



# HISTORIC BRIGHTON

## Newsletter and Journal

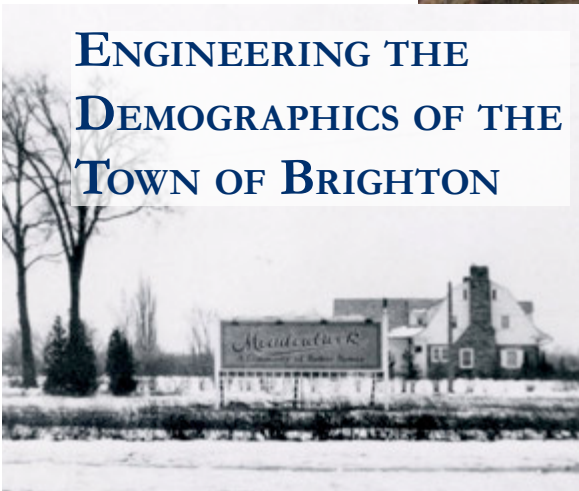
*Exploring our Town's history and educating our community about Brighton's past.*

Volume 27 No. 01 - Spring 2026

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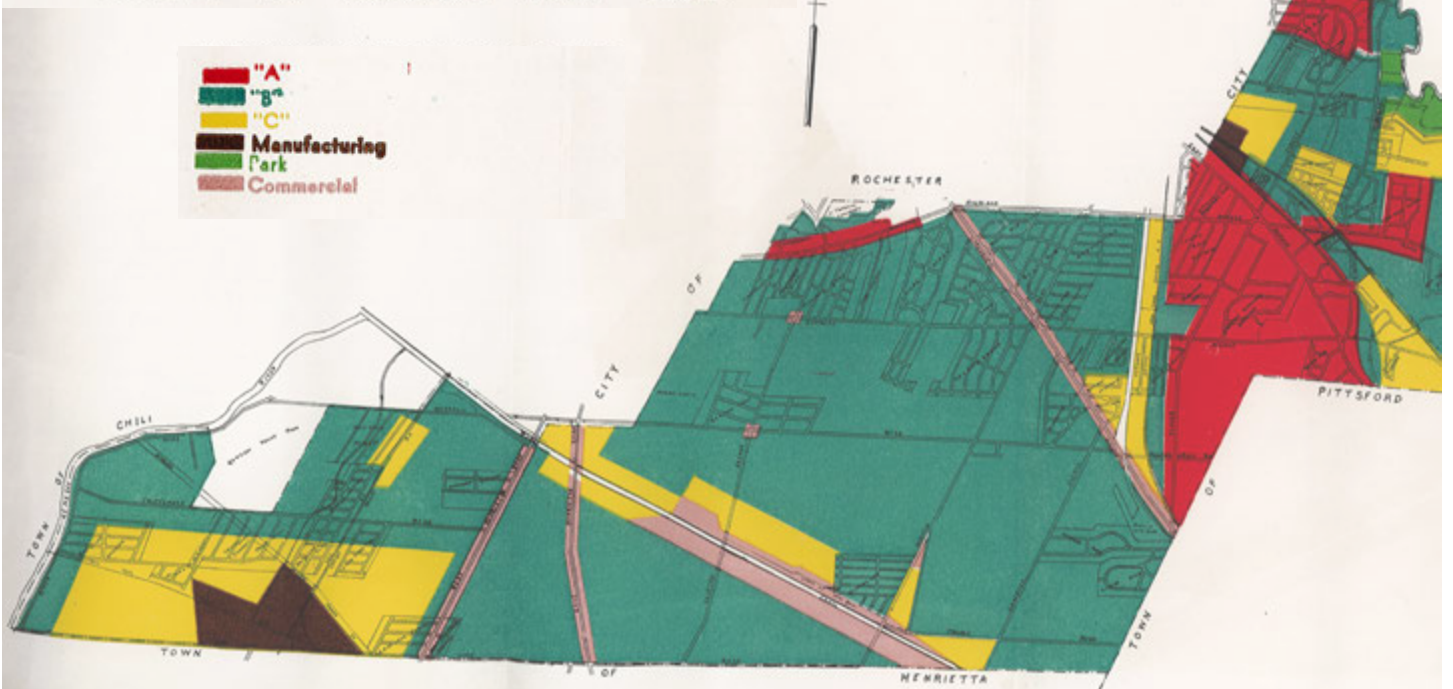
## 100 YEARS OF ZONING:

### ENGINEERING THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE TOWN OF BRIGHTON



## TOWN OF BRIGHTON

COUNTY OF MONROE NEW YORK



1933 Town of Brighton Zoning Map showing the three classes of residential zones (A, B, and C), and also Manufacturing, Park and Commercial zones

