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Collier Heights

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COLLIER HEIGHTS

A Neighborhood of Significance



Historic District Nomination Form
for the National Register of Historic Places

SECTION 1

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. **Historic Name of District (see Section 3.B.1):** Collier Heights
2. **Location of District:** The Collier Heights neighborhood is located west of downtown Atlanta, northeast of and bounded by the junction of Interstate 20 and West Interstate 285. Other key streets are Hamilton E. Holmes Drive NW, Collier Drive NW, Oldknow Drive NW, Baker Ridge Drive NW, and Harwell Road NW. Although properties bordering Donald Lee Holloway Parkway NW are not included in the proposed district, it is a major traffic artery serving the neighborhood.

City or vicinity of: Atlanta

County: Fulton

Zip Code of the district: 30318

Approximate distance and direction from county seat: Six miles west-northwest.

3. **Acreage of district to be nominated (approximately):** 986 acres.
4. **a. Total Number of Historic/Contributing Resources in district (from Section 2.A. p. 6):** 1,765.
b. Total Number of Noncontributing Resources in district (from Section 2.A. p. 6): There are 99 noncontributing resources and 134 vacant resources.
5. **Are a majority of buildings in the district less than 50 years old?** Yes; see Section 4.C.
6. **Property Ownership**
Does a federal agency own property within the district? No.

NOTE: A letter of support for the district nomination from an agency or organization that represents property owners in the district must be included with the HDIF.

A redrafted letter from the Collier Heights Community Association is attached or forthcoming.

NOTE: In districts of 50 property owners or less, a list of the property owners of record must be submitted. N/A

Do the property owners within the district support nomination of the district to the National Register? Nomination is supported by the Collier Heights Community Association.

Have any of the following been informed about the nomination of this district to the National Register? What has been their involvement, if any, in the nomination process? Be as specific as possible.

Regional Development Center: No.

County government: No.

City government: The Atlanta Urban Design Commission supports the National Register Nomination and has provided technical assistance. The city is also working with the neighborhood to designate it as a local historic district.

Local historical society or preservation organization: No.

Neighborhood, homeowners', or civic association: The Collier Heights Community Association strongly supports this nomination and is actively involved in generating awareness and interest for it.

Business association: No.

Is the nomination of the district part of a larger formal or informal preservation program in the area? No.

7. Sponsor of Nomination

Name(s) of local sponsor: Collier Heights Community Association, c/o Harold and Juanita Morton

Organization or agency (if applicable): Collier Heights Community Association

Mailing Address: 2726 Collier Dr

City: Atlanta

State: GA

Zip Code: 30318

Telephone—Monday-Friday daytime and/or work: 404-799-5495

E-mail: juanitalmorton@comcast.net

8. Form prepared by

Name: Case Studies in Historic Preservation Class, HIST 8700, Spring 2008, Richard Laub, Instructor. Students: Emilie Arnold, Neil Bowen, Renee Brown-Bryant, Stephanie Cherry, Parinya Chukaew, Erica Danylchak, Emily Eigel, Hilary Morrish, Melina Vasquez, and Lillie Ward.

Title and Organization or Company, if any: Georgia State University, Department of History, Heritage Preservation Program

Mailing Address: 805 General Classroom Building, 38 Peachtree Center Avenue

City: Atlanta

State: GA

Zip Code: 30303

Telephone—Monday-Friday daytime and/or work: 404-463-9206

E-mail: hisrel@langate.gsu.edu

Date: April 12, 2008

What is your relationship to or interest in the district? Class project.

9. Reasons for nominating the district (Explain all that apply)

Recognition: Collier Heights is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as a neighborhood not only significant as a mid-century suburban development, but also as a largely intact affluent African American neighborhood that saw its genesis in Atlanta's historic and rocky desegregation.

Grant Assistance: No.

Tax Incentives: No.

Protection: Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act will help to ensure that the Collier Heights neighborhood will be taken into account in the event of proposed Federal undertakings in the vicinity. Local designation will provide for further protection.

Part of a larger preservation plan: Once Collier Heights is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Collier Heights Community Association, along with the aid of the Atlanta Urban Design Commission, will work to designate the neighborhood as a local historic district. This designation will help to regulate changes to historic properties within the district, as well as demolition and new construction.

Minority Resource: The Collier Heights neighborhood is an important minority resource as a historically African American neighborhood that served the housing and community needs of a growing African American middle and upper class in the 1950s and 1960s.

Other public interest in this nomination: N/A

SECTION 2

DESCRIPTION

A. Number of Contributing and Noncontributing Resources:

Provide the number of each type of contributing resource in the district.

Buildings: 1,756.

Structures: None.

Sites: None.

Objects: None.

Provide the number of each type of noncontributing resource.

Buildings: 106.

Structures: 1.

Sites: 1.

Objects: None.

B. Description

1. **Summary description:**

The mid-twentieth century was a time of intense change and expansion for the Atlanta area. After the Second World War, housing shortages close to the city and the construction of the city's highway system rapidly nudged Atlanta's boundaries outward. While this flight from the city to the suburbs was largely the privilege of White Atlanta, there were instances of suburbanization among the African American population, among which the need for housing and the shortage thereof had, by the post-World War II era, reached a critical climax. While many African American suburbanization opportunities in Atlanta at this time were the result of "White flight," which transformed many previously all-white neighborhoods into majority-

African American areas seemingly overnight, the majority of the neighborhood of Collier Heights is unique. This majority mid-century neighborhood, located within an area of west Atlanta not annexed within city limits until 1952, is a quintessential example of upper- and middle-class suburbanization in Atlanta during the mid-twentieth century with one significant distinction: it was largely developed as the result of an African American initiative, and specifically served a majority African American population.

While the main body of Collier Heights was initially constructed for African Americans, there was development in the area prior to 1951 that consisted of early bungalows, American small houses and modest ranch houses, which were actually originally built for whites. This early development of the area was quickly vacated by whites once African Americans began building in and moving into the area.

African Americans began purchasing lots in Collier Heights, which was at that time considered a much larger area encompassing the four corners of land that currently surround the intersection of interstates I-20 and I-285, during the mid-1950s, by which time the neighborhood was being touted in the city's leading African American newspaper, the *Atlanta Daily World*, as the most prominent African American residential area in Atlanta. By way of a patchwork quilt-like development pattern of approximately 55 independent subdivisions, the community currently known collectively as Collier Heights was created. Upon the lots that were purchased and developed at this time were built, largely from plan books but also by independent developers, the ranch and split-level house types that characterize the majority of the area today. Large house lots integrated with the natural topography, curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs, and ample vegetation characterized the neighborhood. Collier Heights came to embody a quintessential example of mid-twentieth-century middle- and upper-class suburbanization in the United States.

The construction of interstates I-20 and I-285 between 1958 and 1980, and their intersection in the Collier Heights area, divided the original neighborhood of Collier Heights into four quadrants separated by major transportation thoroughfares. While three of these quadrants eventually became known by other names, the area bounded roughly by Bankhead Highway (currently Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway), I-285, I-20, and Hightower Road (currently Hamilton E. Holmes Drive) continued to be referred to as Collier Heights. The completion of various sections of the interstates during the 1950s and 1960s brought greater accessibility, and therefore, further growth and development, to the area. Multiple churches and schools began to populate the borders of the neighborhood and they helped to maintain the sense of community and camaraderie that had been a feature of Collier Heights since the beginning of its development.

By the 1960s, the neighborhood was celebrated in nationally-known publications, including the *New York Times* and *Time Magazine* (see appendix), as the premier residential enclave of influential African Americans in the southeast. Some of Atlanta's most prominent African American figures, including Ralph D. Abernathy, Herman Russell, Martin Luther King, Sr. and Asa Yancey, Sr., had made Collier Heights their home, and not only remained as residents, but also worked hard to protect the area from commercial development pressure and increasing crime as residential development slowed during the late-1970s.

Today, Collier Heights remains unique in that, despite radical changes in development along its boundaries, and general changing tastes in residential development (which have largely turned away from mid-century house types), it retains not only a remarkable degree of architectural and developmental integrity, but also a notable population of original and long-term residents.

These residents remain involved in and extremely proud of the community, and are passionate about the neighborhood's preservation.

2. **Natural terrain, natural landmarks, geographic features in and around the district:**

The natural terrain in and around Collier Heights is hilly, which resulted in steeply sloped and often-uneven building lots (see images 1 and 2). Many of the lots on which infill construction is currently occurring were formerly left undeveloped, due in great part to their challenging terrain. A creek runs from the center of the southern boundary of the proposed district across Collier Drive, between Dale Creek Drive and Waterford Road, paralleling Waterford Road before it forks east of Shorter Terrace. The two branches of the creek then travel northeast and northwest, respectively. Lands just inside and immediately bordering the boundaries of the neighborhood have been the subject of invasive grading and construction, and as a result, the terrain of the proposed district survives as a scarce vestige of the historic terrain of west Atlanta.

3. **Distinct parts, areas, or sections of the district:**

The proposed Collier Heights district includes an area of residential development, a small area of community building development, and green space.

The residential development area is cohesive and not infiltrated by other types of development, aside from designated parkland and schools. This area of Collier Heights includes three primary distinguishable types of residential development. The oldest of these is the bungalow, followed by the American small house, while the youngest and more significant development consists of mid-twentieth century house types, including primarily ranch and split-level types. Bungalows appear scattered and intermittently as independent examples on relatively large lots fronting the north and middle portions of the east boundary of the neighborhood, Hamilton E. Holmes Drive, an early thoroughfare of the area, while the American small houses appear as small pockets within the easternmost third of the proposed district, interspersed within and essentially surrounded by the mid-century ranch and split-level development. This area's proximity to the historic thoroughfares of Hightower Road (currently Hamilton E. Holmes Drive), Simpson Road (currently Joseph E. Boone Boulevard)/Collier Drive, and Bankhead Highway (currently Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway), all of which served as the main transportation routes to and through the area prior to the construction of Interstates 20 and 285, explains its earlier development (see Section 2.B.12 for further information on historic transportation routes).

There is an area of community building development located on both sides of Hamilton E. Holmes Drive in the southeast corner of the proposed district. Berean Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Radcliffe Presbyterian Church, First Missionary Baptist Church, and Frederick Douglass High School are all located in this corner of the proposed district. Other public buildings in the district include Collier Heights Elementary School, which is located within the residential area of the neighborhood (see Section 2.B.7).

Finally, there is designated green space, in the form of two city parks, within the proposed district. Dale Creek Park is a 3.2-acre park surrounded by house lots fronting Baker Ridge Drive, Forest Ridge Drive, Dale Creek Drive and Collier Ridge Drive, in the southeast portion of the neighborhood. Harwell Heights Park is a 23.4-acre park located adjacent to Collier Heights Elementary School on Collier Drive, in the southwest portion of the neighborhood. In addition, there are also multiple pockets of open woodland between lots and behind houses that greatly add to the lush, green, natural appearance that characterizes the neighborhood (see Section 2.B.8).

4. **Pattern of land subdivision, including street layout, lot layout, alignment of major highways, field systems, etc.; and relationship of this pattern of land subdivision to the natural terrain and to the physical development of the district:**

The street pattern of Collier Heights is almost entirely curvilinear, indicative of the period of most active and prevalent development in Collier Heights: the mid-twentieth century. Even the major historic thoroughfares of the area, Hamilton E. Holmes Drive (formerly Hightower Road) and Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway (formerly Bankhead Highway), follow a curving path north-south and east-west respectively. Major, multi-lane interstates I-20, which runs east-west, and I-285, which runs north-south, form the south and west boundaries of the proposed district, respectively.

The collective neighborhood of Collier Heights is composed of a handful of examples of scattered, independent bungalow development dating from 1915 through approximately 1930, as well as 55 recorded individual subdivisions platted throughout the late 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s (see attached subdivision map). House lot sizes vary between type of development and subdivision. The lots on which bungalows were constructed are often larger and deeper, ranging from 69 to 175 feet in width and 158 to approximately 300 feet deep, initiating the trend of deep, narrow lots that characterize Collier Heights' development up through the present day. These were built when the area remained largely rural, and front the only two major thoroughfares that traversed the area and connected it with the city of Atlanta at that time.

With regards to later development, again, house lot sizes vary between individual properties, but also between subdivision, with some, such as those along Godfrey Drive, as small as 65 feet wide by 112 feet deep, up to those dispersed along streets including Duffield Drive, Engel Road, Linkwood Road, and Waterford Road, which average more than 100 feet wide by several hundred feet deep. The majority of lots fall somewhere in the middle of these two extremes, averaging approximately 80 feet wide and between 100 and 150 feet deep. House lots are inconsistently sized, shaped, and patterned as a result of the piecemeal nature of the neighborhood's development. Inconsistency in the street pattern results from the same origins: main thoroughfares such as Collier Drive twist and turn through the entire neighborhood, while other principal streets, such as Waterford Road, completely change direction and name during their passage through the various stages of development that today compose Collier Heights.

After the residential bungalow development, the mass subdivision of the proposed district began in 1946 with the first of six phases of development known as "Collier Heights," all within the eastern half of the proposed district. The majority of this development took place along Baker Ridge Drive, Collier Ridge Drive, Loghaven Drive, Godfrey Drive, Linkwood Road, Ozburn Road and Oldknow Drive. This development consisted mainly of narrow, rectangular lots between 60 and 100 feet wide by between 150 and 250 feet deep. Overall, lots were irregularly-sized, but within individual subdivisions, most lots were typically close to uniformly-sized. It is interesting to note the development along Loghaven Drive, Godfrey Drive and Linkwood Road, all of which sit extremely close to I-20 but outside of the area that was sure to be demolished for the interstate's construction: it is probable that this development resulted from the announcement of the final proposed path for I-20, although the date of this announcement has not yet been verified. Also interesting to note is the date of house construction for the majority of these lots, which typically occurred several years after land subdivision, between 1950 and 1955, with some mass construction occurring as late as the early 1960s. However, it also appears (according to present documentation) that most of these areas include one property built prior to the land subdivision, while some actually exhibit multiple scattered properties built prior to the recorded land subdivision date, as early as 1941.

The subdivision of the neighborhood remained slow during the years between 1950 and 1954, when five new subdivisions were platted. All of these were platted during 1950 and 1951, while there was no subdivision activity between 1952 and 1954. (The years between 1952 and 1945 correspond with the annexation of this land into the city of Atlanta, the establishment of the West Side Mutual Development Committee, and the National Development Corporation's purchase of land for African American housing within the proposed district's boundaries. This was the impetus for the subsequent transition of the previously-developed white residential areas within the proposed district to African American residential areas.) During this era, the majority of development took place in the central and southeastern portions of the proposed district. The largest subdivisions were platted in the center of the district, along Baker Ridge Drive (along which subdivision activity ran the entire length by 1954), Engle Road, Larchmont Drive and Waterford Road. Many of those lots fronting the east side of Waterford Road have very irregular rear lot lines, due to the stream that runs immediately behind the properties. Within these subdivisions appears the first cul-de-sac in Collier Heights, Larchmont Court, located within Unit Seven of the Collier Heights subdivision (platted in 1951), as well as the unique, almost triangular lot shape and radial pattern of lots that resulted from organization around cul-de-sacs and would appear regularly in latter subdivision of the neighborhood. A majority of large, irregularly-shaped lots that span a wide, irregular range of sizes is present: common lot measurements are 65 or 130 feet wide and just above 200 feet deep. Along with the cul-de-sac, the expected increasingly-curvilinear street pattern also characterizes all of the subdivision of this era, save for Unit Eight of the Collier Heights subdivision, which was platted along straight, gridiron streets very near the east boundary of the proposed district in 1951. This, along with Unit Five of Collier Heights, also platted in 1951, constitutes the smaller-scale subdivision of this era, which occurred predominantly along Collier and Dale Creek Drives. These subdivisions were composed almost exclusively of nearly-rectangular or rectangular lots, and while those along the west portion of Collier Drive are irregularly-sized, those along the east portion and along Dale Creek drive are all between 70 and 90 feet wide and approximately 150 feet deep. For all of these subdivisions, the main date of house construction is, much as with those subdivided in the late 1940s, typically several years after land subdivision, between 1955 the early 1960s, with some mass construction occurring as late as the mid-1960s. In this era, only Unit Eight of the Collier Heights subdivision, platted in 1958, exhibits houses apparently built prior to the subdivision of the land.

