COMMUNITY-BUILDING AS NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION: A CASE STUDY OF CEDAR PARK IN POSTWAR WEST PHILADELPHIA

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Contents

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List of Figures

Introduction

In West Philadelphia lies a tree-lined neighborhood full of large Queen Anne houses called Cedar Park. In the early 2000s, a City of Philadelphia marketing campaign highlighted the diversity of the neighborhood with a tagline: "Where the 34 trolley stops in 23 countries."[1] Unlike the neighborhoods farther west that suffered from white flight in the 1950s and 1960s, Cedar Park remained a diverse and racially mixed neighborhood throughout the second half of the twentieth century. The neighborhood is one half of the National Register Historic District "West Philadelphia Streetcar Suburb," and the houses and buildings in the neighborhood retain much of their nineteenth-century character. While Spruce Hill, the neighborhood to the northeast, has attempted several times to legally protect the built environment with local historic designation, there have been no such efforts in Cedar Park. The diverse, attractive neighborhood that exists today is a result of community-led efforts in the late twentieth century to stabilize the neighborhood.

Stephanie Ryberg-Webster, an urban historian who studies the connection between historic preservation and urban renewal, has argued that it was Philadelphia's "planners—not preservationists—who saved vast swaths of the city's landscape."[2] This thesis fractures the dichotomy of planners and preservationists and adds another actor: people. I document the efforts of Cedar Park's residents—'people power'— in

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[1] Maureen Tate (former president, Cedar Park Neighbors) interview with author, October 16, 2023; "Cedar Park: Where the Trolley stops in 23 countries," Pamphlet, date unknown, Box 4, Folder 6, Collection 2019-25, Cedar Park Neighbors Collection, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library (hereafter CPN Records).

[2] Stephanie R. Ryberg, "Historic Preservation's Urban Renewal Roots: Preservation and Planning in Midcentury Philadelphia," *Journal of Urban History* 39, no. 2 (March 2013), 194.

preserving their neighborhood during the time of 'urban renewal' in Philadelphia, from the 1960s to the 1980s. My investigation focuses on the efforts of two community groups: Cedar Park Neighbors, a neighborhood civic association, and the Movement for a New Society, a radical pacifist group.

Both Cedar Park Neighbors and Movement for a New Society articulated explicit aims for what they viewed as 'community stabilization' and shared goals of building rehabilitation, housing affordability, and community safety. One group, Cedar Park Neighbors, worked within the established institutions of urban renewal: Philadelphia's Redevelopment Authority, the West Philadelphia Corporation, and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, albeit with a community-first approach. The other group, Movement for a New Society, was anti-capitalist and anti-institution, creating their own alternative institutions in the neighborhood. Both groups' bottom-up approaches to neighborhood stabilization focused on preserving not just the buildings but also the people inside them. The efforts and practices of these two groups were not explicitly viewed as preservation, which similar activities in Society Hill (another neighborhood in Philadelphia) were. Yet, like more formalized preservation activities, their efforts helped to manage change in the social, cultural, and physical character of the neighborhood. This historical study of Cedar Park reveals that working to preserve the social fabric of a neighborhood—the people and community resources—can also help to preserve the physical fabric.

Several questions drive this research. What role did the two groups play in the neighborhood's stabilization and the subsequent preservation of the built environment? How did their actions affect both the social and physical environment of the

neighborhood? As Cedar Park's demographics shifted, how did the actions of these primarily white groups affect the racial make-up of the neighborhood? "Racially mixed," (1977) "transitional," (1988), "integrated" (2017)—many words have been used to describe the diversity of Cedar Park as the community shifted from a primarily white neighborhood in the early twentieth century to a racially diverse neighborhood in the later-half of the century.[3] Where is the line between neighborhood 'stabilization,' discrimination, and—later—gentrification? As Cedar Park faces new urban pressures like gentrification and displacement in the twentieth-first century, what lessons from the past can inform future community efforts?

Both archival sources and interviews undergird this primarily historical research. I interviewed five current or former members of Cedar Park Neighbors and one former member of Movement for a New Society (MNS). As many of the founders of MNS have already passed away, I supplemented my research with previous member interviews that others conducted, including: five interviews by Andrew Cornell in 2010 and 2011, and four interviews conducted by Dorothy Flanagan in 2006.[4] The archival records of both groups round out the primary sources.[5] Two bodies of secondary

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[3] "Racially mixed" credited to: Lou Antosh, "Cedar Park: Boom Bringing in Whites," part of the series "Philadelphia, The Changing City," *Evening Bulletin* (Philadelphia, PA), 1977; "Transitional" credited to Kelvyn Anderson, "Shared Destinies," *City Paper,* No. 187 (Philadelphia, PA), March 11-18, 1988; "Integrated" credited to Jake Blumgart, "The Changing Streets of Cedar Park," *Philadelphia Magazine*, March 11, 2017, https://www.phillymag.com/news/2017/03/11/cedar-park-gentrification-west-philadelphia/.

[4] Andrew Cornell*, Oppose and Propose! Lessons from Movement for a New Society* (Oakland, California: AK Press and the Institute for Anarchist Studies, 2011); 2006 interviews were conducted by Dorothy Flanagan and transcripts are located at Box 5, DG 154 ACC 08A-077, Movement for a New Society Collection, The Peace Collection, Swarthmore College Library (hereafter, MNS Records).

[5] The three primary collections used are: Cedar Park Neighbors Collection, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Movement for a New Society Collection, The Peace Collection, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania; West Philadelphia Corporation Collection, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

literature—1) histories of Philadelphia's urban renewal efforts and, 2) contemporary preservation and planning literature on the connection between preservation and neighborhood stabilization/revitalization—help to put these groups' efforts into context.

From the 1960s to 1980s, Cedar Park was a neighborhood in transition, changing rapidly from what was once a primarily Irish Catholic neighborhood. In the actions of Cedar Park Neighbors and Movement for a New Society lie community-based strategies and tools for how to stabilize such a rapidly changing neighborhood. Today, Philadelphia and the Cedar Park neighborhood face different pressures than they did in the 1960s and 1970s.[6] In the twenty-first century, some neighborhoods in Philadelphia are experiencing rapid growth leading to gentrification and displacement, while others fall into greater poverty.[7] Looking back at twentieth-century community-building efforts, like those in Cedar Park, through the lens of preservation can help clarify what *is* preservation, and how preservation efforts can help build stronger, more resilient, and equitable neighborhoods for the future.

Part 1: Setting the Scene: Urban Renewal in Philadelphia

The Cedar Park neighborhood is a section of West Philadelphia now recognized as stretching from 46th Street to 52nd Street, from Larchwood Avenue to Kingsessing Avenue, as shown in Figure 1. While these boundaries have shifted over time, since the formation of Cedar Park Neighbors in the 1960s, the demarcations have remained fairly

[6] Blumgart, "The Changing Streets of Cedar Park."
[7] Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity, "American Neighborhood Change in the 21st Century," University of Minnesota Law School, April 2019, https://law.umn.edu/institute-metropolitan-opportunity/gentrification-and-decline-about-web-map-data; Emily Dowdall, "Philadelphia's Changing Neighborhoods: Gentrification and Other Shifts since 2000," *The Pew Charitable Trusts Home Page*, May 19, 2016, http://pew.org/1TXTXY7.

Figure 1: Boundaries and Location of Cedar Park (Source: Open Data Philly)

steady.[8] Before European colonization, the land was part of Lenapehoking (the homelands of the Lenape). A village called Arronemink was directly adjacent to what is now known as Cedar Park, in between the two waterways, Mill Creek and the Schuylkill River.[9] The area was part of Kinsisslingh, a name from which today's Kingsessing

[8] Cedar Park Neighbors, "Cedar Park Map," Cedar Park Neighbors Home Page, accessed September 24, 2023, http://www.cedarparkneighbors.org/cedar-park-map.
[9] George P. Donehoo, *A History of the Indian Villages and Place Names in Pennsylvania* (Mechanicsburg: Sunbury Press, 2014), 21.

Avenue derives its name.[10] After white colonizers forced the Lenape from the land in the eighteenth century the area became primarily agricultural, with large country estates of the wealthy dotting the landscape.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, industrialization and a growing middle class spurred speculative development and the creation of West Philadelphia's "streetcar suburb."[11] While some of those large country estates remain, the area now known as Cedar Park was built primarily at the turn of the century as large twin homes in Queen Anne or Colonial Revival style, see Figure 2 for examples. The Queen Anne residences built were distinctive with "full-width, classical columned front porches and modified Queen Anne detailing indicative of the transitional style buildings."[12] Many of these Queen Anne twins remain standing with their distinctive architectural details preserved. As the growing middle class moved into this speculative housing, churches were built to serve residents, including St. Francis De Sales Roman Catholic Church and Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church, both still standing.[13] A trolley route down Baltimore Avenue helped grow the street as a commercial corridor. By the early twentieth century, Cedar Park was an economically stable neighborhood made up of primarily white middle class residents with a high percentage of second-generation Irish Catholic

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[10] Amy Cohen, "Coaquannock Map Shows Lenape Land Before William Penn," *Hidden City Philadelphia*, November 26, 2021, https://hiddencityphila.org/2021/11/coaquannock-map-shows-lenape-land-before-william-penn/.
[11] Cynthia Rose, "West Philadelphia Streetcar Suburb," *University City Historical Society Home Page*, accessed April 25, 2021, https://ucityhistorical.wpcomstaging.com/west-philadelphia-streetcar-suburb-historic-district/.
[12] Rose, "West Philadelphia Streetcar Suburb."
[13] Rose, "West Philadelphia Streetcar Suburb."

Figure 2: Houses on 47th Street and Windsor Avenue (left) and house on 48th Street and Springfield Avenue (right) (Source: Photographs by author, April 2021)

immigrants.[14]

In the 1940s and 1950s, in the wake of the Depression, Cedar Park changed again. The neighborhood experienced population loss as residents moved to the suburbs. This was the case in other neighborhoods across the city, too. By the mid-twentieth century, Philadelphia—once called 'the workshop of the world'—was facing many of the typical issues of post-war urban America: loss of manufacturing, declining populations, and aging infrastructure.[15] Postwar Philadelphia also suffered from white

[14] Cedar Park Centennial Commemorative Booklet: Celebrating 100 Years of Cedar Park and 50 Years of Cedar Park Neighbors, Booklet, June 2011, 2019-25, Box 4, Folder 4, CPN Records.

[15] "The Philadelphia of To-Day, the World's Greatest Workshop: America's Largest Home City with More Home Owners than Any Other City in the World," image, accessed February 3, 2024, https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3824p.pm008311/; Laura Wolf-Powers, *University City: History, Race, and Community In the Era of the Innovation District*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022), 24-25.

flight as wealthier white residents moved to new suburbs being built outside the city. Many once middle-class neighborhoods saw rapid population change and decline.[16] Unlike other large cities that depended solely on demolition and new highways to fix urban issues, Philadelphia responded to these challenges with a variety of approaches. In 1952, *Architectural Forum* called this method the "Philadelphia Cure" and asserted they were "clearing cities with penicillin, not surgery."[17] As Ryberg-Webster, an urban historian, argues: Philadelphia's midcentury history complicates the "urban renewal equals demolition" story.[18]

From the 1950s to the 1980s, public and private interests joined to enact urban renewal projects across Philadelphia. Ed Bacon, often called Philadelphia's Robert Moses, was the visionary behind many of Philadelphia's urban renewal projects. Some of these projects include classic highway projects, like the Roosevelt extension and Vine Street Expressway — both of which cut communities of color in half.[19] These neighborhoods, like Nicetown (the Roosevelt extension) and Chinatown (the Vine Street Expressway), still feel the effects of these destructive projects.[20] However, while some projects required demolition, others protected Philadelphia housing. In a plan for the Philadelphia of the future, Bacon writes of "the staying power of the brick row houses,

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[16] Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London: Routledge, 1996), 116.
[17] "The Philadelphia Cure: Clearing Slums with Penicillin, Not Surgery," *Architectural Forum* 96 (April 1952), 112-119.
[18] Ryberg, "Historic Preservation's Urban Renewal Roots," 194.
[19] Elizabeth Greenspan, "Nicetown," *Places Journal*, June 25, 2019, https://doi.org/10.22269/190625, Part 1.; Arthur Acolin and Domenic Vitiello, "Who Owns Chinatown: Neighbourhood Preservation and Change in Boston and Philadelphia," *Urban Studies* 55, no. 8 (2018), 1691.
[20] See Greenspan, "Nicetown," Part 1; Acolin and Vitiello, "Who Owns Chinatown", 1690; Kathryn E. Wilson, "″We Want Homes, Not Highways″: Urban Renewal and the 'Save Chinatown' Movement," *In Ethnic Renewal in Philadelphia's Chinatown*: *Space, Place, and Struggle* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2015), 63.

and the adaptability of it for renewal for attractive urban living."[21]

This other method of urban renewal, the "penicillin," was exemplified in the neighborhood of Society Hill. Francesca Ammon, an urban historian and preservationist, writes that "Society Hill stands out for its marriage of clearance with smaller-scale infill construction and historic preservation."[22] In the 1950s, Society Hill was made up of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century row homes and a diverse population of whites, African Americans, and Eastern European Jews.[23] The city's efforts to rehabilitate and renovate the neighborhood also included the objective of attracting a more "affluent demographic."[24] Neil Smith, a geographer and Marxist academic, identified Society Hill as an early example of gentrification. The goal of the city was to revive the city's economy and bring "rich households 'back from the suburbs.'"[25] The "return" of rich new residents to Society Hill was originally framed as positive: new residents were forging an urban life for themselves.[26] This view has been complicated over time, with both Smith and Ammon highlighting the role that the new "yuppy" residents played in the neighborhood.[27] Like in many cases of gentrification, the original, lower income residents of Society Hill were displaced. The 'success' of Society Hill depended on both public (the City of Philadelphia) and private actors (developers and individual property

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[21]Edmund N. Bacon, "Philadelphia in the Year 2009," in *Imagining Philadelphia Edmund Bacon and the Future of the City*, ed. Scott Gabriel Knowles (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 17.
[22] Francesca Russello Ammon, "Resisting Gentrification and Historic Preservation: Society Hill, Philadelphia, and the Fight for Low-Income Housing," *Change Over Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 13.
[23] Ammon, "Resisting Gentrification and Historic Preservation," 14.
[24] Francesca Russello Ammon, "Picturing Preservation and Renewal: Photographs as Planning Knowledge in Society Hill, Philadelphia," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 42, no. 3 (September 2022), 317.
[25] Smith, *The New Urban Frontier*, 117.
[26] Smith, *The New Urban Frontier*, 117.
[27] Ammon, "Resisting Gentrification and Historic Preservation," 14; Smith, *The New Urban Frontier*, 117.

owners) working together. Smith argues that Society Hill was "an early and influential prototype of the public-private development corporation."[28] Across the Schuylkill River, another group of private and public actors were also conducting major projects in the name of urban renewal.

In 1959, a "multi-institutional collaboration" called the West Philadelphia Corporation was formed. The West Philadelphia Corporation (WPC) was led by the University of Pennsylvania and also included members of West Philadelphia's institutions like Drexel University and nearby hospitals. Its aim was to use "urban redevelopment as a means to shape University City as a special precinct for the pursuit of scientific knowledge."[29] Like the private groups that worked with the city in Society Hill, this private corporation, made up of private institutions, worked with Philadelphia's Redevelopment Authority in the area designated in 1957 as the "University City Redevelopment Area."[30] Originally, University City was only designated as the area directly South of Lancaster Ave and north of Spruce Street to 40th Street. Later in 1964—due in part to the advocacy of Cedar Park Neighbors —"University City" would be enlarged to include adjacent neighborhoods like Spruce Hill and Cedar Park.[31] The group's efforts had lasting effects: financial support and rehabilitation for some neighborhoods, whole-sale clearance for others.

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[28] Smith, *The New Urban Frontier*, 116.
[29] Wolf-Powers, *University City*, 25.
[30] Wolf-Powers, *University City*, 25.
[31] University City Community Associations, Institutions, and Community Facilities, Prepared by the West Philadelphia Corporation, Map, 1964, Box 1, Folder "1963," CPN Records; Public Hearing by the City Council Committee on Municipal Development Zoning for Bill No. 382-University City, Cedar Park, Minutes, June 10, 1964, Folder: Cedar Park Neighbors 1966-1969, Call Number: 350, Volume 29, West Philadelphia Corporation Records, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (hereafter WPC Records).

