

Mapping Racially Restrictive Housing Covenants in Prince George's County

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Summary

Research into redlining and racially restrictive covenants has become increasingly common in recent years, but variations in local restrictive practices and applications across the country are poorly understood. Racially restrictive housing covenants were common in Prince George's County, Maryland during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These practices have left a lasting legacy on the social landscape of the county. This report contributes to the historical understanding of racially restrictive covenants within the county and outlines possible directions for future research.

This report is based on a sample dataset from the Maryland Land Records Grantor Index. Deeds with restrictive covenants were recorded and the property boundaries were mapped using a Geographic Information System (GIS). This enabled the textual documentation of these practices to be tied to their spatial location in Prince George's County.

The results of this report are preliminary and are based on partial findings using a subset of the total deeds during the period in which racial covenants were legal. Using this small dataset, we were able to refine our methodology, identify new research questions, and develop a strategy to accelerate the identification and mapping of similar racial covenants across Prince George's County.

Background

Housing discrimination has taken different forms, depending on the socio-economic structure of a given time. Racially restrictive housing covenants began in the late-19th century and spread throughout the country in the early-20th century (Jones-Correa, 2000-2001, p. 544). These covenants are statements written into deeds that restrict the sale of the property or home to individuals based on their race.

Another early-20th century practice that had discriminatory consequences is commonly referred to as redlining. This refers to maps developed by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) that identified locations of homes with a higher risk of default (Mitchell & Franco, 2018). The Federal Home Loan Bank Board (FHLBB) began to use these maps to set mortgage terms in different urban neighborhoods (Woods, 2012). The areas deemed high-risk were dominated by racial minorities who already faced discriminatory lending terms (Hillier, 2003), but the HOLC and FHLBB institutionalized discrimination at the federal level with resulting unfavorable terms for people of color seeking mortgages and insurance.

These impacts extended decades beyond the official end of these policies. This report focuses on the first form of racialized housing discrimination, restrictive covenants, as applied in Prince George's County, Maryland

The 1917 *Buchanan v. Warley* Supreme Court case outlawed municipally mandated race-based housing but did not in any way deal with private agreements (Ely, 1998). This case didn't rule on private agreements and created a loophole that resulted in the rise of racially restrictive housing covenants as legally enforceable private contracts within property deeds. This loophole enabled de facto racialized zoning to continue until private covenants were outlawed in the 1950s (U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1973). The practice was so widespread that "by 1940, 80% of property in Chicago and Los Angeles carried restrictive covenants barring black families" (The Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston, n.d.).

Another critical Supreme Court case in the history of race-based housing covenants was *Shelley v. Kraemer* in 1948. This ruling found that the creation and continuation of racially restrictive covenants was legal, but their enforcement was unconstitutional. It was not until congress passed the Fair Housing Act in 1968 that racially restrictive covenants were made illegal (U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1973). Despite the changes of the Fair Housing Act, racialized housing patterns have largely remained intact and in some cases housing segregation has increased (Darden, 1995).

Racialized housing covenants were used in Prince George's County, as in the rest of the country but their full extent and long-term impacts in this jurisdiction are poorly understood. This report outlines our approach to identify and map properties that contained these covenants. This is an important first step in developing a more complete picture of the ways housing covenants impacted life in this majority Black county.

Methods

In 2019, a significant amount of work had already been done on this project by a student group in the UMD College of Information Sciences (Cheng, Kim, Martinez, Thapa, & Thomas, 2019), but the data used in that report was not accessible. To make all the data retrievable, a standardized methodology for searching data, categorizing data, and representing data was developed during the 2021 Fall Semester. The research team developed an efficient methodology to identify and integrate data from the 2019 project with additional deed data in the Maryland Land Records archives.

The method described in this section is the one our team developed. Some of the data collected in the analysis was identified when determining an efficient method for reviewing Prince George's County deeds. This same method could be used to continue this project.

The goal of the 2021 project was to map explicit instances of racially restrictive covenants and disseminate them through an ArcGIS StoryMap. While there are many invisible forms of housing segregation in the historic record, explicit race-based restrictions can be found in housing deeds. Once a deed with a race-based restriction was found, the entire platted area was marked as being under a racially restrictive covenant. Thus, this method requires two primary documents: the deed with the restriction and the plat sheet used to initially survey the house from the deed.

