The authors of the Bloomingdale History Timeline are neighbors who live across the street from each other. And although our ages differ by nearly 25 years, we chat about nearly everything, and fuss and fight about many things, and learn from each other. We are both passionate about Bloomingdale. And we have become good friends.

When we first discussed writing a brief history of Bloomingdale, we focused on developing an architectural history. But we could not quite envision how such a history would explicate the unique dynamism of Bloomingdale. We also perfunctorily explored other typical foci of neighborhood histories and reached a similar conclusion. And then we both read Schoenfeld, Cherkasky, and Kraft’s brilliant work on Mapping Segregation in Washington, DC (Prologue, 2015) - and light bulbs turned on. We realized that Bloomingdale’s distinctiveness rests not only in its architecture, but also in its land use, and their interactions (‘points/counterpoints’) with social/institutional factors.

Next we tackled the issue of presentation of information. The writing of a nuanced narrative essay seemed more than either of us was willing to tackle - and more than most people would take the time to read. At meetings of the BVS project’s Architecture and Design group, we kept hearing declarations of, “As designers we are visual people and we need to include lots of visuals and graphics in our efforts”. And this led us to consider presenting the history through use of the device of a Timeline that would visually and metaphorically suggest the witnessing of the evolution of history and change.

But how would a Timeline explicitly convey the interactions between the two major types of events
that we desired to highlight? Our answer to this issue was a two-sided Timeline: One side presents architectural/land use events; the other side presents social/institutional events.

We then took to the internet, on which we intentionally heavily relied to ensure that cited information sources would be readily accessible to readers. Some of the historical issues that we researched were derived from existing histories of Bloomingdale. Others were issues of current import whose histories we sought to better understand (e.g., the development and use of McMillan Park, flooding in Bloomingdale). Other issues were suggested by BVS Project Oral History interviews (e.g., proposed freeways, the widening of North Capitol Street and Rhode Island Avenue, the 1968 riots). Still other issues literally popped-up on our computers as we read sources, and tried to think of a 100 variations of the search term ‘Bloomingdale History.’

What emerged was a Timeline with numerous historical story lines - many of which are intertwined into mega-narratives. For example, one can’t help but take note of the extent to which Federal and local policies and practices on a broad range of issues, spanning more than 150 years, served to promote and reinforce ‘myth-making’—especially related to race. Many of these myths continue to be reflected in numerous challenges confronting Bloomingdale, including issues and tensions of ‘gentrification’ and related neighborhood development. Consequently, there are entries on the Timeline that may ‘turn lightbulbs on’ and momentarily take your breath away.

We wish to express our deepest appreciation to Anthony Teat, Creative Director of Masai Interactive, who readily grasped the intents of the Bloomingdale History Timeline effort, and masterfully transformed Timeline text into an engaging visual Timeline that tells a story through historical entries, factoids, photos and graphics.
Social and Architectural History of the Bloomingdale Neighborhood, Washington, DC

The following Timeline of Bloomingdale’s history uniquely indicates various interactions between Bloomingdale’s social, institutional, and organizational historical events, and its architectural and land use histories. Specifically, the Timeline highlights the following:

• The social, institutional and land use factors that influenced Bloomingdale’s growth and development from a rural area populated by farmers and gentry, to a thriving diverse urban neighborhood.

• The critical and continuing roles of water, transit, and land/real estate speculation in Bloomingdale’s growth and development.

• The significant, continuing, and sometimes contentious influences of race and architecture, land development/use (including the McMillan reservoir and sand filtration site) in shaping Bloomingdale’s major challenges, opportunities, and character.

• The remarkable development, maintenance, preservation, and re-use of Bloomingdale’s homes and buildings.

• The significant contributions Bloomingdale has made to the District of Columbia and the nation.
1800 – 1850

Initial Development: Bucolic & Rural

Free Blacks tend to reside along the main roads (e.g., North Capitol and Lincoln Roads) of the area subsequently known as Bloomingdale, working in the area’s industries, as farm workers, and as laborers and domestic workers on estates.

George & Emily Truxton Beale (members of prominent Washington military families) purchase 10 acres for $600 in what was then known as the County of Washington and establish their country estate, ‘Bloomingdale’, at what is now the SW corner of North Capitol and Randolph Place NW. The estate was later expanded to 50 acres and stretched from Florida Avenue to T Street (Cultural Tourism DC, 2015; HU, No Date; Ghosts of DC, 2012; McDonald, 2014).

Tiber Creek, the main branch of which ran along the western boundary of what is now the Bloomingdale neighborhood, and the springs that fed it are the major source of water for the City of Washington (HU, No Date).

Area later known as the residential area of Bloomingdale is used for a variety of light industrial purposes, farming, orchards and private estates (Brief History, No Date).
Mr. Joseph A. Smith, owner of farm where present day McMillan Reservoir is sited, sells one acre parcel to Congress containing natural springs (Smith Spring) (Sunday Star, 1933)

Congress has pipes constructed for carrying water two miles from Smith Spring to the US Capital Building (Sunday Star, 1933)

George Beale deeds land and right-of-way to springs for use as a water supply for the Capitol (HU, No Date).
Congress purchases entire Smith Farm surrounding Smith Spring (Sunday Star, 1933)

Due to population growth, wells are increasingly dug, resulting in reducing Tiber Creek’s water flow and promoting its pollution. Creek is paved over as sewer by the 1890s (HU, No Date).

1835

1850s

1860s to 1890s

Civil War & its Aftermath

Washington’s population more than doubles as it experiences a large influx of workers, soldiers, refugees, and freedmen during and following the Civil War (Brief History, No Date; DC Office of Planning, 2014; Van Dyne, 2008).

Between 1860 and 1870, African Americans increase their representation in DC’s population from 19% to 32% (Walker, 2005).

DID YOU KNOW?

