

HOW THE MUSIC CITY IS LOSING ITS SOUL:
GENTRIFICATION IN NASHVILLE AND HOW HISTORIC PRESERVATION COULD
HINDER THE PROCESS

By

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ABSTRACT

Segregation and urban renewal are directly connected, and gentrification is an indirect consequence of both. Gentrification and contemporary neighborhood revitalization would not be quite so striking if it had not been preceded by urban renewal when mostly low income, African American neighborhoods were targeted. When the back-to-the-city movement lured white, middle class homeowners back to the cities that the previous generation had flown from, historic preservation was used with little thought to long-term residents and their neighborhood culture. With no signs of slowing down, Nashville's exponential growth and rapid gentrification over the past decade has been steadily destroying what made it unique in the first place: its communities and the historic neighborhoods that house them. Gentrification has, as it usually does, hit Nashville's older, lower income communities that hardest. One of these is Edgehill, a historically African American neighborhood that is in danger of being destroyed by tear-down fever and short-term rentals. Though many seem to think that displacement and housing destruction is an unavoidable consequence of growth, this does not have to be the case.

Historic Preservation has had a hand in gentrification, but to claim, as its critics have done, that it is largely responsible for the United States' affordable housing crisis is ridiculous. But Historic Preservation does need a public relations makeover. It seems to still be viewed as the stodgy hobby of people who want to dictate what color to paint a house or something to be feared as a harbinger of displacement for lower income residents. The financial benefits of preservation have understandably been used to convince cities and private developers to invest in historic structures, but Preservationists need to accept that to protect historic structures and the healthy communities within them they need to become activists, not just for the built environment but for the people that reside in these historic places. While Historic Preservation will not fix the affordable housing crisis, it can and should be used as a tool to save extant housing and preserve the history of our most vulnerable communities before they are erased socially, culturally, and physically. But to meet this goal we will need to broaden the definition of Historic Preservation and Preservationists will have to see themselves not only as historians, but as activists that can affect change. City administrations will have to make a choice to strike a balance between preservation and development. There are many ways the preservation of extant buildings can help, not hinder, with the affordable housing crisis while preserving communities and our historic resources. Change is inevitable, but change that completely disregards communities is wrong and in the long run detrimental to the health of cities.

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INTRODUCTION

Since 2010, on average, Nashville's population has increased between 89 and 100 people per day.¹ The Music City also drew 14.5 million tourists in 2017.² With no signs of slowing down, Nashville's growth has been steadily destroying what made it unique in the first place: its communities and the neighborhoods that house them. One of these is Edgehill, an historically African American neighborhood that is in danger of being destroyed by tear-down fever and short-term rentals. Though many seem to think that displacement and housing destruction is an unavoidable consequence of growth, such social destruction does not have to be the case. New Nashville is swallowing old Nashville in a perfect storm of state law, zoning decisions and high demand.³ While the high demand is not likely to change anytime soon, there will have to be policy changes and a decision by local government to prioritize its more vulnerable constituents.

In 1967, a resident of Edgehill wrote a letter to the editor of *The Tennessean*, railing against the ongoing construction of the I-40 loop through downtown Nashville. He wrote that realtors had swindled owners out of their property to sell back to the government, which was buying up property to accommodate the oncoming highway.

¹ Joey Garrison, "New Data: Nashville Region Still Growing by 100 People a Day," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) Mar. 28, 2017. <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2017/03/28/new-data-nashville-region-still-growing-100-people-day/99733098/>

² Nate Rau, "Nashville Area Set New Record for Tourism with 14.5 million visitors in 2017," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) Jan. 25, 2018. <https://www.tennessean.com/story/money/2018/01/25/nashville-area-set-new-record-tourism-14-5-million-visitors-2017/1065628001/>

³ Davis Plazas, *How New Nashville is Swallowing Old Nashville*, documentary, David Plazas and George Walker IV (2018; Nashville: The Tennessean, 2018), Digital film. <https://www.tennessean.com/videos/opinion/2018/01/19/documentary-how-new-nashville-swallowing-old-nashville/108809622/>

The writer noted that residents “have so far been subjected to much dislocation and almost no meaningful relocation.” The writer asserted that African Americans “should not be expected to take kindly to being corralled into a blighted urban area by Jim Crow real estate practices and bulldozed around by the high priests of the super road cult.”⁴

This same community is currently being subjected to much dislocation and almost no meaningful relocation. The high priests of tourism and the half million dollar home are forcing out Edgehill residents. Residents are no longer corralled in the urban areas they made home in the aftermath of urban renewal, but are being scattered into the suburbs that once excluded them. Edgehill can be used as a case study to highlight Nashville’s history of prioritizing development, tourism, and universities over its long term residents as well as demonstrate how, in theory, preservation policies and practices can be used to allow development but protect Nashville’s longtime residents by keeping their housing affordable and safe from developers.

Edgehill is a vibrant community with a complex history that deserves preservation. While preservation will not fix the affordable housing crisis, it can and should be used as a tool to save extant housing and preserve the history of the most vulnerable communities before they are erased, socially, culturally, and physically. But to meet this goal we will need to broaden the definition of preservation and preservationists will have to see themselves not only as historians, but as activists that can affect change.

⁴William Washburn, III, “Letter to the Editor: negro removal - not urban removal” *The Tennessean*, November 20, 1967.

CHAPTER ONE: EDGEHILL HISTORY

Nashville is environed by a line of bluffs, extending with a few intervening valleys, from the Cumberland River below town around to the river above town, a distance of about eight miles. Along the summits of these bluffs and across their dividing valleys, a strong exterior and continuous line of earth works from river to river..." and between the bluffs "...the following pikes, named in order from right to left, radiate from the city: the Charlotte, Harding, Hillsboro, Granny White, Franklin, and Murfreesboro.¹

The section of South Nashville through which Granny White Pike passes is one of Nashville's oldest neighborhoods, yet its origins and its historical boundaries have been little studied. The first instance of the official use of the name "Edgehill" was when "Kentucky and West Jackson Streets, running from the Hillsboro turnpike to Spruce Street" became Edgehill Avenue in 1890.² Edgehill was rarely (if ever) referenced in local newspapers as an entire neighborhood until it was slated for urban renewal in the mid-twentieth century. Likely settled by enslaved people who flooded into Nashville after the Union occupation of the city, mapping the neighborhood is difficult because its boundaries have fluctuated over time, and Nashville has historically had a "salt and pepper" population distribution in most neighborhoods. It is most likely that Edgehill began as a series of contraband camps.

The term "contraband" was first used to refer to escaped enslaved people who came to the Union army in search of sanctuary. Not wanting to send valuable labor back to the Confederacy, Union General Benjamin F. Butler deemed the enslaved people "contraband of war" shortly after the war began, which provided the Union Army with the "legal veneer for holding the [enslaved people] and avoiding challenging their status as

¹ "The Battle of Nashville - Forces, Positions, and Gallant Fighting of McArthur's Division," *The Nashville Daily Union* (Nashville, TN), Dec. 25, 1864, 1.

² "Changing the Names: Important Alterations of Prominent West End Streets," *The Nashville Daily Union* (Nashville, TN), Dec. 11, 1890, 3.

property.”³ Subsequent legislation allowed the Union Army to confiscate enslaved people from Confederates and forbade their return to the Confederacy. Following the arrival of the Union, enslaved people began streaming into the city. It was relatively common for enslaved people to look to the Union Army for some kind of protection and support, but the army was ill prepared to take care of a huge number of enslaved people in addition to its troops. To solve this problem, in August of 1862 General Grant established the first official Tennessee contraband camp in Grand Junction, Tennessee. He appointed Chaplain John Eaton, Jr. as the superintendent of contrabands. Eaton was instructed “to organize a network of special posts where the soon-to-be freedmen ... could be fed, clothed, housed, and put to work.”⁴

The Union Army occupied Nashville in 1862 with little incident, and quickly took advantage of the new influx of potential laborers and soldiers. Contrabands were often responsible for fort construction and more menial labor at Union encampments and in battle. The principal forts of the Union in Nashville were Fort Negley on St. Cloud Hill; Fort Morton (originally called Fort Confiscation) on a hill west of Franklin Road near South Street; Fort Houston at 16th and Division; and Fort Casino, a blockhouse on Reservoir Hill (Kirkpatrick’s Hill) on 8th Avenue.⁵ Soldiers and a workforce made up of impressed free and enslaved African American laborers built three posts during the first year of Union occupation of Nashville. Of the three forts, Fort Negley proved the most significant. Built of local limestone, dirt and timber, soldiers, contrabands, and workers

³ Kate Masur, “‘A Rare Phenomenon of Philological Vegetation’”: The Word ‘Contraband’ and the Meanings of Emancipation in the United States,” *The Journal of American History* 93, no. 4 (Mar. 2007): 1050.

⁴ Steven Joseph Ross, “Freed Soil, Freed Labor, Freed Men: John Eaton and the Davis Bend Experiment” *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 44, No. 2 (May, 1978): 215.

⁵ Walter T. Durham, *Reluctant Partners: Nashville and the Union, July 1, 1863 to June 30, 1865*. (Nashville, TN: Tennessee Historical Society, 1987) 221.

completed it in December 1862. It was the largest inland stone fortification built by the Union Army during the Civil War.

Contrabands made valuable contributions to the war effort, even though the conditions in camps, especially the informal ones, were often abominable. Sanitation and what passed for medical facilities “caused an extremely high mortality rate.”⁶ In local newspapers, African Americans who remained in contraband settlements in Nashville after the war were depicted as depraved thieves on a reign of terror.⁷ General Lovell H. Rousseau, a Nashville district commander, wrote about the contraband population in Nashville:

The Negro population is giving much trouble to the Military as well as to the *people*. Slavery is virtually dead in Tennessee, although the State is excepted from the Emancipation Proclamation. Negroes leave their homes and stroll over the country *uncontrolled*. Hundreds of them are supported by the Government, who neither work nor are able to work. Many straggling negroes have arms obtained from soldiers and their insolence and threats greatly alarm and intimidate white families who are not allowed to keep arms or who would generally be afraid to use if they had them. The Military cannot look after these things and there are no civil authorities to do so. In many cases negroes leave their homes to *work for themselves* boarding and lodging with their Masters defiantly asserting their right to do so.⁸

Even though conditions in the camps were far from ideal, contraband camps often became permanent communities after the war. There are “old contraband camps” mentioned in local Nashville papers, but none were specifically named. Aside from the official camp located closer to the downtown area, the most specific references locate camps and settlements near Hillsboro, Granny White, and Franklin Pike.⁹

⁶ Bobby L. Lovett, “The Negro's Civil War in Tennessee, 1861-1865,” *The Journal of Negro History* 61, no. 1 (Jan., 1976): 38.

⁷ See: *The Nashville Union and American*: Nov. 11, 1869 p. 4, Nov. 30, 1869 p. 1, and Jan. 18, 1870 p. 4 for articles concerning contraband camps in Nashville.

⁸ Michelle R Scott, *Blues Empress in Black Chattanooga: Bessie Smith and the Emerging Urban South* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008) 23.

⁹ “Somewhat Improving,” *Nashville Union and American* (Nashville, TN), Nov. 30, 1869. 1.

Once the U.S. Army began mustering African American soldiers into regiments of the U.S. Colored Troops in late 1863, their families often followed, seeking federal protection and sometimes employment, often living nearby federal facilities and encampments along with self-emancipated individuals and their families from plantations in the surrounding areas. Some of the camps housed schools operated by missionary societies, who conducted church services in addition to those offered by military chaplains. Residents established churches, schools, fraternal and benevolent societies.¹⁰ Due to these, once the Union army left Nashville, more often than not, freedmen's camps developed into black neighborhoods.

There were plenty of references in local newspapers to old contrabands camps in the area, but there is not a contraband camp named Edgehill mentioned or evidence that a contraband camp was formally established in the area at all. According to Tennessee State University historian Bobby Lovett, the Union army established at least three contraband camps in Nashville. The first was near the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad depot, another was in East Nashville near Edgefield, and a third in the area now known as Edgehill.¹¹

The 1870 census listed the occupations of African American residents as farmers, laborers, dairymen, cooks, maids, "house girls," washerwomen, and gardeners.¹² The same census indicates that 38% of Nashville's population at the time was African American, living in every one of Nashville's ten wards but having a majority

¹⁰ Kate Hatfield and Susan Knowles, "Overview of Edgehill History," written for proposed Edgehill Neighborhood Conservation Zoning Overlay, Metro Historical Commission, 2017.

¹¹ Bobby L. Lovett, *The African American History of Nashville, Tennessee, 1780-1930* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1999) 55.

¹² Bobby Lovett "From Plantation to the City: William Edmondson and the African American Community" in *The Art of William Edmondson* edited by William Edmondson et al. (University Press of Mississippi, 1999) 18.

population in none.¹³ Some African Americans were reluctant to leave the city to return to work on farms, after they had so recently escaped them. Once outside of the central business district in downtown Nashville, “the spatial distribution of [African Americans] was chiefly determined by access to casual and insecure employment.”¹⁴ This pattern meant work with the railroads and factories that boomed in the post-war era, with housing for African Americans increasingly segregated near rail yards as well the old locations of federal forts. The Union Station turntable and the tracks of the former Nashville & Chattanooga form the northernmost point of the Edgehill area; the Louisville & Nashville Railroad runs along the eastern side, and there were multiple lumber yards in the area.

In 1870, the concentrations of African Americans near rail lines and factories accounted for almost half the African American population in Nashville. These South Nashville railway yards became part of racial expansion from downtown, but that progression was slowed and reversed by white flight from the city. In 1890 the 10th ward, a large portion of southern Edgehill, was 55% African American. By 1900 the number of whites living in the area had doubled, doubling again in 1910. By 1920 there were five times more whites than there had been in 1890 and African Americans made up only 14% of the population of the 10th Ward.¹⁵

The homes in Edgehill in this period were generally double-tenements or shotgun houses, made of unpainted wood. The roads were narrow and unpaved, and streetcars

¹³ Benjamin Walter, “Ethnicity and Residential Succession” In *Growing Metropolis: Aspects of Development in Nashville*. Edited by James F. Blumstein and Benjamin Walter. (Vanderbilt University Press, 1975) 22.

¹⁴ Walter, 23.

¹⁵ Walter, 23.

would become the primary mode of transportation.¹⁶ Clearer boundaries of the neighborhood began to take shape when white Nashvillians followed streetcar lines into the area at the end of the nineteenth century, compressing Edgehill to the East and West. By then Edgehill was by all available accounts a working class African American neighborhood, gaining a reputation as a place for aspiring working-class and middle-class African American families.¹⁷ As employment opportunities in urban centers increased, rural Tennessee inhabitants of both races moved into Nashville seeking work and an improved quality of life. The Great Migration northward from the Deep South also swelled the population of Nashville as African Americans sought work in the city or stopped there on the way north.¹⁸

The neighborhood and its main artery were most likely named after the home of Charles A.R. Thompson, a partner in Thompson & Kelly, a successful downtown “dry-goods” store. His two-story brick mansion, called “The Edge” and “Edgehill,” was built in 1879 near the corner of Hillsboro Pike (now 21st Avenue) and Jackson (now Edgehill Avenue). Seated on twelve acres of woodland with extensive gardens, the home stood at that location until 1910, when the Thompsons sold their property to George Peabody College for its new campus, and dismantled and moved the house to its present location on Bowling Avenue.¹⁹ An editorial notice that year in *The Tennessean* newspaper urged the city to build additional cross streets through the area stretching from Twenty-first

¹⁶ Josephine Ridley and Carrie Harrison, *Reclaiming Our Past: The History of Kayne Avenue Missionary Baptist Church, Nashville, Tennessee, 1886-1992* (Nashville: Kayne Avenue Baptist Church, 1993), 1-2.

¹⁷ Lovett, 75.

¹⁸ Kate Hatfield and Susan Knowles, “Overview of Edgehill History,” written for proposed Edgehill Neighborhood Conservation Zoning Overlay, Metro Historical Commission, 2017.

¹⁹ “Dwelling on the Past: ‘Edgehill’ House Provides a Window to Peabody’s History,” *Peabody Reflector* 69, no. 2, (Summer 2000): 2.

avenue (Hillsboro Pike) to Granny White Pike (12th Avenue South) between Edgehill and Belcourt Avenues, which were the only two cross streets for a one-half mile stretch.²⁰

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the churches and schools became the public landmarks for black neighborhoods in a “Jim Crow” city, replacing the earlier primacy of the Union army forts. Fort Negley was abandoned although the Works Progress Administration resurrected it as a public park in the late 1930s. Forts Morton and Casino disappeared under a wave of new public improvements. In 1889, the city built its reservoir on top of Kirkpatrick’s Hill where Fort Casino had once stood. A quarry was opened on the site of Fort Morton atop Currey’s Hill (also called Meridian Hill). The reservoir, built with rock from the Meridian Hill quarry, supplied water to the whole city.²¹

²⁰ “Need Cross Streets to Build Up Section,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), July 28, 1912. 3.

²¹ Kate Hatfield and Susan Knowles, “Overview of Edgehill History,” written for proposed Edgehill Neighborhood Conservation Zoning Overlay, Metro Historical Commission, 2017.

