

City of Detroit

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Krainz Woods/Sojourner Truth Homes Historic District Final Report



By a resolution dated May 18, 2021, the Detroit City Council charged the Historic Designation Advisory Board, a study committee, with the official study of the proposed Krainz Woods/Sojourner Truth Homes Historic District in accordance with Chapter 21 of the 2019 Detroit City Code and the Michigan Local Historic Districts Act.

The proposed Krainz Woods/Sojourner Truth Homes Historic District is located approximately seven miles north of downtown Detroit and consists of 323 acres, approximately 1,561 resources and 1,400 contributing resources. The boundaries are generally located along and extending north of Nevada Avenue to East Seven Mile Road between Ryan Road and Mound Road. The proposed local historic district includes 1,561 structures, the Syracuse-Hildale Playground, and Krainz Park.



Krainz Woods/Sojourner Truth Homes
Historic District boundary map
Detroit, Wayne County

BOUNDARIES

The boundaries of the proposed Krainz Woods/Sojourner Truth Homes Historic District, outlined with heavy black on the attached map, are as follows:

Beginning at a point, that point being the intersection of the centerlines of Ryan Road and East Seven Mile Road; thence south along said centerline of Ryan Road to its intersection with the centerline of Nevada Avenue; thence east along the centerline of said Nevada Avenue to the centerline of Mound Road; thence north along the centerline of said Mound Road to its intersection with the centerline of East Seven Mile Road; thence west along the centerline of said East Seven Mile Road to the centerline of Ryan Road to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the proposed Krainz Woods/Sojourner Truth Homes Historic District delineate the parcels associated with the buildings in the Krainz Woods/Sojourner Truth Homes neighborhood. The boundaries are inclusive of historically significant properties that have been occupied by White Americans and Polish Americans, and later, African American Detroiters. The boundaries include the Sojourner Truth Housing Development, Krainz Park, and Legacy Charter Academy (Edmund Atkinson School). The boundaries were confirmed by the members of the Krainz Woods/Sojourner Truth Homes community.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The proposed Krainz Woods/Sojourner Truth Homes Historic District is significant under Historic Designation Advisory Board **Criteria Number One**: “sites, buildings, structures, or archaeological sites where cultural, social, spiritual, economic, political, or architectural history of the community, city, state, or nation is particularly reflected or exemplified.” The proposed district is also significant under National Register **Criteria A** at the local level, for its role in Community Planning and Development, Ethnic Heritage: Black, and Social History. The district is significant for its community planning and development in Detroit, as White American, Polish American, and African American Detroiters shaped the physical and geographical landscape in the Krainz Woods and Sojourner Truth Homes area.

The proposed Krainz Woods/Sojourner Truth Homes Historic District is significant under Historic Designation Advisory Board **Criteria Number Two**: “sites, buildings, structures, or archaeological sites which are identified with historic personages or with important events in community, city, state, or national history.” The proposed district is significant under National Register **Criteria B** at the local level for its relationship with Malcom X and his development and education in the Nation of Islam.

The proposed Historic District also meets Historic Designation Advisory Board **Criteria Number Three**: “buildings or structures which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural specimen, inherently valuable as a representation of a period, style, or method of construction.” It

is also significant under National Register **Criteria C** at the local level as a distinctive collection of residential buildings that have evolved through the years.

Period of Significance

The period of significance of the Krainz Woods/Sojourner Truth Homes Historic District is defined as **1921 to 1971**, beginning when the area was first settled by White Americans, Polish Americans, and later African American Detroiters. This period includes many of the physical changes that have taken place in Krainz Woods/Sojourner Truth Homes reflecting significant social, commercial, and African American history in Detroit.

Significance

Developmental and Planning History

Evidence of the earliest human activity in the vicinity of Detroit dates to the Late Woodland period (500-1000 CE). This native culture of hunters and gatherers lived in small villages near the Detroit River. The proposed district, seven miles from the Detroit River had soil that was well drained, but the area did not have an immediate aquatic resource and according to archaeologists, there is low evidence of archaeological significance within the proposed district.¹ Adjacent to the proposed district, there was recorded evidence of a prehistoric archaeological site. Known as the Prairie Mound, it was once located just northeast of today's East Seven Mile Road intersection with Mound Road. The Prairie Mound was described as a prehistoric burial locale in 1865 by William A. Ennis, a farmer who constructed his home and barn on the mound. Ennis found Native American bones and relics while plowing his fields.² The Prairie Mound is mentioned in Silas Farmer's book *History of Detroit and Wayne County and Early Michigan*, and was noted on an 1876 map by H. Belden & Co. Archaeologist Mark C. Branstner wrote that the Prairie Mound was more likely a glacial dune line (sand dune) used by the Native Americans as a burial location. Unfortunately, none of the relics or further descriptions of the items exist today.

Detroit was incorporated as a town in 1802, and the Michigan Territory was organized that same year with Detroit as its territorial capitol. Judge Augustus B. Woodward designed a new plan for Detroit in 1805, and the city sprawled outward from the Detroit River as the population grew in



Col. Philetus Norris

the 19th century. The development of the area directly north of the Detroit boundary began with the establishment of Hamtramck Township north and east of the city of Detroit in 1798. In the mid-19th century, Hamtramck Township was a large and mostly undeveloped township with borders extending from Woodward Avenue to Connor's Creek, and from the Detroit River to Eight Mile Road.³ A federal survey had described the site northeast of Detroit as "worthless" likely due to its marshy fields.⁴ Nevertheless, Civil War veteran Colonel Philetus W. Norris (1821-1885) purchased a large tract of land in Hamtramck Township in 1865; he laid out streets, and platted the land for sale in 1873. Norris built the village between the forks of Conner's Creek and he initiated a vast drainage system of the area in addition to establishing 70' wide plank roads. Norris' early efforts at industrialization remain realized today in the area's rail lines, road configurations, and the drained Conner Creek basin. It was stated in several sources that Norris intended to name the town he founded "Prairie Mound" in honor of the presumed Native American burial mound in the area, but his naming plan was thwarted.⁵ Norris had convinced the Detroit & Bay City Railroad to run a track through the area, the railroad posted the name "Norris" on its depot, and the name

¹ Branstner, Mark C., *A Phase 1 Detailed Land Use History and Limited Field Inspection of the Proposed Mound – Ryan Prison Site*, Detroit Michigan, December 31, 1985, p. 12.

² Sherzer, William Hittell, *Michigan Geological and Biological Survey*, Publication 12, Geological Series 9, Geological Report on Wayne County, Lansing, Michigan, 1913, p. 29.

³ Sewick, Paul, *Detroit Urbanism*, accessed on June 29, 2021, <https://detroiturbanism.blogspot.com/2016/01/other-mounds-in-metro-detroit.html#more>.

⁴ Romig, Walter, *Michigan Place Names*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, Michigan, 1986, p. 402.

⁵ Naldrett, Alan, *Lost Towns of Eastern Michigan*, The History Press, Charleston, South Carolina, 2015, p. 24-25.

stuck. The Village of Norris' main crossroads were at today's intersection of Mt. Elliott Street and Nevada Road thus the village, the area's first settlement, was just east of the proposed historic district.

By 1900, there were over 1,200 residents of the area then known as North Detroit. The residents wanted to be associated with the city of Detroit in the hope of being merged into the growing city, and benefit from its status, governance, and infrastructure. Also, by that time, the Prairie Mound was leveled and no longer is in evidence today.

Early History of Krainz Woods

The area now known as Krainz Woods was once a deeply wooded part of Hamtramck Township, west of the Village of Norris. It was in 1835 that the rural property in the area first began to be sold to the public. One of the first recorded property owners in the area was Shubael Conant (1783-1867). In 1835, Shubael Conant filed a record with the U. S. government for his purchase of 640 acres of land in today's Krainz Woods.⁶ His property was subdivided and sold for farms many times over the next fifty years, and Conant Street was named in recognition of Shubael Conant. Between the years of 1865 and 1869 John Ryan bought up rights to a 160 acre parcel of the original Conant-owned land (Ryan Road is named for John Ryan).⁷ In that post-Civil War era, the area was initially developed as large-lot suburban agricultural/residential property.

A significant development occurred in 1906, when the Detroit Terminal Railroad (DTRR) purchased property at the south side of what is now Nevada Street, running east-west, to develop its railway. While the area was still part of Hamtramck Township in 1906, Detroit's population boom of the 1910's created a demand for housing, and developers began platting new subdivisions and streets. Both the 1910 Sanborn Insurance Co. map and the Baist Co. map from 1911 do not depict streets in the area of the proposed district. The agricultural land was undocumented by the mapping companies at that time.



Detroit Historical Society, Seven Mile Road, 1918

In 1916, the election ballot in the North Detroit area (Six Mile Road to Seven Mile Road at Mt. Elliott Avenue) asked voters to approve annexation by the City of Detroit. Annexation was approved because voters knew they would receive Detroit services such as fire and police protection, Detroit public high school privileges, sewers, and water connections. A large water main was under construction in 1916 to supply water to the area. Developers were quick to advertise their lots once they knew that annexation was imminent, an advertisement in the *Detroit Free Press* promoted lot sales in "Just Open: Harrah's Norwood Subdivision." Harrah's contained 639 lots, most 35 feet wide by 105 feet deep to an alley. The subdivision contained graded streets, sidewalks and shade trees, and promoted the fact that it was within half a mile of city water and streetcar lines. Early residential suburbs such as these fostered

⁶ Branstner, Mark C., *A Phase 1 Detailed Land Use History and Limited Field Inspection of the Proposed Mound – Ryan Prison Site*, Detroit Michigan, December 31, 1985, p. 5.

⁷ Ibid.

an emerging American aspiration for life in a semi-rural environment, apart from the noise, pollution, and activity of a crowded city, but close enough to the city for commuting daily to work.⁸ The Davison-Victor streetcar line made the area accessible for employees of the Ford Rouge, Dodge Main, and Maxwell (later Chrysler) plants.

A 1917 City of Detroit plat map depicts one of the largest developments in the area at that time; 119 plats in the “North Detroit Homes Subdivision” located in the proposed district between Mound Road, Buffalo Street, Hildale and Robinwood Streets. An advertisement in the *Detroit Free Press* named the developers: Leinbach, Humphrey & Roberts. Because the area had been considered undeveloped countryside, promotion of the new subdivision described amenities for potential buyers. The ad stated that there was a “great scarcity and great need in Detroit for cheap homesites with improvements that could be purchased for under \$1,000.”⁹ The subdivision was advertised as being near the Davison streetcar line, “the paved Seven Mile Road, and the new outer boulevard (Outer Drive).”¹⁰ The subdivision was promoted as being within 15 to 20 minutes’ ride from the Dodge, Ford, Packard, and new General Motors plants where over 150,000 were employed. The ad stated that schools, churches, and stores were nearby and that a new Catholic school and church were soon to be built within two blocks of the property. And the ad stated that the subdivision streets were “cinderized” or in other words, dirt roads covered in coal cinders.

The 1923 Baist Co. map details many streets from Mound to Ryan Roads, between Nevada and Seven Mile including: Moenart, Bloom, Buffalo, Caldwell (once called Rochester), Syracuse, and Albany.¹¹ These north-south streets were aligned with the existing streets south of the Detroit Terminal Railroad and East Davison Street. The platting of subdivisions in Detroit generally occurred first from the south and later expanded to the north as development grew from downtown. Many of the streets in the proposed district had name changes as time went on: Nevada Avenue was initially named Rail Road Avenue for the Detroit and Bay City Rail Road (later the Detroit Terminal Railroad Line) that ran nearby (south of Nevada Street). Later in the 1900s, Nevada Street was known as Carson Street; many streets were renamed in the 1916 timeframe when developers had their property surveyed and platted.

The 1923 Baist Company Map of the area featured the name of the subdivisions in the district: “Harrah’s Norwood” subdivision was one of the largest with 639 lots; it ran from Nevada north to Seven Mile Road between Fenelon and Bloom Streets. “O’Connor’s Subdivision” ran from Hildale to Seven Mile Road and from Hasse to Fenelon Streets. The “North Detroit Homes” subdivision ran from Mound Road west to Buffalo Street. In 1923, a plat map for the “John I. Turnbull’s 7-Mile-Nevada Subdivision” describes that gas links had been placed. The “John I. Turnbull Subdivision’s” southern section was later developed to become Krainz Park, Atkinson School, and the Sojourner Truth Homes. Smaller subdivisions included: the Judson Bradway Mound Road Subdivision; the Hutton, Nalls, Bonnah Subdivision, Waterman’s Subdivision, and the Hill Kern

⁸ Ames, David L. and L. F. McClelland, *National Register Bulletin: Historic Residential Suburbs, Guidelines for Evaluation and Documentation for the National Register of Historic Places*. United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, D.C., 2002, p. 65.

