

Topographies of Power: The Lasting Impacts of Racial Zoning

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During the multiple site visits to the Locust Grove Neighborhood throughout the semester--especially toward the beginning--I found myself questioning the history of the neighborhood before I actually knew any of it. It seemed like such a quiet, friendly place to live--almost innocent in a way--filled with historic homes and covered by a beautiful canopy of old trees. However, there is always a deeper, more complex history to any place, including Locust Grove. As the semester progressed and the history of Locust Grove and the greater City of Charlottesville was revealed, I found myself being exposed to the land use and zoning practices that helped to constitute the neighborhood of Locust Grove as it exists today, many of which were ultimately racially motivated.

Over the past decade, much of the public discourse and academic exploration of the land use and zoning policies of the 20th Century has been brought into the public eye--specifically in regard to the history of these land use and zoning practices--much of which was racially motivated. As the links between race and planning practices became more publicized, there have been calls to address the history and implementation of these planning practices and change them to no longer reflect this history.¹ In response to these calls, many major cities have been attempting to grapple with the racial histories of planning and land use², such as the Mapping Inequality Project in Minneapolis and the city's efforts to "undo barriers and overcome inequities created by a history of policies in our city that have prevented equitable access to housing, jobs, and investments."³ In response to the affordable housing crisis and class disparities found throughout the region, parts of the history of the planning practices of Albemarle County and the

¹ Knuppel, Andrew J, "Watershed Moments in a Suburbanizing County: Environmentalism, Exclusion, and Land Use in Albemarle County, Virginia, 1960-1980", Page 9-10, Master's thesis, University of Virginia, 2020.

² Knuppel, Andrew J. Page 9-10.

³ City of Minneapolis, "Minneapolis 2040," Minneapolis 2040, 2018, <https://minneapolis2040.com/>.

City of Charlottesville have been brought to light and are now beginning to be documented through a variety of efforts, such as the Mapping Cville project started by Jordy Yager. The history of planning and zoning practices found across the state of Virginia, including cities like Lynchburg and Richmond, ultimately directly influenced the racially motivated planning and zoning practices of Charlottesville and Albemarle County; the broader implications of these planning and zoning practices create topographies of power that can be seen not only at the larger scale of the state and the city, but also the scale of the individual neighborhood through resources like the comprehensive plans of these cities that delve into background and neighborhood analysis that prove the racially motivated origins of these practices.

Race based zoning and land use policies in Virginia began with explicit racial segregation; In 1911, the city of Richmond, through the use of its charter powers, “adopted the first ordinance dividing the city into separate blocks for white and colored.”⁴ After this many other cities across Virginia began to adopt similar race-based district policies, including Roanoke, Lynchburg, and others.⁵ However, in 1917 in the *Buchanan v. Warley* supreme court case, these ordinances that promoted explicit racial segregation were ruled unconstitutional and “assured to the colored race the enjoyment of all the civil rights...enjoyed by white persons.”⁶ With this ruling, explicit racial segregation was not allowed; however, race-based planning and land use created by professional planners were then enacted that allowed for cities to divide their land into separate districts to “regulate the use of land and buildings”⁷ which resulted in the

⁴ McGuire Woods Zoning and Segregation Work Group. “Zoning and Segregation in Virginia Part 1.” *McGuireWoods Consulting*, McGuire Woods, media.mcguirewoods.com/publications/2021/Zoning-And-Segregation-In-Virginia-Study-Part1.pdf, Page 3-4.

⁵ McGuire Woods Zoning and Segregation Work Group. Page 4.

⁶ “*Buchanan v. Warley*.” Oyez. Accessed April 22, 2021. <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1900-1940/245us60>

⁷ McGuire Woods Zoning and Segregation Work Group. Page 4.

planning process creating “legally defensible ways” to create Black residential areas.⁸ At the forefront of these practices in the state of Virginia were Richmond and Lynchburg—in addition to many other cities--all of which influenced the development of race-based planning practices in Charlottesville; although these practices are no longer in use in a contemporary setting, their effects linger today in land use policies that perpetuate segregation by race and income.