The period between 1955 and 1959 marked the height of subdivision activity in the Collier Heights area. During these five years, 24 new subdivisions were platted within the boundaries of the proposed district, most of these in the northwest and southeast areas. Again, the subdivisions of this era run the gamut in terms of lot size and shape. Subdivisions such as Hightower Court, platted along Hightower Court in the southeast corner of the proposed district in 1956, and Woodlane Park, all four units of which were platted in the northwest portion of the proposed district between 1958 and 1959, are composed of rectangular and radial, almost-triangular lots (around curved streets), fairly uniform in size (averaging approximately 80 feet wide by 200 feet deep). However, in subdivisions such as Unit One of the Woodlawn Land Development Company, while there are some more average-sized lots, there are also some of the largest lots in the proposed district, all of which are 100 or more feet wide and many of which are between 250 and 500 feet deep. In sum, as with the rest of the Collier Heights neighborhood, there is again little regular pattern present in the land subdivision of the overall neighborhood during this era: while the majority of the subdivisions were composed of the smaller lots that are more uniform in shape and size, a broad spectrum of lot sizes and shapes is represented. House construction within the subdivisions of this era occurs largely within a few years of the subdivision platting, between 1955 and 1960. While some examples, such as

Miami Heights, platted along Jamaica, Kingston and Harwell Roads in 1958, and Unit Three of Royal Oaks Manor, also platted in 1958 along Venetta Place, experienced build-out within a year or two of the subdivision's establishment, other areas, such as Unit One of Handy Park, in the center of the proposed district along Oldknow Drive, was still experiencing significant amounts of house construction as late as the early 1970s. Finally, there are some large areas in which house construction again appears to have occurred almost entirely prior to the official platting of the subdivision. This phenomenon appears in the Santa Barbara subdivision and the Renfro Valley subdivision, both of which are recorded as platted in 1958, but within which almost all houses were apparently constructed in 1955. A more in-depth examination of building permits for such areas would be useful in confirming this phenomenon.

Large-scale subdivision continued throughout the neighborhood between 1960 and 1964, during which another 16 subdivisions were platted and piecemeal subdivision expanded to blanket the vast majority of the proposed district. The majority of this subdivision occurred in the northeast corner of the proposed district, which had yet to be infiltrated by mass subdivision. During this era, six subdivisions, four of which are fairly large, were platted in the northeast corner. The northwest portion of the proposed district was also actively subdivided at this time, and includes Unit Two of Harwell Heights, which is one of the largest in the neighborhood, platted along Amhurst and Hobart Drives, Jones Road, Stetson Place and Vanderbilt Court and Lane in 1961. This, along with those in the northeast corner, represent a large portion of the final phase of large-scale land subdivision in Collier Heights: much of what was subdivided after and along with these are smaller subdivisions, some of only a few properties apiece, that made use of small parcels of land that had been previously left vacant between established subdivisions. Average lot size in the subdivisions of this era again varied greatly. Subdivisions such as Unit Two of Harwell Heights, both units of King's Grant, platted along King's Grant Drive and Eleanor Terrace in 1962, and Unit Two of Handy Park, platted along Handy Drive in 1961, all exhibit the typical, almost-rectangular lots averaging approximately 80 feet wide by 150 feet deep, although there are multiple exceptions to this average lot size and also multiple triangular, radial lots and more trapezoidal lots. Subdivisions such as Unit Two of Oakland Hills, platted along Magna Carta Drive in 1963, and Unit Three of Crescendo Valley, platted along Allegro, Indigo and Symphony Lanes in 1961, exhibit much deeper house lots averaging 200 or more feet deep that are also often oddly shaped. House construction within the subdivisions of this era largely coincides with the subdivision dates, and was often rapid, building out subdivisions such as both units of Crescendo Valley and many of the smaller, infill subdivisions within a year of the official subdivision date. However, once again, there are discrepancies, such as the Hightower Court Extension, which was platted in 1960 but where it appears that the majority of houses were built in 1955, even before the original Hightower Court subdivision was recorded in 1956.

Between 1965 and 1969, subdivision slowed dramatically in Collier Heights. Only three subdivisions were platted in the proposed district during this era, all three by 1966. Two of these, both units of Crestwood Forest, platted along Larchmont Circle and Drive and East and West Kildare Avenues in 1965 and 1966, were actually new mass subdivisions, and likely represented the most upscale subdivisions yet constructed in Collier Heights, as described by a *Time Magazine* article of the era.¹ Lots platted during this era were almost entirely rectangular or nearly so, and of the more typical average size of approximately 80 feet wide by 150 feet deep. House construction in the three subdivisions of this era took place entirely in the late 1960s and early 1970s, bringing mass house construction in Collier Heights to a close until the

¹ "A Lift in Living," *Time Magazine*, September 21, 1959.

present day and construction of the modern infill that is currently emerging on lots throughout the neighborhood.

5. **Arrangement or placement of buildings and structures on lots within the district; relationship of buildings and structures to one another and to their surroundings; density of development:**

Houses in the proposed Collier Heights Historic District consistently front the street to which they are situated closest with their primary façade, and therefore typically front the street with their longest façades, despite the fact that most lots are far deeper than they are wide. This results in much smaller spaces between side façades of houses in comparison to the spaces in front of and behind houses. There are exceptions, such as transverse ranch houses, which front the street with one of their two shorter façades. These are dispersed throughout the neighborhood (see images 3 and 4). Also, on corner lots, houses occasionally front the corner itself, and are therefore positioned diagonally on their lots: multiple examples of this arrangement can be seen along Hobart and Amhurst Drives in the northwestern portion of the proposed district. The smaller, more uniform houses in the neighborhood exhibit an average setback of between 40 and 70 feet from the street that they front, but there is no uniform setback and while the majority of the houses are more-or-less aligned with one another along their block or portion of their street and therefore display an approximately equal setback, even these typically vary by at least a few feet. Houses are almost invariably situated well within the half of their lot that is closest to the street that the house fronts. The larger, more unique homes display varied setbacks, particularly along select streets, such as the north sides of Engle Road and Collier Drive south of Handy Drive, where the setback seems to follow absolutely no plan, and the houses are situated to the rear or middle of their respective lots. This irregular arrangement is also exemplified along parts of Collier Drive around its intersection with Simon Terrace.

The arrangement and placement of the bungalows along Hamilton E. Holmes Drive and Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway is indicative of the early, rural, scattered development that they represent. Some are placed further from the street that they front than is typical in the proposed district, while many are placed within the half of their lot that is closest to the street that the house fronts, much like the other types of construction in the area. These houses are much further apart from one another, a characteristic that is again indicative of this as early development, which took place when the area was largely undeveloped and therefore, larger lots were common. The houses are also located on either flat or slightly sloping lots that would have been the only easily-developable land in the area prior to the advances in grading and excavation that attained everyday feasibility closer to the middle of the 20th century.

The arrangement and placement of the American small houses in Collier Heights is typical of American small house neighborhoods. The houses are relatively even with the street and front the street with their longest façades. They exhibit an average setback of 50 feet, which varies little between properties or pockets of development. The ranch houses that are occasionally interspersed within the American small houses exhibit the same average setback and lot positioning as do the American small houses.

The arrangement and placement of the ranch and split-level houses within the Collier Heights neighborhood is a direct result of both topography and the affluence of many of the neighborhood's residents. First, the topography of the neighborhood is very hilly and most of the houses both respect and showcase this feature via design elements such as partially-exposed basements, many of which are entirely subterranean on one side of the house, and entirely exposed on the opposite side (see images 5 and 2). Also, many houses were placed on their lots

as a result of geographical features, such as streams and topography. Houses were often not only designed to respect these features, but also situated on their lots in order to take advantage of and avoid destroying the natural features, many of which then became enhancing, integral elements of the house site. For example, the carports of many of the houses on Santa Barbara Drive are located at a lower elevation than the houses and physically connected to them only via slanted roofs, which are a character-defining feature of these houses (see image 6).

Second, the affluence of the neighborhood's residents played a direct role in how houses were arranged on lots. More affluent residents not only benefited from larger lots, but higher-style house plans that sited the house anywhere and in any position on a lot, based on the client's individual demands. These houses often sit elevated from the street and are accompanied by significantly larger setbacks (see images 7, 8 and 9).

6. **Architectural characteristics of the district, including: periods, styles, and types of buildings and structures; design qualities, scale and proportion, construction materials and techniques, and workmanship:**

The original development of what is today the Collier Heights neighborhood took place along the west side of Hamilton E. Holmes Drive during the 1910s, 1920s and 1930s. This development is composed of select, scattered examples of bungalows, the oldest of which is a circa-1915 house located at the corner of Baker and Hamilton E. Holmes Drives (see image 10). The bungalow house type is one- to one-and-one-half stories, as well as long and low with an overall rectangle shape. Integral porches and low-pitched roofs with wide overhangs characterize this type. Almost all of those in Collier Heights are of the front-gabled subtype, which was one of the most popular bungalow subtypes. Bungalows were very popular in Georgia and throughout the U.S. from 1900 through 1930.

The bungalows within the proposed district are of the Craftsman style, the most popular 20th-century house styles in Georgia. This style emphasizes materials and craftsmanship, and these bungalows are therefore the only houses in Collier Heights that exhibit a style not based on the emphasis of standardized, machine-produced materials and ornament. Collier Heights' Craftsman bungalows often exhibit a wide variety of materials, most commonly wood and masonry. They are wood-frame construction and all exhibit clapboard siding. All have front porches, although some have been infilled. Architectural details characteristic of the Craftsman style, including wood brackets, square wood columns set on brick piers, small, multi-light windows and masonry chimneys, are common, as are mid-century styled metal awnings over windows and around porches, as found at 684 and 688 Hamilton E. Holmes Drive (see images 249 and 250). Almost all of these properties exhibit an outbuilding, which is rare with regards to the main body of the proposed district's development. Also, the majority of these houses have undergone extensive alteration, including porch infill, additions, and alteration of architectural features, as exhibited at 550 and 711 Hamilton E. Holmes Drive (see images 10 and 251). There are also many that are in very poor condition, due to lack of maintenance.

Collier Heights' later, mid-twentieth century development produced three visually- and architecturally- distinct categories of architecture: American small houses, high-style mid-century houses, including ranch and split-level types, and less unique, simplified ranch and split-level houses. The majority of contributing properties survive without major alterations, although the enclosure of carports has been popular, as has the replacement of mid-century door styles with more modern doors that incorporate leaded glass.

The American small house is the dominant type along Albert Street, Forrest Ridge Drive (see image 11), the easternmost portion of Oldknow Drive (around its intersection with Albert

Street), the southernmost portion of Ozburn Road (around its intersection with Oldknow Drive), the easternmost portion of Baker Ridge Drive (see image 12) Godfrey Drive (see image 13) and Loghaven Drive (see image 14). American small houses are detached one-story houses that are nearly square in massing. Hence their name, they are small by today's standards, with the largest examples topping out around 900 square feet. These houses are composed of three to five major rooms in addition to a bathroom, all compactly massed together, and therefore almost always devoid of unnecessary interior space, such as hallways. Most of these houses, both in general as well as in Collier Heights, have no defined style, as the addition of ornament and aesthetic detail also added cost. American small houses are most often wood-frame construction, and aesthetic characteristics include clapboard siding, a centered front entrance framed by two double-hung, multi-light windows across the primary façade, and a side-gabled roof, as appears at 436 Forrest Ridge Drive (see image 15).

A recently identified subtype of the American small house, the Extended American small house, also appears occasionally on the previously-mentioned streets within the proposed district. The Extended American small house's type name belies its form: it is simply a slightly larger American small house that incorporates a larger living room as part of a more rectangular massing than the traditional American small house. Examples of this type are dispersed throughout the pockets of American small house construction within Collier Heights (see image 16).

Younger mid-century house types, including the ranch and the split-level, populate the vast majority of the proposed district. These can be further divided into two categories within the Collier Heights neighborhood: high-style examples that are often larger, uniquely-designed, and unusually-situated on remarkably-larger house lots, and simplified examples that were developed in mass quantities, and therefore exhibit slight variations of uniform designs and approximately-uniform lot size and positioning within their lots.

Both the high-style and simplified categories include ranches and split-levels, the dominant house types constructed in the U.S. during the mid-twentieth century. These house types developed based on three central principles: the isolation of various activities to separate areas of the house based on the nature of the activity, increasing privacy by orienting the house and its activities either inward or towards a rear yard and away from the public street, and the integration of outdoor and indoor living spaces, which was accomplished by the inclusion of courtyards and patios as integral living spaces. The ranch type consists of a long, low single-story house in which private spaces, such as bedrooms, are grouped together on the opposite side of the house from public spaces, such as the living room. The split-level incorporates this identical arrangement, but does so on three levels, two of which are stacked and compose one half of the house, and the other which is positioned at a height between the stacked levels and pushed to one side, composing the second half of the house. This house type was well suited to the rolling terrain of Collier Heights, as it was originally designed to accommodate side-to-side sloping lots.

There are various subtypes and styles of ranch houses and split-levels, all of which appear with varying frequency in the proposed district. Official terminology for mid-century house types and styles including ranch and split-level subtypes for the state of Georgia is still evolving at the Georgia Historic Preservation Division, and the names of the following subtypes were tentative but working as of February 12, 2008.

- The "Compact" Ranch, which is small and rectangular with minimal recesses or projections, is the most common subtype within the proposed district. These are found with

frequency throughout the neighborhood, with both subterranean, as at 2930 Oldknow Drive (see image 17), and elevated basements, as appears at 683 Aline Drive (see image 18).

- The “Linear” Ranch, which has a long, rectangular form with a length that is at least twice its width, for example at 3022 West Peek Road (see image 19), is also very common in this neighborhood.
- Also common is the “Linear with Clusters” subtype, which is also long and rectangular, but incorporates a cluster of bedrooms projecting forward on one end, as can be seen in the example at 3042 West Peek Road (see image 20).
- The “Courtyard” subtype incorporates a courtyard (which often consists of a small patio) surrounded by projecting wings in either the front or rear of the house. The courtyard is typically centered and associated with an entrance, as can be seen in the example at 862 Skipper Drive (see image 21).
- The “Half Courtyard” subtype is also defined by a courtyard (which again often consists of a small patio); however, the courtyard is framed by only one projecting wing in this subtype, thereby creating an “L”-shaped house. This arrangement can be clearly seen in the example at 2333 Jones Road (see image 22).
- The “Rambling” Ranch exhibits the long, low ranch form, but in an almost indescribable collage of projections and rooms. Three distinct planes, delineated by cascading hipped roofs, compose the principal façade of this sprawling subtype, as can be seen in the example at 816 Woodmere Drive (see image 23).
- The “Bungalow” Ranch is almost square in shape and is therefore much more tightly massed than the traditional, more sprawling ranches. The “Bungalow” qualities are exhibited in the example at 2873 Collier Road (see image 24).
- The “Alphabet” Ranch, which represents houses with unusual geometric forms that often look like letters, is also present in the proposed district. This subtype includes some of the most unique houses within the neighborhood, including a round house at 2851 Baker Ridge Drive (see image 25), and an example at 896 Woodmere Drive (see image 26) that is composed of squared portions joined by a round portion.
- Finally, at least one example of the “Stacked” Ranch, an odd form of ranch house that defies the very nature of the ranch by being two stories, is also found in Collier Heights. This example is on Allegro Drive between Indigo Lane and Crescendo Drive (see image 27), and appears as a two-story “Linear with Clusters” ranch house.
- The single subtype of the split-level, the Split-foyer, has three distinct levels: an entrance area on-grade, and an upper and lower level, each of which is a half-flight of stairs above or below the entrance level, respectively. As the lower level is almost always partially-subterranean, this house type is recognized from the exterior by a one-and-one-half to two-story appearance. Split-foyers are found most commonly in Collier Heights along Allegro Drive, Indigo Lane, Crescendo Drive, and Lyric Way (see images 28, 29, and 30).

