

# Memorandum

To: Robin Rue Simmons, Alderwoman  
From: Devon Reid, City Clerk  
Subject: The Case for Reparations  
Date: April 18th, 2019

## **Introduction:**

In order to make the case for reparations in Evanston and to determine the extent of the harm that has been committed, we will need as much data as possible. Our focus will be on finding historical roadblocks to accumulating generational wealth. Moving forward, the Clerk's office will assist the alderwoman to recruit a working group including representatives from the Evanston History Center, Open Communities, Shorefront Legacy Center, Evanston Collective, NAACP Evanston Chapter, and various community members, to continue research and draft a specific model for reparations in Evanston.

## **Reasoning:**

Research in the Clerk's office has found multiple instances of racial discrimination perpetrated by the City of Evanston. These include:

***Relocation of Black homes:*** In the 1920s, Aldermen began approving permit applications to move homes to the 5th ward. We surmise most of these homes were owned by Black families. Further investigation with the Cook County Recorder of Deeds will allow us to create a list of relocated homes and determine the race of their owners.

## ***Red-Lining and Segregation-driven Housing Policies:***

In the 1930s, the federal government convened the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), which brought together mortgage lenders, developers, and real estate professionals across the country to design color-coded maps designating the credit-worthiness of certain neighborhoods. Red-lined communities were labeled as "hazardous" and subsequently denied Federal Housing Administration (FHA) backed mortgages. The red-lined D2 neighborhood in **(Figure 1)** contains most of the

present-day 5th Ward and a portion of the 2nd Ward. Notes from the HOLC assessment indicate that their classification was racially motivated:

*“This neighborhood houses the large negro population living in Evanston...”*

*“This concentration of negroes in Evanston is quite a serious problem for the town as they seem to be growing steadily and encroaching into adjoining neighborhoods...”*

*“The neighborhood is graded “D” because of its concentration of negroes, but the section may improve to a third class area as this element is forced out...”*

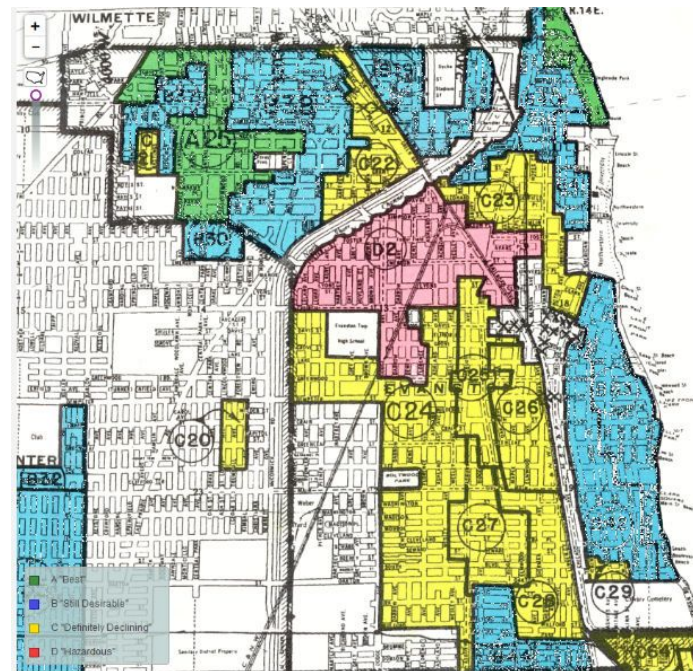
Although African Americans in Evanston were more likely to own their homes than in Chicago, the high level of segregation resulted in increased crowding and higher housing prices in the section of west Evanston that was deemed “open to African Americans.”

While explicit markers of segregation were uncommon, racial barriers were well understood. Between 1910 and 1940, there was no substantial expansion of the African American community outside of western Evanston despite population growth of 5,000. Throughout the early 1900s, a series of rezoning policies reduced the number of African American “approved” housing units outside these boundaries.