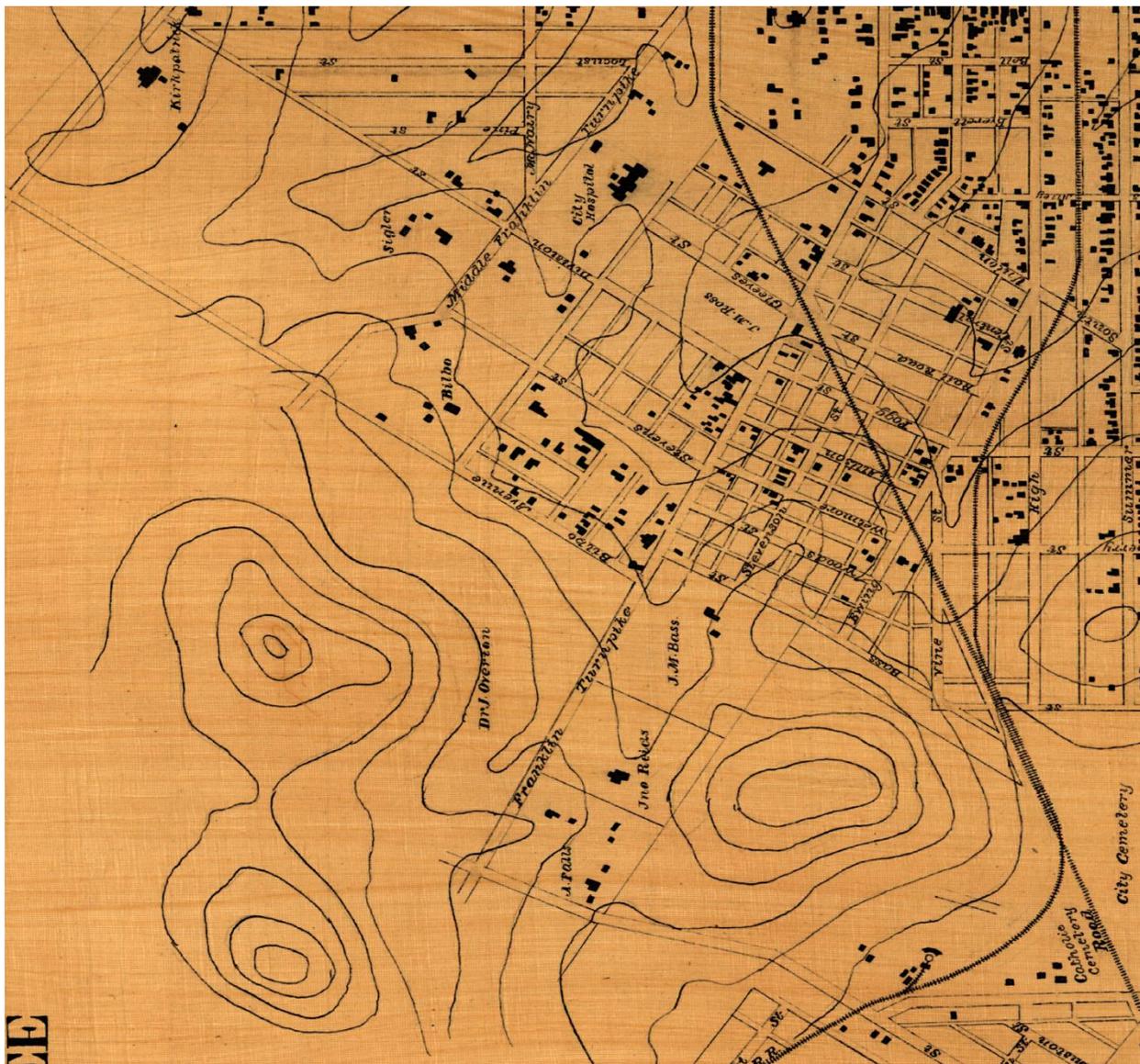


Figure 1. Enlargement of circa 1861 map of Nashville. Courtesy of the Library of Congress. See Appendix A for full map.



Figure 2. Enlargement of map of Nashville, 1877. Courtesy of the Library of Congress. See Appendix B for full map.



Figure 3. Enlargement of Nashville Railway and Light Co., 1913. Thick black lines indicate streetcar lines. See Appendix E for full map.

The development and extension of electric streetcar lines at the end of the nineteenth century were a catalyst for major change in Edgehill. The new lines began the division of Davidson County's old plantation lands. Developers moved into the Edgehill area to accommodate the new crowd of white suburbanites fleeing the city, and the planning of new subdivisions to house the white residents that followed the streetcar lines down 8th and 12th Avenues began very quickly.²² Developers turned Belle Meade Plantation into a subdivision in 1906 and Henry Compton's land, on which the late Orange Edmondson and his wife Jane had raised four sons and two daughters, was divided into streets, lots, and a school lot in 1907. That same year, when the formerly enslaved Jane Edmondson rented a house at 1437 13th Avenue South and began taking in laundry, several of her older children were already working at various day jobs in Nashville.²³ Her sons Orange Jr., a teamster, and William, a railroad laborer and janitor at the Women's Hospital, were able to purchase lots on Fourteenth Avenue South by 1913. William, who lived at 1434 14th Avenue South, and later worked as a stonemason's helper, would begin to gain a local reputation as a tombstone carver and stone sculptor by the early 1930s. Having at one point purchased his brother's lot for a garden and orchard, he made it a sculpture yard.²⁴ Edmondson is now one of the most highly regarded American sculptors of the mid-twentieth century. The limestone quarry on Meridian Hill nearby would likely have served as a source for Edmondson's carving stone.²⁵

²² Bobby Lovett, "From Plantation to the City: William Edmondson and the African American Community," in *The Art of William Edmondson*, ed. Cheekwood Museum of Art (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), 19.

²³ Lovett, 19-20.

²⁴ Judith McWillie, "William Edmondson with Edward Weston and Louise Dahl-Wolfe" in *The Art of William Edmondson*, ed. Cheekwood Museum of Art (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999)

²⁵ McWillie, 48.

The arrival of the streetcar to Edgehill made the neighborhood more attractive to downtown professionals. White commuters settled along 8th and 9th Avenues on the eastern border of the neighborhood and along 21st Avenue to the west. But Edgehill remained a predominantly African American area with use of the Kayne Avenue (12th Avenue) line. Developers began to subdivide and sell lots priced to appeal to median income level buyers. Middle-class whites began to move into the neighborhood between Hillsboro Pike (21st Avenue South) and 15th Avenue. African Americans, who had outnumbered whites nearly two to one in 1890, were soon living mostly on the inside streets (14th to 10th Avenues South).

The new streetcar lines headed south and west to Vanderbilt University, founded in 1873. Nearby was Roger Williams University, a Baptist college for African Americans. Founded in 1866 as the Nashville Normal and Theological Institute which purchased “thirty acres of the W.H. Gordon plantation lands on the east side of Hillsboro Pike” in 1873-74 with the help of African American business leaders Henry Harding and Abram Smith. The boundaries of the new campus “reached east to today’s 19th Avenue South and then north to present-day Wedgewood Avenue, next to the Belmont plantation mansion.”²⁶ Administrators renamed the Nashville Normal and Theological Institute Roger Williams University in 1883.²⁷ By 1879, the Institute had over two hundred students. Two of the six faculty members were African American, as were four of the school’s trustees.²⁸ In 1905, two fires destroyed the main buildings at Roger Williams

²⁶ Bobby L. Lovett, *The African American History of Nashville, Tennessee, 1780-1930* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1999) 148-149.

²⁷ Lovett, 49.

²⁸ Lovett, 149.

University and the school was forced to sell its campus²⁹ to nearby Peabody College and real estate developers in 1911.³⁰ An article published in *The Tennessean* shortly after the second fire attempted to put to rest rumors that Roger Williams University would be trading places with nearby Peabody College. This rumor had “stirred up” presumably white residents of South Nashville, as that trade would allegedly cause property values to fall and put “business...at a standstill.”³¹

Next steps for the university proved controversial. An article in the *Nashville Globe* reflected unease over what happened next. “They built the old Roger Williams and turned it over to a society dominated by white men, and when the fire came and the ‘winds blew,’ the Negroes woke up and realized that they had built on a sandy foundation. [The] 50,000 in insurance money was turned over to the ‘society dominated by white men’ and the land was subdivided, proceeds from which go to the same society.³² A new site was purchased, possibly on 11th Avenue South, where a site was cleared and prepared to begin construction.³³ The proposed site was located in an area where the “best class of the negro race” lived; it was suggested that the Kayne Avenue Streetcar line be extended to the new site. An article in the *Tennessean* stated that white citizens in the nearby Waverly neighborhood could raise few objections, especially considering that they would not have to ride the same Kayne Avenue streetcar to reach

²⁹ Lovett, 20.

³⁰ Bobby Lovett, “Roger Williams University,” *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, December 25, 2009, <http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=1147>.

³¹ “Rumor Groundless,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), May 29, 1905, 5. See also: “False: Roger Williams Not Going to Buy Old Peabody Site. Groundless Rumors Create Stir,” *The Nashville Globe* (Nashville, TN), Feb. 11, 1910, 1.

³² “Initial Rally for Rogers Williams University,” *The Nashville Globe* (Nashville, TN) Feb. 1, 1907, 1.

³³ “Real Estate and Industry News,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) June 10, 1906, 27.

their own homes.³⁴ The new site in Edgehill was never completed and the University was pushed out of the city to a site on White's Creek Pike into the present day ABC.

Whites had a different vision for the old Roger Williams University campus. One of the trustees of the George Peabody College for Teachers responded that they would be developing the site but it would not be for "a negro school." An African American "in close touch with the affairs of Roger Williams" said that the university was perfectly aware that "the white people of that section of the city do not want us there."³⁵ The construction of George Peabody College for Teachers on a large section of land bordered by Hillsboro Road and Edgehill Avenue on the west and north and by 18th Avenue on the east, which included twenty-five acres of what had been the Roger Williams campus, began in 1912. The remaining acreage was sold to real estate developers who platted it out with covenants restricting African American ownership to the area east of 15th Avenue South.³⁶

The incidents involving Roger Williams University campus seem to be the first well publicized instance of blatant encroachment by whites into the Edgehill area. Dr. Bobby Lovett writes that a racially restrictive covenant was used on the property after it was acquired from Roger Williams University. Racially restrictive covenants first appeared at the end of the nineteenth century. These covenants would be included in the deed to a property, restricting who the owner could sell, rent, or lease the property to in future. Those restrictions were usually explicitly racially based.

³⁴ "Real Estate and Industry News," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) May 13, 1906, 33.

³⁵ "Baptist - Committee Investigating National Convention Boards - Prominent Ministers from all Parts of the Country," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) Feb. 11, 1910, 1.

³⁶ Bobby L. Lovett, *The African American History of Nashville, Tennessee, 1780-1930* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1999) 151.

The Bransford Realty Company, which was beginning to develop certain neighborhood blocks as early as 1913, did build homes for African Americans. Advertisements in the *Nashville Globe* offered property in the “section for colored people” in the Edgehill addition between Waverly Place and Belmont College. The advertisement instructed readers to take the Kayne Avenue (12th Avenue) or Belmont streetcar and get off at Edgehill Avenue and walk to 15th Avenue. The property for sale would be on 14th and 15th Avenues.³⁷

By 1920 the African American population of Edgehill was being pushed back toward the downtown area to the north. By this time, the Edgehill neighborhood had begun to take its more contemporary shape between 10th and 15th avenues, enclosed by Division Street to the north and Douglas Avenue to the south. The *Nashville Colored Directory* for 1925 highlighted prominent churches in the neighborhood, including Kayne Avenue Baptist on 12th Avenue South and Bethel A.M.E. Church on 10th Avenue South. Prominent business owners and professionals in the neighborhood included architects Moses and Calvin McKissack, who lived at 1501 and 1205 Edgehill Avenue.³⁸ A page containing four photographs of “beautiful homes owned by the colored citizens of Nashville” featured 1303 Tremont, the home of Hon. Clay T. Moore and Family.³⁹ Though none of the city’s segregated parks for African Americans (Greenwood on Lebanon Road, Hadley on Centennial Boulevard, and Napier at Cannon and Donelson

³⁷ “Don’t Miss Our Big Annual Sale!: Advertisement of the Bransford Realty Company, “ *The Nashville Globe* (Nashville, TN) July 4, 1913, 7.

³⁸ R.C. Grant, *Nashville Colored Directory* (Nashville: R.C. Grant 1925), advertisement on p. 76.

³⁹ R. C. Grant, *Nashville Colored Directory* (Nashville: R.C. Grant, 1925), 10.

Streets were convenient to Edgehill. In 1928, however, an Edgehill Park for African Americans only was mentioned in *The Tennessean*.⁴⁰

Such important historic African American churches as Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (1866), Kayne Avenue Baptist Church (1882), Bass Street Baptist Church (1887), Lea Avenue Christian Church (1892), and Mt. Sinai Primitive Baptist Church (circa 1890) define the institutional foundation for the Edgehill neighborhood. Add to that the presence of two African American public elementary schools: Carter School, located on 12th Avenue South near Edgehill Street, and Lawrence School on South Street near Kayne Avenue. Two schools formed in the post-Civil War era, “the William Penn School, renamed in honor of Judge John Lawrence in 1889, and the Granny White School, renamed in honor of the African American educator Howard C. Carter in 1896” were combined into the Carter-Lawrence School in 1940.⁴¹ By the mid-1940s, the school building was being leased to the South Street Community Center.⁴²

Over time, as wealthier white residents moved further out of the city into park-like subdivisions dependent solely on automobility, integrated urban neighborhoods such as Edgehill became more segregated. The growing black middle class built large family homes in areas such as the west side of Edgehill. The neighborhood boasted its own doctors, dentists, and lawyers. Commercial, professional, and civic establishments for African Americans continued to develop along 12th Avenue South, from denominational publishing, to labor organizations, physicians, restaurants, and public meeting halls near

⁴⁰ “Negro Parks Have Varied Programs” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Sept. 2, 1928, 37.

⁴¹ Joel Dark, “Edgehill,” in: *Profiles of African Americans in Tennessee*, a publication of the 2018 Nashville Conference on African American History and Culture (Metropolitan Historical Commission, 2018).

⁴² “...A lease allowing the South Street Community Center for Negroes to use the abandoned Carter-Lawrence School was renewed. Councilman Wilson, who said he attended the school 74 years ago at the age of six, sponsored renewal of the lease.” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), May 8, 1946, 2.

downtown to retail businesses further out on 12th Avenue South in the heart of the neighborhood. The South Side Pharmacy, a bakery, and a cleaners stood on the same block of 12th Avenue South and the Consumers Meat Market was located at 12th Avenue South and Edgehill Avenues, according to the 1925 *Nashville Colored Directory*.

The neighborhood remained culturally and economically vibrant into the 1950s. Although outsiders owned many businesses in Edgehill, it had its share of locally-owned African American businesses. Edgehill residents also had informal businesses such as beauty parlors in their homes. Some touring African American musicians, barred from segregated hotels downtown, stayed in a rooming house in West Edgehill.⁴³ *The Negro Travellers Green Book*, a national guidebook for automobile tourism published from 1938 to 1964, listed a beauty parlor on Hawkins Street, a hotel on 8th Ave South, and a Drive-In on 12th Ave South as offering services for African Americans during the period of Jim Crow segregation. The 1950 Nashville City Directory lists Zema Hill Funeral Home at 1306 South Street, Walter L. Hicks Grocery at 1104 South Street, and Cotton Brothers Restaurant and Clemons Drug Store on 12th Avenue South. In the 1940s, Reverend Hill, who lived at 1408 Edgehill Avenue, had purchased four white concrete polar bear sculptures formerly used as roadside advertisements for the two Polar Bear Frozen Custard shops in Nashville. Reverend Hill installed two on his front lawn and two in front of his funeral home. In 1952 Hill sold his funeral home to Patton Brothers,

⁴³ Nashville Civic Design Center, "Overview History," from Edgehill Neighborhood: Findings and Recommendations (2003) 9.

formerly in business on 8th Avenue South, and the polar bears out front soon disappeared.⁴⁴

In the late 1950s Owen Bradley moved his recording studio to 16th Avenue South on the border of west Edgehill. It was the first recording studio in the area, and its success, in conjunction with the boom of the country music industry, led to a large-scale migration of record companies to the area now known as Music Row. Over the next five years Record companies rushed to purchase residential houses that the new Metro planning commission was happy to accommodate with zoning changes. As a result Edgehill's character changed drastically. Many of the prominent families living in west Edgehill left the area as the music industry continued its expansion.⁴⁵ Nashville's eagerness to accommodate Music Row's growth would prove the beginning of a long and ongoing battle for Edgehill's right to remain in an increasingly smaller area and hold onto what power it had to decide Edgehill's future.

⁴⁴ LaCrisha Butler, "2nd Set of Polar Bears Reappears," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Jan. 4, 1987, 1B and 3B.

⁴⁵ Nashville Civic Design Center, "Overview History," from *Edgehill Neighborhood: Findings and Recommendations* (2003) 9.

CHAPTER TWO: URBAN RENEWAL IN EDGEHILL

“If this is the Kind of City We Want, It’s the Kind of City We’ll Have”

Isolating Nashville’s African American communities was clearly a priority for the Nashville Housing Authority (NHA) during its series of urban renewal projects, which were in progress from about 1950 to 1970. Urban Renewal offered federal funding to cities seeking to concentrate their lower income, mostly African American population in dedicated areas. The NHA prioritized commerce while claiming concern for the well-being of its lower income citizens but the agency effectively segregated African Americans from the rest of the city. The NHA claimed to have “sought and received the cooperation of all units of government, civic organizations, public utilities and religious and welfare organizations,” asserting that nowhere else in the United States have urban renewal programs “achieved greater community understanding and greater community support” than in Nashville.¹ Over the course of the urban renewal projects planned for Edgehill, this would prove to be patently false, but it would also show how important community organizations and advocates are to a neighborhood with few avenues of recourse.

The use of buzzwords such as “blight” or “slum clearance” and a series of federal housing laws and regulations allowed Nashville carte blanche in achieving its urban renewal goals. In 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act was passed. Called the greatest public works project in American history, Federal-Aid Highway Act helped build 46,876 miles of road.² Roads were safer and the ease of travel encouraged economic growth, but “there

¹ Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency Annual Report, 1954.

² Elisheva Blas, “The Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways: The Road to Success?” *The History Teacher* 44, no. 1 (Nov., 2010): 128-129.

were various, unforeseen consequences” of the new highways.³ Urban renewal projects were often used to clear the way for these highways and healthy communities were destroyed in their wake.

The Nashville Housing Authority’s original aim was to provide low income housing, but as that was underway, “a corollary objective was determined” to start a slum clearance program “that would provide locations for the proposed housing developments.”⁴ Lower income areas were often targeted for renewal, not because of the conditions in those areas, but because property costs were lower, so it was less costly for governments to exercise eminent domain.⁵ Residents were also thought less likely to put up a fight even if they had the means to do so. Tracking Nashville’s succession of urban renewal projects, one thing is obvious: one of the Nashville government’s primary goals was isolating its African American population.

The first public housing legislation was part of Roosevelt’s New Deal. During the New Deal era of 1933-1941, federal public housing agencies were obligated to enter into cooperation agreements with local governments before building. Rules were meant to limit construction costs and tenant incomes, but when the legislation was reauthorized in 1949 during the Truman administration the construction industry caused an uproar.⁶ The housing laws to come would be more generous.

The Housing Act of 1949 had provisions for the relocation of displaced residents and attempted to include private enterprise in public housing construction.⁷ Various

³ Blas, 130.

⁴ MDHA Annual Report, 1954.

⁵ Blas, 130.

⁶ Edward G. Goetz, *New Deal Ruins: Race, Economic Justice, and Public Housing Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 27-29.