# WELCOME TO BRIGHTON: 100 YEARS OF ZONING ORDINANCES

By Sue Barocas, *Historic Brighton Member, with edits by HB*

Note from the Editor:

*In past issues of this publication, Historic Brighton has reviewed the social, financial, and legal consequences of unconstitutional home lending and realty practices implemented nationwide that have affected the demographics of our town, and towns like it all over the country. However: bank redlining and unethical real estate practices are not the only factors that have influenced who has - or has not - been permitted to enjoy life as a resident of the town of Brighton. This issue focuses on another facet of how laws and regulations have been manipulated towards maintaining a certain exclusivity to Brighton residency, and how all of these factors worked in concert, and by design, to influence the demographics of our town. This research is ongoing, and has been undertaken by an independent citizen who has dedicated a generous amount of personal time to understanding, documenting, and explaining how and why Brighton has taken the shape that it has with some intention, and why it is sometimes hard to see that inequity and inequality can be codified in ways that are less visible or understandable to the general population. Thank you to Sue for her efforts, and for sharing her research on this history.*

-Michael Lempert

The advantages of living in Brighton are well known: beautiful neighborhoods, exceptional schools, safe streets, green space, easy access to Rochester, and, of course, proximity to the nearest Wegmans grocery store (originally at Twelve Corners, but now in adjacent Pittsford).

At the heart of Brighton's success is 100 years of zoning. Most of us never give a thought to the role or parameters of zoning regulations, but the rules dictate the size, configuration, and quantity of the homes and other buildings in our town - that is, it literally governs the shape of Brighton. Zoning is a planning tool that regulates land use in a given city or town. This has often proven to be a good idea to manage development of any given area, but it comes with both intended and unintended consequences.

What is *exclusionary land use zoning*?

In the early 1900s, *exclusionary land use zoning* was an essential mechanism for controlling the chaos and shifting demographics of expanding industrialization.

The idea was to take a map of the

community in question and partition it into separate rectangles. Each section was a dedicated district for exclusive uses: **residential, commercial, or industrial**. It was a relatively simple way to keep the dangerous, polluting, and annoying products of manufacturing away from residential areas. The practice of zoning is the reason there isn't a dry cleaners or a service station in the middle of residential neighborhoods. It is the reason there isn't an apartment building nestled in between most neat rows of single family homes. Zoning also regulates conditions within districts. For a residential district there are regulations relating to lot size, height, width, set-back requirements, and density of dwelling units, among others parameters.

This mechanism of control over the layout of a town is largely invisible to most residents, but not because the information is unavailable or hidden; quite the opposite, the town has published and updated the zoning regulations many times. However, zoning regulations can be very detailed and difficult to understand, and require some effort to realize the impact of such seemingly innocuous and apolitical regulations on a community.

To a large extent, zoning regulations control the character and visual landscape of a community. Zoning decisions can also dramatically affect the perceived and market values of residential property.

The zoning ordinance may, indirectly, represent an official policy decision about the size, location, and the racial and economic aspects of the residential population. The zoning ordinance does not just maintain the character of the town, it creates it.

Local governments have a large degree of autonomy to control land use in their jurisdictions. States typically grant them the authority to pass ordinances and regulations as long as they don't conflict with other laws. All states give municipalities the power to enact, and change, zoning regulations, usually through zoning and planning departments or boards.

In 1925, Brighton created one of the first zoning ordinances in Monroe County. Although it appears to be an unimposing 23 page booklet, our earliest zoning ordinance and its immediate revisions (1925-1928) laid the foundation for the future of Brighton. Of the three land-use districts designated (residential,

commercial, and industrial), it is likely that residential had the greatest overall impact. Occupying about 40% of the town's land area, residential districts were limited to two types of buildings: 1) single family dwellings and 2) church, school, college, public library, public museum, or community building. Multi-family dwellings, except for the few already in existence, were to be built only in commercial, and not in residential, districts.

Residence districts were divided into three classes - Class A, Class B, and Class C, with their accompanying lot-size minimums:

1925:

- Class A - 9,000 square feet
- Class B - 7,500 square feet
- Class C - 6,000 square feet

The exact acreage of each class is unclear, but from the map accompanying the 1933 revision, it appears that the largest portion of residential land was dedicated to Class B.

From its original 1925 zoning ordinance, Brighton made significant residential zoning revisions in 1944 and 1957.

1944:

- Class A - 18,500 square feet
- Class B - 10,500 square feet
- Class C - 9,000 square feet

After two years of debate, the 1957 Revised Ordinance included the following lot size changes:

1957:

- Class A - 23,125 square feet
- Class B - 13,500 square feet
- Class C - 11,250 square feet

In the 1950s, in addition to increasing lot sizes within the districts, the Town Board approved upgrades of Class C to Class B zones, and also Class B to Class A zones. These were big changes. They applied to any undeveloped residential land in the town. The timing of these changes, which were always increases in size (and therefore brought increases in cost as well) may or may not be significant.

