Roots of Urban Decay: Race, Urban Renewal, and Suburbanization in Youngstown, Ohio, 1950-1977

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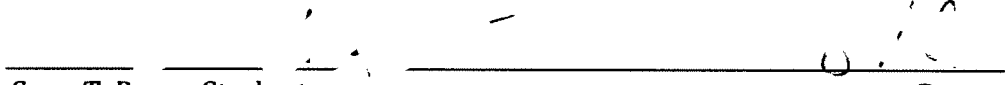
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Abstract

After a half a century of seemingly inexorable urbanization, the post-war era

in America saw a steady decline of cities. For older industrial areas like Youngstown,

Ohio, decay in the decades following World War Two proved to be particularly

extreme. After reaching a height of 170,000 in 1930, the city's population declined

to 139,000 by 1970. In the ensuing decades after the war, the shift of the population

to the outlying areas and growing racial conflicts and inner city problems

proliferated in a city trying to counter a shrinking population and tax base

The purpose of this study is to determine how and why the roots of Youngstown's

eventual urban collapse grew. To determine the roots of urban decay in the city, this

thesis moves beyond the study and analysis of the closure of the city's steel mills in

the late 1970s and early 1980s. By analyzing populations and demographics, retail

shifts, racial conflict, African American self-empowerment, and the effects of urban

renewal in the period between roughly 1950 and 1977, this thesis seeks to explain

the problems that led to the Youngstown area's fragmentation.

Chapter one analyzes Youngstown's population stagnation at the beginning

of the 1950s, early suburbanization and the growth of retail in outlying areas.

Chapter two examines the cities response to decline in urban renewal campaigns

and the unintended consequences they had on concentrations of poverty. Chapter

three focuses on white flight in the 1960s and the eclipsing of retail in Youngstown

by huge shopping centers in the suburbs. Chapter four examines the impact of

segregation in the city—especially in regards to education and neighborhood decay.

Chapter five deals with the problems of inner city joblessness, concentrated poverty, and the first Youngstown race riot in 1968. Chapter six is about the second riot to hit Youngstown in 1969 and the rise of the Black Power movement in the city. The conclusion closes the thesis by examining the eroding position of the city vis-a-vie the suburbs in the first half of the 1970s, and of the failed attempts at regionalization and metropolitan governance. In conclusion: racial problems, suburbanization, failed urban renewal campaigns, and a decline in employment opportunities in the inner city in the 1960s all contributed to the early decline of Youngstown years before the first steel mill in the are actually closed.

Introduction

The first half of the twentieth century saw a seemingly inexorable urbanization of the United States. By 1920, for the first time, more people lived in cities than in rural areas. The industrialization of the United States and the creation of what became the world's largest manufacturing base in particular fueled urbanization, especially in the East and the Midwest. Youngstown, Ohio was a prime example of this development. The population of the city rose from 33,000 in 1890 to 170,000 in1930. Steel mills sprouted up along the banks of the Mahoning River, which snakes through the city: Republic Steel, the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company, United States Steel, and Sharon Steel all had plants in the Youngstown area. Thousands of immigrants from across Europe—as well African Americans coming up from the south as part of the "Great Migration"—settled in the area and found work in the local mills. By the early 1940s, after decades of labor battles, the Youngstown steel industry became unionized. By the time the Second World War ended in 1945, industrial cities like Youngstown enjoyed a high standard of living and a seemingly bright future.

The post-war era proved to be a time of decline for American cities. Older industrial cities in particular faced issues. Many plunged into a series of socioeconomic issues dubbed the "urban crisis." Youngstown, Ohio is a particularly noted case of the latter development and an extreme case of urban collapse. Most academic studies of Youngstown focus on some aspect of the city's industrial history, working class culture, or manufacturing economy. This study will instead focus on aspects of the origins of the areas main divisions brought about by race,

urban renewal, suburbanization, and inner city poverty in the years between roughly 1950 and 1977—the year the first steel mill in the Mahoning Valley closed.

First, this thesis will look at the early suburbanization of the area in the 1950s. The transition of the most rural townships and small cities to growing residential enclaves and the early growth of retail options at the fringes of the city and in the suburbs will be included. This chapter explores the first shift in population and retail tax base to growing townships around the city like Austintown, Liberty, and particularly Boardman, Ohio. The importance of the growth of suburbs and consumer amenities in the 1950s became even more crucial to the city of Youngstown's future during the tumultuous decade of the 1960s.

Like many cities experiencing population loss in the mid-twentieth century, Youngstown turned to urban renewal as a revitalization tool. The various urban renewal schemes put forth by the city will be examined through newspaper, accounts, oral histories, and in the cities own reports. In particular, the creation of the I-680 expressway system around the city will be detailed, as well as the crippling and outright destruction of neighborhoods and the dislocating of African American populations. In particular the isolating of African Americans would have a direct effect on the concentration of poverty on the city's south and east sides.

Much of the scholarship about Youngstown's post-war history does not go into detail about the importance of the 1960s. This thesis argues that the city's fortunes declined dramatically by 1977—the year The Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company closed its works in nearby Campbell, Ohio. Nearly 27,000 people left the city during the decade. By the beginning of the 1970s, modern shopping malls in

Boardman and nearby Niles, Ohio represented the new options for consumption available outside of the city. This study will show that not only was population shifting away from the city during the 1960s, but also that Mahoning County, minus Youngstown, was becoming the main center of retail.

Only one published study, *Steeltown U.S.A*, addresses the African American community of Youngstown in any way. However, even then, the authors do not look at the African American community's response to redlining, urban renewal (dubbed "Negro Removal" for its effects on primarily African American neighborhoods) inner city decay and suburbanization. The fourth chapter details the effects of segregation in neighborhoods and in the school system and its impact on the African American community. Chapter five addresses the decline in inner city employment and the growth of concentrations of poverty, and their connections to the 1968 riot on the south side. As concentrated poverty grew in the south and east sides of city—much of it due to segregation, urban renewal, and tax base erosion—urban uprisings follow.

Youngstown's second race riot in 1969, as well as the Black Power movement and black responses to urban inequity, is covered in chapter six. Far from being a population that was solely acted upon, the black community fiercely resisted being marginalized as the city declined during the 1960s and into the 1970s. In particular, Ron Daniels—one of Youngstown's most able activists—and the "Freedom Inc." movement helped to empower the black community so it could supply its own needs—outside of the white power structure of the city and suburbs that proved unwilling to listen to their demands.

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The often forgotten riots of 1968 and 1969 are presented here as warning signs from inner city. Chapters four, five and six in particular pay attention to the micro-level changes going on in parts of the lower east side and the lower south side, especially in the neighborhoods bordering Hillman Street. The Hillman area provides a micro look at neighborhood deterioration that lurked behind the chaos that erupted in that neighborhood at the end of the 1960s. Aside from Joe Kusluch's paper *Youngstown's Stability Through Deindustrialization*, no academic study has examined neighborhood and block level changes in the city. Unlike Kusluch's paper, this study examines the spread of blight and neighborhood decay in the years previous to 1977. By doing so, an accurate picture of the decline of the Youngstown's neighborhoods surrounding Hillman and Oak Hill can neighborhoods can be advanced—for the collapse of this neighborhood portended the collapse of other neighborhoods—particularly in the city's south and east side—where white flight and concentrated poverty were the worst.

The mid-1970s acts as an ending point for this paper because this study aims to show the major problems in the Youngstown area prior to the era of the steel mill closings—roughly from 1977-1984. The fragmentation of the metropolitan area prior to this date was already severely weakening the city's residential tax base, home values, retail business sectors, neighborhoods, and minority groups. The city of Youngstown faced an encirclement of growing and prosperous suburban areas that were hostile or completely indifferent at best, to the city's mounting problems. At the forefront of that hostility was the issue of race and neighborhood change in Youngstown.

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A large number of secondary and primary sources are used in this thesis. Secondary literature places Youngstown in the context of post-war change in a variety of contexts. Statistical information and figures are also presented from primary sources including the U.S. Census, City and County Data Books, and local governmental reports and publications. Newspaper accounts and oral histories are used to provide background and bolster the historical narrative.

Chapter 1

The New Frontier

At the end of World War Two, American industrial cities formed the epicenter of a manufacturing base without parallel in history. With Europe and Japan a smoking ruin, cities like Detroit, Michigan—the "Arsenal of Democracy"—Gary, Indiana, St. Louis, Missouri, Akron, Ohio, and others served as a potent reminder of not only America's economic power, but of the power of its workers. American blue collar and working men returned home from the war with a justifiable optimism about their place in the United States, and their share in the burgeoning economic prosperity that was unfolding. This meant the staples of the so-called "American Dream." The new and affordable world of the automobile was coming. Jobs paying a living wage with benefits as unionization were about to reach their peak; and home ownership levels were rising.

In many ways, the city of Youngstown symbolized the successful, mid-sized American industrial city in the mid-twentieth century. In 1890, Youngstown was a modestly sized city of 33,000; by 1930, the area was firmly positioned as one of America's steel centers with a population of 170,000.[1] By the early 1940s, after decades of brutal labor battles, Youngstown's steel mills were effectively unionized by the United Steelworkers of America.

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[1] In 1916, the district of Youngstown was the second largest steel producer in America. It had slipped to number four by 1950. See Pace and Associates, *Comprehensive City Plan—Report Number Two: "The Economy of Youngstown"* (Chicago, Illinois: June, 1951), 18.

Additionally, in the early part of the 1930s, Youngstown ranked fifth in terms of home ownership.[2] That statistic, which was widely pushed by the Chamber of Commerce, couldn't hide the fact that Youngstown suffered from a severe housing shortage. Both rental and private residences were scare. A local governmental referred to the problem as "a housing shortage of unprecedented proportions."[3] In fact, during the period between 1940 and 1950, Youngstown found itself the only major city, with a population larger than 100,000, on the western side of the Alleghany Mountains to lose population.[4]
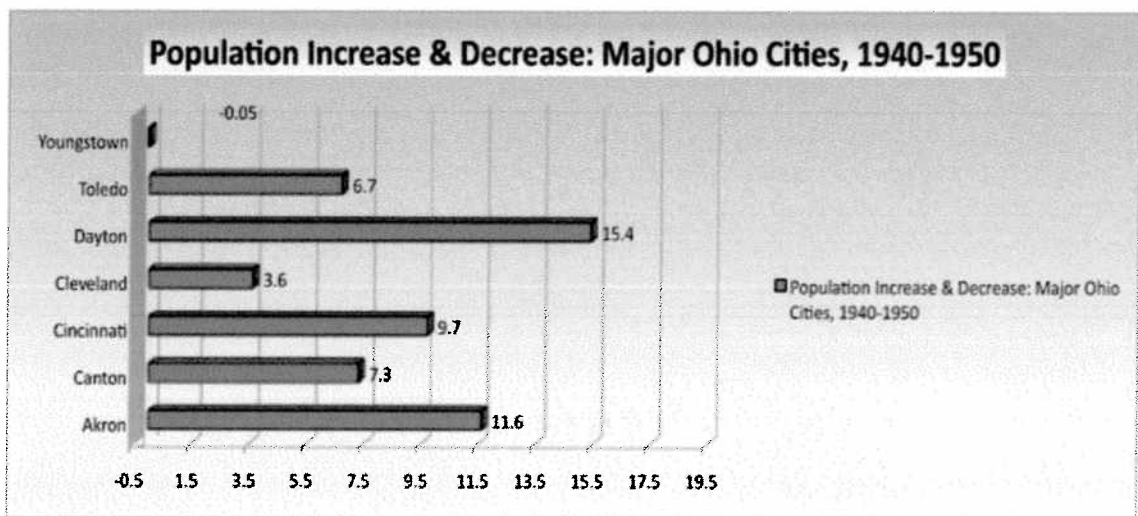
Population Increase & Decrease: Major Ohio Cities, 1940-1950

City	Value
Youngstown	-0.05
Toledo	6.7
Dayton	15.4
Cleveland	3.6
Cincinnati	9.7
Canton	7.3
Akron	11.6

☐ Population Increase & Decrease: Major Ohio Cities, 1940-1950

Chart 1.1

Source: Pace and Associates, "The Economy of Youngstown," 10.

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[2] *Youngstown: The City of Homes*, brochure, ca. 1931

[3] Youngstown Metropolitan Housing Authority, *Postwar Improvements Proposed Program of Public Housing for Low Income Families in Youngstown*, 9; also, Sean T. Posey, "Crossing to Westlake Terrace: Public Housing in Youngstown, Ohio" (seminar paper, Youngstown State University, 2010), 6.

[4] Pace and Associates, "The Economy of Youngstown" P.10.

In the decade after the Great Depression, American cities, for the most part, were still growing. Youngstown's very early stagnation represented the beginning of a worrying trend, especially for the city itself but also for cities in general: suburbanization. American suburbanization is not a post-war phenomenon. Nor has the growth of outlying areas been a recent occurrence in Ohio history. During much of the nineteenth century, quite in contrast to today, suburbs carried the stigma of poverty and licentiousness.[5] By the beginning of the century, that had changed. In Ohio, at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, there already existed over 784 different municipalities. For quite unlike the European experience, the comparatively low bar set by most U.S. States allowed for the proliferation of municipalities. In the Youngstown area, this included the small suburbs of Liberty Township, Austintown, Canfield, and Boardman—many of which had been in existence since the late eighteenth century—were poised for growth by the 1950s with combination of a housing shortage in the city and government programs that essentially promoted suburban growth.

As part of its multi-volume examination of the socio/economic development commissioned by the city, Pace and Associates Group sought to explain Youngstown's population loss: "It is quite clear that many persons leaving Youngstown have moved to the suburbs, just outside the city limits."[6] Unlike the city, suburban Boardman, Canfield, and Poland, gained population during the decade

[5] Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 140.

[6] Pace and Associates, "The Economy of Youngstown" P.12.

of the 1940s.[7] Austintown gained 4,300 people during the 1940s, bringing its

population to 10,000. Boardman Township's population increased to 13,600,

making it larger than the nearby industrial city of Campbell. The years 1949-1954

witnessed the construction of 2,000 homes in Boardman Township with 7,000

people immigrating into the township, all this in an area that was mostly farm land

just a decade earlier.[8] By the mid-1950s, suburban growth was already proving to

be a major challenge for the city.

Growing divisions within the metropolitan area, in many ways, mirrored the

divisions in the city prior to World War II. In what might be called an "inner

suburbanization," class and racial divisions resulted in stark boundaries within the

city limits. The moneyed and upper classes dominated the north side. Youngstown's

fifth ward, solidly Republican, belied the Democratic establishment that dominated

much of the city. The inner city neighborhoods, especially on the south and east side,

were primarily African American—largely as the result of red lining. A primary fear

within the city was that internal divisions might be exported to the outlying areas,

where they would pit the city against the surrounding townships and villages. A

local city report echoed this concern: "As long as suburbanization took place within

our city proper there would be resulting problems, but they appeared to be solvable

within the existing framework."[9] The idea that divisions between city and suburb

could possibly be unsolvable proved a justifiable anxiety. Nowhere was this more

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[7] Pace and Associates, *Comprehensive City Plan—Report Number Two: "The People of Youngstown"* (Chicago, Illinois: January, 1951), 24.

[8] "50s Were Boom Years In More Ways Than One," *Vindicator*, July 4, 1999. P. A1.

[9] The City of Youngstown, *One Hundred Ways to View Our City*

apparent than in the threats of annexation and battles over water, which defined

much of the early animosity between Youngstown and its neighbors.

The last major annexation undertaken by Youngstown took place in 1929, when the

city acquired 8.29 square miles of land from nearby Coitsville Township.[10] That

same year, the Youngstown Board of Control pushed for the annexation of parts of

neighboring Liberty Township. The city's Finance Director stated, "(they) live there

because of Youngstown...They work here; their interests are here."[11] However,

officials from both Liberty Township and Trumbull County, of which Liberty

Township is apart, fought annexation vigorously. From this point on campaigns by

the city of Youngstown to annex outlying areas became fruitless.

By the 1950s, with newfound worries over the decline of the city, and with

more populous and more powerful surrounding townships, talk of annexation

became even more torturous. Decades previous to the 1950s, Youngstown extended

its water and sewer lines to suburban areas. In particular Austintown, Liberty, and

Boardman benefited from this move. Yet constant problems with water pressure

and disputes over water itself brought annexation continually back to the forefront.

In 1955, city leaders suggested that annexation into the city of Youngstown would

likely be the solution to Boardman and Austintown's water issues, for this would

give the city's water department a chance to boost service while dramatically

dropping the price of water to rates at the same level citizens of Youngstown were

paying. It would also eliminate the issue of duplication of services; only one water

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[10] Pace and Associates, *Youngstown Plans, No. 2* (Youngstown, Ohio: March, 1951)

[11] "Back Move To Annex Lands North Of City," *Youngstown Telegram*, September 26, 1929. P.1.

department would be needed, not three.[12] Finance director Nicholas Bernardi tried

to sell the idea by alluding to the potential benefits of joining the city and breaking

down municipal barriers:" There has never been an opportunity like this before and

a great revival and expansion are in the making if we take advantage of it."[13]

Austintown and Boardman remained unmoved by such pleas.

Demographic developments within Youngstown also most likely heightened

resistance to annexations, along with the city's generally weakening position.

During the 1955 mayoral campaign, Youngstown's flagging population and

economic issues encouraged talk of annexation, especially since many-feared new

industry might bypass a city no longer growing.[14] In Boardman and Austintown,

forces mobilized against such a move. Along with Boardman Trustees, the

Austintown Board of Education made general comments opposing the measure—

citing inadequate busing in the city and school building efforts already under away

in the township.[15] It is quite possible, especially noting the future segregation of

Youngstown and surrounding area schools in the 1960s and 1970s, there were

other considerations. A highly publicized Pace and Associates Report written just

five years earlier documented that the African American school age population was

growing quite rapidly in Youngstown. In 1941-1942, 12.9 percent of Youngstown

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[12] "Annexation Could Solve Water Plight," *Youngstown Vindicator*, August 8, 1955. P.4.

[13] Ibid.,

[14] "Annexation In The Campaign," letter to the editor, *Youngstown Vindicator*, September 10, 1955.

[15] "Schools Fight Annexation Of Austintown Township," *Youngstown Vindicator*, September 8, 1955, A-6.

Public School's population was African American. Seven years later black children made up about 17 percent of the public school population.[16] White flight and neighborhood racial turnover was already beginning in the early and mid-1950s.[17] In any event, annexation failed and the fissures between city and suburb continued to grow.

The ascendancy of Boardman Township during the 1950s reflected the depth of new growth and development outside the city. By the year 1953, Boardman was a "boom town," according to local historian Howard Aley. Between the end of the 1940s and 1953, developers spent thirty million in construction in the township.[18] A sprawling 72-acre park, finished in 1948, became an oasis inside the fast growing township, complete with large picnic grounds, multiple pavilions, and summer programs for children.[19] The educational system expanded rapidly. One thousand seven hundred children attended Boardman public schools in 1945; by 1952 nearly 3,000 children were enrolled. A new elementary school opened the same year.[20] Growth appeared to be continuous for the foreseeable future as well. Township officials estimated that continued levels of enrollment would require about nine

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[16] Pace and Associates, *The People of Youngstown"* P. 37.

[17] Mel Watkins, *Dancing With Strangers: A Memoir* (New York: Simon and Schuster Press, 2002), 86.

[18] Howard Aley, A Heritage to Share: *The Bicentennial History of Youngstown and Mahoning County, Ohio: Youngstown and Mahoning County, Ohio, from Prehistoric Times to the National Bicentennial Year* (Bicentennial Commission of Youngstown and Mahoning County, Ohio, 1975), 433.

[19] "Many Facilities Are Being Enjoyed," *Youngstown Vindicator*, July 20, 1952. P. 6

[20] "Boardman School Enrollment Rising; 313 in Kindergarten," *Youngstown Vindicator*, June 3, 1952. P. 1.

new classrooms every year with an increase of 300 children in schools.[21] The

growing affluence and comforts of Boardman epitomized the national trend in

suburbanization. Historian Elizabeth Ewen and Rosalyn Baxandall describe the

suburban dream taking shape during this time period around the country in places

very similar to Boardman. "In their vision suburbia meant a place where ordinary

people, not just the elite, would have access to affordable and attractive modern

housing in communities with parks, gardens, recreation, stores and cooperative

town meeting places."[22]

Cultural and business institutions left the city along with the people. In 1955,

Westminster Presbyterian Church—long a mainstay downtown—began the process

of moving to Boardman. The next year the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company,

the area's largest steel mill, started to put together the details of a new massive

office headquarters to be located in Boardman. Despite its rapid growth,

Youngstown suburbs like Boardman faced a dearth of retail and business options, at

least during the early stages of post-war suburbanization. Shoppers were still

largely compelled to travel from Austintown, Boardman, Liberty Township, Poland,

Canfield and other outlying areas to the traditional retail centers in downtown

Youngstown and in the Uptown district, located on the city's far south side. This was

the case in many metropolitan centers throughout the country.[23] It turned out

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[21] "Boardman's Growth Necessitates Nine New School Rooms Annually,"
Youngstown Vindicator, October 10, 1955, A-9.

[22] Elizabeth Ewin and Rosalyn Baxandall, *Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), XXI.

though to be only a matter of time before retailers awoke to the growing spending power of suburbanites.

In the years following World War Two, the American economy began once again decisively shifting to a model based on mass consumerism. As it turned out, the base of the new American consumer economy was to be suburbia. Not only did suburban populations grow mightily during the late 1940s and into the 1950s, their spending power did as well. Nearly thirty percent of consumer spending came from suburban families in 1953; this was a marked increase, and one that would only continue. Not only did suburban consumer spending start to drive the economy, the gradual relocation of retail businesses out of cities and into new shopping plazas— and later malls—where a wide variety of goods were available in a one-stop shopping atmosphere, in turn drove suburbanization.[24] As the early 1950s progressed retail establishments like none seen before began to take shape outside of cities. One of the most important businessmen pioneering new forms of retail was a Youngstown man whose first big projects were launched in Boardman, Ohio. Edward DeBartolo Sr. would go on to not only transform the world of retail in Boardman. He later became one of the most important shopping mall pioneers in the country.