One of the most destructive and long-lasting actions of the West Philadelphia Corporation was the demolition of a primarily Black neighborhood within the University City area, called the Black Bottom.[32] Before its destruction, the Black Bottom had been home to "69 businesses, 1,407 homes, and 3,423 people, many of them first-generation migrants from the Southern United States."[33] The residents were displaced and their homes (mostly rental row homes) were destroyed. As Mindy Fullilove describes in her book *Root Shock*: *How Tearing up City Neighborhoods Hurts America and What We Can Do About It,* displacement from neighborhoods causes multigenerational trauma.[34] Fullilove describes root shock on a personal level as "the traumatic stress reaction to the destruction of all or part of one's emotional ecosystem."[35] At the "level of a local community," like the destruction Black Bottom, it can cause emotional damage for generations.[36] Andy Hines, an urban theorist, argues that the destruction of the Black Bottom and the creation of University City are inextricably intertwined and reflect the "university's role in reinforcing, perpetuating, enacting, and benefiting from whiteness as property."[37]

The Black Bottom was not the only minority neighborhood demolished during Philadelphia's urban renewal efforts. Nicetown and Chinatown, both ruptured by highways, were also minority-majority neighborhoods.[38] The demolition of these Black

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[32] Wolf-Powers, *University City*, 25.
[33] Wolf-Powers, *University City,* 1.
[34] Mindy Thompson Fullilove*, Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do about it* (New York: New Village Press, 2016), 5.
[35] Fullilove*, Root Shock,* 11.
[36] Fullilove*, Root Shock,* 14.
[37] Andy Hines, "The University Fix and John Edgar Wideman's Philadelphia Fire," *American Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (2020), 131.
[38] Greenspan, "Nicetown," Part 1; Acolin and Vitiello, "Who Owns Chinatown," 1691; and Wilson, "We Want Homes, Not Highways,″ 63.

and minority neighborhoods and the trauma—emotional, mental, and economic—still affect Philadelphia's Black, brown, and minority communities today. It must be emphasized that the success and advocacy of the case study groups of this thesis, Cedar Park Neighbors and Movement for a New Society, were in large part due to their whiteness and the inherent privileges and agency that enables in United States society. Philadelphia reserved its more "innovative" urban renewal methods for historically white neighborhoods or with the explicit aim of making the neighborhoods whiter and more affluent.[39]

Given this, there were successful efforts to resist urban renewal plans within Philadelphia. The Crosstown Expressway Citizens' Committee to Preserve and Develop the Crosstown Community (CCPDCC), was an interracial coalition that successfully resisted plans for a highway through South Street. These efforts were supported by architects Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, who used their professional expertise and political relationships to support the efforts of CCPDCC.[40] Additionally, groups like Mantua Community Planners, whose motto was "Plan or Be Planned For," aimed to "build and strengthen Black-led economic institutions from within the neighborhood" and put redevelopment in the hands of community members.[41]

Cedar Park, the neighborhood analyzed in this thesis, is no different when it comes to the racial disparities of these projects. However, many of Philadelphia's major urban renewal projects—from the rehabilitation of Society Hill to the destruction of the

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[39] Ryberg, "Historic Preservation's Urban Renewal Roots," 194.
[40] Sebastian Haumann, "Vernacular Architecture as Self-Determination: Venturi, Scott Brown and the Controversy over Philadelphia's Crosstown Expressway, 1967-1973," *Footprint*, Issue 4 (Spring, 2009) 40, https://doi.org/10.7480/footprint.3.1.698.
[41] Wolf-Powers, *University City*, 49.

Black Bottom—were spearheaded by city officials, leaders of large institutions, and private developers. Cedar Park was facing many of the changes and challenges with which other neighborhoods in Philadelphia were struggling. However, community members were able to take a bottom-up approach — aided by the privilege they were afforded and the institutions they aligned themselves with — to tackling these changes. While Cedar Park Neighbors worked with city institutions enacting urban renewal, they were generating the ideas and advocating for funding — not the other way around. Cedar Park Neighbors and the Movement for a New Society used primarily volunteer, 'people-powered' or 'grassroots,' methods to address the challenges facing midcentury Philadelphia neighborhoods.

Part 2: Cedar Park Neighbors

"Many of you will remember this section as one of the city's finest residential areas: Impressive structures on tree-lined street with every possible amenity for good living."
- Cedar Park Neighbors Letter to Philadelphia City Council, 1975[42]

In 1959, Philadelphia's Commission on Human Relations hosted a series of workshops whose aim was to "reduce restrictive housing practices."[43] One such workshop took place in the Kingsessing Recreation Center in West Philadelphia and was titled, "The Problem of Changing Neighborhoods." The workshop prompted several residents of the nearby neighborhood to create Cedar Park Neighbors (whose official communications began in 1963), a group named after the neighborhood park located at

[42] Cedar Park Neighbors to Philadelphia City Council, February 23, 1975, Box 1, Folder 1, 2019-25, CPN Records.
[43] Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations, "Our History," City of Philadelphia, last modified May 5, 2021, https://www.phila.gov/departments/philadelphia-commission-on-human-relations/about/our-history/.

50th Street and Baltimore Avenue. The group described itself as "a community organization dedicated to the maintenance of neighborhood stability."[44] Fed by fears of white flight, Cedar Park Neighbors quickly got to work. Collaborating with the West Philadelphia Corporation, the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, and with funds from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, the group proceeded to use local and federal policies to stabilize the Cedar Park neighborhood.

Figure 3: 47th Street and Cedar Avenue in 1954 (Source: John McWhorter, June 1, 1954, Philadelphia Department of Records)

Gerald "Jerry" McHugh, one of the founding members of Cedar Park Neighbors, was "born, raised, made his living, and retired" in the neighborhood.[45] A "person who had a real sense of place," McHugh was a large part of Cedar Park Neighbors' early

[44] Eugene Bloomfield to John Kramer, May 21, 1959, Folder: Cedar Park Neighbors 1966-1969, Box 350, Volume 29, ASRS, WPC Records.
[45] Maureen Tate, "In Memoriam: Gerald A. McHugh, Sr," *Cedar Park Neighbors Newsletter*, September 2013, https://issuu.com/cedarparkneighbors/docs/1309_web_cpn.

efforts to keep residents in the neighborhood.[46] In the 1960s, real estate agents went around the neighborhood knocking on doors, claiming the neighborhood was "being planned as a '100% Negro community."[47] A 1967 letter to Mrs. Schneiter from Leo Molinaro (another member of Cedar Park Neighbors) recounts that it was an "old trick used by certain unscrupulous people who are trying to scare good people like you. Neither white nor black residents want such a community."[48] McHugh himself was a real estate agent who operated his business from a corner office at 48th and Baltimore. However, unlike the "unscrupulous" real estate agents going door-to-door, McHugh wanted to "maintain the diversity of the community," and worked his whole life to do so.[49]

While Cedar Park Neighbors' leadership was technically biracial in the early years (there was one Black member in a group of nine) many of the group's early documents contain discriminatory undertones. The fear of white flight and the continued diversification of the neighborhood with new Black residents was a large part of the creation of Cedar Park Neighbors. For example, in a pamphlet from the 1960s the groups' aims are listed as:

1. To encourage present residents to stay in this area.
2. To receive, with harmony and understanding, new neighbors of high standards.
3. To help counteract panic, which is often induced by fear and the activities of unscrupulous real estate agents.
4. To maintain and improve housing and community facilities.[50]

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[46] Theodore Schleifer, "Gerald A. McHugh Sr., civic activist," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 29, 2013, https://www.inquirer.com/philly/obituaries/20130729_Gerald_A__McHugh_Sr___civic_activist.html.
[47] Mrs. Schneiter to Leo Molinaro, September 8, 1967, Folder: Cedar Park Neighbors 1966-1969, Call Number: 350, Volume 29 ASRS, WPC Records.
[48] Mrs. Schneiter to Leo Molinaro, September 8, 1967.
[49] Schleifer, "Gerald A. McHugh Sr., civic activist."
[50] Cedar Park Neighbors, Pamphlet, Call Number: 350, Volume 29 ASRS, WPC Records.

What makes a 'new neighbor of high standard' and why they needed to be received with 'harmony and understanding' is never explored in Cedar Park Neighbors' early documents; however, the tone and language mirror racist rhetoric of the time. Of the four aims of the group, the first three focus on the changing demographics of the neighborhood. The fourth aim — to improve housing and community facilities, arguably the main aim of many community organizations — is relegated to the end.

The formation of Cedar Park Neighbors occurred at the same time as the formation of the West Philadelphia Corporation, the public-private development corporation that facilitated the destruction of Black Bottom. One of the first major actions of Cedar Park Neighbors was to work with the West Philadelphia Corporation to officially request that the University City Urban Renewal Area created by the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority be extended to 52nd Street instead of the originally proposed 44th Street.[51] A petition with 2,500 signatures from Cedar Park residents supporting the measure was given to Philadelphia's City Council.[52] In the council meeting that approved this ordinance, the executive director of the Redevelopment Authority stated: "although it may be certified as a slum and blighted area, the neighbors feel no offense because they realize that the definition . . . is one where deterioration has just begun and they wish to prevent."[53] The measure passed and the boundary was extended, opening an avenue for Cedar Park to receive federal funds.

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[51] Petition, Call Number: 350, Volume 29 ASRS, WPC Records.
[52] Michael B. Sisak, "Neighbors Spur City Drive to 'Save' Cedar Park," *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, Located in Cedar Park Centennial Commemorative Booklet: Celebrating 100 Years of Cedar Park and 50 Years of Cedar Park Neighbors, Booklet, Box 4, Folder 4, 2019-25, CPN Records.
[53] Public Hearing by the City Council Committee on Municipal Development Zoning for Bill No. 382-University City, Cedar Park, Minutes, June 10, 1964, Folder: Cedar Park Neighbors 1966-1969, Call Number: 350, Volume 29 ASRS, WPC Records.

In the *Philadelphia Bulletin* article touting the efforts, Jerry McHugh said that "we wanted to be a step ahead of the city planners," and "impress everyone that a community can be saved with little governmental money but with lots of volunteers."[54]

In stark contrast to the demolition and clearance the West Philadelphia Corporation enacted in the Black Bottom, the corporation's support of Cedar Park Neighbors focused on providing money and support to keep current residents in place. Laura Wolf-Powers, a planning scholar, argues that the support given to Cedar Park was common of West Philadelphia Corporation's support of "majority-white"

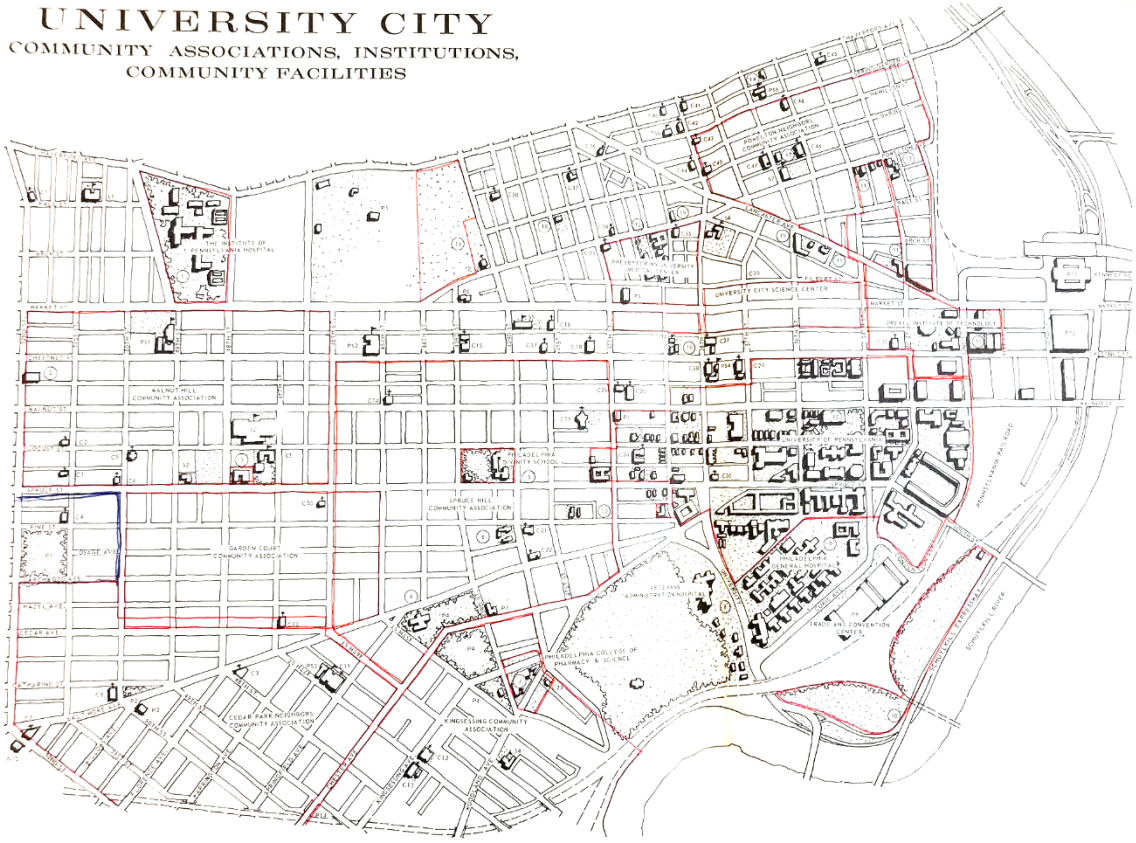

Figure 4: Map of University City and Community Associations, 1963 (Source: Box 1, Folder: "1963," CPN Records)

[54] Sisak, "Neighbors Spur City Drive to 'Save' Cedar Park."

neighborhoods including Powelton Village, Spruce Hill, and Garden Court.[55] See Figure 4 for the extended boundaries and neighborhoods included in University City. In their plans for University City, the West Philadelphia Corporation supported rehabilitation for white neighborhoods and clearance for Black ones. Cedar Park Neighbors relied on support from the local universities and the West Philadelphia Corporation to support their rehabilitation aims. While some residents disliked the more transient population that the universities supplied to the neighborhood, the West Philadelphia Corporation and the University of Pennsylvania were a strong ally to the group through the 1960s and 1970s.[56]

With the urban renewal area expanded, Cedar Park Neighbors worked with the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority to receive governmental money. The Redevelopment Authority succeeded in making the area eligible for 3% federally-insured loans under the new Housing Act of 1965 under section 312.[57] This was in addition to the FHA assured loans that were eligible to all of University City under Section 220 of the National Housing Act of 1949 — one of the reasons that Cedar Park Neighbors advocated to have Cedar Park added to University City's boundaries.[58] These two programs made it much easier for residents to secure financing for renovations and ensured that renovations were completed under standards created by Philadelphia's Redevelopment Authority.[59] A press release from the Office of the

[55] Wolf-Powers, *University City*, 25.
[56] Tate, interview with author, October 16, 2023.
[57] "House Tour Set For Cedar Park," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 21, 1967.
[58] Cedar Park Demonstration House, Pamphlet, 1966, Folder: Cedar Park 220 Rehab Project, Acc. 350. Box 14, WPC Records.
[59] "Rebuilt Home Opens Today In Cedar Park," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 25, 1964; Cedar Park Neighbors 1968, Pamphlet, Call Number: 350, Volume 29. Box 4, Folder 6, ASRS, WPC Records.

