

ORAL HISTORY OF BONTON AND IDEAL NEIGHBORHOODS IN DALLAS, TEXAS

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The Bonton and Ideal neighborhoods in Dallas Texas, developed in the early 1900s, experienced physical and social decay throughout the 1980s. Neighborhood organizations and resident activism were vital to the rebirth of the community in the 1990s. Current revitalization efforts taking place there have been a source of contention as the neighborhood continues to overcome inequalities created by decades of racialized city planning initiatives. This thesis focuses on how the structuring structure of whiteness has historically affected, and continues to affect, the neighborhoods of Ideal and Bonton, as well as acts to identify how black residents have navigated their landscape and increased their collective capital through neighborhood activism.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Whenever someone asked about my thesis project, I would provide the same speech- “I am collecting an oral history of two black neighborhoods in South Dallas. My thesis covers about 100 years of history, starting with the development of the neighborhood and ending with current revitalization efforts taking place there. The neighborhoods are near South Central Expressway and Rochester Park.” I would watch everyone’s face as I spoke, particularly at the end of the speech, when their eyes grew larger as they realized what neighborhoods I was referring to. Then I would be bombarded with personal comments and questions of concern- “That’s where my cousin/uncle/friend used to get their drugs,” “Oh, you workin’ in the hood,” “You don’t go there by yourself, do you? It’s not safe.” I would smile and wait patiently as the barrage of questions and comments ceased. Once I alleviated concerns for my safety I would ask, “Did you know the residents there work together to run a neighborhood farm and honey company?” I would hold in a laugh as once again their faces changed, while they tried to reconcile the idea that there could be a fully functioning farm in drug-infested and crime-ridden South Dallas. Those instances are what continue to draw me to the history of the South Dallas neighborhoods of Ideal and Bonton. Their accounts of community action, neighborhood improvement, and resident empowerment demanded to be told as the residents continue to strive to change the negative perceptions associated with their neighborhood. Their story is one of collective action to build socioeconomic capital in spite of historically racialized structures that continue to affect them.

I began researching the Bonton and Ideal neighborhoods after being contacted by Cobbie Ransom and Brian Price from the Neighborhood Investment Program (NIP) division of City of Dallas Housing and Community Service Department. NIP partners with community members to achieve sustainable redevelopment in neighborhoods (Full 2014).

NIP targets five neighborhoods: South Dallas - Ideal and Rochester Park neighborhoods, West Dallas, South Dallas – Jubilee, Owenwood, Dolphin Heights & Frazier Courts neighborhoods, N. Oak Cliff / Marsalis, and Lancaster Corridor / Cigarette Hill (Dallas, South Dallas Ideal/ Rochester Park Community Revitalization Plan 2012). For the South Dallas - Ideal and Rochester Park neighborhoods, NIP expressed interest in recording local history and creating historically inspired artwork for the revitalized streetscape. During the revitalization process, NIP was also working with the Texas based nonprofit design organization buildingcommunityWORKSHOP (bcWORKSHOP). bcWORKSHOP hosts community events, creates community inspired neighborhood designs, and records local history through Neighborhood Stories documentaries. NIP suggested that I work with bcWORKSHOP to collect the stories of Bonton and Ideal.

Prior to interview collection, I knew very little about the Ideal and Bonton neighborhoods. Given NIP documents containing revitalization plans, the names of two neighborhood organizations (T. R. Hoover CDC and H.I.S. Bridgebuilders), and a short list of potential informants, I teamed up with Craig Weflen and Jamie Vahala from bcWORKSHOP. We all picked up our phones and begin to dial.



## CHAPTER 2

### PROJECT DESIGN

#### Research Goals

With little knowledge of the history of Ideal and Bonton, the initial goal was to answer the following research questions:

1. What major events have occurred in Bonton and Ideal between 1920 and 2015?
2. Which areas in the community have been most significant to the residents?
3. What are the differences between the Bonton and Ideal neighborhoods?

While these main questions provided a foundation for collecting the oral history of Bonton and Ideal, stories provided by residents introduced historical and cultural themes that invited further investigation. This led to revised research goals centered on racial ideologies and urban planning:

1. How have racialized urban planning practices affected the formation of Bonton and Ideal?
2. What factors led to the increase of violence, drugs, and decay in the neighborhoods in the 1970s and 1980s?
3. How have residents increased their social, economic, and political capital?

#### Research site: Ideal and Bonton

Located in South Dallas, Ideal and Bonton are bounded by Hatcher Street and Malcolm X Boulevard to the north and South Central Expressway on the west. To the east is Railroad Avenue and Rochester Park, which acts as a boundary to the south as well. C .F. Hawn Freeway acts as a physical boundary between the neighborhoods with Ideal to the

north and Bonton to the south. Bisecting the two neighborhoods is Bexar Street, which runs south from Myrtle Street to dead end at Rochester Park (See Figure 1).

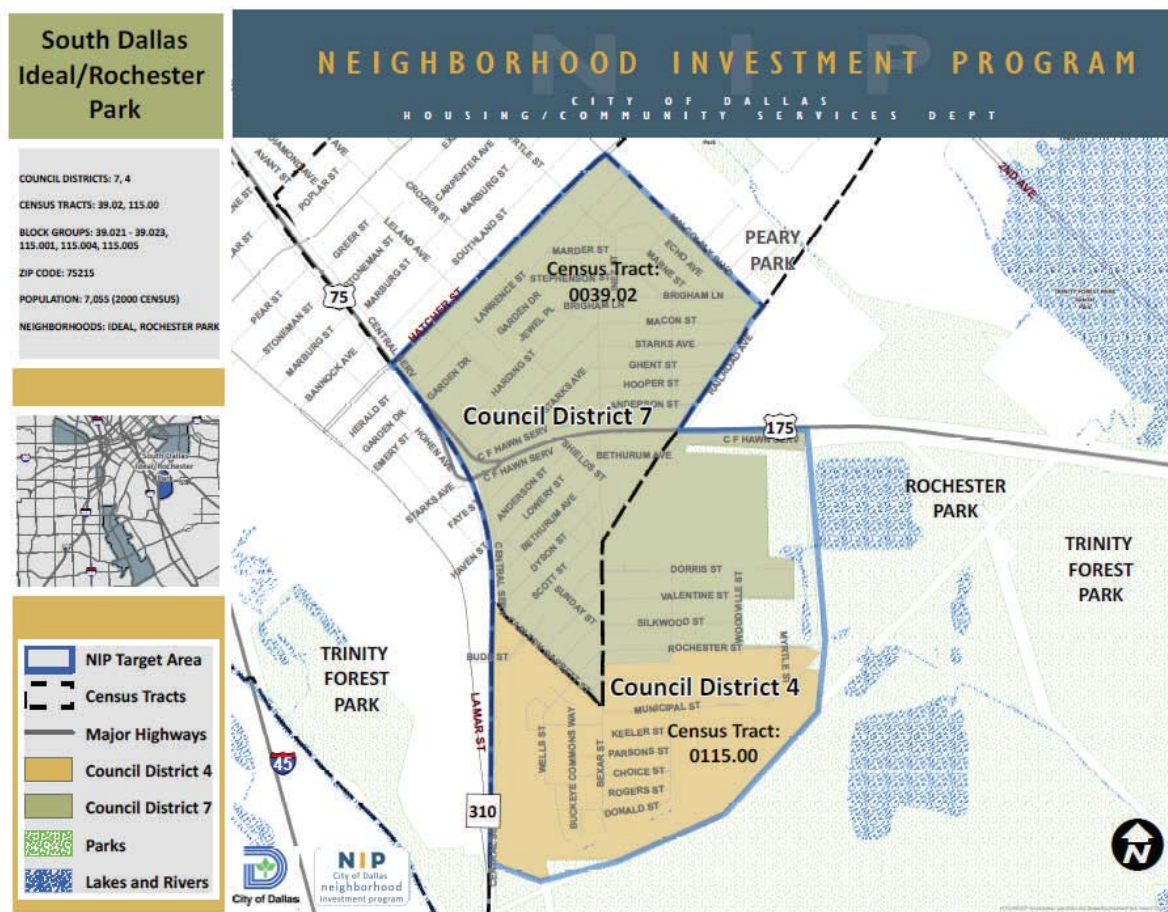


Figure 1: South Dallas Ideal/ Rochester Park NIP/CRP Location Map (Dallas, South Dallas Ideal/ Rochester Park Community Revitalization Plan 2012).

## Project Stages

### *Data Collection*

In December 2014 I began calling residents that NIP and bcWORKSHOP referred to me. These residents were either members of neighborhood associations or crime watches and had been vocal in meetings with NIP and bcWORKSHOP. While I knew little about the history of the area, I was aware that the revitalization efforts had been widely criticized throughout Dallas for various reasons, including the high costs of development, unsuccessful

filling of retail spaces, and dissatisfaction of residents who felt they had no power in the change. I was also warned that some residents would not be interested in talking with me if they knew I was associated with NIP or bcWORKSHOP because of feelings they held towards them. With all of this in mind, I thought it would be difficult to find participants for this study, but I could not have been more wrong. Each resident I called was excited to share his or her family history and talk about the neighborhood. At the end of each phone call, a resident would provide the contact information for at least two more residents who would be beneficial for the project.

In addition to residents, I contacted the South Dallas Cultural center and was referred to local historian Donald Payton. He became a key informant during the interview process and we met various times in the archival section of the Dallas Public Library to search through microfilm images of *The Dallas Express* and The Dallas Negro City Directory. In addition to articles from *The Dallas Express*, those from *Dallas Morning News* were vital to solidifying dates of events and providing additional information forgotten or unknown to residents.

Participant interviews were scheduled for the last week of December and throughout the month of January. Each informant was contacted by Brian Price, Craig Weflen, or myself. Contact information, interview date, and special notes were added to an excel spreadsheet shared through Google Docs. Sixteen semi-structured open-ended interviews were completed, thirteen of which were with current or previous residents of Ideal or Bonton.

Interviews were conducted in the homes of residents or at neighborhood locations, such as community centers. At first I thought Craig, Jamie, and I would make people uncomfortable as we intruded into their homes with video cameras and spot lights, had them sign forms, and helped them string microphones up their shirts and pin them to their collars, but it was the exact opposite. The time it took for Craig and Jamie to set up the lights and

cameras, and check the sound levels, provided me with the opportunity to show the residents that I was as excited to hear what they had to say as they were to share, and that this was in no way a formal interview. We made small talk as the men set up, discussing the details of the project, admiring a family photographs on the counter, vintage telephone on the wall, and the picket fence coat hanger in the community center. Many times residents began to mention stories or referred to events that I would bring up again while the camera was rolling.

In addition to interviews, I attended NIP and bcWORKSHOP community meetings where residents shared their opinions on new plans and building designs. When I contacted one resident, I was invited to Wednesday night bible study at the home of Daron Babcock, H.I.S. Bridgebuilders director of urban missions and Bonton resident. There I met and built rapport with residents in a religious setting instead of community meetings where I had previously made my contacts. In this atmosphere, the openly discussed what was happening in their lives and in their community. Many people who attended this “family time,” were recovering drug addicts, reformed drug dealers, or were previously incarcerated. Now these same residents work as entrepreneurs in the neighborhood.

### *Data Analysis*

After interviews were transcribed, and interview audio and video uploaded, they were coded for major themes. Each code was then placed on a separate file folder and each interview segment was physically cut and pasted to the accompanying theme. Once this was completed, an excel spreadsheet was created containing a row for each theme and subtheme, and a column for each interview participant. An “X” was placed in corresponding box for each person that referred to a particular theme. In addition to this news paper articles were printed and grouped by theme and placed in separate folders. Emergent themes were used to

write the history of Bonton and Ideal and examine the neighborhoods as a case study of residential activism and empowerment.

### *Deliverables*

This research project culminated in a written history of Bonton and Ideal from 1920 to present day. This history provides NIP with a document that will be referenced as they continue to improve and mark historical sites throughout the neighborhood. bcWORKSHOP used our findings to create a documentary to serve as a visual representation of the oral history of the Ideal and Bonton neighborhoods. This film, as a part of bcWORKSHOP Neighborhood Stories collection, is set to air on the PBS series Frame of Mind in the Fall of 2015. The written history and film are available through the Texas /Dallas History & Archives Division or the Dallas Public Library.

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Various bodies of literature discuss the concept of whiteness on the national, regional and local level. Whiteness has reinforced not only racial segregation and social dominance, but also influenced urban policy and change. I am going to introduce the “habitus” of whiteness in the United States and examine its influence on urban policy making, underclass formation, neighborhood evolution, and residential activism against current revitalization in Dallas.

Using Melissa Hargrove’s (2009) interpretation of whiteness as habitus, based on Pierre Bourdieu’s (1977) concept of habitus, I will identify how the social construction of whiteness was instituted by white-elites<sup>1</sup> and created trends that formed a racialized ideology. Highlighting Sherry Arnstein (1996) and George Lipitz (2007), I acknowledge that whiteness is an institution that, through tactics such as mythology, remains hidden and goes unchallenged. This hidden institution has had detrimental social, political, and economic effects on blacks as racialized ideology led to segregation practices in urban planning that perpetuated socioeconomic inequalities. In order to see how South Dallas fits into the larger context of racialized planning, a broad understanding of whiteness and black neighborhoods will be taken from trends identified by Michael Phillips (2006).

In this review, I argue that racial segregation was the most notable item on the urban planning agenda leading to the formation of hypersegregated neighborhoods comprised of single races and classes. Matthew Durlington (2006), Setha Low (2009), and Catherine Bauer (1945) are the primary scholars who demonstrate this process and explain that urban planning was the tool that provoked it. Drawing from the works of Christopher Silver and John

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<sup>1</sup> In order to ‘prevent further reification’ of racial categories, such as black and white, being used as biological categories associated with social status, I have chosen to use lower case when referring to these “social constructions of human difference” (Davenport 2004).

Moeser (1995), and Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton (2010) I identify urban planning techniques, such as redlining and racialized zoning, that targeted and isolated blacks into the worst neighborhoods in the city. In addition to this, techniques used by white residents will also be examined as collective actions that perpetuated the hypersegregation of races and classes.

Key scholars argue that racial segregation, and resulting class segregation, are the causes of concentrated decay in black neighborhoods. I rely on the work of William Julius Wilson (2010) and Massey and Denton (1993) to demonstrate this. Both of these scholarly works describe how economic recessions were magnified in black communities, where businesses begin to close, job availability was scarce, and resources were few, and identify these as the causes of underclass formation. The underclass is characterized and examined through the works of Paul Jargowsky and Rebecca Yang (2006), and Ronald Mincy (1989) in order to understand the cyclical effects living in such neighborhoods has on black residents.

The neighborhood life cycle, formulated by Paul Knox and Linda McCarthy (2012) is incorporated as a tool to categorize the changes that occur in certain neighborhoods and how planners and residents may differ in their vision for the neighborhood. Through an examination of these stages, I argue that black residents continue to remain powerless to changes that occur in their neighborhoods, which causes them to create neighborhood organizations that provide them with enough collective capital that they are able to implement their own changes. The organizations with their particular set of goals, identified by Richard Rich (1980), Mark Purcell (2001), and Megan Gilster (2013), meet with city planning groups, characterized by Stacy Harwood (2007) and June Manning Thomas (2004), to address the myriad problems that affect the neighborhood. However, the problems they discuss become a point of contention as residents and city planners have varied perspectives, visions, and goals for the area.

## Whiteness as Habitus

In Pierre Bourdieu's development of the concept of practice, three concepts come into play with one another - field, capital, and habitus. Field represents a specific social arena, capital represents the sources of social power available to individuals and groups interacting in that arena, and habitus refers to embodied aspects of history and upbringing that the individuals in the arena bring to the game. Bourdieu uses habitus instead of culture to emphasize its dynamism, defining it as "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures" (Bourdieu 1977, 72). Bourdieu asserts that habitus is constantly constructing and reproducing itself throughout history:

[T]he habitus, the product of history, produces individual and collective practices, and hence history, in accordance with the schemes engendered by history...a past which survives in the present and tends to perpetuate itself into the future by making itself present in practices (Bourdieu 1977, 82).

This thesis focuses on how the structuring structure of whiteness has historically affected, and continues to affect, a black neighborhood in South Dallas.

Melissa Hargrove operationalizes a "social field of whiteness," by identifying stakes and interests within the field. It is here that "agents and/or institutions battle for power over the distribution of the specific capital that has been accumulated, and it is these struggles and their outcomes that heavily influence subsequent strategies for domination and control employed by those in the loftiest positions" (Hargrove 2009, 95). In effect, the field is comprised of different races and economic classes battling the social capital associated with and controlled by whites. It is with this definition of the social field of whiteness that I situate the historic struggle between non-elites, non-whites and the white elitist Dallas power structure.

Just as race is socially constructed, whiteness is a "historical and cultural construct actively produced and reproduced to further/or improve an individual or social group's



position within the power dynamics of neighborhood, region and/or nation/state" (Low 2009, 81). For the city of Dallas, it is the elite whites who have invested in this construct and the resulting systematic lack of agency within minority and non-elite groups. Those who are in power have an interest in maintaining their economic, social, and political control. Within the social field of whiteness, this power structure is one of binary opposition: whiteness is simultaneously a division between white and non-white and elite and non-elite. The idea of a white elite "us" and a non-white non-elite "them" is what those in power use to reinforce control. Because the classification of race is also determined by the white elite, it becomes a "systematic advantage of one group over another, where whiteness becomes the location of advantage in societies structured by racial dominance" (Low 2009, 81). It is the ability of white elites to maintain their capital through normalized racist ideology that reinforces their position within the power structure.

Throughout American history, white elites have imposed "conditioning mechanisms" that have placed various groups into an apparently normative hierarchy. This occurs because "in order for the field of whiteness to function, there have to be stakes and people willing to engage in the system" (Hargrove 2009, 95). For example, redlining and racialized zoning were important stakes that helped to reproduce these ideas (Phillips 2006, Silver and Moeser 1995). This hierarchy becomes unconscious and taken for granted as it evolves over time, or as Bourdieu argues "the 'unconscious' is never anything other than the forgetting of history which history itself produces" (Bourdieu 1977, 78-79). In essence, certain races and classes find themselves positioned on a social field where their social power (capital) is reinforced through everyday stories and interactions that make the relations appear normative. As this hierarchy evolves into "a naturalized facet of our everyday lives," it becomes a hidden state of awareness that is "increasingly resistant to being adequately categorized and identified" (Hargrove 2009, 102). Particularly within southern cities of the United States, the

unidentified structure of whiteness is a perpetuated hidden consciousness with "an unspoken collective agreement of allegiance to the power dynamic" (Hargrove 2009, 95).

Also termed "the American consensus," hidden consciousness, centered on white elitism opposes redistribution of power along racial lines (Arnstein 1996, 216). Publically unacknowledged, the American consensus and hidden consciousness have played a vital role in hindering advancements for non-elites and non-whites. This invisible institution constricts both individual and community agency. It "never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations" (Lipsitz 2007, 201). The cultural construction of race has "sinister structural causes and consequences" that "have institutionalized group identity in the United States, not just through the dissemination of cultural stories but also through systematic- efforts from colonial times to the present to create a possessive investment in whiteness for European Americans" (Lipsitz 2007, 202). A notable way in which Dallas successfully normalized and historically reproduced racism is through mythology. Not only was mythology an investment in the naturalization of inequality, but also a precursor to racialized city planning.

Hargrove maintains "the perpetuation of inequality based on myths of racialized difference is one of the most urgent problems facing citizens of the U.S.A." (2009, 95). Controlled by the white elite, a "myth of consensus arose" in Dallas through newspapers and everyday interactions (Phillips 2006, 3). Black Dallasites were deemed happily ignorant and inferior beings that are being civilized by whites. The idea developed and spread that it was up to "brave and determined white businessmen" to rescue Dallas, which "lay wasted in the hands of colored peoples" (Phillips 2006, 3). This white man's burden was aided by segregation myths centered on the idea that "African-Americans represented near-beasts who desired nothing more than to rape Anglo-Saxon women and to overthrow their racial superiors" (Phillips 2006, 77). Myths such as these served to segregate races and reinforce

the socioeconomic structure. Phillips argues "the Dallas power structure, in fact, always depended on divisiveness. Skin color split the city, and winning acceptance as part of the white ruling caste consistently represented the surest means of social advancement" (Phillips 2006, 9).

In order to evaluate the effects of racial ideology on non-elites and non-whites, one must take into account of the circulating Dallas myths and their influences on Dallasites. At the center point in the overall Dallas Mythology was the idea "that whites represented progress and that people of color represented savagery (Phillips 2006, 4). To be classified as white means to invest in the power structure through actions such as "distancing, denial, superiority, belongingness, and solidarity" (Low 2009, 82). In order for one to progress, or prosper, within the dominant culture, one would have to be classified as white. To be classified as a white-elite in Dallas was not solely a phenotypical distinction, but a material distinction as well.

While white Dallasites continued to invest in strategies to maintain control, non-whites and non-elites struggled within this field to achieve social mobility. This flexible construction of race was based on the "acceptance of elite social norms" which "shaped Dallas politics for more than 130 years" after reconstruction:

In Dallas, whiteness represented a merger of physical characteristics and political beliefs... For those so marginalized, such as Mexican-Americans and Jews, social acceptance depended on moving closer to the white ideal. Being white required not just a European ancestry and relatively pale skin. Race was an attitude... whiteness rested on the steadfast belief in racial differences, support for capitalism, faith in rule by the wealthy, certitude that competition and inequality arose from nature, and rejection of an activist government that redistributed political or economic power (Phillips 2006, 12,19).

While blacks represented "the city's bottom social rung," other minorities occupied a more liminal position. These groups were situated on "an uncomfortable middle ground in the city's racial hierarchy between wealthy Anglos at the top and poor African-Americans at the bottom" (Phillips 2006, 7,8).

Marginal latinos and jewish minority groups were able to achieve a certain level of whiteness depending on whether they fit certain criteria. Wealthy light skinned minorities could gain acceptance as white if they adhered to the social and political norms. This allowed them access to better paying and more versatile job opportunities. With availability of economic opportunities, marginal minorities resisted being identified with blacks who were given lower-waged jobs (Phillips 2006, 69). While post-Great Depression economic growth provided an avenue for minorities to strengthen their middle class status, it also led to greater division amongst minority groups. Marginal minorities struggled to achieve elite status by proving their whiteness which in turn meant they separated themselves physically and socially from blacks. Aside from individuals who were able to achieve marginal white status, those who were unable had little means of advancement, not only culturally, but economically and politically as well. White elite ideology was at the foundation of social, political, and economic structures in Dallas. This principle translated into racial and class segregation in neighborhood planning.

### Urban Planning

Matthew Durlington asserts that "the control of space is an inherently political process with the capacity to confirm identity and convey ideology" (2006, 149). Given that racial ideology and mythology controlled the power structure in Dallas, urban planning discriminated against minorities. Racialized segregation enclaved low-class blacks into the worst areas of the city. This racial segregation created hypersegregated neighborhoods characterized as "small, densely settled, [and] monoracial" where a black resident is "very unlikely to come into regular contact with a member of Anglo society" (Massey and Denton, *Hypersegregation in U.S. Metropolitan Areas: Black and Hispanic Segregation along Five* 1989, 382).

Once economic opportunities diminished, hypersegregation heightened the concentrated decay of such neighborhoods. Low maintains that "racism is the cornerstone of patterns of urban and suburban separation and exclusion that inscribe material whiteness and the racialization of class in the USA" (2009, 80). Similar to the normalization of whiteness in society, whiteness in urban planning can be characterized as "natural, normative, taken-for-granted, and most importantly out of residents' everyday awareness" (Low 2009, 79).

Highly racialized planning prior to the 1950s continues to affect black neighborhoods today. In essence, neighborhoods became physical representations of social, political, and economic divisions due to whiteness, the enforcement of which was through segregation, redlining, and fear. Christopher Silver and John Moeser, in their studies on southern cities, recognize three commonalities within urban planning that influenced the formation and progression of black neighborhoods - each city allocated specific residential spaces for African-Americans, these spaces were located in the worst neighborhoods, and African-Americans remained politically powerless to the making of these plans. They note "the black community in the southern metropolis was, like its northern ghetto counterpart, a product of discrimination by whites in the allocation of residential and commercial spaces for the black community" (1995, 8) Silver also asserts:

From the 1920s through the early 1950s, revitalization in southern cities embraces two dominant strategies, one stressing preservation of the existing social and economic fabric of the city and the other treating planning as a restructuring process to transform the hodgepodge character of downtown into a physical, functional, and visual whole (Silver 1991, 70).

The spaces allocated to blacks were racially isolated, socially divested, and economically uniform. Bauer, writing in the 1940s, criticized the restrictedness of city planning in what she terms "domestic isolationism" (Bauer 1945, 105). Domestic isolationism was being achieved in the 1940s through city planning with the push towards "enormous one-class dormitory developments as completely separated from one another and

from work places as possible” (Bauer 1945, 105). Development of single class areas reinforced racial separation. Because whites and marginal whites tended to hold high paying jobs, and blacks held low paying jobs, the racially segregated spaces they occupied became class segregated spaces as well.

Bauer argued that "all spokesmen of property interests and most professional planners assume that neighborhood planning and social stratification are one and the same thing" (Bauer 1945, 107). Neighborhood planning techniques during this period were "based on discriminatory real estate practices, zoning ordinances, and mortgage structures designed to insulate whites from blacks" (Low 2009, 80). In addition to discriminatory housing, redlining and “blight designations” also contributed to socioeconomically homogenous neighborhoods (Hargrove 2009, 97). The most popular of these racialized practices were “zoning and the use of private real estate covenants to control and segregate the growing urban black population" (Silver and Moeser 1995, 125).

The planning techniques that I examine are racialized zoning and urban renewal. In addition to the role of planning techniques, I argue that racial and class divisions were perpetuated by white residents who sought to maintain the normalized cultural hegemony. Economically, “discrimination in employment exacerbated black poverty and limited economic potential for integration,” while socially “black residential mobility was systematically blocked by pervasive discrimination and white avoidance of neighborhoods containing blacks” (Massey and Denton, *The Continuing Causes of Segregation* 2010, 177). With Massey and Denton, I assert that “the spatial isolation of black Americans was achieved by a conjunction of racist attitudes, private behaviors, and institutional practices that disenfranchised blacks from urban housing markets and led to the creation of the ghetto” (Massey and Denton, *The Continuing Causes of Segregation* 2010, 177).

In Dallas, racialized zoning was employed in the early 1900s. In 1916, "Dallas became the first city in Texas to allow racial housing segregation by law" creating "three categories of neighborhoods - white, black, and open." (Phillips 2006, 63). Although this law was invalidated a year later, Dallas City Council in 1921 passed a new law that left segregation in the hands of the residents. They "could request that their blocks be designated as white, black, or open. Once a designation was made, only a written request by three-fourths of the residents in that block could change the neighborhood's racial assignment" (Phillips 2006, 64). With a history of racialized mythology, Dallas residents began to actively and knowledgeably separate themselves from undesired neighbors. Race became a distinguishing factor used by white residents, who trusted other citizens that looked like them, but feared and excluded those who did not (Logan and Molotch 1987). In response to being in close proximity to undesirable blacks, white residents created physical barriers between them, through fence or wall construction, or moved out of the area (Low 2009, 80). In the 1940s, covenants were made "among property owners against selling or renting to 'non-Caucasians'" and rental applicants were "carefully scrutinized for any possible deviation from the narrow canons of 'desirability'" (Bauer 1945, 106). In Dallas, white neighborhoods consequently "became moats and the residents eagerly raised the draw bridges to keep away frightening African-Americans, Mexican-Americans and white radicals" (Phillips 2006, 64).

