

URBAN RENEWAL IN DANVILLE, KENTUCKY

The Destruction of Traditionally Black Neighborhoods

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AFFECTED AREAS

A-7th Street Area

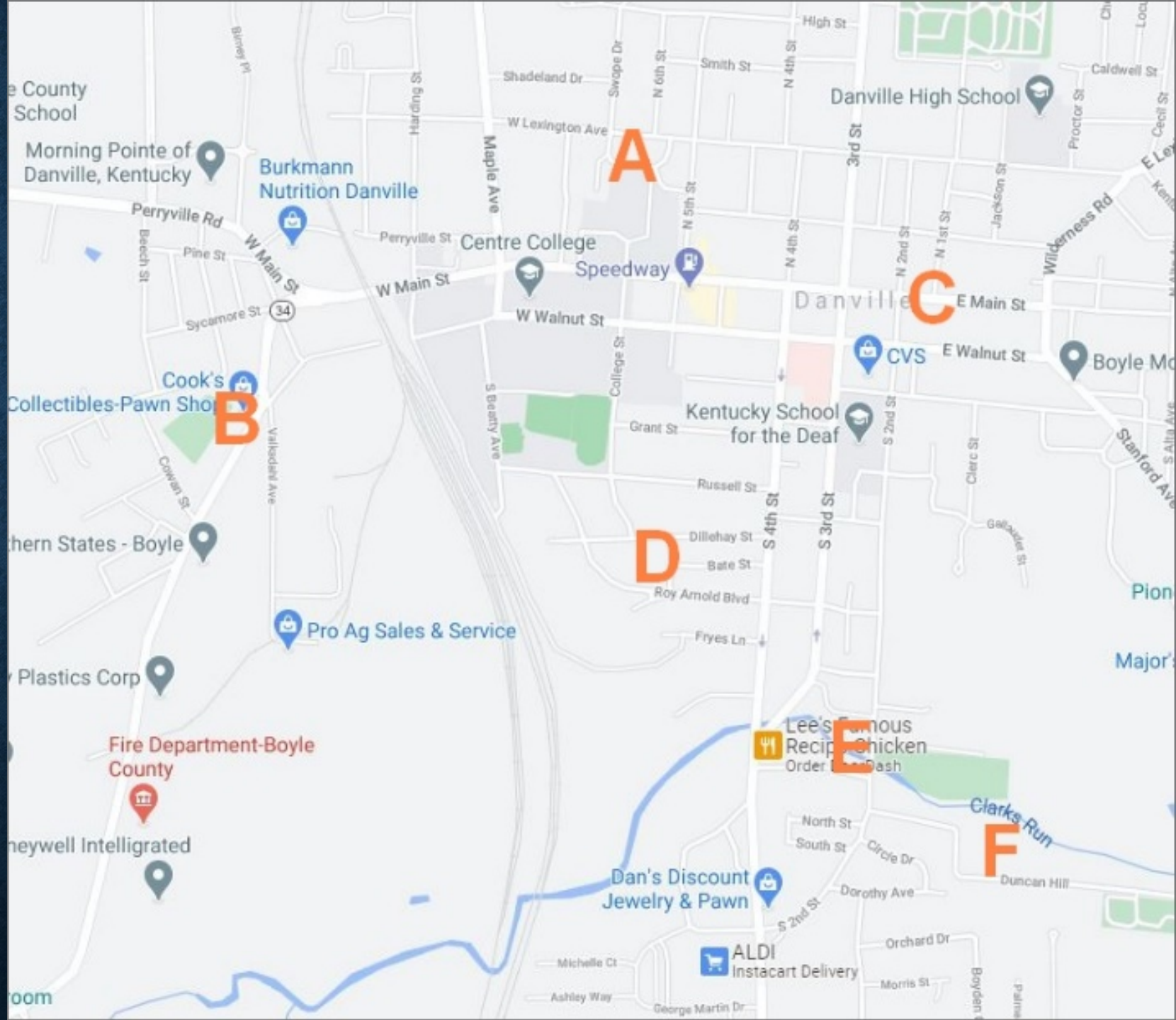
B-West Danville Area

C- So 1st and So 2nd Sts

D-Dillehay, Oak, etc

E-Randolph Hill

F-Duncan Hill



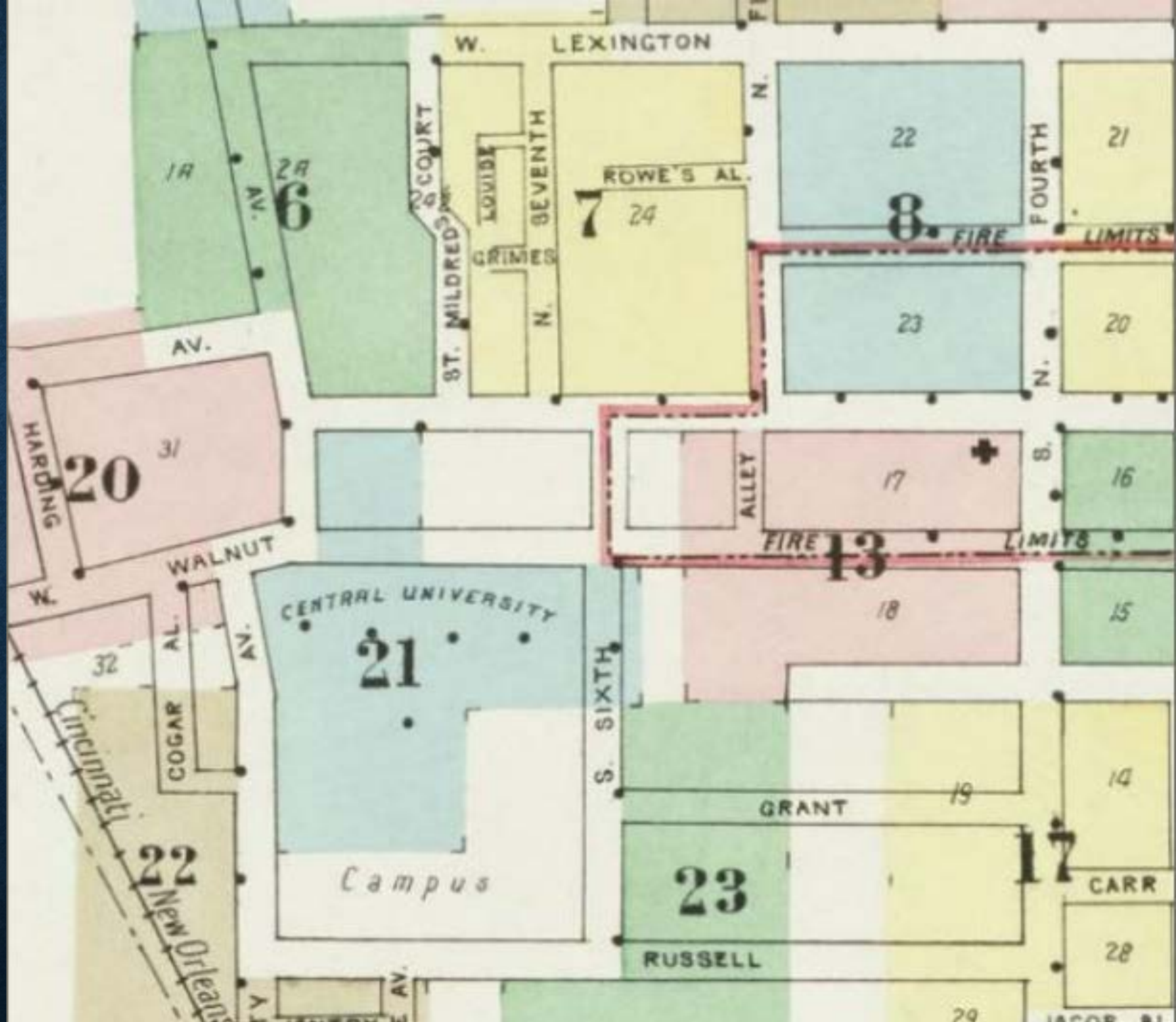
URBAN RENEWAL IN GENERAL

- City planners, post WW2, developed plans to rebuild cities, increase tourism, and encourage investment in urban areas.
- Robert Moses, of New York, architect of the 1939 New York World's Fair, created or managed projects that harmed poor and nonwhites.
- Throughout much of the South, “urban renewal” became a code word for “get the Blacks out of town.”
- James Baldwin said that urban renewal should be called “Negro Removal”

THE SEVENTH STREET AREA

Sanborn Fire Insurance
Map 1914, Map No 7

Shows North 7th, Rowe's
Alley, Grimes, and
Louise Streets in
relation to Centre
College (Map 21)



**LEXINGTON
AVE AT 7TH ST
LOOKING EAST**



THE 7TH STREET AREA

- First mention of “urban renewal” was December 1960, regarding 7th Street between Main St and Lexington Avenue.
- The 1961 expansion of Centre College into 7th Street area meant the college was investing \$4.5 million in new facilities.
- One goal of the Housing Commission was to set up better housing for residents and provide an additional 60 units of low-income housing.
- Editorial in the *A-M*, 19 Apr 1962 (p4) was critical, saying that some people will ask loaded questions in the spirit of “obstructionism”.

THE 7TH STREET AREA

- Reply by barber Dallas Jones -- Negroes are not trying to impede progress.
- Instead, when 7th Street is bulldozed, they will have no place to go where (1) they can afford to live; or (2) they are wanted.
- But when it comes to taxes, the city will certainly be standing with its hand out.
- Jones then notes “renewal” is only in Negro neighborhoods.

