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University of Minnesota Libraries



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What is a covenant?

- A provision in a property sale that limits the buyer's use of the property
- Often “runs with the land,” meaning that it's binding on future buyers as well
- Not all restrictive covenants are racial, many still legal

Source: [Legal Information Institute, Cornell Law School](#)

Warning

Racist and outdated language coming in next slides

Racial covenant

538

Doc. No. 712111. Filed April 23 1914 at 12:35 o'clock P. M.

Henry B. Scott & Wf.
to
Wels A. Anderson

THIS INDENTURE, Made on the 25th day of May A. D. One Thousand Nine Hundred and ten (1910) by and between Henry B. Scott and Leonora C. Scott, his wife, by W. P. McFarland, her attorney in fact, or the City of Burlington, Iowa, parties of the first part, and Wels A. Anderson of the County of Hennepin in the State of Minnesota, party of the second part:

WITNESSETH, That the said parties of the first part, in consideration of the sum of Five Hundred Twenty-five and No/100ths (\$525.⁰⁰/₁₀₀) Dollars, to them paid by the said party of the second part, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, do by these presents Grant, Bargain, Sell, Convey and Confirm, unto the said party of the second part, his heirs and assigns, the following described Lots, Tract, or Parcels of Land, lying, being and situate in the County of Hennepin and State of Minnesota, to-wit:

The East One-half (E¹/₂) of Lot numbered Five (5), in Block numbered Eleven (11), Seven Oaks Acres, Minneapolis, Minnesota according to the recorded map or plat thereof on file and of

The party of the second part hereby agrees that the premises hereby conveyed shall not at any time be conveyed, mortgaged or leased to any person or persons of Chinese, Japanese, Moorish Turkish, Negro, Mongolian or African blood or decent. Said restrictions and covenants shall run

then are broken by the grantee herein or his heirs or his assigns, then and in that case this conveyance shall be void.

It is further mutually covenanted that the premises hereby conveyed shall not at any time be conveyed, mortgaged or leased to any person or persons of Chinese, Japanese, Moorish, Turkish, Negro, Mongolian or African blood or descent. Said restrictions and covenants shall run with the land and any breach of any or either thereof shall work a forfeiture of title, which may be enforced by re-entry.

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD THE SAME, Together with all the hereditaments and appurtenances thereto in anywise appertaining, and the said Henry B. Scott, one of the parties of the first part does covenant with the said party of the second part his heirs and assigns, as follows: That they are lawfully seized of said premises in fee simple, and that they have good right and power to grant and convey the same; that the same are free from all incumbrances whatsoever except special installments of taxes, if any, levied, but not paid and that the said party of the second part his heirs and assigns, shall quietly enjoy and possess the same; and that the said parties of the first part will WARRANT AND DEFEND the title to the same against all lawful claims.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the said parties of the first part have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first above written.

Signed, Sealed and Delivered
in Presence of
E F Hanbold
Edwin J Smith

Henry B Scott (Seal)
Leonora C Scott (Seal)
by W.P. McFarland Atty in fact.

DEED RECORD—86

Minnesota Uniform Conveyancing Blank No. 5

23

SECURITY PRINTING COMPANY, ST. CLOUD, MINN. — 110101 P1

INSTRUMENT

N75982

Edward Vandersluis and Louise

Vandersluis, his wife

TO

Carl W. Grewe and Ruth M. Grewe,
husband and wife

Filed for record this 25th day of October

A. D. 1941, at 11:30 o'clock A. M.

Thos. Niedzielski Register of Deeds.

By Deputy.

This Indenture, Made this 27th day of October, 1941,
between Edward Vandersluis and Louise Vandersluis, his wife,
also known as Ed Vandersluis

of the County of Benton and State of Minnesota, part i.e.s. of the first part, and
Carl W. Grewe and Ruth M. Grewe, husband and wife,

of the County of Benton and State of Minnesota, parties of the second part,

Witnesseth, That the said parties of the first part, in consideration of the sum of -----
One Dollar and other valuable consideration ----- DOLLARS,
to them in hand paid by the said parties of the second part, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, do hereby Grant, Bargain,

to the place of beginning; possession shall be given to grantees November 1st, 1941; PROVIDED, that this deed is given subject to the restrictive covenant of the grantees that for twenty five years after date said premises shall not be sold, leased or rented or occupied by any person of the negro, oriental, semitic or Indian races, or who has the blood of any of said races (except as limited by present laws or treaties) and that said premises shall be used only for residential purposes.

