By MARY BISHOP, STAFF WRITER

SOMETHING began happening 40 years ago that changed Roanoke forever.

It displaced thousands of men, women and children, wiping out neighborhoods and institutions. A long chain of broken promises scarred citizens' political muscle as badly that the bitterness flares up in public hearings to this day.

And yet the story — from the point of view of those who lived through it — has never been told.

Today, in a special section called "Street By Street, Black By Black," how Urban Renewal Upended Black Roanoke," we report what the

Your comments welcome

To comment on this story, make a

STORIES FROM PAGE A1

friendly funded program called urban renewal did to the black families of Roanoke.

Their spurring from the city's near-

labeled and oldest black neighborhoods —

Northside Roanoke and Gallows had

began in 1965. Urban renewal went

through three waves and several

small ones that stretched about

decades. It continues today in a smaller

scale as the city prepares to tear down 10

Gallows homes to build a road to

downtown.

The history of urban renewal in Roanoke was all about what city leaders, most of these white, wanted to do with 300 acres of prime developable land just

north of the railroad tracks from downtown and dedicated for generation

by black families.

Government leaders here thought

what Roanoke was a regressive way to
do what looked like then to them and

put in highways, industries and public

commissions such as the Roanoke Civic

Center. But there was a lack of

understanding among those policymakers

— as well as reporters and editors at this

newspaper — of what life was really like

in black neighborhoods, what those

communities meant to people, and exactly

what would happen to the families

involved.

Most of all, there was little

recognition that black families had the

same attachment to each other

community and home as everybody else.

"Gone and right" are words that

Roanoke's older white leaders used to

describe what they saw in those

neighborhoods. Black people who lived

there faced the wall word to the

Home.

In the 1950s, a majority of black Roanoke lived in older Northside or

Gallows as nearly every black family in this city has known the officials of urban renewal. If not directly, then through the loss of a grandmother's home, a best

friend's church, a school.

While people felt it, too, even if they
did not realize what was happening to

them because when black people were

told out of segregated neighborhoods,

they had nowhere to go but the white

neighborhoods just beyond the older

city limit. In the 1950s and 1960s, white

families found their newly integrated

areas and found out across the valley,

filling the suburbs that began to encircle the city.

While some blacks moved into public

housing and bought homes in those

every city, more black families bought

bungalows than less than the ones they left.

The problem was, many took on staggering

debts to move to the more

neighborhoods, friends and
social communities in the process.

Several older black Roanoke

interviewed for today's report said it's too

painful to ponder what urban renewal did
to their communities. I don't mean telling

you," one man said, apologizing as he

ended a long account of what happened to

him, "it's, sort of makes me a little sick to

talk about it.".

Roanoke natives still argue among

themselves about whether they should

have been black and Move at all.

which promised removal of one of the

city's oldest neighborhoods but wound up

doing more to save the high-rise

that building up. All these years later, they're

still divided over it another man said, "Just

like Vietnam or Korea.

Urban renewal took place during the

administration of city United States

president. In a reverse in Roanoke by

seven mayors, four city managers, three

Recreation and Housing Authority

directors, 44 members of Council,

and 32 members of the authority's board

of commissioners. Of the more than 80

local officials, who presided over urban

renewal, only 11 — four council members

and seven, authority board members —

were black.

All these officials have been

rehabilitated for their role in urban renewal

rebuilt black Roanoke. No single person,

someone, has been held accountable.

I have personally come to the conclusion, said one, to也好 at night,

that I was nobody's fault and it was

everybody's fault," and Earl Reynolds,

a, a former Roanoke City planner and

urban city manager.

A couple of years ago, Tall Ballard,

executive director of Roanoke's anti-poverty agency, Total Action Against

Poverty, put on paper what he thought

wrote the long-lasting impacts of the loss

black Roanoke's oldest black communities.

He agreed a few years ago to let his words

be printed here, saying his feelings

haven't changed.

"These actions here for decades left

the impression that the City of Roanoke

not only has no regard for the black neighborhoods and their institutions but

will stop at nothing to appropriate the land

and property of Blacks what it desires it

for some other use," Ballard wrote.

"Has dispensed the impression of blacks to invest in their town. It has

created a sense of transitory which has

been a deterrent to attracting business

understandably. It has created a sense of

hopelessness and even bitterness which has

been transmitted to a new generation of

young people who have seen their

parents exploited.

Black Roanoke still feel wounded

and angry about urban renewal. White

Roanoke hasn't undertaken why.

Today, we try to explain.

Roanoke Times & World-News
“People look at urban renewal, but it was Negro removal. That’s all it was.”

William H. Hanley

Black Roanoke's laments the taking of their communities

BY MARY BISHOP, Staff Writer

AGAINST the odds, Oliveve and Arthur Tyree fashioned a life for themselves and their children in old Northeast Roanoke.

Polio had kept Arthur Tyree in a wheelchair since his teens. He earned money flying radios in their dining room.

