Making the Cotton District (White): Urban Renewal, New Urbanism, and the Construction of a Nostalgic Neo-Plantationist Pastiche

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Sometimes heralded as the first ever new urbanist development, Starkville, Mississippi's Cotton District neighborhood stands out as a relatively dense, walkable, and mixed-use neighborhood in the otherwise car-centric landscapes of the rural south. Together with the neighborhood's colorful buildings reminiscent of the grand homes of the antebellum South, these elements obscure the fact that the neighborhood as it exists today is the result of a federally funded urban renewal project that razed much of the adjacent Black neighborhood of Needmore and opened up the present-day Cotton District as a space for new investment. In excavating the details of these different elements of the Cotton District's history, our central conceit is that the Cotton District represents what we call a "nostalgic neo-plantationist pastiche" produced through the material and symbolic displacement of Blackness and its replacement with both material and symbolic whiteness. By conceptualizing this landscape as constituted fundamentally by white nostalgia for a mythical, bygone era of plantation capitalism, and instantiated through a bricolage of architectural and design styles, we seek to draw attention to the precise ways that this landscape actively (re)constructs the past, rather than simply representing it. At the same time, the case of the Cotton District offers an opportunity to reconsider received wisdom in urban design and planning concerning the historic and contemporary linkages between urban renewal and new urbanism, and racial inequality and urban planning more generally.
Key Words: anti-Blackness, displacement, new urbanism, urban renewal, whiteness.

Described by one writer as a "Hobbit shire on the edge of the Mississippi cotton belt" (Faber 2017), Starkville, Mississippi's Cotton District sits on the eastern edge of the city, nestled between the Mississippi State University campus just beyond the city limits, and downtown Starkville, just a half-mile or so to its west down University Avenue. Known to Mississippi State undergraduates as just "The District," the Cotton District is a relatively dense, walkable, and mixed-use neighborhood that is home to both a significant proportion of Starkville's off-campus student housing as well as a significant proportion of the town's nightlife. Occupying a strategic nexus between the university and downtown Starkville, the Cotton District is frequently offered as a synecdoche for the city as a whole in promotional brochures and social media posts from the local chamber of commerce.

Apart from its centrality to local life in Starkville, a small, isolated college town of just 25,000 in east central Mississippi, the Cotton District is exemplary of a much larger set of social and spatial processes of concern. This article also provides an opportunity for rethinking both the common stories told about these processes and the vantage points from which they are rehearsed. On the one hand, the Cotton District is widely heralded in urban design and planning circles, sometimes even being deemed the first ever new urbanist development. At the same time, though, this development was only made possible through federally sponsored urban renewal, and the displacement of poor and working-class Black and white residents of the neighborhoods surrounding the J. W. Sanders cotton mill from which the Cotton District derives its name. Not only is this history not widely known within Starkville, but we argue that it is actively hidden or erased through the aesthetic practices of the Cotton District's developer, the recently deceased Dan Camp.[1] By drawing on a pastiche of different Southern architectural styles adopted from places like New Orleans, Charleston, and Savannah, the Cotton District attempts to

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produce and project an image of timelessness and authenticity, despite the fact that nearly all of Camp's buildings have been built in the last twenty to thirty years.

In excavating the details of these different elements of the Cotton District's history, our central conceit is that the Cotton District represents what we call a nostalgic neo-plantationist pastiche produced through the material and symbolic displacement of Blackness and its replacement with—again, both material and symbolic—whiteness. Like all cultural landscapes, the Cotton District lies, concealing its true nature and history behind a veneer of naturalness, especially its seeming historic authenticity (Duncan and Duncan 2001; Schein 2003). We therefore pick up on Brunsma et al.'s (2020) argument that "[t]o understand white spaces and the ways they operate culturally, scholars should pay close attention the historical establishment of such spaces and the associated origin stories" (2009). By conceptualizing this landscape as constituted fundamentally by white nostalgia for a mythical, bygone era of plantation capitalism, and instantiated through a bricolage of architectural and design styles, we seek to draw attention to the precise ways that this landscape actively (re)constructs the past, rather than simply representing it.

In the case of the Cotton District, examining the history of this nostalgic neo-plantationist pastiche and its creation has implications that extend beyond the city itself. The establishment of the Cotton District, and its relationship to the adjacent Needmore neighborhood, offer an opportunity to reconsider received wisdom in urban design and planning concerning the historic and contemporary linkages between racial inequality and urban planning. In particular, we argue that rather than seeing "New Urbanism … as a genuine alternative to the slum clearance and suburbanization practices of past urban renewal efforts" (Bohl 2000, 770), it is instead a set of social and spatial practices similarly steeped in whiteness while also being historically dependent on the removal of Black people and places for its production. By focusing on the processes of displacement that gave rise to the Cotton District, we emphasize the ways that new urbanism fundamentally draws on and revitalizes the larger regime of what Williams (2020) terms *racial planning*. We argue that the history of the Cotton District and Needmore troubles the putative novelty of new urbanism, and calls attention to new urbanism's roots in urban renewal. In this case, the seeming newness of new urbanism is bolstered by symbolic invocations of plantation nostalgia in the built environment, in turn reifying whiteness by naturalizing and making invisible the geographies of displacement and profit that produce it.

To demonstrate these interconnections, we first turn to reviewing the extant literature in three key areas: the histories and geographies of urban renewal in the United States, the development of new urbanist planning and design, and, finally, geographies of whiteness and anti-Blackness. The article then focuses on exploring several key elements in the Cotton District's creation, as revealed through our archival analysis of both qualitative and spatial data related to the neighborhood through time. Of particular interest are (1) the importance of new urbanist planning and design to the Cotton District (and vice versa), (2) the fact that the Cotton District's development was largely dependent on federally funded urban renewal and the destruction of the adjacent Black neighborhood, while (3) the local state provided support for private redevelopment efforts like those of Dan Camp, ultimately resulting in (4) the displacement of Blackness from the area both materially and symbolically, only to be (5) replaced with a nostalgic neo-plantationist pastiche meant to reinforce and naturalize the whiteness of the neighborhood. Through this focus on the longer history of urban renewal and displacement that is rarely acknowledged in the mythologies of new urbanism, we hope to spur greater critical attention to the broader aesthetic and spatial trajectories of new urbanism as a form of racial planning and white supremacist spatial practice. Because new urbanism has often been embraced as a response and solution to the ills wrought by urban renewal, careful attention to the place-based relationships between new urbanism and the dynamics of dispossession that form its foundations can be a crucial step toward Williams's (2020) call for a truly reparative model of planning that directly confronts and addresses historical and ongoing injustices, and contributes to urban spaces that are just and equitable.

Contextualizing Urban Change in the Cotton District

Urban Renewal

The process known as *urban renewal* represents perhaps the single largest transformation of the U.S. urban fabric. Initiated in a piecemeal fashion by city

leaders in the early twentieth century, expanded through the influx of federal funding made available by the Housing Act of 1949, and motivated by a desire among city officials and business leaders to revalorize the inner-city neighborhoods affected by various forms of so-called blight, urban renewal was largely a program of demolition. As noted by Anderson (1964) in what is widely considered the most famous critique of urban renewal, "In spite of the verbal emphasis given to rehabilitation since 1954, less than two tenths of one percent of the gross project cost of urban renewal at the end of 1962 was for rehabilitation" (20). The goal was, from the outset, to remake neighborhoods from whole cloth. "[Urban renewal] was intended to obliterate the urban past and replace it with something better. For most urban renewal planners, there was no reason to conform to the urban context: that context was the very thing they were trying to destroy" (Teaford 2000, 456).

