

A Home for the Liberal Ideal

Brown University Housing Policy & the East Side of Providence 1937 – 1997



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I have read and understood Brown University's *Academic Code* and pledge that this thesis fully respects the principles of academic integrity defined in the code, including that the research conducted for it was carried out in accordance with the rules defined by the University's Institutional Review Board for research involving human subjects.

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Date: 12 May 2020

I agree that my thesis can be made available to both the Brown Community and the general public for didactic and research purposes.

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Abstract

A few short decades ago, working class communities, communities of color, and immigrant communities thrived in neighborhoods abutting Brown University's campus on the East Side of Providence, Rhode Island. These neighborhoods offered some of the city's most affordable rents. Today, the East Side is an enclave of wealth and whiteness in an otherwise predominantly low-income and non-white city. This Public Policy honors thesis examines the historic role that Brown University played in disrupting these affordable housing opportunities and in displacing and disintegrating these communities between 1937 and 1997. It documents this role through archival work, spatial representation, and interviews with key stakeholders. Ultimately, this thesis imagines a framework through which Brown and its university community members can address this historic impact and, in moving forward, become a leading player in addressing Providence's contemporary housing crisis.

*Cover Image: Photograph taken from the intersection of Brook and John Streets, at the southernmost edge of Brown's campus looking southward down Brook Street and towards Fox Point, September 1971.
(Taken from Malcolm Stevens papers, box 11)*

For Mom:

“Of all things love is the most potent.” —Maria Montessori

Acknowledgements

Friends of the HOPE community: This effort was born out of our work, our uncertainties, and above all else, our shared belief in the collective capacity of young folks to effect positive change in the lives of our neighbors. May this document assist in advocacy efforts of years to come. A special thanks to Jac and Oscar, who have both served as dear friends and mentors in my HOPE journey.

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my best to “stay in my lane” in writing this thesis. I sincerely hope that it has made a meaningful contribution and can serve as a tool in future efforts of university accountability.

My data entry friends: I am so very appreciative of the time, energy, and effort that you devoted to this thesis. The maps featured herein would not have been possible without the hundreds of hours of data entry collectively volunteered by the following friends: Amelia Anthony, Toby Arment, Roxanne Barnes, Kai Barshack, Abby Barton, Leslie Benavides, Yael Braverman, Aubrey Calaway, Wylie De Groff, Athena Feng, Melissa Lee, Lucas Fried, Maya Glicksman, John Graves, Hilary Ho, Noah Hoffman, Tova Ibbotson, Deb Marini, Sarah Martinez, Evelyn McKenney, Michael Mills, Julia Ostrowski, Jack Ostrovsky, Avi Shapiro, Jourdan Smithwick, Daniel Stassen, Caitlin Takeda, Thea Talamhan, Melina Tidwell Tores, and Sunil Tohan. I can only assume that my chili-making skills are superb—or that my time at Brown has been graced by superb friends. A special thanks to Aubrey and Hilary: I am grateful to have shared this thesis journey with each of you. Sunil: You have lifted my soul more than once this year.

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Mom and Dad, my first teachers: “From the time you were very little,” our most cherished neighbor Fred Rogers reminds me, “you've had people who have smiled you into smiling, people who have talked you into talking, sung you into singing, loved you into loving. They've always cared about you beyond measure and have encouraged you to be true to the best within you.” Thank you for loving me into loving. Thank you for caring for me beyond measure. How fortunate and proud I am to be your son.

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Forward: Until Brown Pushed Us Out

On a brisk, Providence, Rhode Island winter night, I sat with Larry on a covered bench in Kennedy Plaza, the city's main public transportation hub. As Larry and I talked, I became more and more aware of the night's bitter cold: my toes started to tingle, and my hands, pressed again the metallic bench, started to go numb. From my vantage point in Kennedy Plaza, I could see in the near distance the warm lights of Providence's East Side—the home to my university, Brown University. With a quick, ten-minute walk east, over the Providence River and up College Hill, I could be back on campus and in my dormitory. As Larry spoke again, I refocused my attention. Allowing my mind to wander to thoughts of my warm bed was inappropriate, I reminded myself, for like thousands of Rhode Islanders that night, Larry would not be returning home to a warm bed of his own. Instead, he would sleep outside, seeking refuge from the elements in a sleeping bag, under a pavilion near the river.

That night, I sat with Larry in my capacity as a nighttime outreach worker with Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere, or HOPE, the student-run homelessness direct service and advocacy organization at Brown. For more than fifteen years, HOPE undergraduates have fought to end homelessness in Rhode Island through partnership with many of the state's homelessness service providers, political activists, and individuals with lived experience. Through HOPE's political advocacy work, students strive to elevate the issues of housing and homelessness in Rhode Island while supporting the passage of legislation to expand the state's affordable housing opportunities. Through the organization's direct service work, students seek to make life on the streets ever-so-slightly more bearable for people experiencing homelessness—distributing things like hats and gloves, granola bars, and bus tickets. However, our true goal is something bigger,

something infinitely more challenging to achieve: to walk alongside our unhoused neighbors in solidarity as they seek stable, affordable homes.

In HOPE, we often talk about what it means to have a home. Homes are places where we nourish our bodies, our minds, and our souls; they are places we share with those we love most in this world; they are places where we are free to be our truest self. Our homes are the foundations upon which we build the rest of our lives. In Kennedy Plaza that night, Larry shared with me the many places he had called home, but the East Side was his first. He was born there, he said, pointing up College Hill, in the direction of my campus. Larry had lived amongst members of the Brown community, he said, “until they expanded and pushed us out.” HOPE’s mission Larry continued, was well and good. But how, he wondered aloud, did HOPE, as a collection of Brown undergraduates, reckon with the tremendous burden that students like us put on the Providence housing market? What did we think of the significant role that our university played in displacing the working-class communities that had once existed at the edges of Brown’s campus? How, Larry asked, could we as Brown community members ever truly be a part of the solution to Providence’s housing crisis when we were also a part of the problem?

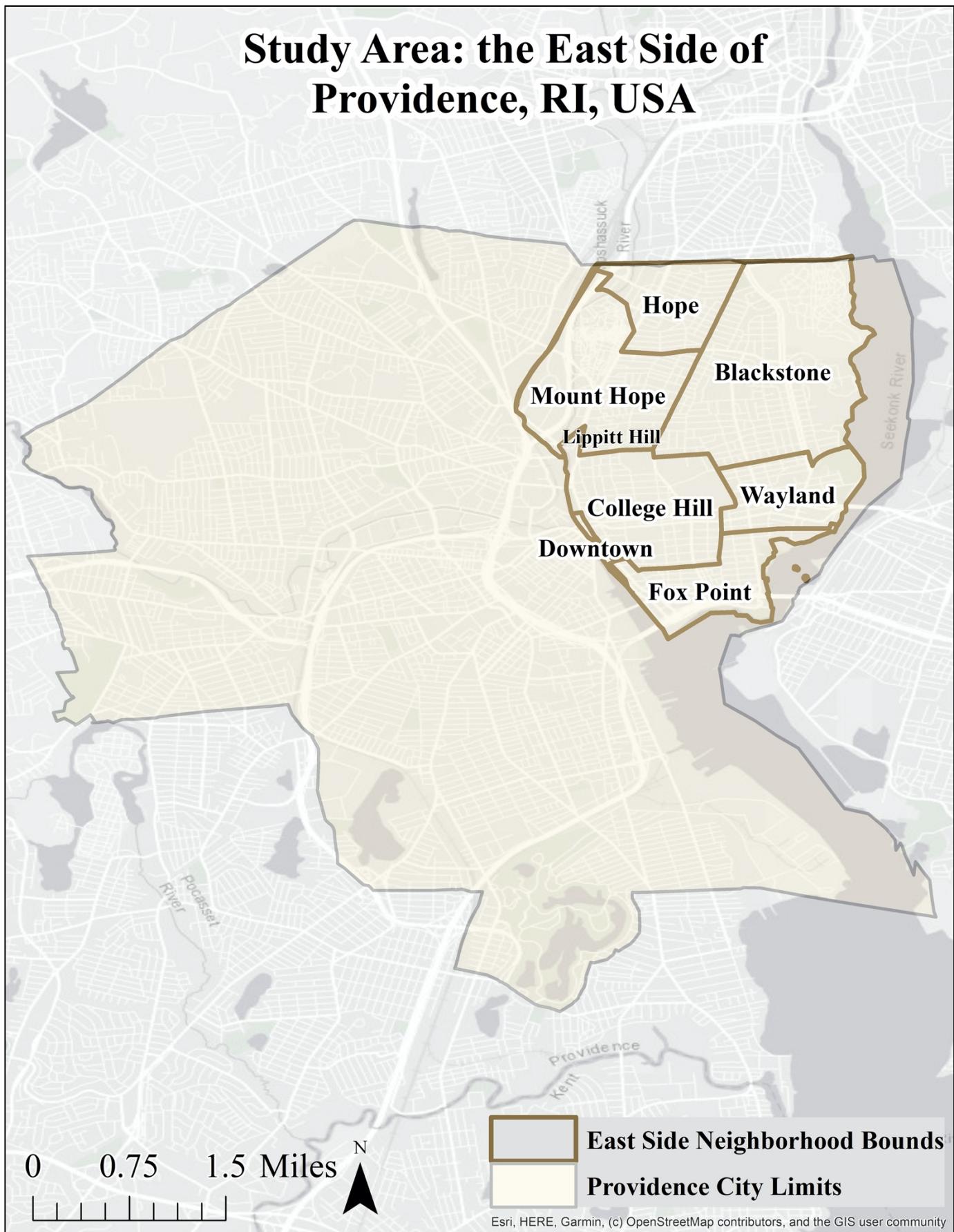
Upon my arrival to Providence as a Brown first-year in 2016, I assumed—like the great majority of my peers—that the East Side had always been an enclave of wealth and whiteness in an otherwise predominantly low-income, non-white city. The East Side is adorned with streets that project power and privilege—streets like Benefit Street, home to the city’s impressive collection of colonial-era mansions, and Wickenden Street, a hip retail strip brimming with trendy coffee shops and boutiques. Indeed, contemporary demographic and housing data seemed to support my presumption. In 2018, the East Side’s median household income, \$64,447, was

more than double that of the rest of the city.¹ Meanwhile, the East Side's median single-family home price, at \$570,000, was more than triple that of the rest of the city. I struggled to imagine how Brown's campus—with its stately mélange of Georgian and Federalist buildings, many dating back to the nation's founding—could have ever been surrounded by anything but communities of power and privilege. And yet, Larry said otherwise, and as this thesis will demonstrate, he was correct.

A few short decades ago, working-class communities, immigrant communities, and communities of color abutted Brown's East Side campus. These communities offered some of Providence's most affordable housing opportunities, opportunities that served people of modest means like Larry's family. Within East Side neighborhoods to Brown's north and south, these communities laid down their roots, providing inclusive safety nets and springboards for newly-arrived émigrés, racial and ethnic minorities, and low-income Rhode Islanders. However, in the second half of the twentieth century, a complex array of forces—including historic preservation and urban renewal—collided to uproot and displace many of those communities from the East Side. But, as Larry suggested on that brisk night of outreach, there was a third force: Brown University expansion. This thesis is the story of that force.

¹ HousingWorks RI. "2018 Housing Fact Book." HousingWorks RI at Roger William University, October 2018.

Study Area: the East Side of Providence, RI, USA



Introduction: Towards a Clear Historical Record

This thesis has evolved considerably since its early days of conceptualization. I began this journey with the goal of offering Brown University a collection of recommendations that it could employ to help ameliorate Providence's contemporary affordable housing crisis. Today, two-thirds of Providence's renting households are costs-burdened, spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing.² The most extreme effects of this crisis are shouldered by the nearly 5,000 Rhode Islanders who experiencing homelessness today.³ As a Brown undergraduate engaged in housing advocacy work, I sought to imagine ways that my institution could meaningfully contribute to efforts to address this crisis. I therefore believed that the construction of a list of recommendations for university leaders to engage in housing work would be the purpose of this thesis.

For my recommendations to be received seriously by university leaders, I recognized the necessity of first articulating *why* Brown University should contribute to affordable housing efforts in Providence. Arguments calling for university contribution as an act of charity, I believed, would inevitably fall flat. Engagement in housing work by the university would only occur, I sensed, if Brown's supposed obligation to act was justified with evidence of its contribution to the city's housing challenges. As such, I began this thesis by seeking to first answer the question, "Has Brown University contributed to the creation of housing instability in Providence?"

In trying to address this query, I stumbled into a web of East Side history that, for several

² HousingWorks RI. "2018 Housing Fact Book." HousingWorks RI at Roger William University, October 2018.

³ "State of Homelessness." *Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless*, 2020.

reasons, offered no succinct answers to this profound question. Firstly, the story that emerged from this inquiry was exceedingly complex. The story that I discovered was not one of heroes and villains. Indeed, as we shall see in these chapters, Brown University leaders *did* carry out tremendous harm upon the vulnerable communities that surrounded the institution’s campus. However, their motives were not, with occasional exception, explicitly malicious. Rather, more frequently, in pursuing an honorable mission—the advancement of liberal education at Brown—these university leaders appeared blinded by a tragic hubris, a belief that the good of the university negated the discomfort Brown might impose upon its neighbors. As we shall see, evaluating this hubris and its impact is nuanced work.

Understanding Brown’s contribution to the production of housing instability is challenging for another reason. As these chapters underscore, it is difficult to isolate the individual effects of the university’s actions. In the second half of the twentieth century, a host of interwoven factors placed a great deal of pressure on East Side neighborhoods. It is, therefore, important to evaluate the university’s action within this greater web of neighborhood, cultural, and economic shifts.

Finally, there is a serious scarcity of scholarship that critically evaluates the history of Brown University. The most readily available histories of Brown are official histories commissioned by Brown leaders—like Ted Widmer’s *Brown: The History of an Idea* and Janet Phillips’s *Brown University: A Short History*—both of which present a predominantly celebratory version of the university’s past. There is even less critical scholarship regarding Brown’s relationship with its host city of Providence, a concerning reality considering that Brown has been one of the city’s preeminent social and economic forces, since the university’s move to Providence in 1770. Because of these realities, interrogating Brown’s role in the East Side’s housing ecosystem required a great deal of time-intensive archival research.

Articulating Brown's role in the production of housing instability in Providence, I therefore realized, would be no easy effort. Answering this query would not serve as a simple preamble to my collection of policy recommendations. It would instead be the core purpose of this thesis.

Chapter Overview

In the six decades examined by this thesis—spanning 1937 to 1997—Brown University, the City of Providence, and the United States more generally each underwent dramatic restructuring. This thesis seeks to engage critically with changes occurring at each of these levels. It strives to understand how these university, city, and national transformations interacted and impacted one another. Time and again, throughout the history herein chronicled, on-campus university decision-making was shown to have severe impacts for Brown neighbors, just as Brown leaders were consistently compelled to navigate forces of change originating beyond their campus's bounds. Therefore, in interrogating Brown University's *external* impact upon the housing opportunities of its surrounding community, we often find ourselves examining the *internal* transformations in Brown's student housing and land use policies.

In Chapter 1, our story begins with the 1937 selection of Henry Merritt Wriston as Brown University President. Perhaps more than any university president before or since his time, Henry Wriston left a dominant mark on Brown. Wriston led Brown's evolution from a regional school, principally known as a training ground for Baptist clergy, to a nationally-recognized leader in liberal education. In no capacity was his mark upon the university more impactful than in the realm of student housing. Wriston believed that dormitories were centrally important sites of liberal learning. In a time of rising authoritarianism across the globe, he argued that communal living at a university offered space for the free exchange of ideas and the development of

gentlemanly decorum. Wriston believed that by attaining a truly residential college—wherein all students lived in on-campus, university accommodations—Brown could uniquely advance liberal education at the university and produce generations of free-thinking leaders ready to advance democracy in the United States and throughout the world. In pursuit of this residential college, Wriston would initiate at Brown one of the most ambitious programs of university residential construction that the nation had ever seen, building a massive residential quadrangle that bears his name today. Wriston’s aspirations for a residential college and his deep belief in the educational value of the collegiate residential experience would loom over his successors for decades to come.

In Chapter 2, we follow President Barnaby Keeney as he assumes the university’s helm—and Wriston’s dreams—in 1955. Keeney would share his predecessor’s faith in the residential college and would bequeath the university community with a quadrangle of his own. However, unlike Wriston before him, Keeney’s residential construction—and the destruction of historic East Side homes it necessitated—would trigger deep-seated protest from the city’s “first families” and spawn the creation of the Providence Preservation Society (PPS). The PPS and the massive East Side Urban Renewal Project for which it would advocate would upend many of the East Side’s neighborhoods. The “revitalization” carried out by the PPS and the East Side Urban Renewal Project was imbued with inequity, prescribing the preservation of homes at the region’s core while calling for widespread clearance for the neighborhoods at the region’s periphery—those areas predominantly occupied by the East Side’s working class. As we shall see, while Brown did not engage in urban renewal activities as explicit as those efforts of many of its peer institutions in the era, Brown did nonetheless actively participate in—and profit enormously from—the concerted transformation of its surroundings, a transformation that actively sought to

engender a more expensive—and by definition, less socioeconomically inclusive—East Side.

In Chapter 3, we return our focus to on-campus transformations. With remarkable speed, Wriston’s aspirations for a truly residential college at Brown were questioned, challenged, and abandoned. In its stead, Brown students, faculty, and administrators increasingly called for a housing system that stressed individuality and choice for its students. In adopting this system of choice, first under the leadership of Ray Heffner—president from 1966 to 1969—Brown permitted increasingly large numbers of students to move off-campus entirely. Quickly, the influx of Brown students into the working-class neighborhoods that surrounded the university imposed tremendous pressure upon those neighborhoods’ most vulnerable members. For a brief moment, beginning in 1969 under the leadership of Acting President Merton Stoltz, student advocacy compelled the university to account for the neighborhood burden its shift in student housing policy was causing. However, with the selection of Donald Hornig as university president in 1970, that moment quickly passed. Under Hornig, as the university focused its attention on a ballooning budget deficit, Brown would again turn a blind eye to the impact of its growing dependence upon off-campus living.

In Chapter 4, we see leaders of Providence in the 1980s began to tighten their chain on the university through the proposed adoption of institutional zoning. Under President Howard Swearer—inaugurated in 1977—Brown read the writing on the wall and began a major process of East Side property consolidation and relinquishment. While celebrated at City Hall, the university’s release of under-used, peripheral properties sent shockwaves through the university’s surrounding neighborhoods. Meanwhile, the university’s continued failure to construct sufficient on-campus housing for its growing student body would cement its dependence on off-campus housing. By the time Swearer’s successor Vartan Gregorian would retire from his post in 1997,

the neighborhoods surrounding Brown were nearly unrecognizable from their character of only a few decades earlier.

This thesis concludes with an examination of the dominant threads that persist through to the present day, while engaging with December 2018 and February 2020 university announcements for the construction of three new dormitory halls. Finally, while offering specific policy recommendations to address the legacies of community displacement and dissolution herein chronicled is beyond the scope of this thesis, the final chapter does reflect broadly on the principles upon which the amelioration of these legacies of harm could occur.

Methodological Note

This thesis has relied upon a collection of qualitative research methods. The core of the research has been archival in nature, utilizing the resources of the Brown University Archives, located in the John Hay Library's Special Collections. In constructing the following narrative, I drew upon twenty of the Archives' collections. These included the Brown University Presidential Papers spanning 1937 to 2000, from President Wriston to President Gordon E. Gee. In addition to the presidential papers, I examine the collections of a number of Brown administrators, primarily the papers of administrators whose work at Brown concerned residential housing, government and community relations, and the maintenance of the university's physical plant. These additional collections were selected through consultation with the Special Collections staff. I also examined collections of prominent Brown University Corporation members like those of John Nicholas Brown II and collections related to university committees devoted to housing.

Throughout my research, I also conducted a number of interviews with key informants.

Between February and April 2020, I conducted seven formal interviews with contemporary university leaders: President Christina H. Paxson; Provost Richard M. Locke;⁴ Executive Vice President for Planning and Policy Russell Carey; Vice President for Campus Life Eric Estes; Associate Vice President for Campus Life Koren Bakkegard; Assistant Vice President for Government & Community Relations Al Dahlberg; and former Swearer Center for Public Service Executive Director Mathew Johnson. Additionally, I interviewed the current Executive Director of the Providence Preservation Society Brent Runyon. I also conducted formal interviews with two leaders of the University of Pennsylvania, both of whom are respected leaders in the fields of community engagement and university-community affairs: Associate Vice President and Founding Director of the Barbara and Edward Netter Center for Community Partnerships Ira Harkavy and Assistant Vice President Tony Sorrentino. Finally, I interviewed Andy Eisenberg, Brown Class of 1971 and a founding member of the Ad Hoc Committee on Housing & University Expansion.

Insights regarding the dormitories announced in February 2020 were attained through personal attendance at three separate meetings: The first was a March 2, 2020 in-person meeting between university representatives and university neighbors. The second was a March 4, 2020 in-person meeting between Brown undergraduates and Noah Biklen, Partner at Deborah Berke Partners, the architecture firm designing the dormitories. The third was a March 17, 2020 virtual meeting between Biklen, university representatives, and university neighbors.

This thesis features a series of maps representing off-campus student distributions through the decades. The off-campus student distribution maps draw upon information found in the Brown University student and staff directories—for the years 1942, 1949, 1960, 1970, 1980,

⁴ Due to university's closing due to the COVID-19 outbreak, this interview was conducted via email correspondence.

1990, and 2000—located in the university’s Special Collections.⁵ To present these off-campus distributions in map form, the first step involved the digitization of these records. Each year’s directories offered a wide variety of information, including student semester, home address, and campus box numbers. I was only concerned with off-campus addresses within Providence city bounds and therefore only extracted Providence-based, off-campus addresses from the records for both undergraduate and graduate students.⁶

Because Optical Character Recognition technology in Adobe Acrobat and Abbyy Fine Reader software failed to accurately and efficiently transform scans of these records into electronic spreadsheets that could be mapped using spatial analysis software, digitization was done by hand. Thus, members of HOPE and friends of the author manually inputted thousands of student off-campus addresses, turning these records into Microsoft Excel spreadsheet form. Once digitization was complete, the information was plotted using ArcMap software. In each map, each “X” or cross represents one singular student. Some of these maps are featured throughout the following chapters. These maps are presented in sum in Appendices A and B.

This thesis also features a collection of maps created by the author that display demographic and housing data between 1950 and 1970. These maps present information from the 1950, 1960, and 1970 Censuses of Housing and Population. Like the off-campus student distribution maps, the censuses’ data was digitized by hand by HOPE members and friends of the author. The maps, which display percent non-white⁷ and average rent on a block-level in the East Side neighborhoods, were also constructed using ArcMap software. Some of these maps are

⁵ I sought to use the first year of each decade to provide a snapshot of off-campus student distribution through the years. The irregularities in this selection scheme (1942 and 1949) were the result of missing directories. The student directories of 1940 and 1950 were not available in the Special Collections.

⁶ Graduate student information was only recorded in the directories beginning with the year 1970.

⁷ In 1970, percent “negro” was recorded instead of percent non-white.

featured throughout the thesis. They are also presented in sum in Appendices C and D.

This thesis was significantly impacted by the university's March 2020 closure due to the global outbreak of COVID-19. It was my original aspiration to carry this thesis's research from the 1937 selection of Henry Wriston to the present day. This aspiration was waylaid by the university's closure of key resources like the Special Collections. Thanks to the Special Collections' gracious staff who scanned certain materials., I was able to examine some—but not all—desired materials from the collections of Acting President Sheila E. Blumstein and President Gordon E. Gee, the two university leaders who succeeded President Vartan Gregorian. I was, however, unable to examine those of President Ruth J. Simmons or Christina H. Paxson, Brown presidents between 2001 and 2020. Due to the resulting scarcity of materials covering the past two decades of university history, I ultimately decided to forgo the planned chapter that would evaluate this time period. It is my hope that one day I may be able to return to such a chapter.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the many ways in which I personally relate to the histories chronicled in this thesis. First, as previous sections have suggested, I consider myself a housing advocate. I believe deeply in the human right to housing. I believe that actions that force individuals and communities from their homes are a great affront to that right. Second, as a soon-to-be-alumnus of Brown University, I recognize the tremendous benefit and privilege I have derived and will continue to derive from my membership in this academic community. I do not take this privilege lightly, and in writing this thesis, I have strived to offer a critical analysis of my university's history while also recognizing the great things that the Brown community has and will continue to do for Providence, Rhode Island, the nation, and the world.

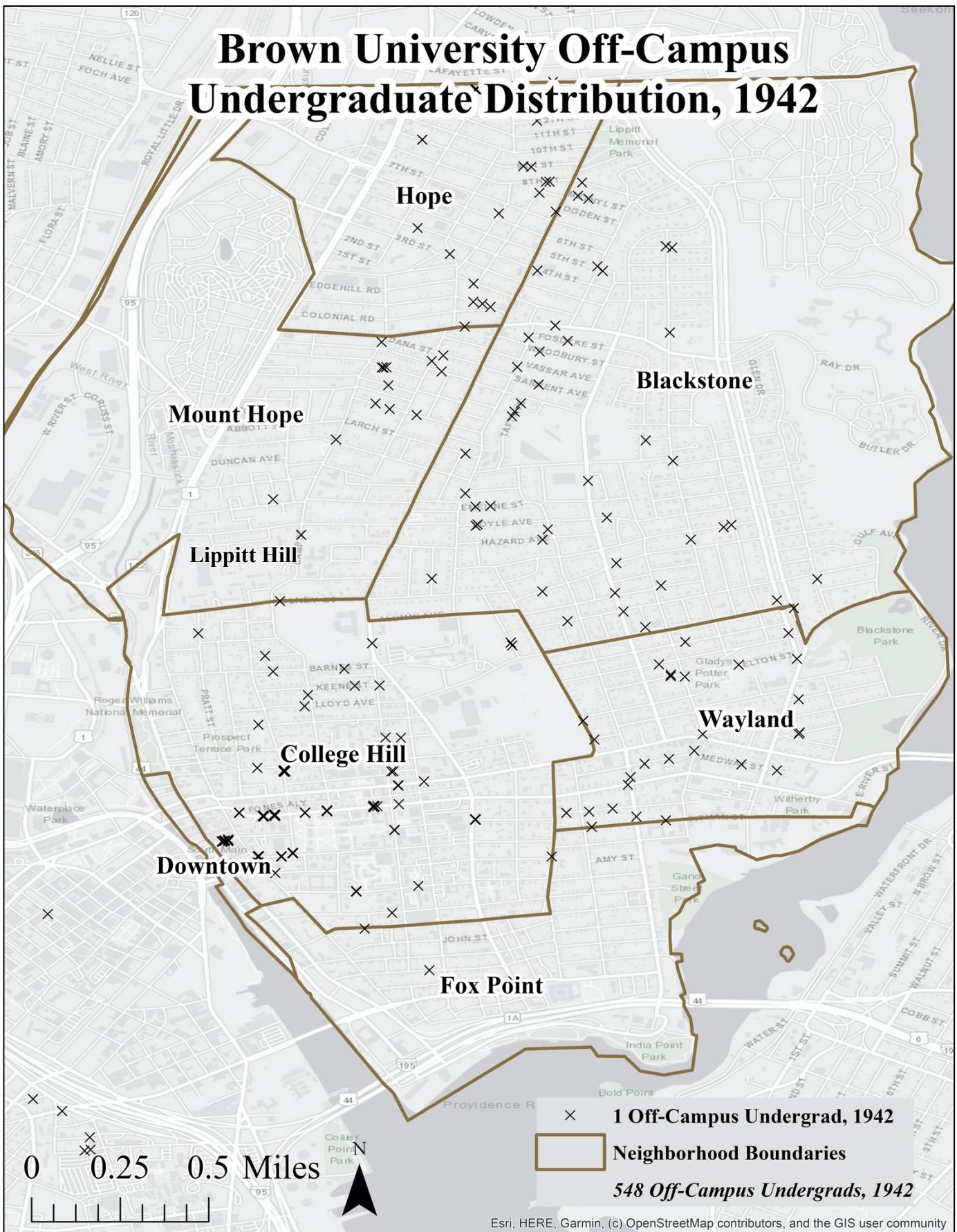
I am not exempt from implication in the challenging histories of displacement and neighborhood transformation I chronicle. Since January 2019, I have lived in an off-campus

apartment in Fox Point, the formerly working-class neighborhood that was perhaps most threatened by the presence of its northerly neighbor, Brown University. In fact, my apartment is located directly between two of Fox Point's last reminders of the neighborhood that was. To my apartment's immediate east, sits Friend's Market, a Portuguese-American grocery that has been operated by Manny and Maria Pedroso for more than half a century. To my west, sits the Sheldon Street Church, a stronghold of the neighborhood's Cape Verdean community and the headquarters of the Fox Point Community Organization, a leader in opposing Brown's glacial spread south into Fox Point. While my apartment has been occupied by Brown undergraduates for the past 20 years, over the course of writing this thesis, I have often thought, with great discomfort, of the families who may have occupied my apartment before those students moved in. It is my hope that this thesis will lean into this discomfort and help university affiliates like myself process the great burden that comes with living in the beautiful neighborhoods of the East Side, neighborhoods imbued with rich history and complexity.

In 2007, authors of *Slavery and Justice*—the trailblazing report commissioned by President Simmons to investigate Brown's profound relationship with the transatlantic slave trade—observed the important role that the documentation of history plays in efforts of institutional accountability: “Whether justice is pursued through prosecution, the tendering of formal apologies, the offering of material reparations, or some combination of all three, the first task is to create a clear historical record of events and to inscribe that record in the collective memory of the relevant institution or nation.”⁸ It is my hope that this thesis will contribute to a more clear historical record of Brown's role in the production of housing instability in Providence through its contribution to community displacement on the city's East Side. But above all else, I hope that

⁸ Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice. *Slavery and Justice*. Brown University, 2007.

this thesis will inform a more just path forward and assist future generations of Brown University as they imagine more compassionate university housing and land policies.



Chapter 1: An Enlightened Program of Physical Expansion:

The Wriston Years, 1937-1955

In 1936, when illness forced Brown University President Clarence Barbour to take a permanent leave of absence, the Brown Corporation was granted an opportunity to reinvigorate its institution with the leadership of a new president. Brown University of the mid-1930s was in dire need of reinvigoration on most all fronts. According to Thomas Watson, Jr., Brown Class of 1937 and eventual Ambassador to the Soviet Union under Jimmy Carter, the effects of the Great Depression on the university were “obvious.” “The campus looked rundown and a good number of students seemed undernourished,” remembered Watson.⁹ The university was by and large a regional school, principally serving Rhode Island residents, many of whom commuted to the university from nearby Pawtucket, unable to afford to live on or near campus. The university’s snobbish elites derisively referred to such students as “carpetbaggers.”

According to many accounts, the Brown student body was plagued by “anemic diversity and pervasive sexism.” “Fritz” Pollard, an African American, All-American halfback on Brown’s football squad, recalled that in his first days at Brown, the school’s athletic department refused to award him a jersey: “Maybe they thought my color would stain the uniform,” Pollard suggested.¹⁰ Meanwhile, female students at the separate and distinct women’s college, Pembroke College, existed as a sort of “second-class citizen” at Brown.¹¹ They had both separate instructors and student organizations and lived in segregated residential accommodations away from the campus’s core.

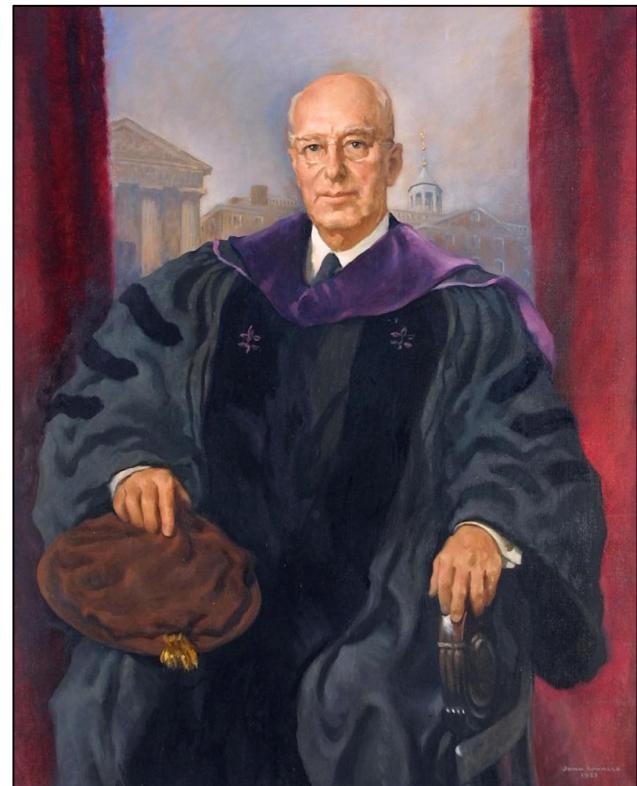
⁹ Widmer, Ted. *Brown: the History of an Idea*. Thames & Hudson, 2015, pp. 177.

¹⁰ Widmer 149.

¹¹ Mitchell, Martha. “Pembroke College.” *Encyclopedia Brunoniana*, 1993.

In selecting Henry Merritt Wriston to succeed Barbour, the Brown Corporation boldly diverted from the university's past. Wriston, born in the Wyoming Territory and the former president of the Appleton, Wisconsin-based Lawrence College, was in many respects about as different a selection for president as could be imagined by early twentieth century Brown.¹² Wriston would be the first Brown president since 1855 to not be a graduate himself of the university and the first ever to not be an ordained Baptist minister.¹³ As Brown University historian Janet M. Phillips notes, Wriston's selection "marked the end of 173 years of sectarian leadership of an increasingly secular university."¹⁴

While Brown had always considered itself at the forefront of higher education, the Corporation recognized that the times had changed and that Brown required a president with an orientation towards the future. Wriston was a risk-taker, warned William S. Learned as he recommended Wriston's presidency to the Brown Corporation, the governing body of the university.¹⁵ "He would undoubtedly provide a series of shocks to the old college," said Learned. "But I believe it would survive and profit enormously." Learned's prophecy would hold true.



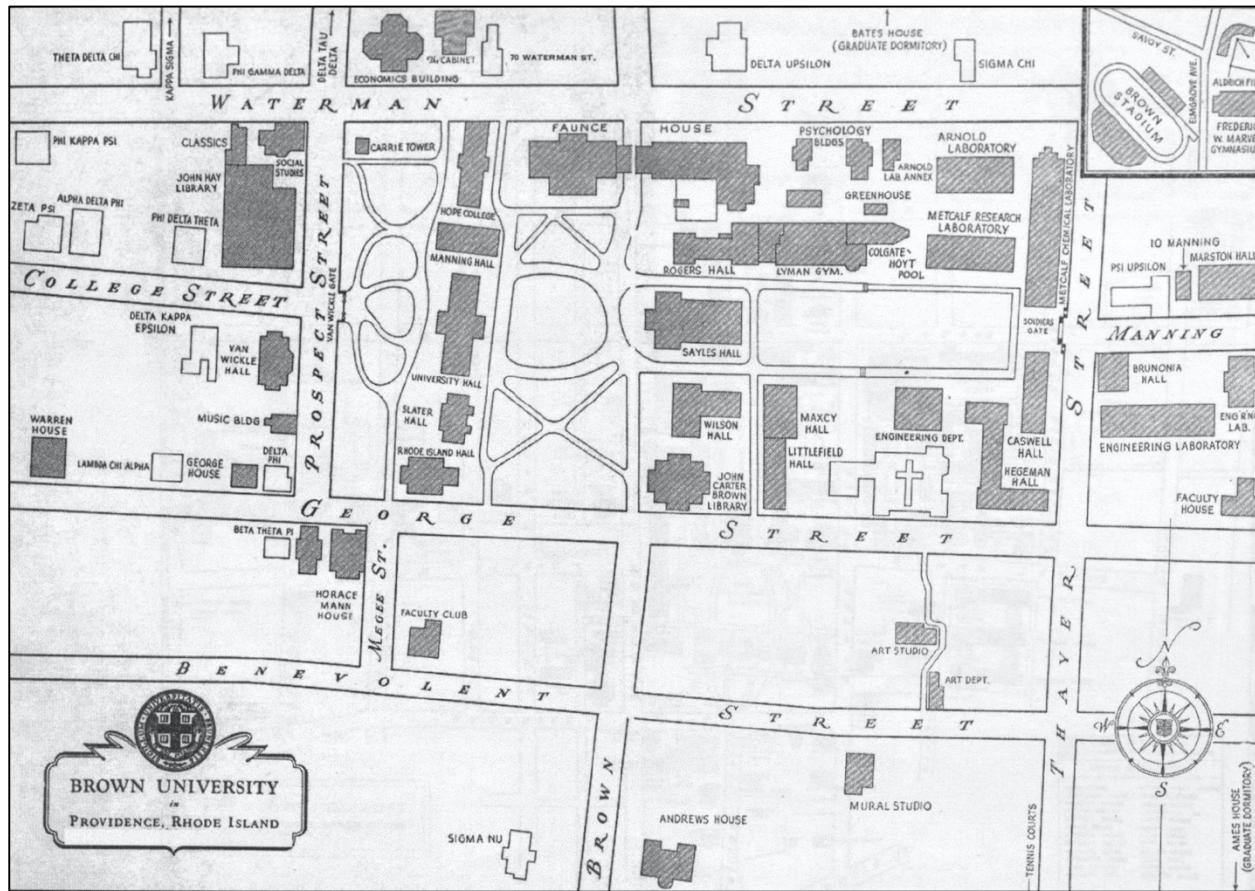
Portrait of Henry Merritt Wriston, by John Lavalle, 1957. (Courtesy of Brown University Office of the Curator Portait Collection)

¹² Mitchell, Martha. "Wriston, Henry M." *Encyclopedia Brunoniana*, 1993.

¹³ Phillips, Janet M. *Brown University: A Short History*. Brown University Office of University Relations, 1992, pp. 70.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.



Brown University physical plant in 1946. (Taken from Schermerhorn)

This chapter examines the Wriston presidency’s dramatic impact on the residential experience and infrastructure at Brown University. It begins by contextualizing Wriston-era Brown in early twentieth-century Providence, paying particular attention to the residential neighborhoods that surrounded Brown’s campus. The chapter then examines Wriston’s understanding of two key concepts—“liberal education” and “residential college”—that guided the Wriston administration’s residential policy.

In the context of this chapter, liberal education can be understood as “an approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change.”¹⁶ Rather than emphasize mechanical and technical skills, liberal education seeks to

¹⁶ Association of American Colleges and Universities. “What Is Liberal Education?” *Association of American Colleges & Universities*.

provide students with a wide breadth of knowledge and to develop broadly applicable skills like communication, analytical awareness, and problem-solving. The term “residential college” here connotes an academic environment in which the vast majority of an institution’s students reside in on-campus accommodations, as opposed to off-campus living arrangements.

This chapter follows the “series of shocks” that President Wriston delivered Brown University. By the end of the Wriston administration, Brown’s residential norms and infrastructure had dramatically changed, setting the institution on a dominant path that would impact the university and its surrounding communities for generations to come.

A Two Kind of World

While today the East Side of Providence is an enclave of wealth and whiteness in an otherwise predominantly non-white, low-income city, in the early twentieth century, the neighborhoods that surrounded Brown University were full of a rich diversity of race, national origin, and class. Brown’s neighbors reflected the shifting populations of Providence, which grew by more than 75,000 inhabitants between 1900 to 1940, mostly thanks to robust immigration, much of it from Ireland, Italy, and Portugal.¹⁷ Brown’s campus sat at a crossroads of the city with a vantage point that simultaneously emphasized Providence’s past as a colonial mercantile center and its future as a melting pot of recent émigrés.

The core of Brown’s campus is located in the geographic center of the East Side in the neighborhood known as College Hill. In its first 150 years, Brown’s landholdings had changed very little.¹⁸ Any substantial growth had been hemmed by the stately mansions located at the

¹⁷ Leazes, Francis J., and Mark T. Motte. *Providence, the Renaissance City*. Northeastern University Press, 2004, pp. 35-36.

¹⁸ Wriston, Henry M. Letter to Harold B. Tanner. 26 September 1944. Box 129, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

campus's abutting northern and eastern edges. These mansions were occupied by generations of Providence's business class, whose likes included members of the Brown, Sharpe, and Corliss families, among other prominent merchants. As *Slavery and Justice* documents, the vast majority of the wealth of these families, the City of Providence, and Brown University itself, originated through direct and indirect participation in the transatlantic slave trade.¹⁹

In post-slavery United States, Brown University remained physically proximate to the city's sources of wealth. West of the university, past the campus of the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD)—whose reputation as a nationally-acclaimed design school was growing—was Providence's bustling downtown, a “bastion of American industry.” It boasted, the nation’s largest textile manufacturing plant, the largest steam-engine factory, and one of the nation’s largest centers of jewelry design and production.²⁰ From 1935 to 1971, the campus of the Bryant College of Business Administration abutted Brown’s immediate east. Many of the city’s middle to upper-middle class professionals resided eastward of Bryant, in neighborhoods like Blackstone and Wayland, which were dominated by sturdy single-family homes.

To Brown’s north and south, however, working-class communities, communities of color, and immigrant communities thrived. To Brown’s northwest, the Lippitt Hill and Mount Hope neighborhoods had for more than a century been home to a plurality of the city’s Black population. Lippitt Hill was first settled by the formerly enslaved Black people freed in 1773 by Moses Brown—one of the four Brown brothers who helped found the “Rhode Island College,” the college that was renamed “Brown University” in 1804 in his family’s honor.²¹ By 1961,

¹⁹ Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice. *Slavery and Justice*. Brown University, 2007.

²⁰ Jerzyk, Matthew. “Gentrification’s Third Way: An Analysis of Housing Policy .” *Harvard Law Review*, 2009, pp. 416.

²¹ Berke, Ben. “Providence’s Lippitt Hill residents get a chance to tell their story.” *Providence Journal*. 15 September 2017.

Lippitt Hill was home to more than one-third of the city's Black population.²²

Just south of the university, the waterfront neighborhood of Fox Point flourished. Fox Point had always been a neighborhood of immigrants and settlers. Adjacent to the Narragansett Bay, the neighborhood boasted a bustling port, which provided a surplus of blue-collar jobs until the 1950s. This, and its remarkably low housing costs, made the neighborhood an economically welcoming place for recent arrivals. Fox Point was one of Providence's main transportation centers, at one point accommodating as many as seven steamship lines that transported freight and passengers up and down the eastern seaboard while also connecting southern New England to Europe.²³

Fox Point was shaped by three separate waves of immigration, the first in the 1830s and 40s, when settlers from Ireland arrived, evading the devastation of the island nation's potato famine. By 1875, Irish immigrants made up three-fifths of Fox Point.²⁴ From 1890 to 1924, the next major wave of immigration came from Portugal.²⁵ The influx was tremendous; in 1912 alone, more than 12,000 immigrants from Portugal debarked at Fox Point's docks, many choosing to lay down roots close to where their ships landed.²⁶ By 1925, more than half of Fox Point's 5,000 residents were foreign-born Portuguese.²⁷ The density of the Portuguese population provoked resident Arria Bilodeau to remember that, in the Fox Point of her youth, "it was almost as though something from Portugal had been preserved in amber from an earlier era."²⁸ Life-long

²² Citizen's Advisory Committee for Urban Renewal. "Providence Redevelopment, 1945-1961." 1961. Box 39, John Nicholas Brown II papers (Ms.2007.012). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 20 February 2020, pp. 14.

²³ Text for *Shipping Expands Around the Port*. Providence Harbor Walk at Fox Point & India Point, Providence.

²⁴ Gorman, Laurel. *Fox Point: The Disintegration of a Neighborhood*. 1998. Brown University, Bachelor of Arts in American Civilization Honors Thesis, pp. 11-12.

²⁵ Taylor, Emily. "2000 racial and ethnic breakdown; Fox Point neighborhood, Providence, RI." *Fox Point Oral Histories*. Brown University Library Center for Digital Scholarship. 16 March 2009.

²⁶ *Shipping Expands Around the Port*.

²⁷ Gorman 14.

²⁸ Taylor, Emily et al. "Women's Experiences of Race in Fox Point" *Fox Point Oral Histories*. Brown University



Store owner Manny Pedroso arranges items in the store front of the Portuguese-American Friends Market. (Taken from Swearer papers, box 33)

Fox Point resident Eileen Afonso—whose family to this day operates Friends Market, a Portuguese-American market located at 126 Brook Street—agreed. Of her youth, Afonso recalled, “I was living a two kind of world, a Portuguese world in this country and an American world...I had Portuguese food, English food. Portuguese entertainment, American entertainment. And I kind of did both hand in hand.”²⁹

Fox Point’s final wave of immigration from Cape Verde was in many respects its most impactful. Cape Verde, a small archipelago 240 miles off the coast of West Africa, was an

Library Center for Digital Scholarship. 5 May 2009.

²⁹ Ibid.

important hub of maritime commerce between the African, European, and American continents.³⁰ Immigrants from Cape Verde, a colonial possession of Portugal from 1460 to 1975, brought with them a distinct mix of African, Portuguese, and European culture. Unlike the Portuguese who settled before them, Cape Verdeans had a darker complexion, and many Cape Verdeans in the United States identified as Black. Renowned mariners, Cape Verdeans had long worked New England whaling ships. Once the whaling industry dissipated, thousands of Cape Verdeans fled their drought-stricken islands and the harsh colonial rule of the Portuguese, becoming the first people of the African Diaspora to voluntarily immigrate to the United States.³¹ By 1924, approximately 35,000 Cape Verdeans had crossed the Atlantic, with a majority settling in two principle Cape Verdean enclaves: New Bedford, Massachusetts and Providence, Rhode Island.

By the mid-century, Fox Point was a “melting pot,” in the truest sense of the phrase. “The whole community was one big happy family,” remembered Cape Verdean-American Justino Andrade.³² “You never wanted for anything.” However, Fox Point, like every American community, struggled with complex race relations. “As soon as you put you were Cape Verdean...you were branded black,” Marcia Castro remembered, suggesting that this “brand” carried an indication of inferiority even in Fox Point.³³ Some Cape Verdean Fox Pointers felt that it was necessary to endure a degree of conflict with their Portuguese neighbors. Many had relatives who remained on the archipelago under Portuguese control and “wanted to make sure no one was hurt over there.”³⁴ “There’s always racism...the Portuguese and the Cape Verdeans

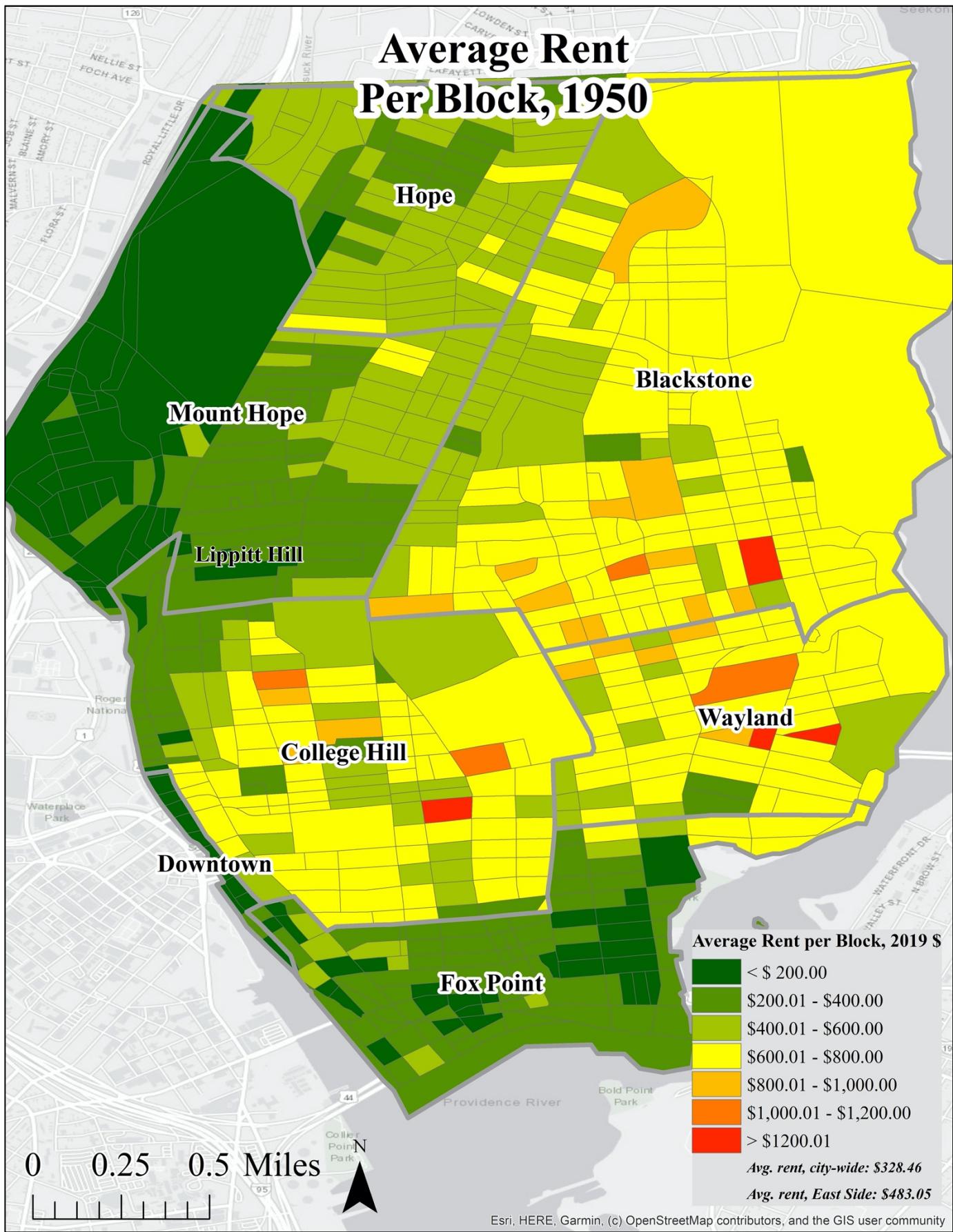
³⁰ Fox Point Cape Verdean Heritage Project, Inc.. “Our Rhode: A Mile of Fox Point Cape Verdean History.” 2020.

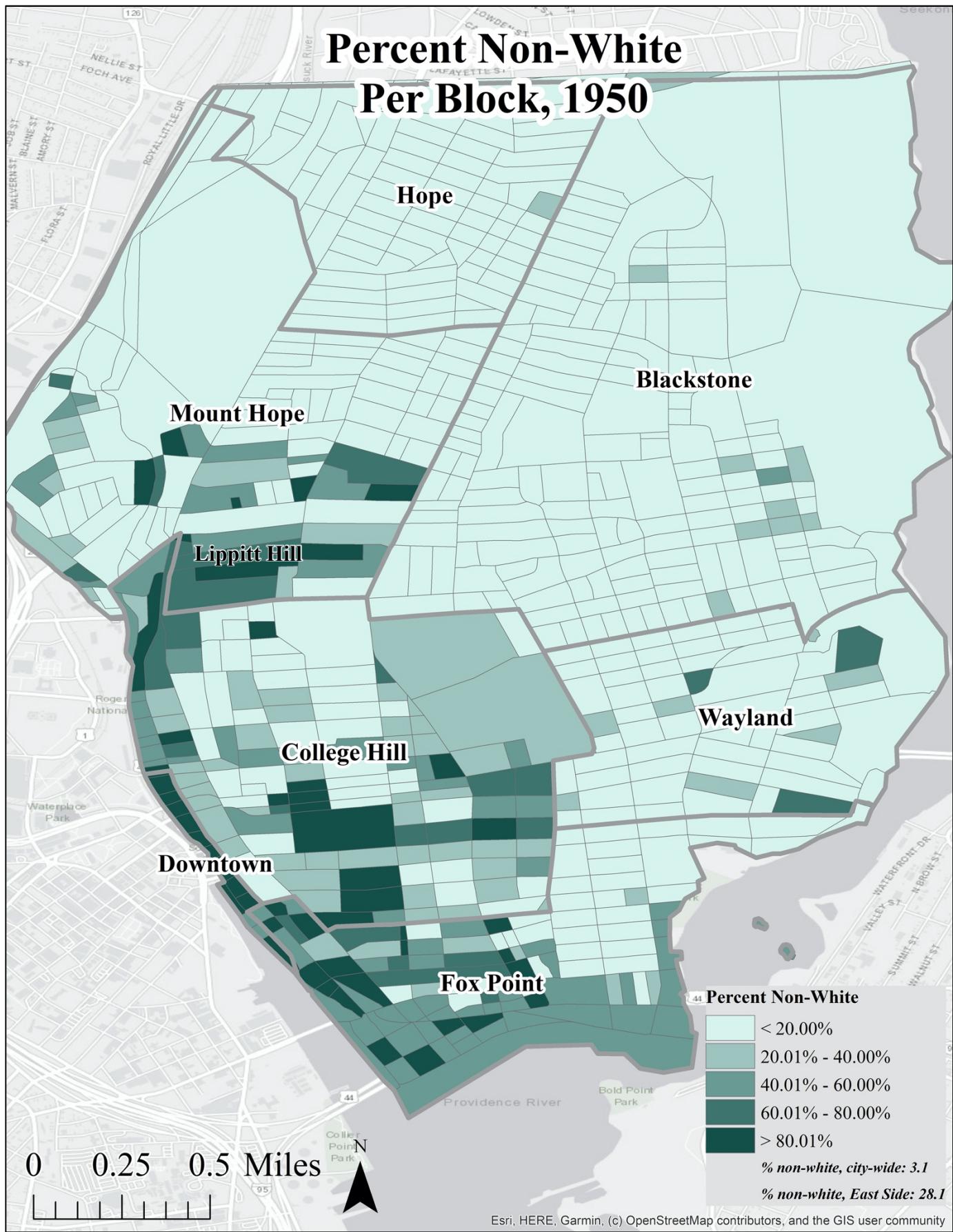
³¹ Ibid.

³² Andrade-Watkins, Claire, director. *Some Kind Of Funny Porto Rican?: A Cape Verdean-American Story*. 2006.

³³ Taylor, Emily et al.

³⁴ Andrade-Watkins.





didn't always get along," recalled resident Yvonne Smart.³⁵ "They had an affinity for each other, but they didn't always get along."

Life in this "melting pot" was no doubt complex and impacted by occasional conflict. But in a time when Providence was less than three percent non-white, there is no question that Fox Point was one of the few neighborhoods in Providence that offered working class families, families of color, and immigrant families a welcoming and affordable community to call "home." "We never had to lock the doors," Dottie Alves Ramos, a second-generation Cape Verdean, recalled, repeating an often-expressed sentiment.³⁶ "Everyone looked out for one another," she added.

In the sections that follow, we will see that Brown's leaders expended considerable time and money in developing a residential experience that they believed augmented the university's offering of liberal education. But as they did so, it is important to remember that Brown's working-class neighbors to its south and northwest were cultivating rich, robust, and stable communities of their own. With time, these dual residential efforts would come into conflict.

Hospitable to Our Educational Ideal

When Henry Wriston arrived in Providence in 1936, he brought with him a conviction that college educators at liberal education institutions had been charged with a task of international significance. Wriston lamented that, in the inter-war period, the ideal of liberal education was in a "process of disintegration."³⁷ "The liberal ideal puts the individual man at the very center of all

³⁵ Taylor, Emily et al.

³⁶ Gorman 20.

³⁷ Wriston, Henry M. "Educational Housing." Speech at the Alumni Meeting, 18 June 1945. Box 10, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

human values,” recalled Wriston in 1945.³⁸ “But the world was turning its back on that ideal; the individual was steadily being subordinated to society—to the state.”

Wriston’s arrival at Brown coincided with the rise of fascist governments in Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union. Wriston attributed fascism’s rise to these nations’ abandonment of liberal education, an abandonment that he believed produced cohorts of citizens incapable of free thinking.³⁹ With the loss of liberal education in Nazi Germany, Wriston believed that German youth had “become tools for the maintenance of an established ideal and organization. They do not lead, they follow. The slavishness with which they follow shows that they are not free; they are bound.”

Wriston believed that liberal education alone could guard against the production of such “slavish” young people in the United States. Liberal education created generations of citizens empowered to question the wisdom of leaders and be free-thinkers. Wriston argued that “the liberal ideal offers no slick solution to momentary problems, but strengthens man to wrestle with eternal problems as well as to cope with the daily round.”⁴⁰ Wriston felt that the responsibility of advancing liberal education—the mission of an institution like Brown—was about more than sharing and producing knowledge; the battle of liberal education was a battle to preserve the future of American democracy in the face of rising global authoritarianism.

Meanwhile, the value of liberal education, according to Wriston, was being profoundly challenged by sources from within the United States during the inter-war period. Political leaders, Wriston felt, saw less purpose in an education that sought to wrestle with those “eternal problems” and favored a far more unemotional and practical conception of education, one whose

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Schermerhorn, Peter. *Competing Visions: Historic Preservation and Institutional Expansion on Providence’s East Side, 1937-1966*. 2005. Brown University, Bachelor of Arts in History Honors Thesis, pp. 16.

⁴⁰ Wriston. “Educational Housing.”

economic output was more readily apparent. This conception of education represented a significant departure from the education long provided at Brown. None of Brown's founders, said Wriston, "would have supposed it possible that the power of the mind or the vigor of the human spirit could ever be regarded as subordinate to skills essentially mechanical. Yet these are the characteristic happenings of our time."⁴¹

Wriston sensed that in this time of educational transition, rather than retreat from its guiding principles, Brown had to double-down on its commitment to the "liberal ideal." How could Brown cultivate free-thinkers ready to assume ownership of American democracy in an age of fascism? How could Brown develop in its students inquisitive spirits that sought more than mastery of mechanical skills? To Wriston, these goals would be achieved through the reinvigoration of Brown's residential experience.

The incoming Brown president believed deeply in the lessons of the academic experience that happened outside of the classroom: in a university's athletic programming, student activities, and, above all, residential environment. Wriston believed that some of the most meaningful lessons of liberal education could be transmitted from a university to its students not only in its classrooms but also through its dormitories. Dormitories could be sites of learning where students absorbed lessons in gentlemanly decorum, while living in communal quarters. In dormitory lounges and over meals in a common refectory, students could engage in spirited, free-flowing debates with peers of different backgrounds and opinions. And—if the residence halls were handsome enough—while living in residential quarters, student could develop architectural and aesthetic appreciation, thereby allowing the dormitories to "refine the social graces of its inhabitants."⁴²

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Schermerhorn 14.

True educational housing reform, Wriston would unabashedly admit, required a drastic increase in the degree of social control that universities influenced over their students. A college, he believed, needed to influence every element of a student's experience when in school.⁴³ To permit young people to live amongst one another without considerable control was an abdication of university leaders' responsibility to guard the morals of the institution. When well-supervised, the residential experience, said Wriston, could "revivify the intellectual and social life of all our students" and "provide a more orderly, a more gracious, and a more effective environment for the undergraduate as scholar and gentleman."⁴⁴ Wriston sought for Brown to create generations of free-thinkers. However, these free-thinkers, said Wriston, could only truly be developed through close supervision by their institution.

When the value of liberal education was presumed and supported by society at large, Wriston believed that universities, understandably, devoted less consideration and resources to student housing. As such, the difficult and expensive work required to maintain the educational values inherent in a collegiate residential experience went neglected for years at institutions around the nation, Brown included. But now that liberal education was being openly challenged by sources both internal and external to the United States, this status quo could no longer continue. By failing to invest in its students' residential experience, Wriston believed that universities were neglecting critical opportunities to positively impact their students. "We must re-create a domestic environment hospitable to our educational ideal," he believed.⁴⁵ "We must inculcate a way of life consistent with our aims. Our educational purpose must be evident in the structures themselves; it must be reflected in the manners and customs which they promote, just

⁴³ Schermerhorn 12.

⁴⁴ Wriston. "Educational Housing."

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

as it must dominate the temper of our teaching, indeed our every relationship.”

In short, through the eyes of Wriston, liberal education forged responsible inheritors of democracy, and liberal education required a robust, highly-regulated and refined residential environment. Building that environment would be costly. But, believing himself to be entrusted with the preservation of liberal education and, in turn, the development of a responsible citizenry capable of furthering democracy in an era of authoritarianism, to Wriston, no cost would be too high. Wriston would defend the liberal ideal at Brown, as such, by initiating at the university the rapid construction of hundreds of dormitory units, in the hopes of bringing scores of Brown students back on to campus and under the university’s watchful eye.

Shut Out the City

In 1936, the housing reality on Brown’s campus was about as far from Wriston’s idealization of a residential community as possible. At the time of Wriston’s arrival, Brown had no coherent housing plan.⁴⁶ Half of the university’s male students lived in fraternities, all of which were located in privately-owned houses off-campus. As a results, the great majority of Brown students were scattered throughout the East Side.⁴⁷ In addition, there was little organization in terms of use of university buildings. Dormitory rooms abutted classrooms, offices, and even laboratories.⁴⁸ Many buildings—even the iconic University Hall, the university’s original and central building—were mixed use.⁴⁹ Wriston mourned that, due to its haphazard assemblage of housing efforts, the university was failing to tend to the “morals of the

⁴⁶ Schermerhorn 88.

⁴⁷ Iselin, Diane C. *Ivied Halls: Two Centuries of Housing at Brown University*. Office of Residential Life, Brown University, 1981, pp. 21.

⁴⁸ Wriston, Henry M. “Report to the Committee on Ways and Means to Provide for Housing.” 13 April 1945. Box 22, James Pickwell Adams papers (OF.1CA.A1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 13 February 2020.

⁴⁹ Schermerhorn 8.

College,” one of its most critical duties.⁵⁰

Addressing this disorderly housing approach and providing the university with a robust residential community became “of first priority” to Brown upon Wriston’s arrival.⁵¹ In the late 1930s, no issue so continuously occupied university leaders as did student housing. In his first report to the Corporation in June 1937, Wriston laid out his conception of educational housing, arguing that student’s education is “received not only in the classroom and the library but from all the contacts with their fellows and from their daily surroundings.”⁵² He would add: “We must regard the dormitories, therefore, as an important part of our educational project... We should lay more and more emphasis upon the dormitories as instruments of instruction...” To the newly-arrived Wriston, no need of the university was “more urgent than the rehabilitation of some of these student habitations and the addition of modern, well-designed buildings.”⁵³ He set out on an unbridled campaign to convince his fellow university leaders of this conviction.

Wriston was a prominent advocate in the nation for educational housing, but he was not the only university leader investing considerably in his university’s housing stock. Many of Brown’s peer institutions were making remarkable strides in bolstering their housing stock. In the late 1930s, Harvard University and Yale University each built new residential complexes and compelled students onto dining hall meal plans.⁵⁴ In 1938, Yale was able to house its entire incoming first-year class in college-owned buildings for the first time, an accomplishment of which Brown could only dream.⁵⁵ Wriston recognized that Brown’s housing deficiencies posed a considerable barrier to its institutional advancement. If Brown was to rise in the academic ranks

⁵⁰ Wriston, Henry M. *Educational Housing*. Brown University, 1946, pp. 23.

⁵¹ Wriston. “Report to the Committee on Ways and Means to Provide for Housing.”

