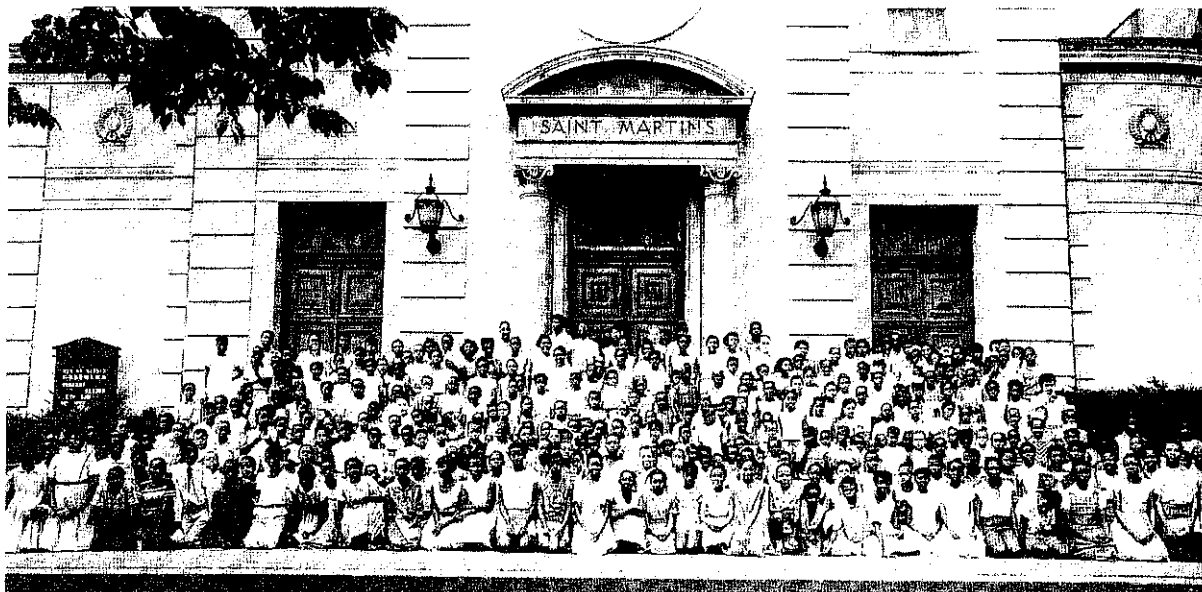# Bloomingdale

The Intersection of Gentrification, Aging-in-Place, and Race in a District of Columbia Neighborhood

Julius S. Levine, FAICP
with Emily C. Pierson, MArch II/MCRP

The School of Architecture and Planning
The Catholic University of America

Another of Occasional Monographs on Washington Area Neighborhoods
Summer 2015

Bloomingdale

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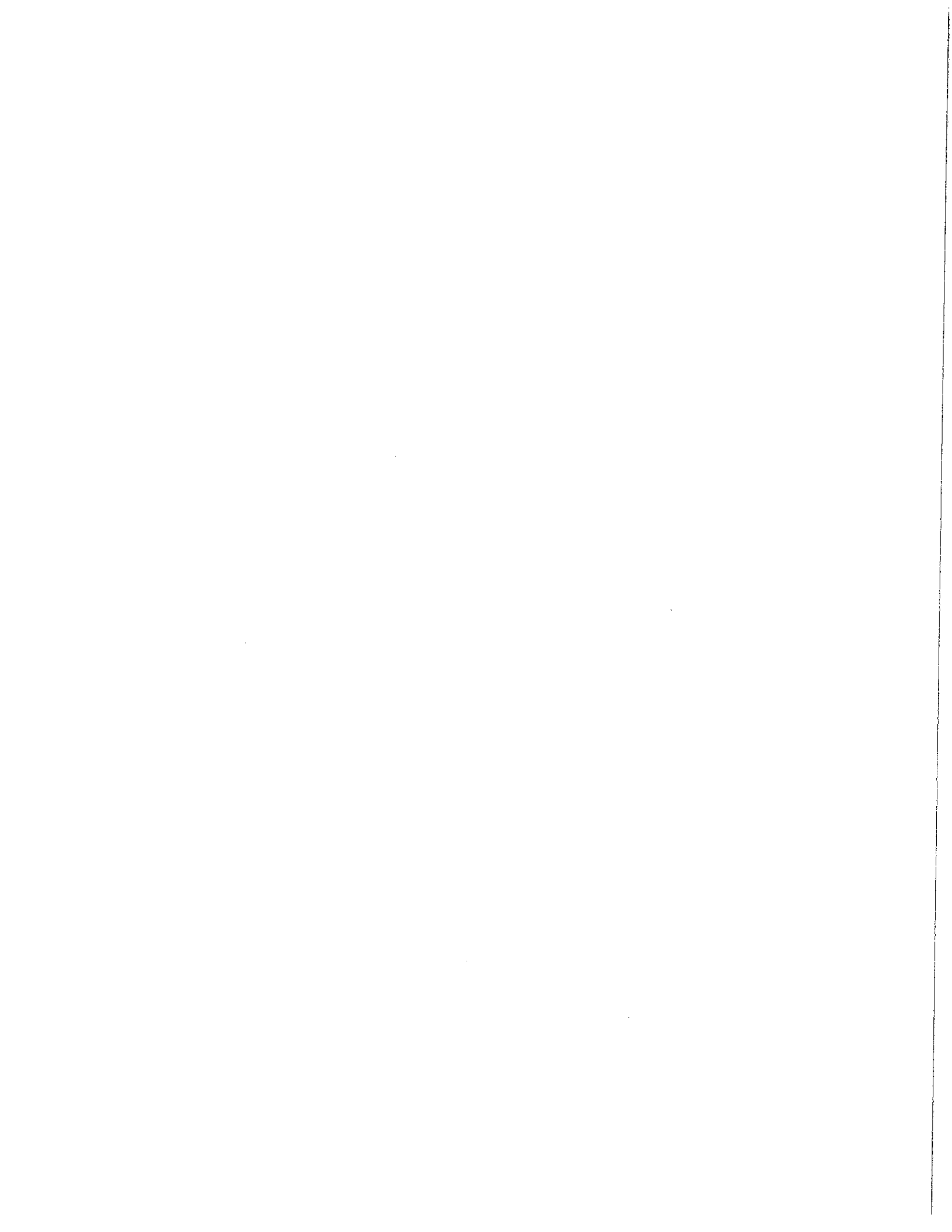and Race in a District of Columbia Neighborhood

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Cover Photo Credit: Onwukwe, Rosemarie. *Bloomingdale*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Pub., 2010.

