

= Washington Park Subdivision =

The Washington Park Subdivision is the name of the historic 3 @-@ city block by 8 @-@ city block subdivision in the northwest corner of the Woodlawn community area , on the South Side of Chicago in Illinois that stands in the place of the original Washington Park Race Track . The area evolved as a redevelopment of the land previously occupied by the racetrack . It was originally an exclusively white neighborhood that included residential housing , amusement parks , and beer gardens .

During the late 1920s and 1930s , the area became the subject of discriminatory twenty @-@ year covenants , which were determined to be invalid by the United States Supreme Court , when challenged in a seminal case by Carl Hansberry . The case is a vital part of legal studies and considered an important part of a broad class of histories . The play Raisin in the Sun is based on Lorraine Hansberry 's struggles in this neighborhood .

= = Location = =

Due to the non @-@ rectangular shape of the Washington Park community area , the original Washington Park Race Track actually occupied the Southern two @-@ thirds of the Washington Park Subdivision , which is an 8 @-@ city block by 3 @-@ city block area in northwest corner of the Woodlawn community area and bounded by Dr. Martin Luther King Drive to the west , South Cottage Grove Avenue to the East , East 60th Street to the North and East 63rd Street to the South . This is the area directly south of Washington Park and both south and east of the Washington Park community area . It would be part of the Washington Park community area if the community area were to complete its logical proper rectangle .

= = Historical significance = =

Between 1884 and 1905 , the race track occupied part of the area now known as Washington Park Subdivision . After the city outlawed gambling , the area was redeveloped as a residential housing subdivision with neighboring commercial recreation such as the White City amusement park that flourished until the Great Depression . The neighborhood also included a beer garden that was remodeled by Frank Lloyd Wright .

Between 1900 and 1934 , the African American population in Chicago grew from 30 @,@ 000 to 236 @,@ 000 . In this time , Chicago 's demographics changed so that instead of having this population diluted in scattered places , it was concentrated in two large strips of land . The concentration was enforced by violence at first , but restrictive covenants became the preferred way to enforce segregation after a few decades .

When necessary , community organizations used violence to pursue their segregationist purposes , and between 1917 and 1921 , bomb use discouraged encroachment into majority white neighborhoods . The bombs were used at the residences of African Americans as well as the properties of real estate agents and bankers . In 1919 , African American banking magnate Jesse Binga , the owner of the first Chicago bank to be operated by African Americans , and the first African American who lived in the Washington Park Subdivision , endured five bombings of his home by angry whites . Binga lived on the block diagonally northwest of the northwest boundary of the subdivision at 5922 South Dr. Martin Luther King , Jr . Drive .

Although they were previously rare , racially restrictive covenants among property owners that outlawed the purchase , lease , or occupation of their properties by African Americans became common in Chicago in the 1920s , following the Great Migration . Local businessmen and the University of Chicago became alarmed at the prospect of poorer African Americans moving from the Black Belt due to a combination of racial succession and economic decline . In 1926 , the United States Supreme Court upheld racially restrictive covenants in Corrigan v. Buckley ( 271 U.S. 323 ( 1926 ) ) . In 1927 , the Chicago Real Estate Board ( CREB ) sent representatives throughout the city to promote such covenants , which it viewed as a progressive alternative to violence . The board representatives provided model contracts drafted by the Chicago Plan Commission as part of their

efforts . By 1928 , the Hyde Park Herald reported that the covenants prevailed throughout the South Side , and 95 % of the homes in the subdivision were covenanted . Most African American neighborhoods were bounded by covenanted areas since 85 % of Chicago was covenanted .

= = Legal issues = =

Between 1928 and 1940 , the subdivision was a legal battleground . In 1928 , landlords in the subdivision signed the covenants in which they agreed that they would not rent to non @-@ whites . The language of the covenants state that no properties in the subdivision " ... shall be sold , given , conveyed or leased to any negro or negroes , and no permission or license to use or occupy any part thereof shall be given to any negro except house servants or janitors or chauffeurs employed thereon ... " The covenants were signed by " owners of land on the one or the other side of Evans , Langley , Champlain , St. Lawrence , Rhodes , Eberhart , Vernon and South Park Avenues , between 60th and 63rd Streets and on 60th , 61st and 62nd Streets between South Park and Cottage Grove Avenues " on September 30 , 1927 , and they were recorded at the Cook County Register of Deeds on February 1 , 1928 . They were intended to be valid and in force until January 1 , 1948 .

The Great Depression decreased white demand for the subdivision 's properties . A few well @-@ off African Americans convinced some owners to sell properties to them . The most famous case was that of Dr. James L. Hall , who rented a property located at 419 E. 60th St. from the white Issac Kleiman . In 1933 , Olive Ida Burke ( the wife of Mr. Burke ? a future defendant in the famous Hansberry v. Lee case ) sued Kleiman in the case now known as Burke v. Kleiman . The circuit court granted an injunction in favor of the plaintiffs , which was upheld on appeal by the Supreme Court of Illinois . The plaintiffs stipulated that as of 1928 more than 95 % of the property owners signed the covenant . This stipulation was later proved false ? only 54 % had actually signed .

In 1937 , Carl Hansberry purchased a property from James Joseph Burke located at 6140 South Rhodes . Anna M. Lee , and other promoters of the covenants , sued to prevent Hansberry 's family from living in the neighborhood . This led to the Hansberry v. Lee , 311 U.S. 32 ( 1940 ) case . Defendants argued that the stipulation made previously in Burke v. Kleiman that more than 95 % of the owners had signed the covenant was false and the case should be rejudicated . Plaintiffs , while admitting to the fact , contended that the principle of res judicata barred courts from rehearing the old arguments . The Illinois courts ruled in favor of plaintiffs . However the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People decided to represent the buyer in the United States Supreme Court . The case caught the attention of national real estate magazines and African American newspapers . The U. S. Supreme Court eventually reversed that ruling stating the application of res judicata in this case would violate Fourteenth Amendment . The play Raisin in the Sun was inspired by Lorraine Hansberry 's time in the neighborhood after her father won the repeal of restrictive covenants .

The result of Hansberry v. Lee led to racial succession . White tenants were often evicted to make way for higher @-@ paying African American renters . By 1950 , the subdivision was over 99 percent African American . The Hansberry case is a seminal case in civil procedure and class action legal studies . It is also considered an important study of African American , Chicago and legal history .

While the purchase case proceeded , some landlords subdivided properties and rented them to blacks at a premium . Some realtors began encouraging white families to move out so that they could rent properties to African Americans . Smaller property owners were pressed to sell to realtors or directly to African Americans because the neighborhood was undergoing a racial transformation . The conditions of this neighborhood are described in a section of Black Metropolis by St. Clair Drake and Horace Roscoe Cayton .

The Supreme Court ruling and several similar rulings led to the racial transformation of the Woodlawn and Hyde Park community areas . Political futures were determined by positions taken on this issue . Future five @-@ term Mayor of Chicago Richard J. Daley ran for Cook County Sheriff in 1946 as a progressive anti @-@ covenant candidate . Eventually , in Shelley v. Kraemer , 334

U.S. 1 ( 1948 ) , which was argued by Thurgood Marshall , the U. S. Supreme Court declared restrictive covenants in general unenforceable .