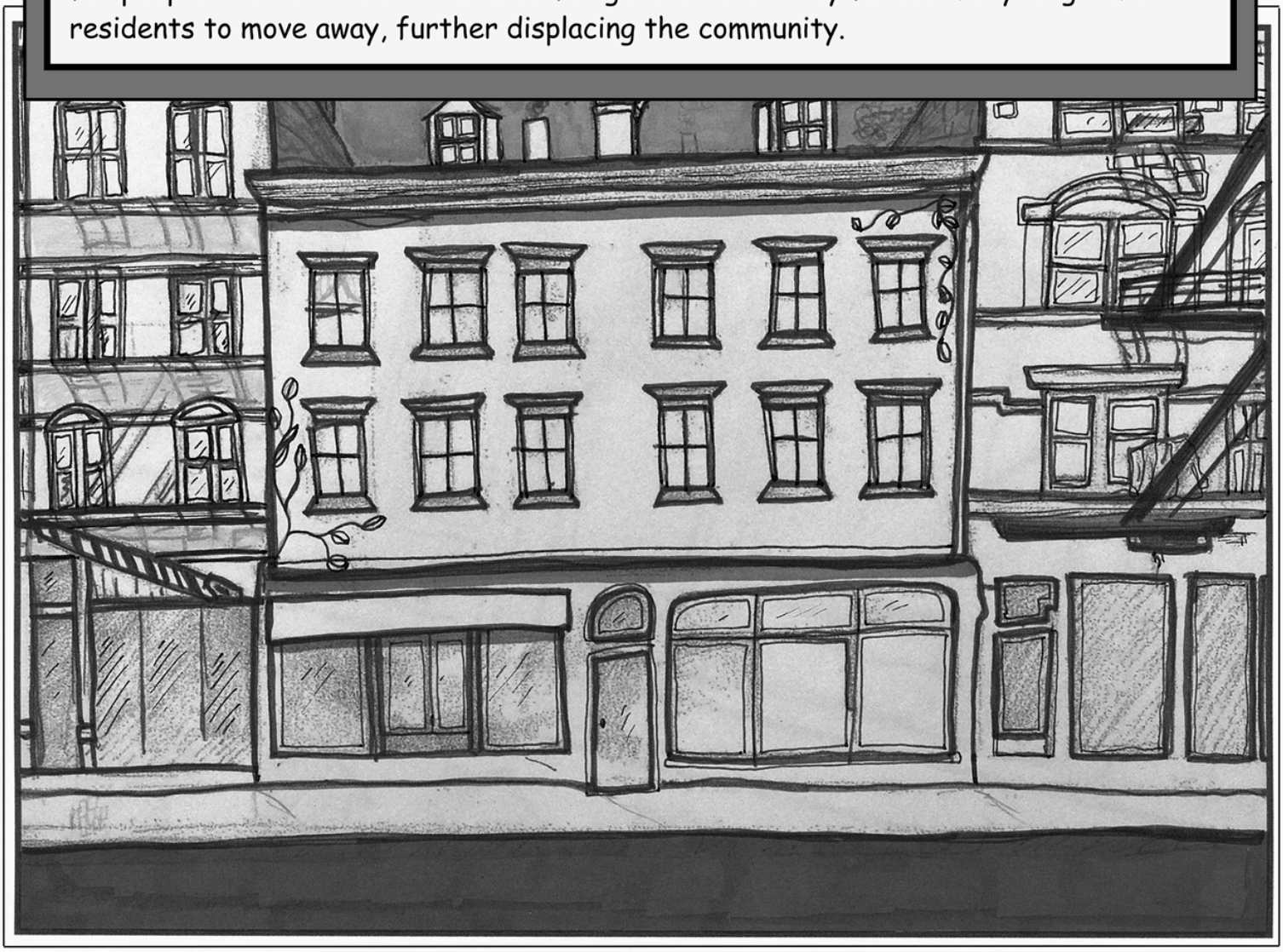

Development of major roadways have also divided communities. These roads made it harder for long-time residents to stay connected with their neighbors and contributed to their displacement.