⁹ Classified Ad, *Detroit Free Press*, October 5, 1919, p. A20.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Baist, G. W. M., *Baist’s Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Detroit Michigan*, Philadelphia, PA, 1911.

Subdivision. In 1923, homes were developed mainly at the eastern side of the area, closest to Mound Road.

Another larger subdivision at Nevada Avenue and Ryan Road created 380 individual residential plats for the “Marwood Heights” subdivision. A newspaper advertisement for the “Marwood Heights” subdivision lots noted that it was located just twenty minutes from the manufacturing district and that it was directly north of the Dodge Brothers plant (later known as Dodge Main) in Hamtramck.¹² Between 1923 and 1940, about 1,000 single-family houses were constructed in Krainz Woods.

During World War II’s peak production years in the 1940s, Detroit officials had Mound Road widened to become a divided four-lane street. Mound Road was paved with concrete at that time, and the nearby automotive suppliers and manufacturers that converted their production to supplying the war effort used Mound Road as a trucking transit route. The Polish American Sacred Heart of Saint Mary Cemetery at Mound Road and East McNichols Road had to move graves that were in the new Mound Road right-of way. At the mid-century era, development along Nevada Avenue was mainly industrial in nature, and included the Nationwide Paper Company, the Detroit Asphalt Paving Company, the Braver Lumber Company, the Milliken Steel Company, the Master Metals Division of the National Lead Company, sand and gravel yards and the Huron Steel Company was on the southeast corner of Ryan and Nevada Avenues. In 1966, 70+ acres were transferred from the Detroit Terminal Railroad to Chrysler Corporation, who used the space for vehicle surface storage lots.¹³

The homes developed in today’s Krainz Woods area were mostly worker housing, that is, homes designed for a factory worker and his family without much extra embellishment, and many of the homes were constructed by the homeowners. The development of the area in the 1920s was described in the history of the nearby Catholic church Saint Louis The King Parish in their twenty-fifth anniversary booklet:

Those were the days of superabundant prosperity. Everyone was employed. Not only the Ford Motor Company, but the Dodges and many other automobile factories were operating full blast. The wages were fabulous, and every worker wanted not only a home of his own, but also an automobile. The American Poles especially gave an impetus...and a sincere desire to form and possess their own homes.¹⁴

When the Polish American Catholic church, St. Louis the King (18891 St. Louis Street at Seven Mile just east of Mound Road) was established in 1923, it attracted a large number of Polish Americans to the Seven Mile and Mound Road vicinity. The influx of new families to the newly established parish began to increase in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. The first church building sat 620 people and an elementary school was completed in 1924 with a capacity of 500 students. The congregation grew during the mid-century years, and a new, much larger church building was constructed in 1955 (Donaldson & Meier) with a capacity of over one thousand. The tall bell tower

¹² “City Lots at Subdivision Prices,” advertisement, *Detroit Free Press*, August 31, 1919.

¹³ Branstner, *Ibid*.

¹⁴ *History of Saint Louis The King Parish, Silver Jubilee – 1923-1948*, Detroit, Michigan, 1948.

of St. Louis the King is sheathed in alternating dark red brick and limestone, and it is a landmark in the Krainz Woods area.

Polish Americans who constructed homes in the residential neighborhoods in Krainz Woods also developed the commercial buildings. Retail establishments in the area in the 1940s included: Bridge Coal Company (Nevada Ave.); Feldman's Department Store (Mt. Elliott); Rembacki Hardware (East Seven Mile Road); H. S. Pieszewski's Grocery (Buffalo St.); Henry's Trophy Bar (Mt. Elliott); Migda's Super Market (Mt. Elliott); Banka Collision Shop (East Seven Mile); Michael Jakubowski Dry Goods (Mound Road); and Leona's Beauty Shoppe (East Seven Mile Road).

One of the largest buildings in the Krainz Woods/Sojourner Truth Homes historic district is at the southeast corner of Seven Mile Road and Ryan Road, (18862 Ryan Road). The two-story yellow brick structure was built for the Michigan Bell Telephone Company in the late 1920s as an "exchange" building. At that time, the installation of telephones was growing exponentially and by 1930, Michigan had 804,643 telephones installed.¹⁵ The Michigan Bell exchange buildings housed the mechanical equipment to service the new telephones, and the exchange buildings still serve the same function today. The Michigan Bell exchange building at Seven Mile and Ryan Roads (built in 1941) was a physical example of the growth and density of the neighborhoods in that area.

John Krainz Memorial Park

In 1924, the City of Detroit acquired the property on the west side of Healy Street, between Stockton, Hildale Streets and the alley east of Justine Street (then a portion of the John I. Turnbull Seven Mile Nevada subdivision), to reserve the area as park land (petition #920). The park was initially known as the Hildale-Stockton Park; it was 9.72 acres in size, and the City of Detroit received the land on a Quit Claim Deed (C-793417) from the State of Michigan Land Office Board in 1944. In June 1947, the City of Detroit's War Memorials Committee announced the parks and playgrounds that would be renamed in honor of those killed in action, or who were Medal of Honor winners in World War II. It was then announced that Hildale-Stockton Park was to be renamed John Krainz Jr. Memorial Playfield in 1949.

The namesake of Krainz Woods, and Krainz Park was U. S. Army Captain John J. Krainz, Jr. (1915-1945), a member of the 152nd Anti-Aircraft Battalion who was killed in action against the Japanese on February 6, 1945, at Luzon, Philippines. Krainz was the son of John and Katherine Krainz of 17838 Hawthorne Street (no longer extant) just a few miles west of the proposed district. Krainz was a graduate of Redford High School and had worked at the Dodge Main Plant in Hamtramck until he joined the Army. Captain Krainz was posthumously awarded the United States Armed Forces' Silver and Bronze Stars. The U. S. Army named the camp and occupation headquarters in Hokkaido, Japan for the 152nd Anti-Aircraft Battalion of the 11th Airborne Division "Camp John Krainz" in his honor. Krainz is buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. The United Auto Workers - Congress of Industrial Organizations (UAW-CIO) Dodge Local No. 3 workers union at the Dodge Main plant fundraised to erect a flagpole and plaque to memorialize John Krainz Jr. The UAW-CIO's Service Contact



¹⁵ "Phone Figures Show Growth of Michigan," *Detroit Free Press*, August 24, 1930.

Committee worked with the City of Detroit's Department of Parks & Recreation to erect the flagpole and plaque in Krainz Park in 1948. In the following years, the surrounding neighborhood adopted the name Krainz Woods.

Detroit's African American Neighborhoods

The contents of this section of the report are largely taken from the Twentieth Century Civil Rights Sites In the City of Detroit - Survey Report by Quinn Evans Architects prepared for the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office and the City of Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board.

In 1820, the African American population in Detroit was recorded at just 67 residents. Detroit's Black population remained relatively small until the turn of the twentieth century. Its upper and middle class African American residents were integrated into the city overall, while working class Blacks clustered on the East side along with White working-class immigrants. It was the explosion of Detroit's automobile industry after 1907 and Henry Ford's introduction of the assembly line and the five-dollar workday in 1914 that brought the first large population of African Americans to Detroit.

The new immigration created a change in African American housing patterns within the city. In the decade between 1910 and 1920 Detroit's Black population increased over 14%; between 1920 and 1930 it rose to over 49.6%. As African Americans moved in large numbers into the city, White residents interpreted this as a threat, and reacted to establish and maintain racial homogeneity. Blacks who attempted to move into White neighborhoods in the 1910s and 1920s faced increasing resistance, from White property owners refusing to sell or rent to Blacks, to the establishment of racial covenants, to actual violence against African Americans who attempted to break the color line. While segregation was not the city's official policy at the time, the White police force and city officials either passively supported or actively enforced *de facto* segregation. As a result, most of Detroit's African American residents were involuntarily segregated into a few small areas of the city on the city's East side known as Black Bottom and Paradise Valley. As more and more people were packed into relatively small areas, houses and apartments were subdivided in an attempt to expand living space well beyond its capacity. Extremely overcrowded conditions and lack of maintenance by landlords reduced the housing in these areas to what were termed slums, though the neighborhoods themselves retained a vibrant sense of community.

The mostly residential district of Black Bottom was located south of Gratiot Avenue between Brush Street and the Grand Trunk Railroad Tracks, eventually extending all the way to the Detroit River on the south. The commercial counterpart to Black Bottom was Paradise Valley, extending a few blocks to either side of the main commercial corridors of Hastings and St. Antoine Streets from Gratiot to Mack, and eventually expanding north toward Forest Avenue. Although historically Black Bottom was considered a residential area and Paradise Valley a commercial one, in practice there were businesses located throughout Black Bottom and Blacks lived in homes, boarding houses, and apartments on the side streets of Paradise Valley. Most of the historically Black churches, businesses, and social and political organizations founded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were located in Black Bottom and Paradise Valley.

By the 1920s there were several small middle-class enclaves developing outside of the lower east side. Like their White counterparts, Black Detroiters aspired to home ownership, but due to restrictive racial covenants and racial prejudice, there were few areas open to them. Black residents looking to purchase homes had to search for areas well away from established White neighborhoods. The largest of these was the “Black West Side,” a community bounded by Tireman Avenue, Epworth Street, Warren Avenue, and Grand River Avenue.

Detroit’s most exclusive Black enclave in the 1920s was undoubtedly Conant Gardens, a small neighborhood bound by Seven Mile Road, Conant Street, and Nevada Avenue, just west of the proposed Krainz Woods historic district. As with the West Side neighborhood, Blacks pursuing home ownership on the east side had to go all the way out to a relatively unpopulated area of the city to establish a new neighborhood. Conant Gardens was surrounded by open fields, in a setting that was at the time more suburban than urban. Here, Blacks built substantial homes of wood and brick in the most popular styles of the times, such as Tudor Revival and Craftsman.

While some middle-class Blacks were able to move out of Black Bottom and Paradise Valley, the majority of the city’s Black inhabitants, and virtually all of its lower income residents, remained confined to that area prior to World War II. About 1,000 migrants were able to settle on former farmland in the Eight Mile Road and Wyoming area in the 1920s. By the time of the Great Depression beginning in 1929, Blacks suffered disproportionately from unemployment. The Detroit Housing Commission, in an attempt to relieve at least some of the overcrowded and dilapidated housing situation in the Black Bottom, secured funding from the federal government to build public housing, the first such federally-funded housing development for Blacks in Detroit. However, this development, called the Brewster Homes, would not be built on vacant land, but on an already densely packed neighborhood on the western edge of Paradise Valley, south of Mack Avenue between Brush and Hastings Streets.

In the 1940s, urban renewal plans caused African Americans to start to seek new housing resources as their established neighborhoods were marked for demolition. Black Bottom and Paradise Valley were almost completely destroyed in the 1950s and 1960s to make way for new developments like the Mies van der Rohe designed Lafayette Park, and the Chrysler Freeway (I-75). Expansion out of the traditional small enclaves reserved for the Black community was slow, in part because it continued to meet resistance, often violent, from Whites.

Sojourner Truth Homes

The Great Depression had created a housing shortage throughout the city, only slightly alleviated by federally-funded housing developments such as the Brewster Homes. Although World War II helped fuel economic recovery, housing construction remained very sluggish due a shortage of skilled workers and materials, both of which were prioritized for the war effort. Black Detroiters, still squeezed into the lower east side, bore a disproportionate share of the housing shortage burden. Although they represented nearly two-thirds of the city’s population growth in the 1940s, virtually no new housing was built for African Americans. The only housing construction of any scale during World War II was for defense workers. The Roosevelt administration was under immense pressure from civil rights activists to provide housing for Black as well as White defense workers, so in 1941 the Detroit Housing Commission approved two sites for federally-sponsored public housing, one White, one Black.