⁷Housing Act of 1949. Public Law 171, 81st Cong., 1st sess. Approved July, 15, 1949.

attempts were made to encourage private investment in public housing projects, without success. The Housing Act of 1954 tried yet again, this time encouraging redevelopment and rehabilitation of properties. In public housing's infancy, slum reformers felt that "direct government intervention in the form of publicly funded and operated housing was the only viable long-term strategy"⁸ for combatting the issues within existing housing and neighborhoods. That sort of government intervention took the form of urban renewal.

The first large scale project that would affect Edgehill was the University Center Urban Renewal Project. With funding approved in 1962, the University Center project would control and encourage development in two "distinctly separate but equally vital segments of community life:" the education-medical center and Music Row on 16th Avenue South. The education-medical center included Vanderbilt University, Peabody College, Scarritt College, Belmont College, Saint Thomas Hospital, and Vanderbilt Hospital. For every dollar the universities and medical institutions spent on property to add to their complexes, the federal government would contribute two. As well as expanding the university and medical complexes, the project would allegedly "curtail creeping blight and the drift toward second class housing and slums in some sections."⁹

One thing to keep in mind, there were no standardized definitions for any of the terms commonly used to describe neighborhoods slated for renewal; blighted, substandard, obsolete, or unsuitable. When naming an area to be cleared, the area

⁸Edward G. Goetz, *New Deal Ruins: Race, Economic Justice, and Public Housing Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 25.

⁹ "University Center Project Affects Total Community," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Aug. 6, 1967, 16.

referred to was often a small, dilapidated part of the larger neighborhood. Blight was in the eye of the beholder; the beholder in Nashville's case was a government much more concerned with commerce than the well-being of its African American. In order to qualify for urban renewal federal funding, at least 50% of the housing in a proposed area must be deemed substandard. There were HUD guidelines for slum designations, but it was up to property inspectors to decide if an area would qualify. It was relatively easy to have properties deemed blighted because it was often simply a matter of opinion for property inspectors, there were not strict parameters for condemning a property. For example, a home that was next to a home that had been classified as blighted could then itself be called blighted or a house being rented was sometimes classified as blighted simply because it was a rental. The Vanderbilt and Nashville codes inspectors that came to the University Center area have since been accused of underhanded tactics by residents at the time. Over the course of acquiring land for the project, Vanderbilt was accused of buying homes and purposefully letting them deteriorate and become substandard.

By the time the project was up for final approval, Vanderbilt had already made 60% of its land purchases and 51% of the housing in the area had been deemed the prerequisite substandard, though one councilman stated that he knew there were still "some fine homes in the area" and voted against the project because residents in the area were opposed to it.¹⁰ Property owners had until 1975 to sell to Vanderbilt; past that

¹⁰ "University Center Project Affects Total Community," *The Tennessean* (Aug. 6, 1967): 1. See also: n/a, "Council Votes Center Renewal" *The Tennessean* (Aug. 16, 1967): 33.

deadline the NHA would use eminent domain to confiscate the land.¹¹ Similar to Nashville's other urban renewal projects, there were problems with communication between the NHA and the communities that would be affected by the University Center project. Home owners were afraid (rightly so) their homes were just going to be taken away and local councilman Glenn Ferguson charged the NHA with not keeping community members sufficiently informed. In 1970, Reverend Bill Barnes and Fannie Mae Dees, a well-known figure in the fight against the University Center Project, with a number of community members petitioned the NHA to "allow the formation of the citizens group to help facilitate greater understanding and ease the process of redevelopment and rehabilitation"¹² which would create the University Center Project Area Committee.

It was reported that 3,800 homes would be razed for the University Center project, but displaced residents would be relocated to "decent, safe, and sanitary housing."¹³ Charles Hawkins, the NHA urban renewal director at the time, called the estimate "fantastic," stating that it was approximately 3,800 *dwelling units*. Hawkins would blow smoke throughout his tenure at the NHA and in this instance he was splitting hairs; one dwelling unit was the equivalent of one resident or family displaced, it simply did not necessarily mean that per dwelling unit there was an entire structure demolished. Estimating that 3,800 *homes* would be demolished was not far off the mark.¹⁴

¹¹ Bill Carey, "A City Swept Clean: How Urban Renewal, for Better and for Worse, Created the City We Know Today," *Nashville Scene*, Sept. 6, 2001, <https://www.nashvillescene.com/news/article/13006140/a-city-swept-clean>.

¹²Lindsay Hager, "University Center Urban Renewal," Research Report, MTSU Center for Historic Preservation, 2015. 11.

¹³ "3,800 Houses To Be Razed In VU Center," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) April. 10, 1962, 1.

¹⁴ Hager, 3.

While the University Center Project was closing in on Edgehill to the West, I-65 was encroaching to the East and the Edgehill Urban Renewal Project was headed down the center of the neighborhood. Thirty-three million dollars of federal money was approved for the Edgehill project in 1965 and it was quickly approved because of yet another deadline for federal funding contributions. The project was expected to take seven years to complete and would include a little over one thousand acres of land.¹⁵ The main purpose of the project, according to the NHA, was to improve the area for residents and Hawkins assured Edgehill that they would not be forced to move without somewhere to go.

The project officially began in 1966. As well as new housing, the project sought to build parks and schools, widen streets, update storm water and sewage lines, clear land for Belmont, and eliminate “incompatible land uses and obsolete structures.”¹⁶ Vague descriptions such as these are peppered throughout Nashville’s urban renewal programs, allowing the NHA leave to clear properties where they saw fit. The project irreversibly damaged the original layout of the neighborhood and eliminated commercial space on 12th Avenue, “the neighborhood's historic spine.”¹⁷ Wedgewood Avenue cut through Edgehill to the South and separated it from Belmont campus. I-65 blocked off the Eastern boundary and the rezoning of Music Row cut Edgehill off to the West. The northern portion of Edgehill would be rezoned and sold for commercial uses, effectively isolating the neighborhood from the rest of Nashville and concentrating Edgehill’s

¹⁵ “Edgehill Project Receives Approval,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) Oct 14, 1965, 1.

¹⁶MDHA Annual Reports 1961-1972.

¹⁷ “Edgehill Neighborhood: Findings and Recommendations,” Nashville Civic Design Center, 2003, 10. http://www.sitemason.com/files/jn2dZS/edgehillbook_web.pdf

residents into a progressively smaller area. The project displaced an estimated 2,300 people.

At the beginning of Edgehill's renewal, the NHA made it clear that each home the program destroyed would be replaced and the housing for those displaced would be ready well before residents had to move.¹⁸ This claim would quickly prove inaccurate. The first phase of the project, which was the section in the path of I-65, would displace 700 families, but there were only 500 units planned, even though there would somehow not be "an immediate critical need for housing space."¹⁹ Officials held an informational meeting for Edgehill residents at Rose Park School in late 1965, and announced plans to establish a permanent information center at a later date. Councilman Mansfield Douglas, III, requested the meeting; it gave residents a chance to ask an NHA official questions and view proposed plans.²⁰ Councilman Douglas was solely responsible for those initial meetings and the NHA would continue to be less than forthcoming throughout the project while claiming that it was keeping residents apprised of what was being planned for their neighborhoods. But one Edgehill resident, most likely summing up the majority view, said "no one can ever tell you direct."²¹

Relocation issues plagued Edgehill. Many of those displaced were not eligible for the proposed public housing or rent supplement projects. The Edgehill project would not provide comparable, or even enough, housing for displaced residents. The director of the Metro Welfare Commission, Camilla Caldwell, admitted in 1967 that "the problem is

¹⁸ Jim Squires, "NHA to Build 4 Housing Projects," *The Tennessean* (Oct. 7, 1965): 77.

¹⁹ Jim Squires, "Dwellings Sought for 700 Families," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) Oct. 6, 1965, 1-2.

²⁰ "Edgehill Renewal Meetings Slated," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) Oct. 5, 1965

²¹ Rob Elder, "Edgehill Given 2nd Approval After Hearing," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Oct. 29, 1965, 1.

we don't have anywhere for these people to go." Local groups urged residents not to sell to the NHA until the issues with new housing were resolved. This scenario would play out again, with repeated calls to halt the project. Various civil rights and neighborhood groups would publicly make requests of the Nashville government, but the language they used became more contentious as the project wore on. In 1969 the Nashville Committee for Decent Housing asked "whether the Mayor's important Citizen Advisory Committee on Housing and Urban Development can be replaced 'with a group interested in Edgehill residents rather than the mayor's prestige.'"²² The committee demanded that the relocation of residents in Edgehill cease pending an investigation by the authorities and sought to confirm that the NHA had built an adequate amount of housing for the families that were being displaced.²³ While the Mayor's Citizens Advisory Committee claimed that there was plenty of housing being built, the Committee for Decent Housing was skeptical, claiming that "hundreds of persons are being displaced monthly...and many of these people are not eligible either for public housing or rent supplement projects."²⁴ Hundreds of families were being displaced monthly, and of the families displaced in January of 1969 only about thirty-five were eligible for the new housing project. By 1970 these advocacy groups went directly to HUD to request a halt to the project, stating that it had resulted in the exploitation of African American Nashvillians and had "intensified racial segregation."²⁵

²² "Halt Demanded to Edgehill Relocations," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) Jan. 13, 1969, 7.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Craven Crowell, "Halt Asked to Renewal in Edgehill," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Feb. 24, 1970), 1.

The project was controversial to say the least, but Edgehill was not without defenders. Protests against the project's concentration of housing and how relocation was being handled began less than a year after the project was initially approved. Representatives from the Tennessee Commission on Human Relations, the Nashville branch of the NAACP, the Edgehill Citizens Organization, the Tennessee Council on Human Relations, and the Nashville Christian Leadership Council signed a joint resolution calling for the NHA to stop acquiring more property until adequate homes at reasonable prices were available. Resolution requested that a committee be formed to safeguard fair housing for citizens (outside of government), that letters be sent to the department of housing and HUD requesting an investigation, and stated that "55% of persons in the project area are homeowners but due to the low level of income, 80% of all project residents are eligible for public housing" making the available housing inadequate.²⁶

This same group of representatives and citizens met shortly afterward and "voted to set up a committee of attorneys to oppose property sales which were considered 'unsatisfactory' for area homeowners." Councilman Douglas spoke, alleging that the NHA was failing to comply with the fair housing provision in the civil rights bill. Such a violation would allow residents to take action and halt federal funds, though Councilman Douglas, president of the Nashville chapter of the NAACP at the time, hoped that the problems would be able to be solved locally.²⁷ The group eventually requested the NAACP's help in filing suits against the Edgehill project.²⁸ Whether or not

²⁶ "Relocation of Displaced," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) Sept. 1, 1966.

²⁷ W.A. Reed Jr., "Edgehill Group Seeks Aid," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Sept. 19, 1966,

²⁸ "Edgehill Mapps NAACP Plea," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Mar. 14, 1967, 26.

to proceed with legal action was left to Avon Williams, an attorney and well-known figure in Nashville's civil rights movement. Williams was part of the legal opposition to the controversial routing of I-40 through North Nashville, a thriving African American community before urban renewal.²⁹ Williams' experience with the Edgehill Committee convinced him that "bureaucratically planned programs, if unchallenged, can run over the very people they are supposed to serve."³⁰

The Edgehill Committee repeatedly voiced its concern that homeowners were not being fairly compensated for their homes, and were not able to buy comparable homes with what they received for their properties. The NHA's goal, according to the NHA, was to provide decent housing for families "who are not able to avail themselves of such housing through...the open market."³¹ While this might sound charitable, the inability to avail themselves of housing through the open market was not always due to finances. Often, even if homeownership was an option financially, discriminatory housing practices in the private market kept African Americans from moving outside of segregated neighborhoods, further isolating them into the areas the Nashville government had chosen for them. This situation in turn lowered the value of the property owned by African Americans because it was in the area viewed as, even after urban renewal, undesirable. Even the housing around public housing was undesirable, because of the location and often the quality of the projects. This pattern led to a higher

²⁹ "Group Eyes Court Fight to Halt Edgehill Housing," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Jan. 19, 1968, 17.

³⁰ Rob Elder, "Williams' Platform Asks Votes for 18-Year-Olds," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), July 7, 1968, 10.

³¹ Nellie Kenyon and Rob Elder, "Integration Not Goal: NHA," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Dec. 10, 1966, 1.

than average population density, which would have been compounded by the NHA's proposed housing.

Cutting down on population density within proposed urban renewal areas was a goal of Edgehill's activists from the beginning because the potential for a ghetto to develop out of public housing rises significantly with population density. The NHA implied that making an effort to scatter public housing across Nashville was forced integration, something that was not a priority. The seemingly unconcerned NHA admitted that the proposed Edgehill plans would most likely continue segregation. Robert C. Crownover, the director of public housing for the NHA, told *The Tennessean* in 1966; "the economics of this thing outweigh the social side considerably. It boils down to a dollar question." The U.S. Civil Rights Commission questioned Crownover:

Q: What do you think the social results of the present plans...will be?

A: That's a pretty broad question. I'm not competent to make any statements.

Q: You're the director of public housing?

A: Yes.

Crownover went on to repeatedly insist that it was entirely up to residents where they chose to live. The NHA was not forcing African American Nashvillians to live in public housing.³²

In 1977, the *Tennessean* ran an exposé on interracial couples sent to find housing. The "combination of grossly inflated rental prices" and "subtle discriminatory practices" had led to a cynical definition of integration as "the length of time between the first black family's moving into the neighborhood and the last white family's moving out." The extent of "racial steering" was debated, but there was "zoned racial planning in terms of sections,

³² Nellie Kenyon and Rob Elder, "Integration Not Goal: NHA," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Dec. 10, 1966, 1 & 7.

areas of marketing, solicitation and advertising.” This practice was done subtly, as prospective buyers were told that “there’s not going to be any blacks in this subdivision, so your property value will remain constant and the community will be quiet.”³³ While Crownover was not incorrect that residents were not being forced into public housing, he ignored what African Americans faced in the private housing market.

An example of the housing constructed by the NHA in Edgehill was Edgehill Village, which was occupied in 1969 and referred to as an “instant-slum,” overcrowded and poorly built. Councilman Douglas testified that “when you flush the commode in one apartment, it flows into the kitchen sink of another one.”³⁴ The same year the Nashville Committee for Decent Housing demanded that the relocation of residents in Edgehill cease pending an investigation by the authorities.³⁵ While the Mayor’s Citizens Advisory Committee claimed that there was plenty of housing being built, the Committee for Decent Housing was skeptical, claiming that “hundreds of persons are being displaced monthly...and many of these people are not eligible either for public housing or rent supplement projects.”³⁶

Forced displacement is one of the most “intrusive exercises of state power”³⁷ affecting those displaced beyond the economic and social. If the aim of urban renewal was to help those in need of decent living conditions, “it [was] questionable whether the limited and inconsistent gains” from urban renewal and rehousing were an acceptable

³³ Benjamin Houston, *The Nashville Way* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 237-238.

³⁴ Pat Welch, “Housing called ‘Instant-Slum,’” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), June 18, 1971, 2.

³⁵ “Halt Demanded to Edgehill Relocations,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Jan. 13, 1969

³⁶ “Halt Demanded to Edgehill Relocations,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Jan. 13, 1969

³⁷ Edward G. Goetz, *New Deal Ruins: Race, Economic Justice, and Public Housing Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 25.

amount of improvement in comparison to the negative aspects.³⁸ Despite the best efforts of Edgehill's advocates, by 1970 the NHA had succeeded in isolating Edgehill from the rest of the city. Across the United States public housing had "become a reflection of the racial segregation and the unresolved conflicts of American cities." Urban Renewal turned content homeowners into public housing residents, displaced families from their neighborhoods, and often used strict rescreening practices "to effectively bar residents from returning to their revitalized communities." In combination with the racist practices and policies of the private housing market, African American were left with very few options and very little recourse.³⁹

If the aim of urban renewal was to help those in need of decent living conditions, "it [was] questionable whether the limited and inconsistent gains" from urban renewal and rehousing were an acceptable amount of improvement in comparison to the negative aspects.⁴⁰ The issues that arose as consequences of urban renewal, in the short and long term, rarely outweighed the benefits. The "correlation between the inequitable racial distribution of resources as restrictive factors for communities of color improving their [socioeconomic status], living in safe and affordable neighborhoods, obtaining quality education, accessing quality healthcare, and improving health outcomes"⁴¹ is undeniable. Whether or not the government was willing to admit it, race was central to the creation and problems of public housing in the 1960s and 1970s. By

³⁸ Marc Fried, "Grieving for a Lost Home: Psychological Costs of Relocation," in *Urban Renewal: The Record and the Controversy*, ed. James Q. Wilson (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1966), 315.

³⁹ James H. Carr and Nandinee K. Kutty. *Segregation: The Rising Costs for America*. (New York: Routledge, 2008).

⁴⁰ Marc Fried, "Grieving for a Lost Home: Psychological Costs of Relocation," in *Urban Renewal: The Record and the Controversy*, ed. James Q. Wilson (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1966), 315.

⁴¹ Louis Lee Woods, II, "Can Health Equity Coexist With Housing Inequalities? A Contemporary Issue in Historical Context" *Health Promotion Practice* 15, No. 4 (July 2014): 477.

the end of Nashville's urban renewal boom, across the US public housing had "become a reflection of the racial segregation and the unresolved conflicts of American cities."⁴²

The effects of displacement went beyond the economic and social. In 1966 Marc Fried wrote of the emotional effects of forced displacement. He compared the emotional response to displacement to grief. Families could alleviate some of that by remaining in the same area, but that wasn't always an option. Dependence on social networks, which can be necessary to survival for lower income families, was not taken into account when families were displaced. That grief response was not dependent on apartment size or home ownership, but the spatial and physical arrangements of the displaced original home and the social and cultural relationships that were damaged during relocation. "Forced displacement can also have negative effects on self-sufficiency and well-being regardless of place attachment."⁴³ According to Fried, "urban planning cannot be limited to 'bricks and mortar.'"⁴⁴ It is often assumed that, because a neighborhood or home appears to be substandard, that the residents would be happy to be relocated, but some scholars realize that a new home is not the cure-all all many think it is.

Advocates of renewal and displacement make oversimplified assumptions about how residents will be affected by a new environment. It is assumed that residents of "blighted" neighborhoods feel the same about those neighborhoods as those who labeled them as "blighted" in the first place, and that they would be happy to move. These assumptions are not always wrong, but Goetz writes that the issue is much more

⁴²Carr, James H. and Nandinee K. Kutty. *Segregation: The Rising Costs for America*. (New York: Routledge, 2008).

⁴³ Edward G. Goetz, *New Deal Ruins: Race, Economic Justice, and Public Housing Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 122.

