

The Hobbyist

VILLA HEIGHTS

Cordelia Park

PHIFER HEIGHTS

OPTIMIST PARK

Birdsong Brewing Co

Rosie's Coffee & Wine Garden

Little Sugar Creek Greenway

The Culture Shop

VanLar

Alexander Park

BELMONT

Lunchbox Records

Haraz Coffee House

Midwood Smokehouse

Resident Culture Brewing Company

Calle Sol Latin Café & Cevicheria

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Total Distance

6.0 mi



A. Charlotte's Belmont Neighborhood - More than a Century from a Mill Village Start



Introduction

Hello, thank you for your interest in the Belmont Community's History Walk! Join us for a 2 and a half-mile tour in one of Charlotte's oldest neighborhoods – the Belmont Community. On this tour, you will learn about three different eras of Belmont. First the mill village, then the post-Brooklyn neighborhood and disinvestment, and finally the reinvestment that started in the early 2000s.

Backstory and Context

The Belmont Community is located about 2 miles northeast of today's Uptown Charlotte, just outside the I-277 loop. The neighborhood's boundaries include Parkwood Avenue to the north, Hawthorne Lane to the east, East 10th St to the south, and Little Sugar Creek to the west.

Our story begins with the Seaboard Railway. In the early 1890s this area was mostly farmland. There was only one house and the area was mostly known for having a fine spring of crystal water. These train tracks sparked industrial development in the area.

Today, we will travel through more than 120 years in time, from the turn of the century to 2020. You will hear about the origins as a white mill village, the transition to an under-invested Black neighborhood influenced by Urban Renewal, and the most recent transition to rapid growth and development.

Charlotte's tale of two cities, as noted in the 2017 Leading on Opportunity report, is becoming a reality in the Belmont Community. As housing prices soar, long-time homeowners are concerned about tax increases and renters are losing their affordable rates.

As you walk through the neighborhood, you will see large, new modern homes next to smaller mill homes and older buildings being brought back to life. You will also learn about mill village life, Habitat for Humanity's international Women Build experience and current redevelopment.

You will find a bronze medallion on the sidewalk at each stop. Note that due to the rapid development, some structures may have changed or been razed since the recording, or medallions may have been removed.



Let's get started!

Address

1003 Louise Ave
Charlotte, NC 28205

B. Louise Cotton Mill



Directions from Charlotte's Belmont Neighborhood - More than a Century from a Mill Village Start

1. Head southwest on Louise Ave - 66 ft

Introduction

We begin this tour at the Louise Cotton Mill at the gated vehicle entrance near the railroad tracks and across from 1003 Louise Avenue. In 1896, investors planning the Louise Yarn Mill purchased 30 acres of farmland for \$3,000 from Mrs. Kate Moore. When the mill opened in 1897, it was the largest cotton mill in Charlotte and was conveniently located next to the Carolina Central Railroad.

Backstory and Context

A nearby stream, which ran along the route of today's Hawthorne Lane, was dammed to provide a mill pond. This water was used, not for power but rather as insurance against fire. Water mains ran from the pond to a pump house and throughout the mill.

Louise Mill began as a 10,000 spindle hosiery mill and expanded in 1901 to add two large wings and a courtyard, creating the mill's unique U-shape. For sixty years, from 1897 to 1957, the mill was steadily in operation as a cotton mill. The community thrived in this early half of the century, but by the late 1950s, mills were closing and plants were relocating. The neighborhood began at the edge of Charlotte's nineteenth-century boundary but now found itself in the urban inner-city as newer subdivisions attracted residents to more prosperous suburban areas.

Ownership of the Louise Mill building changed multiple times after it closed, and its uses varied until 2018 when the historic structure was reimagined and turned into housing, called The Lofts at Hawthorne Mill. This meticulous conversion into loft spaces kept the nineteenth-century Southeastern textile mill



architecture. The craftsmanship includes the original five-course masonry facade, the heavy timber interior, and 12-foot window openings with segmental-arched tops. Today, the Louise Mill is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is one of only three intact cotton mills that survived in the city from the late nineteenth century.

We'll continue our tour by heading north on Louise Avenue toward Belmont Avenue. You will cross Louise Avenue and look for the medallion on the sidewalk near the stop sign.

Address

C. The Mill Village



Directions from Louise Cotton Mill

1. Head northeast on Louise Ave toward Belmont Ave. Destination will be on the left - 482 ft

Introduction

At this stop, you will see houses behind the mill along Louise Ave. This street was part of the mill village. The Louise Cotton Mill built 72 houses for its workers on William (which is now Pamlico), Louise, and Pegram streets, on the hill above the mill. These homes have special significance because they illustrate the mill's role and the labor of the workers as Charlotte became a major textile manufacturing center in the Carolina Piedmont region between 1880 and 1930.

