



Before We Forget: Strategies to Preserve Diverse Cultural Landmarks in Madison

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Executive Summary

Madison, Wisconsin has always been home to non-white residents. Despite this, the properties that have been designated as historic landmarks do not represent the full diversity of the city's residents. This research seeks to identify strategies and best practices that could be implemented in Madison to preserve places that have shaped the city's different social, cultural, and ethnic communities. This is particularly timely as city planners engage in planning processes for a comprehensive plan update, a new historic preservation plan, and neighborhood planning. An examination of existing policy from guiding institutional bodies and a review of historic preservation planning practices yielded some best practices to be implemented. The strategies of cultural mapping, reexamining what is already preserved, and crafting historic context statements were identified as three tools that would benefit Madison's preservation efforts. While this paper has a specific focus on preserving Madison's African-American landmarks, the strategies discussed can be used to identify landmarks significant to people from a wide range of backgrounds.

Introduction

“A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin, and culture is like a tree without roots.”- Marcus Garveyⁱ

Our understanding of history and of ourselves is interwoven with our sense of connectedness to place. A reverence for history and its relationship to the built environment has been instituted in United States policy. Since the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966, protecting places that are central to the American experience, both nationally and locally, has been a priority. Until recently, landmarks have primarily represented the history of the majority culture. In recent decades the “diversity deficit” has been acknowledged and there is movement within the historic preservation field to discover and preserve places that represent the country’s racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity.^{ii,iii} Madison, Wisconsin is currently in the process of updating its comprehensive plan and will soon embark upon its first historic preservation plan in nearly forty years. The time is ripe for the City to consider how it will ensure that the experiences of all who have shaped its history are incorporated into preservation practices. With particular focus on African-American landmarks, this report proposes strategies that can help ensure that a greater range of historic places and stories are preserved.

Identity and Place

Individuals often feel a deep sense of connection to the place they call home. This rootedness is part of the concept of place identity, which states that identities form in relation to environments. The construction of this identity is complex, but generally “a sense of place identity derives from the multiple ways in which place functions to provide a sense of belonging, construct meaning, foster attachments, and mediate change.”^{iv} This has immense impacts on the ways in which people interact with their surroundings. Preservation is one venue through which people can “regain a sense of identity with their own origins of which they have often been robbed by the sheer process of urbanization.”^v Recognizing this, there is a movement to bring to light the forgotten stories of marginalized and underrepresented groups who have shaped local, state and national experiences. Through protecting the significant places and stories, both old and new, that shape identity, planning practitioners can help support the sense of self and community belonging felt by those they serve.

Placemaking, a collaborative process through which individuals shape the public realm to maximize shared value, has been a useful tool to help communities guide change in neighborhoods, cities, and regions since the 1960s.^{vi} Inherent in this process is consideration of the physical, cultural, and social elements of a place, the identities of those who use the space, and how the two will change. With a strong focus on public participation, capacity building, and forging social interactions, placemaking is now being applied to historic preservation practices. The partnership between the Project for Public Spaces and the National Trust for Historic Preservation formalized this effort.^{vii} Through using both tools together, historic neighborhoods can retain their economic vitality and serve as community destinations and new places can be developed in ways that will help them become the places that communities will want to preserve in the future.

Historic Preservation in Madison

Madison’s preservation efforts began in the 1960s as a response to urban renewal and other developments.^{viii} The city’s first historic preservation ordinance was adopted in 1970 and the Landmarks Commission was created. In 1974, the non-profit Madison Trust for Historic Preservation was founded.^{ix} Both the city’s Historic Preservation section and the Madison Trust have a stated focus on preserving the built environment and its historic significance.