⁴⁴ Marc Fried, "Grieving for a Lost Home: Psychological Costs of Relocation," in *Urban Renewal: The Record and the Controversy*, ed. James Q. Wilson (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1966), 378.

complex than the idea that if housing is substandard, according the government, than residents must want to leave or that residents dislike public housing altogether. The desire to stay or leave public housing does not always go hand in hand with a prior sense of well-being in public housing, and negative feelings about public housing does not always indicate a desire to leave.⁴⁵ Though how residents feel about their homes in public housing projects and the process of displacement, the overarching and consistently negative effect of displacement is the disruption of social support networks.

Rev. Bill Barnes was outspoken against the kind of urban renewal that would concentrate poverty, stating that “if this is the kind of city we want, it’s what we’ll get.”⁴⁶ He believed that, aside from aesthetic improvements, the bottom line of urban renewal was increased racial and social isolation within an urban area. This result is exactly what happened in Edgehill. To the south, urban renewal had remade the western area of Edgehill into what is now “Music Row.” Many music executives bought neighboring homes as a result, even with Edgehill nearby, which still had some black businesses and a thriving neighborhood center at the time. As a result, 12th Avenue South was widened dramatically to become a major north– south corridor that also barricaded the Edgehill Homes. In conjunction with Interstates 40 and 65, plus the connector loop of Interstate 440, Edgehill was now confined on all sides by major traffic arteries. New street patterns formed cul-de-sacs to buttress the spatial division between Music Row and nearby neighborhoods, and Wedgewood Avenue was expanded as a formidable line between Edgehill and Belmont College.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Goetz, 149-150.

⁴⁶ Robert Elder, “Edgehill Project Shift Approved,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) Dec. 7, 1967, 1.

⁴⁷Houston, *The Nashville Way*, 238.

Despite the NHA, Edgehill remained a close knit community, though displacement continues today and the parallels to urban renewal are striking. In 1967 a resident of Edgehill wrote a letter to the editor of *The Tennessean*, railing against the ongoing I-40 construction controversy and writing that residents “have so far been subjected to much dislocation and almost no meaningful relocation.”⁴⁸ The letter said that African Americans “should not be expected to take kindly to being corralled into a blighted urban area by Jim Crow real estate practices and bulldozed around by the high priests of the super road cult.”⁴⁹ These sentiments are not far off the mark in contemporary Edgehill, with gentrification acting as a modern version of urban renewal. Current Edgehill residents should not be expected to endure harassment from realtors trying to buy their hard won properties, just to see them bulldozed by the high priests of the condo and the short term rental, all of which is encouraged and allowed by the city government.

⁴⁸William Washburn, III, “Letter to the Editor: Negro Removal - Not Urban Renewal,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), November 20, 1967, 10.

⁴⁹ Washburn, 10.

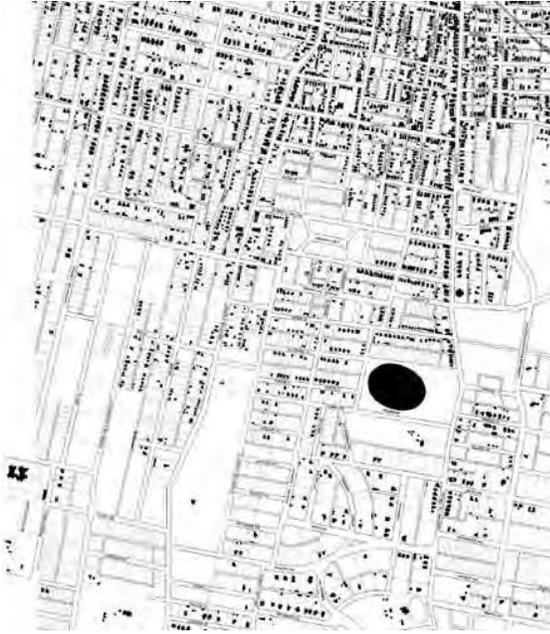


Figure 4. Ground Map of Edgehill, 1908. Courtesy of the Nashville Civic Design Center.



Figure 5. Ground Map of Edgehill, 1951. Courtesy of the Nashville Civic Design Center.



Figure 6. Ground Map of Edgehill, 2000. This map, in comparison with Figures 5 & 6 shows how urban renewal and interstate construction damaged the traditional fabric of the area. Courtesy of the Nashville Civic Design Center.

CHAPTER THREE GENTRIFICATION AND REVITALIZATION: CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS IN EDGEHILL

Progress is almost always good and needed... [but] I question the process when all the change and progress is carried on the backs of one segment of the community...then it becomes exploitation.¹

In 1995 Rusty Rust, a white photographer and tai chi instructor, bought “this really cool house” in Edgehill. Rust got a “killer deal” on the home he bought at 1605 Villa Place. The location was attractive as well, something that Rust was not alone in seeing the appeal of as more and more people moved into Edgehill because of its convenient proximity to downtown and Music Row.² Exemplifying the profile of a ‘back to the city’ gentrifier, Rust was probably part of the first wave of gentrifiers coming into Edgehill. The ‘back-to-the-city movement’ refers to a reversal of disinvestment in and flight from U.S. urban centers. Gentrification is a more slippery term, and it’s rare to find it defined the same way twice. It generally refers to an area with lower income residents (usually African American) that more affluent, usually white, people are moving into because of location and lower property prices. In the early 1980s, gentrification was already disproportionately affecting minority neighborhoods, primarily because in previous decades African Americans were forced into their current neighborhoods by racially motivated housing policy and practices.

By the time Rusty Rust moved to Edgehill, the neighborhood had gained a bad reputation with regard to crime. According to some residents, the only time outsiders

¹Lon Chandler, “Letter to the Editor: Progress is changing minorities’ landscape,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) Jan. 27, 2001, 12A.

²Jim East, “Edgehill Attracts Residents Who Like Location,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) Apr. 29, 2001, 7B.

heard about Edgehill was when somebody got shot or there was a death or some other crime occurred.³ Edgehill seemed eager to contradict public perception. A letter to the editor of the *Tennessean* in 1995 from Edgehill resident Phillip Lafleur said that while Edgehill has been dangerous, crime is down and the representation of Edgehill's youth as dangerous drug dealers was wildly inaccurate. While their "clothes, hair, and jewelry are beyond description...[and] they play their stereos so loudly that my windows sometimes rattle and they drive too fast down my street....they go to school and they are home at night and they go to jobs and church."⁴ Rev. Bill Barnes said that the community had struggled for a long time, but things were improving because of the community working to improve things.⁵

Edgehill was the first Nashville neighborhood to actively pursue a better relationship with local police.⁶ Rev. Barnes explained that "during the late 1960s, Edgehill residents suffered the brunt of police tactics aimed at keeping the peace...those things just aren't forgotten."⁷ In an effort to "humanize" the police for residents, Edgehill sought to establish "working relationships with the police officers who patrol their neighborhood and [set] up afterschool activities for youth in their community" in the hope that it would combat problems.⁸ In 1991, ONE signed an agreement with the police department that, among other things, set up a monthly meeting with police and

³ Joe Rogers, "A Half Century of Caring: Edgehill Center continues tradition," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) Aug. 18, 1991, 1F.

⁴ Phillip Lafleur, "Letter to the Editor: Finally Admitting Teen Crime is Down," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) Feb. 8, 1995, 8A.

⁵ Lisa Benavides, "Edgehill Neighbors Work to Improve Area," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) Nov. 29, 1993, 6B.

⁶ Fiona Soltes, "Edgehill Girds for Battle with Area's Rising Crime," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) Sept. 22, 1991, 5B.

⁷ Renee Elder, "Edgehill Residents Invite Police to Clean Up Neighborhood," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) Dec. 28, 1991, 2B.

⁸ Tammy Smith, "Edgehill Troubleshooters Befriend Police, Keep Kids Busy," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) June 3, 1992, 10.

residents to discuss the progress that was being made in the neighborhood. Edgehill residents wanted to work with the police and keep communication lines open, but ONE members were “adamant that police not become overzealous and violate citizens’ rights.”

Residents did not deny that crime was an issue, but they wanted it known that Edgehill was a community of people supporting each other. Edgehill had a variety of programs directed at, not only keeping the younger generation out of trouble, but in improving life for the neighborhood as a whole. The Edgehill Center, formerly the South Street Community Center, provided many of the programs that benefited the neighborhood, such as drug prevention, tutoring, child care, ballet, and Afrikan dance.⁹ Edgehill was one of the first neighborhoods in Nashville to establish a community garden, the Terrence Murray Community Garden, as a healthy outlet for local children.¹⁰ Ronnie Greer, Edgehill’s councilman from 1999 to 2007, said that despite Edgehill’s issues the neighborhood was a good place to grow up because of churches, community centers, parks, schools and “plenty of community members willing to look out for each other.”¹¹

Edgehill is unique in that it has been fighting against encroachment from Belmont and Vanderbilt universities and Music Row in one way or another for most of its history. Edgehill’s post-urban renewal history is peppered with attempts to rezone property to accommodate the booming business on Music Row. In 1992, Edgehill and ONE fought

⁹ Fiona Soltes, “Edgehill Girds for Battle with Area’s Rising Crime,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) Sept. 22, 1991, 5B.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Johnson, “Community Gardens Beautify Area, Promote Fellowship,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) June 27, 2010, 6B.

¹¹ Linda Bryant, “Outspoken Councilman Opens Up About Racial Issues in District 17,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), May 2, 2005, M1.

against a bill proposed by Councilman Ludye Wallace that would rezone property on South Street from residential to commercial. The property was on an alley that was recognized as a buffer between Edgehill and Music Row and would have allowed a building rented by CMA Records to expand by 2,800 feet toward Edgehill. Rev. Barnes spoke of going through urban renewal and “seeing Edgehill lose so much of its character and commercial district was difficult....We fought to keep it from being invaded by Music Row”¹² and the universities. Edgehill residents knew that they had to hold the line because if they allowed one studio or business to rezone a property that would open the floodgates. Edgehill feared that they would be overtaken “by the Row’s commercial appeal and home businesses allowed under special permits.”¹³ Business owners don’t want to pay Music Row real estate prices, so they move next door to Edgehill. Allowing those types of businesses to spread into their neighborhood would come with a host of issues. Property values were already rising and Edgehill feared the same would happen with property taxes if businesses spread. It was a fight for preserving their neighborhood and its affordability for longtime residents.¹⁴

The effects of Belmont University’s expansion and its growing student population also were problematic for Edgehill. The area was flooded with cars, making parking and traffic an issue. DeLois Wilkinson raised her children in her house at 1504 Acklen Avenue, which she bought almost thirty years before Belmont received approval in 2001 to build a five story building with a parking garage that would accommodate 650-800

¹² Linda Bryant, “Design Plan Concerns Some Edgehill Residents,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Feb. 28, 2005, M2.

¹³ Katie Tiernan, “Edgehill Fights for Integrity,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Sept. 4, 2001, 1B.

¹⁴ Rochelle Carter, “Wallace to Withdraw Rezoning Bill,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Mar. 1, 1992, 3B.

cars. Though the building would not be part of her property, Wilkinson seemed to know that Belmont would continue to spread. She hoped that she could find a new neighborhood “with the warmth and love of this place.”¹⁵ Wilkinson’s home has since been demolished and part of Belmont’s Janet Ayers Academic Center now takes up the lot.

Edgehill residents saw the writing on the wall early, with regard to gentrification. They started an Edgehill Neighborhood Study in 2002, as a collaboration with the Nashville Civic Design Center. Published a year later, the results of the study were “a blueprint of dreams for the future.”¹⁶ The Edgehill Neighborhood Design Plan (not the neighborhood study) had been created over the previous few years, a collaborative effort between the Nashville Civic Design Center, Metro government, and some Edgehill residents. The Metro Planning Commission in adopted the design plan in August of 2005, but what has happened with the plan since then is a little unclear. There is now a Green Hills/Midtown Plan in place¹⁷ that mentions Edgehill, but there is nothing of the large scale design plan from 2005. Edgehill residents worked with Metro on the Green Hills/Midtown Plan, specifically how much mixed-use and retail zoning would be allowed in Edgehill.¹⁸ There was hesitancy about mixed use zoning with the original design plan,

¹⁵ Jim East, “Edgehill Attracts Residents Who Like Location,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Apr. 29, 2001, 7B.

¹⁶ Linda Bryant, “Groups Outline Vision for Edgehill Neighborhood,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Oct. 27, 2003, 9.

¹⁷ Nashville Next: A General Plan for Nashville and Davidson County Volume III Green Hills - Midtown Adopted June 22, 2015 amended 2017.
http://www.nashville.gov/Portals/0/SiteContent/Planning/docs/CommPlans2017/next-vol3-Green%20Hills-Midtown_Amended2017.pdf

¹⁸ Linda Bryant, “Update of Midtown/Green Hills Community Plan Gets Mixed Reviews,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), May 2, 2005, 2.

probably because Edgehill residents were concerned about being taken over by Music Row and “swallowed up by outside private development.”¹⁹

There was concern that any plan endorsed by the city would be a repeat of urban renewal, with longtime residents displaced and amenities created that were not really meant for Edgehill. A Metro-Nashville planner and project coordinator said that creating a plan like the Edgehill Neighborhood Design Plan “can help a neighborhood in transition by setting land use policy to guide subdivision and zone change decisions in the future,”²⁰ but Edgehill Councilman Ronnie Greer had reservations rooted in urban renewal and its consequences. Residents wished to keep their neighborhood intact as it was, to have shared open spaces and commercial developments that serve the residents.²¹

At the time it was thought that how the 12th Avenue area developed would determine Edgehill’s future.²² The development of a commercial area is often a precursor to full blown gentrification, Edgehill was concerned at how rapidly the 12th South neighborhood, about a half mile south of Edgehill, was gentrifying. By 2007, 12th Avenue South was booming²³ and by then it had been renamed 12South (a brand name being another indicator of gentrification).²⁴ Edgehill would eventually get its own 12South-esque commercial area, but not on 12th Avenue.

¹⁹ Linda Bryant, “Design Plan Concerns Some Edgehill Residents,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Feb. 28, 2005, 6.

²⁰ Linda Bryant, “Edgehill Will Review Area ‘Vision’,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Oct. 25, 2005, 3.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Bryant, 6.

²³ Chris Jones, “Owners Embrace New 12thSouth Location,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Jul. 1, 2005, 5.

²⁴ Seemingly out of nowhere neighborhood name changes are another indicator of gentrification. See: “One of the most rapidly gentrifying areas of Nashville’s urban core is Edgehill, where resident groups last year erected signs marking the neighborhood’s boundaries. Developers had begun rebranding sections as “Gulch South” and “12South,” after glitzier adjacent areas. The minimalist metal signs state “Edgehill” below a silhouetted polar bear, a nod to quirky statues that have been in the

In 2006, what was a large industrial building that housed Whiteway Cleaners was developed and renamed Edgehill Village, which housed a variety of new businesses. The multiphase commercial development consisted of an art gallery, hair salon, and a coffee and print shop. It also had medical offices and an electrolysis center, a bakery, and a pilates studio. There were also apartments available.²⁵ The co-owner of the coffee shop said business was growing, likely because of its location in the “Vanderbilt-Belmont-Music-Row” area.²⁶ This comment is telling of whom the development was intended, and it was and is not for the lower income residents of Edgehill. One laughable commitment a partner in the development made to the community was not to allow franchises or chains to have storefronts in Edgehill Village, as if that alone would make the new businesses more accessible to many Edgehill residents. In 2011, the development of Edgehill Village was a key catalyst for Edgehill gentrification.²⁷

A comparable example of commercial developments in lower income, African American neighborhoods is the St. Roch market in New Orleans. The St. Roch market is in a neighborhood in New Orleans called Faubourg Franklin, an historically African American neighborhood. The building, constructed in 1875, was abandoned after Hurricane Katrina. Now renovated and housing thirteen food vendors, the owner claims that the development is about the community though most of the locals can’t afford it,

neighborhood since around 1930. We needed to mark our boundaries to prevent some encroachment,” said Rachel Zijlstra, board president of the Edgehill Village Neighborhood Association. “What developers do (with names) doesn’t make the neighborhood. It’s about the people that come together.”
<https://www.tennessean.com/story/money/real-estate/2017/10/26/nashville-gentrification-neighborhood-nations-edgehill-salemtown-antioch/763566001/>

²⁵ As of 2012, a 2 story, 1,000 square foot loft was renting for \$1,600.

²⁶ Suzanne Normand Blackwood, “New Urban Village Concept Successful for Businesses,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Apr. 5, 2006, 1M-West.

²⁷ Bobby Allyn, “Edgehill Evolves,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Oct. 2, 2011, E1 & E4.

given that 40% of the nearby residents live below the poverty line. The price of services “excludes the majority of the community residents from their own neighborhood establishments. Instead, St. Roch Market caters to a largely white, middle- and upper-middle-class clientele with disposable income.”²⁸ Though some of the investors and vendors at St. Roch claimed a few years ago that they intended for the market to sell affordable groceries, among other things, that has not come to fruition, considering that the St. Roch Market website has vendors that serve \$10 cocktails or \$12 po’boys.

This type of obvious disconnect between the local community and developers and business owners is common, and rings true for Edgehill Village as it does with St. Roch. One clothing store moved from affluent Green Hills to Edgehill Village in the hopes that it would attract a younger hipper audience. A pilates studio owner spoke about how her business was similar to studios that can be found in New York City and about how many former New Yorkers she had as clients. Business owners and developers often claim, publicly, that they are invested in the community and its members, but there has been little evidence of that in Edgehill, especially when the people moving into the neighborhood are as tone deaf as those business owners. While the renovation of Whiteway Cleaners was touted as a win for Edgehill, it seems unlikely that it has really benefited the historically working class, lower income community. Local investors bought Edgehill Village for 9.2 million in 2014. They added a custom jeans store and a cocktail bar. Rent has gone up, but the owners claim that they are bringing “that experience with being a good neighbor.”²⁹ It seems doubtful that they are truly

²⁸ Peter Marina, “Gentrification and Violent Cultural Resistance,” *Transgressive Living in the Informal Economy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 175.

²⁹ Lizzy Alfs, “Edgehill A Sign of City’s Boom,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Nov. 1, 2015, D3.

concerned with being good neighbors, since they have plans to tear down two nearby homes built in 1936 to build a parking deck.

Edgehill has struggled to get the types of businesses it *needed* for decades, namely a grocery store. Edgehill never recovered from the removal of its commercial area during urban renewal. Over the years Edgehill has lost fifteen different grocery stores.³⁰ The first grocery store to open in the area post-urban renewal was a Winn-Dixie in 1982, which would become a Bi-Rite and subsequently a Piggly Wiggly. A Save-A-Lot that opened in 1999 would close a couple years later. Since the Save-A-Lot closed the community has been fighting to lure a grocery store to the area, with no success. Edgehill has remained a food desert since the Save-A-Lot closed, which closed because owners claimed they weren't making a profit.³¹ Stores often claim that crime and profit keep them from opening stores in lower income areas.