Edward J. DeBartolo, Sr. grew up the son of an Italian immigrant who had prospered in Youngstown's construction trade. Michael DeBartolo's tenacity and

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[23] Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Post-War America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 257.

[24] Roger Horowitz and Arwhen Mohuns eds., *His and Hers: Gender, Consumption, and Technology* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998), 190.

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workaholic approach to business made his construction firm highly profitable. His

son, Eddie would keep the same long his fifteen-hour workdays to build a shopping

empire.[25] Not only did DeBartolo have his father's iron work ethic, he had a

gambler's nature combined with tenacious business acumen. In 1940 he bought an

entire corner block in Boardman, Ohio. However, he didn't have the money to back

up his purchase, so he met with local bankers and essentially stated what he had

done and why the bank should give him the money. He walked away with $75,000

dollars and his first pieces of real estate.[26] During World War Two, DeBartolo

mastered topography. He later used this skill to scout for ideal locations for

shopping plazas. After returning home from the war, DeBartolo set his sights on

developing retail plazas in the burgeoning township of Boardman.

After incorporating his own company—The Edward J. DeBartolo

Corporation—in 1944, he began developing his first plaza projects. In 1949,

DeBartolo built the Belmont Avenue Shopping Center on the outskirts of

Youngstown. Also, during that same time construction began on another DeBartolo

project at the corner of Market Street and Indianola in the city's business district

uptown.[27] These projects represented the beginnings of the decentralization of

retail in the city. Previously, locally owned businesses and national retailers

dominated the downtown. This soon changed.

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[25] Dale Peskin, "Edward DeBartolo: The Kingdom And The Power," *Tampa Tribune,*
May 25, 1980, Sunday Section, P.9.

[26] Ibid., 6.

[27] "DeBartolo Co. History Mirrors Advancement," *Youngstown Vindicator,* June 20,
1951, P.18.

Plazas, and later shopping malls, proliferated during the 1950s. These "retail strips" catered especially to new suburbanites.[28] In the Youngstown area, the Greater Boardman Plaza perfectly symbolized these emerging retail plazas. Described as one of the "largest and most beautiful shopping developments in the state," the plaza itself cost an estimated two million dollars, was 812 feet long, and could accommodate 1,200 automobiles in its parking lot.[29] Merchants filling the plaza represented a wide variety of shopping opportunities: A&P, Kroger, and Century Foods supermarkets covered every conceivable grocery need. The F.W. Woolworth Company, which also had a large store downtown, offered an enormous amount of household items. Along with Livingston's women's clothier, these department stores were part of a larger trend of decentralization going on, where outlets traditionally located in downtown areas opened up satellite shops in the suburbs.[30] There was also a hardware store, drug store, dry cleaning, dairy shops, beauty services, etc. A local branch of the Mahoning National Bank opened up as well. Retailers stressed the little extras. Employees were on the strictest orders to be as pleasant and as respectful as possible in order to make "plaza shopping a habit."[31]

As the decade progressed, plaza expansion continued unabated. The Mahoning Shopping Plaza, also built in the early part of the 1950s and located at the

[28] Cohen, 258.

[29] "DeBartolo Company History," P.18.

[30] Cohen, 258.

[31] "Shopping Plaza Merchants Well Known To Youngstown," *Youngstown Vindicator*, October 10, 1951, A-19.

very edge of Youngstown, added an additional 450 feet of retail space in 1953. The

Greater Boardman Plaza also added another 100 feet of space and attracted several

new tenants in the mid-1950s. The total worth of the Greater Boardman Plaza

project eventually edged up to over two and a half million dollars.[32] In 1958 a retail

strip capable of holding forty stores opened up in Liberty Township. A gala affair

accompanied the grand opening of the Liberty Plaza, complete with French coach

rides, a fashion show, children's rides, and a parade.[33] The Liberty Plaza project,

another DeBartolo Company venture, cost more even then the Boardman Plaza.

Including a restaurant and lounge on the premises, the 237,000 square feet facility

could hold 8,000 cars in its parking lot and offered a variety of specialty and

boutique shops.[34]

By the early 1960s, another plaza, the Wedgewood Plaza, opened in

Austintown Township. There were now large plazas in every one of Youngstown's

major suburbs: Boardman, Austintown, and Liberty Township. Like the others,

Wedgewood offered a vast array of consumer goods and enticements for the young

families in Austintown. A gas station, bakery, grocery store, and even a 31-lane

bowling alley rounded out the offerings.[35]

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[32] "DeBartolo To Add New Stores At two Biggest Shopping Plazas," *Youngstown Vindicator*, January 25, 1953, A-1.

[33] "Free Rides, Stage Shows Spice Daily Festivities," *Youngstown Vindicator*, August 8, 1958, B-41.

[34] "New Center Is Largest In Youngstown District," *Youngstown Vindicator*, August 20, 1958, B-3.

This new form of retail attraction began to take hold on the shopping habits

of both suburbanites and city dwellers in a big way. Local historian Richard

Scarsella recalls the ambience of the new shopping plazas of that era: "These new,

long, flat, air conditioned, modern market places featured free, well-lit parking, wide

covered sidewalks, evening hours and one-stop shopping...Youngstown would

never be the same again."[36] Indeed, though little recognized throughout the 1950s,

plazas—which represented the beginning of the shift of retail out of the city—were

simply one of the first signs of an area fragmenting. This trend played out in metro

areas across the country. Ultimately though the fragmentation of Youngstown's

retail trade was part of larger and more disturbing trends.

As prosperous young families took advantages of government largesse to

build new homes and pursue new opportunities—and thanks to the new consumer

mass consumer economy, lifestyles—outside of central cities, America began to

shift. The number of people living in suburbs and their growing economic means

altered the balance of power between cities and outlying areas. In Youngstown, this

marked the beginning of what would become a catastrophic decline. Failed

annexation efforts, stalled attempts at forming regional governments, the movement

of populations outside of the city, and the early growth of retail outside of the

central business district cast the first shadows in growing problems that exploded

across the landscape of the metropolitan area in the 1960s. However, before those

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[35] "Wedgewood Plaza To Have Grand Opening Thursday," *Youngstown Vindicator*,
April 10, 1962, 1.

[36] Richard Scarsella, *Memory and Melancholy: Reflections on the Mahoning Valley
and Youngstown, Ohio* (Lincoln: iUniverse Books, 2005), 213.

events played out, the city fathers of Youngstown turned to a national trend in their

efforts to revitalize a flagging city: urban renewal.

Chapter 2

Bulldozing the Way to Tomorrow

The roots of the urban renewal campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s can be traced back to the "slum" clearance programs of the 1930s. In contrast to urban ghettos—which are mono-racial or mono-ethnic—slums were considered run-down, multiethnic neighborhoods largely created by the rapid period of industrialization between 1860 and 1930.[1] Affordable housing simply never caught up with successive waves of immigration to booming industrial cities. By the time of the Great Depression, slum conditions and a lack of affordable housing were being addressed at the federal level for the first time. At the local level, after the passage of the Ohio Housing Authority Law in September of 1933 and the creation of the Youngstown Metropolitan Housing Authority in December of that year, a vigorous publicity campaign against slums was launched.[2] The passage of the Wagner-Steagall Act, or the US Housing Act of 1937, provided funds for slum clearance campaigns and the building of public housing. It was hoped that the issue of affordable, low-income housing and overcrowded tenements could be solved in one swift stroke. The first such public housing facility in the country undertaken after the passage of the act was the Westlake Terrace Housing Project in Youngstown.[3] Westlake Terrace went up over the ruins of Westlake Crossing, a slum area

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[1] John F. Bauman, *Public Housing, Race, and Renewal: Urban Planning in Philadelphia, 1920-1974* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 76.

[2] Posey, 6.

[3] Posey, 8.

destroyed to make way for the project. However, this by no means solved the problem; it turned out to be only the beginning of the issue of removing blighted areas in the city.

The successor act to the Wagner-Steagall Act was the Housing Act of 1949, part of Harry Truman's "Fair Deal" legislation. Title one of the bill provided government grants for not only slum clearance but also so-called "urban renewal" projects. Along with that, the Housing Act of 1949 seemed to codify the belief that affordable, sanitary, and decent housing was an American right.[4] The term "urban renewal" came into vogue after the passage the Housing Act of 1954, which created an urban renewal administration. Largely the act "emasculated" public housing policy and was one more sign that urban renewal in and of itself was becoming the paramount objective.[5] Declining American cities turned to urban renewal to combat "blight," a term used to describe declining central city conditions. Yet, the changed political climate of the Fair Deal saw to it that combating blight—and not attacking the root of urban poverty, or even focusing much at all on the poor in cities—would take priority at the behest of the Democratic Party and local (primarily business) elites.[6]

Having already experienced population decline earlier than almost any other American city in the Midwest, Youngstown's city fathers faced the decade of the 1950s with growing trepidation. The federal government listed Youngstown as "one

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[4] Bauman, 94.

[5] Ibid., 140.

[6] John H. Mollenkopf, *The Contested City* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983), 74. 76.

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of the most depressed cities in the nation in 1958."[7] Additionally, suburbanization

started draining the population and tax base. At the beginning of the 1950s, a

decades- long housing shortage resorted in Youngstown having the smallest amount

of available housing in the state. This in turn led to the continued blighting of

especially overcrowded slum neighborhoods. In 1952, local governmental officials

designated about one-eighth of the city as a slum area. After extensive planning

studies, the city planned to tear these areas down and sell them to private

developers. Mayor Charles Henderson saw urban renewal demolition as the

beginning stage of neighborhood redevelopment, but in an ominous portend of

things to come, he admitted there remained no concrete plans for the building of

new housing to replace old slums.[8]

Youngstown's housing shortage remained an issue through the decade of the

forties. As that decade progressed, the problem of took precedence in the minds of

local planners. Addressing the census information from the decade of the 1940s,

City Planning Director Israel Stollman spoke frankly about the issue: "There has

certainly been nothing to indicate that that the sub-standard housing situation has

improved." He went on to say that "nearly one third of the people here don't have

the housing accommodations they need."[9] Citing the success of the Westlake Terrace

public housing project, the city hoped to construct another 935 units of as part of a

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[7] Aley, 447.

[8] Jack Jurey, "Three Areas Bear Brunt Of Housing Shame," *Youngstown Vindicator*, March 15, 1952, 15.

[9] "Decent Housing For Thousands In City," *Youngstown Vindicator*, March 3, 1952, A-1.

new public housing project.[10] However, public housing—which would be

increasingly met with resistance as the decade progressed, largely because of an

increase in African Americans in the area—clearly could not meet the city's housing

needs. In 1952 the city began construction on nearly 3,000 housing units located in

underdeveloped parts of the east and west sides.[11] Amazingly the projects

announced as part of the city's first phase of urban renewal guaranteed the

destruction of homes and neighborhoods that would not be replaced with the

building of new units.

When later discussing the origins of Youngstown's first phase of urban

renewal, members of the Youngstown Urban Renewal Agency quoted urban

planners and theorists, Arthur B. Gallion and Simon Eisner to sum up their own

philosophy.

> Urban renewal is not for the purpose of restoring
> stability to real estate values, although this will result. It
> is not for the purpose of bailing out the investments of
> landed gentry, since much of the decaying city pays
> dividends to its absentee owners. It is not intended to
> recover speculative losses, since the curse of blight has
> fallen upon the property of those who cannot afford to
> join the flight to better places. It is not for the purpose
> of providing ripe opportunities for investment for
> profit, although it will open this fertile field. It is not for
> the purpose of providing employment, although it will
> create unlimited opportunities for labor in field or
> factory. Urban renewal is for none of these specifically,

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[10] Ibid.,

[11] "2,700 Housing Units Now Planned For City," *Youngstown Vindicator*, June 1924, 1952, A-3.

but each is a part serving the main objectives: building
a decent city for people.[12]

Virtually none of this turned out to be the case though, at either the national

level or in Youngstown itself. Hopes remained high though as Youngstown filed its

first application for government grants, as authorized under the Federal Housing

Act of 1949, and as the first citywide plans were put together. The initial phase of

urban renewal focused on four projects designed to clear housing and

neighborhoods to make way for a variety of new uses. Several glaring problems

immediately popped up. Approximately 1,135 families faced dislocation in the

course of clearing land for urban renewal phase one, but all of the end uses for this

cleared land were industrial in nature.[13] The report did not address the basic

question of realistically relocating families in a city with an admitted crisis of

suitable housing. Still, voters approved funds for all four projects in 1954.

Possibly the most controversial program during the first phase of urban

renewal was the planned destruction of the so-called "Monkey's Nest" neighborhood

on the city's north side.[14] The Monkey's Nest, originally and officially referred to as

the Caldwell area, dated back to 1886. During that year, the Youngstown Board of

Education approved funds for the first schoolhouse to be built in the

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[12] The City Of Youngstown, *One Hundred Ways to View Our City: What is Urban Renewal?* (Youngstown, 1967), 3.

[13] Urban Renewal Agency, *Urban Redevelopment: First Report* (Youngstown, 1953, No. 1), 9.

[14] There is still debate over the origin of the term "Monkey's Nest." Some claim the name comes from a local bar owner that owned monkey; others claim it comes from an incident in which circus monkey's escaped into the area during a stop by a travelling circus. There is little evidence the nickname is racial in origin.

neighborhood.[15] Following the boom in industrial employment around the turn of

the century, both black and European immigrants flooded into the neighborhood.

By the early part of the twentieth century the area gained infamy as a hardscrabble

place with a tough reputation. Initially, the Monkey's Nest started out as multi-

ethnic and multi-racial neighborhood, but by the mid-1930s, the neighborhood was

majority African American.[16] Overcrowding, and the area's designation as a slum by

the city, put it directly in the path urban renewal. Wrangling by local political

elements delayed the neighborhood's demolition for seven years. During that

time—and far into the future—bitter feelings brewed over the neighborhood's

destruction, especially by those who saw it as power play by white officials in the

city.[17]

By 1961, no residents remained in the Monkey's Nest area. Small industrial

firms and parts of the new expressway soon came to occupy what would be known

as the Riverbend. The practical effect of urban renewal in the Caldwell/Monkey's

Nest neighborhood was the destruction of a black enclave and the dispersing of its

residents into a woefully deficient housing market. While the primarily working

poor populations of the neighborhood were relocated into neighborhoods on the

north, south, and east side of the city, they faced a variety of immediate problems.

Whites started abandoning neighborhoods with growing black populations; hence

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[15] Annie Przelowski, "43-Year-Old History Of Monkeys Nest Unearthed," *Youngstown Vindicator*, February 19, 1978, B-3.

[16] Ibid.,

[17] Ernest Brown Jr., "Chick It Wasn't, But Monkey's Nest Was Home, And More To Its People," *Youngstown Vindicator*, August 14, 1977, B-4.

abandonment and blight began to spread.[18] Redlining and discriminatory lending

policies by banks guaranteed African Americans could not follow Caucasians into

better neighborhoods.[19] Similarly, blacks had difficulty getting home improvement

loans in these neighborhoods. As highway projects gained steam in the 1960s, more

displaced African Americans found themselves in neighborhoods being blighted by

white flight.

The disastrous campaigns of early urban renewal projects did not come

without protests. The Youngstown Metropolitan Housing Authority strenuously

objected to any slum clearance campaign without available housing at reasonable

prices for displaced families.[20] The YMHA probably recognized that despite the city's

assurances, no concrete plans for adequate and affordable housing for soon to be

displaced families had emerged. Further controversy stirred when George Schultz, a

history professor from Youngstown University, and a local architect published a

pamphlet warning of the dangers of urban renewal. Sponsored by a host of local

churches, Challenge to the People of Youngstown probed the possible consequences

of ongoing renewal projects, among other issues. Working from the city's own

projections, the authors estimated 2,500 homes would be plowed under in five

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[18] Sherry Lee Linkon and John Russo, *SteelTown U.S.A.: Work and Memory in Youngstown* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 199-200.

[19] Intergroup Goodwill Council, *Understanding Through Discussion: Conference on Intergroup Relations for College Students* (Youngstown, Ohio, 1950), 7-a; Also see Michael A. Beverly, "The African American Experience in Youngstown, 1940-1965" (Masters Thesis., Youngstown State University, 2002), 61.

[20] C.L. Robinson, Chairman of Youngstown Metropolitan Housing Authority, to Mayor's Office, June 9, 1958, Housing Projects Folder Number One, Unmounted, Youngstown Public Library, Youngstown, OH.

years alone. The fact that twenty percent of Youngstown's houses could not pass code compounded the issue. [21] The authors also connected slum clearance and the issue of housing to race; African Americans suffered the most from both urban renewal and the inadequate housing market.[22] The local newspaper, the *Youngstown Vindicator*, criticized the findings, especially the aspects involving race and housing.[23] However, the warnings of impending problems if the issue of urban renewal, minorities, and adequate housing were not solved turned out to be all too prescient, especially after the highway program began.

The most ambitious urban highway construction programs yet went into full throttle across the country during the 1950s and 1960s. This need (or want) for so-called "super highways" had been building since the 1920s, a decade that saw half of all Americans owning an automobile. By the eve of the Second World War, the Bureau of Public Roads and the Department of Agriculture began the first stages of pushing for a 30,000 mile long interstate expressway system they claimed would increase employment, connect city and rural areas, as well as contribute to the removal of urban slum areas.[24] Like city planners involved in localized urban renewal projects, highway planners often colluded with or shared the mindset of city business and political leaders that were interested in removing "slum areas," or

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[21] *Challenge to the People of Youngstown*, pamphlet, prepared by Vern L. Bullough and George P. Schultz. P.1.

[22] Ibid., P.3.

[23] "Author of Housing Pamphlet Defends Analysis Of Slums," *Youngstown Vindicator*, June 13, 1958, A-21.

[24] Mark H. Rose, *Interstate Express Highway Politics: 1939-1989* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 4.

whatever they designated a slum area. This also included and emphasis on reintroducing traffic to downtown areas facing competition from suburban shopping.[25] In Youngstown, politicians and businessmen alike hoped the new highway system would be the lynch pin in an urban renewal campaign that could change the city's fortunes.

In 1952 the city unveiled the findings of its study on traffic flow and travel in Youngstown's main corridors. The plan called for the construction of a five (later reduced to four) pronged arterial beltway around the city. This eventually included I-680—the main highway cutting through the city—and the expressways of West Federal Street, Madison Avenue, Hubbard, and Division Street.[26] Highway engineers expected the arterial system to halt the erosion of downtown real estate values and bring suburban shoppers back to the city.[27] City Engineer James Ryan speculated that twice as many cars would travel through and around the city in the next quarter of a century. The approximately eight and a half miles of arterial highway and five mile of inner-belt expressway could be expected to handle future traffic; additionally, planners hoped the highway system would alleviate the issue of spreading slums.[28] The Census Bureau backed up the city's projections. They

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[25] Ibid., 7; For other examples of the collusion of urban planners with business and power elites on the local level see Christopher Silver, *Twentieth Century Richmond: Planning, Politics, and Race* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 8-10. And Mollenkopf, 176.

[26] Aley, 529. The arterial highway system plan was finalized in 1959.

[27] "Youngstown's Little Turnpike," *Youngstown Vindicator*, October 29, 1952, A-1.

estimated 225,000 people would live in Youngstown's city limits by 1980.[29] In

November of 1956 the first bond issue for the highway system passed. Along with

urban renewal within the city, the arterial highway system seemed to offer further

proof of Youngstown's moving into the future assured of an inevitable revitalization.

Ground broke on the first leg of Youngstown's expressway in 1960. Mayor

Frank Franko assured all gathered that the arterial system would "insure

Youngstown's becoming one of the finest cities in the state and nation." Franko also

included time to promote the upcoming bond issue for urban renewal, which was on

the ballot in November.[30] Yet, all of these predictions—the Census Bureau's, the city

engineer's, the mayor's, etc. never materialized. The highway system, like slum

clearance, did change the face of the city, though not in ways the city fathers

expected.

The city's highway program plans targeted the historic neighborhood of

Brier Hill, an industrial enclave that encapsulated much of the evolution of

Youngstown. Nearly a hundred years before the area dramatically changed by miles

of concrete and asphalt, in the mid-1840s, when Youngstown was a sparsely

populated place of a few thousands souls, high-grade coal was found in an area

known as Brier Hill. This coal, dubbed "Brier Hill Black" touched off a rapid

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[28] "Ryan Urges Expressways To Ease City's Traffic," *Youngstown Vindicator*, November 4, 1956, A-2.

[29] "Expressway Is A Must To Meet Growth," *Youngstown Vindicator*, November 4, 1956, B-1.

[30] "Ground Broken For Expressway," *Youngstown Vindicator*, September 19, 1960, A-1.

industrialization of the area.[31] The first of nearly a dozen Youngstown area iron furnaces, the Eagle Furnace, started in Brier Hill. [32] A fully integrated steel mill was eventually erected at the bottom of Brier Hill. This industrial growth brought thousands of workers to the neighborhood, which eventually became known as "Little Italy," due to the presence of so many Italians.[33] As the neighborhood grew, a variety of churches, ethnic grocery stores, and cultural institutions emerged to serve immigrant communities and their families. Not long after the end of the Second World War, it became apparent that the city's highway and urban renewal plans would change the face of Brier Hill in coming years.