Local efforts by property owners and city government have been successful in designating properties on the National Register of Historic Places and as local landmarks. Currently there are 183 local landmarks, five local historic districts, over 75 individual properties and 13 historic districts on the National Register.^{x,xi} While some properties and districts are classified as both local and national landmarks, the two distinctions carry different regulations. So long as no federal monies are used, property owners of a national landmark can use their discretion in property alterations, though they are encouraged to contact state historic preservation offices beforehand.^{xii} In contrast, Madison’s historic preservation ordinance requires that those who own property in a historic district adequately maintain a property and acquire a “certificate of appropriateness” prior to making alterations.^{xiii} The majority of the historic structures and districts are located on the isthmus and on the near west side of Madison. Since the isthmus was the first part of the City to be developed this is expected.

While preservation practices in Madison have been very successful, few landmarks associated with people of diverse backgrounds have been preserved. There are some notable Native American and African-American landmarks. Eleven sets of effigy and burial mounds dating from 700-1200 A.D. are classified as local landmarks. In 1987, the East Dayton Street National Historic District was accepted as the city’s first and only African-American landmark.^{xiv,xv} This district is comprised of three structures and represents all that remains of what was once a much larger enclave of prominent African-Americans in Madison. In addition to private residences, the structures that remain housed social institutions, such as a church, a grocery store, a charitable society, and a rooming house. This neighborhood thrived until the mid-1930s.

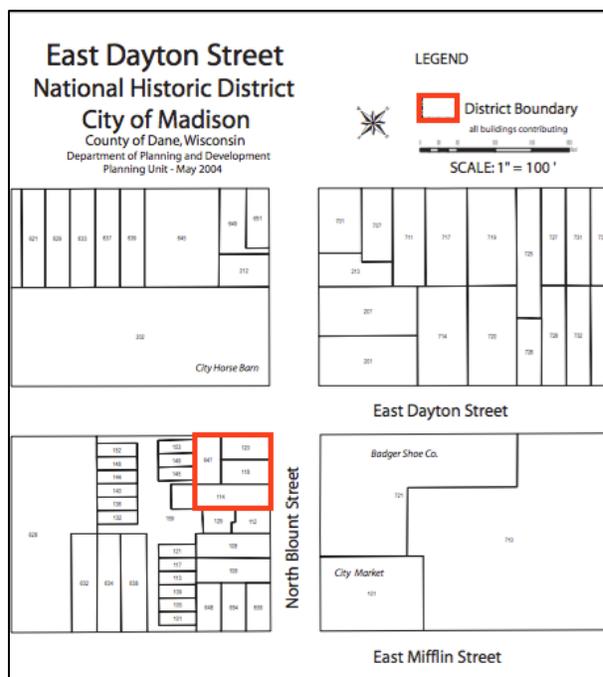


Figure 1: East Dayton Street Historic District
Source: City of Madison Planning Division

Why Preserve Diverse Places Now?

Historic preservation and recognizing the various contributions of Madison’s diverse populations can serve a step in the direction toward reconciling racial disparities. The disparities are a direct result of the systematic disinvestment in neighborhoods that housed communities of color. The only large federally funded urban renewal project in Madison occurred in the Greenbush

neighborhood.^{xvi} Traditionally Madison’s Italian neighborhood, black and Jewish families also called “the Bush” home. Urban renewal displaced over 250 families from this twelve-block area. Many families likely relocated to the neighborhoods of South Madison, largely because it was one of the only areas where they were allowed to live. This restriction is rooted in the racial covenants and restrictive mortgage lending practices which impacted the spatial development of the city, despite being made illegal by the 1948 Supreme Court case Shelley v. Kraemer and efforts to push for equality in the 1968 Fair Housing Act.^{xvii}

Despite the fact that it has been illegal to deny someone housing based on their race for decades, the spatial patterns that were put in place by redlining persist.^{xviii} This is particularly true with regards to poverty. In order to better promote equity and improve quality of life in neighborhoods with longstanding challenges, the mayor’s office oversees a Neighborhood Resource Team (NRT) program^{xix}. The nine teams rely on coordinated efforts by city staff, city departments, residents, and other stakeholders. One NRT, the Southside NRT, covers the areas that were deemed undesirable by 1930s housing policy and where many who were displaced from the Greenbush neighborhood likely settled. Even with efforts to improve neighborhoods that have historically been disinvested in, disparities remain. Table 1 shows that the neighborhoods that comprise the Southside NRT, Burr Oaks and Bram’s Addition, have housing values significantly lower than the City and have a considerably higher proportion of minority residents.