When you walked up their steps, you could look through the front door and see him sitting at the antique table and buffet, fixing somebody’s old radio.

Oliveve Tyree cleaned white people’s houses by day and rented by night at Burrill Memorial, a black hospital. She was grateful that the white families she cleaned for gave her milk and hand-me-down clothes for her daughter and two sons.

The Tyrees owned their cottage in Northeast Roanoke at 1109 4th St. They knew all their neighbors — Will Gather, Eddie Wallace, Hulley Allen, George Smith. The kids rode their bikes down Diamond Hill and the steep slopes that surrounded their house.

Little grocery store density the neighborhood. Selma Baker and Chanelle Mitchell each had one just around the corner.

Eventually, Oliveve Tyree managed to add to her house. “I enjoyed the house we had,” she says. “But it’s all fixed up, it’s nice around it and all painted.”

In those days, she still had to drink from the “colored” water fountain at the Kreso five-and-dime downtown. the newspaper wouldn’t have had her daughter’s engagement picture.

In 1955, when her son Lewis was about to go into the Army, the Army announced it was going to take the Tyrees’ house — and all their neighbors, too.

It didn’t work out at first. “They promised they’d build new houses there and we could buy them back. They said they were going to fix it up and make it beautiful for the people.

Little did the Tyrees know that their home stood in the crosshairs of one of America’s most invasive social experiments. In Roanoke, it would force the migration of demands of black men, women and children. It would tear down 1,500 of their homes. It would leave more than 200 of their businesses and 24 of their churches.

Roanoke Times & World-News

A SPECIAL SECTION

“Yo know, I lived Northwest.” Oliveve Tyree said. She misses those neighbors. “They all got along and their children got along just like they were brothers and sisters.” Tyree, outside her current home on Hanover Avenue Northwest, flanked by sons the Rev. Benjamin Tyree, on left, and Lewis Tyree.
Urban renewal was considered a very progressive, socially desirable thing to do.

Former mayor Willis "Wink" Anderson

"My daddy never flinched at riding the bus. Frances Calhoun, said, looking at the picture the housing authority took of her childhood home at 514 Gilmer Ave., N.E. "That's Daddy's car. It was a Chey- enne. It was red. We used to have holes in the yard where we shot marbles.""

The city had to take the houses, Pickett added. "It had to be done - for the good of the city, for the good of the future. Their kids were growing up in slam conditions."

"It was prime growth land," she said, that could be used for community facilities such as the Rochester Civic Center. "Some people had to suffer."

The city had to take the houses, Pickett added. "It had to be done - for the good of the city, for the good of the future. Their kids were growing up in slam conditions."

"It was prime growth land," she said, that could be used for community facilities such as the Rochester Civic Center. "Some people had to suffer."
HOW URBAN RENEWAL UPROOTED BLACK ROANOKE

"The people are not here no more. The closeness — the black-people closeness."

Richard Chubb

A SPECIAL REPORT

The beginning of the end, the city said people could begin to move out of Northwest. That Northwest was cleaned up.

Lewis Linsberg, a contractor who began his three years with the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority board around 1951, said the agency had learned to build houses for Negroes.

"I guess the highway coming through there, for one," he said. "Interroute 351, built in the mid-1950s."

Yes, it was the Interstate System that had the biggest impact on the Commonwealth, West said. "When you built that, the Negro community had a chance to go somewhere."

As the residents thought they were going to stay on, their old neighborhood burned.

"We were criticized greatly for this," Sumrall said. "In the beginning, we made a mistake." But the burnings, he said, were being used to the advantage of the Guerrero family.

The next day, January 15, the Guerrero family was back in the house on Orange Avenue.

And it was, the city said, the city was going to pay its notoriety.

"It cost me $3,200 for her house, probably a lot more," he continued, "and I'm still earning a line on the address she had built for her children.

No one will ever know the house and all its glory. Oliver went to a new home with all the money, Oliver Taylor went to a job, Oliver Smith went to a house.

"I don't know where the family lived," Sumrall said. "I don't know where they are."

The agency would buy the home for $2,300. She repaid her Murray's notes in full, she repaid her husband's disability, she repaid her husband's disability.

And, by the way, she repaid him and his home. They left and went to their old house in the Northwest.

The agency gave her sufficient money to move into her old home. She had to pay $2,300. She repaid her neighbor to move back in, she repaid her husband's disability, she repaid her husband.

And, by the way, she said, the money was deposited.

The city said for 20 years, 20 years, the city said, the city did not pay the rest.

In 1965, the city moved it to Hankover Avenue.

And, by the way, she said, the city did not pay the rest. She said, "I'm not going to live without his money."

And, by the way, she said, the city did not pay the rest.
"There were so many things that destroyed the families, because when that father out and he had more debt than he could handle, for some reason or other, he turned just evil-minded and he just ran away because he couldn't handle it.