For the Black housing development, the City's housing commission chose a location already close to a segregated Black area, at the northwest corner of Dequindre and Modern Streets. However, shortly thereafter federal housing officials overrode local officials and designated a location at the intersection of Nevada and Fenelon and purchased the farmland on that site. This location was not far from the Black enclave at Conant Gardens, but it was directly adjacent to the Polish American neighborhood near St. Louis the King church. In September of 1941 the two-hundred home development was named the Sojourner Truth Homes, commemorating the African American evangelist, abolitionist, and women's rights advocate, Sojourner Truth (1797-1883). The Sojourner Truth housing project was constructed as permanent housing and it was Detroit's only permanent "war housing." The funding for the Sojourner Truth Homes was allocated under the Lanham Act, special emergency legislation enacted to provide accommodations for defense workers.¹⁶

Throughout the fall of 1941, while construction proceeded on the Sojourner Truth Homes, Whites in the area protested, and a new organization named the Seven Mile-Fenelon Improvement Association led the hostilities. This association was exclusively White, and the organizers were two real estate developers, Joseph F. Buffa and John Danzell, each of whom held substantial property interests on Detroit's northeast side. The Detroit Housing Commission had adopted a policy to maintain the racial character of existing neighborhoods in its housing projects, adding fuel to the fire. In January 1942 the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) changed its mind and determined that the Sojourner Truth project would instead be for Whites, promising Blacks another development. This ignited a new round of protests from the Black community. A coalition of Detroit's civil rights activists; Reverend Horace White, Senator Charles Diggs Sr., and the Reverend Charles Hill led the counter-protest. Mayor Edward Jeffries backed the coalition, and finally the FHA relented and allowed Blacks to begin moving into the Sojourner Truth Homes.

On February 28, 1942, when twenty-four Black families attempted to move in, a mob of approximately seven hundred White protestors blocked their entrance to the Sojourner Truth Homes. This touched off violent confrontations and fighting between Blacks determined to defend their homes and Whites determined to make them leave. Forty individuals were sent to local hospitals and more than two hundred others were arrested and jailed.¹⁷ Mayor Edward Jeffries Jr. postponed occupancy of the Sojourner Truth Homes after the violence. Black community leaders wrote to President Franklin Roosevelt to intervene, and the community rejected relinquishing the homes they were promised. A huge rally of thousands of African Americans was held in Cadillac Square in downtown Detroit on April 12, 1942, demanding immediate occupancy. The Sojourner Truth Citizens Committee was organized to advocate for the Black residents. On April 15, 1942, the National Housing Agency ordered the homes opened to Black residents. City and state police officers and the Michigan National Guard protected the new Black residents of Sojourner Truth when they moved into their homes on April 29, 1942. By May 18th, 168 families had moved into the Sojourner Truth Homes.¹⁸

¹⁶ Detroit Housing Commission, *Housing and Community Development in Detroit*, 1955, p. 24.

¹⁷ Van Dusen, Gerald, *Detroit's Sojourner Truth Housing Riot of 1942*, The History Press, Charleston, SC, 2020, p. 2.

¹⁸ The Conant Gardeners, *Conant Gardens: A Black Urban Community, 1925-1950*, 2001, p. 160.

The racial attack at the Sojourner Truth Homes was covered in the *New York Times*, *Life* magazine, and *Time* magazine; the most significant national news sources of the 1940s. Additionally, the



Sojourner Truth Homes protest February 28, 1942; photo courtesy of Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University collection

Detroit News, the *Detroit Times*, the *Detroit Free Press*, the *Michigan Chronicle*, and the *Detroit Tribune*, and other local news sources covered the incidents. Just one year later, in 1943, Detroit erupted with deadly race riots that lasted for a week. The Sojourner Truth Homes residents consolidated into the brick houses at the center of the development and scheduled watches; however, the riot did not reach the area. In later years, the residents of the Sojourner Truth Homes organized progressive endeavors such as the establishment of a cooperative food store. The Sojourner Cooperative was organized in March 1944 for the express purpose of

providing a grocery store for the people who lived in the area of the Sojourner Truth Homes. Membership grew steadily, and eventually a new building on Conant Street was furnished with all new equipment, and the co-op ran until 1956.¹⁹ Some units of the Sojourner Truth Homes were remodeled around 1970 and in 1981, new roofs were installed, gutters and downspouts added, and aluminum siding was installed on porch entrance roofs and on gables (permit #75856). New units were constructed in the 1986/87 renovation, and the grid pattern of the properties was changed to a mainly curvilinear garden-style plan with the housing units arranged around courts. Also at that time the two-story original townhouse buildings were renovated with new brick exteriors. The *Detroit Free Press* reported that the renovation cost \$4.8 million financed from a fund acquired by Mayor Coleman A. Young's staff at the City Planning Department through the U. S. Economic Development Agency (EDA) and the City of Detroit.²⁰ This major renovation at the Sojourner Truth Homes was designed by the Detroit African American firm Sims Varner & Associates.

Sims Varner & Associates Inc. – designed the renovation to the Sojourner Truth Homes (1986)

Sims Varner & Associates is significant as the architectural firm of the renovation of the Sojourner Truth Homes in 1986. Founded by Howard F. Sims, FAIA, Sims Varner Associates has been headquartered in the city of Detroit since 1968 and is Detroit's most prominent 20th century African American architectural firm. The firm has been responsible for the design of many of Detroit's prominent buildings including the Robert Millender Center (1985), the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History (1997), the addition to Cobo Hall (1989-90), and the Golightly Career and Technical Center (1982).

Howard Sims (1933-2016) first joined the Navy as a draftsman to get experience as an architect since racial prejudice at the time did not allow for architecture internship opportunities to African American students. Stationed in Morocco during the Korean War, Sims helped to design naval

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 102.

²⁰ Christoff, Chris, "Public housing project hailed as step forward," *Detroit Free Press*, October 18, 1986, p. 3A.

facilities. Following his discharge, Sims received his Bachelor of Science in Architecture in 1963, and a Master of Architecture degree in 1966, both from the esteemed College of Architecture at the University of Michigan. In 1964, he started Howard Sims and Associates in Ann Arbor and then Detroit, and the firm is considered the oldest Black-owned architectural business in Michigan.

Architect Harold R. Varner (1936-2013) joined the firm in 1973, where he became a partner and eventually the executive vice president. Harold Richard Varner was a native of Detroit. He received his architectural education from the Cass Tech and Lawrence Technological University and became a licensed architect in 1967. For fifteen years, Varner served on the Michigan Board of Architects. In 1981, he was elected to the American Institute of Architects' College of Fellows.²¹

When Sims founded the firm, African Americans had limited opportunities to design buildings in Michigan. “Certainly, it’s true that at one time, Black architects had only one major client: churches and maybe funeral homes,” Sims told the Detroit Free Press in 1982. “It wasn’t until the mid to late 1960s that Black people entered the decision-making process so far as what might be built and where, and how it should look.”²² At the time of the planning and design of the Sojourner Truth Homes in 1987, Sims-Varner Associates was one of only three Black-owned architectural firms in Detroit.

Both Sims and Varner were very much active in their community. Sims’ advocated to provide both effective and exceptional design to all, that was expressed in his designs for the award winning McMichael Middle School in Detroit, and the Redford Branch Library. Sims’ dedication to the Detroit community was further demonstrated by his strong philanthropic and mentorship activities such as with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Sims and his wife Judith established scholarships at multiple universities, including the University of Michigan School of Architecture and Wayne State University. In 1969, both Sims and Varner were part of a coalition of Black business leaders known as the Harambee (meaning “all pull together” in Swahili) of Oakland County.

Sims’ firm was one of the first minority architecture firms in Michigan, and the first African American-owned architecture firm in Detroit. Sims’ gained experience and recognition outside of architecture as well, as an author of Michigan’s first building codes, and as a board member of institutions such as the Federal Reserve, and Detroit’s Comerica Bank and DTE Energy. In addition to the prominent buildings in Detroit listed above, other major works include the expansion of Cobo Hall, the campus of Wayne County Community College, the University of Michigan School of Social Work, Detroit Wayne County Port Authority Terminal, the UAW-GM Center for Human Resources, Orleans East Apartments in Lafayette Park, Franklin Wright Village in Elmwood Park, and Martin Luther King Jr. High School. The firm currently operates as SDG Associates and is run by Howard Sims’ son, Wesley Sims, the Chief Financial and Operating Officer.²³

²¹ Docomomo US website. <https://docomomo-us.org/designer/sims-varner-associates> Retrieved April 1, 2021.

²² Ibid.

²³ SDG Architects + Planners, website. <https://sdg-assoc.com/> Retrieved April 1, 2021.

A State of Michigan historic marker was installed in the Sojourner Truth Homes in 2021, and a National Register of Historic Places nomination form is being written for the Sojourner Truth Homes and is likely to be completed in 2022.

Krainz Woods – Mid-20th Century

The neighborhood now known as Krainz Woods was developed and occupied beginning in the 1920s, initially by people of Polish and Slavic descent. The first Polish neighborhood of Detroit was built around the church of St. Albertus (established in 1871) at East Canfield Street, and from there Poles moved north to the city of Hamtramck, and then in the mid-twentieth century, migration continued to the north and northeast. The Krainz Woods area was a green refuge from more crowded and older sections of Hamtramck and Detroit. Krainz Woods' new houses attracted both autoworkers and crafts-laborers, many of whom worked in the nearby Chrysler plants or in the dozens of small tool and die shops that lined Nevada Avenue, East Seven Mile and East McNichols Roads. Polish American residents of the early 20th century took pride in their neighborhood's several impressive Catholic parishes: Saint Rita's (1924), Saint Bartholomew's (1924), Corpus Christi (1923), Transfiguration (1926) and the enormous Saint Louis the King (1923). Saint Louis the King was the home base of the activist group, the Seven Mile-Fenelon Improvement Association.²⁴

As noted by author Dennis Badaczewski, many Polish Americans changed their surnames to English translations, while others Anglicized their name such as Walker for Walkowiak or Jarvis for Jaworski. In spite of pressures to the contrary, many of the Smiths, Millers, and Wests still identified themselves as Polish Americans and it defined their ethnic heritage. The Poles who first immigrated to Michigan chose to live in Polish neighborhoods, usually built around a Polish Catholic Church staffed by Polish priests. Most early Polish immigrants actively chose to live near people who spoke and worshipped as they did. Many Polish Americans who moved to the Krainz Woods area were the children of first-generation immigrants. Those returning from World War II desired to live away from the stigma of the Polish enclave of Hamtramck, just as Americans were becoming more mobile with automobile ownership. Some Polish Americans moved north from Hamtramck to the Krainz Woods neighborhood, and then later, their children moved north to the suburbs of Warren, Sterling Heights, or St. Clair Shores.²⁵

Conant Gardens is an early historically African American neighborhood directly west of Krainz Woods. Conant Street and East Seven Mile Road are the main commercial streets, with Pershing High School at the northeast corner of the neighborhood. In the 1940s and 1950s, the African American population expanded west of Conant to the existing Grixdale neighborhood. The residents of Conant Gardens used restrictive covenants to enforce the single-family residential character of the district.²⁶ Also nearby is Solomon's Temple Church (2341 East Seven Mile Rd.), a Black Pentecostal church founded in 1944, which was among the first in the city to broadcast its

²⁴ Sugrue, Thomas. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998, p. 238.

²⁵ Badaczewski, Dennis, *Poles in Michigan*, Michigan State University Press, East Lansing, Michigan, 2002, pgs. 16, 23.

²⁶ Sugrue, Thomas. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009, p. 41.

sermons and services.²⁷ African American Catholics were denied membership in the area's White churches, and then with the Detroit Catholic Archdiocese approval, they formed Holy Ghost Catholic Church on Binder Street, between Nevada Avenue and Seven Mile Road just west of the district. The congregation formed in 1939 and in 1944 the church was designed by architect Edward Schilling.²⁸ The success of Conant Gardens inspired African Americans to move to the neighboring Krainz Woods area.

As the Krainz Woods neighborhood developed, home were built on almost each available lot, and people of other nationalities moved to the area. The 1930 United States Census showed that the



Mr. and Mrs. Thomas J. Wilson at their newly constructed home on Keystone Street, 1950.

