



POST-WORLD WAR II RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS, 1945-1970

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The Post-World War II Residential Development of Little Rock, Arkansas, 1945-1970 historic and architectural context includes an introduction, a historical overview of the city's growth and development, a discussion of residential property types from this period and registration requirements for National Register eligibility. This context only focuses on residential architecture and no other property types or archeological resources from this period are included in this study.

In the years just before and after World War II, the continued rise in automobile ownership led to the subdivision of rural land on the edges of cities for residential development. The Great Depression of the 1930s significantly slowed home construction as did the war years of World War II, when materials and labor were directed toward the war effort. With so few houses built between 1930 and 1945, post-war there was a high demand for housing, particularly as military personnel returned from overseas. In response to the housing crisis, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the Veterans Administration (VA) incentivized housing construction and homeownership. Federal policies encouraged home loans as well as road construction projects during this period. These factors were responsible for the rapid development of residential subdivisions in suburban settings. On the periphery of cities, large land parcels were subdivided for tract housing. Several house forms and designs became ubiquitous in this post-war climate of rapid suburbanization. At the same time, commercial businesses began following the migration to the suburbs as new highways were constructed. This trend can be seen in Little Rock during the post-World War II period.

This context first provides an introduction to the city's past historic preservation efforts and the growing interest in post-World War II resources. The context then includes an examination of Little Rock's history prior to World War II and the status of the city as it entered the post-World War II period. The context then examines governmental and societal trends which affected the growth and development of cities nationwide and how these trends were reflected in Little Rock. A discussion of residential architectural development nationwide follows along with a specific review of Little Rock's residential resources from 1945 to 1970. Finally, the context concludes with a discussion of significance and registration requirements to assess the National Register eligibility of individual properties and subdivisions from this period.

I. INTRODUCTION

Little Rock is Arkansas's most populous city, the state capital, and the county seat of Pulaski County. Clustered around Little Rock in the center of the state are a number of smaller cities, including North Little Rock, Conway, and Jacksonville, which comprise Arkansas's primary metropolitan corridor, with a total population of 850,000. Little Rock was platted in 1820 and became the Territorial Capitol in 1821. Little Rock derived its colorful name from a rock formation on the south bank of the Arkansas called *la Petite Roche* (meaning "the little rock") by French explorers.

Little Rock has a long tradition of recognizing and protecting its historic resources. The rise of the historic preservation movement in America in the 1960s led to the formation of the Quapaw Quarter Association in 1968. This association was the city's first non-profit historic preservation advocacy organization. The Arkansas Legislature also made a strong commitment to historic preservation when it created the Capitol Zoning District in 1975 to protect residential (and commercial) areas around the Capitol and Governor's Mansion. In 1976, the Little Rock Historic District Commission was established and this was followed in 1981 with the creation of the MacArthur Park local ordinance district.

The city's revitalization and preservation efforts have had a number of positive results in recent decades. The Governor's Mansion and MacArthur Park Historic Districts contain the largest number of protected historic dwellings in the state and rehabilitation and property values have both increased significantly. Central High School was listed as a National Historic Landmark and the adjacent Visitor Center now attracts thousands of tourists annually. The Clinton Presidential Center receives thousands of visitors each month and has spurred additional development along the river. The River Market District is thriving and downtown residential development is increasing. Little Rock currently has twenty-one historic districts listed in the National Register as well as over two hundred individual listings. Financial incentives for rehabilitation have been enhanced, especially through the passage in 2009 of the Arkansas Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit.

In 2009, the "Little Rock Citywide Historic Preservation Plan" was completed which examined past preservation efforts and recommended a series of future actions. One of the recommendations of the plan was to identify and evaluate individual properties and districts built after World War II which may meet the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Once considered the "recent past," the post-World War II residential development of the city has been the subject of numerous studies in recent years. Interest in the architectural styles and historic contexts from this period is expressed in new scholarship and research not only in Little Rock but in communities across the country.

As part of this trend, the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program completed a study of post-World War II residential architecture in the state in 2014. This report, "Now, Light and Livable, From Modern to Ranch, 1945-1970" was written by Preservation Specialist Holly Hope and examines the architectural and historical development of Arkansas in

the post-War period. Although Little Rock was prominently featured, this document had a statewide focus and was not an in-depth analysis of the city. In keeping with the recommendations of the 2009 preservation plan, the City of Little Rock commissioned this study in 2017 to provide an overall context of the residential development of the city and identify those areas or properties which may have particular significance. The context is to serve as a basis for assessing the significance of residential architecture from the post-World War II period and identifying those properties which may meet the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

A primary resource for this report was *Slow, Light and Livable, From Modern to Ranch, 1945-1970+* written by Holly Hope. Ms. Hope completed extensive research on the architecture and historical contexts of the period from 1945 to 1970. This research included many magazine articles and Arkansas newspaper accounts, copies of relevant books, architectural publications and other source material. This data was utilized for this report and access to Ms. Hope's files is greatly appreciated. Special thanks goes to Mason Toms, Preservation Service and Design Coordinator with the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program for his insights and advice on Little Rock's mid-century architecture.

Other resources utilized for this context include USGS quad maps and historic maps of Little Rock from the Arkansas History Commission. Also reviewed were previously published histories, city directories, National Register-listed resources, and historic photos of Little Rock. Dates for construction of dwellings were determined largely from Pulaski County Tax Assessor and GIS data. This data also provided dates and plats of subdivisions from 1945 to 1970. Assistance was solicited from members of the Quapaw Quarter Association, the University of Arkansas School of Architecture and Little Rock members of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) regarding their opinions of the most significant properties built in Little Rock between 1945 and 1970. Social media was also used to inform Little Rock residents of this project and numerous comments were received through this outreach. Field work consisted of driving the majority of the streets in the subdivisions, taking representative photographs and identifying particular property types as well as architectural forms and styles. Interviews were held with a number of property owners concerning the histories of their homes and the author is grateful for their information and access to their property.



Figure 1: Map of Little Rock, Arkansas. The majority of the city's 1945-1970 subdivisions are bounded by Interstate 430 on the west, Interstate 30 on the south, University Avenue on the east and the Arkansas River on the north.

II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT – LITTLE ROCK’S GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

A. *Little Rock’s Growth and Development to 1945*

By 1799, the name Little Rock (*la Petite Roche*) had begun to appear on the maps of French explorers traveling the frontier west of the Mississippi River. The geologic formation initially referred to as the “French Rock” (now “Big Rock”) was included in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, but the first settlement near the landmark was not made until the spring of 1812 when a trapper named William Lewis built a cabin on the bank of the river where the Old Southwest Trail crossed the Arkansas River. Arkansas became a territory in 1819.¹ Half a dozen log buildings were all that marked the new territorial capital, but one of them housed the *Arkansas Gazette*, the territory’s only newspaper, which on December 29, 1821 optimistically predicted that “in a few years we shall have the most flourishing and pleasant town west of the Mississippi.”

Though the town was located on the Arkansas River, only in spring did the waters of the slow, sluggish waterway rise high enough and run fast enough to clear its channel of driftwood, snags, and sandbars. As a result, the cost of trade and consumer goods was often double what those goods cost in other towns along the western frontier. While Little Rock was the region’s leading community from the first year it was founded, the capital city remained little more than a village. The town boasted about 60 buildings, mostly log but a handful of them brick or frame. In 1831, a decade after the first Anglo settlers built their cabins, Little Rock incorporated as a town, numbering less than 1,500 people contained within a twelve-block area stretching south from the river.²

Growth came to Little Rock with the opening of the Arkansas River in 1832. That year, President Andrew Jackson signed a bill authorizing the construction arm of the War Department (soon to become the Corps of Engineers) to clear and maintain a channel on the Arkansas River, thus joining the Arkansas to the Ohio, Mississippi and Missouri Rivers as part of the nation’s strategic infrastructure. With reduced hazards and travel time, steamboats docked in greater numbers below the “Little Rock” on the river. In 1830, it typically required a steamboat more than two weeks to travel from Little Rock to New Orleans. By 1840, that time had been reduced to four or five days.³

At the same time, the War Department confronted growing border tension between Mexico and the United States. The U.S. recommissioned Fort Smith west of Little Rock and built a thirty-six-acre Army Arsenal in Little Rock with barracks, officers’ quarters, stables, gun repair shops and storage facilities for 100 tons of ordnance. The installation was formally commissioned on June 23, 1838. During the 1830s, Little Rock also served as a supply point for the Native Americans on the Trail of Tears. In May of 1830, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act, mandating the removal of native tribes east

¹ C. Fred Williams, *Historic Little Rock: An illustrated History* (San Antonio, TX: Historical Publishing Network, 2008), 5-6.