Table 1: South Madison Neighborhood Demographics

	City of Madison	Bram’s Addition	Burr Oaks
Racial and Ethnic Composition			
White	75.6%	24.4%	20.1%
African-American	7.1%	34.7%	19.1%
Asian	7.3%	12.2%	22.2%
Hispanic/Latino	6.9%	24.9%	34.0%
Other or Multiracial	3.1%	3.8%	4.6%
Housing Characteristics			
Average House Value	\$248,621	\$113,830	\$136,863
Median Year Built	1972	1965	1962

Source: City of Madison Neighborhood Indicators Project, 2017

In addition to the continued efforts of the NRTs, the lack of preservation of diverse places can be addressed in the three planning processes that the city is embarking upon. The Imagine Madison comprehensive plan process began in fall 2016 and will guide growth and development in the city through 2040. With equity as a guiding lens to “address current structural and institutional inequities” for communities of color and other disadvantaged groups, this planning process provides an opportunity to ensure that new development does not erode areas of cultural significance.^{xx} A second planning process that will soon begin is the crafting of a new historic preservation plan. This process will place special emphasis on preserving places that are significant to people from underrepresented backgrounds. A final planning process that is scheduled to begin in 2017 is a new neighborhood plan for the Badger Road/ South Park Street corridor. This plan, which includes the Southside NRT area, will serve as an update to the 2005 South Madison plan and help form development in the neighborhood for the decade ahead.

Institutional Guidance

Before proposing strategies for Madison to implement to preserve more diverse landmarks, an examination of existing policy from guiding bodies is necessary.

American Planning Association

Diversity in planning practices is addressed in several documents from the American Planning Association (APA). The mission statement articulates the desire to guide “the development of vital communities” and “[promote] education and citizen empowerment.”^{xxi} Further, the APA aims to “promote a diverse workforce,” “advance the planning movement and principles of sustainability, inclusion, and nondiscrimination,” and “address issues of social equity in [their] publications and diversity forums and on [their] website.”^{xxii} The APA’s legislative priorities also seek to promote social equity and the organization aims to support policies and programs that “create more prosperous and more just communities.”^{xxiii} The organization claims that to better serve diverse minority communities the APA must work to diversify their membership.^{xxiv}

Focusing on preservation, the APA’s Policy Guide on Historic and Cultural Resources encourages planners to take advantage of “emerging preservation strategies that address and interpret the histories and cultural legacy of all segments in society without regard to ethnicity, religion, or social strata.”^{xxv} Additional guidance is available in an eight page briefing paper released in 2011 focusing on cultural preservation. It states that a community’s ability to preserve its heritage while simultaneously developing new cultural expressions in the current times is a key to its health.^{xxvi}

National Trust for Historic Preservation

The National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP), a Congressionally chartered and privately funded non-profit organization, openly states that preserving diverse places is a goal. “Protect[ing] significant places representing our diverse cultural experience by taking direct action and inspiring broad public support” is the organization’s mission.^{xxvii} By claiming that diversity is a central goal of the NTHP, the organization is able to reframe how it approaches preservation work. Beyond training preservationists to engage with people from historically underrepresented backgrounds, the NTHP affirms that in order to be more inclusive in preservation practices, “reconstructing traditional narratives to include underrepresented communities” is necessary.^{xxviii}

As part of living up to its mission to inspire broad public support, the NTHP released a 24-page booklet for local activists to help them preserve historic African-American places in their communities.^{xxix} In addition to serving as an introduction to the field of preservation planning, the document serves as a primer on regulatory and funding mechanisms and provides case studies.