During the Civil War, 56 different facilities in Washington were used as hospitals for soldiers. The capacities of the larger hospitals ranged from 420 beds to nearly 2600 beds. By January 1, 1865, more than 18,000 Soldiers died in these hospitals. (Murray, 1996-97)
A 38-acre reservoir basin (the future McMillan Park reservoir) is excavated, and a round brick spring house tower with onion dome is constructed on top of Smith Spring. Reservoir basin, however, remains unused and devoid of water until 1905, following completion of the four mile tunnel to the Georgetown Reservoir and the McMillan Sand Filtration Plant.

Howard University, a predominantly Black institution, is established in the neighboring LeDroit area as a private institution that is Federally chartered and funded in part by an annual Federal allotment, and named after General Oliver Howard, Commissioner of the US Freedman’s Bureau. Many Howard U. professors, graduates and students have resided in and significantly contributed to the evolution of Bloomingdale. (BCA, No Date; Cultural Tourism DC, 2015; HU, History, No Date; Wikipedia [b], 2015).

The North Washington Citizens Association is established serving Bloomingdale.
Congress passes legislation requiring that new streets in Washington City's growing suburbs follow the city's layout in order to simplify the extension of sewers, water mains, and streetlights into the suburbs (HU, No Date; Wikipedia [a], 2015)

Congress charters the 2 ½ mile Eckington & Soldier’s Home (E&SH) Railroad - the first electric streetcar railroad in the Washington area, which is established by Colonel George Truedell as a means to spur suburban home ownership (HU, undated)

E & SH railroad is extended along North Capitol Street from New York Avenue to Soldier’s Home, bringing streetcar service and residential development to Bloomingdale (DC Office of Planning, 2014; HU, No Date; History of Bloomingdale, No Date).

1888

The Bloomingdale suburban subdivision is established.

1889

Slater School opens for African American students (including those residing in Bloomingdale) and is immediately overcrowded. The proposal to add an adjoining school to relieve overcrowding is strongly opposed by the (White) North Capitol & Eckington Citizen Association, which results in delaying the construction of Langston School until 1902 (DC Office of Planning, 2014).

1890

The North Capitol & Eckington Citizens Association is established.

DID YOU KNOW?

In Spring 1861, much confusion occurred when thousands of newly organized Union troops poured into DC, including more than 1750 Ohio troops who established a camp on the Bloomingdale farm (estate). Hortense Prout, an enslaved person on the John Little farm located in what is now the Kalorama Park area, took advantage of this confusion to seek freedom. Dressed in men’s clothes, Prout sought refuge in the Bloomingdale camp. Her owner went there and requested her return of the camp’s Colonel. She was found in the camp and returned to her owner who took her to the City Jail for ‘safekeeping’. After 10 days, she was released to her owner’s custody. Ten months later, by Executive Order, slavery was abolished in DC (Cherkasky, 2015).
The 45 acre Moore estate, located north and west of the former Beale estate, is sold to private developers and incorporated into the developing Bloomingdale neighborhood (Wikipedia [a], 2015).

The entire Bloomingdale neighborhood has been divided into house lots and its street grid is paved (DC Office of Planning, 2015; HU, undated; McDonald, 2014; Wikipedia [a], 2015).

District begins to enact Jim Crow (de jure segregation) legislation. Prior to this, integrated neighborhoods were common in DC.

Restrictive racial housing covenants barring Black ownership and use, are incorporated into some Bloomingdale deeds (as a marketing strategy) by developers—most notably, Ray Middaugh of Middaugh & Shannon. (HU, No Date; Prologue DC & Kraft, 2015).

DID YOU KNOW?

In the late 1890s, the cost of a lot in Bloomingdale ranged from $75 (mid-block) to $200 (corner) (McDonald, 2014).
The current Metro bus naming system is based on the route’s historic use and/or ownership:

Numbered buses (e.g., the 80 & 90) originally were streetcar line routes that usually went around the city clockwise.

Buses with a letter and number (e.g., G8, P6) originally were bus routes of the former Capital Transit Company that usually went around counter-clockwise, starting in SE.

Buses with a number and letter (e.g., 5A) originally served Virginia. (Shannon, 2010)

**DID YOU KNOW?**

1895 -1897

The (exclusively White) North Capitol & Eckington Citizens Association is established (Eckington Civic Association - Narrative, No Date).

The Old Engine Firehouse 12 (North Capitol & Quincy Streets NW) ‘commissioned’ by the North Capitol & Eckington Citizens Association, is constructed (Old Engine 12…, No Date; DC Historic Preservation Office, 2014).

1897

First horseless carriage comes to DC as “playthings of the wealthy”. Subsequent mass production of autos necessitates improved roads (Van Dyne, 2008).

1901

St. Martin’s Catholic Church holds its first mass in a Bloomingdale mansion (Cultural Tourism DC, 2015).

McMillan Commission is established to develop plans for a coordinated District park system, and identifies the reservoir and sand filtration plant site as a key linkage to the plan’s system of parks, extending from Rock Creek to Anacostia (HU, No Date; Van Dyne, 2008).
The McMillan reservoir and sand filtration system, built by the US Army Corps of Engineers, become fully operational (Cultural Tourism DC, 2015; HU, undated).

Between 1903 and 1908, Harry Wardman built 180 rowhouses in Bloomingdale. He also was an active developer in Columbia Heights and Mt. Pleasant, and built apartments and hotels - including the Shoreham. He lost most of his estimated $30 million fortune when the stock market crashed in 1929 and went bankrupt, but continued to build houses. He died in 1938 of cancer. (BloomingdaleDC, History (2008); DC Preservation League, 2014; Fleishman, 2005; Van Dyne, 2008).


The Rhode Island (aka Central) Methodist Episcopal Methodist Church is constructed at First & Rhode Island Avenue, NW and is the first building on that block (Brief History, No Date; DC HPO, 2014; Kelsey & Associates, 2008).

The entire McMillan Site is named McMillan Park (Brief History, No Date).