² *Ibid.*, 19.

³ *Ibid.*, 23.

of the Mississippi to new Indian Territory, carved out of the Louisiana Purchase. Some 30,000 Native Americans crossed Arkansas to present-day Oklahoma, many of them on the southern route through North Little Rock. Throughout the 1830s, Little Rock was a center for travelers heading west resulting in more than \$100,000 injected into the Arkansas economy during that decade.⁴

In 1833, construction began on the territorial capitol building, now called the Old State House, the first building in Arkansas constructed with public funds and the first designed by a professional architect. Construction was well under way by 1836, when Arkansas entered the Union as a slave state. Little Rock continued its rapid growth during the 1830s and with 1,500 people in 1840, the Arkansas capital rivaled Memphis in size.⁵

The Greek Revival-style Old State House harmonized with the homes built by affluent Little Rock citizens of the early 1840s in what is now the MacArthur Park Historic District. Notable among these prominent homes was the Pike-Fletcher-Terry House, home of lawyer and newspaper editor Albert Pike. Distinguished by six Ionic columns, the house occupied the entire 400 block of 7th Street. Two other homes now listed on the National Register survive from the early 1840s, Trapnall Hall and Curran Hall. Both are located on Capitol Avenue within the MacArthur Park Historic District.

Little Rock continued its steady growth in the years before the Civil War with its population increasing from 2,000 in 1850 to 3,800 in 1860. During the 1850s, there were several attempts to fund construction of a railroad through the state and to Little Rock but these never came to fruition. However, the steamboat traffic continued to bring commerce to the city and in 1858, 317 boats docked at the Little Rock wharf in only six months' time. Wharf fees on vessels were the single greatest source of city revenue and kept Little Rock prosperous until the Civil War.⁶

In 1861, Arkansas seceded from the United States along with other southern states to form the Confederacy. As the capital, Little Rock was the seat of the state's Confederate government and a training center for troops. Little Rock sent hundreds of men into the Confederate army and contained a number of hospitals to house wounded and sick soldiers. As the war continued, the population increased with refugees who fled other parts of the state.

On September 10, 1863, Union troops skirmished along the north side of the Arkansas River as a diversion, meanwhile putting up a pontoon bridge nine miles south of the city and crossing the Arkansas River. Thus flanking Confederate rifle pits and breastworks, Federal troops occupied Little Rock by afternoon. The city then surrendered to Union occupation. The city was then occupied by federal troops for the duration of the war. Union dollars and planning did much to transform the city as the

⁴ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 26-28.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Quartermaster's Department constructed facilities to house, feed, transport, and support 12,000 occupying soldiers.⁷

The Civil War and Reconstruction radically changed Little Rock's demographics. In 1860, 23% of Little Rock citizens were African American. By 1870, that number had grown to 43%. Hostility towards African Americans and Unionists flared, especially as black voters helped elect new, Republican candidates to government, and former Confederates were not permitted to participate in Reconstruction politics.

Reconstruction also brought an infusion of northern capital accompanied by a building boom. The city's three brick yards ran at capacity during the late 1860s. More than 400 houses were built in 1867, and 200 more in 1869. The peak of building came in 1871 and 1872 when 1200 houses were built. Investment continued into the 1870s when three new banks were established. The Baring Cross Bridge, completed in 1873, spanned the Arkansas River and provided the final railroad connection between Memphis and Little Rock. In 1877, the city's first streetcars began running on Main Street.

During this post-war surge of construction, architectural trends in Little Rock evolved, as the Victorian styles became popular. Built in 1868, the First Hotze House on Main Street is a good example of the Italianate style, which often features elongated, narrow windows, arched upper sashes or hoods, bay windows, decorative entrances, bracketed eaves and sometimes a cupola. The Pollock House on Scott Street from 1870 and the Garland-Mitchell House from 1873 are two more prominent examples of the Italianate style in Little Rock.

During the 1870s, many of Little Rock's investors chose to build homes along a new street named Lincoln Avenue, just west of newly constructed Baring Cross Bridge. One of the most prominent of the homes was built in "Carpet Bagger Row" by Alexander McDonald who moved to Little Rock in 1868. He constructed a large example, now known as the Packet House, of the Second Empire style with a distinctive mansard roof.⁸ A decade later, Italian immigrant Angelo Marre, having amassed a fortune in the liquor import and saloon business, built a Second Empire home in the MacArthur Park area called the Villa Marre.

The 1880s and 1890s have been called Little Rock's Gilded Age, a time of robust growth during which the city's population doubled to 38,000 residents. New public buildings distinguished the downtown including a new Post Office and Courts building, a Board of Trade building, the new Pulaski County Courthouse and the Union Station Depot. In 1893 the federal arsenal grounds became City Park. A second bridge spanning the Arkansas, Junction Bridge, opened in 1885, and the Free Bridge was completed in 1897.⁹

⁷ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁹ *Ibid.* 45-47.

In residential architecture, the Queen Anne style, featuring asymmetrical facades, bays, balconies, towers and turrets, became popular. The region's most flamboyant (surviving) example of Queen Anne style is the Hornibrook House located on Louisiana Street. The historic areas of Little Rock have many outstanding examples of Queen Anne architecture. Typical among them are the Dibrell House on Spring Street and the Turner-Ledbetter House on Louisiana Street.

In 1891, electric streetcars replaced those drawn by mules, allowing for expansion into areas farther from downtown. A group of Michigan investors purchased 800 acres west of town for a residential development known as Pulaski Heights. The area was attractive for its higher (300-foot) elevation, allowing residents to escape summer insects and disease. Located west of downtown, the development accentuated the historic disparity between white and black citizens of Little Rock. Since the end of the Civil War, African-Americans had settled in the marshy bottom lands on the city's east side. Additional African-American residents settled west of Mount Holly Cemetery between 9th and 12th streets. In time, this population extended to form the nucleus for the city's African-American neighborhoods in the 20th century. A four-block section along West 9th Street between Broadway and Chester was the center of the black business district. Boundaries between the white and black communities were clear. Those boundaries became more evident in 1903 when Arkansas passed the Gantt Bill (or Jim Crow Law). This bill provided for the separation of races on public transit systems.¹⁰

By 1890, Little Rock's growing African-American community was served by two institutions of higher learning: Philander Smith College, founded in 1877, and Arkansas Baptist College, founded in 1884. Resisting the national trend of educating African Americans only in manual skills subjects, Philander Smith also offered courses in journalism and advertising and, later, classical and scientific degrees with courses in Greek, Latin, algebra, and natural philosophy. The presence of Philander Smith bolstered the number of educated, professional African-Americans in the city, and fostered pride and cohesion within the black community. Founded in 1884 by the Colored Baptists of the State of Arkansas, Arkansas Baptist College was committed to academic and cultural excellence in educating future African-American ministers. The school also sought to make higher education available to young black men and women. In 1885 the school moved to 16th and High Streets (now Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive), where the campus remains today.¹¹

Downtown Little Rock gained a prominent addition in the new century as a new State Capitol building was begun in late 1900 and finished in 1914. The construction of the monumental Neo-classical structure was a symbol of a new, progressive era in the state. At the same time, Little Rock built a new city hall. Completed in 1908, City Hall still stands at the corner of Markham and Broadway.

While these new public buildings were under construction, Little Rock's business community was building turn-of-the-century retail skyscrapers. One of the best extant

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 49-50.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

examples is the eleven-story, State Bank Building built in 1909 on the corner of Fifth and Main. Another significant commercial building of this period is the seven-story Gus Blass Department Store Building on Main Street. Built in 1912, it became the city's fifth skyscraper. A well-known Little Rock landmark, the Gazette Building on West Third Street, is also a distinctive example of architecture of the period.