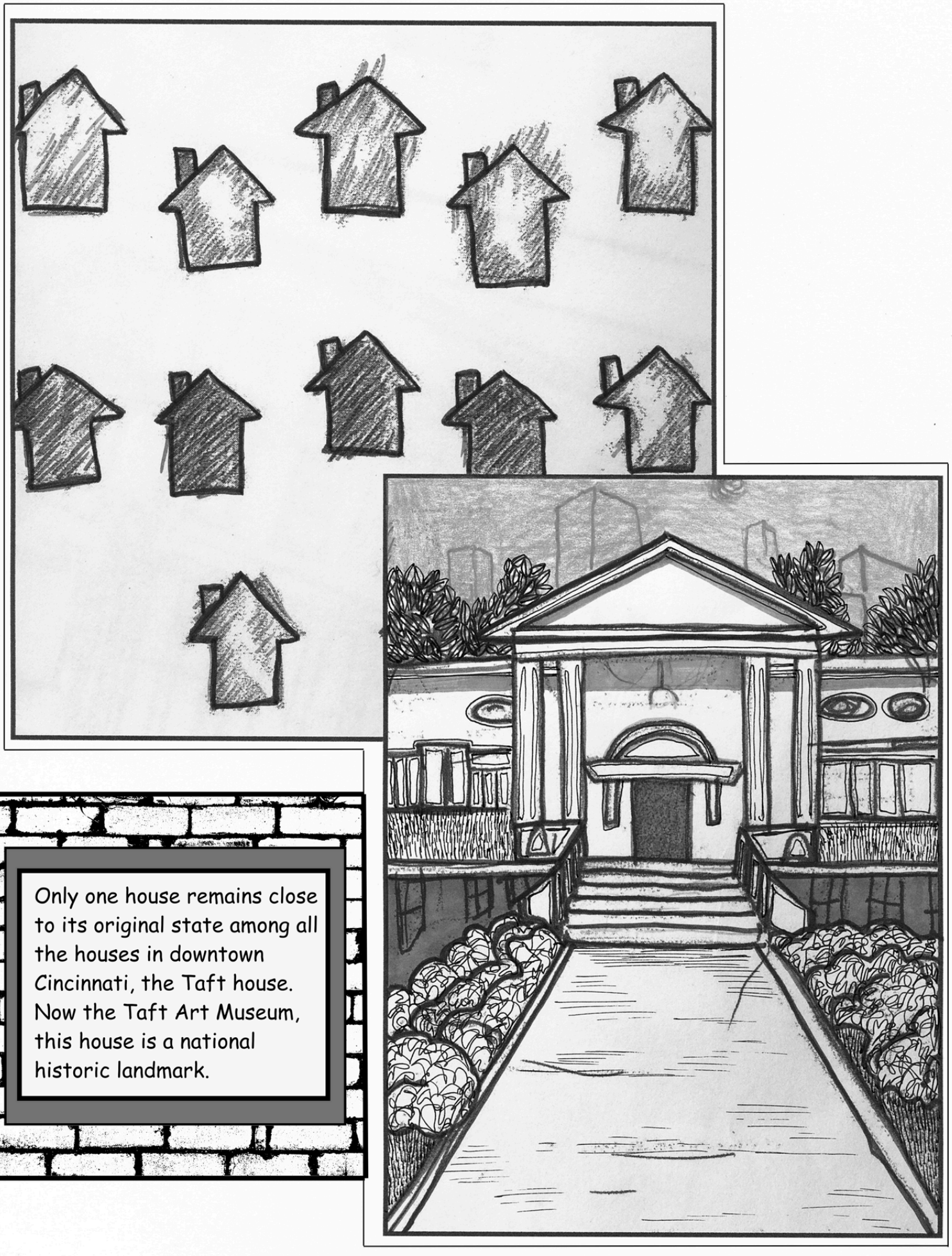
Abandoned and rundown buildings like this one spent years lining the streets of downtown, but there was plenty of affordable housing.

