

**North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources  
State Historic Preservation Office**

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Roy Cooper  
Secretary Susi H. Hamilton

Office of Archives and History  
Deputy Secretary Kevin Cherry

September 16, 2020

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Shelby Reap  
Office of Human Environment  
NCDOT Division of Highways

**FROM:** Renee Gledhill-Earley  
Environmental Review Coordinator

*Repe for Ramona M. Bartos*

**SUBJECT:** Historic Structures Survey Report, U-6103, Construction of express lanes on US 74 from I-277 to Idlewild Road, Mecklenburg County, ER 20-0610

Thank you for your August 19, 2020, letter transmitting the above-referenced report. We have reviewed the report and concur with the report's findings for the reasons cited in the report.

The Elizabeth Historic District, MK 866, was listed in the National Register in 1989 and it retains eligibility.

The following resources were determined eligible for the National Register in a 2006 study, and they retain eligibility:

- Cole Manufacturing Company, MK 157
- Old Charlotte Coliseum and Ovens Auditorium, MK 1779
- J.N. Pease Associates, MK 2188
- South 21 Drive-in No. 2, MK 1781

The report recommends the following resources as eligible for the National Register:

- Chantilly Neighborhood, MK 2199
- Charlotte Merchandise Mart, MK 4410
- Allied Security Building, MK 4412
- North Carolina Savings and Loan Building, MK 4413
- Ervin Building, MK 2133
- Eastway Park Neighborhood, MK 4414

The report finds that the following resources are not eligible for the National Register:

- Commonwealth Neighborhood, MK 4408
- Coliseum Downtowner Motor Inn, MK 4411
- Amity Gardens Neighborhood, MK 4415

- Albemarle Center, MK 4416
- North Sharon Amity Neighborhood, MK 4417
- Independence Tower, MK 4418
- Barber Manufacturing Company, MK 4419

The above comments are made pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's Regulations for Compliance with Section 106 codified at 36 CFR Part 800.

Thank you for your cooperation and consideration. If you have questions concerning the above comment, contact Renee Gledhill-Earley, environmental review coordinator, at 919-814-6579 or [environmental.review@ncdcr.gov](mailto:environmental.review@ncdcr.gov). In all future communication concerning this project, please cite the above referenced tracking number.

cc: Mary Pope Furr, NCDOT

[mfurr@ncdot.gov](mailto:mfurr@ncdot.gov)

ER 20-0610



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

ROY COOPER  
GOVERNOR

J. ERIC BOYETTE  
SECRETARY

August 19, 2020

Ms. Renee Gledhill-Earley  
Environmental Review Coordinator, State Historic Preservation Office  
North Carolina Department of Natural & Cultural Resources  
4617 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-4617

Dear Renee:

RE: Historic Structures Survey Report, U-6103—Widen US 74 from I-277 to SR 3143  
(Idlewild Road) in Mecklenburg County PA# 19-07-0021, WBS# 48136.1.1

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes to widen US 74 from I-277 to Idlewild Road in Charlotte. NCDOT contracted Acme conduct a National Register evaluation of twelve properties and six districts in the project area.

The report and survey materials are enclosed for your review and comment per 36CFR.800. Please let me know if you have any additional questions regarding this project. I can be reached at (919) 707-6088 or by email at [sleap@ncdot.gov](mailto:sleap@ncdot.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shelby Reap".

Shelby Reap  
Historic Architecture Team

Attachments

ER 20-

# **HISTORIC STRUCTURES SURVEY REPORT**

for

**US 74 (Independence Boulevard) Express Lanes from I-277  
to Idlewild Road (SR 3143)  
Mecklenburg County  
TIP No. U-6103  
WBS No. 48136.1.1**

**Prepared for:  
Environmental Analysis Unit  
North Carolina Department of Transportation  
1598 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1598**

**Prepared by:  
Acme Preservation Services, LLC  
825C Merrimon Avenue, #345  
Asheville, NC 28804  
828-281-3852**

**July 2020**

# **HISTORIC STRUCTURES SURVEY REPORT**

for

**US 74 (Independence Boulevard) Express Lanes from I-277  
to Idlewild Road (SR 3143)  
Mecklenburg County  
TIP No. U-6103  
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**Prepared by:  
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825C Merrimon Avenue, #345  
Asheville, NC 28804  
828-281-3852**

**July 2020**

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Clay Griffith, Principal Investigator  
Acme Preservation Services, LLC

Date

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Mary Pope Furr, Supervisor  
Historic Architecture Team  
North Carolina Department of Transportation

Date

**US 74 (Independence Blvd) Express Lanes from I-277 to Idlewild Road, Mecklenburg County**  
**North Carolina Department of Transportation**  
**TIP No. U-6103 | WBS No. 48136.1.1**

**MANAGEMENT SUMMARY**

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes to convert two bus lanes in the median of US 74 (Independence Boulevard) for two-way express lanes from I-277 to west of Idlewild Road (SR 3143) in Charlotte. Identified as a strategic highway corridor, Independence Boulevard is a primary east-west route in the region, which has seen significant population growth in recent years. The project calls for converting the existing center bus lanes to two-way express lanes (one in each direction) with limited access points, as well as a potential direct connector between the express lanes and Albemarle Road (NC 27). The project area, which is approximately five miles in length, passes through heavily developed suburban areas southeast of downtown Charlotte. The Area of Potential Effects (APE) for the proposed project generally follows the study area, which is delineated as 150 feet on either side of the centerline of the existing expressway and typically extends to the edges of the existing US 74 (Independence Boulevard) right-of-way. The APE expands to 600 feet in width where Albemarle Road intersects Independence Boulevard.

The project is subject to review under the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement for Minor Transportation Projects (NCDOT/NCHPO/FHWA/USFS 2015). An NCDOT Architectural Historian defined an APE and requested a building inventory to identify and assess all resources approximately fifty years of age or more within the APE. The results of the inventory were presented to all NCDOT architectural historians and they concluded that eighteen resources warranted an intensive National Register eligibility evaluation and they are the subject of this report. NCDOT Architectural Historians determined that all other properties and districts are not worthy of further study and evaluation due to lack of historical significance and/or integrity.

In December 2019, Acme Preservation Services, LLC (APS) completed a reconnaissance-level survey of the APE and prepared a historic architectural resources inventory for 206 properties with resources over fifty years of age. APS reviewed the inventory with NCDOT Architectural Historians on January 17, 2020, to consider the potential eligibility of the recorded properties. NCDOT staff determined that eighteen of the properties appeared to warrant further investigation of their potential eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places (see Appendix A). NCDOT contracted with APS in February 2020 to complete an intensive historic resources evaluation of the eighteen properties identified during the reconnaissance survey. Architectural historians Clay Griffith and Josi Ward conducted fieldwork in March 2020, photographing and mapping the properties, and authored the report. Primary source investigation was limited by local and statewide restrictions imposed due to public health concerns arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Background research was largely conducted through online sources including the Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office, Mecklenburg County GIS, the J. Murrey Atkins Library at UNC-Charlotte, and newspaper archives. The North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office's Mecklenburg County survey files in Raleigh were searched to provide additional architectural context.

After an intensive evaluation following the National Register of Historic Places criteria for eligibility, eleven of the eighteen properties evaluated were found to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Of this number, two properties are potential historic districts, one property was previously listed on the National Register, and five properties were previously placed on the Study List for the National Register or designated as local landmarks. Of the eighteen properties evaluated in this report, the remaining seven properties were found to be not eligible for the National Register. The eligibility of the one National Register-listed and five Study List properties was confirmed through the evaluations for this project. Additionally, a section of the National Register-listed Elizabeth Historic District was recommended for a boundary reduction in 2011. The boundary reduction area covers portions of four blocks located east of Hawthorne Lane and north of Independence Boulevard. The area has been redeveloped into three-, four-, and five-story apartment blocks and townhomes that are out of scale with the rest of the Elizabeth neighborhood.

APS conducted the survey and prepared this report in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Technical Advisory T 6640.8A (Guidance for Preparing and Processing Environmental and Section 4(f) Documents); the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological and Historic Preservation (48 FR 44716); 36 CFR Part 60; 36 CFR Part 800; the HPO's *Report Standards for Historic Structure Survey Reports/Determinations of Eligibility/Section 106/110 Compliance Reports in North Carolina*; and NCDOT's current *Historic Architecture Group Procedures and Work Products*. This property evaluation meets the guidelines of NCDOT and the National Park Service.

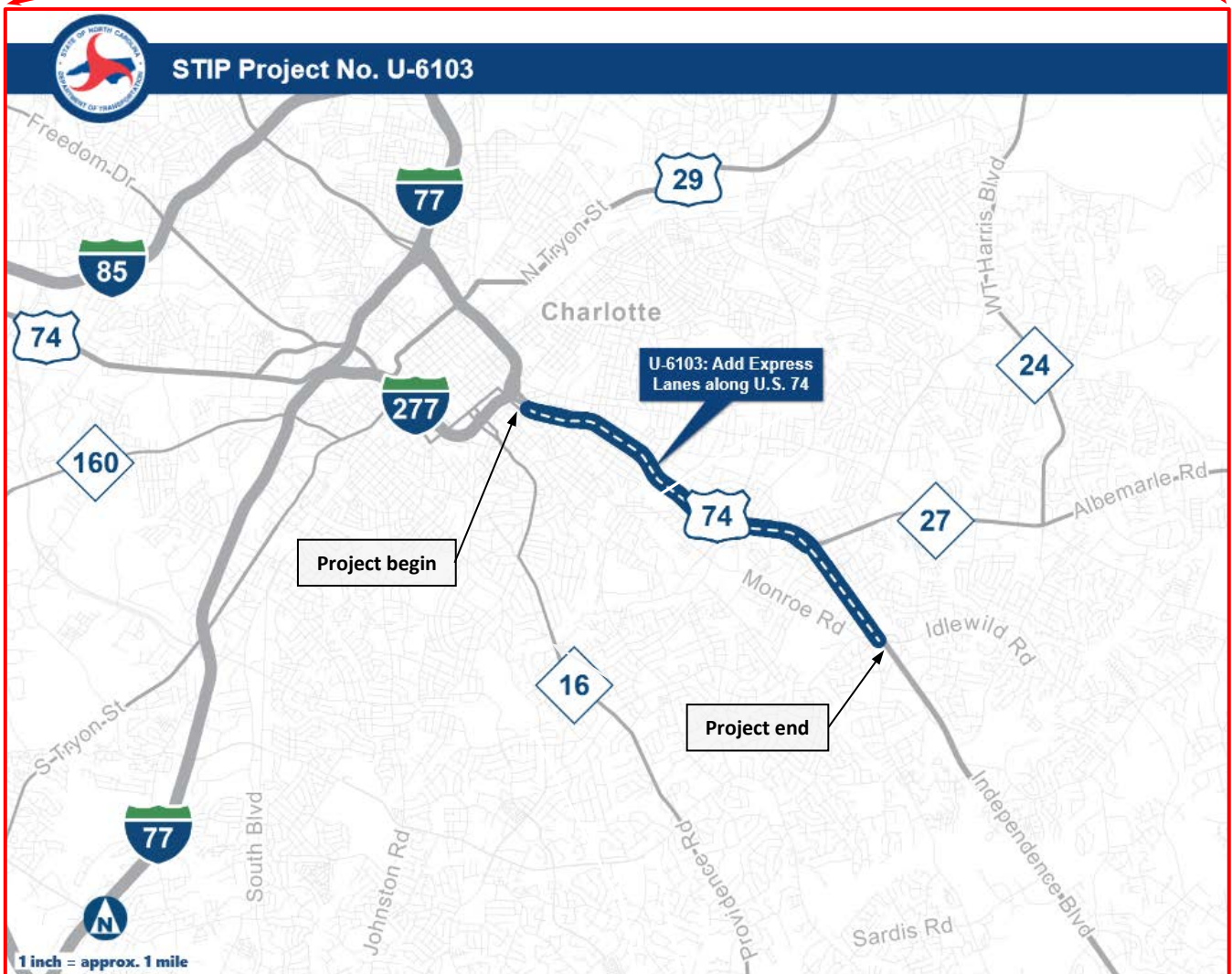
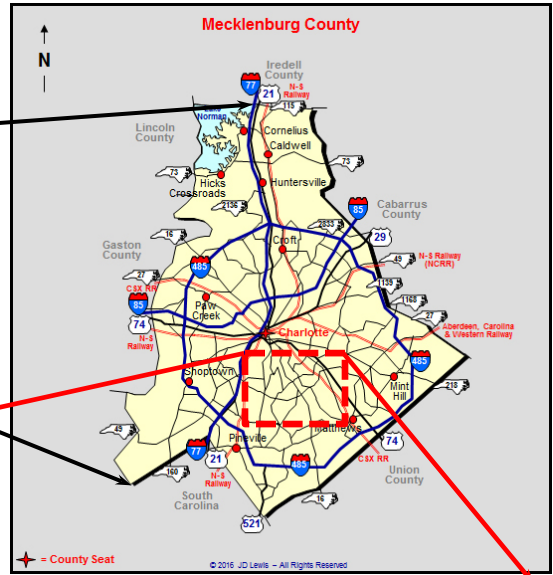
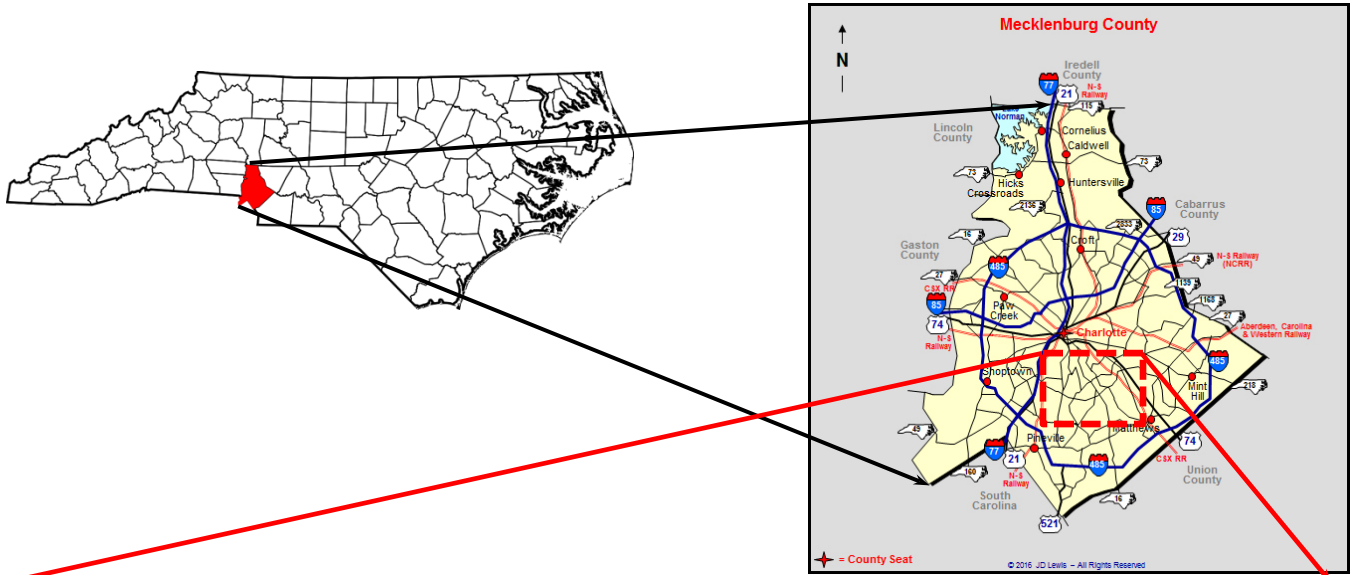
SSN	Property Name	Address	PIN	Eligibility Determination	Criteria
MK0866	Elizabeth Historic District	Central Ave, Seaboard Air Line RR, Bascom St, E 5 <sup>th</sup> St, Kenmore Ave, Park Dr, and E Independence Blvd	Multiple	National Register (1989)	A, C
MK0157	Cole Manufacturing Company	1318 Central Ave	08117722	Eligible (DOE 2006)	C
MK4408	Commonwealth Neighborhood	Commonwealth Ave, McClintock Rd, Westover St	Multiple	Not eligible	
MK2199	Chantilly Neighborhood	Shenandoah Ave, Bay St, Chesterfield Ave, Laburnum Ave, Kingsbury Dr	Multiple	Eligible	A, C
MK4410	Charlotte Merchandise Mart	800 Briar Creek Road	15902109	Eligible	A, C
MK1779	Old Charlotte Coliseum and Ovens Auditorium	2700 E Independence Blvd	15902801	Eligible (DOE 2006)	C
MK2188	J. N. Pease Associates	2925 E Independence Blvd	12910106	Eligible (DOE 2006)	C
MK4411	Coliseum Downtowner Motor Inn	3024 E Independence Blvd	15902713	Not eligible	
MK1781	South 21 Drive-In No. 2	3101 E Independence Blvd	12910110	Eligible (DOE 2006)	A, C
MK4412	Allied Security Building	3601 E Independence Blvd	13109101	Eligible	C
MK4413	North Carolina Savings & Loan Building	3801 E Independence Blvd	13110115	Eligible	C
MK2133	Ervin Building	4037 E Independence Blvd	13111110	Eligible	B
MK4414	Eastway Park Neighborhood	Eastway Dr, E Independence Blvd, Albemarle Rd	Multiple	Eligible	A, C
MK4415	Amity Gardens Neighborhood	Pierson Dr, Buena Vista Ave, N Sharon Amity Rd, E Independence Blvd	Multiple	Not eligible	
MK4416	Albemarle Center	4822 Albemarle Road	13301145	Not eligible	
MK4417	North Sharon Amity Neighborhood	E Independence Blvd, Albemarle Rd, Pierson Dr, Amity Pl, Farmingdale Dr	Multiple	Not eligible	
MK4418	Independence Tower	4801 E Independence Blvd	13302539	Not eligible	
MK4419	Barber Manufacturing Company	5300 E Independence Blvd	16303227	Not eligible	



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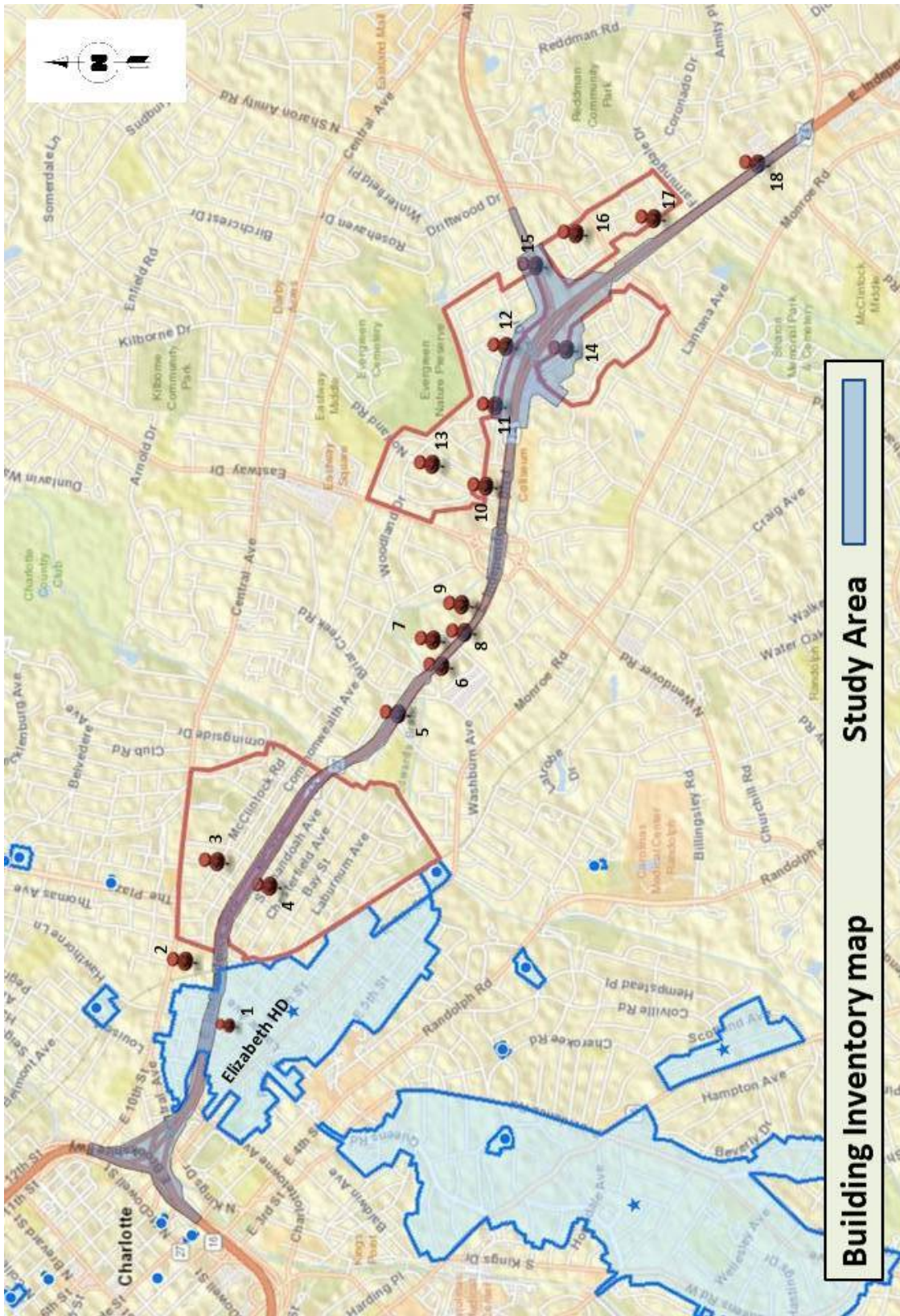
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# I. Project Location Maps





Project Location and Study Area Map (HPOWeb 2.0 GIS Mapping)



Inventory Map (HPOWeb 2.0 GIS Mapping)

## II. Introduction

NCDOT proposes improvements to US 74 (Independence Boulevard) from I-277 to west of Idlewild Road (SR 3143) in Charlotte, Mecklenburg County. The project calls for converting two existing bus lanes in the median of US 74 (Independence Boulevard) to two-way express lanes (one in each direction) with limited access points, as well as a potential direct connector between the express lanes and Albemarle Road (NC 27). The Area of Potential Effects (APE) for the proposed project is generally delineated as the study area for the project. The APE typically extends 150 feet on either side of the centerline of the existing expressway and frequently corresponds with the edges of the existing US 74 (Independence Boulevard) right-of-way. The APE expands to 600 feet in width where Albemarle Road intersects Independence Boulevard.

Approximately five miles in length, the project area is located in the south-central portion of Mecklenburg County and southeast of Charlotte's central business district. Identified as a strategic highway corridor, Independence Boulevard extends from the perimeter of downtown into the suburbs. The project area is generally characterized as a multilane, median-divided urban expressway with interchanges at major intersecting roads and two center transit lanes. Originally opened in 1949, Independence Boulevard is a primary east-west route in the region, which has seen significant population growth in recent years, and is bordered by continuous commercial and residential development.

In December 2019, Acme Preservation Services, LLC (APS) completed a reconnaissance-level survey of the APE and prepared a historic architectural resources inventory for 206 properties with resources over fifty years of age. APS reviewed the inventory with NCDOT Architectural Historians on January 17, 2020, to consider the potential eligibility of the recorded properties. NCDOT staff determined that eighteen of the properties appeared to warrant further investigation of their potential eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places (see Appendix A). NCDOT contracted with APS in February 2020 to complete an intensive historic resources evaluation of the eighteen properties identified during the reconnaissance survey. The evaluations of those properties are documented in this report.



**View east along Independence Boulevard (US 74) to Hawthorne Lane Bridge near project beginning**



**View east along Independence Boulevard (US 74) in vicinity of Chantilly and Commonwealth neighborhoods**



**View northwest along Independence Boulevard near Rockway Drive**



**View southeast along Independence Boulevard near Rockway Drive**



**View northwest along Independence Boulevard near Charlotte Coliseum to Briar Creek Road interchange**



**View southeast along Independence Boulevard near Charlotte Coliseum and Ovens Auditorium**





**View east along Independence Boulevard from Norland Road**



**View west along Independence Boulevard from Wilshire Place**



**View east along Independence Boulevard to interchange with Albemarle Road (NC 27)**



**View southwest along Albemarle Road (NC 27) to intersection with Independence Boulevard**



**View east along Albemarle Road from Pierson Drive**



**View southeast along Independence Boulevard from North Sharon Amity Road**



**View northwest along Independence Boulevard**



**Project end, view southeast along Independence Boulevard to Idlewild Road (SR 3143)**

### III. Methodology

APS conducted the initial field survey for the proposed improvements to US 74 (Independence Boulevard) in Mecklenburg County in November and December 2019, and all properties thought to be over fifty years of age within the APE were photographed and recorded. Preliminary research on the project area was conducted by consulting with the Mecklenburg County GIS and tax records, and information provided through the county's GIS typically included a year built, which provided a preliminary list of resources over fifty years of age based on the available data. Additional research was conducted through the Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds office, J. Murrey Atkins Library at the University of North Carolina Charlotte, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission (CMHLC), and the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office's Mecklenburg County survey files in Raleigh. Historic maps and city directories were also consulted to gain basic information about dates of construction, general patterns of development, and specific occupants or tenants.

A search of the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (HPO) mapping system (<http://gis.ncdcr.gov/hpoweb>) revealed eight previously recorded properties within the APE and another six properties proximate to the APE. The previously recorded resources within the APE include the National Register-listed Elizabeth Historic District (MK0866), which spans both sides of Independence Boulevard, and five resources on the Study List for the National Register. The Study List properties include the Cole Manufacturing Company (MK0157), Old Charlotte Coliseum (MK1779), J. N. Pease Associates Building (MK2188), South 21 Drive-In No. 2 (MK1781), and the Ervin Building (MK2133). Additionally, the Charlotte Coliseum is designated a local landmark by the CMHLC.

During the initial reconnaissance field survey, 206 properties with primary resources over fifty years of age were determined to be located within or adjacent the APE for the project. The properties were documented and a historic building inventory was submitted to NCDOT in December 2019. The vast majority of recorded properties are unremarkable or heavily altered examples of common commercial and residential building types and frequently display material alterations, such as synthetic siding and replacement windows, or additions that compromise their historic integrity. Many of the resources directly adjacent to Independence Boulevard are typically commercial structures constructed after the road opened in 1949 with surface parking lots, large signage, and a considerable set-back from the road.

APS presented the inventory to NCDOT's Historic Architecture Team on January 17, 2020, to review the potential eligibility of the inventoried properties. NCDOT staff determined that 188 of the properties did not appear to be potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and did not warrant further investigation. Six of the remaining properties were either previously listed in, or determined eligible for, the National Register and warranted further review to confirm their continued eligibility and boundaries. Twelve of the inventoried properties were considered to possess significance and potential eligibility for the National Register and merited additional research and context development to make a full determination.

In February 2020, NCDOT retained APS to document the eighteen eligible and potentially eligible properties described and evaluated in this report. Supplementary survey work was

conducted and photographs were taken in March and April 2020 by Clay Griffith of APS and Josi Ward of Foreground Consulting. Extensive background research for each of the properties was conducted through the Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office and GIS department, as well as other online resources including newspaper archives, genealogical records, the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library's Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room, and websites for individual business and local organizations. Historic aerial photographs for the Independence Boulevard corridor were reviewed through the NCDOT Historic Aerial Imagery Index.

The HPO's Mecklenburg County survey files at the Office of Archives and History in Raleigh were searched in December 2019, during the preliminary phase of the project, to provide additional architectural context. Five historic architectural resources survey reports prepared for the HPO were also reviewed for general context information. The survey reports represent the results of two phases of the Charlotte Comprehensive Architectural Survey (2014 and 2015), a survey of industrial and institutional resources (2001), a survey of post-World War II resources (2000), and African American Resources in Mecklenburg County (2002). NCDOT files for earlier improvement projects to US 74 (Independence Boulevard) provided additional data and background information.

Primary source investigation for the project was limited by state and local restrictions imposed due to public health concerns arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Interior inspections, in particular, were generally not available due to business closures as a result of local stay-at-home orders. Most individually evaluated resources were viewed through first-story windows, entrances, atriums, and lobbies to the extent possible but thorough interior inspections were not available. While many resources are available online, in-person visits to repositories such as the Atkins Library at UNC Charlotte and the Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room were not possible. The availability of these additional resources is not likely to have impacted the evaluations completed in this report, but it is possible that more extensive research and investigation could augment the documentation provided in this report.

## IV. Historical Background and Architectural Context

The city of Charlotte, affectionately known as “the Queen City,” takes its name from young Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, who married King George of England in 1761 to become Queen of Great Britain and Ireland. From its eighteenth century origins along a Native American trading path, the settlement bearing Queen Charlotte’s name emerged from the Civil War with a growing population of industrious newcomers that began transforming the rural courthouse town into the largest city in the Carolinas. The intersection of two roads—Trade Street and Tryon Street—became the center of Charlotte and the four wards, or quadrants, of the city helped physically organize its future growth. Bolstered by an advantageous location, Charlotte became a hub of activity in the late nineteenth century, served by four railroads and powered by the Catawba River to the west. Commercial and industrial growth invigorated the local economy, and Charlotte emerged as the trading and financial center of the nation’s predominant textile manufacturing region. As Charlotte came to epitomize the New South city of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, its prosperity was contagious and attracted an abundance of hard-working, visionary businessmen and women who built and rebuilt the city into a sprawling metropolis of the present.<sup>1</sup>

The seeds of Charlotte’s rise began with the discovery of gold in Cabarrus County and surrounding areas at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Conrad Reed’s accidental unearthing of a seventeen-pound nugget on Little Meadow Creek was the earliest authenticated discovery of gold in the United States and soon drew attention to the region. By the 1830s, area mines yielded sufficient quantities of gold ore to warrant a request for a branch of the federal mint; otherwise, local gold had to travel to Philadelphia by stagecoach to be minted into coins or to Christopher Bechtler’s private mint in Rutherford County. In 1835, a branch mint was authorized by President Andrew Jackson for the tiny outpost of Charlotte, whose population barely eclipsed 1,000 people. Renowned architect William Strickland drew the plans for the U. S. Mint in Charlotte, which opened in 1837 on West Trade Street and produced an impressive amount of gold coins from local ore over the next two decades. The Charlotte Mint established the town as a place of importance within the region and laid the groundwork for its future evolution into a national financial center.<sup>2</sup>

The growing town, like a magnet, attracted an impressive number of talented and productive individuals who helped influence its trajectory in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. James B. Duke (1856-1905) of the powerful American Tobacco Company became interested in harnessing the rivers of Piedmont North Carolina to produce energy and, with the help of Dr. W. Gill Wylie and William S. Lee, dammed the Catawba River at Great Falls in South Carolina below Charlotte to begin generating electricity. Duke and his partners formed the Southern Power Company, dammed the Catawba River at other locations in North Carolina,

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Frederick Marsh and Blanche Marsh, *Charlotte: Carolinas’ Queen City* (Columbia, SC: The R. L. Bryan Company, 1967), 1-2; Catherine W. Bishir and Michael T. Southern, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Piedmont North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 502-503.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Kratt, *Charlotte, North Carolina: A Brief History* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2009), 59-65.

erected long-distance transmission lines, and began supplying electricity to Piedmont towns and textile mills in North and South Carolina.<sup>3</sup> The rise of cotton mills and textile production in the Carolinas was greatly assisted by the efforts of mill designer and builder Daniel A. Tompkins (1851-1914), a tireless promoter of the southern textile industry who published his highly influential book, *Cotton Mill: Commercial Features*, in 1899. The mill villages planned by Tompkins initiated a wave of population growth as the labor force moved into more urban settings, and the increasingly urban population spurred an expansion of retail services to keep up with the growing city. Merchants J. B. Ivey and William H. Belk established bustling networks of stores requiring clerks, sales people, and managers, like David Ovens, to serve the community.<sup>4</sup>

Industrialist Edward Dilworth Latta (1851-1925) contributed across many facets of Charlotte society. Born in South Carolina, Latta moved to Charlotte in 1876 to operate a clothing store, which he later sold to begin buying and developing real estate. He purchased 1,000 acres on the outskirts of town, formed a construction company, and built an electric streetcar line to develop the city's first suburb, Dilworth. The electric streetcar was critical to expanding the boundary of the city beyond the original four wards. In addition to the residential district of Dilworth, Latta's streetcar delivered citizens to the popular amusement grounds of Latta Park, where his construction company built a lake and large pavilion. Near the railroad tracks, Latta developed a portion of his property for industrial concerns including the Atherton Mill, Charlotte Trouser Company, and Charlotte Pipe and Foundry. The growing city benefitted greatly from Latta's involvement, which included the erection of several substantial commercial buildings in the business district and invested in the Highland Park Land Company to develop other residential suburbs.<sup>5</sup>

Latta's streetcar suburb helped lead the way for a city boasting the motto "Watch Charlotte Grow" and needing to expand its boundaries. The Greater Charlotte Club coined the phrase, which went on to gain widespread acceptance. The organization, a precursor to the Chamber of Commerce, formed in 1905 to promote the city and attract businesses and investors. The city's population continued to climb steadily from 11,500 residents in 1890 to 18,000 in 1900, and then nearly doubled in the first decade of the twentieth century, eclipsing 34,000 by 1910.<sup>6</sup> The growing citizenry needed housing and developers were acquiring farmland close to the city to subdivide for residential suburbs. Paul Chatham owned a 500-acre cotton and dairy farm that was later subdivided for Chatham Estates, Chantilly, and Midwood. Several smaller farms were subdivided for the developments that became the Elizabeth neighborhood. In 1911, Charlotte banker George Stephens called upon landscape designer John Nolen to transform nearly 1,200

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 84-88; Bishir and Southern, 55-57.

<sup>4</sup> Kratt, 89-90, 92-95; Marsh and Marsh, 67.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 100-103; John R. Rogers and Amy T. Rogers, *Charlotte: Its Historic Neighborhoods* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 1996), 45-49; Chalmers G. Davidson, "Latta, Edward Dilworth," NCPedia, 1991, accessed February 20, 2020, <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/latta-edward-dilworth>.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas W. Hanchett, *Sorting Out the New South City: Race, Class and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 2.



acres of farmland belonging to his father-in-law, John S. Myers, into an exclusive residential suburb with wide curving streets, shady trees, and stately homes.<sup>7</sup>

The nation's entry into World War I necessitated training sites for American soldiers, and civic boosters including Mayor Frank McNinch, Cameron Morrison, and David Ovens lobbied officials in Washington hoping to secure a military camp for Charlotte. Camp Greene rose quickly on 2,600 acres west of the city and approximately 1,000 structures were erected in a little over a month. With 60,000 soldiers at the camp, the number of servicemen outnumbered city residents and ignited the local economy. Despite long periods of rainy weather, a harsh winter, and the influenza epidemic, the hospitality extended to Camp Greene troops enticed many to return to Charlotte after the war, resulting in a population surge during the 1920s.<sup>8</sup>

With Camp Greene dismantled, Charlotte's suburbs became home to more than 36,000 new residents in the 1920s, joining the city's existing population of 46,000 citizens. New homes were built for buyers across the spectrum of income levels and the flurry of construction activity attracted and engaged a number of talented architects, who helped give physical form to the city. Several had been working in the city since the late nineteenth century, including D. A. Tompkins, Willard G. Rogers (1863-1947), and Charles Christian Hook (1870-1938). A prolific designer, Hook worked in a wide range of styles for a wide range of building types, but was noted for his steadfast promotion of the Colonial Revival style. Similarly, Louis H. Asbury (1877-1975) and James M. McMichael (1870-1944) designed a number of elegant buildings in a range of styles, though McMichael was best known for his church designs. William W. Smith (1862-1937), an African American brickmason and contractor, designed and built a good number of buildings for the black community in Charlotte. Marion R. Marsh (1893-1977) arrived a bit later but contributed a number of distinctive buildings, especially in the Chantilly area, which was originally platted in 1913, but did not begin to see significant development until the 1930s.

The thirty year period following World War II was transformational for the City of Charlotte, a time of equal importance to its initial settlement and the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. After World War II it appeared that the white patriarchy, which had controlled so much of the city's early twentieth century history, would continue to dominate. And it did for a while as evidenced by the creation of Independence Boulevard. Mayor Herbert Baxter announced his desire to leverage \$200,000 of municipal bonds in order to secure \$2 million of federal money for the construction of a crosstown expressway. Angry residents of Elizabeth, Piedmont Park, and Chantilly decried the mayor's plans to funnel traffic through the densely developed residential areas east of Charlotte and accused city officials of selecting the route as a political favor to former mayor Ben Douglas, who owned large amounts of land on the east side of town.<sup>9</sup>

The proposed expressway plan was devised by James B. Marshall, a talented engineer born and educated in South Carolina. Marshall came to Charlotte in the 1920s and served as city

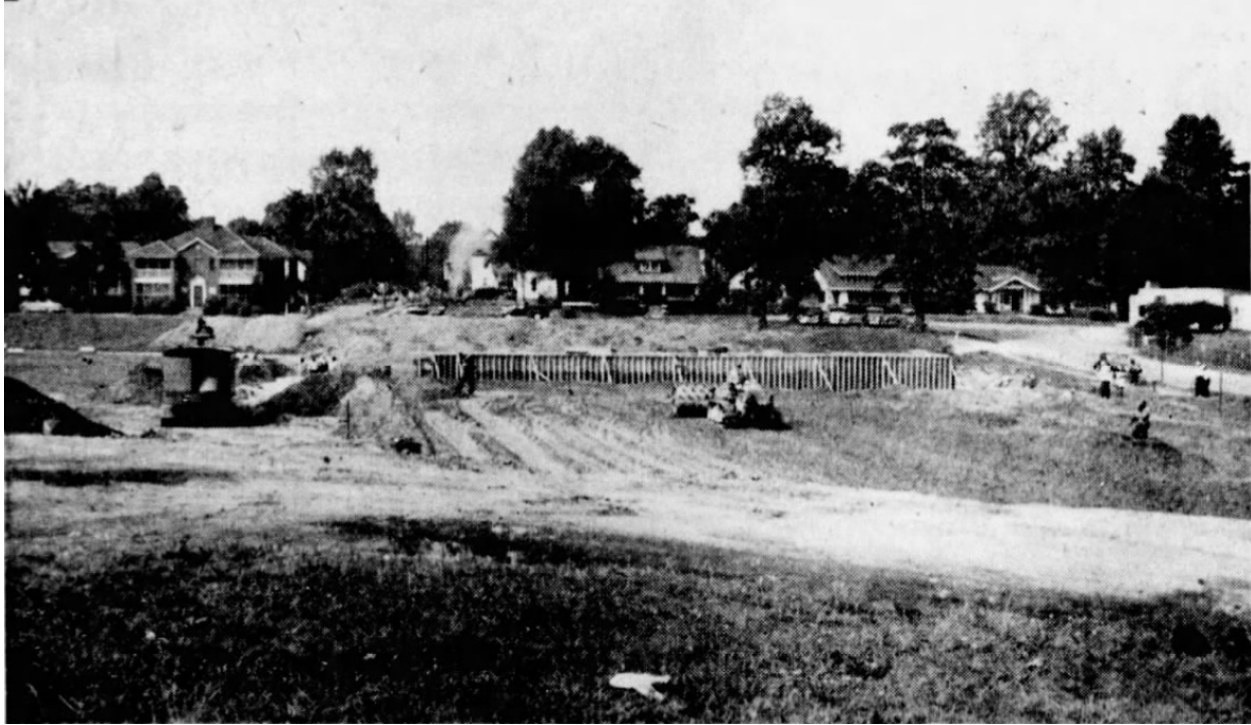
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<sup>7</sup> Rogers and Rogers, 57-62; Bishir and Southern, 519-520, 522-523.

<sup>8</sup> Kratt, 113-116.

<sup>9</sup> Dan L. Morrill, *Historic Charlotte: An Illustrated History of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County* (San Antonio, TX: Historical Publishing Network, 2001), 82.

manager during Douglas' tenure as mayor (1935-1941). Marshall moved to the private sector in 1941, and joined the engineering department of J. N. Pease Associates. In 1946, the Charlotte Planning Board hired Marshall as a consultant to prepare a master plan for city streets following a comprehensive traffic survey by the State Highway Commission that recommended the construction of crosstown boulevards to relieve congestion in the central business district. Mayor Baxter, a Boston native who trained at Camp Greene during World War I before returning to Charlotte in the 1920s to run a successful lumber business, and other city leaders recognized the importance of highways to Charlotte's position as a major trucking and distribution center.<sup>10</sup>



**“Working on Crosstown Boulevard”** (*The Charlotte News*, June 15, 1948)

A deal to endorse the route of the new crosstown expressway occurred during an informal dinner at the Myers Park Country Club, where Herbert Baxter was president. Public outcry convinced city leaders to adjust their proposed route, which was, in turn, deemed unsuitable for an expressway by federal officials. The Federal government, as the principal financial backer of the new highway, reverted to the proposed route through the Elizabeth, Piedmont Park, and Chantilly neighborhoods. The contract for the new expressway was approved in March 1947, with work to begin immediately on the eastern section. Ben Douglas, in his role as a State Highway

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<sup>10</sup> Morrill, 83-84; Pete McKnight, “The Crosstown Boulevard,” *The Charlotte News*, June 2, 1947; “Past Mayors,” City of Charlotte, <https://charlottenc.gov/Mayor/PastMayors/Pages/BenDouglas.aspx>; accessed May 26, 2020.

Commissioner, presented the contract, which only required the city pay one-third of the right-of-way costs, to City Council.<sup>11</sup>

The crosstown boulevard remained a contentious issue even though most Charlotte residents came to terms with its inevitability. Condemnation proceedings for Douglas' property at the intersection of Elizabeth Avenue and Fox Street were reviewed in superior court to avoid any impropriety due to his position as a highway commissioner. The presence of a survey crew on McClintock Road, two blocks north of the proposed route along Westmoreland Avenue, stoked fear of an alignment change and resulted in a flurry of telegrams to local and state officials, senators, congressman, and even General Omar Bradley, head of the Veterans Administration, whose agency was planning to construct a hospital on McClintock Road. The new thoroughfare opened in April 1949.<sup>12</sup>

The opening of Independence Boulevard was a crucial piece of the outward expansion of Charlotte on its east side. Construction of the new expressway placed greater emphasis on the role of the automobile in post-war society and exposed some ugly truths about wealth and mobility. Just as city buses replaced streetcars in the 1930s and allowed people to live further from their where they worked or shopped, the automobile pushed the suburbs further afield, decreasing travel times and increasing mobility. In the 1950s, when a new civic coliseum and auditorium were planned for a site on Independence Boulevard outside the city center, it signaled a significant change in the forces that shaped the city. New highways and expressways built upon Charlotte reputation as a transportation hub beginning with the railroad network created in the late nineteenth century and reinforced with the airport development in the 1930s, which



**“Looking west on Independence Boulevard”** (The Charlotte News, February 9, 1965)

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<sup>11</sup> Morrill, 84; “City Council Plans Hearing Tuesday on Proposed Cross-Town Boulevard,” *The Charlotte News*, October 9, 1946; Dick Young, “Route Would Follow Line First Chosen by Engineers,” *The Charlotte News*, March 11, 1947; Porter Munn, “Boulevard Condemnation Proceedings Under Way,” *The Charlotte Observer*, January 6, 1948.

<sup>12</sup> “Boulevard Fight Is Flaring Anew,” *The Charlotte News*, February 5, 1947; Dick Young, “Crosstown Blvd. Open to Traffic,” *The Charlotte News*, April 4, 1949.

began as a Works Progress Administration project bolstered by Mayor Ben Douglas (1937-1941).<sup>13</sup>

Federal money available through New Deal relief programs also played a significant role in reconfiguring the east side of the city. As Charlotte historian Tom Hanchett wrote, “Civic leaders discovered that [federal] money could do more than simply aid the unfortunate. Officials utilized New Deal dollars to reinforce the desirability of Charlotte’s east side, particularly the southeast sector.”<sup>14</sup> Following the model of the exclusive Myers Park neighborhood, the city’s thinly developed southeast side was ideal for suburban expansion.<sup>15</sup> Most importantly, newly available mortgage insurance provided by the Veterans Administration (VA) and Federal Housing Administration (FHA) made it possible for developers to build houses for middle-income buyers. Before these policies were in place, most loans were for only five years, and required at least 50 percent down at the time of purchase, which made them accessible only to the wealthy. Federal mortgage insurance made it feasible for the banks to loan veterans 30-year mortgages sizable enough to purchase single-family homes as well as automobiles.



**Independence Boulevard, ca. 1960, view east from Albemarle Road** (*Historic Charlotte*, 83)

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<sup>13</sup> Marsh and Marsh, 129.

<sup>14</sup> Hanchett, 227.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

The terms of VA and FHA loans also dictated the form of development. Both types of federal loans followed the precedent set by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), which assessed credit risk on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis nationwide. HOLC loans were biased toward new neighborhoods populated by white residents, which received the coveted A-rating while older, mixed-use neighborhoods and those with African American residents were given lower grades. FHA and VA programs reinforced the segregation and homogeneity begun by the HOLC. The FHA Underwriting Manual explicitly preferred segregation by race and income level, and called for subdivisions whose design ensured separation through winding streets that limited outside access by not connecting to existing, dominant thoroughfares. In order to ensure that neighborhoods followed these preferences, banks strongly favored working with developers such as Charlotte's Ervin Company that did everything from buying vacant farmland to laying out the streetscapes to selling the completed houses.<sup>16</sup>

These two factors—accessible mortgages and vehicles—were what primarily led to the suburban boom in urban America at large and Charlotte in particular when coupled with the city's explosive post-war population growth.<sup>17</sup> After surpassing 100,000 residents in 1940, the population doubled to more than 200,000 by 1960 and over 350,000 by 1970. The population increases were ascribed to both new residents and the expansion of the city limits into the suburbs.<sup>18</sup> Hanchett also attributes the automobile-centric model for development in southeast Charlotte to the Charlotte Coliseum (see #6), which set a standard for including large swaths of parking areas into development plans. Convenience for the automobile began to dominate planning along Independence Boulevard as it stretched beyond the streetcar suburbs of Elizabeth, Chantilly, and Plaza-Midwood. Shopping malls, office parks, and restaurants were all developed with the automobile-driving suburban consumer in mind.<sup>19</sup>

As city leaders embraced Charlotte as a “dynamic city on the move” at mid-century, architects and builders adopted European-influenced Modernism to create the new image of the city as a center of progressive design.<sup>20</sup> Modernist architecture began to take hold in North Carolina with the opening of the experimental Black Mountain College near Asheville in the 1930s and the School of Design at North Carolina State University in the late 1940s. Graduates of the School of Design often found their way to Charlotte, where they started careers working for two of the most prominent firms working in the Modernist style, most notably those of A. G. Odell and J. N. Pease.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 229-233.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 229-233; Sarah A. Woodard and Sherry Joines Wyatt, “Motorized Landscape: The Development of Modernism in Charlotte, 1945-1965,” Multiple Property Documentation Form, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, 2000, 1, 12.

<sup>18</sup> “Charlotte: A Good Place To Live, A Good Place To Do Business,” (*The Charlotte News*, 1954), 2; Woodard and Wyatt, 5-6.

<sup>19</sup> Hanchett, 241.

<sup>20</sup> “Charlotte: New City of the ‘70s,” 6; Woodard and Wyatt, 24-27.

Son of a wealthy Concord textile family, Arthur Gould Odell Jr. (1913-1988) studied civil engineering at Duke University before earning an architecture degree from Cornell and training at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Despite his more conservative education, Odell moved to Charlotte and established his practice in 1939, decrying the city's lack of modern architecture while recognizing its booming economy. Odell rose to prominence with the design and construction of the Charlotte Coliseum and Ovens Auditorium, although it was the coliseum's 332-foot unsupported dome that garnered the most attention. Odell designed numerous schools, libraries, churches, and office buildings. Odell's growing firm became an important training ground for School of Design graduates, many of whom organized new firms and were replaced with new architecture school graduates. Odell considered it "a great advantage to have the continuing benefit of the enthusiasm and stimulation of young designers."<sup>21</sup>

Another important Charlotte architect whose education predated the formation of the School of Design was J. Norman Pease (1885-1987), who came to Charlotte in 1920 to manage an office for Lockwood Greene Engineers, a South Carolina firm active in the design and construction of textile mills. After a stint in New York, Pease returned to Charlotte in 1938 and partnered with architect James A. Stenhouse to form J. N. Pease and Associates. Pease rose to prominence designing water works and sewage disposal plants and completing large scale projects for the military. Following World War II, the Pease firm became the largest architecture and engineering company in the state and undertook projects of nearly all types with the notable exception of private residences.<sup>22</sup> Pease, like Odell, hired a number of graduates of the School of Design that, in turn, influenced the company's Modernist designs. Pease's son, Norman Pease Jr. (1921-2009) studied at the School of Design before earning a degree from Auburn University and joining his father's firm. The younger Pease became company president after his father retired.<sup>23</sup>

A growing number of developers and builders emerged to supply housing to the city's increasing population. Dwight L. Phillips (1905-1973), who grew up on his father's dairy farm in the Sharon section of the city, became one of the first twentieth-century builders to exert extensive influence in the city and help steer its future growth. Phillips got his start building affordable homes in the Chantilly and Revolution Park neighborhoods, but during World War II his company began to erect housing for the military in Jacksonville, North Carolina, which led to extensive contracts for military housing in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. After the war, Phillips turned his attention to the housing shortages in Charlotte and secured FHA funding to build a number of houses in Chantilly, as well as the Morningside and Briar Creek apartments. Built in 1949-1950, the Morningside Apartments (no longer standing) comprised 42 two-story buildings built in a park-like setting and offering more than 300 apartments. The complex was a good example of superblock apartments, surrounded by green space and planted with shade trees.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> "The Architect and His Community," *Progressive Architecture*, May 1957, 116-118; Bishir, 522.

<sup>22</sup> "Pease Firm Opens Big New Boulevard Office Building," *The Charlotte News*, March 14, 1959.

<sup>23</sup> "Pease Firm Turns 40," *The Charlotte Observer*, November 19, 1978.

<sup>24</sup> Morrill, 146-147; Jason L. Harpe and Brad Guth, "Survey and Research Report on the Morningside Apartments," Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission Designation Form, January 23, 2006, n.p.; Loye Miller, "Dwight Phillips: Mecklenburg's Mystery Man," *The Charlotte Observer*, May 5, 1958.

While Phillips worked extensively building single- and multi-family housing in Charlotte, he was involved—often quietly—in other significant commercial, industrial, and civic projects. Phillips sold the site of the Charlotte Coliseum and Ovens Auditorium to the city and owned the parking lot that served the facility. He privately financed the Charlotte Merchandise Mart and built the Coliseum Motor Court to take advantage of visitors coming to the new entertainment and convention facilities on Independence Boulevard. He erected shopping centers, restaurants, and the 32-story Wachovia Center in Winston-Salem. Phillips was one of five businessmen responsible for bringing a \$12 million nuclear plant to Anson County and was an investor in the Westport development at Lake Norman. He was active in the local Democratic Party and, although he never ran for public office himself, enjoyed significant influence behind the scenes.<sup>25</sup>

Rutherford County native Charles C. Ervin (1924-2006) began his career as a bricklayer in the Navy, and attended an officer training program at Duke University. After his service in World War II, Ervin returned to Charlotte to manage grocery stores and married Mary Frances Underdown of Lenoir County.<sup>26</sup> Charles Ervin, along with one his brothers, E. L., a carpenter, began construction a home for the newlyweds and before they were finished had been commissioned to build four more for other veterans and young couples.<sup>27</sup> The Ervin brothers, with encouragement from Mary Frances Ervin, launched a homebuilding company that soon evolved from a family-run business to the largest homebuilder in the southeast.<sup>28</sup>

Inspired by the assembly line home construction pioneered by Levitt & Sons in Long Island, New York, whose Levittown had become a national icon of post-war suburban living, the Ervin Company began to buy large swaths of undeveloped farmland at the outskirts of the city and to build entire subdivisions. A map of the Ervin Company's subdivisions under development in 1955, shows seven projects encircling Charlotte and generally lying just beyond the city limits.<sup>29</sup> The company also streamlined construction, building blocks of houses at a time following the model of an assembly line. Specialized crews worked sequentially on each lot: first the lot would be cleared, making way for a foundation crew, which was followed by a framing crew, a masonry crew, a plastering crew, a trim crew, and finally the landscaping and painting crews.<sup>30</sup>

The Ervin Company did not limit itself to home construction. As the company built subdivisions, frequently adjacent to one another, Ervin began constructing shopping centers to serve homeowners moving into their neighborhoods, and likewise make the neighborhoods more appealing to potential investors. By 1963, the company had built three large shopping centers in

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.; Emery Wister, "Five Charlotteans Behind the Atom Project," *The Charlotte News*, April 8, 1958.

<sup>26</sup> "Charles Conger Ervin," obituary, *The Charlotte Observer*, June 5, 2006.

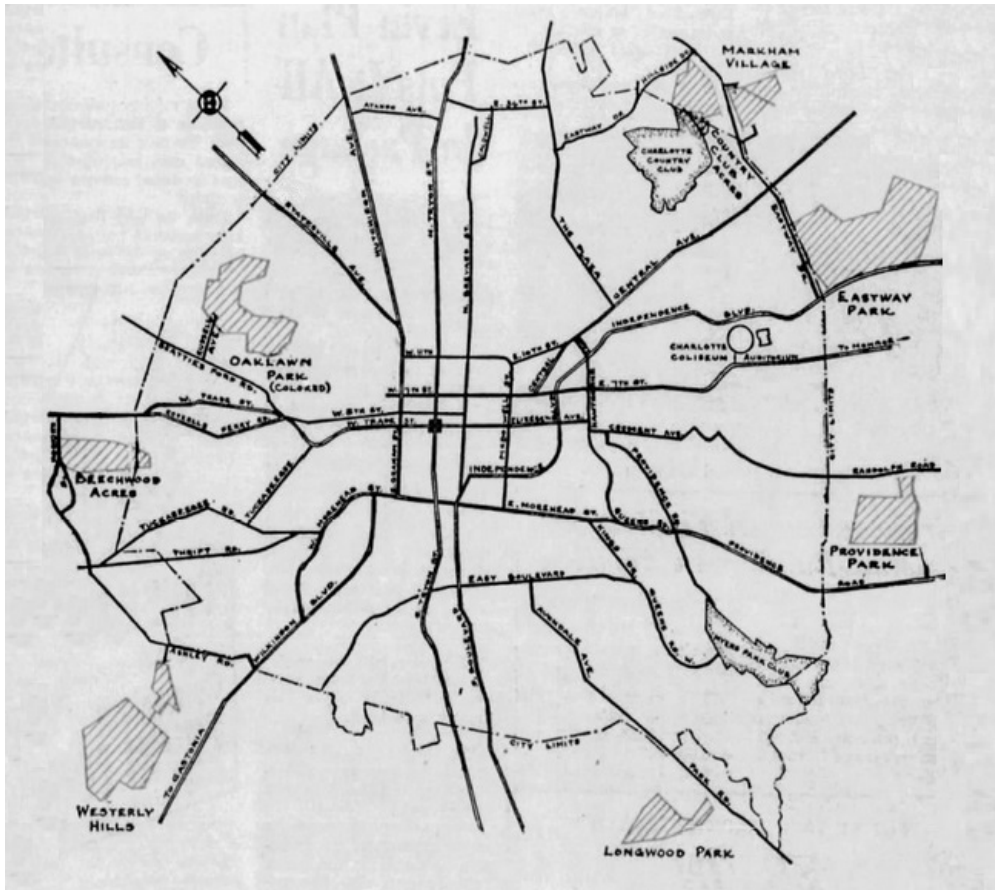
<sup>27</sup> "Ervin Brother Began By Helping Each Other," *The Charlotte News*, July 26, 1952.

<sup>28</sup> "Mary Ervin," obituary, *The Charlotte Observer*, January 24, 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Ervin Construction Special, *The Charlotte Observer*, October 23, 1955.

<sup>30</sup> "Ervin Construction Co. Has Specialized System," *The Charlotte News*, July 25, 1952; "Construction Co. Can Look Back on Busiest May," *The Charlotte News*, June 14, 1952.

Charlotte suburbs, including the Amity Gardens Shopping Center<sup>31</sup> In 1968, the company expanded to open Hallmark Galleries, a home-furnishing store at 6500 East Independence Boulevard that was conceived as a one-stop interior decoration shop for prospective homebuyers. Floor coverings, paint colors, drapes, furniture, appliances, fixtures were all offered in store. In opening the store, Ervin again modeled itself after Levitt & Sons, and became the first construction firm in the southeast to do so.<sup>32</sup>



**Subdivisions Under Development by the Ervin Company** (*The Charlotte Observer*, October 23, 1955)

The Ervin Company was one of four leading suburban development firms in Charlotte following World War II, including C. D. Spangler Construction, the John Crosland Company, and the Lex Marsh Company. While these builders and developers were adapting to the regulations attached to FHA and VA financing, the curvilinear street became a prominent feature of modern suburban development, breaking from the gridded street patterns of early twentieth century and transitional neighborhoods. Curvilinear streets offered aesthetic advantages and allowed a layout to follow the natural contours of the land, but the institutionalized and bureaucratic influences on subdivision design, such as standardization of curvilinear street use, created a degree of socio-

<sup>31</sup> “Ervin Starts Big Project,” *The Charlotte Observer*, February 10, 1959.

<sup>32</sup> “Ervin Offers One-Stop Furnishings,” *The Charlotte Observer*, July 21, 1968.



economic fragmentation across the city. As a result, the south and east sides of Charlotte catered heavily to affluent and middle-class white families while African American were increasingly steered to the northwestern side of the city.<sup>33</sup>

While a cadre of Modernist architects were helping to shape the city and define its architectural character through sleek corporate offices, simple brick and concrete boxes with glass entrances for commercial activities, and flat-roofed and angular school buildings, the residential architecture of Charlotte evolved more slowly. Residential construction grew at a tremendous rate following World War II, but the pressures of construction and suburban sprawl wielded greater influence than the pursuit of new architectural forms. The Cloisters neighborhood (MK2115) is one of the few identified neighborhoods in Charlotte that displays a higher than average concentration of fully developed Ranch houses, split-levels, and Modernist-influenced residences.

The majority of documented post-World War II and suburban neighborhoods in Charlotte are defined by a preponderance of Minimal Traditional and modest Ranch houses, commonly described as the Rectangular Ranch form. The term Ranch house describes the low, informal one-story houses that dominated American residential construction in the post-war period. Builders and homebuyers increasingly embraced the rambling, open-plan Ranch house form in the 1960s and 1970s, but the earlier Rectangular Ranch form featured a more compact plan and touches of traditional, typically Colonial Revival, detailing. These modest one-story dwellings were often finished with brick veneer, a façade picture window, and an uncovered entry stoop or shallow porch. In an Ervin Company subdivision these homes could be customized with additional exterior façade materials, a decorative front-facing gable, or an engaged single-bay carport.<sup>34</sup>

Residential neighborhoods and subdivisions full of Minimal Traditional, Ranch houses, split levels, and contemporary dwellings radiate out from the city center and early streetcar suburbs like the growth rings of a tree marking the steady expansion of Charlotte through the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The construction of the crosstown expressway, Independence Boulevard, in the late 1940s provided a vital artery for businesses and city services to reach into the countryside and allowed developers to convert farmland into vast tracts of housing for the city's booming population in the post-war period. Although the east side of Charlotte was transformed by commercial and residential development along Independence Boulevard, shifting centers of population in the 2000s continue to define Charlotte as a dynamic city on the move.

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<sup>33</sup> Woodard and Wyatt, 10-11, 33-36; Marvin A. Brown, *Intensive-Level Historic Architectural Analysis for Conversion of High Occupancy Vehicle Lanes to High Occupancy Toll Lanes on I-77 between I-277 and I-85, Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, TIP No. I-5405*, Report for North Carolina Department of Transportation, Raleigh, NC, December 2012, 4-13.

<sup>34</sup> Woodard and Wyatt, 47-48.

## V. Property Descriptions and Evaluations

### Inventory No. 1

Resource Name	<b>Elizabeth Historic District</b>
HPO Survey Site Number	MK0866
Location	Roughly bounded by Central Avenue, Seaboard Air Line Railway, Bascom Street, East 5 <sup>th</sup> Street, Kenmore Avenue, Park Drive, and East Independence Boulevard
PIN	Multiple
Date(s) of Construction	1900-1941 (Period of Significance)
Eligibility Recommendation	National Register listed, 1989; Eligible – A, C (community planning and development, architecture, landscape architecture)



**Houses and commercial buildings, Pecan Avenue, west side, view to southwest**

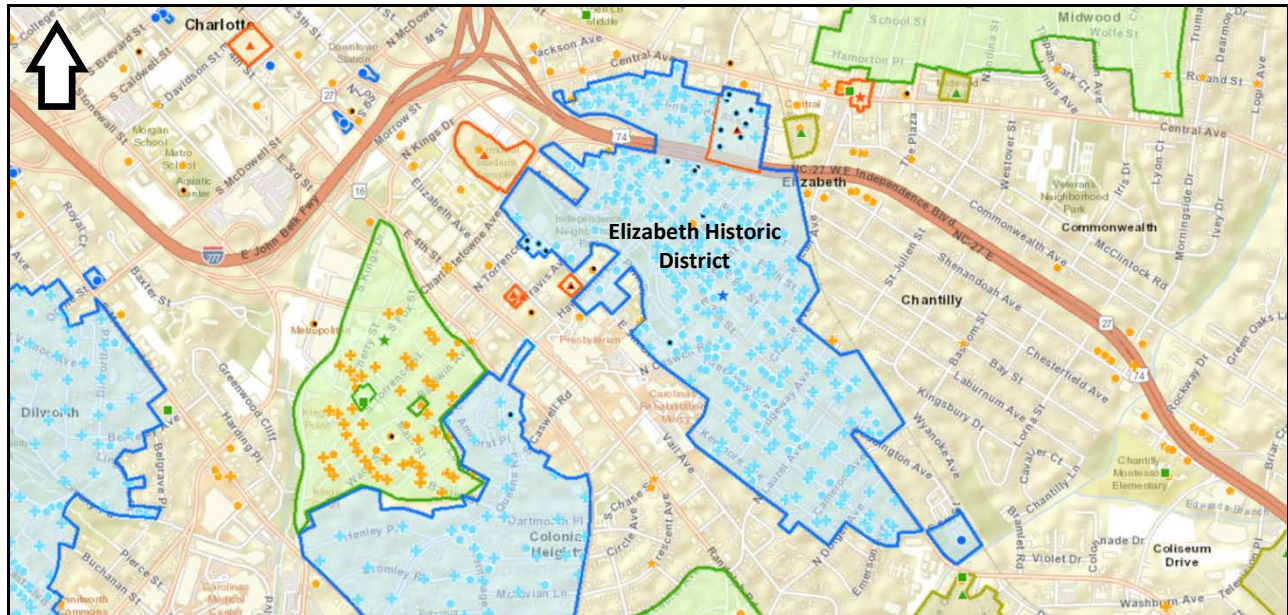
#### *Description*

The Elizabeth Historic District is an early-twentieth-century suburban residential neighborhood encompassing approximately 265 acres and lying one mile east of Charlotte’s central business district.<sup>35</sup> The irregularly shaped district comprises all or part of five subdivisions platted or opened for sale between 1891 and 1915, as well as the city’s first public park, Independence Park. The subdivisions that compose the Elizabeth Historic District include Highland Park (1891), Piedmont Park (1900), Oakhurst (1900), Elizabeth Heights (1904), and Rosemont (1915). The irregular shape of the district is attributable, in part, to the boundaries of the nineteenth-century farms that were

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<sup>35</sup> The inventory, historical background, and significance are adapted from Allison Harris Black, “Elizabeth Historic District,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, NC, 1988.

purchased and platted for the different subdivisions. The district nomination documents 1,058 resources that include nearly 900 contributing resources. The historic district contains a large collection of early-twentieth-century residential construction rendered in a variety of popular architectural styles, as well as an elementary school, churches, commercial buildings, and the 43-acre Independence Park.



