From a Culture of Poverty to a Culture of Property: Preservation and Urban Crisis in the "City of Homes"

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From a Culture of Poverty to a Culture of Property: Preservation and Urban Crisis in the “City of Homes”

A Dissertation Presented

by

Brian F. Whetstone

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2023

Department of History
“From a Culture of Poverty to a Culture of Property: Preservation and Urban Crisis in the ‘City of Homes’”

A Dissertation Presented

By

Brian Whetstone

Approved as to style and content by:

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Marla Miller, Chair

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Eldra Dominique-Walker, Outside Member

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Brian Ogilvie, Chair

History Department
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This work would not be possible without the many mentors, professors, and friends who supported me along this journey. My alma mater, Hastings College, welcomed me to an intellectual and social environment where I was encouraged to explore my interests in putting history to work in the world—I did not always know it in the moment, but I received a thorough education in public history and making history meaningful in the world there. Michella Marino, Robert Babcock, and Glenn Avent tirelessly supported and defended the significance of history at Hastings College while treating my peers and I like respected colleagues, an ethos that prepared us all for graduate school. Michella introduced me to the expansive worlds of public history and oral history. Joe Prickett, Ryan Smolko, Nathan Kosmicki, Nick Musgrave, Grace Rempp, Sabrina Maxwell, and Emma Attuire all shared and kindled my passion for history and justice. I am deeply indebted to you all for the mentorship and friendship you provided me.

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My dissertation committee has been a steady source of support and inspiration from the moment I arrived in western Massachusetts. Jennifer Fronc expanded my understanding of women’s and gender and carceral history and introduced me to scholarship that broadened and deepened my understanding of modern U.S. history. Her careful editing and thoughtful advice pushed me to produce my most effective and authoritative writing. David Glassberg has offered unparalleled support for this project, and his knowledge and familiarity with Springfield have proven indispensable to pursuing new lines of inquiry and guiding my research in immeasurably productive ways. Eldra Dominque-Walker offered the most stimulating questions about historic preservation and the built environment that consistently pushed me to become a more thoughtful preservationist. Marla Miller has been an incredible role model, trusted advisor, colleague, and friend throughout this project. She has encouraged me at every step to become the best public historian I can be and has always helped me remain tethered to the world of public history.

This research would not have been possible without the support of the Department of History and the Richard Gassan Memorial Fund. Additionally, I am indebted to Cliff McCarthy and Maggie Humberston at the Springfield Museum of History whose patience with my many archival requests led me through Springfield’s history. Staff at the Massachusetts State Archives, Smith College Special Collections, and Special Collections and University Archives at UMass were essential to this research, and I thank them for their compassion and patience to fulfill my requests in the midst of a global pandemic. Finally, to the Springfield preservationists and residents who took the time to participate in oral history interviews, I cannot begin to articulate my gratitude. Your knowledge, insights, life experiences, and wisdom were essential to this project. I can only hope that your stories
continue to breathe life and inspiration into preservation in Springfield beyond the boundaries of this project.

So many mentors have shaped my dual identity as a practitioner and scholar of historic preservation. Kristine Gerber made me the most hopeful I have ever been for preservation’s capacities to make the world just and equitable while I was fortunate enough to work with her at Restoration Exchange Omaha. I remain thankful for her mentorship and continue to be inspired by all she does for the city of Omaha. Ryan Reed has always kept me in touch with my Nebraska roots and his friendship and mentorship have supported my growth as a preservationist in my time at UMass. Sarah Marsom has provided constant inspiration to make preservation a more equitable movement and I am grateful for the many conversations we have shared about preservation and public history.

My family, especially my parents, have always offered unending support for me to pursue my passions. I cannot thank you both enough for all you have done to help me realize my dreams. To Emily Whitted, your compassion, love, and patience have sustained me and carried me over the finish line. You have helped me always feel at home and been there for me always. Thank you.
ABSTRACT

FROM A CULTURE OF POVERTY TO A CULTURE OF PROPERTY:
PRESERVATION AND URBAN CRISIS IN THE “CITY OF HOMES”

MAY 26, 2023

BRIAN WHETSTONE, B.A., HASTINGS COLLEGE
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Directed by: Professor Marla R. Miller

From a Culture of Poverty to a Culture of Property: Preservation and Urban Crisis in the “City of Homes” explores the intersection of the historic preservation movement and the urban crisis from the vantage point of Springfield, Massachusetts in the two decades following the passage of the landmark National Historic Preservation Act in 1966. Rather than explore the workings of larger professional or governmental preservation organizations, this dissertation instead centers the role of community preservationists—those homeowners, community activists, and founders of neighborhood organizations who pursued historic preservation as an avocation and articulated preservation’s significance at the scale of their homes, neighborhoods, and cities. These preservationists mobilized their “culture of property” that positioned the responsible management and respectable tastes of property owners as an antidote to urban crime and disorder, white flight, the growing political demands of the twentieth-century Black freedom struggle, and the structural problems prohibiting access to affordable, safe, and sanitary housing. Collectively, these issues constituted an “urban crisis” especially troublesome to northeastern cities like Springfield. Promoting private property ownership entrenched metropolitan inequalities, prolonging the urban crisis rather than alleviating its worst symptoms. In placing their faith in the culture of property, community preservationists helped shepherd cities into a new era of privatization and municipal
governance that ensconced real estate speculation and private property as drivers of urban rehabilitation and markers of urban citizenship and belonging.

At the same time, community preservationists’ fixation on the urban crisis and their culture of property drove a reorientation of the larger national preservation movement around issues of urban decline and urban governance. Left underexplored by both urban historians and scholars of the historic preservation movement, this reorientation generated many of the modern tools of the contemporary preservation movement, including the federal historic tax credit program, revolving funds, using preservation to attend to the political demands of marginalized groups, and a quality-of-life politics used to define preservation’s relevance to urban policymakers. Situated at the intersection of urban and public history, this dissertation draws from oral histories with preservation movement participants to reveal previously unacknowledged connections between preservation and postwar urban governance.
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Introduction

Long before he made a career as an oral historian who developed the concept of “shared authority” Michael Frisch cut his teeth as an urban historian studying Springfield, Massachusetts.¹ As a graduate student at Princeton University in the mid-1960s, Frisch longed to learn beyond the ivory tower. “I was very tired of school,” he recalled in 1991, “there was this notion that I could do a community study and get out of the university setting into some different sort of environment.”² Frisch’s advisors at Princeton turned him towards Springfield, at the time Massachusetts’ second-largest city and “closer to the scale” Frisch needed for his dissertation and eventual first monograph, Town Into City, published in 1972. But once he arrived in 1965 to begin his research, Frisch found Springfield to have an arresting “level of historical self-consciousness” as he explored the rich collections of the Connecticut Valley Historical Museum, navigated the city’s streets and neighborhoods, and discussed the city’s nineteenth century heritage with local residents.³ Inevitably, Frisch found himself drawn to Mattoon Street, a dense stretch of rowhouses with “fancy ‘swell fronts’” and mansard roofs adjacent to downtown Springfield and synonymous with the city’s efforts to craft its image as an urbane metropolis in the 1870s.⁴ Initially hailed by city boosters as “a sure sign of a promising urban future,” Frisch found the townhouses “long vacant” and

¹ Frisch’s concept of “shared authority” has circulated widely among public and oral historians to describe how scholars and public audiences always bring their own cultural and community experiences to oral history interviews and public history projects. His work has been cited some 1,500 times since its publication in 1990, see Michael Frisch, A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990); Katherine T. Corbett and Howard S. Miller, "A Shared Inquiry into Shared Inquiry," The Public Historian 28, no. 1 (Winter 2006), 20.
⁴ Frisch, Town Into City: Springfield, Massachusetts, and the Meaning of Community, 1840-1880, 143.
derelict in 1965, awash in an urban landscape reeling from deindustrialization, population loss, and deepening poverty.  

It was well known that Mattoon Street “was a dump.” By the time Frisch strolled the street in 1965, Mattoon Street acquired a reputation as a lodging and boarding house district whose residents were some of the poorest and most disadvantaged in Springfield, a dismaying reality that contrasted sharply against the street’s former architectural and social elegance. Yet despite the street’s fall from grace, individuals guided by “historical self-consciousness” still found themselves drawn to Mattoon Street’s once-elegant housing stock long after Frisch returned to Princeton in 1967. In 1974, Sally and David Fuller moved from a small apartment in Agawam, Massachusetts across the Connecticut River where they purchased 11½ Mattoon Street. The rowhouse was “a flophouse,” Sally remembered, “the rooms were divided by particle board walls, there were still a lot of people living in it” as a rooming house. Sally, a former Russian translator for the National Security Agency, and David, a lawyer, set to “gutting” the house of its trappings as a rooming house while carefully preserving the home’s original fireplace mantels, woodwork, and stained glass. Not long after, Sally and David joined the Mattoon Street Historic Preservation Association (MSHPA), a preservation organization made up of likeminded homeowners renovating the surrounding rowhouses along Mattoon Street. By 1975, city officials heralded young couples like the Fullers for taking an “urban neighborhood” like Mattoon Street from “disaster to approaching elegance,” a transformation unthinkable to observers like Frisch just one decade prior.

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5 Frisch, 277.
6 Sally Fuller, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, September 30, 2020, interview in possession of the author.
7 Sally Fuller, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
As Sally and David Fuller purchased and renovated their historic brick rowhouse, became members of their neighborhood’s preservation organization, and championed the power of preservation to transform Mattoon Street, they joined a growing cohort of community preservationists across the country who believed that historic preservation could reverse urban decline. By the late 1960s, when people like Sally and David Fuller cultivated their own preservationist consciousness, historic preservation already encompassed both a professional and avocational placemaking strategy. Throughout the twentieth century, a wide range of governmental agencies and professional organizations drove the field’s professionalization, culminating in the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).9 A legislative milestone, the NHPA opened new opportunities for preservation professionals by creating the modern bureaucratic infrastructure of state preservation offices, the federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)—the nation’s registry of places designated worthy of preservation.10 These professionals also defined the language of “historic preservation”: the acceptable physical interventions to “stabilize,” “rehabilitate,” “remodel,” or “protect” elements of the built environment deemed “historical,” and the acceptable ways to articulate a building, site, or entire neighborhood’s historical and contemporary “significance.”


10 National Historic Preservation Act, Public Law 89-665, 89th Cong. (October 15, 1966). Additionally, the NHPA, through Section 106 of the Act, provided a review process for properties listed on the NRHP threatened by federally funded projects that could have an “adverse” effect on designated sites. The NHPA likewise established the National Historic Landmarks program that built upon the existing list of National Historic Sites already maintained by the Department of the Interior.
However, this dissertation is less concerned with the workings of large professional organizations and governmental agencies—though they do make appearances throughout. Rather, I focus on the actions of community preservationists, those homeowners, community activists, and founders of neighborhood organizations and associations who pursued historic preservation as an avocation and articulated preservation’s significance at the scale of their homes, neighborhoods, and cities. Community preservationists like Sally and David Fuller adapted abstract tools or concepts like the NRHP to their specific local contexts, literally shaping how their neighbors would encounter and experience federal preservation policy and professional methodologies. By pursuing preservation as an avocation, community preservationists blended their own professional occupations and personal commitments as they moved between their roles as parents, spouses, social workers, architects, activists, and municipal employees. These preservationists were never isolated from their governmental or professional counterparts. Rather, community, governmental, and professional preservationists remained in active dialogue, finding inspiration, adopting tactics, and crafting new preservation tools from and alongside one another. In shifting focus from national governmental and professional preservationists to community preservationists, I illuminate the commitments and agendas of a group of preservationists that did not always align with, but nevertheless influenced, the actions of their governmental and professional counterparts to articulate an alternative narrative of the preservation movement’s transformation following the landmark NHPA in 1966.

I argue that community preservationists, in tandem with their governmental and professional peers, reoriented their movement to address the ongoing “urban crisis” afflicting cities in the late twentieth century by promoting the responsible ownership and stewardship of private property. In pivoting to the urban crisis—the collective impact of
segregation, deindustrialization, white flight, and racial violence that reached a crescendo in the 1960s—community preservationists and their professional and governmental colleagues sought to further consolidate their newfound political influence by making preservation relevant to policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels. The urban crisis and its attendant “culture of poverty” captivated the attention of governmental officials, commentators, policymakers, and community leaders to whom both appeared inseparable from the urban social and physical landscape. Rather than solely blame the state of American cities on vast structural or systemic forces, social scientists and policymakers posited that the impoverished condition of nonwhite urbanites and the resultant urban crisis plaguing cities stemmed from a “tangle of pathology” inherent in Black and nonwhite social and familial relations.

If social scientists theorized this “culture of poverty” within the broader urban crisis, preservationists prescribed their own culture of property to reverse the sinking fortunes of urban America. The respectable tastes and responsible management of urban space cultivated by property owners, preservationists believed, could strike at the heart of the constituent components of the urban crisis by making cities safer, stabilizing investments in urban real estate, attending to the demands of the ongoing Black freedom struggle, and

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alleviating the burdens of housing shortages on municipal infrastructure.\textsuperscript{13} Such beliefs in the power of property and homeownership to promote social and political stability evolved from earlier moments in the 1920s to link homeownership with citizenship, patriotism, and the family that became codified by the New Deal state in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{14} This continuity between homeownership campaigns of the second quarter of the twentieth century and preservationists’ culture of property in the postwar period remained a guiding and often unstated ethos for community preservationists as they applied their culture of property to the urban crisis.

From their positions in cities across the country and lived experiences as urbanites, community preservationists drove this reorientation of the broader preservation movement. While these preservationists undertook their campaigns in good faith, promoting private property ownership did little to alleviate the urban crisis. Community preservationists imagined an alternative to demolition and urban neglect, articulating a more environmentally sound future for American cities that marked a radical departure from postwar urban development.\textsuperscript{15} Additionally, community preservationists, like generations of public history

\textsuperscript{13} The concept of “taste” has been approached by historians as a key vehicle for Americans in the late eighteenth century to engage with politics and national affinity. See Catherine E. Kelly, \textit{Republic of Taste: Art, Politics, and Everyday Life in Early America} (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); For the emergent fields of public history and historic preservation in the twentieth century, taste has played a critical, if understudied role, in shaping which objects, buildings, or architectural styles are deemed most authentic or “historic.” On the role of museums in this process see Jeffrey Trask, \textit{Things American: Art Museums and Civic Culture in the Progressive Era} (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); On the shifting architectural tastes of the twentieth century, most notably a transition away from colonial-era architecture to a wider embrace of eclectic Victorian styles, see Suleiman Osman, \textit{The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Postwar New York} (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 96; Cameron Logan, \textit{Historic Capital: Preservation, Race, and Real Estate in Washington, D.C.} (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).


\textsuperscript{15} Mainstream postwar redevelopment was guided by a “culture of clearance” that sought to conquer, eradicate, and rebuild the “disorganized” and obsolete urban built environment. This “culture of clearance” had enormous environmental, social, and physical ramifications for American cities, see Francesca Russello Ammon, \textit{Bulldozer: Demolition and Clearance of the Postwar Landscape} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016); Samuel Zipp, \textit{Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York} (New York, NY:
practitioners preceding them, mobilized history to address some of the most pressing social and political issues of the twentieth century encapsulated in the urban crisis. Yet where preservationists imagined their movement as promoting the common social good, the reality of their initiatives was more complicated—despite their best intentions. Promoting private property ownership entrenched metropolitan inequalities, prolonging the urban crisis rather than alleviating its worst symptoms. In placing their faith in the culture of property, preservationists helped shepherd cities into a new era of privatization and municipal governance that ensconced real estate speculation and private property as drivers of urban rehabilitation and markers of urban citizenship and belonging. This vision overlooked how the housing market and real estate industry operated in fundamentally exclusionary ways that

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17 Beginning in the 1990s, geographers registered these shifts within emerging debates over “gentrification” where the “collective owners of capital” increasingly held power to shape public space and “remove” those without property from the public sphere through increased policing and real estate speculation. For early accounts of this trend see Neil Smith, The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City (Oxford, UK: Taylor and Francis, 1996); Nicholas Blomley, Unsettling the City: Urban Land and the Politics of Property (Oxford, UK: Taylor and Francis, 2003); Cathy Stanton’s ethnographic account of the creation of Lowell’s National Historical Park in the 1970s underscores how preservationists and public historians were foundational in that city’s turn to private-market-driven solutions to urban problems, see Cathy Stanton, The Lowell Experiment: Public History in a Postindustrial City (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006); Historians in the 2010s have examined gentrification as a complex process engendered by a number of diverse actors, but with many of the same privatized and punitive results, see Aaron Shkuda, The Lofts of SoHo: Gentrification, Art, and Industry in New York, 1950-1980 (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Brian D. Goldstein, The Roots of Urban Renaissance: Gentrification and the Struggle over Harlem (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017); These lines of inquiry have generated analyses that center the role of private market actors in determining the development of U.S. cities as well as the primacy of private property and homeownership to these visions of urban rehabilitation, see Destin Jenkins, The Bonds of Inequality: Debt and the Making of the American City (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2021); LeeAnn Lands, “Be A Patriot, Buy A Home: Re-Imagining Home Owners and Home Ownership in Early 20th Century Atlanta,” Journal of Social History 41, no. 4 (2008): 943–65; Caley Horan, Insurance Era: Risk, Governance, and the Privatization of Security in Postwar America (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 102; Themis Chronopoulos, Spatial Regulation in New York City: From Urban Renewal to Zero Tolerance (London, UK: Taylor and Francis, 2011), 78; Roberta Gold, When Tenants Claimed the City: The Struggle for Citizenship in New York City Housing (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014).
systematically barred poor, Black, and other nonwhite urbanites from sharing in the spoils of metropolitan “rebirth” engendered by the preservation aims of private property owners.

In tracing the relationship between historic preservation and the urban crisis, I demonstrate how preservation and the urban crisis remained locked in a reciprocal relationship in the years between 1966 and 1986. Not only did preservationists impact the urban social, political, and physical landscape, the urban crisis fundamentally transformed the national preservation movement. As community preservationists broke the urban crisis down into what they identified as its constituent parts—crime and urban disorder, white flight, the demands of the Black freedom struggle, and the flagging rental and single-family housing market—they forged new logics and tools adopted by their governmental and professional counterparts. While these tools register as ubiquitous today, they were highly experimental in the early 1970s. The quality-of-life politics deployed to locate preservation as a tool to make cities safer and amenable to urban professionals; the federal historic tax credit program; speculative real estate tools like revolving funds; and educational imperatives imparted through guidebooks, how-to manuals, and house tours are all the direct product of preservationists’ entanglement with the urban crisis but were never foregone conclusions when preservationists set out to demonstrate preservation’s relevance to solving that crisis.\(^\text{18}\)

Ultimately, the urban crisis required preservationists to grapple with the longstanding tension between preservation as a force for transformative social and political change and preservation as a tool of speculative real estate investment. Rather than resolve this tension, preservationists brought these competing impulses into an uneasy coexistence, an alliance they believed was necessary to preserve their tenuous political power and social relevance and meaningfully address the problems of the urban crisis. In this period where community preservationists most intensely engaged with the urban crisis, they established the terms through which a new generation of public history practitioners would reckon with the social good and social consequences of historic preservation in the twenty-first century, a “reckoning” that continues to fracture around preservation’s entanglement with private property and preservation’s capacity to produce more equitable and sustainable communities.

“Preservation and ‘Urban Problems’”: Historic Preservation and the Urban Crisis

Urban historians have yet to consider community preservationists as relevant political actors in the late twentieth century while historians of historic preservation have yet to explicate the

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significance of the urban crisis in transforming the historic preservation movement in this same period. While set in a specific locale—Springfield, Massachusetts—I situate my analysis within the longer story of homeownership, historic preservation, growth, and decline in the twentieth-century city. Beginning in 1966, the same year the NHPA was signed into law, this dissertation concludes in 1986, a year that the modern preservation bureaucracy assumed its contemporary shape and experimental tools like historic tax credits and revolving funds became well-established components of a preservationist toolkit. 1986 also marked a point in which preservationists paused to take stock of their movement’s accomplishments and lingering challenges after two decades of preservation practice structured by the NHPA—a reflective mood that similarly prevailed in Springfield in 1986 as the city prepared to celebrate its 350th anniversary of English settlement. By looking to these two decades in which preservationists most directly engaged with the urban crisis, I bring these scholarly conversations into better focus to reveal how the late-twentieth century preservation movement shaped the trajectory of new modes of urban governance in the 1970s and how the perceived social and material realities of urban decline guided the preservation movement.

Beginning in the late 1990s, urban historians increasingly adopted the urban crisis as an object of study as they searched for the historical roots of contemporary metropolitan inequality.21 These historians emphasized the role of white flight, deindustrialization, re-segregation, and the predatory practices of the real estate market and federal homeownership policy in the early- and mid-twentieth century that ushered in sweeping demographic,

political, and social transformations for U.S. cities in the postwar period. Much of this literature approached the late 1960s and the high-profile urban uprisings in segregated Black communities as the dramatic climax of this crisis while the 1970s figured as an unfortunate denouement to the tumult of the decade prior. More recent analyses have turned greater attention to the various responses to the urban crisis in the 1970s, opening new ways of thinking about the transition to “neoliberalism” by examining how policymakers simultaneously blamed urban problems on state action to alleviate those very problems and nonwhite urban residents themselves. This analysis extended the “culture of poverty” thesis to justify the state’s evacuation of a redistributive social agenda and prioritization of privatized and punitive modes of urban governance. As Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor argues,


24 “Neoliberalism” is a particularly sticky term among historians who continue to debate its effectiveness as an analytic paradigm. The term generally refers to the rise of free-market principles and dismantling of the welfare state from the 1970s to the present day. The concept of “neoliberalism” was not a new phenomenon by the 1970s, and had a transnational intellectual genealogy, see Amy C. Offner, Sorting Out the Mixed Economy: The Rise and Fall of Welfare and Developmental States in the Americas (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019); on a historiographical account of neoliberalism see Kim Phillips-Fein, “The History of Neoliberalism,” in Brent Cebul, Lily Geismer, and Mason B. Williams, eds., Shaped by the State: Toward a New Political History of the Twentieth Century (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 347-362; more recently, historians have challenged
the transformations of the 1970s were “nothing less than the same urban crisis under a new name” as the “culture of poverty” took on new ideological life in this decade.\footnote{Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 214.}

By promoting private property ownership as an antidote to urban decline, preservationists played vital, yet overlooked, roles in these processes. To recover the role of preservationists in these transformations, I situate preservationists as fundamentally political actors who shared a social and political worldview structured by mid-century racial liberalism. This shared political culture informed preservationists’ embrace of private property. Racial liberalism developed from a liberal political tradition that encompassed political and cultural habits oriented towards the state’s protection of private property.\footnote{N.D.B. Connolly, “The Strange Career of American Liberalism,” in Cebul, Geismer, and Williams, Shaped by the State: Toward a New Political History of the Twentieth Century, 65.} By the mid-twentieth century, racial liberals championed political equality between all Americans and vaunted private property ownership as a powerful equalizing force. Yet liberals overlooked the structural and systemic barriers to equality or homeownership faced by Black and nonwhite citizens by positing racism as a problem of individual behavior or the “tangle of pathology” perpetuated by the “culture of poverty” and nonwhite conventional narratives of a "top-down" neoliberal turn engineered solely by policymakers, but rather as a "grassroots" process, see Claire Dunning, Nonprofit Neighborhoods: An Urban History of Inequality and the American State (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2022); Benjamin Holtzman, The Long Crisis: New York City and the Path to Neoliberalism (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021); Andrew J. Diamond and Thomas J. Sugrue, eds., Neoliberal Cities: The Remaking of Postwar Urban America (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2020); Marisa Chappell, “The Strange Career of Urban Homesteading: Low-Income Homeownership and the Transformation of American Housing Policy in the Late Twentieth Century,” Journal of Urban History 46, no. 4 (2020): 747–74; While elements of neoliberalism can be found throughout the twentieth century, many historians agree that what distinguishes the neoliberal 1970s from preceding decades is the retooling of state functions to support new carceral infrastructure. These historians have demonstrated that, rather than a simple evacuation of the state, some parts of the state have shrunk while others, particularly those responsible for punishment, have significantly grown, see Jordan T. Camp, Incarcerating the Crisis: Freedom Struggles and the Rise of the Neoliberal State (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2016); Elizabeth Hinton, From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016); Julily Kohler-Hausmann, Getting Tough: Welfare and Imprisonment in 1970s America (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017); Heather Ann Thompson, “Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation in Postwar American History,” The Journal of American History 97, no. 3 (December 2010): 703–34.
“maladjustment” to mainstream American political culture. Racial liberalism informed community preservationists’ political commitments to never discriminate on “Color, Class, or Creed” while narrowing the range of feasible solutions to the urban crisis to those that underscored private property and homeownership, a colorblind proposition that in practice tended to privilege whiteness and economic homogeneity. Through this political worldview, community preservationists arrived at their culture of property, a solution to urban decline that accelerated the turn to punitive and privatized urban governance in the 1970s and 1980s.

While historians of the twentieth-century United States have long charted the contradictory trajectory of liberalism and its entanglement with the urban crisis, historians of historic preservation have yet to explore the role of the urban crisis in transforming the historic preservation movement in the late twentieth century. Beginning in the late 1980s, historians of the historic preservation movement examined the various routes that movement took through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These historians emphasized the role of women’s voluntary associations, such as the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association, who appropriated preservation as a political tool to shape community identity, participate in public life, and naturalize or challenge white supremacy. Most historians

29 Much of this literature focuses on the role of white women’s voluntary associations, especially in the southern United States, who used preservation as a tool for political participation and racial subjugation, see Barbara J. Howe, “Women in Historic Preservation: The Legacy of Ann Pamela Cunningham,” The Public Historian 12, no. 1 (Winter 1990): 31–61; Patricia West, Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America’s House Museums (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999); Stephanie E. Yuhl, A Golden Haze of Memory: The Making of Historic Charleston (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); for a study of northern women, see Marla R. Miller and Anne Digan Lanning, “‘Common Parlors’: Women and the...
locate the historic preservation movement’s origins in preservationists’ efforts to control and manage urban change in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The urban crisis—a period of especially tumultuous urban change—continues to be curiously distinct from these historiographical conversations while the period following the 1966 NHPA remains understudied, despite the movement’s “maturation” and integration with “local environmental politics and urban policy” in the 1970s and 1980s.

As I position preservationists as critical political actors in postwar urban history, so too do I situate the urban crisis as a formative development for the post-1966 historic preservation movement. The urban crisis captivated the attention of preservationists, in part because the physical tolls of that crisis entailed the tangible losses of historic places to


demolition, neglect, urban renewal, vandalism, and arson. Preservationists immediately linked these physical losses with the social problems of the urban crisis. As Arthur Ziegler, Jr., the president of the high-profile Pittsburgh Landmark and History Foundation, explained in 1971, “architectural and human decay go hand in hand…Reduce one and you deter the other.” But community preservationists found themselves drawn to the urban crisis for more intangible reasons. In reorienting their movement to address the “architectural and human” problems posed by the urban crisis, community preservationists and their governmental and professional peers could demonstrate their movement’s social and political relevance to policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels, a bid that further secured their movement’s professional legitimacy and political power.

In this way, the urban crisis constituted both a serious problem as well as an exciting opportunity for community preservationists. If preservationists could illustrate that preservation and “urban problems” were not “poles apart,” then the “rapid changes taking place in American cities [could] greatly affect the direct and tangential interests of preservationists…The needs of our cities are many, and preservationists have an opportunity to help meet those needs.” By demonstrating how preservationists seized this “opportunity” to meet the needs posed by the urban crisis, I bring urban history and public history together to place community preservationists as central actors in the political shifts engendered by the urban crisis while situating that crisis as a watershed moment for the historic preservation movement.

**Preservation and Urban Crisis in the “City of Homes”**

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From a Culture of Poverty to a Culture of Property takes Springfield, Massachusetts as a case study to examine the intersection between the post-1966 historic preservation movement and the urban crisis.Situated in Massachusetts’ Connecticut River Valley, the city emerged in the nineteenth century as an industrial powerhouse and largest city in western Massachusetts. As the self-proclaimed “City of Homes,” a civic identity that emphasized Springfield’s supposed high rate of homeownership in the nineteenth century, by the mid-twentieth century the city was reeling from deindustrialization, white flight, and urban uprisings characteristic of the urban crisis.34 From a peak of nearly 174,500 people in 1960, the city’s population declined precipitously after the closure of the Springfield Armory in 1968, one of the city’s largest employers and manufacturer of munitions since its establishment in 1777.35 By 1980, the city’s population hovered around 152,300 people, the lowest since 1940. A wave of migrants from Puerto Rico beginning in the 1950s and accelerating in the 1980s encouraged a second wave of white flight to the region’s surrounding suburbs, despite these migrants’ commitments to repopulate and revive those urban neighborhoods left behind by their white counterparts.36


I situate Springfield as a critical node within broader global and national developments in the historic preservation movement and the urban crisis. As historian Llana Barber argues in her study of Lawrence, Massachusetts, divestment “has been most extreme and persistent in the nation’s small or second-tier postindustrial cities,” providing a concrete example of the stakes raised by the urban crisis in a place like Springfield and how preservationists began to grapple with that crisis.\(^{37}\) Moreover, Springfield and the wider Connecticut River Valley are the terrain on which preservation and its entanglement with property have taken shape for centuries.\(^{38}\) By drawing from rich and detailed local archival holdings, private collections, and oral histories with preservation movement participants, I illustrate how Springfield was both unique in the ways preservationists encountered the urban crisis and simultaneously representative of the wider transformations underway in mid-century urban political economy and the historic preservation movement.

Preservationists never viewed the urban crisis as a singular, abstract “crisis” but rather broke this crisis down into its constituent parts, an analysis that shapes the outline and chronology of this study. *From a Culture of Poverty to a Culture of Property* moves chronologically as the preservation movement evolved and topically to explore the five primary facets in which preservationists engaged with the urban crisis: crime and urban disorder, white flight, the Black freedom struggle, and the flagging rental and single-family housing markets. Each chapter is shaped by a dual goal to recover the role of preservationists in urban history and the place of the urban crisis in historic preservation to underscore how both remained conjoined in this period.


Chapter One begins not at the highwater mark of Springfield’s urban crisis in the 1960s, but rather the early nineteenth century, when preservationists first mobilized a national movement. The Connecticut River Valley, and settler colonial assertions of sovereignty over the region’s Indigenous inhabitants, played significant roles in linking historic preservation to the settler logics of private property ownership. Preservationists throughout the Connecticut River Valley, including Deerfield, Hadley, and Springfield, Massachusetts, as well as regional organizations mobilized in the mid-nineteenth century to preserve those sites with tangible associations to settler colonial violence exacted against Indigenous claims to sovereignty in the region. In linking preservation to property, the region’s settler colonists established a preservationist ethos that took the preservation of private property ownership as a central goal of their movement. When Springfield first began experiencing the pangs of the urban crisis in the mid-twentieth century, these settler logics intersected with preservationists’ position as racial liberals. Aghast at the “culture of poverty” plaguing Springfield, preservationists drew from their political identities as racial liberals—and Springfield’s historic racial liberal political tradition—to prescribe their culture of property.

Chapter Two begins with preservationists’ efforts to apply that culture of property to Springfield’s urban crisis. This chapter explores the formation of Springfield’s first preservation organization, the MSHPA, and the creation of the city’s local historical commission in 1972 within the context of the nascent wars on crime and drugs. The urban uprisings launched by Black and other nonwhite segregated communities to articulate demands for better housing, employment, and reductions in police violence appeared emblematic of the urban crisis engulfing cities. Historians have demonstrated how municipal, state, and federal policymakers responded to these demands with a range of
punitive solutions that accelerated the formation of the carceral state. As I illustrate through the example of the MSHPA, preservationists played crucial roles in this process by mobilizing historic preservation to convince white residents—urban and suburban alike—that cities were still safe places to live. Preservationists demonstrated safety through a series of projects that remade urban space to fit suburban expectations of “safe” neighborhoods and brought expanded punitive tools to bear on urban neighborhoods through increased policing and ordinances that regulated residents’ mobility. Ultimately, I illustrate how the range of punitive responses to urban crime and disorder engulfed the historic preservation movement in this period and how preservationists extended and naturalized these punitive solutions into areas of social and political life that seemingly had nothing to do with punishment or incarceration.

As urban uprisings contributed to white anxieties about crime and disorder, white residents voted with their feet and left Springfield altogether. Chapter Three traces how preservationists engaged with this process of white flight by looking to Forest Park Heights, the site of the city’s second historic district and subject of organizing on behalf of the SHC and local civic association, the Forest Park Civic Association. The campaign for Forest Park’s historic district reveals how preservationists sought to import the exclusionary zoning and land-use techniques piloted in autonomous suburban communities into urban neighborhoods to maintain their appeal to white urbanites wavering towards leaving Springfield behind. At the same time, community preservationists drew from a rising public historical consciousness generated by the 1976 bicentennial to promote their narrative of residential exclusivity across a wide range of historical mediums. Overall, this chapter illustrates how preservationists reinforced the culture of property by integrating suburban-style zoning and land-use politics into their movement and how in so doing they brought
these exclusionary technologies into the city to enforce socioeconomic and racial homogeneity.

Chapter Four turns to a neighborhood that did not resist white flight, but instead embraced their new Black neighbors: McKnight. McKnight’s Black residents experienced many of the constituent parts of the urban crisis simultaneously, and this crisis greatly shaped the city and nation’s broader Black freedom struggle underway in the 1960s and 1970s. This chapter excavates the relationship between the Black freedom struggle and historic preservation by examining the historic district campaign undertaken in McKnight by Black and white homeowners between 1973 and 1976. I illustrate how Black women adapted historic preservation to their civil rights organizing by mobilizing McKnight’s history to demonstrate to white city officials, policymakers, and lending institutions that McKnight was worthy of the civic resources afforded to exclusive neighborhoods like Forest Park Heights, rather than the divestment that characterized city planners’ approach towards McKnight’s integration. The culture of property remained central to this vision as Black women drew from their status as homeowners to illustrate their neighborhood’s respectability and “worth.”

By the late 1970s, the “urban housing crisis,” a nationwide shortage of affordable, safe, and sanitary rental housing, marked a new chapter in the urban crisis that consumed the attention of policymakers. As with crime, white flight, and the Black freedom struggle, community preservationists promoted their culture of property as an antidote to this specific crisis, arguing that the urban housing crisis was rooted in the individual attitudes and practices of landlords. In the process, preservationists refashioned themselves as landlords, insisting that their responsible management of property and careful surveillance and selection of their tenants would alleviate the worst afflictions of the urban housing crisis.
Such arguments shifted attention away from the demands of tenant activists—who called for more structural and societal solutions that emphasized housing as a human right—and into the realm of individual behavior. Policymakers searching to divest the state from maintaining commitments to provide affordable housing welcomed these arguments with open arms and rewarded preservationists with a new development tool, the federal historic tax credit, that subsidized their initiatives as landlords. Chapter Five recovers preservationists as vital political actors in this rightward shift in municipal governance that discarded the provision of affordable housing as politically necessary or appropriate actions on the part of the state. At the same time, this chapter illuminates how preservationists’ transformation into landlords produced tangible political gains, even as larger corporate actors increasingly cashed in on the benefits afforded by the federal historic tax credit program.

Where Chapter Five examines the relationship between preservation and the rental housing market, Chapter Six explores the other side of that coin: preservationists’ entanglement with the private residential housing market as real estate speculators and developers. As in Chapter Five, I situate preservationists as critical political actors in this shift in municipal governance that accepted private market actors as best equipped to guide cities away from the urban crisis through “public-private partnerships,” the neoliberal bread and butter of community development in the late 1970s and early 1980s.³⁹ Nowhere were public-private partnerships more politically influential than Massachusetts, a state whose political leadership discarded a redistributive social agenda in favor of austerity politics that subsidized private investment in Massachusetts cities. Preservationists were both beneficiaries of and political agents in this process, a position I explore through the Springfield Preservation Trust (SPT). First formed as a real estate tax shelter for Mattoon

Street residents in 1973, a new generation of preservationists reformed the SPT as an organization dedicated to protecting Springfield’s “built environment” in 1977. The contradictions between commitments to the built environment and real estate speculation defined the SPT’s guiding ethos as an activist organization committed to preventing demolition and as a private market “partner” and recipient of the city’s Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) to purchase, renovate, and resell deteriorated homes in the city’s historic districts. For the SPT, this tension proved untenable as preservationists’ desire to protect the totality of the urban landscape collided with municipal officials’ visions for urban regeneration.

By way of concluding, I assess preservationists’ attempts to reconcile their contradictory embrace of the built environment and real estate speculation. Ultimately, preservationists settled on a strategy of education that sought to reform individual behavior towards historic buildings without obstructing the state’s subsidization of private market urban redevelopment. This strategy drew from many of the tools piloted by preservationists over the preceding two decades: house tours demonstrated appropriate renovations; the use of the NRHP and historic tax credit program could encourage developers to make preservation-conscious development decisions; and how-to manuals and guidebooks to educate on architectural style. While this process may have brought some of the contradictions explored in Chapter Six into better alignment, it inflamed other tensions around “shared authority” as preservationists insisted their political power resided in their ability to authorize what constituted “preservation” and its benefits to urban neighborhoods—debates on which Michael Frisch would later build his career as a public
historian.40 Finally, I demonstrate the legacy of this tension in the battle against the construction of an MGM resort casino in downtown Springfield beginning in 2012. The casino battle reveals how preservationists felt they were best equipped to guide private development, but still largely accepted austerity measures and private market solutions to urban problems, a political reality they helped structure in their culture of property and approach to the urban crisis.

Revising this moment in the history of historic preservation reveals how the legacy of the urban crisis continues to shape the contemporary preservation movement and how preservationists have played critical, yet overlooked, roles in shaping the postwar urban landscape. The responsible ownership and stewardship of private property remains entrenched in the contemporary preservation movement, especially the bureaucratic infrastructure through which professional and governmental preservationists continue to engage. This entanglement with real estate speculation and private property ownership consistently ignites calls from grassroots community preservationists and activists to “dismantle” preservation or repeal the NHPA, radical propositions that illuminate how tensions over preservation’s social possibilities and political and economic consequences continue to frame debates between community, professional, and governmental preservationists.41 Such calls also underscore how preservationists are not politically neutral

40 Since this initial theorization, public historians have conceptualized “authority” as something to be “shared” by public historians, rather than as something already shared. See Frisch, A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History.

actors. As Seth Bruggeman observes in his study of Boston’s Freedom Trail, public historians and preservationists are both “product and victim” of a “rigged economic system” that curtails preservationists’ capacity to enact more equitable social change. Ultimately, acknowledging that preservationists have contributed to our contemporary reality of stark metropolitan inequality and attending to preservationists’ very real political influence are essential components in a preservation movement that succeeds in making cities and communities more equitable and sustainable places to live.

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CHAPTER 1

Preserving Property: Settler Colonialism and the Urban Crisis in the Connecticut River Valley

Edmund Lonergan knew Springfield like the back of his hand. Born in 1951 in Indian Orchard, a mill village at the outskirts of the city, Lonergan navigated the city’s streets and nearby woodlands alongside the Chicopee River on his bicycle. The oldest of six children, Lonergan “was given free rein, I was able to do a lot of exploring.”¹ As Lonergan explored Springfield, he moved through a layered landscape laden with traces of the city’s settler colonial past and its industrial present. “Indian Orchard” derived its name from “the fact that the Indians, so tradition runs, imitating the early settlers, set out an orchard on the banks of the Chicopee River.”² The orchard was never meant to last. Amid King Philip’s War, a vast regional conflict from 1675 to 1678 triggered by an Indigenous uprising led by Wampanoag chief Metacom, white settlers launched a surprise attack against local Indigenous forces camped near the river. The settlers surrounded the Indigenous soldiers, forcing them to “be slain or leap into the river” and drown in Wallamanumps Falls.³

By the time Lonergan cycled through Indian Orchard, the agrarian landscape of orchards was instead dominated by industrial manufacturing plants clustered along the Chicopee River. So too did manufacturing define East Springfield, another far-flung Springfield neighborhood to which Lonergan’s family relocated as the family expanded. East Springfield hummed with the daily rhythms of the nearby Westinghouse Electric plant. “Every afternoon at three- or four-o-clock, 2,000 to 3,000 people would all come out”

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¹ Edmund Lonergan, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, February 20, 2021, interview in possession of the author.
³ Highland Community Springfield, Massachusetts, 27.
gates of the facility, operated by Westinghouse since 1926, and make their way home. But as Lonergan grew older, Westinghouse’s daily rhythm grew more irregular. In 1959, plant officials announced a major reduction in the plant’s workforce and shift to operations in Mansfield and Columbus, Ohio after a strike inaugurated by the plant’s workers in the mid-1950s. As Lonergan prepared to relocate from Springfield to Philadelphia to enter the University of Pennsylvania’s anthropology program in 1970, Westinghouse shut the doors of its East Springfield plant. The facility remained vacant for over a decade.

When Lonergan returned to Springfield in 1974, he no longer recognized the city he crisscrossed on his bike as a child. “The highways had come in,” Lonergan remembered, and dramatically transformed Springfield’s landscape. Interstate-91 slowly crawled through the city’s North End between 1958 and 1970 where over 200 acres of buildings had been leveled to the ground and displaced over 1,000 individuals. Other changes were on the horizon. In August 1975, the North End descended into chaos for three days after the murder of a young Puerto Rican man, Jose Reyes, by police—the second police murder in a year in the North End—as Puerto Rican residents staged an uprising against the city’s police force. That same year, the city’s planning department issued a dire warning that the city was “tottering on the brink” of a housing disaster after discovering that 14 percent of the city’s housing stock was considered “substandard.” The Springfield of Lonergan’s youth seemed

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4 Lonergan, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
6 Dean Albertson, Robert Rossi, Oral History, October 1, 1975, Dean Albertson Oral History Collection, University of Massachusetts Amherst Special Collections and University Archives; Jose Barreto, Edward Hannabury, Oral History, October 22, 1975, Dean Albertson Oral History Collection, University of Massachusetts Amherst Special Collections and University Archives.
to slip further away with each passing day as buildings fell to the wrecking ball, arson, or neglect. Springfield, Lonergan learned, was in crisis.

In his new position as a research librarian at the main branch of the Springfield Public Library, Lonergan had a front-row seat to Springfield’s transformation. So too did he have unparalleled access to the city’s history. As Springfield descended into urban crisis, Lonergan threw himself into the city’s past. With his access to historical documents in the library’s collections, today housed in the Lyman and Merric Wood Museum of Springfield History, Lonergan allied himself with the Springfield Preservation Trust (SPT), a preservation nonprofit mobilized in 1977 to promote the preservation of Springfield’s “built environment.” With the SPT, Lonergan helped conduct research for historic resource inventory surveys, local historic districts, and National Register of Historic Places nominations, work that helped protect many historic buildings from demolition. Lonergan believed and continues to believe that the city’s preservation movement “has been really helpful to Springfield” in a moment of acute crisis that prevented the city “from losing a lot of its housing stock” as tens of thousands of acres of land were cleared in cities across the United States from federal urban renewal programs. Preservation, in other words, had alleviated some of the most pressing spatial problems posed by the urban crisis.

As Lonergan developed his preservationist consciousness in the 1970s, he stood at the intersection between the city’s settler colonial and industrial pasts; forces that transformed Springfield into a manufacturing powerhouse in the nineteenth century seemed far removed as the city slipped into decline in the postwar period. While Lonergan may not have realized it at the time, settler colonialism—that is, a distinct form of imperialism where

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9 Lonergan, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
settlers come to stay on expropriated land and remake themselves as that land’s legitimate occupants—likewise undergirded historic preservation, with the movement’s distant origins in the settler violence that characterized New England in the seventeenth century.10 This chapter excavates those roots by tracing the dual arcs of preservation’s settler colonial origins and Springfield’s urban crisis, two developments that collided in the 1970s when preservationists like Lonergan mobilized preservation to address the city’s sinking fortunes. Out of this collision, I argue, emerged preservationists’ culture of property, a distinct response to the urban crisis that centered the responsible management and stewardship of property as the most effective means of addressing the urban crisis.

While historians in the last two decades have traced a variety of political and social responses to the urban crisis, settler colonialism’s intersections with this crisis remain understudied.11 In her study of Los Angeles, Kelly Lytle Hernandez compellingly situates the twentieth-century rise of mass incarceration as an outgrowth of settler colonialism’s impulses towards “native elimination and racial disappearance.”12 Few scholars have applied this perspective towards the urban crisis, locating that crisis instead in the contradictory politics of the New Deal liberal coalition; the bipartisan project across the twentieth century to secure the legitimacy of urban police departments; and the institution of racial apartheid in the urban North, West, and Midwest.13 So too have historians of the historic preservation

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10 David Hugill, Settler Colonial City: Racism and Inequity in Postwar Minneapolis (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2021), 8.
movement largely overlooked their movement’s entanglement with settler colonialism. But preservation, Whitney Martinko argues, was forged as a tool of colonization in the early republic as white elites sought to craft a historical consciousness for the new nation that imagined colonization as a path to “civilization.”¹⁴ My analysis of the culture of property brings settler colonialism into better conversation with twentieth-century urban developments and the transformation of the historic preservation movement by locating preservationists’ response to the urban crisis in their embrace of property ownership first forged in the settler colonial violence of New England in the seventeenth century.

The ways that the “culture of poverty” interacted with mainstream liberal politics at this time also reveals how this particular response to the urban crisis brought settler colonial ideas to bear on urban decline. Overwhelmingly, city officials received this culture of property favorably because of a liberal political tradition that long valued homeownership as a constitutive element of civic identity and belonging—a short intellectual leap from settler colonial beliefs that ensconced property ownership as a prerequisite to personal autonomy and national sovereignty. Embodied by the city’s nineteenth-century identity as the “City of Homes,” these liberal political commitments to homeownership originated in efforts to combat anxieties around the region’s urbanization in the nineteenth century, a process contingent on settler colonial conquest in the western United States. In turn, Progressive reformers pushed to link homeownership with citizenship in the first decades of the twentieth century. From these twin contexts emerged Springfield’s preservation movement, one deeply committed to property ownership as a driver of urban rehabilitation received by

sympathetic city officials who embraced historic preservation as one tool to battle the city’s industrial decline.

**Settler Colonial Roots: Property and Preservation in the Connecticut River Valley**

The preservation movement in the United States emerged from the crucible of settler colonial violence and assertions of sovereignty over Indigenous inhabitants of North America. In present-day New England, settler violence reached a crescendo in the late seventeenth century during King Philip’s War, a conflict that in the Connecticut River valley involved white European settlers and Pocumtuuck, Sokoki, Agawams, and Nonotuck people who mounted a sustained uprising from 1675 to 1678 that destroyed English settlements and ravaged Indigenous homelands.\(^\text{15}\) European suppression of the uprising asserted settler sovereignty over the region’s Indigenous inhabitants through a system of private property rights that expropriated Indigenous land seized during the conflict. Two centuries later, the association between King Philip’s War and European suppression of Indigenous resistance inspired the region’s earliest preservationists who mobilized to save those structures—domestic dwellings in particular—affiliated with the advent of Euro-American sovereignty and persistence in the region. This fusion of the settler logics of property ownership and sovereignty with the preservation of historic structures undergirded the modern historic preservation movement and informed its trajectory into the twentieth century and eventual collision with the urban crisis.

Modern property law in the United States emerged from the settler colonial appropriation of Indigenous lands. As Brenna Bhandar argues, property legislation evolved

\(^{15}\) Christine M. DeLucia, *Memory Lands: King Philip’s War and the Place of Violence in the Northeast* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 1.
by attaching value to those capable of appropriation. Indigenous people, viewed by European settlers in the seventeenth century as “outside history, lacking the requisite cultural practices, habits of thought, and economic organization to be considered as sovereign, rational economic subjects,” did not possess the necessary qualifications to own and manage property. For white settlers to view Indigenous people as “outside history” required the recognition and subsequent delegitimization of existing Indigenous modes of relationship to place while “solidifying a colonial sovereignty unmoored from them.” Private property thus constituted what Manu Karuka describes as an act of “countersovereignty,” or what Walter Johnson considers a “counterrevolution,” that acknowledged the inherent illegitimacy of settler colonial land claims and worked to violently assert sovereignty over Indigenous peoples through a system of private property ownership, dispossession, and genocide.

In Springfield, William Pynchon instrumentalized the settler logics of property to expropriate Indigenous land from the region’s Indigenous inhabitants. In so doing, he created critical infrastructure that would transform Springfield into a key site of dispossession in the region and a nineteenth-century hub for the “organization, financing, and outfitting” of settler colonial conquest in the nineteenth century. Pynchon arrived at the Kwinitekw (or long) River—the present-day Connecticut River Valley—in 1636. Seeking to develop an English plantation at a strategic trading point on the Connecticut River, Pynchon inserted himself and his fellow English settlers into an environment long inhabited

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by the Agawam, a name these Indigenous peoples ascribed to the land they inhabited.\textsuperscript{20} Where Pynchon’s initial deed in 1636 recognized certain Agawam sovereign rights over land use, his engagement in the fur trade over the next decade generated highly volatile economic conditions for Indigenous traders.\textsuperscript{21} To resolve trading debts, Agawam people entered into land sales and foreclosures with Pynchon and his European counterparts that on paper granted concessions to Indigenous land rights and placemaking practices, but in practice favored exclusive European property ownership.\textsuperscript{22} This process of debt and European foreclosure accelerated the seizure of Indigenous land to pay off debts.\textsuperscript{23} For example, Samuel Marshfield, a European settler and trader alongside Pynchon, extracted all Indigenous-held land in Springfield in 1661 from leaders Cuttonis, Coe, Mattaquallant, Menis, Wallny, and Taqualloush who all were unable to resolve their debts with Marshfield with beaver pelt.\textsuperscript{24} By the eve of King Philip’s War, Pynchon’s plantation in Agawam destabilized Indigenous place claims in favor of a system of private property rights that prioritized European expropriation of Indigenous land.

King Philip’s War accelerated the dispossession of New England’s Indigenous people. As Christine DeLucia observes, the advent of King Philip’s War in 1675 was one of several conflicts in a region “fraught with borderland tensions and Indigenous efforts to maintain ties to ancestral spaces” where settlers solidified their claims over Indigenous land.

\textsuperscript{20} David M. Powers, “William Pynchon, the Agawam Indians, and the 1636 Deed for Springfield,” \textit{Historical Journal of Massachusetts} 45, no. 2 (Summer 2017), 145-147.
\textsuperscript{22} DeLucia, \textit{Memory Lands: King Philip’s War and the Place of Violence in the Northeast}, 210–17.
throughout the war. In western Massachusetts, the conflict devastated English settlements less insulated from Indigenous forces than towns further east like Boston. In 1675, Springfield residents weathered a sustained Indigenous attack, barricading themselves in the “stockade” or “fort” erected by John Pynchon, son of William Pynchon and colonel of the Valley’s militia stationed 21 miles upriver in Hadley during the attack. The attack killed four settlers and destroyed much of the city, a physical manifestation of the deep “psychological toll of seeing English worlds come undone” that forcefully reminded settlers “that they still dwelled in dynamic Native space.” While eastern colonial settlements easily rebuilt in the wake of the conflict, English settlements in the Connecticut River Valley “remained decimated or scattered” for years afterward, generating intense psychological turmoil in the region’s settlers that informed their collective approach to memorializing and preserving physical markers of the conflict in the nineteenth century.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, American preservationists discovered great utility in the vestiges of settler survivance and Indigenous “disappearance” that remained on the landscape to mobilize a historical consciousness supportive of a broader nation-building project. As Whitney Martinko argues, early preservationists defined nationalism “by histories of Euro-American colonization of North America” and mobilized a heritage infrastructure that “fashioned colonization as a process of civilization.” In this framework, preservation functioned as a “tool of colonization” as preservationists mobilized around sites associated with settler colonial sovereignty over Indigenous inhabitants. At the same time, these preservationists looked to sites understood to emblemize Indigenous

25 DeLucia, Memory Lands: King Philip’s War and the Place of Violence in the Northeast, 205.
27 DeLucia, Memory Lands: King Philip’s War and the Place of Violence in the Northeast, 220.
28 DeLucia, 220.
people’s gradual and “natural” disappearance from North America to reinforce narratives of Indigenous erasure.\textsuperscript{\text{30}}

Preservationists in the Connecticut River Valley played instrumental roles in formulating their movement’s commitments to settler colonialism as the nation’s founding narrative. One of the region’s earliest preservation campaigns involved efforts to save John Pynchon’s “fort,” a key site of settler survivance during King Philip’s War. The building’s proposed demolition in 1831 ignited a fierce publicity campaign to save the structure. Supporters of the building’s preservation insisted that the fort’s material presence in Springfield’s changing urban landscape would tether contemporary residents to the city’s settler colonial past. “That the only remaining structure reared by the first settlers should be demolished at once,” lamented preservationists, “seems like sacrilege, and almost enough to call back from the graves the slumbering dead.” Preservationists insisted the building’s significance would reinforce a narrative of settler survivance against the “base degenerate race” of the region’s Indigenous inhabitants. The fort was a crucial “monument” to “keep in remembrance everything that is glorious and praiseworthy” and derive “high moral instruction” for the industrializing city.\textsuperscript{\text{31}} However, the fort was ultimately demolished in 1831 and replaced with a commercial storefront.

Despite its destruction, Pynchon’s “fort” continued to fuel a preservationist ethos well into the nineteenth century and unite residents of Springfield behind a common identity rooted in settler colonialism. Just two years after the building’s demolition, the Hampden Mechanics Association commissioned the creation of two chairs from the home’s oak timbers, one of which they donated to the American Antiquarian Society who later regifted it

\begin{footnotes}
\item[\text{30}] Martinko, 16.
\item[\text{31}] “The Old Fort Demolished!” \textit{Springfield Republican}, August 3, 1831.
\end{footnotes}
to the Connecticut Valley Historical Society. Both chairs featured a print of the fort on its top rail with a back of “eagle’s legs grasping spears for support.” In 1871, the building acquired a permanent place in the city’s official seal. Beyond these material efforts to preserve the building, Pynchon’s fort played a central role in civilizational and historical narratives about the city’s origins, most prominently in 1886 during the city’s 250th anniversary of English settlement. In May of that year, residents celebrated the historic occasion by attending an elaborate parade that presented a linear, progressive narrative of the city’s settler colonial origins through a series of lavish parade floats. Amid the parade’s early displays came a scale replica of Pynchon’s fort complete with “Three Puritans” who “strolled continually through the garden armed with blunderbusses.” Despite misgivings that the replica fort “had the disadvantage of looking too new,” the float reaffirmed the fort’s historic role as a “place of refuge from the Indians,” cementing associations between the city’s settler colonial past and its contemporary present.

