



Please email us at smoketown.na@gmail.com

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Due to the pandemic, general meetings are on the third Saturday of each month from 1pm-2pm, and broadcasted LIVE from zoom on Facebook.

The Historically Black Neighborhoods Ordinance is meant to center those most vulnerable to gentrification.

Jan 28, 2021 Metro Council Meeting Supporting Document from Smoketown Neighborhood Association

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Presenting Board member: Jessica Bellamy (pronouns: any/all/y'all)

Presenter Bio: Jessica Bellamy is a Black Louisvillian who grew up in Smoketown. They are a returning resident and Smoketown homeowner who serves as secretary of the Smoketown Neighborhood Association. They graduated Summa Cum Laude and have three degrees from the University of Louisville. Bellamy worked as a research analyst for five years at the Neurodevelopmental Science Lab at UofL before launching a career as a movement-based researcher, community organizer, information designer, and later an award-winning international data justice influencer, speaker, and equity-centered data storytelling educator. They have been featured in Forbes Magazine, Communication Arts Magazine, Arrianna Huffinton's Thrive Global Magazine, Adobe's Create Magazine, and other publications. Currently, Bellamy is a co-principal investigator, researcher, movement science learning experience designer, data storyteller, and community organizer at the Root Cause Research Center. They have co-authored multiple reports and data resources under this groundbreaking, movement-based research organization located in Louisville, KY.

Bellamy was one of the Kentuckians For The Commonwealth economic justice members who developed, co-authored, co-designed, and presented the Smoketown Vision Survey

Report. They also helped to revitalize the neighborhood association back in 2015, and was a key organizer in Smoketown's battle against MSD to make the CSO Basin on Logan Street at-grade (which was standard for all other neighborhoods except Smoketown). Three generations of her family have lived and worked in Smoketown for over 30 years. Her grandmother is community leader and nationally recognized Kentucky chef, Shirley Mae Beard of Shirley Mae's Cafe. Bellamy comes from a legacy of community advocacy and engagement, and intends to build on that legacy in honor of the community that raised her.

3-MIN Statement from the Smoketown Neighborhood Association as delivered by returning resident and SNA secretary, Jessica Bellamy:

We need a resident-led progressive solution that directly addresses the issues of systematic racism and systemic classism that are unique to neighborhoods that have—and continue—to endure the economic oppression of redlining, divestment, infrastructural neglect, over-policing, mass eviction, displacement, dispossession, and now gentrification. We need a policy that sees that Black neighborhoods in Louisville are primarily made up of low-income^{1a} and fixed-income **renters**, who have zero protections under the city from displacement, and who deserve the right to remain in their homes as their neighborhoods change. Councilwoman Dorsey has proposed an ordinance² and Councilmen Arthur has introduced an ordinance.³ I am here to speak on behalf of the Smoketown Neighborhood Association on the larger problem that involves both. We have also submitted a full statement with supporting evidence and details for your review.

In 2016, Louisville Metro Housing Authority sold two blocks worth of properties to a cohort of nonprofit developers called the Hopebox. Based on our recorded conversations with the leaders of the Hopebox, they are planning to sell those homes for \$150k each, which is without question financially out of reach for the majority of our current residents.

Back in 2016, the Hopebox signed a development agreement with LMHA that committed them to begin development of these unaffordable homes within 18-months. It was no coincidence to us that within that 18-month window LMHA then promptly evicted several of our neighbors that rented near where the Hopebox development was to occur.

Yes, LMHA knowingly evicted several households that it likely believed were *undesirable* and/or *incompatible* with **their** vision of Smoketown's future. On your watch, the Hopebox and LMHA successfully colluded to banish and gentrify that section of Breckenridge.

¹ Households making under \$30,000 in annual income

² Neighborhood Plan Advisory Board Ordinance - File ID #0-539-20

³ Historically Black Neighborhood Ordinance draft - google drive document -- **This ordinance is meant to center those most vulnerable to gentrification.**

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Gwuo06ovCoKlp0IGi9ri3hFDgomCaxTfi1PFH9XInio/edit?fbclid=IwAR20aEiPxsRpw23Cr6DLFaJ_LQGQFFBUFr9mJhELsFF8ogmAmfpgC5tV88s

Neighborhoods like Smoketown—historically Black, historically low-income^{1b}, and majority renter occupied neighborhoods—need immediate, progressive, and thoughtful protections against developers and landlords like the Hopebox and LMHA.

