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# Neoliberal Environmentalism in the War on Poverty: A Case Study of Carbondale, Illinois

Gregory Matthew Carter

*Southern Illinois University Carbondale*, [greg1832@siu.edu](mailto:greg1832@siu.edu)

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ENVIRONMENTAL NEOLIBERALISM IN THE WAR ON POVERTY:  
A CASE STUDY OF CARBONDALE, ILLINOIS

by

Gregory M. Carter

B.A., Quincy University, 2015

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Master of Arts Degree

Department of History  
in the Graduate School  
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Approved by:

Dr. Kay J. Carr, Chair

Dr. Ras Michael Brown

Fr. Joseph A. Brown, SJ

Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
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## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Gregory M. Carter, for the Master of Arts degree in History, presented on March 30, 2017, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: Environmental Neoliberalism in the War on Poverty: A Case Study of Carbondale, Illinois

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Kay J. Carr

The following thesis examines the city of Carbondale, Illinois, during the tumultuous years between 1965 and 1975. Carbondale was the recipient of large amounts of funding from the Model Cities program, part of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. During that time, Carbondale experienced violent anti-war protests and community-wide unrest. At the same time as Model Cities projects began, the modern environmentalism movement surrounding the first observance of Earth Day, April 22, 1970, also occurred. Within four years, environmental groups comprised mostly of white citizens were pitted against African-American community activists working to improve Carbondale's segregated Northeast neighborhood and the city officials who supported them. Environmental activism in Carbondale was perceived as a source financial gain, as was the Model Cities program. Thus, a neoliberal, marketplace approach was used to sell both activities to the general public rather than appeals to justice, public health, or moral outrage. Most historical accounts of the rise of environmentalism begin with accounts of spectacular national events, yet the story of environmental change in Carbondale contradicts that narrative.

Both sides of the struggle were eventually denied success by a combination of generational endemic poverty in Southern Illinois, and lingering racism the War on Poverty programs stoked rather than diffused.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This student instead owes a debt of gratitude and credit to many people who shaped this thesis project. First and foremost, I have to thank my wife, Kim, for taking this long and hard journey through academia with me. Were it not for her, I would never have gone back to college. Next, I thank Dr. Justin Coffey of Quincy University, the best undergraduate professor I had, who pushed me through intense work which prepared me to engage this subject matter.

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## NOTE ON LANGUAGE

The sources for this research project use the terms “Negro,” “Black,” “Afro-American,” and “African-American” interchangeably to describe neighborhoods, individuals, and social movements. In the following text, the use of these words to describe African Americans is derived from original, quoted sources, and is not intended to cause offense.

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## INTRODUCTION

“‘The other side of the tracks’ is not an abstract metaphor but a specific place as well as a condition and a social class.”

–Paul Theroux, *Deep South*

To historians, a watershed moment in the past is emblematic of profound change. To many older residents in Carbondale, Illinois, the year 1970 was clearly a watershed in community identity. Between the months of May and November, the city was the scene of violent riots and confrontations between students from Southern Illinois University and the National Guard, and between the local police and the Black Panthers. Through the summer months, the union locals turned out to participate in a nationwide labor strike. In August, environmentalists chained themselves to trees, women marched in protest against gender discrimination, and massive construction projects lurched forward as one neighborhood in Carbondale became a battlefield in President Lyndon Johnson’s “War on Poverty.”<sup>1</sup> For the first time, the river of federal and state funds that flowed regularly into Carbondale from the 1930s onward came with strings attached. The first string included a requirement that residents in Carbondale’s African American neighborhood were to receive control over decisions made about the neighborhood for the first time since the American Civil War. The second string was a requirement that Carbondale’s “model neighborhood” was to be rebuilt and the residents uplifted in every way possible that enabled them to fully participate and compete in the modern consumer marketplace. The third caveat was a five year deadline.

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<sup>1</sup>For the local context of these events, see Stanley Brodsky to Mayor David Keene, August 29, 1969, in Box 1, Folder 3, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

Because of these events, city residents were forced to reevaluate their identity, and that of their community, as Carbondale underwent a period of reconstruction.<sup>2</sup> Was Carbondale an integrated college town or a segregated manufacturing community modeled on the Jim Crow South? Could the City of Carbondale, perpetually starved for funds, and the older white community cope with a rising African-American community and a radical body of college students? The answer was a resounding “no,” unless residents were convinced of some future means of financial gain. What was born from this attitude was a case of neoliberal environmentalism, which in turn was dogged by racism and poverty until it too was defeated. Neoliberalism, or an emphasis on privatization and the removal of government oversight or regulations in favor of free-market principles, could not overcome racial animus caused by decades of segregation or Carbondale’s perennial case of low worker income and absent tax revenue sources.

Studying the War on Poverty through this localized lens provides unique insight and adds to the historical conversation about the tumult of the 1960s and 1970s in America. Although far from alone, the city of Carbondale was on the periphery of larger national trends and social movements that were taking place. This project began as a colloquium paper on a local environmental advocacy group. During the course of researching that group, the complexities of identity and community in Southern Illinois quickly overwhelmed the scope of the paper and demanded expansion. Cultural geographer Carolyn Finney’s *Black Faces/White Spaces*, provided a profound influence on the expansion of the original paper. Her call to reexamine the physical environment and to consider not simply what “environment” is, but what “environment” means to humans living in a given place, called this student to entirely reconsider the physical geography and environment of the City of Carbondale and its surroundings. Segregation created separate environments for several segments of the Carbondale population, and each carried a separate meaning and definition. Integration forced these meanings to come into conflict, creating the problems presented in this thesis. This thesis is an examination of the

effects of War on Poverty programs at the grass-roots level on the physical environment and identity of one community: Carbondale, Illinois, as part of the federal government's War on Poverty. Over 1,100 communities equal in size to Carbondale applied for Model Cities funds, and submitted graphic, unfettered details about the state of affairs in each city. These applications are frank attestations to the real picture of "poor" communities existing at the very height of post-World War II economic prosperity; without examining them, a more complete picture of the War on Poverty and the real economic state of American communities in the 1960s and 1970s remains elusive.

Environmental movements in Carbondale and Northeast, the segregated African-American neighborhood of the city, were linked by two features: desire for environmental change and poverty. Conditions reported for the Model Cities grant in Northeast Carbondale blend environmental justice and environmentalism together, and created a cause-and-effect relationship with other environmental activism in Carbondale in the late 1960s through the mid-1970s. The Northeast neighborhood was a time capsule, lagging fifty or more years behind the rest of the community in every possible respect because of complete Jim Crow segregation. Between 1964 and 1970, public segregation was chipped away, leaving only the economic situation to be resolved. The Model Cities funds were supposed to resolve that final problem.

The official application for Model Cities funds included a comprehensive economic survey of the entire community and demonstrated the enormity of the task ahead: homes needed to be drastically altered or demolished, streets rebuilt, a nearby creek rerouted to prevent flooding and pollutants from inundating the neighborhood, and a host of additional work. In effect, a complete reconstruction of the environment in Northeast Carbondale was

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<sup>2</sup>For a national context of the issues surrounding these events, see Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2010), Justin Coffey, *Spiro Agnew and the Rise of the Republican Right* (New York: Praeger, 2015), Michael Nelson, *Resilient America: Electing Nixon in 1968, Channeling Dissent, and Dividing Government* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2014), Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), and Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2011).

required, and future economic prosperity was the justification. A simple formula was followed: polluted groundwater led to sick adults and children, resulting in missed opportunities to work. Working adults could participate in the local economy, pay taxes, and come off the county welfare rolls, resulting in community-wide prosperity. Improved housing generated higher property values, and those values in turn generated property tax revenue for the cash-strapped city government. Healthy children could finish their education, break the cycle of poverty, and become wage earners who could contribute to the local economy.

The process of getting Model Cities funding began in 1968, and the first portions of federal and state funds were disbursed in early 1970. In the middle of the Model Cities application process, a local environmental group was created by Mayor David Keene. This group, largely comprised of business owners and garden club members, was charged with the task of cleaning up the downtown and making Carbondale more aesthetically pleasing. Again, financial incentives were required. At the very first meeting of the environmental group, initially called the Mayor's Beautification Committee, the leaders based their mission on the idea that a clean community would equal financial opportunity. In theory, more people would visit a clean Carbondale, stay overnight and spend their money in a clean Carbondale. The chief obstacle to their mission was a complete dearth of funding sources available for neighborhood cleanup and nearly thirty percent of Carbondale's white community, apart from university employees, was unemployed and living on welfare. The groundswell of nationwide environmentalism leading to the first Earth Day in 1970 gave impetus for the group to break away from city government and reform as a semi-private organization, the Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment (CFBE). From 1970 to 1978, this group doggedly pursued beautification efforts while simultaneously begging for funds from anyone who would listen.

Work to alter conditions in Northeast Carbondale eventually caused the collapse of the CFBE. All city resources were directed at improving Northeast, and the constant need for

additional funding led the city to float bond issues again and again. The last bond issue resulted in a financial windfall for the city. The city council voted to disburse the extra profits to local non-profit groups, but the CFBE had never fully separated from city government. The CFBE also failed to connect with the Northeast neighborhood or the student environmental groups on the Southern Illinois University campus, so the most powerful advocacy groups in the city, the Northeast Congress for Development (NCD) did not help them and SIU provided only token support.<sup>3</sup> Instead, the CFBE was usurped in its mission by another group, Green Earth, Incorporated, a non-profit conservation group formed literally overnight in order to take advantage of the city bond profits. Green Earth, Inc., was modeled on the Sierra Club, so instead of seeking out profit through environmental activism, Green Earth purchased parcels of land around Carbondale in order to completely foil commercial development.

Because Carbondale was the location of a growing research university, almost every element of the tumultuous “Sixties” was both carried into Carbondale from outside and developed from within the community. In 1970, Carbondale had a population of 22,000 permanent residents and 23,000 college students. Within that combined population was an active local chapter of Students for Democratic Society (SDS); a group of civil rights activists who philosophically identified with both Martin Luther King’s strategy of nonviolence and Malcolm X’s credo of “the ballot or the bullet;” a local Black Panther organization; a local version of the Sierra Club; chapters of the Republican, Democratic, and American Communist political parties; rumored connections to the Weather Underground; the National Organization for Women (NOW); and dozens of other organizations between 1970 and 1975. Two organizations

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<sup>3</sup>Northeast Community Development Congress Position Paper on SIU Riots, September 24, 1970. Delyte Morris Administrative Papers, 1948-1970, Box 565, Folder 3. SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center. Carbondale, Illinois.

<sup>4</sup>The May 1970 graduations and police crackdowns in response to the riots removed many of the students and radical groups. The student leaders from the Radical Action Movement group all graduated in May, 1970, the Carbondale police raided the Carbondale SDS chapter house during the riots and arrested all present, and drove out the Black Panthers by November, 1970.

eventually came to represent social movement advocacy in Carbondale while all the others slowly fell silent.<sup>4</sup>

Two community groups created by Mayor David Keene in 1969 are examined in this study. The first was the City Demonstration Agency (CDA), created to administer local activities in the War on Poverty. The second was the Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment (CFBE). This group was created in response to the nationwide groundswell which precipitated the first Earth Day celebration in 1970.<sup>5</sup> The two groups both conceptualized the physical environment of Carbondale in economic terms and saw environmental change as a producer of economic success and equality. Both groups also disavowed connections to community radicals, both sought ways to erase the past, and both groups ceased active operations by the end of 1975.

The records of these two agencies demonstrate with clarity the dire need for outside intervention Carbondale faced during the 1970s. The City Demonstration Agency, spearheaded by Civil Rights activist Robert M. Stalls and supported by Southern Illinois University administrators and local civic clubs, oversaw a mammoth influx of cash to Carbondale from federal, state and local Model Cities funds, and used money for drastic infrastructure changes, community development and reconstruction. Unlike the City Demonstration Agency, however, the CFBE attempted to raise funds and support only from the local white population. The CFBE was perpetually starved for funds and was unable to generate meaningful support for long-term projects despite membership of over four hundred supporters and connections to local businesses and civic clubs. The two groups never achieved a solid connection in order to spread their shared goals to the entire community.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>David Keene to H.F. Davenport, June 11, 1969, in Box 1, Folder 3, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois. See also Adam Rome, *The Genius of Earth Day* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013), and Susan Youngblood Ashmore, *Carry It On: The War on Poverty and the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama, 1964-1972* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999).

<sup>6</sup>Preserved minutes from CFBE meetings repeatedly mention an inability to build bridges to the Northeast neighborhood in order to extend CFBE work there. By 1972, when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was beginning reconstruction of Piles Fork Creek and Attucks Park, the CFBE appears to have been totally unaware of developments.

Through the lens provided by these two organizations, I argue there is a need for closer examination of the relationships between the War on Poverty and the 1970s Environmentalism Movement. The history of the environmentalism movement should begin with the War on Poverty, because changing the physical environment was seen as a means of alleviating poverty. Any new research should begin on the periphery of these movements and begin with the smallest communities that received funding for any Great Society project. Two reasons demonstrated with stark clarity in Carbondale justify this reevaluation:

First, historians of Great Society programs have shown a remarkable determination to focus on America's largest cities and ignore those on the periphery of American society. By ignoring communities and people on the periphery in the 1960s and 1970s, historians have placed too much emphasis on densely-packed urban areas and have missed opportunities to study the effects of federal and state intervention elsewhere. A quick survey of War on Poverty and urban renewal historical literature reveals a distinct pattern: Harlem, Chicago, Detroit, Oakland, Atlanta — Urban Crisis. Rural poverty, on the other hand, is scarcely mentioned. This pattern oversimplifies the diversity of the War on Poverty and leaves out a vast swath of historical information.<sup>7</sup> The various Model Cities projects, apart from attention to the program's conception of "maximum feasible participation," are almost entirely neglected from the historiography. This thesis is an attempt to initiate an in-depth historical discussion about the Model Cities program as a whole.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, historians of environmentalism and environmental justice, mistaken in their belief that these are two separate fields of inquiry, have focused entirely too much attention on the spectacular events of the 1960s and 1970s and have equally turned their attention away

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<sup>7</sup> A close examination of the Model Cities communities as a whole is entirely absent from the historiography. Most of the "canonical" works on the War on Poverty mention Model Cities in passing, at best. While many volumes have been devoted to other aspects of the War on Poverty, including Welfare/AFDC, housing, urban violence and others, an in-depth reference for the Model Cities program is inexplicably absent.

<sup>8</sup> Noel Cazenave, *Impossible Democracy: The Unlikely Success of the War on Poverty Community Action Programs* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 139.

from urban areas to focus on the natural environment. A similar pattern in the historical literature is revealed when examining the local effects of national environmental best-sellers: Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*; Paul Erlich's *The Population Bomb*; Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire*; the Love Canal disaster; the Santa Barbara Oil Spill; Three Mile Island. No mention of these people, popular books, or spectacular events exists in the extant records of the CFBE or the environmental groups on the SIU campus. Equally absent from the record is any discussion on fossil fuel, deforestation, water or air quality. Instead, environmentalists in Carbondale focused on erasing evidence of rioting and of poverty while articulating a belief that a clean community equaled an economically prosperous community. Environmental historian Frank Uekoetter argues convincingly in his work for a reexamination of environmentalism timelines and concepts, because, he argues, there is an entirely different timeline and methodology needed that separates rural and urban, national and local environmental movements. The experience of environmentalism in Carbondale bears out his argument.<sup>9</sup> Nationwide reaction to the Santa Barbara oil spill was immediate, whereas cleaning up decades of pollution and neglect in the 147 model neighborhoods nationwide received little attention.

Carbondale also needed to improve the looks of the physical environment so visitors would stay in Carbondale and buy homes and consumer goods. This need created what environmental historians and urban planners have called an urban ecosystem, wherein economy was a determinant not only of citizenship, but also as an environmental condition. Fixing the environment, eliminating poverty, and eliminating racism were coincidental factors in creating a community fit for citizen consumers to belong, and Carbondale attempted all three aspects

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<sup>9</sup>Frank Uekoetter, *The Turning Points of Environmental History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 7; David Delmar, *Environmentalism* (Edinburgh: Pearson-Longman, 2006), 66.

simultaneously.<sup>10</sup> Because the city government was incapable of impacting the crisis with its own resources, it turned outward, as it had in the past, to state and federal government intervention. Because Model Cities was a joint endeavor requiring state and local funds to supplement federal dollars on a matching basis, the City of Carbondale resorted to bond issues in every election between 1962 and 1976, mortgaging the future on current improvements and reducing the city's borrowing capacity and credit rating in the process. By the time the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers surveyed Northeast Carbondale for a construction project, the City of Carbondale was unable to borrow funds and had to resort to a final bond issue in order to pay for the cost of materials.

