

BLACK HERITAGE AND HISTORIC PLACES: 1945-1975

PROJECT SUMMARY

JUNE 2024

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Overview

In 2022, Raleigh started the Black Heritage and Historic Places: 1945-1975 project. The project finds and records places important to Black history in Raleigh. The focus period starts in 1945. The study follows the 1988 study on Raleigh's Black communities which covered up to the year 1945. Properties that are at least 50 years old qualify for recognition, so the focus period ends in 1975. There were many historic places (existing and lost) identified for the project.

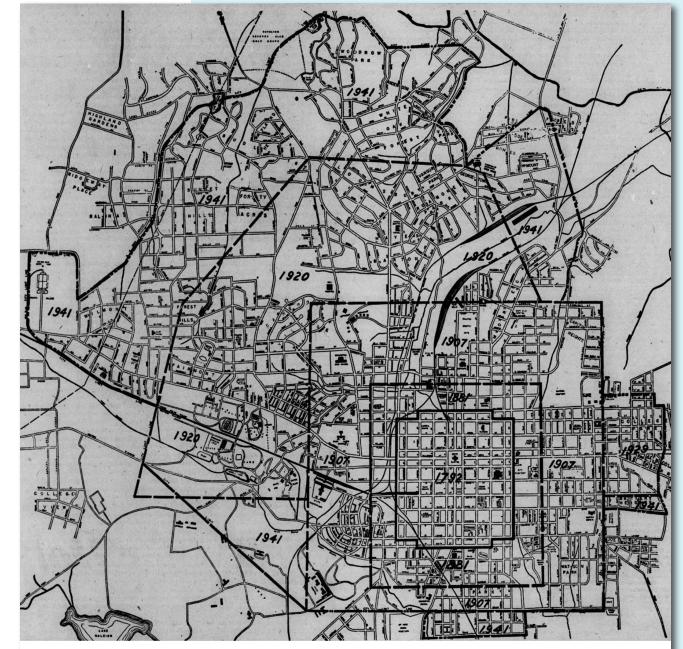
The project highlights:

- » Churches
- » Entertainment venues
- » The Civil Rights Movement
- » Black architects and building professionals
- » The Biltmore Hills neighborhood

The project suggests places for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The report also provides recommendations for further study. This project will add to the understanding and appreciation of Raleigh's Black heritage. The study will help the City to promote cultural awareness and recognition.

Study Area

The study area is Raleigh's 1975 city limits, which was 33,000 acres in size. This area represents the historic boundaries of Raleigh. For churches, the project used an expanded study area. The study included churches within the current city limits. The report records places that have important history, connection with people, and design.



Map of Raleigh annexations as printed in The News & Observer, January 1, 1950



Community Participation

Connecting with the community and listening to residents were key to the project. City staff and the project consultant used various ways to reach out and get people involved.

The project included three public meetings. The first two meetings introduced the project and initial research. These meetings had a good turnout and encouraged discussion. This shows that people in Raleigh care about their Black heritage.

At the first meeting, attendees talked about the history of their neighborhoods. Residents expressed concerns about how the city is growing. City staff listened to and addressed concerns. At the second meeting, city staff explained the oral history component of the project. The third meeting focused on the consultant's findings. The presentation included topics recommended for future study. Meeting attendees were able to rank their preferred next steps at the end of the meeting. See <u>"Areas for</u> <u>Future Study" on page 16</u> for the ranking results.

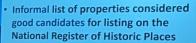






Raleigh's Black Heritage and Historic Places Study

What is the Study List?

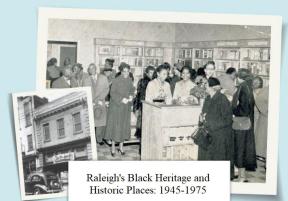


Does not mandate or insure National Register listing.

Properties generally must be over 50 years of age, have significance, and "integrity."

Before the third meeting, a draft report was published on the city's website. Readers interested in providing feedback could answer survey questions. The comments provided in the survey are included in the report. See Appendix A in the <u>final report</u> for the comments and responses from the project consultant.

The project included six oral history interviews with members of the community. The transcriptions and audio recordings of those interviews will be added to the City of Raleigh's oral history collection.



December 2022



Historical Context

The Growth of Raleigh and Urban Renewal

The report begins by focusing on pre-1945 development patterns as described in prior research studies. It includes an overview of how the city grew in the mid-20th century. References and sources used in the report are provided.

Like in other U.S. cities, Black residents were often forced to live on less desirable land. Racial segregation and restrictive covenants further limited where Black residents could live. As a result, in Raleigh, Black residents typically lived in the southern and eastern areas of the city. The location of segregated institutions (universities, churches, and schools) reinforced segregated development patterns. Federally funded projects also encouraged segregation. One example is John Chavis Memorial Park (505 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.), which was a "separate but equal" alternative to Pullen Park (520 Ashe Ave.). The restrictions also led to several neighborhoods built purposely for Black residents, like Rochester Heights and Biltmore Hills. Unfortunately, some of these new neighborhoods had problems with public services. These challenges often had a bigger impact on Black communities.

