



## **Let's Take a Walk through the Community**

by Monique Hall, 2021 CTI Fellow - Using Digital Mapping to Study History, Race, and Gentrification

Devonshire Elementary school

This curriculum unit is recommended for:

This course is recommended for 4th grade Social Studies and/or SEL (Social Emotional Learning)

**Keywords:** gentrification, Colored People, African American, urban renewal, “White Flight” Housing and Urban Development (HUD), community, demographics

**Teaching Standards:** See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

**Synopsis:** In this unit, student focus will be on community. Students will be able to make a connection between class community building through SEL (Social Emotional Learning) and the community in which they live. Students will use digital mapping and technology to tell their own stories. By developing community stories within the classroom, students will be able to begin to understand the kinship between their own outside communities and the inside classroom community. It is important that teachers listen to the stories of those that live in the community and know what surrounds the school as those are the factors that impact student's lives in a positive and/or negative way.

I would teach this curriculum during Social and Emotional Learning time, which is 30 minutes per day. (SEL) Social and Emotional Learning helps address various forms of inequality and empower young people and adults to co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities.

## **Introduction**

Knowledge is power. Children learning about the history, past and present of Charlotte can enlighten, inspire, anger and/or become a catalyst for change. History should be taught in truth and transparency. To begin to deal with the trauma of racial and social injustice since the first slave ships in 1619 touched on the shores of what is now America, we must begin to restore and repair generations of abuse, suffering and the denial of the role many played and still play in the deterioration of communities of color. It is utterly important to tell the whole truthful story of slavery, Jim Crow, and the generational effects still felt to this day.

## **Rationale**

Gentrification is happening all too often. People of color are constantly seen as the hindrance to prosperity and change. We have always been the bridge to prosperity and change. The problem is we have not benefited from that prosperity and change. We have been left out all too many times.

America was built on the backs of enslaved people. In 2021, why are we still being forced to leave our homes and priced out of communities once deemed undesirable to live in and now under the guise of urban renewal development, desirable neighborhoods again?

### **School Demographics:**

**Devonshire Elementary** is a Kindergarten-5th grade school. The school's mission is to make the world a better place one student at a time. Devonshire Elementary is a title one school located in Charlotte. The student population is approximately 624 students.

#### **The demographic makeup is as follows:**

The student to teacher ratio is 15:1 which is slightly lower than the North Carolina state level of 16:1.

The racial makeup of the school is 60.9% Hispanic/Latino, 30.7% Black or African American, 3.3% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander, 3% white and 1.9% two or more races.

98% of the students are eligible for free lunch and 2% of students are eligible for reduced lunch.

The Math proficiency rate is 33% which is lower than the district rate of 44% and the reading proficiency rate is 18% which is lower than the district rate of 40%

The female population is 48% and is comparable to the male population of 52%.

## **Content Research**

I want to introduce a curriculum that raises and addresses the following questions:

### **Essential Questions:**

#### **How old is Charlotte?**

English-Irish immigrants chartered Charlotte over 200 years ago in 1768. The area was discovered while traveling on the Great Wagon Road from Philadelphia.

#### **How did Charlotte get its name and the historical context of how Queen Charlotte was and has been portrayed in history?**

When Charlotte was chartered, King George III of England ruled the colonies. His German-born wife was named Queen Charlotte. The immigrants, hoping to curry favor with the king, named the town after her, thus giving the nickname The Queen City.

#### **How has gentrification changed the demographics of communities?**

When gentrification within a community begins, many community members of color resist because they know once white people move into the space, the neighborhood will become “more desirable” and homes become less affordable. Homeowners who are/were currently living in the neighborhood are forced to move because they often can’t afford to fix up their homes, pay the increased taxes and/or other African Americans are priced out of the community altogether. White people only see the “improvements” and years that prior residents have spent asking for resources for restoration, lower taxes, employment opportunities, meaningful, helpful solutions to rising crime and poverty. Any and all of these factors play a role in restricting any neighborhood's growth.

#### **What happens when gentrification prices families of color out of communities they are living in?**

According to the article *What do ‘Newcomers’ Mean For A Neighborhood: The History of Gentrification In The U.S.*, “Gentrification is “really just a process by which a

neighborhood goes from being, say, a little below the median income for the area to above.” The article is based on the book *Newcomers* by Matthew Schuerman.

