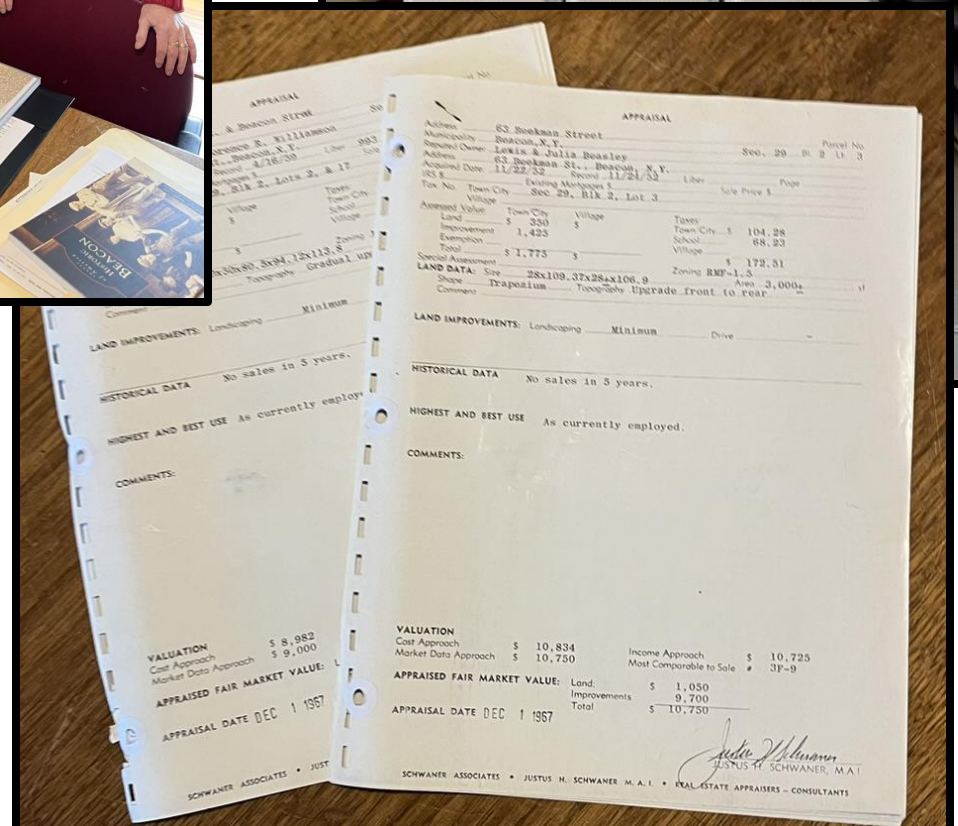
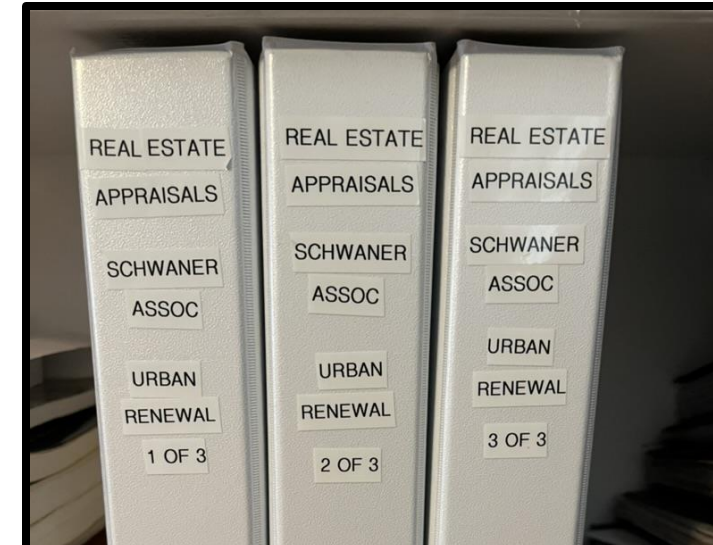
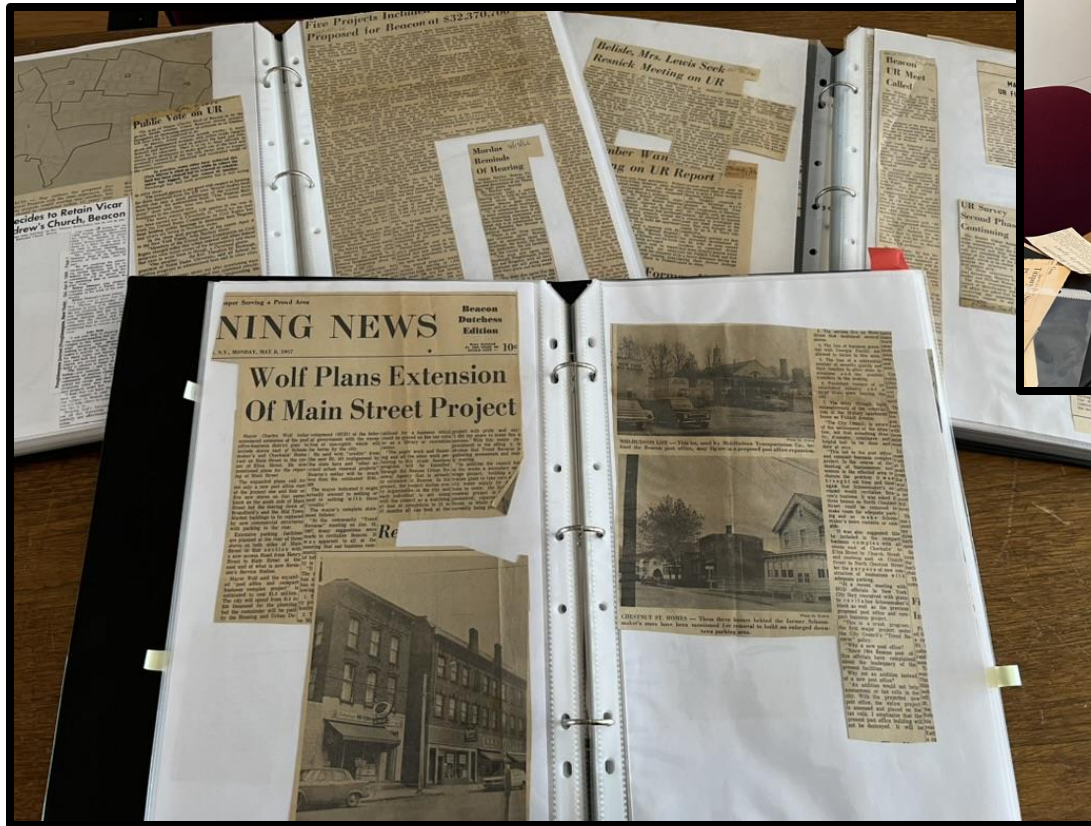


