



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

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Roy Cooper

Secretary D. Reid Wilson

March 15, 2021

MEMORANDUM

TO: Shelby Reap sreap@ncdot.gov
NC Department of Transportation
Environmental Analysis Unit, Historic Architecture Group

FROM: Renee Gledhill-Earley *RGE for Ramona M. Bartos*
Environmental Review Coordinator

SUBJECT: Historic Structures Survey Report, U-5926, New Route from 23rd St to 26th St,
PA 19-08-0018, New Hanover County, ER 20-0612

Thank you for your February 9, 2021, letter transmitting the above-referenced report. We have reviewed the report and offer the following comments.

We concur with the findings of the report, that Creekwood North Historic District (NH3669) is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C as cited in the report. The report is to be commended for revealing the significance hidden by the resource's face-value appearance.

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. In all future communication concerning this project, please cite the above referenced tracking number.

cc: Mary Pope Furr, NCDOT mfurr@ncdot.gov

HISTORIC STRUCTURES SURVEY REPORT

New Route from 23rd Street to N. 26th Street, New Hanover County

TIP No. U-5926

WBS No. 46873.1.1

PA No. 19-08-0018

Prepared for:

Environmental Analysis Unit

North Carolina Department of Transportation

1598 Mail Service Center

Raleigh, North Carolina, 27699

Prepared by:



NV5 - Technical Engineering and Consulting Solutions

6750 Tryon Road

Cary, North Carolina, 27518

JANUARY 2021

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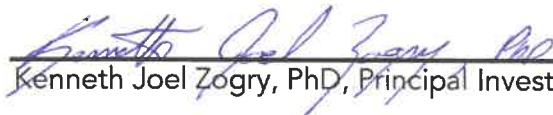


NV5 - Technical Engineering and Consulting Solutions

6750 Tryon Road

Cary, North Carolina, 27518

JANUARY 2021


Kenneth Joel Zogry, PhD, Principal Investigator



Date

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

Date

Management Summary

NCDOT STIP Project U-5926 proposes to construct a new route from 23rd Street to N. 26th Street in Wilmington. Most of the proposed roadway will be constructed on new location and connect existing segments of Federal Express Boulevard to the west and Kornegay Avenue to the east. The project is part of a larger effort to provide full control of access along Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway, which currently includes an at-grade intersection with Kornegay Avenue in the project area. The proposed improvements would remove this intersection and provide a new east-west access route to the Creekwood North neighborhood via 23rd Street.

The project's Area of Potential Effect (APE), as defined by NCDOT, includes a 370-foot buffer along N. 26th Street and extends approximately 1,500 feet southwest of this road on new location. In the vicinity of 23rd Street, the APE extends approximately 1,500 feet to the south to cover all structures located along Scientific Park Drive and Federal Express Boulevard within the Smiths Creek Industrial Park.

The project is subject to review under the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement for Minor Transportation Projects (NCDOT/NCHPO/FHWA/USFS 2015). NCDOT architectural historians conducted preliminary documentary research to identify and assess all resources of approximately fifty years of age or more within the APE. One district within the APE warranted further evaluation for potential National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility and is the subject of this report. NCDOT architectural historians determined that all other properties are not worthy of further study and evaluation due to lack of historical significance and/or integrity.

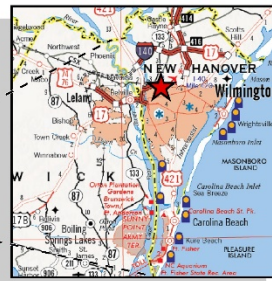
New Hanover County was comprehensively surveyed by various architectural historians in seven phases for the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (HPO) between 1973 and 2010. No other previously surveyed resources are present within the project APE, and the resource within this study was not previously surveyed.

In January 2020, NCDOT requested that NV5 Engineers and Consultants (NV5) complete documentary research, field study, and NRHP evaluations for this one potential historic district. The results are as follows:

	NCHPO Survey Site Number	Eligibility Determination	Criteria
Creekwood North Historic District	NH3669	Eligible	A

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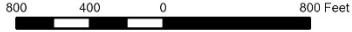

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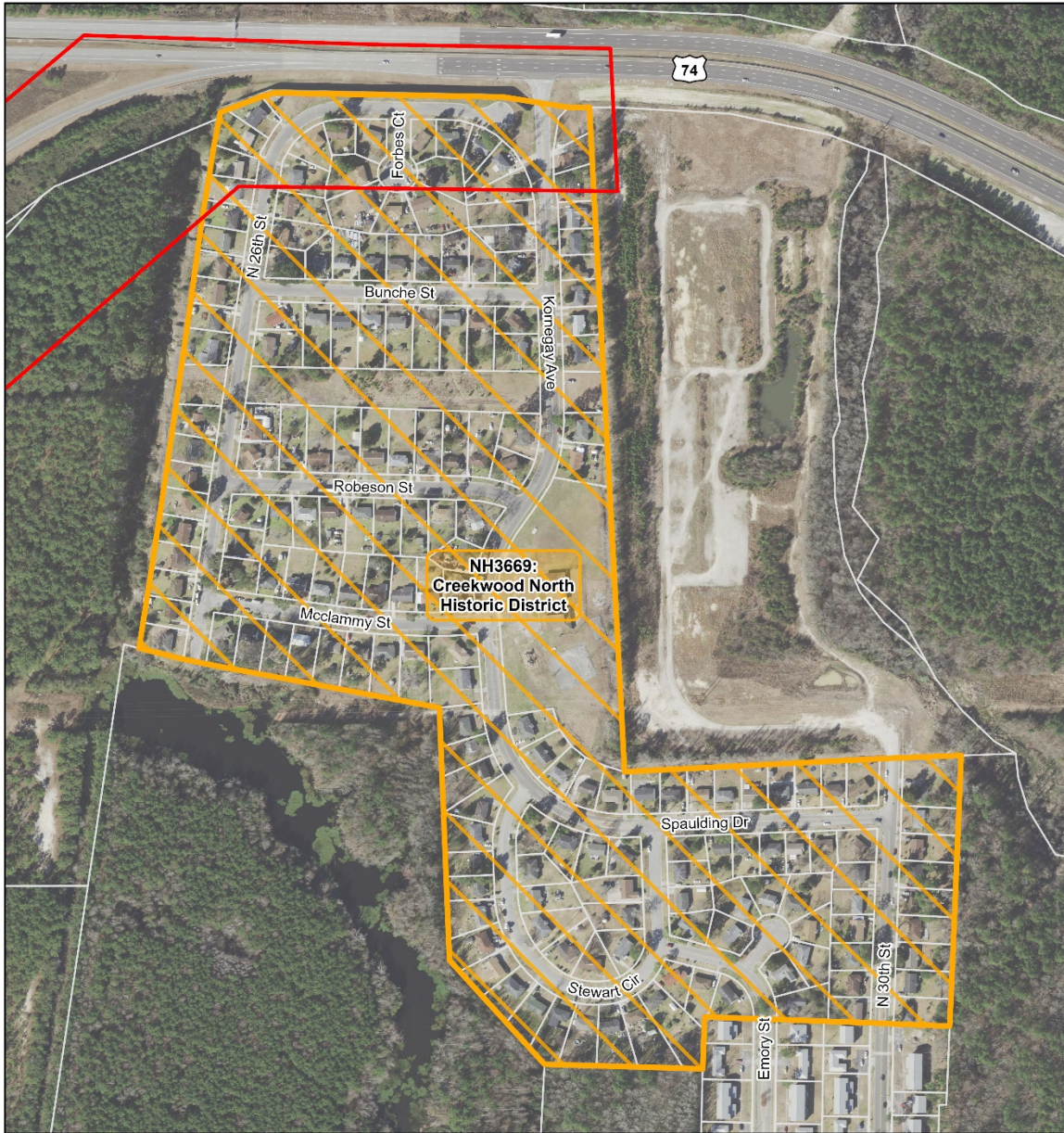







 <p>NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION</p>
<p>N. 23rd Street (SR 1302) to N. 26th Street. Construct Route on New Location.</p>
<p>STIP Project U-5926</p> <p>New Hanover County</p>
<p>Figure 1 - Project Vicinity</p>