Residents of Brier Hill found themselves in the path of several highway and road renewal projects slated by the city. In the 1940s, Youngstown began purchasing properties in the area. The city planned to widen Federal Street, which ran through Brier Hill and eventually connected the future interstate I-680. Starting in 1953 homes and business alike fell to the wrecking ball as the first leg of the renewal project started.[34] The highway project had a particularly deleterious effect on cultural institutions and landmarks. The nearly century old St. Ann's Church and elementary school was laid to waste in 1960 by the expressway. The original St.

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[31] Linkon and Russo, 18-19.

[32] Ibid., 19.

[33] Tony Trolio, *Brier Hill USA,* ed. Michael N. Varveris (Poland: Ciao, Promotions, 2001), 12.

[34] Fred Ross, interview by Thomas G. Welch, 28 April 2010, Steel Valley Voices, Center for Working Class Studies, Youngstown, OH.

Anthony's Church, later moved to the top of Brier Hill, was knocked down.[35] St. Rocco's Church, next to St. Anthony's, long a center for Catholic Italian life, also was displaced. After the city revealed that it stood in the path of an expressway, the church relocated to the suburb of Liberty Township.[36]

The expressway system essentially cut several swaths through the neighborhood, dividing and rendering much of Brier Hill unrecognizable. Decade's later emotions over what urban renewal projects did to the area still remain raw. Jane Cascarelli Oleksiuk returned to her grandparent's house many years after the Division Street Bridge Project had flattened their old block to find a painful sight. "The outdoors ovens were all gone, (these ovens were for communal use between neighbors) and the old wooden bridge replaced by a concrete and steel expressway bridge...The grape arbors were all gone, but through my tears I saw my grandpa's grapes still growing on the empty lot."[37] John Ruggiero, who grew up in Brier Hill in the 1930s and 1940s, later described the enormous changes that overtook the area:

> Now when I return to Brier Hill I have to cross the
> street to look at the spot where my house had stood
> until the state highway department decided in the 60s
> [sic] to build a four-lane highway. All the houses on that
> side of the street were bought and destroyed while
> leaving the opposite side intact, as it is today. The land

[35] Thomas G. Welch, "Catholic Disunity and the Decline of Youngstown's Parochial Elementary Schools, 1964-2006" (PhD Dissertation, Kent State University, 2009), 184.

[36] Tony Trollio, *Brier Hill USA: The Sequel*, ed. Michael N. Varveris (Poland: Cia Promotions, 2004), 137.

[37] Ibid., 133.

on which the house stood for more than six decades is covered with thick macadam pavement. What a modern horror and a shocking reminder that all change is not always for the better.[38]

According to former Brier Hill resident Fred Ross, urban highway projects took a frightful toll on the area: "It was upsetting. It tore down a lot of homes...It pushed people out of their surroundings and out of their birthplace, and it disrupted everything."[39] He went on to say "And no, the...general opinion was, No, we don't want this. And that was (the restructuring of) Federal Street, which connected to (Interstate) 680. The (State Route) 711 connector is really what chopped up Brier Hill. That was the final hatchet, because 680 and 711, it wiped us out."[40]

The highway projects represented the beginning of the end of the old Brier Hill neighborhood. After the closing of the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Brier Hill works in 1979, the area deteriorated further. In the 1990s, highway work commenced again in Brier Hill—erasing even more of what could have become a historical neighborhood.[41] It was the highway system—ballyhooed as key piece of Youngstown's future—that essentially ruined what cultural geographer William Hunter calls "one of the most historically meaningful places in Ohio, an area that is

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[38] Ibid., 63.

[39] Ross, 2010.

[40] Ibid.,

[41] A 1999 report by the Ohio Department of Transportation stated that various urban renewal projects had "removed a significant portion of the Brier Hill core," rendering it ineligible for historic neighborhood status.

unquestionably significant for its role in the rise of the United States as an industrial power."[42]

Nearly every side of the city suffered in some way due to urban renewal. As local historian Thomas Welch points out, renewal projects that cleared land for the expansion of Youngstown State University "imperiled longstanding neighborhoods on the city's lower and upper north side; and in 1967, the expansion of the university contributed to the closure of St. Joseph's Elementary School, a north side institution since 1874."[43] Spatially, Youngstown State University expanded thirty times in size during this period—knocking out whole parts of neighborhoods on the north side.[44] The building of the highway also dispersed ethnic neighborhoods on Youngstown's eastside, while various urban renewal projects severely impacted traditional Catholic neighborhoods, churches, and parochial schools in the inner city.[45] The numbers displaced were large. In 1966-1967 alone the city approximated that 1,800 residential units were destroyed and 1,675 families dislocated.[46]

By far, the negative impact of urban renewal hit the African American population of the city the hardest. This mirrored what happened in city after city from Nashville to Baltimore. Eventually those in African American communities

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[42] Ibid., 242.

[43] Welch, 184.

[44] The City of Youngstown, *One Hundred Ways to View Our City: What is Urban Renewal? Part Two* (Youngstown, 1967), 4.

[45] Welch, 185.

[46] Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Analysis of the Youngstown/Warren, Ohio, Housing Market*, Federal Housing Administration (Washington, DC, 1966), 19.

began referring to urban renewal as "Negro removal." That is an especially apt

description of what took place in Youngstown. On the national level racial minorities

and ethnic groups made up about 60 percent of those displaced by urban renewal

campaigns.[47] In Youngstown, the city's urban renewal department determined that

about seventy five percent of those forcibly relocated by the city were African

American.[48] In a similar situation to cities such as Detroit, Camden, and Newark,

urban renewal campaigns and highway projects did tremendous damage to black

communities in the area.[49]

After the destruction of the Monkey's Nest, several additional urban renewal

campaigns further dispersed and isolated the city's black population. Highway

projects connected to I-680 did particular damage. As historian Raymond Mole has

illustrated, "It now seems apparent that public officials and policy makers, especially

at the state and local level, used expressway construction to destroy low-income

and especially black neighborhoods in an effort to reshape the physical and racial

landscapes of the postwar American city."[50] Whether or not such deliberate intent

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[47] Paul S. Rothenberg, ed. *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism* (New York: Worth Publishers, 2008), 75.

[48] Charles Etlinger, "Population Shifts Burden Horse and Buggy Governments," *Youngstown Vindicator*, December 26, 1971, A-5.

[49] For specific examples of urban renewal's impact on African Americans in Detroit, see Thomas Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, for Newark, see Kevin Mumford, *Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America*, and for Camden see Howard Gillette Jr., *Camden After the Fall*. These particular city's demographics, economic, and historical experiences are highly similar to Youngstown.

existed in plans laid forth by Youngstown's planners and public officials, much of the actual outcome of these plans had the same effect. This was not lost on many of those in the black community.

Along with disruptions that it brought to Brier Hill, the rerouting of US 422 and the building of the highway split the north side area in pieces and wrecked successful middle class black neighborhoods. As Sherry Linkon and John Russo have demonstrated, highway projects basically ruined thriving black businesses and neighborhoods.[51] Along with the victims of the Monkey's Nest, urban renewal dispersed large numbers of African Americans into the south side, which whites were in the process of abandoning, or if they were especially low income, into the projects.[52] Highway projects forced The Rev. Lonnie Simon's church, New Bethel Baptist, from the north side to Hillman Ave. on the south side in 1964. He remembers the church not being given adequate funds by the city to relocate. Only after a white church offered to sell their current location—as white parishioners were fast leaving the area—did they find an adequate space on the south side.[53] These relocated individuals soon found themselves—especially on the south side—hemmed in by redlining and mortgage discrimination.

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[50] Raymond A. Mohl, *The Interstate and the Cities: Highways, Housing, and the Freeway Revolt* (Research Report: Poverty and Race Research Action Council, 2002), 3.

[51] Linkon and Russo, 198-200.

[52] A.J. Carter, interview by Joseph C. Drobney, 7 November 1985, transcript, Oral History Program, Youngstown State University, Youngstown, OH.

[53] Reverend Lonnie Simon, interview by Michael A. Beverly, 15 February 1999, transcript, Oral History Program, Youngstown State University, Youngstown, OH.

As the 1960s wore on the deleterious effects of urban renewal began to

become obvious in cities around the country. A backlash soon followed. Especially in

the later 1960s, as the civil rights movement and the Black Power movement gained

steam, urban renewal projects halted in the wake of mass protests in San Francisco

and Baltimore, among other places.[54] In Youngstown, African Americans, under the

auspices of the Urban League and other activist groups, challenged the ghettoization

of blacks on the city's south side. The Director of Housing at the Youngstown Urban

League pointed out that housing for dislocated persons was grossly inadequate and

no African Americans were involved in deciding housing issues in the city.[55] A group

of prominent local African American men issued a report through the Youngstown

Leadership Conference stating that highway and urban renewal projects that might

displace more black families must be stopped. Despite these efforts, it was too late

to stop the last of the expressway—the Madison Ave. portion of I-680—and the

expansion of St. Elizabeth's Hospital. Unlike Baltimore, the Black Power movement

in Youngstown was just gaining steam involving other issues, though, as will be

shown, pushback did occur.

The Madison Avenue and St. Elizabeth's Hospital expansion completed the

undermining of the African American community on the north side that began with

the clearing of the Monkey's Nest. The expressway route ran through the Westlake

Terrace Housing Project, which was almost all black by 1966, when the project

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[54] For examples of protest movements against urban renewal in the late 1960s, see Mohl, 94 and Mike Miller, *Community Organizer's Tale: People and Power in San Francisco* (Claremont: Heyday Books, 2009)

[55] Leon Stennis, "Blacks Face City Problems," *Youngstown Vindicator*, March 28, 1973, 17.

started.[56] Not only did the expressway divide Westlake Terrace in half and dislocate huge chunks of the project, it wiped out the neighborhood surrounding Westlake. Years later, Romelia Carter, a prominent civic and community leader, remembered the impact of the Madison Avenue project on the local black community: "It disrupted homes, the whole bit. This area (neighborhood around Westlake Terrace) used to be full of voting citizens and homeowners."[57] Like many other African Americans, Carter saw the Madison Avenue Project as extension of the dispersal of a growing African American political block. "It is amazing how they broke up the political block and how it was done. As we see it, when you talk about the Third Ward (the north side) it was done on purpose, for political reasons."[58] Black residents of Westlake Terrace Public Housing Project expressed similar feelings about urban renewal. Long-time Westlake resident Alice Freeman spoke harshly about the impact of the Madison Avenue Expressway project, which physically divided Westlake Terrace: "The way it chopped off left us isolated. Instead of being part of the city, we're like a city within a city. And I think the people downtown wanted it that way so they could overlook us."[59]

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[56] Posey, 15.

[57] Romelia Carter, "Westlake Terrace Project," interview by Joseph Drobney, 4 November 1985, Westlake Project, transcript, YSU Oral History Program, Youngstown State University, Youngstown, OH.

[58] Ibid., For further information of the political impact on the black community, see Linkon and Russo, 198-200.

[59] Tim Roberts, "Longtime Resident Refuses To Abandon Hope For The Future," *Vindicator*, June 6, 1988, A-12.

The million plus dollar expansion of St. Elizabeth's hospital proved to be similarly damaging to north side African Americans. Concerns were immediately raised upon its proposal. The Youngstown Community Action Program warned of what might happen if families were relocated without consideration, mentioning the case of a woman in the St. Elizabeth's area who was about to be forcibly moved by an urban renewal project for the second time.[60] Romelia Carter described a family that was forced to move multiple times.

> Lots of games were played with homeowners. They did not know. This was all new to them. Eminent domain set in. They did not know what the heck eminent domain was. They used eminent domain to move folks just for the hell of it. I know the Williams'. One family moved three times. They moved from North Avenue to make room for the expansion of St. Elizabeth's Hospital, and from there to the corner of Covington and Parmalee. Then they were displaced again to make room for the mental health center, and they moved further up Covington, where they were displaced again for the freeway.[61]

The net result of urban renewal projects on the north side was not only the destruction of an emergent black cultural and political nexus, but the ghettoization of African Americans pushed into areas of the city where they faced steep difficulties to getting home owners insurance or home improvement loans.[62]

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[60] "Urban Renewal Studies City's Housing Needs," February 28, 1969, 13.

[61] Carter, 1985.

[62] "Black Face City Problems"

By the beginning of the 1970s, urban renewal had lost most of its luster. From Jane Jacob's famous 1961 critique of urban renewal and top-down decision making, to the protest movements of the late 1960s, public opinion turned against urban renewal.[63] Not only did it fail to revitalize many city cores, it actively ruined countless neighborhoods and communities. Numerous scholars advanced a variety of motivations for targeting of certain neighborhoods during the urban renewal campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s. While many see the failures of urban renewal as the result of well intentioned, but ill-conceived planning, others have advanced more critical theories. Former Temple University Professor E. Michael Jones argues WASP planners sought to destabilize growing Catholic strongholds of power and direct them into growing "white suburbs" while further isolating and marginalizing African Americans.[64] This dovetailed with the overwhelming effects of renewal projects on the Catholic population of the city and the African American populations. Similarly, historian Ronald Bayor argues that the location of highway construction and highways themselves "could also serve racial purposes in terms of barriers, buffers to protect white neighborhoods and excuses to destroy black sections of the city."[65] There is also evidence for this theory in the experience of urban renewal in Youngstown.

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[63] Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961),

[64] E. Michael Jones, *The Slaughter of Cities: Urban Renewal as Ethnic Cleansing* (Chicago: St. Augustine's Press, 2004),

[65] Ronald H. Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth Century Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996),

Regardless of accurate intentions, urban renewal in Youngstown proved

largely disastrous. In 1970, Youngstown Councilman McCullough Williams,

exclaimed "all the urban renewal projects have amounted to little more than a

clearance program...If all the planned projects were carried out, with adequate

provision for housing, they could have made a significant contribution to the city."[66]

Of course that was not the case. Instead the city incredibly admitted that as late as

1967, the city had built "no new housing" to offset units destroyed by urban

renewal.[67] What the city did succeed in doing was laying the groundwork for

growing inner city ghettos, while also severely harming the African American

community. As far as Youngstown's grand plans for using expressways to bring

people back to the downtown and city center? They never materialized. Instead the

arterial system made it ever easier for people to connect and move to suburbia.

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[66] Charles Etlinger, "Money Woes Hit City Hard," *Youngstown Vindicator*, September 28, 1970, A-5.

[67] The City of Youngstown, *One Hundred Ways to View Our City: What is Urban Renewal? Part Two, 4.*

Chapter Three

Exodus to Wonderland

At the beginning of the 1960s, approximately 33 percent of Americans lived

in suburbia.[1] By 1970, more Americans lived in suburbs than in central cities.[2] This

radical socio-economic transformation wrought large-scale changes in the balance

of power between cities and their smaller outlying areas. It also dramatically

changed the social, ethnic, and racial, makeup of American cities. As in the rest of the

country, quickly developing suburbs like Austintown, Boardman, and Canfield, were

places of "promises, dreams, and fantasies" for those leaving cities.[3] Over time

suburbia in the popular imagination became the embodiment of the American

Dream itself. To service these growing and consumer oriented communities came

massive shopping malls that dwarfed even suburban plazas, while offering an even

wider variety of goods and services. The end result of this was the completion of the

'total package' of suburban living. The city, aside from work—and even that changed

as everything from the service sector to manufacturing migrated from core areas—

could be avoided altogether.

For Youngstown—as with many American urban centers, especially in the

"manufacturing belt"—suburbanization during the 1960s decisively splintered the

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[1] "The Roots of Americana," *Time Magazine*, June 20, 1960, under "National Affairs/Americana,"

[2] Charles Etlinger, "Mahoning Valley: Steel And The Suburbs," *Youngstown Vindicator*, September 27, 1970, A-1, A-4.

[3] Dolores Hayden, *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), 1.

city. The continuing shift of the retail base and the ongoing shift in population to the surrounding townships and villages aggravated the balkanization of Mahoning County. It also resulted in declining property values in the city and the diminution of the central business district downtown.

As Boardman Township boomed in the 1950s, other Youngstown suburbs soon followed. By 1955 what once was once formerly farmland in neighboring Canfield began to be replaced with upscale housing. For Canfield (which consisted of a village and an adjoining township) soon became known as an "elite" suburb. In 1956 the area experienced its first real growth since the 1840s. Rapid development poised the village for a near doubling in its size that year.[4] Home prices by the mid-1950s ranged from $14,000 to $50,000. This led to Canfield Township's property tax valuation being higher than Youngstown's by 1955.[5]

The typical resident of Canfield was a white collar professional or executive under fifty years of age with less than three children.[6] These new prosperous suburban families would have found much to recommend in Canfield. For one, the village in few ways resembled the smokestack environment of Youngstown. In the 1960s, it placed among the top "Cleanest Town" contest award winners in the country four years in a row.[7] Additionally, the area's higher elevation improved the

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[4] "Expansion Of Canfield Is Planned," *Youngstown Vindicator*, March 5, 1956, A-1.

[5] Philomena Sparano, "Residents Flee Noise, Smoke," *Youngstown Vindicator*, May 8, 1955, A-5.

[6] Ibid.,

[7] "Canfield Sets Ceremonies To Open Clean Up," *Youngstown Vindicator*, April 24, 1968, 2.

air quality. Also, wide-open spaces and complete lack of industry made it unique in the Youngstown area.[8] Above all though, Canfield was prosperous. In 1961 the village's tax valuation doubled compared to four years earlier.

More oriented in working class roots, the township of Austintown also experienced stellar growth during the 1960s. From 1942 to the end of the 1960s, the population nearly sextupled. During the 1960s the township added about 400 new residential units per year.[9] Like Boardman, the number of new families in Austintown constantly increased its school enrollment. While Youngstown's school district faced constant issues with aging facilities and inadequate operating budgets during the 1960s, Austintown built a five million dollar high school complete with the "most modern educational equipment."[10]

In stark contrast to Youngstown, Austintown also benefited enormously from the construction of the highway system. In 1964, a Youngstown real estate agent estimated that about five million dollars would be brought into the local economy by the expressway interchange program that was scheduled to go through Austintown.[11] Eventually this section of Austintown filled up with truck stops, bars, restaurants, and commercial real estate. Sherry Linkon and John Russo succinctly sum up the ironic twist that development in Austintown symbolized perfectly: "The

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[8] Sparano, "Residents Flee Noise, Smoke," 2.

[9] City Planning Associates, Ohio-R-127 (CR) Community Renewal Program, *Physical Inventory and Analysis, Mahoning County, Ohio* (Youngstown, 1969), 23.

[10] "Austintown Dedicates $5 Million High School Today," *Youngstown Vindicator*, October 20, 1968, B-1.

[11] "Reveals $5,000,000 Development Plans," *Youngstown Vindicator*, March 3, 1964, A-3.

promised residential and commercial development resulting from the construction of I-680 never occurred (in the city), but the suburbs boomed."[12] This was part of a larger national trend of great spatial imbalances in growth and the movement of development outward, away from central cities that occurred in the post-war era.[13] The Youngstown area's evolution, or devolution in this case, and in the case of the movement of retail away from cities symbolizes the decentralization of metropolitan areas in America in general.

Suburbanization in the 1950s and into the 1960s had a noticeable effect on Youngstown's downtown. By 1960, the city realized that commercial traffic had dropped off in the central core. Several studies were commissioned that marked the beginning of what would be multiple efforts to revitalize the central business district. In this sense Youngstown was not unique. In fact economic prosperity continued in the central business district well into the era of general decline for downtowns across America. As early as the 1920s, downtown business districts faced competition that challenged their previously accepted preeminence in urban life. By the end of World War Two, downtown was widely seen as "not the central business...just another business district."[14] This trend came later to Youngstown. At the end of the war, downtown still figured largely as the place for shopping and entertaining in the city and the suburbs.

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[12] Linkon and Russo, 44.

[13] Owen D. Gutfreund, *Twentieth Century Sprawl: Highways and the Reshaping of the American Landscape* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1-2.

[14] Robert M. Fogelson, *Downtown: Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 2.

The 1950s shift in population to the suburbs and the creation of new modern plazas like the Greater Boardman Plaza, Liberty Plaza, and Wedgewood Plaza, all drew consumers from the central business district. By the end of the decade, the city awoke to the problem. A snapshot of the downtown in 1960 showed that an equivalent of about ten percent of the city's population worked downtown.[15] Despite occupying far less than one percent of city land, downtown represented eight percent of the city's appraised value.[16] Retail establishments occupied about fifty percent of the space available in downtown; hence the decline in retail traffic and sales posed very real problems for the city administration.[17] Unfortunately the city pinned the promise of downtown revitalization at first on the arterial highway system and then on other even less substantial plans for redirecting traffic and consumers back into the city core.

The highway system's failed promise left downtown Youngstown high and dry by the beginning of the 1970s; far from bringing in traffic, the highway system "cut downtown Youngstown off from much day-to-day traffic."[18] Another downtown development idea, part of the later rounds of urban renewal programs, was to close traffic off to the downtown area and create a "downtown mall" for shoppers and pedestrians. This plan aped ideas that were gaining traction in shopping mall

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[15] City Planning Commission, *Findings of the Downtown Inventory* (Youngstown, Ohio, 1960), B.

[16] Ibid., C.

[17] Ibid., D.

[18] Linkon and Russo, 44.

development at the time—outdoor fountains, trees and ornamental decorations placed at strategic points. Planners constructed a below ground plaza for outdoor concerts and artistic events. The city set up various different points for vendors and shelters, small gardens, outdoor benches and seating, and booths and pavilions. Shoppers found colorful and redesigned paving areas inside the mall as well. The city and private investors sank nearly two million dollars into the downtown mall plan.[19] Yet, much like the highway program, the expected shoppers did not flock to downtown.