Charles Meadows had one of the best jobs a black man could find in Norfolk; he worked for the railroad.

"They said they were building the road and more than three people, but what the devil," Davis argued. "Somebody named Charles Meadows, felled out in 64th Patton Ave. N.E., in 1968. Some people want to count, "They found the truth was they were going to move business in that area, and there was no place for anybody to build back."
The housing authority says that not all the buildings in the area would need to be razed; some could be upgraded," said the caption under this April 1964 photograph in the Roanoke Times-World-News. The picture came just before City Council approved the Kimball redevelopment project in Northeast. Contrary to what was in the newspaper, no homes were served or built.

"You gave us nicer homes... [but]... took away our past and our togetherness."

Walter Flazer Sr.

The following text is not legible due to the quality of the image.
FROM PAGE 5

Gainesboro History, organized in 1921 and one of the South's earliest black libraries—First Baptist Church, organized in 1867 and in its brick building on North Fifteenth Street in 1900— and Fifth Avenue Presbyterian's fine 1908 church at 304 Pas- sin Ave, N.W.

Famous Gainesborns came out of Gaines- born, such as Edward R. Dady, U.S. ambassador to Liberia under President Tru- man and later the president of the borough of Manhattan and a candidate for the New York state attorney general. He was the son of a Gainesboro debtor.

"Right now, we don't have one or two black doctors in Roanoke," said Charles Davis, a retired mailman. "Back then, blacks might have had a doctor, and more black physicians and pharmacists than that.

THE 1950-city directory shows 900 homes and 165 small businesses in Gainesboro: The Off Beat Pool Par- lor, the Day & Night Taxicab and the Dundas Ice Cream Bar & Foun- tainette were just a few. There was a savings and loan, an insurance company, a cleaners, a drugstore and more hairdressers than you could shake a hot comb at on Gainesboro's densely populated streets.

"No, we're not as slave-like," William Hackett, a retired Roanoke public schools administrator, said in the event that asked that Gainesboro many times before.

His father, Benjamin R. Hackett, Sr., was Gainesboro's letter-carrier for 44 years. Every kid in Gainesboro knew "Mr. Hackett."

Brennie Hackett grew up on Gainesboro's West Side. When she passed the 10 children at 206 Wells N.W. Every one of them graduated from college.

The Hackett children didn't learn the lessons of life just from their parents. They learned from people like a neighbor who had a dirty, swampy back yard for fun- ging. "Mr. Hardy, he lived down the street. Every morning, he would add a dirt and a ditch, and he went to work on the freight station. What we learned was, they put a little bit for a living, you don't have to be dirty or dress shabbily."

A man who grew up in Gainesboro didn't want to offend old friends, but he thought he could offer a more balanced picture of Gaines- born than what he's read in recent years. He refused to be quoted by name.

"The man loved Gainesboro. He was in business there. And, he says, Henry Street, "He had a store called..."

Henry Street was a street of huts.

A lot of these places provided for fun- ging. Bookkeeping."

But there were murders, prostitution and a lot of crime on Henry Street.

"Some called it Little New York."

He acknowledges there were legitimate businesses — a drugstore, a store, a theater, drugstores, doctor offices, as it cruisin' people.

"Yes, there was a thing about Gaines- born. He said, "Life was nice, but life was hard.""

"The largest and best-stocked drug store in the state owned by a colored man." In 1877, that's how The Rich- mond Planet, a black newspaper, described the Roanoke Pharmacy on Gainesboro's Front Street.

"Mr. Johnson was a man of influence in the community, and local historians say Roanoke's white hospitals refused to admit him because he was black. His family put him on a bus to the hospital and he was turned down. A family doctor told him to go to Roanoke's Memorial hospital, founded in 1875.

"When Roanoke was founded, more than one-half of Roanoke's colored babies were being delivered by midwives," Dr. L.C. Dowling, hospital superintendent, wrote in 1908. The first of the black doctors opened Roanoke's first black hospital in Gainesboro in 1912. It was named for Dr. Isaac Davis Bell. The non-profit hospital moved in 1924 to the old Alleghany Institute below, a boys' home on McDowell Avenue Northwest and later built a new building.

Burrell Memorial closed in 1978 and reopened two years later as Burrell Home for Adults, a subsidiary of Roanoke Memorial Hospitals.

Photo courtesy of L.C. Dowling

GRADUALLY, almost Gainesboro resi- dents began to warm to what City Hall and the housing authority were saying they would do to Gainesboro.

"It's a matter of rebuilding the neighborhood with the same people, the same institutions and the same businesses, but in new quarters," Wenesley White, who oversees the acquisition and demolition of homes for the authority, said in a 1972-synopser story.

"All we can say is, 'Give us a chance.'"

By then, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development acquired a $33 million renewal project, the city's first subsidized housing project to have a citizens' group, called a Project Area Council. The council was the group that people living in the area or running businesses there would have a say in how urban renewal was done. The things were changing quickly. Late in 1969, President Nixon reduced funding for the first HUD initiative proposed for Gaines- born, the Neighborhood Development Program.