The cumulative effect of this program of demolition and clearance was the "bulldoz[ing of] 2,500 neighborhoods in 993 American cities" (Fullilove [2004] 2016, 4), resulting in the displacement of more than a million people. Talen (2014) similarly offers that the "conservative estimate of all the units demolished under federal programs is 910,000 (580,000 units demolished under federal slum clearance programs and an additional 330,000 demolished for highway building)" (238). This destruction was not evenly distributed, though. According to Fullilove ([2004] 2016), roughly 1,600 of the neighborhoods destroyed by urban renewal (or over 60 percent of the total) were predominantly Black. Although these numbers clearly indicate that a large number of Latinx, Asian, and white ethnic neighborhoods were also demolished by urban renewal, the clear focus on the destruction of Black neighborhoods famously led to the writer James Baldwin instead calling it "Negro removal."

Notable examples of urban renewal include the displacement of approximately 20,000 Black, Jewish, and Italian-American residents of Boston's West End (Gans 1962) and the countless projects initiated by Robert Moses in New York City that displaced nearly 30,000 residents, immortalized by the opposition of Jacobs (1961) and other neighborhood activists in Greenwich Village.[2] Although these instances are certainly some of the most individually impactful and damaging, they do not tell the entire story of urban renewal. That is because urban renewal was not a strictly big-city phenomenon, but was instead taken up in countless small towns and rural areas across the country, including in the South. Indeed, "[t]he overwhelming majority of cities to have participated in the federal urban renewal program (74.7 percent) had populations below 50,000 … nearly half of all urban renewal programs or projects (48.1 percent) took place in cities with populations of fewer than 50,000" (Appler 2017, 203).

One common use of urban renewal money in smaller towns and bigger cities alike was to support the growth of local universities. Following the passage of the 1959 Housing Act, which updated the previous Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954, and its Section 112, local urban renewal funding was able to be leveraged on university projects so long as they were purported to have some larger public benefit. In practice, this meant largely the same thing as it did in other contexts: the destruction of Black neighborhoods and displacement of Black residents (Hochfelder and Appler 2020). As work by Kahler and Harrison (2020) shows through the case of Columbia, South Carolina's urban renewal program, the expansion of college campuses served as a way of simultaneously displacing nearby Black communities and maintaining the university as a space of whiteness during the era of desegregation in the mid-twentieth century (see also Hanlon 2011 for an example of how the same process occurred in Lexington, Kentucky, prior to the beginning of federally funded urban renewal).

The cumulative spatial dynamics of urban renewal were contradictory. On the one hand, the displacement of Black people from centrally located, accessible neighborhoods produced new geographies of poverty and disinvestment, albeit often in places quite far from the place-based networks that were destroyed through urban renewal (Holliman 2009). At the same time, though, one of the key enablers of urban renewal was the additional funding and planning support provided through the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956, which cut new interstate highways through urban centers. The routes of these new interstates were not accidental, but deliberately planned to accomplish the same ends as urban renewal: the displacement of Black people from prominent locations in the city (Fullilove [2004] 2016; Dottle, Bliss, and Robles 2021). These

highways then provided the means for white residents to flee central city neighborhoods to the suburbs, ushering in a then-new, and still largely dominant, era of autocentricity and (ostensibly) free movement across much greater distances than was previously practical.

New Urbanism

Some two decades after the end of the urban renewal era, a group of architects, urban designers, and planners began to push back against the kind of urban form created in its wake. Organized under the banner of new urbanism, but sometimes referred to as neotraditional town planning, this new group of designers sought to return to the kind of city and neighborhood that existed before urban renewal and the interstate highway system: dense, mixed-use, walkable, and largely self-contained neighborhoods, the kinds of places where community could flourish organically through the everyday interactions of neighbors that were practically unavoidable. That is to say, new urbanists tend to privilege the somewhat nebulous idea of community in their work, but see community as an inevitable product of a particular kind of urban design, in effect a kind of spatial determinism or design fetishism (Talen 1999). In some sense, these designers and planners sought to get back to the kind of dense, walkable, human-scale urbanism celebrated by Jacobs in the mid-twentieth century, rather than the homogeneous suburban sprawl of fast food and big box stores that Kunstler (1994) described as a "geography of nowhere" several decades later.

The idealized past that new urbanists seek to return to is, however, largely a concocted one. Drawing on the work of Hobsbawm, Till (1993) argues, "The so called tradition used in the neotraditional movement is … largely 'invented'" (710). Apart from the fact that new urbanist developments are often comprehensively planned and developed by a single developer rather than through an organic, gradual process, the designs are often meant to signal a reverence for history and place while constructing a mish-mash or pastiche of styles taken from different places and time periods than the one that is supposedly being represented (Till 1993; Falconer Al-Hindi and Staddon 1997). The function of this invented tradition is meant to naturalize the status quo of new urbanism by constructing a narrative continuity between contemporary new urbanist developments and historic urban form. As Zimmerman (2001) shows, however, through his examination of new urbanist developments in exurban Minnesota, these backstories tend to elide the messiness of the actual histories, and instead symbolically reproduce the removal of, for example, Indigenous peoples from these landscapes in favor of new white settlers. The case that Zimmerman documents is not, however, the full extent of new urbanism's imbrication with displacement and exclusion.

Although often built on suburban greenfield sites such that critics once found fit to criticize it as the "new suburbanism" (Lehrer and Milgrom 1996; see also Bjelland et al. 2006; Trudeau and Malloy 2011; Markley 2018a, 2018b), new urbanism has also been used toward the ends of altering existing urban neighborhoods. This has been especially the case in the ways new urbanist-inspired HOPE VI and privately funded projects have been used to displace public or other low-income housing, thereby increasing the whiteness and affluence of urban (and even some suburban) spaces that were previously seen as deviant or not valuable (Hanlon 2010; Markley 2018a, 2018b). Elsewhere, as Raciti (2020) argues, new urbanism's valorization of an architectural and design aesthetic most closely associated with middle- or upper-class white society during an era where racial segregation was being written into law by those very same groups has the potential to symbolically exclude those who were not beneficiaries of such an era and its policies. At the same time, new urbanism often fails to acknowledge the ways that traditionally marginalized, non-white neighborhoods across U.S. cities have actually put the ideals of community and locality it preaches into practice. It is through an analysis of these dynamics in Starkville that we attempt to provide an answer to the question posed by Falconer Al-Hindi (2001), when she writes that despite the fact that so many new urbanist developments are clustered in the southeastern United States, even in relatively small towns off the beaten path, "no ready explanation exists for the location of New Urban communities at … Starkville, Mississippi" (212). That is to say, just as in so many other new urbanist communities, the explanation lays in an understanding of how whiteness is deliberately embedded in the landscape to the exclusion of other spatial imaginaries and practices.

Landscapes of Whiteness and Anti-Blackness

Whiteness and white supremacy are central to the exclusionary dimensions of both new urbanist development and the era of urban renewal for which new urbanism purportedly provides a corrective. Although whiteness is pervasive in practically all elements of Euro-American society, urban renewal and new urbanism represent particularly clear examples of the spatialization of whiteness in the built environment. For Lipsitz (2011), "[t]he white spatial imaginary views space primarily as a locus for the generation of exchange value" (30) through its "idealiz[ation of] 'pure' and homogenous spaces, controlled environments, and predictable patterns of design and behavior" (29). Like so many other cultural landscapes, though, one of the goals of the white spatial imaginary and the material geographies it underpins is the making invisible of whiteness as such, or the desire for whiteness to disappear from view such that it is taken as the fundamentally natural or default state of being.

Within the broader frame of how Americans view whiteness, Hoelscher (2003) argues that "[d]enying white as a racial category, neglecting to see whiteness has a history and geography … allows whiteness to stand as the norm" (662). Brand (2022) invokes the geological metaphor to characterize this as a kind of "sedimentary process that obscures the very nature of white supremacy and white privilege as a spatialized praxis," which ultimately gives way to understanding it also as "a temporal praxis, continuously unfolding and persistently generative not only of material inequalities but also of symbolic invisibilities, a set of unmarked orientations and categories of experience that work in and across racial geographies" (277).