Where were they going? The first shift in retail occurred between the traditional business district and the uptown business district. The main area of the uptown runs roughly from Market Street and Delason Avenue to Market and Avondale Avenue, and also includes stretches of South Avenue and Indianola Avenue.[20] By the end of the 1930s, businesses were beginning to expand in the heart of the Market Street corridor. The announcement of the impending opening of a Woolworth's store and a Kroger Grocery store was "expected to considerably enhance the importance of the 'uptown' area."[21] The post-war years saw Uptown expand even more. By this time the area represented a vital commercial and real estate hub in the city. A Pace and Associates report in 1957 established that for practically the first time shoppers were passing up the traditional downtown

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[19] Larry Quinn, "City Plans Lively Downtown Mall," *Youngstown Vindicator*, August 5, 1973, A-1.

[20] Boundaries for the uptown business district are taken from the Youngstown State University Center for Urban Studies and Market Street Merchants Association,

[21] "New Stores To Build In 'Uptown,' *Youngstown Vindicator*, December 14, 1937, 15.

shopping core in favor of places like the Belmont shopping area on the north side and the uptown district.[22] That same year the Uptown's Businessmen's Association formed. Comprised of eighty members initially, the association aimed to promote itself through a series of advertising campaigns promoting the area as a retail and services destination.[23] Undoubtedly shoppers did increasingly frequent the uptown, but what was the business condition of the area in the 1960s? How likely is it that the uptown played a decisive role in attracting consumers away from the downtown?

In 1961, approximately 118 retail establishments operated on the main arteries of the uptown area—those being east and west Market Street, also from the corner of Indianola Avenue and Hillman to South Avenue, and from Southern Boulevard to Brooklyn Avenue and Market.[24] That year there were twenty vacancies and two vacant storerooms. A decade later there were 105 retail establishments in the uptown. The number of vacancies increased to nearly forty and the number of vacant storerooms stood at thirteen.[25] So, although we do not have access to retail figures for the uptown business district, it's clear that businesses had closed and

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[22] "More City Shoppers Favor Outlying Centers," *Youngstown Vindicator*, April 7, 1957, B-10.

[23] "Form Association To Spur Shopping In Uptown District," *Youngstown Vindicator*, November, 14, 1957, A-5.

[24] *Youngstown City Directory*, Akron: Burch Directory Company Publishers, 1961. The definition of a retail establishment is taken from the U.S. Census Bureau, see

[25] *Youngstown City Directory*, Akron: Burch Directory Company publishers, 1971.

vacancies increased.[26] By the beginning of the 1970s, a tipping point had been reached in the relationship between the value of retail sales and the total number of retail establishments in Mahoning County (minus the city) versus Youngstown. The following charts show the gradual erosion of Youngstown's retail base as retail decentralized.
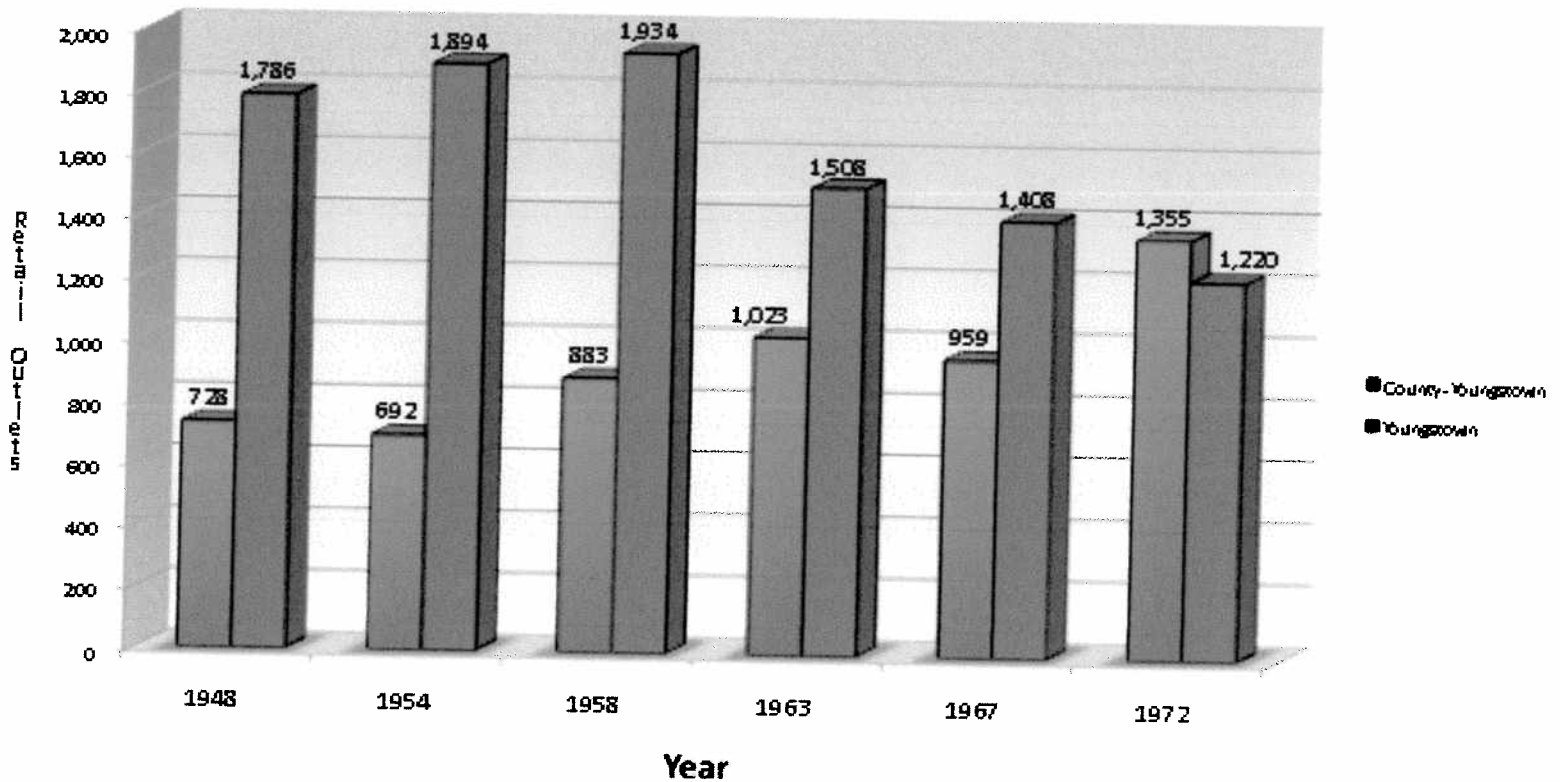
Youngstown and Mahoning County Retail Outlets

Chart 3.1

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[26] The more reliable figure is the total number of retail establishments (hand counted and referenced by the author) and not the total number of vacancies, which does not differentiate between residential and commercial real estate, though the majority of lots were commercially zoned and not apartments or homes.

$700,000
$600,000
$500,000
$400,000
$300,000
$200,000
$100,000
$-

1948   1954   1958   1963   1967   1972

* Youngstown
* Mahoning
County-Town
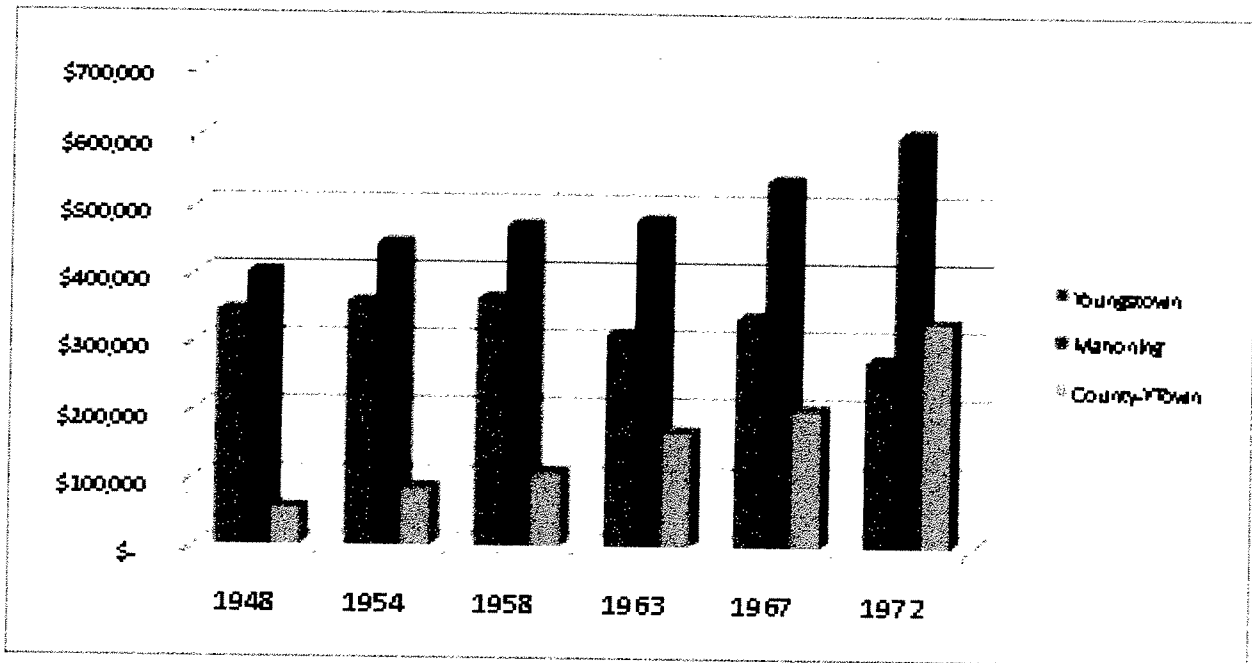
Chart 3.2

A 1970 survey of citizen opinions listed the decline of the downtown business district as one of the top ten problems in the city. It also elicited a variety of responses. Some blamed the tax structure. Others hoped urban renewal projects would revitalize the area.[27] The real issue was suburbanization. As historian Robert Fogelson puts it, "a nation of suburbs is not conducive to a thriving downtown."[28] The growth of the outlying areas, the construction of plazas and "strips" for convenient shopping, and finally the rise of the shopping mall greatly affected central business districts, and especially in Youngstown, all the retail districts in the city. From that point forward, the future of consumer and retail spending lay outside the city.

The decade of the 1960s proved to be even better for Boardman than the previous decade. Much of the population leaving the city was settling in this township—a solidly middle class area that basically occupied the middle ground between more working class Austintown and the more elite Canfield. The year 1962 saw nearly ten million dollars in building construction, a two million dollar increase over the year before, making it one of the most successful building years since the end of the 1940s. The first hospital built in Mahoning County that was not located in Youngstown also opened that year—a watershed event.[29] In 1965 the Boardman Township Zoning Inspector announced that the township had issued "12,211

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[27] City Planning Associates, *Preliminary Report for Youngstown, Ohio Community Renewal program R-108 (CR)* (Youngstown, Ohio, April, 1968), 32.

[28] Fogelson, 377.

[29] "1962 Building in Boardman Is $9, 098, 652," *Youngstown Vindicator,* January 10, 1963, A-4.

building permits since 1949, when zoning was established in Boardman, for a total valuation of $135, 380, 623."[30] In a little over a decade, the once largely rural township of Boardman became a bustling and rapidly grown suburban destination. The capstone to this process during the 1960s was the building of the Southern Park Mall, which, at the time, was one of the most modern shopping centers in the state, built by the same man responsible for the ultra-modern Boardman Plaza in the 1950s, Edward J. DeBartolo, Sr.

This massive increase in building and commercial retail led to Boardman eventually becoming the shopping destination, as well as one of the most attractive places to live in the county. Very much cognizant of this fact, Edward DeBartolo, who was already becoming one of the preeminent developers in the state and later the nation, took this opportunity to pursue his largest project yet. A nearly three year long fight with the Boardman Township Trustees was the first step in the effort to build a large mall complex in the vacant fields off of Route 224.[31] The initial pitchman for the project was another developer whose panache and business prowess was on par with that of DeBartolo, William Cafaro. When the mall was finally built though, the Cafaro Corporation had already moved on to another mall project in the area. Instead, Edward DeBartolo helmed the transformation of retail in the Youngstown area once again with the building of the Southern Park Mall. Along with the later opening of what was to be the Cafaro Corporation's Eastwood

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[30] "New Building In Boardman In 1965 Totals $9, 124, 234," *Youngstown Vindicator*, January 4, 1966, A-6.

[31] "Boardman Mall Gets Final OK," *Youngstown Vindicator*, April 22, 1966, A-1.

Mall in nearby Niles, the Southern Park Mall solidified the base of retail growth outside of Youngstown.

The opening of the Southern Park Mall on June 8, 1970, truly represented an auspicious occasion for the rising star of Edward DeBartolo and the growing importance of Boardman itself. Full-scale advertisements in the Youngstown Vindicator, complete with drawings for lavish trips to Italy, proclaimed the unique status of the new mall in the area:

> Stroll in complete, climate-controlled comfort throughout this ultra-modern, fully enclosed "Shopping City." You'll marvel at the beauty of the majestic court fountains, the crystal peacocks, and the wondrous gardens that are situated throughout the shopping concourses. Stop for refreshments. Enjoy a first-run movie. Dine in elegance.[32]

While billing itself as a collection of "the finest array of merchants ever assembled under one roof," the Southern Park Mall did indeed represent a shopping experience that no place in Youngstown could offer.[33] The mall had available space for over 100 stores and its estimated initial employment was 1,000 employees— later to grow to almost 3,000.[34] The parking lot could hold almost 6,000 cars and the mall itself covered nearly 100 acres.[35] Inside, over one million square feet of shopping space awaited consumers. This made it one of DeBartolo's very biggest

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[32] "Southern Park Mall is 11th For DeBartolo," (accompanying advertisement) *Youngstown Vindicator*, June 7, 1970, E-2.

[33] Ibid.,

[34] Ibid.,

[35] "Giant Boardman Mall To Employ 2,000 To 3,000, Provide Shopping In Luxury," *Youngstown Vindicator*, July 21, 1968, A-1.

mall projects up to that time, and one of the biggest malls in the state, not far removed from Dayton Mall in Dayton, Ohio—the state's largest.[36] Downtown department stores like Strouss-Hirshberg opened satellite stores in the mall. Sears and Roebuck actually closed their location in the uptown area and relocated to the Southern Park Mall. In a very short period of time, retailers flocked to fill available spaces in this new shopping megaplex.

The mall's first year ended up being a "very good" one, according to Southern Park's manager.[37] Later on that same year, DeBartolo announced that 1,000 more parking spaces would be built. Also announced was the future opening of a Horne's Department store, which was scheduled to increase the floor space to 1.25 million feet and make Southern Park Mall "one of the complete regional malls in the country."[38] Despite the presence of the mall, the Greater Boardman Plaza continued to thrive. In fact commercial development continued unabated. The same year the Southern Park Mall opened, yet another commercial plaza project came on line. This facility opened later at the corner of Route224 and Route 7.[39] Development on Route 224 gained even more steam in later years.

Not to be outdone by Edward DeBartolo, fellow mall magnate, William Cafaro, who mysteriously dropped his bid to build a mall in Boardman in 1968, set

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[36] Ibid.,

[37] "Southern Park Mall's First Year A Good One," *Youngstown Vindicator*, May 23, 1971, B-1.

[38] "Pittsburgh Firm sets Debut," *Youngstown Vindicator*, November, 11, 1971, B-4.

[39] "Boardman To Get New Shop Center," *Youngstown Vindicator*, July 13, 1971, A-4.

his sights instead on opening a shopping facility in the small working class city of

nearby Niles. The man who would later "change the way America shops," started his

life in the tough and solidly working class east side of Youngstown.[40] He made his

start in the business world with automotive dealerships and he quickly branched

out into developing, eventually forming the Cafaro Corporation. In 1965 the Cafaro

Corporation built one of the first enclosed shopping malls in the region in Lima,

Ohio.[41] With the construction of the Eastwood Mall, Cafaro pioneered one of the

very first "regional malls," which also ended up, for a time, being the largest mall in

the country as well.[42]

The sprawling Eastwood Mall Complex proved every bit as spacious and

elegant as the Southern Park Mall. In another case of the unintended consequences

of the arterial highway system, easy access to the expressway made the vacant land

where the mall eventually sprang up a desirable piece of property.[43] Over 3,000

employees worked in Eastwood's vast, climate controlled spaces. This, like the

Southern Park Mall, made it more attractive than the all-weather, outdoor shopping

districts in the city. Also, like most malls of the time, indoor foliage, trees, large

fountains, and specially designed walkways were located throughout. Even more

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[40] "Developer Of Malls, Philanthropist Dies," *Youngstown Vindicator*, April 23, 1998, A-1.

[41] Ibid.,

[42] Joshua Freed, "Mall Of America Wants Its 'Biggest Title Back," *Seattle Times*, March 22, 2007,
Accessed April 13, 2011.

[43] "Cafaro's Huge Warren Mall Nearly Ready," *Youngstown Vindicator*, January 12, 1969, E-26.

impressive was the 1,000 seat theater and the extravagant restaurant/lounge known as the "Top of the Mall," which cost over a million dollars by itself.[44]

Much like the Southern Park Mall, opening day ended up being a very auspicious occasion for the Eastwood Mall. Thousands of people clogged the roads to get there. The president of Montgomery Ward's Department Store made a special trip to Eastwood for the opening. Chairman James Nash of the Cleveland Montgomery Wards termed it among the best malls he had seen anywhere in the country.[45] Even Miss U.S.A. showed up to cut the ceremonial ribbon. Almost certainly equally elated at the mall's opening were the city fathers of Niles, as the area looked at about $500,000 in extra tax revenue a year as a result of the mall. However, just as with the Southern Park Mall in Boardman, the city of Youngstown ended up the real loser.

Aside from their importance in undermining retail in the city, the Eastwood and Southern Park Malls were part of what became a formula of sorts for mall development in the post-war era. It is true that consumers—who were rapidly acclimating to the mass-consumption formula that became the heart of an American economy increasingly reliant on consumer spending—embraced the conveniences of mall and plaza shopping: all weather shopping, chain stores with predictable offerings, and elaborate surrounding being chief among them. These shopping centers also replaced downtowns as the centers of community life, as suburbs replaced cities as the locations for these communities. The overtones of this change

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[44] Ibid.,

[45] "Giant Eastwood Mall Opens," *Youngstown Vindicator*, September 17, 1969, A-1.

over were also socially exclusionary. Harvard historian Lizabeth Cohen describes the nature of this new paradigm: "Developers and store owners also set out to exclude from this new public space unwanted urban elements, such as prostitutes, disruptive rebels, and racial minorities."[46] These new centers of community life started as explicitly and implicitly white. Nor was this accidental, according to Cohen; developers saw deeply redlined and segregated suburban communities as ideal locations for mall development.[47] In other words, white suburban consumers with disposable income drove the movement of retail in the Youngstown area, while at first the downtown and then the uptown decayed as the neighborhoods around them became increasingly African American and more impoverished.

The suburbanization of economic growth also set a terrible precedent that only grew worse over time: the concentration of growth in a narrow segment of the metropolitan area. Yet, few people seemed to fear that trend. DeBartolo himself— and probably Cafaro—certainly did not. DeBartolo slammed the city of Youngstown as politically backward and unprogressive; in contrast, he praised the Boardman Township Trustees for there "progressive thinking," in regards to his mall.[48] Never mind that there was very little that was progressive about the promotion of sprawl and decentralization, though quite obviously the trustees and the DeBartolo Corporation pursued their own self-interests. DeBartolo also seemed unfazed by his prediction that within the next couple of decades the populations of Boardman,

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[46] Cohen, 265.

[47] Ibid.,

[48] "Pittsburgh Firm Sets," B-4.

Poland, and Canfield, would be greater than that of Youngstown. In his hubris

DeBartolo later tried his hand at revitalizing the downtown with a plan he helped

craft; it failed. The real reason for the decay of the city's commercial districts was

the same reason that Youngstown's inner city neighborhoods became increasingly

distressed: flight from the city, spreading poverty, blight, and segregation.

The suburbs continued the growth they experienced in the 1950s during the

decade of the 1960s, while the city itself continued to decline. The depth of

population loss in Youngstown during the 1960s compared to other similar

midsized industrial cities is readily seen in the following chart.

% Negative Population Decline - 1960 to 1970

Akron: 5
Canton: 3.1
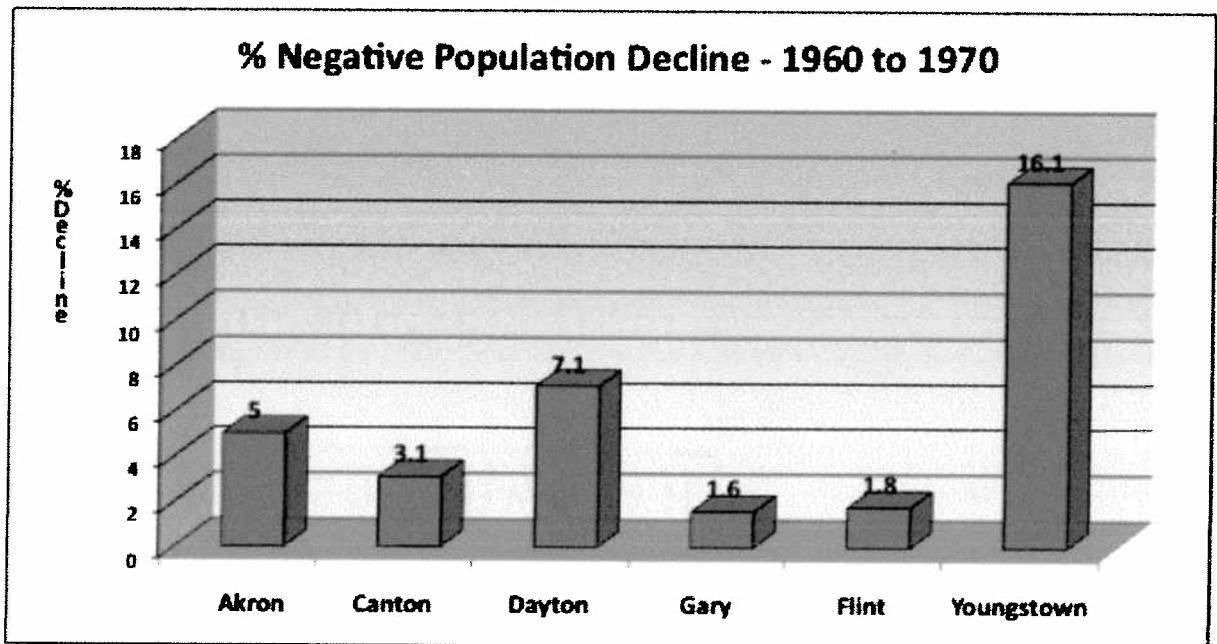Dayton: 7.1
Gary: 1.6
Flint: 1.8
Youngstown: 16.1

Chart 3.3

Source: U.S. Census of Population

Youngstown's population dropped even further than larger industrial cities like Cleveland and Detroit—which lost 14.3 percent and 9.7 percent respectively.[49]

As the population declined, the core business districts eroded in Youngstown, as did neighborhood businesses that long served as cornerstones of the community. A particularly sad example was the disappearance of neighborhood grocers. Between the end of World War two and 1970, seventy percent of Youngstown's neighborhood grocers closed.[50] They fell prey both to the large chain stores that were becoming ubiquitous in retail, but also to the movement of the population out of the city. This became the first step in what would eventually become the rise of "food deserts" in the city, where entire neighborhoods lack any ready access to fresh groceries. Both the rifts that opened up between the city and the suburbs, and the growing inequality between the inner city and outlying areas, were ultimately heavily influenced—and perhaps made irresolvable—because of the issue of race.