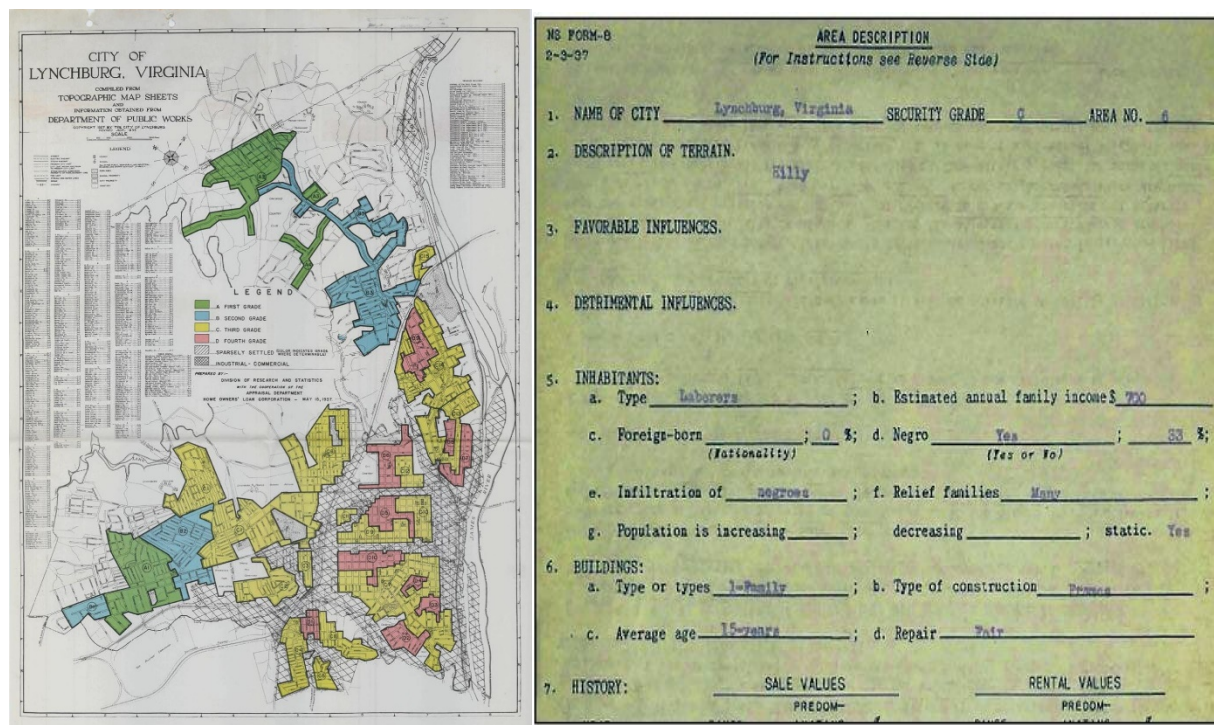


Figure 1: (Left) 1937 Map of Lynchburg, Virginia showing the areas of the city by grade. Home Owners Loan Corporation Checklist (HOLC) designated “A” areas to be the best and where good mortgage lenders with available funds are willing to make their maximum loans. “B” areas are “still desirable” where mortgage lenders will hold commitments 10-15% under the limit. “C” areas were characterized by obsolescence and lower grade population and would hold commitments under those of the A and B areas. “D” areas were categorized to be the worst areas, characterized by detrimental influences to a pronounced degree, undesirable population or an invasion of it.⁹ Photo courtesy of the [Mapping Inequality Project](#) at the University of Richmond.

Figure 2: (Right) A portion of the Home Owners Loan Corporation Checklist for neighborhood evaluation. Photo Courtesy of the News and Advance.