Fortunately, policy can do a lot here. Councilwoman Dorsey’s replacement ordinance doesn’t do much better than the current ordinance, but it can exist alongside Councilman Arthur’s ordinance which was co-created with community members.

This city’s government has ensured that external, affluent stakeholders hold all the cards in development in historically Black and low-income^{1c} neighborhoods.

This power imbalance is intentional, disgraceful, insidious, and will no longer be tolerated. That is why we are calling on you Metro council members to support the Historically Black Neighborhood ordinance. **The ordinance is meant to center those most vulnerable to gentrification.** We invite you all to read the full statement and materials provided to further explain the need for policies that challenge and could rectify this city’s racist and classist development practices. Thank you for your time.

Full Statement from the Smoketown Neighborhood Association as delivered by returning resident and SNA secretary, Jessica Bellamy:

We need a resident-led progressive solution that directly addresses the issues of systematic racism and systemic classism that are unique to neighborhoods that have—and continue—to endure the economic oppression of redlining, divestment, infrastructural neglect, over-policing, mass eviction, displacement, dispossession, and now gentrification. We need a policy that sees that Black neighborhoods in Louisville are primarily made up of low-income^{1d} and fixed-income **renters**, who have zero protections under the city from displacement, and who deserve the right to remain in their homes as their neighborhoods change. Councilwoman Dorsey has proposed an ordinance and Councilmen Arthur has introduced an ordinance. I am here to speak on behalf of the Smoketown Neighborhood Association (SNA) on the larger problem that involves both. We have also submitted a full statement with supporting evidence and details for your review.

In 2016, Louisville Metro Housing Authority (LMHA)—for the low price of just \$5,004—sold two blocks worth of properties (the 500 and 600 blocks) to a cohort of nonprofit developers called the Hopebox. Based on our zoom recorded conversations with the leaders of the Hopebox, they are planning to sell those homes for \$150k each, which is without question financially out of reach for the majority of our current residents. Ironically, based on our research, these homes may have been acquired by LMHA under Hope 6 to create homeownership opportunities for Smoketown residents. It’s a dark and sick joke that that’s likely not going to happen.

Back in 2016, the Hopebox signed a development agreement with LMHA that committed them to begin development of these unaffordable homes within 18-months (see figure 1 below). It was no coincidence to us that within that 18-month window LMHA then promptly evicted several of our neighbors that rented near where the Hopebox development was to occur.

DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT

This DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT (the "Agreement") is entered into as of the 21st day of October, 2016, by and between the LOUISVILLE METRO HOUSING AUTHORITY (the "Housing Authority") and Young Adult Development in Action, Inc. d/b/a YouthBuild Louisville ("Developer").

RECITALS

A. The Housing Authority has agreed to convey to Developer and Developer has agreed to acquire title from the Housing Authority, certain parcels of real estate located at 536 and 538 East Breckinridge Street, Louisville, Kentucky (collectively, the "Parcels").

B. Within 18 months ^{18 months} after Developer's acquisition of the Parcels, Developer will construct improvements on the Parcels (collectively, the "Improvements").

Figure 1:
Development Agreement between Louisville Metro Housing Authority and Young Adult Development in Action, Inc. d/b/a YouthBuild Louisville

Yes, LMHA knowingly evicted several households that it likely believed were *undesirable* and/or *incompatible* with **their** vision of Smoketown's future. This is clear gentrification. This is clear racial banishment. As you can see from the 2017 Smoketown eviction map (Figure 2 and 3 below) in the materials provided by SNA, there is a conspicuous and uniformed line of dots spread across a single block on east Breakenridge that corresponds to the Hopebox development sites (figure 4 below). All those dots are people.. families... neighbors that were evicted. That row of dots is why I'm here today.