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To Have and to Hold the Same, Together with all the hereditaments and appurtenances thereunto belonging or in anywise appertaining, to the said parties of the second part, their assigns, the survivor of said parties, and the heirs and assigns of the survivor, Forever, the said parties of the second part taking as joint tenants and not as tenants in common.

And the said

part i.e.s. of the first part, for themselves, their heirs, executors and administrators do covenant with the said parties of the second part, their assigns, the survivor of said parties, and the heirs and assigns of the survivor, that they are well seized in fee of the lands and premises aforesaid and have good right to sell and convey the same in manner and form aforesaid, and that the same are free from all incumbrances.

And the above bargained and granted lands and premises, in the quiet and peaceable possession of the said parties of the second part, their assigns, the survivor of said parties, and the heirs and assigns of the survivor, against all persons lawfully claiming or to claim the whole or any part thereof, subject to incumbrances, if any, hereinbefore mentioned, the said part i.e.s. of the first part will Warrant and Defend.

D. No noxious or offensive trade or activity shall be carried on upon any lot nor shall anything be done thereon which may be or become an annoyance or nuisance to the neighborhood.

E. No persons of any race other than the Aryan race shall use or occupy any building or any lot, except that this covenant shall not prevent occupancy by domestic servants of a different race domiciled with an owner or tenant.

(38)

108 N. P. Dodge Jr. and Laura W. Dodge,
D husband and wife
261 To
Odin Hagen

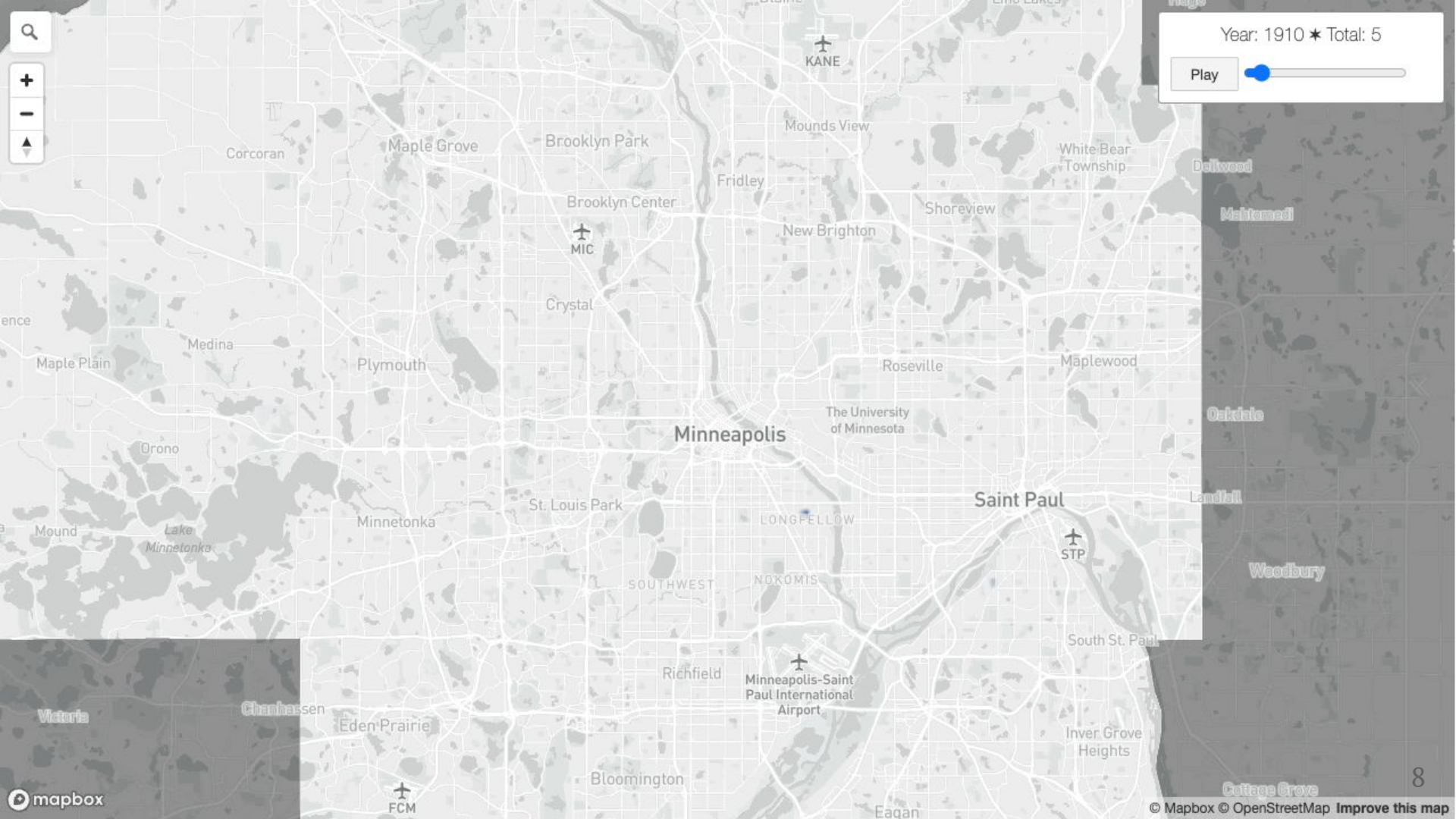
Warranty Deed
Document #132613
Dated April 18, 1919
Acknowledged April 18, 1919
Recorded May 3, 1919
2 Witnesses

