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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Roanoke Park Historic District
Wake County, North Carolina

SECTION 7/NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Setting

The Roanoke Park Historic District is located southeast of Raleigh's Five Points intersection. The intersection is created by the convergence of Fairview and West Whitaker Mill roads and Glenwood Avenue. The approximately 107-acre district is roughly diamond shaped, with a two-block extension at its southwest corner. West Whitaker Mill and Fairview roads spoke outwardly from Five Points in a northeasterly and southeasterly direction respectively, forming the district's northwest and southwest boundaries and a triangular wedge in which the district's secondary residential streets are nestled. Sunrise Avenue is the district's northeastern boundary and the curving Bickett Boulevard serves as the southeast boundary. The 300 and 400 blocks of Bickett Boulevard and Morrison Avenue project from the district's southwest corner to form the extension.

The Roanoke Park Historic District is an early-twentieth century residential neighborhood consisting almost completely of single-family dwellings and outbuildings such as sheds and garages. The district also contains six contributing duplexes and a park. The nominated area is today referred to by local residents as Roanoke Park, but actually consists of six separate subdivisions created between 1913 and 1926. The district derives its name from the largest of these subdivisions. The subdivisions are unified into one neighborhood by connected streets and sidewalks and the presence of similar architectural styles and building materials, lot and house sizes, and building setbacks. Amenities, such as mature trees, tree medians and a park, serve to further unify the area. The result is a compact and picturesque pedestrian-friendly neighborhood.

The district's topography is that of the undulating hills of North Carolina's eastern Piedmont region. From Whitaker Mill Road, the district's northern boundary, the land rises and falls as it slopes towards Pigeon House Branch and the railroad and industrial corridor south of the historic district. A small, unnamed stream is marked through the center of the park between Greenwood and Cherokee drives on the 1923 Roanoke Park plat map. Another stream serves as the rear property line for the lots on west side of Sunrise Avenue. Neither of these streams is still active, however, the land dips at their former locations.

The district's characteristic irregular street pattern is a response to the underlying topography. Hills, slopes, and streams were considered during platting and the street pattern was designed to be harmonious with these features. The traditional grid – with streets intersecting at right

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angles and following the points of the compass – was abandoned here in favor of a site-specific plan that follows the topography of the area. Straight streets, such as Morrison, the 300 and 400 blocks of Bickett Boulevard and Wills Avenue, run either northwest/southeast or northeast/southwest. Many of the streets, such as the 1600-1800 blocks of Bickett Boulevard, West Aycock Avenue, and Dare Street, curve to follow the gentle slope of the land.

This irregular street plan creates blocks of varying shapes and sizes. The combination of straight and curving streets controls the flow of vehicular traffic, which in turn encourages pedestrian use. The neighborhood park located between Greenwood and Cherokee drives is a destination for pedestrians as well as an open space for children to safely play in view of the surrounding homes. The houses that front the park on Greenwood and Cherokee drives are set back slightly further than those in the rest of the district.

Although the district's street pattern is irregular, lot size and shape does not greatly vary throughout the district. In general, lots are rectangular--with narrow road frontages and deep back yards--and less than one-fifth of an acre in size. Exceptions are found along Sunrise Avenue where the extra deep lots are slightly larger, at one-third of an acre. The lots on the east side of the 1800 block of Bickett Boulevard and a few lots on the east side of the 1600 block of Sunrise Avenue have been recently subdivided to reduce their size and create a large in-parcel on the block bounded by Bickett Boulevard, East Whitaker Mill Road, and Sunrise Avenue.

The siting of the dwellings is of particular importance in the district. Houses are constructed closely together, yet, the thoughtful arrangement of public and private outdoor spaces preserves a sense of spaciousness despite the high-density of development. Most dwellings address the street and facades are parallel with the curb. On a few corner lots, such as 208 and 1611 Bickett Boulevard (#36 and #105), houses are angled slightly to the street. Houses are close to the street with the setback generally uniform from street to street. Thus, the facades line up to form a defining edge that divides the public and semi-public spaces such as concrete sidewalks and planted tree lawns and front yards, from the private yards to the rear. In recent years many yards have been completely walled off by tall privacy fences. The district's lack of service alleys also contributes to the privacy of the rear yards. The small front yards are often landscaped with locally popular varieties of dogwoods, crepe myrtles, azaleas and other small flowering bushes and shrubs. These varieties are also seen in the tree medians, as are large hardwoods such as oaks.