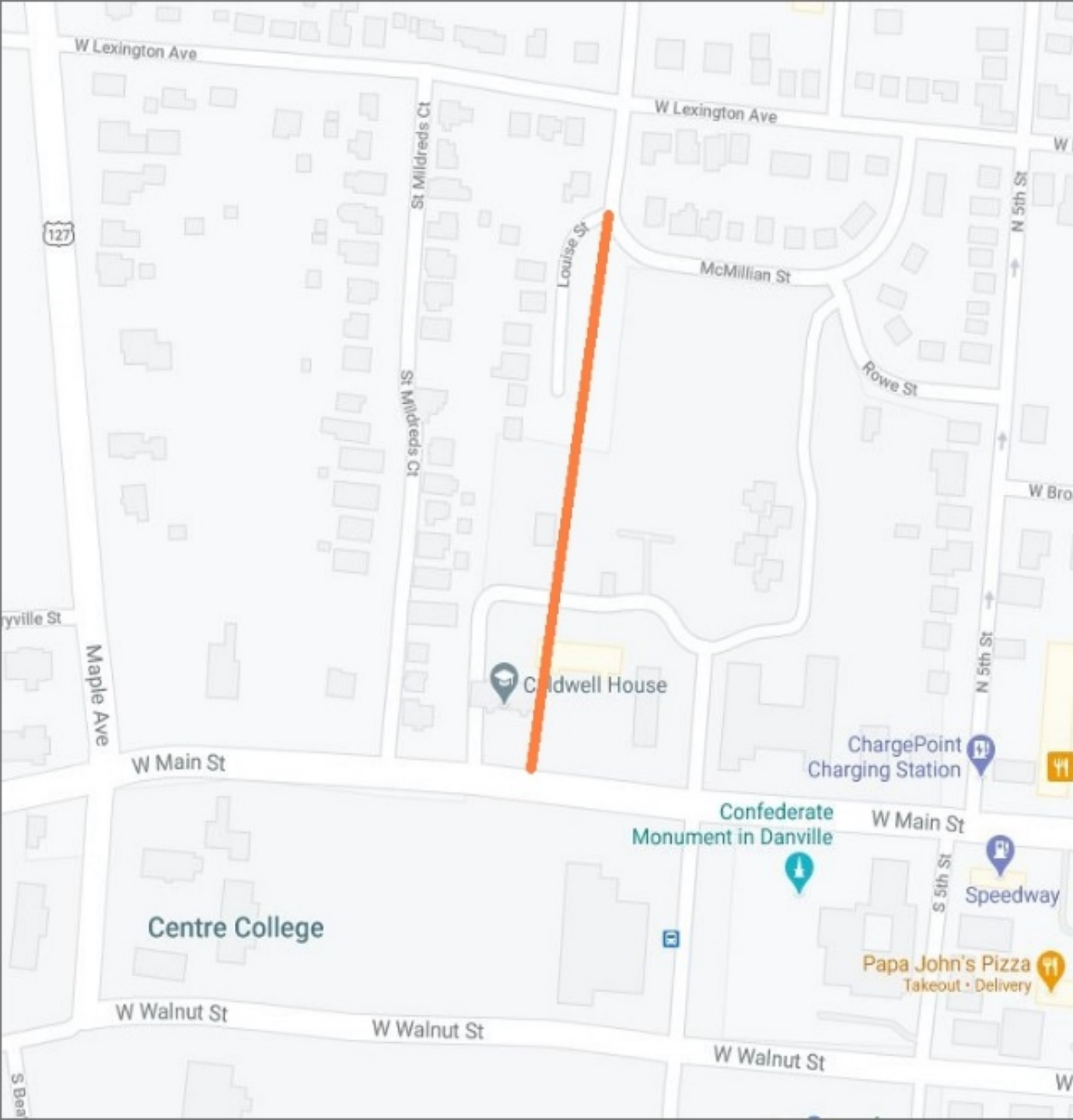
THE 7TH STREET AREA

- He then asks why they can't get good jobs doing work other than mopping and raking yards.
- After 7th and Rowe Streets, what areas are to fall to the wrecking ball next – Walnut St, Stanford Avenue, Green St?
- Urban renewal destroyed neighborhoods, and the connections people in those neighborhoods had with one another.
- The sense of "community" was destroyed as former neighbors spread out all over Danville, or even left the city or county.

THE 7TH STREET AREA

- White families did not face that disaster.
- By 19 Nov 1963 the destruction of 7th Street was accomplished.
- Centre College built a new dormitory and parking lots in what was once a Black neighborhood.
- This was the first such neighborhood taken by urban renewal.

NORTH 7TH STREET IN RELATION TO CENTRE COLLEGE



THE 7TH STREET AREA

- Cohen wrote the A-M, 8 Dec 1969, noting that renewal of the 7th Street area included “somewhere in small print” that Centre would be able to buy about 65% of the land for recreational purposes.
- He noted that this agreement short-changed the black people in the 7th Street area.
- Building of sidewalks and nice streets, with water, gas, sewers, electricity and landscaping, with one side of the street being utilized didn't make sense.



SOUTH 2ND STREET AREA

**ELITE POOL
ROOM, WITH
GOLDSMITH
HOUSE ON
RIGHT**

SOUTH 2ND STREET AREA

- Prior to WW2 Emma Weisiger gave property to the state which would become Weisiger Memorial Park, now Constitution Square.
- 2nd Street as an urban renewal area is first mentioned in September 1965, at a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce.
- C of C Chair Larry Boos noted that an additional urban renewal project would benefit the and mean “only one thing: more cash customers.”
- In August 1968, a representative of City Planning Associates described the extent of the 2nd Street project.

SOUTH 2ND STREET AREA

- Even before urban renewal, the creation of Constitution Square in 1939 took the former Danville Theological Seminary (est. 1853 though the building was built prior to 1828).
- It stood on the Walnut Street end of the park where the Courthouse replica stands now.
- It had become a “Negro tenement” by 1910.



