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Park Ridge: The Deterioration of a Successful Turn of the Twentieth Century Development and Its Current Revitalization Effort

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Parkridge: The Deterioration of a Successful Turn of the Twentieth Century Development and Its Current Revitalization Effort

On a clear, bright, beautiful Saturday morning, a block party celebrating the quiet revitalization of one of the oldest neighborhoods in Knoxville was under way. Local band was playing music. The residents mingled with visitors while kids scampered between booths provided by local businesses, such as SunTrust Bank, BB&T, KUB, Center for Neighborhood Development and Knox Housing Partnership, just to name a few. Many were eating homemade brownies, cupcakes or cookies and drinking ice cold sweet teas and lemonades. At lunch time, Buddy's BBQ served free hot dogs and BBQ sandwiches to everyone around. The atmosphere was jovial and optimistic, and the neighborhood felt warm and lively. Local television station, Channel 10, stopped by to capture the activities for the evening broadcast. This celebration, called National Neighborhood Works, was repeated all over the country. Small, deteriorated neighborhoods are now finding ways to revitalize their communities by returning to family oriented activities, in clusters of owner occupied historic homes. The neighborhoods look inviting and residents feel safe, and visitors welcome.

I looked into the start and development of Parkridge community in Knoxville Tennessee by first tracking the demographic and economic information with the aid of the

U.S. Census and City Directory, converting the statistical data into graphs and maps. I then interviewed community development leaders, home owners, landlords and people who used to live in the neighborhood. It is my aim to chart the evolution of this community in order to understand what caused its rise and fall. It is my hope that understanding the patterns and causes of the decline will help in planning the revitalization and sustainability of other neighborhoods and, in turn, be beneficial in the design of new communities.

Few people in West Knoxville have ever heard of Parkridge, though at one time Parkridge and adjacent parts of East Knoxville were an incorporated municipality called Park City. The name Park City comes from the Chilhowie Park which lies at the east end of the area. The Parkridge Community is the most intact portion of the original Park City running roughly from First Creek east to Cherry Street and from Magnolia Avenue north to I-40 (see map 1). Most Knoxvilleians would not see this area as a desirable place to live today, but at one time it was home to many of the upper middle income merchants and professionals, not unlike the ones that live in some of the most affluent subdivisions in West Knoxville, such as Sequoyah Hills and Westmoreland and in East Knoxville such as Holston Hills. (Parkridge Community Organization)

Today Parkridge is a historical district within the city of Knoxville - one of the rings of subdivisions developed in the late Nineteenth Century and early Twentieth Century spurred by the introduction of two city streetcars into the area. One line went through Washington Avenue and the other through Magnolia Avenue (see Knoxville, Tennessee

District Map). The streets in Parkridge were laid out in grid patterns, and the blocks were divided into small lots of 20 to 50 feet, typical of a “streetcar suburb” of the time with the longest side of the block facing the streetcar lines, which provided transportation and influenced the neighborhood’s development in its earliest years. This was a pedestrian neighborhood with sidewalks throughout the district, houses with front yards of 20 to 30 feet and large porches that formed outdoor rooms for relaxation and socialization with one’s neighbors. (*Park City: National Register, Historic District Nomination*) The area also contains Caswell Park, the largest park in the city that now exists as the best softball complex around. The historical homes were built between the 1880’s to 1940’s, representing many of the architectural styles prevalent in that time period, such as Queen Anne, Eastlake, Folk Victorian, Dutch Colonial Revival, Spanish Eclectic, Tudor Revival, Neoclassical, American Four Square, Colonial Revival, Bungalow, Craftsman and even Prairie influenced buildings (see housing styles). In addition, the district has the highest concentration of Barber homes in the world (see chart 1). Twenty-two houses are attributed to George F. Barber, an internationally known architect who established a catalog and mail-order house firm in Knoxville. The firm (Barber and McMurry) still possesses a dominant hold in the Knoxville architectural market today. (*Park City: National Register, Historic District Nomination*)

As one can see, Parkridge did not happen in an ad hoc way like much of today’s residential development. It was planned, and it was successful. However, along the way things happened; not only did growth stop, but the community also broke down to a point where most of the residents are now low-income renters, and the majority of the historical homes have deteriorated to near condemnation. The alarming fact here is that if a well

planned neighborhood such as Parkridge could not be sustained, might not this happen to many of the ad hoc residential developments of today that exhibit ambiguous architectural language. Lacking redeeming architectural value, built of cheap materials with poor construction methods, designed to have a short life expectancy and with little rational community planning, they won't maintain their value, will be hard to sell and will become the slums of the future.

Looking back in the years before the Civil War, Knoxville grew slowly but steadily: 10,170 people lived in Knox County in 1810, and of these, only 730 lived in the city. Forty years later in 1850, the county population increased to 18,900, and 2,076 of those lived in the city. That was an increase of 85 percent in the county and 184 percent in the city. In just the next ten years, by 1860, the county population had grown another twenty percent to 22,813, while the city jumped another 155 percent to 5,300 people (MacArthur, p. 20). In other words, in just ten years (1850 to 1860), the city population grew roughly three times what it had grown in the previous 40 years. This growth was stimulated by railroad companies that built tracks to the city. In 1858, East Tennessee and Georgia (ET&G) and East Tennessee and Virginia (ET&V) railway companies connected Knoxville to other cities to the north and south, and by 1886, tracks were built through Knoxville that connected the city to the eastern seaboard and to the western states. With a transportation infrastructure established, Knoxville became the headquarters of the regional rail system (MacArthur).



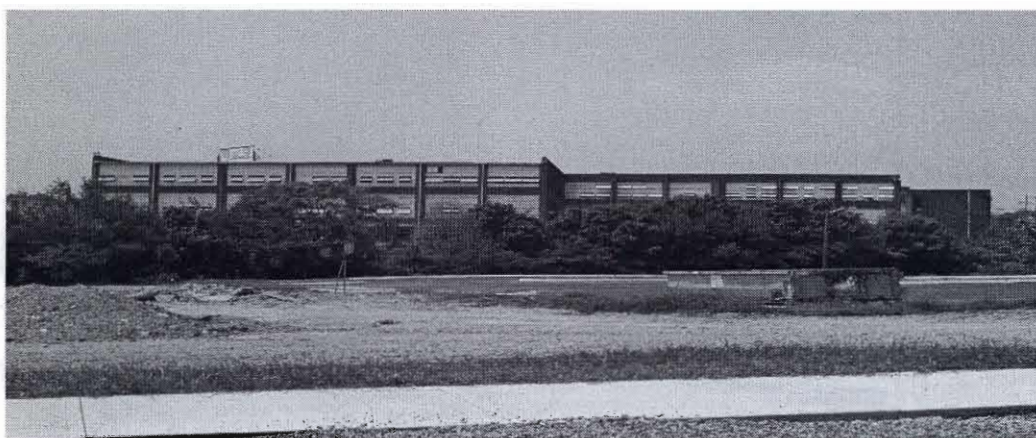
ET&G Railway Track Map

310 EAST TENNESSEE, VIRGINIA AND GEORGIA RAILWAY.									
THOMAS H. CALLAWAY, President. JOSEPH JACQUES, Vice-President. R. C. JACKSON, Gen. Supt. JAMES G. MITCHELL, Secretary and Treasurer.					JAMES R. OGDEN, Gen. Freight and Ticket Agent. O. H. P. ROGAN, Auditor and Paymaster. General Offices, Knoxville, Tenn.				
Trains Leave.				Jan. 30, 1870.		Trains Arrive.			
Acc.	Mix	Mail	Mls.	STATIONS.		Frs.	Mail	Mix	Mix
A. M. A. M.				Bristol		P. M. P. M.			
7 20	5 37	0	0	Union		6 07	8 35	0 30	0 30
8 20	6 37	20	20	Carter's		5 37	8 25	0 30	0 30
9 10	6 37	20	20	Johnson's		5 31	7 35	0 30	0 30
10 25	7 32	32	32	Jonesboro		4 57	6 55	0 30	0 30
11 30	8 05	43	43	Limestone		4 29	5 45	0 30	0 30
11 55	8 10	47	47	Fullert		4 12	5 30	0 30	0 30
12 55	8 50	59	59	Greenville		3 39	4 45	0 30	0 30
1 55	9 20	65	65	Midway		3 04	3 15	0 30	0 30
2 37	9 52	74	74	Rogersville Junc.		2 37	1 50	0 30	0 30
4 27	10 14	82	82	Russellville		1 55	1 10	0 30	0 30
5 12	10 37	88	88	Morristown		1 34	1 35	0 30	0 30
5 52	11 05	96	96	Talbot's		1 02	1 50	0 30	0 30
6 17	11 20	101	101	Mossy Creek		12 48	11 20	0 30	0 30
6 42	11 34	105	105	Newmarket		12 34	10 45	0 30	0 30
7 22	12 00	113	113	Strawberry Plains		12 06	10 00	0 30	0 30
8 02	12 27	120	120	McMillan's		11 44	9 30	0 30	0 30
8 32	12 54	130	130	Knoxville		11 15	8 25	0 30	0 30
P. M. P. M.				ARRIVE		A. M. A. M.			
6 10	10 45	1 14	130	Knoxville		11 07	4 45	4 25	4 25
8 15	11 15	1 26	137	Erin		10 10	4 15	4 00	4 00
9 05	12 05	1 44	144	Concord		10 20	3 35	3 10	3 10
10 05	1 03	2 50	150	Lenoir		9 54	2 35	2 30	2 30
10 45	1 45	2 50	158	Loudon		9 29	1 45	1 45	1 45
11 20	2 20	3 00	165	Philadelphia		9 10	1 05	1 05	1 05
12 25	3 05	3 30	175	Sweetwater		8 40	12 50	12 20	12 20
12 45	3 25	3 44	180	Ragsan's		8 39	11 55	11 40	11 40
1 50	4 25	4 13	185	Athens		7 45	11 00	10 45	10 45
2 40	5 10	4 38	193	Riceville		7 27	10 20	10 00	10 00
3 30	6 00	4 59	200	Charleston		7 09	9 10	9 10	9 10
4 43	7 15	5 15	212	Cleveland		6 27	8 30	8 00	8 00
6 10	8 00	6 10	213	Cleveland		6 00		6 00	6 00
7 10	8 55	7 10		State Line		5 10		5 10	5 10
8 10	10 20	8 10	243	Dalton		3 45		3 45	3 45
9 10	6 51	2 25		Cottewah		5 32	6 51		
9 45	7 10	2 31		Tyner's		5 13	5 55		
10 30	7 40	2 40		Chattanooga		4 45	5 00		
P. M. A. M. P. M.				ARRIVE		A. M. P. M. A. M.			