U-5926 Construct a New Route from 23rd Street to N. 26th Street – New Hanover County



<p> Evaluated Property Inset</p> <p> APE Boundary</p>	 <p>NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION</p>
<p>800 400 0 800 Feet</p>  <p>Source: NCDEQ, NCDOT, NC OneMap, NV5 CALYX Figure Date: 5/18/2020</p> 	<p>N. 23rd Street (SR 1302) to N. 26th Street. Construct Route on New Location.</p> <p>STIP Project U-5926</p> <p>New Hanover County</p>
<p>Figure 2 - Area of Potential Effects (APE)</p>	



<p> APE Boundary</p> <p> Parcel</p>	 <p>NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION</p>
<p> NR-Eligible Boundary</p>	<p>N. 23rd Street (SR 1302) to N. 26th Street. Construct Route on New Location.</p> <p>STIP Project U-5926</p> <p>New Hanover County</p>
<p>350 175 0 350 Feet</p> <p>Source: NCDOT, NC OneMap, NV5 CALYX Figure Date: 5/18/2020</p> 	<p>Figure 2A - NR-Eligible Boundary - Creekwood North Historic District</p>

Methodology

On February 12 and 13, 2020, NV5 Senior Historian Kenneth Zogry and Architectural Historian Miles Tolbert conducted a field survey and completed field photography of the one potentially eligible district located within the APE for this project. Telephone interviews were conducted with one original property owner currently living in Creekwood North and the pastor of nearby Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church.

Documentary research was conducted in the North Carolina Room at the New Hanover County Public Library and Special Collections in Randall Library at UNC-Wilmington, and in a number of monographs on the history of Wilmington, public housing, public education, and the Civil Rights Movement in North Carolina. Online sources utilized include the HPO Web, New Hanover County Tax Assessor and Register of Deeds records, Wilmington Housing Authority website, Ancestry.com, and Newspapers.com. A full list of individual published works and interviews cited is included at the end of this report.

Evaluation: Creekwood North Historic District

Resource Name	Creekwood North Historic District
HPO Survey Site Number	NH3669
Street Address	Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway south to Emory Street & N. 30 th Street; N. 26 th Street west to Kornegay Avenue
PIN	Multiple
Construction Dates	1970-1972
NRHP Recommendation	Eligible, A



Description

The Creekwood North Historic District is a planned residential community located in Wilmington, North Carolina, northeast of downtown and just south of Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway. The district encompasses approximately 60.8 acres and is bounded on the north by Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway which is the principal access road into the area. The western boundary runs along N. 26th Street and the eastern boundary runs along Kornegay Avenue. A number of internal roads within the district include Bunche, Robeson, and McClammy streets, E. Stewart and Forbes circles, Cooper Court and Spaulding Drive. Creekwood North is connected on its southern boundary to the separate but contiguous Creekwood South neighborhood via Emory Street and N. 30th Street.

Creekwood North consists of 189 individual houses and lots. Residential lots are rectangular or square in shape and feature flat grassy lawns and some shrubbery and mature trees. Most lots are uniform and approximately one-quarter-acre in size. Houses are situated close to one another in a grid-like pattern and along both sides of the neighborhood's internal streets. Houses located on corner lots where streets intersect are situated diagonally toward the street.

As the neighborhood is an entirely planned community, the houses are predominantly mid-twentieth century Ranches and largely uniform in style and appearance. The houses are brick and feature either side-gabled or hipped roofs with asphalt shingles. The uniformity of the designs is varied slightly by number and placement of primarily single-pane double-hung windows, the use of sections of frame siding or decorative frame insets, and addition of carports. Location of wooden entrance doors also varies, with some featuring an entrance on the side of the house and others on the façade below a small

projecting porch. Additionally, most houses on corner lots in the neighborhood are diagonally placed and feature a hip-roofed, with or without clipped end gables. Since the period of original construction, some number of houses have been modified with vinyl siding, windows, and metal roofs (Figures 20, 23, 24, and 26), or enlarged roofs (Figures 21, 22, 25). Examples included in this report are representative of typical alterations.

Along with Ranch plans, two multi-level houses are present in the neighborhood. One split-foyer house (Figure 23) is located toward the northern entrance of the neighborhood along Martin Luther King Jr Parkway and is all that remains of a street of a dozen originally built in this configuration. The house is constructed of brick with vinyl-clad siding and features a side-gabled roof with asphalt shingles. Fenestration includes a centrally placed entrance door with a large square window above illuminating the interior staircase, a large picture window in the living room, and three one-over-one double-hung windows. The second multi-level house (Figure 25) is a substantial enlargement of what was originally a Ranch (Type #4), with additions including a brick-enclosed carport and a vinyl-clad second story on the southern end.

In total, there are existing examples of 11 original plan variations in Creekwood North:

1. Ranch: hip-roofed, side entrance
2. Ranch: side gable, side entrance
3. Ranch: hip-roofed, front entrance
4. Ranch: side gable, front entrance with small gable porch
5. Ranch: side gable, front entrance with small engaged shed porch
6. Ranch: side gable, front entrance with carport
7. Ranch: side gable, inset porch (corner model only)
8. Ranch: clipped hip-roofed, smaller (corner model only)
9. Ranch: clipped hip-roofed, larger (corner model only)
10. Ranch: hip-roofed, front entrance with carport (corner model only)
11. Two-story split foyer

Because of the number of repetitive floor plans in the neighborhood, the following representative resources have been documented for this report:

Number	Property Address	Building Type
1	1611 N. 26 th Street	Ranch: hip-roofed, side entrance
2	1401 N. 26 th Street	Ranch: side gable, side entrance
3	2606 McClammy Street	Ranch: hip-roofed, front entrance
4	1305 N. 26 th Street	Ranch: side gable, front entrance with small gable porch
5	1501 Kornegay Avenue	Ranch: side gable, front entrance with engaged shed porch
6	2602 Bunche Street	Ranch: side gable, front entrance with carport
7	1302 N. 26 th Street	Ranch: side gable, inset porch (corner model only)
8	1601 Kornegay Avenue	Ranch: clipped hip-roofed, smaller (corner model only)
9	1210 N. 26 th Street	Ranch: clipped hip-roofed, larger (corner model only)
10	2710 Bunce Street	Ranch: hip-roofed, front entrance with carport (corner model only)
11	1610 Kornegay Avenue	Two-story: split foyer
12	2607 McClammy Street	Ranch: Type #1, siding and window alterations
13	1405 N. 26 th Street	Two-story: Type #4 altered from a Ranch
14	2606 Robeson Street	Ranch: Type #2, derelict

The neighborhood also features two large community buildings situated on a four-acre lot centrally located on the eastern boundary of the district. The north building on the lot, contemporary with the neighborhood and similar in style to the houses but larger, is constructed of brick and features a shallow hipped roof with asphalt shingles. Entrance doors and one-over-one double-hung windows are present on all elevations. Its originally served as a community center. The south building of slightly later date is a painted or stuccoed masonry structure topped by a hipped roof with asphalt shingles. A large frame shed-roofed central section creates a large open vaulted interior space, lit by clerestory windows. Entrance doors and slider windows are present on all elevations. Its originally served as a classroom building for the Head Start program. The earlier brick structure remains largely intact, but the later building shows severe hurricane damage. Both buildings are now abandoned and scheduled for demolition.

