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Mission Statement

The purpose of the Black Metropolis National Heritage Area is to establish a strategic framework and infrastructure within which the community (residents, civic and community organizations, local institutions and businesses, and elected officials) can understand and interpret the distinctive landscape and history of the Black Metropolis and promote its economic prosperity. Thus the mission is:

“To identify, interpret, preserve, develop and commemorate the historical, cultural, economic, and political achievements of Chicago’s historic African American settlers, the unique, economically independent community that they formed, their place in the Great Migration and national movements for racial equality; to present the Great Migration story and the struggles borne by African Americans against discrimination; and to preserve the historic buildings, neighborhoods, and cultural artifacts of the Black Metropolis.”

The NHA designation will establish a coordinating entity that will connect various organizations that seek to understand and interpret the history of Bronzeville, those that seek to improve quality of life in the community, and those looking to promote the area to visitors and prospective investors to ensure that future developments in Bronzeville are informed by its rich history and cultural legacy. The coordinating entity will assist in preserving and protecting the historic sites, neighborhoods, and cultural artifacts of Chicago’s traditional “black belt.” It will also promote the area’s history and reinforce the accomplishments of Chicago’s African-Americans to current and future generations. Thus the National Heritage Area will serve as a living "show and tell" vehicle for the area’s unique history and culture.

Vision

“We envision a Bronzeville in which the community (residents, civic and community organizations, local institutions and businesses, and elected officials) understand the value and are fully committed to preserving and promoting their cultural heritage and natural environment for future generations; seek to stimulate economic and community development; and enhance opportunities for continued tenancy of African Americans as well as creating a diverse community.”

National Heritage designation establish partnerships and the infrastructure necessary to market Bronzeville to visitors, stimulate economic viability, and contribute to the quality and character of life for residents. The story of the Black Metropolis will be a “living history,” with the challenges and accomplishments of Chicago’s early African American resident providing an example for the revitalization of Bronzeville as a safe, vibrant community, as well as for ongoing movements for racial equality and equity.

BMNHA Project Goals

The specific goals of seeking congressional designation for the Black Metropolis National Heritage Area are as follows:

1. Recognize the important contributions made to American culture and history by the African Americans who settled in Chicago's historic "black belt."
2. Recognize the achievements of African Americans in establishing a self-sustaining community, even in the face of legally-sanctioned segregation and discrimination.
3. Recognize significant contributions made by Chicago's early African American residents to arts, business and entrepreneurship, civil rights, education, health care, journalism, religious and civic life, and sports and recreation.
4. Commemorate the Great Migration, a definitive event in United States history that brought African Americans to northern cities in search of better employment and life opportunities, and in the process, moved American society as a whole towards equal treatment and inclusion of diverse racial and ethnic groups.
5. Assist the community, government and private entities in interpreting the story of the Black Metropolis.
6. Preserve historic buildings and structures, historical data, artifacts, art, and objects associated with Chicago's "black belt" as well as the Great Migration for the benefit and education of the public and future generations.
7. Stimulate new development and community revitalization in the Black Metropolis area.
8. Enhance opportunities for continued tenancy of African Americans and other ethnic communities.
9. Educate visitors and residents alike on the significant history of the African American community in Chicago and the United States, including the Great Migration.
10. Highlight African American art, oral tradition, literature, and music.
11. Market the Black Metropolis area as a destination for tourists, shoppers and other visitors.

NHA Interpretive Themes

The Black Metropolis area in Chicago, Illinois' South Side has a cohesive and distinctive history and landscape that is worthy of a National Heritage Area designation. The historic features of Chicago's Black Metropolis predate the Great Migration. It goes back to 1830's when the black population began to concentrate on the near south side of Chicago, and extends to the late 1980's. The Black Metropolis development involves the creation of these people, the market they made, the businesses they created, the buildings they built and institutions they founded. It encompasses the restrictive covenant period (1910's to 1950's) when legal residential restrictions enforced concentration of African Americans in what is now commonly referred to as Bronzeville. It also encompasses at least the two great waves of migration that coincided with World War I (1916-1919) and World War II (1939 - 1945). These movements had significant impacts for Chicago and other northern cities, and redefined African American life in the United States. By early 1940's African American residents in Chicago numbered about 500,000, part of an overall outmigration from the south of more than 5,000,000 individuals.