There are also various styles of ranch and split-level architecture, many of which are exemplified in Collier Heights. These include more conservative variations, such as those with no expressed style, or those in the Colonial Revival style, which appear in Collier Heights with

multiple variations of porticoes and traditional ornament (see images 31, 32, and 33) as well as more inventive variations, such as the Modern Ranch (which often incorporates elements of the International Style, including the flat roof and ribbon windows) (see images 34 and 8), the California Contemporary style, which exhibits abstract stylized details such as the asymmetrical gabled roofline (see image 35), and a subtype of the California Contemporary, the Eichler style, which is named for well-known California-based ranch architect Joseph Eichler and is characterized by the incorporation of cantilevered roofs, exposed roof beams and a great deal of glass on the principal façade, particularly by means of the clerestory (see images 36 and 37).

While in states such as California, experimental materials and forms were common embellishment on ranch and split-level houses, Georgia's conservative architectural tradition refined these types stylistically in all but the rarest of examples. The houses within the proposed district most often display the more traditional Georgia ranch house and split-level aesthetic characteristics and elements. Brick traditionally dominated ranch house construction as the veneer material of choice within the state of Georgia, and construction within Collier Heights is no exception to that rule. Brick is the most common building material in the proposed district, appearing in numerous colors and patterns (see images 38, 39, and 40), types, including Roman brick (see image 35), and features (see images 41, 42, and 43). Brick is very often paired with horizontal wood siding, typically affixed on the upper half of a house (see images 44, 45, and 46). Wood trim, including railing, fascia boards and boxed eaves, is common (see images 47 and 46), while cast metal trim and ornament, such as window surrounds, burglar bars, and porch supports and railing, is also very common and extremely ornate in certain examples (see images 48 and 49). Geometric, abstract curved and vegetation-inspired designs are the most common cast metal designs in Collier Heights, as is typical for ranches across the U.S. Decorative concrete block and tile screening of various types and detail is common, and often conceals a carport or patio (see images 50, 51, and 52). Brick and stone are also occasionally used as pure embellishment (see images 41 and 34). Massive, horizontal brick chimneys are common (see images 53 and 54). Enormous three-part picture windows are found on most primary facades but vary greatly in design from house to house and are usually wood-framed (see images 55, 56, 57, and 58).

Both metal- and wood-framed windows are found on these houses, and exist in multiple designs. Common examples include those composed of various number of rectangular lights stacked vertically (see image 59), diamond-paned windows (see images 60 and 61), single-light fixed windows (see image 62), 1/1 double-hung windows (see image 63), and more traditional multi-light double-hung windows, which are most often found on more-conservatively styled houses (see image 31). Typical mid-century smooth wood doors, often with various small glazed openings (see image 64), and some with unique details, such as hardware type and placement (see image 65), are common, although many have been replaced with more modern, ornate doors that incorporate large leaded glass designs (see images 66 and 67). Metal security doors of various designs, some of which are extremely ornate, are also common (see images 68, 69, and 70). (Many of these are not original, having been installed during the 1980s during a rash of burglaries and vehicle theft in the neighborhood.) Both gable and hipped roofs, or some combination thereof, are most common, while flat roofs and more contemporary rooflines, such as the asymmetrical gable, are also present but not as common. Some of these also incorporate artistic detail, such as cantilevering and massive boxed eaves (see image 47).

As is the rule in all post-WWII suburbs, very few houses are without either an attached garage or carport, and these appear in various designs and materials (see images 71, 72, and 73), but are almost always positioned on the side of the main house or underneath the main level to one

side. Outbuildings, however, are rare. Landscaping generally includes a large side driveway and a short paved walk connecting the driveway to the principal entrance, all surrounded by a broad lawn. One of the most unique yet consistent features of Collier Heights houses are their mail boxes, which often match the associated house in material and/or design (see images 74 and 75). The majority of these are brick, but some also incorporate cast metal, often as a stand for a typical simple metal box.

There are examples of highly decorative ranches that are simplified in overall form, but nonetheless, stand out from the main body of simplified ranches. The best example of this phenomenon is represented by two compact ranches with Japanese-inspired roofs and ornament, located at 2973 Collier Drive and 870 Venetta Place (see images 76 and 77). The source of the inspiration for their unique ornament and whether these houses were designed by individual owners or builders are as yet undetermined.

The vast majority of the houses within the proposed district originated in or were highly influenced by popular plan books of the time, such as those published by Home Builder's Plan Service and W.D. Farmer, Residence Designer of Atlanta. Other houses of higher style, designed by unofficial draftsmen and individuals who simply "had a flair for house design," are more unique, and brought high-style examples of the ranch and split-level house types, such as a circular "Alphabet" Ranch, located at 2851 Baker Ridge Drive (see image 25), high-style Modern "Linear" Ranches, located at 2875 Valley Heart Drive and 591 Waterford Road (see images 78 and 79), and a uniquely-detailed "half-courtyard" ranch at 3061 Collier Drive (see image 80), to the neighborhood. The high-style ranch and split-level houses of the neighborhood are concentrated on Engle Road, Waterford Road west of its intersection with Oldknow Drive, Collier Ridge Drive, Collier Drive, Valley Heart Drive, Woodmere Drive, Venetta Place, Eleanor Terrace, Baker Ridge Drive, Larchmont Circle, Dale Creek Dive, East and West Simon Terrace, and Chalmers Drive. These houses tend to exhibit the same types of ornament and aesthetic detail as those of the simplified category, but in greater quantity and variation. Unusual use of materials (see images 8 and 81), and overall more elaborate detail and ornament are just a few of the characteristics that set these examples apart stylistically from their more simplified, less personalized counterparts. Furthermore, some of these properties exhibit estate-like qualities, featuring huge house lots with swimming pools, tennis courts, guest quarters and ornamental gardens (see images 82 and 83).

Finally, there are scarce two-story houses within the proposed district. The single identified "Stacked Ranch" has already been discussed (see image 27). In addition, there is the house at 637 Lyric Way (see image 48), the design of which is believed to have been based on a W.D. Farmer plan of this era (see plan #807 in the appendix). There is also an example of a Colonial Revival house, one of the few two-story types popular during the 1950s, in Collier Heights at 2618 Baker Ridge Drive (see image 84). The Colonial Revial house is Colonial in both type and style, exhibiting a two-story plan with a separate, usually-attached garage, and Colonial-inspired aesthetics, including a gabled roof, a porch, traditional window and door styles, and shutters, all of which appears on 2618 Baker Ridge Drive.

7. **Detailed description of all community landmark buildings (government buildings, community buildings, churches, schools, etc.) within the district. Include dates of construction; an architectural description with building type, style, distinctive features; and architect or builder (if known); and use (historic and current):**

▪ **Collier Heights Elementary School**

Located on Collier Drive in an area of approximately six acres, the Collier Heights

Elementary School campus numbers three buildings (two rectangular in massing; one cylindrical) designed with elements of Formalism and the International Style (see image 85). Designed by architects Bodin & Lamberson, the first building on the site was constructed by Abco Builders for the City of Atlanta Board of Education in 1958. Construction of the school was first proposed in 1957 by the Board of Education, predating the 1961 Collier Heights Neighborhood Plan. In 1959, Willard Lamberson also designed the building behind the initial rectilinear mass. Richard Aeck designed another portion of the school in 1961, according to the published history of Aeck Associates and Tony Aeck (Aeck Associates Job #6101). Recognizing that by 1961, Collier Heights Elementary School was already operating above capacity, the Neighborhood Plan urged the development of additional facilities. Most recently known as M. Agnes Jones Elementary School, this school is currently vacant and has been listed for sale.

▪ **Frederick Douglass High School**

Frederick Douglass High School is located on the west side of Hamilton E. Holmes Drive (see image 86). Its campus numbers four buildings, including the school, auditorium, gymnasium, and equipment facilities. It also possesses a track and field, baseball diamond, and three tennis courts. Designed by the architectural firm Aeck & Associates and built by the Thompson & Street Co., the original school building is a large, brick-and-concrete International Style block, while the gymnasium and auditorium date from 2004 and are significantly more modern in style. The 2004 additions also included renovations to the original school building, which pierced its walls with numerous windows but left the initial massing intact. The 1961 Collier Heights Neighborhood Plan suggested that a vocational school be built in this vicinity by the Atlanta Board of Education. In 1967, when such a project, the Simpson-Hightower High School, was underway, the project was renamed after 19th-century African American abolitionist Frederick Douglass. The school opened September 3, 1968 to 2,100 students as a primarily vocational institution and is today a high school of high repute.

▪ **Bazoline E. Usher Elementary School**

Located just north of St. Paul of the Cross Catholic Church, Usher Elementary fronts Harwell Road and overlooks Interstate 285 to the west (see image 87). Its present configuration numbers five modern concrete-and-brick buildings with International Style elements, including a gymnasium as well as a paved play area. Commissioned by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Atlanta from the architect Albert O. Ordway, it was built by Van Winkle & Co. in 1962. This school was first known as Drexel High School, a parochial school operated by St. Paul of the Cross Catholic Church and Atlanta's only African American Catholic high school. Drexel High School closed in 1967 due to school desegregation and a decline in student enrollment, and the same year, the Atlanta Board of Education leased the school from the Diocese and began to operate it as the Harwell Road Elementary School. In 1969, the Board of Education purchased the school. Harwell Road Elementary School closed after the 1991-1992 school year to be reopened as Bazoline E. Usher Middle School, named in honor of one of Atlanta's most respected African American educators and school teachers. Today, this school again serves as an elementary school.

▪ **St. Paul of the Cross Catholic Church and Imhotep School**

This church, rectory, parochial school, and convent building, a campus of four buildings located on Harwell Road and overlooking Interstate 285, have strong New Formalism and International Style elements. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Atlanta purchased the property for this campus in 1954 from Mr. and Mrs. R. R. Cook and planned construction of the St. Paul of the Cross Elementary School (present-day Imhotep School) for December

of 1956; at the time of its construction, this school was the only elementary school servicing the Collier Heights Area. The same month, the city of Atlanta notified the church that the construction of Interstate 285 had been planned through its property. The St. Paul of the Cross Elementary School and the convent building, built by DeGive, Dunham & O'Neill, Inc., opened in 1957 and continues to operate as the Imhotep Center of Education, opened in 1993 (see image 89). The construction of St. Paul of the Cross Catholic Church and rectory began in 1959, designed by architect Brother Cajetan Bauman and built by DeGive, Dunham & O'Neill, Inc (see image 88). It opened for its first mass in September of 1960. An article from the *Atlanta Daily World* in October 1960 noted that the church had "stained glass windows from Paris, altar from Rome, Italy, wood carvings from Dublin, Ireland."²

- **Radcliffe Presbyterian Church**

This modern masonry A-frame church with standing seam metal roof and bell tower is situated on the west side of Hamilton E. Holmes Drive, across from Frederick Douglass High School and Berean Seventh-Day Adventist Church (see image 90). This was the only public social gathering point available to the community early in Collier Heights' development. It was designed by Georgia's first African American AIA member and registered architect, architect Edward Miller, and built by Abco Builders, completed in 1958.

- **Berean Seventh-Day Adventist Church (formerly Union Baptist Church)**

Located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Collier Drive and Hamilton E. Holmes Drive, this masonry church follows contemporary classicism in its reference to St. Martin-in-the-Fields of London; it has a Greek Revival portico and a tall steeple (see image 91). Formerly the home of the Union Baptist Church congregation that commissioned it, the church changed ownership to the Berean Seventh-Day Adventist Church congregation in 1999. It was designed by architect Herbert Rawlins and built by the A. R. Winter Company, completed in 1962.

- **First Missionary Baptist Church (formerly Berean Seventh-Day Adventist Church)**

Located at the northwest corner of the intersection of Collier Drive and Hamilton E. Holmes Drive, this church formerly housed the Berean Seventh-Day Adventist Church congregation (see image 92). The Berean congregation built and relocated to this church from its Ashby Street (Joseph E. Lowery Boulevard) location west of downtown Atlanta, where it had been holding services since 1929, and ownership was transferred to the First Missionary Baptist congregation in 1999. The church is a modern A-frame church of masonry construction in an elongated T-shaped plan, designed by architect Frank C. Houpt and built by day labor in 1963.

8. **Landscape characteristics of the district, including streetscapes; front, side, and rear yards; parks and squares; recreation grounds; fields, wooded areas, hedgerows, etc.; and the relationship of these landscape characteristics to the natural terrain and the pattern of land subdivision:**

The overall landscaping in Collier Heights reflects minimal public improvements. There is no evidence of directed street plantings, and there are no sidewalks except on a short stretch of Collier Drive and the more public thoroughfares like Hamilton E. Holmes; otherwise, there is only a simple concrete curb (see image 123). The nature of the terrain necessitates terracing and retaining walls, some of which are elaborate in design (see images 252, 253, and 254). Private front lawns are open with varying personal landscape effects and are rarely fenced in, with

² George Coleman, "Yancey Decorated by Pope During St. Paul Dedication." *Atlanta Daily World*, October 25, 1960.

mature shade trees found sometimes in the front yards, more often in side yards, and especially in rear yards. The neighborhood is known for its dogwood trees, particularly in the Simon Terrace area, thanks to the Atlanta Women's Chamber of Commerce's annual "Dogwood Lighted Trails" spring tours, which in 1969 prompted the planting of a large number of the trees.³

Collier Heights has two parks: Harwell Heights Park and Dale Creek Park. Dale Creek Park, a 3.2 acre conservation park with access only from Dale Creek Drive, was recognized in the 1961 Neighborhood Plan as "undeveloped;" the plan urged the acquisition of public park lands by the city (see image 93: Dale Creek Park). The 23.4 acre Harwell Heights Park, located northwest of Collier Heights Elementary School on Collier Drive, has minimal development in the form of parking, a baseball diamond, a basketball court, and three tennis courts.

9. **Physical features of historic transportation routes—highways, streets, rail lines, street railways, etc.:**

While the Collier Heights neighborhood has no rail lines, it is virtually defined by its location at the intersection of Interstates 20 and 285, freeways that developed at the same time as the neighborhood. The other two major thoroughfares enclosing the neighborhood are the northeasterly Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway and north-south running Hamilton E. Holmes Drive. Historically, Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway, known in the past as Bankhead Highway and Mayson-Turner Ferry Road, has been an important east-west transportation route between Atlanta and Alabama; during the Civil War, when General Tecumseh Sherman flanked the Confederate river line on the shores of the Chattahoochee, the Confederate army fell back from the river line along this route to Atlanta.

Due to the steep and hilly aspect of the land as well as its suburban type of development, the Collier Heights streetscape follows curvilinear paths. The 1961 Neighborhood Plan also recognized this tendency, noting that the "street pattern in Collier Heights is sensitive to the influence of the land. In many steep areas, great difficulty is encountered in constructing suitable roadways."⁴

10. **Archaeological potential, if known or reliably inferred:**

As this area has been relatively recently developed and continually inhabited since that time, the archaeological potential in Collier Heights is not high, and a professional archaeological survey has never been done. The highest archaeological potential is found in the Alsobrook Family Cemetery on Jones Road north of Hobart Drive (see image 95). This small cemetery is characterized by a haphazard and overgrown collection of grave markers and headstones resting within a space ten to thirty feet from the curb. Space for burial is relatively limited; it is bounded on the west by Jones Road, north and south by housing, and on the east by steeply sloping terrain. This cemetery, probably associated with a rural homestead, has headstones dating from as early as 1868 and was documented by Franklin Garrett in 1931. Garrett counted nine graves with headstones and as many as seventeen unmarked graves. Currently, there are six headstones that appear to be relatively undisturbed; another headstone is broken, and at least two are vandalized. One headstone is extant in the cemetery that Garrett did not record, with dates "1896-1902;" presumably, this marker was added after 1931. These headstones and markers show evidence that Alsobrook and Ham family members are interred here. (See Section 3.C for information concerning the Hams and Alsobrooks.)

³ "Cooperative Effort," *Atlanta Daily World*, April 10, 1969.