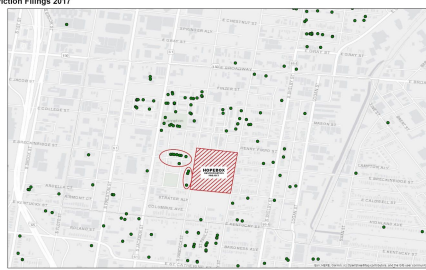


Figure 2: 2017 Evictions in Smoketown. Larger image (figure 8) shown in Smoketown Eviction Data Section on page 11 of this document.

Source: Administrative Office of the Courts. (2020, July 17). Jefferson County Forcible Detainer Data 2015⁴ 2020. Louisville, KY.

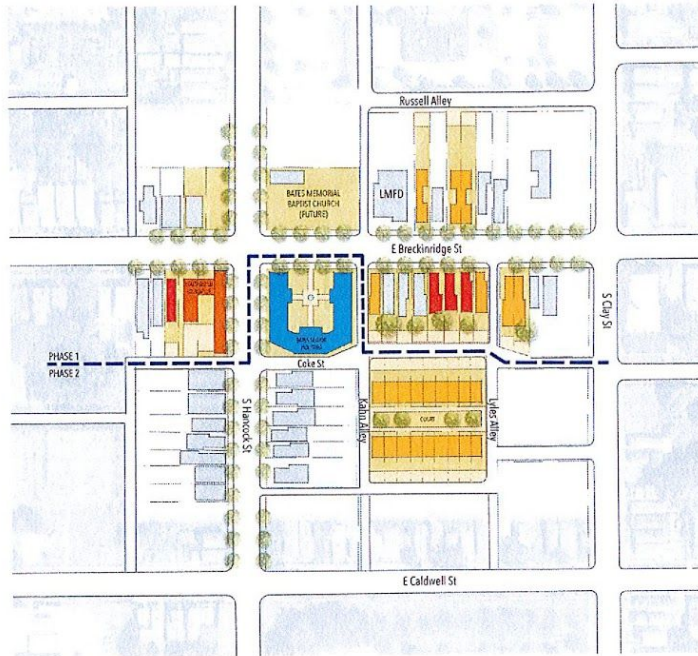
⁴ For housing units the boundaries of Census Tract 62 were used which do not align perfectly with the neighborhood boundary and are slightly larger. Eviction rates are likely slightly higher than presented.



Figure 3: Detail images of Figure 2

SECTION ONE: DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

Our development group would like to pursue a two-phased development plan. The illustration below shows the individual phases within the larger context of the surrounding Smoketown neighborhood. Each phase is described in more detail below.



- Map Key
- New Infill Housing
 - Historic Housing Rehabilitation
 - Bates Memorial Baptist Church - Future Development
 - YouthBuild Louisville - Future Development
- Total Housing Phase 1 and Phase 2 - 45 units +/-

Smoketown - Breckinridge Street Conceptual Master Plan

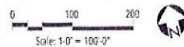


Figure 4: Image from page 3 of the Breckenridge Redevelopment Plan submitted by Lynn Rippy, Executive Director of YouthBuild and Hopebox representative, to Lisa Osanka, Interim Executive Director of Louisville Metro Housing Authority on August 21, 2018.

Includes images of the proposed future location of Bates Memorial Church among other things.

I am a third generation Smoketown legacy who is returning to my childhood home, I am daughter of Teri and Jesse, grand daughter of famous chef and community leader Shirley Mae, and niece to dozens of Black men, women, and persons who all my life have encouraged me to speak up for our community as they themselves are forced to fight for legitimacy just for occupying space.