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[49] US Census Bureau, *Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790 to 1990.* (Washington D.C., 2000)

[50] Frederick J. Blue, William D Jenkins, H. William Lawson and Joan M. Reedy, *Mahoning Memories: A History of Youngstown and Mahoning County* (Virginia Beach: Donning Company Publishers, 1995), 44.

Chapter Four

Separate and Unequal

The 1960s, and indeed much of the 1950s, saw the problem of race explode

across the American Landscape. The dismantling of Jim Crow and the start of the

Civil Rights Movement mainly affected the southern states. Race did, however, come

to increasingly dominate—in many ways—the politics and society of cities in the

Midwest, east, and northeast in particular, as well as western cities such as Los

Angeles, during the early and mid-twentieth century. For almost all of America's

history the African American population resided almost entirely in the south. This

was a by-product of slavery and the continued attachment of many African

Americans to the land, mostly in the form of sharecropping.

By the early 1940s, the increased mechanization of agricultural largely put an

end to sharecropping. During roughly the next three decades, approximately five

million African Americans left the south, mostly to seek employment in

manufacturing cities in the Great Migration.[1] This movement of blacks out of the

south was the largest internal movement of people in United States history[2]. It had

critical implications for Youngstown. As the black population grew over the decades

from the early 1920s into the 1950s and 1960s, a variety of measures were used to

[1] Nicholas Lehman, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How it Changed America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 410.

[2] The Great Migration is often looked at as two waves of migration. The first was mostly driven by the lack of demand for agricultural workers, due to cotton crop destruction in the south from the Boll Weevil and from an increased demand for workers during the Great War. About one and a half million African Americans left the south during the period 1910 to 1930.

contain and isolate Youngstown city's African American population. Combined with the adverse effects of urban renewal, this fragmented the city and the entire metropolitan area hopelessly by race and set the stage for Youngstown's becoming one of the most segregated cities in America.

It is impossible to understand the post-war city without understanding race and its construction. The role race has played though is muddied by its inclusion into supposedly larger concepts. Social scientists Michael Omi and Howard Winant elaborate on the misunderstanding of race in historical and sociological analyses: "In general, theoretical work on race has not successfully grasped the shifting nature of racial dynamics in the postwar U.S.... Most theories are marked by a tendency to reduce race to a mere manifestation of other supposedly more fundamental social and political relationships such as class and ethnicity."[3] In particular, the "ethnic" theory of assimilation—one based very much on a European model —failed when it came to the "problem" of African Americans. The emergence of "white studies" in recent years has provided ample evidence of not only the failure of assimilation based on a European Model, but also of the failure of models that center mostly on class based theories of inequality.[4]

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[3] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (London: Routledge, 1994), 2.

[4] For some noted texts in whiteness studies see Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2010); George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006, Rev ed.) and for class based analyses of race see David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso Books, 1999) and also by Roediger *Working Their Way Towards Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White. The Strange Journey From Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005)

During much of the first half of the twentieth century, European ethnicity and

"whiteness" were not synonymous. As more and more Southern and Eastern

Europeans arrived in the states, questions of who would be called white amplified.

The term "dark white" was sometimes used to delineate those from Southern and

Eastern European backgrounds.[5] In many Midwestern counties, including Mahoning

County, the self-proclaimed protectors of whiteness, the Ku Klux Klan, experienced a

revival during the 1920s. They targeted Catholics and Italians (also Jews), mostly

due to their being "foreign" and perhaps non-white.[6] This targeting of foreigners

often carried over into the work place. Sherry Lincoln and John Russo point out that

racial divides in Youngstown were complicated during the early part of the

Twentieth Century. Using a series of poems written by a steelworker from nearby

Warren, Russo and Lincoln suggest racial divides between "black sheep" (strike

breakers) and "whitemen" could easily have been between native whites from

Northern European countries and immigrants from Southern and Central Europe,

not just between European Americans and African Americans.[7]

During the New Deal period the definition of white changed—yet again.

Historian Nell Irvin painter calls this era the "third enlargement of American

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[5] David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White. The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 4.

[6] Thomas R. Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and Decline of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s* (Lanham: Ivan R. Dee, 2011), IX. For more information on the Klan and Youngstown/Mahoning Valley, see William D. Jenkins, *Steel Valley Klan: The Ku Klux Klan in Ohio's Mahoning Valley* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1990)

[7] Lincoln and Russo, 121.

whiteness."[8] The first enlargement of whiteness took place during the first part of

the 1900s. This involved the removal of property ownership as a basic perquisite for

voting. Poorer Anglo American whites could then join their wealthier counterparts

in exercising the right to cast a ballot. The second enlargement of whiteness

happened in the post-Civil War era, as mass migration from Southern and Eastern

Europe helped push the definition of whiteness beyond those principally coming

from Anglo Saxon and Nordic backgrounds. In the third enlargement of whiteness,

all Ethnic Europeans essentially became white, largely due to the deliberate

segregationist policies of the Federal Housing Administration, which led to the

suburbs becoming nearly entirely European American. In Detroit, another

manufacturing city with many parallels to Youngstown, "whiteness" was fully

extended to previously labeled "ethnics," as more and more African Americans

moved to the city.[9] The same process played out in Youngstown.

Historian Robert Bruno notes the changes that took place in the racial

character and make up of post-war neighborhoods.

> The character of Youngstown residential areas changed
> from late 1940s to the late 1950s. Housing settlements
> based on pre-middle-income wages produced more
> racially integrated neighborhoods than ethnically mixed
> ones. But after workers began to move into areas a bit
> further from the mills, they found themselves living
> next door to families of different ethnicity. Rising
> incomes enabled workers of all nationalities to choose

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[8] Painter, 359.

[9] Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Post-War Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 123.

housing that broke down earlier ethnic barriers among neighborhoods.[10]

This is not to say that inter-ethnic prejudice died out among European Americans, but it took on a different cast when compared to the structural forces that kept blacks out of certain neighborhoods in the city, and out of the suburbs essentially all together. Bruno goes on to describe the nature of post-war segregation: "Bank lending policies left black workers behind in what were once integrated neighborhoods. The city of Youngstown was notorious for its residential redlining, and every black worker I interviewed expressed resentment about being unable to get a mortgage from local banks."[11] As the 1960s progressed, the conflicts in Youngstown increasingly came to pit not ethnic group against ethnic group, but white against black. This process would eventually balkanize large parts of the city and the suburbs. While animosity between Catholics and Protestants, Italians and Anglos, did continue on a limited basis, these fissures lessened over time in the face of growing racial divisions.

African Americans who migrated to Youngstown seeking employment in Youngstown's steel mills found themselves assigned to the very worst jobs.[12] Coal and steel companies also brought in African Americans as strikebreakers, a common tactic designed to pit workers against each other. University of Chicago

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[10] Robert Bruno, *Steelworker Alley: How Class Works in Youngstown* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 33.

[11] Ibid., 33.

[12] Beverly, 80.

Business Professor Sean Safford points out, the steel company owners (or "northern European elites," as Safford refers to them) purposely segregated workers by ethnicity and in company housing in Youngstown. This promoted balkanization among workers, something that apparently did not happen in the Lehigh Valley— which Safford compares to the Mahoning Valley/Youngstown.[13] What Safford neglects to mention though is that steel companies in Youngstown didn't invent anything new with this trick. They were well aware of ethnic rivalries and played upon them—much to the detriment of the city's future. In Youngstown, unlike the Lehigh Valley, a substantial and growing minority of African Americans in the early and mid-twentieth century hardened these rivalries along racial lines. Youngstown's demographics were (and are) quite different than Allentown's. By 1970, African Americans made up a quarter of Youngstown's population, where Allentown's African American population did not even make up two percent of the city's overall population.[14] Basically, Safford underestimates the importance of the racial divide in Youngstown and the profound affect it had on how whites came to view the city— especially the inner city—as it changed demographically. The already strained relationship between Youngstown and the outlying areas grew worse as whites fled the city in the wake of encroaching African American populations.

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[13] Sean Safford, *Why the Garden Club Couldn't Save Youngstown: The Transformation of the Rust Belt*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 57-58.

[14] U.S. Census Bureau, City and County Data Book, "Cities: Population, 1970 (April 1)"

In the immediate post-war period African Americans were already bunched together in neighborhoods, mostly in inner city neighborhoods near the core.[15] In the 1950s and 1960s, the destruction of black neighborhoods saw more and more African Americans pushed into these areas. Thus an already untenable system of racial segregation became worse as inner city neighborhoods began to deteriorate during the 1960s. White flight was also one of the other main reasons for that decay. As the black population grew and began trying to break out of redlined areas in the city core, whites began leaving in increased numbers to suburbs where African Americans were unable to follow. This resulted in continued disinvestment from the city core, increased segregation of schools, growing concentrations of poverty, and conflicts over the integrating of neighborhoods.

As the African American population in Youngstown climbed, the white population began decreasing in very close proportions. The following graphs illustrate that effect for the years 1940 to 1970.

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[15] *One Hundred Ways to View Our City: The City vs. The Suburb, 2.*

Percent Black and White Population 1940-1970
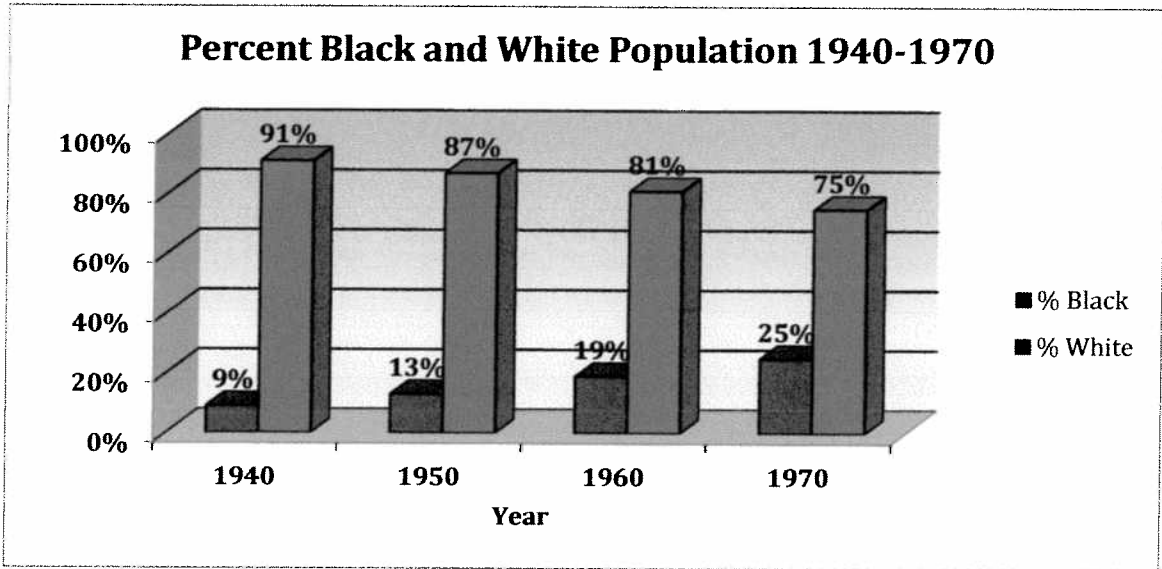

Chart 4.1
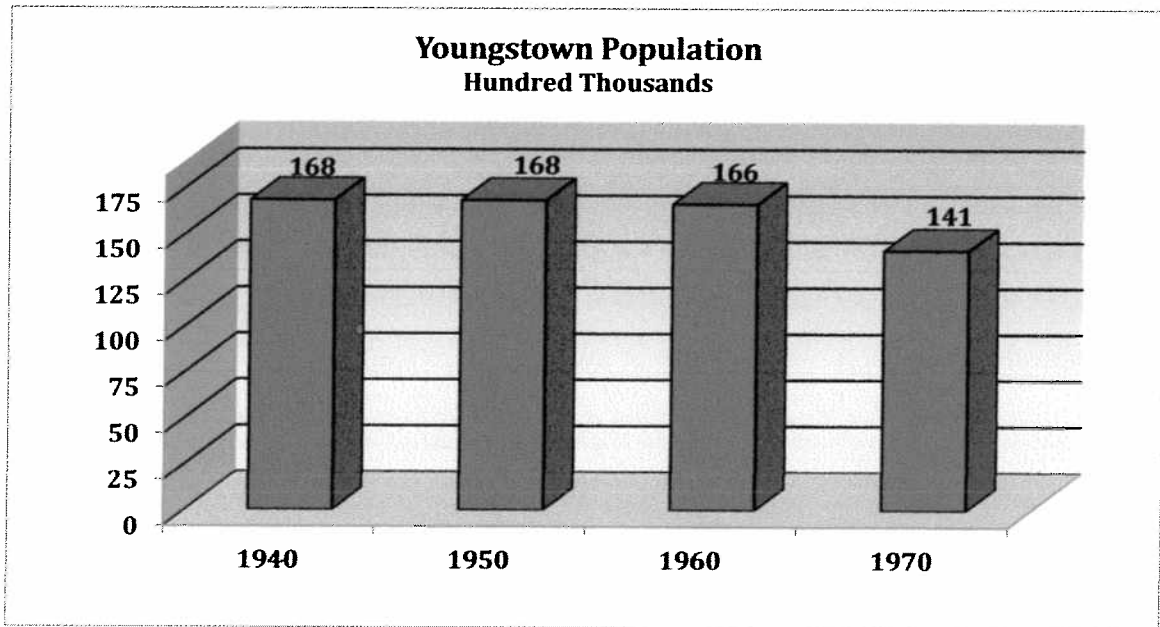
Youngstown Population
Hundred Thousands

Chart 4.2

Source: U.S. Census of the Population

Segregation was already present within Youngstown before the population

shift in the 1960s, but it hardened even further after 1960, when residential

segregation was more complete than it had been at any time in the city's history.[16]

The following map charts racial segregation in 1960. Over the course of the

decade, as white flight to the suburbs increased, segregation in residential living

became more pronounced, even as the segregation in public facilities ended as a
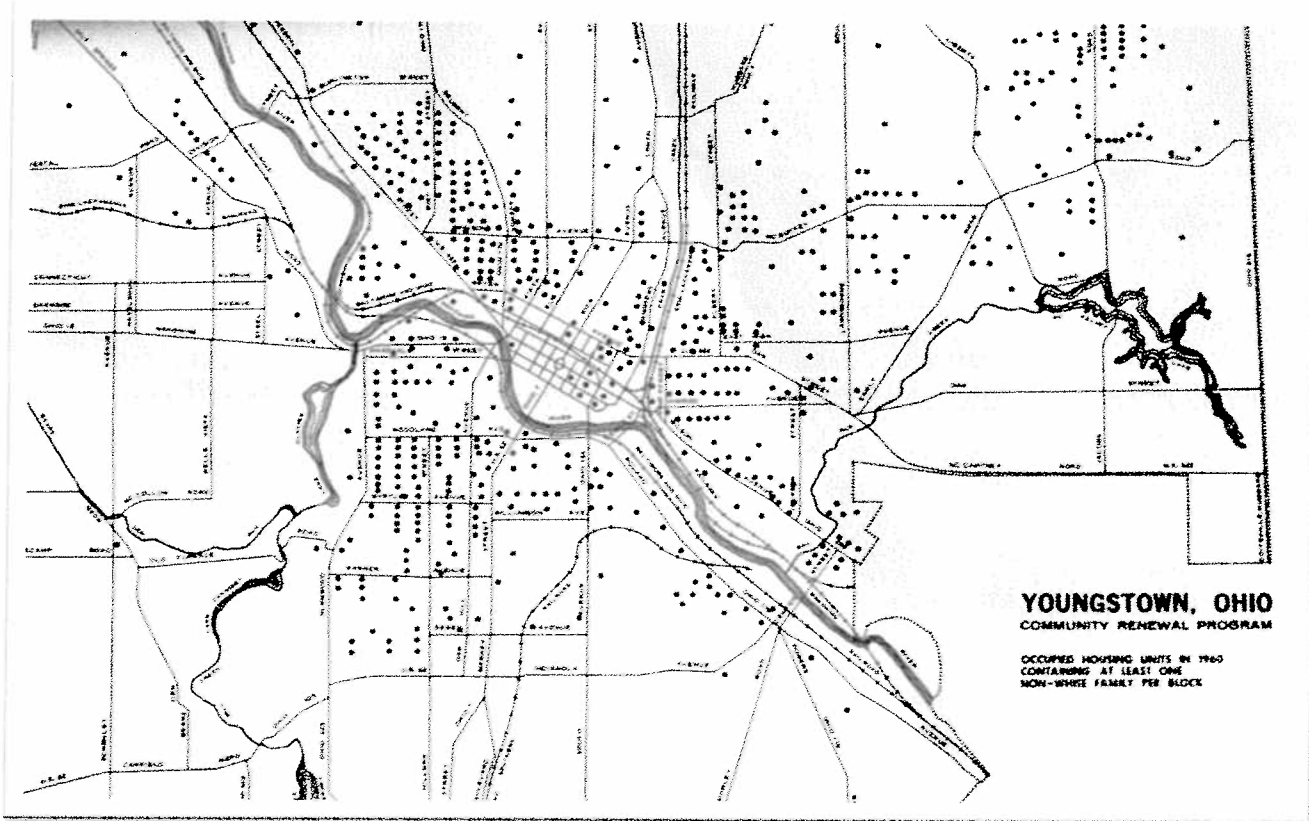
practice.

YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO
COMMUNITY RENEWAL PROGRAM

OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS IN 1960
CONTAINING AT LEAST ONE
NON-WHITE FAMILY PER BLOCK

Figure 4.1

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[16] George D. Beelan, "The Negro in Youngstown: Growth of a Ghetto," (seminar
paper, Kent State University, 1967), 4.

Source: City Planning Associates Inc. *Social Inventory Preliminary Report, Community Renewal Program r-108 (CR)*, Volume 1 (Youngstown, 1968), 89.

The map above is admittedly imperfect; Puerto Ricans are also included in the "non-white" category. It does give some idea of the completeness of segregation in certain parts of the city, particularly in the west and upper south side. As mentioned previously, this would have an enormous impact on the housing conditions for African Americans in the city—especially after the urban renewal campaigns—and for the physical condition of the housing stock in inner city black neighborhoods.

In a 1965, the city of Youngstown reported that nearly twenty percent of housing could be labeled as "deteriorating or dilapidated condition."[17] The majority of that stock was in African American sections of the city. Any real growth in housing occurred during the 1960s outside of the inner core of Youngstown.[18] In other words, white housing markets grew, while African Americans of all classes were left behind. African American homeowner rates also seriously lagged behind white rates of homeownership, and notoriously, rental units tend to decline faster than units owned by the individual occupant. The black housing situation eroded further because of this. African Americans tended to be far more likely to occupy deteriorating rental units as well as homes they actually owned.[19] Youngstown's

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[17] City Planning Commission, *Housing Trends and Characteristics,* (Youngstown, 1965), 31.

[18] Ibid., 29.