The consequences are rather obvious: when lot size is increased and the assigned class type is upgraded, there is an inherent increase in the cost of the houses being built on the larger-sized lots. Simultaneously, there is a subsequent decrease in the likelihood that moderate- and lower-income families will be able to become residents. While it may be coincidence (unlikely), these changes were happening at the same time (1934-1968) that the federal government was sponsoring biased home lending practices that limited the access of non-white families to certain areas of Rochester outside of the city limits. So while access to lending was being manipulated, so too was the cost of available lots and homes increasing by design (and not simply by casual market forces).

In the 1965 Revised Zoning Ordinance no lot sizes were changed, but residential Classes D-1 and D-2 were added to allow more space for apartments. The 1965 ordinance was the last one printed as a single document. After that, the town went to a 3-ring Code Book that could be amended easily by adding more pages. Comprehensive Town Plans were compiled in 1971, 1990, 2000, and 2018.

Between 1925 and 1975, three other factors, each with separate agendas, dovetailed with our zoning infrastructure to create the character and landscape of our town: restrictive covenants in property deeds, NAREB (the National Association of Real Estate Boards), and federal home finance programs (already mentioned above).

**Racially restrictive covenants** were explicit, undeniably clear forms of housing discrimination. As suburban development increased in the nation after World War I, so did the use of restrictive covenants. Racially restrictive covenants were attached to property deeds to prevent the sale, lease, or occupancy of a piece of property to certain groups of people - frequently African Americans, but



*Language like “country club” and “resort living” imply a luxury and exclusivity, without overt discrimination*

also Jews and Italians, among others. Declared unenforceable in 1948, they sat quietly on property deeds until academic research brought their existence, and prevalence, out of the shadows in the 2010s. In 2020, a group of residents from Brighton's Meadowbrook neighborhood, together with town historian, Mary Jo Lanphear, researched the use of racially restrictive covenants in Brighton. They found that 18 of our 108 neighborhoods had deeds with restrictive covenants. In some places, the language restricted the occupancy of property to residents that might be interpreted as "low-quality" simply by the determination of their neighbors opinions, removing strict language (but allowing for racist practices to continue). The Fall 2021 Historic Brighton Newsletter contains an article by Mary Jo Lanphear's intern, Kayla Whalen, on the use of restrictive covenants in Brighton.

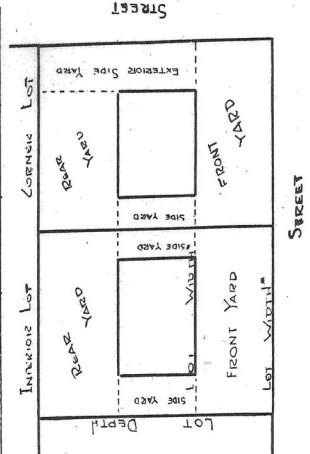
On November 19, 2020, the National Association of Realtors®, formerly NAREB, published an apology for racist policies of the past and vowed to keep working to correct lasting inequities in housing. What had NAR been doing for the last 100 years that required an apology? The general public may or may not have understood fully, but apparently NAR did, and was forced to reconcile with the impact of their historical choices.

The National Association of Real Estate Boards, (NAREB) was established in 1908 at a convention in Chicago. They attempted to clean up fraud in real estate sales, to establish some standard of conduct, and to promote land use zoning. In 1910, The Real Estate Board of Rochester joined the national organization. It is important to note that NAREB was a private, whites-only, self-defined,

# ZONING SCHEDULE

ALL SHOWN MEASUREMENTS ARE MINIMUM REQUIREMENT EXCEPT AS OTHERWISE INDICATED

PRIMARY USE	ZONE	LOT		YARD			HOUSE AREA		Maximum Height of Bldgs	ATTACHED SIDE		GARAGE			PARKING	SIGNS	Accessory STRUCTURES
		AREA	WIDTH	FRONT	SIDE	REAR	CORNER	LEVEL		OTHER	HEIGHT	MAXIMUM	AREA	Set Back			
Res.	A	23,125 square feet	125 feet	60 feet	2 SIDES - 25% Lot WIDTH 1 SIDE - 10% Lot WIDTH	25% lot depth but not less than 25' OR equal to height principal building	1800 square feet	1800 square feet	35'	14 feet	800 square feet	10 feet	4 feet	See PART 1 and PART 2	See PART 5 AND PART 1	See § 42-74 and ARTICLE VIII	
Res.	B	13,500 square feet	90 feet	40 feet		See § 42-43	1100 square feet	1300 square feet	35'	14 feet	800 square feet	10 feet	4 feet	See PART 1 and PART 2	See PART 5 AND PART 1	See § 42-74 and ARTICLE VIII	
Res.	C	11,250 square feet	75 feet	40 feet		See § 42-43	900 square feet	1000 square feet	35'	14 feet	800 square feet	10 feet	4 feet	See PART 1 and PART 2	See PART 5 AND PART 1	See § 42-74 and ARTICLE VIII	