Second, too many histories of 1960s-1970s liberalism use a top-down approach beginning with President Kennedy or President Johnson and frame social movements under the aegis of revived New Deal Liberalism. This method has placed too much emphasis on the upper echelons of government, ignoring the effects at the grass-roots level, and has often focused on the wrong presidency. Although studies of 1960s liberalism and the conservative backlash against it focus on Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, many of the programs used to combat poverty began before 1960 and survived until the Reagan era. Carbondale was the recipient of federal and state programs beginning with the New Deal and remains a recipient of outside benefits today. Funding for War on Poverty programs was not administered until two years into the Nixon presidency.<sup>11</sup> This continuum of outside support is often overlooked by historians.

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<sup>10</sup> Marina Alberti, *Advances in Urban Ecology: Integrating Humans and Ecological Processes in Urban Ecosystems* (New York: Springer, 2008), 15-16.

<sup>11</sup> Although a polemic against federal spending, Martin Anderson's *The Federal Bulldozer* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967) offers the best detailed descriptions of the continuum of the public and private urban renewal projects developed between 1949-1967. See also Brian Drake, *Loving Nature, Fearing the State: Environmentalism and Antigovernment Politics Before Reagan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013).

Furthermore, the community work done in Carbondale by the CFBE and the CDA was conservative in nature, not liberal. Local community activists in both organizations associated liberalism with the radicals on the SIU campus and the Black Panthers in Northeast Carbondale, not with economic progress or social justice. Despite Southern Illinois being a Democratic, pro-union stronghold, both groups attacked the grip labor unions had on the city. CFBE members actively crossed picket lines during the 1970 strike to collect garbage and voluntarily became “scab labor.”<sup>12</sup> The CDA used federal government resources to integrate labor unions for the first time in history. The majority of funds directed to the CDA were used to create education programs for children and unemployed adults, and to provide urgently needed medical care. Funds from the agency were also used to improve neighborhood infrastructure and housing stock, and garnered praise for the resulting dramatic rise in taxable property values, not for creating equality of any kind.

The funding for the Model Cities program was also strictly time-limited.<sup>13</sup> The CDA was given five years to erase decades of discriminatory practices and severe neglect by local government in order to make residents of the Model Neighborhood economically competitive in the local marketplace for employment. Marketed as “hand up, not a hand out,” by Johnson, a timeline to the end of outside funding was in place when Carbondale’s Model Cities grant was approved.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>“Position Paper of the Northeast Community Development Congress,” September 24, 1970, in Box 565, Folder 3, Delyte Morris Administrative Papers, 1948-1970, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center. Carbondale, Illinois.

<sup>13</sup> Several historians of the War on Poverty have asserted a five-year time frame. The wording on the actual document specifies “a short period.” See National Archives and Records Administration, “Act of November 3, 1966, Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966,” 103, part 4, <https://research.archives.gov/id/299945>.

<sup>14</sup>Randall Woods, *Prisoners of Hope* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 185-186; Jonathan Bean, *Big Government and Affirmative Action* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 47.

Many of Johnson's conceptions of his Great Society involved bringing people excluded from the mainstream of American society and economic prosperity into the national fold.<sup>15</sup> Economic self-sufficiency and participation in American consumerism were indicators of American citizenship. People who lived in poverty and people denied equal rights because of skin color were not simply marginalized economically. They lived outside of American society by force of historical and economic circumstance while nominally holding the title of citizen only because they lived within the United States. The surveys conducted for the Model Cities grants between 1966 and 1972 demonstrate endemic Jim Crow segregation throughout Carbondale, problematizing the conception of the Jim Crow south. Historians Thomas Sugrue and James Loewen extensively demonstrate the depths of Jim Crow in northern states in their works, but Sugrue's exceptional contributions to the historical narrative avoid confronting the periphery and focus exclusively on large urban areas.<sup>16</sup> Loewen, on the other hand, focuses on Sundown towns and dismisses communities he believes are exceptions to his formula, including Carbondale, from his exhaustive work on segregation.

Three groups of sources were used for this project. The first chapter of this thesis is a historiographical review of the discussion on poverty in America that includes original published sources from 1958 to 1975 and historical works that have followed. This is necessary in order to place Carbondale into the ongoing historical discussion and to demonstrate the absence of

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<sup>15</sup>Five volumes of historical work are considered standard references for every discussion of the War on Poverty: Michael Gillette's *Launching the War on Poverty: An Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), Annelise Orleck and Lisa Hazirjian's edited work *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), Randall Woods' *Prisoners of Hope: Lyndon Johnson, the Great Society, and the Limits of Liberalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), Michael B. Katz's *The Undeserving Poor: America's Enduring Confrontation with Poverty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), and James Patterson's text *America's Struggle Against Poverty in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000). Two conservative polemics against the War on Poverty programs, Martin Anderson's *The Federal Bulldozer* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), and Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky's *Implementation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973) are also important contributions to the historical conversation.

<sup>16</sup>Thomas Sugrue's *Sweet Land of Liberty* (New York: Random House, 2008) and James Loewen's *Sundown Towns* (New York: Touchstone, 2005) provide exceptional detail about the effects of Jim Crow in northern states. Any study of the Civil Rights era is incomplete without a close reading of both texts.

periphery communities into context. The debate over the necessity and effectiveness of federal intervention in local affairs is brought into sharp focus in this thesis. Segregation in 1960s Carbondale was so absolute and resistance to social change so resolute that outside intervention was required, whether practical or not. Unlike other studies of the War on Poverty, however, this study demonstrates how dramatic federal intervention in Carbondale was. Carbondale was the smallest of five cities in Illinois to receive Model Cities funding. Between 1968 and 1975, state and federal funding for Model Cities programs amounted to \$4,000 per individual living in the model neighborhood. In Chicago, a frequent focus point of discussions on the War on Poverty, spending amounted to approximately \$40 per individual.<sup>17</sup> By limiting discussions of federal funding to larger cities, historians and economists alike have failed to show the disparity and diversity of spending involved.<sup>18</sup>

The second chapter discusses the Model Cities program in Carbondale. Documents from the Model Cities program application are used to clarify social structure and economic conditions in Carbondale, especially in the designated model neighborhood, a twelve-square-block area populated almost exclusively by African Americans called Northeast Carbondale. Usual discussions of the War on Poverty and urban renewal focused on urban “ghettos” in large cities. Verbose descriptions of the 1960s and 1970s “urban crisis” fail to capture the full depths of segregation and urban poverty. Carbondale, removed from any direct geographical connection to a larger metropolitan area, has a record of Jim Crow segregation demonstrating a depraved, generational indifference to human life. Physical conditions in Northeast Carbondale more

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<sup>17</sup> \$38 million was spent on War on Poverty programs in Chicago, where the designated Model Neighborhood population was approximately 500,000. In Carbondale, \$11 million was spent on a population of 2,450 people.

<sup>18</sup> *The Chicago Tribune* devoted an entire year to examining the “permanent underclass” in the mid-1980s. Criticism of how War on Poverty funds were “spread,” and therefore misapplied, by Mayor Daley’s administration, resulted in little or no benefit to the city’s poor. See James Squires, ed., *The American Millstone: An Examination of the Nation’s Permanent Underclass* (Chicago: *The Chicago Tribune*/Contemporary Books, 1986). See also Michael B. Katz, ed., *The “Underclass” Debate: Views from History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

closely resembled a concentration camp than a neighborhood. Studies of Carbondale conducted between 1964 and 1970 referred to Northeast Carbondale as a “black ghetto.” The reality of the situation was far worse.<sup>19</sup>

The third and final chapter stems from the original research project that led to this thesis. The Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment (CFBE) was created in response to the nationwide movement of the first Earth Day in 1970, and the documentary record left behind by this group offers a glimpse into the struggles of the white population in Carbondale that was not tied to Southern Illinois University. The members of this organization defined environmentalism in Carbondale through the lens of local economic conditions and defined racism and poverty as environmental conditions, while ignoring broader environmental concerns like the region’s dependence on coal power. Also missing from their records is any mention of the spectacular environmental controversies of the time period, suggesting a disconnection from the nationwide environmentalism movement. Instead, the group used environmentalism as means of covering up local social problems, using tree plantings to build barriers between the local white community, and the university community, and to reinforce the barriers between Carbondale and Northeast Carbondale. Taken together, these sources present a complex, deeply divided community on the outer edges of several nationwide movements.

Several forces intersected in Carbondale to deny real social, environmental, and economic changes to the community. A lack of income caused by generational poverty throughout the older parts of the community, persistent racism and unwillingness to cross the color line left over by a legacy of Jim Crow segregation, and a neoliberal economic view of

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<sup>19</sup> In his work *Means Without End: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), Giorgio Agamben defines a “camp” as “the space that opens up when the state of exception starts to become the rule. Camps constitute a space of exception— a space in which the law is completely suspended.” In Carbondale, total segregation did not take effect until World War I. From that period until the late 1960s, the state of exception in Carbondale was the total segregation of African Americans from the benefits of community membership.

environmentalism combined to render moot all attempts at long-term change. Instead, long-term animosity remains as the legacy of the War on Poverty and modern environmentalism in Carbondale.

## Chapter 1

### THE “MODEL CITY” LEGACY

“Why anyone should hate an anti-poverty program, I don’t know.”

–Lyndon Johnson<sup>20</sup>

There is no shortage of historiography examining the War on Poverty or the “Urban Crisis” of the 1960s and 1970s. Historians of all stripes agree that a “discovery” of poverty occurred during the 1960 presidential election, spurred on by several polemical texts written in the late 1950s, the foremost being Michael Harrington’s *The Other America*. After winning a landslide election in 1964, President Lyndon Johnson, riding atop the high tide of American Liberalism, determined to use the full resources of the Federal government to eliminate poverty before the end of his presidential term. Vast numbers of federally-sponsored programs were created to support Johnson’s goal, although elimination of poverty did not occur. The Model Cities program, a nickname which stemmed from the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Reinvestment Act of 1966, was deployed to improve conditions in Carbondale’s Northeast neighborhood and over one hundred other cities nationwide.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, unrest in several cities compelled Johnson and his advisors to confront the developing “urban crisis” caused by several factors, especially endemic levels of inner city

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<sup>20</sup> Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 347.

<sup>21</sup> Ricardo Millett, *Examination of “Widespread Citizen Participation” in the Model Cities Program and the Demands of Ethnic Minorities for a Greater Decision Making Role in American Cities* (San Francisco: R & E Research Associates, 1977), 2-3; Jonathan Bean, *Big Government and Affirmative Action* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2001?), 37; Andrew Weber and Amanda Wallace, “Revealing the Empowerment Revolution: A Literature Review of the Model Cities Program,” in *Journal of Urban History* 38, No. 1 (January, 2012), 74, Accessed September 23, 2016, <http://juh.sagepub.com/content/38/1/173.full.pdf+html>.

poverty. Johnson administration insiders and historians alike disagree whether or not the real intent of the War on Poverty was Johnson's vision of a renewed New Deal or a means to co-opt the growing influence of the Black Panthers on the Civil Rights Movement. Leadership for city demonstration agencies nationwide was chosen from among nonviolent activists. In Carbondale, the move to shutter the local Black Panther organization began with an open letter by the City Demonstration Agency in May, 1970, remonstrating local radicals and violence. If pressure to issue this denouncement was applied by anyone in government, no documentary evidence exists. However, reconstruction of Northeast Carbondale began in earnest immediately after the protests, not before. A crackdown against the Black Panthers in the fall of 1970 culminated in the shooting of a Carbondale police officer and failed a standoff with local police in November, 1970.<sup>22</sup> Although several locally-published "underground" newspapers extolled the views of the Black Panther Party (BPP) for several more years, the BPP ceased to exist as an organized body in Carbondale by December, 1970.

Located far from the epicenters of rioting and campus protest when the War on Poverty commenced, Carbondale was still undergoing profound change in 1970. Rather than a simple community caught in the outer rim of larger events, the unique city demographics made Carbondale a magnet for social unrest. Several paradoxical trends made Carbondale an unusual community in the 1960s:

1. There was no "white flight" from Carbondale. The explosive growth of Southern Illinois University instead produced white influx and a drastic change of demography. Historian

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<sup>22</sup>Northeast Community Development Congress, "Position Paper on the State of Affairs of the Southern Illinois University Carbondale Campus, September 24, 1970," in Box 565, folder 3, Delyte Morris Administrative Papers, 1948-1970, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

Robbie Lieberman argues white flight from campus only occurred after the 1970 riot. However, the city at large did not incur this trend.<sup>23</sup>

2. Carbondale's population (excluding the transient population of students) was 22,000. Although "city" was defined by the Census Bureau as "over 2,500 in population" at the time, Model Cities and related documents refer to Carbondale as "intensely rural," "lacking an industrial base," and, at the same time, described Northeast Carbondale as a "Black Ghetto," a term usually applied to densely populated urban areas. Carbondale was one of the sixteen smaller communities to receive first-round Model Cities grants that were designed to replace earlier programs for urban, not rural, renewal. Finally, anti-poverty programs for youths, VISTA (rural) and JobCorps (Urban) were both deployed, simultaneously, to Carbondale between 1970 and 1974.<sup>24</sup>
3. Although Carbondale was geographically removed from the contested areas of the Civil Rights Movement, the Anti-War Movement, and the perceived "urban crisis" in 1970, Carbondale was at the vanguard of another economic trend: deindustrialization occurred in the form of railroad and mining decline rather than large-scale manufacturing.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Both Robbie Lieberman, in *Prairie Power: Voices of 1960s Midwestern Student Protest* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004) and Robert Harper, in *The University that Shouldn't Have Happened, but Did* (Carbondale, IL: Devil's Kitchen Press, 1998) note a decline in local enrollments at Southern Illinois University after 1970. Harper blames the 1970 riots, and Lieberman blames local racist attitudes for the decline.

<sup>24</sup> The 1970 Census Bureau definition of an "Urban Place" was a population of 2,500 or more. See Edward C. Banfield, *The Unheavenly City: The Nature and the Future of Our Urban Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1970), 5; In their survey report for construction projects in Carbondale, the survey team from the U.S. Army referred to Northeast Carbondale as "Urban," "Intensely Rural," and "Black ghetto" interchangeably. See *Detailed Project Report: Model City Neighborhood, Carbondale, Illinois*. St. Louis, MO: Department of the Army, St. Louis District, Corps of Engineers, 1974, 8-10.

<sup>25</sup> In her work on gentrification, Loretta Lees frames her work on an earlier theory of de-industrialization proposed by Daniel Bell in 1973. In his theory, Bell identifies four characteristics: (1) a shift from manufacturing to a service-based economy, (2) the centrality of service-based industries with "specialized knowledge" as a key resource, with universities replacing factories as the dominant institutions, (3) the rapid rise of managerial, professional, and technical occupations, and (4) artistic avant-gardes leading consumer culture rather than media, corporations, or government. In Carbondale, the rise of SIU occurred in conjunction with a decline in railroad work, as did the construction of the interstate highway through nearby Marion, Illinois, which drew blue collar work away from Carbondale. The 1966 Shapiro Report on Carbondale's economic situation noted 1,100 manufacturing jobs in the city, whereas SIU employed 4,000 full-time and 4,000 part-time. See Loretta Lees, Tom Slater and Elvin Wiley,

Because of University growth, Carbondale was actually undergoing a subtle form of proto-gentrification prompted by the arrival of university faculty, new staff, and graduate students with higher income levels.

4. Although the CFBE did participate in Carbondale's own Earth Day programs, and members of the group were among those responsible for crafting a 1972 long-range plan for the city rife with environmental concerns, the organization minutes and project notes suggest an organization with almost exclusively economic motives.

These combined paradoxes serve to contradict one historiographical theory after another. In order to address this conundrum, Carbondale must be placed into the context of three key concepts defining the perceived need for government intervention: the "urban crisis," the "rediscovery" of poverty in the 1960s, and the definition of the Modern Environmentalism movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

An agreed-upon definition of "urban" was not the only piece in contention among critics of federal intervention. In his work on U.S. government intervention and small businesses, historian Jonathan Bean summarizes the problematic nature of the "urban crisis":

"Crisis may be the most overused term in a politician's vocabulary. From the Constitutional Crisis of the 1780s to the health care "crisis" of the 1990s,

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*Gentrification* (New York: Routledge, 2008). See also *Model Cities Application, Carbondale, Illinois* (Carbondale, IL: City of Carbondale, 1968) for detailed pattern maps of unemployment, income levels, and housing conditions. The 1968 application includes the entirety of the 1966 report compiled by Shapiro and Associates and the information submitted by the city in 1967 for Model Cities funds. Of the urban renewal funds granted to Carbondale in 1962, seventy-five percent was allocated to a four-square-block white neighborhood and twenty-five percent allocated to the whole of Northeast Carbondale, an area approximately eighteen square blocks in size. In the 1967 application, the city recommended Northwest, an all-white neighborhood parallel to Northeast Carbondale, and was denied funds.

politicians have tried to create a sense of urgency and gather support for their programs by propagating the notion of an impending catastrophe.”<sup>26</sup>

In his book *Voices of Decline*, Robert Beauregard offers another conclusion:

“City decline has become an abstract receptacle for displaced feelings about other things. “City” is used rhetorically to frame the precariousness of existence in a modern world, with urban decline serving as a symbolic cover for more wide-ranging fears and anxieties ... One of the more conventional ways to characterize urban decline is loss. We cannot understand urban decline, however, unless we recognize prosperity and growth elsewhere ... The period from the early 1960s to the early 1970s was one of deep angst about the cities- an angst whose real source was racial fear and guilt.”<sup>27</sup>

For creators of the War on Poverty programs, the definition of “urban” largely seems to have signified segregated or politically neglected African American communities, although not all of the grants were used for African-American neighborhoods.<sup>28</sup> Whether or not guilt was a factor is undocumented in the primary sources from the period. Compelling arguments have been made that the emphasis on African American neighborhoods was a way for the Johnson administration to head off violence. However, urban renewal funds dedicated to Northeast Carbondale were used beginning in 1962 and extended until well after the threat of violence in the neighborhood was past. Prosperity in the neighborhood, conceived as individual economic

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<sup>26</sup> Jonathan Bean, *Beyond the Broker State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 165.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Beauregard, *Voices of Decline: The Postwar Fate of U.S. Cities* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993), 6, 36, and 208.