Backstory and Context

The company-owned houses followed the three-room gable house plans that industrialist D. A. Tompkins promoted in his book, "Cotton Mills: Commercial Features." He suggested creating modest homes to accommodate workers who had been more accustomed to rural life than cities before coming to work at the mills. Homes were one-story frame buildings with a side yard and larger back yard for gardening. The mill village was maintained by the mill owners who were mostly white. The lives of the workers were even policed by mill owners, who had men patrol the neighborhood to maintain the neighborhood's reputation and appearance.

The mill house which stood at 1104 Louise Avenue until December 2020 was built in 1897 and most likely cost around \$325. Through the years, the home's original design had been maintained, but at the time of recording was an empty lot, likely being prepared for a new home.



On May 20, 1949, the Charlotte Observer reported that the owners of the Louise Mill were selling mill houses at prices ranging from \$2,000 to \$3,100 each. Over the years, some structures have been modified, updated, and many demolished. To the left of this address on Louise Avenue, is an example of a renovated mill house with additions to increase the size.

Now, let's head west, or left, on Belmont Avenue. Once you reach the stop sign, turn right to walk across Belmont Avenue, then left to cross Pegram Street and stop at the intersection. Look for the medallion near the entrance of the brick building.

Address

D. Red Front Department Store



Directions from The Mill Village

1. Head northeast on Louise Ave toward Belmont Ave - 30 ft
2. Turn left onto Belmont Ave. Destination will be on the right - 364 ft

Introduction

The next stop is at the two-story brick building at the intersection of Belmont Avenue and Pegram Street. This is the oldest surviving retail building in the neighborhood, the Red Front Department Store. In the early 1900s, there were small groceries and small general stores on almost every corner in all of Charlotte's working-class neighborhoods.

Backstory and Context

Dozens of small shops operated in the community. Most of the wooden business structures are now gone, but some substantial brick ones can still be found, such as this one.

The Red Front Department Store opened for business in 1902. Mill workers and others in the area spent 10 to 12 hours a day, six days a week at their factories. They rarely had time, energy, or means to travel downtown to the grocery and department stores which were frequented by the wealthier suburbanites. Stores like Red Front filled that gap. The building also served as a community gathering place for groups like the local Glee Club.



In 1905, the Red Front Department Store closed, and a series of businesses occupied the space in the years that followed, the longest occupant being the Walker & Son Grocery Store. Opening after the Louise Mill closed, the grocery store occupied the space from the 1960s to at least 1989.

In 2017, the building was designated a historic landmark by the Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmark Commission.

Let's head north on Pegram Street to the intersection with East 15th Street. As you walk north, you will see a one-story building on the left which once housed Fatback Queen. You will hear more about this business at the next stop. Look for the medallion before you cross 15th Street.

As you're walking, look to your right to see examples of former mill houses. It wasn't until 1914 that gas became available in homes, and in 1949 when bathtubs were installed indoors. Prior to that, bathhouses for the mill workers were outside their homes. Bathhouse ruins remain behind several of these homes.

Address

E. Four Developments Create Current Day Belmont



Directions from Red Front Department Store

1. Head northeast on Pegram St toward E 15th St - 279 ft

Introduction

This corner marks the intersection of the mill village, the southeast area of the neighborhood, and suburban land developments called Belmont Springs to the southwest, Sunnyside to the northeast, and Eastend to the northwest. This is the nexus of the different developments that gave rise to what we now consider Charlotte's Belmont neighborhood.

Backstory and Context

When the mill closed in 1957, the community continued as a white working-class neighborhood into the 1960s. Tom Hanchett, a local historian, found that as late as 1962, "there were virtually no Black



residents in the survey area north of Belmont Avenue". This changed when Brooklyn, Charlotte's largest Black neighborhood, in what is currently Second Ward of Uptown, was razed as part of an Urban Renewal project. Between 1961 and 1970, more than 13 churches, 2 schools, and 1,480 homes across 238 acres were leveled. Not a single new residential unit was built, and more than 7,000 people were forced to find housing elsewhere. They were steered to the neighborhoods surrounding Uptown, including this area.

One Belmont resident recalls being displaced from Brooklyn and moving to Belmont as a young adult. She remembers "block busters" or white investors who convinced white homeowners to sell their homes at lower prices by stoking the fear of Black residents moving in. Urban renewal helped Charlotte expand its uptown, but it also ended up increasing both racial and economic segregation. The poorest families from Brooklyn were pushed into rentals and public housing, which had the result of concentrating poverty. The neighborhood entered a period of white-flight and disinvestment that lasted into the early 2000s.

