

Redlining and Restrictive Covenants - Student Presentation

90 Minutes Total

5 Minutes – Introductions

5 minutes – Introduce Topic

Where do you Live? (Show Current Map of Omaha, Omaha Burke highlighted)

What if someone told you where you could or could not live?

Today we are going to talk about Redlining and Restrictive Covenants. Two policies which limited people of color to where they could live in Omaha and throughout the country.

Let's start by watching this video produced by National Public Radio

10 minutes – Omaha Redlining

Show Omaha map from 1935. Discuss what different colors meant.

In 1935 the Omaha Home Owner Loan Corporation created a map that designated neighborhoods red, yellow, blue, or green—with red corresponding to “high risk” and green corresponding to “low risk.”

In the redlined areas, people were refused a loan or insurance because they lived in an area deemed to be a poor financial risk. Most African Americans were only allowed to buy or rent in places in a small area around 24th Street and Lake Street and around 30th and Q Streets.

Show link to interactive Omaha redlining map. Zoom in to show clearer the areas of town affected.

What areas are you seeing?

25 minutes – Was North Omaha “Hazardous” at the time. No

Show 1 minute Street of Dreams clip of early North Omaha

Show slides from North 24th presentation showing what North Omaha looked like in 1958.

Slide #8 - However, despite being isolated – or because of it – Blacks flourished in North Omaha. They opened businesses in rented storefronts from Jewish building owners along North 24th, built churches and social halls, created their institutions, and soon flourished around Lake Street.

Slide #9 By 1920, the Near North Omaha neighborhood was home to an Old Colored Folks Home and the Colored YWCA sponsored a group of Black Red Cross nurses. African American families shopped in Black-owned businesses, attended Black churches, sent students to Black schools, and sent the dead to Black caretakers.

Slide #10 They also did business with whites and Jewish people, rented homes from white landlords, and were sometimes allowed to interact with white people in downtown Omaha, despite many businesses having signs in their windows reading “No Negroes Allowed.”

15 minutes – North Omaha Riots and North Omaha Freeway

Show Street of Dreams Riot Video – 1 minute.

Show North Omaha Freeway Video

Show Interactive Map of properties lost. – Historic Parcel, Redlining, Expressways, 1955 Imagery.

15 minutes – Move to the Suburbs – Restrictive Convents

Map showing growth of Omaha 1954 to 2010s

Why did people want to move to the suburbs? What made it affordable?

There were lots of people and a shortage of houses in the U.S. after WWII.

Many people associated urban life increasingly in negative ways: overcrowded, noisy, polluted, immoral, diseased, unsafe, too much concrete, too many “undesirable” people, etc.

The basic, general appeal of suburbia, then, was the possibility of living beyond the noise, pollution, overcrowding and disease of the city, while still close enough to enjoy the benefits of its industrial and cultural vitality.

Advertisers for suburban developments emphasized the green, open spaces of the suburbs and hinted buyers would find a sense of peace and tranquility unattainable in city life.

Restrictive Covenants. Show interactive map. Have students click on a property and find in the deed the restrictive covenant pertaining to the restriction of owning or selling to a racial minority group.

A restrictive covenant is a provision in a property deed that limits or “restricts” what the owner can do with the property. These covenants contained language that limited the ability to sell property to members of a racial minority group.

Bob Boozer Experience

Bob Boozer playing for the Chicago Bulls at the Civic Auditorium in Omaha, January 6, 1969. Omaha native & Omaha Tech basketball star Robert Louis "Bob" Boozer was an American professional basketball player in the National Basketball Association. He won a gold medal in the 1960 Summer Olympics and won an NBA Championship as a member of the Milwaukee Bucks in 1971. Omaha World-Herald Photo

In 1967, when Omaha native and NBA basketball star Bob Boozer found a big lot to build a home in Colonial Acres, just up the hill from Forest Lawn Cemetery, the developer refused to sell it to him. Thirty percent of the homeowners in Colonial Acres “strongly objected” to a Black man moving to their hill. They threatened to “wreck” the development if Boozer bought a lot. Boozer’s annual NBA salary exceeded the cost of new construction. “If I could become white overnight, any community in Omaha would welcome me with open arms,” Boozer said. Omaha World-Herald Photo

Fight for Fair Housing

The Citizens Coordinating Committee for Civil Liberties (4CL), according to World-Herald reports, demonstrated quietly in the Council chamber by holding signs asking for fair housing while helmeted police guarded the entrances to the enclosed area of the chamber. Omaha World-Herald Photo

Lines of Civil Rights demonstrators outside Omaha's old City Hall, 18th and Farnam Streets, in October 1963. Civil Rights demonstrators also lined the balconies of the old City Hall. The World-Herald reported 2,000 people attended; the Omaha Star said 4,000 plus.

State Sen Edward Danner testifies for the open housing law, June 6, 1967. The legislation was defeated 28-21. "Naturally this was a tremendous disappointment to the people of my district. But participating in irresponsible acts will not solve the problem." The legislature's only Black was confident some future Legislature, maybe the next one, would pass an open housing bill. Ran June 7, 1967. World-Herald News Service Photo

On July 17, 1969, Nebraska Legislature's lone black senator Edward Danner, finally captured his white whale — open housing. Lawmakers voted 38-6 to "prohibit discrimination in the sale, leasing, and rental of property because of race, color, religion or national origin." Open housing "won't erase all the scars of the past," Danner said, "but it may prevent further wounds."

15 Minutes - Fair Housing Passes. Do things change? How has Redlining affected the areas? What is Being Done Today?

Show 2.4 minute video Economic Effects on Redlining and Restrictive Covenants

Social Determinates of Health

Despite the Fair Housing Act of 1968 — which broadly prohibits discrimination in the sale or rental of housing —, the redlines drawn around Omaha continue to hold strong, leaving long-lasting effects on communities today.

What kind of problems can result from redlining and disinvestment in a neighborhood? Healthy Food Deserts. Education. Health.

Show slide Asarco Plant

Lead Poisoning in Soil

Show slide Safeway at 24th and Lake.

Healthy Food Deserts. Safeway opened at 24th and Lake. Opened in 1964. Closed in 1968. The nearest grocery stores are miles away. Chubb Foods 16th and Locust. Aldi – 30th and Sorensen.

Show slide Differences in White and Black Wealth

Did not have the benefit of the generational wealth created by home ownership and business ownership.

Whites have 8x more wealth than African Americans.

Richard Rothstein author of Color of Law said that enormous disparity is entirely attributable to an unconstitutional federal housing policy that was practiced in the mid-20th century and that's never been remedied.

How Are People Working to Revitalize North Omaha Today?

- 24th and Lake Development
- Front Porch Investments Greenlining Fund
- Carver Legacy Center, an innovative collaborative partnership will once again bring a financial center back to Historic 24th and Lake Streets. The goal is to increase access to credit, capital, and loans for African Americans and North Omaha residents. Focus on business and home loans
- Omaha 360
- North Omaha Trail and Community Gardens

5 Minutes - Additional Resources and Close