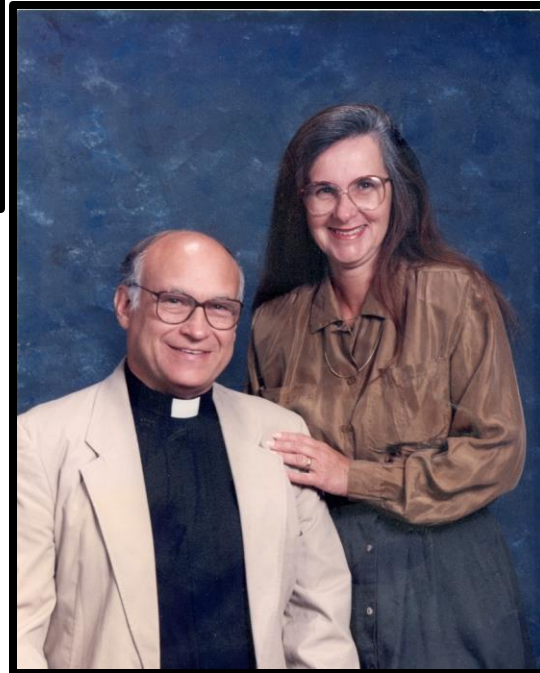
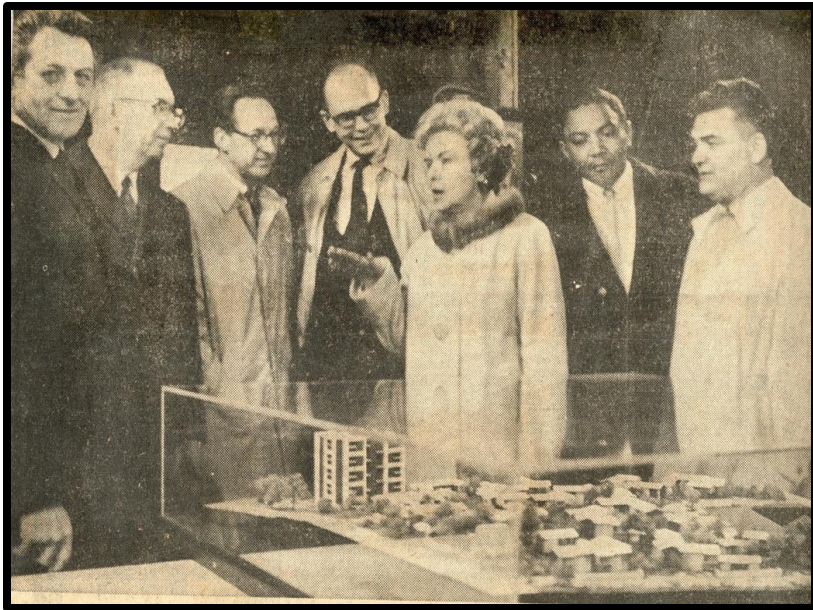
Beacon's West End Story: A Historical Perspective of Urban Renewal in the 1960s and 70s



Beacon Historical Society Archives



Photos from the BHS Archives





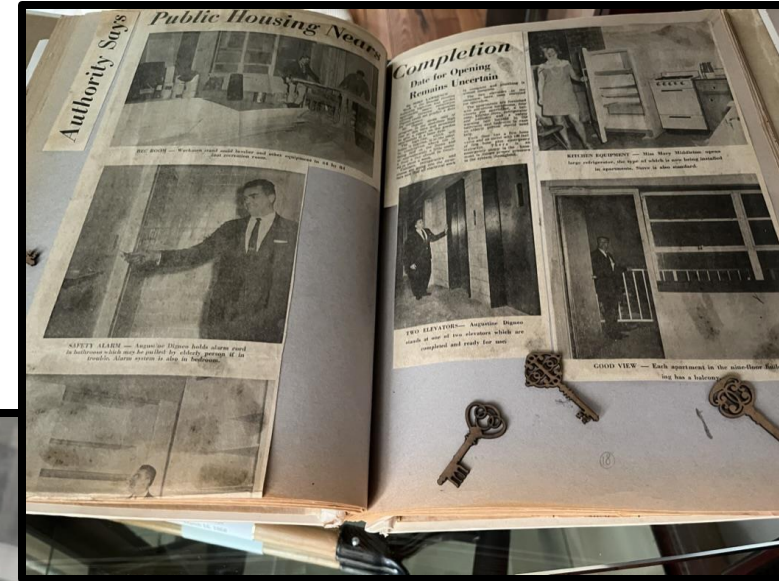
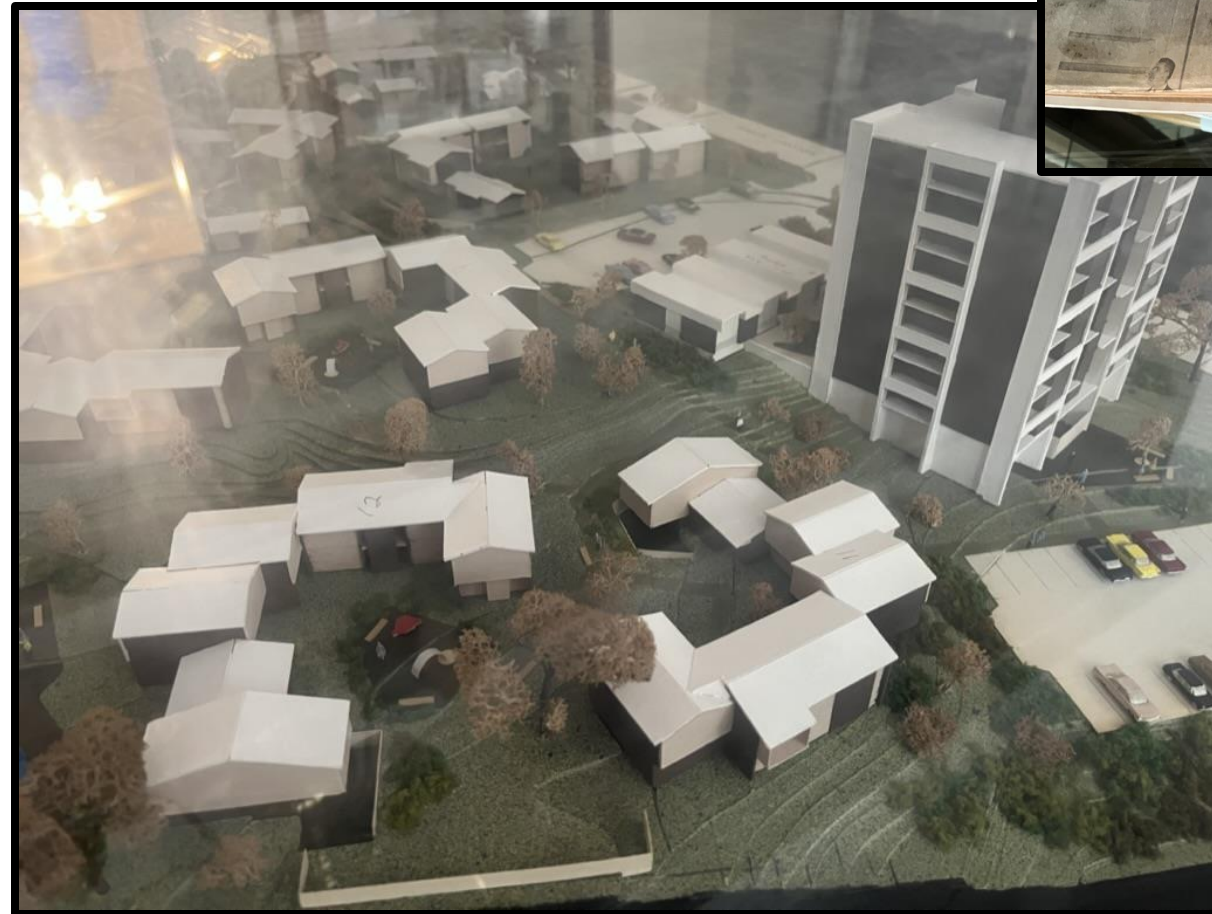
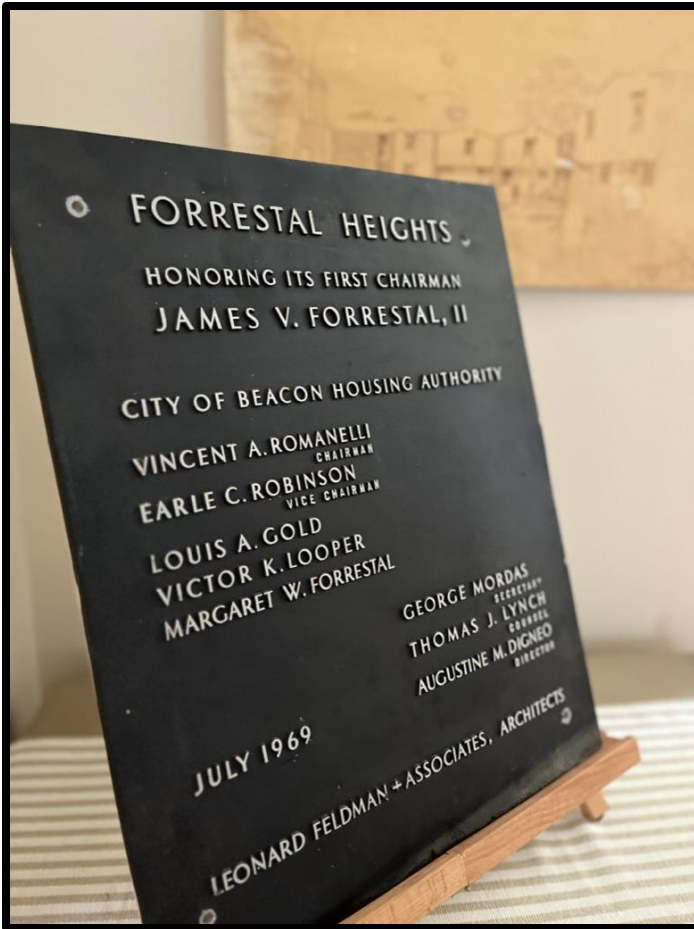
David Hochfelder