The Great Migration is a demographic phenomenon in which African Americans migrated to the North in search of work and other opportunities. The Black Metropolis, as a setting, witnessed African American contributions to the civic, cultural, and economic life of Chicago, the State of Illinois, and the Nation. It forced its legally- and socially-proscribed citizens to challenge their environment and their Nation to fulfill its promise as a place of opportunity for all. These contributions and accomplishments fall into the following main categories, which constitute the key themes of the feasibility study:

- a) **BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL PURSUITS:** Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood established itself as the center of Black entrepreneurial spirit. With State Street developing as the Black Metropolis' "Wall Street," the area produced two of the largest Black banking operations in the Nation in the Binga State and Douglass National Banks. Scores of smaller businesses ranging from print shops to restaurants to clothing stores to hair salons and barbershops were also established in Bronzeville.
- b) **CULTURE AND ART:** The area emerged as a musical mecca ranging from jazz to gospel to delta and urban blues to rhythm and blues and was home for institutions such as the George Cleveland Hall Branch Library, which nurtured literary giants such as Langston Hughes, the South Side Community Arts Center, and the DuSable Museum of African American History and Culture.
- c) **EDUCATION:** The area includes the first public secondary school in the State of Illinois built specifically to accommodate the educational needs of African-American students. The school opened in 1934 and was named in honor of Chicago's first non-native inhabitant and trader, Jean Baptiste Pointe du Sable, a Black man from Haiti. Illustrious graduates include Nat "King" Cole and Chicago Mayor Harold Washington.
- d) **GOVERNANCE AND POLITICS:** From its political bases in the area's Second Ward and the First Congressional District, Chicago's Black Metropolis proved itself a political center for all African-Americans, producing the first African-American to sit in Congress in the 20th century, the Honorable Oscar DePriest. The same seat held, in succession the first African-American Democratic congressman, the Honorable Arthur W. Mitchell, the Honorable William L. Dawson, the Honorable Ralph H. Metcalfe, the Honorable Bennett M. Stewart, the Honorable Harold Washington, later the city's first elected African-American mayor, and the Honorable Charles A. Hayes.

- e) **HEALTH CARE:** The area includes Provident Hospital, founded in 1891 by the brilliant African-American surgeon Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, and site of the first successful suturing of the human heart by Dr. Williams in 1893.
- f) **LABOR:** The area was home to millions of unskilled and semi-skilled African-American workers, including the packinghouse workers who arrived during the Great Migration and constituted 25 percent of the stockyards workforce during World War I. The Pullman porters, representing a full 20 percent of the nation's African-American workforce during the early 1900s, were organized in the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the first predominantly Black labor union. Bronzeville's labor history forms an important part of labor advancements made throughout Chicago.
- g) **MILITARY LIFE AND PATRIOTISM:-** At Bronzeville Camp Douglas, African-American men enlisted in the Union Army as part of the 29th Infantry Regiment of the United States Colored Troops. A generation later, they would train at the Eighth Regiment Armory nearby before embarking for France as part of what President Wilson referred to as the great crusade to 'make the world safe for democracy' during World War I.
- h) **RECREATION AND COMPETITIVE SPORTS:** Early on, the Nation's most popular sports (baseball, boxing, football, track and basketball) enjoyed support from the Black Metropolis' population and drew participants who earned widespread recognition such as Rube Foster, a native Chicagoan, who founded the Negro Baseball League and its local team, the American Giants.
- i) **RELIGION AND CHURCH ACTIVISM:** The area includes Quinn Chapel African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church, an antebellum center of abolitionist activity, and a major station on the Underground Railroad. With emancipation, religious movements to provide and protect the civil rights of all citizens were led by Black Metropolis churches such as Quinn Chapel and Bethel A.M.E.
- j) **SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CIVIL RIGHTS:** It was from within the Black Metropolis area in the early 20th century that Ida B. Wells-Barnett waged her crusade for justice for African-Americans and women and worked to establish the first National Association for the Advancement of Colored People branch in that group's national network in 1912.
- k) **URBAN DESIGN AND GREEN LANDSCAPE:** The area includes many historic structures and locations as well as great boulevards and community parks. The area has a number of historic districts and over 84 landmark buildings/structures in the National Register of Historic Places ranging from the Overton Hygienic Manufacturing Building at 3617 South State Street and the Chicago Bee Building at 3647 South State Street to Liberty Life Insurance Company at 3501 South Parkway and a monument and park dedicated to United States Senator Stephen Douglas at Lake Park Avenue and 35th Street. The area also has several green and public spaces, stretching from Chicago's historic lakefront to the boulevard systems to the west.