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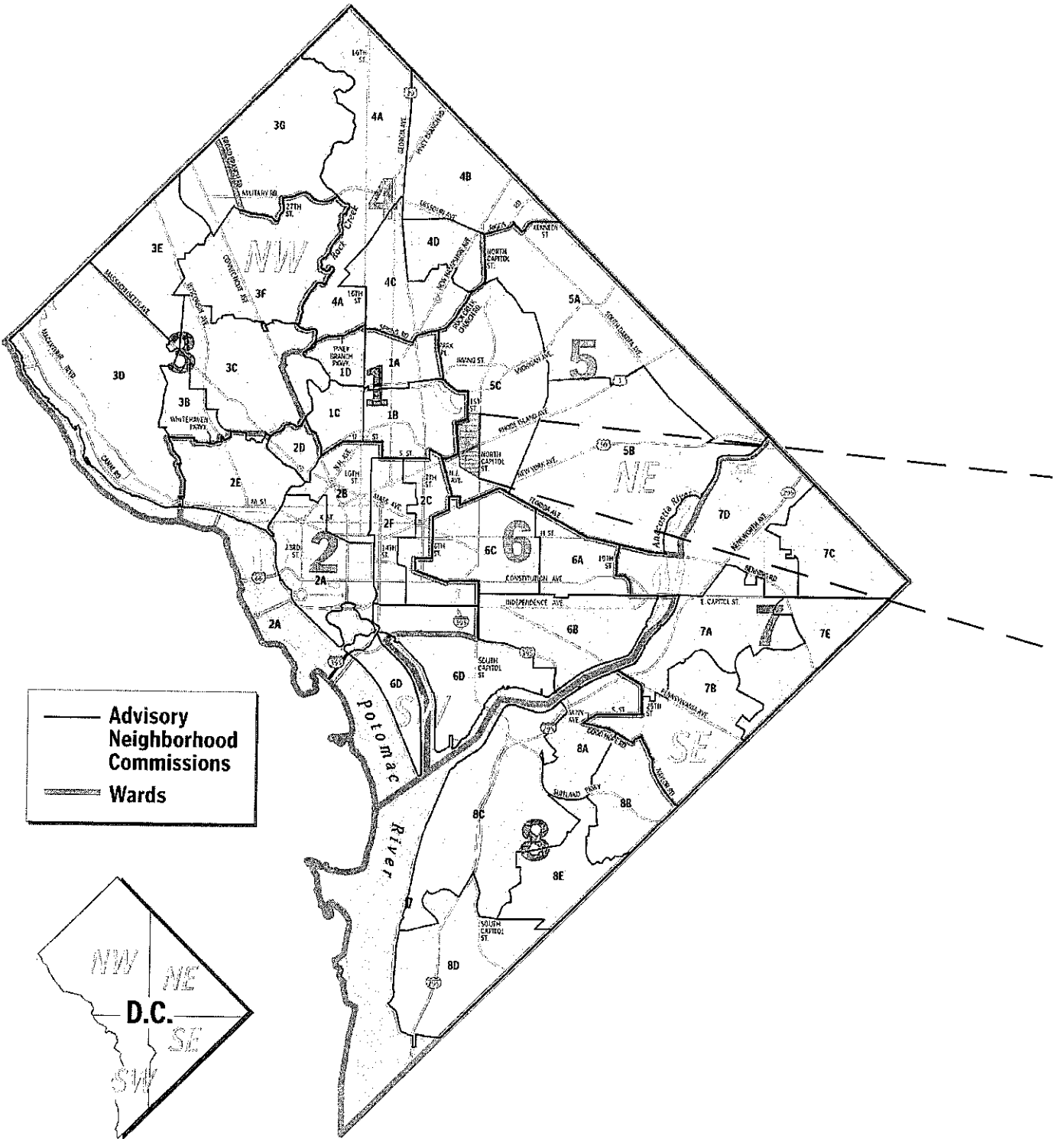
Wards and ANC districts of DC. Bloomingdale is located in Ward 5 and under the jurisdiction of ANC 5e. Map courtesy of Washington Post Co.