While certain areas were allocated to blacks, these areas "were concentrated in the worst neighborhoods, in those areas slated for demolition or at least determined to be outside the main lines of white residential development" (Silver and Moeser 1995, 8). These neighborhoods also lacked infrastructure. Black Dallasites lived on unpaved streets lacking plumbing, electricity, or trash collection for many years (Phillips 2006, 63). As cities began to focus planning on improving and expanding downtown in the 1950s, black neighborhood

on the fringes of downtown became areas targeted for urban renewal projects and demolished for construction of freeways (Silver 1991, 70). From a city planning perspective, "black neighborhoods were deemed unworthy of redevelopment or improvement and deserved only demolition" (Phillips 2006, 173). In what Phillip calls "bulldozer apartheid," "poor neighborhoods were plowed under and replaced by pricey developments out of the economic reach of the former residents" (2006, 169). In Dallas, planning "dominated by banking and real estate interests" led to the "development of the 'worthless' Trinity floodplain" where the council sought to "convince the federal government to pay for the Trinity River redevelopment in the name of urban renewal" (Phillips 2006, 6). Not only did this urban renewal process uproot black communities in the Trinity floodplain, but also in other neighborhoods in Dallas, like Deep Ellum and State-Thomas. Located in the Trinity Flood Plain, Bonton and Ideal exemplify the qualities of neighborhoods built from racial segregation and maintained by socioeconomic forces that later influenced its decline into an underclass area.

### Underclass Neighborhoods

While factors that lead to the underclass formation are economically related, blacks experience the worst because they lived in mono-class<sup>2</sup> areas. Because of the heightening and concentrating effects of segregation on the black community, I argue racial segregation was the main cause of underclass development. Underclass individuals, as noted by Wilson, are individuals that are impoverished and lack economic opportunities:

Included in this group area individuals who lack training and skills and either experience long-term unemployment or are not members of the labor force, individuals who are engaged in street crime and other forms of aberrant behavior, and families that experience long term spells of poverty and/or welfare dependency (Wilson 2010, 187).

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<sup>2</sup> I use the term mono-class to describe areas comprised of residents of a singular class, such as middle class.



Underclass neighborhoods are also characterized as having high rates of unemployment and female headed families, as well as below average income and high school completion rates (Mincy 1989, Jargowsky and Yang 2006, Wilson 2010). Because of class concentration, any economic shift or recessions are magnified in underclass neighborhoods where “economic downturn is necessarily confined to a small number of geographically isolated and racially homogeneous neighborhoods” (Massey and Denton 1993). This results because residents in these areas “are likely to have limited upward and intergenerational mobility” (Jargowsky and Yang 2006, 58).

Hypersegregated black neighborhoods, through racialized urban planning, were created from segregation practices that limit access to economic and social opportunity to the people that live there. Exhibiting these characteristics, concentrated black neighborhoods are the effect of historically racialized planning. In other words, it is the perpetuation of poverty through a historically structured lack of economic and social opportunities that leave residents within underclass areas in a cyclical state of powerlessness.

In order to determine how racialized city planning created underclass neighborhoods like Bonton and Ideal, there must be an understanding of what comprises a neighborhood. Neighborhoods are complex, ever-changing entities, with moving boundaries, evolving environments, and changing demographics. Patricia Mooney-Melvin compares the neighborhood to a laboratory that serves to explore the dynamics of political, religious, social, cultural, and economic histories (Mooney- Melvin 2014). The everyday interactions of these histories within the neighborhood create “concomitant set of behavioural expectations, social roles and ideologies” (Durington 2006, 149). Chapter four examines the Bonton and Ideal neighborhoods in various ways. The neighborhoods will be explored as places of social cohesion, as reflections of their physical environments, and finally, as the meeting places of exchange and use values.

Gregory (1998) and Massey and Denton (1993) provide a framework to understand how neighborhood dynamics relate to social, political, and economic institutions. Based on historical trends, blacks in the 1920s were moving from farms to cities, particularly in the north, in search of better job opportunities (Massey and Denton 1993). Having arrived, they were offered the worst paying jobs and sectioned off into the worst neighborhoods. In the early 1900s, Gregory states blacks moved to Corona, a neighborhood in Queens, New York because residence there “offered the opportunity for homeownership, suburban living, and social mobility” (1998, 27). However, African-Americans who were drawn to Corona filled jobs in domestic and low skill trades, similar to jobs occupied by early black of South Dallas. Similarly, Corona residents “occupied the worst housing and paid the highest rents” because they were excluded from certain neighborhoods by “racial covenants” (Gregory 1998, 23). Blacks were left to depend on black-owned businesses in their areas for goods and services. As blacks frequented businesses in their own neighborhood, they retained economic viability. However after the Great Depression, jobs became scarce, incomes dropped, and black-owned business growth slowed (Massey and Denton 1993). The downward spiral of black neighborhoods was heightened after desegregation, in the late 1960s, when blacks were able to frequent white establishments outside of their neighborhood, ultimately leading to a decrease of business in black neighborhoods. Once viable economic opportunities were lost in the neighborhood, there was no means of socioeconomic advancement. Without racial segregation, “the economic dislocations of the 1970s would not have produced concentrated poverty or led to the emergence of a socially and spatially isolated underclass” (Massey 1990, 330).

Within the neighborhood, decay of the physical environment can affect the attitude of residents. Space, as noted by Mark Purcell "includes both (1) concrete material surroundings and (2) abstract ideas, thoughts, and feelings about those surroundings" (2001, 178). With

businesses closing and nothing filling their place, black neighborhoods become largely vacant. As the built environment continues to decay, the neighborhood begins to show “signs of social disorder such as street-corner drinking, catcalling, sexual harassment, graffiti, and littering” (Massey and Denton 1993, 138). Residents see the signs in relation to the built environment and “come to distrust their neighbors and to look upon them as threats rather than as sources of support or assistance” (Massey and Denton 1993, 138). Examining physical and social decay within the neighborhood must not be limited to the study of the built environment and resident perceptions of it (Mooney- Melvin 2014). Physical and social decay must also be examined as results of historical forces and consequences of social and economic structures that have been put in place.

### Neighborhood Life Cycle

The relationship between historical forces, social structures, and neighborhood decay as they relate to Ideal and Bonton will be examined in chapter four through Edgar Hoover and Richard Vernon’s concept of the neighborhood life cycle. While this particular life cycle does not apply to all neighborhoods, it a useful guide to center the evolution of Bonton and Ideal from development to revitalization. Divided into five phases, Hoover and Vernon’s neighborhood cycle includes- suburbanization, in-filling, downgrading, thinning-out, and renewal (1959).

Suburbanization, the beginning of the life cycle, is characterized by “low-density, single-family housing occupied by young families of relatively high socioeconomic background” (Knox and McCarthy 2012, 211). During this developmental stage, new homes are being built, people are meeting one another, and social cohesion emerges. Wilson states that prior to the 1960s, neighborhoods “exhibited the features of social organization - including a sense of community, positive neighborhood identification, and explicit norms and

sanctions against aberrant behavior” (Wilson 2010, 186). In-filling begins when “multifamily and rental dwellings are added on vacant lots, increasing the density and decreasing the social and demographic homogeneity of the neighborhood” (Knox and McCarthy 2012, 211). Downgrading is characterized by a slow “deterioration and depreciation in the housing stock, of aging in place, and of increasing population turnover,” while thinning out is a period of “high population turnover bringing social and demographic change; conversion and demolition of some residential units” (Knox and McCarthy 2012, 211).

Renewal or revitalization is essentially the beginning of a new neighborhood cycle. This occurs “in the form of new tracts of housing, usually at a high density that reflects the neighborhood’s (now) relatively central location” (Knox and McCarthy 2012, 211). Revitalization projects seek to improve community involvement, attract local businesses, diversify housing options, provide mixed land use, and increase public safety (Elwood and Leitner 2003, Ewalt 1997, O’Hara 2001, Vojnovic, et al. 2013, Larsen 2005). For black neighborhoods, revitalization comes with its own mythology. Similar to mythology concerning blacks in Dallas, urban frontier mythology, as identified by Neil Smith, views black inner-city areas the same as frontier ideology- as a place where civilization meets savagery (Smith 1996, xvi). Through this comparison, Smith argues inner-city areas are seen as areas of conquest where planners are “urban pioneers” gentrifying black neighborhoods (Smith 1996, xviii). Various scholars note that projects undertaken that promote redevelopment are criticized for increasing gentrification in neighborhoods, placing beautification above improvement, and assuming that simply a change in the physical environment will reduce social inequality (Larsen 2005, Fainstein 2013, O’Hara 2001, Urbanism 2011).

Planners aspire for neighborhoods to be culturally diverse and economically vibrant with residents “of varied talents, training, and social- economic status” in areas that “provide a wide range of shops, services, and community institutions” (Bauer 1945, 109). In the case of revitalization, NIP works to not only change the built environment of a neighborhood and make a space that caters to various demographics, but also to transform the exchange value of previously neglected places. As stated previously, Silver and Moeser argue that African-Americans remained powerless during development initiatives (1995). Resident powerlessness often “contributes to the general anxiety resulting from the fact that market mechanisms, as current structures, may well serve to undermine [the] neighborhood” (Logan and Molotch 1987, 111).

From a political economy perspective, the neighborhood has both use values and exchange values. Using a Marxist approach, I argue that locations within the neighborhood are viewed as commodities that must serve the social needs of residents as well as the exchange needs of investors (Marx 1990). Residents prioritize use value or “use place to satisfy essential needs of life,” while entrepreneurs, prioritize exchange value, or “strive for financial return, ordinarily achieved by intensifying the use to which their property is put” (Logan and Molotch 1987, 1,2). While this includes entrepreneurs and private investors, the exchange value of a location is the concern of city planners. The push and pull of these opposing forces many times leads to conflict between residents and planners. This perspective is particularly apparent in relationships between residents and city planners and was used to frame opposing views related to the revitalization of South Dallas.

Deborah Martin states "land-use conflicts in urban politics reflect this tension between land as a commodity to be bought, sold, developed, or otherwise support economic activities and land as the setting or daily life and social relations" (2004, 591). Residents and city planners have different goals and purposes when they look at their neighborhood. Martin

determined that in the neighborhood of Athens, Georgia, "scale was central to the conflict, with residents focused on the neighborhood, whereas the hospital emphasized its regional purview and portrayed the neighborhood as mere land parcels" (2004, 609). This exclusion, on the planners' part, of consideration for the neighborhood's use value, led to the residents actively fighting the implementation of the plan.

In order to work with residents to improve their power within the revitalization process, cities create departments that act as middle men. The goal of these programs are to "empower residents, develop local leadership, improve communication between city and residents, build neighborhood capacity, and raise the importance of neighborhood issues on the citywide political agenda" (Harwood 2007, 262). In the case of Bonton and Ideal, the City of Dallas created the Neighborhood Investment Program (NIP) to improve the quality of housings and public infrastructure, promote economic development and neighborhood investment, and improve safety through redevelopment and code enforcement (Dallas, South Dallas/ Fair Park Economic Development Corridor Plan 2001).

NIPs strive to reach three needs of neighborhood planning. At the neighborhood level, the plan "must be a collaborative process," involving expert planners, residents and community organizations, "relatively open and transparent," as well as "driven by the community, with focus placed on the neighborhood's agenda, not the planner's agenda" (Thomas 2004, 52). In order to achieve this, particularly in black neighborhoods, planners "may need to overcome likely fractures of race, class, and ethnic background" as well as "overcome resident's grief over the changes that are taking place in the neighborhood" (Thomas 2004, 52). While some residents may welcome revitalization efforts, some are "continually confronted with development projects that do not fit their idea of what their neighborhood should be like" (Purcell 2001, 189). These are sources of major conflict between neighborhood residents and planners during the revitalization process.

In summary, disagreement over planning agendas, disharmony with regard to race, class, and ethnicity, dismay over neighborhood change, and dissension concerning what the future should look like serve as the catalysts for neighborhood activism through collective organization.

### Neighborhood Activism

Resident collective consciousness is made manifest through neighborhood organizations, which act as “front lines of defense against threats to the neighborhood’s quality of life” and “provide interlocking networks of communication for disseminating neighborhood news and information and for alerting residents to problems” (Gregory 1998, 147-148). Organizations also “seed street repairs, improvements in local schools, better police protection, housing- code enforcement, and dozens of other objectives” (Rich 1980, 559). For hypersegregated black neighborhoods, this is essential to the progression and vitality of the area. Situated in the worst areas with radically diminished resources, “their demands for services like police and fire protection, environmental control, and sanitation are likely to be greater than those of newer, less densely settled, and nonindustrial neighborhoods” (Rich 1980, 564).

As Logan and Molotch argue, this is paradoxical since “neighborhoods with the most serious need for community organizations are those with the least capacity to create and sustain them” (1987, 136). This thesis acts to identify how black residents navigate their landscape to increase their collective capital through neighborhood activism. If “activism is action intended to bring about social, political, economic, environmental, or ideological changes” then neighborhood activism “is therefore action to create changes in neighborhood condition” (Gilster 2013, 33). Neighborhood activism is a means through which citizens have increased their social capital and empowered themselves. As defined by Arnstein,

citizen power is reached once there is a "redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic process" to become valuable participants in the decision making processes concerning their neighborhood (1996, 216). Once they "can induce significant social reform which enables them to share in the benefits of the affluent society" then citizens have empowered themselves (Arnstein 1996, 216).

Richard Rich uses the theory of the collective good to determine what causes residents to participate in neighborhood organizations. In this theory, neighborhood organizations are seen as "mechanisms whereby residents can pool the resources and share the costs necessary to solve common problems and secure collective benefits" (Rich 1980, 572). In addition to hypersegregated neighborhoods having more problems and fewer resources, residents within these neighborhoods must work to influence others to participate in change, even residents who have actively perpetuated the physical and social decay of the neighborhood (Gilster 2013, 35). This may include residents that were former drug dealers or those who have been incarcerated.

While some residents might understand the concept of collective goods, the overall approach to neighborhood activism is spatial. Residents participate in organizations to improve their concrete and built environment. Purcell argues that "using class, race, gender, or any other single category as the taproot of neighborhood activism is a necessarily limiting approach" as residents also "mobilize according to their subjectively perceived agenda, a well-defined spatial vision for what their neighborhood and city should be like" (2001, 181). As chapter five reveals, Ideal and Bonton organizations have sought to restore and rehabilitate their neighborhood by creating a safe environment, building and renovating homes, and attracting businesses to fill vacant buildings. Residents are not initially drawn to activism with the primary purpose of changing racial, social, and class issues that they face. They see their built environment decaying and make plans to improve homes, businesses, and



streets. While they may understand that these problems are products of larger institutional structures, they are concerned with the livability of their neighborhood.

While underclass neighborhoods lack resources wealthier neighborhoods have, neighborhood activism provides an avenue for residents to redefine and associate new meaning to their area (Logan and Molotch 1987, Gregory 1998). In Corona, programs such as clean up campaigns were “extremely significant” given that the neighborhood had been seen “as a political issue and object of discourse” (Gregory 1998, 125). Gregory argues that the physical act of removing trash, which is “a polysemous symbol of disorder” and symbolically tied to blackness and poverty, “undermined the construction of Lefrak City as a site of danger and urban blight” (Gregory 1998, 125). Progress in Lefrak City was accomplished by the collaboration between residents, city officials, and local press and politicians. Signs of neighborhood progression include the filling of vacant lots, decrease of defacement, and cleaner streets and yards (Gregory 1998, 116). Decaying neighborhoods are not solely the product of economic immobility. Just as economic decay is caused by hypersegregation based on social and political institutions, “progress [does] not simply mean job mobility and the accumulation of wealth but, more fully, the capacity to produce, sustain, and defend the social and political conditions that made such mobility possible” (Gregory 1998).

### Neighborhood History

Oral history collection is methodological approach through which the “particular mix of residents, structures, institutions, problems, and possibilities that characterize a community” can be examined (Mooney- Melvin 2014, 462). The collection of black neighborhood histories is beneficial to the investigation of whiteness and city planning because they identify “the roots of the issue at hand” and the “various options for resolving

particular problems" (Mooney- Melvin 2014, 469). By collecting oral histories, I could determine Bonton and Ideal's place within the larger context of racialized city planning:

The linkages between a neighborhood and the larger city of which it is a part are critical in understanding the ranges of possibilities available for an area's growth and the limitations it may experience over the course of its development (Mooney- Melvin 2014, 468)

This thesis argues that in the case of neighborhood activism and revitalization in South Dallas, the local history is rich with references to social, economic, struggles as an effect of whiteness. However, it is also apparent that Bonton and Ideal have a history of empowerment as well. Oral histories demonstrate that the community known as Bonton and Ideal is a case study of how neighborhood organizations and city planning initiatives interact. This methodology provided a framework to understand Bonton and Ideal's formation, decay, and revitalization. In Reconstructing a Community with Oral History, Darlene Richardson asserts "oral histories capture the stories, the grit, the heart and soul of lives affected by our nations' laws, prejudice, and apathy" (Richardson 2002, 102). For black neighborhoods shrouded in a history of whiteness and racial ideologies, June Manning Thomas argues "oral history is particularly adept at soliciting input from those for whom no written records exist or who are unlettered or relatively powerless" (Thomas 2004, 55).

Mackay, Quinlan and Sommer state "the human ability to be retrospective and reinterpret previous experiences that makes oral history a living window into the past" (MacKay, Quinlan and Sommer 2013, 22). Mooney-Melvin maintains oral history encourages "local residents to think more broadly about their world and to appreciate its ties to the larger metropolitan community" (Mooney- Melvin 2014, 463)." For Bonton and Ideal, oral history provides residents with a means to share experiences, define themselves, enhance pride, and build bridges (MacKay, Quinlan and Sommer 2013).

Theories concerning whiteness and urban planning allowed me to determine how historically racialized city planning has led to the formation of black underclass

neighborhoods. In the next chapter, I present a case study of a hypersegregated South Dallas neighborhood where residents have worked to empower themselves through neighborhood activism, thus increasing their individual and collective capital.

CHAPTER 4  
SOUTH DALLAS NEIGHBORHOOD LIFE CYCLE:  
FROM DEVELOPMENT TO DECAY

I examine the development of Bonton and Ideal using the neighborhood life cycle. This timeline acts as a case study to examine how theoretical concepts introduced in the previous chapter emerge through the history of an area within South Dallas (A timeline featuring important events in Ideal and Bonton History can be found in the appendix).

Located south of the central business district and east of Central Expressway, development began in the area from Hatcher to Rochester Park in 1913 (See Figure 2). Predominantly a black middle class neighborhood, this area housed 19 suburban additions upon its completion. The bisecting Bexar Street provided a center of economic activity for the area and consisted of various black-owned businesses. Due to redlining laws, racial tensions, and growing black population during the 1940s, the area became home to two housing projects in the 1950s. Located at the bottom of South Dallas, this area lacked basic public amenities until the early 1960s. During this time, the area was split in half by the construction of Highway 175. The subsequent economic deterioration of black-owned businesses along Bexar, the physical and social division by Highway 175, and minimal resources available, led to the area's increasing impoverishment in the 1970s.

As violence and crime increased in the 1980s, local residents began initiating neighborhood led programs to combat drug and safety problems. These programs grew into community and non-profit organizations that have provided economic opportunities. With similar goals, the City of Dallas began revitalizing the area in 2000 and has since completed the construction and beautification of homes and businesses along Bexar Street. These actions have been received by both appreciation and criticism.

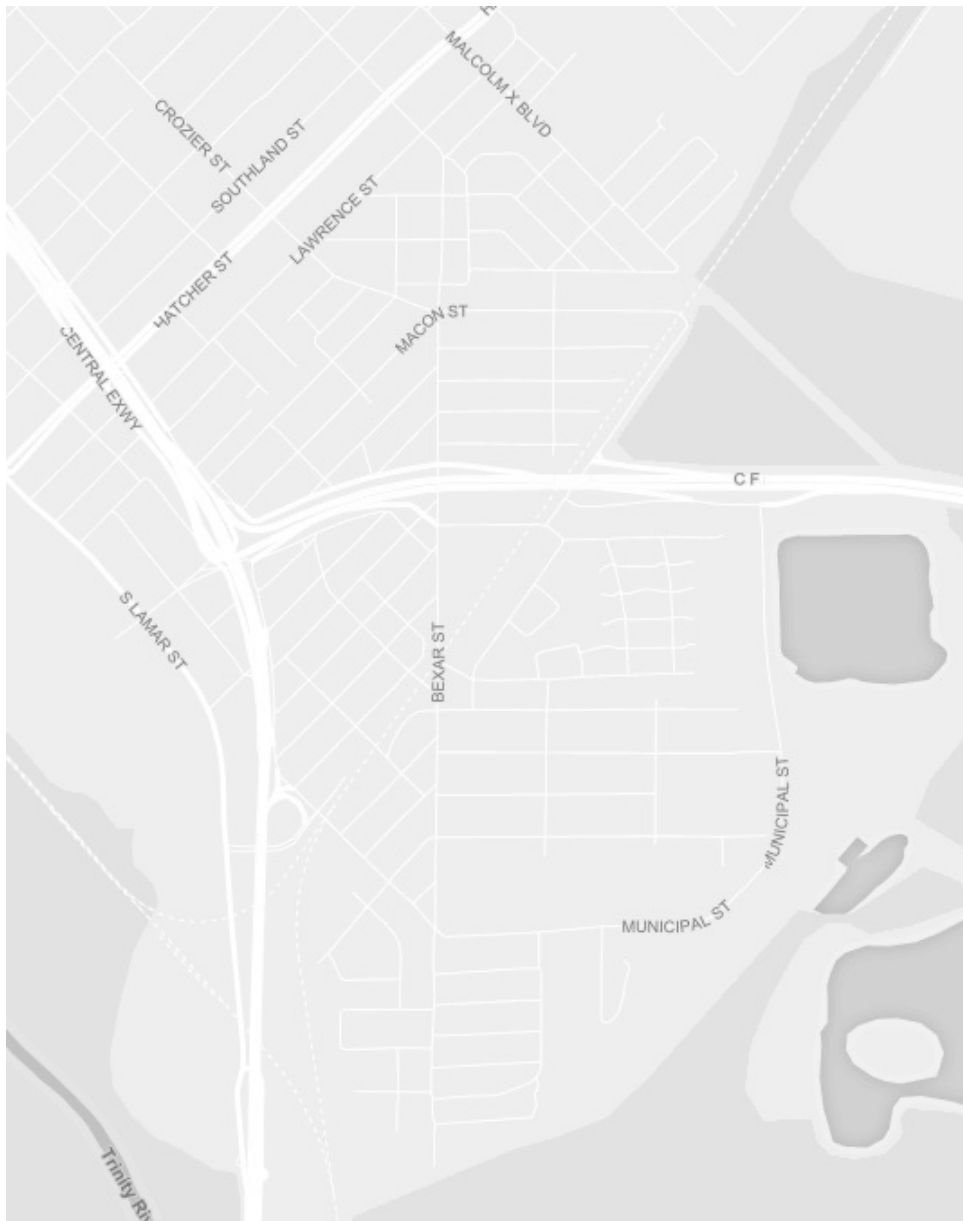


Figure 2: Mapbox Map of Research Site

### Suburbanization and In-Filling

Beginning in 1913, suburban additions were being built below Hatcher Street. The first six developments included Lincoln Manor, Lincoln Manor No. 2, Lomas Park, Ervay Cedars, Camp's Peachland, and Elite (See Figure 3). From Hatcher Street, these additions spread south along Rowan Avenue, with H. & T. C. Railroad acting as a boundary to the

west. The completion of the first phase of additions resulted in the creation of approximately 1500 homes.

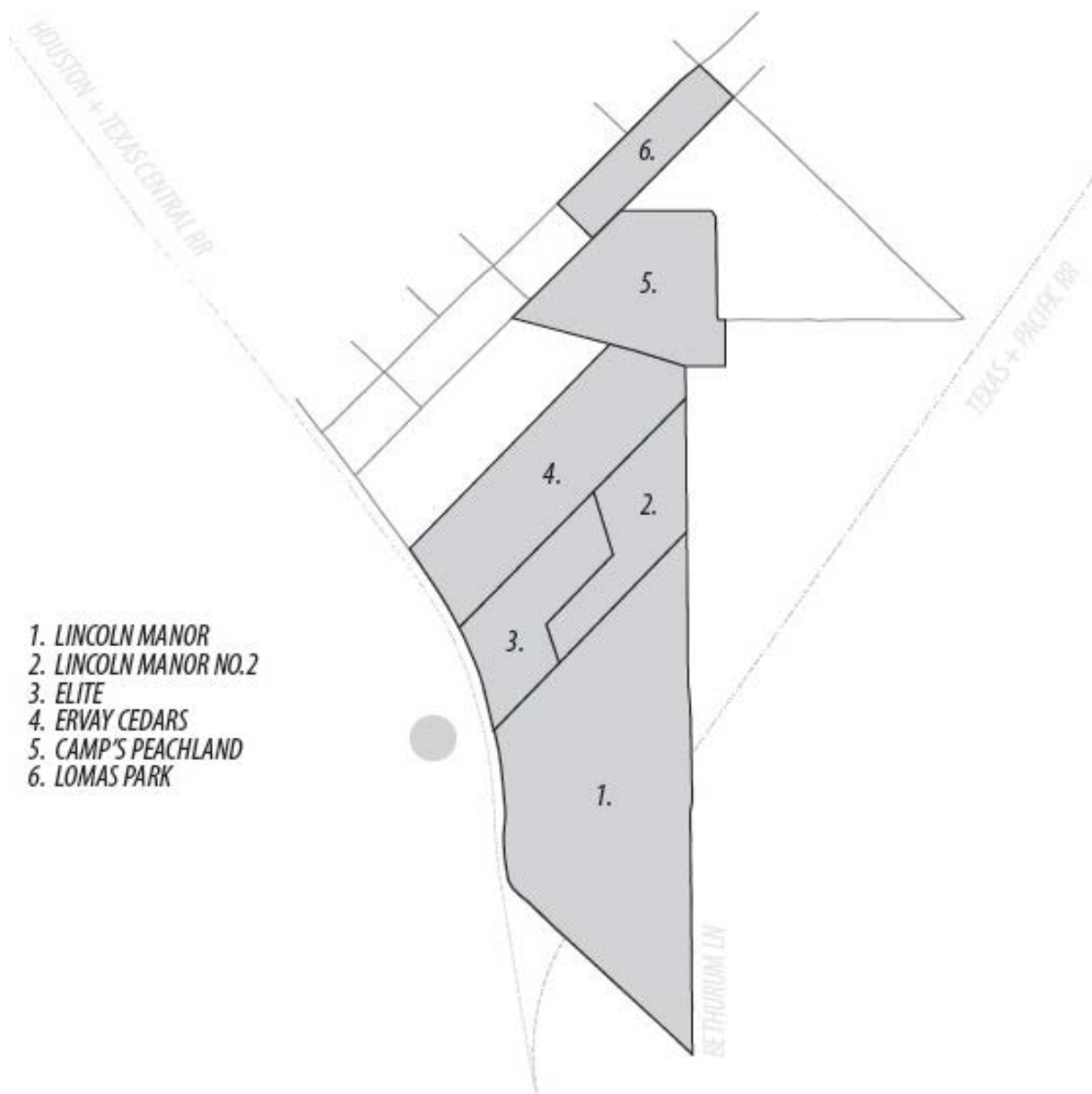


Figure 3: 1913-1915 Additions (**Kunz 2014**).

In 1919, development resumed with the City Blocks Addition. This second phase was completed in 1927 with the Woodside addition and included 6 other additions-Oakland Place, Webster's South Dallas, South Lawn, HT Lackey's, Ideal, and SD Lawrence (See Figure 4). Spanning from Hatcher along Rowan Avenue, these additions added over 600 homes to the area.

