



Housing for All Project 2023

A Timeline of African American Housing History in Alexandria

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Date	Event	Citation
1790s	Free families purchase small parcels of land and create a neighborhood known as The Bottoms outside of Alexandria's major commercial and residential areas. The neighborhood was later known as The Dip.	Pamela J. Cressey, <i>Alexandria, Virginia City-Site: Archaeology in an African American Neighborhood, 1830–1910</i> (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1985).
1810s	Free families create another enclave known as Hayti (pronounced <i>Hay-tie</i>). The neighborhood's name most likely commemorates the Haitian Revolution.	T. B. McCord, <i>Across the Fence, but a World Apart: The Coleman Site, 1776-1907</i> (Alexandria: Alexandria Urban Archaeological Program, 1985).
1850s	Free and enslaved African Americans build temporary homes at the foot of Oronoco Street during the fishing season. This neighborhood is called Fishtown and continues in operation through the 1920s.	Harold W. Hurst, <i>Alexandria on the Potomac: The Portrait of an Antebellum Community</i> (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991).
Civil War (1861-1865)	<p>The Union Army constructs emergency housing for African American refugees flowing into Alexandria. The first barracks open in February 1863.</p> <p>New African American neighborhoods, mostly created by refugees during the Civil War, become permanent fixtures in Alexandria. These new neighborhoods include Grantville (later known as Petersburg and today The Berg) and Newtown (later known as Uptown and today Parker-Gray).</p>	Wesley E. Pippenger, <i>Alexandria, Virginia Death Records, 1863-1869 (The Gladwin Record) and 1869-1896</i> (Westminster, MD: Family Line Publications, 1995).
Reconstruction (1865-1876)	Newly emancipated African American families settle in eastern Fairfax County, which Alexandria will annex in the twentieth century. These neighborhoods will become known as The Fort, Seminary, and Lincolnia.	Krystyn R. Moon, " Finding the Fort: A History of an African American Neighborhood in Northern Virginia, 1860s-1960s ," June 2014; Alexandria Archaeology, Alexandria, Virginia; Krystyn R. Moon, "A Brief History of Lincolnia,"

		February 2023; Department of Planning and Zoning, Alexandria, Virginia.
ca. 1890s	By the end of the nineteenth century, African American families settled around North Fairfax Street between Montgomery and Second Streets, most likely to be close to their work on nearby wharves or factories. This area became known as Cross Canal. The remains of the Alexandria’s antebellum canal ran through the neighborhood.	Virginia Knapper, Interview by Pamela Cressey, March 24, 1982 , Alexandria Legacies, Office of Historic Alexandria, Alexandria, Virginia.
1905	The Watsons plat their land in Alexandria County (today known as Arlington County) for a streetcar suburb that catered to African American families. The subdivision, called Sunnyside, was annexed by Alexandria in 1930.	Krystyn R. Moon, “Sunnyside Subdivision Summary,” February 2023; Department of Planning and Zoning, Alexandria, Virginia.
1900s-1960s	Race-based restrictive covenants, which first appear in the United States prior to the Civil War, are introduced to Alexandria’s streetcar suburbs. Rosemont and George Washington Park, both of which are annexed from nearby counties, either ban African Americans or only permit persons of the “Caucasian race.”	Krystyn R. Moon, “Zoning and Restrictive Covenants Report,” February 2023; Department of Planning and Zoning, Alexandria, Virginia.
1912	The Virginia General Assembly passes legislation to allow municipalities to create race-based segregation districts. This policy was based on a similar policy in Baltimore, Maryland. Richmond, Norfolk, Roanoke, and Falls Church begin the process of designating certain areas for African American and white residents. The U.S. Supreme Court in <i>Buchanan v. Warley</i> (1917), however, rules that the segregation of communities by local governments infringes on individual property rights. The law is deemed unconstitutional.	D. M. P. Freund, <i>Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America</i> (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Emily Lieb, “The ‘Baltimore Idea’ and the Cities it Built,” <i>Inside/Outside</i> (Summer 2019): 105-119; Roger L. Rice, “Residential Segregation by Law, 1910-1917,” <i>The Journal of Southern History</i> 34.2 (May 1968): 179-199.
1931	City Council passes Ordinance No. 109, which divides Alexandria into three land uses (commercial, industrial, and residential) and prioritizes single-family dwellings. The U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling in <i>Village of Euclid, Ohio v. Ambler Realty Co.</i> (1926) paves the way for this practice, which spreads throughout the country. Industrial and commercial zoning is also used to push out African American property owners.	Krystyn R. Moon, “Zoning and Restrictive Covenants Report,” February 2023; Department of Planning and Zoning, Alexandria, Virginia.
1933	As part of his New Deal, President Franklin passes the Home Owners’ Loan Act, which allows the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation to buy mortgages from banks and refinance them. By 1937, the HOLC generates what becomes known as redlining maps, which delineate neighborhoods as high or low risk that often correlates with the racial, national, and/or class makeup. The impact of the HOLC on Alexandria residents is unknown. No HOLC map is created for Alexandria, and the National Archives has only kept correspondence files under the letter “C.”	Krystyn R. Moon, “Zoning and Restrictive Covenants Report,” February 2023; Department of Planning and Zoning, Alexandria, Virginia.
1934	President Franklin Delano Roosevelt passes the National Housing Act, which establishes the Federal Housing	Richard Rothstein, <i>The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of</i>