**How have Charlotte neighborhoods changed historically from 1965 to the present day and what effects did those changes have on people of color?**

Charlotte neighborhoods have drastically changed from after the slaves were emancipated in 1865, throughout Jim Crow South, under the guise of urban revitalization during the 1970's and 1980's until current day gentrification. One such neighborhood was the community of Brooklyn.

**How has gentrification affected generational wealth of people of color in North Charlotte?**

By reading the book, *The Color Of Law*, I was informed about how systemic racism kept people of color from gaining generational wealth through homeownership in many cities throughout the country. HUD (Federal government) and local city governments created and sustained segregated communities by creating contracts that prohibited integration of residential neighborhoods, and also refused to give people of color loans to buy homes in White neighborhoods. When people of color tried to move to white neighborhoods, they were denied loans. When that didn't work, homes were bombed and/or they caused panic by calling it an invasion, and white people would move out of the neighborhood and take most of its resources with them. This became known as “white flight.” Racist zoning practices made living in segregated Black neighborhoods hazardous to health by placing sanitation, sewage and toxic waste facilities in African American communities.

**Should students be still taught how to use a paper map as well as a digital map?**

Using maps in schools helps develop spatial thinking. Spatial thinking is defined as the ability to analyze places and spaces around us. According to the article, “*Let Grow Education and Schools, Should we still be teaching kids how to read and use maps?*” by Trevor Muir, “when students learn map skills, they are learning to visualize and interpret data.”

**Brooklyn**

The community of Brooklyn was located in what is now referred to as Second Ward. Brooklyn continued to grow after emancipated slaves began to move there even though it was geographically lower than the other 4 wards, and the resulting sewer and sanitation purposes made living there hazardous. In spite of those conditions, what made Brooklyn a community was the creation of Charlotte's black main street, which thrived after 1900. According to the article *Historic Charlotte Neighborhoods*, "The community's Black population continued to grow throughout the nineteenth-century and was "solidly Black except for Trade, Tryon, College, and parts of Fourth Street. In its heyday, Brooklyn was a thriving black business center; an African American city-within-the-city, complete with its own downtown. While the socio-economic level of residents spanned from shanty housing, like Blue Heaven, to the homes of Charlotte's most dignified black professionals, the community marked many "firsts" for Charlotte's black residents."

Brooklyn was home to the Myers Street School, the first Black public school in Charlotte, and the city's first Black high school, Second Ward High. The Myers Street School was built in 1886, and was closed in 1907. The Second Ward High School served the Brooklyn Community from 1923 to 1969.

"The community contained the city's Black YMCA and library. The Brevard Street Library opened two years after the Carnegie Library refused to admit black patrons. The Brevard Street location served as its "colored branch" and was the first free library for Black patrons in the state of North Carolina. The A.M.E. Zion Publishing House, also located in Brooklyn, published all printed materials for the A.M.E. Zion denomination in America and issued its monthly newspaper. The publishing house was one of the few Black owned businesses where Black men could be employed and trained in a white collar profession," as stated by the article *Historic Charlotte Neighborhoods*.