<sup>28</sup> The complete record of Model Cities applicants and grant recipients at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, Dearborn, Michigan, contains American Indian reservations and an indigenous peoples’ neighborhood in Honolulu, Hawaii, approved for funding.

independence and a new city tax base, was a key feature of the Model Cities venture. In his famous Howard University speech, June 4, 1965, Johnson argued that bringing an unprepared man to the start of a race and allowing him to compete without preparation guaranteed failure. Model Cities, however, did exactly that. Residents of designated model neighborhoods were expected to be economically self-sufficient and to overcome decades of inequality in every possible category, in five years or less.<sup>29</sup>

The various terms used at the time and today, including “urban,” “ghetto,” and “black neighborhood,” complicated the definitions of the perceived crisis. In his work on the etymology behind the term “ghetto,” ethnographer Mitchell Dunieir sets the tone: “in a number of Southern cities ... black neighborhoods were demarked by physical barriers such as railroad tracks or waterways.” In his work on *The Republic of Nature*, historian Mark Fiege moves this definition out of the stereotyped South to Topeka, Kansas.<sup>30</sup> Northeast Carbondale was marked by four barriers. To the west was a railroad embankment, to the north, a railroad tie-making plant, to the east was a flood plain and creek, followed by the city limits, and to the south, Illinois state highway 13. Ninety-eight percent of the African American population of Carbondale lived in this neighborhood in 1970.<sup>31</sup> The white neighborhoods in Carbondale suffered a different division: university or non-university. Incomes and unemployment statistics compiled for urban renewal identified this divide as another source of potential problems for the city.<sup>32</sup> The growth of professional jobs and the inability of the local population to fill them created a rift between new

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<sup>29</sup> Randall Woods, *Prisoners of Hope: Lyndon Johnson, the Great Society, and the Limits of Liberalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 185-186.

<sup>30</sup> Mitchell Duneier, *Ghetto: The Invention of a Place, the History of an Idea* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016), 33. See also Mark Fiege, *The Republic of Nature: An Environmental History of the United States* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012), Alan Campbell and Donna Shalala, “Problems Unsolved, Solutions Untried: The Urban Crisis,” in *The States and the Urban Crisis*, ed. Alan Campbell (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentiss-Hall, 1970), 4-26.

<sup>31</sup> *Model Cities Application, Carbondale, Illinois* (Carbondale, IL: City of Carbondale, 1968), 4-6.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, unemployment pattern maps.

university employees and old-stock residents unprepared for sweeping changes to the city. The demands of a new, growing population for consumer-related services also put a strain on local businesses that were unprepared.

The key element identified in most descriptions was a combination of poverty combined with race. In his seminal work *Dark Ghetto*, Sociologist Kenneth Clark offered the best description applicable to Carbondale:

America has contributed to the concept of the ghetto the restriction of person to a special area and the limiting of their freedom of choice on the basis of skin color. The dark ghetto's invisible walls have been erected by white society, by those who have power, both to confine those who have no power and to perpetuate their powerlessness. The dark ghettos are social, political, educational, and above all economic colonies. Their inhabitants are subject peoples, victims of the greed, cruelty, insensitivity, guilt, and fear of their masters. The objective dimensions of the American urban ghettos are overcrowded and deteriorating housing, high infant mortality, crime, and disease. The subjective dimensions are resentment, hostility, despair, self-depreciation, and its ironic counterpart, compensatory grandiose behavior. ... The most concrete fact of the ghetto is its physical ugliness—the dirt, the filth, the neglect. The dark ghetto is not a viable community- it cannot support its people.<sup>33</sup>

Clark's descriptions, when compared to the examinations of Northeast Carbondale for the Model Cities program, also describes Northeast Carbondale to an exacting degree. With close to fifty percent unemployment, high arrest statistics, violence between the Black Panthers and the Carbondale police, high percentages of adults and children with health problems, and a standardized condition of absolute segregation, Carbondale fit the pattern for future violent unrest. The size of the community, compared to a larger urban area, was irrelevant. Rather than an account of urban unrest beset by physical violence and destruction, Carbondale defined what historian Rob Nixon has called "slow violence," an almost invisible, slowly growing problem

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<sup>33</sup> Kenneth Clark, *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power* (New York: Harper and Rowe, 1967), 11 and 27.

often invisible to the naked eye.<sup>34</sup> The larger question echoing through the halls of national policymakers, was “why do these conditions persist?” Economist Theodore Lowi offered an answer:

The United States has been an urban nation for several decades. Why now, when resources should be sufficient to meet demands, are cities continually demonstrating their inability to sustain themselves and their citizens? Life is on the decline in our cities in large part because government structure has become incapable of dealing with modern social problems.<sup>35</sup>

Once again, a commentator on a national scale struck an almost perfect description of the situation in Carbondale in 1970. Perpetually wedded to dependence on single industries and outside funds to support the community, having no tax base to support public improvements because the railroad and the university were exempt from local taxation, and sustained conditions of absolute segregation and total neglect in the African American neighborhood, Carbondale was strained immensely by the sudden onslaught of university expansion, demand for more consumer opportunities, civil rights, student protests, social movements of every stripe, and a population of white and black long-time residents finding themselves unemployed. “Crisis” is the best applicable term, as it turns out, to describe the situation in Carbondale between 1965 and 1975.

The chief difficulty in the history of the War on Poverty has been the definition of poverty itself. When interviewed by the staff of the Johnson Presidential Library, Johnson advisor Robert J. Lampman emphasized the diversity of opinions about poverty at the outset in 1964 as an explanation for the diversity of programs that were created:

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<sup>34</sup> Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 3.

<sup>35</sup> Theodore Lowi, *The End of Liberalism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969), 167-168.

“We would get into discussions about the definition of poverty ... some people would say poverty obviously means a lack of money income. Other people said poverty is more or sometimes even less about money. It’s a spiritual concept, or it’s a participation-in-government concept, or it’s a lack of some kind of self-esteem... race... image problem... psychological... lack of opportunity, lack of public facilities like public schools and so on.”<sup>36</sup>

Historian Rob Nixon reminds us “the ‘poor’ is a compendious category subject to almost infinite local variation as well as to fracture along fault lines of ethnicity, gender, race, class, region, religion, and generation.” In Carbondale, the designated model neighborhood featured a forty-nine percent adult unemployment rate. Several older white neighborhoods in Carbondale featured unemployment rates between and twenty and thirty percent. What unified them was the federal “poverty line,” defined as annual income for a family of four below \$3,000. This poverty line, of course, was then and remains now a subject of intense debate in several fields of inquiry.

In his extraordinary work on poverty, *The Undeserving Poor*, historian Michael B. Katz reminds his readers that uniform characteristics identifying a culture of poverty have remained elusive, yet there remains one common thread. He writes, “The culture of poverty is an ethnocentric idea. It takes on one set of standards- usually, white, middle-class, and American, and applies them universally.”<sup>37</sup> The War on Poverty was no different. All of the standards applied to Carbondale were based on an assumption of a nuclear family built around a male bread-winner, and women in the workforce was seen as a negative, rather than positive, concept. In *The Other America*, Michael Harrington added political invisibility to the

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<sup>36</sup>Michael Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty: An Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 6.

<sup>37</sup>Katz, *Undeserving Poor*, 54-55. See also Susan Greenbaum, *Blaming the Poor: The Long Shadow of the Moynihan Report on Cruel Images About Poverty* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015).

definition. John Kenneth Galbraith, on the other hand, offers a definition more suitable to the conditions in Carbondale in 1970:

“People are poverty stricken when their income, even if adequate for survival, falls radically behind that of the community. Then they cannot have what the larger community regards as the minimum necessary for decency; And they cannot wholly escape, therefore, the judgment of the larger community that they are indecent.”<sup>38</sup>

Where almost all authors agree, however, is that racism and racist practices exacerbated the problem and prevented real economic progress. Economic achievement was the key in the War on Poverty. President Johnson’s core conception of “the poor” was that they were unable to participate in the fruits of America’s postwar prosperity. The liberal idea of a consumer citizen, able to purchase goods and contribute to the national economy, was a core conception well before 1970, and a bedrock of the War on Poverty programs. Among the information collected on Carbondale in the mid-1960s, the lack of automobile ownership and the inability of model neighborhood residents to obtain loans at local banks in order to improve their situation were mentioned as evidence of an inability to escape poverty.

In her work on postwar consumerism, historian Lizabeth Cohen argues, “the new postwar order of mass consumption deemed that the good purchaser devoted to “more, newer and better” was the good citizen.” Thomas Sugrue agrees, arguing “access to consumer goods- the right to buy- was a defining characteristic of what it meant to be an American citizen.”<sup>39</sup> The ability to

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<sup>38</sup> Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1962), 6-10; Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1958), 235.

<sup>39</sup> Lizbeth Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 119; Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York, Random House, 2008), 135.

participate in consumer society was a hallmark of the logic behind reform in Carbondale. Model neighborhood residents needed better housing and medical care so they could work and buy. To obtain either one, federal intervention was necessary to overcome decades of racism, redlining, and Jim Crow segregation.

In his work on Phoenix, Arizona, Andrew Ross argues, “although growth is often seen as integral to any capitalist system of accumulation, its recognition as a society’s only relevant standard of worth is largely a postwar development. . . . Because growth appears to benefit everyone, it is cheered on by boosters, and enabled by politicians and planners.”<sup>40</sup> In Carbondale from 1950 to 1970, jumping on the bandwagon of growth was universal among white citizens because growth had been steady, in one form or another, since 1950. The continuous expansion of Southern Illinois University fueled an economic boom that lasted until the 1990s and affected virtually every kind of work.

Federal intervention was required, however, in order to include African Americans in economic growth, because the concept of community growth during the immediate post-war period excluded them. In *Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, Aldon Morris maintains the perpetuation of racism was a benefit in some ways. According to Morris, “skin color alone, not class background or gender, locked blacks inside their segregated communities. Thus segregation itself ensured that the diverse skills and talents of individuals at all income and education levels were concentrated within each black community.” In Carbondale, a core group of activists coalesced into what became the designated City Demonstration Agency (CDA), originally called the Northeast Community Development Congress (NCD). Because these local activists were unable to exercise their talents outside of Northeast Carbondale, only they were

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<sup>40</sup> Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2011), 4; Andrew Ross, *Bird on Fire: Lessons from the World’s Least Sustainable City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 51-53.

prepared when the requirements of the Model Cities program were presented.<sup>41</sup> A local “Community Action Program” was required, to be overseen by residents of the neighborhood in which the funds were to be deployed. A dynamic, tight-knit group of community activists, who had made connections to the resources of Southern Illinois University, was already in place when the funds were approved in 1969.

Across the tracks, the Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment (CFBE) also turned an eye to economic concerns. Formed by Mayor Keene in 1969, the group was created for the purpose of revitalizing the downtown. Unlike the NCD, the CFBE had no outside assistance upon which to rely. Instead, the group was expected to raise its own funds and complete projects with only token assistance from the various city departments. The group organized a citywide environmental issues conference as a local event for the first Earth Day in 1970, and notes from the conference suggest two overarching concerns: a need to clean up and beautify many parts of Carbondale in order to attract visitors and shoppers, and a need to confront poverty. Eleven months into their existence, the riots that flowed out from SIU into the downtown created a disaster for them. One hundred businesses and homes were vandalized, railroad tracks were damaged, cars were overturned and set on fire, and on top of all that, a nationwide labor strike stopped local garbage collection for several weeks. The CFBE members, instead of beautifying the downtown, were forced to collect garbage and to work toward erasing evidence of the May 1970 riots.

In the next chapter, the conditions in Northeast Carbondale studied by Southern Illinois University for a 1966 Model Cities Program grant, and the 1975 conclusion report of the local Model Cities Program committee form a story of environmental change, the origins of a localized movement for environmental justice that still exists in 2016, and fit this insular

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<sup>41</sup> Aldon Morris, *Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 3.

community into the story of environmentalism in Carbondale as a whole. In Northeast Carbondale, environmental change came from one source: President Johnson's "War on Poverty," and the influx of federal, state, and local funds for the programs created to fight poverty. Federal intervention was the prime mover in environmental change for Northeast Carbondale, and the human living environment was the factor examined in closest detail.

## Chapter 2

### ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE IN THE MODEL NEIGHBORHOOD

“Northeast remains as it was 50 years ago.”

– Pat Harvey<sup>42</sup>

Northeast Carbondale, the predominantly African-American neighborhood attached to Carbondale’s town center, derives its name from its geographic location. From the founding of Carbondale in the 1850s until the 1980s, Northeast’s residential boundaries cornered the north and east city limits of Carbondale proper. The creation of the neighborhood and the conditions prompting environmental change by 1970 was completed over the course of decades as Carbondale grew as a community, incorporated, adopted an attitude of Jim Crow segregation, and expanded away from Northeast. By the mid-1960s, Northeast Carbondale was invisible to Carbondale visitors, hidden from sight and boxed in by environmental barriers both man-made and natural. Environmentalist movements in Carbondale and Northeast, however, were linked by two things: a desire for environmental change, and poverty. Conditions reported for the Model Cities Program grant in Northeast Carbondale tried to blend environmental justice and environmentalism together, and tried to create a cause-and-effect relationship with other environmental activism in Carbondale in the late 1960s through the mid-1970s. Work to alter conditions in Northeast Carbondale eventually caused the collapse of the environmental activist organization formed by white residents attempting to clean up the rest of the community, and the denunciation of the violent protests in 1970 by SIU students led to a split between older

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<sup>42</sup> Pat Harvey, “Outhouses!” in *Black Unity*, November 15, 1968, Box 29, Folder 5. Charles L. Kotzer Collection of Freedom of the Press and Alternative Publications, Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

Northeast Carbondale environmental justice activists and younger ones in the neighborhood, as well as a disconnection from radical students at SIU.<sup>43</sup>

In this chapter, the conditions in Northeast Carbondale studied by Southern Illinois University for a 1966 Model Cities Program grant, and the 1975 conclusion report of the local Model Cities Program committee form the bookends of a more nuanced story of environmental change, the origins of a localized movement for environmental justice that still exists in 2016, and fits this insular community into the story of environmentalism in Carbondale as a whole. In Northeast Carbondale, environmental change came from two overarching sources: President Johnson's "War on Poverty," and the local impacts of the Civil Rights Movement. Federal intervention was the prime mover in environmental change for Northeast Carbondale, and the human living environment was the factor examined in closest detail.

Carbondale's black community, Northeast, has been largely ignored in local histories. Published histories of Carbondale all feature local landmarks in exclusively white areas of Carbondale. The most recent, an architectural history of Carbondale published in 1983, excludes black architecture completely, excepting one former church, as if the Northeast neighborhood does not exist.<sup>44</sup> A product of the Jim Crow era, Carbondale's Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society has been the sole source collecting, preserving, and publishing the history of Northeast Carbondale. The three published histories from this organization completed between 1990 and 2010 provide conclusive evidence of a vibrant, sophisticated community of African

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<sup>43</sup> Northeast Community Development Congress Position Paper on SIU Riots, September 24, 1970. Delyte Morris Administrative Papers, 1948-1970, Box 565, Folder 3. SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center. Carbondale, Illinois.

<sup>44</sup> Susan Maycock's *An Architectural History of Carbondale, Illinois* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983) contains only one image of a church in Northeast Carbondale. The entire remainder of the text is devoted to Southern Illinois University and Carbondale's older white neighborhoods.