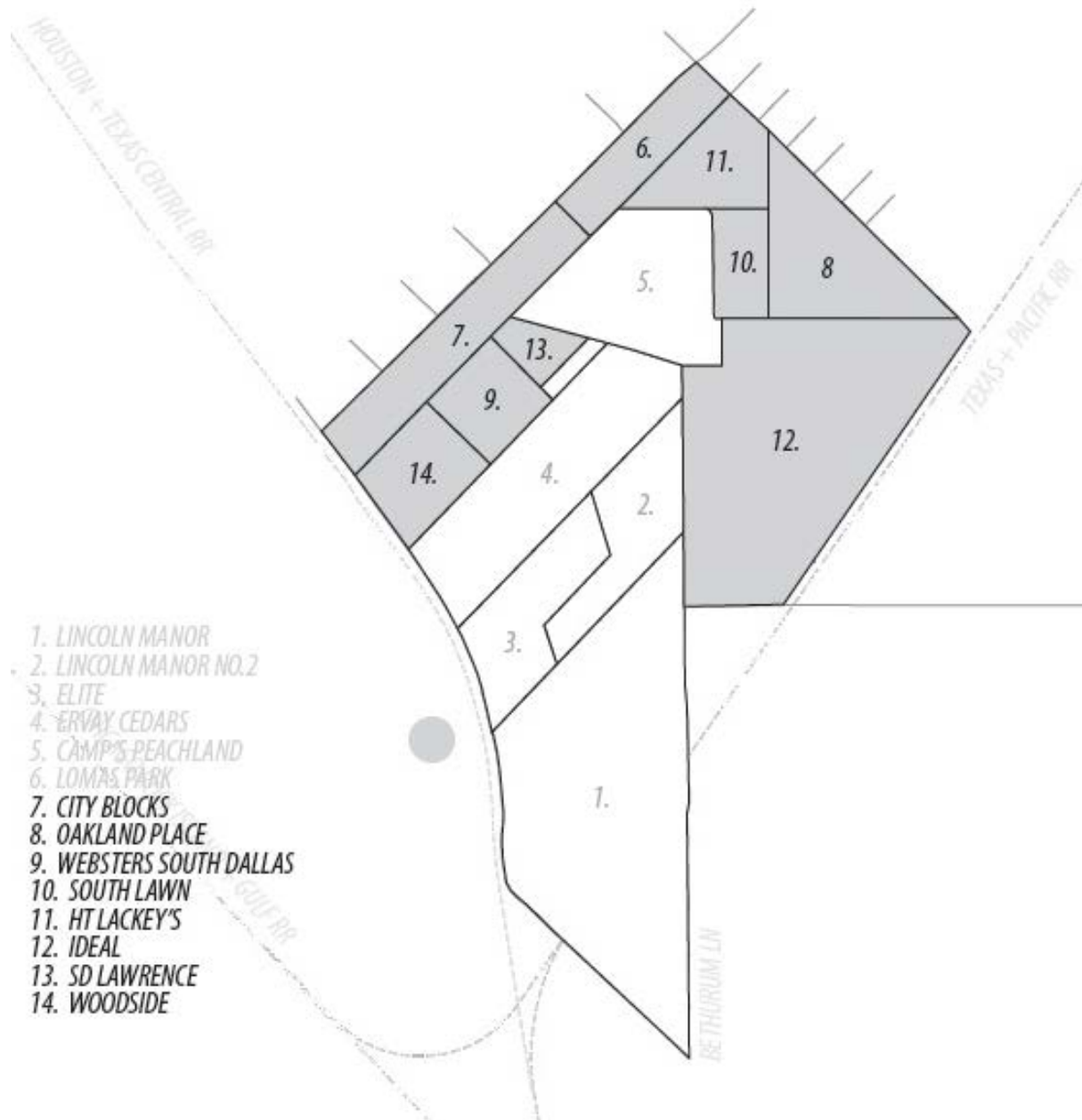


Figure 4: 1919-1927 Additions (Kunz 2014).

On October 2nd, 1920, advertisement began in *The Dallas Express* for the "Ideal Addition" (1920:7). Headlines read "High Class, Bon Ton, Restricted Residence Section for Colored People" and "A Look Means A Lot!" (The High Class, Bon Ton, Restricted Residence Addition 1920, Announcement Extraordinary 1920)(See Figure 5). Located across from Lincoln Manor and Lincoln Manor No. 2 on Rowan Avenue, the Ideal addition boasted 271 lots (The Ideal Addition Dallas' Newest and Finest Residence Addition for Colored

People 1920, Real Estate Firm to Open New Addition 1924). To the east, the Ideal Addition was bounded by Houston & Texas Central Railroad, and to the north and south, Brigham Lane and Bethurum Lane, respectfully.

This addition, exclusively contracted for blacks, targeted blacks who wanted to become homeowners in a middle class neighborhood. National trends during the early 1920s demonstrate that large numbers of blacks moved to cities in search of social mobility, which was associated with suburban living and home ownership (Gregory 1998, Massey and Denton 1993). However, due to Dallas segregation laws passed in 1916 and 1921, black residents were limited to suburban developments appropriated for them (Phillips 2006). A week before opening day, *The Dallas Express* argued that for blacks, “the Ideal Addition is just what its name implies. Ideal for location, for desirability, for prices of its lots, for easy terms, and as offering splendid possibilities for people become homeowners” (A Look Means A Lot 1920) (See Figure 6).

**A LOOK MEANS A LOT!**

**THE HIGH CLASS, BON TON, RESTRICTED RESIDENCE ADDITION**

for Colored People Advertised Last Week Will be Known as

**“THE IDEAL ADDITION”**

This new addition will be on the market in about two weeks. Watch for announcement in the Express. This addition will be handled by the same people that so successfully handled the Lincoln Manor No. 2, Elite and Southland additions, selling off more than 800 lots. This itself guarantees the success of this beautiful new addition, as the Company is noted for its fair and liberal dealing with its customers. Hundreds of satisfied customers of the other three additions will testify to the straight and liberal dealings of the management with them.

Lots in this IDEAL ADDITION will be sold on the same easy terms as other additions sold out, viz:—a minimum of \$6.00 cash per lot and \$6.00 monthly, with NO INTEREST and NO TAXES.

The title to the 50 acres of the IDEAL ADDITION has been examined by the Hon. Wendell Spence of Dallas and pronounced a “perfect title.”

It will pay prospective lot buyers of Dallas to wait for the opening of this NEW IDEAL ADDITION. Wait for it.

**IDEAL DEVELOPMENT COMPANY,**

Room 104—1600 1-2 Main Street; Phone X 2088

**A LOOK MEANS A LOT!**

Figure 5: October 9, 1920 *Dallas Express* Ad



**OPPORTUNITY KNOCKING AT YOUR DOOR!**

## **"A LOOK MEANS A LOT"!**

October 31st, Sunday, will be the opening day sale for lots in the new IDEAL ADDITION, the latest, best and most desirable residence addition in Dallas exclusively for Colored people.

We are gratified in being able to offer this splendid addition to Dallas people. For some years, knowing of the 45 acres comprising it, and of its great desirability for a high class addition, we have been hoping we might secure it, lying, as it does, close to three other additions for Colored people handled by us, viz:—The Elite, Lincoln Manor No. 2 and the Southland, all now practically sold out, over 800 lots to contented satisfied buyers and home owners.

But the owner of the IDEAL ADDITION planned it either for a great Industrial section or as an addition for white people. We showed him the great need the Colored people of Dallas had for choice residence additions, of their need for homes of their thrifty habits, of what we had done for them, in way of selling lots to them, and of the scores of Homes built, and finally gained his consent for us to take his choice 45 acres, plat it for the IDEAL ADDITION, and giving us an EXCLUSIVE CONTRACT to handle the addition.

The IDEAL ADDITION is just what its name implies. IDEAL for location, for desirability, for prices of its lots, for easy terms, and as offering splendid possibilities for people to become HOME OWNERS. It is to be a strictly HIGH CLASS, BON TON residence addition. We want good people to buy and own it. It is restricted as to number, as we have only 271 lots to sell.

It is also IDEAL as to terms:—Only \$6.00 cash as the minimum cash payment, with \$6.00 per month per lot. That's just 20 cents per day. No interest. No taxes. Abstract with every sale. Perfect title, passed upon by the Hon. Wendel Spence, who says "the title is perfectly good."

The surveyor is now finishing platting the addition and staking the lots. The next issue of the Dallas Express will give full directions as to location and how to get there. **DON'T MISS IT. BE READY. DELAY NOT. THE EARLY BUYER GETS THE REST.** Remember that OCTOBER 31ST, SUNDAY, is set for the opening sale day, with salesmen on the ground to help you select your lot or lots. Out of town buyers may send us checks and we will select good lots, subject to exchange, as desired, later on. We refer to the Dallas Express as to our responsibility. "The best investment is the earth itself," and that is specially true of Dallas earth—Dallas, the fast growing City in the great Southwest.

## **"A LOOK MEANS A LOT"!**

**Phones X 2088, Residence Edg. 3784.**

**THE IDEAL DEVELOPMENT COMPANY**

**Room 104, 1600 1-2 Main Street,**

**Dallas, Texas**

Figure 6: October 23, 1920 *Dallas Express* Ad

In 1923, the third phase of development began with advertisements for the Bon-Ton Addition and Lincoln Manor No.3 (Announcement Extraordinary 1923, 7, The Dallas Express 1924). Located South of Lincoln Manor No. 2, Bon-Ton and Lincoln Manor No.3 were situated at the southern end of Bexar Street. Along with these developments were plans for yet another addition, OE Taylor, however, it remained unbuilt (See Figure 7).

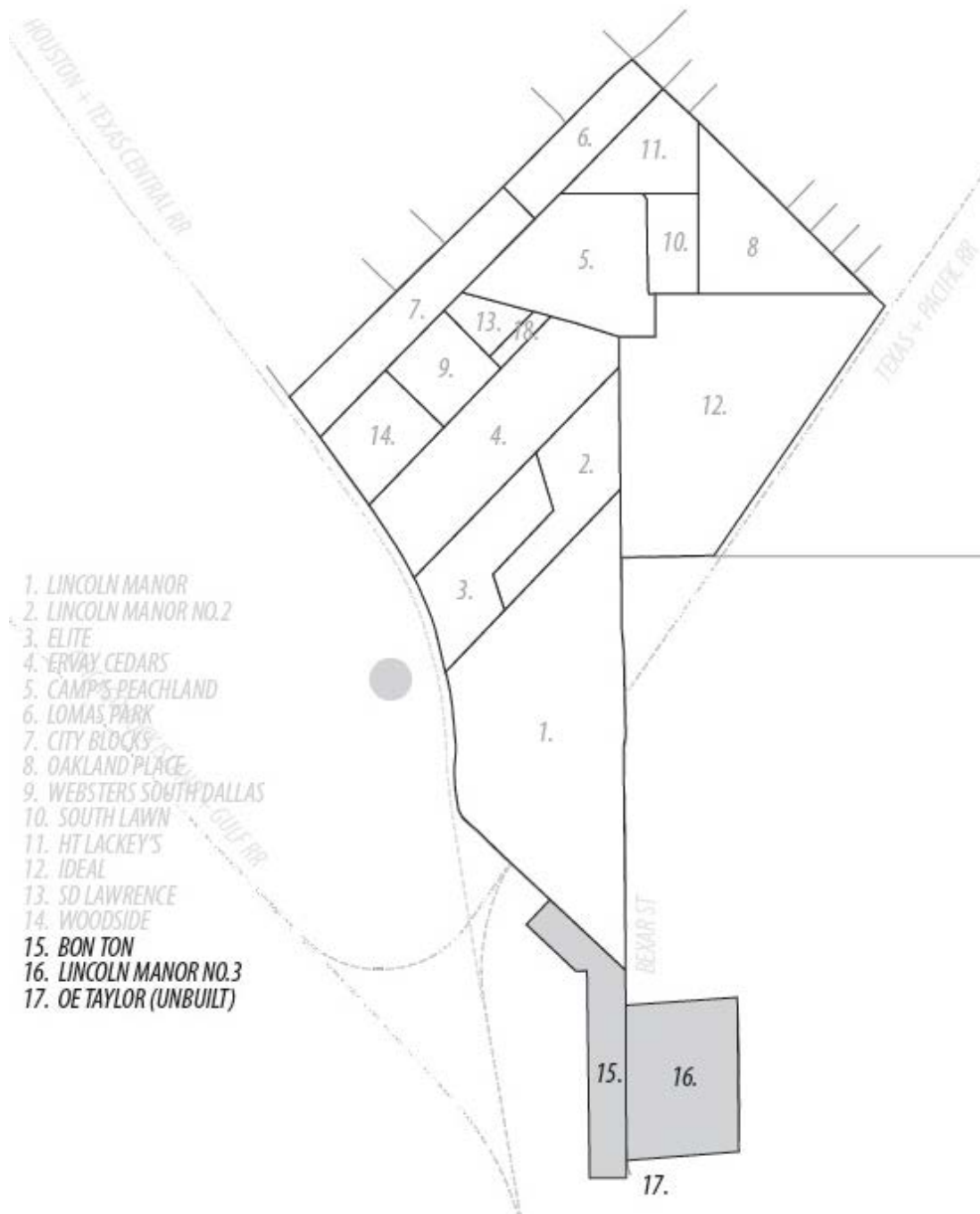


Figure 7: 1932 Additions (Kunz 2014).

One advertisement announcing the Bon-Ton addition acted as self-proclaimed "timely warning to colored people of Dallas." Lots were expected to be "sold out in a few weeks, for it [was] exceedingly hard to find ground in Dallas which the owners will allow to be offered exclusively for colored people" (Announcement Extraordinary 1923, 7) (See Figure 8). Bon-Ton and Lincoln Manor No.3 provided a total of 187 lots on 90 acres priced at \$5 and \$6 a month (Real Estate Firm to Open New Addition 1924, 2) (See Figure 9). *The Dallas Express* claimed that "the best, the wisest colored people of Dallas [were] buying lots and building homes" (Announcement Extraordinary 1923, 7).

**Announcement Extraordinary.**  
GOOD NEWS  
— for —  
COLORED PEOPLE WANTING TO OWN  
THEIR OWN HOMES.  
A NEW, HIGH GRADE, EXCLUSIVE RESIDENCE AD-  
DITION SOON TO BE OFFERED FOR SALE.  
**FIFTY ACRES.**  
fine land in SOUTH DALLAS, adjoining Lincoln Manor  
No. 2 Addition is now being surveyed and platted into lots,  
streets, etc. The opening sale date will be given through  
the Dallas Express soon.  
WATCH FOR IT! WAIT FOR IT! BUY A LOT!  
**The "Bon-Ton" Addition.**  
Office 504 Slaughter Bldg. Phone X-2088.  
Good Agents wanted, men or women.  
**Announcement Extraordinary.**

Figure 8: December 21, 1926 *Dallas Express* Ad

## REAL ESTATE FIRM TO OPEN NEW ADDITION

Dealy & Dealy, Real-Estate Agents announce the sale of 40 acres of choice land in South Dallas, adjoining the Lincoln Manor No. 2 and Bon Ton Additions. This 40 acres will immediately be cut into choice lots, Sts. cut through and will at once be put on the market for sale under the name of Lincoln Manor No. 3. The lots will be priced very reasonable and sold on the easiest terms that lots have ever been offered in Dallas, namely \$5 cash and \$5 monthly without any interest. Dealey & Dealey have developed and made successes of the Elite, Ideal, Southland, Lincoln Manor No. 2 and Bon Ton Additions, have been handling these Additions for the last 10 years and built up a little City of some 5000 or 6000 people. The Lincoln Manor section has developed very rapidly, the Myrtle St. car-line has been extended within several blocks of th Addition and the Ervay carline is to be extended at once to the City limits and Colonial Avenue paved. Lincoln Manor has a good City school, any number of churches of the different denomations and a number of stores and drug-stores. The section is due to grow very rapidly and will develop into one of the largst exclusive Negro Communities in the South.

Figure 9: December 21, 1924 *Dallas Express* Ad

With the building of exclusive black neighborhoods came a sense of pride. Many of the streets where the new additions were being built named after successful African Americans (See Table 1):

When Bonton was developed we had in the 1920s, Dallas had a very clear cut middleclass. They had black doctors. They had teachers. They had people like Dr. CV Roman, Dr John Anderson, America's number one black architect, his name was William Sidney Pittman, and the streets were named for these successful people. We had Dr. Dyson, and these men had come to Dallas and set up practice and did very well so as a tribute to them we had streets down in this new neighborhood...that were named for Dr. Sunday, Dr. Dyson, Dr. Anderson, William Sydney Pittman. So we had a historical tie, it was good they gave us those streets because those streets give us a historical tie to the neighborhood. Successful people living on streets named after successful people (Dallas resident, Donald Payton).

Homeownership and suburban living was the goal for blacks who worked a majority of the year on farms. Prior to the 1900s, 60 percent of Dallasites were farmers. In roughly 40 years, the rural economy of Dallas County evolved into a service-oriented economy (Phillips 2006, 60). By the 1930s, the Dallas working class was comprised of domestic and service workers, such as janitors, maids, railroad employees, and masons. With increasingly stable and better paying jobs, blacks were drawn to the social mobility that came with living in additions like Ideal and Bon-Ton.



Name	Yeats	Significance
Dr. John Wesley Anderson	1861-1947	Dentist, acquired land for the Lincoln Manor addition
Dr. Charles V. Roman	1864-1934	Started practicing in Dallas, later became founder of Mercy Hospital in Memphis, the largest black-owned and operated hospital in the South
John Paul Starks	1865-1923	Educator and businessman, worked to open Booker T. Washington School and created <i>Dallas Express</i> Company to keep the paper running
William Sidney Pittman	1875-1958	1 <sup>st</sup> practicing black architect in Texas, designed Allen Chapel AME Church
Dr. Phillip M. Sunday	1881-1946	One of the 1 <sup>st</sup> black doctors to provide blood testing, civic leader, and businessman
Dr. A. H. Dyson		

Table 1: Biographical Summary of Black Leaders for Whom Streets Were Named

Born in the 1930s, Willard Tom Dotson has lived in the Ideal addition his entire life. When the family was not working in the cotton fields, his mother worked as a maid and his father at Tennessee Milk Dairy. Like other black farmers, his parents were drawn to the new homes advertised in Ideal:

At that time the white peoples...they had control of a lot of this land in here. Then over a period of time they started selling it up for lots, building up, people would buy the lots and build their houses. So [my family] came here from a little town called Reinhart on the other side of Pleasant Grove between here and maybe Greenville. They settled down there at the end of Ghent Street (Ideal resident, Willert Dotson).

Farther down Ghent lived Henrietta and Ether Ingram. Their father, a carpenter, would later work on the construction of Turner Courts apartments. As a family of 8, the Ingrams lived in

a one bedroom house in Ideal (See Figure 10). Henrietta and Ether spoke about what their home life was like growing up there:

We had an old frame house and what they call picket fence now - it was a fence that they put up so it wasn't very well picketed...we had an outdoor toilet in the back so we had to go outside to use the restroom... (Ideal resident, Henrietta Ingram).

In the living room – the living room/bedroom – we had one of those little potbelly stoves...you had to put wood in then it connected to the roof and then comin' out so the smoke would come out the top of the roof. We didn't have television and no electricity and no telephone, anything like that, but we did have a radio and we used to listen to Inner Sanctum Network<sup>3</sup>...now my father, before we'd go to bed, especially the young ones, he always read the bible and he'd read biblical stories to us and we would just sit there all cuddled up and everything and we'd listen to him and we just had a good time (Ideal resident, Eather Ingram-Watson).

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<sup>3</sup>The radio show *Inner Sanctum Mysteries* was a horror anthology that ran from 1941- 1952 (Kuersteiner 2008).



Figure 10: Ingram Family. From left to right, as related to Henrietta and Eather: James Robert (brother), Kenneth (nephew), Goldie (mother), Larry (nephew), Norma (sister)

### *Racialized Planning*

While African-Americans were able to become homeowners in middle class neighborhoods, city ordinances restricted where they could live. Based on a review of these ordinances and maps, it is apparent that by the time the last additions were being built (1953), there had been longstanding zoning laws that prevented many African-Americans from moving to certain parts of the city (See Figure 11). Particularly in South Dallas, this included



the area above Hatcher, despite there being no color designation for this area. As black families began to move into other South Dallas neighborhoods, racial tension increased.

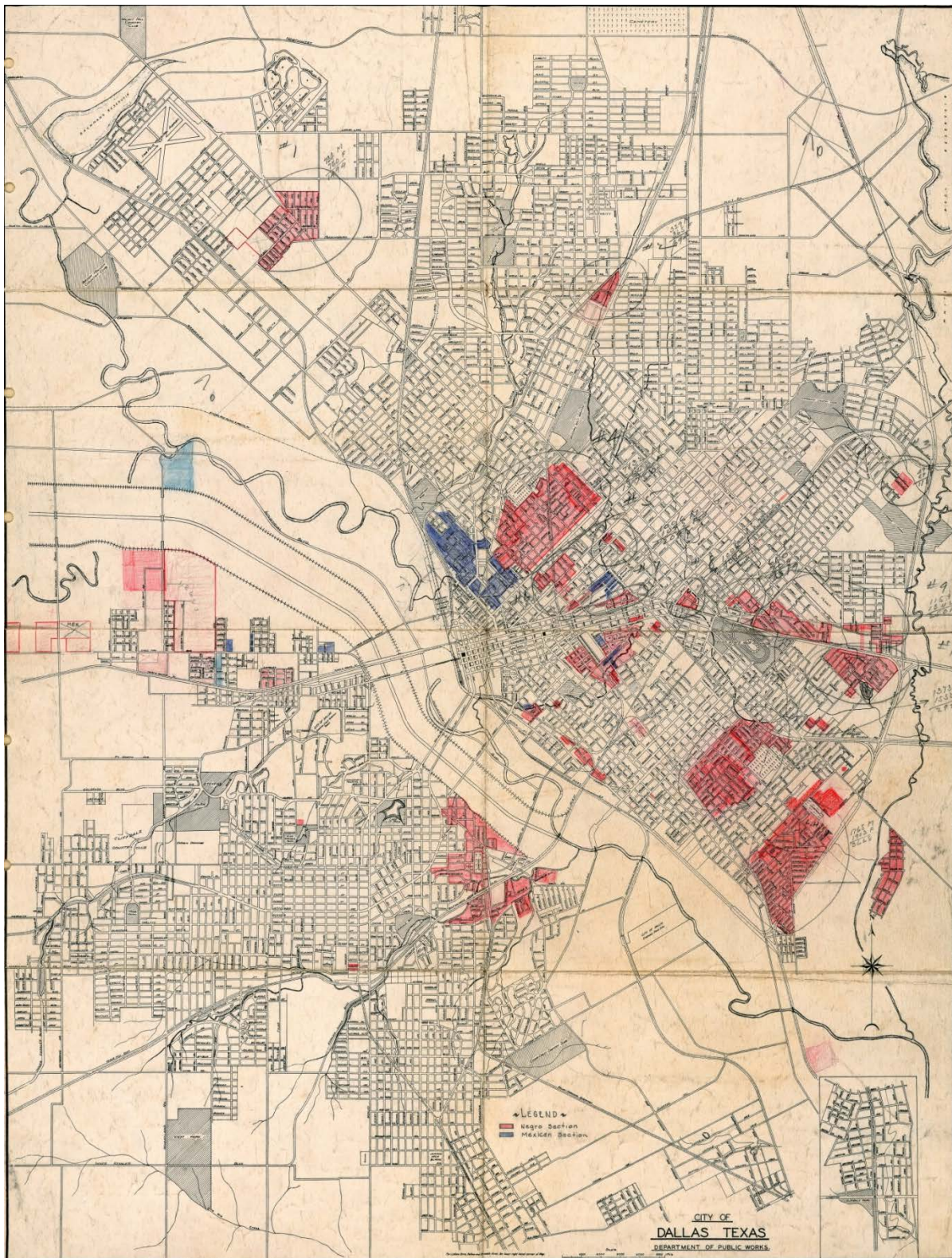


Figure 11: 1945 Dallas Map designating Negro sections (red) and Mexican sections (blue)

By 1940, 50,000 blacks were living in 3.5 square miles of segregated neighborhoods (Phillips 2006, 120). As black middle class Dallasites began to buy formerly white occupied homes in predominately white neighborhoods across the city, they were assaulted and threatened. As they moved, they were greeted by angry mobs throwing rocks, hanging effigies, and fires (Phillips 2006, 120). In North Dallas, residents targeted real estate dealers who were planning to sell homes to blacks with a hanging effigy. *Dallas Morning News* articles began to highlight these stories in August as white property owners began to have meetings with real estate agents pressuring them to leave their areas (Dallas Morning News 1940, Dallas Morning News 1940). In South Dallas, effigies were hung on Myrtle Street warning blacks to stay away from the neighborhood (Dallas Morning News 1940). By September, tensions concerning segregation and Negro housing had become violent. On September 11, 1940, a bombing attempt was made in North Dallas on a home owned by a black family. This was followed by the bombing of a home in South Dallas less than a week later. Over 15 months, there would be more than 16 bombing of Negro homes in Dallas (See Figures 12 through 14).

Two homes in open areas were targeted twice, one of which, 3731 Oakland, was owned by Doctor Phillip M. Sunday<sup>4</sup> (Galloway 2013). These bombings were less than two blocks from the new additions in the segregated area. By their very fact, they served as deterrents for other ambitious potential black homebuyers and their location, so close to the additions, acted as a physical buttress that confined South Dallas blacks to the area below Hatcher.

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<sup>4</sup> One of the streets in the Bonton addition was named after Dr. Sunday, an African-American physician



## ***Another Bombing***

Dallas police believe they have a workable clue in the newest bombing outrage, the explosion at 3401 San Jacinto apparently aimed at George Ripley's model village for Negroes. Fortunately, the damage in this case was slight and no personal injury occurred. The fact remains that there was damage, that it could have been more serious. It is to be hoped that the police are right, that the accepted clue leads not only to identification and arrest, but conviction with punishment fitted to the callous enormity of the crime.

Just to keep the record straight, here is a partial list of offenses against domiciles by bombing or otherwise in the racial controversy here:

October 1, 1940. Bombing.  
October 24. Incendiary fire.  
October 25. Bombing.  
December 3. Bombing.  
December 21. Bombing.  
January 13, 1941. Two bombings.  
January 17. Bombing.  
February 3. Bombing.  
February 11. Bombing.  
March 6. Bombing.  
April 14. Bombing.  
May 8. Bombing.  
Thirteen offenses. No arrests. No convictions.  
Thirteen hits. No runs. Thirteen errors.

Figure 12: May 10, 1941 *Dallas Morning News* Article

# Bombing of House Fails In Renewal of Race Trouble



—News Staff Photo.

A crude bomb, containing six sticks of dynamite, planted in a house at 2618 Lobdell, is shown as it was examined by Detectives V. S. Smart (left) and M. A. Shaw.

## Explosive Placed In Dwelling Next To Negro Home

Race trouble flared anew in South Dallas Tuesday night when three unidentified white men attempted to bomb an unoccupied house at 2618 Lobdell, at Exline Park, next door to a house into which a Negro family moved Tuesday morning.

Six sticks of dynamite, taped together and fused, were found by police in a brown paper bag lying in the middle of the living room floor soon after Negroes next door saw the men break into the house about 9:30 p.m. The fuse had been lit, but had gone out before reaching the denotating cap inside the bomb.