The Nathanial Parker Gage School (200 block of 2nd Street NW) is built - becoming the first (White) school located in Bloomingdale. This school is now a private condominium (Bloomingdale's History, 2008; Brief History, No Date; Wikipedia [a], 2015).
Most Bloomingdale house lots have homes built on them. Many of these homes are designed by Thomas M. Haislip, Appleton P. Clark, George Schneider, Joseph Bohn Jr., William C. Blundon, N.R. Grimm, William C. Allard, A.H. Beers, Stanley Simons, Hunter & Bell, and others. Builders include Ray E. Middaugh, William Shannon, Lewis E. Brueninger, A.B. Mullett & Company, and William Freeman. Major developers are Harry Wardman, Francis Blundon, Thomas Haislip and S. H. Meyers. The homes’ architectural styles reflect variations of the French Academic rowhouse, Queen Anne, Georgian, Colonial Revival and other styles, which serve to create what is described as an “architecturally vibrant” neighborhood (Cultural Tourism DC, 2015; HU, No Date; Kelsey & Associates, 2008; Wikipedia [a], 2015).

The McMillan Pumping Station (2nd & Bryant Streets NW) opens and begins distributing filtered water from the McMillan reservoir to the city (Cultural Tourism DC, 2015).

1904

The Memorial Church of the United Brethren (a Protestant and historically anti-slavery denomination) is built at 1712 North Capitol St., NW. Building is now occupied by Metropolitan Wesley AME Zion Church (Office of Planning, 2014)

The American Theater, located at 105-112 Rhode Island NW, is constructed and opens for exclusive use by Whites. It is renamed the Sylvan Theater in 1929, and becomes accessible to Blacks in 1950; Racial segregation of playgrounds begins in the District of Columbia closes in 1965 (DC Historic Preservation Office, 2014).
Harrison v. Smith (1907) is the first documented DC case of an African American purchasing a house (2206 First Street NW) with a racially restrictive deed covenant (placed in deed by developer Ray Middaugh in 1899). Smith, a Black civil engineer, is sued by Charles Harrison and other neighbors -- including Samuel Gompers, the Founder and President of the American Federation of Labor. Prior to going to court, neighbors buy the house from Smith (Brief History, No Date; Prologue DC & Kraft, 2015).

Racial segregation of playgrounds begins in the District of Columbia (Evening Star, 1945).

The District’s most significant and least recognized land use struggle (who has access to what land, where, under what conditions, and for what purposes) begins. It is a 40-year battle over restrictive racial covenants -- pitting developers against realtors, realtors against homeowners, Blacks against Whites, and Whites against each other -- with Bloomingdale at its center.

Restrictive covenants in DC are also targeted to persons of Jewish, Mexican, American Indian, Persian, Armenian, and Syrian ancestry (Williams, 2008).

DID YOU KNOW?

Between 1907 and 1948, owners of at least 34 Bloomingdale homes were involved in at least 24 legal actions (including 22 formal lawsuits) related to enforcement of racially restrictive housing covenants (Prologue DC & Kraft, 2015).
Construction begins on the granite approaches for McMillan Fountain in McMillan Park. The fountain will cost (exclusive of the foundation and approaches) $25,000.

1910

Bloomingdale is an established, primarily White, upper and middle class, neighborhood with well-built, up-to-date houses, convenient streetcar transportation, and widespread home ownership. Many homes feature quarters for live-in servants, servant’s staircases, and garages for the highly prized automobile (DC Office of Planning, 2014; HU No Date; US Census, 1900, 1910, 1920).

1911

The Detroit Free Press in reference to Senator McMillan’s contributions to DC’s water and park systems notes: “In public recognition of his services, the grounds which contain the big reservoir and all the filtration beds and auxiliaries were made into a public park and named McMillan Park.” (Detroit Free Press, 1911)

1912

St Martins Catholic Church opens its school, which is staffed by Sisters of Notre Dame (Cultural Tourism DC, 2015).
McMillan Park’s Bloomingdale Playground (Whites only) opens to the public on July 1. Amenities include six grass tennis courts, rock-a-bye swings (toddlers), baby hammocks (toddlers), Kindergarten Swings, Merry-Go-Round, Sandboxes, 24 Foot Long Slide, Basketball Courts, Volleyball Court, Croquet Court, Gymnastics Equipment and Sports Fields (baseball, soccer, football) (Washington Herald, 1913). It is reported that a Girl Scout Farm is being built at the McMillan Park Filtration Site where “upon completion it is anticipated another Girl Scout farm will be established on the Reservoir Plot…[which will be used] for [the cultivation of] late crops (Washington Times, 1917)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>The population of the District of Columbia is 360,000 (Washington Herald, 1913)</td>
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<td>1914-1920</td>
<td>WWI &amp; Urbanization</td>
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<td>1917</td>
<td>North Washington Citizen’s Association endorses McMillan Park playground location and asks Commissioners to provide funds to build a swimming pool and shelter house at McMillan Park playgrounds.</td>
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<td>Pushed by the South’s rabid Jim Crowism and pulled by renewed industrialism spurred by WWI needs, the Great Migration of rural southern Blacks to urban centers in the North, Midwest, and West begins (Gotham, 2000; Jones-Correa, 2000-2001).</td>
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<td>Due to the rapid growth of DC associated with WWI’s increased need for government workers, Bloomingdale comes to be viewed as an urban, rather than suburban community, triggering the neighborhood’s first major out-migration of residents to more rural suburbs – thus providing opportunity for Black home ownership in Bloomingdale (HU, undated).</td>
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<td>Fourteen major urban race riots (1917-1921) occur throughout the U.S. due to increased racial competition for housing and jobs, especially between Black migrants and European immigrants – resulting in the establishment of various institutional practices for containing such conflicts –many of which served to increase racial segregation (Gotham, 2000; Jones-Correa, 2000-2001).</td>
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An open air dancing pavilion is constructed in McMillan Park’s Bloomingdale Playground, which is used during the day for Red Cross instruction, and various children’s activities, and in the evenings for organized dances for adults (Washington Herald, 1917 and July 1918).