Dates	Description	Source	Accession No.
1884-1922	A-B		MSA_CE273_1
1884-1922	C-D		MSA_CE273_2
1884-1922	E-G		MSA_CE273_3
1884-1922	H-K		MSA_CE273_4
1884-1922	L-M		MSA_CE273_5
1884-1922	N-R		MSA_CE273_6
1884-1922	S		MSA_CE273_7
1884-1922	T-Z		MSA_CE273_8
1923-1939	A-B		MSA_CE273_9
1923-1939	Andersen/Anderson		MSA_CE273_10
1923-1939	Beale/Beall/Bealle/Bell		MSA_CE273_11
1923-1939	Brown/Browne		MSA_CE273_12
1923-1939	C-D		MSA_CE273_13
1923-1939	Clark		MSA_CE273_14
1923-1939	Davies/Davis		MSA_CE273_15
1923-1939	E-G		MSA_CE273_16
1923-1939	Green/Greene		MSA_CE273_17
1923-1939	H-K		MSA_CE273_18
1923-1939	Hall		MSA_CE273_19
1923-1939	Johnson/Johnston/Johnstone		MSA_CE273_20
1923-1939	Lovell		MSA_CE273_21

Figure 1. Land Records, Grantor Index, 1884-1992

The Maryland Land Records digital archive was used to locate deeds. The Prince George's County active grantor indices for 1884-1992 are available (Figure 1). The 1923-1939 index was chosen as a starting point because deeds were typed by this time, making them easier to read and assess. The deeds are sorted alphabetically by grantor's last name within the desired date range (Figure 2).

View document in separate tab

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT
(Land Records, Grantor Index, Original)
1923-1939
A-B, pp. 0000a-0000c
[3 images]
MSA CE 273-9

Return to inventory

Next »

Jump to new page

Page: Go!

Display range of pages

Start: End: Go!

NOTE: Limit 10 pages

[+]Send Image Feedback

MDLANDREC-NET (Version 3.8.0) © Maryland State Archives, 1999-2021.
An Archives of Maryland Online Publication

Figure 2. Land Records, Grantor Index, 1923-1939, A-B

Entering the desired page number in the “Jump to new page box” and Ctrl-Left clicking the “Go” button opened a new tab (Figure 3). This sequence didn’t lose the tab shown in Figure 2, which made moving to a new page easier. The new tab, shown in Figure 3, is sorted alphabetically but also contains the liber and folio numbers necessary to search for a deed.

The screenshot displays the MDLANDREC.NET interface. On the left is a table titled "GRANTOR INDEX TO LAND RECORDS—(PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD.)—THIRD SERIES". The table has columns for SURNAMES, GRANTORS, GRANTEES, KIND OF INSTRUMENT, and Date. The table is sorted alphabetically by grantor surname. On the right side of the interface, there are navigation and search controls:

- A "View document in separate tab" button.
- Page navigation buttons: « Previous and Next ».
- A "Jump to new page" section with a "Page:" label, a text input field, and a "Go!" button.
- A "Display range of pages" section with "Start:" and "End:" labels, two text input fields, and a "Go!" button.
- A "NOTE: Limit 10 pages" warning.
- A "[+]Send Image Feedback" link.

At the bottom of the page, the text reads: "MDLANDREC.NET (Version 3.8.0) © Maryland State Archives, 1999-2021. An Archives of Maryland Online Publication".

Figure 3. Land Records, Grantor Index, 1923-1939, A-B with Liber and Folio

The deed list was searched in chronological order. To locate the deeds, the liber and folio were entered into the book and page search boxes on the MDLandRec homepage, which led to the original deed referenced in Figure 3. Only items listed as “Deed” in the “Kind of Instrument Column” were searched.

For example, the first entry searched would be Liber 314, Folio 1, *not* Liber 761, Folio 87. This is because covenants are private agreements made within deeds when exchanging property and that racial restrictions were significantly more common in deeds. From here, the deeds were searched for instances of racialized covenants. Given that this set of deeds is relatively standardized, racial restrictions would only appear in specific sections of the form. It's worth noting that this sped up the search; we didn't have to read the entire document, just sections that would carry the specific covenant terms. If a deed stated that it was subject to previous restrictions, the previous deed was checked if the liber and folio of the previous deed was available in the document. When a deed was found with a racial restriction, the deed information was recorded in a [Plat Spreadsheet](#) that recorded the deed's date, liber and folio, as well as a quote from the restriction.

