

**COLLIER HEIGHTS: A NEIGHBORHOOD CASE STUDY EXAMINING THE  
INTERSECTION OF ARCHITECTURE AND RACIAL EQUALITY**

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**COLLIER HEIGHTS: A NEIGHBORHOOD CASE STUDY EXAMINING THE  
INTERSECTION OF ARCHITECTURE AND RACIAL EQUALITY**

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## SUMMARY

By using the Collier Heights neighborhood in the west side of Atlanta as a case study, this thesis will examine questions which arise at the intersection of architecture and racial equality. Research will focus on the years between 1952, when Collier Heights was annexed into the City of Atlanta, and 1968, the last year of major development in the area.

According to historian Andrew Wiese, Collier Heights is regarded as “the country’s preeminent mid-century African American developed suburb.” This statement can be attributed to numerous factors including its importance in the realm of African American cultural heritage, community planning, and social history. As well, its architecture is noteworthy for its exceptionally intact collection of mid-twentieth century houses, which were built from custom design and stock plans.

Collier Heights is a worthy case study not only because it is currently in the application process to the National Register for Historic Places due to its size, its well-planned nature, and the principal role played by African Americans in its development, but also because of the history that this neighborhood represents. The story of Collier Heights is specific to Atlanta’s monumental past which has shaped the development of our social environment today; it is an environment situated at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century wherein the everyday politics of housing are still poignant and where the concept of attaining the “American dream” is a daily headline.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

“We don’t want any undesirable people moving into the neighborhood,” said a potential white neighbor of Nat King Cole’s in 1948. “Neither do I,” responded Mr. Cole, “If I see anybody undesirable coming in, I’ll be the first to complain.”

“Collier Heights: A Neighborhood Case Study Examining the Intersection of Architecture and Racial Equality” explores the ways and means that members of the black middle-class were able to purchase, design, and build a typical suburban neighborhood for themselves in post-World War II Atlanta, Georgia. This study will examine issues concerning the junction of architecture, specifically the single-family home, and the attainment and assertion of social equality. By taking into consideration the ability of architecture to serve as part of a larger social practice which enables its users to provide an outward expression of their social status and inner desires, this thesis will demonstrate that African Americans asserted their equality, gained social acceptance, challenged white supremacy, and empowered themselves through the attainment of better housing and expanded homeownership in the postwar suburban landscape.

The case study of this exploration is the Collier Heights neighborhood located in Atlanta’s west side. The time period of interest begins with Emancipation and ends with the passing of the Fair Housing Act in 1968, although the duration of time which will receive the most attention are the years following World War II. According to

historian Andrew Wiese, Collier Heights is regarded as “the country’s preeminent mid-century African American developed suburb,” and is significant due to its importance in the realm of African American cultural heritage, community planning, and social history. As well, its architecture is significant for its exceptionally intact collection of mid-twentieth century houses. In fact, Collier Heights’s history and existence is so remarkable that it is currently in the application process for designation on the National Register of Historic Places.

Highly promoted to a regional audience by *The Atlanta Daily World* as the mid-century African American suburban neighborhood in Atlanta, and featured in national publications such as *The New York Times*, *Ebony*, and *Time* magazine, Collier Heights’s distinctive nature is attributed to a combination of factors including, although not limited to, middle- and upper-class African American population growth, political and civic leadership, financial institutions, available lands, and land-development expertise. At a time when strict residential and social segregation was the norm, when houses were in short supply and when demand was great, black Atlantans successfully worked with private land developers and public planning agencies to meet the needs of a growing middle-class who wanted to own their own piece of the American dream.

Scholarship pertaining to this examination comes from the study of race and space, suburbanization, African American history, Southern history, and Atlanta history. Additional analysis will pertain to the rules and regulations concerning the real estate industry and the governmental policies put into effect that dictated how and where blacks could and should live in postwar America. As well, attention will be put on



prescriptive sources such as magazines that were geared to the consumptive tastes of the black middle-class. And lastly, my research concentrated on documentation and research of the Collier Heights neighborhood, its history, its designers, and its residents. The focus of this final exploration was dependent on articles, photographs, and advertisements of the neighborhood, as well as correspondences with Collier Heights residents.

In regards to the scholarship and literature pertaining to this thesis, intellectuals such as Charles Abrams, Kenneth Jackson, Dolores Hayden, Gwendolyn Wright, and numerous others, have contributed to the study of housing and American suburbanization. In the book *Forbidden Neighbors: A Study of Prejudice in Housing*, Charles Abrams detailed the link between the housing problem in American cities and the growth of prejudice.<sup>1</sup> Written in 1955, this book recorded the major changes taking place in neighborhoods across the country and opened up dialogue concerning the vast implications for America's social and political structures.

In his book, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*, Kenneth Jackson demonstrated how the physical space surrounding all of us, sets up living patterns which condition a person's behavior. By examining the American experience in contrast to the rest of the world, Jackson proved how important and symbolic suburbia was to mid-century Americans when he stated, "suburbia has become the quintessential physical achievement of the United States."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Abrams, *Forbidden Neighbors: A Study in the Prejudice of Housing* (New York, Harper, 1955).

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1985) 3.

Within her scholarship on suburbanization, Dolores Hayden explored the intersection of social history and architectural history with an emphasis on the domestic realm. In her book *The Power of Place: Urban Landscape as Public History*, Hayden stated that “architecture, as a discipline, has not seriously considered social and political issues, while social history has developed without much consideration of space or design.”<sup>3</sup> By making this statement, Hayden was attempting to understand better the urban cultural landscape of the United States while proposing a more unified approach to scholarship that would combine aesthetics, politics, and the ethnic history concerning minorities. In addition, her book *Redesigning the American Dream: The Future of Housing, Work, and Family Life* examined the patterns of private and public domestic life, both in the United States and abroad, and explored the challenges associated with the attainment of the ideal home while at the same time, probed for solutions concerning the planning and designing of better housing, social services, and public space.<sup>4</sup>

Also drawing attention to the connection between social history and architecture is historian Gwendolyn Wright. In her book *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America*, Wright offered an attempt to bring to attention certain issues concerning American housing which related to various architectural and ideological models that throughout history the United States had adopted. Stating that “architectural structures cannot fully remedy inequalities or redress wrongs,” Wright

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<sup>3</sup> Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscape as Public History*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995) 8.

<sup>4</sup> Dolores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream: The Future of Housing, Work, and Family Life* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1984).

pointed out that houses and residential communities in general do convey a great amount of meaning concerning our current and past social values.<sup>5</sup>

Concerning issues specific to African Americans, in his book *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century*, Andrew Wiese demonstrated that whites were not the only Americans to inhabit suburban spaces and his work traced the history of black migration to the suburbs. In addition, his essay *The House I Live In: Race, Class, and Suburban Dreams in Postwar United States*, provided insight to the emergent black middle-class and the desires for social equality for which they were striving. In addition, scholarship such as *The New African American Urban History* edited by Kenneth Goings and Raymond Mohl explored twentieth-century African American history in regards to the city and the urbanization of the black population.<sup>6</sup>

Pertaining to scholarship concerning the South and specifically Atlanta, *Black, White and Southern: Race Relations and Southern Culture 1940 to the Present* by David Goldfield presented its reader with issues concerning race and space wherein he provided accounts of the major moments of the civil rights era, while also examining more recent efforts by African Americans to achieve economic and class parity.<sup>7</sup> Authors such as Ron Bayor and Kevin Kruse have contributed scholarship documenting the complex history of Atlanta, a city that began as a small railroad hub and became

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<sup>5</sup> Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the American Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981) xix.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Goings and Raymond Mohl, ed., *The New African American Urban History* (London: Sage Publications, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> David R. Goldfield, *Black, White and Southern: Race Relations and Southern Culture* (Baton Rouge, LA, Louisiana State Press, 1990).

home of the civil rights movement; a city with a past full of social strife and segregationist practices; a city that was “too busy to hate.”<sup>8</sup>

Stemming from the scholarship of the aforementioned authors, in an effort to understand better the connection between the domestic built environment and social issues concerning equality, my research strategy was to approach the subject in the following way. In Chapter 2, “American Suburbanization,” I examine the migration patterns of African Americans after Emancipation and examine the process and trends of suburbanization leading up to the postwar years. Discussed in this chapter will be issues concerning what exactly a suburb was, who inhabited them, and what did it mean to inhabit such spaces. In an attempt to convey that owning a home was a mark of social status and acceptance which provided a sense of completeness and stability to the inhabitants, the symbology of homeownership will also be explored. Later in the chapter, the Great Migration will be discussed, and the patterns of black movement and lack of decent housing available to blacks will be analyzed. Following this discussion, it will become evident that as white fears about losing their racial superiority heightened, as resentment over job competition was rising, and as an increased demand of housing was emerging, whites began to take measures which further restricted the mobility of blacks in social, economic, and spatial terms.

In the following chapter, “Racialized Space,” the discussion will address the systematic ways in which segregation and class exclusion in the housing industry

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<sup>8</sup> Ron Bayor, *Race and the Making of Atlanta* (University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Kruse, Kevin, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*, (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2005). Quote by Mayor William Hartsfield, <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp>, (March 2009).

became enshrined as public policy. Attention will be given to the handbooks and manuals utilized by the New Deal's Home Owner's Loan Corporation and the Federal Housing Administration wherein appraisal methods were intended to evaluate neighborhoods based on the character of the community (i.e. the color, religion, and socioeconomic makeup of the people who lived there); this was done as an attempt to keep neighborhoods racially homogeneous under the guise of securing property values. In the process, racism became public policy.

Chapter 4, "Homes for Cadillac Families," will address the lack of decent housing available to blacks and specifically the emergent group of middle-class blacks who, by the postwar years, were rising in numbers. Stories about the headaches, hardships, and frustrations associated with attaining a better house in a better neighborhood will be presented. As African Americans were able to overcome these obstacles, elite members of this group were highlighted in prescriptive literature such as *Ebony* magazine. Within this chapter, attention will be placed on *Ebony* and the ways in which this magazine presented an expressive, consumption-oriented social lifestyle that epitomized a suburban vision of black middle- and upper-class life. Later in this chapter, analysis will be put on other prescriptive sources, such as *House & Home* magazine, in regards to the growing discussion concerning the desperate need for new and better housing for the black middle-class population.

The final chapter, "Atlanta," explores the ways and means that middle-class African Americans were able to rise above traditional racist stereotypes of the postwar years and carve out for themselves a piece of the American dream. By securing for

themselves land on Atlanta's west side, and by working with white and black politicians, developers, banks, and real estate companies, Atlanta's black middle-class built for themselves a separate suburban enclave, Collier Heights, which could rival any white middle-class suburban community around the country. Full of typical (and a few unique) ranch-style mid-century houses, Collier Heights is an extraordinary expression of the advancement of social equality through the built environment. By overcoming years of systematized racism in the housing industry, and prejudice in all facets of society, the residents of Collier Heights created spaces of self-expression, independence, and empowerment.

## CHAPTER 2

### AMERICAN SUBURBANIZATION

It's better to live in a "shack" that's your own than to abide in a place that belongs to another.

- *Baltimore Afro-American*, 1927

Spurred by the return of economic prosperity, the decline of the industrial city, and the rise of the suburbs, among other circumstances, in the years following World War II, America's identity was greatly altered. The industrial past that once dominated society no longer held its influence; manual labor was on the decline and consumption was surpassing production; and while people were abandoning the central city for new bedroom communities, massive housing developments were taking the place of factories as one of the era's dominant urban images. Americans began to live and think differently about themselves in the period between the end of World War II and the mid-1970s; it was a period of time which historian Robert Beauregard in his book *When America Became Suburban* labeled the "short American century" wherein the United States became the most prosperous of nations, the first suburban society, and a global superpower.<sup>9</sup>

In the years between 1945 and 1970, Americans experienced a period of prosperity - jobs were plentiful, wages were on the rise, and young war veterans returned

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<sup>9</sup> Robert A Beauregard, *When America Became Suburban* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

home feeling confident enough about the future to flee their city apartments in exchange for a home with a mortgage in the suburbs. After the war, Americans focused on a peacetime conversion in which the dream house would be a focal point of postwar material comfort.



Figure 2.1 General Electric Advertisement, 1943 (Source: Albrecht, *World War II and the American Dream*, xxi).

During this short American century, Americans celebrated the wealth of consumer products, particularly those associated with the single-family home. *Better Homes and Gardens* promoted the “kitchen of tomorrow” in department stores around the country. Architects, engineers, and manufacturers focused their attention on creating faster and better methods to build houses, while scientists and inventors explored new materials and techniques such as Styrofoam, Saran, and moldable plywood. At the same time,



designers were exploring the aesthetic possibilities of these advancements by creating now-classic designs for modern living. Admired throughout the world for its vast array of consumer goods and its comfortable, modern way of life, America was a reinvented, bountiful society rooted in a suburban environment. But how did this suburbanization come to be, and who occupied these spaces?

According to Kenneth Jackson in the book *Crabgrass Frontier*, the suburb, as a residential locale inhabited by scattered dwellings and businesses situated outside of city walls, existed since the earliest of civilizations and was an important part of the ancient, medieval, and early modern urban traditions. In America, established suburbs existed since well before the Revolutionary War. In Boston, a 1719 real-estate developer advertised a new development at Barton's Point as "laid out in House Lotts with two Streets Cross, that have very fine prospect upon the River and Charlestown and a great part of Boston."<sup>10</sup> In Philadelphia the first suburb opened in the Northern Liberties in 1741, and in New York, Greenwich Village was separated by two miles of marsh land from the crowded, unhealthy town below Wall Street. Suburbanization as a "process involving the systematic growth of fringe areas at a pace more rapid than that of core cities, as a lifestyle involving a daily commute to jobs in the center" first occurred in the United States and Great Britain around the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> But what were the characteristics of these early suburbs, and were they similar to our notion of suburbia today?

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<sup>10</sup> Jackson, 13.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

In his book, Jackson explained that by 1815, five spatial characteristics were shared by all the major “walking cities” in the world.<sup>12</sup> Two of those characteristics are particularly important to this discussion. First, due to the fact that the nineteenth-century work day was long, and because all commutes to and from work had to be done by horse or foot, inhabitants of the walking city lived in close proximity to their jobs. The second important characteristic of the walking city was the tendency of the most fashionable and respectable addresses to be situated close to the town center. Based on European tradition dating back thousands of years, to be a resident of a big town was to enjoy the best life had to offer, as opposed to living outside the city walls, in lesser surroundings. Thus, in their original inception, the United States’ (and the world’s) first suburbs contrasted with the twentieth-century’s vision of suburbia. In today’s society, the concept of suburbia goes hand-in-hand with middle- and upper-class spaces; places where a better class of people lived, who sustained spatial privileges and advantages, and where a better lifestyle could be had. This vision also privileged those who had the means to move out of the urban core. So how did this change come about?

By 1875, the walking city would be turned inside-out due to the introduction of the steam ferry, the commuter railroad, the horsecar, the elevated railroad, and the cable car. Combined, these advancements led to the separation between commercial areas and residential areas wherein people who could afford to move out of the urban core of cities could secure for themselves healthier, cleaner, more orderly environments in which to call to home. Made possible by a plethora of available undeveloped land surrounding

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<sup>12</sup> Jackson assigned the term “walking city” to preindustrial agglomerations because the easiest, cheapest, and most common method of getting about was by foot.

the central cities, these new suburbs were romantic visions of an ideal, harmonious, and refined democratic way of life. Figure 2.2 contains an illustration from Thomas Hill's *Right and Wrong, Contrasted* from 1884 which juxtaposes the social life of the urban environment with that of the suburban.<sup>13</sup>

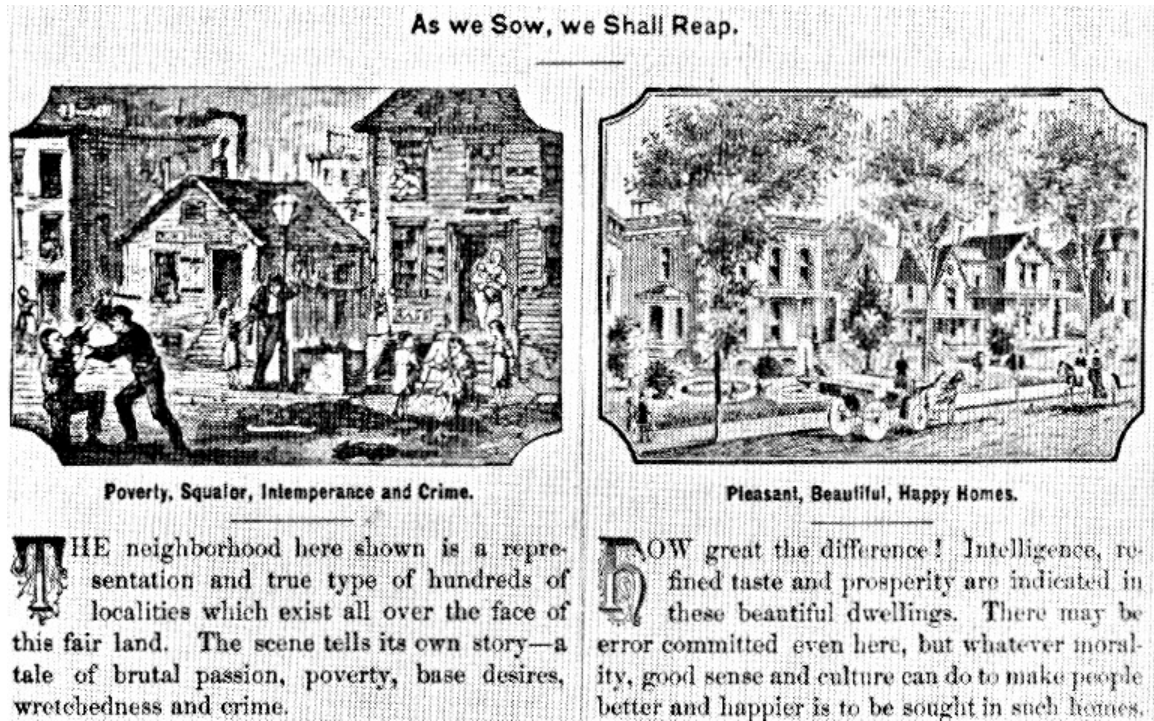


Figure 2.2 Illustration from Thomas Hill's *Right and Wrong, Contrasted*, 1884 (Source: Wright, *Building the Dream*, 98).

By the middle of the nineteenth-century, Americans were a people of plenty, and the wages of even the most meager working men were higher than those found elsewhere around the world. Geographically, Americans were also fortunate in regard to the amount of space available to its citizens. In contrast to some other countries where much of the undeveloped land was taken up by treeless desert or frozen tundra, the United States

<sup>13</sup> Wright, *Building the Dream*, 98.

was heavily comprised of forested or grass-covered land that was easily inhabitable; there seemed to be an almost endless supply of land in North America.

Often a function of the size of the country as well as the speed and availability of mass transit, affordable property was available to the working-class members of society who aspired to occupy and own a safer and more secure place for their families. As stated in an advertisement from the *Louisville Courier-Journal* in 1871:

#### \$50 CASH WILL BUY A LOT

\$50 cash on each lot, remainder in 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 years The community, and in particular clerks, mechanics and laboring men who are paying nearly one-half of their earnings for rent are invited to this sale.

#### BE ON HAND, BUY A LOT

and in the course of a few years you will be rid of house rents and exacting landlords.<sup>14</sup>

By 1890, when the Bureau of Statistics announced that the Western frontier no longer existed, the United States had become the world's leading industrial nation and expectations about residential space had become implanted in middle-class culture. Thanks in part to prescriptive sources extolling the benefits and availability of suburban spaces, as well as the statements made by politicians, theologians, writers, industrialists, and musicians, the concept of "Home Sweet Home" had taken hold in the American psyche.<sup>15</sup> As a result, the single-family dwelling became a symbol in the built

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<sup>14</sup> Jackson, 129.

<sup>15</sup> Payne, John Howard.

environment which conveyed specific meanings regarding the social status and inner desires of its inhabitants.

## THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

In light of this new cultural symbol, homeownership was seen as an investment that would gain people status and wealth as well as serve as a confirmation of moral rectitude. “A man is not a whole and complete man,” Walt Whitman wrote, “unless he owns the house and the ground it stands on.”<sup>16</sup> New notions about the actual and symbolic value of the house as a physical entity could be found in statements such as those by nineteenth-century Yale theologian Timothy Dwight:

The habitation has not a little influence on the mode of living, and the mode of living sensibly affects the taste, manners, and even the morals, of the inhabitants. If a poor man builds a poor house, without any design or hope of possessing better, he will...conform his aims and expectations to the style of his house. His dress, his food, his manners, his taste, his sentiments, his education of his children, and their character as well as his own, will all be seriously affected by this ugly circumstance.<sup>17</sup>

Such sentiments still held true in the following decade. In his seminal book *Forbidden Neighbors: A Study In Prejudice of Housing*, author and city planner John Abrams described the home as “the seat of one’s leisure hours, security, memories, where the family is raised, where hopes are built, where treasured possessions are kept and good

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<sup>16</sup> Jackson, 50.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

friends are fed.”<sup>18</sup> Throughout the nineteenth-century and until today, the notion of owning a private residence represented stability, and the permanent residence was considered desirable as much then as now. Abrams asserted in his book that the desire to achieve homeownership was an emotional experience, “a vision that is always realty but not always reality. It bespeaks freedom and security; it is tied up with pride, confidence, and the search for popularity or position...It nourishes ambition and grants relief from the pressure of daily routines. It is the mysterious gadget that promises to resolve life’s frustrations and conciliate one’s desires.”<sup>19</sup> Abrams goes on to write that when a person is able to attain homeownership “he sees release from the fears and uncertainties of life,” and the fulfillment of owning one’s home is a symbol of what we call “the American way of life.”<sup>20</sup>

In addition to providing an outward expression of “the American way of life,” according to other scholars, homeownership is also a clear representation of the individuals who inhabit it. As professor Clare Cooper has noted, “just as the body is the most obvious manifestation and encloser of a person, so also is the home itself a representation of the individual. Although it is only a box and often the unindividualized result of mass production and design, it is a very particular box and is almost a tangible expression of self. Men and women find in their homes the greatest opportunity to express their personal taste.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Abrams, 137.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 138.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*.

So, who's personal taste and who's dreams have scholars been writing about in regards to the attainment of a home as evidence of a person's fulfillment? For the most part, scholars have directed their attention to members of the elite, white, middle-class and have paid little attention to the houses and suburban spaces occupied by minorities. Let us now look at the suburban domestic realm from the point of view of African American's - a group of people who for much of history were forced to occupy lesser spaces and who were not only not allowed to own property, but were considered property themselves. By exploring what homeownership has meant to this group, a better understanding of the importance of Collier Heights will be revealed.

In her article "The Tasty Framed Cottage: An African American Architectural Iconography," historian Barbara B. Mooney traced the often neglected trajectory of black domestic buildings. Early in this article Mooney noted that when most people are asked to think about black domestic architecture (architectural historians included), what normally comes to mind are disastrous public housing projects such as the Pruitt-Igoe complex in St. Louis and the Robert Taylor Homes in Chicago, as well as images of grim slum conditions or rural poverty. Images such as these have led to the racial stereotype that many whites have come to believe, "that black people are somehow metaphorically or literally deficient in clean living."<sup>22</sup> By exploring how ex-slaves and abolitionists combated this racial stereotype, Mooney documented how the freed-person's capacity to erect a middle-class domestic setting characterized by order, health, literacy, and morality

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<sup>22</sup> Barbara Burlison Mooney, "The Comfortable Tasty Framed Cottage: An African American Architectural Iconography," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, (March 2002), 48.

established a legitimate claim to her equal participation in the public sphere and served as currency which helped purchase white acceptance and pacified white hostility.

One person who advocated on behalf of newly freed blacks and their capacity to advance in a white dominated society was Union general Clinton Fisk. Preaching assimilation through architecture, Fisk published in 1866 a manual of conduct for former slaves who attended the Fisk School for Freedmen in Nashville, TN (now Fisk University). Cognizant of the ever-present racism of whites, Fisk's *Plain Counsels for Freedmen* told his black students that "if you are thrifty and get on well in the world, they can not help respecting you." According to Fisk, the center of the freed-person's new life would be the home, and within his manual he advised: "You must learn to love home better than any other place on earth...It should be comfortable...It should be kept clean...It should be beautiful."<sup>23</sup> Thus, for some newly freed African Americans, homeownership represented the ability to participate fully and equally within a social system dominated by whites.

In the following century, the black print medium became influential in promoting the values associated with homeownership. Journals such as *The Crisis*, *The Half-Century*, and *The Competitor* sought to confront the physical and occupational stereotypes held by whites by publishing photographs of prosperous black dwellings. Figure 2.3 and 2.4 depict two images that were shown together in a November 1920 issue of *The Crisis* wherein "the old cabin" was juxtaposed with "the new mansion" in order to offer evidence that traditional notions of black homeownership had changed. These

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 52.



journals also carried articles that promoted an ideal domestic environment which served as the stage for middle-class behavior by proclaiming that a “home is no longer a mere house, it is an institution.”<sup>24</sup> This institution represented the accomplishments, aspirations, and (by implication) the assimilation of its users into mainstream, white society.

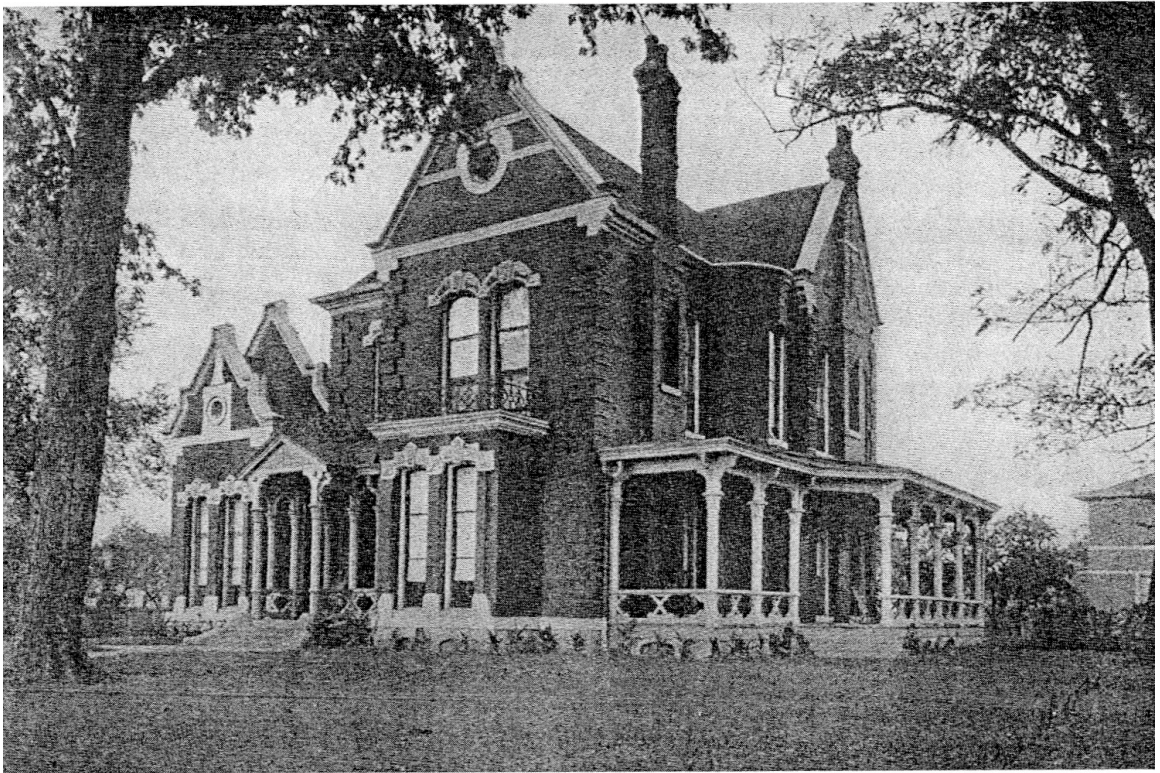
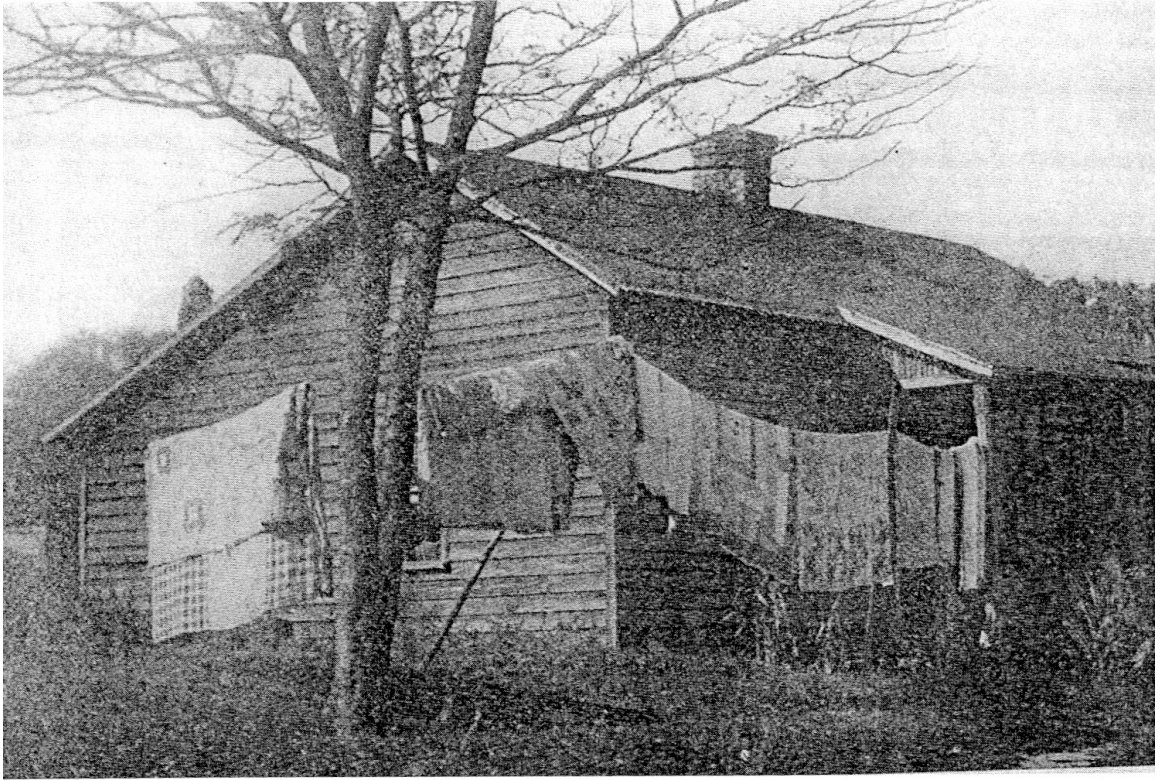
W.E.B Dubois had a lot to do with the messages being conveyed through the black print media. As editor of *The Crisis* for the first twenty-four years of its publication, DuBois argued that improved housing would improve race relations, and he indicated that progress among African Americans could be proved by evidence in the built environment. One such example of a built environment that promoted the advancements of its black residents was the Collier Heights neighborhood.

#### AFRICAN AMERICAN SUBURBANIZATION

As noted by Andrew Wiese, “historians have done a better job excluding African Americans from the suburbs than even white suburbanites.” Based on Jackson and Beauregard, the picture that has been painted is a monochromatic version of the postwar suburban world where all its inhabitants were members of this elite group. This is not to

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 59.



Figures 2.3 and 2.4 “Old Cabin” juxtaposed with “new mansion” in *The Crisis*, November 1920 (Source: Mooney, “The Comfortable Tasty Framed Cottage,” 57).

say that Jackson and Beauregard ignored any discussion of blacks in their scholarly material. Mention of how blacks were mostly prohibited from the suburbs is made in both works. Nevertheless, there is more to the story of blacks in suburbia than just the prejudice and segregation they experienced. In fact, blacks did indeed carve a place out for themselves in suburbia, and an exploration of Collier Heights will demonstrate this. However, before analysis of the Collier Heights neighborhood can occur, let us first examine the ways in which African Americans came to occupy the suburban realm.

With the end of the Civil War, blacks gained the freedom to own land and property. The Fourteenth Amendment declared that “all citizens shall have the same right in every state and territory as is enjoyed by White citizens thereof to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold, and convey real and personal property.” The success of the Civil War also bestowed upon African Americans the freedom to move without having to gain permission from one’s owner/master. Although by federal law African Americans were now free to move, work, and live where they pleased, insufficient decent housing options were available to them.

Of the options available to newly freed blacks, one was for blacks to remain in their old slave quarters, a common practice carried out by blacks in both rural and urban settings. Another option available was to live under the sky, move into deserted houses, ruins, or improvised sheds. And a third option was to erect and occupy structures similar to those they had inhabited as slaves. Many times these structures were built on the site of slave habitations that had fallen apart. They were crude and inexpensive and



according to Gwendolyn Wright, “they represented dominant white attitudes about black domesticity, black sexuality, and black standards of character and cleanliness; the houses were seen by whites as an expression of the fundamental difference that legitimated segregation policies.”<sup>25</sup> The following is a description of one such dwelling place, “[A]door less than five feet high would give the only access to light; a room ten feet square with an earth floor was the living and sleeping quarters, and a fireplace would serve as kitchen. Sometimes there was an extra room for the old folk; sometimes, too, there were glass windows, but these were soon replaced by pieces of old clothing, quilting, or newspapers.”<sup>26</sup>

Despite their deficiencies, these structures represented the desires for cultural continuity amongst the blacks themselves, much in the same way that twentieth-century neighborhoods like Collier Heights will prove to do. In addition, these rudimentary dwellings conveyed something about the inhabitants’ family life, the carpenters’ building skills, and more importantly, the severe limitations placed on the newly freed blacks.

Regardless of whether blacks were inhabiting makeshift houses or were renting spaces in substandard tenement buildings, emancipated blacks faced overcrowded, unhealthy conditions which ate up much of their meager earnings. Left with minimal options available to them in regards to employment, many blacks faced death and disease before they were able to get settled. Meanwhile, particularly in the South, the number of African Americans had risen from 6.7 percent to 22 percent of the regional population

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<sup>25</sup> Wright, *Building the Dream*, 57.

<sup>26</sup> Abrams, 19.

and with the Great Migration these numbers would continue to rise.<sup>27</sup> However, as evidenced by our history, increased numbers of African Americans did not necessarily afford them increased opportunities.

## THE GREAT MIGRATION

Beginning around 1915 and lasting through the 1920s, blacks flocked out of rural southern areas by the thousands. Between 1916 and 1918 alone, over 400,000 black men and women moved to urban areas in hopes of better employment, better pay, better living conditions, and the possibility of a better future. But as history has shown, this was not the immediate outcome. According to Abrams, “in the whole saga of American migration, no in-migrating group had faced such disadvantages.”<sup>28</sup> Because so many blacks came in such short period of time, the absorptive capacities of cities were taxed and their dark skin made them conspicuous which discouraged assimilation. As well, because blacks had received little or no education in the rural settings from which they came, they were often forced to accept low wages which denied most of them comparable amenities and houses that could have helped to win social acceptance by their white neighbors.

An immense amount of research has been carried out detailing and exploring the migration of blacks out of the rural South and into the North. However, for purposes of this paper, focus will remain on the African Americans who chose to remain in the South.

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

Not all blacks fleeing the plantations of the South chose to inhabit the urban core of cities. As recorded by the Bureau of the Census, by 1940 a million and a half African Americans lived in suburbs which were defined as “thickly settled” districts adjacent to cities of 50,000 people or more.<sup>29</sup> Despite the growing number of blacks fleeing the South, hundreds of thousands of African Americans settled in the residential regions surrounding southern cities while working in the urban core, just like their white counterparts.

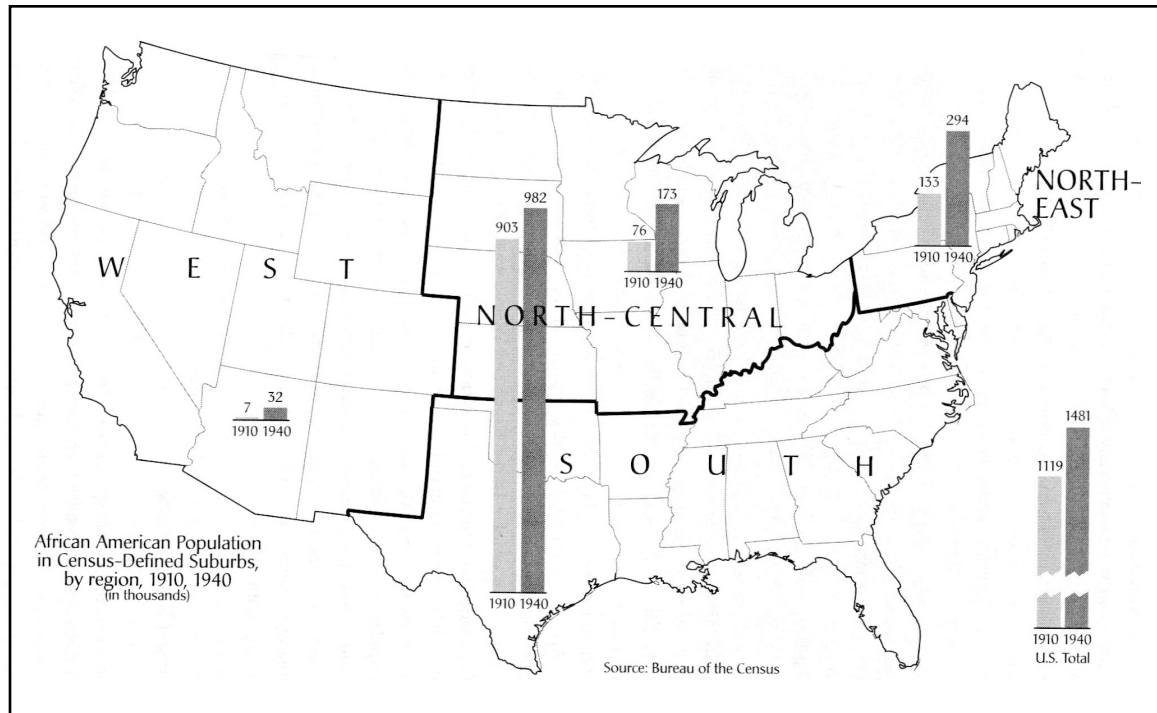


Figure 2.5 Suburban African Americans by Region, 1910 and 1940. (Source: Wiese, *Places of Their Own*, 115).