Battles on the 100 block of Adams Street NW -- At least 5 homes with restrictive covenants (placed by Middaugh & Shannon in 1899) are bought by Blacks; neighbors sue; courts enforce covenants and nullify deeds; Black homeowners are forced to vacate (Prologue DC & Kraft, 2015).

Federal courts in deference to the principle of ‘denying property rights without due process’ strike down State and local governments’ designation of specific urban neighborhoods (‘districts ’/’zones’) as limited to ownership/occupancy by specific racial groups (Jones-Correa, 2000-2001; Kaplan and Valls, 2007).

Earmarked by realtors as a neighborhood appropriate for Black professionals, Blacks begin buying homes in the southern and western parts of Bloomingdale, sold by both Black and White realtors who are “highly selective about Blacks to whom they sell property… investigating their income, profession and characteristics” – thus fostering the development of stable, middle-class Black home ownership (BCA, No Date; HU, No Date).

The (exclusively White) North Capitol Citizens Association) is established through merger of the North Washington Citizens Association (Bloomingdale) with the North Capitol and Eckington Citizens Association (Washington Post, 1940).

The Bloomindale Civic Association (BCA) is established, organized from the interests of a group of residents on Quincy Place NW (Bloomingdale Civic Association, No Date).

DID YOU KNOW:

In DC under Jim Crow, most exclusively White neighborhood associations were called Citizens Associations, while most Black associations were called Civic Associations. Although membership to these Associations is now open to all, to this day there exist two separate city-wide Federations of Citizen and Civic Associations -- legacies of DC’s historical patterns of residential racial segregation (DeBonis, 2013).
Torey v. Wolfes (1925) relates to the attempt of Earl and Minnie Torey, a White couple, to sale their home (40 Randolph Place NW) to Sereno Ivy, an African American – although the house had a racial covenant placed on the deed in 1904 by developer Middaugh & Shannon. Neighbors sued the Toreys. The DC appellate court ruled the sale as illegal, noting: “when they … subjected themselves to the restrictive covenant, not only for their own protection, but upon the assurance that a similar restriction would rest upon all other property embraced in the Middaugh and Shannon Development on Randolph Place” (Prologue DC & Kraft, 2015).

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1924, the National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB), amended its Code of Ethics and added the following provision: “A Realtor should never be instrumental in introducing into a neighborhood a character of property or occupancy, members of any race or nationality, or any individuals whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood”, with compliance by ostracism or expulsion from local realtor boards. In 1927, NAREB developed a model racial covenant for its local boards, and encouraged them to establish homeowner associations to sign onto covenants. In 1950, the 1924 amendment was modified to exclude only the language related to race, nationality and other individuals (Jones-Correa, 2000-2001; U.S Commission…, 1962;
Despite court rulings in support of racial covenants, the costs and slowness of the legal enforcement process result in the inability to prevent large numbers of Black home buyers from moving into Bloomingdale homes (HU, undated; BCA, No Date).

District superintendent of playgrounds announces immediate construction of the Bloomingdale Playground field house in McMillan. The field house is part of a $22,000 Civil Works Administration project. The project also includes four tennis courts, tournament horseshoe courts, a wading pool, playground equipment of various types, a baseball/soccer diamond, and a nursery for children of elementary age.

The years of the Great Depression and the Great Black Migration to the North serve to promote Bloomingdale’s transition from a White middle-class to a Black middle-class neighborhood, with many houses rented with less screening than that afforded prospective home owners (HU, undated; BCA, No Date).

The development and use of restrictive covenants by petition (in contrast to covenants in deeds) increases dramatically throughout DC. Such covenants are frequently written by neighborhood (citizen) associations. However, a few blocks organize to nullify restrictive covenants (Prologue DC & Kraft, 2015).
VA/FHA mortgage loans often are not extended to Blacks – thus blocking their path to home ownership and wealth accumulation—and setting the stage for many problems of 1960s/70s (Demos, No Date; Kaplan & Valls, 2007).

Grady v. Garland (1947) focuses on 8 rowhouses (1737 - 1747 First Street NW), but fundamentally is about an intra-block struggle among 7 White homeowners over the utility of enforcing restrictive covenants in a racially changing (White to Black) neighborhood. Grady and 5 other homeowners wish to nullify their covenants, while the Garlands and 1 other homeowner desire to maintain the covenants. The Court upholds the covenants noting the 8 homes effectively create “a barrier against the eastward movement of colored population into the restricted area” (Prologue, 2015).

Dispute among Bloomingdale neighbors over the utility of enforcing restrictive covenants in a racially changing neighborhood goes to court.


St. Martins Catholic Church builds a new church at North Capitol and T Streets NW.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Civil Works Administration (CWA) was a national New Deal program of the F.D. Roosevelt Administration that created temporary manual labor construction jobs during the Great Depression. CWA existed for less than five months (November 1933 to March 1934). During that time, CWA spent $200 million per month and provided employment to 4 million persons. CWA workers laid 12 million feet of sewer pipe and built or improved 255,000 miles of roads, 40,000 schools, 3,700 playgrounds, nearly 1,000 airports, and 250,000 rural America outhouses (Wikipedia [c], 2015).
Until the 1960s, FHA and VA loan policies, consistent with extant national realtor and lending practices, explicitly promoted housing segregation and the growth of White suburban housing, while minimizing investment in Black and racially mixed neighborhoods, through use of such strategies as: (a) using loan risk criteria that gave White non-immigrant neighborhoods the highest ratings and predominantly Black neighborhoods the lowest ratings; (b) encouraging ‘economic stability’ and ‘homogeneity’ of neighborhoods by promoting (prior to 1948) use of racial covenants in suburbs; (c) using ratings of neighborhood ‘credit worthiness’ that served to exclude most Black neighborhoods for loans. Conventional lenders progressively adopted similar practices (Goering & Wienk, 1996; Kaplan & Valls, 2007; Leadership Conference…, 2005).
Mays v. Burgess (1945). Clara Mays, an African American, buys and occupies a house (2213 First Street NW) with a restricted covenant. White neighbors sue, demanding enforcement of the covenant. The covenant is upheld by both the DC Court and the US Court of Appeals (twice); the US Supreme Court refuses to review the case. Mays refuses to vacate due to her inability to locate another property suitable for her household of nine. Consequently, her eviction is court-ordered. Mays subsequently relocates to 2131 First Street NW—a house with an expired covenant (HU, No Date; Prologue DC & Kraft, 2015).

