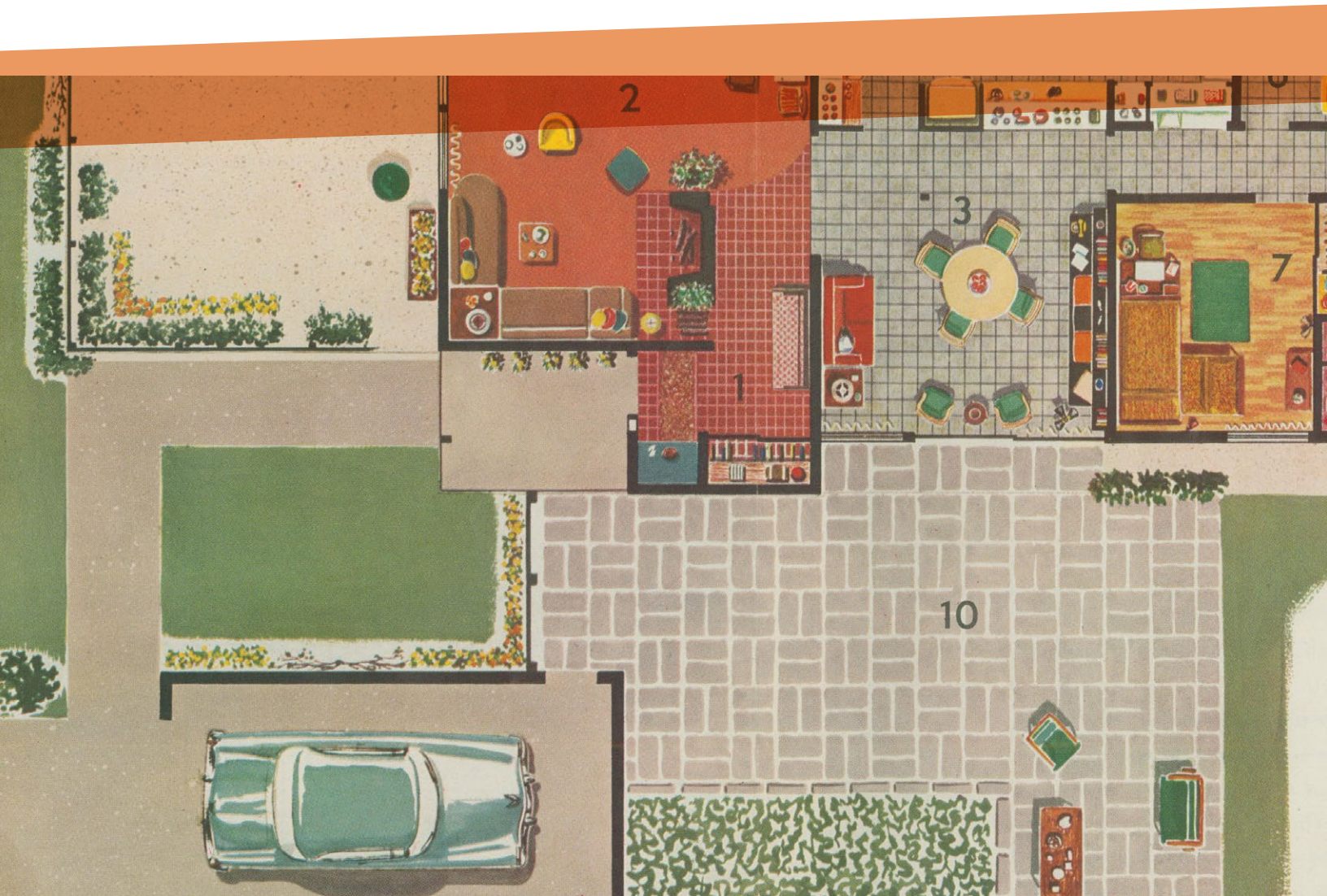


STUDENT ARTICLE LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

NAPERVILLE, ILLINOIS



Courtesy of the Naperville Heritage Society

WORDS TO KNOW

technoburb

annexed

suburbanization

sundown town

Caucasian

ordinance

subdivision

restrictive covenants

Shelley v. Kraemer

Fair Housing Act of 1968

commission

Jones v. Mayer

13th Amendment



Centennial Beach was segregated from its opening in 1932 until the 1950s. This was not a formal policy, but a well-known custom that kept Black swimmers out of the Beach. Courtesy of the Naperville Heritage Society

