

MOTION: SEE SOMETHING SAY SOMETHING 1930's-1960's

- I _____ move that the LTRB:
- A. submit a request thru Deputy City Manager Baker or other City official(s) deemed appropriate, asking that Planning and Zoning staff in collaboration with the Office of Housing staff verify the content in the article penned by Dr Krystyn Moon entitled, “The African American Housing Crisis in Alexandria, Virginia, 1930s–1960s” and at the conclusion of the verification process
 - B. if the content of Dr Moon’s referenced work is verified (*in whole or in part*) recommend that the verifying staff:
 - (1) name/identity any unjust and inequitable housing and zoning practices [construed as legal] and
 - (2) in collaboration with other appropriate entities propose corrective action to remedy any harmful effects such practices had and/or continue to have on Alexandria African-American residents of that era and/or their descendants: *and*
 - C. in the interest of transparency that appropriate suggested public/private entities be provided copies of the reports of verification and recommended corrective action to include
 - (1) City Council Members,
 - (2) City Staff (Human Rights Commission, Race and Social Equity Officer, City Attorney)
 - (3) City boards, commissions, committees
 - (4) a suggested list of public/private non-governmental entities
 - D. moreover, after weighing the pros and cons - assent to:
 - (1) to providing “stakeholders” listed below a copy of the motion “*for information only*” in the interest of transparency as well as possible individual or organizational community engagement prior to the start of the requested work; and
 - (2) after completion of the work addressed above (see A & B) seek appropriate approval to host a Forum to inform Alexandria residents of staff’s work in identifying causes & effects of the African American Housing Crisis during the 1930’s-1960’s

Motion Focus: Identify & correct the cause & any harmful effects of the African American Housing Crisis in Alexandria, VA, 1930s–1960s”

ADDRESSEES TO BE PROVIDED A COURTESY COPY OF MOTION FOR INFORMATION (tentative suggested list)

MOTION “See something-say something: 1930’s-1960’s”

City Council Members	Remarks/Contact: ●email or ●telephone #	Boards, Commission and Committees	Remarks/Contact: ●email or telephone #
Mayor Wilson		Affordable Housing Advisory Cmte	
Vice Mayor Jackson		Board of Architectural Review	
Councilman Aguirre		Commission on Aging	
Councilmember Bagley		Commission on Women	
Councilman Chapman		Community Services Board	
Councilwoman Gaskins		Human Rights Commission	
Councilman McPike		Planning Commission	
		Historic Alexandria Resources Commission	
City Staff	Remarks/Contact: ●email or ●telephone #	Public/Private NGO entities	Remarks/Contact: ●name; ●email or ●telephone #
City Manager (Mr Parajon)		ACT for Alexandria	
Deputy City Manager (Ms Baker)		Alexandria Bahai Center	
Deputy City Manager (Ms Collins)		Alfred Street Baptist Church	
Deputy City Manager (Ms. Triggs)		Beth El Hebrew Congregation	
Dept of Cmty & Health Svcs (Ms Garvey)		Beulah Baptist Church	
Library		Chamber of Commerce	
Ofc of Historic Alexandria		Christ Church	
Ofc of Housing (Ms McIlvaine)*		Departmental Progressive Club	
Ofc of Planning & Zoning (Mr. Moritz)*		Federation of Civic Assns	

Ofc of Racial & Social Equity (Ms Tucker)		Fairlington United Methodist Church	
		Fairlington Presbyterian Church	
		First Baptist Church, Alexandria,	
OTHER City Staff		Good Shepherd Lutheran Church	
City Clerk (Ms. Sitton)		Legal Svs of Northern VA	
		Meade Memorial Episcopal Church	
Superintendent, ACPS (Dr. Hutchings, Jr)		Muslim American Society	
		NAACP	
		N. VA Affordable Housing Alliance	
State Elected Officials		Shiloh Baptist Church	
Senator George Barker		St. Joseph's Catholic Church	
Senator Adam Ebbin		Tenants & Workers United	
Delegate Charniele Herring		Urban League	
Delegate Elizabeth Barrett-Parker			

FOR INFORMATION & DISCUSSION OF MOTION

1. Background **2.** Definition of Terms **3.** HUD Glossary of Terms **4.** Content/Rationale **5.** Basis for Motion
Attachments (4) • Dr Moon's Article • Connection Article dtd June 8, 2017 • NY Times Article dtd Aug/22/2020 • City's Fair Housing Summary (1990-2021)

1. BACKGROUND

A. Unsung Heroes that Helped Desegregate Public Libraries by [D Nichole Brown](#) February 4, 2022

source: <https://oaklandlibrary.org/blogs/post/unsung-heroes-that-helped-desegregate-public-libraries/>

(1) Most school-age students know that if it weren't for non-violent protests such as sit-ins, they wouldn't be able to share a restaurant or lunch counter with their friends regardless of skin color. They also understand if it weren't for the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s - 1960s, everyone wouldn't be able to ride the bus equally or even attend integrated schools. Although most children learn about the Civil Rights movement, they rarely learn about public library sit-ins. So, I am going to give you a brief history of some of the people who fought to desegregate American Public Libraries:

An officer escorts five men from the Alexandria (Va.) Library in August 1939. They were arrested and charged with disorderly conduct. Picture courtesy of the Digital Public Libraries of America

On August 21, 1939, five well-dressed Black men entered the Alexandria Public Library in Alexandria, Virginia. They politely asked the librarian to register for library cards and were denied. After being denied library cards, they selected books from the shelves, sat down at separate tables, and began to read quietly. The librarian called the police to have the men removed from the library.

The coordinator of this protest was Samuel Wilbert Tucker. He was also a lawyer for the state of Virginia. That day, Mr. Tucker was not at the library and called the local newspapers to alert them of the protest. Over 300 spectators and newspaper photographers watched as the men were arrested by police, removed from the library, and charged with disorderly conduct. Mr. Tucker defended the men in court, and the judge refused to rule on the case.

The judge refused to rule on the case because this was a complicated situation. Although the Black men reading in the "whites only" library was a direct violation of the library's "whites only" policy, there was not a "colored library" available in Alexandria for the men to use. The lack of a "colored library" was a direct violation of Virginia state law. Although segregation was legal in 1939, it was illegal to deny "equal" resources for white and colored citizens. So technically, without a "colored" library, the men were legally allowed to use the "whites only" library. At least, that was what Mr. Tucker argued in court.

Because integration was not an acceptable solution in the Winn-Dixie south in 1939, the library board quickly approved the construction of a "colored" library which opened in April 1940. Most books, furniture, and fixtures in the new "colored" library were donated used books or castoffs from the main Alexandria library. When invited

to apply for a library card at the "colored" library, Mr. Tucker refused. He argued he deserved equal access to the main library. The Alexandria Main Library was finally desegregated for adults in 1959. In 1962 the library was finally fully desegregated, permitting Black children to use the facilities.

In 2019, research by Alexandria Library staff discovered that the charges against the five men were still outstanding because although the judge never issued a ruling, the charges were never dropped. In October 2019, the Alexandria Circuit Court dismissed all charges, ruling that the men were "lawfully exercising their constitutional rights to free assembly, speech and to petition the government to alter the established policy of sanctioned segregation at the time of their arrest" and no charges should have been filed.

The Alexandria sit-in was the first staged sit-in to protest against library segregation. It happened 15 years before the birth of the 1954 Civil Rights Movement. The names of these pioneering men are William Evans, Edward Gaddis, Morris Murray, Clarence Strange, and Otto L. Tucker (Samuel Tucker's Brother)

(2), Death and legacy of Samuel W. Tucker: He died on October 19, 1990, survived by his wife Julia. They had no children. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery, sharing a tombstone with his elder brother George.^[4] The Robert H. Robinson Library that opened in 1940 and closed in 1959 became home of the Alexandria Black History Museum.^{[36][37]} In 1998, Emporia, Virginia, dedicated a monument in Tucker's honor, with an inscription calling him "an effective, unrelenting advocate for freedom, equality and human dignity – principles he loved – things that matter."^[4] In 2000, Alexandria, Virginia dedicated a new school, Samuel W. Tucker Elementary School, to Tucker in honor of his life's work in the service of desegregation and education.^[38] In 2014, the city's library began collecting donations for the Samuel W. Tucker Fund, to expand a collection relating to civil rights history. Also in 2000, the Richmond City Council voted to rename a bridge formerly named after Confederate General J. E. B. Stuart after Tucker, despite controversy.^[39] In 2001, the Virginia State Bar's Young Lawyers Conference implemented the Oliver Hill/Samuel Tucker Institute, named for both Oliver Hill and Samuel Tucker. The institute seeks to reach future lawyers, in particular minority candidates, at an early age to provide them with exposure and opportunity to explore the legal profession they might not otherwise receive.^[40] Since 2001, the Oliver W. Hill & Samuel W. Tucker Scholarship Committee has presented scholarships to deserving first year law students at Virginia law schools and Howard University.^[41]

source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Wilbert_Tucker

B. Unsung shero (Dr. Krystyn R. Moon) deserves high praise for her superb research which helped shine a light on “The African American Housing Crisis in Alexandria, Virginia, 1930s–1960s” (see attachment). Her well documented report merits further inquiry and analysis as part of an overall effort to identify and correct the effects these unjust and inequitable housing and zoning practices [construed as legal] had and/or continue to have on Alexandria residents identified as African-Americans. Moreover, I contend Dr. Moon’s well documented research reveals there is also ample reason to believe the timeframe during which the unjust and inequitable practices were enforced [not only] adversely impacted the health and wellness of people of color during the 1930’s-1960’s but [perhaps] their descendants as well.

2. DEFINITION OF TERMS

TERM	Alexandria City	Virginia	U.S. Gov’t	ICMA - International City/County Management Association
Equity	Fairness and justice in policy, practice and opportunity consciously designed to address the distinct historical and structural challenges of non-dominant social groups, with an eye to equitable outcomes. The goal of equity is to acknowledge unequal starting places and correct the imbalance.	A body of civil law concerned with doing justice where money is inadequate or inappropriate as a remedy. Examples of equitable actions include divorce and injunctions. Equity cases are handled by circuit courts.		Equity is the guarantee of fair treatment, advancement, opportunity & access for all individuals while striving to identify & eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups and ensuring that all community members have access to community conditions & opportunities to reach their full potential and to experience optimal well-being & quality of life.
Justice	The proactive process of reinforcing and establishing a set of policies, practices, attitudes, and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts, and outcomes for all individuals			

	and groups. <i>See also, racial justice.</i>			
Legal Justice				
Moral Justice				
Legal equity				
Moral equity				
Racial Inequity	Race as the number one predictor of life outcomes, e.g., disproportionality in education (high school graduation rates), jobs (unemployment rate), criminal justice (arrest and incarceration rates), life expectancy, etc.		...the systematic fair treatment of people of all races and ethnicities that allows equitable outcomes. Once racial and ethnic inequities are eliminated, race and ethnicity are not factors in outcomes.	Racial inequity is when two or more racial groups are not standing on approximately equal footing, such as the percentages of each ethnic group in terms of dropout rates, single family home ownership, access to healthcare, educational opportunities, career mobility, etc.
Racial Injustice	The proactive process of reinforcing and establishing a set of policies, practices, attitudes, and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts, and outcomes for all individuals and groups impacted by racism. The goal, however, is not only the eradication of racism, but also the presence of deliberate social systems and structures that sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures.		means countering oppressive social and institutional structures, and fighting for the basic rights of racially oppressed peoples.	The systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. Racial Justice [is defined] as the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all. Racial justice—or racial equity—goes beyond “anti-racism.” It is not just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures.
Restorative Justice			a process whereby parties with a stake in a specific offense resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offense and its implications for the future."	
Values			Human values: means the social, cultural, historical, economic and environmental influences that have an impact on the quality of life	
Letter & spirit of Civil Law				

Primary Sources:

1. <https://www.alexandriava.gov/equity/race-and-social-equity-definitions> // could not find in City Code
2. https://www.vacourts.gov/courts/overview/glossary_of_court_terms.html / could not find in Virginia Code
3. <https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/united-states-federal-government#:~:text=United%20States%20Federal%20Government%20means,the%20United%20States%20of%20America.> / could not find in federal code
4. <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/restorative-justice-overview>
5. <https://icma.org/glossary-terms-race-equity-and-social-justice>

Secondary sources visited but not used:

1. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>
2. <https://thelawdictionary.org/>

3. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Source 1: https://www.huduser.gov/portal/glossary/glossary_all.html#s

AFFORDABLE HOUSING: In general, housing for which the occupant(s) is/are paying no more than *30 percent of his or her income for gross housing costs, including utilities*. Please note that some jurisdictions may define affordable housing based on other, locally determined criteria, and that this definition is intended solely as an approximate guideline or general rule of thumb.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAM (AHP): A competitive program of the Federal Home Loan Bank (FHL Banks) system that provides grants twice a year through financial institutions for investment in low- or moderate-income housing initiatives. The program is flexible, so that AHP funds can be used in combination with other programs and funding sources, thus promoting a project's feasibility.