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Schermerhorn 20.

⁵⁴ Widmer 188.

⁵⁵ Schermerhorn 20.

and shed its reputation as a largely regional institution, it needed to at least remain on par with its peers. Brown could not attract top-quality students, the university believed, if it failed to improve its housing. “As competition for good students will inevitably become keener, it is unlikely that we can maintain our position [in the field of higher education] unless we can provide adequate housing for those who need it,” argued university literature in soliciting financial support for residence hall construction.⁵⁶ While Wriston’s commitment to educational housing was philosophically grounded, the urgency of housing improvement at Brown was no doubt augmented by more immediate and practical concerns.

While the quality of on-campus housing was in disrepair and disorganization, the state of off-campus housing was, to Wriston, arguably worse. With dormitories at full capacity in 1937, many students rented private rooms throughout the community. Wriston was ideologically doubtful of the value of any students living unsupervised in privately-owned homes. He deplored the lack of control that the university had over the lives of off-campus students: “from an educational point of view, it is most unfortunate to have any boys living in private boarding houses not under University supervision.”⁵⁷ Young men, Wriston also recognized, could be rowdy, disruptive, and downright disrespectful to their neighbors. In addition to the decreased capacity to exert educational influence on students not living in university spaces, Wriston believed that reducing or eliminating off-campus living would minimize conflict with external community members. If the university could contain “periodic outbursts of enthusiasm” in on-campus residences, Wriston believed that the university could “avoid friction with our

⁵⁶ Brown University Housing & Development Fund. “Questions and Answers.” 17 April 1949. Box II-3, Brown University Dean of the College files (OF.1CA.1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 14 February 2020.

⁵⁷ Wriston. “Report to the Committee on Ways and Means to Provide for Housing.”

neighbors.”⁵⁸

It is worthwhile to interrogate the theoretical underpinnings of the residential college.

While Wriston framed Brown’s attainment of a fully residential college as a boon to university-community relations, this harmony is one gained through segregation of the university from its surroundings, not a harmony grounded in the more “neighborly” concepts of mutual aid, respect, and partnership. As Brown fundraising literature recognized, “Colleges located in metropolitan communities find it essential to establish an academic community within the community.”⁵⁹

Separation between the inhabitants of the university and those of the city was, in the eyes of the Wriston administration, a critical ingredient to the success of Brown. “The residential college is not an ivory tower,” the office of the Dean of the College would suggest.⁶⁰ “It is an island. The current of history shapes the island’s form and its life. The insularity of the residential college allows it to develop a distinct character and to concentrate its own impact on those who come to it.”

In American higher education, there is a long history of universities attempting to divorce themselves from the “vices and temptations of the city.”⁶¹ As historian Margaret O’Mara has noted, “The prevailing design and architectural choices of American colleges and universities reflected the deep-seated cultural presumption that the urban environment was no place for intellectual discovery.”⁶² The legacy of this attempted separation remains a relevant force in university-community relations. As historian Thomas Bender catalogues, the quintessential

⁵⁸ Brown University Housing & Development Fund.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ “Statement to the *Brown Daily Herald* on the Intellectual Contribution of the West Quadrangle.” 26 November 1957. Box VI-8, Brown University Dean of the College files (OF.1CA.1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.

⁶¹ Etienne, Harley F. *The Role of Universities in Urban Neighborhood Change: The Case of University City, West Philadelphia and the University of Pennsylvania*. 2007. Cornell University, PhD dissertation, pp. 50.

⁶² O’Mara, Margaret Pugh. *Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the next Silicon Valley*. Princeton University Press, 2015, pp. 60.

American urban campus—with its central “green” or quad surrounded by academic and residential buildings—is grounded in the principles of “Anglo American pastoralism.”⁶³ The university campus exists to separate the university community from its surroundings, and according to campus planners like Richard Dober, must be “green—providing relief from the communal life of the institution and removal from the stress of the general conditions of modern society.”⁶⁴ The campus, a patch of bucolic serenity in an otherwise grimy urban environment, therefore served the dual purpose of attracting the university’s most critical inputs—its faculty, students, and donors—while providing the university community the enclave from society that leaders felt necessary to produce knowledge. In this sense, the preservation of the campus has always been seen by university leaders as a critical component of the university’s mission.

In imagining their residential college, leaders of Brown generally shared these beliefs. As Brown Vice President F. Morris Cochran wrote in planning Pembroke College’s newest residential dorm, “I should like to see the block entirely enclosed utilizing single brick walls in baffle style between buildings and at the gates to effectively shut out the city and provide some privacy for those in the college community.”⁶⁵ As Cochran’s phrasing suggests, Brown community members, through the generations, have often not seen themselves “of” the city of Providence but “within” it. Indeed, President Wriston saw Brown’s placement within Providence as a unique hurdle to be overcome, not an asset to embrace: “Liberal education must function amid inhospitable pressures,” he wrote in 1946.⁶⁶ “Education must progress, if at all, like a swimmer—in a resisting medium.”

⁶³ Perry, David C and Wim Wiewel. “From Campus to City: The University as Developer.” *The University as Urban Developer Case Studies and Analysis*, edited by David C. Perry and Wim Wiewel, Routledge, 2015, pp. 7-8.

⁶⁴ Ibid 8.

⁶⁵ Cochran, F. Morris. Letter to President Wriston. 22 August 1945. Box 8, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

⁶⁶ Wriston, Henry M. *The University College*. Box 149, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

Ironically, Brown's pursuit of a residential college and its willingness to ignore community wishes in this pursuit would be the ultimate source of community resistance to the university. The outbreak of the Second World War, however, would force Wriston to postpone the actual building of his residential college. Brown, the nation, and universities throughout the nation would emerge from the other side of that conflict as drastically different places.

Anxious to Serve

As Brown sought a residential campus that would cloister it from the demands of the outside world, it could not ignore the international conflagration that consumed the nation, beginning in December 1941. World War II dramatically altered the Brown community, with a significant number of Brown affiliates joining the war effort in some capacity. Almost three-fourths of the Class of 1942, for example, entered war-related service immediately following their graduation.⁶⁷ The college experience for those who remained in school during the war years was significantly affected, as the university began to teach year-round to graduate students more quickly. Throughout the war, there was a constant presence of active service members on campus, as Brown became one of the nation's eleven centers for meteorological training, an important element of aviation.⁶⁸ Though the hostilities never reached American shores, the threat of an attack loomed over the Brown community, which was trained in an air defense plan which consisted of a system of sirens and whistles that would alert community members of an attack and a team of patrol, firefighting, and first aid squads that would tend to damage.⁶⁹

Like the men and women who had once lived and learned in it, Brown's physical housing

⁶⁷ Widmer 180.

⁶⁸ Widmer 182.

⁶⁹ "Notice: Air Raid Defense Plans." 26 February 1943. Box 8, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

plant was mobilized to support the war effort. In December 1942, stating that the university community was “anxious to serve national interests as fully as possible,” President Wriston offered housing and dining services for U.S. armed forces during the war.⁷⁰ In total, Brown offered housing and dining facilities for 1,600 service members.⁷¹ While the armed forces ultimately did not require use of all of the offered facilities, the influx of service members brought the campus to its physical limits. The armed forces filled beds that normally housed civilian students, and buildings like the Sharpe House, the current home of Brown’s History Department, was “filled practically to capacity” with service members.⁷² Meanwhile, civilian students—forced from their dormitories—were housed in temporary barracks in the Lyman Gymnasium, now Lyman Hall.⁷³ These severe limitations of space were less an extreme deviance from normalcy than a harbinger of the duress that Brown’s physical housing infrastructure would be under for the next three decades.

According to Wriston, the war had two major effects on student housing at Brown.⁷⁴ First, due to material shortages, it halted all construction of new housing units and the rehabilitation of existing units. Second, it brought the challenged condition of fraternity life at Brown into focus. During the war, with dormitories occupied by service members, the university had instructed its fraternities to use their privately-owned, off-campus homes to house displaced civilian students.⁷⁵ This war-induced measure marked the end of fraternities’ extensive degree of self-

⁷⁰ “In response to official inquiries from Washington....” 29 December 1942. Box 8, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

⁷¹ Wriston, Henry M. Letter to Division Engineer, New England Division. 19 August 1942. Box 9, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

⁷² Wriston, Henry M. Letter to Chief of the Bureau of Naval Personnel. 28 July 1943. Box 9, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

⁷³ Cochran, F.. Morris M. Letter to Emery R. Walker. 1 November 1945. Box 9, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

⁷⁴ Wriston, Henry M. “Report to the Committee on Ways and Means to Provide for Housing.”

⁷⁵ “In response to official inquiries from Washington....”

control at Brown. It also exposed to university leaders the severely dilapidated physical state of the fraternity houses. As the war began to come to a close, Brown Vice President Bruce Bigelow warned that for fraternities at Brown to survive the stresses of the Depression and the war, more guidance and oversight from the university to the fraternities was direly needed: the fraternities, said Bigelow, “must be as much a part of the University as a dormitory, class-room, library, or gymnasium.”⁷⁶

When Wriston arrived at Brown, he observed that fraternity culture at Brown was “old but not vigorous.”⁷⁷ Wriston disapprovingly saw that “fraternities had a free hand to exhibit their capacities independently.”⁷⁸ Under this state of limited university involvement in fraternity governance, the fate of the fraternities—and their finances—were left to their young inhabitants. To compete with the room and board rates of on-campus accommodations, fraternities kept their rents low and tolerated minimal levels of maintenance. Many of the fraternities houses had therefore become dangerously run-down, and all but three of the approximately 15 fraternities existed in severe debt.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, the university was perennially concerned with the academic standing of fraternity men, keeping close watch on the houses’ grade point averages in comparison to their independent, non-fraternity affiliated peers.⁸⁰ The fraternity men consistently struggled academically.

To President Wriston at the war’s close, the need for drastic change in Brown’s fraternity

⁷⁶ Bigelow, Bruce M. Letter to Henry M. Wriston. 23 July 1943. Box 8, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

⁷⁷ Wriston, Henry M. “An Era of Transition.” *Providence Journal*. June 1964. Box 101, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

⁷⁸ Wriston, Henry M. “Brown as a Fraternity College: Past, Present and Future.” *Brown Alumni Monthly*. December 1943. Box 149, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

⁷⁹ Wriston. “An Era of Transition.”

⁸⁰ Arnold, S.T. “Report to the Committee on Academic Reorganization on Behalf of the Sub-Committee on the Quality of Students at Brown and the Factors which Affect the Quality.” 14 January 1931. Box 19, James Pickwell Adams papers (OF.1CA.A1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 13 February 2020.

life was evident. He noted that the fraternities had a declining standing in the student body, poor scholastic achievement, and houses that were next to worthless. More fundamentally, Wriston questioned whether “secret societies, self-selected, can escape the dangers of snobbishness and whether they are compatible with the democratic, egalitarian social temper of American life.”⁸¹ At Brown, he believed that fraternities had become “neutral at best, and at worst, influences hostile to intellectual effort.”

Ultimately, Wriston and his colleagues decided that it was “wiser to attempt to reinvigorate a waning tradition than abandon it.”⁸² Wriston believed that the university deserved part of the blame for allowing fraternity life to dissolve at Brown and that, as such, the university should be involved in fraternity life’s resurrection. With the houses in such disrepair that their purchase by the university was economically infeasible, Wriston suggested that the fraternities gift their houses to Brown. The university would assume ownership and maintenance of the houses and provide the fraternities space in soon-to-be-built, on-campus accommodations. The fraternities and their alumni were, at first, virulently opposed to such a plan. But, with the end of the war approaching and the threat of returning veterans in dire need of housing, Wriston grew impatient and forced the fraternities’ hands. In October 1945, the Corporation declared that no university-affiliated fraternities could occupy property not owned by the university.⁸³ From thence forth, fraternities have been required to live on-campus, and their membership has been limited to the number of students that they could house in on-campus facilities.

In reflecting on the fraternity episode, Wriston firmly believed that his action, however bold and disruptive, ultimately preserved fraternity life at post-war Brown. Unless the university

⁸¹ Wriston. “Educational Housing.”

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Schermerhorn 39.

took the lead, said Wriston, the fraternities' high costs of property, maintenance, and taxes would have driven all but a few from existence.⁸⁴ The fraternity battle was a major step forward in actualizing Wriston's aspiration for a residential college, as he successfully brought a significant contingent of the Brown student population "under one roof" and into university-owned residences. Moreover, Wriston's decision to not abandon fraternity life at Brown but instead to prop up this "waning tradition" was an important first step in an emerging Brown housing philosophy that valued individual choice in housing options.

To Deny Its Birthright

American higher education was dramatically transformed in the post-war climate. The nation's postsecondary enrollment, first aided by efforts to educate returning service members like the GI Bill, exploded. From 1940 to 1960, the U.S. college population grew from 1.5 million to 3.7 million students.⁸⁵ Just 14 percent of young people attended college in 1950. By 1970, 32 percent would.⁸⁶

In line with peer institutions across the nation, following the war, leaders of Brown began a concerted effort to greatly expand the size of their university. Since 1921, the size of Brown had been limited to 1,000 students, and the size of Pembroke was capped at 500 since 1927.⁸⁷ President Wriston lamented that while the size of the U.S. college and university population had begun to ramp up in the pre-war period, Brown's student population had remained fairly static. Wriston perceived this stagnation to be a failure of Brown to adequately do its part in

⁸⁴ Wriston. "Report to the Committee on Ways and Means to Provide for Housing."

⁸⁵ Widmer 149.

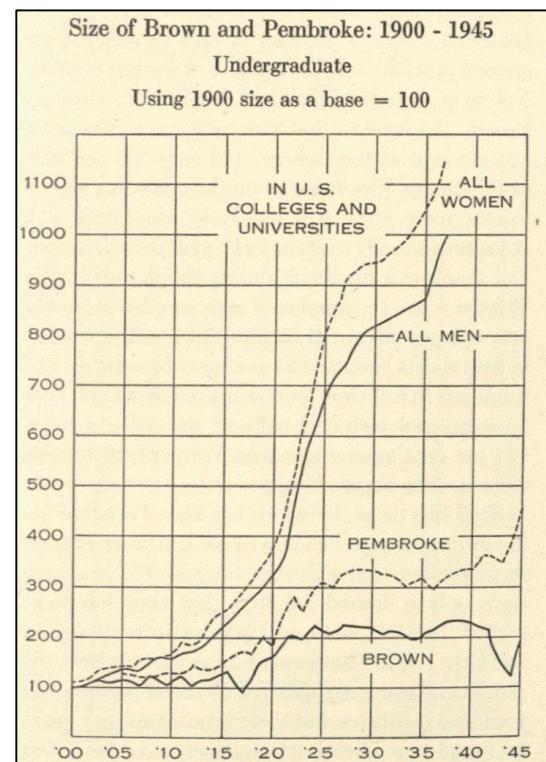
⁸⁶ Widmer 193.

⁸⁷ "Report to the Special Committee of the Corporation on the Size of Brown." 28 February 1946. Box 15, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

shouldering the burden of the growing number of young Americans seeking higher education's enrichment. "For a college to refuse to undertake the education of those who merit its service and whom it can reasonably serve is to deny its birthright and fail to justify the privileges and immunities granted by charter and by custom," wrote the Special Committee of the Corporation on the Size of Brown in February 1946.⁸⁸ Brown, its leaders believed, had a moral obligation to meet the demand for its services by deserving young people.

Additionally, post-war Brown leaders continued to fret that a more mechanical form of higher education was posed to diminish the standing of liberal education in the U.S. They believed that expanding Brown was a necessary effort in advancing liberal education and ensuring that the United States' supply of moral leadership from elite institutions would not be cut short. "More acute than ever is the need for the spiritual, moral, and intellectual values which led to the establishment of Brown [and] which have informed its history and remain the inspiration of its future," argued the university in 1946.⁸⁹

The university was convinced that what Brown provided to the world was unique. Public universities, those which underwent the most dramatic post-war expansion, were devoted to a more vocational, "private competency" that was "defined more and more in terms of material standards and gainful skills,



Graph of Brown undergraduate populations, 1900 - 1945. (Taken from Wriston papers, box 149)

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

in economic rather than moral and spiritual values.”⁹⁰ But the crisis of the post-war period—addressing the loss of 75 million souls during the war, the obliteration of cities and cultures, and the unleashed capacity of nuclear warfare—was a moral crisis, Brown leaders believed. “What Brown meant in 1764 and what it means in 1946 are identical,” wrote the Corporation. “As it was of vast importance for the world of the eighteenth century, it is also of critical importance for the twentieth.” There simply were not enough institutions in the United States to meet the need for liberal education, Brown leaders believed. If universities like Brown failed to expand, the critical demand for liberal education would go unmet in the post-war climate. As such, in the eyes of its leaders, Brown had a moral obligation to grow.

Brown’s desire for expansion was, at least in part, guided by egalitarian motives. The university recognized that the war had expanded the desire for universal higher education. In mobilizing the universities during the war, as occurred at Brown, the nation at large developed an appreciation for the vast resources of higher education. There was greater public recognition of the important role that higher education could play in society. Universities, argued Brown leaders, must respond to society’s “deep urges” for expanded higher education.⁹¹ For too long, Brown leaders lamented, the nation’s college population was dominated almost exclusively by higher-income families. This status quo must change, and Brown must do its part: “no capable youth shall be denied higher education,” university leaders stated. Brown leaders were cognizant of the reality that to make Brown more accessible to middle- and lower-income students, space needed to be made for them: “If colleges which are really devoted to the liberal arts make no room for the increasing numbers of able students,” the university wrote in 1946, “it will be regarded as a manifestation of social insensitiveness.”

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

Brown, under Wriston's leadership, also embraced what it saw as a patriotic duty to educate as many returning veterans as possible. Wriston would write in 1945, "As far as Brown University is concerned, the answer to the question 'What will you do for the veteran?' can be given in two words: educate him."⁹² The university under Wriston acted upon this declaration, as Brown became the only university in Rhode Island to establish a veteran's college. Wriston promised that the returning GI's would not be regarded as "stepchildren" of the university but as fully entitled members of the Brown community.⁹³ In droves, veterans flocked to Brown, and by 1947, nearly 500 veterans had enrolled.⁹⁴

While egalitarian and patriotic ideals were important motives for the post-war expansion of Brown, more practical and arguably superficial sources of motivation were undeniably present. Brown leaders regretted that "there is a strong tendency no longer to look upon universities as great adventures of the human spirit but as community service stations."⁹⁵ Brown desperately wanted to shed its perception as a "junior college" that principally served local Rhode Island students, believing that this "parochial" approach to higher education promoted an isolationist view of the university, as an organization that existed to simply address local economic need. Brown, as such, sought in the post-war period to "actively encourage qualified students from all parts of the country to come to its campus."

No matter the different sources driving institutional expansion, Brown's aspirations for growth greatly expanded the pressure exerted on the university's already encumbered housing infrastructure. For the 1946-47 academic year, Brown experienced an on-campus housing

⁹² Wriston, Henry M. "Postwar Education and the Veteran." *The Rainbow of Delta Tau Delta*. November 1945. Box 149, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

⁹³ Phillips 76.

⁹⁴ Widmer 194.

⁹⁵ "Report to the Special Committee of the Corporation on the Size of Brown."

shortage of almost 700 beds.⁹⁶ By July 1948, admissions officer Emery R. Walker, Jr. was pleading for President Wriston to take bold action to correct the university's housing woes.⁹⁷ "This is an emergency of the first order," wrote Walker. "The University's relation with students, parents, and schools can be immeasurably damaged unless something is done." To keep the university's housing capacities afloat amidst its rapid expansion, the university would take remarkable measures.

Brownstown and Brown's Housing Plea

Brown's dire post-war housing situation compelled the university to adopt increasingly drastic measures. These emergency measures evinced a great willingness of the university's neighbors to support Brown and its students in a time of tremendous need. The seriousness of the measures were also important propellants in compelling the university and its donors to acknowledge that major investment in the university's housing stock could no longer be delayed.

While Brown's efforts to accept returning veterans with opened arms may have satisfied the university's perceived sense of patriotic duty, it entirely overwhelmed its housing infrastructure. Many of the veterans, older than most traditional students, often came to Providence with partners and children in tow. The university's housing plant, at the time almost entirely comprised of doubles and singles, was not built with such family units in mind, and the surrounding East Side neighborhoods were by and large unable to absorb this major influx of new families in the neighborhood's private rental units. As such, in January 1946, Brown entered into preliminary negotiations to secure 110 temporary housing units from the National Housing

⁹⁶ Schermerhorn 48.

⁹⁷ Walker, Jr., Emery R. Letter to Henry M. Wriston. 9 July 1948. Box 22, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

Agency.⁹⁸ These units were little more than temporary barracks, not unlike the accommodations that the service members had lived in while in the line of duty. The university placed these units on parking lots and empty athletic fields near the Brown football stadium on Elmgrove Avenue, north of the university's core. The university adjusted rent for each family to ensure that inhabitants were paying no more than 25 percent of their individual income.

By January 1947, 104 married students lived in these barracks, one family per unit. This small “village” of temporary units was fondly referred to as “Browntown.”⁹⁹ Brown administrators, in visiting Browntown, were surprised to find that the units, once decorated by their inhabitants, were “quite attractive” and “surprisingly warm.” By December 1947, 60 families with children—and 77 children in total—called Browntown “home.” Remarkably, at least 28 couples welcomed newly-born children into their young families while living in Browntown. Throughout its existence, Brown’s housing office continuously received new applications for the Browntown units. While the effort helped delay the housing crisis for married veterans, Brown still struggled with a dire shortage of housing for unmarried veterans and its civilian students.

In this moment of urgent need, Brown turned to its East Side neighbors for assistance. In the summer of 1946, the university issued an urgent “housing plea,” asking that neighbors provide housing accommodations for 697 students for whom on-campus beds did not exist.¹⁰⁰ Revealing the direness of their housing woes, Brown emphasized that the university was not only interested in neighbors’ guest rooms but also “attics, game rooms, Summer cottages, rooms over

⁹⁸ “Resume of Events Leading to Construction of Browntown, 1946.” 1946. Box 7, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

⁹⁹ Crooker, William. Letter to Henry M. Wriston. 27 January 1947. Box 22, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

¹⁰⁰ “Brown Issues Housing Plea: Asks City Residents to Provide Space for 697 Students.” 1946. Box 22, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

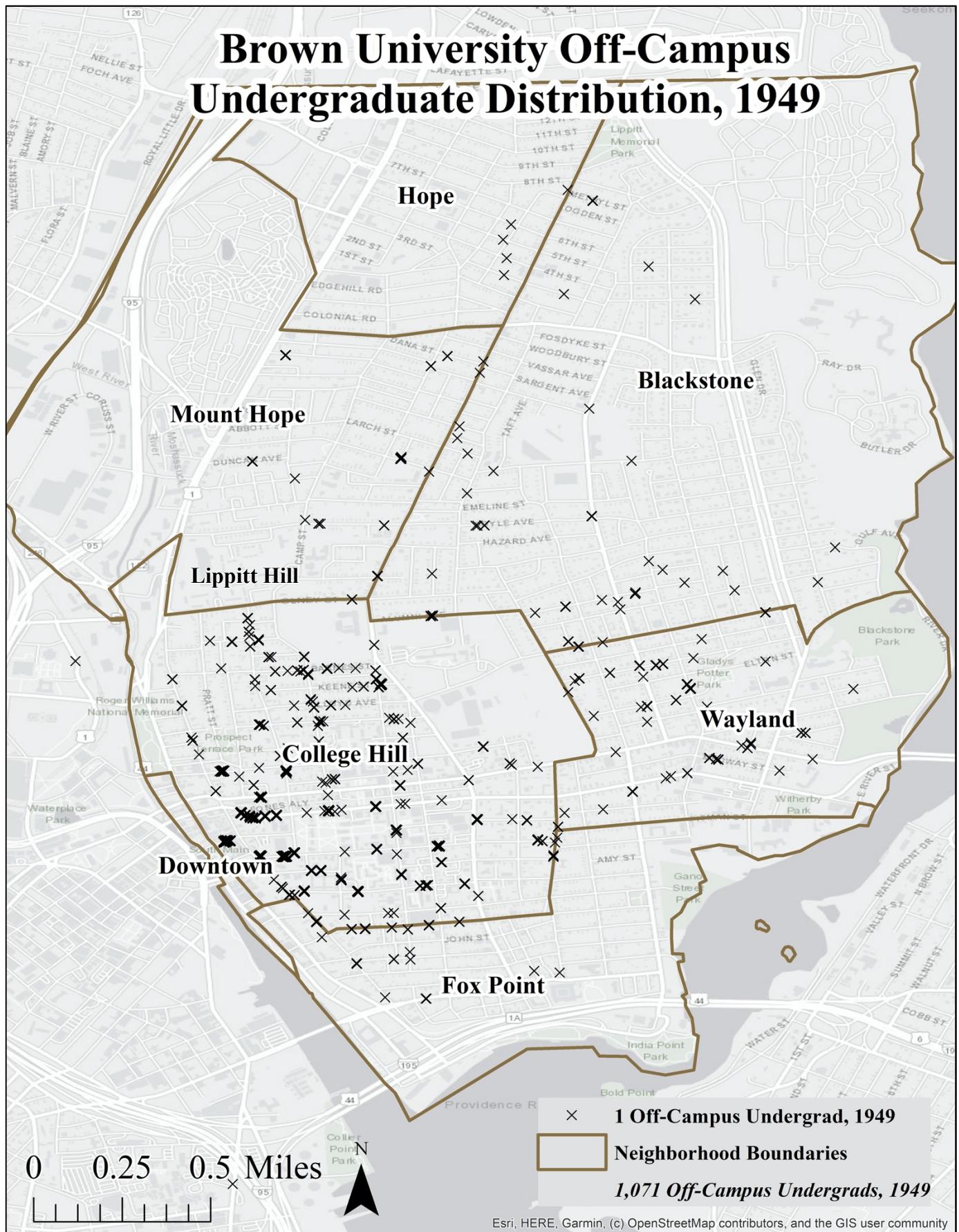


Exterior shot of "Brownstown" on Elmwood Avenue, circa 1947. Brown's Marvel Gymnasium stands in the background. (Courtesy of Images of Brown)



Interior of the Brownstown unit. (Courtesy of Images of Brown)

Brown University Off-Campus Undergraduate Distribution, 1949



Esri, HERE, Garmin, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community

garages, any usable habitable space.” The university’s East Side neighbors responded to this plea gallantly, making nearly 1,000 offers of assistance to the university.¹⁰¹ The Brown Alumni Magazine celebrated these offers as evidence of strong university-community relations. More accurately, the offers were evidence of the community’s remarkable extension of grace to the university.

Despite these extraordinary measures, addressing the university’s housing shortages became an annual struggle as the university’s student population grew each year. Again, by September 1949, only 77 on-campus spaces were available for the more than 500 students who requested them.¹⁰² James A. Cunningham, Jr. of the Brown housing office urged President Wriston to take sustained, not temporary, housing action, noting that the university’s housing woes were a “cumulative process that gets worse with each year that the situation is not remedied.” Wriston agreed, stating in July 1949, “we should build the quadrangles at the earliest possible moment.”¹⁰³ He added: “The grief that comes with the bad situation of Brown housing...cannot be cured until new accommodations are ready.”

Building Wriston’s Quadrangle

To build these accommodations, Brown would embark on what the university would call in 1952 “one of the largest construction programs ever undertaken by a single educational institution.”¹⁰⁴ The university called for two quadrangles that would expand its on-campus

¹⁰¹ Schermerhorn 49.

¹⁰² Cunningham Jr., James A. Letter to Henry M. Wriston. 18 August 1948. Box 22, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

¹⁰³ Wriston, Henry M. Letter to Mr. Davis and Mr. Crooker. 12 July 1949. Box 22, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

¹⁰⁴ “Final Report of the Housing and Development Fund 1945-1952.” *Bulletin of Brown University*. 1952. Box 2, George Street—Housing Committee (File 1-W/1-W). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 12 February 2020.

housing capacity by more than 1,000 beds. In imagining these quadrangles, President Wriston requested “nothing grandiloquent.”¹⁰⁵ “We seek only more appropriate provision for the life of the scholar,” he said. “We want living conditions to encourage his intellectual, moral, and social progress.”

Wriston launched a massive capital fundraising campaign—entitled “A Home for the Liberal Ideal”—to finance the quadrangles’ construction. He reminded potential donors that the campaign was not for “brick and mortar alone.”¹⁰⁶ “If this campaign was merely for beauty and comfort, we would have no right to ask all the alumni and all the friends of the University to contribute,” he said. Rather, this campaign was about defending and expanding Brown’s commitment to the preservation of liberal education.

In appealing to the state and citizens of Rhode Island for contributions to the campaign, Wriston argued that the Brown students who would occupy these dormitories would be the leaders of Rhode Island for years to come. The dormitories’ inhabitants—Wriston told Rhode Islanders at a December 1946 fundraising dinner in downtown Providence—“are going to be your employees tomorrow, your colleagues a little later on, and eventually your successors in the business and industry, the political and intellectual life of this city and this state.”¹⁰⁷ Many of Rhode Island’s leaders, like Governor J. Howard McGrath echoed Wriston in supporting Brown’s building campaign.¹⁰⁸ The entire state, McGrath argued, would benefit greatly from the university’s “enlightened program of physical expansion and social educational development...These buildings when completed are to be shrines of public service, no less than

¹⁰⁵ Wriston. “Educational Housing.”

¹⁰⁶ Schermerhorn 46.

¹⁰⁷ Schermerhorn 50.

¹⁰⁸ “2 Quadrangles, Refectory to Be Added to Campus.” *Providence Journal*. June 1945. Box 10, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

objects of pride in the hearts of Brown men.”

While Brown would raise some of the building expenses from self-liquidating loans, a great majority—approximately two-thirds—would come from private contributions. The campaign reached a tipping point when John D. Rockefeller, Jr.—son of the oil tycoon and Brown Class of 1897—pledged \$1.3 million for the quadrangles’ development.

With sufficient funds to begin construction, Wriston first turned his attention to Pembroke College. In his time as president, Wriston sought to address the “second class citizenship” of female students at Pembroke.¹⁰⁹ In the early 1940s, on-campus housing for “Pembrokers” was possibly even more underdeveloped than it was for their male counterparts. A far larger percentage of Pembroke students came from the immediate, Providence community, living with family and commuting to campus. Still, many female students lived in privately-run boarding houses. In 1941, only 45 percent of Pembroke students lived in on-campus accommodations.¹¹⁰ In the post-war years, applications to Pembroke had doubled, and serious investment in the college’s housing stock quickly became a major priority.

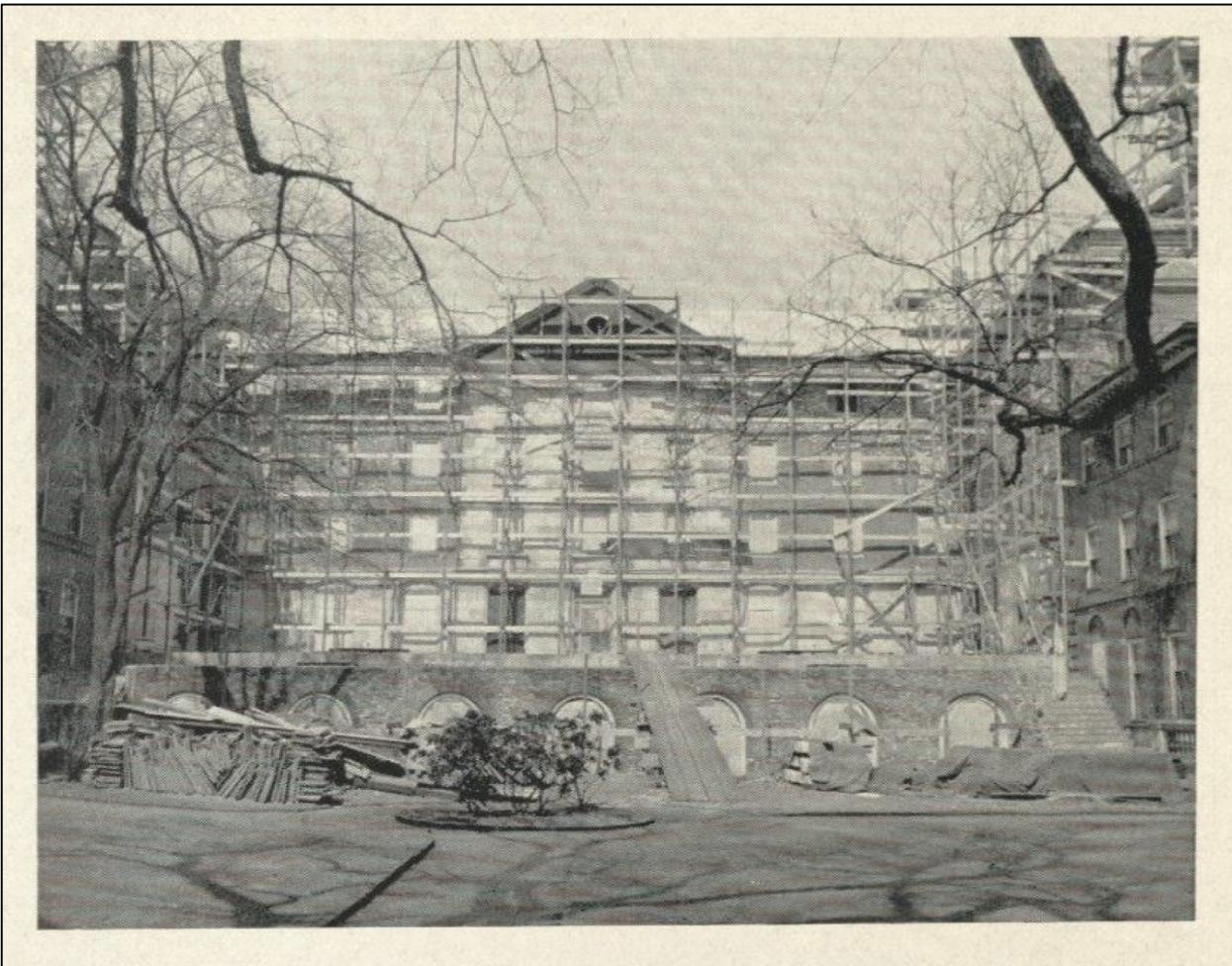
On April 22, 1946, Brown began construction on Andrews Hall.¹¹¹ This new dormitory, dedicated in October 1947, would structurally join two existing dormitories that faced one another from across a grassy patch: Miller Hall, built in 1910, and Metcalf Hall, built in 1919. Andrews Hall, though built with contemporary construction techniques and considered one of the most modern college buildings in the country, was designed in the Georgian style, popular in the colonial era.¹¹² The residence hall would be the first of the modern era to mimic these older

¹⁰⁹ Wriston. “An Era of Transition.”

¹¹⁰ “Facts about Pembroke and the Rhode Island Society for the Collegiate Education of Women.” 29 January 1941. Box 27, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

¹¹¹ Schermerhorn 54.

¹¹² Iselin 12-13.



Andrews Hall, under construction, circa 1946. (Taken from Wriston papers, box 149)

design styles, in the hopes of integrating itself into the campus's existing architectural profile. By adding on to Miller and Metcalf, Andrews Hall gave the Pembroke campus a U-shaped behemoth of a dormitory that expanded the college's on-campus capacity by more than 150 rooms.¹¹³

With additional housing for Pembroke underway, Wriston turned the building campaign's attention back to the men's college. Unlike at Pembroke, Brown lacked a property large enough

¹¹³ Morriss, Margaret S. Dedication of Andrews Hall. 2 November 1947. Box 27, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

for the massive quadrangle that the president envisioned. “Brown...is conspicuously under built,” Wriston complained.¹¹⁴ “The fact that there is not now sufficient land [for a new dormitory]...is adequate evidence that we are not hoarding property and that we are not acquiring it needlessly.” In a post-war analysis of its surroundings, the university decided that the two-block area bound by George, Thayer, Brown and Charlesfield Streets was the ideal location for construction of the envisioned quadrangle. The area was anything but undeveloped, however, and making way for construction of the quadrangle would be a massive undertaking, one that began Brown on a decades-long path of conflict with its neighbors.

Before beginning construction on the two-block area, Wriston would initiate what he would call “the greatest slum clearance since Sherman burned Atlanta.”¹¹⁵ In February 1949, 50 separate buildings stood in the quadrangle’s way, though the university owned a majority of them.¹¹⁶ Most had been acquired over the years through purchase or donation.¹¹⁷ Still, the university spent more than \$200,000 to acquire properties it did not already own.¹¹⁸ Preparation of the land for construction drastically altered the environment of the block. Once it had acquired the buildings that sat on it, the university closed Benevolent Street between Brown and Thayer Streets. With the assistance of U.S. Senator T.F. Green, the university acquired the Thayer Street Grammar School and prepared it for demolition.¹¹⁹ Since 1868, the Thayer Street School—which

¹¹⁴ Wriston. Letter to Harold B. Tanner.

¹¹⁵ Phillips 74.

¹¹⁶ “Report of the Committee for the Study of the Disposition of Houses on the Quadrangle Site, to the Advisory and Executive Committee of the Corporation and to the Student Housing Board.” 11 February 1949. Box II-3, Brown University Dean of the College files (OF.1CA.1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 14 February 2020.

¹¹⁷ “Final Report of the Housing and Development Fund 1945-1952.”

¹¹⁸ “Interim Report Re: Student Housing at Brown University.” 11 February 1948. Box II-3, Brown University Dean of the College files (OF.1CA.1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 14 February 2020.

¹¹⁹ Roberts, Dennis J. Letter to Theodore Francis Green. 26 December 1944. Box 129, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF.1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.



Site for the quadrangle, with white line marking area for demolition, circa 1946. Taken from an airplane looking westward. University Hall stands in the bottom left. (Taken from Photograph Collections III)



Thayer Street School. Photo taken from the northwest corner of Thayer and Charlesfield Streets. (Taken from Photograph Collections III)



Photograph of cleared northeastern lot of quadrangle, the contemporary site of the Sharpe Refectory, more commonly known as the "Ratty." (Taken From Photograph Collections III)

stood at the corner of Thayer and Charlesfield—had educated generations of neighborhood children.

Brown made minimal effort to preserve the structures that lay in the path of the quadrangle, asserting that the structures slated for demolition had “no historical value whatsoever.”¹²⁰ Of the 50 buildings on the construction site, the university determined that only eight were worthy of preservation. Only four of these structures were ultimately recommended for relocation. Among them, the Kenny House which sat on Benevolent Street, was moved to Power Street, “because of the architectural and historic value of this property and because of the importance of good will

¹²⁰ “Report of the Committee for the Study of the Disposition of Houses on the Quadrangle Site, to the Advisory and Executive Committee of the Corporation and to the Student Housing Board.”

with the community.”¹²¹ Of all the other buildings, the university ruled: “There would be no justifiable criticism for the University’s razing the houses not marked for relocation.”¹²²

On June 1, 1952, Wriston’s quadrangle was completed. The total cost of the project: over \$11 million dollars, more than double the originally projected costs.¹²³ The quadrangle dramatically expanded the university’s physical infrastructure, adding 750 residential beds and a dining hall, the Sharpe Refectory, more commonly referred to as “the Ratty” by students, built to serve 1,000 students. In a nearly two decade span under Wriston’s leadership, the university had made remarkable strides in expanding its housing capacity; from the time of Wriston’s arrival to the early 1950s, Brown had gone from a capacity to house approximately 40 percent of its students to a housing capacity of nearly 75 percent of its student body.¹²⁴

While housing shortages would persist after the construction of Wriston Quad, as it soon became known, President Wriston had a new-found confidence in the university’s ability to address these shortages. “After carefully weighing the facts and measuring my words,” Wriston would wryly observe before the Corporation in October 1953, “I have come to the conclusion that there is nothing wrong with Brown University which a few million dollars will not fix.”¹²⁵ Though Wriston set his eyes on another residential quadrangle, that battle would ultimately be carried on by his successor, Barnaby Keeney, a man who worked under the tutelage of Wriston and would largely follow the path set by Wriston.

¹²¹ “Kenny House.” 1459. “Report of the Committee for the Study of the Disposition of Houses on the Quadrangle Site, to the Advisory and Executive Committee of the Corporation and to the Student Housing Board.” Photograph Collections - III Wriston and Keeney Quads. Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

¹²² “Report of the Committee for the Study of the Disposition of Houses on the Quadrangle Site, to the Advisory and Executive Committee of the Corporation and to the Student Housing Board.”

¹²³ “Final Report of the Housing and Development Fund 1945-1952.”

¹²⁴ Schermerhorn 71.

¹²⁵ Schermerhorn 78.



Students walk through the completed Wriston Quad, circa 1947. (Courtesy Images of Brown)

Conclusion: A Series of Shocks to the Old College

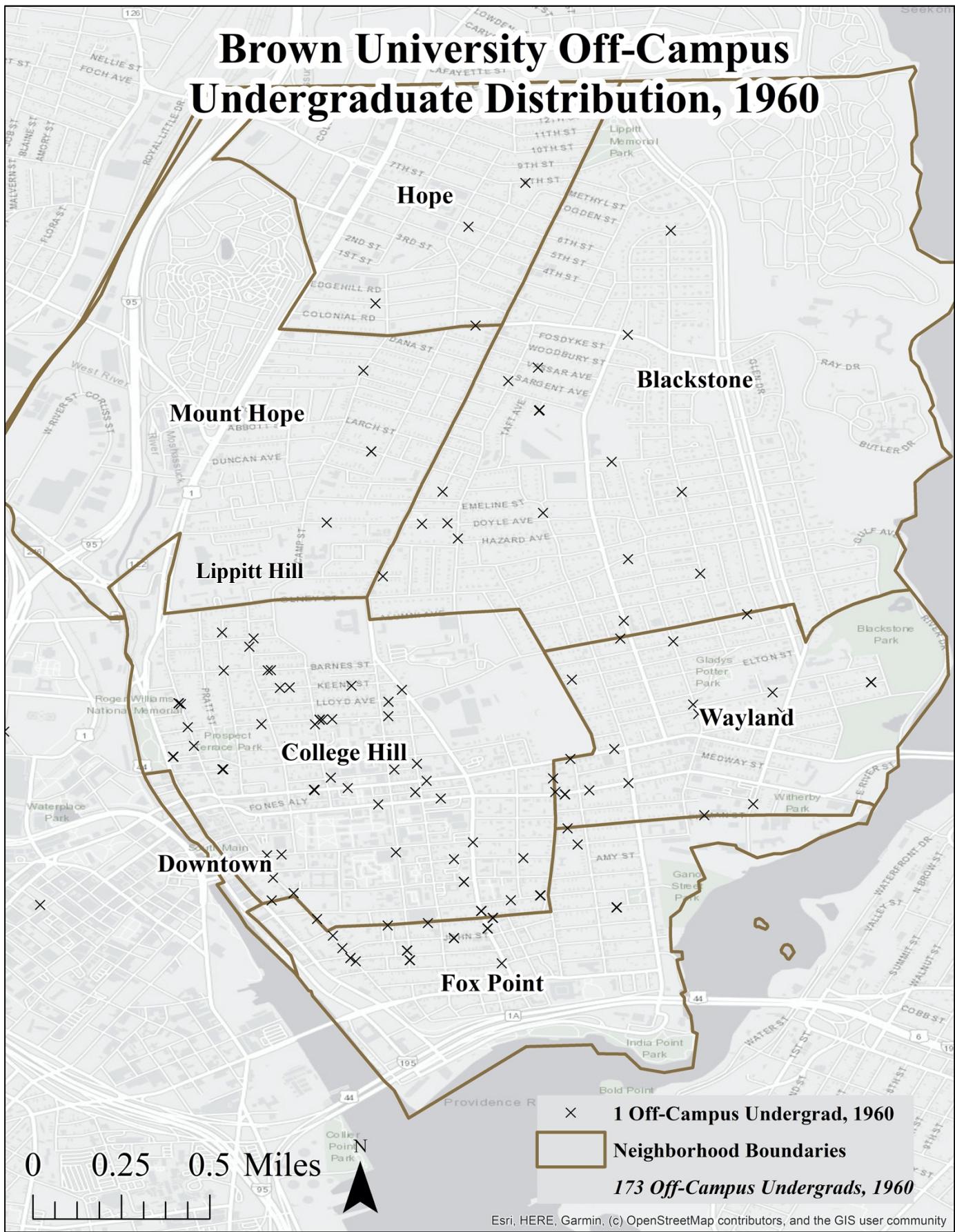
By the time Henry Wriston retired as Brown University President in 1955, he left behind a campus that was dramatically different from the one that he had inherited. Upon his retirement, Brown's campus was—in many respects—reinvigorated. In Wriston's nearly two decades of leadership, he had transformed the residential experience at Brown. Under Wriston, Brown added more than 1,000 rooms to the university's residential capacity.¹²⁶ But perhaps more significantly, he transformed the nature of residential life at Brown. When he arrived, Brown was

¹²⁶ Schermerhorn 79.

dominated by a decentralized fraternity culture that dissipated the university community throughout the East Side. When he retired, living on-campus had become the dominant social norm. While still far from the residential college of Wriston's aspirations, Brown had made a remarkable step in that direction. However, as we shall see in following chapters, that dominant norm was short-lived, and the value of the residential college, long presumed under Wriston, was actively questioned by Brown students, faculty, and administrators alike.

During the Wriston years, Brown's housing policy was in large part guided by the university's reaction to post-war trends occurring at the national and international levels. As we have seen, the university's housing construction was initiated to accommodate the unparalleled expansion of the American college population and to counter shifting concepts of higher education that Brown leaders thought damaging. However, the nuclei of the trends to which Wriston's successor would respond were far more homegrown, originating with sources just beyond the edge of its campus.

Brown University Off-Campus Undergraduate Distribution, 1960



Chapter 2: Replace Those Things That Are No Longer Useful:

The Keeney Years, 1955-1966

Following in the footsteps of a giant is rarely an enviable job, but Barnaby C. Keeney was up for the challenge. In selecting Henry Wriston's successor, the Brown Corporation did not seek out another president with a penchant for institutional agitation, an indication of its approval of the university's new direction under Wriston. Barnaby Keeney was an "insider." He had joined the faculty as a professor of medieval history in 1946 and soon was promoted, first to Dean of the Graduate School in 1949 and then to Dean of the College in 1953.¹²⁷

Keeney was poised to continue the momentum in Brown's residential transformation that Wriston had initiated. Like Wriston, Keeney believed that Brown must continue to expand in size to keep up with the growth of public schools and to maintain liberal education's standing, despite the rise of technological and vocational learning.¹²⁸ Keeney shared Wriston's belief in the critical educational value of the collegiate residential experience, though perhaps he expressed this commitment more succinctly than his predecessor: "Education is a full-time job," said Keeney.¹²⁹ "It should occupy every waking hour of the student, even those devoted to recreation. A dormitory must be an invitation to learning, and every hour that a student spends in it must be spent in learning, however pleasantly." In ideological agreement with Wriston, Keeney believed that Brown must advance its commitment to educational housing, saying in 1956: "We seek to

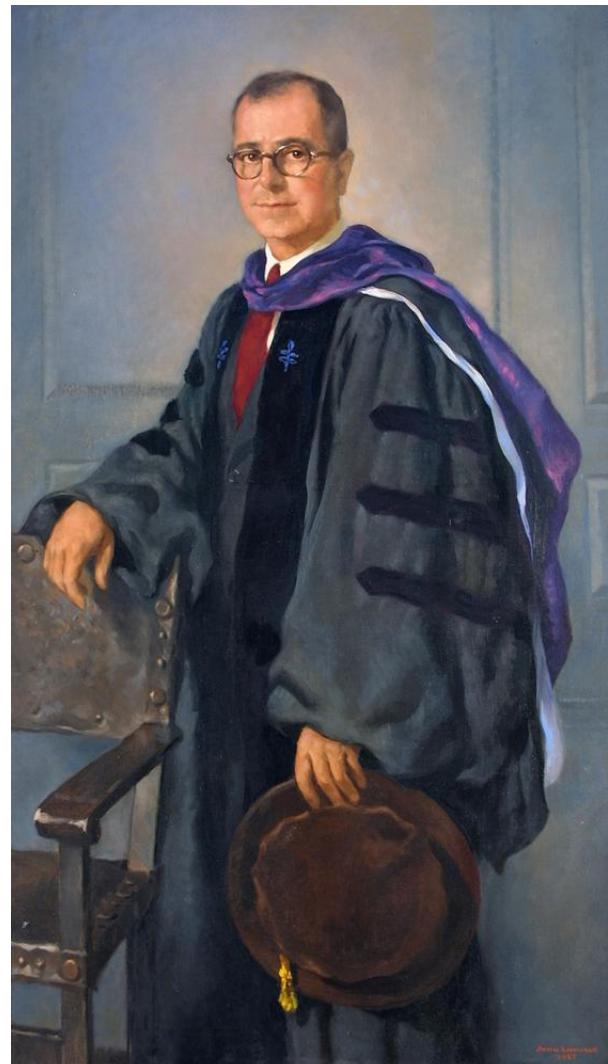
¹²⁷ Phillips, Janet M. *Brown University: A Short History*. Brown University Office of University Relations, 1992, pp. 78.

¹²⁸ Schermerhorn, Peter. *Competing Visions: Historic Preservation and Institutional Expansion on Providence's East Side, 1937-1966*. 2005. Brown University, Bachelor of Arts in History Honors Thesis, pp. 84.

¹²⁹ Keeney, Barnaby C. "Forward." Speech at the Dedication of Champlin and Morriss Halls, October 1960. Box 20, Barnaby Conrad Keeney Papers (OF.1C.12). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 18 February 2020.

approach the ideal of a completely residential college.”¹³⁰ With approximately a quarter of its students living in off-campus accommodations, attaining that ideal would be no small order, requiring the addition of yet another massive residential quadrangle.

As we shall see in this chapter, building Keeney’s quadrangle would set in motion a chain of events, which began with the founding of the Providence Preservation Society (PPS). As this chapter documents, the PPS would significantly influence two successive projects—the *College Hill Study* and the East Side Renewal Project—that would radically change the character of the East Side. This chapter also examines the rise of the policy techniques of “urban renewal,” which dominated mid-century urban environments and provided the ideological backbone of the *College Hill Study*. Brown’s peer institutions were significantly involved in urban renewal efforts in their respective cities. Though not as visible as that of its peers, Brown’s participation in urban renewal in its surrounding neighborhoods was robust nonetheless, and urban renewal dramatically impacted how the university related to its surroundings in the mid-century and beyond.



Portrait of Barnaby C. Keeney, by John Lavalle, 1957.
(Courtesy of Brown University Office of the Curator Portrait Collection)

¹³⁰ Schermerhorn 118.

A Second Great Accomplishment in University Housing

Despite the tremendous growth in the university's residential capacity under Wriston, perennial housing shortages still plagued the rapidly growing university. In August 1954, admissions officer Emery R. Walker, Jr. explained to university leaders that 179 students had been assigned to temporary, emergency quarters until regular rooms became available.¹³¹ In the four short years following the opening of Wriston Quad, the percentage of on-campus students would dip from 78 to 74 percent, simply due to the university's increased enrollment.¹³² "Boys are mad, and their mothers are beside themselves," reported Walker. "The word will get back to [high] schools, and we will return to where we were seven and eight years ago; we are once again 'the college that can't house its students.'"

The threat of institutional relapse following Wriston's years of progress ignited a fire under Keeney to build another residential quadrangle with all possible speed. For its next development, the university selected a site bound by Charlesfield, Brown, and Benevolent Streets, located just west of the newly-completed Wriston Quad. As with Wriston Quad, the construction site for West Quadrangle—as it would first be known—was anything but vacant. Eleven homes lay in its path. Unlike Wriston Quad, however, a far greater percentage of these homes—eight of the 11 structures—were of historical and architectural significance.¹³³ Many of the homes—more accurately classified as mansions—were once occupied by important figures in the city and state's history, like the home located at 17 Benevolent Street, the former residence of Rhode Island Governor Seth Padelford.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Walker, Jr., Emery R. Letter to Henry M. Wriston. 30 August 1954. Box 22, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

¹³² "The West Quadrangle of Brown University." September 1967. Box 22, Barnaby Conrad Keeney Papers (OF.1C.12). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 18 February 2020.

¹³³ Schermerhorn 104.

¹³⁴ Ibid 105.

With Wriston Quad's wholesale demolition of two city blocks in recent memory, many of the university's neighbors were anxious to get ahead of Brown in preventing demolition of this scale for West Quad. Prominent East Siders like Antoinette Downing and John Hutchins Cady petitioned the university in December 1955 to save two early 19th century homes slated for demolition. They requested that Brown incorporate them into the quadrangle's construction, eventually collecting the signatures of 106 city residents who supported the homes' preservation.¹³⁵ Downing, Hutchins Cady, and many of the petitioners were members of what Providence historians Francis J. Leazes, Jr. and Mark T. Motte would call the city's "first families."¹³⁶ They were wealthy, white residents whom were often descendants of the region's original European settlers and leading mercantile families. Like Downing, the wife of Brown faculty member George E. Downing, and Cady—Brown Class of 1903, many of these prominent neighbors also had a direct, personal relationship with the university.

In his response to the petitioners, President Keeney expressed his regret for the "necessity of destroying the houses in the area to be occupied by the new Quadrangle."¹³⁷ Keeney suggested that the university had done what it could have been reasonably expected to do, citing the university's "considerable effort to move these houses." The scope of this effort, in reality, was limited. While the university agreed to symbolically sell the homes for one dollar, any buyer would need to assume the financial responsibility of relocating the buildings, an endeavor that would cost at least \$30,000.¹³⁸ Antoinette Downing scolded the university for its failure to take a more active role in the houses' preservation, arguing that Brown's decision to build on this site

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Leazes, Francis J., and Mark T. Motte. *Providence, the Renaissance City*. Northeastern University Press, 2004, pp. 53.

¹³⁷ Keeney, Barnaby C. Letter to Antoinette Downing, John Hutchins Cady, and Clarkson A. Collins. 10 December 1955. Box 21, Barnaby Conrad Keeney Papers (OF.1C.12). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 18 February 2020.

¹³⁸ Schermerhorn 104.



Site for West Quadrangle, with a white line marking the area for demolition, 1946. Taken from an airplane looking westward. The recently-completed Wriston Quadrangle is visible at the photo's top. (Taken from Photograph Collections IX)



The Shepard House on Charlesfield Street, a Greek revival house deemed "exceptionally luxuriant" by Brown. It lay in West Quad's path and would be razed. (Taken from Photograph Collections IX)

came with a “responsibility to see that the quality of this area, a real center of early Republican Providence, is not jettisoned.”¹³⁹ Downing rejected what she saw as a ruthless and insensitive approach to advancing residential education at Brown, adding:

We would expect Brown to consider such salvage as an important investment, an investment which would have some of the same purposes a liberal education has... To tear down such buildings, real and rooted in the life of the city, is a betrayal of a trust, the responsibility to our past. We would be proud if Brown, even at this late date, would see its way to “preserve and improve” our city.

In late December 1955, Keeney simply responded, “I hope very much that you will be able to raise funds to help save one of the houses for which there is some hope of preservation.”¹⁴⁰ No individual or collective capable of paying for the buildings’ relocation came forward, and all 11 houses in West Quad’s path came down.¹⁴¹

On September 7, 1957, West Quad was completed. At its dedication, Keeney celebrated the campus’s newest addition as a “dignified and happy home” for the university’s independents, the continuously growing contingent of the student body not affiliated with fraternities.¹⁴² The West Quad, built in the American Georgian style like Wriston Quad, constituted another impressive advancement in the pursuit of the residential college for Brown, adding almost 350 rooms to the university’s capacity and allowing the university to house more than 2,000 students in total, or about 83 percent of its students.¹⁴³ With no shortage of irony, Keeney extended a gracious thank you to “our neighbors, some of whom, we know, have been inconvenienced at various times as

¹³⁹ Downing, Antoinette et al. Letter to Barnaby C. Keeney. 14 December 1955. Box 21, Barnaby Conrad Keeney Papers (OF.1C.12). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 18 February 2020.

¹⁴⁰ Keeney, Barnaby C. Letter to Antoinette Downing, John Hutchins Cady, and Clarkson A. Collins. 20 December 1955. Box 21, Barnaby Conrad Keeney Papers (OF.1C.12). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 18 February 2020.

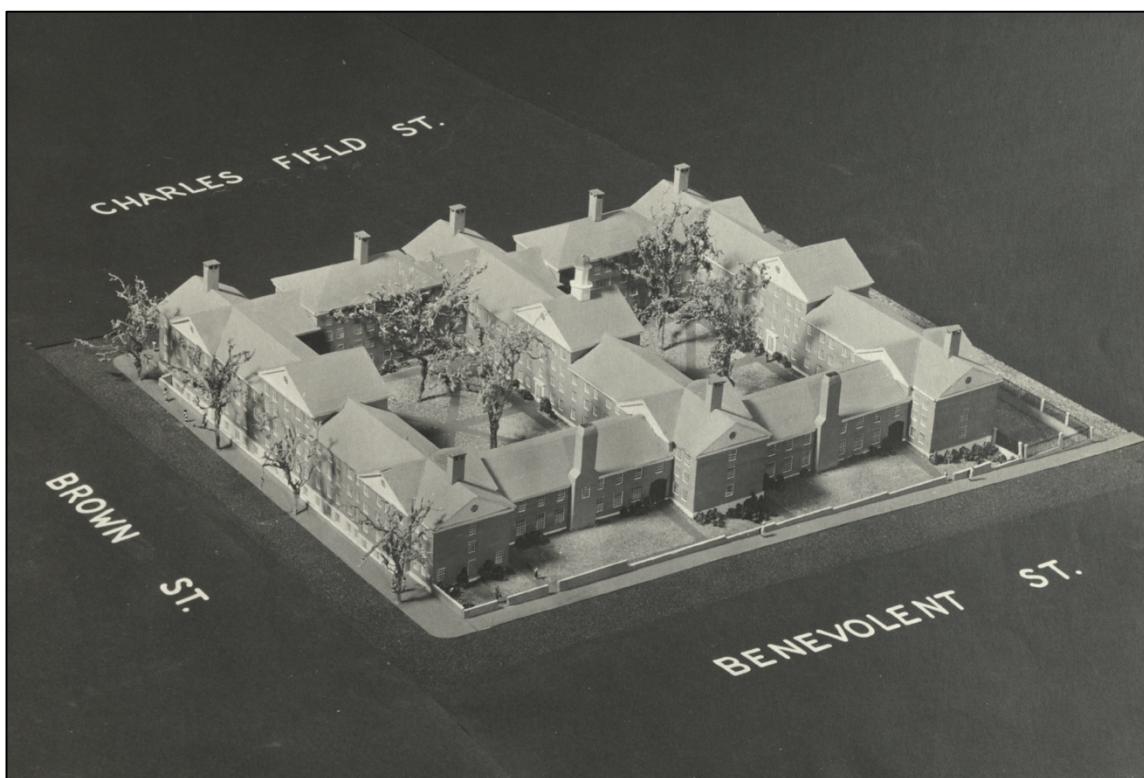
¹⁴¹ The Providence Preservation Society. “The College Hill Study.” *The PPS Legacy: How the College Hill Study Saved Providence*, 2016.

¹⁴² “The West Quadrangle of Brown University.”

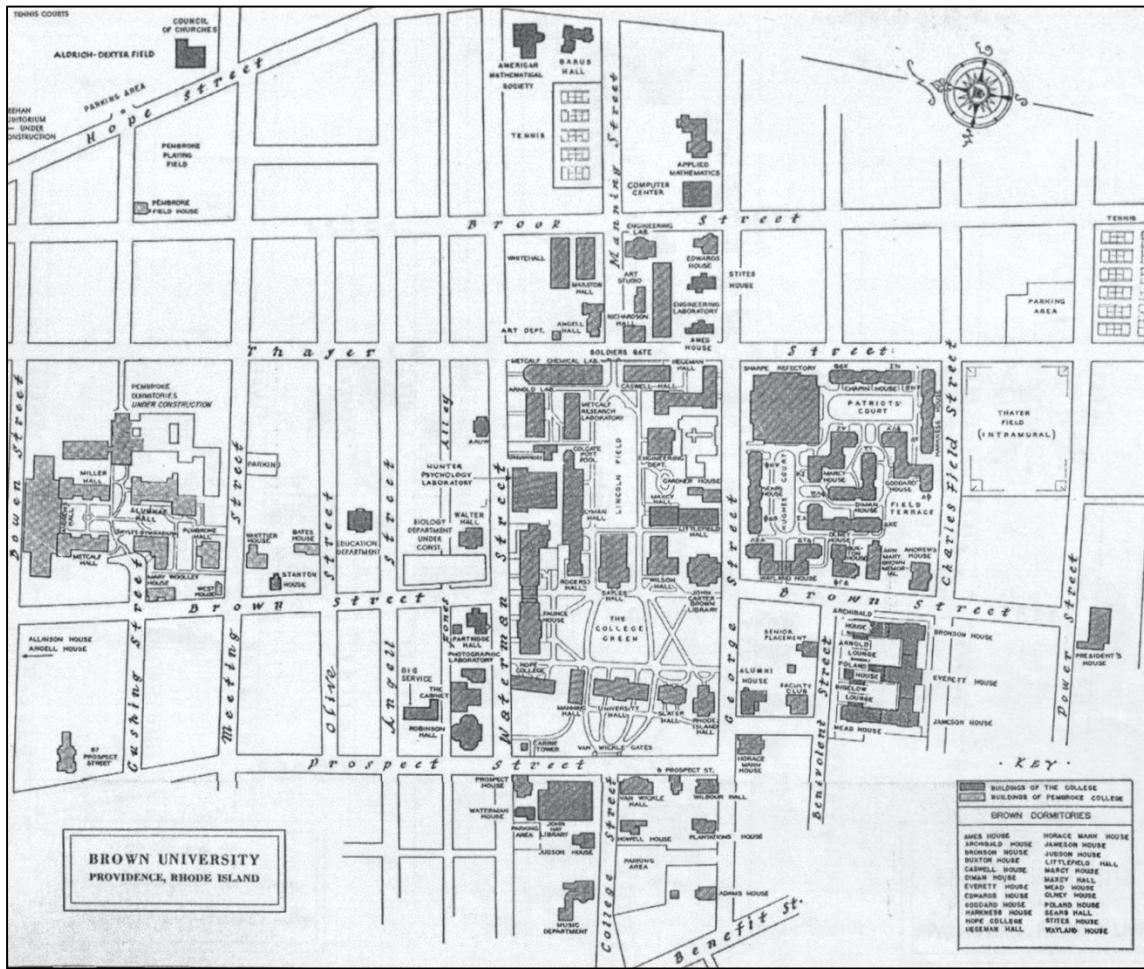
¹⁴³ Ibid.



A house on Benevolent Street in mid-demolition to make way for West Quad. (Taken from Photograph Collections IX)



A model of the planned new quad. (Taken from Photograph Collections IX)



Brown University physical plant in 1962, following the construction of the two new quadrangles. (Taken from Schermerhorn)

the necessary phases of construction were carried on... We hope they feel, as we do," said Keeney, "that the quadrangle constitutes a valuable improvement to the city as well as to the University."