Cover: *Better Homes & Gardens* 1955 "Idea Home of the Year" featured this floor plan for homes in a Naperville development. Courtesy of the Naperville Heritage Society

PLANNING EXCLUSIVITY

Today, Naperville, Illinois, is a booming 21st-century **technoburb**. Of its residents 32% are people of color, primarily of Asian descent. But as recently as 1969, Naperville was virtually an all-White community. Its growth was shaped by exclusionary planning, including the use of racially **restrictive covenants** designed to ensure an all-White population. For over 80 years, Naperville was a sundown town.

Naperville in the 1890s was a quiet place of farms and light industry. Throughout the 1800s, Naperville and most of DuPage County excluded Black people and other people of color from settling and working locally. In a 1907 *Chicago Tribune* article, a resident of neighboring Glen Ellyn pointed to Naperville as a model for exclusion, stating, "In Naperville they have no colored colony. They will not sell land or anything else to negroes or give them work, and they stay away. Negroes will lower the price of real estate. Do we want them here?"

As early as the 1920s, Naperville landowners and developers put racially restrictive covenants in property deeds to prevent individual homes from being sold or rented to any person "not a **Caucasian**." These covenants appeared on Naperville deeds into the 1960s.

FROM FARMS TO SUBURBS

During the mid-20th century, Naperville transformed into a Chicago suburb. Between 1950 and 1980, the city **annexed** thousands of acres of farmland, sparking intense debates about what Naperville would grow to be. In 1954, the city council approved a **subdivision control ordinance** that kicked off a housing boom. This ordinance set standards to ensure that Naperville buildings and developments would always be "of the highest quality." Naperville became a desirable place to live. It boasted excellent schools. The East–West tollway (built with funds from the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956) made it easy to reach downtown Chicago.

Oak Hills being a subdivision of part of Sections 18 and 19, Township 38 North, Range 10 East of the Third Principal Meridian, in the City of Naperville, DuPage County, Illinois, together with the tenements and appurtenances thereunto belonging.

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the same unto said Parties of the Second Part, not in tenancy in common, but in joint tenancy, and to the proper use, benefit and behoof forever of said Parties of the Second Part.

And the said Parties of the Second Part for said parties and the heirs and assigns of said parties hereby covenant and agree as a part of the consideration hereof that this Deed is issued subject to the following:

1) All restrictions, building lines, easements noted on the recorded plat of Oak Hills Subdivision hereby conveyed.

2) No part or portion of the premises shall be used for any business or commercial purposes whatsoever.

3) After the main residence building has been erected there may then be erected necessary garages, or outbuildings, at a lesser cost; before any residence is erected, plans therefor must be approved by a property owners' committee to consist of three members elected by the lot owners of the subdivision, each lot having one vote for each member; terms of office for one year or until a successor is elected; election to take place at a meeting to be called by any three lot owners; failure of lot owners to elect a committee or failure of such committee to disapprove plans within ten days after receipt of same shall nullify this restriction.

4) It is an express condition of this conveyance that the premises herein described shall not be conveyed or leased to any person not a Caucasian and in the event that the premises shall be conveyed, leased, or permitted to be occupied by any grantee or successor to a person who is not a Caucasian, this deed shall forthwith become null and void and premises revert to the grantor.

5) All lots herein are restricted to single family residences, except Lots 44 to 49, both inclusive upon which two single family residences may be constructed, each having not less than 10,000 square feet of area.

6) Any violation of the covenants and agreements set forth shall be sufficient warranty and authority for the owner or owners of any other lot or lots in said subdivision to commence proceedings in any Court of record in DuPage County, Illinois, to restrain the violation of any of the covenants and agreements.

7) The owner or owners of the premises herein or any part thereof shall be liable for any costs and expenses growing out of any such proceedings for injunction and in addition, after the termination of such litigation, to the Plaintiff therein, for the sum of \$200 for attorney's fees.