Sites associated with the Connecticut River Valley’s Indigenous inhabitants likewise motivated early preservation campaigns. So-called “Indian forts,” remnants of seventeenth century fortifications constructed during moments of intertribal conflict, remained scattered throughout the region and attracted the attention of early preservationists. Just one decade after the failed campaign to save Pynchon’s “fort,” Chester Osborn, a local farmer,

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32 Harry Andrew Wright, The Story of Western Massachusetts (New York, NY: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1949), 248; Mary Robinson Reynolds, “Recollections of Thirty Years of Service,” Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 5, no. 1 (January 1947), 18; the Connecticut Valley Historical Society (today the Springfield Museums) has incomplete donor information and currently maintains no record of the chair’s accession or deaccession. A fire in the museum’s storage area in the 1950s may have destroyed the chair as an inventory of the museum’s collections did not exist at that time.


34 “An Ordinance to Establish a City Seal,” Springfield Republican, January 27, 1868.


36 “The Old Fort Goes on a Holiday Parade,” Springfield Republican, May 1, 1886.

purchased the “Indian fort” on Long Hill in Springfield that dated to Pynchon’s negotiations with local Indigenous tribes. Osborn took “much interest” in the fort's history and identification of “Indian landmarks,” renaming the site “Fort Pleasant.” In 1894, Philip Kilroy, a doctor, announced his intent to redevelop the site, inaugurating an archaeological dig sponsored by the American Association for the Advancement of Science with professional assistance from anthropologists F.W. Putnam and Frank Hamilton Cushing from Harvard University’s Peabody Museum and the Bureau of American Ethnology, respectively. The dig unearthed pestles, mortars, pots, bowls, and the posts that supported the fort, all determined to be of the “crudest sort” and indicative of work from a “later generation” of Indigenous residents, “one which from lack of experience, due to long use of European utensils, had lost the knack and skill of their fathers.” Putnam and Cushing confirmed their valuation of the site’s “crude” character after unearthing the fort’s “burial ground” where a quarter of the skulls “had an extra suture at the base of the back,” a feature “seldom found in white men, though often in monkeys and suggests a low order of intelligence.”

These “discoveries” and the attendant analyses peddled by preservationists and anthropologists like Osborn, Putnam, and Cushing positioned “Indian forts” as evidentiary records justifying settler assertions of sovereignty over the region’s Indigenous inhabitants. That Putnam and Cushing found the site’s archaeological record dismaying supported widespread claims of a civilizational break between an ancient and long-vanished “enlightened” people that occupied North America and the region’s contemporary

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38 Wright, *The Story of Western Massachusetts*, 279.
Indigenous inhabitants.\textsuperscript{41} Moreover, as Margaret Bruchac notes, these early preservationists interpreted forts as the extent of Indigenous settlement in the region, providing a “convenient tool of erasure” when preservationists equated “the destruction of an Indian fort with the destruction of an entire village, and the disappearance of an entire tribe.”\textsuperscript{42} The excavation and subsequent interpretation of Springfield’s “Indian fort” as a crude relic to a “sordid, squalid little band, scarcely better than the beasts of the forest” reinforced a narrative of disappearance where the region’s Indigenous people had “passed out of the picture forever.”\textsuperscript{43} Like Pynchon’s “fort,” these early preservation campaigns linked regional historical narratives and national identity to settler survival and persistence over Indigenous disappearance.

Sites of settler survivance continued to invigorate the preservation movement into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In Deerfield, Massachusetts, a small town situated on the Connecticut River roughly 35 miles north of Springfield, preservationists launched a national campaign to save the “garrison house” of John Sheldon from demolition in 1848.\textsuperscript{44} Like Pynchon’s fort in Springfield, the Sheldon home was the site of a raid by Indigenous and French forces, one of many in the region in the aftermath of King Philip’s War. Captives during the 1704 conflict barricaded themselves in the home of Sheldon, a selectman and deacon in Deerfield, while the surrounding houses burned to the ground.\textsuperscript{45} When the violence subsided, the home took on new significance as a site of settler survivance, a key association that preservationists attempted to draw from in 1848. Just one

\textsuperscript{43} Wright, \textit{The Story of Western Massachusetts}, 285.
\textsuperscript{45} Michael C. Batinski, \textit{Pastkeepers in a Small Place: Five Centuries in Deerfield, Massachusetts} (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 31–33.
year prior, the owner of the home proposed its demolition, sparking a campaign to save the house led by Unitarian minister Samuel Willard. In a national broadside, Willard argued that as a “memorial of what was experienced by our infant settlements” the house constituted “common property” beyond the strictures of the private market and retained value in its ability to reinforce nationalism rooted in settler colonialism.46

Despite Willard’s appeals, the home was demolished in 1848 while the home’s front door with its scarred hatchet marks preservationists pulled from the debris. The home’s loss motivated the region’s next generation of preservationists to protect extant remnants of the valley’s settler colonial origins. Led by George Sheldon, a descendent of John Sheldon, preservationists in Deerfield formed the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association in 1870, an organization Sheldon envisioned as a regional hub for memorialization and historic preservation.47 At the center of his association’s growing collections, Sheldon situated the lone surviving artifact from his ancestor’s home: the weathered front door complete with a gaping hole marking the violence of the 1704 raid. Sheldon placed the door in the “Indian Room,” an exhibit hall in the association’s Memorial Building and only area of Indigenous representation.48 From its central position, the “Old Indian House Door” inspired visitors that held it as a “sacred memorial,” its marred surface “baptized in blood” viewed by “thousands and tens of thousands through coming centuries.”49 While preservationists failed to save the entirety of Sheldon’s home, their use of the “Old Indian House Door” continued to link preservation with settler colonialism in the Connecticut River Valley.50

46 “To All Who Feel an Interest in the Antiquities of New-England,” broadside, Deerfield, MA, December 15, 1847.
47 Batinski, Pastkeepers in a Small Place: Five Centuries in Deerfield, Massachusetts, 133.
48 DeLucia, Memory Lands: King Philip’s War and the Place of Violence in the Northeast, 242.
49 J. Arms Sheldon, John Sheldon and the Old Indian Homestead (Greenfield, MA: T. Morley & Son, 1911), 12–13.
50 The door remains on display today in Memorial Hall and in the last two decades has been subject to powerful Indigenous efforts to reinterpret the door and other artifacts of the “Indian Room,” see Sarah Schweitzer, “A Language Change: Objections to Some Blunt Landmarks from 1704 Indian Raid Lead to
Just down the Connecticut River in Hadley, James Lincoln Huntington was developing his own preservationist consciousness visiting his family’s ancestral home, Forty Acres. Situated on the eastern bank of the Connecticut River, Forty Acres dated to 1752 when Huntington’s ancestor, Moses Porter, amassed hundreds of acres of farmland near former communal meadowland allotted by Hadley’s town proprietors in the 1660s known as “Forty Acres and its skirts.” Huntington first visited the house in 1882, just twelve years after the formation of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association. No longer the vast productive farm of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, successive generations of the Huntington family used Forty Acres as a summer home, renaming the site “Elm Valley” to indicate the home’s romantic retreat from agricultural labor. A doctor practicing medicine in Boston, Huntington returned annually beginning in 1918 to “wander through the deserted rooms marveling at the beauty of the place in spite of dust-covered chairs and tables.” Huntington established the house as a summer home for his aging mother until her death in 1926, an event that accelerated the home’s transition into one of the region’s first historic house museums alongside contemporaries like Sheldon in Deerfield and the Amherst Historical Society’s acquisition of the 1744 Strong House in Amherst for use as a museum one decade earlier.

Like Deerfield, Hadley residents built their community’s identity around a sense of settler embattlement against Indigenous violence, an identity Huntington and his family drew

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from to inform their own ideas about Forty Acres. Since the late eighteenth century, Hadley residents circulated a local legend that narrated the town’s salvation from an Indigenous raid during King Philip’s War. Vulnerable at a church service to a brewing Indigenous attack, so the legend went, an elderly man dressed in old English clothing appeared to warn the townspeople of the Indigenous forces and drive them away before vanishing. Unbeknownst to Hadley residents at the time, this “Angel of Hadley” was William Goffe, a political exile on the run from English authorities after condemning English King Charles to death in 1649. Despite little evidence of an Indigenous attack on Hadley, the legend gained wide traction, finding its way into romantic accounts of Puritan life written and circulated by James Fenimore Cooper in 1829 and Nathaniel Hawthorne in 1835.54 While later historians deemed the legend dubious, it continued to inform a historical consciousness invested in narratives of settler survival against Indigenous violence.

While not associated with a specific act of settler survivance, Huntington drew from Hadley’s sense of embattlement to articulate Forty Acres’ significance. Throughout the interwar period, Huntington especially underscored the home’s supposed unique status as “the first house to be built outside the Hadley stockade.”55 The “stockade” or “palisades” were wooden fortifications lining the outer edges of Hadley’s early home lots to protect the town’s first European settlers from Indigenous attacks. While the stockade had long been removed before Forty Acres’ construction in 1752, Huntington cemented this association with his family’s ability to stake a claim on land expropriated from Indigenous inhabitants and rendered safe for white settlement through acts of extraordinary violence like King

Philip’s War. Other narrative points in Huntington’s interpretation underscored the home’s position on Hadley’s supposed frontier, emphasizing the enduring threat of Indigenous violence curtailed by the house’s architecture. At the juncture of two additions in the home’s attic, visitors to the house in 1923 could see what Huntington referred to as “a secret passage used many years ago for escape from the Indians.” An interior smokehouse on the second floor kept smoked meats “beyond the reach of prowling Indians,” ensuring that residents at Forty Acres could withstand any threats posed by Indigenous forces.

Huntington likewise turned to narratives that naturalized Indigenous servitude at the site to elaborate on the home’s significance. A popular family legend Huntington articulated included his widowed ancestor Elizabeth Porter learning of the death of her husband, Moses, in the Seven Years War by way of his “Indian body servant” passing his sword through a window of the home. Huntington and his family romanticized other traces of Indigenous people at the home and interpreted Indigenous artifacts at Forty Acres as evidence that relegated Indigenous people to the past. Before Huntington conceived of Forty Acres as a house museum his grandfather, Frederic Dan Huntington, already transformed a second-floor room into a makeshift “museum” where he “displayed many Indian relics…and other antiquities.” Frederic’s “museum” received a steady supply of objects as the family collected “Indian relics from our own ground” after the “plough would

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57 James Lincoln Huntington scrapbook, entry from Carl Bachman, June 20, 1923, Porter-Phelps-Huntington Family Papers, Special Collections and University Archives (hereafter SCUA), University of Massachusetts Amherst, MA.
58 “Heroes of yesteryear ventured forth from this homestead to build a nation—preach the gospel—and to heal the sick,” pamphlet from Porter-Phelps-Huntington Foundation, 1957, Porter-Phelps-Huntington Family Papers, SCUA, University of Massachusetts Amherst, MA.
60 D. Sessions, “Dr. James Lincoln Huntington’s 1960 Tour Through the Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum altered June 1971,” Porter-Phelps-Huntington Foundation, SCUA.
turn up some curious implement that had been used by aboriginal warriors or farmers in the meadows west of the house.” Frederic took great pleasure in exhibiting to visitors at the house “the arrow and spear-heads we had found, the mortar and pestle for grinding corn, and the primitive bowl.”61 Through these romantic legends and “primitive” objects, Huntington and his family fashioned Forty Acres into a historic site that presented a compelling argument for settler survival and Indigenous disappearance from the region.

Such narrative points remained compelling to New England’s burgeoning historic preservation movement and found their way into late-twentieth century narratives about the site’s historic significance. As early as 1921, regional preservation and historical organizations, including the Walpole Society, the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, and the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, stopped at Forty Acres on their own “pilgrimage trips.”62 By 1959, for Hadley’s Tercentennial, visitors could themselves be held “captive” and taken on a “forced march” to Forty Acres inspired by captives taken during Deerfield’s conflict in 1704.63 These organizations valued Forty Acres for its ability to convey settler “life in the colonial period” through a wide array of intact collections.

Huntington and his contemporaries exclusively fixated on property owners in these historic narratives, overlooking the variety of domestic and enslaved workers at these historic sites. When Huntington formally established Forty Acres as a historic house museum in 1949, he entrenched the home’s association with settler survivance, noting in early promotional materials that his ancestor Moses Porter “felt it was safe to erect the first substantial mansion

62 “A Walpole Society Pilgrimage: The Fall Meeting at Worcester, Petersham, and Greenfield, Massachusetts,” (Bston, MA: Blaney and Dow, 1921);
63 “Captive Tourists’ Taken On Trip Through Valley,” June 19, 1959, Porter-Phelps-Huntington Family Papers, SCUA, University of Massachusetts Amherst, MA.
north of what had been the stockaded town” in 1752.\textsuperscript{64} In 1972, Forty Acres’ designation to
the National Register of Historic Places cemented this line of reasoning as state historical
commission staff listed the home as an important regional remnant of “early settlement” and
explicitly attributed the home’s significance to its status as the “first house constructed
outside the stockaded town of Hadley.”\textsuperscript{65} This generation of early Americanists and colonial revival proponents—and their insistence on studying property owners—likewise guided
historical scholarship well into the late twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries.\textsuperscript{66}

In transforming his home into one of the region’s earliest historic house museums,
Huntington positioned himself at the forefront of a colonial revival movement that fueled a
heritage infrastructure committed to settler colonialism. In 1939, valley residents adopted a
new marketing moniker for the region, the “Pioneer Valley,” to generate tourism. Led by the
newly formed Pioneer Valley Association (PVA), the group championed the region’s first
generation of white settlers as “River Gods,” a series of politically influential “leaders of such
unusual strength and ability” forged from “the stress of the conflict with the French and
Indians.”\textsuperscript{67} In their efforts to lure prospective tourists to the region, the PVA transformed
sites like Forty Acres into romantic tourist symbols of a “new land to explore” and conquer
like settler colonists centuries prior.\textsuperscript{68} As Christine DeLucia notes, the PVA’s branding of the

\textsuperscript{64} “The Porter-Phelps-Huntington House,” Award of Merit from the American Association of State and Local History, 1955, Massachusetts Cultural Resource Inventory System Record Page for Porter-Phelps-Huntington House.


\textsuperscript{67} Elisabeth Shoemaker, \textit{River Gods: Their Story in Pioneer Valley, Massachusetts} (Northampton, MA: Pioneer Valley Association, 1941), 1.

\textsuperscript{68} “South and Mid-West Respond to Allure of Scenic Pioneer Valley,” \textit{Springfield Union}, July 30, 1939.
region as the “Pioneer” Valley “demonstrated how Native presence and history…were overrun by hardy Anglo-American settlement,” the “first true settlers” of the region.⁶⁹

The region’s name change followed a physical reorganization of the built environment, fueled by Huntington’s contemporaries who looked to historic preservation and historic houses as valuable “cultural commodities” in the postwar period.⁷⁰ Most prominently, Henry and Helen Flynt began purchasing and restoring historic homes in Deerfield as early as 1942, including the Josiah Dwight house in Springfield, one of the city’s last eighteenth-century structures which Flynt moved and reassembled on Deerfield’s Main Street in 1950.⁷¹ Flynt drew a straight line between the region’s settler colonial past and the new international threats posed by communism, reinterpreting the 1704 raid in Deerfield to inspire contemporary Americans to “hold strong against the new red threat.”⁷² Deerfield, Flynt argued, “heard the beat of the tom-tom two-and-a-half centuries ago, and met the challenge as we are meeting it in Korea today, with the lives of brave young men and women,” an analysis that mobilized the town’s settler colonial history against “the siren song of collectivism.”⁷³ Through these projects, preservationists like Flynt and Huntington reaffirmed their movement’s commitments to settler colonialism while recycling the region’s settler colonial past to address postwar social and political anxieties.

When Henry Flynt first stumbled upon the Dwight house in Springfield, he found it in a condition shared by many of the city’s historic homes: dilapidated and stretched to its

⁶⁹ DeLucia, Memory Lands: King Philip’s War and the Place of Violence in the Northeast, 264.
⁷⁰ Miller, Entangled Lives: Labor, Livelihood and Landscapes of Change in Rural Massachusetts, 255.
physical limits as an overcrowded rooming house occupied by Black waiters, maids, and laborers recently arrived from the South. Flynt’s choice to extract the Dwight house from Springfield’s urban landscape revealed that preservationists already harbored deep anxieties about the postwar developments transforming urban racial and social demography. In 1950, those developments did not yet portend a crisis, with Springfield’s manufacturing base still largely intact, but by the late 1960s industrial cities like Springfield seemed locked in an unending cycle of poverty and destruction. Whereas Flynt chose to remove the Dwight house from this brewing urban crisis, many preservationists took to adapting their movement to alleviate that crisis and protect historic structures in situ. But in the 1960s, preservationists did not cut their ideas about preservation and placemaking from whole cloth; they tapped a movement centuries in the making, one with deep commitments to settler colonialism and the settler logics of property ownership. In the context of the urban crisis, preservationists breathed new ideological life into property ownership with their culture of property at the same time that mainstream policymakers and city leaders sought to reverse the destructive “culture of poverty.”

A Culture of Property for the “City of Homes”

Preservationists in the 1970s found ready allies in Springfield’s city hall. Bolstered by their movement’s long entanglement with settler colonialism, preservationists in Springfield benefited from the city’s nineteenth-century identity as the “City of Homes” and a twentieth-century racial liberal political tradition that looked to property ownership as a

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marker of civic belonging. When combined, these ideas around property ownership made preservation a desirable and popular approach for the city’s urban crisis. Like many cities in the mid-twentieth century, Springfield’s industrial base eroded as some of the leading manufacturers shuttered or relocated in search of cheaper labor and less regulatory oversight. City leaders looked to preservation as one tool to salvage the city’s industrial heritage.

Beginning in 1964, efforts to transform the Springfield Armory into a National Park Service unit manifested this postindustrial vision. An industrial landmark, the Armory’s origins dated to 1777 when George Washington selected Springfield as the site to make and store ammunitions for the Continental Army. The outbreak of the Civil War and Confederate seizure of the federal arsenal in Harpers Ferry in 1861 catapulted the Armory into national prominence as the government’s only federal armory and primary supplier of ammunitions. At its wartime peak, the Armory employed nearly 3,000 workers—one quarter of Springfield’s working men. The settler colonial conquest of the American West, imperial interventions in the Pacific Rim, and wartime mobilizations of the twentieth century consistently expanded the Armory’s production and workforce: at its peak during World War II, the Armory employed nearly 14,500 men. Like other industries in the Connecticut Valley, the Armory experienced a precipitous postwar decline, its workforce dwindling to 2,275 employees when Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara announced the Armory’s closure in 1964, a development that spurred city leaders to embrace the Armory’s preservation. Preservationists thus brought their culture of property to a context in which

76 Antwain K. Hunter, “‘Patriots,’ ‘Cowards,’ and ‘Men Disloyal at Heart’: Labor and Politics at the Springfield Armory, 1861-1865,” *Journal of Military History* 84, no. 1 (January 2020), 55.
77 Kaufman, *Conflicting Goals for a National Park: The Historic Arsenal at Springfield, 1968-2008*, 12; for further information about the Armory’s history see Guy McClain, Martin Kaufman, and Joseph Carvalho, eds.,
city officials were already turning to preservation to alleviate the city’s economic woes. But where city leaders looked to public and commercial buildings like the Armory, community preservationists concerned themselves with domestic structures, filling a preservation niche they believed city leaders overlooked in favor of downtown development.

In the nineteenth century, Springfield’s boosters and later Progressive-Era reformers linked homeownership to the city’s meteoric rise as an industrial hub in the Connecticut River Valley. Most prominently, boosters adopted the “City of Homes” to indicate Springfield’s alleged high rate of homeownership and to illustrate the character of the city’s residents as upstanding, morally virtuous, and thrifty. By the end of the Civil War, Springfield grew as a regional manufacturing powerhouse with the Armory fueling an industrial boom. The Armory profited from the violence of the Civil War and suppressions of Indigenous uprisings in the frontier West, manufacturing arms supplied to Union troops and the U.S. military. Other manufacturers benefitted from the settler colonial conquest of the American West that dictated imperial expansion in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Springfield functioned as a critical node in the suppression of Indigenous resistance in the West and imperial ambitions undertaken in the Pacific Rim. Manufacturers like the Wason Car company produced railroad cars that traversed the expanding network of western railroads and the Morgan Envelope Company landed government contracts for postal cards used in railroad freight exchanges. The Springfield Rifle, first developed at the Armory in 1873, served as the Army’s basic weapon during the Spanish-American War and


78 In 1891, the *Springfield Republican*, the local newspaper, attributed the “City of Homes” to Frederic R. Guernsey, a newspaper editor who used the phrase in a letter to the *Boston Herald*, see “City of Homes,” *The Springfield Republican*, November 17, 1891; “Our City of Homes: Clark W. Bryan’s Verses Read at Last Night’s Banquet,” *The Springfield Republican*, April 4, 1889; James Eaton Tower, *Springfield Present and Prospective: The City of Homes* (Springfield, MA: Pond & Campbell, 1905), 18.

79 Frisch, 117.
suppression of armed resistance in the Philippines thereafter. Taken together, settler and imperial conquest nourished the city’s industrial operations in the post-Civil War period to encompass over 250 manufacturing establishments, making Springfield one of the fastest growing cities in Massachusetts.80

New England’s rapid urbanization generated anxieties among urban reformers that linked the region’s agricultural and rural decline to a decline of character and morality more broadly. When industrialization and urbanization began to eclipse rural life in the nineteenth century, many contemporary observers worried about a subsequent loss of thrift and dignity in American character, feelings made more acute in places like Massachusetts that witnessed a massive “decline in manufacturing, commerce, and population” from agrarian towns and villages.81 Springfield’s boosters countered these observations by spinning urban homeownership as a transparent indicator of residents’ high moral character. As one account relayed in 1889, Springfield’s embrace of homeownership proved the “purity of the city” whose “moral quality…is of an unusually high grade, compared with the average city in New England.” Homeownership emulated the “spirit of the early Puritan pioneers,” strengthening the “appropriateness of the name, ‘City of Homes,’ in which Springfield has delighted.”82 By 1900, city boosters claimed a higher proportion of homeowners “than almost any other of the great cities of the land.”83 However, such claims did not represent Springfield residents’ material realities; only a minority of Springfield residents owned their own homes (32

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80 Frisch, 120.
percent) in 1900, but the “City of Homes” image nevertheless retained impressive political and social purchase for the city’s industrialists, boosters, and politicians. For community preservationists in the postwar period, Springfield’s identity as the “City of Homes” would inform their culture of property that they applied to the city’s urban crisis.

Progressive-Era housing reformers worked to bring these boosterish claims of high homeownership into greater alignment with reality, in the process situating the single-family, owner-occupied home as the site of productive, moral, and healthy citizenship. Housing reformers at the turn of the century discouraged common practices in immigrant and laboring people’s homes like lodging and piecework, repackaging the single-family home as a site that separated the nuclear family from the rest of the city and established the privacy of the family as a model for moral housing. In this way, increasing homeownership—and the way that families used their homes—fit squarely within a Progressive agenda for Americanizing recent immigrants and combatting social and moral problems reformers linked to immigrant and working people’s behavior and individual pathology. In Massachusetts, Progressive reformers turned to state authority to promote homeownership as a marker of urban citizenship. In 1911, housing reformers in Massachusetts succeeded in passing a bill to create the Homestead Commission, a state agency tasked with investigating housing conditions and making recommendations to increase the construction and sale of

84 “Real Estate in Springfield,” *The Springfield Republican*, May 14, 1895; U.S. Bureau of the Census, “Proprietorship of Homes,” Table 107, 1900, page 705. 1890 was the first year the Census Bureau collected data on one home “proprietorship.” The census distinguished between “owned” and “hired” (rented) homes; within the “owned” category, bureau agents further differentiated these numbers by noting whether a home was “free,” “unknown,” or “encumbered,” meaning some kind of mortgage or other restriction was applied to the deed. Census enumerators documented homeownership at the unit of the family and considered a house “owned” if the head of the family who lived in the home at the time of enumeration was also the legal owner.

single-family homes in the state.\textsuperscript{86} As community preservationists would argue in the 1960s, the Commission situated homeownership as the only pathway to becoming a “true American,” arguing that the failure to live in a single-family home produced “civic defects” that “strikes at the very life of good citizenship.”\textsuperscript{87}

These reformers turned to historic preservation as a critical tool to model productive citizenship, tapping into the region’s settler colonial heritage infrastructure. Already, reformers in the Connecticut Valley found great utility in the preservation and reuse of historic building fabric to cultivate “Yankee” values among a growing immigrant population. As Marla Miller observes in Deerfield in the 1870s, white women tapped into the ambivalence around urbanization and immigration shared by Springfield’s Progressive reformers and looked to the “colonial past to restore moral values, rehabilitate Anglo Saxon communal pride and cultural authority, and [revitalize] white middle-class economic life” through the preservation of colonial-era homes.\textsuperscript{88} These women aligned with prominent preservationists like William Sumner Appleton who “restored” the Paul Revere house in Boston’s North End in the 1910s to “Americanize” that neighborhood’s Italian newcomers.\textsuperscript{89} Appleton’s Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities later purchased the Asher Benjamin-designed Henry Alexander house in Springfield in 1939, one of the city’s oldest homes that dated to 1811, which reformers identified as a critical “symbol

\textsuperscript{88} Marla R. Miller and Anne Digan Lanning, “‘Common Parlors’: Women and the Recreation of Community Identity in Deerfield, Massachusetts, 1870-1920,” \textit{Gender and History} 6, no. 3 (November 1994), 436.
of the city” whose preservation would underscore the city’s identity as the “City of Homes” (Figure 1.1).90

**Figure 1.1: Alexander House.** Springfield’s twentieth-century housing reformers looked to historic homes like the Asher Benjamin-designed Alexander house as critical resources in promoting homeownership to contemporary residents. Source: Six Years of City Planning in Springfield, Massachusetts.

The Progressive impulse to promote homeownership dovetailed neatly with Springfield’s liberal political climate in the interwar period and beyond. Urban liberals took up the reforms championed by Progressive reformers, banding together under the New Deal into so-called “pro-growth coalitions” who crafted what Destin Jenkins describes as a “racial welfare state” that “afforded more benefits, protections, and access points to white

90 “Six Years of City Planning in Springfield, Massachusetts” (Springfield, MA: City Planning Board, 1930), 22; Christine Longiaru, "Linden Hall/Alexander House," Form B—Building Survey, October 9, 2003, Massachusetts Cultural Resource Inventory System.
Americans than nonwhites.”  

In other words, urban New Deal liberals expanded the role of the state in the lives of everyday Americans by creating a host of new “public” resources like parks and public housing while at the same time circumscribing access to those resources through race-based criteria. Pro-growth liberals embedded a commitment to property ownership within the core of these New Deal programs, exemplified by the creation of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) in 1934 that stabilized the real estate market and expanded access to home finance capital through racially and ethnically determined mortgage lending practices like redlining.  

Even the New Deal’s public housing initiatives stressed federally-funded housing projects as a waypoint on the path to homeownership by extending housing units to married couples and enforcing income caps to push tenants into the private housing market.  

Homeownership and private property drove the expansion of the liberal state in cities like Springfield and crystallized existing racial and sexual hierarchies within the racial welfare state.

Mobilizing through churches and civil rights organizations, Black residents of Springfield worked tirelessly to expand the bounds of the liberal state and pinpoint the limitations of liberal ideology. Springfield’s Black community originated in the city’s settler colonial roots; John Pynchon enslaved at least two Africans in the seventeenth century and the city’s enslaved population grew to around 40 by the mid-eighteenth century.  

Beginning after the abolition of slavery in Massachusetts in 1783, Springfield’s free Black community expanded throughout the nineteenth century to include a growing middle class defined by

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men like Primus Mason, a formerly enslaved man who built a small fortune as a real estate investor after the Civil War. As the city’s Black community grew, they mobilized through religious and cultural institutions, especially the Free Church, later renamed St. John’s Congregational Church, to press for the rights of full citizenship. St. John’s was a hotbed of activism and at one time included fiery abolitionist John Brown in its membership rolls, but its pastor in the twentieth century, William N. DeBerry, accelerated the church’s role in pressing the city’s white liberal coalition to incorporate the needs of the city’s Black community.

DeBerry arrived at St. John’s in 1899 and adapted the church to provide a range of social services that intersected with the city’s twentieth-century Black freedom struggle. DeBerry’s arrival coincided with several other Black southern migrants caught up in a mass internal migration in the decades before and after World War I. By 1918, Springfield’s Black population rose to nearly 2,000 with most Black residents settling in the city’s North End and Hill neighborhoods, having arrived from Georgia, Virginia, and North Carolina to find employment in the city’s burgeoning war industries. Like other Black migrants in northern urban centers, Springfield’s Black newcomers faced significant challenges to secure housing, jobs, and economic security, a situation exacerbated by the liberal state that DeBerry and other civil rights organizations sought to counter. At the head of St. John’s, DeBerry developed a home for working girls, an employment bureau, and hosted a night school, programs that paired well with the advocacy campaigns of the city’s local NAACP chapter established in 1915 to desegregate Springfield’s public facilities. In 1940, DeBerry issued a

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96 Kazini, 9.
scathing analysis of the New Deal’s failure to address racial inequality in the city, arguing that the decade of the 1930s virtually “restored the black man’s pre-war industrial status . . . to the ‘hewer of wood and drawer of water,’” a status DeBerry and other leaders of the city’s Black freedom struggle continued to resist into the postwar period.99

Despite the role of liberal programs in entrenching racial inequality, white urban liberals maintained a fundamental faith in racial liberalism to mediate issues of race and inequality. In the urban North, scholars have identified how racial liberalism developed from a set of political beliefs that championed the equality of all people and expressed faith in government intervention to solve social and political problems, yet viewed racism as an individual, psychological issue detached from broader structural and systemic forces.100 Amid a surge of activism from the interwar Black freedom struggle and anti-Black violence perpetrated by lynching and race riots, urban liberals interpreted white vigilante violence as an expression of individual lawlessness in need of psychological reform. When confronted by more assertive Black activists, white liberal policymakers sought to more readily address the demands of the Black freedom struggle for the rights of full citizenship, accelerating their embrace of individualist frameworks to combat prejudice.101 If “prejudice was a matter of irrational and false beliefs,” urban liberals believed, then “the scene of the crime was the heart.”102 In the postwar era, racial liberals mobilized these assumptions about individual prejudice into strategies to contain and manage white racism, even as state and federal policies continued to exacerbate urban racial inequality.

101 Miller, 202.
Springfield entered the postwar era as a nexus for national and international liberal intellectual thought. Most prominently, Springfield acquired international attention for the “Springfield Plan,” the liberal brainchild of superintendent John Granrud and Clyde Miller’s Institute for Propaganda Analysis—an organization mobilized in 1937 by social scientists to detect and analyze propaganda. Granrud, a native of Minnesota, held experience as superintendent of government schools in the Panama Canal Zone before attaining his PhD from Teachers College at Columbia University in 1925.\textsuperscript{103} When Granrud became superintendent of Springfield’s school system in 1933, he turned to Miller for support to build an intercultural curriculum program to combat individual prejudice in the city’s schoolchildren and adults. Alongside Miller, a professor at Columbia University, Granrud secured support for his experiment from the National Conference of Christians and Jews (NCCJ), an interfaith organization dedicated to combatting interreligious prejudice.\textsuperscript{104} With the NCCJ’s backing, Miller and Granrud began devising an ambitious new school curriculum to “eradicate blind and intolerant attitudes.”\textsuperscript{105}

Animating the Springfield Plan were racial liberal beliefs about intolerance and prejudice that liberal administrators like Granrud believed could be wiped away through individual, psychological appeals. Beginning in 1939, the “Springfield Plan” retooled the city’s classrooms to stress the “contributions” of diverse groups of Springfield residents to the city’s culture and hire more diverse staff to “accentuate personal worth and eliminate spurious judgements along racial and religious lines.”\textsuperscript{106} Granrud extended the Springfield Plan into the workplace as well, creating a series of adult education programs to teach

\begin{footnotes}
\item[103] Lauri Johnson, “‘One Community’s Total War Against Prejudice’: The Springfield Plan Revisited, Theory and Research in Social Education 34, no. 3 (July 2006), 305.
\item[104] Johnson, 304.
\item[106] Wise, 50.
\end{footnotes}
tolerance among the city’s adults. Through the implementation of the Springfield Plan, Granrud hoped to teach away prejudice through individual interventions that transcended “the boundaries of their own group and [overcame] the prejudices of the majority.”107 The Springfield Plan garnered wide acclaim in the postwar period as a liberal success story, with school administrators within and beyond the United States adapting the plan for their own districts including New York, Denver, Portland, Philadelphia, Kansas City, and Ontario, Canada.108 In 1945, Warner Brothers released a film promoting the plan, *It Happened In Springfield*, that the studio censored for its portrayals of interracial classrooms—to the dismay of Black activists with Springfield’s chapter of the NAACP.109 The rise of the Springfield Plan, and the erasure of Blackness from the plan’s public aura, epitomized the limits of liberal politics that focused exclusively on white attitudes towards race.

In 1950, Springfield again served as the proving ground for another liberal intervention. Just five years after the Springfield Plan made it to Hollywood, renowned Black psychologist Kenneth Clark traveled from New York to Springfield to measure the impacts of segregation on the city’s schoolchildren through his so-called “doll test.” In Springfield, a “New England city” Clark considered to have “a reputation for good race relations,” Clark tested 119 Black children with four dolls, two white and two Black.110 Over the course of his test, Clark asked the children to identify which dolls they would like to play with, which dolls were “nice,” “bad,” had a “nice color,” and the doll that “looks like you.”111 The results of Clark’s test demonstrated the impacts of racial prejudice on individual schoolchildren with

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109 Sokol, 21.
72 percent of the children picking the white doll to play with, 68 percent choosing the white doll as the “nice” doll, 71 percent identifying the Black dolls as “bad,” and 63 percent choosing the white doll as having a “nice color.” When the Supreme Court delivered its landmark ruling in Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, the court cited Clark’s Springfield study, homing in on Clark’s findings that confirmed the individual impact of racial prejudice by emphasizing how segregation created “a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone.”

Overlooking Clark’s structural critiques of segregation, Brown v. Board of Education cemented liberal conceptions of racial prejudice as an individual problem with Springfield’s Black schoolchildren serving as key evidence in the liberal dismantling of institutionalized segregation.

Springfield’s political leaders continued to embrace liberalism amid the city’s real and perceived decline in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Like other old, Northeastern cities, Springfield began experiencing the early pangs of the urban crisis in the mid-1950s. Most troubling to city leadership was the exodus of longtime white residents from Springfield to surrounding suburban towns and an influx of poorer, nonwhite residents. While Springfield’s population increased from 162,000 to 174,000 residents between 1950 and 1960, beginning in 1960 the city began a precipitous population decline accelerated by the closure of the Springfield Armory in 1968. Meanwhile, surrounding suburban towns like Longmeadow, East Longmeadow, and Wilbraham more than doubled their populations between 1950 and 1970. With populations nearly 100 percent white, the Massachusetts State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission characterized these towns as a

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112 Clark, Prejudice and Your Child, 44–45.
“white noose” strangling Springfield as the city’s Black and Latino populations increased from roughly three to eight percent of the total population.\textsuperscript{114} In this same period, the city’s internal racial geography shifted as developers transformed undeveloped land in outlying areas within the city’s boundaries into low-density, all-white neighborhoods like East Forest Park and Sixteen Acres. The city’s “core” neighborhoods, like the Old Hill and North End, transitioned into “ghettos” where Black and Puerto Rican migrants found themselves confined to some of the city’s most dilapidated and unsanitary housing.\textsuperscript{115}

Suburban growth was especially vexing to city leaders in states like Massachusetts. Unlike their counterparts in booming Sunbelt cities like Phoenix, Dallas, and Atlanta, city officials in Massachusetts could not chase the tax dollars of more affluent white residents through unrestricted annexation.\textsuperscript{116} Sunbelt states benefitted from state constitutions that enabled annexation and did not require a popular referendum to annex suburban towns, but Massachusetts’ state constitution favored suburban autonomy and since 1866 required double referendums in suburban towns and cities attempting annexation.\textsuperscript{117} As a result, town and city boundaries hardened into fixed positions by the 1870s in Massachusetts and earlier in Springfield in 1848 when Chicopee broke away from Springfield and incorporated as an independent town.\textsuperscript{118} The rigidity of Massachusetts town boundaries exacerbated the effects of white flight in Springfield by making it impossible to pursue lost tax revenue across town lines through annexation. Compounding white flight for Springfield was the city’s efforts to


\textsuperscript{115} “Housing Discrimination in the Springfield-Holyoke-Chicopee Metropolitan Area,” 27.


reassess property taxes to account for new construction in outlying neighborhoods. City assessors’ revaluation methods generated higher property taxes for homeowners, encouraging more affluent white residents to relocate to suburban towns with relatively lower property taxes. In 1961, the Massachusetts Supreme Court declared this revaluation procedure unenforceable, allowing over 19,000 homeowners in Springfield to file for tax abatements that dramatically eroded the city’s already dwindling tax base.119

Faced with population and tax revenue loss, city leaders devised strategies to attract white residents back to Springfield that ultimately accelerated the city’s spiral towards the urban crisis. Guided by an abiding faith in liberalism’s ability to stabilize urban property values through governmental intervention, a new generation of civic administrators led by Thomas J. O’Connor looked to the federal urban renewal program to boost the city’s economic woes. At 32 years old, O’Connor was the city’s youngest mayor with five years of experience as a liberal Democratic representative in the Massachusetts statehouse.120 When elected in 1959, O’Connor pursued an aggressive redevelopment agenda to reverse the city’s sinking fortunes, working with the city’s redevelopment authority to ensure that Interstate-91 crossed the Connecticut River to incorporate Springfield—the only 20-mile stretch of the roughly 300-mile interstate sited east of the Connecticut River.121 Along with the construction of Interstate-91, O’Connor inaugurated a transformative urban renewal project in the city’s North End that razed and cleared some 220 acres for redevelopment and construction of Interstate-91 and an ancillary artery, Interstate-291, that routed drivers to the Massachusetts turnpike.

120 Konig, 1.
These efforts to redevelop Springfield proved destructive and exacerbated the city’s brewing crisis. In the North End, urban renewal destroyed 2,100 housing units and 500 businesses, decreasing affordable housing options for many of the city’s low-income and nonwhite residents. As historians have long illustrated, urban renewal disproportionately affected communities of color, a result of decades of structural divestment from sound housing in nonwhite neighborhoods and planners’ tacit assumption that Black and nonwhite people constituted acceptable targets of state violence. Ostensibly cleared to provide better housing, nearly 60 percent of those displaced from the North End remained near the project area and continued to live in already-deteriorated housing now augmented by respiratory hazards introduced by the emissions of nearly 68,000 cars traveling along Interstate-91 every day. Urban renewal concretized the city’s racial geography, thrusting former residents of the North End into a racialized housing market that solidified housing segregation as Black and nonwhite residents sought housing in segregated neighborhoods like the Old Hill (Figure 1.2). Finally, where O’Connor and other redevelopment officials looked to the construction of interstate highways to make downtown more accessible to suburbanites, Interstate-91 only hastened and enabled white flight to surrounding suburban towns. To add insult to injury, Springfield’s stretch of Interstate-91 took twelve years to complete, the

122 O’Connell and Konig, 56.
only uncompleted stretch between New York City and the Canadian border until 1970 and an embarrassing reminder that the city “was still faltering.”

Figure 1.2: Displacement From Urban Renewal. Urban renewal projects in the North End thrust Black and nonwhite residents into the city’s racialized housing market, forcing many to remain in dilapidated housing in the North End or seek housing in segregated neighborhoods. Shown here are the neighborhoods displaced residents relocated to indicated by the arrows emanating from the hatched area in the lower lefthand corner of the map. Source: “Housing Discrimination in the Springfield-Holyoke-Chicopee Metropolitan Area,” 1966.

The state violence urban renewal directed at the city’s Black and nonwhite residents coincided with spectacular acts of police violence and assertive Black resistance, developments that accelerated Springfield’s perceived descent into social and political disorder. In 1965 the city became embroiled in a police scandal when two white patrolmen brutally arrested 17 Black men and one white woman at the Octagon Lounge in the city’s North End in July. The event triggered a wave of backlash from the city’s chapters of the

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127 O’Connell and Konig, 58.
Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the NAACP who underscored that the “brutal, unreasonable, unnecessary force” used by Springfield police officer was symptomatic of the structural obstacles Black residents faced to secure quality housing, jobs, and education. In telegrams to the International Union of Electrical Workers, CORE and NAACP members warned that failure to reprimand the officers involved could be “the trigger that may result in radical unrest to the degree that occurred in Harlem and Rochester” and again just one month later in Watts. Charles V. Ryan, the liberal successor to Mayor O’Connor, refused to fire the officers involved, preferring initiatives to “professionalize” and train the city’s police force in this crisis of legitimacy while conceding to a tense march down State Street overseen by Massachusetts National Guardsmen. Ultimately, Ryan’s response to the “Octagon Lounge incident” would accelerate this crisis in policing by increasing the Springfield Police Department’s discretion and authority and the likelihood of violent encounters between residents and the police.

The tipping point towards crisis came in 1964 when Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara announced that the Springfield Armory would close in 1968. At its height during World War II, the Armory employed over 14,000 people, a number that dwindled to 2,275 by 1964. While no longer at its industrial zenith, the Armory was still one of the last significant industrial employers in the city and third largest employer overall. The Armory’s closure came on the heels of several other major manufacturers in the city reducing their

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130 Higgins, 49.
workforces in search of cheaper labor in the South or beyond the United States. Between 1953 and McNamara’s announcement, Springfield residents were buffeted by news of manufacturing firms closing or reducing their workforces, including American Bosch, Westinghouse, Indian Motorcycle [sic], Buxton Hood, Van Norman Industries, the Springfield Thread Works, and the Fleming Foundry. Combined with white flight, the destruction wrought by urban renewal, and the growing demands of the city’s Black freedom struggle in the wake of police brutality, the Armory’s closure felt like the city was beginning to “fly apart.” For many, closing the Armory “broke the city's heart, its collective spirit,” inducing “psychological damage” that signaled “the end of Springfield as an industrial or manufacturing city.” When the Amory officially shuttered its doors in 1968, Springfield appeared on the brink of complete collapse.

In this moment of economic and social crisis, Mayor Ryan and other city officials fused historic preservation with their own liberal redevelopment politics to stabilize the turmoil sparked by the Armory’s closure. In 1968, the chamber of commerce mobilized Springfield’s nineteenth-century identity and officially changed the city’s nickname from the “Industrial Beehive” to the “City of Homes,” placing their faith in the city’s past to guide its future. Meanwhile, Springfield Technical Community College (STCC) and General Electric agreed to move into a portion of the Armory while Ryan haggled with the Department of Defense to leave behind the Benton Arms collection as the basis of a museums at the site. Ryan envisioned the Benton collection—a massive collection of historic munitions—as the

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135 Bill Malloy, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, November 30, 2020, interview in possession of the author.
136 Donald J. D’Amato, Springfield—350 Years: A Pictorial History (Norfolk, VA: The Donning Company, 1985), 144.
137 Forrant, Metal Fatigue: American Bosch and the Demise of Metalworking in the Connecticut River Valley, 165.
centerpiece of a heritage economy that would draw tourist dollars to the city.\textsuperscript{138} While Ryan succeeded in convincing the Department of Defense to leave the collection behind, the explosive uprisings in segregated Black communities in 1967 and again after Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination in 1968 thwarted Ryan’s museum plans. To Ryan’s dismay, museum president Larry Lewis relayed in 1970 that the museum was operating at a staggering deficit due to “wide-spread public feelings about guns in the wake of the events of the past few years.”\textsuperscript{139} As the nation’s descent into urban crisis stalled the Armory’s new museum, General Electric pulled out of its agreement to use the Armory’s buildings for industrial production. Desperate, city officials turned to the National Park Service (NPS) to fill the void.\textsuperscript{140}

Springfield officials’ embrace of the NPS in 1970 reflected how recent changes in federal historic preservation policy better aligned the agency with urban liberal redevelopment politics. Most significantly, the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) in 1966 increased the scope and scale of the agency’s activities by creating the National Register of Historic Places, state historic preservation offices, and introducing a new federal review process overseen by the agency when designated sites were threatened by federally-funded projects.\textsuperscript{141} While most scholars consider the act in relative isolation, the NHPA is best understood within a sweeping pantheon of liberal legislation enacted by a Congress increasingly preoccupied with the federal government’s role in addressing urban social and political problems.\textsuperscript{142} When the 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress passed the NHPA in 1966, it came

\textsuperscript{139} Larry Lewis, cited in Kaufman, 52.
\textsuperscript{140} Kaufman, 51.
on the heels of several legislative milestones from the Johnson administration, including legislation that created the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Public Works and Economic Development Act, and the landmark Voting Rights Act of 1965.\textsuperscript{143}

Taken together, the NHPA’s inclusion in this legislative docket reflected how liberal policymakers believed that preservation could play a role in addressing the symptoms of the urban crisis alongside other governmental initiatives to combat poverty and decline.

The NHPA expanded the scope of the NPS and pushed it more explicitly into urban redevelopment politics. In states like Massachusetts where the urban crisis became most protracted, the NPS coordinated the creation of new “partnership parks” that divided park administration between the NPS and private entities to induce urban economic revitalization. Massachusetts led the way in this shift in NPS administrative practices. In 1970 and again in 1974, Massachusetts state senators submitted legislation to create two of the nation’s first partnership parks: Springfield Armory National Historical Park and Boston National Historical Park.\textsuperscript{144} By 1978, Lowell National Historical Park joined the ranks of the state’s partnership parks. In turn, governor Michael Dukakis inaugurated his heritage state parks program to imitate the NPS’s partnership parks model and mobilize industrial heritage tourism to revive the state’s flagging economy.\textsuperscript{145} As Seth Bruggeman observes, the NPS framed these “partnerships” as a “legal relationship between the NPS and a private organization contrived to generate profit” that borrowed from the logics of liberal “postwar

\textsuperscript{145}Kaufman, Conflicting Goals for a National Park: The Historic Arsenal at Springfield, 1968-2008, 90.
urban renewal policy that imagined national parks as tools for changing landscapes.” In this way, city officials’ concerted efforts to create a national park at Springfield’s Armory reflected an abiding faith in history’s fusion with liberal redevelopment agendas to usher Springfield into an era of postindustrial prosperity.

Yet where city officials lavished attention on the Armory, many of the city’s earliest preservationists worried that Springfield’s residential neighborhoods went unnoticed as they slipped into further decline. While both the city’s political leaders and community preservationists believed in preservation’s capacities to address the urban crisis, they diverged on whether commercial or residential sites required the most immediate attention. Springfield’s city officials argued that a “vital and resurgent downtown” would “spawn neighborhood revitalization” and that initiatives to preserve historic commercial and industrial structures like the Armory should take precedent. Community preservationists believed the opposite. Preservationists prioritized the preservation of residential homes to reverse the city’s decline, a key component of their culture of property. Jim Boone, a school social worker who would become the president of the Springfield Preservation Trust, observed that “Houses are the easiest thing to become passionate about that then spreads out into the larger community.” Bob McCarroll, the city’s first preservation planner hired in 1973, insisted that Springfield’s preservation movement “didn't come out of the business community,” but rather from “homeowners” closest to the intense residential decline spurred by the urban crisis. On a more practical level, community preservationists

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148 Jim Boone, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, October 26, 2020, interview in possession of the author.
149 Bob McCarroll, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, October 4, 2020, interview in possession of the author.
underscored that failure to restore the “residential tax base” would undercut all efforts to revitalize downtown.\textsuperscript{150} While not in combative opposition, city officials and community preservationists proceeded through the 1970s on parallel tracks, converging only in their belief that preservation could reverse urban decline.

By situating property ownership as a key driver in Springfield’s rebirth, community preservationists offered a solution legible to the city’s liberal political establishment and mainstream racial liberal thought. This initial generation of preservationists maintained a deep faith in residential property ownership to address the mounting “culture of poverty” growing more entrenched in the city’s neighborhoods. The “culture of poverty” thesis, encapsulated in the infamous Moynihan report, was intensely concerned with domestic space and relations. Published in 1965 amid the mounting urban crisis, the report speculated that “at the center of the tangle of pathology” miring American cities in poverty “is the weakness of the family structure.”\textsuperscript{151} Black urbanites, the report continued, were locked in a “matriarchal family structure” that produced Black children who “flounder and fail” while generating intense feelings of “alienation,” an alarming conclusion policymakers used to explain the dramatic uprisings in the late 1960s.\textsuperscript{152} The solution required emulating a traditional, “stable” white family structure, what the report’s authors believed “remains a powerful agency not only for transmitting property from one generation to the next, but also for transmitting no less valuable contracts with the world of education and work.” Without

\textsuperscript{150} D’Amato, \textit{Springfield—350 Years: A Pictorial History}, 128.
situating property ownership at the center of a liberal agenda, the “tangle of pathology” would only tighten and strangle American cities.¹⁵³

The first generation of community preservationists in Springfield mobilized their culture of property as a response to the “culture of poverty” in line with racial liberal thought. A variety of civic organizations and private redevelopment agencies committed to promoting residential homeownership in Springfield undergirded preservationists’ formulation of their “culture of property.” Eleanor Dashevsky’s trajectory through Springfield’s coalition of housing organizations and into the ranks of community preservation organizations reflects the path many early preservationists wore through the city’s racial liberal political scene as they embraced a “culture of property.” Born in Springfield in 1927, Dashevsky grew up in suburban Longmeadow before attending American International College in Springfield. When Dashevsky graduated with a bachelor’s degree in history in 1966, she went to work as an assistant developer for the Micah Corporation.¹⁵⁴ “Born in a climate of social unrest” in Springfield in 1965, Micah bought, renovated, and sold dilapidated housing to low-income residents. As an assistant development director, Dashevsky guided the organization’s acquisition of homes throughout Springfield’s impoverished neighborhoods and coordinated their sale or rental to low-income, nonwhite residents. Racial liberalism fundamentally structured Micah’s analysis of the urban crisis: the organization championed homeownership as the pathway to productive citizenship and relied on “homeowner counseling” to “train” low-income residents into emulating white domestic and familial relations as new homeowners.¹⁵⁵ This liberal focus on

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“counseling lent itself to intrusive inquiries into the suitability of families on welfare as homeowners” that downplayed the structural barriers to nonwhite homeownership and located the material conditions of poor neighborhoods in the “tangle of pathology” (Figure 1.3).156

Figure 1.3: Micah Advertisement. In this 1969 advertisement, Micah squarely positions the urban crisis as a crisis of homeownership. To “take the hell out of here” required pushing renters into the private housing market and then counseling them to emulate white domestic relationships with their homes, a core tenet of racial liberalism that underscored homeownership as the only pathway to productive citizenship. Source: Springfield Republican, January 19, 1969.

From her position in Micah, Dashevsky quickly became immersed in a vast web of civic organizations that situated homeownership as central to Springfield’s recovery from the urban crisis. Dashevsky brushed elbows with members of the Jaycees, a local social organization sponsored by the Joint Civic Agencies (JCA), a loose federation of civic

agencies partially funded by city hall to guide Springfield’s economic recovery. The JCA financed and incorporated Better Homes for Springfield, Inc., a nonprofit organization that worked closely with Micah to promote low-income homeownership and in turn alleviate the pressing social problems of “education, broken families, health, discrimination, and employment.”

Like Dashevsky, the JCA and Jaycees filled their ranks with racial liberals who lived in Longmeadow and commuted to various white-collar jobs in downtown Springfield. Among the Jaycees’ membership was attorney Eugene Berman and architect David Spencer. Dashevsky worked closely with Spencer in 1972 to coordinate the sale of a vacant townhouse on Mattoon Street to the Landmark Preservation Group, a private restoration corporation in which Spencer was a founding partner. The sale marked a radical departure from Micah’s mission to exclusively sell real estate to low-income families; Spencer intended to renovate the home into a “private townhouse” or “luxury downtown apartments.”

More importantly, that Dashevsky sat across the table from Spencer orchestrating the sale of a dilapidated townhouse to a restoration group indicated her

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160 “Mattoon St. Townhouse Sold to Landmark Group.”
embrace of historic preservation to combat the urban crisis—with the noticeable omission of low-income and nonwhite tenants from that very process (Figure 1.4).

Figure 1.4: Eleanor Dashevsky and the Landmark Preservation Group. The Springfield Republican captured the moment at which Eleanor Dashevsky (right) transferred ownership of a dilapidated townhouse on Mattoon Street to David Spencer (left), a founding member of the Landmark Preservation Group who intended to preserve the building as a luxury housing development. Source: Springfield Republican, February 18, 1972.

Just one year earlier, Dashevsky, Berman, and Spencer, along with a suburban cohort of property owners from Longmeadow, mobilized as the Mattoon Street Historic Preservation Association, the city’s first historic preservation organization that put preservationists’ nascent culture of property into practice in one of the city’s most deteriorated neighborhoods. From this initial sale of the Mattoon Street house in 1972, Dashevsky rapidly promoted historic preservation’s capacities to alleviate the “culture of poverty” by transferring dilapidated historic housing into the hands of respectable
preservationist homeowners. Beyond the MSHPA, Dashevsky worked with the Forest Park Civic Association and Springfield Preservation Trust, her career as a community preservationist touching nearly every association mobilized to promote historic preservation. Dashevsky readily embraced a preservationist culture of property, a decision guided by her involvement in racial liberal civic organizations that promoted homeownership to alleviate the “culture of poverty” miring Springfield in the urban crisis.

Conclusion

As Dashevsky’s sale in 1972 suggests, low-income and nonwhite residents were at best peripheral to this vision and at worst obstacles to the city’s recovery. Property owners, and homeowners in particular, preservationists positioned as the best-equipped actors to address Springfield’s decline. What remained to be seen was how preservationists would administer their culture of property to Springfield’s urban crisis, a task preservationists pursued throughout the 1970s. In the process, preservationists would transform Springfield and accelerate the city’s turn towards privatization and punitive modes of urban governance—a turn made possible by a centuries-long convergence of settler colonialism and liberalism that reinscribed property ownership as a marker of civic belonging in the modern city. At the same time, preservationists’ collision with the urban crisis would alter their movement’s trajectory as preservationists devised new tools and logics to better orient their movement towards alleviating urban decline.

But at the beginning of the 1970s, these results were far from ordained or conceivable to many of the city’s preservationists. Most maintained a vague hope that preservation could help shepherd Springfield out of a period of prolonged crisis and into an era of renewed prosperity. What did seem clear was that, despite their differences,
preservationists and Springfield’s municipal leadership aligned around preservation as a useful tool to address the urban crisis. When Dashevsky, Berman, Spencer, and fellow Longmeadow residents mobilized as the MSHPA in 1971, they capitalized on city officials’ sympathetic and encouraging outlook on preservation first articulated in the battle to save the Armory. With the city’s backing, the MSHPA turned to apply the culture of property to a neighborhood afflicted by the urban crisis, in the process demonstrating the power of preservation to transform the urban landscape.
CHAPTER 2
Fighting Crime: Preservation’s Carceral Turn

Eugene Berman was distraught. “Where are we headed?” he asked the Mattoon Street Historic Preservation Association (MSHPA) in 1978.¹ As the inaugural president of the MSHPA, Berman fastidiously protected what he saw as “a sense of identity and feeling and consequently a source of pride” bestowed by the historic brick rowhouses that lined Mattoon Street just northeast of downtown Springfield, Massachusetts.² For the past seven years the MSHPA worked to curate that sense of identity, but in 1978 the “quiet, safe neighborhood of a few years ago” was in imminent danger. So-called “non-residents” threatened to erode the street’s sense of safety.³ In response to this perceived threat, the MSHPA marshalled its own private police force to limit the mobility of non-residents. Fusing together policing with preservation, the MSHPA’s hard work paid off in the form of Springfield’s first residential parking permit ordinance in 1983 that restricted parking to Mattoon Street residents. With Mattoon Street once more firmly in the hands of residents, the MSHPA quietly ended their pursuit of “non-residents.”

