

# **The History of Downtown Dutchtown**



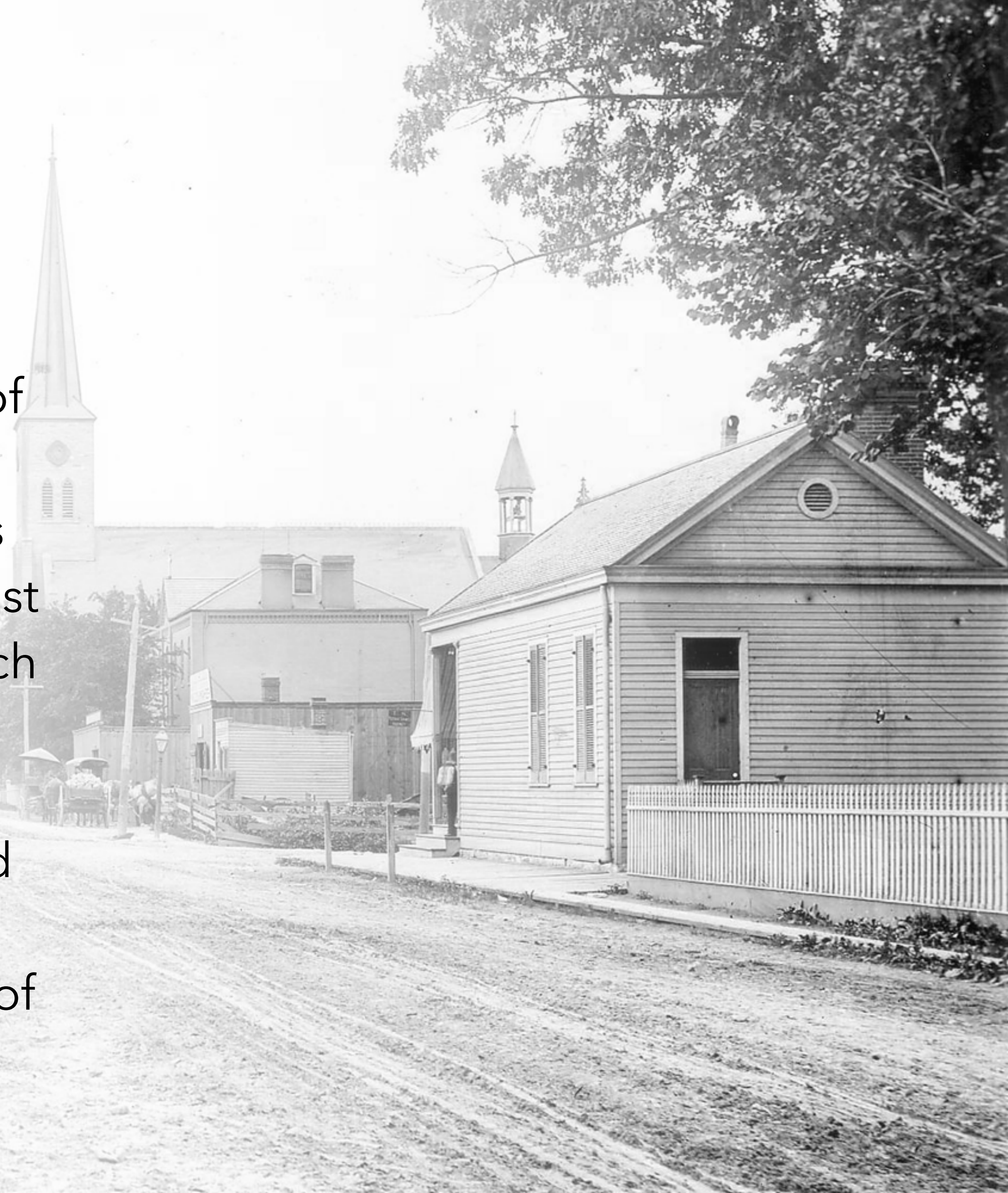
The name "**Dutchtown**" comes from a St. Louis style mispronunciation of the word "Deutsch," the German immigrants who flocked to and built up this large swath of southeast St. Louis beginning in the second half of the 19th century.

