

# A TIMELINE OF ABUSES

For footnotes please visit [www.friendsogadscden creek.com/timeline](http://www.friendsogadscden creek.com/timeline)

## AGAINST GADSDEN CREEK AND THE GADSDEN GREEN COMMUNITY



**1872**

**Gadsden Creek was an important place for Black cultural activity, including fishing, baptism, swimming, and bathing<sup>1</sup>.**

In 1872, the Charleston Chief of Police responded to complaints about boys bathing in public waterfronts by designating 3 public waters for this activity, one of which was Gadsden Creek<sup>2</sup>.

This is an early instance of the City's regulation of "undesirable" African-American activity, and shows the low value assigned to the creek and this area, populated by the largest group of Colored property owners in any single area in the City of Charleston<sup>3</sup>.

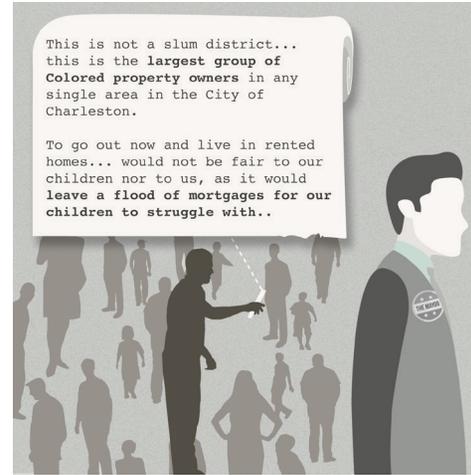


**1938**

**Two tornados swept the Charleston peninsula, damaging homes in Gadsden Green. Prior to this, Mayor Maybank had already been taking steps to seize property from Gadsden Green homeowners as part of slum clearance to create public housing as part of Urban Renewal<sup>1</sup>.**

The tornado was an opportunity to accelerate (locally) the process (nationwide) of seizing property from Black landowners to access federal New Deal funds.

The result? Government-controlled, racially-segregated public housing – a well-documented<sup>2</sup> step in the ongoing process of undermining African-American homeownership<sup>3</sup>.



**1940**

**John Harris and 39 Gadsden Green residents write a letter to Mayor Lockwood, voicing strong opposition to the destruction of their homes to create a racially-segregated public housing complex -- the Gadsden Green which we know today<sup>1</sup>.**

These Black landowners anticipated the explosive inequity that would be born out of the City's seizure of their property, and organized to make their voices heard in order to protect their property and the livelihood of generations to come.

The City responds that they have received the letter, but that it is too late.<sup>2</sup>



**1952**

**Construction of the racially-segregated Gadsden Green public housing complex is complete, and the City immediately begins to use the Gadsden Creek area as a landfill<sup>1</sup> dumping tons of municipal waste and soil as part of an aggressive land "reclamation" program.**

This both violates the federal Rivers and Harbors Act,<sup>2</sup> and completely disregards the existing natural drainage systems, contributing to the flooding we know today.<sup>3</sup>

- Gadsden Green residents are subjected to mountains of trash in their backyard, and a natural resource is stolen for the interest of speculative real estate investors.



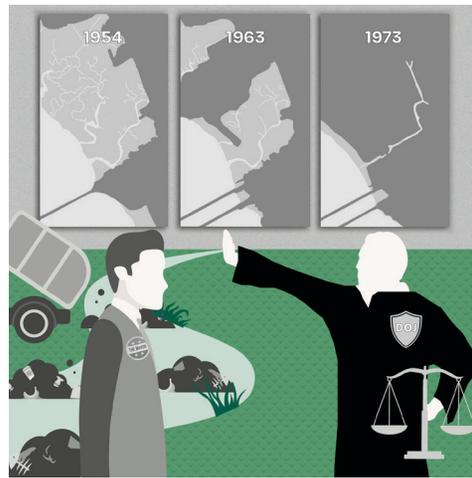
## 1956

**The Colored Farmers Fair is shut down by Mayor Morrison, who calls its facilities in the Gadsden Creek area “unsightly” and “sticking up like a sore thumb.”<sup>1</sup>**

A longstanding cultural event in Harmon Field, the Colored Farmers Fair was a place for Charleston’s African-American citizens to gather around a shared heritage rooted in farming, with lively contests around crops and livestock and crowds reaching 6000 people in a single week.<sup>2</sup>

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As the City continued to use this area as a landfill, Mayor Morrison made the City’s intentions crystal clear, saying “it is easy to envision the handsome municipal development which can take place in this area”<sup>1</sup>

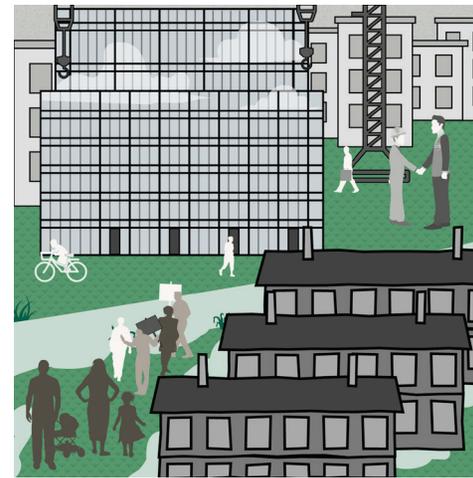


## 1969

**The Department of Justice threatens to sue Charleston for 13 years of dumping waste and soil in over 95 acres of wetland, violating the federal 1899 Rivers and Harbors Act.<sup>1</sup>**

The U.S Army Corps. of Engineers issues an after-the-fact permit to Charleston (1971) with explicit instructions to cease all current and future filling, protecting Gadsden Creek in perpetuity.<sup>2</sup>

Charleston ignores warning multiple times, gathering municipal waste at the Harmon Field swimming pool, an important Gadsden Green community space.<sup>3</sup> In the coming decades, Charleston continues to try to develop this area, but is repeatedly denied by the U.S Army Corps of Engineers.



## 2020

**Over the years, the City tried several more times to develop the Gadsden Creek area, but was blocked by the Army Corps. of Engineers.**

But in 2012, Mayor Joe Riley created the Horizon Foundation (now known as WestEdge Foundation)<sup>2</sup> to create a biomedical district the **largest and most expensive development in the history of the peninsula, that would destroy what remains of Gadsden Creek.**<sup>3</sup>

**The Gadsden Green community, who has lived in the area for generations, was not meaningfully engaged.** And like many cases of gentrification, we got: luxury housing, parking structures, and high-end office/commercial space, with little regard to the needs of the public housing complex next door.

In 2015, the community, with the support of powerful environmental non-profits, spoke out against WestEdge’s permit application. In 2018, WestEdge resubmitted their application, this time with silence from groups like Coastal Conservation League. The remaining activist voices became the Friends of Gadsden Creek and began to take strategic action and raise awareness.

In 2019, the community once again overwhelmingly opposed the WestEdge proposal to fill the creek at a public hearing. Today, the application sits with SCDHEC, while WestEdge developments continue to encroach on Gadsden Creek and the Gadsden Green community. FOGC continues to speak truth to power, and stand behind the Gadsden Green community.