SOUTH 2ND STREET AREA

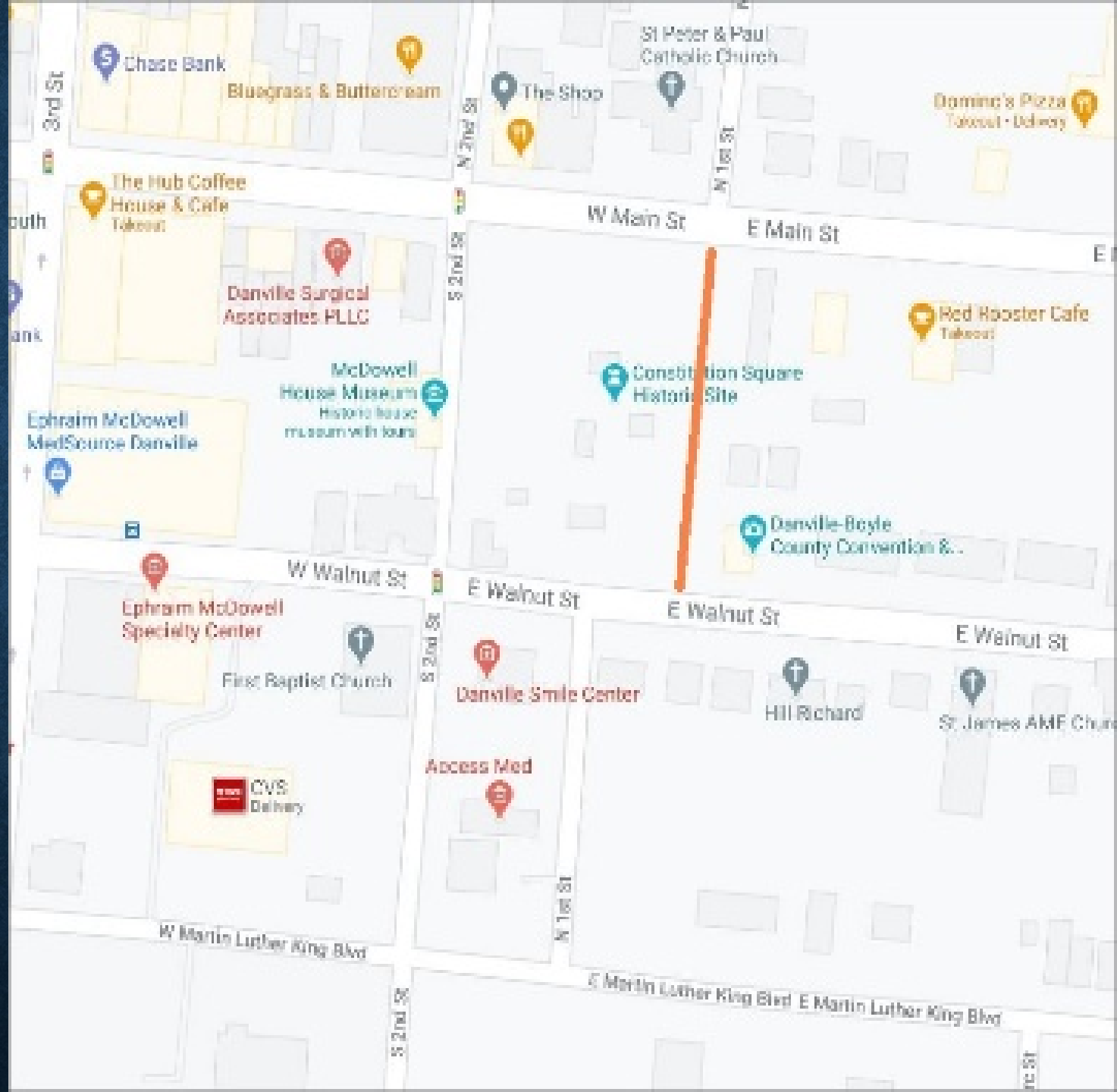
- “All of the west (east?) side of Second Street will be purchased and demolished, except that the Adam Gold Smith house at the corner of Second and Walnut will be restored and retained. Two other buildings, the old Grayson Tavern and the old residence near the corner of Main and First [the Fisher Row and Watts/Bell buildings], will be restored along with the Gold Smith House and all of these will be taken over by the State in a new and enlarged “Constitution Square.”

The article further noted that the plan

- “calls for closing First Street between Main and Walnut. This should allow for enlarging the park to an area all of the way from Second Street to about 100 feet east of the present First Street. This would throw the three houses, which the commission proposes to save and restore, inside of the new Constitution Square.”

SOUTH 1ST STREET (RED LINE)

**NOW, A WALKWAY
BETWEEN E MAIN AND
E WALNUT**



SOUTH 2ND STREET AREA

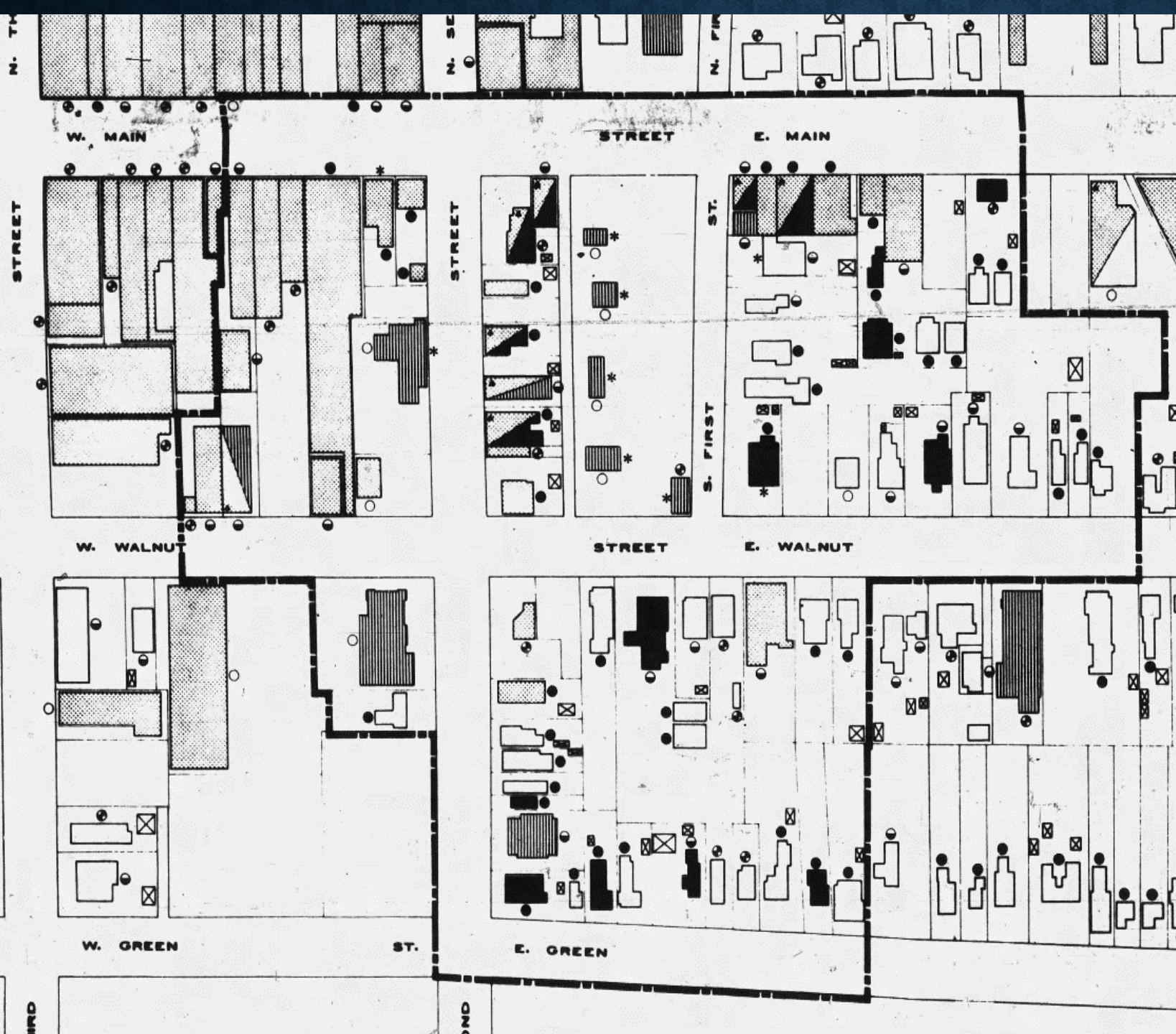
- Plans suggest that 67 substandard houses are located in the project area, and
- Wishes to assure the public that substitute housing will be available to residents who are displaced,
- That enough of the area will be available for residents to if they so choose, and
- That low interest loans and grants would also be available.
- \$1.5 million, 11.4 acres of land, would be the plan for So 2nd St.
- 25 buildings, 17 businesses, 45 families, and 14 individuals would be displaced.

