



HOME AS A LIVING ARCHIVE

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11.308 Ecological Urbanism

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I. Purpose

The impetus for this project grew out of a brief, yet deeply meaningful encounter with people with familial roots in West Philadelphia. On Saturday, October 12 in the fall of 2019, Scott Winfree, a community member, gave us a walking tour. He led five members of our class, Ecological Urbanism at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), around the Mill Creek, neighborhoods. Hour after hour, we strolled through the streets with Scott. Several people greeted him along the sidewalk or from their front porches. Some asked what his company (our class) was doing in the area. He responded that we were a group of MIT students who were interested to help the community. Our class brought a mix of backgrounds and experiences: urban planning and architecture, community housing development, as well as history and anthropology.

From the sidewalk we passed row-houses and homes with porches and stoops, some in good condition, others in need of repair. We learned from Scott how to identify what a developer-owned house looks like: ones with light grey-painted edifices and fancy address numbers. Scott taught us that these unassuming facades belonged to people who did not actually live there; developers bought the homes at a low price only to fix them up and then sell them later. This silent form of gentrification, a phenomena playing out across the United States, is what our class had been reading up on for weeks. On that day, we saw it first hand. After the visit, our class dedicated six weeks to reflecting, synthesizing, and creating

possible approaches on how to hold ground. We drew from what we had learned over the course of the semester, and from our meetings with congregants of Monumental Baptist Church, community gardeners, and a handful of residents in West Philadelphia.

My personal take away from it all, as Scott expressed, is that “We need to reinvest in this community.” His words have invoked what is proposed in the following pages: a project for protecting the uniquely tangible and intangible things that define what it means, for residents of West Philadelphia, to live in and care for a home.

II. Introduction

While West Philadelphians combat home displacement, this document offers ways in which Monumental Baptist Church can protect the livelihood of its congregants and fellow community members. By bringing together West Philadelphians’ histories in the form of an archive, the project would allow people, local or non-local, to understand an entire community’s past and present in one place. A community archive permits a kind of continued knowledge making which can then become the grounds of imagining a livable future. In other words, *this is a document that envisions how to build an archive for community resilience in West Philadelphia*. While an archive can enrich a community in myriad ways, this document offers one timely, foundational idea in which the West Philadelphia community can utilize an archive for the benefit of keeping their homes in face of harmful development projects.

The project, “Home as a Living Archive,” seeks to give West Philadelphia residents the power to define their own community through the collection of cultural materials—photographs, videos, newspapers, maps, recipes, letters, diaries, financial or legal documents, or other objects—which depict the character of people living in a place they call home. These items may be donated, photocopied, or photographed (for those who wish to keep their personal items). The end product of this proposal aims to eventually manifest into a public exhibition of West Philadelphia homes in a way that showcases the living people and their histories as entities worth preserving.

First, I provide a brief introduction to situate the importance of archiving and archival projects in global, national, and local contexts. Second, I share a background about the history of housing displacement and how looking to the past can reveal strategies for self-defense in the present. Third, I present a theoretical framework for the concepts behind this document. This third section discusses the concepts of previous scholarship which may feed into the fabric of an archive project. Fourth, I offer a case study of 88 Block Walks, a successful example of what Home as a Living Archive might look like for West Philadelphia. In the fifth section, I lay out an application of principles which describe how to set up a project like Home as a Living Archive for Monumental Baptist Church. The sixth section discusses the limitations of such a project and future possibilities of the archival program’s implementation. Lastly, I leave a timeline which charts the course of a project such as Home as a Living Archive.

III. Background: housing displacement and historical strategies for self-defense

Archives tell stories by gathering items which can serve as proof that an event took place at a certain point in time. Uncovering past triumphs for certain generations of people can offer strategies for current generations. For example, by looking at a record in the National Archive called, “The Black Panther Party,” people today can draw inspiration, hope, and confidence from the historical group that sought to end racist policies and attitudes through the tactics of self-defense. Formed in 1966 in Oakland, California, The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP) emerged as a “revolutionary organization with an ideology of black nationalism, socialism, and armed self-defense.”¹ In the record, a film circa 1966-1969 serves as potent evidence, which displays moving images of Black peoples’ resistance and their form of self-defense as it had been exercised in wake of the Civil Rights era. Some parts of the film show Black students in uniform marching to protest at Alameda County Courthouse, Oakland, California. Other parts show Kathleen Cleaver, American professor of law involved in the Black Power Movement and the Black Panther Party, speaking at Hutton Memorial Park in Alameda County, California. In another segment of the film, protesters take to the streets chanting, “no more pigs in our community!” A Black Panther speaker in the film states,

We think that this educational process is necessary, and it’s the people that will call the revolution, and it’s the people that will call the change in the country. The Black Panther Party is

¹ “The Black Panther Party.”