The predominant characteristics of these early black suburbs were in contrast to the typical bedroom communities inhabited by the white middle-class. For the most part,

<sup>29</sup> Wiese, *Places*, 15.

these suburbs were blue-collar communities, located on the edge of town, made up of blacks who had less education, who had lower incomes, and who worked in lower-skilled jobs than their urban counterparts. As well, black suburbs were visually unlike the white communities because “they often occupied cheap, often nuisance-prone land. Many were geographically isolated, cut off by railroad tracks or other physical barriers, reflecting in almost every case a history of black struggle to acquire and hold space.”<sup>30</sup>

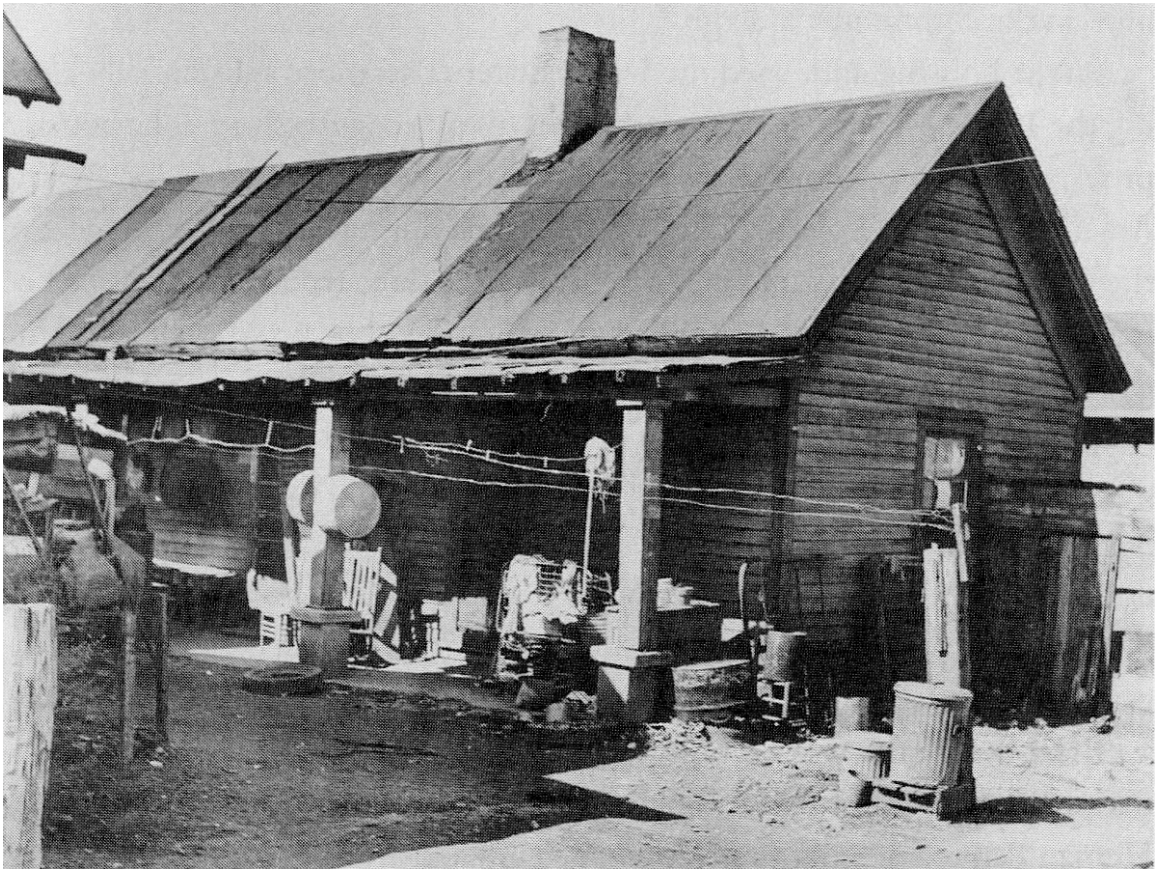


Figure 2.6 House in Atlanta which typified crowded and substandard conditions found in African American communities across the South, 1940s. (Source: Wiese, *Places of Their Own*, 175).

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

Suburban dwellings ranged from tenements abandoned by European immigrants to small, cheaply constructed cottages and owner-built shacks. Many black suburbs also lacked basic infrastructure such as paved streets, sewers, gas lines, electricity, etc. At times, lack of services reflected the neglect of white officials; in others, communities resisted improved services as a way to cut costs. Thus, in contrast to the well-groomed white middle-class suburbs, the majority of early black suburbs were unplanned, unregulated, and unpretentious working-class communities.<sup>31</sup>

As increased numbers of blacks flocked out of the rural environments and moved into southern cities and suburbs, increased antagonism was placed on blacks. As well, European immigrants, whose skin color appeared *white* and who blended into the social fabric of America with greater ease than blacks, began to replace African Americans in their established enterprises, and job opportunities were becoming limited. No sooner had a wave of migrants made their way into a city, secured jobs, found homes, established communities, and lessened social tensions than another wave of migrants would appear and old wounds would reappear. Unable to distribute themselves throughout a city because African Americans were limited in regard to where they could inhabit spaces, existing concentrations of blacks would be enlarged, and eventually the need to expand into adjoining sections or make inroads into new sections previously established by whites was necessary. Thus, white fears and feelings of resentment increased.

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*



According to Abrams, who was writing in 1955, for white southerners, the primary fear was that whites would lose supremacy, that class segregation would break down, and mixed marriages and social parity would come about.<sup>32</sup> As well, among lower-income whites, competition for jobs was a factor that led to resentment between the races. Thus, despite the efforts of African Americans to free themselves from racial and economic limitations, the Great Migration provoked new initiatives in land-use planning, education, and public space intended to reaffirm black inequality and secure white privilege; this in turn coincided with white efforts to “restrict black mobility in social, economic, and spatial terms.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Abrams, 26.

<sup>33</sup> Wiese, *Places*, 40.

## CHAPTER 3

### RACIALIZED SPACE

“There isn’t any Negro problem; there is only a white problem.”

-Richard Wright, 1946

The turn of the twentieth-century marked a turning point in the history of race and the restrictions put upon urban and suburban spaces. Whereas before the 1890s there had only been a few attempts to segregate urban territory racially, at the turn of the following century, while Southern whites began restricting African Americans in regard to voting rights, and while segregation in public places was becoming more formalized, across the country whites began seeking out more methods to define race in regard to the metropolitan landscape. And as was explored in the previous chapter, the Great Migration spurred an unrelenting struggle to use, control, and define the built environment. These controls mostly came in the form of racial zoning ordinances and restrictive covenants both of which were put into place by members of the white race to try to keep African Americans in *their* place.

Despite the fact that housing requires the largest capital cost of any human necessity, for the first three centuries of urban settlement in North America, the provision of shelter was regarded as an unnecessary responsibility of the government. Occasionally during the seventeenth-century, local governments put into place restrictions on wooden dwellings and thatched roofs, while in 1867, New York City passed restrictive housing

laws. Nonetheless, the selection, construction, and purchase of a place to live was considered, for the most part, the responsibility of an individual.

The federal government's role before the 1930s was mainly supervisory; its involvement was limited to a survey taken of slum conditions in 1892, the creation of a Federal Land Bank System in 1916, and the erection of munitions and arms workers' houses during World War I. This attitude would change after the New Deal when some thirty federal agencies would emerge, all with an interest of one kind or another in land operations pertaining to houses, farms, buildings, and real estate credit and/or loans.

The first federal housing effort in the United States took place in 1918 during World War I when Congress appropriated \$110 million in order to create two programs that would provide housing for war workers - the Emergency Fleet Corporation of the United States Shipping Board and the United States Housing Corporation. However, these efforts were not the results of a "conscious effort to help the poor nor of an increased reform spirit." Rather, it was "an exercise of the war power, not the disputed general welfare power."<sup>34</sup> However, these efforts did prove that the federal government could intervene in private enterprise in a successful way.

Following World War I, the government adopted a hands-off approach in regard to housing. The Department of Housing would occasionally sponsor an "Own Your Home Week" to publicize the housing campaign by the National Association of Real Estate Boards but the mechanics of home building and acquisition of property were left to the

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<sup>34</sup> Jackson, 192.

marketplace. As Senator William Calder of New York argued, “[t]he Government is an organization to govern, not build houses.”

Not until after the Great Depression would there be a shift in the federal government’s involvement with the housing industry. As is well known and documented, the Great Depression had a crippling effect on almost every industry in America, and the blows taken by the housing industry and its homeowners were mammoth. For example, between 1926 and 1933, the construction of residential property fell by 95 percent, and the money put into home repairs fell by 90 percent. In 1926 (considered a typical year), about 68,000 homes were foreclosed in the United States; by 1930 that number had increased to about 150,000; by 1931 nearly 200,000 homeowners lost their properties to foreclosures; and by 1932 this number had reached 250,000.<sup>35</sup>

Theorizing that the plight of the real-estate and construction industries was serving as a drag on the rest of the economy, and trusting that homeownership was the foundation of both a sound economic and social system, as well as a guarantee that our country would continue to develop rationally as changing conditions demanded, President Herbert Hoover convened the President’s National Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership in 1931. The intention of this conference was to support homeownership, and President Hoover’s preference for the private residence was made clear when he stated, “I am confident that the sentiment for home ownership is so embedded in the American heart that millions of people who dwell in tenements,

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 193.

apartments, and rented rooms...have the aspiration for wider opportunity in ownership of their own homes.”<sup>36</sup>

The conference made four recommendations that would point the government toward a different direction in regards to federal housing policy and provided a bonus to speculative builders: (1) the creation of long-term, amortized mortgages; (2) the promotion of low interest rates; (3) institutionalized government aid to private efforts to house low-income families; and (4) the lowering of home construction costs. As a separate measure, President Hoover’s administration tried to encourage homeownership in two other ways. First, on July 22, 1932, the President signed the Federal Home Loan Bank Act which established a credit reserve for mortgage lenders to increase the supply of capital in the housing market. Second, later that same year, he approved the Emergency Relief and Construction Act which, among other things, supported the newly formed corporations whose sole purpose was to provide housing to the poor or to reconstruct slum areas. Unfortunately, neither of these measures proved to be successful and it was left to Franklin D. Roosevelt’s administration to provide effective new housing initiatives.

Two of these measures put into place by President Roosevelt’s New Deal, which had a lasting and highly important effect on the suburbanization of America, were the Home Owners Loan Corporation and the Federal Housing Administration. Combined, these two initiatives turned the American neighborhood into a “breeding ground of bias, fear, and discrimination” where segregation and class exclusion became public policy.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 194.

<sup>37</sup> Abrams, 149.

## Home Owners Loan Corporation

On April 13, 1933, President Roosevelt urged the United States House and Senate members to pass a bill that would protect the small homeowner from foreclosure, relieve him of part of the strain of high interest and principle payments incurred during a time period of higher values and earning ability, and affirm that it was national policy to protect homeownership. Signed into law a month after it was proposed, the emergent Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) served urban needs by making it possible to refinance mortgages in danger of default or foreclosure, and granted loans at low-interest rates to permit owners to reclaim homes lost through foreclosure. As a result, between July 1933 and June 1935, the HOLC provided more than \$3 billion for over one million mortgages, or loans for one-tenth of all owner-occupied, non-farm residences in the United States.<sup>38</sup>

More importantly to this discussion, because the HOLC had to make predictions and assumptions concerning the useful or productive life of housing it financed, the HOLC systematized the appraisal methods used around the country. Thus, the creation of a formal and uniform system of appraisal, reduced to writing, structured in defined procedures, and implemented by individuals, was set into place. According to one economist, the HOLC training and evaluation procedures is credited “with having helped raise the general level of American real estate appraisal methods.”<sup>39</sup> Put another way, the HOLC initiated the practice of “red lining.”

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<sup>38</sup> Jackson, 197.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

In order to carry out their predictions about property values, HOLC appraisers divided cities into neighborhoods and developed intricate questionnaires concerning the occupation, income, and ethnicity of the residents, as well as the age, type of construction, price range, sales demand, and general condition of the housing stock in a particular location. In order to evaluate this information, a rating system emerged that put more value on neighborhoods that were sparse, new, or homogeneous while undervaluing neighborhoods that were dense, of mixed races, or aging. Four categories of quality (First, Second, Third, and Fourth with corresponding code letters of A, B, C, and D and colors of green, blue, yellow, and red) were created.

The First grade locations (A and green) were listed as new, homogeneous, and in “demand as residential locations in good times and bad.” According to the HOLC practices, homogeneous meant “American business and professional men” (otherwise thought of as white and Christian). A result of this was that Jewish neighborhoods could not be considered “best” nor could they be considered “American.” The Second grade (B and blue) locations went to “still desirable” areas that had “reached their peak,” but were expected to remain stable for many years to come. The Third grade neighborhoods (C and yellow) were mostly described as “definitely declining,” and the Fourth grade areas (D and red) were defined as neighborhoods “in which things taking place in C areas have already happened.”<sup>40</sup> See figure 3.1 for an example of an HOLC “Residential Security Map.”

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 198.

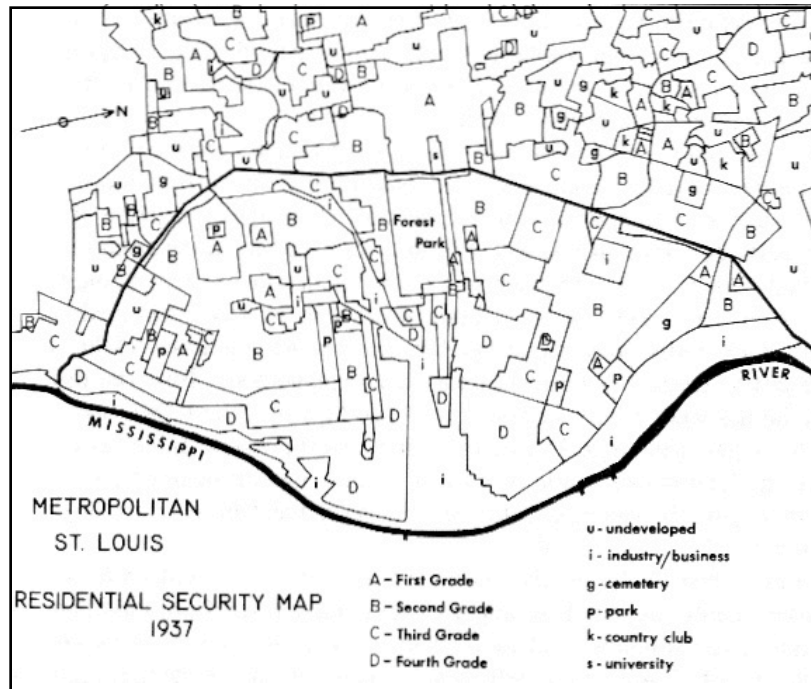


Figure 3.1 St. Louis Area Residential Security Map, 1937 (Source: Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 199).

HOLC assumptions about the condition and future potential of urban neighborhoods were based on both an ecological conception of change and a socioeconomic one. Assuming that change was inevitable, HOLC appraisers accepted as fact that the natural tendency of any area was to decline. This assumption was based partly on the increasing age and obsolescent nature of physical structures, and in part because of the filtering down of the housing stock to families of ever lower income. Thus, physical deterioration was both a cause and effect of population change, and HOLC appraisers made no attempt to discern between the two. Therefore, black neighborhoods were invariably given the red grade, as were any areas with markedly poor maintenance or vandalism. Likewise, neighborhoods that were “definitely declining” which received the Third grade or yellow were given such a low mark in part because of age and in part



because they were “within such a low price or rent range as to attract an undesirable element.”<sup>41</sup>

In his book, Jackson made a point to assert that the Home Owners Loan Corporation did not initiate the practice of taking into consideration race and ethnicity in real-estate appraisal. Rather, according to Jackson, the HOLC was simply following the bigoted American way. The fact remained that white men were making judgements based on the racial makeup of a community which then dictated that the supposed socioeconomic characteristics of a neighborhood, rather than other characteristics relevant to the built environment, should determine the value of housing. These judgements would have lasting effects around the country for years to come.

These racist notions were legitimized by Homer Hoyt and Robert Park at the University of Chicago where they developed a model of neighborhood change. Hoyt showed that “values declined as a function of the lowered status of residents and that the introduction of blacks into a neighborhood would first raise prices (the first black families had to pay a premium to break the color barrier) and then precipitate a drastic decline.”<sup>42</sup>

Other real-estate appraising texts that helped solidify the entanglement between race and space were the manuals and handbooks adopted and used by members of the National Association of Realtors. Founded in Chicago in May 1908 as the National Association of Real Estate Exchanges, the organization then changed its name to the National Association of Real Estate Boards in 1974, and is now currently known as the

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Abrams, 154.

National Association of Realtors (NAR). Comprised of “realtors” (black real estate professionals were called “realists” and had their own trade organization, the National Association of Real Estate Brokers, because they were not admitted into NAR) when the group began, the organization espoused an anti-racial philosophy which, by the 1920s, was accepted without resistance or fanfare.

In 1922 when the NAR was still a small trade organization, only two textbooks had been written on the subject of real estate. However, that all changed when Professor Richard T. Ely, land economist at the University of Wisconsin, made arrangements with the Macmillan Company to publish twelve new books on the topic. The first books dealt with a variety of subjects relevant to the field - real estate advertising, land economics, roadside development, real estate law, public land history, land planning, and other technical subjects, some of which were new and original contributions to field of land economics. But the books written on the current real estate practices of the times introduced the racial question in no uncertain terms.

One of the first books to be published was *Principles of Real Estate Practices* by professor Ernest McKinley Fisher. In his book, Fisher (who at the time of its publication was the assistant executive secretary of NAR) emphasized that the most important aspect determining the value of a community was its character. According to Fisher, “[i]t is a matter of common observation that the purchase of property by certain racial types is very likely to diminish the value of other property in the section.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 156.

Similar to the comment made by Jackson defending the HOLC appraisers, Abrams asserted that both Ely and Fisher were men without racial bias but who were simply stating what they thought were facts. Once again, these facts, or “common observations,” would have lasting implications in regard to the social stratification of the built environment.

As we saw in the designation of neighborhood ratings, religion, as well as race, played an important factor in the minds of realtors, and it was understood that not only should people of the same race live in proximity with one another but so should people of the same religion. As stated in another manual which was part of the series initiated by Ely:

Residential values are affected by racial and religious factors...A home utility seeks location near people...but always near persons of the same social standing, same races, near to churches, schools, and all phases of social life and with access to places of business and shopping...And so the habits, the character, the race, the movements, and the very moods of people are the ultimate factors of real estate value...The real factors are buying mood, hours, purchasing power, motive at the moment, directions of movement, race, occupations, religion and standards of living...<sup>44</sup>

In another part of the series, in a section called “Standard Course,” the author (then general counsel to NAR) argued for the legality of restrictive covenants:

The individual citizen, whether he be black or white, may refuse to sell or lease property to any particular individual or class of individuals. The power of the whites to exclude blacks from purchasing their property implies the power of the blacks to exercise the same prerogative over property which they may own. There is, of course, no discrimination within the civil rights clause of the Constitution.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Frederick Morrison Babcock, *The Appraisal of Real Estate*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924) 70-71.

<sup>45</sup> Nathan William MacChesney, *The Principles of Real Estate Law* (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1927) 586.

Statements such as these coincided with the official position of NAR and its code of ethics, which up until 1950 read as follows: “A realtor should never be instrumental in introducing into a neighborhood a character of property or occupancy, members of any race or nationality, or any individual whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in the neighborhood.”<sup>46</sup> This sentiment was taken so seriously that any realtor who violated this rule was subject to expulsion from the Association.

In 1943 a brochure was issued by the NAR entitled “Fundamentals of Real Estate Practice,” which combined an African American seeking an education with shady company. As stated in the brochure:

The prospective buyer might be a bootlegger who would cause considerable annoyance to his neighbors, a madame who had a number of Call Girls on her string, a gangster, who wants a screen for his activities by living in a better neighborhood, a colored man of means who was giving his children a college education and thought they were entitled to live among whites...No matter what the motive or character of the would-be purchaser, if the deal would instigate a form of blight, then certainly the well-meaning broker must work against the consummation.<sup>47</sup>

The expressed views of this brochure, which put a gangster and an educated black man in the same category, as well as the statements taken from the previously mentioned handbooks and manuals, revealed the disdain these white men had for African Americans, regardless of their class or level of education. An indication of the unfair power system wherein white men held the power to dictate where and how people should live, these declarations contributed to the racist environment with which the educated residents of Collier Heights would have to contend.

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Abrams, 156.

## THE GOSPEL OF RACISM

Taught in schools and colleges around the country, the National Association of Realtors Boards' codes and theories were espoused by teachers, and hundreds upon thousands of student brokers received the gospel of racism. In addition, local realty groups encouraged their communities to accept ideas of what people should be like, what colors or races were socially desirable, with whom people should live, and what their social standards should be. Thus, the rule of value was often dependent on the concept of a 100 percent American community which could only be made up of the "right" people (again, white and Christian).

According to Abrams, this "racist theory of value," which was codified by respected academics, carried out by realtors and community groups, and taught in schools and colleges, was also widely circulated in prescriptive sources such as real estate magazines, newspapers, and home magazines. For example, in an article from *Good Housekeeping* magazine entitled "Personality in a Community," a shield of honor was afforded to ten "exclusive suburban communities" where the importance of class, the difference between right and wrong groups, and the designation of "social standing" were prominent. The article informed its readership that these selected neighborhoods used restrictions to protect their communities from the fate of going from a "once-fine neighborhood" to one on the "wrong side of the tracks."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Helen Koues, "Good Building Materials," *Good Housekeeping*, (vol. 104, no. 2, March 1937), 50.

In the following month, *Good Housekeeping* published an article entitled “Beauty in Community” in which the author informed its readership that an ideal community, for the “average man,” is a well planned and orderly one with all the “necessary conveniences.” (Those necessary conveniences such as paved streets and planned utilities were the same ones that suburban black neighborhoods could not afford.) Within the article, we are told that a good community is governed by a plan; this plan must include “protection of land, protection of values, protection of architectural quality of the houses, protection of type of residents, and last, maintenance and enforcement of the restrictions.”<sup>49</sup> Articles such as these make it clear that the racist theory of value dictated by organizations such as the National Association of Realtors had made its way into mainstream America.