Former City Council member Mary Fickett says Gainesboro got caught between conflicting philosophies of urban planning: "One said save and preserve a neighborhood, the other said tear it down and build something else. "Gainesboro people got mixed up in the two theories," she said.

City leaders still need to look for renewal, Fickett says. "We're trying to get the $2 million federal grant for Gainesboro in 1972. By then, some in the neighbor- hood found that Gainesboro's renewal would be all that different from Richmond's."

Gainesboro dentist Walter Claytor resigned as chairman of the Gainesboro citizens' group in Febru- ary 1972. He warned residents that the group was un- advisory and did "not have the final say as to what transfers to the project impact area."

The housing authority and a "viable city" City Council were firmly in command, he said. He advised residents to "bite your teeth through..." protecting your rights and your property.""

The city's housing authority, by government to save Gainesboro's old buildings was failing. A Washington consultant hired by the city said in 1973 that only 113 of 693 homes surveyed in Gainesboro were suitable for rehabilitation. Housing rehab had been cut off the federal budget.

Over the years, hundreds of Gainesboro residents sold their houses to the authority and moved to new neighborhoods. The authority ran a social-service program to ease the transition.

It opened as office in the former Hare Funeral Home, a place of church services in a funeral home, cookout, coffee house, time to Fairlawn Park and other gatherings for kids, Halie Morin restored old people who were being moved out. "We carried them back and forth to churches. We traveled with them. They were people who had lived there 40 or 50 years."

The residents got three times the money that Northam family received. Besides payments for their homes, Gainesboro residents were given up to $1,500 to help buy new ones, plus a few hundred dollars for the move.

Looking back on the Gainesboro project, Lewis L. Johnson, a Roanoke resident authority board member during the project's years, scoffed at the complaints of peo- ple who were forced to move. "Well, I think it was just as good as it could be. They warned something for settling, with some cote and ice put on it."
I have come to the decision — the city and the redevelopment authority, any land that they want they will take eventually.

Kathleen Vaughn Ross

When compared to the 1948 photograph (below, right) this one, taken early this month, shows just how much space was cleared for urban renewal and later used for Interstate 81, the Roanoke Civic Center, the city’s main post office, hotels, businesses, industries and offices.

ULPI Campbell, Lenoya Campbell’s mother, bought a house at 413 Rutherford Ave, N.W. in Gainsboro after she was forced out of Northeast.

She had been an elevator operator at the State City Building downtown on Campbell Avenue.

“I wasn’t much better than she did,” Northeast.

grandson Terry Campbell said. The windows were being forced out, the sidewalks were being torn off, and the house was bad shape.

Lula Campbell had saved some transportation and was treated at Cullers Hospital while her son, Walter, and her wife, Clara, stayed at the Gainsboro Hotel.

Lula Campbell had been on Rutherford about 14 years when she got the word she would have to move again. Her side of the street was torn down by 1974, she said; the house was deeper into Northeast.

“Terry Campbell never heard his grandmother complain. She wasn’t upset about moving. She didn’t show it. It was a house for her to be in for 25 years and she was glad to have a nice house.

But her children, Sandie Jordan, believes her grandmother took it hard.

“Terry was active and moving around on Ruther-

ford,” Jordan said. “By the time she got up to Parks, she was pretty much slowly in bed. She wouldn’t even look at TV. All of a sudden, she just didn’t want to do anything.”

Lula Campbell became an invalid; she died in 1979, in her late 60s.

SONE people waited years for their houses to be bought by the city so they could find new ones. Many still complain that the housing authority tore down the best houses first and left the rest to deterior-
ate.

Old people who had lived in their houses all of their lives stepped moving them because the housing authority said the homes soon would be torn down. The modernist even left to move out of the area and sell the houses. The old people saw the new houses as a better deal.

“Should they plant their gardens again?” By June 1974, City Manager Julian Hovey was saying this was not the kind of redevelopment he wanted, and the World-News understood that Gainsboro had turned into just another bullfights.

That October, a man named Daniel Jones came to a housing authority public hearing. He had lived at his home on Rushford Road for 73 years.

He had been at one of the first meetings on the Gainsboro project, five or six years earlier.

At that first meeting, Jones went in a hearing transtest. “They said they’d fix your house up if it didn’t come up with the standard of the city. And if you’re moved, they’d keep your money to fix your house up, and if they had to tear your house down, they’d give you a grant to get you another house.

That was the first meeting,” Jones went, “I remember that personally. And I’d get money, went plumb off of that. What I want to say, you’ve tore down homes that I remember. I’m 77 years old. You’ve tore down homes that I knew that was built — built — good homes. And you left houses standing that had dry rot and they didn’t have no water or nothing in those homes.