Every deed should reference the plat it resides in by referencing the plat book and folio; the plats were easily found via [plats.net](#), which can be accessed through the MDLandRec website. Plat information can be found in the deed documents. Language around racial covenants tends to appear in the same portions of the deed text. Once the plat connected to the deed is located, the plat book and folio, its number and date, its surveyor, and the subdivision name stated exactly as on the plat sheet were recorded and the hyperlink to the [plats.net](#) page was provided.

Once all deed and plat information were recorded, we used MDLandRec to navigate to the first entry in the liber where the restrictive deed was found. For example, we determined the deed in liber 326, folio 92 contained racial restrictions. After that, we went to liber 326, folio 1 and proceeded to go through the entire liber.

We proceeded to the next entry in the alphabetized grantor index when the whole liber was searched. We repeated the process outlined above if a racial restriction was located. As seen in Figure 3, when liber 314, folio 1 was searched (the entirety of liber 314 was searched if

a racial restriction was found) we moved on to Liber 519, Folio 148 to repeat the process outlined above until every entry from this page was searched. We would then return to the alphabetized grantor index to go to the next page, repeating the steps until every page was searched.

Once this was complete, the researcher moved to the next set of alphabetically ordered deeds in the given date range and repeated the steps until all last names for the given date range were searched. For example, in Figure 1 the next alphabetized grantor index searched would be MSA_CE_237_10. The process was repeated until we reached the last entry in the 1967 grantor index. This was the last searched year because in 1968 the Fair Housing Act was passed, making racially restrictive covenants illegal.

Some deeds with racial restrictions couldn't be included in the spatial database because critical data points were unattainable. Sometimes, primary documents were damaged, didn't include references to plat numbers, or the relevant plat books weren't digitized. Occasionally, a deed doesn't reference the relevant plat or provide a previous deed to check. In these cases, it was impossible to accurately map the plat and so that data isn't included. Furthermore, if a racially restrictive deed was found but belonged to a plat already in the data set, it wasn't included. This is because the project's primary goal is to visualize segregated plats and once a plat was found to be segregated, the entire area was marked as restricted.