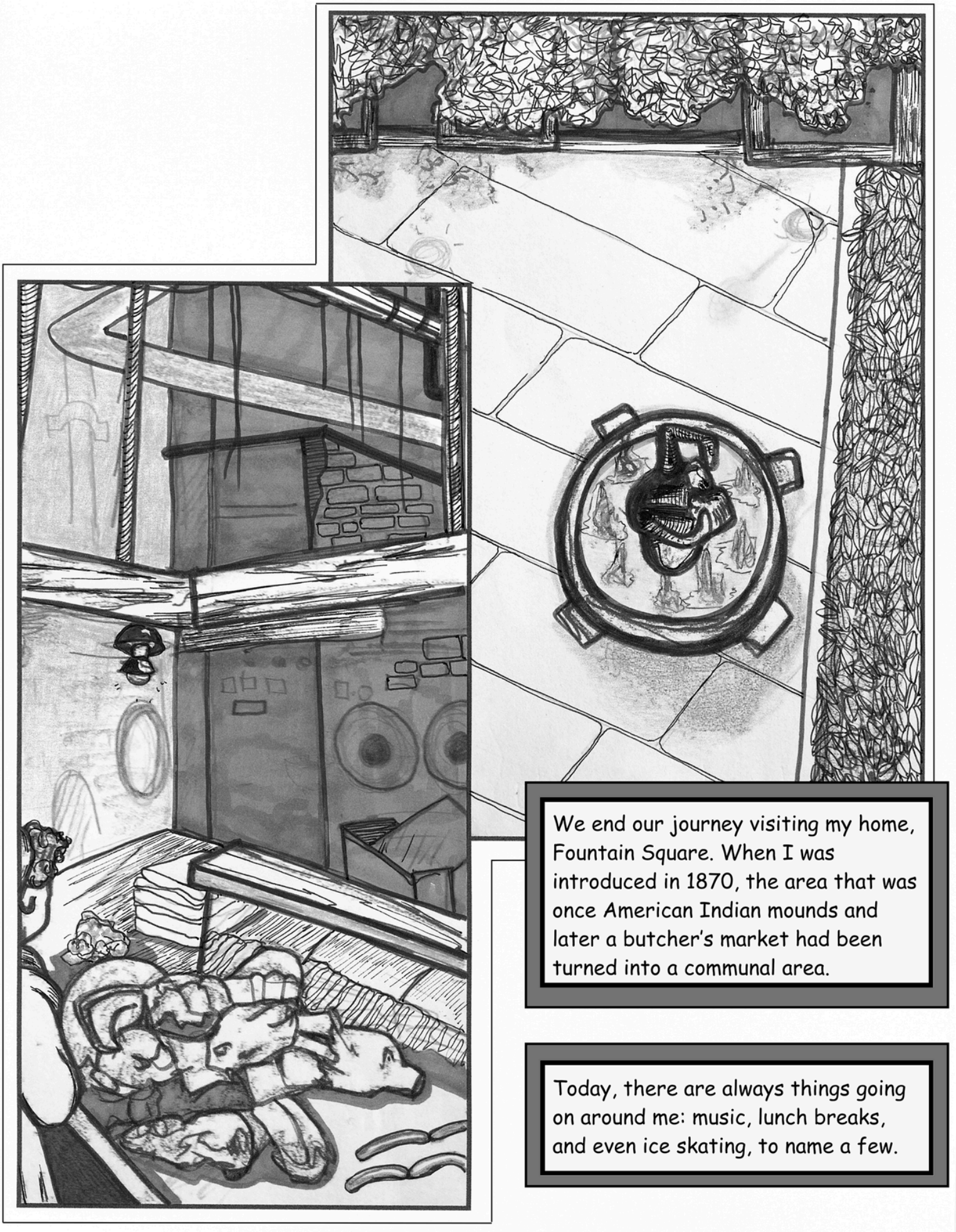


Then a development company named 3CDC began making changes to the neighborhood.

They transformed old buildings into sparkling new buildings, increasing real estate and rent costs. These changes decreased the affordability and availability of housing for people who had lived in the area for generations. They forced many long-time residents to move away, further displacing the community.

