

# HISTORY OF WASHINGTON PARK

## TRANSPORTATION HISTORY



**1874** Grand Boulevard horse carriage path is dug (now Martin Luther King Boulevard).



**1887** Cable cars reached as far south as 63rd on State Street and 67th on Cottage Grove.

**1892** Garfield Station built to transport visitors to the 1893 World's Fair.

**1905 - 1908** Five branches of the south green line were added.

**1907** The "L" is extended the length of Washington Park and into Woodlawn.

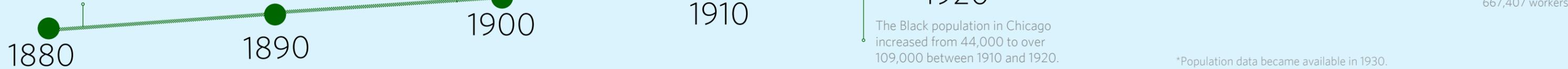
**1910** Peak green line transit service: 5 branches and 47 stations.

**Boosts and Blocks** are inspired by United for a Fair Economy (UFE). They represent events that had either a positive or negative impact on the neighborhood.

**1947** CTA began to cut service to nearly 100 stations with low riderhip or considered "uneconomical." Impact was felt hard on Green Line.

## POPULATION GROWTH

After the Great Fire of 1871, the South Side expanded quickly as both the rich and the poor left the city's center.



In the 1890s, German Jews had begun to settle in eastern Washington Park and African-Americans began moving to the area south of Garfield, west of State Street. It was an early example of neighborhood diversity, but not everywhere was so welcoming. Many municipalities in Illinois were known to be "sundown towns," where Black people were not allowed to be when the sun went down.

The Black population in Chicago increased from 44,000 to over 109,000 between 1910 and 1920.

\*Population data became available in 1930.

Manufacturing employment in the city of Chicago peaked at 667,407 workers.

**1833** Potawatomi ceded the last of their Illinois and Wisconsin lands as part of the Treaty of Chicago. Chicago is incorporated as a town, and as a city 4 years later. As American townspeople began to outnumber the French and Potawatomi inhabitants, the government forced most of the Potawatomi people from Northern Illinois to new homes on the far side of the Mississippi.

**1848** Illinois becomes a truly free state with the constitution of 1848 that outlawed both slavery and indentured servitude.

**1871** Washington Park is designed by Frederick Law Olmstead and Calvert Vaux, named after the first president, originally "mowed" by roaming cows and sheep.

**1879** Washington Park dedicated, former President Ulysses S. Grant presided over the ceremonies. A boulder was placed where he planted a tree.

**1884** The area was dredged to turn the swampy land into a more livable place.

**1889** Washington Park area is annexed into the city of Chicago.

**1890** University of Chicago opens in the adjacent Hyde Park neighborhood.

**1891** Washington Park Refectory is designed by Daniel Burnham.

**1893** Twenty-seven million visit the south side for the World's Fair in Jackson Park and Washington Park connected by Midway Plaisance. The Fair was protested by Ida B. Wells and Frederick Douglass for exclusion of Black Americans.

**1905** The Chicago Defender is founded by Robert Abbott, as a forum to attack racial injustice, credited with being a major catalyst for the Great Migration.

**1910** Daniel Burnham's office designed an administrative park building, now DuSable Museum of African-American History.

**1917** Jesse Binga moved to Washington Park; he was the founder of The Binga Bank, the first privately owned African-American bank in Chicago.

**1917** The Chicago Real Estate Board set out a formal policy of racial segregation and voted to expel any member who sold property on white blocks to Black people.

**1919** The city was a "hotbed" of racial tension, culminating in city-wide race riots of 1919. Invading Irish and white gangs led to the formation of the first Black street gangs in the Bronzeville area to defend the community. Some South Side industry closed during riots, impacting the economy.

**1922** Loreda Taft's sculpture "Fountain of Time" added to Washington Park, world's earliest concrete finished art work.

**1920s** Chicago's thriving "Black Belt" of Bronzeville extends south into the Washington Park neighborhood, wealthier white residents begin to move from the area, closing many businesses; jazz Age; Washington Park defined as Community Area 40.

**1926** The US Supreme Court upheld racially restrictive covenants in Corrigan v. Buckley that were used to keep Black Chicagoans in segregated and over-crowded areas.

**1929** Black residents of Chicago gain access to city jobs, expanding professional class; Bud Billiken Parade started.

**1930s** The Chicago Black Renaissance, influenced by Great Migration and Great Depression, promoted racial pride and a new black consciousness which led to the growth of jazz, blues, gospel and literature that addressed Chicago culture, racial tensions, issues of identity, search for meaning.

**1937** Chicago Housing Authority is formed.

**1930** The University of Chicago serves as headquarters of the Federation of Neighborhood Associations through the 30s and 40s, its primary purpose being the opposition of efforts made by the Black community to get legislation passed that declared restrictive covenants as invalid.

**1933-1947** The University of Chicago spends nearly \$111,000 on "community interests," and over \$80,000 on defending restrictive covenants.

**1940** Rhumboogie Cafe opens at 343 East Garfield Boulevard, starting a short but successful reign, just before Club DeLisa suffered a big fire.

**1940** Supreme Court decides against the use of restrictive covenants in the case of Hansberry v. Lee.

**1940** Native Son, by Richard Wright is published, whose main character, Bigger, drives Mary Dalton and her boyfriend around Washington Park.