Results

Subdivision	Plat Book	Plat Folio	Plat number	Date of Plat	Surveyor	Deed Liber	Deed Folio	Deed Date	Address	Quote	Plat Link
UNIVERSITY HILLS, BLOCKS C-H, J-K	BB 12	61	A17-1138	2/17/1947	David A. Finkelstein	1178	25	September 28, 1949		At no time shall the land included in	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
CAPITOL HEIGHTS, ZANTZINGERS SUBDIVISION	JWB 5	678		3/18/1905	WM. J. Latimer	314	1	12/24/1927		The herein described piece of land...	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
CHEVERLY SECTION 1 AND 2	RNR 2	38		3/3/1919	Edward L. Latimer	278	316	10/8/1926	2356 Bellevue	First. That the herein described piece	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
COLMAR MANOR, SECTION 1	RNR 2	37		07/09/1918	J. W. Holloway	223	23	8/28/1924		Second. At no time shall the above	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
HYATTSVILLE HILLS, SECTION 3	SDH 3	20		2/9/1925	J. Spence Howard	474	253	4/5/1937		First. That the herein described piece	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
DISTRICT HEIGHTS, SECTION 1	SDH 3	21		03/29/1925	James P. Gallager	538	319	9/27/1939		The said lots shall not be sold, alien	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
WEST RIVERDALE	BDS 1	31		10/23/1908	Francis S. Cammody	428	456	10/18/1935	6500 Gateway B	This deed is made upon the full an	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
GREATER CAPITOL HEIGHTS	BDS 1	60-65	A18-0987	8/11/1909	O. B. Zantzing	328	92	2/8/1929		First, that the parties of the of the	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
BOULEVARD HEIGHTS	LUB A	60	A08-1503	3/22/1923	Albert E. Steward	70	154	2/15/1911	1518 Arcadia Av	That the herein described piece	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
UNIVERSITY PARK, SECTION 8B	BB 6	55	A19-0987	7/8/1938	George N. Bowen				4308 Underwood	That said land, or any part thereof,	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
CAPITOL HEIGHTS	LUB A	76	A18-0781	4/25/1904	Olway B. Zantzing				5102 Doppier St	land or any part thereof, or any, b	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
BRADBURY HEIGHTS	BDS 1	69-71	E06-2397	9/28/1909	Robert F. Bradbury				4108 Alton St. C	shall never be sold or conveyed to	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
COLONIAL KNOLL, BLOCK 1, LOTS 1-5	BB 6	59	A18-0880	5/20/1928	A. H. Sedensommer				6211 Carrollton	At no time shall the land included in	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
FRINGETON SUBDIVISION, SECTION 1	BB 6	38	A05-0057	10/22/1940	Alphonse C. Hammer, Katherine Hammer				6207 Davis BLV	No part of said lot or building erected	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
CARMODY HILLS, SECTION 1-2	SDH 3	10	A18-0034	1/9/1925	Olway B. Zantzing				0 Birchleaf Ave.	FIRST that the herein described pie	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
RANDOLPH VILLAGE, BLOCK 1A, 3A, PARTS 4-6	WWW 22	66	A18-2238	8/12/1953	Norair Corporation				0 Central AVE.	No person or persons of the negro r	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
RANDOLPH VILLAGE, BLOCK 6-7, LOTS 1-2	BB 9	5	A18-0002	3/25/1941	Katherine L. Spalding, Edwin W. Spalding				8513 Dunbar Av	Subject to the following conditions a	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
ADDITION TO BERWYN	BDS 1	14	A21-0756	N/A	N/A				0 48th Ave. Coll	No lots sold to colored people	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
CHARLES G. SCHULTZ SUBDIVISION	BB 7	93	A09-0324	5/7/1940	Charles G. Schultz				0 Branch Ave. C	No sale to, lease to or occupancy by	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
COLMAR MANOR, FIRST ADDITION	RNR 2	41	A02-0258	1/27/1917	Ida M. Moyers				3705 Monroe St	Second, at no time shall the above	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
TREASURE COVE, SECTION 5	SDH 3	62	C12-2803	12/01/1928	The Treasure Cove Development Company				1209 Angler TR	It is hereby covenanted, by and bet	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
HOLLYWOOD ON THE HILL	RNR 2	18	A21-0772	Feb. 1913	August Burdloff, Henry C. Burden				9803 47th Pl. Ca	subject to the covenant that the abo	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
RIVERDALE HEIGHTS, BLOCK 9, 10, AND 13	RNR 2	73		12/12/1923	J. Spence Howard	328	190	1/29/1929		"At no time shall the above describe	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
BELTSVILLE HEIGHTS	RNR 2	49		Apr. 1920	Edward L. Latimer	328	192	2/27/1929		"That said lots or buildings thereon s	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
CHEVERLY SECTION 4	SDH 3	45		Jul. 1925	Edward L. Latimer	328	33	11/3/1928		". That the herein described piece of	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
RIVERDALE HEIGHTS, BLOCK 8-22	RNR 2	42		7/1/1919	J. Spence Howard	328	40	12/1/1928		"At no time shall the above describe	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
RIVERDALE HEIGHTS, BLOCK 1-6	RNR 2	43		7/1/1919	J. Spence Howard	328	40	12/1/1928		"At no time shall the above describe	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
WHITELEY	RNR 2	44		8/9/1919	Edward L. Latimer	328	89	2/12/1929		"4. That no part of the property or p	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
BEL-MAR	SDH 3	17		3/17/1925	Sutton Brocher Co.	328	146	1/7/1929		"Second, at no time shall any part of	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/
RIVERDALE HILLS, SECTION 1-2	SDH 3	24		8/7/1925	J. Spence Howard	328	172	7/21/1926		"2. That the said lots or any building	https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/

Figure 4. Plat Table

Figure 4 shows the project's final data set. There are a number of reasons for the multiple missing entries in the Plat Spreadsheet, including damaged original documents resulting in missing data or illegible writing. This was especially an issue with plat numbers. Entries with missing deed libers and folios are from the 2019 research team's data collection that was carried over for this project. In this, we are working off their data in good faith.

The 2019 data set also has the most references to contemporary addresses due to their methodology. The previous research team started from existing historic houses and moved back in the land records until a racial restriction was located. This methodology proved tedious and was abandoned, but the new methodology explained above doesn't provide the modern address and thus the new data set doesn't record addresses.