Statement of Significance

The Black Metropolis area on Chicago's South Side is a historic site of African American achievement in arts and culture, business and entrepreneurship, politics, and sports and recreation. The Black Metropolis area, and its various historic buildings and neighborhoods, also serves as memorial to the Great Migration demographic movement in which approximately 5,000,000 African Americans migrated north in search of employment and improved life opportunities. These early settlers, as well as later waves of African American migrants, confronted discriminatory policies in housing, employment, and civil rights. Their perseverance and determined effort to build a self-sustaining community challenged Chicago and the nation to fulfill the promise of a place of opportunity for all. The unique landscape and significance of Chicago's Black Metropolis is best described in Timothy Samuelson's "*Black Metropolis Thematic Nomination*"^[1] whose excerpts are included below:

The Black Metropolis Thematic nomination is comprised of buildings and public monuments which collectively represent what are among the most significant landmarks of black urban history in the United States. Centered in the historic Bronzeville on Chicago's Near South Side, these properties are the tangible remains of what was once a thriving "city-within-a-city" created in the early part of this century by the city's black community as an alternative to the restrictions, exploitations, and indifference that characterized the prevalent attitudes of the city at large. In contrast to usual urban development patterns of the time where blacks settled in existing neighborhoods and buildings, Bronzeville community was literally built from the ground up with its own economic, social, and political establishment, directly supported by black enterprise and capital. Contemporarily referred to by residents as "the metropolis," the development had firmly established itself by the turn of the century, and prospered until the 1930s when the Depression and socio-economic conditions virtually halted its further development.

The origin of Chicago's black heritage is synonymous with the origin of the city itself, one of the earliest recorded permanent settlers being Jean Baptiste Point DuSable, a French-speaking black who was engaged in trade with the Indians by the 1780s. Upon Point DuSable's departure in 1800, there was no significant black settlement in the area until the 1840s as Chicago was developing as a rapidly growing Midwestern city. At that time, blacks fleeing oppression in the South began to settle in Chicago, forming the nucleus for what was to develop into the first cohesive black community, which, according to census records, was comprised of 323 persons in 1850 and nearly tripled to 955 persons by 1860. The black community was not assimilated into the city at large, but was concentrated into small pockets throughout the city, the largest settlement being on the Near South Side, adjacent to the western fringes of the central business district. By 1870, the city's black population had grown to 3,691 persons, and steadily doubled in number with each succeeding decade. The boundaries of the South Side black community expanded southward in a long narrow strip, often known as the "Black Belt", bordered by the railroad yards and industrial properties to the west, the affluent residential neighborhoods adjacent to Wabash Avenue to the east, and extending south from Van Buren Street to Thirty-ninth Street, a distance of nearly five miles. The established white business and social communities of Chicago were largely indifferent to the black community, consequently it gradually evolved a complete commercial, social, and political base of its own. As the black

^[1]Timothy, S., (1986) "*Black Metropolis Thematic Nomination*"^[1] *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C.:*

community grew, the demand for goods and services was increasingly supplied from within the community itself, and had diversified to such an extent by 1885 that a complete directory of black businesses was published, *The Colored Men's Professional and Business Directory of Chicago*. Similarly, black-supported churches and social organizations proliferated, and evidence of the community's political strength was shown in the election of John Jones, to the Cook County Board of Commissioners in 1874. Jones, a downtown tailor of mixed free-black and white parentage, was supported in his election by both blacks and whites, and was the first black to hold elected office in the State of Illinois.