To Keeney, West Quad constituted a marvelous step forward for Brown. “The educational effects of the Quadrangle are almost inestimable and the effect on the student body is beyond belief,” he said.¹⁴⁴ Upon West Quad’s completion, Keeney—following in the footsteps of his predecessor—could boast of Brown’s “second great accomplishment in university housing”

¹⁴⁴ Keeney, Barnaby C. "Chapel Talk to Seniors." 20 April 1955. Box 93, Barnaby Conrad Keeney Papers (OF.1C.12). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 18 February 2020.

which “strengthened our belief that student residences have an intellectual and not merely a physical function.”¹⁴⁵ Within a remarkably short timespan following his presidential inauguration, Keeney had his crowning infrastructural accomplishment; in 1982, West Quadrangle was formally renamed Keeney Quadrangle in his honor.

While Keeney’s December 1955 letter put an end to his exchange with Downing, Hutchins Cady, and the petitioning East Siders, the university’s arguably callous response to neighborhood concern about campus development was only just beginning. The university’s rejection of its neighbors’ pleas and its apparent willingness to demolish Providence’s historic buildings would be critical components in the birth of an organization—the Providence Preservation Society—whose organized and collective efforts would dramatically alter the university’s future growth and the character of the East Side with it.

The Past as Asset for the Future

On February 20, 1956, the Rhode Island Historical Society called a special meeting. Its purpose: address the demolition of historic homes in College Hill that fell in the wake of Brown’s housing construction program.¹⁴⁶ The meeting was attended by individuals now remembered as bulwarks of historic preservation in Rhode Island, including Antoinette Downing, John Hutchins Cady, and Elizabeth Slater Allen, among them. John Nicholas Brown II—the great-grandson of Nicholas Brown, Jr., the namesake patron of Brown University—chaired the meeting. Before the gathering’s close, the group determined that Brown’s rough-handed maneuvering in the community necessitated a new organization, separate and distinct

¹⁴⁵ Iselin, Diane C. *Ivied Halls: Two Centuries of Housing at Brown University*. Office of Residential Life, Brown University, 1981, pp. 29.

¹⁴⁶ The Providence Preservation Society.

from the Historical Society—an organization that was empowered to be more outspoken and active in the city's political affairs. The Providence Preservation Society was born.

For an organization dedicated to the preservation of the past, the Providence Preservation Society, or PPS, has always been remarkably forward-oriented. “The evidence of the past is an asset for the future,” its original charter reads.¹⁴⁷ To John Nicholas Brown II—the first chairman of PPS—the organization did not seek to create a “sentimental antiquarian or archaeological project.”¹⁴⁸ Rather, he saw the work of the PPS—specifically in the College Hill area, where almost all of its focus was dedicated in the organization’s early days—as a critical effort in returning economic stability to one of the city’s original neighborhoods. As Brent Runyon, the Executive Director of PPS since 2013, explained: “we were founded on this model of progress, rather than museums. We’re not based on trying to preserve the buildings in the amber. It’s all about balancing progress with preservation and using preservation for progress.”¹⁴⁹

To early members of the PPS, Brown University was woefully abdicating its neighborly responsibility to, in Runyon’s words, balance its progress with preservation. “Paradoxically,” Antoinette Downing said in February 1956, “the most destruction [in Providence] has come from our leading educational institution.”¹⁵⁰ PPS believed that residents of a colonial city like Providence must, as stated in the organization’s charter, “accept the responsibilities as well as the privileges which come with living in an old city.”¹⁵¹ As an institution of higher education, universities like Brown, PPS argued, had a heightened charge to heed this responsibility, a responsibility born out of its liberal education mission. “Preserving buildings doesn’t mean going

¹⁴⁷ Woodward, William McKenzie. “1956-1981: 25th Anniversary of the Providence Preservation Society.” 1981. Box 26, John Nicholas Brown II Papers (Ms.2007.012). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 20 February 2020.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Runyon, Brent, Executive Director of the Providence Preservation Society. Personal interview. 23 March 2020.

¹⁵⁰ Schermerhorn 110.

¹⁵¹ Woodward.



PPS founding members (left to right) John Nicholas Brown II, Antoinette Downing, and Washington Irving shown here presenting a celebratory citation to the superintendent of the Rhode Island State House. (Taken from J.N. Brown papers, box 26)

back to live in the past but simply to enrich present day life," Downing argued.¹⁵² "It is the sort of thing a university stands for when it stands for liberal education."

While vehement disapproval of Brown's destruction of city blocks was the central impetus for the founding of PPS, the university and the preservation society were not, even in PPS's earliest days, always antagonistic. On occasion, Brown and PPS worked collaboratively. For instance, in 1958, PPS president Elizabeth Slater Allen solicited contributions from her members

¹⁵² Schermerhorn 106.

to aid Brown in its effort to renovate Hope College, a university dormitory built in 1823 and the second building constructed by Brown.¹⁵³ On a deeper level, most PPS members earnestly believed that the university could meaningfully serve the neighborhood and the city. As previously noted, many of the preservation society's most influential members had dual loyalties between their preservation work and the advancement of Brown. Many were Brown alumni, spouses of high-ranking faculty, or, as in the case of John Nicholas Brown II, members of the Brown Corporation.¹⁵⁴ That Brown must continue to grow was a given. "The Providence Preservation Society exists for the express purpose of guiding that growth so that our streets may be improved and beautified...while still allowing living space for the town's expanding activities and institutions," said Slater Allen.¹⁵⁵ As her phraseology attests, influencing that university growth—steering it away from certain areas and towards others—would be a primary mission of the society in its early days.

PPS would become one of the most influential private organizations in the city's history, no doubt a result in part of the tremendous social, political, and economic authority that many of its early members held and wielded effectively. The creation of PPS dramatically re-shaped the East Side through another means as well. As we shall see, the birth of PPS coincided with the urban renewal era of American urban history; the society's members were in large part guided by the era's dominant philosophies. PPS's classification as a "citizen's organization" dedicated to urban preservation opened the door to tens of millions of dollars of federal urban renewal money for Providence.¹⁵⁶ This money would fund one of the most influential studies in the history of the city, a study whose ideas still echo throughout the East Side's streets. In the following section,

¹⁵³ Ibid 123.

¹⁵⁴ "John Nicholas Brown Dies at Age 79." *Washington Post*. 11 October 1979.

¹⁵⁵ Schermerhorn 117.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid 113.

we examine the “post-war plight” of American cities and the rise of urban renewal in response to this “plight” to understand the context in which the young PPS operated. We also examine the active role that many of Brown’s peer institutions assumed in the urban renewal era to understand the context in which Brown, under the leadership of Keeney, expanded its campus in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Urban Renewal and the University

Following the end of the Second World War, many cities descended into what sociologists and urban historians have referred to as the “urban crisis,” a period where industry abandoned urban centers, white residents moved to the suburbs in droves, and cities became sites of persistent and deepening poverty.¹⁵⁷ Between 1950 and 1960, the nation’s suburban population grew by 60 percent, while the populations of many cities, particularly industrial hubs like Boston and Pittsburgh, declined by more than 10 percent.¹⁵⁸ Industry and white populations abandoned cities in part due to demographic change, as urban centers across the nation experienced a rapid influx of Black southerners who were leaving the oppressive segregation of the American South. White families’ move to the suburbs was supported by the federal government, which through measures like the GI Bill and a national program of highway construction subsidized the development of single-family, socially and economically homogenous communities away from cities, while also connecting these communities to downtown job centers.¹⁵⁹

As historian Margaret O’Mara explains, city leaders of the 1950s and 60s defined their

¹⁵⁷ Florida, Richard. “Confronting the New Urban Crisis.” *CityLab*, 11 April 2017.

¹⁵⁸ Diner, Steven J. *Universities and Their Cities: Urban Higher Education in America*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017, pp. 42.

¹⁵⁹ O’Mara, Margaret Pugh. *Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley*. Princeton University Press, 2015, pp. 34-35.

cities' challenges as problems "of aesthetics, not of structural inequality," O'Mara argues that "the core problem diagnosed by civic leaders and planners was 'blight': unsightly, crowded, functionally 'obsolete' buildings and infrastructure."¹⁶⁰ Urban leaders saw their cities in competition with surrounding suburbs for jobs, investment, and tax revenue. These leaders believed that they struggled to compete because of a lack of parking and outdated downtown infrastructure. Indeed, they thought that if they could clear "blight" and make their cities more car-friendly, they could re-attract the industry and tax base that had retreated from their urban cores.

In response to this understanding of the "urban crisis," city leaders across the nation advocated and adopted policies of "urban renewal." These policies hoped to revitalize cities by bulldozing economically depressed areas and then attracting wealth back into urban cores through new development.¹⁶¹ The urban renewal era was ushered in by the passage of the 1949 Housing Act, which provided a two-pronged strategy for postwar revitalization: first, the allocation of \$1 billion for "slum clearance" and "blight removal" and, second, a \$500 million investment in "new low-rent public housing units."¹⁶² The law called for a local-federal partnership, wherein federal grants would cover up to two-thirds of the city's expenditures.

The legacy of urban renewal is, at the very least, mixed. While its policies targeted housing units that were undoubtedly deteriorating, urban renewal ultimately destroyed more units than it replaced, resulting in a net loss of housing opportunities in cities. Just as importantly, advocates of urban renewal failed to realize—or, perhaps more accurately, preferred to ignore—the human

¹⁶⁰ Ibid 75.

¹⁶¹ Marcuse, Peter and Cuz Potter. "Columbia University's Heights: An Ivory Tower and Its Communities." *The University as Urban Developer Case Studies and Analysis*, edited by David C. Perry and Wim Wiewel, Routledge, 2015, pp. 48.

¹⁶² Puckett, John, and Mark Frazier Lloyd. *Becoming Penn: the Pragmatic American University, 1950-2000*. Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2015, pp. 60.

cost of displacing hundreds of thousands of residents, rupturing invaluable social networks and communities that, despite economic hardship, looked out for one another.¹⁶³

The ugly truth of urban renewal was that those areas targeted for “revitalization” were primarily neighborhoods occupied by people of color or ethnic groups. It is important to understand that urban renewal programs were not intended to address American poverty; rather, these programs were attempts to “inject economic vitality into central cities, boost the fortunes of downtown businesses, and reconfigure the demographic composition of certain urban neighborhoods to make them more middle-class and more white.”¹⁶⁴ While proponents of urban renewal sought to remove infrastructural “blight,” they also sought to actively exchange low-income, non-white city dwellers for middle-class, white residents. This exchange was in part motivated by the belief that city leaders could rejuvenate cities’ declining tax bases by attracting the white possessors of wealth who just recently abandoned their cities. But undoubtedly, American urban renewal was also motivated by deep-seated racial animus, an animus that equated the presence of Black and other non-white residents as inherent indicators of a neighborhood’s economic decline. Urban renewal actively assigned intrinsic value to white residents and white-occupied spaces while devaluing non-white residents and non-white spaces.

As historian Richard Rothstein observes, isolating this implicit racial animus is a challenging endeavor, as “frequently class snobbishness and racial prejudice are so intertwined that it is impossible to disengage their notions and prove racial discrimination.”¹⁶⁵ However, the lasting effect of urban renewal was undeniably discriminatory. Nine of every ten families displaced by urban renewal—approximately 1 million people in total—were non-white, leading

¹⁶³ Bull, Marijoan, and Alina Gross. *Housing in America: an Introduction*. Routledge, 2018, pp. 48-49.

¹⁶⁴ O’Mara 76.

¹⁶⁵ Rothstein, Richard. *The Color of Law: a Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. Liveright Publishing Corporation, a Division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2018, pp. 53.

writers like James Baldwin to adeptly note that “urban renewal means Negro removal.”¹⁶⁶ In practice, words like “blight” and “slums” were little more than euphemisms for Black communities and other communities of color.

Many proponents of urban renewal believed that these human costs were a bearable consequence of “progress;” New York City urban renewal champion Robert Moses famously asserted that “You can’t make an omelet without breaking some eggs.”¹⁶⁷ However, critics assert that urban renewal actually accelerated the decline of central cities, displacing and consolidating low-income people in segregated sections of cities that became increasingly devoid of investment and were cut-off from services and job opportunities.

Universities were not passive bystanders in the urban renewal era. Many urban universities fought aggressively to ensure that their institutions stood to substantially gain from urban renewal practices. As deindustrialization shook cities, institutions of higher education had increasingly become many cities’ largest employers and islands of wealth in otherwise economically declining areas.¹⁶⁸ The “plight of the urban university” in the 1950s was, in the opinion of many university leaders, being “left behind to inherit a neighborhood growing steadily less desirable.”¹⁶⁹

Meanwhile, many university leaders in congested urban environments believed that urban renewal could be leveraged to meet their growing demand for space during the post-war expansion of higher education. In 1959, Julian Levi—assistant to the president of the University of Chicago—argued that “it is virtually impossible for [universities] to assemble usable

¹⁶⁶ Diner 43.

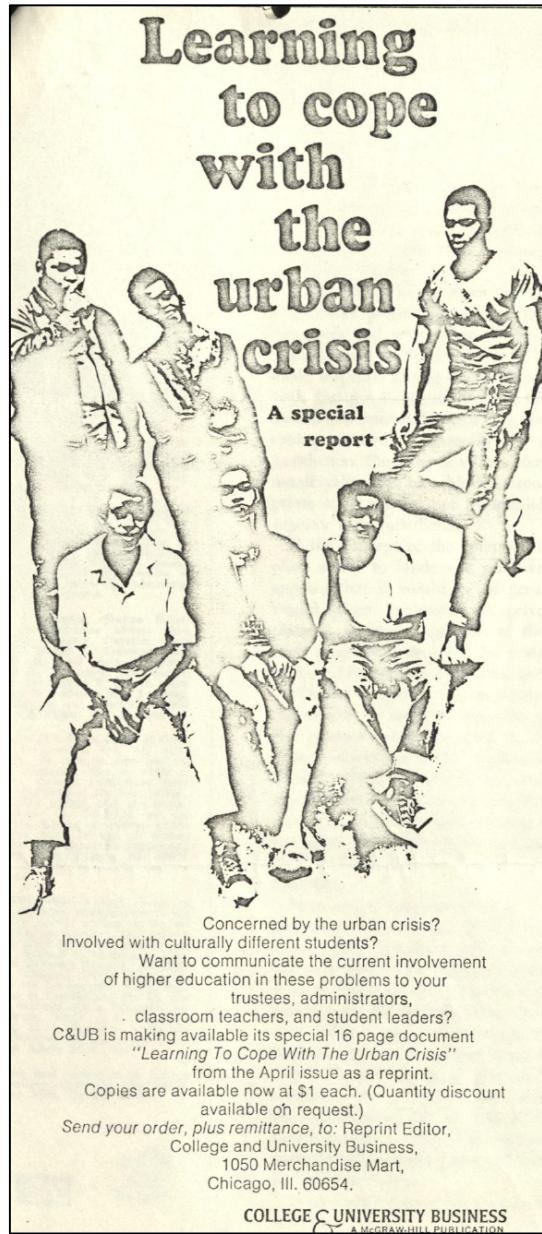
¹⁶⁷ Caro, Robert. *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*. Vintage Books, 1975, pp. 218.

¹⁶⁸ Bromley, Ray. “On and off Campus: Colleges and Universities as Local Stakeholders.” *Planning Practice and Research*, vol. 21, no. 1, February 2006, pp. 4.

¹⁶⁹ Diner 52.

construction sites through the acquisition of needed land by negotiation.” Colleagues like University of Pennsylvania vice president John Moore agreed: the university, said Moore, “cannot expand unless it is given some instrument to assist it in its endeavor.”¹⁷⁰

Later that year, that instrument arrived in the form of the Section 112 amendment to the 1949 Housing Act. In large part devised by Levi—whom peers would call “Mr. Urban University Urban Renewal”—Section 112 made urban universities a critical component of many cities’ urban renewal efforts.¹⁷¹ Section 112 amended urban renewal legislation so that, for projects occurring near a campus, university expenditure for processes like land acquisition, building demolition, and resident relocation could be counted towards the city’s project contribution.¹⁷² For every one dollar in expenditure, universities could leverage up to three dollars in federal money for their host city. As such, cash-strapped cities were highly incentivized to include universities in their renewal efforts and all the more



A pamphlet advertising assistance for university leaders to “cope with the urban crisis.” (Taken from Stevens papers, box 21)

¹⁷⁰ Puckett and Lloyd 62.

¹⁷¹ The Association of Urban Universities. *Summary of Proceedings of the Forty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the Association of Urban Universities*. 1961, pp. 54.

¹⁷² Fitzpatrick, B.T.. “Procedures for Campus Participation in Urban Renewal.” *The University, the City, and Urban*

encouraged to acquiesce university demand for increased space. Much the same, Section 112 encouraged universities to see their surrounding, shifting communities as “blighted” so they could be included in projects and leverage the city’s cooperation.¹⁷³ Not surprisingly, university and cities responded to these incentives: from 1959 to 1967, 115 projects with a total area of 12,000 acres leveraged almost \$500 million in Section 112 federal grants.¹⁷⁴

Individuals like William L. Slayton, commissioner of the federal Urban Renewal Administration, worried about Section 112’s “great danger,” that it may be “considered by the universities solely as an advantageous mechanism for the expansion of their campuses.”¹⁷⁵ But Slayton’s concern appears idiosyncratic among renewal leaders, as others like B.T. Fitzpatrick, co-author of Section 112, asserted that the purpose of the amendment was to “permit institutions to get tough at the bargaining table.”¹⁷⁶ Evoking the higher calling of the university’s mission, Levi agreed: “the institution should not be held up” in its expansion, he said. Echoing logic employed to argue for the post-war expansion of Brown, Levi believed that if universities cannot acquire their needed space, “the college doors will be closed to thousands of young men and women.”¹⁷⁷ Levi continued:

*It is obvious that in the displacement which will occur, many displaced families and merchants will not like the result...But the right of eminent domain is invoked for the precise reason that the man who does not want to sell must do so because of the public interest.*¹⁷⁸

Tools like Section 112 were actively used by many of Brown’s peer institutions to

Renewal: edited by Charles G. Dobbins, American Council on Education, 1963, pp. 16-17.

¹⁷³ Puckett and Lloyd 83-84.

¹⁷⁴ Marcuse and Potter 154-155.

¹⁷⁵ Slayton 6.

¹⁷⁶ Levi 12-13.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid 12-14.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

dramatically reshape their surrounding environments. When the Black population of Hyde Park—the South Side neighborhood that surrounds the University of Chicago—grew from 1 percent in 1930 to 38 percent in 1950, the University of Chicago, led by Levi, helped establish and lead the South East Chicago Commission (SECC).¹⁷⁹ The SECC guided the creation and execution of one of the nation’s first urban renewal projects. 2,500 families, almost all of them low-income and Black, were displaced from the neighborhood.¹⁸⁰

Similarly, when Columbia University’s New York City neighborhood, Morningside Heights, experienced rapid transformation in the post-war period, the university helped found and lead Morningside Heights, Inc., whose explicitly stated goal was to halt the “encroachment of Harlem,” the Black cultural center located directly to the university’s east.¹⁸¹ Columbia sought to “control the social and cultural tone of the community by forcing out what former Provost Jacques Barzun called the ‘uninviting, abnormal, sinister and dangerous’ elements.”¹⁸² In practice, this effort translated to what critics would call an “assault of Columbia, the immense institution, on underprivileged human beings;” by the university’s own account, in the 1960s alone, its massive campaign of purchasing and demolition displaced almost 10,000 people, 85 percent of whom were Black or Puerto Rican.¹⁸³

As these examples attest, many of Brown’s peer institutions in urban centers during the late 1950s and early 1960s actively embraced the potential of urban renewal as a mechanism that could, in the words of Levi, “alter the character of the area [so] as to create economic and social

¹⁷⁹ Belden 65.

¹⁸⁰ Webber, Henry S. “The University of Chicago and Its Neighbors: A Case Study in Community Development.” *The University as Urban Developer Case Studies and Analysis*, edited by David C. Perry and Wim Wiewel, Routledge, 2015, pp. 71.

¹⁸¹ Marcuse and Potter 48.

¹⁸² Avorn, Jerry L., et al. *Up Against the Ivy Wall: a History of the Columbia Crisis*. Atheneum, 1970, pp. 13.

¹⁸³ Bradley, Stefan M. *Harlem vs. Columbia University: Black Student Power in the Late 1960s*. University of Illinois Press, 2009, pp. 28.

pressures moving towards improvement rather than decline.”¹⁸⁴ The neighborhood “improvement” espoused by these universities was, in reality, the wholesale swapping of vulnerable people—often people of color—by more privileged and endowed replacements. As Tony Sorrentino, Assistant Vice President at the University of Pennsylvania, argues today, many university leaders of the era—almost all white, middle- to upper-class men—were frightened by the diversity and, in many cases, poverty that drew close to their campuses in the 1950s and 60s. As such, universities sought out tools like Section 112 that “leveraged Black and Brown communities being threatening to get rid of them so that the university can grow.”¹⁸⁵

Like many of its peer institutions, Brown found its campus in the 1950s directly abutting areas that were marked for “revitalization” by urban renewal projects. Ultimately, Brown’s participation in urban renewal efforts was not nearly as overt as that of many of its peer institutions. However, as we will see, members of the Brown community were indeed active participants in urban renewal efforts in Providence. Perhaps more importantly, the university community benefitted tremendously from urban renewal efforts occurring just at its campus’s edge. These urban renewal efforts, much like the efforts led by institutions like the University of Chicago or Columbia University, had the ultimate effect of transforming Brown’s surroundings. In the end, these efforts attracted more resourced, white residents back to the East Side at the clear expense of the more vulnerable, predominantly non-white residents who had for decades called the East Side “home.”

¹⁸⁴ Belden, David A. *Urban Renewal and the Role of the University of Chicago in the Neighborhoods of Hyde Park and Kenwood*. 2017. DePaul University, PhD dissertation, pp. 93.

¹⁸⁵ Sorrentino, Tony, University of Pennsylvania Assistant Vice President, Office of the Executive Vice President. Personal interview. 24 February 2020.

Providence Sets a Standard

Post-war Providence underwent tremendous economic and social restructuring. After the war, many city dwellers left for the suburbs, beginning a four decades-long period of population decline. From 1940 to 1980, Providence would lose 100,000 inhabitants.¹⁸⁶ By and large, those leaving the city were white, middle-class families, as suburban communities beckoned them with advertisements of superior schools and racial homogeneity. These efforts were successful, and the population of suburban towns like the nearby Barrington, Rhode Island would double in the 1950s.¹⁸⁷ From 1900 to 1960, Providence shrank from 41 percent of the Rhode Island population to just 24 percent.¹⁸⁸ As the population dissipated throughout Rhode Island, so did the capital city's political authority.

Like many other “bastions of industry,” Providence suffered under rapid, post-war deindustrialization, as manufacturers either left for the nearby suburbs or moved south in search of lower-wage employment. In just a five year period between 1957 and 1961, Providence’s manufacturing job count fell from 51,700 to 44,600.¹⁸⁹ The burden of this deindustrialization would be shouldered by the less-educated residents of the city who were less prepared to move towards the city’s emerging white collar employment. The communities that remained in Providence were increasingly non-white and lower-income: from 1950 to 1960, the city’s Black population increased by more than 30 percent.¹⁹⁰ By 1970, at a time when the federal poverty

¹⁸⁶ Leazes & Motte 36.

¹⁸⁷ Jerzyk, Matthew. “Gentrification’s Third Way: An Analysis of Housing Policy .” *Harvard Law Review*, 2009, pp. 417.

¹⁸⁸ The Ad Hoc Committee on Housing and Expansion. *Brown University in the East Side Community: An Interim Report*. 9 December 1969. Box 30, Merton Stoltz Papers (OF.1CA-S2). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 13 December 2019.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Marks, Barry A. et al. *1961 Report to the Commission on Civil Rights from the State Advisory Committee*. 1961. Box 39, John Nicholas Brown II Papers (Ms.2007.012). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 20 February 2020.

line for a family of four people hovered just below \$4,000 a year, 59 percent of Providence families made less than \$5,000, and 22 percent made less than \$3,000.¹⁹¹ As the city's sources of wealth departed and its tax base shrank, much of the city's housing infrastructure also began to suffer. By 1962, only 55 percent of the city's housing stock was classified by the city as "good," with the remainder being "fair" or "poor."¹⁹² Meanwhile, a quarter of the city's homes had serious structural or plumbing deficiencies.¹⁹³

Under such conditions, urban renewal hit Providence hard. By 1960, the Providence Redevelopment Agency (PRA)—the city agency that led Providence's urban renewal efforts—had already completed three projects and had seven more in the works.¹⁹⁴ Most of these project areas were destined for significant or complete clearance. For example, in the Point Street Project—located in the downtown Jewelry District, adjacent to Brown's modern-day Advancement Office—97 percent of the area's homes were classified as substandard, and the project area was completely cleared to make way for an open-air parking lot.¹⁹⁵

One of the PRA's most severe acts of clearance, however, occurred just north of Brown's campus in the Lippitt Hill neighborhood. Lippitt Hill was one of the city's most established Black neighborhoods and, by the arrival of the urban renewal era, housed approximately a third of the city's Black population. In November 1959, the city condemned the neighborhood, transferring all property in the 57-acre tract between Doyle Avenue and North Main, Olney, and

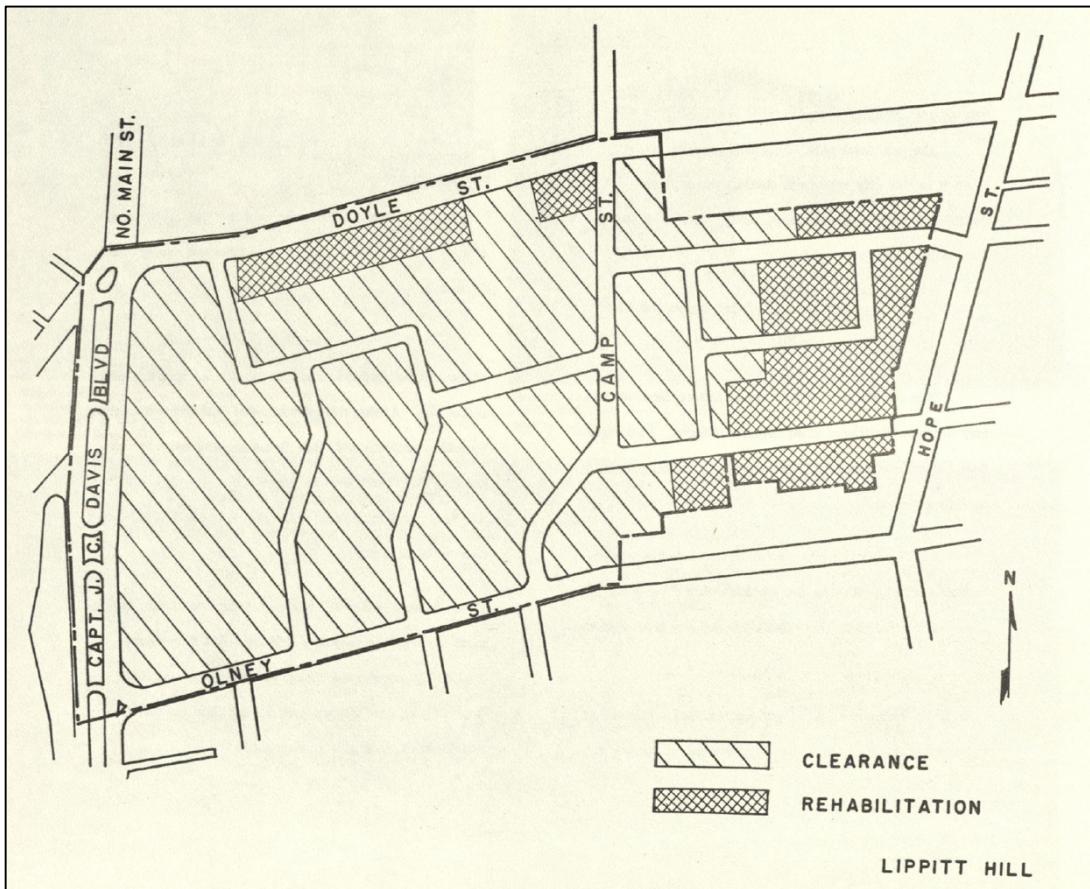
¹⁹¹ The Ad Hoc Committee on Housing and Expansion.

¹⁹² Godfrey, Eric Philip. *Residential Relocation in Providence, 1960-1965: An Ecological Approach*. 1965. Brown University, Master of Arts in American Sociology and Anthropology Thesis, pp. 16.

¹⁹³ Blair and Stein Associates. *Community Renewal Program: Housing Working Paper Number 2*. 17 April 1962. Box 27, John Nicholas Brown II Papers (Ms.2007.012). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 20 February 2020.

¹⁹⁴ Providence Redevelopment Agency. *1960 Annual Report*. 1960. Box 27, John Nicholas Brown II Papers (Ms.2007.012). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 20 February 2020.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.



Map showing plan for Lippitt Hill urban renewal project. (Taken from J.N. Brown papers, box 27)

Camp Streets to city ownership through eminent domain.¹⁹⁶

While the project area was not designated for complete clearance, it did have a near complete displacing effect for its former Black residents. The Citizens' Advisory Committee for Urban Renewal—a citizen's organization comprised of city officials, prominent city residents like John Nicholas Brown II, and even a number of Brown University professors—observed that many neighborhood residents had a tendency to “jump the gun,” leaving their homes before they were officially condemned by the PRA.¹⁹⁷ The group saw this as “justifiable, especially in view

¹⁹⁶ Berke, Ben. “Providence’s Lippitt Hill residents get a chance to tell their story.” *Providence Journal*. 15 September 2017.

¹⁹⁷ Citizen's Advisory Committee for Urban Renewal. “Providence Redevelopment, 1945-1961.” 1961. Box 39, John Nicholas Brown II papers (Ms.2007.012). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 20 February 2020.



University Heights apartments, April 2020. (Photo taken by author)

of the limited housing market to which the non-whites had access.” By January 1961, most of Lippitt Hill had been razed. Of the 650 units demolished, 450 of them had been occupied by non-white tenants.¹⁹⁸ Shortly after the neighborhood’s razing, plans emerged to turn the site into new low-rise apartments and shopping centers—collectively known as “University Heights.” As the development’s name attests, university affiliates from institutions like Brown were these units’ ideal and intended occupants. By 1970, more than 25 Brown students were living in these units, and occupation by Brown affiliates continued to grow through the decades.¹⁹⁹ Today, the

¹⁹⁸ Berke.

¹⁹⁹ “Brown University Student Directory, 1970-71.” 1970. Box 3, Student Directories (OF-1G-R1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 25 February 2020.

shopping center built upon the former location of Lippitt Hill features a Whole Foods Market, Petco pet store, and a McDonald's fast food restaurant. It continues to be heavily used by Brown affiliates.

Highway construction was another, intertwined force of displacement that provoked tremendous neighborhood disruption just beyond the edges of Brown's campus. In 1947, the city started planning for two highways that would bisect its core, one heading north-south, the other east-west. Though seemingly neutral on its face, highway construction in the mid-century, both across the nation and in Providence, was imbued with nefarious purpose and effect. Highway planners were instructed to seek out low-cost land, not exclusively for the purpose of keeping construction costs low. As Richard Rothstein notes, highway construction was understood as a tool—much like the claiming and clearing of land through urban renewal projects—to remove “slums.”²⁰⁰ Planners purposely drove their highways through low-income neighborhoods of color to displace those neighborhoods’ residents and start the areas anew. By 1962, organizations like the Highway Research Board boasted that highways were “eating out slums” and reclaiming blighted areas.” In Providence, the east-west I-195 swept through the core of Cape Verdean Fox Point. In December 1954, the first of an eventual 200 property owners were displaced and compensated for their land.²⁰¹ Sadly, this would constitute Fox Point’s first, not last wave of displacements caused by urban renewal efforts.

By 1968, the PRA would proudly declare that “Today the city of Providence is one of the leaders among the nation’s cities which have undertaken substantial renewal projects...The Providence redevelopment program sets a standard for the rest of the nation.”²⁰² Few, if any, of

²⁰⁰ Rothstein 126-131.

²⁰¹ Gorman, Laurel. *Fox Point: The Disintegration of a Neighborhood*. 1998. Brown University, Bachelor of Arts in American Civilization Honors Thesis, pp. 42.

²⁰² Providence Redevelopment Agency. *What's Happening to Our City?*. 27 October 1968. Box 27, John Nicholas

the city's communities of color would likely argue that Providence's standard was one worth pursuing, for it was these communities that shouldered the burden of the city's urban renewal. Between 1960 and 1965—the PRA's most active period—5,000 people, or 2.4 percent of the city's population, were displaced.²⁰³ Remarkably, in its 1960 report, the PRA estimated that between 1949 and 1963, 75 percent of the city's Black population would be forced to leave their homes and places of business. By contrast, only 7.7 percent of white residents would be expected to move.²⁰⁴ Former president of the Providence branch of the NAACP Cliff Monteiro recounts the effect of the urban renewal period in Providence succinctly: "everywhere black people lived, the City of Providence redeveloped."²⁰⁵

For communities of color in Providence, urban renewal entailed unbridled demolition and unprecedented displacement. On the contrary, white communities and white spaces—specifically those that were adjacent to Brown University—received a wholly different treatment in this era, thanks to the tireless advocacy of the Providence Preservation Society and the highly influential *College Hill Study*. This report would guide the development of the East Side for decades to come and would prove highly effective in determining which East Side communities received preservation and which received "renewal." The study would dramatically impact the surroundings of mid-century Brown University and ultimately drive the university's growth and presence southward, directly into the heart of Fox Point.

Renewal's Second Path: the *College Hill Study*

College Hill: A Demonstration Study of Historic Area Renewal set the East Side on a path

Brown II Papers (Ms.2007.012). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 20 February 2020.

²⁰³ Godfrey 17.

²⁰⁴ Marks, Barry A. et al.

²⁰⁵ Jerzyk 419.

of tremendous physical and demographic transfiguration.²⁰⁶ This report—often simply referred to as the *College Hill Study*—was made possible by the founding of the Providence Preservation Society. The Federal Housing Act of 1954 made available federal funds for demonstration grants, grants that supported the testing of an innovative policy idea’s feasibility, in the hopes that it could be applied to similar communities throughout the nation.²⁰⁷ However, these grants were only available to cities with an established citizen’s organization that would be highly involved in the study process.²⁰⁸ The Providence Redevelopment Agency—which sought to test the feasibility of incorporating historic preservation in its urban renewal efforts—requested that the newly-formed PPS serve as the city’s citizen’s organization in its application for a federal demonstration grant. In April 1957, the federal government awarded the city nearly \$50,000—which would be supplemented by more than \$20,000 in local funds, principally raised by PPS—to begin its demonstration study, which was tasked with “developing and improving techniques for urban renewal in a historic area.”²⁰⁹

After more than two years of research and drafting, the *College Hill Study* was released in July 1959. The report’s authors envisioned the study as both a blueprint for preservation efforts in the College Hill neighborhood and a standard bearer for the nation that would assist communities in incorporating preservation in their plans for the future. “Cities are museums of buildings and the people are their curators,” the report declared, echoing the founding logic of PPS.²¹⁰ “The citizens of old cities are responsible for finding ways to safeguard, renew and bring historic architecture into living use in the contemporary world.”

²⁰⁶ Harrington, Richard B. *College Hill : a Demonstration Study of Historic Area Renewal*. 2nd ed. Providence City Plan Commission, 1967.

²⁰⁷ The Providence Preservation Society.

²⁰⁸ Schermerhorn 113.

²⁰⁹ The Providence Preservation Society.

²¹⁰ Harrington vi.

The *College Hill Study* divided the College Hill area into two distinct regions, each facing their own separate problems. The report refers to the study area's core as the "university area," due to the tight clustering of the region's three universities: Brown, RISD, and Bryant. This region, the authors bemoaned, was plagued by a lack of vacant land for institutional expansion, compelling universities like Brown to recklessly demolish architecturally and historically significant buildings to satiate their growing need for space.²¹¹ Conversely, the study area's northern and southern peripheries—referred to as the "urban renewal area"—were challenged by "residential and commercial blight." Conditions in the total study area, the authors noted, "vary greatly, ranging from slum to mansion."²¹² Faced with this variation, the core challenge of the *College Hill Study* thus became determining which properties deserved "preservation" and which merited "renewal." As such, the study first sought to develop a system for rating the area's historic architecture to inform which structures should be incorporated into future growth and which structures should be forsaken for demolition.

To this end, the study put forward a rubric for building evaluation—grounded in guidelines from the National Park Service—which the authors believed evaluated the buildings simultaneously as individual examples of an architectural period and as a contributing facet to a larger neighborhood.²¹³ The report's guide for evaluation most valued buildings that were: the work of famous architects or builders; the last remaining example of a dying style; a typical building of a prominent architectural era; or a building associated with a historic event or individual. This pattern of evaluation, the authors argued, appropriately placed significance both on the area's more ostentatious structures alongside its more inconspicuous examples of

²¹¹ Ibid 167.

²¹² Ibid 86.

²¹³ Ibid 73.

significant architectural advances. Of the 1,350 buildings evaluated by the report's authors under this rubric, 36 buildings were classified as "exceptional," 168 as "excellent," 330 as "good," 420 as "fair," and 396 as "poor."²¹⁴

Though the *College Hill Study* was a preservationist's document, it actively relied upon the dominant urban renewal logic of the era. The study's authors believed that the preservation of buildings important to Providence's history could only occur by making the East Side a more desirable place to live, own property, and invest resources. While the report argued for robust public support of restoration efforts, these efforts were intended to ultimately spur private investment that would be sustained in the long-term. For example, chief among the report's recommendation was the refurbishment of Benefit Street, one of the city's oldest streets which was believed to be the "backbone of the historic College Hill area."²¹⁵ The report called for the establishment of a historic walking trail along the street and a restaurant and inn at its northern end. The *College Hill Study* believed that by making the street a tourist attraction through public investment, private investors would spring up to restore the street's homes, and private homeowners would pay top dollar to purchase the homes and maintain them for decades to come.

This prediction proved accurate. In the 1961 re-release of the report, the authors celebrated the "remarkable value of private restoration" that had occurred since 1959.²¹⁶ Private companies like the Burnside Corporation, Foxes Hill, and Netop Restorations were established in the wake of the *College Hill Study* to take advantage of the impending rise in Benefit Street's value. PPS established a "Consultant Bureau" to support these house-flippers in restoring the structures to

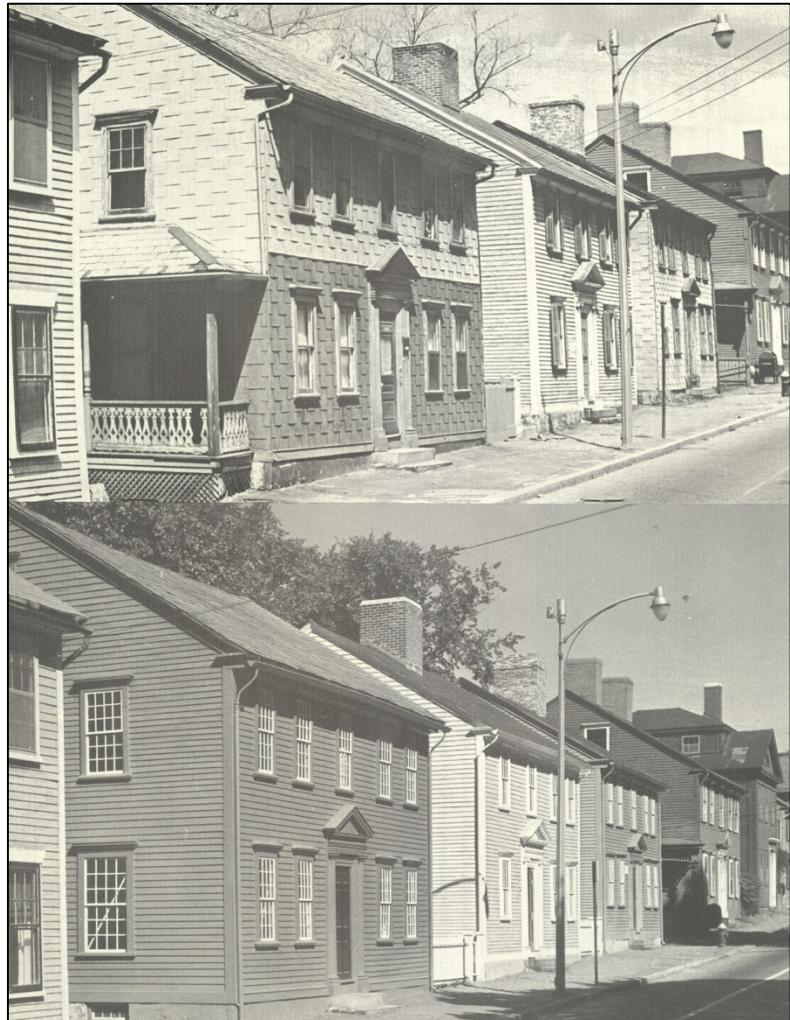
²¹⁴ Ibid 77.

²¹⁵ Ibid 126.

²¹⁶ Ibid 219.

period-accurate styles and decorations. According to the report, these corporations bought houses on Benefit Street for as low as \$3,000 and sold restored shells for as much as \$22,000.²¹⁷ Still, new homeowners would need to invest as much as \$30,000 to make the shells livable. While the study's 1961 re-release celebrated these private restoration companies' participation in Benefit Street's transformation, these developers were far from heroes. Former Black residents of Benefit Street recalled how developers ferociously banged on homeowners' doors, yelling to them to "sell their homes in the name of neighborhood restoration."²¹⁸ Meanwhile, according to these former residents, renters on Benefit Street were duped into believing that if they agreed to move, they could return after the renovation was completed, but such promises went unfulfilled.

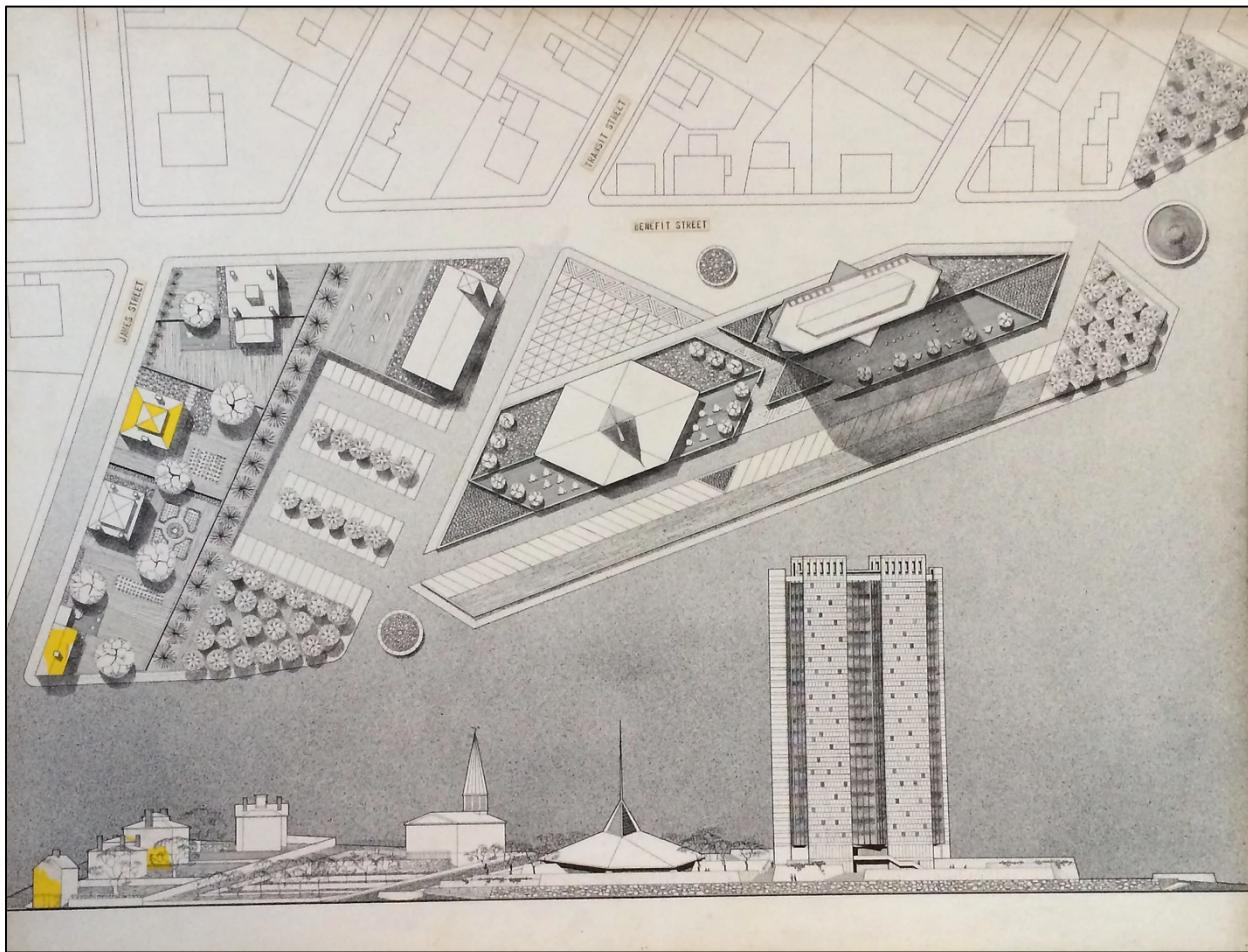
The *College Hill Study* advocated for period-accurate restoration within the study's core on streets like Benefit, but at its study area periphery—in the "urban renewal area"—the study often urged the city to wipe streets clean of "blight" and start anew. For instance, the report called for the creation of a



Homes along Benefit Street restored to period-accurate exteriors. (Taken from J.N. Brown papers, box 26)

²¹⁷ Ibid 225-226.

²¹⁸ Jerzyk 419.



Panel 6 of the College Hill Study showing the 6-acre site between Benefit, South Main, and Wickenden Streets and the intended "knife-blade apartment tower." (Taken from College Hill Study)

120-unit apartment to be located upon the 6-acre, triangular wedge created by Benefit, South Main, and Wickenden Streets, a space then occupied by structures “rated among the worst slums in the city.”²¹⁹ Given the sleek, modern design of the tower and the wedge’s placement at the nexus of Benefit Street—the area’s perceived focal point—there is little reason to believe that the units in this tower would be occupied by anyone but wealthy individuals. It is recommendations like these, says Providence architectural historian David Brussat, that show that “the real intent of all too many of the survey’s recommendations” were “too much renewal and much less rehabilitation than advertised.”²²⁰ These suggestions demonstrate, Brussat continues, the

²¹⁹ Harrington 148.

²²⁰ The Providence Preservation Society.

“survey’s inability—or unwillingness—to summon the creativity to imagine patterns of townscape to reflect the natural growth of community...The impetus was not to preserve but to contrast with the historic fabric, on as extensive a scale as could be plausibly defended.”

While the *College Hill Study* was ostensibly grounded upon reclaiming the East Side’s past, more accurately, the report sought to redirect its future—to alter, in Brussat’s phraseology, “the natural growth of community.” The *College Hill Study*’s blatant disregard for its impact upon the working-class people who called the East Side “home” at the time of its 1959 release is staggering. To be sure, the report’s authors recognized that many of these area’s residents were not financially capable of withstanding the tremendous upward market pressure that the report would unleash upon their neighborhoods. The report also recognized that demolishing “the worst slums in the city” and replacing them with modern high rises required the displacement of former inhabitants. Preservation work—the report understood—is expensive, and for the area’s inhabitants to be able to do that work, they needed to be well-resourced. Many of the East Side’s residents in 1959, the report believed, simply were not well enough endowed to fund this preservation work. As such, for preservation to be sustained, the report believed that altering the area’s demographic composition was necessary.

The *College Hill Study* believed that institutions like Brown could play an important role in this intended transformation. The study, much like PPS, appreciated the need for the area’s universities to expand. The report sought to influence how the universities would do so, intending for its findings to guide the area’s institutions “when they need to make decisions about directions for expansion.”²²¹ It sympathized with Brown for its lack of land readily available for future development.²²² To this end, the *College Hill Study* recommended that the

²²¹ Harrington 17.

²²² Ibid 167.

area's universities "participate actively in citizens groups interested in urban renewal." The study applauded the aforementioned work of the University Chicago and Columbia University in "halting slum encroachment" in their adjacent neighborhoods and in "[dealing] with the problems of changing population, overcrowding, and crime."²²³ The report noted that "there are now several outstanding programs of clearance and development underway which have been initiated by institutions of higher education." The *College Hill Study* believed that Brown should seek to replicate these programs.

While preservationists bemoaned Brown's recent razing of historic buildings, they celebrated and advocated for university growth in the direction of "blight." However, the study regretted that the areas directly abutting the university were in good condition or slated for private, residential restoration, observing that Brown "cannot count on taking advantage of the urban renewal program to help them acquire land as they could if the adjacent areas were suffering from blight and were slated for redevelopment."²²⁴ While Brown may have not directly abutted "blight" like its peers in Chicago or New York, the *College Hill Study* indicates clearly which direction for growth the city's preservationists and planners would tolerate. With the soon-to-be-refurbished Benefit Street to its immediate west and preservation-worthy residential streets to its north and east, southerly growth—towards Fox Point—was Brown's clear direction of expansion preferred by the *College Hill Study*.

In recently reviewing the panels of the *College Hill Study*, Claire Andrade-Watkins—a second-generation Cape Verdean resident of Fox Point—struggled to reconcile the report's visions for the East Side alongside her memories of growing up in it:

I see the "footprint" ...of the house on 26 Planet Street where I was born and raised, the

²²³ Ibid 204.

²²⁴ Ibid 168.

*house at 28 Planet next door where I often babysat...the Burnside Apartments with the wonderful curved iron rail that was the delight of children in the neighborhood. Reconciling those memories to “footprints” [of the report] and what the implementation of the plan created in terms of the human consequences to the denizens of those spaces is another perspective: one of existing, but...[being] voiceless in the determination of “significant or insignificant to the historic fabric,” worthy of preserving or relegated to “infill.” The conundrum is not a resolution but a question. What do we remember? Or more importantly, who decides what and how we remember? The challenge is not the regret of the past, but the hope for the future to reconstitute those lost memories and absent voices and integrate them into the new “vision” of significant historic fabric.*²²⁵

The conundrum that Andrade-Watkins identifies here is the great crime of the *College Hill Study*: advancing one version of the East Side’s past by relegating and upheaving the neighborhood’s then present-day reality. The swapping of the working-class inhabitants of the College Hill area was not an accidental byproduct of the *College Hill Study* but an actively-pursued outcome of the report, believed by the authors to be necessary for the area’s long-term preservation. The report actively sought out an East Side where its neighborhoods were significantly more expensive and—by definition—less inclusive: the report estimated that by clearing “blighted” land, it could increase the area’s value—and its tax assessment—by a factor of four.²²⁶

What makes the *College Hill Study* significant and worthy of intense analysis is that the report’s ideas were more than simple neighborhood projections that collected dust on some inconsequential shelf. Rather, the report’s ideas directly and substantially informed the East Side Renewal Project—Providence’s most ambitious urban renewal effort to date, which shortly followed the *College Hill Study*’s release. The project put the study’s ideas into action, placing the full weight of the federal, state, and local government’s influence and resources behind the report’s vision for the East Side. All the more, the *College Hill Study* drastically altered how

²²⁵ The Providence Preservation Society.

²²⁶ Harrington 213.

major neighborhood players—like Brown University—would consider its future development. In the following sections, we examine the fallout of the post-*College Hill Study* East Side.

Brown in the Post-*College Hill* East Side

With the release of the *College Hill Study*, Brown University leaders increasingly realized that their era of unregulated outward expansion was drawing to a close. Initially, university leaders saw the *College Hill Study* as a threat, poised to greatly increase public influence over Brown's physical development. The university refused to release its internal planning documents—as requested by the study's authors—arguing that speculators would raise property costs in the university's desired areas of expansion, if the university made its intentions for growth public.²²⁷ More holistically, President Keeney objected to the proposed community capacity to regulate how Brown handled its own property. For instance, Keeney said that Brown wished to demolish its Robinson Hall—the ornate Venetian Gothic hall on Waterman Street, which currently houses Brown's Economics Department—and replace it with an “attractive and fully useful structure.” “If we are prevented from demolishing it, we shall build the attractive and useful structure somewhere else and seal Robison Hall,” Keeney threatened, no doubt playing preservationists’ fear of demolition against their fear of robust institutional growth.²²⁸ Keeney was quick to remind the report’s authors that “the most dynamic element in American society of the mid-twentieth century is education.” Brown will continue to “grow with this community,” Keeney warned.²²⁹ “It would ill behoove your commission to recommend that the City of Providence, long distinguished as a center of culture, constrain and perhaps strangle three of its

²²⁷ Keeney, Barnaby C. Letter to Blair Associates. 21 November 1958. Box 21, Barnaby Conrad Keeney Papers (OF.1C.12). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 18 February 2020.

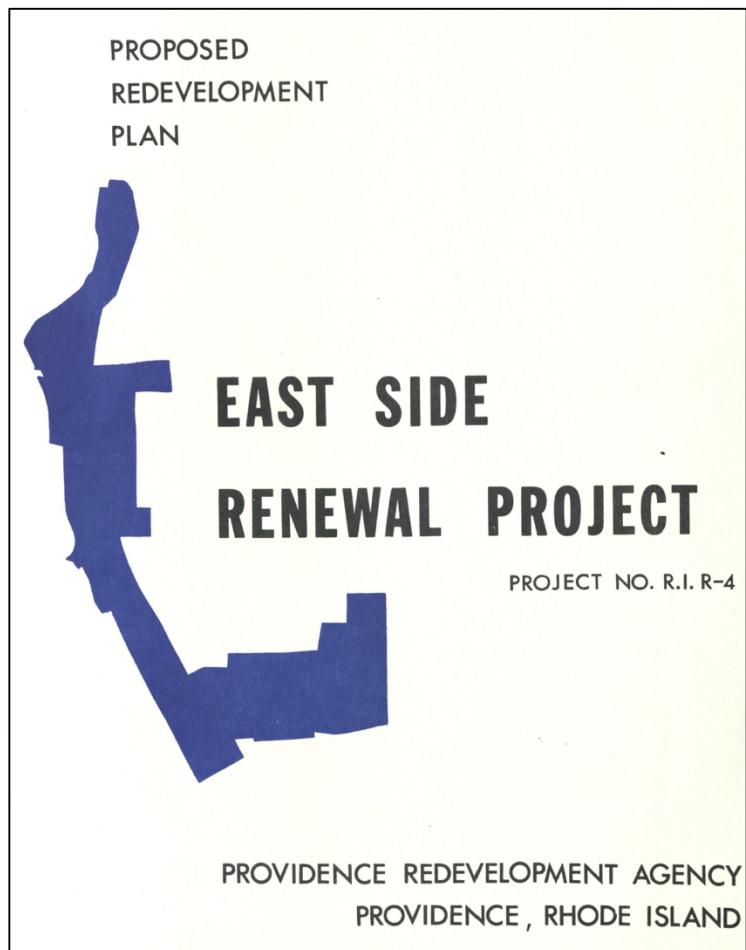
²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

educational institutions..."

While the university deemed it necessary to reassert its institutional independence in the immediate wake of the study, Keeney did not protest the report's larger vision for the East Side. Brown, wrote Keeney, was "in general sympathy with the objectives of the *College Hill Study* to preserve what should be preserved and to replace those things that are no longer useful."²³⁰ Brown leaders would learn to adeptly navigate the "renewed" East Side following the *College Hill Study*—and the massive urban renewal project that grew out of it—simultaneously asserting their claim to independence while using their leverage to benefit from a rapidly transforming real estate market at its campus's edge.

The East Side Renewal Project set out to fulfill the vision for the East Side that the *College Hill Study* set in motion, officially beginning in December 1960, just months after the study's release. The Providence Redevelopment Authority (PRA) proudly recognized the East Side Renewal Project as one of the "most ambitious" urban renewal projects in the nation, lauding its work as "breathtaking in vision and scope."²³¹ The project, in general, aligned with the suggestions laid out in the *College Hill Study*. Its proposal



Cover of the East Side Renewal Project. (Taken from J.N. Brown papers, box 13)

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Providence Redevelopment Agency. *1960 Annual Report*.

was careful to ensure that no property identified by the *College Hill Study* for rehabilitation was prescribed demolition by the project.²³² The East Side Renewal Project was brought to life by a team of personnel dominated by members of the PPS—and, notably, the Brown community. It was guided by the likes of PPS icons Antoinette Downing and Elizabeth Slater Allen alongside leaders of Brown like trustees Frederick Lippitt and John Nicholas Brown II.²³³ Spatially, the renewal project proved more ambitious than its predecessor, as planners combined the original area of the *College Hill Study* with additional renewal in Randall Square—an area just west of the former Lippitt Hill project—and sections of southern and eastern Fox Point.²³⁴ In total, the renewal project comprised a roughly 400 acre area bound by Olney Street, Hope Street, George M. Cohan Boulevard, and the Providence River.²³⁵

Like renewal projects throughout the nation, the East Side Renewal Project created winners and losers. Though 40 percent of the project area’s structures were classified as substandard, those slated for demolition were principally at the area’s periphery, in regions like Randall Square and southern Fox Point, areas occupied by working-class populations and communities of color.²³⁶ Many residents—like Thomas R. Adams, a librarian at Brown—read the writing on the wall: if unchanged, the project would impose dramatically different impacts upon the area’s varied inhabitants. Any redevelopment plan, Adams urged the PRA in a petition circulated throughout Fox Point, must preserve the neighborhood’s “rich variety of income levels, occupations, ethnic and religious backgrounds that traditionally characterize the present

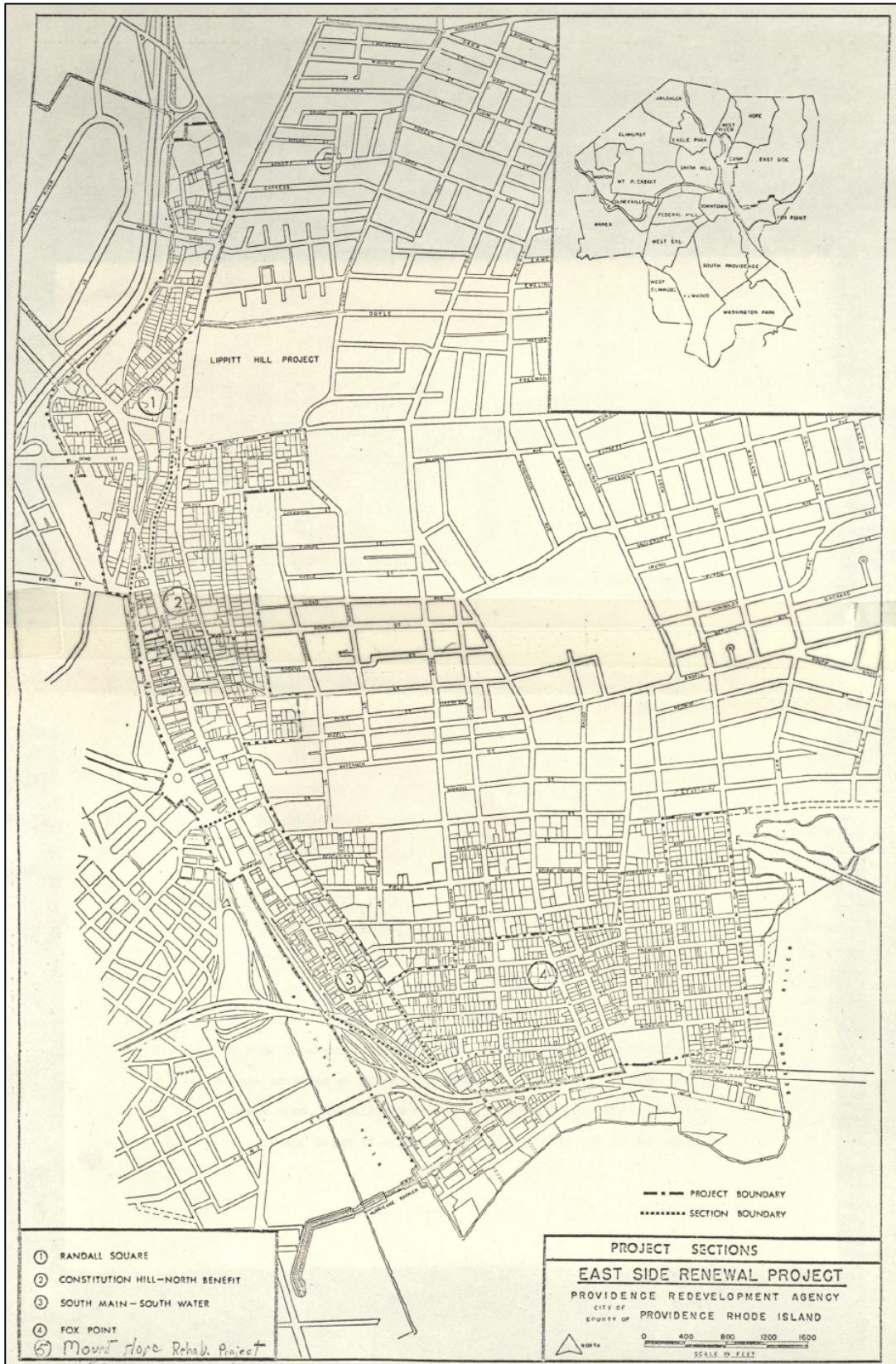
²³² Providence Redevelopment Agency. *Proposed Redevelopment Plan for the East Side Project No. R.I. R-4*. March 1965. Box 13, John Nicholas Brown II Papers (Ms.2007.012). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 20 February 2020.

²³³ East Side Project Citizens Committee. *Meeting Minutes*. 6 February 1963. Box 13, John Nicholas Brown II Papers (Ms.2007.012). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 20 February 2020.

²³⁴ Providence Redevelopment Agency. *Proposed Redevelopment Plan for the East Side Project No. R.I. R-4*.

²³⁵ The Citizen’s Advisory Committee for Urban Renewal.

²³⁶ The Ad Hoc Committee on Housing and Expansion.



Bounds of the East Side Renewal Project. (Taken from Stevens papers, box 23)

residents.”²³⁷ Adams’ protest would prove largely ineffective. By December 1962, the PRA anticipated that in the project’s first wave of displacement, 220 non-white families would be relocated.²³⁸ “There is the problem of getting people throughout the area, people with divergent backgrounds, to regard themselves as a *community* and to regard the East Side project as a community effort,” the Citizens’ Advisory Committee for Urban Renewal complained.²³⁹ That these people with “divergent backgrounds” were treated in dramatically divergent manners by the project did not appear to cross the committee’s collective mind.

While communities at the project area’s peripheries were the clear losers of the East Side Renewal Project, Brown leaders recognized that members of its university community could be some of the project’s biggest winners. The impending effects of the renewal project changed how the university assessed its housing and infrastructural needs. For example, in 1963, the university sought a new Graduate Center, which the university believed would provide much needed housing for Brown’s growing Graduate School while serving as a focal point for the School’s intellectual, cultural, and social life.²⁴⁰ In planning this Graduate Center, university leaders decided to exclusively build single-occupancy rooms designed for single students, stating in its application for federal loan assistance that housing for married students was a lower priority “because urban renewal activities in the City of Providence will provide, in the near future, an increase in the number of low-cost apartment units.”²⁴¹ The emergence of urban renewal in the university’s backyard made leaders of Brown far more willing to rely upon privately-owned

²³⁷ Adams, Thomas R. & Edward O. Handy, Jr. “East Side Renewal Project Petition to Providence Redevelopment Agency.” 24 April 1962 February 1963. Box 13, John Nicholas Brown II Papers (Ms.2007.012). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 20 February 2020.

