

Just Deeds

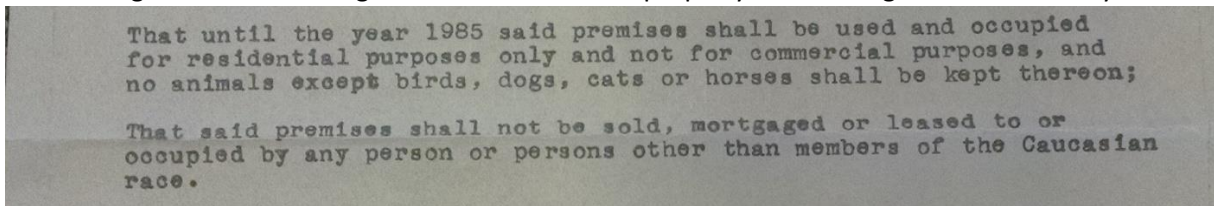
City of Bloomington Toolkit

What are racially restrictive covenants and how do they relate to Bloomington?

Racial covenants are clauses that were inserted into property deeds to prevent people who were not White from buying or occupying land. (Source: [Mapping Prejudice](#))

There are over 500 properties in Bloomington that have racial covenants on them. They are remnants of a long and disturbing history of urban racial exclusion in the Twin Cities and the broader United States. In Bloomington, these covenants were written into the deeds between 1923 and 1951, with the majority written between 1946 and 1948. Although these covenants are unenforceable and illegal today, they still exist in the deeds of these properties. It is likely that most property owners do not know these covenants exist on their property.

The image below is showing a racial covenant on a property in Bloomington from February 1945.

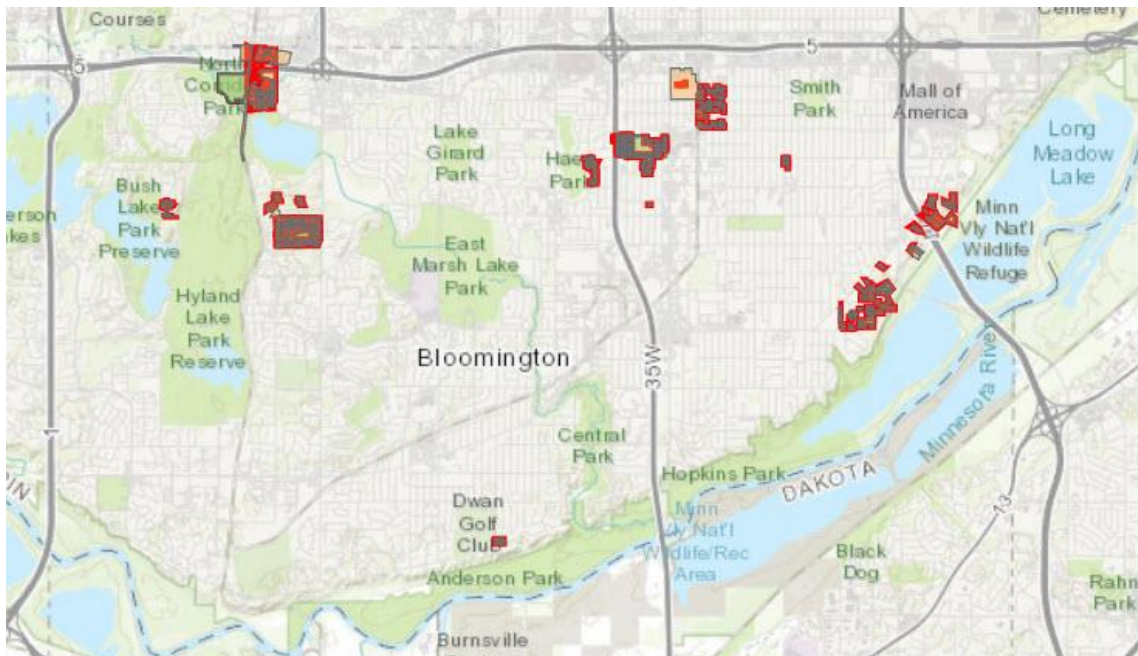


That until the year 1985 said premises shall be used and occupied for residential purposes only and not for commercial purposes, and no animals except birds, dogs, cats or horses shall be kept thereon; That said premises shall not be sold, mortgaged or leased to or occupied by any person or persons other than members of the Caucasian race.

(Image cutesy of the Bloomington Historical Society.)

The Map of Racial Restriction in Bloomington

The following map identifies properties in Bloomington with discriminatory covenants in their titles.



An interactive, searchable map can be found at: <https://arcg.is/1nmfGz>

What is Just Deeds?

The Just Deed Coalition connects local property owners with legal and title services who will work free of charge to discharge the covenants on the property. At the recommendation of the Human Rights Commission and Planning Commission, the City of Bloomington joined the Just Deeds Coalition in June of 2022, and since then has been preparing and beginning to collaborate with residents to discharge covenants.