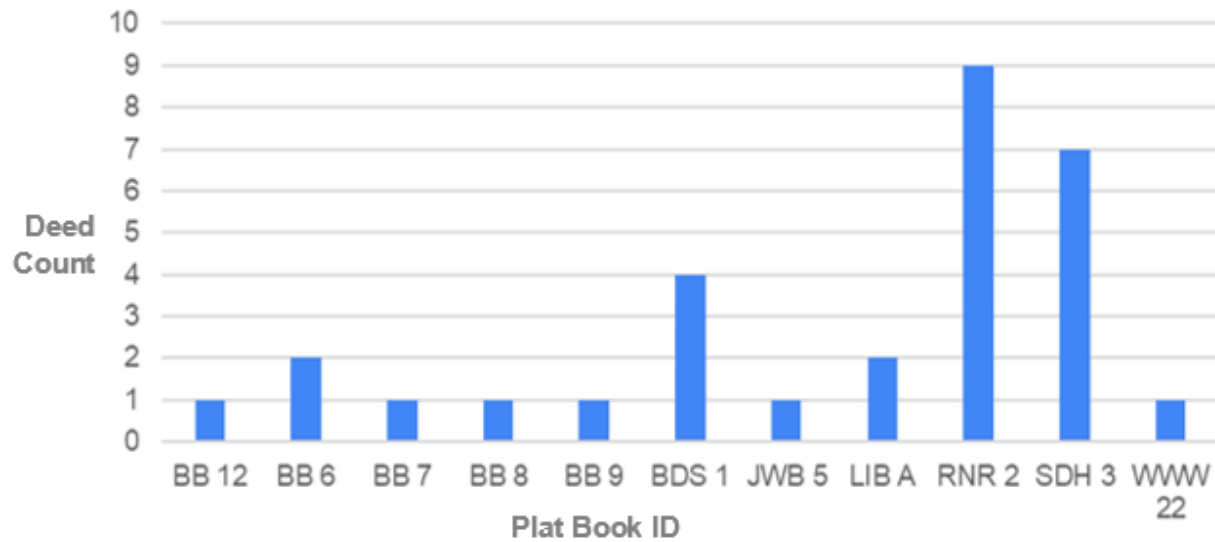


Figure 5. Distribution of Racial Restrictions by Plat Book

We discovered thirty unique instances of racially restrictive housing covenants. In this, the majority of our data (n=16) was found either in plat book RNR 2 or SDH 3 with BDS 1 being notable for having four separate data points. This distribution of racially restrictive covenants may be due to a number of reasons, but primarily that research started with deeds from 1923-1939 and thus plat books from this era are over-represented. Furthermore, RNR 2 and SDH 3 seemed to be the plat books in which certain surveyors recorded their work. In particular, plats created by Edward L. Latimer and J. Spence Howard were most frequently recorded in RNR 2 and SDH 3.

Surveyor	Count
David A. Finkelstein, Herman D. Paul	1
WM. J. Latimer	1
Edward L. Latimer	4
J. W. Holloway	1
J. Spence Howard	5
James P. Gallagher	1
Francis S Cammody?	1
O.B Zantzinger	1
Albert E. Steward	1
George N. Bowen	1
Otway B. Zantzinger	2
Robert F. Bradbury	1
A.H. Seidenspinner	1
Alphonse C. Hammer, Katherine Hammer	1
Norair Corporation	1
Katharine L. Spalding, Edwin W. Spalding	1
N/A	1
Charles G. Schultz	1
Ida M. Moyers	1
The Treasure Cove Development Company	1
August Burgdorf, Henry C. Burden	1
Sutton Britcher Co.	1

Figure 6. Count of Racially Restrictive Plats by Surveyor

Figure 6 shows the number of racially restrictive plats created by an individual surveyor, surveying team, or surveying company. The entry “Francis S Cammody?” indicated that the surveyors last name was partially illegible and may be spelled differently. This was done out of an abundance of caution in data collection. The “N/A” entry also reflects a damaged document with the surveyor’s name missing from the document.

The data indicates that no one surveyor dominated the creation of racially restrictive plats. While some surveyors such as J. Spence Howard and Edward L. Latimer appear more than others (n=9), the distribution of surveyors shows that the practice of creating racially restrictive covenants was common. The percentage of surveyors who created racially restrictive

plats isn't known because non-segregated entries were not recorded. This is another avenue to explore in future research.