²³⁸ East Side Project Citizens Committee.

²³⁹ The Citizen’s Advisory Committee for Urban Renewal.

²⁴⁰ “Proposed Brown University Graduate Center.” Memo. 27 May 1963. Box 8, Merton Stoltz Papers (OF.1CA-S2). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 13 December 2019.

²⁴¹ “Application for loan assistance, Title IV: Narrative Statement.” 21963. Box 8, Merton Stoltz Papers (OF.1CA-S2). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 13 December 2019.

community housing opportunities—housing opportunities likely utilized by working class people just years before—to accommodate its growing body of students.

It was not uncommon for urban renewal to introduce an array of developers seeking to turn a profit by transforming formally low-income communities into middle- or upper-class neighborhoods. However, Brown's presence and its growing population of students and faculty directly motivated many speculators—whom often had direct ties to the university—to engage in such activities at the campus's edge, contributing to the displacement of longtime residents while simultaneously addressing the needs of the university community to which these developers remained loyal.

The transfiguration of South Main Street is a prime example of such development. At the time of renewal, South Main was almost entirely occupied by Black residents, principally from Lebanon.²⁴² Renewing the street was identified as a top priority of the *College Hill Study*, which bemoaned the street as a “mixture of junk shops and other poor grade commercial establishments” interspersed with “one of the worst groups of blighted housing in the city.”²⁴³ Breaking with its past work, the Providence Preservation Society created a separate development arm—the Providence Preservation Development Corporation—to personally guide the street’s revitalization.²⁴⁴ The \$10 million dollar “facelift” on the street was led in large part by two men—John Nicholas Brown II and Edward Sulzberger, a New York-based real estate developer, member of the Brown Class of 1929, and a Brown Corporation member. Central to Brown and Sulzberger’s vision for a revitalized South Main was the construction of over 100 two and three story town houses. In their market feasibility study for the town house developments—which

²⁴² Rodriquez, Adam. “History of South Main Street.” *Fox Point Oral Histories*. Brown University Library Center for Digital Scholarship. March 2009.

²⁴³ Harrington 183.

²⁴⁴ Woodward.



The Plantations on South Main, April 2020. (Photo taken by author)

were eventually called “The Plantations”—the developers noted that Brown’s population of young faculty members and graduate students alone could fill the Plantation’s units.²⁴⁵ Indeed, the “emphatic” support of Brown faculty and graduate students for the units ultimately convinced the developers to go forth with the project. The Plantation’s official publicity materials would boast of its arrival as replacing the “long strip of slum dwellings and decaying retail establishments” that had once occupied the street where it now stood.²⁴⁶

The *College Hill Study* did not compel Brown to suspend its growth or become purely

²⁴⁵ “Marketability Investigation.” 1966. Box 27, John Nicholas Brown II Papers (Ms.2007.012). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 20 February 2020.

²⁴⁶ Sulzberger-Rolfe Inc. “The Plantations: Progress and Preservation.” Box 27, John Nicholas Brown II Papers (Ms.2007.012). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 20 February 2020.

reactive to the external development at its campus's edge. But the study and the resultant renewal project did alter how the university would expand, increasingly forcing the university to build upward instead of outward. Under the new, highly competitive real estate market of the East Side, the university looked skyward for its new development, and President Keeney wryly observed that Brown's neighbors would have to learn anew the meaning of "higher education."²⁴⁷

But Brown's shift to upward development was aided by one last major land purchase, carried out just before the release of the *College Hill Study*. This purchase would temporarily satiate the university's need for horizontal space for expansion. In 1957, Brown added 39 acres to its landholdings by purchasing from the city the grounds of the former Dexter Asylum, a "poor farm" located northeast of the campus's core that had housed impoverished, mentally-ill, or elderly city residents since its founding in 1828.²⁴⁸ This new purchase alone—a massive, largely undeveloped plot of land bound by Hope Street, Angell Street, and Lloyd, Stimson, and Arlington Avenues—was almost half as large as all of Brown's previous landholdings combined, up until that point.²⁴⁹ The new piece of land dramatically expanded Brown's athletic fields, allowing the university to begin planning for an ice rink, an indoor track facility, an aquatics center, and more. The purchase, to this day, allows the university to expand its athletic programs.

Closer to its campus core, the university underwent "an explosion of growth," in the early 1960s.²⁵⁰ With athletic facility construction underway on the Dexter Asylum property, Keeney turned his attention to bolstering the university's academic facilities, completing in quick succession the Rockefeller Library—Brown's principal social sciences library—and a number of

²⁴⁷ Phillips 79.

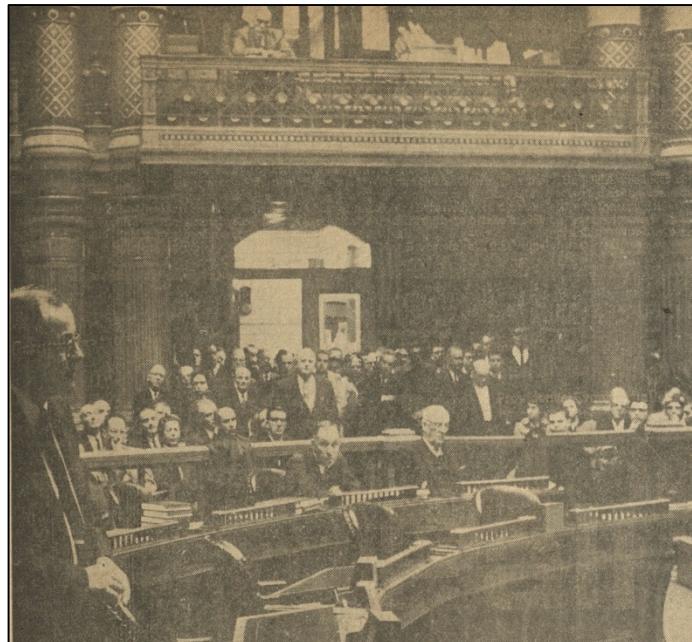
²⁴⁸ Widmer, Ted. *Brown: the History of an Idea*. Thames & Hudson, 2015, pp. 196.

²⁴⁹ Schermerhorn 125.

²⁵⁰ Widmer 195.

science and engineering facilities that including the Barus-Holley building, the J. Walter Wilson Labs (now Page-Robinson), and the Hunter Labs (now the Institute at Brown for Environment and Society).²⁵¹ The university's rapid construction frightened many of Brown's neighbors, with one city resident comparing the university's recent building program to "the tentacles of an octopus that have crept out further and further from University Hall."²⁵² Keeney refused to tolerate Brown's neighbors slowing its growth, while speaking before the Providence City Council. "The issue is essentially whether Brown goes up in the air, spreads out more, or stands still," Keeney explained.²⁵³ "If pressure on the University is to stand still, we shall have to resist."

As Barnaby Keeney drew closer to his eventual retirement in 1966, the institution that he was preparing to pass on to his successor had undergone considerable transformations on many fronts. While Brown's collection of world-class facilities expanded significantly in the last years of the Keeney era, the expansion of the university's personnel was perhaps more dramatic. While the university's



Brown President Barnaby Keeney encourages the Providence City Council to brace for Brown's continued growth at this February 1962 City Council meeting. Brown trustee John Nicholas Brown II observes from the balcony. (Taken from Keeney papers, box 95)

²⁵¹ Phillips 79.

²⁵² "Council Unit Ponders Brown's Plea for Seven-Story Building." *Providence Journal-Bulletin*. 22 February 1962. Box 95, Barnaby Conrad Keeney Papers (OF.1C.12). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 18 February 2020.

²⁵³ Keeney, Barnaby C. Speech at City Hall, 21 February 1962. Box 95, Barnaby Conrad Keeney Papers (OF.1C.12). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 18 February 2020.

undergraduate population grew steadily, Brown's Graduate School, under Keeney—a former Dean of the Graduate School—exploded. In the early 1950s, the school's enrollment hovered around 50; by 1965, its enrollment had surpassed 1,200 students.²⁵⁴ Meanwhile, the size of the faculty had nearly doubled in that time.²⁵⁵ This exponential rise in the size of the university community would stress the university's surrounding community as much as, if not more than, any expansion of university facilities. In the early 1960s, neighbors of Brown fretted over the physical expansion of university facilities into city blocks adjacent to the university's core. However, by the end of the decade, neighbors' concerns would shift, focusing on the negative impact of university community members' infiltration of the surrounding housing market.

Conclusion: Beyond the Bulldozer

Brown University was not officially integrated into urban renewal efforts at a level comparable to that of its peer institutions of the era. Brown did not operate the bulldozers that tumbled "slum dwellings" nor leverage the state's power of eminent domain to address its spatial needs. However, the presence and participation of Brown in the production of urban renewal on the East Side of Providence is undeniable and ubiquitous. Its actions—in pursuit of a residential college—provoked the founding of the Providence Preservation Society, the guiding force behind the *College Hill Study* and the East Side Renewal Project. Brown University was never threatened by erasure in either of these projects. Rather, its presence and need for continued growth was accepted and embraced. But the vulnerable communities at Brown's peripheries were threatened, deemed inconsequential, and targeted by these projects, in part to make way for

²⁵⁴ "Graduate Education at Brown/A New Graduate Center." 1965. Housing Committee report (George Street - Housing) (Classified 1-W). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 10 December 2019.

²⁵⁵ Widmer 195.

Brown's expansion. Further, while the university may not have been operating the projects' bulldozers, Brown community members—from John Nicholas Brown II to Antoinette Downing to Edward Sulzberger—were largely responsible for directing which homes those bulldozers would target.

The university's presence altered how private investors and actors behaved in response to the *College Hill Study* and the East Side Renewal Project. It is possible and indeed likely that the East Side would have faced considerable market pressure in the mid-century that could have challenged the survival of its affordable and inclusive neighborhoods. The East Side's breathtaking, historic homes and close proximity to the city's downtown alone make its neighborhoods desirable places to live. But Brown's presence at the East Side's core undeniably incentivized speculators to see immense profit opportunities inherent in transforming its neighborhoods to meet the needs of the university community. Brown's presence incentivized investors to transform the low-income, Black neighborhood of Lippitt Hill into low-rise, modern apartments and shopping centers, specifically targeted towards university community members—as the name “University Heights” attests. Similarly, investors lined up to profit off of Brown's growing student and faculty populations, who were increasingly in-need of local housing opportunities as the university itself failed to provide them. Under these conditions, investors—many of whom were personally committed to the university's success—were assured that efforts to transfigure South Main Street and its “junk shops” and “slums” into sleek and stately townhouses would be profitable. Meanwhile, these “revitalizations” would assist the university in its mission of attracting top young faculty and graduate students. While Brown may not have been an outspoken urban renewal proponent, visibly leading the East Side's transformation, the university welcomed these acts of “renewal” nonetheless and stood to gain



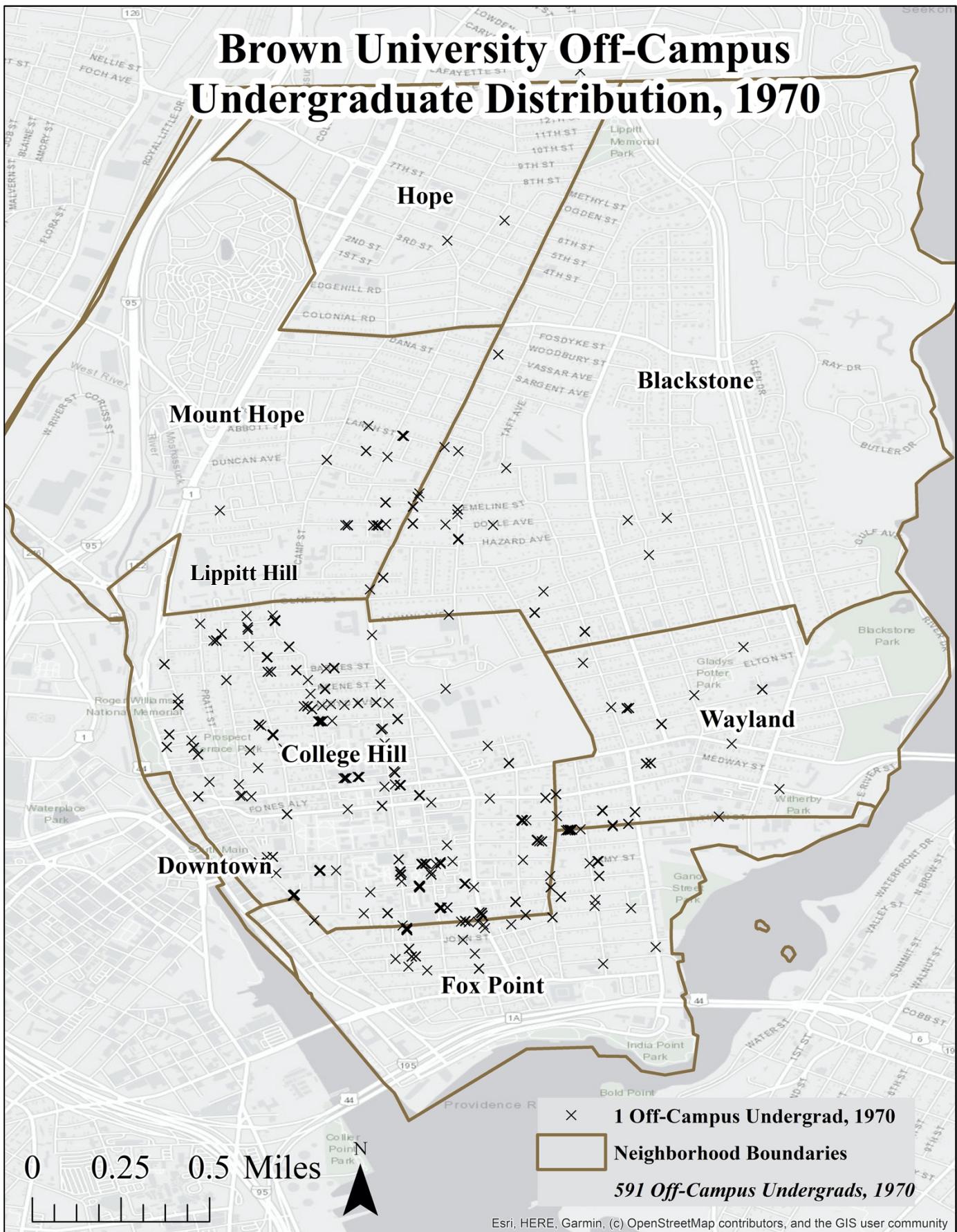
*Plaque on Benevolent Street entrance to Keeney Quadrangle, honoring the quad's namesake, March 2020.
(Photo taken by author)*

tremendously from them.

The Keeney era set in motion a number of university and community transformations that his successors, Presidents Ray Heffner and Donald Hornig, would struggle to navigate. With the purchase of the Dexter Asylum property to its northeast, the revitalization of Benefit Street to its west, and the rapid development for academic facilities upon its few remaining spaces near the campus's core, Brown was essentially landlocked by the end of the Keeney years. Unlike in past eras, the arrival of the Providence Preservation Society ensured that any intended expansion in the direction of historic areas would be hotly contested by this new well-organized and well-endowed community organization. Together, the PPS and a newly revitalized East Side real estate market would ensure that the university's only room for expansion was to its south. As such, as the Keeney era ended and the Heffner-Hornig era began, Brown's southerly neighbors in Fox Point braced for the arrival of the institution. However, to the apparent surprise of Brown

and its neighbors alike, the most fateful impact would not come from university development but from the university's continuing on-campus housing shortages and shifting housing preferences of Brown undergraduates. Soon, community concern over how Brown developed its on-campus facilities would be replaced by fear of how it failed to handle its off-campus student population growth.

Brown University Off-Campus Undergraduate Distribution, 1970



Chapter 3: The University's Frontiers:

The Heffner, Stoltz, & Hornig Years, 1966-1976

The period spanning 1966 to 1976 was one of upheaval and discomfort for Brown University and the nation. During this time, under the leadership of President Ray Heffner, Interim President Merton Stoltz, and President Donald Hornig, the university underwent staggering transformation. Many of these moments of transformation prominently endure in Brown's official lore. They include the May 1969 adoption of the New Curriculum—now, referred to as the “Open Curriculum”—which removed all distribution requirements and advanced at Brown a truly unparalleled degree of undergraduate academic freedom. Other prominent moments represented the culmination of developments that had long simmered within the university—like the July 1971 full integration of the women's college, Pembroke College, into Brown proper. And yet, many critical elements of this period—moments of tremendous university evolution, conflict, and controversy—are largely forgotten in Brown's official histories.

Throughout the administrations of Heffner, Stoltz, and Hornig, few university issues invoked as much controversy and conflict for Brown as did the university's housing policy. As this chapter chronicles, Brown's on-campus housing policy and infrastructure transformed in this era, leaving behind the aspirations of Presidents Wriston and Keeney for the development of a truly residential college. Instead, the university housing policy adjusted to emphasize student choice, independence, and individuality in housing options—an adjustment that reflected the transforming students who occupied those infrastructures.

In this era, a growing percentage of the swelling student body chose to live off-campus,

sending shockwaves through Brown's physical frontiers. On these frontiers, the university abutted working-class communities that—despite the arrival of urban renewal, a crusading historic preservation movement, and a bulldozing highway—remained robust in character and yet fragile in the face of university expansion. Brown student housing policy, as such, again became a great battleground of struggle between Brown and the communities that surrounded it. From these struggles, critical questions arose: what degree of negative impact on vulnerable university-adjacent communities is tolerable? And, what responsibility do universities have to address or mitigate that impact? This chapter begins by examining an important shift in student housing preferences that began under the Keeney administration.

Should Brown Remain a Residential College?

With remarkable speed, the visions for a residential college set forth by Henry Wriston and reemphasized by Barnaby Keeney were challenged by Brown students and faculty alike. Just four short years after the completion of West Quad, a bombshell report ignited a years-long re-evaluation of the residential experience at Brown and sparked intense questioning of the desirability, ethics, and practicality of the once-sought-after residential college. In the end, students, faculty, and administrators would settle on a residential vision for Brown that emphasized individuality and choice, running counter to the regimented, closely-surveilled residential experience advocated for by Wriston.

In October 1960, a group of fraternity men and independents formed a "Student Committee On Residential Housing at Brown" to interrogate the "important problems inherent in the present residential housing system." Their February 1961 report—so bold and sweeping that the *Providence Journal* dedicated multiple pages to its release—took aim at a system they felt

structurally disadvantaged non-fraternity affiliates and divided the Brown student body.²⁵⁶

The Student Committee was highly critical of Wriston Quad, arguing that its buildings failed to provide adequate space for social interaction and—by dividing fraternity members from independents—institutionalized segregation of the student body, often along lines of class and background. According to the student authors, West Quad—which principally housed independent students—“made more problems than it fixed.”²⁵⁷ The Student Committee lamented that, because of buildings like West Quad, the university’s housing plant was imbued with inequity for non-fraternity men: “Independents have been placed in dormitories where social contacts are impeded and where the physical plant is inadequate for the needs, social and intellectual, of the independent students.” The report concluded: “The residential housing community which President Wriston finally built brought problems which, in many instances, were greater than those it sought to alleviate.”

While the Student Committee was sharply critical of Wriston’s housing program, the group did not advocate for the abandonment of Brown’s pursuit of a residential college. The committee, in reality, sought a rededication to the guiding ideals of a residential college. The group proposed, however, to abolish the university’s current hybrid of fraternity and independent housing clusters and to instead institute a university-wide house system, comparable to that used by Yale to this day. While a poll of the student body revealed that the Student Committee’s proposed house system did not have widespread support, it also underscored that disapproval of Brown’s current residential hybrid system was significant, with only 47 percent of the student

²⁵⁶ Ashman et al. *Report by the Student Committee On Residential Housing at Brown*. 14 February 1961. Box 12, William N. Davis Plant Business Manager Office Files (OF.1W.D1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 24 October 2019.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

population expressing their approval of the status quo.²⁵⁸

While this 1961 report did not advance housing reforms that were ultimately adopted, it did set in motion a renewed culture of questioning the residential experience that Brown provided, one that had gone largely unchallenged during the administration of Wriston and much of that of Keeney. The report was the first in a string of such reports to acknowledge that Brown's housing needed to adapt to a "changing student," one that was more independent, more creative, and more in need of housing opportunities that encouraged free association among students. Future committees of faculty and students assigned to further study housing at Brown generally agreed with this assessment. The 1962 Housing Committee argued that while the university could influence student culture "mainly by indirection," the character of student life at Brown was, and ought to be, ultimately decided by the students themselves.²⁵⁹ Increasingly, university community members questioned whether student housing should be a tool used by university leaders to tightly regulate the student experience at Brown, as Wriston and Keeney had argued just years before. With this core intention of the residential college—increased regulation of student life—under attack, the very purpose of the residential college was being questioned. Later that year, the Housing Committee made this questioning explicit: "Should Brown remain a residential college?" it asked in a widely circulated supplement to the *Brown Daily Herald*.²⁶⁰ Repeatedly, in the years to come, groups of students and faculty continually answered "no."

As the debate over student housing intensified, the university assembled a series of ad hoc committees of students and faculty to study the issue. The 1966 Ad Hoc Housing Committee

²⁵⁸ Gottlieb, S. Martin. "47% of Students Favor Present Housing System." *Brown Daily Herald*. 14 April 1961. Box 12, William N. Davis Plant Business Manager Office Files (OF.1W.D1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 24 October 2019.

²⁵⁹ Moore et al. *Report of the Housing Committee*. October 1962. Box VI-17, Brown University Dean of the College files (OF.1CA.1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 14 February 2020.

²⁶⁰ *Supplement: Report of the Housing Committee*. *The Brown Daily Herald*. 23 October 1962. Box 14, Malcolm S. Stevens Papers (OF.1CA.S1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 31 October 2019.

recognized that while the idea of a residential college was appealing, its applicability to Brown in the 1960s and beyond should not be assumed. In evaluating the residential college's historical origins, the committee questioned the very ethics of the concept, noting that, in consolidating spaces for learning, dining, and recreation, the residential college sought to distance students from the distractions of city life by cloistering them away from the harsh realities faced by their non-university-affiliated neighbors, experiences that should not be ignored by a university community.²⁶¹ More pragmatically, the committee noted that Brown's current housing infrastructure was anything but the unified system a residential college demanded. "The housing system at Brown," editorialized the *Brown Daily Herald* in March 1966, "makes a mockery of the concept of the residential college."²⁶² The newspaper had a point; housing at Brown lacked the regularity often associated with residential colleges, with on-campus students at Brown currently living in a combination of fraternities, independent dormitories, and wood-framed converted family dwellings. Meanwhile virtually half the senior class lived off-campus.

Rather than take issue with this mélange of housing styles, increasingly university members celebrated it. "Our age is characterized by a high valuation of individuality," the 1966 Housing Committee noted.²⁶³ The residential college, in many ways, was increasingly recognized as a relic of the past, unsuited for the emerging Brown student of the 1960s. In a full-throated rejection of Wriston's vision, the 1966 committee concluded, "Controlled and efficient diversity is, in our day, more desirable than controlled and efficient uniformity." The goal posts for what entailed good student housing at Brown were shifting.

²⁶¹ Beyer et al. *Report of the Ad Hoc Committee to Re-evaluate the 1962 Housing Report*. 31 May 1966. Box 23, Ray Lorenzo Heffner Files (OF.1C.13). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 13 November 2019.

²⁶² "Much Ado About Mutch." *Brown Daily Herald*. 29 March 1966. Box VI-9, Brown University Dean of the College files (OF.1CA.1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 14 February 2020.

²⁶³ Beyer et al.

The Camarian Club—the Brown student government body—supported this shift.: “a uniform housing program for all undergraduates is undesirable, as well as impractical,” it said.²⁶⁴ “The original residential college is an anachronism of our time... We strongly suggest that the concept of the residential college be abandoned, and that the University’s efforts be directed toward creating a well-diversified and attractive community with fraternities, independent houses, and off-campus residences.” The 1967 Housing Committee, much the same, echoed these predecessor’s evaluations: “the housing system should be as varied and flexible and yet as equitable a system as feasible, one which provides reasonable opportunities for the exercise of meaningful individual choice in residential accommodations.”²⁶⁵ In just a few short years, Brown had a new housing vision, one that may be summarized as “Let a thousand flowers bloom.”

Students took great initiative to bring this housing vision to fruition. In 1970, cooperative housing options arose, offering students “a common sense of purpose and closeness” as they assumed responsibilities of house maintenance, legal and financial responsibility, and a removed “parental” influence from the University.²⁶⁶ Similarly, “special interest” housing arrived in 1971; members of the first special interest house, the French House, took “great pride in their residence,” willingly assuming responsibilities of house maintenance in return for the house’s “international air” and the opportunity to live amongst fellow Francophones.²⁶⁷ Amidst this burgeoning spirit of individual choice, fraternities, long the backbone of the university’s housing system, were not banished or erased from campus. Instead, they were made to compete with these group-living housing alternatives to attract new members. Fraternities, for their part,

²⁶⁴ Haas et al. “The Response of the Camarian Club to the 1966 Housing Report.” 13 October 1966. Box 23, Ray Lorenzo Heffner Files (OF.1C.13). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 13 November 2019.

²⁶⁵ Schulze et al. *Report of the Housing Committee*. February 1967. Box 23, Ray Lorenzo Heffner Files (OF.1C.13). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 13 November 2019.

²⁶⁶ Walker et al. “Proposal for Cooperative Housing.” April 1970. Box 7, Merton Stoltz Papers (OF-1C-13A). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 12 December 2019.

²⁶⁷ “The French House, an experiment-in-living.” *Brown Alumni Monthly*. March 1972, pp. 5-6.

complained of this newfound need to compete. In their petition to move from Wriston Quad to an off-campus house, members of Phi Delta Beta lamented that fraternities at Brown had become “little more than glorified dormitories.”²⁶⁸ Fraternities, they claimed, “owe their existence to their uniqueness,” a uniqueness that had been dissipated in a college community that offered its members increasingly numerous options for communal living.

This spirit of housing choice also worked to dissolve long-existing gender segregation. While Pembroke College would remain a separate entity for another two years, by 1969, the housing committee concluded that segregation of different gendered students in residential accommodations was a “holdover from former years when very different concerns, assumptions, and goals operated in the University” and that the existing arrangement “stifles the individual’s exchange with other members of the community.”²⁶⁹ A coeducational living pilot that academic year—albeit one that still kept men and women on different floors in the same building—had such “overwhelmingly positive results that no weighing and measuring of pros and cons needs to be done.” The pilot found that the coed community had a “very healthy atmosphere” and a “strong sense of internal community.”²⁷⁰ From the Interfraternity Council to the university chaplain, all seemed in agreement: “all who want [coeducational housing] should have it.”²⁷¹ While the Brown Corporation agreed to expand coeducational living by 200 students in the next fall, such incremental change was not fast enough for some. Students in one residence hall took it upon themselves to segregate themselves by suite, not floor, believing the change would “lead to

²⁶⁸ Proposal from Phi Delta Beta. Box 18, Donald F. Hornig Papers (OF.1C.14). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 10 December 2019.

²⁶⁹ Subcommittee On Coeducational Housing. Letter to Housing Committee. 5 March 1969. Box 7, Merton Stoltz Papers (OF-1C-13A). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 12 December 2019.

²⁷⁰ Subcommittee On Coeducational Housing. *Report of the Subcommittee on Coeducational Housing*. 6 February 1970. Box 7, Merton Stoltz Papers (OF-1C-13A). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 12 December 2019.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

a more natural living style.”²⁷² A survey following the action found that 95 percent of the students favored such segregation by unit as opposed to by floor. Coeducational living was congruent with Brown’s housing system of choice, the 1970 Subcommittee on Coeducational Housing felt, adding, “with housing at the University geared toward the idea of diversity, this type of living unit adds a refreshing alternative to the existing system.”²⁷³

The housing struggles of the post-Keeney era were complex and multifaceted. While university leaders struggled to adapt the on-campus residential experience to meet the preferences of a new, emerging student, these leaders also struggled to ensure that the university simply had enough student beds. In short, Brown’s housing woes concerned both quality and quantity, but a rapidly expanding student body frequently ensured the triumph of those questions that concerned quantity.

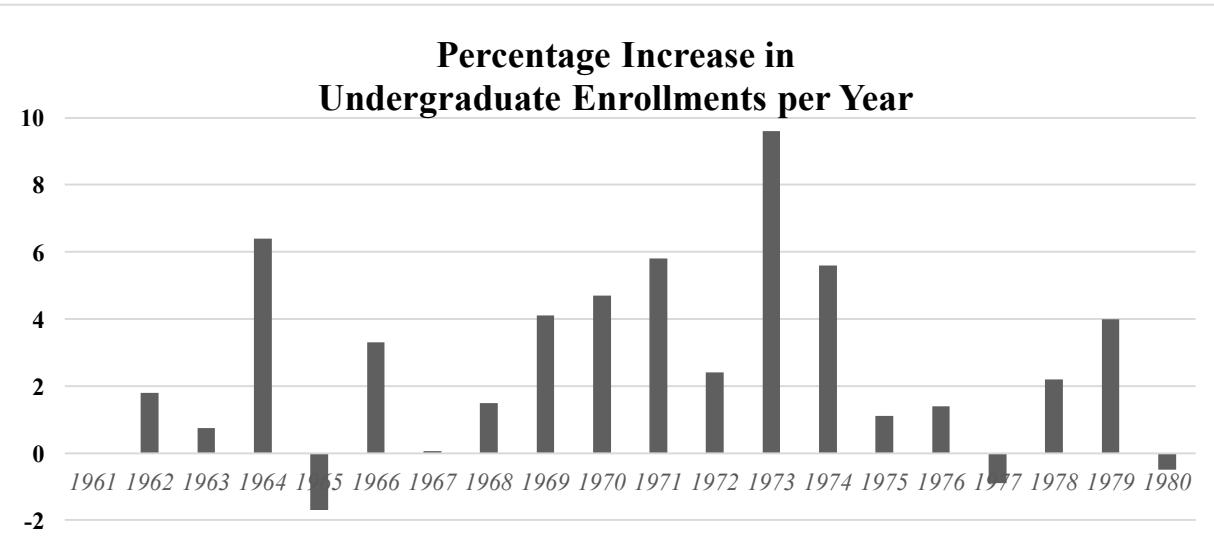
Brown’s “Indefensible” Overcrowding

While Henry Wriston was long gone, his belief in the continued need for expanded higher education remained relevant and persuasive at Brown. President Heffner echoed his predecessor in arguing that without university expansion, Brown would be doing a great disservice to the nation’s growing number of students who sought betterment from the liberal education that Brown offered. Meanwhile, Chancellor Charles C. Tillinghast, Jr.—the head of the Brown Corporation—argued that university growth was critical to Brown’s institutional advancement; without growth, said Tillinghast, Brown would cripple its capacity to attract and retain promising young faculty.²⁷⁴ By failing to increase the Brown student body—and, as such, the university’s

²⁷² Iselin, Diane C. *Ivied Halls: Two Centuries of Housing at Brown University*. Office of Residential Life, Brown University, 1981, pp. 14.

²⁷³ Subcommittee On Coeducational Housing.

²⁷⁴ Tillinghast, Jr., Charles C. Letter to the Reverend Robert H. Schacht. 22 January 1973. Box 11, Donald F. Hornig



(Taken from Gregorian papers, box 164)

need for more professors—Brown would be, in effect, denying its opportunity to seize top, emerging talent for the years to come.

And so, Brown set its sights on an expanded student body. With every year, the student population steadily grew. But soon steady annual growth compounded, and the university found itself quickly surpassing estimates for its student population set only a handful of years earlier. In 1963, the university predicted a modest growth of its student body to 2,662 by 1970, a growth of less than 200 students in those seven years.²⁷⁵ But predictions for such modest growth were abandoned. By 1968, the Brown undergraduate population—at 3,770 students—had rapidly surpassed the 1963 projections for the decade’s end.²⁷⁶ And by 1976, university administrators anticipated even more expansion, planning for a student body of more than 5,000.

While the university’s growth in its student body was desired, the resulting, constant struggle to place these students in on-campus beds was not. Between the mid-1960s and mid-

Papers (OF.1C.14). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 10 December 2019.

²⁷⁵ Hill, Robert. Letter to Dean Morse. 19 December 1963. Box 13, William N. Davis Plant Business Manager Office Files (OF.1W.D1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.

²⁷⁶ “Projected Undergraduate Enrollments, Brown and Pembroke: 1969-76.” 1968. Box VI-16, Brown University Dean of the College files (OF.1CA.1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 14 February 2020.

1970s, Brown was plagued by a near annual shortage of residential space to accommodate its ballooning student body. With each year, it became increasingly clearer that the university's housing capacities had simply not kept pace with its ambitions for growth. In 1967, a shortage of over 1,200 beds was predicted by 1975.²⁷⁷ In the short-term, Brown's deficit of residential space was addressed by the emergency conversion of reading rooms and communal lounges in Wriston and West Quads and the forced overcrowding of students in existing rooms.²⁷⁸ This overcrowding in dormitories across campus was deemed "indefensible" by the 1966 Housing Committee, which worried that, due to overcrowding, West Quad verged on becoming a "ghetto" for first-year students.²⁷⁹ The efficacy of these short-term measures was reaching its limit, university leaders urged Heffner. The university must build new residential dorms, with all possible haste.

So severe was Brown's housing crunch that in 1965, serious consideration was given to the construction of a second campus in Bristol, Rhode Island to house Brown's first-year and sophomore classes.²⁸⁰ While this consideration ultimately subsided without action, Brown's housing challenges did propel the university to significantly expand its campus in the late 1960s. In April 1969, Brown consummated a deal with Bryant College to purchase in full its 11-acre, East Side campus.²⁸¹ As Bryant moved to suburban Smithfield, Brown acquired from Bryant the last remaining significant swath of East Side land and many structures important to its modern-day physical footprint, like the buildings now known as Orwig Music Library and Barbour Hall.

²⁷⁷ "The College: Growth and Housing, 1967-76." 4 January 1967. Box 14, Malcolm S. Stevens Papers (OF.1CA.S1).
Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 31 October 2019.

²⁷⁸ Schulze et al. *Report of the Housing Committee*. February 1967.

²⁷⁹ Beyer et al.

²⁸⁰ Mt. Hope Study Committee. *Preliminary Staff Paper*. April 1965. Box 12, Merton Stoltz Papers (OF-1CA-S2).
Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 13 December 2019.

²⁸¹ *Bryant Property Study*. May 1967. Box 9, Ray Lorenzo Heffner Files (OF.1C.13). Brown University Archives,
Providence, RI. 11 November 2019.

With the purchase, Brown immediately acquired from Bryant beds for more than 400 undergraduates as well as land to build many more.

Though the Bryant purchase gave Brown the physical space to build new dormitories, by the end of the 1960s, the university lacked the financial capacity to build much of anything. Brown found itself in a debilitating \$4.1 million budget deficit, in part the result of the dramatic building programs of the Keeney years.²⁸² While the former Bryant dorms would provide some respite to Brown's housing woes, much of the university's housing challenges remained unaddressed. Increasingly, university leaders and students alike would look beyond the edges of the Brown campus—into the surrounding, highly affordable neighborhoods that abutted the university—to address their housing needs. As we shall see, the university community's increased reliance on off-campus housing during this tremendous period of university growth would threaten the ability of these neighborhoods' most vulnerable members to remain in place.

The University's Frontiers

Since the Wriston years, leaders of Brown had looked with suspicion at off-campus student living. Allowing increased numbers of students to live off-campus, many Brown community members believed, was a clear ideological abdication of the concept of a residential college. With increased numbers of students living in Brown's surrounding neighborhoods, the on-campus experience of all students was dampened, these members argued, as the leadership of off-campus students—most of whom were upperclassmen—was prematurely pulled from the university's residences.²⁸³ Moreover, off-campus living, many believed, engendered not only

²⁸² Widmer, Ted. *Brown: the History of an Idea*. Thames & Hudson, 2015, pp. 222.

²⁸³ Morse et al. *Report of the Committee on Housing*. 19 October 1963. Box VI-9, Brown University Dean of the College files (OF.1CA.1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 14 February 2020.

missing leadership from the campus's oldest students; it also created young students who resented on-campus living and sought reprieve from it: "The morale of the whole system is undermined [by off-campus living]," wrote the 1964 Housing Committee, "because many sophomores and juniors, instead of educating themselves for building their fraternity or living unit, if that is required, accept what exists as inevitable, and look forward to escaping the campus when their turn comes."²⁸⁴

While many members of the Brown community ideologically opposed off-campus living, moving out of the dormitories was, apparently, no particular challenge in the early 1960s. Brown's housing shortage was so severe that university housing officers willingly distributed off-campus permission to most any upperclassman whose departure from campus would free up a desperately needed bed. "Because the present residential quarters are insufficient to accommodate the whole student body," the 1963 Housing Committee wrote, "almost every senior who wishes to live off-campus is permitted to do so."²⁸⁵

Though, as an ostensibly residential college, the university was opposed to off-campus housing in theory, in practice, Brown recognized that off-campus housing was a critical security mechanism for housing its growing student body. "When the on-campus population exceeds the capacity of the Residence Halls to the extent that the best interests of the University are not served," explained housing director Robert E. Hill, "students, upon application, are given permission to reside outside of the University Residence Halls."²⁸⁶ Correspondence like this demonstrates that when Brown's on-campus accommodations had surpassed their capacity, the

²⁸⁴ Morse et al. *Report of the Committee on Housing*. 30 May 1964. Box VI-9, Brown University Dean of the College files (OF.1CA.1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 14 February 2020.

²⁸⁵ Morse et al. *Report of the Committee on Housing*. 19 October 1963

²⁸⁶ Hill, Robert E. Letter to F. Donald Eckelmann. 3 April 1970. Box IX-2, Brown University Dean of the College files (OF.1CA.1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 14 February 2020.

university responded by offering more off-campus permissions.²⁸⁷ While the university may have voiced its theoretical opposition to off-campus living, Brown leaders could not deny that it had become, by the mid-1960s, a critical method used by the university to meet its housing needs. Further, these housing opportunities were provided to the Brown community with no apparent price tag: unlike the beds of Wriston or West Quads, beds available in privately-owned, East Side homes were “provided” to the university at no cost, an additional perk of increased off-campus living that was all the more convincing to a university struggling to reconcile a deep budget deficit.

As the university’s practical dependence on off-campus student housing grew, its theoretical opposition to it shrank. University housing committees began to tout off-campus living as an opportunity for students to find privacy, space for self-realization, and a “transition from campus life to life in society.”²⁸⁸ To many students, this evolution of opinion was a welcomed one. Beverly Hodgson—Class of 1970 and the first female editor of the *Brown Daily Herald*—acknowledged the irrefutable appeal of off-campus living to independence-craving Brown undergraduates: off-campus living offered “an escape from the institutional green walls of the dorms” and “surveillance and dormitory routine.”²⁸⁹ Another student, in favor of off-campus living, succinctly concluded that “No matter what you do to it, a dorm always looks like a dorm. It never looks like home.”²⁹⁰ In increasing numbers, Brown undergraduates of the late-1960s would find refuge from university-affiliated life in East Side homes.

When Brown’s leaders realized that off-campus housing had become an important tool in

²⁸⁷ Hill, Robert E. Letter to Paul Maeder. 16 November 1973. Box 27, Paul F. Maeder Papers (OF-1CA-M1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 December 2019.

²⁸⁸ Hill, Robert E. “Housing Status Report.” 5 July 1966. Box 23, Ray Lorenzo Heffner Files (OF.1C.13). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 13 November 2019.

²⁸⁹ Hodgson, Beverley. “All the discomforts of home.” *Brown Alumni Monthly*. February 1970, pp. 36.

²⁹⁰ Hopkins, Lorraine. “Providence facing problem of student ‘families.’” *Providence Sunday Journal*. 7 March 1971.

addressing the university's housing needs, they made great effort to ensure that university community members could avail themselves of the housing opportunities available just beyond the campus's edge. From the mid- to late-1960s, the university deployed many of the tools at its disposal to rapidly fill privately-owned beds in the East Side with Brown students and affiliates. To lead this effort, in 1966, the university established an off-campus housing bureau to assist its members in finding privately-owned housing opportunities in Brown's surrounding neighborhoods. The explicitly stated goal of the bureau was to give Brown affiliates a leg up in the local housing market over other non-university residents. The office created an off-campus listing service—a clearinghouse of housing opportunities—and ran inspections of properties occupied by members of the Brown community to ensure that the properties were of an acceptable standard.²⁹¹ The office also served as a liaison between university affiliates and landlords, negotiating with the landlords to ensure property maintenance. East Side landlords, according to housing director Robert Hill, generally "have followed our suggestions."²⁹² The off-campus housing bureau was remarkably busy, assisting 2,500 Brown affiliates in 1968 and conducting 142 house inspections in a nine-month period. The office could proudly boast that, by 1968, thanks to its work, 913 Brown students lived within walking distance of the university, while another 330 affiliates students lived between 1 and 3 miles from campus.²⁹³

Brown showed, time and again, that it was willing to fight to preserve its ability to house students in the community. When in 1971 the city attempted to limit the number of unrelated people who could share a unit—a clear attempt by the city to slow the spread of student off-campus occupation—university coordinator of community relations Eric Godfrey claimed that

²⁹¹ Hill, Robert E. Letter to F. Donald Eckelmann. 6 December 1968. Box 14, Malcolm S. Stevens Papers (OF.1CA.S1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 31 October 2019.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Hill, Robert E. Letter to F. Donald Eckelmann. 6 December 1968.

Brown would view any attempt to bar students from off-campus quarters as “discriminatory” and use the full power of the law to defend students’ right to live in the community.²⁹⁴ Due in part to Brown’s legal flexing, the city abandoned this ordinance. Preserving off-campus opportunities was, from the university’s viewpoint, about more than preserving housing choice for its students. It was about maintaining a critical source of student beds, beds maintained on the community’s dime.

But Brown did more than simply advocate for its students’ right to off-campus housing at City Hall or represent university affiliates in their disagreements with East Side landlords; indeed, Brown *was* an East Side landlord—and a prominent one at that. In 1958, in concert with the university administration, a group of alumni established a landholding corporation called Fairview, Inc.²⁹⁵ Fairview’s stated purpose was two-fold: first, it sought to acquire property for Brown at “actual market value.” Recognizing that property owners had a tendency to overcharge when Brown bought land in its own name, by buying under a pseudonym, Brown hoped it could avoid such price-gouging in its land acquisition efforts. Additionally, university leaders argued that Fairview existed to keep properties on city tax rolls until ready for use by the university, recognizing that the cumulative effect of Brown’s tax-exempt status constituted a serious blow to the city’s coffers. By the late 1960s, Fairview had amassed a considerable real estate profile throughout the East Side, owning nearly 50 separate buildings in 1970 with combined assets of nearly \$3 million.

While Fairview was intended to be a clandestine operation, the press quickly exposed its true identity soon after its founding, and by the mid-1960s, most everyone knew that Fairview

²⁹⁴ Hopkins.

²⁹⁵ Price, John B. “Statement on Fairview, Incorporated.” 9 October 1969. Box 32, William N. Davis Plant Business Manager Office Files (OF.1W.D1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 24 October 2019.

and Brown were one and the same. Though technically a separate entity, Fairview's governors reported to Brown's top brass, and Brown administrators—including university presidents—sat on Fairview's governing board. All of Fairview's purchases were made at the discretion of the university.²⁹⁶ Fairview and Brown were one and the same, but their marriage was not necessarily a happy one. "Fairview is the captive of Brown University and not an independent operation," complained Fairview treasurer John B. Price in October 1969.²⁹⁷ Price's contempt was imaginable. Fairview was often asked to do Brown's East Side dirty work.

Fairview was a constant source of strife between the university and its neighbors. Community members often saw the land-holding company as a nefarious arm of Brown that sought to quietly snatch up building after building without the neighborhood noticing; in all fairness, this assessment was accurate to Fairview's purpose. Further, because Brown generally bought groups of adjacent properties through Fairview for the sake of the physical land, not the actual houses that resided on that land, many Fairview buildings would often sit vacant or in stages of disrepair.²⁹⁸ Neighbors consistently complained to Brown of the deteriorating effects that neglected Fairview homes had on their neighborhoods as a whole. The community opinion of Fairview had grown so pervasively negative that its leaders suggested the corporation be renamed "Brown University Taxable Properties Incorporated" to remind community members of the company's more honorable intentions.²⁹⁹

While many Fairview homes were occupied by non-university affiliates, Fairview's largest source of renters was Brown students. As the university noted in 1970, "Fairview properties were

²⁹⁶ *Housing Workbook: Brown University*. December 1970. Box 23, Malcolm S. Stevens Papers (OF.1CA.S1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.

²⁹⁷ Price.

²⁹⁸ Fairview, Inc. Letter to Merton P. Stoltz. 4 November 1969. Box 38, William N. Davis Plant Business Manager Office Files (OF.1W.D1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.

²⁹⁹ Maeder, Paul F. Letter to Donald F. Hornig. 19 October 1972. Box 38, William N. Davis Plant Business Manager Office Files (OF.1W.D1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.



Map of Brown's landholdings in 1970. The map distinguishes between the property of the university proper, Fairview, and the soon-to-be acquired property of the former Bryant campus. (Taken from Stevens papers, box 24)

not purchased for the purpose of insuring a supply of off-campus apartments for Brown students.”³⁰⁰ This was an “accidental consequence,” the university insisted, of its efforts to purchase adjacent properties that could one day be combined for the development of future university buildings. However, by 1970, a serious contingency of the university’s off-campus population—120 of the approximately 500 Brown undergraduates living in off-campus accommodations—lived in Fairview homes.³⁰¹ While Brown urged that its student’s occupancy of Fairview homes was an accident, in its most severe moments of housing shortages, the

³⁰⁰ *Housing Workbook: Brown University.*

³⁰¹ *Ibid*

university leveraged its collection of Fairview homes to expand Brown students' off-campus housing opportunities, at the clear disadvantage of local residents.

Correspondence between the university and Fairview's real estate management agent—Gross Real Estate Service—makes clear that the university sought to replace non-university affiliated Fairview renters with student renters. In November 1969, Dean of the College Eckelmann instructed Gross employees to make a list of "all possible houses that might be used to increase the net student housing at Brown and give some figures on the numbers of students each house could accommodate."³⁰² In early January 1970, Gross returned with a list of 18 properties currently occupied by non-students. In its evaluation of near every property—even properties like 59 Charlesfield Street, which the real estate service noted was occupied by "elderly people" without a lease—the property manager squarely concluded, "I do not see any reason why these apartments cannot be rented to students of Brown University."³⁰³ In total, Gross assessed that 57 students could be placed in off-campus accommodations by forcing out non-student renters.

It is difficult to ascertain whether Brown, in the immediate aftermath of this list's development, went through with compelling Fairview renters from their homes to make way for students. However, it is likely that many Fairview renters were forced by Brown from their homes soon after Gross's January 1970 list was developed. The 1980 Brown student directories reveal that, just ten years after this saga, 10 of the 18 properties on Gross's list were occupied by Brown undergraduate or graduate renters.³⁰⁴ Today, many of the properties on Gross's list that

³⁰² Eckelmann, F. Donald. Letter to John B. Price. 14 November 1969. Box VI-16, Brown University Dean of the College files (OF.1CA.1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 14 February 2020.

³⁰³ Gross, Jr., George M. Letter to Frank C. Acker. 2 January 1970. Box 32, William N. Davis Plant Business Manager Office Files (OF.1W.D1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 24 October 2019.

³⁰⁴ "Student Directory: Brown University, 1980-81." 1980. Box 4, Student Directories (OF-1G-R1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 25 February 2020.

still stand are no longer residential. For instance, 59 Charlesfield today houses Brown's Public Policy program, the academic home of the author of this thesis. But many more of the properties on the list—properties like 276 Brook, 129 Thayer, or 52 Olive—no longer stand at all and have since been subsumed by Brown parking lots or massive construction projects, like the Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs or the Sidney E. Frank Hall for Life Sciences.

The January 1970 Gross list provides a meaningful sample of the fate of many non-university occupied Fairview homes. But more significantly, it makes clear how Brown leaders thought of Fairview's residential landholdings. Brown saw its Fairview homes as either additional sources of beds that could occupy student renters in the university's moments of need or inconsequential structures that resided on land important to Brown's intended, future development. That these buildings served as homes for East Side residents—many of them vulnerable because of age or income—did not appear to be an important consideration to university leaders. This human cost was of secondary concern to determining how these homes could best serve the university's interest.

As Brown sought solutions to its housing woes by looking off-campus, increasingly foreboding evidence suggested that the influx of Brown students was bringing the East Side housing market to a tipping point. In November 1968, Dean of the College Eckelmann alerted President Heffner that "student housing is completely used up" and that "rental rates jumped around 25% this past year."³⁰⁵ While internally Brown feared its impending "residential crunch," the working-class communities that thrived at Brown's frontiers feared disruption, disintegration, and destruction.

³⁰⁵ Eckelmann, F. Donald. Letter to Ray Heffner. 19 November 1968. Box 14, Malcolm S. Stevens Papers (OF.1CA.S1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 31 October 2019.

Brown is Tearing Us to Pieces

By the late 1960s, Brown community members and university neighbors began to recognize that the university's increased dependence on off-campus housing was causing serious problems for the university's most vulnerable neighbors. At the decades' end, the *Providence Journal* was reporting that, due to a shortage of housing in Fox Point, the neighborhood's poorest residents were being displaced in large numbers, with these residents "unable to compete with students and others who are able to substantially outpay them."³⁰⁶ This impending housing shortage was the result of a convergence of factors, among them the *College Hill Study* and the East Side Renewal Project, which had removed from the market many affordable units that had long served the community's least resourced inhabitants. Indeed, according to internal Brown calculations, more rental units had been demolished in the wake of these renewal efforts than had been added by them, resulting in a net loss of neighborhood rental opportunities.³⁰⁷ However, certain members of the Brown community recognized that the university's growing off-campus population of students was a chief driver of widespread displacement.

While Brown actively sought to ensure that its students could avail themselves of privately-owned East Side housing opportunities throughout the 1960s, internal university documents suggest that Brown administrators were largely caught off-guard by the magnitude of the school's off-campus population at the end of the decade. In 1963, university documents projected that the Brown's off-campus undergraduate population would remain essentially unchanged, around approximately 250 students, by 1970.³⁰⁸ In reality, the off-campus undergraduate student

³⁰⁶ "Fox Point Residents Fear Displacement." *Providence Journal*. 18 June 1970.

³⁰⁷ Hill, Robert E. Letter to Malcom Stevens. 15 January 1969. Box 13, William N. Davis Plant Business Manager Office Files (OF.1W.D1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.

³⁰⁸ Hill, Robert. Letter to Dean Morse.

population grew by nearly 300 percent during the decade, reaching over 550 students by 1969.³⁰⁹

Nearly all of the university's growing graduate student population resided in off-campus quarters; from 1961 to 1969, the off-campus graduate population similarly ballooned from 779 to 1,235 students.³¹⁰ Meanwhile, correspondence between housing director Robert Hill and Vice President of Administration Malcolm Stevens reveals that Brown administrators kept close tabs on the growing monthly rents that their students faced. From 1960 to 1970, rents for standard 3-bedroom apartments in Brown's surroundings rose, on average, 50 percent.³¹¹ By the decade's end, the sheer magnitude of students living in the community and the dramatically increased rents that they began to face provoked the university to acknowledge that "the immediate community has reached or exceeded its capacity to gracefully absorb [the] University's 'off-campus' housing."³¹²

Brown and its neighbors increasingly recognized that if the university's housing policy went unchanged, vulnerable neighbors like low-income Fox Pointers would continue to face displacement. "The overall result [of Brown's expansion in off-campus living] has been the gradual destruction of the Fox Point community," Fox Point leader Bernardino Delgado concluded.³¹³ "Fox Pointers are being forced to leave their community so that other interests can benefit." Fellow neighborhood leader Robert Clark concurred, adding "Brown is tearing us to pieces when it comes to housing."³¹⁴ As neighborhoods like Fox Point faced dramatic

³⁰⁹ "Report of the Subcommittee on Space and Quantity of Brown University Housing." 13 November 1969. Box VI-16, Brown University Dean of the College files (OF.1CA.1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 14 February 2020.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Hill, Robert E. Letter to Malcom Stevens.

³¹² Dawson, DeMay Associates, Inc. *Brown University Sketch Plans of May 1971*. May 1971. Box 13, Donald F. Hornig Papers (OF.1C.14). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 10 December 2019.

³¹³ "Fox Point Residents Fear Displacement."

³¹⁴ The Ad Hoc Committee on Housing and Expansion. *Brown University in the East Side Community: An Interim Report*. December 1969. Box 30, Merton Stoltz Papers (OF.1CA-S2). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 13 December 2019.

restructuring in part due to Brown's housing policy, a collective of community and student organizers urged the university to recognize this effect and begin corrective measures to account for it. For a short period of time, their efforts proved effective.

Never a Neutral Agent

"The University is never entirely a neutral agent. Its very existence alters the context from which it must operate," wrote students David Bearman and David Salomon in an October 1968 open letter to President Heffner.³¹⁵ Bearman and Salomon's letter serves to remind us that the university-community housing struggles of the late 1960s and early 1970s were situated within a generally dynamic era in the university's history. Throughout this period, a growing chorus of university community members—led principally by students—urged Brown leaders to critically re-evaluate the complexities of the university's influence in Providence, pleading for Brown to recognize the good of this presence alongside the bad. In the late 1960s, student leaders like Bearman and Salomon urged Brown to actively strive to be a positive force in the lives of the university's disadvantaged neighbors. It is important to examine this cultural moment in the history of Brown, for out of it grew a remarkable—albeit brief—student-led call for the university mitigation of its negative community housing impact.

While future chapters examine in more depth the emergence of university-sanctioned community engagement and the rise of university entities like the Swearer Center for Public Service, it is important to note that, at Brown, widespread community engagement began in large part thanks to student-led initiatives. Many of these nascent examples of student-led community

³¹⁵ Bearman, David and David Salomon. Letter to President Heffner and members of the University Community. 8 October 1968. Box 33, Ray Lorenzo Heffner Files (OF.1C.13). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 14 November 2019.

engagement were born directly from student concern regarding Brown's perceived maltreatment of its surrounding communities. One important early example of such a student-led initiative was the "1968 Brown-Providence Summer Project." The Summer Project was a collection of student-led community engagement efforts that sought to "give concerned students the opportunity to work effectively toward the solution of urban poverty and racial problems in Providence."³¹⁶ Participating students did a variety of work in partnership with community-based organizations, assisting in efforts that included job readiness training, adult education, and welfare rights organizing. A notable number of the projects concerned housing in the city, with students, for example, assisting in rat extermination efforts in Mount Hope and fair housing advocacy in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood. The project was far from a perfect example of university-community engagement, with participating students often revealing, in their description of their efforts, evidence of what today might be recognized as "the white savior industrial complex."³¹⁷ For example, some students brazenly declared that they "now see the city as it is," a remarkable accomplishment in just one summer of work. Others were more blatantly discriminatory in their descriptions of their work and the people with whom they worked: One student, involved in tenant organizing in low-income neighborhoods across the city wrote, "It was more the poor that we were fighting, their attitudes, their problems, the intransigence."³¹⁸

While the project was no doubt mired by problems born, at least in part, from the belief that privileged students at an elite institution could "solve" issues as complex as urban poverty and racism, the Brown-Providence Summer Project does suggest the arrival of a growing student

³¹⁶ *Final Report of the Brown-Providence Summer Project and Proposal for the Establishment of a Community Involvement Center.* 1968. Box V-5, Brown University Dean of the College files (OF.1CA.1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 14 February 2020.

³¹⁷ Cole, Teju. "The White-Savior Industrial Complex." *The Atlantic*, 11 January 2013.

³¹⁸ *Final Report of the Brown-Providence Summer Project and Proposal for the Establishment of a Community Involvement Center.*

consciousness of the university's participation in these deeply-rooted, systemic issues. Philosophically, the organizers wrote, the project was "grounded in the commitment that the Brown University Community should be involved with these problems in ways which maximize the talents and facilities available within a university community."³¹⁹

The Summer Project was successful enough for university leaders to grant financial support for more sustained student-led community engagement, through the Community Involvement Center (CIC), which can rightly be understood as a student-founded predecessor to today's Swearer Center. The CIC's founders, which included David Salomon, imagined the center as a "switchboard" for students committed to social change that strived to "provide facilities and resources to coordinate various student and faculty groups already concerned with Providence."³²⁰ Its founders saw the CIC not only as a site for campus communication and coordination but as a testing ground for how to "best utilize the skills and energies of the University, its faculty, and its students in combatting the Urban Crisis." The CIC's dual hope was to make "education more relevant to the society" and provide "a disinherited culture of poverty in Providence with the resources of a University and the University community."

Just as students were organizing structures for sustained, positive community engagement, Brown's off-campus housing policy was wreaking havoc in the university's adjacent communities. Student leaders like David Bearman and David Salomon recognized to advocate for community involvement required the resolution of this conflict. In their letter to Heffner, Bearman and Salomon argued that the university must transform how it conceptualized its physical planning, construction, and housing policy:

To pretend that the University is neutral is to pretend that it....occupies no space, affects

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid.

*no neighborhoods, and exerts no moral suasion. Brown must recognize that it is an organic part of the community for it cannot afford to replace Fox Point with a student ghetto, a shopping area, or office buildings directed either by or for the University.*³²¹

In following sections, we examine the important advocacy of a student-led group, the Ad Hoc Committee on Housing and University Expansion, a group whose guiding philosophy clearly aligned with and in part grew out of the work of the efforts here chronicled.

Real Need for Real People Now

The calls from these Brown students for heightened university consciousness of its community impact are, of course, situated in a period of unparalleled student activism in the history of the United States. Across the nation, student protest often engulfed life on American campuses in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as students urged their colleges and universities to—among other demands—end their involvement in the Vietnam War and expand their on-campus commitment to the Civil Rights Movement.

Brown was far from insulated from such on-campus conflict. On December 5, 1968, 65 of the university's 85 Black students—led by women from Pembroke—walked out of the university, occupying the nearby Congdon Street Baptist Church, to demand that Brown increase its Black student population and better support Black students already on campus.³²² Furthermore, following the May 4, 1970 Kent State massacre of four students protesting the U.S. bombing of Cambodia as part of the Vietnam War, the Brown student body voted to strike in solidarity. Brown students and faculty proclaimed a “free university,” making all final exams optional and holding impromptu classes on the Main Green.³²³ Students called for that years’

³²¹ Bearman & Salomon.

³²² Bennett, Katherine. “On 50th Anniversary, Alums Reflect on Black Student Walkout.” *Brown Daily Herald*, 5 December 2018.

³²³ Widmer 220.

commencement to be “less frivolous, more in keeping with the times;” students cancelled the traditional Campus Dance, disrupted a ROTC commissioning ceremony, and planned workshops and panels on the burning political topics of the day.³²⁴ This turmoil proved too much for President Heffner, who resigned in 1969, stating “I have simply reached the conclusion that I do not enjoy being a university president.”³²⁵ Heffner’s post was taken over on an interim basis by then-Provost Merton P. Stoltz until a permanent replacement could be selected.

While student protest during the late 1960s and early 1970s is often remembered for its opposition to macro-level affairs like the Vietnam War, student activists at many of Brown’s peer institutions also waged hyper-local political campaigns, robustly and effectively demanding that their universities dramatically reform their treatment of neighboring communities. At Columbia University, for instance, student activists from the school’s chapter of Students for a Democratic Society, its Black student group the Student Afro Society, and community leaders like Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown combined forces to protest Columbia’s then-decade-long assault on communities of color in the New York



Portrait of Ray Lorenzo Heffner, by Philip Pearlstein, 1969. (Courtesy of Brown University Office of the Curator Portrait Collection)

³²⁴ Mitchell, Martha. “Commencement.” *Encyclopedia Brunoniana*, 1993.

³²⁵ Phillips, Janet M. *Brown University: A Short History*. Brown University Office of University Relations, 1992, pp. 83.

City neighborhoods of Morningside Heights and Harlem. In the 1960s alone, Columbia's massive purchasing campaign had displaced almost 10,000 people, 85 percent of whom were Black or Puerto Rican.³²⁶ Community and student fervor exploded when the university attempted to build a gymnasium on public park land in April 1968. In response, Columbia students led a week-long occupation of university administrative buildings. Students referred to this effort as "Gym Crow" and believed that it symbolized the university's "indifference, short-sightedness, and...failure to recognize the debt it owes the great urban community it lives in."³²⁷ The protest, which included the taking of a dean as hostage and violent clashes with city police, brought national attention and criticism to university-led urban revitalization. It ended with Columbia abandoning its plans for the gym.

