

Norman Krumholz, City Planner

In 1979, I had the good fortune to be appointed to President Jimmy Carter's National Commission on Neighborhoods. Stimulated by a good deal of pressure from noisy neighborhood advocates, the Commission received a million dollars and a year's time to hold hearings, identify all the problems of our country's neighborhoods and suggest a set of comprehensive, but low-budget solutions. The Commission struggled, held hearings, discussed, wrestled with the issues and wrote a report. One thing it didn't do was define what a neighborhood is. Its members were afraid to be fatally bogged down.

Happily, John Grabowski does not bog down on the issue of definition. While posing the question "Was Euclid Avenue a Neighborhood?" his paper provides an excellent overview of the historic formation of Cleveland's working class and ethnic neighborhoods. The paper also discussed the key roles of transportation, economic opportunity and evolving social tastes in neighborhood growth and decline. With respect to answering the question he poses, Grabowski accepts Webster's definition. According to Webster, a neighborhood is a small section of a city or town which has definite boundaries, and whose residents have familiar or common associations, similar interests and a degree of cohesiveness. Using these criteria, Grabowski concludes that, yes, elegant Euclid Avenue was a neighborhood even though it was far from the vision of most Cleveland neighborhoods as "ethnic, blue collar bastions of ...frugality and stability." Using the same definitions, I entirely agree. Yet, I am not certain that the definition is sufficiently comprehensive.