The attempted bombing was first discovered by Clyde Surrell, 5043 Marne, who was visiting Lewis Gay, 2622 Lobdell, next door. Surrell heard a noise and looked out the window to investigate. He saw three men pick the screen of a front window, raise the window and climb inside carrying a bundle. A moment later he saw the flare of a match from inside the house. After the men left, he called police.

### Bomb Made by Amateur.

Officers Bob Erwin and W. A. Davis were first to reach the house and found the bomb. Not knowing whether it was still lit, Erwin picked it up and cut off the charred portion of fuse.

Further examination of the crude bomb by Detectives V. S. Smart and M. A. Shaw indicated that the ends of the fuse had been dipped in turpentine before being lit and that the turpentine flame had not lasted long enough to light the slow-burning fuse.

Construction of the bomb indicated that it was devised by an amateur. The six sticks of dynamite were taped together in groups of three, with a denotating cap in each bundle. A long fuse connected to one package of explosive had been lighted and another shorter-length fuse connected it to the other package.

### Near Recent Dynamiting.

The house, owned by Mrs. Grady Thrasher, 5718 Goodwin, was recently built and was for sale. She also owned the property at 2622 Lobdell, which was sold to the family which moved Tuesday morning.

It was in the same neighborhood that a garage door was dynamited on Sept. 16 some weeks after residents hung a Negro in effigy in protest to their moving into the neighborhood.

Figure 13: October 2, 1940 Dallas Morning News Article



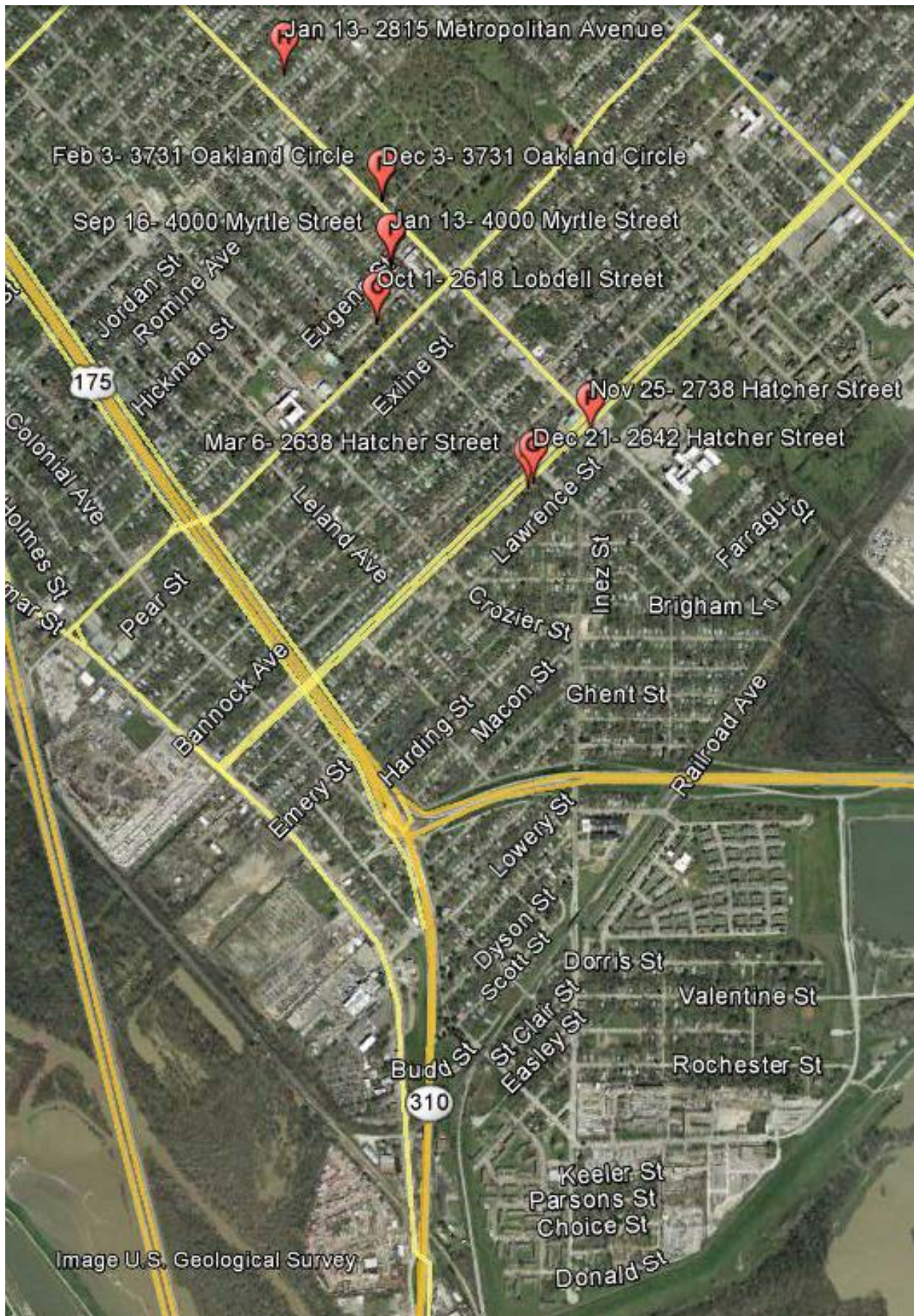


Figure 14: Geotagged Google Earth Map of 1940 Bombings in South Dallas

After WWII, a number of black returning soldiers moved into new homes in South Dallas. Racial tensions sparked again as the city became concentrated with blacks, who were being kept out of certain areas:

As blacks started to come home from the war, come home from WWII, they had problems with these men not wanting to live in substandard housing anymore. They'd gone to school under the GI Bill, they had different sense of pride now that they had gone to the war. They had gone and fought Hitler, and fought for democracy abroad, and they had a thing called the double V - Victory at home and victory abroad - and so a lot of them really believed in the American dream. So when they got home they didn't want to live in the ghetto anymore, so as they moved out you started having some bombing on the edge of North Dallas, and then in the mid 50s you started having bombings over in South Dallas. People would buy houses and the next night somebody would throw dynamite into their house and blow up their house and bring in that fear (Dallas resident, Donald Payton).

A decade after the initial string of bombings, on February 8, 1950, the bombing of black homes resumed in Dallas. This series of bombings lasted 6 months and targeted 6 homes and was attributed to the severe lack of housing available for the growing black population of Dallas.

While those responsible for the bombings of 1940 were never apprehended, Pete Garcia was arrested for leading the group responsible for one of the 1950s' bombings (See Figure 15). As a Mexican-American, Garcia was concerned that he would be associated with new black residents and lose his marginal "white status." He sought "ethnic promotion" by bombing "socially mobile blacks" (Phillips 2006, 125). Garcia enlisted the help of others who aspired to "preserve the boundary between black and white." He placed "For Whites Only" signs "in the yards of families agreeing not to sell their South Dallas homes to black families" and "threatened other families at knifepoint to maintain the ban" (Phillips 2006, 124). Garcia determined "oppression of his black neighbors provided a quick route to whiteness," which was equivalent a quick route to social capital (Phillips 2006).

# 5 MORE INDICTED IN BOMBING CASES

## Machinist Billed by Jury For Arson by Explosives

Five more men were indicted Thursday for bombing and arson of South Dallas property that had been sold to Negroes.

One of the men, Pete Garcia, 26-year-old machinist, was billed for arson by explosives against a house at 2515 Marburg June 3, 1950. The house is next door to Garcia's home.

The other four had been charged two weeks ago with "straight" arson in two gasoline-started fires at a house at 4518 Leland. They are T. D. Peacock Jr., 24, of Fort Worth; Burl Foster, 30, of Mesquite; Elmer Henry (Red) White, 42, of 1422 Harlandale; and Dowell C. (Cotton) Bailey, 37, of 3600 Samuel Boulevard.

Deputy Chief of Police Harry T. Riddell said the burning of the Leland Avenue house followed "the same pattern and the same purpose" as the bombings. He added, "The Leland job was done for pay," but did not elaborate.

The special Dallas County grand jury, in returning the indictments to Criminal Dist. Judge Robert A. (Bob) Hall, issued a statement strongly hinting that more indictments were coming.

The statement gave added weight to Riddell's assertion that the gasoline arson and the bombings were inspired alike by racial discord. It made a fervent plea for "understanding and tolerance from all citizens of Dallas."

Garcia, whose name had not been mentioned before in connection with either type of arson, was arrested at his work bench in a Grand Prairie plant by Riddell, Ranger Capt. Bob Crowder and Capt. L. W. Moore of the fire marshal's office, a couple of hours after the indictment was returned.

A big, husky man, Garcia protested his innocence. He told a reporter, "They just picked me up for something I didn't do." He had his car keys in his pocket, but refused to tell the officers where the car was parked.

Riddell said he had picked up Garcia the night of the Marburg Street bombing for questioning, "but I had to release him." Garcia was not among the many persons who have been brought before the special grand jury for questioning about the eleven bombings.

The bomb Garcia is charged with planting wrecked the interior of the house at 2515 Marburg. Garcia himself lives at 2519 Marburg. The vacant house had been sold by Louis Schleich, white, to J. L. Staten, a Negro. The Schleich family had just moved out the day the bomb was planted and detonated.

White and Bailey were indicted  
See BOMBING, Page 16, Col. 2



—Dallas News Staff Photo.  
Pete Garcia. . . . "Something I didn't do."

Figure 15: August 31, 1951 *Dallas Morning News* Article



A few weeks following the bombing in February, the *Dallas Morning News* printed an article evaluating the housing problem (See Figure 16). As they discussed actions to house over 40,000 black residents in a “Negro city”, they included a map showing the current sections where 75,000 blacks lived adding that “they cannot expand without spilling into white sections” (Lyle, Pelt Recommends Site For Negro Community 1950). Included in this map are the new additions in South Dallas. Similar to the 1940s bombings, most of the bombings of the 1950s took place in the block above Hatcher (See Figure 17 and 18).



This map shows the Negroes' housing plight in Dallas. In the shaded areas, most of the city's 75,000 Negroes live, spotted in between white neighborhoods. They can not expand without spilling over into white sections. The broad line is the Central Expressway route which touches most of the major Negro developments, including the Hall-Thomas area and scattered ones in South Dallas. City Councilman Roland Pelt Saturday recommended a new area to build an entire Negro city.

Figure 16: February 26, 1950s *Dallas Morning News* Article



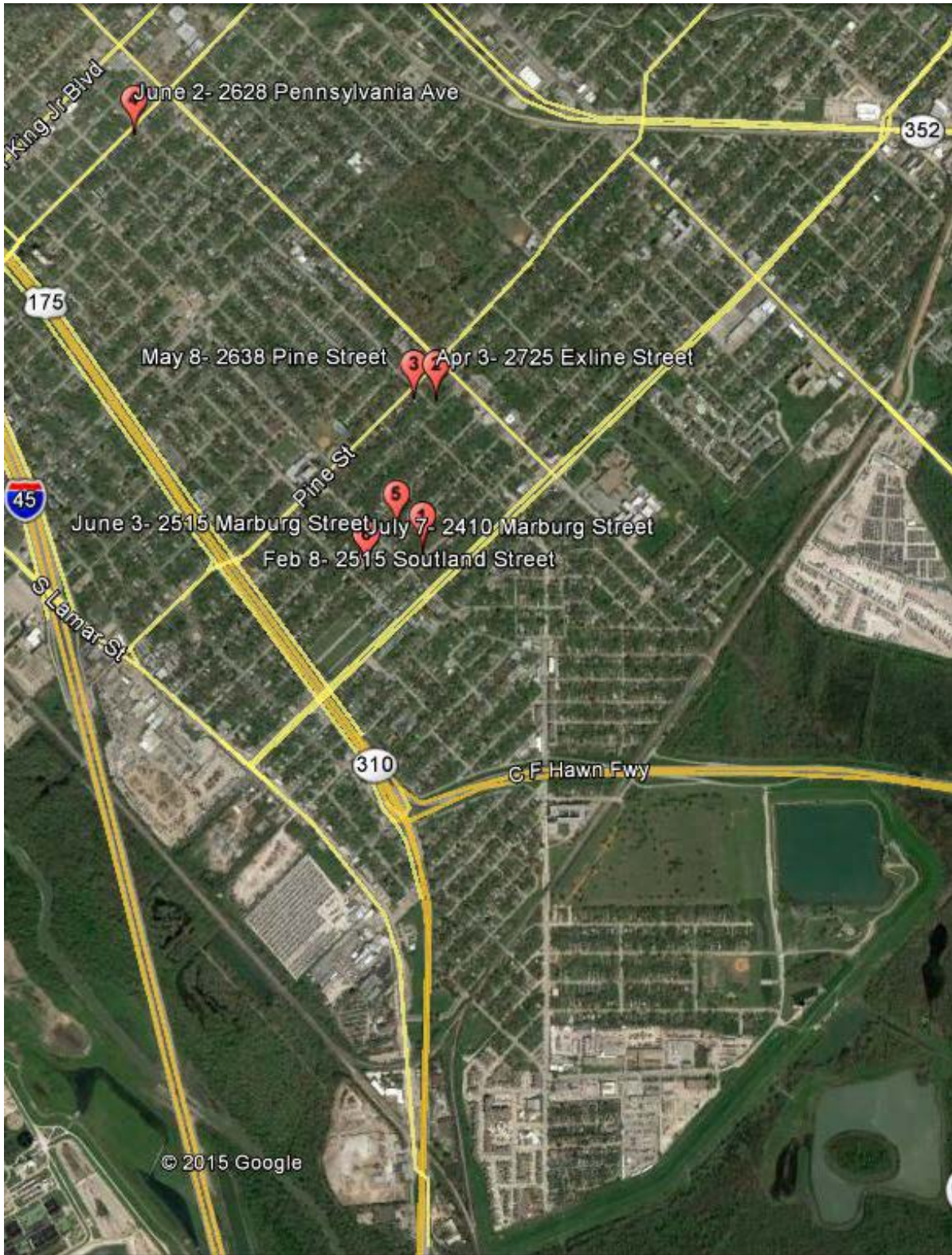


Figure 17: Geotagged Google Earth Map of 1950 Bombings in South Dallas

## Mysterious Bombing

To The News:

Not long ago a Negro couple purchased a dwelling in a so-called white district. Upon preparing to move in the house, it was mysteriously bombed, making it impossible for the new owners to move in.

If the city can not rid the citizens of drastic actions, why isn't it possible for its objectors to come out into the open rather than use communistic tactics?

It shows a streak of cowardice, a great deal of hatred and a lack of intelligence, yet the guilty party or parties probably argue the Scriptures, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

The colored citizens of Dallas have no desire to be "chums" with their Anglo-Saxon neighbors; however they do desire a decent place to live.

The colored people must work too hard and too long to acquire a savings and then have it bombed in a few minutes.

RALPH MATTHIS.

4000 Myrtle, Dallas.

Of course those Negroes want the privilege of buying property in white communities where they should not want to be, but they want the city to furnish a squad of police to "protect" them day and night, although it would be cheaper and much better in every way if they will quit trying to force themselves in where they are not wanted, as there are plenty of places where they can get homes without devaluating the property of white people who have spent many years in getting homes for themselves.

G. E. SEARS.

1007 1/2 Main, Dallas.

## Shame of Dallas

To The News:

Is Dallas a city to be proud of? I should say not! What with the contentious bombing of Negro dwellings.

When the people of intellect and foresight realize the desperate need for decent Negro housing, such things will stop.

BETTY JANE ADAMS.

5917 Vickery Boulevard, Dallas.



Today the situation in Dallas seems to be exactly what it was in the days of the Ku Klux and the Ford outrages, except that the gangsters and anarchists of 1950 use dynamite. The Dallas police seem unable or unwilling to do anything except stall. I think it is time for the Mayor to recognize this and to call on the Governor for Rangers to help us. If the Rangers can not do the job, the Mayor and the Governor should call on the Federal Government for help.

GEORGE CLIFTON EDWARDS.

1603-A Main Street, Dallas 2.

Figure 18: 1950 Letters from Readers to the *Dallas Morning News*

In response to rising complaints about lack of black housing and bombings in white neighborhoods, the city began implementing plans to solve the issue by building public housing projects:

You started getting the housing projects as a result of the overcrowding because you had migrations. You had people leaving East Texas moving up to Dallas for jobs and better education and better opportunities...and then you had the returning veterans, you had one set that were returning from WWII and then you had the second set who were coming home from Korea, so you've got to do something about the housing and so you had a national project building. Chicago had it. New York had it. Philadelphia had it. Dallas had it. It was a national plan to basically warehouse people (Dallas resident, Donald Payton).

With so many blacks attempting to move into neighborhoods above Hatcher in South Dallas, the city identified this location as a target area to place additional black housing. After the completion of the Jewel Courts addition, plans were implemented to build two public housing projects and two more additions along the bottom of Bexar Street. A large portion of houses within the Bonton Addition were torn down in order for the building of the Turner Courts apartments (Ingram 2015). Rhoads Terrace was located behind the new permanent H. S. Thompson Elementary School building ending slightly above Doris Street. Similar to the streets in the area, both housing projects were named after successful black men - attorney J. L. Turner and Dr. Joseph J. Rhoads. With 294 units, Turner Courts welcomed their first family on November 15, 1952. The larger of the two, with 426 units, Rhoads Terrace opened April 25, 1953 (See Figure 21 and 22). By 1953, development in the area below Hatcher Street was complete with a total of 21 additions (See Figures 19 and 20, and Table 2).



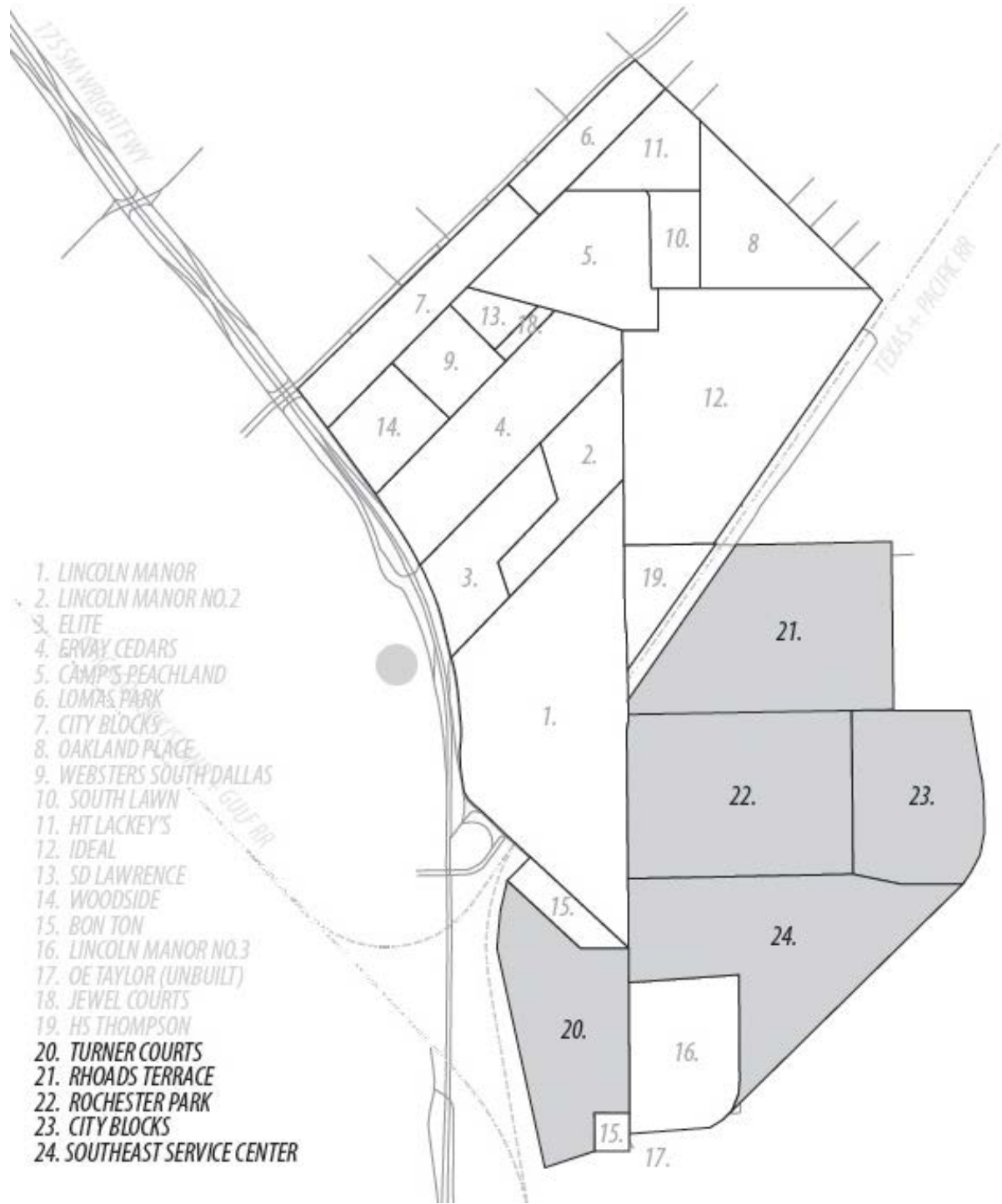


Figure 19: 1952-1953 Additions (Kunz 2014).

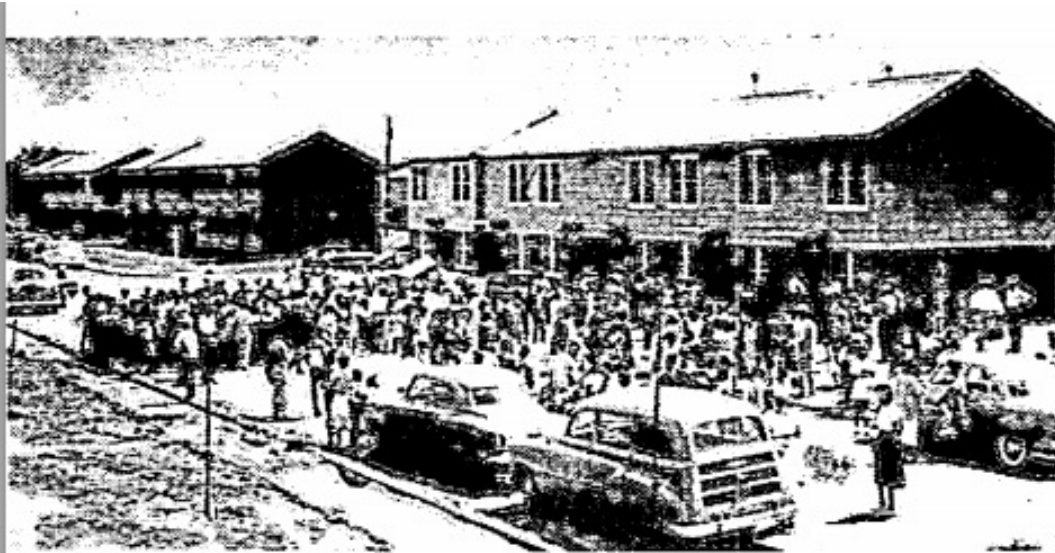


Figure 20: 2001 Google Earth Map of South Dallas Additions

Addition	Year Completed	Number of Units
Lincoln Manor	1913	212
Lincoln Manor No.2	1913	731
Lomas Park	1913	218
Ervay Cedars	1913	161
Camp's Peachland	1913	96
Elite	1915	50
City Blocks	1919	
Oakland Place	1921	100
Websters South Dallas	1922	32
South Lawn	1923	35
HT Lackey's	1924	50
Ideal	1924	271
SD Lawrence	1925	22
Woodside	1927	71
Bonton	1932	29
Lincoln Manor No. 3	1932	158
Jewel Courts	1940	10
Turner Courts	1952	294
Rhoads Terrace	1953	426
Rochester Park	1953	
City Blocks	1953	

Table 2: South Dallas Additions





## Living Units Opened With Ceremonies

Rhoads Terrace, a 426-unit Negro housing development in Southeast Dallas, was opened formally Saturday with ceremonies attended by Mayor J. B. Adoue Jr.

The project is in the vicinity of Bexar Street and the H&TC railroad and consists of seventy-one buildings, each containing six apartments.

The enterprise represents the fourth Negro housing development to be completed by the Dallas Housing Authority, and completes the original program authorized by the City Council for 1,000 units for low-income Negro families.

Two hundred and two families moved into the project Saturday.

Construction is of brick veneer on the first floor and asbestos siding on the second. Variety of design was effected by minor floor-plan changes, use of three kinds of brick, three of siding and three of roofing. Commercial and educational facilities are nearby.

The development was named in honor of Dr. Joseph J. Rhoads, former principal of Booker T. Washington High School who later assumed the presidency of Bishop College at Marshall.

Architects were Tatum and Quade. Fill work was done by Forrest and Cotton, and the construction was by A. J. Rife Construction Company.



### NEW HOUSING UNITS OPENED

Upper photo shows a general view of part of the 426-unit Rhoads Terrace housing unit opened Saturday for low-income Negro families. Lower photo shows, left to right, Louis Tobin, chairman of the Dallas Housing Authority; C. B. Bunkley Jr., president of the Negro Chamber of Commerce, and Mayor J. B. Adoue Jr., at the ribbon-cutting ceremonies.

Figure 21: April 26, 1953 *Dallas Morning News* Article



Figure 22: First family Moves into the Turner Courts Housing Project

### *City Planning Projects*

Milton Baker, Bonton resident, born in the 1950s recollected what it was like growing up in Bonton:

We didn't have the paved roads down there, we had dirt roads. We used to have to improvise when it came to games because we didn't have a lot of the games...I realize that a lot of children today don't know nothing about marbles, spinning tops, yoyos, things of that. We also had to make our own skateboards from regular skates. We played stickball in the park in the projects and we used to go swim in the neighborhood lakes that was there...this guy had some horses near the Trinity River and we used to go down and get his horses and ride them, bring them back up and ride them in the projects and anybody that was outside that could get on the horse—they would get back on the horse...and when we'd cut them loose they'd go back to their



habitat where they were originally staying which would be in the woods down by the Trinity River (Bonton resident, Milton Baker).



Figure 23: Ingram Family. From left to right, as related to Henrietta and Eather - Kenneth (nephew), James (brother), Larry (nephew)

All of the interviewed residents remembered South Dallas as being a tight-knit community when they were younger. Children took care and watched out for each other, neighbors disciplined them the same as their parents and home life was structured:

At that time everybody was kind of tight-knit because people knew each other. The neighbors looked out for everybody - your kids in the neighborhood...It's not like that in this day and time but back in the days everybody knew each other and everybody watched out for each other (Ideal resident, Mary Evans).

It was a close-knit family and the community was close-knit too because if you went down the street and you did something Mrs. Pride and them would say something "I'm going to tell your momma" and if you said something back they'd say "come here" and then they'd touch you up and send you home and you'd get touched up some more (Ideal resident, Jerry Hoover).

We couldn't even go outside until our homework was done, everything was done and properly... they didn't play...we had to sit down and eat at the table every day.

Momma had a meal, if it was nothing but beans and cornbread, we sat down and ate as a family (Ideal resident, Jackie Mixon).

As children, they were expected to stay close to the house:

There was a lady that lived on the corner of Ideal and Starks right down the street from us and she had a grocery store in the front of her house and she lived in the back...all of the kids on Starks there and a few on Macon, the next street, we would all gather up there at the streetlight on the weekend like on Friday nights, we would gather up under the streetlight there in front of her house and we would play hide and go seek and ball and stuff...that was as far as we could go (Ideal resident, Mildred Pride-Edwards).

We didn't have a playground, we made our playground in the street or in the yard. When my parents went to work, it was during the summer that we were out, we had to stay in the yard. We made our own games things like that... (Ideal resident, Eather Ingram Watson).