Mayor stated, "the project will rely entirely upon voluntary residential rehabilitation, and no clearance will be involved."[60] The efforts were successful and according to the Cedar Park Neighbors, "urban renewal projects in Cedar Park totaled close to $1,000,000 (over $10,000,000 in today's dollars) by 1965 and focused on 'conservation and rehabilitation,' involving approximately 200 houses."[61]

Unlike the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority's projects in other parts of the city, the efforts in Cedar Park were voluntary and focused on rehabilitation. However, this voluntary nature of the program also had its downsides. Cedar Park Neighbors struggled with publicity of the program to increase its uptake in the neighborhood. This struggle was increased when the 312 funds were frozen in 1970 due to miscommunication between the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).[62] Part of the issue was that HUD wanted "a code enforcement program with a 3-year limit," attached to the funds. Cedar Park Neighbors opposed the code enforcement program and wanted HUD to honor the original 20-year contract and stay true to their "voluntary" program.[63] While the freeze was lifted (due in part to intense advocacy from McHugh), the group struggled to publicize and raise public interest in using the funds and the bureaucracy required to acquire them continued to be a difficulty for the neighborhood group.[64]

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[60] Division of Public Information, "Office of the City Representative New Release," Press Release, October 3, 1963, Box 4, Folder 4, 2019-25, CPN Records.
[61] "Area Property Rehabilitation Standards – The Redevelopment Authority of the City of Philadelphia," 350, Box 14, Folder: Community Development 1975-1976, WPC Records.
[62] Cedar Park Neighbors University City Newsletter, 1970, Box 1, Folder 7, 2019-25, CPN Records.
[63] Cedar Park Neighbors Board Meeting Minutes, September 14, 1970, Box 1, Folder 7, 2019-25, CPN Records.
[64] Cedar Park Neighbors University City Newsletter, 1970.

Rehabilitation was a real concern for Cedar Park Neighbors. Many of the homes in the neighborhood were built around the turn of the century, and compared to new suburban houses, were "functionally obsolescent."[65] While Cedar Park Neighbors had successfully lobbied and won federal funds for residents, they also wanted to show what was possible with those funds. Working with Pasquale Piccioni and Nancy Kuhn Piccioni, two local architects trained at the University of Pennsylvania in the 1950s, Cedar Park Neighbors created a "demonstration house."[66] Pasquale was working for well-known modernist architect Louis Kahn at the same time the couple was renovating the demonstration house.[67] Located at 4714 Windsor Avenue, the house was supposed to serve as an "object lesson in home approvement," and demonstrate how older homes could be renovated with modern day conveniences.[68] Figure 5 shows the altered, "modernized," floor plan of the house.

The Redevelopment Authority assigned a "rehabilitation specialist" to the Cedar Park area and their office was located in the demonstration house.[69] Tours of the house were regularly given to residents of the neighborhood and even the U.S. Commissioner for Urban Renewal when he visited in 1964.[70] The house was used as the locus for the neighborhood revitalization efforts.[71]In addition to the staff member

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[65] Sisak, "Neighbors Spur City Drive to 'Save' Cedar Park."
[66] "Demonstration Home Opened," *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 23, 1964.
[67] Pasquale Piccioni worked for Louis Kahn from 1960 to 1968. Karen Johnson, "Pat Piccioni," University of Oregon Alumni Association (October 2012), accessed April 24, 2021, https://www.uoalumni.com/s/1540/uoaa/blank_archive.aspx?sid=1540&gid=3&pgid=153.
[68] "Rebuilt Home Opens Today In Cedar Park," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 25, 1964.
[69] Cedar Park-University City Home Improvement House Center and 220 Demonstration House, Pamphlet, Folder: Cedar Park Neighbors 1966-1969, 350, Volume 29 ASRS, WPC Records.
[70] "Renewal Official Will Speak Oct. 9," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 2, 1964.
[71] "House Tour Set For Cedar Park," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 21, 1967; "Rebuilt Home Opens Today In Cedar Park," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 25, 1964.

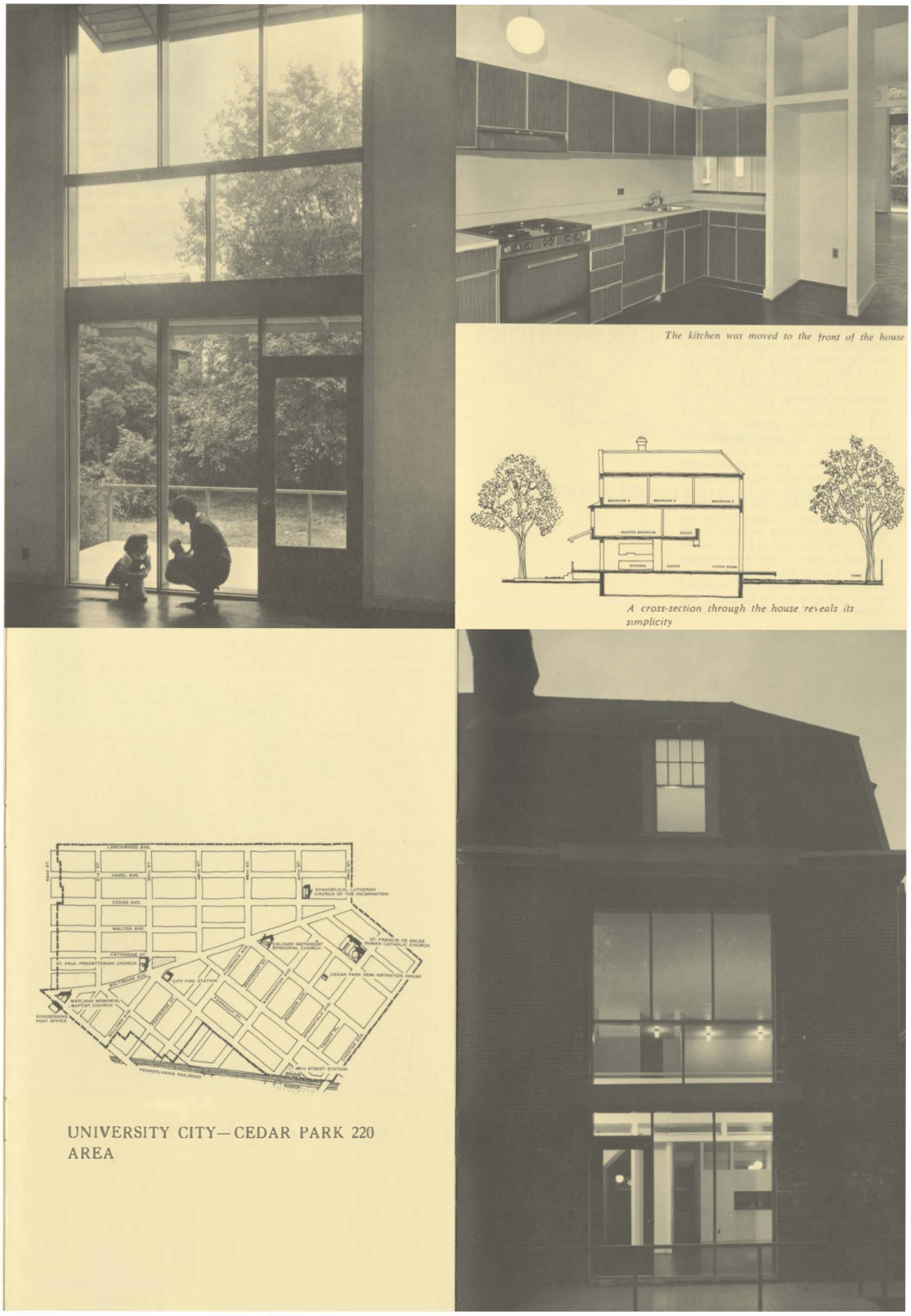

Figure 5: Pages from “Cedar Park Demonstration House” Pamphlet (Source: Box 14, Folder: Cedar Park 220 Rehab Project, Acc. 350, WPC Records)

located in the house, there was material for residents including "home improvement kits."[72] Throughout this time, the Piccionis remained legal owners of the house and rented it out the West Philadelphia Corporation. The house was eventually sold and remains a single-family residence today. Though the West Philadelphia Corporation and Redevelopment Authority used the demonstration house for only one year, Cedar Park Neighbors continued to use renovated houses as examples for residents.[73] Throughout the 1960s, the group would host "house tours" of renovated houses in the area.[74]

While the early focus of the group was on single family homes, in the 1970s Cedar Park Neighbors began to focus their efforts on larger buildings in the neighborhood. The first larger project the group took on was working to renovate the Ivan Apartment building at 47th Street and Baltimore Avenue. McHugh worked to obtain a rehabilitation loan to save the building in 1971-1972.[75] The project used Section 220 loans, which offer mortgage loans for multifamily rental housing projects in development.[76] The building is still standing today at a key intersection of the commercial corridor, Baltimore Avenue and 47th Street. Section 220 loans would be used on other multifamily buildings in the neighborhood including Regent Street Apartments

[72] Cedar Park-University City Home Improvement House, Pamphlet, WPC Records.
[73] In 1976, CPN hosted an open house of 4705 Hazel, boasting that "this property was condemned and has been renovated. Welcome to 4705 Hazel, Open House Poster, Folder: Community Development 1975-1976, Call Number: 350, Volume 29 ASRS West Philadelphia Corporation Collection. WPC Records.
[74] Cedar Park Neighbors 1968: House Tour Map, Box 4, Folder 6, 2019-25, CPN Records.
[75] Cedar Park Neighbors Newsletter, September 2013, (September 24, 2013), https://issuu.com/cedarparkneighbors/docs/1309_web_cpn.
[76] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Section 220," accessed February 3, 2024, https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/housing/mfh/progdesc/progsec220.

Figure 6: Ivan Apartments in 1910 (top) and 2024 (bottom). (Source: Mercantile Studio, "Historic Architecture in West Philadelphia: 1789-1930s," Facebook, Posted October 23, 2010; Photograph by author, October 2023)

at 51st and Regent, and Cobbs Creek NSA at 52nd and Larchwood.[77] While supportive of larger apartment buildings, the group was wary of conversions from single-family homes to multi-family and rooming houses as the group felt that these properties were often not well-maintained.[78] When West Philadelphia Corporation proposed possible graduate student housing in the neighborhood in 1965, the Cedar Park Neighbors opposed this housing project for a more transient population.[79]

Preserving buildings was part of Cedar Park Neighbors' attempt to "hold onto significant structures in the neighborhood."[80] However, this interest in significant buildings was not due their *historic* significance but rather the use they could serve the neighborhood and the harm they represented when vacant. The group did not have a specific interest in preserving other historic and architecturally significant buildings in the neighborhood. For example, while theaters are often an object of concern for preservation-minded organizations, the group supported the demolition of the Byrd Theater at 4720 Baltimore Avenue, "even if it means building a high-rise complex" in its place.[81] Despite various plans by city officials and Cedar Park Neighbors that were never implemented, today the location is a municipal parking lot, see Figure 7. The group was selective about which non-residential buildings were worth adaptive reuse and focused on perceived needs in the neighborhood. Buildings that were in poor condition or couldn't serve the neighborhood were demolished. Ultimately, the group's

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[77] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "FHA_BF90_RM_T_12312022," FHA, Section 220 Projects, 1935-2022, https://www.hud.gov/files/Housing.
[78] Cedar Park Neighbors Board Meeting Minutes, November 3, 1976, Box 1, Folder 8, 2019-25, CPN Records.
[79] Cedar Park Neighbors Board Meeting Minutes, October 5, 1965, Box 1, Folder 8, 2019-25, CPN Records.
[80] Tate, interview with author.
[81] Cedar Park Neighbors Board Meeting Minutes, May 1, 1967, Box 1, Folder 7, 2019-25, CPN Records.

Figure 7: Byrd Theater at 4720 Baltimore Avenue in the 1960s and 2024 (Source: Cinema Treasures, accessed April 1, 2024; Arden Jordan, photograph by author, "46th and Baltimore Avenue," April 2024, Philadelphia, PA)

focus was not preserving the built environment, but rather the current needs of the community.

Cedar Park Neighbors' aims of rehabilitation and productive reuse soon turned to the neighborhood's commercial corridor. Between 1975 and 2000, Cedar Park's Baltimore Avenue lost "a pharmacy, a bank, a real estate agency, a funeral home, a furrier, a butcher shop, and a family restaurant."[82] When the neighborhood's fire station closed in 1984, Cedar Park neighbors rallied to save the building. Due to the size restrictions on the historic building, Cedar Park Neighbors led by member John Kromer advocated for a neighborhood market.[83] Instead of the building going to public auction, Cedar Park Neighbors and Councilmember Lucien Blackwell petitioned for a public use; the City passed an ordinance and the firehouse was sold for one dollar.[84] Cedar Park Neighbors worked with a private market owner Bill Coleman and created the West Philadelphia Associates to run the market, each actor with an equal share. The market opened in 1988.

While the market was the result of a long community-engagement process, it also faced significant opposition. One major issue was that the market included few minority-owned business. Due to the cost of the project, the rents for the stalls were high, which led to higher-end products being sold. Fears of the market being a gentrifying force played a large role in neighborhood opposition.[85] Reverend Patterson

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[82] John Kromer, *Fixing Broken Cities: New Investment Policies for a Changed World*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2023), 184.
[83] John Kromer (former member of Cedar Park Neighbors) interview with author, November 1, 2023.
[84] Kromer, *Fixing Broken Cities,* 191.
[85] Kromer, *Fixing Broken Cities*, 191.

Figure 8: Fire Station in 1959 and 2023 (Source: R. Carollo, December 9, 1959, Philadelphia Department of Records; Photograph by author, November 2023)

of Hickman Temple AME Church (located in the same intersection) was especially against the market.[86] John Kromer later interviewed (and then anonymized) community members; one Black community member said, "looking back on an experience like that, people don't necessarily remember all the details of what happened, as much as they remember how they felt; and I remember feeling disenfranchised."[87]

Opposition to the market became such a big issue—running primarily along racial lines—that it affected Cedar Park Neighbors' 1989 Board election. The election and more specifically, the campaign had "carried racial overtones."[88] In the original election, the white candidate Fred Wolfe (who, in fact, had a stall in the market) won against the Black candidate Theresa Sims. Cedar Park Neighbor members were concerned about voting discrepancies and alleged campaign tactics—including one claim that flyers for the white candidate were only distributed to white residents.[89] The election coincided with racial tensions in the group and neighborhood over the management of the Firehouse Market. In the end, the issue was resolved by electing both candidates act as co-presidents.[90]

Despite opposition, the market ran for 16 years before closing in 2005. Current Cedar Park Neighbors view the project as a success despite the controversy, as it saved a historic and important landmark in the community.[91] The Firehouse building still stands

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[86] Kromer, *Fixing Broken Cities*, 196.
[87] Kromer, *Fixing Broken Cities*, 198.
[88] Kendall Wilson, "Community Election Results Disputed by Neighbors," *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 5, 1989.
[89] Wilson, "Community Election Results."
[90] Tate, interview with author.
[91] Cedar Park Centennial Commemorative Booklet, Box 4, Folder 6, 2019-25, CPN Records.

and now houses a brewery, café, bicycle shop, and co-working space.[92] Figure 9 shows the Firehouse in the year before the adaptive reuse and the building today. However, while the market project saved the building, it also highlighted racial tensions in the neighborhood and the budding fears of gentrification that were realized in the 2000s.

Cedar Park Neighbors was also concerned with the rise of abandoned and vacant buildings. The group created a "Property Housing Task Force," also known as "Vacant Buildings Committee," which kept a running survey of vacant and abandoned properties in the neighborhood.[93] This list helped the group work with the city on which houses they wished to demolish and which they wished to save. For example, in 1977 a house at 4840 Cedar Avenue was slated for demolition. Cedar Park Neighbors requested Philadelphia's Department of License and Inspections (L&I) to remove it from their list of demolitions.[94] The house is still standing today.[95] Another property at 4821 Florence Avenue was demolished with the support of the group.[96] The group turned the vacant land into a neighborhood garden which they maintained for many years.[97] This volunteer group effort to track vacant buildings later evolved into the short-lived Cedar Park Community Development Corporation, whose goal was to buy at low or no-cost vacant houses and to "repair and remodel into community-owned apartment and houses for low-income and moderate-income families."[98] Another goal of the group was "to

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[92] Katherine Dowdell, (current member of Cedar Park Neighbors' Zoning Committee) interview with author, October 3, 2023.
[93] Tate, interview with author.
[94] Ralph David Samuel to City of Philadelphia Office of Licenses and Inspections, December 7, 1977, Box 1, Folder 4, 2019-25, CPN Records.
[95] "Street view of 4840 Cedar Avenue," Google Maps, accessed April 2, 2024, https://maps.app.goo.gl/1zEuKcf7tAi5cH3U6
[96] Ralph David Samuel to City of Philadelphia Office of Licenses and Inspections, CPN Records.
[97] Tate, interview with the author.
[98] Cedar Park Centennial Commemorative Booklet, Box 4, Folder 6, 2019-25, CPN Records.

preserve the unique racial and economic diversity of Cedar Park by providing decent and attractive housing for all."[99] The rehabilitation projects were part of Section 3 Project under HUD which supports housing rehabilitation that provide housing on sites under common ownership.[100] The group started with twelve buildings on the 800 and 900 blocks of 49th Street and the 4900 block of Hazel Avenue.[101] The creation of the Development Corporation is an example of the multi-faceted approach of Cedar Park Neighbors. They identified a problem (vacant homes), deliberated, and found a solution (creation of a CDC to rehabilitate the houses).

Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, Cedar Park continued to be a "transitional West Philadelphia neighborhood determined to remain in control of its own future" as a City Paper declared in 1988.[102] At the turn of the twenty-first century, Cedar Park Neighbors continued its multi-faceted approach, working with the city to create plans for the commercial corridor and to create community gardens in vacant lots.[103] The community volunteer group used a mix of planning and community development tools to try to stabilize the neighborhood. These methods included using existing urban development programs and rehabilitation loans and working with government and institution programs to fit neighborhood needs. The group also experimented with different approached to increase affordable housing in the neighborhood, maintain

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[99] Cedar Park Community Development Corporation Summary and Goals, Report, 1976, 2019-25, Box 1, Folder 13, CPN Records.
[100] "Invitation to Qualified Bidders Cedar Park Community Development Corporation," March 3, 1978 (page 22 of 80), *Philadelphia Daily News* (March 03, 1978); HUD, "What is a Section 3 project?" HUD Exchange, accessed April 14, 2024, https://www.hudexchange.info/faqs/crosscutting-requirements/section-3/general/what-is-a-section-3-project/.
[101] Cedar Park Community Development Corporation Summary and Goals, Report, CPN Records.
[102] Kelvyn Anderson, "Shared Destinies," *City Paper: Philadelphia's Free Weekly Newspaper*, March 11-18, 1988, No. 187, 2019-25, Box 4, Folder 4, CPN Records.
[103] Tate, interview with the author.

abandoned houses, and develop vacant lots. The organization's focus on rehabilitation, affordability, and the power of community bore similarities to another group that moved into the neighborhood in the 1970s and helped reshape the neighborhood during this time of urban renewal, the Movement for a New Society.

Part 3: The Movement for a New Society

"The community is located in the western section of Philadelphia, between 44th and 49th streets close to Baltimore Avenue in a fairly stable area of large substantial homes built many years ago, an area including whites and blacks, university students and faculty, many first generation Catholics who have lived here much of their lives; a section with one of the highest crime rates; change is in the wind; there is a sense of hope." – George Willoughby, founding member of the Movement for a New Society [104]

Despite the efforts of Cedar Park Neighbors, Cedar Park continued to lose residents in the 1960s; by the early 1970s, it was seen as a neighborhood in decline.[105] The neighborhood's large Victorian houses, economic decline, and active integration brought Cedar Park to the attention of another group—made up of transplants—that played a major role in the neighborhood's character and stabilization efforts in the coming years: the Movement for a New Society, which operated in the neighborhood from 1971 to 1988.

The Movement for a New Society (MNS) was a group of activists "working nonviolently for fundamental social change."[106] Formed in 1970-1971, the group consisted primarily of members of the non-violent action group A Quaker Action Group

[104] A Quaker Community in the Philadelphia Life Center, Flyer, June 20, 1973, Series 1, Box 4 of 8, DG 154 ACC 2015-031, MNS Records.
[105] Edward B. Fiske, "Quaker Commune Is Seeking Nonviolent Social Change: Life Center in West Philadelphia Cites Idea of Simplicity," *The New York Times*, April 6, 1972.
[106] Moving toward a New Society, Pamphlet, 1975, Series 1, Box 4 of 8, DG 154 ACC 2015-031, MNS Records.

(AQAG), a national organization formed in 1966. Members had participated in peace movements against the Vietnam War, support for Puerto Rican freedom, and campaigns for racial justice—such as Martin Luther King Jr.'s Poor People's Campaign.[107] In the words of George Lakey, one of the group's founders, the Movement for a New Society was a "product of criticism and self-criticism at the end of the turbulent 'sixties."[108] Reflecting on both the personal and societal dimensions of their activism work, members of AQAG felt their anti-war and social justice efforts did not address the societal structures that had created these problems to begin with. In March of 1971, AQAG presented a proposal to the American Friends Service committee. The proposal included a vision for what they imagined, including "a critical analysis of the American political-economic system," "expanding the consciousness and organizing the commitment of the middle class toward fundamental change," and "the organization and development of nonviolent revolutionary groups and life centers."[109] The proposal called for a "movement for a new society."[110] This group of radical Quakers, dissatisfied with the American Friends Service Committee, created a new secular group that aimed to address this vision.

A core part of the Movement for a New Society was the creation of 'life centers,' where activists would live communally, share resources, and create alternative institutions, thus giving them more time and energy to devote to their activist activities. The Movement for a New Society was a national (and later, international) group —

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[107] George Lakey, "Where is MNS Coming From?," Print, 1980, Series 1, Box 3 of 8, DG 154 ACC 2015-031, MNS Records.
[108] Lakey, "Where is MNS Coming From?."
[109] Cornell, *Oppose and Propose!*, 19.
[110] Cornell, *Oppose and Propose!*, 19.

however, there were two main nodes of members: one in Eugene, Oregon and the other in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.[111] The Philadelphia members — dispersed throughout the city — sought a neighborhood to start their Life Center.

The group considered other neighborhoods in the city such as Germantown and Powelton Village. Many factors, including the size of the houses, their relatively affordability, and their availability (due to population decline), were significant in the decision to move to Cedar Park.[112] George Lakey and his wife Berit were two of the founding members of the Movement for a New Society. The Lakeys had lived in Powelton Village for several years and were involved with several communal residences of Quakers already in the neighborhood. However, due in part to Movement for a New Society's (MNS) hope to differentiate themselves from the Quakers and create a non-denominational and non-religious organization, the group moved to Cedar Park.[113]

MNS members hoped that their presence as primarily college-educated white progressives would have a positive effect on the neighborhood. In a 2010 interview, George Lakey stated that "one reason we chose this neighborhood was precisely because we wanted to do whatever we could to stabilize it so that it wouldn't become yet another Philadelphia slum but instead could become stably integrated racially."[114] The group hoped that their presence could help reverse the population decline and support the integration of the neighborhood.

The group moved into the neighborhood first by purchasing a large nineteenth-

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[111] Cornell, *Oppose and Propose!*, 19.
[112] George Lakey (co-founder of Movement for a New Society) interview with author, December 19, 2023.
[113] Lakey, interview with author, December 19, 2023.
[114] Cornell, *Oppose and Propose!*, 113.

century building they called the Stone House in 1971. The Stone House was the center of their operations and communally owned through a nonprofit created by the group.[115] The Stone House served as the group's training center and housed activities such as a food co-op. A major component of Movement for a New Society's mission was to train visitors from across the United States and the world on nonviolent resistance. Visitors came to the Philadelphia Life Center for trainings that lasted a weekend, a week, or even several months and would stay in houses around the neighborhood.[116] In addition to the Stone House, MNS members moved into houses around the neighborhood, sometimes buying the properties and sometimes renting them. Whether owning or renting, the communities made caring for the properties of paramount importance, not just for the quality of their living but also as a show of respectability to their neighbors.[117]

Some of group's properties, like a print shop started at 4722 Baltimore Avenue, were on blocks in the neighborhood that had been identified by Cedar Park Neighbors as places that needed community "generators."[118] A print shop run by radical activists (that once was investigated by the FBI) is perhaps not what CPN member John Landy imagined as a generator that would "more closely identify[ing] the community in the university and institutional complex."[119] However, the print shop did renovate a vacant building and create a legitimate community business on a block of Baltimore Avenue

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[115] Philadelphia Life Center Association Collective, Pamphlet, February 17, 1976, Series 1, Box 4 of 8, Folder: MNS Life Ctr Philly, DG 154 ACC 2015-031, MNS Records.
[116] William S. Coleman, "Fragments of the Philadelphia Life Center; A Squint at The Future of The Movement for A New Society," Unpublished doctoral thesis, Series 1, Box 1of 8, DG 154 ACC 2015-031, MNS Records.
[117] Lakey, interview with author, December 19, 2023.
[118] John Landy to John O'Shea, November 18, 1964, Folder: Cedar Park Neighbors 1966-1969, Number: 350, Volume 29 ASRS, WPC Records.
[119] John Landy to John O'Shea, November 18, 1964; PMNS Local Network Meeting, October 7, 1985, Box 2 of 5, DG 154 Acc 08A 077, MNS Records.

Figure 9: The Stone House at 1006 S 46th St in 2023 (Source: Photograph by author, 2023)

identified as "badly declining" in 1964.[120]

By 1973, members of Movement for a New Society's Philadelphia Life Center owned several pieces of property in the neighborhood. In addition to the Stone House, other houses were owned or rented individually. As a fundamentally anti-capitalist group, members held mixed opinions about owning properties and participating in the real estate market. The group put a lot of thought into the creation of a land trust, and asked themselves questions like: "how can we remove ourselves from the vicious speculative-inflationary, exploitative cycles that the owning of land in a capitalist society entails?" and "what does sub-standard housing, urban blight and poverty have to do with owning and administering property in West Philly?"[121] One of the explicit aims of creating a land trust for the Life Center houses was to provide stability in the neighborhood by removing properties from the speculative housing market.[122] Even several years into the Life Center, members worried their presence was having a gentrifying effect on the neighborhood.[123] Their efforts were realized and six houses were created into a land trust that still operates in the neighborhood (the land trust now contains eight houses). Though smaller than the twenty or so houses claimed by the Life Center at its peak, the Life Center land trust still provides housing for current residents in the neighborhood.

Ownership and stewardship of Cedar Park's large houses were not the only ways

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[120] John Landy to John O'Shea, November 18, 1964.
[121] Proposed queries for Life Center Houses to Plan a Urban & Rural Trust in this Area of Delaware Valley, Minutes, 1973, Series 1 Box 4 of 8, Folder: MNS Life Ctr Philly, DG 154 ACC 2015-031, MNS Records.
[122] Land Trust needs New Members, Flyer, Year Unknown, Box 6 of 13, Folder: Philadelphia MNS – Life Center/Land Trust, 1972-1982, DG 154 Acc 90A-02, MNS Records.
[123] Future of the Stone House: Where We're at Now, Minutes, April 1981, Box 6 of 13, Folder Philadelphia MNS – Life Center/Land Trust, 1972-1982, DG 154 Acc 90A-02, MNS Records.

that the Life Center worked in the neighborhood; part of Movement for a New Society's plan for societal change included creating "alternative institutions" outside the capitalist mainstream.[124] Many of these alternative institutions provided important services to the neighborhood at a low cost. The first neighborhood need addressed was safety. In the 1970s, Cedar Park had high crime rates—but instead of increased police presence, Life Center members created a block safety program that included over twenty-one blocks in the neighborhood. This block safety program aimed to get members of blocks together in community and create groups to walk around the neighborhood with airhorns. Described by the *Philadelphia Inquirer* as an "interracial group" based on "neighborly spirit of mutual care and trust," the program was eventually credited with lowering the local crime rate.[125] The program was so successful that Ross Flanagan, the primary organizer of the program, received a grant from the Ford Foundation to implement the program in other communities.[126]

After the success of the block safety program, the group turned to other neighborhood needs like "rehabilitating abandoned housing."[127] As with Cedar Park Neighbors, the vacant and abandoned housing in the neighborhood was a concern for MNS. They addressed this issue through multiple avenues. One was the creation of the People's Carpentry and Painting Collective which offered low-cost home repairs as one of the Life Center's 'alternative institutions.' Another was direct support from Life Center members to make "money available to help folks fix up some abandoned

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[124] A Quaker Community in the Philadelphia Life Center, Flyer, MNS Records.
[125] Warren Brown, "W. Phila. Community Group Plans Program for the Prevention of Crime," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 3, 1973.
[126] Lakey, interview with author, December 19, 2023.
[127] Minutes for Life Center Meeting, February 10, 1976, Box 6 of 13, Folder: 1976, DG 154 Acc 90A-02, MNS Records.

houses."[128] Other alternative institutions provided support to the neighborhood, including a food co-op operated under the Stone House. Only fifty percent of members were Life Center residents, the rest of the co-op members were local residents.[129] In addition to their alternative institutions, the group provided support to other activist groups in Philadelphia including MOVE and the urban homesteading movement.[130]

During the years Movement for a New Society operated in the neighborhood (1971-1988), their relationships with Cedar Park residents were mixed, ranging from amicable to antagonistic. At its peak, there were over 170 MNS members living and operating in over twenty buildings in the neighborhood. Neighbors of the Life Center were at times hostile — calling Philadelphia's office of License & Inspections on houses for breaking code as a 'boarding house.'[131] The original residents of the neighborhood were primarily Roman Catholic, whose values were sometimes at odds with the actions of the Movement for a New Society, including the community's sexual liberation; many members identified as gay. Lakey, himself a queer man, stated: "It was tricky line about, on the one hand, not trying to create animosity in the neighborhood so that we couldn't organize with the neighbors, and on the other, still being ourselves—still having a kind of integrity about our radicalness."[132]

At times, the neighborhood organizing efforts of the Movement for a New

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[128] Local Network Meeting, Minutes, July 11, 1983, Series 1 Box 5 of 8, DG 154 Acc 2015-031, MNS Records.
[129] From Mariposa Food Co-Op to Stone House Food Co-Op Members, Flyer, Year unknown, Box 6 of 13, DG 154 Acc 90A-02, MNS Records.
[130] Lynn Shivers, "Preliminary Report on the Friendly Presence Vigil," Flyer, May 10, 1978, Series 1 Box 5 of 8, DG 154 Acc 2015-031, MNS Records.
[131] Controversy with City of Philadelphia Licensing and Inspections in Regard to Stone House, Flyer, September 21, 1976, Series 1 Box 5 of 8, DG 154 Acc 2015-031, MNS Records.
[132] Andrew Cornell, *Oppose and Propose!,* 116.

Society were supported by residents in Cedar Park. When one Life Center community of renters (called Sunflower) were trying to buy their house, the president of Cedar Park Neighbors wrote the landlord on "our behalf, encouraging them to sell the house" to them.[133] The group received neighborhood support in other forms as well. St. Frances de Sales, the large Catholic church in the neighborhood, offered their school's gym for MNS's training sessions. As MNS member Nancy Brigham said, "that connected us with a very important organization in the neighborhood." The residents of Cedar Park were not a monolith and their acceptance or rejection of the Movement for a New Society was a influenced by many factors.

Like Cedar Park Neighbors, the Movement for a New Society's efforts rehabilitated many houses and buildings in the community. They were also interested in public safety and keeping housing in the area affordable. While only operating in the area for a little under two decades, their efforts played a role in shaping the primarily Irish Catholic neighborhood into a mixed-race, politically progressive community. Their efforts demonstrate how community-building and neighborhood planning can take place outside of traditional institutional structures. Movement for a New Society was an atypical community group with an outsized effect on Cedar Park. By studying their efforts, we can better understand the community as whole.

Part 4: Community and Communes: Comparing Practices

Cedar Park Neighbors and the Movement for a New Society used multiple

[133] Message from Sunflower People to Other Life Center People, Flyer, June 26, 1980, Series 1, Box 4 of 8, DG 154 ACC 2015-031, MNS Records; Report to Executive Committee of Life Center, Report, November 22, 1974, Series 1, Box 3 of 8, DG 154 Acc 2015-031, MNS Records.

tactics to stabilize the neighborhood. Both groups worked on housing rehabilitation: both acquired buildings in the neighborhood and repaired them. Both worked on projects focused on community safety. Movement for a New Society had their block program and airhorns, while Cedar Park Neighbors worked with local police for increased patrols and an additional substation.[134] Both groups worked on food security in the neighborhood: Movement for a New Society with their food cooperative and Cedar Park Neighbors with the Firehouse Market. While the term "volunteer" doesn't quite apply to the Movement for a New Society, both groups had committed members whose community work was an additional project they undertook in their daily life.