BLIGHTED STRUCTURE: A structure is blighted when it exhibits objectively determinable signs of deterioration sufficient to constitute a threat to human health, safety, and public welfare.

CHRONICALLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUAL: A homeless individual with a disability who lives either in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter, or in an institutional care facility if the individual has been living in the facility for fewer than 90 days and had been living in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter immediately before entering the institutional care facility. In order to meet the "chronically homeless" definition, the individual also must have been living as described above continuously for at least 12 months, or on at least four separate occasions in the last 3 years, where the combined occasions total a length of time of at least 12 months. Each period separating the occasions must include at least 7 nights of living in a situation other than a place not meant for human habitation, in an emergency shelter, or in a safe haven.

DILAPIDATED HOUSING: A housing unit that does not provide safe and adequate shelter, and in its present condition endangers the health, safety or well-being of the occupants. Such a housing unit shall have one or more critical defects, or a combination of intermediate defects in sufficient number or extent to require considerable repair or rebuilding. Such defects may involve original construction, or they may result from continued neglect or lack of repair or from serious damage to the structure.

DISABILITY: A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such for an individual.

ELDERLY PERSON HOUSEHOLD: A household composed of one or more persons at least one of whom is 62 years of age or more at the time of initial occupancy.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM (CDBG): Created under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, this program provides grant funds to local and state governments to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing with a suitable living environment and expanding economic opportunities to assist low- and moderate-income residents. CDBG replaced several categorical grant programs, such as the Model Cities program, the Urban Renewal program, and the Housing Rehabilitation Loan and Grant program.

FAIR HOUSING ACT: 1968 act (amended in 1974 and 1988) providing the HUD Secretary with fair housing enforcement and investigation responsibilities. A law that prohibits discrimination in all facets of the homebuying process on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, or disability.

FAIR MARKET RENT (FMR): Primarily used to determine payment standard amounts for the Housing Choice Voucher program, to determine initial renewal rents for some expiring project-based Section 8 contracts, to determine initial rents for housing assistance payment contracts in the Moderate Rehabilitation Single Room Occupancy program, and to serve as a rent ceiling in the HOME rental assistance program.

FAIR MARKET VALUE: The amount of money that would probably be paid for a property in a sale between a willing seller, who does not have to sell, and a willing buyer, who does not have to buy.

HOUSEHOLD: All the people who occupy a housing unit. A household includes the related family members and all the unrelated people, if any, such as lodgers, foster children, wards, or employees who share the housing unit. A person living alone in a housing unit, or a group of unrelated people sharing a housing unit such as partners or roomers, is also counted as a household.

INADEQUATE HOUSING: Housing with severe or moderate physical problems, as defined in the American Housing Survey (AHS) since 1984. A unit is defined as having severe physical problems if it has severe problems in any of five areas: plumbing, heating, electrical system, upkeep, and hallways. It has moderate problems if it has problems in plumbing, heating upkeep, hallways, or kitchen, but no severe problems.

INCOME LIMIT (IL): Determines the eligibility of applicants for HUD's assisted housing programs. The major active assisted housing programs are the Public Housing program, the Section 8 Housing Assistance Payments program, Section 202 housing for the elderly, and Section 811 housing for persons with disabilities.

MARKET AREA: The geographic area from which a project owner could reasonably expect to draw applicants, based on the services and amenities offered by the development and the needs of the community.

MARKET VALUE: The most probable price that a property should bring in a competitive and open market, provided that all conditions requisite to a fair sale are present, the buyer and seller are knowledgeable and acting prudently, and the price is not affected by any undue stimulus.

MINORITY NEIGHBORHOOD: A neighborhood in which the percentage of persons of a particular racial or ethnic minority is at least 20 points higher than that minority's percentage in the housing market as a whole; the neighborhood's total percentage of minority persons is at least 20 points higher than the total percentage of minorities for the housing market area as a whole; or in the case of a metropolitan area, the neighborhood's total percentage of minority persons exceeds 50 percent of its population.

NONPROFIT HOUSING ORGANIZATION: Any private organization that is organized under state or local laws; has no part of its net earnings inuring to the benefit of any member, founder, contributor, or individual; and has a long-term record of service in providing or financing quality affordable housing for low-income families through relationships with public entities.
PROHIBITED BASES:
Civil rights statutes establish the demographic categories by which discrimination is prohibited. Under the Fair Housing Act, the prohibited bases are race, color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status, and disability.
PROTECTED CLASSES:
Demographic categories of persons established by civil rights statutes against whom discrimination is prohibited. (See also Prohibited Bases.)
REHABILITATION: The labor, materials, tools, and other costs of improving buildings, other than minor or routine repairs. The term includes where the use of a building is changed to an emergency shelter and the cost of this change and any rehabilitation costs does not exceed 75 percent of the value of the building before the change in use.
RENOVATION: rehabilitation that involves costs of 75 percent or less of the value of the building before rehabilitation.
SECTION 202: Provides capital advances to finance the construction, rehabilitation or acquisition (with or without rehabilitation) of structures that will serve as supportive housing for very-low-income elderly persons, including the frail elderly, and provides rent subsidies for the projects to help make them affordable.
SECTION 8 EXISTING RENTAL ASSISTANCE: Provides rental assistance to low-income families who are unable to afford market rents. Assistance may be in the form of vouchers or certificates.
SECTION 8 HOMEOWNERSHIP PROGRAM: Allows low-income families who qualify for Section 8 rental assistance to use their certificates or vouchers to pay for homeownership costs under a mortgage.
SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PROGRAM: This program is authorized by title IV of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (the McKinney Act) (42 U.S.C. 11381–11389). The program is designed to promote the development of supportive housing and supportive services, including innovative approaches to assist homeless persons in the transition from homelessness, and to promote the provision of supportive housing to homeless persons to enable them to live as independently as possible.
SUPPORTIVE HOUSING FOR THE ELDERLY: Housing that is designed to meet the special physical needs of elderly persons and to accommodate the provision of supportive services that are expected to be needed, either initially or over the useful life of the housing, by the category or categories of elderly persons that the housing is intended to serve.
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES: Urban, suburban, and rural places that successfully integrate housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure investments in a manner that empowers jurisdictions to consider the interdependent challenges of: 1) economic competitiveness and revitalization; 2) social equity, inclusion, and access to opportunity; 3) energy use and climate change; and 4) public health and environmental impact.
SWEAT EQUITY: Using labor to build or improve a property as part of the down payment.
TRANSITIONAL HOUSING: A project that has as its purpose facilitating the movement of homeless individuals and families to permanent housing within a reasonable amount of time (usually 24 months). Transitional housing includes housing primarily designed to serve deinstitutionalized homeless individuals and other homeless individuals with mental or physical disabilities and homeless families with children.
URBAN RENEWAL AREA: a slum area or a blighted, deteriorated, or deteriorating area in the locality involved which the Secretary approves as appropriate for an urban renewal project.
URBAN RENEWAL PROJECT: a project planned and undertaken by an LPA [Local Public Agency] in an urban renewal area with Federal financial and technical assistance under Title I of the Housing Act of 1949. A project may involve slum clearance and redevelopments rehabilitation and conservation, or a combination of both. It may include acquisition of land, relocation of displaced site occupants, site clearance, installation of site improvements, rehabilitation of properties and disposition of acquired land for redevelopment in accordance with the Urban Renewal Plan.
VACANT UNIT: a dwelling unit that has been vacant for not less than nine consecutive months.
VERY LOW-INCOME: Households whose incomes do not exceed 50 percent of the median area income for the area, as determined by HUD, with adjustments for smaller and larger families and for areas with unusually high or low incomes or where needed because of facility, college, or other training facility; prevailing levels of construction costs; or fair market rents.
WORST CASE HOUSING NEEDS: Needs experienced by unassisted very low-income renters who either (1) pay more than one-half of their monthly income for rent; or (2) live in severely inadequate conditions, or both.
ZONING: The classification of land by types of uses permitted and prohibited in a given district, and by densities and intensities permitted and prohibited, including regulations regarding building location on lots.

RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS - In real estate transactions, restrictive covenants are binding legal obligations written into the deed of a property contract, usually by the seller. These covenants can be simple or complex and can levy penalties against buyers who fail to obey them
BLOCKBUSTING - a business process in which real estate agents and building developers convince property owners to sell their houses at low prices by telling house owners that racial minorities will soon move into their neighborhoods in order to instill fear in them. The agents then sell those same houses <u>to black families at much higher prices</u>
REDLINING - systematic denial of various services to residents of specific, often racially associated, neighborhoods or communities such <u>as banking, insurance, health care, supermarkets, etc</u>
REVERSE REDLINING - occurs when a lender or insurer targets particular neighborhoods that are predominantly nonwhite or are being blockbuster , <u>not to deny residents services, but rather to charge them more than in a non-redlined neighborhood</u>
GOVERNMENT LOANS denied or lost based on the race of the applicant
EMINENT DOMAIN - the right of a government or its agent to expropriate private property for public use, with payment of compensation.
EASEMENTS - a right to cross or otherwise use someone else's land for a specified purpose
Restorative practices aim to repair harm done to individuals and communities visit https://www.resolutionvirginia.org/restorative-justice .

4. CONTEXT - REQUEST FOR ACTION IN PURSUIT OF OVERDUE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE and EQUITY

- A.** Given the research work already completed by Dr. Moon, request appropriate staff verify the work of Dr. Moon.
- B.** If staff substantiates the work of Dr. Moon, request staff propose appropriate remedies to address/correct the harmful effects that unjust and inequitable practices housing and zoning practices had on African Americans during that timeframe mentioned and their descendants.
- C.** See, say, do something: <https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2022/03/11/michigan-dioceses-race-and-spirituality-initiative-takes-a-deep-dive-into-redlining/>
- D.** See, say, do something: https://www.thediocese.net/Customer-Content/www/CMS/files/Annual_Convention_2021/R10a_Final_Clean_pdf.pdf

5. BASIS FOR MOTION/STANDING: See Something Wrong Say Something to Right it

PURPOSE OF THE LANDLORD TENANT RELATIONS BOARD

The Landlord-Tenant Relations Board (LTRB) was established by City Council in 1971 to investigate and mediate landlord-tenant disputes and *to make recommendations to City Council with respect to public policies affecting landlords and tenants*. The duties, powers, and responsibilities of the LTRB found in Alexandria City Code reads: The duties, powers and responsibilities of the Landlord Tenant Relations Board can be found in §12-5 of the Alexandria City Code and include the following: **(a)** Consider grievances of landlords and tenants when grievances are referred to the Board by City Staff; **(b)** *Act in an advisory capacity to the City Council on public policies affecting landlords and tenants*; **(c)** Formulate and recommend legislative proposals to City Council; **(d)** Develop and publish guidelines and summaries regarding the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants, and **(e)** *Participate in educational activities relating to landlord-tenant issues*.

ATTACHMENT 1

The African American Housing Crisis in Alexandria, Virginia, 1930s–1960s

by KRYSTYN R. MOON

Krystyn R. Moon is an associate professor of history and the director of American Studies at the University of Mary Washington.

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In 1960, the *Washington Post* interviewed the Rev. Dr. John C. Davis, the minister at Meade Memorial Episcopal Church in Alexandria, about finding a home near his congregation. Although he had been minister at Meade Memorial for fifteen months, Davis and his wife lived in the church. Even with with \$30,000 saved, he could not purchase a home in Alexandria. “Any number of homes are listed in the paper every day, but as soon as I tell them I’m a Negro they say they have no Negro housing.”¹ When not tending to his congregation, Davis worked at Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS); however, the western, more suburban portions of the city where VTS was located also had as few housing options. Like many of Alexandria’s African American professionals, Davis would most likely be forced to live in Washington, D.C., where members of the African American middle class had greater access to housing.