While downtown grew upward, residential areas grew outward, mainly to the west. In 1903, a streetcar line was constructed from downtown to Pulaski Heights. The following year, Forest Park was developed offering a bandstand, dancing pavilion, picnic area and skating rink. By 1905, the upscale suburb had 400 residents. Pulaski Heights featured homes in a wide array of newly popular architectural styles, including Colonial Revival, American Foursquare, Tudor Revival, Spanish Revival, and Craftsman houses. Bungalow dwellings were also the predominant house type in the Hillcrest Historic District. Also, these new styles of homes were constructed in older neighborhoods like the Governor's Mansion District.

Despite the boom of residential construction during the decade before World War I, city revenues declined and the city was more than \$1 million in debt. In order to support the war effort and to boost the regional economy, a group of Little Rock businessmen raised \$500,000, bought 13,000 acres northwest of the city, and donated it to the U.S. government for a military training camp commissioned as Camp Pike. The new military base became the training ground for more than 50,000 recruits, most of which came through Little Rock and used city services while on leave.¹²

Despite wartime prosperity, Little Rock was not able to keep pace with providing services for military personnel and covering interest payments on its loans. Voters were forced to reconsider an occupation tax. For the first time in nearly two decades, the city had cash flow sufficient to meet its monthly obligations. Little Rock entered the 1920s with a burst of civic enthusiasm. This energy was reflected in the number of new buildings. A new Union Station depot was built when the old one burned in 1921, and, in 1926, the city's tallest structure to date was completed, the fourteen-story Donaghey Building at the corner of 7th and Main. It dominated the skyline until the 1960s.

During the 1920s, Little Rock's population grew by more than 25% from 65,000 to 82,000. A number of apartments were built throughout the city to house this surge of new residents to the city. Typically two or three stories in height, these multi-unit dwellings are found in a variety of neighborhoods. Like single-family homes of the era, they were often built in Colonial Revival or Craftsman styles.

Among Little Rock's many civic projects during the prosperous 1920s were two new high schools. The first was Little Rock High, built to house more than 2,000 students and widely recognized as one of the most beautiful schools in the country. Nine blocks

¹² *Ibid.*, 59.

to the east, a second school, Dunbar High, with an emphasis on industrial subjects, served African-American students.¹³

The Great Depression of the 1930s slowed construction considerably in Little Rock and the population grew by only 6,000 residents during this decade. Many businesses closed and residential development was limited during these years. Houses which were built during the 1930s tended to reflect simpler forms - Craftsman and Revival styles gradually gave way to new "modern" homes with cleaner lines. While the period's Art Deco and Art Moderne styles were limited for home construction, their emphasis on streamlining and sleek materials also influenced house designs with restrained ornamentation. Few examples of the Art Deco or Art Moderne styles were built in Little Rock during the 1930s. A notable exception was the Art Moderne Werner Knoop House at 6 Ozark Point completed in 1937 (NR-listed 1990).

By the late 1930s, another world war was taking shape in Europe, and Camp Pike in North Little Rock, renamed Camp Joseph T. Robinson, was activated. The Army leased more land and expanded the base to more than 70,000 acres. Training began there in 1940 and with America's entry into World War II many new jobs in construction were provided for Little Rock residents. During the war, Camp Robinson drew more than 25,000 new citizens to Little Rock, and thousands of soldiers with weekend passes visited the city regularly. This increase in population caused a housing shortage, and the military contracted with the city to build three new housing projects for personnel involved in the war effort. Sunset Terrace and Highland Park in southern and western sections of the city were constructed for whites and Tuxedo Courts on the city's southeast side housed African-American families.¹⁴

With the end of World War II in 1945, Little Rock was a changed city. Its population increased significantly during the war and it gained prominence as the largest and most commercially successful city in the state. The city's prominent business leaders banded together as the Committee of 100+ and purchased 600 acres southwest of the city for the development of an industrial park. State leaders were eager to assist Little Rock development, as Arkansas experienced a population loss from rural communities.

B. Little Rock's Growth and Development, 1945-1970

By the early 20th century, the planners and designers across the country steered the development of new neighborhoods, promoting a model of larger residential lots with landscaped yards as country living. Intellectuals tied this ideal to moralism, citing the social and aesthetic superiority of a suburban way of life. Reformers stressed the physical and psychological benefits of living in a location with plenty of fresh air and sunshine, far removed from the grimy, germ-infested confines of urban tenements, and the harmony and safety inherent in a neighborhood composed of residents with shared

¹³ *Ibid.*, 62, 65.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

values.¹⁵ In Little Rock, the development of Pulaski Heights was the first example. In 1891, Michigan lawyers H.F. Auten and Edgar E. Moss purchased 800 acres far from the center of town in anticipation of streetcars. When the streetcars were placed into service in 1903, Little Rock's first suburb was created. By 1905, there were 300 families living in Pulaski Heights which was incorporated that year. The town became Little Rock's Ninth Ward in 1916.

The suburban movement was also a vehicle for a shift in architectural preferences. In the early twentieth century, Americans came to embrace their roots by turning away from the ornamented, formal, cluttered designs of Victorian architecture for symmetrical, orderly Colonial Revival, American Foursquare, and Neo-Classical designs, and architecture with vernacular overtones such as Tudor Revival and Craftsman. The Pulaski Heights Land Company published a promotional pamphlet in 1911 featuring Tudor Revival-style dwellings and Craftsman Bungalows.¹⁶ Prominent Arkansas architects of the period were George Mann and Charles Thompson, who designed several Pulaski Heights homes.

As in most cities across the country, construction in Little Rock slowed significantly during the Great Depression. In response to the crisis, the administration of President Franklin Roosevelt created federal agencies to assist with housing, employment, and conservation. In 1934, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) was established as part of economic recovery and stimulus, and created standards for home construction and privately financed home loans. FHA standards institutionalized principles for both neighborhood planning and house design. To help stabilize the real estate market, developers advocated zoning and subdivision regulations. Among FHA standards for community planning were subdivisions featuring curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs, promoting a distinctly ex-urban setting and sense of community cohesion.¹⁷

Subsequent legislation, beginning with a 1938 amendment to the National Housing Act that made it easier to purchase new, small homes on credit, shifted the focus to facilitating home ownership for consumers, including those whose financial situations would previously have prohibited them from making such an investment, such as war workers.¹⁸ Not only was home ownership promoted, increasingly it was expedited through government assistance. Such financing aids included low-interest bank loans, and long-term, low-interest mortgages. Developers, too, had access to FHA funding opportunities, particularly to construct subdivisions of new housing, which expanded dramatically post-World War II.

¹⁵ Clifford Edward Clark, Jr., *The American Family Home, 1800-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 182-183.

¹⁶ Todd Traub, "A Century of Growth: The History of Little Rock's Heights and Hillcrest Neighborhoods," Little Rock Soiree, February 28, 2017. <http://www.littlerocksoiree.com/post/98858/100-years-of-growth-the-history-of-little-rocks-heights-and-hillcrest-neighborhoods>.

¹⁷ National Park Service, "Land Use and Site Development: Suburban Land Development Practices," at NPS website <https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/suburbs/part2.htm>, accessed August 10, 2016.

¹⁸ Leo Grebler, editor, *The Role of Federal Credit Aids in Residential Construction* (National Bureau of Economic Research, 1953), 22.

To alleviate the housing shortage resulting from the Depression and military restrictions on materials and labor during World War II, other new programs were initiated to stimulate construction and home ownership. The Veterans Administration's (VA) mortgage guarantee program of 1944 eliminated down payments on new homes for veterans. The Housing Act of 1949, intended to replace slums with decent homes for families, expanded the role of the federal government in fostering affordable mortgages for and promoting construction of public housing.¹⁹ The Veterans Emergency Housing Program (VEHP), headed by the National Housing Expediter, was organized in 1945 when Civilian Production Administration Priorities Regulation 33 was issued for the purpose of funneling building materials to low- and medium-priced housing.

These programs and others continued to favor new construction. Between 1935 and 1951 nearly four million new residential units were financed via the FHA or VA.²⁰ In the 1940s, FHA standards went so far as to prohibit financial assistance to older neighborhoods - a clear policy to encourage new development on the periphery of cities. Other factors influencing the national trend of suburbanization included the increased affordability of automobiles, federal funding for new highway construction, growth of public utilities capacity, the ease of obtaining credit for home buying, and the general prosperity of the period.