ETV&G Railway Time Table

With all this growth, Knoxville also became the third largest wholesale center in the south. Manufacturing and mechanical jobs were of even greater importance to the local economy. In 1900, manufacturing made up 30.6 percent of the economy compared to 29.5 percent in commerce, but by 1920, twice as many people were working in

manufacturing as in commerce. In fact, Knoxville had a greater percentage of the population in manufacturing than Nashville, Atlanta, Memphis, New Orleans or Birmingham, a fact that persisted until 1930 when the Great Depression put an end to this growth (MacArthur). The large number of manufacturing employees was attributed to the growth of the textile mills after the 1880's with factories such as Brookside Cotton Mill, Knoxville Woolen Mill and Standard Knitting Mill. Other industries such as iron works and stone and marble quarries also aided in the growth.



Standard Knitting Mill - Located Across From Caswell Park (August 3, 2004)

The rise of Parkridge is closely related to the economic development of the city. Since the neighborhood is located within half a mile from the railway stations and only about two miles from downtown Knoxville, it was a great location to live for downtown business professionals, merchants, and also blue collar workers who relied on the railway system and on manufacturing in the vicinity. In 1889, there were only two people living in the area, both on East Fifth Avenue. One year later in 1890, when the two streetcar lines were laid to give easy access to and from the area, sixty six houses went up on nine streets. Among the residents of the time was the famous architect George Barber. Twenty two Barber-designed homes remain in Parkridge. In 1892, Edgewood Land and

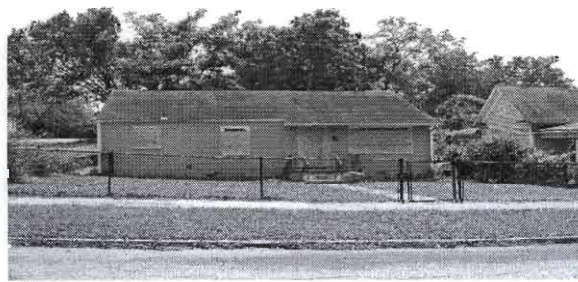
Improvement Company, a firm George Barber was associated with, purchased 150 acres for residential additions in Parkridge (see map 1). The first of the additions was around Washington Avenue since it had seen the bulk of improvements in the last few years, such as streetcars, electric street lights, sidewalks and the city water main. In short, Parkridge had a country setting but also enjoyed the privileges of modern city amenities. At the center of the tract, a smooth, rounded ridge afforded one of the finest views to be had of this area of the city and of distant mountains (the ridge that is now bisected by I-40). The price for lots in this addition ranged from \$500 to \$1,000 each, a comparatively low price for Knoxville property. With the development efforts of the Edgewood Land and Improvement Company, by 1900, the number of households sky rocketed.

By 1910; the construction of the larger homes, such as Queen Anne, Victorian and Colonial Revival, which were popular since the 1880's, gave way to the smaller Bungalow, Craftsman and Minimal Traditional houses. A small black community existed on the slopes of Chestnut Ridge, particularly along Adams and Dodson Avenues. These people, along with other low-income whites in the area, generally worked at either local factories or as servants in the more affluent homes in the area. (Parkridge Community Organization) Parkridge and all of Knoxville saw much growth from 1910 to 1920. Chilhowee Park hosted three national expositions between 1910 and 1912, and industrial employment during the decade increased substantially. In 1917, the city of Knoxville annexed all of what had been incorporated as Park City and three other suburban communities (Mountain View, Oakwood and Lonsdale). (Parkridge Community Organization) By 1930, Parkridge reached the height of its development with the

estimated number of residents around 9,000, almost three times as much as the current resident count.

Parkridge stopped prospering shortly after the Great Depression. Knoxville, like all other American cities, suffered from the crash of the stock market and plunge of the economic structure. Life was hard for many Americans, although for Knoxvillians, with the help of strong manufacturing and railways systems, the area suffered comparatively less than some regions of the country. Nevertheless, the boom that the city had enjoyed over the last thirty years stopped. Though Parkridge was still one of the best places to live in the city, it was no longer sought after by the wealthy.

The next twenty years brought change to the neighborhood. After World War II, many houses went up for the military personnel returning from the war. The veteran houses were just 850 square feet with two or three bedrooms. The plan for the houses was rectangular with a pitched roof and no particular style. These homes were built purely for economy and function. Despite that fact, veteran houses were such a huge successful building project across the United States that they now represent a page of architectural history that has rich connections to World War II.



Boarded Up Veteran Home on Jefferson Avenue

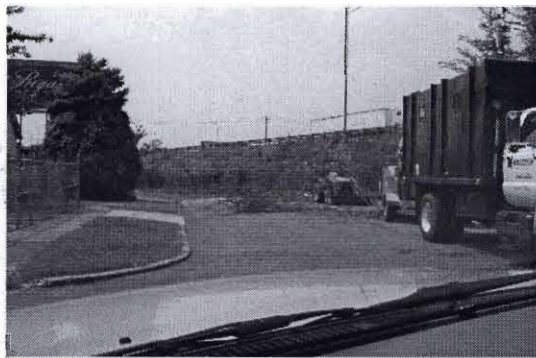
By the 1950's and 60's, the earlier manufacturing economy that created the growth to the city was slowly being replaced by a service economy. The textile mills that brought jobs to the area were closing one by one. The railways that were once the life line of the city gave way to the automobiles, trucks and highways. This change in the transportation system was actually a deliberate effort on the part of car manufacturers such as Ford, General Motors and large scale civic construction companies (who supply materials and labor for road building) to drive out streetcars, trolleys and railways in order to corner the huge transportation market in the country. (Kunstler) Trolleys and railway companies were replaced with buses, automobiles and trucks. As we can see today, they were hugely successful in converting the county into an automobile society. With this replacement, there was no longer a need for the grids and lots to be laid out in a streetcar subdivision, nor is there a need to continue building sidewalks for pedestrian communities or for close-by neighborhood parks. Houses lost the old large front porch for relaxing and socializing, which paralleled the disappearance of sidewalks in the neighborhood. The neighborhood is less of a community after this loss of the social area that brought people together.

With the ease of travel, people no longer needed to live close to work and the center of the city; they were now free to move further out. West Knoxville was the new country living that Parkridge once marketed itself to be. Kingston Pike became a conduit for upscale residential development. Fort Loudon Lake (The Tennessee River) provided a waterfront for an even more upper scale living. The Holston River allowed the same

opportunity to East Knoxville that Fort Loudon gave to West Knoxville, but the differences were that the Holston River created a geographical division as it cut across East Knoxville while Fort Loudon Lake ran along West Knoxville. In addition, there was minimal industry along Fort Loudon Lake while there were factories such as cement plants and boat yards along the Holston River. West Knoxville offered an escape from the city into the country for many who were tired of seeing the crowding and poor conditions of city life. Realtors and developers began to promote and build the west side of the city as the east side, where the aging Parkridge is located, lost its appeal. By sprawling out west, one can now have large lots and low density residential developments, which Americans associate with country living. Land has traditionally been the way Americans choose to show wealth and individuality. As historian Sam Bass Warner put it, the genius of American land law “lay in its identification of land as a civil liberty instead of as a social resource.” (Kunstler, p. 26)

When Interstate 40 was built in the 1960s, it cut through Parkridge, divided the neighborhood and blocked the downtown from its nearby residential communities (see map 2). I-40 took away the before mentioned ridge that offered the spectacular view of downtown and the Smokey Mountains. By bisecting the neighborhood, the Fourth and Gill Community to the north was created. Glenwood Avenue that once ran from Parkridge to Fourth and Gill was severed by the interstate. Though Fourth and Gill went through its own decline, in many respects the interstate helped that neighborhood from suffering the same prejudice that Parkridge went through by creating a buffer from the perceived undesirable East Knoxville. The area evolved into more of a college students’

and young adults' community. This division severely damaged the fabric of the Parkridge neighborhood, because the highest concentration of the earlier Queen Anne, Victorian and Colonial Revival homes of the 1880's to 1900's were in the Fourth and Gill area. Revitalization was made easier by the architectural value of these old styles in Fourth and Gill, but the success of the revitalization stopped at the interstate and did not make its way across to Parkridge.



Dead End Where Glenwood Avenue is bisected by I-40

With the changes in the economy and growth of the city, the resident mix of low-income whites and blacks in Parkridge increased. The Summit Hill area was once home to many of the poor African Americans. When the Civic Coliseum was developed, the African American residents were displaced. Many, if not all, moved towards the East Knoxville communities such as Parkridge.

An occurrence known as "white flight" began to take place, although some will deny this as the cause of the movement. When an area that is predominately white experiences an increase in the African American population, rather it be real or only perceived, a critical point is reached where the white residents, fueled by the opportunistic real estate

sales agents and residential developers, become convinced that the value of their home is no longer appreciating but in fact depreciating with the change in demographics. The whites then start to sell their homes and move away from the area. Parkridge suffered just that. When this happened, banks, lending institutions and insurance companies did what is called Red Lining. Red Lining is an illegal practice of actually drawing a red line on a map to mark undesirable areas in order to charge higher interest rates for loans, premiums for insurance or all together refuse service to the area. Parkridge was Red Lined.

To add fuel to the fire, new investment and population growth was happening in West Knoxville, East Knoxville slid further and further into decline. The city pumped tax dollars into building mainly the infrastructure of West Knoxville. East Knoxville tax dollars were actually bank rolling the growth of West Knoxville, while more and more wealth and people continued to move away from the east to the west. East Knoxville began to carry the stigma of low-value real estate, high crime and dilapidating neighborhoods, a stigma which still persists today. When Ann Bennett of the Metropolitan Planning Commission first considered moving to Knoxville twenty years ago, she recalled the real estate agent trying to convince her that East Knoxville was not a safe place or a wise place to invest in a home. Even when the agent was told that Mrs. Bennett would only consider homes that were built before the 1940's and located close to the downtown area, the agent still sent her a list of homes that were no older than the 1960's of which none were located in East Knoxville and enclosed a letter reiterating the evil of East Knoxville. When Mrs. Bennett finally chose a home in East Knoxville, her

bank's Knoxville branch would not offer a reasonable loan (suggesting that they were surreptitiously red lining East Knoxville). She resolved this by going through her old Memphis branch of the same bank to originate the loan papers for Knoxville home.