Quote	Count	Percent of Total
Exception for Colored Servants	9	30
Mention of "Health", "Sanitation", "Death Rate"	2	6.666666667
"Negro", "Blood", "African"	25	83.33333333
Excluded all Except "White Race"	4	13.33333333
General Restriction for "Colored"	7	23.33333333

Figure 7. Common words, phrases, and terms in racially restrictive housing covenants

Figure 7 quantifies the wording used in restrictions. The restrictions are grouped into five categories: exception for colored servants, reference to health, sanitation, or death rate; Negro, blood, or African; exclusion of all except whites; and a general restriction for all non-white individuals.

While the “exclusion of all except whites” category is similar to the general restriction for all colored people, the wording of these two categories is dramatically different. For example, a general restriction would be “The said lots shall not be sold, aligned or conveyed, leased or rented to or occupied by any person or persons of the colored race or African descent” (Liber 538, Folio 319). An example of a restriction for all except whites would be “First. That the herein described piece or parcel of land, or any part thereof, or any improvements thereon, shall never be sold, leased, donated to, or conveyed to any other than the white or Caucasian race” (Liber 278).

The words “Negro,” “Blood,” and “African” were categorized together because they consistently appeared together as in Liber 326, Folio 40: “At no time shall the above described lots or any part thereof... be sold to, leased to, transferred to, or occupied by any Negro or persons of Negro or African descent.” In the initial analysis, the word “colored” was grouped with

“Negro” and African” but given that “colored” can refer to all non-white individuals depending on interpretation, it was made its own category.

Many restrictions fell into multiple categories. For example, the full quote from Liber 326, Folio 40 is: "At no time shall the above described lots or any part thereof... be sold to, leased to, transferred to, or occupied by any Negro or persons of Negro or African descent. This provision, however, not to include servants, bona fide employed by the owner or occupant of said lot while living with said owner or occupant." This would fall into both the “Negro/Blood/African” category and the Exception for Servant category.

Mentions of health, sanitation, and death rate were rare but they had a unique language. In these cases, restrictions were made for “any one race that has a higher death rate than that of the white or Caucasian race.” Both instances of such restrictions also fell into other categories, however given that this form of restriction attempts to use a supposedly unbiased scientific measurement of death rate it was given a unique category. Interestingly, no mention of moral degradation was found in the data set, limited as it is.

In addition, the overwhelming majority of restrictions applied only to Black individuals (n=25) instead of a general restriction on colored individuals or explicit restriction on all except white individuals.

Of note are the numerous exceptions made for African American domestic servants. While it is not known whether these houses and the property owners would necessarily employ a domestic servant, it’s interesting that an explicit exception is made.