On your watch, the Hopebox and LMHA successfully colluded to banish and gentrify that section of Breckenridge. By 2020, through the neighborhood planning process we discovered a lot about the Hopebox gentrification project. We learned that the Hopebox was led by Youthbuild and included other nonprofit developers like New Directions, Rivercity Housing, IDEASxLab, Vital Sites/Louisville Preservation Fund, Bates CDC, Bates Memorial Baptist Church, The Housing Partnership, Habitat for Humanity Metro Louisville, and others. We learned that Smoketown homeowners who lived near the development site had many unaddressed concerns about the Hopebox gentrification project. We learned that despite **not** being accountable to the concerns of Smoketown residents, that the Hopebox was actually not even accountable to LMHA itself. The Hopebox has been in violation of its 2016 development agreement with LMHA for years now. They are apparently accountable to no one but themselves. Hopebox representative, Lynn Rippey, has lied on record multiple times about waivers from LMHA that don't exist. We know this because every time we put in an open records request with LMHA for said waivers, we're told that they have no knowledge of such documents.

Needless to say there is no community trust to give these nonprofit developers who have been legitimized by the authority of this city. Neighborhoods like Smoketown—historically Black, historically low-income^{1e}, and majority renter occupied neighborhoods—need immediate, progressive, and thoughtful protections against developers and landlords like the Hopebox and LMHA. We need protection from Youthbuild, IDEASxLab, New Directions, and so many others who aim to push us out with a *compassionate* smile on their faces.

Fortunately, policy can do a lot here. The current state of our neighborhood planning process and development practices contribute to the racist and classist legacy that by affiliation you all are a part of. The current restrictions embedded in the neighborhood plan advisory board ordinance are a part of a legacy of excluding poor residents and communities of color who have been over policed, prosecuted, jailed, and discriminated against in hiring practices. The current ordinance requires an applicant to submit to a background check, produce resumes, have no debt with the city and more. All of which were deterring factors when our neighborhood association tried to recruit more residents to apply for our neighborhood plan advisory board.

Councilwoman Dorsey's replacement ordinance doesn't do much better. It actually opens up a new can of worms for our community because of its vague use of words like "diversity." Her ordinance may open up opportunities for Black residents to participate in neighborhood planning processes in predominantly white and affluent Louisville neighborhoods, but it also may be creating a permanent place for white affluent external stakeholders to continue to dominate the planning process in neighborhoods like Smoketown.

Councilman Arthur's ordinance (which was co-created with our community and can co-exist with Dorsey's ordinance) seeks to establish mechanisms that neighborhoods like ours have needed for decades. Right now, there are no anti-displacement policies that protect renters in the city of Louisville. Right now there are no policies that prevent our council members (like former councilwoman Barbra Saxton Smith) from wheeling and dealing with developers like the Hopebox. There are no policies that require housing developers to build housing that our current residents can afford, because they don't want people making under 30k in annual income to live in the communities that they're building. *How messed up is that?*

This city's government has ensured that external, affluent stakeholders hold all the cards in development, whereas current and returning residents of neighborhoods like Smoketown have little to no power.

This power imbalance is intentional, disgraceful, insidious, and will no longer be tolerated. We know that it is by design that nonprofit developers like the Hopebox and LMHA are able to do what they do. That is why we are calling on you Metro council members to support the Historically Black Neighborhood ordinance because (as I mentioned earlier) we desperately need a resident-led progressive solution that directly addresses the issues of systematic racism and classism that are unique to neighborhoods like ours. That also means that we need to stop using vague and shallow words like "inclusion" and "diversity" when we talk about development. If this council aims to be anti-racist then you need to talk about race in these rooms and in your policies. If this council aims to be anti-classist then you need to talk about class in these rooms in your policies. It's that simple. I can't be more clear. To directly address a problem you have to speak it out loud unapologetically and aim for root causes with laser precision. But you can't find the root causes without those who are at the frontlines of the problem. We need to start directly talking about race and class when we talk about development and we need current residents to lead development in neighborhoods that are most vulnerable to gentrification.

Do you want to be complicit with these 2017 evictions on East Breakenridge or 2020's gentrification-motivated murder of Breonna Taylor. I ask you councilmembers, is that what you want in your legacy or are you ready to fight for a Louisville that better aligns with its values?