We would slip out of the yard every once in a while and go in the streets or next door but on Ghent Street we could see down to Bexar Street, and if we were outside playing and momma in the house and daddy's coming from work, see we could always look down to the end of the street, and if we see him we'd be back in that yard because we didn't want to get a whoopin' (Ideal resident, Henrietta Ingram).



Figure 24: Mildred Pride- Edwards

Although socially cohesive, the physical condition of the area was subpar. From completion of the first development in 1913 to the completion of the last development in 1953, this area of South Dallas lacked basic services. While there were improvements concerning electricity, indoor plumbing, and phone service, the streets continued to go unpaved, there was no sewage, and there was a lack of public transportation (See Figures 23 and 24). This was common in African-American neighborhoods:

Blacks have always had to move up from the back and so Bonton was kind of the back part of South Dallas and it was also developed in the floodplain because blacks couldn't own prime land, all of the land that we ever got was in the bottoms or the floodplain or frogtown (Dallas Resident, Donald Payton).

In April 1942, there was a major flood along the Trinity River. Older South Dallas residents remember flooding along the streets when they were children. Located in the floodplain, homes and businesses along Bexar Street were most susceptible to damage:

When it rains hard Bexar Street looks like a river...and all these streets out here, like all of them poured into Bexar Street (Ideal resident, Willert Dotson).

The street used to flood all of the time when it rained. We tried to play in the water like other kids did, but our parents didn't like us to go out there and wade in the water and walk in the water because the streets was full of water. Every time it rained it came over the railroad track (Ideal resident, Henrietta Ingram).

In response to the 1942 flood, residents were evacuated and received aid from the Red Cross at Lincoln High School (Flood Subsidies, But Deaths Reach 5; Rail, Highway Traffic Still Snarled 1942) (See Figures 25 and 26). Bexar Street continued to experience flooding until 1991.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Bexar Street experienced major flooding in 1942, 1949, 1957, 1964, 1989, 1990, and 1991.



Figure 25: Flooding in the Bonton Addition of Dallas along St. Clara Street

# Flood Subsides, but Deaths Reach 5; Rail, Highway Traffic Still Snarled

The death-toll of floodwaters that carried the Trinity River to its highest stage since 1908 mounted to five Tuesday as three more drownings were reported.

D. S. Rockey, 68, farm hand on the O. W. Reagin farm at the Kaufman-Dallas county line, was swept downstream on Elm Fork shortly after midnight while a 10-year-old boy looked on. His body has not been found.

**—Insert Flood Subsides 4-26**  
The 13-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Tucker was lost in East Fork late Monday night on the Tucker farm four miles southeast of Forney, in Dallas County. The boy was riding a mule and leading another out of a flooded pasture when the mule he was riding reared up and tossed him into the water. His body has not been found.

The body of John Crutchfield, 70, was recovered by County Commissioner Buck Frank and W. B. Thompson in a ditch 100 yards downstream from his home near Winstead Road and East Grand near White Rock Creek. He had

been warned to flee his home but had failed to do so.

The river was slowly receding Tuesday, except in the southern part of the county, where the crest was passing Tuesday night. Elm Fork, East Fork and West Fork were falling fairly rapidly. A. M. Hamrick, United States weather observer, said that no rain was in sight and that the flood danger in this section was over.

## Boat Dumps Its Occupants.

Rockey and a neighbor boy left a small house in the lowlands and herded cattle to high ground on an old highway. When the water rose to about four inches over the high ground, Lloyd Fowler went out and got them in a boat. While going back to land, the boat overturned. All caught hold of willow bushes, but Rockey was unable to hold on. The boy saw him swept down Elm Fork. The boy and Fowler righted the boat and got safely to land.

Six persons marooned for about an hour in tree tops in the White Rock bottoms near the Roosevelt Addition, off Second Avenue, were rescued at night by M. H. Doss of 311 West Louisiana. The marooned persons had escaped drowning by climbing into the trees after their boat overturned. Doss, who rescued fifteen persons Monday, was dispatched to the scene in his boat from the Sheriff's office.

The Trinity River crest passed Dallas about 3 a.m. Tuesday, Weather Observer Hamrick said. A 2 a.m. reading showed 45.43 feet, with the water rising slowly. The next reading at 7:30 a.m. registered

45 feet. At noon the gauge showed 44.2 feet and at 3:30 p.m. 43.5. The flood was two and one-half feet higher than the 1941 rise.

Water was running 3.3 feet over the Lake Dallas spillway at noon, compared with 2.6 feet Monday afternoon. Hamrick said this additional water will only slow down the drop in Elm Fork. At Carrollton Elm Fork registered 11.8 feet Tuesday morning. The crest Monday was 14.4 feet. East Fork showed 13.6 feet at Rockwall on Tuesday morning, after a crest of 24.82 feet Monday just before the levees broke there. West Fork was down to 10.5 feet at Fort Worth, after rising to 17.6 feet Monday.

## Traffic Still Disrupted.

Levees of Dallas County Levee District No. 2 broke above Malloy bridge Tuesday, flooding a wide expanse of rich land. This break and possible weakening of other levees will cause the water to spread out and lessen the height of the flood below on the Trinity.

The Weather Bureau said the river would continue to fall at Dallas, and would rise from Rosser, just below the mouth of East Fork, to Trinidad. The crest is due to reach Trinidad Sunday or Monday, when a forty-eight-foot stage may be expected.

Highway and railroad traffic was still disrupted by water over roads and bridges and by damaged roadbeds. The Texas & Pacific line was open westward and the Southern Pacific southward, but T. & P. trains to the east were being rerouted over other lines to Corsi-

cana, and the Katy was going by Fort Worth. The Katy stopped traffic over the Trinity River bridge south of Dallas for a time due to the high water. Other rail lines out of Dallas also were making extensive detours.

## Most Roads to Open Soon.

Among the main highways reported closed Tuesday were U.S. 67, between Rowlett and Rockwall; U.S. 80, west of Forney; U.S. 175, west of Forney and at White Rock Creek; U.S. 75, at Five-Mile Creek; State Highway 78, between Wylie and Lavon; State Highway 114, beyond Field Circle, and State Highway 183, at White Rock Creek. Many of these roads were expected to be open Wednesday. Bus lines were making many wide detours due to blocked roads.

Deputy sheriffs moved their ac-

See FLOOD on Page 11.

## Flood

CONTINUED FROM FIRST PAGE.

tivities to the southern part of the county Tuesday night as the flood crept down the Trinity. Residents of the Wilmer section were warned to watch for rising waters. A boat was kept on hand in that section by deputies in event it was needed for rescue work. Many persons were moved from their homes to higher ground near Hutchins.

Deputies J. H. Wortham and Henry White worked most of Monday night removing Negroes out of the Roosevelt Gardens area. Deputies Bill Bietendorf and Vernon Sanford rescued a family from high waters near Irving and warned many others.

Five Negroes were moved from a two-story house at the end of Bexar Street, near Metzger's Dairy, by Deputy Jim Townsend. Two other Negroes refused to move out. Houston Viaduct Still Closed.

Deputy Ed Caster, on duty on flooded Second Avenue, said a Negro family was living in the attic of its home near Roosevelt Gardens and refused to move. About forty Negroes remained on an island in that section. During the day the Red Cross sent 300 pounds of feed for their stock and a big batch of sandwiches and coffee. Negroes removed from this flooded section are being cared for at the Lincoln High School.

Many homes in South Dallas along Lamar Street near Forest and on side streets off Lamar were flooded Tuesday, but the water was falling fairly rapidly. Old-timers in this area, which is below the levees, said the water appeared about three feet lower than the record flood of 1903.

The Houston Street Viaduct was closed to traffic Tuesday and will remain blocked until the condition of a weakened pier in the main channel can be checked. This viaduct was constructed many years before the levees of the City and County of Dallas Levee Improvement District were built. The other viaducts, all high above the flood waters and showing no signs of strain, were built between the levees after they were thrown up.

Figure 26: April 22, 1942 Dallas Morning News Article



Bounded by railroad tracks, the residents in the additions became accustomed to the trains (See Figure 27). Willard would walk on the H & T.C. Railroad tracts with his friends as the steam engines went by (Dotson 2015). Eather reflected that the train "would be so noisy, but after living so long in that area you get kind of used to it" (Ingram 2015).

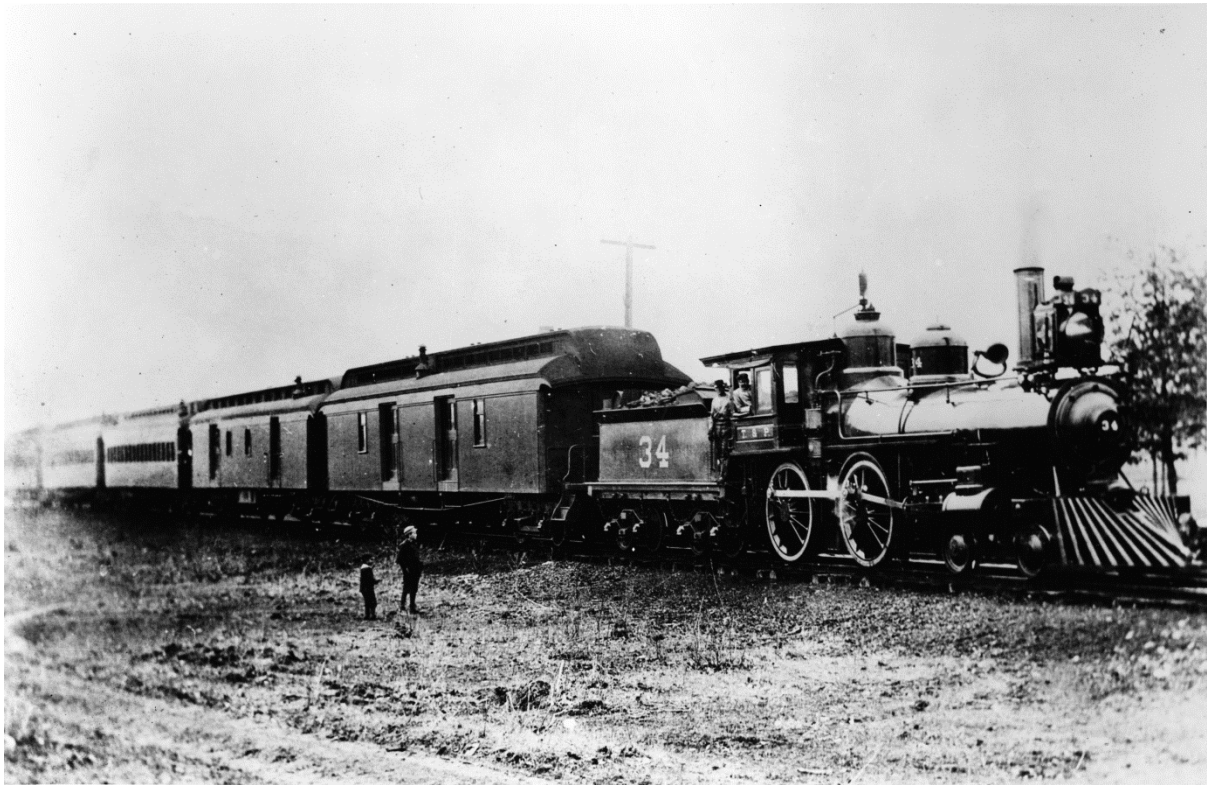


Figure 27: T & P Railroad Engine Number 34 with Two Small Boys Standing Near

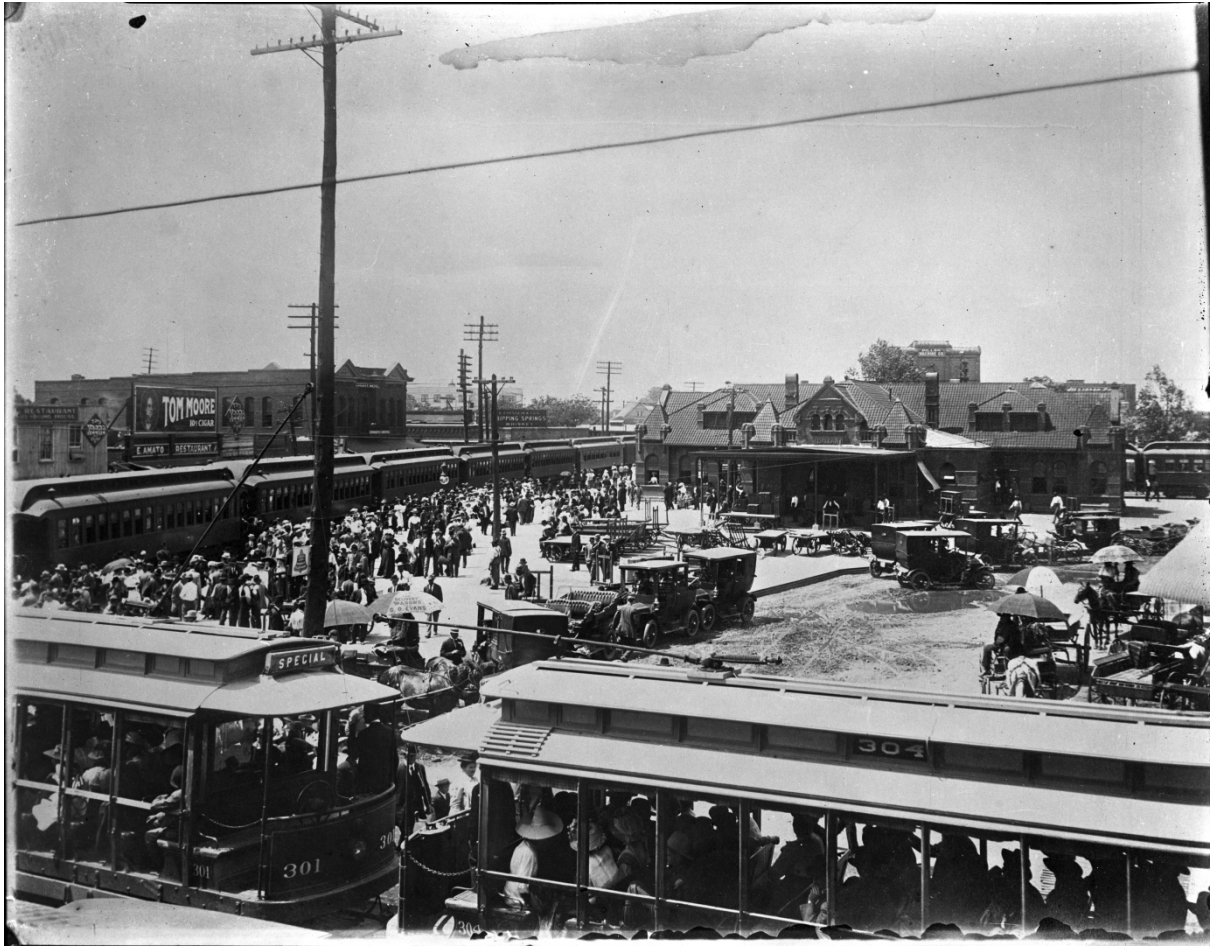


Figure 28: H. & T. C. Depot, Train Arriving and Streetcar in Foreground. H. & T. C. Railroad, neighboring the South Dallas additions provided jobs and, in addition to streetcars, public transportation to blacks in the area.

From the beginning, the area was accessible by streetcar (See Figure 28). However, the public transportation system was unable to accommodate the daily activities of large numbers of black South Dallas residents in the 1950s. With over 2,000 families living along Bexar Street, and 900 of them lacking transportation, the city began to approve bids for city improvement contracts (Dallas Morning News 1950, Bus Line to Serve Bexar Street Area Receives Approval 1951).

During this time there larger improvements happened throughout Dallas. In addition to the widening of streets, Dallas began freeway expansion. In 1949, the Central Expressway Project was implemented to remove the H. & T. C. railroad tracks and build an additional section to US 175- South Central Expressway (See Figure 29). The construction of freeways led to more black families, like Ideal resident Mary Evans', moving to South Dallas.



Figure 29: US 175 South Central Expressway replaced H. & T. C. Railroad in 1949. South Central Expressway, later renamed SM Wright Freeway, would become the new western boundary to the additions (**Kunz 2014**)



As city planning projects promoting automobile transportation in the 1950s increased, projects supporting public transportation decreased. Improvements in South Dallas significantly changed the area during this time (Action Due on Street, Sewer Jobs 1957, Council Sets Hearing on Paving Plans 1957, Dallas Plans \$10,500,000 Street Jobs 1943). By 1957, Bexar street was widened and paved, sewers included, streetcars removed, and bus stops added (\$1,244,733 Bids Taken by Council 1950, Bus Line to Serve Bexar Street Area Receives Approval 1951, City to Study Bexar Paving Job Tuesday 1950, Bus Service Planned for Negro Area 1950) (See Figures 30 and 31).

## **Bus Service Planned for Negro Area**

The Dallas Railway & Terminal Company has proposed bus service for 2,000 Negro families in the area south of Hatcher between Central and the T&NO Railroad, City Public Utilities Supervisor J. W. Monk said Monday.

The area has been a problem for years. Most of the streets are narrow, muddy in rainy weather, and it was considered impossible to put in extensive public transportation.

The City Council Tuesday will open bids on paving and widening Bexar Street, opening the way for public transportation. The DR&T has said it will operate a feeder bus line on Bexar from the end of the Myrtle Street car line, near Myrtle and Bexar (crosswise to the Bon Ton addition near the railroad.

Originally, a street car line down Bexar had been discussed, but apparently was ruled out. Some residents of the area have had to walk more than a mile through muddy streets to public transportation.

The new service will start when street conditions permit. A further extension over Hatcher is also being considered to serve the 400-unit Southern Terrace Apartments for Negroes.

To prepare for the extension, DR&T will ask the City Council Tuesday to approve a \$4,085 expenditure of DR&T money to make streetcar trackage changes.

A 3-block section of tracks on Bexar between Myrtle and Macon will be abandoned. The section will be served by bus. The Myrtle Street tracks will be rebuilt, and the street paved from Lawrence to Bexar. Cars on this line will again use the Lincoln High School terminal at Myrtle and Council.

Figure 30: May 16, 1950 *Dallas Morning News* Article



Figure 31: Photo from Resident Mary Evans Showing the Paved Streets in South Dallas

In 1953 plans were implemented to construct a freeway from Dallas to Kaufman Counties. Beginning in 1960, the construction of US 175, later named C. F. Hawn freeway, would go straight through the additions in South Dallas (See Figure 32).

Homes in Lincoln Manor, Lincoln Manor No 2, Elite, and Ideal were demolished to make way for the freeway and service roads:

There was a church right there on the corner where the police station is...a big nice church which is now Mount Horan. It's up on Carpenter now. They had to move their church up on Carpenter, off of Malcolm X. There was housing ...all along and back off...where the freeway is. Nothing but houses (Ideal resident, Mary Evans).

The freeway acted as a physical division between two parts of the area that affected the way residents began to interact and see each other. These physical divisions manifested into social divisions that led to the formation of two separate neighborhoods - Ideal to the north and Bonton to the south - where there had once been only one (See Figure 33).



Figure 32: Map of US 175 C. F. Hawn Freeway (Kunz 2014).

No one is sure why the addition names Bon-Ton and Ideal, became larger names for the whole neighborhoods, but many residents speculate. Many residents refer to Bonton<sup>6</sup> as Bomb Town, in connection to the racialized bombings in the 1940s and 1950s, while others attribute Bonton as a variation of the French word for “good times”-“*bon temps*”:

The Bonton area is the area where blacks who lived on Eugene and Pine Street and other areas and communities north of Hatcher fled when whites started bombing their homes on those streets... Bonton is a corrupted French version of “good times” but it was actually meant to be Bomb Town. Ideal is named for the street that runs... Ideal street ran right along the western side of the church but it was always kind of ironic that that was called the ‘ideal neighborhood’ and was at the same time kind of fractured both culturally but also when you hear about the stories of some of the families that lived there and the way they looked after one another and cared for one another I think that it made for a much more ‘ideal’ community than it grew to be...But there was a cohesiveness that existed to it up until the building of the CF Hawn freeway and that’s kind of what cut that neighborhood in two (Dallas resident, Rev. Gerald Britt, Jr.).

Residents who were alive prior to the completion of CF Hawn Freeway, or 175, still relate to South Dallas in terms of additions:

[T]he railroad track that separated Bonton all the way up there all the way down through to Lamar and then it was called Lincoln Manor at that time and then you go across Hatcher and it was called queen city (Ideal resident, Willert Dotson).

[A]s far as I know this addition has always been considered the Ideal Addition because that’s what’s on the deeds and the tax records - Ideal Addition. From Hatcher on back...just before you go under the railroad track (Ideal resident, Mildred Pride-Edwards).

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<sup>6</sup> Unlike the hyphenated name for the addition (Bon-Ton), the neighborhood name is referred to as Bonton.





Figure 33: 2001 Google Earth Map of Ideal (Blue) and Bonton (Red) Neighborhoods

After the construction of CF Hawn, residents began to redraw neighborhood

boundaries with Ideal to the north of 175 and Bonton to the south:

From Hatcher all the way back is considered Ideal Addition...to H. S. Thompson and once you go under the railroad track, that's considered Bon-Ton Addition (Ideal resident, Mildred Pride-Edwards).

175. Right there where H. S. Thompson Elementary School is. Once you go right there and you go to that bridge that's over top – that's the boundary right there. Ideal is up there to Hatcher and Bonton is there on down to the end (Bonton resident, Ethel Harris).

However, some residents considered all of South Dallas to be Bonton:

For Bonton and Ideal the boundaries are, to the north, are Hatcher Street to Malcolm X... it spans a little bit to 175 and looping back up to Hatcher in the west... I think once you pass H. S. Thompson everybody calls everything south of that Bonton (Dallas resident, Rev. Gerald Britt, Jr.).

The tracks up to Hatcher... all of that is basically Bonton... as you turn off Hatcher coming down on Bexar, the beginning of there to this dead end...is Bonton (Bonton resident, Marilyn Kimbrough).

Bonton literally, without the politics, Bonton literally is probably from Hatcher, Lincoln High School on back to Turner Courts to the levee back there...If you want to talk about streets then it's probably Hatcher Street, 175 and Carlton/Garrett...all of this is Bonton...but what the city said is that Bonton is from 175 on back...we always knew it as Lincoln on back as Bonton (Bonton resident, Clifton Reese).

In addition to physical bounds, the division of Bonton and Ideal is seen through economic and social perspectives as well:

I would think the most clearly established differences are differences in terms of poverty...It's the difference between poor and more poor. Everything in Bonton is more poor than everything in Ideal and every other pathology that exists between poor and more poor is associated with those two areas (Dallas resident, Rev. Gerald Britt, Jr.).

We used to have a saying where we used to call it the high end and the low end. That was the high end that we called it... when we'd get up that way we'd say "oh that's the high end" (Bonton resident, Milton Baker).

Bonton resident Milton Baker noted that although South Dallas was a small neighborhood, it was comprised of three communities - "people what wasn't of the projects," those that lives in Turner Courts, and those that lived in Rhoads Terrace (Baker 2015) (See Figures 34 and 35).

Willard noted that, while growing up, there were small rivalries between those that lived in the Ideal neighborhood and those that lived in Bonton:

[W]hen I used to be on my bicycle and go down there and those boys would chunk me...they called them the Bonton raiders down there when I was a kid and called us the Lincoln Manor raiders...if you went down there you'd get rocked like you was a dog and that's the way them boys would chunk us if we went down there, but that didn't stop me (Ideal resident, Willert Dotson).

This didn't change as time passed:

[W]hen we grew up that's when the Rhoads Terrace and Turner Courts was there...it seems as though it was a little different living down there and up here. Some of them would follow us home and try to beat us up, from Bonton, it seems as though they used to tell us that we are no better just because we were living in a house and they were living in the projects. There was a certain time of night or day that we couldn't be caught down there if we lived up here. It's still that way today. Some of the kids come to center here and they're always trying to fight them down there in Bonton. They be saying, "So and so hit me as soon as they got off the bus" (Ideal resident, Jackie Mixon).

Much of this was due to stigma associated with Bonton:

All of my friends stayed in Bonton and my mom didn't let us go into Bonton, that was off-limits to us because at the time that was pretty rough... It was a rough area back in the days when I grew up... (Ideal resident, Mary Evans).

People were scared to come to Bonton because of what they heard... you know cause you know Bonton had a reputation at that time... "There's BAD folks down there..." and people didn't want to go down there and get beat down you know from other folks... (Ideal resident, Mary Evans).

I think it's a disconnect between what they call Ideal and Bonton because a lot of people when they hear Bonton they think of the prostitution and the gang violence and all of the criminal activity that was going on... so they want to keep that distance from us (Bonton resident, Clifton Reese).

Jerry Hoover talks about stigma attached to the projects and what that meant:

[T]hey believed that a lot of mischief was going and happening in the projects and a lot of mischief was happening outside of the projects so it was like this – if you would do something outside of the projects everybody believed (or at least the group I ran with) that if you made it to the projects it was over...and the police believed that...certain times police wouldn't go up into certain areas of the projects... (Ideal resident, Jerry Hoover).

In response to the perceptions and activities taking place in the apartments in Bonton, the city implemented a curfew. Main figures in this decision included Bill Decker, Dallas

County sheriff from 1948 until 1970, and Henry Wade, Dallas District Attorney from 1951 until 1987:

I recall when we was growing up they used to lock Rhoads Terrace up... Bill Decker who was the sheriff at that time... Henry Wade who was the DA... you know – Roe vs. Wade – he was the DA at that time and on the weekends Mr. Wade and Sheriff Bill Decker would come down there as soon as it got dark and close those gates and lock them up at 12 o'clock just as you go across the track... if you was in the projects and going out you would have to climb over the fence but what we used to do is we had dug holes up under the fence and then the working people who lived in the projects – if they didn't make that curfew there would be cars lined up all along H. S. Thompson on Bethurum Street (Ideal resident, Jerry Hoover).



Figure 34: Turner Courts Public Housing Project





Figure 35: Rhoads Terrace Public Housing Project

Similar to childhood rivalries between Ideal and Bonton, there were rivalries between Turner Courts and Rhoads Terrace:

[W]e kind of had a rivalry – Rhoads Terrace. We would compete in sports. We would meet up. We had the big park and we would entertain each other in rivalry situations when it came to sports... Turner Courts wasn't as fast to open up to people outside as Rhoads Terrace was... (Bonton resident, Milton Baker).

Marilyn Kimbrough was drawn to buying an apartment in Turner Courts at the age of 17 because she felt a sense of community. This changed over the years:

When I first came here they was connected. They was all together. They never separated themselves. They was together – you know? It was like Rhoads Terrace they knew all the residents from Turner Courts because they had been knowing each other all their lives so it was like they was more together... but as I stayed when the younger generation came up it seemed like they started separating themselves... But then as it moved on like close to the 2000s they all came back because the elder people there weren't having it... (Bonton resident, Marilyn Kimbrough).

### Downgrading and Thinning Out

#### *Bexar Street*

As the area began to fill with black families, Bexar Street began to become the center of activity in the 1950s. Jerry remembered what it was like being drawn to Bexar as a child:

We wasn't supposed to leave that front yard, but I would sit up on that curb and I would look up here on Bexar Street and from where we lived at I could hear music and I could hear people laughing and... I was real curious when I was young... So I'd come up on Bexar and see... you know "it seems like they're having a good time up here...I think I was attracted to that excitement." Bexar Street in the era I came along in, Bexar Street was jumpin'...it would be an integration of all types of people. There would be working class type people, there would be street people, there would be bums and everybody would be right there just having a good time... (Ideal resident, Jerry Hoover).