**Elizabeth Historic District, National Register of Historic Places, 1989 (HPOWEB 2.0 GIS Mapping)**

Reflecting its distinction as the city's second streetcar suburb, the Elizabeth Historic District contains approximately 83 percent residential buildings including single-family dwellings, duplexes, triplexes, quadraplexes, and apartment buildings. All of the multi-family housing was built during the late 1920s and 1930s. While the majority of buildings were constructed during the period from 1910 to the beginning of World War II, a small number of houses date from the first decade of the twentieth century. Houses throughout the district display a range of popular early twentieth century domestic architectural styles including Colonial Revival, Craftsman, and Tudor Revival. Many of these are one-, one-and-a-half-, and two-story frame and brick veneer dwellings for middle to upper-middle income families. Most are in the bungalow mode and likely derived from stock plans provided by builders or from popular magazines and pattern books. The district also contains examples of more substantial and stylish architect-designed houses, including the imposing Colonial Revival-style home of prominent businessman William Henry Belk designed by C. C. Hook. No architect has been identified for the handsome Colonial Revival-style W. Reynolds Cuthbertson House (MK1158) on East 9<sup>th</sup> Street and the stylish shingled houses of John B. Alexander and Walter L. Alexander on Clement Avenue (MK0136 and MK1037, respectively), but their design sophistication strongly suggests an architect's hand at work.

Among the non-residential buildings, architects have been identified for several churches. In 1925, James M. McMichael designed St. John's Baptist Church in the Neo-Classical Revival style.



**John B. Alexander House (MK0136), 509 Clement Avenue, oblique view to north**



**Golden House (MK0143), 1701 East 8<sup>th</sup> Street, view to northeast**



**House, 2205 Kenmore Avenue, view to northeast**



**Houses, 2000 block East 5<sup>th</sup> Street, view to northwest**



**St. John's Baptist Church (MK0149), 300 Hawthorne Lane, view to southeast**



**Hawthorne Lane United Methodist Church (MK0956), 501 Hawthorne Lane, view to northwest**



**Harris Apartments (MK1145), 425 Hawthorne Lane, oblique view to west at East 8<sup>th</sup> Street**



**Houses, 400 block Beaumont Avenue, view to southwest**

McMichael contributed a three-story education building to the Gothic Revival-style Hawthorne Lane United Methodist Church, which was designed by Louis Asbury in 1916. Asbury also designed several houses in the neighborhood. Architect Fred L. Bonfoey designed a number of houses and apartment houses in the district, and Willard G. Rogers designed the Classical Revival-style Elizabeth Elementary School in 1925.

Independence Park was one of the earliest commissions executed by noted landscape architect John Nolen. Established in 1905, the park originally covered 54 acres and occupied the former site of the city reservoir. Nolen's original plans for the park have been lost, but the size and location of some of the trees and shrubbery indicate areas where portions of the original plantings survive. A smaller park and rose garden developed in the Piedmont Park section were lost during the construction of East Independence Boulevard in the late 1940s.

While the Elizabeth Historic District maintains much of its character as a quiet residential suburb, the area has undergone a number of changes that have threatened its special qualities. Two hospitals—Mercy and Presbyterian—were established south of the neighborhood in the early twentieth century. The two hospitals lie outside the district boundaries, but expansion and enlargement of both facilities has encroached upon the southern edges of the district. The construction of Independence Boulevard in the late 1940s split portions of the Piedmont Park and Oakhurst sections on both sides of the expressway and resulted in the destruction or relocation of houses within the path of the road. The expressway also introduced new commercial development and gas stations along its route, as well as increased traffic and new intersections. Grade-separated interchanges were constructed for Hawthorne Lane and Pecan Avenue in the late twentieth century.

Like all of Charlotte in recent years, the Elizabeth Historic District has faced new development pressure for residential and commercial construction. Older, established neighborhoods with architectural diversity and proximity to the city center have attracted new residents, which has, in turn, spurred extensive redevelopment opportunities. While some of the rehabilitation work and infill construction is compatible with the scale and character of the neighborhood, some of the new work has been less compatible, especially in terms of scale and density. In particular, one two-block area north of Independence Boulevard between Hawthorne Lane and Lamar Avenue has been determined eligible for a boundary reduction due to the construction of four- and five-story apartment blocks that loom over the surrounding historic fabric. Marvin Brown identified the boundary reduction area in 2006 as part of an intensive historic architectural resources survey for the Center City Street Car Corridor (ER 05-2463).<sup>36</sup> Brown noted that 25 of the 34 listed resources had been demolished, leaving only nine contributing resources standing on the east side of Lamar Avenue.

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<sup>36</sup> Marvin A. Brown, *CATS Center City Street Car Corridor Intensive-Level Historic Architectural Survey* (Report for Charlotte Area Transit System, Charlotte, NC, July 2006), 21-28.



## *Historical Background*

The Elizabeth Historic District is an irregularly shaped early twentieth century suburban residential neighborhood east and southeast of Charlotte's central business district. The areas south and east of downtown Charlotte began to develop in the late nineteenth century as prosperity and population growth followed the advent of the region's textile industry. While Charlotte emerged as an important hub for textile production and distribution, a range of directly related and auxiliary businesses arose that served both the mills and a growing middle class. Edward Dilworth Latta began operating the city's first streetcar line in 1891 and laid out the first streetcar suburb, Dilworth, to the south of the city. The area of the Elizabeth Historic District soon followed as the second streetcar suburb.

Latta was an investor in the Highland Park Land Company that purchased the 65-acre Shannonhouse Farm east of town for development as a residential suburb in 1891. The Highland Park subdivision was organized along Elizabeth Avenue, which originated from East Trade Street, and several cross streets in a grid plan. The streetcar line was extended from East Trade Street to Elizabeth Avenue before turning north onto what became Hawthorne Lane. As Charlotte's population grew, Elizabeth Avenue became an extension of East Trade Street's upper-income enclave.

At the turn of the century, the Piedmont Realty Company and Oakhurst Land Company organized to develop additional suburban areas immediately north of Highland Park. B. D. Heath, president of the Charlotte National Bank, was the principal stockholder in both companies. The Piedmont Realty Company purchased an 86-acre farm from Colonel W. R. Myers on the Lawyers Road, an old farm road that connected the courthouse in Charlotte with the courthouse in Wadesboro, county seat of Anson County. The company set aside six acres for the eponymous Piedmont Park, and Lawyers Road (present-day Central Avenue) became the site of numerous substantial residences, including the homes of Heath and department store owner J. B. Ivey. Heath bought an adjacent farm, which was laid out for the Oakhurst subdivision.

Further development occurred with the organization of Elizabeth Heights in 1904, which was platted on land owned by W. S. Alexander adjoining the other subdivisions. Independence Park was commissioned in 1905 on a low-lying site that formerly contained the city water reservoir. The city's park commission hired John Nolen, who was completing his final year of study in landscape architecture at Harvard University, to lay out the interior design of the park. Nolen was subsequently hired by the Rosemont Company to provide a plan for developing the Henry C. Dotger Farm beyond Seventh Street. The only evidence of Nolen's suggestions in the Rosemont subdivision is the curving extension of East Fifth Street to an intersection with East Seventh Street.

The city limits of Charlotte were extended in 1907 to encompass the growing number of suburban neighborhoods, including the group of subdivisions that came to be known as Elizabeth. The area's name originated with the sale of a prominent hilltop site within Highland Park for the creation of a women's college. Following a substantial financial donation from tobacco magnate Gerald S. Watts and his son, George Watts, the college was named for Elizabeth Watts, wife and mother to Gerald and George respectively. In 1915, the school merged with Roanoke College and moved to Salem, Virginia, but the name "Elizabeth" had become inseparable from the surrounding area.

Through all of the twentieth-century changes that have affected the district, residents in the neighborhood have forged a strong sense of identity. The Elizabeth Community Association was organized in 1970 to preserve the neighborhood’s historic character and special qualities. In the 1990s, the neighborhood association worked with NCDOT to implement mitigation measures during other improvement projects to Independence Boulevard. Foremost among these projects was the design of overpass bridges for Hawthorne Lane and Pecan Avenue to be aesthetically compatible with the historic character of the district.<sup>37</sup>

### *Evaluation*

The Elizabeth Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in January 1989. The 265-acre historic district represents the development of suburban neighborhoods around Charlotte in response to the city’s tremendous and increasing prosperity in the early twentieth century, which resulted in a pressing need for a broad range of housing. The district also contains a good collection of early-twentieth-century residential architecture, as well as one of the earliest known commissions by noted landscape architect John Nolen. The most significant alteration to the physical fabric of the district—the construction of Independence Boulevard—occurred prior to its listing in the National Register, and its presence was accounted for and assessed in the district nomination.

One area of the historic district has undergone a dramatic transformation in recent years and has been recommended for a boundary reduction. The area lying north of Independence Boulevard between Hawthorne Lane and Lamar Avenue has been redeveloped with four- and five-story apartment blocks out of scale with the rest of the neighborhood. The boundary reduction area also includes new three-story townhomes erected on the east side of Lamar Avenue between East Independence Boulevard and Sunnyside Avenue. Four multi-family buildings dating from the late 1920s and early 1930s will also be removed from the district due to their location on the east side of Lamar Avenue north of Sunnyside Avenue.

For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Elizabeth Historic District appears to remain **eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C for community planning and development, architecture, and landscape architecture. The district generally retains its integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Although changes have occurred within the district, the overall character and historical significance of the area remain intact and taken as a whole the district retains sufficient integrity to remain eligible. The proposed boundary reduction in the northeast section of the historic district was determined eligible in 2011 and remains eligible due to a loss of integrity and historic structures. The boundary reduction area is located on both sides of Sunnyside Avenue east of Hawthorne Lane.

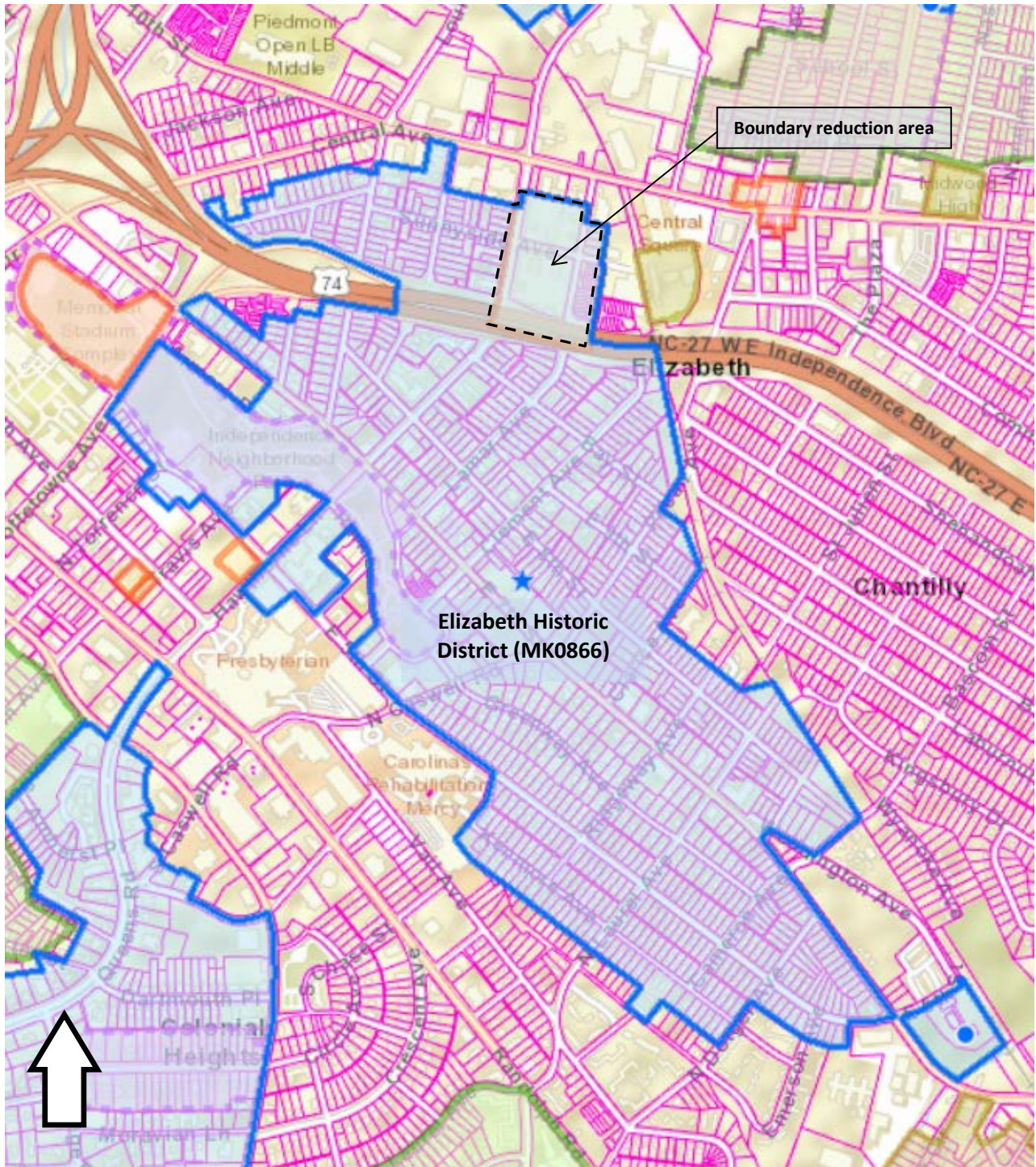
### *Boundary Description and Justification*

The National Register boundary of the Elizabeth Historic District is outlined and shaded on the attached map from HPOWEB 2.0, the HPO’s web mapping application. It abuts the north and south

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<sup>37</sup> Richard C. Gaskins Jr. to Sandra Stepney, May 4, 1994, NCDOT project archive, TIP No. U-209C.

limits of the Independence Boulevard right-of-way from Charlottetown Avenue interchange to the Seaboard Air Line Railway tracks. The proposed boundary reduction area is delineated by a dashed line in the northeast section of the historic district.



**Boundary Reduction Area – Elizabeth Historic District, National Register of Historic Places, 1989**  
(HPOWEB 2.0 GIS Mapping)



**Elizabeth Historic District Boundary Reduction – Elizabeth Square Apartments, Sunnyside Avenue, view to southeast**



**Elizabeth Historic District Boundary Reduction – Metro 808 Apartments, Sunnyside Avenue, view to northwest**



**Elizabeth Historic District Boundary Reduction – contributing resources, 800 block Lamar Avenue, view to northeast**



**Elizabeth Historic District Boundary Reduction – Midwood Square Townhomes, Lamar Avenue, view to southeast**

## Inventory No. 2

Resource Name	<b>Cole Manufacturing Company</b>
HPO Survey Site Number	MK0157
Location	1318 Central Avenue
PIN	08117722
Date(s) of Construction	ca. 1912, ca. 1963, ca. 2000
Eligibility Recommendation	Eligible – C (architecture)



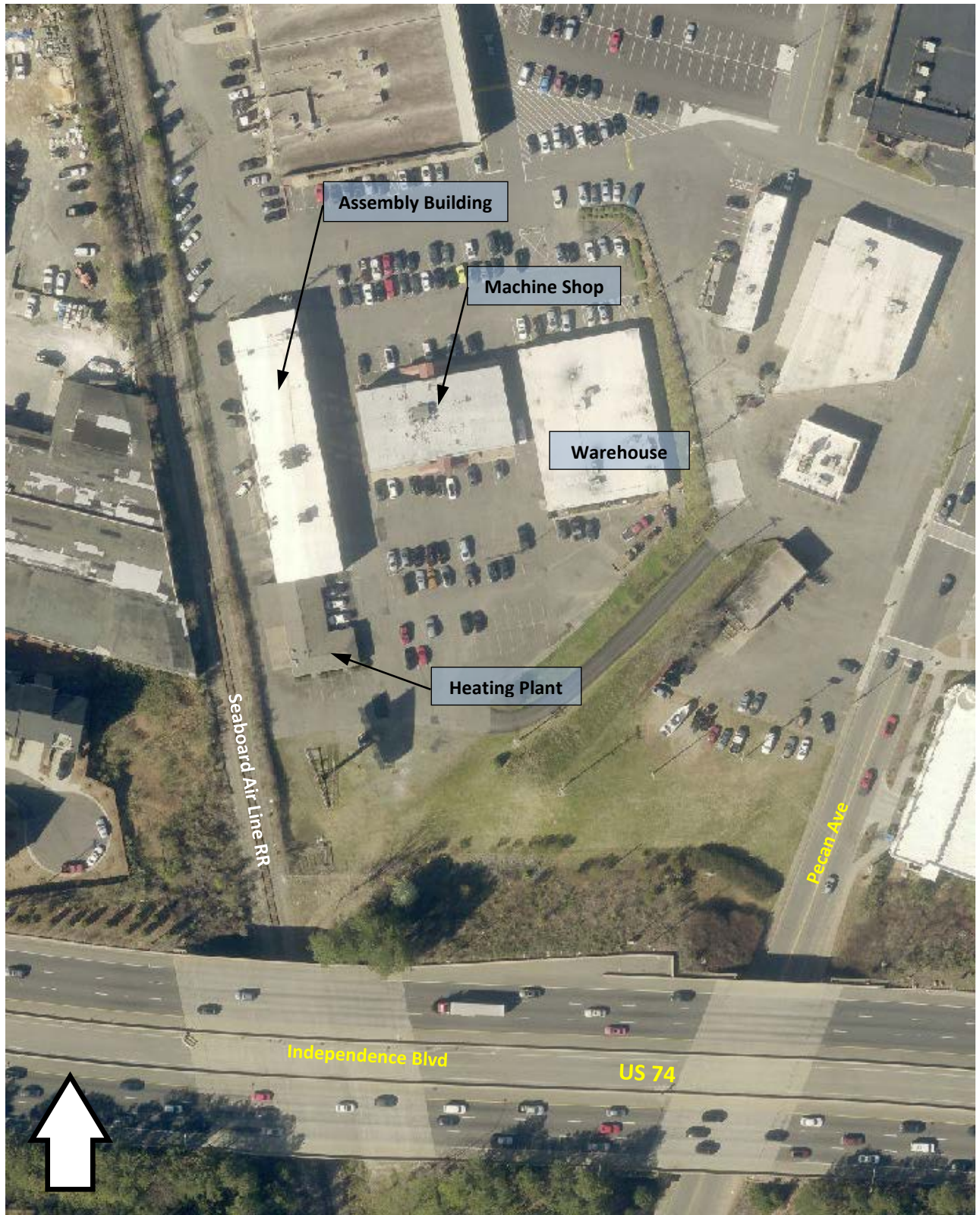
**Cole Manufacturing Company Plant, 1318 Central Avenue, view to northwest**

### *Description*

The Cole Manufacturing Company plant consists of three buildings occupying a 4.5-acre site lying adjacent to the Seaboard Air Line Railway tracks and immediately north of the right-of-way for US 74 (Independence Boulevard). Two of the three buildings are surviving components of an early-twentieth-century multi-building complex developed for the manufacture and distribution of agricultural implements.<sup>38</sup> Completed around 1912, both two-story Romanesque Revival-style industrial buildings were designed by important local architect Charles Christian Hook (1870-1938). The third building on the site is a one-story warehouse erected in the early 1960s for the Cole Manufacturing Company, which ceased operation in 1988. The buildings and site were rehabilitated around 2000 for commercial and retail use with the remainder paved for parking.

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<sup>38</sup> The following historical descriptions and background information is adapted from Stewart Gray and John A. Morrice, "Survey and Research Report on the Cole Manufacturing Company Plant, Charlotte, North Carolina," Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission Designation Form, November 2002.



**Site Plan – Cole Manufacturing Company, 1318 Central Avenue**  
(Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)



**Machine Shop (l) and Assembly Building (r), view to southwest**



**Machine Shop, oblique view to northeast**





**Assembly Building, east elevation, view to north**



**Heating Plant, north elevation, view to south**



**Heating Plant, view to northwest**



**Warehouse, view to northeast**

The largest building in the complex stands parallel to the railroad tracks and contains approximately 23,000 square feet. Built in 1909-1911, the two-story brick structure with round-arch window openings originally served as the **Assembly Building**. The building is nineteen bays long by five bays wide and is capped by a low-pitched gable roof. It features round-arch window bays, a corbelled belt course below the window openings, and an attached metal walkway and exterior stairs on the east elevation to provide access to the second story. The window bays have pilasters with corbelled capitals, header-course archivolt, concrete spandrels, and cast-concrete keystones. Original sash has been replaced with aluminum-frame plate-glass windows, and some of the window openings have been converted to doorways. The long elevations are punctuated by three bays with raised, flat parapets containing decorative brick panels. The five-bay end elevations have an oversized central bay, corbelled cornices, and raised decorative brick panels in the gable end. A one-story gable-roof wing attached to the south elevation connects the Assembly Building with a previously freestanding hip-roof heating plant, which displays round-arch openings with cast-concrete keystones and decorative brick banding and corbelling.

Standing in the middle of the site, the **Machine Shop** is a two-story brick building with round-arch windows and a low-pitched side-gable roof. Built in 1909-1911 and similarly finished as the Assembly Building, the Machine Shop is eleven bays long and five bays wide. Only the center bay of the Machine Shop's long elevations displays the raised parapet detail. The windows on both stories of the center bay have been replaced with double-leaf metal entrance doors. An attached gable-roof metal porch shelters the entrances. A straight run of stairs on either side of the porch rises to the second-story landing. Metal-clad gable roofs cover each set of stairs. The center bays of the end elevations have been bricked in with double-leaf metal entrance doors added on the first story.

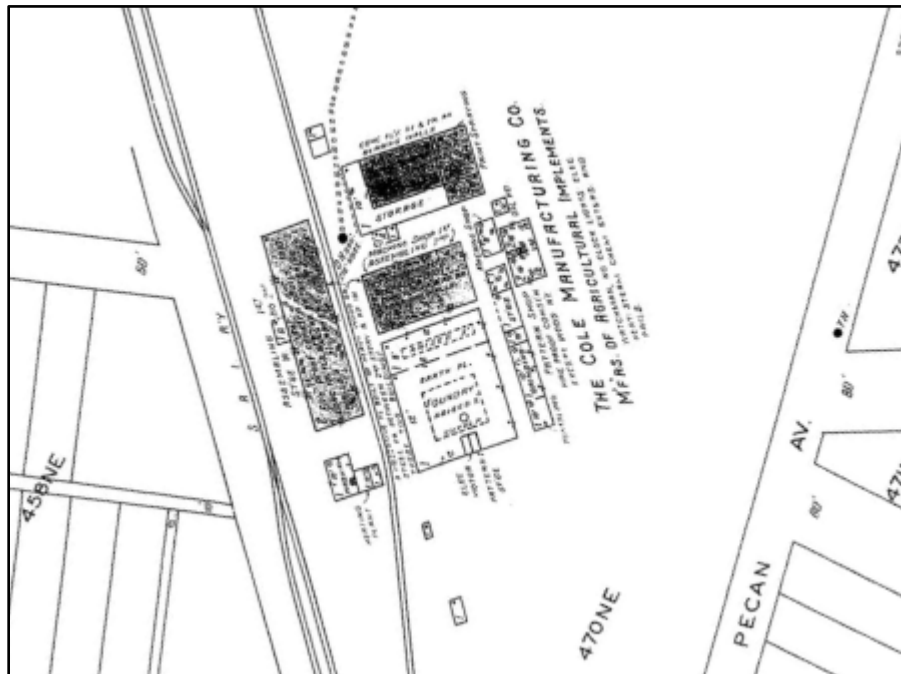
Built around 1963, a one-story **warehouse** containing approximately 11,000 square feet is located near a grass embankment that forms the eastern boundary of the site. The brick building is laid in running bond and capped by a flat roof. The plain exterior is pierced by single-leaf metal doors, square windows located on the upper walls, and a garage bay at the southeast corner of the building. A floor-to-ceiling metal-frame window unit is located at the southwest corner, which originally connected to the ca. 1912 grinding shop. The shop wing fell into disrepair by the mid-1980s and was removed in the early 1990s.

### *Historical Background*

Brothers E. M. and E. A. Cole founded the Cole Manufacturing Company in Charlotte in 1900 to manufacture agricultural implements, primarily an innovative seed planter beneficial to cotton farmers. E. M. Cole invented and patented the seed planter while working on the family farm in Chatham County. The pioneering design became widely popular and led to the factory becoming the largest facility in the world devoted solely to manufacturing seed planters and fertilizer spreaders. The economic growth stimulated by textile mill development in the region resulted in the creation of affiliated supply, finance, and distribution businesses; thus construction of the Cole plant in Charlotte resulted from the city's prominence in the textile industry. While the number of textile mills in Mecklenburg and surrounding counties encouraged diversification, the associated

industries and businesses likewise benefitted from Charlotte’s location as a hub for multiple road and rail connections.

The first Cole Manufacturing plant, built soon after incorporation, stood on the north side of Central Avenue adjacent to the Seaboard Air Line Railroad. As the seed planter gained in popularity, the Cole brothers developed a guano spreader around 1903 that further served cotton farmers across the country. By 1906, the company outgrew its original facility and purchased fourteen acres across Central Avenue for its expanding production needs. In 1909, Cole Manufacturing Company engaged prominent local architect C. C. Hook to design a new manufacturing facility. Hook, who established his practice in 1893 and designed numerous important buildings across the Piedmont, is credited with introducing the Colonial Revival style to Charlotte. He found favor with industry magnates in the region and designed an impressive number of stately Colonial Revival-style homes in Charlotte and other thriving industrial towns.



**Cole Manufacturing Company, 1929** (Sanborn Map from Charlotte, North Carolina, 1929, Vol. 2, sheet 258)

Construction began on the Cole Manufacturing Company plant in 1909 and was nearly complete by 1911. The complex consisted of six principal buildings and several secondary structures with a spur track separating two buildings from the others. At the center of the complex was the two-story machine shop. A woodworking shop (no longer standing) stood to the north and the foundry (no longer standing) to the south. The one-story foundry was notable for its wide hip roof and raised pyramidal-roof clerestory. Along the east side was located the grinding house (no longer standing), along with several smaller structures that served as a machine shop, pattern shop, oil house, and storage. This group of smaller structures was razed for construction of a new one-story warehouse in the 1960s. The assembly building and heating plant were located between the Seaboard Air Line Railway and the spur track that ran through the site.

C. C. Hook designed the buildings in the Romanesque Revival style with brick exteriors, round-arch window bays, decorative corbelling, and low-pitched gable roofs. The buildings incorporated an advanced structural design for their construction, which relied on a poured concrete frame with square posts to support the poured concrete floor and roof systems. The exteriors of the assembly building and machine shop feature two-story arched openings with recessed panels, corbelled pilaster capitals, cast-concrete keystones, and corbelled cornices on the narrow ends. The center bay of each elevation is larger than the others, and a raised flat parapet is present on the long elevations above the center bay and contains a decorative brick panel.

Following the death of the Cole brothers in the 1940s, a third brother, E. O. Cole, a Methodist minister, ran the company for nearly a decade with diminishing results. Jean Cole Hatcher (1910-1980), daughter of E. A. Cole, assumed leadership of the company in 1953. Hatcher recounted that as a child she had been the most interested of her siblings in the business, tagging along with her father to the plant when she was young and gaining a seat on the board in 1942. The company rebounded with the change in leadership and by 1961 had sold more than two million seed planters, fertilizer spreaders, and grain drills. Hatcher retired in 1972, and her son, John Cole Hatcher, became president of the firm. The company ceased operations in the early 1980s and was sold to the Powell Manufacturing Company. The Covington Planter Company of Albany, Georgia, purchased Cole Planters in 2003 from Powell Manufacturing.<sup>39</sup> The Charlotte plant was later rehabilitated and converted for use as office and retail space.

### *Evaluation*

The Cole Manufacturing Company was placed on the Study List for the National Register in October 2001 at the conclusion of a county-wide survey of industrial and education-related sites. The property was subsequently determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places in 2006 as part of a Section 106 review in association a study of historic architectural resources for the Charlotte Area Transit System. The Cole Manufacturing Company survives as an intact and good local example of early twentieth century industrial architecture designed by an important local architect. The one- and two-story Romanesque Revival style buildings integrate innovative fireproof construction technology with the classically-influenced elements of the brick exterior. Noted Charlotte architect C. C. Hook designed the facility for the company, which manufactured specialized agricultural equipment including cotton planters and guano spreaders. The Cole Manufacturing Company plant “represents Charlotte’s growing industrial diversity in the early 1900s as superior rail connections and the investment capital generated by the textile mills attracted a variety of industries to the city.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> “Company History,” Cole Planter Company, 2009, accessed February 20, 2020, <http://www.coleplanter.com/history.htm>; Douglas Helms, “Cole Manufacturing Company,” NCpedia, 2006, accessed February 20, 2020, <https://www.ncpedia.org/cole-manufacturing-company>; Oral History Interview with Jean Cole Hatcher, June 13, 1980, Southern Oral History Program Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, accessed February 20, 2020, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/H-0165/H-0165.html>.

<sup>40</sup> Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc., “Phase II Architectural Resources Survey Report, Southeast Corridor Rapid Transit and Highway Project, Charlotte Area Transit System, Mecklenburg County,” Report for Gannett Fleming, Inc., Charlotte, NC, November 18, 2005, 29.

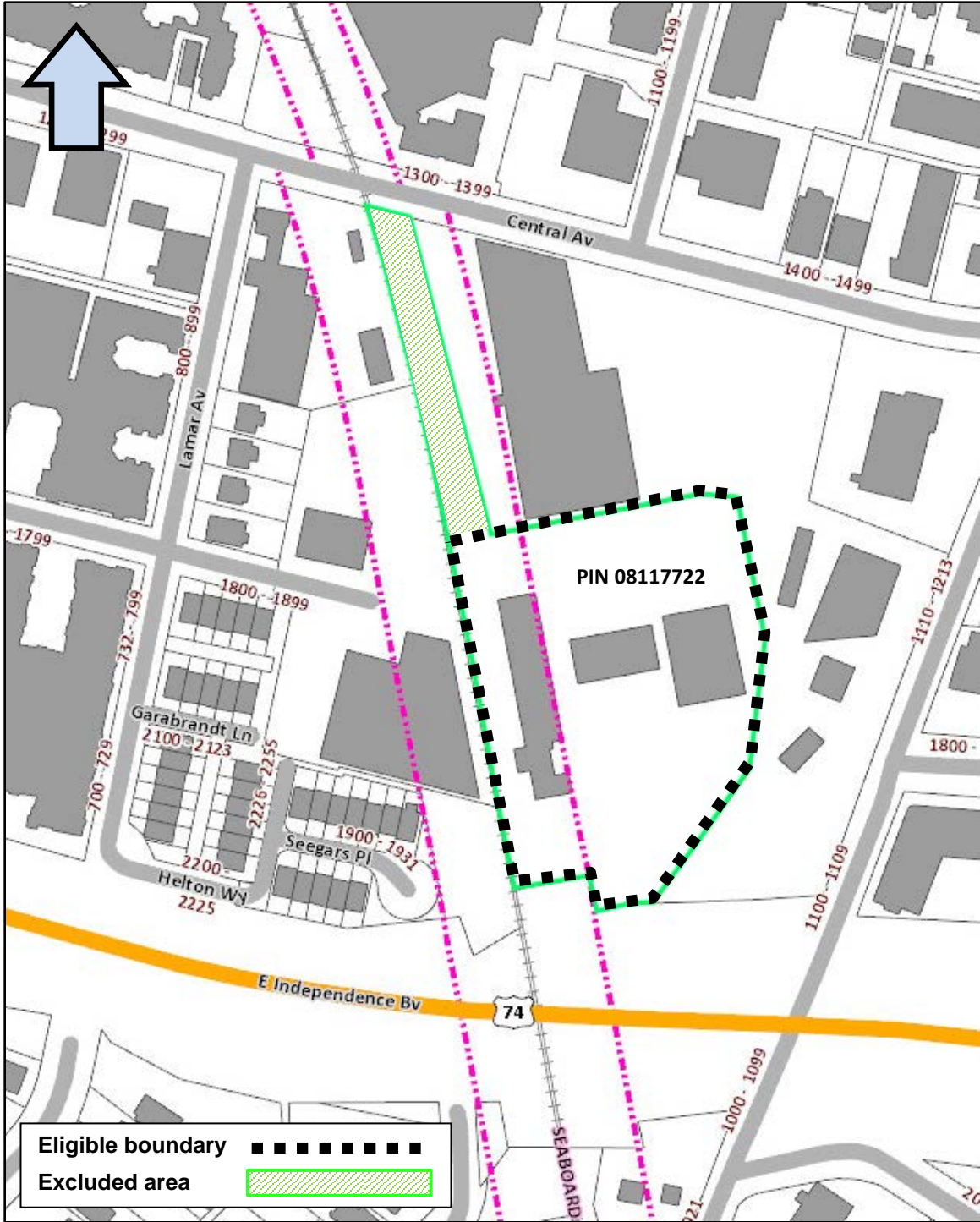
For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Cole Manufacturing Company, appears to remain **eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for architecture. Alterations to the complex, including the loss of contributing resources and material changes, occurred prior to the property's Determination of Eligibility in 2006, and therefore do not affect its potential eligibility. The property generally retains its integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The property appears to be unaltered since it was determined eligible for the National Register and retains the physical qualities and historic associations that contribute to its significance.

### *Boundary Description and Justification*

The proposed boundary of the Cole Manufacturing Company encompasses the majority of the residual 4.5-acre parcel associated with industrial complex [PIN 08117722]. The boundary follows the centerline of the CSX Railway tracks (formerly Seaboard Air Line) to the west, Independence Boulevard right-of-way to the south, and grass embankment and paved parking lots to the north and east.<sup>41</sup> A narrow strip of the property, which extends northward along the railroad tracks to Central Avenue, is excluded from the boundary, which surrounds the surviving buildings and provides an appropriate setting for the small cluster of structures.

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<sup>41</sup> The western boundary of the Cole Manufacturing Company parcel is described in its most recent deed as running "with the centerline of an existing railroad track and lying on the centerline of a 200' CSX Railroad right-of-way," Deed book 34355, page 518, Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds, Charlotte, NC.



**Boundary Map – Cole Manufacturing Company, 1318 Central Avenue [PIN 08117722]**  
 (Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)

### Inventory No. 3

Resource Name	<b>Commonwealth Neighborhood</b>
HPO Survey Site Number	MK4408
Location	Roughly bounded by Independence Boulevard, Pecan Avenue, Central Avenue, and Morningside Drive
PIN	Multiple
Date(s) of Construction	ca. 1920s – 1960s
Eligibility Recommendation	Not Eligible – A, B, C, D



**Commonwealth Neighborhood, aerial view to north** (<https://citychurchcharlotte.org/>)

#### *Description*

The Commonwealth neighborhood generally describes a tree-shaded residential section located on the north side of Independence Boulevard and roughly bounded by Pecan Avenue to the west, Central Avenue to the north, and Morningside Drive to the east. The majority of houses are situated along Commonwealth Avenue, a long, straight street that runs parallel to Independence Boulevard to the south. McClintock Road runs parallel to Commonwealth one block to the north, with another concentration of houses on St. Julien and Westover streets intersecting Commonwealth and McClintock to the west. To the west of St. Julien Street, Commonwealth Avenue intersects The Plaza, Thomas Street, and Pecan Avenue, which comprise a popular commercial area with significant new construction and adaptive reuse.



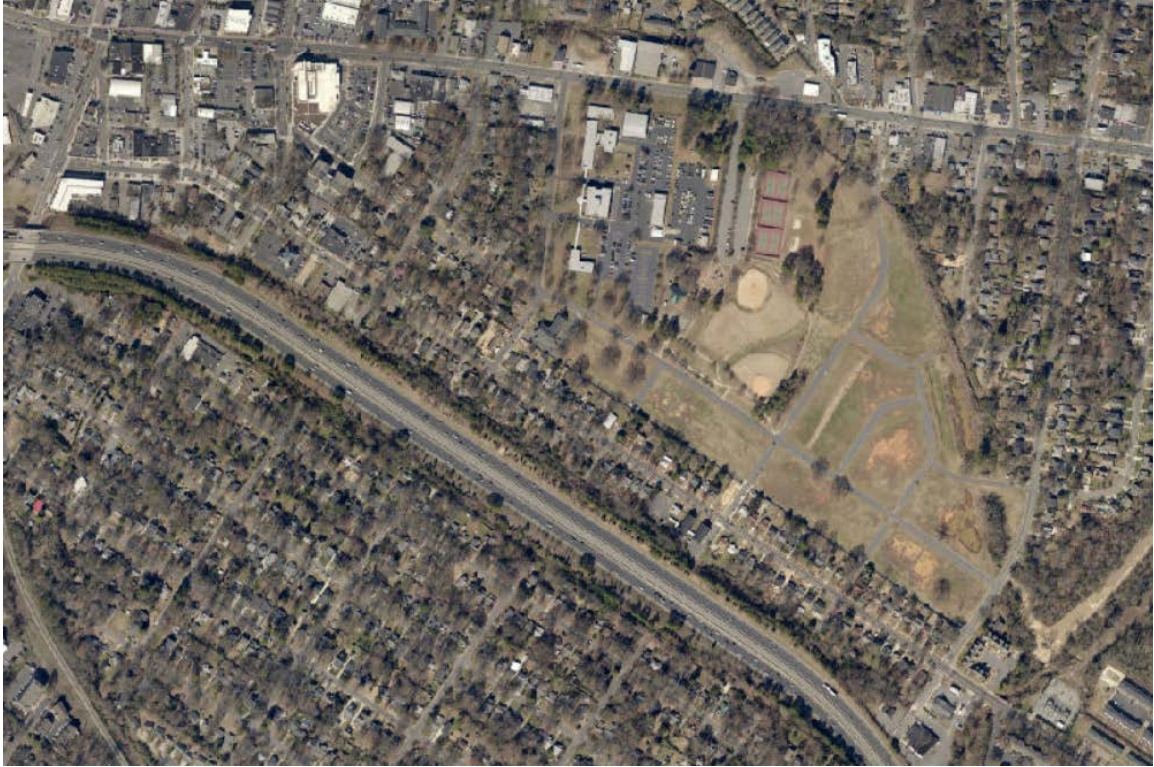


**Commonwealth Neighborhood – parcels by year built (HPOWEB 2.0 GIS Mapping)**

The area extending north from McClintock Road to Central Avenue is dominated by two large tracts containing the United States Army Reserve Center (1330 Westover Road) and Veterans Memorial Park (2316 Central Avenue). The Army Reserve Center campus, built in 1954, encompasses nearly fifteen acres, while the park encompasses sixteen-and-a-half acres of recreational grounds and ball fields. The land was once part of the McClintock Golf Course, which opened in 1931. Much of the area along McClintock Road to the east of Westover Street and east of Veterans Memorial Park has been redeveloped in recent years as a substantial mixed-use complex known as The Village at Commonwealth. A comparison of GIS aerial imagery highlights the substantial amount of construction resulting from the new three- and four-story apartment blocks.



**United States Army Reserve Center, 1330 Westover Road (l) and The Village at Commonwealth (r)**



**Commonwealth Neighborhood aerial, 2014** (Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)



**Commonwealth Neighborhood aerial, 2019** (Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)

The earliest portion of the Commonwealth neighborhood includes the residential section of Commonwealth Avenue, which was originally platted as part of the Chantilly suburb in 1913, and the small commercial area around The Plaza, Central Avenue, and Pecan Avenue. The Greater Charlotte Finance and Realty Company subdivided nearly 250 acres of the old Chatham dairy farm into a grid of long avenues for the Chantilly suburb. Commonwealth Avenue was the northernmost street in Chantilly, which adjoined the homeplace of Captain James H. McClintock (1844-1914). Westmoreland Avenue, one block south of Commonwealth Avenue, was planned as an 80-foot-wide parkway to be the principal thoroughfare in Chantilly. In the late 1940s the State Highway Commission claimed Westmoreland Avenue for the new crosstown expressway, which was later named Independence Boulevard, leaving Commonwealth Avenue isolated from the remainder of the Chantilly neighborhood (see #4).

Classified advertisements from the 1910s through the 1940s for homes in Chantilly typically refer to the houses as bungalows, but the surviving examples of Craftsman bungalows are concentrated on Commonwealth Avenue. The house at **2201 Commonwealth Avenue**, built in 1924, is a fully realized one-and-a-half-story brick bungalow with a tall side-gable roof, gabled front dormer covered with wood shingles, purlin brackets in the gable ends, and four-over-one double-hung windows. An attached full-width shed porch is carried by tapered wood posts on brick piers. The one-and-a-half-story side-gable frame bungalow at 2113 Commonwealth Avenue was built in 1927 but extensively remodeled in 2007. The south side of the **2200 block of Commonwealth Avenue** contains the greatest number of Craftsman bungalows. Constructed between 1920 and 1925, eight of the eleven houses in this block are one- or one-and-a-half-story Craftsman-style frame dwellings with front- or side-gable roofs, exposed rafter tails, decorative eave brackets, and attached front porches.



**Houses, 2201 Commonwealth Avenue (l) and 2200 block of Commonwealth Avenue, south side (r)**

As a collection of several separate developments, the Commonwealth neighborhood consists of a variety of architectural styles and periods. In addition to the group of early Craftsman houses, examples of other popular styles exist in the neighborhood. Now isolated by a commercial building to the west and two vacant lots to the east, the house at **2133 Commonwealth Avenue** is a one-and-a-half-story Tudor Revival-style brick dwelling built around 1947. The side-gable house has a façade chimney, tall front-gable façade bay, projecting front-gable entrance, and six-over-one double-hung windows. Stone quoins enrich the façade chimney and arched entry door, and the tall

front-gable bay is stucco with applied half-timbering. The house at **2200 McClintock Road**, built around 1939, is a nicely detailed one-and-a-half-story Period Cottage situated on a corner lot. The brick house features an interior brick chimney, projecting entrance bay with an asymmetrical front-gable roof, and six-over-one windows. It has a front-gable roof with a side-gable wing and sweeping extension to the west that engages a porch with segmental-arch openings. The porch has been enclosed with jalousie windows and a shingle-clad shed-roof dormer appears to have been added around 2011.



**Houses, 2133 Commonwealth Avenue (l) and 2200 McClintock Road (r), view to northwest**

Several houses exhibit stone construction, which is similar to a small cluster of houses approximately one quarter mile east on Rockway Drive built around 1940. The one-story duplex at 2148-2150 McClintock Road was built around 1935 with stone construction, a pyramidal roof, and two gable-front porches on stone piers. A pair of stone houses on Commonwealth Avenue were built in the late 1930s. The house at **2529 Commonwealth Avenue** is a two-story hip-roof dwelling with an exterior stone chimney, hip-roof dormers, an attached one-story hip-roof porch, and six-over-six double-hung windows. The porch, located on the east elevation, is carried by tapered wood posts on brick piers. A detached one-bay garage stands at the rear of the house. The one-story side-gable house at **2531 Commonwealth Avenue** features a front-gable façade wing, front-gable entrance bay, façade chimney, and replacement one-over-one windows. A stone terrace is located at the front of the house.



**Houses, 2529 Commonwealth Avenue (l) and 2531 Commonwealth Avenue (r)**

The most common house types in the Commonwealth neighborhood are the one- to one-and-a-half-story side-gable brick Period Cottages, Cape Cod, and Minimal Traditional residences built in the late 1930s and 1940s. These houses give definition to much of the neighborhood with their similar scale, massing, and setbacks. Many of the houses incorporate restrained Colonial Revival or Classical elements. While scattered along Commonwealth Avenue, these houses are concentrated on McClintock Road, St. Julien Street, and Westover Street in a small area known as Morningside Hills that was platted in 1935 on the property of J. H. McClintock (PB 4:43).



Houses, 2138 McClintock Road (l) and 1314 St. Julien Street (r)

The one-and-a-half-story house at **2138 McClintock Road**, built around 1940, is a substantial side-gable brick dwelling with a prominent front-gable bay, exterior brick chimneys, and an attached front-gable porch on Tuscan columns. It has been altered with vinyl siding in the gable ends and soffits, and replacement windows. The one-story frame dwelling at **1314 St. Julien Street**, built around 1942, has been covered with vinyl siding but retains its attached entry porch on square posts, facade bay window, and six-over-six double-hung windows. The houses at **1322 St. Julien Street** and **1401 Westover Street** represent some of the variations found in the neighborhood: brick and frame one-story houses with side gable roofs, front-gable facade bays, six-over-six double-hung windows, and small porches. Colonial Revival details frequently appear on the porch elements, in the eaves, or around the entry doors.



Houses, 1322 St. Julien Street (l) and 1401 Westover Street (r)

Interspersed within the residential development are two churches dating from the late 1940s and 1950s. Three buildings, all in a row facing north onto Commonwealth Avenue, comprise the handsome **Commonwealth Methodist Church** complex at 2434 Commonwealth Avenue. The gable-front Gothic Revival church building at the center of the property was begun in 1947 and completed in 1951 with a rear wing added in the late 1950s. A Minimal Traditional brick parsonage was built in 1947, and a fellowship hall, known as the Grigg Building, was erected in 1957 to the east of the sanctuary. Built in 1955, the former **St. Paul's Wesleyan Church** (now City Church) at 2300 McClintock Road is a gable-front brick church with an L-shaped wing at the rear. The building features a central square tower, attached tetrastyle portico, round-arch windows with cast-stone keystones and impost blocks, and double-leaf entry doors framed by a broken pediment surround.



**Commonwealth Methodist Church, 2434 Commonwealth Avenue (l) and St. Paul's Wesleyan Church, 2300 McClintock Road (r)**

The western portion of the Commonwealth neighborhood is a popular commercial area that is gradually creeping into the residential sections. A commercial district has existed at the intersection of Central and Pecan avenues since the 1910s when a streetcar line extended along Central Avenue to The Plaza. Most of the one- and two-story brick commercial buildings date from the mid-twentieth century, and a good number have been rehabilitated for new restaurants, shops, and bars. The grocery store opened by W. T. Harris in 1936 on Central Avenue was replaced by a substantial new Harris-Teeter supermarket in 2013. A Pure Oil Station from the 1930s was converted to a restaurant in the late twentieth century. The Brodt Music Company opened a new shop and warehouse on Commonwealth Avenue in 1954, which was converted to a brewery in 2016. A one-story frame house located next door and built around 1940 has been rehabilitated into an office for the brewery. Similarly, other houses at the west end of Commonwealth Avenue have been converted to commercial uses, but the most significant intrusions are the new apartment and condominium complexes. The three-story Plaza Vu Condominiums were built around 2008 on McClintock Road. The Edison, built in 2012, is a three-story apartment building at the intersection of Commonwealth and Pecan avenues. The Julien, built in 2015, is a four-story apartment building on Commonwealth Avenue with a parking garage on the first level. Other new townhomes and condominium complexes are currently under construction on McClintock Road and Nandina Street.



**Commercial Buildings, 2121 Commonwealth Avenue (l) and 1221 The Plaza (r)**



**Commercial Buildings, 1917 Commonwealth Avenue (l) and 1212 Gordon Street (r)**



**Fire Station No. 8, 2009 Commonwealth Avenue (l) and Dentist Office (MK 2187), 1200 The Plaza (r)**

While the commercial section of the Commonwealth neighborhood is changing and expanding, the area does include a small number of distinctive resources. In 1947, architect M. R. Marsh drew plans for a new fire station for the corner of Commonwealth Avenue and The Plaza. Marsh intentionally designed the two-story brick Chantilly Station (**Fire Station No. 8**) to resemble a residential structure with a side-gable roof, full-height portico, and six-over-six double-hung

windows. The station vehicles are housed in a two-bay hip-roof garage wing.<sup>42</sup> Dr. Edward C. Kirkendol opened a dentist practice in the second story of a building on Central Avenue before commissioning a new two-story Modernist building on a corner of The Plaza opposite the fire station. Completed in 1962, the **dentist office** (MK 2187) is a small scale building that utilizes colored tiles, aluminum, brick, and ribbon windows on the exterior. A full-height glass façade bay and corner entrance have vertical aluminum window frames that project above the roof line.<sup>43</sup>



Houses, 2230 McClintock Road (l) and 2225 and 2229 Commonwealth Avenue (r)

The integrity of the neighborhood is compromised in part by material changes to individual residences but to a greater extent by the number of resources constructed after 2000. The two-story brick and frame residence erected in 2018 at **2230 McClintock Road** displays a complicated roof line, various exterior materials, and heavy timber porch posts and brackets. Constructed in 2008, the two houses at **2225 and 2229 Commonwealth Avenue** are typical of the neo-traditional infill construction common in the area. These frame residences feature side-gable roofs with front-gable bays, attached porches, and decorative elements to give the feeling of historic Craftsman or traditional houses but with a scale and massing that is at odds with the surrounding homes.

### *Historical Background*

The Commonwealth neighborhood, as it is presently identified, derives from several adjacent platted sections that have amalgamated into the current area. Commonwealth Avenue was originally included as the northernmost street of the extensive Chantilly suburb platted in 1913 by the Greater Charlotte Finance and Realty Company. A large tract containing the home place of Captain James H. McClintock (1844-1914) lay to the north of Commonwealth Avenue, while the western end from The Plaza to Pecan Avenue originally belonged to Chatham Estates before it was sold to the owners of Chantilly.

J. H. McClintock, a South Carolina native, enrolled in Davidson College following service in the Confederate army during which he lost an arm. He graduated in 1870 and began teaching school in

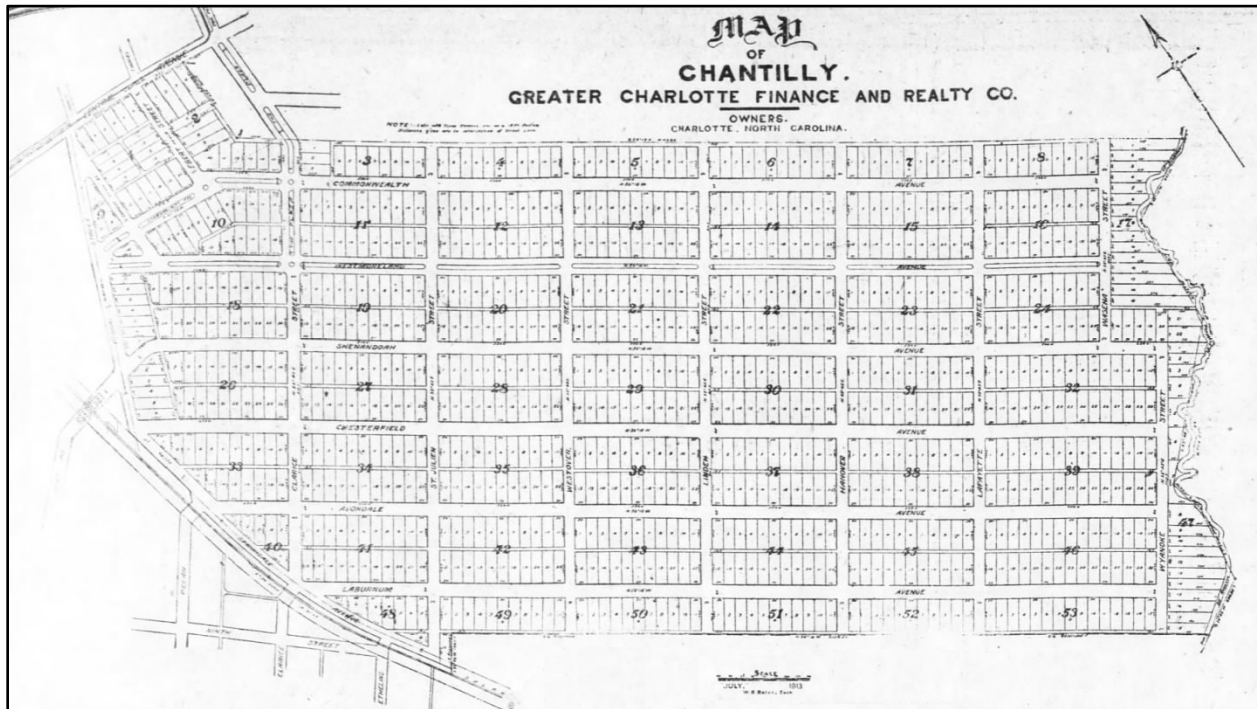
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<sup>42</sup> “Marsh Is Hired To Draw Plans For New Units,” *The Charlotte Observer*, August 1, 1947.

<sup>43</sup> Gerry Hostetler, “Conservative Dentist Filled Life With Friends,” *The Charlotte Observer*, July 12, 2004.



Huntersville, where he met and wed Emma Hunter (1850-1942) in 1873. He later taught school in Fort Mill, South Carolina, before returning to Mecklenburg County in 1882 to serve as county superintendent of education. McClintock served as county treasurer for ten years before retiring to his farm out on the Lawyers Road (present-day Central Avenue) about three miles east of downtown. At his death, McClintock’s estate passed to his wife, Emma. He was survived by two sons and three daughters, one of whom, Janie McClintock (1877-1950), married E. A. Cole, founder of the Cole Manufacturing Company (see #2).<sup>44</sup>



**Map of Chantilly** (*The Charlotte News*, September 7, 1913)

Beginning in 1913, the suburb of Chantilly occupied a large tract of valuable land adjacent to the McClintock’s farm on the east side of Charlotte. The property belonged to Paul Chatham (1869-1944), a textile manufacturer who owned a 500-acre dairy and cotton farm. Chatham sold approximately 250 acres, including the dairy farm, to the Greater Charlotte Finance and Realty Company in July 1913 for the new development (DB 312:338). Several other small suburbs had been platted on the east side of Charlotte, including Highland Park (1891), Piedmont Park (1900), Oakhurst (1900), and Elizabeth Heights (1904), which were served by E. D. Latta’s streetcar line. In 1912, Chatham began developing his own suburb, Chatham Estates, served by a second streetcar line that extended northeast to the Mecklenburg Country Club.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> “Mr. J. H. M’Clintock Enters Into Rest,” *The Charlotte Observer*, May 2, 1914; *The Charlotte News*, July 3, 1914.

<sup>45</sup> *Prominent People of North Carolina* (Asheville, NC: Evening News Publishing Company, 1906), 13; Chatham Estates, Inc., “The Queen City of the South: The Reason Why,” Chatham Estates brochure, *From Miracle Mile to Plaza-Midwood*, accessed May 5, 2020, <https://cltmiraclemile.omeka.net/items/show/5>.

The Greater Charlotte Finance and Realty Company was led by David R. Creecy Jr. (1863-1947) of Richmond, Virginia. Regarded as one of the top real estate men in the South, Creecy came to Charlotte intent on grabbing a portion of the city's burgeoning real estate market. He organized the Greater Charlotte Finance and Realty Company with Julian Gunn of Richmond and three Charlotteans: W. A. Ebert, J. H. McLain, and Cameron Morrison. The company was chartered for general real estate business, as well as handling stocks, bonds, and other financial matters.<sup>46</sup>

D. R. Creecy purchased Chatham's dairy farm at a cost estimated to be around \$250,000 and hired civil engineer W. B. Bates to subdivide the nearly 250-acre tract into 950 lots of 7,500 square feet, generally measuring 50 feet by 150 feet. Beginning in July 1913, Bates laid out streets and staked sidewalks in Chantilly. Westmoreland Boulevard, the neighborhood's central street, was planned as an 80-foot-wide parkway. Chantilly was convenient to both streetcar lines, although neither directly served the neighborhood. Bates—former city engineer of Roanoke, Virginia—engaged forty men and fifty mules to grade the streets. J. C. Ross arrived at the beginning of August with sixty additional mules to complete the grading and begin paving work.<sup>47</sup>

The owners of Chantilly opened sales to the public on September 8, 1913.<sup>48</sup> Although Creecy reported strong sales of Chantilly lots, it appears that actual home construction lagged far behind. The reasons for languid development in Chantilly are unclear, but the United States' involvement in World War I almost certainly fettered progress. The lack of streetcar service to the neighborhood may have contributed to slow sales as well, since the two lines ran only to the western margin of the suburb. Based on dates of construction the earliest houses appear to have been built on Commonwealth and Westmoreland avenues.

Emma McClintock, a widow for more than a decade, began selling portions of the family farm in the 1930s. McClintock's sons, W. B. and J. L. McClintock, and her three sons-in-law organized a corporation to construct a new golf course on approximately 75 acres of the family's land between McClintock Road and Central Avenue. Designed by Arthur Hamm of the Charlotte Country Club, the golf course opened in 1931 and featured a small clubhouse designed by architect M. R. Marsh.<sup>49</sup> In 1935, Emma McClintock subdivided a small section of land near her home that became known as Morningside Hills. The property was bounded by The Plaza, McClintock Road, Central Avenue, and Westover Street, with two interior streets: St. Julien and Nandina (PB 4:43).

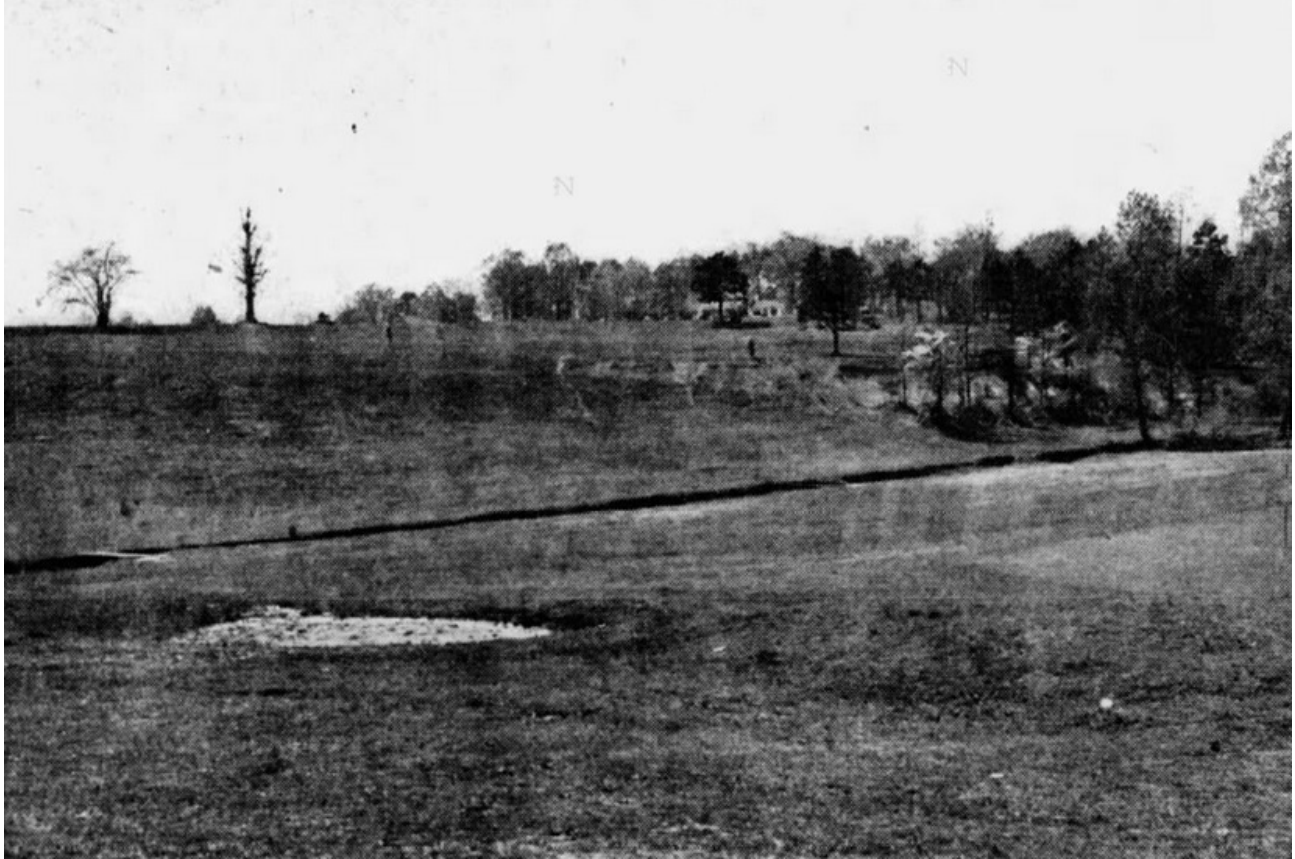
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<sup>46</sup> "To Develop New Suburb," *The Charlotte Observer*, July 8, 1913; "New Real Estate Concern," *The Charlotte Observer*, July 9, 1913.

<sup>47</sup> <sup>47</sup> "Work To Begin Soon On Land Development," *The Charlotte Observer*, June 20, 1913; "'Chantilly' To Be Put On Market—Big Development," *The Charlotte News*, August 29, 1913; "Chantilly Is New Suburb Under Way For Charlotte," *The Charlotte News*, July 27, 1913.

<sup>48</sup> "Chantilly Lots Being Sold Today," *The Charlotte Evening Chronicle*, September 8, 1913.

<sup>49</sup> "New Golf Links To Be Ready For Play Here Next Spring," *The Charlotte Observer*, August 24, 1930; McClintock's Golf Course advertisement, *The Charlotte News*, April 29, 1931.



**McClintock Golf Course** (*The Charlotte News*, June 28, 1946)

When prominent local building contractor Dwight L. Phillips became involved in 1937, Chantilly finally began developing into the attractive middle-class suburb that Creecy and others envisioned in the 1910s. Phillips acquired the property from Charlotte National Bank, opened up new streets and additional lots, and began erecting twenty new houses. Phillips announced plans to construct another forty houses in the second half of the year. The proposed houses were typically brick or brick veneer eight-room structures that cost between \$3,500 and \$6,000.<sup>50</sup>

Phillips continued to build in Chantilly following World War II, and the more than 225 houses erected by his company contributed substantially to the physical appearance and character of the neighborhood. Phillips acquired the McClintock Golf Course property in December 1945 for \$62,500 (DB 1173:190). Two years later he sold approximately half of the golf course property, 32.5 acres, for \$75,000 to the federal government for a proposed ten-story Veterans Administration hospital (DB 1246:316).<sup>51</sup> Phillips retained the remaining 37 acres for the development of Morningside Apartments. He won approval of FHA loans for construction of the apartments to help alleviate post-war housing shortages. Phillips erected 42 two-story buildings of

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<sup>50</sup> “Will Open Chantilly Lots,” *The Charlotte Observer*, May 9, 1937.

