PRESERVING VIRGINIA PARK

Examining Urbanization and Segregation in Detroit

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the Virginia Park neighborhood of Detroit and how the processes of urban renewal and the Detroit Riot of 1967 make a case for Virginia Park to be recognized as a significant historic site. Furthermore, it will examine the methodology of current preservation practices and the criteria required for a building, landscape, or district to be listed as a historic site. As a preservationist myself, I recognize that impactful work has been and will continue to be done to document our nation's buildings, landscapes, and neighborhoods. However, the inability for current preservation practices to adequately recognize sites that do not readily fit within the Secretary of Interior Standards does the field a major disservice. The opportunities to explore the multi-layered narratives for places such as the Virginia Park neighborhood in Detroit offer a future of urban equality. Virginia Park is a specific case that offers insight into the patterns of urban renewal and Black community that play a major role in not only the history of Detroit, but also across the country. By discussing the history of urban renewal in Detroit, its formative effects can be seen through this neighborhood transformation and what impact that had on the communities involved. My motivation for this work stems from my connection to Detroit, growing up in one of its suburbs of Grosse Pointe, and my passion to represent a city I believe deserves more recognition.

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INTRODUCTION

Located on Detroit's West side, the Virginia Park neighborhood is situated between Edison Street and Virginia Park Street, ranging from Linwood Street to Woodward Avenue (Figure 1). Established in 1893, this neighborhood was originally devised as an upper-middle class enclave, displaying many homes designed by prominent Detroit architects constructed between 1893 and 1915. Starting in 1916 and continuing until around 1929, the Great Migration created a large increase to the Black population in the city and this is when a real definition of Detroit's racial boundaries began.[1] Many recent migrants settled in Detroit's infamous African American Neighborhood of Black Bottom, a community of Black-owned businesses, social institutions, and night clubs. By the 1940's, as the dynamic of the city was changing, reconstruction plans such as new highway systems and urban renewal programs allowed for the mass clearance of many neighborhoods in the city, including Black Bottom. By 1946, the condemnation of Black Bottom begun and displaced families sought relocation to Detroit's available West Side in neighborhoods such as Virginia Park, where the former upper-middle class White residents had already made the move to the suburbs. Twenty years later, the racial boundaries of Detroit were still clearly defined and as racial tensions rose, Virginia Park became the beginning site for the Detroit Riot of 1967.

This thesis will focus on the Virginia Park neighborhood of Detroit and how the processes of urban renewal and the Detroit Riot of 1967 make a case for Virginia Park to be recognized as a significant historic site. Furthermore, it will examine the methodology of current preservation practices and the criteria required for a building, landscape, or district to be listed as

[1] Surgue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis.*

a historic site. As a preservationist myself, I recognize that impactful work has been and will continue to be done to document our nation's buildings, landscapes, and neighborhoods. However, the inability for current preservation practices to adequately recognize sites that do not readily fit within the Secretary of Interior Standards does the field a major disservice. The opportunities to explore the multi-layered narratives for places such as the Virginia Park neighborhood in Detroit offer a future of urban equality.

In December of 1982, the National Register of Historic Places listed a section of the neighborhood as a historic district. This district is located on both sides of Virginia Park Street, from Woodward Avenue to the John C. Lodge Freeway, and was listed because of the presence of the well-preserved works by prominent Detroit architects in the late nineteenth century, including Richard Marr, Joseph Mills, and George V. Pottie. Although these architectural accomplishments deserve recognition, the important role this street played within the longer-term history of Detroit goes far beyond its mix of Neo-Georgian, Tudor, Colonial Revival, and Bungalow styles. This listing fails to recognize another key historical moment that marked this neighborhood and was associated with the Algiers Motel, located at the corner of Virginia Park Street and Woodward Avenue. During the uprising of 1967, the Algiers Motel was the site of police brutality, actions that led to the deaths of three men and that left others severely beaten. According to the criteria for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), for a building or site to qualify, it must be at least fifty years old. Since the historic district listing for Virginia Park was approved only fifteen years after the uprising, it is not surprising that the later event was not included in the nomination. There have been some exceptions granted to the fifty-year rule, but these constraints were amongst the qualifications that failed to allow the NRHP to include multi-layered narratives in its listings. In an attempt to expand on such narratives, the

use of oral histories can be a way to really hone in on the association of place. The Detroit Historical Society recently conducted a series of oral history projects, two of which I turned to for this project. “Detroit 67: Looking Back to Move Forward” and “Neighborhoods: Where Detroit Lives” offer a unique lens when examining the significance of the Virginia Park neighborhood to the overall history of Detroit. I include just a few of these interviews to bolster the often-untold narrative of Virginia Park.

Urban Renewal in Detroit

By the 1940’s Detroit had begun construction on the plans for a newly designed highway system to connect the ever-growing suburbs to the city (Figure 2). These sunken highways were a federally funded attempt to ease traffic congestion on the streets by essentially hiding the highways from view at street level. In 1949, Congress had officially passed the 1949 Housing Act, which allowed cities to receive federal funding for the revitalization of cities through urban renewal and public housing projects. At this time, the city of Detroit had already been developing a plan for “slum clearance” in tandem with plans for the Edsel Ford Expressway. Specifically, city planners had already identified twelve potential demolition sites to accommodate both the proposed highway and the construction of new public housing. The most notable urban renewal project that resulted from this early focus on highway development and new housing construction was the Gratiot Redevelopment Plan. This plan was the culmination of Mayor-Elect Albert Cobo’s rise to power and his vision for a “New Detroit.” His plan would accelerate highway construction and the clearance of areas deemed to be “slums,” even as it failed to provide adequate housing for the African American community that would be displaced in the process. The Gratiot Redevelopment Plan would embody the worst effects of urban

renewal: the complete razing of a neighborhood for no other reason than it was not aesthetically pleasing (Figure 3). In June Manning Thomas' *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*, she questions the city's renewal plans, asking why the efforts of municipal politicians were not more successful in maintaining a viable and livable city.[2]

Detroit in the 1940s and 1950s

As racial tensions were quickly rising across the country in the mid-to-late 1960's, cities such as Detroit, Newark, and Los Angeles faced days of rioting as the African American communities protested for equality. These riots were a culmination of years of racial injustice ranging from fair housing to police brutality (Figure 4). After the city of Detroit saw a rise in its African American population beginning in the early 1900's with the first wave of the Great Migration, racial discrimination became rampant in both housing and job opportunities. In 1917, the *Detroit Free Press* explained that the housing situation in Detroit was "more acute than in any other Northern Center of Population, because Detroit's unexampled prosperity is the lodestone that is attracting thousands of Negroes, who are flocking here from southern points just as fast as they can accumulate carfare."[3] The author then described the struggles Blacks would face upon arrival when looking for housing, "Negroes are not welcome in every neighborhood. A European… can find localities where it is possible for him to rent or buy a home on easy terms. In the same district a Negro would be turned away, however worthy he might be."[4] The 1917 Supreme Court Case *Buchanan v. Warley* ruled that the prohibiting certain races from residential areas was unconstitutional; however, cities soon began to find other ways to segregate neighborhoods

[2] June Manning Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit.*
[3] Bates, *The Making of Black Detroit in the Age of Henry Ford,* 97.
[4] Bates, *The Making of Black Detroit in the Age of Henry Ford,* 98.

through loopholes in the case. Racial covenants were used in real estate practices as they thought an "invasion" of black homeowners was imminent, the real estate industry scared white residents into selling their property for less than market value and the house would then be sold high to a black newcomer, "who felt grateful for a chance to secure a scarce commodity, a house."[5] Such practices would continue through the first half of the twentieth century and would lead into the ideas behind urban renewal.

By the 1940's and 1950's, the main underlying causes of racial inequality in Detroit were still housing and employment. Racial restrictions were used for maintaining the exclusivity of neighborhoods. These restrictions determined architectural standards, the regulation of lot sizes, and prohibited multiple-family occupancy, which were all ways to subtly preserve the social homogeneity.[6] These issues would continue to go unaddressed for years due to political and social actions, such as labor markets and housing policies (Figure 5). Industrial labor markets were divided into primary and secondary sectors, the primary being heavily capitalized and the secondary being smaller and poorly capitalized. This is part of the racial practices that took place in shaping the workforce of the mid-twentieth century. Although the auto industry was a main source of employment for the city, in the 1940s, Michigan was the fifth largest steel-producing state in the country, which offered more opportunities for employment in this industry.[7] The jobs of the steel industry were seen as unskilled or semiskilled positions, which were usually the only positions available to African Americans. The more advanced and skilled labor positions were almost exclusively only offered to whites, even if the resume of an African American demonstrated they had more experience. These discriminatory practices would continue, even as

[5] Bates, *The Making of Black Detroit in the Age of Henry Ford*, 100.
[6] Surgue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis.*
[7] Surgue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis.*

what is called Detroit's "critical labor shortage" took shape in the late 1940s and early 1950s. During this time, Detroit's auto industry, construction industry, tool and die companies, and even its stores and restaurants were unable to find workers for their unfilled positions. However, even then, the positions were not offered to Blacks.[8] In 1953, the editor of Detroit's largest Black newspaper, Charles Wartman, wrote "with a few outstanding exceptions, practically nothing happened with regard to employment for Negroes outside of the accepted pattern".[9]

Thesis Outline

The thesis begins by exploring further the history of urban renewal in Detroit, beginning in the 1920's. The Housing Act of 1949 and the Gratiot Redevelopment Plan are explored in particular detail, given their significance to these developments. Attention will also be paid to the history of the Virginia Park neighborhood in order to understand how it was affected by these urban transformations. The chapter also considers the racialized dynamics of urban renewal and the effects of unequal investments in different areas of Detroit during the mid-twentieth century.

Chapter two examines the events of the uprising of 1967 and its significance to the history of the city of Detroit. The chapter aims to establish how critical this event and its aftermath was by analyzing the different interpretations that have been offered about the uprising that occurred from July 23rd until July 28th of 1967.

