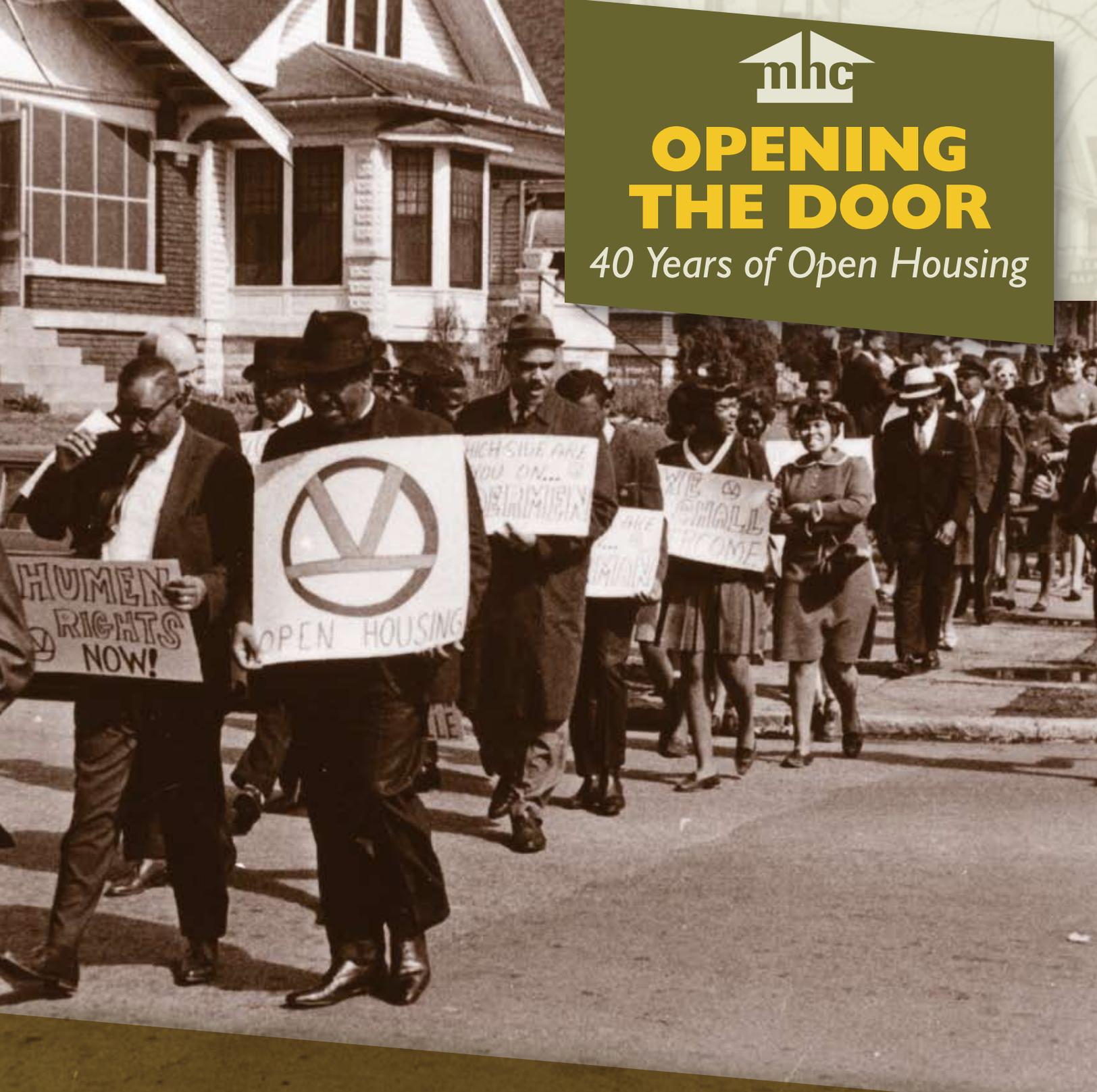




OPENING THE DOOR

40 Years of Open Housing



Just forty years ago,

many Louisville residents opposed the basic notion that African American citizens have the right to rent or own a home anywhere in the city. Like many cities at that time, Louisville's laws overtly supported racial inequality. In response, a courageous group of citizens banded together and sustained a successful movement for citywide integration. Their battle was hard-fought. This issue paper traces the history of that movement, examines housing patterns since 1960, and identifies factors that contribute to residential segregation in Louisville Metro today.