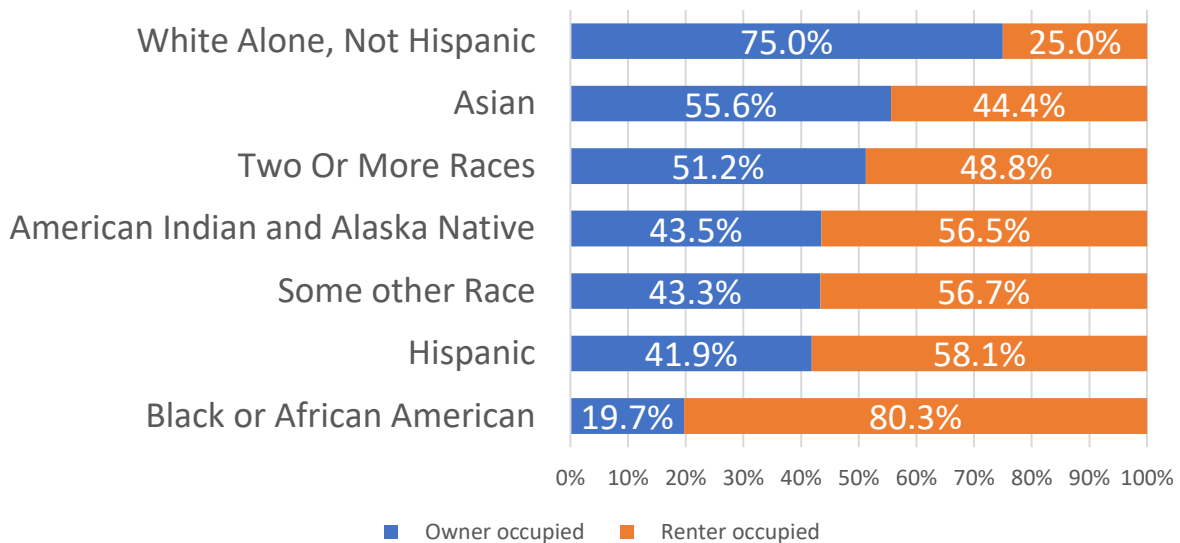
Learn more at <https://justdeeds.org/> and <https://www.bloomingtonmn.gov/cob/just-deeds>.

Why is this essential work?

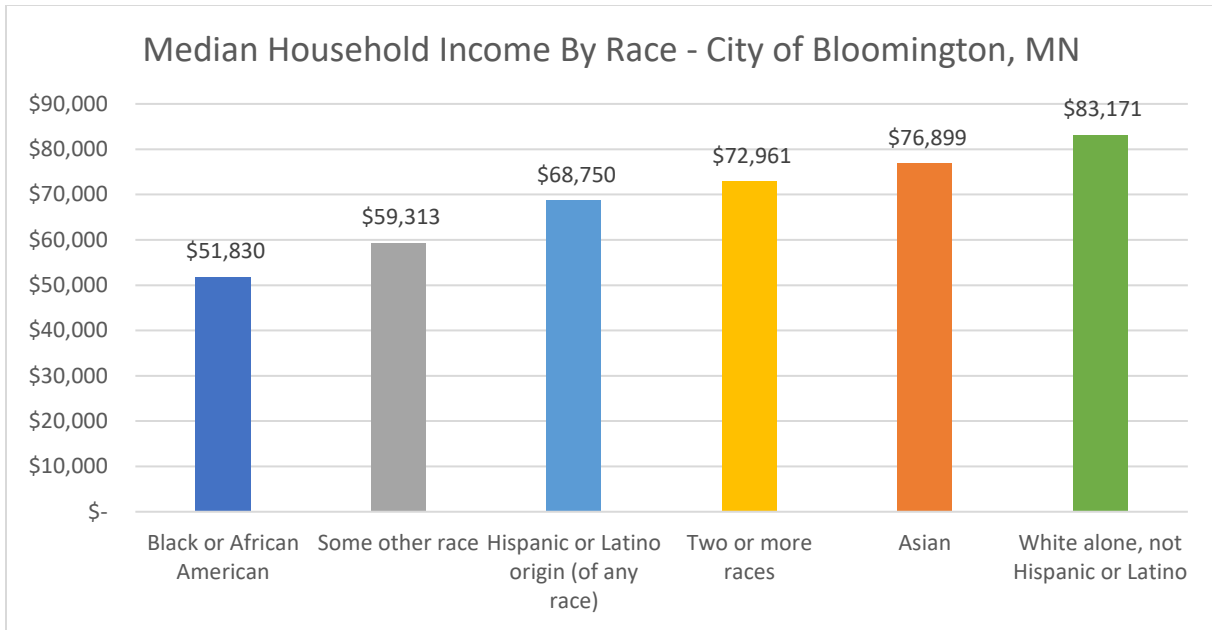
Understanding the history of racial exclusion in our community can lead us to an understanding of our current reality and inequities that exist in Bloomington. Although racially restrictive covenants may appear to be a narrow example of injustice – a practice not as widespread in Bloomington as in other parts of the Twin Cities – they represent the larger picture of housing segregation and racist housing policies that were decades in the making and exist in alternate forms still today. As an essential human right, housing is embedded in all fundamental aspects of our lives – including our health, wealth, education, and safety.