Krainz Woods neighborhood had a Black population of about twenty percent. In 1942, once the Sojourner Truth Homes were occupied by African American families, many of the White property owners in Krainz Woods put their homes up for sale because of racial prejudice. Following World War II, returning veterans purchased homes in the Krainz Woods community, many using the G. I. Bill and Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loans to obtain home loans. The G. I. Bill was formally known as the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, it was a federal law that provided a range of benefits for returning World War II veterans, commonly known as G. I.'s. One of the most

significant benefits were the low-cost mortgages provided to veterans, without regard to race. Still, African American G. I.'s needed to get a mortgage loan from a bank, and thus they were hindered in obtaining mortgages. Additionally, many of the Krainz Woods properties had a restrictive covenant attached to a deed. An example of a racial covenant in Krainz Woods stated, "This property is restricted to use and occupancy by persons of the Caucasian Race only."²⁹ This racial discrimination was a barrier to mortgage loan approvals for African Americans. In 1948, the United States Supreme Court struck down the use of racially restrictive covenants in the landmark case *Shelley et ux. v. Kraemer et ux.* (334 U. S. 1). This landmark federal decision opened up homeownership in Krainz Woods to African Americans.

By the 1950s, more and more African American families began moving to Krainz Woods. One African American family that constructed their home themselves was that of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Jefferson Wilson (18040 Keystone Street) in 1950. Mr. and Mrs. Blondel Morey were also among the first African American homeowners, and they organized the Krainz Woods Property Owners Association in the basement of their home. This group of African American homeowners advocated for each block in Krainz Woods to establish active block clubs on the eighteen streets running north and south in the neighborhood. The group also organized to communicate regarding safety, and to work on getting City government support in the area. A German American builder, Ted Degenhardt Jr., designed and built homes for African Americans in the mid-century era, and

²⁷ Quinn Evans Architects, Ibid.

²⁸ Godzak, Roman, *Catholic Churches of Detroit*, Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, North Carolina, 2004, p. 87.

²⁹ Burton Title Company, Building Restrictions documentation, recorded on December 12, 1941 for the North Detroit Homes Subdivision.

he provided the necessary support for approval of their mortgage loans. The Degenhardt and Sons Construction Company custom-built homes were of high quality and well known. Significantly, Degenhardt's mortgage loan support of the African American community allowed their initial entry to Krainz Woods home ownership.

In 1966 the predominantly White Krainz Woods Community Council, a neighborhood organization, sponsored an advertisement in Detroit's major black newspaper, the *Michigan Chronicle*. The group solicited Black Conant Gardens homeowners to attend a meeting at a local church to protest proposed subsidized scattered-site housing and open occupancy, because, they reasoned, "That's why they [Conant Garden residents] moved there – so their children could live in a stable neighborhood in the proper way." Author Todd Shaw wrote that this was really a form of class prejudice, "Not only did such Black class opposition hamper the City's efforts to site federally subsidized scattered-site housing in Krainz Woods, from an ideological standpoint it tacitly reinforced a class ethic of home ownership among the well-paid black working class, who differentiated themselves from the poor."³⁰ By 1972, African American residents occupied the majority of Krainz Woods.³¹

As noted in the survey report on Detroit's Civil Rights Sites by Quinn Evans Architects, after World War II, improved economic conditions for all American workers and the rise of a Black middle class caused Detroit's African American community to seek better housing opportunities. Many were able to buy property in established neighborhoods of larger homes that had once catered to an upper middle-class White population. As these homes came to need maintenance after over fifteen years of Depression and war, their White owners chose to move to newer homes in the suburbs.³² Because there were few options for African Americans in Detroit, the Krainz Woods neighborhood became a mecca and center of working middle-class African American life.³³

Noted author Thomas Sugrue described the Northeast Side including Krainz Woods, as a center of racial unrest beginning with the controversy over the Sojourner Truth Homes in 1942 and continuing through the mid-1960s. "In the midst of the Northeast Side were two sizable Black enclaves, the Conant Gardens area and the Sojourner Truth Homes. The surrounding streets, some still undeveloped in the early 1950s, became magnets for Black homeowners and builders. As Blacks began to move into houses on the formerly all-White blocks of the Courville neighborhood [west of Conant] and Seven Mile-Fenelon neighborhood, violence exploded. The first battles occurred between 1948 and 1952, as demonstrators vandalized new, substantial single-family homes being built in the area for middle-class blacks. That many of the new homes 'were above the standards of existing structures' in the area enraged White neighbors all the more...Through violence, Whites made clear to Blacks the high cost of transgressing the color line. When the first

³⁰ Shaw, Todd C., *Now is the Time!*, Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina, 2009, p. 44.

³¹ Fischer, Birdie, and Bernice Leatherwood of the Krainz Woods Neighborhood Association, *The Struggles of Krainzwoods*, unpublished manuscript, undated.

³² Quinn Evans Architects, *Twentieth Century Civil Rights Sites In the City of Detroit - Survey Report* prepared for the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office and the City of Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board, 2018-2021.

³³ Philpot, Marsha Battle, quoted from Facebook post accessed July 15, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/412764338844049/posts/2379049252215538>.

Black families tried to cross the invisible line along Dequindre, White neighbors set their homes afire and broke their windows.”³⁴

This type of violence and vandalism also was reported in Krainz Woods. In July of 1949, Mr. and Mrs. Isom C. Jameson began work to construct a home at 18491 Shields Street in Krainz Woods. The *Michigan Chronicle* reported that “two carloads of young hoodlums” vandalized and collapsed the foundation and basement of the home being built. Mrs. Marjory Jameson reported that she had received threatening telephone calls telling her they would “keep you from living here!” When Mr. Jameson, determined to guard his property, parked his car in the alley at the rear of the lot, he was arrested and charged with “investigation of felonious assault.” The NAACP assisted Mr. Jameson’s release and the return of his car. In November of 1949, the Jamesons and their three children were able to move into their home and the *Michigan Chronicle* reported that the “wave of unrest had subsided and that there was a possibility her family would be accepted as good neighbors.”³⁵ This incident was reported in the *Michigan Chronicle*, but it is doubtless that other incidents occurred that never made it into the newspapers.

Architecture of Krainz Woods

The homes of Krainz Woods were designed in a variety of styles and represent a number of eras of construction. Homes from the 1915 – 1930 era were often bungalow styles and used a variety of architectural details, layouts, and finish materials. The most dominant style of home in Krainz Woods is the “Minimal Traditional” style, the form and type of home instituted by the Federal Housing Administration’s (FHA) national program for mortgage insurance in 1936. The FHA program approved homes according to standards they published in brochures. The homes eligible for FHA mortgage insurance were void of nonessential interior spaces, picturesque exterior features, and unnecessary items that would add to their cost, following the FHA’s principle for “providing a maximum accommodation within a minimum of means.”³⁶ The simplest FHA design became known in the home building industry as the “FHA minimum house.” Measuring 534 square feet, and having no basement, the home was a one-story, two-bedroom house designed for a family. A small kitchen and larger living room extended across the front of the house, while two bedrooms and a bathroom were located of a small hallway at the back of the house. The FHA offered variations on this design in a slightly larger 624 square foot home design, and two designs for a two-story version. In 1940, new standards allowed for flexibility and offered plans for attached garages, and additional bedrooms. The new plans allowed for exterior design that avoided repetition and allowed for a variety of wall materials, roof types, and varying placement of the house in each lot. The FHA home guideline principles were used throughout Krainz Woods.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Stephens, Roy W., “White Neighbors in Sojourner Truth Area Wreck Negro Home,” *The Michigan Chronicle*, July 30, 1949.

³⁶ Ames, David L., and Linda Flint McClelland, National Register Bulletin, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, U. S. Department of the interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, September 2002, p. 61.

As the architecture of the area evolved, infrastructure work was also a part of the development of the neighborhood. In 1959, a large sewer extension was planned for three miles under Seven Mile Road from Conant to Conner. The sewer was thirteen feet in diameter, and the contract with Michigan Sewer Construction Company was for \$3.5 million. Payment for the sewer was from a bond issue passed by Detroiters in 1956.



Detroit Historical Society photo of the Michigan Sewer Construction Company workers at E. 7 Mile Relief Sewer.

The Krainz Woods area has had a long history of volunteer community activism. The most significant group was the Krainz Woods Property Owners Association, founded by Mr. and Mrs. Blondel Morey in 1958. The group organized community events beginning in 1959, the Krainz Woods Property Owners Association held a musical, tea, and fashion show where “Miss Krainz Woods” (Geraldine Williams) was crowned. Eighteen different block clubs were active in the Krainz Woods Property Owners Association. In the 1970s, a new umbrella organization, the Krainz Woods Neighborhood Organization, was formed in order to include the neighbors living in the Sojourner Truth Homes. The organization’s goals were to “maintain and improve property values, encourage participation in civic affairs and develop programs that will improve the quality of life for all who reside in the area.”³⁷ The Krainz Woods Neighborhood Organization was one of Detroit’s most significant neighborhood groups, evidenced that for three years, Mayor Coleman A. Young was the keynote speaker at the Krainz Woods Community Council’s Annual Recognition Banquet, where 500 people attended. The annual banquet continued into the 1980s. The Krainz Woods Community Council sponsored and ran an ethnic festival in Krainz Park, gave scholarship awards, distributed Thanksgiving food baskets, and ran a very successful annual picnic in Krainz Park. The group fundraised, designed and installed the “Welcome to Krainz Woods: A Community of Cooperation” signs that are still in place at Mound Road and E. Seven Mile, and at Ryan Road at Nevada Street. By 1994, the organization’s membership included 500 homes.

The Krainz Woods Neighborhood Organization was active in community affairs and worked against a plan to expand a solid waste transfer facility at 4600 East Nevada Avenue in 1991. In the mid-1990s, the Krainz Woods Neighborhood Organization mobilized residents in opposition to the State of Michigan Department of Corrections locating a maximum-security prison at Mound Road and McNichols Road (today’s Detroit Reentry Center and the Mound Correctional Facility). Politicians promised that hardened and violent criminals would not be held in the facility, and that new streetlights would be installed, and hiring employees from the neighborhood would be prioritized. These political promises were not implemented. Later, Krainz Woods came into the national spotlight when ten prisoners of the Ryan Road Correctional facility escaped on August 21, 1994. Four of the fugitives were found in the Krainz Woods neighborhood over the next few weeks. Eventually five of the fugitives were re-arrested, and one fugitive had overdosed. The Krainz Woods Neighborhood Organization president Sara Rayford stated, “We took the prison because they said we had to. We have not forgotten that Engler (Michigan governor) has done this to the community. We have not forgotten or forgiven.”³⁸

³⁷ Williams, Ruby E., “500 at Krainz Banquet,” *Michigan Chronicle*, November 26, 1977, p. 7.

³⁸ Johnson, L. A., “Capture eases tensions but not problems,” *Detroit Free Press*, October 26, 1994, p. 1A.

Krainz Park was programmed by the City of Detroit's Parks and Recreation Department throughout the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. Bands such as the Belle Isle Concert Band played at the park, and entertainment such as the Heritage House Puppeteers performed there. In 2009, Krainz Park was renovated with a new design by the City of Detroit Recreation Department to include new picnic pavilions, tables and benches, sidewalks, and basketball courts were installed. Detroit Mayor Dave Bing led a ribbon-cutting rededication of Krainz Park.³⁹ The renovation was funded by Detroit Recreation Department bond dollars.⁴⁰

By the 1970s, Detroit's African American population had become the majority and today 83% of the city's population is Black. The 1980 United States Census showed that the Krainz Woods area had a Black population of sixty-nine percent. The 1980 Census also showed and that the neighborhood was stable with thirty-five percent of the residents, both Black and White having lived there for twenty years or more. African American Detroiters shaped the physical and geographical landscape in the Krainz Woods and Sojourner Truth Homes area for many decades, and created a stable, significant neighborhood of Detroit.