Another factor aiding in the decline of Parkridge was the natural aging of the population. By the 1960's, the original residents were getting old. When they died, their children did not see the value in moving back into the area. Many of the inherited homes were converted to rental properties. There were no new young home owners in the same income class wanting to purchase the homes that were left by the deceased residents. Parkridge needed to attract the next generation of residents in order to thrive, but with all the problems it was having and the pressure of West Knoxville, it did not attract many buyers.

As the real estate value of Parkridge and East Knoxville homes stopped appreciating, property owners unable to sell their houses and make a profit from the sales, began to convert them into rental units. Most of the historical houses were converted or cut into boarding houses and rented out to low-income renters. Parkridge went from a mostly owner occupied neighborhood in the 1900's to the percent of ownership verses renters being 41 percent to 58.6 percent respectively by 1970. The trend continued to 1990 when there were more than twice as many renters than owners at 31 percent owners and 69 percent renters. In 2000, there was a slight drop to 36 percent owners and 64 percent renters. By other calculations and looking at certain blocks within the Parkridge area, some claim that the renter percentage went as high as 90 percent.

Rental units were not new to this area. In fact, it is healthy for a neighborhood to be diverse in its residential make up. Rental units allow one to try out an area before committing to purchase a home. When Parkridge was developing back in the turn of the Twentieth Century, there was housing built for renters in the form of duplexes. Some of the duplexes remain standing today and function as rentals still. The problem with rental units is not necessarily the renters; it is the absentee owners that don't keep the property and the lot in acceptable condition. The city has only one code officer in east Knox County to impose the rules, which means Parkridge does not get much attention at all.

Other social economic changes affected the development of Parkridge (see statistical graphs). In 1920, the residents of Parkridge were upper middle income merchants and professionals, but by 1970, the medium income of Parkridge was 66 percent of the medium income of Knox County. The percentage dropped to 56 percent in 1980, 41 percent in 1990 and in 2000, it was only 40 percent of the county medium income. Racial make up in Knox County in 1970 was 94 percent white and 5.9 percent black, while in Parkridge it was 73 percent white and 26 percent black. In 1990, there were 84.6 percent whites and 13.2 percent blacks in the county versus 40 percent whites and 58 percent blacks in Parkridge. That was a decrease of 68 percent of the whites and an increase of 131 percent in blacks. In 2000, the percentage of whites in Parkridge dropped down to 33 percent and the black population moved up to 63 percent.

Parkridge began its revitalization as early as the late 1970's when Knoxville's

Neighborhood Housing Service (NHS) established an office in 1979 in what is now the Parkridge Community Center. Until 1985, NHS provided help in housing rehabilitation and financial and organizational assistance to Parkridge residents. In 1983, the Parkridge Community Organization was formed to continue with helping the residents in the community. Under the Parkridge Community Organization, the area has seen the creation of two small parks- Tot Lot on Chestnut Street and Parkridge Park on Bertrand Street. They held Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners, Easter egg hunts and a housing fair to promote neighborhood unity and establish code improvements and police enforcement to encourage community awareness. Through the actions of the Parkridge Community Organization, the neighborhood was designated as a TNT neighborhood and received \$10,000 for improvements. In 1995, they were designated as a Strategy Area by the city for \$200,000 worth of improvements and targeted for concentrated city services for two years. (Parkridge Community Organization) Many new amenities such as the new softball complex and the YMCA were built. In addition, the construction of the second phase of the park across the street from Caswell Park is on its way.



The New YMCA



Driving through Parkridge today, I see the improvements that have been made over

the last 26 years, but many problems still exist that can cause the neighborhood to fall back into deterioration. The goal of the revitalization is to repopulate the area with responsible property owners who are conscience of the historical significance of the housing stock. In order to attract the responsible owners to Parkridge, or to any area for that matter, you must have three fundamentals: 1) physical environment and safety, 2) affordability, 3) reasonable return of investment. Absent any one of the three, one would not consider moving into the area, so for Parkridge to revitalize, it must offer all three. Let's consider the fundamentals one by one and see what Parkridge has to offer or has to improve upon. Keep in mind that for every problem discovered, there would most likely be a few more surfacing.

Parkridge is located within the fringe area of the city where the crime rate is at a higher percentage than the city as a whole. To get into why the crime rate is higher in East Knoxville would not be within the scope of this paper, but we could look into what Parkridge can do to help decrease crime and increase safety. There are two sources of neighborhood safety: the police protection and neighborhood watch programs. The Knoxville Police Department has two patrols that monitor Parkridge, which has around 800 households and approximately 3,500 residents. This level of policing could arguably be considered low since Parkridge is within the fringe area. Although, what is more important and effective in the safety of the neighborhood is an active residential involvement in the neighborhood watch program to show to the prospective home buyer the strong sense of commitment to safety.

When College Homes (a public housing project) was demolished due to the high crime rates and drug dealings, the residents were displaced. They received Section 8 Rental Project Vouchers, and most moved into East Knoxville communities including, but not limited to Parkridge, Fourth and Gill, and Mechanicsville. The crime and drug elements also moved to those areas by using the Section 8 Project Vouchers. Whereas The Section 8 rental program sounds great for helping the needy, unfortunately, what it does to a neighborhood such as Parkridge is suppress improvements in the rental units. Poor tenants are often victimized by landlords who do not feel the need to provide adequate living conditions. The landlords often correctly see that the renters have no other choices, and are sure of getting their money from low-income clients because of the vouchers.. Thus, many of the Parkridge rental homes stay in poor condition.

Fourth and Gill and Mechanicsville did a good job in policing their own neighborhoods to drive out the bad elements once they arrived, but Parkridge fell short. Keep in mind that Fourth and Gill only had about 200 homes in their community and Mechanicsville had about 100 homes. It is far easier to police the relatively smaller areas than to monitor Parkridge with over 800 homes. It is much harder to establish neighborhood watches when the neighborhood is large. Most of the watch groups only monitor close to their own homes, so in order to watch Parkridge, blocks must be formed to have teams of neighborhood watch groups. It takes tremendous effort and commitment to organize such manpower.

When I lived on Deery Street in the Fourth and Gill area in 1993, one of my

neighbors on the corner of Fourth and Deery had a very intimidating Rottweiler. He told me he used to take his Rottweiler to the empty parking lot right next to his home to drive out the drug dealing and prostitution that went on there. I also remember when I first moved into Fourth and Gill, and I went away for the weekend. When I returned on Sunday, my new housemates told me there was a drive-by shooting on the house next to ours.

Other aspects that can improve the physical environment and safety of the neighborhood would be to control the number of vacancies and empty lots. When a building is vacated and lots become overgrown, it attracts the homeless and loiters, which increases the transient elements through the neighborhood and thereby creates instability. Homeless people tend to start fires for cooking or warmth, which increases the possibility of house fires. Control over the vacant and blighted homes in Parkridge is a sensitive issue. Because of the low real estate value and high deterioration of many homes, it is impossible for many property owners to get a reasonable selling price. Thus, many vacant homes are unkempt and run down. If city code enforcement condemns the blighted homes after major neglect, the city will lose the property tax they're generating, but most likely the owners of blighted homes are delinquent in their property tax already. Some of the blighted homes have historic value, if someone would take the effort to restore them. If the city demolished all these homes in Parkridge, the area would lose about 10 to 15 percent of the historic housing stock. Once the homes were demolished, a new problem of empty lots comes into play. The neighborhood filled with overgrown empty lots is not only unsightly, but they attract loiters.

I do not believe the houses in Parkridge suffer from any affordability problems at this time. In fact present real estate values are low enough that buyers are beginning to take notice. The real estate value cycle of Parkridge went from being affordable in the 1890's to being upscale during the 1910's to 1930's. Since the decline, the value dropped so low that once again buyers are starting to be attracted. The only remaining problem is the third fundamental - the reasonable return of investment.

Though Parkridge has seen improvements in revitalization, it is still not at the point where one can reasonably believe the investment spent in the homes will be returned in the resale. In other words, unlike the Fourth and Gill neighborhood, the public has not completely been sold on the revitalization of Parkridge. Matt Foster recently purchased his home in the 2,300 block of Jefferson Avenue for \$25,000. It took \$50,000 more to rehabilitate the house into an absolutely beautiful home. The total cost of the project is around \$75,000, but today the medium housing value of Parkridge is only around \$60,000. It would take a great deal of effort if this home is to be sold today for what the Fosters have in it, not because the house is not worth \$75,000 (if the house were in West Knoxville, it would easily sell for over \$150,000). The problem is that the potential buyer of the house would find it hard to pay that amount in this neighborhood. As Corky Neale of the KHP said, "You can sell a home, but you can't sell a neighborhood." Matt Foster, as an active member of the Parkridge Homeowners Association, believes in the revitalization of the community. Therefore, he feels that it is a good investment for his family in the long run.

If one looks at the ad hoc residential developments around today, most of them have the three fundamentals in place. What they do not have are the aspects that make a neighborhood a community. Most of the developments do not have any social or green space that can facilitate in community bonding. Usually, the location of the development does not take into consideration the impact that it has on the local infrastructure, such as the roads, schools and commerce. The problems they face when the homes reach their life expectancies are that the home owner finds they are investing more and more into the upkeep of the house and the resale value will no longer keep pace with the rising prices of comparable homes. In addition, since there was no community planning during the development process, as urban sprawl pushes people further and further out, these old residential developments will find it harder to attract desirable home buyers and will eventually become the slums of tomorrow.

I believe the process of revitalization of Parkridge should start with the involvement of its residents. Currently there are only 15 active members in the Parkridge Homeowners Association, a number too weak to be heard in the government. In order for the city to increase codes enforcement and police presence, a much larger and stronger voice must come from Parkridge to the district representatives, city officials and state government. The homeowner association should go from block to block to identify who has the most to lose if the neighborhood declines, lobby those home owners to become ambassadors of the revitalization and convince others within the block to be responsible for the condition and the upkeep of their properties and also report code violations of any

absentee owners.