Finally, the Smoketown Neighborhood Association has spoken at length with other neighborhood leaders around the city about this ordinance. Our conversations with leaders in predominantly white neighborhoods like Schnitzelburg and Butchertown just emphasize the shared concern that many community members, white or Black, have about gentrification and development practices that continue to lock out current residents. Our board supports the idea of the protections offered in the Historically Black Neighborhood Ordinance becoming universal, so that all neighborhood development processes in the city of Louisville would require an organized framework which prioritized the concerns and desires of current residents. However, we only support this ordinance becoming universal with the caveat of centering renter and low-income^{1f} residents above all others. **This ordinance is meant to center those most vulnerable to gentrification.** Property owners—whether they live in the community or

no—already have protections from the city concerning displacement. They are a privileged class that more often than not are invited to sit at the table when community input is required. Moreover, there is a long history of toxic, racist⁵, classist homeowner associations in this city and many others, so it is imperative that we make it clear that we are centering renters and low-/fixed-income residents. It is our theory of change that when a group centers their most vulnerable in their decision making process, that that process then inherently builds in protections and language that benefits us all as we progress towards a brighter future. This theory of change has been successfully operationalized in coalitions, nonprofits, and movement-based organizations for decades across the country.

Louisville’s Black community is most vulnerable to gentrification not only because we make up the bulk of renters in this city and not only because we continue to endure racist policies and practices designed to disenfranchise, displace, and dispossess us of our assets, but also because of overall wealth distribution in this city. 33% of Black households in Louisville make less than \$20k per year (see figures 5 and 6 below). As you can see from the chart below, there are more Black households making under \$20k than over \$50k annually.⁶

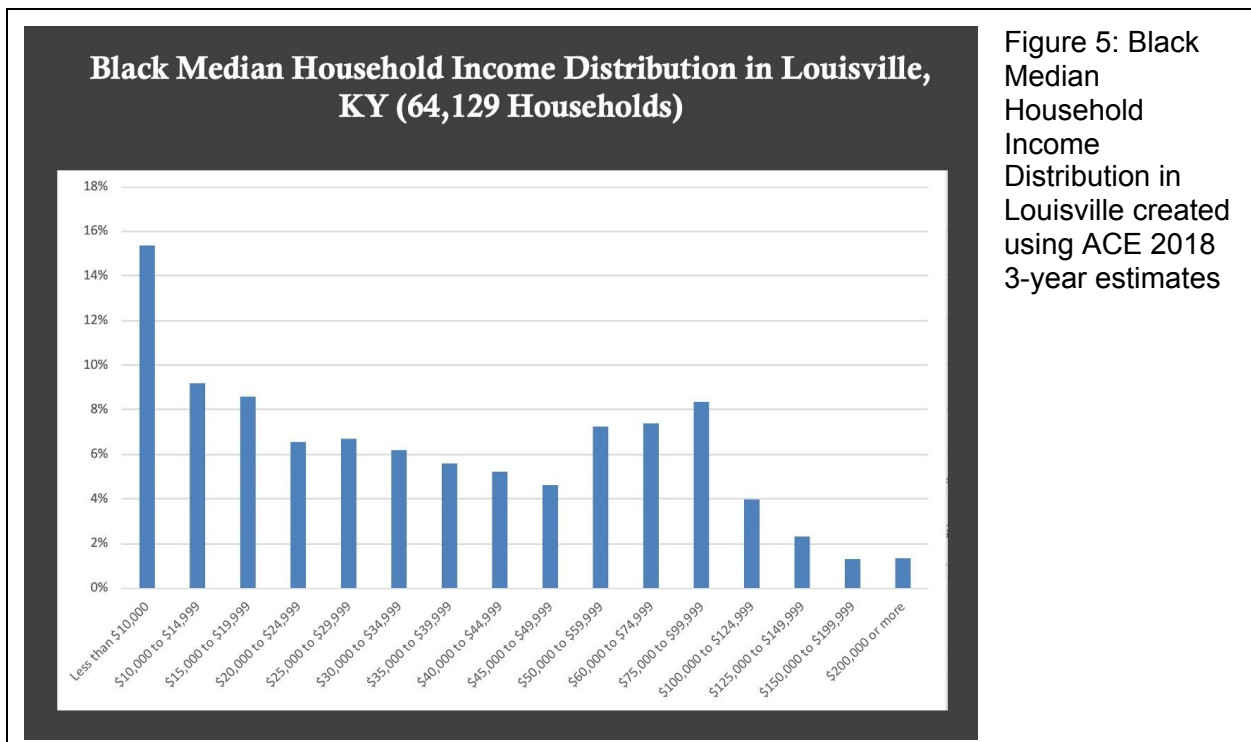


Figure 5: Black Median Household Income Distribution in Louisville created using ACE 2018 3-year estimates