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Surrounding Area

The borders of the district are not sharply delineated from surrounding areas, with the exception of the southern boundary of the district, which abut a railroad and industrial corridor. The remaining boundaries transition seamlessly into the Vanguard Park subdivision to the northwest, the Hayes Barton subdivision to west and the Georgetown subdivision to the east. These areas date from roughly the same period as the Roanoke Park Historic District and therefore display compatible buildings of similar size and style as well as gently rolling landscapes and curvilinear street plans. Sidewalks connect the Roanoke Park subdivisions to the adjacent residential areas.

Architectural Styles and Materials

The Roanoke Park Historic District contains examples of nationally popular architectural styles from the 1910s through the 1950s. These styles are Colonial Revival, Dutch Colonial Revival, Craftsman, American Foursquare, Tudor Revival, Period Cottage, Minimal Traditional, and Ranch. The district also contains simple dwellings that lack stylistic references and are identified by roof shape and massing such as the front-gable, side-gable, square, hipped-roof cottage, triple-A, and a narrow, front gable-form sometimes referred to as a shotgun. Dwellings range in size from approximately 800 square feet for the small post-war houses on the 300 and 400 blocks of Bickett Boulevard and Hanover Street, to 2000-plus square feet for the two-story houses at the west end of West Whitaker Mill Road.

The district's housing stock differs from the Hayes Barton Historic District in that the houses are smaller and, as a whole, less architecturally detailed. The large dwellings of Hayes Barton were constructed for Raleigh's wealthiest residents. Many of the houses are architect-designed and represent the fullest expression of the style in which they are rendered. Roanoke Park dwellings are smaller, pared down versions of their Hayes Barton neighbors. For example, the c.1930 Smith House at 917 Holt Drive in Hayes Barton is a two-story, double-pile brick, Georgian Revival house with a two-story pedimented projecting central pavilion with broken pediment door surround. In comparison, the brick Colonial Revival house at 318 Morrison Street (#235) in the Roanoke Park Historic District shares the materials and two-story double-pile form, but lacks the elaborate entry treatment that is central to the Georgian Revival style.

Approximately fifty percent of buildings in the district are of frame construction. Brick is the second most common material. Stone, stucco and concrete block are also represented. The prevalence of wood and brick as the primary building materials is in keeping with local

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construction patterns, as seen in the adjoining Vanguard Park, Bloomsbury and Hayes Barton historic districts.

Stone provided an alternative to wood and brick construction. Its rusticated appearance was well suited to the naturalistic themes in architecture, particularly favored in the Craftsman style, common from the 1910s through the 1930s. Stone was locally available from a granite quarry about three-quarters of a mile northwest of Five Points at the intersection of Glenwood Avenue and Oberlin Road (at the present location of the Glenwood Village shopping center).¹ Stone in the district is typically undressed brown or gray granite. Stones are laid on edge, rather than in courses, and consolidated with the wide, raised mortar joints commonly seen in early twentieth century Raleigh stonework. A good example of stonework typical in the district is seen on the two-story, side-gable, Colonial Revival dwelling at 501 West Whitaker Mill Road (#400). The front gable of the circa 1940 Minimal Traditional house at 1505 Cherokee Drive (#126) features a stone veneered front gable wing.

Stucco is often seen combined with other materials such as wood or brick. It is used to decorate the gables of the frame Craftsman bungalow at 200 West Aycock Street (#4) and the fine Asian-inspired bungalow at 301 West Whitaker Mill Road (#391). 503 West Whitaker Mill Road (#401) is a one-and-a-half story brick bungalow featuring stucco on the gable ends and dormer.

Nationally, concrete block was a common alternative to wood and brick by the second quarter of the twentieth century. This was due to its low cost and its flexibility for use in a variety of nationally popular styles. However, Sanborn maps indicate that concrete block was not widely used in Raleigh.² Although plain, the district's two pre-1952 concrete block dwellings are significant as rare examples of the concrete block construction; they are 415 Bickett Boulevard (#70), circa 1940, and 1529 Hanover Street (#288), circa 1945. Concrete block is frequently seen as a foundation treatment and in outbuildings.

Sunrise Avenue contains the district's collection of vernacular forms such as the triple-A, square-hipped roof cottage, and narrow front-gable. The triple-A is a one or two-story, single-pile, side-gable house that derives its name from the presence of a decorative central gable on the façade. The district's triple-A houses are the circa 1915, one-story, frame houses at 1618 and 1523 Sunrise Avenue (#323 and #333). Six contributing frame, square, hipped-roof cottages are also located on Sunrise Avenue. The earliest is 1525 Sunrise Avenue (#334)

¹ Wyatt and Woodard, E.24.

² Martin, 6.