The Racial History of Williamstown

Katie Orringer and Morgan Dauk

Clients: Andrew Art and Bilal Ansari
Project Background & Clients

- Project Background
  - Environmental Concentrators
  - Environmental Planning Workshop (ENVI 302)
  - Professor Sarah Gardner

- Clients
  - Bilal Ansari: DIRE Committee member, Assistant Vice President for Campus Engagement in the Office of Institutional Diversity and Equity at Williams College
  - Andrew Art: DIRE Committee member
Scope of Project

❖ Part 1: Racial History of Williamstown
  ➢ Blackinton (1899-1901)
  ➢ White Oaks (1763-1930)
  ➢ (former) Colonial Village (1930-1960)
  ➢ Spruces (1950-Present)

❖ Part 2: Current Zoning in Williamstown

❖ Part 3: Recommendations for future planning
Uncover the history of racial injustice and segregation in Williamstown through specific housing practices, policies, and decisions

Uncover the discrimination that people of color have been subjected to over the course of the town's history

Inspire plans for the future that will promote inclusivity and equal access to the town
Recognition of Privilege

“As a foreword to our report, we recognize our own white privilege in a society that is plagued with prejudice against people of color. In researching and writing about the history of Williamstown, we understand that we have not been subject to the same biases that have impacted minority groups for hundreds of years. While we cannot fully understand the extent to which racism has affected individuals and families from our own experience, we hope that our efforts to describe the events of the past pay tribute to the pain and suffering that many people of color have had to endure.”

Key Questions

➢ Do current zoning & town planning structures separate residents based on race and socioeconomic status?
➢ How can we make changes to the Williamstown zoning & planning structure to promote diversity and inclusion?
➢ Is the low diversity in Williamstown a result of systemic racism as displayed in the built environment, due to explicit displays of discrimination, or both?
History

❖ Four Neighborhoods
  ➢ White Oaks
  ➢ Spruces
  ➢ Blackinton
  ➢ (former) Colonial Village

❖ Racial history

❖ Rise of the KKK
➢ Neighborhoods highlighted by clients as historical case studies of prejudice/injustice
➢ Interviews (personal accounts)
  ■ Barbara Oneil, Carol Zingareli, Cathy Yamamoto, Cheryl Shanks, Dennis Powell, Frances Jones-Sneed, Jamie Art, Matthew Sheehy, Kashia Pieprzak, Sarah Currie, & Susan Puddester
➢ The North Adams Transcript and Berkshire Eagle
➢ Williams College Special Collections
➢ Williamstown Historical Museum
Zoning and Planning Scoping

❖ Interviews
➢ Andrew Groff, Chris Winters, Stephanie Boyd, Lauren Shuffleton-Drako, Elton Ogden, Daniel Gura, Susan Puddester, Tom Sheldon
■ Planning board
■ Affordable housing experts
■ Town planners

❖ Ryan Report
❖ Chapter 70 zoning code
Introduction: General History

- Northern Berkshire cotton mills prospered at the hands of Southern slavery
  - Arnold Brothers in North Adams 1827 - eventually became Mass MoCA
  - Williams Plunkett in Lenox
- Williams College ties to the abolition and colonization movements
  - WASS (anti-slavery society) in the 1820s
  - President Griffin, Dewey and Ebenezer Kellogg supported the colonization movement
- Congressional church pastor donated to ACS (Reverend Gridley)
- Ephraim Williams Jr. owned slaves in mid-1700s
  - Moni, London, Cloe- Prince, Romanoo
Themes

- Infrastructure influences inclusion
- Resource distribution differences between the town and college
- Segregation according to socioeconomic status
- Intentions versus biased outcome
- Beautification - "changing the character of the neighborhood"

Image made using ArcGIS, Fall, 2020.
White Oaks

- Dates: 1763-1930
- Interviews
  - Sarah Currie, Cheryl Shanks, Barbara Oneil
- History
  - Origin
  - Isolation, refuge
- Seen as a town in need of pity and reform

White Oaks

- **Civic challenges**
  - Physical isolation
  - Racial and socioeconomic bias

- **Action taken**
  - Building of White Oaks Chapel
  - Ties to the College

- **Consequences**
  - Encouraged need for reform
  - Became haven for white supremacy group


"Still Another Cross is Burned: Klan Meeting Reported to Have Been Held in White Oaks Church." The North Adams Transcript, Newspapers.com by ancestry, March 18, 1926, Williams College Archives.