⁵ Business Insider. “When homeowners associations were first created, they helped keep Black people out of the neighborhood. They’re still doing it today.” September 18, 2020 <https://www.businessinsider.com/personal-finance/homeowners-associations-black-americans-discriminat-2020-9>

⁶ ACE 2018 3-year estimates

Black Median Household Income in Louisville

Less than \$10,000	9,851
\$10,000 to \$14,999	5,891
\$15,000 to \$19,999	5,507
\$20,000 to \$24,999	4,217
\$25,000 to \$29,999	4,289
\$30,000 to \$34,999	3,977
\$35,000 to \$39,999	3,585
\$40,000 to \$44,999	3,357
\$45,000 to \$49,999	2,959
\$50,000 to \$59,999	4,644
\$60,000 to \$74,999	4,746
\$75,000 to \$99,999	5,371
\$100,000 to \$124,999	2,549
\$125,000 to \$149,999	1,491
\$150,000 to \$199,999	832
\$200,000 or more	863

Black Households – 64,129

Med Black Income



Med White Income



Median Black HH Income - \$32,456

Black households make up 21% of total households in Louisville, but 42% of households making under \$10,000/year

More than 20,000 Black households make less and \$20,000/yr and nearly 50% of those make less than \$10,000/yr

Figure 6: Black Median Household Income in Louisville created using ACE 2018 3-year estimates

We invite you all to submit questions and comments to us via email at smoketown.na@gmail.com. We'd love to hear your thoughts and hope to connect as we work with Councilman Arthur to recruit more community leaders to this work and together refine the Historically Black Neighborhood Ordinance.

Thank you for your time.

Smoketown Eviction Data from 2017-2019 (Figure 7: Smoketown/Jefferson County chart)^{7, 8}

Smoketown							%
	2017	2018	2019		Total Housing Units	658	
Evictions Filed	170	193	108		Owner Occupied Units	205	31.16%
Filing Rate	37.53%	42.60%	23.84%		Renter Occupied Units	453	68.84%
Eviction Judgements	92	111	66				
Eviction Rate	20.31%	24.50%	14.57%				
Jefferson County							
	2017	2018	2019		Total Housing Units	310318	
Evictions Filed	17315	17185	16929		Owner Occupied Units	191339	61.66%
Filing Rate	14.55%	14.44%	14.23%		Renter Occupied Units	118979	38.34%
Eviction Judgements	9867	9565	9050				
Eviction Rate	8.29%	8.04%	7.61%				

Smoketown Serial Evictors:

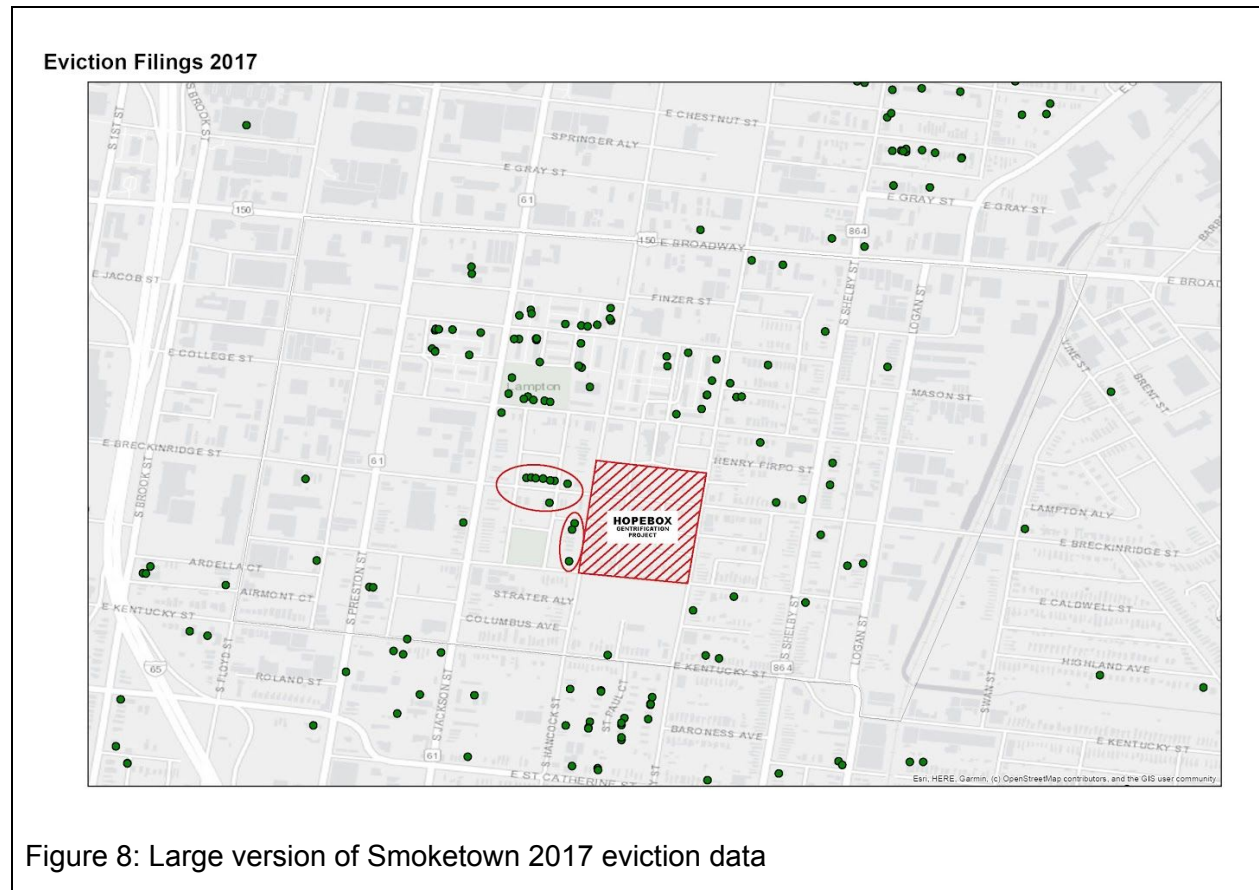
- LMHA (Sheppard Square)
- LMHA Breckenridge
- Broadway Management (419 Finzer St)

⁷ Administrative Office of the Courts. (2020, July 17). Jefferson County Forcible Detainer Data 2015* 2020. Louisville, KY. *For housing units the boundaries of Census Tract 62 were used which do not align perfectly with the neighborhood boundary and are slightly larger. Eviction rates are likely slightly higher than presented.

⁸ ACS 2018 3- Year Estimates. (2018). *American Fact Finder*. Retrieved from <https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/american-factfinder-ii>

Definitions:

A “filing rate” is the ratio of the number of evictions filed in an area over the number of renter-occupied homes in that area. An “eviction rate” is the subset of those homes that received an eviction judgment in which renters were ordered to leave. The filing rate also counts all eviction cases filed in an area, including multiple cases filed against the same address in the same year. But an eviction rate only counts a single address who received an eviction judgment.



Smoketown Neighborhood Association Board - More about Us!



Our Mission. The people who are most impacted by a problem are the ones who are best suited to solve it. For they have the motivation, dedication, insight, lived experience, as well as the in-depth cultural, social, and historical understanding, necessary to accurately identify root causes and envision solutions with long term effects. Since the revitalization of the Smoketown Neighborhood Association (SNA) five years ago, SNA has been a fierce advocate for the residents of Smoketown. We know that there is no better group of people to write our neighborhood plan than those who live in it and are legacies of it. A neighborhood plan is a guide for future decision making. As legacies of this neighborhood, we possess a right to remain despite the changes of tomorrow, and we are profoundly entitled to write our own story and carve a path for our collective future.