However, the Movement for a New Society was a radically different organization than Cedar Park Neighbors. Unlike Cedar Park Neighbors, MNS was made up of transplants to the neighborhood. The Life Center was anti-capitalist, opposed governmental structures and programs, and believed in building alternative institutions. The communal houses that made up the Life Center were similar in concept to the multi-family conversion and boarding houses that Cedar Park Neighbors was trying to prevent. While both groups wanted to "stabilize the neighborhood," they had different ideas on what this meant. Cedar Park Neighbors wanted to preserve Cedar Park by keeping current residents; Movement for a New Society wanted to stabilize it by imagining an interracial, economically stable neighborhood. Cedar Park Neighbors received support from the City of Philadelphia, HUD and federal programs. Movement for a New Society fought License & Inspections, received visits from FBI agents, and

[134] Special Meeting of the Board, Minutes, June 26, 1979, Box 4, Folder 6, 2019-25, CPN Records.

regularly got arrested while supporting other activist groups in Philadelphia.[135] However, Movement for a New Society was a non-hierarchical, multifaceted group that also received funding from the Ford Foundation. Several of their members taught classes at local universities, including Swarthmore College and University of Pennsylvania, on related subjects such as peace studies and organizational dynamics.[136] Both groups eventually became incorporated as nonprofits, operating under the same legal structure.

The work of the two groups, while perhaps inspirational, were not necessarily scalable. Cedar Park has a small footprint; in 1970 the neighborhood had around 10,000 residents and 2,000 buildings.[137] Even within this limited scope, both group's efforts remained relatively small-scale. A little over 220 houses used section 312 funding to rehabilitate their homes.[138] Philadelphia Mayor Tate actually wanted to end the 312-program due to "too little use."[139] Additionally, as Cedar Park Neighbors received most of their funds from the city, they were beholden to changes in administration. In 1978, Cedar Park Neighbors were "regulated to third and lowest priority" and were not eligible for certain loans and grants from the city.[140] The lack of funding was a constant

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[135] PLAN (Philadelphia Local Action Network), "Communique about Walk-in Homesteading Movement," Flyer, June 29, 1978, Folder "MNS Life Center Philly," Box 5 of 5, DG 154 Acc 2051-031, MNS Records; PMNS Local Network Meeting, Minutes, October 7, 1985," Box 2 of 5, DG 154 Acc 08A 077, MNS Records.
[136] Lakey, interview with author, April 7, 2024.
[137] Cedar Park Neighbors Board Meeting Minutes, April 6, 1970. Box 1, Folder 7, 2019-25, CPN Records.
[138] Cedar Park Neighbors Board Meeting Minutes, April 6, 1970.
[139] Cedar Park Neighbors Board Meeting Minutes, April 6, 1970.
[140] John F. Landy to William Rafsky, December 23, 1977, Box 1, Folder 4, 2019-25, CPN Records.

Buildings in Cedar Cedar Park

First 20 Residences Residences Rehabilitate Using 312 Funds

Movement for a New Society Buildings

Figure 10: Map of Selected Buildings Affected by Cedar Park Neighbors and Movement for a New Society (Source: Created by author)

issue for the group and often required them to change tactics when funding sources changed.[141] Movement for a New Society worked on an even smaller scale. At their peak, members lived in only twenty houses. The impact of their other programs, like the food cooperative and the People's Carpentry and Painting Collective, is even more difficult to measure.

This small-scale change was the result of efforts lead by individuals in both

[141]John F. Landy to William Rafsky, December 23, 1977.

groups. Movement for a New Society believed that large societal change could be shaped by individuals. The 'Life Center' part of the Movement for a New Society was only a small part of the group's work; the communes were there to facilitate the group's broader national and international activism. Residents of the Life Center were leading coordinated communication campaigns to shut down nuclear power plants or using their bodies to stop weapons shipments to support American wars in Southeast Asia.[142] Cedar Park Neighbors, while not protesting the Vietnam War, was a volunteer-led organization whose projects often shifted depending on the individual interests of its leaders. Many of the housing initiatives were led by Gerald McHugh, a local real estate agent. The Firehouse Market and other zoning projects were spearheaded by John Kromer, who later became City of Philadelphia's Director of Housing from 1992 to 2001.[143] The neighborhood safety block association that had members of both Movement for a New Society and Cedar Park Neighbors was spearheaded by Ross Flanagan, a Life Center member. The efforts of both groups were rooted in the belief—articulated explicitly or tacitly—that the actions of individuals could have a broader societal impact.

The small scale, slow pace, and 'people-power' of the two groups allowed them to change tactics and evolve over time. And the groups' bottom-up approach is key to the slow and incremental—but still significant—change they each enacted. In his social and historical analysis of the idea of neighborhoods, Benjamin Looker argues that "local community could be envisioned. . . as a place for developing fresh responses to larger social convulsions through the medium of local interactions and interpersonal

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[142] Cornell, *Oppose and Propose!,* 13-63.
[143] John Kromer, "About," *JohnKromer.Com Home Page*, accessed April 2, 2024, https://johnkromer.com/about-john-kromer/.

relationships."[144] In opposition to many urban renewal-era projects across Philadelphia, the approach of these groups allowed Cedar Park to evolve and change slowly, creating a more diverse, stable neighborhood overtime.

Part 5: Stabilization, Gentrification, and a Neighborhood in "Transition"

Though often touted as "uniquely integrated," the Cedar Park neighborhood had clear racial and class divides, both spatial and social.[145] The rehabilitation and conservation efforts of Cedar Park Neighbors closely resembled strategies employed across northeastern cities to resist neighborhood integration, often with covert or overtly racist and xenophobic methods. While brown and Black neighborhoods often faced demolition during urban renewal, white neighborhoods weaponized their privilege and officials' fears of urban decline to get money and resources to conserve their neighborhoods and resist integration.[146] By 1975, Cedar Park Neighbors was using their neighborhood's racial diversity as an argument for rehabilitation to city officials.[147] However, as the contested 1989 Cedar Park Neighbors Board election reveals, the racial tensions in the neighborhood affected both the projects implemented by the group and the daily lives of residents. Cedar Park in the latter-half of the century was neither "in

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[144] Benjamin Looker, *A Nation of Neighborhoods: Imagining Cities, Communities, and Democracy. in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 8.
[145] Jake Blumgart, "The Changing Streets of Cedar Park," *Philadelphia Magazine*, March 12, 2017, https://www.phillymag.com/news/2017/03/11/cedar-park-gentrification-west-philadelphia/.
[146] Mike Amezcua, *Making Mexican Chicago: From Postwar Settlement to the Age of Gentrification* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2022), 10.
[147] "As residents of one of the few neighborhoods in the city which is thoroughly integrated with respect to the socio-economic status, race, religion, and cultural background of its inhabitants." Ralph David Samuel to Mathew Costanzo, 1975, Box 1, Folder 1, 2019-25, CPN Records.

transition" nor fully "integrated"—it was a racially-mixed area with racial and social tensions that played out in both political and personal ways.

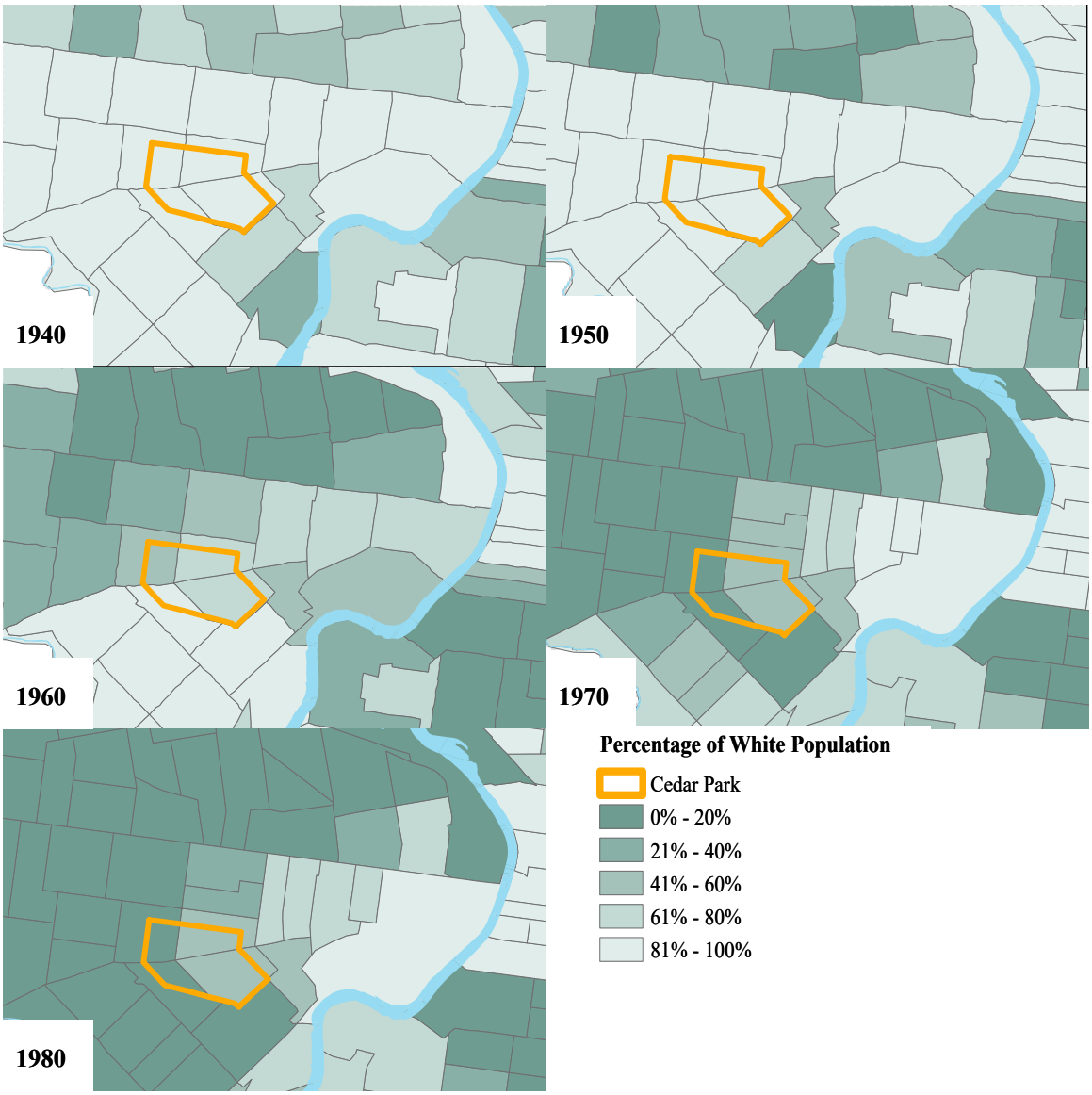

Figure 11: Racial Change by Tract in West Philadelphia, 1940-1980 (Source: Social Explorer, based upon U.S. Census)

In 1950, both Cedar Park and the adjacent neighborhood Cobb's Creek were over 95% white. By 1970, Cobb's Creek was compromised of 5.8% white residents. In comparison, Cedar Park was 54% white.[148] Figure 11 shows the percentage of white residents in West Philadelphia from 1940 to 1980.[149] While neighborhoods farther west became primarily Black, the two larger of the four census blocks that make up Cedar Park remained primarily white. While the neighborhood as a whole was integrated, on a block-by-block level, it remained fairly segregated. Multiple residents referred to 49th Street as a "color line."[150] In Figure 12, 1990 demographics on a block group level show the clear racial divide between east and west of 49th Street.[151] Jesse Mumm, a cultural anthropologist, calls this phenomenon, "intimate segregation."[152] Mumm argues that neighborhood racial change, like gentrification, does not create "integrated communities by increasing diversity, but rather established a new regime of racial segmentation."[153] This racial segmentation is both spatial but also "lived"—in other words, residents participate in the social and personal formation of racial boundaries.[154]

These racial boundaries were not just drawn between white and Black residents. Cedar Park's increased racial diversity in the 1970s and 1980s was also due to incoming

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[148] Blumgart, "The Changing Streets of Cedar Park."
[149] Racial Demographics of Philadelphia, PA, 1940-1980, National Historical Geographic Information System (NHGIS) (based on data from U.S. Census Bureau; accessed March 7, 2024).
[150] Lakey and Tate, interview with author.
[151] Racial Demographics of Philadelphia, PA, 1990, Social Explorer (based on data from U.S. Census Bureau; accessed February 15, 2024).
[152] Jesse Mumm, "Report from the Field: Redoing Chicago: Gentrification, Race, and Intimate Segregation," *North American Dialogue* 11, no. 1 (2008): 16–19. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1556-4819.2008.00007.
[153] Mumm, "Report from the Field: Redoing Chicago," 17.
[154] Mumm, "Report from the Field: Redoing Chicago," 18.

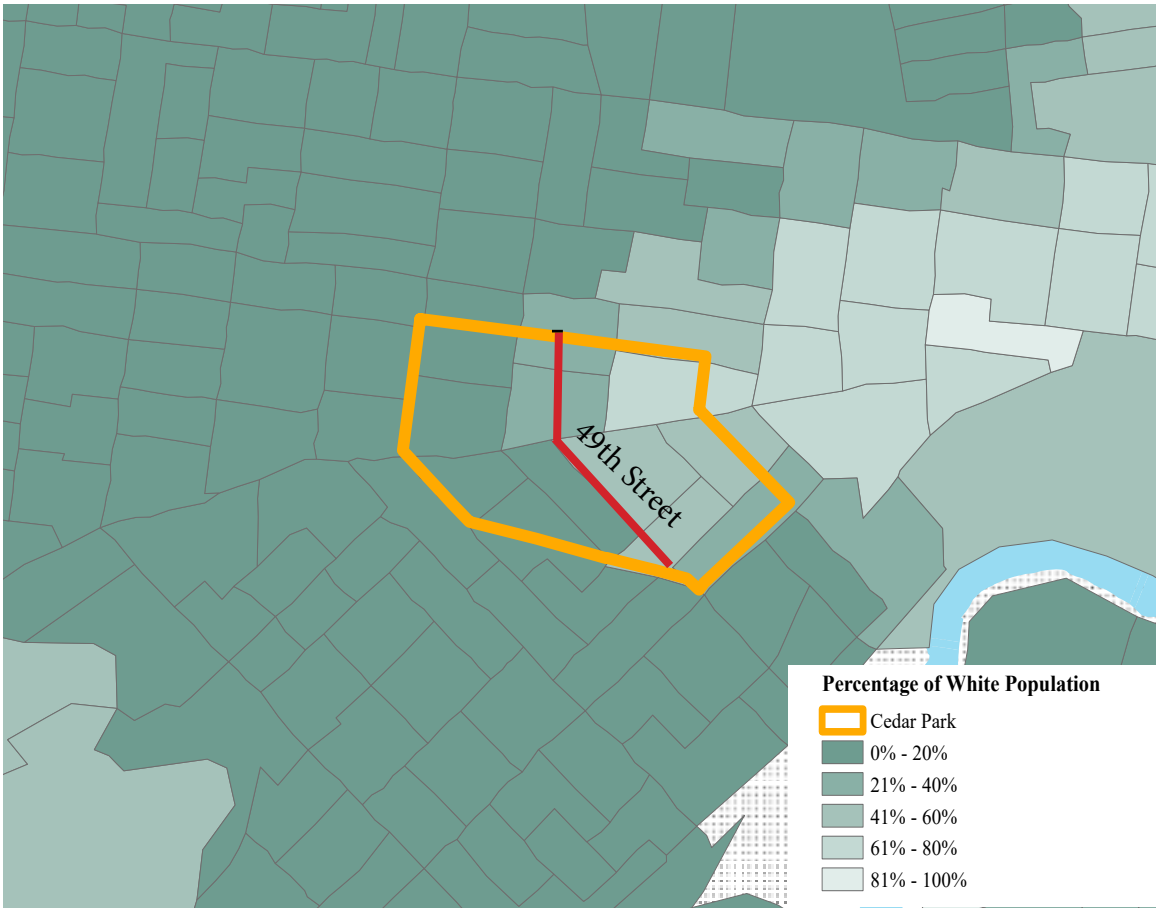

Figure 12: Cedar Park Racial Demographics by Block Group, 1990 (Source: IPUMS NHGIS, based upon U.S. Census)

immigrant communities. The first immigrant community were Southeast Asian refugees resettled in working-class neighborhoods of West and South Philadelphia.[155] One of the six resettlement programs that operated in Philadelphia during this time was the Catholic Social Services.[156] In his book on immigrant communities in Philadelphia, Domenic Vitiello credits the immigrant resettlement efforts in Cedar Park to two churches, Calvary United Methodist and St. Francis de Sales church, which "organized