⁸ Christopher Silver. “The Racial Origins of Zoning in American Cities”, from Manning Thomas, June and Marsha Ritzdorf eds. *Urban Planning and the African American Community: In the Shadows*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997. Page 2.

⁹ “Mapping Inequality.” n.d. Digital Scholarship Lab. Accessed April 22, 2021.
<https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=13/37.42/-79.2&city=lynchburg-va>.

Lynchburg, Virginia serves as a prime example of a city that employed race-based planning and land use practices in the greater context of Virginia. As seen in Figure 1, all of the “best” and “still desirable” areas were classified as primarily residential neighborhoods that had no threat of infiltration of foreign-born, negro, or lower grade population, according to HOLC, while the “definitely declining” and “hazardous” areas were primarily composed of poor and minority individuals in industrial zones with high chances of infiltration. This suggests that these areas of lower class were redlined in order to create neighborhoods that were composed primarily of a minority, working class population and force it to remain that way by offering little to no financial assistance to the people living within these areas due to the lack of stability in these areas determined by HOLC through their checklist process (Figure 2). In addition, the neighborhoods that received a “C” rating were mostly given this rating due to their proximity to the “D” neighborhoods, which made the property inherently less valuable.¹⁰

Ultimately, this classification system determined by HOLC redlined these areas and laid the framework for the land use and planning for the city that is still in effect today. The ratings determined by HOLC prevented many minority individuals from escaping the poverty that encompassed these areas due to the fact that they could not get a loan, move to a better neighborhood, or accumulate wealth while the “A” and “B” neighborhoods were provided with ample opportunities to better their circumstances. These 1937 “C” and “D” neighborhoods currently outline parts of Census tracts that constitute some of the lowest incomes in the city with an average black poverty rate of 34 percent.¹¹ However, Lynchburg is not an abnormality in

¹⁰ Abell, John. 2018. “Red-Lining in Lynchburg | From the Archives | Newsadvance.Com.” NewsAdvance.com. April 8, 2018. https://newsadvance.com/archives/red-lining-in-lynchburg/article_c38a5635-119c-53d1-bf20-883ca33c06e7.html.

¹¹ Abell, John. “Red-Lining in Lynchburg | From the Archives | Newsadvance.Com.”

regard to race-based planning and land use practices determined by HOLC; Richmond also employed these practices.

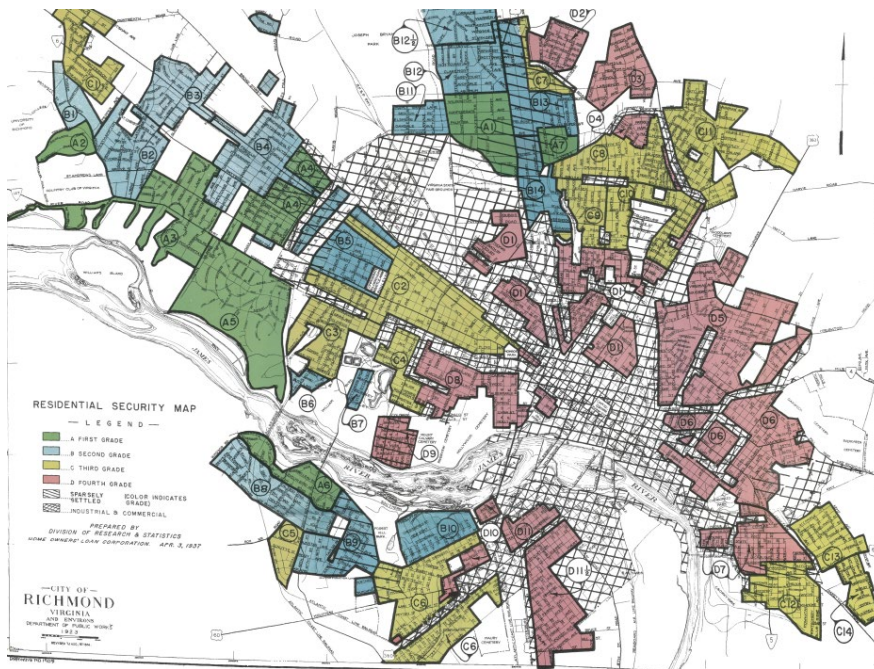


Figure 3: 1937 Map of Richmond, Virginia showing the residential security in each area. Photo courtesy of the [Mapping Inequality Project](#) at the University of Richmond.