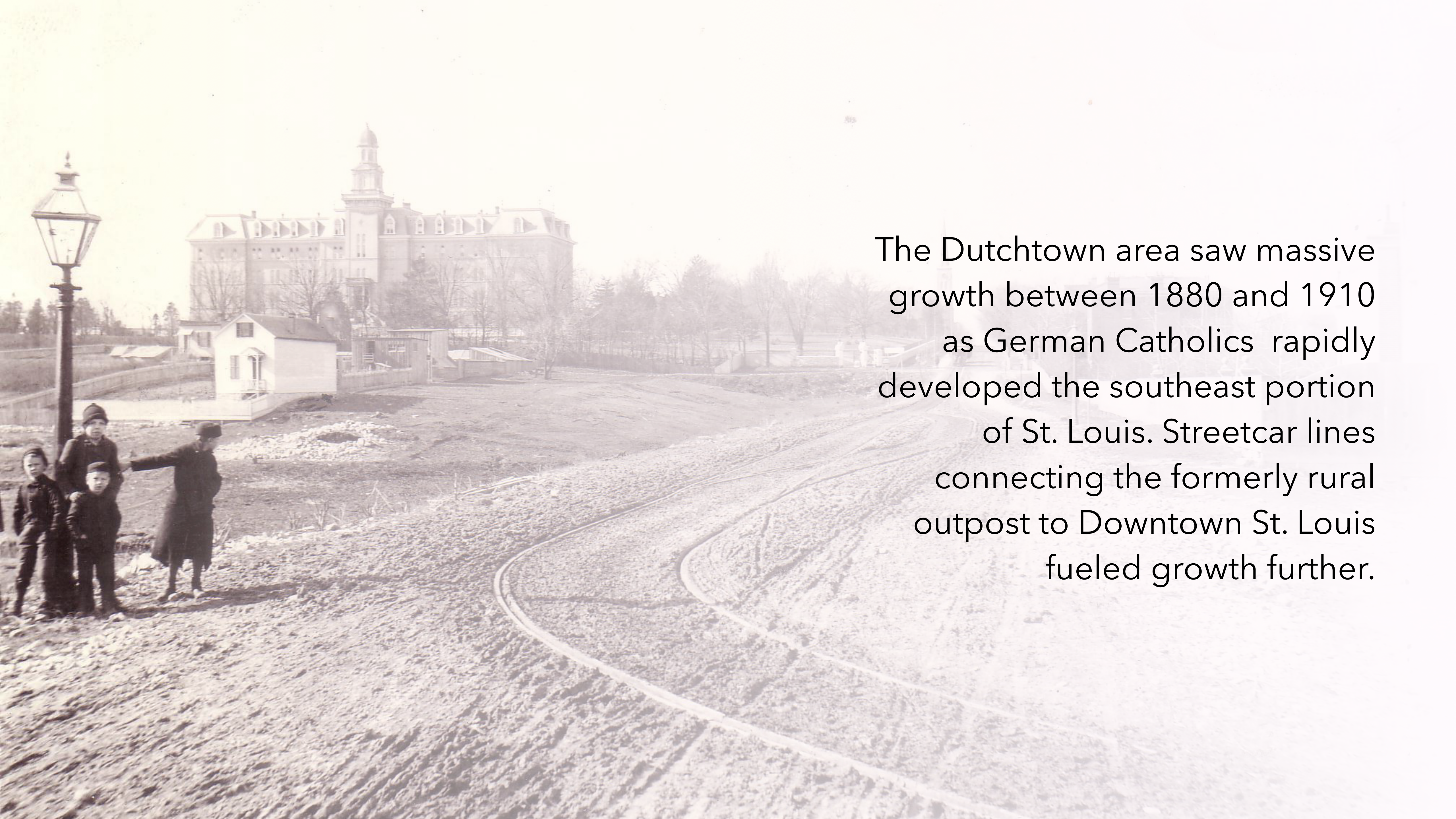
The neighborhood now known as Dutchtown was originally a part of Carondelet Common Fields between St. Louis and the City of Carondelet, all annexed by St. Louis in 1870

Meramec Street east of Grand is referred to locally as "Downtown Dutchtown."

The history of development in this area of Dutchtown is specifically tied to St. Anthony of Padua. Parishioners would gather for Sunday Mass at The House of Refuge, a local orphans home on the site of today's Marquette Park just to the north. The original "single-tower" church was built in 1864.

In the early 1860s the congregation consisted of 70 German-speaking families, 25 English-speaking families, and 117 Catholic children of school age.