Without a reliable public transportation system and a nearby grocery store an undue burden is put on residents. Since the closure of the Save-A-Lot, residents asked the city to make transportation to grocery stores easier, calling for shuttles or a change in the bus stops. The bus has since been routed down Kirkwood Avenue and a small covered area has been erected. The location is no closer to the grocery store, but it is just off of the busier cross street. From that stop, there is still a steep walk up to the Kroger. Even if the bus dropped Edgehill residents at the door of the store, trying to lug groceries on public transportation is not easy, especially for the elderly or people with children that cannot be left at home. Indicative of the amount of people who rely on

³⁰ Rose French, "Edgehill's Tumultuous History Vital to Neighborhood Study," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Sept. 2, 2002, M1.

³¹ Linda Bryant, "Neighborhood Struggles to Build Strong Business District," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Aug. 6, 2004, 5.

public transportation and this Kroger is the pile of shopping carts that can be seen left next to the bus stop on any given day.

While Edgehill has struggled since urban renewal to get and keep a grocery store, they have more recently had to fight to keep their shared open spaces. In 2006 Belmont University proposed a renovation of E.S. Rose Park to Metro Parks. E.S. Rose Park, a 25 acre park in Edgehill, was named after an African American pastor at the Bethel A.M.E. Church. Construction on the park began in 1961 as part of a larger project that included the construction of the Easley Community Center, Carter Lawrence School, Rose Park Junior High School, and an apartment complex for the elderly (part of the larger housing project).³² Belmont wished to renovate the baseball and softball fields and build a soccer field and track, in exchange for preferential use. Metro Parks made the proposal public over two months later, though a time frame for completion or mockup of the proposed plan were not included in the initial announcement. Belmont University, while generally saying how the renovations would benefit the Edgehill community, also spoke of the many ways it would benefit Belmont. The school's athletic director Michael Strickland "stressed the significance of the project to Belmont's athletic programs." University athletic programs often use a good facility as a recruiting tool. As one Belmont student put it, "having our own field would allow us things that we can't do here...and it would really help recruitment....having our own field would really help in that area" Strickland was confident in the college director's judgement and that he would do what is best for Belmont University, not for Edgehill.³³

³² Hugh Walker, "The Giant Pit on Rock Crusher Hill Is No More," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Jan. 6, 1963, 3B.

³³Jonathan Babalola, "Belmont's Plan Could Boost School's Athletic Image," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Jun. 2, 2006, M2.

Residents had mixed feelings. Silas Newsome, an Edgehill resident since 1987, remembered how urban renewal and gentrification affected Edgehill residents. Newsome believed the proposal would “open the door to repeating that episode in the community’s history.”³⁴ Neighbors and community leaders was formed an advisory committee; Organized Neighbors of Edgehill believed the proposal would be a form of gentrification.³⁵ Some Edgehill residents pointed out that this proposal would open the door for other private entities to use parks, a caution that would prove correct with Edgehill’s Tony Rose Park and recent debate on Fort Negley. For the most part, neighbors and residents agreed that the proposal should not go through Metro approval in its original form. Their reasons (similar to the arguments for a grocery store) included:

- 33.1% of community households do not own a car vs 8.7% countywide. This obviously makes access to anything outside of the neighborhood difficult, but in this case it would make access to recreational sites difficult if not impossible.
- 81.6% African American vs 25.9% countywide
- 47.1% households have income of less than 20,000 vs 22.1 countywide
- Single female headed households 36.3% vs 22.1% - with children 21.8% vs 6.4%³⁶

A monthly analysis of Belmont University’s expected use of the facilities revealed conflicts with residents the majority of the time. Though Belmont assured Edgehill residents that the university would be flexible, assurances were all they would provide.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ King Hollands, “Neighborhood Group Sees Problems in Deal,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Jun. 6, 2007, 12A.

The Vice President of Administration at Belmont University, in what seemed like a last ditch effort to come up convince Edgehill that Belmont was doing the neighborhood a favor, said that the university had heard from neighbors about criminal activity in the park and that he believed that the new facilities would decrease crime.³⁷ He also cruelly dangled the possibility of a new grocery store, baselessly claiming that the improvements to Rose Park “could possibly attract needed retail amenities.” A local teenager with younger siblings who used the park regularly said “it would be a great thing for the athletics, but if I can’t go to the park when I want to it really doesn’t matter.” The amount of park covered by sport fields would increase from 17% to 44%.³⁸

Throughout the battle over Rose Park, Belmont University claimed that it would not go through with the plan if it did not have community support, but when the community did not support it the University forged ahead. In June 2007 two Edgehill residents filed suit, requesting that Chancery court review the Metro Parks Board’s decision or reverse it. Metro parks responded by filing a motion to dismiss the case. The suit argued that regulations and the Metro Charter require that the parks department must have recommendation from the planning department before it can lease the park, which it had not. He also argued that while the 40 year lease to Belmont University would cost the university nothing, the university would profit from ticket sales, advertisements, broadcast and cable rights.³⁹ Organized Neighbors of Edgehill originally filed suit to stop the vote getting to Metro Council, and again after the city

³⁷ Nancy DeVille, “Rose Park: Residents, Belmont Clash Over Park,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Aug. 11, 2007, 8A.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Nancy DeVille, “Edgehill Residents Force Hearing Over Rose Park,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Jun. 13, 2007, 19.

moved forward with the lease to Belmont. In June 2010 the case was closed, and construction in Rose Park began the next month. The approved lease would charge Belmont \$50,000 a year for the property, with a scholarship program set up for 8 Edgehill residents with a full ride to Belmont University, Carter-Lawrence Elementary and Rose Park Middle School received \$10,000 a year combined, and Metro Parks received \$40,000 for park improvements. Metro Parks would be in charge of the scheduling for the sports facilities, with preferential treatment given to Belmont. If Metro ever pulled out of this agreement, they would have to refund Belmont the money for all of the renovations.

Many of the articles published at the time report on how Belmont University hoped to work with the community, but there is little evidence that it was truly committed to open communication. Edgehill residents “felt continuously excluded from the decision-making table.”⁴⁰ Belmont University continued to tout how good the improvements would be for the community while forging ahead in spite of the community response. Some Edgehill residents were optimistic, some thought there should at least be more community involvement in the process, and some were flatly against it. An article published in December of 2010 claimed community leaders in Edgehill had changed their tune, but earlier the same year Organized Neighbors of Edgehill had filed its appeal to the Tennessee State Court. Ronnie Miller, a well-known Edgehill native, believed that renovations were Metro’s responsibility. Arlene Lane, the president of Organized Neighbors of Edgehill during the Rose Park debate, called it a

⁴⁰King Hollands, “Neighborhood Group Sees Problems in Deal,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Jun. 6, 2007, 12A.

travesty that would set a precedent that would put other parks in danger.⁴¹ A coalition of ministers from Edgehill congregations believe that the proposal was an attempt by Belmont to “grab land in Edgehill, and will expedite that gentrification of black residents from the neighborhood.”⁴² An article in *The Tennessean* titled “Edgehill Leaders Back Belmont Plan” only offered a lukewarm quote from Brenda Morrow as proof of the neighborhood's support. Morrow, the director of the Edgehill Family Resource Center, said that, while there was back and forth in the beginning, the university and residents just needed to come together. Morrow went on to say that while a lot of good was going on as far as short term goals, she was hoping that Belmont University planned to engage adults as well, with computers and adult learning courses at the Easley Center.⁴³

As of March 2017, Belmont University and Metro were seeking to amend the lease agreement to construct a new, 9,600 square foot batting facility in Rose Park. Councilman Colby Sledge and Belmont University did not meet with Edgehill residents until after Council had agreed to amend the lease. The Edgehill Neighborhood Coalition published a letter to Council Members objecting to the construction:

⁴¹Nancy DeVille, “Edgehill Neighbors Refuse to Give in to Belmont,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Jan. 20, 2010, 3G.

⁴²Hollands, “Neighborhood Group Sees Problems in Deal,” 12A.

⁴³Stephanie Toone, “Edgehill Leaders Back Belmont Plan,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Dec. 15, 2010, G1.

The lease amendment...provides public park land to a private institution on terms far below market rate and, by allowing the construction of a two-story building on this land, irrevocably surrenders an important scenic and historic resource of our neighborhood and the city. We are also deeply concerned about the process through which the lease amendment was advanced. The 2007 lease agreement includes a commitment to ongoing, reciprocal communication with the Edgehill community regarding the lease arrangement. Amending the lease without consultation of, or even accurate notification to, the Edgehill community clearly violates this commitment.⁴⁴

Councilman Sledge responded to the Edgehill Neighborhood Coalition's letter, writing that he understood residents were unhappy but he was unlikely to change his decision because of the stipulation that the city repay the cost of the renovations if it backed out of the lease with Belmont. It's doubtful that this would appease Edgehill residents, considering they were not consulted about the lease in the first place.

Open communication with the community was again abandoned just last year, with Rose Park long since developed for and by Belmont University, when part of Tony Rose Park, a much smaller park a little less than a mile northwest of Rose Park, was unceremoniously given to a developer to store equipment. Residents were not consulted or even notified. In response to the backlash from residents of Edgehill, Panattoni Development, the company using the park, said it would make \$90,000 in improvements including a volleyball court no one asked for, but never consulted the neighborhood.⁴⁵ But, despite the underhanded way the company arrived in the park, the

⁴⁴Edgehill Neighborhood Coalition, "Edgehill Opposes Belmont University's Building Indoor Batting Facility and Office at ES Rose Park," Sept. 28, 2017, <https://edgehillcoalition.org/2017/09/28/edgehill-opposes-belmont-universitys-building-indoor-batting-facility-and-office-at-es-rose-park-update/>

⁴⁵Meribah Knight, "After Developer Takes Over Edgehill Park, Neighbors Complain and Plans Change," *Nashville Public Radio*, Sept. 11, 2017. <http://nashvillepublicradio.org/post/after-developer-takes-over-edgehill-park-neighbors-complain-and-plans-change#stream/0>

board president of the Edgehill Village Neighborhood Association said that Panattoni was willing to listen: “Today, thanks to neighborhood input, the park area the developer needed for staging is half the size it was a few weeks ago and the proposed volleyball court has been replaced with a plan for more green space as well as a bike route and a picnic shelter.”⁴⁶

Another park controversy erupted over Fort Negley last year. Fort Negley, one of the civil war forts in Edgehill before it was separated by I-65, was rebuilt by the Works Project Administration and opened to the public in 1938. In 1978, part of the site was used to construct Greer Stadium for Nashville’s new baseball team, the Nashville Sounds. The stadium has been closed since the end of the 2014 baseball season. In 2017, former Mayor Megan Barry released a request for proposals for private development under an arrangement very similar to the arrangement that had allowed the construction of Greer Stadium. A plan from the Cloud Hill partnership was approved, which included a mixed-used development with affordable, work force, and market rate housing.⁴⁷ But the outcry against further development of the Fort Negley site was immediate.

The Nashville community sprang into action when the proposed Cloud Hill Plan became public, pointing out what seems obvious: that Nashville “owns a lot of land, and there is no good reason to allow a for-profit development in a park with huge historical significance.”⁴⁸ That the plan chosen was from a for-profit development was deliberate.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷ Margaret Renkl, “A Monument the Old South Would Like to Ignore,” *The New York Times* (New York, NY) Jan. 29, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/29/opinion/south-monuments-nashville.html?mtrref=www.google.com&assetType=opinion>

⁴⁸ Renkl.

Barry's call for proposals only included private development. Plans for conversion of the area back into park space were not solicited (Such a plan was presented by the Friends of Fort Negley, and advocate group organized in 2013, to the Park Board) and the process of choosing a proposal was conducted in relative secrecy. Councilman Steve Glover sued the Metro government, alleging that it did not follow its own laws and procedures in choosing the Cloud Hill plan. The Friends of Fort Negley petitioned the state to stop the Cloud Hill development and designate Fort Negley as an historical memorial. This designation would keep the site undisturbed without approval from the Tennessee Historical Commission. It also submitted a proposal that would have Fort Negley included on Unesco's slave route registry, the first US site to be considered. Fort Negley was one of thirteen on the Cultural Landscape Foundation's list of nationally significant sites in need of protection.⁴⁹

Though fighting City Hall is often a discouraging, uphill battle in Fort Negley's case a positive result from community activism was swift. Barry backed out of the Cloud Hill plan after an archaeological firm found it highly likely that there were remains, most likely of the enslaved people who built the fort, still at the site. Mayor Briley is now proposing returning the land from Greer Stadium to Fort Negley Park, a reversal from his predecessor's push to develop the site. On March 13, 2018 Briley announced plans to demolish Greer Stadium while the Metro Historical Commission finishes a cultural landscape report that would guide the planning of a park that would honor the history of the African Americans who built Fort Negley.

⁴⁹Garrison, Joey, "Fort Negley Recognized as a Threatened Cultural Landscape by National Foundation," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) Oct. 12, 2017. <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2017/10/12/fort-negley-threatened-landscape-foundation-nashville/755321001/>

But this does not help Edgehill directly. While Edgehill residents' limited commercial and public spaces are being given away, their housing is also under siege. As of 2017, Nashville was number six on a list of the ten fastest gentrifying cities in the United States. Edgehill has followed a relatively typical pattern of gentrification, but in the last 10 years the problems that come with gentrification have snowballed. From 2007 to 2011, African-Americans made up 67 percent of the total population, on average, but between 2012 and 2016, this percentage was down to 50 percent. Meanwhile, the white population shifted from 26 percent to 45 percent.⁵⁰

Edgehill resident Janice Key's new neighbors, the people buying the new construction in Edgehill, are mostly white. Key says they "act like they lived there first" but isn't sure if this behavior is about race or not.⁵¹ Another Edgehill resident tells the same story. He grew up in Edgehill and bought his current home from his mother in the 1990s, but the neighborhood had changed since then and not for the better in his opinion. He said new white residents would give him looks while he was walking around his neighborhood, making him feel like they thought he either did not belong or was going to rob them.⁵² As late as 2011, all new residents of Edgehill could apparently see when they looked at the tight-knit community that had worked for decades to improve their neighborhood and look out for each other was *potential*. A realtor is quoted saying

⁵⁰ Mike Reicher, "Black Share of Population Plummets in Some Neighborhoods," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Dec. 27, 2017. <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2017/12/28/black-population-plummets-nashville-neighborhoods/936368001/>

⁵¹ Reicher, 2017.

⁵² Dakota Elliott and Kate Hatfield, "Interview with Edgehill Resident," Edgehill Neighborhood Conservation Overlay Project, MTSU Center for Historic Preservation files 2017.

that “for decades, older, ramshackle housing stock held [Edgehill] back.”⁵³ New residents were worried about crime in the area, telling harrowing stories of garage doors left open and bikes stolen, reminding a new Edgehill resident that “she wasn’t in Brentwood” (an affluent white suburb) anymore, but that was “the tradeoff you make for a more urban, central lifestyle.”⁵⁴

This disconnect between new residents and old is more problematic than it seems and throws a wrench in one of the more popular solutions to the affordable housing crisis which relies on residents of different incomes interacting and become one community. This solution, mixed-income developments, involves building new housing that includes market rate and subsidized, low income housing. The idea first became prevalent in the 1990s, but has recently been gaining popularity with cities looking to integrate new development while solving the affordable housing crisis. Mixed income housing was “derived from idea that the problems of poverty become exacerbated when poverty affects the whole neighborhood, depriving entire communities of meaningful connections to employers and social institutions.”⁵⁵ In theory mixed-income developments seems like a good solution, but it is based on “lots of assumptions about what the new neighborhoods should do to help low-income residents find role models or better social networks,” but empirical evidence of the efficacy of mixed-income developments has been scant.⁵⁶

An early survey regarding gentrification “found that generally the in movers were

⁵³ Bobby Allyn, “Edgehill Evolves,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Oct. 2, 2011, E1 & E4.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Liz Entman, “Making Mixed-Income Housing Work for the Poor,” Vanderbilt University, Sept. 17, 2013. <https://news.vanderbilt.edu/2013/09/17/mixed-income-housing/>

⁵⁶ Cheryl Corely, “A Chicago Community Puts Mixed-Income Housing to the Test,” *National Public Radio*, Feb. 5, 2015. <https://www.npr.org/2015/02/05/381886102/a-chicago-community-puts-mixed-income-housing-to-the-test>

opposed to housing policies which would encourage or even help maintain an income, and by implication racial, mix in the neighborhoods. Only 17% favored additional housing for the elderly in their neighborhoods, 9% favored scattered site public housing, 7% desired more private apartments and 0% wanted more housing projects.”⁵⁷ Mixed income housing has had limited success, because of what seems to be a common unwillingness of residents who are paying for the market rate homes to make an effort with lower income residents. The sole benefit of these developments are that they are new and better maintained than the public housing where lower income residents were living in previously. An optimistic interpretation of this pattern is that the housing is maintained because it is privately run. A cynical interpretation is that it is maintained because of higher income residents and lower income residents are just benefiting second hand.

What mixed-income housing really seems like is an attempt to appease affordable housing advocates while encouraging development. One of Nashville’s newest proposed mixed-income developments is the public housing complex currently named the Park at Hillside. Originally named Edgehill Village, the ‘instant-slum’ from urban renewal, the Park at Hillside was renamed and renovated in 1998. .At the time Edgehill residents had concerns about the new plans, because it would turn the complex into a gated community with its own amenities, for all intents and purposes cutting it off from the rest of Edgehill and making it unnecessary for Park at Hillside residents to interact with other community members. Duplicating services that already exist, like a library and community center, “will make the community weaker. At the time

⁵⁷Richard T. LeGates and Chester Hartman, “Gentrification-Caused Displacement,” *The Urban Lawyer* 14, no. 1 (Winter, 1982): 23.