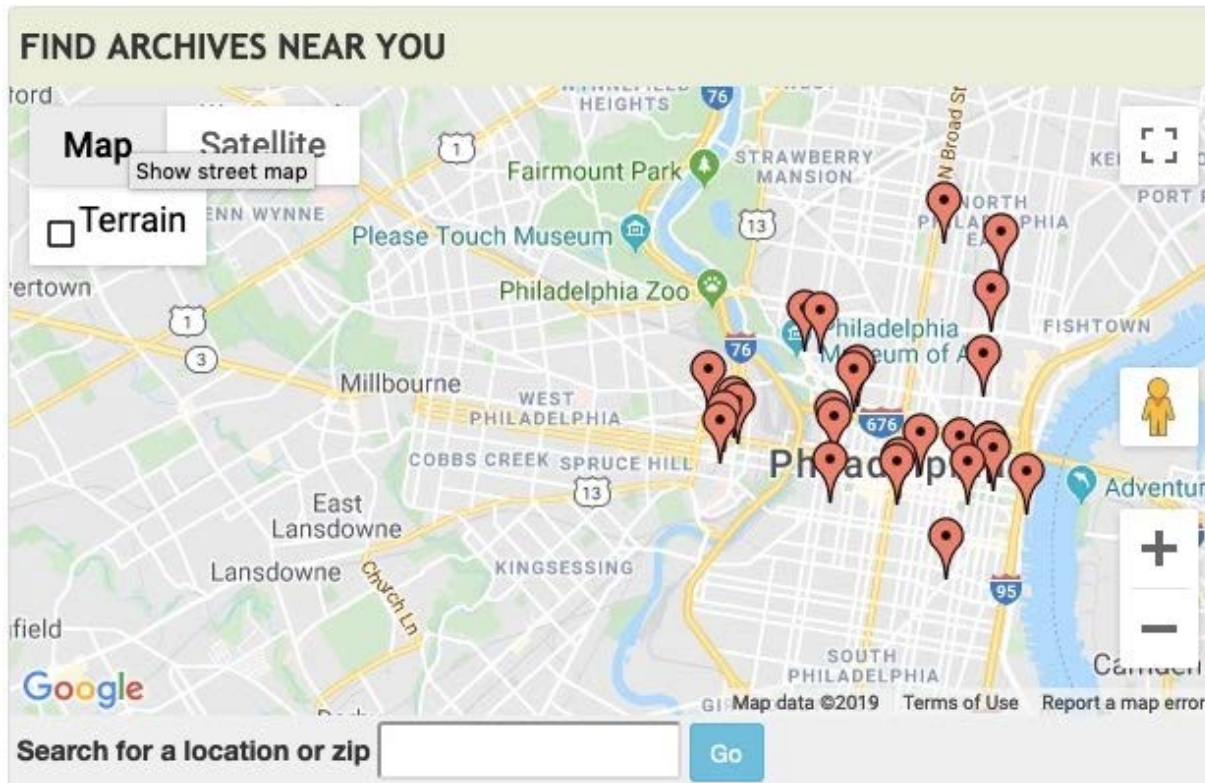


Figure 1. Five archives exist in West Philadelphia. Source from ArchiveGrid, search for archives in West Philadelphia. December 1, 2019.

simply the vanguard of the revolution, and we plan to teach the people the strategy and the necessary tools to liberate themselves.²

Like the National Archives which have stored the Black Panther Party's footage, Monumental Baptist Church could likewise become a place where West Philadelphians could learn about the tactics of their own histories from the collection, preservation, and

accessibility of shared material memories. Either by scanning (photocopying) or donating their artifacts, Monumental Baptist Church can showcase West Philadelphian homes as valuable places worth protecting from developers and gentrification initiatives which lack community participation. In a sense, archives can be a form of protest. As registries of memory, they are sites where previous social action and cultural movements resist falling into an irrelevant past, and instead wield themselves, to present day activists and defenders of home, as weapons of collective

² *Black Panther*. 6:43-7:01.

empowerment around issues such as housing displacement. For centuries, several nations, states, companies, and individuals have recognized the practice of keeping records (archives) as an asset which fortifies their respective societies and cultures.

Around the world, approximately fourteen hundred institutions in nearly two hundred countries and territories handle archives.³ Within the United States, there are around six thousand and two hundred individual archivists and institutional members.⁴ These comprise of local governments, universities, businesses, libraries, and historical societies.⁵ According to the International Council on Archives, the definition of archives are “the documentary by-product of human activity retained for their long-term value.”⁶ More specifically for Home as a Living Archive, the Society of American Archivists posits that archival records can “strengthen collective memory and protect people’s rights, property, and identity.”⁷ At a glance, five archival sites reside in the east end of West Philadelphia, as shown by ArchiveGrid, a project created under the nonprofit OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) (see Figure 1). However, as seen to the west of the district, no archival sites exist. This lack of archives in the neighborhoods beyond the University of Pennsylvania demonstrates that Monumental Baptist Church could fill a role in the collection, preservation, and perhaps most importantly, the *access* of cultural materials which could be turned into documents for community-wide identity formation.

³ “What Are Archives? | International Council on Archives.”

⁴ “Who We Are | Society of American Archivists.”

⁵ “What Are Archives? | National Museum of American History”

⁶ International Council on Archives.

⁷ “What Are Archives? | Society of American Archivists.”

A quote from Mel King, organizer of the Tent City protest in Boston encouraged me to dig further into the importance of who gets to define imagery in public media content. As mentioned in a study by the Community Innovators Lab (CoLab) and the MIT Department of Urban Studies (DUSP), King says, “Somebody else defined my community in a way that allowed them to justify the destruction of it.”⁸ To King’s statement, Hunter College professor Tom Angotti comments, “King’s advocacy was based on firsthand knowledge of the rich and contradictory human environment and social relations that are the essence of community.”⁹ The next section expands on similar themes found in literature on urban planning and urban history.

IV. Theoretical framework

This section delves into themes of history in urban social movements, Black community development, landscapes as public history, and environmental justice. It also discusses concepts of home, and how the American ideals of owning a home have turned out to be less than a reality for certain groups of people and more so of an ideology in the language of public policy. I flesh out the theoretical framework for Home as a Living Archive by expanding on these three themes: urban history as knowledge and power; the Church as a space for community-wide meaning making; and holding onto home as self-determination.

⁸ Seidman, Lee, and Selinger, “From Urban Renewal to Affordable Housing Production System: Boston Mayors and the Evolution of Community Development Corporations in Boston.” Page 10.

⁹ Ibid.

Urban History as Knowledge and Power

In *People before Highways*, Karilyn Crockett offers the book as an archive in and of itself, equipped with methods for collecting and interpreting the dissemination of knowledge—the know-how, or tactics, of community organizing which have mushroomed across activist networks. This “collective, memory-driven” account of an anti-highway coalition of the late 1960s called “People before Highways” shows how memory can be used as a tool for future movements. For example, keeping a record of past events can shed light on how to combat development projects in West Philadelphia. In Crockett’s chapter “Groundwork: Imagining a Highwayless Future,” the Black United Front group erected a house which “[intended] to serve as both a symbol of local resistance to highway development as well as a center for information about the highway, its effects, and how to fight both.”¹⁰ Groups such as the Black United Front ignited the use of “community control,” an “organizing principle for greater Boston’s anti-highway movement.”¹¹ Monumental Baptist Church can learn from the history of community-driven organizations. From the Black United Front, the Church can gain a sense of the significance of central gathering places, which serve as starting points for communities to effectively respond to external impingements, such as development projects that concern the health and welfare of West Philadelphians. The most potent antidote for the Church, however, would be to uncover its own history of coalition building and strength.

¹⁰ Crockett, *People Before Highways: Boston Activists, Urban Planners, and a New Movement for City Making*, page 74.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 79.