The growth of the city also spurred urban renewal and destructive highway projects. Raleigh's expansion led to challenges The desire for some City leaders to eradicate "slums" led to the destruction of neighborhoods like Smoky Hollow and Southside. This forced residents to seek housing in other parts of the city. Businesses relocated or shut down. These projects destroyed entire built communities and the connections of Black families and neighbors. Projects like Walnut Terrace made the tensions around race, property, and development worse.

Raleigh's early Black history and historic sites were often destroyed through redevelopment. This meant Raleigh lost important buildings and people had to leave their communities. The project's purpose is to find and record places that matter to the Black community. This includes places which no longer exist.

Civil Rights and Re-signifying

The report acknowledged that Black people were once excluded from places and services. This exclusion makes some sites important to those that have faced discrimination. Studies like this can help remember past injustice while celebrating people who fought for equality. The Civil Rights period transformed many segregated, exclusive sites into protest sites. These are places where actions led to changed laws and policies. Over time, many Civil Rights sites built by the Black community have been demolished.

For this study, some sites were re-signified as places that sparked social change. Resignifying in this report means updating the official history of a place with more layers of history. For example, the Sir Walter Hotel is significant for the architecture of the building. It was also the site of a protest during the Civil Rights era, but this is not currently part of its written history. Adding information about the protests would tell a more complete story. Studies like this can help remember past injustice while celebrating people who fought for equality.

Properties Identified

A total of 441 properties were found and documented.

Pictures and site forms were created. Of the total, 414 properties were documented for the first time. The project resulted in file updates for 27 properties that were already in the state records. **The properties include:**



42 churches



1 entertainment building



12 places associated with the Civil Rights Movement



37 places associated with Black builders and architects



349 Biltmore Hills houses



Twenty-two (22) properties and two neighborhoods are recommended for listing in the North Carolina Study List.

The Study List is a tool used by the State Historic Preservation Office to review properties that are potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. **Places recommended for listing include:**

- » 1 entertainment building
- » 1 site associated with Black builders and architects*
- » 20 churches
- » Cedarwood Country Estates neighborhood
- » Biltmore Hills neighborhood

*While the consultant was finalizing the report, the Capehart-Lightner House was destroyed by a fire and demolished. The house was associated with Black builders and architects and recommended for the Study List. It remains in the report as a record. A few examples mentioned in the report are the Lincoln Theater, Davie Street Presbyterian Church, and Union Baptist Church.



Property Highlights

The project highlights chances to celebrate and recognize history in Raleigh's Black communities. The project focuses on the years between 1945 to 1975, a time of growth and change in the city. The report makes the following suggestions:



Black entertainment venues did not last long and were at risk of demolition. The Lincoln Theater is the only known place that still exists. These important entertainment spots should continue to be recorded.



2

The Civil Rights Movement

The project suggests grouping and recording Civil Rights sites in Raleigh. The groups include protest sites and meeting places. Recording more sites, such as houses and offices linked to Civil Rights leaders, is suggested. This could include houses and offices linked to Civil Rights leaders. Researchers could add new layers of history to places that are already recognized. "Layers of history" means that places gain new historic recognitions over time.





Architects and Builders

The project also noted Black architects and builders in Raleigh. The report provides information on their work in the city. The project looks into the work of Black architects and builders, like:

- » Henry Beard Delany
- » Calvin Esau Lightner

» John W. Holmes

- » Willie Edward Jenkins
- » Gaston Alonzo Edwards
- » John Wesley Winters

The John W. Winters Company and John Winters' development projects are highlighted. Winters worked on projects like Biltmore Hills, Madonna Acres, and Cedarwoods Country Estates. More research on Black architects and builders is recommended.

4

Churches

Another big part of this project is documenting churches with Black congregations. This includes churches that Black congregations built themselves, like St. Matthew AME Church. The project also looked at churches built by white groups but later used by Black communities. Morning Star Baptist Church is one of the many examples of this type of church. Common architectural styles include Romanesque, Gothic Revival, Classical Revival, Colonial Revival, and Modernist. Some churches don't follow a particular style.

The report also notes churches designed by Black architects. For example, Calvin Esau Lightner designed Davie Street Presbyterian Church. AME Zion Church and Grace AME Zion Church could be eligible for listing in the National Register. Influential figure Mabel "Sister Gary" Philpott made an impact on both churches. Piney Grove AME Church shows how Black congregations moved because of urban renewal. All churches in the report are Christian. The report suggests looking at a wider variety of denominations.