You’ve tore down some good homes like people could live in for the next 100 or 75 years. My house, it’s in the middle of the bottom out of it. Of course, I wanted to fix it up but you said all your grants side it is, so I won’t get grants no money on it.”

Jones came to a meeting the next year, still pleading for answers for himself and his wife, Imma.

“This woman, I’m not asking to buy that much land,” he said, “I ain’t spending four or five hundred dollars putting in another furnace in that old house. I want to know what you going to do and when you going to come in and inspect and tell us when we get to move out. And when you going to build a house for us. I want to know because I’ve got just learned from now, I don’t respect what those people say. I don’t want a house; I want to know what that land will be used for. I need a house; I don’t need a building. I don’t need a community center. I’m not complaining, but I just told, I got an old home over there. Take my home, I thought that was the idea.”

In 1979, five new houses were built in Gainsboro, and Daniel Jones got one of them. Housing authority officials swore he came in a meeting that year that he was happy.

A newspaper carried old homes had been torn down. When Jones’ house once stood in a fire hydrant in front of the helicopter stand on Gainsboro Road.

Daniel Jones, a retired railroad porter and a prisoner in his youth, died almost a year ago — after 17 years in his home at 301 Madison Ave, N.W. He was 97.

ENOBA "Zoe" Ferguson heard about urban renewal from the women who came into her beauty shop and from Theodore Holland, who ran the Hilltop Conference down the street from her house on Chestnut Avenue in Gainsboro.

"There was so much enthusiasm on the part of citizens because of the name of the Northwest." Ferguson said. "The idea was to create a new community to replace the old one.

This time, she thought she could force the city’s program into the open. She became chairman of the Gainsboro Project Area Commission in the early 1930s.

She wanted renewal to begin on Gainsboro’s innermost issues first and work outward. If houses were rebuilt first, she thought, stores to serve those people would follow. She figured industrial development would push those plans so they could get the land they wanted — on the outskirts of Gainsboro, and the factory would give the city of Gainsboro all the money that her husband, a retired navy officer, had to leave.

The city would have all the money it would need, she said. "Zoe didn’t give you any concrete reasons, but the citizens’ input wasn’t used," she said. "It was a paper, but the city and the housing authority worked around it.

"Zoe Ferguson and her husband, Willis, reluctantly left Gainsboro in 1976. They had remodeled their three-bedroom brick house. Zoe Ferguson’s beauty shop was out back. Willie Ferguson’s mother planted roses and other flowers in the front yard.

They bought a more expensive ranch house near the 1100 block of Court Road. Some neighbors did the same; others, especially the ones who had been farmers, have homes in Landover Park on public housing since they left Gainsboro 20 years ago.

In the end, Zoe Ferguson said, the controversy was too hot. "There was so building city what wealready had. It was all destroyed and left void. There’s so one can or clarity people could walk in. It was left barren."

She watched people die waiting for a new home. "I watch people who get nothing if they were going to meetings and the next thing, they were gone forever. I knew what the people had been through, people who worked from sunup to sundown, and maybe it didn’t look like something to other people, but it was their life’s home."
Mary Junsit and Ernest "Poppy" Brown bought the old Monroeur store in Gainsboro in 1977.

The late Joe Monroe had run the store at 908 Broad Street since at least the 1940s. Ernest Brown was his bookkeeper and part-time manager. Mary Brown worked there, too.

Black entrepreneurs and people like Monroe, of LaVernia descent, built the city in Gainsboro. "It was like being at home," Mary Brown said. "They took pride in those places."

Marynow owned the Gainsboro building where The Roanoke Times was published and the First City Auditorium at Wells Avenue and Henry Street where James Brown and Lionel Hampton played in the 1950s and 1960s.

"At one time, they had me believing that they were going to renovate, have a little café and office," Ernest Brown said. "I should have seen through that."

Not long after they bought the business, Ernest Brown said, C. Frank Kofner, an elderly, white, real-estate man, warned him, "Mr. Brown, you're going to have to move. He knew something I didn't know. I hadn't heard nothing about it."

The Brown, so they failed that plan, told what happened then:

Ernest Brown: "They moved everybody out around us. If we could have stayed there and another one of those years, we would have had it made."

Mary Brown: "Sure, we couldn't afford to stay down there. Too many people were moving out."

Ernest Brown: "Some of the elderly people didn't have no way to get back down there. They just left off."

Mary Brown: "We tried to deliver to them to keep the business."

Ernest Brown: "But you've got to have the market."

Mary Brown: "We had to get away."

The Brown closed the store in the late 1970s. Kofner lent them $10,000, but they couldn't pay it off. They sold all the merchandise, Brown's Grocery had 11, employees, two cash registers and 10 shopping bags in the first sale. It was one of the biggest black-owned businesses in town.

But they were competing with chain supermarkets on nearby Roanoke Road. Thus, too, the Brown blew their customers.

They still keep a box of that checks in their basement.