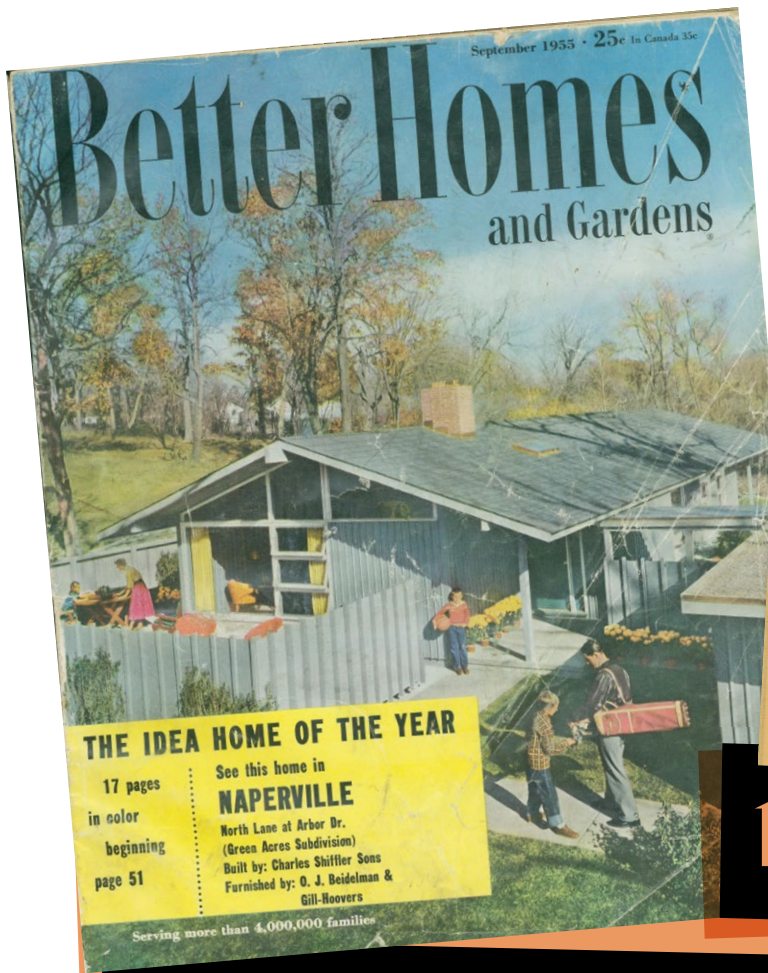
8) All taxes and installments of special assessments maturing after the year...1949.



Restrictive covenant on new construction in Oak Hills subdivision, 1950.
Courtesy of the Naperville Heritage Society



Moser Highlands was one of the first subdivisions to turn farmland into housing, helping transform Naperville into a Chicago suburb.
Courtesy of the Naperville Heritage Society



September 1955 • 25¢ In Canada 35¢

Better Homes and Gardens

THE IDEA HOME OF THE YEAR

17 pages
in color
beginning
page 51

See this home in
NAPERVILLE
North Lane at Arbor Dr.
(Green Acres Subdivision)
Built by: Charles Shiffler Sons
Furnished by: O. J. Beidelman &
Gill-Hoovers

Serving more than 4,000,000 families



THEY'RE MOVING UP TO **MOSER HIGHLANDS**

NAPERVILLEANS ARE DISCOVERING THE
FINEST IN SUBURBAN LIVING IN
MOSER HIGHLANDS

- 12 BUILDERS
- LARGE LOTS
- SEWERS
- PAVED STS.
- SIDEWALKS

This ad encouraged White Napervilleans to "move up" to new housing in Moser Highlands.
Courtesy of the Naperville Heritage Society

Naperville got national attention when this local home was shown in *Better Homes and Gardens* magazine as the 1955 "Idea Home of the Year."
Courtesy of the Naperville Heritage Society

COLLEGES AND COMPANIES CHANGE THE CONVERSATION

Naperville worked to be more than just a place where people lived. During the 19th century, it became home to North Central College (NCC), and in the 20th century new businesses located on the Illinois Technology and Research Corridor along the East–West Tollway. The combination of new residents, socially engaged faculty and college students, and national corporations put pressure on Naperville to embrace civil rights. The conversation about the city’s future began to change.