[8] Surgue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis.*

[9] "Study Reveals Little Change in Hiring Patterns Since Riot". *Michigan Chronicle*, March 7, 1953.

The third chapter considers current preservation practices and the criteria established by programs such as the National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks. This hopes to offer a window into the world of intangible forms of preservation and argue for a wider range of cultural landscapes to be considered worthy of recognition within the field of historic preservation.

CHAPTER ONE:

VIRGINIA PARK AND URBAN RENEWAL IN DETROIT

The Beginning of Urban Renewal

The 1940s economy in Detroit offered what was thought to be an escape from the Great Depression. As a leading industrial powerhouse, manufacturing employment in the city increased by 40% between 1940 and 1947.[10] The promising job opportunities attracted people to the city from all over the country and Detroit quickly became a booming epicenter. City planners soon began to realize that in order to accommodate the new growth, they would need to restructure portions of the city to keep its integrity. The proposed ideas for this restructuring would aggressively attack Detroit's prominent Black neighborhoods, and government provided policies and practices would allow them to do so with ease. These plans would include the development of a series of sunken expressways proposed to rectify traffic problems. Thinking these would also assist with increasing the property values within the city, city consultant Ladislas Segoe suggested that, "since experience in other cities indicates that the depressed type does not destroy the value of property near the right-of-way, much of the Detroit expressway system will be built below the surface of the ground".[11] These sunken expressways would create more divisions by isolating the commercial, residential, and industrial spaces of the city into their own designated spaces. This idea of isolating designated spaces would soon become a more common practice when urban renewal efforts would begin in the late 1950's. The West side of Detroit quickly

[10] Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis.*
[11] *Master Plan Report,* (Detroit: Detroit City Plan Commission, 1946) p. 363.

became the target when city officials wanted to eliminate the dilapidated buildings of the poorer neighborhoods with their ideas of "slum clearance", which only meant the area was not as visually pleasing as the wealthy residents would have liked (Figure 6). Such neighborhoods are the culmination of governmental factors targeting blacks by placing them in designated neighborhoods with inadequate housing and economic inequalities to further structure the city through their viewpoints (Figure 7).

During the late 1940s, Black Bottom was a residential district, housing 140,000 black Detroiters. With its adjacent commercial district, Paradise Valley, the two neighborhoods formed a cultural hub within the city, "known as the Harlem of the Midwest, Black Bottom was the birthplace of the Nation of Islam, the former center of the largest concentration of Black-owned businesses in the country, and the home of religious and cultural institutions that nurtured the rise of Motown sound".[12] Unfortunately, even with all this rich cultural heritage, Black Bottom was also one of the neighborhoods struggling the most by the postwar period, containing the worst housing stock, often owned by absentee landlords. This mix of what city officials referred to as "ugly and dangerous slums" along with its close location to the downtown commercial center allowed Black Bottom to become the focus of urban renewal projects like Lafayette Park.

The Housing Act of 1949 helped create a series of plans for a "finer Detroit". This act allowed for federal funding to do the work the city had been attempting to undertake for years. The Gratiot Redevelopment Plan, which took advantage of new federal funding made possible by this act, would eventually raze the entirety Black Bottom in the 1960s to replace it with both the Chrysler Freeway and Lafayette Park (Figure 8). Lafayette Park was a mixed-income development designed by Mies van der Rohe as a model neighborhood offering residential

[12] Jay and Conklin, *A People's History of Detroit,* 121.

townhouses, apartments, and high-rises with commercial area – what Mies dubbed a suburb in the city. The desired aims of the Gratiot Redevelopment project included slum demolition, increased tax revenue, and new housing accommodation for the middle and upper-class markets.[13] In an article in the *Journal of Urbanism*, they described the work of the development by explaining that Lafayette Park was the result of collaboration ideas and on social, organizational, architectural, landscape, and economics to produce an urban precinct of remarkable resolution, delicacy, generosity, and openness.[14] Although the overall project of Lafayette Park can be seen as a successful urban renewal achievement in certain perspectives, there is a lack of generosity of this project when considering the thousands of Black Detroiters who were displaced in the production of the project. When the neighborhood of Black Bottom was razed, roughly 6000 people were removed and of these, one-third ended up in poorly maintained public housing projects, another one-third were presumed to have moved to nearby neighborhoods such as Virginia Park, and another one- third were never accounted for.[15]

A notable urban planner, Jane Jacobs, wrote in her classic The Death and Life of Great American Cities about how large-scale urban renewal projects were harmful to the urban fabric, both socially and economically. Jacobs argues that,

> our present urban renewal laws are an attempt to break this particular linkage in the vicious circles by forthrightly wiping away slums and their populations, and replacing them with projects intended to produce higher tax yields, or to lure back easier populations with less expensive public requirements. The method fails. At best, it merely shifts slums from here to there, adding its own tincture of extra hardship and disruption. At worst, it destroys neighborhoods where constructive and improving communities exist and where the situation calls for encouragement rather than destruction.[16]

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[13] *Renewal and Revenue; an Evaluation of the Urban Renewal Program in Detroit.*
[14] Locke, Elmlund, and Mehaffy, "Evaluating Landscape Urbanism."
[15] Locke, Elmlund, and Mehaffy, "Evaluating Landscape Urbanism."
[16] Jacobs, *The Death and Life of American Cities*, 353.

Jacobs argument holds true when examining slum clearance in Detroit and how the razing of Black Bottom left many families displaced, only shifting the struggle of finding adequate housing from one neighborhood to another.

In an article from *The Michigan Chronicle* in 1948 entitled "We Must Have More Housing", the author called upon the city administration to move out of the planning stage and actively do something to improve the condition of housing in Detroit. The author requested that city officials develop a program to redress important social and economic problems, "which after all are only by-products of slums, poor housing and in many cases no housing at all."[17]

In November 1949, the city of Detroit was in the middle of elections for its new mayor, and two of the front- runners were George Edwards and Albert Cobo. Both Edwards and Cobo were using the need for public housing to drive their campaigns. Edwards promised a plan to construct over 12,000 units of public housing by using an estimated $130 million available from the Housing Act of 1949. In a speech at one of his rallies he said, "modern housing must be constructed to replace Detroit's slums… The Cobo plan, which would call for private construction of public housing would actually result in double taxation. Units would cost from $100 a month up and slums would not be erased during our lifetimes."[18] Cobo would win the affection of the city's white voters with his public housing campaign by promising to stop the "negro housing projects." Cobo defeated Edwards and his election further dramatized the urban renewal plans for the city. The Michigan Chronicle described the election as "one of the most

[17] "We Must Have More Housing," *Michigan Chronicle,* 10 January 1948, 6.
[18] "'There is No Excuse for Slums,' Edwards Declares in Speech at YMCA", *Michigan Chronicle,* 29 October 1949.

vicious campaigns of race baiting and playing upon the prejudices of all segments of the Detroit population."[19]

According to records of the Planning Commission's monthly reports, there was tension between Albert Cobo and James H. Inglis, the standing Housing Director and Secretary for the city of Detroit. Their tensions and disagreements on the future of the public housing plans for the city would eventually lead Inglis to announce his resignation from the Housing Commission on December 20, 1949. In his resignation, he wrote, "I am in almost complete disagreement with Mayor- elect Cobo's announced housing program. I feel that it falls far short of meeting the real needs of the community and that it completely disregards the seriousness of the housing shortage…"[20] An article in *The Michigan Chronicle* further emphasized Inglis's strong opinions about the public housing plan, while quoting him directly:

> I feel very strongly that the city's best interests will be served by starting at once to develop new public housing as soon as possible on vacant land sites, in order that there will be places to move families who are displaced from future slum clearance projects and also so that federally-aided low rent housing can be available to thousands of deserving low-income families, who are living under deplorable conditions, but not necessarily in areas that will be selected for slum clearance.[21]

Regardless of the obvious disagreements and tensions between Inglis and Cobo, their plans for the city's urban renewal efforts both included the demolition of the dilapidated buildings of the slums, mainly regarding the city's poor Black neighborhoods.

Following the resignation of Inglis, Mayor Cobo would begin to assemble a new Housing Commission by appointing Harry J. Durbin to serve as the new Director. At the same time, he would begin to remove many of the experienced members of the commission and replace them

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[19] "George Edwards Beaten, Cobo Elected Mayor", *Michigan Chronicle,* 12 November 1949.
[20] "Monthly Report to Commissioners: Nov.- Dec. 1949," in Folder: "Detroit Housing Commission 1949," DUL.
[21] "Inglis Demands Prompt Action on Housing," Michigan Chronicle, 31 December 1949.

with real estate agents and developers. Later that December, Cobo would announce his official housing policy:

> We all recognize that there will always be honest, sincere families who cannot meet the rental charges required by private ownership… But it is my belief that participation of the city government should be limited to the needs of these families. It will not be the purpose of the administration to scatter public housing projects throughout the city, just because funds may be forthcoming from the federal government. I will not approve Federal Housing Projects in the outlying single home areas.[22]

Black Detroiters were entangled within the city's worst housing stock, half of it being substandard and most of it overcrowded.[23] In Origins of the Urban Crisis, Thomas Surgue expands on this issue by explaining,

> racial restrictions were a blunt tool for maintaining the exclusivity of neighborhoods. Other types of covenants were more effective, and immune to court challenges. Restrictions that determined architectural standards, regulated lot sizes, and prohibited multiple-family occupancy subtly preserved social homogeneity.[24]

Blacks were only offered the poorest-paying and least secure jobs on the market, which made homeownership an unrealistic endeavor. Even those more well-to-do blacks were being shut out of many housing opportunities through white real estate brokers, which further facilitated entrapment in a strictly segregated neighborhood.