NCPC approves taking a portion of McMillan Park playground for enlargement of the District’s fire-alarm headquarters because the area allegedly was made unsuitable for play due to the expansion of McMillan Reservoir during the war (Evening Star, 1945).

1943

The Barnett-Aden Gallery (127 Randolph Place NW) opens as the first privately owned African American art gallery in the US (DC HPO, 2014; Wikipedia [a], 2015).

1944

VA/GI mortgage loan program is established, which reduces down payments to as low as 0% for returning WWII vets (Kaplan & Valls, 2007).

1945
McMillan Park Playground (Whites-only) is restored to District Recreation Board.

Hurd v. Hodge (1948). James and Mary Hurd of 116 Bryant Street NW win their appeal to the US Supreme Court related to the 1944 purchase of their house, which neighbors’ claimed was illegal as it was subject to a racial covenant. Neighbors also sue the Hurd’s realtor Raphael Urciolo (Urciolo v. Hodge). District Court upholds the covenant and orders the Hurds (and other Blacks who had recently moved to the block) to vacate their homes. Both cases are heard by the US Supreme Court as part of a group of four restrictive covenant cases (including Shelley v. Kraemer), and argued by Charles H. Houston and Thurgood Marshall of Howard University and the NAACP. The Court’s decision invalidates enforcement of all racial and religious restrictive covenants across the nation (BCA, 2013; Cultural Tourism DC, 2015; Prologue DC & Kraft, 2015; Williams, 2008).

1946
North Capital Citizen’s Association requests the “immediate transfer” of McMillan Playground from the Federal Government to the District Recreation Board and District. District Commissioners make a similar request to the Engineer’s Office of the War Department. (Evening Star, 1945)

1947
DC Recreation Committee issues a report that finds: DC has only 1,234 total acres in its play system, i.e., 50% of the playground area and 20% to 25% of the play facilities required by National Standards for a city of 950,000. The committee report details recommendations for what it calls an absolute minimum of facilities by 1955: 1,200 acres of minor neighborhood playgrounds and 1,200 acres of larger community play areas or centers. (Evening Star, 1947)

1948
US Supreme Court invalidates the enforcement of restrictive covenants.

The 47-acre Washington Hospital Center (First & Michigan NW) is established through the merger of three existing hospitals (DC Office of Planning, 2014).

DC Catholic schools and parishes are integrated. (Cultural Tourism DC, 2014)
Representative Arthur G. Klein (D., NY) calls on the District Recreation Board to “abolish segregation on all areas under its control”. The National Capital Park & Planning Commission votes 6-to-2, with two members abstaining, to remove all racial designations from its recreation system map.

DC government responds to Black displacement associated with urban renewal by: (a) implementing zoning changes permitting conversion of single family homes to apartments for 2 or more families, tourist hotels, and other commercial establishments; and (b) disinvestment including reductions in city services (HU, undated).

The intersection of Rhode Island Avenue and First and T Streets, NW becomes, by custom, a racial dividing line (re real estate sales and public accommodations).

FHA and VA loan policies promote White flight to suburbs and discourage mortgage loans in predominantly non-White and racially mixed neighborhoods, such as Bloomingdale. Private sector mortgage lending practices also reflect such policies (Kaplan & Valls, 2007).

1949

1950s & 1960s Urban Renewal and Desegregation of Parks & Schools

Due in part to Black displacement associated with massive urban renewal projects in other parts of DC (especially in DC’s SW quadrant), many working-class and poor Black residents seek refuge in an already over-crowded Bloomingdale (HU, No Date; U.S. National Park Service, No Date; Whose downtown…, No Date).

Black DC homeowners begin moving to suburbs - especially to Prince Georges County (MD), which is now more than 2/3 Black and the richest predominantly Black suburb in the US (Van Dyne, 2008).

Bloomingdale’s average income declines relative to the city average, while the percentage of tenants increases (HU, undated).

White flight from Bloomingdale.
Of the District’s eleven high schools, eight are Whites-only and contain 7,577 unused student spaces, while the three Black high schools have 1,063 more students than student spaces. The average acreage for a black high school is 2 acres compared with the average White high school site of 10 acres. Curricula in the high schools also are vastly different based on race: 29 subjects available to White students are unavailable to Black students. Whites only McKinley High School, serving Bloomingdale, has 1,401 empty student spaces (Evening Star, February 1950).

The District integrates its playgrounds.

The McMillan Bloomingdale Playground in McMillan Park is permanently closed.

1950

1952

DC population exceeds 900,000.

BCA representative Walter B. Sanderson, argues before a District Recreation Department hearing that Langley School Playground (serving Bloomingdale) should not be made ‘Blacks only’, but ‘interracial’ (Washington Post, March 1952).
Congress authorizes the Interstate Highway Act to create a 40,300 mile national road system over 13 years at an estimated cost of $30 billion, with States determining routes (costs and miles later increase substantially). The Act also serves to promote urban policies that link highways with slum clearance and urban redevelopment (Gale Encyclopedia…, 1999; Mental floss, 2015; Molh, 2005).

In the case of Berman v. Parker, the U.S. Supreme Court rules that a public entity has the right to seize the heart of DC’s SW quadrant so that developers can build a waterfront office, residential and hotel complex (Allen, 2005).