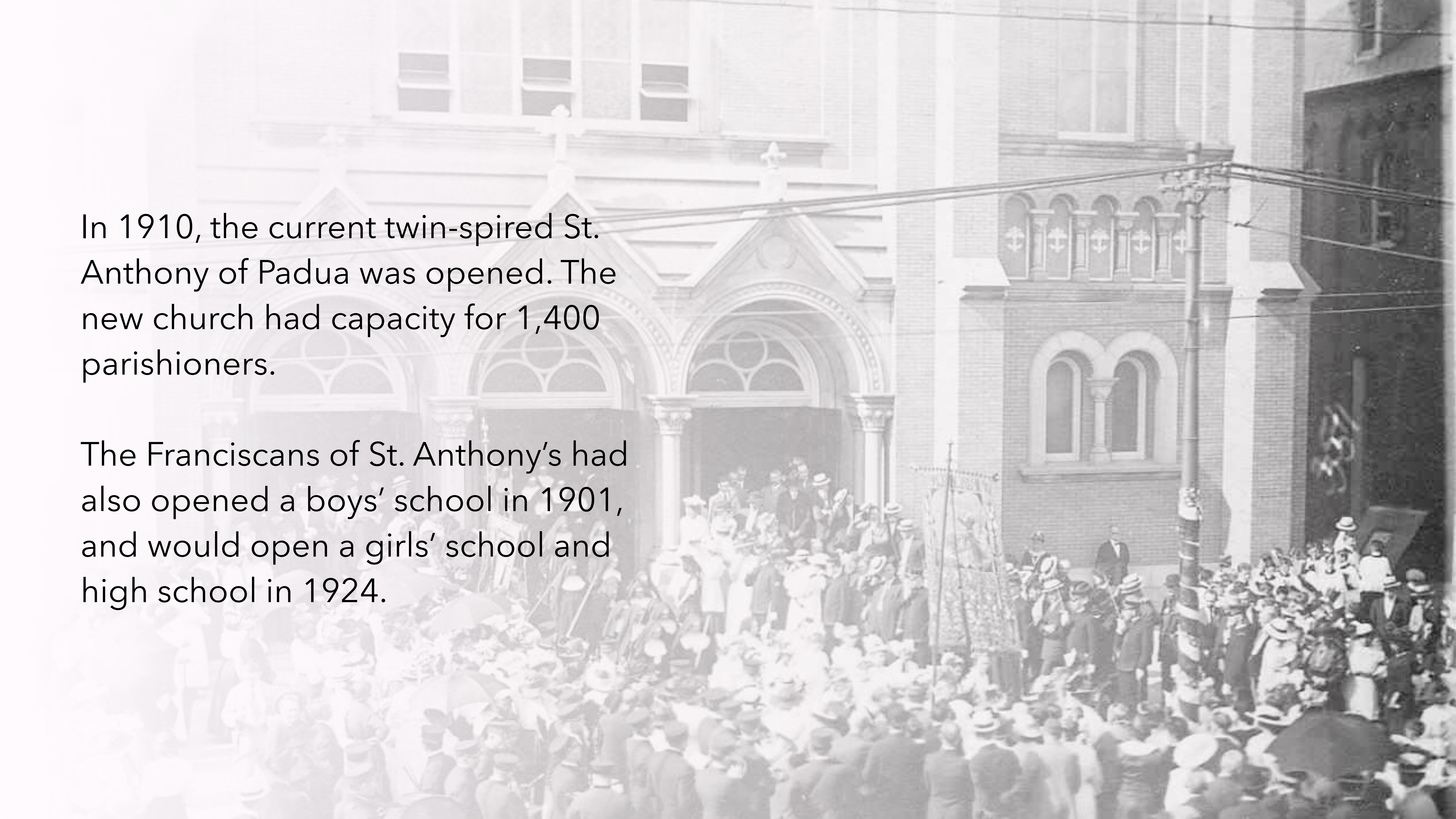




The Dutchtown area saw massive growth between 1880 and 1910 as German Catholics rapidly developed the southeast portion of St. Louis. Streetcar lines connecting the formerly rural outpost to Downtown St. Louis fueled growth further.

In 1910, the current twin-spired St. Anthony of Padua was opened. The new church had capacity for 1,400 parishioners.

The Franciscans of St. Anthony's had also opened a boys' school in 1901, and would open a girls' school and high school in 1924.



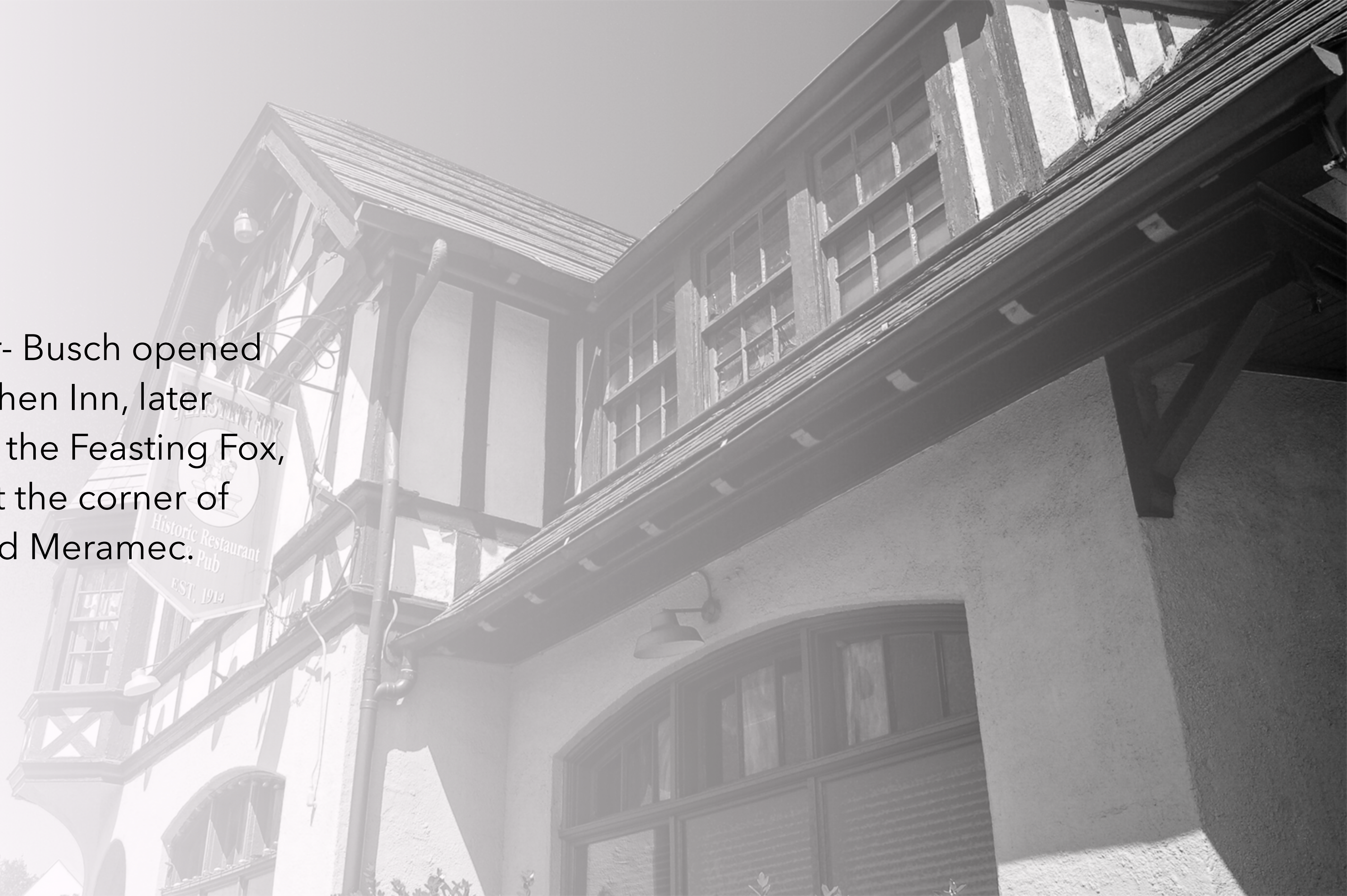
In 1915, Cleveland High School, the largest high school in the St. Louis Public School system, opened to serve the rapidly growing neighborhood.