By the mid-twentieth century, Alexandria found it difficult to house its residents and offer modern amenities.² The city’s eighteenth- and nineteenth-century urban core was seen as dilapidated and overcrowded, while its western portions were largely rural and underdeveloped. With the post–World War II suburban construction boom taking place in nearby counties, local leaders were especially concerned that white middle-class families would avoid Alexandria, choosing to shop, work, and live elsewhere. To address the shift in housing attitudes and practices, the city invoked a set number of strategies to improve its image and residents’ quality of life: annexation, hygiene codes, public housing, urban renewal, and historic preservation.³ Unfortunately, these policies—combined with Alexandria’s segregationist traditions—had a negative impact on African American renters and homeowners living in the city. As a consequence, such families as the Reverend Davis’ struggled to find places to live and were either forced into segregated neighborhoods or out of Alexandria completely.

The situation in Alexandria is reflective of the larger housing issues African Americans faced during the mid-twentieth century in American cities, both North and South. Scholars Arnold R. Hirsch, Ronald H. Bayor, Thomas J. Sugrue, Andrew Wiese, and Karen J. Ferguson have documented the complex interactions between local residents and public policy, which redrew racial boundaries in American cities and forced African Americans into hyper-segregated neighborhoods. In turn, they have argued, African Americans mobilized, often breaking with black elites who were more conciliatory toward whites, to protest openly housing practices and make them a civil rights issue. Alexandria’s proximity to Washington, D.C., also allowed African American activists access to the center of national political discourse on housing and civil rights; their lack of political power, however, inhibited their influence on federal policy, which tended to reinforce local segregation practices.⁴

The history of African American neighborhoods in Alexandria fits nicely into the scholarship of Andrew Wiese and Karen Ferguson, both of whom have documented such communities from the late nineteenth century through the post–World War II period.⁵ In the late nineteenth century, many blacks lived just outside of cities where they could own land with little interference from local governments or the white elite. Men and women also found plenty of jobs in nearby homes, farms, and factories to support their families without needing to commute to nearby towns or cities. Annexation by local municipalities often circumscribed the autonomy within these neighborhoods, especially by the late 1930s when white elites embraced the use of federal policy and funds to reimagine the racial landscape. Pamela Cressey, Alexandria’s longtime city archaeologist, points to the emergence of free black neighborhoods on the city’s periphery as early as the 1790s when the District of Columbia annexed Alexandria.⁶ After the Civil War, additional neighborhoods emerged from the African American refugee population just outside Alexandria’s western city limits. The city’s black neighborhoods—although significantly older than those profiled by other scholars—faced similar issues once annexed by Alexandria.⁷

After World War II, suburban African American residents in Alexandria and elsewhere were seen as a threat to the white, middle-class ideal promoted in prescriptive literature. Self-built homes, large gardens, farm animals, no services (such as water and sewer lines), and lodgers were all common practices among working-class families trying to support themselves.⁸ With the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, the possibility of racially integrated schools panicked white, middle-class residents and local boosters, who pushed for even more rigidly segregated communities. African Americans, however, were not forced out of suburbia. In fact, by the 1960s the number of blacks living in suburban spaces increased nationwide on a scale unseen in previous decades. Poverty, joblessness, crime, and decrepit housing stock propelled the African American middle-class to the suburbs. As in urban centers, the fight for decent housing was a civil right that affected suburbia as well.⁹

Many scholars have argued that a new generation of activists that emerged in the mid-1930s changed the ways in which African Americans responded to social injustice, including housing, in both urban and suburban environments. The breakdown of “managed white supremacy” in Virginia, as laid out by historian J. Douglas Smith, began in Alexandria with the 1939 sit-down strike over the lack of library facilities for black residents. These well-educated men were frustrated by the blatant inequalities in Alexandria and turned to civil disobedience to call attention to the problem. Simultaneously, the appeasing attitudes of the African American elite, who often worked with whites to promote “racial uplift,” did little to address the needs of the majority of blacks. Continuing in the tradition of direct action begun in the 1930s, many veterans became activists after World War II and turned to protests and other forms of direct action to question the racial status quo.¹⁰

Alexandria’s status as a medium-sized city just outside Washington, D.C., however, complicates previous analyses of housing, race relations, and the urban/suburban divide. Although Alexandria is recognized as a distinct city, it also maintains a unique relationship with Washington and, as such, points to the fact that a municipality can fulfill multiple spatial definitions simultaneously, depending on its relationship to other places within a region. In 1791, the federal government annexed Alexandria into the District of Columbia, which Alexandria predated by almost fifty years.¹¹ The federal government then retroceded the City of Alexandria and Alexandria County (now Arlington County) in 1847 in response to complaints from white elites who were frustrated by the lack of federal construction on the Virginia side of the Potomac River.¹² After the Civil War, black and white residents began commuting on a regular basis between Washington and Alexandria, a practice that continues today. Local migration between the two cities was not necessarily unidirectional but was dependent on housing, jobs, educational opportunities, shopping, and leisure activities, all of which were affected by the practice of Jim Crow segregation in both localities. Nevertheless, as a suburb of Washington, D.C., Alexandria’s local politics and housing issues were often informed by the political climate of the nation’s capital and the large, active African American community residing there.¹³

Furthermore, although historians have demarcated cities and suburbs as distinct spaces, the residential landscape within Alexandria’s borders supports the division between urban and suburban neighborhoods as an artificial one. Scholars Richard Harris and Robert Lewis argue that the “differences between the cities and the suburbs as a whole were quite minor and were dwarfed by variations within the city and among the suburbs.”¹⁴ In Alexandria, the desire among local leaders to isolate blacks and entice the white middle class was ubiquitous; so, too, African American demands for justice can be found wherever discrimination appeared, whether in the more densely populated downtown or the more suburban environments to the west. To further complicate the urban/suburban divide, local leaders often turned to the nation’s capital just across the Potomac River for guidance and support when addressing Alexandria’s various housing problems in the mid-twentieth century.

This article explores housing segregation in mid-twentieth-century Alexandria and the ways in which leaders used public policy to reconfigure local neighborhoods and promote the city as an ideal, white middle-class community. Starting in the late 1930s, it became apparent that African American residents had few decent housing options in Alexandria thanks to a housing shortage combined with racial segregation. By the postwar era, the housing problems facing blacks only increased. Intimidation and legislative action expanded the marginalization of the city’s African American renters and homeowners, both in its urban core and its more suburban areas to the west. In response, civil rights activists and their supporters mobilized resources on a local, regional, and national level to fight housing discrimination. Even though many of the problems surrounding African American housing persisted, governmental changes eventually led to shifts in the racial makeup of some (but not all) of Alexandria’s urban and suburban neighborhoods beginning in the early 1970s.

IN THE 1930s, Alexandria’s struggle to house all of its residents became apparent. This problem was tied to an influx of both black and white families and individuals migrating to the area for jobs, first as part of the New Deal and then wartime mobilization. Karen Ferguson notes in *Black Politics in New Deal Atlanta* that factories, military installations, and federal agencies all needed a large workforce, many of whom migrated from the countryside to southern cities.¹⁵ Increasing numbers of Washingtonians, who moved to Alexandria in search of a more suburban life, further reduced suitable housing. To meet demand, developers constructed homes and apartments with white-only housing covenants, such as Parkfairfax, for government workers, many of whom were employed at the newly constructed Pentagon.¹⁶ African Americans, whose population had not increased for forty years, began to migrate to Alexandria looking for homes by the early 1940s (see Table 1). Their housing options were significantly different in comparison to their white counterparts.

Unlike other southern cities of its size, Alexandria had a long history of African American land and homeownership. Beginning at the end of the eighteenth century, free blacks purchased lots and built homes that were subsequently passed down through the generations. Some African American neighborhoods were outside the city limits but were eventually annexed as Alexandria grew. These neighborhoods, located near the city’s commercial corridor, were often racially mixed, housing poor whites and immigrants.¹⁷ When the Virginia state legislature passed a “segregation district” ordinance in 1912, allowing cities and towns to designate neighborhoods as white-only,

Table 1: The Number and Percentage of African Americans in Alexandria, 1900–1980*

Years	Total Population	Number of African Americans	Percentage of Population
1900	14,528	4,542	31
1910	15,329	4,188	27
1920**	18,060	4,112	23
1930**	24,149	4,912	20
1940	57,040	5,032	9
1950	61,787	7,622	12
1960	91,023	10,353	11
1970	110,938	15,644	14
1980	103,217	23,017	22

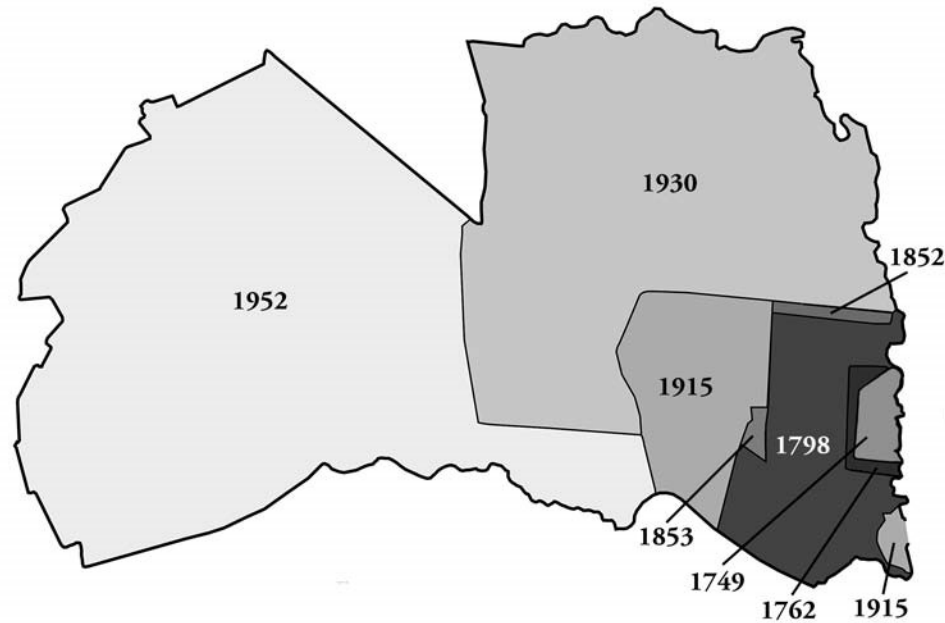
* Information for U.S. Census population numbers from 1910 through 1960 are from the *Historical Census Browser*, University of Virginia, Charlottesville. For population and percentage numbers from 1970 and 1980, see *1970 Census of Population and Housing: Virginia*, Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, December 1971 and *1980 Census of Population: General Population Characteristics, Virginia*, Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, August 1982.

** This number includes the total population of both the City of Alexandria and Arlington County, which had been established as a separate entity in 1920.