What accounts for such an aggressive backlash to the mere presence of “non-residents” on Mattoon Street? And why was an association ostensibly dedicated to historic preservation leading the charge? At stake for MSHPA preservationists and other Mattoon Street residents was not the bricks and mortar of their homes, but the street’s “character” as a paragon of property ownership. This chapter examines the formative role of the MSHPA and other Mattoon Street residents in the city of Springfield’s preservation movement. In the

¹ Eugene Berman, presidential address, Mattoon Street Historic Preservation Association, 1978, LMWLA. The MSHPA was initially named the Mattoon-Elliot Streets’ Neighborhood Preservation Association; the organization’s name was shortened in 1973 to MSHPA. For the sake of clarity, I will use “MSHPA” throughout.
² Berman, presidential address, 1978.
³ Berman, presidential address, 1978.
process of designating Mattoon Street as Springfield’s first local historic district, the MSHPA articulated the logics and value systems of a preservation agenda that would remain at the core of the city’s preservation movement. I explore two common themes within this emergent preservationist ideology that will remain foundational in the chapters that unfold. First, preservationists devised their culture of property by using a set of archival tools, frameworks, and methodologies that valorized historical and contemporary property owners as the most appropriate stewards to chart Springfield’s course away from the urban crisis. Preservationists advanced this argument by allying preservation with a tough-on-crime agenda to promote Springfield as a safe space for white suburbanites and securing private property through increased policing. Both these initiatives informed the other, constituting core elements of that sought to promote and in turn protect private property and property ownership. These twin developments constituted core tenets of community preservationists’ culture of property they believed would reverse urban decline and remained consistent with their identities as racial liberals.

While preservationists looked to homeownership as a solution to the contemporary “culture of poverty,” a “sense of history” nevertheless guided their valorization of historical and contemporary owner-occupants. Preservationists reached this consensus through a historical framework by drawing a straight line between Mattoon Street’s nineteenth-century owner-occupants and the owner-occupants of the 1970s, interpreting the former as examples for the latter in their battle against urban decline. By the 1970s, the street’s material conditions as a boarding and lodging district symbolized Springfield’s larger descent into

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crisis and the intractable nature of the “culture of poverty.”\textsuperscript{5} If Mattoon Street’s reputation as a boarding and lodging district corrupted the street’s foundation as a bastion of homeownership, preservationists would materially and socially restore the street to this largely imagined origin point and, in the process, dispense with its vexing social problems.

To substantiate a historical narrative that established the merits of historical owner-occupants, preservationists pored over a wide array of archival materials, including deeds, reports, newspaper articles, city directories, maps, and building permits. While many of these materials already privileged property owners, preservationists further reinforced the primacy of historical owner-occupants through the way they read and interpreted these materials. Ultimately, this “usable past” pressed historic placemaking strategies into service for community preservationists’ culture of property that promoted residential property ownership as a solution to urban decline.\textsuperscript{6}

Couching themselves as enlightened stewards of the historic built environment, preservationists substantiated these claims through their parallel and complementary project of securing and protecting claims to private property. To that end, preservationists reframed historic preservation as a crime prevention tool, devising a range of initiatives to rebrand urban neighborhoods as safe spaces for white suburbanites and urban expatriates. On Mattoon Street, permanent alterations to the streetscape, combined with more ephemeral events like house tours and street festivals, demonstrated to white suburbanites that the street was still a safe place to live. Additionally, Mattoon Street residents pointed to their


status as the city’s first historic district to call for more intensive policing from the Springfield Police Department (SPD), an initiative that culminated with the creation of the MSHPA’s private police force and the passage of Springfield’s first residential parking permit ordinance in 1983. The adoption of these punitive measures did not mark a break from preservationist ideology during this period, but instead remained conversant with initiatives to promote private property ownership. Both allowed preservationists to assert their stewardship over urban space while promoting the ownership of private property as an antidote to urban decline.

Ultimately, I argue that by framing historic preservation as crime prevention, preservationists not only prefigured the early logics of what would become known as “broken windows” policing, they provided a persuasive argument for local, state, and federal support for historic preservation in a political climate that prioritized “law and order.” In doing so, I bridge the historiographical gulf between historic preservation and the range of punitive governmental responses to urban social and cultural problems during the 1970s and 1980s. In particular, I focus on the MSPHA’s house tours and mobilization of a private police force as crucial moments where preservation and new punitive modes of urban governance collided. For their part, historians of preservation have largely overlooked this intersection, but have illustrated how house tours reinforced dominant racial and sexual hierarchies through narratives presented to public audiences refracted through the personal and domestic experiences of historic occupants.7 Much of this literature focuses on house

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museums, but Cameron Logan has demonstrated how house tours in Washington, D.C. functioned to expand architectural tastes from colonial-era architecture to more eclectic Victorian styles like Mattoon Street’s brick rowhouses. House tours thus already constituted an effective tool to promote political and social agendas by the time Mattoon Street residents deployed them to battle suburban perceptions of crime and safety.

By reframing house tours within the context of suburban white flight and the unfolding wars on crime and drugs, I demonstrate how house tours performed new kinds of ideological labor for preservationists. As historians like Elizabeth Hinton, Jordan Camp, and Max Felker-Kantor have argued, the declarations of a “War on Crime” and a “War on Drugs” constituted a bipartisan political consensus that emerged in response to the urban uprisings and rebellions of the late 1960s. Beginning after the Los Angeles Watts rebellion in 1965, state and federal governments increasingly dedicated funding streams to local and state crime prevention strategies and “get tough” policies like mandatory minimum prison sentences. This “War on Crime,” as Heather Ann Thompson argues, depended on the “criminalization of urban space” and an association between Black and nonwhite urbanites and crime. By the 1970s and 1980s, this “War on Crime” expanded into a “War on Drugs”

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10 Thompson, From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America, 14.

that accelerated the carceral association of illicit drug use with Black and nonwhite people.\textsuperscript{12} Preservationists met the rise of these new punitive practices by \textit{decriminalizing} urban space, using house tours, street festivals, and the material condition of their homes to assure white suburbanites and urbanites that cities were, in fact, safe.\textsuperscript{13} In turn, preservationists made this image a reality by calling for an expanded police presence that advanced redevelopment through policing, a tactic long identified by historians of gentrification and policing.\textsuperscript{14} In uniting the historiography of historic preservation with that of the punitive turn in American governance during the 1970s and 1980s, I reveal how the ascendance of tough-on-crime

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} Donna Murch, “Crack in Los Angeles: Crisis, Militarization, and Black Response to the Late Twentieth-Century War on Drugs,” \textit{The Journal of American History} 102, no. 2 (June 2015): 164.
\end{itemize}
politics integrated public historical praxis within a social and political reality structured around “law and order.”

Figure 2.1: Mattoon Street, circa 1971. Source: Lyman and Merrie Wood Springfield Museum of History Library and Archives

Mattoon Street: From “Rooming Houses to Renaissance”¹⁵

By the early 1970s, Mattoon Street was the poster child for Springfield’s urban crisis and the grip of the “culture of poverty” on the city (Figure 2.1). Regarded by the city’s governmental and business establishments as an inner-city “slum,” prostitution, drug abuse, and housing abandonment pockmarked a street filled with otherwise elegant, but crumbling, brick two- and three-story rowhouses with mansard roofs, bow-fronted bay windows, and brownstone steps embellished with wrought iron railings. A series of domestic and imperial developments combined to produce the street’s dismaying material conditions. In particular, the arrival of Puerto Rican laborers displaced by the U.S. government’s imperial policies to Mattoon Street contributed to white conceptions of the street as an especially repugnant

distillation of the city’s urban crisis. The street’s unique status as Springfield’s only rowhouse district, combined with its scale and proximity to downtown, remained alluring to preservationists and the city’s governmental establishment as a manageable laboratory to test out remedies to alleviate urban decline. When the MSHPA formed in 1971 they integrated historic placemaking strategies into an agenda that promoted property ownership by mobilizing a history of the street that contrasted this contemporary reality of boarding and lodging against a largely imagined history of homeownership as a blueprint for Mattoon Street’s late-twentieth-century renaissance.

In 1830, portrait artist Chester Harding transformed the land that would become Mattoon Street from an “impracticable” and “swampy piece of ground into a “genuine ‘artist’s retreat’” with the construction of a large “Italian villa” of white brick. Railroad contractor William Mattoon purchased Harding’s estate in 1853 and in 1870 extended Salem Street southwest through the Harding estate to Chestnut Street. Mattoon initially sold his street’s lots to contractors and masons who filled the street with two- and three-story brick rowhouses—it remained one of the only rowhouse districts in the entire city.

19 Warner, A Chronicle of Ancient Chestnut Street, 6; Chester Harding, Artist, Who Lived Long in This City”; Springfield Republican, June 18, 1870, Springfield Republican, August 29, 1870; “Map of the City of Springfield,” (New York, NY: Beers, Ellis, and Soule, 1870); Moses King, King’s Handbook of Springfield, Massachusetts: A Series of Monographs, Historical and Descriptive (Springfield, MA: J.D. Gill, 1884), 71. Local contractors Benjamin F. Farrar, Jesse Tapley, Marvin Chapin, Abel Howe feature prominently in the initial deeds and mortgages Mattoon sold. They are too numerous to cite here, but for example see Hampden County, Massachusetts, Deed Book 274, page 57, William Mattoon to Benjamin F. Farrar, May 24, 1870, Hampden County Register of Deeds, Springfield, Massachusetts; Hampden County, Massachusetts, Deed Book 281, page 197, William Mattoon to Benjamin F. Farrar and Jesse F. Tapley, April 19, 1871, Hampden County Register of Deeds, Springfield, Massachusetts; Hampden County, Massachusetts, Deed Book 284, page 1; Sandborn Fire Insurance Map of Springfield, Massachusetts. 1990.
these contractors sold these homes to middle-class white professionals. Several non-homeowning individuals lived on Mattoon Street including immigrants and Black women who worked as domestic servants in these homes. Mattoon Street homeowners also rented single rooms to boarders and lodgers. 20

While preservationists in the 1970s would portray boarding on Mattoon Street as a historical aberration, boarders and lodgers were present from the moment the street formally “opened” in the 1870s. 21 These initial boarders and lodgers tended to be young, white, single men who worked in dry good stores, and white women who worked as dressmakers, in clothing stores, or as music or schoolteachers. 22 At the turn of the twentieth century, lodgers and boarders surpassed middle-class single families and homeowners as the primary residents of Mattoon Street. By the 1950s, young Puerto Rican men supplanted the street’s white boarders. Two intertwined forces worked in tandem to reorient Mattoon Street’s lodging population from white to Puerto Rican workers: state and federal policies that facilitated the elevation of white workers to middle class comfortability and United States imperial policies in Puerto Rico.

As historians of U.S. homeownership policy have documented, the architects of the federal government’s postwar housing programs explicitly designed federal policy to

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20 The 1880 census, the first census for which data is available on Mattoon Street, documents that roughly 1/3 of the street’s residents were either domestic servants or boarders and lodgers, see U.S. Bureau of the Census, Schedule of Inhabitants in Springfield, Hampden County, Massachusetts, June 1880, pages 4-8.

21 Springfield City Directory and Business Advertiser for 1871-1872, 164; Springfield City Directory and Business Advertiser for 1872-1873, 308.

promote middle-class, white social and economic mobility. Rooted in the creation of the New Deal racial welfare state, these policies inaugurated a series of oversight, regulatory, and insurance programs for the private mortgage market that subsidized suburban growth and private, single-family homeownership. Such policies encoded racial exclusion in the very fabric of the U.S. housing market. With this newfound access to social mobility and homeownership, working-class whites like the boarders on Mattoon Street left boarding and lodging houses behind in search of better housing.

The United States’ imperial policies filled the vacancies left behind by these white lodgers by providing an indirect pathway between Puerto Rico and Mattoon Street. The forced modernization of the island—known as “Operation Bootstrap”—and establishment of the Puerto Rican Department of Labor’s Migration division in 1947 pushed Puerto Rican residents from the periphery of U.S. empire to its metropolitan center. Operation Bootstrap aggressively attempted to shift the island away from an agricultural to industrial economy and eliminate the island’s so-called “overpopulation” problem by encouraging labor migration to the United States. The Connecticut Valley’s tobacco industry eagerly took advantage of the Migration Division’s recruitment efforts, working with the Massachusetts Farm Bureau to draw Puerto Rican workers to the valley’s tobacco fields.

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24 Barber, *Latino City: Immigration and Urban Crisis in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1945-2000*.


The results of this imperial project were disastrous. Not only did Operation Bootstrap displace rural Puerto Rican residents from the island, but the Migration Division’s labor recruitment program was viciously exploitative of these men and women’s labor and bodies. Puerto Rican workers, upon arrival in the Connecticut Valley, found crude barracks for worker housing and few available social services. These poor housing conditions, combined with low wages, racial violence, and exploitation, persuaded Puerto Rican workers to “vote with their feet” and walk away from their jobs in search of better housing and employment.

These imperial and domestic developments all collided on Mattoon Street. For many Puerto Rican migrants, Mattoon Street’s inexpensive lodging offered a greater degree of physical security than worker barracks scattered throughout the rural Connecticut Valley. For tobacco worker Jesus R. Torres, boarding and lodging at 11 Mattoon Street allowed him to seek out affordable housing and make a home for himself and his wife, Hilda Mejios. Other Puerto Rican laborers who worked in the Connecticut Valley’s dwindling manufacturing industries made their homes at 11 Mattoon. Luis Moran, a grinder at the Plainville Casting Company in nearby Westfield from Manati, Puerto Rico, rented a room at 11 Mattoon after his previous apartment on Main Street was damaged in a fire. As A.K. Sandoval-Strausz argues, the arrival of Puerto Rican migrants like Torres and Moran to distressed urban areas like Mattoon Street helped repopulate and revive American cities.
undergoing vicious cycles of divestment.\textsuperscript{31} Despite their limited resources as boarders and renters, on Mattoon Street, these Puerto Rican migrants actually helped preserve the street’s deteriorating urban fabric by maintaining a portion of the street’s housing stock as their homes. The simple actions required to live in an apartment—heating, cooking, cleaning—kept pipes from freezing and bursting while decreasing the likelihood of destructive acts like arson that regularly plagued abandoned buildings.\textsuperscript{32}

Springfield’s civic administrators looked to Mattoon Street’s boarders and lodgers not with sympathy, but rather a mounting sense of alarm. The arrival of Puerto Rican migrants to places like Springfield suffering from deindustrialization and capital flight, as Llana Barber demonstrates, only further stigmatized these migrants as a source of the city’s ills.\textsuperscript{33} By the 1970s, individuals with Spanish surnames comprised roughly twenty percent of all listed residents on Mattoon Street, a racialized “new ingredient” that “threatened to retard the progress of that area.”\textsuperscript{34} Such a “threat” posed a “significant problem” to the Springfield Police Department (SPD), who associated crime and drug abuse with Puerto Rican young men.\textsuperscript{35} On Mattoon Street, these Puerto Rican men faced what historian Simon Balto characterizes as “overpolicing and underprotection” that racialized them as nonwhite and criminal as the SPD targeted Mattoon Street’s Puerto Rican residents with drug and narcotics raids.\textsuperscript{36} The criminalization and racialization of this “colony of Puerto Ricans” on

\textsuperscript{33} Barber, \textit{Latino City: Immigration and Urban Crisis in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1945-2000}, 91.
\textsuperscript{34} It is likely this number was much higher. City directories and assessor’s records did not always account for all boarders or lodgers in a particular property.
\textsuperscript{35} Mark E. Mackler, \textit{Mattoon Street: A Century of Transition} (Springfield, MA: Springfield Planning Department), 1975, 8.
Mattoon Street as drug addicts produced a homogeneous image of Mattoon Street’s lodgers as deviant and dangerous. This reputation for illicit activity and deteriorated rental housing stock underpinned preservationists’ solutions to promote owner-occupant property ownership and project an image of Mattoon Street as a safe place for the city’s burgeoning class of white-collar workers. To make such a venture successful, preservationists first turned to historic placemaking strategies to materially and historically recast Mattoon Street from a pathologized boarding district to one of enlightened and urbane property ownership.

Assessing Integrity, Arresting Decline: Assembling a “Usable Past”

When a small cohort of Mattoon Street property owners and other preservationists mobilized as the Mattoon Street Historic Preservation Association (MSHPA) in 1971, city hall at last breathed a sigh of relief that Mattoon Street was on a “collision course with progress.” That same year, Springfield’s city council voted to establish a five-member historic district study committee that worked alongside the MSHPA to designate Mattoon Street and the nearby Quadrangle as the city’s first local historic district. Both mobilized quickly to articulate a historical narrative of Mattoon Street that justified its historic district eligibility. In the process, preservationists intertwined historic placemaking strategies with an


37 Peter Goodman, “Mattoon Street Hippie ‘Head Shop’ Bowed by Financial Difficulties,” *The Springfield Republican*, July 16, 1968; The “problem” of Puerto Rican lodging was imagined beyond what some “data” collection methods on Mattoon Street and the surrounding neighborhood could substantiate. In 1966 the city’s redevelopment authority identified “a heavy concentration of elderly persons and single-person households” as the area’s primary social ills, not the presence of Puerto Rican lodgers and boarders. A following study in 1973 noted the presence of Puerto Rican residents in the neighborhood. See *Springfield Community Renewal Program Neighborhood Analysis: Pearl* (Springfield, MA: Springfield Planning Department, 1966), LMWLA; and *Neighborhood Analysis #10: Pearl* (Springfield, MA: Springfield Planning Department, 1973), 3, LMWLA.


agenda that promoted residential property ownership as the antidote to urban decline. Through their selective appraisal of deeds, city directories, and building permits, preservationists amassed a historical record that provided a compelling, if intentionally incomplete, narrative of Mattoon Street’s origins as an exclusive enclave for some of the city’s high-profile residents. Preservationists stressed that nineteenth-century owner-occupants comprised Mattoon Street’s only legitimate historical actors and interrupted their narration at the turn of the century, when boarding and lodging supplanted single-family occupancy. This narrative resumed in the 1970s with the rightful ascendancy of owner-occupant homeowners as the appropriate stewards of the restoration of Mattoon Street to its origins as a bastion of homeownership. Ultimately, this historical narrative made the MSHPA’s preservationist project possible by creating a “useable past” that justified contemporary efforts to promote property ownership.

Preservationists’ social and political identities as racial liberals intersected with the tools furnished by state and national preservation bureaucracies to make homeownership an attractive solution to urban decline and a central tenet of the city’s preservation movement. The earliest MSHPA members and the historic district study committee united around their shared social and political identities as racial liberals who championed private property ownership and did not discriminate on “Color, Class, or Creed,” many of whom resided in Springfield’s surrounding suburban communities of Longmeadow, Agawam, West Springfield, and Chicopee. At the same time, the MSHPA operated within a longstanding tradition that situated preservation as an extension of urban redevelopment politics, what Cameron Logan characterizes as an initiative to redirect the real estate market and postwar

urban renewal planning towards the “conspicuous protection and promotion of the realm of domestic, private life.”\(^4^1\) When combined with recent changes to Massachusetts state historic preservation law that newly incentivized property owners to participate in the creation of historic districts, property ownership moved ever closer to the heart of the city’s nascent preservationist ideology.\(^4^2\) These developments portended tumultuous changes to Mattoon Street’s physical and social fabric as owner-occupant property owners supplanted the street’s population of boarders.

When Mattoon Street property owners mobilized as the MSHPA in January of 1971, they quickly fused their own racial liberal philosophy to a nascent preservationist ideology.\(^4^3\) The MSHPA’s first executive committee all shared previous professional experiences in a variety of civic agencies, law firms, real estate agencies, and housing development corporations associated with the city’s liberal establishment. None of them lived on Mattoon Street in 1971, but rather in Springfield’s surrounding suburban communities of Longmeadow, Agawam, West Springfield, and Chicopee.\(^4^4\) For many, the Joint Civic Agencies (JCA) and Micah Corporation, a low-income housing development corporation, provided the intellectual foundation through which Mattoon Street preservationists first articulated their own preservationist ideology.\(^4^5\) Micah owned four homes on Mattoon

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\(^4^3\) “Mattoon-Elliot Streets’ Residential Neighborhood Preservation Association Meeting Minutes,” Minutes (Springfield, MA: Mattoon Street Historic Preservation Association, January 6, 1971), LWMWA.


\(^4^5\) These individuals made up what Suleiman Osman has referred to as a “new urban middle class” that was drawn to historic rowhouse districts during this period. See Suleiman Osman, *The Invention of Brownstone*
Longmeadow, Massachusetts resident Eugene Berman, an attorney and prominent member of the local JCA-affiliated Jaycees, served alongside Ellie Dashevsky, an assistant developer with Micah, as the MSHPA’s first president and board member, respectively. Other early members, such as John Greaney, Edward Aubrey, and David Powers, were prominent lawyers or attorneys.47

As they traded suburban ranch houses in Longmeadow for a brick rowhouse on Mattoon Street, preservationists found sympathetic allies in city hall that shared their own political and social worldview.48 In 1971, the Springfield city council voted to establish a historic district study committee to commence a rigorous historical and contemporary examination of potential historic districts in Springfield. The newly formed historic district study committee quickly allied itself with Mattoon Street property owners, becoming honorary members of the MSHPA in September of 1971.49 Like the MSHPA, the study committee was composed of rising members of the city’s liberal establishment: Donald Reichert, director of the George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum; Stephen Hays, director of the Ford Foundation-financed Stage-West Theater; Athena Z. Kalita of the American...
Institute of Architects; Kathleen Morehead, environmental quality chairman of the Springfield League of Women Voters; and Lester J. Premo, president of the Springfield Board of Realtors.\textsuperscript{50}

If racial liberalism shaped preservationists’ contemporary attraction to homeownership, both the Massachusetts and national preservation bureaucracies further privileged a framework that extolled the historical and contemporary virtues of homeownership. Recent legislative changes to the MHC’s administrative procedures in 1971 streamlined the creation of local historical commissions while newly prioritizing the interests of property owners in historic districts. First created in 1963, the MHC’s enabling legislation authorized it to approve local historic districts, conduct historic resource surveys, and identify state historic landmarks.\textsuperscript{51} Unlike historic districts on the National Register of Historic Places administered by the National Park Service, local historic districts in Massachusetts contained provisions that regulated exterior design alterations and subjected alterations to the approval of a local municipal historical commission. As outlined in revisions to the MHC’s enabling legislation in 1971, local historic district study committees, upon receiving MHC approval of their final historic district study reports, could immediately be deputized by a mayor or city council to reform as a city’s local historical commission.\textsuperscript{52}


\textsuperscript{51} Prior to 1963, the creation of historic districts required passage of special legislation through the Massachusetts legislature. Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 697, “An Act Establishing the Massachusetts Historical Commission and Authorizing Cities and Towns to Establish Historical Commissions,” September 11, 1963, 609-611.

\textsuperscript{52} Massachusetts General Court, Senate Bill No. 545, “An Act to Authorize the Establishment of Historic Districts in the Commonwealth,” March 23, 1960; Richard W. Hale, Jr. to Edward S. Morrow, May 26, 1971, Massachusetts Historical Commission legislative file, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston, MA; “Senate 1240,” memorandum prepared for inclusion on Massachusetts Senate calendar, May 4, 1971, Massachusetts Historical Commission legislative file, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston, MA; John F.X. Davoren,
The MHC embedded new incentives for property owners in this legislation. When passed in 1971, the new enabling legislation expanded local historical commission membership to district property owners, forging a new “opportunity for businessmen who have properties in a district to serve on the Commission.”

If state preservation laws stressed the significance of current property owners in the preservation process, the national historic preservation apparatus available to preservationists narrowed their interpretation of the past to historical property owners. The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), a national registry of sites, buildings, and districts considered historic and worthy of preservation maintained by the Department of the Interior, constituted a standard-bearer for many preservationists at the state and local levels. First created by the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966, the NRHP established basic criterion through which preservationists could nominate sites, first by indicating a site’s “association” with historical events, architecture, or individual persons and then establishing its “significance” at the local, state, or national level. The NRHP stressed that eligible properties retain a high degree of “integrity,” what the National Park Service (NPS) defined as the “ability of a property to convey its significance” through hewing as closely as possible to its material condition during the period in which it attained “significance.” When combined with the NPS’s general restriction that properties less than 50 years old were ineligible for the NRHP, preservationists looked to groups like boarders and lodgers not only as “insignificant” but as an active threat to a particular site’s “integrity,”

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55 “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation,” 44.
even if those same boarders and lodgers maintained a deep historical association with a place like Mattoon Street.  

Within the overarching preservation frameworks structured by the conjoined state and national preservation apparatus, the MSHPA and the study committee began constructing an analysis of Mattoon Street that emphasized the historic and contemporary virtues of property ownership. As they began assembling this useable past, the MSHPA and the study committee did not merely examine whatever records were most accessible or convenient; instead, both groups scoured a wide range of historic materials including maps, deeds, building permits, newspaper articles, city directories, oral interviews, and annual reports. In other words, while such sources frequently privileged former property owners over lodgers, it was no accident that the MSHPA and the study committee gravitated to these individuals. Rather, preservationists interpreted and read these materials with a deliberate eye towards the agency of historical property owners to justify their own contemporary agenda of property ownership. This strategy was not lost on some contemporary observers. In 1975, Mark E. Mackler, a teacher at Forest Park Junior High School, remarked that the nineteenth century “elegance of Mattoon Street” that attracted preservationists “proved to be an illusion.” Instead, Mackler noted that throughout most of its existence, Mattoon Street was a working-class neighborhood, “predominately of rooming houses,” that was being deliberately changed “to meet the needs of those with the wealth to afford the renovations or pay the rent.”  

58 Mackler, 5, 17.
indeed once a fashionable area for some of Springfield’s wealthiest citizens, it was at best a fleeting moment in the street’s history.

Despite these historical realities, the historic district study committee instead emphasized Mattoon Street’s architecture as an extension of its original owner-occupants’ status and influence and located the street’s revival in a new generation of owner-occupants. In their final report submitted to Springfield’s city council and the MHC, the study committee gravitated towards the initial cohort of builders and owner-occupants in their narration, conveniently looking past Mattoon Street’s reputation as a lodging district. Instead, it was jewelers, legislators, doctors, and other “respectable citizens” that made Mattoon Street one of the “most popular streets in the city for fashionable residences.”

Such narrative descriptions rendered Mattoon Street’s former lodgers and boarders all but invisible while implicitly associating them with the street’s decline. The MSHPA echoed these sentiments in its own promotional literature for the street but engaged with the twentieth century “decay” of the neighborhood head-on. In no uncertain terms, the MSHPA argued that white-collar property owners, like their nineteenth-century forbears, would “inject life into Mattoon Street,” linking the “dreamer of the 1870’s, William

Mattoon” and “the dreamers of the 1970’s.”61 This narrative turn assisted preservationists in recreating Mattoon Street as a residential street restored to white-collar respectability.62

The study committee and Springfield planning establishment shared these sentiments, incorporating them into their justifications for Mattoon Street’s historic district eligibility. The study committee turned to John Wilson, a member of the city’s planning department, to assess the existing conditions of Mattoon Street. In June of 1971 Wilson began his survey work, using the MHC’s Building Form-B to record each building’s location, current condition, the condition of surrounding buildings, and “a brief description of historic importance” elaborated from a handful of “themes” listed at the top of the inventory sheet.63 Wilson documented 23 structures, the earliest being those homes first built in the early 1870s and the latest being the Yadow apartment building of 1891. Wilson’s survey implicitly and explicitly underscored owner-occupants as the most appropriate actors to shepherd Mattoon Street’s regeneration. Overwhelmingly, Wilson concluded that the current conditions of properties on Mattoon Street were “Deteriorated.”64 Very rarely did

61 “Downtown Springfield, Spring Festival: A guide to the In Town and About Town Happenings,” back leaf; Suleiman Osman has identified a similar process in places like Brooklyn Heights, New York, where urban, white-collar, middle-class preservationists’ historical place narratives explicitly linked the “urban aristocracy” of the nineteenth century to the twentieth-century “rediscovery” of urban neighborhoods. See Osman, The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Postwar New York, 192-210.
63 Massachusetts Historical Commission, Form B-Building Survey, September 1971. The form included a scale of significance (town, commonwealth, or national significance) and the themes included a “historical connection” to one or more of the following: Scholar, Commerce/Industry, Agriculture, Science/invention, Art/Sculpture, Travel/Communication, Education, Military Affairs, Government, Religion/Philosophy, Literature, Indians, Music, and Other. For nearly every form Wilson selected “Other” and wrote “Architecture” in the accompanying blank for significance. For homes he found particularly architecturally interesting he selected “Art/Sculpture.”
64 Of 23 forms for Mattoon Street buildings, Wilson determined 20 to be “deteriorated.” See John R. Wilson and the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), “11½ Mattoon Street,” Historic District Study Committee Inventory of Mattoon Street, September 1971; John R. Wilson and the MHC, “27 Mattoon Street—Lucy Haskell House,” Historic District Study Committee Inventory of Mattoon Street, September 1971; John R. Wilson and the MHC, “24 Mattoon Street,” Historic District Study Committee Inventory of Mattoon Street, September 1971; John R. Wilson and the MHC, “34 Mattoon Street,” Historic District Study Committee Inventory of Mattoon Street, September 1971; John R. Wilson and the MHC, “45 Mattoon Street,”
Wilson came across a property he considered “Good” or “Excellent”—the highest standards for a property’s condition possible on the MHC’s inventory forms. The “current conditions” Wilson was asked to assess invariably required him to take into account the fact that the vast majority of the properties on Mattoon Street (20 of 32 structures) were lodging or apartment houses. Another 11 homes were vacant. Lingering at one boarding house at 50 Mattoon Street, Wilson mused on his form that the property was “revealing” to “what a house can look like if it is ignored” by a property owner. But next door, at 52 Mattoon Street, Wilson saw a righteous moral arc curving towards responsible owner-occupant property ownership. As “the only existing structure on the street to be rehabilitated,” 52 Mattoon stood “as an example of excellence for other owners to strive for.”

The study committee also looked to 52 Mattoon and the recent purchase of several other homes on Mattoon Street by white suburbanites like Eugene Berman as important

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65 Of 23 forms recorded, Wilson only found two Mattoon Street structures to be in “Good” condition and one in “Fair” condition, see John R. Wilson and the MHC, “41 Mattoon Street,” Historic District Study Committee Inventory of Mattoon Street, September 1971; John R. Wilson, “52 Mattoon Street,” Historic District Study Committee Inventory of Mattoon Street, September 1971; John R. Wilson and the MHC, “43 Mattoon Street,” Historic District Study Committee Inventory of Mattoon Street, September 1971; John R. Wilson and the MHC, “50 Mattoon Street.”

66 See the 1971 Springfield City Directory, 149-150. 11 structures were vacant, meaning there was one non-apartment structure/single-family home on Mattoon Street at the time Wilson undertook his inventory.

67 John R. Wilson and the MHC, “50 Mattoon Street.”

68 John R. Wilson, “52 Mattoon Street.”
“examples for the rest of the street.” These “examples” helped prove to Springfield’s city council and liberal establishment that historic preservation, by increasing owner-occupant property and homeownership, could alleviate the city’s economic woes. “Economically,” the study committee argued, “everyone gains from the establishment of historic districts.”

Citing the state’s first historic district in Boston, Beacon Hill, the study committee noted that property values tripled since that district’s creation in 1955, increasing land values, assessments, and the city’s overall tax base while assuring “a quality environment in the future” for property owners. Ultimately, such arguments swayed Springfield’s city council and the staff of the MHC. In 1972, the Springfield city council formally established the

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Quadrangle-Mattoon local and National Register of Historic Places district (Figure 2.2). That same year, the historic district study committee dissolved and reformed as the Springfield Historical Commission (SHC).

The final historic district ordinance cemented the centrality of residential property ownership to the city’s preservation movement. Mattoon and nearby Elliott Street residential properties were subject to “all of the controls allowable under state enabling legislation,”

Figure 2.2: Final Boundaries of the Quadrangle-Mattoon Local and National Register Historic District.
requiring property owners to apply for approval to the newly created SHC for changing exterior paint color and other “architectural features” such as porches, windows, and trim.\textsuperscript{73}

But nearby institutions, including the Springfield Museums Association, the main branch of the city library, and the Catholic diocese were exempt from these exterior controls and could demolish or alter their property at will, despite their inclusion within the boundaries of the local historic district.\textsuperscript{74} This disjuncture was entirely consistent with preservationist ideology.

To Springfield preservationists, institutional buildings were significant to the city’s historical fabric, but residential properties embodied particularly fragile resources and necessary ingredients to reverse the city’s decline.\textsuperscript{75}

While the prioritization of private property significantly impacted the trajectory of Springfield’s historic preservation movement, it most profoundly disrupted the lives and homes of Mattoon Street’s lodgers and boarders. Through their assemblage of their useable past, preservationists cast lodgers and boarders as a historical aberration that obstructed the street’s contemporary progress. While the state and national preservation tools available to Mattoon Street residents certainly structured this approach, local banks further incentivized this logic by clandestinely refusing to extend mortgages or loans to new Mattoon Street residents until they “got the ‘undesirables’ out of the area first.”\textsuperscript{76}

Mattoon Street residents acted accordingly. Ellie Dashevsky orchestrated the sale of the four homes owned by Micah to fellow MSHPA executive committee members between 1970 and 1972 who summarily


\textsuperscript{76} Mackler, 11.
evicted the lodgers from the townhouses. Other Mattoon Street property owners did the same. The city’s liberal establishment looked approvingly to these developments, noting that “the quality of the neighborhood has improved so that fewer low-income renters remain. It is likely that this trend will continue so that in consequence new tenants of higher income will be drawn to the area.” By the mid-1970s, the MSHPA’s white-collar members largely supplanted Mattoon Street’s lodgers and boarders. Masked beneath boosterish pronouncements of Mattoon Street’s “rebirth,” this displacement of the street’s former lodgers and boarders was a deliberate product of Mattoon Street residents’ efforts to assemble their culture of property as the antidote to Springfield’s decline.

There’s “Something of Value Here, and You Had Damn Better Well Police It”:

Safety and Policing on Mattoon Street

Piecing together a historical narrative that valorized property ownership performed a hefty amount of ideological labor for preservationists, but it alone could not secure claims to private property on Mattoon Street. As part of their broader project of promoting residential property ownership, preservationists reformulated historic preservation as a tool to prevent crime by devising a range of initiatives to frame Mattoon Street as a “safe” space for white suburbanite “tourism,” consumption, entertainment, and relocation. To make this image a

78 Sally Fuller, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, September 30, 2020, interview in possession of the author; Fuller described how her home 11½ Mattoon had roughly 11 boarders, but when the house was sold to her and her husband, David, these boarders were evicted.
79 Springfield Redevelopment Authority application for Mattoon Street, quoted in Mackler, 13; Donald J. D’Amato, Springfield—350 Years: A Pictorial History (Norfolk, VA: The Donning Company, 1985), 147.
80 Jim Boone interview; Mackler, 14–15.
82 Stephen Hays, oral history interview.
reality, Mattoon Street residents pointed to their status as the city’s first historic district in justifying calls for more intensive policing while mobilizing a private police force to expel “non-residents.” Preservation’s entanglement with crime prevention was not just a complementary project to articulating the culture of property; it was critical in manifesting preservationists’ ideological claims in the material world by reordering bodies and space to comport with the visions of the street’s new white-collar owner-occupants.

Historic preservation as crime prevention not only prefigured the early logics of what would become known as “broken windows” policing, it provided a persuasive argument for continued local, state, and federal support for historic preservation in a political climate that prioritized “law and order.” On Mattoon Street, efforts to reframe Springfield as a safe place for white suburbanites unfolded within the specific localized manifestations of the embryonic wars on crime and drugs. In Springfield, city hall doubled down on commitments to more aggressive crime prevention in response to the Springfield Police Department’s (SPD) own crises of legitimacy and as the city continued to hemorrhage white residents to the surrounding suburbs. Preservationists too were swept up in this wave of punitive crime prevention strategies. Like local and state policymakers, preservationists “got tough” on crime, intervening in debates about crime, safety, and urban decline by illustrating how historic placemaking strategies could both prevent crime and attract white suburbanites back to the city.83

Mattoon Street residents formulated their appeals to safety in response to the specific material and social manifestations of the wars on crime and drugs in Springfield. On the ground in Springfield, the wars on crime and drugs took shape amidst the city’s real and perceived descent into disorder. Between 1965 and 1975, police brutality, school

83 I borrow this phrase from Julilly Kohler-Hausmann, Getting Tough: Welfare and Imprisonment in 1970s America.
desegregation and court-ordered busing, and the re-segregation of the city’s Puerto Rican migrants reinforced an image of Springfield as unsafe and inhospitable to white residents of the city and surrounding suburbs. The city’s school desegregation plan, known as the Six District Plan and implemented in 1974, responded to and exacerbated racial tensions. While Boston erupted into chaotic white racial violence to deploy its own racial balance plan, Springfield supposedly “integrated its first through sixth grades with little difficulty, no strong community opposition, and no outbreak of violence.” But the Six District Plan, lauded for its “peaceful” integration of white and Black students, was devised on the explicit segregation of the city’s Puerto Rican students in the North End.

This segregationist impulse was just one of a series of interlocking issues that contributed to a violent cycle of oppression for the city’s Puerto Rican migrants. In addition to their isolation in a segregated school system and geographical separation from the rest of the city by Interstate-91, the city’s Puerto Rican population of roughly 13,000 (nine percent of the city’s overall population) was confined to some of the worst housing in the city’s North End, subject to intensive police violence, and faced intense racial hostility. These

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simmering tensions reached a boiling point in 1975. In March of that year, SPD officers shot and killed Rafael Lecudet, an eighteen-year-old resident of the North End, for driving a stolen vehicle.\(^8\) North End residents mobilized to apply pressure to the mayor and police chief to hold the officers responsible accountable and revise “the policies that exist” around the use of deadly force and police hiring practices, but the SPD dragged its feet. “Nothing came out of it,” remembered activist Frederico Brid, “not one thing.”\(^9\) As frustrations with the SPD’s inaction mounted, police shot and killed a second young North End resident, Jose Reyes, in August. With Springfield’s government and police department unwilling to listen to demands to address police violence, Puerto Rican residents of the North End launched an uprising against the city’s police force for three days in August. The police responded by violently suppressing the uprising through mass brutality against demonstrators.\(^0\) In the aftermath of the uprising, North End residents reignited demands for justice, noting that the police perpetuated the most egregious acts of violence during the uprising. The police “aren’t here to protect,” remembered Jose Barreto, the executive director of the North End Drug Abuse Program, “the people who started a lot of the trouble were the police themselves.”\(^1\)

While Puerto Rican residents located the SPD as the primary source of violence in Springfield, many white residents of the city and its suburbs instead blamed Puerto Rican

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\(^8\) Robert Rossi, “The Springfield Community and the Death of Rafael Lecudet” (Report, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1975), 1, University of Massachusetts Amherst Special Collections and University Archives.

\(^9\) Frederico Brid, Donald Pratt, Oral History, 1975, 4, Dean Albertson Oral History Collection, University of Massachusetts Amherst Special Collections and University Archives.

\(^0\) Albertson, Robert Rossi; Barreto, Edward Hannabury.

\(^1\) Barreto, Edward Hannabury, 21.
migrants for crime and disorder. “Every time I pick up a paper and read the crime report,” one angry resident wrote to Springfield’s mayor, “ninety percent of the time the criminal is Hispanic.”92 Another white resident grumbled in a racist tirade that all Puerto Rican residents could do was “burn your town to the ground,” making Springfield “the worst most dog littered, most rat infested, most crime-ridden city.”93 Other white residents showed their dissatisfaction by voting with their feet and leaving Springfield altogether. Between 1970 and 1980 Springfield’s total population declined from 163,905 to 152,319 people. In 1970, about 87 percent of the overall population was white; in 1980, that percentage dipped to 76 percent.94 Despite the relative consistency of reported crime in the city throughout the 1970s, perceptions that Springfield was an unsafe place to live remained entrenched among urban and suburban white residents alike.95

In Springfield, city hall responded to the challenges to the SPD’s legitimacy in the wake of the North End uprising and white flight by expanding the scope and authority of the SPD. Renewed commitments to crime prevention and policing ballooned with the re-election of Mayor Theodore DiMauro for a second term in 1980. The city’s first Italian American mayor and resident of the affluent Sixteen Acres neighborhood, DiMauro placed eradicating the “fear of crime in our neighborhoods” at the center of his administrative

92 Ron Roehler to Theodore DiMauro, August 12, 1978, Mayor Theodore DiMauro Collection, LMWLA.
93 “South End White Family That Can’t Get Welfare and Springfield Residents for 45 Years” to Theodore DiMauro, July 13, 1979, Mayor Theodore DiMauro Collection, LMWLA.
agenda. DiMauro built upon a series of reforms and efforts to modernize the SPD. Between 1970 and 1980, the SPD created a new police cadets training program, launched a comprehensive public relations program in the city’s schools, and forged a new “Community Relations” unit to work with local neighborhood organizations. As Springfield’s population declined, DiMauro authorized an expansion of the police force from just 328 to over 400 active-duty officers. DiMauro dedicated many of these newly hired officers to foot patrols in downtown Springfield to “deter crime and give the public a greater sense of security.” The SPD likewise shifted its resources to criminalizing drug use. Between 1970 and 1975 alone, arrests for drug use or possession rose from just four percent to over one-quarter of the SPD’s arrests. The SPD launched these initiatives from their new headquarters just one block from Mattoon Street on nearby Pearl Street.

These local manifestations of the wars on crime and drugs engulfed historic preservationists, encouraging them to retool preservation for a tough-on-crime agenda as civic resources continued to shift towards crime prevention strategies. To that end, Mattoon Street residents framed preservation as a legitimate and effective crime prevention tool that could persuade white, middle-class suburbanites that the city was still a safe place to live. But


99 The number of arrests for drug use or possession numerically remained stable, 448 in 1970 and 432 in 1975, but their proportion of all arrests increased dramatically as overall arrests fell from 10,731 in 1970 to 1,636 in 1975, see “Springfield Police Department: Annual Report, 1973, 78; Springfield Police Department: Annual Report, 1975, 23.

in the charged political and social climates of the unfolding wars on crime and drugs, attempts to reframe neighborhoods as “safe” carried distinct racialized and gendered assumptions about urban space. Many Mattoon Street residents first forged their visions of safety in the suburban enclaves or small towns from which they relocated, mapping suburban expectations of residential security onto Mattoon Street’s urban context. Within this suburban worldview, “safety” operated as a rubric for evaluating urban space that implicitly privileged whiteness, private property, and economic homogeneity predicated on assumptions of Black and nonwhite pathological violence. The wars on crime and drugs only entrenched this association between Black people and urban crime and illicit drug economies, establishing white “safety” and Black criminality and violence as two sides of the same coin.

Efforts to make Mattoon Street “safe” acquired their most permanent material expression through a multiyear planning initiative adopted by the MSHPA that dramatically reconfigured the spatial and aesthetic qualities of the street. Beginning in 1973, the MSHPA initiated a “master plan” to build upon the street’s visual connections to rowhouse districts like Boston’s Back Bay and the enlightened architectural tastes fashioned by owner-


occupants. The MSHPA’s master plan built on these associations and rerouted Mattoon Street, widened sidewalks with a graceful herringbone brickwork pattern, erected “Victorian” streetlamps, and planted sycamore trees. Springfield’s city government bought into the plan as well, financing the re-routing of Mattoon Street and the new sidewalks in addition to making small grants available through the SHC for individual façade renovations. When completed in 1975, the MSHPA’s master plan presented a compelling visual argument that


105 “Hear Ye, Hear Ye, Here Ye” (Mattoon Street Historic Preservation Association, August 19, 1974), LMWLA. The city of Springfield and property owners on Mattoon Street negotiated covenants to help split the overall cost of the master plan between property owners and the city.

historic preservation could not only halt Springfield’s decline but reconfigure space itself to make it feel safer for suburban white-collar workers.107

Figure 2.3: Defensible Space. Oscar Newman looked to the historic built environment as a precedent for his own theory of “defensible space.” Rowhouse districts, like Mattoon Street, Newman found especially well-designed to facilitate “defensible space.” Source: Oscar Newman, Defensible Space, 1972, figures 4 and 5, page 6.

Projects like the MSHPA’s master plan garnered acclaim as “defensible space” that made urban neighborhoods look and feel safe (Figure 2.3). First articulated by city planner Oscar Newman in 1972, “defensible space” referred to an emerging set of architectural design tenets that gained traction amidst the wider rejection of large-scale urban housing developments as spaces that bred pathological violence and widespread anomie.108 Newman argued that the architectural characteristics of high-density housing, especially large public

housing projects, helped produce criminal behavior and proposed instead for architects to design “defensible space” that inhibited crime by “creating the physical expression of a social fabric that defends itself.” Rather than anonymous high-rise towers, a “defensible space” maintained private, territorial boundaries through the informal surveillance and policing by residents to deter criminal activity. Newman identified the historic built environment as an untapped resource in creating “defensible space,” noting that “In architectural history there is ample evidence of territorial definition and symbolization in the forms of previous residential environments.” In a popular handbook for preservationists published in 1979, Richard Ernie Reed, the director of the Historic Hill District Preservation Program in St. Paul, Minnesota, echoed these observations. “The modern concept of ‘defensible space,’” Reed argued, “is in reality how the early builders constructed the classic human-scale urban space.” By preserving the extant built environment, preservationists like the MSHPA moved “defensible space” from the realm of theory to praxis in their physical manipulation of space to make urban neighborhoods appear safe.

The MSHPA and Mattoon Street residents relied on more ephemeral methods to demonstrate that Mattoon Street was a safe place for white suburbanites. Mattoon Street residents and property owners presented this vision of safety through annual arts festivals and house tours, events that performed new kinds of ideological labor in the context of the wars on crime and drugs. The inauguration of the annual Mattoon Street Arts Festival in 1972 staged the street as a space of white, middle-class consumption where a “crowd of young and old” could safely browse arts and crafts handmade by local Connecticut Valley

That same year, in what became an annual event, Mattoon Street residents opened a handful of homes to curious “tourists” from Springfield and its surrounding suburban communities. For Mattoon Street residents, house tours functioned as a critical staging

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113 Wayne Phaneuf, “Historic District Plans Open House on Sunday,” The Republican, June 20, 1975, LMWLA; “Restored Rowhouses on View,” The Republican, June 23, 1975, LMWLA.
event in which homeowners demonstrated “that ‘regular people’ were moving on to the street” and that these “regular people” could “live on the street safely” (Figure 2.4).\footnote{Sally Fuller, oral history interview.}

**Figure 2.4: Mattoon Street Art Festival.** Mattoon Street residents used house tours as a critical staging event to illustrate to suburban “tourists” that the street was a safe place to live. Source: Lyman and Merrie Wood Springfield Museum of History Library and Archives.

MSHPA members especially prided their ability to draw white suburbanites to Mattoon Street and emphasized the homes purchased by former suburbanites on their house
tours. In their 1976 house tour, MSHPA members drew attention to new homeowners Mark and Deena Manischalchi who “contemplated purchasing a house in rural Chester, but succumbed to the prospect of city living” after seeing 31 Mattoon Street, an “elegant property with no less than five marble fireplaces!” Other preservationists throughout the country quickly picked up on the house tour as an effective strategy to rebrand the “inner city.” “No amount of publicity,” insisted Richard Reed, “can equal the personal, physical experience the suburbanite achieves when he walks the inner-city streets to discover that they are safe.”

Yet Mattoon Street’s dominant image as dangerous remained entrenched in the white suburban consciousness. Sally Fuller reflected that her friends from nearby Longmeadow “would only come during the day because they were sort of nervous about coming to our neighborhood at night.” Mattoon Street residents soothed these suburban anxieties through the specific racialized and gendered visions of safety that their house tours articulated. When Sally and David Fuller had their first child in 1976, their newly renovated second floor nursery was a particularly resonant message to tour-goers that Mattoon Street was a safe place to raise a family. Other homeowners, such as Judy Matt, hosted separate “before” and “after” tours to index Mattoon Street’s trajectory away from the perceived physical and social problems posed by the street’s population of lodgers. Participants on both tours could see for themselves the drastic differences between the “dark” network of narrow hallways and single-occupancy bedrooms required for lodging and the “bright,”

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116 Reed, Return to the City: How to Restore Old Buildings and Ourselves in America’s Historic Urban Neighborhoods, 134.
117 Jim Boone, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, October 26, 2020, interview in possession of the author; Mackler, 7.
118 Sally Fuller, oral history interview.
119 Sally Fuller, oral history interview.
“open,” and orderly spaces engendered by owner-occupants. In tandem with physically reconfiguring Mattoon Street as a “defensible space,” house tours explicitly demonstrated to suburban tour-goers that Springfield remained a safe place to live.

MSHPA members and the SHC most explicitly adapted preservation for a tough-on-crime agenda by arguing that Mattoon Street’s status as the city’s first historic district justified an increased police presence to prevent crime. House tours and street festivals helped preservationists wrangle civic resources dedicated to the wars on crime and drugs by facilitating highly visible displays of police force on Mattoon Street (Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5: Springfield Police Department Officers. Preservationists brought an expanded police presence to Mattoon Street through their annual arts festival and home tours. Shown here 1979, a small squad of SPD officers dressed in historical nineteenth-century-era police uniforms to match Mattoon Street’s Victorian streetscape.

Source: Springfield Daily Republican.

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120 Judy Matt, oral history interview.
As Stephen Hays, a commissioner on the inaugural SHC, articulated, historic district status created “an opportunity to tell the city fathers that they had something of value here and they had damn well better police it.” Other MSHPA members underscored it was a moral necessity to contact the police for any sign of visible disorder. For the SPD, historic district status created a new imperative to expand its policing capacity from the punitive elimination of problematic “druggies, prostitutes, and flophouses” to visibly protect Mattoon Street as a space of white private property ownership. To that end, a small squadron of SPD officers patrolled Mattoon Street during the arts festival, antiques show, and house tours. Dressed in nineteenth-century era police uniforms to match the Victorian streetscape, the SPD’s visible presence on Mattoon Street during these events provided yet another illustration that Mattoon Street was safe for white suburban “tourists.”

As Mattoon Street grew in popularity and notoriety, MSHPA members found that even with the assistance of the SPD it became increasingly difficult to filter white, suburban “tourists” from unwelcome “non-residents.” Such anxieties coalesced around the mobility of “non-residents” and their ability to move through the neighborhood with discomforting ease. Mattoon Street residents pointed to a new bar, Two Mattoon, as the primary draw for “non-residents.” Opened at the corner of Mattoon and Chestnut streets in 1978, Two Mattoon brought bar patrons and their cars—the primary target of Mattoon Street residents’ ire. But against the backdrop of the wars on crime and drugs, “non-residents” were not

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121 Stephen Hays, oral history interview.
122 Eugene Berman, “President’s Address” (Mattoon Street Historic Preservation Association, 1978), LMWLA.
123 Stephen Hays, oral history interview; Mackler, 8; Balto, Occupied Territory.
125 Robert Murphy, “Vibrant’ Conditions on Mattoon Street Protested,” Springfield Union, July 7, 1983, LMWLA; Eugene Berman, “President’s Address” (Mattoon Street Historic Preservation Association, 1978), LMWLA.
merely people who did not live on the street or a pesky handful of bar patrons. If Mattoon Street residents applied “non-residents” evenly to all individuals that did not live on the street, then suburban “tourists” would unarguably fall within the category of “non-resident.” Rather, “non-residents” encompassed a broad, racialized caste of nonwhite and non-normative individuals who refused to be displaced, an action some Mattoon Street residents perceived as threatening or even criminal.

The presence of “non-residents” conjured up the specter of lodgers that the MSHPA first sought to expel from the neighborhood. But in other instances, “non-residents” were quite literally the former lodgers of Mattoon Street residents’ homes. Sally Fuller recalled coming home to find Vermillion Fielder, a former boarder who previously lived in her home, sitting at her kitchen table after letting himself in through an unlocked door.

Regardless of his displacement, Fielder maintained a place attachment to his former home and continued to make frequent trips to the Fullers’ residence, where Fuller remembered finding him sitting on their back stoop. Other non-residents let themselves into Mattoon Street residents’ homes through unlocked doors or windows. Articulated through the actions of former boarders like Vermillion Fielder, boarders and lodgers illustrated that displacement did not sever their physical or emotional ties to Mattoon Street. Such actions not only destabilized the security of private property ownership on Mattoon Street, but undermined Mattoon Street residents’ efforts to stage the street as a safe space for white suburbanites.

Individuals without homes and “prostitutes and dope dealers” made up a similar class of “non-residents” that posed particular gendered and racialized threats to Mattoon

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126 Sally Fuller, oral history interview.
127 Judy Matt, oral history interview.
Street residents’ portrayal of the street as a safe space. By the 1980s, homelessness in Springfield constituted a particularly ambiguous problem with estimates ranging from 200 to over 3,000 individuals without homes in the city.\textsuperscript{128} This ambiguity intermixed with anxieties about urban drug abuse, a phenomenon increasingly associated with the “problem” of Black and nonwhite pathological violence.\textsuperscript{129} In this context, Mattoon Street residents appealed to the protection of white innocence, a central imperative of the wars on crime and drugs.\textsuperscript{130} The owners of Two Mattoon, Ken Rya and Steve Fox, tapped into this framework in their application to the SHC to install new exterior lights, justifying their renovations as a necessary measure to “protect the female clientele” from homeless “bums.”\textsuperscript{131} In a second application, Rya and Fox emphasized the threat of “bums” who “were sitting in the windows drinking + carrying on” and “scaring the females to death.”\textsuperscript{132} These “bums” not only threatened the sexual safety and security of white women, but frustrated Mattoon Street residents’ ability to combat the street’s reputation as a space for illicit drug use and prostitution. One MSHPA member made this connection explicit, noting “When I first moved in here, there were prostitutes and dope dealers all over the street… We’ve made some headway, and now it seems like we’re losing a little ground.”\textsuperscript{133} To Mattoon Street

\textsuperscript{129} Holtzman, \textit{The Long Crisis: New York City and the Path to Neoliberalism}, 202.
\textsuperscript{131} Two Mattoon, application for Certificate of Appropriateness to the Springfield Historical Commission, September 21, 1981, Springfield Historical Commission files, Springfield, MA.
\textsuperscript{132} Two Mattoon, application for Certificate of Appropriateness to the Springfield Historical Commission, September 21, 1981, Springfield Historical Commission files, Springfield, MA.
residents, these “non-resident” “prostitutes and dope dealers” posed racialized threats to their preferred image of Mattoon Street as a safe space for white suburban reinvestment.