City of Madison

There are several elements of Madison’s Vision, Mission, and Service Philosophy that can influence the steps taken in preservation efforts.^{xxx} “Diversity is valued” and “the beauty of the urban environment and natural environment is preserved” are two of the four values put forth in the Vision Statement. The Service Philosophy holds that “support[ing] and inspir[ing] each other” and “continuously improv[ing] the City services” are essential components.

Recognizing that not all of the city’s residents have the same experiences and that there are persistent inequities that continue to have impacts, a Racial Equity & Social Justice Initiative (RESJI) was introduced to make a shift toward more fair practices.^{xxxix} A Comprehensive Equity Tool is available for use on long-term projects and aims to “facilitate conscious consideration of equity and examine how communities of color and low-income populations will be affected by a proposed action/decision of the City.”^{xxxix} While the tool itself does not provide guidance on how to make more equitable policy decisions, it does prompt the staff user to consider who would be burdened by a policy, potential impacts on geographic areas that already face significant disparities, and how long-term impacts will be measured. This tool is already applied to city planning processes.

Strategies

To create more equity in preservation practices and identify places of significance to groups from underrepresented backgrounds, the strategies of reexamining what is already preserved, crafting historic context statements, and cultural mapping should be utilized.

Cultural Mapping

Commonly regarded as a first step in crafting a cultural plan, cultural mapping is a multifaceted tool and an effective way to involve the public in the preservation process. This process of “recording, analyzing and synthesizing, and ... method of describing or depicting resources, networks and patterns of usage” is useful for identifying a community’s strengths and resources.^{xxxix} Taking many different forms, cultural mapping allows people to tell stories about the places that are significant to them and is a way to capture some of the intangible significance of place. San Antonio’s Office of Historic Preservation has used the technique to discover and celebrate stories related to its Missions (See Appendix 1, Figure 6).^{xxxix} By pairing recorded narratives with hand-drawn maps, history can be preserved and shared. This method allows for the documentation of “customs and activities while relating them to geography.”^{xxxix} Using this more interactive technique is a way to draw people into the planning process that normally feel excluded. Since some of the places depicted on the hand drawn map no longer exist, San Antonio’s preservationists will compile a book and create a GIS based map to present the stories that emerged from the cultural mapping process. They have recognized that there are multiple venues through which preservation can occur.

Reexamining What is Already Preserved

The primary lens through which history has been viewed and interpreted is that of the white majority culture. This neglects other lived experiences. Recognizing that it takes time to identify and certify new landmarks, reinterpreting the role of minority groups at existing sites is a relatively quick way to begin preserving a fuller history. In closing some of the gaps in historic

RESJI Mission & Vision

Mission

Establish racial equity and social justice as core principles in all decisions, policies and functions of the City of Madison

Vision

- Living wage jobs, safe neighborhoods, high-quality education, a healthy, sustainable natural environment, efficient public transit, parks and green spaces, affordable and safe housing and healthy food are afforded to all;
- The benefits of growth and change are equitably shared across our communities;
- All people have opportunities for fair and just inclusion in public processes and decisions; and
- One’s future is not limited by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, income, place of birth, place of residence or other group status.

representations, places can more accurately reflect the intersection of identities of those who live in that community.^{xxxvi} This understanding how various groups interacted with each other at the time allows for a richer and deeper historical perspective. This strategy is in line with the APA's support of considering all segments of society in interpreting history and cultural legacies. Utilizing a culturally sensitive narrative approach, which focuses on the "intangible, immeasurable, and invaluable aspects" of history can help foster an understanding of changing positions in society.^{xxxvii} The National Park Service has put this strategy to use at Philadelphia's Independence Hall, incorporating information about slave quarters on the site and the role of slavery in the country's first capital.^{xxxviii,xxxix}