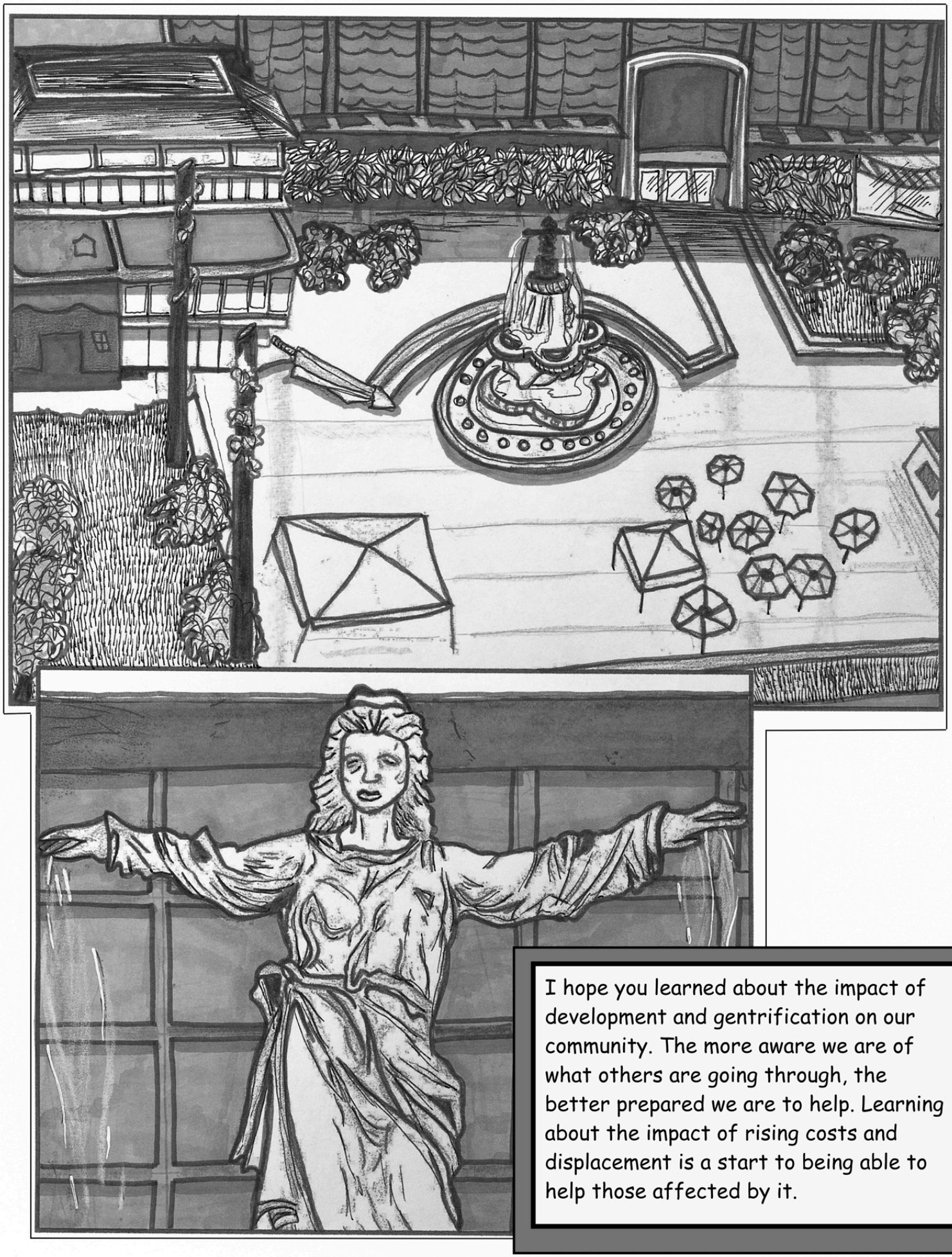



Only one house remains close to its original state among all the houses in downtown Cincinnati, the Taft house. Now the Taft Art Museum, this house is a national historic landmark.