Planning Commission admitted as much: "Their (African Americans) choice of location remains more restricted (compared to white families) by racial prejudices, covenants and fewer economic opportunities which would enable them to afford better rentals and purchase units."[20] The following map charts the growth and reduction in housing during the years 1950-1960. The decrease in housing and the decrease in housing construction correlate with predominately white and predominately black areas of the city.
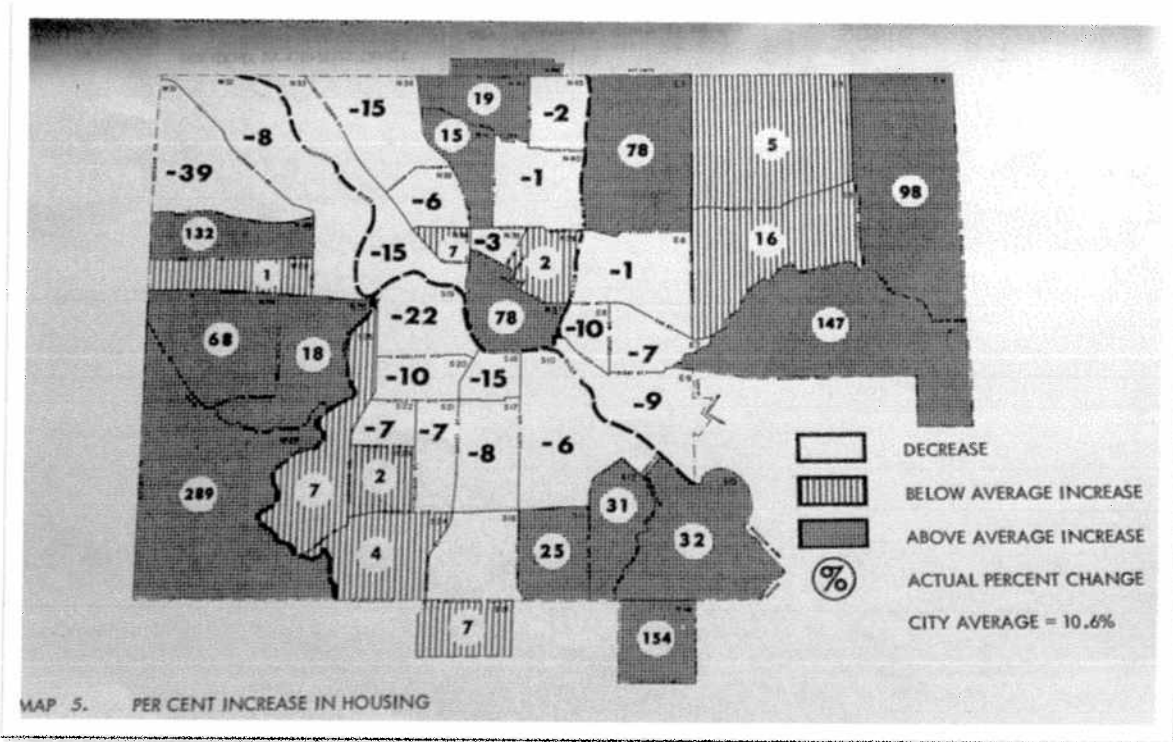

Figure 4.2

Source: City Planning Commission, *Housing Trends and Characteristics* (Youngstown, 1965), 10.

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[19] Ibid., 21.

[20] Ibid., 22.

The plight of housing for African Americans coupled with the expansion of the suburbs resulted in conflicts over attempts by black citizens to move into redlined areas. Similar conflicts came to cities throughout the Midwest and Northeast. In manufacturing centers like Detroit, widespread violence greeted attempts at neighborhood integration.[21] Youngstown's experience involved less overt conflict, but did see African American's face peril when attempting to enter white housing markets. Future *New York Times* Editor Mel Watkins remembers "bombings, cross burnings, and milder protests" directed at blacks who managed to find real estate agents that would sell to them in white neighborhoods.[22] According to north side resident Katherine Bowers, "If you did find a realtor who would sell you a house, you stood a chance of having it burnt down or having paint thrown all over."[23] Arson drove out African American homeowners like Pearl Cox Spencer, who moved near one of the elite white neighborhoods near Fifth Avenue on the north side.[24]

Even certain neighborhoods inside the city, and especially in the suburbs, were problematic for blacks to be seen in after dark. Governor Bowers was among the few African Americans working in Boardman during that time: "After the busses stopped running, approximately 6:30...if you were in one of those white

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[21] Sugrue, XVI.

[22] Watkins, 277.

[23] Katherine and Governor Bowers, Interview by Michael Beverly, August 1998, transcript, Oral History Program, Youngstown State University, Youngstown, OH.

[24] "Negro Woman Sells Home In White Area," *Youngstown Vindicator*, February 20, 1969, 19.

neighborhoods, the police would be there to find out why." This rule also applied to certain neighborhoods in Youngstown: "You did not walk through neighborhoods like Gypsy Lane and all up in through there, up by fifth avenue, all of that...you did not cruise through there in a car because the police would be there to stop you."[25]

Various groups tried to stem wholesale segregation, in the city at least. The Youngstown Fair Housing Committee organized to look into violations of the 1964 Ohio Fair Housing Law. However, the fair housing movement ultimately failed to overcome obstacles to the increasing segregation of the area. Worsening race relations during the decade and the eventual rise of Black Nationalist movements that rejected integration, along with continued white flight, made meaningful housing integration nearly impossible.

Segregation's impact directly affected schools. Youngstown's schools started to gradually decline during the 1960s. This was the beginning of a devolution that led to the school district becoming the worst in the state by the 21st Century. In 1953, Youngstown's junior and high schools were among the highest ranked public schools.[26] Yet, a little over a decade later, segregation and poverty were taking a toll. The local African American newspaper, *The Buckeye Review*, sounded the alarm as white students increasingly withdrew from public schools in the 1960s: "If you don't think this you as a Negro, Afro-American, Black or what-have-you should be

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[25] Katherine and Governor Bowers, Interview by Michael Beverly, August 1998, transcript, Oral History Program, Youngstown State University, Youngstown, OH.

[26] "Youngstown's High Schools Get Top Rating," *Youngstown Vindicator*, May 19, 1953, A-11.

seriously thinking about, brother, you have a hole in your head."[27] In 1969 alone

nearly a thousand fewer students enrolled in the public schools, while 1,000 new

students entered public schools in the outlying areas, or in Catholic Schools in the

city.[28] Poorer and more isolated black neighborhoods began producing more high

school dropouts already by the mid-to-late 1960s. The following chart illustrates

this effect by looking at two predominately black and two predominately white

neighborhoods.

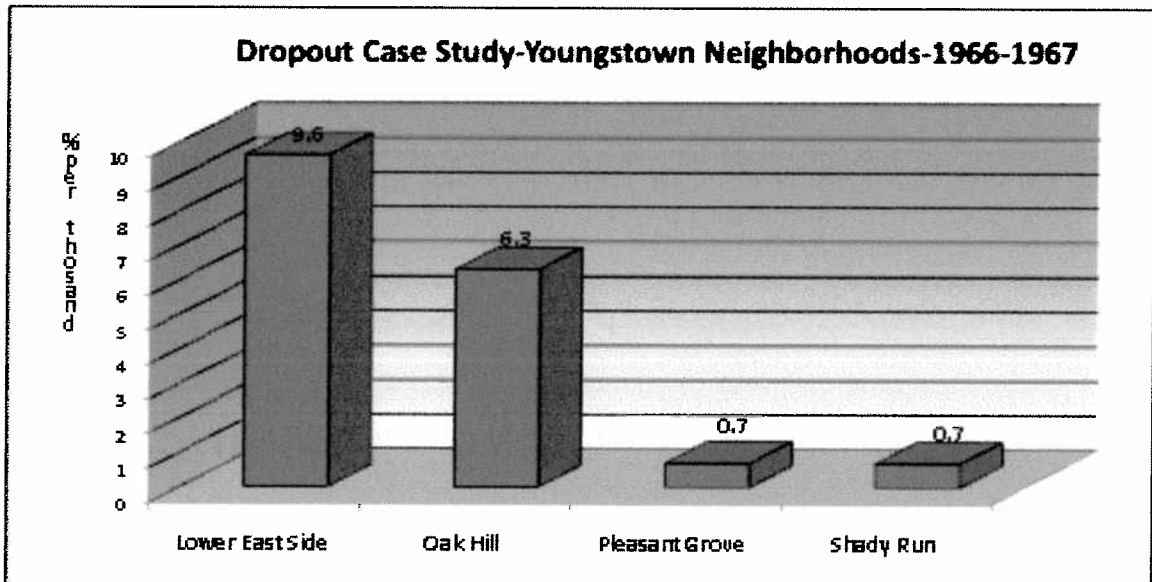**Dropout Case Study-Youngstown Neighborhoods-1966-1967**

Chart 4.3

Source: City Planning Associates Inc., Social Inventory Preliminary Report,
Community Renewal Program R-108 (CR), Volume 1 (Youngstown, Ohio, 1968), 69.

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[27] Shifting Scenes, *The Buckeye Review*, September 5, 1969, 2.

[28] Ibid.,

The highest rates of students dropping out of high school during the late 1960s also tended to cluster together in primarily African American neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty.
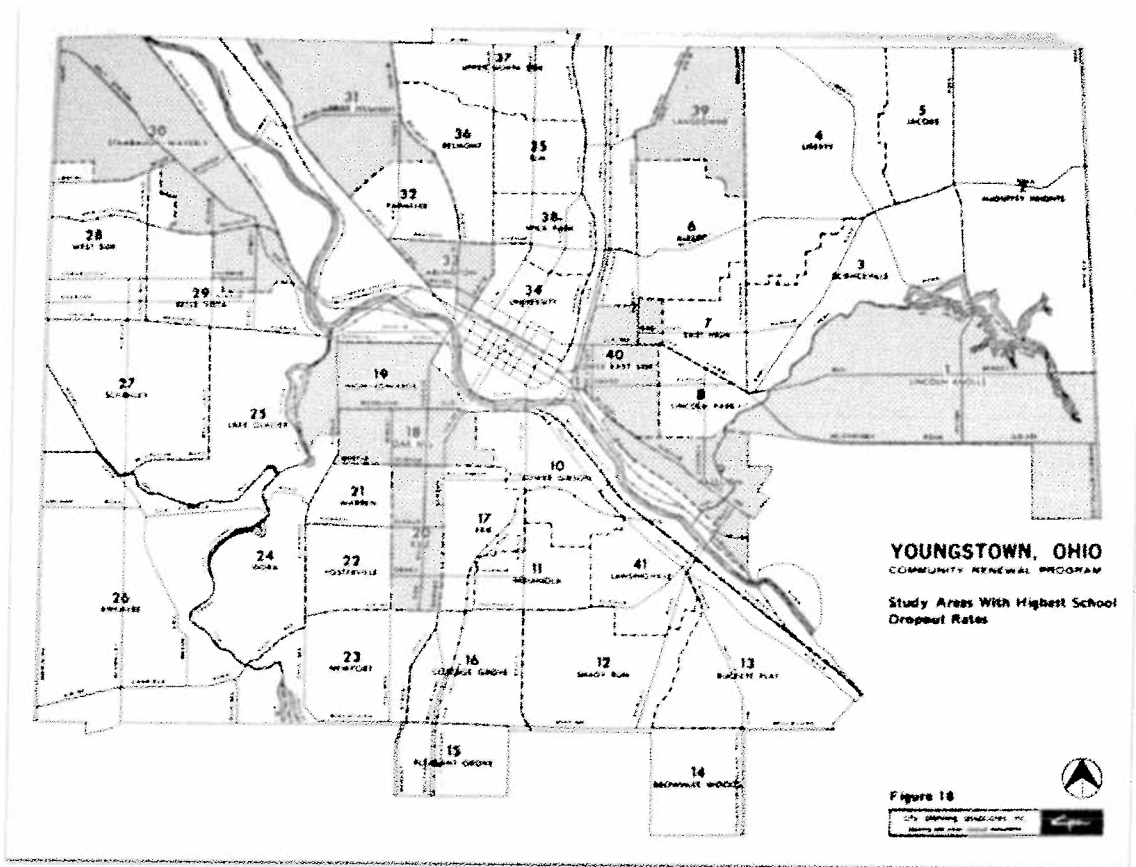

Figure 4.3

Source: City Planning Associates Inc., Social Inventory Preliminary Report, Community Renewal Program R-108 (CR), Volume 1 (Youngstown, Ohio, 1968), 70.

The lower east side and the south side around Oak Hill and Hillman Street,

which are prominently represented among areas with concentrations of drop-outs,

would in particular become troubled areas as the 1960s came to a close. Enormous

differences in educational funding between the city and outlying areas increased

with white flight and segregation. The cities tax evaluation dropped by nearly ten

million dollars in 1969. The year before, the city's eighth straight school levy

failed—quite possibly as the result of an older white population and a younger and

increasingly black school aged population. The levy's defeat resulted in the actual

closure of Youngstown City Schools from Thanksgiving 1968 till into January of

1969.[29] The situation couldn't have been more different in the suburbs. Austintown

passed a nearly two million-dollar levy and a four and a half million-dollar bond

issue in order to construct a new high school.[30] Boardman increased its operating

budget by over $100,000 dollars in 1966, largely due to increased enrollment.[31] As

Youngstown's Schools tried to emerge from a shutdown in 1969, Boardman passed

a record levy and okayed the largest operating budget in the township's history.[32]

By the 1970s, Youngstown City Schools were in trouble. They were also part of a

growing system of separate and unequal education.

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[29] Aley, 486.

[30] "Austintown High School Issue Wins," *Youngstown Vindicator*, November 3, 1965, 37.

[31] "OK $2,958,000 Budget For Boardman Schools," *Youngstown Vindicator*, July 21, 1966, 2.

[32] "Boardman Schools OK Record Budget For '69, *Youngstown Vindicator*, January 16, 1969, 11.

Conditions in schools on the south side crumbled as the area's demographics changed. The facilities in schools in southeast Youngstown proved insufficient at best and deplorable at worst. Overcrowding was common. At the Adam's School, the science room lacked facilities for experiments. Even the heating failed to work properly. Showers regularly flooded into the gym. The *Youngstown Vindicator* reported that Jackson Elementary had almost 500 children crammed into nineteen classrooms in a building over fifty years old with a leaking roof. Staff or students jammed paper into windows to keep rooms warm and windows regularly exploded out of crumbling frames when the wind kicked up. At the Bancroft School the gymnasium also served as the lunchroom. Bathrooms were extraordinarily offensive.[33]

Efforts to fight poor school conditions and segregation increased in the late 1960s and early 1970s. An investigation and survey conducted by the Youngstown Urban League found that many older schools that Youngstown had dubbed "dream schools" were actually run down and poorly taken care of. Lavatories, gyms, and eating facilities were sub-par. African American students at South High threatened to take matters into their own hands if conditions did not improve. In the early 1970s, the NAACP declared that Youngstown was "in the category of bona fide de facto segregation."[34] Citing a study of Youngstown City Schools, the NAACP showed that three fourths of the school system's black population attended four high schools in the city, while the remaining two high schools consisted of three fourths of the

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[33] "Cite Old Jammed Schools," *Youngstown Vindicator*, April 7, 1970, A-1.

[34] "Defends School Segregation Here," *Youngstown Vindicator*, March 26, 1974, 81.

white student body. They suggested that the building of new schools had been done to enforce segregation and that they planned to file a motion in federal court against the school system.

Segregation reshaped whole parts of the city. The solidifying of certain parts of the city—especially the west side—as essentially completely white, and the exodus of more whites to the suburbs, resulted in a growing spatial inequality during the 1960s. This spatial inequality resulted in deteriorating neighborhoods, segregated and inferior schools, and growing high school dropout rates. Economic changes in the central city aggravated the situation further, giving rise to concentrations of poverty, and eventually to "jobless neighborhoods." The aforementioned changes by the late 1960s threatened to explode and render integration an impossible dream. Riots sparked, racial tensions rose, Black Nationalist groups emerged, and the stage was set for the ghettoization of much of the inner city. It also hardened the antagonistic relationship between the city and the outlying areas, as riots and Black Power furthered the idea of Youngstown as an increasingly "black city," and a dangerous one at that.

Chapter 5

Poverty and Revolt

The decline of many Rust Belt cities began in earnest during the 1960s. The

reasons are multifaceted and complex: increased segregation, deteriorating race

relations, growth of concentrated poverty, early deindustrialization, and the shift in

employment opportunities out of the inner city. Youngstown followed this pattern

fairly evenly, though examinations of the city's history have largely overlooked the

origins of these problems in the city—at least in any detail. Social and economic

problems started to blossom some years before the first steel mill in the area closed.

These problems later spread to nearly every corner of the city first full emerged first

in the inner city during the 1960s.

America's slow-down in economic growth in the late 1950s led to interest in

and debate about growing poverty.[1] The debate of how and why poverty proved

both controversial and at times contradictory. In 1959 and 1960, the Special

Committee on Unemployment Problems, organized by the U.S. Senate, gathered

information and interviewed a wide variety of individuals, from scholars to the out

of work. The ensuing debate about those findings revolved around Keynesian

approaches to economic growth to "cure poverty" and to approaches that

acknowledged poverty as part of "structural unemployment," linked to life

obstacles—including racism—that persisted through all parts of the economic

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[1] Frank Stricker, *How America Lost the War on Poverty—And How to Win It,* (Chapel
Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 1.

cycle.[2] As historian Frank Stricker mentions, influential liberal books at the time, though they did criticize measures of economic growth and prosperity, alluded to cultural problems among the poor as a substantial issue.[3] This—combined with the fact that those on the side of structural theories of poverty lost out—led to some of the attitudes implicitly ingrained in Great Society "War on Poverty" Programs.

The concept of deindustrialization is often connected by historians to post 1960s events, but as Thomas Sugure has detailed, the decline in manufacturing employment started much earlier. Employment in the auto industry starting declining in Detroit during the 1950s—the closing of massive Packard Plant in Detroit is a prime example. Sugrue writes the "structure of the economy has been the most important force in shaping poverty."[4] Over one and half million manufacturing jobs disappeared nationally between the early 1950s and the early 1960s. African Americans were disproportionately affected by this change.[5]

In Youngstown, the late 1950s and 1960s saw a noticeable deterioration in manufacturing employment. The cyclical nature of the steel industry, the dominant source of manufacturing jobs in the Youngstown area—was a constant source of economic problems for workers; it was particularly acute in the late 1950s. By 1960,

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[2] Ibid., 16.

[3] Ibid., 2; Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*, (1961; repr., New York: Touchstone, 1997); John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, (1958; repr., New York: Mariner books, 1998)

[4] Thomas Sugrue, "The Structures of Urban Poverty," in *The Underclass Debate: Views From History*, ed. Michael Katz (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 88.

[5] Jeremy Rifkin, *The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era.* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), 73.

the national press had dubbed Youngstown "steel's sick city." The Department of Labor listed the city as one of the most depressed in the nation.[6] In the first two years of the 1960s, the Youngstown-Warren Metropolitan Area registered an over nineteen percent decline in manufacturing employment.[7] Two years later Sharon Steel's mill in nearby Lowellville, Ohio closed. Long-term job loss became a real factor as well. Between 1950 and 1970, 8,000 jobs in primary steel alone disappeared.[8]

African Americans long had a tenuous relationship with steel, manufacturing, and trade employment in Youngstown. As late as the early 1970s they were also greatly underrepresented in a wide variety of the trades—a critical sector of employment for a primarily blue-collar city.[9] Mel Watkins describes the plight of African American steel workers vividly in his autobiography: "And us the last hired and first fired, even in Youngstown's thriving steel industry, they were not inclined to depend entirely on the security of a job."[10] Even for those accustomed to working multiple jobs or dealing in the local underground economy, the changes that job loss—along with increased segregation—brought during the 1960s destabilized many lives, especially among the young. These changes, similar to the aforementioned changes in education, would become most apparent in segregated

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[6] Aley, 447, 453.

[7] Ibid., 461.

[8] Etlinger, "Mahoning Valley: Steel and the Suburbs,"

[9] Reuben McMillan Free Library, "*Black History in Youngstown, Ohio,*" (Youngstown: 1975) 7.

[10] Watkins, 42.

neighborhoods where increasing amounts of African Americans displaced by urban renewal and stifled by redlining lived.

The launching of Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" and the subsequent "War on Poverty" in 1964 brought many of the liberal ideas about poverty to the forefront in a variety of new government programs. The Youngstown Community Action Council (CAC) formed during this time in coordination with the Office of Economic Opportunity. They oversaw many of the War on Poverty Programs. Yet, the main issue, as Stricker explains, was that those who saw the problem of poverty as result of structural forces in the economy had not prevailed in policy decisions; hence, what Stricker refers to as "aggies," or those who claimed that aggregate economic growth would reduce poverty, won out.[11] This is apparent in reports issued from Youngstown's Planning Department regarding the CAC. The poor lacked "access to training and education." They had limited access to "opportunity." Nor did the CAC give "handouts" of any kind: "We extend to the poor a helping hand; we give them responsibilities and provide services training and opportunities so they'll start earning money for themselves."[12] There were problems to this approach though.

Few mentioned the more difficult problems facing the poor in the Youngstown area—particularly the inner city poor. Segregated education and neighborhood isolation was not addressed. Discrimination in local trades and in the steel industry garnered no mention—though it was not until 1974 that real teeth were put into job discrimination against minorities and women with the passage of

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[11] Stricker, 16.

[12] The City of Youngstown, *One Hundred Ways to View Our City: Our City as Social Experience* (Youngstown, 1967), 2.

the consent decree in the steel industry. These programs also did not take into account the shift in employments going on in the economy.

Manufacturing employment, as noted earlier with the large job loss in the steel industry, declined—something of enormous importance for a place like Youngstown. Low-skilled jobs—particularly in retail and the service sector, which would of increased importance with the decline of manufacturing—started to relocate to the suburbs. The already highlighted case of the shrinkage in Youngstown's retail establishments is a good example. Nationally, especially with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and other such legislation, the Johnson administration tackled discrimination. The issue of housing segregation, as mentioned, ended up being too tough to crack. Also, as leading sociologist William Julius Wilson highlights, anti-poverty programs were too disconnected from structural economic reality.[13] As historian Michael Katz notes, "It (the War on Poverty) emphasized opportunities not through focusing on the labor market, as the department of labor at first advocated, but by improving individual skills through education and job training."[14] All this proved problematic to growing urban poverty in Youngstown.

The city did recognize the changes taking place in neighborhoods on the south side. In addressing the brewing problems of concentrated poverty elsewhere in the nation, the city found itself fortunate to have avoided the experience of places like Harlem and Baltimore. Changes of a similar nature were

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[13] William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*, (Chicago, University of Chicago press, 1987), 130.