As urban historian Dolores Hayden writes in *The Power of Place*, “Writing the social history of buildings can begin with material culture theory and method.”¹² Through an examination of how social history can reveal avenues for public history and public art, as well as urban preservation and urban writing, Hayden’s book addresses the same concerns of this project. The impetus of Home as a Living Archive is based on the concern of keeping West Philadelphia homes in the hands of long-time residents with genealogical ties and ancestry in the area. In order to achieve this retention of home properties, and the people in them, the project recognizes the merit in having communities sculpt their own history and tell their own stories in public spaces. Similar projects have been successful in places such as Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia which, as Hayden mentions, preserved “buildings associated with the civil rights movement and Martin Luther King.”¹³ Like Crockett, Hayden highlights the importance of inscribing memory into place. This inscription involves an intimate strand of memory which is also tied to collective or social memories. “Urban land houses” writes Hayden, stand as “storehouses for these social memories” that also carry features of hills and harbors, in addition to “streets, buildings, and patterns of settlement,” which trace the lives of people and yet persist throughout many lifetimes.¹⁴

¹² Hayden, *The Power of Place : Urban Landscapes as Public History*, page 33.

¹³ *Ibid*, page 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, page 9.

The Church as a space for community-wide meaning making

Monumental Baptist Church can solidify its place even more as an iconic structure by turning its building into a site for West Philadelphia residents to learn about and contribute their larger cultural history in connection to broader issues of housing faced across the nation. The church would thus become a site where congregants and the general public could gain a collective sense of home from multiple viewpoints. Noting how pivotal such meeting spaces are in the shared consciousness of citizens, Hayden says,

Territorial history will point to a church where major civil rights meetings were held, or a local newspaper that crusaded for fair housing, or the first place in a city where women tried to vote, or the first integrated primary school. [...] Finding these buildings and interpreting their history is one additional way to fuse the social and political meanings of space with the history of the urban landscape.¹⁵

A site specific example of a project that demonstrates community-wide meaning making is that of The Mill Creek Project in West Philadelphia, which began in 1996. Students in Sulzberger Middle School and the University of Pennsylvania partnered with one another to research the Mill Creek area's past, understand its present, and also envision its future. The students used, "their own eyes and imagination, the place itself, and primary documents of old maps, photographs tax records, census tables, stream-railroad timetables, city plans and windows into otherwise hidden dimensions."¹⁶ Their collaborative project began in the fall of 1996,

¹⁵ Hayden, 39.

¹⁶ "The Mill Creek Project."

led by Anne Whiston Spirn, then a Professor of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania. In one iteration of the school-university collaboration course, Sulzberger Middle School students presented their web development work to the the Pennsylvania General Assembly on February 3, 1998. After their presentation, the assembly room, full of senators and congress members, stood clapping their hands for nearly forty seconds. When the standing ovation settled down, Governor Thomas Ridge remarked to the school teacher, "Mr. Campbell, that was the longest, sustained ovation of approval that I think we've had in this chamber for many years, and deservedly so. Thank you, and your students."¹⁷ The Mill Creek project is one example of a partnership, involving middle school and university students, which Monumental Baptist Church can model to address local community development.

Holding onto home as self-determination

Homeownership is a privilege in many respects. By acknowledging the propaganda of homeownership in the history of America, Monumental Baptist Church can ameliorate the intergenerational blockades to African Americans' wealth imposed by many years' worth of government policies. In a chapter titled "Ideological Origins of Affordable Homeownership Efforts," Lawrence Vale argues that the high rate of homeownership in the United States is the result of generations of public policy which instilled the idea of home ownership as a moral value.¹⁸ The government awarded homeownership to those Americans judged to be worthy. Such aid involved bestowing a "variety of land grants to veterans during the

¹⁷ *Gov. Tom Ridge Speech - WPLP.*

¹⁸ Rohe and Watson, *Chasing the American Dream*, page 15.

nineteenth century.”¹⁹ The Homestead Act of 1862, as Vale says, “epitomized” the legislation which explicitly rewarded people homeownership in turn to those who worked the land; today, it is for those who can afford it, and furthermore, for those who can afford to maintain the homes they have. In the 1950s, low-income citizens were marginalized, as former United States Housing Authority administrator Nathan Straus posited in *Two-Thirds of a Nation* (1952). Straus said that families in the “lower-income half” faced danger in purchasing a home, and that this was “rarely to be recommended.”²⁰ For African American individuals and families, policy exerted racial segregation.

The Color of Law, by Richard Rothstein, depicts how racial segregation came about in the United States due to the combination of federal housing programs and existing views of housing authorities, a majority of whom kept whites and blacks separate when it came time for families to purchase homes in the same localities.²¹ Racial segregation in United States cities was reinforced by America’s historically racialized housing programs, and had disenfranchised minority populations which have come with residual effects that feed into what is now called modern-day redlining. Rothstein’s core argument is that through state-sponsored segregation, the nation unconstitutionally denied African Americans the means and right to integrate into middle class neighborhoods, and that because of this, the U.S. must remedy its unconstitutional acts. Under Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal in the 1930’s, public housing became available. New Deal programs such as the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), established in 1933, and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) were

committed to racial segregation. The Public Works Administration (PWA) enforced segregation through public housing initiatives which designated integrated neighborhoods as either white or black, essentially installing whites-only and blacks-only neighborhoods. After 1937, when Congress ended the PWA program, it halted direct federal construction of public housing. Congress then established the United State Housing Authority (USHA) to provide federal subsidies in different localities through their own public housing agencies. Moving forward, Monumental Baptist Church can understand that West Philadelphia’s situation is a part of these historical underpinnings of housing segregation, a nationwide phenomena faced by Black communities across America.

Knowing how the past has brought us to the future endows people with a furnished and informed sense of what to do now. How does a community step out of generations worth of unfair housing policy? Home as a Living Archive can directly highlight the experiences of West Philadelphians, memories which can lend insight on how to hold onto a home. In the beginning stages of an archive, there is a sense of uncertainty about what will be found. However, having faith in the outcome of the archival process is crucial to the project’s fruition. This same kind of open-ended framework has proved successful for a handful of similar archival projects under the program called 88 Block Walks. As the next section will show, 88 Block Walks has managed, and continues to showcase, local people’s stories of their pasts, which educates the public and allows locals to share their interpretations and self-defined meanings of place.

¹⁹ Ibid, page 15.

²⁰ Ibid, page 38.

²¹ Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*.