**SOUTH
2ND
STREET
AREA**

**ORIGINAL
PHOTO BY
GUY
INGRAM, CA
1968**

**DORIC
LODGE IN
CENTER**





SO 1ST AND SO 2ND STREET AREA

**SUBSTANDARD BUILDINGS
MARKED WITH A BLACK
DOT**

**(FORTUNATELY, NOT ALL
WERE DESTROYED)**

SOUTH 2ND STREET AREA

- Urban renewal in the 1960s called for destruction of 63 buildings on or around South 2nd Street.
- The *A-M*, 22 November 1970, showed run-down condition of many buildings in the urban renewal area.
- One photo shows three historic buildings together – next slide, the “little red schoolhouse” (now the McKinney Conference Center), Grayson’s Tavern, and the UBF Hall on Walnut Street.
- Completion date for the 2nd Street project was set for May 1974.



THREE HISTORIC BUILDINGS

UBF HALL

GRAYSON TAVERN

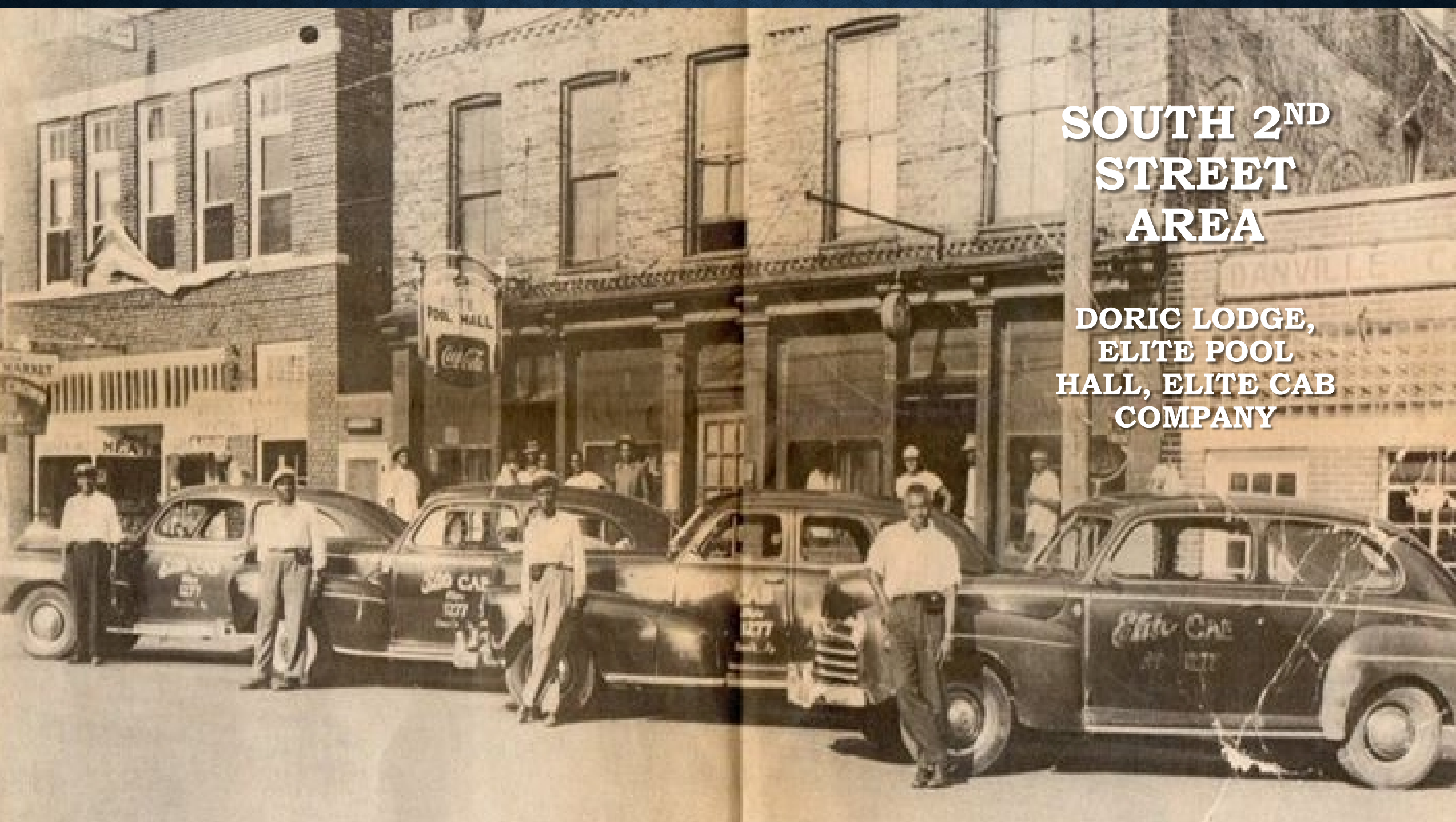
“LITTLE RED
SCHOOLHOUSE”



IT COULD BE NICE — What could be an attractive little red brick building with some paint and a lot of hard work is the structure at 120 South First Street, once a school house. It is part of the Either One Richardson property which is included in the Second Street Urban Renewal area. The building may be restored. Guy Best, at left, who is Urban Renewal director, is standing beside a large pile of whisky and rubbing alcohol bottles the occupants toss out the back door. Someone is living in the house.