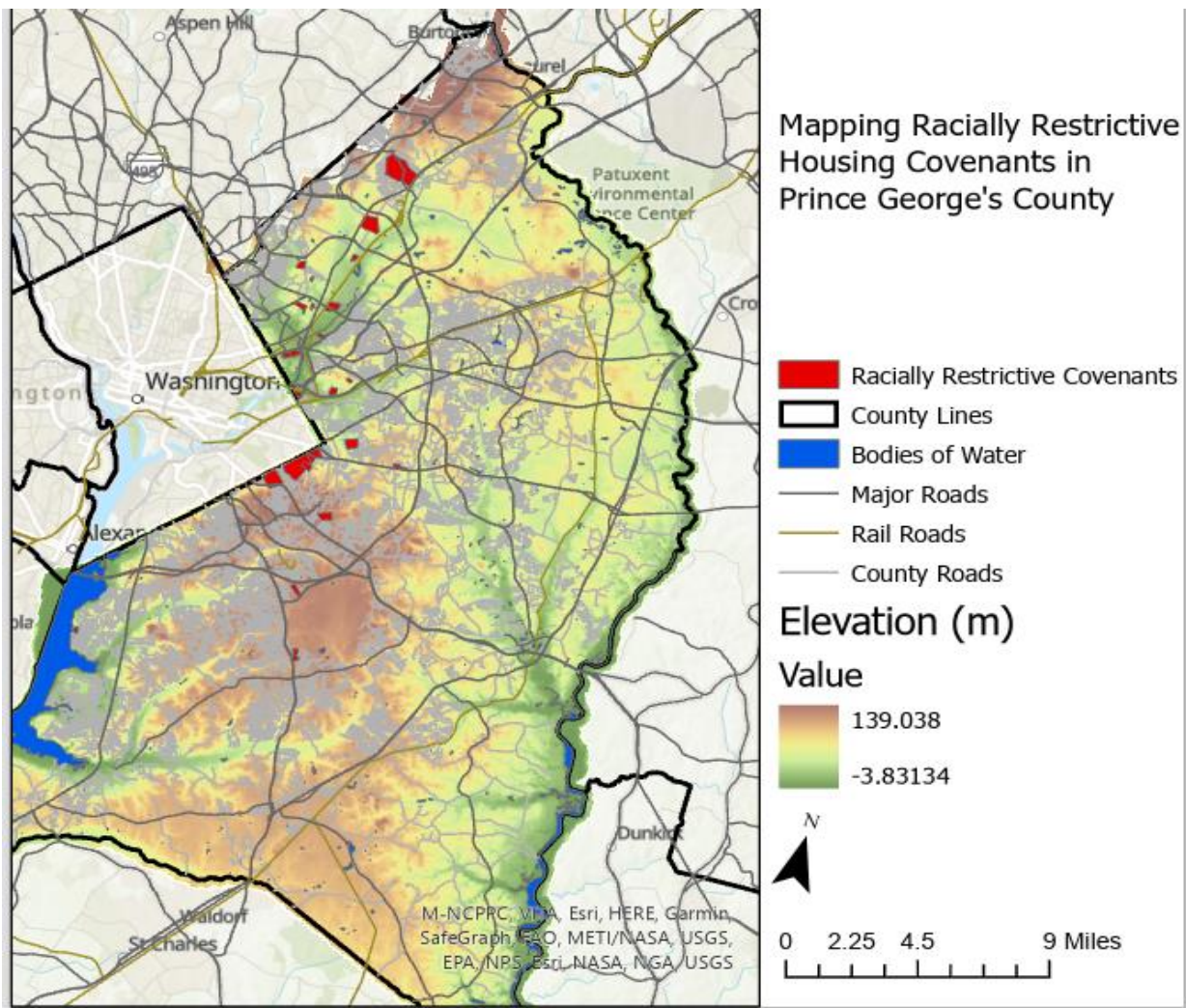


Figure 8. ArcGIS representation of racial restrictions

Figure 8 maps the distribution of the racially restricted plats that have been identified. This was completed using ArcGIS. While the majority of the data set was mapped, two plats—Riverdale Heights, block 9, 10, and 13 and Riverdale Hills, section 1-2—haven't been mapped. Significant landscape changes have left no point of reference to accurately represent the original plat. Most (n=25) of the racially restricted plats are within I-495. While I-495 didn't exist until the Federal Highway Act of 1956, it's worth noting that these plats are often close to the County border with Washington, D.C.

Since our research began with the 1923-1939 grantor index, we can't analyze restrictions over time given the disproportionate weight of data from this date range. Likewise, we can't analyze the relationship between deed books and restrictions because deed books from 1923-1939 dominate the dataset.

Discussion

The data would suggest that racially restrictive housing covenants were more common in the suburbs near the Maryland-Washington border than in the rural portions of Prince George's County, which supports already understood concepts of white flight (Grubb, 1982). The increasing popularity of streetcars followed by the automobile allowed wealthier whites to leave cities for the suburbs that were quickly segregated. This was compounded later, with the construction of highways from these suburbs into the heart of D.C.

Furthermore, the data would suggest that the creation of racially segregated housing covenants wasn't done by a few powerful individuals who were buying land and surveying it to purposefully create segregated housing. Instead, the creation of restrictive covenants was a common practice that developers implemented to increase and maintain property values (Armstrong, 1998). Segregation as a means of increasing property values can be seen in advertisements for housing in these areas. For example, an advertisement in the *Evening Star*, a popular Washington and Maryland newspaper, promoted a house in a segregated community: "Every home in North Woodside, Md. has been specially designed and built—developing a community of superior character, protected by such restrictions as prevent invasion of deteriorating influences" (*Evening Star*, 1926). While these restrictions may also refer to the sale or production of alcohol or the manufacturing of industrial goods, it is most likely in reference to the neighborhood's segregated status. The property referenced in this quote is in Montgomery County, Maryland; however, further research would likely find such advertisements in Prince George's County. Racial restrictions are obviously the product of racism, ignorance,

and prejudice, are also perpetuated by capitalism's necessity to maximize profit. In this instance, the existence of injustice is profitable; therefore, injustice is created.

