

Benbow Park Historic District

The Benbow Park Historic District (GF9143) appears eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for Community Planning and Development and Criterion C for Architecture.

The planned African American development was platted from February 1959 to February 1962, employing planning principals typical of twentieth century suburban residential development. The automobile-oriented development, features concrete curbs and gutters, concrete driveways to each house, but no sidewalks. Large lots with deep setbacks and curvilinear streets enhance the gentle rolling terrain of the area, which slopes generally downward toward South Side Boulevard. In the southwest part of the subdivision, houses on corner lots are angled to face the intersections, a practice typical in postwar developments and espoused by the Urban Land Institute. Streets and building lots on the east side of the subdivision are largely straight and rectangular, respectively, a response to the north-south North O'Henry Boulevard (US-220) that borders the east end of the subdivision.



Figures 90 and 91: 1200 block Eton Drive (top) and 1900 block Carlton Avenue (bottom)

The west part of the subdivision, along South Benbow Road was originally platted as part of the adjacent Clinton Hills development. However, when it remained undeveloped by the late 1950s, the land was replatted and developed with the Benbow Park subdivision. Thus, the greenspace and public park located just southwest of the district bear the name of the subdivision, despite having been platted with the Clinton Hills development.

The subdivision was platted and developed by Joseph Koury and Bill Kirkman (through the entity Better Homes, Inc.). Koury formed a cloth weaving company with his brother in the 1940s, but soon teamed up with Fred Williams to purchase and cut up buildings from the World War II Overseas Replacement Depot, his foray into homebuilding. Kirkman worked as a draftsman for noted Greensboro architect Edward Loewenstein in the 1940s, before leaving to start his own home building company about 1950.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Barkley, Meredith. "Kirkman & Koury: Opposites Attract to Form one of the Largest Home-Building Operations in Greensboro History." Greensboro News & Record. March 21, 1998. Accessed via https://greensboro.com/kirkman-koury-opposites-attract-to-form-one-of-the-largest-home-building-operations-in-greensboro/article_213210c4-8a8f-5ca6-ad25-6ade1f95625e.html September 1, 2020.

Koury and Kirkman joined forces formally in 1952 to form Kirkman and Koury Homebuilders. The company capitalized on the housing shortages of the 1950s, building more than 8,000 houses in both white and black neighborhoods throughout Greensboro in the span of about 20 years. By 1960, when Benbow Park was being developed, the pair was building roughly 300 homes a year. They were able to erect houses so quickly in part because they employed a staff of about 300, manufactured their own wall units and roof trusses in a local factory, and further controlled the supply chain by maintaining their own supply company, Craft Building Supply Company.⁸⁹

Houses in the subdivision were almost entirely speculatively built with four easily identified variations of the Ranch and Split Level forms repeated throughout the subdivision. Colonial Revival details on the majority of the house include multi-light double-hung windows, paneled aprons, modillion and dentil cornices, paneled doors, and classical surrounds. These stand in stark contrast to the more Modernist styles and details found in the adjacent Clinton Hills development. Their presence is indicative of the subdivision's development by white developers and builders who employed the styles and details popular in white subdivisions of the era.