PRIMARY USE	ZONE	LOT		YARD			BLDG AREA	BLDG HEIGHT	BLDG SPACING	OPEN SPACE	PARKING	SIGNS	Accessory STRUCTURES
		AREA	WIDTH	FRONT	SIDE	REAR							
Multi-Residential (APT's)	D-1	8000 sq ft plus 1st Dwelling Unit	20' Max. min's required	60 feet	30' or distance equal to height of principal bldg.	25' or additional unit	Less than 3 dwelling units	400 square feet per each dwelling unit	1 1/2 spaces per each dwelling unit	See PART 1 and PART 2	See PART 4	See § 42-24 and § 42-25	
Multi-Residential (APT's)	D-2	8000 sq ft plus 1st Dwelling Unit	20' Max. min's required	60 feet	30' or distance equal to height of principal bldg.	25' or additional unit	Less than 3 dwelling units	400 square feet per each dwelling unit	1 1/2 spaces per each dwelling unit	See PART 1 and PART 2	See PART 4	See § 42-24 and § 42-25	

(a) livable area only  
(b) rooftop projection & structures - not to exceed 20% rear yard - interior lot  
30% rear yard - exterior lot

(a) over 3 stories - shall be fully serviced by passenger elevators  
(b) D-1 and D-2 shall be fully serviced by passenger elevators  
D-1 see § 42-26 A(2)

Graphic from 1965 Town of Brighton Zoning Ordinance, classes A, B, C, D-1 and D-2

PRIMARY USE	ZONE	LOT			YARD			BLDG AREA	HEIGHT OF BLDGS	PARKING	SIGNS	ACCESSORY STRUCTURES
		AREA	WIDTH	FRONT	FRONT	SIDE	REAR					
Office	E	40 feet	40 feet	40 feet	15' - 02' distance equal to 1/2 lot of principal bldg	15' - unless existing bldg lot district	15% of Lot Width Not less than 10'	1000 each bldg	3 STORIES	See PART 5 and PART 1 § 42-23	See PART 4	See PART 1 § 42-24 and PART 2 § 42-30 ARTICLE IX
Comm.	F	See § 42-37	60 feet	60 feet	REQUIRED EXCEPT see § 42-42	15' - unless existing bldg lot district	15% of Lot Width Not less than 10'	1000 each bldg	3 STORIES > see Section § 42-47 B	See PART 5 and PART 1 § 42-23	See PART 4	See PART 1 § 42-24 and PART 2 § 42-30 ARTICLE IX

(a) F subject to approval by Board of Appeals in some instances, see § 42-31A(G)

PRIMARY USE	ZONE	LOT			YARD			BLDG AREA	HEIGHT OF BLDGS	PARKING	SIGNS	ACCESSORY STRUCTURES
		AREA	WIDTH	FRONT	FRONT	SIDE	REAR					
Ind.	G	See § 42-34 B (1), (2) ARTICLE XII	See § 42-34 B (1), (2) ARTICLE XII	See § 42-34 B (1), (2) ARTICLE XII	20' - unless rear yard abuts residential district	20' - unless rear yard abuts residential district	Some as East yard requirement	1000 each bldg lot area	NO MINIMUM HEIGHT	See PART 5 and PART 1 § 42-23	See PART 4	See PART 1 § 42-24 and PART 2 ARTICLE IX

(a) see § 42-34 B (1), (2) (c) see § 42-40  
(b) see ARTICLE XII

and self-regulated organization, and therefore whatever standards they set out to impose and uphold were in the interest of their leadership and members that already excluded various people of color.

NAREB's 1924 Revised Code of Ethics contained Article 34 which stated:

*"A realtor should never be instrumental in introducing into a neighborhood a character of property or occupancy, members of any race or nationality, or any individuals whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood."*

Article 34 was further clarified by NAREB's **Property Value Axiom:**

*"Minorities depreciate property values in white neighborhoods and realtors have a moral obligation to protect home values in the neighborhoods where they operate."*

That 'axiom' has never been proven and, unfortunately, became something of a self-fulfilling prophecy. It was also never established by what metric any person or family could be considered "detrimental to property values" other than by sheer existence. Therefore, any objection from neighbors or real estate agents who exercised the power to disapprove or disallow certain people from buying homes was enough justification.

To make matters worse, continued membership in NAREB was made contingent upon adherence to the Code of Ethics. There is no reason to believe real estate agents in Brighton, as members of NAREB, did anything other than "go along to get along."

In the 1950s, Article 34 was changed to Article 5 with no mention of race. But there were echos of the Property Value Axiom that have dogged our minority populations for decades.