The store was closed. The Brown dealt with a $21,200 Small Business Administra- tion loan, so the business came in one day, took the keys and auctioned off the place.

Ernest Brown is retiring now; Mary Brown is a aide at Fulton Park Elementary School.

"All the kids come up to 19 Patton," Helen Davis said of her family home in Gainsboro. Her son Ricardo Stovall plays in the backyard around 1953 with his cousins, Wanda Davis Kincey.

"That was taken in my front yard on Moores Run Road, right where Coca-Cola stands now," says Herbert Davis, on left in the picture right. His cousin, Reginald Gillam Jr., right, is now a senior vice president of the international public affairs firm Hill and Knowlton in Washington. "Across the street was a large Caterpillar [dump] truck and we could listen to the engine, and the guys there would ride them around. Miss Annie's oldest was next door, so we knew that our mother could actually raise her window downstairs and Miss Annie would pass the bread and groceries through."

"Sometimes the police would show a scene and the kids would get just have an evening of skating spree," says Ernestine Ferguson, who took this snapshot from her home on Chestnut Avenue in Gainsboro. The street was torn down in urban renewal.

"They were our fishing friends, and we didn't go [that day], but they came by the house afterward to show us their catch. I think they had gone down below Buchanan to a place called Rocky Point on the James River. I think that is in rocks in the image, here."

"-Zonnda Ferguson, who noted the picture on Christmas in Gainsboro.

"Bob's knows how much money was spent on Gainsboro. Estimates range from $10 million to $40 million."

When asked, no one at City Hall, the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority or the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development could come up with a total. Most of it was fed from HUD.

"My father said, 'My god, it really didn't.' said Wesley White, the authority's development director. City documents and old newspaper accounts of City Council budget sessions indicate that at least $27 million has been allocated for the neighborhood since 1970.

Two officials at HUD's Richmond office said the total is around $25 million, but they weren't sure.

"The thing is that all of that money is not visible in Gainsboro."

A fine new hospital is available, cutting and straightening. Seventy-six houses and two small sets of apartments were built. The authority and other agencies (such as some homes, the community-based groups, the Southeast Virginia Community Development Body, built an industrial park with five small warehouses.

George Hobler, former director of the Gainsboro Development Company, and Grosser have sold or given away $500,000 to $1 million to various groups in the Gainsboro area.

"The biggest conundrum 20 years ago is where the money went," said Hobler, who had no proof.

Wesley White said there was no diversion of Gainsboro's money when the authority managed it until the mid-'70s, when HUD switched to community block grants and sent them to City Hall. "Who- ever money we got from HUD, he said, "went to Gainsboro" Bob Hobler, who had been with the city since 1975 and became city manager in 1985, said he was not aware of any diversion of Gainsboro money, either.

"Who did the money go?"

For one thing, several hundred homeowners were paid for their houses and received up to $5,000 in addition to find new ones.

Housing authority records show more than 50 contractors doing all kinds of work on the Gainsboro project.

For years, there was a parade of private building inspectors, architects, engineers, contractors, architects, lawyers, compliance, inspectors, appraisers.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...
HOW URBAN RENEWAL UPROOTED BLACK ROANOKE

FROM PAGE 8

signs, road builders, home builders and other con-
cravelors that made money in Guinibon.

Fifteen destruction companies were con-
tracts with the

labor union in 1970 alone to tear down homes and other build-
ings.

The different, consulting firms from Washington, Richmond, Baltimore, Charlotte and other cities stud-
ied Guinibon and recommended massive destruction.

At least seven lawyers worked on as-
pects of the project, including acquisitions, clearance
and disputes.

Major contractors such as Haynes, Slaye, Mattern &

Matterns, a Roanoke architectural and engineering firm, won
jobs for up to $1 million in the 1970s and 1980s.

Dr. Walter Clayton, a retired Guinibon dentist and a member of early neighborhood organizations that
moni-
tored what government was doing, said urban renewal trig-
gered the site and construction of hundreds of homes, a

"It was a real industry around urban renewal," Earl


drew, Roanoke's first chief planner and assistant

city manager, said of such projects nationally. "But the

benefits were not to the black community and the poor

during the war and after, they did not get a piece of that

economic pie.

BY 1979, 10 years after the project began, hun-
dreds of Guinibon homes had been torn down and
25 new ones built.

British Dennis was in one of the new homes, a
small one built on Madison Ave. N.W. She is still
there. "I was poor, I was homeless," she said.

The Haynes architect department store

searched. She ran the

enjoyed the row houses.

The Kent Kline house, at 1112 Madison Ave.

 Beltz said.

The project involved 2,000 row houses, mainly of
that time the project was closed.

Brenda White, 58, said the project had

In 1949 the Clarice Memorial Church

opened on Madison Road.

Guinibon residents poured into the medical
department of Dr. John Clayton Sr. and five of his

Dr. Walter Clayton to find out what

he had learned in Guinibon.