[14] Michael B. Katz, introduction to *The Underclass Debate: Views From History*, ed. Michael Katz (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 14.

beginning in Youngstown itself. In regards to the concentration of poverty city

reports wondered, "Are we headed in that direction? Twenty years from now, or

perhaps less, what will be the racial makeup of the entire south side of the city?

What will or what has already happened our school system as a result of patterns of

racial distribution?"[15] This report poignantly observed the problems, but, like local

and national public policy, it offered little in the way of concrete solutions. As the

1960s progressed, the concentrated poverty in the inner city, especially on the

south side, worsened.

Youngstown's inner city, much like those across America, became known as a

place of abject poverty in the decades following the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed,

Youngstown by the 1990s, according to urban theorist David Rusk, had the highest

percentage of African Americans living in concentrated poverty out of all sixty

metropolitan areas he studied.[16] The origin of that grim figure initially springs from

the growth of concentrated poverty in the 1960s. The deindustrialization of the

1970s furthered the process immensely. Perhaps no one has elucidated the

importance of concentrated poverty in ghetto neighborhoods more than William

Julius Wilson. The traditional definition of an area of concentrated poverty is a

census tract where forty percent of the population is below the poverty line. This

grouping of the urban poor—almost always by race—leads to the proliferation of

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[15] The City of Youngstown, *One Hundred Ways to View Our City: What is a Slum?*
(Youngstown, 1967), 2.

[16] "Segregation Spells Disaster, Expert Says," *Vindicator,* December 1, 1995, A-1.

social problems.[17] The term came to be used mostly to describe trends post 1970, though these changes in poverty concentrations began during the 1960s.

The best census and statistical information for looking at concentrated poverty in neighborhoods exists for the years 1970 and beyond. However, already by 1970 nearly thirty percent of the African American poor were living in census tracts that qualified as concentrations of poverty. In contrast less than five percent of poor whites lived in tracts deemed concentrations of poverty.[18] Concentrated poverty grew in Mahoning County too during the 1960s. Poverty increased during the years 1960-1966 overall, while concentrations also became apparent.[19] According to a 1967 report by the Office of Economic Opportunity, Mahoning County in 1966 "was afflicted with a dramatically higher order magnitude of poverty... At that time, ninety-seven percent of the counties in the United States held poor populations of lesser magnitude."[20] Youngstown officials not only recognized the poverty problem, but they even implicitly acknowledged their role in creating it: "Concentration (of poverty) may well be the result of past discriminatory practices.

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[17] William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears: The New World of the Urban Poor*, (New York: Random House, 1997), 14.

[18] The Institute on Race and Poverty, (Prepared for the Ford Foundation), *Racism and Metropolitan Dynamics: The Civil Rights Challenge of the 21st Century* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 2002,
), 10.

[19] US Office of Economic Opportunity, *Community Profile, Mahoning County, Ohio*, Office of Economic Opportunity, (Washington DC, 1967), p. CP-007.

[20] Ibid., CP_008.

The situation created by these practices may be a factor leading to the proliferation of other social ills."[21]

City officials accurately described the situation. Concentrations of poverty were partly the result of actions taken by the city and by other institutions. In reports from the mid-1960s those areas that were designated, as "concentrations of poverty" by the city itself were usually the same areas experiencing the widest variety of socio-economic problems. In a 1968 report measuring "social disorganization characteristics," areas with high concentrations of poverty topped the list.[22] This prominently included the High Edwards and Oak Hill areas on the south side as well as neighborhoods on the lower east side. The Oak Hill, High Edwards, and the Warren neighborhoods, which all bordered each other, also had among the highest rates of juvenile delinquency cases and adult crime rates in the city. Not coincidentally these lower south side neighborhoods and the lower east side, would be the epicenter of rioting that broke out in 1968 and 1969. [23]

The term "long, hot summers" came to describe the urban rioting (or urban uprisings, depending on one's point of view) that erupted in cities all across America during the 1960s. Starting with Harlem in 1964, American cities burned as racial and economic tensions overflowed in central cities from coast to coast. These so-called "ghetto riots" reversed the previous norm of racial rioting in America, one

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[21] City Planning Associates Inc., *Social Inventory Preliminary Report, Community Renewal Program R-108 (CR)*, Volume 4 (Youngstown, Ohio, 1968), 3.

[22] City Planning Associates Inc., *Social inventory Preliminary Report, Community Renewal Program R-108 (CR)*, Volume 1 (Youngstown, Ohio, 1968), 76.

[23] Ibid.,

that almost always involved white violence directed against black minorities.

Instead, the riots of the 1960s caused far more destruction of property than killing.

African Americans deeply frustrated with inner city problems and slow-moving civil

rights initiatives instead drove them.

In 1965, the uprising in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles became the

most violent and destructive in American history up to that point. Six days of riots—

touched off by a white patrolman's stopping of a black family—ended up resulting in

the deaths over thirty people and the injuring of over 1,000. Police arrested 3,500

people. The news of the Watts Riot in Youngstown led to a great deal of fear and

community introspection regarding deteriorating race relations in the city. A series

of gatherings involving civil rights activists, social workers, and city officials in

Youngstown saw widespread predictions the city would undergo its own riot if the

problems facing inner city youth were not addressed. The gathering addressed the

problems of urban renewal, scant employment opportunities for black and Puerto

Rican youth, and segregation. Little consensus emerged on concrete plans to

address these issues. All the while, tension flared among youths along Hillman

Street, which ran directly through one of the most troubled areas in the city.[24]

The distressed neighborhoods of Warren, High Edwards (no longer

considered a neighborhood by the city), Oak Hill, and Fosterville surrounded most

of Hillman Street. Over the course of the 1960s, Hillman Street represented a micro

picture of demographic, racial, and economic changes in certain quickly segregating

neighborhoods. According to Mel Watkins, already by 1960, adults warned him

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[24] "Urge Action To Avoid Race Riots In City," *Youngstown Vindicator*, September 28, 1966, A-1.

"Don't drive up Hillman."[25] The area around Hillman fast became black during the decade. In 1960 there were 22 vacancies on Hillman. By 1962 there were fifty-six.[26] This is almost certainly the result of white flight from the neighborhood. Businesses continued to be plentiful on Hillman throughout the decade. They remained almost entirely white owned up until the late 1960s. The racial tensions revolving around an increasingly segregated neighborhood with predominately white institutions and growing poverty would come to a head in the dark days after the assassination of Martin Luther King.

Youngstown's fears of racial violence finally came to pass in April of 1968. On the fourth day of that month, while in Memphis, Tennessee supporting black sanitation workers out on strike, Martin Luther King was shot and killed. Thirty major riots soon broke out across the country, some within hours of the event, some within days. The night of King's assassination, local black community leader and future internationally known Pan-African activist, Ron Daniels, led over 200 mostly young men and women to downtown Youngstown. In his speech that followed Daniels used the moment and the gathering to point out a new black solidarity: "This is a turning point in Youngstown because it is the first time black people have left the pool room, the bar and the neighborhood corner to come downtown and take care of business." Signs in the crowd reflected such sentiments. "The King is gone but black united goes on," and "It is now America, tomorrow is too late" were

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[25] Watkins, 277.

[26] Youngstown City Directory, 1961, 1962.

prominent among them.[27] Despite palpable tension, the crowd later dispersed without event. The peace did not hold.

For four days Youngstown's south side streets remained a pressure cooker of anxiety and anger. During the early evening hours of April 8th bands of young teens and young adults started stoning properties—and especially businesses—up and down Hillman Street.[28] According to conflicting reports, either overly aggressive policing or out of control youths resulted in what happened next. The Rev. Lonnie Simon of nearby New Bethel Baptist Church claims that in response to gathering crowds on Hillman Street. "Police did not ask any questions, they just started swinging." Youngstown Police Chief John Terlecky insisted residents asked that the crowd be broken up as rumors of bomb making swirled through the area.[29] In any event, police chased several youths into a playground at the corner of Hillman and Falls Avenue where two policemen and a young man were shot in the ensuing melee. Events rapidly spun out of control after that.

Looting and Molotov cocktails throwing followed the shooting. [30] The police arrested large numbers of people during these hours, many with caches of weapons including guns and homemade bombs. All available officers descended on the south side, but were unable to contain the situation. Mayor Anthony Flask ordered all bars and liquor stores to be closed and called the National Guard for support. Citizens

[27] "200 Youths Stage Quiet March Here," *Youngstown Vindicator*, April 4, 1968, A-1.

[28] "Vandal Stone Windows At Place Here," *Youngstown Vindicator*, April 8, 1968, A-9.

[29] "Youngstown, Other Cities Hit By Riots After Assassination Of Civil Rights Leader," *Vindicator*, April 4, 1988, A-4.

[30] "53 Arrested Within City," *Youngstown Vindicator*, April 9, 1968, A-1.

reported sniper fire in various spots on the south side.[31] By the next day 600

National Guard units were in place attempting to stop additional fire-bombings.

Eighty people had been arrested by the morning of Tuesday, April 9th. As armored

personal carriers rumbled into the south side, the guard set up a post at the General

Electric plant on Market Street. They soon came under attack by several groups of

youths who overturned their jeep, and without the intervention of bystanders,

probably would have killed the guardsmen. The youths attacked the jeep shortly

after a car filled with several white males crashed through a roadblock and

deliberately ran over several African Americans.[32] Evening fell with reports of a

thirteen-year shot by sniper fire and over 100 people arrested.

The city began to calm down and the National Guard dispersed on April 11th.

Arrests continued including those of a car full of heavily armed white youths whose

weapons had been fired recently. Nearby Cleveland and Pittsburgh had been also

been rocked with riots, as had 117 other cities across America. Youngstown was one

of eighteen cities where the National Guard had been called to put down the rioting.

In Chicago, Baltimore, and Washington D.C., federal troops were required to end the

maelstrom.[33]

The city government tried to heal the post-riot situation by addressing racial

discrimination in the skilled trades—something the Youngstown Fair Employment

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[31] "Takes Hours To Get Call For Guard—Close Bars, Enforce Curfew," *Youngstown Vindicator*, April 9, 1968, A-9.

[32] "Authorities Act To Check Night Violence," *Youngstown Vindicator*, April 10, 1968, A-8.

[33] Clay Risen, *A Nation on Fire: America in the Wake of the King Assassination*, (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009), IX.

Practices Commission thought might have averted the riots if done earlier.[34] The

African American newspaper the *Buckeye Review* condemned the violence but called

for an investigation of its underlying causes. Earlier in the year the *Buckeye Review*

essentially predicted in early 1968 the coming of riots to Youngstown. Unlike the

Youngstown Vindicator, the *Buckeye Review* also addressed the underlying causes

and placed the blame for what ultimately did come to pass: "IF THE NEXT SUMMER

IS A REAL HOT ONE it will not be difficult to place the blame. Who caused the

ghettoes to be crowded? Whose action, or lack of action, brought about the huge

migration of Negros from the south? Who ran from them when they settled in

northern cities?"[35] [sic]

Debates about the consequences of the riots followed. Reverend Lonnie

Simon later pointed out that a lot of destroyed businesses remained permanently

closed. He also accurately described it as event that accelerated the spread of blight

in the area.[36] Nationwide, the consequences of the mass riots in wake of King's

assassination were similar. According to Clay Risen, one of only a few authors to

write a monograph on the post-King assassination riots, the importance of the riots

can be elucidated in terms of the acceleration of segregation: "When the smoke

cleared and the sirens ran down, an invisible wall went up between urban and

suburban America, every bit as real as the one in Berlin."[37] In truth this process was

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[34] "Panel Seeks Cure For Civic Disorder," *Youngstown Vindicator*, April 14, 1968, A-1, A-14.

[35] "Shifting Scenes," *Buckeye Review*, January 12, 1968, 7.

[36] "Youngstown, Other U.S. Cities," A-4.

at work for some time in most American cities. The invisible wall in Youngstown started rising even before 1960. The post King riots were a warning however—a warning about the state of the inner city. This warning went unheeded and even longer and hotter summer was in store for Youngstown a year later, and with it came the increasingly loud call not for, but against integration: the call of Black Power.

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37 Risen, 4.

Chapter Six

Violence and Vanguards

As Detroit burned during heavy rioting in the summer of 1967, Lyndon

Johnson ordered the creation of the Kerner Commission to investigate the causes of

urban rioting that continued to plague the country. The findings of the 1968 report

are notable: Racism, segregation, and a lack of jobs were prime causes of urban

rioting. Urban historian Thomas Sugrue views the riots of the 1960s as part and

parcel of a cultural awakening among African Americans—most notably in the

various Black Power movements. He also convincingly links them to a desire to free

black communities from white economic and social control.[1] He also notes that male

rioters were those most affected by the economic shifts that were part of early

deindustrialization. Available evidence points to Youngstown as somewhat

following this model; however, the second riot in the city in 1969 was less

influenced by nationalism and police interactions (another common cause for urban

riots, according to Sugrue) than by economic conditions in concentrated poverty

zones, and by economic disenfranchisement.

Racial tensions did not subside during 1969. On the lower east side —an

area, as previously noted, that the city considered a sector of poverty

concentration—a series of racially oriented incidents ultimately sparked a riot more

damaging than the one in 1968. In early July, a white storeowner on the east side

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[1] Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet and Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North*, (New York: Random House, 2008), 350.

stood accused of hitting a pregnant black woman after an altercation. Picketing of the store and an NAACP boycott followed.[2] Events snowballed from there. On July 15th an altercation between picketers and the storeowner ended in violence. Crowds of youths firebombed a drug store on Wilson Avenue. The crowd also pelted responding firemen and policemen with bricks. Police officers responded by spraying the crowd with a chemical agent. Gangs of youths soon began overturning cars and looting stores. Within hours stores burned on Hillman Avenue as well, as the rioting moved to the south side.[3]

Early the next day, fireman drove past overturned and burning cars on Hillman Avenue, since they lacked the necessary police escorts to stop and put them out. Firebombing spread from businesses to homes as the day went on. The second night of disorders focused on the Hillman area as groups of young African Americans attacked stores and homes alike. Military police from the National Guard, which had been called, and regular police used tear gas to drive crowds back. Upon hearing the news of the riots, Governor James Rhodes announced he would fly to Youngstown.[4] By the morning of July 17, hardly a business on Hillman Street and Warren Avenue had been untouched by looting or destruction. Spent shotguns casings were scattered over the street as sniper fire had been reported during the night.[5]

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[2] "NAACP Asks Boycott Of Oak Store," *Youngstown Vindicator*, July 15, 1969, A-1.

[3] William A. Snyder, "8 Injured, 3 Held In City Disorders," *Youngstown Vindicator*, July 16, 1969, A-1.

[4] "Call Guard To Help On South Side," *Youngstown Vindicator*, July 17, 1969, A-1.

The targets for nearly all of the destruction on the south and the east side were white owned businesses or residencies. After being asked by a local reporter what the cause of the rioting had been, a south side resident responded, "It's just pent up emotion baby, one hundred years of being exploited and made to eat dirt."[6] The targeting of white businesses and the response of the interviewed rioter fit with Sugrue's overall examination of the pattern of the urban riots in the north during this period. Surveys of nationwide rioting found in fact that the average member of black communities in urban riot zones throughout the north saw the rioting itself as "revolutionary in nature."[7] This was not lost on white communities in Youngstown who already feared travelling at all through certain parts of the south, north, and east sides. Rioting did cement notions of Youngstown as a place of danger, at least in the minds of the local white community.

Urban riots, according to Paul Arn Gilje, also amounted to a conscious acting out against middle class values—white and suburban middle class values. This manifested itself in the destruction of mostly white property, which represented the ownership of local businesses by non-blacks.[8] Many white businesses fled in the aftermath of urban uprisings. This was often seen as emerging Black Nationalist and "community nationalist" groups used the opportunities that riots presented to build black owned businesses that would serve black patrons in a new, inner city black

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[5] "9 Hurt In South Side Rioting," *Youngstown Vindicator*, July 17, 1969, A-1.

[6] "Firemen Let Cars Burn, Battle Fires," *Youngstown Vindicator*, July 16, 1969, A-18.

[7] Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 347.

[8] Paul Arn Gilje, *Rioting in America*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 166.

economy.[9] Both the rejection of suburban middle class values and a desire to

remake neighborhood businesses would manifest itself in cultural awakenings in

Youngstown's black community.

The predicament of racial conflict, poverty, an urban unrest in American

cities during this era came to be known as the "urban crisis" in political science and

urban history. A wide variety of scholars have advanced the idea of an urban crisis

in explaining issues in the inner city. Historian Kevin Mumford breaks with scholars

such as Thomas Sugrue and Nicholas Lemann by rejecting the label of urban crisis to

describe the tumultuous events in 1960s Newark. Instead, he focuses on resistance

and attempts at civic involvement among African Americans.[10] Though Mumford is

possibly too critical of the policy-centered arguments of scholars such as Sugure, he

is correct in identifying the tendency to dismiss, or to never even mention, African

American agency and resistance in regards to exclusionary policies. In the few

histories of Youngstown, with the exception of the work of Michael Beverly, African

American community resistance is ignored. As Beverly correctly points out, black

Youngstowners did manage to build a vibrant community despite a myriad of very

real structural obstacles.[11] Also of importance though are more nationalist oriented

groups that sprung up in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These groups/movements

are important not only because of the cultural centered institutions and thought that

[9] Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 427.

[10] Kevin Mumford, *Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots*," (New York: NYU Press, 2008), 4, 5, 10.

[11] Michael A. Beverly "African American Experience in Youngstown: 1940-1965." (Masters Thesis, Youngstown State University, 2002.), 3.

they advanced in the community, which is still visible in Youngstown today, but also because of the reaction they inspired in a white community already fearful of a "black Youngstown."

Blame for the urban riots of the 1960s often fell on Black Nationalist groups or nationalist inspired "outsiders," who were thought to have inspired local black communities to riot. The same holds true for Youngstown. Before the 1968 riot, authorities claimed that Youngstown had avoided large-scale urban unrest because "outsiders," or radicals, had not infiltrated the area.[12] Both before and after the riots of 1968 and 1969, a variety of black activists would begin to lead resistance against Black marginalization in the city, along with promoting a new cultural understanding. Increasingly, this led to more cleavage between the white and black community.

Black institutions and groups led boycotts against what they saw as exclusionary and racist policies in the city. The Negro American Labor Council, an African American labor group in Youngstown, which was patterned off a national body in Detroit, in conjunction with the Congress of Racial Equality, led boycotts against local employers who were thought to discriminate in hiring. They also went after Youngstown's anti-poverty program, claiming it had little "understanding" of the problem of poverty in Youngstown.[13]

The Youngstown Urban League also played a large role in battling job discrimination and addressing inner city issues. They opened offices in the most

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[12] "Urge Action To Avert,"

[13] Beverly, 75.

troubled parts of the south side and they continuously put the issues of police violence, black unemployment, and social justice in the spotlight of city politics.[14] The Urban League also brought together the black and Puerto Rican communities as part of their "Black Motivation Committee," which sought to address what they considered the inadequate social services available to both communities on almost every level. The Urban League also supported a media team that worked with the local Black Broadcasting Coalition in order to expand their message to a broader audience.[15]

The League's president Darryl Barham came to Youngstown via Newark, New Jersey, where he worked with Black Nationalist, poet, and author Imamu Amear Baraka. Like Baraka and other nationalists, he changed his name to an African surname: Tukufu. He also led the League's "Black is Beautiful" campaign, which was designed to promote a positive self-image for young African Americans.[16] The Youngstown Urban League also understood, better than city officials, some of the root causes of the riots. The Urban League pressured the city on a constant basis to address them, considering as late as at least 1975, the fear of another riot hung over the area.

African American churches and local business figures also involved themselves in the brewing civil rights and social justice movements going on in the

[14] Leon Stennis, "Blacks Focus On Jobs, Order." *Youngstown Vindicator*, March 30, 1973, A-4.

[15] Leon Stennis, "Urban League Official Cites Agencies—Finds Blacks Short-Changed," *Youngstown Vindicator*, March 29, 1973, A-18.

[16] Florita Stubbs, "Poster Ask Black Awareness," *Youngstown Vindicator*, April 9, 1972, A-30.

city during the 1960s. The Rev. Lonnie Simon of New Bethel Baptist Church on Hillman Avenue and Attorney Nathaniel Jones were prominent among them. Rev. Simon made a name for himself through local activism and as a marcher with Martin Luther King in Montgomery, Alabama in 1965. After attending a training seminar in Chicago in 1967, Simon became a born-again activist. He attempted to intercede during the 1968 riots, probably saving lives by calming down angry crowds on the south side. New Bethel Baptist also increasingly became involved with supporting African American cultural traditions, including hosting the first yearly Kwanzaa event in the area, where Simon took to reading prayers from residents and children calling for action against racism and segregation.[17] New Bethel also supported African pride parades, and was involved with the local Marcus Garvey School.

Nathaniel R. Jones was a pillar of the Youngstown community and one of the most prominent African American lawyers in the city. He served as the first U.S. Attorney for Cleveland's Northern District. Judge Jones remained active in civil rights in Youngstown throughout the 1960s—especially in regard to addressing unrest in the inner city. In 1966, he headed the Youngstown Leadership Conference (YLC), a group designed to address racial inequalities in the city. In response to the Watts Riots in 1965, the YLC released a citywide report in 1966 entitled "Past Neglects, Future Demands—Youngstown in Crisis." The report attacked segregated schools and neighborhoods, urban renewal programs that were forcibly relocating black families, and unemployment in the inner city. The report itself was released formally at a city community forum. In a particularly poignant moment, Judge Jones

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[17] "300 Attend First Annual Black Yule Program," *Youngstown Vindicator*, December 29, 1969, 12.

read one of his own passages to the audience. In many ways it sums up the problems

of race and suburbanization in Youngstown in the 1960s: "This city is not large

enough, our suburbs not distant enough, no person among us wealthy enough, nor is

anyone's skin white enough to gain a sanctuary from the effects of discrimination,

deprivation, and denial."[18] These words, which went unheeded, would only become

more accurate as Youngstown's inner city problems spread from neighborhood to

neighborhood over the next few decades. For his role in attempting to head off

urban rioting in Youngstown, Judge Jones was appointed to serve on the 1967

Kerner Commission investigating the root causes or urban unrest.