Alexandria's city council never created such districts (Roanoke, Richmond, and Norfolk did).¹⁸ As late as the 1940s, blacks and whites in older portions of Alexandria still lived side-by-side or across the street from each other, although some blocks were completely black or white. A handful of white residents tried to maintain white-only housing, but the extent of their reach was limited.¹⁹

Housing built in areas annexed in the twentieth century was more racially segregated in comparison to Alexandria's historic core (see Map A). Areas

Map A. Alexandria Annexation, 1700s–1950s

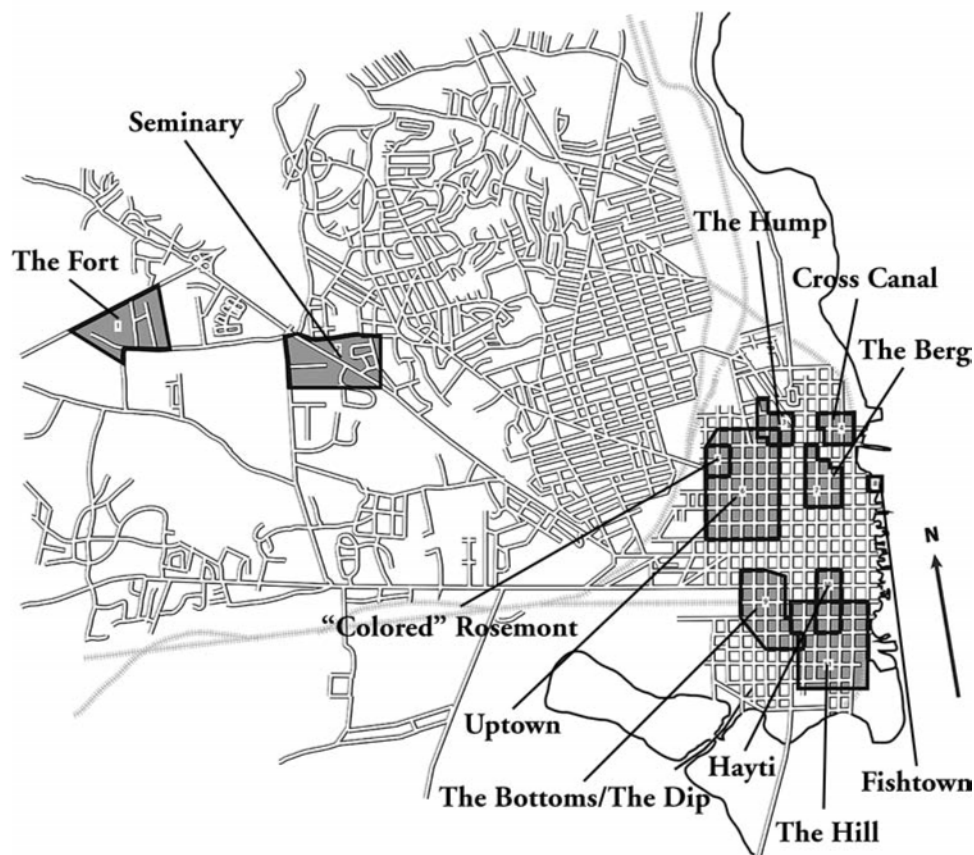


Map by Brian Brown, UMW Geography

annexed in 1915 and 1930 to the north of the city barred African American renters and homeowners.²⁰ Working-class whites, many of whom worked at a local rail yard, lived in the Del Ray and the Potomac neighborhoods, while blacks lived across the railroad tracks. Areas annexed in 1930 and 1952 to the west of Alexandria's historic core were also rigidly divided. Large portions of this region were rural with white-owned farms and large estates.²¹ Two African American neighborhoods, Seminary (also known as Macedonia) and The Fort, contained a sizable number of residents. These neighborhoods were established in the years immediately following the Civil War (see Map B).

In addition to an increasing housing shortage, 1930s public policy heavily influenced the future of Alexandria's African American housing. As Ferguson argues, the allotment of federal funds for slum clearance and public housing during the New Deal "represented the beginning of a massive

Map B. African American Neighborhoods



twentieth-century public works program that would reconfigure the racial geography of American cities.”²² In Virginia, the process began in Alexandria with state delegate Maurice D. Rosenberg, who cosponsored legislation for the development of local housing authorities. This legislation, a response to the National Housing Act of 1937, allowed cities and towns to create housing authorities to build public housing and improve blighted areas using federal funds. In a letter to Alexandria’s mayor, Rosenberg explained that many people were concerned about the city’s “bad housing conditions” and wanted a special meeting of the city council called to begin the process of creating a local authority.²³ The city council agreed.

To understand fully Alexandria’s housing problems, the council asked the Works Projects Administration (WPA) to study the situation. In its published report, the WPA found that 23 percent of Alexandria’s 8,076 dwelling units were substandard or in need of major repairs to make them structurally sound. Of these substandard dwellings, 15 percent housed whites and 67 percent housed African Americans.²⁴ The data from this report also correlated residents living in substandard housing with income level, family size, and access to public welfare. Overcrowded homes, which totaled 280, affected 2.5 percent of the total number of white dwellings and 7 percent of black ones. Forty-nine percent of families in substandard housing made less than \$1,000 a year. Most poor families were small, consisting of two to three people. Finally, only 11 percent of whites and 15 percent of African Americans in substandard housing were known to any welfare organizations. These final two percentages shocked researchers: public and private charities seemed unaware of the depth of Alexandria’s poverty.²⁵

While studying Alexandria’s housing conditions, the city began tearing down homes as part of its slum clearance.²⁶ In a letter to the city council in March 1939, Henry P. Thomas protested condemnations of African American housing. Thomas, a white lawyer, criticized the condemnation of Hannah Nelson’s property. He argued that her

home was “actually in very good condition, in such condition that it can be repaired.” The council voted in favor of Thomas’ request.²⁷ In another letter, Lynn W. Ellis spoke directly to the impact of condemnations on African Americans generally:

You are aware of the fact that sixty per cent of the houses that is available for colored people has long out lived their usefulness. But if you demolish these houses immediately, then where shall all of these people find shelter? This is a matter that deserve[s] your closest thoughts. Certainly these people do not desire to live in fire traps but if that is the best that can do, then why turn them out in the streets in masses? The majority of the people that has rec’d moving notices has tried in vain to find new homes. Or places to store their belongings in such short time that has been given them.²⁸

The city council’s minutes note that the letter was received but that no action was taken.²⁹



The John Roberts Public Housing Complex in the 1960s (*Special Collections, DC Public Library*)

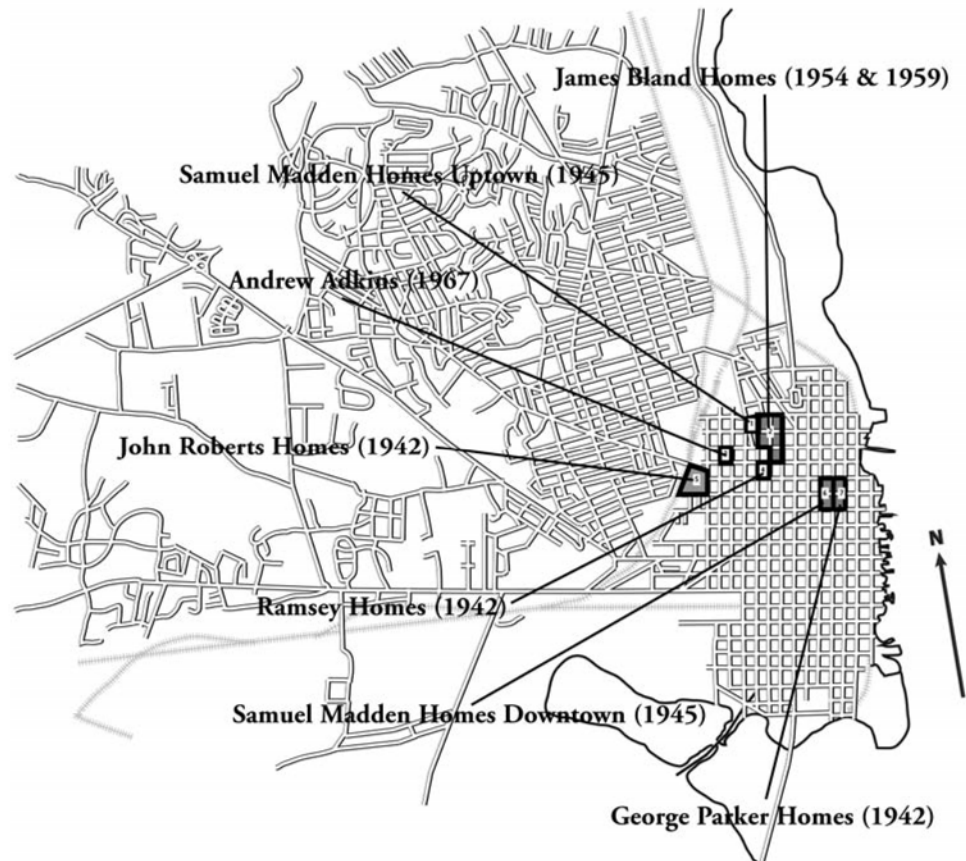
In June 1939, the city council created the Alexandria Housing Authority, later known as the Alexandria Housing and Redevelopment Authority (ARHA), to formally administer slum clearance and public housing through federal funds.³⁰ A summary of a speech by Alexandria’s city manager, Carl Budwesky, in the *Alexandria Gazette* explained that the city government’s reasons for establishing AHA “was to eliminate insofar as may be possible unhealthful and unsanitary conditions in many sections of the city due to the fact that many homes in certain sections are not connected with the city sewer system. He cited the fact that most of the year in and year out jail population comes from these areas, that much of the time of the health department and a great deal of the funds of the welfare department are spent there.”³¹

Budwesky’s statement was very much in line with national conversations on blight during the Great Depression. In *The Rough Road to Renaissance*, historian Jon C. Teaford defines blight as “the process of physical deterioration that destroyed property values and undermined the quality of urban life.”³² To solve these problems, it was argued that cities only needed new highways, sewers, up-to-date housing and commercial buildings, and less pollution.³³ Then white middle-class families, who had moved away to find safer and more hygienic places to live, would return to Alexandria to live, shop, and work. Thus, instead of addressing social and economic inequalities that affected African Americans, white boosters adopted physical improvements to remedy the city’s problems.

Like other cities with a sizable African American population, Alexandria moved quickly to redraw its neighborhoods along more rigid racial lines through its new housing policies.³⁴ By 1940, ARHA planned to build about 200 units to help families in need of low-income housing and either raze or renovate the same number of privately owned homes.³⁵ A year later, ARHA condemned 240 homes and began construction on two segregated housing facilities. The white-only John Robert Homes was built on vacant land between the railroad tracks for the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad and the racially mixed Uptown neighborhood. The construction of George Parker Homes for African American families required condemnation of two blocks of The Berg, another mixed race neighborhood (see Maps B and C).³⁶ Based on a map included in the WPA's report, ARHA built George Parker Homes on two blocks that either housed 80 percent or more whites or was vacant (the area is not shaded in on the maps). However, the 1938 *Hill's Alexandria City Directory* listed several African American homeowners and two restaurants in the area. It can be speculated that this site was the one Lynn W. Ellis wrote the city council about in March 1939; by the time the WPA enumerators arrived, the area was leveled.³⁷

Public housing for African Americans in Alexandria also lacked the support from local government that public housing for whites received. One city council member tried—in lieu of housing black families at George Parker—to use the homes for white defense workers. His motion failed.³⁸ The number of units—110 for African American families versus 130 for white families—also did not meet the housing needs of low-income blacks.³⁹ Finally, the city council allowed the construction of homes for African Americans that failed to meet local housing codes.⁴⁰

Map C. Public Housing, 1940s–1960s



Public housing not only reified racial lines but also did very little to address the immediate need of finding a place to live. African Americans in the late 1930s and 1940s continued to face overcrowded and, at times, dangerous housing conditions. A 1941 *Washington Post* article reported “as many as 20 Negroes [were] occupying three and four-room houses” in Alexandria.⁴¹ A “Letter to the Editor” also described three families living in a four-room “shack” along the railroad tracks in the Uptown neighborhood. Because of the building’s condition, all three families were evicted with no housing assistance.⁴² In 1943, the War Housing Centers around Washington had so few housing options for African Americans that they asked “every Negro family in this entire territory to go over his household and see if he can ‘double up’ a bit and take in a paying war guest or his family.”⁴³

To alleviate the situation, federal authorities intervened and condemned land in Alexandria to build three permanent housing communities for defense workers—Chinquapin Village and Cameron Valley for whites and Ramsey Homes for blacks—and two temporary trailer parks.⁴⁴ Although historian Arnold Hirsch notes the hands-off approach of the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) in the 1940s, in at least this instance, it interceded on the local level to address aggressively unmet housing needs. The FHA, however, avoided any attempt at desegregation and, in fact, reinforced the racial status quo.⁴⁵ The trailer parks created much controversy. The FHA placed fifty trailers for African American defense workers in The Hump, another mixed-race neighborhood, and another fifty for whites in the Del Ray neighborhood (see Map B). Federally funded trailer parks outraged white residents, city government, and Alexandria’s representative in the U.S. House of Representatives, Howard W. Smith.⁴⁶ Alexandria’s city council unanimously passed a resolution denouncing the project, arguing: “trailer type housing projects are in the main undesirable, and prejudicial to the health and general welfare of the general neighborhood.”⁴⁷ After an injunction by the courts failed, the council refused to supply sewer and water hookups to the trailers without a court order.⁴⁸ The federal government successfully installed the trailers by the summer of 1943. After the trailers were no longer needed, the FHA gave them to ARHA to house sixty-one displaced African American families.⁴⁹ In 1954, the site became black public housing known as the James Bland Homes (see Map C).⁵⁰

In the mid-1940s, ARHA built additional public housing developments, which continued the process of segregating more racially mixed neighborhoods. In 1945, ARHA also completed two complexes known as the Samuel Madden Development for Negroes. Samuel Madden “Uptown” was situated in The Hump, while “Downtown” was in The Berg neighborhood (see Maps B and C). These latter housing units alleviated some of the problems African Americans encountered, although local need still was not met. In 1947, the Alexandria Council of Social Agencies reported that “[m]ost of the houses in Alexandria are old. Those in the slum area are of course in the worst condition. . . . These sections, where Negroes are densely settled, have houses some of which had very inadequate sanitary facilities.”⁵¹ The council even found war veterans who were unable to find suitable places to live for their families.⁵²

A combination of forces—a patchwork pattern of residential segregation, slum clearance, the construction of inadequate public housing, and a population boom—made finding a home difficult for Alexandria’s blacks, whether new arrivals or longtime residents. White leadership, which hoped to use federal funds to reorganize the city’s landscape along racial and class lines, and a lack of African American political representation only exacerbated the situation. Although concerned with the unsightly appearance of blight, city leaders were not equally interested in adequately housing residents, especially African Americans, or to look into the root causes of run-down neighborhoods. The 1950s and 1960s would place further burdens on those in need of housing.