Today, we see evidence of the legacy of restrictive covenants, as well as other racist housing practices, in housing inequities in Bloomington. Because homeownership is an essential piece of the accumulation of generational wealth, the denial of homeownership in the 20th century has had lasting effects. Most notably, there is a large gap in wealth and homeownership between White and Black populations in Bloomington.

Tenure by Race/Ethnicity - City of Bloomington, MN



Source: US Census Bureau 2020 American Community Survey 5 -Year Estimates Table B25003BI
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=bloomington,%20mn&t=Race%20and%20Ethnicity&tid=ACSDT5Y2020.B25003B>



Source: US Census Bureau 2020 American Community Survey 5 -Year Estimates Table S1903
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=bloomington%20median%20income%20&tid=ACST5Y2020.S1903>

By discharging restrictive covenants on Bloomington properties, we can acknowledge the history and legacy of racial discrimination in our community and work to build the inclusive community that fully aligns with our mission, “to cultivate an enduring and remarkable community where people want to be” ([City of Bloomington Strategic Plan](#)).

How can I get a restrictive covenant on my property discharged?

If you believe that your property has a restrictive covenant, please visit the Bloomington Just Deeds website (<https://www.bloomingtonmn.gov/cob/just-deeds>) or go directly to <https://www.bloomingtonmn.gov/cob/just-deeds-project-registration> to register for discharge assistance.

If your property is determined to have a discriminatory covenant, a volunteer lawyer will work with you to retrieve a copy of the discriminatory covenant, draft the requisite discharge form, and file the discharge form against the property’s legal title.

How do I get engaged?

Stay connected with City of Bloomington Divisions and Commissions involved in this work:

- Community Outreach and Engagement Division (<https://www.bloomingtonmn.gov/coe/community-outreach-and-engagement>)
- Housing and Redevelopment Authority (<https://www.bloomingtonmn.gov/hr/housing-and-redevelopment-authority-hra>)
- Human Rights Commission (<https://www.bloomingtonmn.gov/hrc/human-rights-commission>)
- Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (<https://www.bloomingtonmn.gov/equity/racial-equity-and-inclusion>)
- Planning Commission (<https://www.bloomingtonmn.gov/plan/planning-commission>)

Homeownership Resources

Bloomington Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) helps provide affordable housing opportunities for those who are not adequately served by the marketplace, coordinates the City's efforts to preserve existing neighborhoods and promotes development and redevelopment that enhances Bloomington. Homeownership resources are listed at <https://www.bloomingtonmn.gov/hr/homeownership-resources>

Learning

Access educational resources online or through the library. Library cards are free and give you access to everything the library has to offer. Check out materials, use library computers, access online resources and more. Get a library card in-person or online. More information available at <https://www.hclib.org/about/library-cards>.

- Penn Lake Library – 8800 Penn Ave. S., Bloomington, MN 55431
- Oxboro Library – 8801 Portland Ave. S., Bloomington, MN 55420 – Check out the Just Deeds display and access resources for reading and discussion.
- OverDrive Digital Library – Download eBooks and audiobooks, eMagazines, and comics for all ages. Use an eReader or access items on your mobile device with the OverDrive Libby app.

The Just Deeds Coalition has compiled a list of resources such as books, videos, articles, and podcasts. Visit the “Education” tab on the Just Deeds website (<https://justdeeds.org/>). Here are some highlights of the resources:

Books

- [Whiteness in Plain View](#) by Chad Montrie
- [The Color of Law](#) by Richard Rothstein
- [Unjust Deeds](#) by Jeffrey D. Gonda
- [Race for Profit](#) by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor

Films

- *Jim Crow of the North* (<https://www.tpt.org/minnesota-experience/video/jim-crow-of-the-north-stijws/>)

Websites

- Mapping Prejudice (<https://mappingprejudice.umn.edu/>)

Help us build a resource library by sharing books, podcasts, articles, films, etc., that have impacted your educational journey around this topic by visiting <https://letstalk.bloomingtonmn.gov/just-deeds>.

Connect with Others

- Host a neighborhood event, book study or film showing. Connect with the Human Rights Commission for support at humanrights@BloomingtonMN.gov.