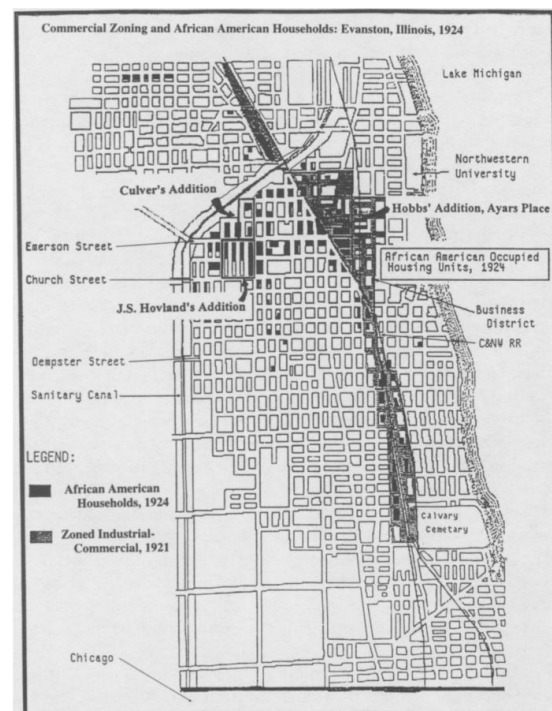
*Had the Black population been more evenly distributed across the city, it would have been more difficult for the federal government HOCL commission to red-line any part of Evanston. However, actions taken as early as 1919 suggest that the city’s rezoning ordinances both reduced the number of African American housing units and concentrated the existing units in the 5th ward.*

In 1919, Evanston passed an ordinance which zoned almost every block where Black people lived outside the west side for commercial uses (**Figure 2**). Over time, public

**Figure 1**  
HOLC map for Evanston showing the red-lining of the 5th ward  
Source: Mapping Inequality project at the University of Richmond’s Digital Scholarship Lab



**Figure 2**  
Many early African American households were located in areas zoned for commerce by the city in 1919. Over time, commercial development “racially cleansed” east and central Evanston. Source: David Bruner, “A General Survey of the Negro Population,” 1924; “Use Map,” Evanston Plan Committee, 1921



and private redevelopment resulted in the demolition of dozens of Black occupied housing units in these areas. Another ordinance passed in the 1920s classified parts of eastern Evanston and the lakeshore as “A” Residence Districts, which banned the building of apartment housing (**Figure 3**). This rezoning directly targeted the Black community because by 1930, about 40% of African Americans in Evanston lived in two-family homes. The reclassification of lakefront property prohibited the construction of multi-family dwellings and would have made it incredibly difficult for Black families to relocate there. Especially since census data indicates that 25-40% of Black Evanstonians used their houses as a source of rental income between 1920 and 1940.

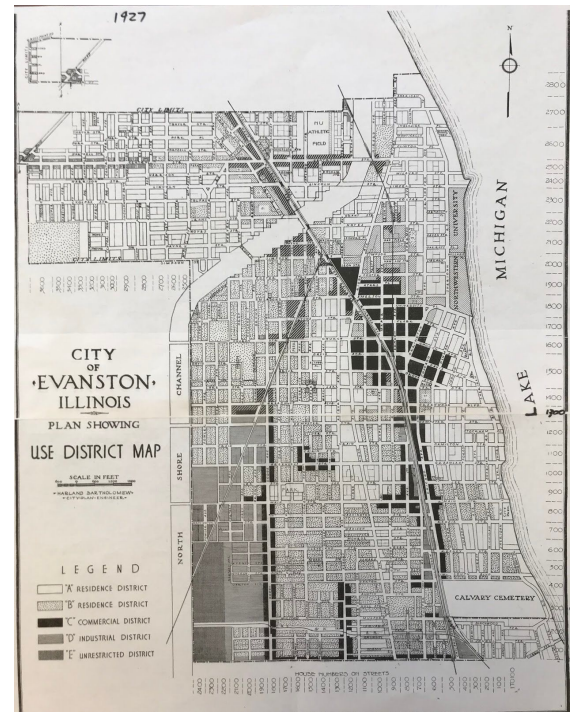
As a result of these rezoning ordinances, by 1940, 84% of African American households in Evanston were located within the modern day 5th ward, which was 95% Black at its core.

Not only were efforts made to concentrate the Black community within the boundaries of the modern day 5th ward, there also appear to have been efforts to prevent new housing for Black residents from being built. During a meeting of interracial leaders called to discuss a proposed federal housing project for Black residents, white attendees introduced a resolution that made approval of the housing project contingent on Black residents using “their influence to keep more of their Race from coming to Evanston.” The need for better housing, due to overcrowding and declining property value, was well documented in reporter produced by social workers and surveys conducted by Northwestern University. At the time Alderman Jourdain branded the resolution “an offer for a deal that was an insult to any Colored man’s self-respect” and it was eventually tabled.