Bloomingdale Study Area
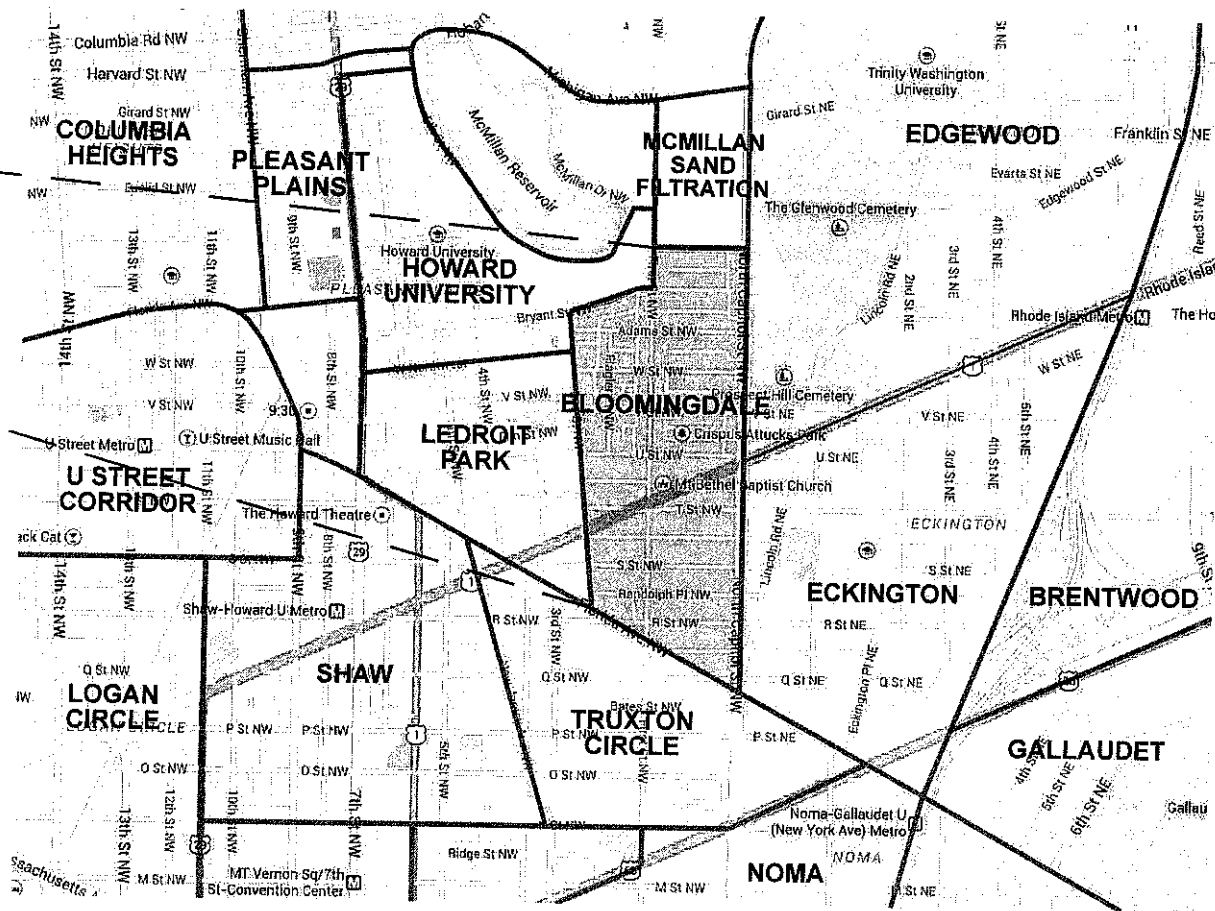
The boundaries of the Bloomingdale neighborhood as defined by historical account and the DC Office of Planning. Bloomingdale is bordered on the south by Florida Avenue NW, the west by North Capitol Street, the east by 2nd Street NW, and on the north by Bryant and Channing Streets NW. The surrounding neighboorhood boundaries are approximate and relatively fluid as the neighborhood construct is based on identity and history rather than hard edges or jurisdictional borders.
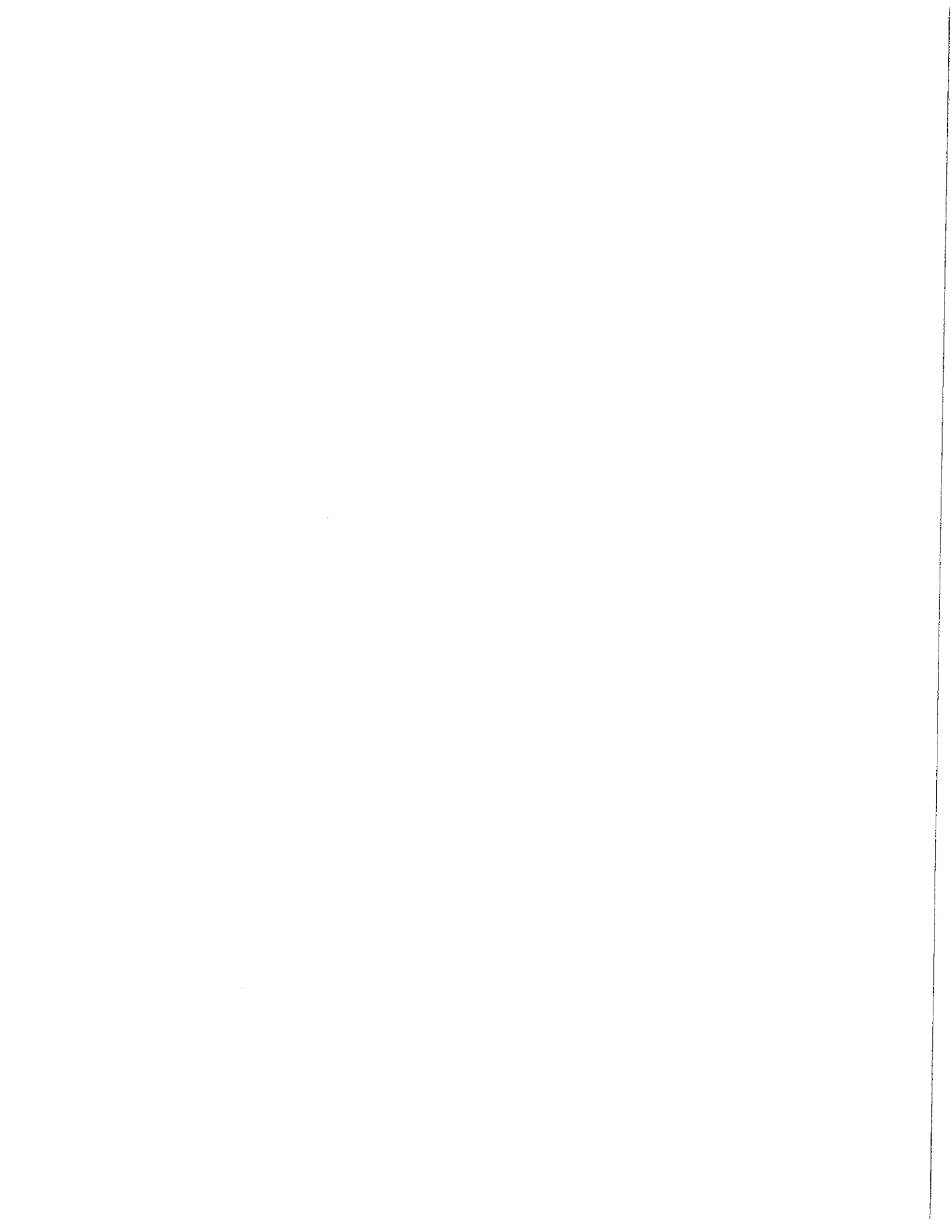
Executive Summary

1. Many of the aging are vibrant and engaged, even while some are frail and impaired.

2. Innumerable benefits are derived when the aged can take advantage of existing programs and activities with both old and young learning from formal and informal interactions.

3. African-Americans succeeded in purchasing homes in Bloomingdale, and LeDroit Park to the west and Eckington to the east, in the late 19th century. Shockingly the restrictive deeds in force and Jim Crow legislation, embedded in covenants prohibiting them from becoming resident owners, remained in force up to the early 20th century.

4. After precipitous declines in the 1970s-1990s, Bloomingdale's population increased in the first decade of the 21st century, an indication of the area's emerging growth potential. Millennials in the 20 to 44 age bracket expanded appreciably and spurred this gain, even as those over 65 declined sharply.

5. In parallel with city-wide trends, the neighborhood's racial mix shifted dramatically. Blacks made up slightly more than half of the residents in 2010, down from about 90 percent in 2000.

6. Concurrently the area has been gentrifying economically, by age, and racially.

7. Despite substantial differences in median income, significant numbers of both Black and White households earned over $100,000 in 2010. Contrary to classic gentrification theory, Bloomingdale is part of another, nascent example and presents wider implications for the nation's urban policies.

8. Millennials have transformed the erstwhile American Dream, forgoing a suburban home with a white picket fence on a quarter to half acre in favor of inner city living, many without a car, and commuting to work by bike.

9. Bridging the gentrification and aging divide, St. Martin's Church, and its dynamic priest, Father Michael J. Kelley, have forged links and bonded older residents with newcomers, virtually dissolving and/or mitigating former racial barriers.

10. The substantial influx of well-off Black and White households, sharing secure economic futures, contrasts with the ingrained multi-generational poverty and corollary racial strife that once again has riven our cities.

11. Ferguson, North Charleston, Staten Island, and Baltimore, a few recent poignant tragedies, evolved to "flash points" despite an infusion of substantial national financial resources directed to improving inner city neighborhoods.