AFTER WORLD WAR II, local politicians, civic organizations, and business leaders embraced large-scale urban renewal in hopes of accommodating Alexandria’s increasing population and the demands of postwar growth (see Table 1). Public housing and slum clearance was still important; however, city boosters were now interested in promoting a white middle-class lifestyle and constructing shopping centers, public buildings, parking, and open spaces. Leroy S. Bendheim, Alexandria’s vice mayor and member of the Alexandria City Council Redevelopment and Housing Committee, explained the need for renewal: “[t]hose who cling to ancient customs and moorings in the face of insistent progress will awake some day to find themselves living in a dead city, through which time and events have swept by to come to rest in more receptive climes.”⁵³ Some white leaders—afraid that Alexandria’s traditions and older housing stock might lead to further decline—sought to reimagine the city as relevant in the new postwar consumerist era. African Americans, however, were left out of this new image of Alexandria.

White community leaders experienced numerous pressures to pursue urban renewal. Modest attempts to improve Alexandria through the restoration of historic buildings had been made previously by individuals and local organizations. In the postwar era, however, these small-scale projects were no longer enough. About a decade earlier, Alexandria's residents and city council had delineated an Old and Historic District, otherwise known as Old Town, within the city's core. This designation protected many eighteenth and early nineteenth-century buildings from demolition while doing little to solve the city's need for housing and modern amenities. Rather than focus on housing and the needs of its citizens, Alexandria prioritized its growing tourism industry and the creation of a commercial zone in Old Town.⁵⁴

The Old Town designation also made public works projects, such as the construction of parking lots and street expansion, nearly impossible.⁵⁵ Additionally, competition from newly established shopping centers, most notably Shirlington in 1944 followed by Seven Corners in 1956, meant consumers did not need to venture into Alexandria's congested historic district.⁵⁶ The majority of the city's residents were also no longer working within the city limits but were commuting to federal and office jobs along the region's new highway system.⁵⁷ With their jobs elsewhere, these workers needed a greater incentive to live and shop in Alexandria. Finally, *Brown v. Board* terrified many white, middle-class parents who feared their children would attend integrated schools. The pairing of federal funds with local authority gave the white elite the ability to "contain," according to Arnold Hirsch, the threat of integration.

Concerned with increasing Alexandria's modern features and attractions, the city's first attempt at large-scale urban renewal began in 1951 with what was known as the Prince Street Shopping Center. ARHA studied the eleven block area that would be affected by the plan and found sixty-four homes without private baths and only cold water plumbing. In the plan's central five-block area, 100 homes were without private toilets. Thirty were in such a dangerous structural state that ARHA recommended demolition.⁵⁸ ARHA, along with the city council's planning committee, endorsed seizing these properties through eminent domain and selling them to a private developer, who would use the land for a shopping center. The shopping center was to become Alexandria's new commercial district so consumers would not have to leave the city or drive into the historic district.⁵⁹ Supporters argued that



Downtown Alexandria in 1955 (*Special Collections, Alexandria Library*)

"[t]his proposal is progress; it is a distinct step forward. . . . Let's make historic Alexandria a progressive and prosperous Alexandria."⁶⁰

During a public hearing on 21 June 1954, many Alexandrians criticized the proposed project. A group of local residents—made up of both white and black homeowners and renters—were up in arms about losing their homes. Representing some of the African Americans affected by the project, attorney Edwin C. Brown argued that his

clients did not believe the city would help them find new homes once their properties were taken. He continued, connecting black poverty to the state of housing: “You know, as I know, that the housing situation as regards negroes is acute. They have low incomes and as a result will have low standards of living and they are not responsible for it! In any job, private or with the municipalities, they are the last ones to be hired and the first ones to be fired. What else can you expect but substandard living?”⁶¹

Other parties had different concerns. Some downtown business owners expressed outrage that the city council would use eminent domain and then sell the land to a private developer: they felt abandoned. A representative for Shiloh Baptist Church, an African American church located near the project area, argued that the plan would “leave in one corner thereof a Church serving a particular community but move the community away and leave the church there isolated.”⁶² The president of the Del Ray Citizens Association spoke against the concept of eminent domain and questioned whether the project actually remedied Alexandria’s public housing shortage.⁶³ After much political and legal maneuvering, the city council placed the project on permanent hold in November 1955.⁶⁴

Within a year, the city council was discussing urban renewal again, this time to access funds under the newly revised Housing Act of 1954. Three components of the law had the greatest impact on Alexandria’s development during the 1950s and early 1960s: all cities must generate a master development plan with community support; local governments must establish standards of structural integrity and healthfulness; and federal funds could be used for projects that were not primarily residential.⁶⁵

To access these funds, the city council focused on updating housing codes to comply with the new act. Passed in December 1957, the Minimum Housing-Hygiene Ordinance was a sweeping piece of legislation that required that all structures be healthful and sanitary.⁶⁶ Sanitarians, hired as part of the Division of Environmental Health within the Health Department, worked alongside the Fire Department to inspect buildings and cite owners for violations.⁶⁷ Both departments could condemn properties not in compliance with the new code, a power that facilitated demolitions in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

When drafting the Minimum Housing-Hygiene Ordinance, the city council also set up the Community Development Committee. Popularly known as the Committee of 77, it analyzed Alexandria’s neighborhoods by U.S. census tracts and wrote a report detailing the needs of each neighborhood.⁶⁸ In 1958, the committee published its report, which would be used to develop Alexandria’s master plan. Upon the report’s release, Stuart Morrison, secretary of the committee, explained: “Alexandria is at the crossroads and must now go ahead with a ‘positive plan of action’ for urban renewal.”⁶⁹ The report stated that a scattering of blighted neighborhoods had emerged in Alexandria, negatively affecting both residents and visitors.

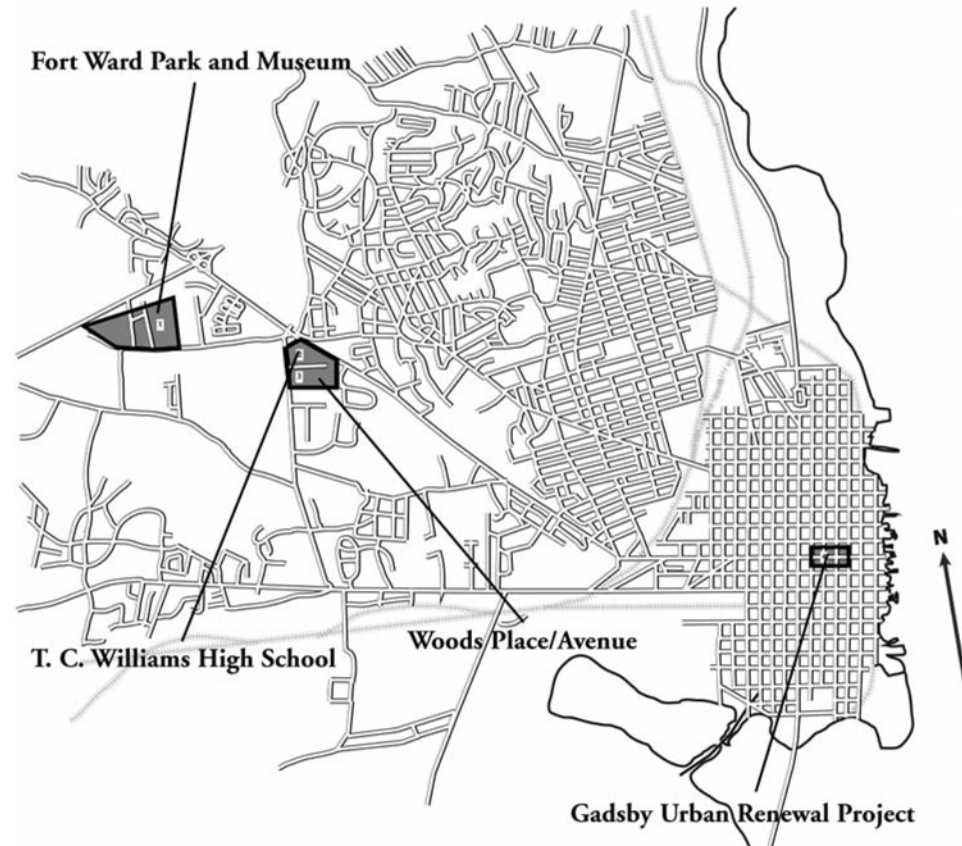
These neighborhoods tended to cater to Alexandria’s African American community, many of whom lived in public housing or run-down tenements. Overall, the report recommended that city government implement policies to prevent blight, hire more staff to enforce laws, and make the historic area more accessible to cars.⁷⁰

One neighborhood stood out as Alexandria’s biggest concern: Uptown. It reportedly contained “the most serious blight problems (with the attendant social problems of disease, crime, and juvenile delinquency).” Fifty-one percent of the neighborhood’s housing was in need of major repairs.⁷¹ Even in the 1950s, Uptown was still a mixture of white and black residents. In another report issued by the Planning Department two years earlier, Uptown was reportedly 40 percent white and 60 percent non-white. These residents were among the poorest in the city, earning 50 percent below the city average. In 1956, the Planning Department recommended housing redevelopment in Uptown with federal assistance as “[p]rivate enterprise has not assumed the responsibility of providing decent living quarters for the people, and more than likely, will not be anxious to do so.”⁷²

Despite the emphasis on Uptown’s need for redevelopment, Alexandria’s first federally funded urban renewal project focused on the city’s historic commercial corridor. Redevelopment of this area was much in line with other urban renewal projects in the United States where white elites “used public authority and federal funds to remove the working class, and particularly poor people of color” from neighborhoods near commercial centers.⁷³ Blight reportedly surrounded this section of Alexandria, negatively impacting not only tourism and shopping but also challenging the city’s white middle-class identity. A report generated by ARHA explained that “[m]ost of the

dwellings in the area were built before the advent of modern building codes and zoning regulations. Their original foundations, exterior construction and interior arrangement and facilities fall so far short of standards for modern dwellings that it is not economically feasible to restore or recondition them since they not only have deteriorated but in addition are basically inadequate in design and deficient in construction.⁷⁴ Limited parking and traffic congestion also kept white middle-class shoppers away.⁷⁵ With newly built shopping centers only a few miles away, there was little-to no need for consumers to go into Old Town.