Black students at NCC in the 1950s experienced prejudice and unequal treatment. **Sundown town** practices stopped them from comfortably traveling west of Main Street in downtown Naperville. Students bitterly joked that every time the college got a new Black student, the Naperville police got a new officer to follow them. These experiences, among others, prompted students and some community members to challenge the city’s segregation norms. Human rights campaigns targeted segregated barbershops, drug stores, and Centennial Beach.

National figures such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who spoke at NCC in 1960 at the invitation of Reverend George St. Angelo, the school’s chaplain, inspired local people to get involved. King told the crowd, “We have the privilege of standing between two ages—the dying old and the emerging new.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., with Arlo Schilling, president of North Central College, at a lunch during King's 1960 visit to Naperville. Courtesy of the Naperville Heritage Society



CREATING A MORE INCLUSIVE CITY

In 1965, the Naperville Council of Churches created a Human Relations Council to help make Naperville more accepting of residents and workers of color. In 1964, Bell Labs, one of the world's leading scientific research and development companies, announced plans to open a new division in Naperville. Its employees of color had to fight for the right to live in the town where they worked.

Using new civil rights legislation, they placed the responsibility of expanding housing access on their employers. The Naperville Human Relations Council contacted local realtors for help in finding homes for two Black Bell Labs scientists. They were unsuccessful. In 1966, they filed a complaint with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

The inability of two Black Bell Labs scientists to purchase local housing made national news. *New York Times*, February 26, 1966. Courtesy of *The New York Times*

NEGRO SCIENTISTS INVOKE RIGHTS ACT

2 Say Realtors Deny Them Homes in Chicago Suburb

By **JOHN HERBERS**

Special to *The New York Times*

WASHINGTON, Feb. 25—The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was asked today to aid two Negro scientists who say they have been unable to find suitable housing in the suburban Chicago community where they are to be employed.

Both now live in a predominantly white neighborhood near Murray Hill, N.J., where they

Most of Naperville's Black workers lived in Aurora, Joliet, and Chicago—nearby cities with established Black communities. A 1968 survey by NCC students interviewed 113 local businesses. Only 11 employed Black workers, though 70 said they would hire qualified Black applicants. The report's authors argued that housing discrimination was the main reason Black people did not work in Naperville. They could not live nearby, so there was no point in applying for jobs. Even Black people who worked locally could not find housing. In 1967, only one of 225 Black employees at Argonne National Laboratories was able to live in surrounding DuPage County.

CHANGE COMES SLOWLY

In 1967, Naperville activists began to push for an official human relations **commission** in the city government. The effort failed. At a city council meeting, Commissioner John Zedrow recalled Naperville's sundown customs:

I remember when a certain minority (Negroes) had to be out of town at sundown. I remember when they couldn't participate in our beach, when they couldn't go get a haircut.

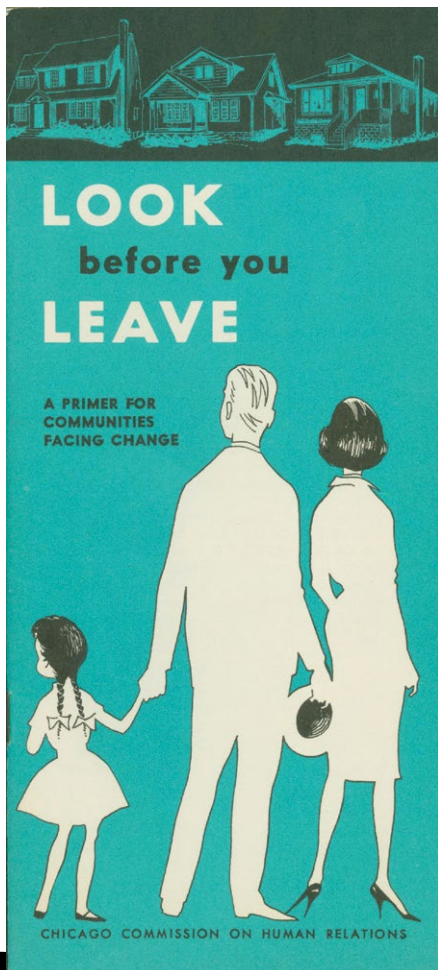
The Naperville Community Council Human Relations Study Group launched in 1964. Courtesy of North Central College