In the political climate of the wars on drugs and crime, Mattoon Street residents approached social problems like homelessness and drug use by devising new punitive measures to disincentivize Mattoon Street’s attraction to these “non-residents.” “Non-resident” automobiles continued to be the primary signifier of Mattoon Street residents’ inability to maintain the street’s image as a safe space. In 1982, the MSHPA’s new president, David Sanborn, coordinated with nearby business owners to mobilize a private police force of off-duty SPD officers dedicated to patrol Mattoon Street on the weekends.\textsuperscript{134} While ostensibly hired to monitor parking, when combined with the SPD’s existing patrols and proximity to Mattoon Street, the MSHPA’s private police squad brought a near-constant demonstration of police force to the street. But the number of non-resident cars, “bums,” and “prostitutes and dope dealers” on the street continued unabated. Ultimately, the MSHPA’s policing strategy disintegrated by the end of 1982 when Rya and Fox pulled out of their agreement with the MSHPA to help finance the weekend police patrol.\textsuperscript{135}

The threats posed by “non-residents” like “prostitutes and dope dealers” drove preservationists in search of new punitive solutions that culminated in the passage of the city’s first residential parking permit ordinance. Shortly after disbanding their private police force, the MSHPA pivoted to lobbying the Springfield City Council for the passage of an ordinance that would codify restrictions on non-resident mobility. Sanborn and MSHPA leadership drafted an ordinance that would allow only Mattoon Street residents to lawfully

\textsuperscript{134} “Irked Residents Seek Law to Restrict Parking,” \textit{Springfield Union}, March 1982, LMWLA; “Minutes of the Mattoon Street Historic Preservation Association” (Springfield, MA: Mattoon Street Historic Preservation Association, April 7, 1980), LMWLA.

\textsuperscript{135} Steve Fox and Ken Rya to David Sanborn, letter, 1982, Mattoon Street Historic Preservation Association, LMWLA.
park on the street, extending the rights of private property ownership to the street itself.\textsuperscript{136} As with their preservationist agenda for the street, property ownership remained central to the MSHPA’s ordinance campaign. The MSHPA justified the necessity of the ordinance through appeals that it would enhance Mattoon Street as a space amenable to white, suburban standards of safety and private property. Residents underscored that the ordinance would “preserve the value of property in the designated residential districts” by deterring “non-residents” from entering their neighborhood in the first place.\textsuperscript{137} “Who is it the City wants to come back—the drinkers?” Sanborn posited to the city council, “or the residents who will pay taxes, improve properties and patronize downtown stores and service establishments on a continuing basis? Are we going to be the City of Homes or the City of Bars?”\textsuperscript{138} By invoking the “City of Homes,” the MSHPA framed the security offered by private parking as a strategy to draw stable, white residents that could expand the city’s tax base. The ordinance passed in 1983, cementing the MSHPA’s valorization of private property first articulated in their historical narratives about Mattoon Street and then enforced through their own efforts to link preservation with crime prevention.

Reframing historic preservation as a crime prevention strategy transformed the historic preservation movement during the 1970s and 1980s. First, preservationists prefigured the logics of “broken windows” policing. Already, preservationists illustrated that


\textsuperscript{137} “An Ordinance Amending Permit Parking Districts” (1982).

to make Mattoon Street look and feel safe required the constant vigilance of owner-occupants to identify and eliminate any source of disorder that threatened the street’s desirability and stability to white suburbanites. These types of formal and informal residential policing strategies informed George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson’s infamous “broken windows” theory that minor forms of disorder left unchecked bred neighborhood decline.139 The MSHPA’s solution to adopt a parking permit ordinance remained consistent with building a “defensible space.” Oscar Newman identified controlling or altering traffic patterns as a method to provide “a form of continuous natural surveillance, as well as an opportunity for formal patrol by a policing authority” to check parking stickers and write citations for violations.140 Such developments, as historian Anne Gray Fischer observes, facilitated the “implementation of a new urban economic order organized around private investment capital, white home ownership, and downtown commercial entertainment” that increased the likelihood that Springfield residents would come into contact with the police.141 But despite “all the resources that have been put in” to protect Mattoon Street residents’ claims to private property, Judy Matt warned, “it’s fragile.”142 These feelings of instability and fragility directed preservationists to the same conclusion Kelling and Wilson arrived at to

142 Judy Matt, oral history interview.
ensure and maintain order: increasing contact between law enforcement and citizens to police any form of minor misconduct or disorder.¹⁴³

The actions of organizations like the MSHPA reverberated far past the boundaries of Mattoon Street. Preservationists across the nation pointed to the crime prevention initiatives of local preservation associations to maintain consistent support for historic preservation from federal and state governments obsessed with crime control.¹⁴⁴ While their manifestations on the ground varied from one locale to the next, the wars on crime and drugs continued to absorb state and federal funding streams regardless of their specific local contexts. Like their counterparts in the MSHPA, professional preservationists across the country found that illustrating how preservation was consistent with a tough-on-crime agenda rearticulated preservation’s values through a punitive framework that appealed to state and federal policymakers. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), an independent federal agency that advised the president and Congress on preservation policy, made particularly strident appeals to historic preservation’s ability to prevent crime. The ACHP argued that preservation could alleviate all aspects of the ongoing urban crisis, but especially highlighted that “preservation prevents crime.”¹⁴⁵ In a series of reports in 1978 and 1979 the ACHP noted that in areas where “rehabilitation became highly visible,” crime decreased “significantly.”¹⁴⁶ “One tangible social benefit of the preservation activity” in historic districts the ACHP studied in Alexandria, Virginia; Galveston, Texas; Savannah,

¹⁴⁴ Hinton, From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America, 277–89.
Georgia; and Seattle Washington, “has been the decrease in violent crime.”¹⁴⁷ Such results remained compelling to preservationists across the country who drew from the ACHP’s reporting to justify their own calls for historic preservation funding mechanisms like investment tax credits.¹⁴⁸

Alongside the ACHP, the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP), a national nonprofit preservation organization founded in 1949, underscored historic preservation and crime prevention as conjoined projects, linking successful preservation initiatives to lower crime rates.¹⁴⁹ Timothy G. Conley, a resident of St. Louis and frequent editorialist in the NTHP’s publication, Preservation News, argued that historic preservation transformed the Lafayette Square neighborhood from “one of the most dangerous areas in St. Louis” to one where the “crime rate has totally reversed itself” through efforts of preservationist “pioneers.”¹⁵⁰ In another initiative lauded by the NTHP in 1980, North Carolina’s attorney general noted that preservation “has a direct relationship to crime” and called on the National Association of Attorneys General to devote legal resources to historic preservation.¹⁵¹ In “an energy short, capital short, crime-ridden environment,” ACHP

chairman Richard H. Jeanette wondered, “what better arguments for preservation could we possibly have?”

Revaluing preservation as a tool to prevent crime reflects not individual malicious intent from preservationists, but rather how new punitive modes of urban governance overwhelmed areas of social and political life that seemingly had nothing to do with crime and punishment. Contrasted with the flourishing body of historical scholarship examining criminal courts, police departments, and the penal system, preservation constituted just one arena underexplored by urban and public historians in which this punitive turn operated. Overwhelmingly, preservationists sincerely sought solutions to the material and social problems they encountered like abandoned housing, deindustrialization, drug abuse, and homelessness. But in a social and political reality increasingly structured around “law and order,” preservationists found fewer avenues for financial and political support for historic preservation that did not prioritize punitive solutions to those very problems. If tough-on-crime politics reoriented governance around “strategies of punishment, surveillance,

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coercion, sanctions, quarantine, or containment,” so too did they redirect public historical praxis to a punitive management of social and political problems.  

Conclusion
Looking to Mattoon Street as early as 1976, preservationists concluded that “Springfield’s future as a ‘City of Homes’ seems assured” through the “tasteful restoration of old neighborhoods” like Mattoon Street. After the “trauma” of “urban deterioration and abandonment”—hallmarks of the city’s urban crisis—Springfield had “finally revived” through the infusion of white-collar preservationists into urban neighborhoods and their application of their “culture of property.” But these celebrations of Mattoon Street’s rebirth masked the more complex social and political stakes involved as community preservationists oriented their movement toward alleviating the urban crisis. In its final iteration, the culture of property promoted and then protected private property ownership in a bid to battle urban decline. On Mattoon Street, the culture of property rested on two intertwined ideological pillars. The first, a set of archival tools, frameworks, and methodologies, valorized property owners as the most appropriate stewards to chart Springfield’s course away from the urban crisis. The second extended preservationists’ assumption of stewards of the built environment, allying preservation with a tough-on-crime agenda and promoting Springfield as a safe space for white suburbanites. The MSHPA knit both of these strategies together at the core of their culture of property that envisioned owner-occupant property owners lifting Springfield out of the ashes of crisis. Forging a

“useable past” to promote property ownership within the broader contours of the nascent wars on crime and drugs would prove a popular strategy as historic preservation gained traction in neighborhoods with drastically different social and spatial contexts than Mattoon Street. In those neighborhoods, Springfield residents found preservation to be a remarkably flexible tool, so long as the endgame remained promoting and protecting property ownership. It is to those neighborhoods, first Forest Park Heights and then McKnight, that I turn to next.
CHAPTER 3

Reversing White Flight: The Suburban Zoning Politics of Historic Preservation

On a chilly fall evening in 1973, a small group of Forest Park Heights residents gathered in Pat Triggs’ living room in her home on Greenleaf Avenue. Held around her coffee table, their meeting “was filled with excitement,” Triggs remembered, “We thought, ‘Oh, this is going to be great!’”¹ As members of the Forest Park Civic Association (FPCA), Triggs and other meeting attendees hoped their neighborhood would become Springfield’s second historic district. First organized in 1963, the FPCA mobilized throughout the late 1960s and 1970s to defend their neighborhood from the aftershocks of Springfield’s urban crisis. As a middle- and upper-class residential neighborhood on Springfield’s southeastern border with suburban Longmeadow, the FPCA sought to stabilize the neighborhood against white flight and to maintain Forest Park Heights’ real estate values. In the decade between their formation and meeting in Triggs’ living room, the FPCA worked diligently to oppose any high-density or commercial zoning changes that would alter the neighborhood’s “character” of single- and two-family residences. Historic preservation, the FPCA believed, was an attractive tool compatible with this agenda.

This chapter traces the role of the FPCA in expanding Springfield’s preservation movement from some thirty-odd brick rowhouses on Mattoon Street to an entire residential neighborhood filled with hundreds of Victorian homes. The FPCA built upon the preservationist ideology first articulated by their counterparts in the Mattoon Street Historic Preservation Association (MSHPA) in distinct ways that nevertheless retained a core commitment to the culture of property’s ability to alleviate the urban crisis. I explore these developments by first situating the FPCA within the broader suburban politics of zoning,

¹ Pat Triggs, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, October 28, 2020, interview in possession of author.
white flight, and land-use science reshaping conversations about urban space in the mid-
twentieth century. From their formal organization in 1963, the FPCA organized against any
proposed zoning changes to Forest Park Heights that would have permitted anything other
than single- or two-family owner-occupied residential housing. As historians of twentieth-
century suburbanization argue, this defense of low-density housing and protection of
suburban property rights obscured the racially discriminatory motivations of the federal
housing industry and real estate market from direct legal challenges through an ostensibly
race-neutral language of “incompatible land use” and market imperatives.2 These debates
about zoning and land-use “provided a useful language with which a mobile, increasingly
affluent, and fast-growing white middle class could explain its desire for certain kinds of
exclusion without invoking the ideologically loaded language of race.”3 If low-density zoning
created the conditions for exclusion, then high-density or multifamily zoning would make
neighborhoods like Forest Park Heights too accessible to nonwhite or low-income tenants.
Such discourse rested on the tacit belief that Black, nonwhite, or low-income residents were
not just incapable of responsibly owning property, but that their very presence in exclusive,
white suburban-like spaces would harm a neighborhood’s property values.4 Despite being
within Springfield’s city limits, rather than an autonomous suburban community like
Longmeadow, FPCA members adapted suburban zoning politics to stabilize the

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2 David M. P. Freund, Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America (Chicago, IL:
Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2014); Keeanga-
Yamahtta Taylor, Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership
(Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2019); Matthew D. Lassiter, The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in
the Sunbelt South (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 54–64; see also Robert O. Self, American


4 Taylor, Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership, 168; Freund,
Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America, 42.
neighborhood against the process of white flight underway in other areas of Springfield by deflecting the “encroachment” of multifamily housing, cheap commercial establishments, and professional offices.\(^5\)

Historic preservation and its attendant culture of property, when paired with the FPCA’s aggressive campaigns against zoning, provided a secure defense of single-family residential property ownership and property values that appealed to white residents who considered leaving the city behind. I chart this ideological merger between a defense of suburban-style zoning and historic preservation by examining the professional alliance between the FPCA and Springfield Historical Commission (SHC) that culminated in Forest Park Heights’ designation as the city’s second historic district in 1975. Both groups mobilized to articulate Forest Park Heights’ historical and contemporary significance as a “stable” residential area of single-family homes occupied by an equally homogenous white-collar middle and upper class. Such arguments buttressed the FPCA’s project of preserving their neighborhood’s property values. But unlike on Mattoon Street where property owners unanimously rallied behind preservation, in Forest Park Heights this process proved more contentious. When a handful of property owners charged the SHC’s proposed preservation controls as a violation of their individual property rights, the SHC and FPCA crafted significant exemptions from restrictions regulating paint color and other minor design elements in their final historic district proposal. Ultimately, these exemptions entrenched a preservationist ideology that sought to promote and protect residential property ownership by further integrating suburban zoning politics and homeownership rights within community preservationists’ culture of property.

\(^5\) “Dear Neighbor,” newsletter of the Forest Park Civic Association, 1964, Forest Park Civic Association collection, LMWLA.
FPCA members did not just argue that preservation could protect property values, they put this argument into practice. I conclude by revealing how FPCA members and Forest Park Heights residents used the new preservationist tools available to them following their neighborhood’s designation to reinforce a neighborhood demography and spatial geography that remained overwhelmingly white, middle-class, and zoned for low-density residential housing through the 1990s. If historic preservation helped produce these kinds of discriminatory outcomes, so too did it furnish a defense for this exclusionary reality through a valuation of neighborhood “diversity.” FPCA preservationists assured their critics that “we’re as diverse as the dickens” while pointing to their uncontroversial acceptance of “Blacks and Whites” within their ranks as evidence of their sincere valuation of “diversity” in their neighborhood and the city’s preservation movement. But “diversity,” as Cameron Logan argues, emerged in the 1970s as a preservationist ideal that escaped measurement in any meaningful way. FPCA members were equally opaque in their deployment of “diversity.” In the hands of the FPCA, “diversity” operated as a vague value set that slipped between an unsubstantiated commitment to social diversity in their neighborhood or praise directed at the range of Victorian-era domestic architectural styles in Forest Park Heights. While historians of preservation have yet to explore how preservationists moved between indexing the “diversity” of their neighborhood in socioeconomic and architectural terms, I demonstrate that architectural “diversity” performed similar kinds of ideological labor as commitments to social and cultural “diversity.”

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By situating the FPCA’s preservation activities within the highly racialized mid-century movements for low-density suburban zoning, I offer an alternative explanation to the transformation of historic preservation during this period that diverges from historians of historic preservation in several ways. First, my analysis of the FPCA unites the large body of scholarship dedicated to uncovering the racial politics of suburban zoning, white flight, and exclusion with the historiography of historic preservation. While a rich body of scholarship has primarily examined the Progressive-era relationship between preservation and zoning, my focus here is on the ways in which preservationists engaged with distinctly suburban zoning politics. In doing so, I take up calls from historians like Alison Isenberg who have pushed historians to consider how preservation spread across urban, suburban, and rural contexts by tracing how residents of urban communities adapted policies designed to benefit autonomous suburbs for their own neighborhoods still tied to urban modes of governance. Most accounts of historic preservation remain dependent upon large, metropolitan centers to illustrate preservationists’ deep engagement with midcentury urban renewal and urban redevelopment politics. By shifting scales to a regional city like


Springfield, I demonstrate the centrality of suburban social and spatial arrangements in community preservationists’ culture of property.

Preservation appealed to the FPCA precisely because of its powerful potential to extend the exclusive low-density zoning that predominated throughout suburbia to urban neighborhoods experiencing racial turnover from white flight. While historians like Lily Geismer have illustrated how suburbanites utilized environmental conservation and open space preservation to exclusionary ends, the role of historic preservation remains underexplored in suburban contexts. Such developments complicate the conclusions historians like Suleiman Osman or Cameron Logan, who observe that preservationists in the postwar period embraced preservation within a broader rejection of the homogeneous sociopolitical and spatial environment of the suburbs in favor of an “authentic” urban community. The case of Forest Park Heights illustrates that community preservationists did not always reject suburbia, but instead absorbed its individualist ideology into their own movement. Historic preservation, by promoting residential property ownership, made it easy to link preservation to an existing suburban-style agenda to protect individual residential property values. Ultimately, defending residential property values by way of historic preservation folded practices of “historical meaning making” into a defense of “community” cohesion narrowly bounded by lines of race and class.

“Our Lovely Neighborhood Is Vulnerable to Attack”: Forest Park Heights and the Genesis of the Forest Park Civic Association

Over the course of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Forest Park Heights emerged as a wealthy, almost exclusively white, enclave for Springfield’s liberal business and government establishment. “Forest Park Heights” comprises the northwestern section of “Forest Park,” the colloquial name for the entire neighborhood. While within the urban city limits of Springfield, Forest Park Heights spatially and culturally developed as a suburban-style neighborhood marked by low-density housing and overwhelming economic and racial homogeneity. Unlike autonomous suburban communities like nearby Longmeadow, the neighborhood’s location within Springfield made it more difficult to ward off the kinds of demographic changes associated with the urban crisis.\(^\text{15}\) To prevent that crisis from reaching their own doorsteps, the Forest Park Civic Association (FPCA) mobilized in 1963 and situated a suburban politics of low-density zoning as their organization’s guiding ideology. FPCA members framed Forest Park Heights as under attack from proposed zoning changes that threatened greater housing or commercial density, changes they and Springfield’s city government feared would result in white flight—and the subsequent flight of tax revenues—and the neighborhood’s decline. While the FPCA made these arguments in good faith, the discourse of zoning and land-use science to which they prescribed provided a defense of single-family housing and racial homogeneity that cloaked racially discriminatory outcomes in the ostensibly race-neutral language of incompatible land uses.

Forest Park Heights emerged in the late nineteenth century as a product of what FPCA members and local preservation advocates defined as Springfield’s “Golden Era,” a “time of great change, growth and progress.”\(^\text{16}\) A period from roughly 1865 to 1915,


Springfield’s “Golden Era” encompassed the city’s rapid industrialization, marked by the centrality of the Springfield Armory to the city’s economy, and the development of new residential neighborhoods. Forest Park Heights, alongside the McKnight neighborhood, remained a prime example of this “Golden Era.” Both neighborhoods were historically linked. John and William McKnight, the brothers behind the McKnight neighborhood’s speculative development in the 1870s and 1880s, invested in Forest Park Heights, forming the Mutual Investment Company in 1890.¹⁷ Alongside the McKnights, the Forest Park Heights Company and lumber syndicate D.L. Swan developed much of the remainder of the neighborhood between the 1890s and 1910s.¹⁸

![Figure 3.1: Sumner Avenue and Forest Park Avenue, circa 1906. The large, Queen Anne home in the center of the image, originally constructed in 1893, reflects the architectural building tastes of Forest Park Heights’ developers. Source: Digital Commonwealth.](image)

Alongside private investment, Forest Park Heights’ prestige soared due to the significant public investments in the neighborhood’s infrastructure. The 735-acre Frederick

¹⁷ “New Real Estate Syndicate,” Springfield Republican, October 11, 1890.
Law Olmsted-designed Forest Park solidified the neighborhood’s stature and architectural pedigree of large, ornate Victorian homes (Figure 3.1). The McKnights, Swan, and the Forest Park Heights Company employed a wide variety of architectural styles as they speculatively built up the neighborhood between 1890 and 1920, including Queen Anne, Shingle, Classical, Colonial Revival, and Tudor. Overwhelmingly, Colonial Revival dominated among the neighborhood’s eclectic residential styles, constituting almost 60 percent of the neighborhood’s inventoried housing stock. Queen Anne and Tudor Revival remained popular as well, collectively representing about 20 percent of the neighborhood’s housing styles. In the context of late-nineteenth-century disruptive transformations like urbanization, immigration, and industrialization, such styles reflected a search on the part of architects for “organic” or “ civilized” architectural styles that transparently indicated a hegemonic national or racial identity. Revivalist styles, especially Tudor and Colonial Revival, “provided an upper class under stress with valuable emblems of unity and exclusivity” and contained the power to evoke what architect Ralph Adams Cram described as “racial memories” that stretched back to an imagined trans-Atlantic Anglo-Saxon racial heritage. Influenced by the writings of figures like Andrew Jackson Downing and Catherine

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19 Illustrated Forest Park: With Sketch of the Other Public Grounds of Springfield, their Beautiful Scenery and Principal Points of Interest (Springfield, MA: The American Book Exchange, 1900).
Beecher, Forest Park Heights’ developers similarly hoped to situate the single-family home as a private space to cultivate the self and family against the perceived social ills of urbanization. To that end, developers built homes on spacious lots, some as deep as 125 feet and as wide as 85 feet on prominent streets like Magnolia Terrace, and employed a uniform setback from the street of roughly 30 feet to strengthen the neighborhood’s low residential density.

While single-family homes made up the “vast majority” of housing stock throughout Forest Park Heights, beginning in the 1910s subsequent developers built apartment buildings on the neighborhood’s periphery concentrated along the western end of Sumner Avenue. Designed primarily in Classical and English Revival styles, these apartment buildings shared the architectural vocabulary of their single-family counterparts (Figure 3.2). In deploying the same revivalist styles as the neighborhood’s single-family homes, architects helped resolve the tensions inherent in the construction of larger apartment buildings in a neighborhood of single- and double-family homes. Ranging in size from smaller six-unit buildings to large apartments with 30 units or more, these apartments housed a middle-class cadre of stenographers, cashiers, tailors, and clerks.


25 John Wilson estimated that roughly 375 of 500 homes in Forest Park Heights were single-family homes, see Springfield Historical Commission, “Forest Park Heights National Register of Historic Places Nomination,” rough draft, circa 1980, Forest Park Heights historic district file, Springfield Historical Commission, Springfield, MA. City planning documents confirm the neighborhood’s low density, see “Existing Land Use,” (Springfield, MA: City Planning Board, 1955), LMWLA.


27 Most of these apartments were built between 1910 and 1920, see Springfield Historical Commission, “8 Ten Apartment House,” n.d., Form-B Building Survey 2041; Springfield Historical Commission, “20 Ten Block House,” n.d., Form-B Building Survey 2033; Springfield Historical Commission, “32 Ten Block Apartment
With its low-density, elegant Victorian homes arrayed around Forest Park, Forest Park Heights embodied what historian LeeAnn Lands describes as a “park-neighborhood.” A common urban residential development in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, park-neighborhoods facilitated an ideological “landscape way of seeing” through the inclusion of public park spaces while functioning as powerful cultural and spatial signifiers of whiteness and property ownership.28 Developers like the McKnights enforced economic and racial homogeneity through the restrictive deeds they sold to prospective homebuyers and builders and the use of single-family residential zoning.29 In the sections of

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Forest Park Heights the McKnights developed, restrictions written into deeds prohibited property owners from erecting “any old building” other than a single- or double-family home, “nor any building less than Thirty (30) hundred dollars.” The Forest Park Heights Company also maintained mandatory minimum home-building costs: at least 3,500 dollars on most of the neighborhood’s streets and 5,000 dollars on high-profile streets like Magnolia Terrace. While these deeds did not explicitly mention race, such restrictions precluded the ability of many nonwhite or low-income Springfield residents to purchase or build a home in Forest Park Heights while securing what neighborhood boosters described as a “higher phase of citizenship” for white potential residents. Through these restrictive development practices, as Lands observes, whiteness became “discursively and spatially attached” to Forest Park Heights. By 1920, with much of the neighborhood developed, only 25 of the neighborhood’s 14,714 residents were Black or nonwhite.

This economic and racial homogeneity remained the status quo in Forest Park Heights well into the 1990s. Between 1950 and 1970, Forest Park Heights was almost 100 percent white, dipping below 95 percent only in 1990. In comparison, in 1970 the entire city of Springfield was only 87 percent white, dropping down to 68 percent white by 1990. Alongside the almost exclusively white neighborhoods of East Forest Park and Sixteen

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31 Jenkins and Burkhardt, “Forest Park Heights National Register of Historic Places Nomination.”
33 Lands, The Culture of Property: Race, Class, and Housing Landscapes in Atlanta, 1880-1950, 4.
Acres to the east, and the suburban towns of Longmeadow and East Longmeadow, Massachusetts to the south, Forest Park Heights made up what the Massachusetts State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights described in 1966 as a “white noose” surrounding Springfield’s urban core. With racial and economic homogeneity secured, the neighborhood remained a stronghold for the city’s white liberal business and government establishment, especially after the implementation of a new city charter in 1962. The new charter discarded Springfield’s bicameral Board of Aldermen and Common Council elected from the city’s eight wards in favor of a city council elected at-large. Between 1962 and 1975, the year Forest Park Heights became the city’s second historic district, Forest Park residents regularly held a five-seat majority on the new nine-member city council. Charles Ryan and Frank Freedman, whose mayoral administrations spanned a decade from 1962 to 1972, both resided in Forest Park as well. Combined with the neighborhood’s socioeconomic homogeneity, the preponderance of Forest Park residents in Springfield’s municipal politics established the neighborhood as an enclave for the city’s white-collar liberal establishment.

39 This change was known as “Plan A” under the state’s Municipal Code and consolidated power beneath the city’s mayor to make appointments, craft the city budget, and chair the School Committee. See N.J. Demerath and Rhys H. Williams, A Bridging of Faiths: Religion and Politics in a New England City (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 59–61; James S. Bulkley and Roger L. Putnam "What’s All This Talk About 'Plan A'? Eleven Questions With Answers," n.d. LMWLA; "Should Springfield Join the Trend Toward City Manager Government?" Horizons (August, 1948), LMWLA; Springfield Board of Realtors, "Strong Mayor Plan 'A' and Springfield City Charters Compared," (Springfield, MA: Springfield Board of Realtors, 1959), LMWLA.
40 Other members tended to be elected from East Forest Park, Sixteen Acres, and Pine Point. Statistical data on Springfield’s city council was compiled from the annual Springfield Governmental Directory, see Springfield City Directories (Price & Lee Co.) for 1962-1975.
Beginning in 1963, the Forest Park Civic Association (FPCA) entrenched their neighborhood’s existing suburban qualities. The FPCA tapped into a suburban politics of zoning and land-use science to oppose any changes to the neighborhood’s “character” of low-density residential housing on the grounds such changes would adversely affect property values. This logic proposed that multifamily zoning, rather than lower-density zoning restrictions, would provide nonwhite or low-income individuals easier access to all-white exclusive spaces; high-density zoning became the target of white suburban attacks rather than overt resistance to nonwhite people. Indeed, FPCA members did not identify as racist archconservatives nor did they launch the kinds of violent attacks against prospective Black homeowners associated with homeowners’ associations as in suburban Detroit or Levittown, Pennsylvania during this period.\footnote{Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, 233–34.}


Instead, FPCA members viewed themselves as colorblind progressives, who Lily Geismer characterizes as “suburban liberals” that sympathized with liberal social movements but rarely took on structural issues that could challenge their own investments in a racialized housing market.\footnote{Geismer, *Don’t Blame Us: Suburban Liberals and the Transformation of the Democratic Party*, 6.} Bill Malloy, a lawyer and officer of the FPCA, insisted that the FPCA’s low-density zoning agenda only had a “financial side” in its implications for the

\footnotetext[41]{Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, 233–34.}
\footnotetext[43]{Geismer, *Don’t Blame Us: Suburban Liberals and the Transformation of the Democratic Party*, 6.}
neighborhood’s demography, as opposed to a “racial side.” Zoning, Pat Triggs argued, was only ever “about land use” and devoid of consequences for the racial and economic makeup of Forest Park Heights. Through these kinds of colorblind appeals FPCA members “perpetuated larger patterns of residential and class inequality” by downplaying race or structural barriers to Black homeownership even as they made good faith arguments for the betterment of their neighborhoods. And, like their counterparts in the MSHPA, this line of argumentation constructed an ostensibly race-neutral affirmation of homeownership as the lynchpin in making Forest Park Heights a defensible space against the most detrimental effects of Springfield’s urban crisis.

When the FPCA first mobilized to protest a proposed zoning change to multifamily housing, they brought the ideologically loaded language of zoning and property values to Forest Park Heights. When the new owner of 181 and 187 Sumner Avenue applied to change the properties’ zoning restrictions in 1961 from Residence B (two-family) to multifamily zoning, early FPCA members Michael Green, Joseph Gurvitch, and Ernest Hargreaves launched a vocal protest to the city council. Under Springfield’s zoning ordinances, multifamily zoning, known as Residence C, allowed property owners to build large, higher-density apartment buildings. Green, Gurvitch, and Hargreaves argued that the “Erection of apartment houses, motels, and other buildings permissible under Zone C will

44 Bill Malloy, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, November 30, 2020, interview in possession of author.
45 Pat Triggs, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
48 The city’s residential zoning ordinances remained consistent throughout the postwar era, see “Zoning Ordinance of the City of Springfield,” as amended April 22, 1971, (Springfield, MA: Springfield Planning Department, 1971), 15-18.
adversely affect land values and lead to a general deterioration of property in the area.”

Focusing on “adverse effects” to land values, Green, Gurvitch, and Hargreaves launched a defense of their neighborhood’s property values grounded in unspoken assumptions about who would find apartment buildings appealing. From this “original purpose” to “protect the residential character of the neighborhood and promote the quality of life in the region” threatened by high-density zoning, the FPCA was born in 1963.

The Forest Park Heights homeowners that composed the earliest iteration of the FPCA framed their neighborhood as “vulnerable to attack” within a militarized rhetoric of war and conflict (Figure 3.3). “ANY change in the character of a single lot threatens the neighborhood,” the FPCA warned nearby homeowners, noting that “The members of the FPCA have an investment of hard work, tears, anguish, concern and over $3,000,000 in their properties. We intend to protect it.” FPCA members mobilized to “hold the line” on Sumner Avenue, the neighborhood’s primary east-west artery anchored by Interstate-91 to the west and the “X” to the east. As Forest Park’s primary commercial intersection, the “X’s” commercial zoning threatened to spread “out in all directions, gobbling up more single and double family residences.” FPCA members pointed to the influence of the “X” in efforts to rezone large homes on Sumner Avenue as professional offices, changes that

49 Michael Green, Joseph E. Gurvitch, and Ernest D. Hargreaves to Councilman John P. O’Brien, October 24, 1961, Forest Park Civic Association Collection, LMWLA.
52 “Forest Park Civic Association,” newsletter of the Forest Park Civic Association, 1964, Forest Park Civic Association collection, LMWLA.
53 “Zoning Battle on Parker St.,” Our Neighborhood (April 1972), 3, Forest Park Civic Association collection, LMWLA.
54 “Who’s Going to Get Sumner Avenue?” Our Neighborhood 1, no. 2 (December 1970), 2, Forest Park Civic Association collection, LMWLA.
constituted “cancer zoning” capable of ruining “a completely residential area” by introducing commercialized land uses.\footnote{“Memorandum of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Appeals,” March 11, 1971, City of Springfield Board of Appeals, Forest Park Civic Association collection, LMWLA.}
1910s and 1920s. By the 1970s, these apartments housed largely white, elderly retirees or widows and remained consistent with the neighborhood’s late-nineteenth-century architectural tastes. FPCA members articulated their apprehension about new apartments in reaction to a real and perceived increase in apartment buildings and a developing association between these buildings and nonwhite or low-income tenants. Following the near-total clearance of the city’s North End for urban renewal projects in the 1950s and 1960s, the city’s housing market did face a significant crunch. In their search for available housing, the Springfield Redevelopment Authority (SRA) relocated 27 households from the North End to Forest Park Heights near the “X” in the 1960s, two of which were nonwhite. Alongside former North End residents, Forest Park Heights’ population of Black and nonwhite residents slightly increased from 31 to 239 between 1960 and 1970. But despite these changes, Forest Park Heights remained 99 percent white and the “vast majority” of homes, roughly 75 percent, remained zoned as single-family residences.

FPCA members remained steadfast in their belief that the appearance of more apartment buildings or the conversion of single-family homes into apartments would accelerate these changes. FPCA members insisted that apartment buildings would “devalue

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56 See *Springfield City Directory* (Price and Lee, Co., 1973) for data on apartment residents on Sumner Avenue. Some of the largest included the roughly 60-unit 127-133 Sumner Avenue, see Springfield Historical Commission, “32 Ten Block,” n.d., Form-B Building Survey 2150; The Beechwood Apartments at 83-91 Sumner Avenue contained 32 apartments, see Springfield Historical Commission, “The Beechwood,” n.d., Form-B Building Survey, 2143; and 16-20 Sumner Avenue which contained roughly 20 apartment units, see Springfield Historical Commission, “20 Ten Block House,” n.d., Form-B Building Survey 2033.

57 The Massachusetts State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights demonstrated a strong association between nonwhite individuals and renting evidenced by statistical data that demonstrated roughly 70 percent of renters were nonwhite, “Housing Discrimination in the Springfield-Holyoke-Chicopee Metropolitan Area,” 14.


60 Springfield Community Renewal Program Neighborhood Analysis: Forest Park (Springfield Planning Department, Springfield, MA: 1973), 1, LMWLA.


many homes in the area.” 63 Other FPCA members slipped into more explicit charges against potential tenants but continued to frame their arguments through a colorblind lens. Apartments would not only “be out of keeping with the single family character of the neighborhood,” but “would attract a transient type of person.” 64 Such arguments puzzled the Springfield planning department, who noted that Sumner Avenue already “has a number of apartment buildings…There is no reason to believe that new apartments would attract a different type of resident.” 65 Despite these realities, the FPCA continued to staunchly oppose high-density housing to protect the residential “character” of their neighborhood. As the FPCA doubled down on this defense of low-density housing, they gravitated towards the city’s nascent historic preservation movement to buttress their protection of residential property values. Already primed to promote residential homeownership through their culture of property, the city’s community preservationists provided a similar lexicon of “character” and design regulation that appealed to FPCA members.

“A Whole Which is Greater Than the Sum of Its Individual Parts”: Creating the Forest Park Heights Historic District

Just one year after the designation of Mattoon Street as Springfield’s first local historic district in 1972, FPCA members mobilized to list a portion of their neighborhood as the city’s second historic district. To FPCA members, Mattoon Street residents’ efforts to promote their culture of property that promoted homeownership to alleviate urban decline remained consistent with their own suburban zoning politics. FPCA members hoped to

63 “Would You Want a 7-Story Apartment in Your Backyard?” Forest Park Civic Association, November 25, 1977, Forest Park Civic Association collection, LWMLA.
64 Springfield Planning Department, “Old Sumner Avenue Study,” Staff Report (Springfield, MA: Planning Department, November 1971), 9.
65 Springfield Planning Department, "Old Sumner Avenue Study," 10.
utilize preservation to stem white flight and secure the boundaries of their neighborhood and so also their own residential property values.

Alongside the Springfield Historical Commission (SHC), the FPCA worked to craft an extensive historic narrative that emphasized Forest Park Heights’ historical significance as a homogenous neighborhood of single-family residences. SHC staff and FPCA preservationists drew from a wide range of sources, including building permits, newspaper articles, deeds, and oral history interviews. In their final analysis, presented in the neighborhood’s local historic district report in 1975 and a National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) nomination in 1982, the SHC and FPCA drew attention to the “character of the district’s architecture” and the eclectic range of housing styles.66 Despite the passage of 60 years since the neighborhood’s initial development, “to this day it [Forest Park Heights] remains a remarkably cohesive district” defined by the kinds of exclusionary building practices of “uniform setbacks, constant building scale; similarity of construction materials” and, most importantly, an “overall uniform density.”67 The NRHP application added that “Throughout the years,” Forest Park Heights residents, “drawn primarily from the middle class, have functioned in executive or leadership positions in local business and industry.”68 The neighborhood’s tasteful architecture, combined with its affluent residents, composed a “whole which is greater than the sum of its individual parts.”69

But despite the FPCA’s suburban imperatives to promote single-family homeownership, some Forest Park Heights residents felt the proposed historic district violated their individual rights as property owners. These residents feared that the SHC’s

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preservation controls, first adopted on Mattoon Street to regulate the exterior alterations allowable within historic districts, would pose an undue burden on homeowners by restricting their rights as property owners. This contingent of homeowners registered their complaints with the SHC at a series of public hearings in 1974, pointing to the SHC’s certification process to approve changes in paint color, roof color, siding, and windows as particularly onerous and gross infringements on the “enjoyment and use of one’s own property.” In response to these vocal protests, the SHC and FPCA crafted significant exemptions from the SHC’s preservation controls. While applications to approve changes in siding and window material remained in place, the SHC struck twelve restrictions in place on Mattoon Street from the final ordinance for Forest Park Heights, including paint color, roof color, and routine maintenance. In the process, the SHC and FPCA further integrated a suburban discourse of property rights within community preservationists’ “culture of property.”

The dramatic increase in property values on Mattoon Street remained a source of “inspiration” for FPCA members as they gravitated towards historic preservation. In September of 1973 SHC secretary John Wilson reached out to Pat Triggs to “begin meeting with a committee of the residents and property owners” of Forest Park Heights. Triggs, alongside fellow FPCA officer Hilton Abbott, created a special sub-committee of the FPCA

72 FPCA members invited MSHPA president Eugene Berman to speak before their historic district subcommittee, see “Historical District Committee,” Forest Park Civic Association newsletter, March 6, 1974, Forest Park Civic Association collection, LMWLA.
73 John R. Wilson to Pat Triggs, September 7, 1973, Forest Park Civic Association collection, LMWLA.
to coordinate research and citizen participation to develop their neighborhood’s historic district application. Fusing suburban zoning with historic preservation appealed to the FPCA. When Triggs organized the initial historic district committee meeting in her living room, one realtor in attendance posited “home values could increase 15 percent just by being in a historic district.” Wilson noted in his own pitch to the FPCA that a historic district would “protect areas of value from incompatible adjacent land uses,” an already-familiar refrain in the FPCA’s zoning battles.

FPCA members quickly found that stabilizing and increasing property values provided an especially persuasive argument for historic district status. “I think it was probably more about property values,” Bill Malloy recalled while reflecting upon what drove so much enthusiasm for historic district designation. Historic district status would “keep the neighborhood stable” and ensure homeowners’ investments in real estate remained sound. FPCA members circled back to the need for “stability,” insisting that “the city needs stable residential neighborhoods. Springfield doesn’t need…more once proud but now decrepit houses.”

“Why do junkies, derelicts and cockroaches have to move into an area before people make a move to save it?” asked another FPCA member. Historic district status promised to “maintain the status quo in the Forest Park neighborhood” by stabilizing property values and warding off proposed higher-density zoning changes that threatened to bring “junkies, derelicts, and cockroaches” into Forest Park Heights. As Robert McCarroll,

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74 Pat Triggs, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
75 John R. Wilson, speech to Forest Park Civic Association, n.d., Springfield Historical Commission records, Springfield, MA.
76 Bill Malloy, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
77 Hilton Abbott, testimony in support of the Forest Park Heights historic district before the Springfield City Council, n.d., Forest Park Civic Association collection, LMWLA.
78 Wayne Phaneuf, “Let’s Save Lower Sumner Ave.,” Springfield Daily News, January 24, 1975, FPCA HD, LMWLA.
79 Abbott, testimony in support of the Forest Park Heights historic district before the Springfield City Council.
a planner with the SHC, recalled, historic district status was a powerful “deterrent for
developers who wanted either higher density of housing or to tear down houses and expand
commercial” zoning. To the FPCA, historic preservation could only enhance their
suburban politics and support of low-density housing.

With Wilson’s help, FPCA members mobilized a useable past to strengthen their
defense of single-family residential property in Forest Park Heights. Like the MSHPA, the
SHC and the FPCA’s historic district subcommittee accessed a wide range of primary
sources, including newspaper and journal articles, deeds, building permits, and oral histories
with long-time neighborhood residents. Rather than focus on individual historical residents,
the SHC and FPCA instead argued that Forest Park Heights was significant because of its
economic and social homogeneity across time. The SHC phrased this argument in language
lifted from a historic district guidelines manual published by the Massachusetts Historical
Commission (MHC) in 1971. The MHC advised that eligible historic districts maintained a
“relationship of all structures in the area to one another” that creates “a whole which is
greater than the sum of its individual parts.” To the MHC, this relationship was primarily a
technical one of the “harmonious exterior” interrelationship between various architectural
design elements. The SHC and FPCA transformed this line into a mantra recited ad
 nauseum to argue that Forest Park Heights’ eligibility as a local historic district stemmed
from the neighborhood’s demography.

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80 Robert McCarroll, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, October 24, 2020, interview in possession of
the author.
81 Stephen Hays, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
83 This language was itself lifted from a historic district ordinance created in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1962.
Massachusetts Historical Commission, *Guidelines for Establishment of Historic Districts* (Boston, MA: Massachusetts
Historical Commission, 1971), 2.
84 *Guidelines for Establishment of Historic Districts*, 2.
85 John R. Wilson, “City Council Briefing,” May 29, 1974, Forest Park Heights historic district file, 2,
Springfield Historical Commission, Springfield, MA; “Preliminary Report on the Proposed Extension of the
In the hands of the SHC and FPCA, “a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts” eloquently summed up Forest Park Heights’ historic and contemporary “significance” as a socially and economically homogenous neighborhood. In his research notes, Wilson returned repeatedly to Forest Park Heights’ reputation as “inhabited by predominantly middle and upper class citizens since its settlement.”

“Since the initial years of development,” Wilson wrote, the proposed historic district “was inhabited by both middle income and wealthier residents,” a trend that “continued until the present day” evidenced by the neighborhood’s status as “one of the highest per capita income rates for the city.”

Unlike their counterparts in the MSHPA, the SHC and FPCA did not need to fabricate a historical narrative of single-family property ownership. In fact, Wilson excavated a continuous narrative of respectable, elite property owners that spanned the late nineteenth century well into the 1960s. In his research notes for the final historic district report, Wilson tallied these individuals by professional status, homing in on those white-collar, male residents who worked in city government or as bankers, manufacturers, real estate agents, lawyers, and doctors.

In the final local historic district ordinance, Wilson noted that the presence of this class of residents throughout the neighborhood’s existence created a “remarkably cohesive district” reflected by its tasteful domestic architecture.

Despite observations about Forest Park Heights’ social and economic “cohesion,” the SHC and FPCA did not simply ignore the historical presence of nonwhite or low-income

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Footnotes:

86 John R. Wilson, research notes for Forest Park Heights historic district, Forest Park Heights historic district file, Springfield Historical Commission, Springfield, MA.
87 Wilson, research notes.
88 Wilson, research notes.
actors in Forest Park Heights. Like other local historical agencies and civic groups across the country during the 1970s, the FPCA tapped into the growth of a popular public history movement bolstered during this era by efforts to commemorate the U.S. bicentennial that developed outside of mainstream institutions like museums or universities. Throughout communities across United States during the 1970s, local historical organizations generated a wide range of public historical content, producing flyers, pamphlets, and walking tours that recovered the diverse roles of locally significant individuals and groups in their community’s development. The FPCA tapped into this growing public history movement to shape their interpretation of Forest Park’s history.

The FPCA’s production of historical knowledge about their neighborhood incorporated non-elite individuals into their public-facing narrative descriptions, but often did so in ways that reified racial and class hierarchies. In 1985, the FPCA published *Lydia, the Banker’s Daughter*, a “delightful Victorian tale set in Springfield at the turn of the century” that drew from anecdotal historical data to frame a children’s story about the life of Lydia Pynchon, a fictional direct descendent of Springfield’s first English family. While the story focused on Lydia and her well-to-do banker father, Dwight, their household staff of a cook, butler, and housekeeper, “Miss Bliss,” made occasional appearances in supporting roles to tend to the lavish Pynchon household. Distributed throughout Springfield as a fundraiser

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92 Hays, 14.
for the FPCA, the book contained a hidden riddle to boost sales by promising a 1,000-dollar reward to the first person to correctly solve it.\textsuperscript{93}

Less elite actors like cooks, butlers, housekeepers, and domestic servants made infrequent appearances in other historic place narratives generated by the FPCA. When Abbott completed oral history interviews for Forest Park Heights’ historic district nomination, he turned next to publishing these recollections in a short book about the neighborhood’s history. Abbott and his interviewees made regular note of the domestic servants who moved in and out of Forest Park Heights. “My mother always had a maid,” in fact, “Every house had a maid—they were cheap then” remembered one long-time resident.\textsuperscript{94} Other projects supported by the FPCA enforced status boundaries between the neighborhood’s upper- and lower-class historical actors. In 1982, Forest Park Junior High School students researched individual homes in Forest Park Heights for their ninth-grade civics class. Drawing from interviews with current residents, students noted how the spatial configuration of neighborhood homes reinforced boundaries between domestic servants and homeowners. Robert Cary, the owner of 64 Magnolia Terrace, described to student Robyn Johnson how “the big porch in front, which goes on three sides of the house, is for the main family, and the closet-like back porch used to be for the maids and servants to come in and out.”\textsuperscript{95} Other homes had “backstairs” so that “the maids would not disturb the family.”\textsuperscript{96} Left unnamed beyond their station as domestic servants, references to non-elite actors in Forest Park Heights reinforced hierarchies between domestic workers and their employers.

\textsuperscript{93} Pat Triggs, oral history interview.
\textsuperscript{94} Abbott, \textit{Picturesque Forest Park Heights}, “Back Stairs.”
\textsuperscript{95} “The Forest Park Area: An Historical View,” (Springfield, MA: Forest Park Junior High School and Springfield School Volunteers, 1982), 1.
\textsuperscript{96} “The Forest Park Area: An Historical View,” 3.
While the FPCA and SHC felt Forest Park Heights maintained its strength as a “cohesive” district, the MHC disagreed. Differences in interpreting historic district “cohesion” arose when the SHC submitted its preliminary boundaries for the Forest Park Heights historic district in 1974 (Figure 3.4). Where the SHC and FPCA believed Forest Park Heights’ socioeconomic homogeneity defined the neighborhood as “cohesive,” the MHC looked more narrowly to exterior design elements. MHC staff balked at the roughly 700 buildings SHC staff included in their preliminary report in 1974. At that time, Forest Park Heights was “one of the largest in terms of numbers of buildings proposed” in the nearly two decades since the creation of Massachusetts’ first historic district, Boston’s Beacon Hill, in 1955.97 Forest Park Heights was almost seven times larger than proposed districts on the MHC’s 1974 agenda.98 Other than the roughly 1,000-building Back Bay historic district in Boston, the next largest historic districts in Massachusetts remained the Salem Maritime National Historic Site in Salem, Massachusetts at 268 buildings and the Old King’s Highway regional historic district, an assemblage of contiguous local historic districts in southern Cape Cod.99 Outside of Boston, Forest Park Heights would be the state’s largest residential historic district. But rather than a tightly bound, unified district, Forest Park

98 At the time the MHC began reviewing the preliminary proposal for Forest Park Heights there were only 88 local historic districts in the state of Massachusetts. On average, most of those districts were around 50-100 buildings and were often a mix of commercial, religious, residential, and civic uses. See the Massachusetts Cultural Resources Inventory for statistical data on historic districts. “Proposed National Register Properties for Consideration at Massachusetts Historical Commission Meeting”; Wendy Frontiero, Francis V. Marshall, and Brenton H. Dickson, III, “National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form: Boston Post Road Historic District,” July 16, 1982.
Heights, MHC staff believed, “lacks an overall architectural quality and cohesiveness” and suggested to the SHC that they redraw their boundaries to exclude “two-family, nondescript buildings” and all other buildings of “insufficient architectural quality.” To the MHC, Forest Park Heights residents’ “sense of neighborhood” failed to factor into a purely architectural appraisal of the neighborhood’s “significance.”

Other developments soon forced the SHC and FPCA to reconsider their proposed historic district. A small, but vocal, cohort of Forest Park Heights residents launched their own critique of the proposed historic district in 1974. Led by Barbara Resnick of 6 Oxford Street, opposed residents took issue with the SHC’s preservation controls. First adopted on

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**Figure 3.4: Draft Historic District Boundaries.** The original proposed boundaries of the Forest Park Heights historic district as conceived by John Wilson in his research notes. The map is oriented 90 degrees to the west; North is the left edge of this image.

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101 Minutes of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, October 15, 1974, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston, MA.
Mattoon Street, local historic district ordinances restricted various exterior design alterations, such as paint color or siding material, and required property owners to receive a certificate of appropriateness, hardship, or non-applicability from the SHC before proceeding with any renovations or alterations.\textsuperscript{102} Such restrictions constituted “an infringement of one of the basic rights guaranteed to all Americans,” Resnick believed, “The right as defined in the 14\textsuperscript{th} Amendment of the Constitution as the invasion of privacy and the interference with the enjoyment and use of one’s own property.”\textsuperscript{103} Other homeowners, like P.A. DeAngelis, echoed these arguments, defiantly stating his opposition to “anyone telling him what he can do with his property.”\textsuperscript{104}

Rather than dig in to their proposed controls, the SHC and FPCA adopted a conciliatory approach to demands to protect individual “freedom” and property rights. SHC staff, alongside Abbott and Triggs, first tightened the boundaries of the proposed historic district to a section of the neighborhood where Abbott estimated roughly 85 percent of homeowners were supportive FPCA members.\textsuperscript{105} Shrinking the district from 700 to 450 single-family homes addressed the MHC’s concerns about architectural “cohesion,” although the district still remained one of the state’s largest. To allay the concerns of property rights advocates, the SHC and FPCA went further to limit the SHC’s preservation controls in Forest Park Heights. Already, the SHC and FPCA agreed that “strict controls on properties (such as those on Mattoon Street) were not appropriate nor practical.”\textsuperscript{106} Faced with the

\textsuperscript{104} Minutes of the Springfield Historical Commission, August 1, 1974, 4.  
105 Abbott, testimony in support of the Forest Park Heights historic district before the Springfield City Council.  
106 “Final Report on the Proposed Forest Park Heights Historic District,” 4.}
specific demands of property rights advocates, the SHC crafted new exemptions to Forest Park Heights’ local historic district ordinance. Unlike Mattoon Street, residents in Forest Park Heights did not need formal SHC approval to alter gutters or downspouts, screen and storm doors, exterior light fixtures, fencing, plantings, sidewalks, screen windows, air conditioning units, paint color, roof color, small or temporary signage, or to perform routine maintenance. Major design alterations, like additions, roof shape, siding material, and windows remained subject to SHC approval.

In adopting more limited controls for Forest Park Heights, the SHC and FPCA further integrated a suburban ideology of individual choice and freedom within community preservationists’ “culture of property.” Already, community preservationists sought to promote and in turn protect claims over private, residential property. FPCA members and more conservative property rights advocates hardly disagreed over the importance of protecting residential property values; rather, both groups divided over who retained authority and expertise in securing private property from the kinds of demographic and spatial changes associated with multifamily zoning. In the end, while the concessions made by the SHC and FPCA kept the SHC’s authority over historic districts intact, community preservationists nevertheless absorbed and integrated a suburban ideology of individual property rights into the city’s preservation movement. What remained to be seen following historic district designation in 1975 was how preservationists would deploy the new tools granted by historic district status to maintain Forest Park Heights as an exclusive suburban enclave.

108 “Exterior Architectural Controls for Residential Structures, Forest Park Heights Historic District.”
“A Diversity of Architectural Styles”: Exclusion and “Diversity” in Forest Park Heights

Following the designation of Forest Park Heights as Springfield’s second historic district in 1975, FPCA members put preservation into practice to support their suburban agenda of exclusionary low-density residential zoning. While the limited reach of the preservation controls codified in the new historic district’s ordinance precluded conflict over minor design alterations, FPCA members could still wield these controls to enforce a spatial geography of single- and double-family zoning. In 1979, FPCA members lobbied for an expansion of the Forest Park Heights historic district to encompass Marengo Park Boulevard and Bellevue Avenue, two streets the MHC once viewed as ineligible within the initial boundary drawn by the SHC in 1974. As they expanded their neighborhood’s historic
district, FPCA members turned to historic preservation to resolve ongoing and potential conflicts over proposed high-density zoning for empty lots. FPCA members literally staked a claim in these debates by moving single-family homes from elsewhere in Forest Park to empty lots within the historic district—initiatives these community preservationists financed themselves with the assistance of preservation tax incentives. Other FPCA members targeted derelict homes in danger of demolition for rehabilitation projects. FPCA preservationists pointed to their historic district’s “significance” as a “cohesive” residential neighborhood to justify the relocation and rehabilitation of various properties as historically “appropriate.”

Alongside this spatial project, FPCA members utilized preservation to ensure racial and economic homogeneity in Forest Park Heights well into the 1990s. Even as their staunch defense of low-density zoning produced tangible exclusionary results all around them, FPCA members insisted that they valued “diversity” in their neighborhood. But FPCA members deployed the term “diversity” unevenly. FPCA members’ valuations of diversity slipped between a commitment to social and racial diversity, on the one hand, and praise about the variety of eclectic residential Victorian styles throughout Forest Park Heights, on the other. While Suleiman Osman has noted that preservationists subscribed to a flexible application of “diversity,” historians of preservation have yet to explore how community preservationists slipped between indexing the “diversity” of their neighborhood in socioeconomic and architectural terms.109 The slippage between these two very different markers of “diversity” in Forest Park Heights provided enough space for FPCA members to continue defending their exclusionary zoning practices. To preservationists, these projects socially and materially elevated Forest Park Heights even as the rest of Springfield spiraled.

109 For example, Osman notes that preservationists pointed to diverse patterns of consumption or various types of businesses within their own valuation of diversity in Brooklyn. See Osman, *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Postwar New York*, 95–97.
further into the urban crisis. “Springfield’s a very poor city,” Triggs observed, “But when you drive around [Forest Park Heights], it doesn’t look like that here” (Figure 3.5).110

Forest Park Heights residents continued to look to preservation as a valuable tool in stabilizing property values and promoting low-density residential zoning. In 1978, residents of Marengo Park Boulevard and Bellevue Avenue submitted a petition to the SHC to expand the Forest Park Heights historic district to encompass both streets, a roughly two-block area

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110 Pat Triggs, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
just northeast of the existing historic district (Figure 3.6).  

Both streets had “beautiful homes,” Pat Triggs recalled, “but they were bookended by streets that were in big transition…They were being squashed in by houses and streets that just were struggling.”