Richmond neighborhoods were also graded by HOLC, which led to decades of “discriminatory practices in real estate sales, lending, and insurance.”¹² The map shows large parts of the Southern and Eastern portions of the city being labeled as “definitely declining” and “hazardous” with these areas being primarily zoned as industrial areas within the city. In addition, many of the areas labeled as “definitely declining” received their rating due to their proximity to black neighborhoods, as is seen in Figure 4. However, those areas that were considered the “best” areas often had restrictive racial covenants attached to them, which provided them with their higher rating.¹³

¹² Komp, Catherine. 2019. “Mapping Projects Show Lasting Impact Of Redlining, Racial Covenants In Virginia | VPM.” VPM.Org. July 29, 2019. <https://vpm.org/radio/news/mapping-projects-show-lasting-impact-of-redlining-racial-covenants-in-virginia>.

¹³ Komp, Catherine. 2019. “Mapping Projects Show Lasting Impact Of Redlining, Racial Covenants In Virginia | VPM.”

9. SALES DEMAND: a. _____; b. _____; c. Activity is _____

10. RENTAL DEMAND: a. _____; b. _____; c. Activity is _____

11. NEW CONSTRUCTION: a. Types _____; b. Amount last year _____

12. AVAILABILITY OF MORTGAGE FUNDS: a. Home purchase _____; b. Home building _____

13. TREND OF DESIRABILITY NEXT 10-15 YEARS _____

14. CLARIFYING REMARKS: **This area is yellow, largely because the school for white children is in the negro area, D-8, and because the negroes of D-8 pass back and forth for access to the William Byrd Park which lies to the west. For this reason losses on properties are being taken. Southeasternmost cheap bungalows.**

15. Information for this form was obtained from Mr. Arnold - Pollard and Begby

Date _____ 193 _____

(Over)

Figure 4: HOLC checklist for Richmond, Virginia. Photo courtesy of Catherine Komp and Mapping Inequality.

In addition, these HOLC gradings influenced the master plans done by Harland Bartholomew and Associates for the city throughout the 20th century, especially in regard to the 1946 master plan. Prior to the 1946 Richmond Master Plan, Harland Bartholomew and Associates had prepared comprehensive master plans for cities across the country. Many of these plans incorporated a few key moves that defined his style of city master planning, including widening streets, building highways around downtown areas, enforcing higher parking standards for new construction, and ultimately enforcing stricter zoning ordinances that would allow for these new master plan features to be realized.¹⁴ The implementation of the master plans they proposed meant that ultimately poverty and urban blight would have to be addressed; for Bartholomew and his associates, this was typically through means of removing dilapidated housing that remained in their way.¹⁵ Bartholomew writes,

“An influx of Negro population has accompanied Richmond’s industrial expansion during the past few years, and it is apparent from population increases in certain old sections of the city, which had shown losses during previous decades, that this influx has been directed largely into the present relatively dense Negro areas, where housing conditions are the worst.”¹⁶

¹⁴ Kollatz, Harry. 2019. “Sunday Story: A Man With a Plan - Richmondmagazine.Com.” Richmondmagazine.Com. September 29, 2019. <https://richmondmagazine.com/news/sunday-story/a-man-with-a-plan/>.

¹⁵ ¹⁵ Kollatz, Harry. 2019. “Sunday Story: A Man With a Plan - Richmondmagazine.Com.”