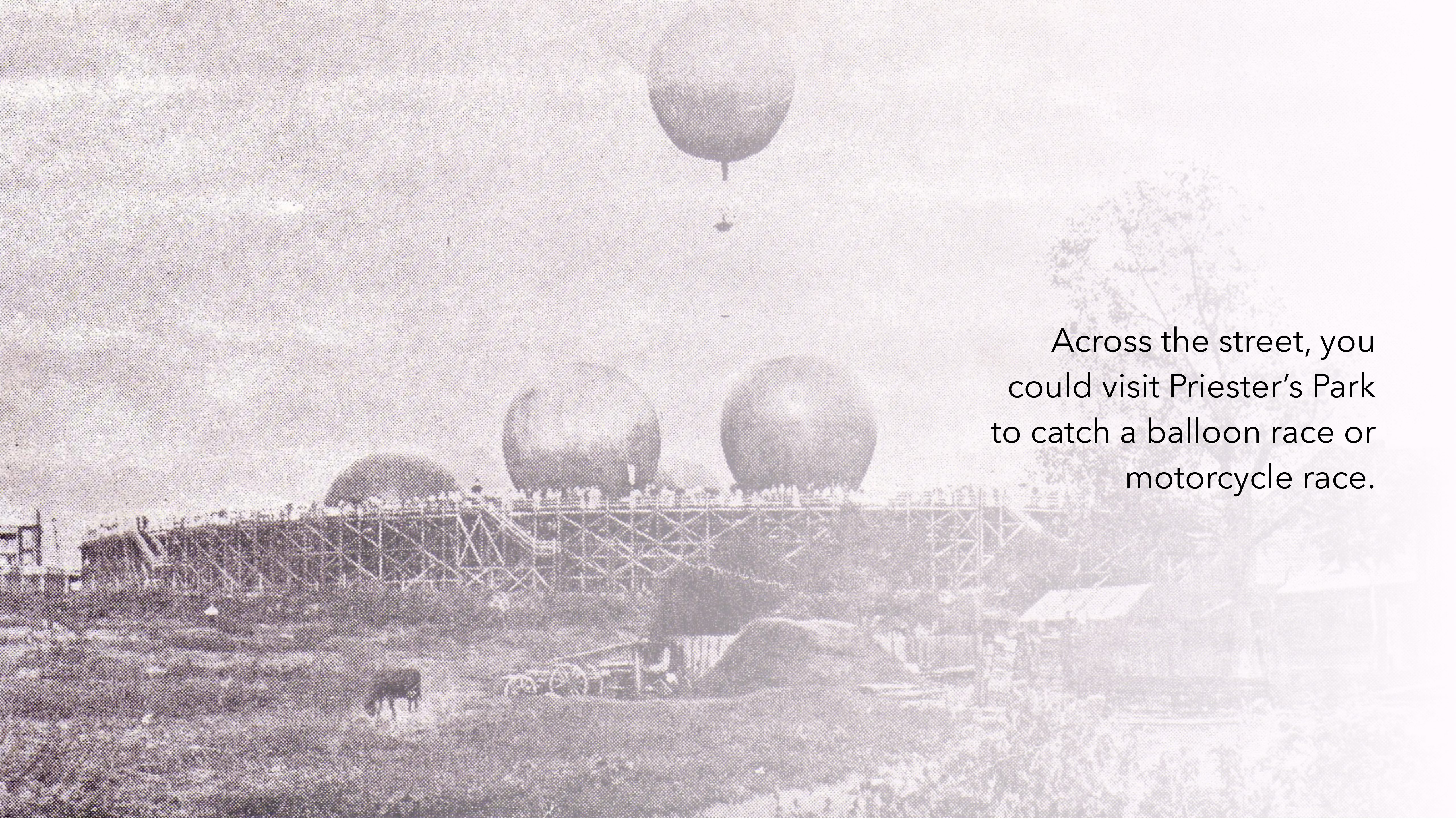


Also in 1915, Marquette Park  
was dedicated. The pool  
opened in 1920.



Anheuser- Busch opened  
the Gretchen Inn, later  
known as the Feasting Fox,  
in 1913 at the corner of  
Grand and Meramec.