SOUTH 2ND STREET AREA

**DORIC LODGE,
ELITE POOL
HALL, ELITE CAB
COMPANY**



SOUTH 2ND STREET AREA

- Doric Lodge No 18 turned down initial offer, but eventually accepted offer of \$34,000 plus \$2,500 for displacement.
- Odd Fellows Lodge building was for sale at that time, so Doric Lodge purchased that building at 215 West Walnut, moved there, and Doric Lodge building was torn down.
- South 1st Street closed, and all buildings on west side were razed.
- By 1974, the block between West Main, South 2nd, West Walnut and South 1st became the present Constitution Square Historic Site
- The Black history of the area had been destroyed.

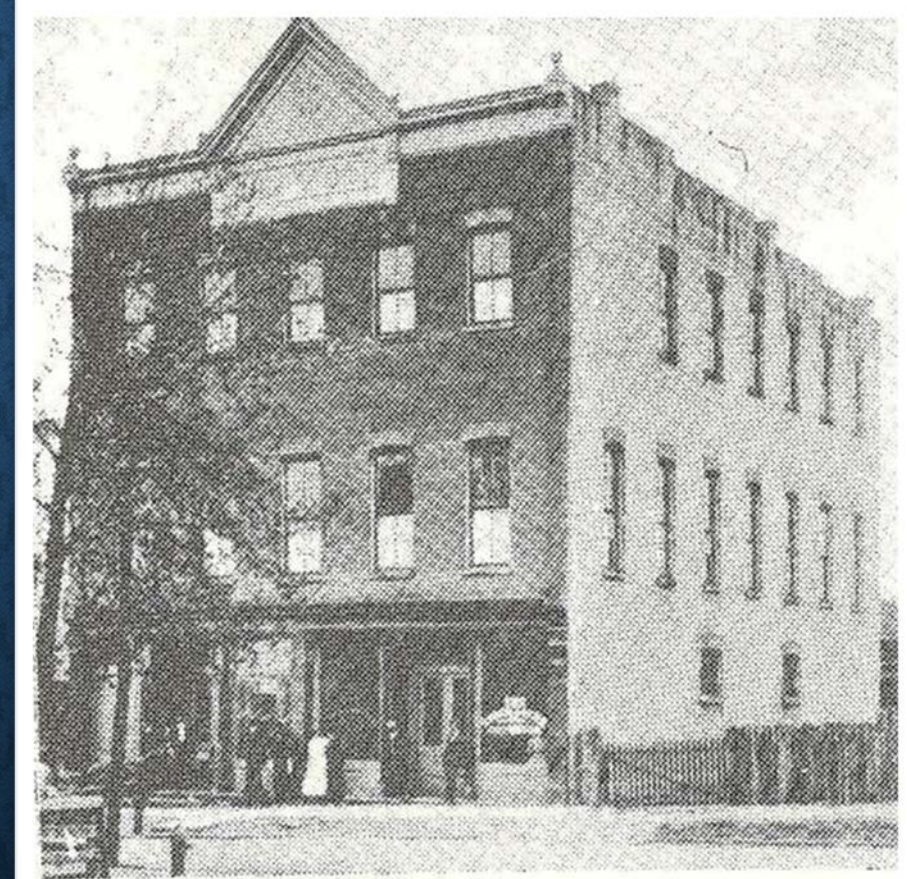
SOUTH 2ND STREET AREA

- Doric Lodge, So 2nd St



DORIC LODGE NO. 18 F. & A. M.
Prince Hall Affiliation

- UBF Hall, Walnut St



The U.B.F. Lodge hall as it looked in the early days. It has now been torn down by Urban Renewal Program located on Walnut Street.