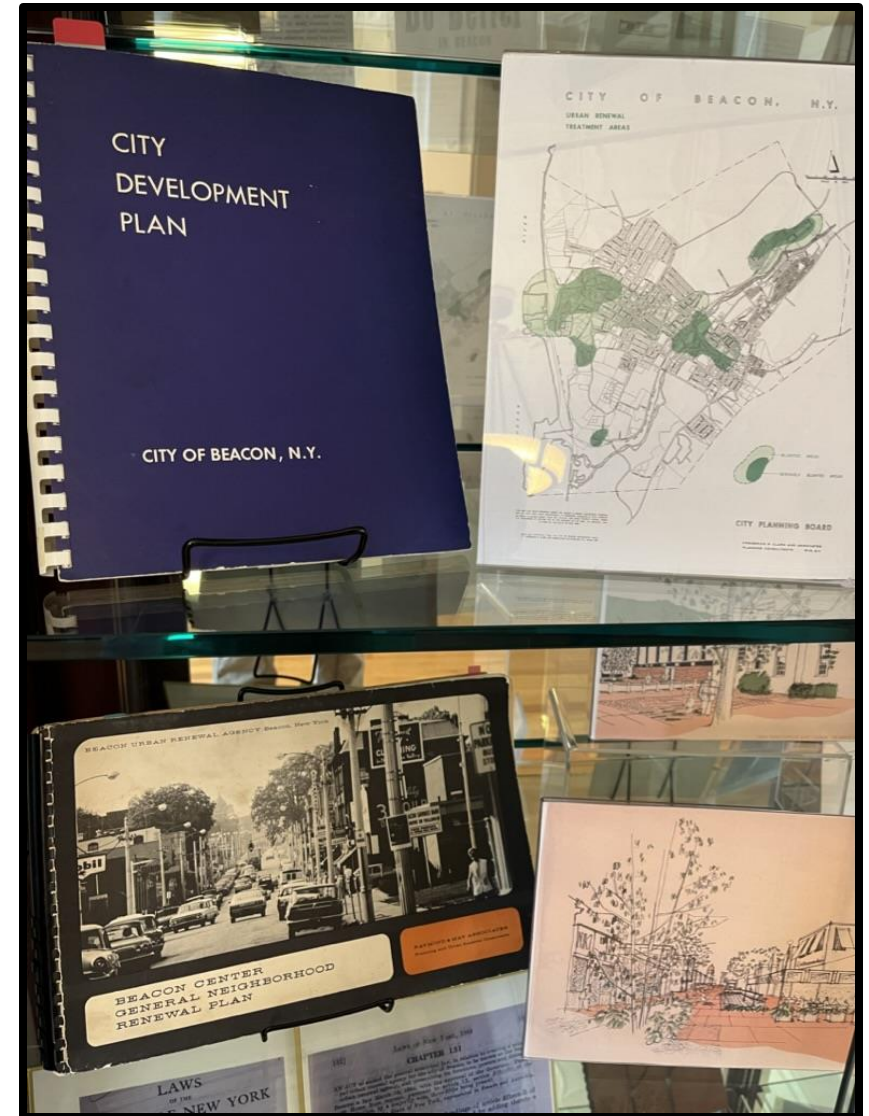
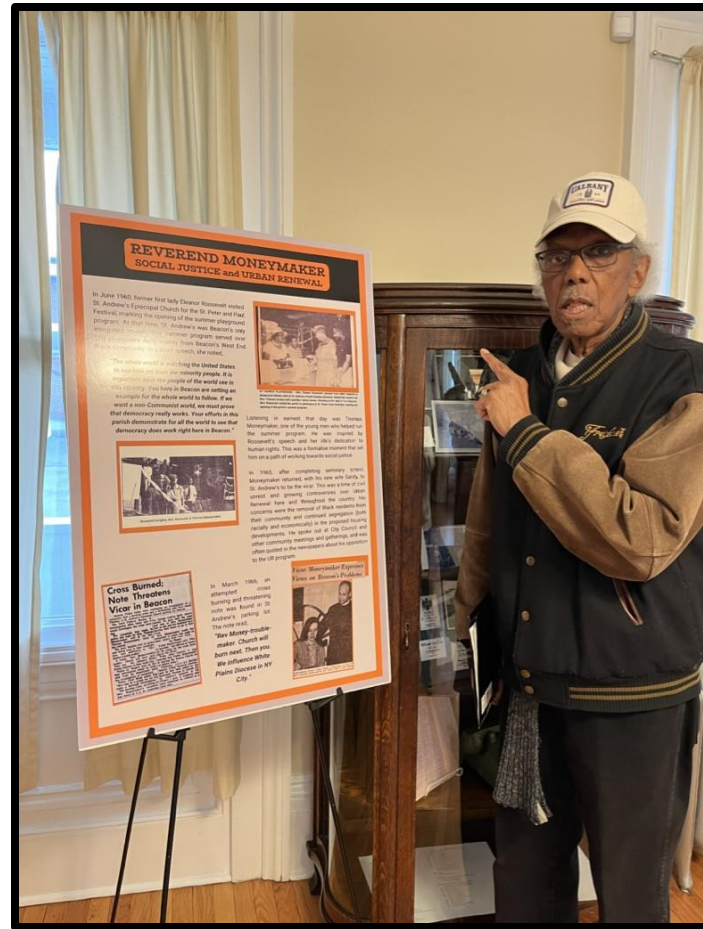
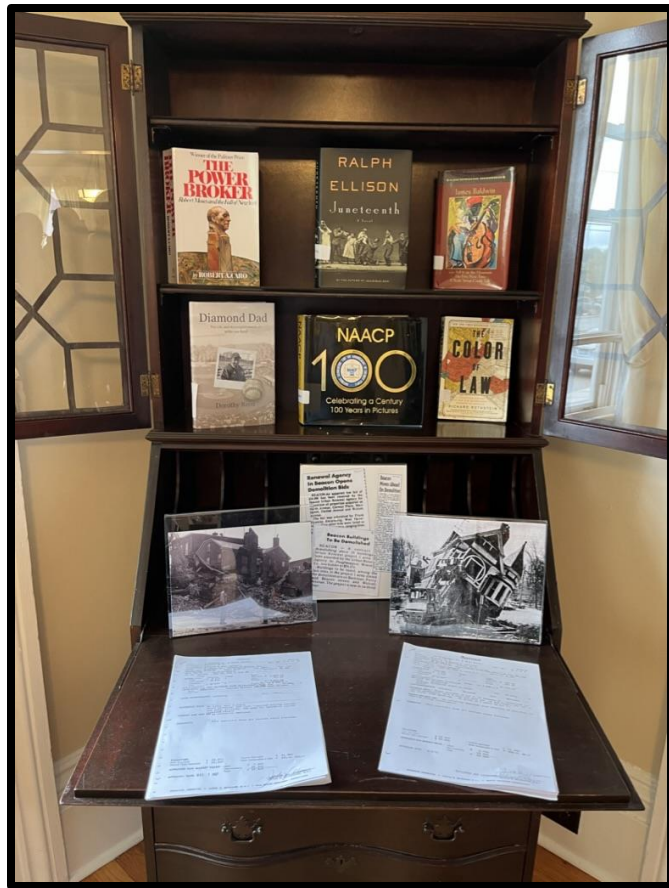
Michelle Rivas, Anne Pfau, Brooke Simmons, Connie Perdreau