This tendency to allow whiteness to stand as the default has been especially evident in scholarship on racism within urban planning and design. As Goetz, Williams, and Damiano (2020) argue, studies of race and urban space too often position race and racism as solely the domain or problem of people of color. In so doing, this work elides the role of whiteness and white supremacy in producing the particular forms of sociospatial order and hierarchy that we live with today, in effect focusing exclusively on the victims of such inequality (or at least its end effects and manifestations) rather than the perpetrators or producers of such inequality. Lipsitz (2011) reveals how this logic works in practice when outlining the more-or-less obvious instantiations of white supremacy in the landscape:

> The plantation, the prison, the sharecropper's cabin, and the ghetto have been the most visible and obvious manifestations of the white supremacist uses of space. Perhaps less visible and less obvious, but no less racist, have been the spaces that reflect and shape the white spatial imaginary—the segregated neighborhood and the segregated school, the all-white work places, the exclusive country club, or the prosperous properly gendered white suburban home massively subsidized with services, amenities, tax breaks, and transportation opportunities unavailable to inner-city residents. (52)

This invocation of the exclusive suburban neighborhood as fundamentally white is one that appears time and time again. Although Etienne (2020) shows how the association of the detached single-family home with whiteness poses an obstacle to the abolition of single-family zoning, his intervention leaves other urban forms associated with whiteness unexamined. Similarly, Goetz, Williams, and Damiano (2020) make the argument that "white space in particular produces a white racial politics" (148), with specific reference to these same kinds of exclusive suburban enclaves, one that is echoed in other key works, such as Lipsitz (2011), when he writes, "The white spatial imaginary portrays the properly gendered prosperous suburban home as the privileged moral geography of the nation" (13).

Yet the strong association between whiteness and suburbanization can divert attention from other consequential ways whiteness is encoded in urban spaces. Following Jackson's (1998) call for "constructions of 'whiteness' [to] be traced at a variety of scales from the nation to the neighborhood" (100), we work to show how whiteness also shapes urban processes that might be missed in an exclusive focus on suburbanization. As Hoelscher (2003) noted, "[a]ny critical, geographical study of race and place in the Jim Crow South—and, by implication, in other locales where exclusionary practices are codified by custom and taken-for-granted norms—needs to examine how those habits and memories are communicated and reproduced" (659), with architecture, urban planning, and design being among the most significant.

As Summers (2019) shows through her notion of Black aesthetic emplacement, even those historically Black spaces that have since been gentrified bear

the mark of a particular kind of white spatial practice. By divorcing the physical presence and belonging of Black people from their aesthetic practices, even distinctly Black spaces have been captured and commodified by whiteness, which seeks to leverage the perceived authenticity of Black spatial aesthetics toward its own ends. Regardless of whether neighborhoods are characterized by conventional white or Black aesthetic markers, a shared reality of what McKittrick (2011) calls "place annihilation" remains pervasive. That is, the material displacement and exploitation of Black people and places serves as a kind of prerequisite for contemporary place making and real estate development, what Purifoy and Seamster (2021) calls "creative extraction." Through their work, Purifoy and Seamster show that white spaces are not created from a truly blank slate, but instead, "value for white spaces is predicated on the devaluation of Black places. Black places are thus not simply deficient or forgotten; their fate is indelibly linked to the fate of white spaces" (Purifoy and Seamster 2021, 52). It is precisely this form of uneven development that characterizes the history and evolution of the Cotton District, and how this neighborhood has had long-lasting effects on the cultural landscape of Starkville.

Making the Cotton District

The Origins of the Cotton District

As mentioned earlier, the Cotton District is so named because it sits adjacent to the former J. W. Sanders cotton mill. For the duration of its existence in Starkville, the cotton mill has served as a focal point for the city's economic development. Initially established in 1901 when Starkville had just 3,000 residents, the mill grew to employ 350 workers by 1929, representing roughly 10 percent of the city's total population (Strickland 2001). Production peaked in the 1940s, with workers producing 8 million yards of the mill's famed Starkville chambray fabric annually (Starkville Daily News 1946a). At the time, the mill had a monthly payroll of $60,000, with employee wages averaging $40 per week (Starkville Daily News 1946a).

The J. W. Sanders cotton mill had an even more expansive impact on the neighborhoods surrounding it. This included not only J. W. Sanders's extensive land holdings surrounding the mill building, known sometimes as Sanders Village, which included housing for mill workers that was being added to as late as 1946 (Starkville Daily News 1946b), but also the nearby Needmore neighborhood, which was established following the Civil War as Starkville's first Black settlement. Needmore earned its moniker because of its proximity to the Mobile and Ohio railroad tracks and the Sanders mill, both of which consistently "needed more" workers, as early residents worked on the railroad, and later, in the cotton mill. Both of the mill neighborhoods—the predominantly white Sanders Village area and the predominantly Black Needmore neighborhood—were distinctly working-class communities, and the mill was an important source of employment for residents of both neighborhoods until it was permanently closed in 1962.

As the mill itself was transitioning, so, too, were the surrounding neighborhoods. Given that a number of houses surrounding the mill were owned by J. W. Sanders and Company, the sale and eventual closure of the mill left these houses in disrepair, and an already working-class area was deprived of its primary source of income. Beginning in the late 1960s, Mississippi State drafting instructor Dan Camp began buying properties in the neighborhood and renting them out as apartments, starting with a set of eight units on Lummus Drive just north of the mill. Gradually over the following decades, Camp would continue buying up properties, renovating them, demolishing them, and building anew, and refining his own vision for the neighborhood he would only later come to call the Cotton District (see Figure 1).

The Cotton District as the First New Urbanist Neighborhood

Dan Camp's Cotton District would eventually reverberate far beyond Starkville, becoming widely heralded in urban design and planning circles. Indeed, the Cotton District has at times been given (and self-proclaimed) the title of the first ever new urbanist development.[3] For this to be true, one would have to give Camp credit for having begun developing the Cotton District as a new urbanist community back in 1969 when he bought his first handful of properties. Camp, however, bought these first properties roughly two decades before the

Figure 1. The Cotton District.

Congress for the New Urbanism was even established or the term *new urbanism* was coined by the likes of architect Andres Duany, arguably the most prominent single individual within the new urbanist movement.

Camp commented on numerous occasions that he had "been doing [new urbanism] a lot longer than [Duany] has and without any association with him … creating the neighborhood everybody else is trying to re-create" (German 1994). Or, as he claimed in a television feature on the Cotton District, "I had a colleague get up and says, 'The New Urbanism has made you rich.' And I just didn't have the fortitude to stand up and say, 'Hell I was doing New Urbanism before you even coined the term'" (Mississippi Public Broadcasting 2005). Regardless of the veracity of these claims to being the first ever, Dan Camp and the Cotton District have figured prominently in discussions of new urbanism. Camp, in fact, was an invited speaker at the very first Congress of the New Urbanism and was once called "the most interesting story in the U.S." by Duany (German 1994).

The Cotton District similarly played host to a number of new urbanist designers in the early 2000s, who produced a series of glowing reports and commentaries on the neighborhood for the Congress of the New Urbanism's *Council Report III*. These pieces called the Cotton District "folksy, amiably rebellious, and practical. … It's humble and gregarious and full of stories. It works hard and has a sense of humor" (Dover 2003, 8), even relating these qualities back to Camp himself. These commentaries largely reinforced a kind of "great man" theory, positioning Camp as the lone genius capable of creating such a masterpiece. One writer proclaimed, "everything related to the beautiful exterior [of the Cotton District] is really the creation of one man" (Herrman 2003, 9). Another asked, "How do we create a world where there is a Dan Camp in every town?" (Klinkenberg 2003, 9). Another questioned, "is there a way America can get 10,000 more Cotton Districts, 10,000 more Dan Camps?" (Dover 2003, 8).

