

# Housing

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provement Association Inc. actually bought four lots and a house on Embert Pl. It built three homes in 1956 and one in 1955. All have been sold. Two were financed by local agencies and two by the corporation itself.

Idea of the movement was that people in substandard houses in the area would sell their property to the Corporation. The buildings would then be torn down and replaced with modern homes. The former residents would then have a chance to buy back the property.

After public misunderstanding of the aims of the organization, state and Peoria authorities apparently withdrew support of the project because the officers, Rudd, Bryant, Francis Arbuckle and Milton Pentecost never heard from them again.

**IN JULY OF 1954**, 75 per cent of the residents of the area had agreed to the corporation's plan for redevelopment, but when it went after funds to carry out its plans, it met roadblocks and was ignored at every turn.

During 1955 and 1956, the corporation gave up on the rest of the area and concentrated on the little property it had been able to purchase on Embert Pl. in one block. There are now seven new homes on Embert and anyone interested in this type of thing can inspect Embert and then go north just one block for the contrast in property.

There are 65 houses and a tavern in the four-block area. There are 45 Negro owners and 20 whites.

**THIS FOUR-BLOCK** area could be a good example of an interracial area, but the plans of the War Memorial Drive Improvement Association Inc. came to naught because housing authorities apparently were not interested enough in seeing a substandard area developed.

However, the contrast in the two streets within this area goes a long way toward refuting the idea that a Negro does not take care of property that is worth caring for.

It also proves to a certain extent that whether prices rise or fall on property depends upon the extent of the demand and the ability of the market to bid upon prices, and has nothing whatever to do with racial characteristics. Generally speaking the Negro home owner pays a higher price than his white prototype because color restricts his field of action.

**ARROW: Henry Harper  
Carver Center.**

## THE NEGRO IN PEORIA

# Housing Effort By Tenants Succeeds, Fails

*J.S.A.A. 14-16-57*  
Housing is one of the most acute of all Negro problems, in Peoria as well as elsewhere. Here is the story of how two determined young men rebuilt and rehabilitated a blighted area despite frustration and opposition and how success was accompanied by failure. This is the seventh of eight articles on "The Negro in Peoria."

By **BILL CONVER**

Efforts at slum clearance and housing improvement have a way of getting themselves thwarted. A prime example was an effort made in four square blocks of Richwoods Township immediately adjacent to Peoria during 1952, 1953 and 1954.

The effort was made by Negro tenants who lived in the four blocks bounded by California, Embert Pl., Boulevard and War Memorial Drive. It accomplished very little because Peoria and state housing authorities, after giving tentative approval seemingly lost interest toward the end of 1954.

**MOVEMENT TO CLEAR** the area and improve housing and general conditions there was promoted by two residents, Tony S. Rudd and James Bryant in 1952. Both live on Embert Pl.

Other residents of the area, specially those on the two blocks of W. Paris Ave. were asked if they would either agree to sell or agree to remodel and help with improvements such as paving the streets.

**TWO FINANCE AGENCIES** agreed to finance new homes in the area. Meetings and correspondence between the group and Peoria and state housing authorities at first held a note of encouragement.

However in 1953 a dispute over zoning with a commercial firm on War Memorial Drive, brought the movement to the attention of the public and it was erroneously reported that the area was nine blocks square.

Opposition to the plan of the improvement association which was incorporated and held its first meeting on Oct. 21, 1954, sprang up because residents in adjoining neighborhoods visualized the project as a government housing project such as Taft Homes.

attempt to provide better homes for the people in the four square blocks and a better environment for those wishing to purchase lots in the area.

The War Memorial Drive Im-  
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**ACTUALLY THAT WAS** not the idea at all, but it was simply an

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