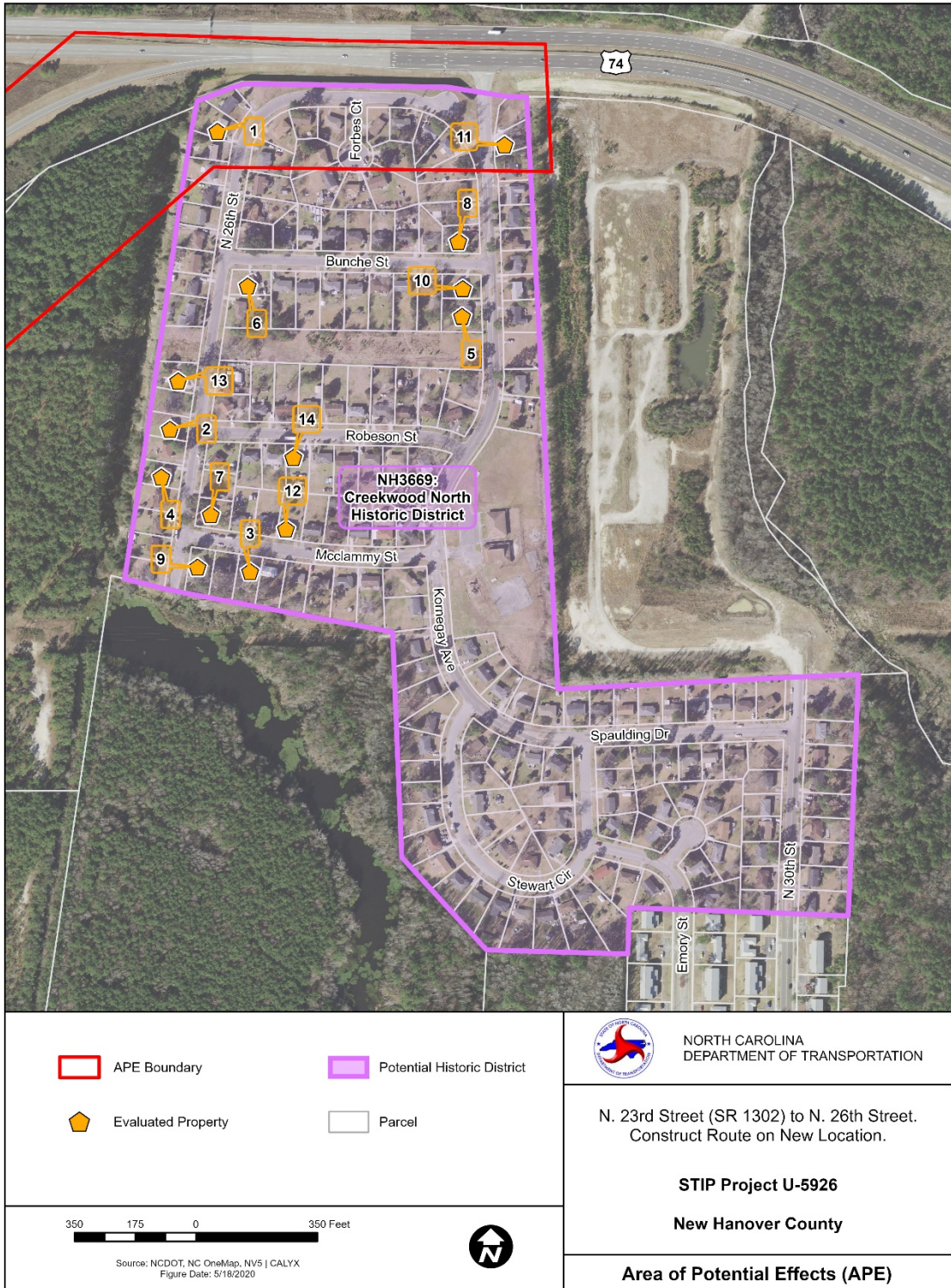


Figure 3: Creekwood North Historic District with representative evaluated resources numbered



Figure 4: Looking west across intersection of Kornegay Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway toward noise wall



Figure 5: Looking east across Kornegay Avenue toward entrance to Creekwood North neighborhood



Figure 6: Looking south along Kornegay Avenue



Figure 7: Looking west along McClammy Street



Figure 8: Looking northwest along Kornegay Avenue



Figure 9: Looking southwest along Kornegay Avenue



Figure 10: Looking south along N. 30th Street toward Creekwood South (multi-family rental units)



Figure 11: Creekwood North Community Center (now abandoned)



Figure 12: Looking east toward former Head Start building (now abandoned)



Figure 13: 1611 N. 26th Street (House #1), hip-roofed side entrance model



Figure 14: 1401 N. 26th Street (House #2), side-gable, side entrance model



Figure 15: 2606 McClammy Street (House #3), hip-roofed, front entrance model



Figure 16: 1305 N. 26th Street (House #4), side-gable, front entrance model, front gable porch



Figure 17: 1501 Kornegay Avenue (House #5), side-gable, front entrance model, shed porch



Figure 18: 2602 Bunche Street (House #6) side-gable front entrance with carport



Figure 19: 1302 N. 26th Street (House #7), side-gable inset porch, corner model



Figure 20: 1601 Kornegay Avenue (House #8) smaller clipped hip-roofed corner model



Figure 21: 1210 N. 26th Street (House #9) larger clipped hip-roof corner model



Figure 22: 2710 Bunche Street (House #10) hip-roofed front entrance corner model with enclosed carport



Figure 23: 1610 Kornegay Avenue (House #11) split-foyer model



Figure 24: 2607 McClammy Street (House #12) hip-roofed, side gable model, newer vinyl siding and windows



Figure 25: 1405 N. 26th Street (House #13) enlarged one-story side-gable front entrance model



Figure 26: 2606 Robeson Street (House #14) side-gable, side entrance model, derelict

Historical and Architectural Context

On July 30, 1970, an article appeared in *The Robesonian* (Lumberton), entitled “Home Ownership May Be a Lever to Prod Aspirations of Poor.” Noting that “public housing in the past provided a place to live for low income groups without holding out the prospect of owning a home,” the article detailed a new federal program known as Turnkey III, which, for the first time, offered a path to homeownership for families who would not otherwise qualify. “The ultimate benefit,” the article continued, “will be the sense of pride among those who have become productive, participating members of the community.” Further, North Carolina was described as “a frontier for testing the concept,” as the second housing development in the United States under this program was nearing completion in Raleigh, and as other Turnkey III projects were in various stages of planning in Wilmington, Charlotte, Winston-Salem, Durham and Greensboro. Ultimately only a few communities were built, including what is today Creekwood North in Wilmington, the subject of this study.¹

¹ *The Robesonian*, July 10, 1970.



Figure 27: Creekwood North, January 1, 1972

(Source: Wilmington Morning News Photograph Collection, North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Public Library)

Public housing in the United States dates from the 1930s and the Great Depression. Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal introduced trial public housing in 1933, and the U.S. Housing Act of 1937 created a permanent program still in existence. Early public housing projects were built with subsidized federal funding and operated by local governmental agencies. For the first three decades these projects were rental only, meant to meet basic housing needs. In North Carolina, these early projects were multi-family, low-rise, and low density.²

Though a cursory glance of Creekwood North today might not suggest significance, its creation as a new type of public housing development is part of a multi-layered history involving race, economic opportunity, public education, and politics in Wilmington, the state, and the nation. It represents efforts during the late 1960s and early 1970s to address systemic and imbedded issues of poverty and equality not easily resolved by the proverbial "stroke of a pen" which characterized the legislative and judicial phase of the Civil Rights Movement (1954-1971). With a strain of progressivism not typical in most Southern states during the mid-twentieth century, North Carolina's leaders helped pioneer these efforts.

Governor Terry Sanford (1961-1965) spent much of his term in office working toward improving public education, economic opportunity, and racial equality in North Carolina. He advocated the creation of inter-racial "Good Neighbor Councils" across the state to bring together citizens, local business and government leaders, and clergy to address these issues. In Wilmington, one of the most active members of the area council was Rev. Edwin E. Kirton, who would become a strong advocate for the building of

² Maggie McCarty, "Introduction to Public Housing," Congressional Research Service report, January 3, 2014, pp 1-2, accessed at www.crs.gov; Alexander Von Hoffman, "History Lessons for Today's Housing Policy: The Political Process of Making Low-Income Housing Policy," Joint Center for Housing Studies policy paper (Harvard: 2012), pp. 2-10, accessed online.