<sup>51</sup> J. A. Daly, “McClintock Golf Course Is Chosen,” *The Charlotte News*, June 28, 1946.

the superblock type in a park-like setting, which contained 336 one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments.<sup>52</sup>

Beginning in 1949, the Chantilly neighborhood changed irrevocably as plans for a crosstown expressway came to fruition. The proposed route of Independence Boulevard stretched east from downtown Charlotte, passed through the Elizabeth neighborhood, and extended along Westmoreland Avenue in Chantilly before turning to the southeast at Briar Creek. Converting Westmoreland Avenue into a principal arterial route effectively severed the northern portion of the neighborhood—from Commonwealth to Central Avenue—from the larger southern portion.<sup>53</sup>

Also in 1949, the Veterans Administration cancelled its plans to build a 500-bed hospital on the property it purchased in 1947. J. Norman Pease had completed plans for the building before federal budget tightening led to the cancellation.<sup>54</sup> In 1954, Congressman Charles Jonas announced that a reserve corps armory would be built on the site. The C. D. Spangler Construction Company received the bid to build the facility, which occupied approximately fifteen acres of the original tract. The other half of the property was given to the City of Charlotte for development of Veterans Memorial Park.<sup>55</sup>

The Commonwealth neighborhood, as it came to be defined after the construction of Independence Boulevard, remained relatively stable through the second half of the twentieth century. The residential areas of Commonwealth Avenue, St. Julien Street, and Westover Street were well established, while the commercial section west of The Plaza continued to evolve. Commonwealth, however, like other “close in” neighborhoods of Charlotte, has undergone a significant transformation in the past two decades. As home prices in Dilworth, Myers Park, and Elizabeth rose appreciably at the end of the twentieth century, young families and first-time home buyers were drawn to the neighborhood’s smaller, more affordable housing stock. Plaza Midwood to the north has similarly emerged in recent decades as a desirable neighborhood with a number of popular new businesses opening on Central Avenue.

The downside of Commonwealth’s resurgent popularity and convenience to downtown is a growing number of rehabilitation and infill projects that are out of scale with the existing houses in the neighborhood. The modest Craftsman bungalows and one-story brick homes that characterize much of the patchwork neighborhood are often considered too small by today’s standards. While remodelings, additions, and new construction diminish the historic character and integrity of the Commonwealth neighborhood, the area has continued to evolve and find new life in the twentieth-first century.

### *Evaluation*

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<sup>52</sup> Morningside Apartments were razed in 2008, and the site redeveloped as The Village at Commonwealth beginning in 2015. Harpe and Guth, n.p.

<sup>53</sup> Dick Young, “Survey of Chantilly Streets Believed Likely,” *The Charlotte News*, November 16, 1949.

<sup>54</sup> J. A. Daly, “VA Cancels Plan for \$7,000,000 Hospital Here,” *The Charlotte News*, January 10, 1949.

<sup>55</sup> “Construction of New ORC Armory To Begin July 1,” *The Charlotte Observer*, June 20, 1954.

For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Commonwealth Neighborhood is **not eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places. The present-day Commonwealth neighborhood is an amalgamation of several smaller platted areas and remnants of other subdivisions that are defined largely by physical proximity. The transitional neighborhood combines portions of the Chatham Estates, Chantilly, and Morningside Hills plats, as well as the redeveloped property of the McClintock Golf Course and Morningside Apartments. The overall patchwork nature of the Commonwealth neighborhood generally lacks integrity of setting, design, feeling, and association.

The Commonwealth Neighborhood is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion A (event). *To be eligible under Criterion A, a property must retain integrity and must be associated with a specific event marking an important moment in American pre-history or history or a pattern of events or historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community, a state, or the nation. Furthermore, a property must have existed at the time and be documented to be associated with the events. Finally, a property's specific association must be important as well.* The neighborhood results from a patchwork of residential and commercial development typical of the time as portions were platted and developed separately by the Greater Charlotte Finance & Realty Company, J. H. McClintock's heirs, D. L. Phillips, and federal and municipal governments. The current extent of the neighborhood results only from physical proximity and associations forged in the later twentieth century. The Commonwealth neighborhood is not associated with significant patterns of community planning and development in Charlotte during the twentieth century.

The Commonwealth Neighborhood is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion B (person). *For a property to be eligible for significance under Criterion B, it must retain integrity and 1) be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, i.e. individuals whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, state or national historic context; 2) be normally associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he/she achieved significance, and 3) should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person's historic contributions. Furthermore, a property is not eligible if its only justification for significance is that it was owned or used by a person who is or was a member of an identifiable profession, class, or social or ethnic group.* As an amalgamation of smaller platted areas, the neighborhood is not directly associated with any specific individual to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion B.

The Commonwealth Neighborhood is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion C (design/construction). *For a property to be eligible under this criterion, it must retain integrity and either 1) embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; 2) represent the work of a master; 3) possess high artistic value; or 4) represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.* The Commonwealth neighborhood comprises several twentieth century residential and commercial areas that have amalgamated based on physical proximity and later associations. The architecture of the neighborhood reflects the piecemeal nature of the area including examples of Craftsman bungalows, modest Minimal Traditional and early brick Ranch houses, Gothic and Classical Revival churches, and Modernist office and commercial buildings. The majority of resources within the neighborhood are typical examples of common types with a few notable exceptions.

The Commonwealth Neighborhood most closely resembles a mid-century transitional subdivision despite its origins in the 1910s as part of the Chantilly development (see #4). Commonwealth incorporates elements of the early twentieth century streetcar suburbs such as Elizabeth (MK0866) and Dilworth (MK0127), which balance single-family residences and small apartment buildings intermingled with commercial buildings, churches, and schools. Unlike those National Register-listed historic districts, the majority of Commonwealth's resources date from the mid-1930s through the mid-1950s, after the streetcars stopped running. This also distinguishes Commonwealth from neighboring Plaza-Midwood neighborhood (MK1851), which lies on the north side of Central Avenue but contains a greater concentration of houses from its earlier decades. The Wesley Heights Historic District (MK1793), listed on the National Register in 1995, is located just northwest of downtown Charlotte. Originally platted in 1911, Wesley Heights did not see significant construction begin until 1922 and continue through the end of the 1930s with a smaller number of houses built after 1940.<sup>56</sup> The Commonwealth Neighborhood bears the most similarity to Chantilly due to their shared history and impacts from the construction of Independence Boulevard in the late 1940s. The Commonwealth section, however, suffers in comparison due to the surrounding development, including commercial buildings and adaptive reuse west of The Plaza, the United States Armory Reserve Center, Veterans Memorial Park, and the intrusive mixed-use complex built on the site of the old Morningside Apartments.

Benefitting from its proximity to downtown and other resurgent neighborhoods, Commonwealth is experiencing its own revitalization with significant commercial rehabilitations, adaptive reuse, and infill construction that compromise the integrity of the neighborhood. Unlike the large surviving portion of Chantilly to the south or similar neighborhoods at Plaza-Midwood and Wesley Heights, the Commonwealth neighborhood lacks cohesion and a strong architectural identity. As such, the Commonwealth neighborhood is not eligible for the National Register under Criterion C.

The Commonwealth Neighborhood is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion D (potential to yield information). *For a property to be eligible under Criterion D, it must meet two requirements: 1) the property must have, or have had, information to contribute to our understanding of human history or pre-history, and 2) the information must be considered important.* Originally platted in the 1910s and developed through the mid-twentieth century, the Commonwealth Neighborhood consists of residential and commercial sections that are unlikely to contribute significant information pertaining to building technology or historical documentation not otherwise accessible from other extant resources and written records.

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<sup>56</sup> Mary Beth Gatz, "Wesley Heights Historic District" National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, Charlotte, NC, 1995.

## Inventory No. 4

Resource Name	<b>Chantilly Neighborhood</b>
HPO Survey Site Number	MK2199
Location	Roughly bounded by Shenandoah Avenue, Chesterfield Avenue, Bay Street, Laburnum Avenue, Kingsbury Drive
PIN	Multiple
Date(s) of Construction	1913, 1930s – 1950s
Eligibility Recommendation	Eligible – A, C (community planning and development, architecture)



**Houses, 2100 block of Shenandoah Avenue, north side, view to east**

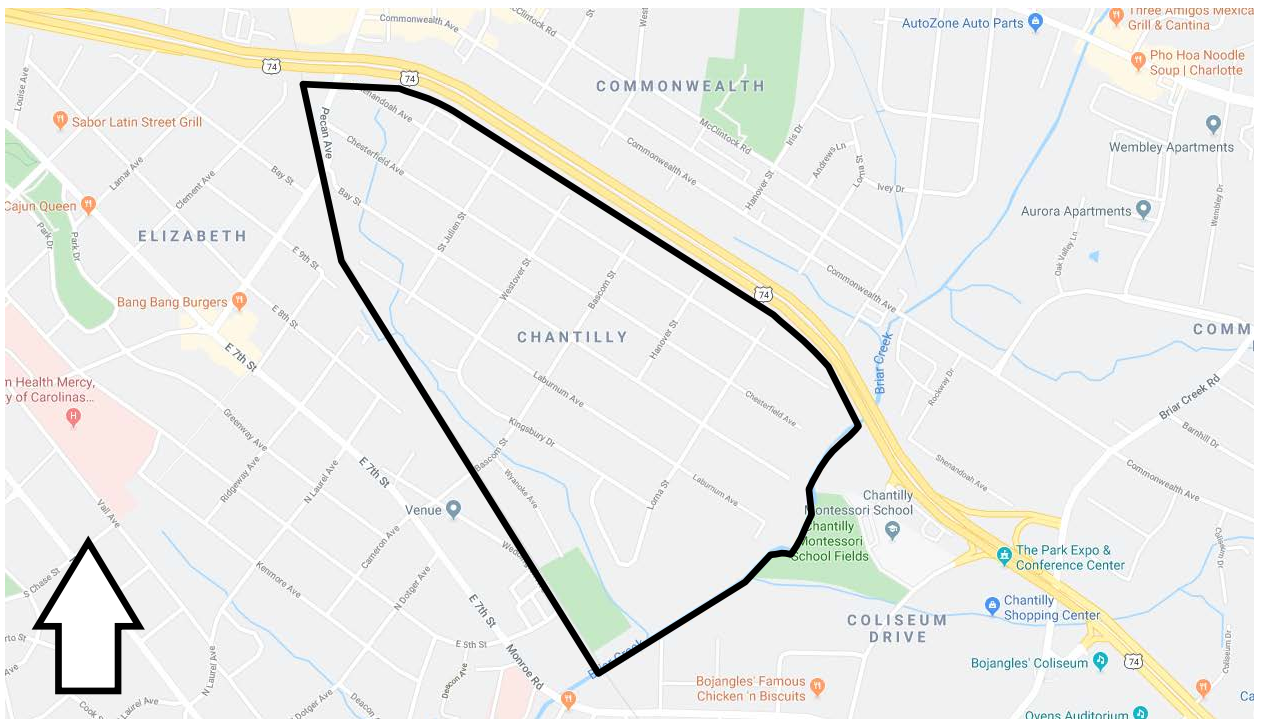
### *Description*

The Chantilly neighborhood is a large residential suburb on the east side of Charlotte that was originally platted in 1913 by the Greater Charlotte Finance and Realty Company. The original investors subdivided nearly 250 acres of the old Chatham dairy farm into a grid of long northwest-southeast avenues that spread north from the Seaboard Air Line Railway to Central Avenue and east from Pecan Avenue to Briar Creek. The neighborhood's broad expanse covered the area from Elizabeth to Chatham Estates and Midwood. In 1949, the opening of a new crosstown expressway claimed Chantilly's central boulevard—Westmoreland Avenue—and split the neighborhood in two. The larger section on the south side of the new expressway retained the name Chantilly, while the smaller area north of Independence Boulevard became known as Commonwealth for the principal street through that section.



**Shenandoah Avenue, view to northwest**

The larger, intact section of Chantilly to the south of Independence Boulevard remains a relatively cohesive collection of more than 650 modest one- and two-story dwellings dating from the 1930s and 1940s. Despite being platted and opened in the 1910s, the majority of construction in Chantilly occurred later. The resulting neighborhood retains a consistency of setbacks, massing, scale, and rhythm along its tree-lined avenues.



**Location Map – Chantilly Neighborhood (Google Maps)**



Classified advertisements from the 1910s through the 1940s for homes Chantilly typically refer to the houses as bungalows. Examples of Craftsman bungalows exist from the early period of Chantilly's development although many of these are located in the Commonwealth section to the north. One of the earliest bungalows in Chantilly is located at **2055 Shenandoah Avenue**. Built around 1928, the one-story brick bungalow has a side-gable roof across the front of the house with a raised front-gable roof extending to the rear. The dwelling has an exterior brick chimney, exposed purlin brackets in the gable ends, and a wraparound porch carried by tapered wood posts on brick piers. The house at **2035 Shenandoah Avenue**, built around 1938, is a one-story Craftsman-influenced frame dwelling resting on a brick foundation and clad with vinyl siding. The house displays an exterior brick chimney, six-over-one double-hung windows, and an engaged cross-gable porch that wraps around the south and east elevations.



Houses, 2055 Shenandoah Avenue (l) and 2035 Shenandoah Avenue (r)

The most common house forms in the neighborhood are the one-story side-gable brick Period Cottages and Minimal Traditional residences built in the late 1930s and 1940s. These houses give definition to the neighborhood with their consistent scale, massing, setbacks and rhythm along the tree-lined streets. The Period Cottages have numerous variations of details and features including façade chimneys, gable-front entrance bays and façade wings, round-arch doors, and arched porch openings. The house at **2301 Shenandoah Avenue**, built around 1946, is further enlivened with stone accents, keystones, and diamond-pane windows.



Houses, 2301 Shenandoah Avenue (l) and 2415 and 2421 Shenandoah Avenue (r)

The Minimal Traditional houses display simpler roof lines and restrained classically-inspired embellishment. Built in 1948, the one-story side-gable brick house at **2633 Shenandoah Avenue** has a one-bay side wing, interior brick chimney, and six-over-six double-hung windows. An attached front-gable porch is carried on slender Tuscan columns. The house at **2437 Chesterfield Avenue** is another one-story side-gable brick dwelling built around 1946. The house features a front-gable façade wing, interior brick chimney, and eight-over-eight double-hung windows. The attached shed-roof porch is supported by boxed posts with scalloped spandrels.



Houses, 2633 Shenandoah Avenue (l) and 2437 Chesterfield Avenue (r)

While the neighborhood is composed primarily of one-story houses, there are examples of one-and-a-half and two-story residences but they appear in fewer numbers. Built in 1946, the two-story side-gable brick house at **2240 Bay Street** has a symmetrical façade with a central interior chimney and six-over-six windows. The house was remodeled around 2016 with a two-story rear addition and an attached shed-roof porch with a gabled center bay and Craftsman-style tapered posts on brick piers. A one-and-a-half-story Cape Cod is located at **2222 Bay Street**. Built around 1946, the brick house has eight-over-eight windows and an attached flat-roof porch supported on Tuscan columns.



Houses, 2400 block Chesterfield Avenue (l) and 2200 block Bay Street (r)

The integrity of the neighborhood is compromised in part by the material changes to individual residences although these changes do not substantially impact the overall character and feeling of the area. Chantilly has been impacted to a greater extent by a number of outsized remodelings and new infill construction that is out of scale with the rest of the neighborhood. A one-story Minimal Traditional house at **2429 Shenandoah Avenue** was torn down and replaced with a new two-story Arts and Crafts-influenced residence around 2017. The imposing two-story house at **2115 Bay Street** was built in 2019 and replaced a modest one-story brick dwelling with a front-gable wing and inset porch that was erected around 1944.



Houses, 2429 Shenandoah Avenue (l) and 2115 Bay Street (r)

While the number of tear downs, remodelings, and additions disrupts the scale and rhythm of Chantilly's historic fabric, many of these encroachments are located in the southern portion of the neighborhood. The incompatible houses are dispersed sufficiently to dilute their impact for the present time, but their presence is noticeable within the neighborhood. For now Chantilly remains a relatively cohesive neighborhood of modest 1940s brick houses with an appealing architectural consistency.

### *Historical Background*

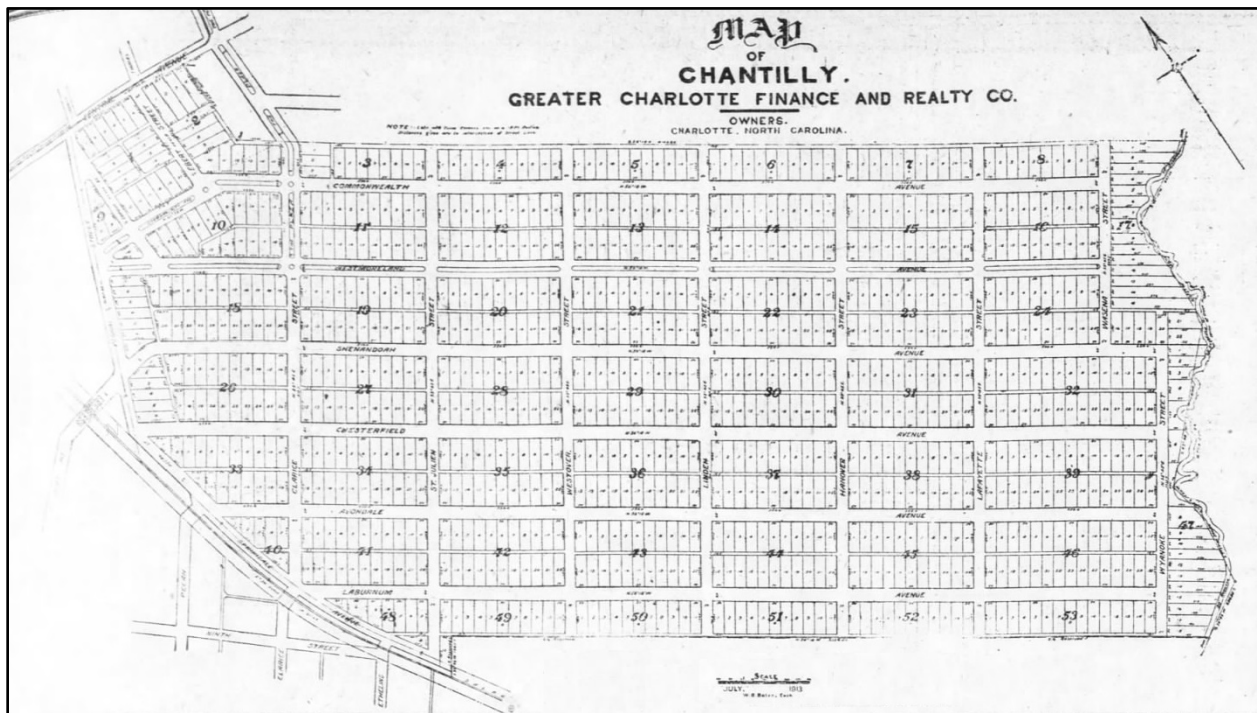
Beginning in 1913, the suburb of Chantilly occupied a large tract of valuable land on the east side of Charlotte. The property belonged to Paul Chatham (1869-1944), a textile manufacturer who owned a 500-acre dairy and cotton farm. Chatham sold approximately 250 acres, including the dairy farm, to the Greater Charlotte Finance and Realty Company in July 1913 for the new development (DB 312:338). Several other small suburbs had been platted on the east side of Charlotte, including Highland Park (1891), Piedmont Park (1900), Oakhurst (1900), and Elizabeth Heights (1904), which were served by E. D. Latta's streetcar line. In 1912, Chatham began developing his own suburb, Chatham Estates, which was served by a second streetcar line and stretched northeast to the Mecklenburg Country Club.<sup>57</sup>

The Greater Charlotte Finance and Realty Company began business in its namesake city by purchasing the Chatham property. The company was led by David R. Creecy Jr. (1863-1947) of

<sup>57</sup> *Prominent People of North Carolina*, 13; Chatham Estates brochure.

Richmond, Virginia. Regarded as one of the top real estate men in the South, Creecy came to Charlotte intent on grabbing a portion of the city’s burgeoning real estate market. He organized the Greater Charlotte Finance and Realty Company with Julian Gunn of Richmond and three Charlotteans: W. A. Ebert, J. H. McLain, and Cameron Morrison. The company was chartered for general real estate business, as well as handling stocks, bonds, and other financial matters.<sup>58</sup>

D. R. Creecy closed on the sale of approximately 250 acres of land adjoining and including Chatham’s dairy farm at a cost estimated to be around \$250,000. The dairy farm was situated on Briar Creek, which was long thought to be an ideal area for residential development. The property had frontage on Monroe Road and the Seaboard Air Line Railway. Soon after the sale, Creecy moved his family from Richmond to promote the new development. Having made his money elsewhere, Creecy was drawn to Charlotte’s potential and declared himself “pleased with city’s prospects for extended growth.”<sup>59</sup>



**Map of Chantilly** (*The Charlotte News*, September 7, 1913)

Beginning in July 1913, civil engineer W. B. Bates laid out streets and staked sidewalks in Chantilly. Bates subdivided the nearly 250-acre tract into 950 lots of 7,500 square feet, generally measuring 50 feet by 150 feet. Westmoreland Boulevard, the neighborhood’s central street, was planned as an 80-foot-wide parkway. The neighborhood was convenient to two streetcar lines: one at Clarice Street in Elizabeth and the other on Central Avenue. Bates, former city engineer of

<sup>58</sup> “To Develop New Suburb,” *The Charlotte Observer*, July 8, 1913; “New Real Estate Concern,” *The Charlotte Observer*, July 9, 1913.

<sup>59</sup> “Work To Begin Soon On Land Development,” *The Charlotte Observer*, June 20, 1913; “‘Chantilly’ To Be Put On Market—Big Development,” *The Charlotte News*, August 29, 1913.

Roanoke, Virginia, engaged forty men and fifty mules to grade the streets. J. C. Ross arrived at the beginning of August with sixty additional mules to complete the grading and begin paving work.<sup>60</sup>

Chantilly was part of a broad expansion of the city and population movement into the suburbs. One writer described the growth metaphorically by claiming that “Queen Charlotte sheds the fringe of cotton and corn from her robes...”<sup>61</sup> D. R. Creecy declared “I have had my eye on Charlotte for a number of years and I am not afraid to talk for Charlotte. Charlotte is not next to the most progressive city in the South but is the most progressive.”<sup>62</sup> Another writer, in words that could easily be construed as sales pitch hyperbole, pronounced that the suburbs of the day will be the “close in” neighborhoods of the future “if you believe the city will grow to them.”<sup>63</sup> While extolling the opportunities available for solid returns on real estate investment, the author pronounced Chatham Estates, Chantilly, Craigmore, Meyers Park, Piedmont and other neighborhoods as just the first circle of Charlotte’s outward growth.

CHARLOTTE DAILY OBSERVER, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1913

**Next Week Will Be  
CHANTILLY  
Week In Charlotte!!**

All indications point to an unprecedented demand for these LOTS, such is the desire of Charlotte people to get their choice of this superb property.

**Chantilly**  
Is Charlotte's Latest and Most Beautiful Suburb—Formerly the Chatham Dairy Farm

**Opening Sales Day Monday Sept. 8**  
**BUT—** You had better come in or phone our office and reserve your lots in advance of the rush, as present indications point to the reservation of all the lots before the opening day.

**Don't Wait Until Your First Lot Is One In the Graveyard !!!**  
The Terms at CHANTILLY Are Easy And You Can Meet Them If You Hurry !!!

**BUY THEM ON THE MONTHLY INSTALLMENT PLAN**  
TERMS \$10.00 or more CASH and \$5.00 or upwards per Month—NO TAXES  
OR INTEREST charged on deferred payments first year and only 3 per cent thereafter until lot is paid for.

<p><b>IMPROVEMENTS</b></p> <p>Stone Driveway, Paved for car use, Concrete Driveway, Walkways laid in front of every lot and sidewalks extended to the property line.</p> <p><b>RESTRICTIONS</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No lots sold or leased to persons of African descent.</li> <li>No alcoholic liquors allowed to be sold on the property.</li> <li>No use of any kind of the premises which would constitute a nuisance or injure the value of neighboring or adjoining lots.</li> <li>All houses, other buildings and fences to be built back from the street line 20 feet.</li> <li>Building construction to be of the best of bricks according to the street location.</li> <li>Other desirable restrictions.</li> <li>Purchasers of lots do not WAIVE on title.</li> </ol>	<p><b>How to View the Property</b></p> <p>Take Ochsler, Brainerd, the get off at corner of Peach Street and Central Avenue near the Plaza and you will be right on the property.</p>	<p><b>Don't Forget The Date of Sale MONDAY SEPTEMBER 8TH</b></p> <p>Make a special note to having a lot or lots reserved in advance, especially for the first 5000 people—don't miss the price of selling 46.11!</p>
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**GREATER CHARLOTTE FINANCE AND REALTY COMPANY**  
OUR REALTY BUILDING  
Telephone ..... 2721

Get Out The Corner at Once and Not Greater Charlotte Finance and Realty Co.

CHARLOTTE DAILY OBSERVER, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 1913



Lawyers  
Doctors  
Merchants  
Bankers  
Salesmen  
Book-keepers  
Clerks  
Stenographers  
Concord Citizens  
Gastonia Citizens  
Rock Hill Citizens  
Salisbury Citizens  
Greensboro Citizens  
Winston-Salem Citizens  
Shelby Citizens  
Lincolnton Citizens  
Mooresville Citizens  
And Everybody Else

**Are Invited To Attend The  
Grand Opening Sales Day Of  
CHANTILLY LOTS**  
(Formerly Chatham Property, Situated on Central Ave.)  
**On Monday, September 8th, at Charlotte, N. C.**  
Everybody take a holiday long enough on above date, Monday, Sept. 8th., the opening sales day to become a purchaser of lots in

**CHANTILLY**  
Greater Charlotte's Pride Suburb!!!

Lots may be reserved before the formal opening on any day between this date and opening day, by applying in person or by mail and making a small deposit, thereby avoiding the rush of September 8th.

**BUY THEM ON THE MONTHLY INSTALLMENT PLAN**  
TERMS \$10.00 or more CASH and \$5.00 or upwards per month—NO TAXES OR INTEREST  
charged on deferred payments first year and only 3 per cent thereafter until lots are paid for.

<p><b>IMPROVEMENTS</b></p> <p>Stone Driveway, Paved for car use, Concrete Driveway, Walkways laid in front of every lot and sidewalks extended to the property line.</p> <p><b>RESTRICTIONS</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No lots sold or leased to persons of African descent.</li> <li>No alcoholic liquors allowed to be sold on the property.</li> <li>No use of any kind of the premises which would constitute a nuisance or injure the value of neighboring or adjoining lots.</li> <li>All houses, other buildings and fences to be built back from the street line 20 feet.</li> <li>Building construction to be of the best of bricks according to the street location.</li> <li>Other desirable restrictions.</li> <li>Purchasers of lots do not WAIVE on title.</li> </ol>	<p><b>How to View the Property</b></p> <p>Take Ochsler, Brainerd, the get off at corner of Peach Street and Central Avenue near the Plaza and you will be right on the property.</p>	<p><b>Don't Forget The Date of Sale MONDAY SEPTEMBER 8TH</b></p> <p>Make a special note to having a lot or lots reserved in advance, especially for the first 5000 people—don't miss the price of selling 46.11!</p>
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**GREATER CHARLOTTE FINANCE AND REALTY COMPANY**  
OUR REALTY BUILDING  
Telephone ..... 2721

Get Out The Corner at Once and Not Greater Charlotte Finance and Realty Co.

**Promotional advertisements for Chantilly**  
*The Charlotte Observer*, August 30, 1913 (l) and September 2, 1913 (r)

<sup>60</sup> “Chantilly Is New Suburb Under Way For Charlotte,” *The Charlotte News*, July 27, 1913.

<sup>61</sup> “‘Chantilly’ To Be Put On Market—Big Development,” *The Charlotte News*, August 29, 1913.

<sup>62</sup> J. P. Lindsay, “Optimism and Faith—Rule of Realty Market in Charlotte,” *The Charlotte News*, September 7, 1913.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

The owners of Chantilly opened sales to the public on September 8, 1913. Creecy extensively promoted the new development through full-page advertisements in the local newspapers. One advertisement encouraged potential buyers and investors from across the area including Rock Hill, Gastonia, Greensboro, Winston-Salem, Lincolnton, and Shelby. Creecy's company brought 40 agents to Charlotte to assist with sales, which were strong in the opening days.<sup>64</sup>

Initial interest was driven, in part, by a special advertising extra for the new Chantilly suburb published by *The Charlotte News*. W. M. Bell, advertising manager for the newspaper, conceived of the promotion, which was reportedly the first of its kind in a Charlotte newspaper. The public eagerly sought the advertising supplement, which ran in the morning edition. The hook of the advertisement told the story of a gold mine discovered on the property, which it then compared to the potential gold mine for home buyers and investors in the Chantilly development.<sup>65</sup>

Although Creecy reported strong sales of Chantilly lots, it appears that actual home construction lagged far behind. Almost nine months after sales opened, the Greater Charlotte Finance and Realty Company hired W. L. Peck and O. E. Ansley of Oklahoma City to build 25 residences in Chantilly. The two men came highly recommended and, according to their contract, erected houses in "the western style of architecture."<sup>66</sup> Other investors were encouraged, including a group of Statesville residents, who traveled to Charlotte at the behest of Brownlee Frix to look over lots in Chantilly. The visitors met with Creecy and after inspecting the property purchased 35 or 40 lots averaging between \$700 and \$800 apiece.<sup>67</sup>

The reasons for languid development in Chantilly are unclear, but the United States' involvement in World War I almost certainly impeded progress. The lack of streetcar service to the neighborhood may have contributed to slow sales as well. Two streetcar lines ran only to the western margin of the suburb. In 1920, H. B. Heath, a Charlotte cotton broker, bought a portion of the Chantilly development for approximately \$75,000. Heath acquired nearly thirty acres on the western side of the neighborhood, which he subdivided into 147 lots (DB 412:609). Heath expressed plans to continue developing the area into "a desirable residential section."<sup>68</sup>

Soon after Heath's purchase, local real estate developer T. T. Cole bought a large slice of the Chantilly property at public auction on the courthouse steps. Cole bid \$33,500 for the tract.<sup>69</sup> Cole turned right around and offered the Chantilly lots for sale at auction, along with one free lot. He promoted the sale with a band traveling in the back of a truck and by offering transportation from

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<sup>64</sup> "Chantilly Lots Being Sold Today," *The Charlotte Evening Chronicle*, September 8, 1913.

<sup>65</sup> "News' Advertising Extra First of Its Kind Ever Issued in City," *The Charlotte News*, September 8, 1913.

<sup>66</sup> "Western Architecture To Be Design of Houses in Chantilly Estates," *The Charlotte News*, June 22, 1914.

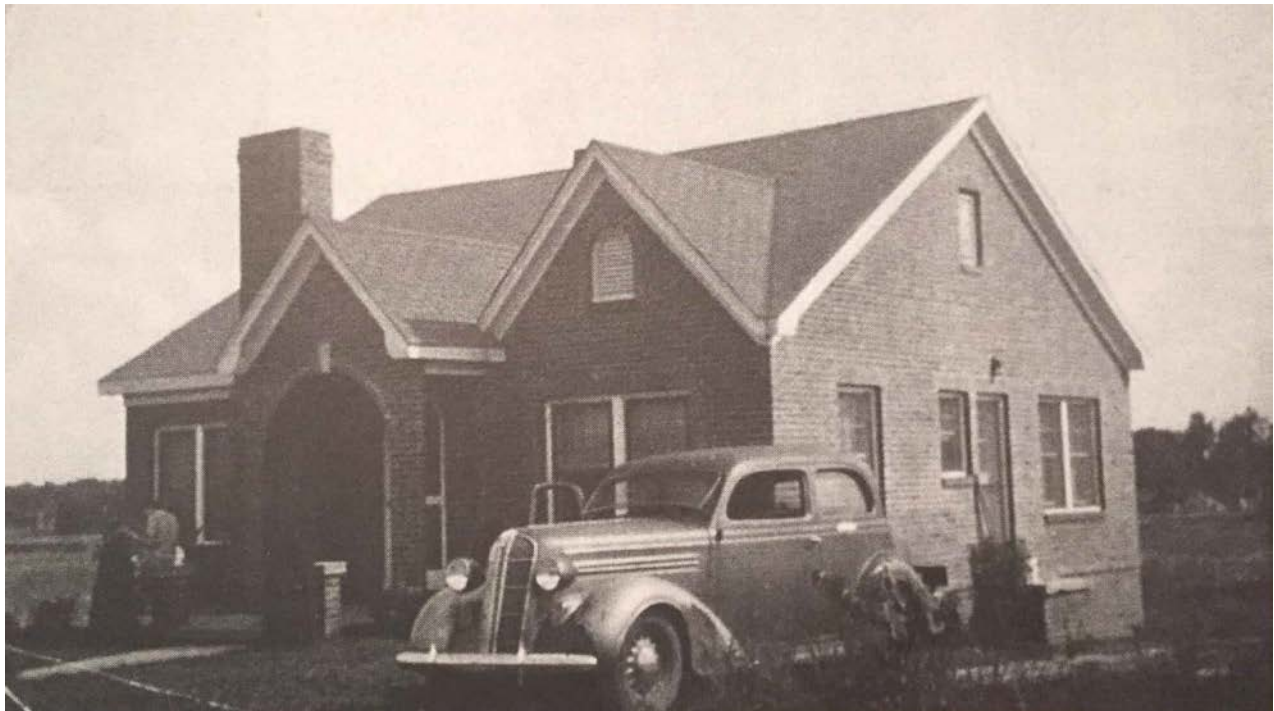
<sup>67</sup> "Statesville Citizens buy Property Here," *The Charlotte Observer*, November 24, 1914.

<sup>68</sup> "Chantilly Development Bringe [sic] Big Price Here," *The Charlotte Observer*, January 15, 1920.

<sup>69</sup> "Chantilly Property Is Bought by T. T. Cole," *The Charlotte Observer*, March 16, 1920.

Independence Square to the suburb. J. Lee Phillips served as auctioneer and sold all 72 lots for between \$200 and \$750. Paul Chatham won the free lot that was offered.<sup>70</sup>

Sales continued slowly through the 1920s with another public auction of lots in May 1924. Advertisements for the auction stated that “214 beautiful home sites” were available.<sup>71</sup> Evidence suggests that Chantilly was still sparsely developed during the Depression. When George and Mary Pearre built their one-story brick house at 2312 Shenandoah Avenue in 1936 there was only one other house on the street.<sup>72</sup> In 1934, the city’s Public Works Administration (PWA) engineer enumerated five projects employing local workers, which included installing storm drains, water and sewer lines, fire hydrants, and a fire alarm system. The A. H. Guion Company engaged more than 100 men to install water mains and sewer lines in Chantilly through the PWA-funded projects.<sup>73</sup>



**George and Mary Pearre House, 2312 Shenandoah Avenue, 1936**  
(*Charlotte: Its Historic Neighborhoods*, 72)

When building contractor Dwight L. Phillips became involved in 1937 Chantilly finally began developing into the attractive middle-class suburb that Creecy and others had envisioned in the 1910s. Phillips acquired the property from Charlotte National Bank, opened up new streets and

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<sup>70</sup> “Chantilly Lots Go In Tuesday Auction,” *The Charlotte News*, March 30, 1920.

<sup>71</sup> Chantilly advertisement, *The Charlotte Observer*, May 6, 1924.

<sup>72</sup> Rogers and Rogers, 72.

<sup>73</sup> “Employ 343 Men On Public Works Projects Here,” *The Charlotte Observer*, May 31, 1934.

additional lots, and began erecting twenty new houses. Phillips announced plans to construct another forty houses in the second half of the year. The proposed houses were typically brick or brick veneer eight-room structures that cost between \$3,500 and \$6,000.<sup>74</sup>

The D. L. Phillips Company constructed the majority of new houses in Chantilly over the next decade, which Phillips described as “mostly bungalow type.”<sup>75</sup> Despite the renewed activity in Chantilly, in October 1940, Phillips announced that more than 200 building lots remained available. The new houses built by the Phillips Company had an average cost of \$3,750, with 98 percent brick construction.<sup>76</sup> Phillips began planning twenty-five new residences costing approximately \$100,000 total with funding through the Federal Housing Authority (FHA). The houses, which ranged in price from \$3,250 to \$4,500, were five- and six-room dwellings primarily built along an extension of Westmoreland Avenue. The new houses were similar in style and appearance to existing homes in the neighborhood, now one of the fastest growing in Charlotte. FHA-insured long-term loans financed the houses, and the project was expected to be followed by another round of FHA-funded construction in the neighborhood.<sup>77</sup>

Phillips continued to build in Chantilly following World War II, and the more than 225 houses erected by his company contributed substantially to the physical appearance and character of the neighborhood. Phillips continued to build and market houses in Chantilly using FHA loans, including 100 brick and frame houses on Bay Street and Laburnum Avenue, which were offered at three prices: \$8,250, \$8,750, and \$9,750. Available with no down payment, the houses had oil heat, electric hot water heaters, insulation, select hardwood floors, and a full-size garage.<sup>78</sup> Phillips also built two apartment complexes, Morningside and Briar Creek, in Chantilly, along with the Chantilly Shopping Center.

Beginning in 1949, the Chantilly neighborhood changed irrevocably as plans for a crosstown expressway came to fruition. The proposed route of Independence Boulevard stretched east from downtown Charlotte, passed through the Elizabeth neighborhood, and extended along Westmoreland Avenue in Chantilly before turning to the southeast at Briar Creek. Converting Westmoreland Avenue into a principal arterial route effectively severed the northern portion of the neighborhood—from Commonwealth to Central Avenue—from the southern portion including Shenandoah, Chesterfield, Bay, and Laburnum avenues. In November 1949, twenty-five Chantilly residents addressed City Council to complain about the proposed closing of Pecan Avenue at the railroad. The State Highway Commission approached the Seaboard Air Line Railway for assistance funding a grade separation where Independence Boulevard would cross the railroad, but residents

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<sup>74</sup> “Will Open Chantilly Lots,” *The Charlotte Observer*, May 9, 1937.

<sup>75</sup> “Many Lots Left In Chantilly,” *The Charlotte Observer*, October 6, 1940.

<sup>76</sup> “Dwight L. Phillips Says 225 Homes Built In Three Years,” *The Charlotte Observer*, October 6, 1940.

<sup>77</sup> “Homes To Be Built at Cost of \$100,000,” *The Charlotte Observer*, May 17, 1939.

<sup>78</sup> Classified Advertisements, *The Charlotte Observer*, October 16, 1947.



felt that the additional distance for automobiles to cross the proposed road at Lamar Avenue was excessive and could hurt businesses at the intersection of Pecan Avenue and 7<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>79</sup>



**Chantilly Neighborhood – parcels by year built** (HPOWEB 2.0 GIS Mapping)

While the construction of Independence Boulevard reduced the size of Chantilly, the new expressway helped insulate the neighborhood in some ways. The expressway, railroad tracks, and Briar Creek created formidable natural and manmade boundaries, leaving only four points of access into the neighborhood. Increased traffic and development along Independence Boulevard in the late twentieth century corresponded with increased suburban sprawl, and Chantilly was regularly snubbed by homeowners looking for newer, larger houses. As a result, the neighborhood declined in the last decades of the twentieth century.<sup>80</sup>

Chantilly, like other “close in” neighborhoods of Charlotte, has undergone a significant transformation in the past two decades. As home prices in Dilworth, Myers Park, and Elizabeth rose appreciably at the end of the twentieth century, young families and first-time home buyers were drawn to Chantilly’s smaller, more affordable housing stock. Plaza Midwood to the north has similarly emerged in recent decades as a desirable neighborhood with a number of popular new businesses opening on Central Avenue. The downside of Chantilly’s resurgent popularity, however, is a growing number of rehabilitation and infill projects that are out of scale with the existing houses in the neighborhood. The modest one-story brick homes that defined the 1940s are often considered too small by today’s standards. Remodelings, additions, and infill construction out of

<sup>79</sup> Dick Young, “Survey of Chantilly Streets Believed Likely,” *The Charlotte News*, November 16, 1949.

<sup>80</sup> Tim Long, “Saying Goodbye The Best Darned Neighborhood in Charlotte,” *Charlotte Agenda*, April 17, 2015, accessed May 6, 2020, <https://www.charlotteagenda.com/1366/saying-goodbye-the-best-darned-neighborhood-in-charlotte/>.

scale with the existing houses threaten to diminish the historic character and integrity of the neighborhood. For now, the tree-lined streets and regular rhythm of houses in Chantilly reveals the cohesive collection of domestic architecture that forms the core of the neighborhood.

### *Evaluation*

For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Chantilly Neighborhood is **eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places. Chantilly is a good example of a transitional neighborhood characterized by a traditional gridded street pattern dominated by long east-west avenues. Originally platted in 1913, the neighborhood largely consists of modest one-story brick houses from the late 1930s and 1940s built by the D. L. Phillips Company. The neighborhood generally retains its integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The overall integrity has been compromised by material changes to individual residences, alterations to the original plat and street patterns, and later infill construction.

The Chantilly Neighborhood is **eligible** for the National Register under Criterion A (event). *To be eligible under Criterion A, a property must retain integrity and must be associated with a specific event marking an important moment in American pre-history or history or a pattern of events or historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community, a state, or the nation. Furthermore, a property must have existed at the time and be documented to be associated with the events. Finally, a property's specific association must be important as well.* Chantilly is a good example of a transitional neighborhood that bridges the period between Charlotte's early streetcar suburbs and its rapid growth and expansion in the post-war war period. Likewise, the neighborhood physically extends eastward the traditional street patterns of the city's early twentieth century residential sections before transitioning into the suburban residential development that followed the construction of Independence Boulevard and automobile-centric destinations like the Charlotte Merchandise Mart, Charlotte Coliseum, and Ovens Auditorium, which lie just beyond Briar Creek at Chantilly's eastern edge. Although it was originally platted in 1913 and heavily promoted using a new type of dedicated newspaper advertising, the Chantilly neighborhood was sparsely developed until the 1940s, when the majority of houses were erected to meet the housing needs of the city's growing post-war population. The construction of Independence Boulevard in the late 1940s permanently cleaved the northern portion from the majority of the neighborhood, but the surviving bulk of Chantilly remains a cohesive, well-defined transitional neighborhood on Charlotte's east side. As such, it appears to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion A as epitomizing the significant trends of residential suburbanization on Charlotte's east side.

The Chantilly Neighborhood is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion B (person). *For a property to be eligible for significance under Criterion B, it must retain integrity and 1) be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, i.e. individuals whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, state or national historic context; 2) be normally associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he/she achieved significance, and 3) should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person's historic contributions. Furthermore, a property is not eligible if its only justification for*

*significance is that it was owned or used by a person who is or was a member of an identifiable profession, class, or social or ethnic group.* The neighborhood is not specifically associated with the lives of any individuals who achieved the level of significance required to be listed in the National Register under Criterion B or best represent the productive life of any specific individual.

The Chantilly Neighborhood is **eligible** for the National Register under Criterion C (design/construction). *For a property to be eligible under this criterion, it must retain integrity and either 1) embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; 2) represent the work of a master; 3) possess high artistic value; or 4) represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.* Originally platted in 1913, the architecture of Chantilly predominantly dates from the late 1930s and 1940s when the neighborhood was largely built out by the D. L. Phillips Company, who constructed more than 225 houses in the transitional suburb. Chantilly remained sparsely developed into the 1930s, with the majority of early houses apparently built on Commonwealth and Westmoreland avenues. While the Westmoreland Avenue houses were lost during the construction of Independence Boulevard, a small collection of Chantilly's early bungalows are primarily located across the busy thoroughfare on Commonwealth Avenue.

The Chantilly Neighborhood most closely resembles a mid-century transitional subdivision despite its origins in the 1910s. The Greater Charlotte Finance and Realty Company platted the neighborhood in 1913 by extending the grid street pattern of the adjacent Elizabeth Historic District (MK0866) across the Seaboard Air Line Railway, just beyond the limits of streetcar service. As a result Chantilly bears some similarities to the streetcar suburbs of Elizabeth and Dilworth (MK0127), but unlike those National Register-listed historic districts, the majority of Chantilly resources date from the mid-1930s through the mid-1950s, after the streetcars stopped running. This also distinguishes Chantilly from the nearby Plaza-Midwood neighborhood (MK1851), which lies on the north side of Central Avenue but contains a greater concentration of houses from its earlier decades. The Wesley Heights Historic District (MK1793), listed on the National Register in 1995, is located just northwest of downtown Charlotte. Originally platted in 1911, Wesley Heights did not see significant construction begin until 1922 and continue through the end of the 1930s with a smaller number of houses built after 1940.<sup>81</sup>

Chantilly stands out among other transitional neighborhoods identified during the preliminary survey for the subject project (see Appendix A). The Green Hills, Echo Hills, and Oakhurst Heights (MK3343) subdivisions were platted and developed in the mid-twentieth century as the city's residential growth was pushing eastward. These small subdivisions were later impacted by improvements to the Briar Creek Road and Eastway Drive/Wendover Avenue interchanges with Independence Boulevard that compromised their integrity. The Oakhurst neighborhood (MK3464) has been similarly impacted by the construction of the Eastway Drive/Wendover Avenue interchange, which added a couple of streets severed from the Echo Hills subdivision, and today represents an amalgamation of several smaller sections. Like Chantilly, Oakhurst began in the early twentieth century with development along Monroe Road and gradually expanded over time to include resources dating from the 1920s through the 1950s with a significant amount of infill

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<sup>81</sup> Mary Beth Gatzka, "Wesley Heights Historic District" National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, Charlotte, NC, 1995.

construction. The neighborhood includes the previously recorded Oakhurst School (MK2229), Hudson Silk Hosiery Company (MK1732), and mill store (MK1735), although the mill and mill store no longer stand.

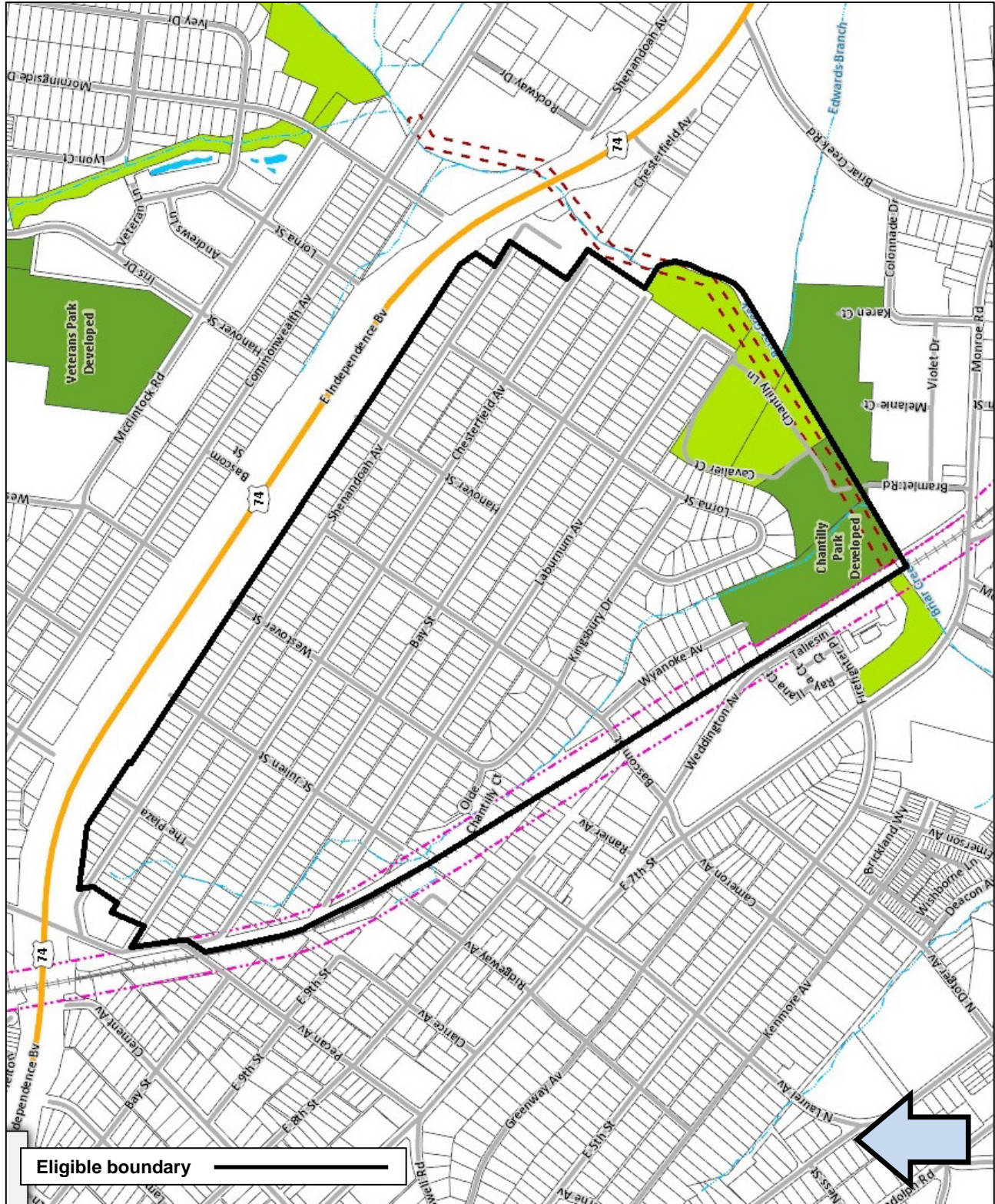
A fragment of the original Chantilly plat lies on the north side of Independence Boulevard, which was separated by construction of the expressway in the late 1940s. Despite their shared history, the Commonwealth section to the north suffers in comparison due to the surrounding development, including commercial buildings and adaptive reuse west of The Plaza, the United States Armory Reserve Center, Veterans Memorial Park, and the intrusive mixed-use complex built on the site of the old Morningside Apartments. The larger, intact section of Chantilly to the south of Independence Boulevard remains a relatively cohesive collection of more than 650 modest one- and two-story brick Period Cottages and Minimal Traditional residences built in the 1930s and 1940s. The resulting consistency of setbacks, massing, scale, and rhythm along the tree-lined avenues largely defines the architectural character of Chantilly. While the number of tear downs, remodelings, and additions in recent years has disrupted the scale and rhythm of Chantilly's historic fabric in parts of the neighborhood, the bulk of these encroachments are located in the southern portion of the neighborhood. The incompatible houses are dispersed sufficiently throughout the neighborhood to dilute their impact for the present time, but their presence is noticeable. The greatest concentration of historic resources remains on Shenandoah and Chesterfield avenues, giving the appearance of a relatively cohesive neighborhood of modest 1940s brick houses with an appealing architectural consistency.

The Chantilly Neighborhood is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion D (potential to yield information). *For a property to be eligible under Criterion D, it must meet two requirements: 1) the property must have, or have had, information to contribute to our understanding of human history or pre-history, and 2) the information must be considered important.* The residential subdivision platted in 1913 on the site of the old Chatham dairy farm and built out during the mid-twentieth century is unlikely to contribute significant information pertaining to building technology or historical documentation not otherwise accessible from other extant resources and written records.

#### *Boundary Description and Justification*

The proposed boundary follows the general limits of the original Chantilly plat with the principal exception of its northern edge, which was severed in the 1940s by the construction of Independence Boulevard. Thus, the northern boundary of the Chantilly neighborhood follows the back tax parcel lines of properties located on the north side of Shenandoah Avenue and abuts the right-of-way of Independence Boulevard. The boundary excludes two parcels at the east end of Shenandoah Avenue due to modern construction. The house at 2637 Shenandoah Avenue [PIN 12710110] was built in 2009, while the larger tract at 2740 Shenandoah Avenue [PIN 12710204] is currently being redeveloped as townhomes called Chantilly on the Green. The two commercial parcels at the western edge of the neighborhood, located at 902 Pecan Avenue and 906-920 Pecan Avenue, are also excluded from the proposed boundaries due to redevelopment and rehabilitation of the properties.

The remaining edges of Chantilly are generally delineated by Pecan Avenue to the west, the Seaboard Air Line Railway tracks to the south, and Briar Creek to the east. Due to the large scale of the neighborhood, the specific boundaries to the south, east, and west were not determined outside of the APE for the subject project. Further investigation and more complete documentation of resources in the southern portion of the neighborhood, which fall well outside the APE, are needed to fully determine potential district boundaries.



**Boundary Map – Chantilly Neighborhood (Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)**

## Inventory No. 5

Resource Name	<b>Charlotte Merchandise Mart</b>
HPO Survey Site Number	MK4410
Location	800 Briar Creek Road
PIN	15902109
Date(s) of Construction	1961, 1970, 1990
Eligibility Recommendation	Eligible – A, C (commerce, architecture)



**Charlotte Merchandise Mart, 800 Briar Creek Road, façade, view south across Independence Boulevard**

### *Description*

Originally built as the Charlotte Merchandise Mart, this sprawling two-story flat-roof brick building consists of the original exposition buildings and a new exhibition hall and lobby added in 1990. Opened in 1961, the original block facing Independence Boulevard—the 240,000-square-foot **Independence Hall**—is a relatively plain structure enlivened by a projecting glass atrium and decorative brickwork on the façade. The blind façade walls are divided into thirteen bays to either side of the entrance pavilion with alternating vertical panels of sawtooth brick and running bond with projecting header bricks. The entrance pavilion consists of an aluminum-frame grid of windows and two sets of double-leaf glazed doors, which open into a small vestibule. The pavilion encloses an atrium with a curving split staircase rising to a cantilevered second-floor landing and descending to the ground floor exhibition hall. The atrium retains original bent-metal stair railings and balustrades with wooden handrails, terrazzo floors, and the Sweitzer Mural. Painted by noted muralist Charles L. Sweitzer, the two-panel mural uses bold colors to depict a timeline of Piedmont cultural history.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>82</sup> “Sweitzer Mural, Charlotte Merchandise Mart,” J. Murrey Atkins Library Special Collections, University of North Carolina Charlotte, accessed March 26, 2020, <http://digitalcollections.uncc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15483coll1/id/1388>.



**Charlotte Merchandise Mart, façade, view to south**



**Charlotte Merchandise Mart, entrance pavilion, view to south**





**Charlotte Merchandise Mart, façade, oblique view to east**



**Charlotte Merchandise Mart, atrium stairs and Sweitzer Mural**

The side elevations of the main building are laid in running bond with raised header brick and have two vertical openings filled with breeze-block screens that mark the location of stairwells on the interior. Both side elevations have loading bays with roll-up overhead doors serving the ground-floor exhibition hall located partially below grade. A concrete exterior elevator shaft has been added to the east elevation, and a prefabricated metal storage building stands to the southeast of the main building.

A five-story wing, completed in 1970 and known as **Freedom Hall**, rises above the main building at its southwest corner. A narrow lobby connects the two wings, but the later structure is more plainly finished with running bond brick walls, a tall band of sawtooth brick below the parapet, and enclosed exterior stair and elevator shafts giving relief to the blind exterior walls.

The L-shaped complex was enlarged to its present configuration in 1990, with the construction of a third exhibition space and additions that nearly doubled the size of the facility. A two-story entrance hall and lobby was constructed in the interior angle of the “L” at the rear of the original building. A covered breezeway extends to the south across Edwards Branch to **Liberty Hall**, a 104,000-square-foot exhibition hall with a curving south wall. The new lobby and exhibition hall are constructed with precast concrete panels on the exterior, which clearly distinguish the additions from the original brick buildings.



**Site Plan – Charlotte Merchandise Mart, 800 Briar Creek Road**  
(Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)



**Charlotte Merchandise Mart, east elevation, view to west**



**Charlotte Merchandise Mart, west elevation, view to east**



**Charlotte Merchandise Mart, Freedom Hall, oblique rear view to northeast**



**Charlotte Merchandise Mart, Freedom Hall, oblique front view to northwest**



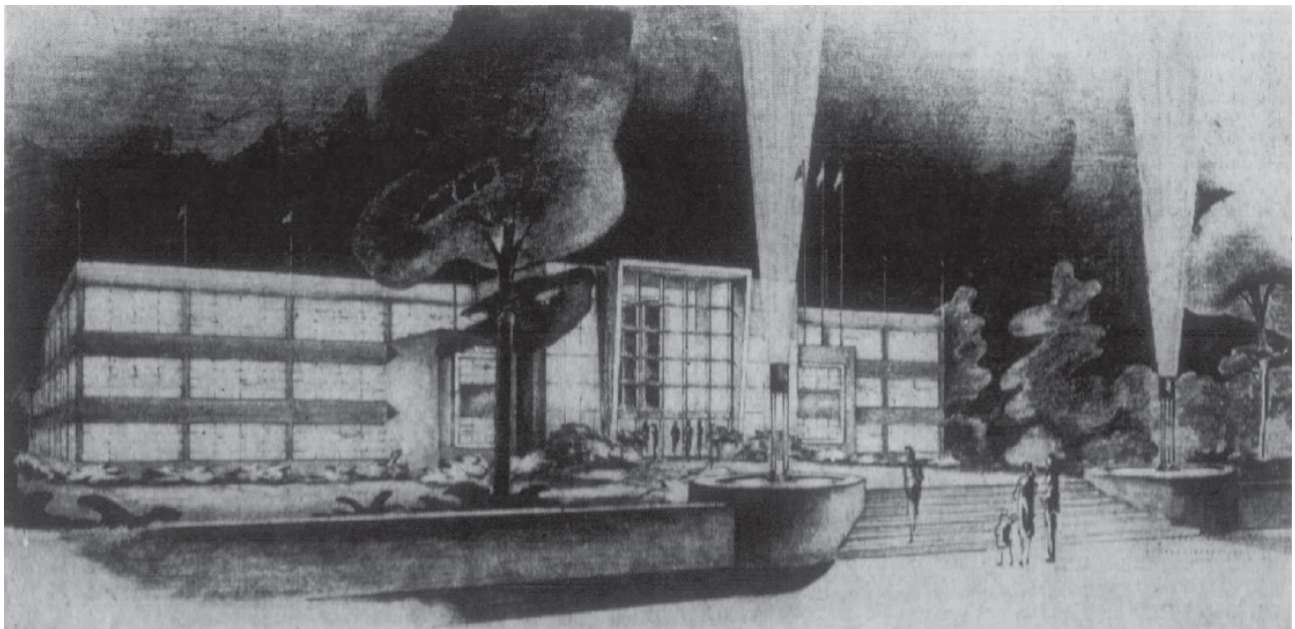
**Charlotte Merchandise Mart, rear elevation, view to north**



**Charlotte Merchandise Mart, Liberty Hall façade, view to east**

### *Historical Background*

Although the Charlotte Merchandise Mart did not open until 1961, planning for the facility began in the late 1940s. Members of the Carolinas-Virginia Fashion Exhibitors met in Charlotte in June 1947, to vote on a proposal to construct an exhibition facility. Prominent business leaders had been developing the idea for many months in order to accommodate the needs of the city's approximately 450 wholesale and distribution firms. The Carolinas-Virginia Fashion Exhibitors were the first of fifteen organizations asked to endorse the proposed merchandise mart. Preliminary plans prepared by J. Norman Pease and Co. depicted a three-story building with large bands of windows and a projecting entrance bay and glass atrium. Housing 100,000 square feet of exhibition space, the proposed building was expected to cost between \$1,000,000 and \$1,250,000.<sup>83</sup>



**Proposed Merchandise Mart, sketch by J. Norman Pease and Co. (*The Charlotte Observer*, June 4, 1947)**

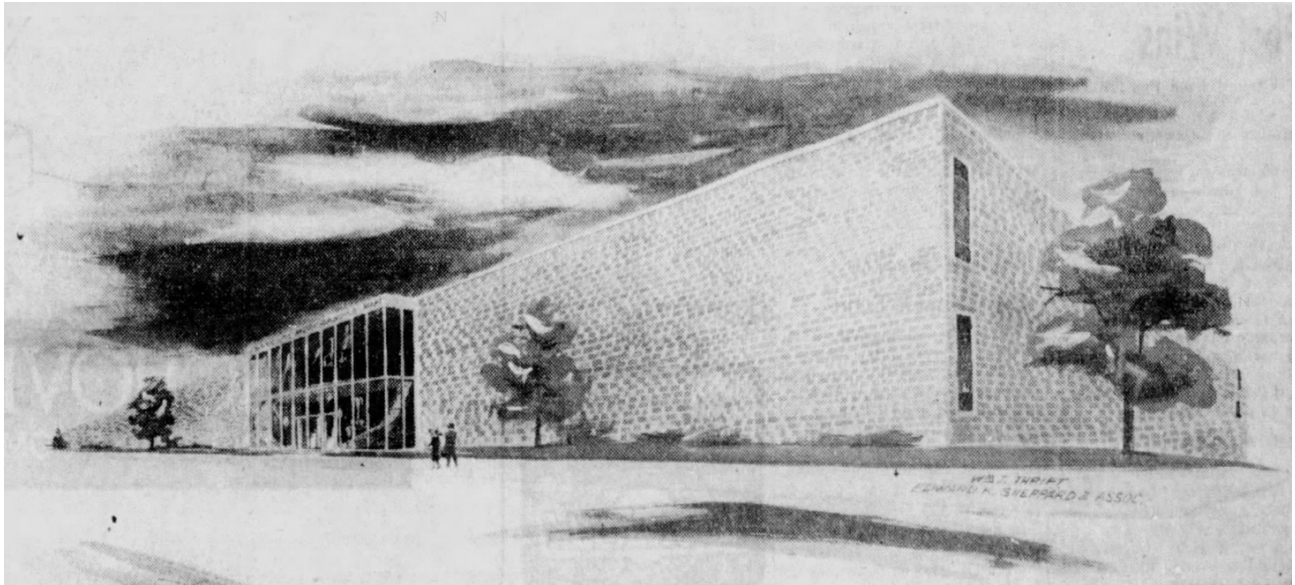
While the original push for a merchandise mart languished for a number of years, other developments on East Independence Boulevard helped secure its eventual construction east of downtown Charlotte. Dwight L. Phillips, a prominent developer and builder, who had built many of the houses in the Chantilly neighborhood (see #4), the Chantilly Shopping Center, and Morningside and Briar Creek apartments, sold twenty-three acres on Independence Boulevard to the city in 1954 for the construction of a new civic coliseum and auditorium (see #6). Phillips subsequently erected a 176-room motel on the east side of the coliseum site to accommodate visitors in town for special events.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> "Fashion Group Set To Study Plans Tonight," *The Charlotte Observer*, June 4, 1947.

<sup>84</sup> Morrill, 146-147.