¹⁶ Harland Bartholomew and Associates. Richmond (Va.) City Planning Commission. A Master Plan for the Physical Development of the City. Richmond, Va: City Planning Commission, 1946.

As seen in figures 5 and 6, it is clear that in Richmond--and eventually in Charlottesville--this meant the destruction of blocks of historic property, typically within African American neighborhoods; this encouraged the preservation of predominantly white neighborhoods and the destruction of black neighborhoods in favor of his Master Plan for the city.

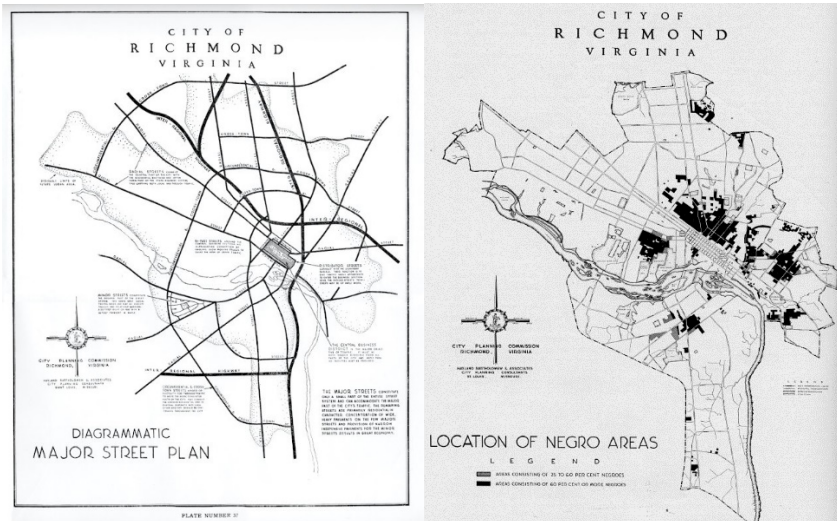


Figure 5: (left) A diagrammatic street plan proposed by Harland Bartholomew and Associates in the 1946 Master Plan for Richmond, Virginia.

Figure 6: (right) A map delineating the primarily black areas within Richmond, Virginia. Image from the 1946 Master Plan proposed by Harland Bartholomew and Associates.

These professional city planners continued to use race-based city planning and land use practices in order to create legally defensible ways to keep primarily African American and White neighborhoods separate. In addition to this, these planning practices proposed by Harland Bartholomew targeted the African American neighborhoods as areas in need of redevelopment since they were considered “dilapidated” and “slum-like”, which included new infrastructure of streets and transportation as well as house and land size requirements that displaced and destroyed these neighborhoods.¹⁷ Eleven years later, Harland Bartholomew and Associates

¹⁷ Harland Bartholomew and Associates. Richmond (Va.) City Planning Commission. A Master Plan for the Physical Development of the City. Richmond, Va: City Planning Commission, 1946.

proposed their housing ordinances for Charlottesville which were directly influenced by the race based planning practices they proposed in Richmond.

In 1957, the City Planning Commission of Charlottesville hired Harland Bartholomew and Associates to prepare a Preliminary Report Upon Housing within the city. This report was directly intertwined with that of the 1929 comprehensive zoning plan proposed by Allen Saville, a Richmond planning authority who was brought in by Charlottesville to segregate neighborhoods by means of planning.¹⁸ Ultimately, the Bartholomew document did more than just reporting on the existing housing conditions of Charlottesville; it proposed housing ordinances within the city that resulted in the redlining and destruction of certain districts due to their poor housing conditions, similar to those proposed by Saville 28 years earlier. Bartholomew describes,

“Although not directly related to public health, safety or morals, there is one additional aspect of the problem of bad housing which is certainly important to the welfare of the community. Bad housing is costly...its depreciating effect and that of hindering logical growth represents an intangible cost far greater than direct cost... over 780 dwelling units are dilapidated or in need of such extensive repairs they should be removed.”¹⁹