Black-owned businesses were also displaced from Brooklyn, including the original Fatback Queen. A current resident, who was displaced from Brooklyn, remembers it as a gathering place with a big jar of fatback on the counter. A place where if someone had a dollar, they could eat and have a drink. Fatback Queen continued as a gathering place in its location in Belmont. While the building changed hands several times, the name remained in 2020.

Now cross 15th Street, walking north on Pegram Street to view 1201 Pegram Street on the left.

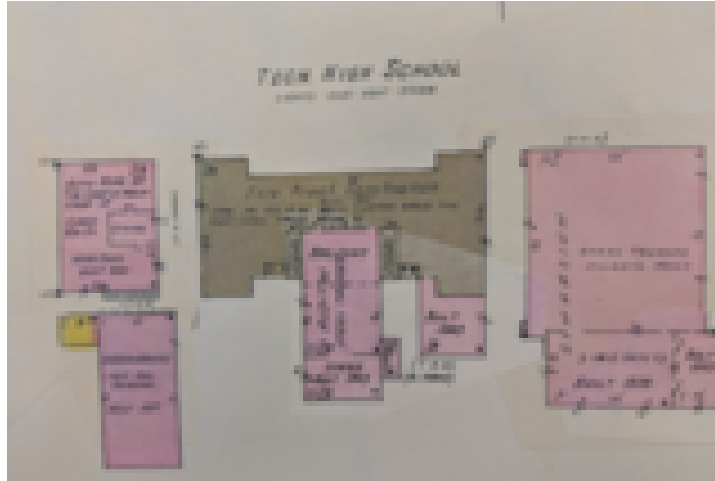
1201 Pegram Street was originally the Belmont Park Church. Now, this property is called The House United home. Half of the house was built at the 2012 Republican National Convention in Tampa, Florida, and the other half was built the following week at the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte. Delegates and elected officials from both parties worked alongside TV star Ty Pennington from "Extreme Makeover" fame to assemble the home for a grand reveal and to donate the completed house to a military veteran.

Let's continue north on Pegram Street to the intersection of East 17th Street. You will cross Pegram Street and look for the medallion near the stop sign at the vehicle entrance of a school. This is the former site of the Belmont Park Vocational School.

Address



F. Tech High School



Directions from Four Developments Create Current Day Belmont

1. Head northeast on Pegram St toward E 15th St - 0.2 mi
2. Turn right at E 17th St Restricted usage road - 30 ft

Introduction

The next stop is at the large institutional structure. As cotton mills came into the Belmont and North Charlotte communities in the early 1920s, Charlotte city leaders and businessmen began working together to improve the education of the children of the mill workers and others in the surrounding community. City leaders worked with the owners of The Louise Mill to create a vocational school to provide children of the Belmont and North Charlotte communities with industrial education.

Backstory and Context

The Belmont Park Vocational School opened in September 1922 as one of Charlotte's first secondary education offerings and the first vocational school in North Carolina to offer a high school curriculum. It was one of three high schools built, including Central High School for whites in Elizabeth and Second Ward High School for Blacks.

The school contained 16 classrooms with space for domestic science classes, manual training, sewing classes, a model dining room, and two workshops. In 1927 the school was renamed Charlotte Technical High School. After the class of 1954 graduated, the school became Hawthorne Junior High, located at 1411 Hawthorne Lane.

In 2020, this location served as the Hawthorne Academy of Health Sciences, Military, and Public Service, a Charlotte Mecklenburg School. The original building was demolished long ago.

Continue north on Pegram Street and make a right turn to go east on Kennon Street. Look for Soulshine Organics on the right as you head toward the medallion at 1405 Kennon Street.

As you walk, note the mix of duplexes and more modest original homes compared to larger new construction. Some of the larger, newer homes began to sell for \$500,000 to more than \$700,000 in 2020.

Address

Pegram St.



G. Sunnyside Development



Directions from Tech High School

1. Head west toward Pegram St Restricted usage road - 30 ft
2. Turn right onto Pegram St - 453 ft
3. Turn right onto Kennon St. Destination will be on the left - 0.2 mi

Introduction

As you walk along Kennon Street toward the next stop, you will see Soulshine Organics on the right, just past 1304 Kennon Street. Look for the open space between homes with a Little Free Library and mosaic design. Soulshine Organics is an urban farm that was started in 2012 by four residents of Belmont who decided they would use all-organic methods to grow their own fruits and vegetables, raise chickens for eggs and bees for honey. Continue walking about 300 feet and cross Kennon Street just past the intersection with Parson Street to 1405 Kennon Street.