Did You Know?

The urban renewal of DC’s SW quadrant (1950s B 1960s) involved razing 99% of its buildings, and displacement of 1500 businesses and 23,000 persons of whom 69% were Black. However, despite such massive displacement, as of 1962, DC had “used sparingly” FHA’s Section 221 relocation housing program, and had not established a central relocation service. Consequently, displaced SW persons often found themselves socially isolated - e.g., 25% of such persons reported not making a single friend in their new neighborhood. (U.S. Commission, 1962; Van Dyne, 2008; Whose downtown?, No Date).

1953
Preparations underway for desegregation of DC public schools - BCA submits recommendation to Schools Superintendent Hobart M. Corning, to create inter-racial extracurricular activities and inter-school student visits.

1954
DC public schools are desegregated and many Whites transfer to private schools or move to suburbs (Cultural Tourism DC, 2015; Van Dyne, 2008)

1957
DC becomes majority African American.

Mt Bethel Baptist Church, a Black congregation, purchases and occupies the Rhode Island Methodist Episcopal Church at First & Rhode Island NW r(Cultural Tourism DC, 2015).
Coalitions of Black & White citizen advocates (e.g., the Committee of 100, civic associations in Ivy City and Brookland neighborhoods) successfully oppose construction of major interstate freeways through DC residential neighborhoods -- making DC 1 of only 5 cities (NYC, Baltimore, New Orleans, San Francisco) to do so. Freeway sections that are built (e.g. I-395, I-295) tend to isolate affected neighborhoods, especially as one travels from northwest to southeast. Funding for unbuilt freeways are diverted to Metro system development (DC Office of Planning, 2014; Kozel, 1997/2007; Striner, No Date).


1960s – 1970s
The Freeways and Civil Rights

DC Freeway Coalition Leaders - S. Abbott & R.H. Booker
DC Freeway Protest Sign
Proposed Freeways In & Near Bloomingdale
Through use of its public space authority, DC widens both Rhode Island Avenue and North Capitol Street and creates the North Capitol underpass in Bloomingdale, resulting in improved traffic flow from suburbs to DC, a changed amputated streetscape/landscape of abutting properties, and reduced connectivity between commercial and residential areas on the east and west sides of North Capitol. (Bridge Statistics..., No Date; DC Office of Planning, 2014).

In response to growing concerns about mass displacement associated with building of interstates in urban areas, Congress passes Highway Act of 1962, requiring States to: a) engage in urban highway planning that includes coordinated ‘multimodal’ transportation and land development planning in coordination with local officials, and b) provide relocation assistance to displaced residents and businesses. (Mohl, 2002).

1961 – 63
DC Street Car system – one of the most extensive in the country – is closed and dismantled. Consequently, many DC residential neighborhoods are ‘disconnected’ from transit to other parts of the city -- especially as one travels from northwest to southeast.

1962
Congress passes the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlaws discrimination based on race, color, religion, gender, or national origin; ends unequal application of voter registration requirements; and bans discrimination in schools, at the workplace and by facilities that serve the general public (i.e., public accommodations).

1964
The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is enacted, resulting in the mass enfranchisement of U.S. minorities by: regulating election administration at State and local levels – including banning literacy tests; providing nationwide protections for voting rights; mandating certain ‘special requirements’ on some jurisdictions, e.g., (a) providing bilingual ballots and election materials, and (b) receiving preclearance from federal officials prior to implementing any changes in election procedures.
During the riots, many Bloomingdale small businesses are destroyed by fire. Many of these businesses and others subsequently close, leaving Bloomingdale with inadequate commercial services (HU, undated).

The Bloomingdale/Eckington/Edgewood community is reported to be both the number 1 most disinvested area of the City’s 36 Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs) and the number 3 among the ANCs in potential for reinvestment (HU, undated).

Riots occur in DC following the assassination of M.L. King, Jr., requiring the deployment of Federal troops and the National Guard. Thirteen persons die in DC. (HU, undated; Van Dyne, 2008).

During the King riots, President Johnson signs the Fair Housing Act (Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968), requiring HUD and other federal agencies to “affirmatively further” fair housing, but through use of enforcement primarily dependent upon individual plaintiffs, and provision of very limited monetary awards (Kaplan and Valls, 2007; Leadership Conference..., 2005; Wikipedia [d], No Date).

Congress passes ‘Home Rule’ for DC (Van Dyne, 2008).

Bloomingdale homeowners are increasingly pressured to sell their homes; tenants are displaced by zealous housing code enforcement; exceptionally high estimated utility bills increasingly result in loss of services; increasing unemployment is evidenced among Bloomingdale youth (HU, undated).

The “S Street Club” of Bloomingdale is organized primarily by residents of the 100 block of S Street NW to address crime, lack of policing, irregular and unpredictable garbage pickup and removal, and other community issues; the Club lobbies District commissioners to have highway street lights installed on troubled blocks as a crime deterrent.
Metro opens. The subway is built in part as an alternative to proposed freeway systems through DC neighborhoods, but also to meet the transit needs of the suburbs.

The abandoned Chesapeake & Potomac Company site (now Crispus Attucks Park) is conveyed to a community group (incorporated as ‘NUV-1’) for use as a community center and training site. The following year, with the assistance of the Hyman Construction Company, the Crispus Attucks Park of the Arts begins operation with DC government funding (Crispus Attucks Park, 2015; DC Office of Planning, 2014; Wikipedia [a], 2015; Williams, 2008).

U.S. vs American Institute of Appraisers (re discrimination in real estate appraisals) – Court rules that defendants (AIA, and 4 other associations focused on real estate appraisal) violated the Fair Housing Act due to their promulgating discriminatory standards and instructional materials wherein race and national origin are viewed as negative factors in determining the value of dwellings and the soundness of mortgage loans. Subsequent settlement agreement with HUD and DOJ requires that race, religion and ethnicity homogeneity of a neighborhood or property cannot be used as a requirement for maximum appraised value (Goering & Wienk, 1996; Leadership Conference…, 2005).