Map D: Urban Renewal, 1950s–1960s



The Gadsby Commercial Urban Renewal Project began in 1959 (see Map D). The project was named after Gadsby's Tavern, a late eighteenth century building converted into a museum in 1929 by the American Legion and one of the few buildings to be saved from the proposed demolition. According to the preliminary report submitted by ARHA to the city council, the Gadsby Project would create a completely new commercial corridor, destroying a twenty-block area in the historic district. **Various versions of the plan included a range of new structures: a municipal center, parking lots, a park, high-rise apartment buildings, an auditorium, a department store, a civic center, and a 200-room hotel.**⁷⁶



Urban renewal in Gadsby in 1965 (*Special Collections, DC Public Library*)

Once again, local residents and businesses organized against such massive demolition. They were joined by another concerned group of constituents—historic preservationists. Unlike other opponents to the project, historic preservationists were critical of such sweeping destruction because they believed it would damage the city’s historic and architectural uniqueness and hamper its growing tourist industry.⁷⁷ In 1962, the Historic Alexandria Foundation explained that—though it supported the destruction of slums—the foundation was critical of the demolition of historic buildings without any consideration for rehabilitation.⁷⁸ The city council and Mayor Frank E. Mann recognized the problem and began plans to save some historic buildings and require that any new construction match the historic district’s colonial style.⁷⁹ Over the next few years, a greatly narrowed Gadsby Project emerged, focusing on the businesses and homes in the six blocks around City Hall.⁸⁰

As with the aborted Prince Street Shopping Center, housing for displaced residents was a major concern with the Gadsby Project. Seventy-five percent of individuals and families living around the commercial corridor were in need of public housing. Out of those families, twenty-nine were white and forty-six were black. No attempt was made to rehouse residents near the commercial corridor; furthermore, despite the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, city leaders refused to offer desegregated public housing to those displaced. Initially, ARHA planned for African Americans to find slots in its current public housing system, which by the late 1950s had 459 units available for occupancy with a turnover rate of forty-one units a year (as a point of comparison, white-only public housing had 462 units available with a turnover rate of 210 units a year).⁸¹ For the overflow, ARHA planned to give residents a list of private market homes for sale and rental units. Federal funds had been acquired to build additional public housing for African Americans; those homes, however, were not expected to be available until 1964.⁸²

Around the same time, Alexandria’s city council approved two additional urban renewal projects—Fort Ward Historic Park and T. C. Williams High School (see Map D). Unlike Gadsby, which affected Alexandria’s urban core, both of these projects were located in less densely populated areas to the west of downtown. This section of Alexandria was slated for the rapid post–World War II suburban development, catering to white middle-class commuters who city leaders desperately wanted. The sites for Fort Ward Park and T. C. Williams High School also happened to be the two locations where African Americans could easily live in western Alexandria.

The establishment of Fort Ward Park began as part of the region’s Civil War centennial celebrations. The Civil War Round Table of the District of Columbia initiated conversations with white residents about building a park on the remains of Fort Ward, one of the sixty-eight forts making up the Defenses of Washington. The park would be one of the stops along the Round Table’s proposed Fort Drive, a freeway they hoped the federal government would build around Washington to alleviate congestion and promote tourism.⁸³ With suburban development encroaching on the area, local white



Rosenberg Department Store in 1955 (*Special Collections, Alexandria Library*)

residents moved quickly to petition the city council for a multi-purpose park, which would include passive recreational spaces and historic elements. The city council approved the project in 1954, using local funds to purchase land, reconstruct the northwest bastion, and build museum space. Federal funds acquired under the Housing Act of 1961 purchased additional land. The park opened on Memorial Day in 1964.⁸⁴

For African Americans, the construction of Fort Ward Park further constrained the already limited housing market. After the Civil War, a settlement known locally as “The Fort” was established on the site, and a handful of residents bought land, which was subsequently passed down. By the late 1940s, whites owned a majority of the land, but the majority of residents were African Americans. To facilitate park construction, sanitarians declared The Fort as blighted with all of its homes (eleven total) deemed “substandard.”⁸⁵ Residents recognized that they would either need to sell their property or move out of white-owned rentals. One former resident, Maydell Casey Belk, recalled the city pressuring her mother to sell: “The city told her [mother] that if she didn’t sell it she would lose out because they were going to condemn the houses because they didn’t have any bathrooms, no running water and stuff, so that is when she gave in.”⁸⁶ With their home under threat of condemnation, the Casey family sold their property to the City of Alexandria.

Seminary, another African American neighborhood in western Alexandria, was also slated for urban renewal. Its residents, like those at The Fort, settled in the area during the late nineteenth century and worked primarily in agriculture or at two nearby educational institutions—Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS) and Episcopal High School (EHS). Unlike those who lived in The Fort, African Americans owned the land in the **Seminary neighborhood. As a consequence, its population had grown significantly in the twentieth century as one of the few places where blacks could own property.**



Destruction of Rosenberg Department Store in 1965 as part of the Gadsby Urban Renewal Project
(Special Collections, Alexandria Library)

In its 1958 review of housing and land use, the Committee of 77 reported that “Mudtown [the derogatory name whites gave to Seminary] is a problem to the city.” Although some “houses may be rehabilitated, there [were] large numbers that should be removed.”⁸⁷ By 1960, city leaders abandoned any discussion of rehabilitating Seminary and shifted their focus solely toward replacing it with a “new high school to avoid serious overcrowding in the city’s two predominantly white high schools.”⁸⁸ Immediately, Alexandria’s Urban Renewal office declared forty-eight buildings in the project area substandard. A report promoting the Mudtown Urban Renewal Project

stated: “[t]he area was never properly developed with dedicated streets, layout of lots, storm and sanitary sewers, city water, electricity, fire protection, etc.”⁸⁹ T. C. Williams High School—made famous in the 2000 film *Remember the Titans*—opened on the remains of Seminary in the fall of 1965.⁹⁰

Although white city leaders and residents were primarily concerned with housing conditions in Uptown, the neighborhood was never slated for largescale urban renewal.⁹¹ Instead, segregated public housing built in the late 1930s and 1940s was the city’s main attempt to provide low-income African Americans with decent places to live. Urban renewal in Alexandria focused on other areas—its commercial corridor in the historic downtown and T. C. Williams High School and Fort Ward Park, both of which were located in the less densely populated western portions of the city. The former project catered to white business leaders who were concerned with competition from shopping malls and the impact of suburbanization. Urban renewal at Seminary and The Fort addressed the new standards of suburban living among Alexandria’s middle-class whites. All three projects negatively impacted African American residents whose housing options had steadily decreased—while its population increased—following World War II.

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT after World War II brought residential segregation to the forefront of national debates, connecting it with access to jobs, education, voting, and public spaces. Although the majority of Alexandria’s white population was not concerned with overturning local housing practices, black activists and white progressives were vocal about racism’s impact on housing accessibility. A younger generation of local leaders, who first appeared in the late 1930s and included many veterans after World War II, refused to follow the more conciliatory practices of previous generations and turned to direct action to bring attention to the injustices tied to Jim Crow segregation in Alexandria. By the early 1970s, Alexandria’s housing—from its more suburban sections to downtown—saw marked demographic changes.

After World War II, African Americans faced continued housing pressures as their population increased and housing decreased. As noted in earlier, ARHA tended to ignore the needs of black residents. The city’s urban renewal projects also displaced African American renters and homeowners, often forcing residents to scramble for housing in black neighborhoods or move out of Alexandria altogether. The persistence of housing covenants, especially in suburban developments in the western and northern portions of Alexandria, guaranteed that almost no African Americans could live there. Furthermore, the desegregation of public schools in the 1960s combined with the perception that the presence of black neighbors destroyed home values meant that white residents refused to sell or rent to them. In a few instances, African Americans even faced violence. In 1955, black renters who had recently moved into Del Ray—a white, working-class neighborhood north of Alexandria’s historic commercial corridor—were threatened with an anonymous note followed by gunshots.⁹²

In the 1940s and 1950s, African Americans individually fought the taking of their land and homes. Charles “Buster” Williams, who lived in The Hump during the 1940s, recalled in an oral history using the courts to fight for a better sale price when his home was condemned to make way for public housing.⁹³ A 1944 *Washington Post* article highlighted individuals who refused to move out of their condemned home for a road to a newly constructed apartment complex.⁹⁴ In 1959, the Peters family sold most of their land to a local Catholic school, despite protests from city planners who argued the land was integral to the establishment of Fort Ward Park.⁹⁵ By the early 1960s, at least one Fort neighborhood family hired well-known lawyer and state senator Armistead Boothe to represent them against the city. Boothe brought in outside appraisers, forcing Alexandria to pay more than it initially offered.⁹⁶

By the early 1960s, African American residents turned to publicly criticizing Alexandria’s race relations and housing situation. With the city’s decision to build the new high school, Seminary’s residents organized themselves and actively fought against the project. Retired Col. Marion I. Johnson, president of the Seminary Civic Association and vice president of the Alexandria Council on Human Relations, criticized city leaders for the lack of assistance to aid displaced residents, many of whom were struggling to find a place to live.⁹⁷ Johnson along with Armistead L. Boothe worked out an agreement with Mayor Leroy S. Bendheim and Councilmember Josiah S. Everly to set aside land and funds in the Mudtown Urban Renewal Project for the construction of a middle-class African American subdivision (see



Marion Johnson looking at plans for the newly built Seminary neighborhood in 1962 (*Special Collections, DC Public Library*)

Map D). Sixteen of the fifty-two families displaced from Seminary were able to purchase homes with the help of federal loans through the Urban Renewal Administration. The other families found places to live in public housing or in the private sale and rental markets. Two families left Alexandria.⁹⁸ Although collective action did lead to concessions on the part of city government to house displaced residents, there was still no attempt at desegregating. After success at Seminary, local activists continued to be vocal about the overall situation in Alexandria. At a public hearing on housing in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area held by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission on 12 April 1962, Marion Johnson spoke explicitly about the



The Seminary neighborhood in 1962 (*Special Collections, DC Public Library*)

housing problems facing African Americans: “The most serious problem facing the Negro citizens in the city of Alexandria today is unavailability of decent, sanitary housing on any level because of the unwillingness of the financial institutions, private builders, and other segments of the homebuilding industry to provide housing that is available to the Negroes and the various actions of the city government in its urban renewal highway widening and other Government-sponsored projects.”⁹⁹ He cited Alexandria’s segregationist practices, the lack of new housing options, and the city’s refusal to embrace an open housing ordinance as hurdles for African American residents. Ultimately, without major changes in the local government’s attitudes and practices “the Negro will be almost completely driven from the city of Alexandria. Only the public housing residents will remain to serve as a reservoir of domestic servants for the white community.”¹⁰⁰

Public housing in the early 1960s not only continued to be segregated with little-to-no criticism from the federal government, but also African American–owned homes were still targeted for public housing. In 1962, ARHA revived a proposal to build 225 units of public housing; all three potential sites, however, were located in black neighborhoods. African American activists spoke out against ARHA’s plans. A. Melvin Miller argued vehemently against the proposed public housing locations, citing the destruction of owner occupied homes, many of which were in good condition. He noted that “[t]he continuous decrease of land space available for Negro occupancy within the City is a most serious problem and the market for safe, sanitary housing above the low income level is almost nonexistent.”¹⁰¹ Miller, a civil rights lawyer, was serving as the vice president of the NAACP’s local chapter and president of the Durant Civic Association (a local civil rights organization). A few months later, the Federal Housing and Home Finance Agency placed a temporary hold on funds for the Gadsby and Mudtown Urban Renewal Projects until plans to help displaced residents were clarified. Ironically, the new plan included a much leaner segregated public housing program with a disappointing ninety units, not even half the needed number of units. Alexandria’s urban renewal plans were recertified in fall 1962.¹⁰²

Under mounting pressure, Alexandria’s city council held a closed-door meeting on 21 May 1963 to address desegregation.¹⁰³ From this meeting, the city created its Human Rights Ordinance, which for the first time in local law recognized the problems of racial segregation, including in matters of housing.¹⁰⁴ In a letter written a couple days later, Robert I. Terrell, president of the NAACP’s local chapter, congratulated the mayor and city council “for rendering a judgment beneficial to the people of our City and the metropolitan area” through this ordinance, which he hoped would “influence all private business establishments supported by the public.”¹⁰⁵ The Human Rights Ordinance, however, put the burden of proof on victims, again failing to address a systemic problem. Only through complaints to the Human Rights Director, who

oversaw the Human Rights Commission, could an individual experiencing housing discrimination seek recourse. It is unknown whether discriminated residents used the process.

Although local government attempted to address racial prejudice, some private businesses and housing establishments also embraced desegregation. At least one apartment community in western Alexandria took it upon itself to desegregate. By the summer of 1963, Parkfairfax, one of the largest apartment complexes in Alexandria, announced that African Americans could rent units for the first time. Parkfairfax's policy shift was tied to negotiations between the National NAACP headquartered in New York City and the complex's owner, Metropolitan Life Insurance. MetLife maintained several white-only apartment complexes throughout the United States, which it desegregated at the same time.¹⁰⁶

Another major turning point was the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which required all federally funded programs to desegregate. Alexandria's public housing, however, was slow to act and continued to maintain the racial status quo. John Y. Kerr, ARHA's director, refuted criticisms from the local chapter of the National Urban League, blaming white residents for self-segregating and choosing to live apart from African Americans. Kerr went further, projecting that the city's ninety new units in Uptown would probably "be occupied by Negroes only" because whites would refuse to live in an African American neighborhood.¹⁰⁷ Segregation, in Kerr's view, was an individual problem and not the result of institutional practice.