Community groups such as the Knox Housing Partnership (KHP) are actively involved in the revitalization of the Parkridge neighborhood. Currently KHP has purchased five houses in the target area for renovation, which is around the 1,600 block of Jefferson Avenue. Within the next two to three years, KHP has planned to identify and rehabilitate over 30 more houses in that target area. Once this revitalization plan is complete, it will serve as an example and spring board for further projects in Parkridge. I am working with Corky Neale of the KHP in creating an outreach program for graduate students of the University of Tennessee College of Architecture. KHP will purchase a house in need of historical renovation and supply the material while the graduate students perform the demolition, redesign and construction of the house. It is an excellent way to introduce the value of renovation to the next generation of architects and, at the same time, show the community commitment in revitalizing old neighborhoods such as Parkridge.



KHP Modal House on Jefferson Avenue

Since 1997, the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) down zoned the

Parkridge area from R-2 to R-1. This means that no longer can apartment buildings be constructed in the Parkridge community. The only rentals allowable are duplexes. This down zoning helps to keep the number of rental units in the neighborhood in check. One of the goals in revitalizing Parkridge is to decrease the percentage of renters. Right now the ratio of renters verses home owners is about two to one. A healthier ratio would be close to one to three, because home owners tend to be longer term residents, and by investing in property, home owners tend to take better care of their investment more than renters.

An H-1 overlay has also been drawn in certain blocks of Parkridge. The overlay requires all new construction and renovation of the buildings to stay within the historical character of the neighborhood. In order for an area to have an H-1 overlay, MPC must have the consent of property owners. For the most part, home owners welcome the overlay since it preserves the historical fabric of the community, which helps retain the value of the individual property. The absentee owners are less than enthusiastic in the change since if they want to make any changes in their rental properties, it would cost more to keep the change consistent with the requirement of the historic overlay. That is why conversion to an H-1 overlay in Parkridge is a block by block process.

David Hutchins is the President of the Board for the Knoxville Community Development Corporation. He is an architect with Hutchins and Associate and has been working on some renovation projects in Parkridge. Mr. Hutchins suggests that in order to successfully revitalize Parkridge, a short-, mid- and long-term plan must be made and

monitored. A small target area for the first wave of revitalization, such as the one that KHP has focused on, needs to be identified. Within the area, all homes should be under a rating system from one to five, with one being the houses in the most need for complete renovation and five being just some minor work needing to be done. The renovation effort will attack the houses with the one rating first to create the most dramatic impact on the area. After that, the houses with a two rating will be developed. By this time, hopefully, the rest of the home owners will have the motivation to do work on their homes without further encouragement. Mr. Hutchins would like to see more community groups such as, but not limited to, the Knox Heritage, Project Grad and University of Tennessee creating cooperative projects that take advantage of many material, financial and labor resources in the area to facilitate revitalization of not only Parkridge, but other communities as well.

There are many actions that still need to be taken in order to successfully turn Parkridge around. Most of all, it takes caring. It takes caring from the city government to provide infrastructure improvements, create a better school system, and enable stricter code enforcement and stronger police protection. It takes caring of local leaders and organizations to lead this charge with funding, labor and professional know how. Most importantly, it takes caring from the property owners of Parkridge to show pride in their neighborhood and the desire to make their community a better place to live, not only for now, but for generations to come.

Parkridge started off as a great place to live, and the elements that once attracted

people to the area are still there. Already, we have seen younger generation home owners move into the neighborhood. More and more students are taking advantage of living in historical homes with cheaper rents than what they would have to pay in many other areas of Knoxville. The city is building parks and recreation centers to enrich the life of residents. The property values are now low enough to make profitable investment a possibility. As long as everyone works toward the common good to make this revitalization a reality, Parkridge not only can be a great place to live again, but it can also be an example to other neighborhoods that are trying to recover from deterioration.

BARBER HOMES:



1614 Washington Ave



1618 Washington Ave



1724 Washington Ave



1730 Washington Ave



1802 Washington Ave



1912 Washington Ave

Other Barber Homes in Parkridge:

1620 Washington Ave

1635 Washington Ave

1701 Washington Ave

1702 Washington Ave

1704 Washington Ave

1705 Washington Ave

1712 Washington Ave

1730 Washington Ave

1803 Washington Ave

1804 Washington Ave

1904 Washington Ave

1905 Washington Ave

1603 Jefferson Ave

1640 Jefferson Ave

1701 Jefferson Ave

1708 Jefferson Ave

2039 Jefferson Ave



Old Parkridge Junior High, which is now converted into condos



One of the best renovated houses in the area

Housing Styles



Queen Anne



Folk Victorian



Dutch Colonial Revival



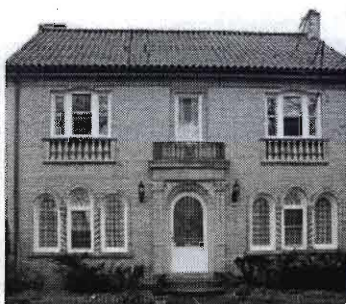
American Four Square



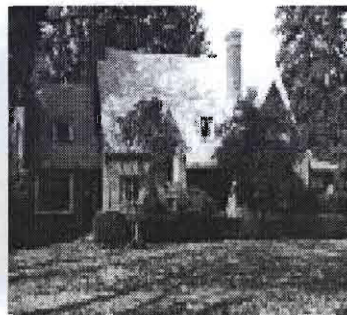
Neoclassical



Craftsman

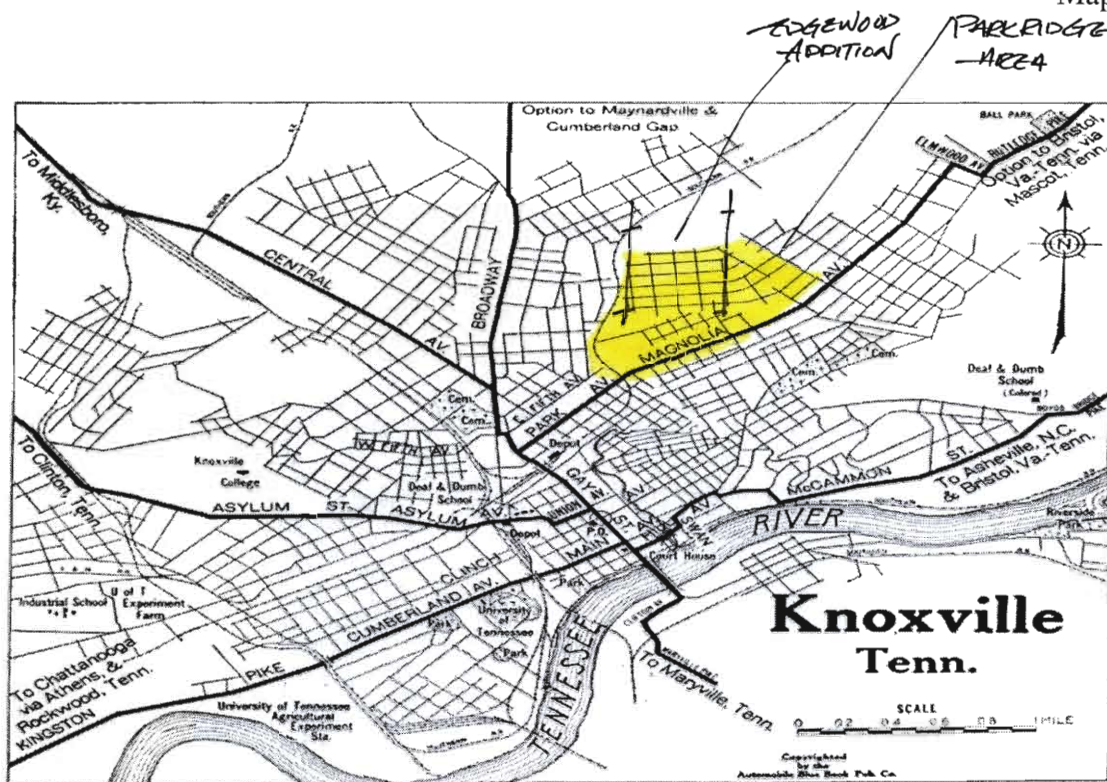


Spanish Eclectic

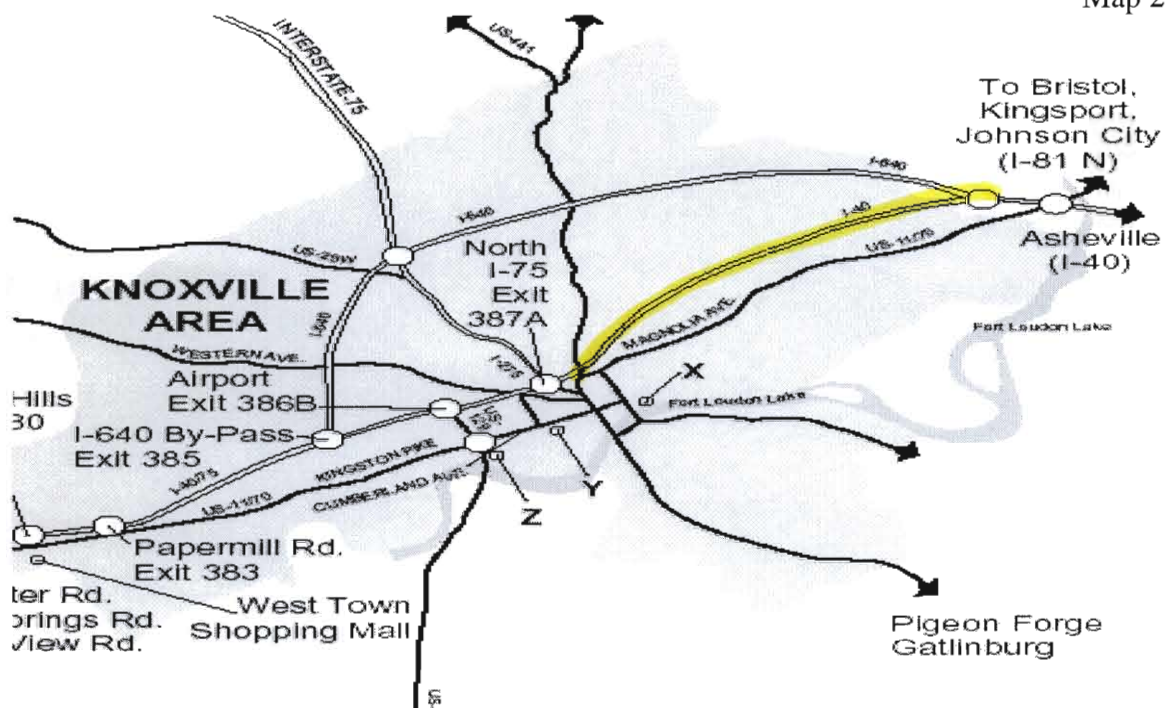


Tudor Revival

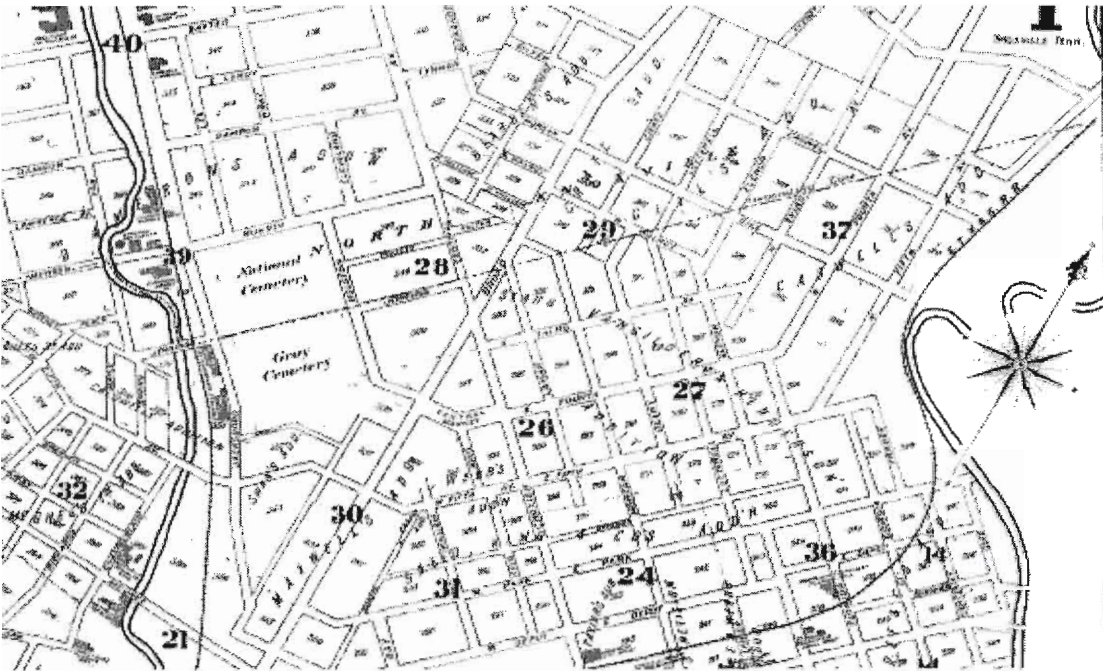
Map 1



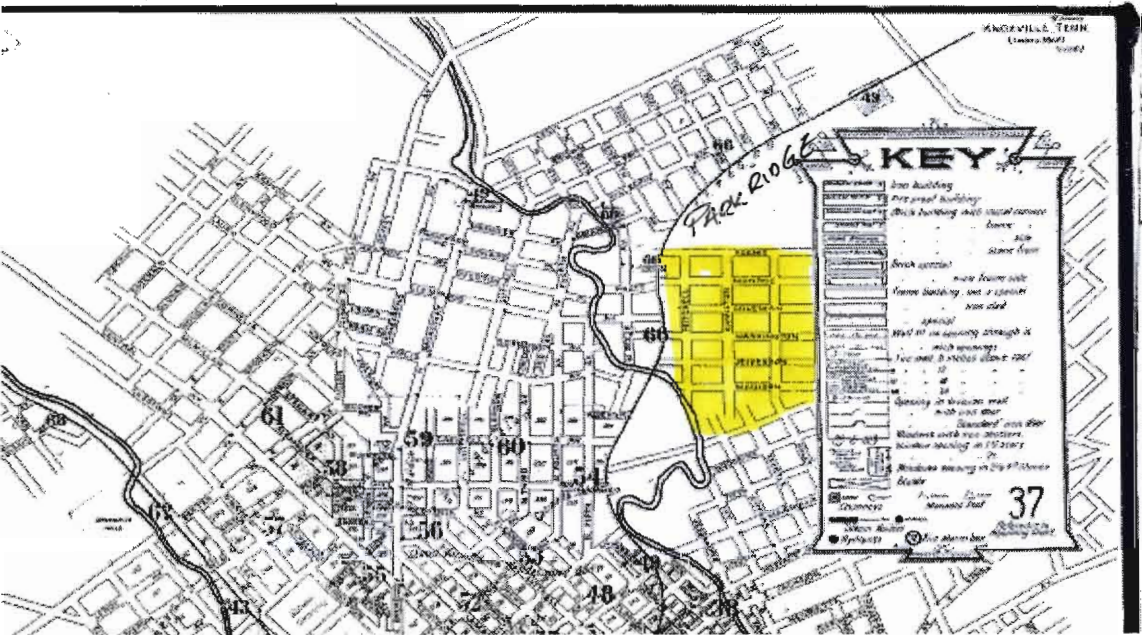
Map 2



Sanborn Maps of Parkridge area:

