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SECTION B

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Blacktown Fears Boom Town Future

By BRAD SWANSON
Herald Staff Writer

A stream of white money is flowing into the shady lanes of Key West's century-old Blacktown community. Many long-term residents fear a flood before long, sweeping away their homes and lifestyle.

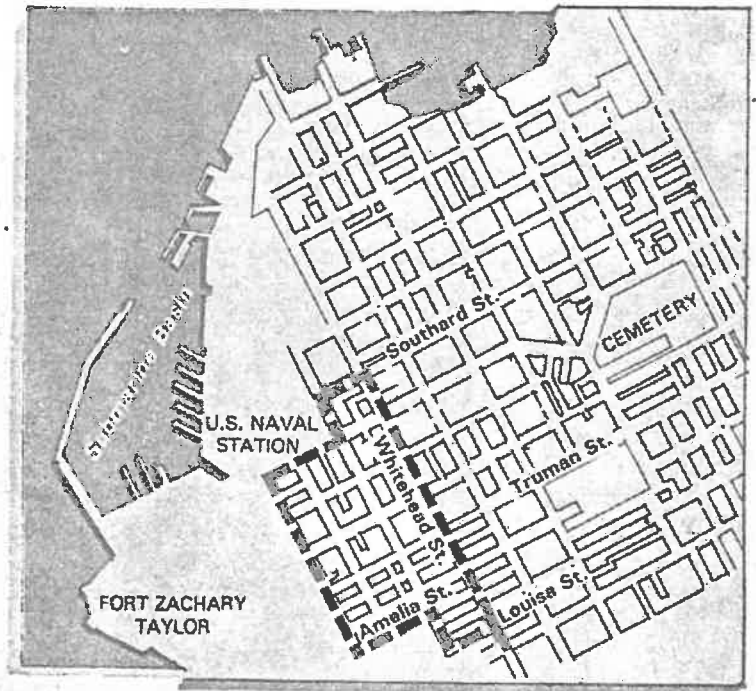
Signposts of a future many residents dread are starting to emerge.

White faces peer from windows in houses built by blacks. Three residences are combined into a compound populated only by whites and removed from the community behind a high fence.

The new owners of apartments that house 72 black families consider — then reject for now — turning many of them into condominiums that current occupants, who pay \$90 a month rent, say they could not afford.

"You can't call this a predominantly black neighborhood any more," says former City Commissioner Lang Milian from behind the counter of his Dorothy's Grocery at the corner of Whitehead and Virginia Streets.

OLD MEN sit and discuss the day's events outside the grocery and frequently on Sundays families



Map of Key West's Blacktown

...approximate boundaries outlined.

"PROPERTY soon we'll be sleeping in the streets," her friend Kim Forbes, 22, adds bitterly.

"What is bothering me more than anything else is the intent of persons buying property" in Blacktown, says Key West NAACP President Calvin Barnes.

"I like the idea of an integrated community. I go for that, if that is the intent of (new owners). But I don't go for people who want to push me out."

White ownership of black land is not the issue, say Barnes and other residents. White "Conchs" or Key West natives have always owned a large amount of property in Blacktown and rented to blacks.

But in the wake of Key West's current surge in nationwide renown, vastly increased economic pressures are tearing at the fabric of life in Blacktown.

Key West's mostly intact 19th Century core of handcrafted wood-

Setting It Straight

Barry Lopez, assistant chief of the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority's desalinization plant, told the aqueduct board Thursday he knew that a scrap dealer bought a quantity of copper-nickel tubes from the plant. The Herald reported he didn't know how the money from the sale was reported. However, Lopez has nothing to do with the money from such sales. What he said was that he didn't know where and how the tubing was weighed and what suspended plant chief Jack Delozier did with the weight ticket. Lopez was at the board meeting, and confirmed some information relayed by plant operator John Ream. However, any charges of wrong-doing at the plant were made by Ream.

and Brad Swanson

sioner Jerry Hernandez, who wanted the argument is "ridiculous." sion is on Tuesday's meeting agen-

s Pay Visit

White 1976 but a large tract recently purchased for more than \$485,000 in Blacktown.

• Perhaps the greatest threat to the character of Blacktown is the 100-acre contiguous tract of presently disused Navy land slated for development soon probably including hotels, shops, a marina and perhaps condominiums.

"You definitely have many people becoming interested in properties in that area because they feel with the (former Navy) base opening up, values will rise," says realtor Theresa V. Tanis.

"MOST PEOPLE we're selling (Blacktown property) to right now are people who are speculating with the feeling the base is going to be a huge recreation area with big yachts," says Tanis, who has sold property in Key West 11 years.

Recent property sales speak for themselves.

A house is now for sale for \$200,000 on a street that is racially mixed but was all black until five years ago, says Tanis. The white owner bought it for \$45,000 a year ago and extensively renovated it, including installing a swimming pool.

But a house on Whitehead Street that sold for \$15,000 six years ago in bad condition, says Tanis, was

but students are advised to buy a masks the 70 to 100 per cent increases commonly found in the district, declared historical several years ago by the state and protected from anachronistic building.

Property in Blacktown rose an average of about 40 to 45 per cent in value, he says.

The traditional 20 to 25 per cent difference between the assessment of a similar house on similar lot in Blacktown and white areas probably widened to about 30 to 35 per cent, he said.

THAT MEANS property in Blacktown is more a bargain than ever.

"I can't blame a person for selling," says Barnes. "The money being offered for property cannot be offered by another black."

City officials recognize the need for low and moderate income housing in the city's draft Land Use Plan and proposals for use of the presently fallow Navy land now being studied include public housing.

But although more "projects" could mean the difference between blacks staying in Key West or moving out to the rest of the Keys or to relatives on the mainland, they are no substitute in many residents' eyes for the tradition, social cohesion and more comfortable lifestyle of a genuine neighborhood.

Briefly...

Sunfish Sailors To Circle Island

Sunfish sailors are invited to race around Key West in the fourth annual around-the-island competition April 14, sponsored by the Key West Sailing Club. The 12-mile race starts at 10 a.m. at Mallory Square and registration is open at 8:30 a.m. at the boat ramp. Trophies will be awarded for win, place and show. Additional information is available from Fred Bogar at 294-9690.

Fish Traps Subject Of Public Hearing

The Islamorada Charter Boat Association is up in arms over the use of controversial fish traps — and members want Sen. Dick Anderson (D-Florida) to

but students are advised to buy a text and other materials, available through the auxiliary for \$6.50 a set. The classes will be held 7 to 9 p.m. at Key West High School. Call A. Mirzaoff at 294-2078 for details.

Airline's Business Soars in March

Air Florida reports it broke its own record for passenger miles flown and passengers boarded during March. The number of passengers flown during the month was 107,878 — more than the airline carried during all of 1976. Air Sunshine, once Key West's own independently-owned carrier between the island and Miami, became a wholly-owned subsidiary of Air Florida several months ago. The parent airline also has added a number of new routes.

Woman Is Killed