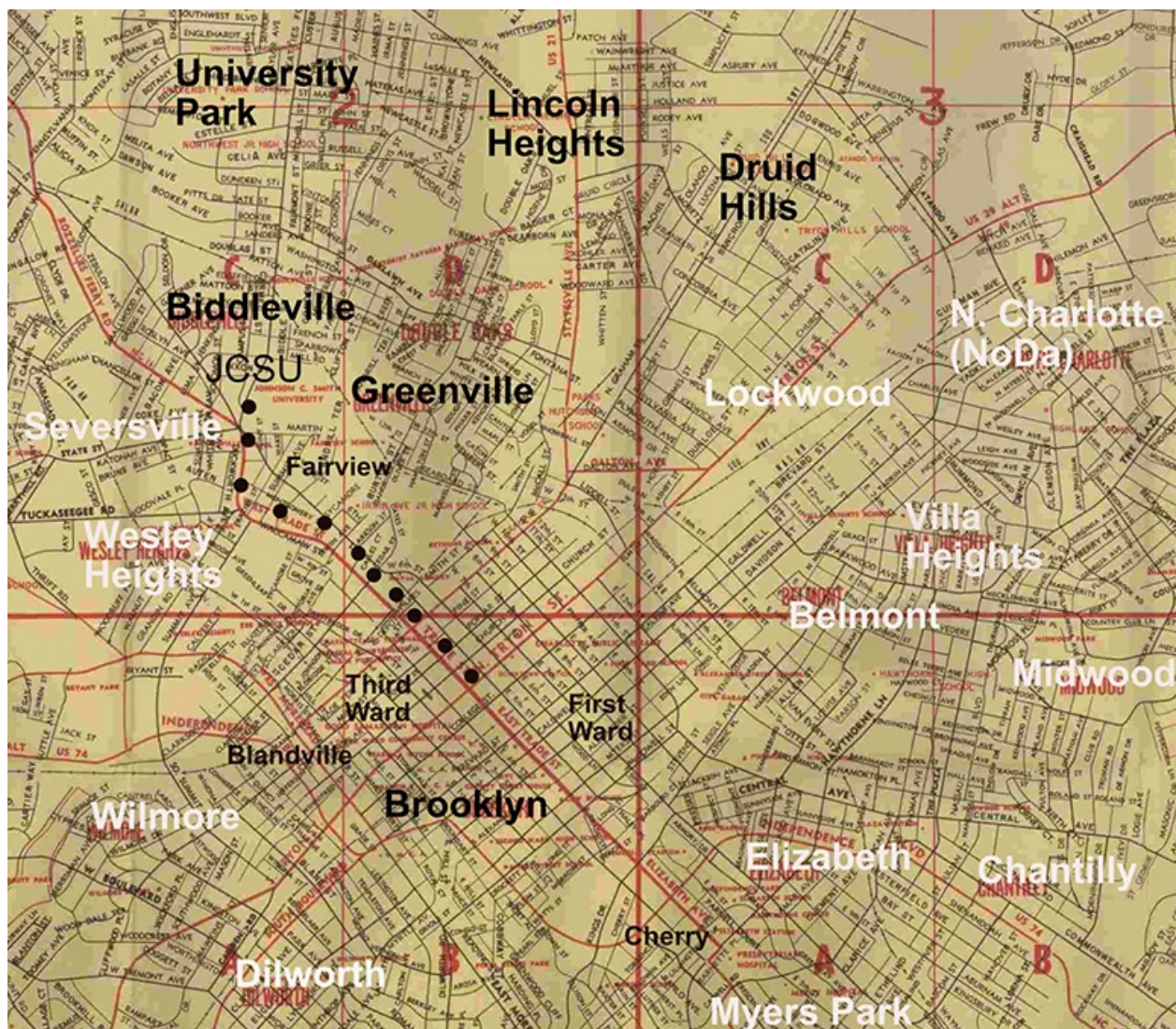
During the 1930's and throughout the 1940's federal programs made mortgages available, and builders started building homes to sell to African Americans in West Charlotte. The removal of African Americans out of the Brooklyn community and into West Charlotte, along with the building of West Charlotte High School, started the deterioration and decline of the Brooklyn community. When Independence Boulevard was built in the 1960s, it exposed the worst sections of the neighborhood. In 1947 in the city's new zoning plan, the Brooklyn community received the label of Industrial. According to *The Color of Law*, during the twentieth century when the FHA (Federal Housing Administration) developed the insured amortized mortgage as a way to promote homeownership nationwide, zoning practices rendered African Americans





*The 50 or so square blocks of Brooklyn, roughly bounded by 4th, Brevard, Morehead and Long streets once held more than 1,000 structures ranging from shotgun rental houses to stately offices, churches and homes. (Photo courtesy of the Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library.*

### Charlotte City Map



This is a Charlotte city map from 1962. Black neighborhoods labeled in black text, white neighborhoods in white.