Creekwood North. Sanford's most significant achievement was the North Carolina Fund, a public-private partnership that employed innovative policies and techniques to address systemic poverty (and by extension racial inequality) in the state, certain elements of which served as models for President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" programs, including Vista and Head Start. Sanford's efforts helped create an environment that welcomed the racially integrated Turnkey programs into North Carolina, at a time when this was being strongly resisted by many southern states.³

Coupled with efforts to resolve systemic issues of economic inequality and decades of racial segregation of residential communities, the protracted process of desegregating public schools in North Carolina came to a flashpoint in 1971 and was central to the choice of location and development of Creekwood North. Following the *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* Supreme Court decision in 1954, schools in North Carolina and throughout the South did not desegregate as ordered, "with all deliberate speed." As the Civil Rights Movement progressed during the 1950s and 1960s, increasing pressure was placed on Southern public-school systems to fully integrate. Most had largely circumvented *Brown* in a variety of ways. In North Carolina, the Pearsall Plan and Pupil Assignment Act were created, which allowed for public school student assignment based on residential neighborhoods that were already strictly segregated, and by giving school systems the option of closing schools if certain actions (meaning attempts by African American families to send their children to white schools) caused disruption.⁴

Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, adjudicated in 1971, became the Supreme Court case to finally desegregate American schools in practice as well as theory. The principal ruling cited the need for busing to be implemented to truly integrate schools, and eliminate the *de facto* segregation caused by the "neighborhood school" device of student assignment.⁵

Across North Carolina implementation of *Swann* was difficult but ultimately successful. Protests erupted in Greensboro and other large cities; though in Durham a leading black activist, Ann Atwater, formed a bridge with former white KKK leader, C.P. Ellis, to desegregate public schools peacefully. In Wilmington, protests and ultimately violence resulted from the closing of Williston High School, the city's leading African American school. After the firebombing of a grocery store in February 1971, ten protesters were arrested and convicted of the crime and given a total of 282 years in prison. The group, who came to be known as the "Wilmington 10" were a national *cause celebre*. After several years of public outcry, the sentences were reduced, but the incident left bitterness in the African American community.⁶

³ For a complete study of the North Carolina Fund, see James L. Leloudis and Robert R. Korstad, *To Right These Wrongs: North Carolina Fund and the Battle to End Poverty and Inequality in 1960s America* (UNC Press: 2010).

⁴ For a complete study of this subject see Ransome E. Holcomb, "A. Desegregation Study of Public Schools in North Carolina," doctoral dissertation, East Tennessee State University, 1985. William Link, *North Carolina: Change and Tradition in a Southern State*, second edition (Wiley Blackwell: 2018), pp. 447-449.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ For studies of how desegregation evolved incrementally in Durham and Greensboro, respectively, see: Osha Gray Davidson, *The Best of Enemies: Race and Redemption in the New South* (UNC Press: 1996); and William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom*. Reprint edition (Oxford University Press: 1981). For the Wilmington 10, see Link, *North Carolina*, pp.449-454.

The planning and building for what became Creekwood North occurred within this charged environment. In reference to the proposed development, the *Charlotte News* reported that “the possible results of more such housing for the nation’s blacks and poor are obvious: relief from ghetto conditions and a decrease in the need for crosstown busing to desegregate public schools.” In fact, extensive documentation exists showing that the leaders of the county and city public school systems were directly involved with planning for the experimental neighborhood (Figure 28).⁷

From the beginning the racial make-up and location of Creekwood North (and other new rental public housing projects in Wilmington) were key considerations for both local and federal authorities. In a letter from Wilmington Housing Authority Executive Director B.H. Marshall Jr to Heywood Bellamy, superintendent of New Hanover County Schools, Marshall explained that since passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the public housing authority had adopted “a positive integration policy” in existing housing projects which resulted in “a splendid mixture of the races without there ever having been any dissention or trouble.” In terms of siting Creekwood North and other projects, Marshall made a point of noting that they had chosen “areas out of predominately white and predominately negro neighborhoods of the City – the object being to locate the new projects in the fringe areas in order to permit both white and negro people to live together without having to move too great a distance from their source of employment...or away from their family, friends, or places where they had gone to church all of their lives.” While some Turnkey III developments in North Carolina were as much as fifty percent black and fifty percent white, Creekwood North was established with a ratio of seventy-five percent black families and twenty-five percent white families.⁸

⁷ *Charlotte News*, August 18, 1972.

⁸ B.H. Marshall Jr to Heywood Bellamy, July 10, 1970, and William Hill to Judge Butler, August 16, 1972, both in the Dr. Heywood C. Bellamy Collection, Special Collections, Randall Library, University of North Carolina at Wilmington.

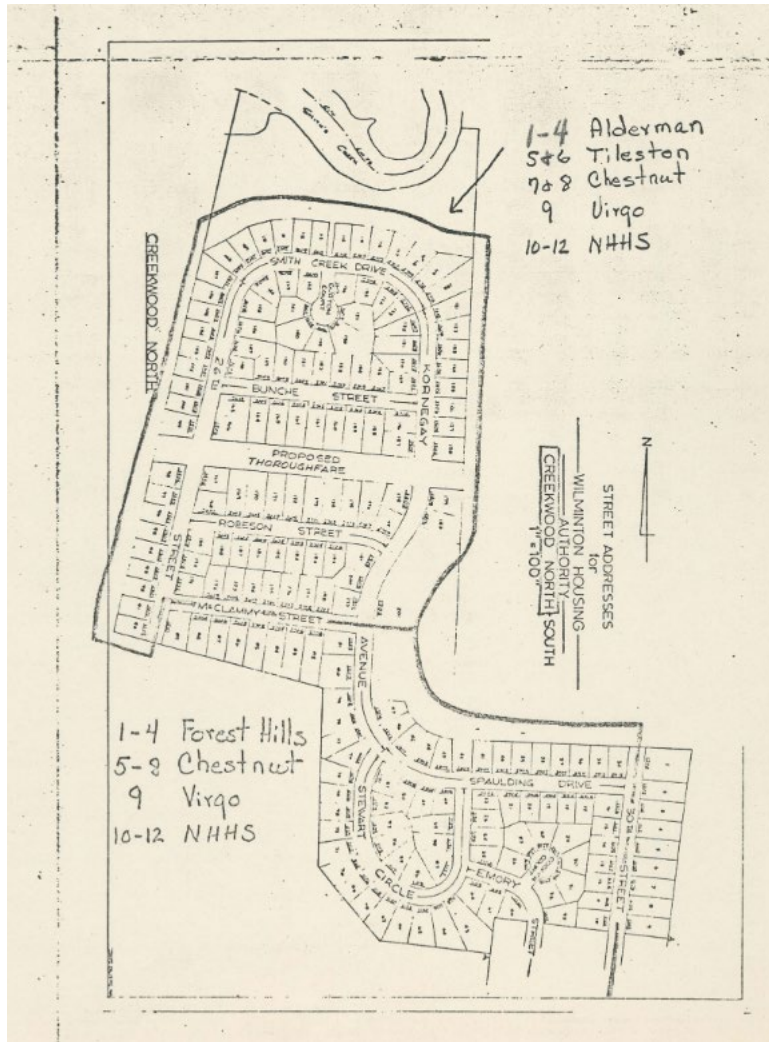


Figure 28: Public School assignments for Creekwood North, 1972
 (Source: Dr. Heywood C. Bellamy Collection, Special Collections, Randall Library, UNC-Wilmington)

The Turnkey programs were designed as public-private partnerships and overseen by the Federal Housing Authority (FHA), part of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Under Turnkey I, private developers purchased land and constructed units per government specifications, which were then sold to and managed by a local or federal housing authority. Turnkey II allowed for private or tenant-run management.⁹

Turnkey III, created in 1968, sought a new approach by encouraging individual home ownership. An AP wire service story that appeared in several North Carolina newspapers described the project as “a new approach...chipping away at the barrier between race-proud blacks in city slums and economically-alooof

⁹ United States Economic Development Administration, “The Local Economic Development Cooperation; Legal and Financial Guidelines,” (pamphlet, 1971), pp. 98-99, accessed online.

whites in the suburbs.” Further, the Turnkey III program shifted “emphasis from stark, ghetto-like rental units in public housing projects to split-level and ranch-style houses.”¹⁰

Ground was broken for Creekwood North in the spring of 1970 on land north of downtown Wilmington, known as the Jacob Swart property. Plans called for 200 single-family units, ranging from two to five bedrooms, but most (185) with three or four bedrooms. All houses were built on concrete slab foundations and had one or one-and-one-half bathrooms. The houses were placed along streets arranged in an overall horseshoe pattern; 188 of the houses were one-level Ranch style, but along N. 26th Street twelve two-story split-foyer models were built by the time the community was completed in early 1973.¹¹

As specified by the terms of Turnkey III, General Building and Masonry Contractors, Inc., of Raleigh constructed the neighborhood at a cost of \$3.1 million and sold the completed development to the Wilmington Housing Authority (WHA) for \$3.817 million, realizing a profit of approximately 25 percent. Although the large local firm of Boney Architects was associated with the project, they seem to have only worked on site planning and the community centers as the plans for the houses themselves appear to be standard designs created for HUD.¹²

During construction controversy erupted over the naming of the development. The WHA Board of Commissioners initially announced it would be called “Martin Luther King Jr. Homes,” after the recently slain civil rights leader. Various groups within Wilmington’s African American community objected, though for different reasons. Some felt the housing development was not a significant enough landmark to bear his name, while others lobbied to name it for Mrs. Augusta Cooper (Figure 29), a former librarian and local black advocate who worked tirelessly to bring this first Turnkey III project to Wilmington. The WHA Board agreed to remove King’s name but refused to name it for Mrs. Cooper as City regulations prohibited naming for a living person.¹³

¹⁰ *Charlotte News*, August 18, 1972; and *Gastonia Gazette*, August 18, 1972.