The failure to in any way ameliorate urban inequality or racial injustice in the

city led to the rise of Black Power movements in Youngstown. The idea of Black

Power is linked to the notion of Black Nationalism. Whether literally the concept of

creating a second nation for African Americans, or the idea advancing a black-

centric self-determination, Black Nationalism has existed since the late nineteenth

century. Martin Delaney, often called the "Grandfather of Black Nationalism,"

elucidated the basic concepts of both of these themes in the years following the Civil

War. In the post-Great War era, Marcus Garvey and his Universal Negro

Improvement Association led the largest Black Nationalist movement in world

history. Garvey thought assimilation into white societies, be they in Europe or

America, both foolish and undesirable. Instead, he proposed a separate homeland

for blacks in Africa. Garvey's eventual imprisonment for mail fraud and the decline

of the UNIA led to a decrease in nationalist organizations until the 1960s and the

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[18] "Negro Report Details Shortcomings Of City," *Youngstown Vindicator*, October 14, 1966, A-1.

rise of "Black Power". First popularized by Stokely Carmichael in the 1960s, Black

Power encompassed both black separatists and those who believed in black

empowerment, but not nationalism—the Black Panther Party is a good example of

the latter. [19]

Youngstown's African American community, prior to the 1960s, has been

presented as primarily non-radical in orientation, in regards to racial issues.[20]

However, Youngstown played host to one of the more noted chapters in Ohio of

Marcus Garvey's UNIA during the 1920s, numbering 3,000 members.[21] However, the

nature of the UNIA would have precluded voiced attempts at integration, since the

Garvey platform was completely opposed to such moves. The same could be said of

the Nation of Islam, which emerged in Youngstown during the 1950s.[22] These

groups represented separatist strains in the city. During the 1960s, a variety of

Black Power and Black Nationalist styled activists and groups brought a vocal

militancy to the forefront as segregation and black community deprivation

worsened. Future presidential candidate, director of Jesse Jackson's Rainbow

Coalition, and international Pan-African activist, Ron Daniels was chief among them.

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[19] Dean E. Robinson, *Black Nationalism in American Politics and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

[20] George Beelen, a student of famed historian August Meier, claims it was a curious that a lack of militancy did not exist, since integration was always a seemingly impossible goal for blacks in Youngstown.

[21] Marcus Garvey, *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers, Vol. V: September 1922-August 1924*. Robert A. Hill, Tevvy Ball, and Erika Blum eds: (Berkely: University of California Press, 1987), 506.

[22] Watkins, 186.

Born in the segregated neighborhood of Pittsburgh's Hill District, Daniels moved to Youngstown as a young child. He joined the NAACP while still in his teens and participated in several picketing campaigns against racially exclusionary businesses and practices in the city.[23] These early efforts included a boycott campaign against segregated lunch counters in the downtown Woolworth's Department Store.

In the mid-1960s, Daniels formed "Freedom Inc.," a Black Power group that went on to achieve national prominence in Pan-African and Black Nationalist circles. In 1968, as the organization began to gather funds, Daniels set Freedom Inc. on a path to develop the local black economy in Youngstown. The economic formula itself was to be a unique mixture of private and cooperative ventures with public ownership. The group opened a bookstore, the Native Son, and a clothier. Later came the Freedom Foods Market, which provided fresh produce and healthy food for the black community.[24] Daniels also helped form "Black Star Enterprises," which included Daniel's business, the People's Market.[25] Daniels and Freedom Inc. also were the driving force behind the "Afrikan Cultural Weekend." These two-day long cultural festivals drew thousands from around the city every year. Freedom Inc. and a variety of other cultural oriented groups continued to transform the rhetoric

[23] Warren Neal Holmes, *The National Black Independent Political Party: Political Insurgency or Ideological Convergence?* (London: Routeledge, 1999), 56.

[24] "Freedom Inc. Gets Grant From Episcopal Church," *Youngstown Vindicator*, August 11, 1968, A-9.

[25] "Black Leader, Activist Ron Daniels To Step Out Of Spotlight In January," *Youngstown Vindicator*, September 9, 1986, A-5.

around civil rights and neighborhood development throughout the late 1960s and into the 1970s.

Hillman Street, sight of urban revolts during 1968 and 1969, became the focus of much of the Black Power movement in the city. By early 1970, as white businesses began closing, some African American businesses began to step into the breach along with various Freedom Inc. ventures. The City Directory at the time showed the beginnings of black owned businesses moving into fast vacating retail and storeroom space. What was J&M Battery Service in 1960 became the Ebony Record Shop by 1973.[26] What had been a residence in 1963, and an abandoned building by 1969, became the Youngstown Urban League's Food Stamp Center by 1973.[27] Several residences in 1963, whose owners had Italian and Jewish surnames, became the headquarters for Freedom Inc. and the Native Son Bookstore by 1973.[28] A private residence and a foot clinic became the Youngstown Area Community Action Council (an inner-city non-profit that the city initially tried to blame for the 1969 riot) and the Martin Luther King Action Center by 1973.[29] Soul food restaurants and clothiers opened as well. In such a way, racial turnover proceeded on Hillman and the neighborhoods surrounding it.[30]

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[26] *Youngstown City Directory*, Akron: Burch Directory Company Publishers, 1961-1962, 148; 1973, 350.

[27] Ibid., 1963, 143; 1969, 153; 1973, 351.

[28] Ibid., 1963, 143; 1973, 351.

[29] Ibid.,

[30] Ibid.,

In 1970 Freedom Inc. helped open the Uhuru Cultural Center and the Marcus Garvey School for African Education on Hillman Avenue. Large murals covered the fronts of the newly refurbished houses. The murals included the slogan "It's Nation Time," a direct reference to the title of a book by Black Nationalist Imamu Amiri Baraka.[31] This represented a high point for black community building on the south side of Youngstown. At this same time, the Afrikan Cultural Weekend began as a tradition in Youngstown. Thousands of people gathered each other summer to celebrate African Heritage. A good example of the scope of the Afrikan Cultural Weekend is the 1972 gathering. 6,000 gathered to hear Owusu Sadaukai, a friend of Stokley Carmichael, and Imamu Baraka. Cabaret shows, a "soul picnic," African Dancers, and performance by the Black Brier Hill Drummers rounded out the events.[32] Youngstown's black community embraced a new path.

Sociologist Roderick Bush states, when discussing Black Nationalism—and by extension, Black Power—that when shut out of the power structure and abandoned by local and federal governments, "do for self" movements and groups emerged in African American communities.[33] This is especially true for the working class, which Bush claims forms the historic base of most nationalist movements. In

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[31] "Uhuru Center Is Planning Dedication," *Youngstown Vindicator*, November 4, 1970, 14.

[32] Special Foldout, "Freedom Inc. Presents: 3rd African Cultural Weekend, June 23, 24, & 25," *Youngstown Vindicator*, June 22, 1972.

[33] Roderick Bush, *We Are Not What We Seem: Black Nationalism and Class Struggle in the American Century* (New York: NYU Press, 2000), 33.

Youngstown, a steel city and long a working class bastion, support for nationalism in various forms had been strong since the Garvey movement of the 1920s.

The concept of "do for self" was obviously present in the words of Ron Daniels when he addressed the downtown march the night Martin Luther King was assassinated. He exclaimed that night, "If we need a burger, we will build our own. If we need a country club, we will build our own. If we unite we can get anything we want."[34] Still, unlike some Black Power groups, Daniels, Freedom Inc. and others in Youngstown never embraced radically separatist positions. Daniels himself later claimed he was a "radical militant," but only a "little bit" more radical than the liberal left.[35] He also embraced multicultural activism with whites. Even Youngstown's African American newspaper, *The Buckeye Review*, while vociferously condemning segregation, ghettoization, racial and economic justice, stopped short of separatism and even criticized some Black Power advocates.[36] This mattered little though in the scheme of things.

White flight continued and economic problems in the inner city only worsened through the late 1960s and early 1970s. The white community, as it did nationally, reacted with disdain and fear to Black Power ethos of all stripes. Roderick Bush's analysis of this development puts the challenge that Black Power issued to American society in perspective: "The Black Power movement generated intense opposition to the extent that it raised claims that could not easily be met in

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[34] "200 Youths Stage," A-1.

[35] Stephen Oravecz, "Ron Daniels: Working Toward Creating A Better Life For All People," *Vindicator*, September 26, 1982, 8.

[36] Whitney M. Ward, "To Be Equal," *Buckeye Review*, December 28, 1968, 2.

the context of the existing framework of social relations."[37] Black Power rose in Youngstown in response to segregation, economic inequality, and racism; sadly, the response to it was simply more of the same.

The suburbs and white neighborhoods in Youngstown distanced themselves even more from the inner city and its problems and concerns. This ultimately led to disaster for both African Americans in the city and ultimately all of Youngstown and the suburbs. The closing of the area's steel mills, starting in 1977, finished the job that segregation, racial animosity, and white flight started. Social Democrat Tom Khan succinctly summed up the effect that the twin problems of racism and technological change had on African Americans: "It is as if racism, having put the Negro in his economic place, stepped aside to watch technology destroy that place."[38]

The cumulative impacts of these stressors were fully evident by the 1990s, when Youngstown's inner city became one of the most dangerous places in America. The roots of the homicide explosion that eventually engulfed Youngstown stretch back to the 1960s and 1970s. As Sherry Lincoln and John Russo have noted, sustained unemployment and factors related to unemployment helped drive the increase in crime in the 1990s.[39] This can be seen in economic statistics. After 1964,

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[37] Bush, 11.

[38] Tom Khan, "The Problems of the Negro Movement," *Dissent,* Winter 1964, P.115.

[39] Linkon and Russo, 196.

the jobless rate for Black Americans would be consistently twice that of White Americans, and in many cities, even worse.[40]

What they do not mention is that the brunt of all these factors—joblessness, loss of income, economic disinvestment, fell on the African American Community. Urban Renewal, job discrimination, and segregation started the process, a process of "underdevelopment." Walter Rodney first posited the idea of underdevelopment in his examination of how European colonizers deliberately diverted resources away from their colonies; hence, "under-developing" them[41] Many of Africa's post-colonial problems sprang from their underdevelopment at the hands of Europe. American political scientist Marable Manning adapted this idea to an American setting, explaining the historical underdevelopment of Black America. Marable describes the various stages of this historical trajectory: "chattel slavery, sharecropping, peonage, industrial labor at low wages, and cultural chaos."[42] The latter two stages are readily seen in the historical trajectory of twentieth century Youngstown.

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[40] Rifkin, 74.

[41] Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa,* Rev. ed. (Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1981).

[42] Marable Manning, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America: Problems in Race, Political Economy, and Society,* Rev. ed. (Brooklyn: South End Press, 1999), 3.

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Conclusion

A City on the Brink

The 1960s took a frightful toll on Youngstown; just how frightful it ended up becoming can be summed up by the results of the 1970 census. 27,000 people, nearly all of them white, left the city during the decade.[1] The stark nature of white flight and segregation is revealed in the statistics. Over 35,000 African Americans lived in the city of Youngstown in 1970. Only about 712 African Americans lived in suburban areas in Mahoning County during that same year. Nor were many African Americans even present in city leadership. Even the *Youngstown Vindicator* candidly reported that whites both within and without of Youngstown deeply feared a possible "black takeover" of power in the city.[2] This all but guaranteed further divestment from the city. The following chart shows the rather extreme population loss Youngstown suffered during the 1960s compared to other midsized industrial cities.

The city and suburbs diverged both demographically and economically. The residential flight of the middle class and more prosperous working class residents from the city drained the tax base of Youngstown. The buying power of an average family in Youngstown amounted to almost $2,000 dollars less than the average

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[1] Etlinger, "Mahoning Valley: Steel And The Suburbs," A-1.

[2] Charles Etlinger, "Youngstown City On The Grow?" *Youngstown Vindicator,* September 28, 1970, A-8.

household in Boardman or Austintown in 1970.[3] By 1970, Boardman and Austintown together made up 24 percent of the county's tax valuation.[4] While the suburban townships struggled with how to maintain and expanded services while being limited to property tax rates, Youngstown faced far more foreboding issues. The city's tax base was shrinking, while the cost of providing services—and the need for them—increased. Youngstown's budget was $175 per capita in 1970. Boardman and Austintown's was only about $30 per capita.[5] Figures such as these show the increasingly desperate position of Youngstown, a city with a shrinking middle class and growing poor and minority populations.

Two approaches found popularity when it came to reversing Youngstown's position. The first was urban renewal. As already mentioned, not only did urban renewal fail to rebuild the inner city, it actively helped to ruin it. The second plan, involved efforts at first—often poorly approached—to annex the suburbs, something that always proved a nonstarter. Regionalization of local government seemed to be the ideal third option. Even regionalization had to overcome a myriad of problems.

A metropolitan governing strategy involving Youngstown and Warren—a smaller industrial city about sixteen miles to the north of Youngstown—had to overcome much bad blood between the two cities. Not only was Warren in another county, its city fathers felt they had long been given a back seat politically in the

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[3] Ibid., A-1.

[4] Etlinger, "Mahoning Valley: Steel And The Suburbs," A-1.

[5] Ibid.,

region to the needs of Youngstown. Additionally, the decline of Youngstown's steel industry during the 1960s and the rise of the Warren area's automobile industry provoked even more friction between the two cities.[6] Many believed a metropolitan government within Mahoning County would make more sense. After all, duplication of services was rampant, considering the various different departments for each municipality, many of which seemed extremely wasteful, such as Austintown's Road Department having an expensive road grader that hardly saw use more than a week or two a year. The need for a single set of building codes for both the city and township was also needed to make it less complicated for developers to do business.[7]

The truth was though that forming a metropolitan government within Mahoning County looked utterly daunting in 1970. Youngstown and the suburbs lacked even minimal levels of cooperation. Area politician Robert E. Hagan blamed rank provincialism for the lack of cooperation: "I don't think there's a spirit of cooperation at all. There are too many people in every township wishing to be separate from the city."[8] Township officials did not even deny such accusations. The comforts of a middle class existence in relatively upscale neighborhoods, far from the steel mills and economic and social problems of Youngstown had an enormous

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[6] Charles Etlinger, "Future Points To Regional Cooperation," *Youngstown Vindicator*, September 30, 1970, A-5.

[7] Charles Etlinger, "Rapid Growth Poses Problems For Suburbs," *Youngstown Vindicator*, September 29, 1970, A-4.

[8] Ibid.,

pull. As one politician said, "people are happy to live in their own little community."[9]

While a few activists dreamed of a strong Youngstown and Mahoning Valley at the heart of what would be a regional "megalopolis," the reality of the situation was far, far, from that.

A half of a decade later, the conversation sounded much the same. Not long before the bicentennial, the city released a report entitled, "A Look at the Future of Youngstown." The report pointed to Youngstown's position as a well-developed industrial city with a solid, but aging infrastructure. It also noted though that redevelopment projects mostly took place outside of the city in the growing suburbs. No consensus had yet developed on how to deal with that, as urban renewal had been deemed a failure by then.[10] Unfortunately, besides another in a long line of "Youngstown needs to economically diversify" pitches, the recommendations for the city's future development were underwhelming. Talks of continued development around the downtown Federal Plaza mall (which ultimately failed) continued. The same talk of regionalization and metropolitan government that the 1970 census results produced was still going on, once again though, political reality precluded such scenarios.

What the report remained silent on were the consequences of being unable to pursue some sort of regional situation were, for as the President of the Warren Area Chamber of Commerce Ronal Martin said in 1970, " You cannot escape the

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[9] Ibid.,

[10] Northern Ohio Urban System Research Corporation, *A Look at the Future of Youngstown* (Cleveland, OH, NOUSR, 1975), 23.

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problems of the inner city. They flood out and overwhelm everyone."[11] The truth of those words became only clearer after the events of 1977.

On September 19th, 1977, the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company announced it the closing its works in nearby Campbell, Ohio. In all, this move wiped out 5,000 jobs. Over the next seven years just about all of the area's primary steel operations shut down. When discussing the narrative of decline in Youngstown this period is well highlighted in academic and journalistic circles—as are the probable causes and consequences of the shutdowns. As has been shown here, Youngstown's social and economic problems were well advanced by 1977. Nearly three decades of disinvestment, suburbanization, fracturing of the metropolitan area, unplanned development, inner city job loss, urban renewal, segregation, and housing discrimination, took a huge toll on Youngstown, and by extension, the Mahoning Valley.

Youngstown, almost alone among cities with a population over 100,000 in the north, began stagnating and declining population wise during the 1940s, with population actually showing a decline in the 1940 census. Early efforts to annex the suburbs or to promote cooperation between them and the central city failed. Instead, the city's internal divisions were transplanted into provincial townships and villages. Not long after that, the post-war consumer economy came to the Youngstown area in the form of well controlled and regulated strip plazas, which drew the consumer base from at first the central business district downtown and

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[11] Etlinger, "Rapid Growth Poses Problems For Suburbs," *Youngstown Vindicator,* September 29, 1970, A-4.

then from the Uptown business district as well. Already by the late 1950s, growth in population and retail moved slowly outwards away from the city's central core.

Like many declining cities during the 1950s and 1960s, Youngstown embraced urban renewal. Massive slum clearance programs and highway building projects were thought to be the answer to the city's eroding position; instead, these efforts decimated neighborhoods, isolated African American populations, and rendered much of the city unrecognizable. Urban renewal destroyed ethnic enclaves and historic neighborhoods like Brier Hill. Highway plans also hit Catholic neighborhoods on the north and east side hard. Growing middle class African American neighborhoods on the north side fell, which also affected African American political power. No new housing emerged to replace ruined neighborhoods either. Promised growth and revitalization never materialized. The replacement of the Monkey's Nest/Caldwell area with light manufacturing made little economic difference, though it did have a lasting effect on working class African Americans. The much vaunted highway program, while terrifically destructive to neighborhoods, simply accelerated flight to the suburbs. Hoping to take a great leap forward, Youngstown took a giant step backward with urban renewal.

The 1960s represented a new height in suburbanization. In Youngstown, the growth of outer ring suburbs like Boardman, Austintown, and Canfield exploded. Suburban and residential and commercial construction numbers seemed to be topped every year in early and mid-decade. The coming of shopping malls of Eastwood and Southern Park malls completed the process that began in the 1950s

with the Greater Boardman Plaza. Culturally controlled and exclusive malls offered the latest in consumer-oriented frills that business establishments in Youngstown could not compete with. It no longer became necessary for suburbanites to travel to the downtown business district or even to the Uptown business district anymore; hence, by 1970, the total amount of retail spending in the county, minus Youngstown, exceeded the amount spent in the city—a tipping point that was never reversed. The city's commercial corridors began to decay. More people left the city.

Youngstown's problematic racial history grew far worse during the 1960s. The flocking of European "ethnics" to suburbia eventually led to the expanding of the definition of "whiteness," especially because, at first, FHA policies, and then redlining left black populations excluded from suburbanization. In the city, growing African American populations increased the pressure to contain them in certain sections of the city.

At the beginning of the 1960s Youngstown's residential segregation reached levels never seen before. Urban renewal, housing shortages, and redlining heightened this affect. Increasingly, redlining and urban renewal crowded African Americans into neighborhoods with higher amounts of older and dilapidated housing stock. Redlining and poverty prevented most from getting home improvement loans. Residential segregation also led to segregated schools. Over the course of the decade, segregated areas experienced crowded and decaying schools, along with abnormally high concentrations of high school drop-outs. This eventually led to pockets of concentrated poverty in parts of the north side, and in the lower east and south side.

Poverty grew in the inner city during the 1960s, even as the War on Poverty programs started. Structural economic changes in manufacturing especially hurt unskilled African American labor in the city—which were already suffering from residential and educational segregation. It was in two of these areas, the lower east side, and the Hillman Street area in the south side where riots would break out in the late 1960s.

In 1968 and 1969, riots engulfed parts of Youngstown. The conditions of poverty, segregation, and a growing black revolutionary consciousness were involved. In riot-blighted areas like Hillman, the first Black Power groups began to try and transform local neighborhoods and economic structures. Ron Daniels, Freedom Inc., and others, opened businesses and promoted African culture to the segregated black working class. Along with civil rights figures like Nathaniel Jones and the Rev. Lonnie Simon, they resisted the inequities of the inner city. None of this could stem white flight and disinvestment in black neighborhoods, which continued unabated.

By 1970, Youngstown faced extraordinary dilemmas. Aside from the well-covered topic of economic diversification, the city had to contend with a shrinking population, a decreased tax base, intense racial problems, and surrounding townships and villages that had deep indifference, if not outright hostility toward the city. Youngstown went from a great example of a growing and prosperous mid-sized industrial city, to an economically distressed place with troubling inner city problems and regional issues that it could not address without the help of outlying areas that wanted no part of Youngstown or its problems. All the while, the city

continued down a road of over reliance on steel. The city also catered to failed urban renewal and downtown revitalization plans even after it had become apparent that they were unsuccessful.

The steel mill closures of 1977-1984, threw more fuel on a fire that was already burning bright by the mid-1970s. The inner city meltdown of the 1990s, and the area's current inability to move past racial and provincial issues, all have their roots in not only deindustrialization, but in the less discussed issues of urban renewal, segregation, race politics, suburbanization, and neighborhood decay in the post-war era. These are also the roots of urban decay. If Youngstown is to survive in a post-steel world, it must do more than just attract jobs. It must deal with the historic legacy of inner city decay and the fracturing of the metropolitan area, as well as the consequences of past mistakes stemming from failed urban redevelopment projects.

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