Due to its location, Bexar Street provided various venues of entertainment, food, and retail stores to South Dallas, many of which were black-owned:

Along Bexar Street a lot of the businesses was owned by blacks... You had Ben Bowman - which owned a shoe store... He owned a café and then you had the iceman... We had an iceman in the neighborhood that delivered ice. He and his wife had a beauty shop across the street... Quickies the big supermarket there that was the biggest supermarket we had in the neighborhood and then we had another store,

which was Reiners. Then we had a liquor store on the corner of Macon and Bexar Street (Ideal resident, Mary Evans).

“We’d go and play music and stay out at the malt shop all night and all day until the malt shop closed... like the Happy Days, we had our own like malt... during those days we would get on the bus and stuff and just ride... a lot of the bus drivers knew us from the community and they would let us ride and say “just get on the bus and don’t be bothering anybody” so it was good. It was well (Bonton resident, Milton Baker).

These businesses gave economic vitality to the community:

They were small businesses...I know they look kind of trashy now, but I know when I was growing up they were serious legitimate businesses...there was actually a black-owned theatre on Bexar Street and my mother tells me stories of her going to that theatre. So you had some businesses there...that actually provided that type of vitality, that economic vitality that keeps those neighborhoods going (Dallas resident, Rev. Gerald Britt, Jr.).

Most businesses were small cafes, barbershops and salons, or convenience stores. There were also candy stores and comic book stores. Of the businesses in the 1950s most remembered was the Lincoln Theatre:

Lincoln Theatre! I’ll never forget that. Lincoln Theatre was a movie house that everybody went to on Fridays and Saturdays and Sundays. My dad used to take me and my sister and he’d get off of work on Fridays and he’d take me and my sister to the Theatre and stay there at the Theatre with us until we got through looking at the movies and stuff. It was a good Theatre...That was the only black Theatre in this area... (Ideal resident, Mary Evans).

Opened in 1947, Lincoln Theatre was a black-owned business where many children frequented on the weekend with their parents and friends:

The ones that went on Saturday was the younger ones... the older ones might have went on Saturday, but they would go later because they would have a movie called the “midnight movie” or “midnight show”... so they would go later. So most of the kids were there were teenagers like 13, 15 and under... all the kids go during the day... We only went during the daytime, but we could go by our self and come back by our self... (Ideal resident, Henrietta Ingram).

We started going when I was a probably a preteen...They had those chapter pictures... like Red Rider and you have to come back the next Saturday to catch up on them and they had other movies too... but it was mostly westerns – that’s all I remember is a lot of westerns... Roy Rogers and all of them kinds of movies... (Ideal resident, Eather Ingram-Watson).

While there are no documented pictures that show the inside of Lincoln Theatre, Ideal and Bonton residents described it as they remembered:

It was old. Turn-up chairs. They was all wood. At the front of the theatre, you had the concession stand and you had the bathrooms at the front and then you had two ways to come in there. One at the right and one on the left. You had the screen... to back of the theatre. You had the middle row and you had rows to the side. It was like a little stage... you had a little stage in front of the screen and that was it. That was the Lincoln Theatre (Ideal resident, Mary Evans).

When you first walk in the entry in there's a person outside to take your tickets in the booth and then when you walk in there's a counter over there where all the goodies are, the candy and everything, and then you walk forward and going into the theatre there were two doors... you can go that door way or that way... it was spacious and it was a lot of room in there... it would usually be a lot of kids, a lot of us in there... (Ideal resident, Eather Ingram-Watson).

Thus, Lincoln Theatre, along with other businesses, provided areas where residents could congregate and build community.

However by the mid-1950s, Bexar Street had also become home to juke joints<sup>7</sup>, bars, and liquor stores (See Figure 36 through 41):

Right across the street over there on the next corner there used to be a pool hall called "Big Gnaw" and there was another little joint next to that that this man owned, named Tom Myers [owner]. I was young, but I would go in there and Big Gnaw he taught me how to shoot pool. When I was about 13, I ditched from school...he taught me how to play cards and stuff like that. He taught me how to shoot dice. How to cuff the dice. All of that kind of stuff... That's the way Bexar Street was and I got a lot of whoopins for being on Bexar Street but during that period of time my thinking was like I can't make no money at home, I can make money on Bexar. So whenever I got a chance I'd be up there on Bexar...I would make runs for them because they would like bootleg and they would say take this liquor and put it in your pants and take it on down to Slim...but there were always consequences to such things. When I got older then consequences came about and I had to make some changes. Big Changes (Ideal resident, Jerry Hoover).

Bexar became a more dangerous place, with continuous armed robberies of busses, businesses, and homes (See Figure 37).

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<sup>7</sup> A small inexpensive establishment for eating, drinking, or dancing to the music of a jukebox or a live band ("Juke Joint" n.d.).



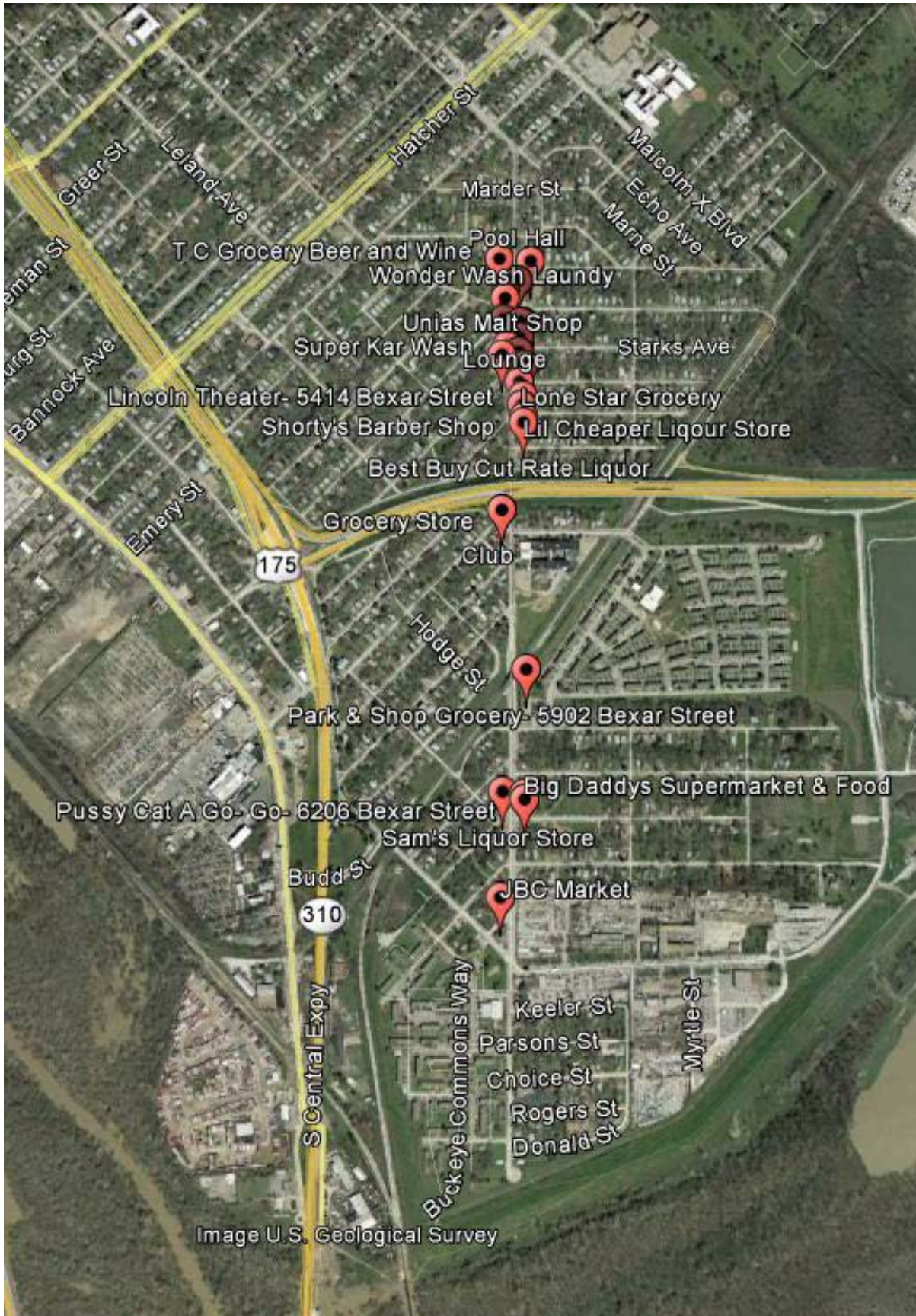


Figure 36: 2001 Geocoded Google Earth Map of All Known Bexar Street Businesses

## Gunman Dies In Shootout With Police

A Negro gunman was shot and killed at 12:45 a.m. Monday and a police officer slightly wounded during a bus holdup at Bexar and Stephenson in South Dallas.

## Passenger Kills City Bus Driver

A city bus driver was stabbed to death in his bus in the 5300 block of Bexar in South Dallas about 12:45 a.m. Wednesday.

The victim was identified as Wilson H. Bevill, 55, of 9025 Fairhaven.

Police said two passengers aboard the bus told them Bevill stopped to pick up a passenger and that the man pulled a knife, slashed Bevill across one arm, then stabbed him in the chest. The assailant fled.

An alarm was put out for a young Negro, described as about 5-foot-9 and 220 pounds.

**A KNIFE-WIELDING** assailant raped a 27-year-old South Dallas housewife in her Bexar Street Project apartment about 4 a.m. Sunday. The woman told police the rapist threatened to harm her children if she did not quiet them.

## Motorman Held Up

A Negro bandit held up motorman Lawrence Mitchell, 28, aboard his Dallas Transit System bus Sunday night in the 5900 block of Bexar and escaped with about \$40.

## Grocery Robbed

A lanky Negro gunman held up the Park & Shop Grocery, 5902 Bexar, at 8:55 p.m. Friday, forced owner R. E. Neves to surrender \$325 at pistol point and escaped.

## Man Charged In Shooting

A Negro man was charged on three counts of assault with intent to murder Wednesday in connection with a gangland-style shooting at a cafe Saturday night. Clinton Travis Lee, 21, was charged with throwing open the door of Williams' Grill, 5205 Bexar, and wounding three Negro men with shotgun blasts.

## Man Draws 13-Year Term For Robbery by Assault

Leroy Buchanan, 20-year-old Negro, has been convicted of robbery by assault and sentenced to 13 years in prison.

Buchanan and a boy snatched a purse containing \$6 from Mrs. Maggie Camper. Then they kicked the tiny, 82-year-old woman before escaping the night of March

Esther Marie Richardson, 15, Linell Richardson, 14, and John Robert Richardson, 13, testified in Judge J. Frank Wilson's criminal district court that they saw Buchanan and the other boy attacking Mrs. Camper. Each said they could positively identify Buchanan, whom they had known for years.

## Bus Driver Robbed

A Negro gunman shot a hole in the roof of a city bus and robbed the driver, Robert Earl Cody, 35, of \$58 at 10:35 p.m. Saturday at Bexar and Silkwood. After threatening Cody's life repeatedly, police were told, the gunman and a companion fled on foot.

## Youths Robbed Him, Driver Tells Police

A Dallas Transit System driver told police he was robbed by two Negro youths, one brandishing a small pistol, after they boarded his bus early Saturday at Bexar

and Central in South Dallas. Thomas Terry, 51, of 2009 S. Farola, said the youths took the coin changer and loose currency, totaling \$80.

Figure 37: 1960s Dallas Morning News Articles



Over the next two decades (1960 and 1970), Bexar Street gradually became associated with gambling, prostitution, violence, and drugs. With the simultaneous building of Turner Courts and Rhoads Terrace and the closing of black-owned businesses, the South Dallas area became socially fragmented.



Figure 38: Best Buy Cut Rate Liquor and Lil Cheaper Liquor Store

Most residents credit the decline of the community to the closing of businesses along Bexar Street. In the latter half of the 1960s as black residents were able to patronize white stores previously unavailable to them, they began spending their money at larger stores outside of the neighborhood. Rev. Garret Britt, Jr. discusses the mindset blacks had once they had the chance to shop at stores with more variety and lower prices:

When integration came and we were allowed to go downtown even more we stopped trading with the small places, the small mom and pop stores... we were able to go downtown and the money that could've been used to improve the neighborhoods – that money was used to turn over at least 8 times in your neighborhood (your dollar

is) but when the dollars taken out it turns over 1.5 times in our neighborhood so now the money is going out and it went to the merchants who took the money and went far north, they didn't bring their money back into the southern sector, they went north so North Dallas improved and South Dallas went down because it had no viable economic base we still had small stores, little things like liquor stores, some small grocery stores ... People are just here temporary so they don't have the pride. They don't have the neighborhood pride. They don't have the homeownership pride like people had because renters are more mobile so they don't feel like they have to keep this place up because they're only here temporary and that's what happens in neighborhoods (Dallas resident, Donald Payton).

Minyards selection, at least at that time, is a lot more expansive than Bobs so I'm going to get all of my groceries at Minyards. I may go over to Bobs if I need a carton of milk or a can of peas or whatnot... that's where the decline starts and then Bobs closes and somebody else opens up and they're going to try to recoup all of their money on a can of peas in one sale so it gets to be a cycle that perpetuates itself (Dallas Resident, Rev. Gerald Britt, Jr.).

Convenience stores continued to charge more for the same price over the next twenty years (See Figure 39). When Ethel Harris moved to Bonton in 1995, she had the same experience.

[T]hey had three little convenience stores, like a little store where the bread was like three dollars. They charged an arm and a leg for everything that was in the store... (Bonton resident, Ethel Harris).

As noted in news interviews conducted in 1990, residents were "frustrated at the general lack of chain-owned grocery stores, pharmacies, retail stores, restaurants, and auto-repair outlets. They also [knew] that the absence of chain outlets [hit] them in the pocketbooks, forcing them to pay higher prices for such essentials as food" (Howard 1990). Residents began shopping in local convenience stores only if they needed one or two items, or had no transportation to stores outside the neighborhood. Businesses that remained in the 1970s and 1980s were places where residents would buy and sell drugs, services, and other items. The most notable location like this was the Super Kar Wash on the corner of Bexar and Starks:

When I was growing up the car wash was a hang spot and you could barely... this was my time - when you could barely get out there to wash your car... People were out there selling everything, doing everything, I mean people went to the restroom out there and everything (Ideal resident, Sherri Mixon).



That car wash where people were going to hang out over there...you could see them selling drugs. They would just come up and, “You want this? Hey man, you want this?” (Bonton resident, Ethel Harris).



Figure 39: Big Daddy's Supermarket & Food

Stores in the area did not stay in business long. The pool hall at 5106 Bexar would become a liquor store until the residents bought it to build T .R Hoover Community Development Center in 1999 (J. Hoover 2015, Mixon 2015). Sitting in T. R. Hoover CDC, named after his grandfather, Jerry Hoover discussed the frequent business turnover:

It was just one thing replacing another...if something closed up it would turn into another café or another pool hall...this location right here used to be a pool hall. I used to shoot pool in this very location, but now it's a community center...at some point it turned into a liquor store (Ideal resident, Jerry Hoover).

After the closing of Lincoln Theatre, the building was used for mattress building and repair and later turned into Lone Star Grocery before it was left vacant (Dotson 2015, Ingram 2015, Ingram- Watson 2015) (See Figure 40). Many other businesses stayed vacant long after their initial closing. By the late 1990s, there were only six businesses open on Bexar Street. There

were four closed buildings and four vacant lots (Dallas, South Dallas/ Fair Park Economic Development Corridor Plan 2001). This was noted by *Dallas Morning News* reporter:

Bexar Street is bereft of many services taken for granted in other sections of the city: Supermarkets. Pharmacies. Banks. Even convenience stores. Instead, Bexar Street, between Brigham Lane and C. F. Hawn Freeway, is dominated by six stores whose shelves are stocked with liquor, beer and wine (Howard 1990).

In addition to businesses being closed and left vacant, the change in the community was noted in a 1999 *Dallas Morning News* article:

Bexar Street is like a vital organ that slowly decayed and shut down in old South Dallas. For years as it withered, the rest of the body - the neighborhood around it - worked harder to continue functioning. Residents still use the street as the main artery in and out of their community. They pass boarded-up and crumbling buildings along what was once a bustling commercial strip of black-owned businesses (Adams-Wade 1999).



Figure 40: Lincoln Theatre

In 1989, 1990, and 1991, South Dallas experienced more flooding. The second flood reached a height of four feet causing over 300 residents to seek emergency shelter at the Red Cross Disaster Services Center. These floods had detrimental effects on the already decaying neighborhood - it is estimated that 170 homes were damaged in Bonton alone (M. Lewis 1990, Shine 1990, Tomaso 1991):

[I]n the late 80s and the early 90s there were two floods actually that came and devastated the Bonton area in particular and that was because it was so much lower than the upper part of Bexar Street and it flooded so that people were literally on rooftops until the water receded...there were no storm drains down there so there was literally nowhere for those waters to go and it was something additional that had to be corrected...what was clear is that somebody was going to lose their life down there because they clearly intended to shut those floodgates to keep those waters down... (Dallas resident, Rec. Gerald Britt, Jr.).

I remember my classmate's mother lived down there...and she was saying that her mom didn't want to leave out of the house, didn't want to leave her house even though there was water down there in the house and they had to get a boat and get her out of there (Ideal resident, Mary Evans).

After the first one they put those gates up to try to prevent or give us some time to get out of here you know and it was closing off the other end so people really didn't take well to that (Ideal resident, Sherri Mixon).

The continuing cycle of devastation and expensive repair caused many residents to leave their homes for better areas (Shine 1990). With each flood came more dilapidated homes and vacant lots:

[W]hen all of that water came down there that's when a lot of those people did move out because people didn't have any money to rebuild...water in their houses and stuff and house buckling and coming a loose... people owned those homes and had been down there for years and years and years (Ideal resident, Mary Evans).

I think what happened was that people that couldn't afford to rebuild left but for the most part, Bonton being a poorer area than Ideal in a lot of ways, poor people are pretty resilient so those that could stay cleaned up their houses and cleaned up their properties and found a way to stay... the ones who didn't are the ones whose houses were completely destroyed... for the most part when you go down there now when you look and see those areas where there are gaps between those houses, most likely those were places where those houses were destroyed and haven't been rebuilt yet. Or in areas where you go down and see habitat homes, most likely those homes are built on properties of homes that were destroyed because of that flood (Dallas resident, Rev. Gerald Britt, Jr.).

Home vacancy increased in both Ideal and Bonton from the 1960s to the 1990s, aided by flooding and outmigration. From 1960 to 1980, the Ideal population dropped from 5,000 residents to 2,400. This translated into a housing decrease of 2,200 to 1,100 by the 1990s. Of those 1,100 homes, 350 were occupant owned. In Bonton, there were 1,000 housing units, 700 of which were public housing. The remaining 300 homes were either owner-occupied or rented (Horner 2008, Adams-Wade 1999). Abandoned and rent homes not only looked bad, but were hot spots for drug activity. Residents who occupied these rent homes were not screened by renters nor were they held accountable for upkeep:

When older people would die and no one would claim the property, [the city] would tear [the house] down (Ideal resident, Jerry Hoover).

[T]here was a couple of drug houses right across the street from me, but they were busted and the owner of them, she didn't care about who she rented it to...and there are a lot of abandoned houses that the homeless and different ones are in, they're staying in and they're also doing their drugs in them too... (Ideal resident, Mildred Pride-Edwards).

You start getting one house that goes down and somebody breaks a window out in one house and the next kid comes through and he knocks out two windows and nobody replaces the windows and then the people next door say, "We don't want to live next door to an abandoned house" and then somebody knocks out the windows in their house and then somebody says, "I don't want to live next to two abandoned houses" so they move out and then you've got three abandoned houses and then the transients start coming in... and then you've got offsite landlords who have moved to New York or Chicago and this house was the house they grew up in or a house their parents' home and they don't know what's happening they just know they collect rent from these people and as long as the rent comes in... they don't make any repairs or anything... you just get people who don't care about the neighborhood because they don't know about ownership... they don't have the pride that comes with ownership (Dallas resident, Donald Payton).

In an analysis of Dallas' crime hot spots, it was determined that "a common feature in nearly every hot spot is a heavily lopsided ratio of rental residential property to owner-occupied homes. Rental properties, especially in troubled areas, tend to be magnets for crime" (Undivided Attention 2011, A14). Some residents felt that the changes were sudden:

It just started coming in overnight. And they was coming all around and some of them didn't live into our community at all but they knew where to come to drop it off

and it was our community. And I think because we let it happen. We were afraid to say something (Ideal resident, Jackie Mixon).

While others saw it more as a gradual decay:

So where you had houses that were torn down that weren't built and weren't replaced. You had businesses that had closed. You had other signs of decay and so while it has changed over time, in one sense it was almost imperceptible... You got used to it (Dallas resident, Rev. Gerald Britt, Jr.).

Even when it became drug infested a lot of the kids there, and the young peoples there didn't try to start the next person using drugs because they was using drugs. They more or less tried to shield them away from it ... There was a lot of discretion used about [drugs]. I think that became different in the latter part of the 80s.<sup>8</sup> People stopped caring and started trying to find whoever they could misuse or abuse for their own selfish gain. That's when things started taking a turn for the worse (Bonton resident, Milton Baker).

Well into the 1980s, high crime rates, drug use, and violence began to have a normalizing affect on residents. Milton Baker spoke of the change he saw in the 1970s and the effect it had on the next generation. His nephew Clifton, born in the 1980s, also spoke about how he and other his age assimilated to their environment:

We started also getting brothels, motels and stuff built into the community and when you get that we started getting a lot of the wrong people, a lot of the wrong environment. You had drugs, prostitution, gambling...as time went on you started having a multitude of generations getting involved with drugs so it became a normal thing in the community... along the way we dropped the ball because I wasn't raised like that...the last part of the 60s all of the 70s and the first part of the 80s we had that lifestyle–street life. Of course our children...they emulated the same thing that we was doing and it became a generational thing (Bonton resident, Milton Baker).

At the age I was, and growing up in the midst of a lot of that, it became normal because of the things that were happening around that time. I remember my mom and them used to take us as little kids to the pool hall and you used to see a lot of things happen whether it was somebody getting stabbed or fights happen...but you considered it a norm because growing up down here you didn't see what was going on the other side of downtown, this was normal to you...a lot of our lives are very similar because a lot of us grew up without fathers...a lot of us grew up seeing drugs dealt on the corner, prostitution, we grew up seeing our mothers struggle to take care of us...we grew up on welfare, we grew up with government assistance, government housing, and everything... (Bonton resident, Clifton Reese).

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<sup>8</sup> The 1980s, a period of increasing crack cocaine use, is associated with the crack epidemic (Kornbluh 1997).

In a news interview, another Bonton resident spoke about the generational effect of living in a neighborhood where bullet holes in the walls, daily ambulance sightings, teen moms, family members who have drug and alcohol problems, and “career horizons don’t go much beyond cashier, dishwasher or store clerk” are a norm. In the same article, *Dallas Morning News* reporter Tod Robberson goes on to note “generation after generation, this pattern has grown so common for families around Lincoln High School in South Dallas that few stop to think anymore about what’s wrong with the picture. That’s just the way life is, the way it’s always been” (2013, P01).

A 1997 *Dallas Morning News* article stated “nature tried mightily to destroy one of Dallas’ bleakest, most remote corners with persistent floods in the late 80s and early ‘90s. Now, some residents in the tattered community of Rochester Park [Bonton] fear that humans are about to finish the job through drug-dealing and neglect” (Wrolstad 1997). Physical and social decay were ever present along Bexar Street. A *Dallas Morning News* article surmised that the problems in the area were “most related to drug trafficking: theft, prostitution, vagrancy public drunkenness, speeding cars, trash, high weeds, high employment, irresponsible landlords, demolition delays and no neighborhood unity” (Wrolstad 1997). Bonton and Ideal were neighborhoods with “sagging or charred structures, red-tagged for demolition, allow drug-selling squatters to take up residence or stray dogs to wander through gaping doors” (Wrolstad 1997).

Surrounded by a decaying and unsafe environment, with little means to break out of the cyclical pattern of street life, the morale of the neighborhood declined:

When you grow up with stuff like that it becomes a part of you. You’re a product of your environment whether you acknowledge it or not, you’re a product of your environment. There’s certain things that you explore in your neighborhood – it becomes a part of you (Bonton resident, Milton Baker).

Eventually the neighborhood became almost as depressed as the community was looking...kids who would go to school at H. S. Thompson, they had to pass by a lot of stuff on the streets in order to get to school and get home...vacant lots that were



littered with all types of trash and things like that...the neighborhood was in spirit, and to some degree in character, became about as depressed as it looked (Dallas resident, Rev. Gerald Britt, Jr.).



Figure 41: Bexar Street in 2001 (Dallas, South Dallas Ideal/ Rochester Park Community Revitalization Plan 2012)

### *Public Housing*

Colloquially known as the “Red Bricks,” Turner Courts and Rhoads Terrace grew increasingly unsafe and continued to lack basic services throughout the 1980s and 1990s. In a *Dallas Morning News* article, Rhoads Terrace was described as “a stagnant sump, a pond of deteriorating homes and hopes” (Blow 1981, 16). The article continued:

Rhoads consists of row after row of identical barrack-like 2-story frame buildings, 71 in all. Of the 426 housing units, 64 are boarded up and vacant. Most of the vacant apartments have been vandalized repeatedly. The red bricks on the bottom half of the building is covered with graffiti. The asbestos siding on the building is faded and cracked. Garbage and debris are spread throughout the complex. Tires, broken-down old couches and car parts lie in knee-high weeds. Trash spills into the street around

curbside garbage bins. Leaky outdoor faucets drip incessantly, creating permanent strips of muck in the black dirt. In some places, raw sewage bubbles to the surface, filling the air with its stench (Blow 1981, 16).

These problems would continue throughout the last third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Residents in the area contacted City Council about their grievances of lack of repairs, fluctuating rent, drainage of standing water, and outdated play areas (Renters Speaking of Strike 1970). The city also initiated security rounds and programs to increase safety in the area. In a 1982 study of Dallas Housing Authority projects, it was determined that over 50 percent of apartments had wall and ceiling damage from leaks, a majority of toilets were rotting the floors, all kitchens were either missing fixtures or had plumbing issues, and 95 percent of apartments had more than three broken or missing windows. Additionally there were various cases of faulty wiring, health and safety violations, and pest and rodent infestations (Blow and Bauer 1981).

In efforts to improve the living conditions in the apartments, Rhoads Terrace and Turner Courts were remodeled in the late 1980s. Despite renovation efforts, Rhoads Terrace and Turner Courts continued to “tarnish Dallas’ image” well into the early 2000s (Blow and Bauer 1981) (See Figure 42). In one year, over 300 police reports were filed between Rhoads Terrace and Turner Courts. In 2006, DART, concerned for the safety of their drivers after people continuously threw things at busses, temporarily stopped service to Turner Courts after dark (Horner 2008).



# City-run 'slums' tarnish Dallas' image

By Steve Blow and Esther Bauer  
Staff Writers of The News

They are forgotten places of ruin and despair, tucked away in the corners of a city preoccupied with prosperity.

Bearing unfamiliar names — Rhoads Terrace, George Loving Place, Turner Courts — the Dallas public housing projects stand as perhaps the most haunting contradiction to the city's image as a Mecca where everything, even government, works.

■ Hopes crumble along with homes in Rhoads Terrace project. Page 14A.

"It should be an embarrassment to the whole community," said Jack Herrington, the plain-spoken director of the Dallas Housing Authority.

Herrington, a veteran housing administrator hired two years ago to straighten out the Dallas public housing mess, was even more blunt in an appearance before the City Council in April.

"After having seen a number of projects, I believe we have the very worst public housing situation here,



he said. "Something went wrong in Dallas, Texas."