Edmund Atkinson School

The Krainz Woods neighborhood owed much of its development to the excellent school located in its southern center, Edmund Atkinson School (4900 East Hildale Street). The architectural firm of McGrath, Dohmen, & Page designed Atkinson School in a Collegiate Gothic style in 1927. Atkinson School opened its doors to students for the first time in February 1928 with a capacity for 580 pupils. Atkinson was constructed at a cost of \$165,745 and was planned in accordance with the Detroit Public Schools "unit plan" which allowed for expansion with additions. The school's namesake, Edmund Atkinson (1870-1923), was a Detroit attorney who served on the City of Detroit Common Council from 1900 to 1904. In 1907, he was appointed to the position of Assistant Corporation Council and acted as a legal advisor to the Detroit Board of Education, to which he brought expert knowledge of municipal affairs and politics. Atkinson helped to acquire the land for Hildale Stockton Park, adjacent to the school, now known as John Krainz Park.⁴¹

Edmund Atkinson School was designed as a platoon school for grades kindergarten through eighth. A platoon school is one where student switched between classroom studies and vocational programs, as well as hands-on and recreational activities such as gardening outdoors and in the attached greenhouse. Atkinson's second unit (a large addition), containing an auditorium, gymnasium, practical arts room, three classrooms and a combination lunch/playroom was completed in 1931. African American students from Conant Gardens living west of Ryan Road initially comprised one-quarter of the student population. Other students attending Atkinson School were first generation white immigrants from Eastern European countries in

³⁹ "Photograph of Opening Ceremony," img.timeinc.net. Retrieved 11-29-2012.

⁴⁰ "Detroit Recreation Dept. To Hold Krainz Park Dedication Today at 5 p.m." press release, September 17, 2009.

⁴¹ Goldstein, Deborah, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, Edmund Atkinson School, December 12, 2011, p. 6.

Krainz Woods, and later, students who were first generation Middle Eastern immigrants living in Krainz Woods.

Mildred Benson Scott, one of the original fifty students enrolled in kindergarten who attended Atkinson through eighth grade (having skipped a couple of grades), reminisced that,

For several years, Atkinson was known to be the most beautiful school in the city, partially because it was a new building with several new innovative features. There was a playroom directly above the gymnasium, which also served as a lunchroom. The long folding tables with benches attached could be stored in the walls until lunchtime. There was also a dumb waiter, (a small elevator used to transport heavy packages of food or other material between floors) which ran up and down the outside wall – a convenience for food vendors. However, most notable was the well-tended schoolyard with its neatly trimmed shrubs and evergreens framed by beds of pretty flowers. Decorative birdhouses added a rustic beauty to the landscape. Every student had a hand in this outdoor project. It was part of our Nature Study class.⁴²

Also, according to Ms. Scott, the African American students were verbally directed to follow Stockton Avenue to school, skirting the wooded area that is now Krainz Park, and ending up at the school playground where they would then enter through the two main entrances on East Hildale Street.⁴³ Atkinson School was an anchor in the Krainz Woods community and hosted events such as student Field Day for competitions such as the fifty-yard dash. The school hosted Spring Concerts and plays such as “The Bishop’s Silver Candlesticks” derived from *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo.

New homes built in the Krainz Woods neighborhood in the late 1940s after the end of World War II, added to the demand for more classroom space. In 1955 a temporary building with two self-contained classrooms was brought to the site. By 1961, Atkinson School had a capacity for 880 pupils in kindergarten through sixth grades.

In 2010 charter school operator National Heritage Academy bought the Atkinson School building from the Detroit Public Schools district for \$600,000 and invested an additional \$6 million to renovate it as Legacy Charter Academy. Known as “Legacy” it is a kindergarten through fifth-grade school that opened with 398 students on September 7, 2010. Major interior renovations were implemented; a wing was added, lead and asbestos were abated, new plumbing, electrical, heating and cooling systems installed, and computer system infrastructure was installed. The original crushed marble terrazzo flooring was polished and restored. Leaders at Legacy Charter Academy honored and preserved the historic architecture of the building, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (2011). The original “Edmund Atkinson School; 1927” engraved stone plaque on the exterior above the entry door was preserved and left in place. Legacy Charter

⁴² The Conant Gardeners, *Conant Gardens: A Black Urban Community, 1925-1950*, 2001, p. 60.

⁴³ The Conant Gardeners, *Conant Gardens: A Black Urban Community, 1925-1950*, 2001, p. 59.

Academy leadership and principal John Cogley opted to put their new sign on the school grounds and to leave the original engraved stone intact.⁴⁴

Edmund Atkinson Elementary School was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The nomination for the National Register of Historic Places for Atkinson School was prepared by the City of Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board in 2009.

King David Missionary Baptist Church

King David Missionary Baptist Church is the largest church in Krainz Woods, located on the northwest corner of East Nevada Avenue and Sunset Street. King David Missionary Baptist



1970s photo of King David Missionary Baptist Church at 18001 Sunset Street. Inset image of founding pastor Reverend Rogers W. Dixon.

Church founded July 1, 1951, by Reverend Rogers W. Dixon. Using the theme “It’s later than you think,” Rev. Dixon campaigned door to door in Krainz Woods and assembled a small group of followers. The group would become the nucleus of the present day King David Missionary Baptist Church. Without a facility in which to worship, Rev. Dixon and his following moved from place to place and found short-term solutions by meeting in a hall on Grant Street, and then in an old, vacant government building at Naumann Street and Ryan Road. In May 1956, the assembly purchased land at 18001 Sunset Street, and proceed to build a permanent house of worship. Twelve

years later, the church was completed, and the cornerstone was placed on March 12, 1969. The congregation was able to pay off the mortgage in 1981. After Rev. Dixon was called to rest on January 28, 1996, Rev. Sterling H. Brewer became pastor of King David Missionary Baptist Church. Like his predecessor, Rev. Brewer has continued to lead the congregation, and throughout the years, began planning for an addition. In 2001, King David Missionary Baptist Church celebrated fifty years of service to Krainz Woods residents and the surrounding community, and received a testimonial resolution from the Detroit City Council. The church members and Pastor Brewer broke ground on the new expansion of King David in 2004. The addition was completed in 2005 and the first church service in the newly expanded church was on Christmas morning of that year. Today the church has served as a vaccination site during the Covid 19 pandemic and has a food bank for the community.

Significant Krainz Woods residents

Malcom X – Malcolm X (1925-1965) was one of country’s the most significant African Americans, a civil rights leader, minister, and human rights activist prominent in the Nation of Islam. Due largely to his efforts, the Nation of Islam grew from 400 members in 1952 to over 40,000 members by 1960. Malcolm X vigorously promoted Black nationalism until his assassination in 1965.

⁴⁴ Schultz, Marisa, “DPS schools get new life as charters,” *The Detroit News*, October 2, 2010.



Malcolm X, *Detroit Free Press*

Malcolm X had begun conversion to the Nation of Islam while in prison, and after he was paroled in August 1952, he went to the Detroit suburb of Inkster to live with his brother Wilfred and his family. Malcolm X quickly joined the Temple of Islam (later named the Nation of Islam) which at that time was a small but growing nationalist movement of African American Muslims in Detroit and found fellowship at the Temple of Islam's Detroit Temple Number One, then located at 3408 Hastings Street. There Malcolm rejected the surname "Little" as a slave name given to his family by white oppressors, and he became known as Malcolm X. He officially changed his name to El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz. While in Inkster and Detroit, Malcolm X had various jobs, including furniture salesman, cleaning man at the

Garwood Industries factory, and was briefly an assembly line worker for Ford Motor Company's Lincoln Mercury division in the city of Wayne.⁴⁵

In late 1953, Malcolm X moved from his brother's home in Inkster and lived with Robert and Raushanah Davenport (later Mustafa Hassain, 1920-2010), who then went by the name Robert X.



The Davenports and Malcolm X lived at 18827 Keystone Street⁴⁶ and worshiped together. Robert X stated, "Malcolm was like a family member. He paid no room or board and he lived as my brother in one of the spare bedrooms."⁴⁷ Malcolm X lived at 18827 Keystone Street for an unspecified period of time,⁴⁸ but the home is significant for its association with the Nation of Islam, and as the home of Malcom X when he was forming his career

path and future in the Nation of Islam. Mustafa Hassain was a former professional boxer and Negro League baseball player; he had moved to Detroit in 1931 and then was introduced to the Nation of Islam.

Malcolm X was dismayed that the Nation of Islam was not attracting more followers, and he then began an intensive recruiting campaign with the blessing of leader Elijah Muhammad. Soon the Nation of Islam's membership began to soar. In under a year, the membership of the Detroit temple tripled due to his efforts and Malcolm was appointed assistant minister in Detroit. He worked full time increasing membership of the Nation of Islam, as well as communicating the message of Black Nationalism through newspaper columns, radio, and television, as well as many personal engagements. Malcolm X left Detroit in 1953 to work full time as a recruiter and minister for the

⁴⁵ Federal Bureau of Investigation Files, "Malcolm K. Little," recorded March 16, 1954, <https://vault.fbi.gov/malcolm-little-malcolm-x>

⁴⁶ The FBI file on Malcolm X erroneously stated the address as 18887 Keystone Street; the file states that Malcolm X was living in that location and receiving mail there.

⁴⁷ Dyer, Ervin, "Friend of Malcolm X, former Negro League player is Muslim of the Year," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, January 3, 2004.

⁴⁸ Payne, Les, *The Dead Are Arising: The Life of Malcolm X*, Liveright Publishing Corporation, New York, NY, 2020, p. 272.

Nation of Islam in Philadelphia, Boston, and New York City. In 1958, Malcolm X married a Detroit, Betty Dean Sanders, he and Betty Shabazz had six daughters.

On November 10, 1963, Malcolm X gave his “Message to the Grass Roots” speech in Detroit at the Northern Negro Grass Roots Leadership Conference, partly organized by the Shrine of the Black Madonna founder Albert Cleage at King Solomon Baptist Church in Detroit. The speech drew a distinction between Malcolm X’s vision of Black liberation and the nonviolent vision of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Arguably Malcolm X’s most famous speech, “The Ballot or the Bullet,” was given in Detroit at King Solomon Baptist Church (April 12, 1964). The revolutionary essence of Malcolm X’s nationalism created the foundations of a revolutionary change of the economic system for African Americans. He acknowledged the need for reform and revolution, all in pursuit of freedom and equality.⁴⁹

On February 14, 1965, the day his home in the East Elmhurst section of Queens in New York City was firebombed, Malcolm delivered one of his last major speeches, “The Last Message” to a mostly African American audience at Ford Auditorium in Detroit. Malcolm X stated, “I only say that we Negroes should defend ourselves against the violence of others.” Seven days later, gunmen assassinated him in Harlem. He was 39 years old.⁵⁰

Spencer Haywood – Spencer Haywood was born in Silver City, Mississippi in 1949 and in 1964 his family migrated north and moved to Krainz Woods (18421 Sunset Street). In 1967, while attending Pershing High School, Haywood led the school’s basketball team to the state championship. Haywood attended Trinidad State Junior College in Trinidad, Colorado during the 1967-68 college season, where he averaged 28.2 points and 22/1 rebounds per game. Due to his exceptional performance and talent, Haywood made the USA Olympic Basketball team in 1968. Haywood was the leading scorer on the USA’s gold medal winning basketball team and set a USA field goal percentage record of .719. Haywood transferred to the University of Detroit in the fall 1968, and he decided to turn pro after his sophomore year, but National Basketball Association (NBA) rules, which then required a player to wait until his class graduated, prohibited him from entering the league. Due to this circumstance, Haywood joined the Denver Rockets of the American Basketball Association (ABA). Haywood broke ABA records and in 1970, despite the NBA’s eligibility rules, Haywood joined the Seattle SuperSonics. Along with the team owner, Haywood launched an antitrust suit against the NBA. The case went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court before the NBA agreed to a settlement. Thus, Haywood established a path to the NBA for future players.⁵¹

Haywood was named to the All-NBA First Team in 1972 and 1973 and the All-NBA Second Team in 1974-75. Haywood played in four NBA All-Star Games and in the 1974-75 season, he helped

⁴⁹ Carson, Ibid.

⁵⁰ Gavrilovich, Peter and Bill McGraw, “*The Detroit Almanac: 300 years of life in the Motor City*,” The Detroit Free Press, Detroit, Michigan, 2000, p. 605.

⁵¹ Basketball Hall of Fame, <https://www.hoophall.com/hall-of-famers/spencer-haywood/>, Accessed on July 21, 2021.

lead the SuperSonics to their first playoff. Overall, during his five seasons with Seattle, Haywood averaged 24.9 points per game and 12.1 rebounds per game.⁵²

In 1975, the SuperSonics traded Haywood to the New York Knicks, later he played for the New Orleans Jazz, the Los Angeles Lakers, and the Washington Bullets. Haywood was married to fashion model Iman from 1977 to 1987, and they have a daughter. He remarried in 1990 and has three daughters from that marriage. Haywood was inducted as a member of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 2015.