During the post-World War II period, the economy shifted from manual labor to office work, and white-collar employment surpassed blue-collar work by 1953. The Gross National Product surged from \$200 billion in 1940 to \$300 billion in 1950. The average age at marriage for women dropped from twenty-two to twenty, and two out of three university-enrolled, white women left school to marry and start a family. The multi-generational household of pre-war decades declined as young families established independent homes. Home ownership rose from 43.6 percent in 1940 to 55 percent in 1950.²¹ These economic and cultural shifts underpinned the national trend of suburbanization and the boom in home construction.

Politicians promoted the idea of working citizens, producer-purchasers of goods. Consumerism came to define good citizenship beginning in the Great Depression era and merged with Cold War ideology following World War II. In her book *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, Lizabeth Cohen contends that during the Depression, spending was encouraged as a civic-minded effort to get money flowing. Thus, a good citizen spent, not hoarded, money. The citizen-consumer was at once concerned with societal responsibility and personal materialism. At war's end, when the American economy and population boomed, the values of

¹⁹ Holly Hope, "Low Light and Livable: From Modern to Ranch in Arkansas, 1945-1970," Report on file with the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, Little Rock, Arkansas, 2014, 29.

²⁰ Grebler, 16.

²¹ Kathryn M. Kuranda, "Housing an Air Force and a Navy: The Wherry and Capehart Era Solutions to the Postwar Family Housing Shortage (1949-1962)," Report prepared for the United States Department of the Air Force and the United States Department of the Navy, (2007), 50.

American individualism and a free-market economy were increasingly contrasted with state-imposed Communism of the Soviet Union.²²

Cold War rhetoric shaped the collective ideology of American culture. Domestic policies during the Cold War era reinforced the suburban, nuclear family paradigm with a breadwinner husband and stay-at-home mother through low interest home loans, preferential treatment of male veterans in college enrollment, and tax credits that rewarded parents with children. Women were praised as good citizens when they stayed at home, tended to the family economy, and raised patriotic children. Conversely, single women were generally unable to obtain home loans. This white, middle class, suburban household model, however, ignored real demographics, which included low-income households, the elderly, inner-city African-Americans, working women, and influxes of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans.²³

Despite societal pressures to stay at home to nurture the family, women played a major role in increasing home ownership and changing the form of residential living. By mid-century, American women were becoming more active outside the home even as they maintained their traditional roles of housekeeper and caregiver. The number of women in the U.S. labor force increased from less than 11,000,000 just prior to World War II to over 18,000,000 in 1950. By 1960, 35 percent of American women ages 14 and older were employed (up from 25 percent in 1940, 29 percent in 1950).²⁴ In 1955 the percentage of women in the labor force who had children between the ages of 6 and 17 was 27 percent; by 1965 the number had risen to nearly 46 percent.²⁵ As more women entered the work force in these decades family spending jumped with the increase in income provided by working mothers. In turn, this allowed families to have more discretionary spending to buy new homes.

The competition to sell suburban homes led builders and developers to identify house plans, appliances and other amenities to lure homebuyers to their development and away from rival subdivisions. Research into what couples - and especially women - wanted in a new home became the subject of numerous magazine articles and government studies. In 1956 the Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA), which included the FHA and the Federal National Mortgage Association, convened the Women's Congress on Housing in Washington to take the pulse of housing trends from the female homeowners' perspective. The data collected resulted in a list of 59

²² Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 19, 55, 123, 195.

²³ Cohen, 134, 144, 212; Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992); 26, 29, 41, 78.

²⁴ Clifford Edward Clark, Jr., *The American Family Home, 1800-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 206.

²⁵ Kristen Peeler, et al, *Housing an Air Force and a Navy: The Wherry and Capehart Era Solutions to the Postwar Family Housing Shortage (1949-1962)*, (Frederick, MA: R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, 2007), 50; "Women in the Labor Force," online article at www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0104673.html, accessed 01/08/2013; "Mothers in the Labor Force, 1955-2010," online article at www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0104670.html, accessed 01/08/2013.

desirable characteristics of the ideal home, including a separate family room, plenty of closets, and a dedicated laundry space.

Illustrative of the research into women's preferences were articles that appeared in *McCall's* magazine in 1944 entitled *What Women Want in Their Living Rooms of Tomorrow*, *What Women Want in Their Dining Rooms of Tomorrow*, *What Women Want in Their Kitchens of Tomorrow*, and *What Women Want in Their Bedrooms of Tomorrow*. The bedroom article included data on the style of house 4,432 of the contestants preferred, which leaned toward %modern+ as opposed to %traditional.+ Many of those who responded favored interior designs and décor that would later be associated with the modern Ranch style.²⁶ Advertisements by developers and builders increasingly focused on such houses, which had open floor plans, separation of adult and children spaces, and outdoor living areas such as backyard patios and decks. Other successful campaigns were promulgated by utility-focused companies, such as %Gold Medallion Home . Live Better Electrically+ and %All-Gas Homes.+

With the rise of the Ranch and similar period styles took hold in the late 1940s, the terms %informal,+ %convenience,+ %easygoing,+ %efficiency,+ and %livability+ were the types of catchwords and phrases used in realtor ads and home magazines to describe these homes.²⁷ Concurrently the architectural design community stressed such concepts as %individuality, honesty, functionality+ to establish new standards of taste while satisfying the needs of contemporary families.²⁸ The editors of *Architectural Forum* at the time also promoted incorporation of advanced building technology to create homes that were both practical and modern.²⁹

The California builder Cliff May is often singled out as a primary promoter of the Ranch house, through *Sunset* magazine and various house-plan books that influenced builders, architects, and contractors across the country.³⁰ May drew inspiration from the Southern California ranchos, which were low and %rambling,+ and exhibited close indoor-outdoor connectivity. May thus advocated homes with informal, open-flow floor plans, and easy transitions to outdoor living spaces.³¹ Split-Level designs, also increasing in popularity along with the Ranch, were multi-level but maintained the same Ranch sense of informality and openness by staggering the floor levels and incorporating short stairways, often with a wide run and shallow rise.

A primary focus of the new suburban home was the kitchen. The kitchen was where the stay-at-home wife could cook during the day or the employed wife could produce a

²⁶ Mary Davis Gillies, *What Women Want in Their Bedrooms of Tomorrow, A Report From the Bedroom of Tomorrow Contest*, (McCall's Corporation: New York, NY, 1944), 17, 26-27.

²⁷ Hope, "Low, Light and Livable," 36.

²⁸ Clark, 199.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 199, 201.

³⁰ Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 603.

³¹ Daniel P. Gregory, *Cliff May and the Modern Ranch House* (New York, NY: Rizzoli International Publications, 2008) 23.

quick dinner when she got home from work. Home-building and decorating magazines often contained articles and advertisements detailing the design and modern functionality of the kitchen and associated appliances. In 1953, author Robert Woods Kennedy stated that "the housewife cannot be expected to enjoy cooking as long as it is thought of and expressed as a duty which interferes with life. It must be a part, an important part, of life itself."³² Rather than a site of drudgery or an isolated "laboratory" devoted to food preparation, the kitchen instead became a social site, central to the active spaces of the house, especially in combination with the dining or living room.³³ Open floor plans, built-in tables and eating nooks, colorful kitchen appliances, strategically placed wall openings and windows allowing for supervision of children, and proximity to both family room and patio gave the kitchen a new role as living space, or as a 1953 article in *House Beautiful* terms it, a "living kitchen."³⁴

Another aspect of the new suburban home was the differentiation of public and private spaces. Eighteenth and nineteenth-century homes often did not demarcate sleeping areas as strictly private, a trend that began to take hold during the Progressive Era. In two-story homes separating upstairs private bedrooms from downstairs public rooms was simple. But one-story and Split-Level homes required a different contextualization. Modern houses were thus designed to create "active zones" where informal gatherings and activities took place, and "quiet zones," including bedroom areas.³⁵ A distinct parents' bedroom, or master bedroom, with an associated master bath emerged in larger homes. As the kitchen, and often a separate den, assumed an "active" function, the living room decreased in importance as the primary family gathering space. The formal living room instead became a semi-public "quiet" space, or "adult" area, where a parent could relax away from the kids after a long day at work, and, coupled with a formal dining room, provide a place for entertaining special guests and staging more formal events and activities. The formal spaces also became locations for teaching children proper etiquette.³⁶

New technology such as air conditioning and television also influenced both exterior architecture and interior space in the mid-twentieth century. Air conditioning had been used in industrial and commercial settings but its application to homes was rare until after World War II. The first window air conditioner was invented in 1931 but sales were slow due to their expense. Improvements to these units brought down the costs and increased their efficiency after the war. Window units for the home were must-have items in Arkansas by 1953 and one million units were sold nationwide that year.³⁷ With

³² Robert Woods Kennedy, *The House and the Art of its Design* (New York, NY: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1953), 253.