Historic Context Statements

In addition to deepening a practitioner's understanding of the community with which they are working, a historic context statement can be useful in reframing what is already preserved. These technical documents compile information about a particular theme in a specific geographic area for a specific time period.^{xl} These documents can have very broad or narrow foci. Once a document is complete, it provides a new lens that practitioners can apply to the planning process (See Appendix 2). Depending on how the context statement parameters are framed, these documents can vary in length: Orlando's Parramore Comprehensive Neighborhood Plan includes a three page statement and San Francisco has a citywide African-American context statement of 172 pages.^{xli,xlii} In addition to African-American history, San Francisco has historic context statements documenting its Filipino and LGBTQ histories and will soon be drafting a Latino historic context statement. St. Louis, MO included eleven separate historic context statements as part of its 1995 preservation plan. Some areas of focus include education, the African-American experience, the immigrant experience, and religious life.^{xliii}

Implementation in Madison

Reexamining what is already preserved and crafting historic context statements will help preservationists adhere to the RESJI goal of conscious consideration of equity. These processes will help spread the fact that minority residents have been shaping Madison since its inception. While African-Americans did not exceed one percent of the city's total population until 1960, they have always had a place in Madison.^{xliv} Because of Madison's position as the state capital, much of the city's history is well documented. This will help to facilitate the processes of reexamining what is already preserved. For example, it is well documented that some early African-American residents worked in the State Capital.^{xlv} City staff could partner with the capital tour guides to incorporate information about these men and the role of messengers and clerks in the city's early days.

The historic context statement will provide a lens through which to view the disinvestment that has impacted South Madison and other predominately minority neighborhoods. The 2005 South Madison neighborhood plan's three page history section details that the neighborhood was platted as a suburb in 1902, grew in population because of resettlement of those displaced from the Greenbush area, and is racially and ethnically diverse.^{xlvi} That those who were displaced had few other housing options because of race-based housing policies is not mentioned. The history told in the new plan could resemble that in Orlando's Parramore plan (excerpt in Appendix 2), which clearly presents the ways in which segregation and industrial district zoning shaped the residential neighborhood and disadvantaged its residents.^{xlvii} A historic context statement as part of the comprehensive and preservation plans should include that the areas of East Dayton Street, East Wilson/ Williamson Street, Milton and Mound Streets, the Greenbush Triangle, and South Madison were all home to pioneer African-American residents.



Figure 2: Early African-American Neighborhoods in Madison
 Source: City of Madison Planning Division

The National Park Service’s 2002 Cultural Heritage Needs Assessment found that there were several different types of places that people from underrepresented backgrounds desired to see preserved.^{xlviii} Two types that Madison’s initial preservation efforts should focus on are places of experience and places of achievement, which offer a depiction of a group’s everyday experience and important individual contributions to the broader society.

Two places of experience that should have their historic contributions further examined are 1616 Beld Street and 1610 Gilson Street. These properties are in the Bram’s Addition neighborhood and the Badger Road/ South Park Street neighborhood planning area. Zach Trotter, one of the City’s first African-American nightclub and tavern owners, owned the Tuxedo Tavern on Beld Street.^{xlix} Originally located on West Washington Avenue in the Greenbush neighborhood, the business opened in 1928 and was forced to relocate because of urban renewal. The 1964 construction building has changed ownership several times, yet it has remained a significant part of the neighborhood.^l The Gilson Street property has operated primarily as a barber shop/ hair salon since its construction in the 1960s.^{li} Now vacant, the businesses there also served as a center of the south Madison community. While these buildings are not architecturally significant, they help tell stories that are essential to the development of the neighborhood and the identity of those who live in the area. These properties and others like them would be ideal for a process similar to the cultural mapping used in San Antonio.

These and other informal gathering places have shaped the local place identity and a collaborative neighborhood based process should be used to gather and preserve these stories. Through partnerships with other organizations in the city, efforts are being made to utilize this strategy in public participation efforts for the updated historic preservation plan.