Darnell Kenneth Hall – Darnell Hall (b. 1971) is an Olympic gold medalist who won the gold medal in the 1600-meter (4 x 400) relay at the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona, Spain. Hall was raised in the Sojourner Truth Homes and is a Pershing High School graduate. Upon returning from the Olympics, his friends and family gave Hall a pancake breakfast at the Sojourner Truth Homes Community Building, and then a parade that went to Krainz Park, where he was honored by city officials. In 1995, Hall won the gold medal at the International Amateur Athletic Foundation (IAAF) World Indoor Track Championship in Barcelona, Spain. Today Darnell Hall married with three children, is a member of the Detroit Police Department and volunteers organizing the Police Athletic League (PAL) Track & Field programs for Detroit youth.

Lenny Green – Leonard Charles Green (1933 – 2019) was a professional Major League Baseball player who was one of the African American players that pioneered baseball's integration. Green was born in Detroit and grew up on Shields Street in Krainz Woods, he attended Pershing High School and was a baseball star. Beginning his baseball career in 1957, Green went on to become an outfielder in Major League Baseball for twelve seasons. Green played for the Baltimore Orioles, the Washington Senators/Minnesota Twins, the Los Angeles Angels, the Boston Red Sox, and the Detroit Tigers. Green lived in a duplex at 18693 Sunset Street and Robinwood Street in Krainz Woods while playing with the Tigers, and later in life. He played six games for the Detroit Tigers before he was released from the team in July 1968, and he retired from professional baseball. Over his career, Green was a .267 left-handed hitter with 47 home runs and a 253 RBI in 1,136 games including 138 doubles, 27 triples, 78 stolen bases and a .351 on-base percentage. He recorded a .984 fielding percentage playing all three outfield positions. Lenny Green lived in Detroit during his retirement years, had a daughter, and he died in Detroit at the age of eighty-six.⁵³

Larry Foote – Lawrence Edward Foote Jr., (b. 1980), is an American football coach and former National Football League (NFL) linebacker. According to residents of the area, Larry Foote lived in the Krainz Woods neighborhood and attended Pershing High School where he played football. He went on to a successful football career at the University of Michigan, and later was drafted by the Pittsburgh Steelers. Foote earned two Super Bowl rings while playing for the Steelers in Super Bowl XL and XLIII. He briefly played for the Detroit Lions and the Arizona Cardinals. Today he is a linebacker coach at the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

John Witherspoon – John Weatherspoon (1942 – 2019) John Witherspoon was an American actor and comedian who performed in various television shows and films. According to residents of the

⁵² Wikipedia, Spencer Haywood, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spencer_Haywood, Accessed on July 21, 2021.

⁵³ Henning, Lynn, "Former Tigers outfielder Lenny Green dies at age 86," *Detroit News*, January 6, 2019.

area, Witherspoon lived in the Krainz Woods neighborhood and attended Pershing High School. Witherspoon was one of eleven children and his older brother William Weatherspoon, became a songwriter for Motown, where he penned the lyrics of the 1966 hit single “What Becomes of the Brokenhearted.” John changed his name from Weatherspoon to Witherspoon early in his career. When he became interested in acting, he moved to Las Vegas, and then Los Angeles where he began working in stand-up comedy. Within a few years he began to get small rolls on television, one of his earliest being on a 1979 episode of *Barnaby Jones*. Witherspoon had a major role in the television series *Friday* and he starred in such films as *Hollywood Shuffle*, *Boomerang*, *The Five Heartbeats*, and he had many guest appearances on television shows during his long career. Witherspoon was married with two sons when he passed away in 2019.⁵⁴

The Dramatics – The Dramatics, an American soul music vocal group, formed in Detroit in 1964, when some members lived in the Sojourner Truth Homes and Krainz Woods. The Dramatics were originally known as the Sensations with founding members Ron Banks (lived on Shields Street), Larry Demps, Roderick Davis, Elbert Wilkins, and Larry Reed. Their first release in 1965 was titled “Bingo” and recorded for the Wingate label of Golden World Records in Detroit. The Dramatics performed at the Fox Theater in the *Swingin’ Time Review of ‘67* on July 19, 1967. The following day, the Dramatics were victimized by the Detroit Police at the start of the July 1967 uprising. The account of the horrific events were documented in the book, *The Algiers Motel Incident* by John Hersey.⁵⁵ Reed and Davis left the group soon afterwards, and were replaced by William “Wee Gee” Howard and Willie Ford in 1969.⁵⁶ The new version of the Dramatics signed with Stax Records of Memphis Tennessee, and later producer Don Davis re-signed them to Volt, a subsidiary label of Stax. The group broke through with their first Top 10 hit with the song “Whatcha See Is Whatcha Get” which was awarded gold disc status in 1971. The Dramatics appeared on the nationally broadcast television program, *Soul Train* and through the 1970s, the group continued to have successful hits including “In the Rain” in 1972 (becoming their second million-seller), and “Me and Mrs. Jones,” and “Shake it Well.” The group recorded for Don Davis’ label Groovesville and in the 1980s, the Dramatics moved to Capitol Records.⁵⁷ The Dramatics membership changed over the years, but in total recorded over twenty original albums, two live albums and eight compilation albums.

In the 1990s, the quintet contributed its harmonies to “Doggy Dogg World,” a track from rapper Snoop Doggy Dogg’s multi-platinum debut album. The group has since collaborated with contemporary recording artists including Coolio, 40 Thieves, and Ice Cube. In 2018, L.J. Reynolds acquired the trademark rights to the name The Dramatics. The band was officially inducted into the R&B Music Hall of Fame at Cleveland State University in 2013. The Dramatics continue to tour today.

⁵⁴ Genzlinger, Neil, and Derrick Bryson Taylor, “John Witherspoon, Actor in “Friday” and Other Movies, Dies at 77,” *New York Times*, October 20, 2019.

⁵⁵ Hersey, John, *The Algiers Motel Incident*, Bantam Books, New York, NY, 1968.

⁵⁶ Wikipedia, The Dramatics, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Dramatics Accessed July 21, 2021.

⁵⁷ Stax, The Dramatics, <https://staxrecords.com/artist/the-dramatics/> Accessed July 21, 2021.

The Floaters – The Floaters started as a quartet from the Sojourner Truth Homes in the early 1970s with members Larry Cunningham, Charles Clark, Robert Palmer, and Paul Mitchell. The Floaters became a very popular club act in Detroit. Early on, Palmer left the group and was replaced by Ralph Mitchell, who was with the Floaters when they recorded their first album. Mitchell wrote the band's one major hit, "Float On," with Arnold Ingram and Marvin Willis. The group's self-titled debut album hit the stores with virtually no fanfare, but a young New York disc jockey played the single on the air during a break and the phone lines lit up. A disc jockey in Cleveland has similar results and soon realized it had a potential hit on its hands. The lyrics spotlight each member of the band, who introduced themselves with their name, astrological sign, and ideal type of romantic partner. The song became a worldwide hit in 1977 on the ABC Records label, reaching No. 1 on the U.S. Rhythm & Blues (R&B) chart, No. 2 on the U.S. Billboard Hot 100 chart, and No. 1 in the United Kingdom Singles Chart.

Follow-ups such as "You Don't Have to Say You Love Me" (No. 28 Billboard R&B chart) were not as successful. The group continued to record, releasing four studio albums over the next few years. The Floaters went through a legal battle as the group split, but they regrouped and toured for many years until founding member Larry Cunningham died on January 10, 2019, at the age of 67.

Eddie Floyd - Eddie Floyd (born Eddie Lee Floyd, in 1937, in Montgomery, Alabama) is a soul and R&B singer, best known for his work with Stax Records in the 60s and 70s. As a child Eddie Floyd moved to Detroit with his family, later he founded the vocal group The Falcons (along with Willie Schofield, Sir Mack Rice, and Joe Stubbs). The group had a hit "You're So Fine," and group members changed when Wilson Pickett joined the group. Floyd pursued his music career outside of Detroit and he signed with Stax Records of Memphis Tennessee. Floyd was unfortunately overshadowed by Stax Records labelmates such as Otis Redding, Sam & Dave, and Rufus Thomas, although he managed both chart success and touring acclaim. He not only had great hits on his own, most notably the soul music anthem "Knock On Wood," but wrote songs for others, such as "You Don't Know What You Mean To Me" for Sam & Dave.⁵⁸ Krainz Woods residents stated that Eddie Floyd grew up on Keystone Street in Krainz Woods in his early years. Floyd continues to tour today.

Description

Krainz Woods, located approximately seven miles north of the Detroit River, was developed in the early twentieth century as a streetcar and automobile suburb. Situated north of the now defunct Detroit Terminal Railroad rail line, and east of the Chrysler Expressway (Interstate 75), and covering 323 acres, Krainz Woods, with its proximity to automotive factories and suppliers, initiated the development of housing. Today, Krainz Woods is comprised of 97% residential structures; there are over 1,500 homes and approximately forty commercial structures in the neighborhood. The homes in Krainz Woods exhibit a wide range of architectural styles, and range from one to two-and-one-half stories in height. The surrounding border streets: Ryan Road, Nevada Avenue, Mound Road, and East Seven Mile Road are mostly lined with commercial

⁵⁸ Last f.m., <https://www.last.fm/music/Eddie+Floyd/+wiki>, accessed May 20, 2022.

buildings. Krainz Woods' residential building stock presents a variety of architectural styles and patterns but maintains a shared rhythm of residential construction with similar setbacks between sidewalks and streets. The interior streets of Krainz Woods are mostly one-way streets laid out in a north-south grid. An exception to the pattern of Krainz Woods streets are the Sojourner Truth Homes (1941-87), where the homes are fenced and separated from the grid of Krainz Woods' other streets. The Sojourner Truth Homes complex is a City of Detroit-owned subsidized rental housing property that contains twenty two-story rowhouse buildings, and twenty-nine two-story duplex townhomes. There is a total of over two-hundred units in the complex. The streets surrounding the Sojourner Truth Homes are: Stockton Street, Fenelon Ave., Nevada Ave., and the western boarder is the alley east of Justine Street. The Sojourner Truth Homes have a separate curvilinear street plan surrounding a large Community Building at the center.

Originally developed at the edge of metropolitan Detroit's urban area, Krainz Woods was soon surrounded by the northern expansion of Detroit. Adjacent farmland was filled with other housing developments, new neighborhoods, as well as commercial interests lining the major streets. The most visually prominent contributing resources in the district are Legacy Charter Academy/Atkinson School (4900 East Hildale Avenue), built in 1927, King David Missionary Baptist Church (18001 Sunset Street), built in 1969, and the AT&T/Michigan Bell Telephone Exchange (18862 Ryan Road), a two-story yellow brick structure built in 1941. Directly to the south of the Krainz Woods district, south of Nevada Avenue is the Detroit Reentry Center/Detroit Detention Center, previously known as the Ryan Correctional Facility (17600 Ryan Road), a prison of the Michigan Department of Corrections. The prison opened in 1991 and occupies a 39-acre plot of land to house 500 male prisoners. The Detroit Reentry Center closed in January 2021.⁵⁹

General Description of the Krainz Woods Area

Placed on generally flat terrain, the principal residential streets are generally fifty feet wide and are oriented in a north-south grid. The residential streets run in one-way traffic directions; the streets alternate one way north, one-way south, and one way east and one way west. The north-south streets are four blocks in length, from Nevada Avenue on the south to East Seven Mile Road on the north. The north-south blocks are longer than the east-west blocks. The north-south streets in the district are: Dean, Sunset, Shields, Justine, Eureka, Hasse, Healy, Lamont, Fenelon, Conley, Keystone, Moenart, Bloom, Buffalo, Caldwell, Syracuse, and Albany Streets. Each street is lined with a range of approximately fourteen to sixteen residential lots per block, per side, with each lot measuring approximately thirty-five feet wide and one-hundred-and-five feet long. The east-west streets: East Robinwood, East Hildale and Stockton Avenue usually do not have associated residential lots, although the length (north or south side) of the adjacent residential lots is at the street-fronts of Robinwood, Hildale, and Stockton. Sidewalks line each side of the streets in Krainz Woods and are set back from the road by a tree-lined median. At the eastern side of the proposed district, south of East Hildale Street, and on each side of Syracuse Street is the Syracuse-Hildale Playground, approximately a half block in length, with playground equipment, picnic tables, and a basketball court on its eastern side. The setting and feel of Krainz Woods and the Sojourner Truth Homes however, have minimally changed since development ended in the mid-twentieth century.