⁴ City of Atlanta Department of Planning, "Collier Heights: A Neighborhood Plan, 1961" (Atlanta, 1961), 6.

Additionally, a 1958 article in the *Atlanta Daily World* marking the beginning of construction for the Collier Heights Elementary School states that adjacent to the playground area, there was at one time believed to be a Civil War-era “military installation.” While no evidence was found to confirm this claim, there could be potential for Civil War-related archaeological investigation.⁵

11. **Exceptions to the general rule and/or historic anomalies:**

A complex of four radio towers exists in a large lot at the intersection of Loghaven Drive and Chalmers Drive, just north of Interstate 20 (see image 94). Although these towers appear in the 1955 City Directory as the WATL Broadcasting Tower at 2720 Loghaven Drive, the historic towers may have been replaced and further research is necessary. These towers are currently owned by WOAK, an AM news and talk radio station.

12. **A description of representative noncontributing properties within the district.**

The vast majority of houses in Collier Heights contribute to the character of the district. Noncontributing properties in Collier Heights include the headquarters of the South Atlanta Conference of Seventh Day Adventist building at 294 Hamilton E. Holmes Drive, as well as infill housing within the neighborhood that dates within the past twenty years (1980s-2000s). Although some infill is better suited to the neighborhood than others, for example a sprawling red brick house with a ranch feel built in 1987 (see image 132), most houses built during this period typically fail to match the character of the neighborhood in massing, height and stories, and site setting, and are often two-story single-family residences with multiple incorporated garages that have been squeezed into a lot too small to accommodate initial development in the 1950s-1970s (see images 144, 195, and 220).

Addresses of Non-Contributing Resources

Albert Street: 676, 638

Aline Drive: 707, 760

Baker Ridge Drive: 2621, 2642, 2667, 2687, 2856, 2842, 2965, 2983, 3040

Caron Circle: 791

Chalmers Drive: 211

Chilton Drive: 349

Collier Drive: 2665, 2671, 3000

Collier Ridge Drive: 437

Dale Creek Drive: 2779, 2855

Duffield Drive: 779, 827

Eleanor Terrace: 3123, 3143

⁵ “Construction Is Underway For Collier Heights School.” *Atlanta Daily World*, February 16, 1958, p 2.

Engle Road: 2747, 2753, 2868

Godfrey Drive: 2506

Hamilton E. Holmes Drive: 630, 674

Handy Drive: 2927, 2932, 2940

Jamaica Road: 2405

Kildare Avenue: 425

Larchmont Drive: 574

Linkwood Road: 213

Loghaven Drive: 2715

Magna Carta Drive: 820

Oldknow Drive: 2694, 2720, 2726, 2783, 2791, 2836, 2844, 2914

Ozburn Road: 691, 710, 718

Renfro Drive: 2910

Peek Road: 2797, 2803, 2829, 2841, 2850, 2856, 2857, 2861, 2867, 2870, 2876, 2881, 2882, 2888, 2890, 2904, 2910, 3048, 3088

Seaborn Road: 2737, 2789

Valley Heart Drive: 2844

Venetta Place: 840, 849, 889

Waterford Road: 467, 479, 485, 570, 582

West Handy Drive: 600

West Kildare Avenue: 498

West Peek Road: 2999

Woodmere Drive: 840

* An additional 10 noncontributing properties, all of them new construction, have been identified on Larchmont Circle, Larchmont Drive, Waterford Road and Peek Road, but do not have posted street numbers, nor are these numbers recorded in GIS.

13. **Boundary Description**

13a. The proposed Collier Heights Historic District is bounded to the south by Interstate 20 and to the west by Interstate 285. The eastern boundary of the District is Hamilton E. Holmes Drive from the intersection of Hamilton E. Holmes Drive and Interstate 20 and the northern property line of 732 Hamilton E. Holmes Drive. Two properties lie on the eastern side of Hamilton E. Holmes drive and are included in the proposed District; these are Berean Seventh-Day Adventist Church at 291 Hamilton E. Holmes Drive and Frederick Douglass High School at 225 Hamilton E. Holmes Drive. The northern boundary is formed by the property lines of multiple houses south of Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway. The northern boundary fluctuates to exclude non-contributing residential and commercial fronting Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway; it roughly follows the southern property lines of larger lots fronting Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway.

13b. A small subdivision development composed of houses on Azlee Place, Callahan Street and Jamima Street, the development of which is non-contiguous and independent from the neighborhood at large, is excluded from the proposed boundaries. Large, vacant lots are also part of the excluded area. The boundaries correspond to the period of development of Collier Heights between 1915 and 1968. These dates correspond to residential development in the area. The City of Atlanta and local residents also identify this area as the Collier Heights neighborhood. For more detail, please see the proposed Collier Heights Historic District Survey Map (attached).

SECTION 3

HISTORY

A. Summary of Historical Facts

1. **Original owner(s) or developer(s) of the district:** See appendix for 1911 Hudgins Map.
2. **Subsequent developers of the district:** See appendix for developer list attached to plat maps.
3. **In general, the original use(s) of properties in the district:**
The land in the area was dispersed in the 1821 Georgia Land Lottery. The 1938 aerial photograph (see appendix) shows that the land comprising the present Collier Heights was either used as farmland or vacant and wooded into the late 1930s. The first subdivision maps for the area were recorded in the 1940s, which marks the beginning of large-scale suburban development in the area.
4. **In general, the subsequent use(s) of properties in the district:**
Concerted residential development in the form of bungalows began in the 1910s. American small house development began in the 1940s and was supplanted by ranch and split-level house development during the 1950s. This residential subdivision and development continued through the 1960s.
5. **In general, current use(s) of the properties:**
The properties remain overwhelmingly residential.

6. **Architects, engineers, builders, contractors, landscape architects, gardeners, and/or other artisans and craftsmen associated with the design of the development or historic resources within the district:**

Edward Miller (1904-1981) designed Radcliffe Memorial Presbyterian Church at 286 Hamilton E. Holmes Drive. The project was completed in 1958.⁶ Miller, who received his architecture degree from New York University, began his professional career as an instructor and practitioner at Tuskegee Institute in 1940.⁷ He relocated to Atlanta in 1950 and became the first African American architect to practice and reside in Georgia.⁸ His obituary in the Atlanta Daily World explains that he was “perhaps best remembered for using his position to help young black architects gain positions in this growing area . . . his firm was the only avenue through which young black architects could obtain needed practical experience before taking the licensing examinations, due to segregationist practices” during the 1950s.⁹ In 1967, Mayor Ivan Allen appointed Miller to the Building Code Advisory Board. Miller also served on the committee working to preserve the M.L. King, Jr. Birthplace.¹⁰ Miller also designed the Atlanta Life Insurance Office (1972) and numerous college buildings that are not part of the district.¹¹

Willard Lamberson (1913-1986) of the Atlanta firm of Bodin & Lamberson Architects-Engineers, designed the two rectilinear buildings on Collier Heights Elementary School’s campus, located at 3050 Collier Drive, NW.¹² Lamberson graduated from the Georgia Institute of Technology with a degree in architecture in 1936 and immediately joined the firm on Frazier & Bodin as a draftsman. At the end of World War II, Lamberson became a partner in the firm. He later became senior partner in the firm Lamberson, Plunkett, Shirley and Woodall, Architects that was established in 1967. Lamberson designed the Nunnally home on Blackland Road, the Woodruff home on Tuxedo Road, and numerous school and college buildings that are not a part of the district.¹³ Plans of Collier Heights Elementary School are archived at the Kenan Research Center at the Atlanta History Center.

Richard Aeck (1912-1996) of Aeck Associates, Inc. designed Frederick Douglass High School at 222 Hamilton E. Holmes Drive, which was completed in 1969.¹⁴ A graduate of the Georgia Institute of Technology, Richard Aeck entered professional practice in 1936. Aeck Associates is credited with the design of several Atlanta landmark buildings including Georgia Tech’s Alexander Memorial Coliseum and the Grady High School football stadium. The firm also designed the Lovett School and Boulder Park Elementary in Atlanta, which are not a part of the proposed district.¹⁵ Richard Aeck also designed an addition for Collier Heights Elementary School in 1961 (Aeck Associates job # 6101).¹⁶

Tom Cousins (1931 –), future Atlanta real estate tycoon, developed the Crescendo Valley subdivision of Collier Heights in cooperation with William L. Moore in 1961. Tom Cousins

⁶ City of Atlanta Building Permit Files, 1897-1983, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center.

⁷ “Edward Miller Dies; Rites Held Saturday,” *Atlanta Daily World*, February 15, 1981.

⁸ Notes on Edward C. Miller, Black/African American/Architects/Builders/Contractors file, Historic Preservation Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

⁹ “Edward Miller Dies: Rites Held Saturday.” *Atlanta Daily World*, February 15, 1981.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Notes on Edward C. Miller.

¹² City of Atlanta Building Permit Files, 1897-1983, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center.

¹³ Willard N. Lamberson, “A History of Lamberson, Plunkett, Shirley and Wooddall, Architects,” Lamberson, Plunkett, Shirley and Wooddall, Architects Business File, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center.

¹⁴ City of Atlanta Building Permit Files, 1897-1983, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center.

¹⁵ *Aeck Associates, Inc., Architects* (n.p.: Atlanta, 1966).

¹⁶ Antonin Aeck, FAIA, e-mail communication with architect, April 3, 2008.

began his career with Knox Homes, a company that sold kits of building material to homebuilders. Then, in 1958, he founded Cousins Properties with his father. By the early 1960s, Cousins was the largest homebuilder in Georgia. By the mid-1960s the focus of his company turned to office development, which would become the hallmark of the firm. Over the next few decades, Cousins helped transform Atlanta's built environment. He built the Omni coliseum, the Omni International Hotel, and was instrumental in the building of the Georgia World Congress Center. In 1989, he built a new skyscraper for Citizens and Southern National Bank, which was the tallest building in the South.¹⁷

Joseph W. Robinson, FAIA, designed the homes of Herman J. Russell and Dr. William Shropshire in the proposed district. Mr. Robinson became the first African American architect from Georgia to be elected as a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects. He obtained his license in 1970 after years of teaching in public schools. He is known for his high-style homes for African Americans, designed for hosting social and other gatherings.¹⁸

Isaac "Ike" Saporta (1910-1998) was an immigrant from Greece. He studied under many important European modernists in Germany and Paris. Known as a professor in Georgia Tech's School of Architecture for thirty years, he was involved in a planned but unexecuted cooperative residence in Collier Heights. He was known for his work in planning and is credited as helping to organize Atlanta's planning commission in the late 1940s.¹⁹

10. **Date(s) of development and source(s) used to determine date:**

Subdivision plat maps obtained from Fulton County indicate that concerted residential development began in 1915. The large-scale subdivision of the proposed district in its entirety took place from 1941-1968 in at least fifty-four subdivision parcels (see attached subdivision map).

11. **Significant persons associated with the district;** summary or brief account for their significance; dates of association with the district or a property or properties within the district:

Reverend Ralph David Abernathy (1926-1990), a Collier Heights resident, is known as one of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s closest associates. He helped organize the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott, the Charleston, South Carolina hospital workers' boycott, and the Atlanta sanitation workers strike. With Dr. King and Bayard Rustin, he formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), focusing on organizing Southern African American ministers and community activists. Reverend Abernathy succeeded Dr. King as SCLC president. He also served as head and organizer of the People's Campaign March on Washington, D.C. (1968). Reverend Abernathy received a degree in mathematics from Alabama State University in 1950 and a master's degree in sociology from Atlanta University in 1951. He served as a minister for First Baptist Church (Montgomery, AL) and Atlanta's West Hunter Street Baptist Church. Reverend Abernathy was arrested for his actions in the Albany, Georgia campaign. Working closely with Dr. King, Reverend Abernathy was involved in the 1968 effort to bring equity to Memphis, Tennessee sanitation workers. This was Dr. Abernathy's final collaboration with Dr. King. Dr. Abernathy continued to work on SCLC activities until his resignation in 1977.

¹⁷ Walter Woods, "Atlanta Power Player Cousins Retires," *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, December 7, 2006.

¹⁸ Lyon, n.d.

¹⁹ Glover, 1998.

Howard Baugh, Sr. (1924-2007), a Collier Heights resident, was one of the first African American police officers hired by the Atlanta Police Department. He was promoted over time to become the first African American assistant chief of the Department. He is also known for protecting Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. during his visits to Atlanta and during the March on Washington.

William L. Calloway (? - 1999) graduated from Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Born in Atlanta, he returned to the city to teach at Washington High School (1933), and later at David T. Howard High School. He became associated with the Alexander Insurance Company to supplement his teacher's salary. There he worked with Theodore (T.M.) Alexander. He founded Alexander-Calloway Real Estate Company with Mr. Alexander (ca. 1942). Although he was not a resident of Collier Heights, he was a principal with Consolidated Mortgage Company during the period of significance, president of the Empire Real Estate Board, and a supporter of the Butler Street YMCA. Mr. Calloway was the first African American member of the Commerce Club. With Mills Lane, he helped establish the Atlanta Action Forum.

George Coleman (living), a Collier Heights resident, is a retired journalist known for his work with the Atlanta Daily World. Mr. Coleman received a degree in journalism from Lincoln University. He then worked with the Atlanta Daily World as city editor and then managing editor during the period of significance. His stories focused on local and national events related to desegregation and civil rights. His interviews include policemen, politicians, sports figures and Civil Rights leaders. Mr. Coleman complemented Atlanta Daily World editorial duties by writing poetry to accompany stories. He was the first African American member Georgia's association of professional journalists.

Geneva Moton Haugabrooks (1904-1977), a Collier Heights resident, was the founder of Haugabrooks Funeral Home, a traditionally African American mortuary located in the Auburn Avenue Historic District. She attended Spelman Seminary (now Spelman College) and married Thomas Haugabrooks shortly thereafter. Mrs. Haugabrooks worked as a cook for Governor Slaton for some eight years, taught school at St. Marks School in Fayette County for three years and managed the A.B. Cummings Funeral Home for eight years. Mrs. Haugabrooks organized Haugabrooks Funeral Home in 1929. Known as "Momma" Haugabrooks, she was active in community activities. She provided resources to support the Atlanta chapter of the NAACP and several Civil Rights protests. She was a member of the Women's Auxiliary of the NAACP. Most noteworthy is her work to establish Haugabrooks Academy, a now-defunct school for young women, adjacent to the proposed district at 567 Hamilton E. Holmes Drive.

Donald B. Hollowell (1917 - 2004), a Collier Heights resident, is best known as a civil rights attorney. He served as chief counsel or counsel for several landmark civil rights cases. Some include *Ward v. Regents* (segregation at the University of Georgia School of Law); *Hunt v. Arnold* (segregation at Georgia College of Business, now Georgia State University); and *Holmes vs. Danner* (representing Hamilton Holmes and Charlyne Hunter Gault seeking admission into the University of Georgia). Mr. Hollowell, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and civil rights workers were arrested during the Albany, Georgia campaign, and Rev. Martin L. ("Daddy") King, Sr. and others were arrested after his arrest during an effort to desegregate Atlanta's bus system. President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed Mr. Hollowell to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (1965). The city of Atlanta renamed Bankhead Highway, a major thoroughfare serving the Collier Heights community, in his honor.

Leroy R. Johnson (living), a Collier Heights resident, became the first African American since Reconstruction to be elected to the Georgia Senate in 1962. He continued to be elected to the

Senate until his departure in 1974. He was admitted to the Georgia Bar and was employed by the United States District Attorney's staff to the Fifth Judicial District in Fulton County. He also served as legal advisor to the Council of Northwest Civic Clubs during the period of significance.

Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr., a.k.a. "Daddy King" (1897- 1984), and Mrs. Alberta Williams King (1926-1974), Collier Heights residents, were the parents of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Reverend King (born Michael King) was educated at Morehouse College. Rev. and Mrs. King are known for their work in the community and in the Civil Rights Movement. Rev. King led the Atlanta Civic and Political League, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Atlanta Negro Voters League. He chaired the Committee on Equalization of Teachers' Salaries to protest the disparities in pay for African American teachers. He served on the board of Atlanta University. He was arrested for civil disobedience during an effort to desegregate Atlanta's public transit system (and was represented by Donald Hollowell in this case). Mrs. King, the former Alberta Williams was active in the YWCA, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. "Momma" King was killed in 1974. Their children include Willie Christine (who is a Collier Heights resident), Dr. King (deceased), and Alfred Daniel Williams (deceased).