**Historical Images of The Brooklyn Community**



Myers Street School 525 South Myers Street

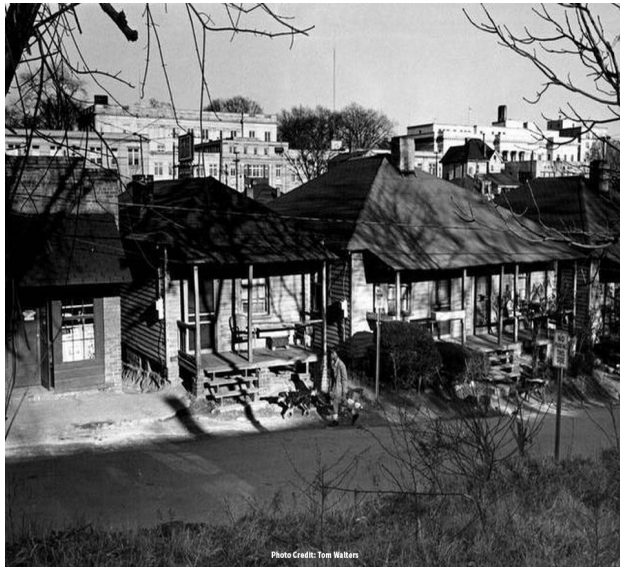


2nd Ward High School



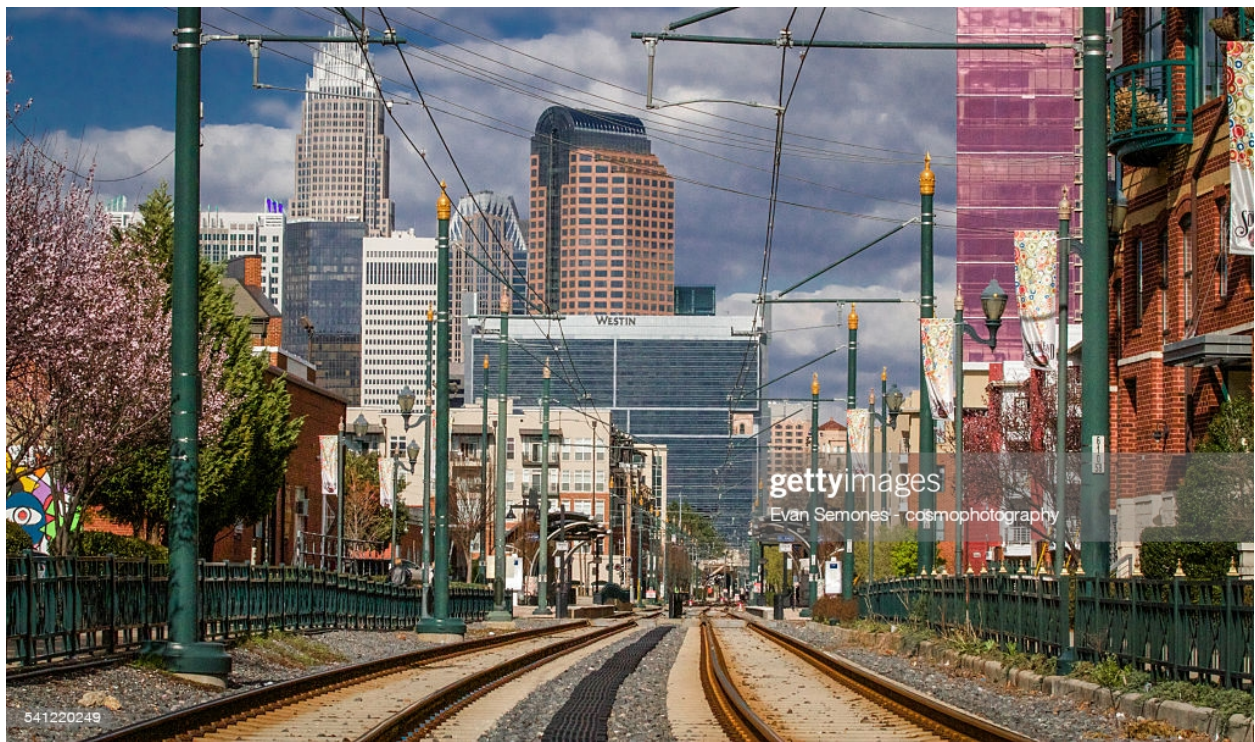


2nd Street



3rd Street

Modern day Charlotte



## **Lessons**

### **Lesson 1 & 2**

First lesson would be an introduction to the historical Brooklyn neighborhood and the contrast to what the neighborhood is now Uptown Charlotte. Before showing the photos of the historical Brooklyn neighborhood, you can read the book *My NC from A to Z* by

Michelle Lanier or show the [video](#) of the read aloud of the book. This book talks about people and places in North Carolina and is full of imagery.