Figure 3: 1616 Beld Street
Source: Author



Figure 4: 1610 Gilson Street
Source: Author

As with any planning process, things rarely go according to plan. Preparing for potential stumbling blocks from the outset can prevent or reduce future issues. One potential issue is that many of the properties of interest may no longer exist or may have been significantly altered. Interpretive signs or a walking tour brochure could be created to preserve the memory of these places and educate others about their significance. Another barrier to this preservation work is that many of Madison's early African-American residents are no longer able to tell their stories. Now is the time to engage these residents and preserve their stories and experiences before they are completely lost to history.

Conclusion

There is a long legacy of historic preservation in Madison. However, the landmarks that are preserved do not represent the history of all who have contributed to the city's growth. With the compilation of new plans for South Madison, historic preservation, and comprehensive planning, a window of opportunity has arrived for the city to consider how it will work to preserve more diverse places. Existing guidance and tested strategies suggest that reexamining what is already preserved, writing historic context statements, and implementing cultural mapping in the public participation process can be used and will help preservation efforts. South Madison neighborhoods have a rich history and sense of community; these planning techniques can help to preserve both for the future.

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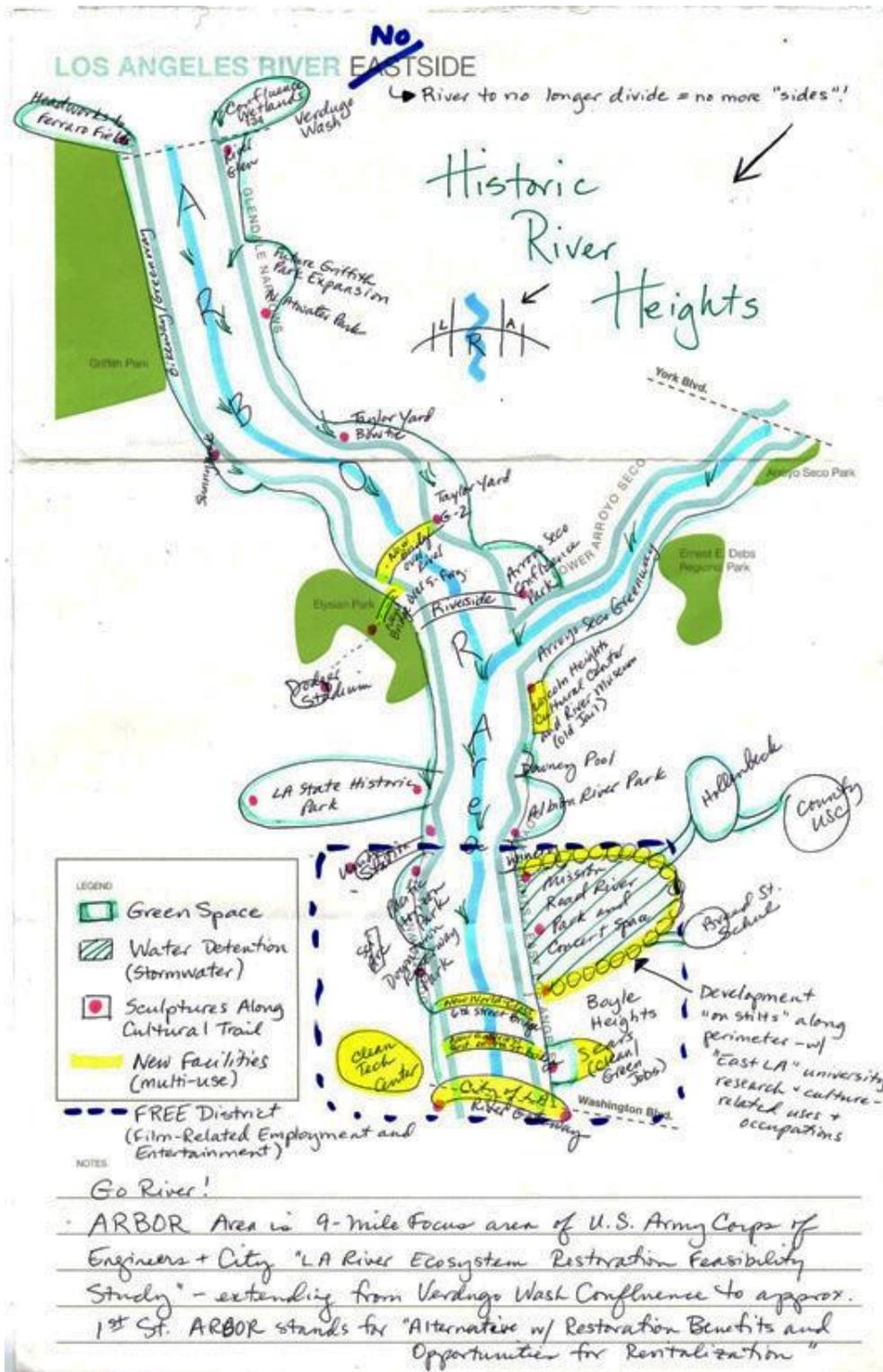