[155] Domenic Vitiello, *The Sanctuary City: Immigrant, Refugee, and Receiving Communities in Postindustrial Philadelphia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022), 67.
[156] Vitiello, *The Sanctuary City,* 67.

committees on housing, language, socialization, crime and safety, and clothing and furniture distribution."[157] Figure 13 shows that the increase of foreign born residents in Cedar Park occurred primarily in the part of the neighborhood where the two churches reside. Maureen Tate, former Cedar Park Neighbor Board President, says that St. Francis de Sales, the Catholic Church in the heart of neighborhood, was "a big part of the immigrant story" in Cedar Park.[158] Former parishioners had willed houses in the neighborhood to de Sales, and the diocese then used those residences to house incoming refugees.[159]

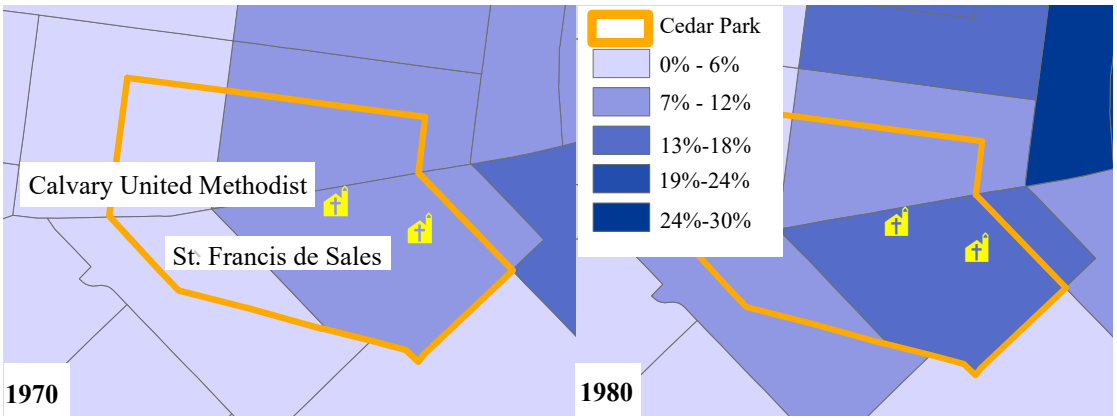

Figure 13: Percentage of Foreign-Born Residents, 1970 and 1990 (Source: Social Explorer, based on U.S. Census)

In addition to Southeast Asian immigrants, the neighborhood also became home to African immigrants, especially from Ethiopia and Eritrea. These immigrant communities started to shape the neighborhood. Baltimore Avenue, Cedar Park's commercial thoroughfare, which suffered economic decline through the 1960s and 1970s, saw a resurgence as Southeast Asian and African restaurants and grocery stores

[157] Vitiello, *The Sanctuary City,* 68.
[158] Tate, interview with author.
[159] Wolfe, interview with author.

moved into vacant storefronts.[160] Figure 14 shows Baltimore Avenue today, many Southeast Asian and Ethiopian restaurants reside on just a few blocks. These immigrant communities help to revitalize the neighborhood—so much so that, in early 2000 (as mentioned in the introduction of this thesis), a marketing campaign proclaimed that Cedar Park was "where the 34 trolley stops in 23 countries."[161]

Figure 14: Baltimore Avenue between 47th and 48th streets, (Source: Photograph by author, April 2024)

The efforts of Cedar Park Neighbors and Movement for a New Society are inextricably intertwined with these demographic changes. Cedar Park Neighbors was started by mostly white residents with socio-political power, whose goal was in part to keep white residents in the community. Gerry McHugh, the Cedar Park Neighbor member who devised many of the early strategies of the group, was a real estate agent

[160] Kromer, *Fixing Broken Cities,* 184.
[161] Tate, interview with author; Cedar Park: Where the Trolley Stops in 23 Countries, Pamphlet, Box 4, Folder 6, CPN Records.

and explicitly focused on stabilizing housing prices in the neighborhood.[162] The social, educational, and governmental structures they used in their early efforts were created for people like them—white middle-class homeowners. In his book, *Making Mexican Chicago*, Mike Amezcua argues that white homeowners during the 1960s and 1970s used racist practices, combined with pride in their neighborhood, "to innovate their own homegrown *restrictionist populism* to fortify themselves against the twinned perils of property devaluation and unwanted diversity" (emphasis added).[163] Amezcua argues that the presumed peril of lower property values was intertwined with incoming brown and (and in the case of Cedar Park) Black communities. In Chicago, white communities "marshaled local community networks" to get city officials to use rehabilitation and conservation in their neighborhoods instead of demolition.[164] Cedar Park Neighbors' early efforts are textbook examples of this "restrictionist populism" in action. In many ways, Cedar Park diversified despite the neighborhood association's early efforts, not because of them.

FHA-insured mortgages, a tool used by Cedar Park Neighbors, in particular have a long history of being used as tools of racial exclusion and redlining. A 1935 underwriting manual proclaimed: "if a neighborhood is to retain stability it is necessary that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same racial and social classes."[165] Some of the neighborhood stabilization tools that Cedar Park Neighbors used in the 1960s were not readily available to primarily Black neighborhoods in the city. Cedar

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[162] Maureen Tate, "In Memoriam: Gerald A. McHugh, Sr." Cedar Park Neighbors Newsletter, September 2013, https://issuu.com/cedarparkneighbors/docs/1309_web_cpn.
[163] Amezcua, *Making Mexican Chicago*, 8.
[164] Amezcua, *Making Mexican Chicago*, 8, 48.
[165] Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2017), 83.

Park and the Black Bottom were both classified as part of the University City urban renewal area that designated the area as the slum. Cedar Park received rehabilitation loans; the Black Bottom got demolition and displacement. While other factors played into this difference (for example, the housing stock of Cedar Park was better made and maintained), the privileges and power afforded to Cedar Park Neighbors to manage change in their neighborhood were not afforded to nearby Black neighborhoods. Even when the FHA changed their policies in 1967 to make "home programs available for the purchase, sale and improvement of properties throughout the inner city" in the United States, the ways in which this mandate was enacted was often harmful to Black homeowners and the communities they lived in.[166]

Movement for a New Society, while mostly looking for large cheap houses, also hoped that their presence as a primarily white, working- and middle-class group could help stabilize the neighborhood. However, the group was acutely aware of their own biases. Just as the group tried to reflect on their classism and sexism, they also interrogated their racism; specifically connecting this process with how to get along better with their neighbors in Cedar Park. A 1977 flyer for a "Forum on Racism" asks: "What are the blocks that keep MNS individuals[,] houses[, and] collectives from reaching out creatively and delightingly to the wider West Philly neighborhood?" [167] As time went on, the group also grew more self-aware about how their presence affected the neighborhood. As George Lakey said in an interview in 2010, MNS were sometimes

[166] Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 34, 135.
[167] Forum on Racism, Flyer, 1977, Series 2 Box 3 of 19, DG 154 ACC 2015-031, MNS Records.

considered the first "colonizers" in the neighborhood.[168] Members were concerned not only about whether their presence was contributing to gentrification in the neighborhood, but also about how the residents of Cedar Park perceived them. Nancy Brigham, a Movement for a New Society member who stayed in Cedar Park said, "I think there are people who are still in this neighborhood who really resented MNS because it felt so separate."[169]

The presence of a large politically-alternative group with progressive sexual politics like Movement for a New Society may have played a role in making the neighborhood attractive to other individuals looking for a safe space. Perhaps due in part to Movement for a New Society, Cedar Park continued to attract a certain type of progressive throughout the later-half of the twentieth-century. Lou Antosh in his 1977 series "Philadelphia, the changing city," for the *Evening Bulletin* wrote:

> "The artists, homosexuals, esthetic types, with a yen for vibrant city life, move in first while the home prices are low enough to fit their resources. Then come the professionals, who send house values skyward."[170]

Like many "back-to-city" movements, the roots white progressives planted in the twentieth century have resulted in gentrification pressures in the twenty-first. While the neighborhood was primarily Black from 1980-2010, Cedar Park is now majority white as seen in Figure 15.[171]

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[168] George Lakey, interview by Dorothy Flanagan, July 22, 2006, transcript, Box 5 of 5, DG 154 Acc 08A-077, MNS Records.
[169] Nancy Brigham, interview by Dorothy Flanagan, June 22, 2006, transcript, Box 5 of 5, DG 154 Acc 08A-077, MNS Records.
[170] Lou Antosh, "Philadelphia, the changing city," *Evening Bulletin* (March, 1977), Article, Box 120 - UAP638-21, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
[171] Figure 15 is the composite of the four census blocks that make up Cedar Park. However, the census blocks do match the neighborhood exactly and the two census blocks that make up a larger portion of the neighborhood remained whiter through the latter half of the twentieth century. Thus, while Figure 15 shows the general change of the neighborhood over time, it does not accurately represent true percentages for

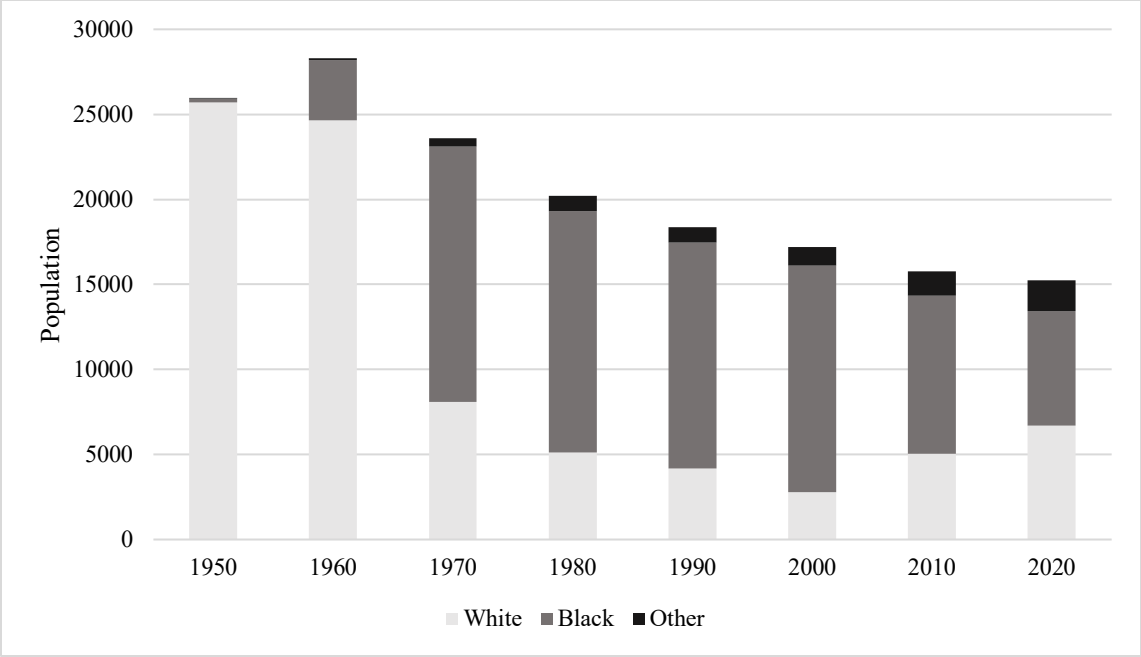

Figure 15: Racial Change in Cedar Park, 1970-2020 (Source: Social Explorer, based on U.S. Census)

While often described as being in transition, Cedar Park has remained a racially mixed neighborhood for over fifty years. Cedar Park Neighbors' original aims mirrored 'restrictionist populist' neighborhood movements across the United States—to manage change in the neighborhood: economic, social, and racial. In many of those aims, the group was fairly successful. Racial change occurred much more slowly than neighborhoods farther west, and Cedar Park Neighbors itself turned into a multi-racial group. However, it is not clear whether this continued racial diversity was due to their rehabilitation efforts or to the larger economic and social factors at play. Movement for a New Society wanted an integrated neighborhood and worked against the gentrification they saw taking place. However, their presence itself may have played a role in the

Cedar Park. Racial Demographics of Philadelphia, PA, 1970-2020, Social Explorer (based on data from U.S. Census Bureau; accessed April 14, 2024); Emily Dowdall, "Philadelphia's Changing Neighborhoods: Gentrification and Other Shifts since 2000," (Philadelphia: The Pew Charitable Trusts) May 19, 2016, http://pew.org/1TXTXY7.

gentrification. Ultimately, white people, even well-meaning ones, can cause a great deal of harm. The efforts of both groups must be placed in conversation with the larger harm that was enacted to Black and brown communities during urban renewal.

Part 6: Community Building as Historic Preservation

In 1998, a large portion of Cedar Park's buildings were added to the National Register for Historic Places as part of the West Philadelphia Streetcar Suburb Historic District, see (Figure 16). The nomination was part of efforts for local designation spurred by the adjacent neighborhood Spruce Hill.[172] Despite serious opposition, Spruce Hill attempted local designation in 1987 and 2002.[173] The Cedar Park neighborhood, despite its wealth

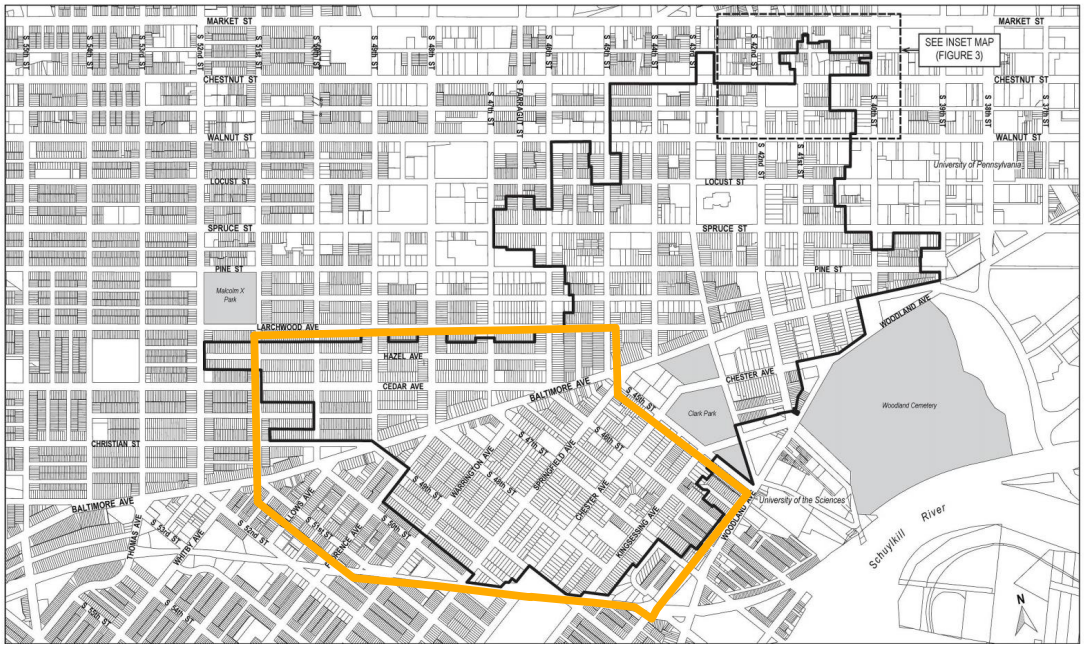

Figure 16: Boundaries of West Philadelphia Streetcar Suburb National Historic District, Cedar Park in Orange (Source: National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Collection, accessed March 15, 2024)

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[172] Sophie Calla Zionts, "The 'Threat' of District Designation: Preservation or Gentrification?," Masters Thesis (University of Pennsylvania, 2023), 47.
[173] Zionts, "The 'Threat' of District Designation," 2.

of historic resources—as evidenced by its inclusion in the National Register—has never had a similar push for historic designation.[174] Instead of enacting preservation through regulation, Cedar Park Neighbors and Movement for a New Society pursued preservation through other means. By focusing on the social fabric of the neighborhood, their efforts also helped preserve the physical fabric. Most of the efforts of these groups were not labeled or viewed as preservation at the time. However, what these groups described as neighborhood "stabilization" helped preserve not just the built environment of the neighborhood but also the social and cultural character of the community. Cedar Park is an example of how focusing on the preservation of social *and* physical fabric of a neighborhood is a legitimate preservation practice that can create diverse, thriving neighborhoods.