In 1958, Phillips resurrected the idea of a merchandise mart in Charlotte and began planning for a 175,000-square-foot facility on approximately eighteen acres just west of the Charlotte Coliseum. Designed by architect William Thrift of the Charlotte firm of Edward K. Sheppard & Associates, the proposed building was being advertised as a three-story air-conditioned structure constructed of prestressed concrete and brick, aluminum, and glass. The Modernist building would have a footprint nearly 400 feet wide and 150 feet deep. The building, estimated to cost around \$2,000,000, would be the third largest merchandise mart in the country behind only Chicago and Dallas.<sup>85</sup>



**Architect William Thrift's Sketch of the proposed Merchandise Mart**  
(*The Charlotte News*, September 10, 1958)

Controversy surrounded plans for the Merchandise Mart in October 1958, when Phillips requested a zoning change for the property to avoid standard setbacks from Independence Boulevard. Phillips sought the zoning change to permit construction of a building similar to the Dallas Mart and to locate it close to Independence Boulevard without a setback. Phillips hired Joe Ragland, manager of the Dallas Mart, to consult on the project. Amid outcry from neighboring residents and organizations who felt Phillips received special treatment, there was some concern that the project might move to Greensboro. After initially receiving the requested zoning change, Phillips asked city council to reverse their decision to appease area residents.<sup>86</sup>

Following the zoning controversy, Phillips announced plans to proceed with the proposed multi-million dollar merchandise mart at the Independence Boulevard site and assured city leaders

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<sup>85</sup> Emery Wister, "2-Million-Dollar Mart Planned For Charlotte," *The Charlotte News*, September 10, 1958.

<sup>86</sup> Dick Young and Emery Wister, "Will Council Act on Mart?" *The Charlotte News*, October 15, 1958; "Mart Nears Drawing Board," *The Charlotte News*, October 17, 1958; Loye Miller, "Phillips Asks End To Mart Zoning Tiff," *The Charlotte Observer*, October 22, 1958; "The City Council Can Undo Last Week's Zoning Error," *The Charlotte Observer*, October 22, 1958.

of his commitment. Without the zoning change, the building was redesigned as a four-story structure enclosing 255,000 square feet of exhibition space. Phillips shared his desire to break ground on the building in early 1959, and hired Joe Whitcomb, a former salesman of women's wear in the Carolinas, to manage the merchandise mart.<sup>87</sup>

Plans for the project dragged through 1959 as negotiations continued with the various groups who would use the building. The facility would contain both permanent displays for local manufacturers as well as a large exhibition hall for seasonal fairs and trade shows.<sup>88</sup> An office for the proposed Merchandise Mart opened at 2616 Independence Boulevard in a former house. Site clearing required removing six houses that faced Independence Boulevard. The office served as Whitcomb's headquarters, where he prepared materials to show to interested firms and individuals and entertained officials of four major trade shows: Carolinas-Virginia Fashion Exhibitors, Dixie Fashion Exhibitors, Men's Apparel Mart, and Southern Children's Mart.<sup>89</sup>

Plans continued to lag well into 1960, after Phillips promised to break ground in early 1960 and be completed in time for the Carolinas-Virginia Fashion Exhibitors and Dixie Fashion Exhibitors' shows in January 1961. Further delays in completing the architectural and engineering plans by architect Thrift and structural engineers Ezra Meir & Associates of Raleigh pushed the construction dates back further. Construction had still not begun by June 1960, with Phillips now assuring completion in time for the June 1961 women's wear show.<sup>90</sup> With an estimated price tag nearing \$2,250,000, the Charlotte Merchandise Mart would serve the Carolinas, eastern Tennessee, and southern Virginia and be comparable to a similar facility under construction in Atlanta.<sup>91</sup>

The project finally began gaining momentum in late 1960, when the Phillips Investment Company filed an application with the city building inspection department. Plans called for Crowder Construction Company to erect a three-story building containing 240,000 square feet and costing approximately \$1,500,000. Additional parking spaces were needed to serve the merchandise mart, but Phillips struck a deal with the Auditorium-Coliseum Authority to utilize and expand upon the neighboring Coliseum's lot for use by both facilities.<sup>92</sup> With the parking concerns settled, the city issued permits for construction of the mart. Completion was now estimated for December 1961, with the first show scheduled in January 1962.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Emery Wister, "Work on Merchandise Mart to be Started First of Year," *The Charlotte News*, November 7, 1958; "Joe Whitcomb To Manage Mart," *Charlotte Observer*, November 9, 1958.

<sup>88</sup> "Mart Building Still In Works," *The Charlotte News*, August 14, 1959.

<sup>89</sup> "Mart Office Is Opened," *Charlotte News*, November 18, 1958.

<sup>90</sup> Emery Wister, "Merchandise Mart Architects Tardy," *The Charlotte News*, June 13, 1960.

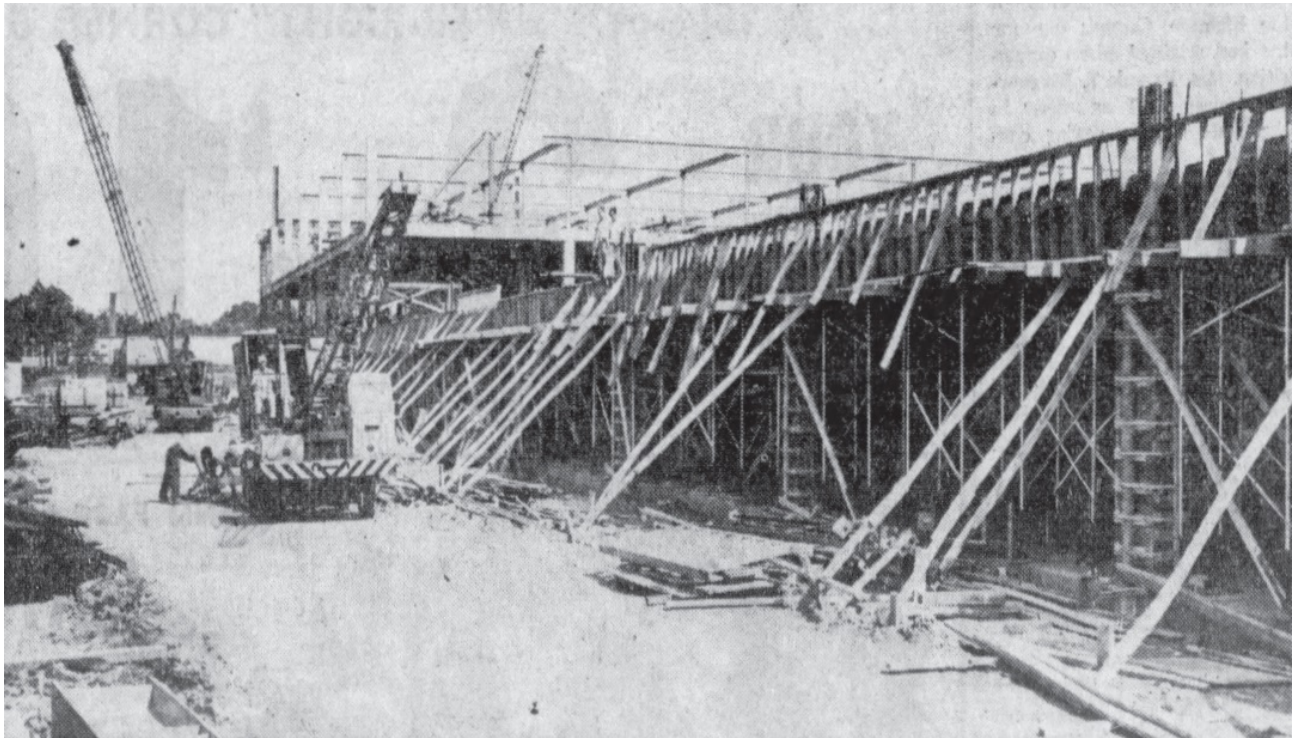
<sup>91</sup> Emery Wister, "\$2 Million Display Hall To Be Erected," *The Charlotte News*, January 25, 1960.

<sup>92</sup> "\$1.5 Million Mart Application On File," *The Charlotte News*, December 16, 1960; Joe Doster, "Parking Lot Plan Okayed By Authority," *The Charlotte Observer*, January 5, 1961.

<sup>93</sup> "Final Approval Given To Merchandise Mart," *The Charlotte News*, January 14, 1961.



Pressure on the rising merchandise mart increased significantly in the spring of 1961, when a delegation of Charlotte's civic and business leaders lobbied the State Department of Conservation and Development to host a major international trade fair in October of that year. Although the full building would not be complete by October, Phillips promised that the 80,000-square-foot first floor would be available for the fair. Charlotte's bid for the fair offered the Coliseum, Ovens Auditorium, the partially finished Merchandise Mart, and the 20,000-square-foot Radio Center as possible sites for exhibitors. International in scope, manufacturers and buyers from around the world were expected to visit the fair and view displays of foreign and domestically produced machinery and manufactured goods. The fair was timed to coincide with a visit to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill by President John F. Kennedy.<sup>94</sup> Fair planners envisioned 640 display booths of machinery, manufactured products, and industrial services greeting an anticipated 250,000 visitors over the ten-day fair.<sup>95</sup> Although originally billed as an international fair, it was decided that the fair would only feature firms doing business in North Carolina, and by the end of May the event was renamed the North Carolina Trade Fair.<sup>96</sup>



**Merchandise Mart Going Up Fast** (*The Charlotte News*, May 22, 1961)

Construction of the merchandise mart moved ahead at a rapid pace, with the structural concrete frame rising quickly. By July the exterior brickwork was nearly complete, steel work was

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<sup>94</sup> Julian Scheer, "N.C. Plans Huge Trade Fair," *The Charlotte News*, April 25, 1961; Jay Jenkins, "Charlotteans Bid For Fair," *The Charlotte Observer*, April 27, 1961.

<sup>95</sup> Harry Snook, "Plans Pushed For Huge Trade Fair," *The Charlotte Observer*, May 11, 1961.

<sup>96</sup> "Trade Fair Born Amid Confusion, Disappointments—But All's Well," *The Charlotte Observer*, October 11, 1961.

well underway, and contractors were installing plumbing and electrical connections. The first two floors of the three-story building were expected to be ready for use by the trade fair.<sup>97</sup> Dwight Phillips announced a second major show to follow the North Carolina Trade Fair at the merchandise mart. The nine-day Southern Automobile Exposition was scheduled to begin at the end of October, offering previews of the 1962 model cars and appearances by auto racing personalities as well as television and movie stars. The auto show, as planned, would be the second largest in the country behind Detroit.<sup>98</sup>

The Charlotte Merchandise Mart opened in October 1961 as an integral part of the ten-day North Carolina Trade Fair, the first exhibition to showcase the state's goods to foreign and domestic buyers. President Kennedy officially opened the fair in brief remarks from Chapel Hill prior to receiving an honorary degree from the University of North Carolina. The first two stories of the merchandise mart were rushed to completion to provide 160,000 square feet of exhibition space.<sup>99</sup> More than 140,000 people attended the fair to look at displays sponsored by 321 firms doing business in North Carolina. The response from exhibitors, visitors, and local businesses was generally favorable, with benefits ranging from new orders, new prospects, and intangible advertising.<sup>100</sup> Just two months after the fair closed, Governor Terry Sanford outlined his desire for Charlotte to host a second trade fair in 1963.<sup>101</sup>

On the heels of its successful opening, the Charlotte Merchandise Mart hosted the first Southern Automobile Exposition, a five-day automobile show. Ford, Chevrolet, and Chrysler were the only domestic manufacturers participating in the show and displayed new model cars alongside models from foreign manufacturers BMW and Saab. Extensive displays of race cars and appearances by owners and drivers highlighted the show. Movies of three top stock car races were shown continuously throughout the show.<sup>102</sup>

The privately owned facility became an important component of Charlotte's civic amenities as the city emerged as an important convention and host city in the southeast. Phillips described the merchandise mart as a "showcase and a showplace" for trade shows and permanent exhibits.<sup>103</sup> Over the years, the Charlotte Merchandise Mart became a landmark associated with popular yearly consumer and trade events including the Southern Ideal Home Show and Southern Women's Show, alongside the annual Christmas show and smaller exhibitions for baseball card, model railroad, and sporting enthusiasts.

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<sup>97</sup> "Merchandise Mart Going Up Fast," *The Charlotte News*, May 22, 1961; "Sparks Fly At Merchandise Mart," *The Charlotte News*, July 12, 1961.

<sup>98</sup> Emery Wister, "South's Biggest Auto Show Coming," *The Charlotte News*, May 16, 1961.

<sup>99</sup> Emery Wister, "North Carolina Shows Off," *The Charlotte News*, October 7, 1961; "Merchandise Mart Rushed For N.C. Event," *The Charlotte Observer*, October 11, 1961.

<sup>100</sup> Victor K. McElheny, "N.C. Trade Fair Closes After 140,000 Saw It," *The Charlotte Observer*, October 21, 1961.

<sup>101</sup> Harry Snook, "Sanford Calls for Second North Carolina Trade Fair," *The Charlotte Observer*, December 22, 1961.

<sup>102</sup> Bill Hughes, "Mart Glitters With Initial Auto Show," *The Charlotte News*, November 1, 1961.

<sup>103</sup> "Merchandise Mart Rushed For N.C. Event," *The Charlotte Observer*, October 11, 1961

After nearly a decade the thriving Charlotte Merchandise Mart was enlarged with a 200,000-square-foot addition completed in early 1970. The five-story wing was executed with a brick exterior to match the original building, and featured two elevators running to all floors. The open-plan double-height first floor of the wing, known as Freedom Hall, connected with the display hall in the original building, known as Independence Hall, to provide 120,000 square feet of ground-floor exhibition space. Managed by W. R. Oberhultz, the merchandise mart hosted around thirty large trade shows each year, with the Carolina Fashion Exhibitors' five yearly shows being the largest.<sup>104</sup>

Dwight Phillips died in 1973, after nearly three decades steering and influencing Charlotte's explosive growth and development. The D. L. Phillips Company continued to own and operate the merchandise mart. Son-in-law Tom P. Phillips became president and served until his retirement in 2000. Dwight Phillips' daughters, Peggy, Elizabeth, and Iris, remained the principal stockholders.<sup>105</sup>

In the late 1980s, with Belk Stores leaving the mart and a new municipal coliseum under construction, the owners of the Charlotte Merchandise Mart began planning a second expansion of the facility that would double its size. The new wing, known as Liberty Hall, opened in 1990 and added another 104,000 square feet of exhibition space. The new wing included a restaurant, renovated lobby area, and additional showroom space making the merchandise mart the largest exhibition facility in Charlotte. Around the same time, however, the city approved a site and proposed plans for a new civic convention center. Unlike the convention center and the new coliseum, the Merchandise Mart had been built and was operated without public money.<sup>106</sup> A number of other tenants and showrooms moved downtown after the Charlotte Apparel Mart opened in 1989, but the merchandise mart continued hosting popular consumer and trade events including the Southern Spring Home & Garden Show and the Southern Christmas Show. By 2000, however, Phillips' three daughters were looking to sell the building. In 2007, the property consisting of the three exhibition buildings and twenty-eight acres was sold to University Park Baptist Church for use as the church's main campus.<sup>107</sup>

### *Evaluation*

For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Charlotte Merchandise Mart is **eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places. The former Charlotte Merchandise Mart was an important component in the development of the Independence Boulevard corridor in the post-World War II period and a good example of a mid-rise building designed in the Modernist style. As Independence Boulevard helped open the

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<sup>104</sup> Emery Wister, "Merchandise Mart Is Bigger By 200,000'," *The Charlotte News*, March 10, 1970.

<sup>105</sup> Roy Covington, "Developer-Political Leader Dies," *The Charlotte Observer*, December 25, 1973; Morrill, 147.

<sup>106</sup> Clifford Glickman, "Merchandise Mart Double In Size," *The Charlotte Observer*, February 21, 1990; Foon Rhee, "Council Picks Convention Center Site," *The Charlotte Observer*, May 24, 1989.

<sup>107</sup> Maggie Frank, "God Is My Co-Signer," BusinessNC, September 16, 2011, accessed March 20, 2020, <https://businessnc.com/god-is-my-co-signercategory/>.

suburban rim to development, prominent builder Dwight L. Phillips conceived of the Merchandise Mart to strengthen Charlotte's standing and attractiveness as a center for large conventions and exhibitions. Despite its later additions, the former Charlotte Merchandise Mart retains a good degree of integrity and nice architectural details for a primarily utilitarian structure. The property generally retains its integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The design of the building has been compromised to some degree with the additions and renovations completed in 1990, which substantially increased the building's footprint. These additions, however, are located at the rear of the original building and clearly distinguished in their construction by different exterior materials. The early portions of the building—Independence and Freedom Halls, completed in 1961 and 1970, respectively—are viewed without intrusion from the later additions at the rear.

The Charlotte Merchandise Mart is **eligible** for the National Register under Criterion A (event). *To be eligible under Criterion A, a property must retain integrity and must be associated with a specific event marking an important moment in American pre-history or history or a pattern of events or historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community, a state, or the nation. Furthermore, a property must have existed at the time and be documented to be associated with the events. Finally, a property's specific association must be important as well.* The privately built and operated Charlotte Merchandise Mart represents a significant development in the emergence of Charlotte as an important convention and trade show destination in the second half of the twentieth century. Long recognized as a transportation hub and distribution center, which contributed to the growth of new industries and businesses in the early twentieth century, Charlotte was positioned for explosive growth following World War II. Construction of Independence Boulevard in 1949 as a primary east-west artery served as a catalyst for suburban development. The Charlotte Coliseum and Ovens Auditorium, built in 1955, were the first large-scale civic facilities erected outside of the central business district, and the subsequent construction of the Merchandise Mart solidified the area as the city's premier venue for entertainment, sporting events, cultural arts, expositions, and trade shows. The Charlotte Merchandise Mart provided the city with a facility rivaled in scale and function by only a small number of other metropolitan areas. It served to complement the coliseum and auditorium and helped Charlotte attract an enviable array of regional conventions, exhibitions, and trade shows.

The Charlotte Merchandise Mart is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion B (person). *For a property to be eligible for significance under Criterion B, it must retain integrity and 1) be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, i.e. individuals whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, state or national historic context; 2) be normally associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he/she achieved significance, and 3) should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person's historic contributions. Furthermore, a property is not eligible if its only justification for significance is that it was owned or used by a person who is or was a member of an identifiable profession, class, or social or ethnic group.* The Charlotte Merchandise Mart is directly associated with local builder Dwight L. Phillips, who privately owned and operated the facility. A prominent booster, Phillips actively promoted Charlotte business and industry in the post-war period as his company built residential subdivisions, apartments, shopping centers, and motels to serve the growing city. Although the Charlotte Merchandise Mart is closely associated with Phillips'

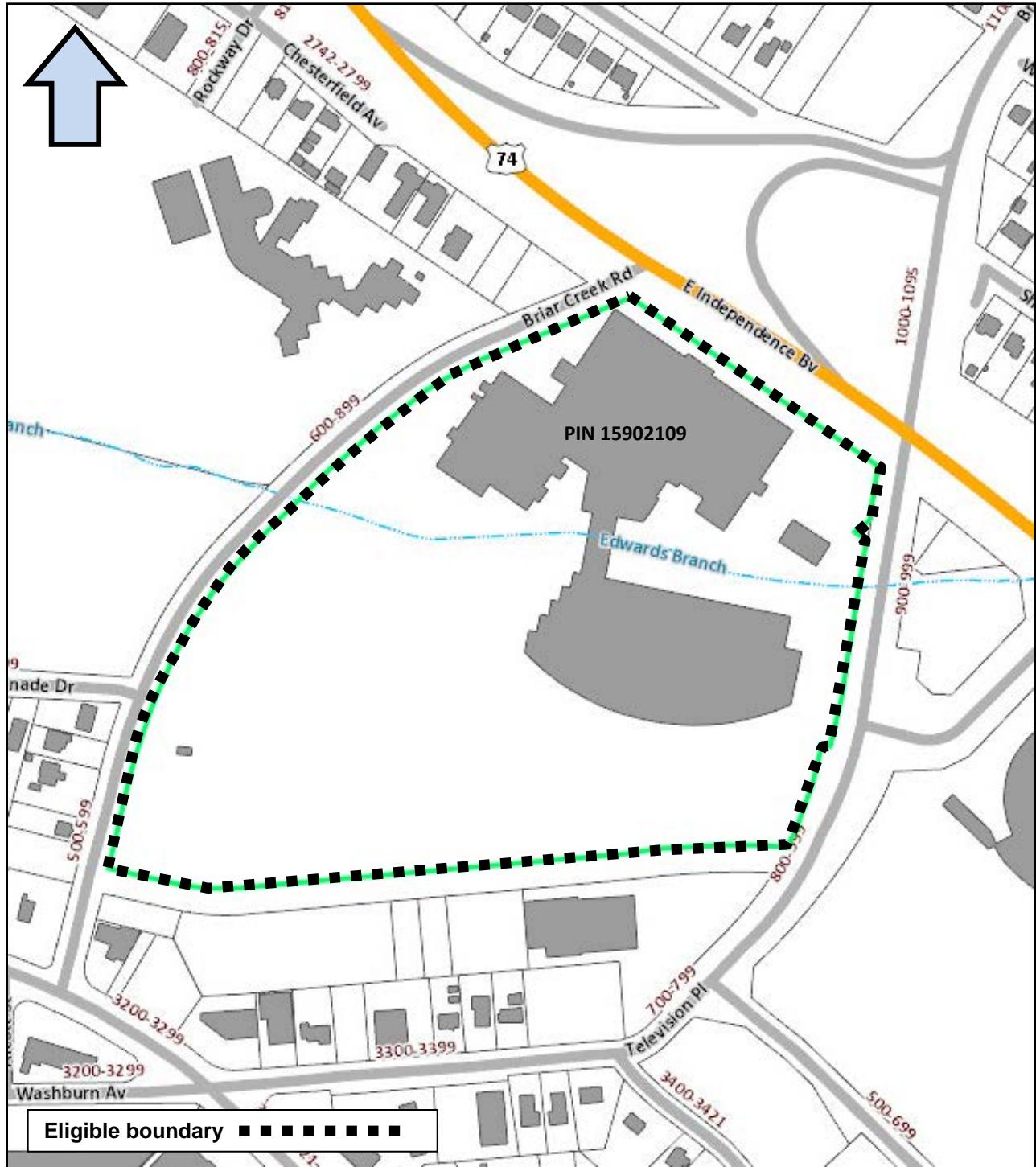
extensive work the city, the property is one of many surviving structures built by the D. L. Phillips Company. As such, it is unlikely that the Merchandise Mart best represents Phillips' productive life and historic contributions to the city of Charlotte.

The Charlotte Merchandise Mart is **eligible** for the National Register under Criterion C (design/construction). *For a property to be eligible under this criterion, it must retain integrity and either 1) embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; 2) represent the work of a master; 3) possess high artistic value; or 4) represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.* Designed by architect William Thrift, the Charlotte Merchandise Mart is an exhibition hall and showroom building designed in the Modernist style. The flat-roof edifice is enriched with brick patterning on the façade, concrete breeze block screens, and a glass entrance pavilion. The property type is somewhat unique and combines aspects of mid-rise office buildings and super-mart retail stores, which were becoming popular in suburban Charlotte after World War II. The Merchandise Mart functions as a large box enclosing the flexible, open plan of the ground-story exhibition hall, as well as the glass-enclosed permanent showrooms on the upper stories. The exterior skin of the building's mass is enlivened with subtle, low-relief brick work but the most lavish spaces and materials are reserved for the entrance pavilion and major circulation areas. Thrift's design for the building provides interest to the large exterior mass and neatly highlights the organization of functional space within. Although the full interior was not available for inspection due to public health concerns, the visible portions of the interior through the glazed front atrium suggests that the building retains a good degree of interior integrity. The Charlotte Merchandise Mart is a good example of its type and displays significant Modernist design ideas in its execution.

The Charlotte Merchandise Mart is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion D (potential to yield information). *For a property to be eligible under Criterion D, it must meet two requirements: 1) the property must have, or have had, information to contribute to our understanding of human history or pre-history, and 2) the information must be considered important.* Begun in 1961 and expanded twice in 1970 and 1990, the Charlotte Merchandise Mart is unlikely to contribute significant information pertaining to building technology or historical documentation not otherwise accessible from other extant resources and written records.

### *Boundary Description and Justification*

The proposed boundary of the Charlotte Merchandise Mart follows the legal property line encompassing the full extent of the 25.5-acre property [PIN 15902109] and containing the buildings and extensive paved parking lot. The façade of the main building sits close to the edge of Independence Boulevard and the boundary extends up to the right-of-way of Independence Boulevard. The proposed boundary does not include a paved six-acre parking lot located on the west side of Briar Creek Road. The smaller lot, though historically associated with the Charlotte Merchandise Mart, occupies a separate tax parcel [PIN 15901604] and contains no additional features or resources that contribute to the significance of the property.



**Boundary Map – Charlotte Merchandise Mart, 800 Briar Creek Road [PIN 15902109]**  
 (Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)

## Inventory No. 6

Resource Name	<b>Old Charlotte Coliseum and Ovens Auditorium</b>
HPO Survey Site Number	MK1779
Location	2700 East Independence Boulevard
PIN	15902801
Date(s) of Construction	1954-1955
Eligibility Recommendation	Eligible – C (architecture); Local Landmark, 2009



**Old Charlotte Coliseum and Ovens Auditorium, 2700 East Independence Boulevard, ca. 1955**

### *Description*

Located on an eighteen-acre site on the south side of Independence Boulevard, the Old Charlotte Coliseum (present-day Bojangles' Coliseum) and Ovens Auditorium have long shared a landscaped plaza and in the past year have been connected to one another with an addition called the Coliseum-Auditorium LINK Connector Facility. A massive parking lot behind the complex was part of the original design.

Built of steel and reinforced and cast concrete, the coliseum's massive dome stands atop outward slanting columns. The coliseum walls are noteworthy for the distinctive undulation of concrete and glass on their surface. The glazed area opens onto the circulation and shopping spaces beneath the stadium seating, a choice that floods those secondary spaces with light and creates a visual connection between the interior of the building and the plaza surrounding it. The



**Charlotte Coliseum, façade, view to east**



**Charlotte Coliseum, oblique view to the west**





**Ovens Auditorium, façade, view to west**



**Ovens Auditorium, façade detail, oblique view to west**



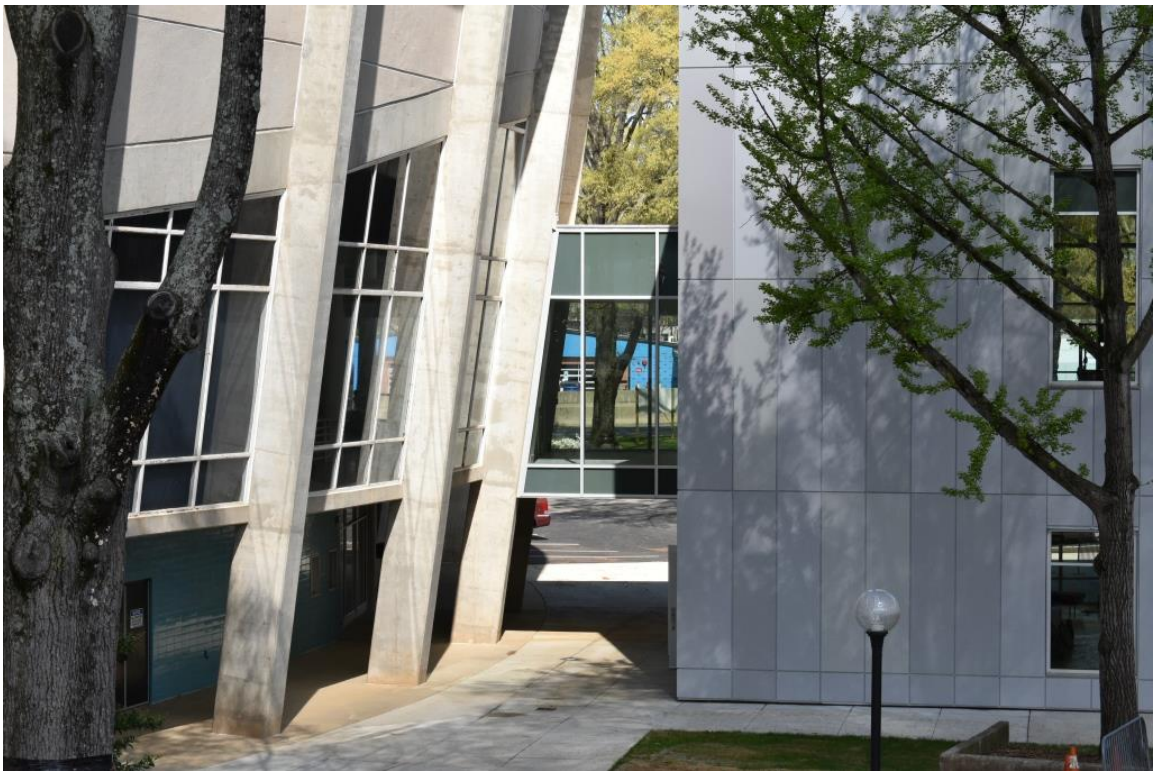
**Charlotte Coliseum (r) and Coliseum-Auditorium LINK Connector Facility (l), view to west**



**Coliseum-Auditorium LINK Connector Facility, view to west**



**Coliseum-Auditorium LINK Connector Facility, view to east**



**Bridge between Charlotte Coliseum (l) and Coliseum-Auditorium LINK Connector Facility (r)**

main interior centers on the arena floor, around which rise precast concrete bleachers with original maple folding seats.<sup>108</sup> The ceiling of the area is the dome itself, with exposed structural members visible throughout.

To the southeast of the coliseum stands the Ovens Auditorium, a two-story concrete building with aluminum windows and doors and rectangular tile accents. Reflecting the complex's inspiration as an automobile-oriented entertainment center, an automobile portico on cylindrical columns projects from the front of the auditorium building. A two-story expanse of plate glass contains the entrance lobby and upstairs lounge. Behind the lobby sits the fan-shaped theater space, designed to seat 2,500, with a cantilevered balcony that projects out over the orchestra seats. The singular pop of color on the building's exterior comes from two walls of teal-colored tile that flank both sides of the upstairs lounge on the front of the building. The blue tile is also used in the lobby, mezzanine, and the rear wall of the auditorium. The lobby features a terrazzo floor and an open staircase with wood and metal railings.

As originally designed, the two buildings were connected by a modernist plaza that featured organically shaped green spaces framed by swaths of concrete pavers. A circular drive leading up to the auditorium's portico contained an expansive greensward. By the 1970s the lawn area had been replaced with a rectangular pool and fountains. Today a paved patio has displaced the original circular drive and two rows of parking spaces divided by a planted median stand in place of the reflecting pool.

Several phases of changes have been made to the complex in the past decades. In the 1970s, to better accommodate vehicular traffic, the main entrance of the coliseum was moved from the east to the south side of the building, facing the parking lots. Following construction of the new Charlotte Coliseum on Tyvola Road, a second round of renovations began in 1991, which updated the sound and lighting systems as well as the restrooms, locker rooms, concession stands, and box office. The buildings were both made handicap accessible during these renovations; in both cases this entailed the construction of two-story additions to accommodate elevators. Care was reportedly taken to preserve the original oak floor and original maple folding seats in the coliseum. Renovations in the 1990s also entailed replacing the auditorium seats (substituting orange and turquoise seating for dark teal) and remodeling the upstairs lounge.

Construction on a third round of renovations to the complex has recently concluded. The Coliseum-Auditorium LINK Connector Facility designed by Odell Associates connects the two buildings and adds additional concession space to accommodate events in both venues. The concrete and glass addition has been designed to mirror the materiality of the two buildings. Its north face is almost entirely composed of plate-glass panels whose scale echoes the rhythm of the glazed front of the auditorium building. The rear of the addition features aluminum panels, an offset ribbon of windows, and a concrete bridge that leads from the parking lot to the connector facility's main entrance. The connections have been designed to minimize intrusion onto either

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<sup>108</sup> Catherine W. Bishir and Michael T. Southern, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Piedmont North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 522; Paula M. Stathakis and Davis H. Liles, "Survey and Research Report on the Charlotte Coliseum," Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission Designation Form, July 30, 1990, 23-26.

building. A slender bridge encased in glass attaches the coliseum to the new structure. Although the connector facility abuts the auditorium building more completely, it appears that circulation between the two is limited to a narrow passageway on the west wall of the second floor lounge.<sup>109</sup>



**Old Charlotte Coliseum and Ovens Auditorium, view to northwest**

### *Historical Background*

The Old Charlotte Coliseum and Ovens Auditorium are Modernist landmarks whose importance to the development of the Independence Boulevard corridor cannot be overstated. Upon its completion in 1955, the complex became a nationally publicized example of modern architecture and was cited as a symbol of Charlotte’s emergence in the modern era of automobile-centered urban design. Convenience for the automobile began to dominate planning along Independence Boulevard, and the complex set the standard for the inclusion of large parking areas as part of future development plans. Shopping malls, office parks, and restaurants were all developed with the automobile-driving suburban consumer in mind.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Stathakis and Liles, “Charlotte Coliseum,” 29-31.

<sup>110</sup> Hanchett, 241; Bishir and Southern, *Guide*, 522.



**Site Plan – Charlotte Coliseum and Ovens Auditorium, 2700 E. Independence Boulevard  
2018 aerial taken before construction of Coliseum-Auditorium LINK Connector Facility  
(Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)**

The complex was built on an expansive eighteen-acre site that local developer Dwight L. Phillips sold to the City of Charlotte in 1954. Phillips began his career as a residential developer in the 1930s and went on to build wartime housing for the military in Jacksonville, North Carolina, and on various military bases in North Carolina, Georgia, and South Carolina. Locally, Phillips became one of Charlotte's preeminent mid-century developers, and was behind the Chantilly Shopping Center and Hutchinson Shopping Center; residential developments including Chantilly

(see #4), Morningside Apartments, Briar Creek Apartments, and Freedom Village; and major landmarks such as the Charlotte Merchandise Mart (see #5). In 1954, after he sold the land for the coliseum to the city, he anticipated a need for lodging nearby and built a 176-room motel called the Coliseum Motor Court adjacent to the complex.<sup>111</sup>

When the complex first opened to the public, it was located at the outer edges of Charlotte's pre-war suburbs. The coliseum's only neighbors were the Coliseum Motor Court, a service station, a hamburger stand, and a Howard Johnson's restaurant: all built in anticipation of the crowds the complex would draw to Independence Boulevard. A decade later, after the Charlotte Merchandise Mart opened adjacent to the complex, each of Charlotte's major banks had branches in the vicinity and car dealerships, restaurants, and additional entertainment venues lined the corridor.<sup>112</sup>

Both the coliseum and auditorium were designed by A. G. Odell & Associates, a local architectural firm that specialized in Modernist design. The Charlotte Coliseum provided the first single-purpose sports facility in the region and was designed to seat an audience of 13,500 people. The New York structural engineering firm of Severud-Elstad-Kruger assisted Odell in developing the structural plan for the dome, which was the largest single-span domed roof in the world upon its completion. The coliseum dome was featured in *Architecture and Building* and *Look* magazines for its unique design. In trade journals such as *Construction*, *Popular Mechanics*, and *The National Insurance Buyer*, the facility became a poster-child for Alcoa aluminum.

Although the two buildings were conceived as a unit, Ovens Auditorium has always been the less lauded of the two. Named for David Ovens, one of the New South leaders of Charlotte, the auditorium building has a modest exterior and decidedly more elegant interior. By mid-century, the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra was playing at the Armory Auditorium on Cecil Street (present-day Kings Drive), a venue in such disrepair that its state was negatively affecting attendance. With established philanthropy work including presidency of the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, presidency of the Good Fellows Club, head of the first Community Chest Drive (forerunner to United Way), local chairmanship of American Red Cross during World War II, and presidency of the Community Concert Association, Ovens turned his focus to raising public funds for the new auditorium, which would bear his name. He chaired the planning committee for the complex and was instrumental in selecting its architect.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Morrill, 146-147.

<sup>112</sup> Stathakis and Liles, "Charlotte Coliseum," n.p.; Woodard and Wyatt, 29-31.

<sup>113</sup> Morrill, 69-70.

### *Evaluation*

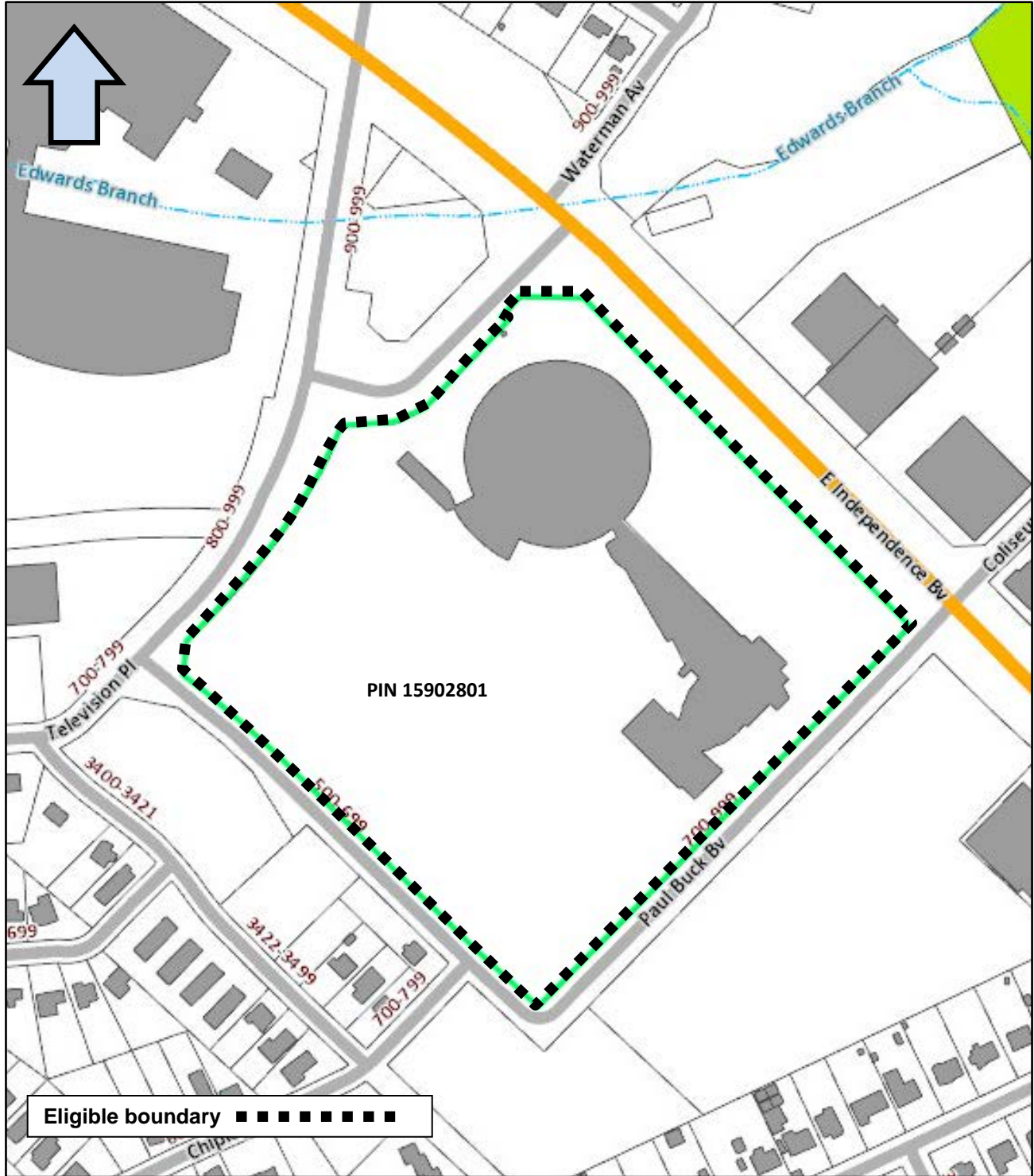
The Old Charlotte Coliseum was placed on the Study List in 1990. The property was subsequently determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places in 2006 as an intact example of mid-century Modernist architecture on Charlotte's east side. The building was further designated as a local landmark in 2009 under similar criteria. It is unclear why these designations and determinations were limited to the Charlotte Coliseum and did not explicitly describe or include Ovens Auditorium. Conceived as a unit and retaining comparable degrees of integrity, the old Charlotte Coliseum and Ovens Auditorium are architectural and cultural touchstones in the city. The buildings represent important designs by Charlotte's most prolific and renowned modernist architect, A. G. Odell, Jr., and had a significant impact on the expansion of Charlotte's post-war suburbs.

For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Charlotte Coliseum and Ovens Auditorium appear to remain **eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for architecture. The property generally retains its integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Recent alterations to the complex, including the construction of the Coliseum-Auditorium LINK Connector Facility, have been designed with careful consideration of the buildings' historic importance and original design, and do not affect their potential eligibility. The property retains the physical qualities and historic associations that contribute to its significance.

### *Boundary Description and Justification*

The proposed boundary of the Old Charlotte Coliseum and Ovens Auditorium encompasses the full eighteen-acre parcel associated with the entertainment complex [PIN 15902801]. The boundary follows the property lines, which abuts the Independence Boulevard right-of-way on the north, Paul Buck Boulevard to the south and east, and Television Place to the west. The boundary includes the coliseum, auditorium, connector facility, paved parking lot, and landscaped plaza.





**Boundary Map – Charlotte Coliseum and Ovens Auditorium, 2700 East Independence Boulevard [PIN 15902801] (Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)**

## Inventory No. 7

Resource Name	<b>J. N. Pease Associates</b>
HPO Survey Site Number	MK2188
Location	2925 East Independence Boulevard
PIN	12910106
Date(s) of Construction	1959
Eligibility Recommendation	Eligible – C (architecture)



**J. N. Pease Associates, 2925 East Independence Boulevard, façade, view to north**

### *Description*

Situated on the north side of Independence Boulevard, the J. N. Pease Associates Building is a two-story Modernist office building designed by the Pease firm in 1959 to centralize the company's offices. The flat-roofed building is constructed with a reinforced concrete frame, brick panels, and concrete block. The eight-bay façade is composed of the concrete frame with floor-to-ceiling aluminum-frame windows and doors on the first story and a second-story brise-soleil consisting of concrete chimney liners set on their side and stacked to form textured panels. The building is entered at the southeast corner through a glazed two-story atrium with an open stair to the second-story offices. While the Pease firm originally occupied the second story and portions of the first story of the building, the remaining areas of the first story were designed for leased offices and retail spaces, but only the primary entrance remains intact. In late 2019, the windows around the atrium were replaced with mirrored glass. The brise-soleil stands four feet in front of



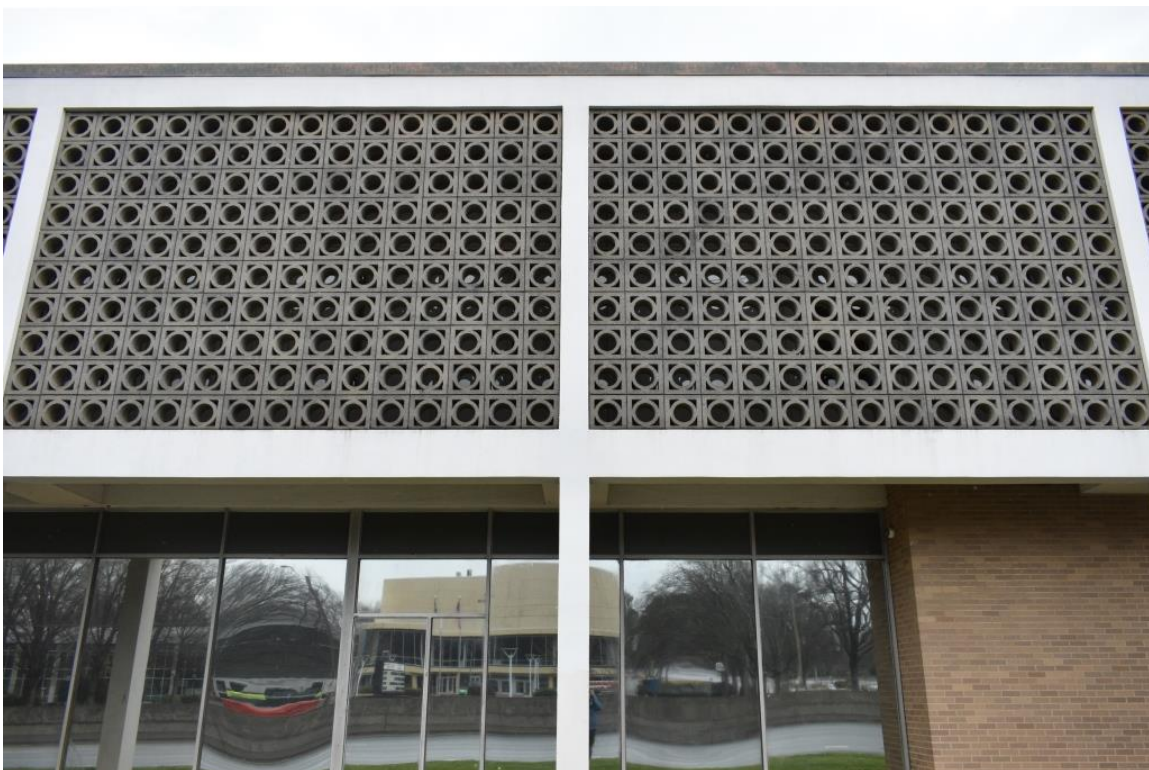
**J. N. Pease Associates, oblique front view to east**



**J. N. Pease Associates, south corner, view to north**



**J. N. Pease Associates, oblique front view to west**



**J. N. Pease Associates, south corner, view to north**



**J. N. Pease Associates, oblique view to west**



**J. N. Pease Associates, north corner, view to south**

the building and an exterior second-story walkway extends behind the screened panels for the majority of the façade.

The side elevations are almost entirely blind with only double-leaf metal-frame glazed doors and sidelights located on the west elevation. This side entrance is sheltered by an attached awning and accessed from a concrete ramp with metal rails. On the east elevation, double-leaf metal doors topped by four louvered metal grilles appear to access a mechanical service room. The side elevations are enlivened by steel L-angles framing the brick infill panels within the structure's concrete frame.

The rear elevation displays concrete block infill and two-over-two double-hung metal sash windows on the second story. An attached exterior metal stairs rises at the center of the rear elevation to a single-leaf metal door on the second-story, which is sheltered by a flat metal awning suspended from metal tie-rods. The first-story has single-leaf metal entry doors, two sets of double-leaf glazed doors, and tall, narrow, single-pane windows. A single-leaf door at the west end of the rear elevation is accessed from a concrete ramp with metal rails.



**Site Plan – J. N. Pease Associates, 2925 East Independence Boulevard**  
(Source: Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)

## *Historical Background*

A 1957 feature in *The Charlotte Observer* on J. Norman Pease Associates (then J. N. Pease & Company, Inc.) noted that the firm had purchased a two-acre site on Independence Boulevard for the construction of a new two-story office building.<sup>114</sup> Located opposite Ovens Auditorium (see #6), the proposed building was being designed to house the company's offices on the second story and part of the first. The remainder of the first story would be leased. The new company offices allowed for all of its operations to be consolidated under one roof. At the time, different branches of the company, which provided architectural and engineering services, were scattered in three different locations downtown.

Born in Columbus, Georgia, James Norman Pease (1885-1987) came to Charlotte in 1920 to open a branch office for Lockwood Greene Engineers, a prominent South Carolina architectural and engineering firm active in the design and construction of textile mills throughout the southeast. Pease recalled that the firm dispatched him to Charlotte because of its position at the center of the textile industry and as a growing community. Lockwood Greene later reassigned Pease to their New York office, but after a decade, Pease returned to Charlotte in 1938 to open his own architectural practice. He partnered with James A. Stenhouse, a Charlotte architect, and the pair quickly took on projects for the city of Charlotte designing water works and sewage disposal plants before landing a major commission at Fort Bragg. As operations expanded, George S. Rawlins, a civil engineer, and architect Robert A. Botsford joined as partners in 1940. The firm incorporated in 1942, as Pease was departing for a second round of military service at the age of 57. Promoted to Colonel, Pease commanded the 369<sup>th</sup> regiment of the Corps of Engineers in the South Pacific.<sup>115</sup>

Upon his return from World War II, Pease led the growing firm to become the largest architecture and engineering firm in North Carolina and one of the fifty largest in the nation.<sup>116</sup> Between 1940 and 1952, Pease & Company had completed \$75,000,000 worth of work at Fort Bragg alone. A five-person branch office was opened in Pease's hometown of Columbus in 1948. The company executed building projects of nearly all types except private residences and public highways, and their work extended up and down the east coast and as far west as Texas. The firm had thirty projects in various stages of design and construction in 1957, including office buildings, warehouses, and a water treatment plant in Charlotte. At the time, the firm comprised 109 employees, including seven principals, nine registered architects, four registered civil engineers, two registered structural engineers, and three registered electrical engineers.<sup>117</sup>

Construction of a new office building in the late 1950s allowed, in part, all of the firm's operations to be housed in a single location. Designed by Pease and constructed between May

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<sup>114</sup> Demont Roseman, "Pease: For Charlotte Another Landmark!" *The Charlotte Observer*, August 18, 1957.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*; J. Norman Pease Oral History Interview, May 22, 1979, J. Murrey Atkins Library Special Collections, University of North Carolina Charlotte, accessed January 28, 2020, <https://nsv.uncc.edu/interview/ohpe0124.html>.

<sup>116</sup> "Pease Firm Opens Big New Boulevard Office Building," *The Charlotte News*, March 14, 1959.

<sup>117</sup> Demont Roseman, "Pease: For Charlotte Another Trademark!" *The Charlotte Observer*, August 18, 1957.

1958 and February 1959, the \$300,000 building was built by contractors McDevitt & Street.<sup>118</sup> The firm's ten offices on the second story were arranged along the front and sides of the building around a central open court. As there are no windows on the sides of the building, the court brought light and air to the interior offices, as well as a snack bar and conference room, although the building was air conditioned. The interior was generally rendered in natural tones with colorful accents, including elm and cherry paneling and exposed brick walls, vinyl tile and carpeted floors, linen curtains, and Scandinavian chairs and Herman Miller sofas with blue tweed upholstery.<sup>119</sup>

The most distinctive feature of the building also highlighted its colorful accents. The brise-soleil is composed of stacked chimney blocks that cast points of light into the front offices. In addition to emphasizing the building's horizontality, the brise-soleil sparkled with colored lights at night when floodlights mounted in the space between the screen and the front wall played off of colored glass panels on the façade.<sup>120</sup>

By the early 1970s, the firm had become inextricably intertwined with Charlotte's phenomenal growth and development in the post-war period. In 1972, Pease and Stenhouse retired from daily operations, and the firm reorganized as J. N. Pease Associates. George S. Rawlins, director of engineering since 1940, became president of the 140-person firm, while J. Norman Pease Jr. (1921-2009) was elected vice president and director of architecture. The younger Pease became president of the firm in 1976.<sup>121</sup> J. N. Pease Associates ultimately merged with LaBella Associates of Charlotte in 2010, and the successor firm sold the building in 2012 (DB 27405:670).

### *Evaluation*

The J. N. Pease Associates Building was placed on the Study List for the National Register in February 2001 at the conclusion of a county-wide survey of Charlotte's post-World War II architecture. The building was subsequently determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places in 2006, as part of a Section 106 review in association with a study of historic architectural resources for the Charlotte Area Transit System. The Pease Associates Building is recognized as an excellent and intact example of a mid-rise Modernist office building. Office buildings were not a new phenomenon but gained in prevalence in the post-World War II period as they moved into the suburbs and displayed Modernist design elements.

For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the J. N. Pease Associates Building appears to remain **eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria C for its architecture as the work of an important local architect in the Modernist style. The property retains a high degree of historic integrity, including its location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The property

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<sup>118</sup> *The Charlotte News*, March 14, 1959.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*; Lee Winter, "Col. Pease Knew What He Wanted For His Office," *The Charlotte Observer*, March 15, 1959.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

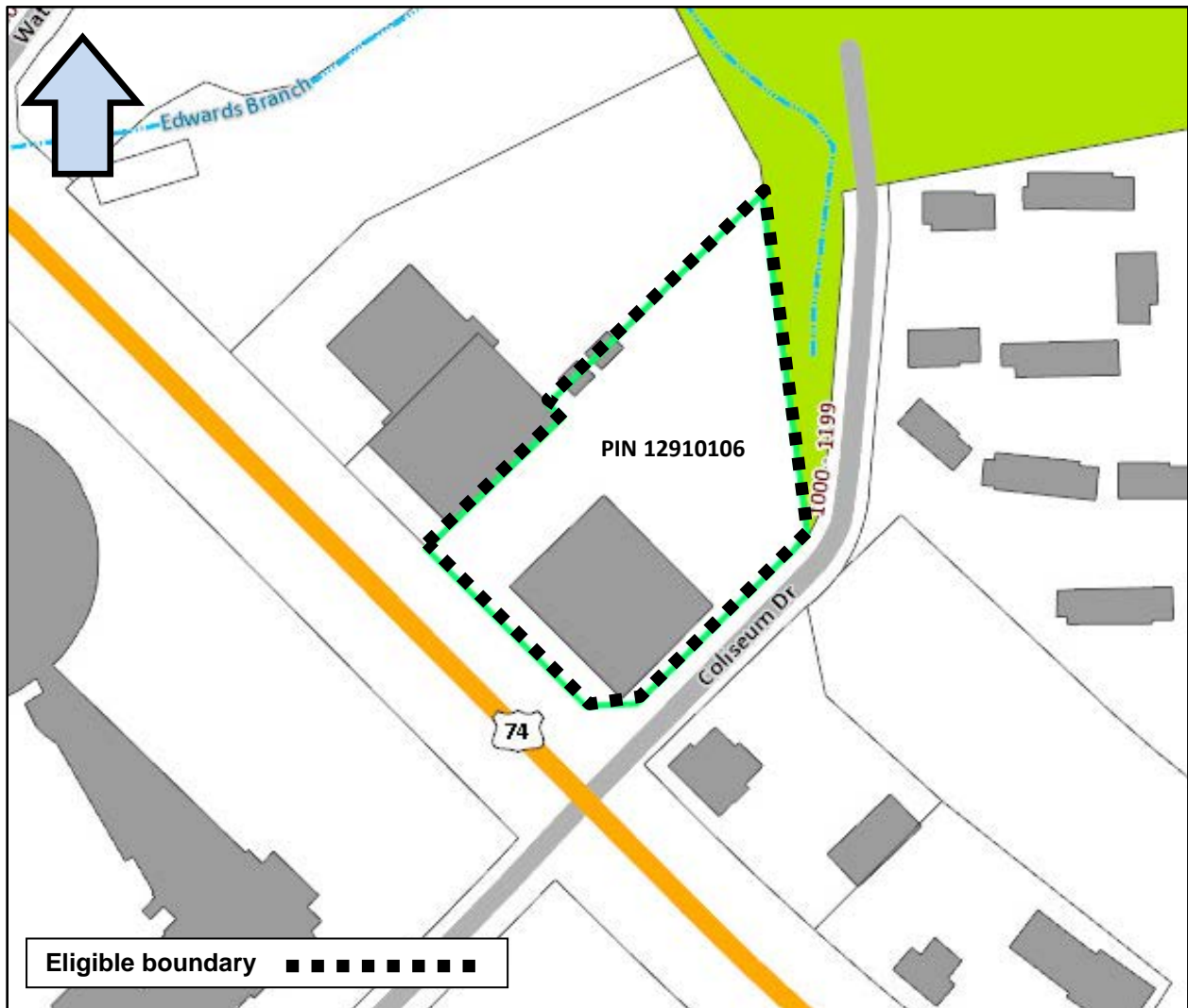
<sup>121</sup> "Pease Gives Up Presidency of Firm He Began in 1938," *The Charlotte Observer*, December 7, 1972; "Pease Firm Turns 40," *The Charlotte Observer*, November 19, 1978.



appears to be largely unaltered since it was determined eligible for the National Register and retains the physical qualities and historic associations that contribute to its significance.

*Boundary Description and Justification*

The proposed boundary of the J. N. Pease Associates Building encompasses the full 2.63-acre parcel associated with the building [PIN 12910106]. The boundary follows property lines and abuts the right-of-way of Independence Boulevard to the southwest and Coliseum Drive to the southeast. The boundary includes the office building, paved parking areas, and landscaping across the front of the building. A metal building shown on a survey of the property, dated June 7, 2012, and included with the deed (DB 27405:670), no longer stands. The building straddled the property line with the adjacent parcel [PIN 12910105].



**Boundary Map – J. N. Pease Associates, 2925 East Independence Boulevard [PIN 12910106]**  
(Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)

## Inventory No. 8

Resource Name	<b>Coliseum Downtowner Motor Inn</b>
HPO Survey Site Number	MK 4411
Location	3024 E. Independence Boulevard
PIN	15902713
Date(s) of Construction	1969
Eligibility Recommendation	Not Eligible (A, B, C, D)



**Coliseum Downtowner Motor Inn, 3024 E. Independence Blvd., overall view to southeast**

### *Description*

Opened in 1969, the Coliseum Downtowner Motor Inn is a visual landmark on Independence Boulevard, looming as it does above the service stations that stand beside it today. The eight-story hotel has a concrete frame painted white and is clad with light yellow panels and horizontal three-part windows. The narrow end of the building facing Independence Boulevard is four bays wide, while the side elevations are twelve bays deep. The vertical beams defining the bays rise to a blocky concrete cornice. The yellow panels that form the walls between the bays appear to be thin veneer with vertical seams that emphasize the building's height. The three-part windows, which may be replacements, align to form horizontal bands on the side elevations, and the center pane of each window group appears to be operable while the others are fixed. Two interior elevator shafts rise above the flat roof.



**Coliseum Downtowner Motor Inn, view to west**



**Coliseum Downtowner Motor Inn, oblique front view to south**



**Coliseum Downtowner Motor Inn, east wing, view to north**



**Coliseum Downtowner Motor Inn, entrance detail, view to west**



**Coliseum Downtowner Motor Inn, parking deck, oblique rear view to east**



**Coliseum Downtowner Motor Inn, parking deck, view to southeast**

The first-story entrance to the building is a recessed bay that forms a porte cochere beneath the main block of the hotel. An exterior concrete patio on the second level wraps around three sides of the building, projects forward to shelter the porte cochere and entry drive, and connects to the parking deck to the west. The porte cochere is supported by concrete piers that are extensions of the vertical beams on the narrow face of the building, and the two center bays are filled with irregularly coursed stone walls. From the entrance drive, the building is entered through a glazed storefront with two single-leaf glass doors. The exterior walls on the first story of the building are finished with concrete panels of rough aggregate. A one-story windowless wing on the east side of the building likely housed the hotel's original restaurant and lounge.

A four-level parking structure stands to the west of the hotel and is connected to the building at the first story. An open terrace extends from the second level of the parking deck to the second story and projecting front patio of the hotel. A walkway between the two structures at the second story is covered by a cloth awning. The parking deck displays an exposed reinforced-concrete frame with concrete T-beams carrying the floor loads. The upper levels of the parking structure are bordered by metal railings with thin solid panels screening the north and west sides. An in-ground swimming pool was originally located at the rear (south) of the hotel but was removed around 2015.



**Coliseum Downtowner Motor Inn, swimming pool site, oblique rear view to east**

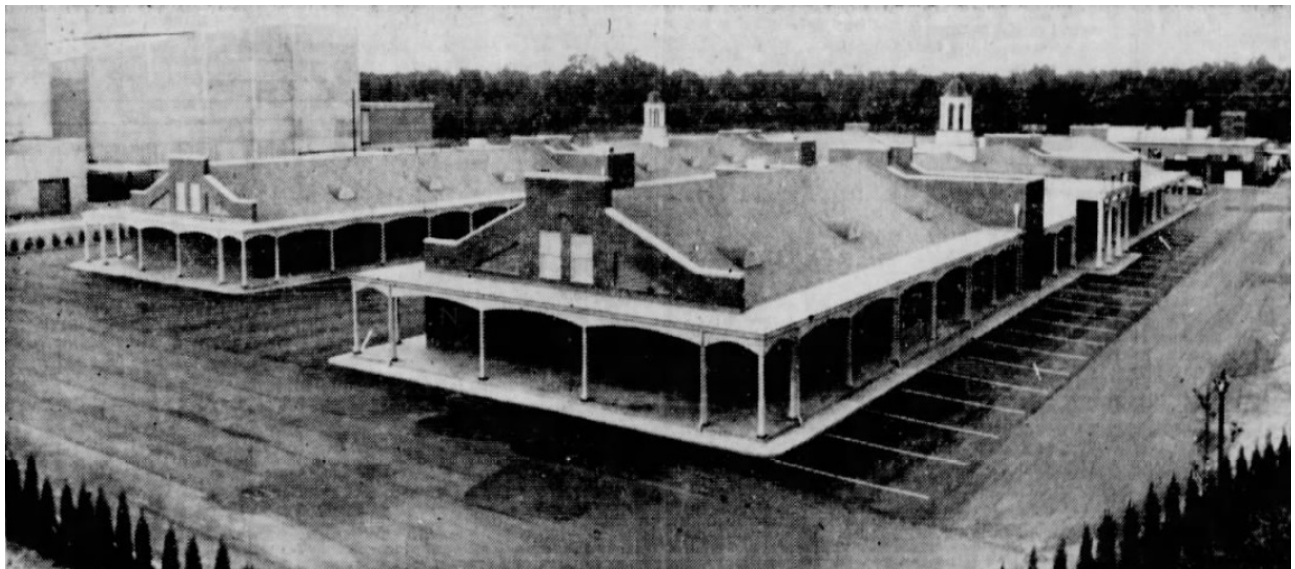


**Site Plan – Coliseum Downtowner Motor Inn, 3024 E. Independence Boulevard**  
(Source: Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)

### *Historic Background*

Construction of the Charlotte Coliseum and Ovens Auditorium complex in 1955 directly prompted a new wave of development along Independence Boulevard in subsequent years. For more than fifteen years previous, local developer Dwight L. Phillips (1906-1973) had been purchasing land on the east side of Charlotte, including hundreds of unsold lots in Chantilly (see #4) where he built more than 200 houses in the 1940s. Phillips built the Chantilly Shopping Center, as well as Morningside and Briar Creek apartments. In 1947, he sold a tract of land on McClintock Road to the federal government for a proposed Veterans Administration hospital, and a few years later sold a 25-acre tract to the city for the new Coliseum-Auditorium complex. Phillips held yet more land surrounding the two venues, which he later developed into the Charlotte Merchandise Mart (see #5) to the west of the coliseum and the Coliseum Motor Court to the east of the auditorium.