Show pictures of The Brooklyn Neighborhood and ask the following questions:

1. What do you notice about the photos? (Old black and White photos)
2. How do you know the photos are from the past? (the cars)

Now show the pictures of current day and ask the questions:

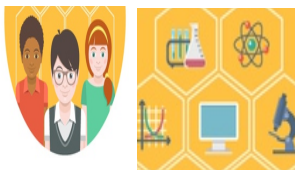
1. What do you notice about these photos? (In color)
2. How do you know the photos are current day photos? (train tracks, large modern buildings)

Ask students to draw a conclusion by asking the following question:

What do you think happened to that neighborhood from the past to make room for the neighborhood from the present?

After the discussion, have students complete the photo analysis worksheet. Assign students a photo to analyze. The completion of the photo analysis worksheet will continue to lesson 2.

Lesson 2 watch video [The History of Charlotte's Brooklyn neighborhood](#) (5:12)

Analyze a photograph		
<b>Meet the photo</b>  What do you see?  Is the photo?  <input type="checkbox"/> black and white <input type="checkbox"/> color  Is there a caption?	<b>Observe its parts</b>  Circle What you see in the photo.  	<b>Try to make sense of it</b>  Who do you think took this photo?    Where do you think this photo was taken?

<p><input type="checkbox"/> YES   <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p>If so, what does the caption tell you?</p>	<div data-bbox="607 207 844 371" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>People   objects   people and objects</p> <p>What are the people doing in the photo?</p> <p>What are the objects used for in the photo?</p> <p>Write two words that describe the photo.</p>	<p>List something that helps you prove where it was taken.</p> <p>Why do you think the photo was taken?</p> <p>How does this photo compare to modern times?</p>
<p>Use it as historical evidence.</p> <p>Where do you think we could find out more information about the people or objects in the photo?</p>		

## Lessons 3 & 4

[Watch a video types of communities](#) (4:14 minutes)

After watching the video, ask students the following questions:

1. What type of neighborhood is the school in?
2. What type of neighborhood do you live in?
3. How do you know?

Show students a map of the school neighborhood. ([Devonshire Elementary](#)) All the school maps are on the CMS website.

Ask students the following questions:

1. What do they notice about the map?
2. Do you see your street?
3. What is the Legend for?

Students will then work on [Let Grow map](#) (make copies)

Students may not be able to answer all the questions.

Students will watch this [video](#) (stop at 3 minutes) then work on completing the questions and then completing the map through lesson 4.

The final product will be completion of their neighborhood map.

[North Carolina map blank template](#)

[North Carolina map by county](#)

## **Appendix 1**

### **Standards:**

#### **Social Studies**

4. G.1.2 Exemplify the ways in which movement of people, goods and ideas has impacted the development of North Carolina using geographic tools and representations.

4.H.1.3 Explain how people, events and developments brought about changes to communities in various regions of N.C.

#### **Reading**

RI.4.7 Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.



RI.4.8 Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text.

### **Speaking and Listening**

SL.4.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

### **Social Emotional Learning**

### **Vocabulary Acquisition and Use**

L.4.6 Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal precise actions, emotions, or states of being and that are basic to a particular topic.

### **Resources:**

#### **[Slide presentation](#)**

Lessons 1 & 2 [\\_Photo Analysis Worksheet](#)

Lesson 3 & 4 [\\_Let Grow Map](#)

[My N.C from A to Z by Michelle Lanier](#)

**Sources:**

Major NC Cities Still at Risk of Gentrification by Jonathan Lowe published February 27, 2020

[LetGrow](#) Education and Schools Should we still be teaching Kids How to read and use maps

[What do New Comers Mean for a Neighborhood: The History of Gentrification In the U.S](#) by Jeremy Hobson, December, 2019

The Color of Law by Richard Rothstein

My N.C. from A to Z 2020 by the North Carolina Office of Archives and History

[Brooklyn Village History](#) copyrighted 2021

Youtube video: January 2019 (8:15) [How a Black Community was erased from Uptown Charlotte.](#)

[Historic Charlotte Neighborhoods. Research Guides. J Murrey Atkins Library. Updated August 21, 2020](#)

[Statistical Atlas](#)

[Queen City Nerve. Charlotte's Alternative Newspaper. February 2021](#)

Analyze a Photograph, National Archive