Graphic from 1965 Town of Brighton Zoning Ordinance, classes E, F and G

That ideology permeated the entire real estate industry: agent training and discipline; underwriting and land sales; subdivisions, mortgage and finance; rental management; appraisal and property valuation; developers and construction. It is difficult to overstate the reach of the real estate industry.

In the 1950s, NAREB made a seamless shift to its **Freedom of Association Doctrine: You have a basic right to control who lives next to you.** This doctrine took the responsibility of discrimination out of the hands of the real estate agent and placed it with the owner. The best-known instance of Brighton residents acting out the Freedom of Association Doctrine was the 1960 Peter Tolliver case. Two neighbors tried, unsuccessfully, to prevent the Tollivers, an African-American couple, from buying a home on their street.

NAREB went on to aggressively campaign against federally funded fair-housing projects being built in predominantly white neighborhoods. In 1963, NAREB shifted gears to promote their Home Owners' Bill of Rights - a document centered on the notion that homeowners have a basic right to choose whom to sell or rent their property to. In actuality, this is *not* a right, as specifically stated in President Johnson's 1968 Fair-Housing Act. Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of housing based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, and familial status. Limiting the ability of free citizens to purchase property wherever they choose and had the funding to pay for it ran contrary to the very essence of the American Dream.

Refusing to back down from its Property Value Axiom, NAREB continued to support racial steering and other tactics to prevent minorities from securing residence in predominantly white neighborhoods - all in the name of maintaining property values.

In 1972, NAREB became NAR (the National Association of Realtors®). From 1910 until the 1970s, NAREB played a leading role in creating the racial landscape we see in Monroe County and Brighton. Between 1940 and the late 1960s, the African-American population of Rochester ballooned from 3,000 to 50,000, and yet as their personal wealth from hard work and success in business increased, their movement was still largely restricted to the 3rd and 7th wards of the city. During the same time period, the population of Brighton doubled from about 13,000 to over 26,000, but the demographics of that population did not change as dramatically. Even as recently as 2000, the African-American population accounted for less than 4% of all Brighton residents (and by 2024 was still only 6%).

In 1933, one of President Roosevelt's first New Deal programs was the creation of the Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC), designed to prop up failing banks and mortgages. The HOLC revolutionized home finance in the United States by buying up mortgages facing foreclosure and refinancing them at more favorable terms. They created the fixed-term, fixed-rate self-amortized mortgage, which is what we have today. It became known as the American Mortgage. Between 1933 and 1935, the HOLC bought up and refinanced over 1,000,000 failing mortgages nationwide, several of them right

here in Brighton.

The HOLC was always a temporary program. The federal government did not intend to continue holding mortgages. As a more permanent fix for the housing crisis of the Great Depression, Congress established the Federal Housing Administration (FHA).

Rather than holding mortgages outright, the FHA program relieved qualified lenders of investment risk by insuring eligible mortgages. Which mortgages would be eligible for FHA insurance? The FHA Underwriting Manual guided FHA 'valuators' in determining whether, or not, a local mortgage was of sufficiently low risk against default or declining value to be insured by the federal government. The Manual was a complex set of explanations, formulas, and ratings to be used for this purpose. Not all mortgages qualify for FHA insurance.

Underwriting is concerned with property value and its sustainability. You don't want to be insuring mortgages that are likely to lose value over the life of the loan. What kind of single-family homes are likely to hold their value over the life of a thirty-year mortgage? That would be new suburban homes, in rigidly zoned neighborhoods, that have a low probability of being infiltrated by 'inharmonious racial groups' (which meant groups for which the neighborhood was not intended). It was argued, once again, that inharmonious racial groups would bring down property values. This is carefully spelled out in the 1936 Underwriting Manual. During the late 1930s and 1940s, restrictive covenants were an enhancement for developers trying to secure FHA insured loans for their projects.

However, while much has been said about the impact of restrictive covenants on the demographics of suburban America, there was actually a four-pronged attack on equal housing opportunities. The FHA addressed **zoning**, which increased the sizes and prices of private lots and homes, and prevented the construction of lower-priced or multi-family homes. It also addressed **restrictive covenants**, which directly or indirectly banned racial minorities from occupying homes in certain neighborhoods in the suburbs. **NAREB ideology** encouraged real estate agents and homeowners alike to use discriminatory practices to control what the incoming homeowners of a neighborhood looked like. Finally, the **federal sponsorship of discriminatory practices** pushed for selective lending to predominantly white homeowners. The historic lack of a more diverse population in Brighton was not simple coincidence or homeowner preference, but rather it was a carefully engineered recipe to encourage some and discourage others from being able to purchase and own property within the town.

The 1971 Town Plan (Comprehensive Development Plan for the Town of Brighton) is a wealth of information about Brighton's response to the county-wide housing shortage of the 1960s and its projected continuation into the 1970s.