³³ Clark, 204.

³⁴ Wolfgang Langewiesche, "The Next American House; By a Man who's Going to Build One," *House Beautiful* (April 1953), 145.

³⁵ Hope, "Low, Light and Livable," 37.

³⁶ Kennedy, 87; Albert M. Cole, *Women's Congress on Housing* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1956), 79-80; and Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (Cambridge, MA, London, England: The MIT Press, 1981), 255.

³⁷ Hope, "Low, Light and Livable," 38.

air conditioning, not all windows needed to be fully functional, and large, fixed picture windows became central features of many mid-century designs.

Little Rock received its first television station in 1953 and television sales soared. It was predicted that by 1960 there would be 38 stations.³⁸ To accommodate this new popular house addition, builders encountered a dilemma . how to allot space in a modern open-concept floor plan for a noisy, distracting entertainment center. A multi-faceted research program conducted by the Housing and Home Finance Agency, authorized in 1949, addressed such issues as part of new-home livability.+ The trend that developed among builders was to set aside family rooms+or recreation rooms+to provide a place for families to gather around the television.³⁹ An article appearing in 1953 in the *Arkansas Democrat* offered Helpful Hints on TV Arranging,+ noting that the ideal placement for a television was in a separate social space such as a game room or study.⁴⁰

Mid-century homes also changed the way residents used their outdoor spaces and interacted with their neighbors, emphasizing family over community.⁴¹ In fact, very few mid-century subdivisions in Little Rock were built with sidewalks, thus discouraging pedestrian traffic through the neighborhoods. The outdoor space at the front of the house, including the front porch, declined as a significant area for interaction. Most outdoor activities instead took place in the area behind the house, where families enjoyed landscaped backyards and rear patios, often thought of as an extension of the indoor living space. The extensive use of glass at the rear of the home also served to bring the outdoors in and connect the home with nature. The catch phrase of home magazines in the early 1950s for an exterior activity space was outdoor living room.⁴²

To provide the greatest amount of space in backyards, garages and carports were generally not sited at the back but instead made contiguous with the front façade. Other solutions for garage/carport placement included a slightly projecting or recessed bay but still mainly in line with the front plane of the house. This approach can be seen principally in the subdivisions built for middle-class customers, rather than the higher-income neighborhoods with larger lot lines.⁴³ The more expensive homes could include a more substantial garage or carport front-facing wing.

The post-war confluence of available land, improved automobile access, federal housing programs and general prosperity combined to stimulate the development of dozens of subdivisions and construction of thousands of homes in Little Rock's suburbs between 1945 and 1960. Stimulating the local economy were updates to the Little Rock airport, the building of U.S. Interstate 30, construction of the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas

³⁸ "First TV Station Due Here Next Year," *Arkansas Democrat*, September 25, 1952.

³⁹ Clarke Beach, "Television Is the Architects' Headache," *Arkansas Gazette*, April 16, 1950.

⁴⁰ "Helpful Hints on TV Arranging: Sets Bring Problems to Homemakers," *Arkansas Democrat*, March 15, 1953.

⁴¹ Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 279-280.

⁴² Hope, "Low, Light and Livable," 39.

⁴³ "Turning House Around to Get View of Yard Can Pose Problems," *Arkansas Democrat*, July 2, 1950.

River Navigation System and the Little Rock Port Authority. In the mid-1950s the Little Rock Industrial District was also completed.⁴⁴

Between 1940 and 1950, the population of Little Rock grew by 16.1 percent to 102,213 residents. Population growth was also reflected in business sector growth. The Chamber of Commerce launched a recruitment campaign with the slogan "Arkansas: The Land of Opportunity." Between 1954 and 1956, recruiters persuaded thirty-four firms to relocate to the Little Rock area. These included major employers such as the Reynolds Metal Company and the Aluminum Company of America. Additionally, Jacksonville was chosen in 1952 as the site of the Little Rock Air Force Base (LRAFB), activated in October of 1955. Approximately 85,000 people attended an open house held for the public.

By 1952, city officials and developers predicted a future of rapid development in Little Rock, both residential and industrial. As a means of managing and guiding the growth, and controlling zoning at an early stage, it was proposed to put a new county planning code in place to extend Little Rock's city limits. This harmonized with the goals of developers, who were keen to create and market planned communities in the suburbs. Controlling growth through proper city planning was enough of a national concern that the topic was the focus of the 1952 meeting of the National Association of Homebuilders.⁴⁵

Facilitating Little Rock's expansion were new and modernized roads. Judge Arch Campbell is credited with the construction and paving of about 200 miles of roadways in Pulaski County during the 1950s. These routes included Hayes Street (now University Avenue) in Little Rock, built in phases between 1952 and 1955, which linked Arkansas Highway 10 to Asher Avenue, or State Highway 5.⁴⁶ Also dating to 1959 was the construction of expressways, the widening of roads, and the building of road extensions.

Residential developments accounted for a significant portion of the city's post-World War II expansion. Such growth was accelerated by easier financing options, including government programs. In Arkansas the availability of GI loans prompted 13,840 veterans to acquire new homes or make home improvements by 1949.⁴⁷ It was predicted then that by 1957, 50,000 Arkansas veterans would be homeowners thanks to the GI Bill, if the state's veterans followed the national trend.⁴⁸ Home financing was also facilitated by increased funding opportunities through the Federal National Mortgage Association, and private investors becoming more amenable to honoring a 4-percent

⁴⁴ F. Hampton Roy, Sr., Charles Witsell, Jr., and Cheryl Griffith Nichols, (*How We Lived: Little Rock as an American City*. Little Rock, AR: August House, 1984), 207-210.

⁴⁵ "Edge of City Planning Mandatory: Little Rock 5-Mile Belt Is Advised," *Arkansas Democrat*, February 17, 1952.

⁴⁶ "More than 400 Miles Paved: Campbell Cites 8-Year Mark," *Arkansas Gazette*, March 22, 1959; "Edge of City Planning Mandatory," *Arkansas Democrat*, February 17, 1952.

⁴⁷ Hope, "Low, Light and Livable," 41.

⁴⁸ "50,000 New Homeowners by 1957 Under GI Program," *Arkansas Gazette*, April 17, 1949.

interest rate on mortgages. Other factors promoting home ownership included the generally low pricing for new houses, and the decline of rent control.⁴⁹

Nationally, the FHA pushed suburban growth over urban density, precipitating a trend toward high-profit-margin, developer-built homes, which were clustered in peripheral subdivisions rather than the city core.⁵⁰ Developers rushed to take advantage of national and local circumstances, marketing hundreds of single-family homes in dozens of new suburban neighborhoods. In 1950 the city planning commission of Little Rock approved 16 new subdivisions, including Queen Manor and Scenic Heights.⁵¹ Over the next decade, builders constructed over 10,000 new homes in the city, concentrated to the west and southwest of downtown.

Local news reporting about construction in Little Rock and Arkansas expressed enthusiasm and high optimism. In a July 1950 issue of the *Arkansas Democrat* it was noted that during the first five months of the year new construction had already hit the \$7 million mark. In 1954 home construction totals outpaced 1953 by 92 percent, and in 1955 figures for new-home building in Arkansas were higher still.⁵² The growth continued through the 1960s as the population of Arkansas increased by 8 percent (137,000) and housing units increased by 15 percent.⁵³

The development and marketing of subdivisions depended heavily on developers' consideration of the automobile, including the incorporation of carports, garages, auto courts, and paved driveways as standard components on new homes, and proximity to retail venues with ample parking. Promotion of new suburbs also stressed the qualities of internal roads. A 1959 *Arkansas Gazette* article on the Sheraton Park subdivision noted "The streets are of asphalt construction and are sufficiently wide for two-way traffic."⁵⁴ For an open-house event in 1960 at the Brookfield subdivision, developers Rector-Phillips-Morse even joined forces with Dumas Milner Pontiac to promote both a viewing of homes and a chance to "See the new 1960 Pontiac."⁵⁵

No other method of transportation contributed as much to the growth of homebuilding and the establishment of symbiotic links between suburban residential neighborhoods and nearby commercial strips, as well as the decline of home delivery services and downtown commercial venues. After World War II the car was proclaimed a necessity of

⁴⁹ "Getting GI Loans Now Easier," *Arkansas Democrat*, December 4, 1949; "War Vet Important To Arkansas Market," *Arkansas Democrat*, October 16, 1949; "Building Boom Erases Spring Slump," *Arkansas Democrat*, September 25, 1949.