Americans coexisting with the rest of Carbondale, but almost completely separated from it until 1964, when citywide school segregation ended.<sup>45</sup>

Defining the environment has been a core issue causing fragmentation throughout the history of environmental conservation. In his oft-cited essay on defining the environment, historian William Cronon calls for a redefinition of what wilderness is, issuing a challenge to environmentalists to consider the constructed, or man-made environmental conditions persisting throughout much of the world, especially the United States.<sup>46</sup> In Northeast Carbondale, the natural environment was entirely man-made in 1966. One park constituted the only “green space” in the entire neighborhood. For decades, Attucks Park served as the only outdoor recreation space for Carbondale’s segregated little league teams and Troop 122, Carbondale’s segregated Boy Scout organization.<sup>47</sup> All other “natural” features had been progressively altered and shaped by humans since the community was founded.

Historians Giovanna Di Chiro, Luke Cole and Sheila Foster, in their extensive works on the history of environmental justice, offer an alternative definition to environment. In his contribution to William Cronon’s text *Uncommon Ground*, Giovanna Di Chiro argues, “environmental justice activists define the environment as the place you work, the place you live, the place you play. Many mainstream environmentalists would find this formulation incomprehensible, even ethically indefensible, because of its apparent anthropocentrism.”<sup>48</sup> This division in environmental activism, as argued by Di Chiro, Cole and Foster, defined

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<sup>45</sup> Martha Farris, *In Unity There is Strength: A Pictorial History of the African American Community of Carbondale, Illinois* (Paducah, KY: Turner Publishing Company, 1999), 37.

<sup>46</sup> William Cronon, “The Trouble With Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Co., 1996), 69.

<sup>47</sup> Farris, *In Unity*, 109; Melvin Macklin, *Traces in the Dust: Carbondale’s Black Heritage, 1852-1964* (Magnolia, TX: Ingenuity Press, 2001), 310.

<sup>48</sup> Giovanna Di Chiro, “Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice,” in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Co., 1996), 301; Luke W. Cole and Sheila R. Foster, *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001), 32-33.

predominantly white environmental activities in Carbondale. In Northeast Carbondale, environmental conditions documented by researchers and activists in the 1960s demonstrated a need for radical environmental change in order to make the neighborhood a safe place to live. Broader environmentalist concerns, including preservation of wilderness and protecting animal species from extinction, had no priority, whatsoever, in Northeast Carbondale.

To understand environmentalism in Carbondale, the operating definition of environment must be reconsidered based on physical and socioeconomic conditions in the city in the mid-1960s. In Carbondale, the Northeast neighborhood closely resembled communities studied by sociologist Dorceta Taylor in her work *Toxic Communities*. Although Northeast Carbondale was not part of the American South's "Cancer Alley" or a community on the heavily polluted Love Canal in New York, the impacts of human environmental pollution so affected Northeast Carbondale's physical environment, the common parameters that define environmentalism and environmental justice are insufficient.<sup>49</sup>

Echoing geographer Carolyn Finney's call to "change the way we think about African Americans in relation to all things environmental," understanding environmentalism in Carbondale requires an examination of the human and "natural" environments combined, not separately. In her work, Finney consistently found "the experience of being black trumped any place-based assertions related to environmental engagement."<sup>50</sup> In Northeast Carbondale, African-American identity was fundamental in creating the neighborhood environment itself, and the environmental conditions affecting the neighborhood had been created, largely, by whites in

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<sup>49</sup>Dorceta Taylor, *Toxic Communities: Environmental Racism, Industrial Pollution, and Residential Mobility* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2015), 6-32.

<sup>50</sup>Carolyn Finney's extraordinary work, *Black Faces/White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015) successfully challenges many assumptions about African Americans and the natural environment. The implications in this text were a profound influence on this thesis and merits considerable attention by environmental historians.

the surrounding community. The efforts at change prompted by the Model Cities Program, although aimed to promote individualized socioeconomic change, also prompted radical alterations to the existing physical environment. The key to securing Model Cities funding was the racial composition of the neighborhood, unifying the physical environment, economic status, and social conditions in the neighborhood around blackness.<sup>51</sup> The environmental conditions in Northeast Carbondale were, indeed, a model case for the requirements of the program.

Extant histories of Northeast Carbondale remind readers Carbondale was not always a segregated community. Initially present in Jackson County records as slaves, the African-American presence in Southern Illinois predated statehood.<sup>52</sup> Carbondale's African-American community grew steadily from 1818 until the end of World War II, when the post-war industrial job market lured many residents away to larger cities that offered greater economic prospects. Northeast's population decline was stemmed by 1960, and the neighborhood population stabilized permanently.<sup>53</sup> Initially segregation was not employed to create the Northeast Carbondale neighborhood of 1970. Although numerous segregated social organizations were formed in Carbondale between incorporation in 1853 and 1970, the city's first veteran's organization, the J.W. Lawrence Post No. 297 of the Grand Army of the Republic, was integrated, while segregated G.A.R. posts for African-American soldiers were established in nearby Murphysboro and Carterville.<sup>54</sup>

Post-Civil War prosperity for Carbondale's white community, tied primarily to the expansion of the Illinois Central Railroad and the area coal industry, quickly excluded African

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<sup>51</sup> Anne Gaylord Monty, *Carbondale, Illinois: Model Cities Program Final Report, 1970-1975* (Carbondale, IL: City of Carbondale Division of Human Resources), 2-3. Model Cities Program Documents and Records Collection. Carbondale City Clerk Archives. Carbondale, Illinois.

<sup>52</sup> Farris, *In Unity*, 4.

<sup>53</sup> Model Cities Grant Proposal Outlines, Delyte Morris Administrative Papers, 1948-1970, Box 559, Folder 5. SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center. Carbondale, Illinois.

<sup>54</sup> Farris, *In Unity*, 90.

American residents. By 1910 segregation and the adoption of Jim Crow practices had occurred in almost all communities in Southern Illinois. This gradual change, documented broadly in C. Vann Woodward's *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* and more recently described in depth as "the nadir of racism" by James Loewen in *Sundown Towns*, grew on a parallel course with the rise in white prosperity following the American Civil War.<sup>55</sup>

In Carbondale, the Illinois Central Railroad constructed a switching yard, car maintenance facility, and a tie finishing plant, the locations of which effectively sealed off the expansion of Northeast Carbondale by creating an industrial boundary on the north side of the neighborhood. The rail lines to these facilities were placed on a raised "levee," which effectively walled off the west boundary of the Northeast neighborhood. Effluvium, oil, and creosote runoff from the rail facilities polluted the air and groundwater in Northeast Carbondale from the late 1860s until present day.<sup>56</sup> Although Loewen consistently excludes Carbondale from his list of Southern Illinois sundown towns, local historian and genealogist Melvin Macklin disagrees. In his genealogical history of Carbondale, *Traces in the Dust*, Macklin argues, "it was not acceptable for blacks to be 'across the tracks' after nightfall unless they were domestic workers." Macklin also notes that although Southern Illinois Normal University allowed black students to attend, the university dormitories, eating facilities, and the university drug store were strictly segregated until 1950.<sup>57</sup> Highway construction and expansion between 1920 and 1965 effectively finished the job of sealing off Northeast Carbondale from the rest of the community.

Economically, residents of Northeast Carbondale were also walled off from advancing physically and financially with the rest of the city. Coal mines and other industries in Southern

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<sup>55</sup> James Loewen, *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 2005), 25.

<sup>56</sup> Geoffrey Ritter, "Solar Meeting Reveals Anxieties," *Carbondale Times*, accessed October 16, 2016, <http://www.carbondaletimes.com/030515solar>.

<sup>57</sup> Macklin, *Traces in the Dust*, 309; Loewen, *Sundown Towns*, 63.

Illinois, as well as the connected labor unions, denied African-Americans employment in all but a few locations too distant from Carbondale to be practical or safe to reach. Despite forming the north boundary of Northeast Carbondale, the railroad facilities and the tie plant denied employment to African Americans, excepting Pullman Porters, until World War II. Even programs designed to stem the tide of the Great Depression were segregated, prompting the creation of an all-black CCC unit to work projects near Carbondale. White racial violence also spread across Southern Illinois from 1900 to 1955, and caused the complete destruction of African-American neighborhoods in several nearby towns.<sup>58</sup>

School segregation was employed to separate African-American residents of Carbondale as early as 1866, and remained in effect for 98 years. As the African-American youth population in Carbondale grew and outstripped the East Side School, the city built Attucks High School in 1914 for black students, but did not build additional facilities until 1954, when, on the eve of the *Brown vs. Board of Education* lawsuit, ground was broken for Thomas School, the city's first all-black elementary school since the 1870s. The Carbondale school district openly defied the outcome of the *Brown* decision until the fall semester began in 1963.<sup>59</sup>

The combination of segregation, economic deprivation, and environmental pollution fostered the growth of several generations of courageous activists in Northeast Carbondale, several of whom are still active in Carbondale in 2017.<sup>60</sup> Denial of voting rights in citywide elections led to the creation of an ad-hoc neighborhood council, the Northeast Development Congress (NCD). To address problems in schools, several dynamic parent-teacher organizations were formed, and a number of residents from Northeast Carbondale became active in the broader

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<sup>58</sup> Farris, *In Unity*, 91-93; Loewen, *Sundown Towns*, 214.

<sup>59</sup> Farris, *In Unity*, 36-37; Macklin, *Traces in the Dust*, 309.

<sup>60</sup> Stephanie Esters, "Margaret Nesbitt Dedicates Life to Community Activism," *Southern Illinoisian*, accessed October 16, 2016, [http://thesouthern.com/news/margaret-nesbitt-dedicating-life-to-community-activism/article\\_1b78552f-5363-5186-800b-5ab92fa4f4b4.html](http://thesouthern.com/news/margaret-nesbitt-dedicating-life-to-community-activism/article_1b78552f-5363-5186-800b-5ab92fa4f4b4.html).

Civil Rights struggle. The first sign of a crack in status quo city-wide segregation, and a definitive example of the connection to sympathetic outsiders did not come until 1947, when the protest to desegregate Carter's Café was conducted jointly by advocates from Northeast Carbondale and white students from Southern Illinois University.

The environment of total segregation in Carbondale, similar to conditions documented elsewhere by historians May Dudziak, Mark Fiege and Thomas Sugrue, served as an incubator for the organizers of Civil Rights movements of the 1960s, not a deterrent.<sup>61</sup> As environmental conditions steadily worsened over time, they created a corresponding growth in advocacy, culminating in the Model Cities Program application and implementation. This growth of local activism peaked as national attention to the Civil Rights struggle took the shape of new laws, policies, and initiatives. In 1964, the Johnson administration, with devoted focus on liberal change to American society and curing social ills, created numerous national policy initiatives, including the Model Cities Program, as part of a new Great Society initiative, The War on Poverty. Drawing attention to the effects of poverty, as environmental historian Rob Nixon has noted in two of his works, requires the exposition of the spectacular. Nixon refers to "the poor" as a "compendious category subject to almost infinite variation as well as to fracture along fault lines of ethnicity, gender, race, class, region, religion, and generation." All of these fault lines

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<sup>61</sup> Farris, *In Unity*, 104. In *Cold War Civil Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) May Dudziak documents the post-war efforts by the NAACP and CORE to use appeals the United Nations as a vehicle to create a global audience for African-American civil rights. Thomas Sugrue's *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York, NY: Random House, 2008) is an extraordinary source for information on civil rights movements outside of the American South throughout the twentieth century. For the environmental causes of the *Brown vs. Board of Education* lawsuit, see Mark Fiege, *The Republic of Nature: An Environmental History of the United States* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2012), 318-357.

were present in Carbondale, and invisible to planners at the national level, and deliberately invisible to local planners outside of Northeast Carbondale.<sup>62</sup>

To President Johnson, Americans living in poverty were effectively beyond the pale of American citizenship because they were unable to partake in the prosperity of the era. The Model Cities Program was part of a continuum of policies designed to eradicate poverty. Originally intended to combat rural white poverty, Model Cities grants were eventually applied predominantly to African-American neighborhoods as part of the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966. This shift in application has not been considered unusual by historians of racism. Karen and Barbara Fields, in *Racecraft*, argue “from very early on, Americans wove racist concepts into a public language about inequality that made ‘black’ the virtual equivalent of ‘poor’ and ‘lower class,’ thus creating a distinctive idiom that has no parallel in other western democracies.” Implemented between the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968, the War on Poverty contained measures for antidiscrimination as a part of economic improvement, in order to guarantee that some of the monies would be used to stimulate economic growth in African-American communities.<sup>63</sup> In Carbondale, however, economic improvement also required radical environmental change.

In 1975, the City of Carbondale issued a final report on its participation in the Model Cities program. Funding to the program was cut when the Ford administration stopped Model

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<sup>62</sup> Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 3-4. See also Andrew Ross, *Bird on Fire: Lessons from the World's Least Sustainable City* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>63</sup> Melvin Mogulof, “Black Community Development in Five Western Model Cities,” In *Social Work* 15, No. 1 (January, 1970), Accessed September 23, 2016. <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=7&sid=264b6a5f-f9ee-4710-9775-df103cedf881%40sessionmgr4008&hid=4114>, 12; Michael Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty: An Oral History* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 71, 85; Karen E. Fields and Barbara K. Fields, *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life* (London, UK: Verso, 2014), 11; Randall B. Woods, *Prisoners of Hope: Lyndon Johnson, The Great Society, and the Limits of Liberalism* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2015), 183-186, 197.

Cities grants and instituted block grants in their place.<sup>64</sup> The end report of the program demonstrated the stark differences between Northeast and the remainder of Carbondale, and outlined the drastic changes that were required to alter the physical, social, and economic conditions in order to bring Northeast Carbondale closer to the standard of living enjoyed by the rest of the city population. The final report's author, Anne Monty, reminds readers that the acquisition of Model Cities grants required two fundamental characteristics of neighborhoods. The first condition was "marked deterioration in the quality of the lives and the environment;" second was the presence of "inadequate resources of the city for dealing effectively with the critical problems."<sup>65</sup>

Predominantly, the critical problems addressed in the Carbondale report and the Model Cities program requirements were caused by a combination of racial discrimination and poverty over the course of several generations. These two factors worked in turn to create an environment dangerous to human inhabitants so overwhelming, the resources of the City of Carbondale were inadequate to repair it. Drastic, widespread change was required, beginning with the physical environment. The first identified problem in the Model Cities report was low income, followed by unemployment or underemployment, poor personal or environmental health, and a hazardous physical environment, all of which were demonstrated in lurid detail throughout the final report. One in five homes standing in Northeast did not have running water or indoor plumbing, and those with indoor plumbing had inadequate septic systems to eliminate hazardous wastes. Storm drains in the neighborhood were either out of date or absent entirely,

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<sup>64</sup> Andrew Weber and Amanda Wallace, "Revealing the Empowerment Revolution: A Literature Review of the Model Cities Program," in *Journal of Urban History* 38, No. 1 (January, 2012): 80, Accessed September 23, 2016. <http://juh.sagepub.com/content/38/1/173.full.pdf+html>.

<sup>65</sup> Anne Gaylord Monty, *Carbondale, Illinois: Model Cities Program Final Report, 1970-1975* (Carbondale, IL: City of Carbondale Division of Human Resources), 2. Model Cities Program Documents and Records Collection. Carbondale City Clerk Archives. Carbondale, Illinois.

causing toxic runoff to accumulate in yards, streets, and the school playground after rainfalls. Most streets in Northeast were ignored when Carbondale constructed paved roads, leaving the neighborhood with gravel and dirt streets that were left in a state of disrepair for decades. Garbage collection had never taken place in Northeast. Public water lines had been routed away from the neighborhood to white neighborhoods, adequate pressure lines for fire hydrants were never installed, and neither were street lights. The report clearly identified the cause: “systematic, generational, neglect and discrimination by city fathers.”<sup>66</sup>

Prior to the Model Cities planning process, the city of Carbondale worked with a consulting firm in the early 1960s for a proposed application for an urban renewal project. The resultant report, released in 1966, demonstrated the severity of conditions in the Northeast neighborhood and outlined the astronomical costs that would be associated with repairs. This report, the Shapiro Report, was used by Northeast Development Congress president Robert Stalls, who approached SIU President Delyte Morris for help in acquiring federal funds. Emphasizing Morris’s mission to use SIU for uplifting all of Southern Illinois, Stalls succeeded in getting manpower for the Model Cities study, which guaranteed approval of the grants provided to Carbondale from several sources.<sup>67</sup>

The Model Cities program eventually required adding twelve staff and faculty positions to Southern Illinois University, and the Carbondale Public Schools, and thirty paid positions to the City

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>67</sup> In his semi-biographical account of the rise of Southern Illinois University, Robert Harper devotes considerable attention to Delyte Morris, who served as SIU president from 1948-1971. Morris devoted exhaustive amounts of energy to growing SIU and to promoting outreach into communities throughout Southern Illinois and even northern Kentucky. For every dollar of federal and state funds that was dispersed in Carbondale between 1950 and 1975, an amount as much as ten times higher went to SIU. Model Cities staffing needs led to the creation of undergraduate and graduate programs in business, education, human resources, sociology, and psychology. These degrees necessitated expansion of the university administration, faculty, staff, and graduate students, the placement of SIU student teachers directly into the Carbondale schools, and the creation of what became John A. Logan Community College. See Robert Harper, *The University That Shouldn’t Have Happened, but Did* (Carbondale, IL: Devil’s Kitchen Press, 1998).