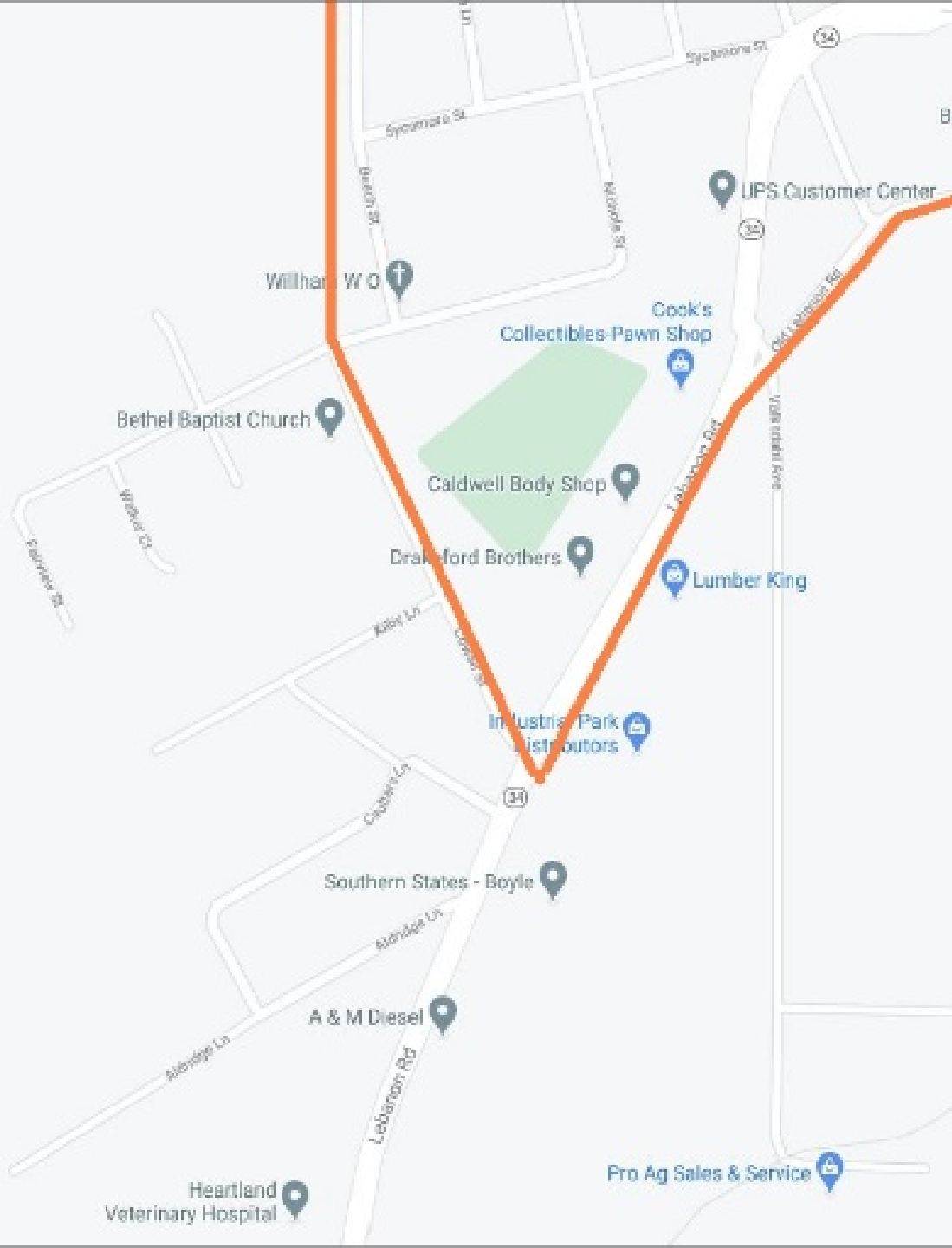
WEST DANVILLE AREA

- As the 2nd Street Urban Renewal project neared completion, developers looked to other areas that could be “rehabilitated.”
- By 1975, in West Danville, a city-county partnership to upgrade sewer lines along Lebanon Road and Cowan Street looked as though it would receive funding.
- Plans called for renewed sidewalks, rehabilitation in the Grant-Russell Street area, acquisition in the Randolph Hill, West Green Street, West Danville, and McGrath Street areas, and redeveloping Lebanon Road from West Walnut Street to Cowan Street.

WEST DANVILLE (COWAN ST, FAIRVIEW) AREA

**RED LINE IS CITY LIMITS AT
THE TIME**

**LEBANON ROAD FROM OLD LEBANON
RD TO COWAN ST AS WELL AS KILBY
LANE (MEADOW LANE) WAS FOCUS OF
U.R. IN WEST DANVILLE**



WEST DANVILLE AREA

This plan

- ✓ did more harm,
- ✓ caused more bitterness,
- ✓ resulted in more lawsuits and problems, and
- ✓ proved more of a failure than any other plan in Danville.

The issues it caused would last well into the late 1980s, and even today.

WEST DANVILLE AREA

- A legal notice described the Cowan Street project which would include
- Acquiring 65 parcels of land.
- Relocating families who lived in housing that could not be rehabilitated and demolishing those structures.
- Rehabilitation grants for those houses which could be rehabilitated.
- Improvement to the sewer system, storm sewers and roads in the area.

WEST DANVILLE AREA

- Creation of a neighborhood park.
- Allotting 10 acres for multi-family housing.
- Designating some land on Lebanon Road as commercial property;
and
- Reusing the remaining land for single-family residences.
- The project budgeted \$1,500,000.

WEST DANVILLE AREA

- Rev. Richard Hill asked if people of the area would be given first choice to purchase the land back and rebuild and was told that was the plan.
- Hill however, pointed out that did not happen on the South 2nd Street project,
 - that many residents were forced to leave the area, and
 - was told that that laws have changed since that project.

WEST DANVILLE AREA

- Hill did not seem convinced, saying that “he wants to get what the people want and not what the city wants.”
- The URCDA was hopeful in 1981 that all these projects could be completed, and that there would be little to no more substandard housing in the city.
- But federal money began to dry up.
- The Fiscal Court meeting of 9 Feb 1982 resulted in approval of the URCDA’s proposal for the Cowan Street redevelopment project.

WEST DANVILLE AREA

- J P Connor, who represented the Fairview-Cowan area on the Court, said residents “don’t want the project. They believe it was forced on them.”
- The project was halted in October 1983, because URCDA ran out of money.
- Residents complained since then about conditions in the area with partly demolished buildings, and rat-infested refuse dumps.
- James E Johnson Sr, noted, “The city doesn’t want to take care of the problems. The county doesn’t want to take care of the problems. Urban Renewal walked off and left the problems, and we’re left holding the bag.”

WEST DANVILLE AREA

- Joe Troxler said sewer line is not in condition for residents to hook on.
- Lots not connected to the sewer lines weren't selling.
- URCDA hoped that county would take over.
- In the fall of 1987, the URCDA finally began to make progress selling lots.
- In August, 8 lots were sold at public auction, and Harold Kilby offered \$27,000 for all 31 remaining lots, though he had no plans to develop them.
- Charged that Guy Best tried to prevent residents from buying lots.

WEST DANVILLE AREA

- James E Johnson, James H Johnson and Fred Troxler, claimed that Best's actions were racially motivated, and the three men had filed complaints with the Kentucky Human Rights Commission.
- They were told that they would have to put in sewer lines and do other improvements, but then Best sold 31 lots to Harold Kilby without those requirements.
- James E Johnson said, "I can't understand how (Kilby) can buy those lots for less than \$900 each and Urban Renewal says the \$1,200 I offered for the two lots next to me is too low."
- Best responded, "it sounds like they're trying to get up some sort of discrimination complaint, but it won't work."