Picturing Urban Renewal

Beacon Housing Authority at Forrestal Heights



Beacon's West End: A Historical Perspective of Urban Renewal in the 1960s and 70s.




Beacon Historical Society's Exhibition

This is Beacon Beacon's West End Story Podcast Series iambeacon.org/this-is-beacon

Ruben Simmons and Brooke Simmons



Professor Hochfelder (left), Connie Perdreau (right)



56 min

PLAY

Beacon's West End Story | Exploring Urban Renewal w/ Professor Hochfelder and Connie Whitener Perdreau

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Welcome to Beacon's West End Story! Join us on an extraordinary journey through time as we delve deep into the intricate history of Urban Renewal and its profound impact on the community of Beacon's West End.

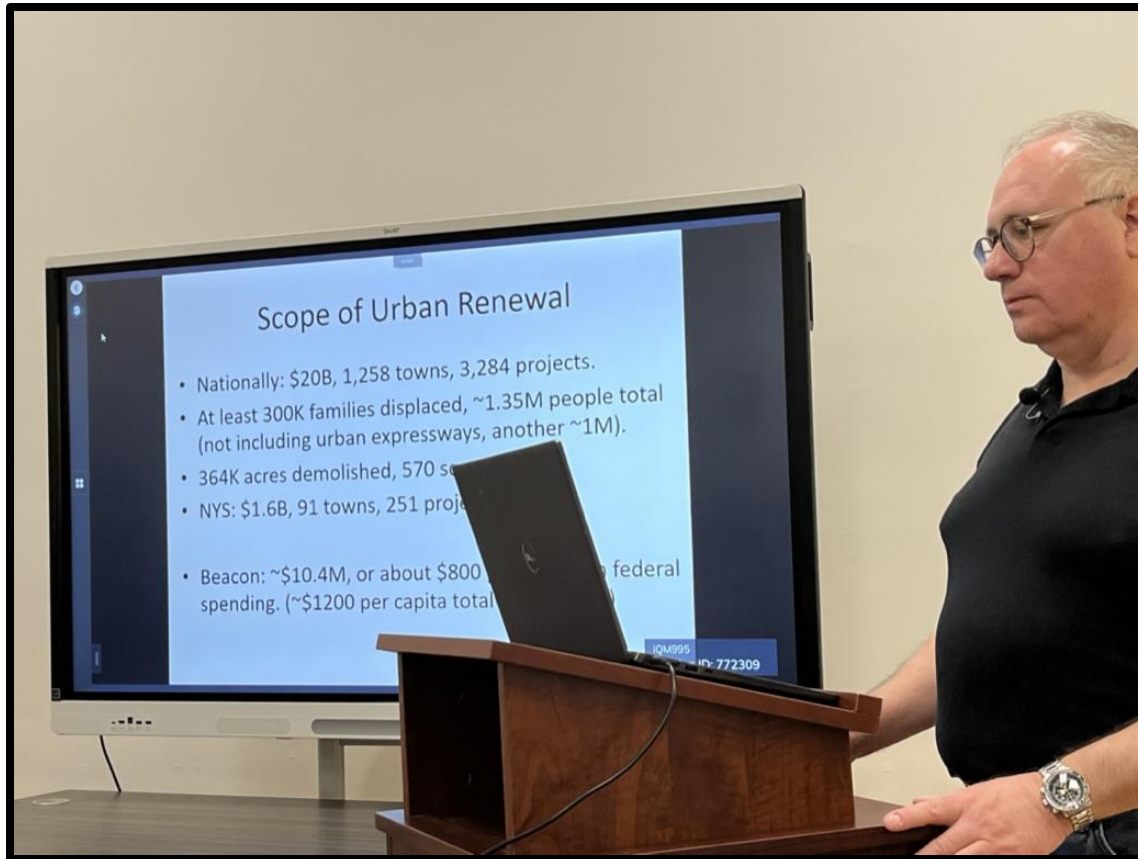
On this first episode, we have the privilege of sitting down with historian and University at Albany Professor, David Hochfelder. Together, we navigate the complex landscape of Urban Renewal, exploring its multifaceted aspects. Professor Hochfelder acts as our guide, leading us through the maze of funding sources, policy decisions, and urban planning strategies that shaped the course of Urban Renewal. We'll peel back the layers, unraveling the complexities of this historical phenomenon, and examine its intentions, successes, and the far-reaching consequences it left in its wake.

But this episode isn't solely about historical analysis; it's about personal experiences too. We're honored to welcome a special guest, Connie Whitener-Perdreau, a former resident of the West End. Connie shares her unique perspective, providing a personal lens through which we can gain insight into the profound impact of Urban Renewal on Beacon's West End neighborhood.

Subscribe now to stay connected with our ongoing journey through the rich tapestry of Beacon's West End. If you're passionate about preserving the history of our community and would like to contribute by sharing your voice, photos, or artifacts from the West End, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at iambeacon.info@gmail.com.

Join us in celebrating the spirit of our community, exploring the complexities of Urban Renewal, and preserving the invaluable stories that define the Beacon's West End. [#BeaconWestEnd](#) [#UrbanRenewal](#)