Some say Herrington's assessment may be overdrawn. But there's no dispute that Dallas, one of the na-

tion's most prosperous large cities, has some of the nation's worst public housing.

"It's disastrous," said Phil Abrams, deputy housing commissioner for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington.

Although others of the 11 family projects in the city may be worse, the enormous West Dallas complex may best exemplify the paradox of Dallas and its public housing. Located just across the Trinity River from the gleaming skyscrapers and bustling commerce of the Stemmons Industrial District, the West Dallas projects

stand like a bombed-out ghetto.

The scene is numbing in scale and condition. More than half the housing authority's low-income units are located in this single sprawling complex, but vandalism and neglect have left a third of the 3,357 units boarded up and vacant — 400 are beyond repair. Of the 29 laundry rooms in the complex, the machines in only one work.

Earlier this year, the Dallas City Council hired consultants to make the first comprehensive study of the condition of the DHA projects.

See CITY-RUN on Page 13A.



The Dallas Morning News: Jay Godwin

Garbage piles up outside a Rhoads Terrace apartment.



The Dallas Morning News: Jay Godwin

Officer Marvin Swofford searches an abandoned Roseland apartment for a robbery suspect.

# City-run 'slums' belie Dallas' model image

Continued from Page 1A.

Among the myriad problems:

■ More than 50 percent of the apartments have roof leaks that have disintegrated parts of ceilings and interior walls.

■ Almost all toilets are worn out. Many are leaking and rotting the floors, creating health hazards.

■ In all apartments, kitchen plumbing is "unacceptable" because of broken, irreparable or missing faucets, clipped and worn-out sinks and leaky drains and traps.

■ Fully 95 percent of the apartment buildings have three or more broken or missing windows, none has weathertipping and 80 percent of the buildings are missing large patches of asbestos siding.

The consultants also found faulty wiring, roaches and rodents, innumerable violations of health and safety codes and a "depressing and rundown atmosphere."

The price of making the projects safe and decent again was estimated at \$133 million — an average of more

than \$18,000 for each apartment.

With the exception of the housing authority's highly successful projects for the elderly and handicapped, virtually all areas of its operation were in deplorable condition when Herrington arrived in 1979.

The HUD audit found the Dallas Housing Authority administration overstuffed and underqualified; the Section 8 rent subsidy program was operating at half its authorized level, and the authority's \$12 million attempt at renovating the West Dallas projects was declared a failure.

Since then, by all accounts, Herrington's administration has brought significant management improvements, but improvement in the condition of the projects is harder to come by. With the exception of Roseland Homes, where a \$12 million renovation is under way, improvements at the projects have been insignificant to nonexistent, officials say.

It's a situation that leads Herrington to refer to himself grimly as "the

largest operator of slum property in Dallas."

Ron Steinhart, chairman of the 5-member housing authority board of commissioners, said, "From everything we hear, our low-income housing stock is about as lousy as you'll find in the country."

Because of extreme, self-imposed fiscal conservatism in the 1950s and '60s and administrative mismanagement and lack of federal money in the '70s, the family housing projects have been on a downward slide almost since they were built in the early '40s and early '50s.

The decline rapidly worsened in the '70s, and by the end of the decade, the housing authority seemingly had lost control of the projects.

Herrington describes the situation as a downward swirl in which each problem contributed to the next. Maintenance workers began receiving more work orders than they could meet, tenants lost interest in doing their part of the maintenance, delinquency on rent payments

soared, tenants moved out without notice, vandals demolished empty apartments, crime flourished.

Herrington said maintenance workers must remove batteries from housing authority vehicles left in the projects overnight, and gasoline tanks are always kept almost empty to prevent siphoning. (The authority tried using locking caps, but thieves merely punched holes in the bottom of the gasoline tanks.)

When HUD conducted its management review in 1979, housing authority officials couldn't even tell investigators how many of their units were habitable.

In some projects, more is needed than mere renovation of existing units.

"They are all very solid, very well-built structures. There's no doubt they can be rehabilitated," said Mark Wassenich, assistant director of the Dallas Rehabilitation. "But the way they were built in the '40s and '50s

does not fit the way people live in the '80s. We've got to change them to provide a better social community."

An example, he said, is Roseland Homes, which was built in 1942 when even many of the affluent did not own cars. It was built with 650 units and 100 parking spaces, which causes problems today.

A more serious example is the size and starkness of the West Dallas projects, which originally were built as three separate projects for whites, blacks and Mexican-Americans.

The team of consultants described the situation as "an extreme case of institutionalism which is both demoralizing and depressing."

Area HUD director Irving Stelman calls it a "built-in disaster."

Carlos Garcia, new director of management for the housing authority, said: "Whoever decided to put 3,500 units in one place ought to be shot. But it was done, and now we've got to manage it."



Jack Herrington . . . grimly refers to himself as "the largest operator of slum property in Dallas."

Figure 42: July 30, 1981 Dallas Morning News article

## CHAPTER 5

### SOUTH DALLAS NEIGHBORHOOD LIFE CYCLE:

#### REVITALIZATION

##### Rehabilitation and Renewal

###### *Ideal*

Neighborhood activism in Ideal began in the 1990s when young residents discovered older residents were being harassed by drug dealers. Senior citizens whose homes were located near alleys were being persuaded to sit on the porch and collect money for drug dealers. At the age of 12, Sherri Mixon witnessed the effects of this on her way to school one morning:

There was a lady at the corner of our street, her name was Mrs. MacDonald, who was wrapped, tied and bound by drug dealers. They wanted to use her house because it was in an alley. At the time, Bexar Street was pretty much a vacant abandoned street and there was a lot of crime that was developing in the area and it didn't become very visible to us until this incident that day when I was headed out to school with my brother. The lady had hollered and my father, who had just gotten off of work, came to her aid and we found out she had been wrapped, tied and bound for a couple of days (Ideal resident, Sherri Mixon).

Instances like these were what caused her mother, Jackie Hoover-Mixon, to form the neighborhood crime watch:

Senior citizens were coming and they were afraid to sit on their porch...I was the youngest one and then Mrs. Van Zandt she came in and we got to talking and we said we got to do something. We are the youngest ones into this community and everyone's depending on us. So I went down to the city hall and I talked to our councilwoman, then was Mrs. Ragsdale, and I told her what was going on and she told me to form a crime watch group (Ideal resident, Jackie Mixon).

Once they began to discuss some of the issues in the neighborhood, it became apparent that the problem in Ideal was more complex than putting a stop to drug dealing and lowering crime rates:

[W]e had some 50-odd people that came to my house and we talked about the crime and what can we do and the policeman came...and other things started coming and

not just crime, it was code, sanitation, all of those things were working together...the high weeds were as tall as me on these vacant lots and that's where the children were in these vacant lots shooting hookey. That was a problem, so we got together and we just started doing things, activities, positive things to let them know that we are well, we are alive and were not going to take it...we were fed up, just fed up... (Ideal resident, Jackie Mixon).

Once we started cleaning the neighborhood up and getting better lighting in the neighborhood then everyone started seeing the things that were out there and they were like, "Oh my god," we had homeless teenagers, "Oh my god. How did they get here? How long have they been here?" People started getting involved...first crime watch meeting you find out that all of this is going on everybody's block and it just kind of trended a relationship that grew itself... (Ideal resident, Sherri Mixon).

The crime watch actively monitored the streets, hosted informative neighborhood meetings, and maintained continuous contact with the local police department.

[We] began looking in the community not really addressing the bigger picture, just the smaller issues. Like you know Mrs. So-and-so's house still needs fixing, the streets still need services, the community still needs to know what's going on. Communicating with our officials making them aware so that things could be done a little quicker or be put on a schedule to be addressed (Ideal resident, Sherri Mixon).

So they started inviting the city counselor and they made some changes. They wanted some changes made and that's when police started circling around them a little bit more. I started going to the crime watch and I started seeing all of the changes that was happening (Ideal resident, Ethel Harris).

As neighborhood activism began to grow, the Mixons organized prayer vigils that were held in the streets of Ideal. This was done in order to raise awareness, make the crime watch visible, and demand change. In addition to this, they formed the Ideal Neighborhood Association:

It started as a prayer vigil with a faith-based group...talking about our issues and meeting with some of our representatives to try to address the issues in our community and making them aware of the need for more of the services that paying citizens should have. Adequate lighting, policing, and the community itself had to become involved and that was creating a neighborhood association and getting to work in the community and letting people know what's going on in certain areas so we could all become more involved... (Ideal resident, Sherri Mixon).

Prayer vigils were used to disseminate neighborhood rules and regulations as well as news.

As the Ideal Neighborhood Association worked throughout the community, they challenged



the residents to be active in the change in their area (See Figures 43 through 45). Their motto

"Wake Up Community" was seen throughout the neighborhood and visible at every event:

Our neighborhood slogan was 'Wake Up Community' for the Ideal Neighborhood and every time we would start a march we would have our t-shirts with "Wake Up Community," with a time clock on it, black and white shirts...and we would walk through the neighborhood with a bullhorn... (Ideal resident, Jackie Mixon).

[W]hat we did to start out was it was a prayer circle on one street and we asked everyone to pray at that hour that day for the services on Bexar Street and for our community and our children...and when the churches were involved we were able to have a minister at each prayer circle and they prayed for each street and then after they prayed for each street we all met on Bexar Street and then we would pray for the corridor and then one year...we covered all the way to that end holding hands and we had different preachers with bullhorns from all over the city...(Ideal resident, Sherri Mixon).

We'd march up and down. We used to have a store, which was a storefront drive-in, and there would be a lot of drug dealing over there and we picketed that store one Saturday. We walked it up and down, up and down in front of the store trying to keep people from going in there and buying stuff because there were a lot of drugs being bought out of there (Ideal resident, Mary Evans).



Figure 43: Dallas Morning News Clipping featuring resident and informant Jackie Mixon



Figure 44: Ideal Neighborhood March

Some denizens fiercely fought neighborhood change. Marches against drugs were met with backlash from drug dealers. As residents tried and failed to get more police protection, the neighborhood association teamed up to march with the Black Panthers:

Some guys came and they told us that they was going to shoot us if we didn't stop doing what we were doing into the community. So at that time the panthers, the Black Panthers, Amen...all of us got together there on Bexar Street and blocked the street (Ideal resident, Jackie Mixon).

The day that the Black Panthers came and marched, that day it disturbed a lot of the drug dealers in the community and things just went wild because they didn't want them coming in the neighborhood and telling them what to do and whatever and the police department came in because there was a lot of fighting. Words was being talked and stuff like that to the Black Panthers and to the crime watch (Ideal resident, Mary Evans).



## Police plan drug patrols in S. Dallas

Officers to concentrate on specific areas daily

By Al Brumley

Staff Writer of The Dallas Morning News

A plan to rid South Dallas streets of drunks and drug dealers was announced by police and neighborhood leaders Wednesday.

Officers from the Police Department's southeast operations bureau will be assigned periodically to South Dallas locations and given one goal: Clean up whatever has been identified as the area's problem.

The plan has been described by Chief Bill Rathburn as "the future of policing." It is a unique example of cooperation between a community and the Police Department, said Assistant Chief John Holt of the southeast operations bureau.



The Dallas Morning News: Juan Garcia

Dallas City Council member Diane Ragsdale praises a police plan to rid South Dallas streets of drug dealers and drunks at a

news conference on Wednesday. She told listeners that her constituents are "ready to reclaim our neighborhoods."

Figure 45: *Dallas Morning News* Clipping from Resident

The neighborhood association began going to City Hall and speaking to people knowledgeable about regulation, code, and keeping communities safe. In addition to this, they began programs to help children in the area (See Figures 46 and 47):

They had a house over here and they had it where when the kids get out of school. Some of the kids didn't have nowhere to go, so this was started for meals, and help them with their homework (Ideal resident, Eather Ingram-Watson).

We got started with afterschool very informal. It just started as lunch with the kids twice a day with two different groups and homework as much as we could do was done mostly by the senior women in the neighborhood. We worked out of a little four bedroom house that was given to us on Starks, and it's called "The Community House," and the community's potluck dinner is what fed the kids twice. The neighborhood residents would prepare the food and we would serve it there (Ideal resident, Sherri Mixon).



Figure 46: Ideal Neighborhood Association Member



Figure 47: Ideal Neighborhood Association Members Feeding Residents



As more programs were implemented, the neighborhood association began looking for a permanent building to house their programs:

We progressively have gone a little higher when we started partnering with people like Habitat For Humanity – people who had information about real estate that understood that there was a desired need just based on our services on these lots for the past two to three years...A good friend who was higher up in habitat For Humanity said, “Hey I have some real estate that you might be interested in... we have a handle on the land, you can get your hands on it and get it developed and you all can get into it and build your community center...” (Ideal resident, Sherri Mixon).

For example, in the place of an abandoned liquor store, the 5,000 square-foot T. R. Hoover Community Development Center was built in 1999 with the aid of Habitat for Humanity and Highland Park Methodist Church (Aubespain 1999). This building has been used as a facility for after school programs, computer classes, counseling sessions, emergency programs, and a place where anyone can receive help (See Figures 48 and 49).



Figure 48: Meeting at T. R. Hoover CDC



Figure 49: Residents Receiving Food at T. R. Hoover CDC

Habitat for Humanity was also vital to the rebuilding of homes in both Ideal and Bonton (See Figure 50). Since its initial building in 1996, Habitat was responsible for building more than 100 homes in South Dallas by 2010 (A Redevelopment Model 2013, Jennings 2012). Habitat for Humanity Empowerment Coordinator and Habitat homeowner, Ethel Harris spoke about the many homes Habitat has built in the neighborhoods:

We started out building off of Doris and Valentine and Rochester, all them, we built those out totally. We've got almost 100 and something down there (Bonton resident, Ethel Harris).



Figure 50: Dallas Area Habitat for Humanity

The City of Dallas also began building and replacing homes during this time.

However, the costly price of home building by the city was met with backlash from the Ideal neighborhood association who began to implement their own programs to build homes (See Figure 51):

[W]hen they started building replacement houses, which means that if Mrs. Jonnies' house was not livable then they would take and knock her house down based on code reference and they would build her a new, well there was contractors coming from all over the city to build these houses in our neighborhood but when they came to the meeting they said, "I can't build no house for no 50,000" and I said, "Sure you can, you just can't be selfish."...So when we came in and started building these houses we showed them that, yes, you can build these houses for 50 for the city and no they're not as profitable, but we look at the end sustaining means is that you just placed someone that's going to be a responsible person on that lot and that person is going to work with the community to try to better that block... (Ideal resident, Sherri Mixon).





Figure 51: T. R. Hoover CDC Building and Remodeling Homes

The conflict between the city's housing development goals, and residents and organizations goals of building homes owned by responsible citizens, arose because these groups have associated different values with housing lots. Residents are concerned with the use value of the housing unit. Whether the occupants will positively impact the social needs of the community. While this is important to the city, they are also concerned with the exchange value of the lot. Whether the money invested in the multifamily unit or mixed-use development placed there will produce revenue. These opposing perspectives were vocalized in neighborhood meetings concerning the development of additional rental homes. Residents were opposed to rental additions to the neighborhood because of the issues surrounding rent homes that already plague the community, such as disinvestment in upkeep and criminal and drug activity.

A *Dallas Morning News* article also notes the conflict between use and exchange value concerning multifamily apartments:

While the city of Dallas often focuses its affordable housing grants on high-density multifamily apartments, Habitat focuses on saturating a community with new owner-occupied single-family homes. These homes replaced abandoned buildings that had bred deadly criminal activity. And a critical mass of responsible homeowners is a strong safeguard because these residents have a stake in the community that a renter in a multifamily unit might not share. In fact, City Hall would be wise to evaluate Habitat's southern Dallas experience in its planning (A Redevelopment Model 2013)

Mixed views on development, where money should go, and the purpose and vision of Bexar Street are where the Ideal Neighborhood Association and the City of Dallas disagreed.

Tensions rose with the city's implementation and control over revitalization plans that the residents felt was their project:

[A]fter Jackie [founder of the Ideal Neighborhood association] and them started building the houses...she started the idea of the redevelopment working with UTA's department of social work and Boston Consultant Group...her organization still had the credibility to make city officials think that she had the sophistication to pull something like that off. When you look at that design down Bexar Street, that is essentially the design that she came up with to redevelop that main drag...she wasn't able to get access to the money to do it simply because when she showed the plans...the mayor simply said that, "I like the idea but I'm going to get someone else

to do it” and that’s really what happened with the project... from that point it became a city project which is kind of ironic...when I would go to the city and talk about building the houses and whatnot they would always say, “Where are you going to get the money and who do you want to take money away from in order to do this.” Now all of a sudden the city got hot to revitalize Bexar Street and do it with a project design that was literally indigenous but not give them any credit for it... (Dallas resident, Rev. Gerald Britt, Jr.).

Things really did not go well with us and the Bexar Street Corridor. The Bexar Street Corridor was a plan that was developed by residents in this community. We spent time away from our families talking to responsible people...and they came up with our plan of action in writing and they did it in a visual representation, and the struggles behind that was a vision that only the people held. The vision became very plain and simple to folks because they were looking at it on paper, but they had no clue as to how it was actually going to unfold. There were partners at the table that were going to provide everything that was needed, but it was not bought in by our city, and so when the city came in and took control of Bexar Street they only took what was on paper. The vision behind the whole project and the steering of it was still with these people so this is what we get...we have development out here, but I personally believe it could have been far greater (Ideal resident, Sherri Mixon).

Once the community plan for improvement, formulated through the efforts of collective organization and neighborhood activism and founded on the commodity of use value, became a city initiative, it evolved into a plan focused primarily on exchange value. Many residents feel that the revitalization efforts in Ideal and Bonton have fallen short to meet the needs of the community because they focus mainly on beautification and economic development.

This will be examined in more detail in the next section.

### *City of Dallas*

Introduced in 2001 by the City of Dallas, Bexar Street revitalization was a part of the South Dallas/Fair Park Economic Development Corridor Plan. Within this plan included the then current qualities and potential opportunities for the area. Improvements that the City of Dallas recommended were “physical improvements to support reinvestment,” self-help and public safety initiatives, and activities to “promote business commerce for the corridor” (Dallas, South Dallas/ Fair Park Economic Development Corridor Plan 2001, 40).

Specifically within Ideal and Bonton, the Neighborhood Investment Program (NIP) was set

up to improve the quality of housing and the built environment, promote economic opportunities, improve safety and transportation, attract investment, and address blight (Dallas, South Dallas Ideal/ Rochester Park Community Revitalization Plan 2012, 4). The NIP identified the threats to Bexar Street which included “drug activity, lack of job skills training, crime, neighborhood perception and safety, and speeding” (Dallas, South Dallas Ideal/ Rochester Park Community Revitalization Plan 2012, 12). Weaknesses along the corridor included lack of code enforcement, vacant lots, deterrents to investment due to high crime, and lack of job opportunities. These threats and weaknesses were the source behind actions taken place there.

The revitalization of Bexar Street was broken into three phases. Phase I, CF Hawn Freeway to Brigham, and Phase II, CF Hawn Freeway to Trinity, have been completed. Phase III, Brigham to Hatcher is currently under construction (See Figures 52 through 56, and Table 3).



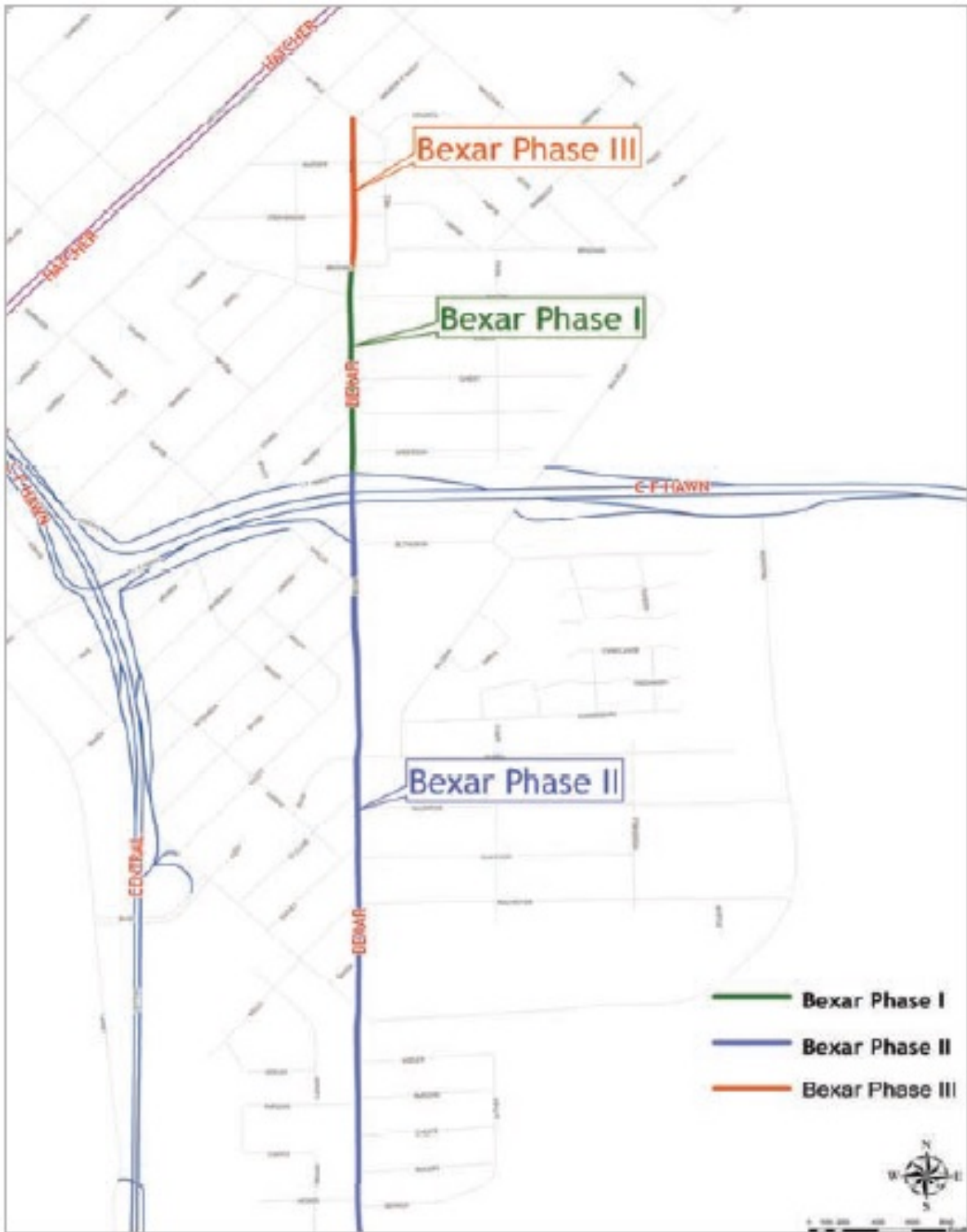


Figure 52: Bexar Street Corridor Plan (Dallas, South Dallas Ideal/ Rochester Park Community Revitalization Plan 2012)

Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
Street and streetscape improvements	Street and streetscape improvements	Street and neighborhood gateway improvements
Community art and green spaces	Community art and green spaces	Code enforcement
Mixed- use buildings	Mixed- use buildings	Infrastructure improvements
Townhome units	Redevelopment of Turner Courts and Rhoads Terrace	
Police Satellite Station	Employment and training campus	
Senior Housing	Code enforcement	
Serenity Garden	Infrastructure improvements	
Code enforcement		
Infrastructure improvements		

Table 3: Bexar Street Corridor Phases



Figure 53: Bexar Street Corridor Phase I (Dallas, South Dallas/ Fair Park Economic Development Corridor Plan 2001)





**Figure 54: Bexar Street Townhomes (Dallas, South Dallas Ideal/ Rochester Park Community Revitalization Plan 2012)**



**Figure 55: Bexar Street Mixed Use Developments (Dallas, South Dallas Ideal/ Rochester Park Community Revitalization Plan 2012)**



**Figure 56: Bexar Street (Dallas, South Dallas Ideal/ Rochester Park Community Revitalization Plan 2012)**

In 2008, Turner Courts and Rhoads Terrace were demolished (See Figure 57). The lots would be left vacant for five years:

[I] was heartbroken...we was devastated. I think a lot of times when you speak of change we want it but when it starts happening we don't because this was all we knew, this was all we loved and we were so connected to each other that we leaned on one another from Rhoads Terrace all the way from Bexar down to here to Turner Courts, the whole neighborhood from the houses to the housing projects, we was always here together so living by one another that we could get to each other and knowing where each other's kids was...our kids was at the same school and everybody still stayed in the neighborhood so we was heartbroken cause we didn't know where we were going to go as far as relocating. We didn't know where housing was going to place us and a lot of the people who live in the houses were upset because we weren't going to be around anymore...it was devastating, it's still devastating to us (Bonton resident, Marilyn Kimbrough).

The closing of the apartments led to a lower number of children attending H. S. Thompson and despite neighborhood backlash, the closing of the school. Repeatedly, residents expressed discontent with the closing and asked during interviews whether the city would reopen the school now that one of the apartment complexes has been rebuilt:

H. S. Thompson, when it closed - people from both sides of CF Hawn were at a meeting to talk about the school closing and to express their displeasure that the school closed and I think those are moments that people realized that the only true divisions between the neighborhoods are the ones you create... (Ideal resident, Hasani Burton).

It hurts because it's like part of you left. Now it hurts our kids because our kids get bussed out and H. S. Thompson had some great teachers. It was one of the most recognized schools in the state of Texas. Academically. It was one of the top elementary schools and to take that away and send them to a school that's probably not even ranked - it hurts. It hurts our children (Bonton resident, Clifton Reese).

I do wish they would open back up H. S. Thompson because they closed it down after they moved the kids out of the projects down there - Turner Courts... they got all that built back up and all those kids are back down there. A lot of kids are back down there now and I don't see no reason why they don't open that school back up. Hopefully they will so these kids won't have to get up so early in the morning and be bussed to 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, 2 or 3 miles away from home... (Ideal resident, Mildred Pride-Edwards).

They had gotten rid of both housing projects so when they did that you didn't have a lot of children in there to maintain [H. S. Thompson] so that's what they say. We got a new development there in buckeye commons and you have children there and then you have a lot of children that have to leave out of the community to go to other public schools and I think that if you have little children and you have people that are financially strapped you know, I think that the school should be open for those types



of people that can get up and walk their child to school because they're not able to get up and take them in their car...you would have people that get up and have their children ready and they have to go a long way to get to school (Bonton resident, Milton Baker).