African American families at all income levels found it difficult, if not impossible, to find housing outside the city of Rochester - and even inside the city beyond the red-lined neighborhood boundaries. Low income white families also encountered housing scarcity in the suburbs, yet the construction of new suburban garden apartments grew.

The decade of the 1960s saw a shift in the character of housing development in Brighton from low density single family dwellings to increased residential densities. *“Over 75% of the total housing units authorized in Brighton during 1960-1969 were for apartment units.”* (Town Plan p. 81) Nearly all of these were higher-end garden apartments. They were not intended for lower-income families. Although these additions to housing stock reduced Monroe County's

housing shortages overall, they did nothing to alleviate the shortages at the lower end. Here is a breakdown of Brighton's housing stock as of 1970:

- About 38% of the total land area of the Town is devoted to residential use.
- 90% of that area is single family detached units (Class A, B, and C).
- 10% is multi-family units, nearly all garden apartments, but also two high-end, high-rise buildings at the corner of Clover and East Ave and some low-rise developments in commercial zones on Elmwood, Clinton, Monroe, Edgewood, and Crittenden.

By the mid-1970s, nearly all of Brighton's residential districts were fully developed. The residential housing stock of Brighton has not changed significantly in the last 50 years; nor has the total population (according to census data, the population in 1970 was approximately 35,000, and by 2020 it had risen to only approximately 37,000). Zoning decisions made between 1925 and 1975 have held fast.

'Affordable housing' is a complicated term to define because so many diverse segments of the population have different concepts of what "affordability" means. In the 1990s, an affordable housing project was completed in Brighton that should be acknowledged, and it developed because of a confluence of the right factors at the right time: state-owned land, state priorities, and local support from a Town Supervisor and Town Board committed to doing something about the lack of affordable housing in Brighton. Spearheaded by former Town



Council Rock neighborhood development sign declaring "highly restrictive" as triumphant benefit

Supervisor Sandra Frankel (1992-2002) and Councilmen Ray Tierney and James R. Vogel, Deerfield Woods was designed to build 70 individual homes for moderate income (50-80% of area median income), first-time homeowners who were income eligible. Tucked in behind the northwest corner of Clinton and Westfall, many Brighton residents are unaware of its existence or history. A fuller description of the project is available in the local history area of the Brighton library in a Town of Brighton Planning Documents box (1990-1999); r/LH/352.0006/MEM.

To our credit, in the spring of 2025, 100 years after the publication of our first zoning ordinance, the Brighton

Planning Board approved a proposal for a new development to take over the abandoned site of the former Rochester Psychiatric Center on Elmwood Ave. The new development would include 120 residential units for low- and moderate-income individuals. No shovels in the ground yet, but it's a start.

Former Supervisor Frankel, long a voice for affordable housing in Brighton, summed up the situation succinctly in a 2014 Democrat and Chronicle article:

*"We all have a stake in the success of the greater Rochester area, and that includes reducing the concentration of poverty in the city. One piece of the puzzle is to ensure*

*that all communities have their fair share of low- and moderate-income housing, which may require changes to land-use plans and zoning."*

To that: Amen.

HB

*Sue Barocas is a retired RCSD teacher and long-time Brighton resident. She has spent the last 5 years as an independent researcher with town historian, Mary Jo Lanpbear, investigating housing discrimination in Brighton from 1925-1975. Her full report, with extensive resource lists, is available at:*

*<https://zachbarocas.com/images/Our-Town-Initial-Report-Sue-Barocas-Brighton-NY-2024.pdf>*

With a splendid view of the Pinnacle Hills and the Reservoir, the old McFarlin Farm, lying between Elmwood Avenue and Winton Road South, adjacent to Monroe, has long been considered the finest undeveloped building site in Brighton. Its irregular terrain near Elmwood and its long rolling stretches extending back toward Ashbourne Road hold exceptionally interesting landscape possibilities.

HomIndustries has acquired this old farm and soon will build on it a Community of smart homes conforming to the best in Colonial architecture. The minimum plot of land with each house will be 75 feet by 120 feet and, for those who desire it, additional land will be available. Naturally no land is available for building by anyone other than HomIndustries. All road and sewer work, grading and seeding will be done by the Corporation. Side walks, electric light poles and such encumbrances are to be omitted in an effort to give the Community a distinctive atmosphere.

In addition to having a natural beauty, the old Farm is advantageously located. Churches, both Protestant and Catholic; subway and bus stations, good stores, Brighton No. 1 School, all are an average of 5 minutes walk from the Community. Downtown Rochester can be reached by auto in 12 minutes and yet a car will take the home owner in five minutes to several country clubs, to Cobb's Hill skating rink, tennis courts and the public parks.