⁵⁰ Wright, 248.

⁵¹ "Six Bridges, Expressways Will Lead Into Future," *Arkansas Gazette*, June 21, 1959; Little Rock City Planning Commission, *City of Little Rock Annual Report, 1959*, (Little Rock, AR: Little Rock City Planning Commission, 1959), 2, 9.

⁵² "Building Tops \$7 Million in Five Months," *Arkansas Democrat*, July 2, 1950; "State Home Construction Up 92 Pct.," *Arkansas Democrat*, December 12, 1954.

⁵³ Hope, "Low, Light and Livable," 41.

⁵⁴ "Bracy Realty Plans 200 Homes in 4 Years at Sheraton Park," *Arkansas Gazette*, November 22, 1959.

⁵⁵ *Arkansas Gazette*, January 1, 1960.

life by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and it became an integral part of new housing forms and new cultural norms.⁵⁶ Much of the suburban front yard was sacrificed to the needs of the car and paved over for carports, driveways, and additional parking spaces for visitors. Even the kitchen was affected, with house plans positioning it near an entrance with easy access to the car to unload groceries.⁵⁷ The car became the critical link between our homes, jobs, and social lives.⁵⁸

The ubiquity of the automobile and homeowners' dependency on it as their primary mode of transportation necessitated improved roads, especially as a tool for attracting business interests and new residents to an area, including to the proliferating mid-century subdivisions. Post-World War II in Arkansas, road improvements were financed by a general obligation bond issue, advanced by Governor Sid McMath, intended to boost highway maintenance and construction.⁵⁹ As part of a national plan to implement an interstate system to get travelers from coast to coast, as well as provide a national defense transportation network, interstate highways in Arkansas, beginning with Interstate 30 and Interstate 40, were constructed in the 1950s. Funding from various state and federal programs was utilized for building access highways. Such roadway improvements contributed to the development of rural areas ripe for residential and industrial growth.⁶⁰

As in many cities, most residents in Little Rock continued to work and shop downtown, commuting from suburbs by automobile. This led to traffic congestion and parking issues in the city's core. The American Planning and Civic Association, composed of civic leaders and professional planners from across the country, held its annual conference in Little Rock in 1957, entitled "Main Street 1969," to study the future development of downtowns in small and medium-size cities. Two key issues were how best to refashion and maintain downtown shopping areas, and how to alleviate the traffic problem.⁶¹ For Little Rock city officials and business leaders one solution to the parking problem was to demolish older downtown buildings and sections of blocks to make way for surface parking and high-rise garages. The opening of a parking deck at Fourth and Louisiana streets in 1957 was celebrated with a sports-car parade.⁶² The

⁵⁶ Martin Wachs, Margaret Cranford, eds., *The Car and the City: The Automobile, The Built Environment and Daily Urban Life*, (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), 138.

⁵⁷ "Life with the Auto," *Sunset*, vol. 116 (June 1956), 75.

⁵⁸ Martin Wachs and Margaret Crawford, eds., *The Car and the City: The Automobile, the Built Environment, and Daily Urban Life* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 86.

⁵⁹ Hope, "Low, Light and Livable," 31.

⁶⁰ Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department, *Historical Review: Arkansas State Highway Commission and Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department, 1913-1992*, (Little Rock, AR: Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department, 1992), 54, 61, 64, 76, 86, 90; Ben Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999*, (Fayetteville, AR: The University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 95; Christie McLaren, "Arkansas Highway History and Architecture, 1910-1965," (Little Rock, AR: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 1999), 10-11.

⁶¹ "National Planners Open Little Rock Session Today," *Arkansas Gazette*, June 10, 1957; "Traffic-choked Main Street Outmoded, Cars Must Go, National Planners Told," *Arkansas Gazette*, June 11, 1957.

⁶² Hope, "Low, Light and Livable," 32.

opening of a second parking deck with drive-in facilities for Worthen Bank on Main Street, built later that same year, also made the news.⁶³

Despite the efforts of Little Rock's downtown merchants and businesses, the construction of shopping centers away from the city core gained momentum during mid-century, particularly in the western suburbs. Plans for the Village Shopping Center, at the intersection of the new U.S. 67-70 highway, were begun in 1955.⁶⁴ At the same intersection and less than a mile away from the burgeoning Broadmoor neighborhood, the 1956 Town and Country Shopping Center was touted as the "first integrated shopping center with all the stores under one roof."⁶⁵ Such venues held the promise of creating essentially self-sufficient towns.⁶⁶ By 1960 there were at least eleven shopping centers in the Little Rock area, with three more in the works.⁶⁷

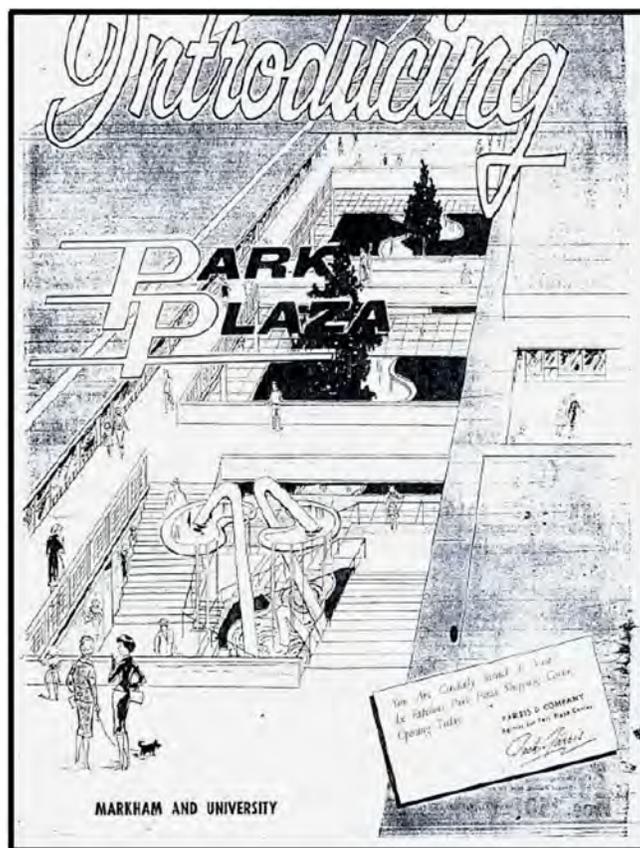


Figure 2: Advertisement for Park Plaza in the Arkansas Gazette, November 1, 1960.

⁶³ "A New Dimension in Downtown Parking: Newrock," *Arkansas Gazette*, June 2, 1957; "New Parking Deck For Little Rock Plans Office Space," *Arkansas Gazette*, July 14, 1957.

⁶⁴ "New Center at Geyer Springs Set," *Arkansas Democrat*, August 28, 1955; "New Shopping Center Planned," *Arkansas Democrat*, August 28, 1955.

⁶⁵ F. Hampton Roy, Sr., Charles Witsell, Jr., and Cheryl Griffith Nichols, *How We Lived: Little Rock as an American City*, (Little Rock, AR: August House, 1984), 215.

⁶⁶ "Hayes Street: A New Town Is Booming," *Arkansas Gazette*, September 14, 1958.

⁶⁷ "Shopping Centers: Suburbia's Gold Mines," *Arkansas Gazette*, November 27, 1960.