The Cotton District as a Result of Urban Renewal

The hagiography of Dan Camp and his singular genius in building the Cotton District tends to elide one crucial piece of the story: Were it not for the federally funded urban renewal program's investment of resources in tearing down the vibrant, predominantly Black Needmore neighborhood that sat just next to it, Dan Camp almost certainly would not have built the Cotton District at all.

Described by Jones (2015) as "the Harlem of Starkville," Needmore was the first Black neighborhood established in the Starkville area after the Civil War, set up on what was then the land just outside the city limits to the southeast. In the face

of the segregation and racism of the Jim Crow South, Needmore residents built a strong community in the century that followed the abolition of slavery. Needmore residents were able to build lives and a thriving neighborhood in Starkville despite a lack of city investment in infrastructure, and despite the low wages available to Black workers in a rigidly segregated and differentiated labor market. Residents worked nearby on the railroad, in the cotton mill, and for the university, and pieced together a living through domestic employment in white households. Small, shotgun-style houses were prominent in the neighborhood, and many residents grew food in garden plots for household consumption. Needmore was an important center of Black life in Starkville, and produced many prominent educators, doctors, lawyers, and nurses (Evans 2021). Needmore residents also developed small businesses, including restaurants, stores, and even an ice house (Jones 2015). Despite limited resources, Needmore, in fact, had many of the characteristics that are celebrated by new urbanism and often attributed to the Cotton District, such as a mixture of land uses including both residential and commercial, on small lots and with a distinct sense of community pervading the neighborhood.

In the first week of November in 1969, Starkville was awarded over $3 million in federal funds for what it called the University Area Urban Renewal Project, covering the majority of Needmore, and ultimately leading to the displacement of most of Needmore's residents.[4] The inflation-adjusted equivalent of nearly $17 million in 2021 dollars, only about one-third of these funds had been disbursed and spent by the city by June 1974 when the federal urban renewal program came to an end (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 1974, 79). Starkville's project was one of fifty-four separate federally funded urban renewal projects across twenty-eight different Mississippi cities, but one of the largest; only seven of these individual projects had larger budgets than Starkville's (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 1974, 78–80).

It is no coincidence that Dan Camp started buying up property along Lummus Drive in 1969, the same year that Starkville was able to complete the planning stages for, and ultimately be awarded, a federally funded urban renewal project. Although the vast majority of Camp's property acquisitions over the years have been just outside the formal urban renewal area boundaries, as is evident in Figure 2, almost all have sat just north of the boundary, where much of the Sanders mill-owned worker housing was once located. Indeed, a number of Camp's earliest acquisitions were properties that had previously been owned by J. W. Sanders and Company, which had just gone out of business several years prior.

So even though many of Camp's properties were not formally within the urban renewal area and had previously been inhabited by the white workers at the mill, it is important to note that Needmore and Sanders Village were functionally interrelated. The two adjacent areas had even been collapsed into one another as part of the larger area labeled as blighted and targeted for urban renewal by the city's plans, as shown in Figure 3, a zoomed-in version of a map of blight from a report prepared as part of the urban renewal planning process (City of Starkville 1969). Produced by a consulting firm out of Birmingham as part of the requirement for applying for federal urban renewal funding, the neighborhood analysis report repeatedly described the Needmore and other mill-adjacent neighborhoods as blighted and cancerous, at risk of spreading to other parts of the city, as was common in similar documents of the era in other places (cf. Gordon 2003; Herscher 2020).[5]

Although both of the mill neighborhoods were considered blighted and in need of intervention, Camp's attention to the more northern and predominantly white portions of the neighborhood can be attributed in part to the way the city designed its urban renewal program. It was clear that the vast majority of those areas directly targeted for demolition were in Black neighborhoods, but this did not mean that the city meant to leave the Sanders Village area untouched by urban renewal. Instead, they simply saw the areas inhabited predominantly by whites as more amenable to private redevelopment, without the need for direct public funding and involuntary displacement of existing residents. In one of the several book chapters celebrating his work, Dan Camp explained the logic of his business expansion, saying, "What would happen is that all the people that the Urban Renewal did not buy from came to me and said, 'We'd like you to buy this.' So I would accumulate property because of them soliciting me, not me soliciting them" (Faber 2017). In other words, it was through these informal

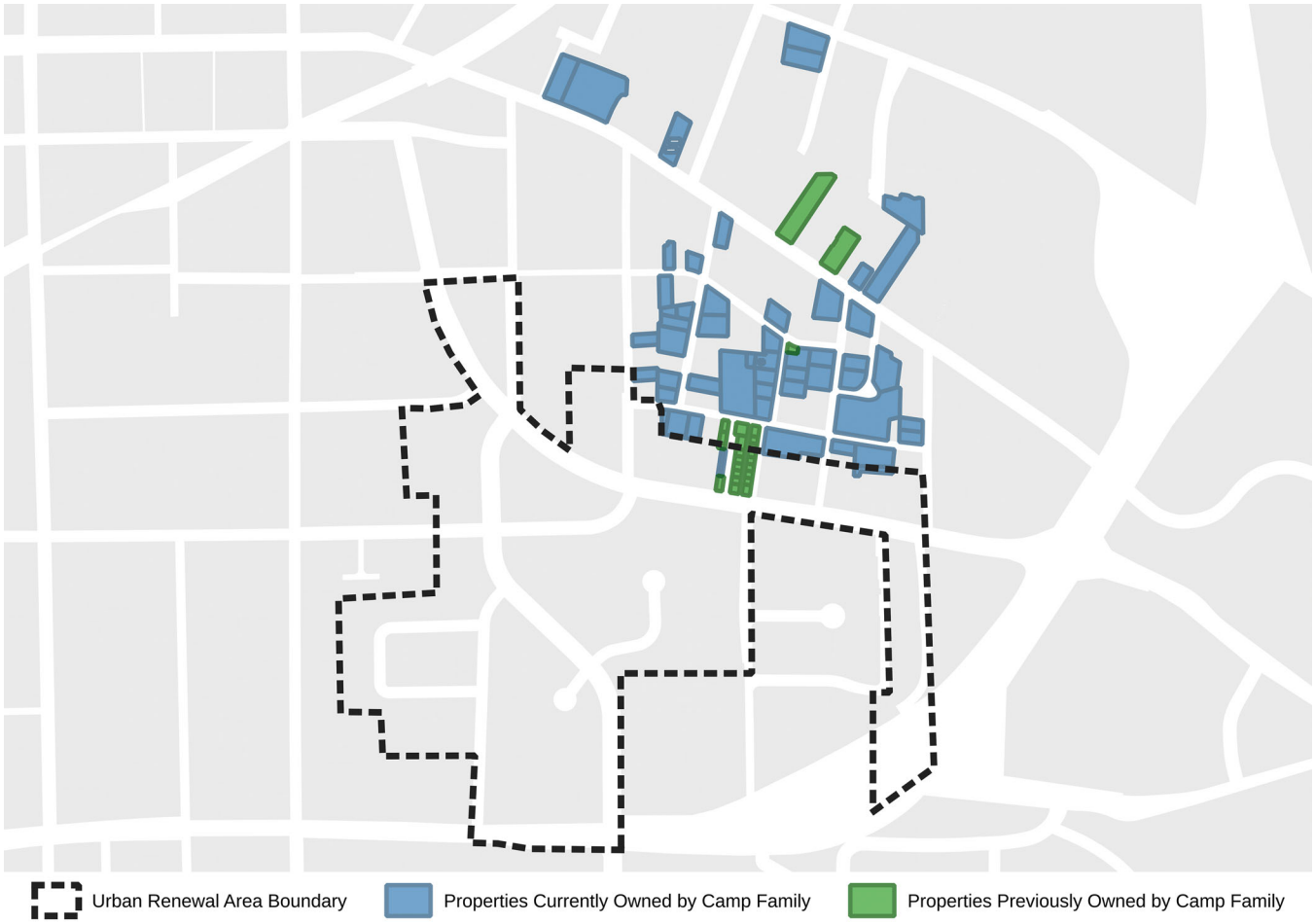

Figure 2. Map of properties owned by Dan Camp in relation to urban renewal area boundary.

arrangements that the officially defined urban renewal area was effectively extended into the core of what is today's Cotton District, with the federal investments in displacing Black families further leveraged by collaboration between local banks and enterprising landlords and developers like Camp. Such a privilege was not afforded to Black Needmore residents, though, who were not able to take buyouts and move into new subdivisions being built around Starkville like the white residents of Sanders Village were. The racialized determination of blight, in effect, constituted the difference between forced displacement and voluntary relocation.