Building permits were issued for the Coliseum Motor Court on March 8, 1955, showing proposals for a \$250,000 motel-restaurant and a \$150,000 motel located just east of the new auditorium site.<sup>122</sup> Phillips built the new facility, which consisted of two long motel buildings and a new restaurant at the front of the site facing Independence Boulevard. The motor court buildings were brick construction and contained 84 guest rooms, all located on the ground floor. The rooms were equipped with double beds, foam-rubber mattresses, telephones, televisions, and air conditioning. At the grand opening in October 1955, Phillips declared that the motor court had been “designed and built to provide convenient, adequate facilities near the auditorium and coliseum.”<sup>123</sup> The motor court was immediately popular with entertainers and athletes performing at the nearby venues.<sup>124</sup>



**Coliseum Motor Court** (*The Charlotte Observer*, October 23, 1955)

During the 1950s, Charlotte’s hoteliers stayed busy and enjoyed relatively high occupancy rates. In 1958, the city reported more than 1,700 hotel rooms and nearly 600 motel rooms to welcome visitors and business travelers alike. The commercial trade kept room occupancy generally higher at the beginning of the week, but occupancy rates fell substantially on the weekends unless there was a convention or fashion show in town. Bruce Abbott, manager of the Coliseum Motor Court, indicated the motel typically had vacancies on the weekends unless there was a “big event at the nearby coliseum or auditorium.”<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> “Permits Issued for Two Projects,” *The Charlotte Observer*, March 9, 1955.

<sup>123</sup> “Coliseum Motor Court Opens,” *The Charlotte News*, October 24, 1955.

<sup>124</sup> Emery Wister, “Show ‘Nuf,” *The Charlotte News*, October 19, 1955.

<sup>125</sup> Emery Wister, “Travelers Can Find Lodgings Here, But Coming on Friday Helps,” *The Charlotte News*, February 6, 1958.



By the mid-1960s, the number of hotel rooms in Charlotte had doubled. Despite 3,515 available rooms in 1966, more than 1,000 more hotel rooms were planned or under construction with demand coming primarily from people attending conventions and trade shows. At the time four new motels were scheduled for the busy Independence Boulevard area: a Holiday Inn and Golden Eagle Motor Inn were under construction and a Landmark Inn and a Ramada Inn were planned.<sup>126</sup> The Golden Eagle Coliseum opened in September 1966 across Independence Boulevard from the Charlotte Coliseum. Built by the C. D. Spangler Construction Company, the Golden Eagle Coliseum offered 110 rooms and an International House of Pancakes restaurant.<sup>127</sup>



**Postcard view of Charlotte Downtowner Motor Inn, corner of W. Trade Street and Mint Street, ca. 1962**

The Memphis-based Downtowner Corporation planned to expand its growing chain of motels in the early 1960s by constructing new units in Charlotte and Columbia, South Carolina. Luther Matthews, president of the company, announced plans to have 75 Downtowner Motor Inns operating along the east coast by 1965.<sup>128</sup> The company's five-story 102-room hotel in Charlotte opened in February 1962 at the corner of West Trade and Mint streets. The hotel, built at a cost of nearly \$1,000,000, offered a restaurant, swimming pool, a small meeting room, and parking for over 100 cars. B. A. Pless, formerly of the Hotel Charlotte, managed the facility.<sup>129</sup> During the

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<sup>126</sup> Emery Wister, "Motel Boom: 4,500 Rooms," *The Charlotte News*, January 17, 1966.

<sup>127</sup> "Golden Eagle Coliseum Opens," *The Charlotte News*, September 20, 1966.

<sup>128</sup> "Names In Business," *The Charlotte News*, April 7, 1961.

<sup>129</sup> Emery Wister, "Downtowner Inn Nears Completion," *The Charlotte News*, January 15, 1962; "New Motel Here Opens Tomorrow," *The Charlotte News*, February 16, 1962.

motel boom of the mid-1960s, the company opened a motel in Rock Hill, South Carolina, just across the state line, and began exploring the possibility of a new facility in Charlotte.<sup>130</sup>

Around 1967, Dwight Phillips entered into a series of agreements and leases to develop property immediately east of the Coliseum Motor Court for another motel. Independence Properties Inc. acquired an option for three parcels owned by former mayor Ben E. Douglas (1897-1982) and his wife Carolyn near the intersection of Independence Boulevard and Fugate Drive (DB 2879:465). D. L. Phillips Investment Building Inc., successor company to Phillips' Coliseum Motor Court Inc., entered into a lease with Douglas' Independence Properties to develop a new facility that would be leased by a third party (DB 2959:518).<sup>131</sup> The lease described that drawings and specifications for a proposed building on the site were prepared by James H. Livingston Associates, an architectural firm from Ann Arbor, Michigan, and dated November 1964. The structural drawings were prepared by Carver Hunt, a structural engineer. Livingston's drawings included both the hotel and the parking structure. According to the lease, dated July 5, 1967, construction on the building must commence within twelve months and be completed within three years.

Born in Iowa, James H. Livingston (1922-1975) studied aeronautical engineering and served as a Navy pilot during World War II. He married Dorothy Keough in 1945, and his father-in-law, a partner in a Detroit architectural firm, convinced Livingston to become an architect. After completing his architecture degree at the University of Michigan, Livingston opened his own practice in Ann Arbor around 1955 and designed number of elegant Modernist houses in the area. He was closely associated with several single- and multi-family housing developments, as well as commercial and education projects, which became more prevalent in his later career. Near the end of his career, he was appointed chief architect for Inn America in the United States and Europe. In addition to the Coliseum Downtowner, Livingston designed the old Hyatt Hotel (present Embassy Suites) in Winston-Salem in 1974. Notable for its dramatic full-height atrium, the nine-story concrete and glass building has a heavy concrete cornice on one elevation and irregular projecting window bays on the upper story of the other elevations. Livingston, after being diagnosed with stomach cancer in 1974, abruptly closed his practice and retired to Florida.<sup>132</sup>

The Coliseum Downtowner Motor Inn opened on July 17, 1969, with Charles E. Petty as manager. Operated by Motor Inn Management of Fayetteville, North Carolina, the "modernistic" eight-story hotel had 175 rooms, a banquet room, three smaller meeting rooms, and ample parking in the four-story parking deck. The banquet room could accommodate 425 people for a seated dinner. The Four Flames Restaurant at the hotel could seat 225 people while the Aztec Lounge, a nightclub, had a capacity of 150 people.<sup>133</sup> The Frank H. Conner Company, contractors, built the new facility.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> "Just Opened," advertisement, *The Charlotte Observer*, April 24, 1966; Wister, January 17, 1966.

<sup>131</sup> The original lease was twice amended: first in April 1968, which, among other things, set the term of the least at 60 years (DB 2979:115), and second in December 1969 (DB 3150:331).

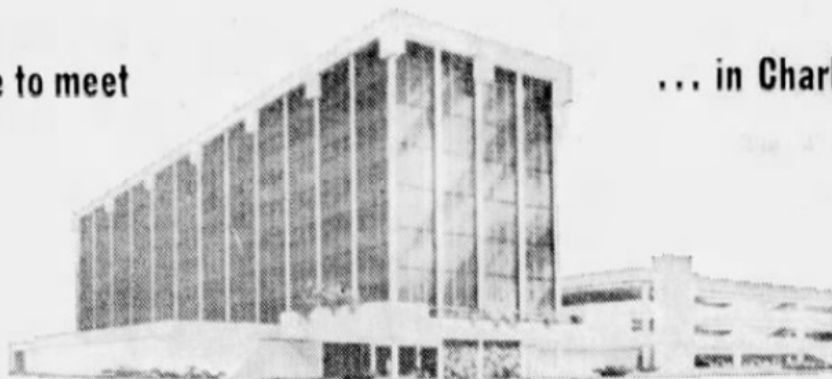
<sup>132</sup> "James H. Livingston," a2 Modern (<http://www.a2modern.org/architects/james-h-livingston/>; accessed May 2020).

<sup>133</sup> "New Services," *The Charlotte News*, July 17, 1969; "New Downtowner To Open July 1," *The Charlotte News*, May 2, 1969.

# GRAND OPENING!

the place to meet

... in Charlotte



RESTAURANT • LOUNGE • MOTOR INN

# DOWNTOWNER

Grand Opening advertisement (*The Charlotte Observer*, July 20, 1969)

The success of the new hotel was highly anticipated, which made its subsequent troubles seem so improbable. Even before the Coliseum Downtowner opened, Marvin Stephenson of Motor Inn Management announced that preliminary plans were underway to enlarge the hotel. Stephenson stated that the company originally planned a six-story facility before settling on eight stories, but he wished they had built a ten- or twelve-story hotel.<sup>135</sup> The Four Flames emerged as a popular local restaurant known for its fresh Maine lobsters, while the Aztec Lounge hosted local and national touring musicians. Noted for its atmosphere, the Aztec Lounge was decorated to order with plush carpets, dim lighting, and southwestern Indian motifs after Stephenson visited Mexico.<sup>136</sup> Elvis Presley rented the hotel's entire eighth floor during his stops in Charlotte to

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<sup>134</sup> "Our Congratulations," advertisement, *The Charlotte Observer*, July 20, 1969.

<sup>135</sup> Emery Wister, "Motor Inn To Double Capacity," *The Charlotte News*, July 7, 1969.

<sup>136</sup> Susan Jetton, "'A Nice Place To Go...'," *The Charlotte Observer*, January 18, 1970.

perform at the Coliseum.<sup>137</sup> Nicaraguan leader General Anastasio Somoza stayed at the hotel in 1973, during an extended visit to solicit aid for the earthquake-stricken country and attend Gemfest '73, a national mineralogy show at the Charlotte Merchandise Mart. Locals who met the Central American ruler, who spent much of his time in a third-floor suite at the hotel and ate most of his meals at the Four Flames Restaurant, regarded him as a jovial and down-to-earth person.<sup>138</sup>

By the mid-1970s, however, the hotel experienced financial difficulties after Motor Inn Management defaulted on its loan. The property reverted to Independence Properties, who reassigned the lease to the Coliseum Hotel Corporation and sold the hotel to a new company, Direction Management Corporation (DMC), led by H. Maynard Clark. DMC took over management of several hotels including the Downtowner Motor Inns in Charlotte, Durham, and Winston-Salem, as well as other motels in North Carolina, Tennessee, and upstate New York. According to Clark, DMC spent approximately \$250,000 to renovate the guest rooms, lounge, lobby, and restaurant of the Coliseum Downtowner, which was renamed the Century Coliseum. Within a year, DMC was defunct and Independence Properties and Coliseum Hotel Corporation filed for bankruptcy. A report presented in bankruptcy court described the condition of the facility as “generally poor.”<sup>139</sup>



**Aztec Lounge, *The Charlotte Observer*, January 18, 1970**

By 1978, the hotel was again open and operating as the Best Western Coliseum. The Aztec Lounge hosted disco parties and the Four Flames had been replaced by Schuler’s Restaurant, which moved into the space from the Ramada Inn further east on Independence Boulevard.<sup>140</sup> At the end of the 1980s, the hotel again experienced financial problems that necessitated the sale of the building to new owners, who spent more than \$700,000 renovating and refurbishing the structure.<sup>141</sup> African American businessman Fred Lawing, the present owner, purchased the hotel in 2007.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>137</sup> Harry Lloyd, “‘Almost Mushy’ Note Wins Private Meeting With Star,” *The Charlotte Observer*, April 15, 1972.

<sup>138</sup> Mark Etheridge, “Joke-Cracking Nicaraguan Ruler Receives ‘Nice-Guy’ Rating in City,” *The Charlotte Observer*, June 30, 1973.

<sup>139</sup> “Downtowner-Coliseum Get New Name, Look,” *The Charlotte Observer*, January 1, 1976.

<sup>140</sup> “We’ve Moved!” advertisement, *The Charlotte Observer*, December 17, 1978.

<sup>141</sup> Doug Smith, “East Charlotte Hotel Aims For A Niche Market,” *The Charlotte Observer*, November 19, 1991.

<sup>142</sup> Dante Miller, “This Black-owned hotel is more interested in preserving history than tearing it down,” Q City Metro, April 2, 2020 (<https://qcitymetro.com/2020/04/02/this-black-owned-hotel-is-more-interested-in-preserving-history-than-tearing-it-down/>; accessed April 4, 2020).

## Evaluation

For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Coliseum Downtowner Motor Inn is **not eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places. Designed by architect James H. Livingston for the Downtowner Motor Inns chain, the building is an undistinguished eight-story hotel in the Modernist style erected in the late 1960s as an expansion of the neighboring Coliseum Motor Inn (no longer standing). The property generally retains its integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, although the some design elements and materials have been diminished over time by later changes.

The Coliseum Downtowner Motor Inn is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion A (event). *To be eligible under Criterion A, a property must retain integrity and must be associated with a specific event marking an important moment in American pre-history or history or a pattern of events or historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community, a state, or the nation. Furthermore, a property must have existed at the time and be documented to be associated with the events. Finally, a property's specific association must be important as well.* The Coliseum Downtowner Motor Inn, erected in 1969, was part of a citywide hotel building boom in the 1960s and an expansion of motels along the Independence Boulevard corridor. The Coliseum Downtowner was the second unit built in Charlotte by the growing Downtowner Motor Inn chain; the first Downtowner was a Modernistic five-story building located on West Trade Street downtown. The Coliseum Downtowner was notable for its height compared to the typical two-story motels that dotted the road, including the neighboring Coliseum Motor Court (no longer standing), which was one of the first to be built on the newly opened expressway. Despite its height, the Coliseum Downtowner lacks any special significance to be eligible for the National Register.

The Coliseum Downtowner Motor Inn is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion B (person). *For a property to be eligible for significance under Criterion B, it must retain integrity and 1) be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, i.e. individuals whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, state or national historic context; 2) be normally associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he/she achieved significance, and 3) should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person's historic contributions. Furthermore, a property is not eligible if its only justification for significance is that it was owned or used by a person who is or was a member of an identifiable profession, class, or social or ethnic group.* Designed and built for the Downtowner Motor Inns chain, the property is not specifically associated with any one individual to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion B.

The Coliseum Downtowner Motor Inn is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion C (design/construction). *For a property to be eligible under this criterion, it must retain integrity and either 1) embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; 2) represent the work of a master; 3) possess high artistic value; or 4) represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.* The Coliseum Downtowner Motor Inn is an eight-story hotel executed in the Modern style. Designed by Michigan architect

James H. Livingston, the flat-roof building is constructed with a concrete frame where the vertical piers define the bays of the building. The vertical bays are clad with thin veneer panels and horizontal aluminum-frame windows. The hotel displays construction techniques and elements similar to other Modernist buildings in the corridor such as the J. N. Pease Associates Building (#7) and the North Carolina Savings and Loan Building (#11), but its materials and finishes lack the sophistication of those other structures. The hotel has undergone a number of renovations and remodelings, including major projects in 1976 and 1991. The building differs in height from other surviving hotels and motels on the Independence Boulevard corridor, which are typically two- and three-stories tall. It more closely resembles the seven-story Ervin Building (#12) and the twelve-story Independence Tower (#17) but again appears to be a less sophisticated expression of a Modernist high-rise building. The Coliseum Downtowner Motor Inn does not possess any special architectural significance and lacks sufficient design integrity to be considered eligible for the National Register under Criterion C.

The Coliseum Downtowner Motor Inn is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion D (potential to yield information). *For a property to be eligible under Criterion D, it must meet two requirements: 1) the property must have, or have had, information to contribute to our understanding of human history or pre-history, and 2) the information must be considered important.* Opened in 1969, the Downtowner at the Coliseum is unlikely to contribute significant information pertaining to building technology or historical documentation not otherwise accessible from other extant resources and written records.

## Inventory No. 9

Resource Name	<b>South 21 Drive-In No. 2</b>
HPO Survey Site Number	MK1781
Location	3101 East Independence Boulevard
PIN	12910110
Date(s) of Construction	1959
Eligibility Recommendation	Eligible – A, C (commerce, architecture)



**South 21 Drive-In No. 2, 3101 East Independence Boulevard, view to east**

### *Description*

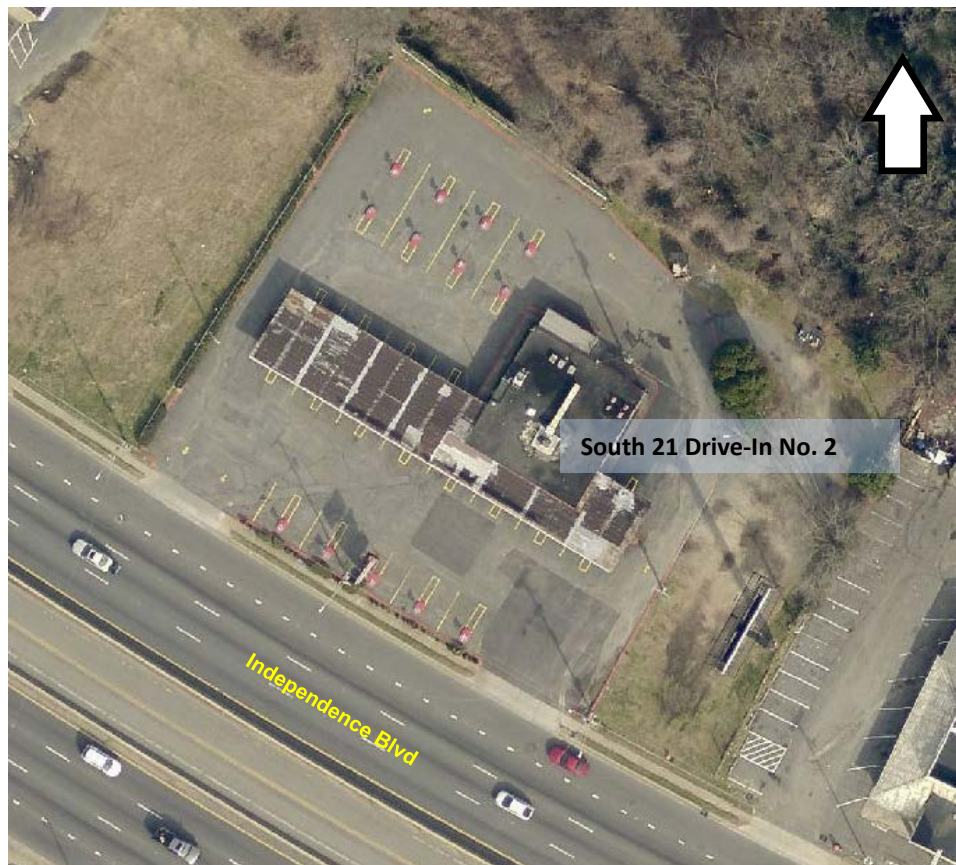
Situated on a level, one-acre lot covered with asphalt paving, the South 21 Drive-In No. 2 is highly intact example of a curb service restaurant dating from 1959. The restaurant was built as the second location of a popular Charlotte eatery, which opened in 1955 on US Highway 21, known as South Boulevard.<sup>143</sup> The two restaurants were similar in design, but the structure at the first location has been demolished. The site is paved to accommodate car traffic, with concrete islands and menu stands, both covered and uncovered, for fifty vehicles. Prominent signage adjacent to Independence Boulevard and at the rear of the property attracts customers and

<sup>143</sup> The following historical descriptions and background information is adapted from Stewart Gray and Dr. Paula Stathakis, “Survey and Research Report on the South 21 Curb Service Restaurant,” Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission Designation Form, 2002.

advertises popular menu items. The principal sign, as well as the flat metal canopy carrying across the front of the building, is illuminated at night with brightly colored lights.

The building at the center of the business is a relatively simple one-story, flat-roofed masonry structure with a brick veneer exterior. The façade features aluminum-frame floor-to-ceiling window units that are partially filled with red enameled panels. Two single-leaf glazed-and-paneled doors on the façade and one on the east elevation provide access to the kitchen and prep areas for employees. A veneered wall panel at the southeast corner is composed of stacked stretcher bricks. The interior appears to be finished with glazed ceramic tiles. A one-story, one-bay concrete block wing projects at the rear of the building.

The front of the building, however, is dominated by a flat-roof metal canopy spanning approximately 160 feet. The canopy structure consists of round metal columns supporting exposed steel I-beams and a corrugated metal roof. A metal fascia along the front of the canopy is painted red and holds a single row of colored light bulbs—alternating yellow, white, and red—that extends the full width of the canopy. Each parking space is served by a two-sided stainless-steel menu stand equipped with intercoms and tray holders. The lighted menu boards and intercoms, which were manufactured by Servus-Fone, are supported by metal posts on lozenge-shaped concrete islands.



**Site plan – South 21 Drive-In No. 2, 3101 East Independence Boulevard**  
(Source: Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)





South 21 Drive-In No. 2, oblique front view to northeast



Canopy front and menu stands, view to west



**South 21 Drive-In No. 2, southeast corner, view to northwest**



**South 21 Drive-In No. 2, façade, view to north**



Menu stands and canopy rear view, view to southeast



Rear service area with menu stands and advertising signs, view to northeast



South 21 advertisement from wrestling program, Charlotte, NC, 1968  
 (Mid-Atlantic Gateway, May 4, 2008)

### *Historical Background*

South 21 Drive-In opened in 1955, with its first location on South Boulevard. The restaurant was begun by three brothers, Sam, George, and Nick Copsis, who immigrated to the United States from Greece in the 1950s. Sam Copsis arrived in New York in March 1951, followed later that year by his brother George. After several years working for an uncle who owned a restaurant in Spartanburg, South Carolina, Sam Copsis moved to Charlotte to work as a ladies' clothing salesman. Once in Charlotte, he saw potential opportunities in the restaurant industry. For partners, he enlisted his brothers, George, who was working in Chicago, and Nick, who had recently immigrated following service in the Greek army during the early 1950s. The Copsis brothers belonged to a close-knit ethnic community in the Carolinas, the majority of whom were independent businessmen within the restaurant industry.

When the Copsis brothers opened their restaurant, there were already ten other drive-in restaurants in Charlotte. Central Drive-In on Elizabeth Avenue opened in 1948 and was the first in the city. Drive-in, or curbside service, restaurants had risen in popularity over the first half of the twentieth century with increasing automobile ownership. As the city physically expanded in the post-war period along the principal highways and thoroughfares, suburban development encouraged greater reliance on automobiles and curbside service restaurants were among a growing number of auto-oriented conveniences.

For their first location, the Copsis brothers rented a small building on US Highway 21, known as South Boulevard, south of the city center. A Greek friend from Columbia, South Carolina, Steve Christostomithes, suggested the name "South 21" for the new enterprise, as well as designing and building the restaurant's original street sign. The success of the venture is attributed, in part, to offering a wider range of menu items than typical drive-ins, including fried chicken and hamburger steak dinners, barbeque plates, and coffee. The brothers purchased an adjacent vacant lot in 1958 to make room for additional customers.

With the success of their first location, the brothers decided to open a second location on Independence Boulevard in 1959. They leased the land from the Wallace family—J. M. and Gertrude Wallace and J. Mason and Nancy Wallace—who subdivided a portion of their land for the nearby Green Hills neighborhood (DB 2118:245). In planning for their second restaurant, the

Copsis brothers decided to add canopies at both locations, which were also designed by their friend Steve Christostomithes. A year after opening the second location and installing canopies, Charlotte received an especially heavy snow in March 1960, causing the canopies at both locations to collapse. The canopies were rebuilt by Squires Construction Company for \$12,000, but the added expense and loss of business during cleanup put the business on shaky ground financially. Timely intervention from local businessman Howard Biggers Sr. helped the brothers alleviate their debt, and they soon opened a third location on North Tryon Street. The restaurants thrived for many years, and the brothers opened and sold several additional locations. The South Boulevard restaurant was sold to new owners in 1994, and the building was demolished around 2012. South 21 Drive-In No. 2 on Independence Boulevard, however, has remained open and in operation, nearly unchanged. It is currently owned and run by George and Maria Housiadas, a daughter of one of the founders.<sup>144</sup>

### *Evaluation*

The South 21 Drive-In No. 2 was placed on the Study List for the National Register in February 2001 at the conclusion of a county-wide survey of Charlotte's post-World War II architecture. The restaurant was subsequently determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places in 2006, as part of a Section 106 review in association with a study of historic architectural resources for the Charlotte Area Transit System. The South 21 Drive-In No. 2 is recognized as an intact and good local example of a mid-twentieth-century drive-in restaurant, a property type that became enormously popular in the post-war period, but is rapidly disappearing from the landscape. Drive-in restaurants tapped into the American preoccupation with automobiles and stand as typical representations of a built environment increasingly designed to accommodate them.

For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the South 21 Drive-In No. 2 appears to remain **eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C in the areas of commerce and architecture. The property retains a high degree of historic integrity, including its location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The property appears to be unaltered since it was determined eligible for the National Register and retains the physical qualities and historic associations that contribute to its significance.

### *Boundary Description and Justification*

The proposed boundary of the South 21 Drive-In No. 2 encompasses the full one-acre parcel associated with restaurant [PIN 12910110]. The boundary follows the property lines and abuts the Independence Boulevard right-of-way on the south. The boundary includes the restaurant, canopies, paved parking lot, menu stands, and signage.

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<sup>144</sup> Dick Bourne, "South 21 Drive-In: A Charlotte Wrestling Tradition," *Mid-Atlantic Gateway*, May 4, 2008, accessed February 26, 2020, [https://www.midatlanticwrestling.net/resourcecenter/smoke\\_filled\\_rooms/bourne17\\_south21.htm](https://www.midatlanticwrestling.net/resourcecenter/smoke_filled_rooms/bourne17_south21.htm).



**Boundary Map – South 21 Drive-In No. 2, 3101 East Independence Boulevard [PIN 12910110]**  
 (Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)

## Inventory No. 10

Resource Name	<b>Allied Security Building</b>
HPO Survey Site Number	MK4412
Location	3601 East Independence Boulevard
PIN	13109101
Date(s) of Construction	1960
Eligibility Recommendation	Eligible – C (architecture)



**Allied Security Building, 3601 East Independence Boulevard, oblique front view to northeast**

### *Description*

The Allied Security Building is a two-story on basement Modernist office building erected in 1960 for the Allied Security Insurance Company. The building occupies a corner lot on the north side of Independence Boulevard with a driveway extending across the front the property and connecting to a parking lot for the strip shopping center located next door at 3169-3657 East Independence Boulevard. Norland Road intersects the expressway to the west of the building. A paved loop parking area is located at the rear (north) of the building and is accessed from Norland Road. A raised concrete ramp accesses a drive-thru teller window on the building's west elevation and connects the rear parking area to the front driveway. Boxwoods are planted along the foundation at the front of the building, while a landscaped island west of the building contains mature evergreen and deciduous trees.



**Allied Security Building, oblique front view to northwest**



**Allied Security Building, west elevation, oblique view to north**





Allied Security Building, entrance bay, view to north



Allied Security Building, stair detail, view to north



**Allied Security Building, rear elevation, oblique view to west**



**Allied Security Building, terrace, view to southwest**

Designed by Charlotte architect David M. Mackintosh Jr., the mid-rise flat-roof office building is finished with aggregate concrete panels across the façade and sides of the building with windows located at the rear. The building is two stories tall with a third story located below grade and exposed on the north elevation. An off-center full-height glazed entrance bay is defined by a rectilinear concrete frame that projects out from the façade and rises above the cornice line of the flat roof. A spiral staircase with wooden risers and custom tubular steel railings is visible through the metal-frame window grid. Double-leaf glazed doors are located in the center bay and open into the glass atrium. They are approached from poured concrete steps. The concrete wall panels are white cement with black stone aggregate and the flat parapet coping is black porcelain enamel. The building rests on a foundation of dark brick set back from the exterior wall plane to give the appearance on the façade that the building is hovering just above ground level.<sup>145</sup>

The rear elevation is brick with horizontal bands of metal-frame four-light windows and horizontal muntins on the upper two levels. A shallow projecting stairwell finished with concrete panels projects out from the rear and contains a single-leaf metal door in its fully-glazed side wall. Behind the building, a circular exterior patio of broken tile is framed by a curving brick knee-wall and steps down to the basement-level entrances. On the west side of the building, a concrete ramp leads up to a plate-glass drive-thru window sheltered by a metal awning. The exterior appears to be largely intact, as is much of the interior judging by a visual survey through the windows.

### *Historical Background*

Allied Security Insurance Company was originally incorporated as the Family Security Life Insurance Company under the laws of South Carolina on August 6, 1941. World War II, however, delayed the company's start until 1948.<sup>146</sup> In 1958, Family Life merged with Allied Life Insurance of Charlotte and the Tennessee Life and Service Company of Knoxville, Tennessee, to form Allied Security Insurance Company.<sup>147</sup> Charles Honig, president of the North Carolina firm when it merged to form Allied Security, became president of the new company. As a result, the headquarters were slated for consolidation in Charlotte following the 1958 merger.<sup>148</sup>

In July 1959, the company purchased land for its new headquarters from Charles and Mary Frances Ervin for approximately \$140,000 (DB 2090:251). The lot was located just beyond the city limits on the north side of Independence Boulevard at its intersection with Norland Road, which had only recently been established with the development of the Eastway Park (see #13) subdivision by the Ervin Construction Company. The new building allowed the company to consolidate its executive offices with a printing shop and several minor functions from

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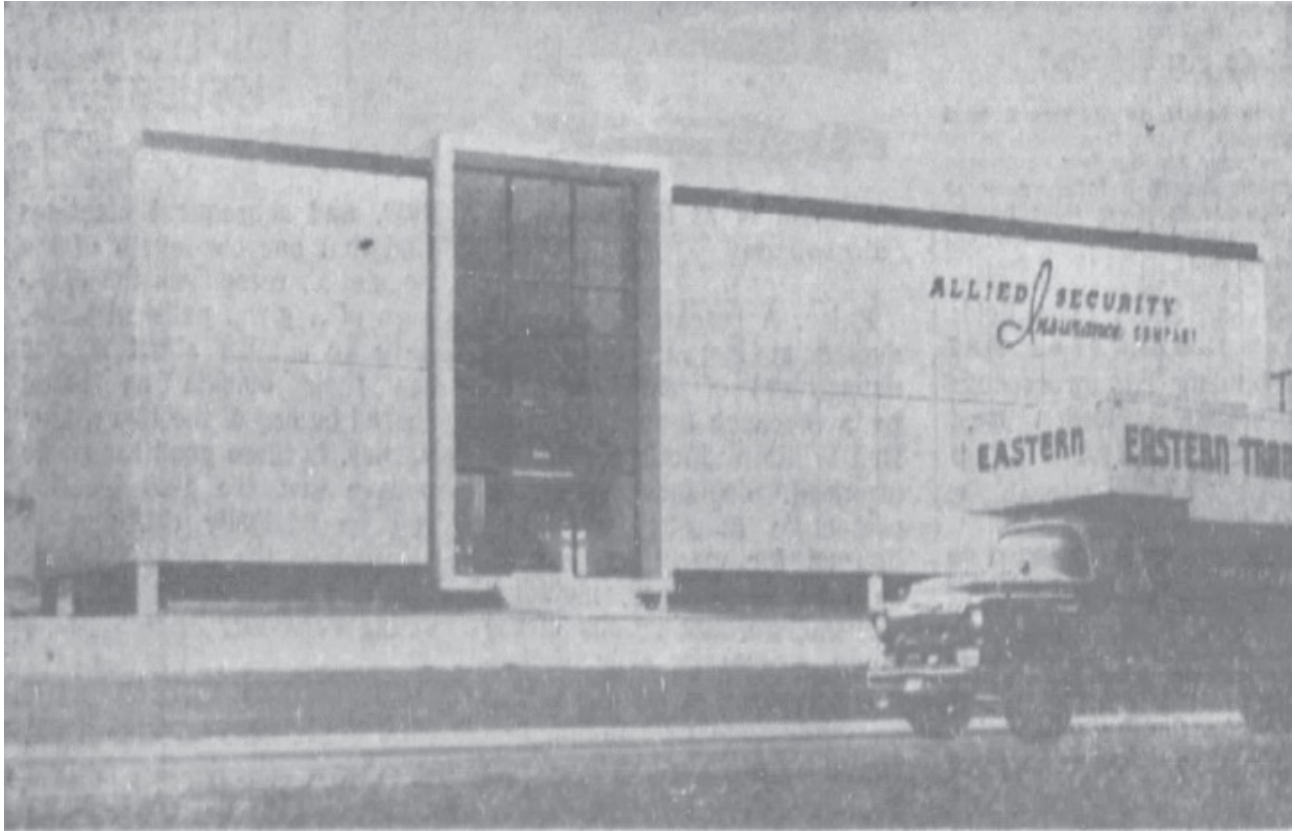
<sup>145</sup> "New Offices Nearly Ready," *The Charlotte News*, July 30, 1960.

<sup>146</sup> "Southern Investment Company," advertisement, *The Charlotte Observer*, May 14, 1961.

<sup>147</sup> John S. Demott, "Insurance Firm Plans Acquisition," *The Charlotte Observer*, November 9, 1963.

<sup>148</sup> "Insurance Companies Are Merging," *The Greenville News*, July 10, 1958.

Spartanburg where the headquarters were formerly located. Allied Security employed approximately thirty people and planned to add more once the new building was occupied.<sup>149</sup>



**Allied Security Building in advertisement for Eastern Transit Storage Company**  
(*The Charlotte Observer*, November 7, 1960)

Local architect David McNab Mackintosh Jr. (1916-1988) designed the new building for Allied Security, which contained approximately 16,000 square feet of space for the company's executive offices. Allied Security occupied the first two floors of the \$200,000 building and leased the upper-level offices to other firms. Mackintosh, a South Carolina native, got his start in Charlotte working for J. N. Pease Associates (see #7). By the mid-1950s, he had opened his own office, D. M. Mackintosh & Co., and produced designs for schools and libraries. For the Allied Security Building Mackintosh designed a simple two-story on full basement, flat-roof structure that appeared to hover above the ground and was entered through a dramatic glass entrance bay. Three sides of the building were blind pre-cast concrete walls with bands of windows on the rear elevation.<sup>150</sup> Bids for the project opened on October 15, 1959, in Mackintosh's offices on Briar Creek Road.<sup>151</sup> Laxton Construction Company served as contractors for the "ultra-modern building."<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> "Life Insurance Firms Coming," *The Charlotte News*, September 18, 1959.

<sup>150</sup> "Firm Plans New Office Building Here," *The Charlotte Observer*, September 19, 1959.

<sup>151</sup> "Contractors' Bids On Building Open," *The Charlotte News*, October 15, 1959.

Construction of the Allied Security Building began in late 1959 and continued through the summer of 1960. In early 1960, March snowstorms left many Charlotte building projects at a standstill and sent nearly 1,000 construction workers to the unemployment line. By April the two-story skeleton of the Allied Security Building was rising where the site had been a quagmire just a few weeks previous. Grading equipment at the Merchandise Mart (see #5) site had similarly stalled due to wet conditions.<sup>153</sup>

The Allied Security Insurance Company offices opened for occupancy in August 1960. After its completion, *The Charlotte Observer* opined that the Allied Security Building was one of “the most handsome buildings around” and described it as “a fine piece of architecture...enhanced by good grooming of the grounds,” which had been red mud up until completion of the building.<sup>154</sup> John B. Lippard, a landscape architect and site planner, designed the grounds.<sup>155</sup> The Allied Security Insurance Company received a beautification award from the Chamber of Commerce in recognition of its building and grounds as part of community-wide improvement efforts.<sup>156</sup>

Through the early 1960s the Allied Security Insurance Company grew quickly as it undertook a series of corporate acquisitions and mergers. The first merger joined Allied Security with the Sentinel Life Insurance Company of Greenville, North Carolina. The new company retained the Allied Security name and Charles Honig continued as president of the new company, while Sentinel president A. Hardwell Campbell became chairman of the board of directors. Under the merger plan, Greenville became the North Carolina headquarters for the company even though the executive offices remained at the new building in Charlotte.<sup>157</sup>

Allied Security subsequently merged with the Constellation Life Insurance Company of Norfolk, Virginia. Constellation formed in 1959 and gained national recognition for offering life insurance to American astronauts. Following the merger, the Norfolk firm operated as the Constellation division of Allied Security, and its president, Shirley R. Dashiell, became Allied’s vice president in charge of the Constellation division.<sup>158</sup> In 1963, Allied Security announced plans to purchase the Sir Walter Raleigh Life Insurance Company, also of Charlotte. Floyd A. Russell organized Sir Walter Raleigh Life in 1955 and headed the company from its inception until his death in September 1963.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> “New Offices Nearly Ready,” *The Charlotte News*, July 30, 1960.

<sup>153</sup> Bill Hughes, “Hammers Fly as Builders Make Up For Costly Delay,” *The Charlotte News*, March 29, 1960.

<sup>154</sup> “Opinions,” *The Charlotte Observer*, December 4, 1960.

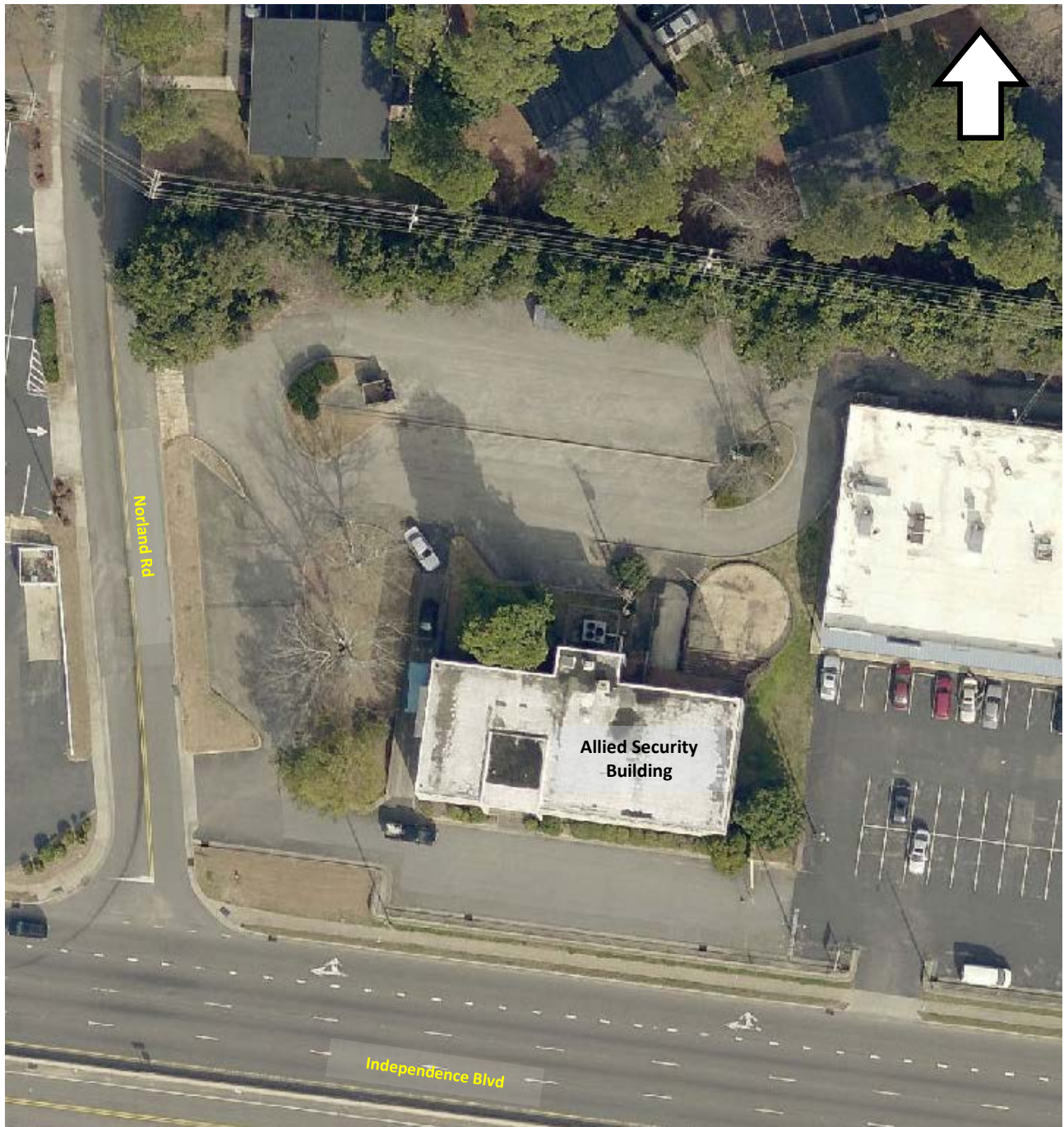
<sup>155</sup> Rolfe Neill, “The Flying Lens,” *The Charlotte Observer*, February 12, 1961.

<sup>156</sup> “City’s Fight For Beauty Continuing,” *The Charlotte News*, October 24, 1963.

<sup>157</sup> “City, Greenville Firms Announce Merger Plans,” *The Charlotte News*, September 3, 1960.

<sup>158</sup> Emery Wister, “Insurance Companies to Merge,” *The Charlotte News*, January 27, 1961.

<sup>159</sup> John S. Demott, “Insurance Firm Plans Acquisition,” *The Charlotte Observer*, November 9, 1963.



**Site Plan – Allied Security Building, 3601 East Independence Boulevard**  
(Source: Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)

By the end of 1963, the Allied Security Insurance Company, a conglomeration of eight firms, planned to merge with United Family Life Insurance of Atlanta. The company would operate as a subsidiary of United and maintain the Allied Security name. Charles Honig, president of Allied Security, was named president of the newly merged company, while United Family Life president Raymond B. Nelson became chief executive officer and chairman of the board of directors. In

addition to Honig, Allied’s other executives were kept on by United, which had assets totaling \$37 million and approximately \$412 million of insurance in force.<sup>160</sup> The merger with United Family Life was approved in February 1964.<sup>161</sup>

Somewhat ironically, former Allied president Charles Honig—who oversaw multiple mergers and consolidations of his firm—was fired from his position as president of the United Family Life Insurance Company for opposing a proposed merger with another Atlanta firm, American Security Insurance. Honig disagreed with United’s CEO and board chairman Nelson about the proposed merger and following a lengthy and contentious board of directors meeting, Honig was dismissed. Since merging with United Family in 1963, Allied Security had continued to operate as a subsidiary of the Atlanta firm.<sup>162</sup>

In August 1969, the United Family Life Insurance Company of Atlanta sold the Allied Security Building for \$500,000 to Queen City Mechanical, a heating and air-conditioning contractor based in Charlotte (DB 3123:528). Tenants were not affected by the sale since the new owners purchased the building as an investment property. The Computeroom remains a longstanding tenant of the building since the late 1970s.<sup>163</sup>

### *Evaluation*

For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Allied Security Building is **eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places. The property is a good example of a mid-rise office building designed in the Modernist style that retains a high degree of integrity. Designed by local architect D. M. Mackintosh, with site planning executed by John B. Lippard, the building is a sleek two-story box with an off-center entrance bay and modern materials. The property retains its integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The Allied Security Building is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion A (event). *To be eligible under Criterion A, a property must retain integrity and must be associated with a specific event marking an important moment in American pre-history or history or a pattern of events or historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community, a state, or the nation. Furthermore, a property must have existed at the time and be documented to be associated with the events. Finally, a property’s specific association must be important as well.* The Allied Security Insurance Company was one of many small- to medium-sized firms that opened in Charlotte in the post-war period. Drawn by the city’s position as an important financial center with a growing population, many businesses and companies established headquarters or regional offices in Charlotte. Allied Security was one such company that benefitted from Charlotte’s

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<sup>160</sup> “Charlotte Insurance Firm May Merge,” *The Charlotte Observer*, November 27, 1963.

<sup>161</sup> “Allied Security’s Stockholders OK Merger With United Family,” *The Charlotte Observer*, February 25, 1964.

<sup>162</sup> Roy Covington, “Insurance Firm’s President Fired In Battle Over Merger,” *The Charlotte Observer*, August 28, 1965.

<sup>163</sup> “Allied Gets \$500,000 For Offices,” *The Charlotte Observer*, August 29, 1969.

reputation and business climate in the second half of the twentieth century. The company is not associated in a meaningful way with any significant historic events or trends to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion A.

The Allied Security Building is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion B (person). *For a property to be eligible for significance under Criterion B, it must retain integrity and 1) be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, i.e. individuals whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, state or national historic context; 2) be normally associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he/she achieved significance, and 3) should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person's historic contributions. Furthermore, a property is not eligible if its only justification for significance is that it was owned or used by a person who is or was a member of an identifiable profession, class, or social or ethnic group.* The Allied Security Building is not closely associated with any specific individual to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion B.

The Allied Security Building is **eligible** for the National Register under Criterion C (design/construction). *For a property to be eligible under this criterion, it must retain integrity and either 1) embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; 2) represent the work of a master; 3) possess high artistic value; or 4) represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.* Designed by Charlotte architect David M. Mackintosh, the Allied Security Building is a nice example of a mid-rise suburban office building executed in the Modernist style. The two-story building plus a full-story basement exposed at the rear is a simple box finished with precast concrete panels and enlivened by a projecting glass entrance bay, glazed rear elevation, and a dramatic open lobby stair. The exterior walls have black aggregate set in light concrete and appear to float above the dark brick foundations, which are set back from the wall plane. The rear elevation is differentiated by its brick finish and bands of aluminum-frame awning windows. Overall the building shares Modernist traits with its contemporaries along Independence Boulevard. Mackintosh worked as an architect for the Pease firm before establishing a private practice, and the Allied Security Building has a similar horizontality and simple massing as the J. N. Pease Associates office building (see #7) at 2925 East Independence Boulevard. These traits are also seen at the Charlotte Merchandise Mart (see #5), along with the prominent glazed entrance atrium and an open lobby stair. The North Carolina Savings and Loan Building at 3801 East Independence Boulevard presents a more classically-inspired temple form, but is finished with refined modern materials. The Allied Security Building is equal to other good examples of mid-rise Modernist office buildings erected along Independence Boulevard in the 1950s and 1960s and retains a high degree of integrity. Although the full interior was not available for inspection due to public health concerns, the visible portions of the interior through glazed entrances at the front and rear suggest that the building retains a good degree of interior integrity. The property is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for its architectural design.

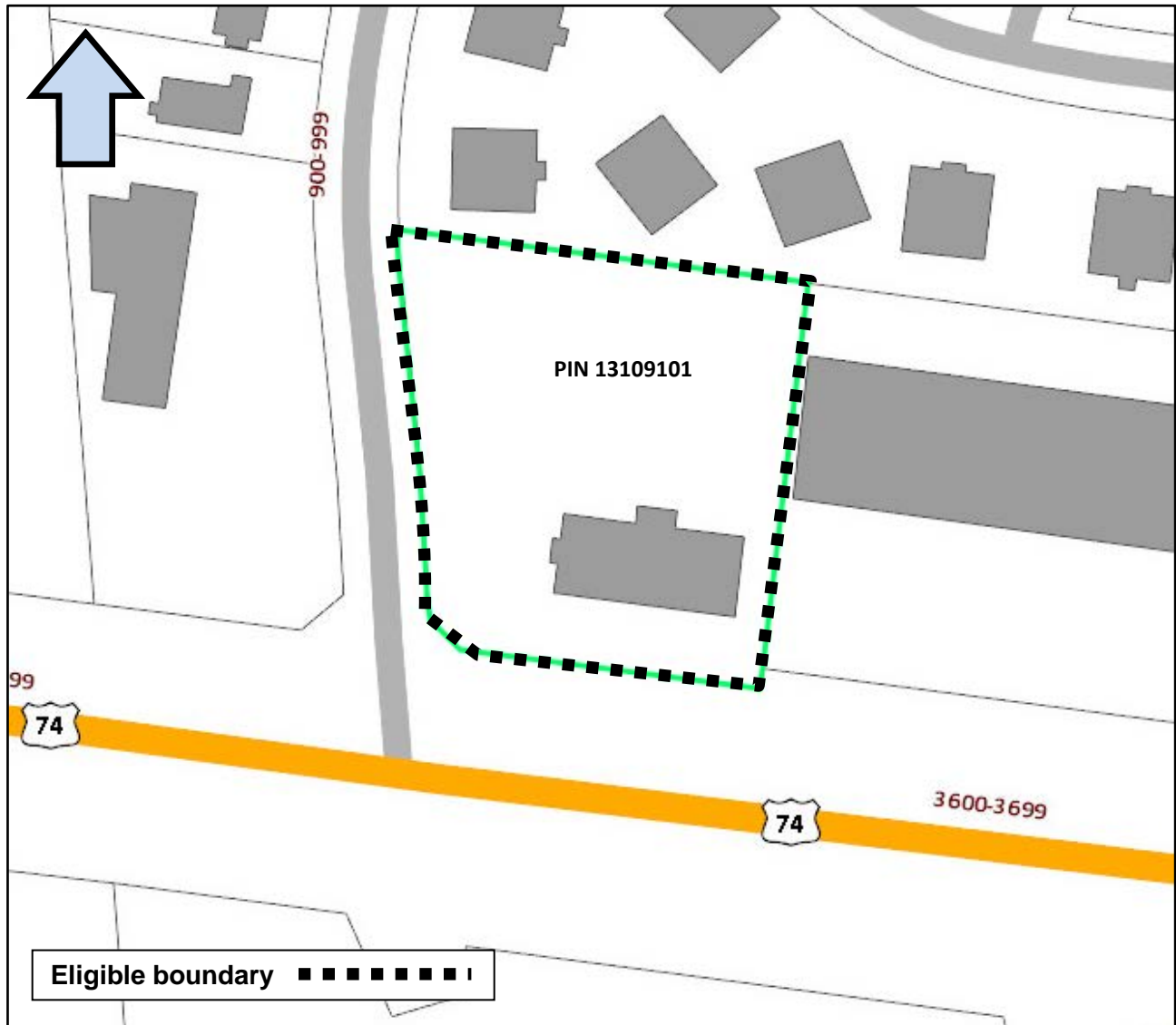
The Allied Security Building is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion D (potential to yield information). *For a property to be eligible under Criterion D, it must meet two requirements: 1) the property must have, or have had, information to contribute to our understanding of human history or pre-history, and 2) the information must be considered important.* Built in 1960, the Allied Security Building is unlikely to contribute significant



information pertaining to building technology or historical documentation not otherwise accessible from other extant resources and written records.

*Boundary Description and Justification*

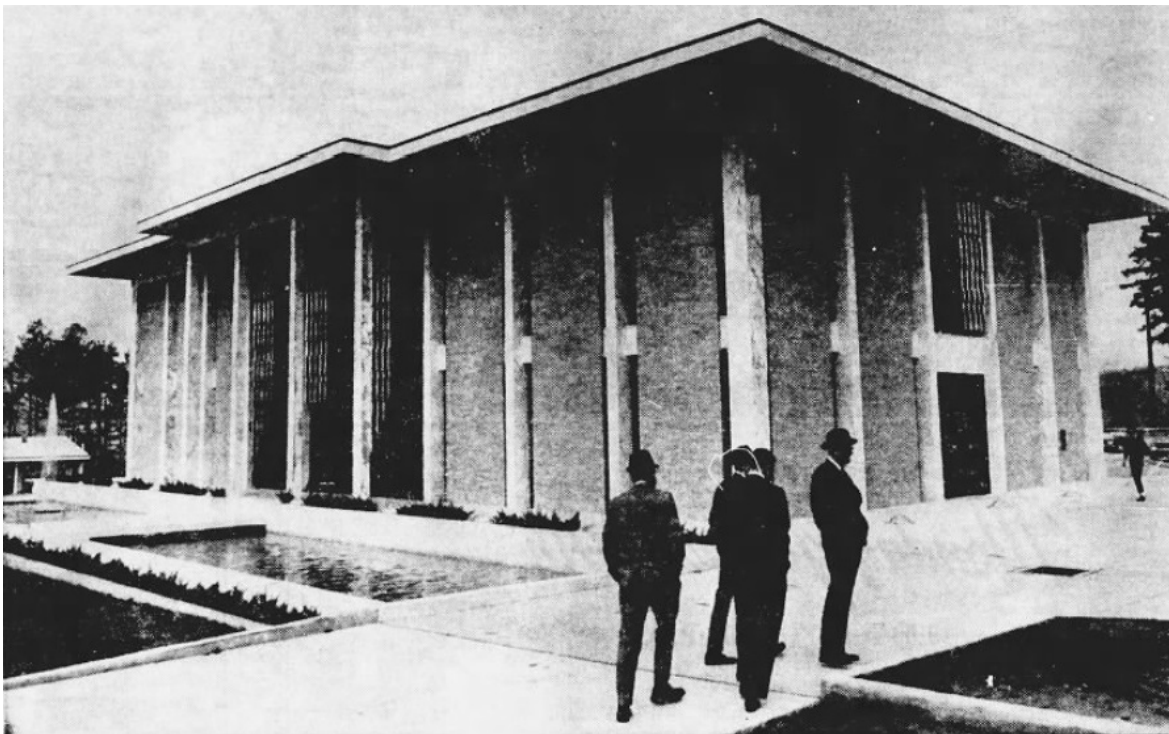
The proposed boundary of the Allied Security Building follows the legal property line encompassing the full extent of the 1.2-acre property (PIN 13109101), which adjoins the existing right-of-way for Independence Boulevard. The proposed boundary includes the residual property historically associated with the building, parking area, and landscape features.



**Boundary Map – Allied Security Building, 3601 East Independence Boulevard  
[PIN 13109101] (Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)**

## Inventory No. 11

Resource Name	<b>North Carolina Savings and Loan Building</b>
HPO Survey Site Number	MK4413
Location	3801 East Independence Boulevard
PIN	13110115
Date(s) of Construction	1963-1965
Eligibility Recommendation	Eligible – C (architecture)



**“Magnificent new office of North Carolina Savings and Loan with pool and fountain”**  
(*The Charlotte Observer*, January 4, 1965)

### *Description*

The two-story bank-turned-office-building at the corner of East Independence Boulevard and Woodland Drive is a Greek temple built with Modernist details. Architect Frank M. Williams of the J. L. Williams firm designed the imposing building in 1963 for a sloping site across Independence Boulevard from the Amity Gardens Shopping Center. Williams created a sort of plinth that forms a walkway around the building. The graded parking area at the rear has a steeply sloping driveway to Woodland Drive, which was installed with a heating cable to prevent icing and snow accumulation. Mature trees along the western edge of the property include hardwoods and long-leaf pines.



**North Carolina Savings and Loan Building, façade, oblique view to northeast**



**North Carolina Savings and Loan Building, façade, oblique view to northwest**



**North Carolina Savings and Loan Building, entrance bay, view to north**



**North Carolina Savings and Loan Building, view to northwest**



**North Carolina Savings and Loan Building, west elevation, view to east**



**North Carolina Savings and Loan Building, rear elevation, view to south**



**North Carolina Savings and Loan Building, oblique rear view to southeast**

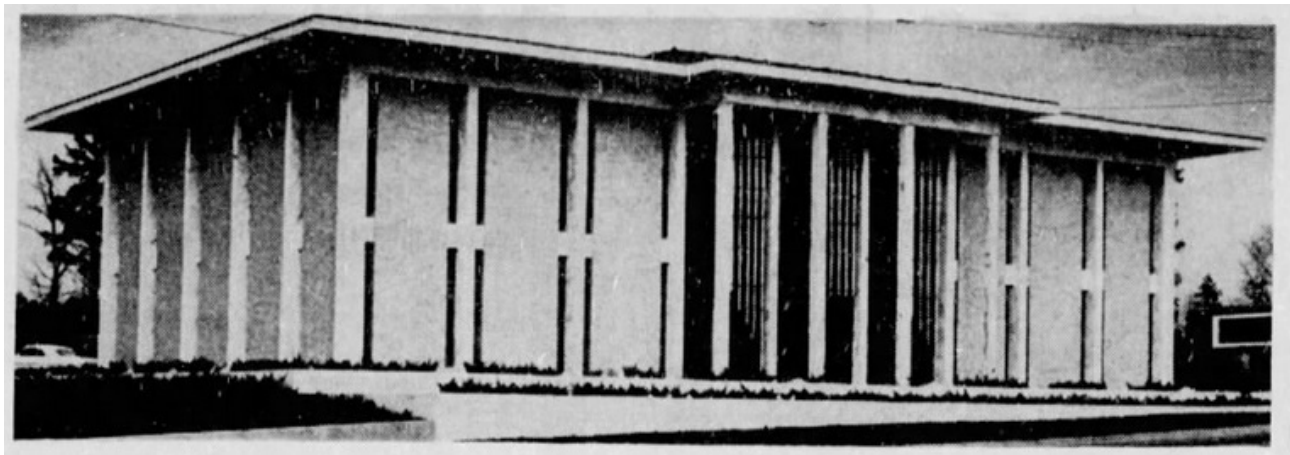


**North Carolina Savings and Loan Building, exit driveway, view to east**

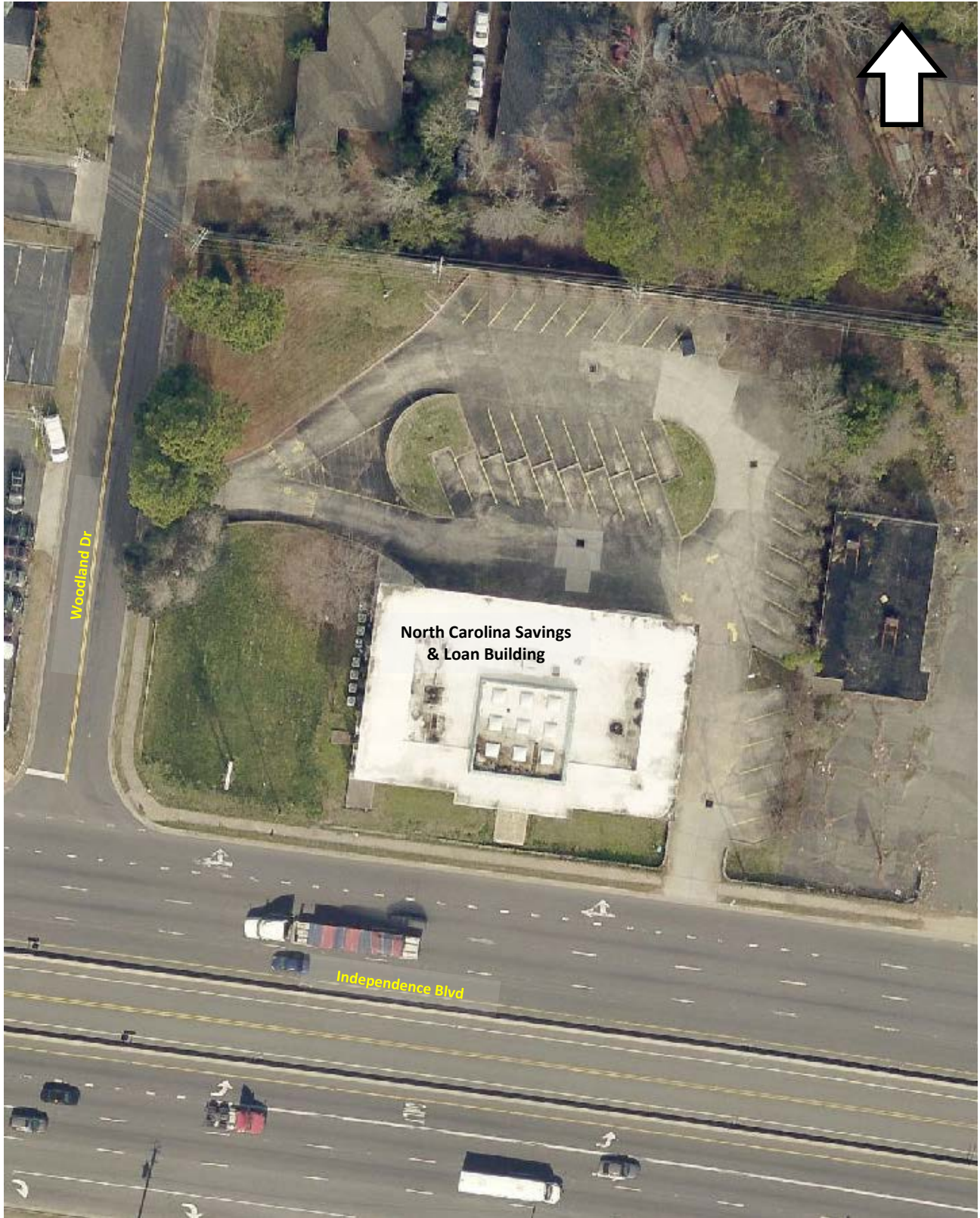
The stripped classicism of the building appears in the symmetry of the elevations, which are nine bays wide on the front and rear and five bays wide on the sides. The square structural columns encircling the building are faced with marble veneer, which is also applied to the spandrels and simplified entablature. Each bay contains narrow vertical windows and spandrels flanking the slightly recessed two-story brick walls, further emphasizing the rhythm of the colonnade. The building is capped by a flat roof with wide overhanging eaves and stylized dentils in the soffits. The architect designed the deep overhangs to help reduce heating and cooling costs by shading the second-story office windows.

The projecting entrance portico on the façade is supported by four marble-clad square columns. The south-facing portico shelters three full-height windows set in a metal-framed grid with double-leaf glazed doors at the base of the central window. The upper portion of the entrance originally featured sculptural solar screens designed by noted artist George Bireline of the North Carolina State School of Design. The screens were later removed. Similarly, a reflecting pool that extended across the front of the building was removed and replaced with swards of grass.

The side and rear elevations continue the pattern of columns and bays around the building. There are no openings on the west elevation and just a single-leaf metal door at the west end of the rear elevation. The east elevation contains a secondary entrance consisting of double-leaf glazed doors framed by single-pane sidelights and a transom. The entrance is surmounted by a marble-faced spandrel and three vertical plate-glass windows on the second story. The interior, as viewed through the front entrance, appears to retain its open two-story lobby.



**North Carolina Savings and Loan Association, 3801 East Independence Boulevard**  
(*The Charlotte News*, January 9, 1965)



**Site Plan – North Carolina Savings and Loan Building, 3801 East Independence Boulevard**  
(Source: Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)





**North Carolina Savings and Loan Building** (*Charlotte: Carolinas' Queen City, 1967*)

### *Historical Background*

The North Carolina Savings and Loan Association first opened its doors in Charlotte on February 18, 1963. The office was housed in a temporary building provided by the Ervin Construction Company at 3801 East Independence Boulevard. At the opening, company president Croson B. Miller announced plans for a permanent building to be erected on the same lot just to

the east of the temporary structure.<sup>164</sup> Miller said the company would invest up to \$500,000 on the new two-story building and reflecting pool. Final drawings were expected from the architect Frank M. Williams in March 1963, with a tentative completion date for construction in the fall.<sup>165</sup> The North Carolina Savings and Loan Association leased the land from Charles Ervin through his Amity Gardens Shopping Center corporation (DB 2412:595). The lease stipulated that the premises were to be used for a savings and loan association, bank, or other financial institution during its twenty year term.

North Carolina Savings and Loan grew out of the Albemarle Savings and Loan Association, which was formed in 1902 by businessmen and civic leaders in Albemarle, county seat of Stanly County. The founders sensed the need “for organized financial aid to promote home ownership by individuals” in a community where growth seemed to be stagnant.<sup>166</sup> The company was renamed the North Carolina Savings and Loan Association in 1961.