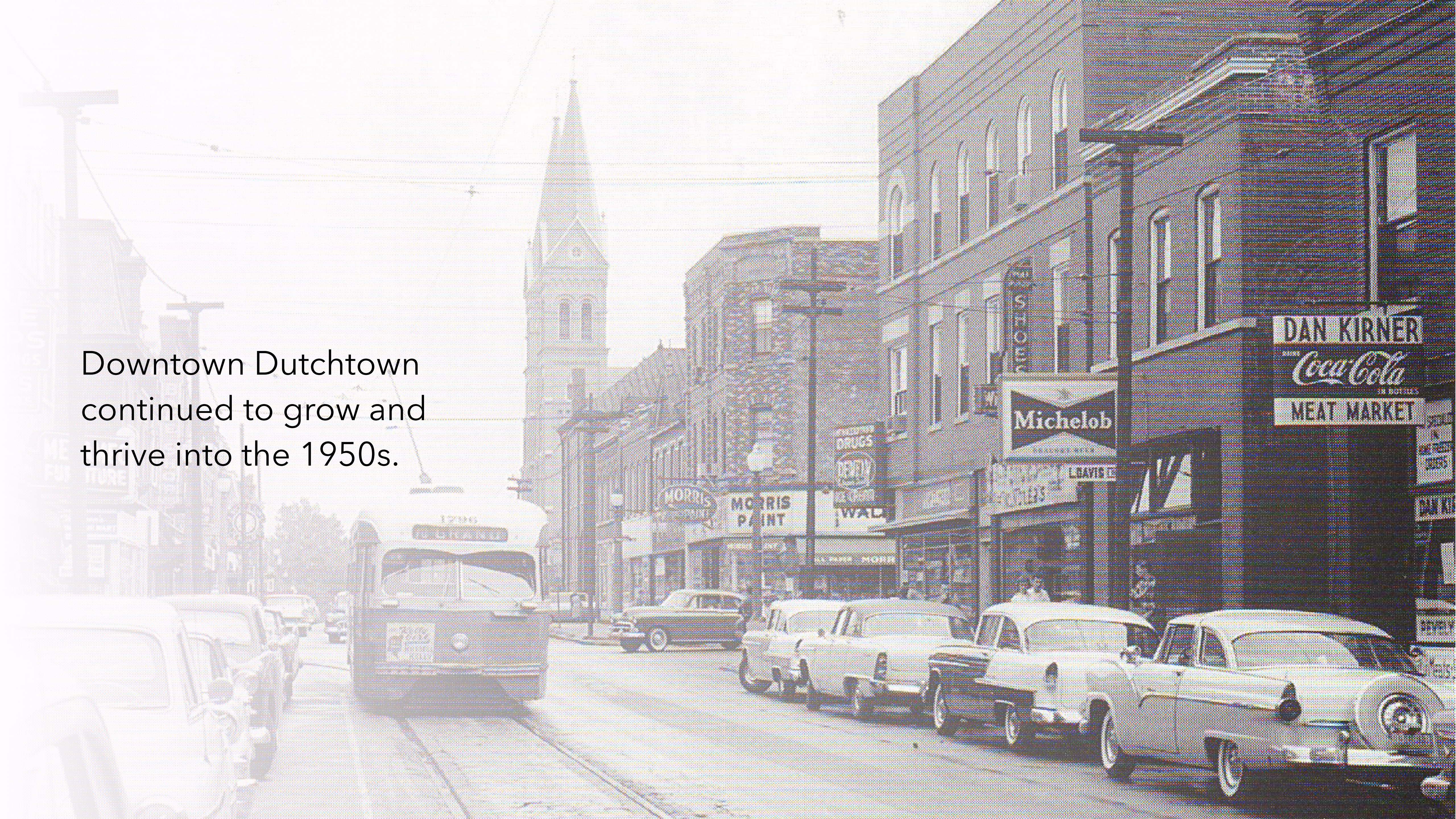
Across the street, you  
could visit Priester's Park  
to catch a balloon race or  
motorcycle race.