A MOVEMENT BEGINS

In May 1963, while Louisville celebrated the adoption of its open accommodations ordinance, protecting African Americans from discrimination in public places such as restaurants and lunch counters, civil rights advocates turned their focus to residential segregation. It would take four years, countless hours of negotiation and organization, public debate and education, mass marches and arrests, and political campaigning and pressure, to pass an open housing ordinance.

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By the mid-1960s, as urban renewal programs displaced African Americans, discrimination and resistance to the integration of other areas of the city limited them to the west end. Real-estate agents then used scare tactics to panic white owners and inspire flight out of the area. The west end was thus becoming simultaneously over-crowded and hyper-segregated.

NOT FOR SALE

Led by labor and civil rights activist Anne Braden, a group of area residents committed to creating an integrated neighborhood in the west end formed the West End Community Council (WECC). This group dedicated themselves to welcoming black newcomers and discouraging white flight. Members went door-to-door to talk to homeowners about the value of an integrated neighborhood and sponsored get acquainted block-meetings and arts events. Their most visible project was distributing yard signs that declared “Not For Sale” or “I’m Not Moving” to discourage block-busting and panic-selling.

“There was a neighborhood association here and the reason for the association was to keep black people out.... They wanted to make sure that black people didn’t buy [my house] and they wanted my permission for the association to buy the house. I just refused. I said as far as I’m concerned anybody has the right to live wherever they want to live... so when people started moving out around here, I and my family doctor, Dr. George Kimbrough, he was on the Council too, we organized a drive to urge people to stay. We made signs and asked people if they would put one in their yards.”

— Norman Logsdon

WECC members believed that as long as African Americans did not have the option of living elsewhere in the city, the west end would be destined to become an all-black “ghetto.” If they wanted to keep their neighborhood integrated, the whole city needed to be open to African Americans. To accomplish that, they needed an open housing law.

Meanwhile, other organizations began to press for a city policy guaranteeing equal access to housing. In 1965, the Human Relations Commission tried to secure such a policy, but succeeded only in getting the professional associations involved in real estate to sign a statement of principles on “freedom of occupancy”. Immediately, civil rights leaders recognized the weakness of this code of ethics and called for a strong, enforceable law. In September 1966, a coalition of the NAACP, Kentucky Christian Leadership Conference (KCLC) and WECC—the core of the new Committee on Open Housing—proposed such an ordinance.

AND SO THEY MARCHED

By early 1967, however, it was clear that city leaders, particularly the Board of Aldermen, were setting up obstacles to the enactment of an open housing law. In response, the Committee on Open Housing, with help from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, threatened and then launched the first open housing demonstrations. A wave of nearly daily marches and rallies began on March 7, when ninety-five people marched to Mayor Kenneth Schmied’s furniture store. The first violence came during a sit-in of sixty-five at a Board of Aldermen meeting on March 14, when police cleared out the chamber by pushing and pulling demonstrators down the stairs and into the street.

Throughout the rest of March, demonstrations continued, combining city hall picketing, rallies, prayer vigils, and marches into the south end, an area that was both affordable for

moderate income black home-seekers and the source of the most vocal white opposition to “forced housing.” Soon marchers faced hecklers who threw rocks and eggs, foreshadowing more violent confrontations to come.

While demonstrations and confrontations raged in the south end, Louisvillians debated the merits of an open housing law. The first sign of mass opposition came in February when the Board of Aldermen sponsored a public forum on the issue at Southern High School. Over one thousand people showed up and jeered the ten individuals who testified in favor of the ordinance. Other forums were hastily canceled due to the disorder, but opponents formed the Concerned Citizens Committee to continue to fight the law.



Meanwhile, a trickle and then a flood of white and biracial organizations endorsed open housing and began calling for both a law and the protection of the demonstrators. By the time the Board of Aldermen took action on the proposed ordinance, more than fifty organizations had gone on record supporting “some form of effective open housing ordinance.”

LOUISVILLE'S NUMBER ONE MORAL ISSUE

Clergy and religious organizations were particularly involved in the drive for open housing. The Louisville Area Council on Religion and Race (LACRR) promoted open housing through its public forums and through mass gatherings at the Jefferson County Courthouse. At the first such rally, about five hundred people heard both black and white ministers declare that open housing was the “number one moral issue” facing the community.