	Administration (FHA). The role of the FHA is to insure mortgages made by private banks to promote homeownership. To guide its decision-making process, it also makes redlining maps, including one for the Washington metropolitan area in 1937, which includes Alexandria. The FHA also requires that developers insert race-based restrictions into their deeds of dedication.	<i>How our Government Segregated America</i> (New York: Liveright, 2017); Krystyn R. Moon, "Zoning and Restrictive Covenants Report," February 2023; Department of Planning and Zoning, Alexandria, Virginia.
1937	The National Housing Act allows for the creation of public housing authorities by state and local governments. In 1939, City Council establishes the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA) and begins the process of condemning properties for the construction of segregated public housing. Almost all public housing is constructed in either the Berg or Uptown neighborhoods through the 1960s.	Krystyn R. Moon, "The African American Housing Crisis in Alexandria, Virginia, 1930s-1960s." <i>Virginia Magazine of History and Biography</i> 124, no. 1 (2016): 28-68.
1946	City Council permits aesthetic zoning for neighborhoods between George Washington Parkway and the waterfront, an area known as the Old and Historic District (OAH). The Board of Architectural Review (BAR) is also created to evaluate all construction projects in the OAH in terms of historical accuracy.	Peter H. Smith, "The Beginnings of Historic Preservation in Alexandria—Moving Toward the Creation of the Old and Historic District," <i>The Alexandria Chronicle</i> 4 (Winter 1996): 1–34.
1948	The U.S. Supreme Court rules in <i>Shelley v. Kraemer</i> that race-based restrictive covenants are unenforceable in the courts because they violate the equal protection clause of the 14 th Amendment. Most developers in Alexandria stop inserting race-based restrictions in deeds. Malvern Hill, located on Quaker Lane, is the last subdivision to insert race-based restrictions in 1962.	Krystyn R. Moon, "Zoning and Restrictive Covenants Report," February 2023; Department of Planning and Zoning, Alexandria, Virginia.
1951	Alexandria updates its zoning policies to include Floor Area Ratio (FAR). FAR impacts density by limiting the floor area of any given building in relation to the overall land area. The City's new law not only make it difficult for developers to build large apartment complexes, but also affects pre-existing homeowners by limiting additions that provide alternative housing.	Krystyn R. Moon, "Zoning and Restrictive Covenants Report," February 2023; Department of Planning and Zoning, Alexandria, Virginia.
1955	A white homeowner and her African American renters are threatened with gunshots and an anonymous note. The renters decide to leave Del Ray, which is an all-white neighborhood. A decade later, a similar incident occurs in Del Ray.	Krystyn R. Moon, "The African American Housing Crisis in Alexandria, Virginia, 1930s-1960s." <i>Virginia Magazine of History and Biography</i> 124, no. 1 (2016): 28-68.
1957	City Council passes the Minimum House-Hygiene Ordinance, which requires that all structures meet specific safety and sanitary standards. This law also allows city employees to fine property owners for not meeting requirements.	Krystyn R. Moon, "The African American Housing Crisis in Alexandria, Virginia, 1930s-1960s." <i>Virginia Magazine of History and Biography</i> 124, no. 1 (2016): 28-68.
1950s-1970s	Alexandria successfully applies for federal urban renewal monies in 1959. The Gadsby Urban Renewal Project concentrates on a few blocks of commercial and residential	Krystyn R. Moon, "The African American Housing Crisis in Alexandria, Virginia, 1930s-

