

In 1939 the Federal Home Owners' Loan Corporation graded neighborhoods in Essex County for mortgage risk, from 'A' to 'D'. Its maps and openly racist annotations reinforced racial housing segregation here and elsewhere. We have downloaded them from the University of Richmond's Digital Scholarship Lab ([dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining](http://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining)) and abridged the area descriptions. Note that descriptions and data sometimes do not match.

**Area: D20**  
**Income:** \$500–2500  
**Foreign:** 30% (Italian)  
**Negro:** 10%  
**Infiltration:** Negroes increasing  
**Housing condition:** fair to poor  
**Description:** One of poorest and least desirable portions of Montclair, with no apparent hope of improvement.

**Area: B18**  
**Income:** \$3k–20k  
**Foreign:** 0%  
**Negro:** 0%  
**Housing condition:** good  
**Description:** Slowly going down. Surrounding neighborhoods are somewhat of a detrimental influence. The class of owners is good.

**Area: B34**  
**Income:** \$2k–10k  
**Foreign:** 0%  
**Negro:** 0%  
**Housing condition:** good  
**Description:** Sales have been active. This is in spite of the fact that East Orange at this point is not very desirable and includes a large gas plant.

**Area: A21**  
**Income:** \$5k–100k  
**Foreign:** 0%  
**Negro:** 0%  
**Housing condition:** good  
**Description:** The whole town is highly restricted. Houses are all of good to highest type, although, on the whole, of fairly substantial age. Many of the owners are citizens of importance in New York City business.

**Area: C38**  
**Income:** \$1k–20k  
**Foreign:** some (Italian)  
**Negro:** few  
**Infiltration:** Negro infiltration  
**Housing condition:** fair to poor  
**Description:** Very mixed district. To a large extent the houses are of substantial size and mainly of advanced age although interspersed with some of more modern type. The balance are of medium size and substantial age. The section as a whole must be classed as having seen its best days.

**Area: D21**  
**Income:** \$500–2000  
**Foreign:** 10% (Italian)  
**Negro:** 90%  
**Infiltration:** Many on relief or WPA  
**Housing condition:** poor  
**Description:** This district houses the greater part of Montclair's large negro population. Most of these are employed locally as domestics, gardeners, chauffeurs, etc. A proposal for slum clearance has recently been defeated on the basis of lack of necessity for such action.

**Area: D22**  
**Income:** \$750–3000  
**Foreign:** 50% (Italian)  
**Negro:** 30%  
**Infiltration:** Considerable on relief  
**Housing condition:** poor  
**Description:** This area also houses a substantial portion of Montclair's large negro population. Houses are almost all of advanced age, and of moderate to small size. Near the Glen Ridge line are a few multiple flats. There is also some local industry, coal yards, etc.

**Area: C40**  
**Income:** \$1.2k–5k  
**Foreign:** some  
**Negro:** 0%  
**Housing condition:** fair  
**Description:** Suffering from age and the encroachment of less desirable elements. The age of the structures gives it a third grade rating. A minority of the houses are of more modern construction, but on the whole the area has long passed its best days, and, in all probability, will continue a slow downward pace.

**Area: A25**  
**Income:** \$3k–50k  
**Foreign:** none  
**Negro:** 0%  
**Housing condition:** good  
**Description:** This area is somewhat of a mixture of new and fairly old structures. Wildwood from North Fullerton to Grove contains older houses and Wildwood from Grove east contains Italians. This latter settlement is small and cannot spread as it is hemmed in on all sides by new and better developments.

**Area: B37**  
**Income:** \$2.5k–15k  
**Foreign:** 0%  
**Negro:** 0%  
**Housing condition:** fair to good  
**Description:** There has been a small settlement of negroes on Gray St. for a number of years. It is not increasing.

**Area: A22**  
**Income:** \$5k–50k  
**Foreign:** 0%  
**Negro:** 0%  
**Housing condition:** good  
**Description:** Most of the inhabitants are substantial businessmen of Newark or New York City.

**Area: B32**  
**Income:** \$1.5k–4k  
**Foreign:** 0%  
**Negro:** 0%  
**Housing condition:** fair to good  
**Description:** Most of the mortgages were taken by one B&L Assn. in Newark. Many foreclosures resulted.



**Area: B35**  
**Income:** \$3k–8k  
**Foreign:** 0%  
**Negro:** 0%  
**Housing condition:** good  
**Description:** While there are no serious factors threatening to change the general calibre of the neighborhood, the houses, for the most part, are of sufficient age and lack of modernity to affect saleability seriously.

**Area: C37**  
**Income:** \$2k–6k  
**Foreign:** 0%  
**Negro:** 0%  
**Housing condition:** fair to good  
**Description:** Convenient to everything. This is an area of substantial age and only intermediate attraction on a moderate scale. It is adjacent to a poor neighborhood in Montclair, which affects it to some degree.