Aside from the inequity in how this typical language of blight, cancer, and disease was used to justify the demolition of these neighborhoods, one of the great ironies in the Starkville case is the contradictory relationship between what was stigmatized by discourses of blight at the time, and what is valorized in celebrations of new urbanism in the present day. As with many other neighborhoods affected by urban renewal across the country, a significant proportion of the homes throughout Needmore and Sanders Village lacked indoor plumbing or insulation from the elements. Another one of the telltale signs of blight mentioned in the city's neighborhood analysis was the lack of paved roads. That the failure to provision what are today considered essential public infrastructure was blamed on low-income Black residents and served to justify dispossessing them of their homes is another of the deep contradictions and injustices of Needmore's experience with urban renewal. At the same time, the racialized definition of blight also stigmatized elements of land use and design that would later be lauded as characteristics of new urbanism. The 1969 neighborhood analysis report asserted that one of the primary blighting influences on the neighborhood was "the free intermixing of different land uses," which created a

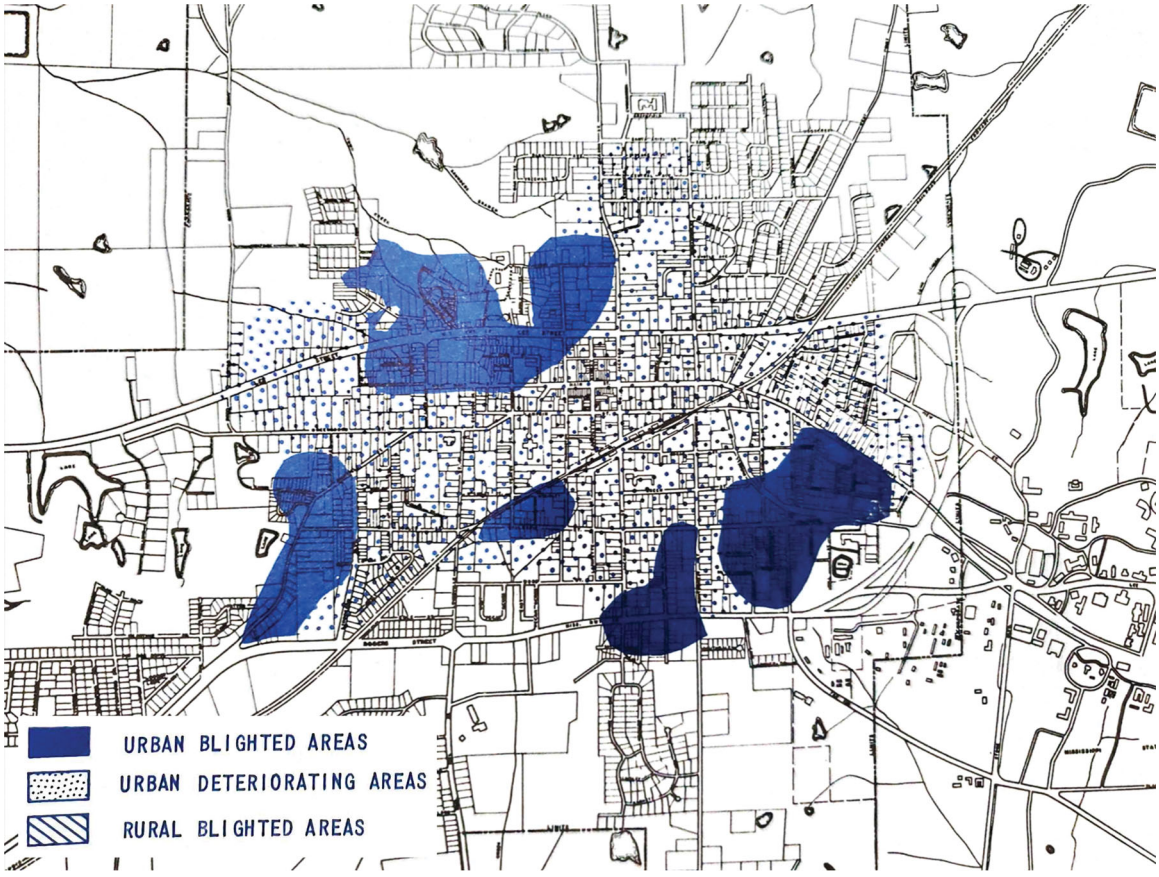

Figure 3. Map of blighted areas in Starkville from 1969 neighborhood analysis report.

"potpourri of development" (City of Starkville 1969, 61). This is, of course, precisely what advocates of new urbanism like Camp seek to create in their master planned neighborhoods, and yet it is also what had to first be wiped off the proverbial map for that vision to be realized, albeit by a visionary white developer rather than the predominantly Black long-term residents of the neighborhood.

Capitalist Ingenuity or Selective Regulation?

The federal government's funding of localized urban renewal projects was not, however, the only form of state intervention that enabled the creation of the Cotton District as it is known today. In addition to the outright demolition of large swaths of the Needmore neighborhood, another major part of the story of urban renewal in Starkville was the creation of a citywide building code, which could be used to force property owners to make repairs or consign the properties to demolition. As with the neighborhood analysis report cited earlier, the development of such a code was a prerequisite for the city's application for federal urban renewal funds. Even in the parts of the present-day Cotton District that were not formally included as part of the urban renewal area, the city's neighborhood analysis noted the potential for code enforcement to put pressure on the current owners, and potentially result in private redevelopment of such buildings (City of Starkville 1969). Through this pressure on low-income renters, homeowners, and even landlords, it was thought that they could be pressured into selling their properties to developers like Dan Camp.

At the same time as the city's newly established planning department was selectively interpreting its new building codes to enforce on the predominantly Black homeowners and tenants in the area, Camp's nascent development received no such scrutiny. This was in spite of the fact that Camp was not a trained architect or builder, but instead a drafting instructor at the university, whose "napkin sketches" were once compared to the "naïve drawings of eighteenth century planters" by Andres Duany (Dover 2003, 8). As one recent book chapter celebrating Camp as one of many "new pioneers," or entrepreneurs

working to reverse the "previous abandonment or neglect of an urban neighborhood" and the resulting "metropolitan wilderness equivalent to virgin forest or prairie," put it, "Whereas building codes in the more affluent residential and commercial sections of the city were enforced, city officials didn't care about codes in the Cotton District. They were so pleased that anybody would build new housing in the area, they gave Camp what amounted to carte blanche" (Faber 2017). The ideology of urban renewal in Starkville thus positioned the Cotton District as an exceptional space, both distinct from new suburban developments around town and also afforded exemptions to the codes that were wielded against residents of Needmore.