V. A case study: 88 Block Walks

Modelling the program 88 Block Walks could be a revitalizing strategy for West Philadelphians who are intent on staking hold of their neighborhood grounds. Founded in Honolulu, Hawai'i in 2014, 88 Block Walks continues to serve its surrounding downtown district called Kaka'ako. 88 Block Walks exemplifies ways in which to honor and recognize a living history of a community. This kind of program, if implemented in West Philadelphia, could stir vigor and pride within community members about the houses they live in and among. The mission of 88 Block Walks is to "provide public access to archival materials and other diverse histories of the neighborhood" by way of a series of walking tours which explore "themes of gentrification, displacement, urbanization and generational change within Kaka'ako's cultural, historical and physical landscape."²² The organization's theory of change is to "remove the lens through which landowners and developers present Kaka'ako's narrative to the public and invite the community to create their own."²³ More details and information about this study can be found in the Appendix.

Carried by the principle of psychogeography, a term for the exploration of urban environments as a way to make pedestrians more aware of the urban landscape, 88 Block Walks aims to promote awareness of the "socio-spatial inequality" within the urban environment of Hawaii's downtown district of Kaka'ako. Since its conception, the program has hosted six walks, with an average of one to two walks per year. The walks thus far have

²² "88 Block Walks."

²³ Ibid.

touched upon different topics related to ecology, society, and infrastructure. Specifically, streams, oral histories, parking lots, university student compositions from the 1920s through the 1970s, historical theater performances, and mission house sites. Through these focused walking exhibitions, 88 Block Walks intends to shift the way people interact with the area.

The 88 Block Walk organization is partnered with a local bookshop in Honolulu called "da Shop." What may help to get this 88 Block Walk idea off the ground in West Philadelphia is for someone to pitch this sort of event to a local bookstore or library, such as the West Philadelphia Library (125 S 52nd St.), Prosperity Bookstore (109 S 60th St.), Hakim's Bookstore & Giftshop (210 S 52nd St.), and/or Bindlestiff Books (4530 Baltimore Ave.). Hakim's Bookstore may be of priority interest since it is one of Philadelphia's black-owned bookstores, according to a 2017 article from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.²⁴

The next step to implement a live showing of an archive project like 88 Block Walks would be for Monumental Baptist Church to promote a volunteer position for spearheading the initiative. Someone such as Awanya R. Peaks, the arts coordinator at the church, might be interested in this position. The annual end of summer "block party" in West Philadelphia would be an opportune venue to host the showcasing of Home as a Living Archive. Titles for these positions could be: Community Housing Educator, West Philadelphia Historical Housing Archivist, or Community Reinvestment Coordinator. According to Pastor Mapson, the weekly Wednesday hot meal event is one of the most valuable

²⁴ Russ, "Last of Philly's Black-Owned Bookstores Looking for a Comeback."

events for people who do not have the luxury of making or buying these kinds of meals for themselves because they are dealing with other structural issues. As we spoke about in our meeting with Pastor Mapson, the church could hold information sessions at these weekly hot meal dinners. As part of these weekly information sessions, the church could also ask people about contributing their cultural materials for Home as a Living Archive.

As Hayden says about the public presentation or celebration of culture,

Festivals and parades also help to define cultural identity in spatial terms by staking out routes in urban cultural landscape. Although their presence is temporary they can be highly effective in claiming the symbolic importance of places.²⁵

Monumental Baptist Church could set up this type of program like 88 Block Walks to establish the “symbolic importance” of West Philadelphians who face the impingement of developers. The church harbors the essential resources and spaces for Home as a Living Archive to thrive (see 2018 class report, “Monumental Spaces”). For example, there are several unused rooms that the church could turn into archive storage or viewing rooms for archival displays. The parking lot is also an innovative resource for viewing archives on a big screen, such as with a projector in an outdoor movie style. These spaces are potential arenas where congregation members and the general public alike can come together to understand that the sum of their homes amounts to a neighborhood of vivacious treasures.

²⁵ Hayden, 38.

VI. Application of Principles

The following section is a rough guideline on how to embark on the archival process. It is by no means exhaustive, but rather a starting point for setting up Home as a Living Archive. This section includes suggestions on how to define the parameters of archival material; identify archive storage locations; understand the act of collection archival materials; sorting archival materials; and finally interpreting what the amassed collection of archival materials means. For more comprehensive information on how to go about the archival process, see the Appendix B for a bibliography of archival guides written by entities such as the University of South Florida Tampa Library Special Collection, and International Records Management Trust.

1 – Archive materials

Step one in the process of setting up a Home as a Living Archive is to define the materials that will become the historical artifacts used to characterize the various homes of individuals. These artifacts include, but are not limited to: photographs, videos, film, newspaper clippings, diaries, maps, recipes, letters, writing, or financial and legal documents.

“Home” gives the living archive an intergenerational and cared for sense of place. In another light, “home” as a living

archive can also reveal a sense of fraught, which may stem from developers and predatory speculators.

Promote the idea of Home as a Living Archive by posting information about the project, and soliciting the collection and contributions of West Philadelphian’s cultural materials via online and social media networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, and the Monumental Baptist Church website.

2 – Archiving

To begin the archival process, there must be someone to set up two places—one online and one physical space where materials can be stored. The online site would host the storage of digital copies, items which have been scanned in by a machine. The second place is a physical site for storing items that congregants or community members have donated. For example, this physical location could exist somewhere in an annex room of Monumental Baptist Church.

Digital archive

To establish a digital archive, create an online page available for public access so that people are able to see images and accompanying information of the hardcopy archive materials. The page can be accessible on its own website domain, or be available on a tab within Monumental Baptist Church’s website (<https://www.thembc.org/>).

The Internet Archive is an organization that can help Monumental to set up a digital archive platform. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit, the Internet Archive partnerships have included a range of institutions such as the Boston Library Consortium, Duke University, Library of Congress, Natural History Museum, Smithsonian Institution, and over 1,400 other library partners. The organization’s mission is to partner with libraries and universities around the world to preserve the knowledge of the world by offering “free long term online access to historians, scholars, researchers, and the general public.”²⁶ For more information on contacting the Internet Archive, see Appendix A at the end of this document.

Physical archive

The purpose of setting up a physical archive is to allow for the collection of those cultural materials which residents donate to Home as a Living Archive. Designating a room for this physical collection would leave the possibility open for future exhibitions in the church or for museum exhibitions.

