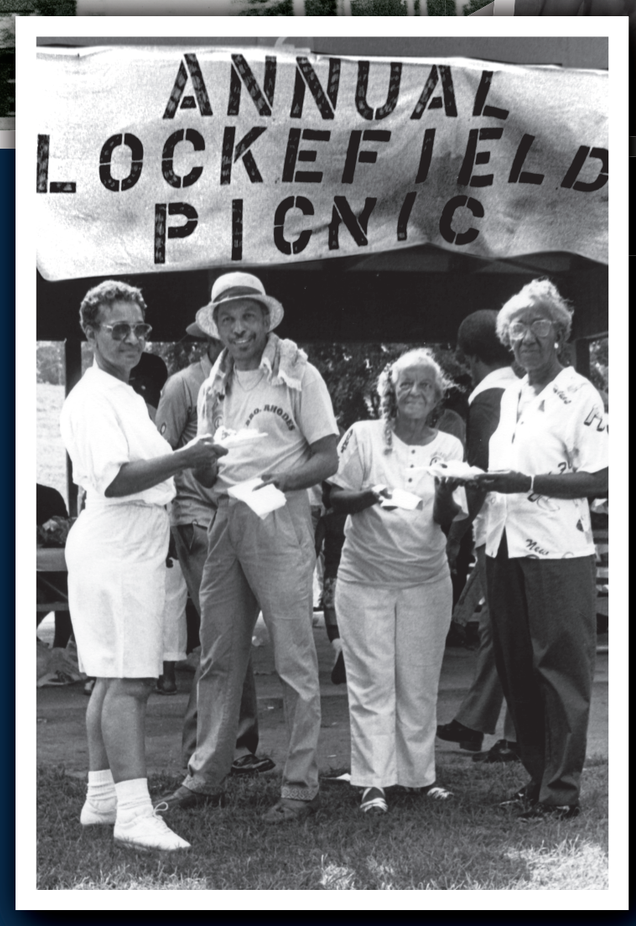
Lockefield Gardens

Top
Aerial view of
Lockefield Gardens c. 1960
Bass Photo Co. Collection, Indiana Historical Society

Above
The renovated apartments in the 1980s.
City of Indianapolis, Department of Metropolitan Development, Indiana Historical Society



Above
Children at a
Kool-Aid stand at Lockefield
Gardens around 1955.
Indianapolis Recorder Collection,
Indiana Historical Society

Left
The Lockefield Garden
Picnic in 1987.
Indianapolis Recorder Collection,
Indiana Historical Society

By the early 1930s, Indiana Avenue had anchored Black life and culture for more than 60 years, but the neighborhood's collection of wood-framed cottages had deteriorated. Lockefield Gardens became the eighth and one of the best of 50 low-cost public housing projects created with Federal Public Works Administration funds under the New Deal. Designed by Russ and Harrison and built by N. P. Severin Company of Chicago, the $3 million complex opened in 1938 after three years of construction, providing 748 spacious apartments in 24 buildings around a central green space, with playgrounds, shopping destinations, and a school. Monthly rents ranged from $20.80 to $30.10, still beyond the means of some Black residents. Much more than a housing project, however, Lockefield Gardens thrived for decades as a vibrant community. Because of highway and university development, only seven of the original buildings still stood when the complex was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

INDIANAPOLIS CULTURAL TRAIL™
A Legacy of Gene & Marilyn Glick