Edward C. Miller (1904-1981) was the first licensed professional African American architect in Georgia. His firm, organized in 1959, was the only avenue through which young African American architects could obtain experience before taking the state's licensing examination. Mr. Miller was involved in the early period of historic preservation in the city, serving on the committee to preserve the birthplace of Dr. Martin Luther King. He obtained a degree from Lincoln University (PA) and continued his studies at Pratt Institute (NY) and New York University (NY). During World War II, he served as an instructor at Tuskegee Institute and managed the Tuskegee Housing Program (ca. 1941). Although Mr. Miller was not a resident of Collier Heights, he was responsible for designing the Radcliffe Presbyterian Church, a landmark in the proposed district.

Lorimer D. Milton (1898-1986), a Collier Heights resident, was president of Citizen's Trust Bank for more than 41 years, retiring in 1971. He was on the faculty of Morehouse College in the economics department and Atlanta University's School of Business Administration. Mr. Milton, along with Jesse Blaton, Sr., founded the graduate program at Atlanta University. Mr. Milton graduated from Brown University with bachelor and masters degrees in business. He moved to Atlanta to teach at the Atlanta University Center colleges. He was mentored by Hemen Perry, founder of Citizen's Bank and John Hope, president of Morehouse College. He, with Clayton Yates, purchased Citizen's pharmacy service, opening the Yates and Milton drug store chain. Mr. Milton also served as a member of the Federal Advisory Council's Social Security Board as well as an advisor to the U. S. Department of Commerce. He also advised Atlanta leaders on issues ranging from education to mass transit. Howard University also selected him to its Board of Trustees. Mr. Milton married the former Eloise Murphy, a descendant of David Thomas Howard, a pioneer in Atlanta business and political circles.

Herman J. Russell (1930 -), a former Collier Heights resident, founded H. J. Russell Construction Company in 1962. His work focused on commercial properties and large multi-family housing developments. His interests continue in preservation and revitalization of neglected urban properties. He became a member of the board of Citizen's Trust Bank, one of the largest African American financial institutes in the nation. He was the first black member and later the second black president of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce.

Quentin V. Williamson (1923 - 1985), a Collier Heights resident, was the first elected African American to Atlanta's Board of Aldermen (1965). He was also an official with Empire Real Estate Board. He founded Williamson Real Estate in 1940, still located on Hunter Street. Some works and original residents refer to him as the original developer of Collier Heights. One account notes he formed National Development Corporation to purchase "... some 200 acres in Collier Heights" and with the Northwest Council of Clubs (a.k.a. the Council of Northwest Clubs).²⁰ He was a member-at-large to the Council when it advised the City of Atlanta on the growth and future of Collier Heights (ca. 1960-61). Mr. Williamson was a native of Atlanta. He received a degree in business administration from Morehouse College in 1940.

Dr. Asa V. Yancey, Sr. (living), a Collier Heights resident, is known for his work as Medical Director of Grady Hospital. He is a board-certified surgeon who has served on the clinical staff at Tuskegee Veteran's Administration Hospital, Freedman's Hospital (Howard University) and Emory University's Medical School. Dr. Yancey also was a faculty member of Morehouse Medical School. During the period of significance, he was appointed the chief surgeon and director of Hughes Spaulding Hospital and then named as the first African American member of Emory's Medical School. Dr. Yancey is a 1937 graduate of Morehouse College and University of Michigan's School of Medicine in 1941. He is known for his works published in peer-reviewed journals as well as his efforts to document the life of Dr. Charles Drew.

Please see the appendix for information about other persons associated with Collier Heights as homeowners or as professionals (real estate, finance, building, and architecture).

12. **Significant events or activities associated with the district:** See Section 3.C below.

B. Name of the District

1. **List all names by which the district is and has been known, and indicate the period of time known by each name.**

Although initial African American development in the area was known as Crestwood Forest, a name that appears as early as 1955 on a map drawn by the West Side Mutual Development Committee, the Collier Heights name appears to have come from the name given to early subdivision developments from 1946 to 1951 (see attached subdivision map). According to Eva Galambos's book, *What's in a Name?: Places and Streets in the Atlanta Area*, Collier Heights was named after George Washington Collier, one of the first white inhabitants in Fulton County and the first merchant in Five Points in downtown Atlanta.²¹ No documentation has been found, however, tying George Washington Collier or any of his descendants to land in the vicinity of Collier Heights.

2. **Explain the origin or meaning of each name:** See 3.B.1 above.

C. History of the District

The area presently known as Collier Heights lies in Fulton County and, like much of the land in Georgia, was originally owned and inhabited by Native Americans. In 1821, the Creek Indians ceded land east of the Chattahoochee River to Georgia. The former Creek lands were surveyed and sectioned into 202.5 acre land lots within five large, original counties: Henry, Monroe, Houston, Fayette, and

²⁰ *Atlanta Daily World*, July 20, 1958.

²¹ Eva Galambos, *What's in a Name?: Places and Streets in the Atlanta Area*. Columbus, GA, Quill Publications, 1996, p. 26-27.

Dooley. Land lots within these counties were distributed to citizens through Georgia's fourth land lottery.²² DeKalb County was formed from part of the original Henry County in 1822. Fulton County was in turn created from a portion of DeKalb County on December 20, 1853.²³ The proposed Collier Heights National Register District boundaries encompass, listed south to north, roughly the west half of land lots 206, 207, and the southwest corner of 208, or that portion on the east side of Hamilton E. Holmes Drive, all of land lots 209, 210, and 211, which is the central portion of the district, and a majority of land lots 238, 239 and 240, portions of which now lie east of Interstate 285 and all of which were originally part of Henry County as it was surveyed in 1821.²⁴

The 1911 Hudgins Map of Fulton County indicates that many of these land lots had been substantially subdivided since their original division in the early 1820s. Several place, street, and family names that appear on the 1911 map were prominent in the history and development of the Collier Heights Historic District, with a small number remaining to echo the land's past. Peyton Road (now Hamilton E. Holmes Drive) ran north-to-south between Mayson-Turner's Ferry Road (now Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway) and Garrett's Bridge Road, which lies in the vicinity of the current Interstate 20. The latter two roads ran east-to-west and both were historic routes for crossing the Chattahoochee River. What is now Baker Road had its western terminus at Hamilton E. Holmes Drive and was called Oliver Baker Road in 1911. The map also shows the early indications of a small town or community called Center Hill located in land lot 208, east and northeast of the present Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway and Hamilton E. Holmes Drive intersection.

The 1911 Hudgins Map of Fulton County also indicates that the north half of land lot 209, just south of Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway in the north-center of the district, was controlled by the heirs of Seaborn K. Ozburn, whose estate was settled in 1897; this land lies in the vicinity of the present intersection of Seaborn and Ozburn Roads.²⁵ The Alsobrook family and Mattie Ham controlled virtually all of land lot 240 in the northwest corner of the district according to the 1911 Hudgins Map. This land surrounds the Alsobrook family cemetery where Alsobrook and Ham family members are interred (see Section 2.B.11). Prominent landowners in the central portion of the district included Richard R. Nash and George O. and Lewis D. Williams. Nash owned all of land lot 211, the southwest corner of land lot 206, and a significant portion of land lot 239. George and Lewis Williams owned significant portions of land lots 210, 211, and 239; Lewis Williams' heirs subdivided and sold residential lots in land lot 211 beginning in 1941.²⁶

The area continued to develop into the early 20th century with scattered residential bungalow development. The 1938 aerial photograph of the Collier Heights vicinity shows that substantial agricultural improvements including buildings and plowed fields were also located in land lots 206, 207, and 208, which lie along both sides of Hamilton E. Holmes Drive. Improvements are also shown in land lots 211 and 240 in the north-central and northwest parts of the district. The majority of the central portion of the district appears to have been unimproved and wooded, but the Simpson Road that appears on the 1911 Hudgins Map looks to have been extended westward through the district by 1938; the extension roughly corresponds with what is now Collier Road. The 1938 view also shows evidence of the earliest planned residential subdivision to be located west of Hamilton E. Holmes

²² Pat Bryant, "Georgia Counties: Their Changing Boundaries", Office of the Secretary of State, Georgia Department of Archives and History, 1983.

²³ New Georgia Encyclopedia, Cities & Counties: Fulton County, available from <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?path=/CitiesCounties/Counties&id=h-2335>; Internet; accessed 6 April 2008.

²⁴ Bryant.

²⁵ Fulton County Inferior Court Minute Book J, 443.

²⁶ Fulton County plat maps; see appendix.

Drive. A few roads, including the former Beth Avenue (later Wilson Road and now Oldknow Drive), were cut in this area, which was laid out by L.J. Hood in 1929.²⁷

American small houses were built in the proposed district between 1930 and 1956, and therefore help to define the growth and development of the area during its later period of significance. American small house development is concentrated within a small portion of the easternmost third of the proposed district. This house type was built throughout the U.S. during the 1930s, 1940s and early 1950s, and was a product of the need for massive amounts of affordable housing during the Great Depression and post-WWII. The unprecedented Federal response to this need resulted in the passage of laws such as the National Housing Act of 1934, which included standards for low-cost, large-scale housing development and incentives designed to encourage the private sector to build such development; the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), created by Congress in the same year as a way to not only provide jobs for out-of-work construction workers during the Depression, but also to allow families who could not normally afford the terms of a mortgage the opportunity to own their own home; and the Servicemembers' Readjustment Act, better known as the GI Bill of Rights, enacted on June 22, 1944. The goal of the latter legislation was to help the government redeem itself after the failed Bonus Act of 1924 and provide returning veterans with some form of compensation for their service. The Veterans Administration (VA) carried out three provisions of the GI Bill: "education and training, loan guaranty for homes, farms or businesses, and unemployment pay."²⁸

As a result of the push to produce the massive amounts of housing needed to meet the demand of a country with a population that was not only physically growing, but also economically growing in terms of its potential for home ownership, housing construction became almost scientific in its use of standard, slightly-varied floor plans, materials, and designs. The American small house was architecture's answer to the demand for quality homes that were both inexpensive to build and inexpensive to own. In Collier Heights, these houses are dominant along Albert Street, Forrest Ridge Drive (see image 11), the easternmost portion of Oldknow Drive (around its intersection with Albert Street), the southernmost portion of Ozburn Road (around its intersection with Oldknow Drive), the easternmost portion of Baker Ridge Drive (see image 12) Godfrey Drive (see image 13) and Loghaven Drive (see image 14). These houses were initially built and inhabited by white residents. An *Atlanta Daily World* article from 1958 noted that the modest homes that cost between \$6,000 and \$10,000 were purchased by returning G.I.s, city employees, and young businessmen—"a cross section of just about any American middle class suburb."²⁹ Both FHA and VA loans began with underwriting standards that promoted housing segregation; in fact, one racially restrictive covenant was found in research of the Collier Heights neighborhood (see appendix). These practices contributed to and exacerbated the plight of African Americans seeking housing during an increasingly severe shortage of residential development available to African Americans in Atlanta and throughout the nation following World War II. These standards would eventually be eliminated by a Supreme Court ruling in 1948.

In 1944, when suburban growth in Atlanta and across the United States was already being driven by the abovementioned Federal programs, the Interregional Highway Committee, which had been appointed by President Roosevelt three years earlier, proposed a 32,000-mile network of highways to improve transportation between the country's largest cities while simultaneously serving large manufacturing and agricultural areas. Highway patterns around major cities followed the scheme of "a hub (downtown) with spokes fanning out from the center and a beltway circling the city on the

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ United States Department of Veterans Affairs, *Born of Controversy: The GI Bill of Rights*, available from http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/history.htm; Internet; accessed 7 April 2008.

²⁹ Al Kuettner, "Atlanta Has Answer to Negro Housing Woes, Writer Holds." *Atlanta Daily World*, July 17, 1958.

outskirts.”³⁰ Around Atlanta, a preliminary proposal featured the city as a hub for highways in the Southeast region with expressways radiating outward toward Birmingham and Montgomery, Alabama; Macon, Georgia; Chattanooga, Tennessee; and Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Also in 1944, the city of Atlanta and Fulton County, with funds from the Georgia State Highway Department and the Federal Public Roads Administration, commissioned the H.W. Lochner Company to study the city’s traffic patterns and make detailed recommendations for the layout of major streets and expressways that would serve Atlanta’s traffic needs far into the future. The *Highway and Transportation Plan for Atlanta, Georgia*, which became known colloquially as the Lochner Report, was completed in 1946. The plan called for a western expressway route that “would lie just north of Simpson Street and extend from about Spring Street where it would join the Connector, to Hightower Road where it would connect with a future interstate highway to Birmingham.”³¹ After the Lochner Report became public, “city officials became actively engaged in laying out Atlanta’s highway system.”³² Although highways and roads were planned to ease traffic flow around the city and facilitate commercial activity and neighborhood development, race quickly became a factor in road placement decisions.³³ In the 1950s, the route of the west expressway (I-20 West) changed from the one recommended by Lochner to one which divided white communities to the south from African American communities recently settled to the north. It became evident that many government initiatives at this time were aimed at keeping America segregated, including those projects undertaken in Atlanta.

In the 1940s, seventy-five percent of the population growth in the DeKalb-Fulton County region was outside the 37-square mile area that encompassed the city of Atlanta.³⁴ Most of this suburban growth, however, was a white phenomenon, with African Americans continuing to concentrate at higher densities in the older neighborhoods around the central business district.³⁵ Even Auburn Avenue’s single-family residences were subdivided into apartments to accommodate the growing African American population that had nowhere else to locate because of segregation. During this period, the quantity of used and transition housing “was inadequate to meet the black population’s growing housing needs, and movement into adjacent white neighborhoods or to vacant, undeveloped lands on the urban periphery was effectively blocked . . . by a lethal combination of restrictive deeds and covenants, terrorism and violence, zoning restrictions, discriminatory lending practices, and strategically placed and strengthened racial barriers.”³⁶ Generally, housing conditions for African Americans in Atlanta were terrible.

The planning and establishment of expressway routes not only encouraged suburban development for white Atlantans, but also destroyed many historically black neighborhoods throughout the city. The severe housing shortages for and home loan discrimination suffered by African Americans encouraged a number of activities in Atlanta, both private and municipal, to attempt to solve the problem. By the end of the 1940s, before city government itself pushed to create a place for African American suburban development, Atlanta’s African American community formed organizations and alliances that would

³⁰ Howard P. Chudacoff and Judith E. Smith, *The Evolution of American Urban Society* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2005), 254.

³¹ H. W. Lochner and Company, *Highway and Transportation Plan for Atlanta, Georgia, Prepared for the State Highway Department of Georgia and the Public Roads Administration, Federal Works Agency* (Chicago, 1946), 13.

³² Ronald H. Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, c1996), 61.

³³ *Ibid.*, 61.

³⁴ Metropolitan Planning Commission, *Now, For Tomorrow: A Master Planning Program for the DeKalb-Fulton Metropolitan Area* (Atlanta: Metropolitan Planning Commission, 1954), n.p.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, n.p.

³⁶ Andrew M. Ambrose, *Redrawing the Color Line: The History and Patterns of Black Housing in Atlanta, 1940-1973* (Atlanta: Emory University, 1992), 88.

eventually focus on both the politics and economics of housing segregation. A cadre of professionals would become advocates for housing policy while working to develop the economic base for home building, purchasing and neighborhood development. This would set the stage for Atlanta's unique approach to planning for segregated middle-class suburban communities, especially the continued growth of Collier Heights.