3 – Collecting materials for the archive

As a way to collect archive materials, allow people to come into the church on a designated day of the week or month

²⁶ Internet Archive, “Digitize Your Collections.”

so that they can bring in their materials to be scanned in by hand. For example, make a room available on a Saturday for an open house and promote the event so that people know their home materials will go towards the creation of an archive which seeks to protect the homes of West Philadelphia residents by depicting a self-determined meaning of home. Appoint school students and other volunteers to help scan in the items that people bring in. If residents no longer want their home materials, the volunteers can write a record of the items and store them in an archive box.

4 – Sorting archived materials

There are many ways in which to sort archive materials. Since the main theme of this particular project is Home as a Living Archive, the materials are on one level already sorted, since the archive title denotes that these artifacts come from West Philadelphia residents' houses. However, going a few steps further in the archival sorting process can help future historians and librarians sift through the materials for research, or even make it easier for lawyers and policy makers who are looking for culturally important documents to further their cases on the importance of home and community preservation.

5 – Interpreting the archive collections

When enough images are collected and uploaded, it is time to publicize Home as a Living Archive. There are a number of ways to promote the collection items. One way to

promote the archive collection is to compose a social media or blog post about one person's house every month as a way to showcase the qualities and values of that person's home. This step in turning archival materials into a story is an act of interpretation. The interpretation stage is meant to connect the disparate set of materials to one another in a way that makes their connections legible. By understanding the connection of materials in the context within a home, readers can relate to the valuable histories which belong to the people living in West Philadelphia.

Writers of these blog posts could be students from schools in the area surrounding West Philadelphia, including universities such as University of Pennsylvania, or Drexel University. It is important to designate someone to write about the collection of home items of a West Philadelphian because the writing imbues the materials with meaning. For example, in 1996, Professor Anne Spirn set out on a project called "Mill Creek" to connect her students at the University of Pennsylvania with teachers and students at the Sulzberger Middle School in West Philadelphia. The project goal was to explore a new curriculum which combined learning, community development, and water resource management. Regarding this project, Professor Spirn indicates on the Mill Creek Project site:

Learning how their neighborhood had evolved (from forest to farms and mills to factories and city) transformed the way children perceived their community. Understanding local history and how the neighborhood had changed in the past unlocked the children's imagination and enabled them to envision

how it might change in the future. Using copies of primary documents (maps, prints, drawings photographs, newspaper articles, and planning reports), university students helped eighth graders construct a local history.²⁷

In the same manner that The Mill Creek Project allowed Sulzberger Middle School students to understand their local history and gear that historical knowledge towards urban planning, Monumental can offer youth this same opportunity through the Home as a Living Archive project. By engaging youth in the practice of archiving and writing about their community's history of place, Home as a Living Archive takes shape as a form of community-based education for emerging generations in West Philadelphia. Some educational aspects of the project include, but are not limited to, teaching youth the skills for becoming: narrators of their own history; community development coordinators; computer programmers; archivists; librarians; historians; representatives; and environmental land stewards. These occupations range far and wide because archiving imparts translatable skillsets that can be used for a variety of other applications in research, lawmaking, policy, social rights advocacy, and other professional pursuits.

Another project that exemplifies the interpretation stage is the West Philadelphia Book Project which sought to bring together school students and seniors who collaborated

with one another to document stories of their neighborhood. The project endowed its participants with a sense of pride in conducting "historical research," "thoughtful discussion," and an "increased intergenerational understanding."²⁸ By curating photographs, oral histories, and maps, the West Philadelphia Book Project gave the area a sense of place and value.

For future iterations of these public-private partnerships between West Philadelphia schools and the University of Pennsylvania, contact Professor John Puckett for collaborative research projects, such as West Philadelphia Collaborative History:

<https://collaborativehistory.gse.upenn.edu/>. The site has data about public housing, and how it has evolved into what is there today such as Lucien Blackwell Homes, serving middle- to low-income individuals and families, akin to suburban style housing. To interpret the archives, students can partner with elders of the community to conduct oral history projects, or to write stories that they gather from conversations. Similarly, school students could also photograph their surrounding houses and have these documentations become a part of Home as a Living Archive. If further guidance is desired, Monumental Baptist Church may connect school students with university students through community-based courses offered at University of Pennsylvania, such as the "HSPV 600 Documentation,

²⁷ Spirn, "The Mill Creek Project."

²⁸ Breinin et al., *West Side Stories: Memories of West Philadelphia*, page v-vi.

Research, Recording I” which is usually offered in the Fall term.

6– Exhibiting

As previously expanded on in the section on a case study of 88 Block Walks, an exhibition of the interpreted archive could take place during an annual block party or at the church parking lot with a large projection that showcases archival materials on the edifice of an entire building wall.