1975 – 1980

Recognizing the threat of speculative reinvestment (and its associated resident displacement), Bloomingdale/Eckington/Edgewood leaders form the ‘Thrust-plus Committee’ – an informal planning coalition that adopts a ‘communitarian approach’ strategy focused on increasing community and public/private involvement in ‘greenline’ or revitalization/stabilization efforts (HU, undated).

1976

DID YOU KNOW?

The 1971 final study on planning DC’s freeways involved an inner loop around the center of the city within DC, and included a proposal for a 6 to 8 lane (Inner Loop East Leg/I-295) that would run north from 11th St. SE in Capitol Hill to near Florida Avenue where it would turn west to T Street NW and proceed on T Street NW to above Dupont Circle where it would turn south to Georgetown and proceed to Virginia. Another 10-lane leg (I-95/North Central Freeway) would proceed east from 3rd St, NW along New York Avenue to the CSX (B & O Railroad) corridor and then follow that corridor northeast through Brookland (where there would be a major interchange of 3 freeways) and Fort Totten Park and proceed to Maryland (Kozel, 1997/2007, Wikipedia, 2013).
DC Council passes legislation protecting historic sites and neighborhoods (Van Dyne, 2008)

District government purchases the McMillan Sand Filtration site for mixed use development after rejecting the Federal government’s offer to purchase at no cost if used as a park (BCA House Tour Book, 2013).

1978

1980s

Chaos & Change

DID YOU KNOW?

After the outlawing of racial covenants, housing racial segregation in DC continued through use of ‘redlining’, e.g. geographically based discriminatory appraisal, mortgage lending and realtor practices that severely restricted Blacks’ access to housing funds, (Goering and Wienk, 1996; Kaplan & Valls, 2007; Ladd, 1998).

1987

Crack cocaine comes to Bloomingdale.

Gentrification begins in Bloomingdale
Federal Bureau of Prisons attempts to construct a new $80 million prison on McMillan Sand Filtration Site and is met with strong community opposition.

McMillan Park is listed in the D.C. inventory of Historic Sites as the McMillan Park Reservoir Historic District and is recommended for listing in the National Register (Bloomingdale's History, 2008; Brief History, No Date).

Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 increase the federal government’s role in enforcement of non-discrimination in housing and lending, increases penalties, and shifts enforcement burden from individual plaintiffs to Federal Government (Kaplan & Valls, 2007).

St Martins School ceases operation (Cultural Tourism DC, 2015).

U.S. Census reports Washington DC’s population is 65.1% Black, of whom 90.3% live in majority Black census tracts (Goering & Wienk, 1996).

Crispus Attucks Park Art Center is destroyed by fire resulting in it becoming a site for homeless people, drug dealing, and abandoned vehicles (Crispus Attucks Park, 2015).

BCA sponsors ‘Picnic in the [McMillan] Park’ This event highlights the fact that Bloomingdale has been waiting for a playground for 43 years. (Washington Post, 1988).

DID YOU KNOW?

Federal court records reveal that the Chevy Chase Federal Savings Bank, the largest savings institution based in the DC metro area: (a) established in 1980 a ‘redlining’ policy to not seek financial transactions secured by DC properties located south of Calvert Street NW or east of Connecticut Avenue NW (including Bloomingdale), and (b) during 1976 -1992, 97% of its 29,846 new mortgage loans (totaling $3.7 billion) in the DC metro area were in predominantly White census tracts (Goering and Wienk, 1996).
New businesses occupy Bloomingdale’s vacant commercial spaces e.g., Windows Café & Market, Big Bear, Rustik Tavern, Yoga District, Aroi Thai Sushi Bar, Bacio Pizzeria, Field to City, Boundary Stone, Red Hen Restaurant, El Camino, Showtime Lounge, Costa Brava, Old Engine 12 Firehouse Restaurant, Grassroots Gourmet Bakery (Wikipedia [a], 2015; Old Engine 12 Restaurant).

Bloomingdale experiences a growing trend of conversions of single-family houses to multi-family condos, pop-ups and pop-backs -- and residents increasingly file complaints about these.

2000 to 2015
Revitalization & Re-Development

DID YOU KNOW?

For Census Tracts 33.01 and 33.02 (North & South Bloomingdale): The 2010 U.S. Census reports: Re families with children: approximately 45% are female headed; 9% of births are to teen mothers; total poverty rate is 17%. Re education and employment: About approximately 6.5% of residents lack a high school diploma; unemployment rate is 9%; 75.5% of residents age 16+ years are employed. Re income: 2008-2012 average family income is approximately $125,000. Re Housing: 2292 housing units are occupied (vs.1673 in 2000); the rental vacancy rate is about 10%; homeownership rate is 68%; median sales price (2013) of a single family home is $697,000; 79% of households have a car. Re crime rates (approximate): Violent - 8/1000 persons (vs DC average of 12/1000; Property - 38/1000 persons (vs DC average of 40/1000) (Urban Institute (b),2015)

US Census reports
Bloomingdale is 59% African American, 30% White, 11% other (Hispanic, Asian, and other national origins) (Wikipedia, 2015)
DC Council passes legislation that returns full control of Crispus Attucks Park to CADC (a nonprofit resident-controlled corporation), forgives all past unpaid taxes and liens, and re-establishes the Park’s tax-exempt status (Crispus Attucks Park, No Date).

North Capitol Main Street (NCMS) is established by community volunteers with the primary purpose of serving as a catalyst for neighborhood commercial revitalization, in conformity with the National Trust Historic Preservation’s Main Street approach – especially on North Capitol Street (New York to Rhode Island Avenues) and in the First & Rhode Island area. Later NCMS becomes a formally designated DC Main Streets program – enabling NCMS to receive funding from DC government (NCMS, No Date).