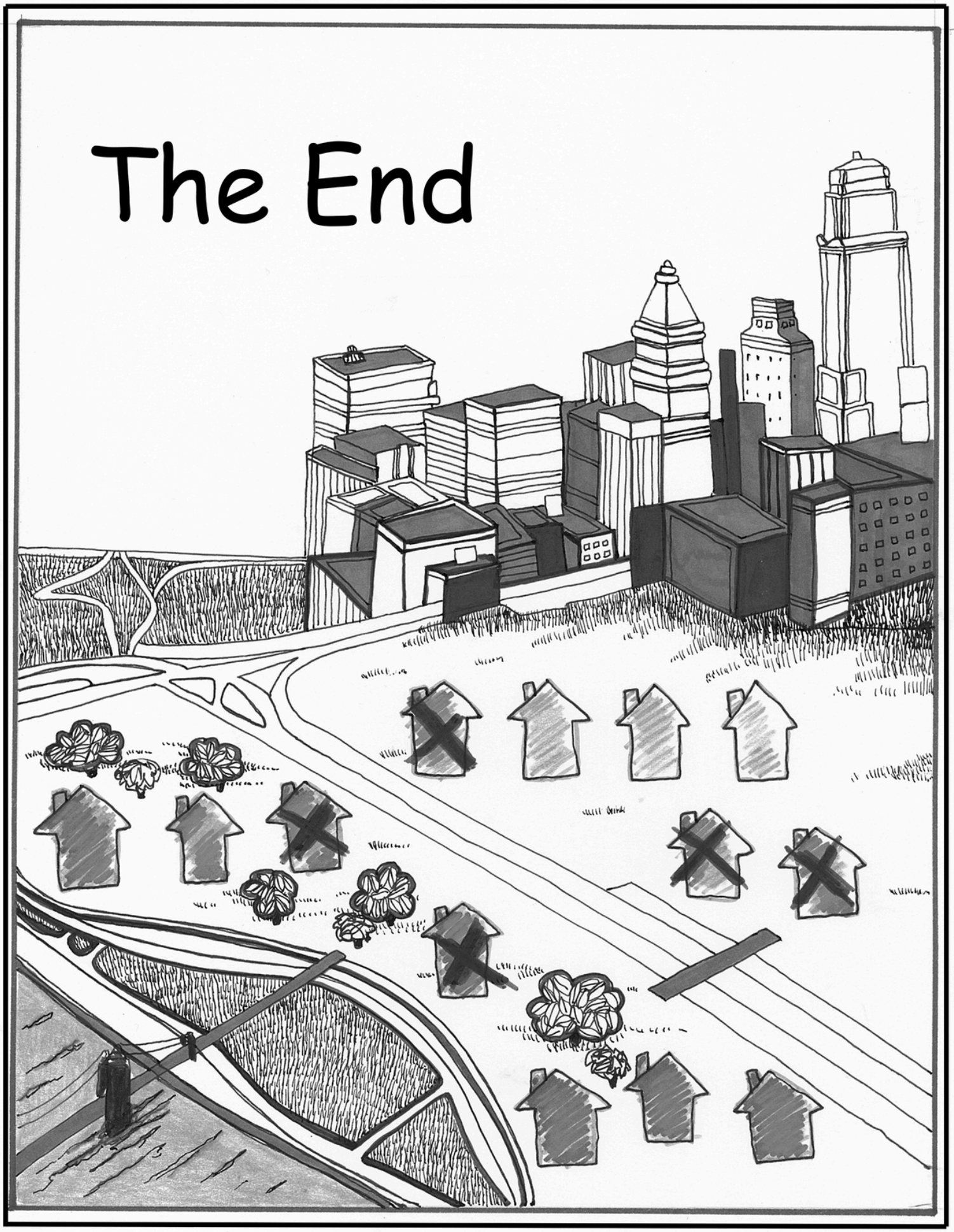
We end our journey visiting my home, Fountain Square. When I was introduced in 1870, the area that was once American Indian mounds and later a butcher's market had been turned into a communal area.