Why, he wants to know, did the promised neighborhood renewal fail? With all the mill-
ings of dollars go-

Dr. John B. Clayton Jr., chief planner and assistant city manager, said of such projects nationally. "But the

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"I have to leave, I'd like to leave a legacy, people know what happened to us, anyway." — Dr. Walter Clayton at the Clarice Memorial Clinic, on his 25-year personal struggle to urban renewal and its impact on people in Guinibon.

"How many millions of dollars have we come into?, " What do we have to show for it?" — Donald Dr. Walter

Clayton in his office at Guinibon's

Clarice Memorial Clinic in

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The family's Claywood Service Station burned, too. Clayton says somebody — he
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1979.
It seems like where we’ve lived and what we’ve done has been swept away.

Zonela Ferguson

GAINSBORO was the neighborhood where Earl Reynolds Jr. grew up. In 1962, he said it was disappearing.

By then, he was Roanoke’s chief planner and the highest-ranking black official in the city. He warned that preserving the city’s white objectives in Gainsboro, was not happening. Unlike other neighborhoods, Gainsboro was not even eligible for housing rehabilitation programs.

During the project’s early years, a colorful mural hung on the wall of a community building. Asked in what it was, if necessary, Gainsboro, a sunny and charming neighborhood full of people and shops after urban renewal.

People went by every day, looking at it, but not the vision of the future,” Reynolds said. "They kept going there. Hopefully, the fact that it wasn’t monumentalizing.

Urban renewal made life worse in Gainsboro, not better, Reynolds said. By shopping on the “urban renewal” label, he said in an interview, government automatically depressed the value of real estate. Banks were less likely to let people use their homes as collateral.

Reynolds said, "It just was as effective as what we think of as being an effective policy," by systematically denying banks to give loans to neighborhoods they think are deteriorating.

What saddened him the most was the fact that people bought out by the city could not be rehoused in Gainsboro. The ones who remained thought the town was worse than ever, and they didn’t get a chance to move. They would have a few years earlier.

"We had a whole lot of people who had properties that we had called urban renewalers, in the town. They were tremendously bad steps. They had been in maintenance."

Reynolds later became minister-city manager and now is Martinsville’s city manager.

When he was growing up at 331 Barrington Ave. N.W., said the old days were all around. "We were living in architectural interesting houses, and we didn’t even know it."

The town of Gainsboro, Reynolds said, is "we could have left the old homes down there, and not only people but safe, sanitary and comfortable places to live, but we would have maintained the historic sense of the neighborhood."

The state of urban renewal’s misjudgments, he said, was that from Washington down, "there was nothing in the policy that dealt with people or what would happen to them and their neighborhoods."

Gainsboro’s project was a patchwork of little projects, none just a block or two long, that stretched more than a quarter-century. "There was no whole," he said, "big picture."

Urban renewal "changed the culture," he said. "I think I think a black community of Roanoke is as strong as it was, publicly, philosophically, and I think the city as a whole is worse off because of it."

I mean, Roanoke is surviving and Roanoke will continue to grow and is prospering, but it will not be as strong as it could have been. It will not be as attractive a community as it could have been.

"I was drawn to go to the Development Hall," says Zonela Ferguson, pictured here with Gainsboro "I was the lady of the people for one of the black communities."
AS an entrepreneur and a Gainesboro native, Walter Flurer Jr. wanted a piece of that pie. He wanted to build apart-
ments on one spot and a hotel in another.

He had an architect and a market analysis, and held the housing authority to sign a pact to put up a motel. The authority said no. The prop-
erty he wanted was promised to developers who built the landmark Motel
Flurer, a renovated Norfolk and Western Rail-
way depot and part-owner of the Flurer Found-
atlantic Hotel. He had to settle for a small apartment site.

"It was all the property had at a time," he said. "We couldn't handle our own affairs.

Now, what he drives by the bankrupt with his grown children, one of them will say, 'Daddy, don't get your head down.' I'm still

"I'm proud of downsize," he says, "and I'm proud of the kids that have come up, but

when I take a red look at it, I'm very

very upset that all the best of everything I had in my community has been turned into a million-dollar playground, and I get none of it.

JUST as the people of Gainesboro were

dispersed by urban renewal, so were their churches.

There were 24 black churches in Gaines-

boro and Northeast in 1964, none in the building it originally occupied.

The city was the trustees' authority when

many of the bigger churches build new saw-

churches. Free Baptist and Hill Street Baptist

rebuild in Gainesboro. Others, like High Street Baptist, pioneered by Jener Monroe Tay-

lor, moved to other neighborhoods.

Other churches had a harder time, and

paid the price for not having till Greater Mount Zion Baptist Church.

It was founded in Northeast as Mount Zion Baptist in 1884. After its first building burned, the congregations built a wooden-

church in 1918. The minister baptized people in a nearby stream.