Outside of the realm of prescriptive sources, additional texts concerning the threat put upon by the *wrong kinds of people* contributed to the gospel of racism being preached in American society. Dating back to the years of the Great Migration, writers had been documenting the prevailing theories concerning the influence of minorities on real estate in which exclusion practices were encouraged. In the 1923 book *City Growth and Values*, publisher Stanley McMichael argued that African Americans were a threat to property values.

There is a natural inclination of the colored people to live together in their own communities. With the increase in colored people coming to many Northern cities they have overrun their old districts and swept into adjoining ones or passed to other sections and formed new ones. This naturally has had a decidedly detrimental effect on land values for few white people, however inclined to be sympathetic with the problem of the

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<sup>49</sup> Helen Koues, “Beauty in Community Planning,” *Ibid.*, (April 1937), 51.

colored race, care to live near them. Property values have been sadly depreciated by having a single colored family settle down on a street occupied exclusively by white residents...

The solution offered by McMichael was:

Segregation of the Negro population seems to be the reasonable solution of the problem, no matter how unpleasant or objectionable the thought may be to colored residents. Southern cities have a habit of taking care of the problem which is well known and seems to be entirely effective. Northern cities, more sympathetic towards the negro, have been so backward...in coping with the problem that serious race wars have resulted...Frankly, rigid segregation seems to be the only manner in which the difficulty can be effectively controlled.

This proposal was followed by a plea for constitutional principles: "The colored people certainly have a right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness but they must recognize the economic disturbance which their presence in a white neighborhood causes and forego their desire to split off from the established district where the rest of their race lives."<sup>50</sup>

Today, in 2009, it is hard to fathom how people's perceptions about how to live could be so narrow-minded and how opinions regarding the evaluation of neighborhoods could be so simplified. By treating African Americans as a lesser race who were undeserving of valuable property, systematized racism was strengthened and its impact was felt in all facets of society, including the American suburbs.

Historians such as Andrew Wiese have argued that American suburbs played a key part in the process to racialize space. Defined by Wiese, racialized spaces were those that were linked to an evolving racial hierarchy whereby residences were defined in

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<sup>50</sup> Stanley L. McMichael and R.F. Bingham, *City Growth and Property Values*. (Cleveland: The Stanley McMichael Publishing Organization, 1923), 181, 182.

separate and unequal terms which granted access and privilege to some while limiting and securing disadvantage to others. With the help of the codes and manuals carried out by members of the NAR, and in accordance with racist theories of value propagated by respected economists and theoreticians prior to the New Deal era, suburban neighborhoods were subject to this process. The history leading up to the creation of Collier Heights will certainly prove this and one major component of that history was the emergence of the Federal Housing Administration, an organization whose core principles were rooted in the concept that neighborhood homogeneity was an essential asset to the security of property value.

#### Federal Housing Administration

Intended to “encourage improvement in housing standards and conditions, to facilitate sound home financing on reasonable terms, and to exert a stabilizing influence on the mortgage market,” the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) was designed to meet President Roosevelt’s desire for a governmental program that could stimulate building without federal spending by relying instead on private enterprise. Dating from the adoption of the National Housing Act signed on June 27, 1934, the primary purpose of the legislation was to alleviate unemployment in the United States, of which people in the construction industry made up a large segment. Testifying before the House Banking and Currency Committee on May 18, 1934, the Federal Emergency Relief Administrator stated: “The building trades in America represent by all odds the largest single unit of our



unemployment. Probably more than one-third of all the unemployed are identified, directly or indirectly, with the building trades...Now, a purpose of this bill, a fundamental purpose of this bill, is an effort to get people back to work.”<sup>51</sup>

Ten years later, in 1944, the FHA was supplemented by the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act (better known as the GI Bill) to help the sixteen million soldiers and sailors of World War II purchase a home upon their return from battling abroad.<sup>52</sup> Basically, the FHA was set up to insure long-term mortgages made by private lenders for home construction and sale; the Administration did not build houses or lend money, rather, it induced lenders to invest in residential mortgages by insuring them against loss on such investments. In addition, by establishing minimum standards on home construction, the FHA standardized the building industry. For the first time, homes were built according to standards that were objective, uniform, and in writing, which insured owners that a dwelling would be free of gross structural or mechanical defects. According to Kenneth Jackson, since WWII, the country’s largest private contractors have all built their new houses to meet FHA standards because many potential customers will not consider a house that cannot earn the Administration’s approval.

Throughout the post-war years, the “middle-class suburban family with the new house and the long-term, fixed-rate, FHA-insured mortgage became a symbol, and perhaps a stereotype, of the American way of life.”<sup>53</sup> This middle-class favoritism had to do with an “unbiased professional estimate” which was a requirement for any guaranteed

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<sup>51</sup> Jackson, 204.

<sup>52</sup> Because the FHA and the VA followed similar procedures and attitudes, for purposes of this paper the two programs can be considered a single unit.

<sup>53</sup> Jackson, 206.

loan. By attempting to guarantee at any time during the term of the mortgage the market value of the home would exceed the outstanding debt, FHA mortgage amounts were based on appraised values of the property itself, a rating of the mortgagor or borrower, and a neighborhood rating. The intent of the neighborhood evaluation was “to determine the risk introduced in a mortgage insurance transaction because of the location of the property at a specific site.” Dissimilar to the Home Owners Loan Corporation, which used a comparable procedure, the Federal Housing Administration “allowed personal and agency bias in favor of all-white subdivisions in the suburbs to affect the kinds of loans it guaranteed...or refused to guarantee.”<sup>54</sup> Thus, if a developer had an inclination to pursue a project for minorities or one where there would be mixed-races involved, those thoughts would be short-lived because the FHA might not be willing to support such endeavors.

The FHA had precise methods regarding how it taught its underwriters to equate the quality of a specific neighborhood. Eight criteria were established (the parenthetical numbers reflect the percentage weight of each criterion):

1. Relative economic stability (40 percent)
2. Protection from adverse influences (20 percent)
3. Adequacy of transportation (10 percent)
4. Appeal (10 percent)
5. Freedom from special hazards (5 percent)
6. Adequacy of civic, social, and commercial centers (5 percent)
7. Sufficiency of utilities and conveniences (5 percent)
8. Level of taxes and special assessments (5 percent)

Taken together, the first two criterion counted for more than all the other six combined and both were “interpreted in ways that were prejudicial against heterogeneous

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 207.

environments.”<sup>55</sup> In fact, the 1939 FHA *Underwriting Manual* dictated that “crowded neighborhoods lessen desirability” and “older properties in a neighborhood have a tendency to accelerate the transition to lower class occupancy.” Smoke and foul odor were considered “adverse influences,” and appraisers were instructed to look carefully for any “inferior and non-productive characteristics surrounding the site.”<sup>56</sup>

Put into practice, FHA appraisers clearly allowed racial theories of value to dictate who and where FHA approved mortgages would be granted. For example, in the racially mixed Boyle Heights area of Los Angeles, federally supported loans were denied to potential home buyers because it was a “melting pot” neighborhood literally honeycombed with varying racial elements which were deemed disruptive. Likewise, between 1943 and 1960, mostly white St. Louis County acquired five times as many FHA mortgages as the more racially diverse city of St. Louis.<sup>57</sup>

As evidence of the racist tradition of the United States, the FHA was extraordinarily concerned with inharmonious racial or nationality groups. In an effort to retain neighborhood homogeneity, the Administration endorsed restrictive zoning efforts and insisted that any single-family residence insured by the agency could not have facilities that allowed a residence to be used as a store, an office, or a rental unit. Traditionally, in minority communities, it was not uncommon to find individuals supplementing their income with the inclusion of one of these entities in their homes. Thus, by forbidding such practices, there was a direct effect felt by black communities.

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> George Lipsitz, “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness; Racialized Social Democracy and the “White” Problem in America.” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 3, September 1995, 373.

In addition, fearing that an entire area could lose its value if the black-white separation was not maintained, the *Underwriting Manual* openly suggested “subdivision regulations and suitable restrictive covenants.”<sup>58</sup>

Restrictive covenants were legal provisions written into property deeds that were commonly used to prohibit black occupancy in an area. These covenants remained part of the FHA’s methods until a 1948 Supreme Court case (*Shelley v. Kraemer*) determined that such covenants were “unenforceable as law and contrary to public policy” according to the Fourteenth Amendment.<sup>59</sup> Even so, it was not until 1949 that the FHA announced that beginning in February 1950 it would halt granting mortgages on real estate that was subject to covenants. Although this announcement was treated publicly as an advancement in the field of racial justice, former housing administrator Nathan Straus noted that the new policy only served “to warn speculative builders who had not filed covenants of their right to do so, and it gave them a convenient respite in which to file.”<sup>60</sup>

Created as an organization to help revamp the home building industry, stimulate home ownership, and reduce the rate of unemployment, the Federal Housing Administration did receive criticism regarding their unfair racial policies. Often times the FHA reacted to such criticism by citing that it was a “conservative business

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<sup>58</sup> Jackson, 208.

<sup>59</sup> In 1945, a black family (the Shelley’s) purchased a house in St. Louis, Missouri. At the time of purchase, they were unaware that a restrictive covenant had been in place on the property since 1911. The restrictive covenant barred “people of the Negro or Mongolian Race” from owning the property. Neighbors sued to restrain the Shelley’s from taking possession of the property they had purchased. The Supreme Court of Missouri held that the covenant was enforceable against the purchasers because the covenant was a purely private agreement between the original parties thereto, which “ran with the land” and was enforceable against subsequent owners.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

operation” that was not created to help cities.<sup>61</sup> That said, by turning the building industry against the minority and inner-city housing market, and by carrying out policies that supported the racial segregation of suburbia, this federal agency embraced the prejudicial attitudes of the time. Whereas before the creation of the Federal Housing Administration, prejudices were personal and on an individual basis, in the post-war years, segregation was enshrined as public policy and was promoted in prescriptive sources; and it was these policies and prejudice attitudes that black Atlantans were up against when they built Collier Heights.

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 213.

## CHAPTER 4

### HOMES FOR "CADILLAC FAMILIES"

We bought a house last year---  
Amidst "the murmuring pine and the hemlock,"  
The flowering dogwoods, the spreading yew,  
The roses, chrysanthemums, blueberries, too

We bought a house last year --  
After looking at many,  
Hearing "No's" loud and fierce,  
After mortgage refusals  
Pleadings "Money's too scarce" --  
Or, just, "We don't want you,"  
Or other things worse

We moved *in* last year --  
Amidst moving van's rumbles and usual clutter  
And telephone wiring, utility men's mutter.  
Amidst silent still neighbors  
Except one tousled blond head  
Whose tricycle trod, where his parents would dread!  
Then, shouts from a distance --  
"Don't go over there!"  
The obvious enmity --  
Borne out of fear!  
"Don't walk on my land!" "Don't trespass!" "Don't speak!"  
What building on sand! *Who* is might? *Who* weak?

We bought a house last year --  
Despite friction and fear.  
We know we're not wanted  
Except by a few  
Who have courage to stand  
On convictions felt true

But this house was our choice  
A home was our goal  
We had no intention of  
Mortgaging our soul

So, my child will stand straight  
And firm, on his sod,  
With courage, conviction  
And faith, in our God!

-Jean E. Moore<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Quoted in Wiese, *Places*, 110-111.

In September 1950, *House Beautiful* magazine published an article titled “How American is Your Way of Living?.” The article began by telling its reader: “Your house, its decorations and furnishings are a character reading of you.” The article continued with the following statement: “If your appearance, manner, and voice are important in giving an idea of what you really are, how much more important is that large, immutable thing -- your home!” And later, the article put forth the following questions, “Is your house American?...Does it form a suitable background for you, your ambitions, your values?...Does your house express the serenity and self-assurance of a person living in a democratic society where Everybody is Somebody?”<sup>63</sup>

Appealing to its readers’ “fundamental American aspirations,” this article associated the concept of owning a home which permits people “to live the efficient, easy, drudgery-free life that our times and our American inventive genius have made possible,” to a sense of self-identity and self-worth. But the question arises, whose self-worth and self-identity were being referred to? Did they really mean that *everybody* truly was *somebody*? Or did they mean that everybody was somebody as long as they were white? And if so, what did this mean in regard to the aspirations of nonwhites in America?

As a result of the systematic racial discrimination inscribed within our social democracy by the Federal Housing Administration, by the mid-1950s, nonwhites were continuing to suffer because available housing options were extremely limited. With the expansion of land-use restrictions and regulations, as well as the slum clearance and

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<sup>63</sup> “How American is Your Way of Living” *House Beautiful*, (September 1953), 80.

urban renewal programs geared towards reshaping existing communities, blacks of all socioeconomic levels were having a hard time finding suitable homes in desirable communities. Even blacks who were members of the highest echelon struggled to acquire suitable housing.

Baseball legend Jackie Robinson is a good example illustrating the barriers facing African Americans in the suburban real estate market during the postwar years. In 1956, after leading the Brooklyn Dodgers to the world championship, Mr. Robinson and his wife began searching for a home in the New York suburbs. Having a reputation that epitomized personal integrity, Mr. Robinson quickly realized they were being shut out of the market when they were unable to purchase an acceptable home in the suburbs of the city where he was revered. As stated by Robinson:

At first we were told the house we were interested in had been sold just before we inquired, or we would be invited to make an offer, a sort of a sealed bid, and then we'd be told that offers higher than ours had been turned out. Then we tried buying houses on the spot for whatever price was asked. They handled this by telling us the house had been taken off the market. Once we met a broker who told us he would like to help us find a home, but his clients were against selling to Negroes. Whether or not we got a story with the refusal, the results were always the same.<sup>64</sup>

The picture painted by Robinson exemplified the headaches and frustrations associated with the efforts involved in the process to purchase a home by thousands of African American families. But let us not forget that for the Robinson family, money and resources were almost unlimited. Mr. Robinson and his wife, like thousands of others, were “Negroes,” marked by the color of their skin, and were simply treated as second-

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<sup>64</sup> Wiese, *Places*, 100.



class citizens, if not worse. So imagine the challenge it must have been for blacks without the money and resources available to the upper echelon of this group. The feat of gaining an entrance to the white housing market was of epic proportions.

In particular, blue-collar African Americans were facing difficulties carving out space for themselves in postwar suburbia. Even as racial bias came under legal assault after World War II, discrimination based on income was gaining steam. After the Depression, financial institutions were so concerned with the stability of property values that they were even less willing to make loans to moderate- and low-income blacks because they were perceived as more of a threat to those values. A consequence of this was that suburbs began to restrict informal home building, apartments, mobile homes, and modest tract housing - many of the affordable housing options available to this lower socioeconomic group. Thus, during the postwar years, low-income African Americans searching for adequate housing were now feeling discriminated upon not only because of the color of their skin but also because of their income level as well.

Notwithstanding, during the housing boom of the 1950s, thousands of new, modestly priced homes were being constructed for African Americans despite the predominant racial bias of the time.<sup>65</sup> Built in close proximity to older, existing communities (because of the FHA's insistence on segregation) home ownership was becoming marginally more available to middle-income blacks. However, working-class blacks were increasingly priced out of the new market and subsidies given by the government limited who were willing and able to make the move. For that reason, by the

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, 92.

mid-1950s, the stream of blacks moving to the suburbs had shifted towards the middle-class.

### MIDDLE-CLASS BLACKS

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the number of blacks living in suburbia rose from one and a half to two and a half million. Whereas before the war the majority of migrants were working-class families, after the war, middle-class blacks were the ones able to make the move. Strengthened by economic expansion around the nation, and due to the emergence of new occupations, black family incomes were on the rise in the postwar years, and families were able to save and invest money in ways that were distinct from those available to most working-class blacks. Although African Americans' economic prosperity continued to lag behind whites, their incomes almost tripled during the 1940s and increased by another 50 percent in the 1950s.<sup>66</sup>

Table 4.1 Rise in nonwhite income- 1939, 1947, 1949, 1950. (Source: "Non White Housing," *House & Home*, 46).

Year	Total Median Income	Nonwhite	White	Nonwhite as percent of white
1939	\$877	\$364	\$956	38.1
1947	1865	863	1980	43.6
1949	2016	1064	2350	45.3
1950	2133	1295	2481	52.2

<sup>66</sup> Wiese, "The House I Live In," 100.

Several factors contributed to the growth of the black middle-class. First, World War II reignited black migration out of the rural South. Hoping to gain better employment opportunities and higher wages, Southern blacks left their jobs in a depressed southern agricultural market for blue-collar occupations in urban areas. Second, pressure from civil rights organizations for a share in public employment opportunities unlocked positions for African American workers in civil service and private-sector clerical fields, which by the 1960s was one of the chief employers of black women. And finally, the growth of African American urban communities brought about an increasing market for black professionals and entrepreneurs who catered to black customers.<sup>67</sup> Thus, by the 1950s, there was a growing number of African American school teachers, nurses, insurance agents, small business owners, civil servants, mail carriers, and stenographers, in addition to skilled craft workers and foremen, all who sought and could afford modestly priced, decent housing in the nation's suburbs.

Throughout his research, Andrew Wiese refers to one particular white-collar African American family, the Braithewaite's, as a symbol of the new wave of black suburbanites after World War II. She a school teacher and he an engineer, the Braithwaites exemplified the emergent black middle-class - wealthier, more educated, and more likely to hold white-collar jobs - yet their race still made them outcasts in many of the nation's housing markets.

Exemplifying their path to find suitable housing as a representation of the general struggle facing postwar African Americans, Wiese retold the family's story about how the

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<sup>67</sup> Wiese, *Places*, 124.

Table 4.2 African American Population Growth, Select Metropolitan Areas, 1940 - 1960. (Source: Wiese, *Places of Their Own*, 170).

Metropolitan Area	1940	1950	% Change 1940-50	1960	% Change 1940-50
New York	669000	1018000	56%	1228000	21%
Chicago	329000	587000	78%	977000	66%
Philadelphia	222000	465000	44%	670000	44%
Detroit	170000	357000	110%	559000	57%
Los Angeles	75000	218000	190%	465000	113%
Washington	219000	324000	47%	468000	44%
New Orleans	160000	201000	26%	267000	33%
Atlanta	149000	166000	16%	232000	40%

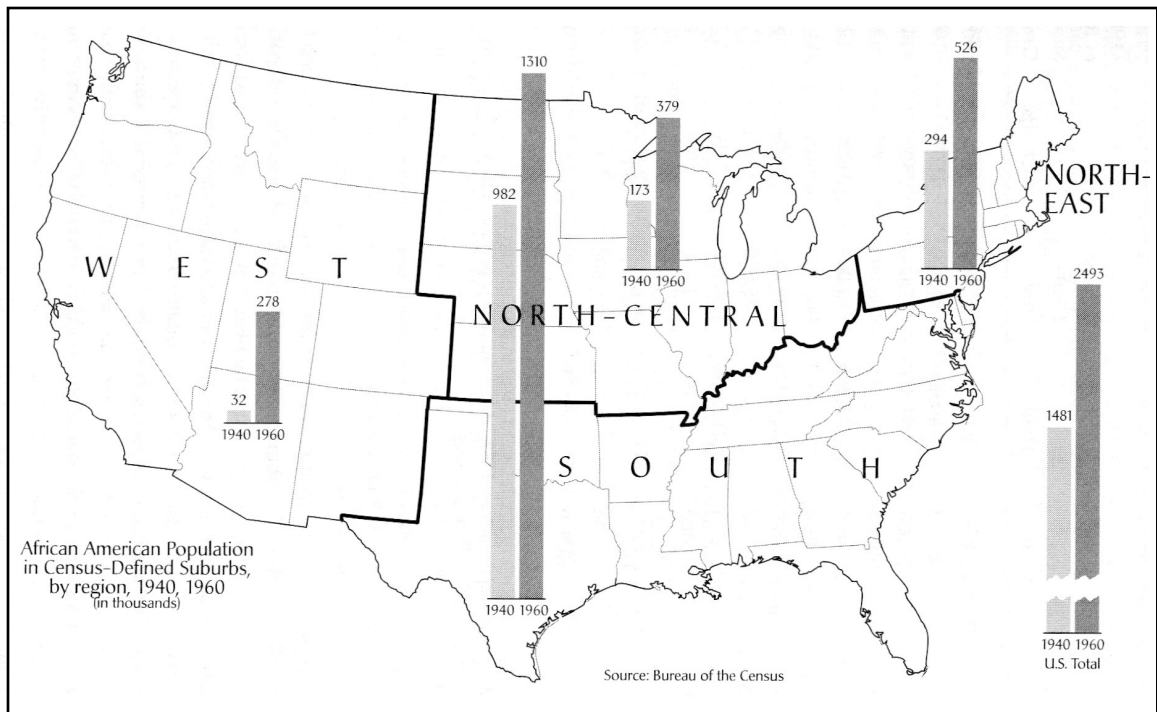


Figure 4.1 Suburban African Americans by Region, 1940 and 1960. (Source: Wiese, *Places of Their Own*, 115).

family searched for a home in suburban Philadelphia. According to their story, while renting an apartment in a “predominantly Negro neighborhood,” the family dreamed of owning a detached split-level home with a yard big enough for the kids to run around in (a typical request in the postwar years). Yet, while white suburban Philadelphians had little to no problems finding a home, it took the Braithwaite’s two years.