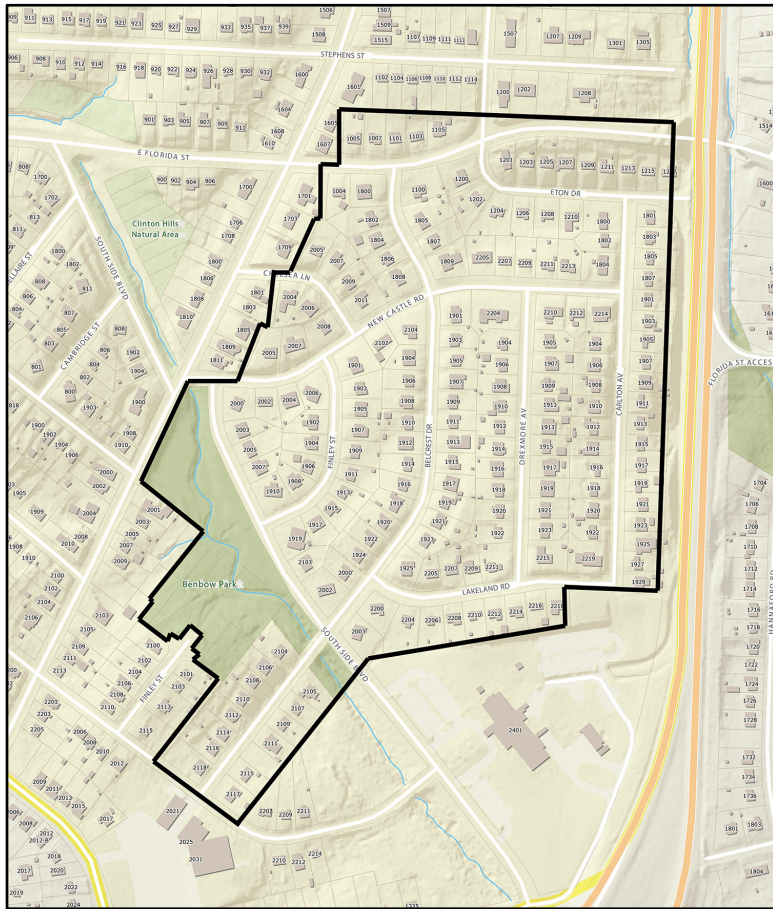
Vinyl windows, siding, and trim are common in the district. Yet, the overall material integrity of the buildings remains high with few alterations to the building forms and no infill construction that post-dates the original development of the district. Thus the district maintains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

While the district was developed by white homebuilders, it was planned and built for African American occupants in Greensboro's growing black middle class. Occupants include teachers, engineers, postal workers, clerks and professors and employees of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University.



Figures 92 and 93: 2200 block Lakeland Road (top) and 1900 block Drexmore Avenue (bottom)

⁸⁹ Barkley, Meredith. "Kirkman & Koury: Opposites Attract to Form one of the Largest Home-Building Operations in Greensboro History." Greensboro News & Record. March 21, 1998.



The period of significance extends from 1959, when the earliest part of the neighborhood was platted, to about 1965, when, according to city directories, the subdivision was largely built out. The boundary of the Benbow Park Historic District, should follow the 1959-1962 plats, minus a small section of the plat at the south end, along Britton Street that is not consistent with the architecture of the rest of the district. It is roughly bounded by East Florida Street on the north, North O’Henry Boulevard (US-220) on the east, South Side Boulevard on the South, and South Benbow Road on the west. It is adjacent to the Clinton Hills Historic District on the west, the Benbow Road Historic District on the north, and the c.1966 L. Richardson Memorial Hospital II on the south.

Figure 94: Map of Benbow Park Historic District (GF9143)

Additional Research

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, interior photographs and additional research were not available for the following properties. These properties have clear architectural significance, most having been designed by well-known African American architects that both lived and worked in the study area. Further, these properties—which include houses of prominent African Americans, African American churches, and a community center—may also have historic significance for their association with Greensboro’s Civil Rights movement and the Social History of Greensboro’s African American community during the mid-twentieth century.

Thus, these properties require further study and verification of their interior integrity to make a determination of eligibility for placement on the National Register of Historic Places. These properties include:

Bishop Wyoming Wells House/Justice Henry and Shirley Frye House, 1401 South Benbow

Constructed about 1959, the Bishop Wyoming Wells House/Justice Henry and Shirley Frye House (GF9128) may be eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for Architecture. Located at the southeast corner of South Benbow Road and Tuscaloosa Street, the one-story, hip-roofed Ranch with a sprawling five-bay façade with attached garage wing was designed by W. Edward Jenkins in 1959 for Bishop Wyoming Wells, and listed as “under construction” in the 1960 city directory.

The house has a brick veneer and two-over-two horizontal-pane wood-sash windows. A projecting, hip-roofed bay to the left of center has a twenty-light bow window. To its right (south) are two bays—a three-panel door with three-light sidelights and a triple window—that have vertical wood sheathing. On the far right end of the façade is a projecting hip-roofed bay with paired windows at the corner. At the right rear (southeast) is a hip-roofed frame wing. A gabled breezeway on the left (north) elevation is enclosed with jalousie windows. The breezeway connects to a two-bay-wide, hip-roofed garage with a group of awning windows on the left elevation and a cupola centered on the roofline.