VII. Limitations and future possibilities for program implementation

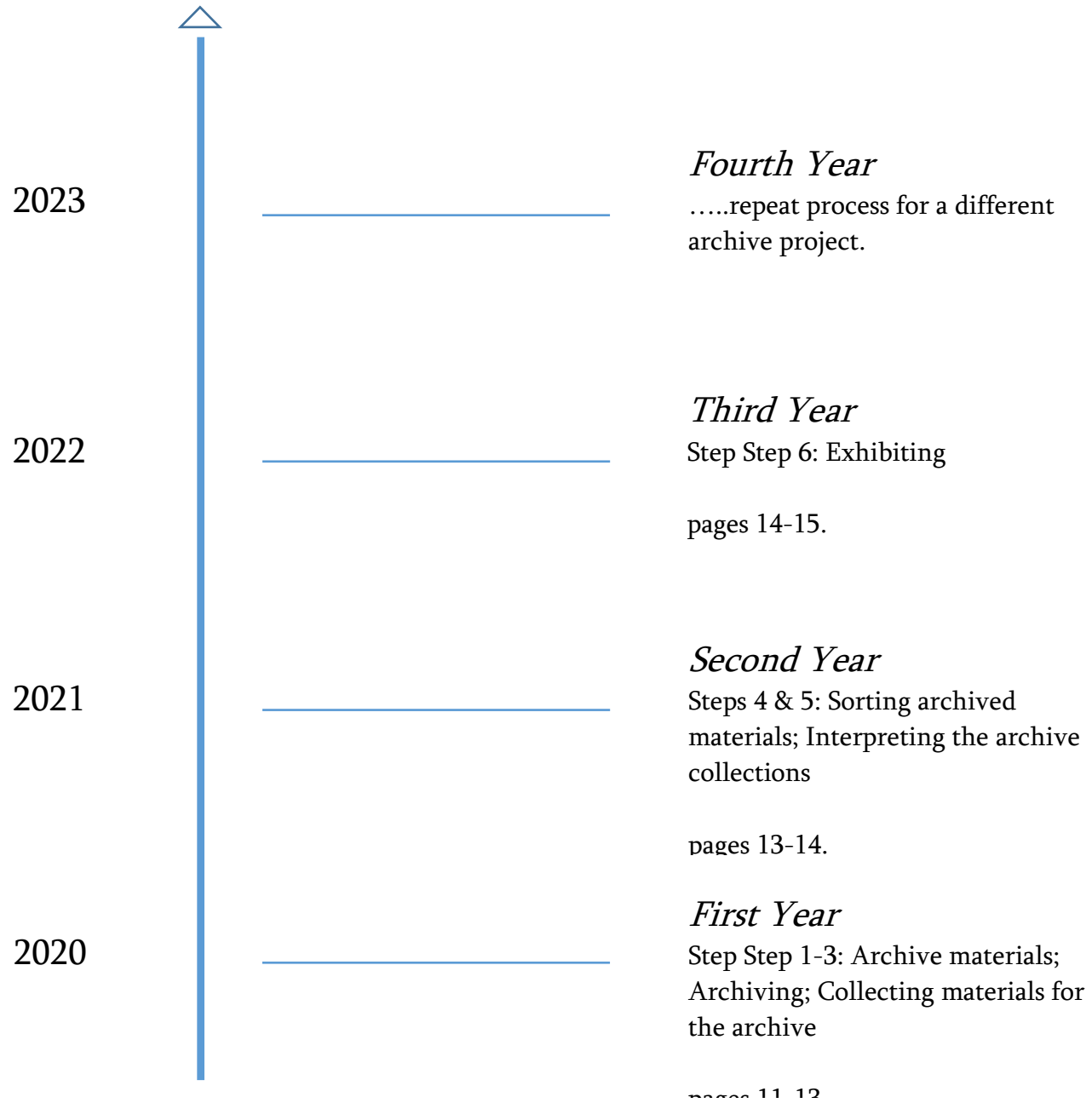
The limits of this project stretch as far as the imagination of its participants.

I hope that this guide may provide a platform on which the community in West Philadelphia can, as Anne Spirn says, “address multiple purposes rather than a single, narrowly defined one-and then to imagine how these might be expressed in renewed public places” (298). As our class has been well aware of, the housing issues faced by West Philadelphians are wide in topic, yet unified by the theme of holding onto a home.

Whether or not West Philadelphians wish to pursue the exact theme of Home as a Living Archive, the central tenets of this document present an open-ended framework for exhibiting any archival history based on the collection of cultural materials or living memory. And even if Home as a

Living Archive manifests as it is imagined in these pages, this does not mean that the archives become irrelevant. Rather, these archives—the process, the people, and the love it took to grow—can continue to grow into a repository of strength, fortified with memory and historical knowledge, for the community of West Philadelphia, and perhaps for other localities who wish to model a project on building resilience.

TIMELINE



IX. Appendix

A. Digitize your Collections with the Internet Archive.

Website:

<https://archive.org/scanning>

The Internet Archive provides a service in several different locations around the world. They provide digitization services for individuals and groups who wish to store their hardcopy or digital data online in an open and free access, long-term storage platform with unlimited downloads. The closest in-person Internet Archive site to Monumental Baptist Church is located about an hour away in the Princeton Theological Seminary Library in Princeton, NJ; address here:

Internet Archive
25 Library Place
Princeton, NJ 08540
415-839-6610

Home as a Living Archive collaborators could drive the physical materials to the Princeton location. Stacy Argondizzo, the current Senior Digitization Manager at the Internet Archive in Princeton says that she can digitize a thousand books a week. Each physical book comes with a \$3 set up fee, with a 12 cents per image cost. In other words, each image costs 12 cents to scan and upload to a database. If there are any foldouts in the book, it is \$2.30. Newspapers are 50 cents per image. Once the files are uploaded into the online repository, they are there for life. Everything that the Internet Archive does is included in the

aforementioned fees for books and images; the place is a non-profit so the organization is covering the labor costs. The benefit of collaborating with the Internet Archive is that they get it done very quickly, whereas if Monumental Baptist Church were to have volunteers conduct the digitization process alone, the archiving speed would be quite slow and possibly clunky.

Monumental Baptist Church may also find a unique connection to the Princeton Theology Seminary Library, which is the largest seminary library in the world. They have worked with other churches within the United States and also abroad. The point person at the library is Gregory Murray (Gregory.murray@ptsem.edu). If you contact him, the library may be interested to partner with Monumental Baptist Church, since the library seeks to document the history of churches. The Princeton Theological Seminary may further be interested to pay Monumental Baptist Church to contribute to their online archive, depending on the level of interest the Princeton Theology Seminary Library has in Monumental Baptist Church's historical materials.

The library may also be able to lend a portable scribe to Monumental Baptist Church. The portable scribe can only handle small content—no large maps, just the standard book size materials that come in 8.5x11 inches. Previously, the library has lent this portable scribe to countries that have limited access to the internet. The content is first uploaded to a hard drive, and later stored online once the scribe is returned.

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88 Block Walks

a case study for Monumental Baptist Church in
West Philadelphia

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district
Kaka'ako (commercial retail district)

Honolulu, Hawai'i

dates of operation
2014- present





goal and mission

88 Block Walks seeks to “provide greater public access to archival materials and other diverse histories of the neighborhood” by way of a series of walking tours which explore “themes of gentrification, displacement, urbanization and generational change within Kaka’ako’s cultural, historical and physical landscape.”¹

theory of change

The program aims to “remove the lens through which landowners and developers present Kaka’ako’s narrative to the public and invite the community to create their own.”