This lot is sold and deed given on the express covenant that no dwelling shall at --- time be placed thereon of less than four rooms, shingle roofing, drop siding, painted and plastered, or of brick, cement or stone, and that said premises shall never be occupied by a colored person or for any immoral use. It is understood and agreed that these restrictions shall run with the land, and any violation thereof shall cause the title herein conveyed to revert in the grantors.

any immoral use. It is understood and agreed that these restrictions shall run with the land, and any violation thereof shall cause the title herein conveyed to revert in the grantors.

50¢ Internal Revenue Stamp affixed and cancelled.

(39)



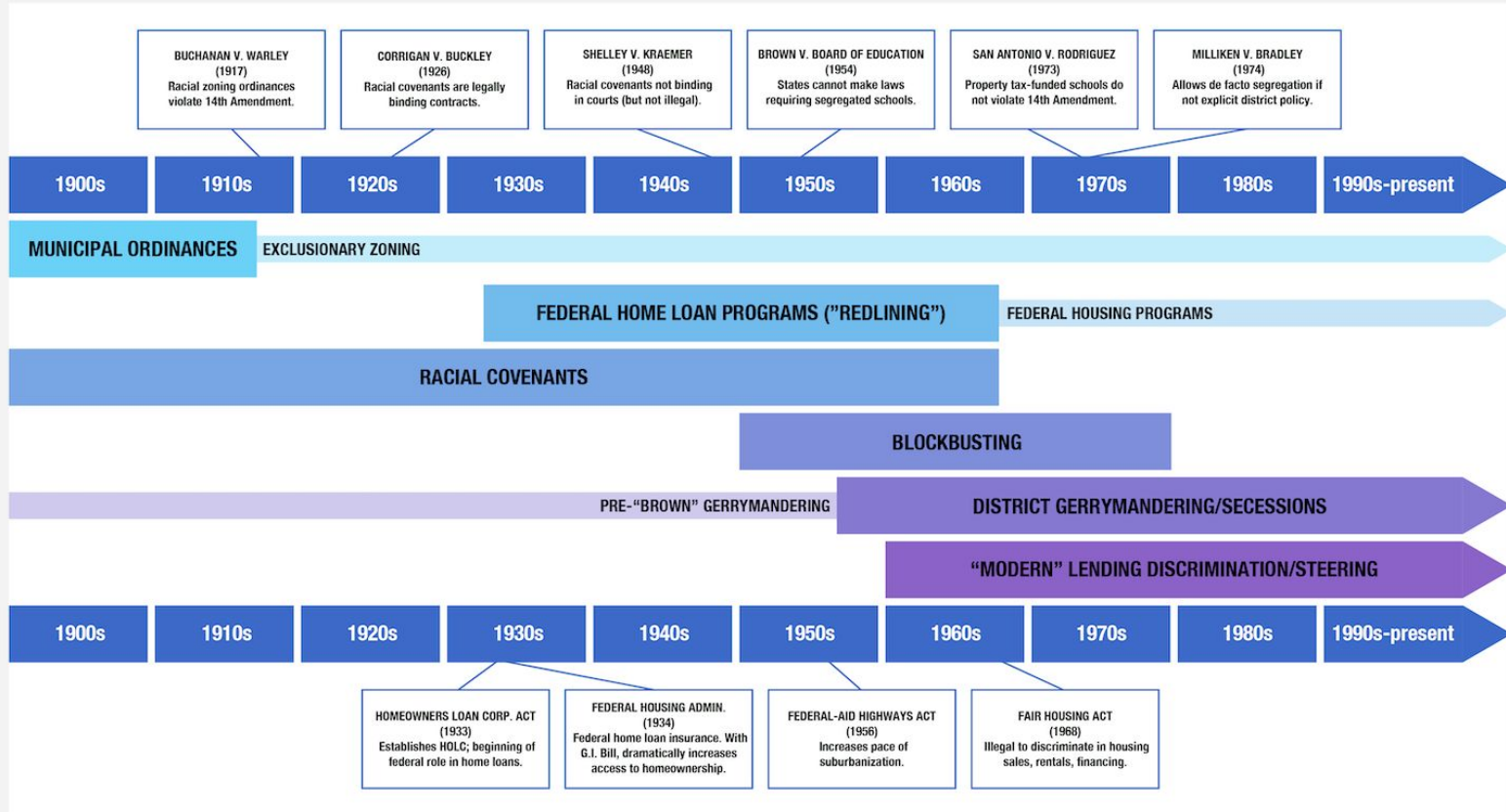
Year: 1910 ★ Total: 5

Play



Why should we still care?

THE CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR RACIAL/ETHNIC SEGREGATION STRATEGIES, LAWS, AND SUPREME COURT DECISIONS, 1900-2022