The ninety-unit public housing development, which was tied to federal funding for Mudtown and Gadsby projects, displaced an additional twenty African American homeowners. One was Otto L. Tucker, a noted civil rights activist who, along with his brother Samuel, fought segregation in Virginia and participated in Alexandria's 1939 sit down strike. He protested ARHA's plans in the press. A *Washington Post* article stated that, according to Tucker, "the sole reason for the selection of the site was that its inhabitants are Negroes and that '50 per cent of the dwellings are owned by members of the Negro race.' [Tucker] also contends that in order to condemn properties there, the city must prove the area is a slum, blighted or deteriorated. He said buildings in the area 'provide safe and sanitary dwellings.'"¹⁰⁸ Despite these objections, Uptown's Andrew W. Adkins Homes, named after the late pastor of Alfred Street Baptist Church, opened in 1967.¹⁰⁹

By the mid-1960s, protesters shifted their focus toward the desegregation of Alexandria's housing market. It was believed that if African Americans could live anywhere they could afford, then they would no longer struggle to find housing and the market would stop being artificially inflated. By 1964, public housing had technically been desegregated; however, the private housing market continued to bar blacks from certain neighborhoods. Starting in 1966, an interracial group known as the Action Coordinating Committee to End Segregation in the Suburbs (ACCESS) organized protests throughout northern Virginia and southern Maryland that focused on the inability of African American homeowners and renters to find housing. They picketed private apartment developments, forcing owners to sign open occupancy agreements and include the phrase "Equal Opportunity Rentals" in their advertisements. To gain the attention of white suburban residents and local and federal politicians, ACCESS coordinated marches along major thoroughfares used by commuters to "dramatize the inferior housing of those poor Negroes and ones who can afford something better but can't find it."¹¹⁰ They walked more than sixty miles along the Beltway circling Washington, D.C., and made several stops in both the black and white sections of Alexandria. Later that year, ACCESS organized another march along Route 1, beginning in the historically African American Gum Springs neighborhood in Fairfax County and continuing through Alexandria and into Arlington County.

These protests, along with other forms of local activism, compelled the city council to pass a voluntary open housing ordinance in 1967. A. Melvin Miller, who had been recently appointed director of the Federal Housing Administration for the Metropolitan Washington Area, appealed to the city council for an ordinance going beyond the city's Human Rights Law. In a recent oral history, Miller stated that he made this appeal after a school teacher with whom he and his wife lived—because they could not find housing for themselves—was unable to move into a certain apartment complex popular with retirees because it was "white only." The deaths of several African American children caught in a house fire also inspired residents to demand safer housing options.¹¹¹

Many individuals and local organizations showed support for the ordinance, being the second such in the state (preceded only by Fredericksburg). Eileen Eddy, chairperson of Alexandria's Economic Opportunities Commission, congratulated the city council on its "assumption of leadership in obtaining voluntary open housing and pledge[d their] full support."¹¹² Because of its voluntary nature, the law had limited legal weight. Nevertheless, city manager Albert M. Hair, Jr., planned to hire staff to negotiate with owners of white-only apartment buildings about opening complexes to African Americans.¹¹³



Integration at the John Roberts Public Housing Complex in the late 1960s (*Special Collections, DC Public Library*)

By the late 1960s, federal legislation once again influenced local laws and practice. Passed six months after Alexandria's voluntary ordinance, the Fair Housing Act of 1968 became the federal government's first piece of legislation explicitly barring racial discrimination in all aspects of home purchasing and renting.¹¹⁴ The act was influenced by a report written by the Kerner Commission on the factors causing civil unrest. The U.S. Senate approved the legislation with the hope that allowing African American middle-class families access to suburban homes would offset mounting racial tensions in urban centers. Within weeks of its passage in the Senate, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated and the country witnessed riots in the nation's capital. The U.S. House of Representatives signed the Fair Housing Act as the National Guard protected the Capitol Building.¹¹⁵ In the next few months, Alexandria's city council would yet again debate housing, this time under the purview of the newly established federal guidelines to end racial segregation in the housing market.¹¹⁶

ALEXANDRIA'S DIVERSE HOUSING landscape and regional role as both a city and a suburb complicates current analyses of African American housing and discrimination in the mid-twentieth century. Regardless of housing density, black and white Alexandrians struggled over where African Americans could live. Local leaders and city boosters embraced a white, middle-class image of the postwar period and tried to modernize Alexandria. A consequence of city development, unintended or not, was forcing Alexandria's African American residents into increasingly segregated neighborhoods or out of the city completely. Federal authorities, as noted by other historians, ceded

almost all control to local officials and refused to force Alexandria and other municipalities to desegregate housing. With a lack of government response to their housing needs, African Americans organized, protesting local government and often contacting federal authorities for support.

By the early 1970s, many of the same struggles of earlier decades persisted throughout Alexandria and the Washington, D.C., metropolitan region. A 1970 report generated by the Washington Suburban Institute on nearby Fairfax County argued that “institutional racism and land development are tied tightly together. So far they have resulted in excluding blacks from residence in the suburbs, in denying them adequate services when they do already live there, in denying them access to suburban employment centers and in their being feared and ostracized in the neighborhoods were they do live or attempt to live.”¹¹⁷

In Alexandria, there was still not enough public housing to meet the needs of African American residents, 50 percent of whom were living below the poverty line. Alexandria’s newly passed open housing ordinance included loopholes, limiting true residential integration and leaving the less populated western portions of Alexandria overwhelmingly white. **Rapid increases in home prices combined with the costs of historic preservation in Old Town only compounded issues.**¹¹⁸

Simultaneously, there were palpable changes. For the first time, African Americans were living in the city’s older suburban neighborhoods to the north, which had previously been dominated by white railroad workers.¹¹⁹ By 1969, 14 percent of city government workers were black, including one individual on the Housing-Hygiene Board and another on ARHA’s Board. Within a year, Ira L. Robinson was elected to represent Uptown on the city council, the first African American to do so since Reconstruction.¹²⁰ In response to his neighborhood’s needs, Robinson convened a Low-Income Housing Study Committee that reported on the structural changes necessary to make Alexandria more affordable for poor families.¹²¹ Two months later, A. Melvin Miller, another vocal critic of Alexandria’s segregationist practices, was selected to chair ARHA.¹²² As ARHA’s head, he pushed for mixed income housing developments and furthered racial integration.¹²³

Despite these and other changes to Alexandria’s racial landscape and housing practices, some of the same housing issues remain even today.

NOTE: Issue examples - see two (2) articles with perspectives and one (1) Fair Housing Testing Results Summary (1990-2021) listed after the footnotes below

FOOTNOTES

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40. City Council Minutes, Recessed Meeting, 11 Sept. 1940, City Council Proceedings, AARC.
41. "Alexandria Finds Housing Shortage," *Washington Post*, 16 July 1941, 5.
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43. "Only 4 Homes Await War Workers," *ibid.*, 11 June 1943, 7.
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ATTACHMENT 2

THE CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

[Sign in](#)

The 'Nice-Nasty Town' (aka: Cheap Grace)



Story by Vernon Miles
Thursday, June 8, 2017

Alexandria — On May 2, 2017 residents of the Del Ray neighborhood awoke to find their neighborhood plastered with posters bearing racist messages of hate against black Americans and against Islam. Like many Alexandrians, Lillian Patterson was shocked when she heard about the racist posters put up in Del Ray. “It really surprises me,” said Patterson. “I thought Alexandria was more subtle than that.”

The local residents quickly tore down the signs and replaced them with messages of love and support that a week later still remain on many telephone poles along Mount Vernon Avenue. But while Alexandrians, from neighbors to Mayor Allison Silberberg, have said the actions do not characterize this historic port city, Alexandria has a long history with racism. It is a history that was covered up and sometimes literally buried, but one that has never gone away.

Alexandria was a city built on the backs of slave labor. It was black slaves who were injured or killed in leveling the coastal cliff that give Old Town its current shape. In the early 1800s, Alexandria was one of the largest slave ports in the country. The Franklin & Armfield Slave Office & Pen, today the Freedom House Museum and home to the Northern Virginia Urban League, exported thousands of slaves across the American South.

Patterson is a fourth generation Alexandrian. Her family on her mother’s side has been in the city at least since the Civil War.

“For my grandmother, and for my mother, growing up in Alexandria was very much what it was like when I was coming along,” said Patterson. “It was a very segregated town. Everybody went their own ways. I didn’t know white people and they didn’t know me. When you live in divided communities you don’t even think about it, that’s just how it was.”

Andy Evans, a local community activist, said the racism in Alexandria was different than in other places in the south. The racism rooted deeply into the city was always something that simmered under the surface and only occasionally boiled over.

“The kind of racism that people talk about in the south is a little bit different from what you talk about in Alexandria,” said Evans. “There were places in south where if people would just walk in that neighborhood at night, you were in trouble. This was a town where nobody wanted to talk about it.”

While Alexandria is a southern city, James Henson, a local historian and one of the authors of “African Americans of Alexandria Virginia: Beacons of Light in the Twentieth Century,” said several factors have helped the city avoid more of the outright racial violence of other cities. Henson notes that the city’s proximity to Washington D.C. offered the city’s black citizens a degree of legislative protection in the 1800s. There were also education opportunities available in Washington D.C. that were inaccessible to black residents of other cities in Virginia.

But mainly, Henson said it was because the black community of Alexandria was very tight knit and had strong leadership. Until the mid-1900s, the black community in Alexandria had been clustered into several neighborhoods throughout the city. These were neighborhoods like The Burg, so-named from black residents moving into the city in the mid-1800s from Petersburg, or The Bottom just south of Alfred Street Baptist Church.

“Whatever happened in the street got home before you did,” said Patterson. “Alexandria was a small town for us. You knew most families. Not everybody in them, but you knew somebody.”

Henson said these communities also helped protect black Alexandrians from threats.

“These pockets helped protect the black communities from whites coming in,” said Henson. “No sane white person would go through The Bottom trying to intimidate black people. Alexandria was very different from other cities because the black community here had a unified strength.”

Throughout the mid-19th century, black leadership in Alexandria was at the forefront of the civil rights movement. A sit-in arranged at the Queen Street library by local lawyer Samuel Tucker was one of the its first of its kind to challenge the discriminatory laws. Evans, whose uncle was one of those arrested in the sit-in, came home from the Vietnam war and started to get involved with the local civil rights movement. In 1970, Evans worked on the campaign for Ira L. Robinson, the first black Alexandrian elected to the City Council since the end of reconstruction.

“Alexandria is a success story about changing the city,” said Evans. The city hired its first black police officer, Albert Beverly, in 1965. “Now, nobody thinks twice about black police officer. Back when Melvin Miller ran for City Council, there was a firestorm. People were saying ‘don’t let two blacks run for City Council.’ Now we have two [on the council] and nobody thinks twice about it. Once generations mix and have diversity, it’s harder to pass on that racism. We’re in a transitional phase now.”

But black leaders in Alexandria say they have seen that tone shift in the last few years.

“It leaves me concerned, as it should leave all of us, about the future direction of our country with regards to race, ethnicity, and diversity,” said William Euille, who in 2003 became the first black mayor of Alexandria. “I think it’s unfortunately a sign of our times, but that doesn’t mean we have to tolerate or accept it.”

“I feel that the new administration has emboldened people, where people would normally hold back out of civility, or out of respect,” said Lavern Chatman, born and raised in Alexandria. “There’s a segment that feels emboldened. The whole ‘Make America Great Again’ sometimes means striking out against certain communities. Hadn’t seen it that blatantly in this community before.”

In 1970, Evans remembered when the American Nazi party came to Alexandria and tried to create a stir. Evans said the Nazis were trying to get a rise out of the local black population to incite violence, but just found themselves laughed at. Evans said it’s no different with the racist posters in Del Ray.

“People behind things like the poster are trying to create a stir,” said Evans. “The problem they have, a lot of the original blacks who grew up here just look at it as a bunch of knuckleheads. These people don’t know this city well enough.”