As seen in figures 7 and 8, Bartholomew and his associates were proposing that predominantly black neighborhoods should be redeveloped or demolished since many of the existing structures within their boundaries could not meet the new standard requirements of the proposed housing ordinance, which included safe and sanitary maintenance, adequate heating, light, and ventilation, and basic sanitary equipment, and minimum space requirements amongst others.²⁰ Substandard areas included Vinegar Hill, which offered an excellent opportunity for

¹⁸ Charlottesville Low-Income Housing Coalition. “The Impact of Racism on Affordable Housing in Charlottesville,” February 2020. Page 32.

¹⁹ Bartholomew, Harland. 1957. *A Preliminary Report Upon Housing in Charlottesville, Virginia*. Charlottesville, Virginia: The City Planning Commission. Page 46.

²⁰ Bartholomew, Harland. 1957. *A Preliminary Report Upon Housing in Charlottesville, Virginia*. Charlottesville, Virginia: The City Planning Commission. Page 50.

redevelopment in the eyes of Bartholomew since clearance of the area would expedite the improvement of traffic flow into central business district.²¹

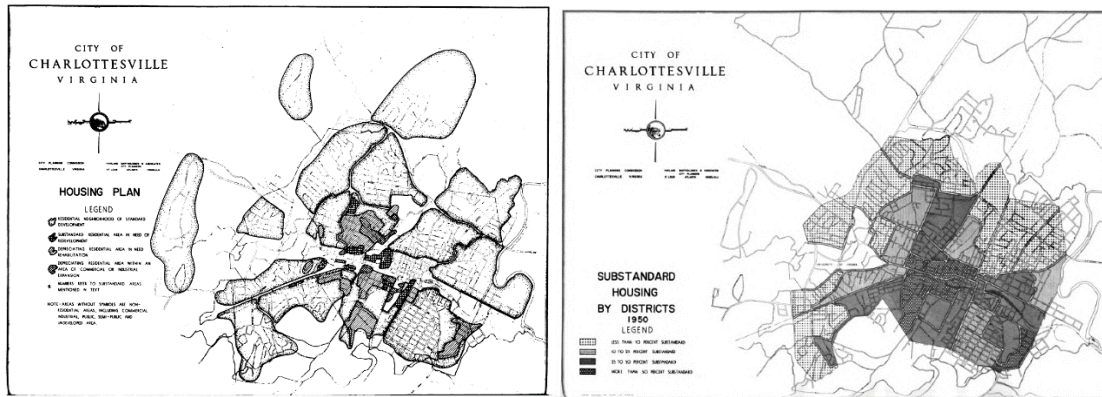


Figure 7: (left) The proposed housing plan by Harland Bartholomew and Associates in their 1957 Preliminary Report Upon Housing.

Figure 8: (right) The substandard housing districts in Charlottesville that served as the basis of Bartholomew's proposed housing ordinance in the 1957 Preliminary Report Upon Housing.

Through the proposed housing plan and housing ordinances from Harland Bartholomew and Associates, the legacy of race-based planning and land use practices that began with Allen J. Saville in Charlottesville were perpetuated even further. The zoning restricted business from “encroaching on white residential areas, but not black ones”, in addition to the use of racial covenants in white neighborhoods that ultimately prevented African Americans from moving out of these residential areas that were slowly becoming industrial. These primarily white neighborhoods included Fry’s Spring, Rugby Hills, Rugby Place, Rugby Woods, and Locust Grove.

In Bartholomew’s plan for the city of Charlottesville, Locust Grove neighborhood is primarily zoned as single-family characterized by large lot sizes, large houses, and a “well defined neighborhood boundary containing a homogeneous population.”²² The same holds true for the 1971 Background and Neighborhood Analysis of Charlottesville done by Harland

²¹ Ibid. Page 56.