Association president Miller, a Stanly County native, took a job with the Cabarrus Bank and Trust Company in Albemarle following graduation from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. After a few years with the bank, he began working with the savings and loan association, and in 1930 he left the bank position to become secretary and treasurer of the savings and loan.<sup>167</sup> The company’s assets grew from \$70,000 in 1931 to nearly \$23,000,000 in 1962.<sup>168</sup> Prior to opening its Charlotte office, the North Carolina Savings and Loan Association has its headquarters in Albemarle with branches in Norwood and Marshville.

Oron J. Rogers, executive vice president, and three tellers, including Rebekah Morrow and Carolyn Garmon, initially staffed the temporary office. Garmon subsequently became head of the loan department at the Independence Boulevard office. Rogers indicated that the company had been making a growing number of home loans in the Charlotte area, which led to the decision to open a major branch office in the city. North Carolina Savings and Loan’s application for a branch in Charlotte was met with stern opposition from the four local savings and loan associations. State insurance commissioner Edwin S. Lanier eventually agreed that there was sufficient need and demand in the Charlotte area for a fifth association.<sup>169</sup>

After construction began on the main office, North Carolina Savings and Loan opened a second office in Charlotte in October 1964. Located in the Freedom Village Shopping Center, the new 2,000-square-foot office was built by local developer Dwight L. Phillips.<sup>170</sup> The Freedom Village

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<sup>164</sup> “Savings and Loan Firm Opens Here,” *The Charlotte News*, February 18, 1963.

<sup>165</sup> “5<sup>th</sup> Savings, Loan Firm Opens Here,” *The Charlotte Observer*, February 18, 1963.

<sup>166</sup> “Firm Founded More Than 60 Years Ago,” *The Charlotte Observer*, January 4, 1965.

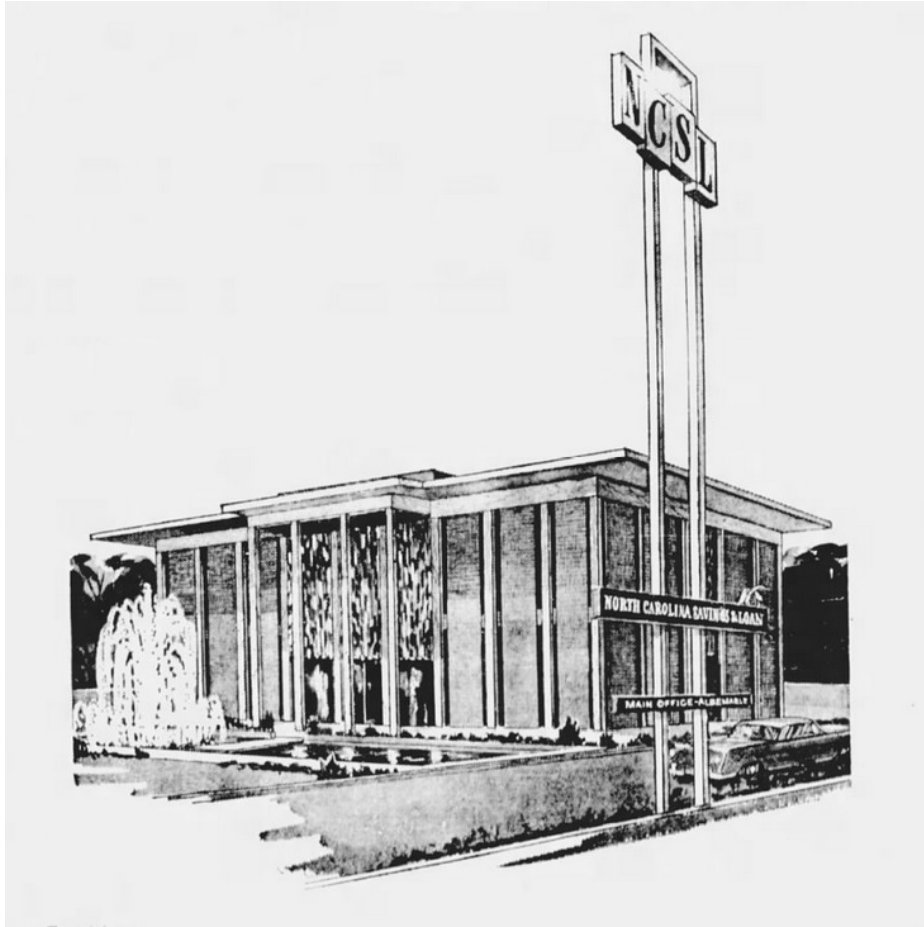
<sup>167</sup> “President Miller Has Guided Firm’s Operation for 34 Years,” *The Charlotte Observer*, January 4, 1965.

<sup>168</sup> “5<sup>th</sup> Savings, Loan Firm Opens Here,” *The Charlotte Observer*, February 18, 1963.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*; “Loan Chief 11-Year Veteran,” *The Charlotte Observer*, January 4, 1965.

<sup>170</sup> John S. DeMott, “N.C. Mutual Savings and Loan To Open Second Charlotte Office,” *The Charlotte Observer*, January 31, 1964.

location was touted as a modern building with many conveniences including a “drive-in window and plenty of free off-street parking.”<sup>171</sup> During the opening month customers could register to win a new mink stole.



**North Carolina Savings and Loan Building** (*The Charlotte Observer*, January 4, 1965)

The architect of the new main office on Independence Boulevard was the firm J. L. Williams Architect-Engineer and Associates of Matthews, North Carolina. James Lewis Williams (1908-1997) was born in Travelers Rest, South Carolina, and graduated from North Carolina State College in 1932 with degrees in architecture and civil engineering. He married Clara Smith of Fairmont, North Carolina. After World War II he opened an architectural and engineering firm in Marion, Virginia, but moved the firm to Matthews in 1958, where he was joined in practice by his three sons. In the 1970s Williams became the first serious business developer in the Matthews area.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> “North Carolina Savings & Loan Association,” advertisement, *The Charlotte Observer*, October 1, 1964.

<sup>172</sup> “James Lewis ‘Mr. J.L.’ Williams,” *The Charlotte Observer*, March 7, 1997; “Williams Architects, Engineers and Associates,” Survey of North Carolina Architectural Firms, NCSU Libraries, accessed April 17, 2020, [https://www.lib.ncsu.edu/specialcollections/digital/text/architects/Private\\_Firms.html#Williams%20Architects-Engineers%20and](https://www.lib.ncsu.edu/specialcollections/digital/text/architects/Private_Firms.html#Williams%20Architects-Engineers%20and).

One of J. L. Williams' sons, Frank M. Williams, designed the North Carolina Savings and Loan Building for his father's firm. Frank Williams had just completed his architecture degree at the North Carolina State School of Design even though he had already been working with his father for several years. The younger Williams designed his "masterpiece of financial architecture" with brick and glass bays between 28-foot marble columns and a two-story lobby on the interior.<sup>173</sup> The edifice, which was to be lit at night, featured a 95-foot-long reflecting pool and fountain at the front of the building.

Grand opening festivities for the new North Carolina Savings and Loan Building on Independence Boulevard took place on January 4, 1965. *The Charlotte Observer* published a special sixteen-page insert in the newspaper and gushed that the structure was "the ultimate in financial buildings." Laxton Construction Company served as general contractor and Atlantic Marble & Tile Co. supplied the cut ceramic tile, terrazzo, and exposed aggregate and imported cut marble for the building. B. B. Owens & Associates installed the "beautiful and picturesque fountain," which changed form every 35 seconds and was lit at night. Wade Manufacturing Corporation "prepared all interior layout plans, manufactured and installed all interior bank fixtures, [and] supplied all interior decorating and furniture for this beautiful new building."<sup>174</sup>

J. L. Williams declared that the architects had "designed an honest building," nothing was disguised, nothing added unnecessarily. The wide roof overhangs were included to save energy by shading the top floor, as well as giving "weight and balance to the beams which support the mezzanine." The base of the building formed a seven-foot-wide walkway around the structure. No interior columns cluttered the full-height lobby, which featured light-diffusing skylights and an open lobby stair designed as an integral part of the décor. Heating cables were added to the steep concrete drive to prevent freezing or snow accumulation in winter. The solar screens in the upper portion of the entrance windows were designed by renowned artist George Bireline of the North Carolina State School of Design.<sup>175</sup>

The nationally recognized Wade Manufacturing Corporation of Charlotte was responsible for the interior design. The design firm, which had consulted with North Carolina Savings and Loan on another branch office, developed the general layout, departmental space allocation, and custom equipment, furniture, and paneling. Vice president George W. Trapp Jr. remarked that the new building "symbolizes the 'New Charlotte'."<sup>176</sup> The design concepts were intended to express a feeling of progress, community pride and leadership, and an image of stability and service.

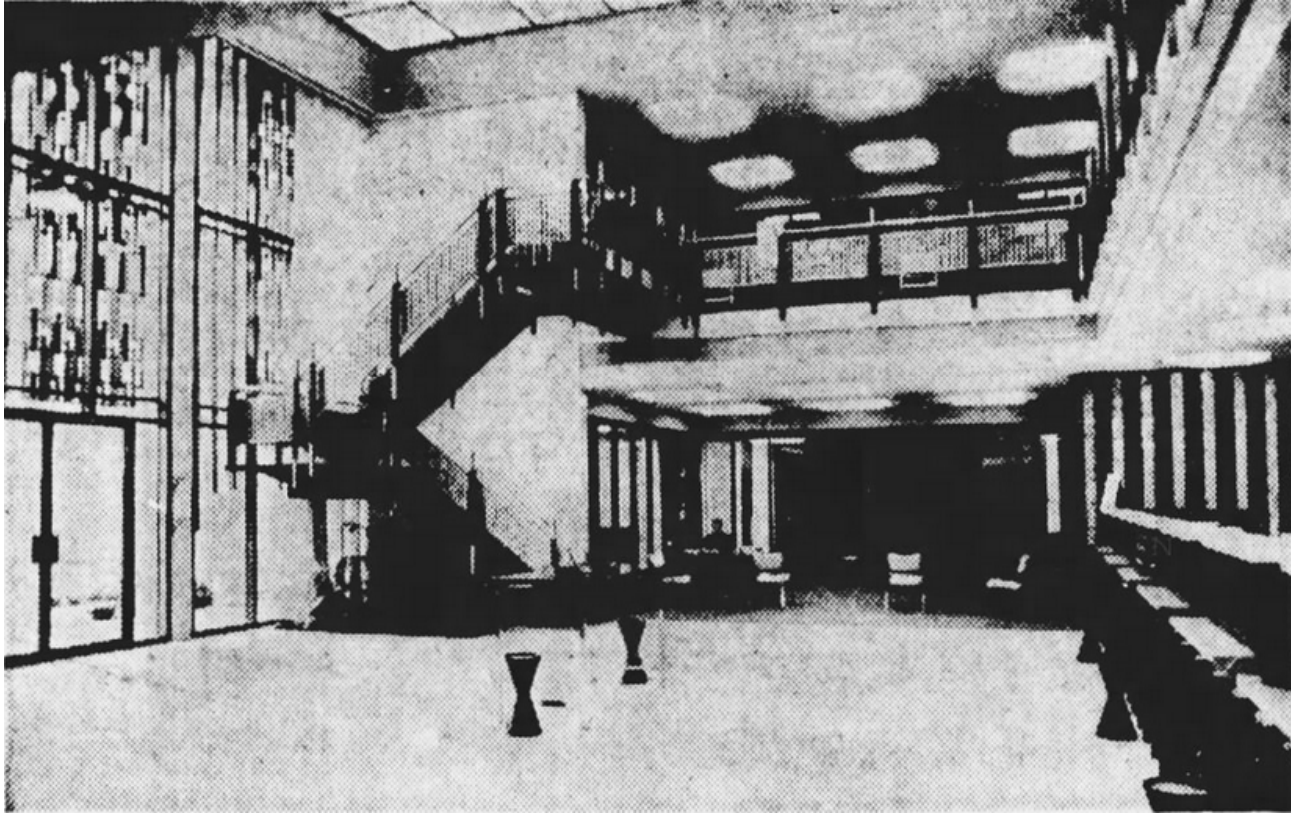
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<sup>173</sup> "Williams Designed Structure," *The Charlotte Observer*, January 4, 1965.

<sup>174</sup> Special insert, *The Charlotte Observer*, January 4, 1965.

<sup>175</sup> "N.C. Savings and Loan Opens Fine New Office," *The Charlotte Observer*, January 4, 1965.

<sup>176</sup> "Nationally-Known Firm Handled Interior Design," *The Charlotte Observer*, January 4, 1965.



**Public Lobby** (*The Charlotte Observer*, January 4, 1965)

The North Carolina Savings and Loan quickly became an architectural landmark on Independence Boulevard, which saw tremendous development during the eighteen months of the bank's construction. It was regarded as one of the handsomest recent buildings on the quickly developing stretch of the road east of the Charlotte Coliseum.<sup>177</sup> The institution enjoyed tremendous success after the completion of the Charlotte office, with assets more than doubling in the five years after the building opened.<sup>178</sup>

In 1972, following a banner year for the firm, C. B. Miller was elevated to chairman of the board and Oron Rogers became president.<sup>179</sup> Rogers' tenure was relatively short-lived, however, as he resigned three years later due to health issues. He was succeeded by H. Clark Goodwin, and senior vice president Kemp M. Causey was placed in charge of all Charlotte operations.<sup>180</sup> Causey

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<sup>177</sup> Emery Wister, "Independence Blvd. In Another Boom of New Buildings," *The Charlotte News*, February 9, 1965.

<sup>178</sup> "Financial statement, December 31, 1970," *The Charlotte Observer*, February 10, 1971.

<sup>179</sup> "Savings-Loan Has Best Year," *The Charlotte Observer*, February 7, 1973.

<sup>180</sup> "N.C. S&L's Rogers Resigns Presidency," *The Charlotte Observer*, October 3, 1975.

joined North Carolina Savings and Loan in 1960 as manager of the Marshville office before moving to Charlotte in 1965.<sup>181</sup>

North Carolina Savings and Loan enjoyed continuing success in the late 1970s before enduring some of the challenges that plagued savings and loan associations in the 1980s. In 1977, shareholders voted to change to a federal charter, prompting a rebranding as North Carolina Federal Savings and Loan Association.<sup>182</sup> In February 1980, the company moved into newly renovated offices downtown at 317 South Tryon Street, but maintained the branch on Independence Boulevard. A proposed merger with four other savings and loan associations in 1983 led to a protracted takeover battle with Charlotte businessman O. Bruton Smith. Smith took over the savings and loan in May 1984, and by the end of the year North Carolina Federal was operating profitably as the third largest savings and loan in state.<sup>183</sup> Like many other savings and loan associations in the late 1980s, North Carolina Federal was beset with problems that led to its ultimate demise and sale to First Citizens.<sup>184</sup>

While the property had been sold to the Executive Building Company in 1970, the North Carolina Savings and Loan's lease for property remained in effect (DB 3170:593). Dennis Lowery (1941-2003), founder of Continental Industrial Chemicals, acquired the ground lease in 1995 and renamed the building (DB 8324:579). An entrepreneur of Lumbee Indian heritage, Lowery came to Charlotte in the 1960s after graduating from the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. He started out selling life insurance before switching to pharmaceuticals and other businesses. By the 1990s, he had built Continental Chemicals into the largest privately owned Native American business in the county, and was named Entrepreneur of the Year by the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce in 1993.<sup>185</sup> The Executive Building Company continues to lease the building for office space.

### *Evaluation*

For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the North Carolina Savings and Loan Building is **eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places. The property is a good example of a mid-rise building designed in the Modernist style for a financial institution. The well-executed design and refined materials of the North Carolina Savings and Loan Building stand out within the commercial strip of Independence Boulevard. The property generally retains its integrity of location, setting, design, materials,

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<sup>181</sup> "South Carolina Native Vice President of Firm," *The Charlotte Observer*, January 4, 1965.

<sup>182</sup> "Names & Changes," *The Charlotte Observer*, June 15, 1977.

<sup>183</sup> Dick Stilley, "N.C. Federal To Absorb 4 Other S&Ls," *The Charlotte Observer*, July 8, 1983; "Smith Protest S&L's Lawyer Fees," *The Charlotte News*, August 22, 1983; David Mildenberg, "Carolinas Banks, S&Ls Steer Clear of Problems," *The Charlotte News*, January 16, 1985; David Mildenberg, "Largest N.C. Savings and Loans Chasing Net Worth, North Assets," *The Charlotte Observer*, January 28, 1985.

<sup>184</sup> Jay McIntosh, "Regulators Seize N.C. Federal S&L," *The Charlotte Observer*, March 3, 1990.

<sup>185</sup> Marion A. Ellis, "Native Son," *Our State* (November 2000), 60-62.

workmanship, feeling, and association. The design and setting of the building have been compromised to a limited degree by the loss of the pool and fountain and the artist-designed solar screens on the façade, but the overall integrity of the building's design and its setting remain.

The North Carolina Savings and Loan Building is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion A (event). *To be eligible under Criterion A, a property must retain integrity and must be associated with a specific event marking an important moment in American pre-history or history or a pattern of events or historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community, a state, or the nation. Furthermore, a property must have existed at the time and be documented to be associated with the events. Finally, a property's specific association must be important as well.* The North Carolina Savings and Loan Association was one of many small to medium-sized firms that opened in Charlotte in the post-war period. Drawn by the city's position as an important financial center with a growing population, many businesses and companies established headquarters or regional offices in Charlotte. Based in nearby Albemarle, the North Carolina Savings and Loan Association was one such company that benefitted from Charlotte's reputation and business climate in the second half of the twentieth century. The company is not associated in a meaningful way with any significant historic events or trends to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion A.

The North Carolina Savings and Loan Building is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion B (person). *For a property to be eligible for significance under Criterion B, it must retain integrity and 1) be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, i.e. individuals whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, state or national historic context; 2) be normally associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he/she achieved significance, and 3) should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person's historic contributions. Furthermore, a property is not eligible if its only justification for significance is that it was owned or used by a person who is or was a member of an identifiable profession, class, or social or ethnic group.* The North Carolina Savings and Loan Building is not closely associated with any specific individual to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion B.

The North Carolina Savings and Loan Building is **eligible** for the National Register under Criterion C (design/construction). *For a property to be eligible under this criterion, it must retain integrity and either 1) embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; 2) represent the work of a master; 3) possess high artistic value; or 4) represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.* The North Carolina Savings and Loan Building, designed by architect Frank M. Williams for his father's firm, is an exquisitely designed and detailed temple-form building rendered in the Modernist style. The two-story flat-roof edifice presents a symmetrical façade with an entrance portico supported on four square columns, stylized dentils in the soffits, and a simplified entablature. Marble-faced full-height piers on the elevations surround the building like a colonnade, and each bay contains recessed brick walls, narrow vertical windows, and marble-clad spandrels. The portico shelters a two-story glazed entryway that opens into a full-height lobby lit from above by light-diffusing skylights. The open interior and mezzanine contrasts the warmth and richness of the custom walnut paneling and furnishings with bright and colorful accents executed in blue, white, silver, and gold. Although the full interior was not available for inspection due to public health concerns,

the visible portions of the interior through the glazed front entrance suggests that the building retains a good degree of interior integrity.

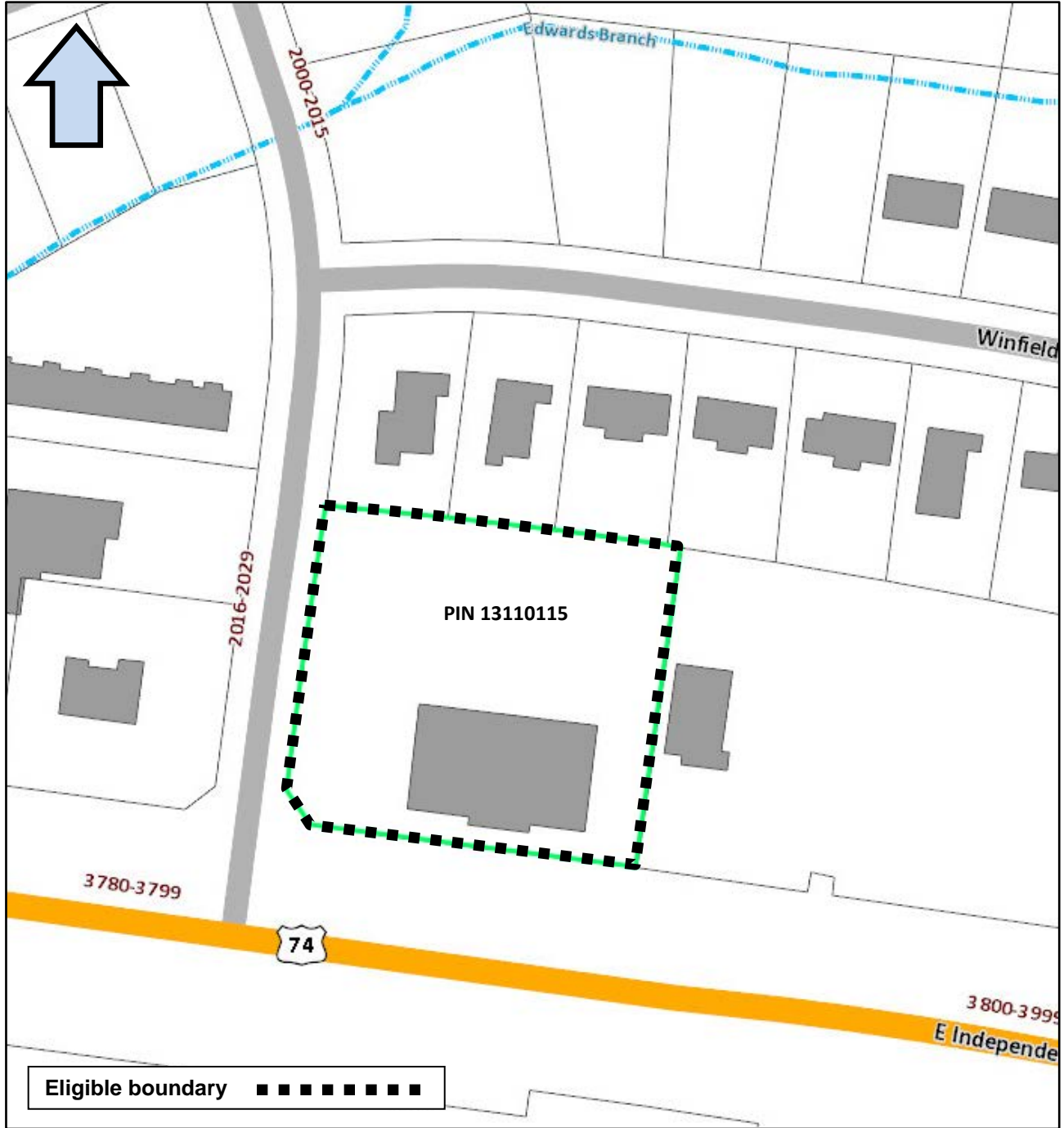
While the building has lost of some of its original design features, the overall form and style of the building remains intact. The building is a rare surviving example of a fully realized branch bank along the Independence Boulevard corridor, with other such buildings having been demolished or substantially altered. These include the branch bank at 3765 East Independence Boulevard built in 1963, and the Wachovia branch at 3665 East Independence Boulevard erected in 1966. Another one-story Modernist bank structure was built adjacent to the Ervin Building (see #12) in the mid-1960s but was demolished around 2000 during improvements to the interchange at Independence Boulevard and Pierson Drive. As a stylish, well-executed example of its type, the North Carolina Savings and Loan Building is eligible for the National Register Criterion C for its architecture.

The North Carolina Savings and Loan Building is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion D (potential to yield information). *For a property to be eligible under Criterion D, it must meet two requirements: 1) the property must have, or have had, information to contribute to our understanding of human history or pre-history, and 2) the information must be considered important.* Built in 1963-1965, the North Carolina Savings and Loan Building is unlikely to contribute significant information pertaining to building technology or historical documentation not otherwise accessible from other extant resources and written records.

#### *Boundary Description and Justification*

The proposed boundary of the North Carolina Savings and Loan Building follows the legal property line encompassing the full extent of the 1.26-acre property [PIN 13110115], which adjoins the existing right-of-way for Independence Boulevard. The proposed boundary includes the residual property historically associated with the building, parking area, and surviving landscape features.





**Boundary Map – North Carolina Savings and Loan Building, 3801 East Independence Boulevard [PIN 13110115] (Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)**

## Inventory No. 12

Resource Name	<b>Ervin Building</b>
HPO Survey Site Number	MK2133
Location	4137 East Independence Boulevard
PIN	13111110
Date(s) of Construction	1964
Eligibility Recommendation	Eligible – B (Charles C. Ervin)



**Ervin Building, 4137 East Independence Boulevard, view to northwest from Pierson Drive**

### *Description*

The seven-story office building built for the Ervin Construction Company in 1964 stands at the north edge of its lot and is surrounded by parking lot on three sides. The Ervin Building faces Independence Boulevard to the south, Pierson Drive to the east, and Bamboo Street to the north. A retail building—formerly a Haverty’s Furniture—stands to the west of the Ervin Building. The eastern edge of the parcel is contained by a large, curved retaining wall, beyond which Bamboo Street and Pierson Drive run below the grade of East Independence Boulevard. When the Ervin Building was originally built, a small Modernist bank building stood at the northeast corner of the lot but was demolished in the early 2000s when the intersection with Pierson Drive was upgraded to a grade-separated interchange.



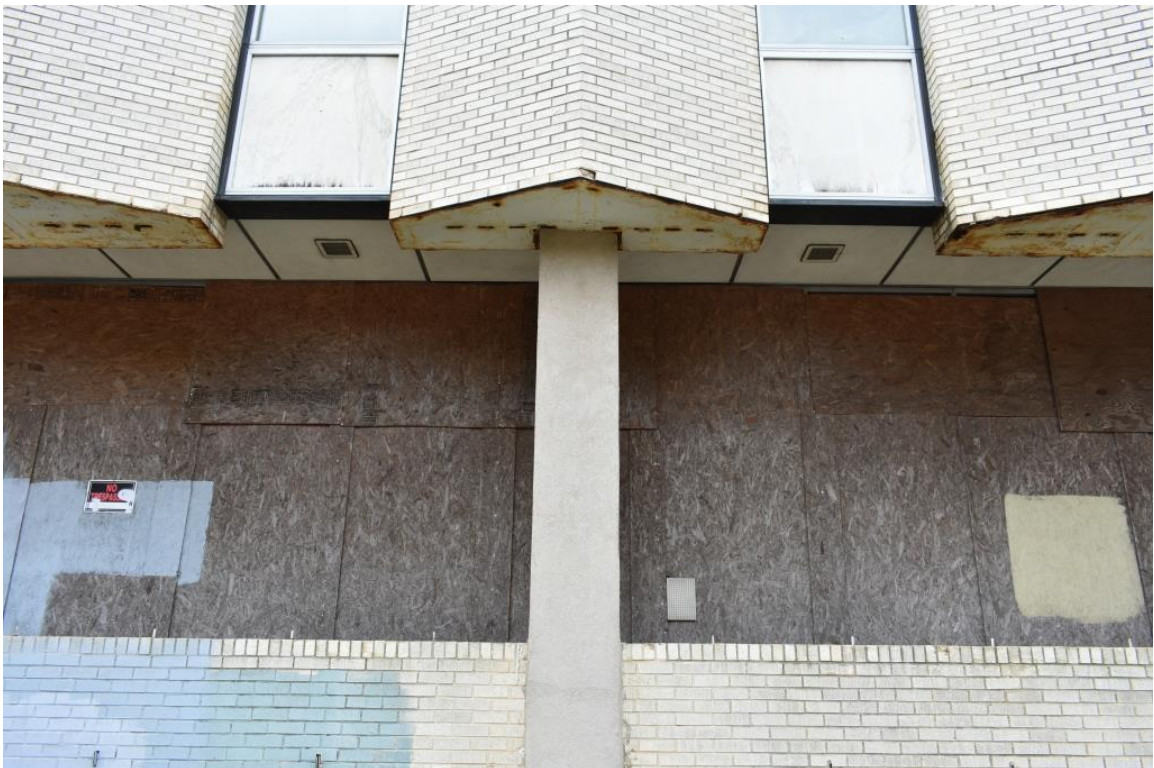
**Ervin Building, oblique front view to northeast**



**Ervin Building, east elevation, view to west**



**Ervin Building, east elevation detail, view to west**



**Ervin Building, north elevation detail, view to south**



**Ervin Building, south elevation, entrance detail, oblique view to northeast**



**Ervin Building, east elevation, first floor detail, view to west**



**Ervin Building, oblique rear view to southeast along Bamboo Street**



**Ervin Building, west elevation detail, oblique view to south**

The vertically oriented square tower of the Ervin Building stands atop an inset ground floor surrounded by square columns inspired by Modernist *pilotis*. Historic photographs show that the columns were clad in white marble, or perhaps granite, but since a 1990s renovation the columns have been covered in stucco. Red granite is also visible at the base of some of the columns.<sup>186</sup> The setback walls of the ground floor are metal-framed plate glass and marble. All of the ground floor walls are presently covered with particle board sheeting and thus not visible.

The tower of the Ervin Building is subdivided by triangular brick pilasters that project out from the bands of windows, give texture to the wall planes, and cast dramatic shadows across each of the building's elevations. The pilasters extend slightly beyond the seventh story of the building as well as below the second story, creating the illusion that they were applied atop a simple square tower. The pilasters are finished with an off-white brick, which matches the faux marble spandrels that separate the six bays of slender one-over-one metal-frame windows from one another. The top pane of each window pivots outward while the smaller bottom pane is fixed. Set back from the roof parapet is an enclosed one-story mechanical space clad in black-painted corrugated metal. Photos from the opening of the building show that this mechanical room was originally painted a light color and displayed a massive "Ervin" sign on the east, south, and west elevations. The sign has since been removed.

All four elevations of the Ervin Building are nearly identical with the exception of grade and egress differences on the ground floor and basement level. The primary entrance on the south side of the structure contained two metal-frame plate-glass doors that opened into the main lobby. The four columns on the south side of the building are ornamented with capital and base details; none of the other columns on the structure have these decorative details. At the north end of the east entrance, four concrete steps framed by a tan brick retaining wall step down into the parking lot beyond. The brick retaining wall wraps around the north and west elevations between the structural piers, running along the lowering grade of Bamboo Street and containing the basement walls. A flat-roofed concrete awning on the west side of the building contains recessed lighting fixtures and covers stairs that descend into the basement. A second staircase with floating risers ascends from the slab beneath the awning to the southwest corner of the building. Concrete curbs surround planters on the southwest and southeast corners of the building, framing the main entrance, which are now overgrown and contain mature trees.

The interior of the Ervin Building was finished on the first story with a terrazzo floor that continued from the exterior walkway under the overhang. On the west side of the entrance lobby, a row of floor-to-ceiling glass partitions created a receptionist's office. At the center of the building, a circulation core rose through all seven levels and contained a bathroom block at the north, two elevators at the south, and staircases at the east and west. On all upper floors, a central corridor circumscribed this circulation core and was surrounded by office space. The building was originally designed with soundproof removable partitions that permitted flexibility of layout and use, and as a result each level's layout has been modified regularly over the years.<sup>187</sup> Finishes in

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<sup>186</sup> The building description and portions of the historical background are adapted from Richard Sidebottom, "Ervin Building Study List Application," North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, NC, 2019.

<sup>187</sup> "Ervin to Construct Eight-Story Building," *The Charlotte Observer*, April 28, 1963.

the upper floors included painted plaster- or gypsum-board walls, acoustical tile ceilings, and carpeted floors.<sup>188</sup>



**Site Plan – Ervin Building, 4037 East Independence Boulevard**  
(Source: Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)

### *Historical Background*

Built as the first custom-designed office building for the Ervin Company, Charlotte’s premier development firm, the Ervin Building is a historic and visual landmark on the east side of the

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<sup>188</sup> Sidebottom, “Ervin Building.”



city.<sup>189</sup> The Ervin Company selected the location on Independence Boulevard as a way to stake its claim as the developer of Charlotte’s burgeoning east side, which by the 1940s had become the area where wealthy whites moved and middle-income whites purchased their first homes. The company’s previous offices at 3400 Rozzells Ferry Road had been in northwest Charlotte; this move indicated an important shift in focus for the company.<sup>190</sup> Although the Ervin Company built developments in many parts of the city, and for many different demographic groups, the company was closely identified and saw its greatest successes on the east side of Charlotte.<sup>191</sup> Construction of the North Carolina Savings and Loan Association Building (see #11) at the other end of the block and Amity Gardens Shopping Center across Independence Boulevard also helped to establish this location as a hub for commercial development on the east side. In 1963, *The Charlotte Observer* reported: “This area will comprise one of the largest shopping and office centers in the nation, with more than 875,000 square feet of retail and office space.”<sup>192</sup>

Construction of the Ervin Building followed the steady growth of the Ervin Company from a family-run construction firm to a regional empire. Charles Ervin began his career as a bricklayer in the Navy, and attended an officer training program at Duke University. After his service in World War II, Ervin returned to Charlotte to manage grocery stores and built a home for himself and his wife with his brother, E. L. Ervin, who was a carpenter.<sup>193</sup> When an eager veteran offered them top dollar for the house, the Ervin brothers saw the financial potential of selling homes to men just home from the war and launched a homebuilding company. Their construction experience helped them to stand apart from Charlotte’s other contemporary developers, none of whom had direct experience in construction.<sup>194</sup>

Although they began by building individual houses, the Ervins quickly saw the potential to scale up their business by taking advantage of the city’s encouragement of post-war development. After World War II, the City of Charlotte began guaranteeing expansion of utility services to anyone building on undeveloped land.<sup>195</sup> Inspired by the assembly line home construction pioneered by Levitt & Sons in Long Island, New York, whose Levittown had become a national icon of post-war suburban living, the Ervin Company began to buy large swaths of undeveloped farmland at the outskirts of the city and to build entire subdivisions. The firm expanded into a vertically integrated business in which all aspects of home buying could be taken care of in-house: floor plans could be modified, architectural styles could be selected from a predetermined assortment, and landscaping services could be acquired. Furthermore, buyers knew that their dream home would

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<sup>189</sup> Woodard and Wyatt, 10-11

<sup>190</sup> “Eastway Park Section Has 98 Building Lots,” *The Charlotte News*, November 19, 1955.

<sup>191</sup> Hanchett, 224-227.

<sup>192</sup> “Ervin to Construct Eight-Story Building,” *The Charlotte Observer*, April 28, 1963.

<sup>193</sup> “Ervin Brother Began By Helping Each Other,” *The Charlotte News*, July 26, 1952.

<sup>194</sup> Hanchett, 233-234.

<sup>195</sup> “Council Acts to Encourage Home Building,” *The Charlotte Observer*, November 14, 1945.

be located in a neighborhood planned according to contemporary standards with fashionable winding streets lined with shade trees and green lawns. The Ervin Company even established a finance department to help buyers access loans and loan insurance through the Veterans Affairs (VA) and Federal Housing Administration (FHA).<sup>196</sup>

The company also streamlined construction, building blocks of houses at a time following the model of an assembly line. Specialized crews worked sequentially on each lot: first the lot would be cleared, making way for a foundation crew, which was followed by a framing crew, a masonry crew, a plastering crew, a trim crew, and finally the landscaping and painting crews.<sup>197</sup> By 1959 the Ervin Company was the South's largest builder of custom-built homes and by 1963 it was lauded as one of the largest in the nation.<sup>198</sup>

The Ervin Company did not limit itself to home construction. As the company built subdivisions, frequently adjacent to one another, Ervin began constructing shopping centers to serve homeowners moving into their neighborhoods, and likewise make the neighborhoods more appealing to potential investors. By 1963, the company had built three large shopping centers in Charlotte suburbs, including the Amity Gardens Shopping Center immediately across Independence Boulevard from their future office tower.<sup>199</sup> In 1968, the company expanded to open Hallmark Galleries, a home-furnishing store at 6500 East Independence Boulevard that was conceived as a one-stop interior decoration shop for prospective homebuyers. Floor coverings, paint colors, drapes, furniture, appliances, fixtures were all offered in store. In opening the store, Ervin again modeled itself after Levitt & Sons, and became the first construction firm in the southeast to do so.<sup>200</sup>

When it came time to build its own office building, the Ervin Company made two decisions of lasting consequence: where to locate the building, and who to design it. Locating across from the Amity Gardens Shopping Center and adjacent to the Eastway Park neighborhood was not a coincidence. Prior to the development of Eastway Park in 1952 (see #13) and Amity Gardens in 1956 (see #14), Charles Ervin began purchasing land along Independence Boulevard adjacent to his subdivisions. This included the purchase of the lot on which the Ervin Building would eventually be located, which was acquired under his own name from Mary Louise C. Neal and Jean C. Isom in November 1957 (DB 1932:50). Four months later the property changed hands within the company and was sold to the Amity Gardens Shopping Center (DB 1992:73). In 1959, construction began on the Amity Gardens Center across the street. The shopping center being one of the company's

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<sup>196</sup> "Ervin Construction Purchases 115 Acres," *The Gastonia Gazette*, September 3, 1959.

<sup>197</sup> "Ervin Construction Co. Has Specialized System," *The Charlotte News*, July 25, 1952; "Construction Co. Can Look Back on Busiest May," *The Charlotte News*, June 14, 1952.

<sup>198</sup> "Ervin Construction Purchases 115 Acres," *The Gastonia Gazette*, September 3, 1959; "Ervin to Construct Eight-Story Building," *The Charlotte Observer*, April 28, 1963.

<sup>199</sup> "Ervin Starts Big Project," *The Charlotte Observer*, February 10, 1959; "Ervin to Construct Eight-Story Building," *The Charlotte Observer*, April 28, 1963.

<sup>200</sup> "Ervin Offers One-Stop Furnishings," *The Charlotte Observer*, July 21, 1968.

largest projects to date, and Eastway Park being one of its most heralded neighborhoods, it made good sense to locate the company's flagship office building within sight of the shopping center and adjacent to the subdivision. At this location, the Ervin Building was surrounded by Ervin Company developments on Charlotte's east side, which had become the Ervin's principal area of activity in the city. The building occupies a slight rise that accentuates its height and visibility on Independence Boulevard.



**Ervin Building** (*The Charlotte News*, February 9, 1965)

In order to have the office building be an advertisement of their success and style, the Ervin Company hired a local architecture firm noted for its Modern design: Ferebee, Walters and Associates. The firm was founded by Stephen Scott Ferebee, Jr. (1921-2016), who was born in Detroit and moved with his family to North Carolina in 1925. Following his service in World War II, Ferebee graduated from North Carolina State University in 1948 with a degree in architectural engineering. Ferebee's architectural career in Charlotte began with A. G. Odell, Jr. (see #6)—one of Charlotte's most distinguished Modernist architects—in 1951. Ferebee partnered with John C. Higgins in 1953, and along with Herschel Walters founded Ferebee, Walters and Associates in 1958. The collaboration with the Ervin Company was clearly a success, as the development firm went on to hire Ferebee, Walters and Associates to build a second company office, Albemarle Center (see #15), on Albemarle Road in 1969, and a speculative office tower, Independence Tower (see #17), on Independence Boulevard in 1972.

The commissions from the Ervin Company came early in the career of Ferebee, Walters and Associates, but the firm went on to make a name for itself in the Carolinas. The firm specialized in designing commercial projects including shopping centers and banks, as well as apartments and multi-family residential projects. Ferebee served as president of the North Carolina American Institute of Architects (AIA) chapter from the late 1950s until he became president of the AIA in 1972. He was also active in founding the School of Architecture at UNC Charlotte. His firm grew considerably, becoming the FWA Group in 1987. Ferebee served as chairman, president, and CEO of the firm until 1990, during which time he oversaw countless significant local projects, the last of which was the Charlotte Convention Center. Ferebee died in Charlotte in November 2016, but the firm that he co-founded remains an active practice.

Ferebee, Walters and Associates applied their training in Modern functionalism to Ervin's goal of designing an office building that could bring employees together in new and personalized ways. The building was designed to connect public spaces with corridors that would facilitate better and more frequent encounters between employees. Furthermore, the interior office spaces were to be

divided by soundproof removable partitions.<sup>201</sup> These partitions allowed for flexibility and made the spaces used by Ervin Company, as well as other tenants, easily adaptable to different work systems and priorities.<sup>202</sup>

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"SERVING CHARLOTTE HOME BUILDERS"

Ashe Brick Company advertisement (*The Charlotte News*, January 29, 1965)

<sup>201</sup> "Ervin to Construct Eight-Story Building," *The Charlotte Observer*, April 28, 1963.

<sup>202</sup> Sidebottom, "Ervin Building."

When the Ervin Building opened in 1964, the Ervin Company only occupied the first four floors. The remaining floors were leased by companies who worked closely with Ervin Company: Reynolds Metals Company; Alamo Polymer Corporation; Ferebee, Walters and Associates Architects; Anaconda Wire and Cable Company; Brockway Glass Company; National Gypsum Company; and numerous insurance companies. Clearly part of the Ervin Company's business model was to keep their subcontractors close, presumably for the company's benefit as well as their clients.<sup>203</sup> In the years following the completion of the building, these subcontractors also displayed their pride in association with the Ervin Company, as well as their landmark building. Builders including Charlotte-based Ashe Brick Company, Glidden Paint & Decorating Center, Gastonia's Owen Steel Company, and Carolina Paving Co., Inc., all took out large-format advertisements in *The Charlotte News* picturing the Ervin Building and advertising their involvement with its construction.

Only five years after completion of the Ervin Building, the Ervin Company again hired Ferebee, Walters and Associates to build a second office building just a half-mile away on Albemarle Road. According to Calvin J. Harris, executive vice president, Albemarle Center became necessary so soon after the first office building was completed because the Ervin Company had acquired seven new companies and added significant numbers of Charlotte-based personnel in 1968. Plans called for the new building to house the Ervin Company's computer and communications centers, as well as offices for lease and a small restaurant.<sup>204</sup>

Seemingly at the height of its success, Charles Ervin sold his company to the American Cyanamid Corporation in 1970, although the Ervin name and business model were retained.<sup>205</sup> During the sale the Ervin Building and Amity Gardens Shopping Center were transferred into the hands of the Executive Building Company, a North Carolina Limited Partnership (DB 3170:593). In the first year after the sale of his company, Charles Ervin worked for Cyanamid but soon left and went back into independent real estate development. Calvin Harris subsequently took over management of the Ervin Company.<sup>206</sup> American Cyanamid Corporation continued expanding the Ervin Company into the Southeast's largest developer, receiving the grand award and three regional citations from the North Carolina Home Builders' Association in 1972.<sup>207</sup> The company faced a slowdown beginning in 1973. Lower home sales and a tight money market made the company's business model—predicated on new home sales—difficult to sustain.<sup>208</sup> The relationship between Charles Ervin and American Cyanamid soured after mid-1970s recession, which led the latter company to liquidate most of its assets.<sup>209</sup> Cyanamid sold the Ervin Company

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<sup>203</sup> "Prominent Tenants Leasing Ervin Space," *The Charlotte News*, January 29, 1965.

<sup>204</sup> Emery Wister, "\$1.25 Million Office Building Is Planned," *The Charlotte News*, December 4, 1968.

<sup>205</sup> "Ervin Co. Tightens Its Belt," *The Charlotte Observer*, November 11, 1973.

<sup>206</sup> "What's Ervin Doing? He's Far From Idle," *The Charlotte Observer*, January 30, 1971.

<sup>207</sup> "Ervin Wins Top Awards," *The Charlotte News*, July 17, 1972.

<sup>208</sup> "Charles Ervin Doesn't Want Firm Back," *The Charlotte Observer*, December 10, 1974; "Ervin Co. Tightens Its Belt," *The Charlotte Observer*, November 11, 1973.

<sup>209</sup> "Ervin, Cyanamid Settle Differences," *The Charlotte Observer*, November 14, 1978.

to the Caine Company of Greenville, South Carolina, in August 1975. The sale included Executive Plaza on Interstate 77 south of the city, Amity Gardens Shopping Center, the Ervin Building on East Independence Boulevard, and Park 77 office building.<sup>210</sup> American Cyanamid filed suit against Charles Ervin in 1976, alleging that the purchase price of Amity Gardens Shopping Center had been inflated due to Ervin not disclosing the leasing details. The suit was finally settled two years later, in 1978.<sup>211</sup> Charles Ervin continued working in private real estate development for the rest of his career, but never again sought to establish a firm of the scale or ambition as his first one. Ervin died in 2006 in Florida, survived by his wife and children.<sup>212</sup>

Following its association with the Ervin Company, the Ervin Building was occupied by many different tenants who changed the flexible floor plans to suit their needs. Ownership of the Ervin Building transferred from Executive Building Company, LP, to Executive Building Company, LLC, in 1998 (DB 9816:703). Most recently, the building was known as the Varnadore Building, named after a real estate company who had offices on the fourth and fifth floors. A large number of LGBTQ businesses occupying other floors led the building to become popularly referred to as “Queer Tower.” In 2018 the building was purchased by the present owners, Ervin Building, LLC, a name that indicates a renewed interest in the history of the building (DB 33144:954). Although the building is now vacant and its interior is in significant disrepair, its exterior integrity is strong and rehabilitation plans are reportedly underway.<sup>213</sup>

### *Evaluation*

For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Ervin Building is **eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places. The building is an architecturally distinctive seven-story office tower built for Charles C. Ervin and his development company, one of the region’s premier firms. Following World War II, Ervin guided the company into prominence as Charlotte’s most prolific suburban developer in the 1950s and 1960s, and the corporate tower represented the apex of Ervin’s productive life as a builder and developer in east Charlotte. The property generally retains its integrity of location, design, workmanship, feeling, and association. Currently vacant, the material integrity of the Ervin Building has been compromised by a lack of maintenance, vandalism, and boarding over of the first story. Similarly the setting has been negatively impacted by disuse of the site, improvements to Independence Boulevard and surrounding streets, and the loss of surrounding businesses.

The Ervin Building is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion A (event). *To be eligible under Criterion A, a property must retain integrity and must be associated with a specific*

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<sup>210</sup> “S.C. Firm Buys Ervin Commercial Division,” *The Charlotte News*, August 2, 1975.

<sup>211</sup> “Ervin, Cyanamid Settle Differences,” *The Charlotte Observer*, November 14, 1978.

<sup>212</sup> “Charles C. Ervin Sr.,” *The Charlotte Observer*, June 11, 2006.

<sup>213</sup> Jeff Taylor, “Can a building once meant to launch East Charlotte into the future be revitalized?” QNotes, May 5, 2017, accessed November 2019, <https://goqnotes.com/50489/can-a-building-once-meant-to-launch-east-charlotte-into-the-future-be-revitalized/>.

*event marking an important moment in American pre-history or history or a pattern of events or historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community, a state, or the nation. Furthermore, a property must have existed at the time and be documented to be associated with the events. Finally, a property's specific association must be important as well.* The Ervin Building was the first purpose-built office building for the Ervin Company, one of Charlotte's premier mid-century development firms. Its prominent placement on East Independence Boulevard indicated the importance of the Ervin Company to the east side of Charlotte, and vice versa. Surrounded by subdivisions that the Ervin Company had built out, and across the street from the firm's massive Amity Gardens Shopping Center, the Ervin Building stood as testament to the prosperity produced by suburban development in mid-century Charlotte. Beyond this wide-reaching association, the company is not associated in a meaningful way with more specific historic events or trends to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion A.

The Ervin Building is **eligible** for the National Register under Criterion B (person). *For a property to be eligible for significance under Criterion B, it must retain integrity and 1) be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, i.e. individuals whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, state or national historic context; 2) be normally associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he/she achieved significance, and 3) should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person's historic contributions. Furthermore, a property is not eligible if its only justification for significance is that it was owned or used by a person who is or was a member of an identifiable profession, class, or social or ethnic group.* The Ervin Company, a construction and development firm founded by Charles C. Ervin following World War II, grew into the largest home building firm in the south and one of the largest construction companies in the country by the 1960s. Specializing in custom-built homes, the Ervin Company developed and built residential subdivisions, shopping centers, and apartment complexes across Charlotte but was closely associated with the east side of the city where many of its projects were concentrated. The seven-story office tower Ervin erected for his company's headquarters in 1964 was strategically positioned along Independence Boulevard and surrounded by Ervin Company developments including Eastway Park, Amity Gardens, Dresden Apartments, Amity Gardens Shopping Center, and Sheffield. The Ervin Building's prominent location helped the company advertise itself and lay claim to suburban development on the east side of Charlotte. The company built two subsequent office buildings for company offices, but the Ervin Building best encapsulates and represents the success and importance of Charles Ervin as the preeminent developer in the area during the 1950s and 1960s. His company's efficient construction process was modeled, in part, on the assembly line construction pioneered by Levitt & Sons in New York. The vertically-integrated company covered all aspects of home buying from selecting a lot to financing to furnishings, and many of Ervin's subcontractors kept offices in the Ervin Building. The Ervin Building stands as testimony to the huge success of the company approach to development and to the long-standing influence of Charles Ervin's firm in the city.

The Ervin Building is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion C (design/construction). *For a property to be eligible under this criterion, it must retain integrity and either 1) embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; 2) represent the work of a master; 3) possess high artistic value; or 4) represent a significant and*

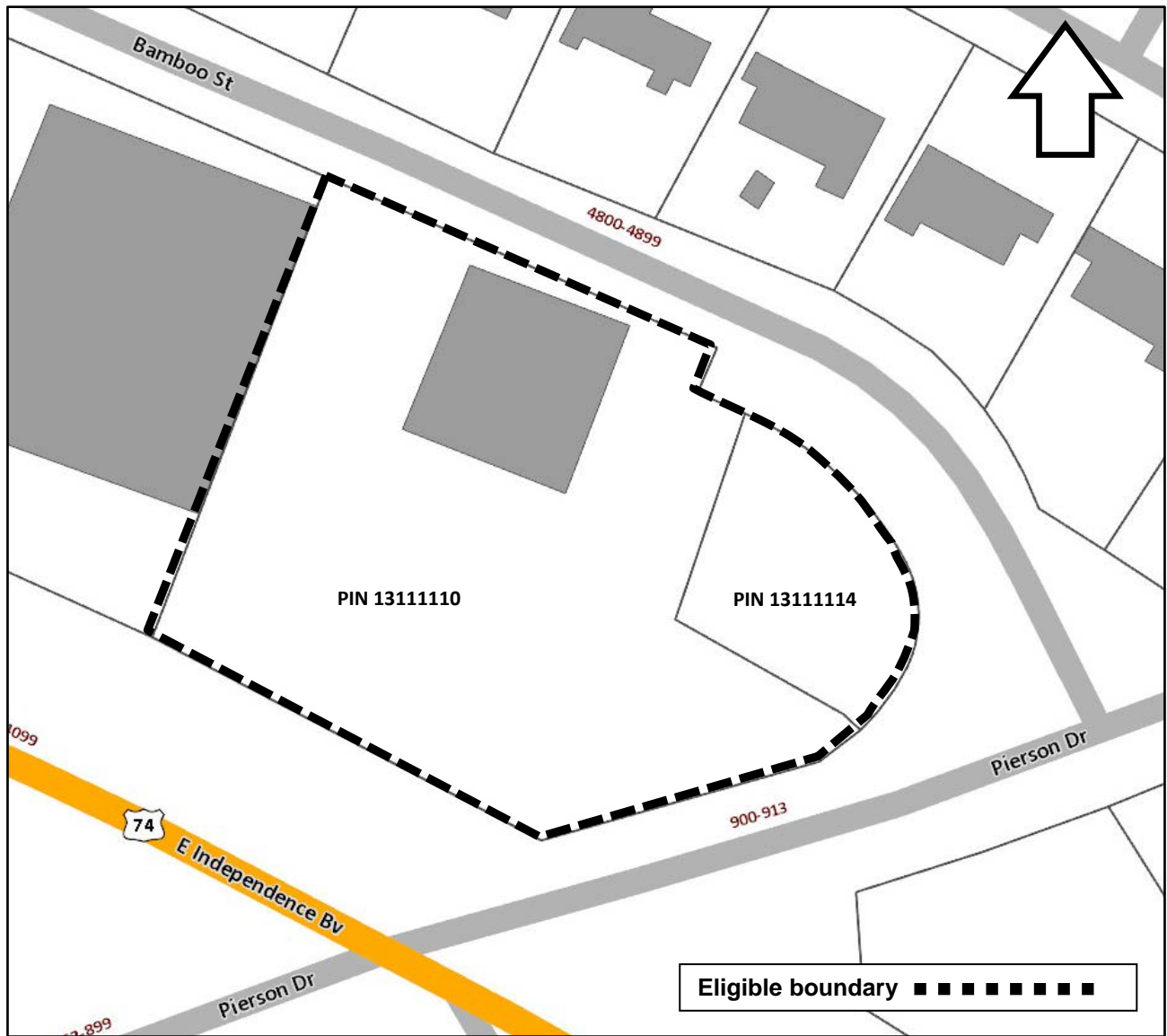
*distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.* The material and design integrity of the Ervin Building has been significantly compromised by a lack of maintenance and vandalism in the past decade. The entire ground floor is boarded over with particle board disguising the Modernist design of the first story and glazed lobby. The setting has also been negatively impacted by disuse of the site and the loss of surrounding businesses. Although the Modernist design by Ferebee, Walters and Associates and the prominent status of the building are significant, the building's lack of integrity prevents its eligibility under Criterion C for its architecture.

The Ervin Building is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion D (potential to yield information). *For a property to be eligible under Criterion D, it must meet two requirements: 1) the property must have, or have had, information to contribute to our understanding of human history or pre-history, and 2) the information must be considered important.* Built in 1964, the Ervin Building is unlikely to contribute significant information pertaining to building technology or historical documentation not otherwise accessible from other extant resources and written records.

#### *Boundary Description and Justification*

The proposed boundary of the Ervin Building encompasses the entirety of the parcel containing the building, as well as a vacant outparcel on which a branch bank building formerly stood [PIN 13111110 and 13111114]. The boundary adjoins the right-of-way of Independence Boulevard to the south, Pierson Drive to the east, and Bamboo Street to the north. The Ervin Building parcel abuts a separately owned tax parcel [PIN 13111113] to the west. The proposed boundary includes the residual property associated with the Ervin Building and its parking area, which is bound on three sides by surrounding streets.





**Boundary Map – Ervin Building, 4037 East Independence Boulevard  
 [PIN 13111110 and 13111114] (Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)**

## Inventory No. 13

Resource Name	<b>Eastway Park Neighborhood</b>
HPO Survey Site Number	MK4414
Location	Roughly bounded by Eastway Drive, East Independence Boulevard, Albemarle Road, and Evergreen Nature Preserve
PIN	Multiple
Date(s) of Construction	1952-1958
Eligibility Recommendation	Eligible – A, C (community planning and development; architecture)



**Houses, Sheffield Drive, north side, view to east**

### *Description*

Eastway Park is a large, self-contained residential suburb on the east side of Charlotte platted between 1952 and 1955 by the Ervin Company (DB 6:651; 7:9, 125, 217, 219, 565, 609). The neighborhood is bounded by Eastway Drive to the west, Independence Boulevard to the south, Albemarle Road to the east, and Evergreen Nature Preserve and Evergreen Cemetery to the north. The neighborhood is often considered to be part of present-day Sheffield Park, although signage on the streets still carries its original name. The gently curving streets of Eastway Park skirt the south side of the Evergreen Cemetery and Evergreen Nature Preserve, and when the subdivision was first developed, the eastern limits were shielded by wooded areas. Beginning in 1962, the Ervin Company developed those woods into the subdivision known as Sheffield. Eastway Park has

hardly been altered since its initial development. The streets remain the same as originally platted; very little infill, if any, exists; and the original setbacks, massing, and scale of the houses remains consistent throughout.

Advertisements for the Ervin Company's flagship subdivision on the east side of Charlotte focused on the variety of architectural details and customization of floor plans available within the single-family Ranch house typology that was the Ervin Company specialty. The model home at **3963 Winfield Drive**, built in 1955, featured a number of specializations on its façade including a double front gable, stone veneer on the center bay, and a narrow side-gable wing on its east side. Advertising copy for the house took note of the "true masculine appeal [of] the solid brick wall in the living room," and praised its "one and one-half baths [and] closets galore."<sup>214</sup>

You Are Cordially Invited —

OPEN FOR PUBLIC INSPECTION

*"The Custom-Line"*

ERVIN'S MODEL HOME IN EASTWAY PARK

BUILT FOR FAMILY LIVING-COMFORT & CONVENIENCE



Advertisement for model home at 3963 Winfield Drive (*The Charlotte News*, October 22, 1955)

<sup>214</sup> "You Are Cordially Invited," advertisement, *The Charlotte News*, October 22, 1965.

The more common houses in Eastway Park are relatively simple, single-story brick Ranch houses. In their uniformity of scale and setback, these houses create a highly consistent streetscape, and yet there is also constant variation amidst the formal detail of the similar houses. The house at **4211 Winfield Drive**, built in 1955, is among the least ornamented Ranch houses found in the neighborhood. The plain one-story brick dwelling has a side-gable roof, wood siding in the gable ends, gable-roof rear ell, and replacement one-over-one windows. Down the block, the house at **4217 Winfield Drive**, also built in 1955, is another side-gable Ranch house, but features several customizations that are typical of the neighborhood. The house has an exterior brick chimney, shallow front-gable wing, wood shingles in the gable ends, a façade picture window, and faux-stone inserts simulating quoins around the entry door.



Houses, **4211 Winfield Drive (l)** and **4217 Winfield Drive (r)**

Although Eastway Park is composed primarily of single-family houses, all of the residences on the south side of Winfield Drive are duplexes. These duplexes occupy lots that were platted in 1954 (DB 7:217, 219) between Woodland Drive and Pierson Drive. The building at **3912-3914 Winfield Drive**, built in 1956, has a side-gable roof with a centered front gable over an inset entrance stoop that contains two single-leaf entry doors and two central picture windows. The residence at **3926-3928 Winfield Drive**, built in 1958, is more typical of the duplexes on the street. Only one entrance of this structure faces the street, allowing the duplex to appear to the casual observer as a single-family home. A broad hip roof caps the building and each of its entry doors, on its north and east sides, is accessed from an uncovered brick stoop framed by raised planters clad in stone veneer. Hip-roof wings on the south and west sides of the duplex are integrated into the primary roofline.

The Ervin Company developed another area of Eastway Park with multi-family residences in 1962, called Dresden Apartments. Situated on the south side of East Dresden Drive between Norland Road and Woodland Drive, the varied apartment units continued a pattern of building multi-family housing on lots that backed up to Independence Boulevard. The development consists of a variety of one-story multi-family units and duplexes built in 1962 between Westchester Boulevard and Woodland Drive. Additional duplexes and larger four-unit apartment blocks were completed in 1964 between Westchester Boulevard and Norland Road.



**Duplexes, 3912-3914 Winfield Drive (l) and 3826-3828 Winfield Drive (r)**



**Dresden Apartments, 3756 Dresden Drive East (l) and Duplexes, 3646-3652 Dresden Drive East (r)**



**Dresden Apartments, front (l) and rear views (r), corner of Dresden Drive East and Norland Road**

The Eastway Park neighborhood remains remarkably intact. Typical renovations of individual houses and duplexes do not impact the overall character and feeling of the neighborhood. Material changes to the structures include the replacement of original windows with vinyl sash; installation of vinyl siding on the gable ends and soffits; and the construction of additions, typically at the rear of the houses. No tear downs or oversized remodelings disrupt the historic character of

the neighborhood, which make Eastway Park one of the most cohesive 1950s suburban neighborhoods built by the Ervin Company.



**Houses, 1900 block of Woodland Drive, west side, view to north**

### *Historical Background*

Located off Eastway Drive and originally reached by turning left “one block beyond the last stop light” on Independence Boulevard, Eastway Park was the Ervin Company’s flagship subdivision in the 1950s, and a sign of the company’s desire to transform the east side of Charlotte.<sup>215</sup> Planning for the neighborhood began at a time when the firm founded by Charles Ervin was quickly rising in prominence and expanding its work in the city, thanks in large part to post-war policies that specifically promoted middle-class suburban neighborhoods filled with detached housing units owned by a homogeneous population.<sup>216</sup>

Construction of Eastway Park took place just as the Ervin Company was becoming a regional empire. Charles Ervin had begun his career as a bricklayer in the Navy, and attended an officer training program at Duke University. After his service in World War II, Ervin returned to Charlotte to manage grocery stores and built a home for himself and his wife with his brother, E. L. Ervin, who was a carpenter.<sup>217</sup> When an eager veteran offered them top dollar for the house, the Ervin

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<sup>215</sup> “Eastway Park Section Has 98 building Lots,” *The Charlotte News*, November 19, 1955.

<sup>216</sup> Hanchett, 233-234.

<sup>217</sup> “Ervin Brothers Began By Helping Each Other,” *The Charlotte News*, July 26, 1952.

brothers saw the financial potential of selling homes to men just home from the war and launched a homebuilding company. Their construction experience helped them to stand apart from Charlotte's other contemporary developers, none of whom had direct experience in construction.

Although they began by building individual houses, the Ervins quickly saw the potential to scale up their business by taking advantage of the city's encouragement of post-war development. After World War II, the City of Charlotte began guaranteeing expansion of utility services to anyone building on undeveloped land.<sup>218</sup> Inspired by the assembly line home construction pioneered by Levitt & Sons in Long Island, New York, whose Levittown had become a national icon of post-war suburban living, the Ervin Company began to buy swaths of undeveloped farmland at the outskirts of the city and to build entire subdivisions. The firm expanded into a vertically integrated business in which all aspects of home buying could be taken care of in-house: floor plans could be modified, architectural styles could be selected from a predetermined assortment, and landscaping services could be acquired. Furthermore, buyers knew that their dream home would be located in a neighborhood planned according to contemporary standards with fashionable winding streets lined with shade trees and green lawns. The Ervin Company even established a finance department to help buyers access loans and loan insurance through the Veterans Affairs (VA) and Federal Housing Administration (FHA).<sup>219</sup>

The company also streamlined construction, building blocks of houses at a time following the model of an assembly line. Specialized crews worked sequentially on each lot: first the lot would be cleared, making way for a foundation crew, which was followed by a framing crew, a masonry crew, a plastering crew, a trim crew, and finally the landscaping and painting crews.<sup>220</sup> By 1959 the Ervin Company was the South's largest builder of custom-built homes, and by 1963 it was lauded as one of the largest in the nation.<sup>221</sup>

In the period after World War II, the return of soldiers from overseas—and the increase in marriage and birth rates that followed—raised the demand for housing in Charlotte. Between 1940 and 1960, Charlotte's population doubled from 100,899 to 201,564.<sup>222</sup> Growth to accommodate this population increase occurred at the city's edges, primarily on the east and south sides of Charlotte. Annexation of previously rural areas into the city limits became a key strategy for Charlotte's expansion during this period. The area that included Eastway Park was incorporated into the City of Charlotte in 1949.<sup>223</sup> Once land became part of the city, developers

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<sup>218</sup> "Council Acts to Encourage Home Building," *The Charlotte Observer*, November 14, 1945.

<sup>219</sup> "Ervin Construction Purchases 115 Acres," *The Gastonia Gazette*, September 3, 1959.