WEST DANVILLE AREA

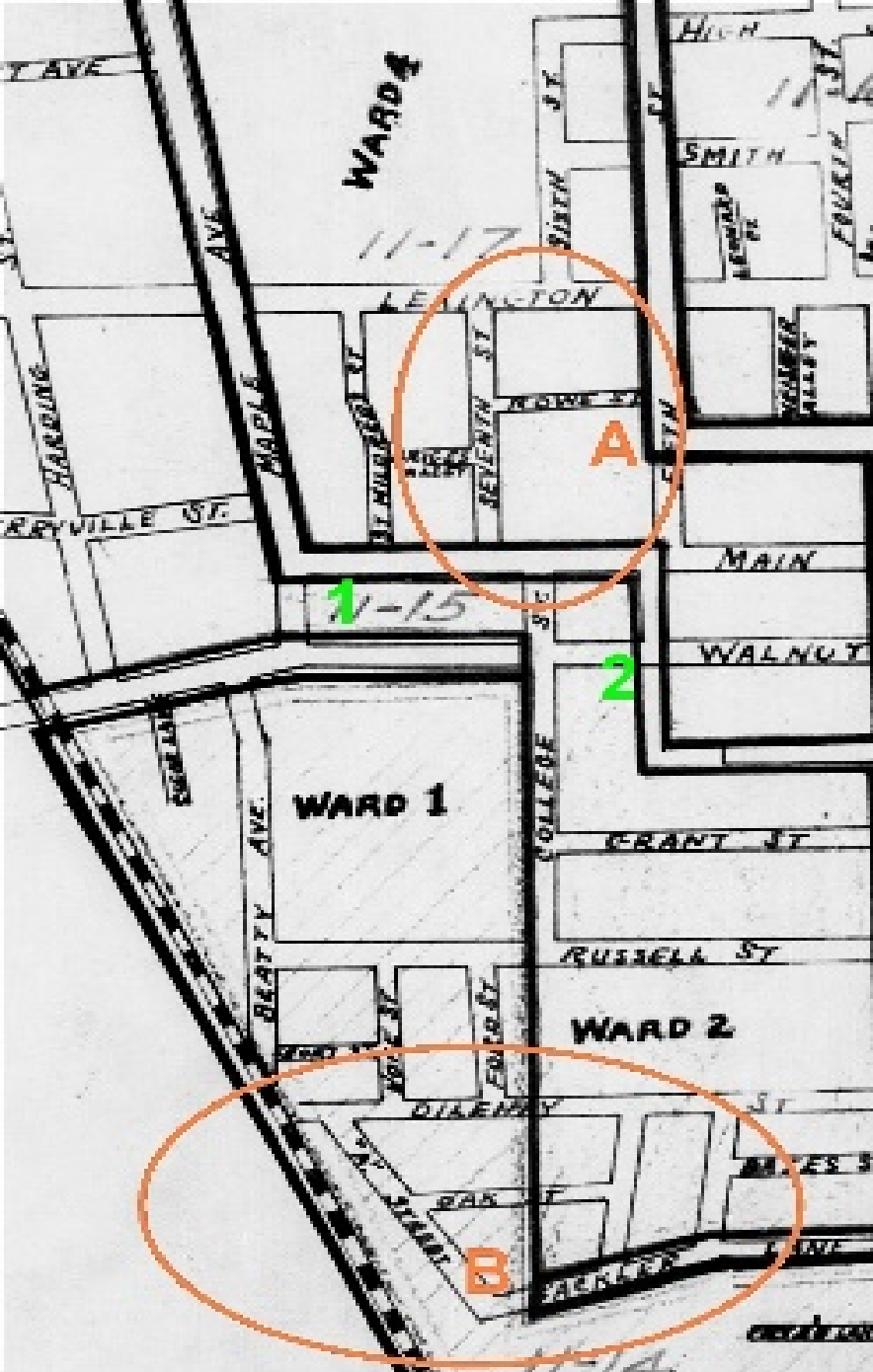
- Troxler added that, “we sold Urban Renewal our land with the promise that houses and sewer lines would be built, but all we got was a lot of rubble, grown-up grass and broken promises. Unlike in other projects where residents are moved out when the work is being done, we’ve had to live with this mess. Now, we aren’t even given a chance at getting our land back.”
- Plaintiffs sued the URCDA in Oct 1987, arguing that when they sold property to the agency, the URCDA sold it back to whites at a lower price than Blacks had offered.
- The federal judge in Lexington ruled on a temporary injunction in January 1988, and Urban Renewal was ordered to sell five lots to the plaintiffs at fair market value.
- Five were sold in 1987, three were donated to the Boyle County Fiscal Court, and 31 were sold to Harold Kilby – the sale that sparked the lawsuit in the first place.

FACKLER, DILLEHAY, AND OAK STREETS, AND DUNCAN HILL

A-Seventh St
B-Dillehay-Oak-Fackler

1-Old Centre
2-Norton Center

(1940 Census Map)



FACKLER, DILLEHAY, AND OAK STREETS, AND DUNCAN HILL

- By 1979, Danville had a plan to annex large portions of Boyle County south of the then city limits, but not Duncan Hill.
- The plan would make Duncan Hill an “oasis” surrounded on three sides by the city.
- Commissioner Cecil Cohen noted, “It looks like the criteria is that no Black areas are going to be taken in (into the city) unless they have sewers.”

FACKLER, DILLEHAY, AND OAK STREETS, AND DUNCAN HILL

- Grant to rehabilitate Dillehay Street area submitted July 1981 to HUD, which would clear 117 houses, and replace them with low to moderate income housing.
- No new construction happened, but all homes on Oak St were destroyed.
- The Oak Street project finally resulted in closing of that street in 2005.

**Thus Urban Renewal ended
with a whimper, not a bang.**