Examples of these neighborhoods include Black Bottom and Paradise Valley. In 1946, Detroit NAACP President Gloster Current explained, Paradise Valley is a mixture of everything imaginable – including overcrowding, delinquency, and disease. Current claimed that it had glamour, action, religion, and pathos, along with brains, organization, and business.[25] The living

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[22] "Complete Text of Mayor Cobo's Address at Inauguration," *Detroit Free Press,* 4 January 1950.
[23] Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis.*
[24] Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis,* 36.
[25] Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis.*

conditions in both Paradise Valley and Black Bottom showed visible poverty, they were plagued with crime, and the outdated, old dwellings made fire hazards ever-present. These neighborhoods would quickly become most at risk when discussions of urban renewal would begin in the late 1940s and early 1950s. While these efforts hoped to help with revitalization of cities, such acts targeted the poor and often ignored neighborhoods which were the only places Black Detroiters were able to live. According to federal housing policy, they assured that black families would "stay confined to blighted, rundown housing stock in the center city, while whites fled to the newly constructed homes in the suburbs. In the late 1940s, 90% of housing in Detroit was off limits to blacks".[26] From 1943 to 1965, there were 192 different associations formed by real estate agents and developers each with the main goal of preserving racial exclusion within Detroit.

The Gratiot Redevelopment Plan

On June 30, 1964, Mayor Cavanaugh and the Detroit Housing Commission released a brochure for the official plans of the Gratiot Redevelopment Project. The brochure begins with a list of the principal objectives of urban renewal, which were "to eliminate slums and blighting influences, to improve health and living conditions, to improve the tax base, and to reduce public expenditures for health and welfare services."[27] The brochure would continue to expand on the processes for the elimination of neighborhoods, and their plans to house all of the families whom were to be displaced. Not only would Mayor Cavanaugh and the Detroit Housing Commission fail to provide adequate relocation services, their brochure would further insult the communities that were targeted. Cavanaugh wrote about the Gratiot area, claiming that it "had never, even

[26] Jay and Conklin, *A People's History of Detroit,* 119.
[27] Gratiot Redevelopment Plan, June 1964.

when new, been characterized as a fine residential neighborhood. Initially populated by German immigrants in the 1850's the community had become occupied almost entirely by Negroes flocking up to Detroit factories from the South."[28] Cavanaugh dug deeper into the "unlivable" conditions of these neighborhoods explaining,

> Physical deterioration brought its inevitable social consequences. Here the crime rate was higher than anywhere in the city; fires more frequent in occurrence and more disastrous in casualties. Rat bites brought daily victims, usually among infants, to the nearby Receiving Hospital. Death rates from T.B., infant mortality, accidental deaths, infectious, parasite, venereal and other diseases were substantially higher than the city of Detroit as a whole.[29]

On October 24, 1966 the Civil Rights Commission (CRC) developed relocation plans for communities who would have housing needs in the aftermath of urban renewal efforts. At the same time, they encouraged city planners and developers to plan their projects so that suitable housing was available at the time of their displacement.[30] Around this time, the State Administrative Board established a state Housing Development Authority whose main job was to provide low-cost housing for the families that would be displaced by urban renewal. Working together, the CRC and HUD hoped to avoid the ways in which public housing construction plans could extend segregation in the city. The CRC reviewed the Detroit Housing Commission's proposed sites for 1000 public housing units and noticed that all of the sites were located in predominantly Black neighborhoods, which would have contributed to segregating the city even more (Figure 9). When the housing commission reviewed and proposed new sites, the common council either rejected them or failed to follow through with relocation. It was not until 1969

[28] Gratiot Redevelopment Plan, June 1964.
[29] Gratiot Redevelopment Plan, June 1964.
[30] Fine, "Michigan Housing and Discrimination."

when the city would approve a new proposal to scatter one hundred public housing units throughout the city.[31]

After discussing the plans and processes of urban renewal through a bureaucratic lens, I will now shift to the perspective of oral histories from the residents of Virginia Park.

The Virginia Park Neighborhood

In an oral history, Detroit resident Frank Rashid discussed his memories of the Virginia Park neighborhood, explaining, "the 12th street area, which was being settled by folks who were being displaced by the urban renewal in Paradise Valley and Black Bottom so that area was increasingly African-American and since restrictive covenant had been declared illegal and since there were lots of incentives for white folks to move out including subsidies for mortgages by the Federal Housing Association that kind of incentive that area was really in transition".[32] Venita Thompkins, another resident of the Virginia Park neighborhood described the changes by saying "… due to urban renewal from Hastings Street, where most businesses were African Americans were… residents due to redlining and housing, African Americans did not live, west of Woodward Avenue. Redlining meaning that they were defined in boundaries, because you couldn't buy housing on 8-mile, redlining meaning that most realtors wouldn't sell to African Americans".[33] The process of redlining refers to denying governmental goods or services, such as banking or insurance, often to people of color. This process was used in correlation with others to define the racial boundaries of the city. Detroit resident, William Pattinson, expanded on these ideas further by explaining,

[31] Fine, "Michigan Housing and Discrimination."
[32] *Detroit Historical Society Oral History Archive.* "Frank Rashid."
[33] *Detroit Historical Society Oral History Archive.* "Venita Thompkins."

> there were actually restrictions on the deeds of the houses that blacks could not buy your house… What happened was that real estate firms would go into neighborhoods and they would offer a white family a huge price for their house to get them to sell to a black family. So, they would offer them much more than the house was worth, and of course people would take it. Not tell the neighbors. Not tell anybody. And then the neighbors would see the black family move in and then everybody would put their house up for sale. It was called blockbusting. And people began to flee to the suburbs to get away from the blacks because they would not live with black people.[34]

The process of blockbusting fueled the shift of white flight to the suburbs. In a 1953 report from the Detroit Housing Commission there was an excerpt written by Fred Kramer discussing the suburbs by saying they offer the four freedoms from noise, dirt, confusion, and blight. Kramer argues that the city must compete on even terms and it has the advantage of choice location and huge resources: "To compete on even terms, surgery is needed. Cities are too far gone for rehabilitation. The inefficient checkerboard pattern, wasteful alleys and narrow lots must be eliminated… this surgery is now possible through urban redevelopment."[35] The years of disinvestment and poor maintenance in primarily Black neighborhoods allowed public officials such as Kramer to seek this quick solution of eliminating the dilapidated buildings, essentially removing the soul of the neighborhood.

The process of urban renewal, specifically referring to the Gratiot Redevelopment Plan, fueled the demographic shift of Virginia Park in the mid-twentieth century. The razing of Black Bottom led displaced families to seek housing in as the former white residents fled to the suburbs. Still, Black families were not afforded equal opportunities for housing through

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[34] *Detroit Historical Society Oral History Archive.* "William Pattinson".

[35] In an article by Fred Kramer from *The Mortgage Banker*, October 1952 reprinted in the May-June 1953 monthlyreport of the Detroit Housing Commission, Folder: "Detroit Housing Commission 1953 Feb-Mar," Box 41, DetroitUrban League.

processes such as redlining. Virginia Park quickly became the new hub of predominately Black owned businesses and the continuation of cultures and traditions within the community. It would also become the neighborhood to undergo most of the damage during and after the riot of 1967.

CHAPTER TWO:

THE SUMMER OF 1967 AND ITS AFTERMATH

Detroit, in the second half of the twentieth century, the city was in an urban crisis shaped by "the systematic political, financial, and labor instruments that produced and reproduced the racially biased social inequality of the city, escalated through the dynamics of positive feedback loops, and precipitating systemic and seemingly irreversible social and economic collapse within the city".[36] In 1962, Jerome Cavanaugh was elected Mayor for the city of Detroit, promising to back fair housing measures with a main goal of reforming the virtually all-while police department. His election campaign honed in on the opportunities to end racial discrimination and police brutality which many Detroiters viewed as a potential political turnover for the city. However, beginning in the mid-1960's, the Detroit Police Department created a special taskforce unit which came to be known as the "Big Four". This taskforce unit was comprised of four officers who drove around the city in a special, lightly marked cars, wearing street clothes rather than uniforms. This unit seemed to have one main goal: target young Blacks "loitering" in their own neighborhoods. The creation of the Big Four caused a deeper division between the Detroit police and the Black community.

On July 23, 1967, Detroit experienced one of the worst urban riots in United States history. That night, around 3:45am the Detroit Police Department raided an underground bar, still referred to as a blind pig, which was slang for a speakeasy during prohibition, on the corner

[36] Velikov, "Tuning Up the City", 44.

of 12th (now Rosa Parks Blvd) and Clairmount.[37] Newspaper reports on the night explain, the police arrested eighty-two people who gathered to celebrate the return of a Black soldier from Vietnam. Once the first set of police cars had arrived, a large crowd formed, and a brick was thrown into the window of one of the police cars. What began as ten to twenty people had quickly become a crowd of two hundred by the time the last police car left.[38] Over the next few days, the crowds spread throughout the city, setting fire to buildings and looting businesses during their protests. The majority of this damage took place within the Virginia Park neighborhood, ranging a few blocks but heavily concentrated around the beginnings of the events on 12th and Clairmount. (Figure 10).

In an article in *America* Magazine, one priest recalled events during the times of the riots, explaining:

> A policeman asked Father Dan and myself to help them disperse a crowd. We agreed and walked around, talking to individuals, asking them to go home. 'I am home,' some replied; but most began to move along. Suddenly, as we began to cross the street, three more police cars, sirens screaming, lights flashing, tore into the intersection. Brakes screeched squads of troopers burst out, pointing their rifles all directions – including ours. The crowds scattered in panic, like pigeons frightened by a shot. One middle-aged Negro did not move fast enough. 'Move!' the troopers shouted as three of them beat him to the ground in a doorway and gashed open his forehead with a rifle butt. As he got to his feet, a trooper gave him another rifle butt in the kidney 'Sorry about that bad language I used, Father' the trooper puffed.[39]

This encounter provides insight into the extent of police brutality that during these events. As the rioting continued, President Lyndon Johnson and Governor George Romney sent in 9,200 members of the National Guard, 800 state police officers, and 4,700 paratroopers in attempt to

[37] Andrea A., Burns. "Waging Cold War in a Model City: The Investigation of "Subversive" Influences in the 1967 Detroit Riot."
[38] Andrea A., Burns. "Waging Cold War in a Model City: The Investigation of "Subversive" Influences in the 1967 Detroit Riot."
[39] Schroth, "Detroit, 1967", 151.

end the rioting, and conditions existed until July 31, 1967.[40] Property damaged exceeded an estimated fifty million dollars, with approximately two thousand buildings burned or looted and 388 families displaced (Figure 11).