Like many people in Naperville, his answer was to let change happen at its own pace. He and others argued there was no need for laws or ordinances when practices would naturally shift over time. Advocates for civil rights rejected this idea and continued to demand that Naperville become accessible to all who wished to live there. A study group was launched to plan a Human Relations Council, leading to its formal adoption.

The next battle was over fair housing (often called “open housing” at the time). Early housing access campaigns depended on moral arguments—open housing was just the right thing to do. Intense backlash demanded a change in tactics. Now advocates talked more about the interests of Naperville homeowners. They focused on bringing in more corporations and keeping household property taxes low. A speaker at a November 1967 meeting of the Naperville Human Relations Council argued that a fair housing ordinance would help the city grow without really changing the population:

If Naperville should pass an open housing ordinance, nothing would happen tomorrow... Certainly there would be no great inundation of Negroes. No more than 60,000 of Chicago's more than 1,000,000 Negroes could afford to live here. Few of those care to be the ones to enter an all-white community. If open occupancy is not achieved, however, industries considering moving from the central city will by-pass. Industrial parks will remain empty, and homeowners will get no relief from taxes.



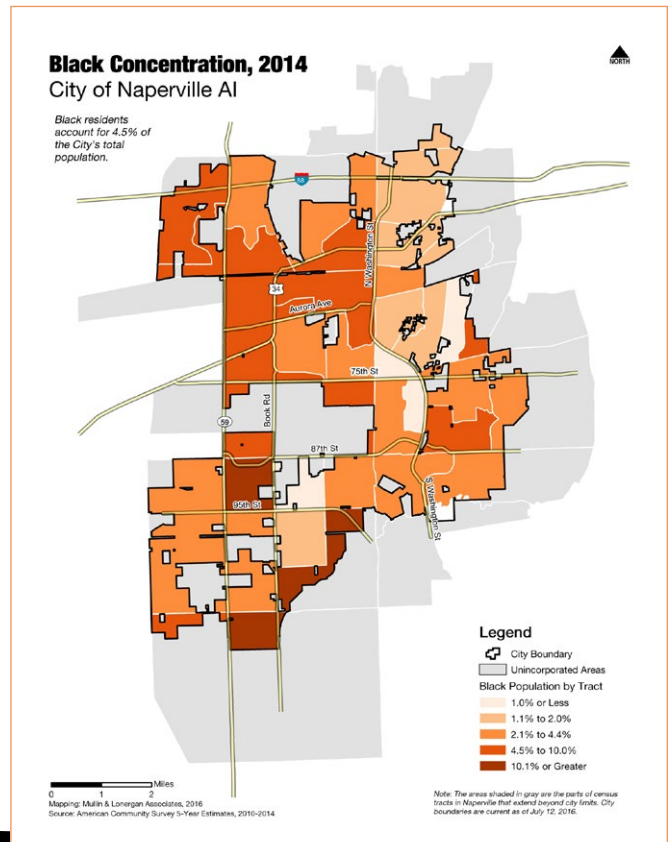
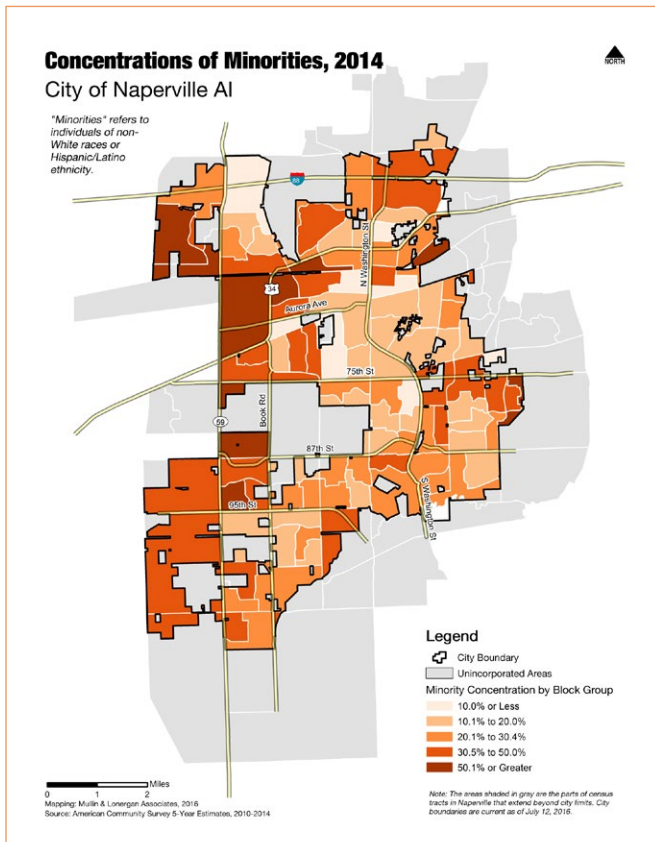
Naperville Human Relations Council member Mary Liz Burris gave guidance to people working to end segregation using resources such as this brochure. Courtesy of the Naperville Heritage Society