12. Sorrowfully, that remains a challenge for our time, and most assuredly the polar counterpoint to the promise of successful regeneration witnessed in Bloomingdale.
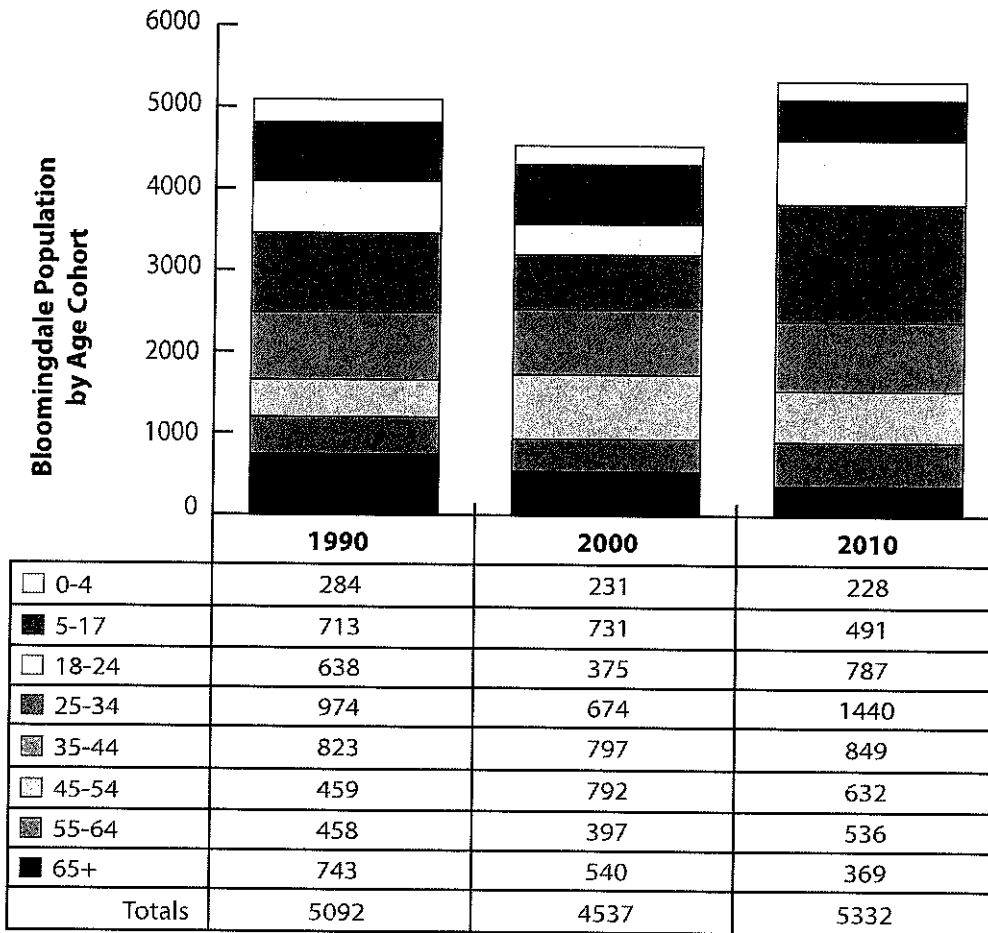
Bloomingdale: Gentrification and Aging in Place

Population by Age Cohort

More telling, however, were the sharp differences that emerged among key age cohorts. Those under 19 years old and those over 65 years of age declined sharply from 2000 to 2010. The Millennials included in the 25 to 44 bracket expanded by over 1000 persons, or 62 percent. Doubtless they had sufficient earning power to absorb an upward movement in rents and/or the increasing sales prices associated with an appreciating in-town neighborhood. Though declining numerically, seniors continuing to reside in the area likely benefited by District homeowner occupancy provisions. Specifically the lower property taxes that apply represent a substantial form of real assistance to those with limited incomes. Consistent with criteria related to age (over 65), ownership, and gross income below $127,000, a senior citizen can obtain a 50 percent discount on his or her property taxes.

Chart B: Population by Age Cohort by Census Tract for 1990-2010

	1990	2000	2010
☐ 0-4	284	231	228
■ 5-17	713	731	491
☐ 18-24	638	375	787
▨ 25-34	974	674	1440
▨ 35-44	823	797	849
☐ 45-54	459	792	632
▨ 55-64	458	397	536
■ 65+	743	540	369
Totals	5092	4537	5332

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1990-2010.

Table B: Population trends by Age Cohort from 1990-2010

Age Cohort by Census Tract	DC Census Tracts		Total for Bloomingdale	DC Average per Census Tract
	33.01 (north)	33.02 (south)		
Ages 0-4				
1990	176	108	284	6.7%
2000	124	107	231	5.0%
2010	138	190	228	29.6%
Ages 5-17				
1990	437	276	713	65.0%
2000	423	308	731	61.0%
2010	279	212	491	51.0%
Ages 18-24				
1990	395	243	638	65.0%
2000	230	145	375	61.0%
2010	515	272	787	51.0%
Ages 25-34				
1990	612	362	974	1.8%
2000	408	266	674	3.0%
2010	830	610	1440	4.2%
Ages 35-44				
1990	496	327	832	6.7%
2000	473	324	797	5.0%
2010	507	342	849	29.6%
Ages 45-54				
1990	270	189	459	65.0%
2000	466	326	792	61.0%
2010	366	266	632	51.0%
Ages 55-64				
1990	272	186	458	65.0%
2000	250	147	397	61.0%
2010	323	213	536	51.0%
Ages 65+				
1990	443	300	743	1.8%
2000	333	207	540	3.0%
2010	240	129	369	4.2%
Total Population				
1990	3101	1991	5092	1.8%
2000	2707	1830	4537	3.0%
2010	3198	2134	5332	4.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1990-2010.

Bloomingdale: Gentrification and Aging in Place

The Inexorable Decline of Seniors

Unlike national trends during the latter half of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century, the percentage of elderly within many inner city neighborhoods have been on a gradual, but nonetheless pronounced downward spiral.

One need not look too far for an explanation; limited numbers of seniors without recourse to other geographic housing solutions in combination with a finite life span inevitably results in a fading if not diminishing age cohort.

Those over 65 in Bloomingdale have declined sharply. For the three decades from 1980 to 2010 their proportional representation has been halved, moving downward rapidly in recent years.

The effects of gentrification and/or mortality have been especially dramatic between 2000 and 2010. As shown in the table below, for the respective neighborhood census tracts the relative percentage of seniors went from 13 to 7.5% in tract 33.01, and 11 to 6.0 percent in tract 33.02.

Stated in other terms, the relatively gradual pattern of times past has accelerated to the point where this cohort likely will become a decidedly minor group in the immediate and long term future.

Two long-time Bloomingdale residents stuff envelopes at St. Martin's Catholic Church on North Capitol Street. Linda (right) lives in the house her parents purchased in the early 1950's. Her daughter lives on the same block and is proud to be a third generation Bloomingdale resident and St. Martin's parishoner. (Photo credit: Emily Pierson 2015.)