> In an oral history, Shevon Fowler described her experience with the uprising:
>
> I didn't know what was going on and why this was happening. I remember as I sat on my bike, the cleaners were on fire, and you know, people were running, people were looting, and then suddenly, the cleaners just blew up. It was just a ball of fire, and that was the cleaners on Twelfth and Euclid, so I could see it from where I was. I remember the week we got the National Guard, and two of them were stationed right in front of our house. You know, they were on each corner, and I lived on a corner house. I remember my dad taking them chairs to sit in and my mother fixing them sandwiches, and then the block club brought them lemonade, because they just looked terrified. Later in that week we did have a sniper that would, I guess, shoot at them, and so we had to take cover all of this.[41]

Fowler's encounter with the events provides another on-the-ground encounter, allowing for the perspective of someone who lived right in the middle of it.

William Bozman, deputy director of Community Action Programs for the Office of Economic Opportunity, asserted that, "if any city had a chance to avoid disaster, it was Detroit."[42] This notion was shattered by the riot of 1967, which came to shock not only other states, but also the residents of Michigan themselves. President Lyndon B. Johnson made a statement describing that what white Americans have never fully understood is that white society is deeply implicated in the "ghetto." White institutions created and maintain it through racial discrimination and economic exploitation that provided the basis for the urban riots throughout the 1960s.[43] The urban uprisings of the 1960s are part of a series of major historical events to

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[40] Andrea A., Burns. "Waging Cold War in a Model City: The Investigation of "Subversive" Influences in the 1967 Detroit Riot."

[41] *Detroit Historical Society Oral History Archive.* "Shevon Fowler."

[42] Andrea A., Burns. "Waging Cold War in a Model City: The Investigation of "Subversive" Influences in the 1967 Detroit Riot", 8.

[43] Rice, A, & Rice, 'Two Brothers Reflect on Spirit of Detroit'.

fight against racial discrimination and inequality in cities such as Detroit. In the view of historian Heather Ann Thompson,

> The 1967 uprising was less Riot than Rebellion. It was a collective action by Black Detroiter's who were resisting a long history of systemic racism, political and economic disenfranchisement, and victimization by the city's predominantly white police force. This was not a climax of African American frustration in Detroit, but rather the inauguration of a period dictated by Black Detroiter's collective pursuit of power. This period was characterized by an ethos of self-assertion and communal validation of Black nationalist politics which privileged the specific goal of racialized redress over the broad goals of American liberalism.[44]

Thompson's statement speaks to the importance of this moment in history and strengthens the argument of Black communities' determination towards change.

The aftermath of the riot altered the fabric of the city and the 1970s brought even more damage. In 1974, Detroit's first Black Mayor, Coleman Young, was elected into office. By the time he was inaugurated, the forces of economic decay and racial hostility were far too vigorous for a single elected official to improve.[45] He was passionate about turning the city around, but the racial tensions in the city were still too persistent. In an interview with former spokesperson for Mayor Cavanaugh, Tom DeLisle, he stated "it was never easy to be Black in Detroit… Blacks felt – rightly – victimized. There were always racist cops. But the riot never stopped in Detroit. Both the criminals and the cops understood that it was a whole new ball game. In the seventies, it was like a gang war between the Blacks and the cops".[46] As drug crime and gang violence plagued the city, an activist for the group, Save Our Sons and Daughters, disputed superficial denigration of crime statistics of Black youth explaining there was a war in Detroit and young

[44] Borshuk, "True Tales and 8 Mile Memoirs: Exploring the Imaginary City of Detroit", 113.
[45] Velikov, "Tuning Up the City."
[46] Borshuk, "True Tales and 8 Mile Memoirs: Exploring the Imaginary City of Detroit", 120.

Black men were the targets. They were a high risk to suicide, murder, jail, and hopelessness. According to Federal Bureau of Investigation statistics, in 1960 there were 172 homicides, in 1970, it was 495, and by 1974 it was nearly 800. As the murder rate of the city was twice that the size of New York and Chicago, Detroit's nicknames had gone from Motor City to Murder City.

Still at this time in the early 1970s, little progress had been made on the rehabilitation of buildings damaged from the 1967 uprising in Virginia Park. In January of 1970, the *Detroit Free Press* published an article entitled, "Inner City Rehabilitation Plan Will Be Model for All,", written by the president of the Virginia Park Association, Joseph Williams. He proclaimed, "Virginia Park will be no dust bowl like 'Black Bottom', Michigan Ave. or Corktown."[47] Williams went on to explain that the new $43 million plan to rehabilitate the neighborhood would become a model for the city, state, and country because unlike the former urban renewal plans of the 1960's, this plan was created by Williams and his neighbors with advice and assistance from city officials. The article continued to explain that because it was a rehabilitation project, many of the existing buildings would be saved. However, 575 buildings, which were dilapidated beyond repair due to the uprising, were going to be torn down. Housing Commission officials reported that the residents of the Virginia Park neighborhood became reluctant to leave, explaining that the residents who would be displaced by demolitions wanted priority for new housing that would be constructed in the area.

In another oral history, Detroit resident Rosilyn Stearns Brown described the conditions of the neighborhoods on Detroit's west side before the uprising as follows: "it was nice, because we had a lot of businesses. Black-owned businesses in the neighborhood. You didn't have to

[47] Inner City Rehabilitation Plan Will Be Model for All", *Detroit Free Press*, 25 January, 1970.

leave the neighborhood to do too much, because everything that you needed was right there in the neighborhood." Furthermore, she discussed the close-knit relationships between the Black families in the neighborhood explaining that although the uprising had added to already developed stereotypes about Blacks that "didn't interfere with us too much because we were like a family on that block. We looked out for each other and we helped take care of the kids, and some of the businesses came back and we were able to, you know, participate in those things. But the riot really changed the way people lived, and it wasn't a good change."[48] She would explain that even through all of these changes, her family never once considered leaving the Virginia Park neighborhood.

Today, the landscape of the Virginia Park neighborhood, especially around the crossroads of 12th and Clairmount, does not look much different from its uprising aftermath (Figures 12, 13, 14). The main commercial drag on Clairmount provides remnants of the Black owned businesses that now stand vacant. Houses along the side-streets are spaced between empty lots of those demolished from the damage. Though the dynamic of this neighborhood has changed over time with the resettling of residents from Black Bottom and the damage from the uprising, Virginia Park is still a very community-oriented neighborhood and is significant to Detroit's history.

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[48] *Detroit Historical Society Oral History Archive*. "Rosilyn Stearns Brown."

CHAPTER THREE:

VIRGINIA PARK'S CHALLENEGE TO PRESERVATION

After the razing of the Black Bottom neighborhood in Detroit in the 1950's, the Virginia Park neighborhood became the new hub for Black-owned businesses, as many of the families who were displaced from Black Bottom relocated to Virginia Park. These predominately Black neighborhoods, one destroyed through urban renewal efforts and the other severely damaged through the uprising of 1967, still hold a strong association of place not recognized through their National Register of Historic Preservation listings. The abandoned houses, businesses, and empty lots that never recovered post-uprising tell the larger story of just how significant this neighborhood actually is to the overall history of the city of Detroit. Recognizing the Virginia Park neighborhood through forms of preservation also opens an opportunity for community engagement that could allow for more successful recognition to Black sites in the future.

For a building or neighborhood to be eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), there are a set of strict qualifications that it must fall under to be considered. This set of four criterion are:

> A. That they are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
> B. That are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past; or
> C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
> D. That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.[49]

[49] US Department of the Interior. (1997). *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.*

When conducting a NRHP nomination, the applicant must choose one of these four criterion as the basis of its consideration. This is used later to help determine its eligibility for approval as a listing. In the case of Virginia Park, the best chance of a successful listing would be to nominate it under criterion A: event. When considering the broad patterns of our history, urban renewal and rioting are a significant factor in the racialized structure of cities and as explained in the first two chapters, Virginia Park is in many ways a product of these events, worthy of recognition. The issue that arises with this process is what qualifies as significant. Three of the four criterion use the word significant as another basis for evaluation. The trouble with this is that if a place does not fall into one of these categories, is it necessarily insignificant? To understand this, we must examine what exactly is meant by this term significant and its relation to integrity. The Secretary of Interior Standards for judging integrity is comprised of seven components:

1. Location: where the historic property was constructed or where the historic event took place.
2. Setting: the physical environment of a historic property.
3. Design: the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure and style of a property.
4. Materials: the physical elements combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.
5. Workmanship: the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.
6. Feeling: a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.
7. Association: the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.[50]

[50] US Department of the Interior. (1997). *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.*

These standards are used in correlation with the criteria listed above when determining eligibility for NRHP listings. It is important to note that the discussion of integrity can only begin after the significance of a property has been fully established. With these seven components in mind, Virginia Park would likely meet four of these seven: location, setting, feeling, and association. Each of these standards must be tied to a specific property or district. For Virginia Park, a nomination under a historic district would be the best route, specifying the boundaries to the area of 12th and Clairmount, including some side streets, where both urban renewal and rioting played a role in the structure of the neighborhood. These boundaries help define the location and setting components, but it is when recognizing the feeling and association aspects of a site that issues seem to arise. In a lecture given by professor, Amber Wiley, she discussed the high level of integrity required for nominations such as this, and reminds us to question what exactly people are looking for and understand that only certain modes of thinking are often being prioritized.[51]

The NRHP also does not address cultural resources that are purely intangible, referring to those who have no property referents. So, what can be done when significance is more intangible in nature? In *Tangible Benefits from Intangible Resources,* James Buckley and Donna Graves use a neighborhood in San Francisco as a case study to examine how we can "create usable pasts that encourage community preservation and development for vulnerable populations."[52] By doing this, they are aiming to shift the focus of traditional preservation programs on physical structures and directing it towards intangible aspects of urban cultures.