1 <http://www.88blockwalks.com/read-me>

abstract

Carried by the principle of psychogeography, a term for the playful exploration of urban environments as a way to make pedestrians more aware of the urban landscape, 88 Block Walks intends to promote awareness of the “socio-spatial inequality” within the urban environment of Hawaii’s downtown district of Kaka’ako. Since its conception, the program has hosted six walks, with an average of one to two walks per year. The focus of the walks thus far have touched upon different topics related to ecology, society, and infrastructure – specifically, streams, oral histories, parking lots, university student compositions from the 1920s through the 1970s, historical theater performances, and mission house sites. Through these focused walking exhibitions, 88 Block Walks intends to shift the way people interact with the area.

keywords

public archive; living archive; walking tour; urban history



size of community

(circled in red)

16,363 people

59.1% Asian

22.2% White

9.5% Mixed

4% Other

3.5% Hispanic

1.4% Black¹



The geographic focus for 88 Block Walks is anyone who is interested to learn about the history of Kaka'ako. However, most of the attendants probably reside in urban Honolulu, which has a population of 350,395 people.²

1 Compiled by Statistical Atlas, 2010 US Census Bureau data.

2 Ibid.

founder

Adele Balderston is the founder and sole organizer of 88 Block Walks. She is a place-based storyteller from Kailua, Hawai'i, and holds an MA in geography from Hunter College (CUNY) and a BA in new media communication studies from New York University.

Adele started the organization because she felt concerned for the inequality in the Kaka'ako area. In an interview with Hawaii Public Radio, she expressed,

It was a really poor area. It was razed because it was urban blight. Urban planners thought it was ugly, so they got rid of it. But now we're having the same problem, they're building all this luxury housing," spoke Adele, "But you know, there's still people who live here, and there are business here. And the businesses are their own communities in this similar way [...] it's just this cycle of displacement."¹



sources of support

Hawaii Council for the Humanities

A 503(c) non-profit, which a private nonprofit organization that supports and promotes the exchange of ideas, stories, and traditions to improve communities and to encourage participation in civic life.¹



Interisland Terminal

A charitable organization which promotes the cultural and socio-economic life of Honolulu through year-round programs in Contemporary Art, Design, and Film that explores the intersections of creativity, innovation and civic engagement.



1 <http://hihumanities.org/>

2 <https://www.missionhouses.org/>

3 <https://hawaii-futures.com/>

4 <https://dashophnl.com/>

external partners

The external partners of 88 Block Walks are individuals, shops, and organizations. Listed are a few examples of the entities:

Hawaii Mission Homes Historic Site

Hawaii Mission Homes Historic Site and Archives "preserves the heritage and interprets the stories of the American Protestant Missionaries, their descendants, and their relationships with the people and cultures of Hawai'i, connecting with contemporary life, and encouraging a deeper understanding and appreciation of the complex history of Hawai'i."²

Sean Connelly

Sean Connelly is the author of Hawai'i' Futures, an online resource for sustainable urbanism in Hawai'i.³

da Shop

da Shop is a community bookstore and events space.⁴

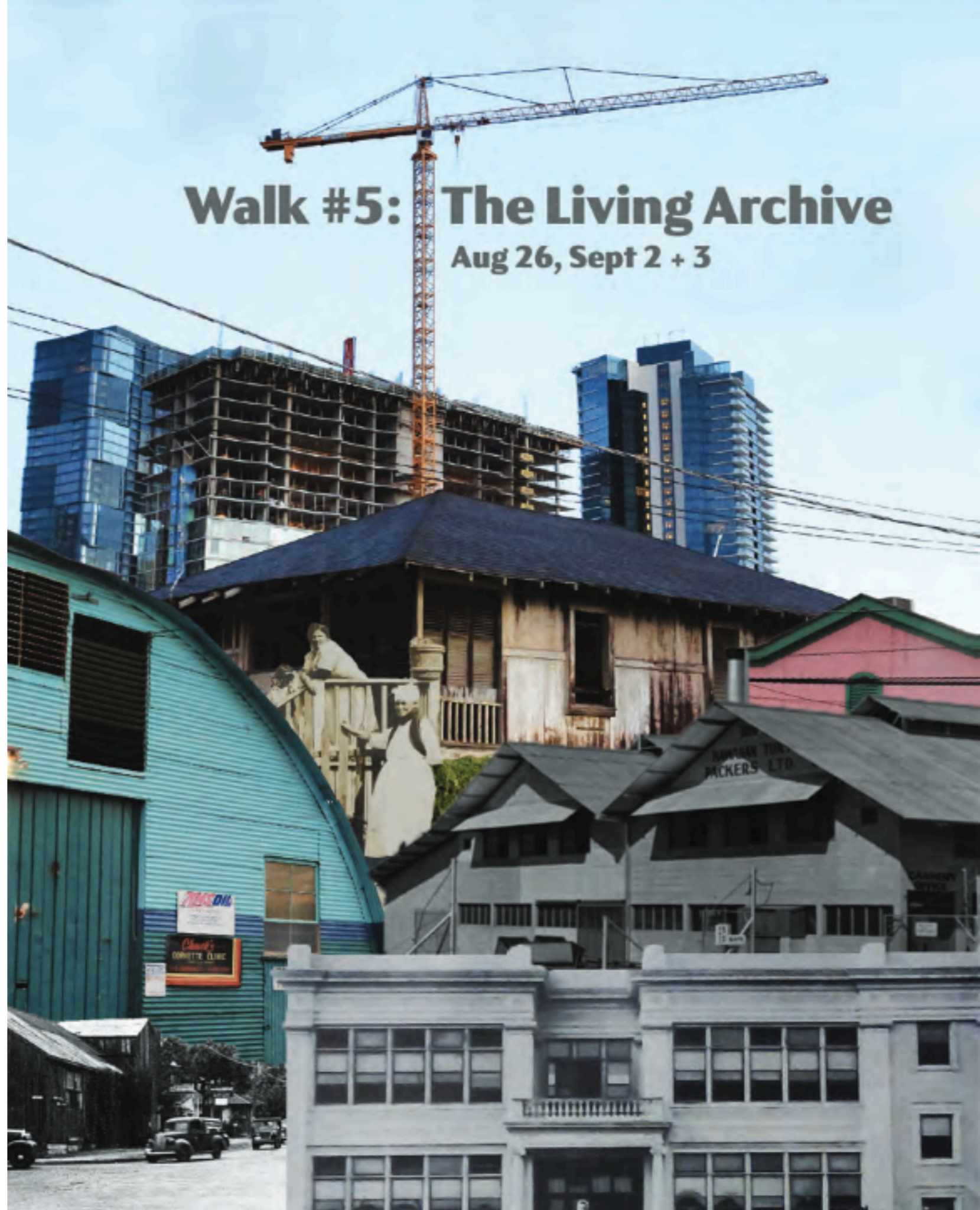
“A lot of people talk about the Ala Wai that runs under the Blaisdell now. So other people are becoming aware of different, you know, things that are less visible in the neighborhood. And they’re trying to bring them to the surface in different ways through their actions and their stories.”