**Area: B36**  
**Income:** \$2.5k–10k  
**Foreign:** 0%  
**Negro:** 0%  
**Housing condition:** good  
**Description:** Formerly a desirable section. While poorer neighborhoods are pressing from the west, those to the north and east are very high class, so that this area can still claim a degree of desirability.

**Area: C36**  
**Income:** \$2k–8k  
**Foreign:** 0%  
**Negro:** 0%  
**Housing condition:** fair to good  
**Description:** Includes some quite large old homes on Forrest St. [sic]. Although bordering on what is quite a good area of Bloomfield, according to Glen Ridge standards, it is one of the least desirable neighborhoods.

**Area: C35**  
**Income:** \$750–2000  
**Foreign:** 50% (Polish)  
**Negro:** 10%  
**Infiltration:** Possible negro infiltration  
**Housing condition:** fair  
**Description:** Negro settlement is concentrated on Dewey-Hobson-Gracel Sts. The new school and the area it serves are adversely affected. Most 2-family houses are Polish-owned.



## Lines of Injustice

THE NEW YORK TIMES real-estate section affirms Glen Ridge as attractive and neighborly. Real-estate websites such as Niche and AreaVibes describe it as “one of the best places to live in New Jersey.” We see firsthand how these upbeat descriptions further drive positive perceptions.

But what happens when descriptions such as these become formal government designations about an area’s quality and worth? What if they inform an explicit public policy? Worse, what of the inverse: descriptions less glowing, or even damning, but similarly codified?

This is the legacy of “redlining” in the U.S. Lines, grades, and a handful of adjectives drawn on government maps created winners and losers. They resulted in enduring systemic racism and economic disparity.

As part of the New Deal in the 1930s, Congress established the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and its now-defunct companion, the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC), to facilitate home financing, improve housing standards, and increase employment in the home-construction industry in the wake of the Great Depression. The FHA’s primary function was to insure home mortgage loans and encourage lenders to make more loans to prospective home buyers. HOLC introduced mortgages that required only a 10-percent down payment and that extended loans to 30 years. These programs and subsidies fueled the postwar economy, the growth of homeownership, and the rise of suburbs. In 1934 some 44 percent of families lived in owner-occupied homes. By 1972 it was 63 percent.

Example of casual racism in the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation area descriptions. This is for a fairly highly ranked area, B37, on the north end.

As part of their mandate, these agencies developed appraisal rules and risk ratings. HOLC created color-coded “Residential Security” maps of all major American cities, including Essex County. It assigned letter grades to neighborhoods, from A to D. For decades, until the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968, these paper maps dictated where banks would and would not provide mortgages.



948 Bloomfield Ave. for sale in 1932. It was in the C37 zone in Glen Ridge, near the D21 and D22 zones in Montclair.

Neighborhoods labeled ‘D’ were deemed “hazardous” and shaded in red. In Essex County, they were typically where Black people or Italian immigrants lived. Just one family of color could determine an entire area’s classification. The FHA’s Underwriting Manual published in 1938 stated, “If a neighborhood is to retain stability, it is necessary that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes.” The presence of immigrants and people of color was noted in a dedicated category to assess “infiltration” and “the probability of the location being invaded by such groups.”

Thus it was not just private covenants and individual acts of racism but also explicit government policy that hindered people of color from buying a home in certain neighborhoods—including Glen Ridge—or getting a loan

to make improvements. Thus the government institutionalized discriminatory lending and reinforced segregation.

For many years, the documents were available to researchers in person at the National Archives. About five years ago, a collaboration of four universities—the University of Richmond, Virginia Tech, the University of Maryland, and Johns Hopkins—digitized these records, finally laying this history bare for the public and policymakers alike in a massive project called Mapping Inequality.

### 8. DESCRIPTION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF AREA:

Level and well wooded. 95% improved. All city facilities, schools, etc. Good transportation including commutation to New York City. There has been a small settlement of negroes on Gray St. for a number of years. It is not increasing and does not affect the area with the exception of the two adjacent streets. Otherwise, the area consists of moderately substantial houses of good type but fair age. It is surrounded on all sides by very good areas, and should retain a degree of desirability for a long time.

The ability to read the redlining maps for oneself makes this shameful history raw. Before, our awareness of the outlines and grades was mostly anecdotal. Now we can read the handwritten narrative descriptions that bankers and real-estate agents once relied on. On the preceding spread is a selection of data for Glen Ridge and adjoining neighborhoods, compiled by *The Gaslamp* editor, George Musser, and volunteer Olivia Mason. While Glen Ridge is praised as being the home of “substantial business men of Newark or New York City,” an adjacent area of Montclair’s Fourth Ward has “no apparent hope of improvement through replacement by business or multiple dwellings.” The Brick Church area of East Orange is given a ‘D’—no prospects for investment—with a majority Black population depicted as “a fairly good class being in the main domestics, chauffeurs, etc.”