**1940** The Federal Home Owners' Loan Corporation creates "redlined" maps of Chicago, identifying areas by racial composition for "risk" in home security mortgages, making it extremely difficult for Black people or anyone in integrated neighborhoods to secure loans to purchase or upgrade homes, or generate wealth from home ownership. The risky investment label also prevented business loans and small-scale investment, leading to neighborhood decline.

**1947** The Illinois General Assembly passed the Illinois Blighted Areas Redevelopment Act, creating a new agency called the Land Clearance Commission with the power to acquire "blighted" land by force and sell it to private developers for residential development.



**1950** Green Hornet Streetcar Disaster: a streetcar traveling too fast for wet conditions veers into a gasoline tanker, triggering a massive explosion that kills over 30 passengers.

**1950s** Service on three branches of the green line south were ended, lines closed.

**1961** The first segment of the Dan Ryan expressway opens cementing segregation/environmental justice concerns



**1982** The Jackson park branch of the CTA was closed and tracks were removed.

**1994** 63rd & Racine and 58th & Prairie stations permanently closed.

**1994** Entire Green Line shut down for rehabilitation work, resulting in 2 years of no service to the area.

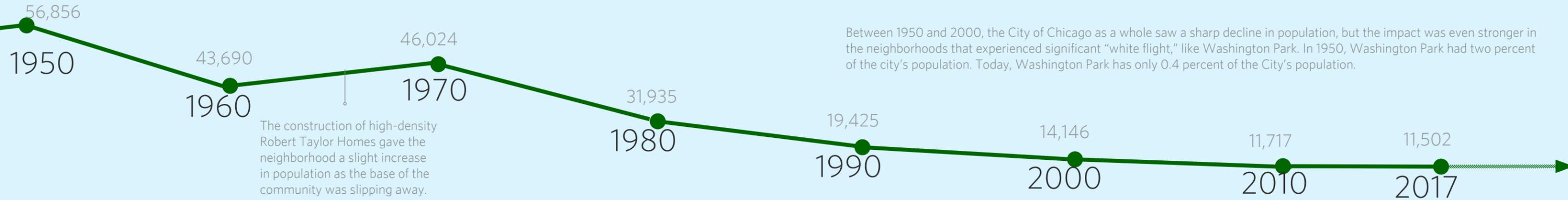
**1997** Demolition of Green Line Tracks east of Cottage Grove eliminating service to Jackson Park



**2001** Historic Garfield Boulevard "L" station and overpass designated with landmark status



**2019** The Garfield Gateway Project brought \$43 million in improvements for the station that included art by Nick Cave



**1948** US Supreme Court strikes down racial covenants

**1952** The University of Chicago formed the Hyde Park Kenwood Urban Renewal Program, which displaced thousands of African Americans on the South Side. It tore down strips of worker housing for student dorms, decimated the local jazz scene, and bulldozed the commercial corridor on 55th St.

**1955** The Illinois General Assembly amended the IL Blighted Areas Redevelopment Act, to give the Chicago Land Clearance Commission more power in eminent domain and to use the land for industrial purposes.

**1961** The DuSable Museum of African-American History founded by writer and arts activist Margaret Burroughs and seven others as the first African-American museum independent of a university.



**1962** Robert Taylor Homes completed as huge low-income housing project between 51st and 54th and State to Federal; not everyone who wanted housing could be accommodated.

**1963** CPS mass walkout of over 220,000 students to protest overcrowded and underfunded majority-Black schools

**1965** More than half of manufacturing jobs in the metropolitan area relocated into the suburbs by this point.

**1971** The Union Stock Yard closed its doors after nearly 106 years of operation.



**1970s** Robert Taylor Homes become neglected by the Chicago Housing Authority and the police.

**1972** Dyett HS is built on the northern border of Washington Park.



**Late 1970s** Beasley Academic Center opens at 5255 S. State Street in Washington Park. Programming includes a free Child Parent Center preschool program, a selective enrollment gifted program and regular education magnet school programs.

**1980** Wisconsin Steel Closes



**1983** Harold Washington elected first African American mayor of Chicago.



**1986** The passing of the Anti-drug abuse act creates disparate negative impacts on Black communities in the US during the War on Drugs. In Chicago, police were busy targeting gang leaders who had maintained some semblance of codes of conduct around violence, breaking large gangs into many factions leading to increased violence.

**1993** US Steel Closes

**1995** Heatwave of three days leaves 739 Chicagoans dead, including many from Washington Park



**2004** Washington Park added to the National Register of Historic Places.



**2007** Robert Taylor Homes completely torn down.

**2008** There are 163 foreclosure filings in Washington Park, the highest rate per 1,000 properties of all Chicago neighborhoods.

**2008** Dyett HS has the largest increase in students going to college in all of CPS.

**2008** KLEO Center founded to address domestic violence.

**2009** Chicago prepares (unsuccessful) bid to host the 2016 Olympic Games with Washington Park at the center of festivities.

**2011** Citing poor academic performance, CPS decides to phase out Dyett High School over the course of a three-year period.



**2014** The Sweetwater Foundation opens the Perry Avenue Commons on the site of a former correctional school for boys.

**2015** After a 34-day hunger strike led by residents, Dyett High School reopens.

**2015** Obama Presidential Library selects the University of Chicago's proposal, ultimately choosing Jackson Park over Washington Park.

**2016** The University of Chicago buys 26 properties in Washington Park. Residents express concerns over displacement with increased demand with new Obama Library.



**2018** Green line performing Arts Center opens, run by the Arts and Public Life.

**2018** The University reopens the Level 1 Trauma Center after years of activists calling for adequate emergency care.



**2020** Renovation of Indiana Playlot with grants and support from the Washington Park Chamber, SECC, and My Block My Hood My City.