Homes will be available as low as \$5,350, with such conveniences as oil heat, cleaned and humidified air, gas range and electric refrigerator, a wood-burning fire-place, two car attached garage and all-metal kitchen cabinets. The present price scale is, of course, temporary. Jan. 1, 1935, saw an

increase and undoubtedly more will follow as labor and raw material costs rise on the returning business tide. HomIndustries requires a deposit of 20% of the cost of the house at the signing of the contract. The balance will be financed thru an F. H. A. guaranteed mortgage maturing in 20 years and amortized by monthly payments which include principal, interest, taxes and fire insurance.

Here are two examples of this financing method:

\$5,350 Home	\$6,800.00 Home
Down Payment \$1,070.00	Down Payment \$1,360.00
Mortgage \$4,280.00	Mortgage \$5,440.00
Monthly Paym't \$ 42.80	Monthly Paym't \$ 54.40

High taxes will never prevail in a HomIndustries Community. The reason is simple - the Corporation does all the road work, places all the sanitary sewer connections and thus relieves the home owner of the heavy assessments for these improvements that have plagued the tax payer in nearly all smart residential sections for years. It is estimated that taxes on a \$5,350 home will run as low as \$125.00 to \$130.00 annually.

Of course the Community is hedged with protective restrictions. The bulk of these are customary in any smart community. HomIndustries feels, however, that its primary obligation in this category lies in the careful selection of the people who will comprise the Community. There is little that can be said about this obligation but the Corporation will gladly tell the names of those who have already purchased homes. They will speak for themselves.

*The above 1936 advertisement for a new HomIndustries development may seem innocently enthusiastic, but in historical context, much of the language references the exclusivity of the neighborhood in ways that are now recognized as deeply discriminatory and unconstitutional. The "distinctive atmosphere" and mention of "country clubs" might only imply generally upper class amenities, but the mention of "protective restrictions" being fashionable and "careful selection of the people who will comprise the Community" are more directly indicating that simply having the means might not be enough to live in this neighborhood.*

## MERCHANTS OF MONROE No. 20: BRUCE BELLWOOD - “MR. BRIGHTON”

By Ray Tierney III, *Historic Brighton Member*

If you've driven down Monroe Avenue recently, you may have noticed a banner draped upon Tuthill Lighting. The message displayed celebrates 101 years ago when G.B. Tuthill began the business. Amazingly, it originally specialized in making lamps when only half the homes in the area had electricity. During the following century, Tuthill, his daughter Esther Mae Bellwood, and currently G.B.'s grandson

(Esther's son) Bruce, continued and expanded the focus of the business. As the Tuthill Lighting story is both centennial and generational, I will focus this installment of the Merchants of Monroe on the current custodian, Bruce Bellwood.

Bruce's first memory of the business was playing above his grandfather's Tuthill Lamp and Shade store at 907 Monroe Avenue in the Cobbs Hill

area. The B in G.B. Tuthill stands for Bruce, making Bruce Bellwood the namesake of his grandfather. When his mother, Esther, took over the business in 1962, one of her first actions was to move it to 1689 Monroe Avenue where it remains as one of the longest standing businesses in the Town of Brighton. When I asked Bruce if he ever considering moving the business he said, “No, the way I looked at it, if we ever moved we would no longer be a landmark”. It is where Bruce got his start as he fondly remembers helping fix lamps when he was only ten years old.

Bruce helped out in the store in his youth, and upon graduation from Geneseo University in 1981, he dove head first into running the business with his mother. By this time the business was beginning to change as lighting fixtures rather than lamps were becoming the focus of interior illumination. His first real imprints on the business were to materialize as he helped expand the business into specialized installations and renovations.

In 1990, Tuthill Lighting partnered with the Smithsonian to restore the lighting at the George Eastman House. Bruce was quoted in the D&C on 11/24/24 that it was “Tuthill's largest project of pride”. That high visibility project opened the door to projects at General Lee's homestead in Virginia, and Henry Ford's residence in Dearborn, Michigan to name a couple. That portion of the business eventually was minimized as Bruce's family began to maximize. The projects in addition to being complex were not



Three generations of Tuthill lighting, left to right: G.B. Tuthill, Esther Mae Bellwood, and Bruce Bellwood



Tuthill Lighting on Monroe Avenue celebrating 100 years of business

local, and his children were growing. Not much comes before “job” in an entrepreneur’s life, but it is clear that “family” did for Bruce.

His innovative nature began to surface as he gradually assumed control of the business. An example of that is a 2004 promotion involving Tiffany Lamps. The full page ad ran in the Brighton Pittsford Post on September 22nd. The Tour de Tiffany Lighting Truckload sale in addition to being very successful was also an indication of Bruce’s ever-growing love of his community.