By 1900, with a population of 30,050 persons, the South Side black community began to take on the characteristics of a small "city-within-a-city," which paralleled the growth and expansion of the City of Chicago at large. A major factor in the growth of "black metropolis" after the turn of the century was its increasing access to financial resources due to the prosperity of the black community. The unwillingness of the established white financial community to support its enterprises ceased to be an impediment to growth. Through the great amount of money generated within the black community, an increasingly independent economic base developed, culminating in the establishment of Chicago's first black-owned bank founded by entrepreneur Jesse Binga in 1908. With greater access to financial resources, the commercial and business interests of Metropolis greatly diversified, with a wide range of professional, commercial, and manufacturing interests.

Growth was further intensified by an increase in the black population by 148% between 1910 and 1920, a period often referred to as the "Great Migration" due to the great numbers of blacks who left the South for greater opportunities in Chicago during that time. Despite the fact that it was in large part cut off from the economic and social mainstream of the rest of the city, Black Metropolis, with a population of 109,548 by 1920, had firmly established itself as a virtual self-contained metropolitan development.

Beginning with the establishment of the black-owned Binga Bank at 3633 South State Street in 1908, the vicinity of State and 35th streets was rapidly transformed into the Wall Street of the black community, housing a wide variety of commercial enterprises. Until the time of the Great Migration, the black business community was largely housed in existing residential and small storefront buildings which were adapted for business purposes, often with unsatisfactory results. New construction was limited mainly to a handful of small one- and two-story structures which were erected as investments by white speculators with an eye on the growing potential of the black economic market. This trend was reversed in 1916 when ground was broken for the Jordan Building, at the northeast corner of State and 36th streets, an impressive three-story combination store and apartment building which was commissioned by songwriter and music publisher Joseph J. Jordan. The precedent of the Jordan Building was closely followed by a series of ambitious black-owned and -financed building projects which were carried out along South State Street throughout the 1920s. The most important of these included the Overton Hygienic Building, a combination store, office, and manufacturing building commissioned by the diverse entrepreneur Anthony Overton in 1922; the Chicago Bee Building, also commissioned by Overton in 1929 to house the *Chicago Bee* newspaper; the seven-story Knights of Pythias building erected in 1926 by a prominent lodge order after plans by Chicago's first black architect, Walter T. Bailey; and the quarters of the Binga State Bank and the Binga Arcade Building, erected by Banker Jesse Binga in 1924 and 1929 respectively. Of these buildings, the Jordan, Overton Hygienic, and Chicago Bee buildings still survive, largely as originally designed during the boom time of Black Metropolis.

In marked contrast to the staid banks, insurance companies, and professional offices which conducted business by day on State Street, the area was magically transformed by night by the bright lights and exciting sounds of the numerous nightclubs and all-night restaurants which were interspersed throughout the business district. These were the popular jazz clubs where such notables as King Oliver, Louis Armstrong, and Jelly Roll Morton played and earned Chicago its reputation as a jazz center in the 1920s. Many of the musicians had arrived from New Orleans, St. Louis, and other points south, each bringing with them characteristics of the musical style of their origins, yet the combination of regional styles soon melded into a distinct musical character which was uniquely Chicago. Beginning with Robert T. Motts' Pekin Theater at 2700 South State Street, which opened in 1905, Black Metropolis began to develop numerous music-oriented clubs and cafes during the following decade, reaching their height in the 1920s. Among the most famous were the Dreamland Cafe at 3618 South State Street, the Royal Gardens (later Lincoln Gardens) at 459 East 31st Street, and the Elite Club at 3030 South State Street. A notable and notorious club was the white-owned Panama at the southeast corner of State and 35th streets, where actress and cabaret performer Florence Mills got her start as part of the Panama Trio, and whose pianist was the noted performer and songwriter Tony Jackson, who is best known for composing the million-dollar hit "Pretty Baby" in 1916. The musical intensity of the area was such that it once was suggested that if a horn were held up at the corner of State and 35th streets, it would play itself because of all the musical winds circulating in the area.