⁵⁹ Rahal, Sarah, "Detroit Re-entry Center set to close in January," *Detroit News*, September 22, 2020.

The busy corridors of Mound Road, Ryan Road, East Seven Mile Road, and East Nevada Avenue create the boundaries of the Krainz Woods/Sojourner Truth Homes Historic District. Mound Road is a four-lane road with a very wide dividing median at the center. The median is grassy with occasional trees planted along its center. Mound Road is mostly lined with commercial structures, but there are a number of single-family residential homes and a small apartment structure facing Mound Road in the Krainz Woods/Sojourner Truth district. The homes are set back from the south-bound lanes of Mound Road by a long distance. Commercial properties on Mound Road include an auto repair and salvage yard, the James Europe Post 2233 V.F.W. Hall, the Clifton Daycare, and a CITGO gas station at the southwest corner of Mound and East Seven Mile Road. East Seven Mile Road is forty feet in width, accommodating four lanes of traffic. There is only one residential home facing East Seven Mile Road (5524 East Seven Mile Road) in the district, and this home is currently vacant. The many commercial structures on East Seven Mile Road range from small grocery stores, tire stores, barber shop, a dry cleaner, automotive service buildings, and a car wash.

Ryan Road is a commercial street that is also four lanes in width and is forty feet wide. At the southwest corner of Ryan Road at East Seven Mile Road is the large John J. Pershing High School, located just outside of the Krainz Woods/Sojourner Truth Homes Historic District boundary. Within the Krainz Woods/Sojourner Truth Homes Historic District boundary are commercial properties on Ryan Road including the large Ameritech Substation Building, a barber shop, Dayspring Baptist Church, a small grocery market, Christ Tabernacle Church of God in Christ (18500 Ryan Road; established in 1966), the Nevada Coney Island restaurant, and a great deal of vacant land. There are no residential properties facing Ryan Road. Nevada Avenue is also four lanes wide and forty feet in width, similar to the other nearby roads. East Nevada Avenue is the site of the large King David Missionary Baptist Church, Mac Daddy Garage (4405 Nevada) Piper Liquor Store (5017 Nevada), Fantasy Hall (a rental hall), and a great deal of vacant land. There are no residential properties on Nevada Avenue, although the many townhouses in the Sojourner Truth Homes development are addressed as 4801 Nevada Avenue, they are set back many yards from the street.

Presented below are brief descriptions of representative examples of the residential architectural styles found in Krainz Woods/Sojourner Truth Homes Historic District. Attached to these descriptions is a complete inventory of all 1,520 properties encompassed by the Krainz Woods/Sojourner Truth Homes Historic District, including a street address, building permit number, building permit date, architectural style, and contributing or non-contributing status.

Sojourner Truth Homes - The Sojourner Truth Homes development does not follow the grid pattern of the other Krainz Woods streets. The 1987 plan of the development was designed by Sims Varner Associates in a garden-style arrangement. The garden-style plan has winding streets, cul-de-sacs, a large Community Building (1987), parking areas, and common green spaces. The street plan is surrounding an oval-shaped central space where the Community Building stands. There are twenty two-story rowhouse buildings, and twenty-nine two-story duplex townhomes in the complex.

The two-story townhomes (1987) are sited lining short blocks on the east-west drives and north-south streets of the complex. Also, the same style of townhomes is at each of the entry street drives

from Nevada, as well as at the eastern and western edges of the complex along the eastern side of the alley at Justine Street and at the western side of Fenelon Street. In the center of the complex, nearest to the Community Building are twenty of the original 1941 Sojourner Truth Homes rowhouse buildings that have been updated with new brick veneers. There are four entrances to the Sojourner Truth Homes complex: two off East Nevada Avenue, one off Stockton Avenue, and one off Fenelon Street. The backyards are open with no fencing between units or buildings, and occasional trees are planted between the townhomes. The front lawns of homes and small islands within the center of parking areas are also planted with trees and grass. The entire Sojourner Truth Homes development is surrounded by a black wrought-iron fence.

The units in the Sojourner Truth Homes range from two bedroom to four bedroom in size. The units with four bedrooms have had an additional handicap-accessible bedroom and bathroom added to the home. The additional bedroom was added to the end of units in both the 1987 townhomes, and the original 1941 rowhouse buildings.



Minimal Traditional Rowhouses - Sojourner Truth Homes – 4801 East Nevada Avenue (1941)

There are twenty (20) of the original 1941 rowhouse buildings remaining on the Sojourner Truth Homes site. Each building has six bays and contains six individual units. The two-story rowhouses are built on a concrete slab and have no basement. These original Sojourner Truth rowhouse structures are side-gabled, faced with dark red brick, with a beige-colored brick string course. The string course runs around each building along the lower edge of the second-story windows. The dark red brick is laid in a running-bond pattern. The Minimal Traditional style of the rowhouses reflects the form of traditional houses but omits their decorative detailing.

The first-floor windows are vinyl-clad aluminum replacement windows and have cast stone or concrete sills. There two types of windows on the second story: newer replacement white vinyl slider casement windows, and newer double-hung white vinyl windows. The second-floor casement slider windows are wider than the double-hung windows. A projecting awning over the front entry porch of each unit was added at an unknown date, the awnings are finished with asphalt shingles and vinyl siding in the gable. Front entry doors are steel or wood, grouped in pairs and have a brown metal screen door and dark red aluminum door surround. Each entry has a porch light, address numbers, and cast-iron mailbox.

The rear of the rowhouses have an enclosed mechanical/utility housing additions which have vinyl siding and dark red asphalt shingled roofs. The gabled sides of the rowhouses have two window

openings on the second story, and one on the first story. There is no eave overhang on the side gables of the buildings. Some rowhouses' side facades have beige stucco and trim replicating a half-timbered appearance in the gable. On the roof of each unit is a PVC vent pipe, and units share a brick chimney. There are brown aluminum gutters and downspouts on each building. A variation among some of the rowhouses is a newer-construction one-story Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant addition at the end of the rowhouse buildings.



Colonial Revival Townhouses– Sojourner Truth Homes – 4801 East Nevada Avenue (1986-87)
designed by Sims Varner and Associates

The townhomes in the Sojourner Truth development added twenty-nine (29) new buildings constructed on the site of the single-family Sojourner Truth homes (now demolished). These new two-story townhomes added sixty-six units to the Sojourner Truth development in 1986-87. The scale, materials, and massing of the new townhomes match that of the original 1941 two-story rowhouses. The townhomes are two-story wood frame, side gable dwellings with a variety of materials and textures, including cladding of dark red brick laid in running bond pattern, wood panel siding, and grey asphalt shingles. The features of the Sojourner Truth Homes that reflect the Colonial Revival style include: a recessed entry door, steep gables, and a surround at the second story wood siding on each side of the window. The townhouses are characterized by multi-level gables, second-floor wood panel siding and projecting bays. The wood panel siding has been painted a light peach color. The main entrance to each unit is entered at a concrete slab in the short alcove sided with wood panels. A porch light, address numbers, and mail slot are found on the wood siding. The entry door to each unit is the original brown aluminum screen door and brown entry door with a horizontal fixed casement window at the top. The first-floor window at the front entrance is also of brown aluminum with a divided two-part casement window. A sill of header bricks is at the first story-windows. The second-story windows have been replaced with white vinyl two-part slider casement windows. A water table of header bricks is at the second-story window level. The roofs are covered in grey asphalt shingles. Brown aluminum gutters and downspouts are on the buildings and an exhaust vent projects from each roof. There is a brown aluminum ridge vent at each roof peak.

The units are grouped in identical pairs, sited as opposite reflecting plans. The rear of the townhomes have a similar alcove entrance, and the windows and doors are also brown aluminum. The utility boxes are on the exterior of the end units. The side facades are faced in brick, include a brown casement aluminum window, the side of the gable has wood panels, also painted a light peach color. There are two, three, and four-bedroom townhouses in the Sojourner Truth Homes site. A variation among the townhouses is a one-story Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant addition on some of the townhouse buildings. These units have a concrete entry ramp. Because of the different-colored brick on the ADA units, it is likely that these were a later addition.



Bungalow - 18884 Albany Street (1927)

Initial resident: Walter Chimka

This one-and-one-half story bungalow dwelling was built in 1927 according to City of Detroit permit #12826-A. With its walls of brick and vinyl siding, this fine example of a bungalow is in keeping with the Craftsman precepts of unaltered natural materials and uncomplicated design. Dwellings of this type lacked excessive ornamentation and relied on the strength and honesty of their materials for aesthetic appeal. In doing so, they displayed original craftsmanship and were often constructed by the homeowner from a kit or drawing set. The home at 18884 Albany's first story is faced with dark yellow vinyl siding, a newer material layered over the original materials. The main entrance at the north side of the principal façade and the triple window adjacent are sheltered by a wide porch covered by the main roof, which is supported by two substantial yellow brick columns. The low-pitched grey asphalt shingled roof with wide, overhanging eaves supports a wide gable roof dormer with three one-over-one windows. The dormer and gable ends are faced with vinyl siding, while the front porch is supported by yellow brick, and three yellow brick piers flank each side of the entry steps. The wood porch railing, likely original, is painted yellow to match the siding.



Two-family Cape Cod – 18667 and 18671 Sunset Street (1948)

Initial residents: 18667 Sunset – Calvin Miller
 18671 Sunset – Samuel W. Allton

There are twelve of these one-and-one-half story brick structures built in 1948/49, during a surge in construction in Krainz Woods (City of Detroit permit #23043). These duplex homes are an unusual example of a two-family housing type. These structures have a rectangular plan and are unusual in that the two sides of the individual homes mirror each other. The homes are faced with dark red multicolored brick, and white aluminum siding is used on other areas of the homes. The main entry on the south side of the principal façade (the east façade) is adjacent to a single-pane casement windows with an angled brick sill and white shutters of wide-set vertical clapboards. The front-gabled porch roof has white aluminum siding in the gable. The porch has a concrete platform and steps. The porch roof is supported by two white aluminum-clad square columns. The second story is dominated by the center gable dormer with a double-hung white vinyl window. Although the first and second story windows are most likely replacements, they are in keeping with the original fenestration pattern for this house. The sharply gabled main roof has a beige/tan asphalt shingle; there is a shared brick chimney toward the rear on the west wall. The attached home at the north side of the house is an identical mirror image of the south side, with the exception that it has a grey asphalt shingle roof. The north and south ends of the home are also faced in dark red variegated brick with a white aluminum siding in the gable. There are white gutters and downspouts on the home, and one downspout is centered between the two halves of the house. There is a front lawn, backyard, and concrete driveway on each side of the homes. There are twelve of this style of two-family home on this block of Sunset Street between East Robinwood and East Hildale Streets. Other versions of the two-family homes on Sunset have the entry doors centered under a single gabled porch. One of these two-family homes (18693 Sunset) was designed or renovated as a single-family home.



Craftsman - 18815 Syracuse Street (circa 1920)

Initial resident: William S. Runner

This frame two-story dwelling was built in 1923 (permit #13081) and is an example of the Arts and Crafts style. The home is built on a basement of concrete block. The house has a high-pitched side gable with a for-shortened western façade roof. The house is faced with white vinyl siding. A wood porch runs length of the principal façade (the east façade), supported on each side by battered columns. The wood railing porch is sheltering the off-center entry door and a triple window with steel casements. The roofline is punctured by the shed roof dormer, a flat-roof dormer that projects from the gable. The gable is covered with white vinyl siding and the window is sheltered by an aluminum projecting awning. The dormer window composed of a set of three steel casement windows. The north façade has a projecting three-sided oriel window at the first story. The rear façade (the western façade) has an enclosed rear porch with a high-pitched roofline. The southern façade has a doorway facing the driveway, and the second-story window has an aluminum awning. The roof of the house is sheathed with dark grey shingles.