While the efforts of the two groups analyzed in this thesis were not directed towards traditional historic designation and regulation at the time, they were nevertheless intertwined with the ongoing conversation surrounding preservation efforts. Since the first historic districts were designated in Charleston, South Carolina and the French Quarter in New Orleans in the 1930s, the question of the role of historic preservation in urban planning has been explored by academics and practitioners.[175] In 1966, federal policy continued to expand the formerly "curatorial" and "patriotic" field of historic preservation into neighborhood planning with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), which created the National Register of Historic Places and

[174] Katherine Dowdell, interview with author.
[175] Stephanie Ryberg-Webster and Kelly L. Kinahan, "Historic Preservation and Urban Revitalization in the Twenty-First Century," *Journal of Planning Literature* 29, no. 2 (May 2014), 120.

the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.[176] By the latter half of the twentieth century, local historic district efforts and the widening of federal preservation policy created a ripe debate on the role of historic preservation in urban planning and revitalization efforts.[177]

Early academic discussion on the role of historic preservation and planning policy mostly focused on the *economic* effects of the early historic districts on local communities.[178] Boasberg, a lawyer, wrote in 1976 that "the historic preservation movement, as it grows, is also broadening its base and enlarging its objectives."[179] The argument for the positive effects of historic preservation like increased property values became more prevalent.[180] This economic argument in support of historic preservation grew in the 1990s due to the Historic Tax Credit. Historic preservation was no longer just of interest to historians and advocates, but also to investors.[181] The economic benefits of preservation were often placed within the context of urban neighborhoods. Wonjo in the *Journal of Planning Literature* argues that "historic preservation and economic development are two ingredients used to revitalize cities."[182]

As the discussion of the role of historic preservation in community planning expanded in the latter half of the twentieth century, the 'community benefits' argument

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[176] Ryberg-Webster and Kanahan, "Historic Preservation and Urban Revitalization," 120.
[177] Stephanie R. Ryberg, "Neighborhood Stabilization through Historic Preservation: An Analysis of Historic Preservation and Community Development in Cleveland, Providence, Houston and Seattle." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2010.
[178] BAH (Booz, Allen, and Hamilton), "The Contribution of Historic Preservation to Urban Revitalization," January 1979, United States: Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, 1979, i-ii.
[179] Tersh Boasberg, "Historic Preservation: Suggested Directions for Federal Legislation Historic Preservation Symposium," *Wake Forest Law Review* 12, no. 1 (1976), 76.
[180] BAH (Booz, Allen, and Hamilton), "The Contribution of Historic Preservation," 4.
[181] Christopher T. Wojno, "Historic Preservation and Economic Development," *Journal of Planning Literature* 5, no. 3 (February 1, 1991), 297.
[182] Wonjo, "Historic Preservation and Economic Development," 296.

emerged, as did the debate on the role of preservation in displacement. In a 1981 volume of the *Stanford Law Review*, Rose discusses the broadening scope of historic preservation beyond the purview of museums and landmarks, highlighting its utility for diverse purposes including community stabilization, environmental aims, and downtown revitalization.[183] This widening of the uses of historic preservation during the 1980s also posed problems. Rose argues that "the phrase 'historic preservation' is so elastic that any sort of project can be justified—or any change vilified—in its name."[184] This vilification was often the role preservation played in displacement and gentrification. Since the 1970s, scholars like Michael deHaven Newsom have argued that preservation causes displacement in lower-income and specifically Black communities.[185] In the 1980s, Rose called the issue of displacement the "albatross" of historic preservation.[186] Displacement was often a reality in early preservation projects, such as Georgetown in Washington DC and Society Hill in Philadelphia.[187]

Gentrification and displacement were also issues in neighborhoods affected by "brownstoning" or "back-to-the-city" movement, where a white liberal middle class moved into lower-income city neighborhoods to "revive" them. Sulieman Osman chronicles this process in Brooklyn in his book, *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Postwar New York.* He writes:

> Rather than seeking race and class homogeneity, middle-class beatniks, radicals, settlement workers, and gay men pushed into poor districts in search of "diversity." Rather than rejecting the aging dilapidated housing stock of the

[183] Carol M. Rose, "Preservation and Community: New Directions in the Law of Historic Preservation," Stanford Law Review 33, no. 3 (1981): https://doi.org/10.2307/1228356, 476.
[184] Rose, "Preservation and Community," 476.
[185] Michael DeHaven Newsom, "Blacks and Historic Preservation," *Law and Contemporary Problems* 36, no. 3 (1971), 424.
[186] Rose, "Preservation and Community," 478.
[187] Newsom, "Blacks and Historic Preservation," 424; Ammon, "Resisting Gentrification," 9.

> inner city, brownstoners sought to purchase, restore, and preserve the "historic" architecture of the urban core.[188]

This process was mirrored in neighborhoods across the United States, with examples of Dupont Circle in Washington, DC and others.[189] In some ways, Cedar Park mirrors this type of movement. Members of the Movement for a New Society could be described as middle-class beatniks, radicals, and gay men. However, the members of Cedar Park Neighbors didn't move into the neighborhood; they were already residents. Gerald McHugh was born and raised in Cedar Park.[190] Despite these differences, Cedar Park's postwar evolution fits within this "back-to-the-city" movement more so than "traditional" preservation planning of this time.

The "traditional" preservation methods of local historic district designation often serve as the focal point in studies examining the connection between neighborhoods and preservation. However, as public historian Andrew Hurley argues, there are caveats:

> "while these preservation initiatives, often supported by government tax incentives and rigid architectural controls, deserve credit for bringing people back to the city, raising property values, and generating tourist revenue, they have been less successful at creating stable and harmonious communities."[191]

In a 2014 literature review, Ryberg-Webster and Kanahan similarly state that scholarship on the relationship between preservation and neighborhood revitalization is still at a "nascent stage."[192]

In the twentieth century, preservation has focused on protecting the built fabric

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[188] Suleiman Osman, *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Postwar New York* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 10.
[189] Osman, *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn,* 8.
[190] Schleifer, "Gerald A. McHugh Sr., civic activist."
[191] Andrew Hurley, *Beyond Preservation: Using Public History to Revitalize Inner Cities* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), x.
[192] Ryberg-Webster and Kanahan, "Historic Preservation and Urban Revitalization," 122.

of cities, then studying the effects of these preservation efforts on the social and economic health of the neighborhood, in that order. In the twenty-first century, preservation as a field is moving away from a heritage-value perspective focused on the built fabric to a societal-values approach that "foregrounds broader forces forming the contexts of heritage places as well as the non-heritage functions of heritage places."[193] This expanded societal-values approach is also expanding to neighborhood preservation, where scholars and practitioners look beyond the physical fabric of urban neighborhoods to the social and cultural fabric, including the people who live there. For example, preservation scholar Trent Nichols looks at the role of historic preservation as one of "comprehensive community initiatives" and analyzes neighborhood plans that "address the historic built environment, heritage, and cultural history, seeking ways to preserve these while also trying to avoid widespread displacement of current residents, mostly low- and moderate-income."[194]

As the field expands the connection between preservation and neighborhood planning in the twenty-first century, looking back at twentieth-century community-building efforts through the lens of preservation can help clarify what *is* preservation. The history of neighborhoods like Cedar Park reveals that while this conceptualization of community-building within preservation may be new, the practice itself is not. Many of the efforts of Cedar Park Neighbors and Movement for a New Society—like the renovation of the Demonstration House and Stone House, federal rehabilitation loans,

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[193] Erica Avrami and Randall Mason, "Introduction," in *Values in Heritage Management: Emerging Approaches and Research Directions*, ed. Susan Macdonald, David Myers, Randall Mason, and Erica Avrami (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2019), 28, https://directory.doabooks.org/handle/20.500.12854/61848.

[194] Trent Nichols, "Protecting the Neighborhood: Historic Preservation and Community Development," *Forum Journal* 26, no. 1 (Fall 2011), 42-43.

low-cost home repairs, the adaptive reuse of the firehouse—can clearly be identified as preservation through this expanded lens.

In addition to rehabilitation projects, the two groups' community-building efforts should also be viewed as preservation. Cedar Park Neighbors worked to clean and green vacant lots and care for abandoned houses. Movement for a New Society created a non-police centered neighborhood safety program and a community land trust. From a planning perspective, greening vacant lots, caring for abandoned homes, and creating shared-equity housing are proven ways to make neighborhoods more stable.[195] Community-building activities that focus on the social fabric of the neighborhood should also be viewed as historic preservation in a societal-value perspective.[196] Case studies like Cedar Park show that neighborhoods focused on these efforts—sometimes described as "community building," "place-based" planning, or "revitalization"—within historically significant areas, can effectively preserve both the social *and* physical fabric of the neighborhood.

The self-described "stabilization" efforts of Cedar Park Neighbors and Movement for a New Society were all about managing change over time. Over many years, these efforts created a diverse neighborhood, with community members that adapted, reused, and preserved high-style Victorian residences and buildings for future

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[195] See the works of Eugenia South on greening vacant land and improving abandoned housing: Eugenia C. South et al., "Effect of Abandoned Housing Interventions on Gun Violence, Perceptions of Safety, and Substance Use in Black Neighborhoods: A Citywide Cluster Randomized Trial," *JAMA Internal Medicine* 183, no. 1 (January 1, 2023): 31–39, https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2022.5460; Eugenia C. South, et al., "Effect of Greening Vacant Land on Mental Health of Community-Dwelling Adults: A Cluster Randomized Trial," *JAMA Network Open* 1, no. 3 (July 20, 2018), e180298, https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2018.0298; For land trust, see Cassim Shepard, "Land Power," *Places Journal*, July 26, 2022, https://doi.org/10.22269/220726.
[196] Avrami and Mason, "Introduction," 28-30.

generations. As Cedar Park continues to evolve and change—today dealing with gentrification and displacement—these historic efforts can help inform future planning efforts.

Part 7: Planning for the Future

Cedar Park, once struggling to retain residents, now faces the opposite problem: rising housing prices are displacing residents. As journalist Jake Blumgart asks in a *Philadelphia Magazine* piece exploring gentrification in Cedar Park: "can integration actually be a long-term condition in a grand old neighborhood just to the west of the University of Pennsylvania?"[197] The location of the University of Pennsylvania (Penn) is especially relevant. In January 2022, the University of Pennsylvania announced it would invest $4.1 million in Lea Elementary, one of the elementary schools serving Cedar Park.[198] Figure 17 is a map of the school catchments of Cedar Park. The last school that Penn invested in is argued to have significantly contributed to rapid gentrification in certain sections of Spruce Hill neighborhood; called the "Penn-Alexander effect" by the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.[199] Stephanie Fahringer, president of the Lea Home and School Association, said in 2022: "there's this mixture of excitement for what could be, and a little trepidation for what could also be."[200]

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[197] Blumgart, "The Changing Streets of Cedar Park."
[198] Kristen A. Graham, "Penn is investing $4.1M in Lea Elementary. That's both promising and risky, the community says," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 20, 2022, https://www.inquirer.com/news/lea-penn-philadelphia-school-district-partnership-20220130.html.
[199] Meagan M. Ehlenz, "Neighborhood Revitalization and the Anchor Institution: Assessing the Impact of the University of Pennsylvania's West Philadelphia Initiatives on University City," *Urban Affairs Review* 52, no. 5 (September 1, 2016), 740; Samantha Melamed, "The Penn Alexander effect: Is there any room left for low-income residents in University City?," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 1, 2018, https://www.inquirer.com/philly/news/penn-alexander-university-city-west-philly-low-income-affordable-housing-20181101.html.
[200] Kristen A. Graham, "Penn is investing $4.1M in Lea Elementary."

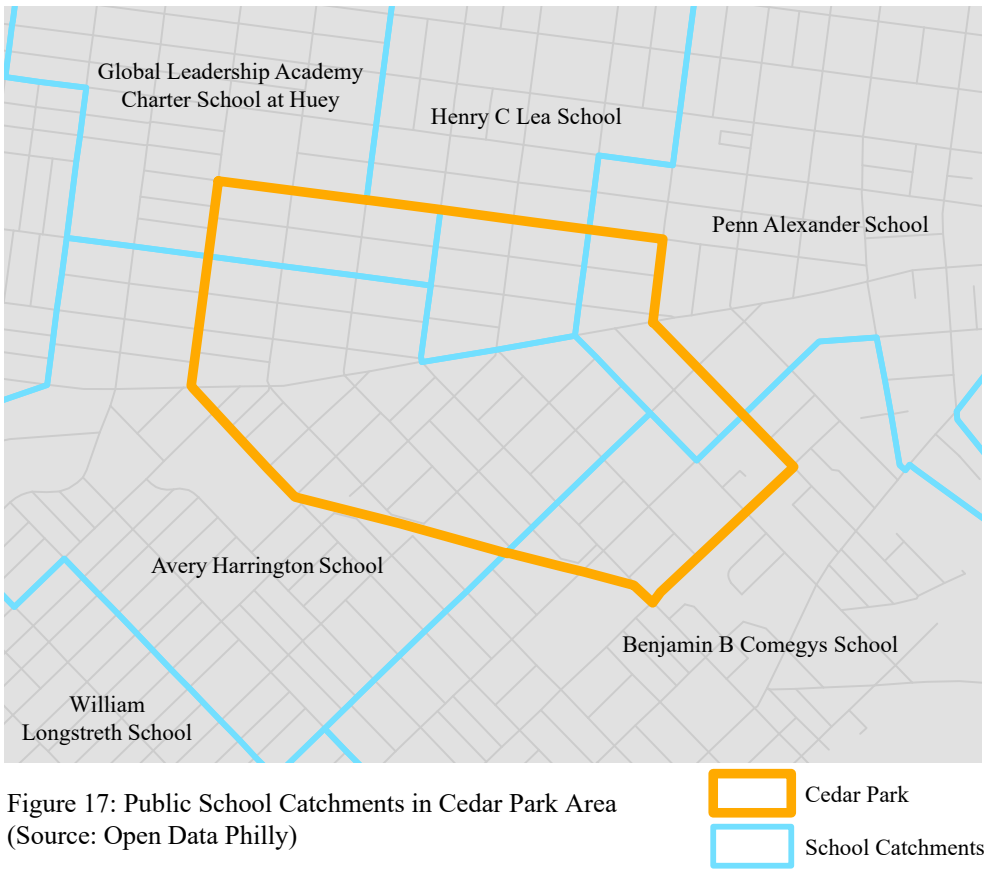

Figure 17: Public School Catchments in Cedar Park Area
(Source: Open Data Philly)

The controversy surrounding a new housing development in Cedar Park also reveals the tensions surrounding housing, development, and gentrification in the area. A 76-unit apartment building in the neighborhood (planned for an empty lot at 48th Street and Chester Avenue) received extreme pushback from some area residents, despite support from Cedar Park Neighbors. Due to the pushback, the developer downsized the development to 22 single-family homes in early 2024.[201] The push-and-pull between single-family housing and multi-family housing is still very alive in Cedar Park today. As the housing crisis worsens and the community faces development pressure, these tensions will continue to grow.

[201] Jake Blumgart, "Duplexes Are Now Planned at West Philly Site Dubbed the 'Poop Building' by Social Media," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 29, 2024, https://www.inquirer.com/real-estate/commercial/cedar-park-single-family-home-development-20240129.html.