Lecture on Urban Renewal by Professor Hochfelder



Beacon Library Community Room

Beacon's West End Story: Portrait of a Community



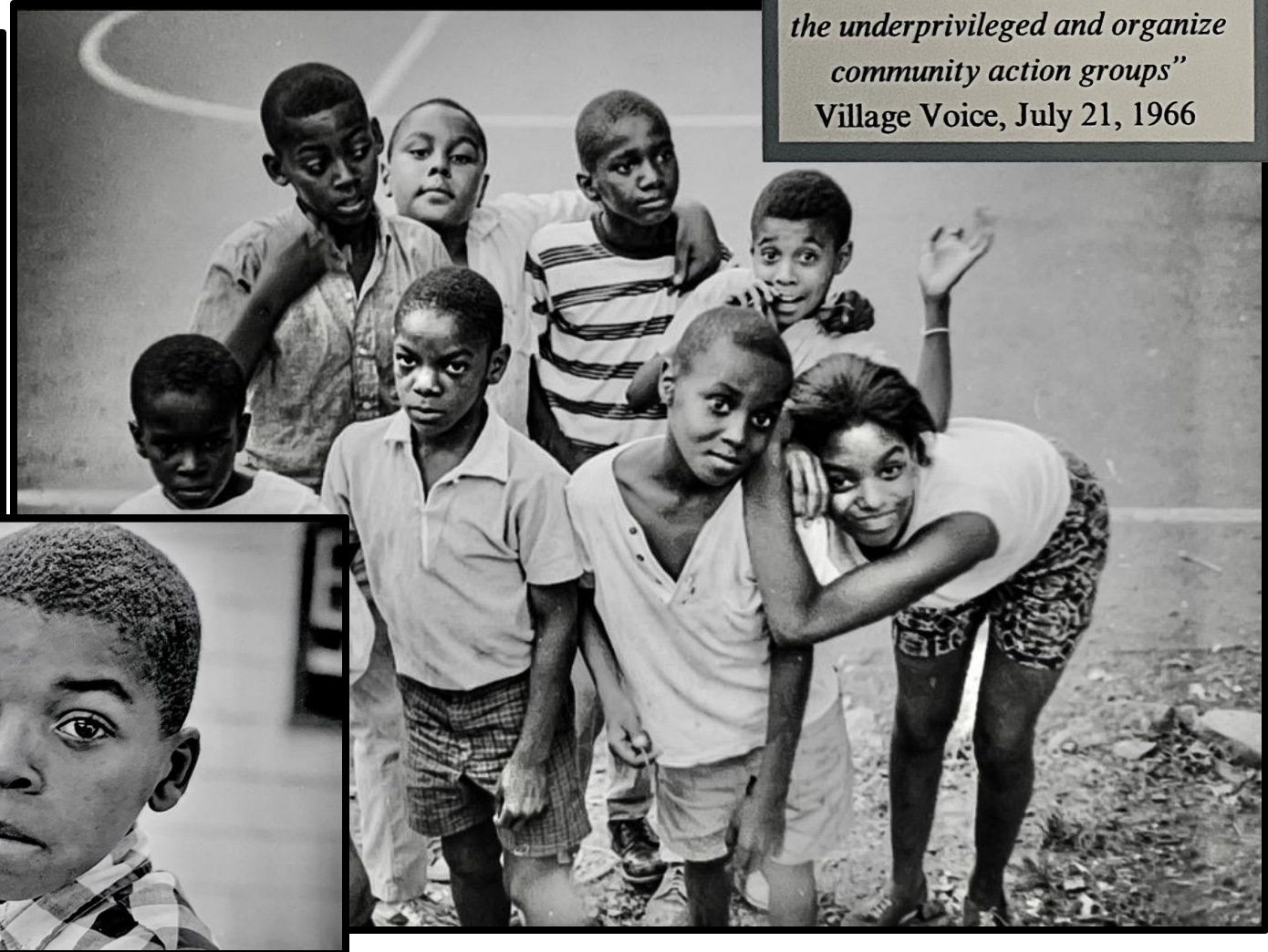
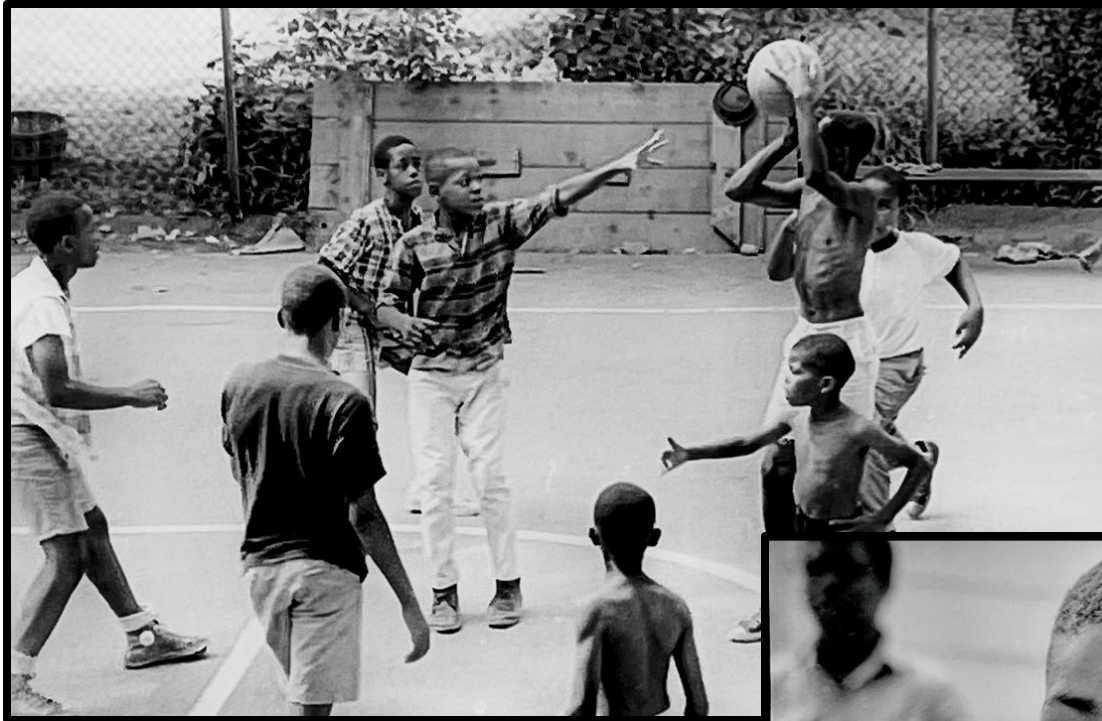
Michelle Rivas &
Leonard Sparks
from the
Highlands Current



Beacon Library Exhibition



Beacon's West End Story: Summer of 1966



the village **Voice**

"Workers needed now in a racially torn city, 60 miles from NYC to work with recreation program for the underprivileged and organize community action groups"
Village Voice, July 21, 1966



Beacon Library exhibition

Photos by Michael Raab



Michael Raab & Sandy Moneymaker



David Quill & Michael Raab

Video Interview and Chronogram Article about the Summer of 1966



The Highlands Current Newspaper

Reader-Funded News for Beacon and Philipstown

The HIGHLANDS Current

SPECIAL REPORT

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PART 1

Always Present, Never Seen

A Black history of the Highlands

By Chip Rowe

History is a prism that can be viewed from many angles. The white wealthy men who forged the nation took one view, and Blacks, Native Americans, women and the impoverished took others. Sometimes the colors produced by the prism cross and blend. But any honest view of history must turn the prism now and again.

The 1619 Project, which was a Pulitzer Prize for *The New York Times*, turned the prism, and the reaction was swift, with accusations that looking at our shared history in ways other than as it was written by white men in the 19th century was teaching white children to bear the guilt of past crimes.

Yet even before *The 1619 Project*, many Hudson Valley institutions had begun to reexamine the contributions of Black people, most of whom were enslaved during the 200 years before the institution was abolished in New York in 1827. In February, the John Jay Homestead in Katonah hosted a program highlighting the fact that the future chief justice enslaved people for more than 40 years after he first called for New York to ban it. In 2020, Boscobel began a project to examine the people enslaved by States Dyckman, who built the early 19th-century home that was relocated in 1956 from Montrose to Garrison.

In 2019, Historic Hudson Valley, based in Westchester County, produced a documentary, *People Not Property*, that acknowledged the earliest Black residents of the Hudson Valley and named their enslavers, including the owners of Van Cortlandt Manor in Croton and Philipsburg Manor in Sleepy Hollow.

"Slavery was the brutal foundation upon which the entire United States, north and south, was built," it stated.