Twin Cities metro home ownership

75%

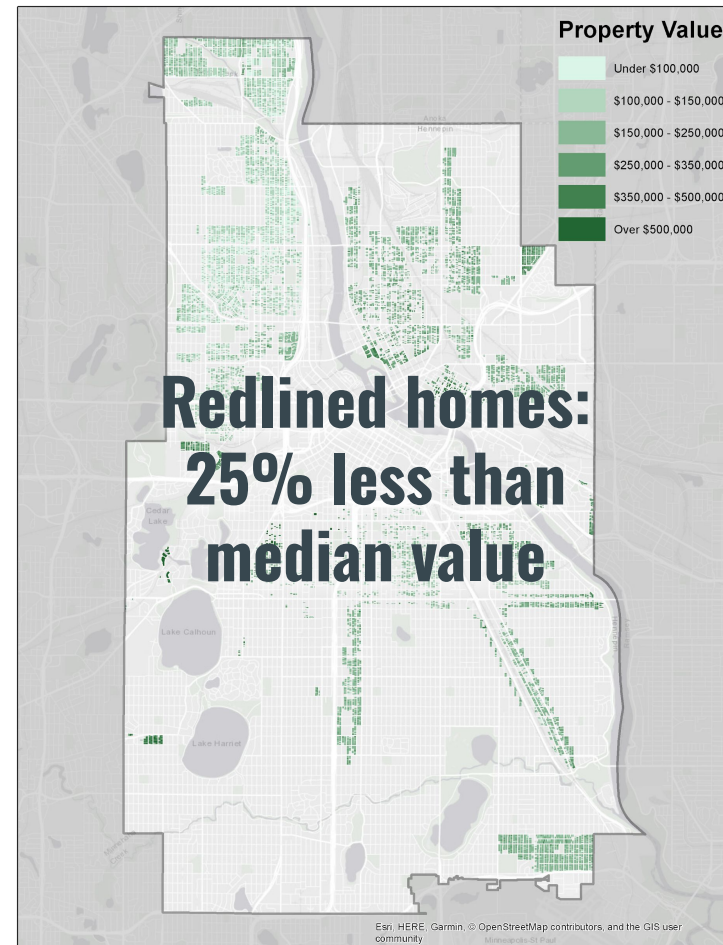
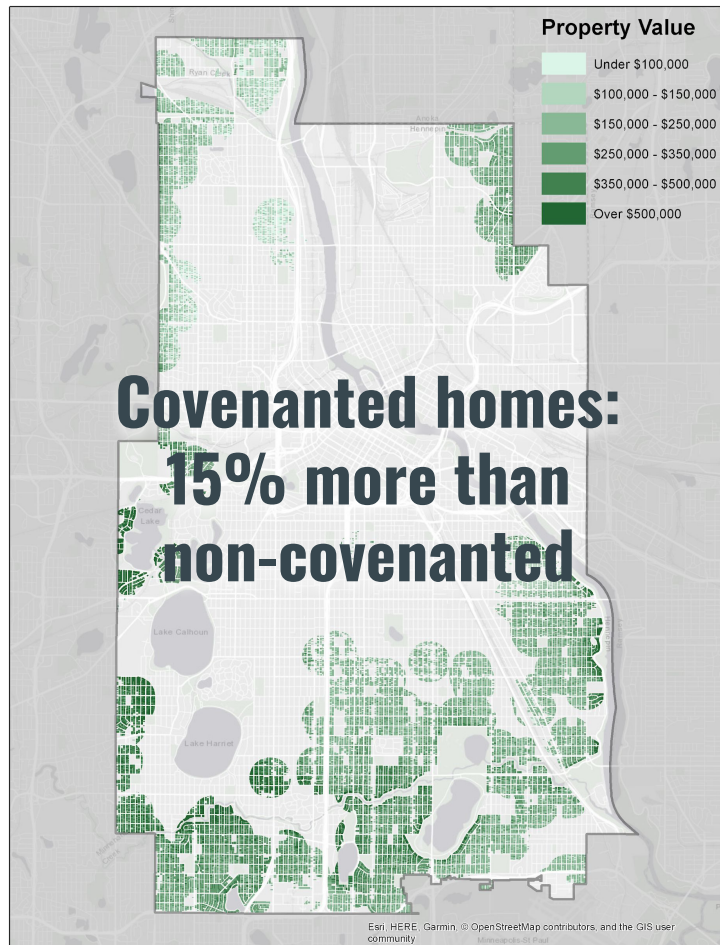
White families

33%

Black families

Largest gap in the country

Nationwide: Black home ownership about the same as 1968



Uniform, granular, public data

The screenshot shows the GitHub interface for the repository 'UMNLibraries / mp-us-racial-covenants'. The repository is public and has 10 watchers and 1 fork. The main branch is 'main'. The repository contains several files and folders, including 'mn-hennepin-county', 'mn-ramsey-county', 'wi-milwaukee-county', '.gitignore', 'LICENSE', and 'README.md'. The 'README.md' file is selected and displays the following content:

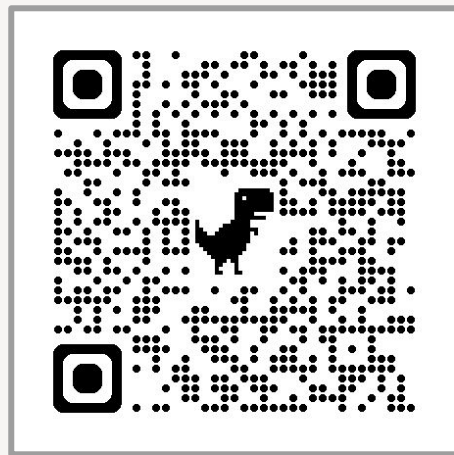
U.S. racial covenants data

Mapped racial covenants, produced by Mapping Prejudice volunteers and Mapping Prejudice and [collaborators nationwide](#). Data maintained by [Mapping Prejudice](#).

Current spatial and data files

Please note that these files are works in progress. Both the data and data formats are subject to change as we add covenants and refine our processes.