The National Park Service (NPS) has a program dedicated to cultural landscapes to help strengthen the relationship between place and historic events, significant people, and patterns in

[51] Wiley, A. (2020). On Standards and Integrity.
[52] Buckley and Graves, "Tangible Benefits From Intangible Resources", 153.

American history. The landscapes for consideration can be determined through four non-mutually exclusive types:

> **Historic Designed Landscapes**: a landscape significant as a design or work of art; was consciously designed and laid out by either a master gardener, landscape architect, architect, or horticulturalist to a design principle, or by an owner or other amateur according to a recognized style or tradition; has a historical association with a significant person, trend, or movement in landscape gardening or architecture, or a significant relationship to the theory or practice of landscape architecture.
> **Historic Site:** a landscape significant for its association with a historic event, activity, or person.
> **Historic Vernacular Landscape:** a landscape whose use, construction, or physical layout reflects endemic traditions, customs, beliefs, or values; in which the expression of cultural values, social behavior, and individual actions over time is manifested in physical features and materials and their interrelationships, including patterns of spatial organization, land use, circulation, vegetation, structures, and objects; in which the physical, biological, and cultural features reflect the customs and everyday lives of people.
> **Ethnographic Landscape:** a landscape containing and variety of natural and cultural resources that associated people define as heritage resources.[53]

A Cultural Landscape Report (CLR), is conducted when wanting to sustain cultural and natural resources of a landscape. CRLs help to expand beyond the NRHP limitations on cultural resources that are intangible; however, their associations to what makes a landscape historically significant are evaluated according to the previously mentioned National Register of Historic Places Criteria for Evaluation, which includes the Secretary for Interiors Standards for judging

[53] US Department of the Interior. (1998). *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques.*

integrity.[54] With landscape qualifications, Virginia Park would be most relevant in either a historic site, historic vernacular landscape, or an ethnographic landscape. Based on the events, identity of place within community, and overall construction of Virginia Park, nomination as a historic vernacular landscape seems the best avenue to take for the type of recognition this thesis has discussed. From the patterns of spatial organization due to population shift of urban renewal to the interrelationships of social behavior and cultural values understood through oral histories, Virginia Park has the potential to be a successful nomination as a cultural landscape.

There is another program for historic recognition that expands on the inclusion of urban cultures is the National Historic Landmarks Program (NHL), which can include buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts that represent heritage in the United States. While this program offers a different way to form a tangible recognition, their criteria has long aligned with certain modes of thinking, unable to adapt to the feeling and memory of a site. The six criteria for NHL designation are:

> Criterion 1: Properties that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to, and are identified with, or that outstandingly represent, the broad national patterns of United States history and from which an understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained.
> Criterion 2: Properties that are associated importantly with the lives of persons nationally significant in the history of the United States.
> Criterion 3: Properties that represent some great ideal of the American people.
> Criterion 4: Properties that embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen exceptionally valuable for a study of a period, style, or method of construction, or that represent a significant, distinctive and exceptional entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

[54] US Department of the Interior. (1998). *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques.*

> Criterion 5: Properties that are composed of integral parts of the environment not sufficiently significant by reason of historical association or artistic merit to warrant individual recognition but collectively compose an entity of exceptional historical or artistic significance, or outstandingly commemorate or illustrate a way of life or culture.
> Criterion 6: Properties that have yielded or may be likely to yield information of major scientific importance by revealing new cultures, or by shedding light upon periods of occupation over large areas of the United States. Such sites are those which have yielded, or which may reasonably be expected to yield, data affecting theories, concepts and ideas to a major degree.[55]

It is important to note that the NHL must also use the Secretary of Interior Standards for judging integrity. However, according to the National Park Service, the NHLs must retain the standards to a higher degree than what is required for a NRHP listing. Most importantly, the NPS explains that if the listing in question has been more than modestly modified or deteriorated since its period of national significance, it will not meet the NHL standards, but *might* be able to qualify under the NRHP qualifications. Virginia Park in this case best qualifies under criterion 1: events and patterns. As discussed before, the spatial layout of the neighborhood is defined by the effects of urban renewal and the uprising of 1967. These events were happening not only in Detroit, but also across the country, defining the structure of many American cities. The trouble again comes from the feeling and association standards used for identifying integrity. Due to the deterioration and modification since these events took place, Virginia Park would not meet the high requirements of the NHL standards for significance, preventing its chance to even examine the seven standards of integrity. However, as understood through some of the oral histories

[55] US Department of the Interior. (1999). *National Register Bulletin: How to Prepare National Historic Landmark Nominations.*

throughout this thesis, the memories, feelings, and associations of Virginia Park are actively part of this community and speak to its significance.

In "Fixing Historic Preservation: A Constructive Critique of 'Significance'", Randall Mason examines the different viewpoints of significance and explains the issues with identifying significance of buildings. He writes that the traditional view keeps in line with a "fixing" mentality which

> presumes that a building will always mean the same thing, that all of society views the building in the same way, and that there is only one kind of significance. But overemphasizing preservation of fabric in this way reflects on an underlying assumption that culture can be treated as a static set of artifacts. And the methods and epistemology aligned with such an assumption lead us away from a real understanding of cultural and individual attitudes towards place.[56]

Mason's argument is important when discussing how the methods of understanding significance may have an impact on the recognition of Virginia Park. In Richard Longsteth's article "The Significance of the Recent Past", he explains that,

> the burden of demonstrating historic significance is best left to those parties who initiate a preservation effort. And rather than thinking about age in absolute terms, it can be more fruitful to concentrate on what given work in that gray area of the recent past represents. If the representation is of ideas and practices – artistic, symbolic, functional, technical, social, and/or cultural – that are clearly different from those in common use today, those differences can allow us to analyze the work as part of a historic phenomenon, rather than one which is still actively shaping the environment.[57]

In the case of Virginia Park, there are many buildings that never recovered from the tumultuous events in July of 1967. Many of the buildings that were left in partial ruins were demolished, but nothing has been built in their place. Other buildings with less damage have been abandoned

[56] Mason, "Fixing Historic Preservation: A Constructive Critique of 'Significance'", 66.
[57] Longstreth, "The Significance of the Recent Past", 15.

and remain part of the physical built environment, but they are no longer tied to the community like they once were. This is where the idea proving significance of this form of an intangible site becomes important. An avenue possible for preserving such places is through a Traditional Cultural Property.

A Traditional Cultural Property (TCP) is a property eligible for inclusion in the NRHP based on its associations with the cultural practices or beliefs of a living community that are (a) rooted in that community's history, and (b) are important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community.[58] TCPs were included in the 1992 amendments to the National Historic Preservation Act in section 101(d) specifically for properties of "traditional religious and cultural importance to Indian tribes of Native Hawaiian organizations."[59] Today, TCPs can expand beyond these tribes, but a key difference between TCPs and any other form of historic properties is that for a TCP to be determined significant, it must be done by the community that values its traditions. It cannot be determined or listed by historians or preservationists alone. Since there have been an extensive amount of oral histories conducted from the residents of Virginia Park, there is a chance to nominate Virginia Park as a TCP. In order to do so, preservationists and architectural historians must build upon their connection to community and offer the opportunities of recognition. TCPs are not based on aesthetics, stylistic types, or potential to provide information about the past. These properties are functional and usually represented by their traditional leaders, deciding which places are important to maintain and whether they retain integrity of the community's relationships and conditions. Once again it is important to note that, as mentioned through the discussion of all the programs for historic

[58] US Department of the Interior. (1992). *National Register Bulletin 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties.*
[59] US Department of the Interior. (1992). *National Register Bulletin 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties.*

recognition, since a TCP is tied to the NRHP, it must be nominated based off one of the NRHP criteria and will be evaluated under the Secretary for Interior Standards for judging integrity.

I have found there are some inconsistencies when it comes to judging integrity through these standards depending on the different State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO). The nomination processes for Barry Farm, a neighborhood in Southeast Washington, D.C., and Mosquito Beach, a neighborhood in James Island, South Carolina provide examples of how the interpretation of policy seems to vary depending on who is involved in the listing process. According to a lecture given by former National Park System Advisory Board Landmarks Committee member, Amber Wiley in October of 2020, Barry Farms is a public housing project that was seeking nomination from the NHL for its association with a series of historical events related to the Black experience in Washington, D.C. Wiley explained that the DC Historic Preservation Office originally rejected the nomination on the grounds that the public housing buildings lacked integrity. Specifically pointing to the previously mentioned seven standards of integrity, the DC HPO decided that the dwellings of Barry Farms did not maintain five of the standards: design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. When Wiley was called in to re-evaluate the site, she determined that through all of the ways we are able to interpret integrity, Barry Farms actually met five of the seven standards, only excluding material and workmanship. Through her experience, she reiterates that the site was not working to be nominated for its architectural design, but rather its historical relevance. As Wiley suggests, when discussing the high level of integrity required for such nominations, we need to question what exactly people are looking for and understand that only certain modes of thinking are often being prioritized.[60] When Mosquito Beach, a historically significant Black community in South

[60] Wiley, A. (2020). On Standards and Integrity.

Carolina, was seeking recognition from the NRHP, the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office had no issues overlooking the lack of workmanship or materials when assessing its historic status. Many of the original buildings on its main drag of Sol Legare Road were no longer standing, putting into question the sites' ability to meet the requirements for the period of national significance. Instead of the SC SHPO rejecting the nomination due to its potential lack of integrity, SHPO agents worked with architectural historian Brittany Lavelle-Tulla and the Historic Charleston Foundation to offer suggestions about how to expand their justification of why this site was significant enough to be listed. The nomination successfully used oral histories to bolster their argument regarding the integrity of Mosquito Beach, honing in on the feeling and associational aspects of the site. These two nomination processes demonstrate how the methodology of preservation practices does not always adequately allow the field to recognize some our nations historically significant landscapes, buildings, and districts.