Development Agency, the board charged with completion of the Model Cities projects.<sup>68</sup> By the time the Model Cities program concluded in 1975, Carbondale had received over seven million dollars in Federal aid, but these funds were largely aimed at socioeconomic improvement plans for the Northeast population. The changes required to alter the physical environment of Northeast Carbondale required far more time, effort, cost, and were only partially corrected after the end of the Model Cities work.<sup>69</sup>

Substantive work began using Model Cities Program and other funds in 1970 after almost five years of planning, and continued in one form or another until 1980. Despite a decade of work, only a few of the permanent fixtures from the Model Cities era remain at the time of this study: a community center, a housing project, and a handful of homes constructed using Model Cities funds. The changes to the physical environment, on the other hand, appear to have always been in place, masking how really recent they are. By the end of the reconstruction process in 1980, altering the Northeast neighborhood required efforts by the City of Carbondale, Illinois Highway Department, the U. S. Forest Service, U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Model Cities work began in the summer of 1971 with a program called Significant Summer Cleanup, whose legacy is the annual large-object trash collection day still observed in Carbondale. Over the course of two summers, volunteers and paid employees distributed 1200 garbage cans, removed dozens of dilapidated structures, demolished abandoned homes, and employed pest control agents to destroy rat and insect populations. The cost for rat eradication

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<sup>68</sup> Model Cities Grant Proposal Outlines, Delyte Morris Administrative Papers, 1948-1970, Box 559, Folder 5. SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center. Carbondale, Illinois; Anne Gaylord Monty, *Carbondale, Illinois: Model Cities Program Final Report, 1970-1975* (Carbondale, IL: City of Carbondale Division of Human Resources), centerfold insert. Model Cities Program Documents and Records Collection. Carbondale City Clerk Archives. Carbondale, Illinois.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-12; Model Cities Grant Proposal Outlines, Delyte Morris Administrative Papers, 1948-1970, Box 559, Folder 5. SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center. Carbondale, Illinois; Robert Harper, *The University That Shouldn't Have Happened, but Did* (Carbondale, IL: Devil's Kitchen Press, 1998), 24-25.

alone was in excess of \$100,000, covered by a grant from the State of Illinois. That the amount of waste in the model neighborhood's 21-square-block area required two full years to remove demonstrates the severity of the problem caused by decades of absent waste removal services.<sup>70</sup> During the same period, over two hundred people living in condemned homes were relocated to public housing units recently built in or near the Northeast neighborhood, and twelve homes were seized by the city and demolished for construction of the Eurma Hayes Community Center. City garbage collection did not extend to Carbondale's African-American community and city sewers were not installed in the Northeast neighborhood until 1974. Until that time, residents relied on outhouses for waste disposal and were forced to burn their garbage in direct violation of Carbondale's burning ordinances.<sup>71</sup>

As reconstruction began, a few members of the NCD joined forces with Carbondale's other environmental group, the CFBE, and contributed to the first long term planning statement by the city of Carbondale since before World War II. Although this effort will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, the city plan, envisioned a massive project to reconstruct Northeast Carbondale and expand the efforts to the whole community.<sup>72</sup> On July 1, 1972, the Carbondale city government released the first publication of a document called *Goals for Carbondale*. A thirteen-section master planning document, the *Goals* offered a frank assessment of conditions in Carbondale more damning than the results of the 1970 environmental conference. In fact, the drafting committee considered the plan so controversial it included a disclaimer and content warning in the preface. It began, "It should be pointed out that these are the Goals of the citizens

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<sup>70</sup> Anne Gaylord Monty, *Carbondale, Illinois: Model Cities Program Final Report, 1970-1975* (Carbondale, IL: City of Carbondale Division of Human Resources), 21. Model Cities Program Documents and Records Collection. Carbondale City Clerk Archives. Carbondale, Illinois.

<sup>71</sup> Resumé of Maintenance Ordinances, 1 March 1970, Box 1, Folder 1, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale.

<sup>72</sup> Goals for Carbondale, July 1972, Box 1, Folder 27, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

of Carbondale, not the goals of the Steering Committee or Subcommittee members. In fact, some committee members as individuals, may disagree with certain of the Goals.”<sup>73</sup>

The master plan for the city began with an environmental policy calling for keeping Cedar Creek Reservoir, Carbondale’s chief source of drinking water, free from pollution. Recently completed as an offshoot of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Glade Creek Storm Drainage Project, the reservoir was owned partially by the City of Carbondale and partially by the U. S. Forest Service. The Glade Creek Project, designed to vent storm water from the Big Muddy River away from Carbondale and Murphysboro, eventually led to the creation of the current Carbondale storm drain system, which shunts water from the North and East sides of Carbondale through a series of drainage canals to the reservoir. In 2017, the remnants of this project still form a physical barrier between the Northeast neighborhood and the shopping districts along Illinois Highway 13.

The second section of *Goals* called attention to the plight of the downtown, calling for improvements; “there has been scant attention paid to the problem of aesthetics in the City, so that it has become not only an eyesore but a place in which no person feels comfortable walking. One of the attractions of urban life is, or should be, that it offers each one of us an interesting place in which to live,” it read.<sup>74</sup> Implementation called for removal of “all architectural barriers to the handicapped,” a visionary goal that was set over two decades before the Americans with Disabilities Act. However noble the goal, local businesses did not embrace the idea and significant areas of Carbondale remain inaccessible today.<sup>75</sup> The other *Goals* were decidedly liberal in nature, especially in light of the conservative orientation of the community.

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>Goals for Carbondale, July 1972, Box 1, Folder 27, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

The *Goals* statements on education and healthcare declared access to quality education and affordable care to be rights, not negotiable items.<sup>76</sup> Programs to solve these two problems in Carbondale included a city government health plan for residents and free access to adult education at John A. Logan College and Southern Illinois University.<sup>77</sup> A whole section of *Goals* was also devoted to ending racial inequality and providing full access to city services to the Northeast neighborhood. This neighborhood, which had existed in a state of segregation and neglect for over 100 years, was finally the central object of city attention.

All the attention paid to the neighborhood, however, was not free from white backlash. The state of conditions in Northeast Carbondale directly caused the creation of a cadre of talented advocates for Civil Rights reforms who were successful in securing federal program support, but these advocates, choosing to work within the local political and socioeconomic system, failed to connect with a younger, more radical generation which came of age at the beginning of the Model Cities program. By 1970, when the Model Cities improvements began, the whole of Carbondale was reeling from the impact of rioting by SIU students enraged by the shootings at Kent State University. In Northeast Carbondale, the rioting students had forged an ideological connection, however tenuous, with the Carbondale chapter of the Black Panther Party, and the local chapter stood at odds with some of the older activists in the neighborhood. In the concluding summary of the Model Cities program, the authors found that “government boards comprised of lay members of the resident community frequently lose sight of long range objectives and allow sentiment rather than objectivity to influence their decisions,” and that infighting prevented model neighborhood residents from achieving more. The report reflected

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<sup>76</sup> Skeptical of Great Society and the Democratic Party, white Jackson County voters abruptly about-faced from their 1964 votes, and swept democrats from all but three elected offices in the 1968 election. Only Northeast residents and people connected to SIU have continued to support the Democratic Party.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. John A. Logan Community College was originally built as part of SIU industrial arts program. It was separated and chartered as a community college in 1969.

actual souring relationships among advocates for change who had only briefly coalesced over environmental and social concerns within the city. The mostly-white graduate students, medical personnel, police from Carbondale and security personnel from SIU were anathema to the Black Panthers and were seen as interlopers in the Northeast community.<sup>78</sup>

The Action Party (RAP), comprised of college-age black youth in Carbondale and at SIU expressed similar sentiments. For college-bound teens from Northeast, the transition to college educations usually meant circumventing the racist constraints of the city of Carbondale and attending Southern Illinois University, which had admitted African-American students from its very beginning in 1869.<sup>79</sup> This move from segregated neighborhood to integrated campus did not entirely create fair conditions, but did expose African-American students to the broader Civil Rights movement on campus and allowed those same students to meet other African-American students from larger cities, especially Chicago, who favored more militant means to establish equality.

By 1969, those students represented a connection to the growing Black Power movement and a shift away from nonviolent protest. A Black Student Union was organized at SIU, and many of the white students taking part in the anti-war movement recognized and sought connection with the methods of the Black Power movement. More radical students saw violent action as an effective form of political mobilization. Historian Robbie Lieberman has identified this trend as “Prairie Power” and argues this type of activism long predated the 1960s, connecting it to the Marxist-oriented Industrial Workers of the World in the 1930s.<sup>80</sup> In her work on

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<sup>78</sup> “The Black Panther Party Platform,” in *Black Unity*, November 15, 1968, Box 29, Folder 5. Charles L. Kotzer Collection of Freedom of the Press and Alternative Publications, Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

<sup>79</sup> Farris, *In Unity*, 54.

<sup>80</sup> Robbie Lieberman, *Prairie Power*, 6. See also Mary Ann Wynkoop, *Dissent in the Heartland: The Sixties at Indiana University* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002) and Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). ADD LYNCH STREET HERE.

the violent campus protests across the Midwest in 1970, Lieberman found similar social conditions in Carbondale at SIU; in Columbia at the University of Missouri; and at the University of Kansas at Lawrence— not just at Kent State, the lodestar and iconic focus of the 1970s protests against President Nixon’s expansion of the war in Vietnam.<sup>81</sup>

Reporters from three “underground” local newspapers, the *Big Muddy Gazette*, *Black Unity*, and *Asata-Uhura*, quickly began castigating the slow progress of work to clean up Northeast and escalating confrontations between Black Panthers and landlords who owned dilapidated properties in Northeast quickly led to armed confrontation with the Carbondale Police. In November, 1970, the shooting of a Carbondale police officer led to a standoff at the local Black Panther Party (BPP) headquarters and a violent end to the local BPP chapter.<sup>82</sup> All of the protests in 1970 were quickly disavowed by the Northeast Development Congress, but the effects were permanent. In his work on the creation of Southern Illinois University, former professor Richard Harper argues the protests and violence of 1970 were causal factors for the political backlash against SIU and Carbondale, and the direct cause for the static condition Carbondale has remained in since that year, and a principal cause for the continued decline of Southern Illinois University.<sup>83</sup>

Residents in Northeast Carbondale and national critics also provided backlash against alterations to the neighborhood. In his 1964 essay, “The Bulldozer and Negro Removal,” Martin Anderson argues the urban renewal was synonymous with “negro removal,” not improvement or

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 120-122. See also Howard Means, *67 Shots: Kent State and the End of American Innocence* (Boston, MA: Da Capo Press, 2016).

<sup>82</sup> Farris, *In Unity*, 105-108.

<sup>83</sup> Northeast Community Development Congress Position Paper on SIU Riots, September 24, 1970. Delyte Morris Administrative Papers, 1948-1970, Box 565, Folder 3. SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center. Carbondale, Illinois. For accounts of political influence on Southern Illinois, see Robert Harper, *The University That Shouldn't Have Happened, but Did* (Carbondale, IL: Devil's Kitchen Press, 1998), Robert Walker, *Downstate: Crimes, Tragedies and Exotic Places in Southern Illinois*, (Aurora, IL: Naperville Writers Group, 2014), and Robert Hartley, *The Dealmakers of Downstate Illinois: Paul Powell, Clyde L. Choate, and John H. Stelle* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2016).

equality, because urban renewal projects, like the one in Carbondale, required forced displacement of residents, often on a permanent basis.<sup>84</sup>

Among the core lessons examined in the final Model Cities report, the problem of displacing persons while waiting for new construction to be completed was reported in several places. When planning for Model Cities activities, none of the planners considered the fact that new homes and new low-income housing units required more time to build than the vacated homes required to demolish, or that some long-term residents in those homes were culturally attached to their homes and were unwilling to move. This caused delays, animosity, and temporary displacement of residents waiting to move into new or renovated dwellings. This displacement, however, led to one of the major successes of the program: a substantial increase in assessed real estate value in the model neighborhood area. One of the original parameters of contributory citizenship chosen by the City Development Agency was the status of “taxpayer.” Left out of this glowing announcement was the fact that most residents of the neighborhood, reportedly earning less than three thousand dollars per year, were saddled with a reported 323% property tax increase without means to pay for it.<sup>85</sup> These contradictory results from War on Poverty programs have generated intense historical debate.

Defining success in the War on Poverty and reaching any consensus in defining “the environment” has been a core issue causing fragmentation throughout the history of

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<sup>84</sup> Martin Anderson, “The Bulldozer and Negro Removal” (1964) in *Race and Liberty in America*, ed. Jonathan Bean (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2009), 221. Also see Dorceta Taylor, *Toxic Communities: Environmental Racism, Industrial Pollution, and Residential Mobility* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), and Lawrence Vale, *Purging the Poorest: Public Housing and the Design Politics of Twice-Cleared Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). Taylor and Vale both argue persuasively that urban renewal projects historically have been more harmful than helpful to African-American communities.

<sup>85</sup> Anne Gaylord Monty, *Carbondale, Illinois: Model Cities Program Final Report, 1970-1975* (Carbondale, IL: City of Carbondale Division of Human Resources), 24-25. Model Cities Program Documents and Records Collection. Carbondale City Clerk Archives. Carbondale, Illinois; Model Cities Grant Proposal Outlines, Delyte Morris Administrative Papers, 1948-1970, Box 559, Folder 5. SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center. Carbondale, Illinois.

environmental conservation. In his oft-cited essay on defining the environment, William Cronon called for a redefinition of what wilderness is, issuing a challenge to environmentalists to consider the constructed, or man-made environmental conditions persisting throughout much of the world, especially the United States.<sup>86</sup>

During the War on Poverty fight in Northeast Carbondale, environmental conditions documented by researchers and activists in the 1960s demonstrated a need for radical environmental change to occur in order to make the neighborhood safe to live in and to foster economic self-sufficiency. Broader environmentalists' concerns, including preservation of wilderness and protecting animal species from extinction, played no role whatsoever in Northeast Carbondale. Thus, these differing interpretations of environmental conservation and environmental justice led to a breakdown among allies in the Carbondale environmental movements.

Cultural geographer Carolyn Finney argues strongly for a need to “change the way we think about African Americans in relation to all things environmental.” Understanding environmentalism in Carbondale requires an examination of the human and “natural” environments combined together, not examined separately. In her work, Finney consistently found “the experience of being black trumped any place-based assertions related to environmental engagement.”<sup>89</sup> In Northeast Carbondale, African-American identity was fundamental in creating the neighborhood environment itself, and the environmental conditions affecting the neighborhood were created, largely, by whites in the surrounding community.

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<sup>86</sup> William Cronon, “The Trouble With Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Co., 1996), 69.

<sup>87</sup> Farris, *In Unity*, 109; Melvin Macklin, *Traces in the Dust: Carbondale's Black Heritage, 1852-1964* (Magnolia, TX: Ingenuity Press, 2001), 310.

<sup>88</sup> Giovanna Di Chiro, “Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice,” in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Co., 1996), 301; Luke W. Cole and Sheila R. Foster, *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001), 32-33.

In Northeast Carbondale, African-American identity was fundamental in creating the neighborhood environment itself, and the environmental conditions affecting the neighborhood were created, largely, by whites in the surrounding community. The city of Carbondale commissioned Shapiro and Associates of Chicago, to complete an urban renewal study of Carbondale in 1966. The report opens by identifying “Evidence of profound neglect and abandonment by public agencies of their obligation for maintaining environmental standards and public improvements in all areas of the city.”<sup>90</sup> Southern Illinois University commissioned a study two years later that arrived at the same conclusions. The efforts at change prompted by the Model Cities Program, although aimed to promote individualized socioeconomic change, also prompted radical alterations to the existing physical environment.<sup>91</sup> prompted by the Model Cities Program, although aimed to promote individualized socioeconomic change, also prompted radical alterations to the existing physical environment.<sup>91</sup>

Common definitions or stereotypes of environmentalism do not apply to Carbondale, nor do those applied to urban renewal and other programs for changing man-made environments. The environmental movements in Carbondale were not the work of young radicals, but were the domain of the politically conservative Carbondale Chamber of Commerce and local Civil Rights Movement activists. The power struggle between these two organizations caused an antagonistic atmosphere still present today, as African Americans used the Civil Rights Act provisions and vast amounts of Federal and state program funding to assert rights and demand equality. Because City Development Act funding required matching amounts from the city and from the state, the city of Carbondale was forced to spend significant amounts of capital on the African American neighborhood for the first time since the Civil War.

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<sup>89</sup> Carolyn Finney’s extraordinary work, *Black Faces/White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015) successfully challenges many assumptions about African Americans and the natural environment. The implications in this text were a profound influence on this thesis and merit considerable attention by environmental historians.