<sup>220</sup> "Ervin Construction Co. Has Specialized System," *The Charlotte News*, July 25, 1952; "Construction Co. Can Look Back on Busiest May," *The Charlotte News*, June 14, 1952.

<sup>221</sup> "Ervin Construction Purchases 115 Acres," *The Gastonia Gazette*, September 3, 1959; "Ervin to Construct Eight-Story Building," *The Charlotte Observer*, April 28, 1963.

<sup>222</sup> Woodard and Wyatt, 5-9.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 10; "New Sub-Division Has Rural Benefits in City," *The Charlotte News*, July 25, 1952.

had access to immediate support for their plans. In 1945, Charlotte’s City Council announced that, “any real estate firm, development agency, or housing contractor who wants to erect houses on undeveloped property within the city can come down to city hall, get his plans approved, and start work with the assurance that the municipal crews will begin the job of laying necessary water and sewer lines and completing the city’s part of the street work so that the finished houses will be ready for immediate occupancy.”<sup>224</sup>



**Eastway Park subdivision, detail of “Map of Greater Charlotte, North Carolina, 1955”**  
 (<http://maps.co.mecklenburg.nc.us/historicmaps/>)

The Eastway Park subdivision began when the Ervin Company purchased 80 acres on Eastway Drive from M. E. Pierson and Associates.<sup>225</sup> Eventually the area expanded to 126 acres divided into 300 lots measuring 70 by 150 feet and larger, generous lot sizes that allowed the firm to advertise the neighborhood as providing “rural living in the city.”<sup>226</sup> The main entrances to Eastway Park were designated on Eastway Drive at Woodland Drive and Independence Boulevard at Norland Road. The basic amenities of the neighborhood included paved streets, standing curbs and gutters,

<sup>224</sup> “Council Acts to Encourage Home Building,” *The Charlotte Observer*, November 14, 1945.

<sup>225</sup> “Big Project to be Built by Ervin Firm,” *The Charlotte Observer*, February 6, 1952.

<sup>226</sup> “Difference Between Development and Sub-Division Is Important One,” *The Charlotte News*, July 26, 1952.



storm drains, city water and sewer facilities. The fact that Eastway Park's acreage had recently been annexed into Charlotte city limits was a major selling point for future homeowners. Incorporation into the city entitled the home owners to municipal services such as fire and police protection, as well as street maintenance. The neighborhood was also well located for families: Chantilly Grammar School and Oakhurst High School were both already in the vicinity and the Eastway Middle School was being planned north of Eastway Park on Norland Road.<sup>227</sup>



**Aerial view of Eastway Park, April 2, 1958 (NCDOT Historic Aerial Imagery Index)**

Construction for Eastway Park began in May 1952.<sup>228</sup> The neighborhood was developed incrementally, moving from west to east. The first plat was filed in April 1952 and contained the northwestern sector of the neighborhood including the main entrance off of Eastway Drive, the westernmost portion of Woodland Drive, the northern portions of Norland Road and Roanoke Avenue, Dresden Drive West, and Brighton Place (PB 6:651). In October 1953 the next plat was filed, completing the western sector of the neighborhood by continuing Woodland Drive, Norland

<sup>227</sup> "New Sub-Division Has Rural Benefits in City," *The Charlotte News*, July 25, 1952.

<sup>228</sup> "Construction Co. Can Look Back on Busiest May," *The Charlotte News*, June 14, 1952.

Road, and Roanoke Avenue, and adding Westchester Boulevard and Optimist Lane (PB 7:9). Several more plats were filed the next year, moving the neighborhood east along the southern edge of Evergreen Cemetery on Sheffield Court and Winfield Drive, as well as adding Wilshire Place, Greenhaven Lane, and Pierson Drive (PB 7:125, 217, 219). The final streets to be platted in the neighborhood were the dead end of Tarrington Drive, Southgate Drive, and Leeds Drive in November 1955 (PB 7:609). Upon the completion of the final 98 lots, Eastway Park was lauded as “one of the finest residential subdivisions in the City of Charlotte.”<sup>229</sup>

Advertisements for Eastway Park focused on the narrow range of home prices, which assured readers that the neighborhood would be demographically homogeneous, and explicitly mentioned that the development followed FHA design standards.<sup>230</sup> House prices ranged between \$12,000 and \$15,000. The Ervin Company predicted that the development would be valued at \$2,525,000 when completed.<sup>231</sup> In a town like Charlotte, these advertisements were intended to appeal not only to prospective home buyers but also to bankers with an eye toward the homogeneity of income level and professionalism of the builder that the government programs required.<sup>232</sup>

**Charlotte's Finest Neighborhoods**  
*"Ask Any Ervin Home-Owner"*

- **EASTWAY PARK**  
OFF INDEPENDENCE BLVD.  
AT EASTWAY DR.
- **SHARONWOOD ACRES**  
OFF PROVIDENCE ROAD & CARMEL  
RD. ON SHARON VIEW RD.
- **MARKHAM VILLAGE**  
TURN LEFT OFF CENTRAL AVE.  
ON EASTWAY DR.
- **WESTERLY HILLS**  
OFF WILKINSON BLVD. ON  
ASHLEY ROAD
- **COUNTRY CLUB ACRES**  
AT END OF COUNTRY CLUB DRIVE  
ADJACENT TO MARKHAM VILLAGE
- **AMITY GARDENS**  
OFF INDEPENDENCE BLVD. 1½  
MILES BEYOND COLISEUM

30-YEAR FHA & VA LOANS AVAILABLE

**LOOK FOR THIS SIGN IN CHARLOTTE**

ANOTHER Ervin Built Home FOR SALE ERVIN CONST. CO. FR. 5-8436

TWO SALES OFFICES FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE  
FR 5-8431 • FR 7-2529

**ERVIN CONSTRUCTION CO.**

**Ervin Construction Company advertisement** (*The Charlotte Observer*, September 2, 1956)

Sales literature for Eastway Park also focused closely on the difference between a development and a subdivision. Article after article distinguished between a subdivision, in which a buyer selected the lot and decided which house to put on it, and a development, in which all houses were built from four or five plans and then sold. Eastway Park, in this definition, was a subdivision. In order to best reach prospective buyers, the Ervin Company partnered with Jack Spiers Agency, a consulting firm that helped the home-building company bring advertising, financing, and sales expertise into the firm. The Jack Spiers Agency provided individualized consultation services for purchasers, helping them choose a plan and location for their dream

<sup>229</sup> “Eastway Park Section Is One of the Finest,” *The Charlotte Observer*, October 23, 1955.

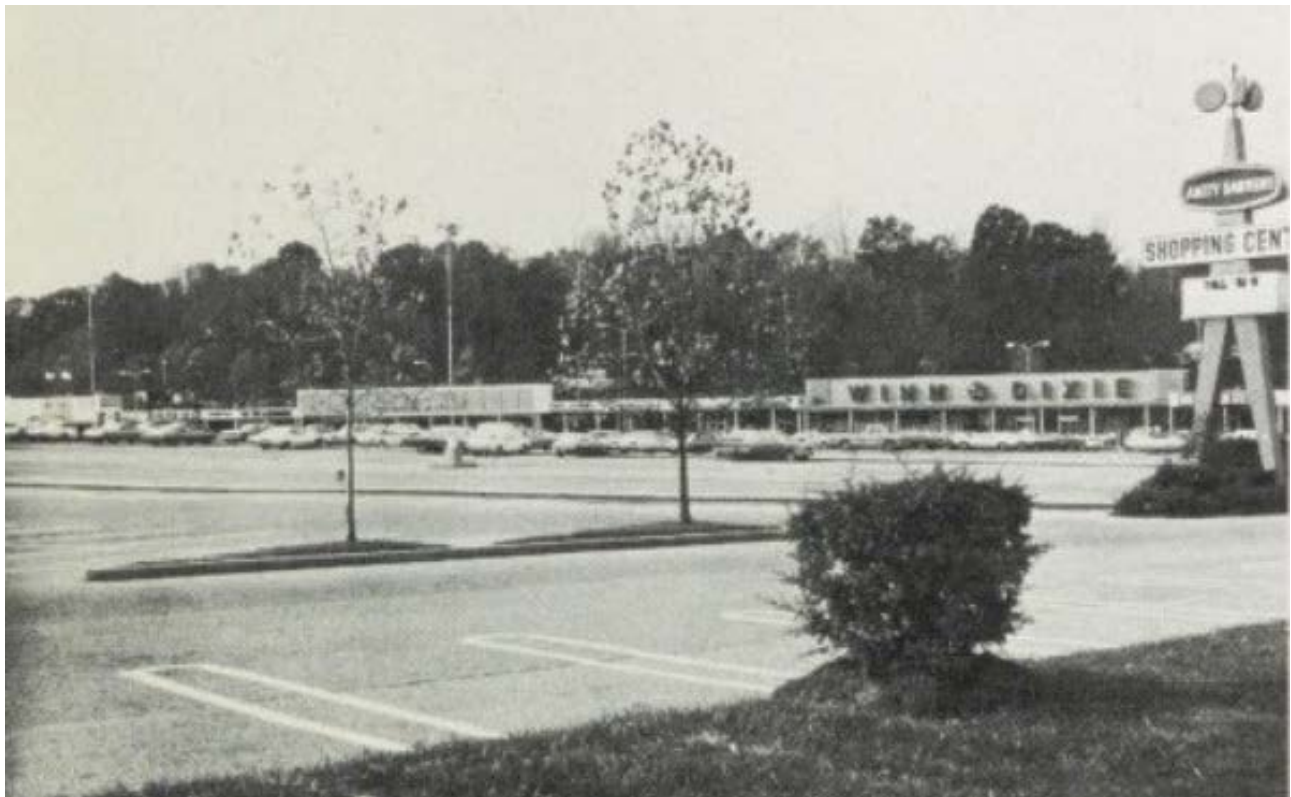
<sup>230</sup> “Difference Between Development and Sub-Division Is Important One,” *The Charlotte News*, July 26, 1952; “Big Project to be Built by Ervin Firm,” *The Charlotte Observer*, February 6, 1952.

<sup>231</sup> “Big Project to be Built by Ervin Firm,” *The Charlotte Observer*, February 6, 1952.

<sup>232</sup> Hanchett, 234-235.

home.<sup>233</sup> Further promising individualization, the planners of the neighborhood guaranteed home buyers that no two alike houses will be constructed next to one another.<sup>234</sup> The streetscape would be varied and personalized, rather than cookie-cutter.

By Christmas of 1956, enough homes were completed in the neighboring Ervin suburb of Amity Gardens (see #14) that the neighborhood entered into a friendly competition, sponsored by the Ervin Company, to out-decorate their neighbors' homes. Homeowners in the two large subdivisions decorated their houses extravagantly, following a model set by the Ervin Company at its sales office in a house on Independence Boulevard, which boasted a rooftop helicopter being flown by Santa Claus and a 20-foot tree in the front yard. Three businessmen served as judges and delivered three grand prizes.<sup>235</sup>



**Amity Gardens Shopping Center, 1970s** (“Charlotte, New City of the 70’s,” 42)

The Ervin Company did not limit itself to home construction. As the firm built subdivisions, frequently adjacent to one another, Ervin began to also construct shopping centers to serve homeowners moving into their neighborhoods, and likewise make the neighborhoods more appealing to potential investors. Eastway Park was located directly across Independence Boulevard from land that the Ervin Company had acquired to develop the massive Amity Gardens

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<sup>233</sup> “Ervin Brothers Began By Helping Each Other,” *The Charlotte News*, July 26, 1952.

<sup>234</sup> “Eastway Park to Have 300 Lots,” *The Charlotte News*, July 25, 1952.

<sup>235</sup> “Eastway Park, Amity Gardens Engage in Decorating Contest,” *The Charlotte Observer*, December 22, 1956.

Shopping Center, which was already being advertised in Eastway Park press releases.<sup>236</sup> Work began on the Amity Gardens Shopping Center in early 1959, with construction on a Winn-Dixie store and a Woolworths, and several smaller commercial spaces. Completed in the summer of 1959, the shopping center was surrounded by Ervin neighborhoods on all sides.<sup>237</sup>

Subsequent development adjacent to Eastway Park further cemented the Ervin Company's foothold in the vicinity. To the east of the neighborhood the firm built a second subdivision, called Sheffield, in 1961 and 1962.<sup>238</sup> The Sheffield neighborhood extended Tarrington Avenue and Pierson Drive to the southeast and connected them to a closed circuit of several streets consisting of Greenbrook Drive, Briarfield Drive, Kimwood Place, and Woodhill Lane (PB 9:399, 417, 419). Furthermore, in 1964 the Ervin Company moved its headquarters to a new seven-story office tower on Independence Boulevard at Pierson Drive, so close that residents along Winfield Drive could see the Ervin Company tower looming over their yards. The placement of the Ervin Building (see #12) so close to Eastway Park and nearby Amity Gardens Shopping Center announced that the two properties were representative of the Ervin Company's diverse and high-quality work, and staked a claim to its position as the preeminent developer of Charlotte's east side.

A second development built in the 1960s was entirely located within the original Eastway Park boundaries. The development, called Dresden Apartments, consisted of multi-family units and ran along the south side of Dresden Drive East between Woodland Drive and Norland Road (PB 10:89). East of Westchester Boulevard a variety of one-story multi-family units and duplexes were built in 1962. At the west end of Dresden Avenue larger four-unit apartment blocks were completed in 1964. These units continued the pattern of placing multi-family housing to abut the commercial development built along Independence Boulevard, a strategy the Ervin Company established with duplexes on Winfield Drive and repeated in the Amity Gardens subdivision (see #14).

Seemingly at the height of its success, Charles Ervin sold his company to the American Cyanamid Corporation in 1970, although its name and business model were retained.<sup>239</sup> In the first year after the sale of his company, Charles Ervin worked for American Cyanamid but soon left and went back into independent real estate development.<sup>240</sup> Although the Ervin Company continued to grow, their business model—predicated on new home sales—became difficult to sustain in the mid-1970s. The relationship between Charles Ervin and American Cyanamid further soured after the latter firm liquidated most of its assets, including the Ervin Company. Charles Ervin continued working in private real estate development for the rest of his career, but never again sought to establish a firm of the scale or ambition as his first one.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> "Eastway Park to Have 300 Lots," *The Charlotte News*, July 25, 1952.

<sup>237</sup> "Ervin Starts Big Project," *The Charlotte Observer*, February 10, 1959; "Ervin to Construct Eight-Story Building," *The Charlotte Observer*, April 28, 1963.

<sup>238</sup> "Ervin Plans Sidewalks in Future Subdivisions," *The Charlotte Observer*, November 13, 1960.

<sup>239</sup> "Ervin Co. Tightens Its Belt," *The Charlotte Observer*, November 11, 1973.

<sup>240</sup> "What's Ervin Doing? He's Far From Idle," *The Charlotte Observer*, January 30, 1971.

<sup>241</sup> "Charles C. Ervin Sr.," *The Charlotte Observer*, June 11, 2006.

Unlike other neighborhoods along Independence Boulevard, Eastway Park has undergone very few changes throughout its history. The neighborhood remains full of houses built by the Ervin Company that serve small families looking for moderately sized homes easily accessible to downtown Charlotte. Although many of the houses have undergone minor remodeling, very little demolition or infill is evident on its streets today. Furthermore, its boundaries remain unchanged with the exception of the Sheffield extension from the early 1960s. The major boulevards of Eastway Drive, Independence Boulevard, and Albemarle Road surrounding the neighborhood, as well as the Evergreen Nature Preserve, have preserved the limits and character of the neighborhood. What remains is a neighborhood very similar to what the Ervin Company envisioned: streets full of cohesive yet varied architecture lined with mature trees and manicured lawns.

### *Evaluation*

For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Eastway Park neighborhood is **eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places. Originally platted between 1952 and 1955, Eastway Park consists of one-story single-family Ranch houses and duplexes built by the Ervin Company in the 1950s. As the Ervin Company's flagship development in east Charlotte, Eastway Park survives as a comprehensively planned and architecturally cohesive neighborhood that typifies the suburban ideal promoted at the time. Eastway Park retains a high degree of integrity in its location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The Eastway Park neighborhood is **eligible** for the National Register under Criterion A (event). *To be eligible under Criterion A, a property must retain integrity and must be associated with a specific event marking an important moment in American pre-history or history or a pattern of events or historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community, a state, or the nation. Furthermore, a property must have existed at the time and be documented to be associated with the events. Finally, a property's specific association must be important as well.* Eastway Park is a large, self-contained residential suburb on the east side of Charlotte platted between 1952 and 1955 by the Ervin Company whose design is characteristic of the community planning and development that took place in Charlotte following World War II. Because the Ervin Company worked so closely within the VA and FHA guidelines, the neighborhoods they built—of which Eastway Park is an exceptionally intact example—are good examples of the impact that federal policies had on the business and design of suburban development in Charlotte. The FHA Underwriting Manual explicitly called for subdivisions whose design featured winding streets that limited outside access by not connecting to existing, dominant thoroughfares. The gently curving streets of Eastway Park skirt the south side of the Evergreen Cemetery and Evergreen Nature Preserve, and only three main entrances on the west, south, and east of the neighborhood provide access to its network of tree-lined streets. The result is a standardized, self-contained neighborhood with clearly delimited edges; picturesque, winding streets; and orderly yet varied architecture.

The Ervin Company laid out and built similar subdivisions throughout Charlotte including Westerly Hills, located on the southwest side of the city, opened in 1955 and was planned with

slightly fewer houses than Eastway Park. Other Ervin developments—generally smaller than Eastway Park and Westerly Hills—included Markham Village and Country Club Acres to the north along Eastway Drive, Montclair (MK2117) and Starmount south of the city, Rollingwood to the southwest, and Beechwood Acres to the west. Sharonwood Acres and Providence Park boasted larger houses than Ervin’s earlier developments. Oaklawn Park (MK3220) in the northwest section was sold exclusively to African American homebuyers. As the earliest and one of the largest Ervin Company subdivisions, Eastway Park became the company’s flagship property and model for future developments.

The Eastway Park neighborhood is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion B (person). *For a property to be eligible for significance under Criterion B, it must retain integrity and 1) be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, i.e. individuals whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, state or national historic context; 2) be normally associated with a person’s productive life, reflecting the time period when he/she achieved significance, and 3) should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person’s historic contributions. Furthermore, a property is not eligible if its only justification for significance is that it was owned or used by a person who is or was a member of an identifiable profession, class, or social or ethnic group.* Eastway Park is closely associated with Charles Ervin, whose Ervin Company was the premier development firm in Charlotte at mid-century and developed and built the neighborhood in the 1950s. The Ervin Company, however, was responsible for numerous residential and commercial projects on the east side of Charlotte and, as a result, the neighborhood does not sufficiently represent the significance or productive life of Charles Ervin to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion B.

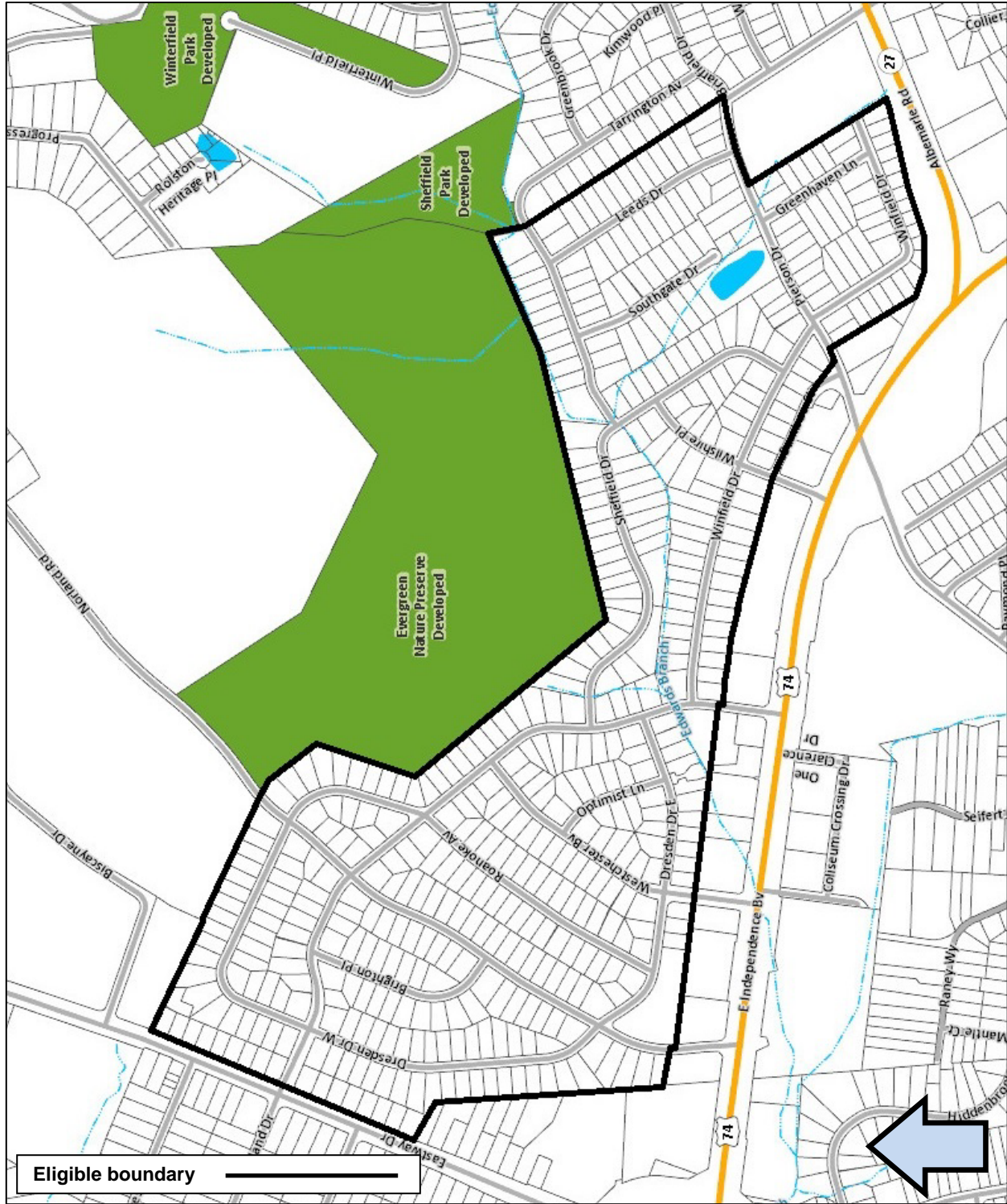
The Eastway Park neighborhood is **eligible** for the National Register under Criterion C (design/construction). *For a property to be eligible under this criterion, it must retain integrity and either 1) embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; 2) represent the work of a master; 3) possess high artistic value; or 4) represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.* Originally platted between 1952 and 1955 by the Ervin Company, Eastway Park is a quintessential mid-century American suburb of the type that became a specialty of the firm. At the time that Eastway Park was completed, the Ervin Company was transitioning from being a successful local firm to one of the largest development companies in the nation. Their efficient and yet customized construction was modeled in part on the assembly line construction pioneered by Levitt & Sons in New York. Beyond building blocks of houses at a time, the Ervin Company also established an approach to design where homeowners could choose all aspects of their house—from lot to style to furnishings—with the same company. The Ervin approach was a huge success, and the east side of Charlotte stands as testimony to the long-standing influence of Charles Ervin’s firm in the city. The consistent yet customized architecture built in Eastway Park neighborhood remains remarkably intact. Typical renovations of individual houses and duplexes do not impact the overall character and feeling of the neighborhood. No tear downs or oversized remodelings disrupt the historic character of the neighborhood, which make Eastway Park one of the most cohesive 1950s suburban neighborhoods built by the Ervin Company.

The Eastway Park neighborhood is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion D (potential to yield information). *For a property to be eligible under Criterion D, it must meet two*

*requirements: 1) the property must have, or have had, information to contribute to our understanding of human history or pre-history, and 2) the information must be considered important.* Developed and built out in the 1950s, Eastway Park is unlikely to contribute significant information pertaining to building technology or historical documentation not otherwise accessible from other extant resources and written records.

#### *Boundary Description and Justification*

The proposed boundary of Eastway Park follows the limits of the neighborhood as platted by the Ervin Company in the 1950s: Eastway Drive to the west, back property lines of lots on Dresden Drive and Winfield Drive to the south, Albemarle Road right-of-way to the east, and Evergreen Nature Preserve to the north. The neighborhood boundaries do not include the blocks of Tarrington Avenue and Pierson Drive that run southeast toward Albemarle Road, which were developed separately with the Sheffield subdivision in the early 1960s.



**Boundary Map – Eastway Park Neighborhood (Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)**



## Inventory No. 14

Resource Name	<b>Amity Gardens Neighborhood</b>
HPO Survey Site Number	MK4415
Location	Roughly bounded by Pierson Drive, Buena Vista Avenue, North Sharon Amity Road, and East Independence Boulevard
PIN	Multiple
Date(s) of Construction	1956-1962
Eligibility Recommendation	Not Eligible – A, B, C, D



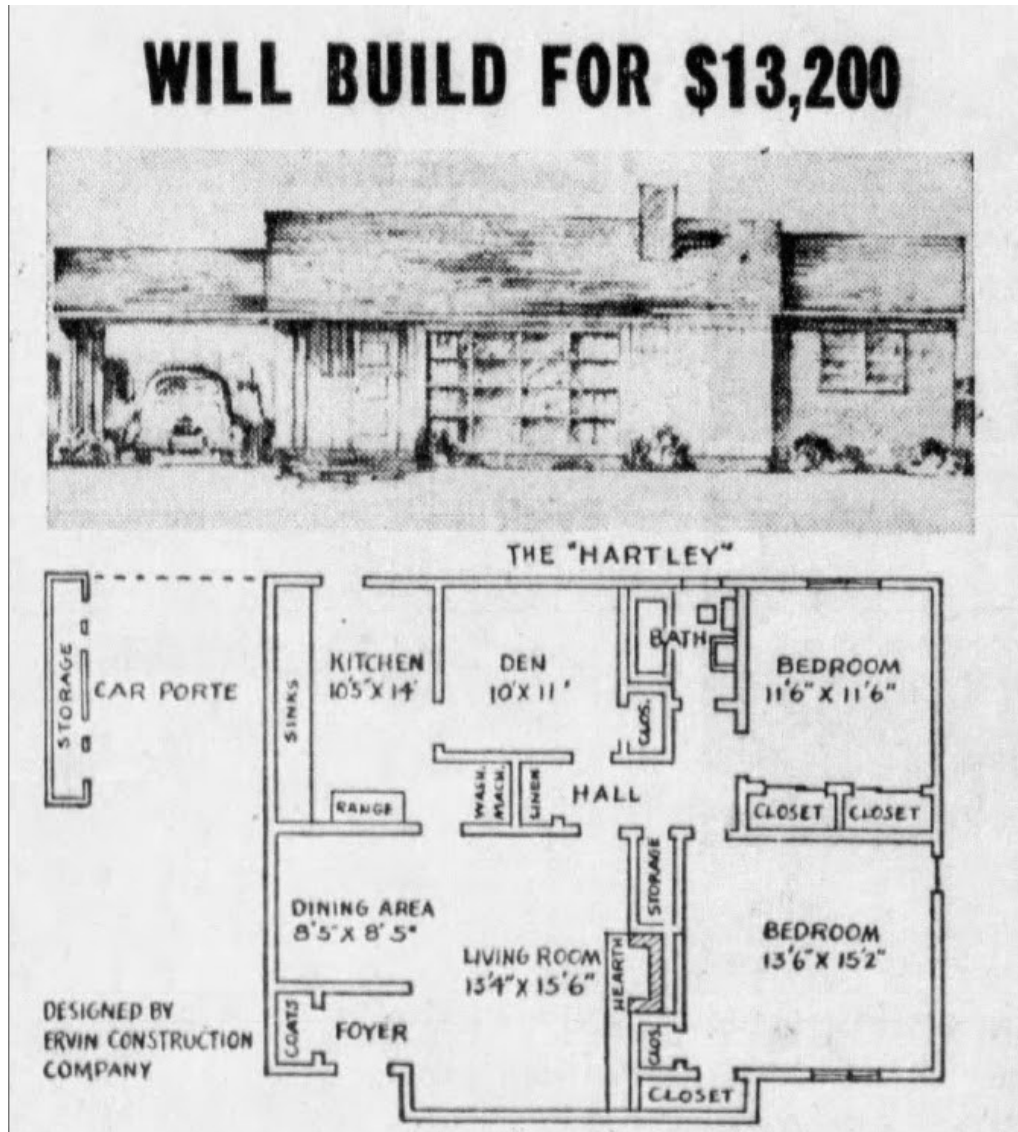
**Houses, 5100 block of Unaka Avenue, west side, view to south**

### *Description*

The Amity Gardens neighborhood is a compact residential suburb built by the Ervin Company that was subdivided in multiple stages between February and October of 1956. Generally bounded by Pierson Drive to the west, Sharon Amity Road to the east, and Independence Boulevard to the north, the neighborhood abuts earlier development along Lanier Road to its south. An unnamed creek runs along the rear of the lots on Kistler Avenue and separates the northern section of Eaton Road from its southern stretch. The creek originally served as a geographic boundary for the southern edge of the neighborhood. The houses in Amity Gardens are primarily one-story side-gable Ranch houses that exhibit a variety of exterior materials, although brick veneer is predominant. The neighborhood and its network of curving streets has been minimally altered

from its initial construction, and the houses within the neighborhood reflect a typical range of alterations that include synthetic siding, replacement doors and windows, and enclosed carports.

Classified advertisements for Ervin Company homes published in the early 1950s were designed to exhibit the simplicity of purchasing a house from the company. As such, they focused on the all-inclusive nature of the purchase: “price includes the house and any 75’ x 150’ lot the purchaser desires.”<sup>242</sup> House models such as the “Hartley” were designed for a small family to live comfortably in the suburbs, as it assumed that all owners would own a vehicle or two. A covered carport and rough storage area was included in the design along with hardwood floors, plastered walls, a tile bath, gas heating system, and landscaping.



The “Hartley,” Ervin Company advertisement (*The Charlotte News*, July 26, 1952)

<sup>242</sup> “Will Build for \$13,200,” advertisement, *The Charlotte News*, July 26, 1952.

Homes similar to the Hartley are common in Amity Gardens, as are variations on the type. The house at **4929 Unaka Avenue**, built in 1957, is a side-gable brick Ranch house with a narrow engaged carport, interior brick chimney, and original two-over-two double-hung windows with horizontal muntins. An attached aluminum awning shelters a single-leaf entry door and brick stoop. The house at **4920 Unaka Avenue**, built in 1958, is another common type in the neighborhood. The hip-roof brick Ranch house has a narrow engaged carport to one side, an interior brick chimney, and a gabled entry canopy over the single-leaf front door and brick stoop.



**Houses, 4929 Unaka Avenue (l) and 4920 Unaka Avenue (r)**

Modern alterations and material changes to the Ranch houses in Amity Gardens are common, although they rarely interfere with the overall massing of the buildings. The enclosure of carports, such as the one found at **5001 Unaka Avenue**, is widespread and adds valuable square footage to the modest floor plans. Built in 1957, this side-gable brick Ranch house has an interior brick chimney, replacement one-over-one windows, and an attached aluminum awning over a single-leaf entry door and brick stoop. Other typical renovations found throughout the neighborhood include additions to the façade that alter the historicism of the house but do little to change its overall form. The house at **5021 Unaka Avenue**, built in 1956, is a one-story side-gable brick Ranch house with an added front-gable porch covered in staggered cedar shakes and carried on Craftsman-influenced piers. The picture window overlooking the porch is an enlarged replacement.



**Houses, 5001 Unaka Avenue (l) and 5021 Unaka Avenue (r)**

Although single-family Ranch houses predominate in Amity Gardens, several variations on the form were built as the neighborhood developed. A small number of split-level houses were built on the north side of Kistler Avenue between Eaton Road and Dudley Drive. The ca. 1956 side-gable split-level house at **5127 Kistler Avenue** has a front-facing cross-gable over the two-story block, replacement one-over-one windows, and a replacement picture window flanked by one-over-one sidelights. In the early 1960s, several multi-family units were built on the east side of Gwynne Avenue, on lots that backed onto North Sharon Amity Road. The structure at **5451 Gwynne Avenue** is a hip-roof triplex built in 1962. Clad in brick veneer, the one-story building is split into two main blocks—one containing two units and the other containing one—that step with the incline of the street. The residence has replacement one-over-one windows, and all three entrances are approached by brick stoops and steps with metal railings. The placement of multi-family units on lots that abutted busy thoroughfares was also a strategy used in Eastway Park (see #13), a slightly earlier Ervin Company development.



**Houses, 5127 Kistler Avenue (Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G) (l) and 5451 Gwynne Avenue (r)**

The Amity Gardens neighborhood remains mostly intact, despite some infill construction. Typical renovations of individual houses and multi-family dwellings do not impact the overall character and feeling of the neighborhood. Material changes to the structures include the replacement of original windows with vinyl sash; installation of vinyl siding on the gable ends and soffits; and the construction of additions, typically at the rear of the houses. Much of the original historic fabric of Amity Gardens remains in place, but the slow erosion of the edges has diminished the overall integrity of the neighborhood.

### *Historical Background*

Amity Gardens was the second subdivision, following Eastway Park in 1952, that the Ervin Company developed along the Independence Boulevard corridor. The neighborhood was platted on the south side of Independence Boulevard at its intersection with Albemarle Road. Planning for the subdivision began at a time when the firm founded by Charles Ervin was quickly rising in prominence and expanding its work in the city, thanks in large part to post-war policies that

specifically promoted middle-class suburban neighborhoods filled with detached housing units owned by a homogeneous population.



**Amity Gardens subdivision, detail of “Map of Greater Charlotte, North Carolina, 1955”**  
(<http://maps.co.mecklenburg.nc.us/historicmaps/>)

Construction of Amity Gardens took place just as the Ervin Company was becoming a regional empire. Charles Ervin began his career as a bricklayer in the Navy and, after his service in World War II, returned to Charlotte and built a home for himself and his wife with his brother, E. L. Ervin, a carpenter. When an eager veteran offered them top dollar for the house, the Ervin brothers saw the financial potential of selling homes to men just home from the war and launched a homebuilding company. Their construction experience helped them to stand apart from Charlotte’s other contemporary developers, none of whom had direct experience in construction.<sup>243</sup> Although they began by building individual houses, the Ervins quickly saw the potential to scale up their business by taking advantage of the city’s encouragement of post-war development.<sup>244</sup> The company streamlined construction, building blocks of houses at a time following the model of an assembly line. Specialized crews worked sequentially on each lot: first the lot would be cleared, making way for a foundation crew, which was followed by a framing

<sup>243</sup> “Ervin Brothers Began By Helping Each Other,” *The Charlotte News*, July 26, 1952; Hanchett, 233-234.

<sup>244</sup> “Council Acts to Encourage Home Building,” *The Charlotte Observer*, November 14, 1945.

crew, a masonry crew, a plastering crew, a trim crew, and finally the landscaping and painting crews.<sup>245</sup> By 1959 the Ervin Company was the South's largest builder of custom-built homes, and by 1963 it was lauded as one of the largest in the nation.<sup>246</sup>



**Aerial view of Amity Gardens, February 10, 1962 (NCDOT Historic Aerial Imagery Index)**

The first announcement for Amity Gardens appeared in February 1956, when the subdivision's graded streets opened to the public. The 63 acre-property acquired by Ervin was divided into 140 lots, varying in size from 60 by 150 feet to 160 by 160 feet. The streets opened to the public in February. The Ervin Company announced that residential development would consist of brick veneer homes "of various designs from conventional to contemporary." While Amity Gardens was under construction, the firm was also completing the development of Eastway Park, Markham Village, Country Club Acres, Beechwood Acres, Westerly Hills, and Oaklawn Park.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> "Ervin Construction Co. Has Specialized System," *The Charlotte News*, July 25, 1952; "Construction Co. Can Look Back on Busiest May," *The Charlotte News*, June 14, 1952.

<sup>246</sup> "Ervin Construction Purchases 115 Acres," *The Gastonia Gazette*, September 3, 1959; "Ervin to Construct Eight-Story Building," *The Charlotte Observer*, April 28, 1963.

<sup>247</sup> "63-Acre Subdivision Divided Into 140 Lots," *The Charlotte News*, February 18, 1956.

Amity Gardens received its name from a development called Amity Gardens Acres, parts of which were originally subdivided by the Sterling Land Company in April and May of 1936 (PB 4:105, 107, 109). The western portion of Amity Gardens Acres still remains just west of the current Amity Gardens; the streets in that section include Raney Way, Seifert Circle, and the southern stretch of Pierson Drive. The Ervin Company, however, purchased the eastern portion of the original development and re-platted the area in its entirety (PB 4:105). A portion of the newly acquired acreage became the lot on which Amity Gardens Shopping Center (present-day Walmart) stood and the rest was subdivided, along with separately acquired land, into residential lots under the shortened name of Amity Gardens.

The Ervin Company subdivided its Amity Gardens in seven different plats, all filed in 1956. The first plats, produced between February and July of 1956, laid out the majority of Amity Gardens, which consisted of Unaka Avenue, Cutler Place, Kistler Avenue, Eaton Road, Dudley Drive, Buena Vista Avenue, Lanier Avenue between Independence Boulevard and Buena Vista Avenue, and Gwynne Avenue (PB 7:627, 693, 717, 755, 757).<sup>248</sup> As originally platted, Unaka Avenue, Cutler Place, and Kistler Road all terminated in cul-de-sacs on their western edges (PB 7:693). Months after those plats were filed, plans changed and the three streets were extended to connect with Pierson Drive, which served as the western boundary of the neighborhood and bordered the future Amity Gardens Shopping Center (PB 7:809; 8:31). Today there is no visual evidence of the original ending of those three streets, although parcel lines still contain the outlines of the original cul-de-sacs.



**Entrance to Amity Gardens neighborhood, Monroe Road at Lanier Avenue**

<sup>248</sup> Gwynne Avenue was named Grove Avenue on the original plat (DB 7:757).

The formal opening of Amity Gardens was held on March 18, 1956. The property initially consisted of “heavily wooded” lots that were accessible from Sharon Amity Road at Buena Vista and on Lanier Avenue, which was accessible from both Independence Boulevard and Monroe Road. The opening ceremony occurred while roads were still being graded and water and sewer lines installed, but a model home site was chosen and planned to be open for tours by the summer. Homes and lots sold for between \$11,500 and \$15,000 and were selling even prior to the formal opening. Home plans were selected from Ervin’s catalog or supplied by the purchasers, who had their choice of lots.<sup>249</sup>

By Christmas of 1956, enough homes were completed in Amity Gardens that the neighborhood entered into a friendly competition, sponsored by the Ervin Company, to out-decorate the homes in the neighboring Eastway Park, also an Ervin neighborhood. Homeowners in the two large subdivisions decorated their houses extravagantly, following a model set by the Ervin Company at its sales office on Independence Boulevard, which boasted a rooftop helicopter being flown by Santa Claus and a 20-foot tree in the front yard. Three businessmen served as judges and delivered three grand prizes.<sup>250</sup>



**Amity Gardens Shopping Center, 1970s** (“Charlotte, New City of the 70’s,” 42)

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<sup>249</sup> “Ervin Opens Subdivision Tomorrow,” *The Charlotte Observer*, March 17, 1956.

<sup>250</sup> “Eastway Park, Amity Gardens Engage in Decorating Contest,” *The Charlotte Observer*, December 22, 1956.



The Ervin Company did not limit itself to home construction. As the firm built subdivisions, frequently adjacent to one another, Ervin began to also construct shopping centers to serve homeowners moving into their neighborhoods, and likewise make the neighborhoods more appealing to potential investors. Amity Gardens was located directly across Pierson Drive from the sprawling Amity Gardens Shopping Center, which was already being advertised when Amity Gardens was platted. Work began on the Amity Gardens Shopping Center in early 1959, with construction on a Winn-Dixie store and a Woolworths, and several smaller commercial spaces. Completed in the summer of 1959, the shopping center was surrounded by Ervin neighborhoods on all sides.<sup>251</sup>

Following the initial development of Amity Gardens on the south side of Independence Boulevard, the Ervin Company continued to plat and build other neighborhoods under the name of Amity Gardens. In 1957 and 1958, the firm platted neighborhoods on the north side of Independence Boulevard, flanking North Sharon Amity Road, under the names Amity Gardens #5, Amity Gardens #6, Amity Gardens #7, and Amity Gardens #8. None of those neighborhoods retain the name Amity Gardens today and are instead referred to as North Sharon Amity and Coventry Woods. Yet the approach to developing Amity Gardens as an incremental creep along Independence Boulevard is indicative of a different approach taken in its development. Unlike the discrete planning that took place with Eastway Park, the planning of Amity Gardens was a continuous and less pre-determined endeavor on the part of the Ervin Company. The end result is a neighborhood with less defined edges and entry points than in the earlier Ervin neighborhood, which provides an instructive counterpoint. Nothing separates Amity Gardens from the earlier development along Monroe Avenue to its south, for example; the architecture on Lanier Avenue simply shifts in time from the 1920s to the 1950s. Nonetheless, Amity Gardens today remains relatively intact, with only a few examples of infill. What remains is a neighborhood very similar to what the Ervin Company envisioned: streets full of cohesive yet varied architecture lined with mature trees and manicured lawns.

### *Evaluation*

For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Amity Gardens neighborhood is **not eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places. Amity Gardens refers to a compact residential neighborhood on the south side of Independence Boulevard developed in the 1950s by the Ervin Company. The neighborhood contains a relatively undistinguished collection of modest brick veneer dwellings that are typical of 1950s suburban residential development in Charlotte. Amity Gardens generally retains integrity location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It has experienced some loss of integrity due to alterations and material changes to individual residences and from the accretion and erosion of its edges due to later development. The loss of the adjacent Amity Gardens Shopping Center and improvements Pierson Drive and Independence Boulevard, in particular, have diminished the historic integrity of the Amity Gardens neighborhood over time.

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<sup>251</sup> “Ervin Starts Big Project,” *The Charlotte Observer*, February 10, 1959; “Ervin to Construct Eight-Story Building,” *The Charlotte Observer*, April 28, 1963.

The Amity Gardens Neighborhood is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion A (event). *To be eligible under Criterion A, a property must retain integrity and must be associated with a specific event marking an important moment in American pre-history or history or a pattern of events or historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community, a state, or the nation. Furthermore, a property must have existed at the time and be documented to be associated with the events. Finally, a property's specific association must be important as well.* Amity Gardens is a compact residential subdivision on the east side of Charlotte platted in 1956 by the Ervin Company. Although Amity Gardens is characteristic of the community planning and development that took place in Charlotte following World War II, it was developed not as a discrete neighborhood, such as the Ervin Company's Eastway Park (#13), but as an incremental series of platted sections and additions. Due to its lack of defined edges, the neighborhood does not adequately represent the standardized types of subdivisions that were typical of suburban development patterns in the post-war period. As such, it does not appear to possess sufficient significance to be eligible under Criterion A.

The Amity Gardens Neighborhood is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion B (person). *For a property to be eligible for significance under Criterion B, it must retain integrity and 1) be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, i.e. individuals whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, state or national historic context; 2) be normally associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he/she achieved significance, and 3) should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person's historic contributions. Furthermore, a property is not eligible if its only justification for significance is that it was owned or used by a person who is or was a member of an identifiable profession, class, or social or ethnic group.* Amity Gardens is one of a number of residential subdivisions closely associated with Charles Ervin, whose Ervin Company was the premier development firm in Charlotte at mid-century and developed and built the neighborhood in the 1950s. The Ervin Company, however, was responsible for numerous residential and commercial projects on the east side of Charlotte and, as a result, Amity Gardens does not sufficiently represent the significance or productive life of Charles Ervin to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion B.

The Amity Gardens Neighborhood is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion C (design/construction). *For a property to be eligible under this criterion, it must retain integrity and either 1) embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; 2) represent the work of a master; 3) possess high artistic value; or 4) represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.* The architecture of the Amity Gardens neighborhood is typical of Ervin Company developments in the 1950s and 1960s. The one-story brick Ranch houses throughout the development tend to have similar form and massing but were available from the builders with a wide range of exterior customizations. Amity Gardens also includes examples of split-level and multi-family residences. While the architecture of Amity Gardens is relatively homogenous, the community planning is less coherent here than it is in other Ervin subdivisions. The curving streets and numerous dead-end roads in Amity Gardens are characteristic of the type of suburban planning that was encouraged by the VA and FHA Underwriting Manual, the neighborhood was planned incrementally to include small subdivisions on the other side of Independence Boulevard (see #16). Thus, this section of Amity Gardens lacks

the discrete boundaries that other suburbs in Charlotte have, making it a less illustrative example of the suburban typology.

The Amity Gardens Neighborhood is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion D (potential to yield information). *For a property to be eligible under Criterion D, it must meet two requirements: 1) the property must have, or have had, information to contribute to our understanding of human history or pre-history, and 2) the information must be considered important.* Developed in the 1950s and largely built out by the 1960s, Amity Gardens is unlikely to contribute significant information pertaining to building technology or historical documentation not otherwise accessible from other extant resources and written records.

## Inventory No. 15

Resource Name	<b>Albemarle Center</b>
HPO Survey Site Number	MK4416
Location	4822 Albemarle Road
PIN	13301145
Date(s) of Construction	1969
Eligibility Recommendation	Not Eligible – A, B, C, D



**Albemarle Center, 4822 Albemarle Road, view to southwest across Albemarle Road**

### *Description*

The two-story, U-shaped Albemarle Center (today known as Albemarle Business Park) overlooks Albemarle Road to the north, just east of the interchange with East Independence Boulevard. A greenway buffers a paved parking area along the building's north side from the busy Albemarle Road, while a second stretch of grass lawn fills the courtyard within the U-shape of the building's footprint. The wide entrance walkway runs perpendicular between the parking lot and the entrance. A planting bed containing an evergreen tree, several bushes, and a flagpole is located on the east side of the walkway. Remaining plantings are limited to evergreen bushes against the building façade along the outer edge of the courtyard lawn. The building is surrounded on all sides by a concrete sidewalk and parking lot beyond.

The centerpiece of the office building is its two-story entrance, which stands out both for its outsized scale and for its material contrast from the rest of the building's elevations. A full-height concrete arch outlines the glazed entryway, whose bronzed plate glass is subdivided by a bronze metal frame that is barely visible amid the panels of similarly toned glass. A pair of metal-frame glass doors open on the right edge of the entryway. Visible through the glass is an interior lobby that features a curving stair and metal railing that rises to an open mezzanine overlooking the entrance foyer below.



**Albemarle Center, oblique front view to southwest**



**Albemarle Center, façade, oblique view to east**



**Albemarle Center, entrance, view to south**



**Albemarle Center, oblique rear view to northeast**

Aside from the stand-out main entrance, all sides of the building are designed with strict uniformity. A mansard cap of brown standing-seam metal runs the entire roofline of the flat-roofed building. Each elevation of the office building consists of vertical panels of brick veneer that frame narrow full-height bands of bronzed windows. Each brick panel steps out at the edges, creating a frame for the window panels and adding dimension to the simple elevations. Each of the window bands is identical in structure, featuring a tall two-pane window on both the first and second floors and a band of metal flashing between the two stories. Like the windows of the entryway, these windows are bronzed and blend in with the bronze metal that frames them. All of the window bands are equally sized, except for the single bands on the north end of each wing of the building, which are approximately twice as wide as the rest.

The east and west elevations are identical to one another. Each is pierced by eight regularly spaced window bands and a central entryway. Two metal-framed glass doors open in the side entrance. The doors are framed by a pair of narrow sidelights and topped by four plate-glass windows, making the entire entryway glazed. The bricks surrounding the entrance bays step out exactly as they do around the window bands. Entrances on the rear elevation are more utilitarian. On the western end of the south elevation a single pair of metal doors is accessed by a concrete stairway and raised concrete loading dock. Metal railings line the staircase and the loading dock. A second single-leaf entrance that appears to serve as a custodial entrance opens in the center of the rear elevation. A perforated brick wall projects out from the building and blocks the view of the rear entrance.

Comparison of the structure today with its original design reveals the value placed on Modernist simplicity by the architects and the clients. The original design for Albemarle Center was thoroughly described in *The Charlotte News* a year before construction began: “The building will be contemporary in design.... It will have a 30-foot arched entrance and wings of the edifice will form an open courtyard for a small plaza with garden-type landscaping.”<sup>252</sup> The description was paired with a rendering from the architects, Ferebee, Walters and Associates, which reveals that minor alterations were made between design and construction. The changes were primarily made to the entrance arch, which in the façade rendering reveals a trio of glazed arches fronted by a flagstone walkway with a fountain in the center. The faint impression of a chandelier appears visible through the front windows. As built, the design became both more minimal and more Modernist in execution. A single archway with plate glass windows and bronze metal frames replaced the trio of arches whose glazed surfaces were subdivided extensively. The historicist fountain and chandelier were also removed from the design. Whether for cost-savings or aesthetics, the result was a distinctly more streamlined design.

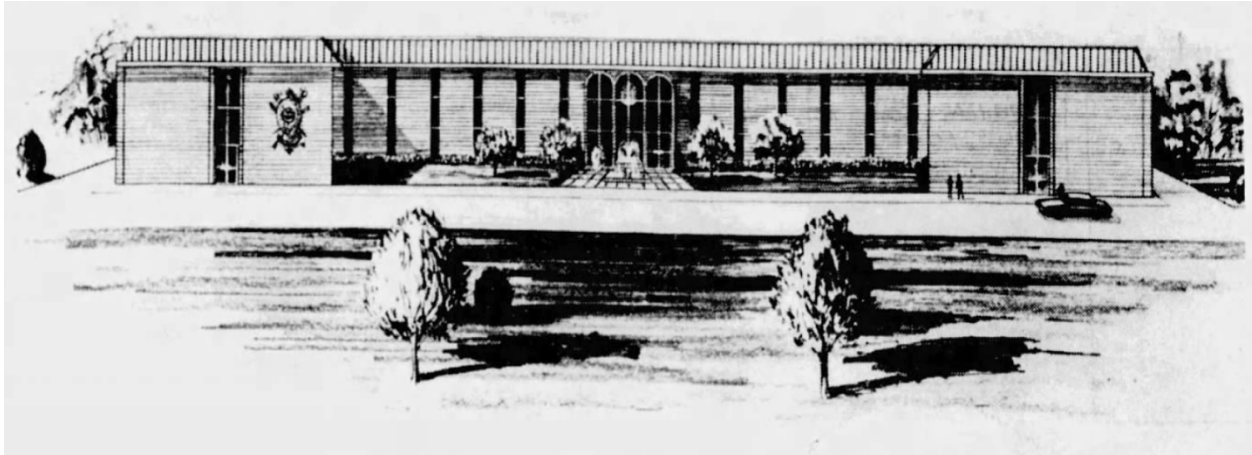
Very little has changed on the exterior of the building since its completion. Consultation with aerial photographs of the site taken during the 1970s and 1980s reveals that the landscaping in the courtyard and around the perimeter has also been minimally altered over the years.<sup>253</sup> Significant

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<sup>252</sup> Emery Wister, “\$1.25 Million Office Building Is Planned,” *The Charlotte News*, December 4, 1968.

<sup>253</sup> Relevant aerial photographs were taken on March 21, 1979, and February 28, 1986, NCDOT Historic Aerial Imagery Index, accessed May 2020, <https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=91e02b76dce4470ebd7ec240ad202a04>.

changes were made to the interior floor plan (and presumably the decor) in 2016, when the building was renovated in order to provide individual office suites.<sup>254</sup>



**Architect's Drawing of New Ervin Building** (*The Charlotte News*, December 4, 1968)

### *Historical Background*

Albemarle Center was the second office building designed by Ferebee, Walters and Associates to house Charles Ervin's rapidly expanding development company. Ferebee designed the company's first offices just five years earlier a half-mile away on East Independence Boulevard. The Ervin Building (see #12) was a seven-story Modernist tower that became a visual landmark on the east side of Charlotte.<sup>255</sup>

Construction of the two office buildings followed the steady growth of the Ervin Company from a family-run construction company to a regional empire. Charles Ervin began his career as a bricklayer in the Navy, but returned to Charlotte to manage grocery stores and build a home for himself and his wife with his brother, E. L. Ervin, a carpenter.<sup>256</sup> When an eager veteran offered them top dollar for the house, the Ervin brothers saw the financial potential of selling homes to men in their situation and launched a homebuilding company. Their construction experience helped them to stand apart from Charlotte's other contemporary developers, none of whom had direct experience in construction.<sup>257</sup>

Although they began by building individual houses, the Ervin brothers quickly saw the potential to scale up their business by taking advantage of the city's encouragement of post-war

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<sup>254</sup> "Albemarle Business Park," Commercial Real Estate Exchange, Inc., accessed November 2019, <https://www.crexi.com/properties/218432/north-carolina-albemarle-business-park>.

<sup>255</sup> The Ervin Company's first building was place on the Study List in 2019. Richard Sidebottom, "Ervin Building Study List Application," North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, NC, 2019.

<sup>256</sup> "Ervin Brother Began By Helping Each Other," *The Charlotte News*, July 26, 1952.

<sup>257</sup> Hanchett, 233-234; Sidebottom, "Ervin Building."



development.<sup>258</sup> The company streamlined construction, building blocks of houses at a time following the model of an assembly line. Specialized crews worked sequentially on each lot: first the lot would be cleared, making way for a foundation crew, which was followed by a framing crew, a masonry crew, a plastering crew, a trim crew, and finally the landscaping and painting crews.<sup>259</sup> The Ervin Company even established a finance department to help buyers access loans and loan insurance through the Veterans Affairs (VA) and Federal Housing Administration (FHA). By 1959 the Ervin Company was the South's largest builder of custom-built homes, and by 1963 it was lauded as one of the largest in the nation.<sup>260</sup>

The Ervin Company did not limit itself to home construction. As the company built subdivisions, frequently adjacent to one another, they began to also construct shopping centers that could serve the population moving into their neighborhoods, and likewise make the neighborhoods more appealing to potential investors. By 1963, the company had built three large shopping centers in Charlotte suburbs, including one in Amity Gardens (see #14) that was immediately across the street from their future office tower.<sup>261</sup> In 1968, the company expanded to open Hallmark Galleries, a home-furnishing store at 6500 East Independence Boulevard that was conceived as a one-stop interior decoration shop for prospective homebuyers. Floor coverings, paint colors, drapes, furniture, appliances, fixtures were all offered in store. In opening the store, the firm again modeled itself after Levitt & Sons, and became the first construction firm in the southeast to do so.<sup>262</sup>

By the late 1960s, the Albemarle Road corridor emerged as the next area of east Charlotte to undergo commercial development due, in part, to over-saturation of development along Independence Boulevard. Originally laid out to link Charlotte with the courthouse at Albemarle, county seat of Stanly County, the thoroughfare began its transformation from a rural two-lane road to a four-lane commercial and residential corridor in 1969 when the Ervin Company broke ground on Albemarle Center. Immediately following the construction of the office building, plans for four apartment complexes, five additional office parks, and two shopping centers came under development along Albemarle Road. Pre-existing subdivisions of single-family homes such as Amity Gardens, Eastway Park (see #13), and Sheffield made Albemarle Road a prime spot for continued commercial development and an ideal location for Ervin's expanded office space. As one real estate broker said in 1971, "[On Albemarle Road] you're in the middle of more middle-income families than you are anywhere in Charlotte."<sup>263</sup> In developing residential neighborhoods

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<sup>258</sup> "Council Acts to Encourage Home Building," *The Charlotte Observer*, November 14, 1945.

<sup>259</sup> "Ervin Construction Co. Has Specialized System," *The Charlotte News*, July 25, 1952; "Construction Co. Can Look Back on Busiest May," *The Charlotte News*, June 14, 1952.

<sup>260</sup> "Ervin Construction Purchases 115 Acres," *The Gastonia Gazette*, September 3, 1959; "Ervin to Construct Eight-Story Building," *The Charlotte Observer*, April 28, 1963.

<sup>261</sup> "Ervin Starts Big Project," *The Charlotte Observer*, February 10, 1959; "Ervin to Construct Eight-Story Building," *The Charlotte Observer*, April 28, 1963.

<sup>262</sup> "Ervin Offers One-Stop Furnishings," *The Charlotte Observer*, July 21, 1968.

<sup>263</sup> Allan Sloan, "Albemarle Road Gets Set for Take-Off," *The Charlotte Observer*, December 19, 1971.

along the corridor during the 1950s, the Ervin Company created a ready market for their commercial ventures in the decades to come.



**Site Plan – Albemarle Center, 4822 Albemarle Road (Source: Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)**

According to Calvin J. Harris, executive vice president, the Ervin Company's new building on Albemarle Road became necessary after the company acquired seven new companies and added significant numbers of Charlotte-based personnel in 1968. Early reports claimed the 55,000-square-foot building would cost \$1,250,000 and would house several key departments of the Ervin Company including new computer and communications centers. Approximately twenty percent of the facility was available for lease by other tenants and a small restaurant had an outdoor terrace. Harris said that the firm's original plan had been to erect a seven-story structure similar to their first building, but the size of the lot allowed them to get more space with a lower profile

building.<sup>264</sup> It would appear that their initial cost estimate was high, as the Ervin Industries office on Albemarle Road was listed as having obtained a \$680,000 building permit in 1969.<sup>265</sup>

The Ervin Construction Company initially purchased land on Albemarle Road in 1958, well before plans for their new office building had begun to take shape. Between September and November of 1958 they acquired several plots from S. B. and Margaret Allen (DB 2008:142). The lots made up portions of the land purchased by the Allens from George W. and Pearl Wallace McManus in 1944 (DB 1125:403); the McManuses had acquired the property from the Sterling Land Company in 1936 (DB 886:226). The Ervin Company sold the easternmost of those lots, abutting Pierson Drive, in 1965, but retained the lot on which their building would soon be built.

The Ervin Company again hired the architecture firm of Ferebee, Walters and Associates—who designed the Ervin Building on East Independence Boulevard—to design their second office building. The firm was founded by Stephen Scott Ferebee, Jr. (1921-2016), who was born in Detroit and moved with his family to North Carolina in 1925. Following his service in World War II, Ferebee graduated from North Carolina State University in 1948 with a degree in architectural engineering. Ferebee’s architectural career in Charlotte began with A. G. Odell, Jr. (see #6)—one of Charlotte’s most distinguished Modernist architects—in 1951. Ferebee partnered with John C. Higgins in 1953, and along with Herschel Walters founded Ferebee, Walters and Associates in 1958. The collaboration with the Ervin Company was clearly a success, as the development firm went on to hire Ferebee, Walters and Associates to build another office tower, this one a speculative venture called Independence Tower (see #17), on East Independence Boulevard in 1972.

Buildings such as the offices the firm designed for the Ervin Company were typical of Ferebee, Walters and Associates’ portfolio, which included many fine examples of corporate Modernism. The variation between the buildings is also instructive, however. Although the original plan for the Ervin Company’s second building was to essentially duplicate the office tower built on Independence Boulevard, Ferebee instead lowered the profile and aimed for a more subdued and suburban-scale building that blended in with the commercial development that the Ervin Company had planned for its expansion along Albemarle Road.<sup>266</sup>

Albemarle Center was the first of many ventures that the Ervin Company launched during the 1960s and 1970s along the Albemarle Road corridor, which *The Charlotte Observer* called, “one of the hottest real estate markets in Charlotte,” in 1971.<sup>267</sup> These ventures expanded beyond residential subdivisions and shopping centers to include not only office buildings but also apartment complexes. One such venture was The Lake Dwellers apartment complex on the north side of Albemarle Road, one block past Sharon Amity, advertised as apartment living for child-free

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<sup>264</sup> Emery Wister, “\$1.25 Million Office Building Is Planned,” *The Charlotte News*, December 4, 1968.

<sup>265</sup> “Building Permits,” *The Charlotte Observer*, August 16, 1969.

<sup>266</sup> Emery Wister, “\$1.25 Million Office Building Is Planned,” *The Charlotte News*, December 4, 1968.

<sup>267</sup> Allan Sloan, “Albemarle Road Gets Set for Take-Off,” *The Charlotte Observer*, December 19, 1971.

couples: “Firelight and shag, roses and wine.”<sup>268</sup> Other real estate firms also took advantage of the development opportunities on Albemarle Road: Gibson Smith Realty built Albemarle Plaza, a seven-building office complex also designed in a Modernist idiom in 1970. Redman Industries (from Dallas) began construction on The Glen, a 224-unit apartment complex in 1971. That same year ABG Industries (from Durham) began the 382-unit Barcelona Apartments. Koger Properties (from Jacksonville) planned a mixed-use development on the 139-acre Grier property.<sup>269</sup>

Seemingly at the height of its growth, the Ervin Company sold to the American Cyanamid Corporation in 1970, but its name and business model were retained.<sup>270</sup> American Cyanamid continued expanding the Ervin Company into the Southeast’s largest developer but faced a slowing of growth starting in 1973. Lower home sales and a tight money market in the 1970s made the company’s business model—predicated on new home sales—difficult to sustain.<sup>271</sup> American Cyanamid sold the Ervin Company to the Caine Company of Greenville, South Carolina, in August 1975. The sale included Executive Plaza on Interstate 77 south of the city, Amity Gardens Shopping Center, the Ervin Building on East Independence Boulevard, and Park 77 office building.<sup>272</sup>

Albemarle Center presumably changed hands when the Ervin Company was purchased by American Cyanamid Corporation in 1970, and again by the South Carolina-based Caine Company in 1975.<sup>273</sup> The next sale on record took place in 1992 when a general partnership under the name Albemarle Center Associates purchased the property (DB 1681:623; 6974:815). The property again changed hands in 2016, and is now managed as Albemarle Business Park, LLC (DB 6974:815).

### *Evaluation*

For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, Albemarle Center is **not eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places. Albemarle Center is a fairly typical example of a mid-rise Modernist office building designed by the Charlotte architectural firm Ferebee, Walters and Associates to be the Ervin Company’s second corporate office on the east side of Charlotte. The building generally retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association on the exterior, but the interior of the building has been regularly altered and updated since it was first built.

Albemarle Center is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion A (event). *To be eligible under Criterion A, a property must retain integrity and must be associated with a specific*

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<sup>268</sup> “The Lake Dwellers,” advertisement, *The Charlotte Observer*, June 3, 1971.

<sup>269</sup> Allan Sloan, “Albemarle Road Gets Set for Take-Off,” *The Charlotte Observer*, December 19, 1971.

<sup>270</sup> “Ervin Co. Tightens Its Belt,” *The Charlotte Observer*, November 11, 1973.

<sup>271</sup> “Ervin Wins Top Awards,” *The Charlotte News*, July 17, 1972; “Ervin Co. Tightens Its Belt,” *The Charlotte Observer*, November 11, 1973.

<sup>272</sup> “S.C. Firm Buys Ervin Commercial Division,” *The Charlotte News*, August 2, 1975.

<sup>273</sup> No deeds have been found for the period between the sale of the property Ervin Construction Company in 1958 and the sale to Albemarle Center Associates in 1992.