Most middle-class families in this country gain wealth from the equity they have in their homes. Due to redlining, most Black residents were unable to get on the escalator. The patterns of neglect and disinvestment revealed on these maps correspond to continuing income and health disparities. Richard Rothstein of the Economic Policy Institute, author of *The Color of Law*, explained in an interview with the Seattle Public Library in 2017: “If you pass a law saying you can’t segregate water fountains, the next day people can drink out of any fountain. If you pass a law saying that you can’t segregate buses, the very next day, people can sit anywhere they want on the bus. But if you say you can’t separate neighborhoods for whites and blacks, nothing much happens the next day. It is a more difficult thing to undo.”

A 2018 study by the National Community Reinvestment Coalition found that residents of neighborhoods marked “hazardous” are still much more likely to be lower-income and minority. In census tract 171, in Montclair’s Fourth Ward, 86 percent of residents are Black or Latinx, and 29 percent of households are at the poverty level. In Glen Ridge,

74 percent of residents are white and non-Hispanic, and 3 percent live below the poverty line.

According to the N.J. Institute for Social Justice’s report *Erasing New Jersey’s Red Lines*, the Garden State has one of the starkest racial wealth gaps in the country. The report cites data from the nonprofit group Prosperity Now that the median net worth for New Jersey’s white families is \$352,000, but just \$6,100 and \$7,300 for New Jersey’s Black and Latinx families, respectively. “The disproportionate rate of homeownership is one of the primary causes of the racial wealth gap,” the report states.

Over the last year the pandemic has further exposed these stark racial disparities. In October *USA Today* published a six-part series on the racial disparities of COVID, illuminating how housing segregation made N.J. ripe for the pandemic’s spread. From the earliest days of the pandemic, Essex County has led the nation in deaths from the novel coronavirus, driven by cases in Newark and other predominantly Black and brown communities. Census data show that Essex is the most racially segregated county in the state and one of the most in the country, according to statistical measures such as the so-called dissimilarity index.

Using redlining data from the Mapping Inequity project, researchers have also correlated neighborhood designations with other data. In March 2021 a report released by the real-estate brokerage firm Redfin showed that formerly redlined areas are more vulnerable to flooding. By understanding these systemic, historic divisions, researchers, government leaders, and local officials have a jumping-off point for remedying the racial wealth divide and its far-reaching consequences.

**LoriJeane Moody**

LoriJeane Moody is the vice president for development at the Open Space Institute. A Glen Ridge resident for 16 years, she is co-chair of the Glen Ridge Environmental Advisory Committee.

The Glen Ridge Historical Society is grateful to our sponsors and patrons.

#### Sponsors

James and Carolyn Badenhause  
Henri-Claude Bailly  
Carolee Bol and Scott Rosenberg  
Carol Borthwick  
Elizabeth and Paul Brewster  
Susan and Sean Cullinan  
Art and Pam Dawson  
Brooke and David Fapohunda  
Margo Garrison and Geoffrey Darby  
Joan Hayes  
Sam Carlo Joseph  
Jacqueline Kollinger  
Alison and Scott Lang  
Anne Webster Leight  
Margot and Hugh Macdonnell  
Harry Rush and Karen McGinn  
Nancy and Dan McMahon  
Sally and Ted Meyer  
Maureen J. and Maureen E. Morgan  
Dan and Toni Murphy  
Ashish and Prachi Parmar  
Stuart and Kate Patrick  
Edith K. Payne

Cherry Provost  
Nicole Quinn  
Bob and Pamela Rice  
Jan and Michael Rohal  
Curtis Schade  
Ava Somogyi and Alden Provost  
Bradley Timmers  
Maria Vecchione  
Andrea Webb  
Richard and Catherine Weber  
Joan and Robert White

#### Patrons

Ajay and Anita Agarwal  
Michael and Anne Alix  
Pam and Alex Bernstein  
Ryan and Megan Blank  
Katie Bogart  
H. Bartlett Brown  
Deirdre Comey and George Peterson  
Frank and Sarah D’Angelo  
David and Tara Doernberg  
Polly Kernan Doyle  
Joseph P. Fanning and Robert C. Kuneman  
Caroline Gentile and Peter Herrigel  
Marc Holzapfel and Deborah Mans  
The Janofsky Family

Tom and Lisa Johnston  
Spratley Kay  
John and Patrice Kelly  
Daniel Kopec  
Stephanie and Michael Koskuba  
Paul and Joan Lisovicz  
Brandee and Joe McHale  
Tracey and Jo-Ann Melhuish  
Jeff and Elaine Monacelli  
Ellen Morris and Stefan Magnusson  
Robert and Ann Marie Morrow  
Jean Morrow  
Greg and Dawn Morvillo  
Karen Sockler Nisenson  
Michael and Mary O’Boyle  
Dan and Carmen Pence  
Mark and Ruby Pizzini  
Ian Remler  
Elizabeth Saggas  
Kevin Sherry  
Lawrence Stauffer  
Robert and Julie Stolte  
Lavanya Subbarayan  
Kathy Sweet  
Anthony and Patricia Turiano  
Melissa Vecchiarelli  
Thomas and Barbara Wenzl  
Jack Wooten