Churches played an important role in the development of Black Metropolis, both from a spiritual as well as a social standpoint in the community. Large congregations such as the Olivet Baptist Church and Pilgrim Baptist Church conducted extensive social programs, and were instrumental in securing lodging and employment for the newcomers which arrived from the South during the "Great Migration." Similar programs were conducted at the Wabash Avenue Y.M.C.A. which opened in 1914 through the impetus of philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, the President of Sears, Roebuck & Company, who had considerable interest in black-oriented causes. Programs at the Y.M.C.A. included extensive job training programs including such specialized programs as auto repair and manual training.

Organized political alliances gave Black Metropolis increased participation in city government, beginning with the election of Oscar DePriest as the city's first black alderman in 1915. Initially working in alliance with the white Republican bosses who controlled the political destiny of the Black Metropolis wards, DePriest sought to build a political organization of his own, forming the "Peoples Movement Club," with headquarters in a former Jewish social club at 3140 South Indiana Avenue. While DePriest's organization was the most influential of the black political organizations, it faced stiff competition from other organizations and rival political figures within the black community. The political voting strength of the Black Metropolis wards was such that by the 1920s the political control was effectively taken from the white political bosses who formerly controlled them, and put into the hands of political figures from within the black community. Gains were made in representation in municipal government as well as in the state legislature, and in 1928 Oscar DePriest had the distinction of being the first black from the North to be elected to a seat in the United States House of Representatives, serving for three consecutive terms.

The Black Metropolis development gained nationwide publicity as a model of black achievement, with extensive coverage in both the white as well as the black press of the time. Chicago was one of the centers of black journalism, having at different times several black-owned newspapers, including the *Chicago Whip*, *Chicago Bee*, *Broad Axe*, and the *Half Century Magazine*. The most influential of the Chicago publications was the *Chicago Defender*, a

newspaper of nationwide circulation which was founded by Robert S. Abbott in 1905. The *Chicago Defender* had a major impact on black thought and development in America by its combination of news items pertinent to blacks nationwide in conjunction with strong editorial viewpoints on a wide variety of civil rights issues. The "Great Migration" of 1910 to 1920 was due in large part to editorials published in the *Chicago Defender* urging blacks to leave the oppression of the South for greater opportunity in Chicago and the North.

Black Metropolis reached the height by the mid-1920s, but its economic vitality began to gradually weaken after 1925 due to socio-economic conditions which were out of the control of its developers. Although the growth and prosperity of Black Metropolis was directly tied to the rapid growth of the black population, particularly during the Great Migration, the sharp decline in new arrivals during the 1920s slowed its development. As employment opportunities did not keep pace with the population increases of the previous decade, unemployment weakened the financial base of the community, adversely affecting the businesses of Black Metropolis which were reliant on support from within the black community. Further deterioration of the financial base occurred when white businessmen who previously had ignored the black community began to realize its economic potential. Rather than attempt to break into the prosperous existing market at 35th and State, an alternate business area was created along 47th Street principally developed and financed by white developers and store owners who controlled the property to such an extent that black-owned and -developed properties and businesses were largely excluded from the area. The introduction of established white chain stores and commercial enterprises along 47th Street gave insurmountable competition to the independent black business of the 35th Street district and progressively siphoned off its energy and self-supporting financial base. The final blow to Black Metropolis came with the Great Depression of 1929 which closed down most of its black-owned banks, insurance companies, and other business interests, while many of the businesses of 47th Street with their broader access to credit and nationwide financial backing remained largely intact. The self-supporting momentum of Black Metropolis, which its backers had hoped would lead to recognition and eventual integration with the established downtown business establishment, was thus dealt a serious blow from which many negative after-effects lingered for decades.