<sup>90</sup> City of Carbondale, *Model Cities Application, April 1968* (Carbondale, IL: Division of Human Resources, 1968), Part 7, Page 4.

Little of the environmental activism in Carbondale had anything to do with nature, but instead focused on the human environment, and specifically on economic conditions environmental change was required to improve. Missing entirely from the historical record is any mention of the best-selling novels purported to have caused the creation of the environmental movement. There is no mention of ending the use of coal power, no mention of saving forest land or animals, only improving the economic status of people in Carbondale through environmental change. Long term effects on the environment were ignored. So too were long-term economic plans. Instead of confronting Carbondale's persistent strategy of relying on single industries and influxes of state or federal cash for survival or the century of racial prejudice and Jim Crow Segregation choking Carbondale's African American community, environmental change was seen only as a means of creating an immediate ability for African-American residents to become economically self-sufficient consumers and taxpayers.

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<sup>91</sup> Anne Gaylord Monty, *Carbondale, Illinois: Model Cities Program Final Report, 1970-1975* (Carbondale, IL: City of Carbondale Division of Human Resources), 2-3. Model Cities Program Documents and Records Collection. Carbondale City Clerk Archives. Carbondale, Illinois.

## Chapter 3

### ENVIRONMENTAL NEOLIBERALISM

“Slogan Suggestion Two: CARBONDALE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL.”

When Carbondale Mayor David Keene announced the appointment of the first Mayor’s Beautification Committee in June, 1969, the city was quiet. With the exception of two incidents, the SIU campus community had not been active in protesting the Vietnam War, nor had the local Black Power movement exerted a local presence.<sup>92</sup> The previous year, Carbondale had successfully hosted, and then elected, “law and order” candidates Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew by a slim majority, and Jackson County voters surrounding Carbondale handed Republican control to all but three elected offices, returning the county to the Republican-dominated governance maintained almost completely since the Civil War.<sup>93</sup> Carbondale’s Northeast neighborhood remained in a state of de facto segregation and third-world living conditions, ignored by city government, deliberately avoided by city services, and patrolled by Carbondale’s all-white police force.

In this chapter, two grassroots environmental organizations in Carbondale are examined. The first is the Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment (CFBE), and second is Green Earth, Incorporated, a competing non-profit foundation. The CFBE was established in 1969 as the Mayor’s Beautification Committee, but members of the organization broke off to form a semi-private foundation one year later. Green Earth, Inc. was founded in 1974 as a private, non-

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<sup>92</sup>Letter from Stanley Brodsky to David Keene, 29 August 1969, Box 1, Folder 3, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale.

<sup>93</sup>“Jackson Goes Demo,” *Southern Illinoisan*, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://thesouthern.newspapers.com/image/86716391>.

profit environmental foundation modeled on the Sierra Club. Both organizations believed in protecting the natural environment, but had differing views as to how. The CFBE saw environmental activist through a neoliberal, profit-oriented lens. In their view, the environment should be kept clean in order to encourage visitors to spend money in Carbondale, not to protect the environment simply for the ecological benefits of doing so. In contrast, Green Earth operated on the principle that any environment altered by man was destroyed. Their strategy, then, was to purchase available land and keep it in a natural state to prevent destruction. Neither group successfully linked to the developments in Northeast Carbondale. A fight over monies generated from the War on Poverty projects in Northeast eventually destroyed the CFBE and gave Green Earth, Inc., the financial wherewithal to achieve its goals of preserving land free from development.

On June 11, 1969, Carbondale Mayor David Keene returned a letter to the Illinois Central Railroad, acknowledging a proposed project to clean up the city's derelict passenger station. Mayor Keene referred to the project as "the largest and most ambitious project they have ever undertaken, but they look forward to it with enthusiasm," referring to his newly selected Beautification Committee. The people Mayor Keene referred to were the heads of the various Carbondale gardening clubs.<sup>94</sup> In addition to those six women, Keene appointed his wife, one professor from Southern Illinois University, and several local business leaders to the committee. In the same letter, Mayor Keene also promised to add names from Carbondale's Northeast neighborhood, but never kept the promise. The committee was built on a lie, undermining future endeavors related to the Northeast neighborhood. Further, the appointment of only one SIU faculty member to the committee, forestry professor John Andreson, communicated Mayor Keene's only token desire to include SIU in his governance of the city.

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<sup>94</sup> Letter from David Keene to H.F. Davenport, 11 June 1969, Box 1, Folder 3, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

Among the committee members were people expected to be experts in the task of beautification. The committee was chaired by Agnes Wright, a firebrand and president of the Carbondale Garden Clubs Council. To even the committee balance with people who favored the city government, Mayor Keene appointed his own wife and the wife of the city attorney, as well as the wives of the presidents of the Chamber of Commerce and the Carbondale Real Estate Board.<sup>95</sup> The group's initial charge was to renovate a derelict railway passenger station and parking lot at the center of the downtown shopping district.

The mayor could not have foreseen the next nine years of attempts to broaden local environmentalism, fighting between the various factions within his former committee, or the outbreaks of violence that rocked the city from 1970-1971. Keene was not in office long enough to take credit for the committee's accomplishments, because he was ousted in the 1972 midterm election.<sup>96</sup> By then, the beautification committee had long broken from the reigns of the city, created a semi-private foundation, and struck out wildly on its own, often at odds with city leadership. From the summer of 1969 until February, 1970, however, the committee remained part of the mayor's office.

The first meeting of the committee was held on September 16, 1969. The guests in attendance included the heads of all the Carbondale garden clubs, the president of the park board, the head of the city planning department, the owner of Carbondale's most popular landscaping supply store, a representative from the League of Women Voters, another from the Carbondale Women's Club, one professor from the SIU School of Architecture and a representative of the

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<sup>95</sup> The Mayor's Committee on Beautification Telephone List, Box 1, Folder 2, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

<sup>96</sup> Goals for Carbondale Planning Summary, Box 1, Folder 27, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

Carbondale Boy Scout Council.<sup>97</sup> The diverse influences of these guests testified to the reach of the original committee members and their desire to grow the committee's purpose and capabilities using local civic organizations rather than exclusive reliance on city government.

The committee's list of goals had expanded well beyond the original objective identified by Mayor Keene. Instead of cleaning up a derelict train station, the committee proposed this project as the second of three sweeping goals. The first goal became the beautification of the entire area known popularly as "the strip" today, a rectangle stretching from Southern Illinois University to Carbondale's hospital. The original plan for cleaning up the Illinois Central railroad station was moved to second priority, and a third goal, creating green space in the Route 51 North Couple, a block-long traffic median created when the state highway department altered the route of the road for improved traffic flow in 1966.

The last person to speak at the meeting, Park Board President Tom Langdon, made a startling admission: the city had no provision for the maintenance, preservation or acquisition of new green space for public use, and argued in favor of bulldozing derelict residential properties and reclaiming land for public use to save money.<sup>98</sup> Why Langdon made this statement was never clarified, and remaining committee minutes make no mention of any further commentary on his part. Was Langdon arguing that the city needed to replace the 1962 master plan with something new? Had Langdon just admitted that the financial status of the city was incompatible with citywide improvement projects? The existing documents provide no answer.

The Mayor's beautification committee met only three more times before yielding projects completely to the CFBE. The committee meeting minutes from November 17, 1969, demonstrate

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<sup>97</sup> Mayor's Beautification Committee Meeting Minutes 16 September 1969, Box 1, Folder 4, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

its lack of direction. Three public relations slogans were recommended, each demonstrating a different tone and purpose:

1. Plant, Pick Up, Paint.
2. CARBONDALE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL
3. Pollution by man of his environment is now called one of the three great problems of the World. Rise up, citizens of Carbondale, solve the problem here and now.<sup>99</sup>

None of them were selected by the committee, which met only two more times before folding into the Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment.

While the Mayor's Beautification Committee struggled to perform, one member of the committee was working behind the scenes to create an entirely different organization with more ambitious goals. SIU Professor John Andreson, recently hired as the official Carbondale City Forester, began holding meetings to create an alternative organization the very day after his appointment to the mayor's committee. One June 9, 1969, the Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment met for the first time.<sup>100</sup> Andreson began the meeting with a presentation from a likeminded organization that was operating in Alton, Illinois, and argued that a city committee was incapable of making a real impact on environmental problems affecting the community.

By circumventing the mayor's committee, Andreson succeeded in bringing together a far more diverse collection of representatives from the Carbondale community. In addition to a large number of individuals from the mayor's committee, Andreson brought several clergy members, two business owners, the city code enforcement officer, one student from Carbondale High

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<sup>99</sup> Mayor's Beautification Committee Meeting Minutes 17 November 1969, Box 1, Folder 4, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

<sup>100</sup> First Meeting Minutes, 9 June 1969, Box 1, Folder 5, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

School, one student from Southern Illinois University, and a reporter from the *Southern Illinoisan* newspaper. Unlike the mayor's committee appointments, however, Andreson included Marie Johnson and Ima Valentine, two representatives from the Northeast Development Congress, the de facto city council in Carbondale's Northeast neighborhood.<sup>101</sup> Unlike Mayor Keene, Andreson's collected group was unafraid to cross the rigid color line dividing Carbondale politics and civic life. In another turn away from the Mayor's committee, the foundation embraced youth groups fully, bridging the gap between the university community and the city and incorporating the efforts of local youth environmental groups, whether privately controlled, such as the Boys Scouts or Girl Scouts, or formed within the public school program, such as the Protect Your Environment club at Carbondale Middle School and the Environmental Club at Carbondale High School.

In a second divergence from the Mayor's committee, Andreson and his associates started their foundation with a constitution and proposed a set of bylaws that included a clear set of intents and purposes. Beautifying Carbondale was no longer the first priority, but part of a much larger plan. The new foundation's first priority was "to stimulate a general interest in promoting for the Carbondale Community a cleaner and more healthful environment and to give it a more attractive and aesthetically pleasing appearance." The second objective was "advocacy for change to unhealthy or environmentally unsound conditions," and the remaining objectives related to public awareness and education programs.<sup>102</sup> Unlike the mayor's committee, the CFBE did not begin with flower plantings or a train station. The constitution specifically identified the

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> CFBE Constitution and By-Laws 1969, Amended August 1, 1973, Box 1, Folder 7, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

“total environment of the community of Carbondale” as the CFBE’s scope of interest and operation.<sup>103</sup>

The CFBE founding members appear to have understood far better than Mayor Keene that flowers and litter sweeps were not a strong enough approach to solving the deep problems that had multiplied over decades of endemic poverty conditions, Jim Crow segregation, and neglect by the city government. By the time of a citywide environmental conference in April, 1970, the breadth of Carbondale’s environmental and social conditions were cataloged by the foundation and the mayor’s beautification committee and represented a laundry list of complaints of every conceivable size and shape. If the first step in solving a problem was the recognition that it existed, the CFBE had done so successfully. The creation of a semi-private foundation demonstrated a lack of faith in city government to address the mounting environmental concerns of the citizens of Carbondale and a deeper conception of the need for a change in policy direction in order to confront and repair decades of damage.

For the remainder of 1969 and into the spring of 1970, the CFBE conducted a continuous membership drive, pursued not-for-profit status with the State of Illinois and prepared for the nationwide observance of the teach-in that became Earth Day, scheduled for April 22, 1970. Although minutes from the first nine months are sketchy, the extant minutes suggest a zealous membership committee and awareness of local, state and nationwide environment-related events destined to affect Carbondale.<sup>104</sup> In March, 1970, a luncheon was sponsored for all local women’s clubs in order to garner support and participation, and on April 9, 1970, the CFBE partnered with the Mayor’s Beautification Committee and several other area organizations to

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Committee Minutes, 17 February 1970, Box 1, Folder 5, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

sponsor a citywide environmental conference a full two weeks ahead of the nationwide observances of the first Earth Day.<sup>105</sup>

As civic groups all over Carbondale busily prepared for a citywide environmental conference and teach-in planned for April, President Richard Nixon moved swiftly to keep the spotlight on environmental activism away from his political rivals in the congress. In the spring of 1970, Nixon endorsed the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, the Water Quality Improvement Act, and the Resources Recovery Act, rivaling the Johnson Administration's entire environmental legislation in less than six months. Real, nationwide environmental progress appeared within reach.<sup>106</sup>

On April 9, 1970, the First Presbyterian Church of Carbondale hosted the first environmental conference in the city's history. The Carbondale Beautification Conference of 1970 also represented the last gasp of the Mayor's Beautification Committee and cemented the ascent of the Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment.<sup>107</sup> Organized into a series of concurrent roundtable discussions held over the course of five hours, the aim of the conference was to address a series of ten problems directly impacting Carbondale. Almost all of the topics addressed, however, were solely aesthetic in nature and demonstrated a continued failure to confront social problems. Representatives from Carbondale's Northeast neighborhood were not in attendance. Nothing in the notes collected at the conference indicates why no representatives attended. The leaders of the Northeast Development Congress (NCD) may have boycotted the event on purpose, but no record exists to prove whether or not they did.

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<sup>105</sup> History of Carbondale Foundation for Better Environment, Box 1, Folder 1, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

<sup>106</sup> J. Brooks Flippen, *Nixon and the Environment* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 12-15; 44-48.

<sup>107</sup> Carbondale Beautification Conference, 9 April 1970, Page 1, Box 1, Folder 6, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

The existing minutes from the conference, when paired with the 1972 *Goals for Carbondale* planning statement, offer an unvarnished view of this moment in history. The ten topics of concern were:

1. Accumulation and lack of proper disposal of debris and litter.
2. Lack of adequate tree and shrub planting and maintenance throughout city.
3. Lack of citizen concern.
4. No obvious results from numerous planning activities; and lack of over-all planning and coordinating unit.
5. Ugly approaches to City of Carbondale.
6. No meaningful aid or advice about clean-up and fix-up to citizens of north east Carbondale.
7. Unsightly store fronts and signs within Carbondale business district.
8. Poor sidewalk construction and street repair.
9. Too many signs, sidewalk obstructions, and overhead utility wires.
10. Obsolete and unsightly facilities and buildings of Illinois Central Railroad.<sup>108</sup>

Findings from the conference were immediately prepared for public release and presented a shocking state of affairs in Carbondale that reflected poorly on the citizens, and offered pointed criticism of city government. The first group castigated the city for near-complete lack of enforcement of city ordinances related to solid waste and noted both an endemic rodent problem, and the absence of waste collection in some parts of town. The second group identified a lack of comprehensive planning and an absence of maintenance of city properties. The fourth group maintained that planning initiatives had failed because of internal conflicts within city government.<sup>109</sup>

The bombshell came from the group chosen to discuss conditions in Carbondale's Northeast neighborhood. The group report began by recognizing the total absence of residents from Northeast at the conference, and then laid bare the underlying problem in Carbondale: "It is the consensus of one group that we, as citizens of Carbondale, must educate ourselves and do

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., Pages 2-5.

something about poverty conditions [emphasis original] in our City if beauty in its truest sense is forthcoming.”<sup>110</sup> The group report went on to note that “some residents keep their lights on in order to keep rats out,” and observed that outdoor toilet facilities were the norm in Northeast residences, where there was “an absence of running water in 22% of its homes.” The report concluded with strong statements about the superficial nature of beautification in the community.<sup>111</sup> The remainder of the conference group reports ignored the painfully obvious elephant in the room, but the members of the CFBE present at the conference did not. On April 30, 1970, the CFBE held a planning conference of its own and decided that the time to act had long passed. Unfortunately for the CFBE, however, national events brought all environmental activity in Carbondale to a halt.

On the evening of April 30, 1970, President Nixon announced the expansion of the war in Vietnam through a bombing campaign into Cambodia in a televised address. Almost immediately, protests erupted on over 450 college campuses nationwide.<sup>112</sup> Unlike campus protests during the Johnson Administration, this time the student body of Southern Illinois University turned out en masse to protest. Although downplayed by the university administration and the newspapers, an estimated one-third of the SIU student body took part in the protests following Nixon’s Cambodia announcement. By the end of the week, the shooting of four students at Kent State University by national guardsmen, an announcement by Illinois governor Richard Ogilvie calling for tuition hikes in the 1970-71 school year, and an overzealous reaction by local law enforcement turned peaceful protests into violent confrontations that spread across

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., Pages 5-6.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., Page 6.

<sup>112</sup> Flippen, *Nixon and the Environment*, 15.

the campus and into several Carbondale neighborhoods.<sup>113</sup> For seven days, Carbondale and the university campus were blanketed with smoke and a constant fog of tear gas as students violently reacted to a number of perceived injustices, in particular the expansion of the war in Vietnam.

Unfortunately for Carbondale residents, violent student protests were not the only problem besetting the community in May 1970. Responding to a nationwide call by the teamsters union, the city garbage collectors and the drivers from a number of area trucking firms went on strike on May 1, 1970.<sup>114</sup> Delivery of goods and groceries to the community ground to a halt for over a month, as did trash collection. Cleaning up the debris of the May Riots fell to concerned citizens and the few students who remained on campus for the summer session. The membership of the CFBE rose to the occasion by mid-June. The disposal work by the CFBE and community members broke with a long-established area tradition of supporting organized labor, and effectively cast the volunteers in the role of scabs crossing picket lines.