Table B1: Senior Population as Percentage of Total Population 1980-2010

Senior Population by Census Tract	DC Census Tracts		Total for Bloomingdale	DC Average per Census Tract
	33.01 (north)	33.02 (south)		
Ages 65+				
1980	16%	14%	15%	12%
1990	14%	16%	15%	13%
2000	13%	11%	12%	12%
2010	7.5%	6.0%	6.9%	11%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1980-2010. Neighborhood Info D.C., Census Tracts, Urban Institute, a Partner of the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership; Revised April 1, 2015.

Bloomingdale: Gentrification and Aging in Place

Population by Race

Much as with city-wide trends, the racial mix in Bloomingdale shifted substantially. After years in the majority, neighborhood Blacks remained as slightly more than half of the residents in 2010, down from almost 90 percent in 2000 given a loss of over 1000 persons in that period.

Whites, on the other hand, increased by over 1200 persons (476%), and were widely distributed in both the neighborhood's northern and southern locales. And while Hispanic and Latino gains were not quite as substantial, their numbers almost doubled from 2000 to 2010.

The picture that emerges is that Bloomingdale is undergoing Gentrification along both age and racial lines. In addition changing earnings among the area's household also contribute to this new outlook.

"Boxer Girl" was installed on the side of the Bloomingdale home of an art collector in May 2009, to mixed reactions. As the blog dcist.com states: "Some neighbors love it, but others just plain hate the thing, for reasons ranging from generalized complaints that it's an "eyesore" to it being "ghetto,"... The piece, which was funded by a grant from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, depicts a young woman wearing boxing gloves, sporting a black eye, amid some rainbows and stars."[1] (Photo credit: Emily Pierson 2015.)
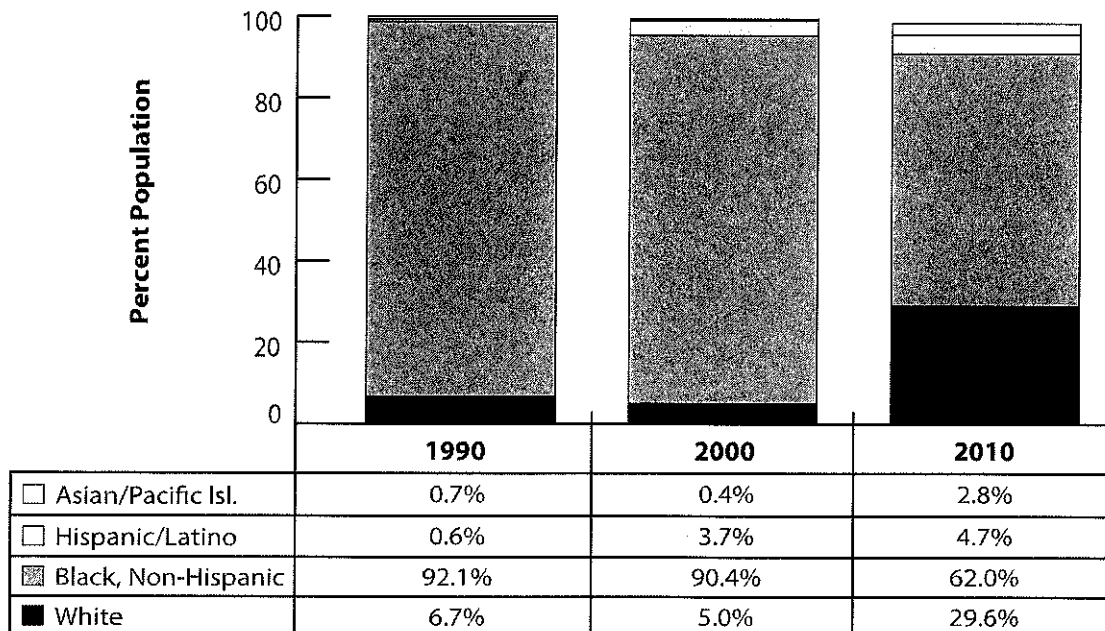
Table C: Population trends by Race from 1990-2010

Racial Composition by Census Tract	DC Census Tracts		Total for Bloomingdale	DC Average per Census Tract
	33.01 (north)	33.02 (south)		
White				
1990	7.5%	5.3%	7.5%	6.7%
2000	4.1%	6.2%	4.1%	5.0%
2010	28.0%	32.0%	28.0%	29.6%
Black, Non-Hispanic				
1990	91.0%	91.0%	92.1%	65.0%
2000	90.0%	6.2%	90.4%	61.0%
2010	64.0%	32.0%	62.0%	51.0%
Hispanic/Latino				
1990	1.0%	0.0%	0.6%	65.0%
2000	4.7%	2.4%	3.7%	61.0%
2010	3.9%	6.0%	4.7%	51.0%
Asian/Pacific Isl.				
1990	0.4%	1.1%	0.7%	1.8%
2000	0.5%	0.2%	0.4%	3.0%
2010	3.0%	2.5%	2.8%	4.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1990-2010.

Chart C: Population by Race by Census Tract for 1990-2010

	1990	2000	2010
☐ Asian/Pacific Isl.	0.7%	0.4%	2.8%
☐ Hispanic/Latino	0.6%	3.7%	4.7%
▦ Black, Non-Hispanic	92.1%	90.4%	62.0%
■ White	6.7%	5.0%	29.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1980-2010.

Bloomingdale: Gentrification and Aging in Place

Income Parameters and Disparities

Despite the vibrant earlier regional economy and District of Columbia job growth, and a moderate fall-off during the severe recession beginning in 2008, the differences between Bloomingdale Black and White households in 2013 are striking.

In tract 33.02 the median for the latter was over twice as high as that for the former; $143,400 compared with $71,000. This range was muted slightly but nonetheless still substantial for tract 33.01; $129,400 versus $76,200.

Notwithstanding that often familiar pattern, perhaps more astonishing were both the Black and White households with incomes above six figures. In tract 33.01 those with income above $100,000 were approximately 30% and 50%, respectively. While not a precise "match", gentrification in the northern 33.02 tract had a parallel impact with about a 29% of Black households at these elevated levels and their White compatriots at a higher ratio of more than 75%.

Patently the fundamental conclusion drawn from these data is that gentrification has surely been in effect for some time. Yet another corollary finding is salient; viz. that this in-migration, unlike that of more classic case examples often cited in the literature, encompasses a diverse racial division. To that end Bloomingdale likely is part of another genre warranting more deliberate thought and analysis as to wider implications; a point we shall turn to later in this monograph.

Across 2nd Street NW from the Bloomingdale neighborhood, sits Carver Hall, a dormitory of Howard University. Photo by Emily Pierson, March 2015.