In 1946, the Atlanta Urban League (AUL), called together representatives from business, government, and social agencies in the black community to discuss the housing problem for the city's African American population and established the Temporary Coordinating Committee on Housing.³⁷ The AUL, founded in 1920, was created to "encourage, assist and engage in activities which lead to the improvement of opportunities for disadvantaged persons and families in Metropolitan Atlanta."³⁸ The AUL's work was targeted to the African American community as a way to help them become empowered enough to enter the "economic and social mainstream."³⁹ With these goals in mind, the AUL was constantly working to help the African American community improve. The year after the Temporary Coordinating Committee on Housing was created, in 1947, the Atlanta Housing Council formed out of this group and issued a report that identified six areas for peaceful black development that would help alleviate the horrendous housing conditions for the city's African American citizens; however, Collier Heights was not identified as one of these original six areas. The Council did not challenge entrenched segregationist policies; instead, it pursued "a policy of improved housing opportunities for blacks within the system of segregation."⁴⁰ Although the local government was not officially involved in the Council discussions, Atlanta Mayor William B. Hartsfield "privately endorsed both the general concept of black residential expansion areas and the specific sites suggested by the Council."⁴¹

Meanwhile, Walter "Chief" Aiken, an African American businessman, began his call for Federal housing and finance policy changes in the late 1940s. His work extended beyond Georgia through a network of African American real estate and finance professionals. Mr. Aiken was one of several members of the Empire Real Estate Board, an organization representing Atlanta's African American real estate and finance corporation owners. (The Board was formed in 1932 as a result of discrimination against African American brokers and realtors in home listing and sales.) This organization also had close ties to other Atlanta and national organizations involved in civil rights, making it possible for Atlantans to identify opportunities for both challenges and changes. This network included a Negro Chamber of Commerce; the local affiliates of the National Business League, the NAACP, and the National Urban League; and the unique "Hungry Club" which was a bi-racial group supporting improved human relations in the city.

Members of Empire Real Estate Board also actively identified properties that could be purchased by realtors and investors for eventual sale to African American families. The case of John Calhoun, an Empire member and broker, brought attention to housing segregation when in 1953 he was stripped of his real estate license for working to purchase residences for African American families in the Mozley Park area of Atlanta. As Mr. Calhoun's court case progressed, another Empire member and eventual Collier Heights resident, Q. V. Williamson, identified and purchased land parcels in and around what is now Collier Heights.

³⁷ Andrew M. Ambrose, *Redrawing the Color Line: The History and Patterns of Black Housing in Atlanta, 1940-1973* (Atlanta: Emory University, 1992), 97.

³⁸ The Atlanta Urban League, Inc., available from <http://www.atlul.org/>; Internet; accessed 7 April 2008.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Clarence N. Stone, *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946-1988* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, c1989), 33.

⁴¹ Ibid, 99.

Atlanta was also the home of several African American financial institutions, all recognized under Federal law and regulation, that would serve as catalysts for changes in African American housing conditions. Citizens Trust Bank, Atlanta Mutual Savings and Loan, and the Atlanta Life Insurance Company grew from Atlanta's early mutual aid corporations, forming a cadre of leaders in finance both in the South and in the nation.

Citizens Trust Bank, under the leadership of Lorimer Milton, provided the financial support for land purchases by members of the Empire Real Estate Board. Others associated with Mr. Milton and Citizens Trust Bank continued their efforts to provide the means necessary for families to make home purchases. Meanwhile, Mr. Walter "Chief" Aiken purchased land and built Waluhaje Apartments, giving young African American middle class families another option for housing—and a chance to prove their worthiness for home loans. Mr. Arthur T. Walden, an African American attorney experienced in civil and criminal matters related to segregation, also became an official of Empire Real Estate Board, lending his expertise especially in situations where violence was threatened to stop home sales or for families to move into newly purchased homes.

Political changes in Atlanta would also dramatically affect housing options for African Americans in the city. At the end of the 1940s, organized black voter drives in Atlanta dramatically increased the number of African Americans registered to vote. By 1946, African Americans constituted 27 percent of Atlanta's total electorate.⁴² Hartsfield quickly recognized that the black middle class could "provide some much needed support for his reform-style politics."⁴³ One of Hartsfield's most important initiatives after his reelection in 1949 was the Plan of Improvement, which would increase the size of the city from 37 to 188 square miles and realign functions of city and county government to increase efficiency. Hartsfield courted African American support by arguing that the annexation of the northern white suburbs would bring a reasonable element into city politics that was capable of counterbalancing more extremist anti-black sentiment. The annexation plan would also open up areas of vacant land that could be used for expansion of African American housing. Extensive behind-the-scenes negotiating, a hallmark of the Hartsfield administration, was "as important to the success of the Plan of Improvement as was the public campaign ... Coalition insiders favored this practice over the 'divisive applications of political pressure,' believing that backstage negotiations lessened the chances for racial polarization."⁴⁴ Ultimately, the Atlanta Negro Voters League supported the plan, which included the annexation of large areas to the west of the city.

Other groups also supported the expansion of Atlanta and the increase of African American housing options. A Metropolitan Planning Commission report from 1950 stated that there "are few local planning objectives more important than that of opening up new areas for Negro housing in such a way that tensions between the races may be eliminated so far as they arise out of land use."⁴⁵ The Metropolitan Planning Commission, now the Atlanta Regional Commission, realized the importance of setting aside undeveloped areas to accommodate predicted increases in African American population. In 1952, the Commission's *Up Ahead, A Regional Land Use Plan for Metropolitan Atlanta* predicted that rapid suburbanization would continue to characterize the city in the coming decades and that nearly all of the population growth in the commission's 300-square mile planning area would be in the suburbs and fringe areas over the next thirty years.⁴⁶ The report further stated:

⁴² Stone, 28.

⁴³ Ambrose, 113.

⁴⁴ Stone, 31.

⁴⁵ Metropolitan Planning Commission, *Metropolitan Atlanta: A Factual Inventory* (Atlanta, 1950), 34.

⁴⁶ Metropolitan Planning Commission, *Up Ahead: A Regional Land Use Plan for Metropolitan Atlanta, February 1952* (Atlanta: The Commission, 1952), 57.

In the development of a logical future residential pattern, expansion areas must be opened up for the colored population. Of the approximately 320,000 people to be added to the population by 1980, about 90,000 will be colored. New housing will be needed for other thousands who might be displaced from crowded downtown areas by expressway construction and redevelopment . . . A practical answer is to open up and develop Negro expansion areas outside the central city. These areas should be assembled as a matter of public policy and should be developed by private enterprise as far as possible. This would provide new housing for the many Negroes who can afford it and would create vacancies in existing downtown housing for those seeking second-hand units.⁴⁷

The same year that this report was published, in 1952, Hartsfield issued an executive order that created the West Side Mutual Development Committee (WSMDC), a bi-racial negotiating body that would work to promote “the orderly and harmonious development of the West Side of our City,”⁴⁸ which had been annexed into the city. This included the area of Collier Heights.⁴⁹ As discussed above, Quentin V. Williamson, an African American realtor who later became a resident, along with others from the National Development Corporation scouted and purchased a 200 acre tract of land in the proposed district west of the creek that runs adjacent to Waterford Road.⁵⁰

On January 15, 1954, the Collier Heights Civic Club reported to its neighbors that it was working “hard and diligently to find out just what the situation is concerning colored development in this general area.”⁵¹ The Civic Club assured white owners in Collier Heights that the National Development Corporation would only build in the area west of the creek mentioned above. The report also stated:

You as a home-owner are probably aware of a movement underway by a group in our area to have you sell to the colored people. This Committee knows for a fact that the group working for the sale to colored has misrepresented some facts to you in this regard and have gone so far as to impersonate a member of this Committee in their solicitation in behalf of their selfish motives. It is the opinion of this Committee that a vast majority of our neighborhood do not want to sell or move at this time. It is recommended before you sign that each of you take the time to thoroughly think through and consider just what you as an individual stand to lose both financially and morally by the action of several people in the community selling to colored and leaving you or your neighbor in a predicament created by this selfish few.⁵²

As the West side of Atlanta faced increasing development pressures, the WSMDC distributed questionnaires to white residents to determine whether homeowners in neighborhoods that faced possible racial transition were willing to stay or sell. On February 11, 1954, the WSMDC sent a letter and accompanying questionnaire to white residents of Collier Heights. These residents lived on Baker Ridge Drive, Collier Drive, Collier Ridge Drive, Dale Creek Drive, and Forest Ridge Drive. The letter stated that “the enclosed questions are being asked of you in order to properly advise real estate men, home finance brokers, city officials, and others concerned as to the desires of Collier Heights residents” and also indicated that although African American companies owned and were developing

⁴⁷ Ibid, 58.

⁴⁸ Metropolitan Planning Commission, “Policy Proposal of the West Side Mutual Development Committee Regarding the Operation of the Real Estate Market with Respect to Race of Occupancy,” Atlanta Bureau of Planning Records, Box 3, Folder 5, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center.

⁴⁹ Mason, H. *Going Against the Wind: A Pictorial History of African Americans in Atlanta*. Atlanta: Longstreet Press, 1992, 189.

⁵⁰ Collier Heights Civic Club, Letter dated January 15, 1954, Atlanta Bureau of Planning Records, Box 3, Folder 5, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

land in the Collier Heights area, they had no intention of disrupting the white residents or causing problems.⁵³

Questionnaires were sent to about 150 homes in Collier Heights and 98 responses were recorded. A letter sent to Collier Heights residents on March 5, 1954 outlined the results of the survey: "The replies to our first question indicated that as of that date, 50 families felt that the community should remain white, 28 preferred to sell to colored, 6 indicated no preference, and 14 did not answer the question. To the second question, 35 favored selling 'as soon as possible,' 22 would 'wait and see what happens,' 26 preferred to stay, 4 had no preference, and 12 did not answer the question."⁵⁴ The results suggested that current residents were not entirely ready to let Collier Heights transition to the African American, middle-class neighborhood that it would become. However, within a few months the neighborhood had transitioned almost exclusively to an African American neighborhood. No original documentation was found to explain the details of this event. However, several years later, the United Press International wire service carried a story that was picked up by the *Atlanta Daily World* and recounted this period of Collier Heights' history.

SURROUNDED BY GROUP

Then one spring day in 1954 a neighbor came home to Collier Heights and put out the call for an urgent community meeting. The news he gave his friends was a shocker. He had stumbled on evidence that Negroes had bought 1,000 acres of undeveloped and had them surrounded.

What happens when that kind of news hits a southern community?

At first there was anger and bitterness—a bit of panic among widows and elderly families. After heated discussion, it was suggested that the entire neighborhood agree to sell their homes to Negroes. The argument was two-fold—such a move would protect property values and it would reduce racial tension by opening up to Negroes an unlimited area for home building.

On the first vote a bare majority approved the drastic step. Community leaders felt that was not sufficient. Real trouble was feared with opinion so sharply divided, but gradually the enthusiasm for selling grew stronger.

The big job during that period was to keep someone from jumping the gun and selling too soon. It was realized that such "blockbusting" tactics could lead to violence and also to a rapid breakdown of property values.

VIOLENCE AVOIDED

Although there were severe pressure [sic] from all sides in those tense days, there never was an incident inside Collier Heights. One big factor was a carefully-planned program of keeping everyone honestly informed—and everyone absolutely calm. Group captains were assigned eight homes each among the 135 houses in the section. They made house-to-house contacts on progress and problems.

Finally the vote to sell was up to 87 per cent and at that point the Collier Heights neighbors agreed to put their homes on the market for Negroes. Again old-fashioned community spirit came into play

Some owners objected to showing their houses to Negro applicants. Neighbors did the job for them. A number of families moved out, leaving homes vacant and lawns unkept. Such eyesores were removed by others.

Tension grew anew as Negroes swept into the community to make purchases. In nearby fringe areas occupied by whites, several tried to sell individually to Negroes. Bombings resulted that could be clearly heard in still peaceful Collier Heights.

Within three months, it was all over and Negroes were the new owners of Collier Heights. This was the signal for immediate expansion of the undeveloped area to the west. Today the sound of hammer and saw is everywhere as the section mushrooms.⁵⁵

Between 1953 and 1957, several events on both the local and national level demonstrated the difficulties that were still being faced by African Americans with regards to segregation and equal rights: while there would soon be more opportunities for blacks, these changes were accompanied by

⁵³ Westside Mutual Development Committee and Advisory Panel, Letter dated February 11, 1954, Atlanta Bureau of Planning Records, Box 3, Folder 5, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center.

⁵⁴ Westside Mutual Development Committee and Advisory Panel, Letter dated March 5, 1954, Atlanta Bureau of Planning Records, Box 3, Folder 5, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center.

⁵⁵ Al Kuettner, "Atlanta Has Answer to Negro Housing Woes, Writer Holds." *Atlanta Daily World*, July 17, 1958.

continued discrimination and violence. In 1953, five African American families moved to a neighborhood near Bankhead Highway, now Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway, and were provided with protection in order to do so.⁵⁶ A year later, two important events in desegregation occurred. The first was the 1954 lawsuit to desegregate Atlanta's public golf courses. One of the plaintiffs in the case was Charles T. Bell, an African American real estate agent involved in Collier Heights real estate development and sales. The second was the *Brown vs. the Board of Education* decision of 1954, which ordered desegregation of public schools with "all deliberate speed." Both cases signaled the slow move towards allowing African Americans equal opportunities and treatment. In 1956, an event just outside the Collier Heights neighborhood would show that there were still racial tensions in Atlanta; the houses of two African American families at 2540 and 2431 Baker Road NW, just outside of the proposed district, were bombed.⁵⁷ West Atlanta was still not an area where blacks were completely welcome or accepted as residents. The Civil Rights movement as a whole was having varied success during this time as well. Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr., a future resident of Collier Heights, was arrested in January 1957 for riding in the front of a bus, similar to the incident involving Rosa Parks in Alabama just two years earlier.⁵⁸ Five years later, in 1962, these struggles in Atlanta were still blatantly evident and reached another critical climax when construction of the Peyton Road Barrier in a neighborhood adjacent to Collier Heights garnered national attention for the city. At this time, Atlanta's newly elected mayor, Ivan Allen, ordered the installation of a concrete barrier to keep black home-seekers from Gordon Road from entering the white neighborhoods in southwest Atlanta. When Hartsfield was asked to comment on the incident, he stated, "Never make a mistake they can take a picture of;" this may be evidence of the differences between the Hartsfield and Allen administrations.⁵⁹ In the face of national criticism, the wall came down less than two months after it went up, but the effects of the event lingered. In the following years, Allen would make several judgments in favor of desegregation, perhaps in an effort to compensate for his initial poor judgment.⁶⁰ Ironically, Mayor Hartsfield would go on to offer his assistance and expertise from this period to the Federal Government under the administration of President Lyndon Baines Johnson. This assistance would be accepted, as he became a domestic advisor to the government on housing issues during the period when major civil rights acts were signed into law.

In 1961, a report entitled *Collier Heights: A Neighborhood Plan* was published by the City of Atlanta Department of Planning to promote Collier Heights as an ideal residential neighborhood, primarily for middle-class African American families. Black families who wanted larger houses and more land, the dream of most Americans, began to move from neighborhoods like the West End, Summerhill, and Auburn Avenue. In 1962, Herman Russell, a successful African American builder, moved to Collier Heights from Summerhill, the neighborhood he had lived in all his life. He wanted a bigger home and "Collier Heights was an upcoming area where lawyers, doctors and business people were moving." The growth of Collier Heights exploded.

Highway construction stalled until the passage of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956, which dramatically increased the federal funding available to complete the nation's system of interconnected roadways. In Atlanta, the portion of the west expressway that forms the southern boundary of the proposed National Register Historic District was completed in 1966 with substantial financial support from the Federal Highway Trust Fund. Meanwhile, construction of I-285 began in 1957 and was

⁵⁶ H. Mason, *Going Against the Wind: A Pictorial History of African Americans in Atlanta*, (Atlanta: Longstreet Press, 1992), 189.

⁵⁷ Atlanta Bureau of Planning, Box 1, Folder 1, Atlanta History Center Archives.

⁵⁸ Mason, 173.

⁵⁹ Kevin Kruse. *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism. Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005, 4.