English Tudor Influenced - 18630 Shields (circa 1930)

This two-story dwelling was built in approximately 1925-1935. Sheathed with tan and brown striated brick veneer applied to balloon frame construction, this cross-gable roof dwelling with graduated eaves. This front gable brick dwelling expresses architectural characteristics of a simplified Tudor Revival house, including its prominent projecting entry gable, its steeply pitched front façade gables, and the rounded lintels above the three first-story front façade windows. The arches of the three windows are filled with white stucco. The original front-façade windows have been replaced with double-hung vinyl windows. Other elements, however, reflect the period, such as the round brick arch over the entry door, adjacent vertical window with a brick arch lintel, raised brick front porch, and brick porch pillars. An elongated brick work detail is centered in the front entry façade. The south façade of the home has a side entry at the driveway, and the basement-level windows at the south façade are filled with glass block. The north façade gable at the second story is filled with white vinyl siding. Houses of this type became popular in the late 1920s and early 1930s all over the city of Detroit. Their blend of traditional elements with low cost proved to be an appealing combination for many families building homes in Krainz Woods.



French Eclectic - 18806 Eureka Street (1933)

Initial Resident: Stanley J. Kolasinski

This two-and-a-half story hipped roof, dark red, orange, brown, and white brick dwelling is an unusual example of the French Eclectic style in Krainz Woods (City of Detroit permit #11815), built in 1933. The house features a prominent wide chimney, ashlar limestone work, a front-facing three-sided tower housing the main entry with arched door, and a small vertical window on the south side of the tower. The entry door and front façade windows have ashlar quoins at each side. At the south side of the front façade is a projecting buttress, faced in ashlar limestone. This French Eclectic style would appear to be a variation on several popular house plans of the time period. The porch is anchored to two brick piers, surrounded by a black wrought iron fence, and it is approached by three concrete steps. At the north façade is a side entry door, and several windows.

At the attic story of the north façade are two hipped-roof dormers. A sleeping porch is at the back of the second story of the house. The roof of the home is covered in light maroon-colored asphalt shingles. There is a metal weathervane at the peak of the entry tower. The house has white aluminum gutters and downspouts, and it has its original black cast iron multi-pane windows in place. The house is sited on an extra lot, allowing for a concrete driveway grass lawns and two-car garage.



Minimal Traditional - One and one-half story – 18096 Buffalo Street (1953)

Initial Resident - vacant

This one-and-one-half story red brick veneer and white vinyl sided-house is a simplified version of the Minimal Traditional style built in 1953 (City of Detroit Building Permit #3262). This structure's most prominent feature is the white vinyl siding on the gable side of the front (east) façade. The front entry is at the center of the front façade, set back from the projecting gabled front. The dwelling's prominent intersecting front gable recalls traditional-style homes. The house features single, double and triple sets of vinyl multi-pane divided windows. The south façade of the home has a side entrance at the driveway, and the south facade is faced with red brick at the first story, and white vinyl siding at the gable. The roof of the home is clad with grey asphalt shingles. Oriented to face Buffalo Street, the home's front porch is raised two concrete steps from the ground level and the house is constructed over a basement. This typical Detroit home has a front and rear lawn and a front concrete walkway, and concrete driveway to the south.

Modest dwellings like this house, sometimes called "Minimal Traditional" for their reduced use of Colonial Revival details on modified traditional housing forms, were encouraged during the 1930s and 40s by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). At the time of construction, such houses were most frequently referred to as "bungalows" for their use of the efficient one-and-a-half-story plan, even though they do not resemble the classic bungalow in appearance. These models of American suburban architecture were touted in a brochure entitled *How to Have the Home You Want*, published by the FHA's Better Housing Program near the end of the Great Depression (FHA 1935). In it, the FHA asserted that "an owned home should be the birthright of every American, no matter the size." While a few larger residences are featured in this brochure,

the majority of homes pictured are of modest proportions with minimal detailing, thus making them more affordable for every American. This side-gable, one-story brick veneer dwelling follows the pragmatism of the time period. It has a brick chimney on the east side, a front porch, a tripartite front picture window, and a prominent gable-front portion with a simple double-hung window and contrasting siding.



Minimal Traditional – One-story – 18642 Conley Street (1953)

Initial Resident - Lucyan Adamowicz

The one-story dwelling at 18642 Conley Street was constructed in 1953 (Detroit City Building Permit #12549). This side-gable brick and wood sided dwelling expresses architectural characteristics of a simplified traditional house, including its chimney at the center of the roofline, the off-center entry door, and vertically divided white vinyl windows. Other elements, however, reflect the period such as the simple eaves, a concrete front porch and an aluminum awning over the porch. Window surrounds, the concrete porch, downspouts, and gutters are painted a light red color. The brick and wood siding at the corners of the house are painted a golden yellow. There is a side entrance adjacent to the driveway at the south side of the house. The roof is sheathed with dark red shingles. A variety of shrubbery is at the front (west façade) foundation. Houses of this type became popular starter homes in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Their blend of traditional elements with low cost proved to be an appealing combination for young families building homes in Krainz Woods.



Neocolonial - Cape Cod - 18706 Bloom Street (1940)

Initial Resident: Edward Galat

This one-and-a-half-story home is another version of the “Minimal Traditional” homes designed in 1940 to the Federal Housing Administration’s standards as “the FHA minimum house.” The Cape Cod style house at 18706 Bloom Street is a side-gable home constructed on a basement and sided in white aluminum siding. The distinctive characteristic of the Cape Cod house are the two gabled dormer windows that project from the roof. The roof of the home is sheathed in light grey asphalt shingles. The original windows in the dormers are two-over-two double-hung windows. There is a large front window on the first floor that is a three-over-two double-hung wood window with grey shutters on each side. There is a concrete three step approach to the concrete stoop. At some time in the mid-century era, the south façade and entry door were renovated with vertical jalousie windows to add light and air in the first-floor entry.

The center entrance door has a white metal screen door and two full-height sidelights. The limited details on the house are derived from the American “colonial” period; details such as the two dormers, and the front window is given importance by the addition of shutters on each side. There is a front concrete sidewalk and a concrete driveway at the south side of the home. There are many variations of Cape Cod homes in Krainz Woods.



Ranch - 18510 Conley (1953)

Initial Resident: Ophelia Barron

This hip-roofed Ranch-style house was built in 1953 (City of Detroit Building Permit #13577). The house sits at the southeast corner of Conley Street and Hildale Street, thus giving the home access for an attached garage at the northern façade on Hildale Street. Clad in orange, yellow, and dark red brick veneer, the house has sandstone brick laid in graduated stacks at the corners, and under the windows of southern bay. This residence presents a sleek, modern appearance with its wide overhanging eaves. Its principal façade faces west and is dominated by a large picture window at the center bay, near the front entry. The front entry bay is set back from the north and south bays and has a brick porch accessed by two concrete steps. The original windows have been replaced with white vinyl-clad windows, most in double-hung configuration, although the window

of the garage (on the west façade) is a large single pane casement window. There are well-maintained shrubs at the west facade's foundation. The roofline extends over a concrete patio in the backyard of the home. The roof is clad in tan-colored shingles and a three-flue chimney is at the center of the north side of the home, adjacent to the wall of the attached garage. The original basement windows have been replaced with glass block. There are many ranch homes of various sizes, and different configurations that are throughout the historic district.

Significant Buildings



Legacy Charter Academy/Edmund Atkinson School - 4900 East Hildale Avenue (1927, 1931, 2009) McGrath, Dohmen, and Page

Legacy Charter Academy/Edmund Atkinson School is a two-story, orange-brick and random-range ashlar-faced school building. Legacy Charter Academy is designed in the Collegiate Gothic style and it has two separate entrances facing north on Hildale Avenue and another entrance facing west on Healy Avenue. It occupies two entire residential blocks between Hildale Avenue on the north, Fenelon Avenue on the east, Stockton Avenue on the south, and Healy Avenue on the west. Atkinson School began with its first unit erected in 1927 and its second unit added in 1931. Both units were designed by the Detroit architectural firm of McGrath, Dohmen and Page. In 2009 a large addition was constructed connecting at the southeast side of the building to accommodate a new gymnasium and classroom structure. The original school building's exterior appearance is characteristic of other Detroit public schools designed by McGrath, Dohmen and Page in the Collegiate Gothic style. Other Detroit structures by McGrath, Dohmen and Page include the George E. Parker Elementary School (12744 Elmira St.), John Marshall Elementary School (1203 East State Fair Ave.), Augustus C. Stellwagen Elementary School (11450 East Outer Drive), and Samuel C. Mumford High School (17525 Wyoming Avenue).

Legacy Charger Academy/Edmund Atkinson School has face brick as the major building material, random range ashlar was used for major elements such as the towers, and limestone trim was used

around windows, and for water tables and coping.⁶⁰ The school is well maintained and is in good condition with a high degree of integrity.



The AT&T/Michigan Bell Telephone Exchange building - 18862 Ryan Road (1941 and additions)

The Michigan Bell Telephone Exchange building was constructed in three stages, and reflects Art Deco details in some of its design. The original section of the building (1941) is approximately 150 feet south of the southeast corner of Ryan Road and East Seven Mile Road. The yellow-brick building is two-and-a-half stories tall, set on a foundation of Mankato stone. The original pedestrian entrance door is at the northern bay of the façade on Ryan Road. The entry door is one-story tall, with a shallow pediment and the door is recessed. Both the entry door and windows have a surround of yellow Mankato stone. The exchange building has two-story tall two-over-four multi-paned windows separated by black granite spandrels that line the west (Ryan Road façade) and north facades. An addition at the southern side of the original two-and-a-half story building created two additional window bays. A later one-story windowless addition is at the southern end of the building. Today, there are two pedestrian entry doors, a truck loading door, and second-story loading door at the south end of the building facing the parking lot. A cornerstone with the date “1941” is at the northwest corner of the original building’s bulkhead.

⁶⁰ Goldstein, Ibid.



King David Missionary Baptist Church - 18001 Sunset Street (1969, 2004)

King David Missionary Baptist Church is a large church building that is located on the northwest corner of East Nevada Avenue and Sunset Street. The red brick veneered church is composed in two sections: the original church (1969) at the southeast corner of the lot, and an addition (2004) to the north. The original church has a slightly vaulted central sanctuary rising two stories in height, illuminated by five colored-glass vertical windows at the eastern façade (the Sunset Street façade). The southeast corner of the church is highlighted by a gabled tower at the corner. A large glass-block cross is inset into the corner tower which is capped by a tiered New England style steeple. A double-door entry is at the Sunset Street façade of the tower. An engraved plaque on the tower states: “King David Missionary Baptist Church founded July 1, 1951, Rev. R. W. Dixon, Founder.” The East Nevada façade of the church has clerestory level two-over-four windows, and glass block filled windows in the basement level. There are seven bays, divided by projecting piers that are proud of the facade, although the steeple tower does not have a window. There is a steel door at the western side of the Nevada façade (the south façade). The west façade (the alley façade) has a three-part casement window at each end. The sanctuary of the church is connected to a dark brown and red brick addition at the northern side of the building. The addition has two terra-cotta colored double-door entrances at the northern bay. The northern bay is capped by a double gable with large windows in the gable. The north façade has a glass block filled vertical window near the entry doors, and two-over-four windows in the center of the façade. An additional entrance is at the eastern end of the north façade. There is a concrete sign for the church on the lawn at the front at Sunset Street.



John Krainz Jr. Memorial Park – A significant feature of the Krainz Woods neighborhood is Krainz Park, located west of Healy Avenue, north of Stockton Avenue, south of East Hildale Street, and east of the Justine Street eastern alley. Adjacent to Krainz Park to the east of Healy Avenue, is the former Atkinson School (now Legacy Charter Academy) where the green and grassy setting is continued. To the south of Krainz Park are the Sojourner Truth Homes, a separate development that is surrounded by a black wrought iron fence on all sides. John Krainz Jr. Memorial Park, a City of Detroit park, is located on the south side of the Krainz Woods district and is 9.72 acres in size. It has preserved some open space and mature trees for area residents to enjoy. The rectangular-shaped Krainz Park features two picnic pavilions, two basketball courts, walking paths, picnic tables, two horseshoe courts, a baseball diamond, and playground equipment. A small hill for winter sledding is at the southeast side of the park. A flagpole erected in memory of John Krainz Jr. in 1948 is at the northwest side of the park.

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