National events soon overcame local debates. The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the federal **Fair Housing Act of 1968**, and a U.S. Supreme Court decision in **Jones v. Mayer** declaring that housing discrimination violated the **13th Amendment** all pushed Naperville to adopt a fair housing ordinance in July 1968.

NAPERVILLE TODAY

Naperville’s population doubled each decade from 1950 to 2000. The Naperville housing market reveals a complicated story about growing diversity: while increased home values have added to the wealth and quality of life for many, the city has become more and more unaffordable for low- and middle-income people. Racial justice and access to housing remain central to discussions of the city’s present and future.

Grassroots organizations and interfaith groups are working to promote community dialogue on housing and racial justice issues. Naperville is now recognizing its history as a sundown town. Recent cases of racial and religious discrimination have brought negative attention to the city and led to a call for solutions. The City of Naperville adopted a new mission statement in 2019, specifically adding the goal of “creating an inclusive community that values diversity.” In 2021, the city added the position of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager, a position that works directly with the Human Rights and Fair Housing Commission to oversee the response to issues, including fair housing.



Maps from a 2017 report on challenges for affordable housing in Naperville reveal a city still largely divided along racial and class lines. Left: Concentration of minority community members, 2014. Right: Black community member concentration, 2014. Courtesy of the City of Naperville



As Naperville’s diversity grows, cultural organizations act as bridges to the larger community. Founded in 1992, Ray Chinese School is the largest Chinese school in the Chicago area, with a mission of teaching and sharing Chinese culture. Festivals such as the annual Holi celebration hosted by Simply Vedic and Juneteenth, hosted by Naperville Neighbors United, gather the community. The Alliance of Latinos Motivating Action in the Suburbs (ALMAS), founded in 2022 supports an authentic community for Latinos (and Latino allies) to celebrate and preserve Latino cultures, increase a sense of belonging, and empower Latino leaders in Naperville and the surrounding suburbs. Religious institutions have expanded beyond churches and now Hindu temples, mosques, and synagogues dot the landscape.



Upper left: Juneteenth, 2023.
 Courtesy of Naperville Neighbors United,
 photography by Alison Thompson Photography

Upper right: Launch event for the
 Alliance of Latinos Motivating Action in
 the Suburbs, 2023.
 Courtesy of the Alliance of Latinos Motivating
 Action in the Suburbs

Lower left: Holi Celebration produced by
 Simply Vedic.
 Courtesy of the Naperville Heritage Society

Lower right: Ray Chinese School students,
 2013.
 Courtesy of the Ray Chinese School

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What roles do small businesses and major corporations play in community change?
 Find some examples in this story.
- Does a community need to make sure there is housing for its workforce?
- What were some ways that Naperville citizens have worked together to make change?

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