Their attempts to own a home began by answering newspaper ads, contacting real estate brokers, attending auctions, and making upwards of three hundred phone calls wherein they were only met with a “stone wall” of resistance. The couple was told by brokers, “We don’t have any split levels” or “That’s already been spoken for.” Others were more honest: “You’re colored, aren’t you? I can’t do anything for you.” Whatever the scenario, the result remained the same; as African Americans, white suburban Philadelphia did not want them.

In “desperation,” the Braithwaites shifted their strategy. With the assistance of a fair-housing organization, the couple located a vacant lot owned by a person willing to sell to them. Ignoring concerns about the location of the lot because it was “very close to public school” and close to an existing “Negro neighborhood,” they moved forward by hiring a contractor and built their new home. Inspecting the progress at night, the couple hoped “to prevent the accumulation of resentment” by their white neighbors. In October 1959 the family moved in to their new home but remained fearful that “something cataclysmic” might occur. For “some time” the family avoided standing in front of their picture window, but the neighborhood remained quiet. This was in part due to the efforts by local Quakers who arranged a meeting to pacify the neighbors and remained with the

family on the first night in their new home. After months of anguish, the suburban dream was theirs.

According to Wiese, the Braithwaite's determination to buy a suburban home was indicative of the new generation of African Americans who were more willing to challenge the racial status quo of the times. As clear members of the middle-class, the Braithwaite's exemplified the shift that took place in the United States as a result of the rising incomes and emergent occupations for blacks during the postwar years and signified a change in who was willing and able to purchase homes in suburbia.<sup>68</sup>

Despite these changes, the racial atmosphere was still tense and divided; discrimination remained a hurdle for the new affluent blacks who were seeking to fulfill their dreams of occupying their place in suburbia after the war. But in the face of white protest, these new suburbanites sought to assert their equality as citizens by having the ability to choose how and where they wanted to live. In addition, the choice about where to live was also part of an ongoing discourse about race and class in the mid-century United States. As black households situated themselves spatially, they also did so socially. As stated by Wiese, "suburbanization was a conscious class-making act. As upwardly mobile blacks achieved middle-class incomes, occupations, and education, they also expressed a sense of class through aesthetic preferences, patterns of consumption, and choices of a place to live."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> By 1955 the middle class had gained numerical superiority, a pattern that would remain for the rest of the twentieth century.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 144.

Assisting the emergent black middle-class in regard to their consumptive tastes and aesthetic preferences was *Ebony* magazine. First published in the fall of 1945, *Ebony* was intended to address African American issues, personalities, and interests in a positive light. As a contemporary of *Life* magazine, *Ebony* always emphasized an expressive, consumption-oriented social lifestyle that epitomized a distinctly middle- or upper-middle-class vision of suburban life. Signaling that middle-class African Americans were “gaining equality as citizens through equality in their tastes and acquisitions,” *Ebony* focused on the housing market as a way to promote the ideal lifestyle circulating among middle-class blacks.<sup>70</sup>

Beginning in the first few years of its publication, and continuing today, *Ebony* produced regular features that publicized the housing and domestic customs of the nation’s black elite. Fawning over “big impressive home[s],” “sumptuous” furnishings, and “lavish lawn parties,” reporters documented the financial success and style of the iconic black movie stars, musicians, athletes, and general black elite of the time. The magazine put attention on both the fashionable city apartments such as those found in the wealthy black neighborhood of Harlem’s “Sugar Hill” as well as focusing attention on the “ultra-modern” detached family dwellings in suburban-style neighborhoods.<sup>71</sup>

Idealized postwar enclaves, such as the Addisleigh Park neighborhood of St. Alban’s in Queens, New York, revealed the spatial and social environment that was highly desired by its middle-class readership. One article began by stating that the “most

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> “Period Styles for Elegance: Detroit’s Salsbury Chooses 18th Century Motif to Furnish Home in Restful Tone,” *Ebony* (December 1950), 64. “Rochester: Radio Star Finds Long Greens Buy Lots of Comfort and Ease,” *Ibid.* (November 1945), 13-20. “Push Button Home: Michigan Physican’s Plush Estate Almost Runs By Itself,” *Ibid.*, 42-46.

exclusive” African American residential area in America is located in St. Alban’s; “more glamour, wealth, talent, and achievement” can be found here than in any other comparable community in the country. Described as a veritable “Who’s Who of Negro Celebrities,” this “swank” neighborhood represented the “upper bracket of Negro life at its best.” Described as having “more Cadillacs per block” than any other like community, the residents of St. Alban’s relocated to this “greener, cooler suburban village seeking comfort, greater relaxation and breathing space.”<sup>72</sup>

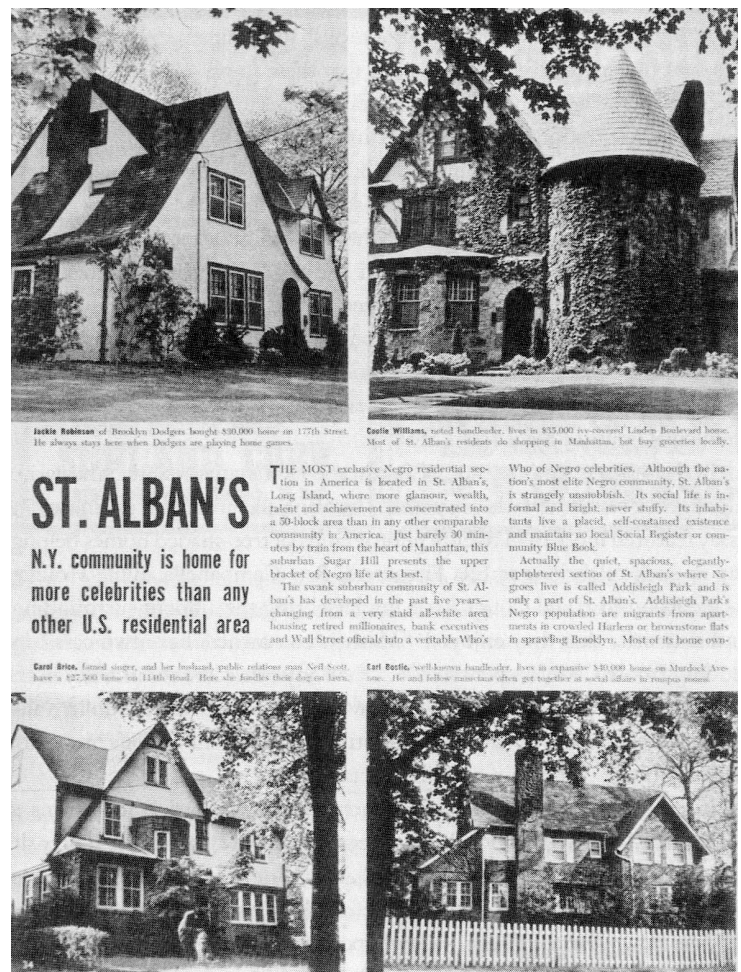


Figure 4.2 “St. Alban’s,” (Source: *Ebony*, 34-39).

<sup>72</sup> “St. Alban’s: New York Community Is Home for More Celebrities Than Any Other U.S. Residential Area,” *Ebony* (September 1951), 34-39.



The St. Alban's article featured more than twenty photographs of the classic two-story Tudor and colonial revival homes all with perfectly manicured landscaped lawns. With houses owned by such celebrities as Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Roy Campanella, and Count Basie, the residents' "richly appointed housing and abundant greenery" conveyed status. Meanwhile, the captions under the pictures listed the dollar value of almost every home, blatantly suggesting the connection between home ownership, wealth, and consumptive tastes.

In 1950 when the article was written, St. Alban's was a relatively new locale for its black residents. Changing from an all-white community comprised of New York bank executives, Wall Street officials, and retired millionaires, the neighborhood had gone through a period of white flight only five years earlier.

White resentment towards blacks moving into the neighborhood dated back to 1941 when bandleader Andy Kirk bought a house through an African American realtor. Proceeding the purchase, the white seller then informed the Addisleigh Park Association, the neighborhood organization whose goal was maintaining the section as "lily-white," that the exclusive community would soon have its first black resident. In an attempt to keep out Mr. Kirk, the association secured an injunction forbidding the sale, which was later upheld by the New York State Supreme Court. Shortly after this maneuver, as more blacks began to show an interest in the area, the first racially restrictive covenants were filed which stipulated that "no sale or rental to Negroes" was allowed in the neighborhood.<sup>73</sup> Months later, the covenant was broken when a white homeowner (a fan

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<sup>73</sup> "St. Alban's," *Ebony*, p 38.

of Mr. Kirk) said he was willing to sell to blacks; and according to the article the first African American resident was not Mr. Kirk but was a retired railroad worker married to a white woman, who purchased the home in her name.

As stated in the *Ebony* article, the early black purchasers of homes in St. Alban's used "devices to circumvent anti-Negro bias."<sup>74</sup> Using white friends or attorneys as dummies, many blacks would have whites purchase their homes for them and would then have the title transferred over. It was written that many of the residents never even saw the interiors of the homes that they purchased; usually they would examine the home from the street, would decide to buy, and then instruct their "white dummies to negotiate the sale."<sup>75</sup>

Despite its problematic history, in 1951 when the article was written, it was said that the Addisleigh Park neighborhood was free of racial tension. Due to a rapid exodus of white families once African Americans began moving into the area, only twenty percent of the neighborhood remained white (approximately 250 families). Of those who left, a high profit was made on their sales wherein the white homeowners took advantage of the situation. According to the article, no Addisleigh Park home was originally constructed for more than \$20,000, but black buyers paid as much as \$40,000 for homes in the community. In fact, the average price paid by black residents was \$20,000. This represented a profit of 100 percent or more.

The St. Alban's community, and others reported in *Ebony*, represented a vision of suburban life that the postwar black middle-class could appreciate and would aspire to be

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, 39.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*.

a part of. Nonetheless, one should keep in mind that this predominantly black neighborhood was the result of white flight; the blacks did not build their own homes nor did they have a voice in the stylistic choices involved in the building process. And although their homes represented the best that money could offer, and were exquisite in taste and style, it was originally a white man's vision, and it was his taste that was being accommodated. So, the question which arises is: were developers building communities from the ground up for blacks? And if so, what did these communities and homes say about their owners' wants and desires?

With regard to whether or not developers were focusing attention on the needs of black housing, the answer, according to a 1953 article in *House & Home* magazine entitled "Non White Housing," was yes.<sup>76</sup> This article brought to the reader's attention the "big untapped market" that was the black middle-class at the time. By acknowledging that "their need is the greatest," the writer's intent was to bring to light the fact that not enough developers were building communities for African Americans. As stated by one Chicago developer, "we have failed miserably" in regard to producing homes for nonwhites. That said, the article pointed out that the handful of developers who were erecting new, from the ground-up developments for African Americans were proving that such communities were a good investment.

Referring to this "new crop of customers," the article explained to its readers that the nation's newest middle-class was comprised of "thousands of prospective customers with better jobs, higher incomes, and more education clamoring for housing to replace

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<sup>76</sup> "Non White Housing: In the Postwar Housing Boom, Most Builders Shield Away From Negro Housing; Now With Homes Harder to Sell, The Big Untapped Market Beckons," *House & Home*, April 1953, 44-49.

the hovels they now call home.”<sup>77</sup> Referring to census numbers concerning America’s black population (see Table 4.1), the article recognized that African American’s income levels had in fact risen over the last decade, and it demonstrated that not only were more blacks now employed than in previous years, but blacks were now working better jobs with better pay, which made them better mortgage risks.

Acknowledging that too many African Americans were living in overcrowded conditions not by choice but by necessity, the writer of the article stated: “The simple truth is that the nation’s urban whites have resisted giving their cities’ new Negro populations as much living space as their money would buy.”<sup>78</sup> In an effort to shed light on the problem, the article explained that much of developers’ “disinterest” in African American housing was due to a lack of knowledge about the market and troubles concerning the availability (or lack thereof) of land and financing.

With regard to the first issue concerning a lack of knowledge on the part of developers, the author inserted a section titled “Trade Secrets For Negro Market” in an attempt to help developers learn about this untapped group. According to this insert, developers were instructed to first, “[b]uild the same quality houses you would build for the white market, particularly in northern cities;” second, “[b]efore you commence, be sure your site will not invite hassle. Go quietly to the planning commission; check with important industrial groups in your area;” next, “[t]ry to get to know Negro families - not the leaders of militant organized groups, but the kind of people you will be doing business with” (in the article the writer refers to these middle-class black families as

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 44.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*.

“Cadillac families”); fourth, “[s]mooth the way with wide publicity -- even before ground breaking. Have a big dedication ceremony. Advertise nonsegregation if this is the case;” next, “[c]hoose a management or sales staff..which is racially integrated...from top to bottom;” and finally, “[f]orm a tenant council to take unnecessary worries off your hand.”<sup>79</sup> According to this article, by following these instructions, a developer would be more in-tune with his black audience and therefore, he would be in a better position to build successful projects for this minority group.

With regard to the latter two problems mentioned in the article, land and financing availability, the land problem referred to the codified segregationist practices whereby there was a lack of space available in urban centers for minorities. Within the article, the writer conveyed sentiments by developers in which the shared feeling was that, social consciousness aside, many communities were “just not ready” for integration and developers were not going to force it and make people (white people) unhappy. As to the third problem, financing, the article cited that in general, builders found financing for nonwhite communities more difficult, but that the growing list of successfully completed projects would become the most convincing evidence for lenders. In addition, the article stated that it was “an arresting but still insufficiently known fact” that values of homes do not depreciate once blacks buy into a neighborhood.<sup>80</sup> In fact, the article stated that after the initial wave of scare-selling subsided, prices generally climbed past where they were before.

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

These progressive attitudes were echoed in a 1959 *Time* magazine segment in which the writer stated that mortgage companies were beginning to realize that steadily employed African Americans were a mortgage-risk worth taking.<sup>81</sup> It went on to say that many builders were gaining a sense of satisfaction from the experience of producing homes for the prospering members of the black middle-class. As one builder stated in the article, “we are enjoying the experience because we can see and feel the appreciation of the people who buy our houses.” Thus, these articles attempted to prove that erecting minority housing was a safe investment which provided a positive experience for the builders and developers. In addition, these articles tried to debunk the myth that black-homeownership equated with depreciated home values.

One city in particular was mentioned in both the *House & Home* article as well as the *Time* magazine article because of the high numbers of middle-class African Americans living there, and for the new developments that were being erected for them. That city was Atlanta, and the remainder of this examination will focus on this southern locale and the steps taken which created separate African American middle-class suburban spaces equal to any of those inhabited by whites.

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<sup>81</sup> “A Lift in Living,” *Time* (September 21, 1959), 28.

## CHAPTER 5

### ATLANTA

“I am glad that when I go to other parts of the world I don’t have to apologize for Atlanta; I am proud that we are a broad liberal minded city; and I am proud of the growth of our negroes.”

-Atlanta Mayor William Hartsfield addressing the Empire Real Estate Board, 1955

“Come out today and select your home in beautiful Collier Heights estates, a community where families can grow and breathe the fresh air of freedom.”

-Advertisement, *The Atlanta Daily World*, 1963

A theme throughout this thesis has been the concept of the *American dream* and the ways and means that African Americans have striven for it. This concept was prevalent in a 1959 *New York Times* article titled “New Southerner: The Middle-Class Negro,” in which the writers sought to shed light on the fact that not only did a black bourgeois exist, but its emergence would have meaning around the nation.

The writer began the article with a quote of a young black father concerning the desires he and his wife had for their children: “We want our children to have a chance at owning a station wagon and a ranch-style house and carrying a briefcase instead of a shovel.”<sup>82</sup> The article continued by explaining that this black man’s desires for the “American dream” were the same as those held by all members of the middle-class,

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<sup>82</sup> “New Southerner: The Middle-Class Negro,” *The New York Times* (August, 9 1959), 11.

regardless of the color of a person's skin, and one of the major fulfillments of this dream was (and still remains) homeownership.

Referring to traditional, racist stereotypes of what a black southerner was (the black man behind the mule, wearing patched overalls, performing menial tasks, living on the margin), the article informed its readers that by the 1950s, southern African Americans had “launched a successful assault in the South” to debunk the myth that blacks were inferior to whites and justified that their place in society had changed.<sup>83</sup> With the attainment of ranch-style homes with picture windows, shiny new cars parked in the carport, and the purchase of other modern gadgets, according to this article, the black middle-class (particularly in the South) had emerged, and their impact would soon be felt all around the country.

To prove their point about the signs and indicators regarding the rise of this new African American middle-class, the writers included a picture of a modern ranch-style home on a sprawling lot in the Atlanta neighborhood of Collier Heights. Stating that Atlanta was “the true center” of the southern black middle-class, the writers explained that by 1959, amidst the racial tensions of the time, “the colored man has assumed a new place” in the South.<sup>84</sup> But how did this circumstance come to be?

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<sup>83</sup> For more detailed information about the racist Southern stereotypes see *Race Relations and Southern Culture* by David R. Goldfield, (Baton Rouge, LA, Louisiana State Press, 1990).

<sup>84</sup> “New Southerner”, 53.



## THE CITY TOO BUSY TO HATE

Throughout its history, Atlanta, like other southern cities, has been impacted by race on a physical and institutional level. From its inception as a railroad hub, the city has always been comprised of whites and blacks, and the relationship between the two races has been a major factor in the shaping of the city. Working within a power system where for many years African Americans were enslaved, and whites were empowered, since the nineteenth-century, regardless of the attitudes and policies of the white elite, black Atlantans have demonstrated the desire and put forth the effort to develop their own community and take charge of their own futures.

At the beginning of the twentieth-century, the impact of Atlanta's racial policies was evident in almost every facet of society. In regard to the city's economy, black employment and occupational advancements had been heavily limited since the nineteenth-century; and although black leaders, such as Booker T. Washington stressed the importance of black economic advancement as a gateway to social equality, African Americans were limited with regard to the opportunities available to them. The attainment of jobs was heavily dependent on education and training, both of which remained highly unattainable by blacks even into the twentieth century. Nevertheless, by 1890 many black Atlantans had secured skilled work (men in particular), and there were small numbers of African Americans of both genders, in clerical and professional jobs. In addition, black Atlantans had started successful businesses such as the Georgia Real Estate, Loan and Trust Company (established in 1890), as well as black-owned

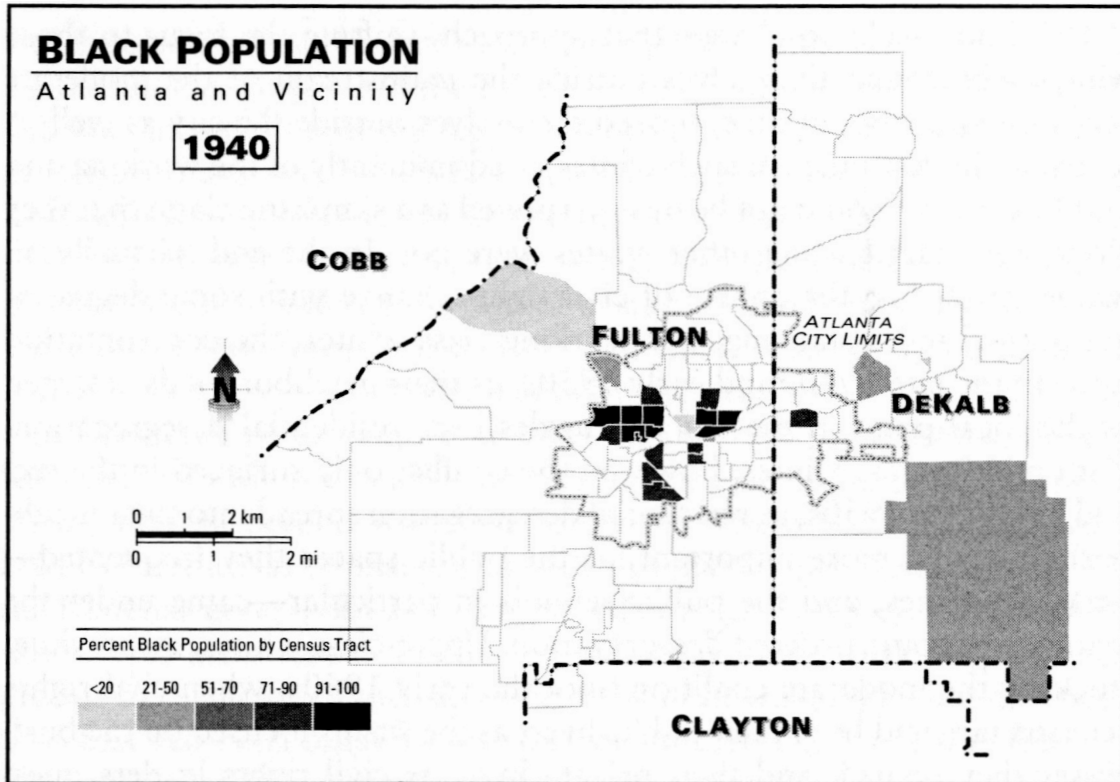


Figure 5.1 Black population, Atlanta and vicinity 1940 (Source: Kruse, *White Flight*, 16).