⁶⁰ New Georgia Encyclopedia, Ivan Allen Jr., available from <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-1382&hl=y>; Internet; accessed 7 April 2008.

completed in 1969. This corresponds with the relocation of St. Paul of the Cross Catholic Church's building in 1956 in anticipation of the highway passing through their property. The portion of I-285 that forms the western boundary of the district was one of the last segments of Atlanta's circumferential highway to be completed.

Although the roadways that would soon surround Collier Heights were slow to materialize, the community itself saw the height of its development between 1958 and 1968, when several neighborhoods were platted, hundreds of houses and several community buildings were constructed, and desegregation allowed African Americans more opportunity to excel in Atlanta. Property development surged starting in 1958, with at least thirty-four subdivisions within the Collier Heights neighborhood being platted between 1958 and 1966; the availability of financing is likely the catalyst of such explosive construction. The houses that were built were similar to those being built elsewhere in the city and the country at the time; ranch houses and split-levels were the prominent house type, being constructed throughout the neighborhood, with various styles represented. Some of the houses were uniquely designed by aspiring architects, but many others were modeled after plans found in magazines or plan books at the time. It is believed and very likely that the designs of W. D. Farmer, a prominent white architect and house plan maker in Atlanta during the second half of the 20th century, were executed in multiple locations in Collier Heights. W. D. Farmer's *Homes for Pleasant Living, 2nd Edition*, was published in 1962, giving residents the opportunity to create their own home. In addition, the work of several African American draftsmen and un-licensed home designers also appear in Collier Heights. A survey of building permits for Collier Heights suggests no licensed architect involvement in designing any of the homes in Collier Heights, but while professional involvement may not have been recorded by the city, oral histories give a different perspective. Mrs. Sarah Jackson-Jones, Collier Heights resident since 1958, indicated that Amer Lee Waters designed her home. Mr. Waters, a Collier Heights resident, was not a licensed architect, but he had a flair for house drawing, and at some point he also worked for Joseph W. Robinson, who had a degree in architecture but was not able to become a professionally licensed architect in Georgia until 1970.⁶¹

Once families began to move to Collier Heights, they worked very hard to maintain the objective set out by the Collier Heights plan. In 1964, residents of Collier Heights and some surrounding neighborhoods stopped the development of a \$4 million shopping plaza at the intersection of Collier Drive (formerly Simpson Road) and Hamilton E. Holmes Drive (formerly Hightower Road).⁶² An apartment development planned for the same area as the shopping plaza was halted in 1966 by residents of Collier Heights and nearby neighborhoods.⁶³ Residents of West Atlanta were aware of what certain types of development would do to their neighborhood and they worked diligently to prevent construction that they did not approve of. The residents of Collier Heights and the African American community were working not only to improve their physical conditions, but they were also working to improve their social conditions.

The homes and neighborhoods within the community of Collier Heights appear in publications throughout the late 1950s and 1960s. The houses of Collier Heights were well promoted, with several ads appearing in the *Atlanta Daily World* throughout 1958. African American families were able to see the homes available to them in West Atlanta in a time when they were being limited to where and how they could live. An editorial in *Atlanta Daily World* from 1958 also suggested that the area west of Atlanta was the prime location for African American, middle-class settlement. The article identifies Collier Heights as an area that had plenty of land for development, was full of African American

⁶¹ Interview with Mrs. Sarah Jackson-Jones, conducted by Stephanie Cherry and Emilie Arnold, March 28, 2008.

⁶² Thaddeus Stokes, "Collier Heights Stands to Lose," *Atlanta Inquirer*, June 1, 1976.

⁶³ Stokes, June 1, 1976.

residents, and residents had access to several banks and financial services that could help them own their own home.⁶⁴

An article for the Woodlawn Heights subdivision advertises it “To be the finest subdivision ever developed, along Skipper and Jones roads, combination brick and frame bungalows, plotted on 18 and ½ acres of rolling terraced wooded lots. 80 to 160 feet fronts, 130 to 342 feet depths. Featuring modern and conventional designs, six designs were available.”⁶⁵ One such design featured was called the Sea Cliff for \$19,000, a shed design or Eichler style home. Another design seen throughout Collier Heights was the Woodland Master Deluxe Split-Level, available for \$21,000. These homes all had the cutting edge appliances and features for homes of this period, something unheard of and unavailable to blacks in Atlanta just a few years earlier. The houses were also remarkably spacious and luxurious; for example, the Deluxe Split-Level boasted, “Nine huge rooms, living room, dining room, kitchen, three bedrooms, den, utility room, play room, and carport. Two full baths and stub-out for third bath in first floor level, G.E surface unit and oven in bronze, storage, forced air furnace, sliding glass doors, loading from dining room to outside yard or patio.”⁶⁶ These plan-book style designs, along with the work of talented draftsmen and the influences of residents themselves, give Collier Heights its combination of typical and atypical mid-century modern houses.

Other major construction projects that occurred in Collier Heights throughout the late 1950s and 1960s included community landmark buildings. St. Paul of the Cross Catholic Church opened in 1960.⁶⁷ Berean Seventh-Day Adventist Church was opened three years later at the corner of Collier Drive and Hamilton E. Holmes Drive (formerly Hightower Road).⁶⁸ Educational facilities were also being constructed between 1958 and 1968. Drexel High School, a part of the St. Paul of the Cross Catholic Church complex, was opened in 1962 and became the first and only black Catholic high school ever in Atlanta.⁶⁹ Drexel High School remained open for five years, closing its doors in 1967 as a result of school desegregation and a decrease in student population.⁷⁰ A year after Drexel High School closed, Frederick Douglass High School opened.⁷¹ The African American community was working to improve its situation, and Collier Heights was becoming the middle-class enclave predicted in the 1961 Collier Heights Plan and in the *Atlanta Daily World*.

The success of Collier Heights as an African American middle class enclave can also be traced to Atlanta’s African American business traditions. Perhaps the best evidence is found in the financing of Collier Heights properties and associated businesses. Oral interviews tie the city’s African American financial sector to Collier Heights. These ties include, but were not limited to the financing of homes and support of the building industry by Citizen’s Trust Bank and the former Mutual Savings and Loan Corporation. Citizen’s and Mutual officers were widely known for their business acumen in Atlanta and in other parts of the nation. Both businesses were able to participate in real estate financing, under arrangements with other banks, in the FHA and VA programs. The president of Citizen’s Trust Bank, Lorimer D. Milton, purchased his lot and built his home in Collier Heights in 1960, living there with his spouse for the remainder of their lifetimes. Officers of this bank’s governing board also were residents of Collier Heights; these officers included Herman J. Russell and Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr.

⁶⁴ Kuettner, July 15, 1958.

⁶⁵ *Atlanta World Daily*, August 3, 1958, Advertisement.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ St. Paul of the Cross Catholic Church 40th Anniversary Journal, 26.

⁶⁸ “Berean Dedicates its New Church.” *Atlanta Voice*, May 17, 1970.

⁶⁹ St. Paul of the Cross Catholic Church 40th Anniversary Journal, 30.

⁷⁰ St. Paul of the Cross Catholic Church 50th Anniversary packet, 36.

⁷¹ “Open House for Frederick Douglass High School,” *Atlanta Daily World*, April 20, 1969.

By the end of the 1960s, development in Collier Heights was beginning to wane. Development declined in Collier Heights after 1968. There were some houses constructed during the 1970s, and the Collier Heights branch of the Atlanta-Fulton County Public Library opened in 1971 outside the proposed district.⁷² There were no major events that happened within Collier Heights after 1968. The Fair Housing Act of 1968 allowed African Americans to live in neighborhoods that were open to all races. The neighborhood today still serves as an example of how African American families were able to overcome adversity in the south and become contributing citizens to the history and function of the cities they lived in.

The time immediately following the period of significance could be characterized by the changes created by desegregation. Families were no longer restricted to specific areas for home purchases, but could seek a full array of housing choices in the city or in the suburbs based on factors such as desirable schools and amenities. Collier Heights homeowners would go on to support civic and social activities, including campaigns to elect residents to public offices at the local and state level. Families would also campaign against some forms of development that would affect the standard of living in Collier Heights. These community-based efforts opposed changes in the nearby Fulton County Airport at Charlie Brown Field and the rezoning of land for a large car dealership. The community would also continue to support a network of civic representing neighborhood subdivisions. These local civic clubs formed the focus for social and sometimes political action to protect the area's residents or call attention to threats to the social structure of the community. The civic associations also worked to protect and improve landscapes and local park areas.

By the turn of the century, many original owners were still living in the community. They had attracted younger couples with families to purchase homes in Collier Heights. For example, Dr. Bill Jenkins, an official with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, found his home in Collier Heights. Dr. Jenkins, who also taught at Morehouse College's new School of Medicine, was known for his work in epidemiology but especially his discovery of the Public Health Service's Tuskegee syphilis study. His report on the conduct of the study prompted national policies regarding protection of human subjects in all forms of publicly funded research. For this family and others, the community offered proximity to work, education, and social outlets desired to sustain their professions and their lifestyles.

Today, the Collier Heights community is experiencing a slow but sure renewal in its character and integrity. There is evidence that recent housing downturns affect the community, especially house flipping and predatory lending practices, as reflected in foreclosures and some neglected properties. However, visits to the community also reveal a newly renovated park which focuses on maintaining health through a LifeTrail system (the first in the state of Georgia), several homes undergoing restoration by new residents preferring affordable mid-century modern homes, and a strong social network of homeowners who have chosen to "age-in-place" in their accessible one-level ranch homes.

SECTION 4

SIGNIFICANCE

A. Areas of Significance

architecture

community planning

⁷² "New Library Opens at Collier Heights," *Atlanta Constitution*, March 27, 1971.

ethnic heritage (African American)
social history

B. Statements of Significance

Collier Heights is a suburban, mid-twentieth century African American residential neighborhood on the west side of Atlanta with a period of significance beginning in 1915, a year marked by the district's first residential development and ending in 1968, when development slowed significantly. At the time of its developmental decline, Collier Heights was still successful, but more housing options for black families began to open up. Collier Heights is being nominated under Criterion A for architecture and Criterion C for its place in the broad patterns of Georgia history. Its physical resources and developmental history contribute to a larger understanding of Atlanta's social history and ethnic heritage (specifically African American), and it also represents an incredibly intact post-World War II mid-century suburban development. The area's physical resources are comprised primarily of ranch and split-level houses, American small houses, and a few earlier bungalows. More than 90 percent of the neighborhood's resources contribute to its period of significance.

The Collier Heights neighborhood is significant in the area of **architecture** as a cohesive example of mid-twentieth century residential development. The area's mass development began during the 1940s post-war building boom with the construction of American small houses along the proposed district's periphery. On a national scale, this type of housing is thought to have had some influence on the development of the ranch style; in Collier Heights one can see echoes of this evolution as the construction of American small houses morphed into the development of compact ranches which eventually morphed into the various ranch subtypes recognized today.

The house types of Collier Heights were perfectly suited to meet the growing needs of expanding families, which characterized the domestic atmosphere of the post-war Baby Boom era - for both blacks and whites. Oral interviews with original residents of the neighborhood reveal that part of the allure of this new suburb was the size of the homes, which were larger and more modern than what could be found in West End, Summerhill and other African American neighborhoods throughout Atlanta. This tended to attract more prosperous and upwardly-mobile African Americans whose real estate options in the city were often stymied by the segregation that was firmly embedded in Atlanta's social culture. Collier Heights shows that the pattern of suburban development and migration was not simply a feature of white city dwellers but that it impacted families across the racial and social strata of society. More significantly, Collier Heights was one of the few areas in Atlanta that catered to this type of middle and upper-middle class development within the African American community and is one of the only African American neighborhoods in Atlanta that still retains the essential characteristics that propelled its development.

During the increasingly stable and prosperous decades of the 1950s and 1960s, the houses in Collier Heights showed not only a maturation in their architectural language but also a commensurate elevation in size, building material and personalization (images 76 and 77). This increased use of high-quality domestic building materials is seen throughout Georgia, as well as the United States, and was most commonly personified in the construction of red brick ranch houses, which are prevalent throughout Collier Heights. What is significant about Collier Heights is that its resources represent houses, styles and building materials that characterize the full spectrum of mid-century suburban house design and typify all of the myriad subtypes contained therein.

The majority of homes found in the neighborhood feature a mixture of brick and wood veneers. The earliest houses have detached garages, which was a design holdover from the days before the American automobile boom. As the trend towards owning automobiles became a matter of principle and not privilege, there was a simultaneous move in Collier Heights towards a new design feature—the

attached garage and carport, an almost-universal feature of the quintessential examples of mid-century architecture that characterize the main body of the neighborhood. Houses throughout the proposed district were also often personalized with signature design elements among them: wrought iron ornament (image #48), columns (image #49), and stone ornament (image #8). The area also features brightly colored wooden shutters, trim, additions and doors which recall the colors of the Caribbean in hues of pink, turquoise, yellow, green and purple (image #50). These details underscore the developing ability of residents to design and personalize their homes, despite the fact that many of these homes were the products of mass development and plan books – two house design methods popularized during the mid-twentieth century that did not often incorporate much individual design.

Finally, extremely few changes have been made to the houses of Collier Heights; except a few examples of infilled carports and replaced doors, notably few “modernizations” have occurred to detract from the historic integrity of this large neighborhood.

Collier Heights is also significant in the realm of **community planning**, as it was one of the first neighborhoods in Atlanta to break with the traditional “pre-war” method of planning and adopt all the elements of the FHA’s preferred pattern of subdivision development. Rather than continuing with the grid pattern of landscaped streets and uniform lot sizes (which is seen on the southern edge of the neighborhood but not throughout) the plan of Collier Heights adheres to the natural, rolling topography of the land. Much of the area is wooded, so the neighborhood features a mix of landscaped lots with mature trees interspersed with more heavily wooded lots, all of which are of varying shapes and sizes. These lots are set amongst a series of curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs that were touted in early real estate advertising as a feature of the neighborhood which “cut[s] down traffic speed and makes it a much safer community in which to bring up children.”⁷³

This subdivision pattern traces its roots to the mid-19th century, although it did not begin to fully develop until the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was a planning style that remained in use for predominately wealthy white neighborhoods, as seen in Atlanta’s Druid Hills and Inman Park historic districts, and did not transition into the mainstream building vocabulary until later in the 20th century. In fact, it was during the 1930s when this shift began to take place as the Federal Housing Administration adopted this picturesque pattern and many of its accompanying characteristics as the preferred plan for neighborhood building. While the grid pattern remained in use, there was a distinct shift in planning methods across the nation and, in Georgia, Collier Heights was one of the first African American neighborhoods to avail itself of this new planning style.

It is likely that developers Thomas G. Cousins and William L. Moore could take partial credit for this shift towards a more naturally inspired planning ethic. In 1961, the *Atlanta Daily World* noted that the Cousins-Moore partnership was already locally famous for their development of the Oakcliff Country Club Estates, and it was they who were responsible for developing and building the Crescendo Valley subdivision in the northeast sector of Collier Heights.⁷⁴ “Tom” Cousins later founded Cousins Properties, a prominent development firm that continues today to specialize in residential, commercial, and mixed-use development. This early work by Cousins might be seen as Cousins Properties’ first efforts in Atlanta, as they would go on to create large scale, planned suburban communities including Indian Hills, Hidden Hills, and Dunwoody Estates in and around Atlanta, and nationally renowned residential, commercial, and industrial developments throughout the southeast, California, and Texas.

This emphasis on creating a neighborhood that was built in harmony with the natural features of the land has contributed to the district’s enduring character. Even as commercial development and multi-

⁷³ *Atlanta Daily World*, August 20, 1961, 1.

⁷⁴ *Atlanta Daily World*, August 20, 1961, A1.

family housing from other parts of Atlanta have encroached upon the original expanse of the neighborhood, and despite the fact that the neighborhood has been fragmented by I-20 and I-285, its landscape and topography enables it to retain a pastoral sensibility that harkens back to its roots as a rural, country area. It lacks prevalent sidewalks and fenced in yards and, after its years of major development, has winding, tree-lined streets and wooded lots. This could not have been accomplished without the early efforts of community planners and the continued work of neighborhood residents to preserve the original character of their district.