¹¹ *Wilmington Morning Star*, April 4, August 25 and October 14, 1970, and December 30, 1972.

¹² *Ibid.*; plaque on the Creekwood South Community Center listing Leslie Boney Jr as architect; email correspondence with Leslie Boney, IV, February 15, 2020.

¹³ *Wilmington Morning Star*, March 8 and March 21, 1970.



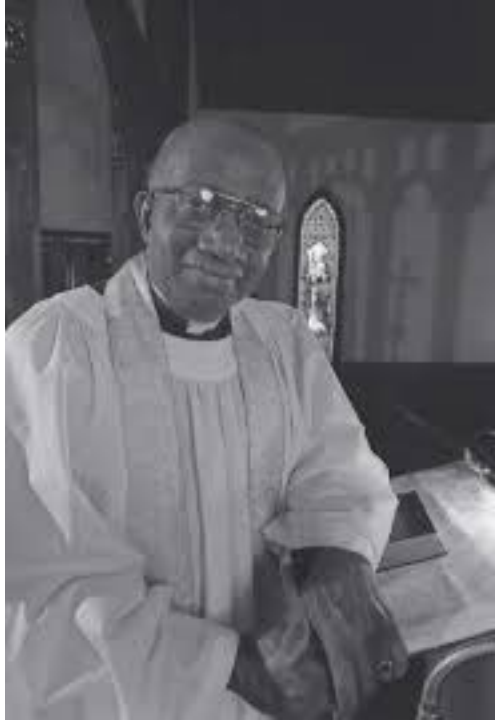
Figure 29: Mrs. Augusta Cooper (center) Hillcrest community meeting
(Source: *Wilmington Star News*, October 18, 1966)

Ultimately “Creekwood North” was chosen, as the development was near Smith’s Creek, and as the adjoining section, consisting entirely of more traditional multi-family rental public housing, was to be named Creekwood South. One street in the neighborhood was named for Mrs. Cooper, however, and several others were given the names of African Americans prominent in North Carolina or nationally. These included Paul Robeson (celebrated black singer and actor); Ralph Bunche (diplomat and first African American recipient of the Nobel Prize); Charles C. Spaulding (early black business leader in the state, and founder of North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company); and George Kornegay, well-known AME minister and folk artist from Alabama.¹⁴

Creekwood North was dedicated at an official “Open House” on November 18, 1971, with remarks by the mayor of Wilmington, the chairman of the New Hanover Board of Commissioners, and prominent African American community leader Dr. Edwin E. Kirton, rector of St. Mark’s Episcopal Church (Figure 30). In his invocation, Dr. Kirton gave thanks for “these tangible community assets...(and) the dreams which have been realized in the erection of these Turnkey III Homes...a visible expression of community concern and community action in providing new and comfortable homes for those who could not otherwise acquire them.” Calling the opening of the development “a landmark event in our City,” Kirton blessed the new and prospective homeowners and praised the project as “demonstrating that all men can live together in peace and security as neighbors, bound by ties of love and mutual understanding and community pride.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Dr. Edwin E. Kirton, “Dedication of Turnkey III Homes,” November 18, 1971, Edwin E. Kirton Family Private Papers, Special Collections, Randall Library, UNC-Wilmington.



*Figure 30: Rev. Edwin E. Kirton
(Source: Cape Fear Museum)*

Along with the official remarks, the Open House included tours of a furnished model home to “promote interest, motivation, and pride in home ownership...and serve as (a) training center for (the Turnkey III) homeownership program.” Guests were served refreshments and received a cleverly designed program in the shape of a small house containing an itinerary of the day’s events (Figure 31a-e).¹⁶

¹⁶ “Creekwood North Model Home Open House,” program, November 18, 1971, Edwin E. Kirton Family Private Papers, Special Collections, Randall Library, UNC-Wilmington.

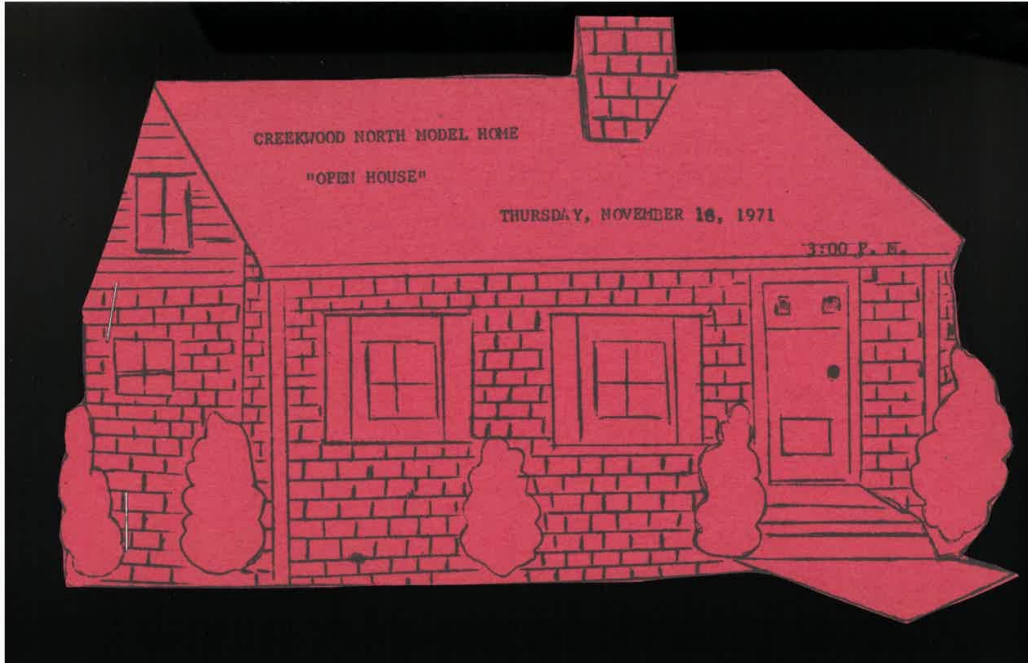


Figure 31: Program for the Creekwood North dedication and Open House, November 18, 1971
 (Source: Edwin E. Kirton Family Private Papers, Special Collections, Randall Library, UNC-Wilmington)