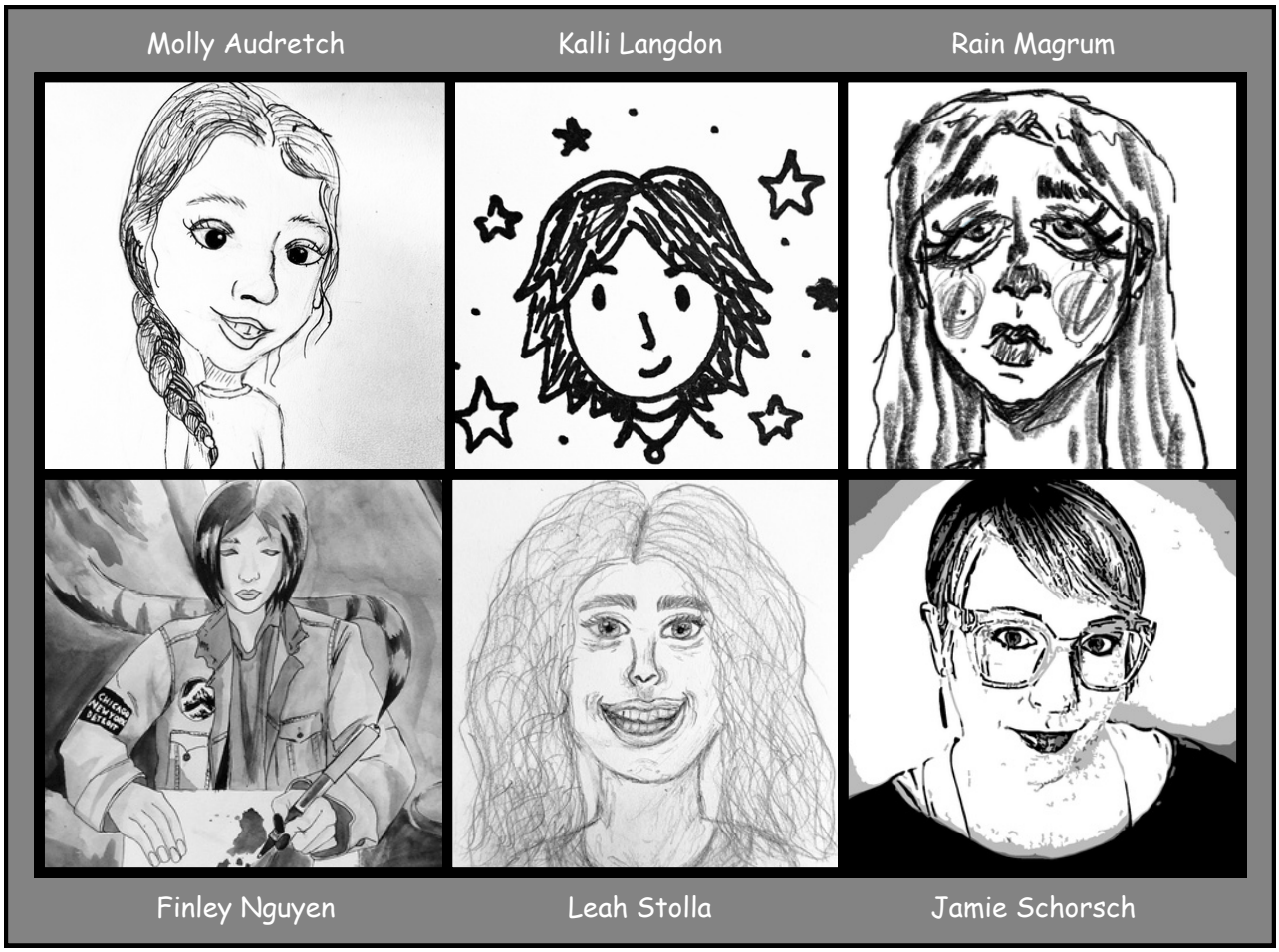
Today, there are always things going on around me: music, lunch breaks, and even ice skating, to name a few.



I hope you learned about the impact of development and gentrification on our community. The more aware we are of what others are going through, the better prepared we are to help. Learning about the impact of rising costs and displacement is a start to being able to help those affected by it.

The End





Hi! My name is Jamie Schorsch, and I am an artist and art teacher at Oak Hills High School. My amazing National Art Honor Society students—Molly, Kalli, Rain, Finley, and Leah—are passionate about social justice issues. We collaborated on the ideation, illustration, and writing of this cartoon to help you learn about the causes and impact of gentrification. Thank you for reading our story.