Furthermore, Collier Heights is significant in the area of African American **ethnic heritage**. Although a small portion of the neighborhood was originally inhabited by white residents, the vast majority of the neighborhood's growth and development occurred once it transitioned from majority white to majority African American ownership. During the 1950s and 1960s it attracted some of the best, brightest and most influential people in the African American community; many of these people were or are long-term residents of Collier Heights. Moreover, these people relied heavily on the help and support of each other to break through racial boundaries and achieve goals that were not only important for them but significant for the African American community as a whole.

Residents of Collier Heights were able to overcome difficulties imposed by segregationist practices in Atlanta in the 1950s and 1960s by turning their focus inward and drawing strength and inspiration from their shared sense of community and ethnic heritage. Dr. William Shropshire, a resident, noted in an interview that while he was waiting for his home in Woodlawn Heights to be built, Walter "Chief" Aiken "rented out a house of his to me."⁷⁵ This type of partnership and support was vital because during segregation it was difficult even for successful African Americans to find acceptable places to live, work, meet or socialize. Another resident Herman Russell relays, "my house use[d] to be the recreation center. We had big parties there. There was segregation downtown. You couldn't use any of the hotels or go into any of the hotel ballrooms. And I had a recreation room and a swimming pool and a deck that would accommodate 150 people. We had as many as 200 people just for parties."⁷⁶ He also recalled how civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr. (whose father lived in the neighborhood), Ralph David Abernathy and Andrew Young would meet in his home to discuss challenges that faced them in fighting segregation.

These homes and buildings owned by churches still stand as a testament to the community's long-term commitment to its present, past, and future. Church buildings still offer a venue for worship, education, community events, and meetings (Berean Seventh-Day Adventist Church, St. Paul of the Cross Roman Catholic Church, and Radcliffe Presbyterian Church). Other congregations (Union Baptist Church) moved to new facilities but left behind buildings now housing other houses of worship or educational centers. New civic and social organizations have been developed in recent years, such as the Collier Heights Neighborhood Association and Woodlawn Heights Community Club, which also speak to the enduring efforts of this community to maintain a strong sense of connection with the foundation of ethnic heritage upon which it has always drawn its vitality.

Finally, the Collier Heights neighborhood is significant in the realm of **social history**, which is closely tied to its ethnic heritage but more directly influenced by the political dealings that were brokered during the 1950s and 1960s.

In 1952 the West Side Mutual Development Committee (WSMDC) was appointed by Mayor Hartsfield to help supervise the peaceful growth of Atlanta's west side, including Collier Heights. After Q.V. Williamson purchased a large swath of land adjacent to the existing white neighborhood of Collier

⁷⁵ Interview at the Woodlawn community meeting, March 3, 2008.

⁷⁶ Interview with Herman Russell, April 8, 2008.

Heights, there was a noticeable spike in tension between the two groups which precipitated the distribution of surveys by the WSMDC to all of Collier Heights' white residents, allowing them a means by which to voice their opinion regarding African American migration to the neighborhood. The majority of residents said that they would prefer Collier Heights remain in the hands of white owners but without unanimous support for the exclusion of African Americans, the area's real estate turnover continued to accelerate.

Ultimately, though, the neighborhood did undergo a racial shift, remarkably without the violence that erupted in other neighborhoods across Atlanta and the South, and blacks were able to create a livable community out of adversity. Successful African American financial institutions in Atlanta supported the early construction of this black community. In Collier Heights, talented African American draftsmen, who were unable to become licensed in Georgia because of segregationist practices, were able to design inspired residences with the input of the neighborhood's homeowners. In the end, Collier Heights evolved into a successful and diverse enclave of African American domiciles. From laborers to professors and from doctors to clerks, Collier Heights provided a safe haven for Atlanta's African American population, all of whom desired the same rights and privileges that were available to their white counterparts in the other suburbs around the city.

C. Exceptions

As a district in which the majority of properties are less than 50 years of age, the Collier Heights neighborhood falls under Criteria Consideration G, and is being nominated because of its exceptional importance in the realm of African American ethnic heritage, community planning, social history, and architecture. It is one of the most intact examples of a post-World War II suburban African American community in the country. During its period of significance, it received acclaim in local and national publications, including (but not limited to) *The New York Times* and *Time* magazine.

Collier Heights was one of the first middle and upper-middle class African American suburban neighborhoods to be built in Atlanta during the period of segregation and, even more significantly, it was created, planned and developed predominately as an African American initiative. This demonstrates how African Americans in the South were moving ever closer to self-realization and demanding the type of respect and recognition that led to the start of the Civil Rights Movement. Collier Heights' mass development coincides with a time of intense segregationist thought and action, tracks community growth through the Civil Rights Movement and the passing of the Civil Rights Act, and culminates with the eventual acknowledgment of African Americans as an important, equal sector of society. The chronological development of Collier Heights encapsulates that entire struggle and after 1968, when there was no longer as much resistance to African American residential development in Atlanta, the growth in Collier Heights begins to diminish. The end of the period of significance represents the introduction of more opportunities for African American growth and development in society that resulted in the end of Collier Heights' position as the only residential option for upwardly mobile African Americans in Atlanta.

Collier Heights remains a neighborhood with "all the physical attributes of post-war suburbia," and neighborhoods like this one allowed African Americans in the South to benefit more from the process of urban decentralization than blacks in any other part of the United States.⁷⁷ For Atlanta, for Georgia, for the South, and for the United States, the history that Collier Heights' physical resources and character represent have played a monumental role in shaping the development of today's social environment.

⁷⁷ Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

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SECTION 5

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

CHECKLIST OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Before submitting your Historic District Information Form, make sure that you have enclosed the following information. **Use this as a checklist and check (with an X) the items that you have included.** If you are unable to enclose an item, explain why on a separate page.

Sources of Bibliographical Information

- Bibliography
- Checklist of sources
- Supplemental research information (clear photocopies not originals)

Photographs (labeled and cross-referenced to district map(s))

- Representative buildings, structures, objects, and/or sites
- Streetscapes and landscapes
- Surrounding areas, edges of the district, and boundaries
- Photocopies of Historic photographs

Maps

- Location map
- District map (s) with photographs, contributing/noncontributing properties, and boundary marked
- District map(s) unmarked for HPD use
- U.S.G.S. Quadrangle map sheet/Topographic map (optional) with location marked
- Photocopy of Sanborn Map(s) (if available)

Text

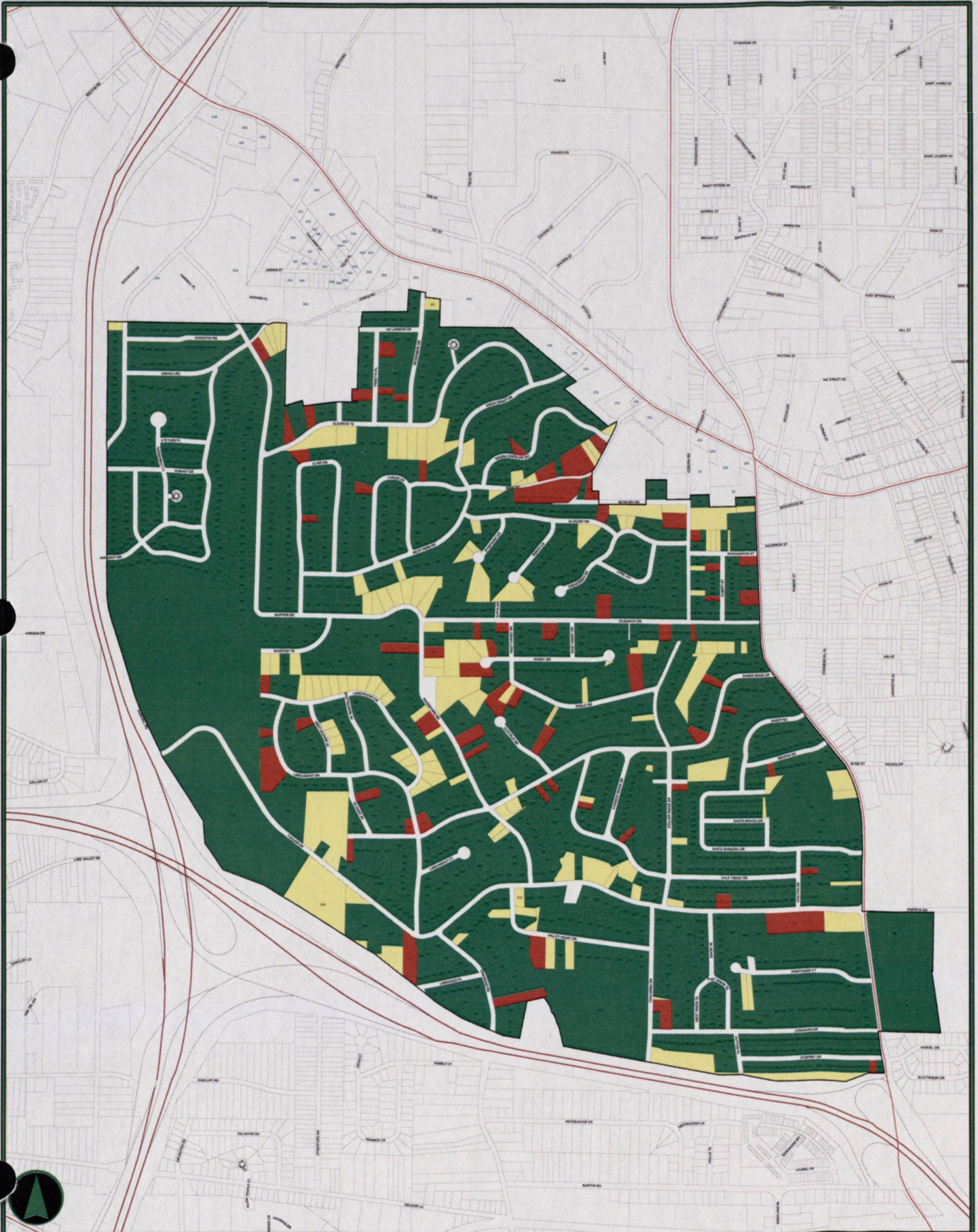
- Completed Historic District Information Form (hard copy and computer disk)
- or**
- Completed National Register of Historic Places Form (hard copy and computer disk)

I have enclosed the above documentation with my Historic District Information Form/National Register form for the _____ proposed nomination. I understand that if I do not include all of the requested documentation, my application will not be processed until it is complete.

Signature of Preparer _____ Date _____

Collier Heights Neighborhood

Proposed Historic District



PROPOSED HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARY
1,765 CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES
99 NON CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES
134 VACANT PROPERTIES

FIELD SURVEY BY HERITAGE PRESERVATION PROGRAM, GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY
NOTE: TOTAL NUMBER OF PROPERTIES IN THE PROPOSED HISTORIC DISTRICT: 1,998

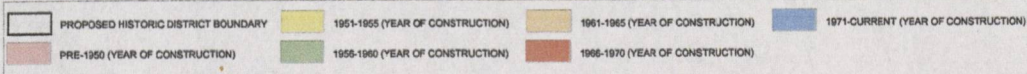
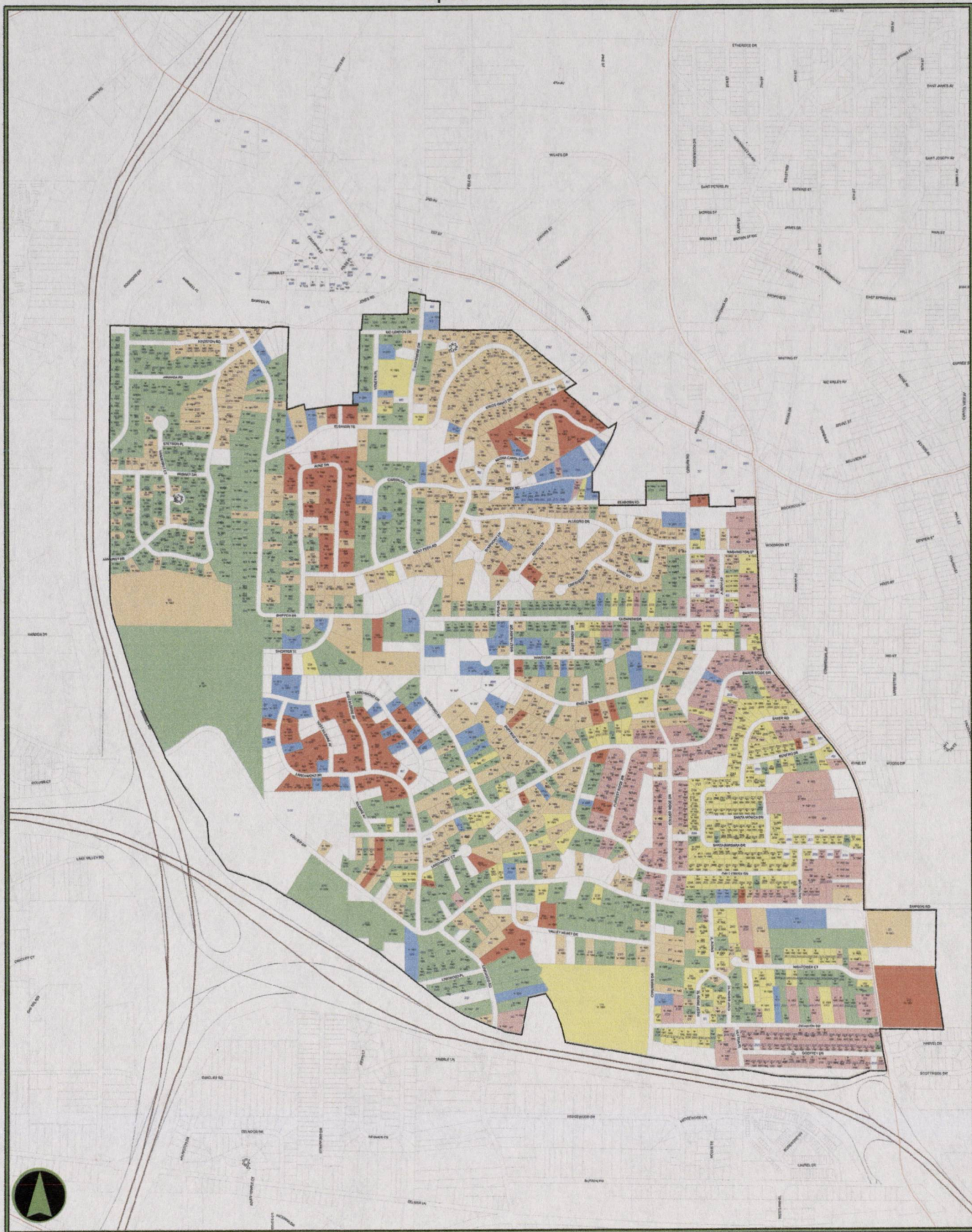
Collier Heights Neighborhood

Proposed Historic District



Collier Heights Neighborhood

Proposed Historic District



Appendix: Street Name Change and Name Derivation Information

Street Name Changes related to discussions of this Nomination

Auburn Avenue: Wheat Street (until 1893)

Cascade Avenue: Adamsville Road, Lickskillet Road

Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway (since 1998): Bankhead Highway (section from Northside Drive to Fulton county line)

Joseph E. Lowery Boulevard: Ashby Street

Hamilton E Holmes Drive: Hightower Road, Peyton Road

Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive: Hunter Street (as of 1863), Cobb Street

Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard: Gordon Street

Simpson Street/ Road: Joseph E. Boone Boulevard (as of 2008)

Street Name Derivations:

Oldknow Drive: Probably named for Joseph Wilson Oldknow, owner of lands now contained in proposed district

Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway: Named for Mr. Hollowell, resident of Collier Heights and African-American civil rights attorney.

Hamilton E. Holmes Drive: Names for Dr. Holmes, an orthopedic surgeon. Dr. Holmes was one of the first African-Americans to be admitted to the University of Georgia. He was also the first African American admitted to Emory University's School of Medicine.

Ozburn Road: Appears to refer to the Ozburn families that were residents prior to the turn of the 20th century.

Simon Terrace: According to a resident, is named for a Mr. Simon who was possibly associated with development of Collier Heights.