	development on King Street, displacing businesses and Black and white renters. Alexandria obtains funding for two other projects in the 1960s: Fort Ward Park and Museum and T. C. Williams High School (today known as Alexandria City), which displace African Americans in the western portion of the city. In 1970, the Dip Urban Renewal Project, located in the neighborhood formerly known as The Bottoms, was the city’s first widescale housing project.	1960s.” <i>Virginia Magazine of History and Biography</i> 124, no. 1 (2016): 28-68; Krystyn R. Moon, “Zoning and Restrictive Covenants Report,” February 2023; Department of Planning and Zoning, Alexandria, Virginia.
1962	The Citizens Advisory Committee on Minority Housing sends a report to City Council demanding that it address the housing crisis that African Americans are facing at all income levels. The Committee recommends open occupancy housing in all urban renewal projects.	Krystyn R. Moon, “Finding the Fort: A History of an African American Neighborhood in Northern Virginia, 1860s-1960s,” June 2014; Alexandria Archaeology, Alexandria, Virginia.
1962	Local civil rights activist Lt. Col. Marion Johnson speaks before the U.S. Civil Rights Commission in Washington, D.C. on housing discrimination in Alexandria. He states that the biggest problem that African Americans face in Alexandria “is the unavailability of decent, sanitary housing on any level.”	Krystyn R. Moon, “The African American Housing Crisis in Alexandria, Virginia, 1930s-1960s.” <i>Virginia Magazine of History and Biography</i> 124, no. 1 (2016): 28-68.
1963	After decades of lobbying by the NAACP, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company desegregates all its residential holdings, including Park Fairfax in Alexandria.	Krystyn R. Moon, “The African American Housing Crisis in Alexandria, Virginia, 1930s-1960s.” <i>Virginia Magazine of History and Biography</i> 124, no. 1 (2016): 28-68.
1964	The Civil Rights Act forbids race-based discrimination in any federally funded programming, including public housing. Alexandria begins to desegregate in public housing offerings.	Krystyn R. Moon, “The African American Housing Crisis in Alexandria, Virginia, 1930s-1960s.” <i>Virginia Magazine of History and Biography</i> 124, no. 1 (2016): 28-68.
1966	The Action Coordinating Committee to End Segregation in the Suburbs (ACCESS) organizes a three-day march from Gum Springs in Fairfax County through Alexandria to highlight the problems surrounding housing access.	Krystyn R. Moon, “The African American Housing Crisis in Alexandria, Virginia, 1930s-1960s.” <i>Virginia Magazine of History and Biography</i> 124, no. 1 (2016): 28-68.
1967	Alexandria’s City Council passes a Voluntary Open Housing Ordinance to begin the process of desegregating housing. Alexandria is only the second municipality in Virginia to attempt to desegregate housing.	Krystyn R. Moon, “The African American Housing Crisis in Alexandria, Virginia, 1930s-1960s.” <i>Virginia Magazine of History and Biography</i> 124, no. 1 (2016): 28-68.
1968	The federal government passes the Fair Housing Act, which forbids discrimination in all aspects of housing in the United States.	Krystyn R. Moon, “The African American Housing Crisis in Alexandria, Virginia, 1930s-1960s.” <i>Virginia Magazine of History and Biography</i> 124, no. 1 (2016): 28-68.

1971	A. Melvin Miller becomes chair of the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA). He is the first African American to hold the job.	"Housing Unit Names Black," <i>Washington Post</i> 2 Oct. 1971, B3.
1972	The Virginia state government passes its own legislation to stop housing discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and nation of origin.	Virginia Fair Housing Law , Code of Virginia, 36-96.1.
1973	The city proposes the expansion of the Old and Historic District to include the Uptown neighborhood. African American residents, led by housing activist Eudora Lyles, protest the expansion of the historic district.	Catherine K. Miliaras, "The Parker-Gray District: Examining a Local Historic District a Generation Later," <i>The Alexandria Chronicle</i> no. 1 (Spring 2015): 1-11.
1977	Alexandria's Community Development Block Grant Office offers homeowners low-interest or no-interest loans to fix up their homes. This program is part of the city's move away from large-scale urban renewal projects.	Patricia Camp Washington, "Conservation District Loans Aid Restoration Projects," <i>Washington Post</i> August 10, 1977, C1.
1978	Using monies from HUD's Community Development Block Grant program, ARHA purchases and renovates run down homes and sells them to middle-income families.	Mary Hitz, "Alexandria to Pick Buyers for Five Rehabilitated Homes," <i>Washington Post</i> June 22, 1978, VA-3.
1983	The Parker-Gray Historic District is established in the Uptown neighborhood. It seeks to protect both historic homes and contemporary structures from gentrification. African American residents, however, continue to leave the neighborhood.	Catherine K. Miliaras, "The Parker-Gray District: Examining a Local Historic District a Generation Later," <i>The Alexandria Chronicle</i> no. 1 (Spring 2015): 1-11.
1985	The 16 th Census Tract Crisis Committee accuses city government of systematically eliminating housing options for African American residents. HUD investigates and sides with the Committee but is unable to find a resolution.	Catherine K. Miliaras, "The Parker-Gray District: Examining a Local Historic District a Generation Later," <i>The Alexandria Chronicle</i> no. 1 (Spring 2015): 1-11.
1986	Several developers purchase apartments in the Arlandria/Chirilagua neighborhood with plans to convert them into high-end condos. Residents face mass evictions, potentially the largest in Alexandria's history.	Krystyn R. Moon, " From Arlandria to Chirilagua: The Shifting Demographics of a Northern Virginia Neighborhood ," Fall 2019; The Metropole: The Official Blog of the Urban History Association.
1987	Local Episcopal churches establish Carpenter's Lodgings to address homelessness. Carpenter's Lodgings will split into two organizations, Community Lodgings in Arlandria/Chirilagua and Carpenter's Shelter in Parker-Gray.	Krystyn R. Moon, " From Arlandria to Chirilagua: The Shifting Demographics of a Northern Virginia Neighborhood ," Fall 2019; The Metropole: The Official Blog of the Urban History Association.

1989	The Tenants Support Committee, later known as Tenants and Workers United, purchases an apartment building and establishes the Arlandria-Chirilagua Housing Cooperative. It's the city's first housing cooperative.	Krystyn R. Moon, " From Arlandria to Chirilagua: The Shifting Demographics of a Northern Virginia Neighborhood, " Fall 2019; The Metropole: The Official Blog of the Urban History Association.
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