### Attempted Correction of Discriminatory Housing Policies

In November 1963, a group of Northwestern students, in partnership with Evanston lawyer and Chairman of the United Citizens Council for Freedom of Residence in Illinois, Donald Frey, circulated a petition calling on Evanston City Council to amend its rooming house ordinance – specifically, to end housing discrimination through selective renting. The petition called for the housing code to be amended to require Evanston landlords to rent to anyone regardless of “race, cred, color or national origin.” The group collected 3,000 student signatures and brought their case before the Evanston Community Relations Commission and City Council.

**Figure 3**  
City of Evanston Zoning Map  
Source: City Records, 1927



In October 1967, the Evanston City Council passed an ordinance to establish a city-issued real estate license that could be revoked if individuals were found to be practicing discrimination in the rental, sale, and advertising of housing. Critics argued that exemptions granted to property owners, financial institutions, and real estate agencies made it ineffective. In 1968, following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the council passed a new fair housing ordinance. However, this ordinance has been challenged and ignored since its passage:

In 1978, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that cities and towns, including Evanston, could not impose the penalties warranted by the ordinance (only the state could).

In 1985, a study of Evanston revealed use of “racial steering” practices by certain realtors, whereby African American renters and buyers were “steered” toward certain properties and away from other areas of the city. This prompted Mayor James C. Lytle to appoint a committee to investigate and correct the problem.

***Council recall of first Black elected aldermen:*** In 1931 Edwin B. Jourdain was elected to represent the 5th ward – making him the first Black alderman in Evanston history. Shortly after, the City Council launched a voter fraud investigation, which resulted in Jourdain being unseated. Jourdain's removal resulted in a year in which the majority Black population of the 5th ward lacked representation on the council.

***Accounts of City Department Discrimination:***

- City Collector's refusal to issue Taxi Cab licenses to Black operators
- Bureau of Recreation's segregation of City Parks and select public beaches
- Evanston Committee on Veterans' Housing's quota on Black residents
- Refusal to drive to the County Hospital in the single police ambulance available to Black patients because it “could not be spared so long out of Evanston”
- Closure of the city's “Social Hygiene Clinic” despite Alderman Jourdain's finding that the closure was in conflict with a provision in the city code (the closed clinics had primarily benefited Evanston's Black community)

***Instances of Discrimination That Will Require Further Research:***

- Discriminatory City Hall hiring practices
- Discriminatory allocation of City funding - how have decisions been made about where services are provided and which facilities experience budget cuts
- Criminal justice: discriminatory enforcement of certain laws (i.e. obedience to police in a public place)
- The history and impact of the Three Unrelated Ordinance on the Black community

- The practice of increasing housing requirements standards and then denying loans to Black families attempting to bring their houses up to code - resulting in decreased Black homeownership

***Data to Gather:***

- Census data on Black homeownership rates
- City zoning policies from 1930 to 1960 and post 1970
- The findings of Mayor James C. Lytle's Racial Steering Correction Committee
- The involvement that Evanston officials had in federal redlining practices

**Case Studies:**

In an effort to acknowledge and correct Evanston's history of racial and economic discrimination, the Clerk's office has compiled a list of reparations ordinances and initiatives in use across the country. This memo provides both historical contexts for the various models as well as suggestions for how these models might be implemented in Evanston.

**Chicago (2015): [Police Torture Reparations Ordinance](#)**

- **Purpose:** To address the consequences of Chicago Police Commander Jon Burge's systematic practice of torture, physical abuse and coercion of African American men and women from 1972 to 1991
- **Reparations:** \$20 million
  - **For Burge's Victims:**
    - \$5.5million to compensate victims and their families (allocated by the newly created Chicago Police Torture Reparations Commission)
    - Center on the South Side to provide psychological counseling, healthcare services and vocational training to torture survivors, their family members and others affected by law enforcement torture and abuse
    - Free tuition at City Colleges of Chicago
  - **For the Larger Community:**
    - Formal apology from the city
    - Creation of public memorials to memorialize survivors and the struggle for justice on their behalf
    - [Requirement that the history of police torture be taught in all eighth- and tenth-grade public school social studies classes](#)

**Northwestern University (2013): [John Evans Study Committee](#)**

- **Purpose:** Reviewed and reported on the history of John Evans (one of the founders of Northwestern University) - specifically Evans' involvement in the Sand Creek Massacre of Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians in 1864