US Census reports DC population is 601,723 of which 51% are Black, 35% are White, 9.1% are Hispanic, and 4.2% are Asian/Pacific Islander (Urban Institute (a), 2015).

U.S. Census reports that Census tracts 33.01 (North Bloomingdale) and 33.02 (South Bloomingdale) have population totaling 5332, of whom approximately 62% are Black, 30% are White, 5.5% are Hispanic, and 2.6% are Asian/Pacific Islander. Children are about 12.6% of the population and seniors are 6.8% (Urban Institute (b), 2015).
The Bloomingdale community divides politically on the McMillan Sand Filtration Site Development Planned Unit Development zoning application of Vision McMillan Partners (VMP) & the DC Deputy Mayor of Planning and Economic Development (DMPED). (continues)

2012-2015

DID YOU KNOW?

There is a big racial disparity in where people who are born in DC end up living. Currently 32% of Blacks born in DC still live here, compared to only 4% of Whites. Whites first evidenced a significant outmigration in 1940. Between 1940 & 1960, 42% of White Washingtonians moved to Maryland and 17% moved to Virginia. But Black Washingtonians did not evidence significant outmigration (due to suburban covenants and mortgage lending practices) until 1970 when less than 10% lived in Maryland AND Virginia, and progressively increased until 2000. Currently 44% of Black Washingtonians live in Maryland including 33% who live in Prince Georges County, with much smaller percentages living in Virginia and North Carolina. (Dickerson-Prokopp, 2015)
• ANC 5C/5E submits resolutions/testimony to HPRB and ZC that support the proposal—often without qualification.

• The Bloomingdale Civic Association (BCA) submits resolutions/testimony to HPRB, ANC, and ZC expressing reservations, concerns, and/or absence of confidence related to such issues as: ANC and ZC decision-making processes; density, absence of known specific use and associated financial viability of healthcare buildings; insufficient attention to, and remedies for traffic impacts in Bloomingdale; insufficient community benefits and related benefit monitoring and enforcement procedures; insufficient community input/partnership related to future design/development decisions, major administrative and procedural decisions related to community benefits, programming of community center and park, rent and purchase cost structures for ‘affordable units’ (BCA). (continues)
• The McMillan Advisory Group (MAG), which is formally sanctioned by DMPED and comprised by representatives of all affected ANCs and civic associations, submits resolutions/testimony/letters to HPRB, ZC, Mayor’s Agent, and DMPED expressing concerns/reservations similar to those expressed by BCA, as well as other concerns such as: park size; number of affordable units; need for a comprehensive traffic study; density of the overall development; preservation of more underground structures and historic views; re-use of above ground historic structures.

• Friends of McMillan Park (FMP), a community-based group with a long history of advocacy in support of the preservation of the site as a park including securing its DC historic designation, gains ‘party status’, hires a lawyer, partners with a historic preservation organization, initiates a ‘Save McMillan’ signage campaign, provides formal comment/testimony to HPRB, ZC, Mayor’s Agent, and eventually pursues legal appeal of ZC’s Final Order. (continues)
• Fontaine & Company, (a firm initially hired by VMP through use of DC funding) develops a strategy to “provide continuous political cover to local elected officials…”, to promote the overall impression of local community support, and to form a grassroots group, Neighbors of McMillan, with the purpose to “neutralize the opposition” (Anderson, J., 2015)

• Neighbors for McMillan, which is loosely organized and funded by Fontaine & Co., sponsors a ‘Create McMillan’ signage campaign, and provides nearly uniformly unqualified support for the Project at HPRB and ZC hearings. (ANC 5E, No Date; DC Zoning Commission, 2014-15; Friends of McMillan, No Date; McMillan Advisory Group, No Date; Neighbors for McMillan, No Date; Vision McMillan Partners, 2015).

Due to its low-lying topology, century old sewer lines and growing population, Bloomingdale floods four times, sparking community outrage. Subsequently, a Mayor’s Task Force on the Prevention of Flooding in Bloomingdale and LeDroit issues a report with 25 recommendations for flood mitigation. BCA President Teri Janine Quinn is a Task Force member (DC Water [a], 2015)

**DID YOU KNOW:**

McMillan Park is again contributing to solving DC’s water problems and Bloomingdale’s flooding problems as the site for an underground storm water storage facility with a capacity of 3.1 million gallons. Other major First Street Tunnel Project components include: a 2800 foot tunnel with a capacity of 8 million gallons; an underground pumping station; and First Street sewer in-line diversion/ storage chambers with a total capacity of 500,000 gallons (DC Water [a] & [b], No Date).
Based on Mayor’s Task Force Report, work is accelerated and initiated on the First Street Tunnel Project (part of the Clean Rivers Project), at an estimated cost of $158 million with an expected completion at the end of 2016 (DC Water [a] & [b], No Date).

DC Office of Planning issues its Mid-City East Small Area Plan (includes Bloomingdale), which calls for preserving neighborhood architecture and character; commercial revitalization including storefront improvements, more retail, and greater mixed use; development of vacant lots; re-establishing the street grid to allow connectivity across North Capitol Street; installation of public art at neighborhood nodes; more affordable housing (Neibauer, 2014; DC Office of Planning, 2014).

DC Department of Transportation issues its Mid-City East Livability Study, which calls for inking communities across the major arterials; reconnecting communities to the larger city; reclaiming minor streets and corridors from commuters and restoring their community use and character, and increasing resiliency to flooding (DDOT, 2014).

2014

'LUCY'- 1st St. Tunnel Boring Machine

Pop-up in Bloomingdale

2015

Cultural Tourism DC launches its LeDroit Park/Bloomingdale Heritage Trail themed ‘Worthy Ambitions’.

BCA establishes the Bloomingdale Village Square Project (with initial funding from the DC Humanities Council) as a means for encouraging implementation in Bloomingdale of those aspects of the Mid-City East Small Area Plan related to increasing ‘neighborhood identity’ and ‘sense of place’.
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