Backstory and Context

You are in the neighborhood once known as Sunnyside. It was created in 1902 by Charlotte real estate developer, Clayton O. Brown, and included present-day Kennon, Umstead, and Parson streets, plus the 1600-1700 block of Hawthorne Lane.

The home at 1405 Kennon Street is only 694 square feet and was originally built in 1918 for residential use. The residence was sold for \$100 in 1982 to the Apostolic Church of Christ, which is a Pentecostal Christian denomination founded in North Carolina in 1969 by Bishop Johnnie Draft and Wallace Snow. Church services occurred in the home until it was sold in 1998. The structure is once again used as a single-family residence.

Turn around to return the way you came, heading west on Kennon Street towards Pegram Street.

During the '60s, Belmont was changing from a white mill village to a predominantly Black neighborhood while lending practices were favorable only to whites. As a result, many homes were rentals with absentee landlords. The housing stock ended up in disrepair, businesses lacked stability and crime increased. Belmont was on the decline, but as you can see now, the housing stock is vastly different.

This transformation began in the early 2000s, fueled largely by young, white professionals who moved to the neighborhood in search of housing close to Uptown. As demand for such housing continued to grow, so did the prices in Belmont. Former landlords sold their properties, displacing those who had cheaper rents. In 2020, the City of Charlotte estimated that an additional 34,000 units of affordable housing were needed to meet the demand. Yet options for those who were displaced are limited.



Soon, you should arrive at 1201 Kennon Street, finding the medallion at the intersection with Pegram Street.

Address

Kennon St

H. Grocery and Convenience Stores



Directions from Sunnyside Development

1. Head west on Kennon St toward Parson St. Destination will be on the right - 0.2 mi

Introduction

The brick building at 1201 Kennon Street was built in 1929 and used as either a convenience or grocery store until 2019. From 1929 to 1953, the building was occupied by H. B. Polk Grocery. It was rebranded as Polk Food Store and closed in 1974. Through 2019, approximately five other stores operated in the building and were also vacant for some periods. As of early 2020, the property was being rezoned to allow the space to operate as a restaurant.

Backstory and Context

The businesses that remained in the neighborhood after the mill closed changed to accommodate the needs of residents over time. Ultimately, many closed and only a handful of business structures remain. Over time, grocery stores changed to convenience stores, which lacked the full array of food.

In 2020, the Belmont neighborhood was considered a food desert, due to the limited access to affordable and nutritious food. Local convenience stores do not provide fresh produce and full-service grocery stores are greater than a mile away, which presents a challenge for residents who do not have transportation.

Now, let's head back south on Pegram Street and turn right, or west, on to East 18th Street. You are now in the former community of Eastend and will travel 5 and a half blocks to the Little Sugar Creek greenway. We will talk about some of the City of Charlotte's investments in Belmont as we go.

From 1970 to 1985, Belmont's population dropped by nearly a third. Forty percent of the housing units had deteriorated, and many were unoccupied. Charlotte's City Council adopted a plan to use code enforcement to address abandoned houses, install curbs and gutters to solve drainage problems and make some improvements at intersections. After careful study in the late '80s, zoning changes were enacted to reduce density, increase homeownership, and stabilize the neighborhood.



The Belmont Area Revitalization Plan was adopted in 2003 and built on the earlier studies. It resulted in a 20-year phasing plan to prioritize projects that could quickly address perceived and actual blighting conditions, thereby setting the stage for attracting new investment. The vision was for Belmont to be a family-oriented community, diverse in age, culture, and income, that promotes public safety, economic and community development, affordable housing, and community pride — a place to live, work and play. With these improvements, Belmont has indeed become an attractive neighborhood, and today's home prices reflect that.

Soon you will cross North Alexander Street. Look for the medallion at 624 East 18th Street on your left.

Address

1201 Kennon

I. Habitat for Humanity's First "Women Build"

Directions from Grocery and Convenience Stores

1. Head southwest on Pegram St toward Kennon St - 125 ft
2. Turn right onto E 18th St - 0.4 mi

Introduction

In the fall of 1983, Habitat for Humanity built its first Charlotte home in Optimist Park, the neighborhood west of Belmont across from Little Sugar Creek. Habitat is a nonprofit that helps families build and improve places to call home. Habitat supporter President Jimmy Carter was in Optimist Park the summer of 1987 to help build 14 houses in 5 days. In August 1988, the efforts moved to Belmont.

Backstory and Context

For Mother's Day in 1991, Habitat had a bold idea: A crew made up entirely of women would design, plan and build a home for a woman and her teen daughters, who were stuck in a cycle of having to move nearly every year to afford rent. Although the applicant worked in accounting for a local company, her paycheck couldn't keep pace with rent increases.