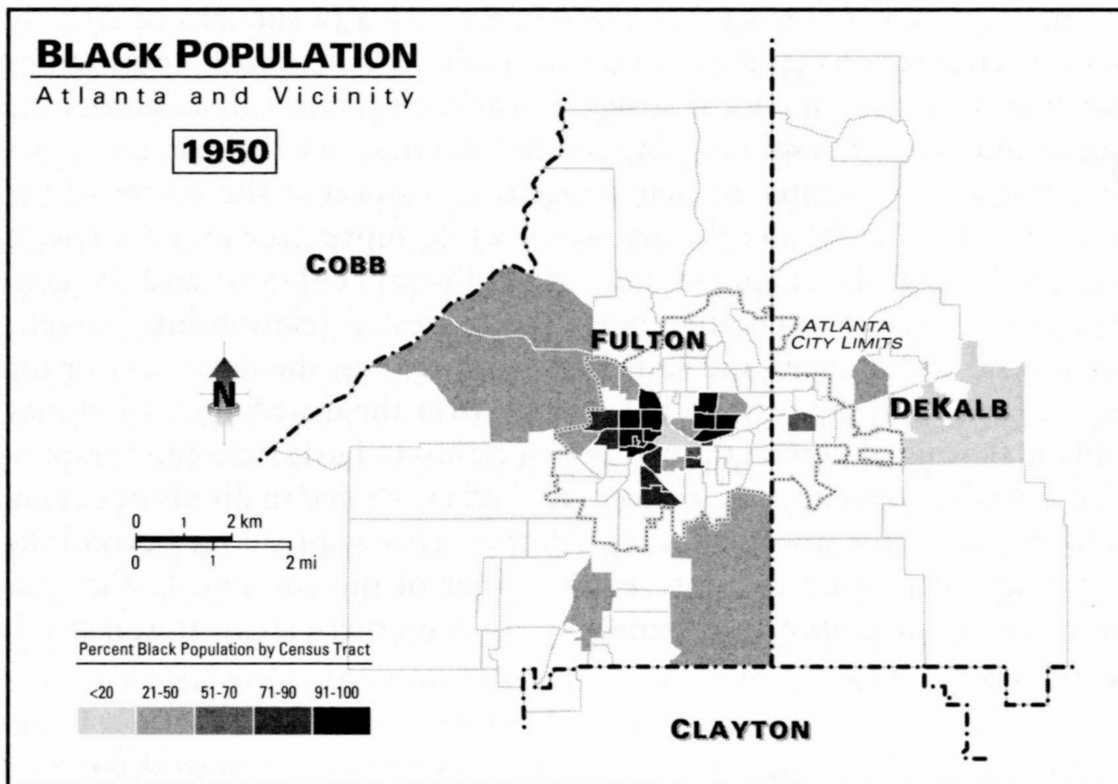


Figure 5.2 Black population, Atlanta and vicinity 1950 (Source: Kruse, *White Flight*, 16).

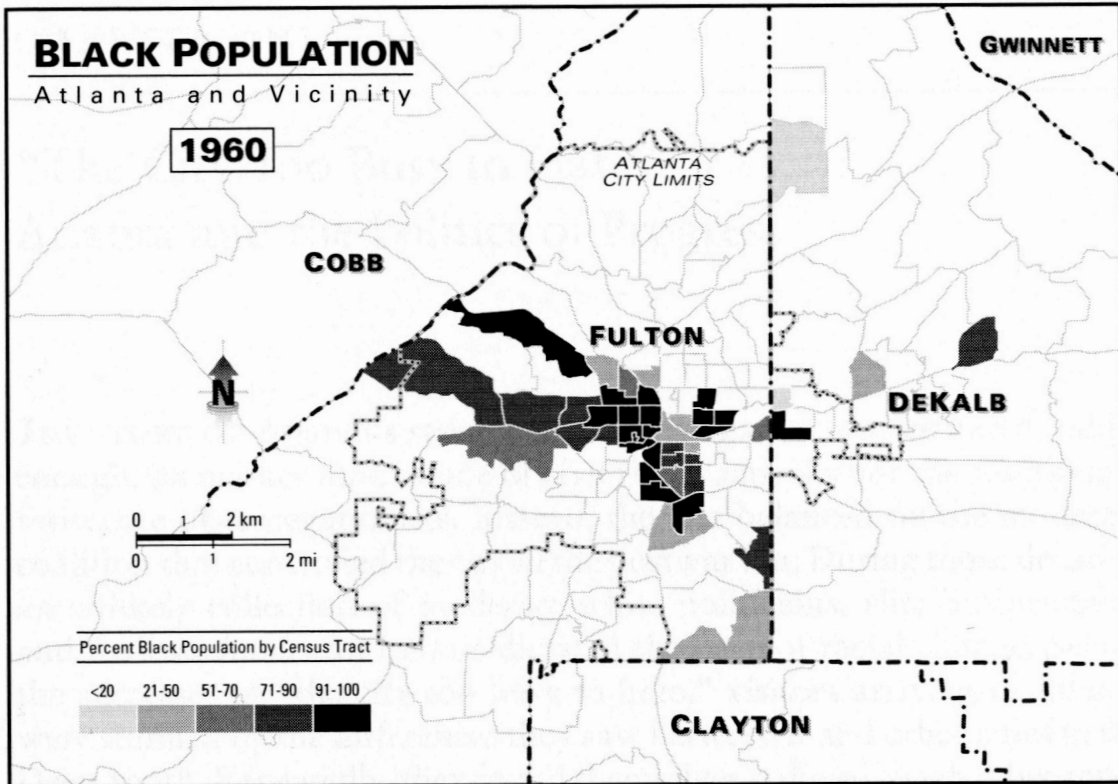


Figure 5.3 Black population, Atlanta and vicinity 1960 (Source: Kruse, *White Flight*, 17).

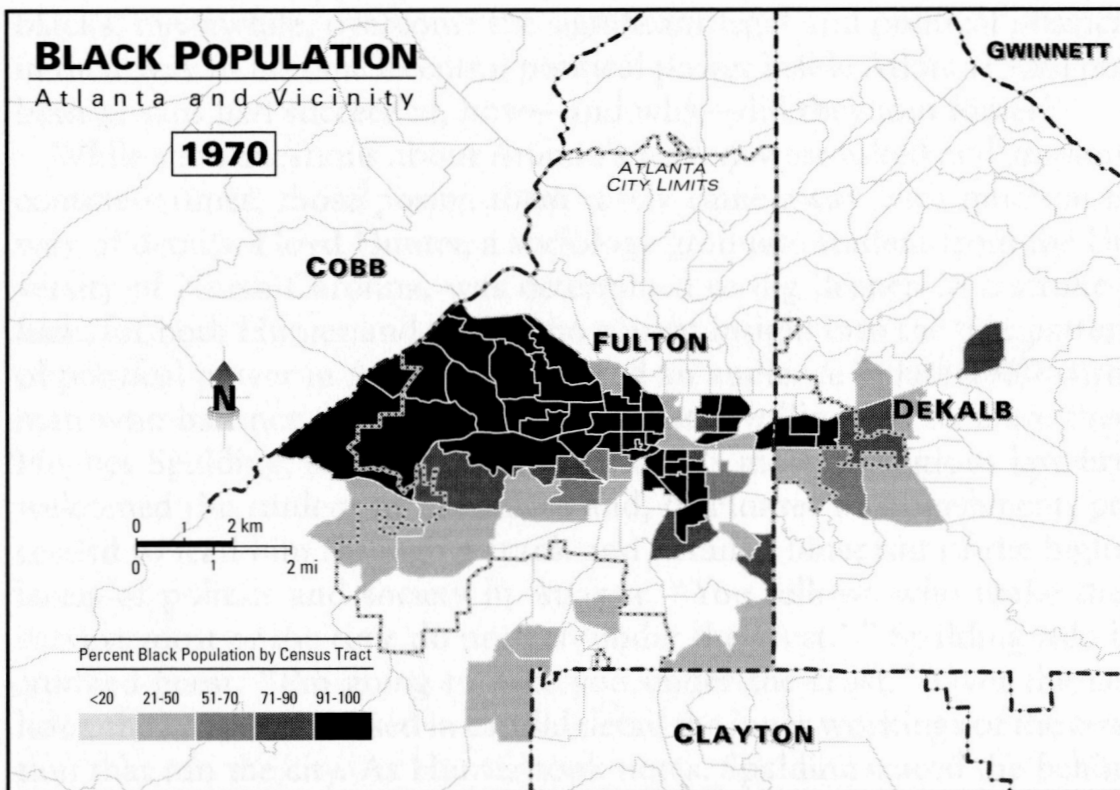


Figure 5.4 Black population, Atlanta and vicinity 1970 (Source: Kruse, *White Flight*, 17).

barbershops, grocery stores, wood-yards, meat markets, restaurants, and other businesses. Thus, the black middle-class in Atlanta had a strong presence in the city leading up to the postwar years.

With regard to public amenities such as schools, parks, buses, and hospitals, before the civil rights era, “separate but equal” was the norm in Atlanta. This system was obviously supported by whites, and was even supported by some blacks, because according to the sentiment of the times, receiving a small amount of facilities was better than receiving none, and segregation was preferable to exclusion.<sup>85</sup>

Regarding the domestic built environment of Atlanta, race and class had always played a major role dictating where blacks could live. In the years following the Civil War, black neighborhoods formed both in the city and around its periphery, in the eastern, southern, and western areas bordering downtown, close to railroad lines, in industrial sections, on cheap land in low-lying areas, as servants’ quarters in the white north side, and in close proximity to the black colleges on the south and west side. But as the black population grew, which it did, and despite securing economic advancements for themselves, which they did, Atlanta’s black population remained spatially limited; efforts were continually made by whites to regulate the mobility of blacks and to control the areas in which they could inhabit. For that reason, well into the twentieth-century, black neighborhoods were plagued by inadequate sanitation, unpaved streets, poor water

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<sup>85</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the desegregation of public amenities in Atlanta see “The Politics of Race and Public Space: Desegregation, Privatization, and the Tax Revolt in Atlanta” by Kevin Kruse, *The Journal of Urban History* (Vol. 31, No.5, July 2005), 610-633.





Figures 5.5 and 5.6 African American homes near the Capitol building, Atlanta, 1940s. (Source: Richard Cloues, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division).

availability, insufficient transportation lines and fire services, deficient public health care and schools, and a severe lack in park space.

As was previously mentioned, Atlanta was a racially segregated city well into the twentieth century. Designed to “manipulate black residential mobility, open up only certain sections of the city for black housing, and hold on to the white population,” the residential patterns in Atlanta were part of the city’s long-term segregation process.<sup>86</sup> This segregated process utilized racial zoning and land ordinances (as well as physical barriers and boundaries) as a way to permit whites to regulate the mobility of, and to control the areas in which blacks lived.

Atlanta’s powerful, white elite enacted its first segregation ordinance in 1913 and subsequent racial zoning legislation were passed in 1916, 1922, 1929, and 1931. Working around the Supreme Court’s rulings about the constitutionality of restrictive covenants (refer to *Shelley v. Kramer*), in 1922 the city was divided into sections, white and black single- and two-family dwelling sections, apartment-house areas, and racially undetermined commercial and industrial districts. As a result of this division, African Americans received less land than what was available to whites for dwelling purposes, and a good amount of the black neighborhoods was classified as industrial. Thus, racial zoning represented an organized effort to oversee the movements of the black community by limiting where blacks could live and created buffers between white and black residential neighborhoods.

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, 54.

Despite the fact that the racial aspects of the 1922 zoning ordinances were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1924, racial zoning still prevailed. For example, in 1929 a law denied any individual the right to move into a building on a street in which “the majority of the residences...are occupied by those with whom said person is forbidden to intermarry.”<sup>87</sup> In addition, a 1931 law made it illegal for “any person of either the white or colored races to move into a building last occupied by persons of a different race...if such...building is situated within fifteen blocks from a public school” of the other race.<sup>88</sup> Although later court rulings struck down these ordinances, the effect was a lasting one and city officials remained aware and continued to think of these pre-designated sections as the only areas suitable for blacks.

By the 1920s, of these “suitable areas” for African Americans, the west side of Atlanta began receiving a lot of attention. Already considered an area of black growth due to its proximity with the historically black colleges and universities located in the area, the west side became the main destination for migrating blacks. In turn, this area became a major racial battleground. Much of this westward push was due to one particular Atlanta realtor and developer, Herman Perry, a man who wanted to “get hold of the West Side before Negroes were fenced in by whites.”<sup>89</sup>

By the 1940s, more than 40 percent of Atlanta’s African American population lived in the west side of the city, and after World War II ended, the need for new housing became even more prevalent. Knowing that black migration into white neighborhoods

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<sup>87</sup> Georgia II Code, sec. 2422 of 1889 reads as follows: "The marriage relation between white persons and persons of African descent is forever prohibited, and such marriage shall be null and void."

<sup>88</sup> Bayor, 54.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 58.

was not a desirable solution to the white residents of the city, peaceful expansion measures had to be taken.<sup>90</sup>

The initial steps to peaceful expansion were taken by members of the African American community themselves. By forming organizations and alliances that would focus on both the politics and economics of housing segregation, a cadre of black professionals came together and became advocates for housing policy while working to develop the economic base for black-homebuilding, black-land purchasing, and black-neighborhood development. These groups would set the stage for Atlanta's unique approach to creating segregated middle-class suburban neighborhoods, in particular, Collier Heights.

One such organization was the Temporary Coordinating Committee on Housing, which was created in 1946 under the auspices of the Atlanta Urban League (AUL). Founded in 1920, the AUL was created to “encourage, assist and engage in activities which lead to the improvement of opportunities for disadvantaged persons and families in Metropolitan Atlanta.”<sup>91</sup> The year after the Temporary Coordinating Committee on Housing was formed, in 1947, the Atlanta Housing Council emerged and issued a report that identified six areas suitable for peaceful black expansion. The council desired to locate housing for blacks in “safe areas,” for as AUL's housing expert at the time commented years later, “the town was about to explode.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> For more detailed discussion about the violence associated with blacks moving into white neighborhoods, see *White Flight* by Kevin M. Kruse, (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>91</sup> The Atlanta Urban League, Inc. available from [www.atlul.org](http://www.atlul.org); Internet; accessed March 2009.

<sup>92</sup> Bayor, 59.



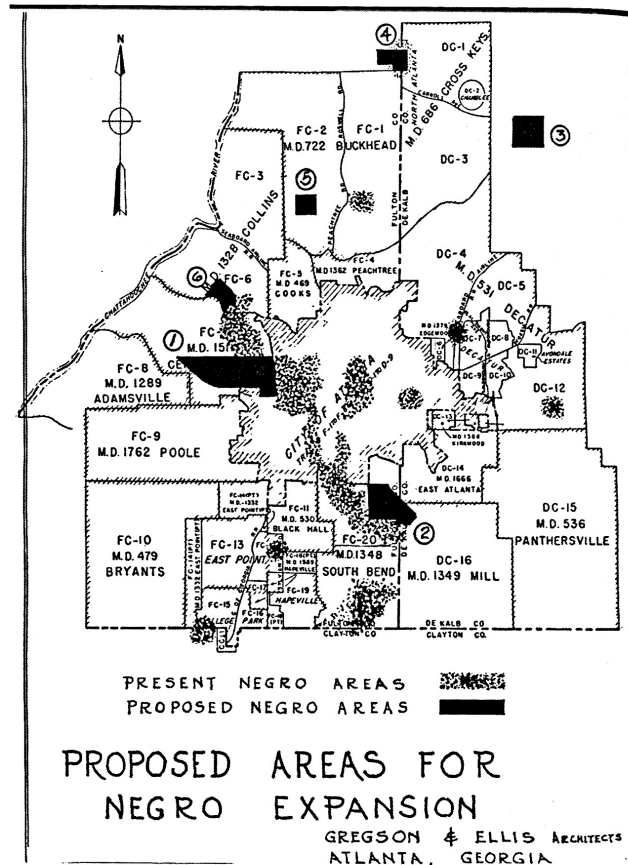


Figure 5.7 “Proposed Areas for Negro Expansion.” Atlanta Housing Council, 1947 (Source: Wiese, *Places of Their Own*, 180).

By this point in time, the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce was on board with the expansion areas, most of which were located in areas already inhabited and/or owned by blacks. Mayor William Hartsfield was aware of the efforts to accommodate the black housing needs, and he himself worked with the initial housing committee to find a resolution. City officials privately endorsed the six expansion areas when they were chosen in 1947, and in 1952, together with the Metropolitan Planning Commission, the expansion proposal was publicly endorsed in its “Up Ahead” planning report. The report stated:

In the development of a logical future residential pattern, expansion areas must be opened up for the colored population. Of the approximately 320,000 people to be added to the population by 1980, about 90,000 will be colored. New housing will be needed for other thousands who might be displaced from crowded downtown areas by expressway construction and redevelopment . . . A practical answer is to open up and develop Negro expansion areas outside the central city. These areas should be assembled as a matter of public policy and should be developed by private enterprise as far as possible. This would provide new housing for the many Negroes who can afford it and would create vacancies in existing downtown housing for those seeking second-hand units.<sup>93</sup>

Basically the commission's actions acknowledged what the black community had already been doing; Urban League-sponsored housing was being built in some of the designated expansion areas, and would continue well into the 1950s with a number of privately financed developments.

Factors that contributed to the expansion of black housing options in Atlanta were numerous. One such component pertained to the accessible financing options available to these new developments. Both black- and white-owned banks, real estate, and insurance companies contributed to this effort, and, because the land was mostly black-owned and occupied on the west side (and did not initially threaten white neighborhoods), there was no serious opposition by city and council officials.<sup>94</sup>

As has previously been discussed, Atlanta was a hub for members of the black middle class, and many of the people involved in the financing and purchasing of land in the west side were affiliates of this group. Comprising this faction were members of the Empire Real Estate Board, an organization that represented Atlanta's African American

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<sup>93</sup> Metropolitan Planning Commission, "Up Ahead: A Regional Land Use Plan for Metropolitan Atlanta, February 1952, 57.

<sup>94</sup> Bayor, 60.

real estate and finance corporation owners. Some associates of the Board actively identified properties that could be purchased by realtors and investors for eventual sale to African American families. One such member of the Empire Real Estate Board, Quentin V. Williamson, identified and purchased land parcels in and around what would become Collier Heights.