Table D1: Household Income in Black Households by Census Tract 2013

Household Income Black Households	Census Tract 33.01 (north)		Census Tract 33.02 (south)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under $25,000	103	13.6%	130	23.5%
$25,000-$34,999	41	5.4%	6	1.0%
$35,000-$44,999	44	5.8%	59	10.6%
$45,000-$59,999	73	9.6%	30	5.4%
$60,000-$74,999	108	14.2%	71	12.9%
$75,000-$99,999	161	21.2%	50	9.0%
$100,000-$124,999	0	0%	50	9.0%
$125,000-$149,999	18	2.4%	89	16.1%
$150,000-$199,999	158	20.8%	53	9.5%
Over $200,000	53	7.0%	17	3.0%
Totals	759	100%	555	100%
Median	$76,180		$71,039	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2009-2013, 5-Year American Community Survey.

Table D2: Household Income in White Households by Census Tract 2013

Household Income White Households	Census Tract 33.01 (north)		Census Tract 33.02 (south)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under $25,000	15	2.8%	10	3.8%
$25,000-$34,999	11	2.0%	9	3.4%
$35,000-$44,999	17	3.2%	3	1.1%
$45,000-$59,999	22	4.1%	5	1.9%
$60,000-$74,999	43	8.0%	13	5.0%
$75,000-$99,999	73	13.6%	18	6.9%
$100,000-$124,999	77	14.4%	41	15.6%
$125,000-$149,999	58	10.8%	44	16.7%
$150,000-$199,999	136	25.5%	71	27.2%
Over $200,000	83	15.6%	48	18.4%
Totals	535	100%	262	100%
Median	$129,475		$143,424	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2009-2013, 5-Year American Community Survey.

Bloomingdale: Gentrification and Aging in Place

Home Values

Consistent with the influx of newcomers and constraints of supply, coupled with a robust expanding economy and a radical shift for inner city preferences among Millennials the price escalation in neighborhood homes has been exceptional.

Tracing the three years from 2011 to 2013, median levels increased by 40 to 75%, going from about $500,000 to $700,000 in tract 33.01, and $400,000 to $700,000 in tract 33.02.

By comparison the median value for District of Columbia homes was higher in 2011 ($547,000) and equivalent to all intense and purpose in 2013. In other words, whatever market conditions and purchaser perceptions about a declining and less desirable area may have been present in the last years of the 20th century have faded or are long forgotten; Bloomingdale has advanced to an in-town "hot-spot" and a magnified demand from affluent Whites and Blacks which has propelled an enormous increase in home values no matter the obvious need for upgrades and rehabilitation in many instances.
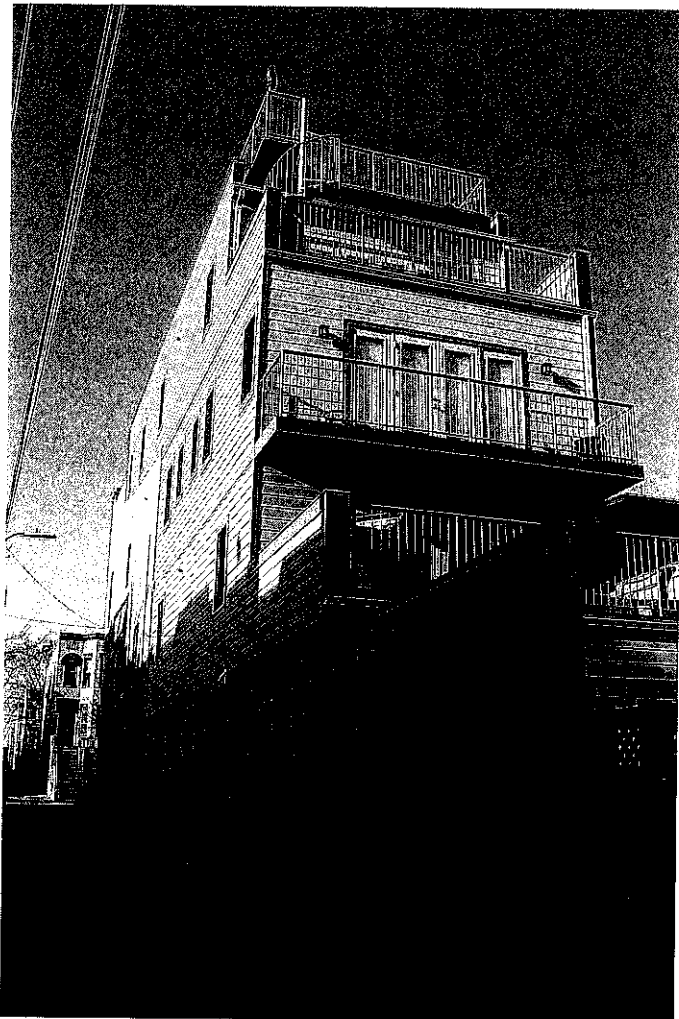

"Pop-ups," such as the one on this rowhouse (left), have helped to fuel increasing home values in the area by adding amenities and oft-needed improvements to older homes. The practice has also fueled contention between neighbors who see the additions as unsightly and destroying the historic character of the neighborhood. Above, a lawn sign protesting pop-ups. (Photo credits: Emily Pierson, March 2015.)

