### Clip 1

Welcome to the Fairgrounds neighborhood circa 1955. Come into the East Side Theater to learn more.

The Fairgrounds neighborhood had the approximate borders of NE 8th Street on the north to the Rock Island railroad tracks at the south. Stonewall or Lottie Avenues to the West and Eastern Avenue – now Martin Luther King jr – to the east. It was bisected by active railroad tracks running southwest-northeast. Today’s Douglass High School (900 N MLK) was the site of the first State Fairgrounds.The area was near the path of the unchallenged North Canadian River and was inclined to flooding.

The Fairgrounds was an incredibly dense, predominantly Black neighborhood. Because of redlining and other systemically racist house practices, the majority of African American residents of Oklahoma City primarily lived in a few specific neighborhoods.

Take a look at these aerial photos from the 1960s that show the density of the neighborhood

### Clip 2

The East Side Theater and its neighboring commercial development was the dream of George Richardson and J.W. Sanford, Sr. Listen to Mr. Richardson and Mr. Sanford’s son, J.W. Jr, talk about the planning and building of the Bath Ave strip.

### Clip 3

Construction began on the commercial strip on the east side of 700 block of Bath Ave in the late 1940s, with the centerpiece East Side theater opening in late 1946.

Look how the block filled in between 1949 and 1955.

Browse through these clippings from The Black Dispatch to see East Side advertisements, showtimes, and news articles

### Clip 4

So why is the East Side Theater gone? Where are the buildings that surrounded it? Keep exploring this model to learn more about the Fairground community and Urban Renewal.

### Clip 5

Oral histories from former and current residents of the Fairgrounds describe the types of business and activities in the neighborhood. Walk up and down the street to explore these stories and other primary sources.

### Clip 6

Louie’s Garage

This triangle-shaped, auto repair shop was one of the first businesses open on the east side of Bath. The owner, Louis Grisby, went by “Buck” to all who knew him.

### Clip 7

710A Bath was a two-story building that housed two businesses for most of its life. In 1955, 710A was The Coffee Cup Sandwich Shop. Take a look at the menu posted in The Black Dispatch.

### Clip 8

710B was the home of Melody Records.

Page through ads of the best-selling record of 1954, available at Melody.

### Clip 9

In a time before appliances became standard household furniture, much of a family’s clothing and linens would be taken to a hand laundry. Willie Mae Glover ran such a laundry on Bath for several years, starting around 1950. You can browse through several advertisements she placed in The Black Dispatch and a personal thank you for laundry service placed in the paper from a client. In the late 1950s, 712 Bath Ave hosted a finishing school, and later a liquor store and bar

### Clip 10

714 Bath

In the early days of the block, this standalone building was home to Palmore ‘s Pie and Sandwich Shop.

Here’s an ad from 1952. (long pause)

By the end of the 1960s, 714 Bath was home to the Bath Street Domino Parlor. Step inside to see a recreation of the space.

### Clip 11

718 Bath

Listed as “under construction” in 1949, Bill’s Cleaners stayed in business on Bath for longer than many other shops. Open until 1973, Bill’s Cleaners also sponsored a Bowling Team in the YMCA league.

Flip though several of Bill’s ads from the 1950s and some of his bowling scores.

Pause and show Bill’s Cleaners ads

We’re also lucky to have several pics from inside Bill’s Cleaners, both the front customer area and the back workroom.

### Clip 12

718B Bath

This address was also home to the Glamour-Manor Beauty shop. The owner and operator Nellie Terry would strive to educate others and entertain and influence her clients. Browse through newspaper clippings that show Mrs. Terry’s work with fashion shows and beautician clubs.

### Clip 13

720-722 Bath

East Side Theater

Listen to Anita Arnold and Sandra Richards talk about going to the East Side Theater.

### Clip 14

728 Bath

Jimmy’s Shine Parlor

In an era of leather shoes, shine parlors existed across all neighborhoods for shoeshines. Jimmy’s Shine Parlor was a long-time vendor for The Black Dispatch.

### Clip 15

730 Bath

This location was home to restaurants and billiard halls before becoming a long-time location of Tub-O-Suds, a chain laundromat. Tub-O-Suds stayed for about a decade as other businesses were shutting down.

### Clip 16

Urban Renewal

What is Urban Renewal?

As pre-WW2 community infrastructure began to age, combined with the growth of suburban living, the Federal government-created program to reinvigorate downtowns and downtown-adjacent communities. These programs were popular across the United States when they began in the 1950s, and continued to be championed by local governments and business leaders through the 1960s and 70s. They often involved demolition of buildings including homes and small businesses, and disproportionately affected communities of color.

Oklahoma City, like most cities in America, acquired more land than was ultimately developed and invested more heavily in new commercial projects than new housing. The initial buy-in and buy-outs by some left streets pockmarked with empty storefronts and homes, and the density of neighborhoods eroded. Businesses could not survive, and remaining residents were forced to travel further for basic needs. Eventually entire business strips like Bath Avenue closed and were demolished. Near-empty areas across the county were used for highway expansion projects, further isolating remaining residents and causing deeper economic destruction. In Oklahoma City the residential areas affected by Urban Renewal were Black neighborhoods on the Northeast side.

Listen to stories of the impact of Urban Renewal from Northeast OKC residents.

Learn more about Urban Renewal in Oklahoma City at metrolibrary.org/urban-renewal

### Clip 17

The Metropolitan Library System wishes to thank:

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The families, business owners, and patrons of the Fairgrounds Neighborhood, Oklahoma City.

Every effort has been made for historical accuracy in portraying the 700 block of North Bath Avenue, Oklahoma City in the 1950s. Please contact the Metropolitan Library System’s Special Collections and Research Department for citations and corrections.