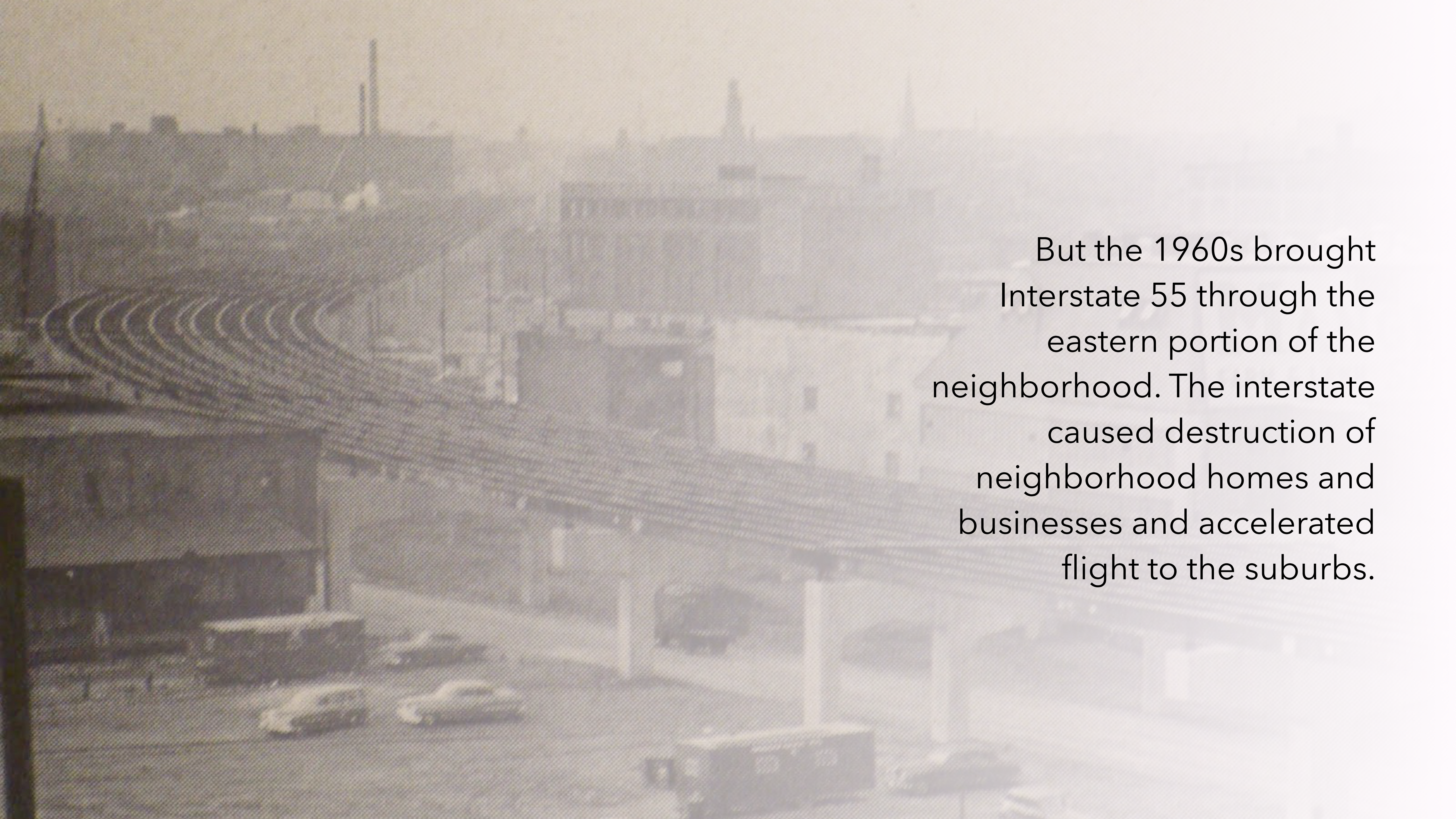


FROZEN CUSTARD

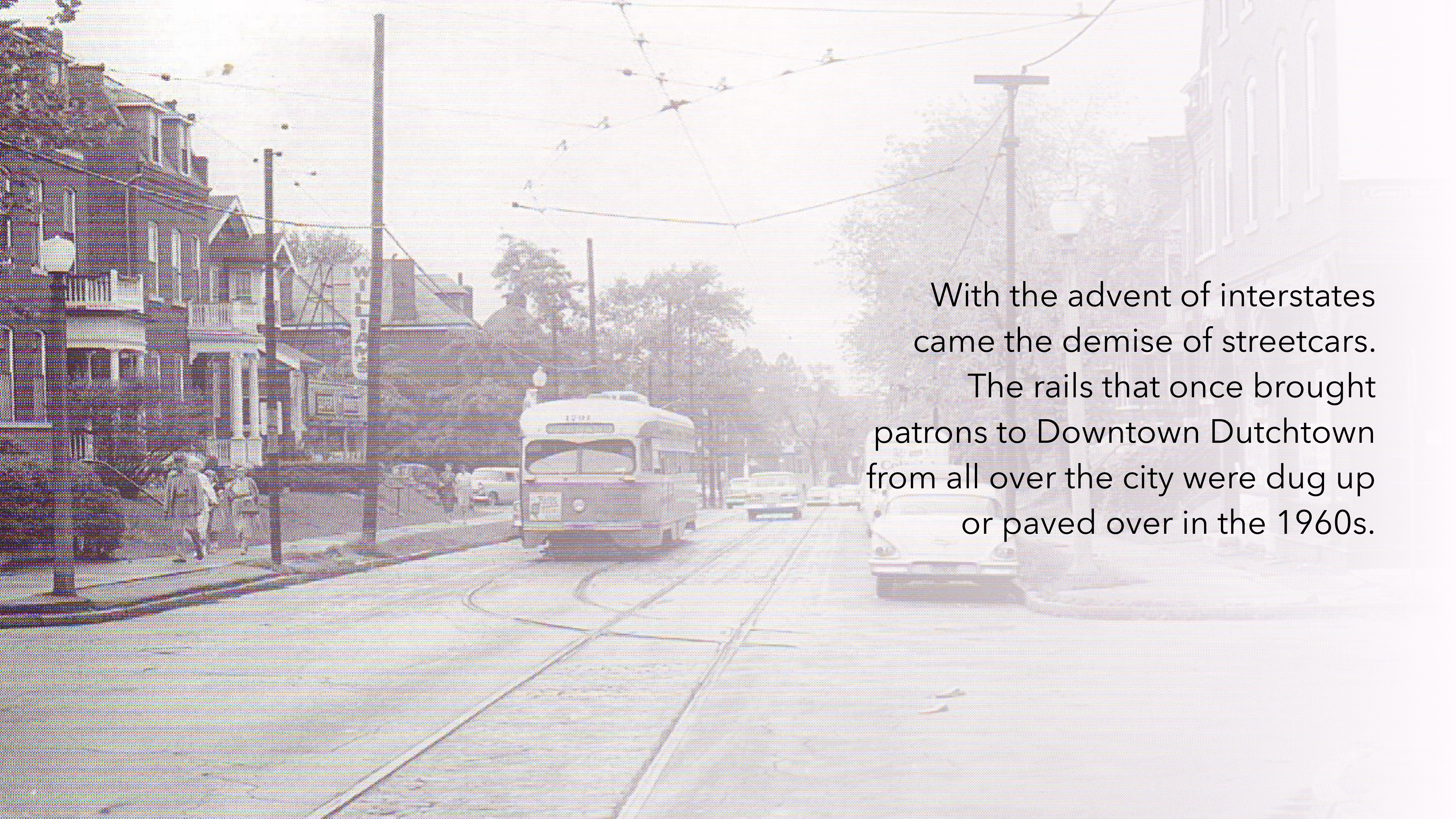
Ted Drewes' Frozen Custard  
opened their original South  
Side location on Grand in 1931.