The Rise of the KKK in the Berkshires

❖ Dates: 1910-1930
❖ KKK active in the Berkshires
  ➢ Cross burnings, initiation meetings
  ➢ Birth of a Nation
    ■ Idealized KKK

Image from “Report Klan Has Large Initiation: Over 100 New Members Join Organization at Indoor Meeting.” The North Adams Transcript, April 7, 1927.
Image from “Still Another Cross is Burned: Klan Meeting Reported to Have Been Held in White Oaks Church.” The North Adams Transcript, March 18, 1926.
Blackinton

- Dates: 1899-1901
- Blackinton Annexation story
  - Wanted fire district inclusion for water
  - Wanted sidewalks
  - Wanted street lights
- Civic challenges
  - Lack of infrastructure and Williamstown not providing fundings (did not have the resources)
- Public action taken
  - Blackinton moved into North Adams' town and control
- Consequences
  - Loss of mill working community in town & loss of land

"Blackinton People Sore." North Adams Transcript, June, 2nd, 1899.
Moving of Griffin Hall

❖ Dates: 1902-1904
❖ Griffin Hall
  ➢ Williams College alumni paid for it to be moved to line up aesthetically with other buildings
  ➢ Named after colonization supporter
❖ Monetary differences between projects
  ➢ Griffin Hall: $25,000 +
  ➢ Blackinton: $3000 to Williamstown
    ■ $264 for hydrants
    ■ $400 for lighting
    ■ Worth $200,000 ($430 in taxes a year)
    ■ Without sidewalk & pipes
❖ Theme: Differences in resources of the town and college
  ■ White Oaks church another college fundraiser

"New Chapel Site: Williams College's New Costly Chapel Will Supplant Old One." North Adams Transcript, August, 20th, 1902.
"Trustees' Meeting." North Adams Transcript, June, 21st, 1904.
"Blackinton People Sore." North Adams Transcript, June, 2nd, 1899.
"Terms Fixed: City is to Pay $3000 for Annexation of Blackinton." North Adams Transcript, April, 3rd, 1900.
Olmsted Archive, Proposed Relocation of Chapel and Griffin Hall at Williams College, Flickr, 2016.
(former) Colonial Village

- Dates: 1930-1960s (through present)
- Interviews
  - Kashia Pieprzak
- College connection
  - people of color not allowed to live there (including college workers)
- Civic challenge
  - increased demand for modern, affordable homes in Williamstown
- Private action taken
  - Harry Thurber created neighborhood
  - Racially restrictive covenant
- Consequences
  - discrimination, segregation, deeds still exist today so ongoing damage

"Protective Covenants and Restrictions." William Harry Thurber, 1939.
Written Testimony in Support of H4944 via Kashia Pieprzak
(former) Colonial Village

❖ Actions Taken

➢ Supreme Court cases
  ■ Shelley v. Kramer 1948
  ■ Fair Housing Act in 1968

➢ H4944 bill in the Massachusetts legislature

➢ Representative John Barrett and Senator Adams Hinds

➢ Washington legislation inspiration: SBH 2514

➢ Bill to remove the deed


Written Testimony in Support of H4944 via Kashia Phipps.


Accessed Fall 2020.
"Upon petition to the land court department of the trial court, a person holding an interest in real property or a party in interest affected by a void provision in this section, may request the land court to expunge a provision made void by this section. The land court may order the removal of such language by order, to either the recorder of the land court department or an assistant recorder of the land court, to strike the void provision from the appropriate record or instrument."