Social justice and equal opportunity for all people are fundamental in the teaching of our Judeo-Christian and American Democratic heritage.... We cannot consistently affirm the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men and yet deny fellow citizens the same rights which we would affirm for ourselves.

— LACRR, 1967

Individual ministers also played prominent roles in the public leadership of the movement. The Committee on Open Housing leadership included Reverends Fred Sampson, A. D. King, and W. J. Hodge, for example. Other ministers, such as Charles Tachau and Tom Moffett, led demonstrations; the Episcopal Archbishop Gresham Marmion worked behind the scenes to garner support from prominent businessmen, and seminary professor Hal Warheim influenced public opinion through radio and television programs. Several observers noted the high participation of white citizens in the Louisville open housing struggle, compared to other cities. One participant attributed this difference almost completely to the role of the churches.

Despite growing biracial support, in early April 1967, the Board of Aldermen

“They had all these Ku Klux Klan signs up across the street when we got out over there by Iroquois Park. Looked like thousands of people. And they were holding up signs and they were yelling and calling names and all of that. It was pretty scary. There were plenty of police cars out there and police wagons. Police wagons ready to take people in. I had never seen anything like that.”

— Ruth Bryant

rejected the proposed open housing ordinance. Immediately after the vote, Reverend A. D. King left the Aldermanic chambers and addressed the crowd of about three hundred, who were waiting for news outside city hall. He announced the result and then called for a march through downtown, which became a two-hour series of parades and sit-ins around city hall and the police station.

For the rest of April, movement leaders held rallies and marches into the south end of the city nearly every day. Marchers met at area churches for mass meetings, then rode in buses, enclosed trucks, and private cars to white south end neighborhoods. Quickly, open housing opponents learned to anticipate the marches and gathered sometimes hours in advance of marches, greeting open housing advocates with storms of rocks, bottles, eggs, and even firecrackers.

As Derby approached, activists began to formulate strategies to delay people

“...They were nasty and they were also dangerous. One night I was marching in back of Martin Luther King, who was hit in the face with a rock. A young, to-be mother was marching to my side and she was hit with a slab of concrete, there were cherry bombs exploding around. . . they were shooting off revolvers, it was spooky.”

— Hal Warheim

from reaching Churchill Downs, to disrupt events, and even to stop the main race. These threats caused the city to cancel the Pegasus Parade. During one of the races in the days leading up to Derby, five young men managed to get onto the track and run in front of the horses. They were caught and arrested, but the incident raised fears of similar hijinx at the Derby itself and the Mayor asked the Governor to increase National Guard presence at Churchill Downs. Officials of the Ku Klux Klan offered to attend in their regalia and help the police to keep order.

VOTING FOR CHANGE

The morning of the Derby, Martin Luther King, Jr. announced that there would be no demonstrations as an act of good faith and a show that protesters were not seeking disruption for its own sake. King included a pledge to redouble efforts in the coming weeks, and his lieutenant, Hosea Williams, declared, “We’ve got to change something in this town. Derby or no Derby, there’s going to be some hell in Louisville until a housing bill is passed.”

Movement leaders, faced with escalating violence, cancelled demonstrations and focused on voter registration. The All Citizens Non-Partisan Voter Registration Crusade led the drive, which was kicked off by a rally at which Martin Luther King, Jr. urged eight hundred people at Green Street Baptist to “vote baby vote” instead of “burn baby burn.” In the fall of 1967, black leaders endorsed the full Democratic slate after a survey revealed that a majority of candidates would consider taking positive action on open housing. The vote was close, but the Republican Board was defeated. A majority on the new Democratic board favored an ordinance. Mayor Schmied changed his position and asked the Board to pass a “meaningful measure.” The Human Relations Commission quickly prepared a new draft ordinance and on December 13, 1967, the Board passed an open housing law by a vote of nine to three. Louisville became the first city in the South to pass an open housing law.

Housing Patterns in Louisville Metro 1960-2000

Today open housing laws in Louisville Metro protect anyone that seeks to rent, buy, or finance housing on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, familial status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity.

So, how far have we come since the fight for open housing began? The data on racial segregation tells us that:

- ▶ Louisville's overall level of residential segregation has steadily declined since open housing, but the city remains highly segregated¹;
- ▶ In 2000, Louisville ranked 75th of 100 cities for racial segregation, with a rank of 1 being the least segregated².
- ▶ In 2000, Louisville ranked 9th among fifteen peer cities in a comparison of racial segregation³.