*event marking an important moment in American pre-history or history or a pattern of events or historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community, a state, or the nation. Furthermore, a property must have existed at the time and be documented to be associated with the events. Finally, a property's specific association must be important as well.* Albemarle Center is the second purpose-built office building for the Ervin Company, one of Charlotte's premier mid-century development firms. Its prominent placement on Albemarle Road, the next major commercial strip on the east side of Charlotte following East Independence Boulevard, indicated the firm's intention to pursue further development in that area of town. Beyond the office park's association with this widespread suburban development, however, the building is not associated in a meaningful way with more specific historic events or trends to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion A.

Albemarle Center is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion B (person). *For a property to be eligible for significance under Criterion B, it must retain integrity and 1) be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, i.e. individuals whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, state or national historic context; 2) be normally associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he/she achieved significance, and 3) should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person's historic contributions. Furthermore, a property is not eligible if its only justification for significance is that it was owned or used by a person who is or was a member of an identifiable profession, class, or social or ethnic group.* Albemarle Center is one of several office buildings closely associated with Charles Ervin, whose Ervin Company was the premier development firm in Charlotte at mid-century and built the office complex in the late 1960s. The Ervin Company, however, was responsible for numerous residential and commercial projects on the east side of Charlotte and, as a result, Albemarle Center does not sufficiently represent the significance or productive life of Charles Ervin to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion B.

Albemarle Center is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion C (design/construction). *For a property to be eligible under this criterion, it must retain integrity and either 1) embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; 2) represent the work of a master; 3) possess high artistic value; or 4) represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.* Albemarle Center was the second office building designed by Ferebee, Walters and Associates to house Charles Ervin's rapidly expanding development company. The office was originally conceived to be another tower such as the Ervin Building, but the architects opted for low, broad massing that would blend in with the commercial development along the burgeoning Albemarle Road corridor. The building is a variation on the common mid-rise Modernist office building form similar to the Charlotte Merchandise Mart (#5) and Allied Security Building (#10), which are characterized as two-story flat-roof boxes with a prominent glazed entrance bay or atrium. Albemarle Center breaks from the common form by adding a metal-clad mansard cap and projecting front wings to create a U-shape plan. The building, however, lacks the bold geometry and refined materials seen at the Allied Security Building and the subtle decorative embellishments found on the Merchandise Mart.

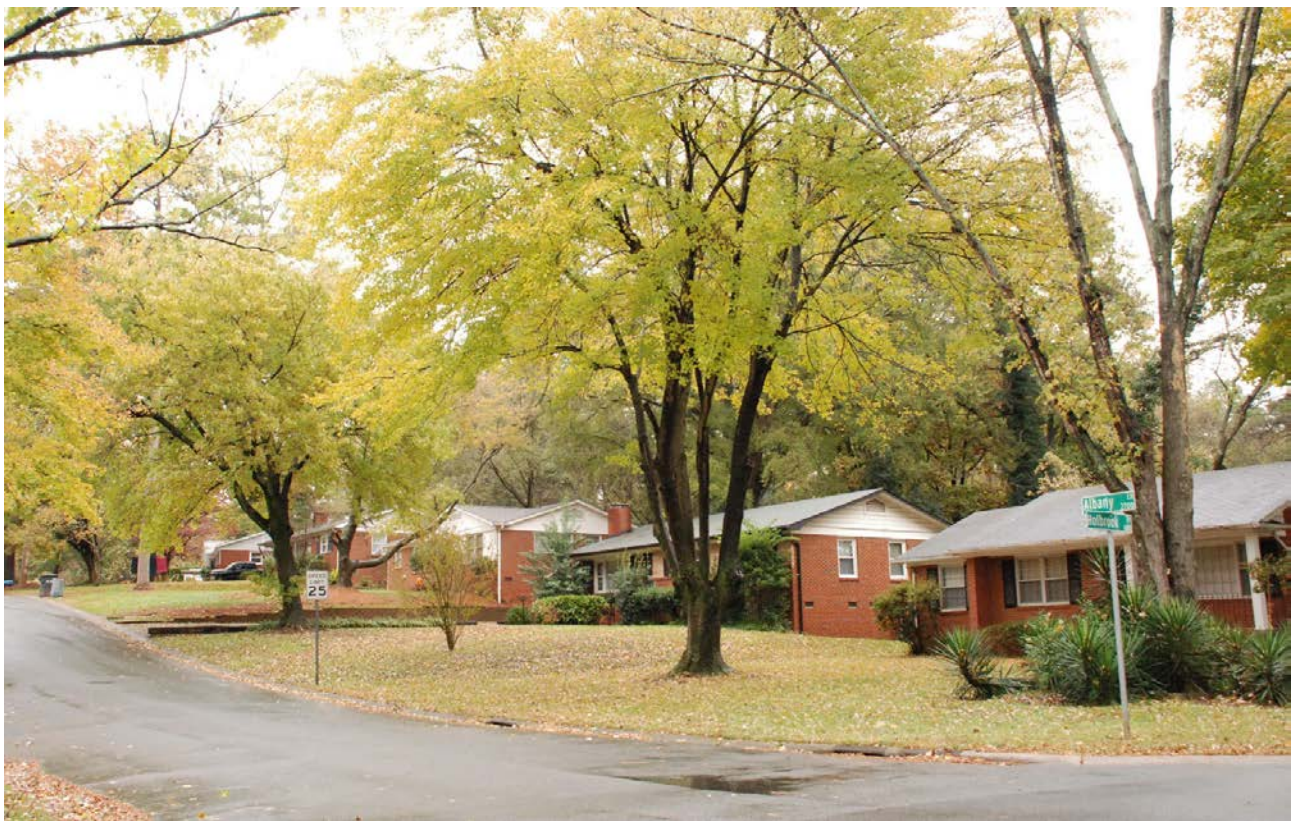
Although it was designed by a prominent local firm who worked extensively with the Ervin Company, Albemarle Center is a relatively subdued example of corporate modernism on Charlotte's Albemarle Road corridor and lacks the level of architectural distinction or influence to

be considered eligible under Criterion C. Moreover, significant changes made to the interior floor plan (and presumably the decor) in 2016, when the building was as individual office suites, diminishes the integrity of the building.

Albemarle Center is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion D (potential to yield information). *For a property to be eligible under Criterion D, it must meet two requirements: 1) the property must have, or have had, information to contribute to our understanding of human history or pre-history, and 2) the information must be considered important.* Built in the late 1960s, Albemarle Center is unlikely to contribute significant information pertaining to building technology or historical documentation not otherwise accessible from other extant resources and written records.

## Inventory No. 16

Resource Name	<b>North Sharon Amity Neighborhood</b>
HPO Survey Site Number	MK4417
Location	Roughly bounded by East Independence Boulevard, Albemarle Road, Pierson Drive/Amity Place, and Farmingdale Drive
PIN	Multiple
Date(s) of Construction	1956-1958
Eligibility Recommendation	Not Eligible – A, B, C, D



**Houses, 2700 block of Albany Lane, south side, view to east**

### *Description*

The present-day North Sharon Amity neighborhood describes a large residential area located immediately southeast of the Independence Boulevard and Albemarle Road intersection and stretching south and east to Idlewild Road and Campbell Creek. The 1950s core of the neighborhood, however, lies at the northwest of the present-day boundaries and is roughly bounded by Albemarle Road to the north, Pierson Drive and (crossing over North Sharon Amity Road) Amity Place to the east, Farmingdale Drive to the south, and Independence Boulevard to the

west. This portion of the North Sharon Amity neighborhood, a compact residential section, was originally platted by the Ervin Company as an extension of the Amity Gardens (see #14) suburb on the east side of Charlotte. The Ervin Company developed the first section of Amity Gardens on the southwest side of Independence Boulevard in 1956. Ervin subdivided this second section of Amity Gardens, east of Independence Boulevard, in multiple stages between July 1956 and November 1958. As it was the first development east of Independence Boulevard on the south side of Albemarle Road, the neighborhood abuts later development to its south and east.



**Houses, 4418 Holbrook Drive (l) and 4410 Holbrook Drive (r)**

The housing in this section of North Sharon Amity consists almost entirely of brick Ranch houses constructed in the late 1950s. The structure at **4418 Holbrook Drive** is a side-gable Ranch house with a front cross gable that slightly overhangs the inset front door. The house features a brick knee wall that contains one side of the front stoop, a metal pier at the other side of the stoop, stone veneer details, replacement one-over-one windows, and vinyl siding in the front gable end. Illustrating the variety found among the Ervin Company's designs, the dwelling at **4410 Holbrook Drive** features several similar details as its neighbor, along with many notable differences. The one-story brick Ranch house has a side-gable roof, vinyl siding in the soffits and eaves, a façade picture window, and replacement six-over-six sash windows. The recessed façade is supported by decorative metal posts at the corners and a projecting center bay is partially covered with faux stone veneer.

As was common in Ervin Company subdivisions of this era, one also finds split-level houses in this portion of the North Sharon Amity neighborhood. The split-level house at **4400 Holbrook Drive** is composed of a side-gable one-story wing and a two-story front-gable block clad with brick veneer and masonry blocks. The house has an exterior brick chimney, vinyl siding in the soffits and eaves, a façade picture window, and two-over-two double-hung sash with horizontal muntins. A one-story shed-roof screened porch is attached to the northwest side of the house.





**House, 4400 Holbrook Drive**

The 1950s core of the North Sharon Amity neighborhood was fundamentally altered in 2017 with the construction of an upgraded interchange between Independence Boulevard and North Sharon Amity Road. Permanently separating the two sides of Holbrook Drive, which had historically served as a main corridor through the neighborhood, the interchange has permanently disrupted the coherence of the neighborhood. Beyond the core that was platted as Amity Gardens, the North Sharon Amity neighborhood is delineated to encompass several later subdivisions and plats that do not appear to share an original vision, design, or architectural character.

### *Historical Background*

The Amity Gardens neighborhoods east of Independence Boulevard—today considered part of the North Sharon Amity and Coventry Woods neighborhoods—were first developed at the same time as the original Amity Gardens neighborhood on the south side of Independence Boulevard. The Ervin Company filed plats for Amity Gardens #5 in July 1956 (PB 8:27) and Amity Gardens #6 between July 1957 and February 1958 (PB 8:27, 123, 171, 173, 235, 237). Ervin platted Amity Gardens #7 in June 1958 (PB 8:297), while Amity Gardens #8 completed this series of plats in November 1958 (PB 8:413). The incremental development of Amity Gardens along the Independence Boulevard corridor followed the Ervin Company's construction of Eastway Park (see #13) in 1952 and the original Amity Gardens in 1956. The second Amity Gardens section centered around North Sharon Amity Road, and was roughly bounded by Albemarle Road to the northwest, Pierson Drive and Amity Place to the east, and Farmingdale Drive to the southeast.

Construction of Amity Gardens took place just as the Ervin Company was becoming a regional empire. Charles Ervin began his career as a bricklayer in the Navy and, after his service in World War II, returned to Charlotte and built a home for himself and his wife with his brother, E. L. Ervin, a carpenter. When an eager veteran offered them top dollar for the house, the Ervin brothers saw

the financial potential of selling homes to men just home from the war and launched a homebuilding company. Their construction experience helped them to stand apart from Charlotte's other contemporary developers, none of whom had direct experience in construction.<sup>274</sup> Although they began by building individual houses, the Ervins quickly saw the potential to scale up their business by taking advantage of the city's encouragement of post-war development.<sup>275</sup> The company streamlined construction, building blocks of houses at a time following the model of an assembly line. Specialized crews worked sequentially on each lot: first the lot would be cleared, making way for a foundation crew, which was followed by a framing crew, a masonry crew, a plastering crew, a trim crew, and finally the landscaping and painting crews.<sup>276</sup> By 1959 the Ervin Company was the South's largest builder of custom-built homes, and by 1963 it was lauded as one of the largest in the nation.<sup>277</sup>



**Aerial view of Amity Gardens #5-#8, February 10, 1962 (NCDOT Historic Aerial Imagery Index)**

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<sup>274</sup> "Ervin Brothers Began By Helping Each Other," *The Charlotte News*, July 26, 1952; Hanchett, 233-234.

<sup>275</sup> "Council Acts to Encourage Home Building," *The Charlotte Observer*, November 14, 1945.

<sup>276</sup> "Ervin Construction Co. Has Specialized System," *The Charlotte News*, July 25, 1952; "Construction Co. Can Look Back on Busiest May," *The Charlotte News*, June 14, 1952.

<sup>277</sup> "Ervin Construction Purchases 115 Acres," *The Gastonia Gazette*, September 3, 1959; "Ervin to Construct Eight-Story Building," *The Charlotte Observer*, April 28, 1963.

All of the Amity Gardens subdivisions received their name from a development called Amity Gardens Acres, parts of which were originally subdivided by the Sterling Land Company in 1936 (PB 4:105, 107, 109). Portions of Amity Gardens Acres still remain just beyond the western end of Pierson Drive, including Raney Way and Seifert Circle. The Ervin Company, however, purchased the eastern portion of Amity Gardens Acres and re-platted the area in its entirety (PB 4:105). The newly platted areas included the tract on which Amity Gardens Shopping Center (present-day Walmart) stood and the rest was subdivided, along with separately acquired land, into residential lots under the shortened name of Amity Gardens.



**Early North Sharon Amity neighborhood, detail of “Map of Greater Charlotte, North Carolina, 1955”**  
[\(http://maps.co.mecklenburg.nc.us/historicmaps/\)](http://maps.co.mecklenburg.nc.us/historicmaps/)

The Ervin Company subdivided extensions of the Amity Gardens neighborhoods east of Independence Boulevard on eight different plats filed between July 1956 and November 1958. The first plat, under the name Amity Gardens #5, established Holbrook Drive running northwest from Sharon Amity Road (present-day North Sharon Amity Road), with two short cul-de-sacs—Albany Lane and Athens Place—extending to the northeast (PB 8:27). Two subsequent plats for Amity Gardens #6, produced between July and September 1957, extended Holbrook Drive across Sharon Amity Road and laid out Kipling Drive along with Whittier Place, Keats Avenue, Shelley Avenue (present-day Shelley Terrace Lane), and the beginning of Amity Place (PB 8:123, 171, 173). The final plats of Amity Gardens #6, dating from February 1958, extended Holbrook Drive further

south, connecting it to Shelley Avenue and terminating in a cul-de-sac as its southern terminus (PB 8:235, 237). Amity Gardens #7 opened the Albany Lane and Athens Place cul-de-sacs and extended both streets to connect with Pierson Drive (PB 8:297). The final plat, for Amity Gardens #8, added a cul-de-sac called Collier Court off of Albany Lane (PB 8:413). In its final form, the Amity Gardens neighborhood on the east side of Independence Boulevard, which forms the historic core of the contemporary North Sharon Amity neighborhood, expanded to fill the area from Holbrook Drive to Pierson Drive and Amity Place with a series of short streets and cul-de-sacs between those limits. Once the Ervin Company had established a firm foothold developing suburbs on the east side of Charlotte, the firm began constructing shopping centers to serve homeowners moving into their neighborhoods. The Amity Gardens Shopping Center, built in 1959, served Ervin neighborhoods in the region, including Eastway Park and Amity Gardens.<sup>278</sup>

In the ensuing years additional plats would be developed to extend the streets of the core North Sharon Amity subdivision and connect them to further development. Plats filed in 1968 for a subdivision named Coventry Woods extended Kipling Drive to the east and connected it to Coronado Drive, Glenbriar Drive, and Cedarwood Lane (PB 14:199, 201, 313). Amity Garden Court, a cul-de-sac accessed from Pierson Drive, was platted in 1962 as a southern portion of the Ervin Company's Sheffield neighborhood (PB 10:13). These later accretions incrementally expanded from the neighborhood's origins and eventually encircled Amity Presbyterian Church, along with its cemetery, located at 2831 N. Sharon Amity Road. Occupying a seven-acre tract, the gable-front brick church was built in 1958, the third sanctuary erected for the congregation at this location. Amity Presbyterian Church was determined eligible for the National Register in 2008 as part of the environmental review for TIP No. U-209B.

None of the Amity Gardens subdivisions platted east of Independence Boulevard retain the name Amity Gardens today. They are instead referred to as North Sharon Amity and Coventry Woods. The Ervin Company's approach to developing Amity Gardens as an incremental creep along Independence Boulevard is indicative of a new type of staged development. Unlike the discrete planning that took place with Ervin's first neighborhood in the area, Eastway Park, the planning of Amity Gardens was a continuous and less pre-determined endeavor. The end result is a collection of small residential areas with less defined edges and entry points than in Eastway Park, which provides an instructive counterpoint.

The portion of the North Sharon Amity neighborhood that was originally platted as Amity Gardens was recently interrupted by construction at the intersection between East Independence Boulevard and North Sharon Amity Road. Between 2012 and 2017, the intersection was upgraded to a grade-separated interchange, North Sharon Amity Road was realigned to the southeast, and a ramp road was constructed to connect the westbound traffic on Independence Boulevard with North Sharon Amity Road. The ramp road required the demolition of commercial buildings on Independence Boulevard and Holbrook Drive, as well as the permanent separation of the Holbrook Drive blocks on either side of North Sharon Amity Road. What once was a coherent, if small, neighborhood has been permanently severed such that there is no pedestrian or vehicular access between the two sides of Holbrook Drive today.

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<sup>278</sup> "Eastway Park to Have 300 Lots," *The Charlotte News*, July 25, 1952.



**Remnant section of North Sharon Amity Road, terminated ca. 2017, view to east**

### *Evaluation*

For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the North Sharon Amity neighborhood is **not eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places. The 1950s core of the neighborhood was developed as Amity Gardens between 1956 and 1958, an extension of the Ervin Company's suburb originating on the southwest side of Independence Boulevard. The North Sharon Amity section was permanently disrupted by the construction of an interchange at Independence Boulevard and North Sharon Amity Road in 2012-2017. While the neighborhood generally retains its integrity of location, materials, workmanship, and association, it no longer retains integrity of setting, design, or feeling due to the changes caused by the interchange improvements.

The North Sharon Amity neighborhood is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion A (event). *To be eligible under Criterion A, a property must retain integrity and must be associated with a specific event marking an important moment in American pre-history or history or a pattern of events or historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community, a state, or the nation. Furthermore, a property must have existed at the time and be documented to be associated with the events. Finally, a property's specific association must be important as well.* The 1950s core of the contemporary North Sharon Amity neighborhood is a compact residential suburb on the east side of Charlotte platted between 1956 and 1958 by the Ervin Company as extensions of its Amity Gardens subdivision on the southwest side of Independence Boulevard (see #14). Although North Sharon Amity is characteristic of the community planning and development that took place in Charlotte following World War II, it was developed not as a discrete neighborhood, such as the Ervin Company's Eastway Park (#13), but as an incremental

series of platted sections and additions. Due to its lack of defined edges, the neighborhood does not adequately represent the standardized types of subdivisions that were typical of suburban development patterns in the post-war period. As such, it does not appear to possess sufficient significance to be eligible under Criterion A.

The North Sharon Amity neighborhood is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion B (person). *For a property to be eligible for significance under Criterion B, it must retain integrity and 1) be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, i.e. individuals whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, state or national historic context; 2) be normally associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he/she achieved significance, and 3) should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person's historic contributions. Furthermore, a property is not eligible if its only justification for significance is that it was owned or used by a person who is or was a member of an identifiable profession, class, or social or ethnic group.* The North Sharon Amity neighborhood is one of a number of residential subdivisions closely associated with Charles Ervin, whose Ervin Company was the premier development firm in Charlotte at mid-century. The Ervin Company, however, was responsible for numerous residential and commercial projects on the east side of Charlotte and, as a result, the North Sharon Amity development does not sufficiently represent the significance or productive life of Charles Ervin to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion B.

The North Sharon Amity neighborhood is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion C (design/construction). *For a property to be eligible under this criterion, it must retain integrity and either 1) embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; 2) represent the work of a master; 3) possess high artistic value; or 4) represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.* The architecture of the North Sharon Amity neighborhood is typical of Ervin Company developments in the 1950s and 1960s. The one-story brick Ranch houses throughout the development tend to have similar form and massing but were available from the builders with a wide range of exterior customizations. The neighborhood also includes examples of split-level dwellings. While the architecture of North Sharon Amity is relatively homogenous, the community planning is less coherent here than it is in other Ervin subdivisions. Originally platted between 1956 and 1958, the curving streets and numerous dead-end roads are characteristic of the type of suburban planning that was encouraged by the VA and FHA Underwriting Manual, but the neighborhood was planned incrementally as small extensions and additions to the primary Amity Gardens subdivision. Thus, this later section of Amity Gardens lacks the discrete boundaries of other suburbs in Charlotte making it a less illustrative example of the suburban typology.

The North Sharon Amity neighborhood is not eligible for the National Register under Criterion D (potential to yield information). *For a property to be eligible under Criterion D, it must meet two requirements: 1) the property must have, or have had, information to contribute to our understanding of human history or pre-history, and 2) the information must be considered important.* Developed in the 1950s, the earliest section of the North Sharon Amity neighborhood is unlikely to contribute significant information pertaining to building technology or historical documentation not otherwise accessible from other extant resources and written records.

## Inventory No. 17

Resource Name	<b>Independence Tower</b>
HPO Survey Site Number	MK4418
Location	4801 East Independence Boulevard
PIN	13302539
Date(s) of Construction	1972
Eligibility Recommendation	Not Eligible – A, B, C, D



**Independence Tower, 4801 East Independence Boulevard, view to southeast**

### *Description*

Standing at a 45-degree angle to Independence Boulevard, Independence Tower is a twelve-story office tower designed by architects Ferebee, Walters and Associates for the Ervin Company in 1972. Paved parking areas surround the tower on its north, east, and south sides. A square, modernist garden bordered by a concrete sidewalk circumscribes the base of the tower. The garden aligns squarely with Independence Boulevard, which forms the western edge of the property while the tower is rotated within it, a design choice that further accentuates the unusual alignment of the building itself.



**Independence Tower, oblique view to northwest**



**Independence Tower, oblique view to south**





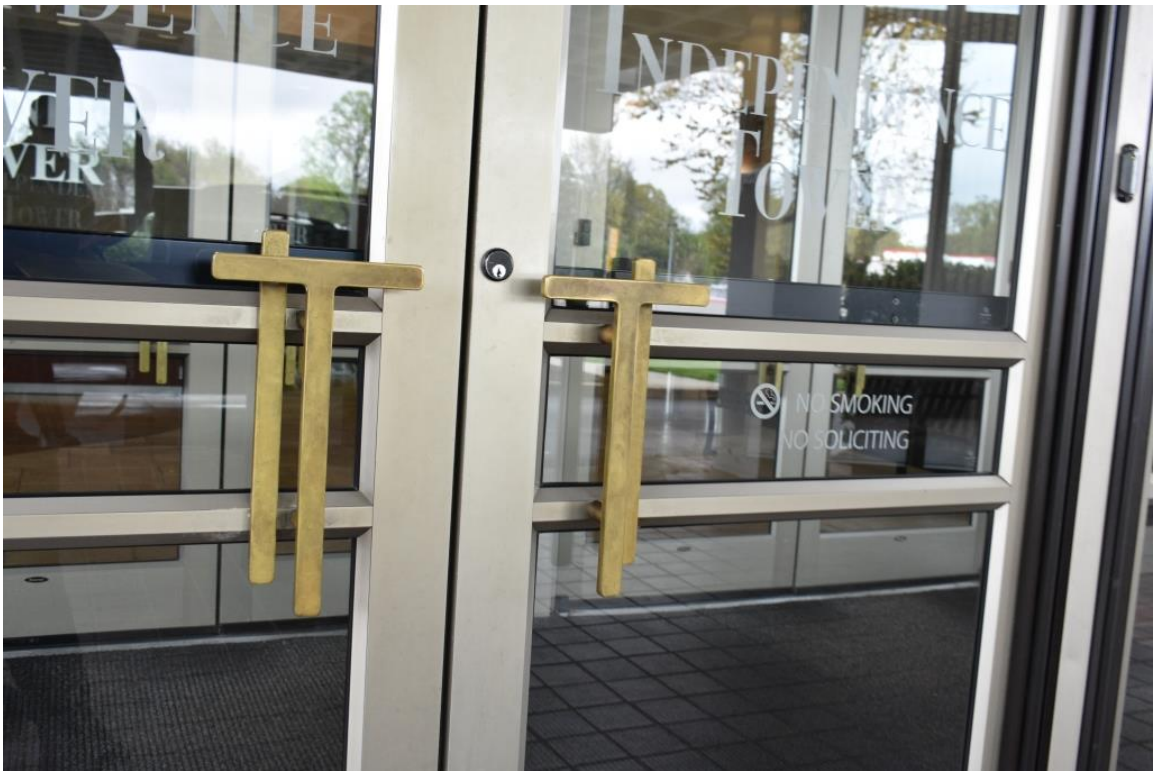
**Independence Tower, entrance, view to east**



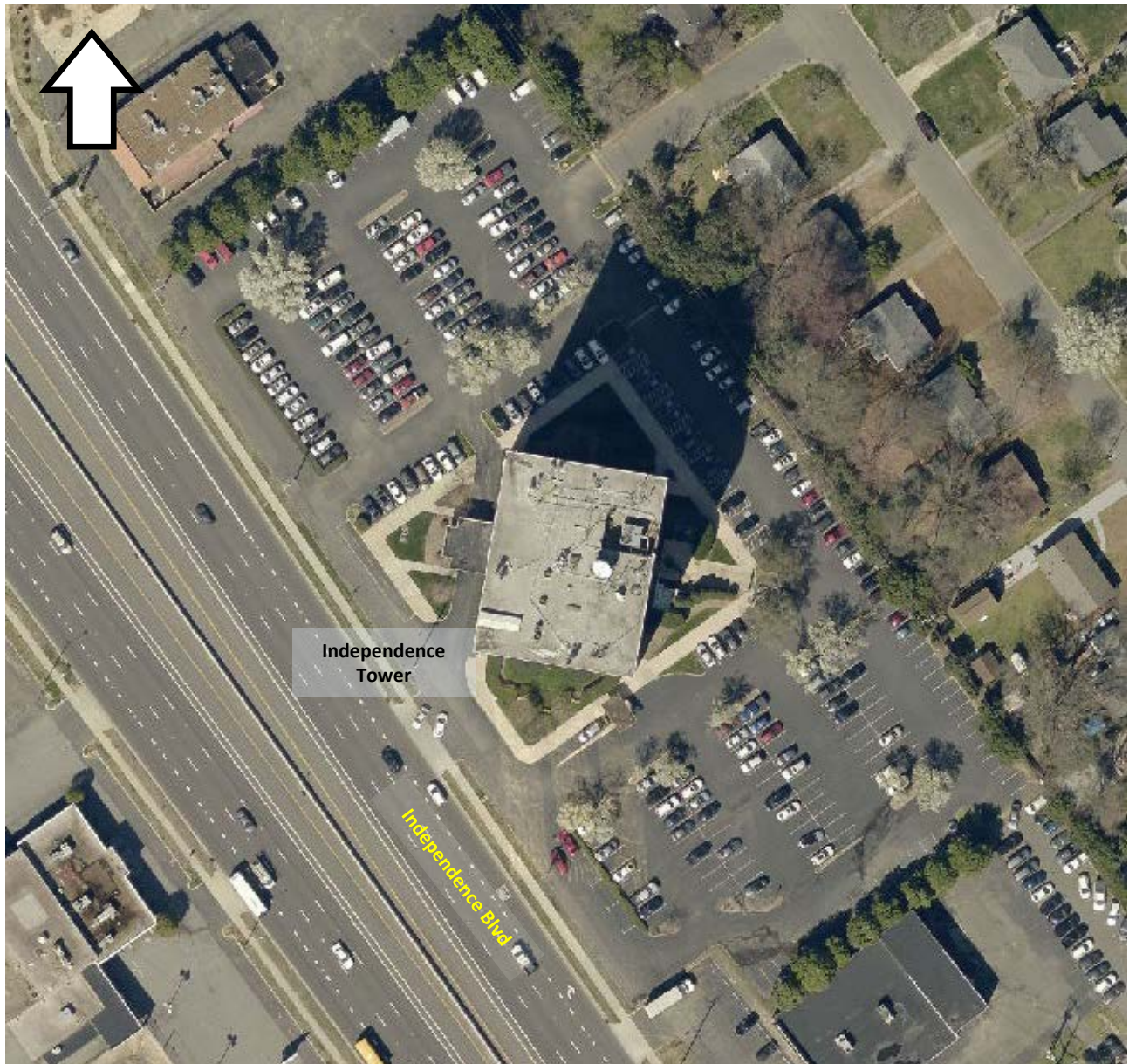
**Independence Tower, view to northeast**



**Independence Tower, first floor detail, view to west**



**Independence Tower, entrance doors detail, view to east**



**Site Plan – Independence Tower, 4801 East Independence Boulevard**

(Source: Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)

Vertical bands of gold mirrored windows accentuate the height of the twelve-story tower, which is five bays wide across the façade and rear elevation but only three bays wide on the side elevations. The structural steel and concrete tower rises from an inset ground floor surrounded by square columns inspired by Modernist *pilotis*. Low-relief pilasters ascend the exterior in line with the supporting columns. The columns and pilasters are finished in smooth white concrete that contrasts sharply with the reflective gold of the window bays. Each bay of windows is subdivided by bronze anodized aluminum frames into a grid at least two panes tall for every level of the interior; the window bands are four panes wide on the façade and rear and six panes wide on the

side elevations. All of the windows are fixed sash. Aside from their slight variation in width, each of the tower's elevations are generally alike.

The first story of the building is similarly regular with its only variation occurring at the main entrance on the west façade. The ground-floor walls are set back on all sides behind a colonnade of thick square posts. Beneath the tower overhang, the first-story walls are clad in a veneer of tan, textured concrete block with groups of full-height metal-frame plate-glass windows located at the corners. The tan concrete and tinted windows help the ground level to recede visually and draw attention to the bright white columns surrounding it.

The recessed main entrance is accented by curved block walls framing a pair of aluminum-frame double-leaf glazed doors with plate-glass transoms and sidelights. Custom-designed brass door handles on the front entrance exhibit a stylized "IT," the initials of Independence Tower. A concrete cruciform porte cochere with a coffered ceiling projects from the main entrance and shelters the entrance drive on the west side of the building. The entrance drive cuts through the garden at the base of the tower, leaving a triangular area of grass lawn and vegetation that provides a buffer between the vehicular area and the landscape surrounding the building.

Several details of the building changed between the architect's original design and final construction. The decorative tile mosaics that newspaper clippings described as covering the entrance walls were evidently not built, either for aesthetic or financial reasons.<sup>279</sup> Today the ground-floor walls are all composed of the same textured concrete panels. An architectural drawing of the tower that was published in *The Charlotte Observer* shows pilasters with projecting capitals that stand out from the façade surface at a sharp angle, casting dramatic shadows across the tower elevations. As built, the pilasters are much more subtle, standing in shallow relief from the plane of the tower wall, and the capitals were entirely removed from the design.

Little is known of the original interior design beyond the fact that it contained movable partitions similar to those that Ferebee, Walters and Associates developed for the Ervin Building (see #12). The movable partitions allowed clients to reconfigure the office spaces to suit their needs.<sup>280</sup> The interior circulation core contains three high-speed elevators, but the elevator lobby has been heavily remodeled in recent years.

### *Historical Background*

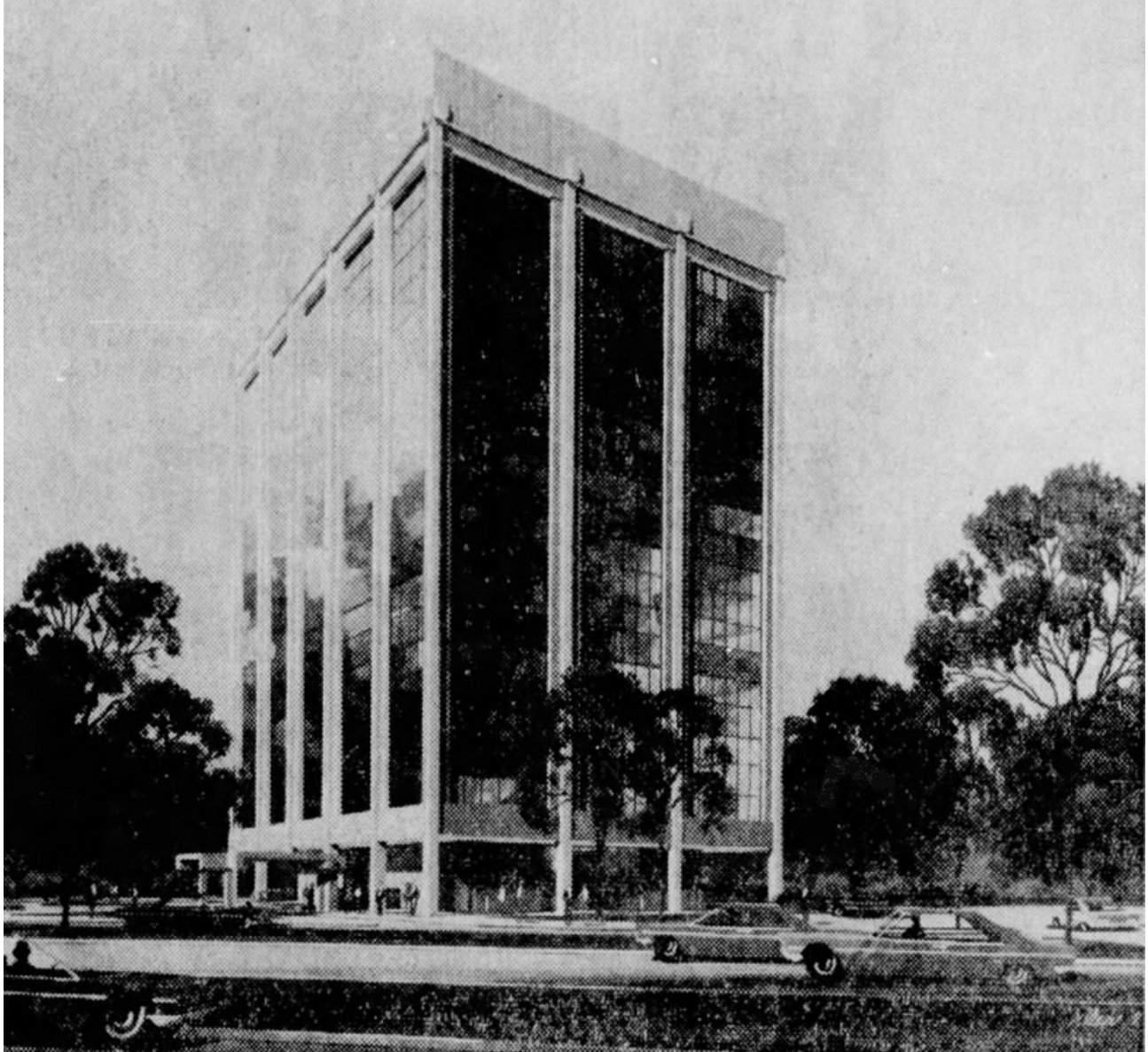
Noteworthy as one of the few skyscrapers on East Independence Boulevard, Independence Tower opened for occupancy in September 1972. The building was constructed by the Ervin Company, who built the only other tower on Independence Boulevard, the seven-story Ervin Building, in 1964. By the early 1970s, the Ervin Company had developed all of the territory surrounding the site for Independence Tower; besides the Ervin Building, the company had built out neighborhoods on the east side of Charlotte starting with Eastway Park in 1956 (see #13) and Amity Gardens (see #14). As the Ervin Company's suburban territory moved steadily eastward, so

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<sup>279</sup> "Going Up," advertisement, *The Charlotte Observer*, October 10, 1971; "Ervin to Erect Office Building," *The Charlotte News*, March 26, 1971.

<sup>280</sup> "Charlotte's New Suburban Landmark," advertisement, *The Charlotte News*, August 24, 1972.

too did its commercial developments including the Amity Gardens Shopping Center built in 1959. In 1972, the Ervin Company purchased the site for their proposed tower from a North Carolina Company called Southern Real Estate & Insurance (DB 3374:103). Construction on the building began immediately.



**Architect's Sketch of Proposed Building** (*The Charlotte Observer*, March 26, 1971)

Perhaps inspired by the positive reception of its first office tower, the Ervin Company ventured into new territory with the construction of Independence Tower as an entirely speculative venture. When it opened, the tower was advertised as containing 100,000 square feet of "luxurious high-rise office" space that is "away from the downtown crush and rush."<sup>281</sup> Calvin J.

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<sup>281</sup> "Prestige at the Right Location," advertisement, *The Charlotte News*, April 22, 1972.

Harris, executive vice president of the Ervin Company, predicted that the firm would keep two floors in Independence Tower and lease out the rest, as “our market research showed an extreme need for office space in this area.”<sup>282</sup> The \$4,000,000 office building would be the tallest and overall biggest structure in the city outside of downtown. Parking space for the tower was included in the original development plans, a strategy that had become typical of commercial development on the east side of town ever since the development of the Charlotte Coliseum (see #6) in 1955.<sup>283</sup> On site, visitors found not only office space, but also a restaurant, lounges, shops, and banking facilities.<sup>284</sup>

Construction of Amity Gardens took place just as the Ervin Company was becoming a regional empire. Charles Ervin began his career as a bricklayer in the Navy and, after his service in World War II, returned to Charlotte and built a home for himself and his wife with his brother, E. L. Ervin, a carpenter. When an eager veteran offered them top dollar for the house, the Ervin brothers saw the financial potential of selling homes to men just home from the war and launched a homebuilding company. Their construction experience helped them to stand apart from Charlotte’s other contemporary developers, none of whom had direct experience in construction.<sup>285</sup> Although they began by building individual houses, the Ervins quickly saw the potential to scale up their business by taking advantage of the city’s encouragement of post-war development.<sup>286</sup> The company streamlined construction, building blocks of houses at a time following the model of an assembly line. Specialized crews worked sequentially on each lot: first the lot would be cleared, making way for a foundation crew, which was followed by a framing crew, a masonry crew, a plastering crew, a trim crew, and finally the landscaping and painting crews.<sup>287</sup> By 1959 the Ervin Company was the South’s largest builder of custom-built homes, and by 1963 it was lauded as one of the largest in the nation.<sup>288</sup>

For the office tower design, the Ervin Company continued their long-standing partnership with Ferebee, Walters and Associates, who had also designed their offices at the Ervin Building and Albemarle Center (see #15). The firm was founded by Stephen Scott Ferebee, Jr. (1921-2016), who moved with his family to North Carolina in 1925, and graduated from North Carolina State University in 1948 with a degree in architectural engineering. Ferebee’s architectural career in Charlotte began with A. G. Odell, Jr.—one of Charlotte’s most distinguished Modernist architects—

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<sup>282</sup> Allan Sloan, “Ervin to Build 12-Story Gold-Glassed Office Building,” *The Charlotte Observer*, March 26, 1971.

<sup>283</sup> Hanchett, 241.

<sup>284</sup> “Let Jack Evans Tell You About Independence Tower,” advertisement, *The Charlotte Observer*, April 23, 1972; “Going Up,” advertisement, *The Charlotte Observer*, October 10, 1971.

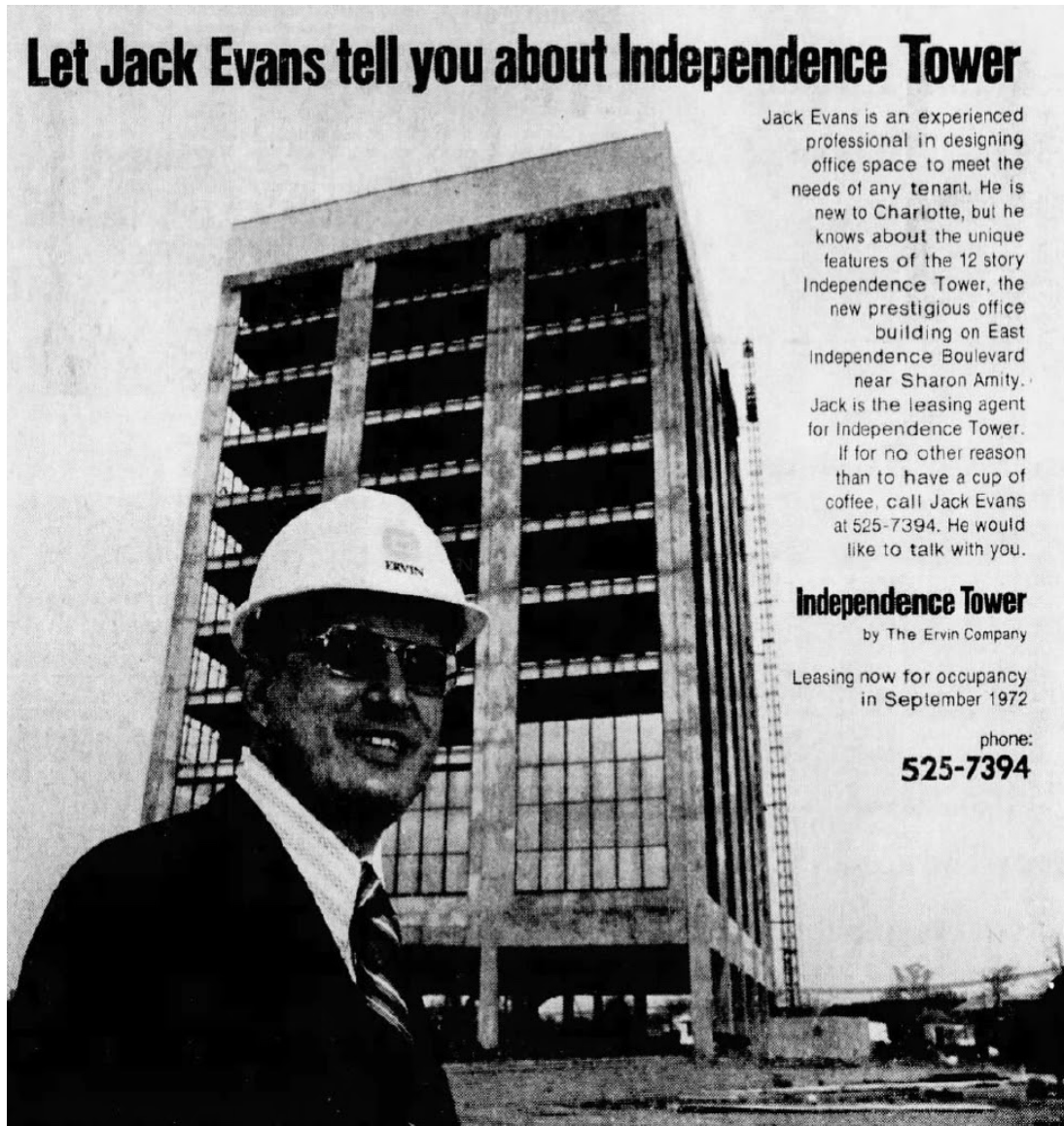
<sup>285</sup> “Ervin Brothers Began By Helping Each Other,” *The Charlotte News*, July 26, 1952; Hanchett, 233-234.

<sup>286</sup> “Council Acts to Encourage Home Building,” *The Charlotte Observer*, November 14, 1945.

<sup>287</sup> “Ervin Construction Co. Has Specialized System,” *The Charlotte News*, July 25, 1952; “Construction Co. Can Look Back on Busiest May,” *The Charlotte News*, June 14, 1952.

<sup>288</sup> “Ervin Construction Purchases 115 Acres,” *The Gastonia Gazette*, September 3, 1959; “Ervin to Construct Eight-Story Building,” *The Charlotte Observer*, April 28, 1963.

in 1951. Ferebee partnered with John C. Higgins in 1953, and along with Herschel Walters founded Ferebee, Walters and Associates in 1958.<sup>289</sup>



**Let Jack Evans tell you about Independence Tower**

Jack Evans is an experienced professional in designing office space to meet the needs of any tenant. He is new to Charlotte, but he knows about the unique features of the 12 story Independence Tower, the new prestigious office building on East Independence Boulevard near Sharon Amity. Jack is the leasing agent for Independence Tower. If for no other reason than to have a cup of coffee, call Jack Evans at 525-7394. He would like to talk with you.

**Independence Tower**  
by The Ervin Company

Leasing now for occupancy in September 1972

phone:  
**525-7394**

**Advertisement for Independence Tower** (*The Charlotte Observer*, April 23, 1972)

To manage their new office building, the Ervin Company hired Jack Evans, a businessman new to Charlotte, as their professional consultant. Evans assisted in the design of the office spaces in Independence Tower and also served as the leasing agent for the Ervin Company.<sup>290</sup> In completing the interior of their buildings, the Ervin Company applied their vertically integrated approach to

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<sup>289</sup> Sidebottom, "Ervin Building."

<sup>290</sup> "Let Jack Evans Tell You About Independence Tower," advertisement, *The Charlotte Observer*, April 23, 1972.

suburban housing to the tower's office spaces. Evans helped future clients select all of the finishes for their office spaces, from the carpeting to the paint color to the drapes.<sup>291</sup>

Following its association with the Ervin Company, Independence Tower has been owned by many different conglomerates, and occupied by countless tenants. Ownership of Independence Tower transferred soon after its completion, in May 1973, to Brooks Harvey Realty Investors out of New York City (DB 3574:577).<sup>292</sup> Ownership then transferred to a string of corporations out of the Dutch Antilles, including Bidwell Incorporated and Independence Tower Property (DB 4260:188). In 1985 IRE Pension Investors out of Florida purchased the property, and it again changed hands in 1996 to Independence Tower, LLC (DB 5070:534; 8838:176). Throughout its history, the building has served the purpose it was originally designed for: a flexible office space available to tenants seeking a work space away from the density of Charlotte's downtown core.

### *Evaluation*

For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, Independence Tower is **not eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places. The tower is an attractive, if unexceptional, example of Modernist architecture designed by the architectural firm of Ferebee, Walters and Associates for the Ervin Company in 1972. The building generally retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association on its exterior, but the interior of the building has been regularly altered since it was first constructed. The elevator lobby, in particular, has been remodeled in a manner that has removed its early 1970s décor. Completed in 1972, the building does not appear to meet Criteria Consideration G for properties achieving significance within the past 50 years. Independence Tower is a good example of a Modernist office tower but does not possess significance of exceptional importance.

Independence Tower is not eligible for the National Register under Criterion A (event). *To be eligible under Criterion A, a property must retain integrity and must be associated with a specific event marking an important moment in American pre-history or history or a pattern of events or historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community, a state, or the nation. Furthermore, a property must have existed at the time and be documented to be associated with the events. Finally, a property's specific association must be important as well.* The Independence Tower was the second office tower that the Ervin Company, one of Charlotte's premier mid-century development firms, built on East Independence Boulevard. Built as a speculative development, its prominent location on Independence Boulevard indicated the vision that the Ervin Company had for the east side Charlotte as a new downtown for the city. Beyond its association with the suburban development that the Ervin Company specialized in, however, the building is not associated in a meaningful way with more specific historic events or trends to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion A.

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<sup>291</sup> "Going Up," advertisement, *The Charlotte Observer*, October 10, 1971.

<sup>292</sup> Jim Mitchell, "Ervin Tower Sold for \$5 Million," *The Charlotte Observer*, May 13, 1973.



Independence Tower is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion B (person). *For a property to be eligible for significance under Criterion B, it must retain integrity and 1) be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, i.e. individuals whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, state or national historic context; 2) be normally associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he/she achieved significance, and 3) should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person's historic contributions. Furthermore, a property is not eligible if its only justification for significance is that it was owned or used by a person who is or was a member of an identifiable profession, class, or social or ethnic group.* Independence Tower is one of several office buildings closely associated with Charles Ervin, whose Ervin Company was the premier development firm in Charlotte at mid-century and completed the office tower in 1972. The Ervin Company, however, was responsible for numerous residential and commercial projects on the east side of Charlotte and, as a result, Independence Tower, which was sold only one year after its completion, does not sufficiently represent the significance or productive life of Charles Ervin to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion B.

Independence Tower is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion C (design/construction). *For a property to be eligible under this criterion, it must retain integrity and either 1) embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; 2) represent the work of a master; 3) possess high artistic value; or 4) represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.* Although the Modernist design by Ferebee, Walters and Associates and the visual presence of the building on East Independence Boulevard are both appealing, Independence Tower is a relatively unremarkable example of corporate modernism less than fifty years old.

Independence Tower is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion D (potential to yield information). *For a property to be eligible under Criterion D, it must meet two requirements: 1) the property must have, or have had, information to contribute to our understanding of human history or pre-history, and 2) the information must be considered important.* Completed in 1972, Independence Tower is unlikely to contribute significant information pertaining to building technology or historical documentation not otherwise accessible from other extant resources and written records.

## Inventory No. 18

Resource Name	<b>Barber Manufacturing Company</b>
HPO Survey Site Number	MK4419
Location	5300 East Independence Boulevard
PIN	16303227
Date(s) of Construction	ca. 1954
Eligibility Recommendation	Not eligible – A, B, C, D



**Barber Manufacturing Company, 5300 East Independence Boulevard, façade, view to southwest**

### *Description*

Built as the Charlotte headquarters of Barber Manufacturing Company around 1954, this two-story L-shaped brick building consists of two sections: a front office wing and a long production wing extending to the rear. The façade features a six-bay entrance portal composed of double-leaf glazed doors, a plate-glass window, and two panels of stacked Roman brick veneer topped by a band of six transom windows. The entrance is framed by a projecting concrete hood. Six metal-frame, six-light windows form a horizontal band that extends across the second-level of the façade above the entrance bays. The north end of the office wing has a set-back bay that contains metal-frame three- and four-light awning windows with concrete sills. A set-back bay south of the entrance reveals the front wall of the production wing, which is enlivened by only a metal louvered vent surmounted by a raised brick panel extending vertically. The southeast elevation of the production wing is blind with a flat parapet.



**Barber Manufacturing Company, oblique front view to northwest**



**Barber Manufacturing Company, southeast elevation, oblique view to west**



**Barber Manufacturing Company, northwest elevation, view to southeast**



**Barber Manufacturing Company, northwest elevation of production wing, oblique view to south**



**Barber Manufacturing Company, rear elevation, view to east**



**Barber Manufacturing Company, view to southeast**

The northwest elevation of the office wing is two-bays wide with four-light metal-frame awning windows on the first story and three-light metal-frame awning windows on the second story. The rear of the office wing has two-light windows on both stories, and a flat-roof block fills the interior angle of the building's "L." An attached flat-roof canopy is supported by a metal pipe column and shelters a concrete slab porch with two-bar metal railings. The porch accesses two single-leaf glazed-and-paneled doors: one entering the office wing and one entering the one-story rear block. The rear production wing has a brick chimney rising against the northwest wall and a single loading bay accessed through a glazed-and-paneled wooden overhead door. A single-leaf metal door on the second story of the rear wing opens onto the roof of the one-story rear block and allows access to an exterior metal ladder to the roof.



**Site plan – Barber Manufacturing Company, 5300 East Independence Boulevard**  
(Source: Mecklenburg County GIS Polaris 3G)

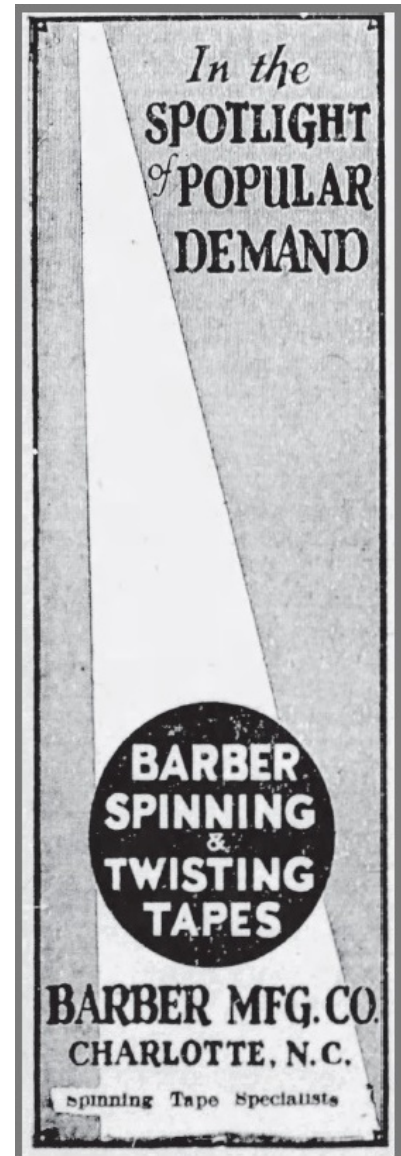
## Historical Background

The Barber Manufacturing Company traces its roots back to nineteenth-century England before moving with the textile industry to the United States. Headquartered in Lowell, Massachusetts, where it operated a large plant, the company made spindles and spindle tape used in textile machinery. Barber bought yarn from textile mills, which it then wove into tape, or belts, to drive the machinery and sold it back to the mills.<sup>293</sup> The Barber product was renowned for “its pulling power and long wearing qualities.”<sup>294</sup> While the company had a good reputation among northern mills, Barber Manufacturing’s products were also well-received by southern mill owners, who appreciated the quality and durability of the company’s spinning tapes. The company sold directly to cotton mills, as well as distributors such as the Textile Mills Supply Company of Charlotte and the Gastonia Mill Supply Company.<sup>295</sup>

The growth of textile manufacturing in the south led to the opening of Barber Manufacturing’s Charlotte branch. North Carolina textile mills appreciated having Barber’s specialized products made locally. Business improved for Barber Manufacturing through the 1920s even as the textile industry slowed toward the end of the decade.<sup>296</sup>

In 1924, Barber Manufacturing began operations in Charlotte, working from the Wade Loft Building at 300 East 6<sup>th</sup> Street. An extension to the Wade Loft Building, home to various small manufacturing concerns, was completed in 1924. The extension was designed by Lockwood, Greene and Company and built by the Southeastern Construction Company. Frank Burke, treasurer of the company, served as manager of Barber’s Charlotte plant.

Frank Burke resigned as manager of Barber Manufacturing in May 1928, and the company hired Douglas Tompkins as his



(*The Charlotte Observer*,  
December 25, 1927)

<sup>293</sup> “Republic Bank and Trust Company,” advertisement, *The Charlotte Observer*, March 24, 1981; “Barber Tape Recommended By Customers,” *The Charlotte Observer*, May 31, 1927.

<sup>294</sup> “Barber Mfg. Co. Has Good Year,” *The Charlotte Observer*, October 20, 1929.

<sup>295</sup> “Making Barber Tape,” *The Charlotte Observer*, March 2, 1928; “Wade Loft Building Extension, 1924,” Manuscript Collections, J. Murrey Atkins Library Special Collection and University Archives, University of North Carolina at Charlotte; *The South’s Development, Part II, Manufacturers Record* (Baltimore, MD: Manufacturers Records Publishing, December 11, 1924), 561; *The Charlotte Observer*, May 31, 1927.

<sup>296</sup> “Burke Expects Good Business,” *The Charlotte Observer*, January 8, 1928; “Alamance County Famed For Its Textile Plants,” *The Charlotte Observer*, March 25, 1928.

replacement. Tompkins came from Rock Hill, South Carolina, where he managed the Carhartt Overall Company's cotton mill for nine years. Prior to his employment with Carhartt, he "spent several years at Clemson College specializing in textiles."<sup>297</sup> Tompkins does not appear to have served long as manager of Barber Manufacturing. In 1930, he was best man at the wedding of Robert T. Dixon (1904-1969), who was now the local plant manager.<sup>298</sup>

Charlotte native R. T. Dixon worked for Barber Manufacturing for several decades, eventually becoming the company treasurer and manager.<sup>299</sup> Edward H. Thomas served as Barber's production manager following World War II. He and other representatives of textile and associated industries organized the Charlotte Textile Club in 1952. Thomas later accepted a position as executive secretary to then newly elected Congressman Charles R. Jonas of Lincolnton, who eventually served ten terms as a United States Representative.<sup>300</sup>

In 1954, Barber Manufacturing acquired the 1.2-acre tract on Independence Boulevard for \$3,750 from Sue Elizabeth Wallace, widow of I. Grier Wallace (DB 1697:13). Descendant of a pioneering Mecklenburg County family, the Wallaces had inherited the family homeplace and approximately 99 acres on Monroe Road. I. G. Wallace (1885-1951), along with his brother and son, operated a firm dealing in fuel, fertilizers, and farm equipment.<sup>301</sup> At the time the Barber Manufacturing building was constructed, the site lay on the outskirts of Charlotte surrounded by farmland and woods. The Barber Manufacturing building was one of just a few commercial buildings located beyond the rapidly expanding residential subdivisions. By the mid-1970s commercial buildings lined both sides of Independence Boulevard for another mile or two beyond Barber Manufacturing.

The Barber Manufacturing Company continued to produce spinning tape through the 1960s and 1970s, although its productivity presumably waned as the American textile industry declined in the late twentieth century. The property and the business were sold to Nicholas Schiffli in 1978.<sup>302</sup> Following World War II, Schiffli graduated from Duke University and began his long career in the textile industry in South Carolina working at Owens-Corning Fiberglass in Anderson and Pacific Mills in Lyman. He later moved to Charlotte and at one time served on the board of the North Carolina Textile Manufacturing Association.<sup>303</sup> His tenure as owner of Barber Manufacturing appears to have been short-lived. The property was sold to its current owners in 1983, for occupancy by Frame Warehouse (DB 4651:911).

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<sup>297</sup> "New Manager For Barber Co.," *The Charlotte Observer*, May 20, 1928.

<sup>298</sup> "Dixon-Nelson Wedding Plans Announced," *The Charlotte News*, October 14, 1930.

<sup>299</sup> "Textile Firm Manager R. T. Dixon," *The Charlotte Observer*, July 24, 1969.

<sup>300</sup> "Textile Club to be Organized," *The Charlotte News*, October 21, 1952; "Congressman Jonas Appoints Secretary," *The Charlotte Observer*, December 22, 1952.

<sup>301</sup> "I. G. Wallace succumbs; Funeral Planned Saturday," *The Charlotte News*, March 2, 1951.

<sup>302</sup> "Republic Bank and Trust Company," advertisement, *The Charlotte Observer*, March 24, 1981.

<sup>303</sup> "Nicholas William Schiffli," obituary, *The Charlotte Observer*, June 30, 2012.



## Evaluation

For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Barber Manufacturing Company is **not eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places. The property is an intact but undistinguished example of a commercial building associated with Charlotte's manufacturing and distribution industries. The property generally retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The Barber Manufacturing Company is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion A (event). *To be eligible under Criterion A, a property must retain integrity and must be associated with a specific event marking an important moment in American pre-history or history or a pattern of events or historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community, a state, or the nation. Furthermore, a property must have existed at the time and be documented to be associated with the events. Finally, a property's specific association must be important as well.* Barber Manufacturing Company was one of many firms affiliated with the South's burgeoning textile industry that opened facilities in Charlotte to take advantage of its vital trading location. Based in Lowell, Massachusetts, Barber Manufacturing specialized in the production of spinning tapes necessary to drive textile mill machinery. Barber products were highly regarded and used nationwide. The company opened its Charlotte production facility in 1924 to position itself among the large southern mills. Prior to building its small plant on Independence Boulevard in the mid-1950s, the company worked from the Wade Loft Building on East 6<sup>th</sup> Street in Charlotte. By the time it built its plant on the outskirts of town, it appears that the company's most prosperous years were behind it as the textile industry entered a long decline in the second half of the twentieth century. While the Barber Manufacturing Company is associated with Charlotte's important textile manufacturing industry, the years spent at this location do not substantially contribute to that significant association. As such, the property is not closely associated with any significant historic events or trends to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion A.

The Barber Manufacturing Company is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion B (person). *For a property to be eligible for significance under Criterion B, it must retain integrity and 1) be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, i.e. individuals whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, state or national historic context; 2) be normally associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he/she achieved significance, and 3) should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person's historic contributions. Furthermore, a property is not eligible if its only justification for significance is that it was owned or used by a person who is or was a member of an identifiable profession, class, or social or ethnic group.* The Barber Manufacturing Company is not closely associated with any specific individual to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion B.

The Barber Manufacturing Company is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion C (design/construction). *For a property to be eligible under this criterion, it must retain integrity and either 1) embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; 2) represent the work of a master; 3) possess high artistic value; or 4) represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.* The Barber Manufacturing Company facility on Independence Boulevard is a two-story office and production facility for the

firm, which made spinning tape for the textile industry. Since opening in Charlotte in 1924, Barber Manufacturing had been based near downtown in the Wade Loft Building, a multi-story fireproof structure arranged to house small manufacturing companies. At the time of its construction, the company's new plant was located on the edge of the city, just beyond the rapidly expanding residential suburbs. The building is relatively plain in its exterior treatment with unrelieved brick walls and metal-frame sash windows. It displays a modicum of Modernist influence on the façade with the large glass windows and transoms, projecting entrance hood, Roman brick panels, and second-story band of windows. While the building is an uncommon example of a manufacturing facility built along Independence Boulevard, which is dominated by residential subdivisions, office buildings, and commercial development, the Barber Manufacturing Company is an unremarkable building with little architectural distinction. The property does not possess any special architectural significance to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion C.

The Barber Manufacturing Company is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion D (potential to yield information). *For a property to be eligible under Criterion D, it must meet two requirements: 1) the property must have, or have had, information to contribute to our understanding of human history or pre-history, and 2) the information must be considered important.* Built around 1954, the Barber Manufacturing Company's building on Independence Boulevard is unlikely to contribute significant information pertaining to building technology or historical documentation not otherwise accessible from other extant resources and written records.

## VII. Conclusions

During the initial reconnaissance field survey of the Area of Potential Effects (APE) for the proposed project in 2019, the principal investigators inventoried and photographed 206 properties over fifty years of age located within or adjacent to the APE. The vast majority of recorded properties were unremarkable examples of common commercial and residential building types and frequently displayed additions and material alterations such as synthetic siding and replacement windows that compromised their historic integrity. From the initial group of documented resources, eighteen of the inventoried properties were considered to possess some potential eligibility for the National Register and merited additional research and context development to make a full determination.

The eighteen properties, which were intensively surveyed in March and April 2020, are described and evaluated in this report. Primary source investigation for the project was limited by state and local restrictions imposed due to public health concerns arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, so background research on the project area and each of the eighteen properties was conducted primarily through online sources including Mecklenburg County GIS and Register of Deeds Office, the J. Murrey Atkins Library at the University of North Carolina Charlotte, the Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission. Additional research was conducted via websites for individual businesses and local organizations, newspaper archives, HPO survey files and report, and NCDOT's Historic Aerial Imagery Index.

Eleven of the intensively surveyed properties are considered to be eligible for the National Register, including one historic district previously listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The evaluated properties include five resources previously placed on the Study List for the National Register, and all five of the properties continue to be considered National Register eligible. Of the eighteen properties evaluated in this report, the remaining seven properties are determined to be not eligible and represent undistinguished examples of common property types that lack sufficient significance and integrity to be eligible for the National Register.

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