Figure 7: Historic Communities and Culture Centers Along the LA River
 Source: MIT Community Innovations Lab (CoLab Radio)

Appendix 2: Excerpts from Historic Context Statements

Excerpt from Orlando's Parramore Comprehensive Neighborhood Plan:

The Parramore community from its very beginning faced tremendous economic and social challenges. Due to segregation, African-Americans were not able to live in the City's predominately white neighborhoods and were relegated to the area west of Downtown on the other side of "Division Street". In 1928, most of the land in Parramore, whether it was residential or not, was zoned for industrial uses. This was done by predominately white landowners in order to provide for the greatest amount of flexibility in land use, and from the assumption that African-American residents were essentially a temporary labor force that could easily be displaced when development and redevelopment opportunities arose. And long after predominately white, middle class neighborhoods to the north and east were enjoying paved roads, water and wastewater services, the people of Parramore were forced to tolerate mostly unpaved streets and a corresponding lack of city services such as indoor plumbing. There was deep-seeded discrimination, with blight and inherent suffering.

Source: City of Orlando City Planning Division, 2015

Excerpt from San Francisco's African American Historic Context Statement:

Some African Americans who arrived in California during this time (1850s) were slaves brought by settlers from the American South. One such person, known only in court records as "Mary," successfully petitioned local courts for her freedom from her owner. She argued that the United States had agreed under the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo to uphold Mexican law until a new state constitution was adopted. Because slavery was forbidden in the Mexican Constitution, she argued, it remained illegal in California. This argument was widely seen in legal circles to be valid and was often used prior to the adoption of California's first constitution.

Source: City and County of San Francisco Planning Department, 2015

Excerpt from *A Preservation Plan for St. Louis*:

Mill Creek Valley was an African-American district from the mid-1800s through the turn of the century. A mix of homes, tenements, shops, saloons, dance halls, and night clubs gave the area a special character. Its population grew markedly after World War II, as black population in the city surged. The St. Louis electorate passed a bond issue in 1954 to redevelop the area. Some 20,000 people lived from Market and Vandeventer to the Mississippi River, and between 20th and Grand, extending south from Olive to the railroad tracks; 95 percent of them were black. Demolition of the area began in 1959 to make way for Laclede Town, Grand Towers, the Ozark Expressway (US 40), and a 22-acre extension by the St. Louis University onto the Civil War-era Camp Jackson site. Nearly forty churches were razed in the process.

Some displaced residents moved to The Ville, others to the area between Delmar and Natural Bridge on both sides of Grand. This shift accelerated the black migration already in progress to University City, Wellston, and Pine Lawn. To accommodate

the poorest displaced residents, the St. Louis Housing Authority continued to construct public housing on the north side-a decision reinforcing the racial segregation of the city. When the Land Clearance and Redevelopment Authority started demolishing blocks of Mill Creek Valley with bond issue money, the NAACP called it a "Negro removal project." The net result displaced thousands, reinforced the north-south division, and dealt a final death blow to a center of African-American culture.

Source: St. Louis Cultural Resource Office, 1995