Developers like Elbert Fausett and Jack Bracy took full advantage of the improved and new roads to promote their new subdivisions, such as Broadmoor and Meadowcliff. They also recognized that the national trend of bringing goods to the people would translate to Little Rock and provide an added incentive to purchase suburban homes. To this end, Fausett created shopping venues close to his subdivisions, such as the EZ Center on Hayes Street near Broadmoor and the Park Plaza Shopping Center at West Markham and University Avenue.⁶⁸ Promotions of Meadowcliff and other neighborhoods continued to extol the ready access to downtown Little Rock, as well as to the host of new suburban shopping centers.⁶⁹ But it was obvious even in the 1950s that downtown could suffer as a consequence of the new developments. A 1958 article in the *Arkansas Gazette* pointed out the superiority and convenience of parking at the shopping centers in comparison to downtown, noting that the shopping centers will provide stiff competition for downtown stores. But the broader economic implications were still in question. The article quoted Thomas Burleigh, chief planner for the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission, as saying too much fringe development can sap the downtown, or compete with itself until it helps the downtown.⁷⁰

The 23-acre Park Plaza Shopping Center, which held its grand opening in December 1960, included a virtual village of stores, including a grocery, drugstore, clothing stores, florist, hardware store, laundry and dry cleaner, shoe store, laundromat, cafeteria, tire and auto-supply store, gas station, bowling alley, barbershop, and doughnut shop.⁷¹ The configuration of the center and its parking area represented a new wave in commercial architecture that separated shoppers from motorists. Its 1,870-slot parking lot was intended to eliminate the need to cross busy intersections, and required only short walks, less than a block, to go from car to center. To accommodate wet weather, there were also covered walkways. Access for delivery of goods was constructed below ground, removing the need for alleys and loading docks behind the stores.⁷² The shopping center thus allowed consumers to easily get to the center via automobile on a wide, paved thoroughfare, and conveniently park within a comfortable distance of a concentrated collection of stores.⁷³ As a 1960 *Arkansas Gazette* article noted, a potential customer on the hoof is worth many dozens behind the wheel.⁷⁴

Simultaneous with the rise of the suburbs, urban renewal projects were developed to address areas of blight within American cities. The Federal Housing Act of 1949 ostensibly addressed poor conditions of inner-city housing with the construction of new public housing buildings. Its application in Little Rock, though, reinforced racial divisions. Little Rock Housing Authority (LRHA) Director B. Finley Vinson openly stated that the

⁶⁸ Hope, "Low, Light and Livable," 33.

⁶⁹ "New Little Rock Subdivisions Provide Modern Background for Home Show," *Arkansas Democrat*, April 26, 1953.

⁷⁰ "Hayes Street: A New Town is Booming," *Arkansas Gazette*, September 14, 1958.

⁷¹ "Park Plaza Makes Formal Bow Today, with Beauty in a Shopping Center," *Arkansas Gazette*, December 1, 1960.

⁷² "Plaza Takes Sprawl Out of Center, Brings Togetherness," *Arkansas Gazette*, December 1, 1960.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

city and the LRHA systematically perpetuated segregation.⁷⁵ The first neighborhood targeted for demolition and clearance was a ten-block area of the historically African-American Dunbar neighborhood. Dunbar was within walking distance of the business district of Little Rock and was the location of many black churches and the black high school.⁷⁶ The Housing Authority razed more than 200 buildings, based on Health Department data showing that only one in four houses was substandard. The LRHA evicted residents and moved them to new public housing built at the edge of the city limits. The public housing development of Sunset Terrace built in 1950 was for whites on the west side of town while the Booker Homes for African Americans was on the far east side of the city. These projects, which removed residents from single-family dwellings and placed them in multi-family apartments were considered modern and progressive models of urban design. Yet, middle class families at the same time manifested the opposite pattern, disbanding multi-generation households and re-locating to suburbia in single-family dwellings with more space and amenities.

The suburban housing boom was greatly influenced by government agencies, such as the FHA and the Urban Land Institute, steering everything from the spatial layout of a tract development to house style and floor plan to loan requirements for a single family home. Subdivision developers became savvy marketers, selling the American dream of suburban family homes, often hundreds within a single subdivision. The FHA's influence in the suburbanization of American cities is evident in its requirements for home loans in new subdivisions. At a minimum, a new development in the post-war period was required to illustrate:

1. Location exhibiting a healthy and active demand for homes.
2. Location possessing a suitable site in terms of topography, soil condition, tree cover, and absence of hazards such as flood, fog, smoke, obnoxious odors, etc.
3. Accessibility by means of public transportation (streetcars and buses) and adequate highways to schools, employment, and shopping centers.
4. Installation of appropriate utilities and street improvements (meeting city or county specifications), and carefully related to needs of the development.
5. Compliance with city, county or regional plans and regulations, particularly local zoning and subdivision regulations to ensure that the neighborhood will become stable (and real estate values as well.)
6. Protection of values through "appropriate" deed restrictions (including setbacks, lot sizes, minimum costs of construction).
7. Guarantee of a sound financial set up, whereby subdividers were financially able to carry through their sales and development program, and where taxes and

⁷⁵ Kirk, John A., and Jess Porter. "The Roots of Little Rock's Segregated Neighborhoods," *Arkansas Times*, July 10, 2014, pp. 12-16. Online at <http://www.arktimes.com/arkansas/the-roots-of-little-rock-s-segregated-neighborhoods/Content?oid=3383298> (accessed August 30, 2017).

⁷⁶ John A. Kirk, "Urban Renewal," at the Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture website at <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net> accessed June 27, 2017.

assessments were in line with the type of development contemplated and likely to remain stable.⁷⁷

Public and private housing construction practices created clearly defined neighborhoods in Little Rock divided by race, with white, affluent suburbs to the west and north of the city and black neighborhoods to the east and south. A notable exception was University Park, where middle-class African Americans were able to purchase homes in western Little Rock. For the most part, Little Rock neighborhoods were so separated by racial lines that forced integration of public schools by law had little effect without cross-city busing. Additionally, infrastructure planning influenced the development of outlying tracts, intensifying the city's demographic patterns.

The movement of whites out of the central city to the suburbs was accelerated by the city's prominent role in desegregating the public schools. In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation in public education was a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Little Rock received news of the decision at a time when the baby boom was adding 1,000 new students to city schools every year. District officials decided to begin token desegregation in the fall of 1957 at Central High School.⁷⁸

Meanwhile, across the South, white resistance to desegregation grew. Nineteen U.S. senators and eighty-one congressmen, including all congressional members from Arkansas, signed the "Southern Manifesto" denouncing the U.S. Supreme Court's decision and urging Southern states to resist it. In fall of 1957 the conflict reached crisis proportions, and Arkansas's governor called out units of the Arkansas National Guard. On September 4, 1957, nine African-American students attempted to enter Central High School. Several of them made their way to one corner of the campus where the National Guard turned them away. As the conflict became more violent, the city asked the federal government for assistance and army troops were sent in, and the African-American students went to class under guard of federal troops. By then, the Central High Crisis had come to symbolize massive resistance to social change and the federal government's commitment to enforcing African-American civil rights.⁷⁹

Both the Dunbar neighborhood and Central High School have been recognized for the roles they played in Little Rock's African-American history. Little Rock Central High School is now a National Historic Landmark, designated in 1998. The Paul Laurence Dunbar School Neighborhood Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2013.

⁷⁷ Linda Flint McClelland, David L. Ames, Sarah Dillard Pope, "Historic Residential Suburbs in the United States, 1830-1960" National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (Washington, D. C. : National Park Service, 2002), E-22.

⁷⁸ C. Fred Williams, *Historic Little Rock: An Illustrated History* (San Antonio: Historical Publishing Network, 2008), 73-74.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 79-81.

In the 1960s, as more people of means abandoned the gritty and increasingly gridlocked urban core, Little Rock became a city of three dominant regions. The east side was predominately African American, the southwest was blue-collar white, and the northwest was essentially upper-middle-class white. City government, public services and the school system were all organized to reflect this arrangement and its attendant tensions. The decade of the 1960s continued to witness the continued expansion of Little Rock's suburbs and between 1960 and 1969 an additional 15,430 housing units were either built or annexed into the city by 1970. At the same time, urban renewal programs continued to result in the demolition of historically African-American neighborhoods, as well as many of Little Rock's downtown commercial structures, replacing them with parking lots and high-rise buildings. The character and appearance of downtown changed rapidly. Twenty-story buildings transformed the downtown area from a predominately retail center to a district dominated by office space. Thousands of commuters retreated to the suburbs at the end of each business day.

