

Historic and Contemporary Segregation

Segregation in Evanston has a similar history to its neighbor city, Chicago, with the city's Black population significantly growing during the great migration and its institutionalized use of Redlining. Evanston's Black population grew from 125 in 1880 to 1,100 in 1910, then to 9,126 near the end of the great migration in 1960 (Gavin, 2019). However, by the start of the great migration, Evanston was already home to a well-established Black community, supplying labor demands by White elites and making personal ties with White families across the city. This well-established Black community and demand for Black labor differentiated Evanston from other suburban cities and towns to Chicago who sought to exclude Black residents altogether (Wiese, 1999).

Although Black residents would not be excluded from Evanston, they would be segregated to West Evanston and excluded from the rest of the city. The segregation process began in the city with a practice of informal racial zoning that was developed and promoted by White real estate brokers (Wiese, 1999). In addition to this practice Evanston banks largely refused to loan money to enable Black households to buy homes in areas that were not viewed as "acceptable" for Black people. Other early 20th century segregationary practices included White homeowners, racially restrictive housing covenants that restricted home sales to only White people, as well as the formation of the West Side Improvement Association that existed to buy homes which were at risk of being sold to a Black family (Robinson, 2013).



Photo of the Grosse Point Lighthouse from cityofevanston.org



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Redlining

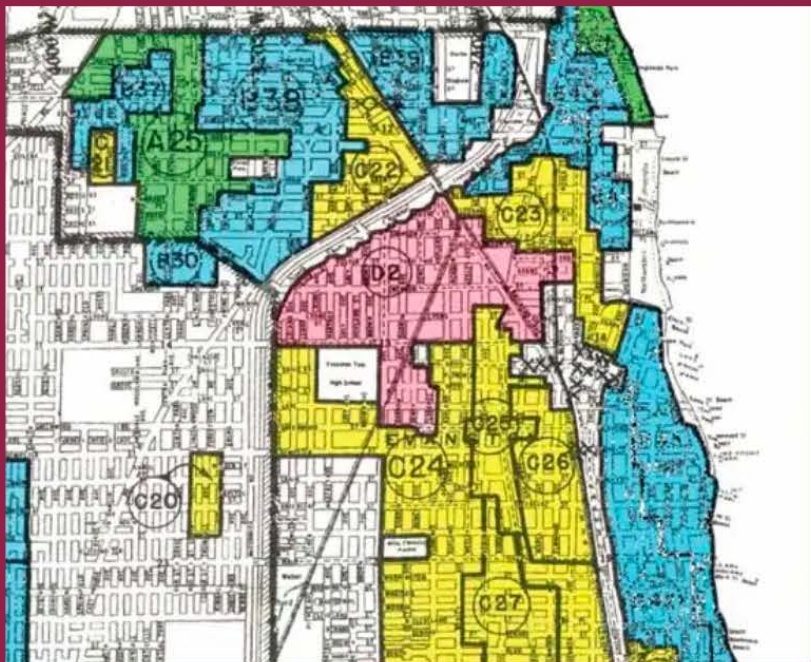
As the Black population continued to grow in the early 20th century, Evanston's Black residents became largely segregated into a triangular area within West Evanston with physical borders including canals to the north and west, as well as train tracks to the east. Within this triangular area, the housing supply for Black households would increase as White families left the area and construction saw new residences on previously vacant land (Robinson, 2013). By 1940, 84% of Black residents lived in the triangular area of the city and 95% of the residents of the area were Black (Wiese, 1999; Robinson, 2013).

Around this decade and with the Federal Housing Administration's inception in 1934, Redlining became another powerful tool to keep and further segregate Evanston. During this process, the triangular area within Evanston in which Black residents were segregated was colored red on housing maps and given a D rating, meaning that homes in the area were ineligible for a federal mortgage insurance. With demand increasing for Black housing and the supply constrained by Redlining and other segregation practices, Evanston's Black community became overcrowded by 150%, leaving most houses with more than one family living in them. Eventually, Evanston Black residents would begin moving out of the segregated triangular area in a block-by-block process to the area's south in the mid-20th century (Gavin, 2019).



Photo of the original Evanston Sanitarium, the first Black hospital by Shorefront Legacy Center from evanstonhistorycenter.org.

In 1964 following this gradual migration south and amid the civil rights movement, Evanston would launch a Community Relations Commission to explore desegregating housing. Through surveying its residents, the commission found that over half of the city's White residents preferred to live in a neighborhood that was 100% White and real estate brokers were refusing to list properties for homeowners that wanted to sell on a nondiscriminatory basis. Institutionalized segregationary housing practices in Evanston would largely end in the late 1960's with Evanston's City Council passing a housing ordinance in 1967 that prohibited brokers from discriminating or accepting discriminating listings as well as Congress's passing of the federal Fair Housing Act in 1968, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of race (Barr, 2014). However, these new anti-segregation policies did not end discrimination in Evanston and segregation is largely still felt today (Gavin, 2019).



Map of Evanston's neighborhoods in 1940 by the Home Owners Loan Corporation, with the Black community shaded red (D2) from [evanstonroundtable.com](https://www.evanstonroundtable.com).

Segregation Policies and Programs

Evanston has been proactive in addressing their segregation and racially discriminatory policies of the past by becoming the first U.S. city to issue reparations to its Black residents. The reparations program is meant to acknowledge and address the historical harm done to the city's Black residents through its discriminatory housing policies, with descendants of Black residents who lived in the city between 1919 and 1969 being prioritized. The \$10 million plan, funded by donations and taxes on recreational marijuana, is centered on housing with distribution of housing grants. As part of this, the first phase of the program included \$25,000 payments made to 16 selected residents for home repairs or property costs (Adams, 2021). These 16 residents selected in January of 2022 were out of the more than 600 people who had applied after the application opened in September 2021. With only 4% of the \$10 million spent on this phase there is more to be planned for the reparations program in the future that is contingent on community input (Jones, 2022). The reparations program has been criticized by some including Cicely Fleming, a Black alderwoman at the Evanston City Council who supports reparations. Fleming has criticized the program calling it "a housing plan dressed up as such" (Treisman, 2021) with too limited participation, autonomy, and scope that does not do enough to lay groundwork or longer-term efforts.

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