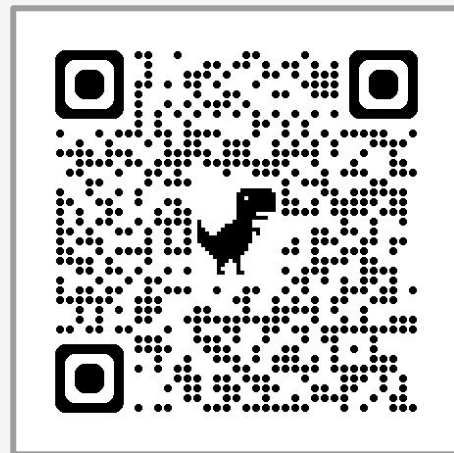
These files represent the covenants that have been successfully mapped and do not include unmapped covenants.



U.S. racial covenants
data on Github

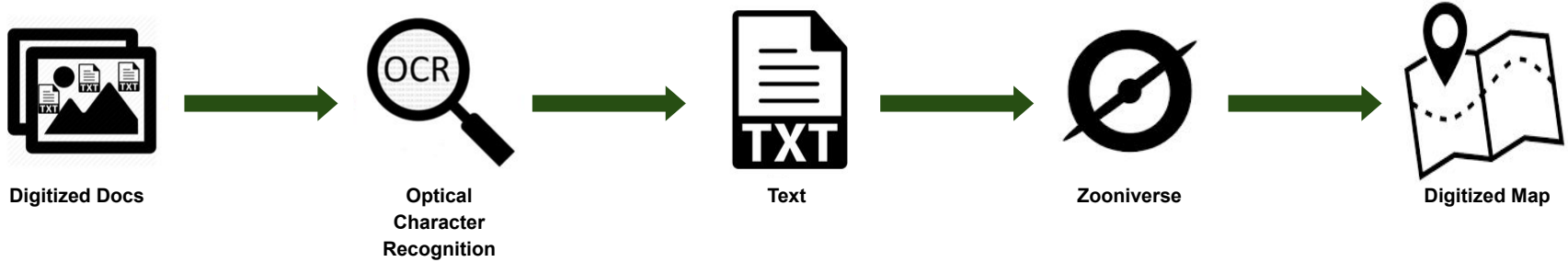
Same file formats for each county

main mp-us-racial-covenants / mn-ramsey-county /		
mikejcorey Initial commit		
..		
📁	covenants-mn-ramsey-county	Initial commit
📄	covenants-mn-ramsey-county.csv	Initial commit
📄	covenants-mn-ramsey-county.geojson	Initial commit
📄	covenants-mn-ramsey-county.xlsx	Initial commit



U.S. racial covenants
data on Github

Mapping Process



Stats to date

- **~14 million** pages processed across 11 counties
- **60,000+** covenants mapped
- **11,000** volunteers
- **51,000** volunteer hours
- In conversation with **30+ counties** across **10 states** + DC

Why crowdsourcing?

- It's more accurate
- We don't have 300 graduate assistants
- We do have 9,400+ volunteers
- Milwaukee: 200 - 700 transcriptions per day
- Peak in 2020: ~2,000 per day



"The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T.," 1953

zoom.us Meeting View Edit Window Help

Zoom

Speaker View

pennypetersen

Marguerite Mills

Dorothy G

maren bjork

Eileen

Julie Strahan

Liz A

David Peterson

barb

RANeiwert

Carol Gurstelle

Tim Beck

Paula

Beth Swanberg

Sharon C

kathy

Chesshir, Clark

Carol Jackson

Mute Stop Video

Security Participants 18 Chat Share Screen Polling Record Live Transcript Breakout Rooms Reactions

End Meeting

The process is the product

"This is super tough to read. It makes me emotional. And, it counters that narrative that racism is 'imagined' or 'doesn't exist'."

One volunteer stated that it was revelatory, so matter of fact, that it countered the narrative of, "...just pull yourself up by your bootstraps."