A “big transition” that vaguely gestured towards an association between nonwhite and low-income individuals in “struggling” areas threatened to overrun single-family homes “significant in stature.” Despite the fact that the addition of just two streets was “like gerrymandering,” Triggs remarked that “if we’re going to save this, we better do it now.”

With little opposition, the SHC moved quickly to add the two streets to Forest Park Heights’ local historic district boundaries.

As they warily watched commercial or high-density developments continue to take shape along Sumner Avenue, community preservationists looked to empty lots as gaps in an otherwise tightly armored defense of single- and double-family residential zoning. To fortify the primacy of residential homeownership, community preservationists literally moved single- or double-family homes from elsewhere in Forest Park to occupy these empty lots. Nationally, this practice was relatively commonplace, but agencies like the National Park Service (NPS) regarded the method as a last resort for buildings threatened by demolition.

In addition to financing these projects themselves, FPCA members utilized the newly expanded historic tax credits system to help offset the costs of moving and renovating large homes. As outlined in revisions to the federal tax code between 1976 and 1986, developers

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112 Pat Triggs, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
113 Pat Triggs, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
were eligible to receive a 20 percent federal income tax credit for income-producing properties listed in the NRHP. Rehabilitation projects were required to meet the Secretary of the Interior’s “Standards for Rehabilitation” to receive the tax credit, a decision determined by a two-part application whereby property owners established a property’s eligibility as a NRHP-designated resource and NPS and MHC staff assessed or endorsed the completed rehabilitation as consistent with the “Standards for Rehabilitation.”

The tax credit program fueled an explosion in NRHP nominations and certification applications, overwhelming federal officials who encouraged state and federal application reviewers to “certify as many buildings as possible within an historic district” to avoid an application backlog and demonstrate the success of the program to federal policymakers. These developments encouraged state and federal certification reviewers to accept community preservationists’ use of preservation to promote residential homeownership. In 1985, Ellie Dashevsky, an assistant developer with the Micah Corporation and a board member of the MSHPA, filed an application with the NPS. Dashevsky hoped to receive federal tax credits for the double-family house she had moved from Applewood Place near the “X” to 24 Beechwood Avenue that she intended to rent as a supplemental income-producing property. Like a NRHP nomination, the historic tax credit certification application asked property owners to establish a property’s historic significance. While Dashevsky did relay some anecdotal information about Applewood Place’s development in

the 1910s, she spent much of her application detailing how relocating the home to Beechwood Avenue would repel encroaching commercial and high-density development along nearby Sumner Avenue. Noting the menacing presence of nearby apartments and restaurants, Dashevsky argued that “the move of this house…onto this vacant residential lot will strengthen the residential fabric of Beechwood Avenue along this very vulnerable commercial edge…”121 Dashevsky was even more explicit in her application for a certificate of appropriateness to the SHC. Dashevsky insisted that the empty lot at 24 Beechwood Avenue “has been subject to a series of zone changes over the past 25 years and finally putting a sound house on the property will make certain the land will be used for residential purposes and, therefore, buffer the street from the business use at the corner…”122

Other Forest Park Heights residents pointed to the need to keep high-density and commercial zoning at bay from prominent residential intersections near Sumner Avenue as sufficient articulation of a particular site’s “significance” to the NPS.123 When the Springfield Neighborhood Housing Development Corporation (SNHDC) purchased a fire-damaged home at 39 Spruceland Avenue in 1983, they turned to the federal historic tax credit to supplement their rehabilitation. Worried the home would be demolished and replaced by high-density apartments or commercial establishments, SNHDC staff wrote to the NPS that admittedly the house had little historical significance but rather the “significance of this

122 Eleanor Dashevsky, application for Certificate of Appropriateness, December 18, 1984, Springfield Historical Commission, Springfield, MA.
house is its relationship to the streetscape.” The SNHDC warned the NPS that if 39 Spruceland Avenue were demolished, “not only would a vacant lot be created, but also a void which could not go unnoticed” by dismayed residents and speculative developers alike. To prevent any changes that would “visually disturb” this lot, the SNHDC urged the NPS to certify their application to stabilize the area’s low-density residential zoning.

Facing a rising tide of certification applications, the NPS and MHC accepted these requests as appropriate uses of the federal tax credit program. In their own internal reviews and endorsements to the NPS, MHC staff accepted that Dashevsky’s relocated property at 24 Beechwood Avenue maintained no historical relationship to its new location. MHC executive director Polly Matherly pointed out to NPS reviewer Valerie Talmage that Forest Park Heights “contains predominately single family dwellings,” and the relocation of a double-family home was entirely appropriate in “scale and design” by enhancing “the neighborhood by filling in a vacant lot with a structure compatible in style and period with others on the street.” The NPS’s certification of Dashevsky’s historic tax credit application reflects what John Sprinkle, Jr. describes as a “fundamental pragmatism” on relocation when buildings were threatened by demolition, even though relocation undermined a site’s ability to convey its historical “significance.” This acceptance of historic tax credit certifications justified on the grounds of strengthening low-density residential zoning reflects the NPS’s tacit endorsement of preservation as a tool to promote property and homeownership as the

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125 Springfield Neighborhood Housing Development Corporation, statement of significance, February 8, 1983.
126 Polly Matherly to Valerie Talmage, May 20, 1985, Massachusetts Historical Commission records, historic tax credit files, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston, MA.
agency became overwhelmed with NRHP and certification applications in the early 1980s. Moreover, for community preservationists, as Briann Greenfield notes, this “doctrine of scale” and low-density residential zoning articulated in tax credit certification applications reinforced the FPCA’s efforts to ensure that Forest Park remained a neighborhood of single- and double-family homes. Ultimately, in the case of Forest Park Heights, local residents, MHC staff, and NPS reviewers shared an understanding of “significance” as determined by a property’s ability to reinforce low-density zoning.

If historic preservation remained ideologically consistent with a defense of suburban low-density property ownership, so too did it function as a crime prevention strategy. Like their counterparts in the MSHPA, FPCA members turned to historic preservation to stem the tide of white flight by projecting an image of Forest Park Heights as a safe place to live. Already, the FPCA viewed the Springfield Police Department (SPD) as an ally “whose goals are consistent with the principle of maintaining stable residential neighborhoods.” In 1977, residents of Washington Boulevard partnered with the SPD “to work hard at keeping undesirables away from Washington Boulevard.” Under efforts spearheaded by mayor Theodore DiMauro, the city’s Parks Department worked with neighborhood residents to create a special security force to police Forest Park and its residential boundaries alongside

the SPD.\textsuperscript{132} Keeping “undesirables” and criminal activity away from “stable residential neighborhoods” remained central to the FPCA’s low-density zoning agenda.\textsuperscript{133} Combined with police action, the FPCA’s crime prevention initiatives further entrenched Forest Park Heights as one of the city’s most socioeconomically homogenous neighborhoods.

FPCA members folded historic preservation into their own crime prevention strategies. Like the MSHPA, house tours provided an especially effective message to suburban visitors that “regular, average, families were living here. We were not wearing bulletproof vests. We were not being shot at on a daily basis here.”\textsuperscript{134} Such messages resonated with visitors from outside of Springfield, who sometimes confused Forest Park Heights for the nearby autonomous and affluent suburban community of Longmeadow.\textsuperscript{135} Other residents, like Stephen Hays, a commissioner on the SHC, remarked that the Forest Park Heights historic district delineated distinct boundaries between safe and unsafe parts of Springfield:

> …my house on Forest Park Avenue was on the edge of the [historic] district. Just beyond me it was not. And what’s interesting is how that neighborhood has declined by not being part of a district. My front yard was magnificent. The backyard there were shootings and drug deals and all sorts of stuff on Forest Street that you can’t say that it wasn’t the historic district, had they been included, would have been changed. But I think that the protections that were offered were important to that project.\textsuperscript{136}

While the creation of historic districts did not alone make Forest Park Heights “safer,” the “protections” offered by historic preservation reinforced existing police action targeted at

\textsuperscript{132} Theodore DiMauro, “Security Program Recommendations, Forest Park,” October 7, 1977, Mayor DiMauro collection, LMWLA.
\textsuperscript{134} Pat Triggs, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
\textsuperscript{135} Pat Triggs, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
\textsuperscript{136} Stephen Hays, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
“undesirables” and illicit activities like “shootings and drug deals.” Pursuing an agenda of low-density zoning, combined with linking preservation to crime prevention, crystallized the borders of Forest Park Heights as an exclusive, racially and economically homogenous neighborhood.

Despite these exclusionary results, FPCA members insisted that they valued “diversity.” Throughout the 1970s, and at the height of their battles over low-density zoning, FPCA members insisted that “we’re diverse as the dickens.”137 The FPCA’s assessment of their group’s “diversity” remained broad, encompassing “conservatives and liberals, Republicans and Democrats, hawks and doves, Blacks and Whites, Jews, Catholics, and Protestants, rich people and lots not-so-rich, old people and young people, and other citizens of widely varying viewpoints of many issues.”138 Ultimately, any resultant friction from this social, racial, and ideological “diversity” dissolved into the background “when it comes to the welfare of our neighborhood, our property values, [and] the safety of our children…”139

Commitments to “diversity” were echoed by community preservationists across the country. As Cameron Logan illustrates, “diversity” emerged during the 1970s as a “politically potent ideal and a commonplace” values set that community preservationists attributed to their projects.140 When community preservationists spoke of their commitments to diversity, they often articulated it within a critique of postwar suburban homogeneity, looking to urban neighborhoods as sources of an authentic community.141 Yet commitments to diversity surfaced among community preservationists most often to defend their projects from

137 “Who Are We?” Our Neighborhood (April, 1972), 2, Forest Park Civic Association collection, LMWLA.
139 “Who Are We?” 2.
challenges by Black or nonwhite groups who pointed to preservation as a source of gentrification, displacement, and urban inequity. Community preservationists’ commitments to diversity not only depoliticized debates about gentrification, as Brandi Thompson Summers argues, but also contained “no definitive grounding or measurability” that could be quantified in any meaningful way. For FPCA members and their counterparts across the country, “diversity” remained a powerful, if abstract, argument they could deploy to defend the racially and economically exclusive zoning practices they fused with the broader preservation movement.

FPCA members fielded critiques of their neighborhood as a socioeconomically homogenous space by pointing to an abstract adherence to diversity. As Pat Triggs recalled, FPCA members frequently came under attack as “the white wine and cheese crowd” attempting to “create a bubble.” Triggs insisted this was “untrue,” noting that Forest Park Heights was “the most liberal-thinking group of people in Springfield…it wasn’t that we were trying to create this little haven for well-to-do people, hardly!” Other FPCA members articulated a colorblind argument that their pursuit of a “stable” homogenous neighborhood contained only economic implications. Reflecting on his own definition of a “stable” neighborhood, Bill Malloy framed it in purely economic terms:

I think just the financial side of it. I don’t think there was any racial side of it. Sometimes that’s a dog whistle thing. I don’t think there was a dog whistle then, but I’d be interested to think if there’d might be. You know, it’s a pretty diverse neighborhood, especially around, there’s a good community of Jewish people, there’s a synagogue.

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144 Pat Triggs, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
145 Bill Malloy, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
With seemingly no racial implications for their low-density zoning agenda, FPCA members consistently pointed to the “diversity” of their neighborhood as a defense against critiques leveled at Forest Park Heights’ social and economic homogeneity.

At the same time FPCA preservationists insisted they highly valued social and racial diversity, they looked to the “diversity of architectural styles” throughout their neighborhood to further combat critiques of exclusivity. While Forest Park Heights’ socioeconomic diversity remained difficult to measurably demonstrate, FPCA preservationists could more concretely point to the fact that “every house in the area is styled differently,” embodying a “diversity…of great architectural importance” that contrasted with contemporary suburban housing styles. FPCA preservationists developed lengthy documentation and promotional materials illustrating how their neighborhood contained a representative cross-section of domestic architecture between the 1890s and 1920s, including “Queen Anne, Shingle Style, Georgian, Colonial Revival, Tudor, and Mission Style.” With “no two dwellings the same,” Forest Park Heights retained an impressive degree of architectural “diversity within a structured framework” first engendered by the neighborhood’s nineteenth-century developers. This slippage between FPCA members’ references to socioeconomic and architectural “diversity” provided a continued justification for their neighborhood’s overwhelming racial and economic homogeneity. By

147 “Forest Park Heights,” Our Neighborhood (July 30, 1974), 1, Forest Park Civic Association collection, LMWL.
vaguely gesturing towards “diversity” without always specifying between socioeconomic or architectural diversity, FPCA members fortified their own defense of Forest Park Heights’ “character” as an exclusive residential enclave.

This “character” of Forest Park Heights as an overwhelmingly white neighborhood prevailed until the 1990s when white flight, combined with an influx of Puerto Rican and Latinx migrants to the neighborhood, better aligned Forest Park Heights with the FPCA’s claims that their neighborhood was socioeconomically “diverse.” Over the 1980s, Springfield’s Puerto Rican population nearly doubled from 8 to 15 percent, accelerating white flight as the city’s housing market tightened. Pat Triggs recalled with dismay how her white neighbors and former members of the FPCA looked disapprovingly at the neighborhood’s social transition in the late 1990s. “I grew up poor and I can see what’s happening in this neighborhood,” one of Triggs’ neighbors vehemently observed, “I have no intention of being here again.” In contrast to the near-total whiteness of Forest Park Heights in the 1970s, by dawn of the twenty-first century Forest Park Heights was now “totally integrated.” If “you are fearful of people who do not look like you or even speak the same language as you, this is probably not the neighborhood for you,” Triggs concluded.

Many white residents reached this same conclusion, the association between nonwhite migrants and urban decline driving many white Forest Park Heights residents to pack up and leave. In 2000, the neighborhood’s white residents had dwindled from roughly 5,000 the decade before to 4,000—63 percent of Forest Park Heights’ overall population. That same decade witnessed Latino growth from just 400 individuals in 1990 to

151 Pat Triggs, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
152 Pat Triggs, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
over 1,000 Latino residents in 2000—roughly 20 percent of the neighborhood’s population. But despite the fears of white residents who left Forest Park Heights behind, the neighborhood did not decline. In fact, Forest Park Heights’ median income remained stable and on par with the average for the rest of the city of Springfield. While Forest Park Heights may no longer be exclusively white, its new middle-class Latino and Black residents are able to benefit from the kinds of exclusionary zoning and preservation policies cemented by their white predecessors in the 1970s.

Conclusion

Despite these more recent changes in Forest Park Heights’ racial and demographic makeup, for decades FPCA members and community preservationists provided a stable defense of their neighborhood’s social, racial, and economic homogeneity. FPCA members wrapped preservation into the highly racialized discourse of zoning and land-use science they deployed to oppose any changes to their neighborhood’s low-density residential zoning. Already initiated by the MSHPA, the FPCA mapped the culture of property onto an entire neighborhood filled with hundreds of Victorian homes. By linking historic preservation to a suburban politics of low-density zoning, preservationists in the FPCA reinforced property ownership as the ultimate imperative of Springfield’s preservation movement. When the SHC crafted significant exemptions to its preservation controls to accommodate the conservative backlash to the proposed historic district, preservationists further integrated a discourse of individual property rights and “freedom” into a preservationist ideology already

entwined with the suburban racial politics of white flight and zoning. Rather than react to suburban political and social culture, community preservationists embraced it, hardening the borders of their neighborhood at the exact moment the urban crisis ushered in sweeping demographic changes to Springfield.

In 1975 when the Forest Park Heights historic district was first designated, such controls were still “a new concept.” But the exemptions forged in Forest Park Heights set “precedents here that others will look to as guidelines for the future.”156 Indeed, the guidelines forged in Forest Park Heights quickly became standardized for all historic districts established in the city after 1975. But consistent and standardized guidelines did not portend an even or uncontroversial expansion of the city’s preservation movement. In 1976, on the heels of Forest Park Heights, a portion of the McKnight neighborhood became Springfield’s third historic district. Where Forest Park Heights residents framed preservation’s virtues through an ostensibly colorblind lens, the battle over McKnight’s historic district designation forced preservationists to grapple with race in uncontrollable and unexpected ways.

On a chilly winter evening just three days before Christmas in 1975, residents from the McKnight neighborhood braved the snowy roads to attend the Springfield city council’s hearing on an ordinance that would establish McKnight as the city’s third historic district. Inside city hall, the council chambers were tense and “people were nervous,” McKnight resident David Gaby reflected, “It seemed like seven chances out of ten that [the historic district] wasn’t going to get approved at city council. There was only one or two promised
votes out of nine” city councilors.¹ Amidst this tense atmosphere, Helen Persip rose from
her seat. 72 years old, Persip grew up in the Old Hill neighborhood and was one of the first
Black residents to move to McKnight in the late 1950s with her husband, Francis. Persip
“went up to the podium and she said, ‘I am going to say something…and I’m going to tell
you the way it really was.’”² For the next twenty minutes, Persip “took over the meeting and
was spellbinding” as she narrated her experience with the neighborhood and emphasized its
respectable past. When Persip concluded her speech and “tales of the area in the early part
of the century,” she received a standing ovation from all in attendance—including the
hesitant city council.³ “No one dared vote no. We got our vote,” the historic district
ordinance passed (Figure 4.1).⁴

Persip was not the only Black woman in attendance at that fateful city council
hearing, nor was she the only Black woman that mobilized to designate McKnight as a
historic district. This chapter traces how Black women arrived at the city’s preservation
movement and centers their pivotal role in creating a historic district in McKnight alongside
their white neighbors from 1973 to 1976. In doing so, I argue that Black women
instrumentalized historic preservation to secure civic resources long withheld from Black
and integrated communities. Black urbanites experienced the constituent elements of the
urban crisis simultaneously; for Black women in McKnight, preservation constituted a
valuable tool to address a Gordian knot of issues converging on McKnight, including
preventing displacement from urban renewal, reversing infrastructural divestment, equitably
distributing subsidized housing and community mental health facilities, protection from

¹ Gaby, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, December 9, 2020, interview in possession of the author.
² Frances Gagnon, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, April 6, 2021, interview in possession of the
author.
⁴ Gagnon, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
police violence, and providing quality education amidst school desegregation. Unlike their counterparts on Mattoon Street or in Forest Park Heights, white McKnight residents eschewed colorblind frameworks to join their Black neighbors in voicing a race-conscious critique of city officials that underscored the structural and systemic effects of racism on the neighborhood’s physical and social landscape. By working alongside these white neighbors to designate a significant portion of McKnight a historic district, Black women demonstrated to city officials that they were just as “worthy” of civic resources as white residents of Mattoon Street or Forest Park Heights. In this way, Black women conscripted preservation into the larger Black freedom struggle underway during the mid-twentieth century, asserting to the city’s leadership that Black lives did, in fact, matter.

While Black women dramatically expanded preservation’s scope by appropriating it as a tool in the Black freedom struggle, property ownership still figured prominently in this framework. In addition to exploring how preservation and the mid-twentieth-century Black freedom struggle intertwined, this chapter argues that two generations of Black political thought—a politics of respectability and more mainstream tenets of Black Power—converged in McKnight. For women like Helen Persip and fellow steering committee member Edna Mapp, born in 1903 and 1913 respectively, the indignities of Jim Crow were not distant memories but the social and political reality in which these women came of age.6 Because segregation “blurred class distinctions within the black community,” Black women in the early twentieth century turned to respectability politics to subvert the racial and gendered logics of Jim Crow by portraying themselves as morally upstanding, virtuous, and

6 Most of these women were born and raised in Springfield. Many belonged to Black families who lived in Springfield for multiple generations.
gentle as white women. Key to this vision was property ownership. Black men and women looked to property ownership as a driver for racial uplift and racial justice that brought Black people closer to wielding political power. In framing property ownership as a solution to the urban crisis, the culture of property thus appealed to Black women seeking greater political, economic, and social rights. This "freedom dream" that linked economic and political justice with respectability and ownership determined the scope of the steering committee’s organizing in McKnight and the final historic district ordinance in 1976. Black and white members of the steering committee settled on a strategy that sought to make McKnight legible to white policymakers by insisting on their neighborhood’s respectability. In this framework, Black residents stressed the historic and contemporary virtues of homeownership, contrasting themselves against Black tenants and renters in the Old Hill and northeast section of McKnight. This strategy generated a historic district coterminous with McKnight’s single-family, owner-occupied housing, solidifying McKnight’s identity as a respectable enclave for multiracial homeowners.

Ultimately, I argue that the battle over McKnight’s historic district produced ambiguous results for the city’s Black freedom struggle. On the one hand, some Black residents successfully leveraged their experiences with McKnight’s historic district campaign to launch their own political careers. Yet, on the other hand, the aftermath of the historic district campaign highlighted the constraints of multiracial organizing around property ownership. While white McKnight residents welcomed their Black neighbors into the

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historic district designation process, this representation did not directly translate into transformative Black political power or sustain a multiracial preservation coalition across the city. Instead, the city’s preservation movement turned back to colorblind approaches to preservation that increasingly bypassed Black community preservationists. In McKnight, white community preservationists focused on perpetuating strategies to make the neighborhood legible to white policymakers, lending institutions, and suburbanites and championed the supposed ability of historic architecture to transcend racial difference altogether. This colorblind framework discarded the concrete demands of the neighborhood’s Black activists in favor of an aesthetic vision insulated from the impediments Black McKnight residents faced from structural and systemic racism.

This chapter first outlines the racial politics that fueled McKnight’s popular identity as a neighborhood of respectable homeowners at midcentury before attending to the demands of the city’s Black freedom struggle. Black women saw in historic preservation great potential to alleviate a series of structural issues converging on McKnight that their male counterparts did not acknowledge in more mainstream civil rights organizing. By way of concluding, I assess how organizing around historic preservation produced limited gains for the city’s Black freedom struggle but succeeded in persuading white residents, policymakers, and lending institutions that the neighborhood was “worthy.”

By tracing McKnight’s historic district campaign, this chapter brings together the historiography of Black public historical praxis and the Black freedom struggle. Historians of Black public history excavated how the Black freedom struggle turned to history as a powerful tool in articulating demands for racial justice and critical counter-narratives to deconstruct racist stereotypes about Black Americans and assert the dignity of Black humanity. Black public historians spanning the early days of the republic to the present
utilized commemorations, oral histories, emancipation celebrations, book-length narratives, museums, magazines, historical societies, and historic sites to make claims to full citizenship in the United States. Much of this literature focuses on Black museums and professional organizations, while historic preservation remains largely underexplored. When historians do discuss the relationship between Black people and preservation, it is primarily to describe the impacts of preservation on Black urbanites, such as gentrification and displacement, rather than untangling Black engagements with preservation. In other words, this chapter relocates Black women from the periphery of the historic preservation movement to its center.

Scholars of the Black freedom struggle such as Robin Kelley, Saidiya Hartman, and Ashley Farmer have long underscored how Black women were “radical thinkers who tirelessly imagined other ways to live and never failed to consider how the world might be


otherwise.” I integrate these insights into the historiography of Black public history by illustrating how Black women pushed the broader midcentury preservation movement to be more radical and transformative in its scope by leveraging preservation to secure greater social, economic, and political power. The “freedom dreams” that envisioned real estate as a key driver for racial justice easily fit within the community preservationists culture of property that positioned property ownership as a pathway to urban revitalization. Compounding this focus on property was McKnight’s status as a “transitional neighborhood” of Black and white homeowners. These neighborhoods, Rebecca Marchiel observes, created the conditions for a political worldview “that united a neighborhood’s residents around their shared interest in their neighborhood’s future.” For Black and white residents of McKnight, that shared interest was property ownership. When joined to the Black freedom struggle, preservation contained more emancipatory possibilities for the residents of McKnight. But a continued focus on property ownership—an equally important imperative of Black political organizing—curtailed that movement’s transformative capacities.

Becoming “McKnight”: The Racial Politics of Neighborhood Identity

John and William McKnight, two brothers who built careers in the late nineteenth century as real estate speculators in Springfield, developed the McKnight neighborhood from the 1870s to the late 1910s. By 1976, McKnight was an integrated neighborhood of large, Victorian

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14 Connolly, A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida, 11.
single-family and multi-family homes. When McKnight residents succeeded in persuading Springfield’s city council to designate a portion of their neighborhood a historic district in 1976, the new district cemented the neighborhood’s association with John and William McKnight and their exclusionary zoning and building practices. The historic district steering committee so profoundly entrenched their neighborhood’s link with the McKnight brothers that even outsiders immediately associated the neighborhood with a history of affluence and exclusion. As Elliott Chase, a University of Massachusetts regional planning doctoral student, wryly observed in 1976, “Having adhered to exclusionary policies” like restrictive covenants and low-density zoning, “the McKnights might be displeased with the present characteristics of the community that bears their name,” a community that, by 1976, was 58 percent Black.16

Yet the irony Chase registered between the McKnights’ exclusionary development practices and the neighborhood’s demographic composition in the 1970s went much deeper than he realized. In fact, Black struggles for freedom and autonomy defined McKnight before the neighborhood even existed. In the early nineteenth century, free Black and some Indigenous people built a community on what would become McKnight but was then the far-flung outskirts of Springfield.17 “Yellow pine trees and negro cabins” formed the main nucleus of the neighborhood around Lake Como, a small pond located near the present-day intersection of State Street and Wilbraham road.18 These residents, many of whom were

18 Charles Henry Barrows, “An Historical Address Delivered Before the Citizens of Springfield in Massachusetts at the Public Celebration, May 26, 1911, of the Two Hundred and Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Settlement; with five appendices, viz: Meaning of Indian local names, The cartography of Springfield, Old place names,” (Springfield, MA: Connecticut Valley Historical Society, 1911), 50; Samuel Bowles and Oliver Pelton, “Springfield, 1827, surveyed by direction of the town, 1826, map, (Springfield, MA: Samuel Bowles,
likely born into slavery or indentured servitude in Connecticut and Massachusetts, held a
cradical and emancipatory vision for this space reflected in the name they ascribed to their

For these residents, the name “Hayti” linked their neighborhoods with the revolutionary enslaved Haitians that mounted a sustained revolution and forged an independent Black republic between 1791 and 1804 and their own desires for independence and self-sufficiency.\footnote{Ada Ferrer, \textit{Freedom’s Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution} (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 11; Carolyn E. Fick, \textit{The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution From Below} (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 1990).}

By the late 1860s and early 1870s, Hayti began to fade from the landscape as speculative residential neighborhoods advanced east from downtown Springfield, a process in part facilitated by Hayti resident Primus Mason. Born into indentured servitude in 1817 in Monson, Massachusetts, Mason emancipated himself in 1837, fleeing to Springfield where he worked as a farmer in Hayti.\footnote{Mason raised pigs that fed on the city’s garbage and worked as an “undertaker to dead horses” by burying their carcasses on empty plots of land he owned. By the turn of the century, Progressive reformers and municipal officials considered these practices unsanitary and not respectable and burned or hauled trash out of city limits. For Springfield, trash traveled away from spaces like McKnight and to Bondi’s Island. “Primus Parsons Mason: Our Aged Colored Citizen who Left most of his Property for Charity,” \textit{Springfield Graphic}, January 23, 1892; Frances Gagnon, “Primus P. Mason: A Black Legend,” \textit{Springfield Journal}, February 9, 1889; the Springfield city directory for 1848 lists Mason’s address as “E. State Street” in the rough area identified by contemporary observers as Hayti, \textit{Springfield Almanac, Directory, and Business Advertiser for 1848} (Springfield, MA: Valentine W. Skiff, 1848), 72.} By the 1860s, Mason owned substantial investments in real

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textcopyright{} 2021, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division. All rights reserved.\footnote{Charles Henry Barrows, “An Historical Address Delivered Before the Citizens of Springfield in Massachusetts,” 50; Judy D. Dobbs, “McKnight District National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form,” National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form (Boston, MA: Massachusetts Historical Commission, March 22, 1976), 2.}
\item Brown, \textit{Upbuilding Black Durham: Gender, Class, and Black Community Development in the Jim Crow South}, 39.
\item Mason raised pigs that fed on the city’s garbage and worked as an “undertaker to dead horses” by burying their carcasses on empty plots of land he owned. By the turn of the century, Progressive reformers and municipal officials considered these practices unsanitary and not respectable and burned or hauled trash out of city limits. For Springfield, trash traveled away from spaces like McKnight and to Bondi’s Island. “Primus Parsons Mason: Our Aged Colored Citizen who Left most of his Property for Charity,” \textit{Springfield Graphic}, January 23, 1892; Frances Gagnon, “Primus P. Mason: A Black Legend,” \textit{Springfield Journal}, February 9, 1889; the Springfield city directory for 1848 lists Mason’s address as “E. State Street” in the rough area identified by contemporary observers as Hayti, \textit{Springfield Almanac, Directory, and Business Advertiser for 1848} (Springfield, MA: Valentine W. Skiff, 1848), 72.
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estate in and around Hayti, land that investors once considered “undesirable for
development,” but acquired new value as the city expanded east. Mason capitalized on the
desires of white developers looking for new land to build speculative residential
neighborhoods, selling land he acquired decades before at a profit.

Mason’s land sales included exchanges with brothers John and William McKnight, real estate speculators who cemented Hayti’s near-total erasure from the urban landscape through their development of the McKnight neighborhood in the 1870s and 1880s. Born in New York in 1835, John McKnight opened a dry goods store in Springfield in 1855; in 1865 William joined his brother in real estate investment and by 1870 the brothers began purchasing land from Mason and other farmers like Josiah Flagg, assembling over 200 acres just east of the Springfield Armory over the next decade. By the mid-1880s, the brothers transformed the area into one of the city’s most prominent residential neighborhoods filled with ornate Victorian houses. Contemporary observers rhapsodized the neighborhood’s “cottages, its lawns, its streets, and its parks” that “call forth the admiration of all visitors to Springfield, and it not infrequently happens that visitors come to the city for the express purpose of seeing the famous McKnight district.” Roughly 60 percent of the neighborhood’s inventoried housing stock was designed in the eclectic Queen Anne style, with the popular Stick and Shingle styles comprising another 20 percent of the

26 Dobbs, “McKnight District National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form,” 2.
neighborhood’s residential designs. Of approximately 500 houses in the neighborhood, John and William personally designed and built nearly 300—including their own lavish homes on State and Worthington streets—exercising significant control over the neighborhood’s spatial development.

Alongside their control of the neighborhood’s residential designs, John and William piloted the same exclusionary tools they would later adopt in Forest Park Heights to ensure their neighborhood remained socioeconomically and racially homogenous. As in Forest Park Heights, lots “were sold with the greatest of care and under conditions which excluded undesirable residents” through the use of restrictive covenants in deeds. A typical deed written by John and William forbade buyers from moving any “old building” onto the lot and required that all new homes be constructed as single-family residences for no less than 5,000 dollars. While these restrictions did not overtly mention race, they curtailed the ability of many nonwhite or low-income Springfield residents to purchase or build a home in the McKnights’ development by remaining prohibitively expensive. Instead, prominent white men were drawn to the McKnight brothers’ development where they refracted their stature and wealth through tasteful residential architecture such as John Hall, the president of the Massachusetts Mutual Insurance Company; James Naismith, the inventor of basketball; and

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29 Data on housing styles and designs in McKnight was compiled from the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS), accessed September 13, 2021, https://mhc-macris.net/index.htm.
32 Hampden County, Massachusetts, Deed Book 434, page 494, John D. McKnight to William McKnight, October 8, 1888, Hampden County Register of Deeds, Springfield, Massachusetts.
a cadre of mayors, architects, and white-collar professional workers. Through the 1950s, the McKnight neighborhood was over 98 percent white, although a few Black families like Primus Mason and his brother, William, continued to live in the neighborhood. The homes of Primus and William Mason stood until the city planning department authorized their demolition in the early 1970s, wiping away the last physical remnants of Hayti.

Despite the prominent stature of John and William in the neighborhood’s development, “McKnight” did not operate as the singular geographic reference for the neighborhood until the 1950s. The name “Hayti” had dropped out of common usage by the late 1870s. Instead, Springfield residents in the first half of the twentieth century referred to McKnight in relation to the neighborhoods around it as “Winchester Square,” “the Hill,” or “Highland.” In the early twentieth century, “Winchester Square” functioned as a literal public square near the intersection of State Street and Wilbraham Road—the geographic center of Springfield—and location of the city’s chief industrial employers like the Knox Automobile Company, the Indian Motocycle [sic] Company, and the Bullard Repeating Arms Company. As a geographical reference, “Winchester Square” roughly encompassed the neighborhoods on either side of State Street in popular parlance, including McKnight, Bay, Old Hill, and Upper Hill. Like “Winchester Square,” “the Hill” denoted those same neighborhoods and indicated their elevation above the city’s lower-lying neighborhoods downtown (Figure 4.2).

34 “History of the McKnight District,” circa 1973, Springfield Historical Commission McKnight Research File, Springfield Historical Commission, Springfield, MA.
Situated near the geographic center of Springfield, McKnight, Bay, the Old Hill, and Upper Hill neighborhoods constituted “the Hill” or “Winchester Square” in popular parlance. The literal public square of Winchester Square is situated near the intersecting lines demarcating these four neighborhoods. Source: “Living in Springfield: Come Join Us!” circa 1980.

The turn to “McKnight” as a clearly bounded neighborhood developed in tandem with Springfield’s shifting racial geography in the mid-twentieth century. Beginning in the 1950s, Springfield redevelopment officials pursued an aggressive urban renewal agenda that redrew and reinscribed lines of race and class throughout the city. In 1958, the demolition and clearance of the North End to construct Interstates 91 and 291 ignited this racial reorganization.\footnote{Springfield Redevelopment Authority, “Report on North End Urban Renewal Project No. Mass. R-7,” (Springfield, MA: Springfield Redevelopment Authority, 1966), 2, LMWLA, Springfield, MA.} Home to a mix of white ethnic, Puerto Rican, and Black residents, the North End contained some of the city’s most deteriorated housing, with Black residents occupying “the sections where housing is the worst.”\footnote{Massachusetts Council of Churches, “Springfield’s North End: A Church and Community Study,” (Springfield, MA: North End Area Ministry Committee of the Council of Churches of Greater Springfield, 1957), 70, LWMLA, Springfield, MA.} When the dust settled from the
wrecking ball in the North End in 1966, over 1,000 families found themselves displaced, 43 percent of whom were nonwhite. 40 The project built “racial separation into the very concrete of the city” by eliminating existing Black housing options in the North End and forcing those displaced Black residents to seek housing elsewhere. 41

Many of those displaced found housing on the Hill to be their only option. Like many displaced Black residents, Candice Lopes remembered her family moving from her childhood home in the North End to live with her aunt in the Old Hill neighborhood in a house on Orleans Street. Born in 1950, Lopes reflected that “moving from the North End to the Hill, we still went to a Black neighborhood.” 42 Lopes’ family and other displaced Black families joined an existing Black community on the Hill, cementing the area as a predominantly Black neighborhood. Lopes and her family were part of a wave of migration within the city triggered in part by urban renewal in the North End: between 1950 and 1960, over 2,000 Black residents moved into the Old Hill neighborhood with roughly 125 families directly displaced from the North End. In that same period, 5,000 white residents left the Old Hill. 43 The arrival of Lopes’ family and other displaced Black residents and migrants strained the Old Hill’s housing stock, encouraging middle-class Black Old Hill residents to look across State Street to McKnight for other housing options.

Helen Persip, like other Black women who grew up in the Old Hill, saw in McKnight’s spacious lots, elegant housing stock, and more reliable municipal services an

42 Candice Lopes, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, May 12, 2021, interview notes in possession of the author.
opportunity to provide a better life for her family. Born in Springfield in 1903, Persip spent her early childhood in a home on Tyler Street in the Old Hill neighborhood.\textsuperscript{44} When her mother, Rebecca, remarried she moved with her family around the corner to Beacon Street where she worked as a hairdresser out of her mother and stepfather’s home.\textsuperscript{45} In 1951, Helen married Francis Persip, a caterer and cook at Springfield College, who grew up in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.\textsuperscript{46} Newly married, Helen and Francis rented an apartment at 70 Catharine on the outer edge of McKnight.\textsuperscript{47} As their family grew, Helen and Francis sought a home of their own where they could raise their children. When the large, three-story Queen Anne home at the corner of Dartmouth and Catharine streets went up for sale in 1957, Helen and Francis secured a mortgage from the Springfield Five Cents Savings Bank and bought the house.\textsuperscript{48} With its large front porch, screened-in balcony, detached carriage house, and corner lot, 20 Dartmouth (Figure 4.3) not only offered Helen and Francis important material benefits to raising their children, the home’s location in McKnight brought Helen and Francis in proximity to structural advantages, like the credit extended through a mortgage, afforded to the neighborhood’s white homeowners.\textsuperscript{49}

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\item \textsuperscript{44} U.S. Census Bureau, Schedule of Population for Springfield, Hampden County, Massachusetts, 1910.
\item \textsuperscript{45} U.S. Census Bureau, Schedule of Population for Springfield, Hampden County, Massachusetts, 1930; U.S. Census Bureau, Schedule of Population for Springfield, Hampden County, Massachusetts, 1940.
\item \textsuperscript{46} David A. Vallette, “Pittsfield Pays Tribute to Family on ‘Persip Day,’” \textit{Springfield Republican}, March 27, 1983.
\item \textsuperscript{47} \textit{Springfield, West Springfield, Chicopee, and Longmeadow Directory} (Price & Lee Co., 1951), 730.
\item \textsuperscript{48} Hampden County, Massachusetts, Deed Book 2584, page 421, Elizabeth M. Klopfer to Francis Persip and Helen W. Persip, December 16, 1957, Hampden County Register of Deeds, Springfield, Massachusetts; Hampden County, Massachusetts, Deed Book 2584, page 422, Springfield Five Cents Savings Bank, mortgage to Francis R. Persip and Helen W. Persip, December 16, 1957, Hampden County Register of Deeds, Springfield, Massachusetts.
\end{itemize}
As McKnight transitioned to an integrated neighborhood of Black and white renters and homeowners, longtime and new residents worried that city officials would no longer view McKnight as deserving of civic resources as segregated white neighborhoods.\(^\text{50}\) To counter these perceptions, McKnight residents framed “McKnight” as a middle-class neighborhood of elegant, well-kempt homes maintained by respectable multiracial families. This turn to “McKnight” was registered by the formation of the McKnight District Improvement Association (MDIA) in 1957—the same year the Persips moved into their home on Dartmouth Street.\(^\text{51}\) The MDIA’s inaugural meeting outlined clear boundaries to their neighborhood, defining McKnight as bounded by Bowdoin Street to the west, the New


\(^{51}\) “Muriel A. Griffin Obituary,” *Springfield Republican*, March 11, 1997; U.S. Census Bureau, Schedule of Population for Springfield, Hampden County, Massachusetts, 1940.
Haven railroad tracks to the north and east, and State Street to the south. Black and white MDIA members likewise decried realtors’ assumptions that Black residents made McKnight a risky investment. In the words of MDIA president Muriel Griffin, the renewed presence of Black residents “from all walks of life,” did not discount that the “McKnight District is an area unsurpassed for continued residential occupation” and “is well worth maintaining as a high standard, conveniently located residential area.” Black residents like the Persips stressed that “the neighborhood was special and especially adapted to being a family neighborhood.” In defining McKnight by the respectability and character of its residents, regardless of race, the MDIA pushed back against the racist assumptions of realtors and city officials that McKnight was unworthy of civic investment.

As the MDIA promoted McKnight as a respectable residential enclave, they mobilized their neighborhood’s history to aid in battles against zoning changes. In the spring of 1957 amidst a campaign to block the rezoning of a Bowdoin Street home from single-family to commercial use, Griffin emphasized such changes would be inappropriate because McKnight was “once considered the city's Gold Coast residential area.” With this comment, Griffin ignited an effort to construct a useable past. But as Black migration to McKnight continued into the 1960s, white and Black residents discovered that individual campaigns against rezoning were insufficient to battle the neighborhood’s “downward slide” as city officials actively divested from the neighborhood’s streets, parks, schools, and infrastructure. Divestment from McKnight created new obstacles for white and Black

54 “McKnight Folks State Purpose: Faith in Neighborhood as Home Site Expressed,” Springfield Republican, April 14, 1957.
55 David Gaby, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
57 “McKnight Group in Action: Bowdoin St. Commercial Zone Opposed.”
homeowners who found their neighborhood “written off” by insurance companies and lending institutions, contributing to the deterioration of the neighborhood’s aging housing stock. Faced with these challenges, neighborhood residents turned to historic preservation, and the specific moment at which McKnight was synonymous with the “Gold Coast,” to demand the resources withheld from them.

“We Were Worth Being a Historic District”: Black Freedom and the Campaign for McKnight’s Historic District

In 1975, Candice Lopes and her husband Manuel moved from their home on Orleans Street in the Old Hill to a large, three-story, gambrel-roofed Queen Anne home on Dartmouth Terrace in the heart of McKnight (see figure 4.4). Lopes remembered that Frances Gagnon, who lived with her husband Victor on nearby Worthington Street, showed Candice and Manuel the home and “encouraged us to live there.” Gagnon soon extended an invitation to Lopes to join the neighborhood’s historic district steering committee, a group Gagnon helped mobilize two years earlier with white and Black homeowners in McKnight. Like other steering committee members, Candice believed that creating a historic district “would save the neighborhood” and went door-to-door with Gagnon gathering signatures on a petition supporting the creation of the city’s third historic district in McKnight. From 1950 to 1975, Lopes journeyed from her childhood home in the North End to the Old Hill, purchased a home in McKnight with her husband, and embraced historic preservation alongside her white neighbors. Over this period of 25 years, Lopes reflected the trajectory of

58 Hampden County, Massachusetts, Deed Book 4155, page 26, Theodore F. Clark and Agnes M. Clarke to Manuel A. Lopes, July 15, 1975, Hampden County Register of Deeds, Springfield, Massachusetts.
59 Lopes, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
60 Lopes, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
many Black newcomers to McKnight in the 1960s and early 1970s who adapted historic preservation as a tool in the city’s broader Black freedom struggle.

Like Lopes, other Black women played instrumental roles in McKnight’s successful historic district designation in 1976. From 1973 to 1976, Edna Mapp, a home teacher for Springfield Public Schools; Elaine Rucks, an Education Planner for the Model Cities program; and Helen Persip, Suzanne Bruce, and Lorraine Cuffee worked alongside their white neighbors in the historic district steering committee to educate residents about historic district design regulations and persuade the Springfield Historical Commission (SHC) and city council of McKnight’s historic and contemporary worth and value. These Black women broadened the city’s preservation movement to be more inclusive and capacious by appropriating preservation as a tool to aid in struggles against displacement from urban renewal, infrastructural divestment, the distribution of subsidized rental housing and community mental health facilities, police violence, and school desegregation—all major flashpoints in the Black freedom struggle. While Black Power ideology became more mainstream in Black political organizing during the 1970s, many members of the steering committee belonged to a generation of Black women where the politics of respectability and early-twentieth century notions of racial uplift figured prominently in their approaches to civil rights organizing. Moreover, as wives, homemakers, and mothers, these women valued preservation as a critical tool to protect their homes and their families in ways their husbands did not always acknowledge. These respectability politics determined the outcome of the neighborhood’s historic district campaign by underscoring McKnight’s historic and contemporary identity as a neighborhood of middle-class homeowners.

Black migration to McKnight accelerated during the 1960s. Between 1960 and 1970, the neighborhood’s Black population increased from 1,872 to nearly 3,500 Black residents;
by 1970, Black people constituted the majority of the neighborhood’s residents at 58 percent of McKnight’s overall population. Many newcomers and future members of the historic district steering committee belonged to the city’s Black middle class and were first-time homeowners. In 1970, just over half of the neighborhood’s Black residents owned their own homes; only seven percent of Black people in Springfield that same year were homeowners. Through a combination of white panic-selling, predatory real estate practices, and the death of longtime white homeowners, Black residents found greater prospects in owning a home in McKnight than in other areas of Springfield. Other steering committee members, like Edna and Alexander Mapp, had owned homes in McKnight for decades. In 1948, the couple purchased their first home on Westminster Street and moved to another home in McKnight on Thompson Street in 1959. Since 1946, Alexander worked as the executive director of the Springfield Urban League while Edna was a visiting home teacher for the city’s public schools. White liberals joined these new and longtime Black residents as well. Frances Gagnon, a Springfield native, and her husband, attorney Victor Gagnon, moved to a home at the corner of Worthington Street and Ingersoll Grove in McKnight in 1968, professing a desire to live in a “racially mixed” neighborhood where her children could “become more tolerant.”

61 “Neighborhood Analysis #9: McKnight-Bay,” 3.
63 Frances Gagnon, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone; David Gaby, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone; Sugrue, The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit, 195.
As they watched the successful creation of historic districts on Mattoon Street and Forest Park Heights, McKnight residents mobilized their own historic district steering committee in 1973.67 The steering committee reflected the neighborhood’s shifting demographics. Gagnon ensured that the committee was “consciously selected to be racially and geographically balanced” to reflect the neighborhood’s diversity, although most committee members were homeowners.68 Committee members included George Flagg, the headmaster at the McDuffie School for Girls; white-collar insurance agent Bill Goodsell; journalist Wayne Phaneuf; Richard Gray, a landlord who lived on Worthington Street and owned over 25 houses in the neighborhood; and Black homeowners Lopes, Persip, Cuffee, Bruce, Mapp, and Rucks.69 Committee members went door-to-door to “explain the implications of historic district status,” articulate the neighborhood’s historic significance, and gather signatures for a petition to present to the SHC and city council.70

Longtime Black residents like Mapp and newcomers like Lopes brought a political agenda to achieve racial and economic justice and battle perceptions from white lending institutions and policymakers that McKnight was unworthy of investment. This intergenerational group of Black women reflected two strands of Black political thought. Persip, Mapp, and Cuffee fused preservation with an early-twentieth-century style of respectability politics to forge “an alternative public identity for African Americans that focused on African American history, respectability, and pride” that could transcend racial

67 Gagnon, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
69 Gagnon, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
oppression.\textsuperscript{71} Younger women like Lopes, Rucks, and Bruce reflected more recent mainstream tenets of Black Power by using preservation to control their self-representation and emphasize Black capability, independence, and self-determination.\textsuperscript{72} While not explicitly articulating a call of “Black Power,” younger women like Lopes—a “Black pioneer” in the University of Massachusetts’ African American studies department—reflected the mainstreaming of Black Power thought in broader political organizing. By weaving both strategies together, Black women could effectively make a case for McKnight’s designation as Springfield’s third historic district.\textsuperscript{73}

As members of the steering committee, Lopes, Persip, Cuffee, Rucks, Mapp, and Bruce quickly adapted McKnight’s historic district campaign to address a series of converging issues relevant to the broader Black freedom struggle. Materially, these Black women well understood how preservation opened new pathways to civic resources in the form of infrastructural investment, access to the city’s planning department, and design regulations from witnessing the historic district campaign unfold on Mattoon Street. For example, when shown slides of Mattoon Street as part of a study examining Black attitudes towards city planners in 1975, Black McKnight residents expressed no significant “difference between…desired and attributed change” to Mattoon street.\textsuperscript{74} Moreover, Black participants in the study expressed anxiety that “Revenue Sharing funds intended for” Winchester Square

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\textsuperscript{71} Johnson, “Ye Gave Them a Stone”: African American Women’s Clubs, the Frederick Douglass Home, and the Black Mammy Monument,” 63; Ruffins, “Lifting As We Climb’: Black Women and the Preservation of African American History and Culture.”
\textsuperscript{72} Burns, \textit{From Storefront to Monument: Tracing the Public History of the Black Museum Movement}, 48–52; Preservation, museums, and historic sites frequently bridged generations of Black freedom organizers that resulted in a hybridized politics of representation that combined more traditional and emergent forms of political activism within the Black community. See Ian Rocksborough-Smith, \textit{Black Public History in Chicago: Civil Rights Activism from World War II into the Cold War} (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2018), 123.
\textsuperscript{73} Lopes, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
\textsuperscript{74} Dorothy Spencer Robinson, “Changing the Inner City: Perceptions of White Decision Makers and Black Residents” (Dissertation, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1975), 48.
\end{footnotesize}
would go “toward rehabilitating Mattoon Street” or that city officials would “Spend a lot of money to make these buildings pretty again’ or ‘Make it beautiful to show for the Bicentennial.’” Such comments reflected how Black people understood that preservation forged associations between neighborhood worth and the city’s budget priorities that manifested through tangible resources like façade grants, new sidewalks and streetlights, and an influx of capital to encourage rehabilitation.

Having observed the tangible benefits of historic preservation on Mattoon Street, Black women in McKnight linked the neighborhood’s historic district campaign to the concrete aims of the city’s Black freedom struggle. Central to that struggle was preventing further displacement from urban renewal. In McKnight, planners treated the mere presence of Black people as a problem in need of a solution. White city officials speculated that “young Negro families moving in and out all the time” in McKnight could turn the neighborhood “into a ghetto or slum” in need of urban renewal akin to the massive clearance underway in the North End. With fresh memories of their own displacement from the North End, Black newcomers to McKnight made active appeals that “we want to not have urban renewal, we want there to be support to renovate or rehabilitate houses.”

Alongside these demands, Black McKnight residents pointed to the design regulations attached to local historic districts as valuable tools to ward off projects that could displace

75 Robinson, 48.
76 Sociologists, journalists, and planners arrived at mid-century understandings of “blight,” “ghetto,” and deterioration through a racialized lens, arguing that Black people were pathologically incapable of maintaining meaningful communal ties with urban space, see Benjamin Looker, A Nation of Neighborhoods: Imagining Cities, Communities, and Democracy in Postwar America (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 145–48; Robert O. Self, American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 144.
78 Gaby, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
Black residents by subjecting demolitions or major alterations to review by the SHC. 79 “We have to get this historic protection,” David Gaby insisted, “to keep us from getting pushed out of the neighborhood…we were going to have urban renewal in a minute if we didn’t get something going on with the historic district.” 80

In addition to preventing urban renewal, Black McKnight residents believed preservation could alleviate the more quotidian divestment from municipal infrastructure that followed displaced Black communities. As state representative Raymond Jordan remembered, in the wake of Black migration from the North End to the Hill, “a lot of the amenities that people used to get kinda faded.” 81 While white suburbanites or policymakers looked to McKnight as a “degenerate area,” Black and white residents stressed that active divestment from the neighborhood’s infrastructure, not Black residents, was to blame for these perceptions and that urban renewal was not the solution to the neighborhood’s conditions. When Gagnon walked her son to nearby Tapley School, she drew attention to the city’s neglect to maintain sidewalks “so overgrown and blocked with broken glass and rubble I didn’t even know there was a sidewalk.” 82 McKnight residents believed that by centering McKnight’s historic and contemporary worth, historic preservation could bring the same financial and infrastructural resources to McKnight that homeowners on Mattoon Street and in Forest Park Heights enjoyed.

Additionally, Black women believed the design regulations embedded in a historic district ordinance would help redress the uneven development of “inner-city” neighborhoods like McKnight and the city’s segregated and affluent neighborhoods. The

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80 Gaby, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
82 “Gagnons Take Refuge in the City.”
distribution of subsidized, low-income housing and community mental health facilities further illustrated what McKnight residents articulated as a neocolonial relationship between McKnight and the city’s government. While McKnight residents applauded subsidized housing, they argued that McKnight already contained “more than four times the level [of subsidized units] of some suburban areas” of the city.\(^83\) By concentrating low-income housing in neighborhoods like McKnight, city officials absolved suburban communities of their responsibility to “evenly distribute” affordable housing.\(^84\) Likewise, McKnight residents argued that their neighborhood contained a disproportionate share of community mental health facilities. As large state institutions closed, the “initially envisioned comprehensive system of after-care and outpatient facilities” touted by advocates of deinstitutionalization “failed to materialize.”\(^85\) Instead, poorly resourced community-based mental health facilities clustered in neighborhoods like McKnight, a product of the city’s racialized development over the twentieth century. As Frances Gagnon reflected, state regulations mandated that mental health facilities needed to be accessible via public transportation, a stipulation that allowed suburban communities without public transit systems to “wash their hands” of community-based mental health programs while inner-city neighborhoods bore the costs of deinstitutionalization and divestment from mental healthcare.\(^86\)

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\(^{83}\) “Housing Projects Move Ahead Despite Community Concerns,” McKnight Neighborhood News, n.d., LWMLA.

\(^{84}\) “Housing Projects Move Ahead Despite Community Concerns.”


\(^{86}\) Gagnon, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
renovations to existing properties, historic district status could provide new barriers to the construction of subsidized housing and mental health facilities in McKnight.

In addition to urban renewal, infrastructural divestment, and the distribution of subsidized housing and mental health facilities, Black residents of McKnight believed historic preservation could secure greater protection from the city’s police department. Black residents throughout Springfield had long endured brutality from the Springfield Police Department (SPD). As Raymond Jordan remembered, for the city’s Black freedom movement “police brutality was the big issue that we were working with” and remained central to that movement nationwide.\(^\text{87}\) Police violence in Winchester Square illustrated to McKnight residents the concrete need for protection. In 1968, the SPD violently suppressed a demonstration outside of King’s Department Store, using excessive force to arrest four Black teenagers.\(^\text{88}\) The incident demonstrated to Black homeowners and renters that the city’s police force was “occupying their area, not there to help, but as suppressors.”\(^\text{89}\) As with infrastructural investment on Mattoon Street, Black people recognized how historic district status created new imperatives for the SPD to offer protection to the neighborhood’s residents and their investments in private property. Candice Lopes remarked that historic district status induced homes to start “shooting up in price,” illustrating, in the words of SHC commissioner Stephen Hays, that “there’s something of value here…and you had damn better well police it.”\(^\text{90}\) Persip likewise underscored that historic district status would

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\(^\text{88}\) “Mayor’s Task Force on Police-Community Relations,” (Springfield, MA: Intergroup Relations Department, 1968), 2.

\(^\text{89}\) “Mayor’s Task Force on Police-Community Relations,” 8.