ONE said that Edgehill Village had been out of control “not the tenants, but the owner and management.” Once again, all Edgehill residents requested was that they be allowed to be part of the decision making process.⁵⁸

The Park at Hillside quickly deteriorated, like it had when it was Edgehill Village. The property was sold in 2016 to the Elmington Capital Group which has plans to develop the one-time subsidized apartments into market rate units in a large mixed use development called ‘The Reservoir.’ Elmington also bought the Pleasant Valley Primitive Baptist Church site and tore it down so they could add the 1.22 acre property to their holdings. The group claims that the company has met with area residents, the mayor’s office, the local councilman and several affordable housing advocacy groups and that there are no plans to displace any of the existing residents of the property.⁵⁹The land that will be used for proposed development was part of the 2005 Neighborhood Design Plan with the Civic Design Center. The Neighborhood Design Plan proposed reconfigured the area back to the pre-urban renewal street grid and adding single family detached houses. Plans for ‘The Reservoir’ were published in 2017⁶⁰ and the 23 acres it will cover is taken up with clumps of apartments and parking lots, not single family homes or any streets. "It's one of the things that's happening as land where the apartments are become more in demand and higher value," a member of the statistics committee of the Greater Nashville Apartment Association said, "...it's

⁵⁸ Catherine Trevison, “Plan for Edgehill Village Includes Gates,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Dec. 12, 1997, 1B.

⁵⁹ “Elmington Eyes Mixed-Use Project in Edgehill,” *The Nashville Post* (Nashville, TN), Jan. 11, 2018, <https://www.nashvillepost.com/business/development/article/20988446/elmington-eyes-mixedused-project-in-edgehill>

⁶⁰ Kimley-Horn Consultants, “The Reservoir: Preliminary Specific Plan,” Jan. 10, 2017. http://maps.nashville.gov/MPC/2018SP-026-001_plan.pdf

just evolutionary with the growth of Nashville."⁶¹

Metro government is in the process of planning and constructing a series of mixed income developments, each called 'Envision [insert public housing name here]'. MDHA broke ground on the first mixed income project of the 'Envision Cayce Master Plan' in November 2017. The planned 94 units will house families of all incomes: subsidized, workforce and market-rate.⁶² MDHA promises a one to one replacement, but that didn't happen during urban renewal so cautious optimism is warranted. Envision Edgehill is still in the planning stage, and those plans call for development of neighborhood "in coordination with the development plans of Belmont and Vanderbilt." There is concern about what businesses will be in the proposed mixed use development. Again, new businesses in developments like these are often not affordable for lower income residents.

What is needed is a fundamental change in how public housing is configured. Mixed income housing does not do this. Rev. Bill Barnes proposed "doing away with high density, large developments" entirely, which would be somewhere to start, but since that ship sailed during urban development we need to make a greater effort at preserving the single family homes that exist and renovating the public housing complexes so at the very least displacement is minimized.⁶³ But fixing issues in the private housing market is critical to saving what is left of Edgehill's homes and

⁶¹ Getahn Ward, "Nashville's Edgehill Area Affordable Apartments Sold for \$20 Million," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Oct. 5, 2016.

⁶² "Mayor Barry Joins MDHA for Groundbreaking of Envision Cayce's Second Residential Construction and First Mixed-Income Development," Nashville Metro Development and Housing Agency, Nov. 29, 2017. <http://www.nashville-mdha.org/2017/11/29/mayor-barry-joins-mdha-for-groundbreaking-of-envision-cayces-second-residential-construction-and-first-mixed-income-development/>

⁶³ Joe Rogers and Tini Tran, "Many Hands Needed to Make A Change," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Oct. 2, 1994, 12A.

residents. There was a large population of working class home owners in Edgehill, but this number has declined steadily as the private housing market has exploded and tear-down fever has gripped Nashville. And even residents who only moved into the neighborhood a few years ago have seen a steep increase in the value of their property. To illustrate the increase in property values in Edgehill, and subsequent rises in property taxes:

- 1306 Edgehill Ave bought in 2013 for \$225,000 now appraised at \$449,300
- 905 14th Ave S bought in 1995 for \$92,000 now appraised at \$447,700
- 1006 15th Ave S bought in 1997 for \$25,400 now appraised at \$538,800

This astronomical rise in property value has lured developers into the neighborhood who are tearing down single family homes to build three story houses, two to a lot, which are more and more frequently used as non-owner occupied short-term rentals.

The booming short-term rental industry has had unforeseen consequences. Though owner-occupied short-term rentals can be a nuisance, irritating neighbors and clogging up traffic, non-owner occupied-short term rentals are irreparably damaging neighborhoods. A preliminary survey, taken by the Edgehill Neighborhood Coalition, of just three streets in Edgehill revealed that investors own 44% of the properties. These short-term rentals are emptying neighborhoods and are hardly monitored by the companies renting the properties or the city. Nashville recently passed a bill to phase out non-owner occupied rentals by 2021, but the state legislature is in the process of attempting to override it. For investors without community ties, it is much more profitable to use a property as a short term-rental instead of renting to long term residents. And long-term renters have very little recourse in the face of eviction by property owners looking to switch to an AirBnB business model.

Nashville's boom "has not only reshaped the physical landscape, but the data shows it upended the social and cultural landscape as well."⁶⁴ A 2016 study looked at the effects of rising property values and redevelopment on the Edgehill neighborhood. The conclusions drawn found that Edgehill is rapidly losing "affordable housing, a sense of history, community, and belonging."⁶⁵ Residents are unsure of their future and feel helpless in the face of development. New, slightly hostile residents replacing old neighbors and out of character new construction is intensifying "feelings of relative deprivation—or the subjective experience of social injustice and inequality—for many of the neighborhood residents. It's one thing to be poor among the poor; it's another thing to experience poverty surrounded by wealth."⁶⁶ Because of the towering new construction residents feel caved in, and "lonely and afraid so they stay shut in their houses." Whatever numbers you can crunch about the detrimental effects of gentrification, what is not easily quantifiable is the psychological and emotional loss. One Edgehill resident said she did not sell because of the money being offered, but because of her health, because of the growth. The growth took away that comfort zone her neighborhood and home used to give her.⁶⁷

Similar stories are playing out in other historically African American, lower income neighborhoods. In North Nashville, Telma Bass Williamson is in danger of losing

⁶⁴ Mike Reicher, "Black Share of Population Plummets in Some Neighborhoods," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Dec. 27, 2017. <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2017/12/28/black-population-plummets-nashville-neighborhoods/936368001/>

⁶⁵ Andy Humbles, "Neighborhood Study Declares Edgehill in State of Emergency," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) November 19, 2016.

⁶⁶ Peter Marina, "Gentrification and Violent Cultural Resistance," from *Transgressive Living in the Informal Economy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017) 176.

⁶⁷ Mike Reicher, "Black Share of Population Plummets in Some Neighborhoods," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Dec. 27, 2017. <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2017/12/28/black-population-plummets-nashville-neighborhoods/936368001/>

the home she grew up in. Because she does not want to sell, she is being forced out by underhanded tactics. Because of new construction in the neighborhood, Bass-Williamson's home was reported to Metro codes and is now scheduled for demolition. Bass-Williamson was operating electrical power from the generator and Metro Codes didn't know how they were getting water, claiming that the owners "were made aware of the situation. It was quite clear that if they did not act what was going to happen and they just chose not to act."⁶⁸ Williamson said:

They're taking down houses like my neighbor's house,...Taking down all these people's homes that work for years and paid their taxes, paid into the system enough to own houses. Now they've taken those houses away from those people and given them pennies on the dollar and building houses 10 times worth more than that...The thing I see is a David-versus-Goliath situation here, where the person with the most money wins at the end of the day.⁶⁹

The Bass-Williamsons are making repairs, but they do not know how much time they have left.

Residents are curious about where the concern was about the state of housing or an adequate grocery store or safe park for these neighborhoods a few decades ago. Because suddenly the city is concerned with the condition of neighborhoods with which it has been previously unconcerned, and many longtime residents know why; the city was just waiting for some high income interest.⁷⁰ What Edgehill finds "really discouraging is the (past) disinvestment in the neighborhood."⁷¹ Austin Sauerbrei of the

⁶⁸ Erika Lathon, "Low income home owners say Nashville's housing boom may leave them homeless," *Fox 17 News* (Nashville, TN), May 31, 2017. <http://fox17.com/news/local/low-income-home-owners-say-nashvilles-housing-boom-may-leave-them-homeless>

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Published results from Vanderbilt are unavailable. For available results of the 2016 study see: <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/local/2016/11/19/neighborhood-study-declares-edgehill-state-emergency/93991154/> and <https://vimeo.com/channels/1166388/192539631>.

⁷¹ Andy Humbles, "Neighborhood Study Declares Edgehill in State of Emergency," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) November 19, 2016.

Edgehill Neighborhood Partnership believes that residents “are definitely ready for improved infrastructure and better housing, but there's a historically grounded fear that 'investment' will just mean further gentrification and displacement.”⁷²

⁷²Getahn Ward, “Envision Edgehill planning up next, MDHA boss says,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Sept. 27, 2016. <https://www.tennessean.com/story/money/real-estate/2016/09/27/envision-edgehill-planning-up-next-mdha-boss-says/91127858/>

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESERVATION SOLUTIONS

Investment in historic preservation can help form new businesses, stimulate tourism and private investment, increase property values, create jobs, and earn more in property and sales taxes. It can enhance quality of life, sense of place, and community pride.¹ The National Trust for Historic Preservation has found that older business districts provide affordable, more flexible space for entrepreneurs, that the creative economy thrives in older mixed use neighborhoods and that nightlife is most alive on streets with a diverse range of building ages.² Cities can also remain remarkably dense at moderate heights and “areas with a mix of older and newer fabric tend to be denser than new-only neighborhoods, and they achieve that density at a human scale.”³ But for all the benefits of historic preservation, it is often underutilized, misunderstood, and can negatively affect certain communities when not used sensitively.

Historic preservation has gained a reputation that does not appeal to wealthy developers or lower income communities. Critics claim that preservation keeps the free market from operating properly, but this claim relies on the assumption that the market is completely neutral and operating without a long history of racism, segregation, and economic inequality. When thinking of historic preservation, developers see rigidly

¹ Donovan Rypkema, *The Economics of Historic Preservation: A Community Leaders Guide* (Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2015), 13.

² Julia Rocchi, “Older, Smaller, Better: New Findings from Preservation Green Lab,” The National Trust for Historic Preservation (Washington, DC) May 15, 2014. https://savingplaces.org/stories/preservation-tips-tools-older-smaller-better-new-findings-preservation-green-lab?&_ga=2.149517808.773010244.1519171527-2115456517.1517332326#.WpDqDGinFEZ

³ “Ten Principles for ReUrbanism: Reuse and Reinvestment in the 21st Century,” The National Trust for Historic Preservation (Washington, DC) Sept. 7, 2016. http://forum.savingplaces.org/blogs/forum-online/2016/09/07/ten-principles-for-reurbanism-reuse-and-reinvestment-in-the-21st-century?_ga=2.224903004.773010244.1519171527-2115456517.1517332326

regulated historic districts and lower income communities see displacement in the form of raised rents, taxes, and an influx of new neighbors who can make long time residents feel unwanted and out of place. In fact, it's more often that a real estate industry focused on luxury housing and encouraged by city administrations is to blame for the gentrification of urban neighborhoods.⁴ The efforts to preserve both Music Row and neighboring Edgehill illustrates a variety of problems with current historic preservation laws, practices, priorities and how preservation is perceived. Though these problems are not unique to Nashville, they are particularly apparent there.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines heritage tourism as “traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present.”⁵ Today heritage tourists stay longer and spend more than the average traveller and historical sites are now more important than recreational assets as a tourist attractions.⁶ This development is wonderful for the preservation of historic resources, but Nashville’s government and its citizens have not fully realized or prioritized the value of heritage tourism. The city’s focus has seemingly been solely on luring and accommodating tourists and developers, not in fully appreciating the value in Nashville’s historic places or their importance to Nashville’s communities. Nashville is destroying “the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present” that attract tourists in the first place.

⁴ Max Page, *Why Preservation Matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 85.

⁵ Jamesha Gibson, “[Preservation Glossary] Today’s Word: Heritage Tourism,” The National Trust for Historic Preservation (June 17, 2015) <https://savingplaces.org/stories/preservation-glossary-todays-word-heritage-tourism#.WrMJBGinFEY>

⁶Donovan Rypkema, *The Economics of Historic Preservation*, 74.

In the Summer of 2014 the Save Music Row campaign began, in response to developers seeking to buy the historic RCA Studio A with plans to demolish it. Musicians and Nashvillians sprang into action. Studio A was eventually saved and the movement gained the attention of the National Trust. The National Trust named Music Row a national treasure and fast tracked research to develop a multiple property nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. In early 2015, the National Trust announced the newly formed Music Industry Coalition with Mayor Dean's office, the Metro Historical Commission, Historic Nashville Inc., the Tennessee Preservation Trust and the Nashville Convention and Visitors Corp. as its partners.⁷ Officials adopted a Music Row detailed design plan and recommended a mild zoning change recommended. Community action with the help of willing property owners and preservation professionals can save a community's historical resources, it also shows that the process can take too long and often just stalls what seems like the inevitable demolition of the built environment. Because even with the immediate action on behalf of Studio A and the full support of the National Trust, there are still only four buildings in Music Row on the National Register. In the National Trust's detailed design plan of Music Row, there are only *recommendations* for what should be done to protect Music Row and promote sustainable growth.

Support for the preservation of Music Row has continued. Just last year the Nashville Predators held a fundraiser for the cause. Even so buildings are still being torn down and very little has been accomplished on a neighborhood-wide scale. This

⁷ Nate Rau, "Music Row Named a National Treasure," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) Jan. 12, 2015. <https://www.tennessean.com/story/money/industries/music/2015/01/12/music-row-named-national-treasure/21626003/>

lack of progress is probably due in part to many of the owners of properties on Music Row opposing any preservation or fundamentally misunderstanding its value. One of the former owners of Studio A voiced his opposition to an historic overlay: "I can tell you that if history was made there, it was in spite of the building." The idea that a structure could somehow hold back history is ridiculous nonsense, as is the former owner's implication that an historic overlay is comparable to the government's use of eminent domain.⁸ But this comment shows how many misunderstand preservation, willfully or not. In combination with toothless, very limited preservation laws, this relatively common attitude from property owners can make it difficult for preservation professionals to quickly and definitively preserve.

The owners of Studio A also claimed that bringing the building up to code was cost prohibitive. Cost prohibitive renovations is a very common excuse used by developers that are unwilling to preserve or adapt older structures. The idea that older structures are usually beyond repair is wildly inaccurate. A report published by Mayor Megan Barry's office claims that any homes built before 1980 require more repairs and maintenance, without any context or specification with regard to type of home, age, or history of upkeep. In contrast, the 2015 American Housing Survey found that of the homes surveyed, 35,335 were built before 1950 and of those 32,442 were in adequate shape. That's almost 92% that have not deteriorated to the point that they are beyond help or prohibitively expensive to repair.

The ongoing debate about the preservation of Music Row highlights another

⁸ Nate Rau, "Harold Bradley: We Oppose Historic Overlay for Studio A," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) July 22, 2014. <https://www.tennessean.com/story/money/industries/music/2014/07/17/harold-bradley-oppose-historic-overlay-studio/12805865/>

issue within historic preservation; the more well known sites with documented histories associations with famous people or events are typically chosen for preservation. Even though the preservation of Music Row is going slowly, it has support. Unfortunately, because of preservation's value in tourism dollars, it is main streets and architectural merit that often gains the most attention from local preservation organizations and the public.

Music Row and its history draws people to Nashville - it is not necessarily the working class neighborhood around Music Row that is doing so, though tourists are more than happy to stay in those neighborhoods. Right next door is a neighborhood that has been around much longer than Music Row and for over fifty years has been displaced by that development. While Music Row is not immune to the tear-down fever in Nashville, in comparison to its neighboring Edgehill the preservation of Music Row has made leaps and bounds toward salvation. But in the face of Edgehill's devastation there has been no public uproar, no organized efforts by celebrities, no wealthy investor coming in and single handedly saving a huge portion of the housing stock.

Part of preservation's elitist reputation stems in part from what has been prioritized when it comes to choosing what type of properties to preserve. Though there are working class communities all over the country that have been saved, historic preservation needs to work to preserve what has been previously neglected. These types of communities' histories are "just as important, and just as worthy of our full preservation efforts."⁹ Preservationists also need to acknowledge the racial biases inherent in what is chosen for preservation (less than 4% of properties listed on the

⁹ Stephanie Meeks, "Why Historic Preservation Districts Are Crucial to Cities," Citylab, Feb. 10, 2014. <https://www.citylab.com/design/2016/02/why-historic-preservation-districts-are-crucial-to-cities/462210/>

National Register are associated with communities of color.)¹⁰ For every Music Row there is an Edgehill, but unfortunately there has not been unified public outrage at the destruction of Edgehill.

That neighborhood has been working to stem the tide of encroachment and gentrification, and recently began the process of creating a Neighborhood Conservation Zoning Overlay. If approved, the overlay would regulate new construction and renovations to existing property. Though it would still allow demolition, this type of overlay is meant to help protect neighborhood character. Unfortunately only two and a half streets in Edgehill would be included because the Metro Historical Commission believes those streets have the most consistent architectural merit. But there is more than architecture to Edgehill. Its history is significant in many ways. The so-called 'fifty year rule' of the National Parks Service is another limitation. While it would make sense to include streets that have a large number of new construction to protect what original properties are left, it is because of that inconsistency in property age and design that those areas are not included. The rules that govern historical commissions and preservation offices should be flexible for the sake of preserving extant structures while they can still be preserved. Not everything can be nominated to the National Register, but preservationists and officials should not disregard properties that were not owned by someone famous or are not necessarily architecturally spectacular, like RCA Studio A.

¹⁰ Graciela Isabel Sanchez, "Preservationists Must Be Anti-Gentrification Activists," from *Bending the Future: Fifty Ideas for the Next Fifty Years of Historic Preservation in the United States* ed. Max Page and Marla R. Miller, 218

A Time for Policy Change

Preservationists need to push for policy change at the federal and local level. There are many things cities will have to address to help encourage preservation and ease the pains caused by gentrification and the affordable housing crisis. It should not solely be non-profits and communities responsible to save these places. To address these issues, especially affordable housing, cities will have to reevaluate priorities and create new policies.