By the 1950s, the church was thriving under the Rev. Melvin T. Coke, a new

pastor. The church had a decided effect to progress, was built at 528 Madison

Ave. N.E.

Members had paid off that building and were debt-free for four years when they

were asked to move. The city wanted to build the Boulevard Civic Center on their

property.

Jener Meadows, 90 and a church trustee, remem-

bered the pain when he heard the news. Coke told

them, "We are not going to move.

I said, "No, my brother. We're going to

have your site.'

The city tore down the church in 1975. The civic center stands there now.

Greater Mount Zion built its fourth and biggest church, at 1101 Georgia Ave. N.W., the next year.

Twenty-two churches were torn down in Gainesboro and Northeast. Long-time residents think this may have been Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church. It was being demolished in Gainesboro in the 1970s.

Mount Zion Baptist Church, founded in 1884, has had four buildings. The one at left was second, built in Northeast in 1968. Mount Zion built its first brick building, renamed Greater Mount Zion, in 1955. It was torn down 15 years later to build the Rosenora Civic Center. The fourth building is on Georgia Avenue Northwest.

In the sanctuary of Street Union Baptist Church, probably in the 1950s. The Rev. William Gilbert, a former pastor, is the gray-haired man on the front row. His wife, Core, is right of him.

T. Andrew's Catholic Church and

Rosenora Catholic Schools are still

"Catholic Hill" in Gainesboro, along with Our Lady of the Valley retirement home, built in 1989.

The bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond, who administers the parishes, schools and nursing home, checked out the home's construction in April 1989. He was pleased with what he saw then.

"The area at the bottom of the hill still looks like a shanty," Bishop Walter F. Sullivan complained in a letter to the Council member David Bowers, a Catholic. Bowers now is Rosenora's mayor.

"The Catholic Church is investing over six million dollars in the improvement of the area," Bowers said.

"I hope that the city can accompany it at a pace. Perhaps some of the dilapidated buildings can be leveled as a sign of the city's commitment to stimulate the improvement of the area.

About that time, the city set its sights on more of Gainesboro for another project — the site for its new lane road that would spread

toward downtown and to theend of hotel Rosenora and Conference Center.

Black Rosenora, led by neighborhood leaders, went to federal courts to plead with the city not to take any more of their community. "If we don't fight these people, they have no history," said the Rev. Charles Grayer, president of the Rosenora branch of the National Association for the Advancement of
1955 COMMONWEALTH
The Commonwealth Project begins, including the widening of Jefferson Street and Wells Avenue.
1964 KIMBALL
The Kimball Project begins making way for a new post office. NW computer center and Roanoke Gas offices.
1965-67
1601 along the western edge of the Commonwealth Project including widening of Orange Avenue completed in 1965.
1968 CIVIC CENTER
Work on Roanoke Civic Center begins on land cleared by the Commonwealth Project more than a decade earlier.

1973 GAINSBORO
Gainsboro clearance begins. Hundreds of homes are torn down. Between 1973 and present 74 homes are constructed in a development between Cherry and Harrison Avenue.
1983 FIRST BAPTIST
First Baptist Church begins construction after clearing block at Jefferson Street and Wells Avenue.
1984 COCA-COLA
Coca-Cola begins for an expanded Coke plant in Gainsboro.
1991 PROPOSED WELLS WIDENING
Highway Gainsboro Preservation District Inc. opposes widening and rerouting of Wells Avenue and destruction of homes.

1,000+ families, a dozen churches and 165 small businesses stood in Gainsboro in 1950.

Eight or so houses near the Reynoldses have been demolished. "They tore down the best ones first," Clara Raymond said, referring to demolitions 20 years ago. "This was a beautiful street back then; not too many of the older homes," she said.

Parable: Harriet Kaper was here in the house her father built at 215 Patton Ave. N.W. She doesn't like to call herself the author of her autobiography or anything in the line of that sort. "One day, my mother called me to the breakfast table and said, 'You're going to live in a house like this.'"

Earl and Clara Raymonds, owners of former Alexandra City Manager Earl Reynolds Jr., have been at 315 Harrison Ave. N.W. for 57 years.

"One of my neighbors is the master of ceremonies," said Mr. Raymonds. "He's been reading the verses to me every wedding ceremony."

Earl Raymonds, who is a barber, has been in business for 37 years. "I've been living here all my life," he said, "and I've been married here all my life."

Said Raymonds: "I think it's a shame they're tearing down the buildings."

The scene reminds some of what it was like in the 1940s and 1950s when the neighborhood was crowded with people and buildings. "There's been 14 houses torn down on this block," he says. "They took away the town where I used to hang out."

Ludwig Edwardsville, 60, has lived in the 200 block of Wells Avenue for 40 years. "I don't like to call myself the author of my autobiography or anything."

The Coca-Cola expansion 10 years ago took the western end of Wells. "I wasn't happy about it," he said. "I was living in the town, and they tore it down."