

I-496 OLDS FREEWAY

Rolling Through the City



The I-496 freeway loop opened in late 1970.

The road, cutting across downtown Lansing, was given the name “Olds Freeway” in honor of Ransom E. Olds. The new freeway reflected a national trend as workers moved out of the cities to suburban homes. I-496 spurred growth in the suburbs, but claimed many streets, homes and businesses in the city. The Olds Mansion and the heart of Lansing’s African-American community were torn out by the freeway’s construction.



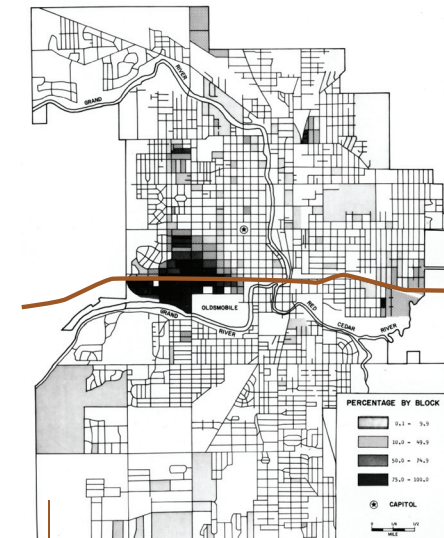
A curved dash Oldsmobile “cut” the ribbon at the dedication of five miles of I-496 on November 25, 1969. Photo courtesy of Michigan Department of Transportation.

YOU AUTO KNOW

About 960 Lansing families had to be relocated due to the construction of I-496.



Lansing architect Darius Moon designed this house for Ransom and Metta Olds. Built in 1904 on the corner of South Washington Avenue and Main Street, it was one of the casualties of the I-496 freeway. Blueprint courtesy of Archives of Michigan.



This 1960 map showed the concentration of Lansing’s African-American population. As the superimposed freeway route demonstrates, I-496 was built through the city’s largest black neighborhood—located northwest of the Oldsmobile plant. Map courtesy of Archives of Michigan.