To help make rehabilitation for feasible, cities should adopt 'smart codes.' City codes often impede the rehabilitation of older properties, but 'smart codes' encourage their adaptive reuse. A few states and cities in the United States that have adopted these types of codes. In 1998, New Jersey adopted a rehabilitation subcode, which defined three criteria that codes enforcement would meet:

- 1) Timeliness of processing and enforcement (i.e., most projects should be handled routinely rather than as a special case)
- 2) Predictability (i.e., people should know that law applicable to them and be free from arbitrary treatment)
- 3) Reasonableness (i.e., provide a reasonable level of safety without imposing excessive additional costs)¹¹

Though this approach could be seen as an opening of the floodgates for the haphazard renovation of older properties, it should help tilt the scales in favor of rehabilitation over demolition. It would at least take the wind out of the sails of developers claiming they cannot afford to bring a property up to code. In Nashville, the owners of the now demolished historic Trail West building on lower Broadway claimed they had originally intended to incorporate the building into their plans but after seven months attempting to

¹¹ Building Technology Inc., "SMART CODES in Your Community: A Guide to Building Rehabilitation Codes," report prepared for the Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research (Washington, DC) August, 2001.
<https://www.huduser.gov/Publications/pdf/smartcodes.pdf>

bring it up to code the building, they chose to demolish. The owners claimed they “just [didn’t] know if it could’ve safely been fixed for a reasonable amount of money,” though Historic Nashville, Inc., a local preservation group, was perplexed at how a rehabilitation permit had turned into a demolition permit in less than a month.¹²

In addition to adjusting codes to accommodate older buildings, cities should require more of property owners hoping to demolish. Owners wishing to demolish a building should be required to thoroughly prove that a property is beyond saving. As it stands, there seems to be very little required to obtain a permit for demolition. The director of Nashville’s codes department estimates that “half of the building permits are issued the same day they are requested, 66 percent are issued in the same week and about 80 to 85 percent are issued within a three-week time period.”¹³ It seems unlikely that, with the amount of permits issued skyrocketing, there is much expected from property owners with regard to proving that a building can be rehabilitated. While adjusting codes and requiring more from property owners could overwhelm the codes department, the city will have to choose to accept these consequences in favor of its built environment. There are tax dollars to be made from permits - property owners will require them either way.

Preservation also needs to be prioritized in cities’ affordable housing plans and policies. The Barnes Housing Fund, created by Nashville Mayor Karl Dean in 2013 to leverage affordable housing developments, includes “incentives to nonprofits and

¹² Getahn Ward, “Trail West Building Demolished, Sparking Concerns,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) Dept. 21, 2015.

¹³ Peter Chawga, “Permitting the Boom,” *The Nashville Post* (Nashville, TN) Sept 2, 2016.

developers in exchange for building affordable housing.”¹⁴ Last year the city added an additional \$1.7 million to go to the Woodbine Community Organization to build 43 homeownership housing units on 17 infill lots owned by Metro Nashville. Mayor Megan Barry made efforts for new complexes and the infill lots to be developed are encouraging, but more should be done for extant neighborhoods and current homeowners who are not in a position to move, even if they wanted to. Included in the list of Mayor Barry’s affordable housing accomplishments is Dismas House, a nonprofit that helps ex-offenders transition from incarceration, which was awarded \$260,291 for a \$7.8 million expansion project. The plan is for the organization to use proceeds from the sale of its property on Music Row and other sources to build a four-story development on Charlotte Avenue.¹⁵ At face value this pattern is encouraging, but what is Metro’s plan for Dismas House’s historic Music Row property? A cynical interpretation of why Dismas House was awarded the money is that it would get the house full of ex-offenders out of Nashville’s most well known tourist destination while freeing up a property for developers.

James Fraser, an Associate Professor at Vanderbilt University’s Peabody College, specializes in housing and neighborhood redevelopment and social justice, among other subjects. Fraser proposes that Nashville “approve a general obligation bond for the better part of \$1 billion in order to fund a land bank and community land trust that will, in tandem, purchase and develop over 30,000 parcels of property to be permanent affordable housing.” Fraser believes that “without taking property ‘off the

¹⁴ Joey Garrison, “Mayor Barry Touts Record Distribution of Affordable Housing Funds,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) Feb. 8, 2017. <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2017/02/07/mayor-barry-touts-record-distribution-affordable-housing-funds/97613104/>

¹⁵ Ibid.

market' and creating a community-based real estate model we will not achieve equity in Nashville.”

To date, the city's efforts to move the needle on affordable living have been offset by real estate investment groups who have one driving motivation, return on investment. The private real estate sector views property and housing in terms of its exchange value on the market, not its use value for people. Friedrich Engels, in his 1872 essay on the Housing Question, wrote about this long ago: 'Capital does not desire to abolish the housing shortage even if it could; this has now been completely established. There remain, therefore, only two other expedients, self-help on the part of workers and state assistance.' Today we need bold action towards funding, building, preserving and retaining housing for all Nashvillians regardless of income and wealth. ¹⁶

If Fraser's estimate is correct, Nashville's mayor could take \$1 billion out of the cost of the proposed mass transportation project, which has already drawn criticism for who it will really benefit, (and still have nearly \$8 billion leftover) to solve the housing crisis, which is far more dire than Nashville's issues with transportation.

If the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result, than Nashville's affordable housing practices are insane. No matter what trendy name you put on huge housing complexes, by building new housing complexes cities are either concentrating poverty further or displacing residents. Affordable housing that is renovated or rebuilt is exciting for residents while it is new, but that newness usually only lasts up to a decade before the housing is allowed to deteriorate and the cycle begins again. Metro Nashville has to stop repeating the same housing mistakes or at the very least become more open up to new ideas.

¹⁶ David Plazas, "Affordable Housing Experts: Nashville Must Talk Less, Do More," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Dec. 21, 2017. <https://www.tennessean.com/story/opinion/columnists/david-plazas/2017/12/17/nashville-affordable-housing-experts-city-must-talk-less-do-more/945289001/>

Rethinking Preservation

Preservationists will have to work to revamp the private sector as well as the public. Preservation has had to rely on historic districts, overlays, tax credits, and National Register nominations to save historic places, but they will have to become more imaginative in navigating bureaucracy and public opinion. Preservationists will have to become advocates for new ways of preserving and will have to take a broader view of what qualifies as a preservation tool. While a dollars and cents argument will help preserve properties, it will not preserve communities. Because while these types of resources are not necessarily geared toward historic preservation and the NPS guidelines, they do *preserve*.

Non-profit, volunteer organizations that help low income homeowners with upkeep and repairs, like Rebuilding Together, should be afforded more funding and attention. Nashville has its own branch of Rebuilding Together and over the years there have been scattered efforts in Nashville to find new ways to help struggling homeowners and prospective homeowners. In 1990, residents moved into the first home in the 4.4 acre New Hope Subdivision in Edgehill. The Nashville Resource Foundation, Inc. sponsored the construction of the subdivision. It paired churches, church groups, civic organizations and corporate sponsors with low-income Nashvillians who qualified with local banks for loans. Families who qualified would work with

volunteers on the construction of their future homes. There were no federal, state, or local tax dollars invested, though Metro Nashville sold the land “at a good price.”¹⁷

Many examples exist of non-profits rehabilitating properties while keeping them affordable. Housing Our Neighbors, a group in Baltimore, has sought to petition the city to rehabilitate its large number of vacant houses into affordable housing. InCommon, an organization in Omaha, had first intended to provide GED, ESL and job opportunities through its work. But in November of 2015, InCommon bought an apartment building in the gentrifying Park Avenue neighborhood in Nebraska. The organization was concerned that it would be sold to a company that would raise the rent and evict its current residents. Working with a local preservation group to have the 1922 building listed on the National Register so it could qualify for federal and state tax credits, as well as low income housing tax credits, InCommon wished to renovate the property while allowing residents to remain in the building. InCommon later began the same process on another property, built in 1890.¹⁸

In 1926 the first African American member of the American Institute of Architects designed the 28th Street YMCA in Los Angeles. After its renovation the LEED Gold-certified building won multiple preservation awards and now houses 49 apartments for low-income tenants, including the mentally ill, formerly homeless, and post-foster care population.¹⁹ Havana, Cuba’s historic downtown has been preserved by allowing new

¹⁷ Linda Moore, “Low-Income Family’s Home Dream a Reality,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN) Feb. 4, 1990, 5H.

¹⁸ Kathryn Flynn, “Fighting Displacement in Omaha’s Park Avenue Neighborhood,” The National Trust for Historic Preservation (Sept. 14, 2017) <https://savingplaces.org/stories/fighting-displacement-in-omahas-park-avenue-neighborhood#.WqrMzqinFEb>

¹⁹ Cheryl Weber, “The Landmark Revival of a Los Angeles YMCA,” The National Trust for Historic Preservation (Mar. 7, 2018) <https://savingplaces.org/stories/the-landmark-revival-of-a-los-angeles-ymca#.WqsebqinFEY>

businesses on the ground floor of historic buildings while allowing rent controlled residential units above. Jobs were also created for people who were trained in restoration specifically for the project.²⁰

Part of what could encourage preservation is for preservationists to become advocates for less traditional forms of homeownership (and to somehow help Americans get over their current fetish for planned obsolescence and square footage for the sake of square footage) such as limited equity cooperatives and community land trusts. Limited equity cooperatives (co-ops) differ from typical co-ops and condominiums. In condominiums, owners own their unit outright. In co-ops the co-op corporation owns a building in its entirety, while individual households own a share in that co-op corporation. The management of limited equity co-op properties runs much the same as a traditional co-op, with the exception of limited appreciation. The principal argument for limited equity co-ops “is their ability to offer greater security of tenure and autonomy to low-income households. Many LEC projects grow out of tenant-led efforts to protest the loss of affordable rental units through threatened eviction, landlord abandonment, or foreclosure.”²¹

Another promising tool in preservation and affordability is the Community Land Trust (CLT). The first successful CLT was created during the Civil Rights movement when Robert Swann bought land for black sharecroppers to develop, but it was not until the 1980s that the idea gained traction in America’s cities.²² But even then CLTs were

²⁰ Page, *Why Preservation Matters*.

²¹ Meagan M Ehlenz, “Community Land Trusts and Limited Equity Co-ops: A marriage of Affordable Homeownership Models?,” Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2014.

²² Alana Semuels, “Affordable Housing, Always,” *The Atlantic* (Washington, DC) Jul. 6, 2015.

only used when cities had plans to build *new* affordable housing. Today, a Community Land Trust is:

“A community housing development organization...(1) that is not sponsored by a for-profit corporation; (2) that is established to carry out activities under paragraph (3); (3) that it: (a) acquires parcels of land, held in perpetuity, primarily for conveyance under long-term ground leases; (b) transfers ownership of any structural improvements located on such leased parcels to the lessees; and (c) retains a preemptive option to purchase any such structural improvement at a price determined by formula that is designed to ensure that the improvement remains affordable to low- and moderate income families in perpetuity.[42 U.S.C.A. SECTION 12773 (West 1994)].²³

Community land trusts can “either purchase or receive as a donation a house or vacant lot, they will then rehabilitate the house or build a new home on the land.”²⁴ Community land trusts retain rights to the land in perpetuity, but the rights to whatever housing is on the land belongs to who the CLT sells that housing to, while the land is leased to the homeowner. CLTs usually have some sort of clause in that lease that will keep the property affordable no matter how much property value rises. In Austin, Texas the Guadalupe Neighborhood Development Corporation is developing a community land trust to keep housing affordable. The Jane Place Neighborhood Stability Initiative recently opened the first permanently affordable apartment building in New Orleans. Nashville’s Barnes Housing Fund, among other projects, has competitive grant programs for homeownership, rental assistance, and homeowner rehabilitation. As part of the fund, Nashville has partnered with The Housing Fund, a local non profit, to create Nashville’s first CLT. Encouragingly, the president & CEO of The Housing Fund believes that a community land trust will force “us to have new conversations not only

²³ Heather Michelle Benham, “An Examination of the History of Affordable Housing with an Emphasis on Preservation Through the Community Land Trust Model,” Master’s thesis, University of Georgia, 2003. 38.

²⁴ Benham, 42.

about the creation of new affordable housing units, but also about the preservation of existing housing units and entire communities.”²⁵

Preservation has often been, up to this point, a handmaiden of gentrification. Though the preservation of the built environment often overshadows the preservation of communities, by utilizing less traditional tools and focusing on who is affected by preservation, preservationists can help lower income and working-class communities stay in the homes that preservationists are also concerned with preserving. These are the communities who are in danger of losing their culture and identity, as well as their housing. Historic preservation “is often about compromise, and in situations involving lower-income, working class communities it should be guided more by traditional residents than traditional fabric.”²⁶ Preservationists should be advocates and resources for these communities, instead of harbingers of displacement.

²⁵ Meribah Knight, “Nashville Creates Community Land Trust to Stem Gentrification,” Nashville Public Radio (Nashville, TN) Dec. 19, 2017. <http://nashvillepublicradio.org/post/nashville-creates-community-land-trust-stem-gentrification#stream/0>

²⁶ Paul Woodward, “Historic Preservation and Revitalization in Working-Class Communities,” Master’s thesis, Clemson University, 2007. 69.

https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1140&context=all_theses

CONCLUSION

“[Preservationists] must reclaim the part of their legacy that stands against the market as a measure of all things and stand firmly again for stewardship of place.”¹

Historic preservation needs a public relations makeover. The variety of things it can bring to the table are not well known. It seems to still be viewed, for the most part, as the stodgy hobby of people who want to tell you what color to paint your house or something to fear by lower income residents as a harbinger of displacement. Preservation needs to get away from its curatorial attitude and its tunnel vision, and explore the many weapons it could and does have in its arsenal to help alleviate displacement while continuing to protect historic resources. Preservationists need to broaden and redefine what historic preservation means and what it can be used for. In the current political climate it is understandable why many preservationists continue to advocate for preservation by touting its economic benefits, but preservationists need to accept that selling their work as beneficial to the economy in the form of tax incentives and tourist dollars is not always going to be what is best for communities.

Preservationists need to be advocates and resources for communities, as well as advocates for the built environment. Preservationists need to help broaden the perspectives of people outside the discipline, and within it, to see communities as a whole with a variety of parts needed to keep functioning; such as local businesses and public transportation as well as stable, affordable housing. First preservationists will have to convince people of the lasting importance of our historic places and the places that, whether they fall under certain historic guidelines or not, matter to the health of

¹ Max Page, *Why Preservation Matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 101.

cities and their communities. Because an understanding of the importance of historic places, there will be no understanding of why it should be a priority for cities to keep long time residents, especially low income and minority communities, in those communities.

Professional preservationists will have to become voices for communities, helping to convince governments to listen to those communities, instead of planners and developers who have no ties the cities and communities they are redesigning and developing. A common problem, especially in Nashville's case, is the city government's publicized willingness to work with residents with little follow through. The huge developments springing up now are similar to urban renewal projects in that it is claimed to be beneficial to the community, but the community that ends up benefitting is not the one that needs it or that is affected most. This reality is why preservationists need to find new ways to preserve communities and affordable housing, because doing the same thing over and over while simply rebranding it will continue to be ineffectual. The fears African Americans and low income communities have in the face of such 'revitalization' "will exist until folks see development following the lead of the working folks in the community and not the other way around."²

In order to honor both historic fabric and people, preservationists will have to embrace new tools in the advocacy of historic and community preservation.³

Preservationists will need to accept that to protect historic properties and the

²Getahn Ward, "Envision Edgehill planning up next, MDHA boss says," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Sept. 27, 2016. <https://www.tennessean.com/story/money/real-estate/2016/09/27/envision-edgehill-planning-up-next-mdha-boss-says/91127858/>

³ Paul Woodard, "Historic Preservation and Revitalization in Working-Class Communities" Master's thesis, Clemson University, 2007. https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1140&context=all_theses

communities within them they need to become activists again. They also need to accept that historic preservation can indeed play a part in gentrification, but it does not have to. Tourism dollars and tax incentives are used to lure developers to cities and it has been a highly effective strategy for preservationists, but in doing so it has “traded social protest for a place at the table of mainstream economic development strategies.”⁴

The most difficult changes will be involve policy. City administrations will have to make a choice to strike a balance between preservation and development, instead of consistently prioritizing development. While it might seem to make sense with regard to supply and cost to cram as many affordable units as a city can onto one lot, this has been repeatedly proven ineffective for the long term health of residents and communities. All of the affordable housing policies available in the US need to be reinterpreted within a preservation context or simply applied to extant housing. Because whatever personal feelings people have about the value of our historic places, the US tears down and rebuilds structures at an unsustainable rate, Cities are not being developed for residents to live in them in the long term; they are developed for tourists who do not need amenities that long term residents do.