Like the nation, Louisville Metro has become more racially and ethnically diverse over the past four decades, yet remains very much segregated by race. In 1960, there were 78,000 African American residents in Louisville, which constituted 13 percent of its population. By 2000, the African American population had increased to 131,000 or 19 percent. Yet, there are very few Louisville neighborhoods that reflect a proportional distribution of white and African American community members.

In 1960, 414,000 white residents (78 percent) of Louisville/Jefferson County lived in tracts with less than a 5 percent African American population. Today, more than 260,000 white residents (49 percent) still live in census tracts with an African American population of less than 5 percent. Today, 52,000 African Americans

(40 percent) live in census tracts that are more than 80 percent African American. In 1960, 40,000 African Americans (51 percent) in Louisville Metro lived in tracts that were more than 80 percent African American. Although the percentage of African Americans living in highly segregated neighborhoods has decreased, the actual number has increased, giving sad irony to data on improved conditions.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau.

² U.S. Census Bureau. Analysis by Kentucky Population Research, University of Louisville. Comparison based on the Dissimilarity Index which compares the spatial distributions of different groups among units in a metropolitan area. Here, the comparison groups are African American and white residents. Segregation is the smallest when majority and minority populations are evenly distributed. The index ranges from 0.0 (complete integration) to 1.0 (complete segregation). Ranking based on the largest 100 U.S. cities, based on population.

³ U.S. Census Bureau. Comparison based on core counties for fifteen peer cities (including Louisville) as defined by Dr. Paul Coomes, University of Louisville.

Distribution of White and African American Population, by Racial Composition of Census Tract, 2000

Tract % African American	Whites	Proportion of Whites	African Americans	Proportion of African Americans	Number of tracts
1-4.99%	264,448	49.27%	7,895	6.03%	68
5-9.99%	140,574	26.19%	11,137	8.51%	35
10-24.99%	87,748	16.35%	17,671	13.50%	25
25-49.99%	26,636	4.96%	17,088	13.05%	13
50-79.99%	14,270	2.66%	25,059	19.14%	11
80-94.99%	2,582	0.48%	26,559	20.29%	8
95-98%	463	0.09%	25,519	19.49%	10
Total	536,721		130,928		170

1963

Louisville adopts open accommodation ordinance, making it illegal to discriminate in public accommodations such as hotels.

1963

West End Community Council (WECC) is formed.

Sept. 1966

Committee on Open Housing proposes open housing ordinance.

March 1967

First open housing demonstrations held.

Early 1960's

Some Louisville real estate agents use scare tactics to panic white owners and inspire "white flight".

1965

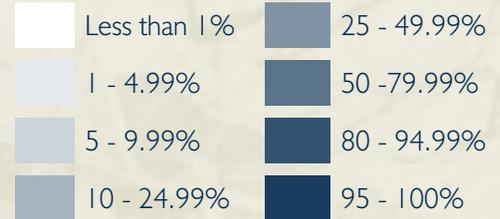
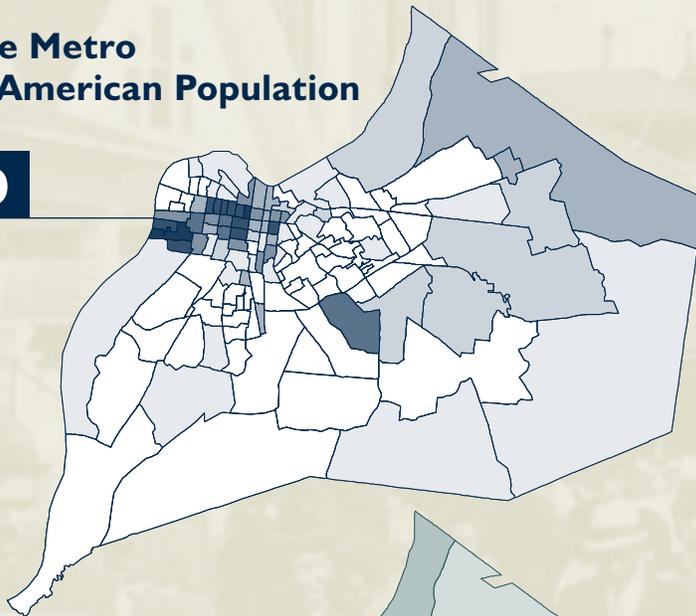
Louisville Human Relations Commission secures unenforceable open housing code of ethics.