Philipsburg Manor, which Historic Hudson Valley has preserved, was constructed by Africans enslaved by a Dutch merchant, Frederick Philipse (1626-1702), whose property covered about a quarter of modern-day Westchester. He and his son would become

major slave traders; the family is honored today by the name Philipsstown. According to Columbia University, before a Philips descendant donated three boxes of family papers to the university in 1930, she removed nearly every document related to its human trafficking.

A.J. Williams-Myers, a longtime professor at SUNY New Paltz who died in July, noted that Black people are almost nonexistent in standard local histories such as the *General History of Dutchess County*, published in 1877, or *The History of Putnam County* (1886), "other than to appear as a statistic when counting material possessions."

There are many examples of this oversight. The late Robert Murphy, who for

38 years edited the Beacon Historical Society newsletter, said that the best single source he found for Black history from the 19th century was the *Fishkill Standard*, although "a careful reading of the paper leaves only the briefest of sketches of what life was like for the Black men and women of that time." The exclusion is reflected in recent artwork by Jean-Marc Superville Sovak, who has a studio in Beacon. In a series of prints, *a-Historical Landscape*, he took 19th-century landscape engraving typical of the Hudson River School and inserted images from anti-slavery almanacs and abolitionist tracts of the same period. "What makes these works so American, I think, is not what is

depicted but also what's missing," he says. The relative lack of archival resources is a loss, says Michael Groth, author of *Slavery and Freedom in the Mid-Hudson Valley*, because "there's nothing more fascinating in our history than the central paradox of slavery and freedom — how can a nation so committed to the ideals of democracy and equality also become the largest slaveholding society in the Americas? And the freedom struggle is as dramatic and powerful a story as any that can be told."

This five-part series is designed to be an introduction to the Black history of the Highlands. Its title is borrowed from social historian Erica Armstrong Dunbar, who was referring to Black people during the time of the Revolutionary War, when Americans fought for white freedom: "They were always present, but never seen."

Arrival

The first Black people brought to the Hudson Valley came against their will, enslaved by the Dutch, who had arrived in 1624 to establish what is now New York City. Investors organized as the Dutch West India Company faced an immediate labor shortage because few whites were desperate enough to emigrate to work in isolation on rented land. If anything, they aspired to be merchants.

The company's initial shipment of humans to New Netherland, in 1625 or 1626, included about a dozen men and their wives, the men built public works projects, cut timber and burned lime, while the women were assigned to various company officials as domestic servants. Slavery would flourish in New York for another two centuries. It was never as integral to the economy as in the American South or West Indies, but many historians believe that, without African labor, the white aristocracy here could not have existed. The enslaved enabled the wealth of families whose names today are memorialized on maps and street signs in Philipstown and Beacon.

(Continued on Page 2)

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The Highlands Current

FEBRUARY 9, 2024 15

Summer of '66

Exhibit showcases forgotten photos from Beacon summer camp

By Leonard Sparks

A *Village Voice* ad lured an aspiring photographer named Michael Raab from New York City to Beacon during the summer of 1966.

More than five decades later, a story in *The Highlands Current* brought him back. Raab shot 35 mm film that summer while working as a counselor for a camp organized by St. Andrew's Episcopal Church at its South Avenue property. The images will be the focus of an exhibit that opens Saturday (Feb. 10) at the Howland Public Library in Beacon.

It is accompanied by a videotaped interview with Raab and Sandy Moneymaker, the widow of the late Rev. Thomas Moneymaker, St. Andrew's former rector and a community organizer. It was Thomas Moneymaker who in July 1966 placed the *Village Voice* ad seeking people to work "in a racially-tempered city" for \$20 a week plus room and board.

Raab, a supporter of the civil rights movement who traveled to Washington, D.C., in 1963 for the March on Washington, saw the camp as an opportunity to "be more of a participant" and decided to take a break from working as an assistant in a commercial photography studio.

The children in his black-and-white photos were mostly residents of Beacon's West End, a predominantly Black community whose homes and businesses were erased by Urban Renewal in the late 1960s and early '70s.

"What is so significant to me, and what I see in these pictures, is a sense of community," said Raab. "That really touched me." The history of that summer had been packed away and forgotten by Raab, who forged a career as a commercial photographer and then in real estate. Those memories stirred in May 2023 when he and his wife booked a three-day trip to Beacon after reading about the city's evolution.

Raab said he searched Google for information on Thomas Moneymaker and discovered *Always Present, Never Seen*, a 2023 film series by *The Current* on the history of Black people in the Highlands. The series included



an interview with Sandy Moneymaker about the integration of St. Andrew's and her husband's concerns about the impact of Urban Renewal on Beacon's Black residents. Raab emailed the newspaper about his summer in the city, which led to a meeting with Diane Lapis, a trustee of the Beacon Historical Society. Lapis set up a meeting between Raab and Sandy Moneymaker, and that "touched off again all these memories," he said.

"Diane spurred me to go back and look and see if I had any pictures from then," said Raab. "I was shocked when I found them."

During his sojourn at the summer camp, Raab and another volunteer from New York City slept on mattresses in a small cottage on St. Andrew's property. They ate inside Moneymaker's residence. Most memorable, he said, were the experiences with the kids, which he captured with a Nikon camera during breaks.

There were activities like basketball and an overnight trip to a campground owned by the Episcopal Diocese in Bear Mountain Park. The trip had one "scary" moment, however, when someone yelled the N-word from a car that passed the children as they walked at night along a road inside the park, he said.

One of the photos that strikes him the most, said Raab, shows four campers interacting with each other as they sit on a bench. Another child stands beside them. "They're all being together, being with each other — that sense of belonging somewhere," he said. "I got a lot out of that summer."

Beacon's West End Story: Summer of 1966 opens in the Howland Public Library's Community Room with an artist's reception on Feb. 10, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., and continues through March 3. The library is located at 313 Main St.

18 March 25, 2022

The Highlands Current

highlandscurrent.org



Connie Pedreaux grew up in this house at 68 Beekman St. before it was demolished in 1971.



This building stood at the corner of Beekman and Ferry streets before urban renewal. Beacon Historical Society

URBAN RENEWAL REVISITED

Project will recall Beacon neighborhoods lost to development

By Leonard Sparks

Connie Pedreaux's childhood home extended beyond the doors of the large house her parents owned at 68 Beekman St. in Beacon.

The four-story was part of something bigger: the largely Black west end that filled an area between the industrial waterfront and Bank Square. Pedreaux remembers a neighborhood where adults and children not only lived, but shopped and worshipped and played.

"It was a great community," Pedreaux said last month on the *I Am Beacon* podcast. "There was the camaraderie, the friends, the family, the church — all of that." The demolition of most of the area's structures under the federal government's urban renewal initiative in the 1960s and early 1970s is the subject of a project that Pedreaux is collaborating on with the Beacon Historical Society, Howland Public Library, *I Am Beacon* and *The Highlands Current*.

An estimated 140 buildings were demolished after Beacon launched its version of urban renewal in 1964 and the City Council approved, in 1965, a five-phase plan calling for the large-scale demolition of so-called "blighted" properties and the construction of new replacement housing and commercial space.

Large swaths of Beekman, Ferry and River streets, and parts of Main Street, were among the neighborhoods in which buildings were demolished, including, in 1971, Pedreaux's childhood home.

It was a program that, as in other cities, spurred charges of classism and racism, angered preservationists seeking to protect historic buildings and left unfinished projects as funding dried up. Others used the



This west end house was bulldozed to make room for a development. Beacon Historical Society

program's incentives to move to new apartments or buy houses in other areas of Beacon. The project, *West End Story: Urban Renewal in Beacon*, will tell those stories. It will partly rely on historical materials, including documents and pictures, but also on oral histories, photographs, documents, artifacts — from Beacon residents, she said. Anyone wishing to contribute can visit beaconlibrary.org/westend. "We hope to hear the voices from the past

Pedreaux's memories include working at St. James AME Zion Church, founded by free Blacks in 1847 in what was then called Fishkill Landing; sitting in her home's bay windows to watch people going to and from the ferry and train station; and riding a bus with her mother and other local residents to the March on Washington in 1963.

