

HISTORIC MEADOWBROOK NEIGHBORHOOD REVOKES RACIST DEED RESTRICTIONS

Thursday, December 17, 2020. Rochester, N.Y. *CORD (Confronting Our Racist Deeds)* Initiative announces it has successfully filed an amendment revoking the restrictive racial covenant in the deeds of the original Meadowbrook tract, laid out in 1929 by the Kodak Employee Realty Corporation. Restrictive covenants and redlining worked hand-in-hand to create the segregated housing patterns that persist in Rochester to this day.

The original Meadowbrook deeds state, “No lot or dwelling shall be sold to or occupied by a colored person.” Although not enforceable since 1948, these racist covenants remained on Meadowbrook deeds (as they have in many other neighborhoods across Rochester and around the country).

In August of 2020, a small group of Meadowbrook neighbors formed the Confronting Our Racist Deeds (CORD) Committee. CORD held four (socially distanced) signature-gathering events and made house calls, exceeding the required 75% of original homes, with 225 owner signatures. Through their fundraising efforts, the cost of the filing with Monroe County was covered in full.

Brighton Town Supervisor Bill Moehle applauds the work as an important step, stating that Meadowbrook “has shown real grassroots leadership in organizing to eliminate racist restrictive covenants from their neighborhood deeds, and especially so in replacing those covenants with anti-racist language. I commend them for being a model for other neighborhoods and communities.”

The committee hopes that this effort will lay the groundwork for other neighborhoods to take action and address our shared racist history, using collective energy to contribute to the dismantling of systemic racism close to home and throughout our country. CORD has created a how-to-guide for other neighborhoods and communities who desire to take this first step, too.

“While not enforceable, the reality is that the impact of these deed restrictions is felt for generations.” said CORD member Johnita Anthony. “The opportunity to revoke these restrictions was an important first step.”

Next steps for the CORD Initiative include collaboration with the Extended Studies Program at Twelve Corners Middle School and a neighborhood conversation with educators and activists Shane Wiegand and Conor Dwyer Reynolds about equity and inclusion in housing. Wiegand sees positive momentum for the Rochester area in the work that has happened in Meadowbrook. "Meadowbrook is one of many neighborhoods with this legacy. I really think neighbors coming together to own this story and make a change is going to ripple throughout the county. "