

City of East Lansing, Michigan

RESOLUTION CELEBRATING FAIR HOUSING MONTH

April 5, 2022

WHEREAS, restrictive deeds and covenants, common mechanisms to keep nonwhites from owning property in mostly white suburban neighborhoods, were employed all throughout the United States and legal until 1948; and,

WHEREAS, the actual language on the deed of a property in the Southeast Marble neighborhood in East Lansing, Michigan reads:

“No Dwelling in the Homestead Terrace shall be sold to or rented, leased, or occupied by any person or persons other than those of the Caucasian race, provided, however, that this restriction shall not prohibit the temporary housing therein of bona fide domestic servants of the owners or occupants of said premises;” and,

WHEREAS, this appalling and offensive language remains attached to this property to this present day; and,

WHEREAS, despite the Supreme Court’s ruling in 1948 ending state enforcement of restrictive housing covenants, structural inequities and racism prevented—and continues to impede—Black, Indigenous People of Color from buying homes in certain neighborhoods; and,

WHEREAS, despite the creation of government-backed homeownership programs to assist Americans with down payments and mortgages, Black Americans were disproportionately not granted access to these programs; and,

WHEREAS, the 1960 census showed that only eleven non-whites, likely aided by white proxy buyers, owned homes in East Lansing, Michigan; and,

WHEREAS, real estate agencies at that time let homeowners pick the buyers they sold to, which helped perpetuate and sustain housing segregation and kept People of Color from owning property; and,

WHEREAS, on November 20, 1962, President John F. Kennedy signed Executive Order 11063, the Equal Opportunity Executive Order, banning housing discrimination in federally funded housing agencies; and,

WHEREAS, this order banned denying housing or funding to anyone based on their race, color, creed, or national origin; and,

WHEREAS, the legislation, which became Title VIII of the 1968 Civil Rights Act, outlawed any refusal to sell or rent a dwelling to any person because of race, color, religion, sex or national origin. It also barred advertising the sale or rental of a dwelling along similar discriminatory grounds; and,

WHEREAS, in 1964, realtors blocked Dr. Robert L. Green, a Black professor at Michigan State University, from buying a home in East Lansing, suggesting he would be happier in Lansing, Michigan with his own kind; and,

WHEREAS, in 1964, Dr. Green used this executive order to file a complaint with the Michigan Civil Rights Commission, who ordered the local real estate company to sell to Dr. Green; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. Green—who was an advisor to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the National Education Director for the Southern Christian Leadership Council—not wanting these realtors to profit from him, purchased a home at 207 Bessemaur Drive; and,

WHEREAS, through this purchase, Dr. Green became the first Black Person to purchase a home by a realtor in the City of East Lansing; and,

WHEREAS, he was offered the option to rent to own a home or purchase by private sale, Dr. Green refused, stating that all Black People should have the right to purchase homes on their own: *“If I take this offer from you, it will not help the next Black Family;”* and,

WHEREAS, the high-profile case sparked attention and caused groups to advocate and lead protests for fair housing, and the East Lansing Human Relations Commission (now the Human Rights Commission) pushed the East Lansing City Council to consider a fair housing ordinance, but it was not until years later that the City Council would take formal action; and,

WHEREAS, on April 8, 1968, four years later and four days after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the East Lansing City Council approved Ordinance No. 213 of the East Lansing City Code, which prohibited housing discrimination and penalized violators; and,

WHEREAS, The Fair Housing Act, enacted on April 11, 1968, enshrined into federal law the goal of eliminating racial segregation and ending housing discrimination in the United States; and,

WHEREAS, The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing based on race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin, and disability, and commits recipients of federal funding to affirmatively further fair housing in their communities; and,

WHEREAS, in 2018, spurred by an essay written by Alex Hosey—an East Lansing High School student chronicling the discrimination faced by his grandparents when they tried to purchase a home in East Lansing—the East Lansing City Council issued a formal apology for redlining and the discriminatory housing practices; and,

WHEREAS, on March 22, 2022, the East Lansing City Council adopted the 2022-2023 Strategic Priorities, which included a priority intentionally addressing housing equity issues, including attainability and accessibility; and,

WHEREAS, the East Lansing City Council has further committed to review single and multiple family zoning districts to consider any changes necessary to make them more effective in supporting housing; and,

WHEREAS, the City of East Lansing is committed to the mission and intent of Congress to provide fair and equal housing opportunities for all; and,

WHEREAS, our social fabric, the economy, health and environment are strengthened in diverse, inclusive communities; and,

WHEREAS, fifty-four years since the passage of the Fair Housing Act, discrimination persists, and many communities remain segregated; and,

WHEREAS, acts of housing discrimination and barriers to equal housing opportunity are repugnant to a common sense of decency and fairness.

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS RESOLVED that the East Lansing City Council hereby declares the month of April 2022 as Fair Housing Month in the City of East Lansing—an inclusive community committed to fair housing—to promote appropriate activities by private and public entities to provide and advocate for equal housing opportunities for all residents and prospective residents of the City of East Lansing.

Ron Bacon, Mayor

Jennifer Shuster, Clerk