\(^\text{90}\) Lopes, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone; Stephen Hays, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, November 12, 2020, interview in possession of the author.
require the “police department to provide some kind of protective services when things were getting a little too rowdy,” rather than brutalize McKnight residents.91

Most significantly, Black women believed preservation could aid in efforts to provide quality education for their children in the wake of Massachusetts’ efforts to desegregate public schools. McKnight was at the center of efforts to desegregate the city’s public schools. By the early 1970s, Black parents across the United States grew frustrated with the declining quality of inner-city schools and demanded better resources and facilities for their children.92 As municipal officials in Springfield divested from maintaining basic infrastructure like sidewalks following urban renewal, so too did the city’s school authorities neglect McKnight’s elementary school, Tapley School. Built in 1887, Tapley’s Richardsonian-Romanesque brick design and four-story octagonal tower stood out from the surrounding neighborhood’s wood-frame Queen Anne residences.93 Tapley reflected the changing demographics in McKnight. By 1965, 75 percent of students were Black while just under 25 percent were white.94 As Black enrollment increased, school officials delayed basic maintenance, contributing to Tapley’s rapid deterioration: “Part of the top floor was condemned, the kids had no library to speak of,” and the condition of the school’s stairwells and bathrooms were “just horrible.”95

As Tapley deteriorated, the state and city’s fraught racial politics around school desegregation converged in McKnight. In 1965, following the concerted activism of Black parents in Boston and legal action from the Springfield chapter of the NAACP, the

91 David Gaby, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
95 Gagnon, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
Massachusetts state legislature passed the Racial Imbalance Act (RIA).\textsuperscript{96} One of the first laws in the United States to explicitly ban school segregation, the new law empowered the State Board of Education to withhold state funding from local school districts that were racially “imbalanced” and required those districts to create and submit a plan to achieve school integration. But the RIA defined “imbalance” narrowly, including only those schools where over half of enrolled students were Black while schools with mostly white students remained exempt. The law also ignored the state’s Asian and Latino populations, operating within a Black-white binary in assessing school integration.\textsuperscript{97} Under this framework, only eight of Springfield’s 44 schools qualified as “imbalanced,” including Tapley, but schools with no nonwhite students did not register as “imbalanced.”\textsuperscript{98} Furthermore, as Lily Geismer argues, the “law contained significant mechanisms to delay implementation since it gave schools systems found in violation...the leeway to devise their plans for remedy,” a stipulation that allowed municipalities in Massachusetts to avoid rectifying imbalance for almost a decade after the law’s passage.\textsuperscript{99}

Springfield school committee officials attempted to comply with the RIA in ways that remained politically popular with white parents but disregarded the concerns of Black parents in McKnight. Beginning in 1966, Springfield school officials discontinued fifth and sixth grades at Tapley, opting to instead bus McKnight’s fifth- and sixth-grade students to segregated white schools throughout the city to achieve integration.\textsuperscript{100} Black parents in McKnight were outraged. Not only did busing fail to address Tapley’s deterioration, busing

\textsuperscript{96} Barbara Garde Garvey, “The Massachusetts Racial Imbalance Act: The Administration of Public Policy at the State and Local Levels” (master’s Thesis, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1972), 6.
\textsuperscript{100} “The Six-District Plan: Integration of the Springfield, Mass., Elementary Schools” (Springfield, MA: Massachusetts State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1976), 11.
“puts 100% of the burden of busing, the lost class time, the lost opportunities for extra-curricular activities, the lost cohesion for the community, squarely on the people of McKnight.”\textsuperscript{101} Additionally, Black students reported harassment from their white peers on buses, remarking that “busing causes uncomfortable feelings.”\textsuperscript{102} In Springfield, busing diverted attention from Black demands “to improve the educational options in majority-black schools,” instead positioning racial integration via busing as the most effective means to address educational inequality.\textsuperscript{103} Ultimately, Black parents interpreted the elimination of fifth and sixth grades from Tapley as an ominous indication of the city’s disregard for the needs and demands of McKnight’s residents, pushing Black parents in search of other strategies to illustrate their neighborhood’s worth and keep Tapley open.

Black parents’ misgivings about city officials’ valuation of Tapley School proved prescient. The city’s formal desegregation plan, known as the Six-District Plan, ordered Tapley School’s closure in 1974, an outcome steering committee members Elaine Rucks and Suzanne Bruce sought to counter with historic preservation to keep Tapley School open.\textsuperscript{104} The Six-District Plan primarily bused Tapley’s former students to the recently constructed New North Elementary School in the city’s North End, a school the state board of education singled out for violating the RIA by segregating the city’s Puerto Rican students into one school district. “A certain amount of ‘thinning’ of the mix was to be provided” by closing Tapley and busing students to the North End, a decision that frustrated McKnight

\textsuperscript{101} “Proposal for Re-Opening the Tapley School,” (Springfield, MA: McKnight Neighborhood Council, 1983), 2, McKnight Neighborhood Council Records, Tapley School Record of Progress, LMWLA.
\textsuperscript{102} John Victor Shea, “A Study of the Patterns of Unrest in the Springfield Public Schools” (Dissertation, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1972), 89–91.
\textsuperscript{104} “The Six-District Plan: Integration of the Springfield, Mass., Elementary Schools,” 27.
residents who “had been subjected to more than [their] equitable share of busing.”

Rucks and Bruce were “extremely concerned about the educational component” and sought to expand the purview of historic preservation “to make the school issue” all “a part of the preservation of the fabric” of the neighborhood. If preservation could not reopen Tapley School by demonstrating its significance as a community resource, than historic district status would at least ensure the building’s long-term protection from demolition.

Steering committee members found enthusiastic support from neighborhood residents excited by Black women’s expansive application of historic preservation to their neighborhood’s issues, but they faced an uphill battle demonstrating their neighborhood’s eligibility for historic district status to city officials who did not live in McKnight. Officials in the planning department “seemed skeptical about creating a racially and economically integrated historic district,” predominant perceptions the steering committee sought to reverse. Committee members quickly mobilized around a strategy to illustrate their neighborhood’s relative “worth” compared to the city’s existing historic districts on Mattoon Street and in Forest Park Heights. “We had to persuade the historical commission that we were worthy,” Gagnon reflected, “We had open houses…I served coffee and tea to the city councilors,” some of whom had never set foot in McKnight. David Gaby reflected that demonstrating worth would “help us keep things together, make things positive, maybe we’ll be treated a bit less like stepchildren.” Other residents hoped that illustrating worth would

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105 Board of Education v. School Committee of Springfield 345 N.E.2d (Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts, 1976).
106 Gagnon, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
108 Gagnon, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
109 Gaby, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
shift the attitudes of realtors and lending institutions that engaged in predatory real estate practices.

As they united around historic preservation, Black and white steering committee members openly criticized racist perceptions of McKnight. Committee members voiced a race-conscious analysis of the implicit associations between historic preservation and whiteness. Historic districts were “seen as appropriate for neighborhoods that were occupied by ‘us,’” remembered David Gaby, “and to the planning department that meant white people.”¹¹⁰ McKnight was “them over there,” a turn of phrase Gagnon registered as a coded acknowledgement between city officials that the presence of Black people in McKnight made the neighborhood too risky for investment and therefore unworthy of historic district status.¹¹¹ Gagnon and other steering committee members similarly stressed the neocolonial relationship between McKnight and city officials, pointing out that members of the SHC did not live in McKnight nor make a genuine effort to have open meetings. “They were a bunch of elitists,” Gagnon remembered, “They were not [meeting] at city hall. They were meeting in the basement level with sherry of the George Walter Vincent Smith Museum.”¹¹² Gaby explicitly contended that “It was a colonial occupier mindset as opposed to a governing body” mindset adopted by city planning officials.¹¹³ Through these critiques, steering committee members drew attention to the racialized expansion of the city’s historic districts to better illustrate how city officials’ reticence to designate McKnight as the city’s third

¹¹⁰ Gaby, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
¹¹¹ Gagnon, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
¹¹² Gagnon, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
¹¹³ Gaby, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
historic district stemmed from racist perceptions of the neighborhood, not sincere qualms about its historic or architectural significance.

Alongside their white neighbors, Lopes, Persip, Cuffee, Rucks, Mapp, and Bruce instrumentalized McKnight’s history to articulate a powerful counter-narrative against accusations that McKnight was unworthy of historic district status for “racial and economic reasons.”114 These women drew from longstanding Black historical traditions that mobilized history to subvert and disrupt racist conceptions of Black humanity while generating spaces for self-respect, dignity, and independence among Black people.115 Lopes, Persip, Rucks, Mapp, and Bruce quickly discovered that the most efficient mobilization of their neighborhood’s history and demonstration of worthiness would need to be legible to white city councilors, lending institutions, and policymakers.

Black and white steering committee members deployed a variety of strategies to appeal to white city officials. Committee members emphasized the connections between all-white Forest Park Heights and McKnight—a strategy that recognized Forest Park’s disproportionate representation in municipal government and on city council explored in the previous chapter. As Lopes asserted, “We’re older than Forest Park,” reminding city officials that Forest Park Heights’ development was contingent upon the financial success of the McKnight brothers’ development in Winchester Square.116 Other McKnight residents leveled charges that McKnight was “both more meritorious and more endangered than Forest

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116 Lopes, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
Park,” elevating the neighborhood’s historical significance and contemporary need for historic district status.\textsuperscript{117}

\textbf{Figure 4.4: Mayoral Tour of McKnight.} Frances Gagnon (left) tours McKnight with mayor William Sullivan (right) outside of Candice Lopes’ Dartmouth Terrace Home in 1975. Source: Springfield Daily News.

Additionally, steering committee members drew on house tours to correct the neighborhood’s “image problems” by inviting city council members and mayor William Sullivan to tour Frances Gagnon’s home and the home of Candice Lopes on Dartmouth Terrace in October of 1975 (Figure 4.4).\textsuperscript{118} For Lopes, Sullivan’s tour allowed her to

\textsuperscript{117} Welch, “Historic Districts of Springfield: A Case Study,” 5.

represent the capabilities of Black homeowners in the neighborhood. Lopes drew attention to her sensitivity to her home that she and her husband, Manuel, were carefully restoring by removing carpet glue from the home’s hardwood floors.\textsuperscript{119} Moreover, the tours allayed “confusion on the part of some Historical Commission members about just where McKnight was located” by defining the boundaries of the neighborhood and stressing the respectability of its middle-class homeowners.\textsuperscript{120}

To further define “McKnight,” Black women deployed respectability politics to underscore their status as homeowners in contrast to renters and tenants in the northeast section of McKnight and throughout the Old Hill. “There was an identity distinction,” David Gaby explained, “Mrs. Persip knew it when she was moving from the Hill to McKnight, everybody knew that there was a difference…people in McKnight were very proud of being McKnight which is different from the Hill which historically was more industrial, more working class, not the same quality houses.”\textsuperscript{121} Since the 1950s, realtors and lending institutions used “Hill-McKnight” to refer to both neighborhoods, a designation that further erased class distinctions among Springfield’s Black community. Black women like Persip readily admitted that McKnight was “damaged by the constant confusion produced

\textsuperscript{119} Lopes, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
\textsuperscript{121} Gaby, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
by connecting it in the news media with the Hill,” a problem that historic district designation could solve by clearly defining McKnight in contrast to its surrounding neighborhoods.122

Persip’s final appeal to the city council reflected these efforts on the part of Black women to concretely illustrate McKnight’s worth to white city officials. Persip stressed the neighborhood’s respectable past:

She told the story so well about how when she was little, she lived on Beacon Street [in the Old Hill] and they would come over to McKnight as a trip as a family just to see how nice it was. And the horses had to have rubber shoes so they wouldn’t wake people up when they were delivering milk and how when she had moved into McKnight, her and her husband were welcomed by the neighborhood association… She [explained] how we needed to be a historic district, and we were worth being a historic district, and all the distinguished people that had lived in the neighborhood.123

“I can tell you what’s wrong,” Persip went on, “methodically” outlining the neighborhood’s grievances of police violence, displacement from urban renewal, and the closure of Tapley School before sitting down: “And there, I’m done.”124 Persip’s speech reflected Black women’s fusion of respectability politics with an emphasis on self-determination. Persip underscored McKnight’s worth and respectability and insisted on neighborhood residents’ ability to assess McKnight’s problems while demanding the necessary civic resources to address them.125

But the final historic district ordinance and boundary leaned further into respectability politics by underscoring homeownership as historically significant and of central importance to contemporary residents. Formally designated as both a local and National Register of Historic Places district in 1976, both designations emphasized the neighborhood’s significance as “a large, well-preserved, planned residential development of

123 Gaby, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
124 Gagnon, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
125 Gagnon, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
the late nineteenth century, and as the location of the homes of a number of Springfield’s prominent citizens.” While “three quarters of a century have passed since the area was essentially completed,” McKnight “remains a remarkably cohesive district” of large, single-family Queen Anne homes. The local district reinforced connects to the McKnight brothers and erased the neighborhood’s connections to Hayti by claiming the area was a “sandy, barren plain” prior to their arrival. As local historian Ed Lonergan reflected, the new historic district overlooked the neighborhood’s “more convoluted, more complex” history to develop a “tagline. And the tagline in McKnight is: ‘the best-preserved Queen-Anne style, late Victorian, wood-frame [neighborhood] in Massachusetts.’” Ultimately, this narrative embedded in the district’s designation entrenched McKnight’s identity as one of respectable and graceful homes with equally respectable homeowners. When Persip arrived at the Hampden County Registry of Deeds in January of 1976 to submit the ordinance’s final

boundaries, the new district mapped almost exactly onto those areas zoned for single-family residences (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5: McKnight Historic District Boundaries and Zoning Maps. The final historic district boundary approved in 1976 (above) was almost completely coterminous with those areas zoned for single-family residences (referenced as “Res A” in the dotted areas on the map below). Source: “Final Report on the Proposed McKnight Historic District” and “Neighborhood Analysis #9: McKnight-Bay.”
Persip, Rucks, Mapp, Cuffee, Lopes, and Bruce made McKnight’s historic district possible. Through their organizing efforts alongside their white neighbors, these Black women appropriated historic preservation as a tool in the city’s broader Black freedom struggle. What remained to be seen was whether historic district status and would be the solution Black women envisioned for the matrix of issues converging on McKnight. Their politics of respectability was a calculated move to realize McKnight’s historic district. But this strategy came with its own set of risks. In making the neighborhood more legible to white officials, white suburbanites and younger families were also drawn to McKnight by the neighborhood’s “tagline,” newcomers that could potentially displace longtime Black residents and make them “victims of the historic district rather than the beneficiaries.”

While these white newcomers would not initiate significant displacement in the neighborhood, they did bring with them a competing vision for historic preservation that bypassed the concrete demands of the city’s Black freedom struggle in favor of an aesthetic vision they believed could transcend racial difference altogether.

“We’ve Got A Lot of Opinions On Fences Around Here”: Bypassing Black Freedom

In 1987, Candice Lopes became the first Black woman nominated to Springfield’s school committee. Lopes attributed her experience grassroots organizing with McKnight’s historic district steering committee for launching her political career. Lopes was not alone in finding historic preservation a springboard into Black political power. In 1974, Raymond Jordan, a leader in the city’s Black freedom struggle and advocate for the redevelopment and preservation of Winchester Square, was elected to the Massachusetts House of

131 Lopes, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
Representatives as the first Black legislator to represent the state’s 12th district. Both Lopes and Jordan reflected how Black civil rights activists and neighborhood advocates assumed new positions of political power across the United States, a product of Black Power’s mainstream popularity in the 1970s. The political ascendency of Lopes and Jordan did not necessarily indicate that white policymakers at the local, state, or federal levels meaningfully addressed the demands of the broader Black freedom struggle, however. Jordan and Lopes’ newfound political power, while real electoral gains, did not portend more transformative or radical disruptions to the racial and economic status quo. Instead, white business interests and policymakers held up individual Black politicians as the natural endpoint of the Black freedom struggle while continuing to evade redressing racial and economic inequities through more holistic structural or societal solutions.

In McKnight, white community preservationists tread a similar path. In the wake of the historic district campaign, white newcomers began moving to the neighborhood, a development that reflected how Black women’s efforts to illustrate McKnight’s worth successfully persuaded white people that the neighborhood was a valuable and respectable place to own a home. But unlike how Lopes, Persip, Rucks, Mapp, and Bruce and other longtime white McKnight residents approached historic preservation with a race-conscious “lens of power relations,” these white newcomers believed preservation transcended racial difference, making race irrelevant altogether. In this colorblind framework, white community preservationists vaunted the capabilities of architecture and the historic district’s

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132 Jordan, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
135 Marchiel, After Redlining: The Urban Reinvestment Movement in the Era of Financial Deregulation, 32.
design regulations to create “a good integrated community.” This analysis not only shifted attention away from the demands of the neighborhood’s Black residents, but it also disregarded the material impediments to upholding the aesthetic vision championed by these white community preservationists engendered by structural racism. As preservationists bypassed the Black freedom struggle, the work of Black women in McKnight to link preservation with struggles for justice slowly unwound. Ultimately, the aftermath of McKnight’s historic district designation revealed the limits of multiracial organizing around property ownership and the culture of property: in overlooking the ways the market continued to place Black residents at a structural disadvantage, preservationists inadvertently reinforced racist notions about Black people’s capabilities as homeowners.

“One afternoon” Jim Boone, a special education counselor at West Springfield High School, drove down Florida Street “and this house caught my eye. This decrepit, dark brown house covered with ivy and overgrown with trees and peeling paint, falling apart. But it had stained glass windows. And I stopped. This house just grabbed me.” On the heels of the historic district campaign, Jim and his wife, Merry, bought the Florida Street house in 1976. Jim and Merry reflected the white, liberal newcomers attracted by McKnight’s historic district status who policymakers heralded as reversing the “mass exodus of the 1960s” from neighborhoods like McKnight. Both natives of Hartford, Connecticut, Merry founded and worked for the Family Planning Council of Western Massachusetts. While restoring their home to its appearance in the 1880s, Jim and Merry discovered that McKnight was “just the kind of neighborhood that when somebody comes in and starts working on one of the

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137 Jim Boone, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, October 26, 2020, interview in possession of the author.
houses the neighbors are friendly and come by.” With their interest in preserving the
eighborhood’s housing stock, Jim and Merry found a sense of community rooted in a
preservationist ethos in McKnight.

Other white newcomers continued to arrive even as longtime white residents left
McKnight. Between 1970 and 1980, the neighborhood’s Black population remained stable
while the white population decreased from just under 2,500 to 1,381, a trend representative
of Springfield’s overall population loss during this period from 164,000 residents in 1970 to
152,000 residents in 1980. Those white liberals who arrived to McKnight in this same
period brought with them a sincere belief that the neighborhood’s historic housing stock
could transcend racial difference. As Rose, who grew up in Brooklyn, recalled, “McKnight
was the example of diversity” and integration in the city’s neighborhoods. “McKnight was
the neighborhood of beautiful, old, turn-of-the-century houses,” Rose insisted, “and anyone
who wanted to live there shared that passion. And that was the connecting point. It didn't
matter who they were, it was this love of older houses” that could bring white and Black
people together in an integrated community. “Can whites and Blacks live together?”
wondered McKnight landlord Richard Gray. The neighborhood’s historic housing
underscored that “yes, we can.” Like Rose, Boone, and Gray, other residents asserted
their sincere belief that “the reason why you have a good integrated community here is
because of the houses. That’s the primary thing…I know what the blacks are here for and I

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139 Boone, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
140 U.S. Census Bureau, Total Population, tables for 1970 and 1980, Social Explorer, accessed October 4, 2021,
https://www.socialexplorer.com/a9676d974c/explore.
141 Rose, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, February 16, 2021, interview in possession of the author.
142 Richard Gray, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, June 10, 2021, interview in possession of the
author.
know what the whites are here for,” both united around the neighborhood’s elegant Victorian housing stock.¹⁴³

In this colorblind valuation of the neighborhood, white preservationists doubled down on the “philosophy of the McKnight brothers,” transforming seemingly race-neutral elements of the urban built environment into signifiers of homeowners’ capabilities to reflect McKnight’s popular perception as a respectable, middle-class enclave.¹⁴⁴ Suddenly, the presence of ordinary and mundane materials, like vinyl siding and chain link fences, seemed to threaten the middle-class identity ensconced in the historic district ordinance (Figure 4.6). The ordinance compounded this fixation, singling out fences as alterations requiring SHC review to “protect street vistas” and encouraging homeowners to maintain “original wood, clapboard, or shingle siding” instead of new vinyl or synthetic siding “whenever possible.”¹⁴⁵

Because the SHC did not have sufficient staff to monitor changes in historic districts, individual McKnight residents took on the task of policing their neighbors to ensure that their homes remained in compliance with the district ordinance, a development that ignited tensions across the neighborhood. These residents believed that deviation from the ordinance destabilized the neighborhood’s respectability. As David Glassberg notes, through policing their neighbors, McKnight residents “vehemently defended [McKnight’s] identity—and by extension, their own—as middle class, and indicated that the badge of that status was the ability to maintain their home.”¹⁴⁶ When a community forum of neighborhood residents was shown an image of a house with a chain link fence, one audience member remarked that

¹⁴³ Transcript, “McKnight Public Forum II,” 32.
“If that’s what I think it is, that’s a rental house,” prompting a swift response from another attendee: “No. They just act like it’s a rental.”

**Figure 4.6: Manual on Home Restoration.** Treating a house “like a rental” threatened to destabilize McKnight’s identity as a middle-class enclave of respectable homeowners. Here, preservationists attempted to illustrate how best to take care of one’s home to reinforce McKnight’s middle-class identity. Source: *The House Book: The Better Way to Restore Older Homes in Springfield.*

White preservationists continued to express the value of “cultural diversity” in their neighborhood but failed to understand how race still mattered to their aesthetic vision of middle-class respectability. As Jim Boone argued, living in a historic district was “more expensive” than “the areas that aren’t historic districts,” yet race theoretically had no bearing on this reality. “Economics,” not race, “is probably the greatest divider in our country” and served as the primary “distinction” among residents of McKnight. And yet, race significantly shaped residents’ abilities to make the material investments in their homes—to

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149 Boone, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
repaint clapboard wooden siding annually, repair original double-hung windows, or maintain elaborate porches and balconies—necessary to illustrating McKnight’s middle-class respectability. While white preservationists believed that maintaining one’s house was a truly colorblind enterprise, this analysis ignored how the housing market and the supplemental home maintenance industry fueled by lending institutions continued to operate in fundamentally racialized ways.\(^{150}\) Black residents acknowledged this reality, arguing that inexpensive materials like vinyl siding and chain-link fences were “in the best interest of the house” and their physical wellbeing as homeowners.\(^{151}\)

**Conclusion**

Ultimately, the squabbles over vinyl siding and chain-link fences inadvertently reinforced racist notions that Black people were unable to properly take care of their homes. As Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor argues, this individualistic thrust “perpetuated the false idea that a knowledgeable consumer could overcome the institutional or systemic problems within the existing urban housing market,” a premise that undercut the race-conscious organizing of McKnight residents to make the historic district a reality in the first place.\(^{152}\) Moreover, the experiences of McKnight reflected the challenges facing integrated communities across the United States as white residents discarded an intentional focus on interracial living and embraced a more generalized “ethos of diversity.”\(^{153}\) In McKnight, preservationists’ colorblind assumption that historic housing could transcend racial difference increasingly bypassed the city’s Black freedom struggle by deflecting attention away from the continued


impact of structural racism on their Black and nonwhite neighbors—or ignoring this reality altogether.

The multiracial coalition that inaugurated McKnight’s historic district campaign found unity in emphasizing their status as respectable property owners, a strategy that succeeded in persuading white residents, policymakers, and lending institutions that McKnight was “worthy,” but fell short of delivering the more holistic and sweeping changes demanded by the city’s Black freedom struggle. The “culture of property’s” emphasis on respectability appealed to the neighborhood’s Black residents. Black women Lopes, Jordan, and other Black preservationists found preservation a valuable tool to launch their own political careers and successfully deflect the worst abuses of urban redevelopment in McKnight. But the broader demands those Black women appropriated preservation to address grew increasingly peripheral to the city’s preservation movement as white newcomers continued to arrive in McKnight. Tapley School remained closed and was converted into apartments in 1993; a new elementary school did not open in McKnight until 2003. As preservationists looked beyond the borders of McKnight, colorblind liberalism, rather than race-conscious attempts to link preservation with the broader Black freedom struggle, would remain the guiding ethos of the city’s preservation movement. And, like white newcomers to McKnight, preservationists would continue to overlook how a colorblind faith in property ownership failed to account for a predatory real estate industry that thrived on racial difference.
CHAPTER 5

Becoming Landlords: Preservation Tax Incentives, Tenant Activism, and the Urban Housing Crisis

Pat Triggs, a resident of Forest Park Heights and member of the Forest Park Civic Association (FPCA), was fed up with absentee landlords. By 1978, Triggs could point to a variety of deteriorating multi-family homes and apartment buildings throughout Forest Park as evidence of the abuses perpetuated by absentee landlords—property owners who did not live in or near the property they leased. “It was immoral,” Triggs remembered, “not only unethical, but immoral, allowing people to live in those conditions and collecting these gigantic, subsidized rents. It was a travesty.” To solve this “travesty,” Triggs became a landlord in 1978, purchasing a two-family house two doors away from her own home, which she began renting to tenants.¹

Twelve years later, Leslie Clement, a community preservationist like Triggs who decided to purchase, renovate, and rent historic houses found herself facing foreclosure on five of her properties amid rising property management costs that overwhelmed Clement’s capacities as an individual landlord.² Yet all around Springfield corporate actors like the Springfield Institution for Savings (SIS) and rental management agency The Claremont Company crowed their success as preservationists and landlords who worked diligently to preserve the “character and charm” of their historic properties while rehabilitating deteriorated rental units.³ What began as conversations around Triggs’ kitchen table to “live out our belief that everyone should have a nice, decent place to live” reverberated into

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¹ Pat Triggs, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, October 28, 2020, interview in possession of the author.
³ Springfield Institution for Savings, “Armoury Commons: A Thoughtful Alternative to City Living”; “Where is the Past Becoming Present?” Springfield Union, June 26, 1977
corporate board rooms as bank presidents and investors modeled themselves after
community preservationist-landlords like Triggs. With their disparate access to capital,
Triggs, Clement, and SIS were nevertheless bound together by their belief that community
preservationists were best equipped to solve the vexing problems plaguing the rental housing
market in the late 1970s.

Community preservationists popularized this argument in the 1970s in ways that
corporate actors would later seize and profit from, often at the expense of preservationists.
By the 1970s, Triggs’ solution to the problems she observed with rental housing in her
neighborhood reflected a transformative development underway as community
preservationists increasingly took on new roles as landlords, an initiative that shifted
apartment buildings from the periphery to the center of the community preservationist
agenda across the United States. Community preservationists like Triggs derived several
benefits from renting property that invigorated their movement during the 1970s and 1980s.
As landlords, community preservationists could secure private property by directly
managing, screening, selecting, and surveilling their tenants, a position that complemented
the ongoing fusion of historic preservation and crime prevention. Additionally, the rents
preservationists collected from leasing their third floor, a carriage house, or the house next
door provided alternative revenue streams that subsidized preservation projects.

But taking on tenants did more than infuse new capital into a preservationist agenda.
In this chapter, I argue that adopting new roles as landlords encompassed a significant
political project for community preservationists to legitimate and sustain preservation by
intervening in ongoing debates about the most effective methods to address the urban
housing crisis. Abandonment, arson, a dearth of affordable housing, the villainization of
public housing, and abusive absentee landlords all constituted what scholars, social scientists,
Community preservationists proffered solutions to this crisis that prioritized subsidizing the profits of individual landlords over structural and holistic solutions articulated by low-income tenants and housing activists. Community preservationists united around a common analysis that positioned individual landlords as both the problem and solution to this crisis: if preservationists simply replaced abusive absentee landlords and took better care of their properties and their tenants, they could diminish the mounting political and infrastructural costs of the urban housing crisis. Such arguments remained consistent with community preservationists’ culture of property that underscored the role of individual property owners—in this case landlords—in addressing urban decline. This reasoning likewise appealed to policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels and attracted the attention of larger corporate actors who sought to reposition themselves as enlightened and more humane landlords like community preservationists. Ultimately, what began as experimental forays into the urban housing crisis on the part of community preservationists in the early 1970s policymakers and corporate actors consolidated in the mid-1980s into strategies that bolstered the private market’s ability to ameliorate pressing urban political and spatial problems.

These new strategies took shape as policymakers actively divested from remediating urban social and political problems through state action. At the federal level, officials crafted new development tools that legitimized and empowered preservationist landlords—and later

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their corporate counterparts—as the new shock troops in the battle against urban decline. The creation of preservation tax incentives in 1976 and their expansion under the Reagan administration most directly subsidized preservationist landlords. Broadly conceived, this legislation provided for investment tax credits to subsidize the rehabilitation of certified historic buildings, so long as they were “revenue-generating properties,” a stipulation that included all commercial and rental residential properties short of private, single-family residential homes. In addition to preservation tax incentives, preservationists benefitted from a wide range of housing subsidization schemes, including Section 8 and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), that aimed to generate profits for private property owners while decoupling the state from commitments to provide safe and secure housing. Preservation tax incentives did double work by legitimizing community preservationists as capable managers of the urban housing crisis while community preservationists’ ready adoption of these incentives naturalized such private market alternatives as the only effective tools to combat that crisis.

Ultimately, I illustrate how community preservationists facilitated, were enabled by, and later eclipsed by a broader devolutionary agenda that encompassed a rightward political shift from “stakeholder” to “shareholder” politics. Shareholder politics sought to unburden the wealthy through a political and economic system that divested from the welfare of less affluent citizens. The measures described above—preservation tax incentives, Section 8, and CDBG funding—all encompassed new tools the state made available for private market actors to secure profit. Community preservationists were crucial political actors in and beneficiaries of this process. By portraying their ventures as an “investment and a home,” community preservationists framed housing as a commodity through which they and their movement could accrue financial and political capital while providing moral assurances that
using their property as a financial instrument did not wrongfully exploit their tenants.\textsuperscript{5} Larger corporate actors like banks and real estate agencies seized on these justifications to promote their own projects as morally legitimate and politically necessary measures to ameliorate the urban housing crisis. By the early 1990s, after Reagan-era changes to the federal tax credit program, corporate actors pushed out their community preservationist counterparts who, ironically, had first absorbed the risk of taking on new roles as landlords while demonstrating the success of such a move.

In securing greater state resources to subsidize their positions as landlords, community preservationists and their corporate counterparts pushed calls from low-income tenants and housing activists further to the margins of mainstream political discourse. As landlords acquired new channels to accumulate profit, low-income tenants found themselves in increasingly unstable housing situations reliant on the individual goodwill of landlords. Tenants actively resisted and protested these initiatives, pressuring municipal and federal policymakers to prioritize the wellbeing of tenants above the bottom line of landlords.

Over the next two chapters, I trace preservationists’ broad involvement with the real estate market as landlords and then as real estate developers engaged in the purchasing and selling of residential property. In this chapter, I examine how strategies that coalesced around promoting landlords as the best actors to battle the urban housing crisis germinated amongst community preservationists and traveled to policymakers and corporate real estate elites where they found an institutional home in preservation tax incentives. By moving preservationists from the periphery to the center of these processes, I bring together several

\textsuperscript{5} Scholars in political economy have referred to this outlook as the “financialization” of housing, or, the tendency to see housing like other financial instruments as a way to manage and generate capital, see Manuel B. Aalbers, “The Variegated Financialization of Housing,” \textit{International Journal of Urban and Regional Research} 41, no. 4 (July 2017): 542–54.
strands of scholarship on the rise of the “marketization” of American politics, neoliberalism, the urban housing crisis, and historic preservation. First, historians in the last decade have turned greater attention to the retooling of the state in the latter decades of the twentieth century to prioritize free market principles and empower the private sector to solve urban problems.⁶ Social scientists, geographers, and scholars in urban studies have long framed these as top-down processes engineered by political elites that discarded Keynesian manufacturing in favor of financial actors and institutions in the finance, insurance, and real estate (FIRE) industries.⁷ Other historians have similarly noted how the political culture of “Reaganism” in the 1980s encouraged policymakers to view the world as “shaped by free-floating, rational individuals and free choice,” rather than analyze problems through a structural or societal lens.⁸ I join an emergent cohort of historians who broaden the political playing field to situate actors across multiple scales of power as vital contributors to the political transformations of the 1970s and 1980s.⁹ In particular, community preservationists’

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emphasis on reforming the predations of individual landlords was one of many diverse forces underwriting the rise of privatism and localism in this era. Community preservationists played substantive roles in this market turn, a development critiqued by observers in the 1980s but largely absent from contemporary histories of the preservation movement.10

Second, historians have devoted significant historiographical attention to negotiations and contestations between landlords and tenants, struggles that played out as the urban housing crisis intensified over the course of the 1970s and early 1980s. Much of this literature focuses on the collective activism and political agency of public housing tenants.11 Often missing from these discussions are those tenants who could only secure rental housing through the private market—the option increasingly available to the vast majority of tenants during this period. As N.D.B. Connolly poignantly reminds us, as political agents, private landlords maintained immense power to shape and constrain the activism of tenants in ways that reinforced the legal and policy aims of white political interests.12 By turning from the well-researched and archivally visible mobilizations of public

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housing tenants to the relationships between individual tenants and landlords, I center the private rooms, carriage houses, and two-family dwellings that community preservationists leased as critical spaces where the holistic and structural solutions to the urban housing crisis marshalled by tenants were increasingly foreclosed. The origins of the preservationist landlord are as much a story of the increasing power of landlords in the late twentieth century as one of paths not taken. Even when presented with opportunities to align preservation with tenant activism, community preservationists continued to choose the path that led to protecting the profits of landlords over the wellbeing of tenants, an outcome that only intensified as corporate actors entered the preservation movement with increasing zeal over the 1980s.

“An Investment and a Home”: Preservationist Landlords and Springfield’s Urban Housing Crisis

In Springfield, local preservation advocates like Triggs assumed new roles as landlords in a bid to politically legitimize and sustain their movement by illustrating to municipal leaders that their own moral and socially responsible management of tenants alleviated the worst afflictions of the urban housing crisis. Tenants directly subsidized and financed community preservationists’ agenda, making it possible to maintain large, historic homes or undertake other renovation and restoration projects. By framing their turn to renting and leasing as a civic duty, community preservationists illustrated how becoming landlords complemented the ongoing fusion of historic preservation and crime prevention by securing their

neighborhoods and immediate surroundings through screening, managing, selecting, and surveilling tenants. Through these actions, community preservationists intervened in ongoing debates about the most effective methods to address the urban housing crisis, proffering solutions that increasingly prioritized subsidizing individual landlords over the collective demands articulated by low-income tenants and housing activist organizations across the city, most prominently from welfare rights organization Arise for Social Justice.

Community preservationists, real estate elites, and policymakers all looked with increasing alarm to the vexing political and infrastructural problems posed by the urban housing crisis. Policymakers at the municipal level especially viewed this crisis as a problem too large to be solved by state action alone. Abandoned and derelict housing ranked as perhaps the most alarming manifestation of this crisis to Springfield’s city officials. Abandoned housing constituted a distressing “visual symbol of the urban ills of our society” and the mounting physical tolls of the urban crisis on municipal infrastructure. By 1975, the Springfield planning department warned that the city was “tottering on the brink” of a housing disaster. In that same year almost 14 percent of the city’s housing stock was considered “substandard,” roughly 8,239 housing units out of the city’s total 59,351 units, many of which were in large apartment buildings with ten or more units located in neighborhoods near downtown Springfield. In 1976, a task force of city officials, landlords,

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15 When compared to other towns in the Connecticut Valley or larger cities like Boston, Springfield ranked lower in overall percentage of substandard housing, but confusion reigned among planners in determining what made a housing unit “substandard.” The Lower Pioneer Valley Planning Commission tracked substandard housing units as those “lacking one or more plumbing facilities” while planners in Boston weighed “adequate heating” and “direct access” to kitchen facilities, see Lower Pioneer Valley Regional Planning Commission, “Housing Inventory, 1972,” (West Springfield, MA: Lower Pioneer Valley Regional Planning Commission, 1972), 38; David Podoff, Daniel A. Primont, and Louis Esposito, “Substandard Housing and the Cost of Providing Housing-Related Services,” (Boston, MA: Boston Urban Observatory, 1973), 7; “The Status of the
and financial lending institutions spearheaded by mayor William Sullivan mobilized to determine the source of Springfield’s abandoned housing. The task force identified a myriad of problems that collectively fueled abandonment, including high energy costs, arson, spiraling property taxes, a sanitary code too strict for the city’s housing inspectors to reasonably enforce, and legislation that allowed tenants to withhold their rent. These conclusions reinforced an implicit belief that the state’s regulatory measures to protect tenants actually fueled the urban housing crisis and gestured towards empowering private market actors through deregulation.

Abandonment exacerbated the urban housing crisis by creating a shortage of affordable rental housing. In 1980, vacancy rates in Springfield dipped below 1.4 percent—a historic low for the city. As vacancy rates plummeted, the cost of rent skyrocketed, making it especially difficult for low-income renters to secure affordable housing. Arise for Social Justice, a welfare rights organization founded in the mid-1980s, noted how lower vacancies disproportionately impacted “low income large families” by linking the low vacancy rates to the city’s abandonment crisis, illustrating how both remained cyclically connected. With “poorer white, black, and Hispanic residents” unable to pay rising rents, “Many landlords abandoned their buildings and their tenants, finding it more economically feasible to desert their buildings than to operate them.” If tenants were lucky enough to find affordable


rental housing, many faced exploitative and abusive tactics from absentee landlords. As Liz Bewsee, a housing activist and founding member of Arise, remembered, “There were stories about landlords who demanded sexual favors for one thing or another from tenants” who couldn’t afford their rents. Other landlords cut corners to make necessary repairs. For example, in 1970, painters for a Walnut Street apartment charged with re-painting the apartment’s ceiling mixed yellow cornmeal into their paint to thicken it, turning the ceiling “into a picnic ground for roaches.”

Tenants, community preservationists, and policymakers alike abhorred absentee landlords as corrupt private market actors but diverged on how best to mitigate the urban housing crisis. Housing activists, like Arise for Social Justice, articulated expansive solutions, framing housing as “the whole living environment that effects personal relations, moral support, security, daily activity, access to community and, indeed, the quality of life.” Through Arise, housing activists like Liz Bewsee urged the city’s housing authorities to consider housing in relationship to other services like welfare, medical care, and transportation, insisting that isolating housing from the additional struggles poorer Springfield residents faced contributed to redlining and residential segregation. But as the city slipped further into its housing crisis, Springfield policymakers turned instead to private market solutions where “the privacy of the normal tenant landlord relationship is maintained.” Mayor Dimauro claimed in 1981 that it would be “leadership” of the private sector “who are going to have the responsibilities of dealing with those problems that

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20 Liz Bewsee, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, April 12, 2021, interview in possession of the author.
23 Liz Bewsee, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
government can no longer or will no longer confront.”

As they adopted new positions as landlords, community preservationists cohered with municipal leaders’ visions for achieving salvation from the urban housing crisis through private market intervention.

Central to community preservationists’ self-conception as landlords were efforts to contrast their own status as “owner-occupant” landlords with abusive absentee landlords. Absentee landlords operated as a foil or strawman against which community preservationists theorized their merits as landlords. Owner-occupant landlords lived in or near the properties they rented while absentee landlords “see the rent coming in and they do the least expensive repairs” while living in some distant, more affluent locale. Preservationists lambasted absentee landlords as exploitative “owners merely interested in monetary gain.” As Richard Ernie Reed, author of a popular preservationist handbook published in 1979 observed, the absentee landlord “is admired for being a smart businessman, while the city taxpayers and the neighborhood residents wonder why their once beautiful community has slowly become a ‘slum.’” Furthermore, absentee landlords maintained no respect for a property’s architectural qualities, which if left to deteriorate could be irrevocably lost to deterioration or eventual abandonment.

But like absentee landlords, community preservationists still viewed housing as a commodity through which they could profit. Even so, community preservationists provided moral assurances that, unlike absentee landlords, they viewed their properties as not merely a

26 Pat Triggs, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
29 Reed, 55–56.
financial instrument, but a “home” that fulfilled the necessary physical, social, and psychological needs of community preservationists and their tenants. Still, the pecuniary benefits were hard to ignore. Community preservationists discovered their enjoyment at “having tenants make their monthly mortgage payments for them.”

Renting and leasing property made the preservation of large, historic homes viable. As Arthur Ziegler explained, tenants’ “rent will enable you to succeed in your risky restoration.” Likewise, Judy Matt underscored that the one-bedroom apartment above her home’s carriage house presented a “good income opportunity” that “paid for all my utilities.” David Sanborn also found tenants to provide a reliable source of income as he “bumped the rent up a little bit each year” after purchasing his home at 34 Mattoon Street until “three or four years down the road the tenants were subsidizing me…the thing really ended up being quite a cash cow.”

But Matt and other owner-occupants continued to emphasize their position as landlords was built on more than financial interest. While the “small resident developer” was indeed “still interested in making a profit,” they were “also interested in the history and architecture of the building,” a position that contrasted with the disregard of absentee landlords.Absentee landlords narrowly viewed their property as “an investment and…don’t care like we care,” but preservationist owner-occupants distinguished their properties as “an investment and a home.” In valuing their property as both an investment in the rental real estate market and

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32 Judy Matt, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
33 David Sanborn, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
34 Reed, Return to the City: How to Restore Old Buildings and Ourselves in America’s Historic Urban Neighborhoods, 55.
35 Judy Matt, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
their homes, community preservationists further constructed themselves as superior to, and qualitatively different from, absentee landlords.

Community preservationists presented themselves to municipal officials by framing their new roles as landlords as a civic duty undertaken in the interest of the city’s overall wellbeing. Owner-occupant landlords were “more stable” and with their dual proximity to their tenants and careful stewardship of their properties’ material elements were better able to manage rental properties than their abusive counterparts.36 For example, Jim Boone, president of the Springfield Preservation Trust (SPT), purchased a two-family house next door to his own home in McKnight, reflecting that “it could be a nightmare if you had a landlord who was irresponsible. So, we're responsible.”37 Community preservationists firmly believed owner-occupants were “the most active” and engaged residents of their neighborhoods, in contrast to “more transient” tenants or negligent absentee landlords.38 When Donald and Sue Ellen Campion began leasing a restored four-story town home on Maple Street in 1976, they remarked that their success was due to the “fact they were not absentee landlords but were themselves committed to the area.”39 Additionally, by remaining attentive to historic architectural details, preservationists infused new “pride in the preservation of the neighborhood.” “Brackets, spindles, and newels… may seem to be small details in a vast project,” according to their counterparts in Savannah, “but they signify the difference between public housing and a neighborhood with human values.”40 As responsible “owner-residents who are committed to the restoration of their new homes” preservationists presented themselves and their culture of property to municipal officials as

36 Bob McCarroll, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
37 Jim Boone, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, October 26, 2020, interview in possession of author.
38 Bob McCarroll, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
the most capable actors to alleviate the city’s housing crisis at the same moment those officials grasped for private market solutions to that very crisis.41

Community preservationists further made their case to city hall through their own politics as racial liberals. As owner-occupant landlords, community preservationists stressed the role of colorblind, individual meritocracy—hallmarks of racial liberal philosophy—to solve pressing social and political problems where state action had otherwise failed.42 Such beliefs reflected a rising political critique that simultaneously blamed the federal government and the individual pathologies and “culture of poverty” of poorer urbanites for the ongoing housing crisis.43 Richard Ernie Reed cautioned in 1979 that preservationists “have trusted too deeply in representative government,” urging community preservationists to prioritize private market solutions to urban problems while reinforcing seemingly colorblind observations about the failures of government spending.44 Arthur Ziegler, Jr., president of the widely acclaimed Pittsburgh History and Landmark Foundation, likewise pushed that “this is the time for us to tell the government, Spend your community development dollars not on yourselves but on us; we can get the job done at lower cost and faster.”45 By arguing that they were better able to manage the urban housing crisis than the state, community

41 Eugene Berman, “President’s Address” (Mattoon Street Historic Preservation Association, 1978), 3, LMWLA; This argumentation was repeated throughout 1970s histories of Springfield written near the national bicentennial, see Frank Bauer, At the Crossroads: Springfield, Massachusetts, 1636-1975 (Springfield, MA: U.S.A. Bicentennial Committee of Springfield, 1975).
44 Reed, Return to the City: How to Restore Old Buildings and Ourselves in America’s Historic Urban Neighborhoods, 145.
preservationists capitalized on existing anti-government sentiments that blamed the state for exacerbating that crisis.

By becoming landlords, community preservationists could make Springfield safer by directly securing their own investments in private property, a project that complemented their ongoing fusion of historic preservation with crime prevention. The Mattoon Street Historic Preservation Association’s (MSHPA) by-laws, adopted in 1977, reflected this commitment to stabilizing claims to private property. The MSHPA split membership into distinct categories, distinguishing between “owner members” and “resident members” while unevenly distributing the rights of membership between both.\textsuperscript{46} Owner members could vote “upon matters … which shall affect property values or involve financial commitments or expenditures by such property owners” while resident members could only vote on matters unfettered from such financial concerns.\textsuperscript{47} The slippery generalization of “matters” that “affect property values” allowed the MSHPA’s owner members to retain wide discretion over anything they deemed connected to their own property values or interests as property owners, a definition vague enough to extend to quality-of-life initiatives like sticker permit parking explored in Chapter Two. And with membership rolls overwhelmingly composed of property owners, the MSHPA’s bylaws virtually guaranteed MSHPA leadership unrestricted management and oversight of Mattoon Street’s renters and tenants, cut off other avenues for tenants to voice their concerns, and ensured that private property would remain under the tight management of owner-occupant landlords.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{46} “By-Laws of the Mattoon Street Historic Preservation Association” (Mattoon Street Historic Preservation Association, August 1977), 2, LMWLA.
\textsuperscript{47} “By-Laws of the Mattoon Street Historic Preservation Association,” 2.
The most common strategy community preservationists deployed to better secure private property was increasing their proximity to—and by extension their surveillance of—their tenants. Jim Boone remarked that he purchased the home next door to his own “just for safety, to protect ourselves,” by collapsing the distance between tenant and landlord.\footnote{Jim Boone, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.}

Other preservationists reconfigured the sociospatial arrangements of their homes to afford a greater sense of security. On Mattoon Street, community preservationists remodeled their homes in ways that subtly dissolved the boundaries between renters and landlords. Building permits reflect these developments at work.\footnote{For 18 available building permits surveyed between 1945 and 1980, ten homes remained single-family residences: “Application for a Dwelling Permit,” John DiNapoli, 41 Mattoon Street, May 23, 1975, Springfield Department of Inspectional Services, Building Permits collection; “Application for a Dwelling Permit,” Robert E. and Carol S. Murphy, 52 Mattoon Street, July 17, 1978, Springfield Department of Inspectional Services, Building Permits collection; “Application for a Dwelling Permit,” David and Ann Henchman, 7 Mattoon Street, July 18, 1977, Springfield Department of Inspectional Services, Building Permits collection; “Application for a Dwelling Permit,” David and Sarabeth Fuller, 11½ Mattoon Street, June 27, 1974, Springfield Department of Inspectional Services, Building Permits collection; “Application for a Dwelling Permit,” 17 Mattoon Street, October 26, 1978, Springfield Department of Inspectional Services, Building Permits collection; “Application for a Dwelling Permit,” 17 Mattoon Street, October 26, 1978, Springfield Department of Inspectional Services, Building Permits collection; “Application for a Dwelling Permit,” Rita McInnis, 25 Elliot Street, July 26, 1983, Springfield Department of Inspectional Services, Building Permits collection; Eight homes were converted into or remained multi-family residences: “Application for Other than a Dwelling Permit,” Paul M. Martin, 24 Mattoon Street, July 1, 1974, Springfield Department of Inspectional Services, Building Permits collection; “Application for Other than a Dwelling Permit,” Carmen and Vivian Rinaldi, 25 Mattoon Street, March 3, 1975, Springfield Department of Inspectional Services, Building Permits collection; “Application for Other than a Dwelling Permit,” Robert Ross, 27 Elliot Street, December 6, 1988, Springfield Department of Inspectional Services, Building Permits collection; “Application for Other than a Dwelling Permit,” Landmark Preservation Group, April 3, 1974, 34 Mattoon Street, Springfield Department of Inspectional Services, Building Permits collection; “Application for Other than a Dwelling Permit,” Edward Aubrey and Robert Benache, 36 Mattoon Street, October 5, 1970, Springfield Department of Inspectional Services, Building Permits collection; “Application for a Dwelling Permit,” Landmark Preservation Group, April 3, 1974, 34 Mattoon Street, Springfield Department of Inspectional Services, Building Permits collection; “Application for Other than a Dwelling Permit,” John Stumpf, 36 Mattoon Street, October 26, 1978, Springfield Department of Inspectional Services, Building Permits collection; “Application for Other than a Dwelling Permit,” 42-44 Mattoon Street, October 1, 1975, Springfield Department of Inspectional Services, Building Permits collection; “Application for Other than a Dwelling Permit,” Donald Campion, 98 Elliot Street, May 25, 1979, Springfield Department of Inspectional Services, Building Permits collection.}

On July 1, 1974, Paul Martin, the property owner of 24 Mattoon Street, submitted an application to the Springfield Building Department to demolish and “remove [the] dividing walls” that split the interior of the previously single-family home into a four-unit apartment.\footnote{“Application for Other than a Dwelling Permit,” Paul M. Martin, 24 Mattoon Street, July 1, 1974, Springfield Department of Inspectional Services, Building Permits collection.} By removing these walls, Martin
returned the property to its “original 1884 layout” as a single-family home, yet he continued to rent it as a four-unit apartment (Figure 5.1). Martin’s interior reconfigurations increased the likelihood that tenants and landlord would interact in unplanned and spontaneous ways by returning the property to its single-family interior arrangements. This “restoration” diverted traffic to quasi-public areas like the home’s central staircase and hallway and removed “dividing walls” in these spaces that provided a greater degree of privacy and separation among tenants. These kinds of interior spaces facilitated a quasi-familial atmosphere that allowed for more direct management and surveillance of tenants. David Sanborn attested to the ways single-family interior spatial configurations structured informal tenant-landlord relationships. When he purchased 97 Elliott Street in 1977, Sanborn’s tenants shared space throughout the three-story home, occupying it not as exploited tenants but rather as “one big happy family.” Ultimately, by intertwining landlords and tenants closer together through hands-on management and surveillance practices, community preservationists better secured private property, a powerful illustration to Springfield’s municipal leaders that preservationist landlords were capable of ameliorating the urban housing crisis.

52 “Application for Other than a Dwelling Permit,” Paul M. Martin, 24 Mattoon Street, July 1, 1974.
53 David Sanborn interview.
By the late 1970s, community preservationists discovered a vast array of material, social, and ideological benefits to leasing property as owner-occupant landlords. Leasing property provided new income streams for a preservationist agenda, in addition to securing neighborhoods through screening, managing, selecting, and surveilling tenants. But becoming a landlord also constituted a political project for community preservationists to legitimate and sustain their movement. By illustrating how they could be good landlords,
community preservationists actively inserted themselves into ongoing debates about how best to alleviate the urban housing crisis. While tenant activists in Springfield looked to holistic structural solutions to the struggles faced by tenants, community preservationists and municipal policymakers isolated landlords as both the problem and solution to the city’s housing woes. Such solutions emphasized the ability of private market actors to alleviate the urban housing crisis. Even as community preservationists looked to housing as a financial instrument in which they could accumulate capital, they provided moral assurances that, as landlords, they valued their properties as an “investment and a home.” Such arguments went a long way to secure political and social clout for preservationists as federal policymakers seized on preservation as a legitimate tool to battle the urban housing crisis by empowering landlords through new state tools like preservation tax incentives.

“Being a Gun for Hire”: Corporate Landlords and Preservation Tax Incentives

“With a whoop and a holler, preservationists across the country welcomed passage of the federal Tax Reform Act of 1976” that revised the federal tax code and introduced a series of preservation tax incentives.54 The creation of preservation tax incentives institutionalized and legitimated community preservationists’ experimental forays into alleviating the urban housing crisis as they became landlords. Preservation tax incentives, by mitigating the risk of investing in deteriorated housing, empowered preservationist landlords as the new shock troops in the battle against the urban housing crisis. Corporate actors accelerated the institutionalization of preservation tax incentives by copying—almost verbatim—the moral assurances and ideological justifications for renting and leasing articulated by community preservationists.

preservationist landlords that positioned their interests in rental real estate as an “investment and a home.” Such developments both facilitated and were enabled by a rightward political shift that attempted to unburden the wealthy while divesting from state initiatives that promoted the welfare of less affluent citizens. In Massachusetts, the state’s supreme judicial court ruled in 1979 against a graduate income tax and instituted a flat tax rate, alleviating the tax burdens of the state’s wealthiest citizens—a move that would be mirrored by the Reagan administration’s changes to the federal tax code in the 1980s.55 Community preservationists, by positioning themselves as enlightened and responsible landlords, naturalized this shift by framing their investments in rental housing as morally legitimate and politically necessary measures to address the urban housing crisis. Ultimately, such initiatives afforded landlords greater opportunities to accumulate capital, but placed tenants in increasingly unstable housing situations—developments that tenants actively resisted by continuing to place pressure on municipal, state, and federal policymakers to prioritize the wellbeing of tenants over the profits of landlords.

Community preservationists that first positioned their approach to renting and leasing as a viable solution to the urban housing crisis received tax incentives with a mixture of excitement and unease. Preservation tax incentives increased the likelihood that developers would look more favorably upon the preservation of historic buildings, but the involvement of corporate entities like banks and real estate developers upset the delicate balance preservationist landlords maintained between managing their properties as “an investment and a home.”56 Furthermore, the Reagan administration’s simultaneous embrace of preservation tax incentives and corporate tax cuts made community preservationists

56 Judy Matt, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
victims of their own success by easing the ability of corporate entities to afford preservation projects over the efforts of community preservationists. Thus, by the 1990s, landlords like Leslie Clement found themselves unable to manage the increasing costs of rental property while banks and real estate management corporations reaped profit from federal tax incentives. Tenant activists looked to developers with suspicion as well, but the city’s housing activists and community preservationists largely continued along parallel tracks, their paths crossing only when tenants’ demands for affordable housing intersected with community preservationists’ interest in buildings of architectural merit.

The introduction of preservation tax incentives in the TRA in 1976 institutionalized the experimental efforts of community preservationist landlords, solidifying the political legitimacy of preservationist landlords. But as a political gain, tax incentives were still tenuous at best and were set to expire in 1981 as outlined in the TRA. Community preservationists thus set out to demonstrate to policymakers how tax incentives cohered with conservative commitments to shareholder politics that decreased the burden on private market actors to accumulate profits. As outlined in the TRA, owners of certified historic buildings—properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or located in a NRHP- or locally-designated historic district—were eligible to amortize the costs of a rehabilitation over a 60-month period or could choose an accelerated depreciation where commercial structures could be depreciated at one-half the ordinary rate and residential structures at two times the ordinary rate. The Revenue Act of 1978 expanded these incentives, providing a ten percent investment tax credit for the rehabilitation of certified

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58 Ryberg-Webster, 208; Wade R. Ragas and Ivan J. Miestachovich, Jr., "Historic Preservation and the 1976 Tax Reform Act," The Appraisal Journal (January 1978), 44-51; The historic preservation provisions of the TRA were included in section 2124, see Tax Reform Act of 1976, Public Law 94-455, 94th Cong., (October 4, 1976), 397-401.
revenue-generating properties. The Tax Reform Act of 1986 expanded these initiatives and offered a 20 percent credit for certified historic structures and 10 percent for those buildings built before 1936.\footnote{Ryberg-Webster, 213.} Rehabilitations undertaken on designated historic structures required certification from the Department of the Interior (DOI) to ensure that rehabilitations remained consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s standards for rehabilitation, a series of regulations that prioritized preserving as much of a building’s interior and exterior historic fabric as possible.