The term ‘urban stabilization’ is often used when neighborhoods are facing economic decline, but the term can also apply to neighborhoods facing gentrification. As Cedar Park continues to face new urban pressures in the twenty-first century, can the methods employed by Cedar Park Neighbors and Movement for a New Society guide future planning efforts during another time of urban flux?

The historical efforts of Cedar Park Neighbors and Movement for a New Society to achieve neighborhood stabilization in the past suggest five key practices for continued stabilization in the future: 1) Apply existing zoning overlays; 2) Utilize funds for rehabilitation and implement education programs to increase use; 3) Advocate for zoning variations beyond traditional family structures; 4) Create permanently affordable housing, and 5) Maintain abandoned houses and vacant lots.

1. Apply existing zoning overlays

One of the first actions that the Cedar Park Neighbors took was to advocate for expansion of the University City Urban Renewal Area to include Cedar Park. The expansion of the Urban Renewal Area was a zoning overlay that opened the neighborhood to programs and funding from the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authorityand the US Department of Housing and Development (HUD).

Cedar Park is currently under the Mixed-Income Neighborhood Overlay District. This district “requires developers building in certain areas to provide 20% of their units at affordable rents in any new Residential Housing Projects. The units must be affordable to households earning up to 40% to 60% of the Area Median Income

(AMI)."[202] This overlay helps keep future housing in the neighborhood affordable, but there are other zoning overlays that could also help the neighborhood.

The majority of Cedar Park could be eligible to become a local historic district, as it is already a National Historic District. However, the neighboring community Spruce Hill has a checkered history with historic districts. Several attempts to become a historic district have been stopped by local politicians and community fears of the role of designation in contributing to gentrification.[203] As a result, the Spruce Hill Neighborhood Community Association and the University City Historical Society are in the process of pursuing the designation of the neighborhood in "quadrants."[204] In several of my conversations with current or former members of Cedar Park Neighbors, it was clear that community leaders are not interested in creating a local historic district, partly because historic districts can be financially burdensome for residents. While the Philadelphia Historic Commission is currently working on a less restrictive version of historic districts based on recommendation from a recent Preservation Task Force, this new district may take years to implement.[205]

A zoning overlay that could be helpful for Cedar Park is a Neighborhood Conservation District. The idea of a Neighborhood Conservation District came from the need for an alternative to historic districts, which uses "a lesser degree of regulation" to

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[202] City of Philadelphia, Department of Planning and Development, "Mixed-Income Neighborhood Overlay District," City of Philadelphia, July 2022, https://www.phila.gov/media/20220720100355/22051311-v1.0-MIN-Fact-Sheet.pdf.
[203] Zionts, "The 'Threat' of District Designation," 4-8.
[204] "Philadelphia Historical Commission Public," Spruce Hill Community Association, February 15, 2024, https://www.sprucehillca.org/.
[205] Heather Hendrickson (Preservation Planner at Philadelphia Historic Commission), in conversation with author, March 28, 2023; Harris M. Steinberg and Dominique Hawkins, "The Past is Prologue: Philadelphia's Historic Preservation Movement Celebrates Its Successes While Looking Toward the Future," *Context – AIA Philadelphia*, Spring 2024, 12.

help preserve a neighborhood's historic resources.[206] Conservation districts were created as both a planning and preservation tool.[207] Guidelines for conservation districts are developed in conversation with communities and only apply to new construction and substantial renovation.[208] Queen Village, a neighborhood on the east side of Philadelphia, enacted the first conservation district in 2008. It has been a successful tool to manage change in a neighborhood without the strict guidelines of historic designation. A conservation overlay district could be a helpful tool for Cedar Park to manage its built heritage.

2. Utilize funds for rehabilitation and implement education programs to increase use

Both Cedar Park Neighbors and Movement for a New Society played a role in the rehabilitation of housing in the neighborhood. Cedar Park Neighbors worked to get the neighborhood certified for 312 rehabilitation loans, which over 200 households used. Members of Movement for a New Society ran the People's Carpentry and Painting Collective to provide low-cost maintenance to neighbors. In addition to acquiring the funds for rehabilitation, Cedar Park Neighbors also worked to educate residents about the use of funds. The creation of the Demonstration House and multiple pamphlets reveal that education was a significant part of how Cedar Park Neighbors worked in the neighborhood in the 1960s. However, in meeting minutes, Cedar Park Neighbors often complained of the slow use of these programs and hoped the Redevelopment Authority

[206] Deborah Marquis Kelly and Jennifer Goodman, "Conservation Districts As An Alternative To Historic Districts: Viable planning tools for maintaining the character of older neighborhoods," *Forum Journal* 7, no. 5 (1993): 6, muse.jhu.edu/article/906100.
[207] Kelly and Goodman, "Conservation Districts," 7.
[208] Mike Hauptman, "Neighborhood Conservation District," Queen Village Neighbors Association, July 3, 2013, http://www.qvna.org/qvna/neighborhoodconservation-district/.

would allocate more funds for education.[209] This suggests that just as important as rehabilitation funds are educational resources to make sure residents know about the existence and proper use of said funds.

In July 2022, the Whole-Home Repairs Program was signed into state law and received a $125 million appropriation.[210] While "overwhelming demand," political in-fighting, and administrative challenges have marred the program's initial bipartisan success story and the release of the funds, the program is still an unprecedented move of financial support for home repairs in Pennsylvania.[211] This is not the only program that exists—Philadelphia has other home repair programs including the Restore, Repair, Renew Program that "helps Philadelphia homeowners access low-interest loans to make home improvements."[212] There is also the Basic System Repair program which offers free repairs to correct 'electrical, plumbing, heating, limited structural and carpentry, and roofing emergencies.'[213] Strawberry Mansion CDC, another neighborhood in Philadelphia with many historic residences, has used these programs and additional grant funding to implement a comprehensive home repair program.[214] These programs can help Cedar Park residents repair their homes; an educational

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[209] Special Meeting, Minutes, May 21, 1968. Cedar Park Neighbors, Box 1, Folder 7, 2019-25, CPN Records.
[210] "Whole Home Repairs Program," Senator Nikil Saval 1st Senatorial District, accessed March 16, 2024, https://www.pasenatorsaval.com/wholehomerepairs/.
[211] Charlotte Keith, "Demand for Pennsylvania's Whole-Home Repairs Program has been overwhelming, but more funding is on hold," *Spotlight PA* (Harrisburg, PA), Dec. 11, 2023, https://www.spotlightpa.org/news/2023/12/pennsylvania-whole-home-repairs-program-shortage-budget-impasse-legislature/.
[212] PHDC, "Philadelphia Neighborhood Home Preservation Loan Program," *PHDC Philadelphia*, accessed March 17, 2024, https://www.phila.gov/services/property-lots-housing/get-home-improvement-help/apply-for-a-low-interest-home-improvement-loan/.
[213] PHDC, "Basic Systems Repair Program," accessed April 16, 2024, https://phdcphila.org/residents-and-landlords/home-repair-and-improvements/basic-systems-repair-program/.
[214] Strawberry Mansion CDC, "Strawberry Mansion Historic Home Repair Program," *Strawberry Mansion CDC Home Page*, accessed April 16, 2024, https://www.strawberrymansioncdc.org/strawberry-mansion-historic-home-re.

campaign could help bring attention to these already existing programs.

3. Advocate for zoning variations beyond traditional family structures

Movement for a New Society was often in legal negotiations with Philadelphia's Department of Licenses and Inspection.[215] While some of these interactions went well and the group was able to secure zoning variances, many of these interactions were antagonistic as the group was slapped with fines for running "illegal boarding houses." In the late 1970s, John Kromer, then chairing Cedar Park Neighbor's zoning committee, was in conversations with local groups in Cedar Park to try to work with the city on zoning that would allow communal living in single-family homes.[216] Cedar Park Neighbors wanted to differentiate between groups like Movement for a New Society and boarding houses, which they were against.

There is now room in Philadelphia zoning code under "group living" that could apply to groups like Movement for a New Society. However, there have been "controversial" suggestions for changes in the zoning code that would allow for more housing outside of traditional family structures. In 2018, Dave Perri, Philadelphia's Commissioner of Licenses and Inspections, suggested to "responsibly put rooming houses back into neighborhoods."[217] Right now, Philadelphia's zoning code only allows for a few single-room occupancy units (SROs).[218] However, if that zoning does change

[215] Minutes from the Annual Meeting of the Life Center Association, November 28, 1978, Series 1 Box 5 of 8, DG 154 Acc 2015-031, MNS Records.
[216] CPN Zoning Minutes, January 1978, Box 2, Folder 10, CPN Records; John Kromer, email with author, March 30, 2024.
[217] Jake Blumgart, "Dave Perri's controversial solution to Philly's housing crisis," *WHYY* (Philadelphia, PA), May 8, 2018, https://whyy.org/segments/dave-perris-controversial-solution-to-phillys-housing-crisis/.
[218] Jake Blumgart, "Rooms for rent: Inside Philadelphia's shadow housing market," *WHYY* (Philadelphia, PA), March 28, 2019, https://whyy.org/articles/rooms-for-rent-inside-philadelphias-shadow-housing-market/.

in the future as Perri hoped, legal, registered rooming houses could be a good option for keeping housing in Cedar Park affordable. Cedar Park has many large three- or four-story Victorian homes. The size of these houses made them well-suited as communal houses for Movement for a New Society—in contemporary society, they are adaptable for purposes beyond single-family residences. Advocating for increased flexible zoning in the neighborhood, including permitted boarding houses, could be another way to increase affordable housing in the neighborhood and fit the historic architecture to a modern-day use. The neighborhood already contains multifamily conversions of the large Queen Annes. Boarding houses could be another affordable option to reuse the large former single-family homes.

4. Create permanently affordable housing

A key issue in many gentrifying neighborhoods such as Cedar Park is housing affordability. When Movement for a New Society realized that their presence was influencing housing prices in the neighborhood, they created a land trust for several of their homes to keep them permanently affordable. While the footprint and impact of the Life Center Association (as the land trust is now known) is relatively small, land trusts are a good way to keep housing affordable in the long term.

In the land trust model, land is held communally by a single nonprofit owner, while ground leases are given to individuals.[219] The community land trust model "confers the stability of homeownership while protecting residents from the property

[219] John Emmeus Davis, "The Community Land Trust Reader," Lincoln Institute for Land Policy, (May 2010), https://www.lincolninst.edu/publications/books/community-land-trust-reader, 8.

market's inherent instability."[220] Community land trusts in the United States are rooted in the Civil Rights era and were originally focused on rural areas.[221] However, as the housing crisis has escalated in cities across the United States, community land trusts have become a way to keep housing affordable and land in the hands of communities. Organizations like the International Center for Community Land Trusts keep track and support CLTs around the world. Think tanks like the Lincoln Institute for Land Policy and nonprofits like Resident Owned Communities are working to increase shared-equity housing across the United States.[222] As the housing crisis continues, the community land trust model can be an effective way to keep housing affordable and keep the community of Cedar Park in control of its own future.

5. Maintain abandoned houses and vacant lots

Both Cedar Park Neighbors and the Movement for a New Society were interested in maintaining and restoring abandoned houses and vacant lots. Philadelphia has a longstanding tradition of greening vacant land.[223] The City of Philadelphia in conjunction with Philadelphia Horticultural Society cares for 13,000 lots across the city.[224] Randomized trials have shown that greening and maintaining vacant land has a positive effect on residents' mental health and reduces crime and violence.[225] Cedar Park Neighbors' interest in maintaining vacant lots and houses came primarily from this

[220] Shepard, "Land Power," Part 1.
[221] Shepard, "Land Power," Part 2.
[222] Davis, "The Community Land Trust Reader,"; ROC USA, "Empowering communities, building a brighter future," *ROC USA*, accessed March 17, 2024, https://www.rocusa.org/equity/.
[223] Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, "Transforming Vacant Land," *PHS*, Accessed March 17, 2024, https://phsonline.org/programs/transforming-vacant-land.
[224] Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, "Transforming Vacant Land."
[225] South et al., "Effect of Abandoned Housing Interventions,"; South et al., "Effect of Greening Vacant Land."

desire to decrease neighborhood crime.[226] Greening vacant lots and maintaining vacant houses can be an important tool for the social and physical health of the neighborhood.

In the 1970s, Cedar Park Neighbors' Vacant Buildings Committee developed into a short-lived corporation that bought, rehabilitated, and sold abandoned houses. While abandoned housing is no longer as much of an issue in Cedar Park (indeed, another effect of gentrification), this model could be used for future endeavors. There are several properties in the neighborhood currently controlled by Philadelphia's Land Bank.[227] Several of the renovated buildings in the 1970s were given to the CDC by the City of Philadelphia. Newly instated Mayor Cherelle Parker has vowed to start an evaluation of the Philadelphia Land Bank.[228] If Mayor Parker focuses her office's efforts on better use of vacant land and housing, there could be an opportunity for Cedar Park Neighbors to work with the city to create more affordable housing in the neighborhood.

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While some of the aforementioned practices like zoning overlays and applying funds for rehabilitation are often viewed as historic preservation, other tools like advocating for zoning variations beyond traditional family structures, creating permanently affordable housing, and maintaining abandoned houses and vacant lots are often perceived as falling within the realm of planning and community development. However, as Cedar Park continues to plan for its future, these tools can help manage

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[226] Tate, interview with author.
[227] Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation, "Property Search Map," PHDC Philadelphia, accessed April 1, 2024, https://phdcphila.org/land/buy-land/property-search-map/.
[228] Lynette Hazelton, "After a Controversial First Decade, What Challenges Does the Philly Land Bank Face Now? Five Advocates Offer Advice," *The Philadelphia Inquirer,* March 10, 2024, https://www.inquirer.com/news/philadelphia/philadelphia-land-bank-advocates-advice-20240310.html.

change in the social, as well as physical fabric, of the neighborhood. Early preservation methods often focused solely on the built environment, sometime causing harm to the social fabric. The two sides of preservation are not in competition, but rather can support each other. Strengthening the social fabric of a neighborhood supports both current residents and the physical built environment. While some physical integrity may be lost, the positive effect on residents outweighs this loss. And while Cedar Park Neighbors and Movement for a New Society's actions sometimes caused harm to residents in the community, this harm pales in comparison to early preservation efforts that focused solely on the physical fabric like Society Hill in Philadelphia or Georgetown in Washington, DC. Preservationists should strive to protect both the social and physical fabric of places—by focusing on the social fabric, they can do both.

Conclusion

The Cedar Park neighborhood in West Philadelphia is made up of tree-lined streets with large Queen Anne houses and a vibrant commercial corridor. But the community is much more than just its impressive architecture. While much has changed since the 1960s, the social and physical fabric of the community remain strong. Through urban decline, white flight, the "return-to-the-city" movement, and now a development boom, the community has remained uniquely diverse in terms of race and ethnicity compared to the rest of West Philadelphia. Many of the social and economic factors that shaped, and continue to shape, Cedar Park are atypical. The neighborhood is near the University of Pennsylvania and benefited from that connection; but it is not so close to the university as to face development pressures of student housing, like Spruce Hill, or

decimation like the Black Bottom. The neighborhood has a significant amount of high-style Queen Anne architecture built in brick and stone. Other neighborhoods in Philadelphia with more modest, vernacular buildings were easier to demolish. The size of the neighborhood is relatively small, so the rehabilitation of several hundred residences can make a significant impact. There are many ways in which the particularities of Cedar Park make it an exception rather than a rule—but that doesn't mean there isn't much to be learned from it.

Every neighborhood is unique. Each carries its own history, demographics, and cultural resources that make that neighborhood special to its residents. While this thesis was primarily a historical look at one particular neighborhood during the era of urban renewal, the past actions of its community members suggest informative tools that can be used for the future. This thesis argues that the actions of Cedar Park Neighbors and Movement for a New Society *were* preservation. Beyond each individual project, the efforts of the two groups show that communities working together on small-scale impact projects can create larger change. By focusing on community-building, managing change, and tending to social and economic challenges of the neighborhood, these groups helped maintain the social and physical fabric of the neighborhood. As Cedar Park faces new challenges in the twenty-first century, these preservation tools can help build community and manage change for the future.

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Index