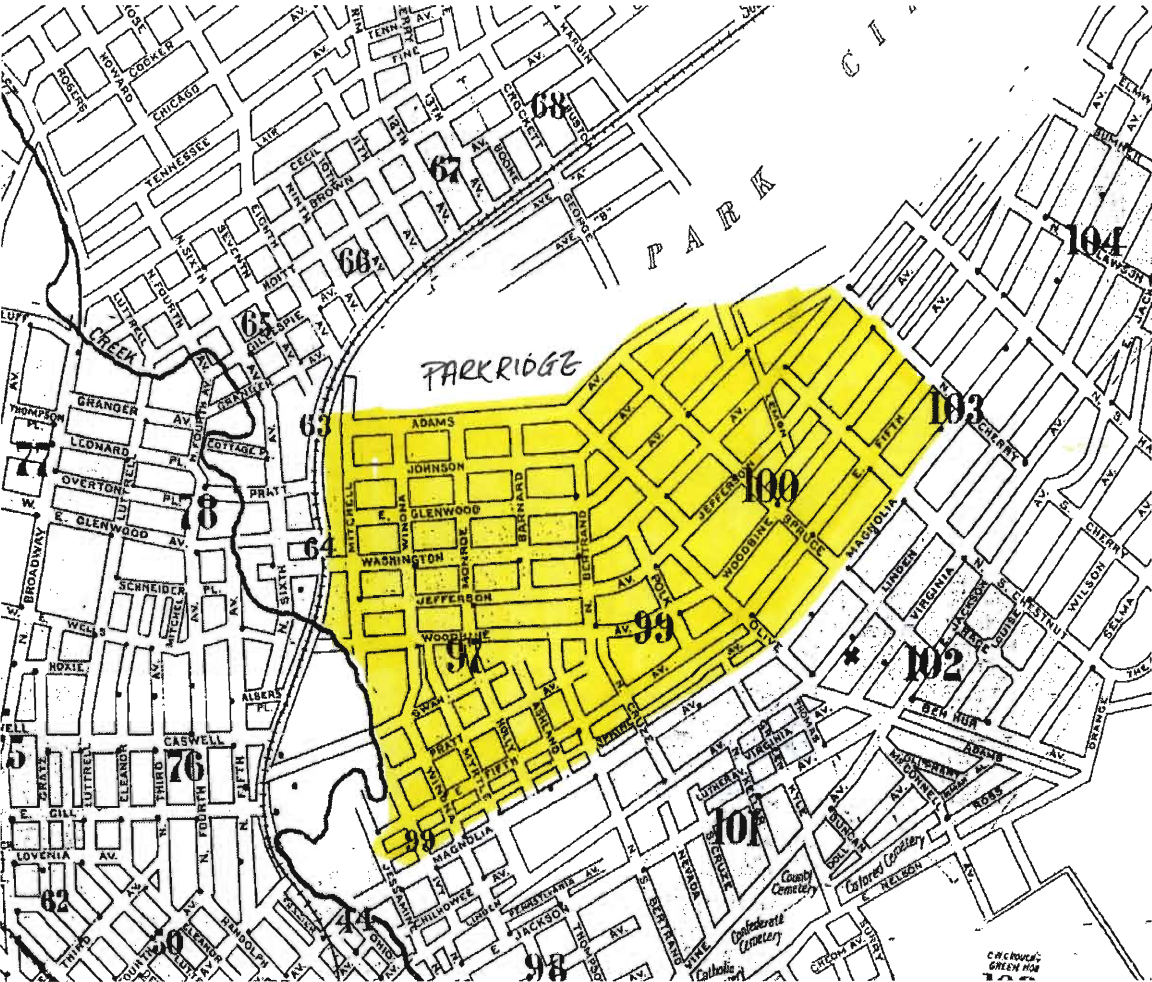


1890

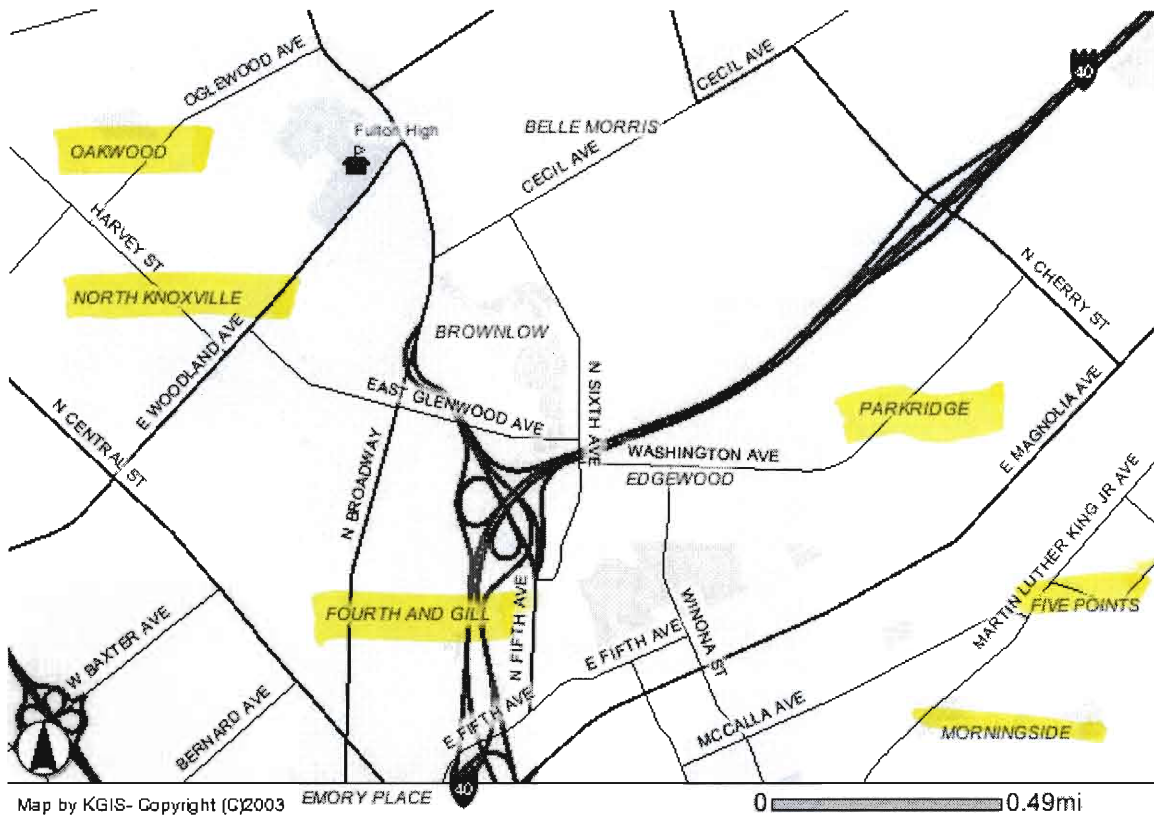


1903

Sanborn Map cont.

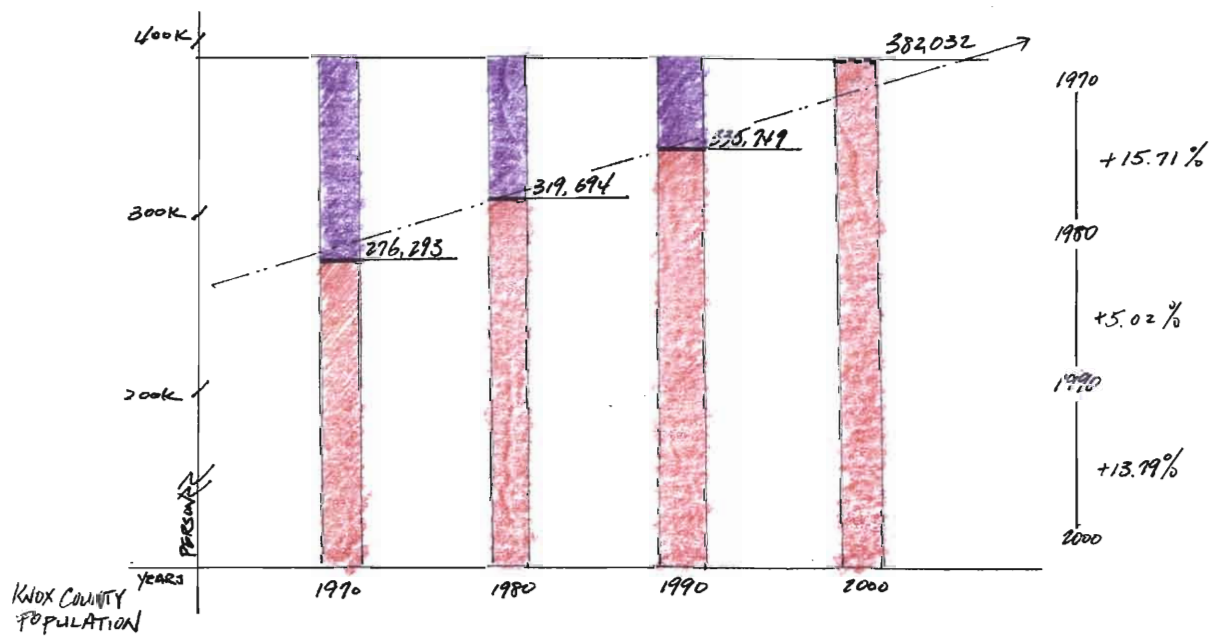
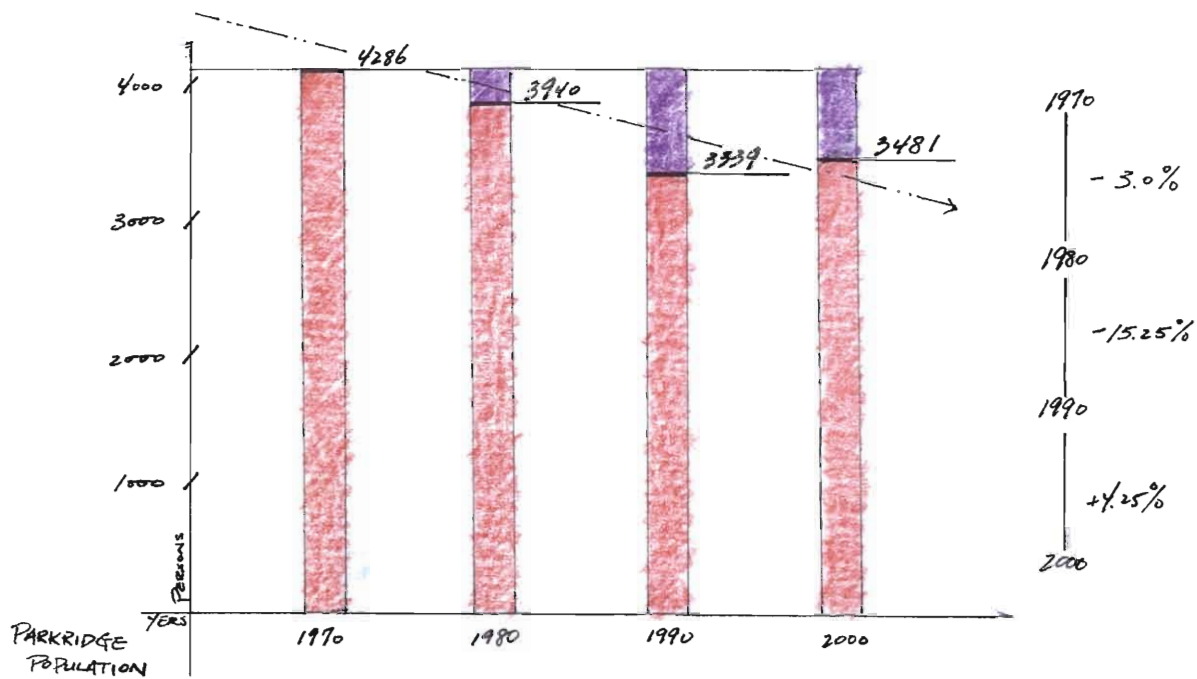


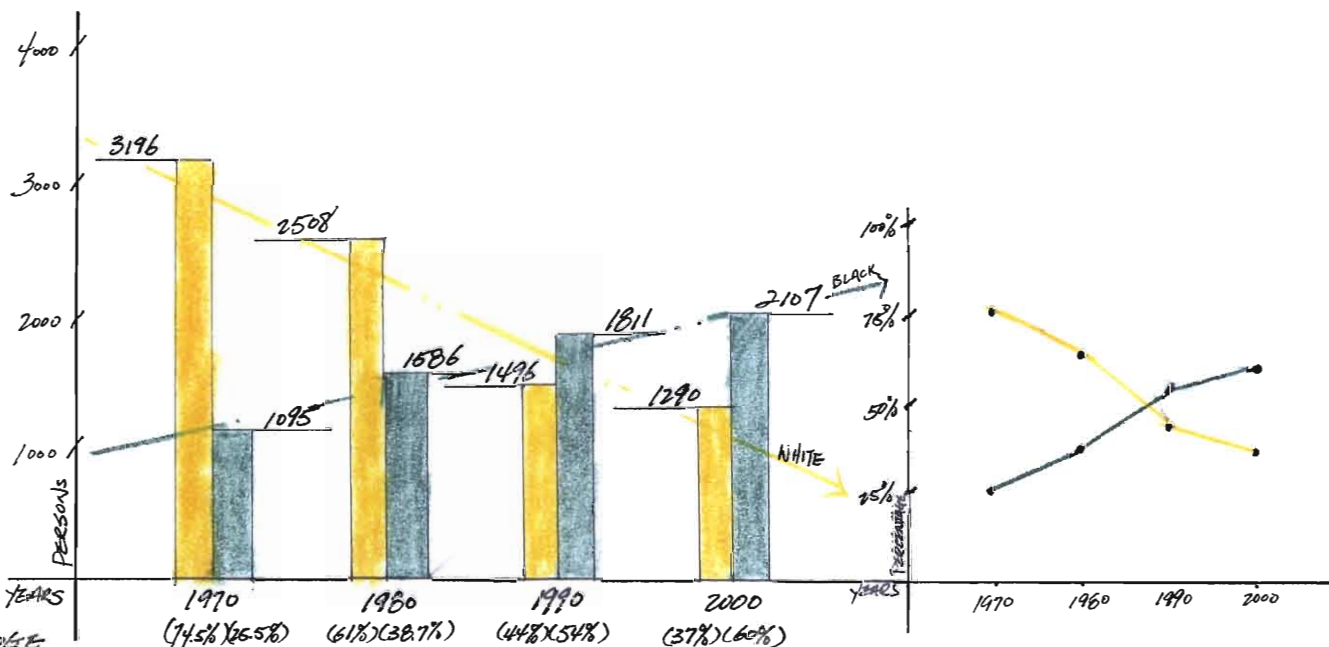
Knoxville Neighborhoods:



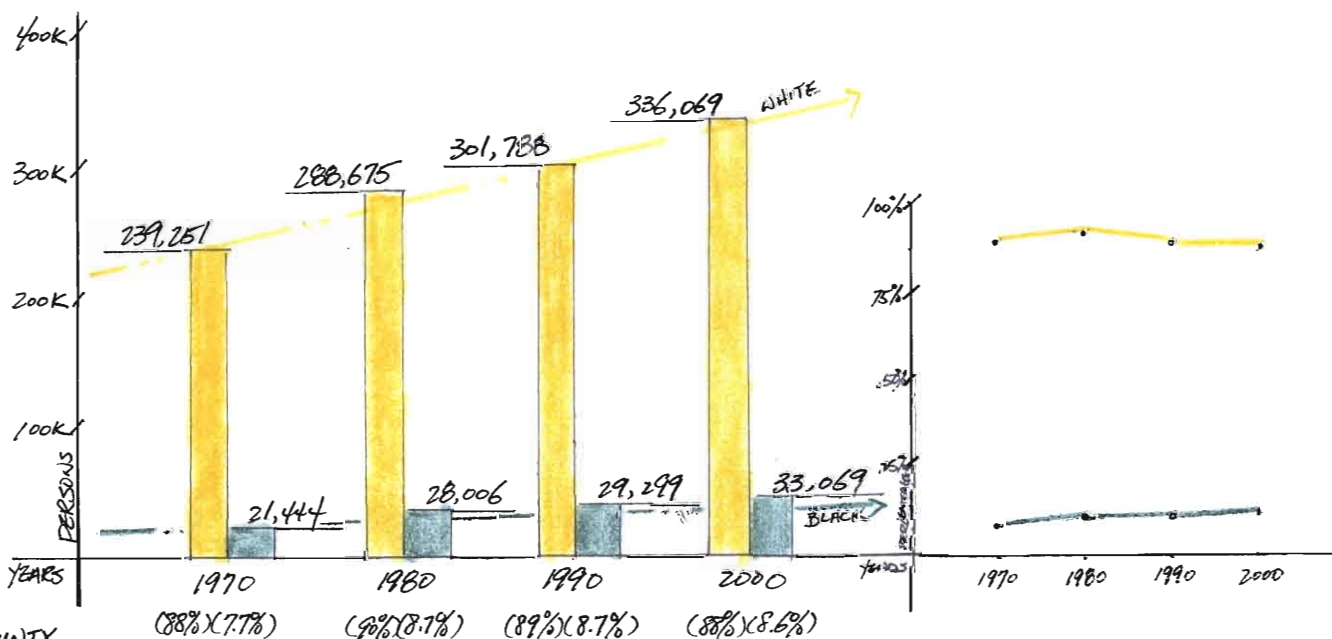
KNOXVILLE AND PARKRIDGE DATA

	1970		1980		1990		2000	
	Knox City	Parkridge	Knox City	Parkridge	Knox City	Parkridge	Knox City	Parkridge
Population	276,293	4,286	319,694	3,940	335,749	3,339	382,032	3,481
White	239,251 (88%)	3,191 (74.5%)	288,675 (90%)	2,508 (61%)	301,788 (89%)	1,496 (44%)	336,069 (88%)	1,290 (37%)
Black	21,444 (7.7%)	1,095 (25.5%)	28,006 (8.7%)	1,586 (38.7%)	29,299 (8.7%)	1,811 (54%)	33,069 (8.6%)	2,107 (60%)
Income < \$10,000					\$25,762 (19%)	\$758 (48%)	19,020 (12%)	451 (27%)
Med. Household Income	\$8,000 - \$8,999	\$5,000 - \$5,999	\$14,787	\$8,414	\$26,010	\$10,786	\$37,454	\$15,332
Total Household Income	92,985	2,032	125,777	2,062	143,582	1,863	171,439	1,863
Occup. Households	78,622 (84%)	1,687 (83%)	117,951 (93.7%)	1,878 (91%)	133,639 (95%)	1,580 (85%)	157,872 (92%)	1,531 (82%)
Vacant Households	14,362 (15.4%)	345 (17%)	7,826 (6.2%)	184 (9%)	9,943 (6.9%)	283 (15%)	13,567 (7.9%)	332 (18%)
Owner Occup.	49,966 (63%)	697 (41%)	78,990 (67%)	977 (47%)	85,283 (63.8%)	491 (31%)	105,594 (66.8%)	550 (36%)
Renter Occup.	28,656 (36%)	990 (58.6%)	38,961 (33%)	1,085 (53%)	48,356 (36.1%)	1,089 (69%)	52,278 (33%)	981 (64%)
Owner Occup.								
White	≈46,991 (94%)	≈509 (73%)			80,243 (94%)	292 (60%)	98,265 (93%)	143 (41%)
Black	≈2,975 (5.9%)	≈188 (26%)			4,467 (5.2%)	199 (40%)	5,523 (5.2%)	310 (59%)
Renter Occup.								
White	≈24,974 (87%)	≈740 (74.7%)			40,905 (84.6%)	231 (40%)	42,066 (80%)	327 (33%)
Black	≈3,682 (12.8%)	≈250 (25.25%)			6,390 (13.2%)	579 (58%)	7,851 (15%)	619 (63%)
Med. Year Structure Built					1968	1943	1974	1945
Contract Rent								
Highest Group	\$100 - \$119	\$60 - \$69	\$80 - \$99	\$50 - \$99	\$350 - \$399	\$100 - \$149	\$400 - \$449	\$250 - \$299
	3951 (13.7%)	178 (18%)	6,712 (17.2%)	387 (35.6%)	6,140 (12%)	222 (20%)	5892 (11%)	154 (21%)
Med. Contract Rent	\$80 - \$89	\$80 - \$89	\$159	\$112	\$351	\$242	\$411	\$310.50
Housing Value								
Highest Group	\$7,500 - \$9,999	\$5,000 - \$7,499	\$50,000 - \$79,999	\$15,000 - \$19,999	\$60,000 - \$74,999	\$35,000 - \$39,999	\$100,000 - \$124,999	\$50,000 - \$59,999
	7,156	218	15,900	144	13,223 (18%)	85 (19%)	13,440 (14.6%)	118 (30%)
Med. Housing Value	\$12,500 - \$14,999	\$7,500 - \$9,999	\$39,900	\$19,650	\$63,400	\$30,650	\$98,500	\$52,100