The Spruces

❖ Dates: 1954 - Present
❖ Interviews
  ➢ Lauren Shuffleton-Drago, Sarah Currie, Carol Zingareli, Susan Puddester, Cathy Yamamoto, Cheryl Shanks

❖ History
  ➢ Albert Bachand
  ➢ 100-year floodplain
  ➢ Flood prevention
    ■ Bachand dredged, straightened, and widened the Hoosic River in 1955
    ■ Reimbursement denied, proposal rejected

The Spruces

❖ Civic challenge
  ➢ Tragedy of Hurricane Irene
  ➢ Displacement, injustice, trauma

❖ Actions taken
  ➢ FEMA
  ➢ Speed of response

❖ Consequences
  ➢ Displacement
  ➢ Decrease in low cost housing options
  ➢ Williams College role with Highland Woods was positive


Neighborhood Commonalities/Themes

- **Infrastructure** - Spruces, Blackinton
- **Segregation** - Spruces, Blackinton, White Oaks
- **Resources (college versus town)** - Blackinton/Griffin Hall
- **Biased outcome** - Spruces with FEMA, White Oaks with Albert Hopkins
- **Beautification/Gentrification & "changing the character of the neighborhood"** - Spruces, White Oaks (Hopkins), Colonial Village
Current Zoning

❖ Traditionally single-family home zoning
➤ (Chapter 70, Article 32: 2019): update on two family homes
■ by right in R2, R3, Southern Gateway districts
➤ Two-family home not largely utilized
➤ Allowed to split existing home into two sections

❖ Conservation land impedes new development

❖ ADUs (Chapter 70, Article 33: 2019)
➤ One per home, detached barn or garage
➤ For conforming lots

❖ Max 3 families per lot

❖ 1,862 single family homes
➤ 93 two family
➤ 26 three family
➤ 158 second homes


Current Affordable Housing

❖ Chapter 40B, 10% threshold
❖ Ongoing Projects
  ➢ Photech site - Berkshire Project Housing Development Corp. (41)
❖ Completed Projects
  ➢ Meadowvale - Williamstown (30)
  ➢ Stetson Road/Cole Avenue - Williamstown (8)
  ➢ Spring Meadow - Williamstown (22)
  ➢ Church Corner - Williamstown (8)
  ➢ Highland Woods - Williamstown (40)
  ➢ Proprietors Field - Williamstown (60)
  ➢ Rental Units - Williamstown Housing Authority (74)
  ➢ Cable Mills (13)


Connection of History & Recommendations

❖ "Changing character of the neighborhood"
  ➢ White Oaks: Hopkins' local mission
  ➢ Colonial Village: racially restrictive covenant
  ➢ Used today across the nation as a way to oppose housing changes like the ones we will suggest

❖ Latimore "City of Atlanta announces city planning initiative to address housing affordability, racial equity" article
  ➢ Mayor Bottoms: ""For too long, housing policies have excluded those who are most vulnerable, particularly communities of color."
  ➢ "The proposed zoning policies in the analysis also target structures of racism and discrimination that have limited housing affordability and exacerbated inequality in Atlanta. The resulting policies seek to increase immediate and long-term affordability for Atlanta residents and directly address the structures of discrimination that still exist in Atlanta’s zoning and land-use policies."
  ➢ Our recommendations address zoning & affordable housing to fight discrimination

Recommendations for Town Planning

- Multiple family home zoning (general residence district)
- Incentivize ADUs through exemption setback & ownership by dividing land
- Mixed-use development & affordable housing unit at old town garage site
- Move to town council system of government (if town population reaches population threshold)

Problem &
Decision
Criterion

❖ Problem
➢ Single-family home zoning = lack of integrated housing
➢ Impedes racial and socioeconomic inclusion

❖ Decision Criteria

Proposals value inclusivity, diversity, sustainability, and affordability (for town and owners/tenants).