Table E: Median Sales Price In Bloomingdale 2011-2013

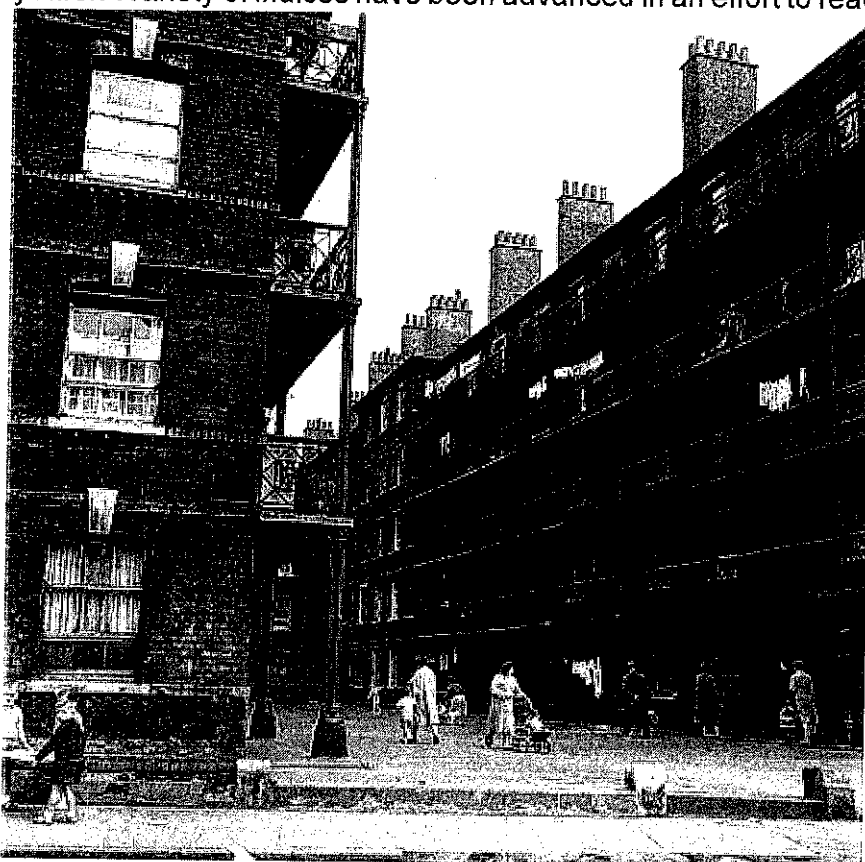| Median Sales Price	DC Census Tracts		Total for Bloomingdale	DC Average per Census Tract
	33.01 (north)	33.02 (south)		
2011	$497,000	$407,000	$452,000	$547,000
2012	$622,000	$611,000	$615,500	$581,000
2013	$695,000	$700,000	$697,500	$611,000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2011-2013. Disparate U.S. Census Reporting. Neighborhood Info D.C.; Census Tracts; Urban Institute, a Partner of the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership; Revised April 1, 2015.
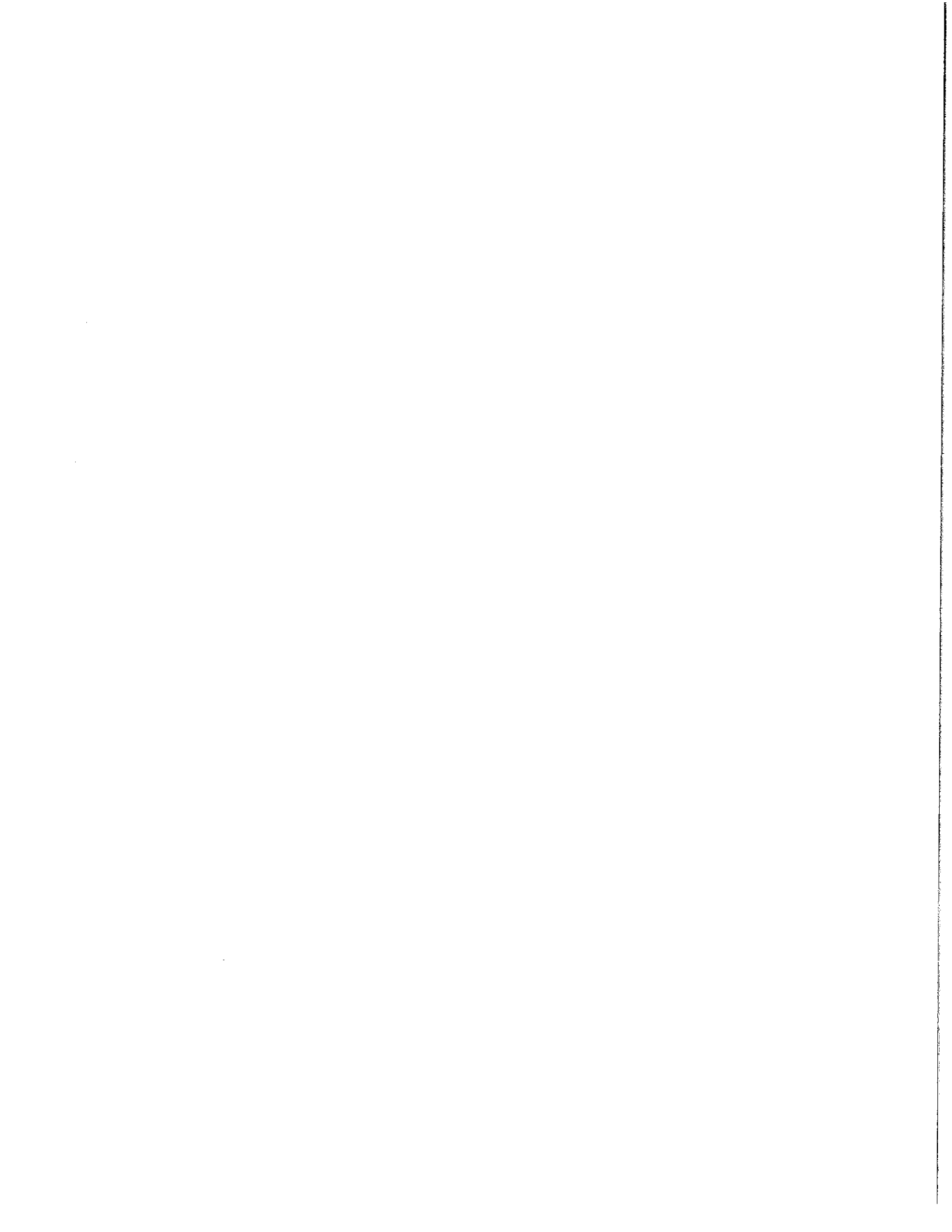
Bloomingdale and Gentrification

Over two generations ago a new phenomenon, gentrification, was coined in professional journals. British sociologist, Ruth Glass, in 1964 described the term as the influx of middle-class people displacing lower-class residents in urban neighborhoods; her example was London and its working-class districts such as Islington.[1]

While clear at the outset, this concept has evolved and become more complex in the ensuing years. A variety of indices have been advanced in an effort to reach a more comprehensive understanding, concurrently with another less heralded effect, viz. aging in place.

The convergence of these two factors, i.e. gentrification and aging, has become more pronounced with the rapid "greying" of America. In Washington, D.C., another overarching concern comes to the forefront; to wit, race. The nation's capital is among several vibrant major United States cities witnessing a "Millennial" surge, consisting generally of those born between 1980 and 2000. Their ethos reverses an

Beaconsfield Buildings in the Islington neighborhood of London, 1960. Built for laborers and artisans in 1879, the tenements were demolished in 1970 due to severe disrepair (Image credit: English Heritage.NMR, AA073048).

Bloomingdale: Gentrification and Aging in Place

The Kemp Mill Estates housing development in Montgomery County, Maryland, circa 1950. Suburban housing such as this sprang up all around Washington, D.C., following World War II. (Photo credit Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington, D.C.).

established post-World War II trend to the suburbs, rooted in ultimately realizing the American dream -- a single family detached home on a quarter or half acre lot, surrounded by a white picket fence.

Demographically, the dual age cohorts at the gentrification forefront vary from city to city. In larger metropolitan areas, such as New York, another sublayer is discerned. Here, Single Room Occupancy buildings (SROs) which have long served as an important source of affordable housing for poor single, elderly and non-elderly persons have declined sharply owing to redevelopment and changing rent stabilization policies. Concurrently the availability of these units has diminished in many gentrifying urban neighborhoods.[2]

The Barbizon (originally the Barbizon Hotel for Women) was one of the first SRO buildings for women in New York City. Built in 1927, the Barbizon was a residential hotel for professional women that employed strict dress codes and rules of conduct. It was converted to condos in 2005. (Photo credit: Sara Krulwich/The New York Times.)