"I wasn't surprised that it happened, but to actually see it was eye opening"

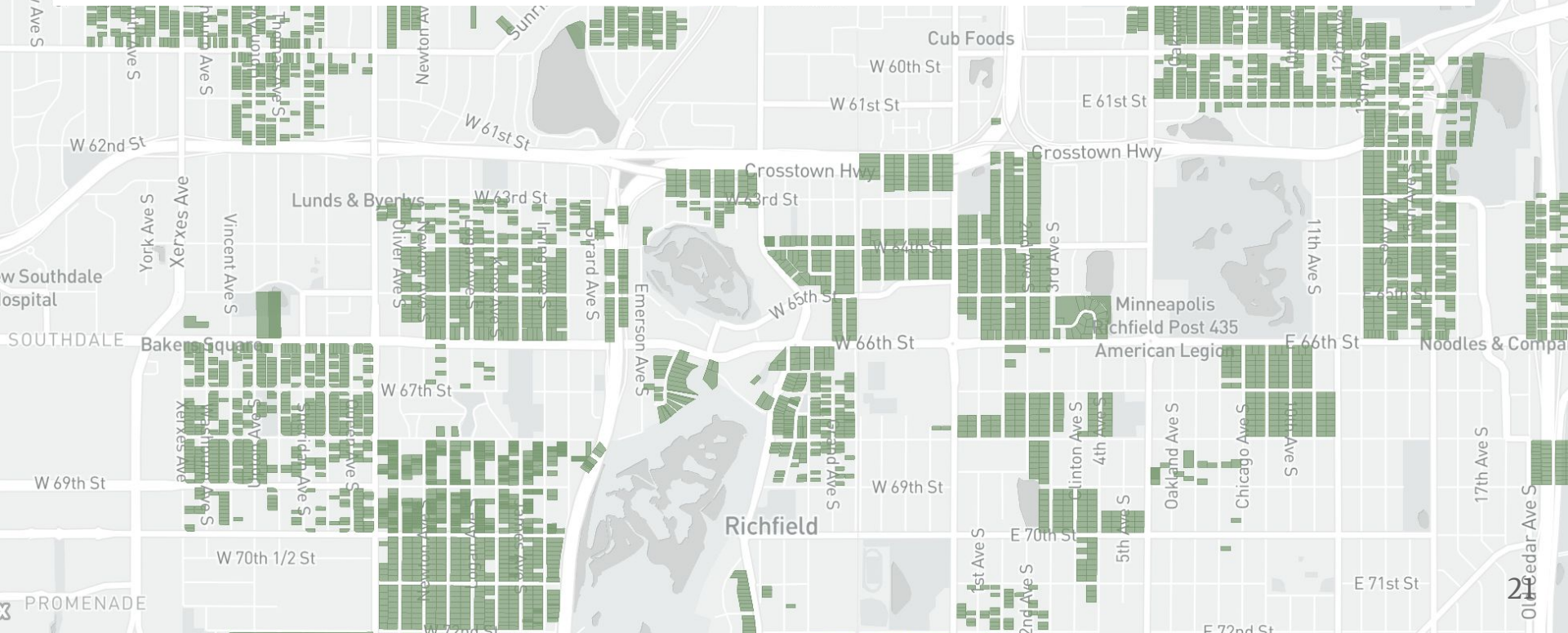
Guiding principles

- The purpose of covenant research is to **understand the scale and nature of racial covenants**. This **should be used to unmake the legacies** of racial covenants and segregation; **support policymaking** that repairs the harm done; **prevent future discrimination and segregation**.
- **Technological innovation should be in the service of facilitating, expanding and improving the volunteer experience**. Removing community crowdsource volunteers from the process is antithetical to the Deed Machine's goals.
- The Deed Machine should be able process records from a **wide range of property record regimes and file formats**, with a primary focus on a United States context.
- Data produced by Deed Machine installations does not need to be published in the same repository, but all such data **should conform to emerging uniform standards**.

How we map matters

How will this map be received? And what does that mean for how we map?

How will this map be received? And what does that mean for how we map?



Property identification is hard

WITNESSETH, that the said party of the first part, for and in consideration of the sum of ~~seven hundred~~
----- Dollars, to it in hand paid by the said part~~ies~~ of the second part,
the receipt whereof is hereby confessed and acknowledged, does by these presents grant, bargain, sell, remise, release,
alien and confirm unto the said part~~ies~~ of the second part, and ~~their~~ heirs and assigns, forever, all
~~that~~ certain piece----- or parcel----- of land situated and being in the Township of Pittsfield, County
of Washtenaw, and State of Michigan, and described as follows, to-wit:

Lot numbered 5 of Block 8 in the Subdivision of Lots 1 to 73 inclusive,
excepting Lots 34 and 36, and Lots 109 to 111, inclusive, of Oak Park, a
Subdivision of part of the west half of Section 1, Pittsfield Township,
Washtenaw County, Michigan, as recorded May 3, 1928 in Liber 8 of Plats,
page 6.