There are many ways the preservation of extant buildings can help, not hinder, with the affordable housing crisis while preserving communities and our historic resources. Historic Preservation is often criticized for contributing to the affordable housing crisis, but abandoning historic preservation will absolutely not solve the housing crisis and it is silly to argue that it would. Change is inevitable, but change that completely disregards communities is wrong and in the long run detrimental to the

⁴ Page, *Why Preservation Matters*, 95.

health of cities. Preservation does not aim to preserve everything in amber; it simply wishes to protect our historic resources from being completely eradicated. As the National Trust remarked, “we all have places that matter to us—places that define us, places that challenge us, places that bring us together and tell our story. These places help form our identity and our communities. They create opportunities for growth and help us feel at home. They explain our past and serve as the foundation of our future.”⁵

⁵ “Adaptive Reuse Should Be the Default, and Demolition the Last Resort,” The National Trust for Historic Preservation, https://savingplaces.org/reurbanism?_ga=2.254367310.773010244.1519171527-2115456517.1517332326#.Wo4MJWinFEY

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Map of Nashville, 1861



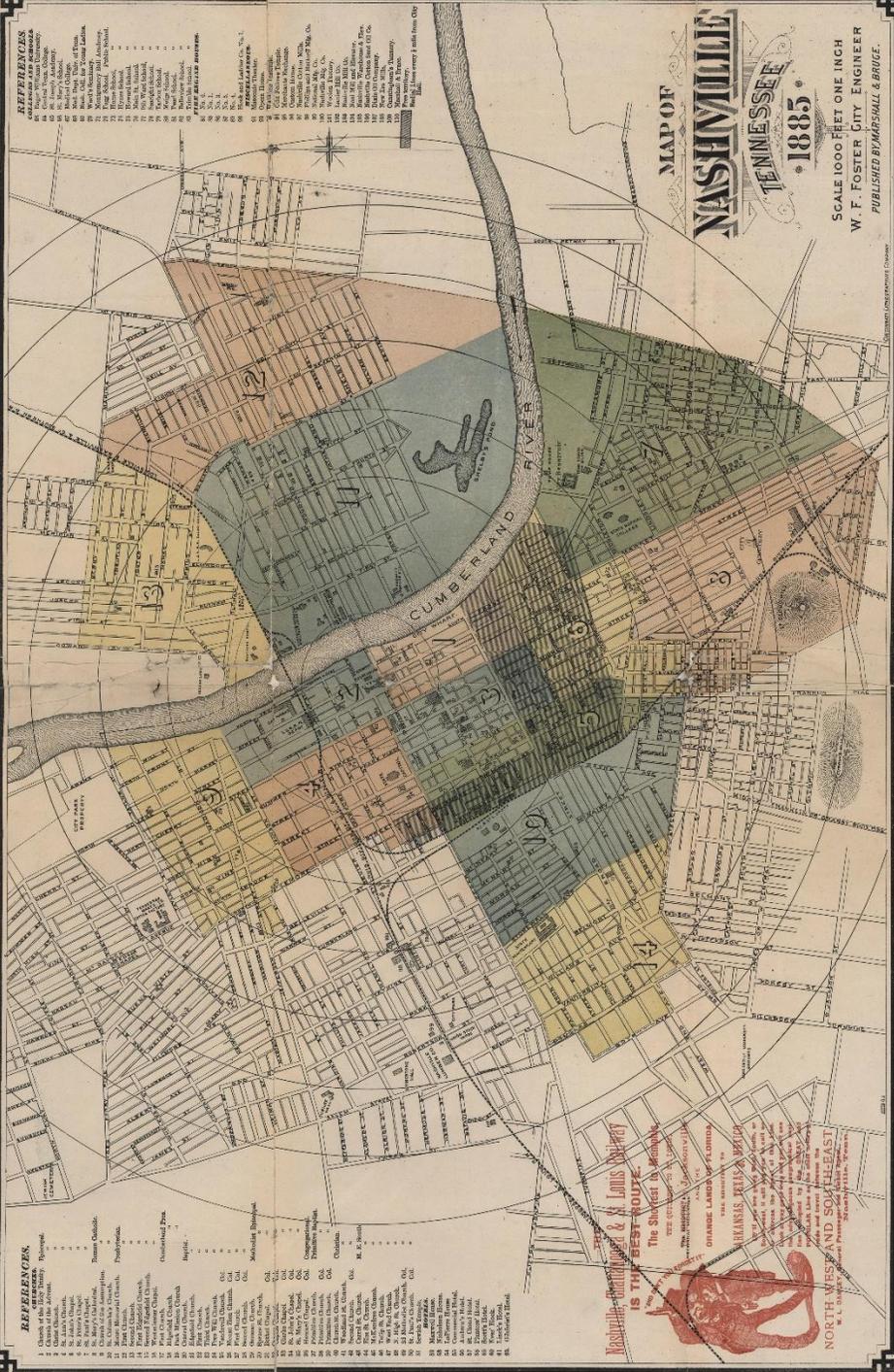
Map of Nashville, circa 1861. Courtesy of the Library of Congress

APPENDIX B: Map of Nashville, 1877

APPENDIX C: Map of Nashville, 1885

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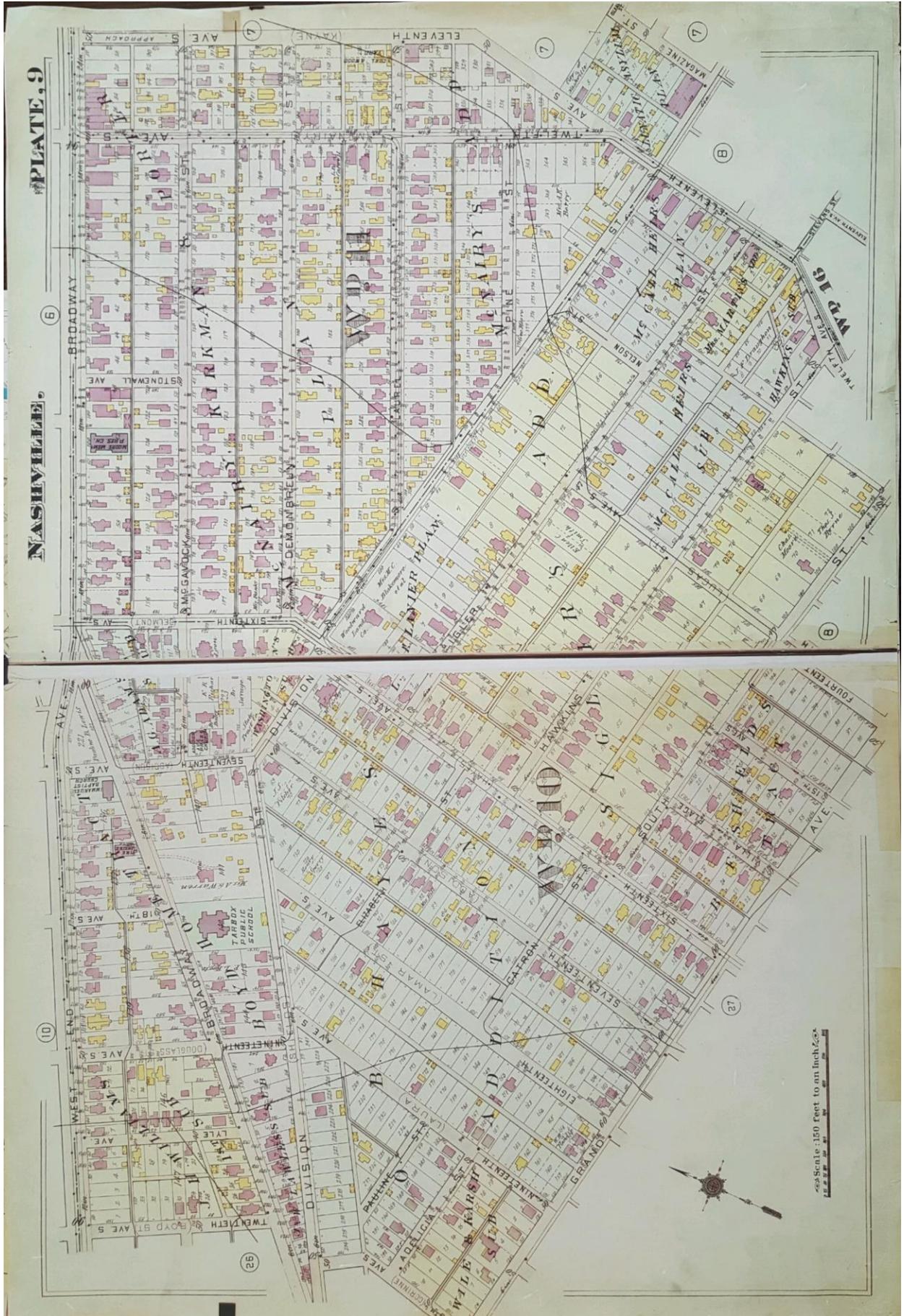
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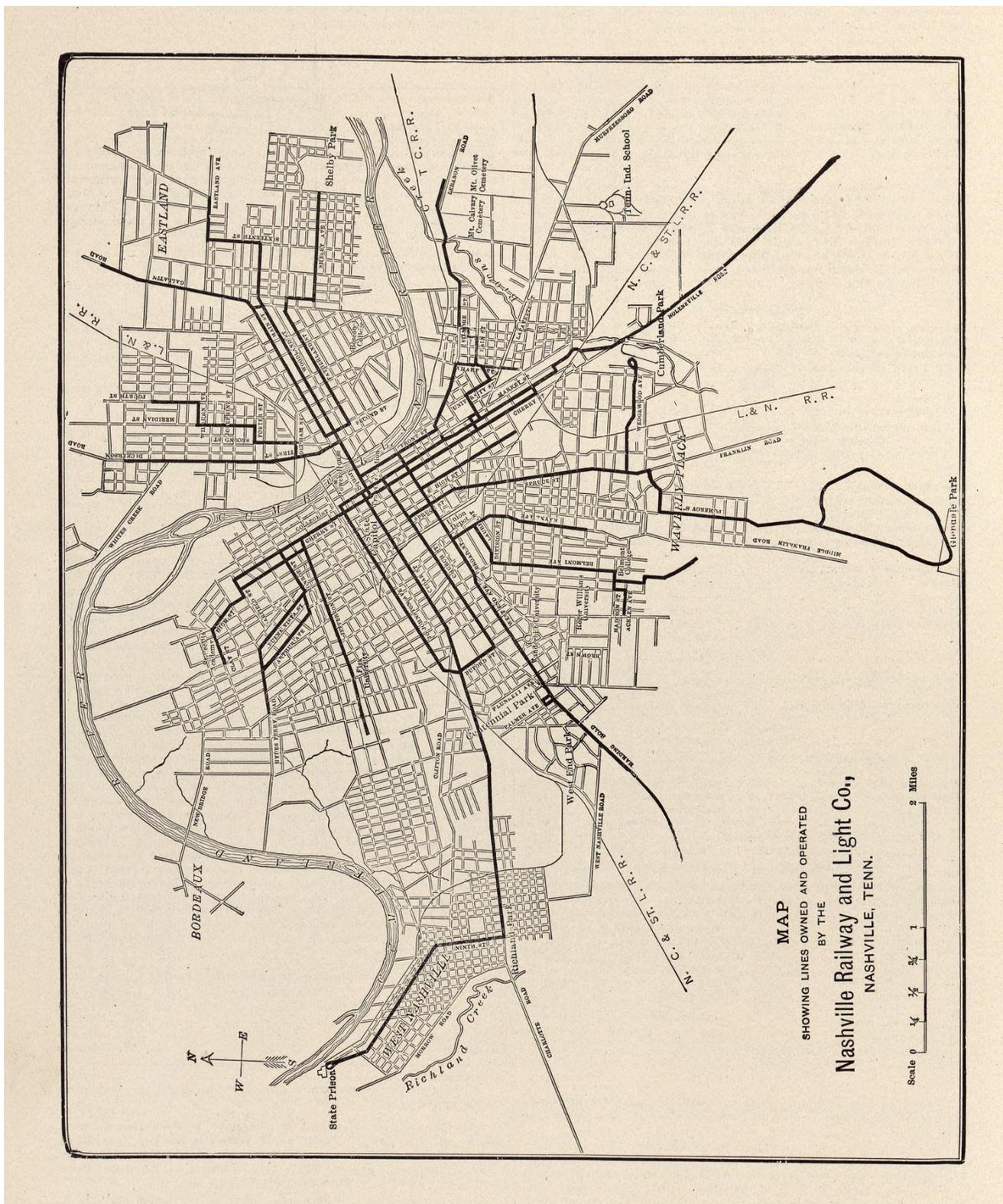
Map of Nashville, 1885. Courtesy of Metro Nashville Government Archives.

APPENDIX D: Map Segments of Edgehill Area, 1908



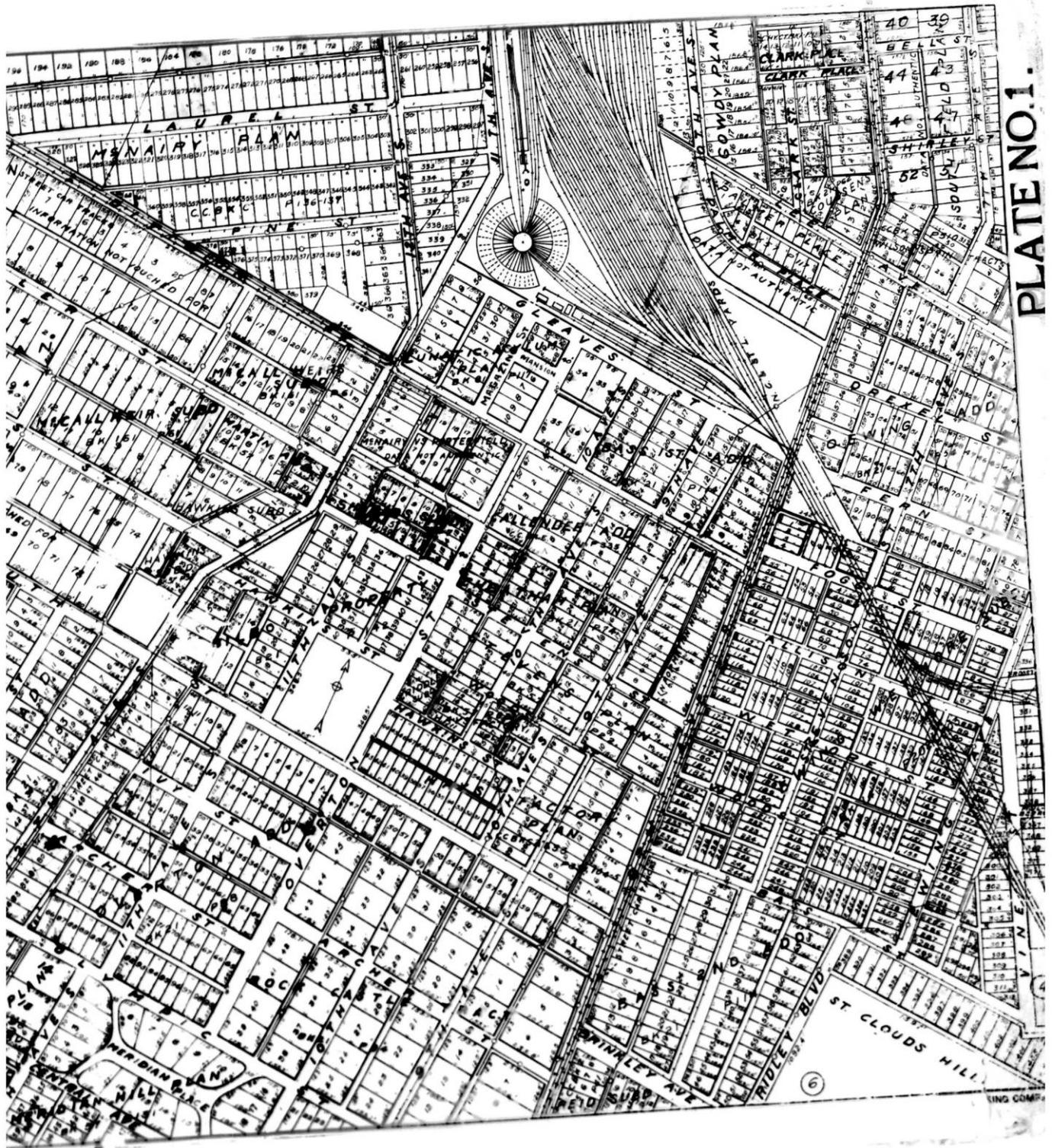


APPENDIX E: Map of Nashville, 1913



Map of Nashville. Produced by the Nashville Railway and Light Co., 1913. Courtesy of the Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection at the University of Texas at Austin.

APPENDIX F: Plat Book of Nashville, 1925-1930

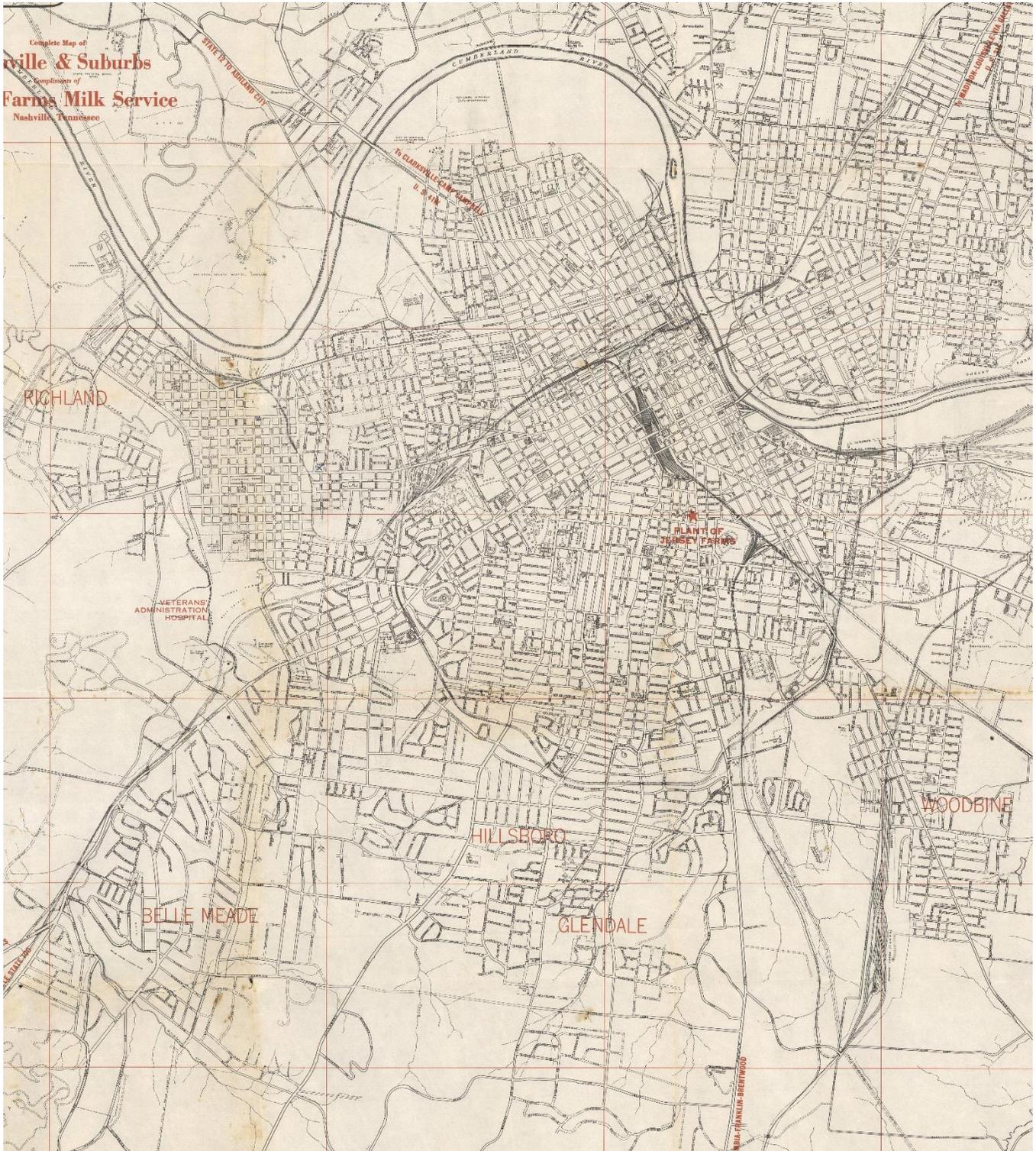


Maps of Edgehill Area from Plat Book of Nashville, 1925-1930. Courtesy of the Nashville Public Library Special Collections.



PLATENO. 7.

APPENDIX G: Map of Nashville, 1947



Map of Nashville. Produced by Jersey Famers Milk Service, 1947. Courtesy of Metro Nashville Government Archives.

APPENDIX H: Map of Edgehill Area, 1960



Map of Edgehill Area, 1960. Courtesy of Metro Nashville Government Archives.

APPENDIX I: Map of Edgehill Urban Renewal Planning Objectives, 1964

APPENDIX J: Current Satellite Picture of Edgehill Area



Courtesy of Google Maps