Among the volunteers was former first lady Rosalynn Carter and Habitat co-founder Linda Fuller. Women in the trades who had the expertise to handle specific jobs on the project were selected, and they, in turn, taught volunteers how to build a home. Women Build is now a global program of Habitat that builds homes in all 50 states and in 30 countries, but it started right here in the Eastend area of Belmont.

Ultimately, Habitat built nearly 200 homes, not only providing access to homeownership for lower-income families but also increasing homeownership in the neighborhood. One resident indicated she was initially scared to move to Belmont due to the crime. But her desire for homeownership was greater than her fear. Some Habitat homes in the neighborhood are still occupied by their original owners, some have changed hands and have been renovated, and some have been razed to make way for new construction.

Let's turn around and head back to the east, then turn right, or south, down North Alexander Street to find the Little Sugar Creek Community Garden, a communal food-share effort.

One last item to note as we walk. In the '90s, residents of Optimist Park, Belmont, Villa Heights and NoDa, collectively called this broader area North Charlotte. They did not call these neighborhoods by their current names. However, the name did not seem to translate outside of the community, as the documented North Charlotte area is generally the current NoDa footprint. A current Habitat homeowner reminisced about North Charlotte and said she just called it home, it's where her children grew up. It wasn't the best area, but they embraced their piece of the neighborhood. Being a Habitat homeowner, she



said they weren't really welcomed and has come to realize it was much like when whites began moving into Belmont in the early 2000s.

As you approach the community garden, look for the medallion on the sidewalk near the entrance.

Address

624 E. 18th St.

J. Little Sugar Creek Greenway Garden & Eastend Development



Directions from Habitat for Humanity's First "Women Build"

1. Head southeast on E 18th St toward N Alexander St - 102 ft
2. Turn right at the 1st cross street onto N Alexander St. Destination will be on the right - 397 ft

Introduction

The gardeners in this community garden believe everyone should have access to fresh food, regardless of income. The garden began in 2009 with a mission to bring residents of local neighborhoods together to experience fun and fellowship while learning eco-friendly gardening techniques. Classes are held regularly onsite, including sessions on composting, soil management, toxicity reduction and seed saving, fresh food harvesting, preparation and preservation. The garden donates over 10% of its produce to Friendship Trays, the area's meals-on-wheels program.

Backstory and Context

Due to the volunteer gardeners' dedication to the community, this garden is regularly recognized as "The People's Garden" by the USDA, and Keep America Beautiful, Inc. Numerous local partnerships support their mission.

Turn around and turn right, or east, onto East 17th Street for four blocks. Look for the medallion at the intersection with Allen Street.

For the last couple of stops, you have been in the Eastend development. We'll continue through it for the



next three stops before heading into Belmont Springs. Eastend was platted by George M. Phifer in May 1903. When the United States Geological Survey mapped the area for its topographic map series in 1905, East End had slightly more than 20 houses, Sunnyside had 14, grouped mainly along Kennon Avenue, and Belmont Springs had some 70 houses.

Address

1321 N. Alexander

K. Allen Street Baptist Church and St. Paul Baptist Church



Directions from Little Sugar Creek Greenway Garden & Eastend Development

1. Head northeast on N Alexander St toward Little Sugar Creek Greenway - 397 ft
2. Turn right onto E 18th St - 0.3 mi
3. Turn right onto Allen St. Destination will be on the right - 328 ft

Introduction

At the corner of East 17th and Allen streets stands a church with a rich history in the community. The former Allen Street Baptist Church started as a Sunday School in 1897 in the Louise Mill School House. It came under the sponsorship of the 12th Street Baptist Church and grew rapidly. Originally named The Belmont Baptist Church, it was organized with 44 members, who hired a minister and deacons with help from the mill.

Backstory and Context

The construction of a new church on Pegram Street was completed in 1902, and its name was changed to the Louise Baptist Church. By 1909 it had reached capacity, and when a new property was purchased at Allen and East 17th, it quickly reached capacity again in 1912, and again in 1916. The church continued to grow and build, adding an educational wing and eventually a new permanent sanctuary. It grew to be the 4th largest Baptist church in Charlotte, training laymen and missionaries.

On a similar timeline in Charlotte's Brooklyn neighborhood, a small group organized Saint Paul Baptist Church when a few people associated with the Primitive Baptist denomination decided to become



affiliated with the Missionary Baptist. This group came together in April 1900 and worshiped in Brooklyn. It was one of the first churches in Charlotte to broadcast a radio ministry, starting in 1951. In 1969, the congregation realized they would not be able to meet the requirements to remain in Brooklyn during Urban Renewal, and they began looking for a new location. The current location of St. Paul Baptist Church was purchased from Allen Street Baptist Church.