After the 35th Street district lost its principal business interests during the Depression, the area quickly declined, and by 1950 one local writer dismissed the intersection of 35th and State streets as "Bronzeville's skid-row." Deterioration and urban renewal took their toll during the 1950s and 1960s resulting in the demolition of entire blocks along State Street for the construction of public housing projects and the campus of the Illinois Institute of Technology, as well as extensive isolated demolitions throughout the community. Fortunately, many of the most significant buildings of the Black Metropolis development have survived, although some are in a state of neglect and deterioration. Collectively, these buildings are worthy of recognition and preservation as monuments to the determination of the black urban pioneers who created them

In addition to Bronzeville's core area, including the landmarks referenced in Dr. Samuelson's nomination, neighborhoods to the north, south and west of the traditional black belt played important roles in settling members of the Great Migration, and in the development of the Black Metropolis.

The Motor Row District, including buildings on Michigan Avenue between 1800 and 2500 south, was an area with a high concentration of automobile showrooms, as well as the location of significant African American cultural landmarks. The Row was the original home of the *Chicago Defender*, Robert Abbott's influential newspaper that served the African American community. Motor Row was also an important

center of blues and jazz, with the studio and offices of Chess Records located at 2120 S. Michigan Avenue from 1956 to 1965. Artists such as Etta James, Muddy Waters, Willie Dixon, Howlin' Wolf, and Chuck Berry recorded albums with Chess Records in the 1950's and 60's, and many famous recordings took place at the Michigan Avenue studio. Other South Michigan Avenue record labels such as Vee-Jay helped spawned a new style of gospelized, rhythm and blues music called "soul" in the early 1960's. The first notable Chicago soul-style record was that label's "For Your Precious Love," a 1958 hit by Jerry Butler and the Impressions. Other notable Vee-Jay soul artists were Dee Clark, Betty Everett, and Gene Chandler.

Motor Row's automobile dealerships, erected between 1905 and 1936, demonstrated the evolution of the automobile business, from simple two-story structures to multi-story buildings encompassing the entire range of related products and repair services. Many of the corridor's buildings were designed by significant architects, and features such as elaborately carved stone work, ornate facades and intricately scrolled ironwork can be viewed on surviving buildings. The Motor Row area also hosts Chicago's oldest African American congregation, housed at Quinn Chapel at 2401 S. Wabash Avenue. The congregation traces its roots to 1847, when seven individuals formed a non-denominational prayer group. Later, the group organized as a congregation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and played an important role in pre-Civil War abolition movement. The current structure was built in 1892 in the Romanesque Revival style, after the original the group's original church was destroyed in the Chicago Fire of 1871.

To the west of Bronzeville sits Fuller Park, a community area that formerly housed many workers employed at the Union Stockyards. Today, Fuller Park consists of a narrow strip of land between the Dan Ryan Expressway and the Rock Island Railroad Metra lines to the east and the Chicago & Western Indiana Railroad to the west. Before construction of the interstate, however, the massive stockyards complex, as well as the railroad yards that emerged to serve them, employed many waves of immigrants, including members of both waves of the Great Migration. Although the area was settled by Irish, and later by Austrians and Germans, African Americans began moving into the community after 1900. Many migrants were recruited directly by agents of the stockyards, who travelled the South advertising the high wages and relative freedoms of the north. At their peak in 1930's the stockyards employed nearly 40,000 workers. The massive number of workers needed for stockyards and other industrial operations, and the desire for cheap, non-unionized labor form the background for both waves of black migration. Specific historical events such as the stockyards strike of 1904 and the labor shortages during WWI and WWII accelerated the recruitment of southern workers, and massive migration resulted. By 1920, African Americans, Mexicans, and Slavic workers had largely replaced the Irish and Germans in Fuller Park. In later years, the decline of the stockyards complex and the construction of the interstate would rob the area of population.