Within the last few years, the field of historic preservation has made substantial efforts towards recognizing and commemorating important histories of Black experience as they have shaped the built landscape. Through the National Trust for Historic Preservation there has recently been a $25 million campaign to launch the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund (AACHAF). The goals of this are to preserve landscapes, buildings and neighborhoods that show the richness of African American life, history, and architecture by telling the overlooked stories embodied in these places. This fund is a huge step forward in the world of preservation to offer recognition to such culturally significant neighborhoods. As explained by Brent Legs in the AACHAF Equity Study Report, the purpose of preservation practice is not to prevent a change in American cities, but instead to provide tools to help manage change in ways that do not

disconnect it from the legacy of its past.[61] When this is done correctly, the field of historic preservation can promote validation of the Black experience.

The patterns of urban renewal and rioting were not localized to Detroit and are not centralized to the late twentieth century. As seen in the summer of 2020, rioting fueled by systemic racism and social injustice is tied to the urban landscape of cities and there is an untapped opportunity to recognize the racialized dynamic of these urban spaces through preservation practices. The relationship between the built landscape and the Black experience is the often-untold narrative of American history, but it is central to the identity of place for neighborhoods such as Virginia Park. Some preservationists too often understand significance only in terms of the material qualities of a given structure or district, believing that if a site does not display a high level of workmanship, it is not significant. Preservationists must have the ability to be more inclusive with their methods and embrace the challenge of expanding the dominant narrative to increase the chances of urban equity and equality in the future.

[61] Legs, "Preserving African American Places: Growing Preservation's Potential as a Path for Equity".

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Figure 1. Map of Virginia Park's Location.

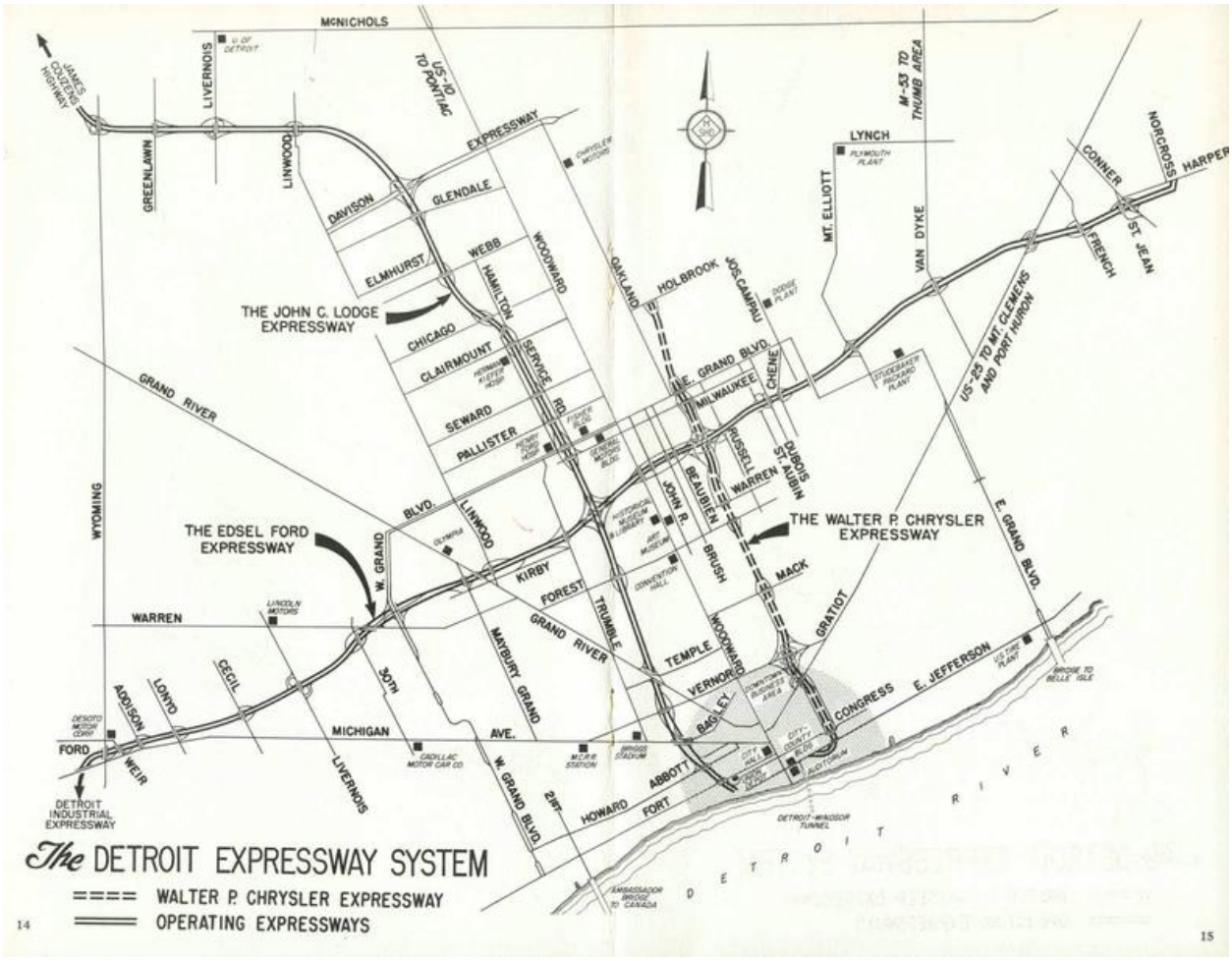

Figure 2. Plan for the Detroit Expressway System. Photo Courtesy of the Detroit Historical Society.

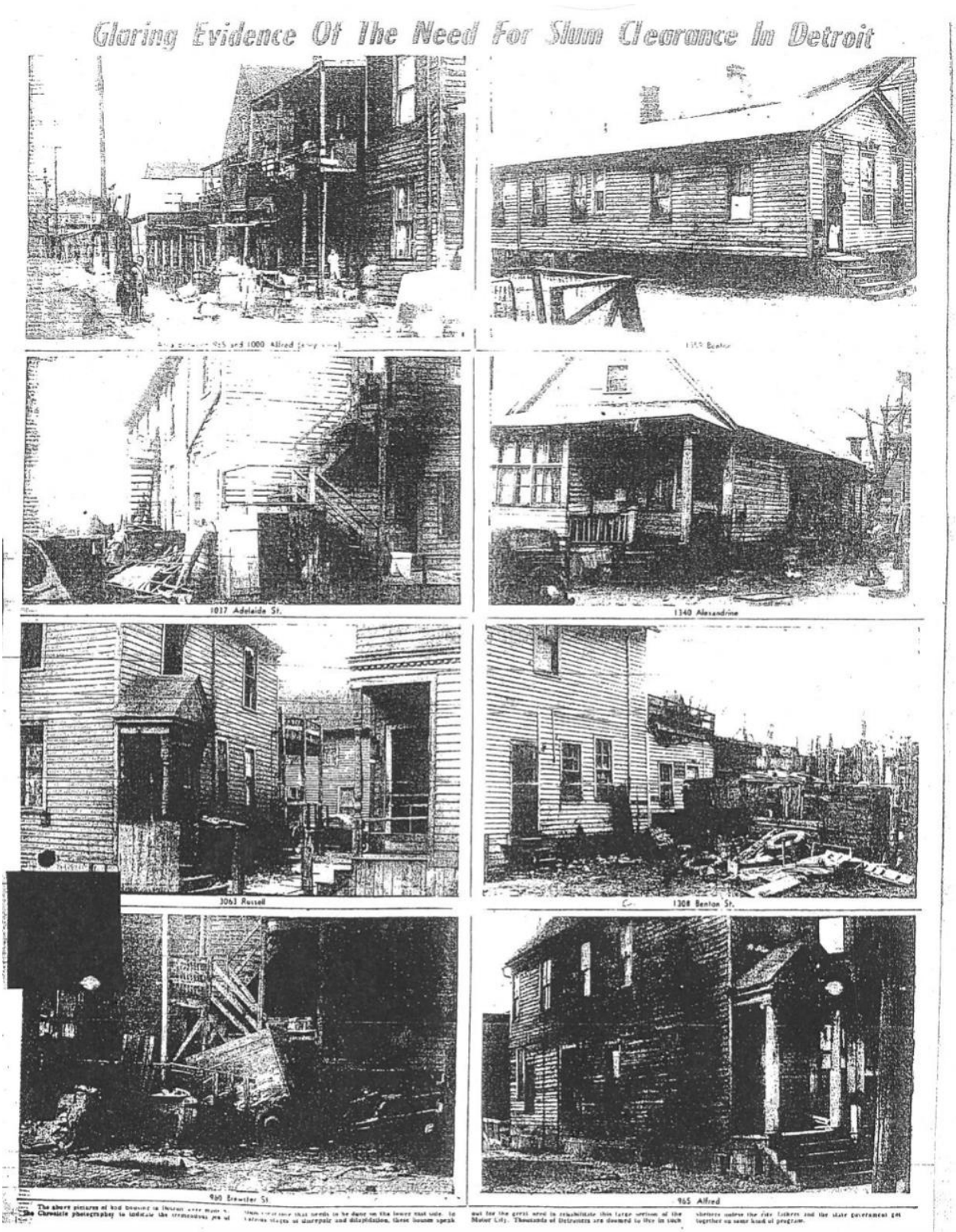

Figure 3. "Glaring Evidence for the Need of Slum Clearance in Detroit". Photo published in a Michigan Chronicle article in 1948.

Figure 4. Protesting Fair Housing in Detroit. Photo Courtesy of the Detroit Historical Society.