This story about the laissez-faire attitude of city officials toward Camp is reiterated in Klinkenberg's (2003) contribution to the Congress for the New Urbanism's feature on the Cotton District. There he noted that one of the key lessons to take away from Camp's work is that:

> Sometimes the best regulation is no regulation. … In the Cotton District, Dan enjoys a unique relationship with the folks at City Hall; one that would make most of us envious. Very often this means building without even having plans. It might mean simply doing what he knows is right, and not waiting for bureaucratic approval. That approach is sure to send shivers down the spines of municipal officials everywhere—especially the ones who require developers to have every conceivable detail drawn before any aspect of a site can be disturbed. (9)

Such an analysis ignores the double standard established by the local government, with one set of rules for poorer residents and another for the landlords and developers seeking to replace them.[6] Treating this contradiction appropriately would, however, present a fundamental challenge to the pervasive notion of Camp as a kind of lone genius embodying Ayn Rand's singular male capitalist hero, as was suggested by current Starkville mayor Lynn Spruill several years ago (Spruill 2014).[7] Between the role of the federal and local governments in creating the conditions amenable to Camp's real estate developments and then facilitating their continuation by providing him with carte blanche, Camp's property empire was fundamentally aided and enabled by local and federal government interventions.

Displacing Blackness, Emplacing Whiteness

The impetus of this combined public (via federal urban renewal funding) and private (via Dan Camp) investment into the mill neighborhoods is, to put it plainly, the simultaneous material and symbolic displacement of Blackness from the neighborhood. Without the evacuation of Black people and places from the area surrounding the mill, the Cotton District would never have been able to exist as such, because the Cotton District has been fabricated as a white landscape, meant to signal belonging to some, and exclusion to others. Despite the claim by at least one Camp hagiographer that "[d]isplacement was not an issue" (Langdon 2017, 196), our analysis of city directories from 1973, 1977, and 1994 reveals quite the opposite to be true for both of the mill neighborhoods. City business directories have been used regularly to document urban economic change and commercial gentrification in U.S. cities (Domosh 1990; Kosta 2019; Bell et al. 2020), but the use of residential directories to track displacement from urban renewal or gentrification is much less common (for some exceptions, see Ammon 2018; Aerni-Flessner and Marks-Wilt 2021). The existence of these directories for a small town like Starkville, especially corresponding to the early stages of urban renewal and subsequent later times, makes them a useful way of tracking the presence or absence of particular residents in the neighborhood over time.

Of the roughly 400 addresses listed within the boundaries of the combined Cotton District and Needmore areas in the 1973 city directory, in only sixty-one cases were the individuals or families present in 1973 still there in 1977. By 1994, this number had further dwindled to only eighteen remaining individuals and households. Of the forty-three individuals or households who were present in the same location in both 1973 and 1977, but no longer there in 1994, in only five cases were these families replaced by homeowners by 1994, indicating a significant shift in the housing tenure of the neighborhood. This is further shown by the fact that the directories indicated that 102 homeowners lived in the area in 1973, but there were just sixty-three total homeowners by 1994. The displaced included residents like Hattie Price, who owned and operated a beauty shop out of her home on Gillespie Street, from which she was the first resident to be relocated in August 1970 (Starkville Daily News 1970b). Similarly displaced were neighborhood businesses

like the Dockins Grocery and Blue Goose Café, which actually sat on the periphery of today's Cotton District, both of which were Black-owned with an integrated clientele (Starkville Daily News 1970a; Brumfield 1971), and several neighborhood churches on Maxwell and Lummus Streets in the heart of the present-day Cotton District.

The material displacement of residents and businesses was accompanied by a symbolic reconstruction of the neighborhood, which reinforces a disjuncture from, and erasure of, the neighborhoods displaced by urban renewal. This symbolic restructuring has been crucial in establishing the Cotton District as a distinctly white space in the present day. The symbolic construction of the Cotton District has occurred through both the aforementioned narratives that position Dan Camp as a heroic agent of the urban renewal of a blighted neighborhood, as well as his development of what we call his nostalgic neo-plantationist pastiche aesthetic.

Bright and colorful, the Cotton District's buildings (see Figure 1) sit in stark contrast with much of the rest of the city, which consists primarily of the kind of mass-produced, low-slung ranch houses built in the 1950s and 1960s that characterize so many towns that grew during the postwar boom. Instead of this kind of placeless suburban aesthetic, the Cotton District's architecture exudes a sense of place and historic continuity. Of course, these buildings are far less historic than the structures targeted as blighted by urban renewal. In this sense, the Cotton District lacks any organic geographical or historical coherence or continuity. Instead, the Cotton District uses a pastiche of styles drawn from places like Charleston, New Orleans, and Savannah, combining multiple architectural styles within the neighborhood, sometimes even within the same building.[8] The only real unifying characteristic of these distinct building styles is that they are all drawn from the centers of the antebellum plantation economy and meant to mimic a largely concocted vision of the opulence of the pre–Civil War planter class (Vlach 2004; see also Bonner 1945).

In addition to the changing appearance of the neighborhood, however, has been the toponymic reinscription of the area in a way that reinforces these performances of whiteness. As countless scholars of critical toponymy have argued, "place naming represents a means of claiming the landscape, materially and symbolically, and using its power to privilege one world view over another" (Alderman 2016, 199), essentially "appropriating or taking ownership of places" (200). At the same time, this represents a process of "signifying who belongs and who does not … drawing social boundaries and constituting collective political subjects" (Madden 2018, 1600). Although often thought of as mundane and natural, thinking about the ways that place names come to be and how they produce particular kinds of space for particular people presents an opportunity for considering precisely this process as it happened in Starkville (Rose-Redwood, Alderman, and Azaryahu 2010).

The naming of the Cotton District as such is itself the most obvious example of this kind of toponymic reinscription. Camp's ability to rebrand an entire neighborhood was clearly a result of both the displacement of existing residents who might have opposed it and his financial investment in an area the city government wanted to see changed. Although the historical connection to the adjacent cotton mill clearly accounts for part of the new neighborhood name, the choice to center cotton in a neighborhood being redeveloped for predominantly white students, and Camp's idealized Old South architectural aesthetics further raise questions about what history is being celebrated and who is meant to belong in such a place.

A number of other renamings have helped to further rewrite the visible history of the Cotton District, as seen in Figure 4. As a result of the city's urban renewal planning, several streets in Needmore were completely eliminated to make room for the newly widened and rerouted Spring Street. Other streets in the Cotton District would go on to be renamed or created from whole cloth by Dan Camp. These range from the goofy, like Rue du Grand Fromage (Street of the Big Cheese), to those with unknown origins like Baltzegar Court, to those with more deliberate and pernicious attempts at reencoding meaning in place names. For example, the shift from calling Muldrow Avenue at the easternmost edge of the Cotton District to Colonel Muldrow Avenue sometime in the 1990s made more explicit the reference to the street's namesake, local planter, U.S. congressman, and Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Henry Muldrow, on whose estate the Cotton District now stands. Muldrow was, however, also a Confederate officer and leader of the local Ku Klux Klan, who helped to write Mississippi's