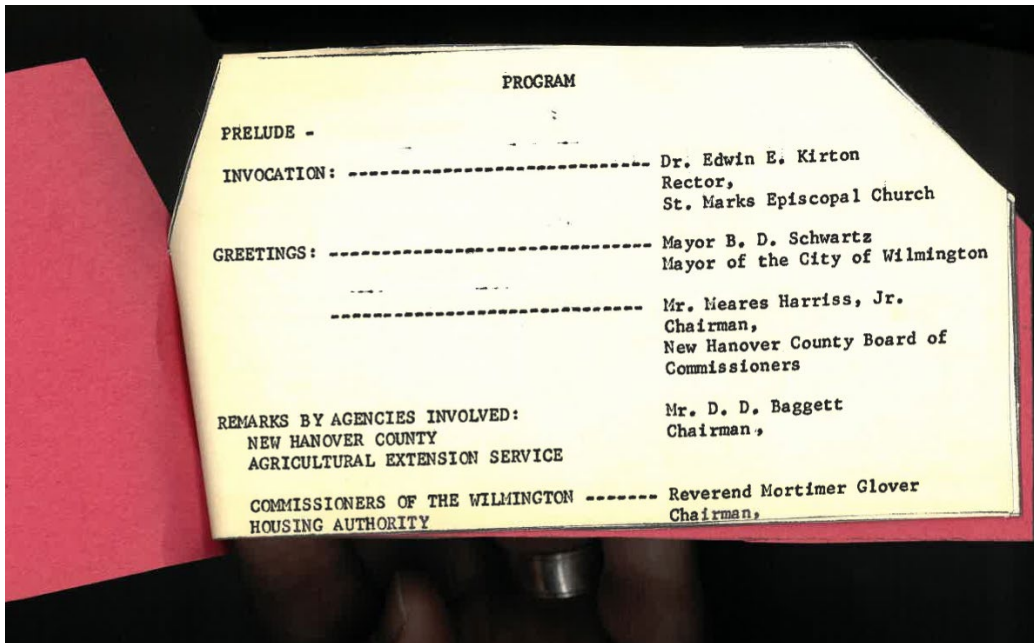


Figure 31a

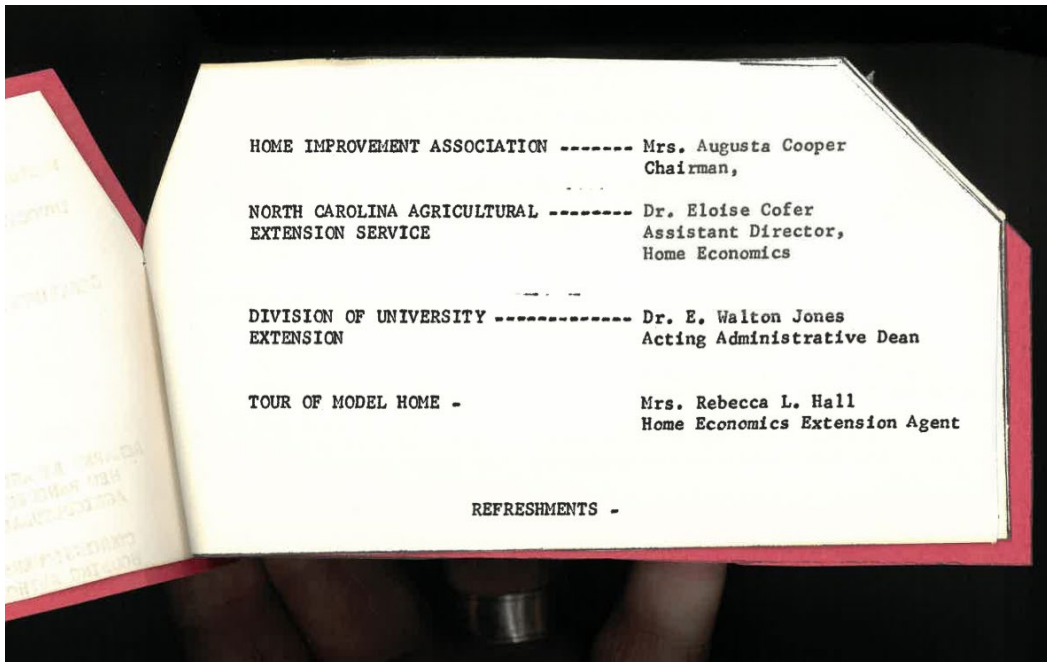


Figure 31b

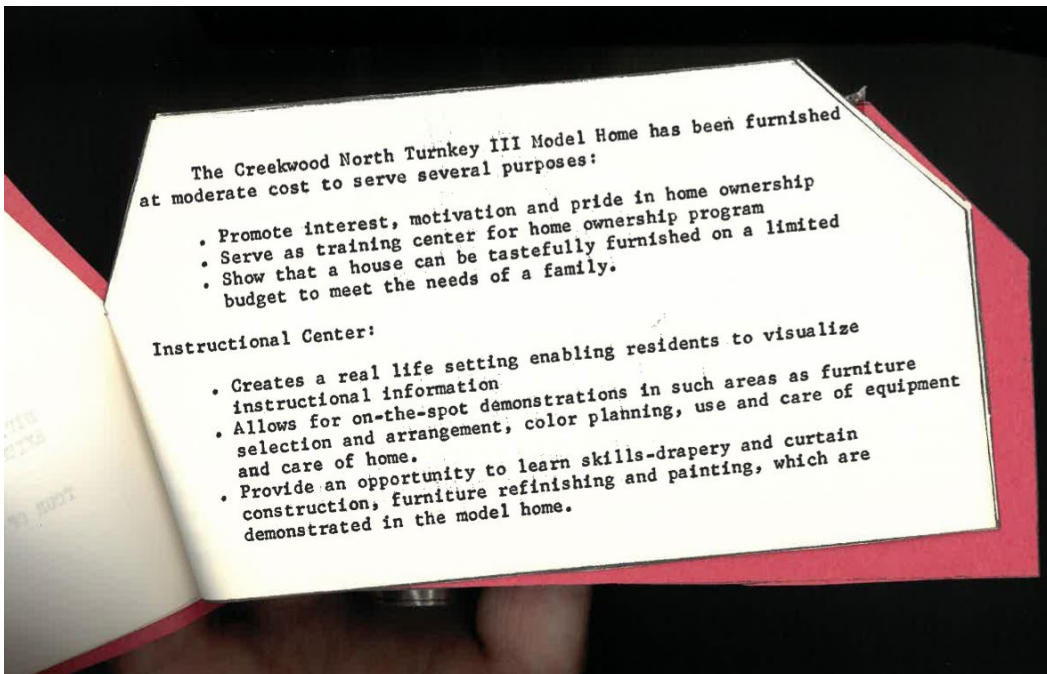


Figure 31c

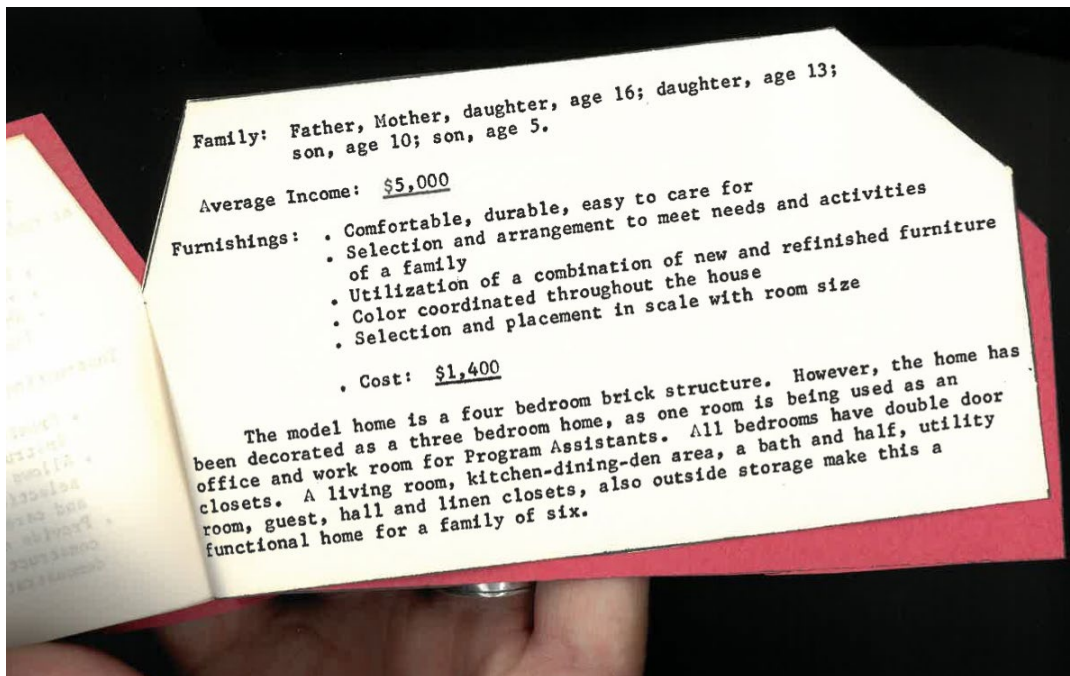


Figure 31d

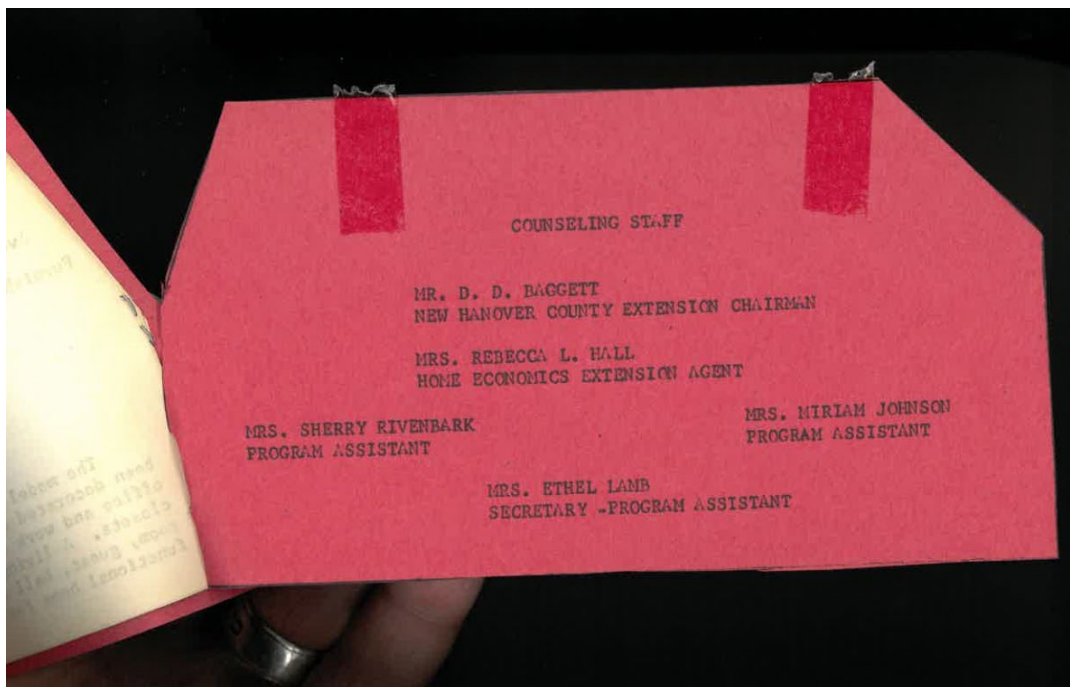


Figure 31e

Eligibility for the Turnkey III program required an application process and multiple steps which moved families along a trajectory from leasing to ownership. Initially residents would pay 20 percent of their income under a lease-to-own agreement, perform routine maintenance on the home, and open an

account to save for a down payment. After performing \$350 of “sweat equity” maintenance, if all other requirements were met, the home could be purchased below market value. In the case of Creekwood North, the homes initially sold for \$17,000 to \$18,000, based on an annual income of \$5,000.¹⁷

The story of Thelma and Frank Walker illustrates the process at Creekwood North. Married in 1965, Mrs. Walker worked at a local neckwear manufacturer, and Mr. Walker was trained as a barber and operated his own shop. Soon after marriage they moved into Hillcrest, a traditional rental public housing project run by the Wilmington Housing Authority. In 1970 the Walkers were approached by Mrs. Cooper, who was canvassing Hillcrest looking for families interested and potentially eligible to enter the program at Creekwood North, then under construction. Mrs. Walker remembers that to be eligible they had to be employed, have good credit history, and maintain separate bank accounts for rent, non-routine maintenance (i.e. appliances), and to save for a down payment. In addition, they were required to attend both Wilmington Housing Authority classes (which provided information on a variety of topics, such as financial planning and home maintenance) and Creekwood North Homeowner’s Association meetings.¹⁸



Figure 32: 1978 aerial of Creekwood North neighborhood.

¹⁷ Joseph Burstein, “New Techniques in Public Housing,” *Law and Contemporary Problems* 32 (Summer 1967), pp. 538-540. *Wilmington Morning Star*, December 30, 1972.

¹⁸ Telephone interview with Thelma Walker, February 29, 2020.



Figure 33: Wilmington Housing Authority staff teaching a class on the Turnkey III program at Creekwood North, June 6, 1971. (Left to Right) Mrs. Sherry Rivenbark, Mrs. Rebecca Hall, Mrs. Miriam Johnson (Source: Wilmington Morning News Photograph Collection, North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Public Library)

The Walker's toured several model homes in the development in 1971 and chose a floorplan. Mrs. Walker remembered that she was a bit disappointed the choices were limited and that the styles of the houses were so similar. The Walker's four-bedroom, one-bathroom house was completed in 1972 and the family continues to live there in 2020. Mrs. Walker noted that some number of homes in Creekwood North continue to be owned by original families, sometimes second and third generations.¹⁹

In her interview Mrs. Walker spoke of the importance of the Community Center to the neighborhood, during the years it functioned. The center staff and adult residents of the community regularly organized sports teams, talent shows, and a big annual May Day celebration. The events and local involvement helped maintain the community and individual property values through pride in ownership. The Community Center was operated by the WHA until 2002, when it was taken over by the Creekwood North Homeowner's Association. The building was severely damaged by Hurricane Florence in 2018, and the Homeowner's Association sold it for private development in 2019. Adjacent to the brick Community Center a masonry classroom-style building with pitched shed roof was built sometime in the later 1970s