Our President. Rev. Dr. Randall C. Webber (pronouns: he/him/his) is a resident of Smoketown, president of the Smoketown Neighborhood Association, and editor of *A Balm in Gilead: Eulogies of Comfort*, a funeral sermon anthology including a eulogy by Barack Obama and a previously unpublished manuscript by Martin Luther King, Jr. He is a veteran, scholar, and works in service of people seeking safe and clean transitional shelters in Louisville, KY.

Our Vice President. Anthony “Tony” Manning (pronouns: he/him/his) is a resident of Sheppard Square, which is located in the heart of Smoketown. He stays plugged into the community concerns of Sheppard Square residents so that he can help to prioritize the concerns of renters in all community discussions. He has been civically active on multiple advisory boards and commissions since he was first recruited to serve the neighborhood in 2018.

Our Treasurer. Jared Zarantonello (pronouns: he/him/his) is a resident and business owner in Smoketown. They also serve as treasurer for the Smoketown Neighborhood Association. Professionally, Jared is a sound artist, music producer, and educator working at the intersection of critical history, migration, and sound. Jared is co-founder of Rhythm Science Sound (located at the Smoketown Collective on Shelby Street). His work often centers refugee communities living and working in Louisville.

Our Secretary. Jessica Bellamy (pronouns: any/all/y'all) is third-generation Smoketown and a returning resident. Jessica is a research analyst, information designer, and community organizer. They currently serve as secretary for the Smoketown Neighborhood Association (see presenter bio on page 1 of this document for more information).

The Historically Black Neighborhoods Ordinance
is meant to center those **most vulnerable to gentrification**.

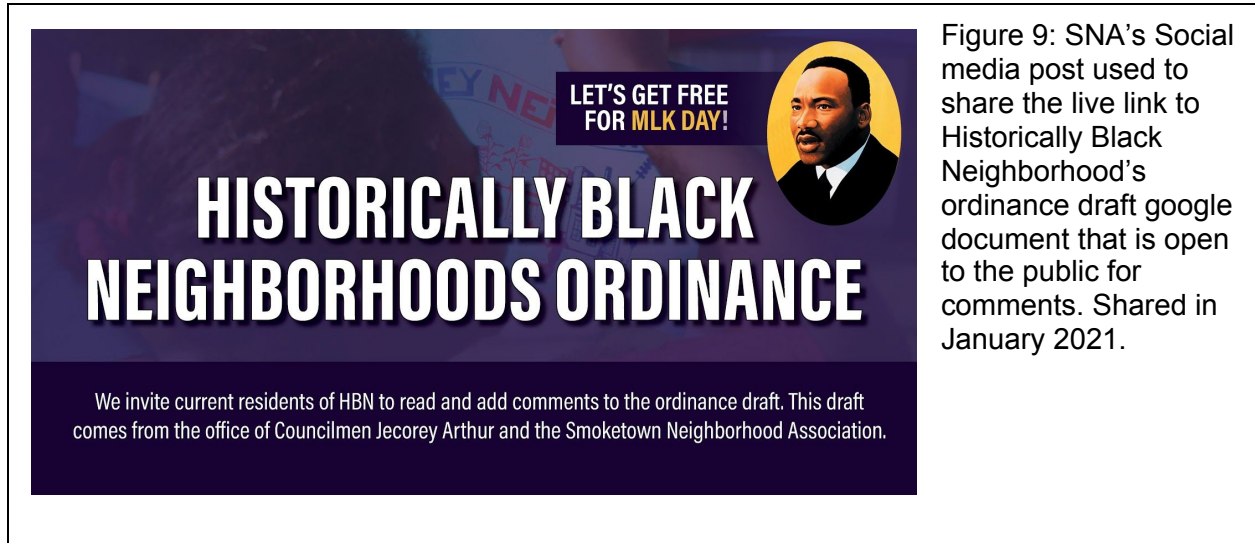


Figure 9: SNA's Social media post used to share the live link to Historically Black Neighborhood's ordinance draft google document that is open to the public for comments. Shared in January 2021.