"Where I grew up does not exist anymore," she said during the *I Am Beacon* podcast. "They couldn't just save the nicer houses. They had to wipe out everything — the good, the bad and the ugly."

Once the houses were demolished, several projects were built: Forrestal Heights, the public housing complex for seniors and families on Wolcott Avenue; the Davies-South Terrace Apartments; a new post office on Main Street; and the Hammond Plaza condominiums at Beekman and Ferry streets.

Beacon residents dissatisfied by urban renewal were generally given priority for units at the developments. Others used cash assistance to buy homes. Pedreaux said her mother bought a house in the Mount Beacon Park community.

"It was a double-edged sword," she said of urban renewal. "It destroyed our community, at the same time, it allowed a lot of people to have better, more secure housing."

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A West End house is bulldozed to make room for a development. Beacon Historical Society

A Look Back at Urban Renewal

An exhibit and series of talks that begin next week will examine the "urban renewal" that altered the landscape in Beacon during the 1960s and 1970s, when the city demolished most of the buildings comprising the Black community on the West End.

"Beacon's West End Story," organized by the Beacon Historical Society, Howland Public Library, *I Am Beacon* and *The Highlands Current*, will tell the story through historical documents, photos, news clippings, oral histories and interactive programs.

Urban renewal was a federal initiative to revitalize cities with new construction. But as the organizers note, the process often had complex and unintended consequences, particularly on marginalized communities.

"Ours is an untold story and history," says Connie Whitener Pedreaux, a former West End resident who worked on the project. "Beacon's West End was once a vibrant, thriving community full of vigor, talent and potential."

Michelle Rivas, a Howland librarian, noted that there are few documents that offer the perspective of West End residents displaced by urban renewal. She said project organizers hoped to "start a dialogue about how these lessons from the past relate to issues facing our community today."

The project includes a four-part podcast; an exhibit at the historical society that opens with a reception from 1 to 3 p.m. on Sept. 30; a lecture at the Howland library at 3:30 p.m. on Sept. 30 by historian David Hochfelder on urban renewal in the Hudson Valley; an exhibit at the library that opens Oct. 14; a panel discussion at Springfield Baptist Church on Oct. 24; and a community conversation with residents of Forrestal Heights and Hamilton Fish Plaza on Nov. 15.



THE RISE UP PROJECT AND THE FOUNDATION FOR BEACON SCHOOLS PRESENT:

LINES OF DEMARCATION

MEMORIES FROM BEACON'S BLACK COMMUNITIES OF THE 20TH CENTURY

RUNTIME: 48 MIN FREE ADMISSION

FUTURE FILM SCREENINGS:

FEBRUARY 13TH - 6PM
 BEACON HIGH SCHOOL

FEBRUARY 24TH - 2PM
 ST. ANDREW & ST. LUKE
 EPISCOPAL CHURCH (15 SOUTH AVE)

FEBRUARY 29 - 6PM (FILM + Q&A)
 HOWLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY
 (LIMITED SEATING)

RESERVATIONS RECOMMENDED

www.foundationforbeaconschools.org/local-history-projects

A Local History Community Collaboration

Logos: RISE UP PROJECT, THE FOUNDATION FOR BEACON SCHOOLS, BEACON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, CITY OF BEACON, HOWLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY, I AM BEACON, Current.

Rise Up at St. Andrew's Church, the Foundation for Beacon Schools, and Beacon High School students



Museum Educator Grant

Pomeroy Fund, in partnership with the
William G. Pomeroy Foundation and the
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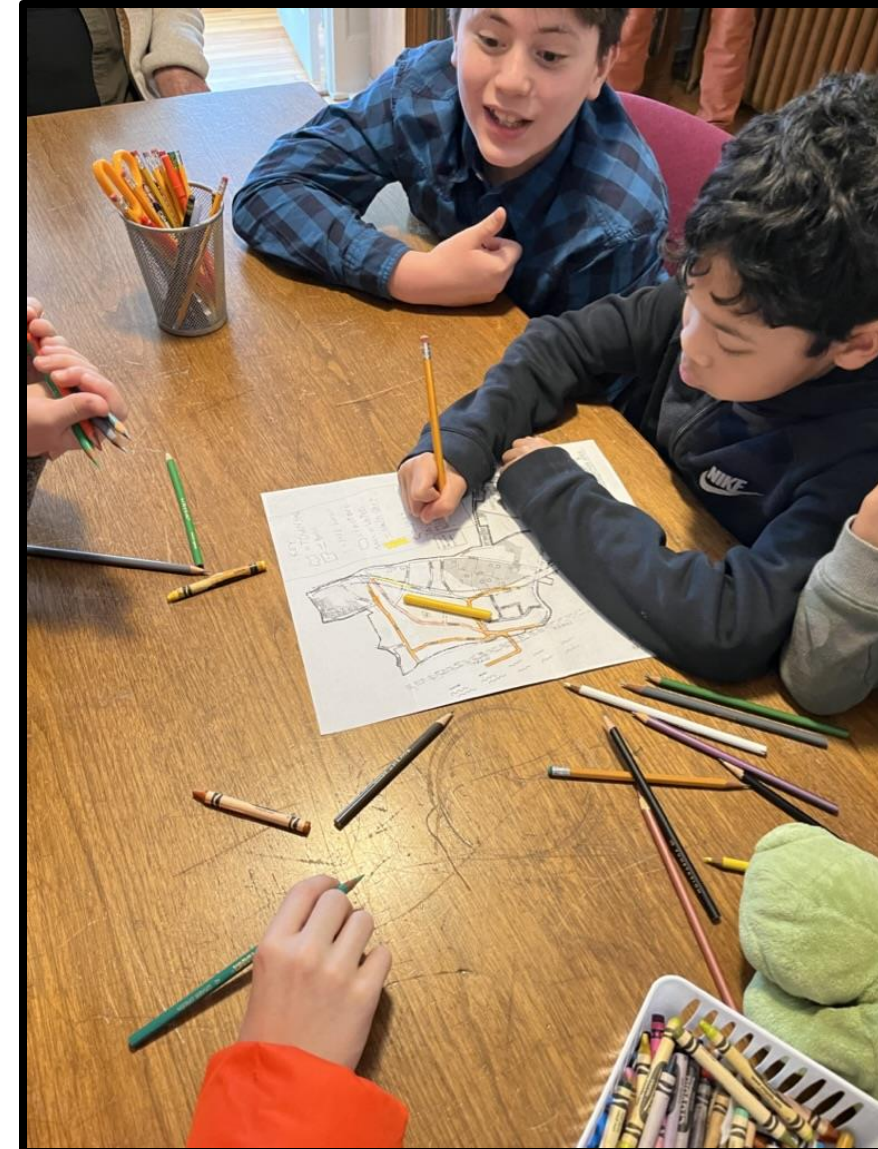
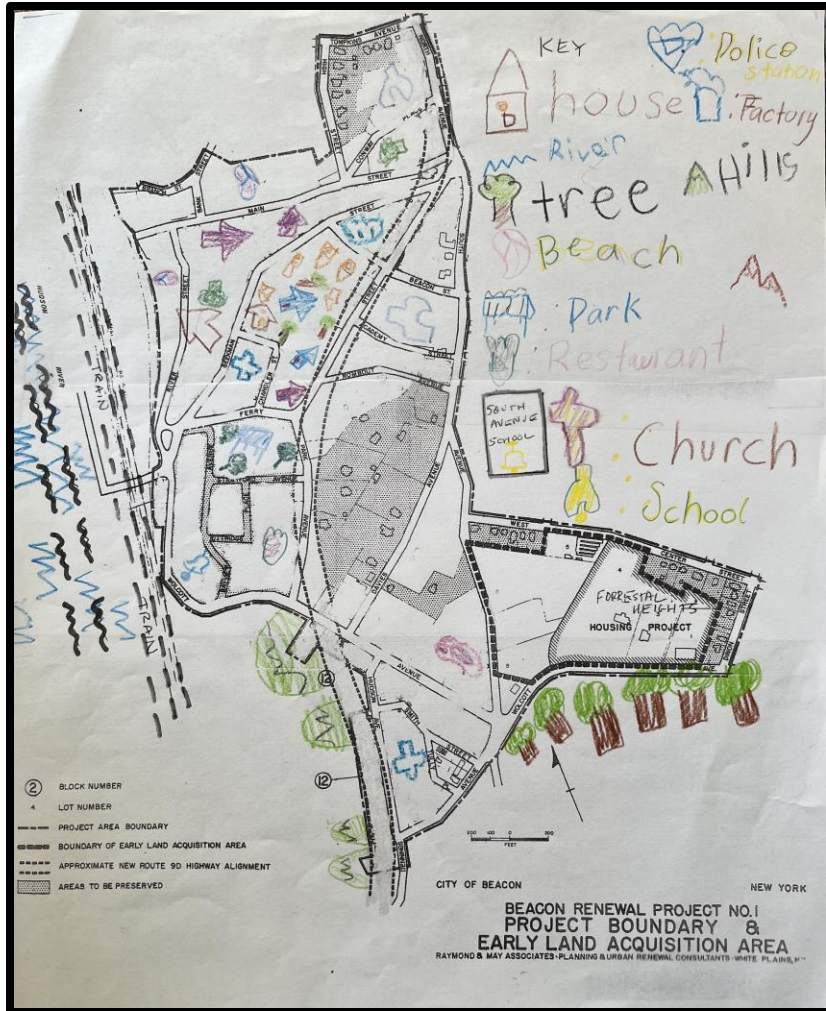
Connie Perdreau, Museum Educator