Another factor that contributed to the expansion efforts by blacks was the fact that Atlanta was home to several African American financial institutions, all recognized under Federal law and regulation. Serving as catalysts for change in their community, Citizens Trust Bank, Atlanta Mutual Savings and Loan, and the Atlanta Life Insurance Company formed a core of leaders that assisted in helping African American families purchase homes in the designated expansion areas.<sup>95</sup>

Political changes also affected housing options in postwar Atlanta. Due to organized voter drives in the 1940s, the number of African American voters had dramatically increased. By 1946, black Atlantans made up 27 percent of the city's total electorate, and their growing political presence heavily contributed to the willingness of white city officials to accept the black expansion measures. As black voting power increased over the next few decades, Mayor William Hartsfield, and other city officials, felt pressure to appease their black constituents and their housing needs.

Regarding this newfound political power, Mayor Hartsfield quickly recognized that these new voters could “provide some much needed support for his reform-style politics.” As a result, Hartsfield heavily courted his African American constituents in

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<sup>95</sup> “Historic District Information Form for Collier Heights,” prepared by Georgia State University, Case Studies in Historic Preservation Class, Spring 2008, 30.

order to gain their approval of, among other matters, his 1949 Plan of Improvement.<sup>96</sup> Hartsfield's proposed plan would increase the size of the city from 37 to 188 square miles and realign city and government functions to improve efficiency.

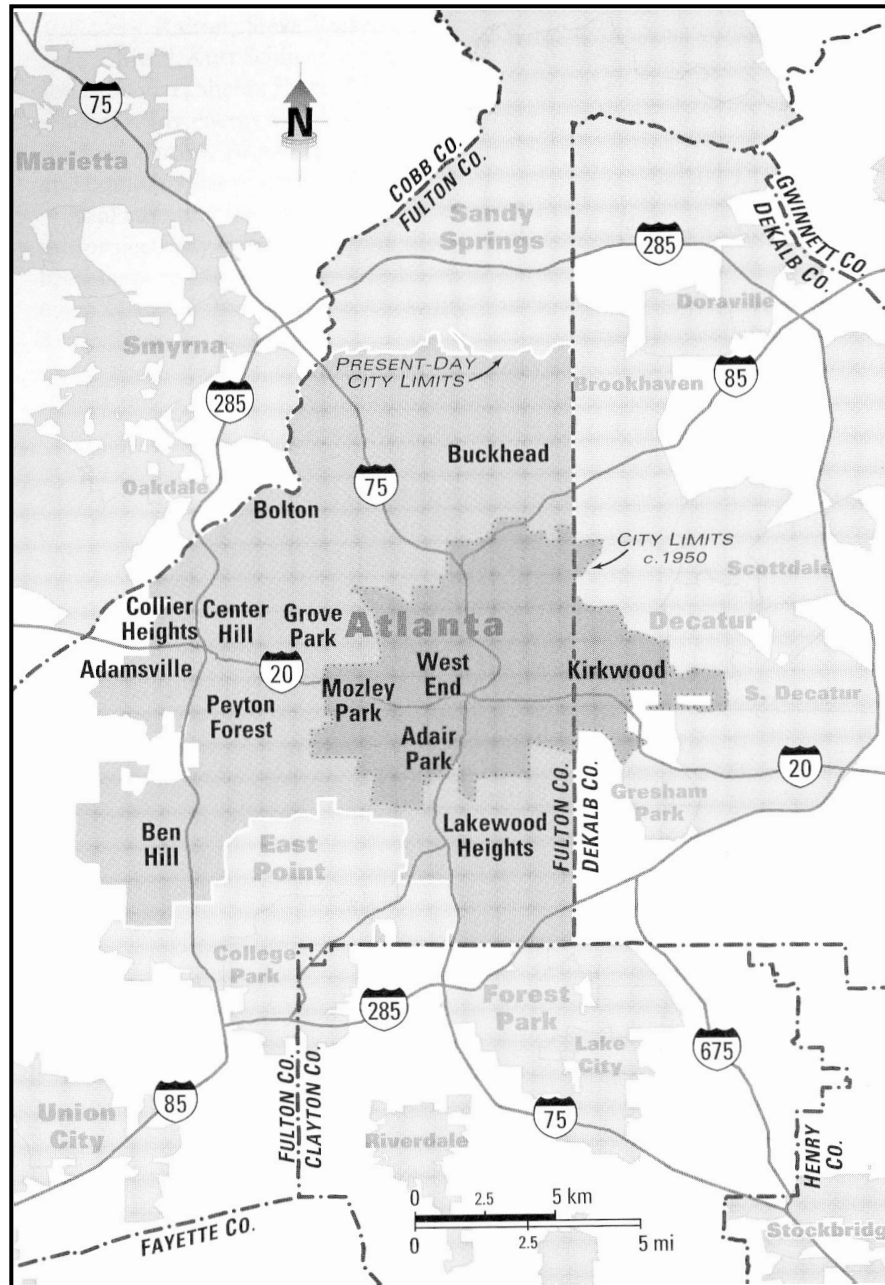


Figure 5.8 Overview map of Atlanta showing the city limits circa. 1950 and the city limits that resulted from Mayor Hartsfield's "Plan of Improvement," (Source: Kruse, *White Flight*)

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

Appealing to African Americans, the Mayor argued that the annexation of the northern white suburbs would bring a “reasonable element into city politics that was capable of counterbalancing more extremist anti-black sentiment.”<sup>97</sup> The annexation plan would also open up areas that could be used as further expansion areas for black housing.

Ultimately, the Atlanta Negro Voters League supported the plan (after extensive behind-the-scenes negotiating), and large portions of land on the west side were opened up to black Atlantans. One such area that was annexed into the city was the previously mentioned Collier Heights neighborhood, a 200 acre tract of land already inhabited by a small group of whites.

## PEACEFUL TRANSITION

Knowing that the racial transition of neighborhoods from white to black could be complicated and at times violent, in 1952, the same year the “Up Ahead” planning report was completed, Mayor Hartsfield established the West Side Mutual Development Committee (WSMDC) . Set up as a biracial group intended to help alleviate the violence associated with neighborhood transitions, the WSMDC was brought on the scene in Collier Heights when white residents discovered that an African American had purchased land adjacent to their neighborhood.

Precipitating this involvement was a report issued by the Collier Heights Civic Club to its residents on January 15, 1954. The civic club reported to its neighbors that it

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

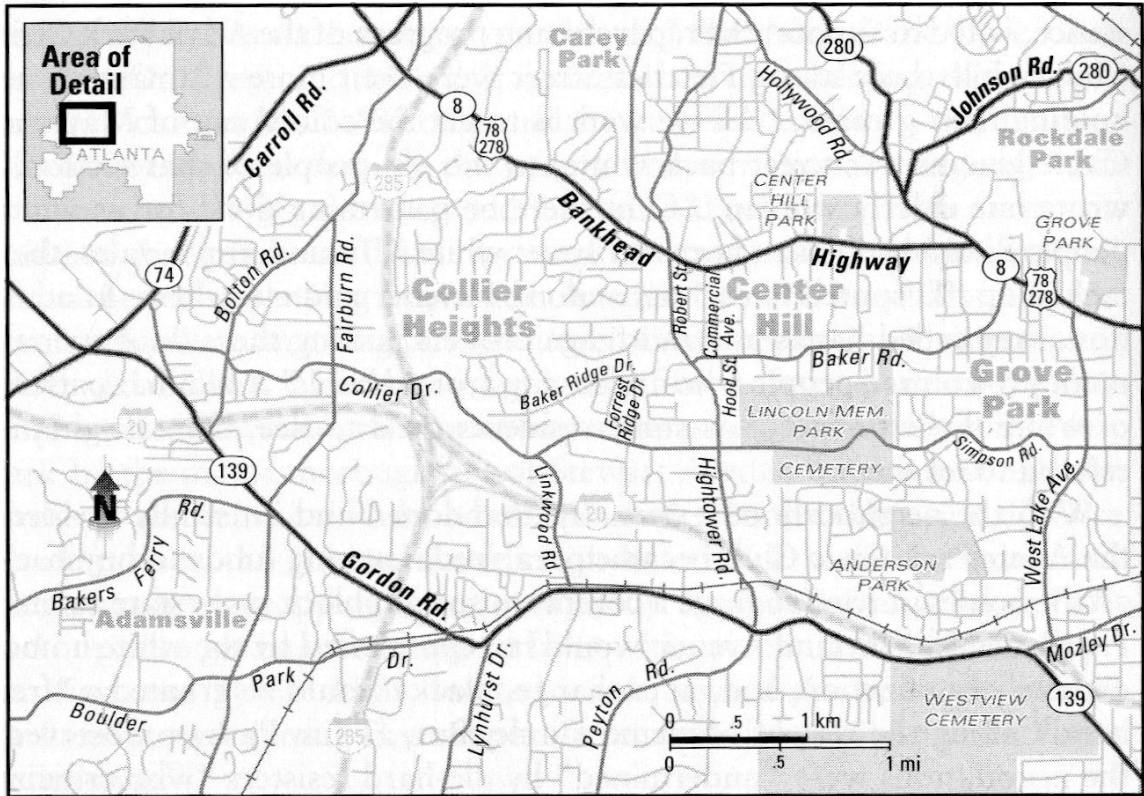


Figure 5.9 Map showing Collier Heights area in the west side of Atlanta (Source: Kruse, *White Flight*, 98).

was working “hard and diligently to find out just what the situation is concerning colored development in this general area.” The issued report also stated:

You as a home-owner are probably aware of a movement underway by a group in our area to have you sell to the colored people. This Committee knows for a fact that the group working for the sale to colored has misrepresented some facts to you in this regard and have gone so far as to impersonate a member of this Committee in their solicitation in behalf of their selfish motives. It is the opinion of this Committee that a vast majority of our neighborhood do not want to sell or move at this time. It is recommended before you sign that each of you take the time to thoroughly think through and consider just what you as an individual stand to lose both financially and morally by the action of several people in the community selling to colored and leaving you or your neighbor in a predicament created by this selfish few.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Collier Heights Civic Club, Letter dated January 15, 1954, Atlanta Bureau of Planning Records, Box 3, Folder 5, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center.



Based on the tone and implications of this letter, the WSMDC felt the need to distribute questionnaires designed to determine the white residents' willingness to stay or sell to African Americans. Typical of the types of measures taken by the WSMDC, on February 11, 1954, a letter and accompanying questionnaire were sent out to the white residents of Collier Heights. The letter stated that, "the enclosed questions are being asked of you in order to properly advise real estate men, home finance brokers, city officials, and others concerned as to the desires of Collier Heights residents." In addition, the correspondence indicated that although African American companies owned and were developing land in the Collier Heights area, they had no intention of disrupting the white residents or causing problems.<sup>99</sup> The correspondences and a sampling of the questionnaires can be found in Appendix B.

Questionnaires were sent to approximately 150 homes in Collier Heights and 98 responses were recorded. A letter sent to Collier Heights residents on March 5, 1954, outlined the results of the survey. To the first question, "My personal preference for Collier Heights is to: (1) remain white; (2) sell to coloreds; (3) no opinion, or see my comment below," 50 families felt that the community should remain white, 28 preferred to sell to colored, 6 indicated no preference, and 14 did not answer the question. To the second question, "My own personal plans are to: (1) sell as soon as possible; (2) wait and see what happens; (3) stay in Collier Heights; (4) no opinion," 35 favored selling, 22

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<sup>99</sup> Westside Mutual Development Committee and Advisory Panel, Letter dated February 11, 1954, Atlanta Bureau of Planning Records, Box 3, Folder 5, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center.

would wait, 26 preferred to stay, 4 had no preference, and 12 did not answer the questionnaire.<sup>100</sup>

The results implied that the current residents were not entirely ready to relinquish their neighborhood to blacks. However, within a few months, the neighborhood had peacefully transitioned from an all white community to an almost exclusively black one, without one incident of violence. Six years later the story of the remarkable transition of the Collier Heights neighborhood was picked up by the *Atlanta Daily World*.

Recounting the “anger and bitterness” felt by the white residents when news first arrived of the sale of land adjacent to theirs, the article informed its readers that the entire neighborhood agreed to sell their homes to African Americans. The article continued by recounting the goal of the transition period, which was “to keep someone from jumping the gun and selling too soon” because such a blockbusting tactic could lead to violence. The article concluded by emphasizing the fact that no violent incidents occurred throughout the transition, due to the “carefully-planned program of keeping everyone honestly informed,” and a short three months later, “it was all over and Negroes were the new owners of Collier Heights.”<sup>101</sup>

## A NEIGHBORHOOD BUILT BY BLACKS, FOR BLACKS

As evident when analyzing the community, Collier Heights was intended to be a tightly

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<sup>100</sup> Westside Mutual Development Committee and Advisory Panel, Letter dated March 5, 1954, Atlanta Bureau of Planning Records, Box 3, Folder 5, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center.

<sup>101</sup> Al Kuettner, “Atlanta Has Answer to Negro Housing Woes, Writer Holds,” *The Atlanta Daily World*, (July 17, 1958).



controlled and well-planned residential district. The concept of control and planning were mentioned earlier in regards to the white neighborhoods that received the “shield of honor” by *Good Housekeeping* magazine. It is worth noting that these two features were also part of the characteristics that distinguish the Collier Heights neighborhood. The architecture of Collier Heights mirrored middle-class white suburban trends across the nation - ranch-style houses with brick veneers situated a uniform distance from the street on spacious, well-manicured lawns with concrete steps and wrought-iron railings. These features were not accidental. Rather, they reflected specific intentions made by Atlanta’s black middle-class to participate fully in postwar suburbia in accordance with extensive land-use planning.

One such planning measure was the 1961 “Collier Heights: A Neighborhood Plan” which was commissioned by the City of Atlanta Department of Planning to promote the area as an ideal residential neighborhood for African Americans. The report described the neighborhood as one that was “growing, building, expanding...in the most rapidly developing section of Atlanta.” By acknowledging the community had some problems in regard to its network of streets, inadequate community facilities, and unsettled development practices, the plan represented “a refinement of the City of Atlanta’s long range planning goals within the Collier Heights community...It is a program designed to prepare Collier Heights for the future.”<sup>102</sup>

During the postwar years, the future of Collier Heights was looking bright, and further development was on its way. The climax of the community’s development took

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<sup>102</sup> “Collier Heights: A Neighborhood Plan,” City of Atlanta Department of Planning, 1961.



Figures 5.10 and 5.11 Typical homes in Collier Heights, examples of common mid-century ranch-style homes, (Photograph by Jill Malino, 2009).

place between 1958 and 1968, when several neighborhoods were platted, hundreds of houses were erected, and several community buildings were constructed. As has been discussed, the prominent house types built in Collier Heights were similar in style to those being built elsewhere for middle-class Americans: ranch-style and split-levels.<sup>103</sup> On the other hand, some of the homes in Collier Heights were unique, such as the pagoda ranch-style house, and were known to have been designed by architects, even though the city did not record any architects or architectural firms on the building permits. In fact, Mr. Jeffrey Robinson, son of Joseph Robinson FAIA, indicated that his father was responsible for designing many of the homes around the neighborhood.<sup>104</sup>

Mr. Robinson (known as J.W.) graduated from Hampton Institute in Virginia in 1949 with a degree in architecture. That same year he moved to Atlanta and began working as a teacher and part-time home designer for the black community, where he did so until his passing in 2008. In 1995 he became the first African American architect to be elevated to the fellowship in the American Institute of Architects. One house in particular that is said to have been designed by him was the circular ranch-style house built for Mr. Stallins, a local band director. In addition, Mr. Jeffrey Robinson indicated that the house in which he now resides was designed by his father. Other residents have also indicated that their homes were designed by architects. For example, Mrs. Phyllis Lawhorn pointed out that her 1963 bi-level house (shown in Figure 5.10) was designed by architect Henry Norris and in the “Historic District Information Form for Collier Heights,” prepared by Georgia State University’s Heritage Preservation

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<sup>103</sup> See “Atlanta Goes Modern,” *House & Home*, (April 1953), 144 -147 for comparable homes in Atlanta.

<sup>104</sup> Oral interview with Mr. Jeffrey Robinson, conducted by Jill Malino, February 24, 2009.





Figure 5.12 Pagoda Ranch-Style house, unknown architect (Photograph by Jill Malino, 2009)



Figure 5.13 Round Ranch-Style house designed by Joseph Robinson (Photograph by Jill Malino, 2009)



department, an interview was documented wherein another homeowner divulged that her family also used an architect.<sup>105</sup>



Figure 5.14 “Big Grand Opening: Collier Heights Estates,” Handbill, 1959. (Atlanta Urban League papers, box 249, folder 12, Atlanta University Center, Robert Woodruff Library)

Attracting the upper echelon of Atlanta’s black population who wanted larger homes on more land, handbill advertisements described one such pocket of the area, Collier Heights Estates, as “Atlanta’s newest and most exclusive subdivision.” The new development offered four “beautiful” split-level home designs ranging in size between 1,400 to 1,800 square feet for between \$17,500 to \$18,500. Homes featured “Hot Point

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<sup>105</sup> Oral interview conducted with Mrs. Phyllis Lawhorn, conducted by Jill Malino, March 10, 2009. “Historic District Information Form for Collier Heights,”

built-in ranges,” “paneled family rooms,” “ample storage space,” “sliding glass doors,” “spacious rooms throughout,” carports, and large lots “to insure privacy.”

Also focusing attention on the grand opening of Collier Heights Estates was the *Atlanta Daily World* whose writer described how the new community would include split level homes with cantilevered upper levels to provide large rooms where every inch of floor space was effectively used.<sup>106</sup> Additionally, the writer made a point to describe three of the model homes, the Fairridge, the Monticello (depicted in Figure 5.15), and the Sherwood.<sup>107</sup> Unlike the well-worn lots and makeshift homes occupied by residents of Atlanta’s working-class, these advertisements depicted images of spacious new homes situated on impeccably manicured lawns with shade trees all around - a thoroughly middle-class vision of domestic space.

From the exterior, the homes in Collier Heights appear to be similar to homes in white middle-class neighborhoods around the country. However, the presence of basements serves as a distinguishing characteristic between the two. Research and interviews with residents indicate that many of the homes in Collier Heights had fully-finished basements. These spaces served as recreational rooms or as *Ebony* magazine called them, “rumpus rooms,” often times containing second kitchens and bars where community members could gather, hold meetings, and entertain one another.

While attending a neighborhood meeting of the Collier Heights Neighborhood Association, the majority of homeowners confirmed that their homes did in fact have

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<sup>106</sup> “Exciting Grand Opening of the Season; Collier Heights Estates,” *The Atlanta Daily World*, (May 5, 1963).

<sup>107</sup> Discussion could be had about the meaning behind the names and messages and values that were trying to be conveyed through them, but that is a topic for another paper.



Figure 5.15 “The Monticello,” Collier Heights, 1997 (Source: Wiese, *Places of Their Own*, 193).

these rooms, as did the president of the association, Mr. Antavius Weems, who indicated that his contained a half-kitchen and a bar. Based on his experience throughout the neighborhood, he estimated that around 80 percent of the houses in Collier Heights contained some such room.<sup>108</sup>

Some of these rumpus rooms were more elaborate than others based on the wealth of the residents. For example, Mr. Herman Perry, local real estate developer and one of the wealthiest blacks in the neighborhood, had a heated swimming pool in his basement (see Appendix A).<sup>109</sup> A story was recounted by one resident concerning a wealthy Collier

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<sup>108</sup> Oral interview with Mr. Antavius Weems, conducted by Jill Malino, March 5, 2009

<sup>109</sup> “Wealthy Atlanta Negroes...How They Did It,” *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, March 9, 1969.

Heights resident who constructed a soda-fountain bar in his basement for his children. According to the story, since most soda-fountains in downtown Atlanta were off-limits to African Americans in the 1940s and 1950s, he built his own.<sup>110</sup> Mr. Jeffrey Robinson indicated that his father would use steel beams in the basements he designed so that the entire floor could be used as fully-open space to entertain better. Based on analysis, it appears that many of the homes in Collier Heights used these rooms as spaces to meet the needs of a black community who could not go downtown or out around town as they pleased. African Americans needed their own communal spaces wherein they could relax, have fun, and entertain without feeling the bias and resentment of whites. Thus, they created their own safe and lively spaces in their homes.

Once residents began to settle into the Collier Heights neighborhood, they worked very hard to maintain its character and the objectives set out in its 1961 “Plan of Improvement.” However, by the end of the 1960s development began to wane. Although some construction did continue into the 1970s, the majority of projects halted in 1968, the same year the Fair Housing Act passed, which granted African Americans more access to housing throughout the city of Atlanta. Nonetheless, by 1968, Collier Heights had made its mark on the city and on the nation, and the community had built for themselves an equal, albeit separate, enclave for members of Atlanta’s thriving middle-class black population.