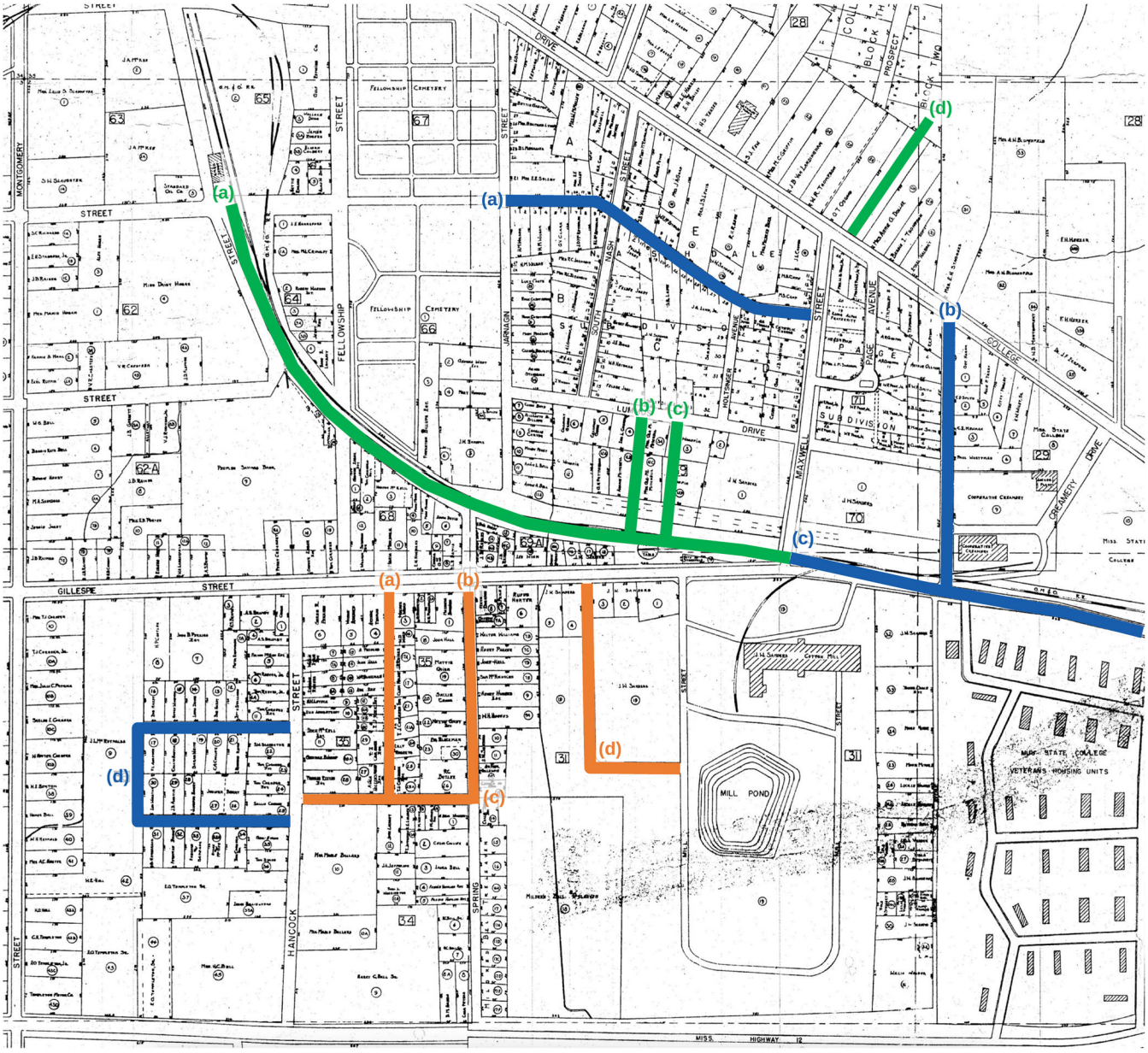

Figure 4. Changes to the toponymic landscape in Needmore and the Cotton District.

repressive 1890 state constitution that undid the gains of Reconstruction. Just a few blocks away, the overall thematic construction of the Cotton District is enabled by the transformation of Hogan Street east of the Odd Fellows cemetery into Cotton Row, and the creation of Planter's Row running between Lummus Drive and Russell Street.[9] These new names bolster a plantation-nostalgic toponymy that also incorporates existing meanings that have been preserved in the landscape, as in the case of Lummus Drive, a likely reference to the Lummus Cotton Gin Company, but which required no such renaming.

Together these architectural styles and place name changes are part and parcel of the larger symbolic remaking and displacement of Black and

working-class neighborhoods with a faux-historic celebration of a bygone age of plantation capitalism. In all of the hagiography around Camp and the Cotton District, we have not found a single mention of the racist violence and exploitation of cotton plantations, or, for that matter, the critical work of Black residents in building and sustaining the city of Starkville and the Cotton District itself.

In many ways though, Camp's profiting by the displacement of Black residents from the mill neighborhoods mirrors the exploitation of Black people and places that his place-making efforts celebrate. When current Starkville mayor Lynn Spruill was quoted as saying, "There are lots of folks who still don't understand the value of the minority communities the way Dan did" (Harrison 2020) after Camp's death in 2020, it is unlikely she meant that Camp literally saw the value to be extracted from the displacement of the working-class white and Black residents around the old Sanders Mill. Yet, despite one article from the mid-1990s commenting that "it's not entirely clear that [Camp] makes money" (German 1994) on the Cotton District, as of the present day, our analysis of local property records and the Cotton District's rental listings suggests that the remaining Camp family earns in excess of $260,000 per month in gross rental receipts from just the fifty-four properties they own within the Cotton District, which are cumulatively valued at over $11 million and are home to approximately 300 distinct rental units. The marketing of the Cotton District as a place for white students, and the subsequent capital accumulation and rental income derived from this repackaging and redevelopment, was built on the intensification of spatial segregation of Needmore from the rest of the mill neighborhoods as created by the redesigned street plan (see Figure 4), alongside the displacement of the majority of Needmore's residents and neighborhood businesses. So, as in many other places, "whiteness became a marketing tool" (Vanderbeck 2006, 647) for the Cotton District, producing, in concert with considerable governmental intervention, new opportunities for accumulation for a privileged class of property owners like the Camp family.

Placing the Nostalgic Neo-Plantationist Pastiche

Despite the very real material legacy of displacement of working-class Black and white residents from the neighborhood and the symbolic emplacement of plantation nostalgia that has made the Cotton District such a local destination, it is not hard to imagine proponents of new urbanism recoiling at the arguments made in this article. Indeed, they could point out that the Cotton District's new urbanist landscape represents one of the only dense, walkable neighborhoods—with at least an homage to historic preservation—in a city that is otherwise dominated by midcentury, autocentric sprawl. Does the Cotton District not, therefore, represent the progressive cutting edge of urbanism in a largely rural region? What about all the housing the Cotton District represents for students and others in close proximity to the Mississippi State campus?

As Summer (2022) argues, these kinds of "performances of progressiveness" allow for the more insidious motivations or end results of developments like the Cotton District to be hidden beneath a veneer of good intentions. Although not erasing history entirely, the Cotton District creates an extremely partial, whitewashed—and ultimately white—history of place. As Summer (2022) writes in her case study of Washington, DC's historic alleys, "The built environment leaves visitors … overwhelmed by a sense of history, but with little knowledge of what that history is" (1124), an insight that could just as easily be true of the landscapes of the Cotton District. To go one step further, we could draw from Adamkiewicz (2016) to argue that the Cotton District's "white nostalgia commodifies a history that omits racism and racial oppression" (24). This obfuscation occurs alongside a nostalgic valorization of cotton and, by extension, the very systems of oppression that the Cotton District and its boosters avoid ever naming as such.

Indeed, the reality is that the making of the much celebrated Cotton District, and the Camp family fortune, is fundamentally dependent on the simultaneous material and symbolic displacement of Blackness from what was one of Starkville's earliest Black hamlets. In its place stands a pastiche of neo-plantationist architectural design meant to be used as a playground for the predominantly white student body of nearby Mississippi State University, simultaneously serving as a kind of visual cue that whiteness is the default, natural state of things, rendering anyone else unwelcome (Driskell and Trawalter 2021). As McKittrick (2006) writes, "Traditional geographies did, and arguably still do, *require* black displacement, black placelessness, black labor, and a black population that submissively stays

'in places'" (9). The invented traditionality of the Cotton District simultaneously signals and obscures the displacements that constitute its contours.