On June 22, the board of directors of CFBE met, having secured non-profit status and incorporated, and planned the first cleanup campaign for 1970. The meeting minutes convey a sense of urgency, listing the first goal of the organization to “make as many small, immediate improvements as possible, especially during good weather.”<sup>115</sup> By July, the CFBE obtained guarantees of complete support from city officials and a number of civic organizations, and CFBE president Howard Shand declared cleanup of the South Illinois Avenue corridor as Pilot Project Number One, with a definitive completion date set for one week ahead of the 1970 SIU

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<sup>113</sup>“Ogilvie Announces Tuition Hike- Protests Set,” *Southern Illinoisan*, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://thesouthern.newspapers.com/image/8670331>.

<sup>114</sup>“Teamsters on Strike, stalling production in area,” *Southern Illinoisan*, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://thesouthern.newspapers.com/image/86704801>.

<sup>115</sup>Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, 22 June 1970, Box 1, Folder 8, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

homecoming festivities.<sup>116</sup> A public art contest to design the official CFBE logo was announced at the same time. By August, sixty submissions were received. Unable to decide between the two top submissions, the board voted to combine them into one and decided on the foundation's official permanent slogan: Together We Make It Better.<sup>117</sup>

The design contest press coverage, the inability to choose a single logo, an ambiguous slogan, and conflicting accounts of the CFBE's purposes highlight the problems endemic to the organization as its first official major activity was underway. A *Southern Illinoisan* article devoted to the contest declared the "objectives of the foundation include stimulating a more healthful and pleasing environment, urging compliance with ordinances, and developing and implementing plans for beautification." One month later, in an article critical of the small prize amount given to winners, the CFBE's purpose was described thus: "to operate as a coordinating and planning group in developing projects that need to be done and attempting to convince local authorities, service groups, and individuals to do them."<sup>118</sup> Already a year into its existence, the CFBE was still unclear about its purpose.

The new foundation logo was also ambiguous. The logo featured a white hand clasping a black hand in front of three "stylized trees" formed from the shape of inverted and broken peace symbols. Beneath the logo was the foundation slogan, "Together We Make It Better."<sup>119</sup> The logo featured prominent symbols of race relations and a betrayed peace movement, not an

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<sup>116</sup> Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, 29 July, 1970, Box 1, Folder 8, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

<sup>117</sup> "Environmental emblem contest ends in tie," *Southern Illinoisan*, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://thesouthern.newspapers.com/image/86719>; Design Contest Submission Requirements, Box 1, Folder 1, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

<sup>118</sup> "Better Environment contest announced," *Southern Illinoisan*, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://thesouthern.newspapers.com/image/86725>; "Small Prize Explained," *Southern Illinoisan*, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://thesouthern.newspapers.com/image/86720>.

<sup>119</sup> Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, 13 August 1970, Box 1, Folder 5, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

environmental movement. Still, the CFBE leadership was satisfied with the logo, and riding along on a wave of favorable press coverage, continued to plan for a citywide cleanup event in October. The unspoken objective was clear: cleaning up the business district could erase as much evidence of the May Riots as possible before celebrants arrived in Carbondale for the week-long homecoming festivities. The goal was to hide from view the disastrous conditions still blanketing the downtown area and the edges of the SIU campus. Coping at the moment pushed environmental activism beyond simple beautification far into the future.

The October 24, 1970 city cleanup event was a smashing success for CFBE. The months of planning resulted in a turnout of almost 300 people. The event gathered together members of the CFBE, local garden clubs, scout troops, three SIU fraternities and the SIU, high school and middle school student environmental clubs.<sup>120</sup> The event participants not only swept clean the entire Carbondale downtown business district and erased all evidence of the riots held the previous spring, but signaled the beginning of an active period for the CFBE. From October, 1970, until the summer of 1974, CFBE events occurred every month. Left out of the equation in the success story, however, was the Northeast neighborhood, and with few exceptions, the SIU campus. The promising coalition of environmental conservationists and environmental justice activists was gone.

By Thanksgiving 1970, the CFBE officially replaced the Mayor's Beautification Committee and began sending a representative to city council meetings to advocate for a new city master plan that included conservation. With a diverse membership representing many civic organizations, every local environmental organization, the college campus, the CFBE became a

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<sup>120</sup> "More than 250 join effort to spruce up Carbondale," *Southern Illinoisan*, accessed March 10, 2016, <http://thesouthern.newspapers.com/image/86780>; Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, 21 October 1970, Box 1, Folder 5, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

voice for change at the city council.<sup>121</sup> Nationwide, environmental legislation was being passed in state after state, including Illinois, where environmental amendments were considered by the legislature for inclusion in the new state constitution.

CFBE board member and *Southern Illinoisan* reporter Ben Gelman was sent to Springfield to cover the constitutional convention and reported extensively on the environmental protection agenda. Calling what became Article XI of the Illinois State Constitution “one of an explosion of new types of laws being proposed in a rapidly changing world,” Gelman devoted several editorials to convention proceedings. It was a good thing, Gelman wrote, “that the convention delegates decided to make it clear the environment is an important part of our heritage and that we have a right to clean air and so forth.” So enamored was Gelman with the proposed legislation that he saw fit to include the entire text of both sections:

Section 1: The public policy of the state and the duty of each person is to provide and maintain a healthful environment for the benefit of future generations. The General Assembly shall provide by law for the implementation and enforcement of this public policy.

Section 2: Each person has a right to a healthful environment. Each person may enforce this right against any part, governmental private, through appropriate legal proceedings subject to reasonable limitation and legislation as the General Assembly may provide by law.<sup>122</sup>

The law defined a clean environment as a civil right, the CFBE was the local advocate for that right, and yet residents did not back the CFBE. After the 1970-1971 school year ended, the

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<sup>121</sup> Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, 15 December 1970, Box 1, Folder 5, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

<sup>122</sup> “Right to a healthy environment spelled out,” *Southern Illinoisan*, accessed March 10, 2016, <http://thesouthern.newspapers.com/image/86711>.

CFBE sponsored a second citywide cleanup event, and participation was dismal. According to existing board minutes, less than forty people attended who did not belong to either a garden club or civic organization.<sup>123</sup> As school resumed in the fall of 1971, CFBE president Howard Shand vented his frustration with the Carbondale populace in an interview with the *Southern Illinoisan*. “There are no volunteers to maintain green space after beautification projects finished, argued Shand, “people just won’t come to us and say, “what can I do?” Gelman added to Shand’s caustic statement by noting the foundation had 455 members but could not find a sponsor for a \$15.00 monthly phone bill.<sup>124</sup>

Disappointment over participation aside, the core membership of the CFBE maintained a regular presence at city council and Northeast Congress meetings. In late November, 1971, the CFBE announced a second major success, the planting of trees on the north couple of Highway 51, the very project proposed at the first meeting of the mayor’s beautification committee in 1969.<sup>125</sup> Next, the CFBE began its only campaign resembling modern environmental advocacy, despite warning signs that the organization was falling into decline. The membership of the CFBE fell precipitously throughout the year, and the SIU environmental organizations partnered instead with the Northeast Congress to stage a neighborhood cleanup.<sup>126</sup>

In February, 1972, the CFBE successfully helped launch Carbondale’s first all-volunteer permanent recycling program. CFBE member Debbie Asaturian was named to the mayor’s steering committee for creating a new master plan for Carbondale, and her husband, Armen Asaturian, succeeded in lobbying the Carbondale school board to institute a recycling program

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<sup>123</sup> Board Meeting Minutes, 6 June 1971, Box 1, Folder 13, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

<sup>124</sup> “Environmentalists find going slow,” *Southern Illinoisan*, accessed March 10, 2016, <http://thesouthern.newspapers.com/image/86715>.

<sup>125</sup> “Two year project realized: trees ‘don’t just grow,’” *Southern Illinoisan*, accessed March 10, 2016, <http://thesouthern.newspapers.com/image/86711>.

<sup>126</sup> Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, 25 April 1972, Box 1, Folder 14, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

and information station in all public schools.<sup>127</sup> The CFBE membership, despite good intentions, planning conferences, and two years of hard work, still could not see beyond individual actions to the broader needs of the community. Newly elected Mayor Neil Eckert, on the other hand, could, and he acted swiftly to create a dynamic new master plan for the city.

On July 1, 1972, the Carbondale city government released the first publication of a document called *Goals for Carbondale*. A thirteen-section master planning document, the *Goals* offered a frank assessment of conditions in Carbondale more damning than the results of the 1970 environmental conference. In fact, the drafting committee considered the plan so controversial it included a disclaimer and content warning in the preface.<sup>128</sup>

“It should be pointed out that these are the Goals of the citizens of Carbondale, not the goals of the Steering Committee or Subcommittee members. In fact, some committee members as individuals, may disagree with certain of the Goals.”<sup>129</sup> So began the *Goals for Carbondale* master planning statement. The master plan for the city began with an environmental policy calling for keeping Cedar Creek Reservoir, Carbondale’s chief source of drinking water, free from pollution. CFBE member Tom Beviert was the chief advocate for keeping the reservoir clean, an issue that surfaced during a fight between the CFBE and the city in October 1972, when city workers clearing the area burned live trees and dumped the refuse in the water. Calling the action a violation of the Environmental Protection Act, members of the CFBE protested to

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<sup>127</sup> Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, 14 February 1972; Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, 23 May 1972, Both in Box 1, Folder 14, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

<sup>128</sup> *Goals for Carbondale*, July 1972, Box 1, Folder 27, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

the city council. Instead of protecting the reservoir, the protest led the city to abandon the cleaning project entirely.<sup>130</sup>

The second section of *Goals* called attention to the plight of the downtown, calling for improvements; “there has been scant attention paid to the problem of aesthetics in the City, so that it has become not only an eyesore... but a place in which no person feels comfortable walking. One of the attractions of urban life is, or should be, that it offers each one of us an interesting place in which to live.”<sup>131</sup>

The other *Goals* statements on education and healthcare declared access to quality education and affordable care to be rights, not negotiable items. Programs to solve these two problems in Carbondale included a city government health plan for residents and free access to adult education at John A. Logan College and Southern Illinois University.<sup>132</sup> Although the CFBE and other environmental advocacy groups provided input to the *Goals for Carbondale*, the steering committee that drafted the document for the city government clearly had farther reaching goals in mind that went beyond the issue of environment protection. A whole section of *Goals* was also devoted to ending racial inequality and providing full access to city services to the Northeast neighborhood. This neighborhood, which had existed in a state of segregation and neglect for over 100 years, was finally the subject of city attention.

Fully supporting the Goals for Carbondale, the CFBE began its final successful year of operation in the spring of 1973, kicking off the season with the restoration of the former Illinois Central depot. Bringing closure to the four-year-old project kept the CFBE moving forward, and

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<sup>130</sup> Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, 24 October 1972, Box 1, Folder 14, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

<sup>131</sup> Goals for Carbondale, July 1972, Box 1, Folder 27, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

work began on January 30, 1973.<sup>133</sup> The CFBE remained without community support despite the work, and board member Muriel Canfield circulated a petition to the city government calling for city maintenance to take over caring for plantings in the downtown business district because the CFBE, whose total membership had plummeted to less than 50 members, could no longer keep up with the workload. In another caustic statement to the press, CFBE president Agnes Wright, the firebrand leader of the Garden Club Council who had spearheaded all of the environmental programs in Carbondale since 1969, vented her frustration with the city government in an interview for the *Southern Illinoisan* on March 6, 1973. “We plant trees and they die, Wright said, “no one wanted the responsibility [of maintenance], but if we had waited until we were sure someone would care for the trees, they never would have been planted.” Responding to her comments, Park Board president Tom Langdon and city councilman Clark Vineyard both remarked that the city had no money for maintenance of green spaces.<sup>134</sup>

Records of the CFBE for the next twelve months suggest a period of almost complete inactivity, compounded by a declining national economy and the oil crisis. During that year, the city of Carbondale refinanced its sewer and water bond issue in order to pay for the provision of running water, sewer lines and garbage collection to the Northeast neighborhood. A windfall of profits from the refinancing was announced, and the city council voted to donate those funds to area nonprofit groups for use on civic improvement projects. The only group ineligible to receive

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<sup>133</sup> “Landscaping Begins,” *Southern Illinoisan*, accessed March 10, 2016, <http://thesouthern.newspapers.com/image/86688>.

<sup>134</sup> “We plant trees and then they die,” *Southern Illinoisan*, accessed March 10, 2016, <http://thesouthern.newspapers.com/image/86787>; Board of Directors Meeting Minutes 27 February 1973, Box 1, Folder 15, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

funding was the CFBE. Because language in the organization bylaws connected the CFBE nominally to city government, the organization was disqualified.<sup>135</sup>

Another organization, spearheaded by Dr. George Karnes, arose to replace CFBE. Called Green Earth, Inc., the organization was entirely private and organized on the model of the Sierra Club. Former CFBE president Agnes Wright and new president Sue Casebeer both complained loudly to the *Southern Illinoisan*. In an interview, Wright remarked that the CFBE “had been begging for money for years,” and Casebeer noted “the complete lack of transparency in Green Earth’s plans,” but to no avail.<sup>136</sup> In July, 1974, the Carbondale city council gave Green Earth, Inc., a donation of over \$100,000 and gave nothing to the CFBE. That Green Earth, Inc., incorporated, began operations and gained access to exclusive municipal funding under the noses of the CFBE membership testifies to the lack of awareness of local conditions by the CFBE.

From August, 1974 until September, 1978, the remaining CFBE leadership proposed resolution after resolution to the city council calling for the maintenance and creation of green spaces, but took on no new projects. Among the proposals were the creation of a park when the city demolished the abandoned Attucks School, paving of downtown alleys and the creation of a downtown mini-park; and the city’s takeover of maintenance for CFBE plantings in the downtown business district and elsewhere. None of these resolutions were heeded by the city, which had abandoned environmental concerns as a priority in the face of a sinking economy.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> “Carbondale Council to discuss Green Earth allocation,” *Southern Illinoisan*, accessed March 10, 2016, <http://thesouthern.newspapers.com/image/86782>.

<sup>136</sup> Letter to City Council from Sue Casebeer, 15 July 1974, Box 1, Folder 12, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois; “Carbondale Council to discuss Green Earth allocation,” *Southern Illinoisan*, accessed March 10, 2016, <http://thesouthern.newspapers.com/image/86782>.

<sup>137</sup> Letter to Community Facilities Committee- City of Carbondale, 22 November 1974; Letter from Meila Patula to Donald B. Smith- President Carbondale Rotary Club, 18 February 1975; Letter from Agnes Wright to Carol Fry, 1 September 1978, Box 1, Folder 12, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

The membership of the CFBE met for the last time on September 22, 1978. No one in attendance was willing to serve as president of the board of directors. Four years later, former CFBE board member and *Southern Illinoisan* reporter Ben Gelman asked a question in his opinion column: “What happened to the Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment?” Former CFBE president Agnes Wright offered the organization’s final reply:

“The need for the organization decreased when city departments took over many of the Projects member [sic] were pushing for. The CFBE can be proud of what it started, and congratulates city officials for taking over effectively and for making us feel that we have worked ourselves out of the job.”<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Letter from Agnes Wright to Editor *Southern Illinoisan*, 29 December 1982, Box 1, Folder 12, Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment Collection, SIU Morris Library Special Collections Research Center, Carbondale, Illinois.

## CONCLUSION

It is hard to contemplate the idea of the War on Poverty being over fifty years in the past. In 2020, Earth Day will be celebrated for the fiftieth time. This is another anniversary event to contemplate. In 2017, the rhetoric of the War on Poverty remains fresh. Presidents Johnson and Nixon still have questionable legacies. The idealist liberal of the 1960s is the “lib-tard” reviled by many in the present. The same problems: racism, environmental degradation, the deindustrialization of America, the cost of entitlements, the undeserving poor, and other hot-button issues remain a part of the current debates and drag perpetually on the coattails of American progress. And we are again at war with a largely ideological enemy on a foreign shore.

Amidst all of this tumult, historians and professionals of other academic disciplines continue to debate the effectiveness of the War on Poverty. Books on the subject are still released as frequently as they were in the 1960s and 1970s. Was the War on Poverty a success? Was it a failure? Was it simply a fool’s errand? No consensus presents itself. In Carbondale, a neoliberal, financial motivation was required to generate change. Northeast Carbondale had languished in a state of neglect and segregation for decades before the War on Poverty. The creators of the Model Cities grant program aimed to remove people from welfare rolls by fostering job training and education for adults and learning programs for children to break the cycle of poverty. A clean community, a working community, complete with consumer citizens and taxpayers, was the objective. The ability to make and spend money was crucial to citizenship.