Start walking south down Allen Street one block to find the next medallion at the corner of East 16th Street. We will learn about the Centra Square housing development and how the St Paul Baptist Church is helping to alleviate some of the affordable housing crisis in Charlotte.

Address

1401 Allen St

L. Centra Square



Directions from Allen Street Baptist Church and St. Paul Baptist Church

1. Head southwest on Allen St toward E 17th St. Destination will be on the right - 341 ft

Introduction

You will view the townhouses and the brick building that make up the block of Allen Street between 17th and 16th Street. A generation ago, Belmont was considered one of Charlotte's most dangerous neighborhoods. Now, it's undergoing another transformation. Longtime residents celebrate the improved safety but grapple with the reality of soaring rents and taxes that may push them out. Post mill-village, Belmont had a very high percentage of rental properties, with most units being very affordable, but now many landlords are starting to either sell or fix up their properties to charge much higher prices.

Backstory and Context

In response to this surge of redevelopment in Belmont and across the City, St. Paul Baptist Church and the Zechariah Alexander Community Development Corporation worked with Charlotte-based Laurel Street housing consultants to develop 3.5 blocks of the church's land into 112 affordable housing units for seniors and families. The development received a significant financial contribution from the City of Charlotte.

Centra Square is made up of a 60-unit senior housing building, 29 townhome-style family units, and a 23-unit, garden-style flat building. The development targets households at 60% area median income and



below.

Now turn right, or west on East 16th Street and walk to the corner of Harrill Street for our next stop. Cross East 16th Street to find the medallion at the one-story brick building.

Address

Allen St

M. Business Use to Single Family Home & Belmont Springs



Directions from Centra Square

1. Head northwest on E 16th St toward Harrill St - 299 ft

Introduction

This brick structure appears to have been built between 1926 and 1930 and served as one of the neighborhood grocery stores for a short time. Between extended periods of vacancy until 2013, it also served as WPA Sewing Project no. 1544, Tire and Supply Co, Hinson Manufacturing & Distribution Company, Knight Brothers Furniture Company, Fire and Glass Fabrications and, finally, as Lo's Place Lounge in the early '80s. In 2013, it was renovated and converted to a residential unit.

Backstory and Context

Begin walking south on Harrill Street for two blocks toward Belmont Avenue. You will pass Little Peoples Park on the left at East 15th Street and will then be in the former Belmont Springs neighborhood.

The parcels making up Little Peoples Park were conveyed to the City of Charlotte in September 1972. Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation have a memo from February 1988 that mentioned houses and piles of brush being cleared to create the 1-acre park.

In 2019, the Belmont Community Association worked with Parks and Rec through a City of Charlotte Neighborhood Matching Grant to add a covered pavilion, picnic tables, grill, and message board.

Now, back to the start of Belmont Springs. By 1892, the Belmont Springs Company was making plans for developing a tract of land on a hilltop across Sugar Creek. In 1896, the company formally platted a nine-block area, with Belmont Avenue running through the subdivision's center. Low-lying land between Seigle Avenue and Sugar Creek at the western edge of the subdivision was shown on the plan as a tree-shaded



park with a winding drive called McAden Avenue. In the park were the spring-fed branches that gave the development the name Belmont Springs.

Proceed to the corner of Harrill Street and Belmont Avenue. You will cross both Harrill and Belmont to find the medallion at 1035 Harrill Street.

Address

1240 Harrill St.

N. Crime and Redevelopment on Belmont Springs Main Street



Directions from Business Use to Single Family Home & Belmont Springs

1. Head northwest on E 16th St toward Harrill St - 23 ft
2. Turn left at the 1st cross street onto Harrill St. Destination will be on the right - 0.2 mi

Introduction

In 1938 Lawrence K. Farrar, Jr. and his wife Marguerite purchased the land at 1035 Harrill Street for \$1,250; and they later built and opened a convenience store named L.K. Grocery. The store stayed in the family and provided goods to the community through decades of changes in the neighborhood.

Backstory and Context

By the 1980s, the racial segregation and poverty that had been exacerbated by displacement and housing policy had been concentrated for well over a decade in the Belmont area. This combination of neighborhood disinvestment, displacement, and concentrated poverty gave rise to growing drug and crime rates in the area. The cocaine use that had begun in wealthier urban areas became a plague in poor neighborhoods. In a 2006 Quality of Life study in Charlotte, Belmont had 3,300 residents, with a violent crime rate that was double the city average. This store became a high traffic spot for the problems plaguing the neighborhood. Between mid-2012 and the end of 2013, there were 122 drug arrests and 74 violent crimes near the property.