– Adele

programs

Since its conception, 88 Block Walks has hosted a total of 6 walking tours. The tours are listed on the website under the “walks” section.¹

The following two pages highlight Walk #5: The Living Archive, depicted in the poster to the right, with Kakaako’s evolving architecture throughout the ages. Older buildings in black in white linger at the bottom while the blue glass development complexes of the current day loom at the top.

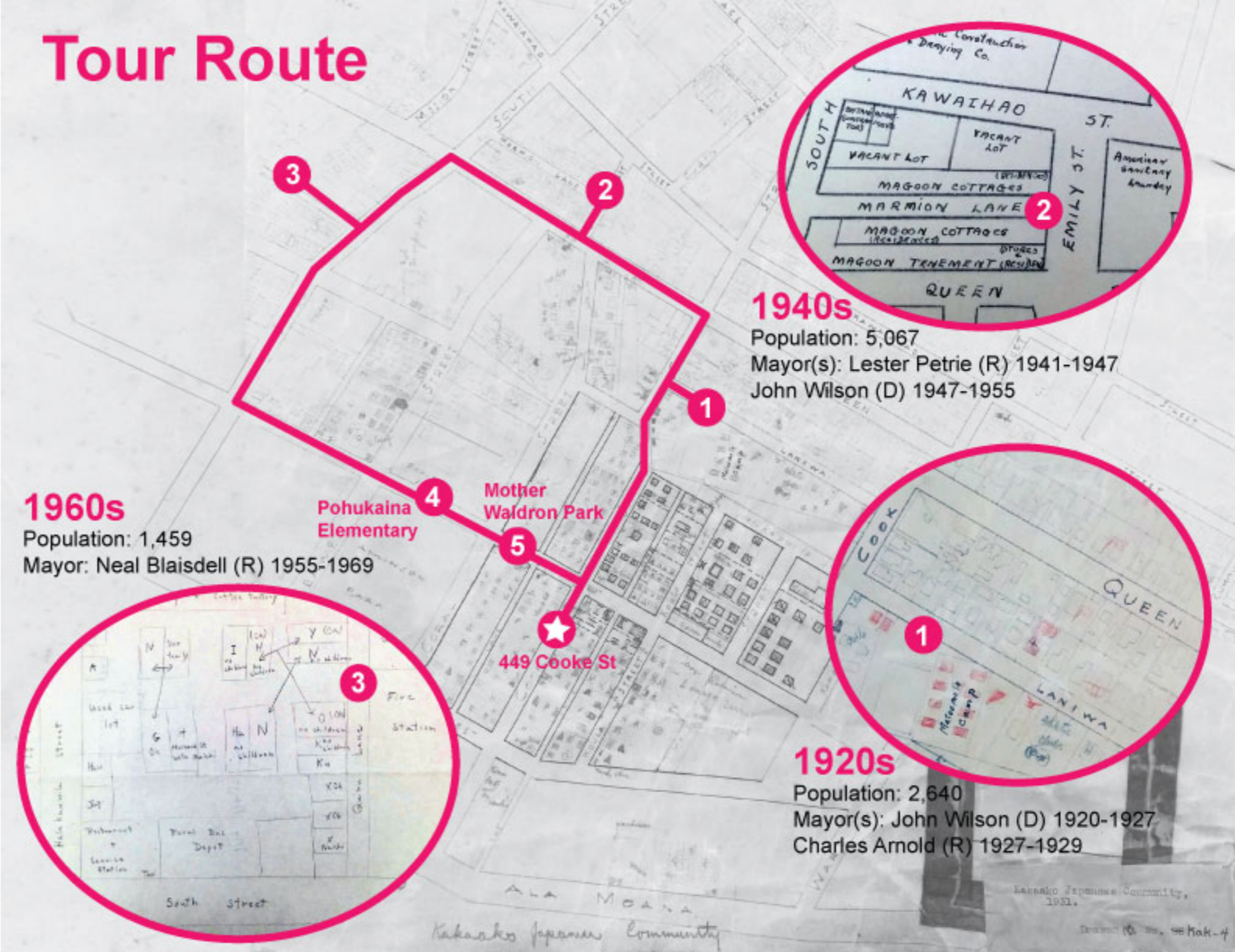




A story teller performs in front of a public audience for 88 Block Walks. The image is from a short film, "88 BLOCK WALKS: The Living Archive" which showcases these tours. Access the film at this weblink: <https://vimeo.com/233774839>.

A map of the Walk #5 tour route.

Tour Route



According to the 88 Block Walks site, "**Walk #5: The Living Archive** is a walking tour and multimedia experience featuring actors in period costumes and multiple outdoor projections of historical images. Narratives stem from ten essays archived as part of the Romanzo Adams Social Research Library Collection (RASRL) at the University of Hawai'i."



Image: a storyteller performing in Walk #5.

strengths

88 Block Walks prospers as a public engagement program, which shares archival work in a meaningful and impactful way through stories and performance art. The diverse range of partnerships add to the program's success.

weaknesses

It is difficult to identify significant weaknesses in the program. However, one suggestion would be for the program to do more work to further articulate the inequality and displacement of previous Kaka'ako residents, perhaps by tracing the effects of developers such as Howard Hughs.

opportunities

The program could do more public outreach to schools, youth programs, and businesses. For businesses, 88 Block Walks could pitch for companies to take walking tours as a "retreat" in which employees, such as those in the downtown district can learn about the urban history of Honolulu. These areas of outreach could even enrich developers' knowledge of the spaces where they live and work.



threats

A major threat to the continuation of the program is that there is only one individual, Adele, who appears to sustain the program with small grants. Because of this small-scale leadership and investment, it is difficult to predict how long the program will last.

lessons for West Philadelphia

This case study of 88 Block Walks may offer ways in which to honor and recognize the living history of West Philadelphians. An adaptation of the program has the potential to stir vigor and pride among community members and the neighborhoods they live in. One idea is to partner with an organization such as Hakim's Bookstore & Giftshop (210 S 52nd St.), which is one of Philadelphia's last black-owned bookstores.¹



Yvonne Blake holds a photo of her father Dawud Hakim, in front of the store in the 1970s (Philadelphia Inquirer, 2017).

¹ Russ, Valerie. "Last of Philly's black-owned bookstores looking for a comeback." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. Dec. 26, 2017. <https://www.inquirer.com/philly/news/hakims-bookstore-black-and-nobel-close-survive-20171226.html>