This also shows that social relations are at the heart of marginalization. "The characteristics of a given parcel of land are not determined by its ownership, that is, the identity of the property owner does not change the property's physical characteristics;" however, this clearly is not the case when African Americans own property (Armstrong, 1998). Fear of diversity and loss of property values in white neighborhoods creates cyclical patterns of property ownership and segregation that continue into the present despite research that consistently proves little relationship between race and property value (Turner, Popkin, & Rawlings, 2009). These patterns have a domino effect of continued segregation in schools, voting districts, and employment.

Future research to compare these findings with current housing prices, racial demographics, presence and quality of schooling, highway development, urban renewal programs, and other areas of interest could provide valuable information on the historic development of inequities in Prince George's County. For example, tax records across the county could be catalogued to determine exact property values based on location, time, and segregated status.

The explicit exclusion of African Americans is also evident in the disproportionate use of words such as "Negro" and "African" in housing restrictions over general restrictions for "colored" individuals or "non-white" individuals. It would be interesting to see what, if any, non-white groups lived in segregated neighborhoods. This could be used to understand the legal boundaries of race based on what ethnicities are classified as white, non-white, colored, Negro, or African. Determining where these boundaries are constructed would help analyze segregation in the region for future projects.

Mentions of health, sanitation, and death rate are notable outliers in the data set. They seem to reference a generally accepted death rate based on race but do not necessarily

reference any study or data to determine what populations have higher or lower death rates than the “white race.” Knowing where these death rate statistics originate could help us understand what other races may have been included or excluded by these restrictions. While it is assumed that African Americans had higher death rates in the first half of the twentieth century than whites based on a multitude of factors, what other races and ethnicities would have been excluded by such restrictions is unknown. It may also be valuable to see how these death rates were calculated to critically deconstruct the “scientific” methods by which racism and segregation were naturalized and made logical.

The exceptions made for domestic servants are evidence of the limited space in which Black Americans could exist in white spaces. Blacks were continually segregated except when they were servants to a white employer. It is unknown what percentage of houses with such exceptions would have Black servants, but given that the exception exists it can be inferred that the presence of Black individuals was only acceptable if agreed on by whites and their presence provided specific, tangible benefits to white people. It would be useful to create an oral history collection of Black domestic servants and of African American homeowners denied access to these properties, to understand the qualitative impacts of these practices.

The biggest take away at this stage is the new methodology developed. Because the deed, liber, and folio were not recorded in the initial 2019 dataset (they were saved as hyperlinks in the digitized document which had since expired), a significant amount of time was spent unsuccessfully trying to recover original data. Once this was abandoned and a new method developed, progress in reviewing deeds increased. Continuing this research using the knowledge and experience developed in Fall 2021 will increase the efficiency of future analyses.

A significant issue in acquiring data is that it must be done by individuals reading images of documents accessible through MDLandRec. While this site is a great resource, saving visits to state archives or the county courthouse for data collection, the documents’ text isn’t searchable. It would be worthwhile to create a method that would allow the documents to be

read and extracted by a keyword search. The keywords would be similar to those in Figure 7 such as “Negro,” “African,” “Race,” “Caucasian,” “White,” “Servant,” “Death Rate,” and “Colored.” This would allow the collection, analysis, and visualization of large amounts of data, dramatically increasing the scope of research.

Conclusion

Preliminary results indicate that the suburbs of Prince George’s County, particularly those near Washington D.C. and major roadways into the city, are more likely to be segregated than other areas. While this fits existing narratives of white flight, more research into the specific language used in creating these restrictive covenants and the relationship between segregation and other factors such as access to schools, utilities, and property values would be revealing.

This could be combined with other data collection methods, such as oral histories, to create a more holistic data set. This research would be supported by development of a semi-automated workflow capable of searching these documents. If this can’t be developed, the method outlined in this paper should be implemented to maintain thorough searching and detailed documentation.

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