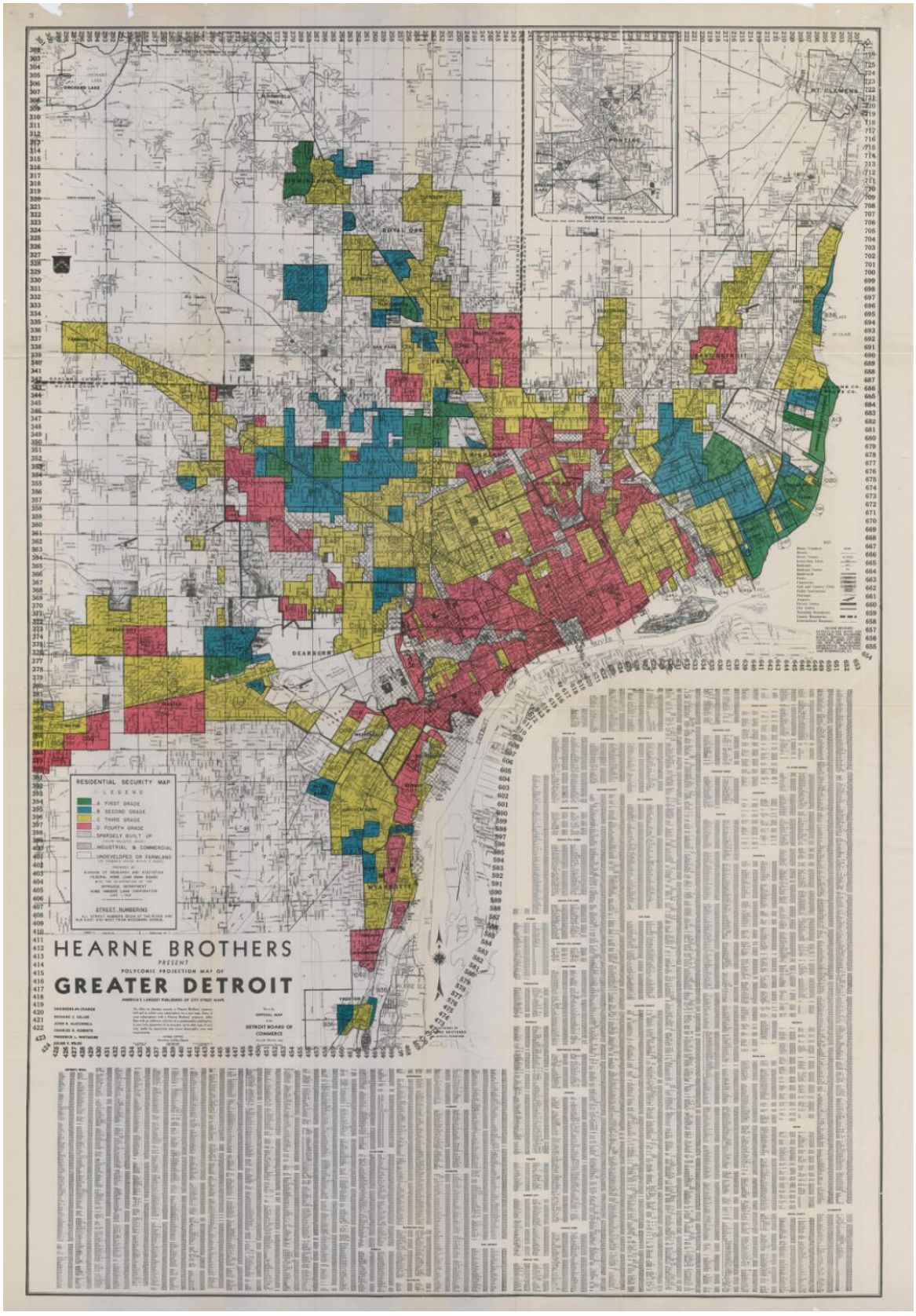

Figure 5. Map of Redlining in Detroit. Courtesy of Detroitography.

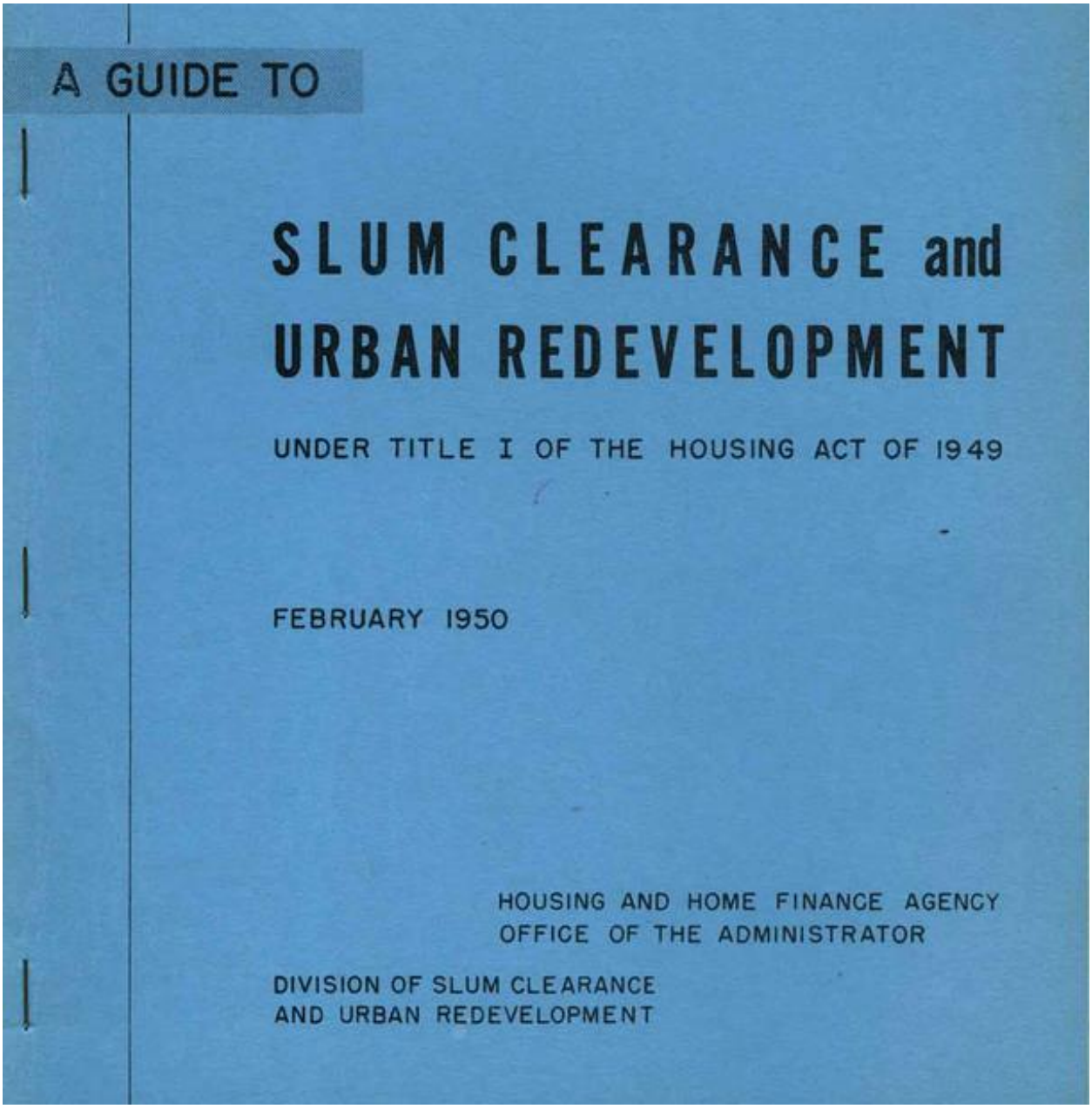

Figure 6. The 1950 Guide to Slum Clearance and Urban Redevelopment. Photo Courtesy of the Detroit Historical Society.