One year later, the University of Pennsylvania sought to establish a University City Science Center adjacent to its West Philadelphia campus. The university, leveraging Section 112 credits, selected "Black Bottom," a predominantly Black, low-income neighborhood for the center's site and displaced at least 600 families in constructing the facility.³²⁸ Like Columbia's gym, to students and community members, the Science Center became emblematic of Penn's heavy-handed treatment of its most vulnerable neighbors.³²⁹ Beginning on February 18, 1969, more than 800 students, faculty, and community members carried out a six-day occupation of Penn's main administrative building, College Hall. Recognizing their institution's destruction of local communities, the occupiers demanded the transfer of undeveloped Science Center land to the community and that the university develop a fund for low-income housing construction.³³⁰

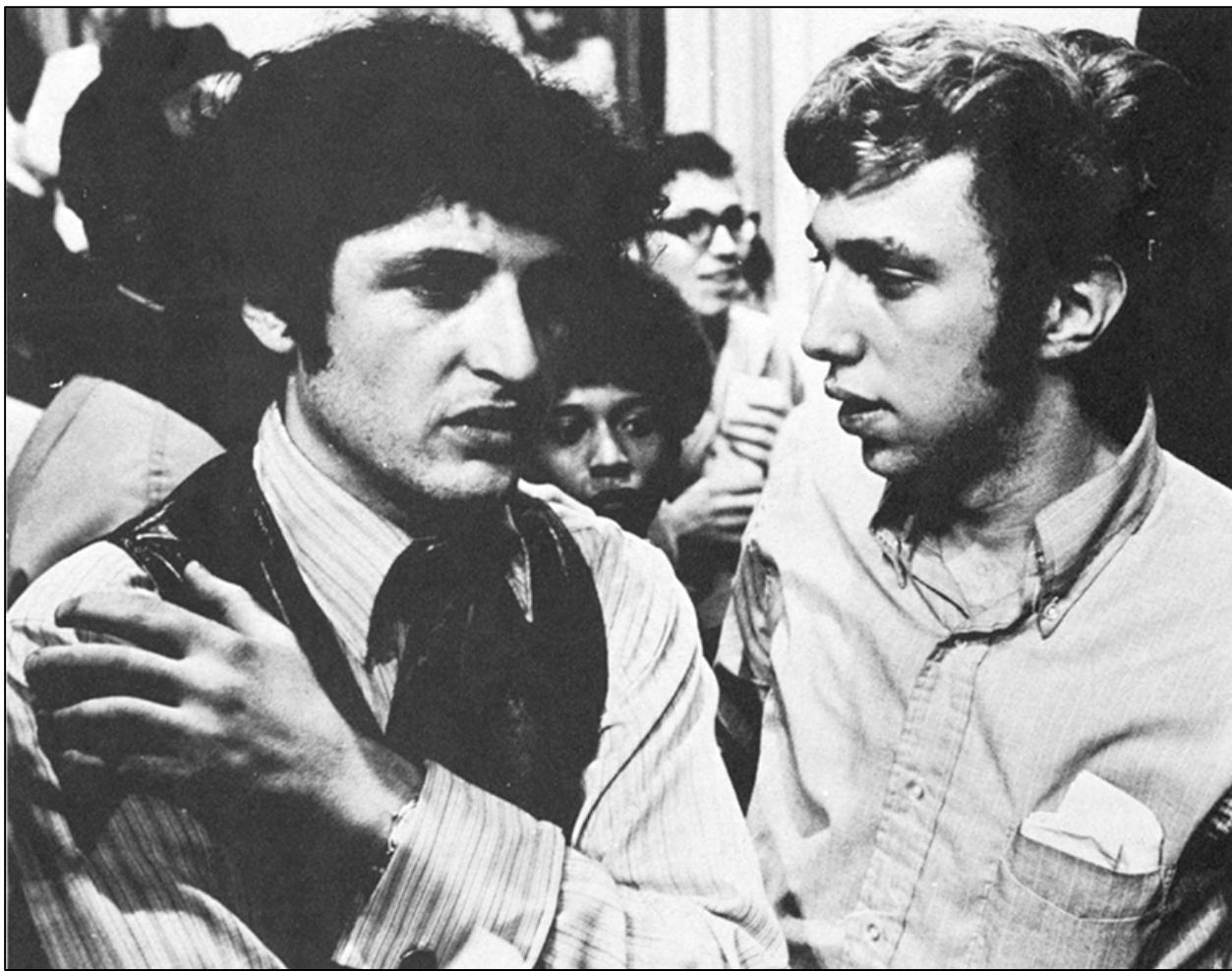
³²⁶ Bradley, Stefan M. *Harlem vs. Columbia University: Black Student Power in the Late 1960s*. University of Illinois Press, 2009, pp. 28.

³²⁷ Ibid 60.

³²⁸ Etienne, Harley F. *The Role of Universities in Urban Neighborhood Change: The Case of University City, West Philadelphia and the University of Pennsylvania*. 2007. Cornell University, PhD dissertation, pp. 132.

³²⁹ Puckett and Lloyd 119.

³³⁰ Ibid 128-129.



University of Pennsylvania student leader Ira Harkavy (right) and sociology lecturer Phillip Pochoda in the midst of the student takeover of College Hall, February 1969. (Courtesy of University of Pennsylvania Archives)

Unlike Columbia, student protest leader Ira Harkavy successfully ordered his peers to remain civil to “achieve real need for real people now.” In a victory largely accredited to the students’ discipline and focus on attainable goals, the university agreed in the short-term to all of the students’ demands. Recalling the impetus for his student activism more than fifty years ago, Harkavy—who has remained at Penn since his days as an undergraduate and helped found Penn’s Netter Center for Community Partnerships—said that he and his peers acted because “We saw it as the moral thing to do.”³³¹

³³¹ Harkavy, Ira, University of Pennsylvania Associate Vice President and Founding Director, Barbara and Edward Netter Center for Community Partnerships. Personal interview. 24 February 2020.

At Brown, there were no clashes with police or takeovers of University Hall in protest of the university's expansion. But nonetheless, there was important leadership exhibited by Brown students that called out the university's disastrous physical impact upon its surrounding communities. These students offered remarkably poignant analysis of the neighborhood transformation occurring just beyond the edge of campus and skillfully identified the ways in which the university was a leading contributor to this change. This student leadership resulted in significant and effective pressure on the university that compelled Brown leaders to change the university's course, if only for a short period of time.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Housing and University Expansion was founded in mid-1969, just as Brown's on-campus housing shortage reached a crisis point and serious cracks in the local rental market imposed by off-campus students began to reveal themselves. In its earliest days, the Ad Hoc Committee sought and received counsel from Reverend Paul Dewhamel, a member of the group Churches Concerned, a conglomeration of six local churches that rehabilitated housing for low-income Fox Point families.³³² Reverend Dewhamel reminded the students of their own implication in this process of neighborhood change and pointed out that "sensitivity was requisite and rare" in this sort of university-community work. The members of the Ad Hoc Committee left their meeting with the Reverend—which they recognized as an opportunity for "sober reflection"—with a sense that its "first concern was to put Brown, its own house, in order."

The Ad Hoc Committee squarely identified Brown's complicity in the displacement of low-income Fox Pointers. "As the number of students living off-campus has grown, the high

³³² "Ad Hoc Committee on Housing and University Expansion: Note of Sunday 23 September 8:00." 23 September 1969. Box VI-16, Brown University Dean of the College files (OF.1CA.1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 14 February 2020.

competition among them for living units has created an inflated housing market in which rents are often beyond the means of many community residents,” wrote Ad Hoc Committee leader Andy Eisenberg, Class of 1971, in December 1969.³³³ “This has in turn resulted in the displacement of these lower-income families.” Eisenberg identified how Brown’s increased dependence on off-campus housing had engendered an unfair competition—between often well-endowed Brown students and the least-resourced residents of Fox Point—for the neighborhood’s limited affordable housing opportunities. However, Eisenberg noted that the Brown students were insulated from these market pressures, oblivious to the unseen damage that they were causing:

In essence, the housing shortage created to a large extent by Brown in an area such as Fox Point has not been felt by the students, who together can pay the high rents and thus find housing. Rather, the squeeze has most affected community people who have been forced to move from Fox Point because of the growing price for housing.

Reflecting on his activism with the Ad Hoc Committee from fifty years prior, Andy Eisenberg remembered the group consisting of a unique blend of Brown students of varied backgrounds and political persuasions. Many members were from the “establishment”—students who were highly involved in student body governance—while others were more “radical community activists.”³³⁴ By his own admission, Eisenberg was himself a member of the former, noting that he and many other members of the committee had “a great relationship with the deans at the time” and could walk into university leaders’ offices as they wished. To Eisenberg, university leaders were not threatened by the Ad Hoc Committee and viewed the group “at worst

³³³ “Ad Hoc Committee on Housing and University Expansion: Note of December 9, 1969.” 9 December 1969. Box IX-3, Brown University Dean of the College files (OF.1CA.1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.

³³⁴ Eisenberg, Andy, Partner, Constangy, Brooks, Smith & Prophete, LLP; Brown Class of 1971. Personal interview. 13 March 2020.

as an irritant.” The Ad Hoc Committee, Eisenberg assessed, was a “creature of the times,” a body of students established at a moment when student agitation was the norm.

While Eisenberg was quick to paint the group as relatively moderate, in December 1969, the Ad Hoc Committee released a remarkably insightful analysis of the East Side’s ongoing neighborhood change. In their powerful report, *Brown University in the East Side Community*, the committee took aim at the various forces actively displacing the East Side’s most vulnerable residents.³³⁵ While the report gives particular focus to Brown’s participation in compelling neighborhood change, it also adeptly analyzed other critical sources of displacement. For instance, the Ad Hoc Committee took issue with the influence of the Providence Preservation Society, which the committee argued “definitely does not represent the lower class” of the East Side.³³⁶ The committee condemned PPS for playing an integral role in attracting private realtors who exclusively saw the East Side’s homes as sources for profit production and not as part of the fabric of robust working class populations. In these processes, the Ad Hoc Committee believed that PPS had shown “little concern for tenants who were displaced when homes where purchased for rehabilitation,” rehabilitation for which the PPS fought aggressively. Meanwhile, the Ad Hoc Committee saw through the East Side Renewal Project’s proposed goal of eliminating “the recurrence of blighted and substandard conditions” and their replacement by “well-planned integrated, safe, and healthful neighborhoods.”³³⁷ The committee rejected this ostentatious language, remarking that such a goal was little more than a “euphemism for the creation of a nice middle class area with a high tax base.”

But by and large, the Ad Hoc Committee’s most impactful analysis was its unpacking of

³³⁵ The Ad Hoc Committee on Housing and Expansion.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Ibid.

Brown's contribution to East Side displacement. "Brown University has shown an insensitivity to the wishes of the community," the report declared in its introduction.³³⁸ It added: "Often the actions of the institution have caused unnecessary hardship to its neighbors." The biggest source of university-sponsored hardship, the committee continued to argue, was Brown's expanded reliance upon off-campus housing. The group noted the dramatic intensification of Brown student presence in the university's surrounding neighborhoods. Between 1961 and 1969, the total Brown off-campus student population had nearly doubled, growing from 921 to 1,787 students.³³⁹ The report observed that the most concerning element of this growth was occurring in Fox Point, where in the span of a few short years between 1965 and 1969, the number of students in the neighborhood alone had grown from 126 to 297.

The committee noted that this intense influx of Brown students into a geographically compact and principally low-income area was dramatically restructuring the neighborhood's housing market. The growing presence of Brown students in the neighborhood compelled profiteering landlords to look at Fox Point with a renewed interest. According to the committee, in the first wave of increased student movement into Fox Point, students were simply occupying a handful of apartments with a higher and higher density. This increasing student density made landlords recognize, however, the potential profitability of renting to students, who clearly demanded more Fox Point units.³⁴⁰ As such, landlords purchased more units with the express purpose of renting them to students. Therefore, in the second phase of student movement into Fox Point, more and more units were becoming almost-exclusively occupied by students, effectively removing them from the market for non-university affiliates.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

The net effect of these developments was “rapid upward pressure on rents” which enticed further “speculation by absentee landlords who buy up houses, divide them into multiple dwelling units and rent them for as much as they can get.”³⁴¹ While some neighborhood residents could withstand this market pressure, many could not, the committee noted. Quoting an anonymous “ex-Fox Pointer,” the committee concluded: “It has been the black Fox Pointer, the Cape Verdean, who has been hardest hit.” The signs of displacement of Cape Verdeans were already evident, the Ad Hoc Committee observed. In the 1960s, the neighborhood experienced a more than 60 percent loss of its non-white population.

“Clearly, Brown University has failed in its role as a responsible member of a larger community in many ways,” the committee observed.³⁴² By taking bold action in the short- and long-term, the Ad Hoc Committee urged that Brown “can help ease the housing shortage in the surrounding community to a large extent caused by the increases in the student off-campus population during the past years.”³⁴³ Chief among the committee’s recommendations was a moratorium on any new student rentals in either the Fox Point neighborhood or the Camp Street area of Mount Hope to the university’s north. The committee hoped that by slowing the student growth into these vulnerable areas, the university could slow the market pressures it had helped provoke. The committee also urged that the university tighten its off-campus permission processes and require, for the first time, that all students register their off-campus addresses with the university. Additionally, the committee identified that the university had to hold its off-campus population steady and limit the size of the graduate school to do so. Finally, the committee identified that the university’s Fairview properties had an important role to play in

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ “Minutes of December 15.” 15 December 1969. Box VI-16, Brown University Dean of the College files (OF.1CA.1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 14 February 2020.

rectifying the university's housing impact. The committee urged that Fairview rentals not be converted into student rentals anymore and that Fairview's monthly rents be lowered "in light of the inflated student housing market."

The Ad Hoc Committee's analysis and suggestions were more than a list of demands. The committee's work opened the eyes of many Brown community members to the drastic impact that the university was having upon its neighbors. The committee played an integral role in elevating awareness of this impact. In the years that followed, numerous university bodies echoed the Ad Hoc Committee's findings and shared in urging university leaders to take corrective action. The Ad Hoc Committee's advocacy—and its positive reception under Acting President Merton Stoltz—gave birth to a new, university-sponsored body, consisting of faculty, administrators, and students tasked with monitoring the university's role in the community: the Community Relations Committee (CRC). The CRC would prove a dogged advocate for ameliorative action with regards to housing. Together, the Ad Hoc Committee and the CRC urged the university to recognize that, in the words of the CRC, "Brown's expansion and housing policies have together been the most serious component among a host of forces which are displacing poor families on the East Side."³⁴⁴ The CRC boldly advanced the work begun by the Ad Hoc Committee, urging the university to change its course and reduce its dependence on off-campus housing. "It is the responsibility of the University to provide housing for its students," the CRC observed. "This should not be the responsibility of the community." For a very brief moment in the institution's history, these urgings were heeded, and Brown—under the leadership of its interim president—took substantive action to mitigate its negative impact and proactively add to the East Side's affordable housing stock.

³⁴⁴ "Report on Off-Campus Housing Policy." Box 19, Donald F. Hornig Papers (OF.1C.14). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 10 December 2019.

Assist in Saving Their Neighborhood

“Although in the long run...Fox Point may not be a low-income area, our actions can halt the artificially rapid rate of this change, thus giving people a chance to adjust normally and without undue hardship,” observed members of the Community Relations Committee.³⁴⁵ With a reasonable degree of sustained effort, the CRC urged, the Brown community could do its part to preserve Fox Point’s identity as a working-class neighborhood and the long-established home of communities of color and immigrants. The CRC added that sacrifice from the university was needed—and a very reasonable thing to expect of the university: “Brown must accept a large share of responsibility [in addressing displacement] because it has had a large share in creating the problem. In light of what has and is happening to these people, we are not asking a great deal from Brown.”

The Ad Hoc Committee and the CRC found a receptive audience in Acting President Merton Stoltz. In a moment unparalleled in Brown’s history, the institution under Stoltz acknowledged the stress that its presence introduced upon the university’s surrounding communities and reckoned with its responsibility to address that stress. “As an institutional citizen, the university has practical as well as a theoretical interest in the health and welfare of its community,” Stoltz wrote in a public statement.³⁴⁶ Stoltz acknowledged that the university’s presence could very well impair that community welfare, and it often did, believed Stoltz: “As one of the dominant institutions in the community—and often *the* dominant institution—the university exerts directly and indirectly a substantial impact on its community.”

With Stoltz at the university’s helm, the university community recognized that little time

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Stoltz, Merton P. “Statement on Brown University and the Community.” 17 September 1969. Box 31, Merton Stoltz Papers (OF-1CA-S2). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 13 December 2019.

remained before the East Side housing market had changed permanently. The CRC, building upon the suggestions of the Ad Hoc Committee, urged that Stoltz hold steady the university's off-campus undergraduate population for the Spring 1970 semester at 500 students, while actively discouraging students from renting in Fox Point.³⁴⁷ Remarkably, Stoltz listened, telling students in a February 1970 letter that the university would "do everything it legally can to dissuade students from living in Fox Point, particularly in the area east of Brook Street and south of Power Street where many lower-income families reside."³⁴⁸

"Brown Crams Campus to Aid Fox Point," the *Providence Journal* wrote in its coverage of the announcement, noting that the university was offering a \$150 room and board rebate for students who voluntarily moved into converted "reading rooms, pajama lounges, recreation rooms and other little-used spaces in residence halls."³⁴⁹ In citing their decision to act, Dean of the College Eckelmann gave credit to the spear-heading advocacy of the Ad Hoc Committee, admitting it "would be difficult to determine whether Brown would have taken similar action concerning student encroachment in Fox Point in the absence of pressure from undergraduates themselves."

Following Stoltz's announcement, the Ad Hoc Committee continued to raise awareness of the need for urgent action from the university community. The committee distributed flyers to the student body, urging students to "assist the Fox Point residents in saving their neighborhood."³⁵⁰ Alongside their flyers, the Ad Hoc Committee distributed fact sheets regarding the housing situation in Fox Point and the pressure that off-campus living had imposed upon it, explaining

³⁴⁷ The University Committee on Community Relations. Letter to Merton P. Stoltz. 15 January 1970. Bond Bread Site (OF-1W-5). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 November 2019.

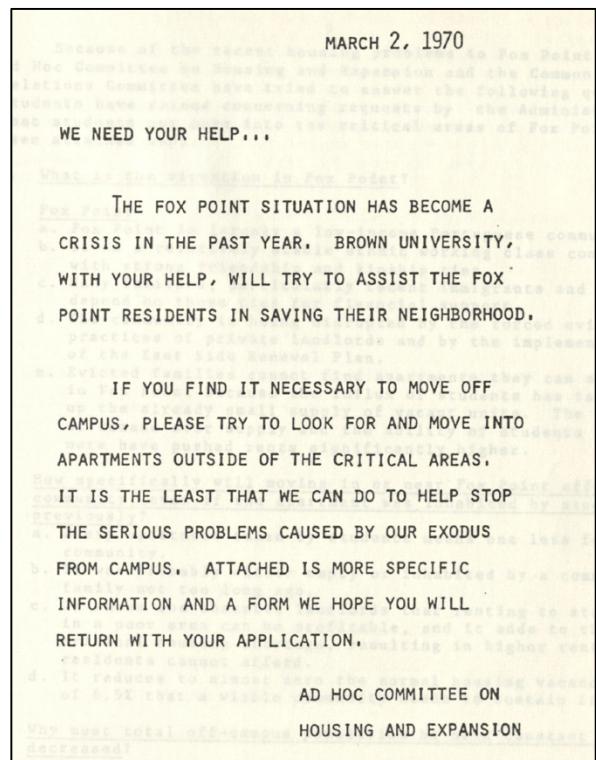
³⁴⁸ Stoltz, Merton P. Letter to the Students. 16 February 1970. Box 20, Paul F. Maeder Papers (OF-1CA-M1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 December 2019.

³⁴⁹ Macres, Gina. "Brown Crams Campus to Aid Fox Point." *Providence Journal*. 16 February 1970.

³⁵⁰ Ad Hoc Committee on Housing and Expansion. Letter beginning "We need your help..." 2 March 1970. Box 20, Paul F. Maeder Papers (OF-1CA-M1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 December 2019.

“every apartment taken by students means one less for the community.” Further, thanks to the work of the Ad Hoc Committee, students were required to sign a pledge in their application for off-campus permission assuring the university that they would not be renting in Fox Point. The university and student activists were surprisingly on message with one another. The housing shortage in the neighborhood, the Dean of the College wrote in a letter to all students, “can be rectified only if Brown students refrain from moving into Fox Point.”³⁵¹

In this unique moment in the institution’s history, Brown appeared poised to take action to correct for a decade of inaction, inaction that the university itself recognized—due to the advocacy of its students—had forced a large number of people from their homes and communities. In this moment, however, Brown did not exclusively seek to halt the destruction of affordable housing opportunities its off-campus population was causing. Remarkably, in this moment of crisis, the university was also considering the *construction* of affordable housing opportunities for non-university affiliated community members. The saga that resulted from this possibility, which concerned the property known as “Bond Bread,” represented a moment of tremendous promise for the university to proactively address a dire community need. Ultimately, this promise would go unfulfilled and tremendous harm to the university’s community relationship would



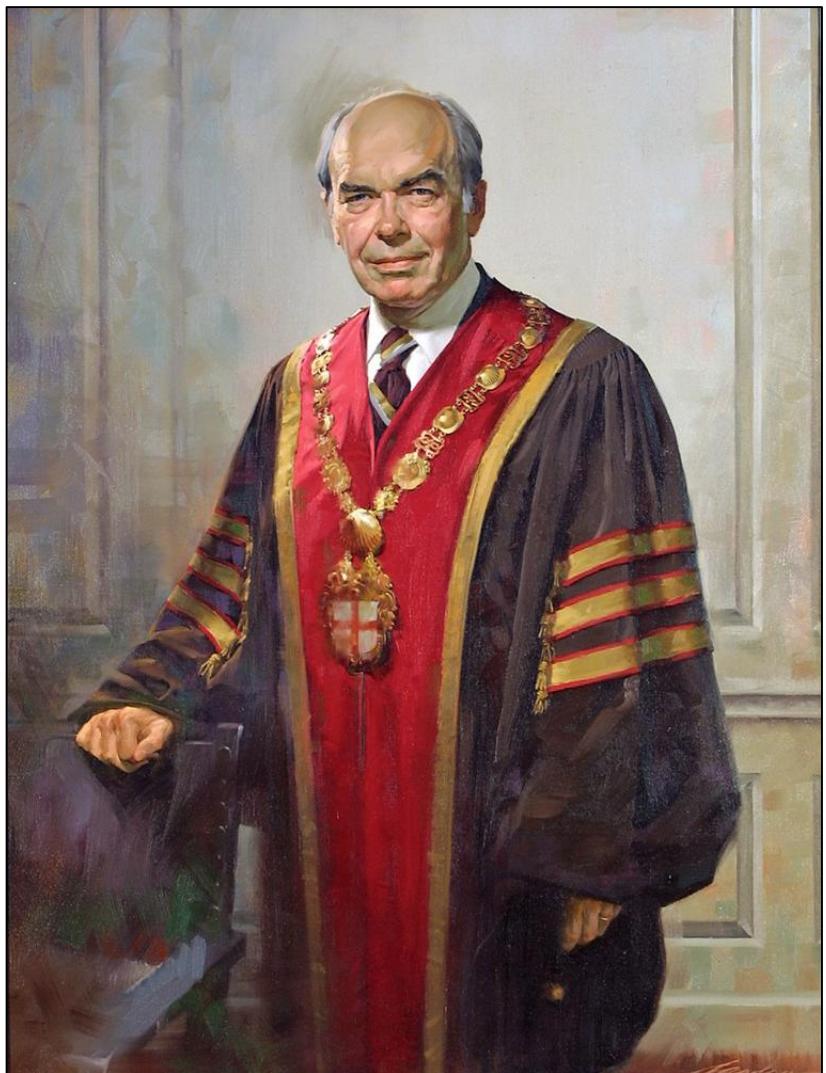
Flyer distributed by the Ad Hoc Committee encouraging Brown students to find off-campus housing outside of Fox Point. (Taken from Stevens papers, box 14)

³⁵¹ The Dean of the College. Letter to Brown Students. 9 February 1970. Box 20, Paul F. Maeder Papers (OF-1CA-M1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 December 2019.

become permanent.

Importantly, the activists fighting this neighborhood change, both internal and external, would soon find themselves advocating before a new president, Donald Hornig, inaugurated in October 1970. Unlike the popular Stoltz, Hornig would never enjoy a positive relationship with the Brown student body. He was regarded with distrust, distrust at least partially grounded in his former work. Hornig, a chemist, was the last person to see the first atomic bomb at the Los Alamos Laboratory in New Mexico before its detonation at testing.³⁵²

Under Hornig's six-year tenure, the Brown administration would increasingly become focused on addressing its \$4 million budget deficit. While under Stoltz, Brown strived to address student and community concern through dialogue, under Hornig, Brown did not avoid conflict. Hornig made this message clear, stating at this inauguration, that Brown "must remain firmly in the storm center. It may mean controversy and conflict...Frontiers are dangerous



Portrait of Donald Hornig, by John Howard Sanden, 1976. (Courtesy of Brown University Office of the Curator Portrait Collection)

³⁵² Mitchell, Martha. "Hornig, Donald F." *Encyclopedia Brunoniana*, 1993.

places. But that is where a great university belongs.”³⁵³ Hornig would fulfill his promise to remain in the eye of the storm, and Brown would push further and further into its frontiers.

To Be of Service to Fox Point: The Battle of Bond Bread

“Brown is ready to work with the community” to address the housing problems the university has helped cause, Ad Hoc Committee on Housing and University Expansion representative Andy Eisenberg told the *Brown Daily Herald* in early 1971.³⁵⁴ “That is something Brown has never said before,” he added. As Eisenberg’s optimism attests, late 1969 to early 1971 was a period of hope for the university activists working to alleviate Brown’s housing impact on its surrounding communities. Integral to this work, as we have seen, were the efforts striving to reduce Brown student occupation of the critically-needed rental units of neighborhoods like Fox Point. Just as important, however, was the battle over a Brown-owned property—known as “Bond Bread”—that university and community leaders alike believed could allow Brown to actively add to the community’s stock of affordable housing.

In December 1965, Fairview acquired for Brown two parcels of land, located just beyond Brown’s southern border with Fox Point. The parcels sat directly across from one another on Brook Street, both bound by Williams and John Streets. Shortly after purchasing the land, Brown razed the few buildings—formerly owned by the Bond Bread bread-making company—on the easterly parcel. On the westerly parcel stood a modest brick garage, formerly used by the Bond

³⁵³ Brown News Bureau. “Brown’s 14th President—1970 - 1975.” July 1975. Box 19, Donald F. Hornig Files (OF-1C-14). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 10 December 2019.

³⁵⁴ Peck, Louis. “UH Fights Zoning Change.” *Brown Daily Herald*, 22 March 1971. Box 21, Malcolm S. Stevens Papers (OF.1CA.S1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.



Photo of Bond Bread site, December 1971, looking north on Brook Street, at its intersection with John Street. (Taken from Stevens papers, box 11)



Photo of easterly plot of Bond Bread site, taken from the intersection of John and Brook Street. (Taken from Stevens papers, box 11)

Bread Company, which was left untouched following Brown's purchase. In total, the two lots comprised a little more than 40,000 square feet.

Brown purchased the lots with the intention of constructing a 1,000 car garage upon the easterly lot to satiate the growing demand for parking spaces that accompanied the university's rapid post-war expansion. However, university neighborhoods protested Brown's proposed development, decrying the intended garage as "out of place" with the residential character of its surroundings and a "betrayal" of the university to its community.³⁵⁵ Community members objected to the idea of the construction of a parking garage when housing was so desperately needed by the neighborhood. They also worried that the influx of cars would interfere with the community playground just down Brook Street. Sensing Fox Point's robust opposition, in October 1966, the Providence City Council denied the university permission to build the garage.³⁵⁶ Brown, therefore, found itself with a huge swath of land but little purpose for it.

The situation grew worse for Brown, when in early 1969, the Providence Redevelopment Agency alerted the university that, as part of the East Side Renewal Project, the PRA would soon condemn the Bond Bread property. Since Brown's razing of the Bond Bread buildings, the lot had become a desolate, vacant lot and eyesore for the community. If the PRA took the properties, the university stood to lose between \$125,000 and \$200,000, since the easterly lot was now vacant; in fair market value calculations, this empty lot was worth dramatically less than it was at the time of Brown's purchase.³⁵⁷ Facing an impending loss of the property, the university pled

³⁵⁵ "After Stormy Public Hearing to Discuss E. Side Renewal Views." *The Evening Bulletin*, 1 September 1966. Box 27, John Nicholas Brown II Papers (Ms.2007.012). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 20 February 2020.

³⁵⁶ "Chronology." 6 February 1970. Box 11, Malcolm S. Stevens Papers (OF.1CA.S1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.

³⁵⁷ The Ad Hoc Committee on Housing and Expansion.

for the PRA to delay its condemnation and grant the university time to develop an acceptable use of the space. The university's petition was successful. Thus, in late 1969, Brown found itself in a peculiar position: find a use for the Bond Bread property that would be acceptable to the city or lose the property—and the hundreds of thousands of dollars that the university had already invested in it.

In a memo to Acting President Stoltz, Brown Vice President for University Relations Ron Wolk explained the operating assumptions of the university in determining the property's potential future use.³⁵⁸ Any further effort by Brown to build a garage would be resisted by the PRA and Fox Point community, Wolk explained, as would any attempt to build academic facilities or student housing, given the property's inclusion in the publicly-funded renewal project. The university, said Wolk, should expect "a substantial loss" if the site were to be condemned. And this condemnation appeared imminent, as the PRA granted the university only a short period of reprieve. Given the community's housing shortage, the PRA, Wolk stated, believed that the construction of housing was the "most appropriate use of the site." Wolk concurred and urged the university to build community housing to "help ease a housing problem in Fox Point that has been caused in part by the influx of Brown students into the area."³⁵⁹ The Ad Hoc Committee celebrated this development, arguing that the site provided Brown with an "opportunity to be of service to Fox Point by developing the land for low-income housing."³⁶⁰ The CRC echoed this sentiment and urged the Brown Corporation to build low-income housing on the Bond Bread site, believing that such construction would make "a significant contribution

³⁵⁸ Wolk, Ron. Letter to Merton P. Stoltz. 30 October 1969. Box 31, Merton Stoltz Papers (OF-1CA-S2). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 13 December 2019.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ The Ad Hoc Committee on Housing and Expansion.

to the community.”³⁶¹ The Bond Bread site, to these university activists, represented a remarkable opportunity for the university to offset the damage to the area’s housing market that it had caused in recent years. Bond Bread was, in their eyes, an opportunity for Brown to meaningfully contribute to the preservation of the working class community just beyond its campus’s edge.

While university activists excitedly anticipated the potential of low-income housing development on the site, Brown’s Bond Bread efforts were mired from the beginning by community doubt and distrust. Brown’s first fatal mistake was appointing as project developer Edward Sulzberger, the Brown Corporation member and New York City real estate developer who had guided South Main Street’s “revitalization” just years prior.³⁶² Fox Pointers gravely distrusted Sulzberger, an outsider whose loyalty, community members assessed, ultimately lay with the university. To Vice President for



Edward Sulzberger standing on South Main Street, in front of his Plantations, in 1974. (Taken from Brown Alumni Magazine)

³⁶¹ The University Committee on Community Relations. Letter to Merton P. Stoltz. 12 March 1970. Bond Bread Site (OF-1W-5). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 November 2019.

³⁶² “Brown Plans to Let Sulzberger Develop Bond Bread Tract.” *The Evening Bulletin*, 21 January 1970. Box 11, Malcolm S. Stevens Papers (OF.1CA.S1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.

Administration Malcolm Stevens, the community's distrust of Sulzberger was understandable, as Sulzberger's reputation in Providence, especially among city residents of color, had suffered gravely following his involvement with the South Main Street project.³⁶³ In addition, Sulzberger was, apparently, a challenging figure with whom to work. "I have grown wary of him myself over the past two years," Stevens admitted.

More generally, many Fox Pointers read insidious meaning into Brown's efforts to develop the Bond Bread site, believing the university's true goals were the recouping of their financial investment in the property and the eventual reclamation of the land for university purposes. This analysis was not the stuff of paranoia or community resentment of the institutional giant next door. Indeed this neighborhood assessment was accurate, as internal university correspondence show President Hornig and his administrators flatly admit that the university's guiding priorities had been the recovery of as much investment as possible.³⁶⁴

Additionally, this correspondence reveals that, with Sulzberger guiding the project, the university remained optimistic of its opportunity to reclaim the property for university use in the near future. Many university leaders understood the importance of the Bond Bread site to the university's future development. One trustee wrote to John Nicholas Brown II, then-chair of the Corporation's Planning and Building Committee, to underscore this importance: if Brown lost the site, "the University will lose control of an important area adjacent to its campus," the trustee wrote, adding: "This would hardly improve the University environment and would be a block to further expansion in that area."³⁶⁵ Meanwhile, Sulzberger confirmed community fear that the

³⁶³ Stevens, Malcolm S. Letter to Donald F. Hornig. 12 November 1971. Box 11, Malcolm S. Stevens Papers (OF.1CA.S1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Letter to John Nicholas Brown II. 12 March 1970. Bond Bread Site (OF-1W-5). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 November 2019.

project's apartments would soon be occupied by university affiliates, not community members, as Sulzberger openly shared with the *Brown Daily Herald* his hope that the Bond Bread site apartments would one day be "rented to faculty and married grad students."³⁶⁶ Sulzberger publicly resented the sentiment of many Fox Point residents that the property be used to house community residents exclusively. "The fundamental aim of all housing today is an ethnically and economically mixed community, but Fox Point may want [the Bond Bread site] just for Fox Point." The idea that the property's development express purpose was to offset the Brown-led dissolution of a once ethnically and economically mixed community did not, apparently, register with Sulzberger.

By mid-1971, the Bond Bread fight had evolved into a struggle between two federal housing programs, created by the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968, that would assist Brown in developing the Bond Bread housing units. In each of the two programs—one referred to as "Section 236" and the other as "Section 235"—Brown would receive near identical support from the Federal Housing Administration: an FHA-insured, 40-year mortgage with an interest rate as low as 1 percent.³⁶⁷ What differed between the two programs was the experience of the unit occupants. Under the Section 236 program, also known as "Rental Housing for Lower Income Families," occupants of the federally-supported units would be renters; the units would have income ceilings, ensuring that a majority of the units' renters have incomes no more than 135 percent of that allowed for admittance into public housing units. Conversely, under the Sections 235 program, also known as "Homeownership for Lower Income Families," the residents of the development would own their units. The same income limits for Section 236

³⁶⁶ Peck, Louis. "Costs, errors hamper Bond Bread housing." *Brown Daily Herald*, 7 December 1970. Box 11, Malcolm S. Stevens Papers (OF.1CA.S1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.

³⁶⁷ CURE. *Draft Report of: Development of "Bond Bread" Properties.*" 27 February 1969. Box 11, Malcolm S. Stevens Papers (OF.1CA.S1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.

would apply to Section 235, but families could have the opportunity to own their homes with a down payment as low as \$200.

While the housing construction programs resulting from Sections 235 and 236 would entail similar financial commitments from Brown, the programs had vastly different consequences for the university's potential to eventually reclaim the Bond Bread land. To Sulzberger and Brown leaders, there was no question that the rental program of Section 236 was vastly preferable, preserving the university's opportunity to one day either fill the Bond Bread's units with its affiliates or reclaim the land for future, alternative development. Unsurprisingly, members of the Fox Point community saw the situation differently, understanding that the homeownership program entailed by Section 235 would offer low-income Fox Pointers physical permanency in the neighborhood. It was estimated that 21 three-bedroom homes could be built upon the Bond Bread property for a price attainable to many low- to moderate-income Fox Pointers.³⁶⁸ Such a development, the neighborhood also believed, would serve to provide Fox Point with a barrier to further university expansion. A mighty clash of the university and community over the fate of the property was brewing.

On a December 4, 1970—on a Saturday afternoon—Sulzberger, leaders of Brown, and approximately 70 members of the Fox Point community met in the auditorium of the Fox Point Elementary School to decide Bond Bread's fate. Sulzberger introduced his plan: 52 rental units with monthly rents between \$129 and \$168, paid for with support from the Section 236 program.³⁶⁹ The opposition to Sulzberger's proposal was, according to Brown lawyer Frank Acker, "overwhelming and emotional." A number of Fox Pointers objected to the Sulzberger

³⁶⁸ Acker, Frank. Letter to Files. 6 December 1971. Box 11, Malcolm S. Stevens Papers (OF.1CA.S1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

proposal, noting that such rents were beyond the economic means of many of the community members for whom the project was supposedly meant to serve. Meanwhile, according to a poll conducted of the neighborhood, 87 percent of responding Fox Pointers favored ownership over rentals. “Clearly the community wants individually owned homes, not rentals,” summarized Acker. But the university was not to be convinced of adopting the Section 235 homeownership program, with Vice President for Community Relations Ron Wolk urging the community members to accept that the price tag for Section 235 would be significantly higher for the university and potential tenants alike. Sulzberger, his interest in the property waning, stated that he had no interest in building Section 235 units.

That Monday, the *Brown Daily Herald*’s front page proclaimed, the meeting’s conclusion: “Fox Point Residents Kill Sulzberger Plan.” “Brown University’s eight-year-long involvement with the Bond Bread Site effectively ended Saturday,” reported the *Herald*, “when a vocal and often emotional gathering of Fox Point residents voiced overwhelming opposition to Edward Sulzberger ’29’s plan to build apartments there.”³⁷⁰ CRC student member Stephen Cowell blamed the university’s refusal to develop the desired 235 homeownership units due to the university’s limited financial commitment.

As the dust settle on the December 4 meeting, Brown was ready to abandon the effort entirely and wash its hands clean of the Bond Bread property. Following the meeting, President Hornig requested that the Providence Redevelopment Authority condemn the site and offer whatever compensation it could to the university. In a final twist of fate, the PRA concluded that “however desirable” condemnation was from the point of both the university and the community,

³⁷⁰ Peck, Louis. “Fox Point Residents Kill Sulzberger Plan.” *Brown Daily Herald*, 6 December 1971. Bond Bread Site (OF-1W-5). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 November 2019.



The Bond Bread garage sitting in a state of neglect, as it would for nearly two decades under the university's reluctant care. (Taken from Stevens papers, box 11)

the PRA could no longer legally reclaim the site.³⁷¹ The PRA appeared to have lost interest in the property or perhaps feared wading into the deep controversy imbued in the property. The Bond Bread site would remain in Brown's possession for more than another decade.

By the end of 1971, Brown too had lost its appetite for the property. When a non-profit developer who had recently partnered with Harvard University to build low-income housing approached Hornig about developing upon the Bond Bread site, the Brown president quickly ended their exchange, refusing the developer's services: "At this point I frankly don't know what we are going to do with the Bond Bread site," responded Hornig.³⁷² "Sulzberger was planning to

³⁷¹ "Condemnation of Brown Property is Held Illegal." *The Evening Bulletin*, Box 11, Malcolm S. Stevens Papers (OF.1CA.S1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.

³⁷² Hornig, Donald F. Letter to Donald L. Saunders. 17 January 1972. Bond Bread Site (OF-1W-5). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 November 2019.

put up Title 236 housing and now that that has gone down the drain we are not too enthusiastic about trying again.”

Brown not only lacked enthusiasm for the Bond Bread site; it appears to have actively resented it. In refusing requests from Fox Point neighbors to build a playground on the site, Vice President Wolk responded that Brown would “not be willing to invest another cent in that property.”³⁷³ Wolk, growing tired of the Fox Point neighbors’ continued advocacy for use of the Bond Bread site for play space, tersely shot back: “Brown has no obligation to provide playgrounds.”³⁷⁴ If the building of playgrounds was off the table, one can only imagine that the moment for Brown to build community housing on the Bond Bread site had passed. Indeed, any sense of obligation that university leaders had felt to do something productive for the Fox Point community with the Bond Bread site had dissipated. For the remainder of the Hornig administration, the construction of community housing on the Bond Bread site was an issue dead on arrival.

Public Be Damned

For a flicker of a moment, Brown appeared poised to accept the responsibility of addressing the damage it had inflicted upon Fox Point. But it was only a flicker, a fleeting period in the institution’s history where a student committee initiated bold suggestions that were heard and heeded by those in power. However, in the post-Bond Bread era, university leaders grew tired of this student and faculty-led advocacy and set out to silence these sources of dissent. The short-lived nature of this moment was not caused simply by the loss of enlightened university

³⁷³ Wolk, Ronald A. Letter to John Martinez. 1 August 1973. Box 11, Malcolm S. Stevens Papers (OF.1CA.S1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.

³⁷⁴ Wolk, Ronald A. Letter to Catherine Robinson. 28 August 1973. Box 11, Malcolm S. Stevens Papers (OF.1CA.S1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.

leadership. Student interest in the work waned as well, as student activists graduated, turned to other issues, or turned a blind eye.

Following the battle over Bond Bread, Brown's contribution to the East Side's housing shortage intensified. While the unbridled growth of the Brown student body had been a key source of stress upon the East Side housing market, Hornig, nonetheless, set out for further university expansion, actively refusing calls to slow the university's growth. In early 1973, the student-led Educational Policy Committee argued that the cracks of university expansion began to show in Brown's classrooms—not just its surrounding housing market—as students increasingly expressed their dissatisfaction at the university's enlarged class sizes.³⁷⁵ As such, the committee urged the university to initiate a moratorium on further growth. Hornig refused such advice, responding to a similar call for slowed university growth by saying that he saw "no way to keep the University solvent unless the size of the undergraduate student body is increased by about 10%."³⁷⁶ The only way to get the university out of its ongoing budget deficit, said Chancellor Tillinghast, echoing Hornig, was growth of the student body, as such growth entailed more tuition revenue and more efficient use of facilities.³⁷⁷

Under Hornig, Brown did make modest additions to its on-campus housing facilities to accommodate this growing student body. In 1973, the university completed three towers on former Bryant land on Young Orchard Avenue. These Young Orchard Avenue Apartments were direct responses to the growing demand for on-campus, apartment style units; each unit featured four single rooms, a common space, with a full bath and kitchen.³⁷⁸ A year later, it built the New

³⁷⁵ Rogers, et al.. Letter to Donald F. Hornig. Box 11, Donald F. Hornig Papers (OF.1C.14). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 10 December 2019.

³⁷⁶ Hornig, Donald F. Letter to Robert H. Schacht. 7 February 1973. Box 11, Donald F. Hornig Papers (OF.1C.14). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 10 December 2019.

³⁷⁷ Tillinghast, Charles C. Letter to Robert H. Schacht. 22 January 1973. Box 11, Donald F. Hornig Papers (OF.1C.14). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 10 December 2019.

³⁷⁸ Iselin 38.

Pembroke Dormitories at the corner of the residential Bowen Street and the commercial Thayer Street. The development, which collectively would house just under 200 students, would feature retail space facing Thayer on its ground floor, earning the university praise for its “anthropocentric design.”

And yet, despite this modest construction, community members continued to fret over the continued impact of off-campus housing. University activists pled for Hornig to maintain the university’s commitment to keeping its off-campus undergraduate population at 500 undergraduates. These activists acknowledged that without sustained efforts by the university, the Stoltz-era action of February 1970 would prove meaningless. But Hornig’s aspirations for further student body growth triumphed over the university activists’ concern. By February 1971, just one year after Acting President Stoltz’s promise to hold the university’s off-campus population at 500, the number of students living in the community had already jumped to 588.³⁷⁹

The Community Relations Committee objected to Hornig’s refusal to keep the university’s word on off-campus living to its neighbors. Beyond taking issue with any single university decision, the CRC took issue with Hornig himself. Under the Hornig administration, CRC leaders wrote in February 1973, the recommendations of the committee were routinely ignored while the university maintained unreasonable expectations about the committee’s capacity to foresee community frustration.³⁸⁰ Brown must takes steps, the committee urged, to abandon the “public be damned” image it so often projected. Hornig did not appreciate the committee’s tone. Two months later, the CRC—a critical source of dissent in the university’s official channels and a guiding force in compelling the university to reckon with its housing impact—was dissolved.³⁸¹

³⁷⁹ “Report on Off-Campus Housing Policy.”

³⁸⁰ Community Relations Committee. Letter to Donald F. Hornig. 28 February 1973 Box 17, Paul F. Maeder Papers (OF-1CA-M1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 December 2019.

³⁸¹ Hornig, Donald F. Letter to Pierre Galletti. 30 April 1973. Box 30, Donald F. Hornig Papers (OF.1C.14). Brown

The committee's duties, Hornig explained, were to be assumed by the pre-existing Campus Planning Committee (CPC). To say the least, the CPC did not hold views similar to the CRC regarding Brown's future expansion into the community. In May 1973, the CPC declared: "We are here, and [the community] must accept us as we must listen to their suggestions and complaints."³⁸² By September 1974, without the critical voice of internal dissent and accountability provided by the CRC, off-campus housing would surge to over 800 students, up 300 students from less than just four years prior.³⁸³

Of course, the CRC was not the only source of dissent that had the university's ear during the brief Stoltz era. Post-1971, there was radio silence from the Ad Hoc Committee on Housing and University Expansion, suggesting that the group had dissolved thereabout, perhaps alongside the graduation of key members like Andy Eisenberg in May 1971. Eisenberg was not surprised that the advocacy that the Ad Hoc Committee had led died down following his graduation. According to Eisenberg, while the Ad Hoc Committee was effective in its work, the student awareness and interest in the university's impact upon its surroundings was not particularly deep. "The vast majority of students at Brown at that time couldn't care," remembered Eisenberg.³⁸⁴ Brown was a different school than what it is today, he said. "Brown was a little bit like Dartmouth. It was a drinking school," continued Eisenberg, adding: "Students who wanted to live off-campus wanted to live off-campus so they didn't have to adhere to university rules, and they could care less [about the university's impact on its surrounding communities]."

To Ira Harkavy—leader of the 1969 student protests against the University of

University Archives, Providence, RI. 10 December 2019.

³⁸² Lichten, Kevin P. Letter to Donald F. Hornig. 31 May 1973. Box 17, Paul F. Maeder Papers (OF-1CA-M1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 December 2019.

³⁸³ McConnell, John J. Letter to Kelsey Murdoch. 11 September 1974. Box 32, Paul F. Maeder Papers (OF-1CA-M1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 12 December 2019.

³⁸⁴ Eisenberg.

Pennsylvania's destruction of West Philadelphia Black communities—student activists both at Penn and Columbia had a strategic advantage in their advocacy, one that student activists at Brown lacked. Penn students could rally around the proposed construction of the University City Science Center as Columbia students could around the proposed Morningside Park gymnasium.³⁸⁵ The Penn and Columbia student activists mobilized their peers by drawing their attention to these physical manifestations of their universities' maltreatment of their neighbors. At Brown, there was no gym or no science center, no single entity that could ignite widespread awareness of the university's impact on local, vulnerable populations. Bond Bread was no doubt the closest thing to Brown's spark. But Bond Bread was different than the Science Center of the gymnasium. The story of Bond Bread is not the story of a callous university bulldozing neighborhood homes; it is the story of a callous university refusing to build those neighborhood homes, even though it recognized its responsibility to do so.

In the later years of the Hornig administration, student activism at Brown shifted focus from off-campus to on-campus. To address the university's budget shortfall, Hornig administered drastic austerity measures, reducing university expenditure by \$6 million.³⁸⁶ Led by members of a student organization called the Third World Coalition, in 1975, hundreds of Brown students boycotted classes and occupied University Hall for 38 hours in protest of university decreases in financial aid. While Hornig no doubt deeply resented the bad press this student organizing generated for the university, by the mid-1970s, attention of the university community was drawn away from the university's impact on its surroundings. As we shall see in future chapters, community opposition to the university's expansion continued. But these external advocates

³⁸⁵ Harkavy.

³⁸⁶ Hornig, Donald F. Letter to Alumni, Parents, and Friends. 1 May 1975. Box 19, Malcolm S. Stevens Papers (OF.1CA.S1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.

would lack the formidable on-campus partners that had, in this unique moment in the Brown's history, compelled the university to reckon with the negative community impacts of its presence.

Conclusion: A Suburb of Brown

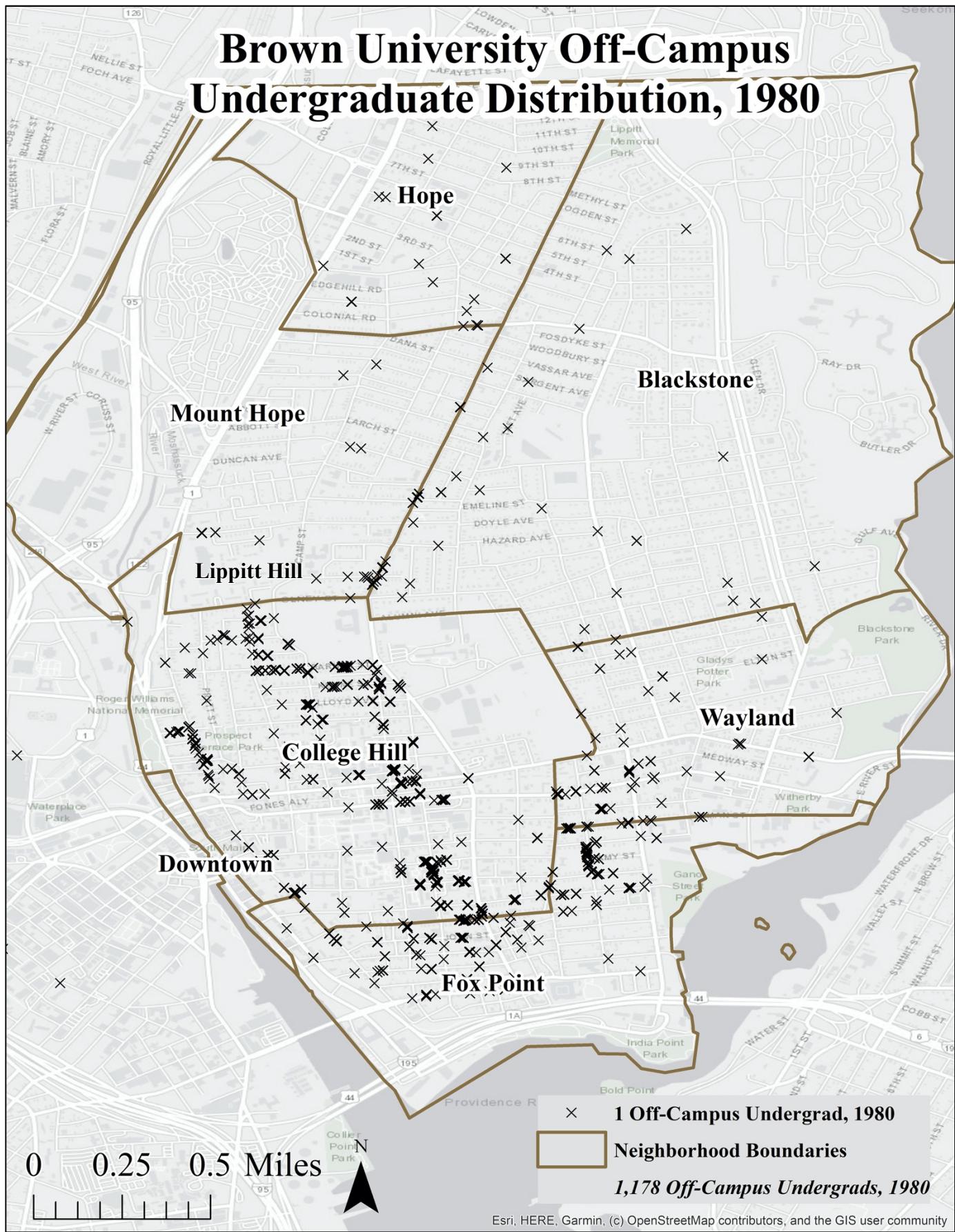
In their collective decade at the university's helm, the administrations of President Ray Heffner, Interim President Merton Stoltz, and President Donald Hornig sought to navigate Brown University through a tumultuous period of cultural and campus unrest. Examining the university's housing policy in this period offers a unique lens to understand the transformation that both internal and external pressures, alongside shifting social norms in university life, helped provoke. These three university leaders inherited from their predecessors a campus shaped—both physically and socially—by aspirations for a residential college and housing policies that emphasized uniformity and tight social control of students. By the end of the era, however, Brown's housing policy offered to its students a mélange of housing options, emphasizing choice, individuality, and independence. These changes reflect the changing nature of Brown University.

But the effects of these on-campus trends were not contained within Brown's borders. In off-campus living, students found reprieve from university life that no dormitory could offer while the university found a new source of residential space to lighten the crunch of its severe housing shortage. In this sense, off-campus homes occupied by Brown students should less be understood as distinct entities, separate from the dormitories. Rather, these homes became critical pieces in the university's housing infrastructure that ensured that all students in the rapidly expanding university would have a bed of their own. Such a reading gives new, literal meaning to the *Providence Journal's* March 1974 observation: "Fox Point's days as a cohesive

ethnic community appear numbered...The neighborhood seems destined to become an expensive suburb of Brown University.”³⁸⁷

For a short period of time, Brown’s housing policy compelled university leaders to critically assess and, for a moment, acknowledge the negative effects of its presence on its surrounding community. In that moment, credence was given to the idea that Brown’s presence in Providence created serious problems for vulnerable communities at its campus’s edge and that the university had a moral responsibility to commit to bold and sustained measures to correct this impact. But as the students who pressured their university graduated, as new presidents with new agendas were inaugurated, as committees of dissent were dissolved, and as the communities that suffered at the university’s expense were displaced, that moment faded.

³⁸⁷ DeSilva, Bruce. “Urban uplift alters Fox Point.” *Providence Sunday Journal*. 24 March 1974.



Chapter 4: The Amorphous Complex Known as Brown:

The Swearer and Gregorian Years, 1977-1997

By the mid-1970s, Providence was “on the verge of an implosion.”³⁸⁸ As debates on Brown’s campus concerning the university’s housing policy surged, the city was hit by a series of crippling blows: many of Providence’s major employers abandoned the city, alongside many members of its already shrinking middle class. The city’s economy continued the dramatic restructuring begun in the post-war era. From 1960 to 1990, factory employment in Providence would decline by another staggering 55 percent—with more than half of that loss occurring in the 1980s.³⁸⁹ Meanwhile, Joseph A. Doorley Jr., Mayor of Providence from 1965 to 1975, would leave his successor—the unruly Vincent “Buddy” Cianci—a growing budget deficit. By 1981, the city’s budget shortfall would surpass \$21 million.³⁹⁰

The citizenry of Providence was changing as well, as the city underwent significant demographic transformations and became increasingly lower-income and less white. In the 1980s, Providence experienced “alarming outflows of middle-income homeowners and tax-paying businesses.” Many of these “middle-income homeowners” were white, and from 1980 to 2000, the city’s white population dropped significantly, both absolutely and relative to the city’s overall population. As the city’s middle class abandoned the city, Providence experienced dramatic inflows of low-income families, many from immigrant backgrounds.³⁹¹ In the last

³⁸⁸ Leazes, Francis J., and Mark T. Motte. *Providence, the Renaissance City*. Northeastern University Press, 2004, pp. 36.

³⁸⁹ Providence Universities Consortium. “Providence Universities Consortium Application.” July 1992. Box 35, Vartan Gregorian papers (OF.1C.16). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 25 February 2020.

³⁹⁰ Leazes & Motte 47.

³⁹¹ The City of Providence. *A Justification for Payments by Private Colleges and Hospitals to the City of Providence*. September 1993. Box 230, Vartan Gregorian papers (OF.1C.16). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI.

quarter of the twentieth century, Providence led the nation in its percentage increase in its Hispanic and Asian populations.³⁹² The changing demographics are reflected in the population of the Providence Public Schools, which from 1968 to 1999, transitioned from 77 percent white to just 19 percent white.³⁹³

Providence's housing market continued to reflect a city becoming increasingly less-wealthy, as neighborhoods throughout the city began to reveal evidence of the city's economic decline. Mayor Doorley, according to his critics, did little to slow this neighborhood decline; the *Providence Journal* wrote in 1975: "Neighborhoods are deteriorating, yet it seems the Doorley administration's only response is to tear down more abandoned houses."³⁹⁴ In the next decade, the city's overall housing situation grew worse, as Providence faced an "unprecedented decline" in the quality of its housing stock in the 1980s.³⁹⁵ Hundreds of units fell into disrepair and abandonment, many permanently lost to the city's stock. At the same time, rents increased at rates far greater than increases in wages. While the city's median income rose by approximately 90 percent through the 1980s, both median rent and median housing values increased at nearly double that rate, due at least in part to the declining overall number of units in the city. Ironically, even as the quality of Providence's housing stock fell, housing in the city became more expensive. By the beginning of the 1990s, roughly 25,000 of the city's low-income families were paying more than 50 percent of their income on rent, classifying them as "extremely housing cost-burdened," by today's standards.³⁹⁶

26 February 2020.

³⁹² Providence Universities Consortium.

³⁹³ Jerzyk, Matthew. "Gentrification's Third Way: An Analysis of Housing Policy ." *Harvard Law Review*, 2009, pp. 419.

³⁹⁴ Leazes & Motte 36.

³⁹⁵ The City of Providence. *Strategic Plan: Nomination for Providence, Rhode Island's Designation as an Enterprise Community*. June 1994. Box 230, Vartan Gregorian papers (OF.1C.16). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 26 February 2020.

³⁹⁶ Providence Universities Consortium.

The story of Providence, in the last quarter of the twentieth century, is, however, more accurately a tale of two cities. As the industrial sector—long the economic backbone of the city’s working-class populations—declined, Providence became dominated by a new business sector—the non-profit sector—the economic cluster to which hospitals, museums, public agencies, and, importantly, universities belong. While traditional industry faded in Providence—losing more than 25,000 jobs in the period between 1976 and 1992—the city’s non-profit sector exploded, creating 15,000 jobs in that same timespan.³⁹⁷ However, workforces were not the only entity of Providence non-profits to grow tremendously in this period. So did their landholdings. As tax-exempt institutions, non-profits’ physical expansion represented an increasingly significant blow to the city’s already depleting tax revenue. From 1989 to 1993 alone, the value of tax-exempt property in Providence increased by \$178 million while, at the same time, the value of taxable property decreased by \$141 million.³⁹⁸ Providence’s non-profits—chief among them Brown University—were becoming islands of wealth in an increasingly poor city. As we shall see in this chapter, Providence leaders expanded their demands that non-profit constituents, like Brown University, increase their economic contribution to their host city.

While Providence struggled under the pressure of demographic shifts and declining tax revenues, Brown, in the 1980s, “got hot.”³⁹⁹ In that decade, the university added an array of new, world-class facilities that greatly expanded its academic programming. These facilities helped make Brown one of the most desirable institutions for the nation’s college applicants; in 1984, Brown could boast that it had the largest number of applicants in the Ivy League.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁷ The City of Providence. *A Justification for Payments by Private Colleges and Hospitals to the City of Providence*.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Widmer, Ted. *Brown: the History of an Idea*. Thames & Hudson, 2015, pp. 229.

⁴⁰⁰ Phillips, Janet M. *Brown University: A Short History*. Brown University Office of University Relations, 1992, pp. 87.

New facilities helped attract applicants, but the true “tipping point” for Brown—according to many university community members—was its selection of Howard Swearer as president in 1977.⁴⁰¹ Swearer, a native of Kansas and the former president of Carleton College in Minnesota, was praised by faculty, students, and Corporation members alike for the steady hand and “unpretentious Midwestern style” with which he led Brown.⁴⁰² While Brown had teetered on the edge of financial ruin for more than a decade, under Swearer, the university finally balanced its budget while simultaneously quadrupling its endowment.⁴⁰³

Many Brown affiliates would remember the Swearer years as some of the university’s best, in no small part thanks to Swearer’s leadership. Frank Newman—the American businessman and U.S. Deputy Secretary of the Treasury—would celebrate Swearer, a leader Newman saw as “idealistic, hard headed, full of good humor and, above all, willing and able to move from



Portrait of Howard Swearer, by Everett Raymond Kinstler, 1993. (Courtesy of Brown University Office of the Curator Portrait Collection)

⁴⁰¹ Widmer 226.

⁴⁰² Phillips 86.

⁴⁰³ Widmer 227.

discussion to action.”⁴⁰⁴ While many elements of Swearer’s years at the university’s helm were laudable, as we shall see, “the hard-headedness” with which he dealt with Brown’s most vulnerable neighbors was often woefully negligent.

As this chapter chronicles, sources of community dissent would continue from Fox Point, but increasingly, Brown would engage in political struggles with City Hall, as Providence leaders sought to limit the university’s future growth through the enactment of institutional zoning. After a long battle over the issue, Brown would give in and begin a considerable program of property relinquishment while intensifying its land use upon its existing property holdings. City leaders celebrated this development as a victory over the university, but Brown property relinquishment would entail serious consequences for Brown’s neighbors who were most vulnerable to displacement. Meanwhile, though the presidencies of Howard Swearer and that of his successor—the gregarious Vartan Gregorian—were notable eras of construction at Brown, very little new housing was built during this era. Nonetheless, the university’s student population continued to grow, deepening Brown’s dependence on off-campus student living. During these two Brown presidencies, many of the communities that surrounded the university would undergo dramatic, seemingly irreversible demographic alteration. After nearly three decades of transfiguration caused by historic preservation, urban renewal, and university expansion, the East Side left behind by President Gregorian would be a substantially different region than that which was navigated by his predecessors just a handful of decades earlier.

⁴⁰⁴ Newman, Frank. “The University and the Rebuilding of the American Community.” Speech at the Dedication of the Howard R. Swearer for Public Service, Brown University, 10 August 1992. Box 9, Henry Merritt Wriston Papers (OF-1C-11). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 February 2020.

No More “Buy Anything That Looks Good”

Since the Wriston years, many East Siders existed under the near constant threat of Brown University expansion. “That the amorphous complex known as Brown University might someday overspread its traditional bounds, now including the old Bryant College campus, and engulf its neighbors has been a long-standing fear of some area residents,” wrote the *Evening Bulletin* in 1974.⁴⁰⁵ As the previous chapter detailed, much of this fear was derived from East Side property occupation by the university and its affiliates through non-traditional means, like property acquisition through Brown’s land-holding company Fairview or through the tenancy of privately-owned rental units by its growing population of off-campus students. But much neighborhood fear still originated in the university acquisition of land by Brown proper. For decades, leaders of Providence had sought a means by which to curtail the university’s physical growth and put at ease city residents frightened by Brown’s encroachment. Since 1966, many city leaders believed that this mission could be achieved through the enactment of institutional zoning in the city.

Advocates of institutional zoning sought to adjust the city’s zoning ordinance—the laws that determine acceptable land use in the city. The city’s zoning ordinance already classified city space as residential, commercial, industrial, and the like. Institutional zoning would add another land use distinction—“institutional”—creating on the city map specific spaces for Providence’s various non-profit organizations like universities and hospitals. As these advocates argued, institutional zones, eventually classified as “I-2” in Providence’s zoning ordinance, have beneficial elements both for universities and their neighbors. First, institutional zoning would aid in the city’s land use planning, determining where the university’s acquisition of property was

⁴⁰⁵ “Brown looks ahead.” *Evening Bulletin*. 17 April 1974. Box 16, Malcolm S. Stevens Papers (OF.1CA.S1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.

welcomed and where it was not. While institutions would still be able to acquire property outside of the zone, this acquisition would be a more cumbersome process, thereby encouraging institutions to acquire land within the zone while reducing neighbors' fear of institutional encroachment outside of the zone. Institutions, on the other hand, had their own reasons to appreciate this zoning mechanism. Within the zone, the institution would be granted greater leeway, allowing it to bypass, for instance, traditional land use and construction height restrictions.⁴⁰⁶ As such, institutional zoning would utilize both the carrot and the stick in influencing the university's growth.

At first, Brown leaders opposed the enactment of the zone, recognizing the proposed legislation as a clear effort by the city to limit the university's physical expansion.⁴⁰⁷ Brown, by its own account, had been "relatively unfettered" by the existing city zoning ordinance in its property acquisition and building construction practices. As the university wrote in the late 1960s, "Institutions have been largely exempt from the restrictions of the existing zoning ordinance. While Brown University has not been altogether free of restrictions imposed by the ordinance, educational institutions do enjoy a degree of freedom that is not afforded individuals or many other organizations."⁴⁰⁸ Given the tremendous freedom it possessed, the university unsurprisingly saw institutional zoning as a threat. Internal memos surmised that growth outside the zone would be "virtually prohibited" by city oversight.⁴⁰⁹ Brown also opposed the institutional zoning legislation's requirement that the university file with the city an institutional

⁴⁰⁶ "Proposals and Comments of Brown University to the City Council Committee on Ordinances on the Proposed Zoning Ordinance for the City of Providence." 18 March 1970. Box 21, Malcolm S. Stevens Papers (OF.1CA.S1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.

⁴⁰⁷ *Real Estate Strategy, Brown University*. 19 August 1991. Box 55, Vartan Gregorian papers (OF.1C.16). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 25 February 2020.