Little Rock's post-World War II history of Sun Belt suburbanization and economic growth is similar to many cities across the country. Factors including the availability of inexpensive land, state and federal policies which encouraged housing construction, improved highways and transportation, technological improvements such as air conditioning, and changes in demographics all led to a wave of suburban development in most American cities and in particular those in the South. The majority of Little Rock's suburbs which developed from 1945-1970 are now fifty years old or older and constitute an important historical and architectural legacy of the city.

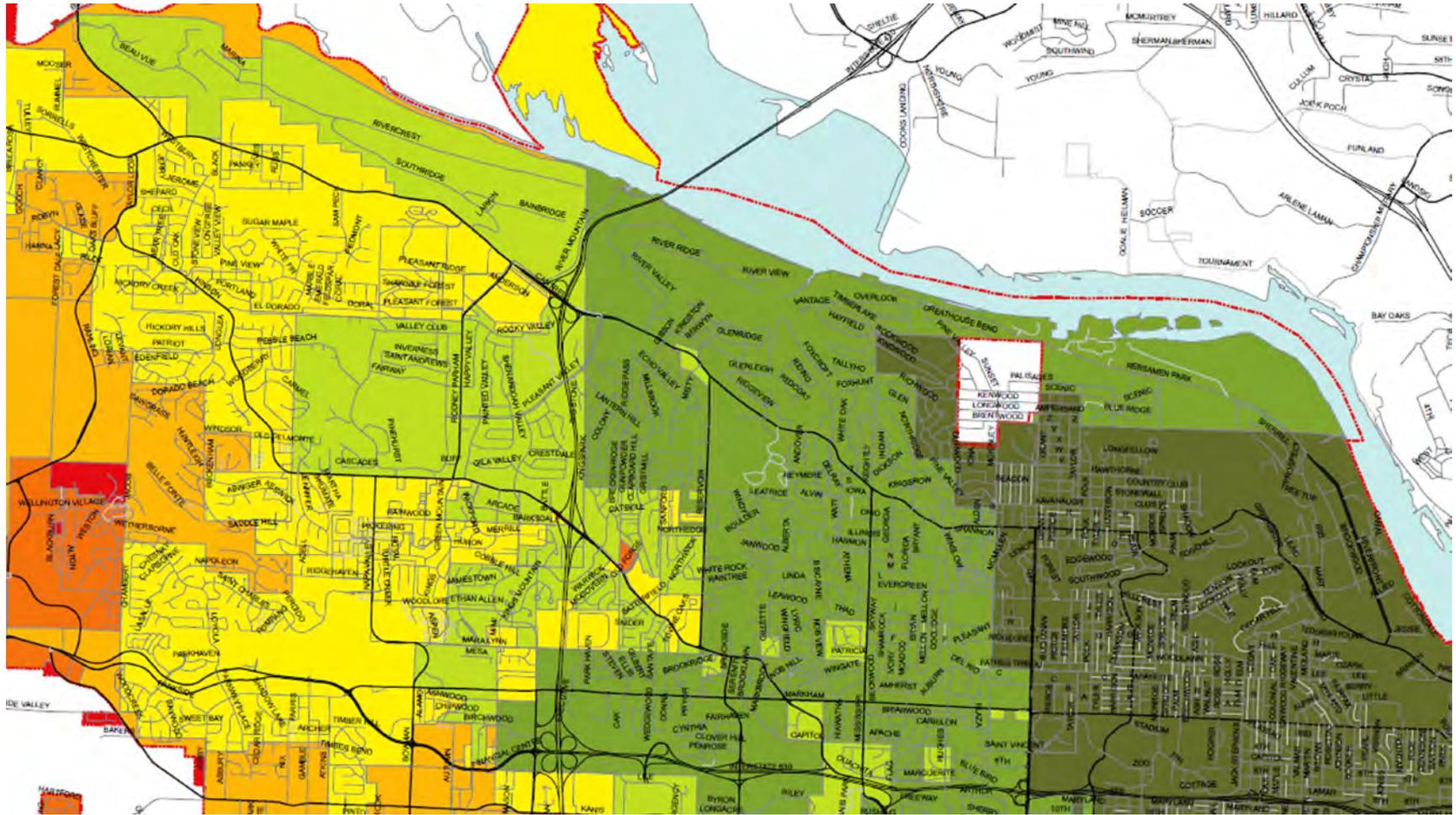


Figure 3: The medium and dark green shaded areas were annexed into the northwest section of the city before 1970.

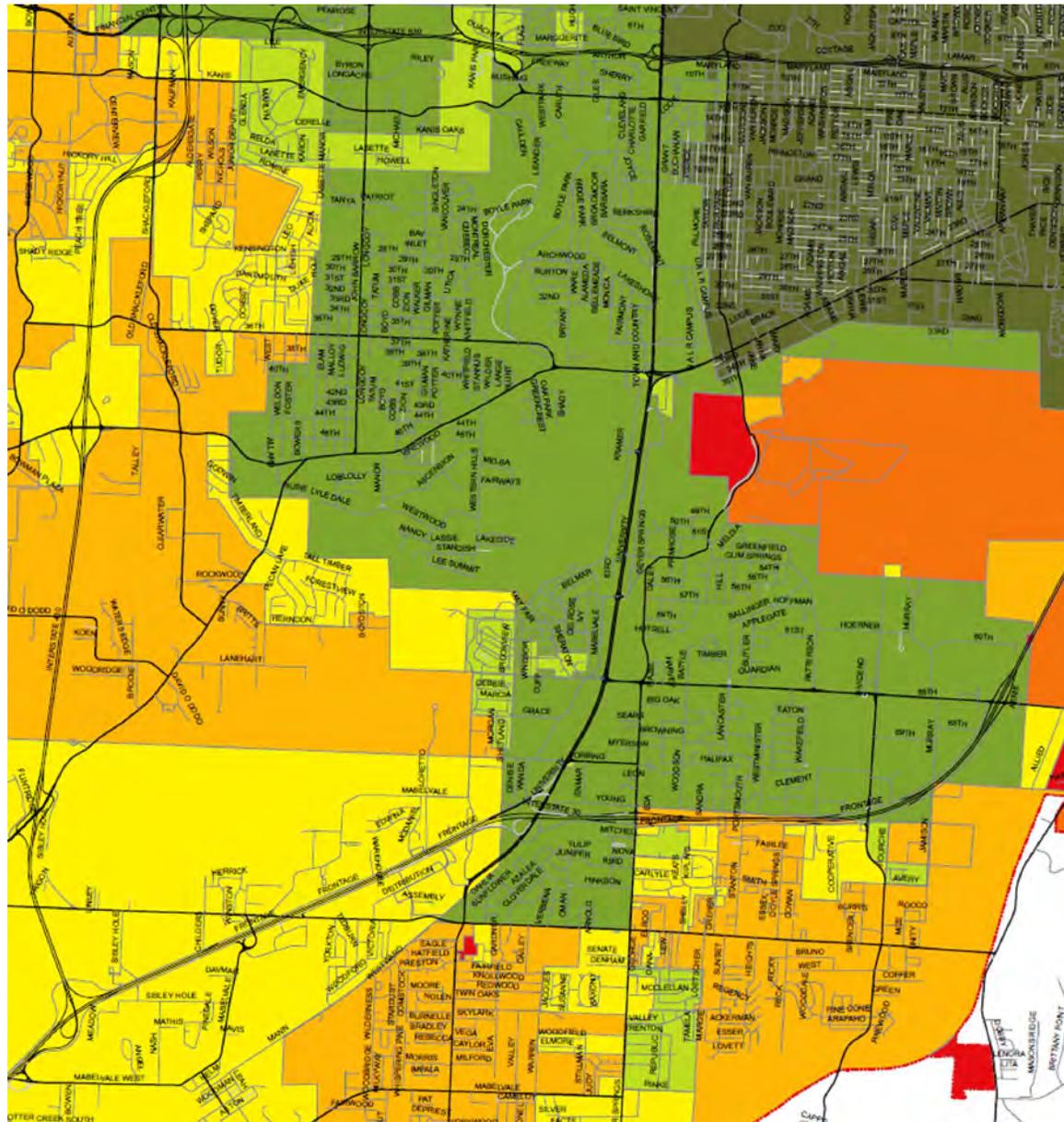


Figure 4: The medium and dark green shaded areas were annexed into the southwest section of the city before 1970.