The new preservation tax incentives extended a devolutionary federal agenda that prioritized private market solutions to the urban housing crisis. In many ways, the 1976 TRA and subsequent revisions to the federal tax code were the ideological successor of the Housing and Community Development Act (HCDA) of 1974; community preservationists would later pair preservation tax incentives with other initiatives introduced in the HCDA. The HCDA eliminated categorical grant programs and instituted a system of revenue sharing through Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), a single revenue source that cities could administer for urban development projects. Whereas categorical block grant programs went to older industrial cities in the Northeast and Midwest, the formula for CDBG distribution shifted revenue sharing to booming cities in the Sunbelt and coastal West.\footnote{R. Allen Hays, The Federal Government and Urban Housing, 3rd ed. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012), 199; Andrew J. Needham, Power Lines: Phoenix and the Making of the Modern Southwest (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014); Lassiter, The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South.}

Moreover, as Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor argues, the “entire thrust” of the HCDA “was toward the preservation of residential segregation,” embodied by the creation of the Section 8 housing voucher program.\footnote{Taylor, Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership, 248.} Under the Section 8 program, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provided housing vouchers to landlords that made up the
difference between HUD’s calculation of “fair market rent” and qualifying tenants’ rental payments. While in theory designed to promote residential integration by expanding low-income tenants’ choice of housing, landlords could opt out of the program, curtailing efforts to build affordable housing in suburban communities. Ultimately, the HCDA and Section 8 program “preserved the private sector as the preferred alternative to house working-class and poor people” by directly subsidizing landlords.

Preservation tax incentives collided with these developments, mitigating the financial risk to invest in older housing stock while elevating landlords as the private market actors best positioned to alleviate the urban housing crisis. Preservation tax incentives thus legitimized the arguments of community preservationists who sought political clout by becoming landlords. While the preservation tax incentives applied to all “revenue-generating properties,” a prerequisite that nominally included commercial structures, preservation tax incentives functioned as a rental housing development program that subsidized individual landlords akin to Section 8 housing. In 1979, the short-lived Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, which briefly administered the tax incentive programs, estimated that 54 percent of all certified rehabilitations nationwide provided rental housing. In states that saw federal funding shift to the Sunbelt through the CDBG distribution formula, the use of preservation tax incentives for housing rose as city administrators grasped at whatever federal funding streams they could find. In fact, by 1980 Massachusetts led the nation both

64 “Report to the President and the Congress of the United States,” 7; “Federal Tax Law and Historic Preservation: A Report to the President and the Congress, 1983.”
in the number of certified tax incentive projects and the amount of federal dollars received, much of which went to the creation of housing units throughout the state.\textsuperscript{66} Collectively, almost 64 percent of certified rehabilitation projects in Massachusetts either entirely or partially provided rental housing.\textsuperscript{67} Springfield ranked only second in the state behind Boston in the number of completed certified rehabilitations.\textsuperscript{68}

In Springfield, the introduction of preservation tax incentives coincided with and accelerated the creation of local and NRHP historic districts that included larger apartment buildings. In a flurry of activity in 1977, the Springfield Historical Commission (SHC) designated three new local historic districts containing a little over two hundred buildings: the Lower Maple historic district concentrated around Maple and Union streets in January; the Ridgewood historic district centered on Ridgewood Terrace and Ridgewood Place in January; and the Maple Hill historic district near Maple and Pine streets in July.\textsuperscript{69} The three new districts, especially Lower Maple, contained not just a diverse array of building styles but also building typologies, including large apartment buildings.\textsuperscript{70} Preservation tax incentives drove other historic district initiatives in Springfield that expanded the representation of apartment buildings in the city’s designated historic resources. In 1982, developers interested


\textsuperscript{68} “Expanding Historic Tax Provisions: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Select Revenue Measures of the Committee of Ways and Means,” 177.


Preservation tax incentives swelled the ranks of community preservationist landlords. Overwhelmingly, community preservationists utilized preservation tax incentives to rehabilitate rental housing, much of it in the Lower Maple historic district.\footnote{“Expiring Historic Tax Provisions: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Select Revenue Measures of the Committee of Ways and Means,” 31.} Both individual preservationist landlords and larger real estate development corporations turned to preservation tax incentives to renovate rental homes or large apartment buildings as housing that they subsequently leased. For example, new community preservationist landlords in McKnight often received preservation tax credits for rehabilitating two-family homes next door to their own residences or that they chose to live in as owner-occupants. At 67 Thompson Street, owner Robert G. Smith filed for tax credits in 1985, underscoring his own “financial need” to convert the home from a single-family to two-family residence where he could collect rent.\footnote{Robert G. Smith, “Request for Certification of Completed Work: Steere House,” United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, July 10, 1985, records of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston, MA.} Like Smith, individual preservationists flocked to historic tax credits to
subsidize their positions as landlords throughout the late 1970s and 1980s, extending their movement’s political legitimacy at the same time they encouraged other preservationists to adopt roles as landlords.  

Preservation tax incentives were not just similar to other initiatives—like Section 8—that subsidized private landlords, community preservationists actively deployed these initiatives in concert to get the most return on their investment. Preservationists made “creative use of Federal programs which seem to have little relevance to preservation goals.” Preservationists paired preservation tax incentives with many of the initiatives introduced under the 1974 HCDA, most commonly CDBG funds (the subject of the next chapter) and the Section 8 housing voucher program. The Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service estimated that by 1980 roughly 15 percent of certified rehabilitations utilized CDBG funding or Section 8. Community preservationists across the nation championed the Section 8 program as a way for the poor to “become part of the ‘market demand force’ which can stimulate landlords to improve their properties and developers to provide new housing as needed.” By mixing and matching various federal subsidies, community preservationists accelerated a reliance on private market solutions to pressing

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urban housing issues while claiming the moral high ground in both preserving historic buildings and providing affordable housing.

In Springfield, larger development corporations copied nearly word-for-word the moral assurances first articulated by individual preservationist landlords, bringing such justifications into mainstream political frameworks for addressing the urban housing crisis. Corporate actors framed the use of preservation tax incentives and Section 8 housing vouchers as moral and humane approaches to renting and leasing property. When the Claremont Company proposed the development of Maple Commons along High Street in 1979, company executives positioned the redevelopment scheme as an enlightened intervention into Springfield’s housing crisis. The Claremont Company utilized historic preservation tax credits for at least nine of the development’s 11 apartment buildings, three of which were paired with Section 8 rental subsidies.79

In their certification applications to receive tax credits, the Claremont Company emphasized that “we are compassionate about the needs of the inhabitants of this area of the City,” while remaining attentive to High Street’s history as a “Turn of the Century apartment street providing over 150 families with a residence close to the heart of Springfield.” By “Recapturing the original function of the buildings on the street,” the Claremont Company could interweave affordable housing and preservation together to “re-create a pleasant environment and a close knit neighborhood within walking distance from downtown.”80

When Maple Commons opened in 1981, company executives emphasized their corporate goodwill in promotional literature, tallying the project’s multiple qualifications as “scattered

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site, inner city, substantial rehabilitation family, handicapped, and elderly housing…The single most difficult type of real estate venture to develop.” Not only was the Claremont Company “meeting a need,” by “retaining and refurbishing many interior elements such as hardwood flooring entrance foyers, and fireplaces” they recreated the “historical ambiance” of High Street for low-income residents. Like individual preservationists, the Claremont Company positioned Maple Commons as an “investment and a home,” advancing an implicit argument that private market actors were better able to manage (and profit from) low-income tenants.

Other corporate actors brought the moral assurances of individual preservationists to municipal officials, legitimizing preservation in the eyes of policymakers attempting to divest the state from solving urban social and infrastructural problems. When the SIS, spearheaded by bank president Lawrence Beane, made their own foray into urban development they refashioned themselves as preservationists by taking a hard position against displacement and retaining historic architectural features. In 1977, Beane coordinated the purchase of 14 apartment buildings located along Salem and Pearl streets just northwest of Mattoon Street that he renamed “Armoury Commons” for the neighborhood’s proximity to the nearby Springfield Armory, an arms manufacturing facility that produced guns and munitions since the late eighteenth century.

Alongside the possibility of postindustrial renewal, Beane saw the half-abandoned and derelict apartment buildings as an opportunity to refashion himself and SIS as

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sympathetic to the plight of low-income tenants, a move that further legitimized preservation in the eyes of the city’s municipal officials. To SIS, Armoury Commons would extend “the successful Mattoon Street historical district to the east,” a prospect that alarmed the elderly renters and families currently occupying the buildings by forcing them to leave to make way for middle- and upper-class renters. But rather than summarily evict and displace these renters, Beame undertook “careful action to counsel with the people in the apartments—trying to make it possible for whoever is living there now to stay there.”

Beame paid a “personal visit to each of the tenants to assure them they would be an important part of the new neighborhood” and transformed the buildings’ many abandoned units into temporary relocation housing so tenants could remain in the same building while SIS renovated their unit. But Beame primarily extended SIS’s corporate welfare to individual, elderly tenants, conceding that larger families “unable to pay the rents will be relocated” while reassuring critics by pointing to a substantial relocation budget to sensitively help families with relocation and moving expenses. Despite the displacement of larger families, local and state officials, including Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis, praised Armoury Commons as a “good example of how a reversal of a neighborhood can work” to alleviate the urban housing crisis (Figure 5.2).
Like community preservationist landlords, Beame positioned Armoury Commons as an enlightened intervention into the urban housing crisis by refashioning SIS as a dedicated preservationist. Already, Beame envisioned Armoury Commons as a natural extension of the “19th century motif, such as is along Mattoon Street,” and emphasized SIS’s attention to “keep whatever woodwork was in the apartments as well as things like the old tin ceilings.”\textsuperscript{89} At Armoury Commons, the “past becomes the present and looks to the future,” with each building being “completely modernized and remodeled while carefully preserving the character and charm of each individual apartment” through the retention of historic features.

\textsuperscript{89} Housing and Community Development Act of 1977: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Development of the Committee on Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs, § Committee on Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs (1977).
like “bay or bow windows, working fireplaces with antique mantels, decorative ceilings, original mouldings, and arched doorways.”\textsuperscript{90} The Springfield Preservation Trust, a nonprofit preservation organization mobilized in 1977, held up Armoury Commons as a successful preservation project in the city, applauding SIS and featuring a model Armoury Commons apartment in their 1977 historic house tour.\textsuperscript{91} By being a good preservationist, SIS could in turn be a better landlord.

As corporations like SIS and the Claremont Company refashioned themselves as landlords, they accelerated the institutionalization of tax incentives amidst the ongoing rightward shift to shareholder politics. Ronald Reagan’s presidential administration exemplified these developments. When elected in 1980, Reagan promised an economic and political program “based on the fundamental precept that government must respect, protect, and enhance the freedom and integrity of the individual” where “Economic policy must seek to create a climate that encourages the development of private institutions conducive to individual responsibility and initiative.”\textsuperscript{92} To support the “freedom and integrity of the individual,” Reagan pursued an aggressive economic program that alleviated the tax burden for some of the wealthiest Americans, promising that reducing taxes on the wealthy would lead to greater economic growth.\textsuperscript{93} At the same time, Reagan aggressively slashed housing provisions, increasing rental ceilings for Section 8 housing.\textsuperscript{94}

\textsuperscript{91} Michael Regunberg, “City of Homes’ Goes Public This Week,” \textit{Springfield Union}, May 9, 1977.
Most of these cuts manifested through Reagan’s Economic and Recovery Tax Act (ERTA) of 1981; what remained unscathed in this legislation were preservation tax incentives. In fact, through the ERTA, Reagan expanded preservation tax incentives to include a 15 percent credit for nonresidential buildings at least 30 years old, a 20 percent credit for nonresidential buildings at least 40 years old, and a 25 percent credit for certified historic structures. Reagan defended preservation tax credits, explaining that they made “the preservation of our older buildings not only a matter of respect for beauty and history, but of economic good sense.”95 Since 1976, community preservationists and larger corporate actors successfully illustrated to conservative elites like Reagan how preservation tax incentives cohered with a conservative agenda that sought to unburden the wealthy and “enhance the freedom” of private market actors to accrue wealth by exercising housing as a financial instrument. That the ERTA expanded tax incentives reveals how community preservationists gained political legitimacy in the eyes of federal policymakers.

But the shift to “shareholder” politics made individual preservationists a victim of their own success. As preservation tax credits expanded and corporate tax rates plummeted, larger corporate entities won out over community preservationist landlords who had first helped crack open the door to banks and development corporations to enter the preservationist fold in the first place. Reagan’s ERTA made it more difficult for community preservationists to profit from tax incentives by requiring “substantial” rehabilitations on all projects, defined as more than the price of a building minus the cost of land.96 This change increased the cost of tax credit projects, creating a minimum blanket expense of around

5,000 dollars. Through these changes, community preservationists faced an increasingly uphill battle that shifted the lion’s share of profits offered by tax incentives to larger corporate actors. Leslie Clement faced many of these pitfalls. Through her limited liability corporation, Clement Restorations, Clement purchased rental real estate in local and NRHP historic districts and complete renovations with the help of preservation tax incentives.\(^97\) By the late 1980s, Clement rehabilitated and rented at least twenty houses scattered across the Lower Maple and McKnight historic districts, making her one of Springfield’s foremost users of preservation tax credits.\(^98\) But the returns offered by tax credits could not keep pace with the costs of managing rental property for an individual landlord like Clement. By 1991, First National Bank of Boston foreclosed on five of Clement’s properties.\(^99\) Clement’s struggles with rental housing reflected how preservation tax incentives increasingly benefitted larger corporate entities with the resources to manage rental property and

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complete “substantial” rehabilitations—a product of the ongoing shift to shareholder politics during the 1980s.

Amid these changes, community preservationists reconsidered preservation tax incentives as a mixed blessing. On the one hand, preservation tax incentives increased the likelihood that larger corporate bodies invested in buildings that would otherwise fall to the wrecking ball even if community preservationists were boxed out by corporate landlords. As local preservationist Connie Witt recalled, tax incentives were “really what has saved buildings” in Springfield because “developers can go into a building that is eligible for a tax credit and get some of their money back right away. That makes a difference to a developer. Because he’s saving money, he’s doing a project for less than what that project really costs.”

If community preservationists could not become landlords anymore, they could at least assume new roles as consultants. Preservation tax incentives accelerated the professionalization of historic preservation, opening new opportunities for preservation “consultants” to assist development corporations with preservation tax certification applications, namely in researching building histories and writing architectural descriptions that would resonate with NPS reviewers. Preservationists like Connie Witt in Springfield and Joan R. Wiegel in nearby Northampton frequently lent their assistance in tax certification applications, bolstering their own professional experience in the process.

100 Connie Witt, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, April 19, 2021, interview in possession of the author.
Other preservationists felt more conflicted about their new roles as consultants. Ed Lonergan, the research librarian for the main branch of the Springfield public library, worked as a preservation consultant on a number of tax credit applications, recalling that “Part of this is you shouldn’t be looking the gift horse in the mouth since I was paid to do research by people who would be taking advantage of tax credits, so it’s somewhat disingenuous for me to say I don’t like them [tax credits].” But tax credits came at a price for preservationists. Lonergan remarked that serving as a consultant felt like “being a gun for hire” to articulate historic narratives for developers concerned only with their bottom line. Tax credits pushed preservation in “a much different direction, and it put it on a money direction,” a trajectory that unsettled preservationists like Lonergan.

As community preservationists readjusted their relationship to preservation tax incentives, tenants found themselves in increasingly unstable housing situations because of the reliance on the private market to provide affordable housing that tax credits accelerated. By 1980, SIS raised rents in Armoury Commons by 20 percent to meet rising fuel and “administrative costs,” a move that destabilized Armoury Commons tenants’ living situations by making housing more expensive. Under the leadership of Black Armoury Commons resident Tyrone Trader, the teen center coordinator at the local YMCA, tenants mobilized as the Armoury Commons Tenants Association to protest the rent hike and force SIS to “do more than pay lip service to their original and announced goals of charging

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103 Ed Lonergan, oral history interview.
affordable rents and stabilizing the neighborhood.” Tenants circulated petitions, withdrew funds or closed their accounts with SIS, and staged a march in front of SIS in the winter of 1980, hoping to pressure Beame to back down from the rent increase. Tenants rebuked Beame’s worries about a low return on investment for Armoury Commons, discarding corporate priorities for the human and social needs of tenants. “If you take the corporate point of view I’m sure there’s a numerical justification for the rent hike,” Trader conceded, but “What we’re protesting goes beyond numerical justification” to the “impossible dream” of a mutually supportive community. While their protest was unsuccessful in halting the rent increase, Armoury Commons tenants revealed how corporate rebranding as preservationists prioritized the desires of landlords over the needs of tenants.

Tenants likewise critiqued preservation tax incentives as governmental underwriting of profit for private landlords. When Rita McCurley of the Baltimore-based Human Preservation Coalition testified to Congress in 1977, she encapsulated the attitudes of many tenants towards preservation tax incentives. McCurley charged preservation tax incentives as “the speculator's dream and the poor person's nightmare. It provides an incentive not to preserve buildings and architecture, but to make money. Lots of money.” Preservation tax incentives, she continued, “benefits those who are into preservation as a business venture,” not the tenants that preservationist landlords claimed to be helping. In launching these critiques, tenants like McCurley underscored preservation tax incentives as an initiative concerned with subsidizing individual landlords over the wellbeing of tenants.


108 “Neighborhood Diversity: Hearings Before Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs,” 57.
Despite sharing concerns about preservation tax incentives and the involvement of corporate actors in rental real estate rehabilitation, housing activists and community preservationists largely continued along parallel tracks, intersecting on the rare occasion that tenants’ demands for affordable housing overlapped with community preservationists’ concerns about demolishing buildings of architectural or historical merit. The saga of the Hotel Charles reflects these tensions. First built downtown as a high-end hotel next to the city’s railroad station in the 1870s and expanded with a major addition in 1928, by the 1970s and 1980s, the Hotel Charles “had become a bit of a flophouse.” As one of the only single room occupancy (SRO) hotels remaining in Springfield, the Hotel Charles provided affordable housing for low-income, elderly, and disabled tenants who would otherwise find themselves homeless. In 1982, the Massachusetts Historical Commission included the Hotel Charles in the “Downtown Springfield Multiple Resource Area,” successfully nominating the building and several other downtown landmarks to the NRHP. When the Springfield Redevelopment Authority (SRA) announced its intent to sell the building for redevelopment as luxury condos, housing activists with Arise sprang into action. Arise insisted that condo conversion would exacerbate the city’s affordable housing crisis, circulating a petition to prevent the Hotel Charles from becoming “the next victim of this thoughtless conversion of affordable housing to market rate housing” while they sought a court injunction.

109 Liz Bewsee, oral history interview.
110 Mary Ellen O’Shea, “Tenants of Hotel Charles Warily Await Moving Day: 400-Room Structure to Become Condominiums,” Springfield Republican, March 20, 1988; Ella Howard has illustrated how SROs provided critical housing for individuals in the wake of deinstitutionalization that had little state support for their own struggles with mental health, see Howard, Homeless: Poverty and Place in Urban America, 183.
In the midst of Arise’s battle against the Hotel Charles’ conversion to condos, a fire severely damaged the building in 1988. Following the blaze, the SRA discarded plans for condo conversion, opting instead to tear the building down to redevelop the land as part of a broader plan for the nearby Amtrak station. The threat of demolition alerted the SPT to the building’s plight, but the SPT approached the Hotel Charles with an entirely different values set than housing activists. The SPT quickly launched their own campaign to halt the building’s demolition on the grounds that “there must be active efforts to protect all buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places and none should be demolished without proper review.” SPT members placed the Hotel Charles on their own endangered properties list and pressed potential city council and mayoral candidates to go on record with their position on the building’s demolition, circulating candidates’ responses to their own membership in advance of the 1992 city elections. Rather than affordable housing, SPT members worried most about “losing…architectural heritage” through the demolition of the Hotel Charles. Ultimately, after a partial demolition of the fire-damaged portions of the hotel in 1988, the remainder of the Hotel Charles was demolished in 1996 to the dismay of housing activists and community preservationists alike (Figure 5.3).

116 Rose, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, February 16, 2021, interview in possession of the author; Liz Bewsee, oral history interview.
Figure 5.3: The Hotel Charles Before Demolition in 1996. Main Street runs along the bottom of the photograph while the elevated train tracks can be seen to the right with an Amtrak train pulling into the nearby station. Source: http://www.historic-structures.com/ma/springfield/hotel_charles.php

Conclusion

Buildings like the Hotel Charles could simultaneously rally housing activists and community preservationists, but this did not guarantee any tangible coalition building. Activists and community preservationists were isolated throughout the controversies surrounding the Hotel Charles’ condo conversion and later demolition: housing activists remained steadfast in their pursuit of affordable housing while community preservationists registered their anxieties about the loss of a historically and aesthetically significant building from
Springfield’s built environment. This did not mean that preservationists were incapable of building coalitions with housing activists. By the mid-1990s, community preservationists hoped to explicitly retool preservation to combat homelessness and provide more affordable housing, evidenced by successful preservation and affordable housing projects like the Times Square Hotel in New York or initiatives to list public housing projects on the NRHP to prevent their demolition.\(^\text{117}\) As valiant as these efforts were and are, their potential to provide greater housing security for low-income tenants remains dependent upon tools like preservation tax incentives that emphasize the individual good will of landlords, a strategy that stretched back to the efforts of community preservationists to legitimize their own positions as landlords in the 1970s.

Alarmed at housing abandonment, the deterioration of Springfield’s historic housing stock, and the gross abuses of absentee landlords, community preservationists became landlords, a significant political project that legitimized and sustained preservation over the 1970s and 1980s. By becoming landlords, community preservationists not only secured new revenue to support their preservationist agenda but demonstrated to policymakers that simply being responsible landlords was a viable solution to the mounting political and infrastructural demands the urban housing crisis placed on the state. Such arguments facilitated and were enabled by a rightward political turn that increasingly valued private market solutions to more systemic social and political problems, a process accelerated by corporate actors and the introduction of preservation tax incentives in 1976. Corporate entities drew from the same logics as their community preservationist counterparts when

they framed their own interests in rental real estate as an enlightened intervention into
Springfield’s urban housing crisis. Ultimately, these kinds of private market solutions put
tenants in unstable housing situations by increasing a reliance on individual landlords to
provide affordable rental housing—developments that tenants fought by emphasizing their
right to safe and secure housing over the profits of landlords.

That the SPT was entangled with the Hotel Charles at all reflected a broader shift
underway in the preservation movement towards an assessment of the entire “built
environment” over individual structures. In Springfield, where community preservationists
first expressed interest in preserving single-family homes, it was a short leap from the
preservation of larger apartment buildings to civic, religious, or commercial structures that
made up an interrelated social and material urban landscape. Through the SPT, community
preservationists would articulate a more expansive vision of preservation that emphasized a
broader human connection to the “built environment” that sat uneasily alongside the SPT’s
operation as a real estate investor and speculator.
CHAPTER 6

Selling Real Estate: Public-Private Partnerships in the Age of Miracles

In 1977, Bill Malloy, Jim Boone, Bob McCarroll, David Gaby, and Connie Witt gathered in Frances Gagnon’s home in McKnight on Worthington Street. Huddled around Gagnon’s spacious living room coffee table, this small group represented two generations of preservationists: the neighborhood activists like Gagnon and white-collar lawyers like Malloy of an earlier generation and newcomers like Boone, a school social worker, and McCarroll, a municipal employee with the city’s planning department.¹

What brought these two generations of preservationists together was the impending demolition of the St. Joseph Motherhouse, a large, Gothic-style convent built in 1899 on Elliot Street that the Roman Catholic diocese intended to demolish (see figure 6.1). With the Springfield Historical Commission largely unopposed to the demolition, Malloy, Boone, McCarroll, Gaby, Witt, and Gagnon revived the Springfield Preservation Trust (SPT) to fight the demolition. Mattoon Street Historic Preservation Association (MSHPA) members and homeowners first created the SPT in 1972 as a nonprofit real estate corporation and tax shelter. By 1973, the organization had lapsed on its paperwork after its board of directors met three times to clarify the SPT’s original bylaws. As Malloy recalled, the 1977 meeting in Gagnon’s living room sought to “revitalize” the SPT and “give it a better focus.”² By reviving the SPT to fight the Motherhouse’s demolition, these community preservationists

¹ Bob McCarroll, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, October 24, 2020, interview in possession of the author; Frances Gagnon, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, April 6, 2021, interview in possession of the author; David Gaby, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, December 9, 2020, interview in possession of the author.
² Bill Malloy, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, November 30, 2020, interview in possession of the author.
refocused the SPT around defending the entirety of “Springfield’s Historically and Architecturally significant built environment.”

The revival of the Springfield Preservation Trust (SPT) in 1977 reflected how, by the late 1970s, being a “preservationist” shifted from a purely avocational or professional undertaking to an expansive political identity and community that embraced an activist ethos. This shift could be detected in community preservationists’ growing commitments to protect and preserve the entire “built environment,” a preservationist framework for approaching historic sites that underscored the way spatial arrangements directly impacted social organization and political life. Moreover, this framework rejected a singular focus on isolating individual historic buildings and emphasized situating landmarks in their surrounding neighborhoods and cityscape. While the initial ascendance in the mid-1970s of phrases like the “built environment,” “cultural landscapes,” and “urban fabric” had specific academic genealogies in fields like public history, geography, and sociology, a new generation of community preservationists in Springfield adopted the “built environment” by way of their own personal and political experiences as social workers, architects, historians, and municipal employees while positioning themselves as activists rather than professional scholars. To be a preservationist, in other words, meant understanding how political decisions were spatial and that spatial decisions were political.

In this chapter, I argue that as community preservationists turned to assess the entire “built environment,” their movement became more capacious, expansive, and inclusive. No longer were community preservationists content to preserve single-family homes, they now looked to the totality of the urban landscape as a historic resource worthy of preservation. As the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) declared in 1976, preservationists

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concerned themselves less with the works of individual architects and buildings and reoriented themselves around “evaluating each structure for what it contributes to the community fabric.”\textsuperscript{4} By 1979, the NTHP defined a commitment to the built environment as a vital component of the emergent preservation “ethic” of the 1980s. To implement that ethic, the NTHP suggested utilizing historic districts to identify a more expansive array of the built environment as culturally and historically significant, including “streetscapes,” vernacular buildings, and everyday structures.\textsuperscript{5} This turn to the built environment pushed community preservationists to dramatically broaden the scope and scale of their agendas in the late 1970s and into the 1980s.

In Springfield, the SPT’s activities in the decade after its reformation in 1977 evidence just how far community preservationists expanded this collective vision. SPT members led campaigns to preserve the St. Joseph Motherhouse, Winchester Square’s Indian Motorcycle [sic] building, the former downtown branch of the YMCA, the Samuel Bowles house, and a cluster of apartment buildings in the South End known as Hollywood. The SPT also conducted historic surveys of the North and South Ends to identify historic properties and led tours of historic churches and downtown commercial and civic buildings. These campaigns veered into explicit political and legislative activism and direct-action tactics that secured political legitimacy for the SPT’s preservationist agenda. The SPT mounted several successful legal challenges to the city of Springfield and state of Massachusetts, securing SPT-appointed seats on the Springfield Historical Commission and acquiring legal standing as a nonprofit to challenge demolitions in court.


Yet the more transformative and radical capacities of the SPT’s preservationist agenda remained tempered by the culture of property and its commitment to promoting private property ownership. Where Chapter Five examined how community preservationists adopted new identities as landlords through their engagement with the rental housing market, in this chapter I trace the other half of that development as community preservationists embraced real estate speculation as urban revitalization. Paradoxically, the SPT’s politics in this era simultaneously enabled and resisted the public underwriting of the private real estate market, a theme explored in the previous chapter. These contradictions lay at the heart of the SPT’s initial birth in 1972 as a nonprofit speculative real estate corporation and tax shelter, a foundational principle the SPT carried out through the buying, renovating, and selling of residential properties via a revolving fund financed by Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). I explore the SPT’s revolving fund against the backdrop of the so-called “Massachusetts Miracle” and its localized counterpart, the “Springfield miracle,” a series of state- and city-sponsored efforts to slash social welfare provisions and promote private market alternatives to urban and economic revitalization.

At the same time, the SPT organized against the private market’s increasing power to shape public space and public life. These paradoxical counter-mobilizations were encapsulated in the SPT’s exhaustive campaign against the proposed demolition of “Hollywood,” a neighborhood of historic apartment buildings in the South End the city proposed razing for private redevelopment in 1983. While the SPT secured the preservation of a portion of apartment buildings, mayor Theodore DiMauro revoked the SPT’s CDBG funding as a punitive response to the SPT’s activism in Hollywood. The loss of CDBG funds effectively ended the SPT’s revolving fund and real estate activities. The lesson to the SPT was clear, and it was one that preservation organizations across the country would learn
as well: success and organizational longevity depended upon community preservationists’ willingness to comport themselves to civic and corporate expectations of urban development above more holistic commitments to the preservation of the “built environment.”

By expanding on my argument in the preceding chapter, I illustrate how community preservationists promoted private market solutions to pressing spatial and political problems; in this case, the SPT situated speculative real estate investment as a key tool in arresting urban decline. In this way, the culture of property remained part of community preservationists’ guiding ethos during the 1980s. But the story I narrate here is not so straightforward, for community preservationists’ simultaneous efforts to protect the built environment sat uneasily alongside their initiatives as real estate speculators. Historians of preservation have analyzed these developments in binary frameworks that obscure the complex transformations of the historic preservation movement during the late 1970s and 1980s. On one extreme end, historians note that by embracing the “built environment,” preservationists prioritized the protection of a collective social welfare to “address the needs and concerns of communities.”6 In contrast, historians at the opposite end of this spectrum posit preservationists as real estate speculators more interested in guiding the private market.7 Ultimately, I illustrate that in this “age of miracles” multiple things could be true at

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the same time: the SPT both enabled and resisted the market turn in urban governance. For community preservationists, this contradiction generated a fraught legacy that continues to pit commitments to upholding the strictures of private property against protecting the entirety of the built environment.

Protecting the “Built Environment”: The New Preservationist Ethos of the 1980s

A complex intellectual exchange between geographers, historians, social scientists, activists, and emerging public history practitioners over the 1970s and 1980s contributed to the ascendance of the “built environment” in academic and professional conversations about urban space and historic preservation. British planners and architects first gravitated to the phrase in the mid-1960s and early 1970s, a shift registered in 1972 when the professional British planning journal, *Official Architecture and Planning*, changed its name to *Built Environment*. In the mid-1970s, the “built environment” migrated from British to American planning and architectural circles and circulated among environmentalists, historians, and sociologists. By the 1980s, the phrase was common parlance within a wide range of academic and professional fields. Andrew Hurley observes that “closer collaboration with academic historians during the 1980s permitted new ideas about social history and people's history to cross-pollinate among professionals employed at museums and universities,” a development that intersected with the mainstream environmental movement. The influence of

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environmentalism and social history encouraged historians and preservationists to look to “ordinary” or “everyday” sites with an “ecological vision” that considered the interplay between human beings and the total environment.\footnote{Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, “Toward a New History of the Landscape and Built Environment,” \textit{Reviews in American History} 13, no. 4 (December 1985): 487; Contributors to \textit{The Public Historian} noted this shift as well, see J. Meredith Neil, “Is There a Historian in the House? The Curious Case of Historic Preservation,” \textit{The Public Historian} 2, no. 2 (Winter 1980): 32; Elizabeth A. Lyon, “Cultural and Environmental Resource Management: The Role of History in Historic Preservation,” \textit{The Public Historian} 4, no. 4 (Fall 1982): 69–86.}


Similar trends were underway in geography and architecture. In 1974, the French geographer Henri Lefebvre theorized urban space as a product of human social relations that shaped the ways in which those social relations played out across time.\footnote{Henri Lefebvre, \textit{The Production of Space}, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1974), 26.} Lefebvre’s insights fueled the so-called “spatial turn” within geography and history that repositioned urban
space as an active agent rather than passive backdrop in social and political life.\textsuperscript{16} As geographer Doreen Massey observed, “spatial form is an important element in the constitution of power itself,” and actively shaped or constrained a wide range of social and political possibilities.\textsuperscript{17} This redefinition could also be detected in analyses of “landscapes,” or “cultural landscapes,” where architectural and environmental historians looked to the built and natural environments as a “composition of man-made or man-modified spaces to serve as infrastructure…for our collective existence.”\textsuperscript{18} This scholarship shaped a fundamentally political analysis of the built environment as an “arena of agency and structure” that operated as a “dynamic force in the shaping and articulation of social processes.”\textsuperscript{19} Decisions that impacted the built environment, therefore, were not just a simple matter of bricks and mortar, but contained profound social and political consequences for all urbanites.

A new generation of community preservationists in the late 1970s and early 1980s arrived at an analysis of the built environment’s relationship to social and political organization through their own personal and lived experiences, sometimes totally independent of the conversations taking place in academia. Consider Ed Lonergan, the research librarian for the Springfield public library. As a child, Lonergan grew up in


\textsuperscript{17} Doreen Massey, \textit{Space, Place, and Gender} (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 22.

\textsuperscript{18} John Brinckerhoff Jackson, \textit{Discovering the Vernacular Landscape} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 8.

Springfield’s Indian Orchard neighborhood, a former milling community on the eastern outskirts of the city. Given “free rein” to ride his bike across the city, over time Lonergan understood Indian Orchard as a “landscape that’s very defined” by the Westinghouse factory that organized the rhythms of daily life.  

Lonergan built on these insights traversing a newspaper delivery route, as he reflected:

> I…started going door to door with my newspapers and interacting with people, older people, retired people, people who wanted to talk. And they were the first owner of their house…I’d say, “How long have you been here?” They’d say something or another. And I’d realize that 30 years ago, 40 years ago, there was nothing here. So, I started by checking at the library, is this really true?

By the time Lonergan entered an anthropology program at the University of Pennsylvania in the 1960s, his experiences in Springfield grounded a dual understanding of how the built environment was directly connected to community organization and how human social relations transformed a landscape where “there was nothing here” to a “very defined” community.

Prominent members of the SPT formulated analyses of the relationship between politics, public policy, and the built environment through brief stints with Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). As a War on Poverty-era initiative, VISTA attracted college-educated recruits to help implement War on Poverty initiatives in Southern urban areas where local leaders were less willing to embrace federal antipoverty initiatives. By putting recent college graduates to work implementing public policy on the ground, VISTA promoted a scholarly and practical analysis of the built environment among its recruits that underscored how governmental initiatives directly shaped the physical and social

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21 Lonergan, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
22 Gail Schmunk Murray, “Taming the War on Poverty: Memphis as a Case Study,” *Journal of Urban History* 43, no. 1 (January 2017), 76.
infrastructure of cities. For example, when Bob McCarroll, a recent graduate of William and Mary, joined VISTA he was deployed to Newport News, Virginia where “we worked on housing issues, and we did some tutoring, and we did some community organizing type events.”23 From his experiences with VISTA, McCarroll returned to school to become a city planner, a position he acquired with Springfield’s planning department in 1972. Like McCarroll, lawyer Bill Malloy also worked on “housing issues” as a VISTA recruit in Nashville and Memphis, Tennessee, where he confronted “the local housing authority with implementing the Brooke Amendment…which stated that folks in public housing shouldn't pay more than 25 percent of their income. And the Memphis Housing Authority just wasn’t implementing it. But we asked them to, and they did.”24 Through their time as VISTA recruits, McCarroll and Malloy came to understand public policy and the urban built environment as interconnected, an analysis that found its way into the philosophy of the SPT.

Other preservationists and SPT members embraced an expansive analysis of the built environment through more quotidian negotiations over and uses of space. These actions could be both mundane and profoundly personal. Recall how Frances Gagnon’s work with code enforcement in McKnight informed her approach to the creation of a local historic district. Gagnon discovered “that code enforcement is best done by petition. Property by property, you know where the violations are, it’s no big secret, do the petition, go door to door…One by one we got the violations.”25 Gagnon’s routine negotiations with landlords and the city’s code enforcement office nevertheless felt empowering as she realized how her

23 Bob McCarroll, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, October 24, 2020, interview in possession of the author.
24 Bill Malloy, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, November 30, 2020, interview in possession of the author.
25 Frances Gagnon, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
neighbors could directly influence the physical quality of her immediate surroundings. Other preservationists reflected on how the built environment impacted personal and familial relationships. Rose, born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, recalled how she “grew up having a nice sense of architecture, being surrounded by architecture, and appreciating the beautiful old buildings,” including the apartment her family lived in. Rose remained friends with her neighbors throughout her life, reflecting that “we used to lock our screen doors together because our apartments were catty-corner and we would just sit out there on a blanket and play.”

Whether negotiating over code enforcement, playing with a neighbor, or implementing War on Poverty programs, community preservationists developed a new consciousness that the built environment and social relationships were mutually constitutive.

By the 1980s these scholarly and personal observations combined, solidifying the “built environment” as the de facto phrase to describe both the object of preservationists’ attention and an implicit set of political and professional beliefs. As early as 1976, the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) argued that “the realization is coming, in fits and starts, that buildings are a part of our total environmental resources and that old buildings are nonrenewable resources.” Preservationists thus needed to weigh “the background buildings and street furniture and other elements that hold the built environment together” rather than simply major landmarks or individual structures. In doing so, preservationists could advance their own political agenda based on “an understanding of the relationship between the quality of the built environment and the quality of life and articulation of the value of a sense of time and place as part of our diverse

26 Rose, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, February 16, 2021, interview in possession of the author.
27 Wrenn, Mulloy, and National Trust for Historic Preservation, America’s Forgotten Architecture, 23.
28 Wrenn, Mulloy, and National Trust for Historic Preservation, 9.
cultural memories.” This quality-of-life politics reflected how community preservationists linked the built environment to social and political organization in their analyses, a framework that supported the careful “management” of historic places in order to improve the social, political, and economic life of cities.

The reformation of the SPT reflected and advanced these analyses of the built environment. When Bill Malloy, Bob McCarroll, Frances Gagnon, Jim Boone, and other preservationists revived the SPT in 1977, they solidified the organization’s primary purpose to “encourage the Preservation, Use and Appreciation of Springfield’s Historically and Architecturally significant built environment.” To that end, the SPT mobilized a political agenda that sought to “educate those people in the city who make the decisions of where the city is going” that “the quality of life depends a great deal on the values and the environment that surround each of us.” This agenda reflected community preservationists’ newfound consciousness that when policymakers and other public figures “abuse our built environment,” those abuses had distinct social and political consequences, putting Springfield residents in imminent danger of becoming “an aimless, reactionary people. It is this respect for ourselves and our heritage that we must protect.” By vowing to preserve the totality of the built environment, the SPT embraced a more expansive vision of preservation’s political importance in shaping social and political life.

The SPT put these commitments into practice by adopting a breathtaking new scope of activism that expanded the kinds of places deemed worthy of preservation. This new scale

32 Jim Boone, President’s Address, circa 1980, records of the Springfield Preservation Trust.
33 Jim Boone, President’s Address.
was evident from the moment the SPT reorganized in 1977. The instigating incident that spurred the SPT’s re-mobilization in 1977 was not a threatened residential neighborhood or Victorian house—the typical objects of Springfield preservationists’ attention—but the proposed demolition of the St. Joseph Motherhouse and Convent on Elliot Street (Figure 6.1). The Motherhouse, a four-story Gothic building built in 1899, functioned as a convent for the nearby Roman Catholic Diocese and cluster of religious buildings associated with St. Michael’s cathedral and rectory.

Figure 6.1: St. Joseph Motherhouse. Proposed demolition for the St. Joseph Motherhouse and Convent, pictured here in the 1930s, spurred the SPT to re-mobilize in 1977. Image courtesy of the Springfield Preservation Trust WPA Image Project.

Where the white-collar lawyers and attorneys like Eugene Berman and John Greaney that first spearheaded the formation of the SPT in 1972 felt comfortable including the Motherhouse within the boundaries of the Quadrangle-Mattoon local historic district but excluding it from any exterior controls or protections, the new generation of municipal employees, architects, and social workers that made up the SPT rebuked this decision as
harmful to the entire built environment of the nearby Quadrangle.\textsuperscript{35} SPT members challenged the Catholic diocese’s proposed demolition of the Motherhouse, attempting to halt the demolition through district and county appeals courts.\textsuperscript{36} But because the initial provisions of the local historic district excluded all properties owned by the diocese and the museums association from the controls regulated by the Springfield Historical Commission, the diocese proceeded with the demolition.\textsuperscript{37}

The Motherhouse’s demolition only galvanized the SPT further, pushing the organization’s members into direct action tactics and legal battles. As Bill Malloy recalled, the demolition of the Motherhouse “was a real turning point,” a “wake up call” for SPT members to double down on their expansive efforts to protect the city’s total built environment.\textsuperscript{38} On the heels of the Motherhouse demolition, MacDuffie School for Girls, a private college preparatory academy, announced its intention to demolish the Samuel Bowles house. Originally built in 1853 for Francis Tiffany, the pastor of the Church of the Unity, the large, Italianate home on Central Street was most closely associated with Samuel Bowles, II, the editor of the \emph{Springfield Republican} newspaper who purchased the home in the 1860s and lived there until his death in 1878.\textsuperscript{39} Around 1890, MacDuffie acquired the home as a classroom and dormitory hall, but by 1978 school officials found the home “too costly to

\textsuperscript{35} See the discussion in Chapter Two on the creation of this historic district. Properties belonging to the Roman Catholic diocese and museums association were excluded from all controls in the local historic district, meaning most properties subject to control were private residential structures. See also “Final Report of the Historic District Study Committee: Quadrangle-Mattoon Local Historic District,” (Springfield, MA: Springfield Historical Commission, 1972).
\textsuperscript{38} Bill Malloy, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
maintain” and sought to replace it with an athletic field and tennis court.⁴⁰ That same year, MacDuffie applied for a certificate of hardship from the Springfield Historical Commission (SHC) to demolish the home, a request the SHC approved in a controversial 5-1 vote in 1979. Frances Gagnon was the only commission member that voted against the certificate of hardship.⁴¹

SPT members balked at this decision, mobilizing through the courts and deploying direct action tactics to protest the demolition of the Bowles house. In July of 1979, the SPT delayed the demolition, securing a temporary injunction through the Hampden County Superior Court, arguing that razing the house would cause “irreparable harm” to the city’s built environment.⁴² The case went to the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court where judges dismissed it, arguing that state laws did not “confer jurisdiction,” or legal standing, to the SPT to challenge decisions of the SHC.⁴³ SPT members made one last-ditch effort to save the house. David Sanborn recalled how “a bunch of us Springfield Preservation Trust members appeared on the morning of the demolition, and we all locked arms along the sidewalk in front of this building.”⁴⁴

While blocking the bulldozer failed to save the Bowles house, the SPT’s loss in court prompted Sanborn to draft an amendment to the state’s laws concerning historical commissions, successfully granting private nonprofit agencies standing to challenge

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⁴⁴ David Sanborn, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, October 8, 2020, interview in possession of the author.
demolitions in court in 1984.\textsuperscript{45} Likewise, in 1980 SPT member Robert Markel drafted amendments to the SHC’s original city ordinance, increasing SHC commission membership to include two SPT-appointed representatives, a move successfully implemented in 1988.\textsuperscript{46} Through this combination of direct action tactics and legislative activism, SPT members brought their expansive commitments to the built environment to bear on city and state officials, securing greater political agency and channels to exercise political power in the process.

The more expansive preservationist vision of the SPT was evidenced by a flurry of activity that pushed beyond a traditional focus on residential architecture. Following the Bowles house demolition, SPT members launched campaigns to preserve other significant landmarks throughout the city. In 1981, SPT members successfully stalled the proposed demolition of the former downtown YMCA, a seven-story, Classical Revival structure built in 1916 that anchored the corner of Chestnut and Hallman Streets downtown. The SPT inaugurated an Environmental Protection Agency impact report to buy enough time to list the YMCA, and several surrounding buildings including the Renaissance Revival-style Hotel Kimball, in 1983 as the Apremont Triangle NRHP historic district.\textsuperscript{47} Shortly thereafter, developers utilized preservation tax incentives to transform the property into a “beautiful apartment building” while saving it from demolition for a parking garage.\textsuperscript{48} In 1982, the SPT launched surveys of the city’s North and South End neighborhoods to counter two “threats

\begin{footnotes}
\item[45]\textit{“Springfield Preservation Trust: Quarterly Newsletter Winter 1984,” Winter 1984, 2.}
\item[46]\textit{“Springfield Preservation Trust: Summer 1980 Newsletter,” 3; “Springfield Preservation Trust: Quarterly Newsletter Fall 1988,” Fall 1988.}
\end{footnotes}
to historic properties: The investment process… and the disinvestment process.”

The surveys embodied the SPT’s more expansive preservationist ethos by attempting to catalogue the entirety of the North and South End’s respective built environments for potential local and NRHP historic district nominations.

These expansive commitments to the built environment continued to bring the SPT into seemingly intractable political quagmires. As early as 1979, the SPT threw its support behind the preservation of the Indian Motocycle [sic] Building (IMB)—the “r” was dropped from “motorcycle” in 1923 to enhance the company’s trademark brand. The former manufacturing complex once defined the heart of the city’s Winchester Square neighborhood, sitting on a triangular plot of land bounded by major thoroughfares State Street and Wilbraham Road. Like the Springfield Armory, the building occupied a profound symbolic position for the city’s history, identity, and economy. At its height, the motorcycle company employed over 3,000 people and acquired national prominence as the first company to manufacture gasoline engine motorcycles on a commercial scale. On the heels of the plant’s closure in the early 1950s, a small department store and several other commercial ventures operated with little success as the massive complex rapidly deteriorated. By the 1970s, the Springfield Redevelopment Authority deemed much of the building structurally unsound. Fearing the worst, the Winchester Square Community Development Corporation and an ad hoc “Blue Ribbon Committee” led by Forest Park Heights resident and SPT member Hilton Abbott sought its successful nomination to the NRHP in 1979.

But the IMB’s NRHP nomination only ignited a fierce political battle over the building’s potential reuse. Following a failed attempt to turn the building into a state heritage park, the city of Springfield proposed to reroute State Street and Wilbraham Road in 1981, demolishing the IMB in the process.\textsuperscript{52} The potential use of federal funding from the Department of Transportation triggered the Section 106 review process.\textsuperscript{53} As outlined in Section 106 of the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act, any use of federal funding to demolish NRHP-designated properties required a review of and attempts to mitigate that demolition’s “adverse effect” on the integrity of the historic district by the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation (ACHP), a federal preservation advisory agency.\textsuperscript{54} SPT members mobilized to illustrate to the ACHP that city officials failed to sufficiently market the IMB to potential developers who would preserve and reuse the building, charging that mayor Theodore Dimauro sought the quickest path to demolition instead of devoting “adequate time, effort, and imagination” to the building’s future.\textsuperscript{55} To refute the city’s claims that the IMB was “unmarketable,” SPT members sent their own letters to real estate developers to “arouse interest and point out development potential,” illustrating to the ACHP that the IMB could, in fact, be saved.\textsuperscript{56} The SPT’s testimony to the ACHP compelled the agency to issue a recommendation that the city pursue the building’s reuse, leading to the IMB’s conversion to market-rate apartments in the mid-1980s, although the most deteriorated

\textsuperscript{53} David Sanborn to Norman J. VanNess, October 19, 1981, records of the Springfield Preservation Trust.
western portion of the building was ultimately demolished.\textsuperscript{57} Despite this mixed record, the SPT asserted that “it was greatly due to our efforts working with neighborhood councils, the State Historic Commission and threatening suits that the building was saved.”\textsuperscript{58} For the SPT, the IMB’s reuse as apartments reflected how their commitments to the built environment improved the economic and social wellbeing of Springfield.

These advocacy campaigns contributed to the formation of a cohesive preservationist community united by a common political agenda. Preservationists experienced this shift as both empowering and incredibly dynamic. As Rose breathlessly recounted, “We were very political, we were fighting the city, we were fighting the diocese, we were arguing with the church, we were fighting with MacDuffie School, we were really pushing for preservation… we were fighting for something I think that we all believed in.”\textsuperscript{59} SPT president Jim Boone felt that as preservationists mobilized together, they disrupted traditional power hierarchies within the city:

We were speaking to the power. People in power weren’t used to being told that they shouldn’t do things… I mean, the chairman of the board of the MacDuffie school that wanted to tear down this house [Samuel Bowles house] was the president of Milton Bradley. And he's not used to having little tatty people from the city telling him what to do. He didn't like that. And mayors didn't like it; if they had a developer that wanted to do something, they didn't want this little group telling them they couldn't do it.\textsuperscript{60}

In uniting around a shared set of political beliefs—that decisions about the built environment were ultimately decisions about social and political organization—preservationists found themselves empowered as dynamic political agents.


\textsuperscript{58} Jim Boone to Raymond Jordan, December 22, 1988, records of the Springfield Preservation Trust.

\textsuperscript{59} Rose, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.

\textsuperscript{60} Jim Boone, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
With this expansive political ethos, preservationists more easily attracted newcomers to their movement, even those that had no previous ties to Springfield. When Liz and Michael Stevens moved to Springfield from Texas in 1985, they arrived with no connections to their new home, other than Michael’s new job with the Springfield Library. Liz and Michael happened to purchase a partially renovated Victorian house in the McKnight neighborhood from the SPT, a decision that immediately integrated them into the city’s preservationist community. Liz reflected how the SPT’s position as a “strong advocate for building preservation…has made it a better place for people like Michael and I who come in and want to purchase and restore a Victorian house because we have a community to belong to, to learn from, to make friends with.”61 Like Liz and Michael, Rose found that this sense of preservationist community made her transition from New York to Springfield easier as well. When she began working for Springfield Technical Community College (STCC), Rose found that she “was spending all my weekends going back to New York City, because I was convinced, I was going to move back.” But by attending a house tour with the SPT, Rose’s outlook shifted dramatically:

We started attending the Trust meetings and it was really a wonderful group of people. They were all so interesting and they were educated, and they were way more colorful than the people I had been meeting…All of a sudden, I was just finding people who had more similar experiences to me. They were more politically conscious; it was a more diverse crew.62

By uniting around their shared commitments to the built environment, preservationists cultivated a distinct political community open to anyone with a general interest in preservation.

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62 Rose, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
Through activism that targeted a much wider range of Springfield’s built environment, community preservationists found themselves buoyed by new modes of political empowerment, even if they lost battles over the demolition of specific landmarks like the Motherhouse and the Bowles house. Through a combination of conversations underway in academic circles and intensely personal experiences, community preservationists embraced the entire built environment as both an object requiring preservation and a set of political beliefs about the interconnected nature between space and social and political organization. By igniting advocacy campaigns targeting the YMCA, the North and South Ends, and the Indian Motocycle Building, the SPT forged an expansive preservationist ethos that brought members together as a cohesive political community. While these developments pushed beyond a traditional focus on private, residential architecture, continued commitments to private property ownership and the culture of property nevertheless tempered this more expansive ethos.

Promoting Preservation to “A More Fiscally Cautious Audience”: The Massachusetts Miracle, Revolving Funds, and Hollywood

In 1978, the SPT launched a revolving fund campaign to purchase, renovate, and sell deteriorated historic homes in the McKnight neighborhood. As a speculative real estate investment tool, the revolving fund enabled the SPT to demonstrate how the private market, rather than initiatives driven solely by the city or state, could reverse deterioration in the city’s neighborhoods. The SPT gravitated to their revolving fund amidst a wider political shift underway in Massachusetts and across the United States that increasingly positioned private-market solutions to urban problems as the only politically viable option for urban

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redevelopment. In this climate, the SPT’s ventures as a speculative real estate nonprofit both enabled and were facilitated by Massachusetts’ aggressive reorientation around private market solutions to the state’s fiscal crisis—the so-called “Massachusetts Miracle”—and the federal CDBG program inaugurated under president Richard Nixon’s Housing and Community Development Act (HCDA) of 1974. Preservationists met these developments by positioning themselves to municipal officials as the private market actors most qualified to undertake urban revitalization projects through real estate speculation, a project that sat uneasily alongside more holistic commitments to the built environment. Ultimately, in Springfield, these tensions erupted in 1983 amidst the conflict between municipal officials and the SPT over the fate of Hollywood.

The “Massachusetts Miracle” had decade-long roots in the state’s fiscal crisis. By the early 1970s, Massachusetts was in “a downward spiral.” As manufacturing firms fled the state for the booming Sunbelt or left the United States altogether, Massachusetts’ unemployment rate skyrocketed, reaching a high of 11 percent during the decade. At the same time, the state’s budget deficit rose, forcing state officials to keep taxes on individuals and businesses high to balance the budget. Disgruntled, corporate leaders derided the state as “Taxachusetts,” claiming that the Commonwealth’s fiscal policies were “hostile to the business community” and drove manufacturing firms from the state in search of greener pastures elsewhere. Rather than attribute the state’s misfortunes to the corporate race to secure labor at the lowest possible cost, policymakers and businessmen blamed the

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65 Lampe, 8.
unemployed, insisting that “taxes are being increased to support the unemployed on welfare” while upstanding taxpayers and corporations suffered.66

Eager to reverse these perceptions, Governor Francis Sargent and his successor, Michael Dukakis, undertook an aggressive project to make Massachusetts attractive for corporate investment. In 1973, Sargent tripled investment tax credits, a bid that sought to lower corporate excise taxes. But the state’s recession only worsened as corporate leaders continued to scapegoat welfare recipients. The “effects of spending so much on welfare in the Commonwealth,” warned one popular pamphlet, “mean that less is available to be spent on stimulating economic development.”67 Gubernatorial incumbent Michael Dukakis heard this message loud and clear. A moderate Democrat, when elected as governor in 1974 Dukakis reoriented state policy to accommodate private sector business growth and lower taxes, signing his name to a “new social contract” that prioritized lowering corporate taxes over New Deal commitments to social welfare.68 To that end, Dukakis cut many of the state’s welfare programs while stimulating high technology industries to invest in the state with lucrative tax breaks, generating a boom in microcomputer production facilities along state route 128 outside of Boston. Other initiatives took shape to lower property taxes. On the heels of California’s so-called “tax revolt” in 1980, Massachusetts voters approved Proposition 2½, a ballot measure that limited municipal property tax levies to 2.5 percent of a property’s assessed value.69

66 Lampe, 23.
67 Lampe, 61.
Dukakis looked to historic preservation as a key ingredient in the state’s economic revitalization. In 1978, while campaigning for re-election, Dukakis unveiled plans for the Heritage State Parks (HSP) program, a program that would instrumentalize the state’s industrial history to leverage private investment in downtown urban cores. By creating new recreational space in the heart of formerly industrial manufacturing centers, Dukakis hoped the HSP program would attract new postindustrial uses for some of the state’s rotting industrial complexes. The HSP program aided the establishment of a National Park Service (NPS) unit in Lowell’s former textile mills in 1978, as well as a HSP in downtown Holyoke, a former paper manufacturing city just north of Springfield. While plans for an HSP for Springfield disintegrated, city and state officials with the Dukakis administration worked to establish a NPS unit in 1978 at the Springfield Armory, the decommissioned federal arms manufacturing center and once-chief employer in Springfield. City officials looked to the Springfield Armory’s rebirth as an NPS unit and campus for Springfield Technical Community College as a way to seize the city’s industrial past to revitalize the postindustrial economy.