⁴⁰⁸ "Memorandum: Proposed New Zoning Ordinance for the City of Providence and its effect on Brown University." 1969. Box 21, Malcolm S. Stevens Papers (OF.1CA.S1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

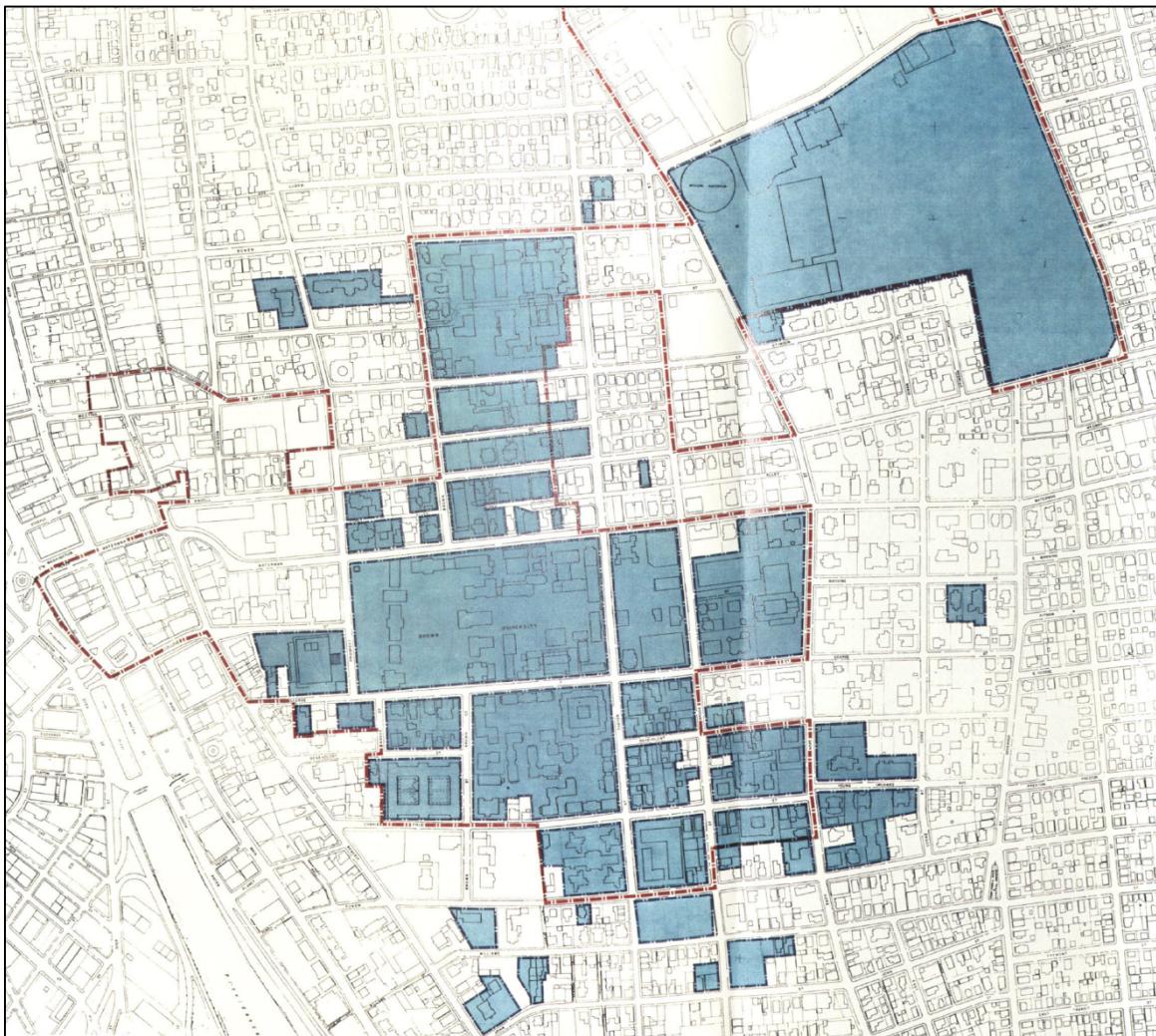
master plan every five years, making public the university's intentions for growth. As it had when authors of the *College Hill Study* requested Brown's planning documents, university leaders objected to such a request, believing that the release of the master plans would lead property owners to raise the prices of land they knew Brown was interested in purchasing.

While the university's protest helped delay the enactment of institutional zoning in Providence, Brown could not avoid it outright, and in 1986, Providence officially revised its zoning ordinance to include an institutional zone around the university.⁴¹⁰ Brown took issue with the particular shape of institutional zone, as 23 percent of the university's land holdings and 15 percent of its built area fell outside of the institutional zone. To build upon this land or modify the use of buildings that fell outside the zone, the university would need to appear before the Zoning Appeal Board. Brown's ability to unilaterally develop these properties would be restricted considerably.

With time, the institutional zone would gain favor with university leaders. Russell Carey—Executive Vice President for Planning and Policy since 2008 and Class of 1991—recognizes that, in general, the institutional zone has “been a real positive,” helping the city’s institutions grow with intention and focus, “not just kind of spread willy nilly.”⁴¹¹ Within the institutional zone, Carey—the senior university officer focused on the university’s strategic planning—says that the university is granted “lots of flexibility and lots of allowed uses that won’t be allowed anywhere else.” The zone makes possible the construction of facilities—chief among them research and residential facilities—that likely wouldn’t have been able to be built without “a whole lot of variances.”

⁴¹⁰ *Real Estate Strategy, Brown University.*

⁴¹¹ Carey, Russell, Brown University Executive Vice President for Planning and Policy. Personal interview. 27 March 2020.



Brown University property ownership map in 1991. Brown property is in blue. The institutional zone is marked by the red, dotted line. (Taken from Gregorian papers, box 219)

While Brown resisted institutional from the time it was first proposed in 1966 to its eventual adoption in 1986, the university also read the writing on the wall, recognizing the growing community pressure for it to consolidate its land holdings and refrain from further East Side expansion. These pressures, alongside the university-community struggles of the late 1960s and early 1970s, compelled Brown to revise its land-acquisition policies. For decades, the university—particularly through Fairview—had operated under the assumption that Brown should buy any near-adjacent property for which the university had the funds and could eventually utilize.

As early as 1973, Vice President of Administration Malcolm Stevens pressured his colleagues to abandon this practice, urging that Brown develop a more measured and restrained acquisition policy while arguing that “It is not enough to just say, ‘buy anything in the neighborhood that looks good.’”⁴¹² Instead, Stevens urged that the university restrict land acquisition to those properties whose need was required for immediate construction or would be required in a project no more than five years down the line.

Stevens’ urgings gained traction among university leaders in the mid-1970s, as the university increasingly pledged to the community that it would “intensify usage in the areas between the three main campus areas—Pembroke, Brown and East,” the last being the label assigned to the former Bryant College campus located east of the original campus’s core.⁴¹³ While Brown’s pledge to intensify land use on its existing property was perhaps an acknowledgement of the longstanding fear of the “amorphous complex known as Brown,” Stevens and his colleagues were no doubt also inspired by the savings that such a land policy offered. Maintaining the university’s collection of buildings at the periphery of its campus—many of them standalone houses acquired by Fairview—was very expensive, as most if not all of these buildings were disconnected from the university’s centralized heating plant and were significantly more expensive per square foot to own and operate than were the university’s core buildings. The university increasingly recognized that ridding itself of these properties was a strategy that would simultaneously reduce costs and be received favorably by community members who resented the university’s robust real estate profile. However, as we shall see in following sections, the university’s pledge to densify upon existing landholdings and relinquish

⁴¹² Stevens, Malcolm S. Letter to Donald F. Hornig. 26 November 1973. Box 16, Malcolm S. Stevens Papers (OF.1CA.S1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.

⁴¹³ “Brown looks ahead.”

underused, peripheral properties would, nonetheless, cause damaging effects for vulnerable neighbors at the university's edges.

As High a Price as Possible

Brown's emerging efforts of the 1980s to consolidate its land holdings were motivated in part by City Hall's opposition to the growing quantity of university-owned East Side land. However, the university's property consolidation efforts were not without serious, often negative consequences for university neighbors. The release of a great deal of land formerly owned by the university constituted a major upheaval in the local real estate market, particularly in Fox Point, where neighborhood residents sought, often unsuccessfully, to keep former university property in the ownership of community members. Simultaneously, Fox Point leaders strived to protect vulnerable community members who relied upon—and frequently lived in—these former Brown properties that were now destined for the open market. Under Swearer, Brown would discover that, just as its entrance into widespread East Side real estate acquisition and development was mired by conflict and controversy, so too would be its exit.

While Howard Swearer's presidency is remembered for the steady hand with which he guided the university and—as later sections chronicle—the president's commitment to university-led community engagement, Swearer's relationship with Brown's neighbors, particularly those of Fox Point, was fraught with challenges. Undoubtedly, Swearer inherited from Hornig a highly imperfect relationship with the university's southerly neighbors. As the Campus Planning Committee (CPC) noted, in 1977, the year of Swearer's arrival, "Brown and Fox Point have long jostled uncomfortably along the southern edge of the campus."⁴¹⁴ The CPC

⁴¹⁴ Blackman, Leo J. "Preservation Planning for the University." May 1977. Box 22, Malcolm S. Stevens Papers (OF.1CA.S1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 17 February 2020.

continued, observing that the physical relationship between the university and the neighborhood was part of the problem: “Our relation to Fox Point is still disastrous in a visual sense. The desolate no man’s land of parking lots which separates the University from the neighborhood does not help to promote good feelings.” However, the most serious source of Brown-Fox Point conflict in the Swearer years would originate from the university’s failure to accommodate neighborhood concerns as Brown relinquished thousands of square feet of real estate.

In 1971, a new community group—the Fox Point Community Organization (FPCO)—emerged to represent the dwindling constituencies of the Portuguese and Cape Verdean Fox Pointers who had for decades defined the neighborhood’s culture and character. By 1978, the community organization—which was principally focused on improving the neighborhood’s housing conditions for longtime residents—boasted 600 members and a full-time organizer. The FPCO explained how, in recent decades, the neighborhood “has become a prime target of real estate speculators.”⁴¹⁵ It continued, noting nearby Brown University’s role in the neighborhood’s transfiguration:

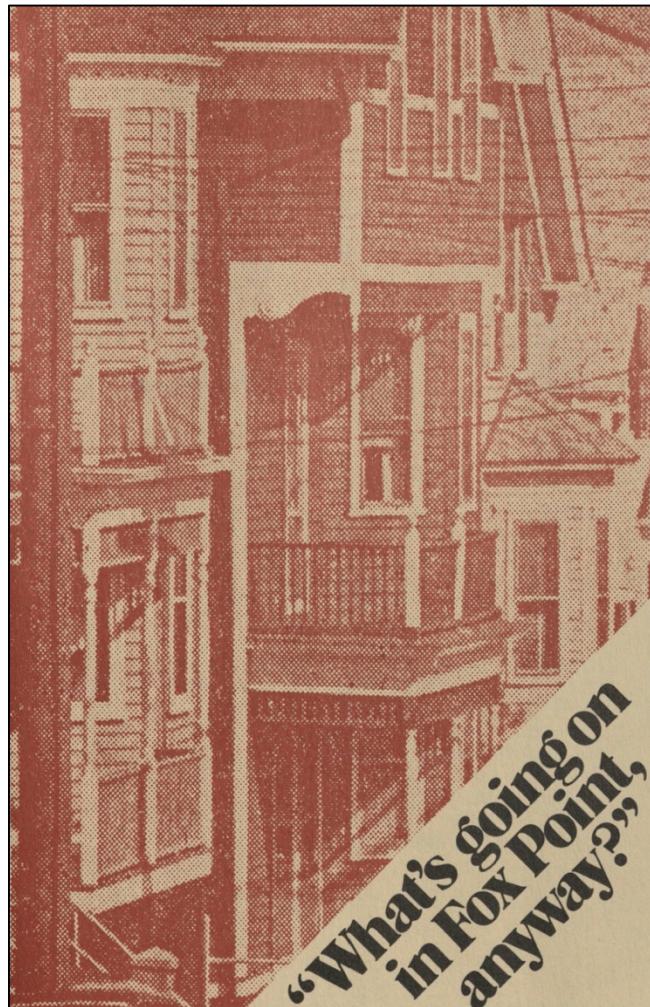
Charming one- and two-family houses, many of them historic, have been chopped into multiple apartment units, forcing rents up and longtime residents out. And with more and more students and professional people moving into the area, city services have been unable to keep up with neighborhood needs.

Fox Point, said the FPCO, was starkly divided between the neighborhood’s “haves”—principally Brown students and university affiliates—and its “have nots”—long-time residents, many of them with low to moderate incomes. As such, the Fox Point of the emerging 1980s was to the FPCO “a confusion of overcrowded, falling down tenements, beautifully antique houses, increased vandalism, and sadly neglected social service programs.”

⁴¹⁵ “Fox Point Community Organization.” 1978. Box 33, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

In the mid-1970s, the FPCO won a significant victory in its relationship with Brown. After community advocacy, Brown agreed to distribute to its students, upon their registration with the Brown Housing Office, an FPCO-written brochure regarding the neighborhood.⁴¹⁶ The brochure—whose front cover asks in bold-faced font “What’s going on in Fox Point, anyway?”—sought to explain to the Brown student body the challenges the neighborhood faced. It clearly attempted to use language that young Brown students might appreciate. “The people who have lived in the Point for years can’t stay on their own turf...The rents are just plain outtasight.” the FPCO brochure observes.⁴¹⁷ The brochure urged students to think about living outside of Fox Point, adding that Fox Pointers strongly opposed student presence in the neighborhood. “To say that Fox Pointers feel strongly is like saying the Hulk doesn’t like being picked on,” wrote the FPCO. By living outside of Fox Point, the brochure concluded, “You’ll be giving one of the last neighborhoods of its kind a chance to *stay* a neighborhood.”

While the FPCO employed hip language and positive arguments of moral



Cover of brochure distributed to Brown students during the Swearer years, encouraging them to not live in Fox Point. (Taken from Ramsden papers, box 17)

⁴¹⁶ Educational Facilities Laboratories. *Campus and Community*. Academy for Educational Development, 1980, pp. 28-29.

⁴¹⁷ Fox Point Community Organization. “What’s going on in Fox Point, anyway?.” Box 17, Richard Ramsden papers (OF.1CA.R1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 March 2020.

responsibility to Brown students, the community organization was much more forceful in its language before Brown administrators, as it argued for the university's effective exit from the neighborhood. The community organization saw the university's growing penchant for campus consolidation as an opportunity to demand accommodation for longtime Fox Pointers in its real estate dealings. In a letter to the Brown Corporation—cosigned alongside a nascent, community housing development organization called the Fox Point Neighborhood Housing Corporation (FPNHC)—the FPCO described how their neighborhood had disappeared “in the name of highway construction, urban renewal, historic preservation, [and] university expansion.”⁴¹⁸ As such, the community organization urged university leadership to as quickly as possible “remove itself as tenant, owner, and user of property in Fox Point” and divest the university of “any and all property in the Fox Point community it does not intend to develop.”

For aforementioned reasons, the university was generally amenable to the FPCO’s requests that Brown divest itself from Fox Point. But the FPCO and Brown would continually clash on the community organization’s next demands. The FPCO urged the university to offer the Fox Point community the “right of first refusal” on the sale of any of the university’s Fox Point properties. Further, the FPCO—with the Bond Bread struggle of the early decade still fresh in their minds—urged the university to commit resources to the “development of ample, adequate, and affordable housing opportunities for the working low-income and elderly of the community.” The commitment of Brown to provide the FPCO and FPNHC with first rights to its divested property along with financial support in the development of community housing was, in the opinion of these organizations, “vital to the integrity both of the university and of the Fox Point

⁴¹⁸ Fox Point Community Organization. Letter to the Members of the Corporation of Brown University. Box 52, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

community.”⁴¹⁹ “We feel,” representatives of the organizations argued in a letter to President Swearer, that “the development of mixed-income cooperatives is a sound means of providing adequate and affordable housing for those Fox Point residents who are in danger of being displaced during the next decade because of the extreme socio-economic pressures they are faced to deal with on a day-by-day basis.”

Swearer, in his response, refused any commitment to offer the community organizations right of first refusal in sales of university land. In relinquishing no-longer-need properties, the university, responded Swearer, needed to sell as profitably as possible.⁴²⁰ With tens of millions of dollars’ worth of construction underway or planned, Swearer argued that Brown needed to “realize as high a price as possible” from these properties’ sales to offset the university’s mounting costs for new buildings. While Brown may have not had any legal obligation to offer Fox Point leaders a right of first refusal, Swearer’s failure to accommodate these organizations would have serious impacts upon the neighborhood. In his response, Swearer failed to realize—or perhaps preferred to ignore—that Brown’s commitment to sell to the highest bidder invited private developers to take advantage of Brown’s new land policy in a manner that clearly disadvantaged long-time Fox Point residents. As poorly-funded neighborhood groups, the FPCO and FPNHC recognized that they had little capacity to compete with private developers on the open market. By refusing to accommodate these community organizations and thereby level the playing field in an inherently unfair market competition, Swearer opened the door for well-resourced developers to snatch up former university-owned land and redevelop it in a manner that would change the neighborhood’s character. Swearer should have recognized that the

⁴¹⁹ Oliveira, Caroline and Lawrence G. Novick. Letter to Howard R. Swearer. 22 May 1981. Box 52, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

⁴²⁰ Swearer, Howard R. Letter to Caroline Oliveira and Lawrence G. Novick. 18 June 1981. Box 52, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

university's sale of land to the highest bidder would create an upward pressure on the market, as developers would recoup their investment through the construction of amenities—residential, commercial, and otherwise—that catered to a wealthy clientele. The development of such amenities on formerly university-owned properties, Brown should have understood, would have a displacing effect for low-income residents of Fox Point.

Swearer similarly rejected the idea that the university had an obligation to devote its resources to the needs of Fox Point residents. Any obligation the university owed to its neighbors—if it existed at all—argued Swearer, was far subordinate to the university's obligation to more obvious university stakeholders, like its students. “As a university, our resources are committed to our students who pay tuition and fees to come to Brown for their post-secondary education...Our first commitment must be to the quality of the faculty and the educational program we offer our students,” wrote Swearer. Then, deploying an argument that has since become a hallmark of university leaders, Swearer asserted that Brown could best serve the neighborhood not through direct contributions or financial support but rather by simply pursuing its educational mission: “Our primary missions of teaching and research do, we believe, contribute substantially to the betterment of society.” In an ultimately-redacted paragraph in a draft of this letter, the university leaders argued this point more explicitly: “As a university, we are sensitive to the problems of the poor and elderly in Rhode Island and elsewhere and we respond to them in the best way we can—through research and programs that result from our academic mission. In addition, we hope that our students use their liberal education to become sensitive and understanding citizens willing to improve our society.”⁴²¹ Perhaps Brown leaders recognized that such a laissez-faire “hope” for Brown graduates to be good citizens one day

⁴²¹ Swearer, Howard R. “Draft Letter: Fox Point.” June 1981. Box 52, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

would be cold comfort to the university's neighbors facing displacement today, and that paragraph was never sent.

In Swearer's response, the university president abdicated Brown's responsibility to be a "sensitive and understanding citizen" in its land dealings. He made clear his belief that Brown had no real obligation to consider the greater community effect of its actions in the East Side real estate market. Rather than question how much of a displacing effect the Brown community had upon Fox Point, Swearer believed that the university should be applauded for its land relinquishment efforts. "While realizing we are not the only cause—and probably not the main one—of displacement in such areas as Fox Point, Brown has made many efforts to be responsive in appropriate ways to the problems of your community," Swearer wrote to FPCO leaders.⁴²² Through the years, Swearer held firm, despite consistent pleas from city residents to accommodate community groups in its land dealings, arguing in sum that "the Corporation of Brown University is not at liberty to divert, in effect, University revenues to projects which are not directly related to our educational and research missions."⁴²³ As this statement and the redacted paragraph to community leaders mentioned above attest, Brown leaders under Swearer were blinded by a tragic hubris, confident that the benefits of the university's academic and research mission weighed more on the scale of justice than the harm that its land dealings imposed upon vulnerable university neighbors.

The university's failure to accommodate its neighbors was seen again, with disastrous effect, in the university's handling of one of the most infamous tracts of land on the East Side. The saga that ensued would only continue to strain Brown's relationship with its neighbors. Once

⁴²² Swearer, Howard R. Letter to Caroline Oliveira and Lawrence G. Novick.

⁴²³ Swearer, Howard R. Letter to Claudine Schneider. 7 July 1981. Box 52, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

again, this time under Howard Swearer, Brown waded into controversy with its surrounding community over the property known as Bond Bread.

Pushed, Priced and Promised Out: The Continuing Battle of Bond Bread

In late 1978, Bond Bread re-emerged as a major source of conflict between Brown and members of the Fox Point community. As Robert A. Bronson, President of the Fox Point Community Organization, explained in a letter to Swearer, the Bond Bread property remained of great concern to community members, despite it sitting vacant for more than a decade at that point. The FPCO, said Bronson, believed that the fate of the Bond Bread site—one of the largest undeveloped parcels remaining in the neighborhood—“will play a key role in shaping the destiny of our neighborhood.”⁴²⁴ At first, Brown leaders under Swearer appeared to recognize the community’s continued concern for the property. At a July 13, 1978 meeting between university and FPCO leaders, Brown agreed to inform the FPCO with significant advance of any university intention to sell the property.⁴²⁵ However, in mid-November, Brown broke this promise and began to move forward with a plan with a private developer, Hill Realty, to move six existing East Side homes to the Bond Bread lot and sell those homes on the open market. The FPCO deplored the university’s failure to inform community leaders of the plan, much less consult them regarding the university’s intentions.⁴²⁶ This failure placed the community in an impossible position, said the FPCO, “thus forcing the community into a last-minute ‘yes’ or ‘no’ decision [and] fostering a situation of confrontation.”

⁴²⁴ Bronson, Robert A. Letter to Howard R. Swearer. 26 June 1978. Box 33 Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

⁴²⁵ Fox Point Community Organization. Letter to Howard R. Swearer. 19 July 1978. Box 33, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

⁴²⁶ Pratt, Steven. Letter to Howard R. Swearer. 16 November 1978. Box 33, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

Brown not only fostered confrontation through its delayed notification; the university was also not entirely upfront with community members about its dealings with Hill Realty. At first, long-time Fox Pointers were, according to the FPCO, under the impression that they would be given the first choice in the sale of the new Bond Bread homes. However, in late November 1978, the community was notified that this was not the case; the sale of the homes would be determined on a “first come, first serve” basis, and some of the homes had already been spoken for in private.⁴²⁷ It also became clear to the FPCO that the homes would be prohibitively expensive for most any of the neighborhood’s low- to moderate-income families. The homes were anticipated to be sold for around \$65,000, with projected monthly mortgage payments of over \$850. U.S. Census of Housing data reveals that the average rents paid by most Fox Pointers at the time was well under \$200. To Susan Perry of the FPCO, Brown’s failure to keep the homes’ costs low was evidence of the university’s disregard for its longtime, low- and moderate-income neighbors: “It is hard to believe,” Perry wrote Swearer, “you can truly have the ethnic interest of the community at heart and at the same time agree that a single-family \$65,000 house, unrehabilitated, is affordable to most Fox Pointers.”⁴²⁸

Brown’s Hill Realty plan provoked a robust response from community members. Bronson of the FPCO spared no emotion in a public statement before members of the press: “We are standing at a neighborhood crossroad...People are being priced out of their chosen neighborhood here,” said Bronson.⁴²⁹ “The government calls it ‘displacement.’ Hill Realty and Brown University call it progress.” Bronson continued, lamenting the failure of Brown and Hill Realty

⁴²⁷ Fox Point Community Organization. “Fact Sheet.” November 1978. Box 33, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

⁴²⁸ Perry, Susan. Letter to Howard R. Swearer. 1 December 1978. Box 33, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

⁴²⁹ Bronson, Robert A. “Statement.” November 1978. Box 33, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

to deal straight and account for the neighborhood's longtime residents who faced displacement:

...good faith has deliberately been broken by Hill Realty and by Brown University by their insistence all along that this plan was for Fox Pointers. The plan is nothing more or less than a blatant attempt to force even more people out of their chosen neighborhood because they can't afford the freight. I can think of no justifiable reason why Brown should be willing to sell this land for tens of thousands of dollars less than it paid for simply to bring in a half a dozen wealthy people. This is what displacement is all about. This is what red-lining is all about—keeping those people out and in their place who are not of a certain economic and social class—and allowing through sheer power of money others to move in.

The FPCO, said Bronson, urged Brown to abandon its Hill Reality plan. "There is no humanity in this plan," said the community organization. "We will not abdicate our neighborhood to the rich and powerful who find Fox Point an 'in place to live' because we are sick and tired of being pushed, priced and promised *out*."

While leaders of the FPCO made clear their organization's opposition to the Hill Realty plan, it became increasingly clear that not all segments of the neighborhood agreed. "I think this is ridiculous for five people to overrule the wishes of 40 people from this community," said Nathan Lindenfield, a neighborhood resident who disagreed with the opposition of the FPCO board—the "five people"—to sell the Bond Bread houses on the open market.⁴³⁰ FPCO leaders recognized the potential for the Bond Bread site to sow discord and division between the members of the demographically shifting Fox Point. "Sentiment is very strong here that this issue will split this neighborhood into those who have and those who have not," worried Perry of the FPCO.⁴³¹ To Perry, it was no surprise that some residents—"the haves"—saw no problem with the Hill Realty plan and its potential to bring in more residents of a similar socioeconomic

⁴³⁰ Gray, Channing. "Fox Point residents decry board's actions." *The Providence Bulletin*. 8 December 1978. Box 33, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

⁴³¹ Perry.

background. It was the neighborhood's less-resourced residents—it's "have nots"—that were threatened by the plan, and it was with these residents that the FPCO urged the university to stand. In her letter to Swearer, Perry concluded: "Brown must not kill the viability of Fox Point by approving this sale!"

The divided community put Bond Bread's future to a vote on December 18, 1978. The community vote was nearly split down the middle, but supporters of the Hill Realty plan had a slight advantage—148 to 135. In hearing the vote's tally—and the failure of the vocal Fox Point Community Organization to convince a majority of its neighbors to vote against the plan—President Swearer would remark: "I must say that it is difficult for those of us at the University to ascertain who represents whom in the Fox Point Community."⁴³² The wishes of the full community were indeed hard to discern; Swearer recognized that it was unlikely that any proposal the university put forward for the Bond Bread site would be met with substantial approval any time in the near future. "The university wishes to have good relations with its neighbors and does not want to stir up controversy," said Swearer in a letter to the FPCO on December 26. As such, Swearer concluded "We think it best to defer for the foreseeable future any development of the Bond Bread site." Again, the university's attempt to relinquish itself of Bond Bread fell short.

Swearer, no doubt, found himself in an extremely undesirable position. As Fox Point's demographics shifted—transforming from a multi-ethnic, working-class community to a predominantly white, upper-middle class neighborhood—Swearer's observation that it was difficult to determine who spoke for Fox Point was accurate. While Swearer could rightfully claim that navigating this transforming neighborhood was no enviable job for a university

⁴³² Swearer, Howard R. Letter to Susan Perry. 26 December 1978. Box 33, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

president, he would not as readily recognize that the actions of his institution had played and continued to play a prominent role in initiating much of this neighborhood transformation. A few years later, Brown finally moved to the Bond Bread site six buildings from the Thayer, Brook, and Charlesfield Street block—houses that had stood in the way of a new dormitory which would bear the name of Swearer’s successor.⁴³³ While Brown would finally succeed in ridding itself of the lot by the end of the Swearer era, the Fox Point community still would not wrest the plot from the university. By 1990, five of those six houses moved to the Bond Bread properties—the houses of 155 and 157 Williams Street and 52, 56, and 58 John Street—were all occupied by Brown undergraduates living off-campus.⁴³⁴ To this day, Brown undergraduates reside in all five Bond Bread homes. As such, Brown succeeded in shedding itself of official ownership of this tormented property without ultimately losing use of it.

Not an Eviction, In the Dictionary Sense

While Swearer sought to distance the university from involvement in the process of displacement by underscoring the challenges the university faced in corresponding with its neighbors, often the university’s role as a force of displacement on the East Side under Swearer was undeniable. The university’s release of East Side properties was a process not without human cost, and the Delgados of 62 John Street are an important reminder of this reality.

Brown originally purchased 62 John Street in 1973 under a conditional agreement wherein the university—through Fairview—controlled the property but continued to rent the house to the former tenants, the Delgados, a husband and wife duo approximately 60 years in age and life-

⁴³³ Swearer, Howard R. Letter to Lawrence G. Novick. 2 July 1984. Box 92, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

⁴³⁴ “The Brown University Telephone Directory, 1990-1991.”



The student-occupied homes of 155 and 157 Williams Street, built upon the former easterly lot of the Bond Bread Site, April 2020. (Photo taken by author)



The former Bond Bread garage, now the John Street Design Studio, which houses studio and classroom spaces for Brown use, April 2020. (Photo taken by author)



The Delgados' light-blue home at 62 John Street is visible in this 1971 photo, behind the easterly lot of the Bond Bread site. (Taken from Stevens papers, box 11)

long Cape Verdean residents of Fox Point.⁴³⁵ The house, which stood adjacent to the infamous Bond Bread site, was purchased by Fairview alongside a row of other houses on John Street, with the apparent hope of combining the properties for future university development. However, when these hopes faded with the impending arrival of the institutional zone, the university decided that it would do better by selling the properties than in serving as a landlord to the homes' predominantly low-income tenants. As such, in July 1983, the university took full ownership of its John Street homes with the intent of selling them soon thereafter.

On May 25, 1984, Brown's John Street tenants, including the Delgados, were told to vacate their homes by August 15 of that year. Brown was terminating their leases and would be placing their homes on the open market. Larry Novick, Executive Director of the Fox Point

⁴³⁵ Swearer, Howard R. Letter to Lawrence G. Novick. 2 July 1984.

Neighborhood Housing Corporation, took to the Delgados' defense. The Delgados were now into their seventies and for displacement from their longtime home would be challenging.⁴³⁶ As the summer progressed and August 15 drew closer, Novick's advocacy on the behalf of the Delgados before the university became more pointed. "What we are talking about is the specific problem of the eviction of an elderly fixed income, minority family from their residence of 16 years," wrote Novick to Brown leaders.⁴³⁷ To assist the couple, Novick suggested that Brown contribute one percent of the sale of 62 John Street to the family to assist them in their relocation. Novick continued: "We realize that Brown University is not an eleemosynary institution but I think the specifics of the Delgado eviction warrant an exception to the rule and would reinforce the meaning of Brown's 'good neighbor' policy."

Robert Reichley—Brown's Executive Vice President for University Relations and President of the Providence Preservation Society from 1985 to 1987—apparently took issue with Novick's sense of urgency. "I tend toward ignoring Larry [Novick]'s letter," Reichley advised President Swearer.⁴³⁸ "I fail to see why we should do anything...We are not 'evicting' the Delgados, at least not in the dictionary sense of the word." With no shortage of vindication, Reichley added "Perhaps if they had come and quietly raised the question, I might feel differently. I doubt it." Swearer took Reichley's advice, and Novick's petition on behalf of the Delgados went unanswered. Novick, on August 7—a week from the original eviction date—continued to seek the university's reprieve for the family and begin a "sincere effort to start a dialogue based on facts rather than public relations."⁴³⁹ Again, Reichley counseled Swearer to

⁴³⁶ Delgado, Antonio. Letter to Howard R. Swearer. 30 April 1984. Box 92, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

⁴³⁷ Novick, Lawrence G. Letter to Howard R. Swearer. 12 July 1984. Box 92, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

⁴³⁸ Reichley, Robert A. Letter to Howard R. Swearer. 18 July 1984. Box 92, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

⁴³⁹ Novick, Lawrence G. Letter to Howard R. Swearer. 7 August 1984. Box 92, Howard Robert Swearer papers

ignore Novick, and again, Swearer listened, letting Novick's plea go unaddressed until after the August 15 eviction date had passed. Brown's actions were justified, wrote Reichley to Swearer, allowing the university to "bring Novick into line in terms of how he should deal with us."⁴⁴⁰

On September 13, Novick wrote one final letter to Swearer, this time to inform the university president that the Delgados had vacated 62 John Street, as enforced by the university. Novick shared his disappointment regarding Brown's "apparent lack of sensitivity in the involuntary displacement of an elderly, minority family" and the university's "reluctance to enter into any meaningful dialogue concerning this displacement."⁴⁴¹ "It is imperative at this time," wrote Novick, "for all concerned to realize what has happened in order for it never to occur again, not in Fox Point nor in any other area of the city of Providence where Brown, or its wholly-owned real estate subsidiary Fairview Inc., intends to dispose of property." This time, Reichley responded, generally evading Novick's call for heightened university responsibility in the displacement of the Delgados.⁴⁴² Reichley did, however, continue to take issue with Novick's use of the word "eviction." "This may be a small matter," wrote Reichley in his September 19 response, "but your use of the word is not correct, since it continues to indicate that we had to take court action, which we did not."

Indeed, it was a small matter, especially to the Delgados, who—regardless of Novick's word choice—were forced from their home of 16 years. The chronicle of 62 John Street was a shameful series of events in the university's history as university leaders like Swearer and Reichley appeared more focused on deflecting responsibility for the human cost of the

(OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

⁴⁴⁰ Reichley, Robert A. Letter to Howard R. Swearer. 6 September 1984. Box 92, Howard Robert Swearer papers
(OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

⁴⁴¹ Novick, Lawrence G. Letter to Howard R. Swearer. 13 September 1984. Box 92, Howard Robert Swearer papers
(OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

⁴⁴² Reichley, Robert A. Letter to Lawrence G. Novick. 19 September 1984. Box 92, Howard Robert Swearer papers
(OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

university's land policy and, just as much, bringing a community activist who was standing up to the university "into line." The real crime, it appears, for Brown was the audacity of a community leader to demand of the university accommodation for a poor, elderly couple that lay in the wake of Brown's decision-making. The plight of the Delgados was one experienced by an array of university neighbors, many of whom were likely not fortunate enough to have the spirited advocacy of Larry Novick at their side. The Delgados' displacement from their Brown-owned home is a critical reminder of the human cost of Brown's land dealings, even whenever those dealings sought to limit the university's widespread ownership of East Side property. Such university action quickened the transfiguration of Fox Point. 62 John was purchased on the private market. With no shortage of irony, by the end of the 1980s, the home was occupied by eight Brown undergraduate students.⁴⁴³ It is still occupied to this day by off-campus Brown students.

In many respects, the university's attempts to reduce its involvement in the East Side real estate market was admirable, but the story of 62 John Street and the Delgados remind us that even the university's good intentions—as shallow as they may have been—caused negative reverberations that disproportionately threatened the community's most vulnerable members. But as we have also seen, this threat very much originated with the university's refusal to meaningfully accommodate such neighbors in its land dealings.

The Open Curriculum of Housing

The university's commitment to intensify the use of its existing landholdings and relinquish under-utilized lots did not, however, mean that Brown halted infrastructural growth during the

⁴⁴³ "The Brown University Telephone Directory, 1990-1991." 1990. Box 2, Staff/Student Directories (OF-1G-S1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 27 February 2020.

Howard Swearer years. Rather, by its own estimation, the Swearer era was likely the university's largest decade of construction in its history, with Brown spending over \$100 million in new construction and adding 575,000 square feet to its campus.⁴⁴⁴ However, with the introduction of the institutional zone, how and where Brown made its purchases and conducted its construction shifted. There was now reduced incentive for the university to push into new blocks outside of the zone, as had been done in efforts like Bond Bread. Outside the zone, the university would face increased public scrutiny in their acquisition and development practices. Instead, Brown's purchasing focused on claiming the few non-university buildings that stood on blocks within the zone or upon blocks adjacent to the zone where the university already possessed a plurality of property.⁴⁴⁵ By the university's account, the 1980s were therefore a period of aggressive purchasing within the zone, as the university sought full control of city blocks it viewed as part of its campus.⁴⁴⁶

But this era of massive development in Brown's overall physical infrastructure lacked any development of new, on-campus dormitories, despite the annual growth of the Brown student body. Publicly, Brown leaders stated that they were satisfied with the status of the university's housing plant in the early 1980s. President Swearer would proudly declare in 1981 that the university's on-campus housing opportunities "provide the kind of options in housing which our curriculum provides for study. Large and small dorms, a sorority, apartments, language houses, and the Graduate Center offer the alternatives and diversity which characterize this very special institution."⁴⁴⁷ As Swearer's statement attests, the calls for housing individuality and choice

⁴⁴⁴ *Real Estate Strategy, Brown University.*

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁶ "Options for Brown University's Campus Expansion." 2000. Box 2, Sheila E. Blumstein papers (OF-1C-17A). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 28 March 2020.

⁴⁴⁷ Iselin, Diane C. *Ivied Halls: Two Centuries of Housing at Brown University*. Office of Residential Life, Brown University, 1981, pp. 35.

initiated in the early 1960s by students had been adopted as official university housing pedagogy in the 1980s.

While the university celebrated its housing stock in public, internally, the university recognized that Brown's housing continued to fail to meet student needs. This failure, Brown leaders admitted, continued to force students off-campus in search of better-suited accommodations. In 1981—the same year as Swearer's optimistic assessment—the university wrote: "Apartment-style facilities and some suite-type arrangements are in exceptionally high demand among the upperclass students. Many upperclassmen and even growing numbers of sophomores have chosen to live off-campus because of the short supply of these most preferred suites and apartment-style accommodations."⁴⁴⁸ Such an observation makes clear that the university's housing failures were not simply failure to provide a sufficient *quantity* of housing, though as past chapters have emphasized, these sorts of housing failures were frequent in the institution's history. This 1981 observation underscores the university failure to provide a sufficient *quality* of housing stock and makes clear that this failure of quality drove students off-campus in significant numbers.

Failed, at least in part, by the university's short supply of units and often ill-suited residential accommodations, Brown students of the Swearer era moved off-campus in unprecedented numbers. At the beginning of the 1980s, 1,000 undergraduates and 1,120 graduates lived in privately owned, off-campus housing.⁴⁴⁹ By the end of Swearer presidency in 1988, the number of undergraduates living off-campus crept passed 1,400 students, numbers that would have been unimaginable to members of the Ad Hoc Committee on Housing & University

⁴⁴⁸ "New Housing & Health Services." 12 February 1981. Box 7, Richard Ramsden papers (OF.1CA.R1). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 March 2020.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

Expansion 18 years prior.⁴⁵⁰ Over the course of the Hornig and Swearer years, the university had developed a chronic, irreversible dependence upon off-campus living.

Mutual Respect and Support

Community concern regarding Brown's occupation of East Side land has always been multi-faceted. Concern has originated in fear that Brown's ownership of land forced other community members from it, as seen in the story of 62 John Street. Other times, community members have opposed the university's plans for construction on that land, as in the early stages of the Bond Bread saga. But for decades, community concern over Brown purchase of city land has originated in another source of contention: Brown's property tax-exempt status. While it is beyond the purview of this thesis to conduct an in-depth analysis of the university's tax-exempt status, it is important to acknowledge the university's tax privileges and efforts by state and city leaders to curtail them during the Swearer and Gregorian years. To this day, the university's tax-exempt status continues to be a source of robust strife between the university and the city. Many city residents and leaders—along with Brown students and faculty—feel the university's tax privileges constitute a shirking by Brown of its financial responsibility to its community.

Brown has enjoyed tax exemption on property deemed essential to its academic mission since the university's earliest days. Brown's tax-exempt status is engrained in its 1764 founding charter. Brown received this privilege as a recognition of the university's service to the public. Proponents of the status argue that it recognizes the private university's public value in producing knowledge and research that enlightens and empowers society, in developing future generations of public leaders, and in serving as a cultural center for the city and state. Brown

⁴⁵⁰ *University Relations Annual Report, 1987-88.* 1988. Box 59, Vartan Gregorian papers (OF.1C.16). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 25 February 2020.

leaders have also long argued that the university's tax exemption serves to recognize the university's boon to the local economy. As early as 1944, President Wriston argued that the university uniquely invited private investment, often from out of state sources, into Providence and Rhode Island.⁴⁵¹ For a majority of the university's history, Brown's tax exemptions were not limited to its essential properties. Until 1965, Brown's president and its full university professors were granted a personal real estate tax exemption of up to \$10,000.⁴⁵² Faculty hired before that year continued to avail themselves of this tax exemption through at least 1977.

Given its tax status, Brown ownership of land has long had a layered economic impact upon Providence and its residents. The majority of the university's purchases removes land from the tax rolls, thereby decreasing the city's tax revenue. Meanwhile, the university's growing physical footprint expands its demand for city services like sewer and fire protection, services for which the university does not, in effect, pay. Expanded property ownership by the university, therefore, erodes the city's tax base while simultaneously expanding the need for city expenditure.

Recognizing the deleterious impact of this university-imposed negative feedback loop, in 1965, the city began requesting from its tax-exempt institutions like Brown voluntary payments in place of the taxes they would otherwise be assessed.⁴⁵³ City and university leaders recognized that such payments were commonplace at many of Brown's peer institutions. Harvard began making payments to its host city of Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1928, while Yale began paying taxes on non-educational spaces to New Haven, Connecticut in 1965. But Brown leaders were

⁴⁵¹ Schermerhorn, Peter. *Competing Visions: Historic Preservation and Institutional Expansion on Providence's East Side, 1937-1966*. 2005. Brown University, Bachelor of Arts in History Honors Thesis, pp. 38.

⁴⁵² "University has major impact on R.I. economy, study finds." *The Weekly Bulletin*. 18 March 1977. Box 4 Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

⁴⁵³ Schermerhorn 157.

resolute in their defense of the university's tax privileges. The university, they continued to argue, was a source of cultural leadership in Providence, housed immense resources for the city and state in its gates, and produced clear economic benefit for its surrounding community. Further, university leaders threatened that the administration of taxes would be passed down to students who would face higher tuition.

By the time of Swearer's arrival at Brown, university leaders alongside their colleagues at other Providence, tax-exempt institutions recognized that they would not be able to withstand continuing city requests for expanded financial contribution. Brown leaders, along with those of RISD, Providence College, and the city's major hospitals therefore sought to get ahead of these growing demands and throw their weight behind a solution that they could support. As such in 1986, representatives of these institutions joined hands to advocate for a state-wide Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program.⁴⁵⁴ According to state literature, under this program, state tax revenues reimburse cities and municipalities for up to 27 percent of what those communities would have collected if tax-exempt properties were assessed in full.⁴⁵⁵ Today, the state's PILOT program is often misunderstood as a program of direct payment from institutions to their host cities, representing partial reimbursement to the city for the institution's tax-exempt properties. This is not the case, however. The program transfers state funds to city coffers. Any contribution of institutions to the city are indirect. As Brown's Assistant Vice President for Government & Community Relations Al Dahlberg explains today, any contribution from Brown to Providence through the PILOT program originates from the payroll taxes and the taxable economic activity

⁴⁵⁴ Brown University et al. *A Proposal for Progress: A Coordinated Plan for Assistance to the Providence Community by its Independent Colleges and Hospitals*. 28 April 1994. Box 230, Vartan Gregorian papers (OF.1C.16). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 26 February 2020.

⁴⁵⁵ The City of Providence. "Formula Aid to Cities and Towns."

it generates.⁴⁵⁶

Despite the 1986 enactment of the state's PILOT program, Providence city leaders continued to demand direct payments from institutions like Brown during the Swearer and Gregorian years. To guard against these demands, Brown leaders began a concerted public relations campaign to argue that Brown's financial contribution to the city was sufficiently robust. The perception that Brown did not contribute to the city and state's economy is "neither adequate nor accurate," the university opined in a Brown-commissioned study of its economic impact.⁴⁵⁷ Brown, the university proudly declared, was the state's third largest employer, employing more "than all the department stores in Providence." The university, the report continued, was a massive economic stimulus in the state and city, producing \$93 million of total economic activity by its estimation. Meanwhile, the university, university-related businesses, and its employees paid some \$3.5 million in direct taxes. "We need to understand," said Swearer of the report's findings, "how many and varied are the relations between Brown and the Rhode Island community. Mutual respect and support of those relations will further the interests of all our citizens."

The university hoped that the report's findings would grant it more "mutual respect" from its neighbors and help ward off future demands from city leaders for more financial contribution of university funds. Indeed, the university received counsel from public relations consultants to deflect community criticism of Brown's tax-exempt status with such economic impact analyses. "While it is not a total defense, the idea that Brown is having a positive impact on the local economy should help people to understand why its tax exemption is worth the cost," argued Opinion Dynamic Corporation, a consultant hired to improve Brown's public image in the

⁴⁵⁶ Dahlberg, Albert A. "Re: First PILOT?" Message to Nathaniel Pettit. 3 April 2020. E-mail.

⁴⁵⁷ "University has major impact on R.I. economy, study finds."

1990s.⁴⁵⁸ “The ‘3000 jobs’ mantra should be something every Providence resident remembers when the campaign is done. The more Brown can imitate [the Massachusetts Institute of Technology]’s constant self-congratulation about its economic impact, the better.”

While Brown’s positive economic impact in Providence was and continues to be significant and noteworthy, community concern about the university’s depletion of city resources at the expense of local residents continued. In that same Swearer-era economic impact study, Brown recognized—though with less fanfare—that its 146.2 tax-free acres in the city constituted a \$562,000 loss in tax revenues.⁴⁵⁹ Meanwhile, the university utilized municipal services in excess of \$2 million. As we have seen in the university’s consideration of its contribution to displacement, Brown, under Swearer, was quick to emphasize the ways in which its presence supported the city economically but was less willing to engage with consideration of the inherent burden its presence and privileges placed upon Providence. In the following section we briefly turn our attention to another space in which the university engaged with the community. Community engagement would serve as a pillar of Howard Swearer’s legacy at Brown, as the Swearer Center for Public Service—the university’s hub for community engagement, re-named in Swearer’s honor in 1992—testifies.

Those That Have Should Serve Those That Don’t

To this thesis, the relevancy of public service—or “community engagement” as we will refer to it—may not be initially apparent. However, the author believes that it is both important and worthwhile to consider the arrival of officially-recognized, university-sponsored community

⁴⁵⁸ Opinion Dynamic Corporation. *Analytic Report: Attitudes of Providence, RI Residents Toward Brown University*. April 1997. Box 230, Vartan Gregorian papers (OF.1C.16). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 26 February 2020.

⁴⁵⁹ “University has major impact on R.I. economy, study finds.”

engagement at Brown University during the Swearer years for a number of reasons. First, it is through community engagement that many members of the Brown community frequently interact with non-university-affiliated neighbors. The author believes that community engagement, when executed with care, intentionality, and a sustainable, long-term commitment can be a positive force in developing relationships of trust and reciprocity between a university and its surrounding communities. As this and previous chapters have made clear, the presence of a university can exert tremendous burden upon its surrounding community. Community-engagement can, on the other hand, be a source of positivity associated with a university's presence, potentially leveraging the resources of a university to support its surrounding neighborhoods in addressing community needs.

At the same time, the author is suspicious of the capacity of university leaders to frame the community engagement of institutional affiliates—specifically its students—as a countervailing force that serves to distract attention from the burdens associated with the university's presence, in effect, transforming community engagement into a mere public relations mechanism. Official, university-sponsored community engagement took root at Brown during the administration of Howard Swearer, following a period of more than three decades of considerable university-community conflict. It is important, therefore, to consider these roots and interrogate how the early days of Brown community engagement interacts with this period of university-community strife.

Finally, it is worth noting that while the author utilizes the term “community engagement”—connoting a wide array of “collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities...for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity”—pioneers of this engagement at Brown, including

Howard Swearer, more frequently would have employed terms like “community service” or “public service.”⁴⁶⁰ While important pedagogical advances have informed such an evolution in phraseology, for the purpose of this thesis, these terms will be used interchangeably.

Swearer came to Brown with a deep appreciation for the power of service. Swearer believed that through a commitment to service, a university could become “a rich community of responsiveness,” fulfilling a higher mission by addressing the concerns of the nation and the world.⁴⁶¹ University-sponsored community engagement, Swearer believed, could dramatically transform the emerging young people of the 1980s, moving them away “from self-centeredness and conspicuous consumption to social responsibility and a sense of community.”⁴⁶² To Mathew Johnson, Executive Director of the Swearer Center from 2016 to 2020, Swearer approached university-sponsored community engagement with the “semi-elite or elite, Kennedy-esque notion of public service—that those who have should serve those that don’t.”⁴⁶³ According to Johnson, Swearer believed that “there were elements of becoming a full citizen that you could not learn in the classroom, that you could only learn by being in community with people who are different from you.” As Johnson explains, Swearer was committed to a notion of engagement that focused on advancing the individual student’s capacity for compassion. He believed that if such individual transformation was multiplied over and again, the aggregate impact would be an emerging generation full of more concerned citizens.

Swearer believed that leaders of higher education had an important role to play in this effort, using their “bully pulpit,” as Johnson calls it, to make space in university communities for

⁴⁶⁰ Swearer Center. “Defining Community Engagement.” *CUEI: College & University Engagement Initiative*.

⁴⁶¹ Swearer, Howard R. “The Academy and Public Service.” 13 March 1987. Box 106, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 20 February 2020.

⁴⁶² Broady, Eric. “Coalition for public service to be housed on campus.” *George Street Journal*. 18 October 1985. Box 106, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 20 February 2020.

⁴⁶³ Johnson, Mathew, Former Executive Director of the Swearer Center. Personal interview. 27 March 2020.

this work. Swearer was instrumental in advancing the profile and national infrastructure for university-sponsored community engagement. In November 1985, Swearer joined with the presidents of Stanford, Georgetown, and the University of Rhode Island to form the body that would become known as Campus Compact, a coalition of university presidents and chancellors that sought to “stimulate student participation in voluntary community service.”⁴⁶⁴ To Swearer, the coalition of university leaders sought to provide support both to “idealistic and active” students—those already engaged with service work—while simultaneously encouraging the more uninvolved members of the “‘me’ generation” to join in for the first time. Campus Compact, its founding documents note, “hopes to impress upon students the importance of their individual efforts to address social problems and to meet social needs.”⁴⁶⁵ In line with Swearer’s guiding philosophy, Campus Compact was founded upon a model of engagement that stressed, above all else, the efforts of the individual.

Swearer advanced the profile and infrastructure of university-sponsored community engagement both across the nation and at Brown. As the founding of the student-initiated Community Involvement Center (CIC)—chronicled in the last chapter—attests, students at Brown had long preceded the university’s administration in leading community engagement efforts. While the CIC had dissipated before Swearer’s arrival at Brown, by 1985, the university could report that already more than 1,000 of its students engaged in community-based work.⁴⁶⁶ Much of this work was entirely student-run, thanks to Brown Community Outreach (BCO), the

⁴⁶⁴ Brozan, Nadine. “Colleges Encourage Student Volunteers.” *The New York Times*. 14 January 1987. Box 106, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 20 February 2020.

⁴⁶⁵ “Campus Compact: The Project for Public and Community Service - A Summary of its Activity 1985 - 1986.” 1986. Box 106, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 20 February 2020.

⁴⁶⁶ Swearer, Howard R. “College campus scene: Habits of the heart vs. habits of the wallet.” *The Providence Journal-Bulletin*. 14 September 1985. Box 106, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 20 February 2020.

largest student organization at Brown.⁴⁶⁷ Founded in 1978, BCO compiled lists of community-engaged programs run by student coordinators and trainings for community involvement. BCO provided students opportunities to engage in a wide variety of efforts, with opportunities ranging from adult and youth education programs to community development work.⁴⁶⁸

Building upon the momentum initiated by the student body through initiatives like the Community Involvement Center and Brown Community Outreach, in 1987, Brown inaugurated its Center for Public Service. The center's founders recognized that the center could co-exist with—not dominate or replace—these student initiatives. Rather, the center's charge instructed it to “coordinate and lend institutional support to existing public service activities at Brown” and work with those existing activities to “increase public service involvement on the part of Brown students, faculty, staff and alumni.”⁴⁶⁹

From the Center for Public Service’s earliest days, its leaders have understood that the center’s work was but one means through which the university interacted with its surroundings. The center’s early leaders recognized that while the center was charged to focus on connecting individual students and faculty with community engagement opportunities, its higher purpose was derived from a mutual obligation that existed between the university and its wider community. The university must support public service opportunities because it is obligated to care for its community’s wellbeing, the center’s 1989 report observed, declaring that “the university’s responsibility to embrace service stems from its duty as an institution within a larger community.”⁴⁷⁰ At the time of its founding, the Center for Public Service therefore appears to

⁴⁶⁷ Brown Community Outreach. “Volunteer Information Handbook, 1988-1989.” 1988. Box 125, Vartan Gregorian papers (OF.1C.16). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 25 February 2020.

⁴⁶⁸ “95/96 Report of the Howard R. Swearer Center for Public Service.” 1996. Box 27, Gordon E. Gee files (OF.1C.17). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 March 2020.

⁴⁶⁹ Nozaki, Roger. “Life and Learning: Public Service and Curriculum at Brown University.” February 1989. Box 35, Vartan Gregorian papers (OF.1C.16). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 25 February 2020.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

have been pulled in two, seemingly divergent directions: while the center existed to inspire individual action, it recognized that its mission of public service was born from some sense of institutional duty which dictated that a well-endowed university ought to help address the needs of its less-resourced neighbors.

Much the same, the Center for Public Service's early leaders recognized that the center's work was not antagonistic to the larger university. On the contrary, the center's leaders recognized that it could help improve the university's beleaguered community relations, by providing a "mechanism for Brown to involve itself favorably in the activities of the town and state."⁴⁷¹ To former center director Mathew Johnson, however, Swearer and his colleagues were not inspired to found the Center for Public Service for the sake of improved public relations. To Johnson, Swearer was motivated by a sincere belief that universities should provide for their students opportunities to be in close proximity from people of differing backgrounds to assist their students in becoming "full, competent citizens."⁴⁷² While the university might benefit from improved community relations thanks to the work of the Center for Public Service, this would be incidental, says Johnson, not integral to its founding purpose.

Such a conclusion appears to be a fair assessment of Howard Swearer's commitment to university-sponsored community engagement. However, Swearer's public service work is placed in a new light when juxtaposed with the university's handling of its community affairs under his presidency. Swearer believed deeply that all individuals have a duty to serve their community, to use the resources they have been privileged to receive to support those less-endowed, and to develop compassion for neighbors of different backgrounds. What is perplexing about the Swearer years, then, is the president's failure to translate these individual duties into institutional

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² Johnson.

duties while he led Brown. While he sought for all Brown community members to be compassionate in their dealings with society's disadvantaged, Swearer fell short, in many respects, to model that compassion in how he led the university's interaction with its most vulnerable neighbors.

In 1985, Swearer observed that in all aspects of Brown's academic mission, "we depend profoundly on our friends and neighbors in Providence and Rhode Island."⁴⁷³ Swearer's admission was no doubt sincere. Perhaps unlike any of his predecessors, Swearer recognized the tremendous privileges the Providence and Rhode Island communities gave Brown. "Let us not mince words," said Swearer. "[These communities] help Brown through individual business contributions. But you also help Brown through its tax-free status." Swearer acknowledged that these privileges did not come lightly and that they bound the private university to take seriously its public contributions. By the time Swearer retired in 1988, he had elevated the profile of university-sponsored community engagement to a newfound level in Brown's history. The Swearer Center for Public Service—renamed and rededicated in 1992, following the former president's passing—serves as a living memorial to Swearer's commitment to community engagement. Every year, thousands of Brown students and faculty pass through the Swearer Center seeking to impact meaningful change in communities throughout the city and state. At that 1992 rededication ceremony, Rhode Island U.S. Senator John Chafee would rightfully conclude that Swearer "believed that an undergraduate education should include learning the practice of citizenship through personal effort to improve the lives of others."⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷³ Swearer, Howard R. "The unusual reciprocity that is Brown University and Rhode Island." *The Providence Sunday Journal*. 15 December 1987. Box 100, Howard Robert Swearer papers (OF.1C.15). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 19 February 2020.

⁴⁷⁴ Chafee, John H. Remarks at the Dedication Ceremony for the Howard R. Swearer Center for Public Service. 10 April 1992. Box 35, Vartan Gregorian papers (OF.1C.16). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 25 February 2020.

The Swearer legacy is complicated—and verges on paradoxical. Perhaps more than any Brown president before him, Swearer recognized the important opportunities for student development that lay in community engagement. He put the institution’s weight and resources behind this community engagement in an unprecedented fashion. But Swearer’s own engagement with the vulnerable communities just beyond Brown’s edge was highly imperfect. He often failed to practice the compassion for vulnerable communities that he preached, disregarding the suffering that university policy could unleash, even if unintentionally, while discrediting the undeniable evidence of Brown-sponsored displacement. No cost-benefit analysis would serve to make sense of these dual realities. Swearer’s successor, Vartan Gregorian, would be more fortunate than Swearer. Gregorian would avoid many of the caustic and costly sagas over contentious properties and forced displacements while benefiting from the foundation for community engagement that Swearer worked to forge.

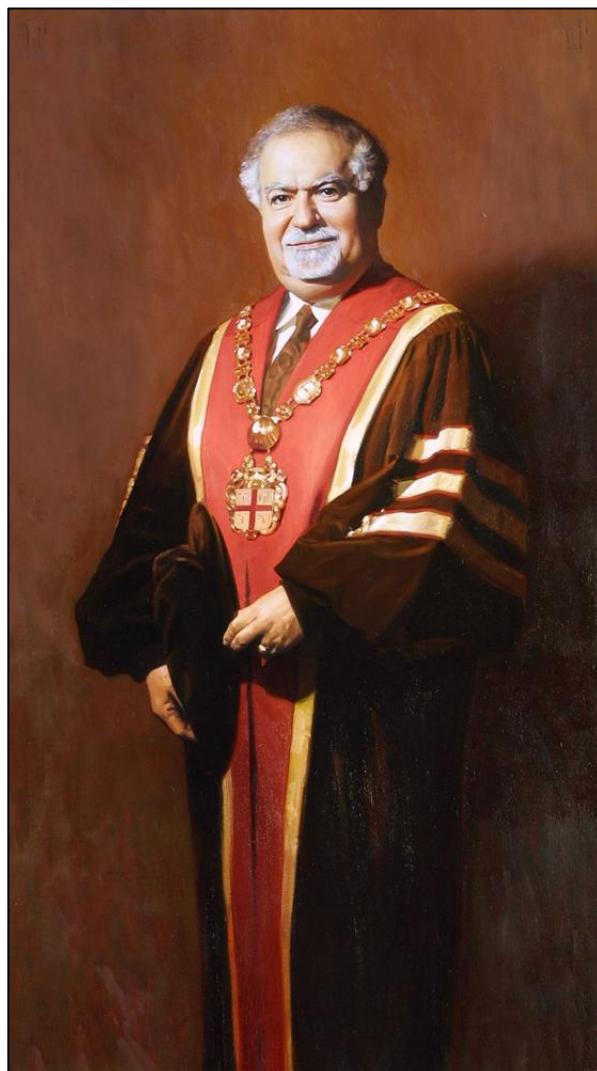
Inheriting the Brown City-State

“The Brown University board of trustees conjured forth, to bring them riches and wisdom, a jinn by the name of Vartan Gregorian,” wrote Norman Atkins of *Rolling Stone*, in describing the 1988 arrival of Brown’s newest president.⁴⁷⁵ Colorfully described by Atkins as a “potbellied, goateed, septa-lingual émigré with mangled syntax and a mane of steel wool,” Gregorian certainly could fill a room, if not the whole East Side, with his boisterous personality. The former provost of the University of Pennsylvania and, more recently, the “champion and savior of the

⁴⁷⁵ Atkins, Norman. “The Making of the President.” *Rolling Stone*. 21 March 1991. Box 149, Vartan Gregorian papers (OF.1C.16). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 25 February 2020.

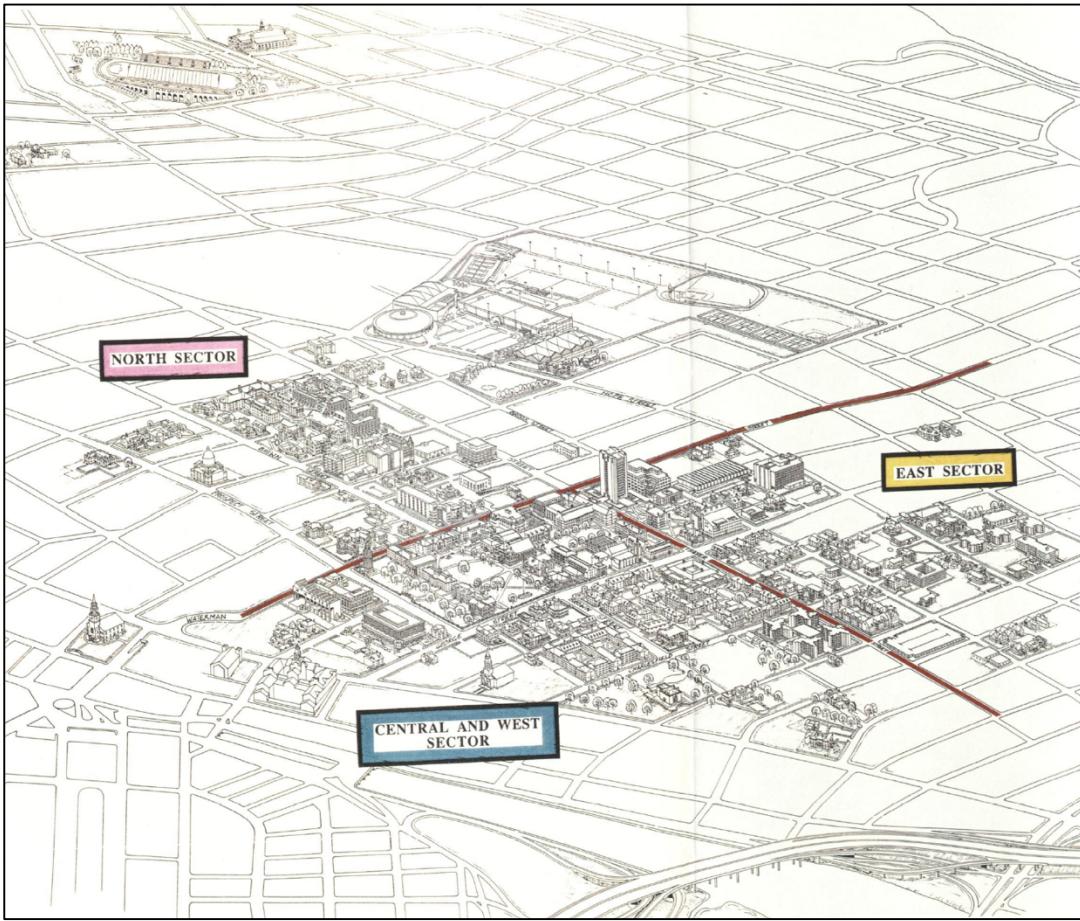
founding New York Public Library,” Gregorian brought to Brown a masterful wielding of the talents critical to a university president of his day: unparalleled fundraising skills and a confidence that projected institutional stability. Upon his arrival in Providence, Gregorian—an Armenian born in Iran who came to the U.S. in his early twenties—remarked that Brown, with its modest endowment and memories of financial instability only a decade in the past, “has done more with less—it is the envy of others.”⁴⁷⁶ But as the university continued to grow, Gregorian would add, “Now we are running out of less.”