Factors Evaluated
➢ Societal Impact
➢ Environmental Impact
➢ Economic Impact
➢ Feasibility
Proposal #1:
Multi-family Zoning (general residence)
via special permit, maximum of 4
Justification

- 84% of homeowners in Williamstown lived in single-family homes
- April 2018 proposal by the Planning Board
  - Cole Ave, East campus
- Large subdivisions have not changed since 1993
- Housing needs changing
  - need smaller, more affordable options for younger generations
- Why not universal?
  - Sewers in rural residences
  - Smart growth: do not permit sprawl
  - General residence is on town sewer

Groff, Andrew. Interview, 14 October, 2020 and (e-mail Dec. 8, 2020)
Proposal #1 Considerations

❖ Societal Impact
  ➢ Inclusivity, diversity, unity
  ➢ Lack of ownership

❖ Environmental Impact
  ➢ Highest density living option: save land from development
  ➢ Utilize land already used for residential
  ➢ No need to build apartments

❖ Economic Impact
  ➢ Upzoning (most units possible)
  ➢ No town cost
  ➢ Allows residents to age in place
  ➢ Expand tax base

❖ Feasibility
  ➢ Town resistance (April 2018)
  ➢ Parking spaces consideration
Homes are underutilized
Historically used to exclude based on race, socioeconomic status
2018, Minneapolis 2040 policy passed to eradicate single-family zoning
  ➢ Increase housing supply, reduce racial and economic segregation, limit carbon footprint
  ➢ Population outpacing housing, higher prices created exclusion
  ➢ Single-family zoned areas were built on old redlining maps
  ➢ Critics argued there would be overbuilding
  ➢ Proponents argued home owners weren’t mandated to split homes or property, and diversity in community is better anyway

Proposal #2:
ADU Setback Exemptions & Ownership (via special permits)

Proposal #2 Considerations

❖ Societal Impact
  ➢ Inclusivity, diversity but limited number of units
  ➢ Allows for ownership

❖ Environmental Impact
  ➢ Building on existing land for residence
  ➢ Higher density living: preserve farmland, discourage sprawl
  ➢ Utilize land already used for residential

❖ Economic Impact
  ➢ Upzoning (more supply, prices lower)
  ➢ Homeowners to make more money selling land (age in place)
  ➢ Setback exemption saves money bring ADU up to code
  ➢ Younger demographic boosts long term economy: expand tax base
  ➢ No town cost

❖ Feasibility
  ➢ Fear of ADUS but allows for ownership, neighbors can attend special permit meeting

Encourage residents to divide homes into housing units

- lack of a setback exemption may be the only thing in way of utilizing ADUs
- Restrictions on ADU placement kept landowners from building
- Brom in Seattle, Washington, Larsen family first in St. Paul, Minnesota
Proposal #3: Mixed-use Development with Affordable Housing Units at the Old Town Garage Site
Old Town
Garage Site

Proposal #3 Considerations

❖ Societal Impact
➢ Socioeconomic integration
➢ Community engagement/student interaction
➢ Welcomes minority groups

❖ Environmental Impact
➢ High density is better than sprawl
➢ Utilizes impervious surface for new housing, saving farmland

❖ Economic Impact
➢ Job opportunities/more customers
➢ Cost v. town revenue
➢ Potential high living cost
➢ High median area income, units not truly affordable

❖ Feasibility
➢ Dependent on funding, environmental parameters, citizen approval
Urban Land Institute Mixed-Use Development

- Three or more revenue-producing establishments (recreation, civic, cultural, etc.),
- Integration, density, and land use compatibility
- Walkability throughout the community