Washington Park is a historically significant neighborhood to the immediate south of Bronzeville's core area, with the park that gives the area its name located to the east of residential blocks. In the mid-to-late 19th century, Irish and German railroad workers and meatpackers made Washington Park home. The area's demographics changed radically with migration of African Americans in 1920's. Since that time Washington Park has been recognized as an African American neighborhood, and has served as the setting for several literary works. In Richard Wright's novel *Native Son*, Bigger Thomas drives the drunken Jan Erlone and Mary Dalton around Washington Park. Lorraine Hansberry's play, *Raisin in the Sun*, was inspired by her time in the Washington Park neighborhood. Hansberry's father, Carl's, purchase of a home covered under a white-only, restrictive covenant came before the Supreme Court in *Hansberry v. Lee* (1940), resulting in a groundbreaking repudiation of the covenant and racially exclusive housing.

Mirroring the southward expansion of Chicago's African American community, the DuSable Museum of African American History, founded in 1961, moved to Washington Park in 1973. It is a Chicago landmark and one of the largest African American museums in the country. Other landmarks in the area include the Schulze Baking Company Plant and *Fountain of Time*, the world's earliest concrete finished art work by Lorado Taft. Washington Park was also the home to several large public housing developments, including the Robert Taylor homes. Most of these have been demolished as part of the Chicago Housing Authority's redevelopment initiatives.

The West Woodlawn neighborhood is another historic, African American area that played a role in settling members of the Great Migration. While Lorraine Hansberry's play, *Raisin in the Sun*, depicted life in Washington Park, her family home, a three-flat located at 6140 S. Rhodes, is actually in the West Woodlawn area. The house, purchased in 1937, is up for landmark status before the Chicago City Council's Committee on Historical Landmarks Preservation. Greater Woodlawn's development can be traced to the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, when housing for workers was erected in the area. Up until 1948, Woodlawn was a predominantly white, middle class neighborhood. However, West Woodlawn, a trapezoidal sub-area directly south of Washington Park, attracted middle-class African Americans with the means to buy homes outside the nearby Black Belt.

In 1928, local white businessmen and officials from the University of Chicago attempted to stop further black settlement into Woodlawn, organizing landlords in the use of a joint restrictive housing covenant. The Great Depression induced many of these landlords to break these covenant, as they could sell illegally subdivided apartments to Black renters who had few housing options. As in other areas, black families who attempted to flee the crowded conditions of the tradition Black Belt often encountered hostility, and in some cases even violence. The Hansberry case and demographic movements already in progress resulted in the transition of the neighborhood from European American to predominantly African American by the early 1960s. 63rd Street became one of the busiest streets on the South Side and was famous for its jazz clubs. In contrast to West Woodlawn's middle-class homeowners, Woodlawn's new residents were recent southern migrants, from the second wave of the Great Migration, and refugees from the traditional black belt and redevelopment elsewhere in Chicago.

To the east of West Woodlawn, the Bronzeville study area encompasses one additional historic site, Oak Woods Cemetery. Oak Woods is the most significant cemetery on Chicago's South Side. Buried here are renowned figures in the history of Chicago such Mayor "Big Bill" Thompson, crime boss Big Jim Colosimo, and physicist Enrico Fermi. Beyond its place as the final resting place of Chicago's elite, the cemetery plays a special role in the history of the Great Migration and the African American community. Many prominent African Americans are buried here, including Mayor Harold Washington, Olympian Jesse Owens, and civil rights activist Ida B. Wells. In addition, approximately six thousand Confederate soldiers are buried together beneath a large monument. These soldiers died while imprisoned at nearby Camp Douglas, a camp commissioned by Abraham Lincoln to prepare recruits for the Civil War, and later to house Confederates who were captured in the fighting