Similarly, local environmental activism was born from the same neoliberal theory. A clean community generated revenue. A cleaned up central business district and city approaches encouraged visitors to bring outside funds into Carbondale, providing economic gain and

financial success to the local population. Parks and other green spaces for local residents to enjoy, planting trees for enjoyment and the improvement of local air quality were secondary concerns compared to the money that would potentially be generated from tourists who found the city pleasant enough to spend the night or spend some money. Once the financial incentives for change were negated by Green Earth, Inc. and their strategy of “preserve and protect” against development, no financial gain was expected and the Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment foundered. By 1980, almost all traces of work done by the CFBE were bulldozed to create a new shopping district located away from the downtown business district.

What remains certain is that Carbondale remains unchanged in many ways. From the mid-1970s to the present day, Carbondale’s population has remained almost exactly the same, but the population of SIU continues to decline. This time no industry is waiting in the wings to swoop in and save Carbondale from economic collapse. Although outright segregation no longer exists in Carbondale, the sundown towns surrounding the city mostly remain as they were. Unlike the big cities that received Model Cities funds, the remains of the many War on Poverty projects can be seen today in Carbondale. The Eurma Hayes Community Center remains in use and social justice advocate Margaret Nesbitt still teaches classes there every day. Carbondale Head Start is still the most active program for preschool children in Carbondale. On the other hand, the Corps of Engineers drainage project is in a state of disrepair due to a lack of long-term maintenance by the city. HUD duplexes and Habitat for Humanity homes are interspersed throughout Northeast Carbondale, whole blocks of tall grass remain where homes once stood in 1970, and both contrast deeply with the homes renovated by Model Cities funding that line the length of Robert M. Stalls Memorial Drive.

Carbondale's black community, Northeast, has been largely ignored in local histories. Published histories of Carbondale all feature local landmarks in exclusively white areas of Carbondale. Carbondale's Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society has been the sole source collecting, preserving, and publishing the history of Northeast Carbondale. The three published histories from this organization completed in the last two decades provide the deepest evidence of the thriving neighborhood community that fought pitched battles over community inclusion for decades. Local histories, it seems, make up the Model Cities legacy. Of all the liberal programs generated in the 1960s, the Model Cities program remains the most overlooked. The Carbondale project generated a dozen master's degree theses and several PhD dissertations, as have other Model Cities projects elsewhere. A complete, in-depth history of the whole program remains unpublished. One hundred forty-seven communities received model cities funding between 1968 and 1975. For each of those communities, at least one thousand more were turned down. The applications and final reports compiled by these communities represent a treasure trove of documents outlining the real state of American prosperity in the late 1960s and early 1970s that remains absent from the historiography.

In a similar vein, no environmental history of the War on Poverty has yet been published. The staggering details of environmental problems in Carbondale alone represent only the tiniest sliver of information about the state of the environmental crisis perceived in the 1960s and 1970s. Documents compiled locally noted that every single source of drinking water for the community was polluted. Children were playing in parks inundated with runoff from a wastewater treatment plant and a garbage dump. Children in two neighborhoods in Carbondale were documented as suffering from malnutrition and dozens had never seen a doctor or dentist in their short lifetimes. These dire environmental concerns cannot have been unique to Carbondale.

Future studies of both the War on Poverty and the modern environmentalism movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s need to be framed with several characteristics in mind, based on this study of Carbondale. A localized, clearly perceived financial incentive was necessary to garner support for either movement to succeed at all. Model neighborhoods were often equivalent to ecological disaster zones, not simply ghettos filled with poor people. Any work done to improve poor neighborhoods as part of the War on Poverty required environmental change and a wide base of grassroots support. Without considering these conditions and requirements, studies of early environmental activism and the War on Poverty will remain incomplete.

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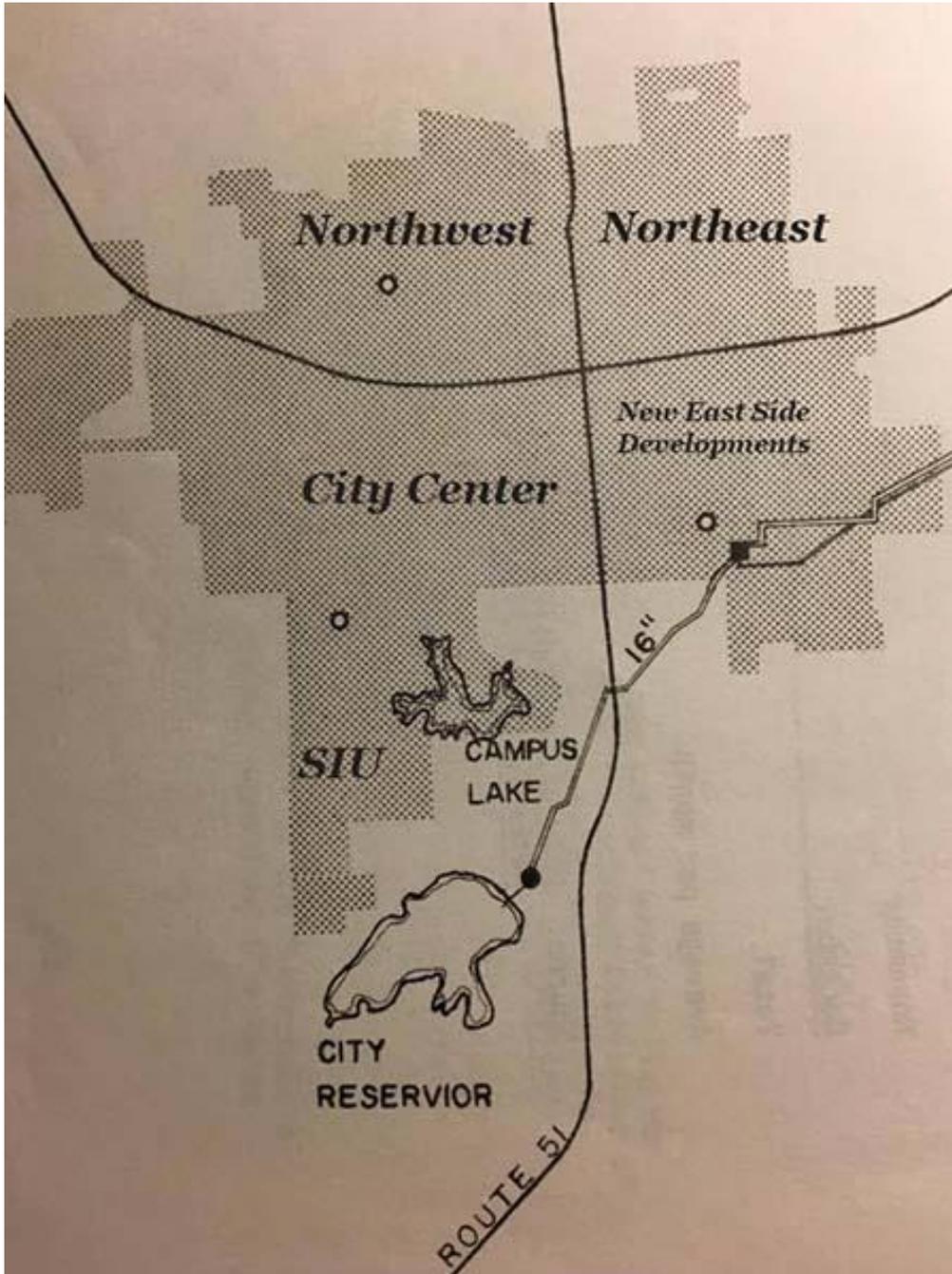
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## APPENDICES

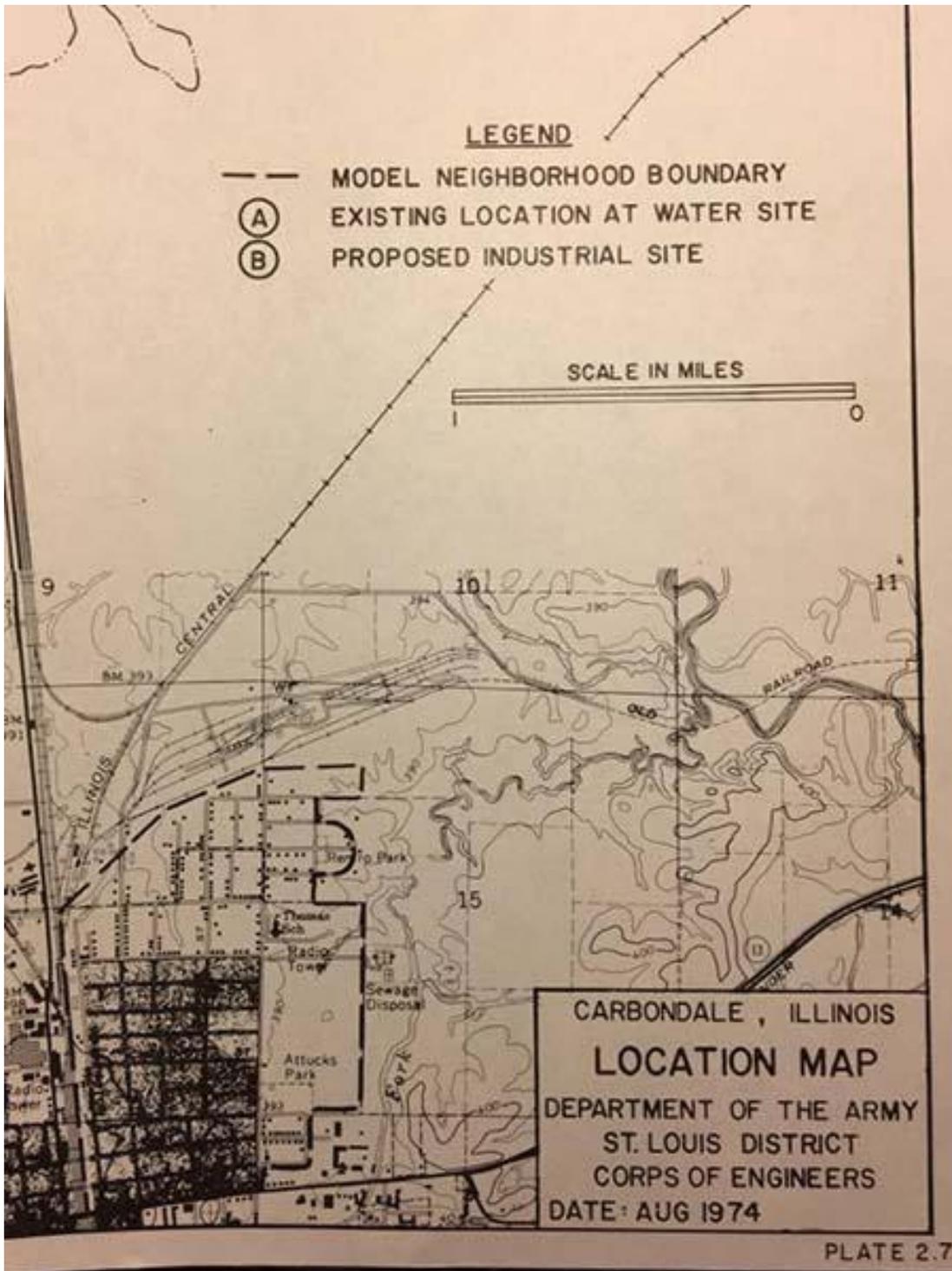
## Appendix A: Activist Organizations in Carbondale, 1965-1975

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Organization Name</u>
ACP	American Communist Party
BPP	Black Panther Party for Self-Defense
BPOC	Black Power on Campus
BSU	Black Student Union
CACGC	Carbondale Association of Community Garden Clubs
CDA	City Demonstration Agency
CFBE	Carbondale Foundation for a Better Environment
CMCG	Carbondale Men's Garden Club
CORE	Congress on Racial Equality
CSTU	Carbondale Student Tenants Union
CWU	Church Women United
MBC	Mayor's Beautification Committee
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NCD	Northeast Congress for Development; Northeast Development Congress; Northeast Community Development Congress
NOW	National Organization for Women
RAM	Radical Action Movement
RAP	Radical Action Party
SCORE	Student Council on Renewable Energy
SDS	Students for a Democratic Society
SOAP	Students Operating Against Pollution
YCC	Youth Conservation Corps

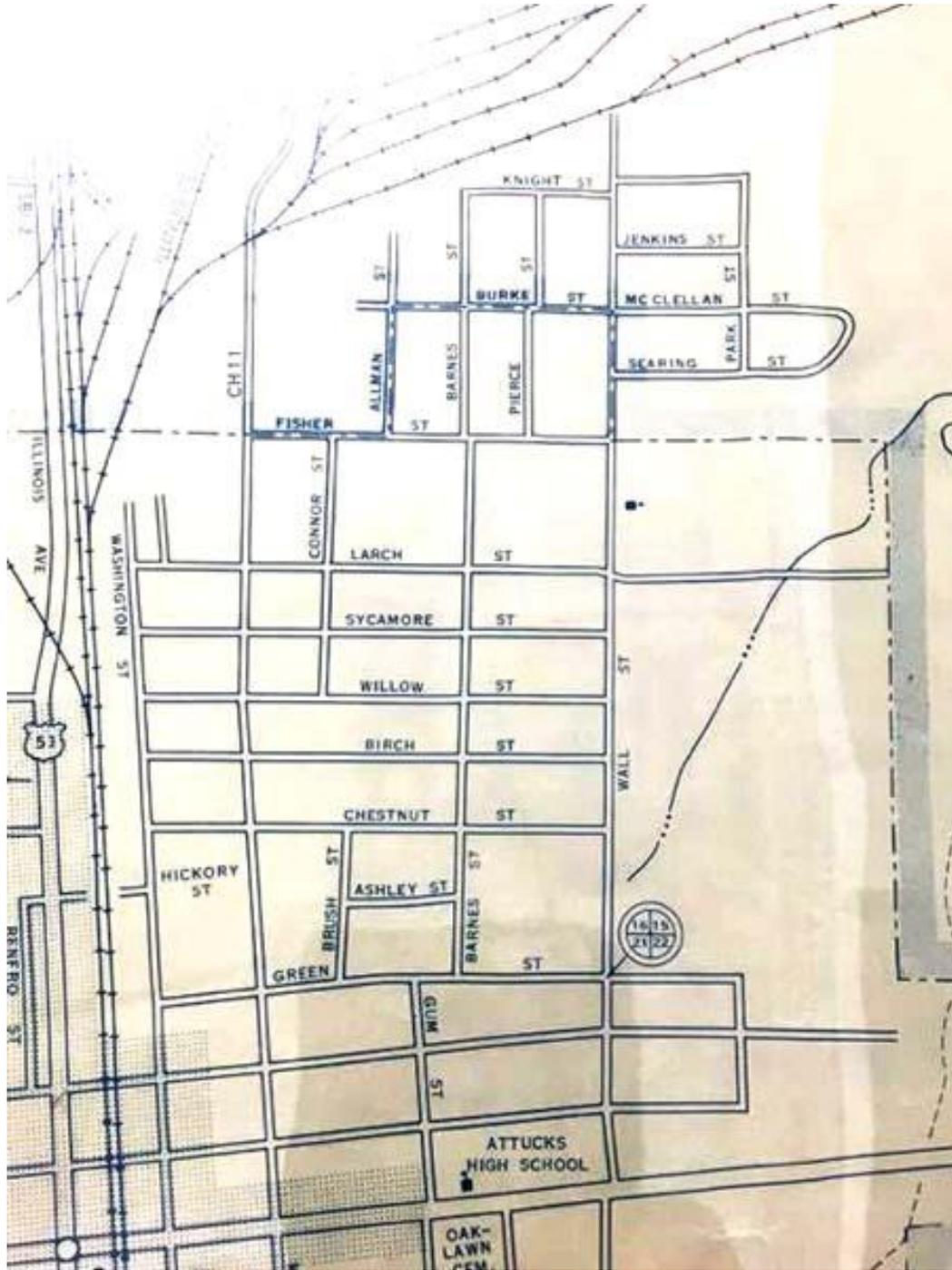
**Appendix B: Carbondale, Illinois in 1970**



Appendix C: Northeast Carbondale, 1974



### Appendix D: Model Neighborhood Street Detail



Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University

Gregory M. Carter

Greg1832@siu.edu

Quincy University  
Bachelor of Arts, History, May 2015

Special Honors and Awards:

National History Honor Society  
National Education Honor Society  
National Criminal Justice Honor Society  
Owen J. Blum Award for Outstanding Scholarly Achievement in History  
Stand Watie Memorial Scholarship  
Stillwell Foundation Memorial Scholarship

Thesis Title:

“Environmental Neoliberalism in the War on Poverty: A Case Study of Carbondale, Illinois”

Major Professor: Kay J. Carr, PhD

Publications:

“Taking Another Look at ‘Beast’ Butler.” *Loyal Legion Historical Journal* 71, No. 4 (Winter, 2014).

“Forting Up in Knox County.” *Nuggets of History* 42, No. 2 (June, 2002).