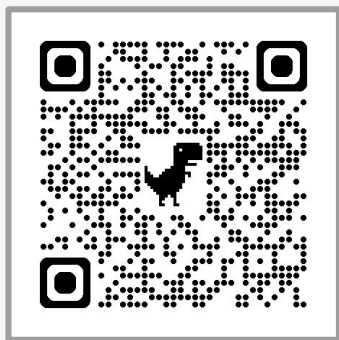
- What is the lot, block, and addition?
- Many possible answers
- Only one is correct, requires context and additional research
- Each individual property really matters
- Statistically good is not good enough



urgency

A constant sense of urgency :

- makes it difficult to take time to be inclusive, encourage democratic and/or thoughtful decision-making, to think and act long-term, and/or to consider consequences of whatever action we take;
- frequently results in sacrificing potential allies for quick or highly visible results, for example sacrificing interests of BIPOC people and communities in order to win victories for white people (seen as default or norm community);
- reinforces existing power hierarchies that use the sense of urgency to control decision-making in the name of expediency;
- is reinforced by funding proposals which promise too much work for too little money and by funders who expect too much for too little;
- privileges those who process information quickly (or think they do);
- sacrifices and erases the potential of other modes of knowing and wisdom that require more time (embodied, intuitive, spiritual);
- encourages shame, guilt, and self-righteousness to manipulate decision-making;
- reinforces the idea that we are ruled by time, deadlines, and needing to do things in a "timely" way often based on arbitrary



whitesupremacyculture.info

*The times are urgent,
let us
slow down.*

[Bayo Akomolafe](#)

The Emergence Network

What are we trying to fix?
What are we trying to scale?



And who benefits from that? Who loses out?

What *You* Can Do

- Understand historical harm and its impact on your work
- Ensure everyone leaves better off
- Decenter systems, center people
- Work on yourself



A critical time

“The function, the very serious function of racism is distraction ... It keeps you from doing your work. It keeps you explaining, over and over again, your reason for being. Somebody says you have no language and you spend twenty years proving that you do.”

– Toni Morrison, 1975, via Karen Attiah

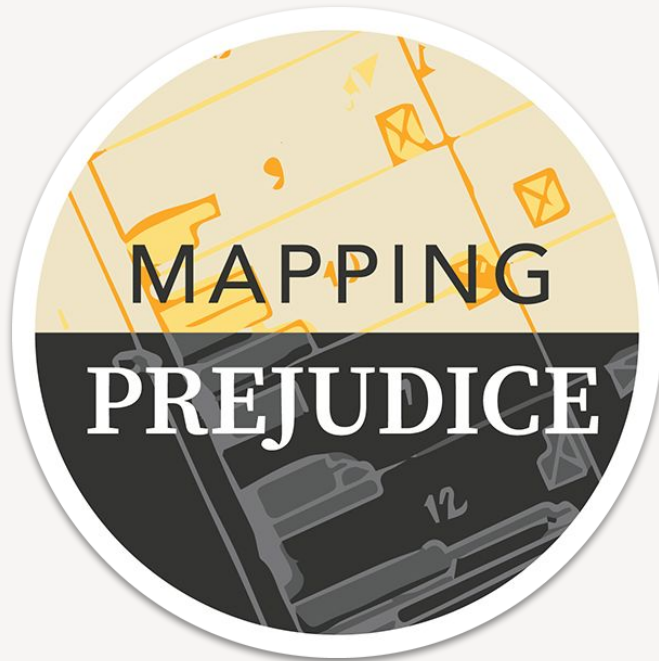
“[D]iversity, equity and inclusion is ingrained in our values, and it advances and elevates our mission.”

– University of Minnesota President Rebecca Cunningham, Feb. 3, 2025

Volunteer with Mapping Prejudice



Link to <https://mappingprejudice.umn/take-action/volunteer>



mappingprejudice.umn.edu



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