The fact that the buildings are meant to appear historic while being of a very recent vintage does not necessarily make the space inauthentic, however. Instead, it speaks to the idea that what is truly authentic about the Cotton District's place in the broader Starkville landscape is its veneration of whiteness. Rather than history and geography being erased in the Cotton District, it might be more accurate to say that they are reworked and reconfigured in a way that calls into question which history and geography the Cotton District is representative of. Given the pastel-colored pastiche of incongruous elements taken from various places that are not Starkville, the Cotton District represents a mobilization and construction of whiteness that borrows liberally from the past to emplace a sense of timeless belonging for each successive wave of white students, residents, and visitors.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the nostalgic neo-plantationist pastiche we have described in this article serves as a material reminder of, and justification for, white claims to space and place. This is especially the case for the ways that this justification helps to paper over competing histories and claims to place, especially by working-class Black and white residents of the mill neighborhoods of Needmore and Sanders Village who were never the intended beneficiaries of the plantation economy venerated by the Cotton District's symbolic order. Although some might note the incoherent pastiche of architectural elements in Dan Camp's faux-historic buildings, most visitors and residents are likely to be caught up in the grotesquely romanticized façade that this landscape seeks to produce for mass consumption. In the end, this nostalgia for the past is used to conceal the processes of Black displacement that simultaneously underwrite and undermine claims to belonging among the white students and business patrons who populate the Cotton District today.

As we have suggested, though, the implications for this story go beyond the handful of acres that constitute the Cotton District. Through its claim to being the first new urbanist development, the brainchild of a lone rentier capitalist genius who could see value where no one else could, popular understandings of the Cotton District elide the importance of government intervention in its creation. Without the state's oversight of the everyday lives of Black people and places, along with a simultaneous laissez-faire attitude toward white landowners, the Cotton District never would have been possible in the first place. Given this larger place of the Cotton District in the story of new urbanism, however, this history questions the conventional narrative of new urbanism being a response or reaction to the autocentric, suburban style developments that were brought into being through urban renewal. Rather, in the case of the Cotton District, new urbanism is in fact fundamentally dependent on these kinds of mechanisms of government intervention.

Although it is not novel or unique to show that urban renewal displaced Black people from their neighborhoods, or that new urbanism has exclusionary elements that tend to lead toward a homogenization of urban space, or even that symbols of whiteness, especially those associated with the violent history of plantation slavery, have been commodified and led to immense profits for some, the case of the Cotton District represents a unique intermingling of these three dynamics. Instead, this article has pointed toward their fundamental interconnections, and the ways that whiteness continues to be reinscribed into the built environment and cultural landscape at the expense of both Black people and places.

Through this more direct linkage between urban renewal and new urbanism in the case of the Cotton District, we can also extend existing critiques of new urbanism's racial and class politics. The Needmore neighborhood designated as Starkville's urban renewal area, which overlaps with and adjoins the present-day Cotton District, did not just happen to be a Black place. Needmore was designated as Starkville's urban renewal area because it was a Black place. Through the material and symbolic erasure of Needmore and its Black residents—an erasure that took nearly forty-five years to commemorate through the erection of a historical marker on Spring Street for the Needmore community in 2017—the neighborhoods surrounding the mill were made palatable for investment and ripe for a

reimagining. As Dan Camp continued to buy up property in the neighborhood and implement his nostalgia-rich, faux-historic plantationist aesthetic, new urbanism began by not only valorizing whiteness, but valorizing one of the most violent and exploitative elements of whiteness while taking part in and benefitting from the expulsion and erasure of Black people and places.

That is to say, the displacement of Blackness is not an incidental by-product of new urbanism, but, just as is the case with urban renewal, fundamental to new urbanism as well. Both of these watershed moments of U.S. urban development were fundamentally driven by, and in turn reinforced, white supremacist spatial practices and ideologies. Urban renewal and new urbanism are therefore not opposites, but rather two sides of the same coin that Williams (2020) calls "racial planning." Indeed, this mode of racial planning is so pervasive even beyond the intersection of urban renewal and new urbanism seen in the Cotton District that many notable projects and achievements within the history of urban planning have similarly relied on the displacement of Blackness as a precondition for their success. From the demolition of the all-Black Seneca Village community to make way for New York's famed Central Park (Rosenzweig and Blackmar 1992; Staples 2019), to the use of eminent domain to clear Black neighborhoods to implement innovative stormwater management solutions in Atlanta (Kinney 2016; Ashly 2020), to Portland, Oregon's reputation of being a green and sustainable city being predicated on the segregation and expulsion of the city's Black population (Goodling, Green, and McClintock 2015), these dynamics represent an all-too-common feature of urban planning's past and present. The ongoing histories of communities such as Needmore, whose material and symbolic displacement has been alternately erased or perpetuated through the heroic narratives of new urbanist development, are crucial to enacting a reparative mode of planning that can explicitly redress these historical and ongoing injustices and produce an urban fabric that is not only "livable" for capital and white elites, but for all of the city's residents.

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Notes

1. Camp died in October 2020 of COVID-related complications, even receiving an obituary in *The New York Times* (Genzlinger 2020).
2. See the "Renewing Inequality" interactive map and Web site at https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/renewal/ for more on the various places and people affected by urban renewal.
3. Although certainly not the only place such a claim is made, arguably the most significant is in the city of Starkville's Wikipedia entry, where the claim is featured in the opening paragraphs, which in turn reproduces the mythology around this claim.
4. The news of Needmore's impending demolition was not taken lightly. Starkville officials were at pains to justify the project to the public, publishing a series of interviews with city officials about the program in the *Starkville Daily News* in the week following its announcement (Starkville Daily News 1969c, 1969d, 1969e). When a public meeting was held on 10 November 1969 in the junior high auditorium, roughly 250 residents attended to express their concern for over three hours (Starkville Daily News 1969b). As larger protests over desegregation and racial inequality rocked Starkville in the coming years, the urban renewal authority offices were even a target of a firebombing (Connor et al. v. Palmer et al. 1970). There is a considerable chance that the firebombings were perpetrated by white residents to further inflame tensions and implicate Black residents in the violence, but the choice of the urban renewal authority as a target speaks to the centrality of Starkville's urban renewal plan in local understandings of racial inequality. This resistance to urban renewal is further seen in a 1973 letter from the Oktibbeha County NAACP to the city regarding suggestions, concerns, and demands for racial justice, which specifically mentioned that "future urban renewal areas or clearance of blighted areas in the city should not be forced in a dictatorial manner on the people involved" (Connor 1973).
5. The neighborhood analysis report would go on to win an award from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which commended the plan and used it as a model for other cities to mimic in their urban renewal planning documents (Starkville Daily News 1969a).
6. In addition to his previously established report with local officials, Camp himself would go on to serve as mayor of Starkville from 2005 through 2009, further entrenching his relationship with local government.
7. Spruill is herself one of the city's largest residential landlords.
8. As Falconer Al-Hindi and Staddon (1997) noted, Andres Duany's Seaside development draws on a similar mixing of these cities' architectural styles, meaning that while the resonance of re-creating the architecture of urban enslavement is a bit more pronounced in a place like Starkville, the use of these styles in new urbanist developments is not entirely unique to the Cotton District.

9. Unlike Camp's other real estate acquisitions and developments around the neighborhood, Planter's Row was designed from the start to be owner-occupied, with commercial spaces on the ground floor, for small-scale entrepreneurs to live and work (Langdon 2017). Although Camp would apparently lose money on this project, the discursive linkage between the "planters" and ownership and entrepreneurship, as opposed to the typical student renters in the neighborhood, is suggestive of a particularly uncritical, if not outright celebratory, usage of terminology associated with plantation slavery.

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