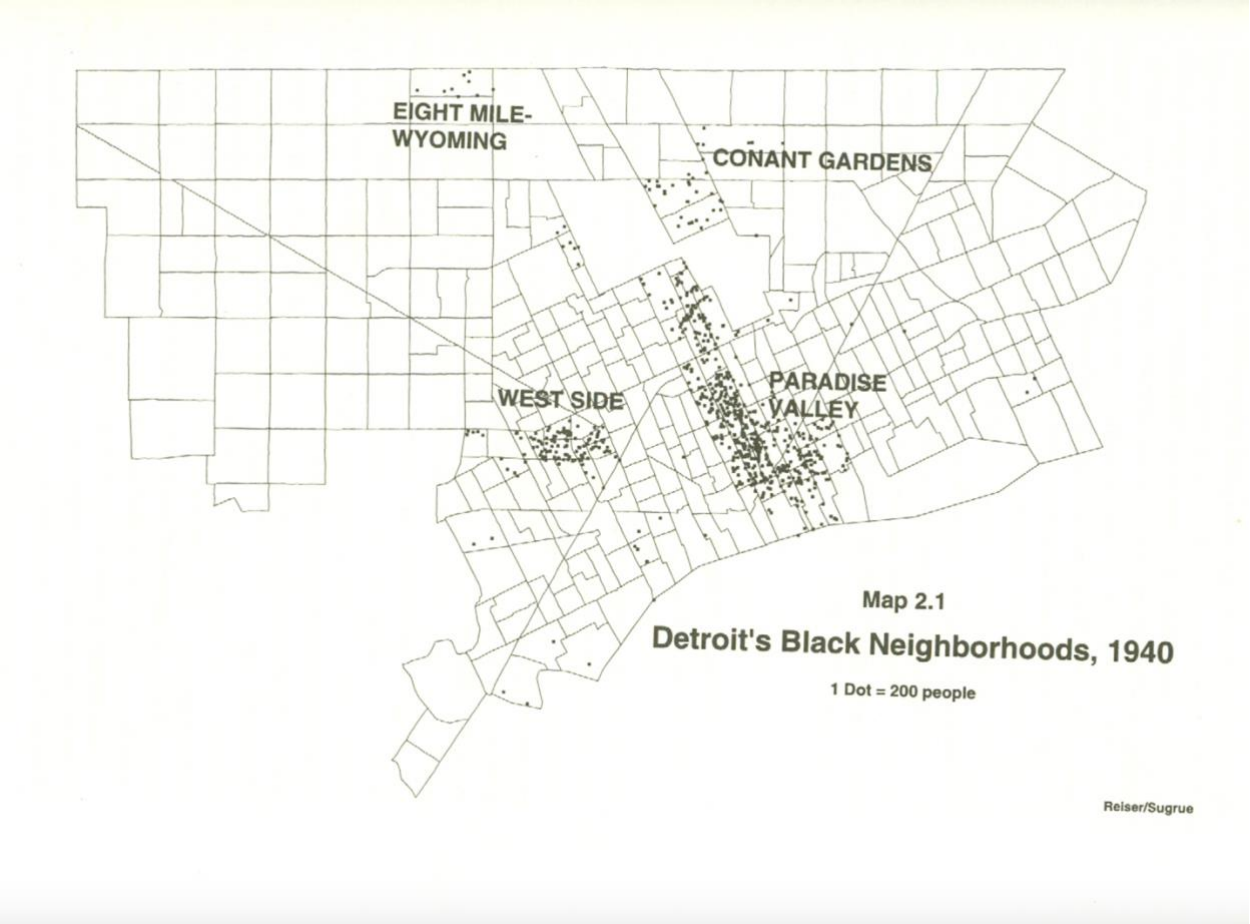

Figure 7. Detroit's Black Neighborhoods in 1940. Photo courtesy of Origins of the Urban Crisis.

Figure 8. The Razing of Black Bottom for Urban Renewal. Photo Courtesy of the Detroit Historical Society.

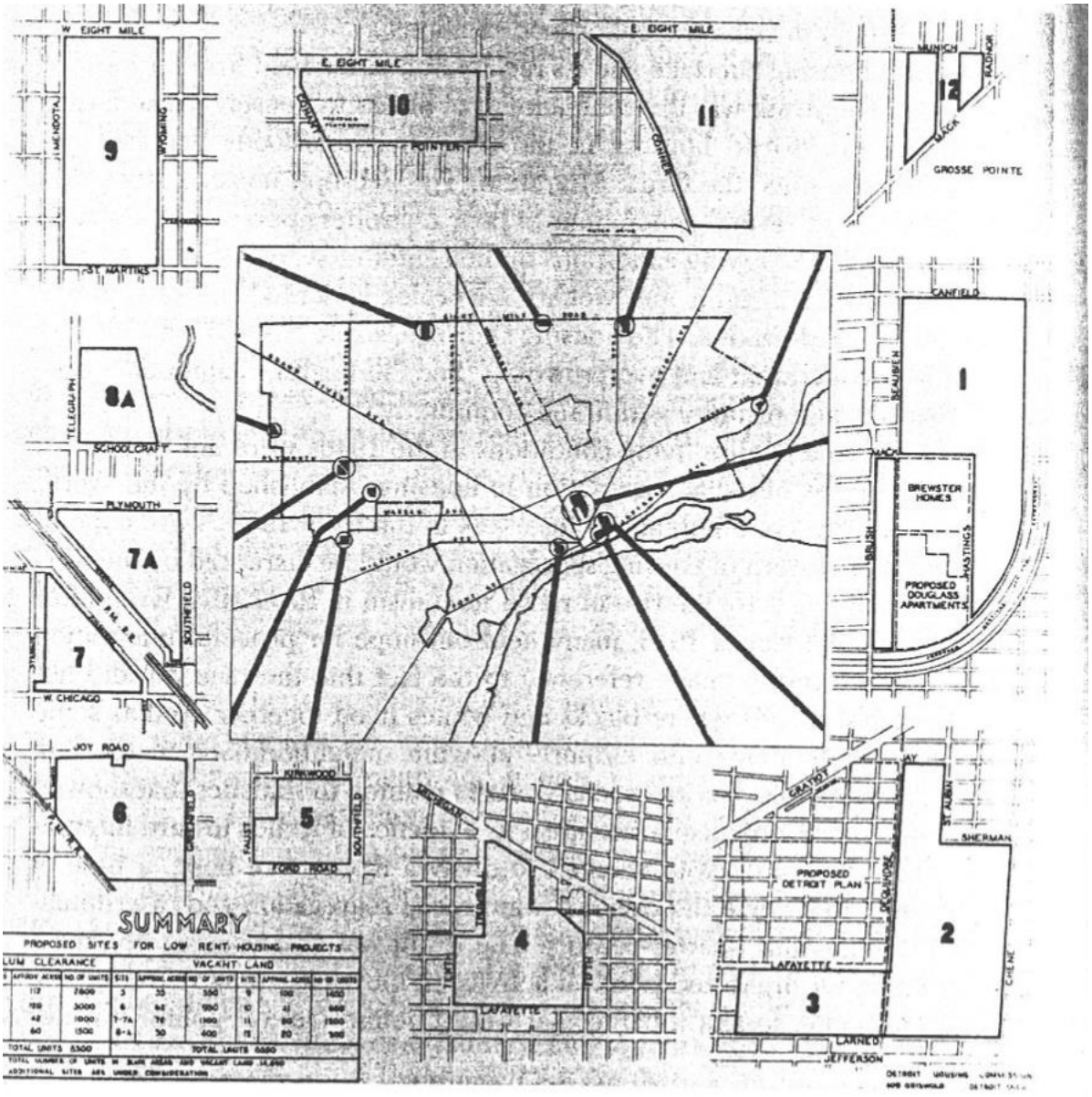

Figure 9. The Detroit Plan's proposed public housing locations. Photo Courtesy of Origins of the Urban Crisis.

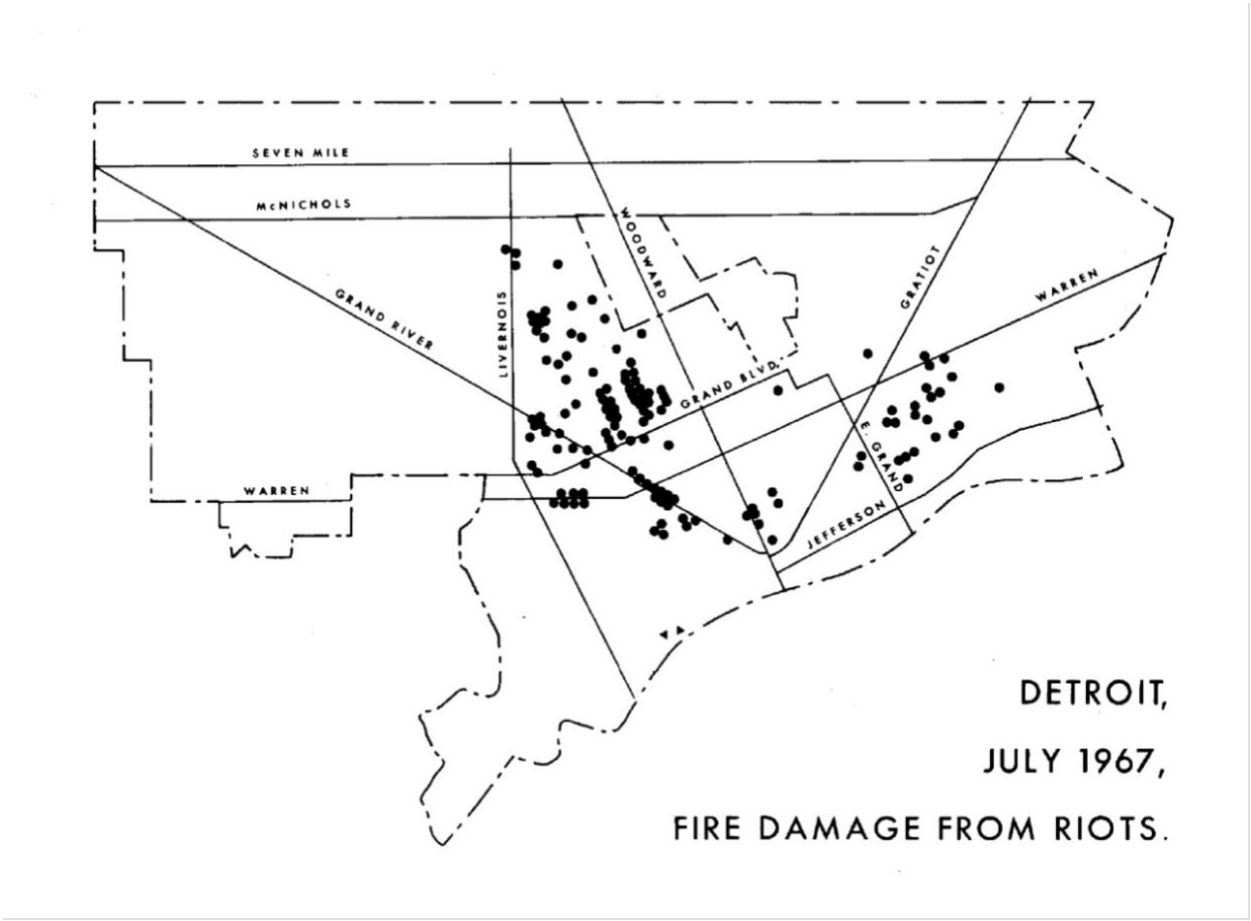

Figure 10. Fire Damage Locations during the Riot of 1967. Courtesy of Detroitography.

Figure 11. Map of Rioting, Looting, and Arson in the shaded area. The Dark square shows the area of major damages from July 23. Courtesy of AP Photo.

Figure 12. Aerial View of Clairmount Street in Virginia Park, 1957. Courtesy of Historic Aerials.

Figure 13. Aerial View of Clairmount Street in Virginia Park, 1973. Courtesy of Historic Aerials.

Figure 14. Aerial View of Clairmount Street in Virginia Park, 2016. Courtesy of Historic Aerials.