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<sup>110</sup> Oral interview with Mrs. Phyllis Lawhorn, conducted by Jill Malino, March 15, 2009.



## EQUALITY THROUGH ARCHITECTURE

Recognizing a distinction between suburban trends found in the North and the South during the postwar years, scholars have devoted attention describing the regional characteristics which led to a process of “separate suburbanization” in the South.<sup>111</sup> In contrast to the urban and suburban North, where African American communities emerged because of a transition of existing neighborhoods (St. Alban’s is a good example of this), African American communities in the South grew in large part through the construction of new housing on the metropolitan fringe (Collier Heights is a perfect example of this). In addition, a major difference between black suburbanization in the South versus suburbanization in other parts of the country was the planning process and political negotiations that went along with it, where black and white leaders worked together to solve the postwar housing dilemma by erecting new communities in sanctioned “Negro expansion areas.” This strategy was successful because (1) it allowed whites to preserve racial segregation and avoid the turbulence that often occurred when blacks moved into a neighborhood and (2) it allowed blacks whose main objective was to build better neighborhoods, a pragmatic way to do so given the racial system of the times. This was certainly the case in Collier Heights wherein whites and blacks came together, appropriated land, and made a plan to provide much needed housing for African Americans.

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<sup>111</sup> Wiese, *Places*, 165.

For blacks in the South, defeating “segregation” did not inherently mean living side-by-side with whites, in fact, few blacks wanted to live in integrated neighborhoods. Rather, desegregation meant rising above the substandard conditions and second-class citizenship imposed by discrimination. African Americans were fighting discrimination on all levels and specifically with regard to housing, blacks wanted empowerment. This empowerment meant new housing, expanded home ownership, and a residential landscape similar to middle-class suburbs nationwide. According to Wiese, the fastest and most definite way to achieve this was on a racially separate basis.

One might find this separate but equal method to be a contradiction of the postwar years. Wiese points out that the Southern black leaders of the time did not feel this way, and they saw no problem in building self-contained African American communities, like Collier Heights, while at the same time fighting for integrated schools and public parks. Given the reality of the times, wherein whites were insisting on racial segregation and were backing up this insistence with a legitimate threat of violence, new options were necessary for African Americans. Consequently, by expanding and improving the supply of housing, while at the same time erecting new, up-to-date neighborhoods, an assertion of equality was made. As stated by Atlanta housing activist Robert Thompson, the construction of even a few “luxury” homes was important “if for no other reason than to assist in changing the white man’s image of the Negro relative to the Negro’s desire to live decently in suburbia.”<sup>112</sup> This concept regarding the white persons image of how blacks live reverts back to the article written by Barbara Mooney which sought to

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<sup>112</sup> Robert Thompson, memorandum to Phillip Hammer, “Atlanta Urban Renewal Survey,” June 25, 1957, box 243, Atlanta Urban League Papers (Robert Woodruff Library, Atlanta, GA).

demonstrate how blacks fought racial stereotypes through the built environment. By proving that blacks were not filthy people who lived indecently, social progress could be achieved and blacks could make a legitimate claim for social equality.

What African Americans gained by having their own, albeit, separate spaces, was more than shelter from the elements, and a respite from white racism; it allowed upwardly mobile African American families the ability to separate themselves from the massive amount of working-class and poor blacks, a population they did not fully associate with, and ensured for themselves an end to second-class living conditions. Thus, the purchasing and building of modern homes, similar to those being attained by whites, not only removed blacks physically from their poor and working-class counterparts. It also denoted a social and economic expanse between socioeconomic groups through the built environments in which African Americans lived. In addition, by building separate communities for themselves, African Americans were able to create spaces of self-expression, independence, and belonging as black people where empowerment came from, among other things, spatial congregation and the ability to chose how and where to live.

## CONCLUSION

By taking into consideration, the notion that architecture is a social construct which enables its users to provide an outward expression of their inner desires and beliefs, my analysis has shown that black planners, designers, and inhabitants of the Collier Heights

neighborhood in Atlanta, Georgia, asserted their equality, challenged notions of white supremacy, and empowered themselves through the attainment of a well-planned and well-designed middle-class suburban neighborhood. Taking place during a time of extreme political unrest in our country's history, the development of Collier Heights is an extraordinary example of how an underprivileged, disempowered group of people fought the mainstream racist ideas and policies of the time through the creation of separate but equal homes in the built environment. Significant today because, among other things, its architecture is a shining example of the mid-century modernist ranch house style, Collier Heights remains relevant because race still effects our current housing industry.

After carrying out this examination, some questions remain: was (or is) the ranch-style house a cohesive match to the aesthetic preferences held by the black residents of Collier Heights? We know that during the postwar years, the ranch house was a clear indication of middle-class values and was a popular house type being built. However, this style was first implemented by white architects, white builders, and white residents. Had African Americans had unlimited possibilities when choosing the prominent house type in their neighborhood to represent fully their aesthetic wants and desires, would the ranch-style house have been their first choice? If not, what house type could have been a better fit?

Other questions that have arisen pertain to the racial and socioeconomic marginalization that still goes on in housing practices today. It is my opinion that the defining characteristics of a community's character makeup has more to do with the socioeconomic class of a group than with their racial makeup. Nevertheless, many of

people today still make judgements based on a person's race, and at the root of this are the cultural perceptions, and misconceptions, that people of different races hold for one another. And these misconceptions still effect the housing industry today.

In his writings, Frederick Douglass made the argument that an orderly, enlightened, domestic environment made an African American not only worthy of freedom, but of acceptance into American society. For Douglass, achieving acceptance was more than a recognition that a black person was no longer enslaved; for future observers of the black condition, it was rather the enabling of that person to erect and occupy a house in a middle-class domestic setting characterized by order, health, literacy, and morality which established a legitimate claim to his equal participation in the public sphere. Likewise, DuBois argued that improved housing would improve race relations, and he indicated that progress among African Americans could be achieved in the built environment. Such progress is surely evident in the Collier Heights neighborhood.

These two men, along with many others since, foresaw the advantages that such environments had to offer, and whether they were conscious of it at the time or not, the residents of Collier Heights rightly proved these theories when they built their community. By fulfilling the American dream of owning a home in suburbia, African Americans in Atlanta overcame racial barriers associated with the systematized practice of segregation and asserted racial progress and equality through their consumption of middle-class homes comparable to those found anywhere in the country.

## APPENDIX A: NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

“Wealthy Atlanta Negroes: How They Did It,” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, March 1969



Thomas B. Reynolds, one of the wealthiest Negroes in America, stands before the massive one-story brick facade of the multi-story, six-story Atlanta home he is building.



W. B. Hill is president of savings and loan firm he and 14 others started in 1952. By last year, \$100 million.



Mr. and Mrs. Ed Colson on the porch of their one-story home. He is a successful real estate man.

By Margaret Shannon

**A**TLANTA has been a capital of black capitalism for a long time, long enough to have second- and third-generation wealth in some Negro families. Jesse Hill Jr., an enthusiastic-type Negro leader, insists that Atlanta is the national capital of black capitalism, although he is not sure that the phrase as he uses it means the same thing as the one now in vogue. Hill is a civil rights activist, but even so, he occasionally has trouble communicating with other blacks.

“We’ve just been swamped with so many slogans you don’t know what they mean anymore,” Hill said. “Even as a Negro, going into some groups, I say, ‘I don’t know how to reach you.’”

When Jesse Hill talks about black capitalism, he is simply talking about Negroes’ making money. Maybe he’s not in the capitalist class himself, but as actuary for Atlanta Life Insurance Co., one of the largest Negro businesses in the country, and as an investor in other black-backed enterprises, he could turn out to be rather well-off one of these days.

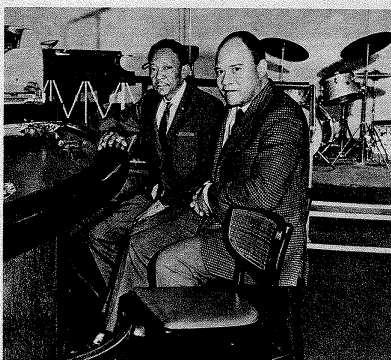
Despite his credentials in the civil rights movement, some of Hill’s notions about doing business with whites might not set well with more militant blacks. “We need some formula to capture more of the total market,” he says. In other words, Negro enterprises need more white trade.

So Hill is no separatist. Yet he admits to being disappointed when Citizens Trust Co., the big Negro bank here, decided to face its new building on Piedmont instead of Auburn Avenue, which used to be known as the rich. (Continued on Next Page)

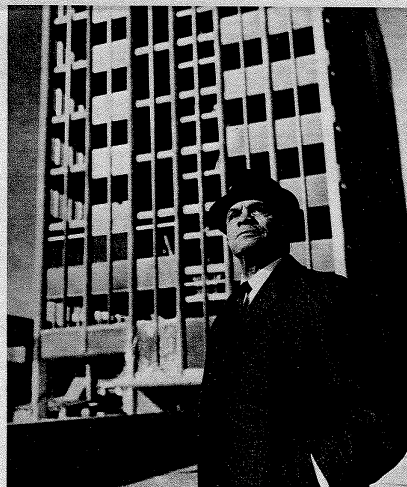


Plastering contractor Herman Russell is one of richest younger black capitalists in Atlanta. He, wife and children enjoy this indoor swimming pool at their home.

Photography by Kenneth Rogers and Floyd Jillson



Robert and James Paschal, brothers, operate a restaurant, motel and this popular nightclub, where a majority of patrons are white.



Bank of which L. D. Milton is president is constructing 12-story office building (in background) in downtown Atlanta urban renewal area.

The Atlanta Journal and Constitution Magazine 3-9-69 9

## APPENDIX B: COLLIER HEIGHTS CORRESPONDENCES

Letter sent out by Collier Heights Civic Club

— Bureau of Planning, Box 3, Folder 5 "WSMDX - General Information, 1953-58"

COLLIER HEIGHTS CIVIC CLUB  
COMMITTEE REPORT  
January 15, 1954.

Dear Neighbor:

This is the report of the Civic Club Committee that was formed December 14, 1953, at the Civic Club meeting at Center Hill School. As you recall, a substantial majority of the seventy-four home owners present at that meeting voted by secret ballot not to sell to colored.

The Committee has worked hard and diligently to find out just what the situation is concerning colored development in this general area. The following facts were true insofar as we were able to determine as of January 15, 1954.

1. The National Development Company (owned by colored) owns the lots or holds the mortgage in the area shown on the attached sketch (cross hatched).
2. The company intends to build only in the area to the West of the creek at present and West only of the access road when it is definitely established.
3. All other lots that the company owns outright to the East are for sale to white people only.
4. The company will not buy or finance any existing house in Collier Heights (except in conjunction with the Collier Heights Civic Club).
5. The Colored Real Estate Board has gone on record as opposing the selling, buying or financing of any existing houses in Collier Heights.
6. An area of land farther West out Collier Road and to the North is being bought up by other real estate people for development for colored.
7. No property South of Collier Road, from Linkwood to Hightower Road, is owned by colored.
8. The colored people have asked that a committee from Collier Heights work with them; a) to get the City to pave Collier Road to beyond Linkwood, such that travel of the colored people through our subdivision will be held to a minimum; b) also to get the access road right-of-way definitely established such that all parties know where the dividing line will be.

## Letter Sent Out by West Side Mutual Development Committee and Advisory Panel

WESTSIDE MUTUAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE AND ADVISORY PANEL  
(ON COLLIER HEIGHTS, GROVE PARK, CENTER HILL AND BOLTON)  
808 GLENN BUILDING  
ATLANTA 3, GEORGIA

March 5, 1954

Dear Collier Heights resident:

The above Committee and Panel were officially appointed from West Atlanta civic and business groups to promote the orderly development of this section of our city. We have provided information to the Collier Heights Civic Club and have met with various committees of residents. We have felt that there existed a sizeable group of you who wanted Collier Heights to retain its present white status, and have worked to preserve the integrity of your community.

The letter and questionnaire mailed February 11 to approximately 150 homes resulted in 98 replies. The Committee and Panel regret that apparently some letters were not delivered. That letter stated that proposed steps would be announced by March 8.

The returns were tabulated by the office staff and have been examined by various interested residents and Committee members. The replies to our first question indicated that as of that date, 50 families felt that the community should remain white, 28 preferred to sell to colored, 6 indicated no preference, and 14 did not answer the question.

To the second question, 35 favored selling "as soon as possible," 22 would "wait and see what happens," 26 preferred to stay, 4 had no preference, and 12 did not answer the question.

You are to be highly congratulated for your willingness to cooperate and to abide by the majority decision, as a large majority so indicated on the returned questionnaires.

We have always upheld the legal rights of any person of any color to buy or sell property in any location. We have sincerely considered our moral obligation to recommend what is best for all people in Collier Heights and the adjacent communities, and also for both races in the entire city. Based on the fact that a considerable number of you wish to stay and prefer the community to remain white, we offer the following information and recommendations:

1. A land corporation is now available which could buy the houses where conditions require the owner to sell, also to repurchase any actually sold to Negroes. These will be rented or sold to white only. It is expected that a public announcement of this corporation's formation can be made by Tuesday, March 9, in the Atlanta newspapers. If for any reason this corporation cannot be publicly announced March 9, we suggest that all white and Negro real estate



operators proceed to handle any Collier Heights properties.

The purpose of this corporation is to insure a white market in areas such as Collier Heights. Residents interested may buy stock and thus have a vote in the operation of the corporation. Due to the number of houses involved, you can realize that considerable time has been required to interest sufficient capital. Also that the Corporation could not be formed only by individual efforts of the residents who prefer that Collier Heights remain white.

2. The 1952 bond referendum included funds earmarked for the construction of Access Road Extension from Peyton Road, N. W. to Collier-Simpson. Preliminary actions have been taken to use part of this available money to make final location surveys and to "stake out" the actual 200 foot wide right-of-way of that portion of this future multi-lane highway between Bankhead and Collier. This entire highway, from the end of present Access Road pavement to the Roosevelt Highway south of College Park, has been "aerially surveyed" by the State Highway Department. It has the support of all Civic and Business groups in West Atlanta. It is included in the State Highway's and City of Atlanta's major street plans. It is needed for traffic and commercial reasons. When constructed, it can also serve as a "Gentlemen's Agreement Line" in various locations. It will provide an artificial line at least 200 feet wide between white Collier Heights and the future Negro development to the west.

3. Recommendation has been made to the Public Works Committee of the Board of Aldermen (City Council) regarding paving of Collier Drive westward from Collier Ridge Drive. This will allow paved road access to the "Crestwood Forest" Negro development without having to use Baker Ridge Drive through the Collier Heights community. Eventually, Baker Ridge Drive will be closed west of Dale Creek Drive by the Access Road Expressway.

4. The Empire Real Estate Board of Negro businessmen reaffirms its position that it is not interested now, or in the near future, in securing or purchasing property in Collier Heights for Negro occupancy, and will continue to respect the wishes of the community.

We point out the fact that Collier Heights will not be entirely surrounded, but will be "tied on" in its Northeast quarter to existing white communities and has considerable room to expand eastward to Hightower Road and northward towards Bankhead Highway.

The Committee and Panel feel that because we were not specifically invited to, nor in attendance at, the March first meeting held at Center Hill school, we did not have a chance to present our recommendations. Also that the vote then taken publicly does not give the same result that would be obtained by a strictly secret ballot. The Committee is not recommending any more meetings,

questionnaires, or ballots. However, if your Civic Club wants to hold an information meeting and its officers will invite us, we will be glad to attend and present the facts as we see them.

Westside Mutual Development Committee

S. B. Avery, Southwest Citizens  
R. W. Florrid, West End  
E. A. Sewell, West Manor  
T. M. Alexander, Pres., Empire Board  
W. H. Aiken, Member, Empire Board  
A. T. Walden, City Executive Comm.

Advisory Panel

J. V. Sargent, Grove Park Club  
Glenn Cushing, Collier Heights  
L. H. Garvin, Center Hill  
Colie B. Whitaker, Bolton  
R. C. Stuart, Technical Advisor  
to Committee and Panel

**APPENDIX C: SAMPLING OF COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRES**

COLLIER HEIGHTS COMMUNITY QUESTIONNAIRE

FEB 16 1954

Please answer all questions and mail to WESTSIDE MUTUAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE AND ADVISORY PANEL, 808 Glenn Building not later than Tuesday, February 16.

QUESTION 1: My personal preference is for Collier Heights to:

- Remain white
- Sell to colored *sell to colored*
- No opinion, or see my comment below

QUESTION 2: My own personal plans are to:

- Sell as soon as possible *Sell as soon as possible*
- Wait and see what happens
- Stay in Collier Heights
- No opinion, or see my comment below

QUESTION 3: Will you abide by the majority decision of Collier Heights residents?

- Yes *yes*
- No
- No opinion, or see my comment below

QUESTION 4: If the majority of Collier Heights residents desire to sell to Negro, will you cooperate in insuring a peaceful and orderly transitional period (probably for one to two years), as the new residents move in.

- I would cooperate *I will cooperate*
- I would oppose the transfer
- See my comment below

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

*This property is lower in value  
so it should go colored  
financially unable to keep the house forced to sell*

Name

*Roy L. Mullin*

Address

*352 Collier Ridge Dr*

(Signature and address not required)

COLLIER HEIGHTS COMMUNITY QUESTIONNAIRE

FEB 18 1954

Please answer all questions and mail to WESTSIDE MUTUAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE AND ADVISORY PANEL, 808 Glenn Building not later than Tuesday, February 16.

QUESTION 1: My personal preference is for Collier Heights to:

- Remain white
- Sell to colored
- No opinion, or see my comment below

QUESTION 2: My own personal plans are to:

- Sell as soon as possible
- Wait and see what happens
- Stay in Collier Heights
- No opinion, or see my comment below

QUESTION 3: Will you abide by the majority decision of Collier Heights residents?

- No opinion, or see my comment below

QUESTION 4: If the majority of Collier Heights residents desire to sell to Negro, will you cooperate in insuring a peaceful and orderly transitional period (probably for one to two years), as the new residents move in.

- I would cooperate
- I would oppose the transfer
- See my comment below

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

*I am going to sell to the first man that wants my property. I have been trying to sell for seven (7) months to white.*

Name James A. Maner Address 388 Collier Ridge  
(Signature and address not required)

FEB 16 1954

COLLIER HEIGHTS COMMUNITY QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer all questions and mail to WESTSIDE MUTUAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE AND ADVISORY PANEL, 808 Glenn Building not later than Tuesday, February 16.

QUESTION 1: My personal preference is for Collier Heights to:

- Remain white
- Sell to colored
- No opinion, or see my comment below

QUESTION 2: My own personal plans are to:

- Sell as soon as possible
- Wait and see what happens
- Stay in Collier Heights OR
- No opinion, or see my comment below

QUESTION 3: Will you abide by the majority decision of Collier Heights residents?

- Yes, *Reluctantly*
- No
- No opinion, or see my comment below

QUESTION 4: If the majority of Collier Heights residents desire to sell to Negro, will you cooperate in insuring a peaceful and orderly transitional period (probably for one to two years), as the new residents move in.

- I would cooperate
- I would oppose the transfer
- See my comment below

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

*The selfish Instigator's of this move have so mis-lead the residents of Collier Heights that this Questionnaire is probably ill-timed because of false reports that have been distributed.*

Name *H.W. Halleck Jr.* Address *376 Collier Ridge Dr. H.W.*  
(Signature and address not required)

*Further assuring reports should be given and then another vote taken*

## Summary of Questionnaires

ABP Box 3, F 7  
)

Westside Mutual Development Committee and Advisory Panel

February 1954 Survey

F i n a l S u m m a r y

Survey forms distributed: 150  
 Replies received (2/24/54): 98, or 65.3% return.

	<u>Total response</u>	<u>% of Total Response</u>
Question 1:	84	100.0%
Option A:	50	59.5
Option B:	28	33.3
Option C:	6	7.2
Question 2:	87	100.0%
Option A:	35	40.2
Option B:	22	25.3
Option C:	26	30.0
Option D:	4	4.5
		} 55.5
Question 3:	73	100.0%
Option A:	57	78.1
Option B:	10	13.7
Option C:	6	8.2
Question 4:	77	100.0%
Option A:	68	88.3
Option B:	5	6.5
Option C:	4	5.2

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