- **Finding:** John Evans deserves institutional recognition for his contributions to the establishment of Northwestern, but the University has ignored his significant moral failures in relation to the Sand Creek Massacre and it should be corrected.
- **Next Steps:** [Native American Outreach and Inclusion Task Force](#)
  - Established to recommend strategies to strengthen Northwestern's relationship with Native American communities through recruitment efforts, academic programs, and campus support services
- **Final Recommendations:**
  - Formulate a strategic approach to grow the number of and retain Native American students, faculty, and staff
  - Conduct research on topics related to Indigenous scholarship; provide support activities for students
  - Build relationships with Native American communities

### **Existing Reparations Models:**

1. *Evanston Justice Curriculum:*
  - a. **(Historical Context):** This would be modeled after the Chicago police torture curriculum referenced above.
  - b. **(Evanston Context):** This would entail working with Evanston school districts to craft a lesson plan to help students understand the history of segregation and racial disparity in Evanston.
  
2. *Company Disclosure:*
  - a. **(Historical Context):** Ordinances proposed in Oakland, Chicago, and Los Angeles City Councils required all corporations doing business with the city (i.e. in industries such as insurance and home loans) to divulge information regarding past connections to slavery in the United States.
  - b. **(Evanston Context):** Evanston could propose an ordinance that required all corporations doing business with the City of Evanston to divulge information regarding past connections to slavery and discrimination in the United States.
  
3. *Direct Payment:*

**(Historical Context):**

  - **Florida (early 90s):** approved \$2.1million to be distributed to the living survivors of a 1923 massacre that resulted in multiple deaths and the decimation of the Black community in Rosewood
  - **North Carolina (2014):** set aside \$10million for reparations payments to living survivors of the state's eugenics program - Virginia has adopted a similar model
  - **Chicago (2015):** \$5.5million for victims of Jon Burge's police torture practices

**(Evanston Context):**

- Residents of Evanston, in some way, would be compensated for the relocation of homes.

4. **Truth and Reconciliation Commission**

- a. **(Historical Context):** model created to address inequality and attempt to heal divisions created by historical violence and inequality by rewriting the city's history in a way that provides citizens with an understanding of how violence took place and who was responsible

**Ex. Guatemala:** outlining the role of government institutions in human rights abuses during 36 years of military rule

**Ex. Mississippi:** University of Mississippi, in conjunction with President Bill Clinton's "One America" initiative, hosted community dialogues to address racial violence related to the U.S. civil rights

- b. **(Evanston Context):** A group of historians and community members would be convened to put together an official historical record of discrimination in the City of Evanston.

**Conclusion:**

From the research gathered, we can reasonably surmise that a history of city-mandated discrimination including:

- **Exclusionary Housing Policies:** including the inability to build multi-unit housing and commercial rezoning that led to the demolition of dozens of Black homes
- **Federal Government Redlining**
- **Divestment from Black Communities:** including the closing of the only school and hospital (Community Hospital) in the Black community

...has led to the decline of socioeconomic status and hindered the ability to acquire wealth for Evanston's Black community.

Since the 1960s, unemployment within Evanston's Black community has risen from 5% to 15% despite Evanston's average unemployment rate remaining at 0-8% since the 1950s. Median income in the 5th ward ranges from \$45,000 to \$55,000, while the median income in Evanston (at large) ranges from \$60,000 to \$110,000.

The 5th ward has the lowest property values in the city, no public school, and is the only ward with areas classified as food deserts.

**Recommendations:**

Staff recommends the alderwoman convene a working group comprised of members from the Evanston History Center, Shorefront Legacy Center, Evanston Collective, Open Communities, NAACP Evanston Chapter, and community members to continue research and draft a more specific model for reparations in Evanston.

In order to develop a more concrete proposal for Evanston reparations, we recommend hosting a joint Community Dialogue & Day of Healing that will provide community members with a space to share stories, assess community needs, and learn about best practices for combating racial inequality at the local level.

With regards to what model would best suit the contextual history of Evanston, we recommend one that increases investment into the 5th ward and supports the building of community wealth. This could potentially take the form of a city-backed loan program that would allow long-term Evanston renters to become owners of multi-family units. Buyers would then be encouraged to rent these units at affordable rates and use the income to pay back the original loan.

We also believe money should be allocated to organizations, like Shorefront Legacy and Evanston History Centers, which are actively preserving and teaching the struggles and contributions of Evanston's Black community.