Feb. 1967

Public forum at Southern High School held where 1,000 heckle supporters of open housing.

Louisville Metro African American Population

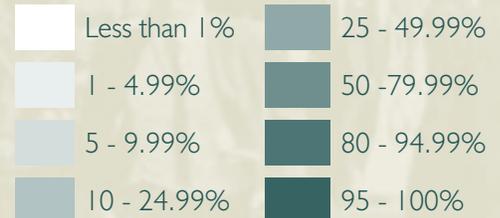
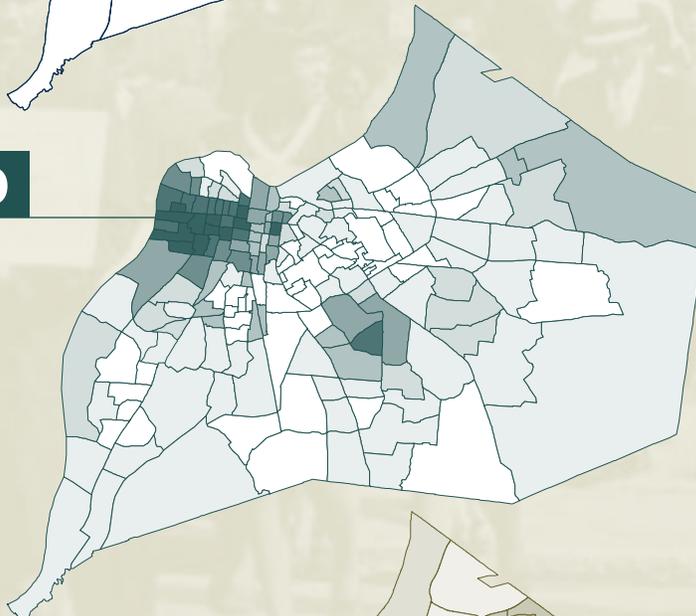
1960



POPULATION

White	532,000
African American	78,000
Other	500

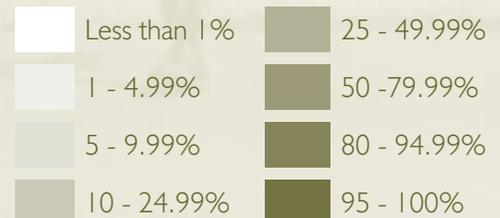
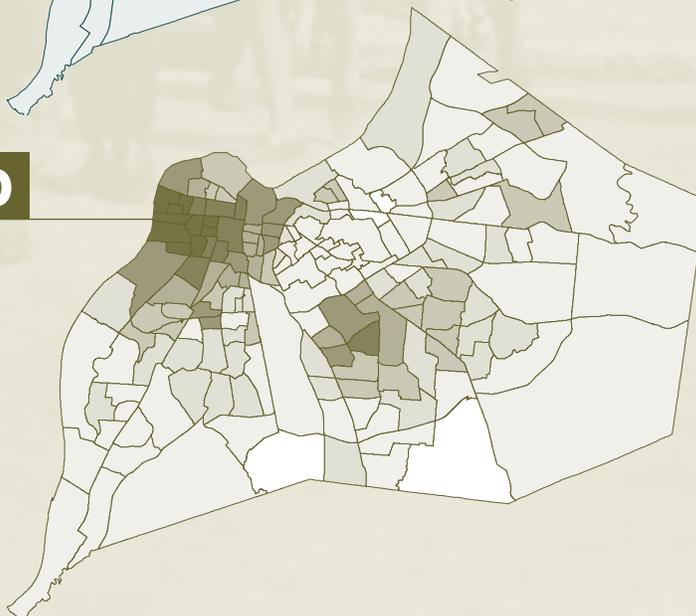
1980



POPULATION

White	570,000
African American	110,000
Other	5,700

2000



POPULATION

White	537,000
African American	131,000
Other	26,000

The 2000 map shows that a medium tint represents 10 – 24.99% African American population. Because the 2000 African American population was 19 percent, an integrated city would be reflected in a map with predominately medium tinted shading. Instead, just 25 of the 170 census tracts fall into the 10 – 24.99% category.

Spring 1967

Louisville Area Council on Religion and Race holds open housing rallies.

Summer 1967

Martin Luther King, Jr. speaks in Louisville to crowd of 800 about voting for leaders who will support open housing.

Dec. 1967

Louisville becomes the first city in the South to pass an open housing law.