In the lower portion of the above-mentioned ad there was an announcement of the upcoming Brighton Homecoming Parade and Celebration. A headline in the Brighton-Pittsford Post on September 15, 2004 read: “He’s

working hard on starting a tradition.” Bruce, in his capacity on the Brighton Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, conceived, organized, promoted and executed the event. Imagine the moving parts (consulting the school district and the town, working with highway jurisdictions for the needed road closures, procuring the entertainment, constructing a business and vendor area, coordinating emergency services) involved in pulling off the feat. I remember that first year passing the review stand, listening to the Skycoasters playing in the triangle and seeing Bruce smiling ear to ear as the floats passed by. Pat Kelly, the president of the Brighton Chamber of Commerce, summed it up best when he said in the Brighton-Pittsford Post, “*You could call him Mr. Brighton.*” Bruce was quoted saying, “*I want this to be every year, this is an*

*eternity type thing*”. His enthusiasm was obviously contagious as the celebration has become a signature town event every fall for over twenty years.

Another example of his community involvement was his creation of the “Foundation for a Miracle” that helps people coping with the nervous disorder, Freidrich’s Ataxia. The inspiration came from a high school classmate. Efforts such as the above led to him to receiving recognition including a 100 Year Legacy Award from St. John Fisher University.

It’s no surprise that his answer when asked, by the Rochester Business Journal (11/22/24), to define his business philosophy that he reached back to his much admired mother’s words from many years ago. “*Take care of every customer one on one and there always will be a tomorrow.*” Today Bruce can proudly take his place as a fitting addition to this series celebrating exceptional “Merchants of Monroe”.

—————HB—————



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# HISTORY TODAY: HISTORIC PHOTOS AT BRIGHTON HIGH SCHOOL

By Amy Dodd Enis, *Historic Brighton President*

Seven Historic Brighton framed photographs of early Brighton that were previously on display in the former Grinnell's restaurant on Monroe Avenue are now hanging in the Brighton High School (BHS) Library Classroom. This fulfills part of our mission to "educate our community about Brighton's past," and their addition to the classroom has sparked conversation and curiosity with students and teachers alike.

According to Howard Enis, BHS Librarian, "I have numerous classes of grade levels 9-12 students in my classroom throughout the year, and I frequently have students and other teachers ask me about the photos or point out references to what the areas pictured look like today. These photos add value to the classroom because the images are compelling and stimulate interest in our community and how it has grown and changed over the years. This gift of framed photos is

an important addition to our library environment and culture."

BHS Technology Teacher, Brian

Knebel, saw the photographs as an opportunity to provide students in his Architecture class with the chance to learn more about them and



One of the many framed prints now on display at Brighton High School; this one features "Brighton Four Corners Looking West on East Avenue, c. 1935"

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other important Brighton landmarks. Brighton Town Historian, ex-officio Historic Brighton Board Member, and font of information, Mary Jo Lanphear, was invited to give a presentation to his class in September. "This Place Matters" is a PowerPoint presentation that Lanphear developed to celebrate and inform about historic preservation in Brighton through its buildings. The entire program includes 70 historic and modern-day slides of various addresses in the Town. Lanphear was able to review approximately 50 of them with the class and share important stories about the people who resided in them. By making connections between the buildings themselves, and the people behind them she was able to paint a vivid picture of the Town's history for the students.

In a note after the event Knebel shared the following, "I learned so much, and I'm sure the students did too! The students were taking notes intensely and with great interest!" He added that "We are so fortunate to have (Lanphear) as a steward of our town's history!" Photos of the presentation and a brief synopsis of it were also shared with the Board of Education as part of a BHS update at a meeting this past October.

According to Lanphear "The best part of being the Town Historian is sharing history with others, especially young people like Mr. Knebel's Architecture class who followed up the presentation with thoughtful thank you notes."

The photographs also piqued the interest of students in the BHS Photography Club and initiated a project, still in progress, to photograph

their own select interpretations of significant landmarks in the town. Student members of the club met with Lanphear earlier in the year about the possibility of doing a future show of their work at the Historic Buckland House.

The photographs were originally scanned and framed as the result of a NYS Legislative Grant sponsored by State Senator, Joseph Robach that Historic Brighton Board founding member, Arlene Vanderlinde, applied for to finance the creation of an exhibit of the early Brighton photographs. The \$10,000 grant allowed Historic Brighton to hire Light Impressions to scan and enhance the selected early photos of the Village of Brighton and frame them for a lecture and photo exhibit. The photos were first

exhibited as part of this presentation at the Harley School. From there the photos went to Barnes and Noble in Pittsford for a month.

Ultimately, the late Dave Grinnell, a longtime sponsor of this newsletter, offered to have the photos professionally hung on the walls of his restaurant so that patrons could see them and enjoy them. When the restaurant closed, the photos needed to be rehomed, which resulted in their current location at BHS. The hope is that they continue to spur thoughtful consideration for years to come.

—————HB—————



*Another one of the framed prints now on display at Brighton High School; this one features "Brighton No. 01 School (no longer extant)"*