²² Ibid. Page 50.

Bartholomew and Associates. While this analysis was done over a decade later, the same legacy of race-based zoning and planning policies is prevalent, even at the scale of the neighborhood in Charlottesville. The two neighborhoods in this portion of the Comprehensive Plan of Charlottesville that comprise Locust Grove today are the Park-East High Street and Locust Neighborhoods as seen in figure 9.

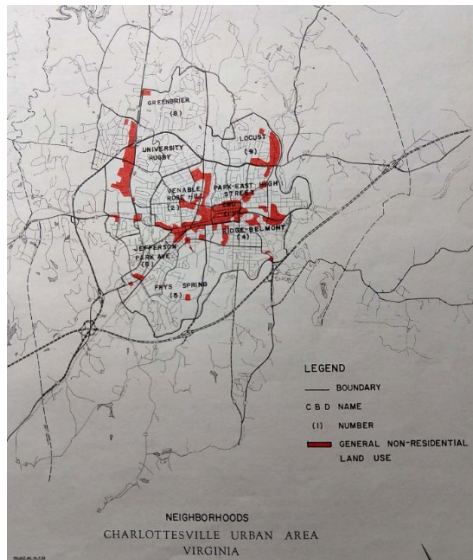


Figure 9: Charlottesville neighborhoods as described in the 1971 Background and Neighborhood Analysis: Elements of the Comprehensive Plan of Charlottesville. Photo courtesy of the 1971 Background and Neighborhood Analysis and Alissa Diamond.

When compared to the other 7 neighborhoods described throughout the document, there is no mention of the percentage of “non-white” population in the Locust and Park-East High Street neighborhoods, which suggests that these are primarily white neighborhoods that are attached to racial covenants. This is a result of the housing ordinances proposed by both Allen Saville and later perpetuated by Harland Bartholomew and Associates in their comprehensive plans of Charlottesville in which 75% of the homes in single-family neighborhoods had racial covenants written into them, including Locust Grove, and forced non-white residents to older,

central, and industrial areas of the city, as seen in figure 10.²³ The other 7 neighborhoods do have mention of their percentages of non-white population in Bartholomew's Housing Analysis.

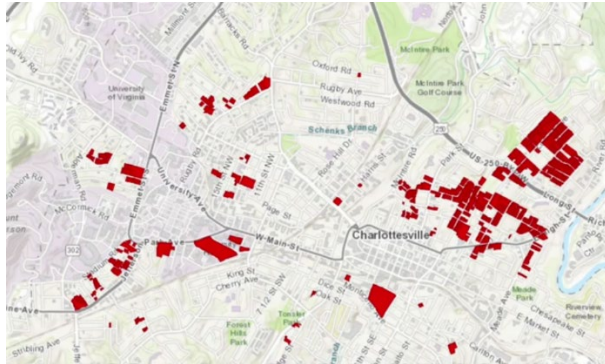


Figure 10: A map of racial covenants attached to house deeds in Charlottesville. These racial covenants are found throughout Locust Grove, making it a representation of the impact that Saville and Bartholomew both had at the neighborhood scale of Charlottesville. Image courtesy of Jordy Yager, [Mapping Cville](#).

Throughout the 20th Century, the history of planning and zoning practices found throughout Virginia as well as the specific city planners, in cities like Lynchburg and Richmond, were direct influences on the race-based planning and zoning practices found in Charlottesville. Through the use of comprehensive zoning plans, housing ordinances, and racial covenants amongst others, this approach to planning in the state of Virginia adopted by individuals like Allen Saville and Harland Bartholomew resulted in topographies of power; these topographies are seen not only at the scale of the state, but down to the scale of the city and even an individual neighborhood like Locust Grove that reinforces the racially motivated origins of these practices.

²³ Charlottesville Low-Income Housing Coalition. "The Impact of Racism on Affordable Housing in Charlottesville," February 2020.