

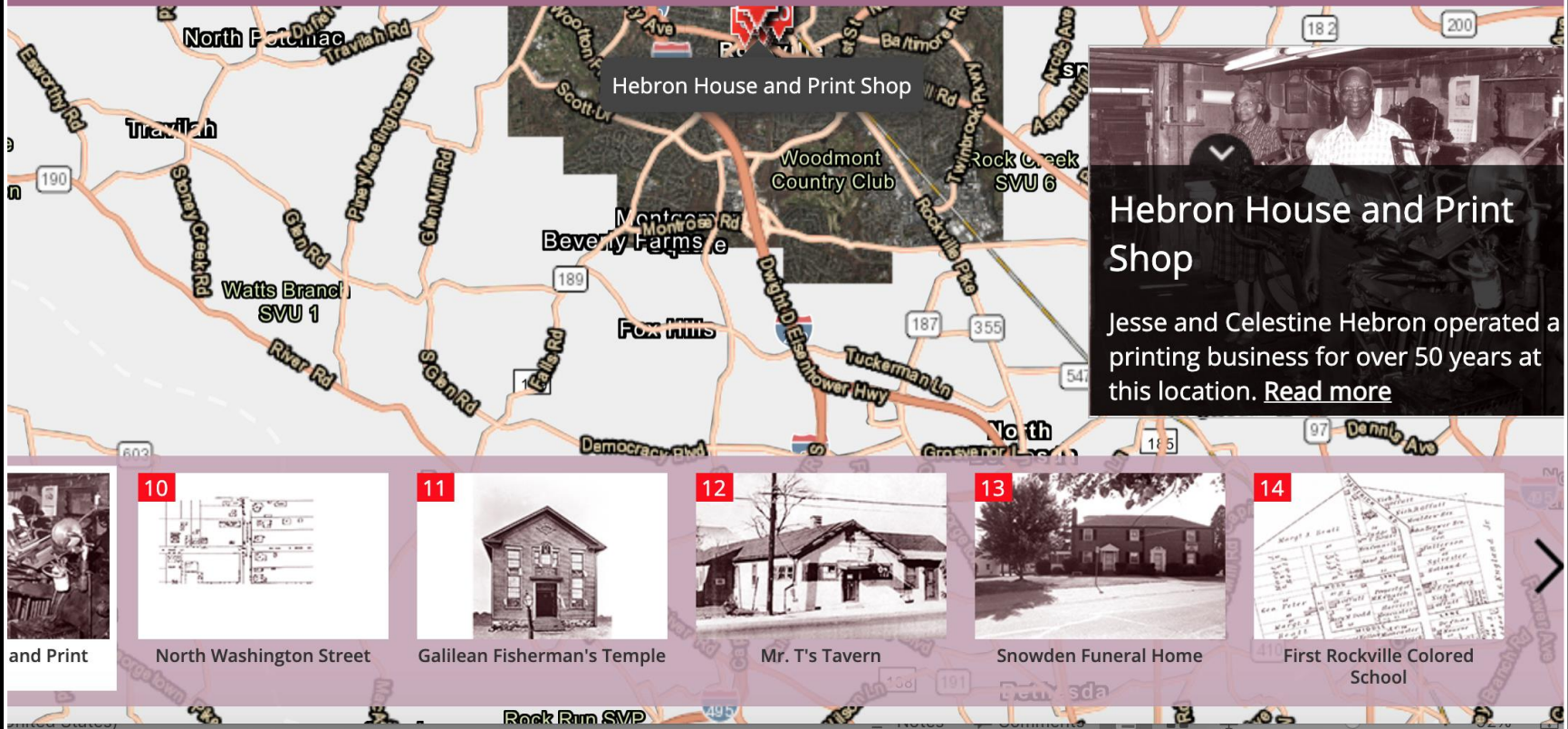
# Question

At one point in time, downtown Rockville was a bustling Black neighborhood. At the corner of North Wood Lane and North Washington Street, just around the corner from Main Street, is the former Hebron Print shop, a successful Black-owned business owned by Jesse and Celestine Hebron. They operated the print shop for a little over 50 years before passing in 1997. What were the kinds of businesses that Black people owned and operated that allowed them to serve to build a life and their communities?

## American Heritage Walking Tour

A Rockville Story Map [f](#) [t](#) [l](#)

documents the people and places in the city's downtown core from the 18th century through the 20th in



MoCo AA Business District, circa 18<sup>th</sup> century through 20<sup>th</sup> century.



## OPEN FOR BUSINESS: TOGETHER WE POWER PROGRESS

"If you were on U Street, you didn't need to go anywhere else. It was all right there for you. Blacks had put together a thriving society and cultured hub created by us and for us."

Lucille Dawson, Barber, U Street's Eaton Barbershop

On Aug. 20, 1934, Founder Jesse H. Mitchell opened the doors of Industrial Bank for the first time at the corner of 11th & U Streets, NW. For the past 82 years, Industrial has been a strong partner for small and large businesses, home owners, and personal banking account customers in the Washington, DC community. Today, it is one of the largest African-American owned and operated commercial banks in the United States.



### U Street Business District, circa October 4, 1949

For nearly a century, the U Street corridor of successful black businessmen, clergy, and educators flourished amid racial and political tension in America. This black aristocracy built a nearly self-contained society outside the white world and with limited white assistance during the Jim Crow era. By 1920, a 40-block portion of the U Street corridor that stretched from the neighborhoods of LeDroit Park near Howard University to the Striver's District near Dupont Circle boasted more than 300 black-owned businesses, including Ware's, a black-owned/managed department store, a 5-star hotel, The Whitelaw Hotel, Industrial Bank, Bohemian Caverns, Murray Printing Company, Club Bali, and Cecilia's Restaurant, among many others. The neighborhood rivaled Black Wall Street and Harlem as a center of American black enterprise, achievement and culture. "You had to wear a tie to walk down U Street," recalls one elderly resident. Image Credit: Photographer John P. Wymer courtesy Historical Society of D.C.



**U Street Lights: Black Broadway composite with Billie Holiday (inset image), circa 1940s.** The Black Broadway's heydays when its thriving entertainment district was located along the "lively and colorful" blocks of 7th Street, 14th Street and U Street featuring hotspots such as The Little Harlem, Harrison's Café and Joe Hurdi's Bar and Grill, among others. Image Credit: Scurlock Studio Collection, Archives Center, Smithsonian's National Museum of American History

This winding driveway at 1839 13th Street, Northwest belonged to the District's first luxury hotel, the Whitelaw Hotel aka "The Embassy," which opened in 1919. From its birth, the Whitelaw was a community effort, built and financed by black investors and entrepreneurs and designed by prominent black architect, Isaiah T. Hatton.



DISCOVER & EXPLORE: Learn more about U Street's coveted entertainment and business district at: [www.blackbroadwayonu.com/explore](http://www.blackbroadwayonu.com/explore)



# Importance of AA Black Business Corridors in early-to-mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century

- In the early-to-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, the economic hubs (gateways) and thriving African American business districts across the country generated African American wealth generated. These districts serve as a reminder of how investors, property owners, and residents could work together to create economic success and serve the needs of black residents.
- These business districts were created out of necessity to serve the African American population and served as early incubators for black arts, commerce and culture, who were being discriminated against by white businesses and cultural and spiritual centers. Restrictive laws, known as Jim Crow (1896-1955), didn't allow African Americans to assimilate into the majority communities, but instead were confined to certain areas of the city. Despite oppressive viewpoints and laws steeped in white supremacy, these African American businesses districts flourished and served as national examples of black economic self-empowerment and economic success.