Spring 1967

Open housing opponents form Concerned Citizens Committee.

April 1967

Board of Aldermen fail to pass open housing law for second time.

Nov. 1967

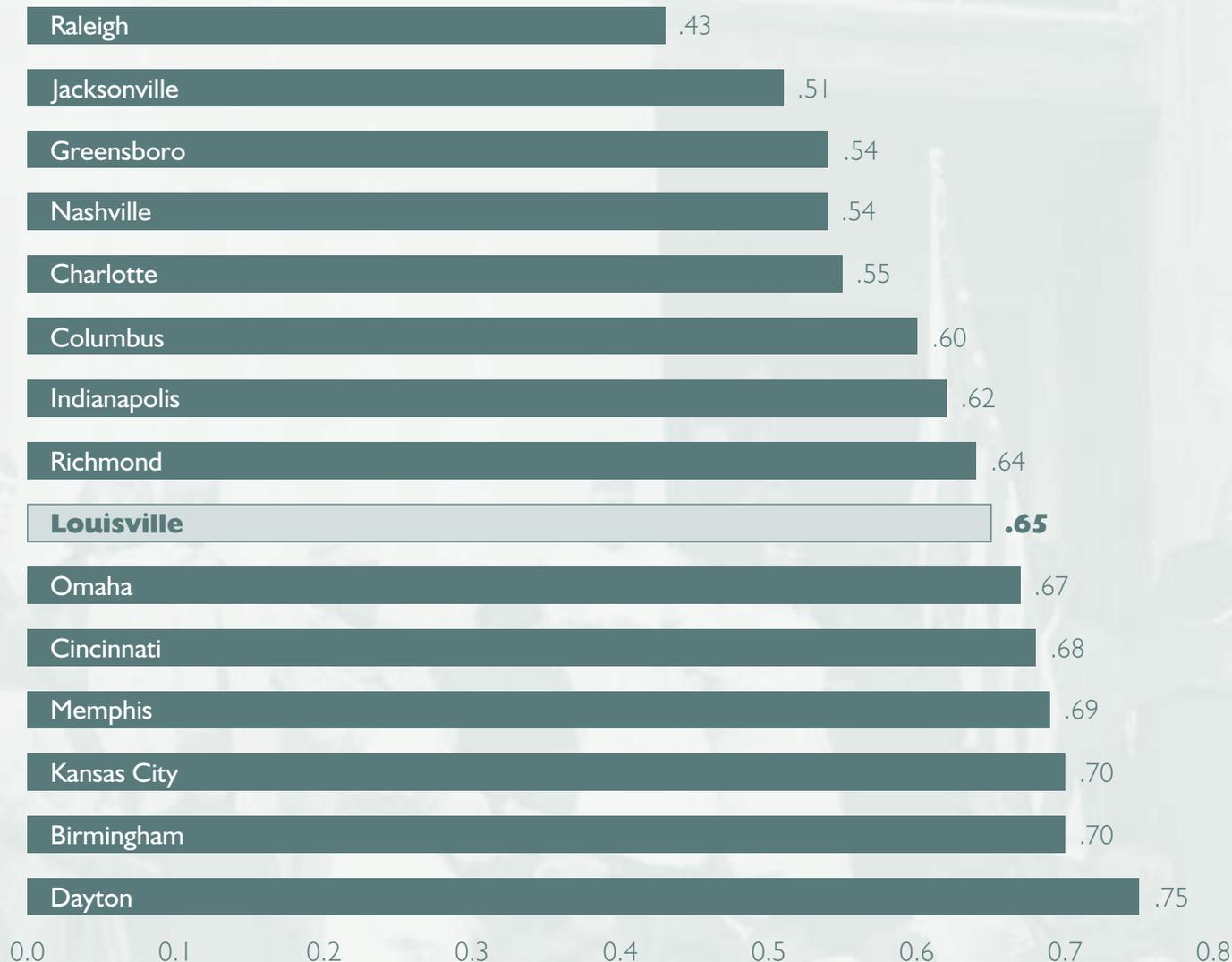
Newly elected Board of Aldermen takes office

March 1968

Kentucky passes state open housing law.

Open Housing Today: Persistent Segregation and our Community's Response

PEER CITY COMPARISON OF HOUSING SEGREGATION, 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Analysis by Kentucky Population Research, University of Louisville

Note: The dissimilarity index that measures residential segregation ranges from 0.0 (complete integration) to 1.0 (complete segregation). Louisville Metro ranked 9th out of 15 peer cities in 2000, with a dissimilarity index of .65, an improvement from 1980, when Louisville ranked 12th out of the 15 peer cities.