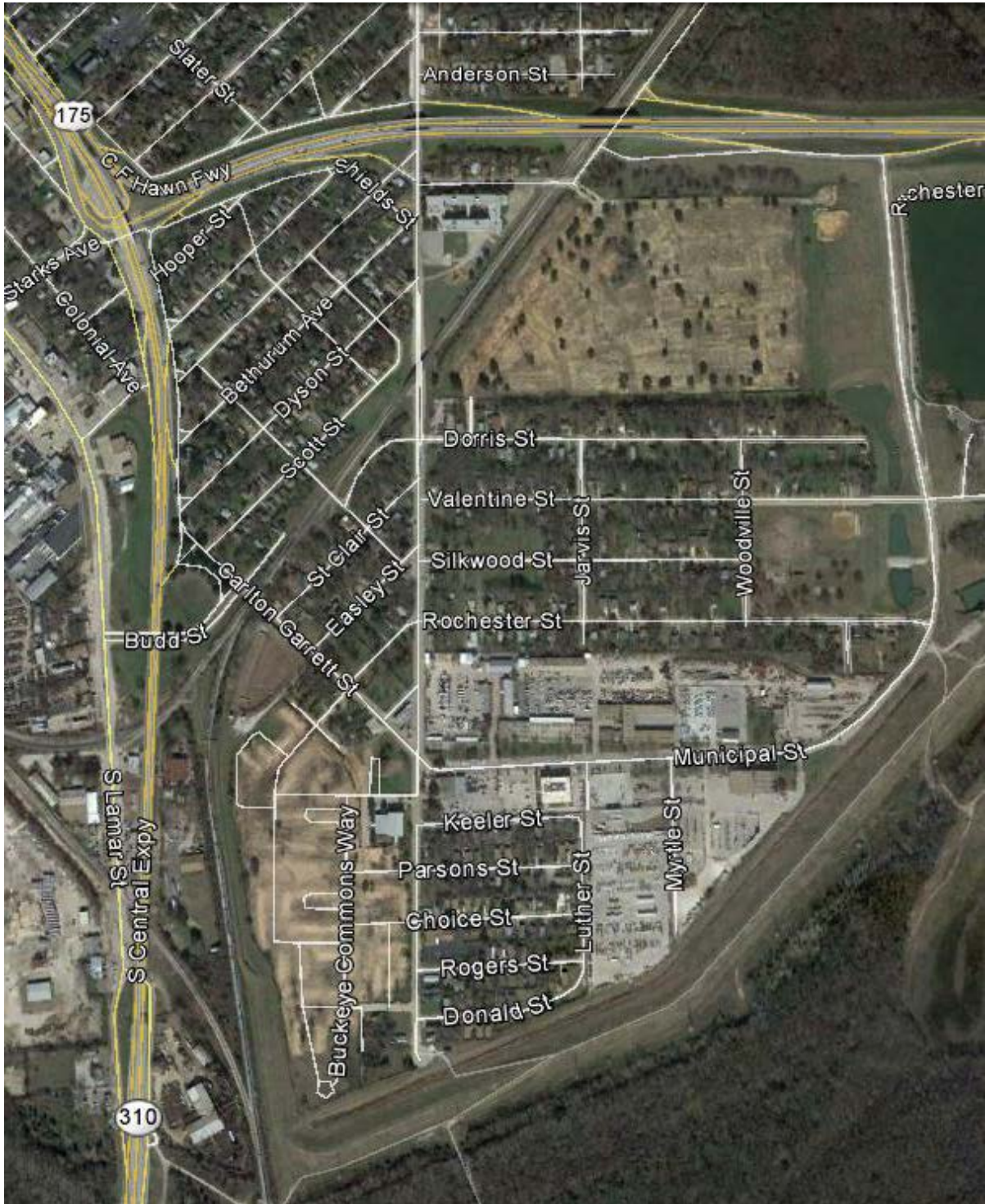


Figure 57: 2009 Google Earth Map of Bonton Showing the Demolished Public Housing Projects

Each resident has expressed opinions concerning the revitalization of the Bexar Street Corridor. There is a distinct feeling within the neighborhood that their history, actions, and opinion are not being sought out during this process. There are obvious improvements to the area with physical changes and crime rates falling:

Well they built up Starks and Bexar Street until you don't hardly know it...they've done Bexar Street up with the condos and they finally put the police department over there. I mean it looks totally different than it was when I was coming up. There's no liquor stores and no juke joints as they called them on the corners... (Ideal resident, Mildred Pride-Edwards).

There's a lot of improvement in the area. We have new apartments. The area has been cleaned up better. They've gotten rid of a bunch of the old rundown houses. So it's better than it was...There's not a lot of violence in the community like there was so you see now that there's a lot of different people coming into the neighborhood and that's what gives it a life because this neighborhood was really going down – it was like a dead neighborhood. Now it has come up to the level where people want to come into the neighborhood and make this their home (Ideal resident, Mary Evans).

Once the city gets through building it up like it should be, it will be awesome...if they do everything that the plan had on it, it would be great because there was going to be a market, a real, live market where you can get fresh fruit and vegetables...there was going to be a store which they haven't ever had a store down there they always had those little convenience stores. There was going to be senior citizens home out there also (Bonton resident, Ethel Harris).

Despite this, residents note that simply changing the appearance of the neighborhood doesn't change the minds of the people that live there:

They wanted to see all this beauty up here and now its beauty but what's happening up there, nothing. Ain't nothing thriving. They've got one store up there, a dollar store. You've got more people probably shopping down here in these little corner stores than would ever shop at that dollar store...you've got people down here, like Mr. Lee down here, and Mr. Lee knows everybody that walks in the store. If we was going to do a cookout or something he'd donate stuff. He's a part of the community. They ain't even gave him money for his store. He ain't going nowhere, they can't buy him out because he's part of the community, lives ain't being impacted like that (Bonton Resident, Clifton Reese).

Various residents discuss the importance of listening to the needs of the neighborhood and understanding their needs when revitalizing:

You have to really listen to people first and foremost, then once people have had their say it's up to someone, like the city for example, to take what the people are saying, come up with a comprehensive interpretation of what they're saying, go back to the people and make sure that's what they want and need, and then lay out a vision and then once you have a vision you can make plans to that vision and once you have

plans towards that vision you can take actions in order to make those plans come to fruition... (Ideal resident, Hasani Burton).

We want the organizations to know that we're truly grateful. We're humbled in what you're doing. We're grateful for the resource, but we would love for you to ask us what it is that we want and not to assume that you know what we would want, because that's not how it works, and then you wonder why we reject you and we're not open hands. Without the people and without the community blessing you won't be here long or it won't work out (Bonton resident, Marilyn Kimbrough).

[Y]ou can build, you can remodel, you can bring in all of these resources but if the people aren't behind it and the people aren't leading it then I don't care what you bring down here... I don't care if you rebuild the community... I don't care... you can build an ark from here to there but if you don't have the people you have nothing (Bonton resident, Clifton Reese).

I just think that if they desire to make an impact that they would gather as much information from people that are available without an agenda, but truly want to see the community do well, and I think they would prosper more in what their efforts would be for us than not coming to us at all...listen to the people in order to make an impact (Ideal resident, Sherri Mixon).

There are many improvements, changes, and critiques residents have concerning the revitalization effort. Some residents feel that the revitalization has been too slow:

They're sticking to where the resident is not putting nothing, except for the crime watches, the resident is not protesting it enough but if they protested more it would speed up and get done what they need to get done, but they're not doing that so the council people are just, they just do a little this year and a little next year...I think they're just doing a little to get by...if we was in Highland Park it would've been finished. That's just plain the way it is (Bonton resident, Ethel Harris).

Other residents feel that not enough money was put into the project:

So it just took some time and now I think with the townhomes and everything on Bexar Street and some of the businesses that are coming in I think it's just beginning to take off and there are those that thought that it should've happened a lot quicker...a couple others who seem to think it's a waste of money and whatnot, but you know there have been millions of dollars spent on other projects that were not as successful and not as beneficial to the social fabric of a neighborhood that were done in other places, and nobody's complained about them. It happens in a poor neighborhood, where it's decidedly difficult to turn around, where it's the first major redevelopment project done in that area in 60 or 70 years, but everyone expects the turnaround in two and a half years. It doesn't work like that. Matter of fact, I can argue that probably didn't spend enough money when they were doing it in the first place (Dallas resident, Rev. Gerald Britt, Jr.).

Residents also discuss the lack of businesses along the corridor and how loitering and crime continue to affect the neighborhood:

I don't see a big chain like Minyard's or something like that moving down here. It might happen, but I doubt it because they'll be like, "No I'm not going to South Dallas with my store," that's the first thing that they're going to think. The first dollar store they had over there, they had broke into that three or four times and they didn't even have much in there worth stealing... (Ideal resident, Mildred Pride-Edwards).

[T]he police department in their cars will pass by and people are just standing and they know what the people up there on the corners are doing. That's what brings the community down, the standing of people, the younger generation standing, loitering in front of businesses and the businesses - you think that they'd have more power to tell them to move on and not stand in the front of their businesses... I've heard a lot of people say they don't like to go up there to the stores because there's a lot of standing (Ideal resident, Mary Evans).

### *Bonton*

In 2012, Buckeye Commons was built in the place of Turner Courts (See Figure 58). This was a "mixed-income development project that [would] include 323 rental units and 25 homes for purchase" (Thompson 2012).



Figure 58: 2009 Elevation View of Turner Courts Redevelopment (**Dallas, South Dallas Ideal/ Rochester Park Community Revitalization Plan 2012**)



The completion of this process was made possible by H.I.S. Bridgebuilders:

[I]t was only so much they could do to continue to remodel the outside and inside was still trashy so what's the best thing to do? Tear them down and rebuild them...Rhoads Terrace when it got torn down I was here to see them tear it down and just to see them tear down the projects was like, man, that was life to some people. A lot of people was hurt. A lot of people didn't want to move. A lot of people was forced to. You had a lot of older people this is all they ever knew... HUD was giving out this grant that was like a 30 million dollar grant and back then Mike Fechner [president and co-founder of H. I. S. Bridgebuilders]...he went to them and said, "Hey this is a community that needs it," and so we was nominated for one of the spots to get it and we ended up getting, being awarded the 30 million dollar grant from Dallas Housing Authority...since Turner Courts gym was the only thing built...they invested a million dollar and redid the insides of it and everything and since it was the only thing standing down here and since this is where Bridgebuilders was originally they rebuilt [Turner Courts] and called it Buckeye... (Bonton resident, Clifton Reese).

In Bonton, H.I.S. Bridgebuilders has been vital to empowering residents to make changes in their neighborhood. This Christian non-profit organization is responsible for helping to create job opportunities and increase entrepreneurship among residents. Most notable of the companies in Bonton are Bonton Farms and Bonton Honey. Bonton Farms is located on the south end of Bexar Street, next to Buckeye Commons and Rochester Park (See Figure 59).



Figure 59: Model of Bonton Farms Provided by Resident

Due to lack of access to affordable foods and grocery stores, Bonton and Ideal became food deserts (Appleton 2015). Built in 2014, with the help of residents and volunteers, this urban farm encourages agricultural sustainability and health education that has proven vital to the neighborhood. The success of Bonton Farms and Bonton Honey has led to the creation of additional businesses and programs targeting the neighborhood:

[Y]ou have six guys that are from the community that started a honey company, Bonton Honey, and you have six guys from the urban community that have never cared for any bees...but now is the proud owners of a company that produces honey from those very bees, and they are not consumers, but they're owners...one of the proudest things that's going on in the community. Also, you have the farms, we have goats that's going to be producing. We've got chickens that are going to be producing. We've got fish from aquaponics that are going to be producing, we've got vegetables that are going to be producing. We've got guys that have got into community colleges that are pursuing their passions we're going through this transition to establish the barber school, barber college in the community as it was when we were coming up when we had the little neighborhood barbers. Now you've got young men going through school to open up a barber college here and give other young men a career in something ...you have an automotive business that's there, and all of these things is an enterprise of Bonton...A lot of peoples noticed...and when they hear about it they're shocked. They say, "I didn't know that was going on in Bonton," Well, it is (Bonton resident, Milton Baker).

Local residents grow produce and tend to animals such as goats and chickens (See Figures 60 through 62):

The farm is awesome. They have goats, Laverne and Shirley is their names...Last week we were supposed to get 200 chickens...we've got animals in the hood...in Bonton we have a farm at the dead end of Bexar and we have the young mens that used to just every day come around and hang out and they have jobs now. They take care of the animals and take care of the farm. Guys that I've been knowing for 20 something years and they do a wonderful job, it's amazing (Bonton resident, Marilyn Kimbrough).





Figure 60: Child Playing with Goats at Bonton Farms



Figure 61: Resident Selling Produce Grown at Bonton Farms



Figure 62: Bonton Residents and Farmers

Through H.I.S. Bridgebuilders, local residents have also founded their own honey company (See Figure 63). Clifton Reese talks about his role in the company and the effects it had on entrepreneurship in the neighborhood:

My obligation was to help the guys in the community that wanted to be a part of it, teach them life skills...and help them grow in this company so the company can grow and it can be self-sufficient. The honey company was started and little did we know that out of that, the birth of Bonton Honey Company, that everything else was going to roll up under it...Daron had a heart for gardening, and Darius, being his next door neighbor, with kidney problems, and on dialysis, and seeing these stores with no healthy food, he was like, "We want to start a garden." Little did he know that starting a garden right in the lot next to him would birth something called Bonton Farms... it's hard for [Darius] to do dialysis and then come out and do beekeeping as well so, his passion was cars. I remember growing up and you'd always see him and you'd go to his house and he'd have about six, seven, eight cars in the yard and all of them would be for sale. He used to go get them from the auction, come back, fix them up then sell them. They was like, "Why don't we start an automotive [company],"...and that's how Bonton Motorworks started. So out of one person's obedience to help start a company to help provide jobs for people in the community has birthed two other



companies to help provide jobs for people in the community... (Bonton resident, Clifton Reese).



Figure 63: Bonton Honey

Residents were afforded the opportunities to use their talents to build businesses and support their community. Skills they possess, that were once used to sell drugs and make money on the streets, are now being used to create businesses and jobs. When speaking about the talent within Bonton, Clifton, former drug-dealer and current Bonton Honey beekeeper, stated:

I don't think they're hidden, but I just think they're covered up by the wrong things in how we use them, cause in the street life we talk about hustling, if you talk about the real world all of the real world is a hustle, they just do it legally. In the street life there's a lot of people that know how to count money, accounting, where they quickly could take an accounting class and be an accountant. It isn't hidden they just use it in a whole different way, people know how to manufacture...but if they were to take a manufacturing lesson or go to a company that does manufacturing they could use that knowledge they have from doing it illegally or untrustworthy and they can go do it legitimately and do the same thing and be more successful (Bonton resident, Clifton Reese).

Not only do these companies provide jobs opportunities, but they also change lives by holding residents accountable and providing a support system (See Figure 64). Many of those who work in the Bonton companies were addicted to drugs or have served time in jail; they are now entrepreneurs who are held responsible for their actions and their role within the community:

[O]ne thing that I believe Bonton Farms is doing is that these guys come down here and work on the farm and be held accountable, that's one thing in life, that a lot of people don't want to be held accountable to the things that they do. Bonton Honey is going to be the same thing, you gonna have people that are holding you accountable, ...aint gonna call you in the morning and say, "get up and come to work," when you come late...the boss is going to say, "If you keep coming into work late I'm going to fire you." ...A lot of people down here in the community are addicted to some kind of drug or alcohol. You think about the drug testing, the accountability, it's all about accountability and doing life and walking with these people, because I once had to be the same person and had to be walked with and loved on (Bonton resident, Clifton Reese).



Figure 64: Bonton Farms is Decorated with Inspiring Artwork and Quotes



Residents discuss how H.I.S. Bridgebuilders has created a sense of pride and purpose in the lives of those around them. They see the changes that are happening in the lives of people they grew up with and know that they are inspiration to someone else (See Photos 65 through 67):

Young mens down here are getting jobs and different opportunities that have been here, but its expanding because other guys are seeing what they're doing and how they're changing... you want it for the next person so you don't put them down or criticize them about if they're still doing what they're doing because we all have to take time out...want the change...you keep encouraging others and watching them (Bonton resident, Marilyn Kimbrough).

I just see how he's taken leadership in learning and training about how to take care of animals and how to work on a farm and all of that. Now when you've got students coming down here on tours, you've got a guy that's off the street, and you done empowered him to do this. He loves it, he can teach some children when they come through, how do you think that makes him feel...you walk alongside a person and you're going to see that, when in a minute you back up and watch them go you'll be like, "Wow I didn't know this person had this in them" (Bonton resident, Clifton Reese).



Figure 65: Bonton Farmer and Resident Teaching Children about GoatS



Figure 66: Children Learning at Bonton Farms



In Bonton, there is a saying all residents know - "Show me your friends and I'll tell you your future." This is repeated at the home of Daron Babcock during Wednesday night "family time," where residents openly share about what is happening in their lives, and in every day conversation. As residents continue to work throughout their neighborhood, they keep this saying in their minds to remember their goal of changing their environment, impacting lives, and building community:

"Show me your friends and I'll tell you your future." And that's a true thing. If you think about the people you keep around you. If you keep drug addicts and thieves around you then in some time what are you going to do? Be a drug addict and thief. I always think about this. A friend told me this - "Positive brings positive and negative brings negative." The old people use to say, "Birds of a feather flock together." If you think about it, you go where people are going- in the right direction. You're going to fall and you're going to make mistakes, everybody is, but stay with people that are going in the right direction (Bonton resident, Clifton Reese).

I just think that everything is just new and different it makes you want to be just a fresh change. You want to treat things better, take care of things better, you value your residence better. We've just improved so when you come back it's like, "Hey, were not going to do this no more were going to do this a little different. We're not just going to hang out in front of the houses. We're not just going to throw the trash down" (Bonton resident, Marilyn Kimbrough).

[P]eople are beginning to make believe and trust in each other in the community again because they see that somebody cares, and when you got people that care, that makes a big difference... (Bonton resident, Milton Baker).



Figure 67: Children Playing with Goats near Rochester Park

### Future

As residents discuss looking to the future, they address the importance of remembering history. This is especially important with new residents moving into the neighborhood. They want residents to know that they are a part of a neighborhood that serves and they are expected to continue the legacy:

You never forget where you come from because if you forget where you come from then the community you live in dies. The history of Bonton will never die as long as we share it (Bonton resident, Clifton Reese).

We have been through the struggle and we just want our youth and our neighbors to know, the ones that are coming in, that it hasn't been the way it is out there now, and we just want it to be known that it was a struggle and we did walk and we did block the streets (Ideal resident, Sherri Mixon).

There needs to be a sense of legacy or ownership of the history. Many of them won't be there in the next ten years or whatnot but there are stories that need to be passed down and stories that need to be told from the bottom up so that they understand not only the rich sweep of the Dallas myth, and the history that goes along with that, but they understand the other smaller and more important or equally important myths that get told from the bottom up, and I also think that they need to be inspired by these stories to continue the activism...this was the first major redevelopment, first indigenous major redevelopment that had gone on in a black community in Dallas. In every other community where you see redevelopment it's done by someone coming in and doing it, this was the first time that it started from the inside and grew and I think they need to know that and have a sense of responsibility to it and not to let what has essentially become a city project stay solely a city project, but to become a part of it and to begin to demand the things that they need to be able to make that place whole again (Dallas resident, Rev. Gerald Britt, Jr.).

Despite a negative perceptions and a history of drugs and crime, there is little doubt among residents concerning the potential of the area:

It's real heartwarming because a lot of times when I look back and look at how Bexar Street used to be and then look at it now I can see the transition and respect the progress, there's great potential in this geographic area and the best is still yet to come... (Ideal resident, Jerry Hoover).

I think the potential is unlimited, I think that if you go down that street in five or six years you're not going to know the area...that is going to be a new beginning for the area and I think that everything points up for the area now if the residents grab hold of it and take advantage of this opportunity and this time to tell the city what they want and how they want it (Dallas resident, Rev. Gerald Britt, Jr.).

What do I think the future holds for Bonton? Prosperity...I don't want to put it in no box and say, "This, it holds this." I think, I don't think, I know Bonton has a bright future cause there's so many things happening in this community. I think people will be able to learn from the residents of that community, as well as the people that come into the community that's also a vital part of the people trying to restore that community. Bonton is a community that can only get better. It's going to be a community that people is going to be proud. They are learning to be proud of the community. Getting involved. Being more caring. Thought provoking. There's so many bright good things that's happening for the community...it's a diamond in the rough and people are beginning to understand that of the community- 'Hey, we have a precious community here. Let's take care of it. Let's make this community better. Try to make it flourish" (Bonton resident, Milton Baker).

Ultimately, residents want Ideal and Bonton to be an example of how residents can change themselves and their community by working together. They want to be an inspiration for other areas that are trying to overcome their own struggles:

What I hope the people from outside of Bonton is able to see is that Bonton is really no different than any other place can be, but if you care and if you work within together that you can change for the better. That you can build something together and that carries, that means a lot. That's what I hope people from outside of Bonton can see...I know that's what's taking place. People are seeing this and they understand. It's not only giving them ideas, it's also inspiring them to do more in their own communities as well that's what it's about, a sense of awareness" (Bonton resident, Milton Baker).

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION

#### Conclusions

Similar to other black areas, the historical decay of the Bonton and Ideal neighborhoods was the direct result of racialized city planning. While blacks in Bonton and Ideal followed patterns of other blacks across the Southern U.S., moving from farm to town in search of better opportunities, and like these others they were met by institutional structures that limited their social, economic, and political capital (Massey and Denton 1993, Gregory 1998). Like other blacks in Dallas, Bonton and Ideal residents were seen as the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder given low-wage jobs in domestic and service industries. Racialized Dallas zoning laws kept residents from owning quality land, locating black-restricted areas to the Trinity flood plains (Phillips 2006). Bonton and Ideal act as examples of how fear tactics and racialized planning, work together to isolate blacks. As a result of the racist bombings of black-owned homes in white neighborhoods in the 1940s and 1950s, as well as color designated housing blocks, blacks were limited to the area south of Hatcher Street.

Lagging behind other areas in terms of infrastructure and continuously plagued by floods, the additional city planning practices of highway construction and building of public housing projects cemented Bonton's and Ideal's transition into decay. Residents spoke of the role highway construction played in the division of the once unified community. While the proximity to other South Dallas neighborhoods provided Ideal neighborhood with access to outside resources, the Bonton neighborhood was left landlocked by expressways and Rochester Park.



Their locations were compounded as economic viability ceased with the closing of black-owned businesses. Black-owned businesses were the economic base for black neighborhoods where residents were limited, by physical distance and segregation of businesses, to patronizing certain businesses (Massey and Denton 1993). After the closing of black-owned barbershops, grocery stores, and entertainment venues along Bexar Street, the only thriving businesses in the community were liquor stores. The physical decay of businesses and homes within the neighborhoods was accompanied by social decay- the rise of crime rates, drug dealing, and criminal activity. Compounded with job scarcity, low education levels, and lack of resources, Bonton and Ideal effectively began to exhibit characteristic of an underclass neighborhoods by the 1970s (Jargowsky and Yang 2006, Mincy 1989, Wilson 2010).

Without the action of neighborhood associations, this spiraling downward would have continued. With these associations, Bonton and Ideal have been able to increase economic opportunities, by providing job training and entrepreneurial ventures, solidify positive neighborhood image, through environmental cleanup and renovations, and build a bridge between the neighborhood and the city, by maintaining contact and collaborating on projects. All of these actions have transformed individuals and the collective community by increasing social capital (Bourdieu 1977).

### Recommendations

While the neighborhoods of Ideal and Bonton are becoming more socially and economically diverse, through resident and city revitalization efforts, there are still tensions in this relationship. Based on resident interviews there are certain recommendations that can be made to the City of Dallas Neighborhood Investment Program.

Firstly, it would be beneficial for the City of Dallas to learn the history of the Bonton and Ideal neighborhoods. This thesis was created for the purpose of providing NIP with a written account of local histories as well as relate resident reactions to revitalization efforts. Because residents feel they are not understood as a community, their neighborhood history has not been taken into account, and their visions are not being fulfilled, a record of historically institutional factors that led the current state of the area would provide NIP with an understanding of how residents have been previously affected by planning initiatives. An acknowledgment by the city of the effects institutional structures have had on the Bonton and Ideal neighborhoods would be beneficial to show the city values resident voices.

Secondly, based on resident interviews, there are still drug, alcohol, and crime problems that plague the area. Residents continuously referenced problems with residents loitering outside of businesses and vacant and rent homes being used as drug houses. It is recommended that the police satellite station on Bexar Street address specifically the loitering outside of T. C. Grocery and the NIP consider resident apprehensions about building more rental units in the area.

Lastly, the rebuilding of Buckeye Commons resulted in the influx of families. This has led to more elementary school aged children in the neighborhood who must be bused to schools outside of their community to attend school. H.S. Thompson was once an academically recognized school and pillar of the neighborhood. It continues to hold importance among residents, who wish for their children to attend a school in their neighborhood. It is recommended that NIP work with the Dallas Independent School District and residents to reopen the school.

## Further Investigation

While the data collected concerning the Bonton and Ideal neighborhoods has provided a comprehensive understanding of the history of the area and how it relates to urban planning, there are additional areas of the community that can be examined with further investigation.

There is a lack of historical record concerning the black-owned Lincoln Theatre. This business experienced protests in the 1940s because black projectionists were not being hired. Lincoln Theatre would provide a beneficial study on the issues black business owners on Bexar Street encountered in relation to social and economic structures.

H. S. Thompson Elementary School and Lincoln High School, both influential institutions in the lives of residents were mostly left out of this account. These were important centers where teachers provided support to students as well as educational instruction. A history of these two schools would provide a greater understanding of the importance of neighborhood schools in black neighborhoods and how they evolve as centers that to help address neighborhood problems.

There are various non-profit organizations, neighborhood associations, and governmental programs that have been vital to the change occurring in Bonton and Ideal. A more complete picture of the complexity that comes with multiple stakeholders participating in neighborhood redevelopment could be made with an investigation of each group.

## CHAPTER 7

### REFLECTIONS

I remember a few years ago telling my grandmother and mother on separate occasions that I wanted to conduct video interviews with our family in order to record our history while older members were still living. They both responded asking similar questions: “What is so interesting and important about us? Why would anyone want to know about our family?” Five years later and after many family deaths, including my grandmother’s, I now understand why the oral history of poor and seemingly unimportant black people is so vital to our understanding of ourselves, our culture, and our society.

As I sat in the homes of South Dallas residents and listened to stories of families, friends, and neighborhood, it felt as if I were sitting across from a relative telling my own family’s story. I found myself relating their experiences with the experiences of my parents and grandparents, remembering conversations about their childhoods and what it was like growing up in a poor black family in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. On various occasions I would find myself asking my mom questions like: “What’s a party line?” These questions would spark long conversations about what it was like growing up in a black neighborhood in Fort Worth. When speaking to younger residents, it felt as if I was listening to the experiences of a cousin or close friend. Even though I live in a different neighborhood, sharing similar backgrounds and African-American culture allowed me to identify with residents in ways that others could not.

Understanding how my family parallels the shared history of Bonton and Ideal helped me shape the way I developed the project. As an anthropologist collecting histories of black people, I found myself embracing my role as a “native” anthropologist while understanding that I was still actually an outsider. I began to research Bonton and Ideal as if I were researching my own neighborhood, using my cultural understanding to ask residents detailed

questions about a particular subject and incorporating anthropological theories to draw conclusions and make links between their histories and urban planning. Without the anthropological understanding of how the economic, social, and political opportunities made available to blacks has been shaped by the relationship between racialized ideology and American urban planning, the stories of black residents in South Dallas would remain untold and unshared. Their importance would be lost within a larger narrative. Anthropology provides an avenue in which these connections are identified and change urban planning policies that target black communities and perpetuate social and economic inequalities.



## APPENDIX

### Timeline

- 1913- First set of additions built in South Dallas in the area below Hatcher Street
- 1919- Second set of additions built in South Dallas in the area below Hatcher Street
- 1932- Third set of additions built in South Dallas in the area below Hatcher Street
- 1940- Black homes bombed
- 1942- Flood
- 1949- Flood
- 1949- South Central Freeway built
- 1950- Black homes bombed
- 1950- Bexar Street paved
- 1952- Fourth set of additions built in South Dallas in the area below Hatcher Street
- 1957- Flood
- 1960- C. F. Hawn Freeway Built
- 1964- Flood
- 1980- Turner Courts and Rhoads Terrace remodeled
- 1989- Flood
- 1989- Ideal Crime Watch formed
- 1990- Flood
- 1991- Flood
- 1999- T. R. Hoover CDC built
- 2008- Turner Courts and Rhoads Terrace demolished
- 2001- NIP formed and revitalization process starts
- 2012- Buckeye Commons built
- 2014- Bonton Farms created

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