In his nearly ten years at Brown’s helm, Gregorian would strive to maintain the university’s institutional advancement begun under Swearer while reining in its growth. To Gregorian, pursuing these two simultaneous goals was an immense challenge. The work of leading institutions of higher education, Gregorian observed, had evolved significantly in the late twentieth century. “The problem you face on our campuses nationally,” Gregorian said, commiserating on behalf of the



Portrait of Vartan Gregorian, by Lucia and Warren Prosperi, 1998. (Courtesy of Brown University Office of the Curator Portrait Collection)

⁴⁷⁶ Biemiller, Lawrence. “The Unruly Schedule and Unpredictable Syntax of Vartan Gregorian.” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. 29 March 1989. Box 149, Vartan Gregorian papers (OF.1C.16). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 25 February 2020.

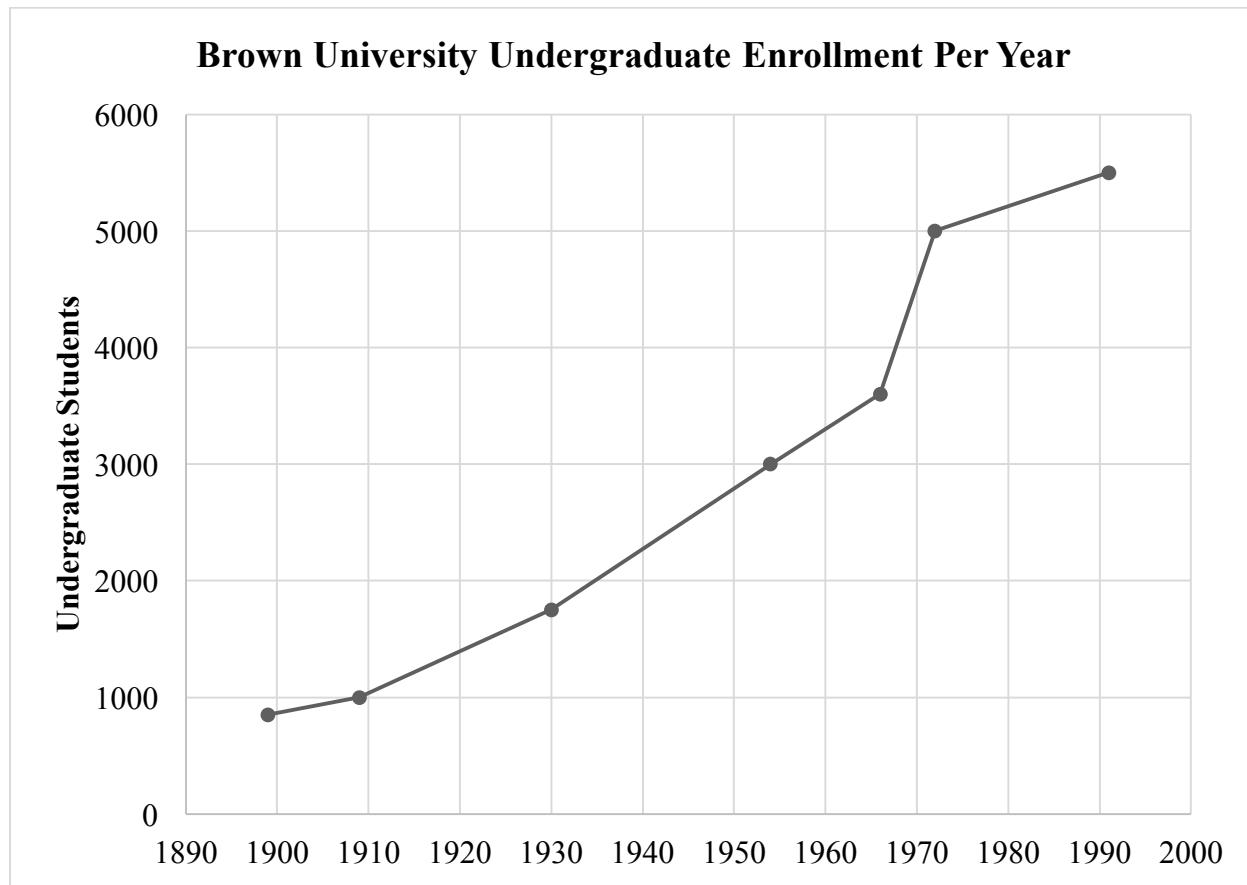


A rendering of the Brown "City-State" from December 1991. (Taken from the Gregorian papers, box 219)

day's university presidents, "is whether we're running an educational institution or whether we're running communities."⁴⁷⁷ The massive scale of operating a university clearly struck a chord with Gregorian, who observed that universities had become "small city-states now...My worry always has been that people who come here, or to any of our universities, don't realize that these are new communities, four-year transient communities that we have created...the president's job on our campuses is not simply educational, it's also building a community, keeping an infrastructure going. And I have 230 buildings to take care of, I have the welfare of 10,000 people to worry about."

Gregorian's concern regarding the emergence of the Brown "city-state" was well-founded.

⁴⁷⁷ Atkins.



(Taken from the Gregorian papers, box 219)

In the decade preceding Gregorian's arrival, certain Brown leaders had been sounding the alarm, calling, without success, for the university to slow its seemingly unfettered growth. In 1974, influential alumnus Thomas Watson, Jr. chaired a Corporation committee that urged the university to limit its undergraduate student body to 5,150 students.⁴⁷⁸ The Watson Report arrived amidst remarkably rapid expansion in the Brown student body, with the number of undergraduates growing by more than 9 percent in 1973 alone. The report urged that the university's rapid growth was being felt within the Brown community, as institutional resources were being stretched thin, the quality of admitted students purportedly was falling, and members

⁴⁷⁸ Hawkins, Brian L. *Considerations in Determining the Appropriate Size of the Undergraduate student Body at Brown University*. 7 January 1992. Box 164, Vartan Gregorian papers (OF.1C.16). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 26 February 2020.

of the growing university community were feeling less connected. The Corporation would, at least in name, heed the Watson Report's recommendation, officially capping enrollment at 5,150 students in 1974.⁴⁷⁹ While that enrollment cap remained the university's official guidance into the Gregorian administration, it was never enforced with commitment. By Fall 1991, Brown undergraduate enrollment had surpassed 5,900 students. A re-examination of the university's size that year determined that Brown was "stretched right to the edge of our capacity, if we have not already exceeded that limit."⁴⁸⁰

In the early 1990s, Brown leaders again recognized that the university's rapid growth had been felt off-campus as well as on campus. In February 1992, Chancellor Richard Salomon noted that Brown's continual growth in its student body had initiated substantial and likely irreversible transformation in the communities at its campus's edge. The university's growth and its failures to provide its students with adequate housing opportunities, Salomon observed, had caused a student "invasion of an area which has been occupied by relatively poor residents."⁴⁸¹ Salomon recognized that "general rental prices in neighboring areas went up due to our students living off campus." Salomon, as such, advocated "gradual retreat from our present number of undergraduates." This "might not reverse all the intangibles cited above," Salomon conceded, but it would reduce the need for more property.

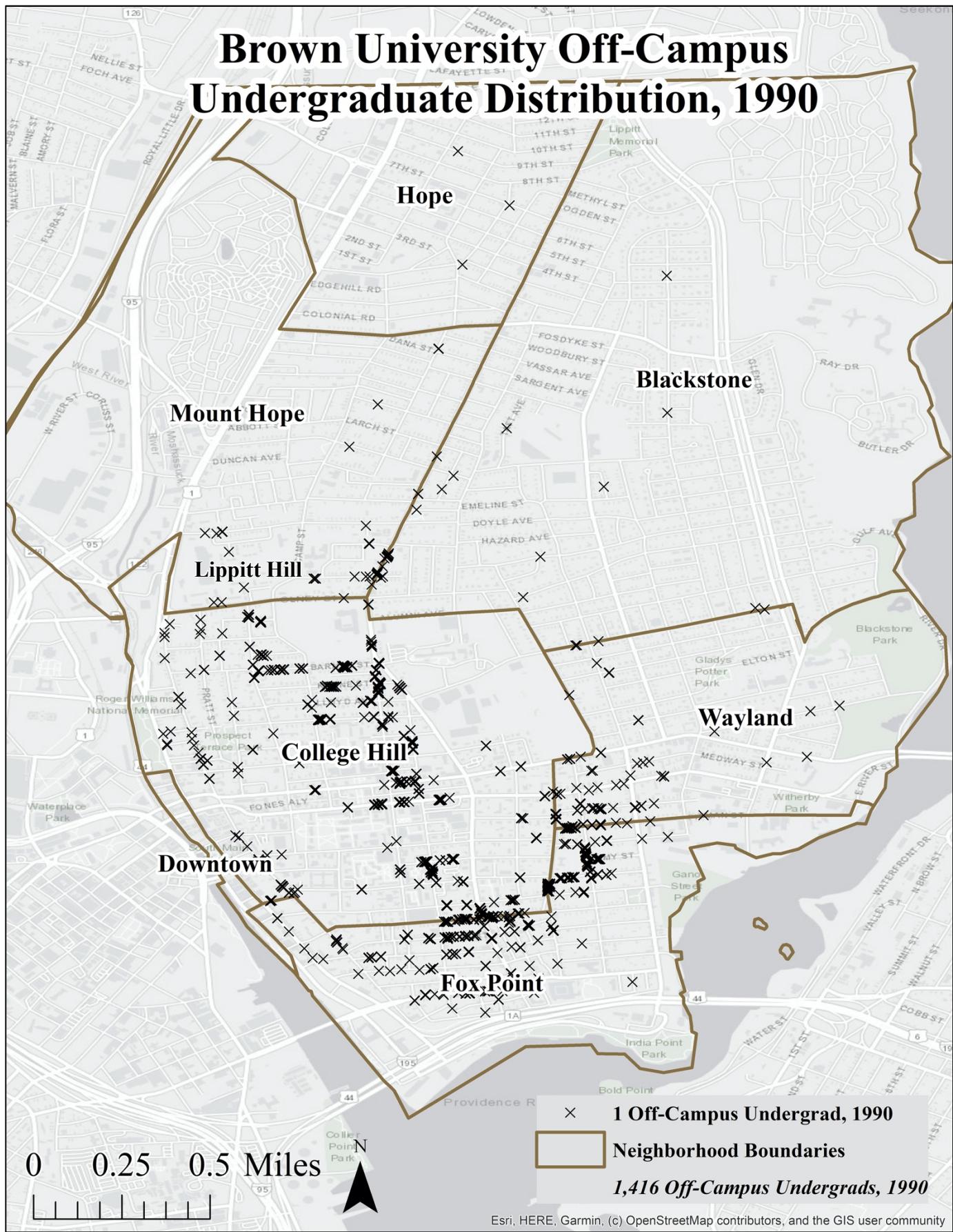
Salomon's premonition was surely accurate. By 1990, Brown's reliance upon off-campus housing reached unprecedented levels. More than 1,400 undergraduates lived in off-campus homes, as did nearly 1,000 more graduate students.⁴⁸² Reliance upon off-campus housing had

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

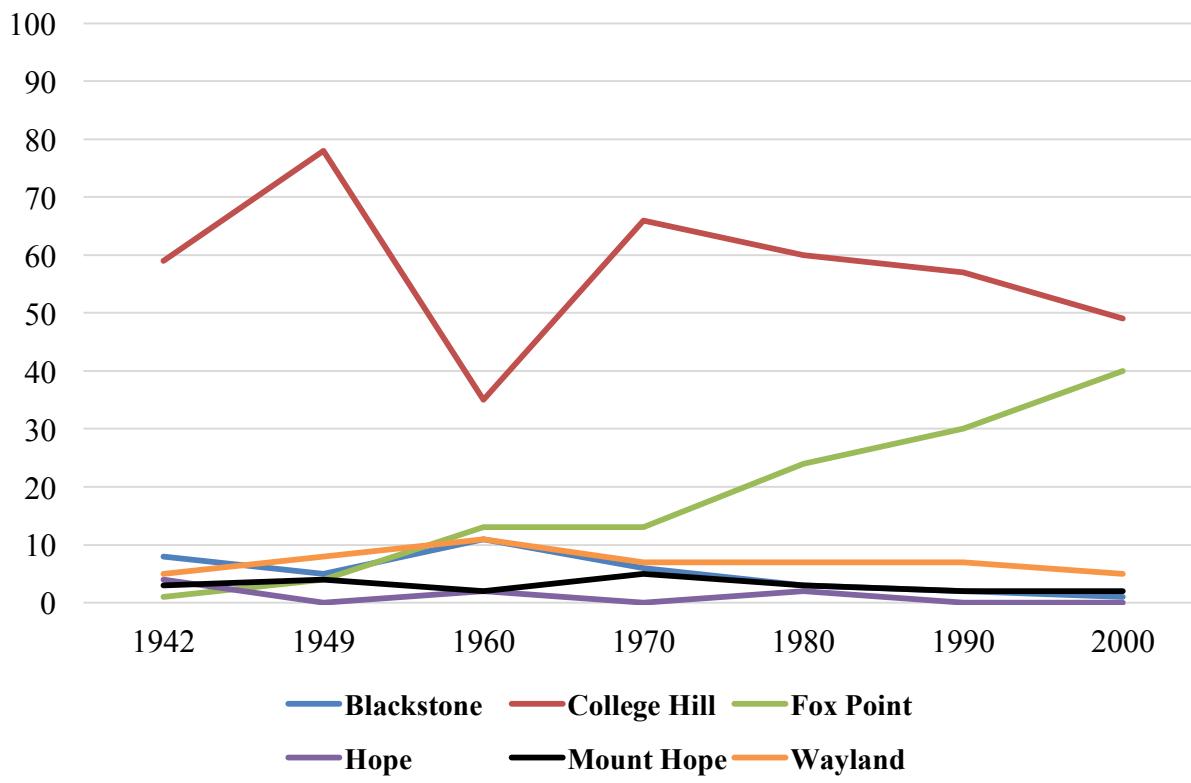
⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Salomon, Richard. Letter to Brian Hawkins. 6 February 1992. Box 164, Vartan Gregorian papers (OF.1C.16). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 26 February 2020.

⁴⁸² "The Brown University Telephone Directory, 1990-1991."



Percentage of Off-Campus Undergraduate Population Per East Side Neighborhood Per Year



(Created from maps featured in Appendix A)

only cemented itself in the Swearer and Gregorian years, as the university continued to address shortages in on-campus units with additional permissions for off-campus living to relieve the pressure on the university's limited dormitory space.⁴⁸³ While the university strived to limit its off-campus permissions to seniors, in the 1990s, on-campus housing pressures made this policy little more than an aspiration. By the university's own admission, by 1996, juniors who sought to live off-campus "can count on the fact that he or she will be granted such permission." Due to shortage in on-campus, residential space, the university would gladly accommodate most any student who wished to live in the East Side community. The above graph, which displays

⁴⁸³ Holmes, Walter. Letter to Mid-Year Students Requesting Policy Review. 23 April 1996. Box 163, Vartan Gregorian papers (OF.1C.16). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 26 February 2020.

changes in the university's undergraduate off-campus student distribution through the decades, also makes clear that as the university's dependence on off-campus living cemented, the percentage of its students living in neighborhoods further from Brown's core—specifically the neighborhood of Fox Point—grew considerably. More and more off-campus undergraduates, therefore, were moving further and further from the university's campus.

Though Gregorian sought to add to the university's housing capacity, decades of general disinvestment required the university president to shift his focus and immense university resources to first restore the Brown's then-crumbling housing stock. Gregorian inherited from his predecessors a housing infrastructure that showed the effects of decades of general neglect. A 1990 examination of the university's housing stock suggested that, with all possible speed, \$33 million of university funds was required to bring back to life the university's postwar residence halls like Andrew Hall and Wriston and Keeney Quadrangles.⁴⁸⁴ The report suggested that another \$20 million be spent, albeit with less urgency, in bringing up to date other halls in the university's housing portfolio.

While a great majority of his housing efforts were focused on rehabilitation of existing dormitories, Gregorian was, however, able to see through one last major addition to the university's housing stock. In May 1990, the university broke ground for a new \$15.5 million, 300-student residential facility on the block bound by Thayer, Charlesfield, Power, and Brook Streets.⁴⁸⁵ The completion of this new dormitory—rededicated in 1999 as “Vartan Gregorian Quad”—would bring 85 percent of Brown's students onto campus, a record high in Brown's

⁴⁸⁴ Brown University Office of Residential Office. “1990 Housing Restoration Plan.” 1990. Box 219, Vartan Gregorian papers (OF.1C.16). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 26 February 2020.

⁴⁸⁵ Nickel, Mark. “Dedication of Gregorian Quadrangle scheduled for Monday, April 12.” *The Brown University News Bureau*. 9 April 1999.



The Vartan Gregorian Quad, to date the university's newest addition to its housing stock, April 2020. (Photo taken by author)

history.⁴⁸⁶ The newest addition would bring Brown's on-campus capacity into line with that of many of its peer institutions.

By the time Gregorian left his post at Brown in 1997, university administrators, like Dean of Student Life Robin Rose, applauded the president's serious investment in the university's housing capacity. "On many occasions you have apologized to parents for the 'barracks' in which their children live," Rose wrote to Gregorian.⁴⁸⁷ "You don't need to apologize anymore. During your tenure you have transformed our residence halls into good places to live, learn, study and

⁴⁸⁶ Brown University Office of Residential Office.

⁴⁸⁷ Rose, Robin. Letter to Vartan Gregorian. 18 March 1997. Box 175, Vartan Gregorian papers (OF.1C.16). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 26 February 2020.

play.” Rose’s praise of Gregorian was deserved. More than any president since Keeney, Gregorian took seriously his responsibility to provide for members of his “city-state” adequate housing opportunities and saw the residential experience as one deserving of tremendous investment. No matter how seriously Gregorian treated investment in residential space, however, he could not escape the historical legacy left by his predecessors. Gregorian inherited a student population of unprecedented size and a dependence upon off-campus living of unprecedented severity. Decades of residential disinvestment demanded that Gregorian devote tens of millions of dollars to deferred maintenance before he could spend a cent on adding new beds. And even though Gregorian would succeed in bringing the university’s percentage of students living in on-campus accommodations to a record high, the university’s unrelenting growth in its students population meant that the overall magnitude of students living in the community went unmitigated.

In many respects, the Gregorian era is remembered for its relatively peaceful years in the relationship between Brown and Providence. Polling by the university in 1997 would determine that 85 percent of East Side residents had a somewhat or strongly favorable opinion of living near Brown.⁴⁸⁸ Just two decades ago, such an overwhelming positive perception of the university as a neighbor would have been unimaginable. No doubt, the university benefitted from initiatives of recent years, like the arrival of the Swearer Center, which broadly painted the institution as a concerned citizen of Providence. Similarly, the affable Gregorian was himself a prominent and beloved city figure who was applauded by neighbors for his efforts like Brown’s “adoption” of the nearby Fox Point Elementary School. In 1992, Gregorian partnered each of the 20 classrooms

⁴⁸⁸ Opinion Dynamic Corporation.



Brown President Vartan Gregorian and Providence Mayor Vincent A. "Buddy" Cianci embrace at the October 24, 1997 ceremony at which the Fox Point Elementary School was renamed in Gregorian's honor. (Taken from Gee papers, box 11)

of the elementary school with a different Brown athletic team which provide mentorship and tutoring to the school's young students throughout the academic year, a tradition that continues to this day.⁴⁸⁹ Gregorian's bond with the elementary school would continue through his final days in Providence. In one of his final acts as Brown University president, Gregorian would allocate \$60,000 of his own funds to the school.⁴⁹⁰ Later that year, in his honor, the school was renamed the "Vartan Gregorian Elementary School at Fox Point." To Gregorian, the school's renaming was the "greatest honor" that he could ever receive.⁴⁹¹

That a school in Fox Point bore the name of a Brown president by the end of the

⁴⁸⁹ "Brown Athletes Team up with Fox Point Students." *Partners in Education of Providence*. Winter 1992. Box 11, Gordon E. Gee papers (OF.1C.17). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 March 2020.

⁴⁹⁰ Gregorian, Vartan. Letter to Christine Heenan. 26 September 1997. Box 175, Vartan Gregorian papers (OF.1C.16). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 26 February 2020.

⁴⁹¹ Davis, Karen A. "Gregorian School: A legacy." *The Providence Journal-Bulletin*. 24 October 1997. Box 11, Gordon E. Gee papers (OF.1C.17). Brown University Archives, Providence, RI. 11 March 2020.

millennium would have been unimaginable to the neighborhood's residents of only a few decades prior. That this reality had transpired was a testament to the commitment of Gregorian to be a good institutional neighbor. But comparing Gregorian to his predecessors is no easy task. The Fox Point that abutted Gregorian's Brown was vastly different than the one that had abutted the university in years past. After decades of immense pressure from historic preservation, urban renewal, and university expansion, Fox Point had changed, in many respects unrecognizable from its character only two decades prior. By 2000, over three-quarters of the neighborhood was non-Hispanic white.⁴⁹² As such, while the school serves as a living memorial to the neighborly improvement that Gregorian helped lead, its name, in another way, is a testament to the neighborhood's tremendous transformation.

Conclusion: Towards the New Millennium

By the end of the Swearer and Gregorian years, Brown University was on as solid a footing as it had ever been. In the late 1990s, Brown's endowment surpassed \$1 billion for the first time ever, and its place as an internationally-recognized, elite research university was enshrined for decades to come.⁴⁹³ The climate on campus was reinvigorated, as new, world-class facilities sprang up and talented students from all corners of the world anxiously applied to fill them. As dramatic transformations transpired on campus, so they did off-campus in Brown's surrounding city. Providence underwent significant demographic alteration in the Howard Swearer and Vartan Gregorian years becoming more non-white and more low-income than ever before. These demographic shifts ran counter, however, in the city's neighborhoods directly adjacent to the

⁴⁹² Taylor, Emily. "2000 racial and ethnic breakdown; Fox Point neighborhood, Providence, RI." *Fox Point Oral Histories*. Brown University Library Center for Digital Scholarship. 16 March 2009.

⁴⁹³ Widmer 234.

university. After more than three decades of historic preservation, urban renewal, and university expansion, the once-robust working-class communities, communities of color, and immigrant communities at Brown's edge barely could hold on.

For decades, city leaders had been without any significant tool to slow the glacial spread of the "amorphous complex known as Brown." However, in the Swearer years, that tool arrived in the form of the institutional zone, which would effectively curb the university's physical growth, successfully encouraging it to densify its land use and shed itself of its more peripheral, underused properties. While this effort was initiated in part as a response to community concern over the university's massive collection of East Side property, it would have dramatic effects upon many of the East Side's most vulnerable community members. Under past presidents, Brown's neighborly capacity was tested by how it acquired property. Under Swearer, the university would be tested in how it released that property. Time and again, Brown neglected the real concern of community activists that the university's land dealings was encouraging rapid transformation that was actively displacing the community's most vulnerable members.

Under Gregorian, Brown strived to rein its growth in and to seriously invest, for the first time in more than 15 years, in the university's housing stock. But these efforts proved too little too late. While reminders of these communities would persist—like the Portuguese Silver Star Bakery on Ives Street or the annual Cape Verdean Independence Day Festival in nearby India Point Park—the neighborhoods that surrounded Brown at the end of the Gregorian years were simply not the same as those that began the Swearer years.

Conclusion: Benefits and Burdens

On the evening of March 2, 2020, tension and indignation pervaded the third-floor conference room of Brown University’s Watson Institute. That evening, East Side neighbors and university representatives met to discuss a major announcement made by the university two weeks earlier: Brown was building student housing again. The university officially announced plans for two new dormitories at the southeastern edge of its campus on February 18, 2020.⁴⁹⁴

The university’s announcement was noteworthy for two reasons. First, for nearly thirty years—since the construction of the Vartan Gregorian Quadrangle in 1990—Brown had constructed no new dormitories. Now, in early 2020, the university was poised to make a considerable addition to its housing portfolio. This announcement was the second of its nature in the last two years. In December 2018, Brown had announced plans for a new 150-bed dormitory.⁴⁹⁵ Together, these three residence halls would expand Brown’s on-campus housing capacity by more than 500 students. According to Vice President for Campus Life Eric Estes, the construction was evidence of Brown’s continued commitment to a “dynamic residential experience.”⁴⁹⁶

But the announcement was significant for another reason as well. It stated that the university’s residential construction was intended to “mitigate challenges that have arisen from having an increasing number of students living away from Brown—including the effects of rising rents on students and local residents...”⁴⁹⁷ These three building projects, said the

⁴⁹⁴ Tabak, Jessica. “Brown Plans New 375-Bed Residence Hall on College Hill Campus.” *News from Brown*, 18 February 2020.

⁴⁹⁵ Hyde-Keller, O’rya. “Brown Plans New Center, Residence Hall to Integrate Health and Wellness Programs.” *News from Brown*, 20 December 2018.

⁴⁹⁶ Tabak.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.



A rendering of a communal space in the lower new Brook Street dormitory by Deborah Berke Partners. (Taken from Tabak)

university, would offer apartment-style units specifically targeted towards Brown's juniors and seniors. As such, the university hoped that by constructing units that appealed to its upper-class students—the majority of Brown's off-campus undergraduate population—it could pull students out of private residences and back onto campus, thereby helping to alleviate the East Side's high rents. "This project advances our commitment both to our students and to the local community," Estes concluded.

However, there was little cause for celebration among community members in that March 2020 meeting. "It doesn't help to describe it as good for us because kids move out of the apartments in the neighborhood," said one resident in attendance.⁴⁹⁸ "Brown created a problem for itself, which is now made into a problem for us," she added. Many of the meeting attendees nodded their head in agreement, and indeed, these neighbors had a point. For these East Side residents, Brown's plans for residential construction would primarily constitute headaches.

⁴⁹⁸ "Minutes of the Community Meeting for Institutional Master Plan Amendment #3." Brown University, 4 March 2020, Providence.

The meeting's attendees were noticeably homogenous.⁴⁹⁹ All were single-family homeowners with property abutting the lower Brook Street construction sites. Of the approximately 20 attendees, all—except for one gentleman—were white and elderly. The clothes and accessories of many attendees suggested that they were financially comfortable, with at least two residents donning pearl necklaces. For this crowd, the hypothetical alleviation of East Side rents meant little. As homeowners in Providence's most desirable neighborhoods, efforts to make the East Side more economically inclusive for priced-out renters was not a cause for celebration. To these attendees, the university's announcement would only entail short- and long-term inconveniences, as construction crews would soon noisily toil away for months on end, just down the street. More generally, the neighbors fretted living near massive dormitories and the hundreds of unruly students who would soon inhabit them. The meeting attendees' objections were valid. But juxtaposed alongside the greater history of Brown University housing policy chronicled in this thesis, their complaints resonate differently.

In 1974, the *Providence Journal* predicted that the neighborhoods surrounding Brown were destined to become the university's "expensive suburb."⁵⁰⁰ As this thesis has documented, that prediction would prove accurate, as many East Side working-class communities and communities of color were forced from their homes in the second half of the twentieth century by a combination of historic preservation, urban renewal, and university expansion. In sum, that combination would transform these communities into middle- and upper middle-class neighborhoods, predominantly occupied by white residents. This transformation was not accidental. It was designed and advocated for by wealthy, white East Siders, many of them Brown affiliates, who expressly sought more expensive—and by definition less inclusive—

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁰ DeSilva, Bruce. "Urban uplift alters Fox Point." *Providence Sunday Journal*. 24 March 1974.

neighborhoods. The demographic composition of that March 2020 meeting, overwhelmingly white and wealthy, underscores the success of that desired transformation. Indeed, the meeting attendees were the idealized inheritors of the East Side’s “renewed” neighborhoods.

To be sure, the meeting attendees’ concerns were legitimate. But their concerns were those of temporary inconvenience, not of displacement. Their concerns were those of decreased property values, not of community dissolution. Their concerns were those of loud construction sites and students, not of being wiped from the map by a mighty university. The nature and severity of these neighborhood concerns make it challenging to draw meaningful comparison between this 2020 development and the history chronicled in previous chapters.

And yet, by engaging with Brown’s February 2020 announcement, we can bring forward critical themes from the history of the university’s housing policy recounted in this thesis. By examining this contemporary incident in its wider historical context, we can see how the values and world-views of university leaders dating from the Wriston era continue to influence Brown’s role as an institutional citizen of the East Side and of Providence to this day. The university’s February 2020 announcement—contextualized within this chronicled history—allow us to conduct two sets of critical reflections.

First: throughout this thesis, we have observed a mighty struggle between two dominant philosophies of student housing at Brown, each of which reflected a greater evolution in the conception of liberal education at Brown. In the first student housing philosophy, Brown leaders advocated structured uniformity in the university’s housing experience, believing this uniformity to be a key ingredient in the production of free-thinking leaders for a democratic society. In the second philosophy, Brown students, faculty, and administrators advocated individual choice and flexibility in student housing arrangements, in part as an effort to reflect changing student

culture. But the university's shift to such a housing strategy was also born from more simple convenience, as Brown struggled to house its growing student body. As Brown prepares to make its first major addition to its housing stock in three decades, we are granted the opportunity to evaluate the insights and warnings this historic struggle encourages us to consider.

Second: contemporary university representatives share a pervasive belief that Brown is a "different kind of developer." Brown, they argue, engages in real estate to advance liberal education. From the urban renewal years of Barnaby Keeney to the property consolidation efforts of Howard Swearer, Brown has indeed operated as a highly unique force in East Side real estate, dramatically impacting the region's communities along the way. Brown's February 2020 announcement—and specifically its framing of these dormitories as a corrective measure that would account for the rental inflation caused by off-campus university students—gives us the opportunity to reflect once more on the broader market impacts of Brown housing strategies on East Side real estate. What unique market burdens has the university imposed on its surrounding communities? How has the university's commitment to "the liberal ideal" impacted its East Side land dealings and those dealings' greater neighborhood impact?

Finally, we conclude this thesis by imagining how the university might address the historic burdens herein documented. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to recommend specific measures or adjustments to its housing policy. Instead, this chapter draws upon the lessons of two important moments in Brown's history—the 1969-1970 advocacy of the Ad Hoc Committee on Housing & University Expansion and the 2007 release of *Slavery and Justice*—to offer broad reflections and principles upon the form that these measures may take. Collectively, this chapter is both reflective and forward-oriented, seeking to use the history chronicled in previous chapters to establish broad principles for a more just and compassionate Brown University housing policy.

Competing Philosophies for the Educational Ideal

In 1945, President Henry Wriston declared that Brown sought a residential environment that was, in his words, “hospitable to our educational ideal.” In the six decades chronicled in this thesis, we have seen Brown community members jostle with forces both internal and external to the university in pursuit of that environment. But we have also seen, in those sixty years, the nature of that idealized residential environment shift continuously, pulled in divergent directions by two principal and competing philosophies of student housing—one philosophy that espoused structure and uniformity and another that advocated choice and individuality. While the residential environment imagined by these philosophies diverged, advocates of each believed that their approach best allowed Brown to advance liberal education. The tension between them persists to this day. Indeed, these competing philosophies continue to reverberate down Brown’s dormitory halls and throughout East Side homes.

When Henry Wriston came to Providence in 1937, he abhorred Brown’s laissez-faire approach to student housing. Wriston believed that Brown—by allowing more than half of its students to live off-campus and many others to reside in ill-planned dormitories—was woefully neglecting the potential of residence halls to serve as exemplar sites for liberal learning. Wriston argued that dormitories were essential places of education on a college campus where students of different backgrounds and persuasions could engage in respectful dialogue while learning to live together. A highly-regulated and structured residential experience, Wriston believed, could uniquely encourage both the free exchange of ideas and the development of gentlemanly decorum, two goals deemed essential by Wriston in developing generations of free-thinkers and responsible leaders for society. Motivated by these convictions, he began at Brown one of the most ambitious programs of institutional residential construction the nation had ever seen.

Wriston's efforts brought hundreds of students into university-owned housing units. His successor, Barnaby Keeney, pledged to continue Wriston's work, in hopes of one day attaining for Brown a fully residential college.

However, Brown's housing strategy quickly swung in the opposite direction, as students condemned the university's new construction for creating what they believed were stifling living environments that segregated the Brown student body along class and social lines. In the late 1960s, as a dominant university ethos of individuality and choice emerged alongside Brown's now quintessential Open Curriculum, students increasingly demanded that the university's housing policy reflect this new university culture—and abandon Wriston's pursuit of a residential college. The university, many students and administrators argued alike, could best demonstrate its commitment to liberal education by allowing students to determine for themselves the nature of their living arrangements. As such, program houses, co-opts, and coed housing units sprang up alongside conventional dormitories and fraternities to offer the emerging Brown students of the 1960s the choice in housing accommodations that they demanded. Still, many Brown students evaded the humdrum of dormitory life by moving off-campus entirely. In unprecedented numbers beginning in the mid-1960s, students moved into the residential neighborhoods that surrounded the university.

While Brown's pivot to a housing system predicated upon choice and individuality may have originated in the philosophical convictions of its students, it was institutionalized by university administrators for far more pragmatic reasons. By adopting a residential approach that emphasized choice, Brown administrators could celebrate the university's idiosyncratic collection of residential units as evidence of the university's responsiveness to student wishes. Meanwhile, by abandoning the pursuit of a residential college, many university leaders felt

absolved of a responsibility to expand on-campus housing accommodations with the same speed that the university had under Wriston and Keeney. As a result, between 1970 and 1990, the university's on-campus housing capacity remained largely static.

But the size of Brown's student population did not. In the post-war decades, it expanded fervently. Under these conditions, the university's relationship to off-campus student living shifted. While under Wriston, off-campus living had been regarded as an abdication of the university's responsibility to guard the "morals of the College," under this new system of choice, off-campus living could be applauded as a legitimate method for independent student development.

But more importantly—and with no small dose of self-righteous hypocrisy—off-campus residences offered the university a massive supply of beds for its expanding student body. And all the better, these beds came at no real cost. Instead, the university filled East Side beds with Brown students by advertising units via its off-campus listing service and inspecting units to prepare them for use by students. The university even pushed non-university affiliates from Brown's armada of Fairview homes to make way for more students. By the mid-1970s, off-campus housing was not just one more housing choice available to Brown students; it was an essential component of Brown's housing infrastructure, a component that played a critical role in ensuring that all Brown students had a bed of their own. By the time of Vartan Gregorian's presidency, Brown had developed a seemingly irreversible, chronic dependence upon off-campus living. That dependence has only deepened in the two decades since the Gregorian years. In 2019, more than 1,800 Brown undergraduates, or 25.9 percent of its total undergraduate population, resided off-campus.⁵⁰¹ Meanwhile, all but a handful of Brown's approximately 3,000

⁵⁰¹ Bares et al. *Studentification and Fair Housing in Providence, Rhode Island*. SouthCoast Fair Housing, 2019.

graduate students reside in private units in the city.

In the decades-long struggle between the student housing philosophies of structured uniformity and of individual choice, the latter has emerged the clear victor at contemporary Brown. This victory is reflected in both the character of the university's residences and in the students who reside in them. A fully residential college would not "work well with Brown," President Christina H. Paxson—Brown's president since 2012—argues, because much of the university's housing stock was not constructed with this goal in mind.⁵⁰² But also, she observes more succinctly, a true residential college would fail at Brown "because of our ethos." Vice President Estes echoes this sentiment: "It's not surprising that in a place like Brown the residential experience, like the academic experience, or other key components of the student experience, would be highly individualized."⁵⁰³ At Brown, says Estes, students are encouraged to be the "drivers" of their academic experience, and that expectation carries into the university's approach to student housing. Indeed, university representatives conceive of the dormitories announced in December 2018 and February 2020 not as efforts to bring more students under the university's watchful gaze—as Wriston might have conceptualized the dormitories. Instead, Brown has long bemoaned its relatively small stock of suite and apartment-styled units.⁵⁰⁴ The university therefore frames the planned construction of these types of units as an opportunity to diversify its housing stock and expand student choice in housing opportunities.

As an elite institution that has distinguished itself from its peers for the last fifty years with an Open Curriculum and pervasive university culture predicated on self-determination and the

⁵⁰² Paxson, Christina, Brown University President. Personal interview. 19 March 2020.

⁵⁰³ Bakkegard, Koren & Eric Estes, Brown University Vice Presidents for Campus Life. Personal interview. 31 March 2020.

⁵⁰⁴ Carey, Russell, Brown University Executive Vice President for Planning and Policy. Personal interview. 27 March 2020.

production of self-motivated but responsible citizens, Brown's preference for choice in housing accommodations does not appear to be going anywhere. University leaders, Paxson argues, account for this penchant for choice among Brown students in university decision-making with regards to housing policy and construction. Paxson suggests that the university has opted to not build new dormitories because it recognizes that students would oppose expanded on-campus housing requirements. In making this point, Paxson recalled how in December 2019 she had told a lecture hall full of students that Brown would be building new dormitories to bring more students back on campus. "I could look out and see the faces," she remembered.⁵⁰⁵ "Most of the students were horrified because they wouldn't be able to live off-campus as juniors." Paxson's presumption that students would oppose continued university efforts to limit off-campus housing is likely accurate. After five decades of housing choice, off-campus living has become a sort of presupposed right of Brown students, deeply engrained within the student body's collective understanding of life at Brown.

This thesis has made clear that at a university like Brown—a mighty university that has often functioned in its surroundings like an elephant in a China shop—transformations in campus life rarely remain contained within the university's bounds. At Brown, the university's pursuit of both of its divergent student housing strategies has had considerable impacts on the surrounding community. On one hand, the university's short-lived pursuit of a residential college demolished city blocks and dozens of community structures. It also unleashed one of the nation's most fervent historic preservation movements, a movement which sadly further accelerated the displacement of low-income residents from the East Side in droves. On the other hand, the university's shift towards housing choice and flexibility sent thousands of Brown students every

⁵⁰⁵ Paxson.

year into the community to commandeer homes once occupied by working-class families and families of color. The pursuit of both philosophies have been shown to cause severe damages for the vulnerable communities that once lived at the university’s frontiers.

It is fruitless to weigh the relative harms caused by the two different approaches to the problem. But if nothings else, this thesis should serve as a cautionary tale about the presumed virtues of student choice, the strategy that ultimately proved “victorious” at Brown. While self-determination in education is often desirable, permitting students autonomy in shaping the academic experience they desire, unbridled and unregulated choice has its dark side.

Institutionalizing student choice, we have seen, can absolve a university community from recognizing its collective impact, blinding a university to the real suffering that that impact can wreak on vulnerable communities. Autonomy and self-determination may be honorable in the exercise of liberal education, but Brown University community members have too often cloaked their actions with these entities to avoid genuine introspection of the harm that the university’s presence can cause.

As previously noted, the university framed its February 2020 decision to build new dormitories in part as an effort to “mitigate challenges that have arisen from having an increasing number of students living away from Brown.” This suggests that contemporary university leaders recognize the collective damage that unfettered reliance on off-campus housing has caused for surrounding communities. The planned construction has, therefore, at least in part, a reparative purpose, striving to help reduce the inflated East Side rents to which the university community has contributed. If this intention is accurate, it is laudable. However, we should not advance under false pretenses. Even if the university could pull all of its students onto campus—a highly improbable possibility—the communities that once existed at Brown’s frontiers would

not magically reappear. Indeed, those community members have been scattered throughout the city and many away from Providence entirely. This reality makes the work of repairing the university's harm done by its previous policies an immensely challenging endeavor, an endeavor we will continue to consider in following sections.

A Different Kind of Developer

“Be frank with me about these residence halls,” Al Dahlberg said to a friend.⁵⁰⁶ “What do you think?” Dahlberg—Associate Vice President for Government and Community Relations at Brown—sought his friend’s counsel regarding the new dormitories that the university had announced in December 2018 and February 2020. Like Dahlberg himself, the friend had grown up in Providence and continued to this day to live near Brown’s campus. “I realize that they’re needed, and I kind of grudgingly accept them.” Dahlberg’s friend responded. “On the other hand,” the friend added, “when the hell is Brown going to stop growing?”

Dahlberg’s friend echoed a line of questioning that neighbors of Brown have asked ever since Henry Wriston’s assumption of the university’s helm in 1936. In the six decades chronicled by this thesis, Brown’s growth has been framed as synonymous with its institutional progress. Without the growth of its student body or the addition of new facilities, Brown leaders have continuously argued that the university would lose the international preeminence that these leaders had worked tirelessly to develop. This presumption of growth remains alive and well among Brown’s current generation of leadership. “Brown needs to grow because the academic enterprise needs to continue to grow to survive,” argues Dahlberg.⁵⁰⁷ “Now we have new

⁵⁰⁶ Dahlberg, Albert, Brown University Associate Vice President for Government and Community Relations. Personal interview. 18 March 2020.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

disciplines that we didn't have 10 years ago like data science. We have new areas of engineering like nanoscience that just didn't exist 20 years ago." Dahlberg concludes: "For an academic research university to be healthy, it needs to continue to grow."

In many ways, this thesis has underscored the dangers of equating a university's progress with its growth. Time and again, we have seen dire negative consequences associated with the university's quest for growth. For example, by setting its sights on the unfettered growth of its student body in the post-war period, Brown was plunged into a near annual struggle to provide these students with adequate residential space. The university failure to do so, we have seen, had dire impacts for the vulnerable communities that surrounded Brown. Meanwhile, the university's insatiable demand for new facilities during the Keeney, Heffner, and Hornig years compelled the university to recklessly acquire any East Side properties it could conceivably one day develop. Before it could realize the full impact of such an endeavor, the university amassed an unruly collection of East Side land, one that the university could not shed without causing crippling damages for vulnerable residents at its campus's edge and plunging the university into deep controversy with community leaders.

But this thesis serves as a cautionary tale of another nature, one that warns of the dangers of believing that the university is a different, more benevolent kind of developer. In responding to his friend about the university's need to build its new dormitories, Dahlberg encapsulated this sentiment. "What I argued to my friend is, in a lot of times, wouldn't you rather have Brown University growing and investing in a neighborhood and planting street trees, redoing sidewalks, and improving the community?" Brown is not like other developers, argued Dahlberg, who invest in the East Side to turn a short-term profit. "Brown University is not making any money on any of this [development]. We're doing it to fulfill a mission. We're also doing it to improve

the community and the neighborhood.”

Brown has long argued that it entered into East Side real estate activity, as Dahlberg does here, solely to advance its commitment to liberal education. Any university property acquisition, Brown leaders argued, was carried out to provide the university community with the physical space and resources needed to advance Brown’s academic mission. To be sure, the university has been guided by this higher purpose. But this higher purpose has not prevented Brown from engaging in sometimes reckless and often seedy real estate practices. Indeed, Brown leaders have frequently hidden behind “the liberal ideal” to protect the university from valid community criticism and to evade socially responsibility for the consequences of its housing and land use policies.

This reality has been demonstrated a number of times throughout the university’s history. As we have seen, at the height of the urban renewal era, Brown University did not counter to forces seeking to turn the East Side into a more profitable place to own property. In fact, the university played a central role in the arrival of urban renewal in the region. The university’s real estate activity was a central impetus in the formation of the Providence Preservation Society, the standard bearer of urban renewal on the East Side. Further, the university’s presence as the East Side’s preeminent “anchor institution” was a major factor that attracted speculators to the region. The university—and its growing population of young students and faculty in need of ever-more housing—inspired developers to transform low-income communities of color, like those of Lippitt Hill and South Main Street, into residential complexes for middle-income city dwellers. These complexes like University Heights and the Plantations specifically targeted Brown affiliates as residents. Further, as these examples attest, many Brown leaders—like Edward Sulzberger and John Nicholas Brown II—amassed considerable profits by engaging in urban

renewal activity that ultimately served the institution in which they maintain a vested interest .

At times, as we have seen, the university argued that to advance liberal education at Brown, the university needed to engage in profit-maximizing real estate activity. Such a line of argument forced the university to engage in moral gymnastics of profound proportions. Under Howard Swearer, Brown argued that the university was concerned with the plight of society's vulnerable, as demonstrated by its commitment to university-sponsored public service. At the same time, however, the university under Swearer callously ignored the severe damages that the university's property dispossession was causing for the most vulnerable residents of nearby Fox Point. Swearer and his colleagues failed to see the deep hypocrisy of the university's actions. Under Swearer, Brown would seek to inspire students to develop care for society's disadvantaged members while failing to apply that same sense of compassion in its neighborhood land dealings.

Brown's mission statement declares that the university exists to "serve the community, the nation and the world by discovering, communicating and preserving knowledge and understanding in a spirit of free inquiry..."⁵⁰⁸ By its own account, Brown University advances liberal education for the purpose of serving community interest. Paradoxically, we have seen that in the pursuit of this mission, the university has repeatedly engaged in ethically dubious and socially irresponsible real estate activity. Brown may argue that it is not like other developers, but time and again throughout the university's history, Brown's housing and real estate practices have aided and abetted forces that have sought to transform the East Side at the clear expense of the working-class communities and communities of color that once thrived at Brown's frontiers.

⁵⁰⁸ "Brown at a Glance." *Brown University*, 2020.

Right the Wrongs

“We are still angry, close to fifty years later, for the urban renewal that destroyed a community in the name of progress,” stated Claire Andrade-Watkins, a second-generation Cape Verdean born and raised in Fox Point, in her 2011 film *Hi, Neighbor*.⁵⁰⁹ Through her research, teaching, and film-making, Dr. Andrade-Watkins, a professor at Boston’s Emerson College, continues to tell the stories of Cape Verdean Fox Point, keeping alive the community that was devastated by what she calls the “inevitable march of urban development, expansion, and change.” As we have seen, Brown University played a central role in this “inevitable march,” reshaping the East Side of Providence through demolition and construction, property acquisition and release, and off-campus housing expansion and dependence.

The story documented in this thesis is one of tragic conceit, in which Brown University leaders believed that by striving to advance liberal education at their institution—“in the name of progress,” as Andrade-Watkins observes—they could do no harm. Brown’s contribution to society, these leaders believed, was immense: Brown faculty and researchers expanded our collective knowledge. Brown invested and attracted millions of dollars into the Rhode Island and Providence economies. Brown graduates went on to lead society as doctors, lawyers, and public servants. While these presumptions may be true and noteworthy in and of themselves, they engendered an institutional hubris that blinded the university to the burden its presence imposed upon the working-class communities and communities of color that once flourished within its presence. In the second half of the twentieth century, as Brown grew in size and stature, it often did so at the expense of these communities, and many of those communities—like Andrade-Watkins’s Cape Verdean Fox Point—were forced from their East Side homes.

⁵⁰⁹ Andrade-Watkins, Claire, director. *Hi, Neighbor: Memories of Loss and Displacement*. 2011.

“The past cannot be undone,” says Andrade-Watkins, in reflecting upon the dissolution of her community. The same can be said of Brown’s participation in that community dissolution: it too cannot be undone. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to prescribe specific measures to adjust Brown’s housing policy, we conclude this thesis, nonetheless, by turning to the past one last time to help us inform a more just path forward.

Too often in the six decades examined by this thesis, community concerns of Brown housing and real estate action have been cast aside, declared by Brown to be community hyperbole or, just as insidiously, the justified and inevitable discomfort shouldered by the neighbors of a great university. From Keeney’s refusal to save the historic homes that stood in West Quad’s path to Swearer’s insistence that Brown must sell to the highest bidder in relinquishing its under-used Fox Point properties, time and again, Brown leaders have dealt with community criticism like a hurdle to be overcome in the pursuit of its liberal educational ideal. Time and again, community criticism was routinely ignored or cast aside. But in one brief moment, this callous norm was broken.

In late 1969 and early 1970, an enlightened cadre of university community members, led by the students of the Ad Hoc Committee on Housing & University Expansion, recognized that—even though the university was guided by a laudable public interest mission—Brown was not infallible. The university could serve as a tremendous resource to the people of Providence, these Brown community members recognized, but it could also place a considerable burden upon the city and its most vulnerable communities. In the narrative of institutional hubris and community neglect presented in this thesis, this moment serves as an important counterfactual. It demonstrates Brown’s capacity to wrestle with both the good and the bad associated with its presence in Providence. It demonstrates the university’s ability to meaningfully integrate

community concern into its decision-making. It demonstrates that upon recognizing the burden caused by the university community, Brown leaders—like Acting President Merton Stoltz—could graciously accept their moral responsibility to take corrective action. While ultimately this counterfactual was short-lived and superseded by an intensification of the trends that the Ad Hoc Committee was fighting, it is an important precedent upon which to consider the correction of Brown’s burden upon community housing. This moment is a proud moment in Brown’s history.

In considering the rectification of Brown’s housing burden and in addressing its participation in the troubling legacy of East Side displacement, we may build upon another proud moment in Brown’s history, the release of *Slavery and Justice*. This report—published under President Ruth J. Simmons in 2007—documented the inextricable link between the university’s founding and its participation in the transatlantic slave trade, chronicling how the Brown family and other university founders profited enormously from the slave trade.⁵¹⁰ These profits, the report observes, provided the financial foundation of the young university. But more generally, *Slavery & Justice* serves as a pioneering text in the emerging fields of institutional accountability and retrospective justice. Most critically, *Slavery and Justice* demands that the contemporary Brown community answer to the historical participation of Brown affiliates in the slave trade. While the Brown-affiliated perpetrators of this unfathomable injustice are long gone, their legacy is not. To this day, members of the Brown community continue to reap the benefits of institutional wealth, resources, and preeminence accumulated through the university community’s former participation in the slave trade.

To this day, members of the Brown community continue to reap the benefits accumulated through the widespread community displacement and dissolution documented in this thesis. On-

⁵¹⁰ Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice. *Slavery and Justice*. Brown University, 2007.

campus, students live in residences—like Wriston Quadrangle—that were erected by tearing down neighborhood structures—like the Thayer Street School—that had served East Side communities for decades. Off-campus, students and faculty occupy homes that, not long ago, housed working-class families, families of colors, and immigrant families. These homes offered such families some of the city’s most affordable housing opportunities. To this day, Brown students and faculty live upon land—like the Bond Bread site—that had been hotly contested by the university and its neighbors for years, leaving deep wounds of distrust for community members. Brown affiliates live and shop in spaces like University Heights, spaces whose construction required the bulldozing of communities of color like Lippitt Hill to attract those Brown affiliates’ business. More generally, the Brown community enjoys the marvelous ambiance of the East Side as its home, an ambiance that attracts students to study at Brown and faculty to teach there. The charming and desirable neighborhoods that surround the university are one of its most important assets in Brown’s institutional advancement. Brown and its university community, this thesis has demonstrated, acquired many of these assets by participating in processes of community dispossession.

“To study or teach at an institution like Brown, to live in a country like the United States, is to inherit a wealth of resources and opportunities passed down from previous generations,” *Slavery and Justice* observes. “Is it so unreasonable to suggest that in assuming the benefits of these historical legacies, we also assume some of the burdens and responsibilities attached to them?” the report asks. While every year, members of the Brown community assume the benefits accrued through the community displacement and dissolution documented in this thesis, we have yet to assume the burdens of this history.

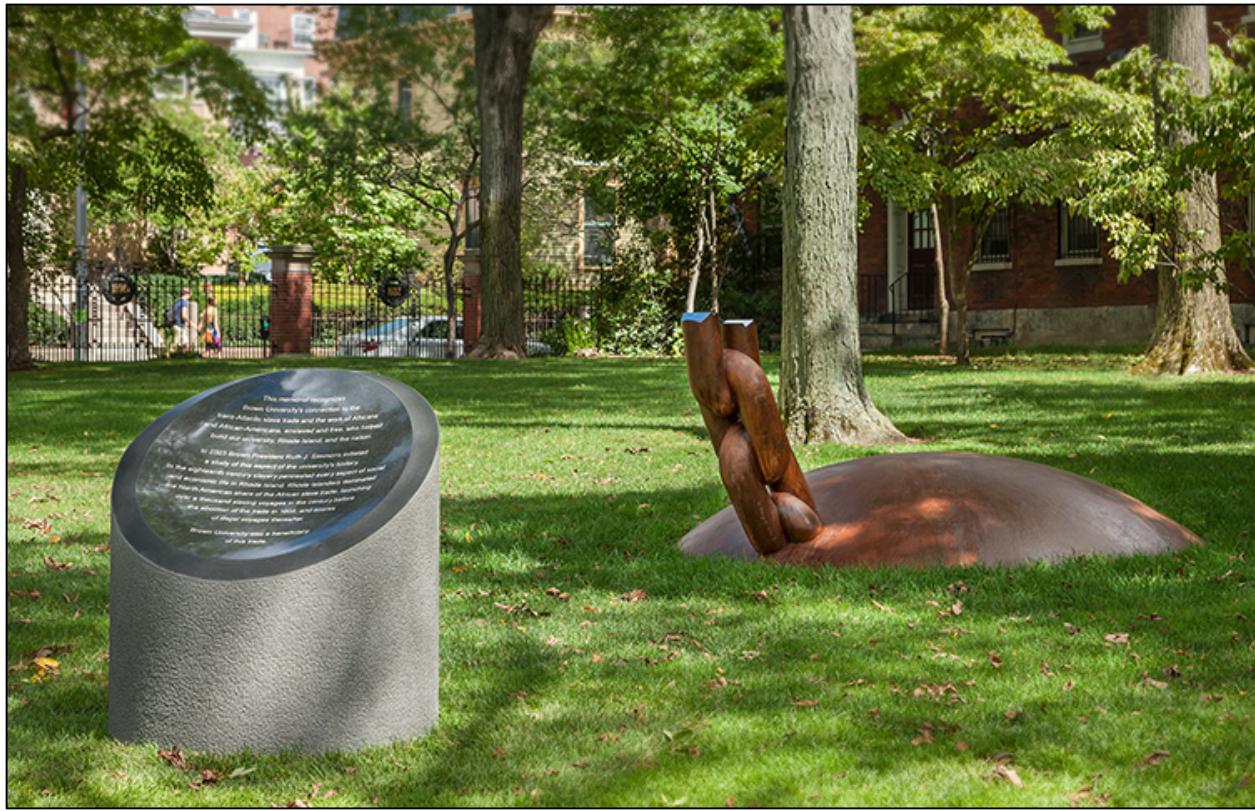
Righting the wrongs carried out by university leaders upon Brown’s surrounding

communities of the mid-twentieth century is a challenging task and any effort to do so would be mired by an inevitable imperfection. But again, *Slavery and Justice* provides a meaningful precedent for the university to build upon. The most successful efforts of retrospective justice, the report observes, begin with a formal acknowledgement of the offense. Throughout the six decades examined in this thesis, leaders of Brown time and again denied the human suffering caused by the university's housing and real estate practices. The contemporary university can no longer do so.

Encouragingly, within private conversation, universities leaders have shown a willingness to acknowledge the burdens associated with the university's presence. "When universities grow and prosper, they do change the neighborhood around them" observed President Paxson, "driving up the prices and shifting people away who are lower-income...and we've seen that over the last 50 years in Fox Point where people have been priced out."⁵¹¹ Indeed, the university's February 2020 announcement of the new dormitories was also encouraging. The university's recognition that it can help alleviate inflated East Side rents should be applauded. But the severity of the community damage documented in this thesis makes clear that acknowledgement of university-sponsored harm must extend beyond private conversation and press releases. Brown must work to elevate the university community's consciousness of this history. This work can be done, *Slavery and Justice* observes, through the report's second recommendation: an institutional "commitment to truth telling."

The truth-telling born out of *Slavery and Justice* took many forms, from the widespread dissemination of the report to the memorialization of the university's participation in the slave trade through artist Martin Puryear's *Slavery Memorial*—the half-buried ball and chain situated

⁵¹¹ Paxson.



Martin Puryear's Slavery Memorial on Brown's "Quiet Green." (Photo by Warren Jagger, taken from Brown's Public Art webpage)

just feet from University Hall. Most significantly perhaps, in 2012, per the report's suggestion, the university inaugurated the Center for the Study of Slavery & Justice, a scholarly research center with a public humanities mission that would continue the work begun by *Slavery and Justice*. Now in its eighth year of operation, the Center continues to interrogate the university's participation in the slave trade while examining how the pervasive legacies of slavery shape the modern world.⁵¹²

This thesis has made clear Brown University's deep participation in community displacement on the East Side of Providence. Today, far too large a percentage of the Brown student body falsely believes that the East Side has always been exclusively occupied by Providence's wealthy and white elites. The university must work aggressively to dispel this

⁵¹² The Center for the Study of Slavery & Justice. "Home." *The Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice*, 2020.

misconception and ensure that all students—especially those living off-campus—understand the rich complexity of the East Side’s neighborhoods and their university community’s role in transforming those neighborhoods.

The Center for the Study of Slavery & Justice—an internationally preeminent research center for studying the continuing legacies of the slave trade—makes clear that the university can engage in meaningful efforts of reparative justice by fulfilling its core charge: expanding society’s body of knowledge. “What universities do best is learning and teaching,” *Slavery and Justice* observes, “and these are the areas in which Brown can most appropriately and effectively make amends.” Just as the university’s participation in the slave trade created a moral imperative to study slavery’s legacies, Brown’s participation in community displacement and the production of housing instability in Providence should compel the university to devote academic resources to studying displacement and housing instability. Brown should build upon the example set by the CSSJ and establish a new scholarly center dedicated to the study of the legacies of displacement in Providence and across the nation.

As an institution dedicated to “discovering, communicating and preserving knowledge,” Brown should seek to understand and interrogating challenging histories, especially those with which the university’s own history interacts. However, looking to the legacies of the past must not prevent the university from responding to these legacies in the present and future. The University of Pennsylvania’s Ira Harkavy—a man who began his career by protesting the callous neighborhood activity of the university he now helps to lead—reminds us that we cannot erase or amend the historic actions of our institutions’ predecessors. But we can control how our institutions proceed in the modern day. “The best way to right wrongs is to exemplify what

should be right in the present,” says Harkavy.⁵¹³ “If you really want to right the wrongs, you want to deal with history, maybe help people who’ve been harmed,” he continues, “the real thing you want to do is be an institution dedicated to doing the right thing for those populations now and in the future.”

Studying the perpetration of historic harm is worthwhile if it compels us to address the continuing legacies of that harm and alleviate contemporary suffering. Providence is in the midst of an affordable housing crisis, as two-thirds of the city’s renters are cost-burdened, spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing as they suffer under the burden of a broken housing market. Thousands of Rhode Islanders experiencing homelessness—like Larry, whose story began this thesis—struggle a stone’s throw from University Hall. As this thesis has demonstrated, Brown University, through its participation in community displacement and the production of housing instability, is innately connected to these struggles. As members of the Brown community, we must first recognize that Larry’s plight is tied to our privilege. And then we must act.

The history herein chronicled—and the unparalleled moment in the history of Brown and the nation that we find ourselves in today—urges us to advance a new, more just and inclusive understanding of the relationship between the collegiate residential experience and liberal education. As I complete this thesis, in May 2020, the world finds itself in the midst of the COVID-19 global pandemic. This is, I recognize, an ironic time to suggest that Brown re-examine its residential experience. The university, for the first time in its more than 250 years of existence, operates without a residential experience entirely, as the university’s student body has been scattered across the globe and classes have moved to a remote, virtual learning platform.

⁵¹³ Harkavy, Ira, University of Pennsylvania Associate Vice President and Founding Director, Barbara and Edward Netter Center for Community Partnerships. Personal interview. 24 February 2020.

Indeed, it appears highly probable that institutions of higher education across the world will struggle to operate under the threat of the virus for semesters—if not years—to come. The virus has introduced seemingly endless sources of concern and uncertainty for universities, but chief among them is the prospect of bringing students from around the world to live and interact with one another in the close proximity of dormitory halls and off-campus homes.

As Brown leaders imagine and prepare for the 2020-2021 academic year, it is increasingly possible that the university's residential experience will be severely altered, if not outright erased, from next year's overall academic experience. Brown should embrace the unprecedented nature of this moment to critically reexamine how its idealized residential experience informs the liberal education its students receive and how its housing and land use policies impact the university's surrounding communities. Whether the university likes it or not, the relationship between living and learning at Brown will be substantially different in the coming years.

In this thesis, we have witnessed the relationship between liberal education and residential life at Brown evolve considerably. Under Presidents Wriston and Keeney, Brown leaders believed that the residential experience ought to isolate students from the external community, so that liberal education could flourish within the campus's bounds. Since that time, however, university leaders reversed their course, arguing that liberal education could progress in a wide array of residential settings, as long as those settings advanced student autonomy and self-determination. In the six decades chronicled in this thesis, we have witnessed a struggle between these competing philosophies. But surely there is another path forward, one that transcends this false dichotomy—one that fulfills the promise of the Bond Bread saga born some 50 years ago.

The residential experience at Brown should do more than drive a wedge between the university community and its surrounding city. Brown should instead advance a residential

experience that *integrates* the university, the city, and the city's inhabitants. As Brown engages in residential construction for the first time in 30 years, the university should build units that serve students and community members alike, allowing students to live alongside Providence city residents who have personally experienced homelessness or housing instability.

At the height of the Bond Bread saga, university leaders acknowledged the responsibility to provide community members with housing units that offset the destruction of affordable housing opportunities the university was causing. More than fifty years since that acknowledgement, however, the promise of Bond Bread has gone unresolved, even as the university's contribution to forces of displacement have grown. For this reason alone, the university should build units that house community members.

But there is another reason that Brown should build housing units for community members alongside units for its students. Since the Howard Swearer years, Brown has appreciated the reality that community-engagement is a two-way street. While Brown students and faculty engaged in community work strive to help address community needs through their efforts, Brown leaders have also recognized that university affiliates benefit tremendously from community-engaged work. Through community engagement, students often attain class credit or work-study wages. They gain invaluable work and research experience that may help attain future opportunities and employment. And above all, they learn from community members whose worldviews and lived experiences often differ with theirs. As President Swearer argued, it is experiences and interactions like this—by “being in community” with people who are different than them—that students may become more full citizens in their time at Brown.