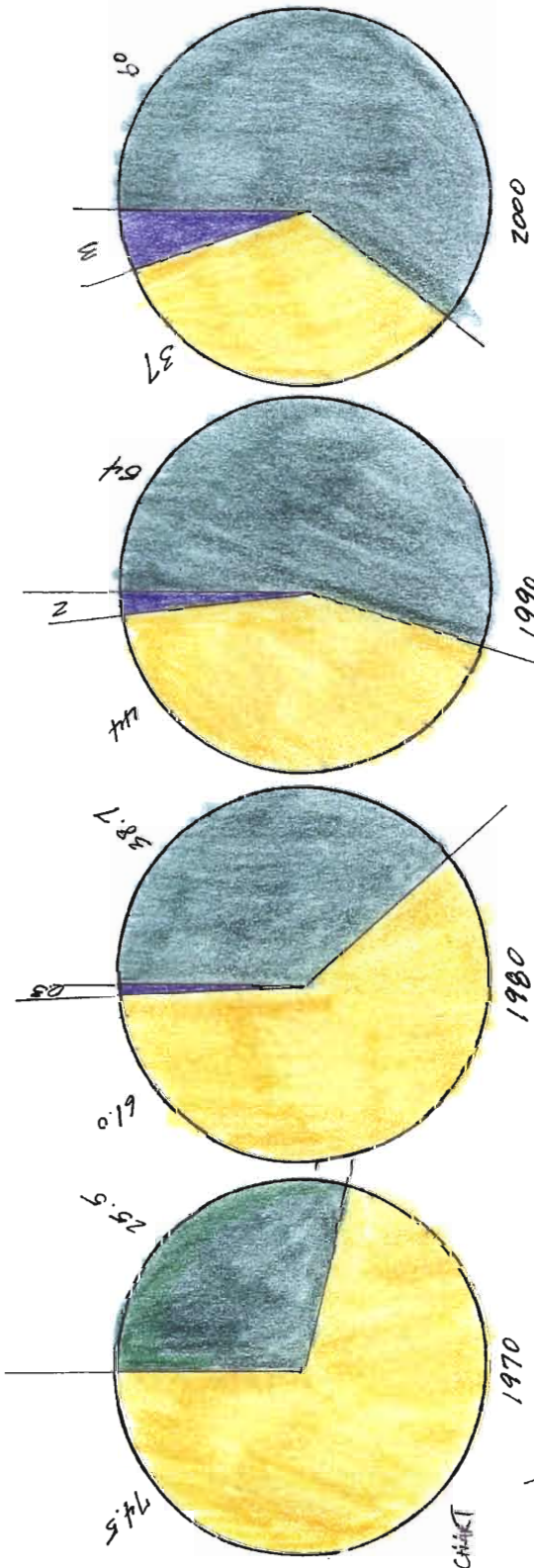




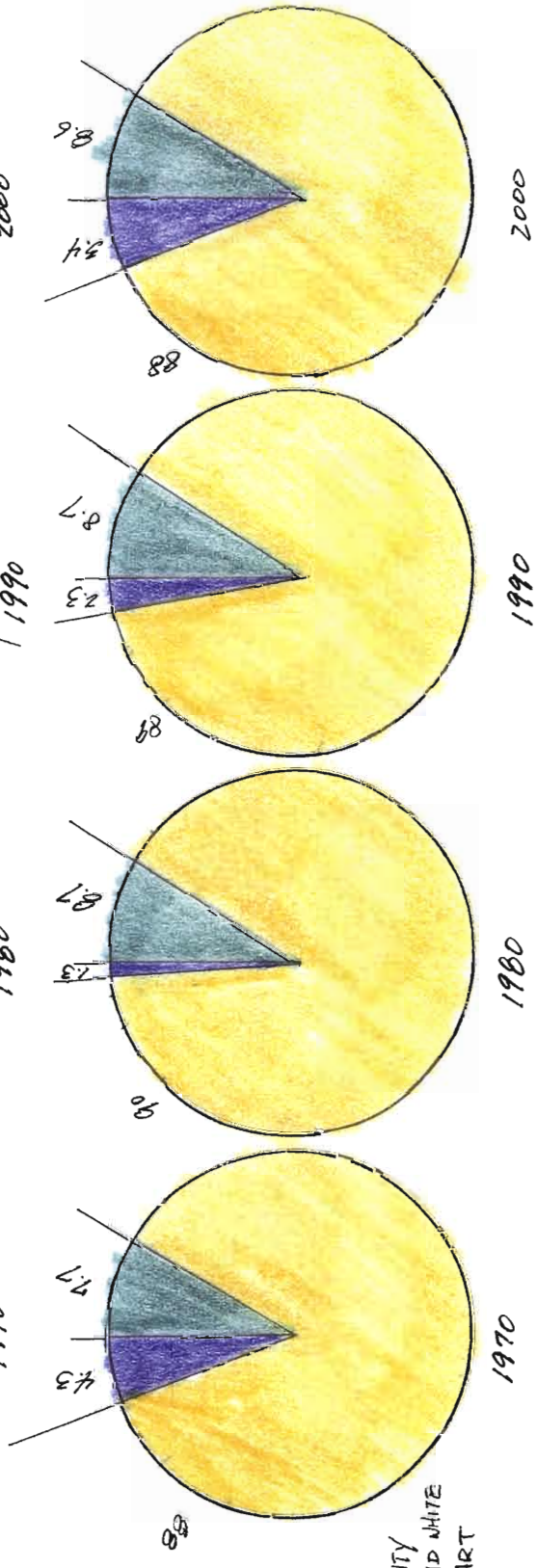
PARKRIDGE
WHITE AND BLACK
POPULATION



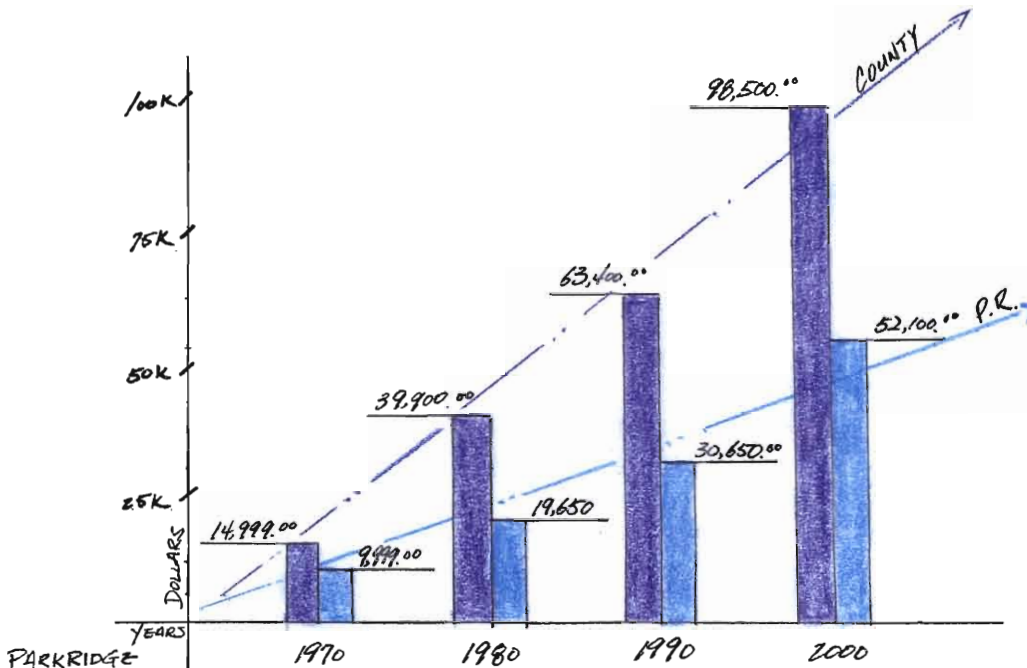
KNOX COUNTY
WHITE AND BLACK
POPULATION



PARKRIDGE
BLACK AND
WHITE PIE CHART

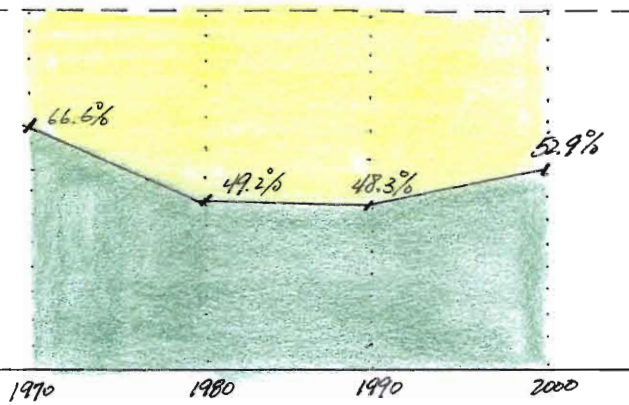


KNOX COUNTY
BLACK AND WHITE
PIE CHART



PARKRIDGE
AND
KNOX COUNTY
MEDIUM HOUSING
VALUE

75%
50%
25%



1970

66.6% OF KNOX COUNTY
HOUSING VALUE

1980

49.2%

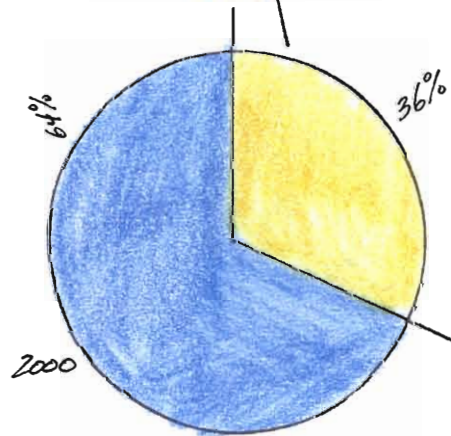
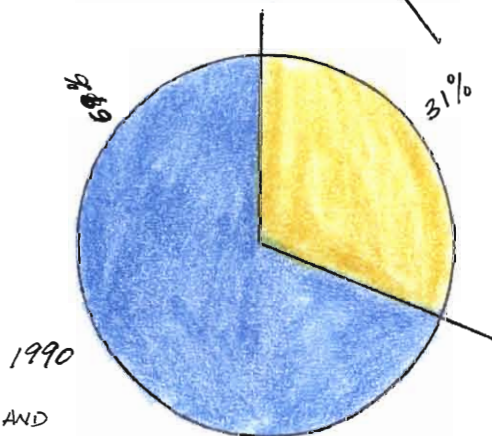
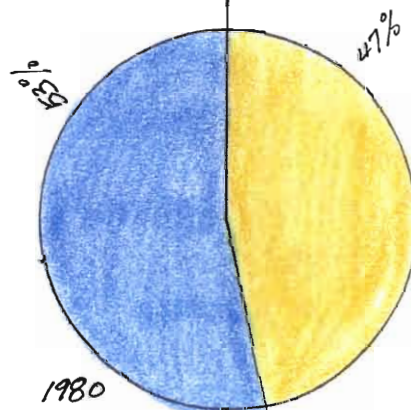
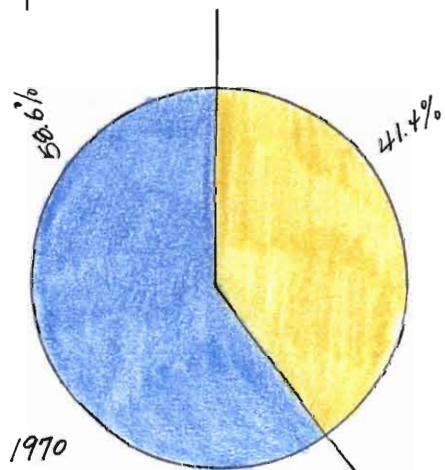
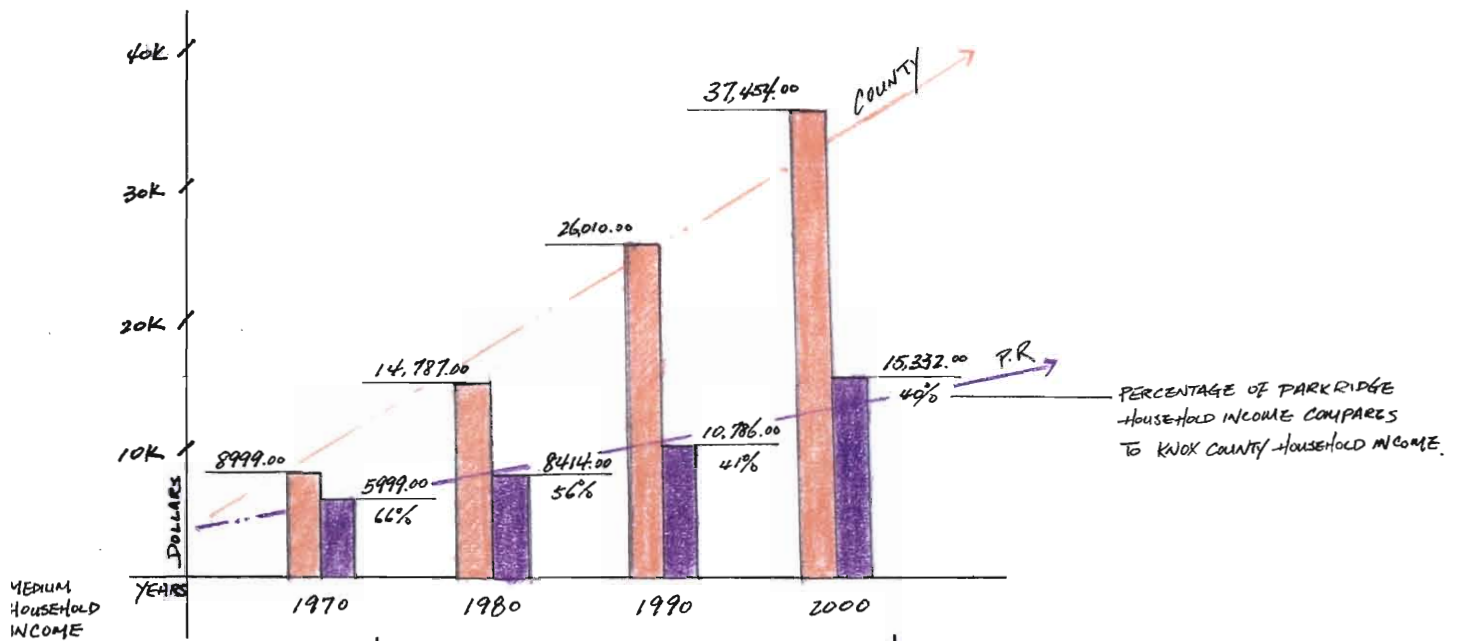
1990

48.3%

2000

52.9%

PERCENTAGE OF HOUSING VALUE
BETWEEN PARKRIDGE TO KNOX
COUNTY



RENTER AND OWNER
OCCUPANCY

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