South Campus Gateway in Ohio

- 1997, Ohio State University’s board of trustees and the Columbus city council approved mixed-use development
- Promote redevelopment and revitalization
- 184 market-rate apartments, restaurants, office space...
- Surrounding landlords and property owners more willing to invest in housing options for potential tenants
- Larger study, still applicable
## Comparative SWOT Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No action</td>
<td>No cost to town No pushback Homeowners keep valuable land</td>
<td>Not sustainable No middle/lower income families Not necessarily preserve farmland</td>
<td>Reduce fear of changing image/unknowns</td>
<td>Economically unfavorable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proposal #1:</strong> Multiple family zoning (general residence) (cap at 3 + ADU= 4) via special permit</td>
<td>Integrated affordable housing Less land development No cost to town Steady income for retired residents High density housing</td>
<td>No guaranteed change May need supporting incentives Land owner pushback New units could become rentals</td>
<td>Promotes diversity Better community engagement Options for middle income families Use for second homes year round</td>
<td>Reluctance to change More Air BnB’s v. full time rentals Unwillingness to split homes Push back from town again Wealthier, large home owners opposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proposal #2:</strong> ADU exemption setback &amp; ownership capabilities (via special permit)</td>
<td>Housing for low income residents Integration with landowners Creates incentive for housing options No cost to town Small environmental impact Home ownership available Financially appeal to homeowners Steady income for retired residents</td>
<td>Relies on motivation of homeowners Limits high-density housing (2 per lot) Neighbors can prevent grant of permit Incentive may not be strong enough Citizen may not want to divide land</td>
<td>Increased socioeconomic diversity Increased racial diversity Appeals to younger demographic Population growth good for business Option for middle and lower income Utilize otherwise unused space/building Use for second homes lots year round</td>
<td>Opposition to waiving boundaries More Air BnB’s v. ADU ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proposal #3:</strong> Mixed-use development &amp; affordable housing units</td>
<td>Increases town center appeal Creates more jobs</td>
<td>Largest environmental impact Competing businesses Most expensive to build May be expensive for tenants Segregated section of town</td>
<td>Business opportunities Modeled to exemplify sustainability Student interactions Option for lower income</td>
<td>Environmental limits/parameters Rapid change may result in pushback Unlikely under 40B get another affordable housing unit so soon High median area income so units not truly affordable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Three Proposals: Feasibility & Goals

❖ Short Term Goal: Proposal #2
❖ Most Feasible
➢ Other two proposals were turned down previously
➢ Less drastic change
❖ Long Term Goal: Proposal #1
❖ Longer Term Goal: Proposal #3

Examine structure of open meeting versus town council
  ➢ "Consensus agenda" of Planning Board in 2019

Democracy: less direct but removes the "filibuster" of dissent of few

Council-oriented government system

Palmer, MA
  ➢ Population grew 6% to 12,497 residents in 2000
  ➢ Shift to Town Council-Town Manager from Open Town Meeting, Board of Selectmen, and Town Administrator
  ➢ Before: lack of productivity
  ➢ After: predicted to be more efficient
Recommendations for Williams College Based on History

❖ Berkshire Eagle from 2018 - Maynard Seider
  ➢ Williams College Slavery and Justice Committee similar to Brown University
    ■ Acknowledge historical ties with slavery
    ■ Address lasting racial inequality in policies
  ➢ Mass MoCA (& WCMA) permanent exhibits
❖ Examine building names on campus like Griffin Hall
  ➢ Yale University: Calhoun to Grace Hopper
❖ Increase diversity requirement
Recommendations for Williams College Based on History

❖ Rental units opened to staff
  ➢ Diverse staff members at Williams
  ➢ Historically connects to White Oaks, Colonial Village, Harry Logan's story
  ➢ Berea College in Kentucky

Recommendations: Based on Neighborhoods

**History**

**Spruces:** Monument and plaque honoring the history of the Spruces, Williamstown Historical Museum exhibit, video recording playing on a loop (Carol Zingareli)

**Colonial Village:** advocacy for H4944 bill, actively fight against racism

**Blackinton:** remember the importance of diversity in future decision making

**White Oaks:** recognize suffering and sacrifice, park/plaque/community building

Caution against dissenters to housing density changes due to "character of neighborhood"
Future Work Plan
(the next steps)

❖ Examine banking practices in town by interviewing the former Williamstown Banking President
  ➢ Redlining in Berkshire County investigation
  ➢ Frances Jones-Sneed study for banks on banking practices

❖ Find the Williams College 1964 Fair Housing Survey of Williamstown
  ➢ Reconduct the survey to see how attitudes have changed

❖ Continue to uncover the town's racial history
  ➢ Ex. Williamstown Historical Museum lecture series on the Chadwell family
  ➢ White Oaks and individual histories

❖ Pledge 36 & 37 of Planning Board (future planning)
  ➢ How to incentivize smart growth among residents?
Acknowledgements

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