While Louisville has made strides in becoming more integrated, the fact remains that almost half of Louisville residents (45 percent) live in extreme racial segregation. After forty years of open housing, why are we still so isolated from one another? And more importantly, what steps can our com-

munity take to build a more integrated city?

The legacy of federal, state, and local exclusionary laws and practices such as restrictive covenants, redlining, and panic selling are reflected in the persistent segregation in Louisville Metro.

According to Gary Orfield, co-director of the Harvard University Civil Rights Project, "The trends in the 2000 census should be taken as a warning that our historic problem of black exclusion is taking on new and complex dimensions."

■ Continued on next page



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While some segregation can be linked to individual attitudes toward living near persons of other races or personal preference, extensive studies confirm that actual levels of segregation are far greater than would be expected if this type of “self-segregation” were the defining factor in segregation. Other factors that impact segregation levels include affordability, NIMBYism, and planning and zoning restrictions. Communities, therefore, can respond to the historic upswing in integration with affordable housing planning or they can build in barriers to integration.

Affordability **Ruling out affordable housing options can rule out integration.**

Housing is affordable if a household pays no more than 30% of its income on rent or mortgage and utilities combined. If a family cannot afford housing in a neighborhood, that family is ef-

fectively shut out of the neighborhood, and thus shut out of the economic and social opportunities that are linked to that neighborhood. Supporting non-profit housing development throughout the city ensures that some families with incomes below 80% of median (\$46,560 for a household of four) have neighborhood options.

NIMBYism **Ruling out affordable housing development in a neighborhood can rule out integration.**

When neighborhood residents oppose planning or zoning that would provide affordable housing options close to where they live, the term NIMBY or “Not In My Back Yard” applies. Often, opponents of affordable housing incentives or options refer to “Section 8” participants as undesirable. The effect of NIMBYism has a disproportionate impact on African Americans in Louisville Metro given that

73 percent of residents using the housing voucher program (formerly Section 8) are African American.

Zoning **Ruling out affordable housing through zoning or planning regulations can rule out integration.**

In the 1960s, the work of the open housing movement focused on discriminatory housing regulations and practices. Today, our community’s work must also recognize that race-neutral zoning and planning regulations may have the effect of excluding many African American families from neighborhoods. Minimum lot sizes in new developments can exclude affordable housing, as can restrictions on building multi-family housing units. While the Alternative Development Incentive section of the Louisville Metro Land Development Code gives private developers flexibility to build housing at different price points, its effectiveness has been undercut by burdensome restrictions.



Metropolitan Housing Coalition
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Louisville, KY 40204-4533

The Metropolitan Housing Coalition is comprised of over 170 member organizations to advocate for fair, decent and affordable housing for all people in the metropolitan region.

Please call 584-6858 for membership information.

www.metropolitanhousing.org

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Recommendations

Implement the Comprehensive Housing Strategy for Louisville Metro.

The Mayor has developed an overall housing strategy for the future.

- ▶ Further develop and implement the Open Housing elements of the plan; and
- ▶ Create a **Local Affordable Housing Trust Fund** as a useful tool to provide choice throughout Louisville Metro. The AHTF would have a dedicated renewable source of income that serves households with incomes below 50% of median and focuses on those below 30% of median income.

Review of Section 8 and public housing placement. Seventy-five percent of households served by these programs are headed by African Americans. Any policy affecting these programs directly promotes or prohibits Open Housing. We should closely monitor the locations of replacement public housing sites to ensure desegregation and encourage policies that support integration of Section 8 participants.

YES, In My Back Yard. Louisville leaders should actively promote Open Housing through a YIMBY campaign of education and public service announcements.

Examine the Land Development Code, neighborhood plans and subdivision regulations for impact on segregation. The past has taught us that passivity does not combat a history of aggressive segregation. Regulatory requirements may have unintended consequences that effectively prohibit Open Housing.

Actively Plan for Open Housing- by race, color, sex, age, national origin, familial status and disability. The changing demographics of Louisville show a rise in female- headed households with children, an increase in the aging population and an influx of immigrants adding to our economic base. Only by planning for the integration of these populations will we provide meaningful choice to all Louisvillians.

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