Still another recent cross-section states that gentrification is not as widespread as perceived up to date. In their study, Joe Cortright

and Dillon Mahmoudi tracking the persistence of poverty over the past four decades in the 51 largest U.S. metropolitan areas, observe it is more common to find that poor neighborhoods stay that way over time or that they grow poorer.[3]

Among the multiple theories formulated to "explain" gentrification, the "rent-gap" carries appreciable currency. Typically, areas impacted are deteriorated and old, though structurally sound. Correspondingly, the aging residents likely have not reinvested significantly, though some modest improvements may have been made along the way. A "trigger" for turnover is the value newcomers assign to an obscure or immediately evident underpriced amenity.

Once again while innumerable indices may bear on this judgment, in Washington and more specifically the Bloomingdale neighborhood, area

Apartment for rent on 1st Street NW. The apartment is advertised by DCRE, a new DC-based real estate company proclaiming to be, "We concentrate on exceptional service, imaginative marketing, and utilizing the latest in technology & social media to assist our clients. We're not the typical, uptight, old-school real estate agents." (DCRE website)

character, market forces reflecting sale values in comparable in-town choices, and housing stock are all cogent factors.

In their work, Lees, Slater, and Wyly, and Atkinson and Bridge, amplify the horizon beyond these fundamental and distinct influences. Theirs encompasses corollary considerations related to existing owners improving their properties, reduced crime, stabilization of

The Nazarene Outpost Ministries Center located on Rhode Island Avenue NW. This faith-based organization is "dedicated to feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, housing the homeless and elderly, caring for the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of families and individuals in the Washington metropolitan area" (http://www. nazareneoutpostministries.org/).

prior declines, increased values, and greater social mix, among other trends.[4] No matter how narrow or wide the criteria, the intrinsic economic gap between current use and an emerging rise in appreciation relative to start-up market levels, clearly propels new interest and "gentrification".

The obverse of an influx of newcomers focuses on either the outmigration of present residents or their continued occupancy of homes purchased many years ago.

For those who remain in place, many emerging concerns have become clearer. With more extended lifetimes, frequently termed the "greying of America", these include the health, and ambulatory nature of "active adults", and the corresponding dependency of other senior citizens.

In these times of increased demands on limited governmental resources, the shift to non-profit organizations, faith based communities, and other support groups has become more pronounced. Sadly, the nation and its cities (including Washington, D.C.) have just begun to address these issues, and for the moment it remains at best "a work in progress".

Caregivers, Adult Day Care, financial assistance, Meals on Wheels, and an array of other outreach efforts are representative initiatives.

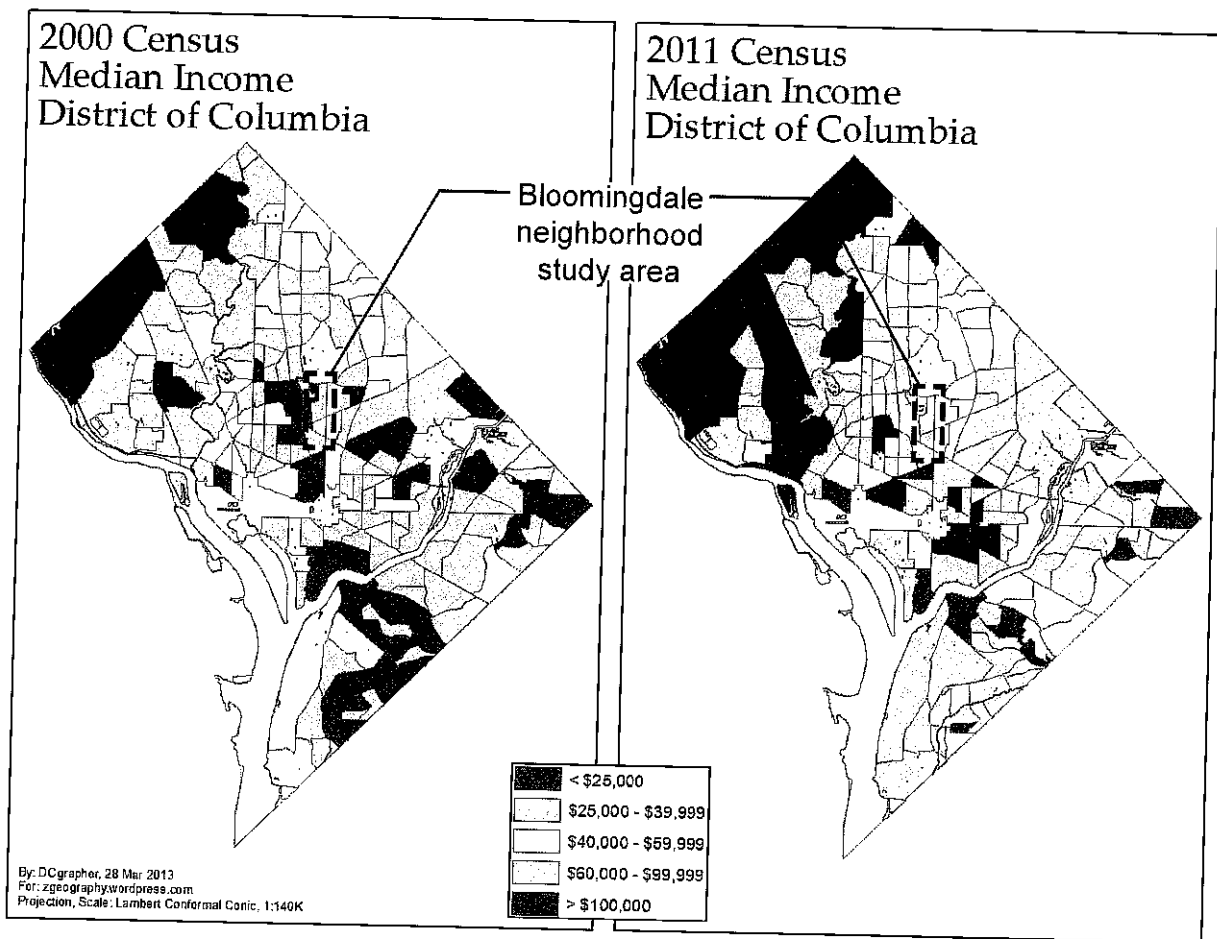Even as these are addressed city-wide, they resonate especially for long-standing Bloomingdale residents.

2000 Census
Median Income
District of Columbia

2011 Census
Median Income
District of Columbia

Bloomingdale
neighborhood
study area

By: DCgrapher, 28 Mar 2013
For: zgeography.wordpress.com
Projection, Scale: Lambert Conformal Conic, 1:140K

	< $25,000
	$25,000 - $39,999
	$40,000 - $59,999
	$60,000 - $99,999
	> $100,000

Map of the District illustrating average household incomes as of the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census. (Map credit: DCgrapher 28 March 2013.)