The City of Charlotte purchased the store in 2014 in an effort to stabilize the area and promote different uses. Based on the Quality of Life Explorer, violent crime has been trending down, with 24 crimes



reported across the Belmont neighborhood in 2018.

The building was vacant when it was sold in 2018 for private development. An animal hospital using more than half the building opened in 2019. Renovations on the remaining part of the building were completed in 2020 for a florist and bottle shop concept.

Across the street, two restaurants opened in 2018, which began restoring Belmont Avenue as a center of business for the neighborhood again.

While facing the building at 1035 Harrill Street, turn right to head west on Belmont Avenue a half block towards Seigle Avenue. The medallion will be found across the street at 901 Belmont Avenue.

Address

1035 Harrill St

O. Belmont Graded School and the Salvation Army



Directions from Crime and Redevelopment on Belmont Springs Main Street

1. Head northeast on Harrill St toward Belmont Ave - 16 ft
2. Turn left at the 1st cross street onto Belmont Ave. Destination will be on the right - 279 ft

Introduction

This stop is currently the Salvation Army Chapel. The 1903 Charlotte City directory lists this property as Belmont Graded School, with well-known journalist and child labor activist Rev. AJ McKelway serving as principal. McKelway wrote a series of editorials opposing the labor of young children in mills for long workdays and in unhealthy conditions.

Backstory and Context

In 1903, he became editor of the Charlotte News and broadened his focus to the entire South. In that year the North Carolina General Assembly passed a weak law, with no enforcement provisions, prohibiting the employment of children under 12 and establishing a maximum 66-hour workweek for children under 18.



In 1937, the Salvation Army begins using a part of the premises as its Family and Transient Bureau. In 1944 the Salvation Army Men's Transient Lodge was the sole occupant of the building, which became the Salvation Army Belmont Community Center. It was rebuilt in 1957, reopening as The Salvation Army.

Head to the corner of Belmont and Seigle avenues. Cross Seigle Avenue and turn left, or south, on Seigle Avenue. You will find the medallion near the bus stop just past Otts Street.

Address

901 Belmont Ave

P. Piedmont Courts to Seigle Point



Directions from Belmont Graded School and the Salvation Army

1. Head northwest on Belmont Ave toward Seigle Ave - 89 ft
2. Turn left at the 1st cross street onto Seigle Ave. Destination will be on the right - 0.2 mi

Introduction

The City of Charlotte located its first public housing project for whites in Belmont. Piedmont Courts opened in 1940 at Seigle Avenue and East 10th Street. The site, on a hollow along Sugar Creek near the railroad, had long been a makeshift shantytown. The new project's architecture by Martin Boyer and Harold Bursley featured elegant historic motifs, including rounded dormers, brick exteriors, and red-tile roofs. The townhouses were arranged to provide covered walkways and interior play yards, which were considered very progressive ideas at the time. Another less elaborate design was created for Blacks in a development near Statesville Avenue across town.

Backstory and Context

By the time Brooklyn was razed in Uptown, Charlotte was integrating, and Black families who could not buy new homes moved into Piedmont Courts. Poverty and neglect were concentrated in the area, and when the crack cocaine epidemic struck, Piedmont Courts became a notorious corridor of drug activity. Witnesses said that users, "queued up to dealers like customers at a fast-food drive-thru." On a Saturday afternoon in November of 1985, gunfire exploded during a conflict between dealers, leaving seven people injured. The book, *Money Rock: A Family's Story of Cocaine, Race, and Ambition in the New South*, tells the story of a drug dealer and the shootout.



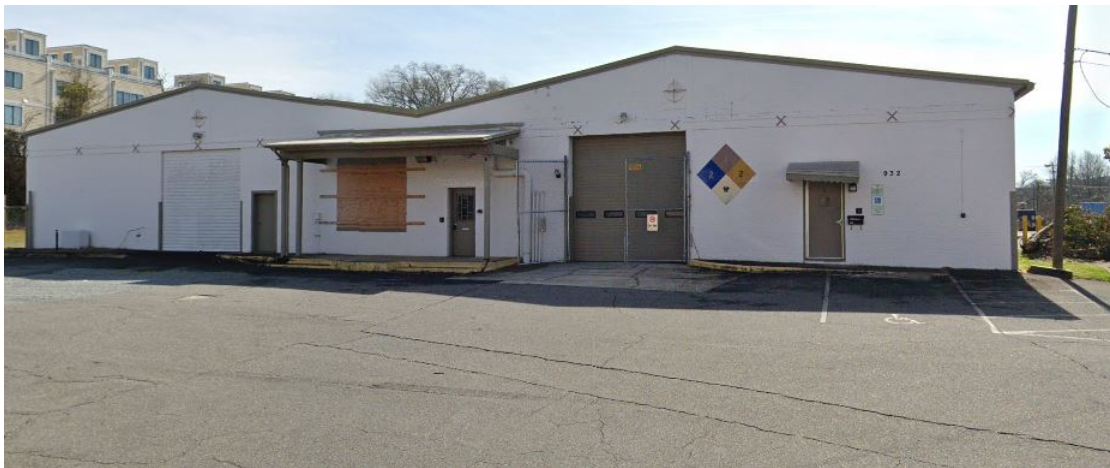
The complex was demolished in 2006 and replaced by Seigle Point and Vistas @ 707 Apartment Homes, a mixed-income development. Today, some former residents of Piedmont Courts continue to hold an annual reunion and relish the friendships and memories they made there.