However, community engagement at Brown has always operated under the unfounded presumption that Brown students had to leave the university campus to engage with community

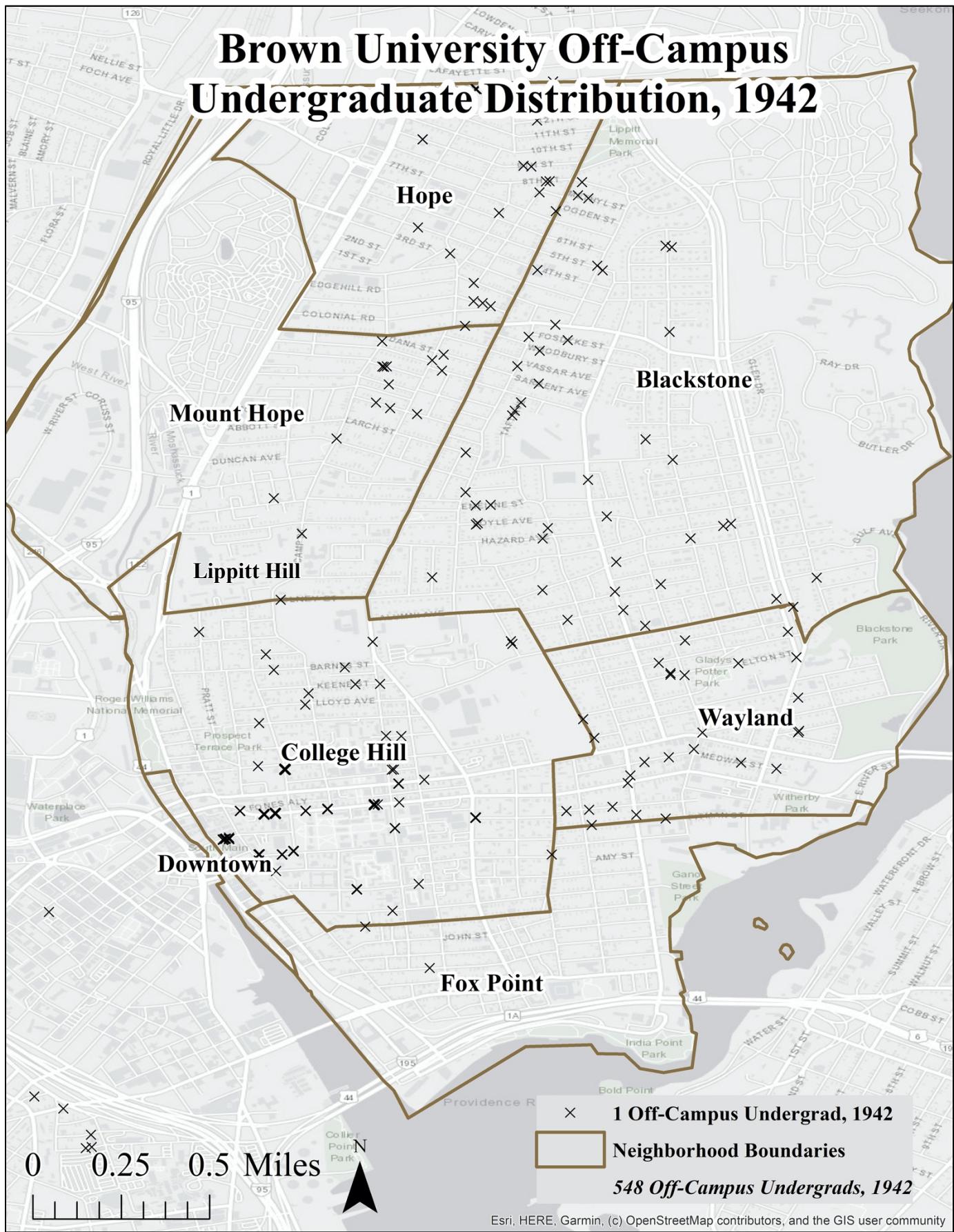
members. Why can't Brown students engage with community members who live down the hall? Why can't those students conduct critically-needed community work like nighttime outreach by knocking on their next-door neighbor's door? By building truly mixed-use units that successfully integrate university students and Providence community members, Brown would take community engagement to the next level. The university would advance within its residence halls an unparalleled liberal education environment that lived up to the university's mission of "educating and preparing students to discharge the offices of life with usefulness and reputation." Simultaneously, the university would begin to respond to the tragic history of community displacement and disintegration to which it was a leading contributor.

"There seems to be good reason to believe that communities that face their histories squarely emerge stronger than those that choose the path of denial and evasion," observes *Slavery and Justice*. Brown must squarely confront its implication in the tragic history chronicled by these chapters. It must do its part to forge a more compassionate housing ecosystem in Providence. If it does so, the university—and its neighbors—will emerge stronger. If it does so, Brown would truly fulfill its liberal ideal.

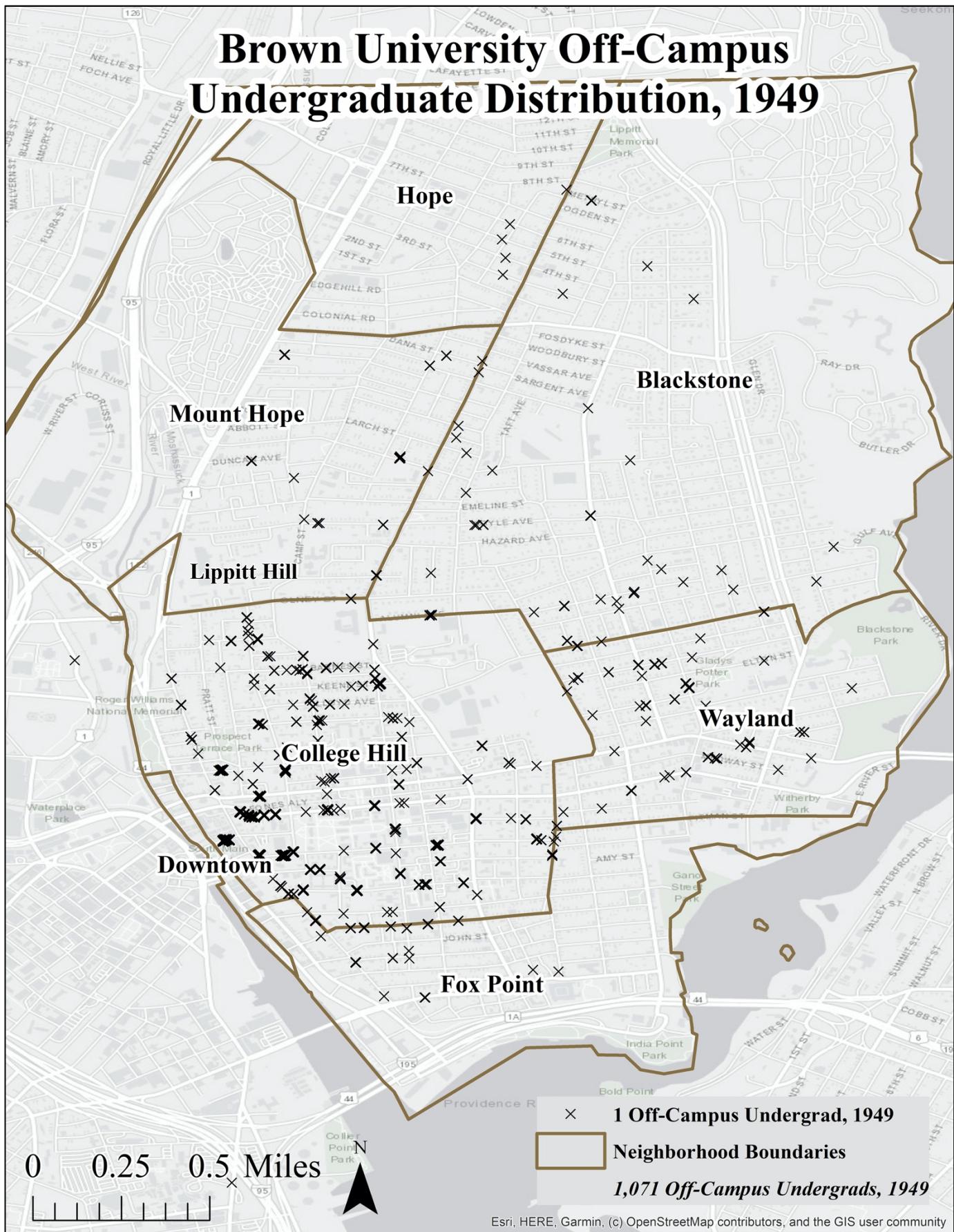
Appendix A:

Off-Campus Undergraduate Student Distribution Maps: 1942 – 2000

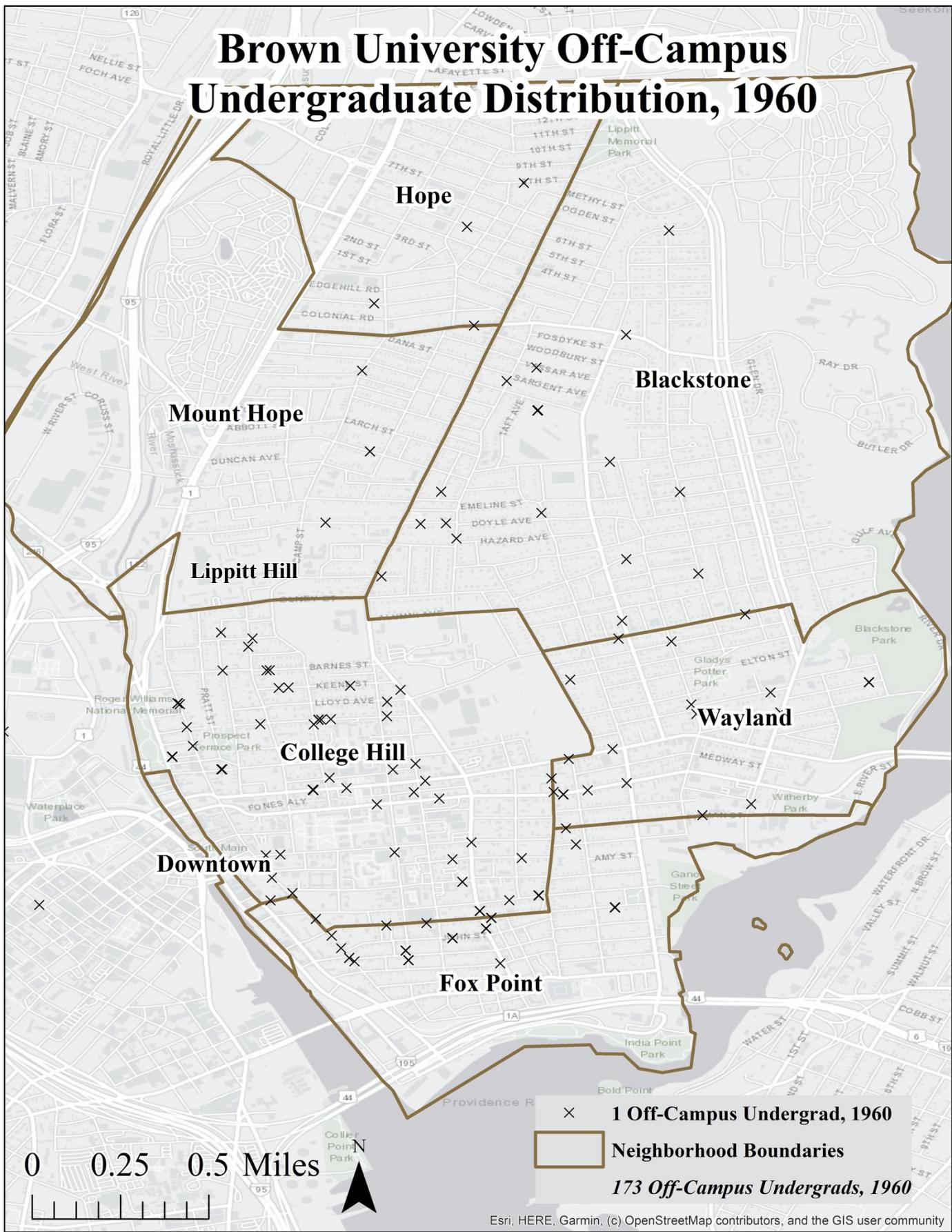
Brown University Off-Campus Undergraduate Distribution, 1942



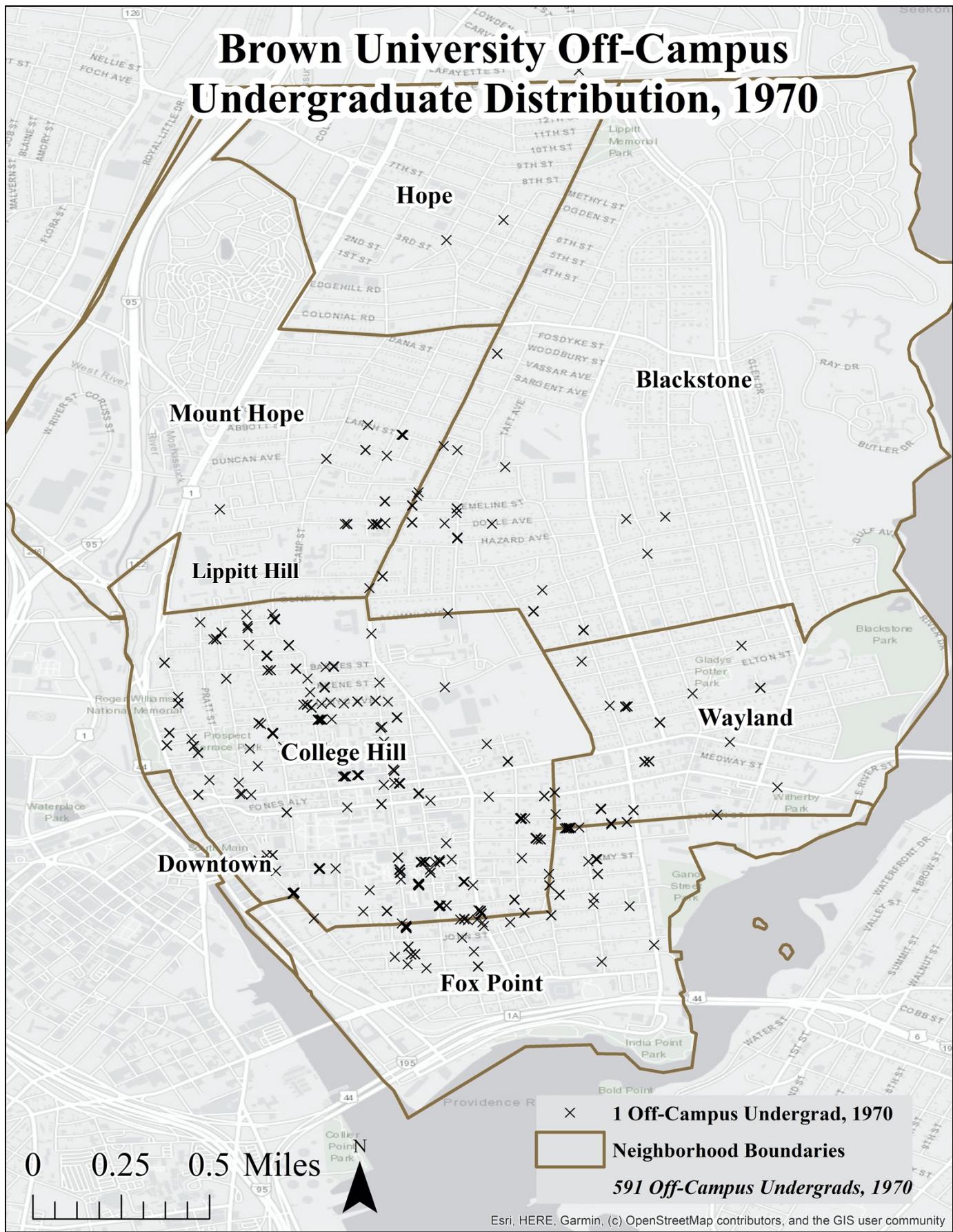
Brown University Off-Campus Undergraduate Distribution, 1949

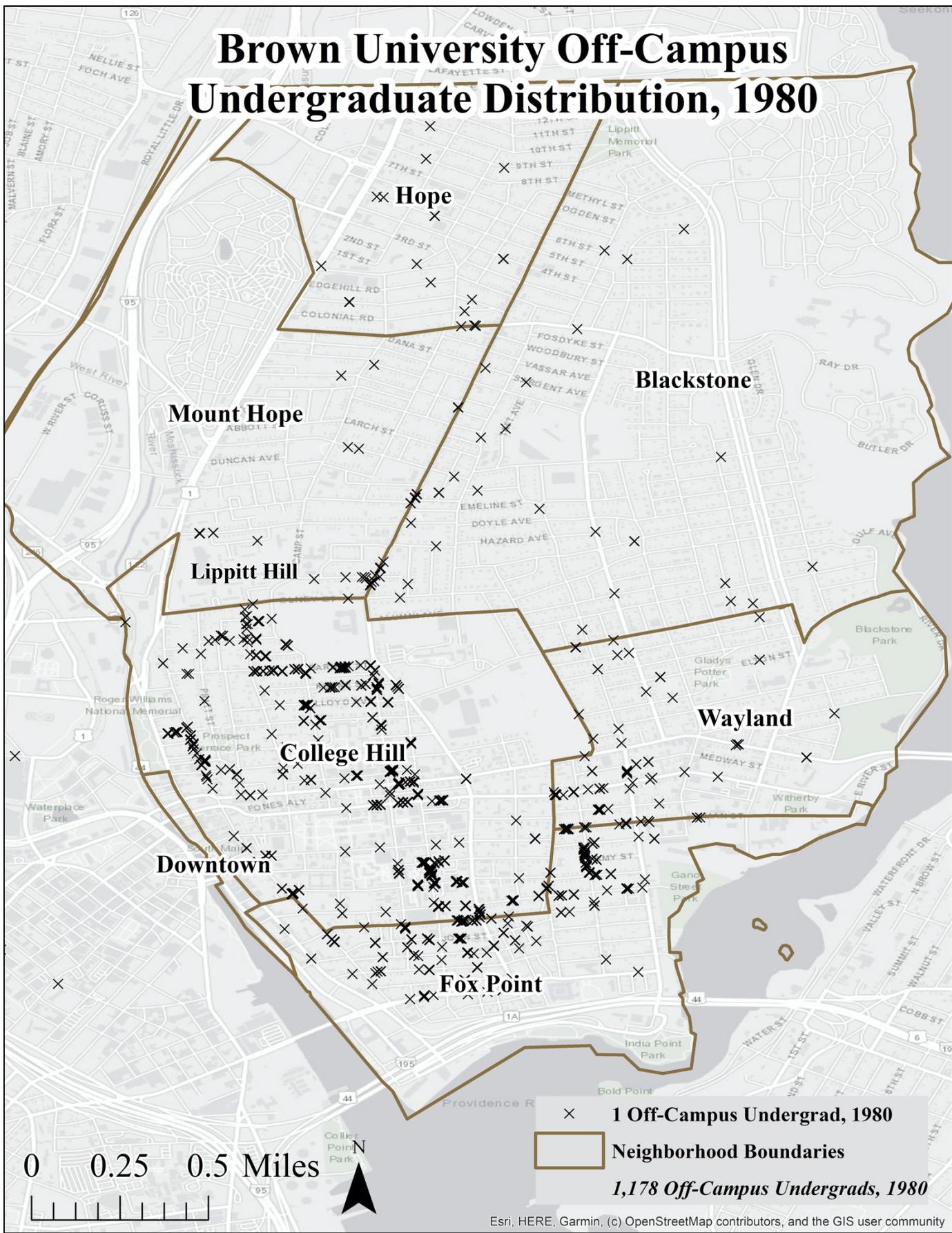


Brown University Off-Campus Undergraduate Distribution, 1960

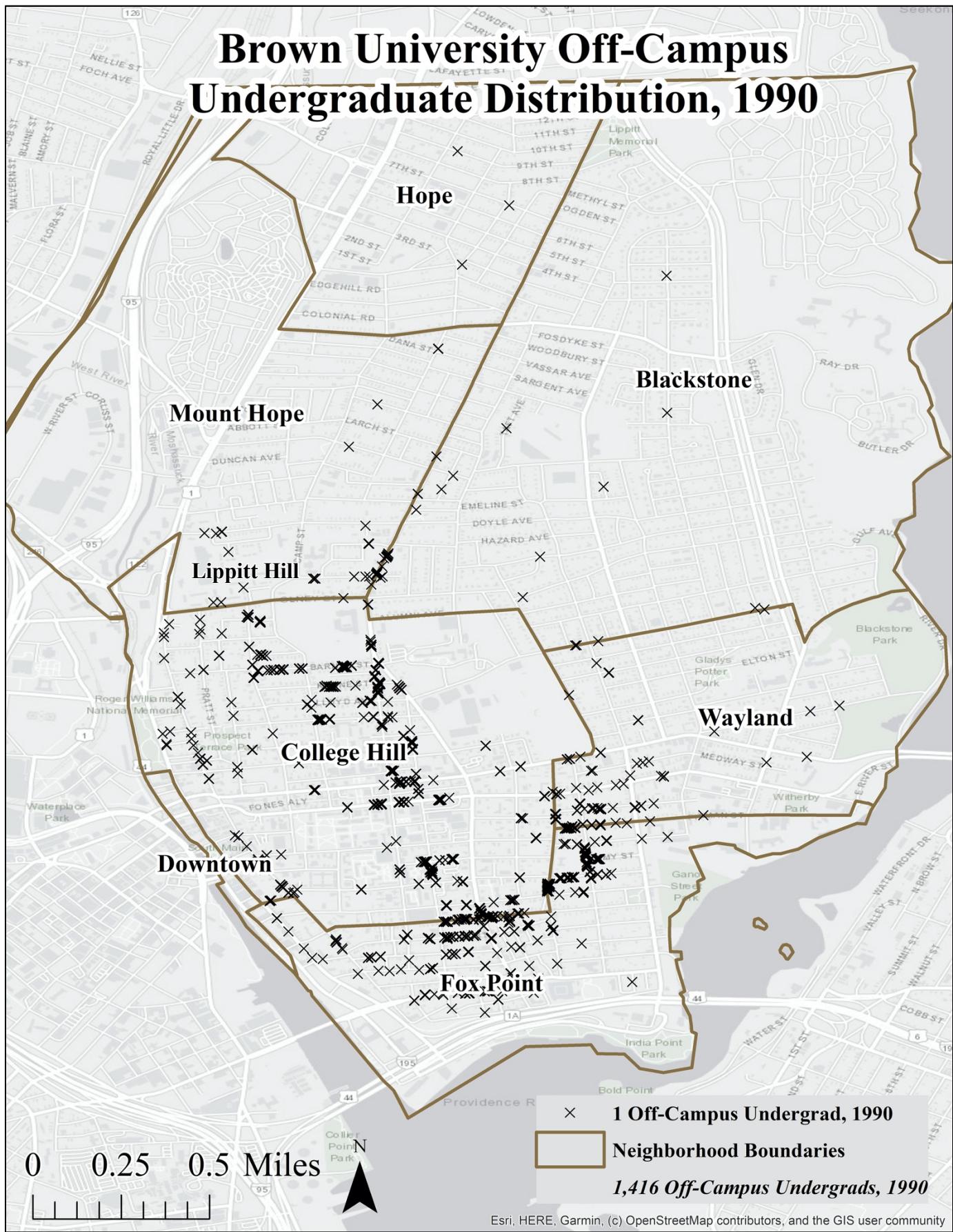


Brown University Off-Campus Undergraduate Distribution, 1970

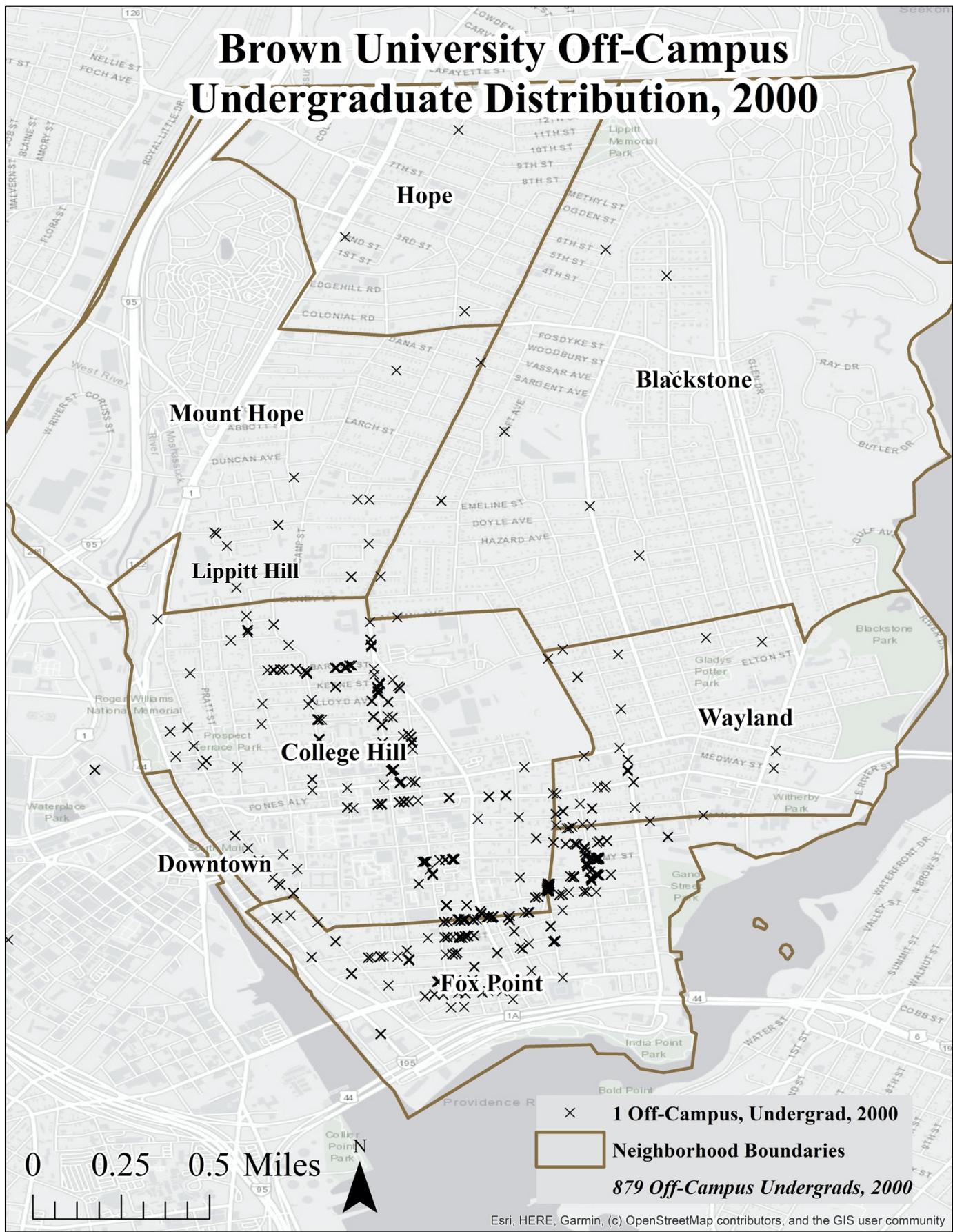




Brown University Off-Campus Undergraduate Distribution, 1990

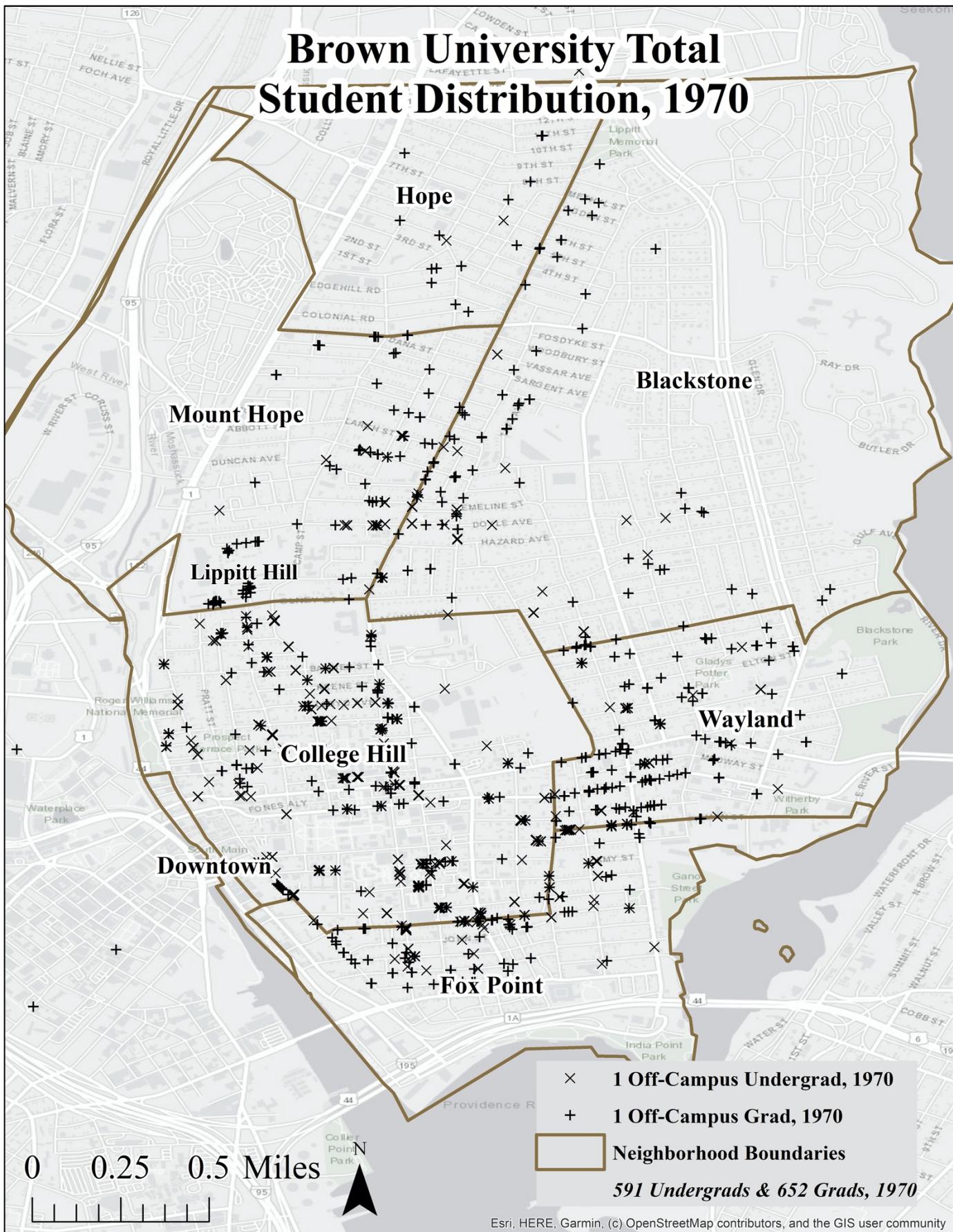


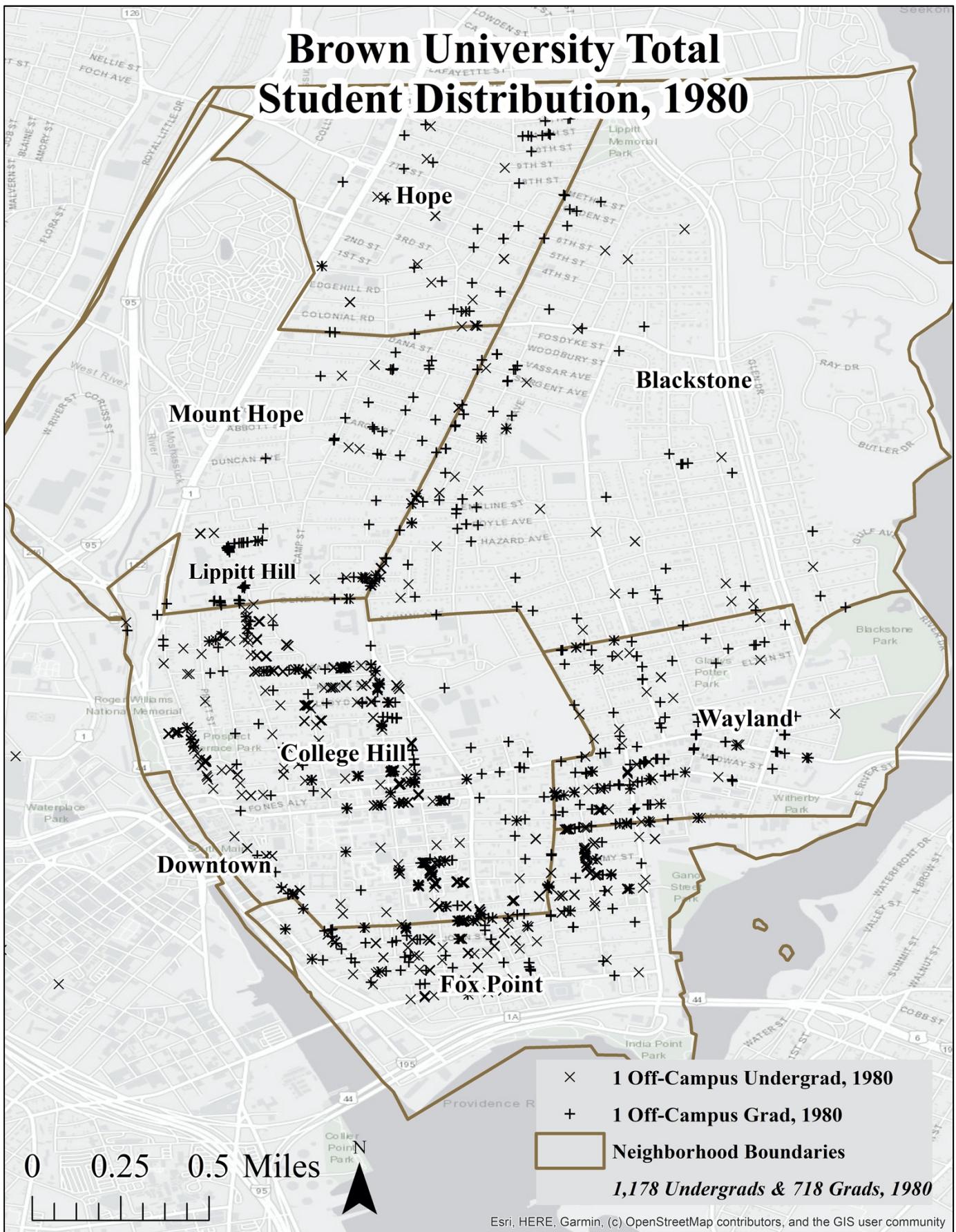
Brown University Off-Campus Undergraduate Distribution, 2000

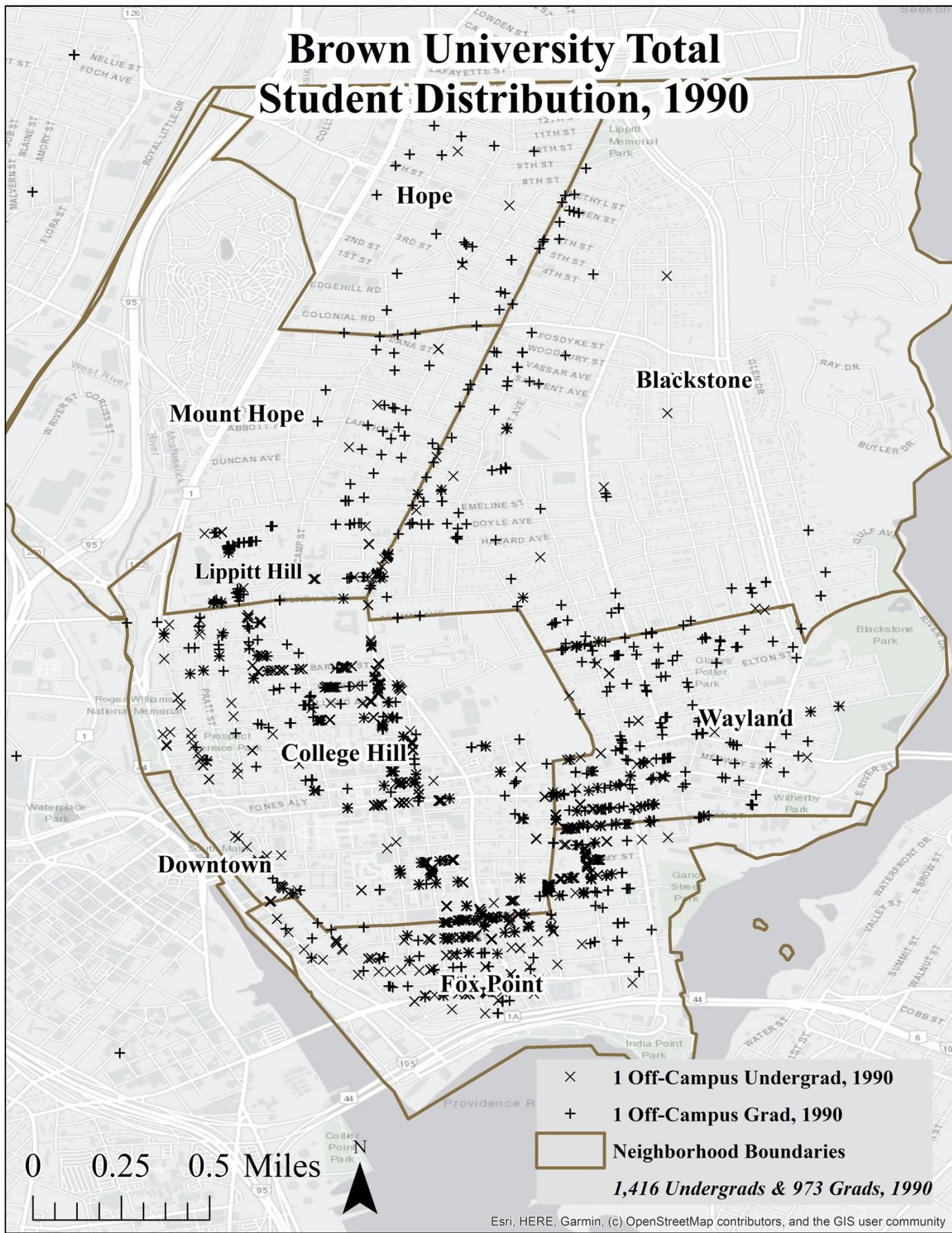


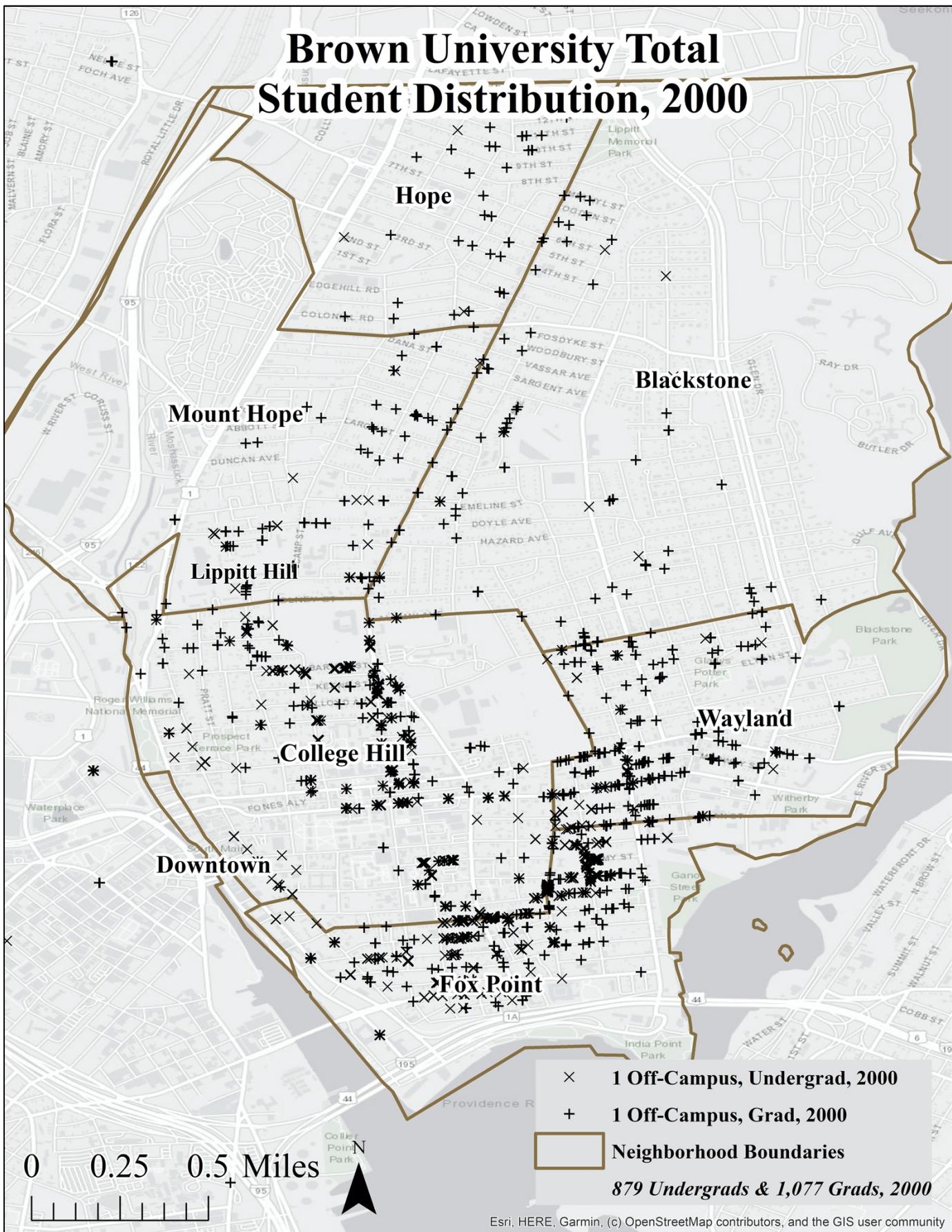
Appendix B:

Off-Campus Total Student Distribution Maps: 1970 – 2000



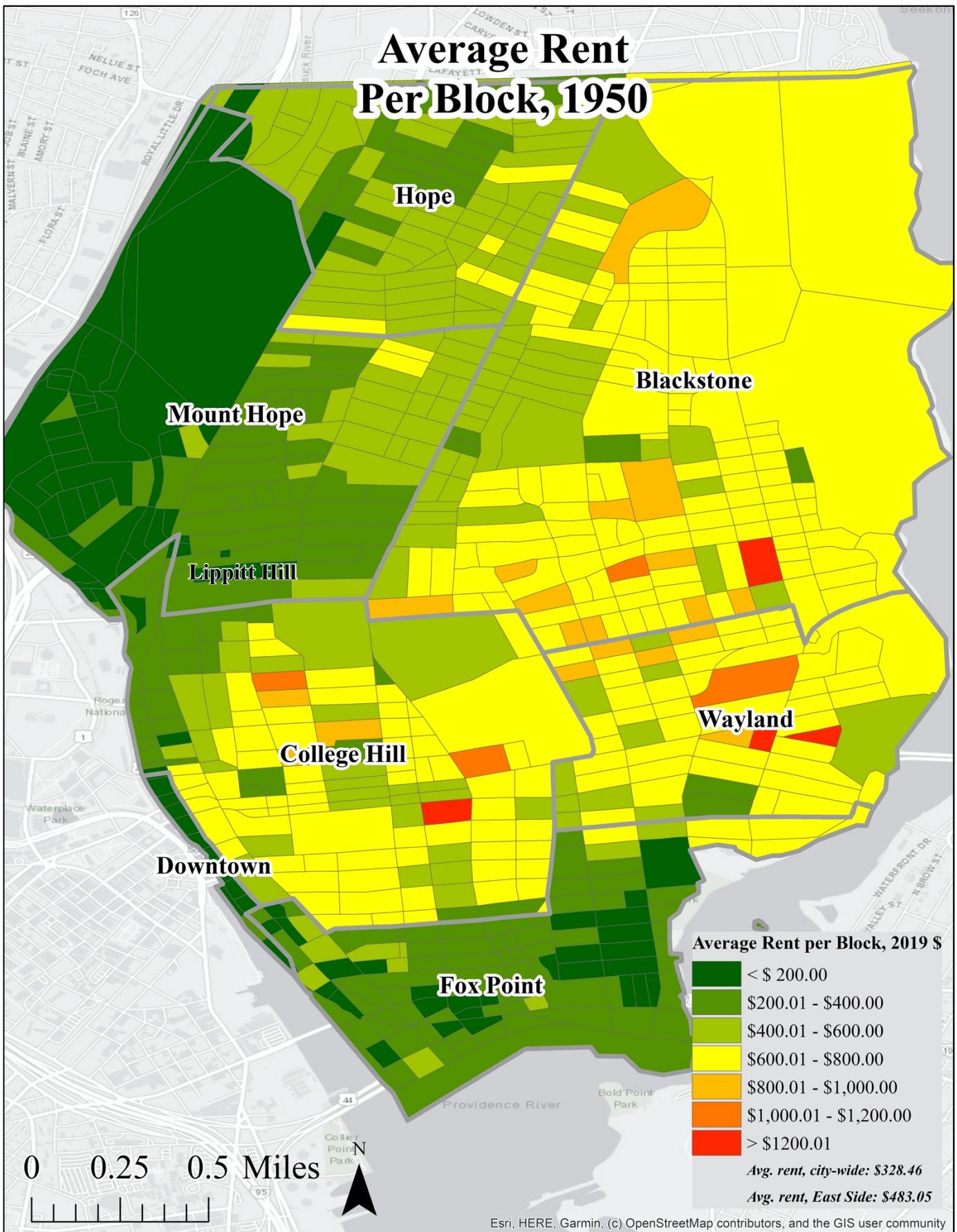


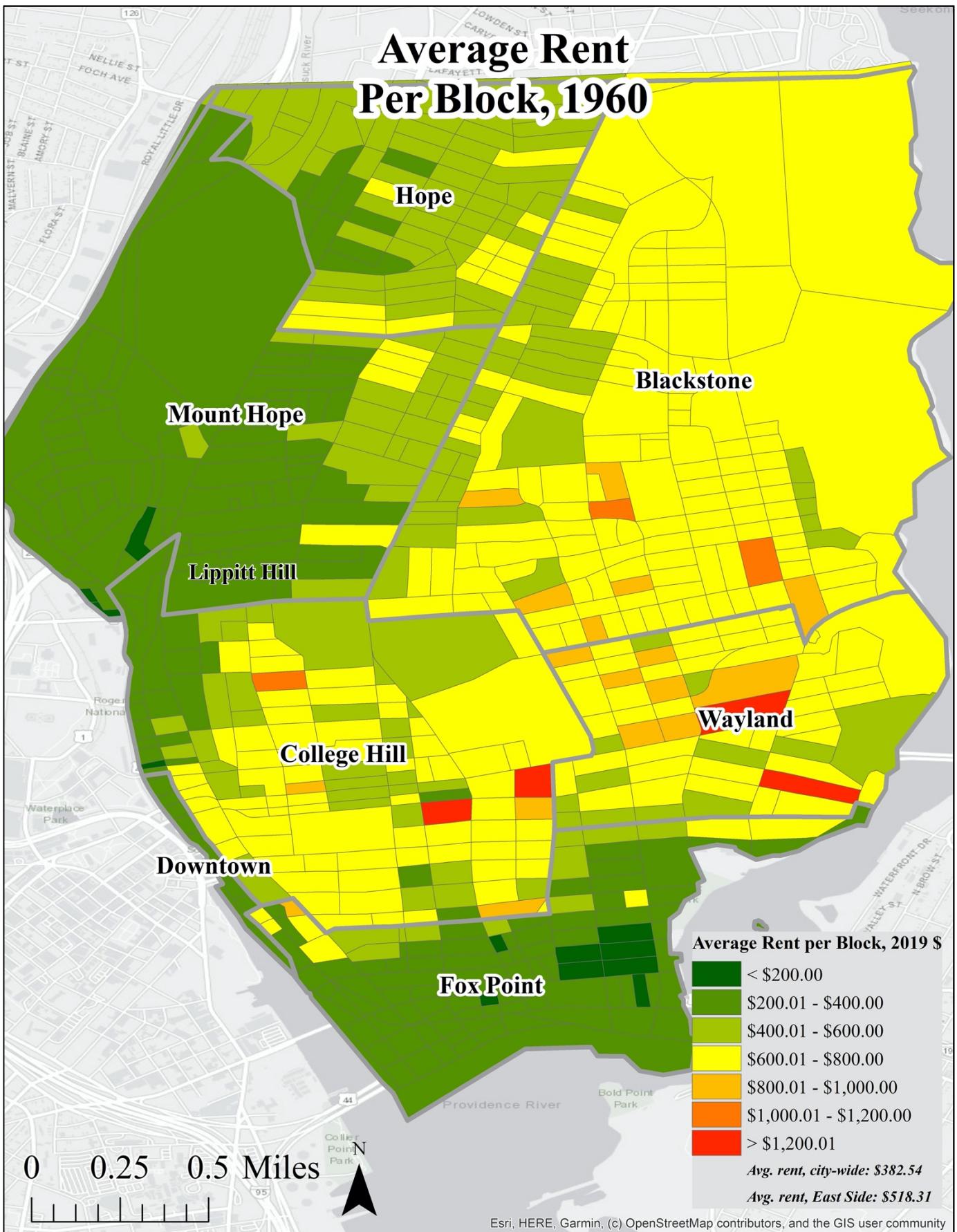


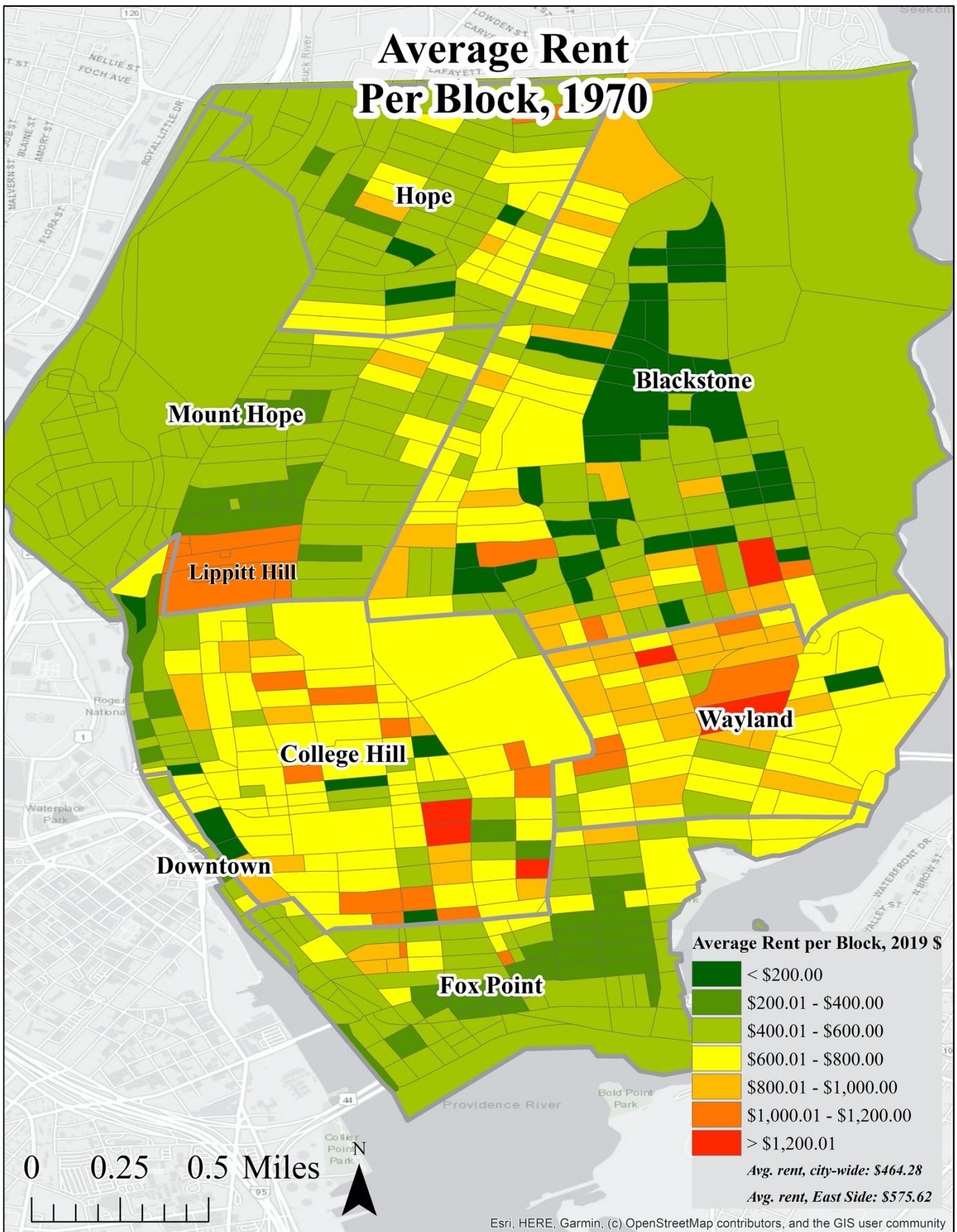


Appendix C:

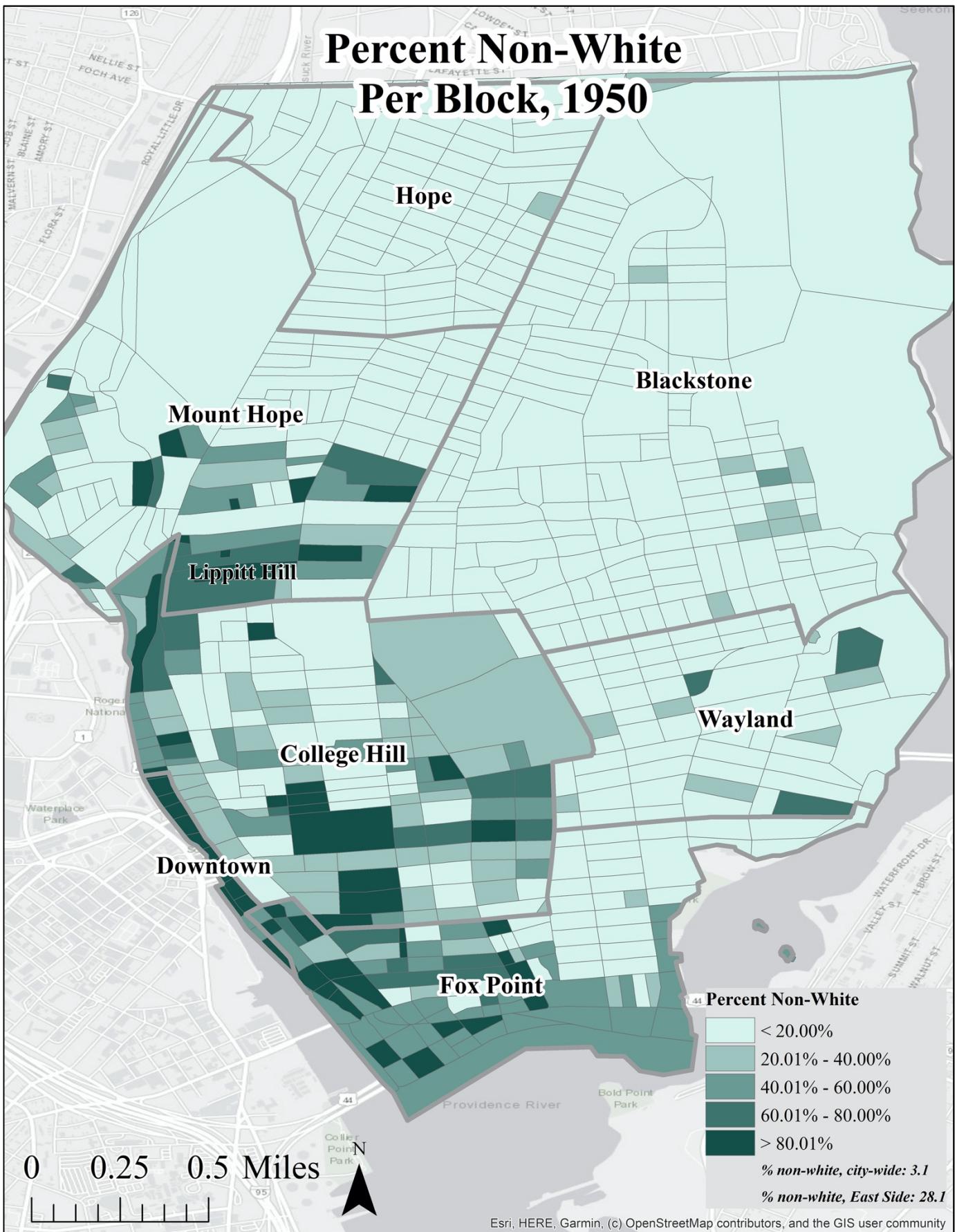
Average Rent Per East Side Block: 1950 – 1970

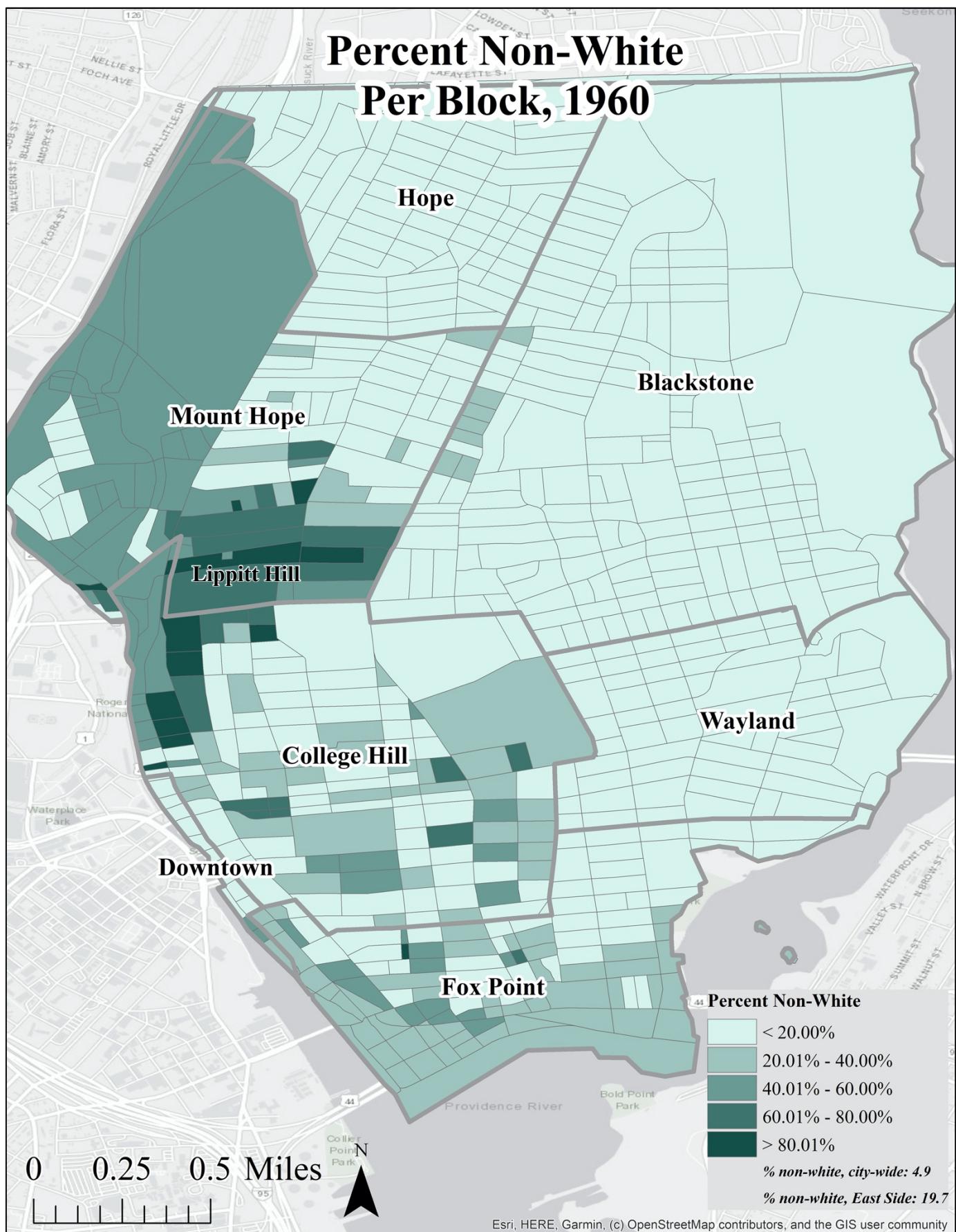


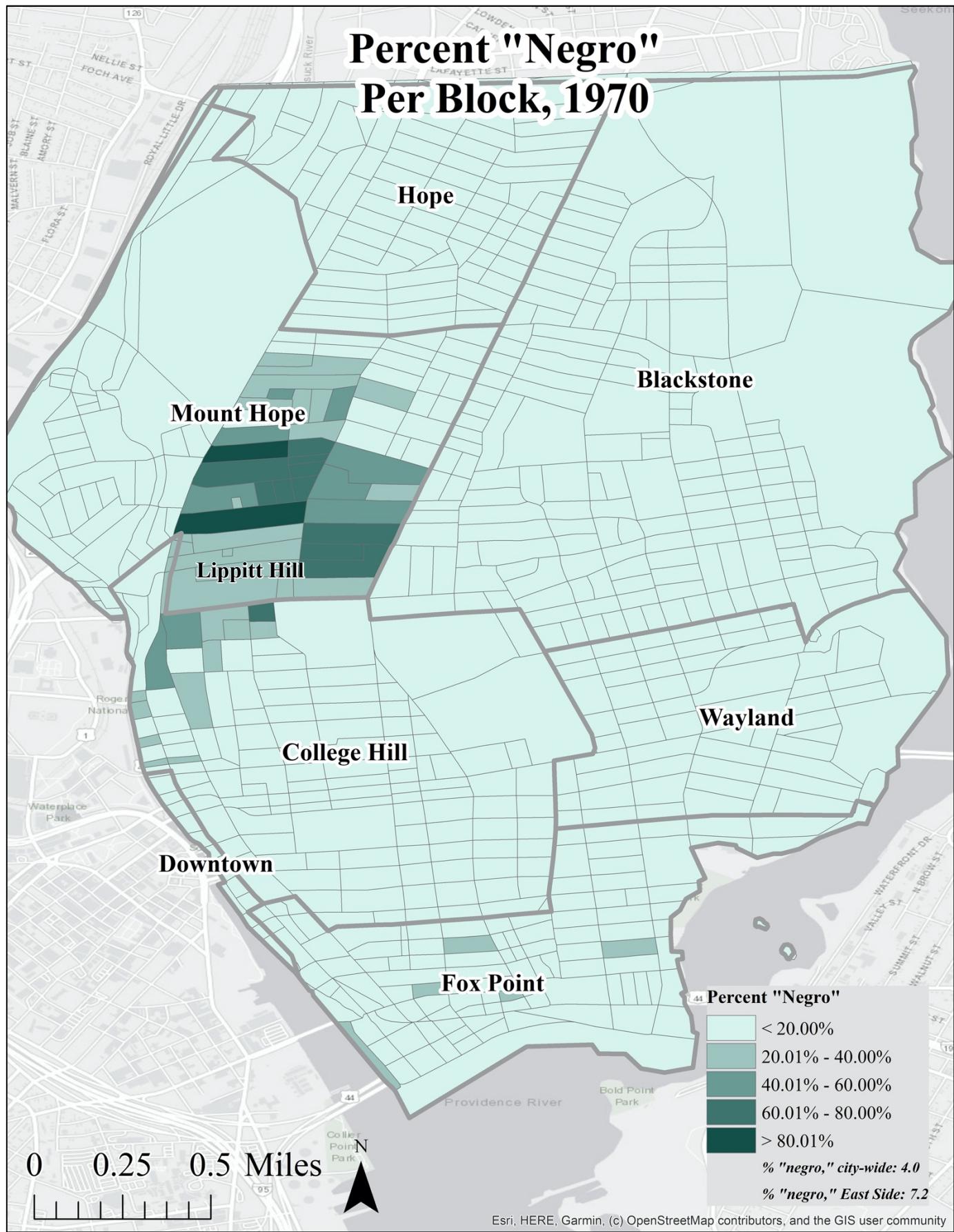




Appendix D:
Percent Non-White Per East Side Block: 1950 – 1970







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