A visual survey of Bowling Green’s lower income and middle income neighborhoods.

In Bowling Green, there lies a division. Access to opportunity is not equal. There exists multiple worlds, relative to ethnicity and financial status, which are visible relative to where one lives. All of Bowling Green should become familiar with this division and the affect it has on all of us. Because of this division we miss out of much of the beauty that Bowling Green’s diversity harbors. Because of this division, there exists a problem with affordable housing. Because of this division Bowling Green is still segregated.

The enclosed photographs represent two different neighborhoods within the city limits of Bowling Green, a lower income neighborhood and a middle income neighborhood.

by Brian Wagner for Dr. Alan Anderson’s Social Ethics Research course at Western Kentucky University.
Within two blocks of the Westside Neighborhood Park, walls still stand on near a dozen vacant buildings. From the old Holley Carburetor Plant to the pair of two-story homes off 10th Avenue roofs deceive strangers that there is something to shelter within. Neighborhood residents know better. “My 13 year-old is not out on the street after dark by himself,” resident Angie Parker states. Her concern is not a selfish one. “All these kids are mine,” she furthers.

In the afternoons the park’s playground acts as a beacon calling to the neighborhood children. They turn out in numbers to take turns flipping from the jungle gym and swing. Often times they walk to the Boys and Girls Club, passing by at least one vacant building along the way. The parents of the neighborhood have made complaints, but the buildings still stand.

Overall the lower income neighborhoods have a greater degree of diversity and a larger degree of vacancy.

The old Holley Plant, at 11th Avenue and Vine Street, is completely accessible to anyone who might decide to explore the vacant building. It is directly across from the Boys and Girls Club of Bowling Green and the Westside Neighborhood Park.
Two vacant houses sit side by side and within eyesight of the park just off Brownslock Road at 941 Scott Street. A local resident said they have been vacant for over 5 years. Windows hold no glass and the interiors look as though they have been scavenged.
lower income

After school the neighborhood children often split their time between the Boys and Girls Club at **531 W. 11th Avenue** and the Westside Neighborhood Park off **Vine Street and Brownslock Road**. Between the two sits the old Holley Carburetor Plant, which is fenced in but the gates often unlocked.
Two condemned houses, **404 and 400 10th Avenue**, (top) have been vacant since 2002. After numerous complaints residents took responsibility and boarding up the homes, which they say the city owns. (Above) On **11th Avenue, between Stubbins and Payne**, a strip of apartments sit partially boarded. Just across the street an apartment complex is being repaired.
lower income

Many of the homes in the lower income neighborhood are in need of paint and repair, while others are well maintained. From the front porch of 251 Stubbins Street (top), a partially burned house can be seen across the street.
Behind the La Luz Del Mundo Church at the corner of Clay Street and 12th Avenue, Jose (right), his brother Pablo, and their friend Richard made a clubhouse from excess construction materials. Various trash and a toilet bowl sits just outside of the clubhouse walls.
(Top) Last summer residents of Western Apartments, at Clay Street, had a curfew because of drug dealers, who used their parking lot to sell drugs. Things have improved, but “they still do it,” said Romeo Hite, who has lived in the complex for a year. (Above) Two houses burned early this year, at 1040 Fair Street. One is currently being repaired, while the other remains charred and vacant.
Freshly groomed lawns line Nutwood Street, west of the 31W by-pass. Many young families have bought starter homes here and their children bike down the streets in the evenings. They live only five miles from some the poorest neighborhoods in Bowling Green.

No vacancy can be seen in passing; no boarded windows, no construction trash. Only a mother and daughter weeding their flower bed. Across the street a neighbor mows their lawn. Sports utility vehicles fill the driveways, while large shade trees canopy the green carpet floor.

Very little diversity can be seen in the middle income neighborhoods and the homes are all relatively well maintained.

“This area is nice,” Tina Payne said as she watched her two-year-old, Nolan, outside of their home at 536 Nutwood Street. During a swing break, Nolan’s father, David walks back from chasing their roaming dog. The neighborhood is mostly, “beginning families,” David said as he ties his son’s shoe.
(Top) Middle income homes and lots are not huge, like 707 Nutwood Street, but still larger than most in the lower income neighborhoods. (Above) Jill Justice has lived off Greenlawn Avenue for four years. It’s “very quiet,” Justice said while weeding her front flower bed with her daughter AnnaBel, while the two wait for daddy to arrive home from work.
One visible difference between the lower and middle income neighborhoods is in the real estate. In the lower income neighborhoods the real estate signs read, For Rent, while in the middle income neighborhoods they read, For Sale. The percentage of renter in the middle income neighborhoods is drastically smaller than the percentage in the lower income neighborhoods.
All of the photographs from the lower income neighborhoods were taken in Census tracts 102 and 103. The middle income photographs were taken in Census tract 106. Referencing Dana Lockhart’s research, An Analysis of Bowling Green Neighborhoods, and U.S. Census Bureau statistics, some general information can be accredited to these specific Census tracts, such as:

Census tract 102 and 103 have:

-both tracts 102/103 are classified as inner city (lower income) neighborhoods.

-both tracts 102/103 have median family income below city median (city median is $27,655).

-tract 102 is 56.7% non-white.

-tract 103 is 27.7% non-white.

Census tract 106:

-tract 106 is classified as a middle class neighborhood.

-the median family income is above the city median.

-tract 106 is 9.7% non-white in racial makeup.