

***Where the Neighborhood Ends***

High School: Grades 9–12

**Background Information**

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**Restrictive Covenants**

While a real estate covenant can limit many things, from landscaping to structural changes, racially restrictive covenants were legal contracts promising not to sell or lease property to minorities. Encouraged by many predominantly white community organizations and even the Chicago Real Estate Board, they became popular in Chicago during the 1920s, when the Great Migration brought more than 500,000 African Americans to the city.

Originally touted as a peaceful and progressive way to prevent racial violence, covenants were described approvingly by the *Hyde Park Herald* as a “delicately woven chain of armor.” By the 1940s, however, they were a political liability. In fact, future mayor Richard J. Daley sold himself as the anti-covenant candidate in his 1946 race for sheriff. The Supreme Court finally struck down restrictive covenants in 1948.

**Urban Renewal and Public Housing**

Following World War II and continuing through the 1970s, "urban renewal" referred to government efforts to revitalize decaying inner-city neighborhoods through massive demolition, slum clearance, and the relocation of residents. A series of laws passed between 1941 and 1953 expanded the city's power to seize land and convey it to private developers with the stated purpose of enhancing the city.

All too often, however, urban renewal meant "Negro removal," as contemporaries noted. Between 1948 and 1963 alone, more than 150,000 people were displaced. Activists claimed that the city tried to contain the expansion of African American living space, in part, by building densely packed public housing high-rises. Ultimately, the courts found that segregation had become official city policy when they determined that 99 percent of Chicago Housing Authority residents were black.

Source: *The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago*, [www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org](http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org)