Downtown Dutchtown  
continued to grow and  
thrive into the 1950s.





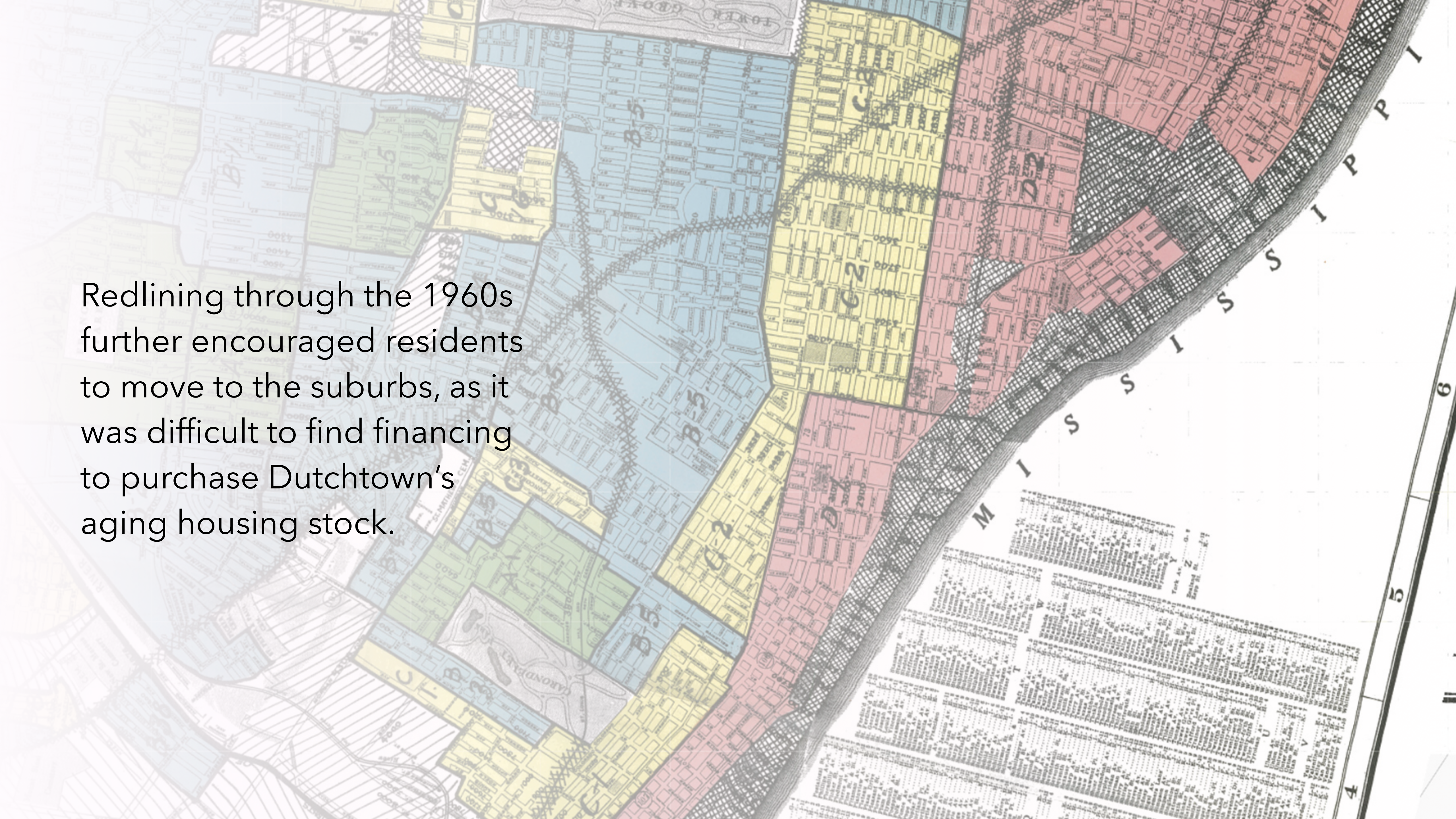
But the 1960s brought Interstate 55 through the eastern portion of the neighborhood. The interstate caused destruction of neighborhood homes and businesses and accelerated flight to the suburbs.