But in 2017, Alexandria’s black community is still very much under siege. Black leaders in Alexandria say the biggest threat to the community today is not from racist flyers or alt-right lobbyists, but the long, slow death of affordable housing in Alexandria. The neighborhoods that first gave the black community in Alexandria a unified voice and strength are being pushed out to make way for new development.

“I don’t even have to think about it: the biggest issue [facing the black community in Alexandria] is affordable housing,” said Euille. “That’s number one.”

Since 2000, market rate affordable units have fallen from 18,218 to 6670. 2017 is the first year in the city’s history where the number of committed affordable units will surpass the number of market rate affordable units.

“There were a lot of African American communities in Alexandria,” said Patterson. “All of them have been gentrified or destroyed.”

The historically black neighborhoods in Alexandria were home to much of the city’s market-rate affordable housing. These were places that were not set aside by the government as affordable and weren’t public housing, but were considered affordable to local residents at lower incomes. Sometimes rising property values and taxes forced the rents to continue to rise until the residents were forced to disperse. Patterson said many residents of the south side of the city moved into Del Ray. Along with Queen Street, Mount Vernon Avenue became one of the spots in the city with a large share of black businesses.

“Then, somewhere along the line something began to change,” said Patterson. “Folks move in and yuppied up the housing. It became more expensive.”

In other cases, the places that were once black communities were physically destroyed by the city. Many of the sections of what was once market-rate affordable housing units have been replaced with public housing projects. The neighborhood that was The Burg still exists in a few blocks of the city, but only as public housing. Parts were demolished to make way for Chatham Square, a mixed-income residential development. Further west, the black community that was built

around Fort Ward after the Civil War was pushed out to make the space available for historic preservation. The community moved east into a part of the city derogatorily called “Mudtown.” Patterson recalled that the area was covered in mud and much of the streets were unpaved, but the black community worked for years to completely transform the area, only to be forced out again in 1971 to make way for a new integrated high school.

“[The city] took the area between the white neighborhoods, where the black community was,” said Patterson. “They destroyed it to build the new high school. The biggest insult was naming the school after T.C. Williams, who was the biggest racist in town.”

Patterson said this phenomena is something she’s seen her whole life in the city.

“It’s a nice-nasty town,” said Patterson. “They will do something that looks nice on the surface, but is nasty when it goes deeper.”

Chatman said the lack of affordable housing is one piece of the larger income inequality crisis that haunts Alexandria, as it does cities throughout the country.

“Income inequality is an issue in this city,” said Chatman. “We’re still giving scholarships to young people who are the first in their families going to college. These are still the kind of issues that are affecting these communities.”

ATTACHMENT 3

New York Times Real Estate Section

Black Homeowners Face Discrimination in Appraisals

Companies that value homes for sale or refinancing are bound by law not to discriminate. Black homeowners say it happens anyway.

A second appraisal valued Abena and Alex Horton’s Jacksonville home 40 percent higher than the first appraisal, after Ms. Horton removed all signs of Blackness. Credit...Charlotte Kesl for The New York Times

By Debra Kamin

Published Aug. 25, 2020 Updated Aug. 27, 2020

Abena and Alex Horton wanted to take advantage of low home-refinance rates brought on by the coronavirus crisis. So in June, they took the first step in that process, welcoming a home appraiser into their four-bedroom, four-bath ranch-style house in Jacksonville, Fla.

The Hortons live just minutes from the Ortega River, in a predominantly white neighborhood of 1950s homes that tend to sell for \$350,000 to \$550,000. They had expected their home to appraise for around \$450,000, but the appraiser felt differently, assigning a value of \$330,000. Ms. Horton, who is Black, immediately suspected discrimination.

The couple’s bank agreed that the value was off and ordered a second appraisal. But before the new appraiser could arrive, Ms. Horton, a lawyer, began an experiment: She took all family photos off the mantle. Instead, she hung up a series of oil paintings of Mr. Horton, who is white, and his grandparents that had been in storage. Books by Zora Neale Hurston and Toni Morrison were taken off the shelves, and holiday photo cards sent by friends were edited so that only those showing white families were left on display. On the day of the appraisal, Ms. Horton took the couple’s 6-year-old son on a shopping trip to Target, and left Mr. Horton alone at home to answer the door.

The new appraiser gave their home a value of \$465,000 — a more than 40 percent increase from the first appraisal.

Race and housing policy have long been intertwined in the United States. Black Americans consistently struggle more than their white counterparts to be approved for home loans, and the specter of redlining — a practice that denied mortgages to people of color in certain neighborhoods — continues to drive down home values in Black neighborhoods.

Even in mixed-race and predominantly white neighborhoods, Black homeowners say, their homes are consistently appraised for less than those of their neighbors, stymying their path toward building equity and further perpetuating income equality in the United States.

Home appraisers are bound by the Fair Housing Act of 1968 to not discriminate based on race, religion, national origin or gender. Appraisers can lose their license or even face prison time if they're found to produce discriminatory appraisals. Title XI of the Financial Institutions Reform, Recovery and Enforcement Act, enacted in 1989, also binds appraisers to a standard of unbiased ethics and performance.

“My heart kind of broke,” Ms. Horton said. “I know what the issue was. And I knew what we needed to do to fix it, because in the Black community, it’s just common knowledge that you take your pictures down when you’re selling the house. But I didn’t think I had to worry about that with an appraisal.”

Appraisals, by nature, are subjective. And discrimination, particularly the subconscious biases and microaggressions that have risen to the fore in white America this summer following the death of George Floyd, is notoriously difficult to pinpoint.

Editors’ Picks

Ms. Horton shared her experiment in a widely circulated Facebook post, earning 25,000 shares and more than 2,000 comments, many of which came from Black homeowners and carried the same message: This also happened to me.

In each comment, a repeated theme: Home appraisers, who work under codes of ethics but with little regulation and oversight, are often all that stands between the accumulation of home equity and the destruction of it for Black Americans.



The value of Stephen Richmond’s home in a Hartford, Conn., suburb jumped after he removed family photos and movie posters, and had a white neighbor stand in for him during a second appraisal. Credit...Monica Jorge for The New York Times

After the first appraisal came up short on his house in an affluent, racially mixed suburb of Hartford, Conn., Stephen Richmond, an aerospace engineer, took down family photos and posters for Black movies and had a white neighbor stand in for him on a second appraisal. He was hoping to refinance; with the second report, he saw his home's value go up \$40,000 from the initial appraisal just a few weeks earlier.

In 2000, the American actor and comedian D.L. Hughley had an appraisal on his home in the Montevista Estates neighborhood of West Hills, a primarily white area in the San Fernando Valley in Los Angeles. Despite a steady uptick in the housing market and the addition of a pool and new hardwood floors, the house was appraised for nearly what he had bought it for three years earlier — \$500,000.

In Mr. Hughley's case, his bank flagged the report.

"They were like, this has to be some kind of mistake because in order for your house to have come in this low, it would have to be in some level of disrepair," Mr. Hughley said.

The bank ordered a new appraisal, which came back \$160,000 higher, and Mr. Hughley went on to sell the home for \$770,000.

Mr. Hughley talks about the experience in his book, "Surrender, White People!", a satirical look at white supremacy, which was published in June by Harper Collins and examines racial inequality in the United States across education, health care and the housing market.

"People always tell us to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. But what if you remove the straps?" he said. "You're invested in the American dream, you have capital, you have a chip in the game. And the fact that somebody could summarily minimize my wealth just because of a bias, it seemed crazy to me."

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, a federal ruling issued in March allowed appraisals for homes that were being sold to be done remotely in certain circumstances, temporarily pausing the need for interior home inspections. Those looking to refinance, however, still must complete an in-person appraisal.

In Mr. Hughley's case, the appraiser was fired. Ms. Horton has filed a complaint with the Department of Housing and Urban Development; when contacted about her case, HUD said it had been assigned to the Jacksonville Human Rights Commission. The agency added that it receives a handful of similar complaints each year.

In 2018, researchers from Gallup and the Brookings Institution published [a report](#) on the widespread devaluation of Black-owned property in the United States, which they discussed in a 2019 hearing before the House Financial Services Subcommittee. The report found that a home in a majority Black neighborhood is likely to be valued for 23 percent less than a near-identical home in a majority-white neighborhood; it also determined this devaluation costs Black homeowners \$156 billion in cumulative losses.

Many appraisers, both during the hearing and in the weeks after, defended their practice, noting that it's their job to report on local market conditions, not set them.

"Is there a problem with poor and underserved communities in the United States? Yes. Is it the appraisal profession's fault? No," wrote Maureen Sweeney, a Chicago-based appraiser in a letter to the house subcommittee following the hearing. "It's like blaming the canary for the bad air in the coal mine, or blaming the mirror for your bad hair day. Appraisers reflect the market; we do not create it."

But what about a Black homeowner in a white neighborhood whose property is appraised for less than his neighbor's? Whether appraisers are devaluing Black homes or entire Black neighborhoods, the core issue is the same, said Andre Perry, one of the writers of the Brookings Institution report and the author of "Know Your Price: Valuing Black Lives and Property in America's Black Cities."

"We still see Black people as risky," Mr. Perry said. "White appraisers carry the same attitudes and beliefs of white America — the same attitudes that compelled Derek Chauvin to kneel casually on the neck of George Floyd are shared by other professionals in other fields. How does that choking out of America look in the appraisal industry? Through very low appraisals," he said.

ATTACHMENT 4

FAIR HOUSING TESTING SUMMARY RESULTS (1990-2021)

A comparison of past test results helps us measure progress in industry compliance with fair housing laws and evaluate the effectiveness of City programs including testing, fair housing education, outreach, and enforcement activities. The sustained downward trend in the number of identified problems is a reflection of the City's commitment to making Alexandria a welcoming community to

all.

Fiscal Year	Market/ Test Type	Protected Class	Sites Tested	Tests Completed (including retests)	Identified Problems	Sites with Problems	Action <i>Include monetary settlements data</i>
1990	Rental Apartments	Race/National Origin(Hispanic)	79	96	19	14	1 Complaint/1-\$10,000 Settlement
1991	Rental (Realtors)	Race/National Origin(Hispanic)	21	24	3	3	Remedial Action
1992	Rental Apartments	Familial Status	71	93	10	10	1 Complaint/1-\$4,000Settlement
1993*	Rental Apartments	Disability	78	291	28	25	3 Complaints/3 Settlements (\$2500)
1996	Rental Apartments	Race	20	20	0	0	No Problems Found
1997	Rental Apartments	Sexual Orientation	75	79	3	3	Remedial Action
1998	Sales	Race/National Origin(Hispanic)	16	62	14	7	3 Complaints/2 Settlements(\$10,000)
1999	Rental Apartments	Disability	70	218	6	5	Remedial Action
2000	Lending	Race/National Origin(Hispanic)	13	14	1	1	Remedial Action
	Rental Apartments	Race/National Origin Hispanic)	72	75	3	3	Remedial Action
2001	Rental Apartments	Familial Status	85	87	2	2	Remedial Action
2003	Rental Apartments	Multiple Bases	83	84	1	1	Remedial Action
2005	Sales	Race/National Origin (Hispanic)	12	12	0	0	No Problems Found
2006	Lending	Race/National Origin(Hispanic)	11	11	0	0	No Problems Found
2007	Rental Apartments	Race/National Origin (Middle-Eastern/Asian)	73	77	3	3	Remedial Action
2008	Rental Apartments	Race/National Origin(Hispanic)	64	66	2	2	Remedial Action
2009	Lending	Race	8	8	0	0	No Problems Found
2010	Rental Apartments	Disability	67	68	1	1	Remedial Action
2011	Rental Apartments	Familial Status	67	67	0	0	No Problems Found
2012	New Construction	Race	13	13	0	0	No Problems Found

2013	Lending	Race	13	13	0	0	No Problems Found
2014	Rental Apartments	Sexual Orientation	70	71	1	1	Remedial Action
2015	Sales	Race	9	9	0	0	No Problems Found
2016	Rental Apartments	Disability	57	59	2	2	Remedial Action
2017	Lending	Race/National Origin(Hispanic)	16	16	0	0	No Problems Found
2018	Rental	Race/National Origin	87	89	2	2	Remedial Action
2019	Sales	Disability (mobility)	12	13	1	1	Remedial Action
2020	Rental	Sexual Orientation/Trangender/Queer	87	87	0	0	No Problems Found
2021	Rental	Housing Choice Voucher	98	104	6	6	Remedial Action

** No testing was conducted in 1994-1995.*