¹⁹ Ibid.

for use as a Head Start Center. Also badly damaged in a hurricane, that structure too was sold for private development in 2019.²⁰

In 2001, the North Carolina Department of Transportation completed a major roadway on the north side of Wilmington, Martin Luther King Jr Parkway. Construction of the roadway necessitated removal of eleven of the twelve split-foyer homes along N. 26th Street in Creekwood North, and a large masonry noise wall was erected to partly shield the neighborhood. The north section of the community originally formed a large cul-de-sac, and there had never been access to exterior roads in that area. An at-grade intersection with the new roadway was built, increasing traffic in Creekwood North.²¹

Comparable Examples

Though federally funded public housing communities are not uncommon in North Carolina, Creekwood North is the only Turnkey III development in Wilmington and one of the earliest of its type, both in terms of promoting home ownership and in being racially integrated from its inception. One Turnkey III community in Raleigh is comparable to Creekwood North; elements of three other neighborhoods in Wilmington are also comparable.

Apollo Heights in Raleigh (Figures 34-36) was the first Turnkey III development in North Carolina and is very similar in concept, size, and design to Creekwood North. The community is approximately 70 acres and contains 216 single-family homes in Ranch and split-level designs. The first homes were completed in May of 1969 and are very similar in size and layout to those in Creekwood North. Likely standardized HUD plans were employed. Apollo Heights is located in southeast Raleigh, a predominately African American section of the city, though it was created as a racially integrated community. Like Creekwood North, Apollo Heights featured a Community Center. Apollo Heights and Creekwood North are also comparable in terms of current condition; both remain predominately single-family owned and predominately African American. Some homes in both communities are well cared for, and some show signs of delayed maintenance. Most remain largely as built, though some feature small additions, and newer siding and windows.

Hillcrest (Figures 37-39), southeast of downtown Wilmington, is a public housing development established in the early 1940s, initially as segregated community for low income African Americans only. It is a more traditional format of multi-family rental units operated by the Wilmington Housing Authority. The neighborhood consists primarily of concrete block one-story duplexes that feature hipped-roofs with projecting end-gables. These elements are comparable to some homes in Creekwood North. Today Hillcrest is an integrated development, though still predominately African American. The condition of the structures is more uniform than those in Creekwood, overall showing signs of delayed maintenance.

²⁰ Ibid.; *Wilmington Star News*, June 26, 2007; and “About Us” page, Turnkey Creekwood North website, www.turnkeywilmingtonnc.org.

²¹ Walker interview.