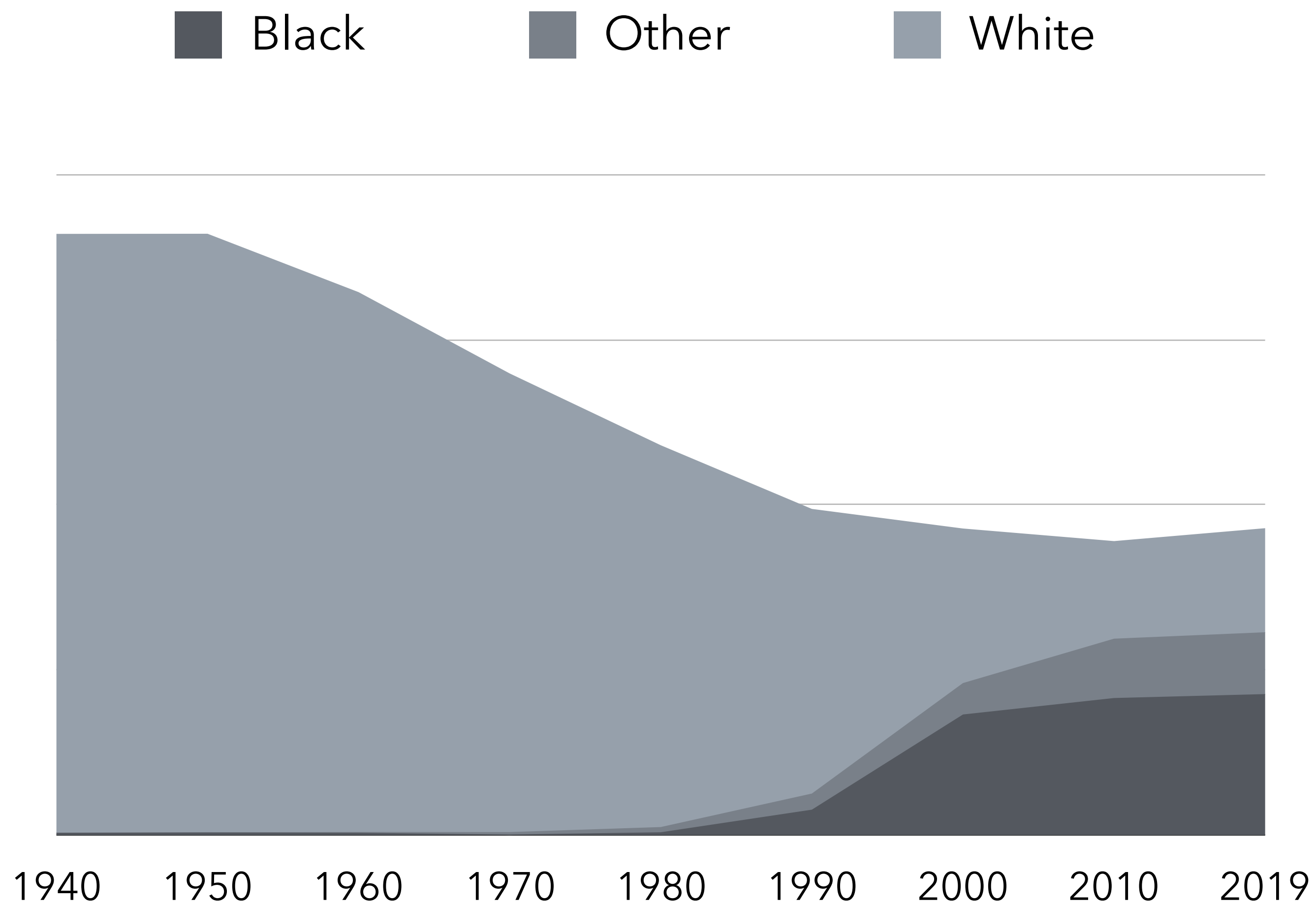
With the advent of interstates came the demise of streetcars.

The rails that once brought patrons to Downtown Dutchtown from all over the city were dug up or paved over in the 1960s.

Redlining through the 1960s further encouraged residents to move to the suburbs, as it was difficult to find financing to purchase Dughtown's aging housing stock.



As the City of St. Louis  
would go on to lose nearly  
two thirds of its population  
after its peak in the 1950s,  
Dutchtown would lose  
about a third of its own  
population.




As Dutchtown, like the rest of St. Louis, struggled with population loss due to white flight and other factors, African-Americans relocating from elsewhere in St. Louis and new immigrants from across the globe began to move in in the 1990s and help stabilize the population.

In the 2000s, the new  
Downtown Dutchtown  
Business Association (DT2)  
was formed to strengthen  
and serve the businesses on  
Meramec and around the  
neighborhood.





DT2 continues to work with businesses and neighborhood stakeholders under a new community development non-profit model with the goal of stabilizing, strengthening, and revitalizing Downtown Dutchtown and the surrounding neighborhood.

A photograph of a street in Downtown Dutchtown at dusk. The street is lined with historic brick buildings. On the left, a building has a sign that reads "GREENFIELD'S CUSTOM INTERIORS". Several cars are parked along the street, and a few are driving in the distance. Streetlights are on, casting a warm glow. The sky is overcast and dim. The text "In 2020, DT2 is partnering with Missouri Main Street Connection on the UrbanMain Initiative pilot program to bring planning resources to Downtown Dutchtown." is overlaid on the left side of the image.

In 2020, DT2 is partnering with Missouri Main Street Connection on the UrbanMain Initiative pilot program to bring planning resources to Downtown Dutchtown.



You can help DT2's efforts to  
create a better Dutchtown for  
all!

**Support Dutchtown businesses**

Volunteer at  
**[DutchtownSTL.org/volunteer](https://DutchtownSTL.org/volunteer)**

Donate at  
**[DutchtownSTL.org/donate](https://DutchtownSTL.org/donate)**