By the early 1980s, these developments converged into what state officials and business leaders breathlessly described as the “Massachusetts Miracle.” This “miracle” encompassed a record low unemployment level at just 3 percent, the growth of new high-tech firms, low property and corporate taxes, and revitalized urban cores infused with a valorized industrial past. But the “Massachusetts Miracle” came at a high cost for the state’s economy.

71 Cathy Stanton, The Lowell Experiment: Public History in a Postindustrial City (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006); King, 52-57.
most disadvantaged citizens, a reality that policymakers chose to overlook. As historian Lily Geismer observes, cutting welfare provisions and alleviating the tax burden for high-tech corporations only exacerbated economic and racial inequality, creating a highly stratified economy divided along a high-tech, white-collar workforce, on the one hand, and a low-wage service workforce that catered to this class of white-collar workers, on the other. As early as 1974, researchers sounded alarm bells that the “tax subsidies to industry and revenue-bonded public development corporations constitute a redistribution of income from taxpayers to large corporations” while “tourist industry subsidies” like those for the HSP program “reinforce and expand the size of the low-wage sector of the economy, putting even more pressure on workers to find additional sources of income.” Those low-wage workers, researchers with the Massachusetts-based Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy revealed, tended to be Latino and Puerto Rican migrants: between 1980 and 1990 Latino migrants experienced the largest increase in poverty among all ethnic and racial groups in the state as they increasingly came to occupy low-wage jobs with few benefits.

The “Massachusetts Miracle” was profoundly uneven in its impact and benefitted some areas of the state more than others. As even contemporary boosters reluctantly admitted, the high-tech industries lauded for revitalizing the state’s economy tended to cluster in suburban areas like route 128 or small towns, illustrating the “dramatically uneven impact of the region’s technological revitalization.” In Springfield, city officials watched with dismay as high-technology firms passed over Springfield for cheaper land in the state’s

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74 Geismer, Don’t Blame Us: Suburban Liberals and the Transformation of the Democratic Party, 252.
eastern suburbs while manufacturing firms like Milton Bradley and American Bosch closed their doors, a “great deterrent” to high-tech investment in the city. At the same time, because of Proposition 2½’s limitations on property tax levies, municipalities suddenly found themselves unable to pay for critical services like fire departments, public infrastructure, and schoolteachers, resulting in massive layoffs across the state to balance municipal budgets. Ultimately, Proposition 2½ shifted “a disproportionate share of the costs of postwar capitalism” to Black and Brown residents of cities while white-collar suburbanites flourished in the lavish benefits of the revived “racial welfare state” afforded by the “Massachusetts Miracle.”

This climate of fiscal austerity induced by the “Massachusetts Miracle” made private market strategies to catalyze urban redevelopment even more appealing to cash-strapped cities like Springfield. For many municipal officials, the federal CDBG program provided critical public funding to goad the private market into the reinvestment necessary to fulfill the ideals of the “Massachusetts Miracle.” First introduced in the Housing and Community Development Act (HICDA) of 1974, CDBG was a hallmark of Nixon’s New Federalism. The program consolidated the categorical block grant programs under Model Cities into a single revenue source administered as grants to municipalities. While designed to streamline funding for urban social welfare programs while granting cities more autonomy over that spending, CDBG funding came with relatively few strings and little oversight attached to its

78 Frank D. Gullini to Theodore DiMauro, October 7, 1980, mayor Theodore DiMauro Collection, LMWLA, Springfield, MA.
usage, allowing cities to utilize CDBG funds not for social welfare but to boost downtown redevelopment agendas.\textsuperscript{82} Additionally, because municipalities, rather than grassroots social agencies, applied for CDBG funding, the ultimate disbursement of funds remained highly contingent on the personalities and agendas of specific municipal officials, especially mayors.\textsuperscript{83} While historians have focused on the eligible uses for CDBG funds related to housing and policing, few have examined how the HCDA set funds aside for “the restoration and preservation of properties of special value for historic, architectural, or esthetic reasons.”\textsuperscript{84} For community preservationists, these CDBG funds promised a potential financial windfall for their movement and new avenues to secure greater political and social capital in the eyes of policymakers.

But simply receiving CDBG funds did not mean that cities had the necessary staff, resources, or infrastructure to transmogrify that money into glittering skyscrapers and vibrant downtown plazas. For that reason, city officials increasingly turned to so-called public-private partnerships to materialize redevelopment projects—a strategy made necessary in states like Massachusetts that limited municipalities’ ability to levy taxes. The “bread and butter of community development” during this era, public-private partnerships first emerged in the nineteenth century as municipal officials partnered with philanthropic institutions and transnational corporations to circulate and manifest urban planning ideals.\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{83} Wrenn, Mulloy, and National Trust for Historic Preservation, \textit{America’s Forgotten Architecture}, 31–32.
By the postwar era, government officials increased the powers of private redevelopment corporations, arguing that private market actors could better allocate federal resources than the government. Through grant-making, as Claire Dunning illustrates, the federal HCDA facilitated a “privatized inclusion” that made government more decentralized and participatory, but simultaneously better insulated from structural change. The resultant public-private partnerships thus brought groups like the SPT into the fold of urban governance, but accelerated a reliance on the private sector to support urban revitalization while framing public funding “as ‘seed’ money to ‘leverage’ financing from private lenders and investors.” In Massachusetts, public-private partnerships fit the expectations for economic recovery of officials like Dukakis by reorienting the role of the state away from a redistributive social agenda and towards underwriting corporate investments in the state’s cities.

Because distribution of CDBG funding hinged on mayoral and municipal political agendas that prioritized free-market, public-private partnerships, community preservationists literally had to make their case to municipal officials that they were the most appropriate private market actors to receive those funds earmarked for historic preservation. Community preservationists readily adapted to this challenge, embracing identities as willing private partners ready to revitalize the nation’s cities while reaffirming public officials’ beliefs that the private market was the most appropriate avenue to alleviate urban decline. As the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) uncritically accepted in 1979, “there is a growing demand that government expense be reduced and that the private world take over,”

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what the NTHP felt constituted “encouraging factors for the cause of preservation.”

Likewise, in the wake of Proposition 2½’s passage in 1980, community preservationists in Springfield doubled down on their commitments to free market principles, arguing that:

Unless the emerging economic, as well as the architectural/historic benefits of preservation can be effectively ‘sold’ to this new leadership, the public sector financial support…could be slowed, or even lost entirely…The SPT must, therefore, intensify its efforts to promote preservation…to a more fiscally cautious audience.

For community preservationists across the country, finding what unlocked public funding from this “fiscally cautious audience” of policymakers became the proclaimed “ethic” of their movement for the 1980s.

Community preservationists quickly discovered that what could be most effectively “sold” to municipal officials was their capabilities as real estate investors and managers of revolving funds. As Leopold Adler, II, director of the Savannah Landmarks Foundation in Savannah, Georgia, bluntly concluded, “the name of the game is real estate.” To play that “game,” community preservationists leveraged public-private partnerships with city officials, launching revolving fund campaigns financed with CDBG funds to purchase, redevelop, and sell historic properties. Revolving funds operated as a single pool of capital preservationists utilized to purchase property that they cyclically replenished—or “revolved”—through the sale of those properties. To community preservationists, revolving funds functioned as “your equity that enables you to venture into the economic battlefield.” Moreover, through the use of revolving funds, community preservationists adopted an “inevitable role as a

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88 National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation: Toward an Ethic in the 1980s, 86.
90 National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation: Toward an Ethic in the 1980s.
businessman,” finding revolving funds a satisfying and “judicious combination of the
serpent and the dove” that left preservationists’ “ideals unpolluted” yet made them
“immensely more effective in realizing them than he would be as dove and dove alone.”

While revolving funds could ostensibly be more effective than merely “crying Heritage,”
they naturalized private market strategies as the most politically viable pathway to revitalize
urban areas, an outcome that sat uneasily alongside more holistic commitments to the built
environment.

In Springfield, the SPT positioned themselves as a qualified real estate investment
corporation to secure public funding from local and state officials fixated on private-market
alternatives to urban revitalization. With the advent of CDBG funding, “public-private
partnerships” became the watchword for redevelopment under Theodore DiMauro’s
mayoral administration from 1978 to 1984. DiMauro explicitly committed to government
subsidization of private investment, arguing in his fiscal year address in 1979 that “it is
increasingly clear that the public sector must do all in its power to nurture and stimulate
growth and development in the private sector.”

To that end, DiMauro organized a
mortgage pool among local financing institutions to underwrite downtown redevelopment
projects, spurring the so-called “Springfield miracle,” a localized version of the
“Massachusetts Miracle.” But DiMauro’s preoccupation with downtown drew criticism that

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93 Ziegler, Jr., Adler II, and Kidney, 1.
95 Theodore DiMauro, “Mayor’s Address: Theodore E. DiMauro,” January 15, 1979, mayor Theodore
DiMauro collection, LMWLA.
96 Amy Zuckerman, “What’s So Right About Springfield? The City to the West Has Undergone An Economic
Miracle While Worcester Is Still Hoping For One,” *Worcester Magazine* (September 1988), 1; Phillip L. Zweig,
“The Revival of Springfield, Mass.: A Model of Private-Sector Involvement,” *The American Banker,* May 11,
1981.
the city only prioritized the interests of corporations in search of sleek downtown offices. To deflect this criticism, DiMauro worked to illustrate a renewed commitment to the city’ neighborhoods by allocating CDBG funding for neighborhood revitalization projects.

The SPT jumped on this opportunity to get their slice of CDBG pie. In 1978, the SPT tapped into DiMauro’s desire for public-private partnerships and scramble to demonstrate his support of the city’s neighborhoods by launching a revolving fund campaign. In their appeals, SPT members argued for a profound “need for cooperation in building and neighborhood preservation between municipal government and a private, non-profit organization such as the Springfield Preservation Trust.” Where DiMauro prioritized downtown redevelopment, the SPT gestured to “many severely deteriorated, vandalized or fire-damaged properties with questionable futures” throughout the city’s historic districts in need of rehabilitation. Through their revolving fund, the SPT would identify “appropriate structures,” purchase them, and “return them to the private market sector as rapidly as possible” to expand the city’s residential tax base and reinvigorate the private real estate market.

The SPT strengthened their appeals to DiMauro by pointing to their origins in 1972 as a preservation-minded speculative real estate investment corporation to further distinguish themselves from “private commercial and governmental sectors” unable to “respond affirmatively” to urban decline. Mattoon Street homeowners and members of

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100 Zorzi, Proposal For Revolving Fund,” 2.
the MSHPA Eugene Berman, John Greaney, John Powers, and Richard Milstein had originally mobilized the SPT in 1972, meeting in Frances Gagnon’s living room to outline the goals of their new organization. As Gagnon recalled, this group of white-collar lawyers created the SPT for “less than noble reasons” as a “tax shelter” for Greaney and Berman’s investments in real estate along Mattoon Street. The SPT’s original articles of incorporation empowered the SPT to preserve and “protect” real estate by giving the SPT wide discretionary authority as a landlord, real estate agent, and investor that could purchase, sell, and borrow against property.

To underscore the organization’s commitments to middle-class property owners, Berman, Greaney, Powers, and Milstein met as the SPT’s board of directors in 1973 to strike two provisions from the organization’s bylaws: one to “construct new low-moderate income housing and to provide the necessary social services for the needy families involved” and the other to “encourage rehabilitation of housing for low-income families in stable neighborhoods.” Through these deletions, the SPT’s initial board of directors explicitly oriented the SPT away from commitments to align preservation with the needs of low-income tenants or families and instead framed preservation as a venture undertaken to stabilize middle- and upper-class investments in the city’s real estate, proposals that resonated with the development politics of the “Springfield Miracle.” With these origins as a preservation-minded real estate investment corporation that prioritized middle-class

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102 Gagnon, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
property ownership, the SPT felt more than “empowered through its charter to engage in all the activities envisioned” in their CDBG proposal to DiMauro.\textsuperscript{105}

These arguments convinced DiMauro, who allocated 24,000 dollars of the 75,000 dollars earmarked for historic preservation from the city’s pool of CDBG funds for fiscal year 1978 to the SPT.\textsuperscript{106} With this initial money, the SPT inaugurated their revolving fund in 1979 and purchased a vacant house at 120 Westminster Street in the McKnight neighborhood for just 6,000 dollars when the city’s average home price hovered around 25,000 dollars.\textsuperscript{107} With 120 Westminster, the SPT situated McKnight to policymakers and the general public to demonstrate “what can be done with places that are in terrible shape...how to do it well, and to get housing back on the market.”\textsuperscript{108} As SPT president Jim Boone remembered, “We had so many vacant houses in McKnight,” homes so “deserted and decrepit” that “nobody wanted [them].”\textsuperscript{109} McKnight’s vacant housing stock was the perfect candidate for the SPT’s revolving fund. Such houses were cheap and occupied high-profile lots on well-trafficked streets, serving as visible illustrations of the power of preservation to reinvigorate the city’s real estate market. The SPT capitalized on this visibility by affixing

\textsuperscript{105} Zorzi, Proposal For Revolving Fund,” 3.
\textsuperscript{109} Jim Boone, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone, October 26, 2020, interview in possession of the author.
their logo, a cutaway view of a detailed Victorian eave, to the homes during the rehabilitation process (Figure 6.2).  

![Image of a Victorian eave with a logo]

**Figure 6.2: SPT Revolving Fund House.** The SPT illustrated the power of preservation to revitalize the city’s real estate market by choosing vacant homes on high-profile lots and affixing their logo to these houses, as seen here above the front door of 11 Lillian Street, a house in danger of demolition that the SPT physically relocated to 53 Thompson Street in McKnight. Source: records of the Springfield Preservation Trust, private collection of Jim Boone.

The SPT homed in on the transformative qualities of their revolving fund, inviting the public to “before” and “after” tours of 120 Westminster, a tactic borrowed from MSHPA members and Mattoon Street homeowners.  

These strategies were successful: just one day after the open house, the SPT sold 120 Westminster at a profit for 30,000 dollars.

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111 Jim Boone, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.

As a real estate investment tool, the revolving fund generated immense political clout for the SPT. Not only did the sale of 120 Westminster help replenish the revolving fund, in fiscal year 1980 DiMauro committed another 25,000 dollars from the city’s CDBG funds for the SPT to purchase 173 Bay Street for 6,000 dollars.\(^{113}\) The SPT quickly established a pattern throughout McKnight, purchasing seven houses between 1979 and 1983 with the assistance of CDBG funds and the money generated from real estate transactions.\(^ {114}\) The flourishing success of the SPT’s revolving fund “drew a lot of people to the Trust,” Jim Boone reflected, “We were really hot, we were going gangbusters on that.”\(^ {115}\) The SPT tallied the revolving fund’s success on multiple fronts. Like their counterparts in the MSHPA, the SPT argued that their purchase and sale of houses generated interest among white suburbanites to reverse the “exodus out of the city.”\(^ {116}\) Guestbooks from “before” and “after” tours reflect this suburban interest, with visitors from nearby suburban towns like Springfield, Mass.: CDBG Program, Year V, July 1, 1979-June 30, 1980,” Capital Investment Summaries, CDBG Years I-V (Springfield, MA: Mayor’s Office of Economic Development, 1979), 75, mayor Theodore DiMauro collection, LMWL; Hampden County, Massachusetts, Deed Book 4996, page 395, Lawrence E. Williams to Springfield Preservation Trust, Inc., September 16, 1980, Hampden County Register of Deeds, Springfield, Massachusetts.\(^ {114}\) Five of these houses the SPT sold at a profit, purchasing them for less than 5,000 dollars and selling them for over 30,000 dollars. The lowest price the SPT paid was for 53 Thompson Street, an abandoned house the city of Springfield sold for one dollar, see Hampden County, Massachusetts, Deed Book 5146, page 214, Diane S. and William Beigert to Springfield Preservation Trust, Inc., August 5, 1981, Hampden County Register of Deeds, Springfield, Massachusetts; Hampden County, Massachusetts, Deed Book 5228, page 24, Springfield Preservation Trust, Inc. to Ruby L. Evans, March 5, 1982, Hampden County Register of Deeds, Springfield, Massachusetts; Hampden County, Massachusetts, Deed Book 5366, page 73, Springfield Preservation Trust, Inc. to Michael J. and Thomas D. Murphy, December 29, 1982, Hampden County Register of Deeds, Springfield, Massachusetts; Hampden County, Massachusetts, Deed Book 5412, page 337, City of Springfield to Springfield Preservation Trust, Inc., March 23, 1983, Hampden County Register of Deeds, Springfield, Massachusetts; Hampden County, Massachusetts, Deed Book 5423, page 241, Country Bank for Savings to Springfield Preservation Trust, Inc., March 18, 1983, Hampden County Register of Deeds, Springfield, Massachusetts; Hampden County, Massachusetts, Deed Book 5483, page 85, Community Savings Bank to Springfield Preservation Trust, Inc., July 26, 1983, Hampden County Register of Deeds, Springfield, Massachusetts; The SPT also detailed these purchases and sales in their quarterly newsletters, “Springfield Preservation Trust: Spring 1981 Newsletter,” 3; “Springfield Preservation Trust: Newsletter Fall 1982”; “Springfield Preservation Trust: Spring 1982 Newsletter,” Spring 1982, 2; “Springfield Preservation Trust Quarter Newsletter Spring 1983,” Spring 1983, 3.\(^ {115}\) Jim Boone, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.\(^ {116}\) Guy A. McLain and Frances Gagnon, Pioneer Valley: A Pictorial History (Springfield, MA: The Donning Company, 1991), 128.
Longmeadow, Chicopee, Agawam, Ludlow, Wilbraham, West Springfield, and East Lynne, Connecticut venturing from their suburban enclaves to McKnight to get a glimpse of the SPT’s use of their revolving fund.\textsuperscript{117}

Through their respective support and deployment of the revolving fund, municipal officials and SPT leadership championed the power of real estate speculation to alleviate urban decline. The revolving fund’s ability to attract suburbanites back to the city particularly resonated with DiMauro. In a 1980s advertising campaign, municipal officials promoted this vision of preservationist-real estate revitalization to potential newcomers. A lavish color image splayed across the front and back covers of the campaign’s promotional booklet depicted mayor DiMauro standing over a grill in full barbeque attire while a multiracial and multi-generational crowd of families waved and beckoned the reader to “Come and Join Us!”\textsuperscript{118} In the background, SPT president Jim Boone’s well-appointed and restored Victorian home in the McKnight neighborhood completed the tableau, offering a historical setting to the contemporary crowd of smiling barbeque attendees (Figure 6.3). Inside, the pages of the booklet championed a “new day is dawning for Springfield” thanks to the SPT’s efforts to preserve the “heritage of its historic districts.”\textsuperscript{119} SPT members echoed these claims, arguing that by reinvigorating the city’s “residential tax base” through their revolving fund, the SPT freed the city to commence “with vigorous revitalization as well as construction of new buildings on vacant parcels.”\textsuperscript{120} By leveraging a public-private partnership to invest in residential real estate, the SPT contributed to the entire revitalization of the city of Springfield.

\textsuperscript{117} Guestbook for 134 Buckingham Street and 173 Bay Street, September 21, 1981, records of the Springfield Preservation Trust.
\textsuperscript{118} “Living in Springfield: Come and Join Us!” (Springfield, MA: Springfield Central, Inc and Springfield Planning Department, 1980).
\textsuperscript{119} “Living in Springfield: Come and Join Us!,” 1.
\textsuperscript{120} McLain and Gagnon, Pioneer Valley: A Pictorial History, 128.
These commitments to private property and real estate speculation sat uneasily alongside the SPT’s activist ethos to protect the entire built environment—an ethos the SPT positioned in direct relation to their revolving fund. The SPT’s promotional literature encapsulated this tension, arguing to potential members that “preservation makes sense, dollars and cents.”121 In a breathless review of their organization’s initiatives, SPT members reflected on the success of their revolving fund that “helped restore six houses already. We’ve even moved two to avoid demolition.” But the revolving fund was “not all we do”:

Our activities range from legislative advocacy of preservation issues to hosting annual tours of historic homes; from maintaining a speakers bureau to surveying historic neighborhoods; and nominating districts to the National Register of Historic Places. We’re even a bit radical—like the time we stood in front of the bulldozers and delayed the construction of the historically significant Samuel Bowles II house.122

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121 “Can This House Be Saved? You Bet It Can!” promotional pamphlet, circa 1983, records of the Springfield Preservation Trust.
122 “Can This House Be Saved? You Bet It Can!”
In just one paragraph, the SPT captured the dramatic scope of their movement, one that
simultaneously believed in protecting the entirety of the built environment to improve social
and political life and in upholding real estate speculation as the most politically viable
method of urban revitalization.

But the ways preservation made “sense” and “cents” were not equal in the eyes of
policymakers. Community preservationists quickly discovered that the quickest route to
social and political capital required comporting their agenda to municipal expectations for
private market redevelopment—a method that made “cents” for developers and real estate
speculators but made less “sense” to preservationists hoping to preserve the totality of the
built environment. In Springfield, the SPT learned this lesson as they mobilized against the
private market’s increasing power to determine urban spatial and political outcomes, a reality
the SPT paradoxically helped to shepherd into the city’s political culture through their
revolving fund. The brewing conflict over Hollywood, an apartment district in the city’s
South End, shaped this realization for the SPT.

In 1983, the city of Springfield submitted a Community Development Action Grant
(CDAG) to the state of Massachusetts to fund the demolition of Hollywood so that
Connecticut-based developer Carabetta Enterprises could redevelop the site into open space
and new housing developments. A dense collection of apartment buildings in Springfield’s
South End, the speculative firm of Gagnier and Angers first developed the 42-block
Hollywood neighborhood as “Outing Park” between 1913 and 1927. In the 1940s, the
neighborhood acquired its nickname as “Hollywood,” supposedly from the actors and

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dancers that lived in the neighborhood and eventually starred in major film productions. But by the 1980s, Hollywood’s glamor faded as the neighborhood came to symbolize the fraught and shifting racial politics of the city’s South End rather than the fame of movie stars. As municipal officials noted in their CDAG application, the South End was “a predominantly Italian neighborhood,” but more recently “suffered a tremendous decline in overall population” alongside a “dramatic increase in new minority residents,” primarily Black and Puerto Rican tenants. City officials and the “remaining Italian residents” attributed the neighborhood’s physical condition to these tenants, claiming the mere presence of nonwhite renters generated racial animosity from the white ethnic residents who “became quite defensive vis-à-vis the deterioration of the neighborhood.” To alleviate this “suffering” of the South End’s white ethnic residents, the city sought a public-private partnership with Carabetta Enterprises to displace the poorer Black and Puerto Rican tenants through demolition of 27 apartment buildings and provision of rehabilitated middle-class housing in a less-dense urban landscape.

The SPT immediately mobilized against this public-private partnership between the city of Springfield and Carabetta Enterprises. Where city officials saw Hollywood’s density as a racialized problem to be razed, the SPT viewed Hollywood as “perhaps the most urban neighborhood in Springfield. The street layout gives tight vistas, many entirely framed by these apartment blocks” (Figure 6.4). To the SPT, the neighborhood’s density and urbanity constituted a historical and architectural asset that if demolished would do irreparable harm to the entire urban built environment.

127 David W. Sanborn to Valerie Talmadge, 13.
For SPT leadership, the obvious middle road to save the most buildings combined market-rate and low-income housing units, “solving both human and historic preservation problems.”128 But the city proceeded ahead with demolition plans, spurring the SPT to register their alarm with officials at the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) that, if demolished, Hollywood would lose its eligibility for the NRHP.129 The MHC responded in kind by notifying mayor DiMauro that the city of Springfield failed to complete a proper environmental review to account for Hollywood’s NRHP eligibility.130 Impatient, the SPT took the city to court in the fall of 1983, securing a temporary restraining order and forcing

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129 David W. Sanborn to Valerie Talmadge.
130 Valerie A. Talmadge to James Hoyte, August 9, 1983, records of the Springfield Preservation Trust; Valerie A. Talmadge to Theodore DiMauro, September 27, 1983.
city officials to the negotiating table.\textsuperscript{131} The SPT argued again for the significance of Hollywood to Springfield residents’ quality of life, noting that demolition would damage the urban environment and erase its “cultural and historic contribution” to the city’s landscape.\textsuperscript{132} From the resulting negotiations, the city of Springfield agreed to only demolish “the worst” of Hollywood’s apartment buildings, leaving the core of the neighborhood largely intact.\textsuperscript{133}

While the SPT won a partial victory over Hollywood’s fate, their commitments to protecting the built environment conflicted with municipal officials’ expectations for private market redevelopment. On the heels of the Hollywood conflict in October of 1983, mayor DiMauro reneged on $80,000 of CDBG funding promised for the SPT’s revolving fund.\textsuperscript{134} The move dashed the SPT’s plans to purchase and renovate four houses in McKnight and limited the organization’s capacity to invest in real estate.\textsuperscript{135} “We were out of business for restoring houses,” Jim Boone reflected, “We had no way of doing it. We didn’t have any money left.”\textsuperscript{136} This fallout from Hollywood made clear the paradox in the SPT’s simultaneous efforts to protect the entire built environment and boost the private market’s role in urban redevelopment. Policymakers and municipal officials would honor preservationist commitments to the built environment so long as those commitments did not obstruct private market actors’ investments in urban revitalization. By promoting real

\textsuperscript{131} David Sanborn to Edmond P. Lonergan, September 26, 1983, records of the Springfield Preservation Trust.
\textsuperscript{132} Springfield Preservation Trust, Inc. et al v. City of Springfield and Springfield Redevelopment Authority, (Hampden Trial Court, 1983); “Affidavit of Edmond P. Lonergan,” Springfield Preservation Trust, Inc. et al v. City of Springfield and Springfield Redevelopment Authority, (Hampden Trial Court, 1983); David Sanborn to Russell J. Omer.
\textsuperscript{136} Jim Boone, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone.
estate speculation as urban redevelopment through their revolving fund, the SPT simultaneously enabled and resisted this development.

**Conclusion**

In the decade after the SPT’s revival in 1977, community preservationists expanded their movement’s ethos to encompass an implicit set of political beliefs that linked the quality of the “built environment” to the quality of social and political life. These commitments to the “built environment” encouraged a breathtaking new scope of activism for community preservationists in Springfield, as evidenced by the campaigns to save the St. Joseph Motherhouse, the Samuel Bowles House, the Indian Motocycle Building, Hollywood, and to survey the North and South Ends. But this expansive new political ethos sat in direct tension to the SPT’s revolving fund campaign, an initiative that encouraged real estate speculation as the most politically viable tool for urban revitalization. These tensions erupted in 1983 when the SPT launched a campaign against the private market’s increasing ability to shape the quality of the built environment, a political reality that, ironically, the SPT helped create through their revolving fund campaign.

Ultimately, in the “age of miracles,” community preservationists could be both crusaders for the common political and social good and speculative real estate agents, despite the contradictions inherent in that uneasy coexistence. Community preservationists learned that municipal officials and policymakers valued preservation insofar as it promoted the private market’s ability to guide redevelopment. Indeed, the common denominator between preservation groups with organizational stability and longevity, such as the Pittsburgh History and Landmark Foundation or Historic Boston, Inc., remains speculation in the real

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estate market. But community preservationists did not simply abandon their commitments to the built environment. Instead, community preservationists looked for another way to resolve the tensions between the dual aims of their movement. That resolution entailed a renewed focus on “education,” drawing from established preservationist tools like house tours and guidebooks to teach private individuals how best to be public stewards of the built environment. But this resolution generated its own complex legacy that continues to shape public and academic debates around the role and authority of preservationists in urban America.

Conclusion

Two decades after he left for Princeton to finish his dissertation, Michael Frisch returned to Springfield. As a speaker in 1986 for the city’s 350th anniversary of English settlement Frisch looked to his 1972 monograph, *Town Into City*, to “extract whatever lessons that history may hold for cities and their people today, both here in Springfield and more broadly as well.”

Now a public historian, Frisch discovered dramatic changes and disconcerting continuities in Springfield’s urban landscape. “The change” downtown, Frisch remarked as he reflected on Springfield in the 1960s and the 1980s, “is dramatic and inescapable.” But as Frisch traveled beyond the glittering new commercial buildings and into the neighborhoods clustered around Winchester Square, a different picture emerged. “The only visible changes” in Winchester Square “have been for the worse—the commercial center, on the verge of disaster fifteen years ago, has toppled over the edge since, and presents a picture of near-total disintegration.” Downtown’s prosperity, Frisch grimly relayed, “has evidently not trickled uphill in Springfield.” As Frisch’s homecoming illustrated, much of Springfield remained mired in the poverty and deprivation of the urban crisis despite the dramatic changes downtown.

Like Springfield, Frisch had changed, too. Two decades removed from his earlier work as an urban historian, in the intervening years Frisch gravitated towards oral history from his position in the American Studies department at the State University of New York’s Buffalo campus. As he returned to Springfield in 1986, Frisch was less concerned with urban history than the “specific issues—and possibilities—raised by the interaction of scholarly

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authority and wider public involvement in presentations of history.”3 Four years later, Frisch would articulate this “interaction” between academic and public authority in the presentation of history as a “shared authority”—the ways that audiences and non-scholars bring their own cultural and community experiences beyond the academy that make public history products more meaningful. “Shared authority” became the methodological watchword for public history practitioners in the 1990s and beyond.4 The scholarly popularity of “shared authority” revealed how Frisch tapped the concerns shared by many public historians in the 1980s around conflicts between scholars and the public about who maintained access to power to determine the meaning of history. The growing awareness of these tensions fueled reflective examinations of the relationships between historians and the public in oral histories, exhibitions, and community history projects throughout the 1980s as scholars embraced an analysis of power in public history practice.5

Frisch’s bleak outlook on Springfield’s decline and observations about the authority negotiated between historians and the public were not disparate phenomena. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, community preservationists in the 1970s and early 1980s embraced a culture of property that positioned property owners and other private actors as best qualified to steer American cities away from the urban crisis locking cities in spiraling poverty and disorder.6 But Frisch’s observations revealed how an abiding faith in property ownership did little to stabilize the plight of Springfield, especially when community

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4 Since its initial publication in 1990, A Shared Authority has been cited or referenced over 1,500 times and nearly 100 times in the pages of The Public Historian. Public historians and other humanities scholars have distorted Frisch’s original meaning over time, conceptualizing “authority” as something to be “shared” by public historians, rather than as something already shared as Frisch defined a “shared authority.”
preservationists refused to see how the real estate market operated in fundamentally exclusionary ways and prioritized the accumulation of corporate and private wealth above the collective welfare of Springfield’s citizens. As I have demonstrated, community preservationists played critical roles in structuring a social and political transformation in urban governance oriented around privatized and punitive responses to urban decline—a shift in municipal political administration that by the mid-1980s threatened to make community preservationists victims of their own success as they grasped at ways to maintain authority over the management of the historic built environment.

Community preservationists’ efforts to maintain legitimacy in the face of austerity politics and privatization reflects another core component of this dissertation’s argument: the ways community preservationists grappled with the urban crisis from 1966 to 1986 fundamentally transformed the preservation movement. Community preservationists responded to their conflicting commitments to privatization and the sensitive preservation of the built environment through a renewed focus on education in the mid-1980s and 1990s. As educators, community preservationists could teach private individuals how best to be public stewards of the built environment, a shift that aligned their movement with a neoliberal social and political climate that placed individual choice in the “free market” as the only viable pathway to alleviate urban decline. Of course, community preservationists contributed to this political shift in the preceding two decades, and in this context reworked old tools like house tours and guidebooks to provide examples of appropriate preservationist activity. Becoming educators preserved community preservationists’ ideological authority but narrowed who was allowed to define “preservationist” and which actors were best equipped to make decisions about and participate in the preservation of the urban landscape. It was precisely these tensions surrounding professional authority, power relations, and community
self-determination that informed Frisch’s remarks in 1986. As community preservationists in Springfield and their counterparts throughout the United States mobilized as educators, they brought these tensions to the fore of academic and professional debates about the relationship between preservation professionals and the communities they claimed to serve.

By way of concluding, I assess the preservationist turn to education in the late 1980s and its cumulative impact on the preservation movement and Springfield’s political and economic fortunes into the twenty-first century. As with previous components of the urban crisis, community preservationists responded to the austerity politics of the 1980s in ways that both accelerated the rise of neoliberalism and shaped the tools community preservationists had at their disposal. Education required less access to financial and political capital while locating preservationist expertise in knowledge of architectural styles, appropriate and sensible renovation techniques for historic structures, and appeals to property owners to make the “correct” set of choices for the collective goodwill of the urban landscape. If education secured preservationists’ authority, it did little to challenge a neoliberal politics that positioned private market and corporate actors as the only legitimate forces to guide urban development.

That preservationists could do little to disrupt the neoliberal status quo became evident in 2012 when MGM Resorts approached city hall to develop a casino in Springfield’s South End, a neighborhood devastated by a tornado in 2011. Only three years removed from the formal dissolution of a state-appointed finance control board assembled after the city’s near-bankruptcy in 2004, city officials jumped at MGM’s nearly 1-billion-dollar casino redevelopment plan. With several historic structures slated for demolition, MGM’s casino ignited controversy among Springfield’s community preservationists and the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) who resolved to demonstrate to MGM officials how private
redevelopment and historic preservation remained compatible pathways to alleviate urban decline.

**Experts and Consultants: Preservation’s Educational Turn**

In the wake of the Hollywood debacle in 1983, community preservationists in Springfield turned to well-established preservationist tools such as house tours and guidebooks to educate private actors in the art of preservation. Like their counterparts in Springfield, community and professional preservationists throughout the country experienced dwindling access to capital amid the Reagan administration’s changes to federal historic tax incentives and shrinking federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. As discussed in Chapter 5, changes embedded in the Tax Reform Act of 1986 tightened restrictions around what qualified as a “substantial rehabilitation,” raising the minimum blanket expense for tax incentive projects. By 1989, qualifying tax incentive projects reviewed by the Department of the Interior shrunk from 3,214 in 1984 to 994.\(^7\) In this climate of fiscal austerity, preservationists around the country including TV-star Bob Vila and the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) championed educational initiatives that sought to teach private consumers how to make individual choices about the built environment.

As the Springfield Preservation Trust (SPT) recovered from their loss of CDBG funding, they turned to education as a core tenet of preservationist philosophy. While educating the public about the value of preservation in reversing Springfield’s decline was a hallmark of the SPT’s activities in the 1970s and 1980s, by the mid-1980s the organization turned instead to educating individuals about making informed choices in the preservation

of the city’s historic structures. As Jim Boone, president of the SPT urged in the early 1980s, the SPT should become an organization “who the Community and City will recognize as being experts and someone to consult before acting in any area that might affect Historic Preservation.”

To be “experts” that city and community leaders trusted to consult, the SPT reworked existing tools to model appropriate preservationist behavior. Where the SPT once used house tours to lure suburbanites back to the city, house tours in the mid-1980s took on a new tone, illustrating instead how “the SPT [is] doing quality restoration and rehabilitation work” to set “an example to other developers and private homeowners as to how houses or architectural and historical significance can be treated and maintained.”

By the late 1980s, the SPT’s interpretation of houses renovated with their now-defunct revolving fund similarly shifted from potent symbols of a preservation-fueled urban revitalization to vehicles for “demonstrating proper restoration techniques.”

Educating the public on “proper” restoration techniques ignited a fierce fixation on imparting, demonstrating, and policing architectural knowledge. As Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga illustrates in her study of community preservationists in California, preservationists in the 1980s and 1990s applied their knowledge of architectural styles to “teach and educate” individuals “in order to change the way they see space and themselves in that space and to convert them to a new set of aesthetic values.” These “aesthetic values” required the public to exercise good taste in appropriate restoration techniques and the sensitive rehabilitation of

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spaces requiring modern upgrades.\textsuperscript{12} This shift to architectural knowledge was evident among preservation professionals who insisted that mastery of architectural taxonomy was the principal professional prerequisite for entry into the field.\textsuperscript{13} The SPT published a flurry of materials in the late 1980s and early 1990s designed to educate property owners in renovating their historic homes. In their appeals, the SPT acknowledged the “confusing terms used in architecture and building” but assured homeowners that they could provide the correct “advice and assistance.”\textsuperscript{14} The SPT’s \textit{The Old House Book}, published in the early 1980s and distributed through the Springfield Historical Commission (SHC), illustrated “the more common parts of a house” and paired glossaries of architectural terms and architectural drawings with brief synopses of Springfield’s history (Figure 7.1). In this way, \textit{The Old House Book} could educate homeowners in the architectural style of their home, a “necessary first step in planning a restoration.”\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item On this trend generally see Max Page, \textit{Why Preservation Matters} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016).
\item Cunningham, 3.
\end{enumerate}
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Alongside *The Old House Book*, the SPT enacted other educational initiatives designed to inculcate architectural knowledge and showcase good preservationist taste in Springfield’s residents. In 1987, the SPT distributed a guide to Springfield’s residential architecture.

Written by longtime SPT member Robert McCarroll, the guide lamented the “lack of appreciation of older buildings” that created a “muddled” urban landscape. But “recognizing and understanding building styles” McCarroll theorized, “will lead to a greater appreciation of each style’s distinct character” and individual consumers’ ability to make better preservationist choices. In 1990, the SPT transformed the residential guide into a 30-minute video narrated by SPT president Jim Boone that walked viewers through the city’s history and associated building styles (Figure 7.2). The SPT built on these guidebooks

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through a regular column, the “House Professor,” in their quarterly newsletter that tackled questions ranging from historically appropriate paint colors to lead poisoning. In turn, the SPT rewarded good preservationist taste exercised by individual homeowners, including hosting a “De-Siding Party” to honor “those who have had their buildings stripped of artificial siding” in 1988. Through these initiatives, the SPT championed their role as educators who closely guarded their authority over the management of the built environment.

Figure 7.2: Homes of the City Still. SPT president Jim Boone stands outside a Stick-style house partially destroyed by fire and rehabilitated using federal historic tax incentives. Source: Homes of the City: A Guide to Residential Architecture in Springfield.

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No one captured the preservationist-educator ethos of the 1980s better than Bob Vila. Born in Florida in 1946, Vila relocated to Boston in the early 1970s after two years in the Peace Corps to study at the Boston Architectural College. Vila rose to local prominence after he and his wife, Dianna Barrett, received Better Homes and Gardens’ Heritage House award in 1978 for their renovation of their home in Newton, Massachusetts.²⁰ Vila’s knack for restoration caught the eye of Russ Morash, a producer at the Boston-based television station WGBH who approached Vila to be the host of a 13-episode series on the renovation of a historic house.²¹ “Finding just the right house to rehab, the right ugly duckling to turn into a swan,” Morash reflected, “was a stumbling block,” but Morash and the WGBH crew soon settled on a “shabby but elegant” house in Dorchester’s Meeting House Hill neighborhood.²² For 13 weeks, camera crews captured Vila’s transformation of the house for the “inexperienced owner who confronts a house that needs a major overhaul” and “needs to understand not only what has to be done but also how to organize its doing.”²³ When the program aired as This Old House on WGBH in 1979, it became an instant national hit while capturing preservation’s turn towards educating individual consumers on the appropriate techniques for rehabilitating historic houses.

It was no coincidence that This Old House originated in Boston. As I have illustrated throughout this dissertation, Massachusetts was a key site of a larger national shift towards a neoliberal politics that promoted punitive and private market approaches to urban redevelopment, a political realignment that community preservationists like Vila drove throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Policymakers recognized this privatized approach to urban

²¹ Roberts, “From Home Renovation to Empire Building.”
²³ Vila and Davison, This Old House, 3.
revitalization accordingly. As Vila and his team worked towards the Dorchester house’s completion, Boston mayor Kevin White visited to see the renovation’s progress. White acknowledged that “this neighborhood is on the way back” thanks to Vila and dissuaded interested homebuyers watching the program of Boston’s reputation for crime and disorder. But “There have been several serious crimes around here” Vila intoned to White, “the criminals seem to be having a field day over here, is there any way to stop it?” “It’s just a lack of familiarity,” White reassured Vila, before reminding him of his efforts to blanket the city’s streets with mounted police units to reassure property owners their families would remain safe.24 “Hearing [horses] at night, just the cloppity-clop [sic] of horses, it gives you a sense of comfort,” White insisted.25 Here in Dorchester, as on Mattoon Street nearly 100 miles away, preservationists and policymakers found common cause in policing investments in urban real estate.

Vila, like other community preservationists, remade himself through This Old House as a dedicated crusader against the urban housing crisis, a position that cemented preservationists as experts in urban rehabilitation without ceding authority to the communities they claimed to serve. One option to resolve this crisis, Vila suggested, was to become a landlord, an identity community preservationists embraced throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Vila recommended other private market alternatives. When This Old House returned for a second season in 1981, Vila selected a rambling mansion in Newton designed by H.H. Richardson emblematic of the urban housing crisis. “In the midst of the housing shortage,” Vila remarked, the abandoned Newton house represented an “undiscovered alternative” for families searching for safe and sanitary housing amid the desperate housing shortage.

25 This Old House, Season 1, Episode 10, “Exterior Planning,” aired May 30, 1979, on WGBH.
shortage facing states like Massachusetts in the 1980s. But rather than transform the home into affordable rental units, Vila insisted that the house be remade into five luxury condominiums, a development he insisted would alleviate the housing crisis. Yet Vila’s plan to convert the home into condos overlooked how condominiums contributed to that very crisis by depleting housing stock accessible to renters and tenants and instead prioritized private homeownership.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) championed preservationists as educators and experts through the 1980s and into the 1990s. A number of high-profile projects undertaken by the NTHP, especially the organization’s “Inner-City Ventures Fund” designed to provide low-income housing, secured the organization’s place as experts on urban rehabilitation. But these campaigns rarely acknowledged the demands or desires of low-income tenants most impacted by the urban housing crisis, an outcome compounded by the organization’s growing commitment to “financial and real estate-oriented approaches” to preservation. This logic percolated throughout the preservation movement, including Arthur Ziegler’s Pittsburgh History and Landmark Foundation (PHLF)—an organization vaunted by the NTHP throughout the 1970s. Ziegler argued that low-income neighborhoods prior to the arrival of community preservationists had “lost [their] ability to determine [their] future.” But as one critic observed in 1985, “the attempt on the part of the distinctly middle-class, predominantly white” preservation groups like the NTHP or

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26 This Old House, Season 2, Episode 1, “The Newton House,” aired on January 1, 1981, on WGBH.
PHLF to serve diverse, low-income populations “is viewed by the ‘population’ as, at best, the soothing of a guilty liberal conscience and, at worst, as a blatant attempt at social control.”

Without an understanding of the authority shared between communities and preservationists—Frisch’s “shared authority”—community preservationists’ turn to education only shored up professional authority rather than forging a more inclusive movement.

Ultimately, community preservationists’ turn to education did little to disrupt a neoliberal status quo that accepted private market actors as the only political actors capable of guiding urban rehabilitation. Instead, community preservationists insisted they could educate larger corporate actors into making better choices that preserved the built environment. This educational impulse towards the private market’s increasing power to shape urban space became evident in Springfield when MGM Resorts approached city officials to build the new casino in 2012. Springfield entered the new millennium as the “‘perfect storm’ for urban meltdown” as the city continued to reel from the urban crisis.

By 2004, Springfield had accumulated a 40-million-dollar budget deficit as the city suffered from declining population, jobs, and revenue. With Springfield on the brink of bankruptcy, Republican governor Mitt Romney placed the city under the control of a state-appointed finance control board to govern and manage its finances while Springfield paid back 52 million dollars in back-taxes. When the control board’s tenure ended in 2009, officials championed 34 million dollars in cash reserves and new controls that restricted spending, but at the cost of diminishing the wages of municipal employees and the nearly 1,300

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teachers who left Springfield for better-paying jobs in suburban communities.\textsuperscript{34} Despite the control board’s alleged successes, Springfield still suffered from high unemployment, a legacy of the Massachusetts Miracle that eroded well-paying middle-class jobs in favor of a service and hospitality economy staffed by low-wage workers.

On the heels of the control board’s tenure, a tornado tore through downtown and the South End neighborhood on June 1, 2011. Destroying nearly 500 buildings, the tornado required city officials to authorize deficit spending to address the disaster, a move mayor Domenic Sarno approached with apprehension.\textsuperscript{35} Amid the wreckage, officials from MGM Resorts approached city hall with a plan to save the city’s finances and boost employment by building a casino in the South End neighborhood—the first resort casino in the state of Massachusetts.\textsuperscript{36} MGM took advantage of recent expansions to the state’s gaming laws signed into law by then-governor Deval Patrick in 2011 that hoped to attract new casino construction to stabilize the state’s finances in the wake of the Great Recession in 2008.\textsuperscript{37} To that end, MGM pledged the new casino would generate 3,000 permanent jobs—largely low-wage, service positions—and 2,000 construction jobs while agreeing to provide 25 million dollars in annual payments to Springfield including taxes and “millions of dollars in annual business to area vendors.”\textsuperscript{38} “We want the city to help itself,” MGM officials insisted, “We are taking this flag to the commonwealth. We’re saying it’s no longer OK to turn away from Springfield.”\textsuperscript{39} City officials and voters welcomed MGM’s plan to guide Springfield out

\textsuperscript{34} Forrant, Grinding Decline in Springfield,” 88.
\textsuperscript{36} Peter Goonan, “MGM Springfield Reveals $960 Million Resort Casino To Open Earlier Than Expected,” \textit{MassLive}, April 26, 2018.
\textsuperscript{37} An Act Establishing Expanded Gaming in the Commonwealth, Chapter 194, November 11, 2011.
\textsuperscript{38} Peter Goonan, “Sarno Picks MGM—Mayor Supporting South End Casino,” \textit{Springfield Republican}, May 1, 2013.
of the devastation of the tornado and near-bankruptcy, voting to approve the host community agreement outlining MGM’s plan in 2013.

While MGM promised a new casino model that would provide a “range of entertainment options” to encourage resort attendees to explore the surrounding city, community preservationists voiced concerns that MGM’s project threatened the very landscape MGM officials claimed to be saving.\(^40\) Community preservationists with the SPT, Springfield Historical Commission (SHC), and officials with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) argued that MGM’s casino plans jeopardized historic buildings in the South End already made precarious by the 2011 tornado. MGM’s proposed casino site overlapped with several significant historic structures, including the 1846 Union House hotel, the 1910 Beaux-Arts-style United Electric Light building, the 1913 Edisonia Theatre, the 1907 YWCA headquarters, and the Classical Revival-style State Building. Community preservationists shared particular concern over the fate of the 1895 State Armory, an imposing Gothic-style building made of heavy granite blocks with crenellated towers severely damaged by the 2011 tornado. When MGM announced its intention to demolish the Union House hotel and the tornado-damaged sections of the State Armory, community preservationists leaped into action to prevent substantial demolition in the South End.\(^41\)

Despite their misgivings about the casino’s impact on historic resources, community preservationists never questioned the necessity of a corporate-sponsored effort to alleviate Springfield’s decline. Instead, community preservationists mobilized to educate MGM to make more preservation-conscious choices in their redevelopment of the South End. “I urge you to grant MGM the license,” SPT member and SHC commissioner Robert McCarroll

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told the Massachusetts gaming commission, “but in doing so, I ask you to ensure history is kept” in the overall redevelopment picture. To that end, community preservationists in Springfield pushed MHC to inaugurate a feasibility study to determine if demolishing the damaged portions of the State Armory could be avoided. From the resulting negotiations, MGM promised to “preserve” many of the structures in the casino’s pathway by incorporating the historic facades into MGM’s new casino facility or “emulating” historic design elements through new construction while demolishing the interiors, a move met with trepidation by the SHC and MHC. In addition to these “preservation” efforts, MGM dropped designs for a tall, glassy skyscraper in favor of street-level architecture that mirrored the surrounding downtown streetscape (Figure 7.3). Finally, to placate worries about excessive demolition, MGM officials pledged a one-time contribution of 350,000 dollars to a historic preservation fund, a mere drop in the project’s almost 1-billion-dollar budget.

Figure 7.3: MGM Casino Design. MGM altered its final casino plans to integrate the casino into Springfield’s downtown architecture by eliminating a glass hotel tower and incorporating existing buildings’ facades into the final design. Source: MGM Presentation, November 18, 2015.

Community preservationists vaunted the final casino design an emblem of their ability to educate a large corporate actor like MGM into making preservation-conscious

choices about the built environment—even if they considered the casino a mixed bag.

MGM’s demolition of multiple historic structures “is a sad, but not unexpected, outcome for preservation,” the SPT lamented, “which received no support from City” and only through the concerted efforts of community preservationists secured the MGM preservation fund.45

Still, other community preservationists felt the casino design process illustrated that “developmental interests have been sensitized to what is valuable” in the city’s historic resources.46 MGM agreed. “From a historical point of view, getting rid of that glass [tower]” MGM officials admitted, “led to something that’s more fitting for Springfield architecturally and materially.”47 With the input of community preservationists, MGM spokesperson Carol Brennan noted, “MGM Springfield has evolved for the better.”48 As with Hollywood three decades prior, city officials felt that preservation had encroached on the private market’s capacity to shepherd urban revitalization; in 2016, Mayor Sarno asked three SHC members most vocally opposed to the MGM’s demolition plans to resign.49 Despite these shortcomings, when MGM officially opened its doors in Springfield’s South End in 2018, the development received wide acclaim as a preservationist success story, winning the 2019 Paul and Niki Tsongas Award from state-wide preservation nonprofit Preservation

45 “MGM Casino Update,” Springfield Preservation Trust Newsletter (Summer 2015), 1.
46 Stephen Hays, oral history interview with Brian Whetstone,
48 Styles, “Past Control.”
Massachusetts for “superlative achievements in historic preservation, rehabilitation, and community impact.”

**Beyond the Culture of Property**

As the battle over a casino in Springfield’s South End reveals, community preservationists’ turn to education did little to disrupt a prevailing neoliberal politics that championed private market and corporate interventions—rather than city, state, or collective approaches—as the only politically viable pathways to mitigate urban decline. Becoming educators marked the culmination of community preservationists’ engagement with the urban crisis, an entanglement that stretched back to the highwater mark of that crisis in the mid-1960s but continued to unfold in the twenty-first century as smaller and mid-sized cities like Springfield still reeled from population loss, deindustrialization, and capital flight. As educators, community preservationists could continue to advance their culture of property to address Springfield’s deterioration by insisting that the responsible management and respectful tastes of property owners would guide cities away from the urban crisis. Community preservationists’ unwillingness to cede professional authority even as they lost access to social and political capital at the end of the twentieth century inflamed tensions between urban communities and community preservationists.

For activists and tenants, community preservationists’ culture of property promised little in a real estate market bent on extraction and exploitation. Property, in other words, held little value for those most threatened by displacement, poverty, and racial violence, a reality made more concrete in Springfield by the 2008 financial crisis. In the wake of the

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Great Recession, Springfield gained notoriety for the state’s largest concentration of foreclosures, the recession forcing nearly 600 people from their homes in Springfield in 2010 alone.\(^{51}\) Out of this context emerged a new activist group, the No One Leaves Coalition, that built on existing tenant activism in Springfield over the twentieth century to “organize residents living in foreclosed homes to build grassroots power to defend against unnecessary displacement.”\(^{52}\) The work of No One Leaves took on new urgency with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. The pandemic destabilized many low-income tenants’ and homeowners’ living situations, especially after a federal eviction moratorium expired in October 2020, prompting a wave of evictions across Springfield.\(^{53}\) The culture of property found little place among organizations like No One Leaves and Arise for Social Justice which worked to connect tenants with housing resources throughout the pandemic, rather than prioritize the desires of property owners.

In the last two decades, scholars and preservation practitioners have more readily accepted that a focus on property is rarely meaningful for urban communities. Many have responded to the tensions observed by Frisch, developing expansive new preservation practices to incorporate greater participation from tenants and activists in the preservation process. Andrew Hurley’s work in St. Louis’ neighborhoods, for example, involved “communities at the grassroots in the historical interpretation of their neighborhoods,” an approach that recognized the power of local communities in the process of articulating historical narratives and involved “them in the production of that space.”\(^{54}\) Other scholars urge preservationists to embrace a preservation praxis that prioritizes intangible values,

stories, and community-driven articulations of historical and contemporary significance.\footnote{Ned Kaufman’s theorization of “storyscapes” as a “place that supports the perpetuation of socially useful or meaningful narratives” or Na Li’s “culturally sensitive narrative approach” that balances competing values through storytelling in culturally diverse settings are both indicative of this trend; see Ned Kaufman, Place, Race, and Story: Essays on the Past and Future of Historic Preservation (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009); Na Li, Kensington Market: Collective Memory, Public History, and Toronto’s Urban Landscape (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2015); Max Page, Why Preservation Matters (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016).}

While this scholarship holds immense potential to disrupt the prevalent culture of property among community and professional preservationists, the reality is that the vast majority of historic preservation activity remains guided by values, practices, and standards rooted in preservationists’ engagement with the urban crisis in 1960s and 1970s and the way that crisis informed the preservation movement’s trajectory over the last decades of the twentieth century.

As I have argued throughout this dissertation, an understanding of the contemporary historic preservation movement is impossible without unraveling how it became entangled with the urban crisis as preservationists’ political capital expanded following the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966. When preservationists claim that historic buildings “are tremendous engines of economic growth, vitality, and quality of life” to insist on preservation’s relevancy to urban social and political problems, those proclamations are a direct outgrowth of community preservationists’ efforts to reorient their movement to address urban decline in the postwar period.\footnote{Stephanie Meeks with Kevin C. Murphy, The Past and Future City: How Historic Preservation is Reviving America’s Communities (Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2016), 44.} Out of preservationists’ intervention into the urban crisis emerged the modern logics of this movement. An insistence on preservation’s ability to improve urban quality of life evolved from developments that tied preservation to an expanding carceral infrastructure and exclusive suburban zoning politics to harness preservation to prevent crime and make white property owners feel safe. Calls to diversify preservation practitioners and the historic sites deemed worthy of preservation is likewise
rooted in the efforts of Black homeowners like those in McKnight to link preservation to the broader midcentury Black freedom struggle. Finally, two of the most popular preservation tools that have sustained preservationists’ cultural and political capital, tax incentives and revolving funds, originated in efforts to manage—and profit from—the flagging rental and housing markets.

Even where community preservationists addressed the urban crisis in good faith, their efforts underwrote the rise of private market actors as the only politically popular agents to solve social and political problems. In this way, preservationists played substantial, yet overlooked, roles in the creation of a fragmented urban landscape marked by intense poverty and extreme affluence—a landscape where out of fiscal collapse and civic bankruptcy emerged a casino corporation making claims upon the city’s historic resources to address the broader symptoms of urban decline. It will require more than simply including those excluded by a culture of property and the machinations of a predatory real estate market to adjust for the unintended consequences of preservation’s intersection with the urban crisis. Instead, preservationists must find ways to realign their movement to address the systemic forces that produced that crisis and acknowledge their very real social and political power to make cities more equitable, sustainable, and fulfilling places for all.

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