Vesta Village (Figures 40, 41), southeast of downtown Wilmington, was developed by the Wilmington Housing Authority at the same time as Creekwood North, but as a Turnkey II project. With 43 units Vesta Village is smaller than Creekwood North and differs in architectural design, consisting of one-level duplexes and two-story townhouses. Though the designs differ and Vesta Village was created as a rental community, like Creekwood North it was planned from the beginning to be racially integrated. Vesta Village continues to function as a low-income public housing community and appears to have maintained its overall integrity and condition.

Also contemporary with Creekwood North is Kings Grant (Figures 42-45), a developer-built non-federally funded Wilmington subdivision dating to the late 1960s and early 1970s. Located northeast of Creekwood North, Kings Grant consists of single-family homes on individual lots. Like Creekwood North, a majority of the homes are one-level Ranch houses constructed of brick with hipped roofs. However, there is more variance in design and floorplans, and overall the houses are somewhat larger. Kings Grant is a good example of a largely intact late mid-twentieth century developer-built subdivision, the type of community the Turnkey III projects were intended to emulate. The homes in Kings Grant are generally well-maintained, and some have additions and alterations typical for structures fifty to sixty years old.



Figure 34: Apollo Heights, Raleigh



Figure 35: Apollo Heights, Raleigh



Figure 36: Apollo Heights, Raleigh



Figure 37: Hillcrest, Wilmington



Figure 38: Hillcrest, Wilmington



Figure 39: Hillcrest, Wilmington



Figure 40: Vesta Village, Wilmington



Figure 41: Vesta Village, Wilmington



Figure 42: Kings Grant, Wilmington



Figure 43: Kings Grant, Wilmington



Figure 44: Kings Grant, Wilmington



Figure 45: Kings Grant, Wilmington

National Register Evaluation

Integrity

Creekwood North Historic District retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship and association. The neighborhood remains on its original planned site, continues to function as a Turnkey III development, and continues to exhibit its mid-century residential appearance. Many of the homes remain structurally as built, though a few have additions and some number have replaced siding, windows, and doors.

Creekwood North Historic District displays somewhat diminished integrity of setting and feeling caused by the construction of Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway and the attendant noise wall in 2001, which necessitated removal of eleven of the larger split-foyer models along N. 26th Street at the northern boundary of the neighborhood. Construction of the roadway also removed the cul-de-sac aspect of that portion of the community, creating a heavily utilized entrance on the north side. In addition, the original Community Center and Head Start building are now abandoned and have been sold for commercial development of the land, thus further diminishing the integrity of setting and association.

Criteria Evaluations

Creekwood North Historic District is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. It is an early example in North Carolina of a neighborhood of single-family owned houses built as part of the historic Turnkey III program, created by HUD in 1968 to move people out of rental public housing and into home ownership. Development of Creekwood North was championed by community leaders and government officials and seen as a means of both promoting residential and public school integration in the City of Wilmington as well as replacing economically blighted neighborhoods. Thus, Creekwood North represents the broader pattern of social and economic change in the United States and North Carolina during the mid-twentieth century, supported by government-backed programs such as the Great Society and the North Carolina Fund.

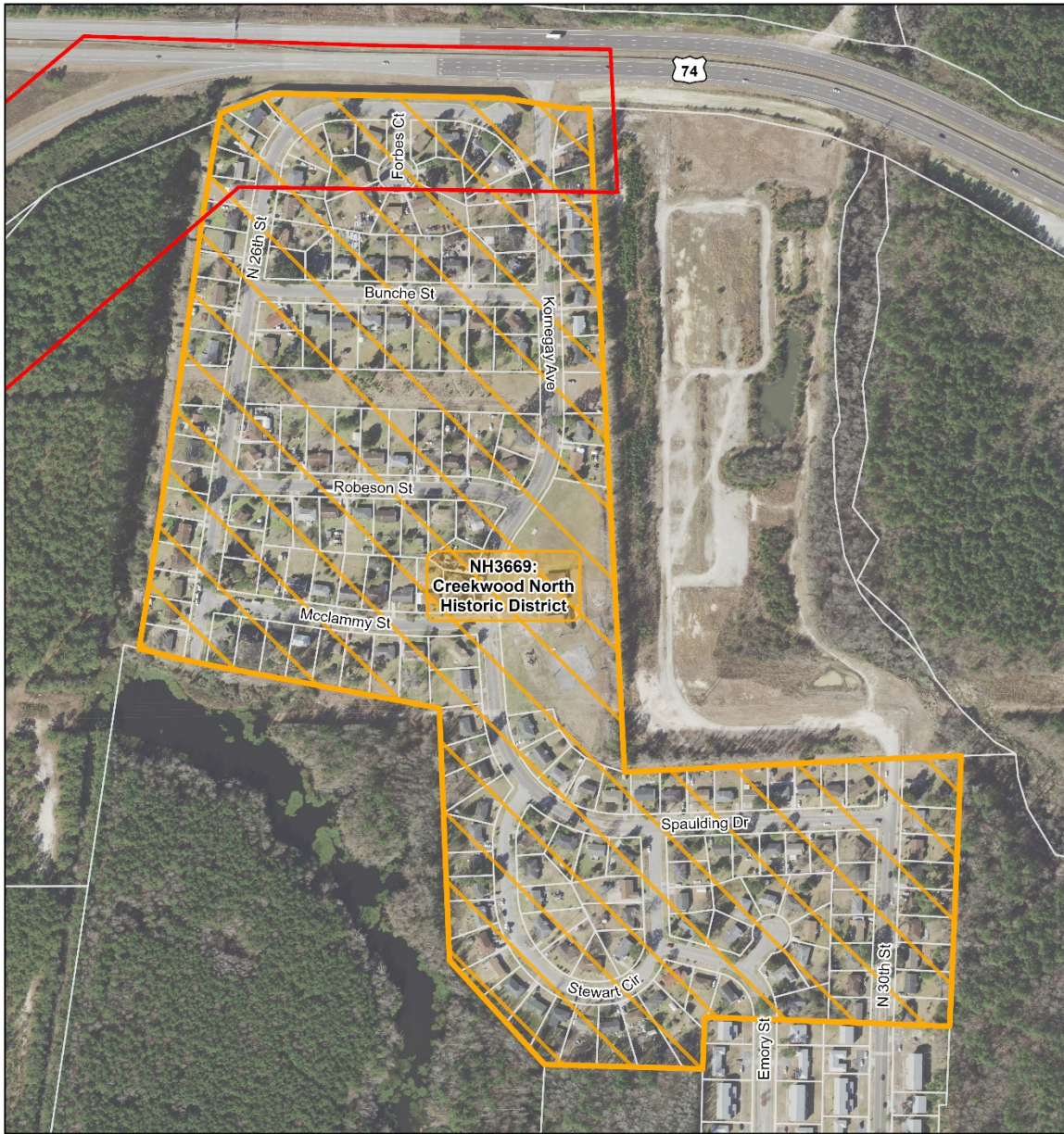
Creekwood North Historic District is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B. No one associated with the district is considered a significant figure in history.







Creekwood North Historic District is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. The houses themselves are not significant or outstanding architectural examples of mid-twentieth century design. While the neighborhood is an example of a planned community, its significance lies within the parameters of the innovative Turnkey III program, not in the design or layout of the built environment.

Creekwood North Historic District is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D as it has not yielded nor is likely to yield information important to history of building design or technology.

Boundary Description and Justification

The National Register eligible boundary for Creekwood North Historic District follows the original platted neighborhood and forms a reverse “S” in overall shape. The boundary to the west follows parcel lines along Stewart Circle, McClammy Street and N. 26th Street; extends to the north along the right-of-way line adjacent to Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway; to the east along the parcel lines on Kornegay Avenue and Spaulding Drive; and to the south across parcel lines along Emory and N.30th Streets dividing Creekwood North from the adjacent but separate Creekwood South development to the south.



 APE Boundary	 Parcel	 <p>NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION</p>
 NR-Eligible Boundary	<p>N. 23rd Street (SR 1302) to N. 26th Street. Construct Route on New Location.</p> <p>STIP Project U-5926</p> <p>New Hanover County</p>	
<p>350 175 0 350 Feet</p>  <p>Source: NCDOT, NC OneMap, NV5 CALYX Figure Date: 5/4/2020</p> 		<p>NR-Eligible Boundary - Creekwood North Historic District</p>

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