Photos from Connie Perdreau's
family albums

Educational Programs at the Beacon Historical Society





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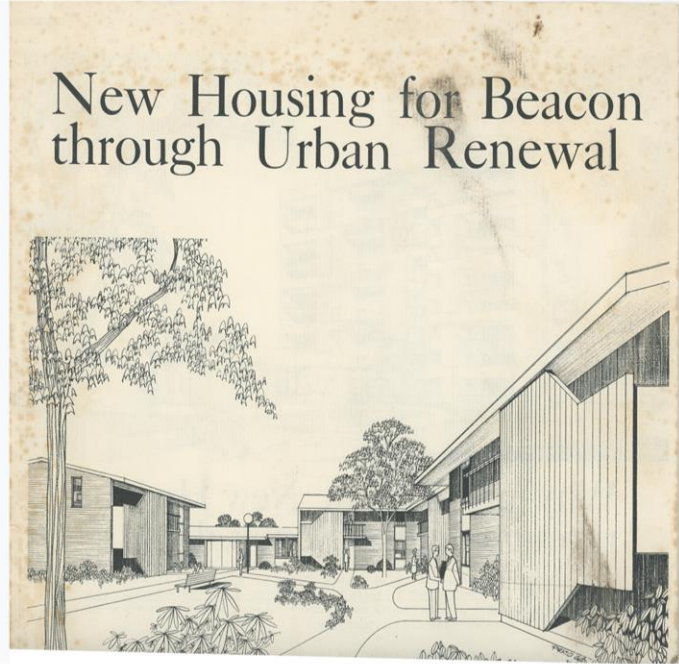
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New Housing for Beacon through Urban Renewal



[♥](#) [📄](#) [f](#) [t](#) [p](#) [in](#)

Date
April 1966

Description
Description of future housing: 335 apartments on Wolcott and South Ave. in Beacon. Rentals starting at \$30 per month and more details described. This item was added as part of the Diversity and Collaborative Knowledge Program funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

Type
Artifact

Region
Mid Hudson, New York State

Era
Contemporary United States



Topic
Urban Renewal

Repository
Beacon Historical Society

Identifier
BHA 136.137.tiff

Source
Beacon Urban Renewal Agency.

Rights
This image is provided for education and

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SENYLRC helping the Historical Society set up the New York Heritage Digital Collections



Jennifer Palmentiero & Kelsey Milner

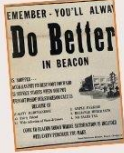


Michelle Rivas



BEACON'S WEST END STORY

A Historical Perspective of Urban Renewal in the 1960s and 70s

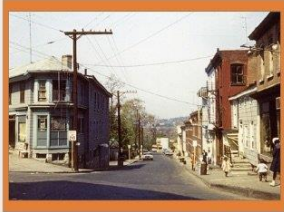


Beacon's Urban Renewal story is compelling, complex, and controversial. The story begins in 1962, when municipal politicians and business leaders looked for ways to rejuvenate the city. Beacon's 19th century homes, businesses, factories, and infrastructure were aging. Industry was departing the city and small shops on Main Street were beginning to close.

A *City Development Plan*, created by city planning consultants, outlined ways to develop the central business district, clear "blighted" areas to make land available for industry and build an arterial highway/9D on the West End using federal and state funds. Soon after, the federal government agreed to a *General Neighborhood Renewal Plan*: a broad-scale revitalization program including improvements in housing, commercial and industrial areas, streets, parks, and community facilities. The proposed 10-year plan would encompass five distinct projects occurring in overlapping years and covering over 25% of the city of Beacon.



By 1966, a substantial majority of Beacon residents opposed the Urban Renewal program. In September, they voted to stop it in a public poll. Concerns included fear of an overreaching federal government, increased taxes, lack of funding and local control, loss of community and property, and further marginalization of the Black community. However, a 3-2 vote from the city council decided the future of the city.



Beacon's first and most ambitious project involved evicting and relocating a predominately Black neighborhood on the West End. The project also included the building of modern low-to-middle housing for those displaced, and the elderly. Connie Perdreau grew up in the West End on Beekman Street and noted, *"It was a double-edged sword. Urban renewal destroyed our community and at the same time it allowed a lot of people to have better, more decent housing."*

All told, by 1975, there were over 500 new units of housing and 250,000 square feet of new industrial space with improvements to infrastructure. Urban Renewal claimed 142 buildings, 205 homes and over 35 businesses. Thirty buildings were accepted into the Neighborhood Improvement Plan and given low interest loans for renovations.



Using materials from the Beacon Historical Society's archives, *Beacon's West End Story* recounts Project 1 which included the demolition of the West End and the building of Forrestal Heights and Unity Interfaith (now Davies South Terrace) housing developments, new industrial structures, and the Beacon Recreation Center playground. Additional materials are on display to give an overview of the entire project funded by the Urban Renewal Agency. Inflationary pressures forced the federal government to withdraw funds for further renewal, essentially saving many of Beacon's historic buildings and neighborhoods from the wrecking ball.

This project was made possible with support from ConsidertheSourceNY.org, a program of the New York State Archives Partnership Trust, through a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the Pomeroy Fund, which is a partnership between the William G. Pomeroy Foundation and the Museum Association of NY. Special thanks to our partners the Howland Public Library, I Am Beacon, the Highlands Current, Connie Perdreau, and David Hochfelder.

Visit the Beacon Historical Society's website at beaconhistorical.org/explore and then click on Urban Renewal.