Let's cross Seigle Avenue and Otts Street. Look for the medallion near the warehouse building and stop sign.

Address

819 Seigle Ave

Q. City Municipal Garage and the Innovation Barn



Directions from Piedmont Courts to Seigle Point

1. Head northeast on Seigle Ave toward Otts St - 82 ft
2. Turn right onto Otts St. Destination will be on the left - 33 ft

Introduction

The City's Municipal Garage was constructed in 1928 and occupied in 1929. Noted Charlotte architect C.C. Hook, who also designed Charlotte's 1925 City Hall, among many other important structures across the Carolinas, provided the plans. The facility was designed with motor vehicles in mind, backing up to the Seaboard Railway line so that gasoline, motor oil, and related products could be brought in by tank car. The Municipal Garage likely also held the city's dwindling number of workhorses in its early years. The Observer noted that former City Stable, located at Hill and Poplar Streets where Panthers' Stadium is today, closed around 1928 when the new Municipal Garage opened.

Backstory and Context

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business models, and supply chains. Charlotte is committed to becoming the first circular city in the United States, and the development of the Innovation Barn is one of the first priorities in implementing the city's circular strategy.

A cafe and retail space will be open, as well as business incubator space for entrepreneurs focused on upcycling - the process of turning discarded materials like plastic bottles into usable products like clothing or shoes. An aquaponic garden stocked with plants and fish will be on site, as well as a soldier fly composting facility capable of processing over 1 ton of food and organic waste per week.

Continue east on Otts Street to find the last medallion at the corner of Louise Avenue.

As you walk along the Innovation Barn, you will see a 10-foot-tall sculpture of a bunny blowing bubbles. The bunny is constructed of a patchwork of scrap metal to promote upcycling and is blowing bubbles to promote recycling. Bubble wrap and air pillows for packaging are not recyclable in our weekly pickup, but those materials can be dropped off at the Innovation Barn to correctly enter the recycling stream. The bunny is proudly named Louise Cotton and pays homage to the origins of the neighborhood, which is enduring even if not in its original state, much like the bunny crafted from metal remnants.

Address

932 Seigle Ave

R. Jack's Cookie Company to 933 Hub



Directions from City Municipal Garage and the Innovation Barn

1. Head southeast on Otts St - 0.3 mi
2. Turn left onto Louise Ave. Destination will be on the left - 26 ft

Introduction

And finally, you have arrived at our last stop, viewing 933 Hub. Built in 1945, Jack's Cookie Company, was acquired by Murray Bakery, which became Keebler, which in turn was purchased by Kellogg. Factory workers produced Famous Amos, Austin Sandwich cremes, and Iced Animal cookies, and sweet smells wafted through the neighborhood. The plant closed in 2014, and the property was purchased by Doug Bradley and Peter Thompson, who transformed it into a dynamic mixed-use facility that in 2020 includes a coworking space, escape room, brewery, indoor skate park, café, and axe throwing facility.



Backstory and Context

We've now come almost full circle on our history walk. Just head north and cross the railroad tracks to get back to the mill that started it all.

Thank you for taking this journey, and hopefully, you have learned about the various transformations of this community, as well as the systems that caused displacement and promoted decline.

Like many cities across the country, Charlotte is grappling with the consequences of the past and continued displacement, while under-invested areas become desirable again. Belmont remains a diverse community with a wide range of home sizes, socio-economic levels, and racial makeup. The challenge is to keep this mix and integrate long-term and newcomer residents. Without more equitable systems and approaches, displacement and the tale of two cities is likely to continue.

This concludes the Charlotte's Belmont Neighborhood City Walks tour. City Walks Charlotte would love to hear from you about your experience participating in this year's tours. To take a brief survey, click the link at the bottom of this page.

Address

933 Louise Ave