5



Biltmore Hills

This project looks into the history of the Biltmore Hills neighborhood. Ed Richards and John W. Winters worked together to develop Biltmore Hills. They also collaborated on other projects like Madonna Acres. At first, the media portrayed Richards as the main person behind Biltmore Hills. They portrayed Winters as only the sales agent. But as time went on, people began to recognize Winters more for his role. Biltmore Hills provided housing options for Black teachers and blue-collar workers during segregation. This neighborhood played an important part in the city's cultural and economic growth.

The report records the historic features of Biltmore Hills. The street names in this area honor influential Black people, such as Ella Fitzgerald and Roy Campanella. The style of ranch houses and curving roads are called out as important features to preserve. The report also suggests getting the community involved and sharing more about Biltmore Hills. The report proposes looking into ways to protect the neighborhood's history. Some options include making the area a historic district or offering preservation incentives.



Recommendations for Further Study

More research is suggested for these themes:



John Wesley Winters

The report suggests doing more research on Winters. He was an important Black developer who built many neighborhoods in Raleigh. This research would show how Winters contributed to Raleigh's Black communities.



Impacts of Renewal Projects

The project suggests studying renewal projects. The research should focus on how urban renewal affected Black communities in Raleigh. This research would look into how these projects led to relocating Black communities. *



Black Architects and Builders

The report suggests exploring the careers of Black architects and builders. This research could help to record the important work of these individuals.

People of the Civil Rights Movement

The report suggests that a context about the people involved in the Civil Rights Movement would provide background data for the identification and designation of additional sites. This project should be undertaken by working closely with the community.*

* N&O Negative Collection, State Archives of North Carolina. 16 Photo copyrighted by the News and Observer

Recommendations for Further Study

Raleigh's Black Churches

Due to the number and variety of churches identified in the report, it may be worthwhile to consider a Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). An MPDF is a tool used for the National Register of Historic Places. It is designed for groups of thematically linked properties.



Update existing reports to add Civil Rights History

The report suggests updating historic reports to include Civil Rights history. This will make sure that these reports are complete and more inclusive. At the final community meeting, all meeting attendees were invited to rank the topics recommended for future study from their first priority to last priority. Thirty people provided a response.

The top three priority ranking results were:

- 1. Update existing reports to add Civil Rights history
- 2. Raleigh's Black Churches
- 3. People of the Civil Rights Movement

The response form provided a space for additional comments. The comments suggested a study on Black schools (Washington, Crosby-Garfield, Ligon, and the Walden schools) and more research on community centers, schools, and educational spaces. Comments received also noted that all of the suggested areas of future study are important and that different Black identities should be explored.





At the final meeting, city staff also shared possible ideas for a non-regulatory program to celebrate culturally important places. Many of the city's current historic preservation programs require architectural integrity (meaning the building has not substantially changed) and design review for exterior changes. This can be cost prohibitive. A non-regulatory program would recognize a place as historic and celebrate it without added regulation. No active non-regulatory programs currently existing in Raleigh. A presentation on possible non-regulatory programs was provided. **The program ideas presented were:**

Heritage Communities:

Based on a program that exists in Greensboro, N.C, this program would recognize the history of neighborhoods. It provides a history of the neighborhood but does not add regulation or a designated historic status.

Historic Markers:

A sample program exists in Winston-Salem, N.C. This provides a visual documentation of history and a destination for people to visit. Depending on the materials, size, and number of markers chosen, a marker program could be very expensive to implement.

Printed Guidebook:

This book would be available for purchase and would describe the city's history and buildings. There are many possible ways to customize a guidebook. It could be thematic or chronological. City staff showed sample images from a guidebook from Kansas City, Missouri.

Digital Mapping:

A digital map is an online accessible site that can be searched to view where buildings are located and can include a written history and photographs. The map could be researched by a professional or crowd sourced. City staff shared a sample digital map from San Antonio, Texas. The map in San Antonio also includes plaques on buildings with a QR code that links the viewer to more information.

Legacy Business Program:

This program could recognize the role businesses have played in shaping the city's culture and economy. Some programs limit participation to businesses that have existed in a city for more than 25 years. The program could include special recognition for older businesses. It could be used as a marketing tool. City staff shared a sample program from San Antonio, Texas.

Cultural Districts:

This is an inactive program mentioned in the city's Comprehensive Plan. The program was designed to showcase Raleigh's cultural importance through districts and heritage trails. An official process for designating a cultural district is needed to implement this program. Meeting attendees were invited to vote for their top three preferred non-regulatory programs. The top three selections were:

- 1. Heritage Communities
- 2. Historic Markers
- 3. Cultural Districts

Some other suggestions were also provided. The suggested ideas included: funding for families to help preserve and restore their houses, the installation of public art, and creation of educational programs and outreach.

The project helps to understand the history of Raleigh's Black communities. The project's recommendations provide a plan for saving this history for the future.

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raleighnc.gov search term: Building History