Figures 95 and 96: Justice Henry and Shirley Frye House, 1401 South Benbow Road (GF9143)

The house may also be eligible for the National Register under Criterion B for its association with Justice Henry Frye, who occupied the house beginning in 1976. Frye was a 1953 graduate of NC A&T and became a U. S. Air Force captain, serving in Korea and Japan. Despite his service, when he returned home and attempted to register to vote in 1956 he was told that he failed the required literacy test, an experience that led him to study law at the University of

North Carolina, graduating in 1959.⁹⁰ Frye was the first African American first-year student to study law at UNC, the first African American to work in a U. S. Attorney's office in North Carolina (in 1963), and in 1968 he became the first African American to be elected to the North Carolina House of Representatives since the Reconstruction era.⁹¹ His first bill introduced a constitutional amendment to abolish the literacy test. He went on to serve six terms in the state House and one term in the Senate before beginning his judicial career. He was sworn in as North Carolina's first African American Supreme Court Justice in 1983 and in 1999 became the first African American Chief Justice in the state. Frye retired from the court until 2000 and remains in the house today.

House, 1810 South Benbow

Among the most overtly modernist houses in the area, this c.1973 house (GF6058) may be eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for Architecture, though the architect and the early history of the house is not known. The distinctive two-story, side-gabled house features a brick veneer at the first-floor level and vertical wood sheathing at the second floor, which cantilevers the first floor slightly. A group of four one-light clerestory windows are located on the right (north) end of the first floor and the left (south) end of the first floor is an open carport supported by metal posts on a tall brick wall. The second floor is three bays wide with two pairs of stacked awning windows on the left end of the façade and a group of four large fixed windows with operable awning windows below on the left end of the façade. The right gable end has a brick veneer that extends the full height of the elevation. The left gable end has an inset porch with a low knee wall. A one-story, gabled ell at the right rear (northwest) has vertical wood sheathing and paired fixed windows with operable awning windows below.



Figure 97: 1810 South Benbow Road (GF6058)

Dr. Frank & Gladys White House, 1206 East Side Drive

One of a number of Modernist-style houses on both sides of East Side Drive, the Dr. Frank & Gladys White House (GF6785) may be eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for Architecture. Designed by local architect William Streat and completed in 1965, this one-story, front-gabled house has a distinctive, low-sloped roof over the five-bay-wide façade. The house has a brick veneer, deep eaves, and large exposed purlins in the gables. Near the center of the façade is an inset entrance bay with paired solid wood doors with very wide,



Figure 98: Dr. Frank & Gladys White House, 1206 East Side Drive (GF6785)

⁹⁰ Literacy tests were used from the 1850s to the 1960s as a means of disenfranchising African American and other minority voters.

⁹¹ "Profiles of Prominent African-Americans in Greensboro."

one-light sidelights and a three-part transom that extends all the way to the roofline. To the left (southeast) of the entrance is a large, three-part picture window. Windows on the right (northwest) end of the façade are one-light awning windows, two single windows and one triple window. The house was built for Dr. Frank White, a history professor at North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University, and his wife Gladys.

Annie Lee Holley House, 1206 Julian Street

Located at the southwest corner of Julian Street and South Benbow Road, the Annie Lee Holley House (GF9138) may be eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for Architecture. Designed by local architect W. Edward Jenkins and completed about 1963, the split-level house has a two-story, hip-roofed wing on the left (east) and a one-story, side-gabled wing on the right (west). The two-story wing is three bays wide at the second-floor level with a brick veneer at the first floor that projects beyond the façade of the second-floor. The leftmost bay projects the farthest with the center bay projecting only slightly with an integrated brick planter in front of it that is lit by three pendant lights. The rightmost bay, the entrance bay, is flush with the second-floor, but sheltered by the shed roof that covers the other bays first-floor. The entrance bay has aluminum siding around a paneled door with three-light sidelights. The second floor has two-over-two horizontal-pane wood-sash windows, aluminum siding, and deep eaves. This part of the house is double-pile with a garage located at the front (north) of the left elevation. The one-story, side-gabled wing has a twenty-four-light bow window on the façade and an exterior brick chimney in the right gable end. A one-story, shed-roofed, brick wing extends from the left rear (southeast). The house was built about 1963 by Annie Lee Holley, a widow and teacher at Washington Street School. Holley was the sister of J. Kenneth Lee, who owned the nearby house at 1021 Broad Street.



Figure 99: Annie Lee Holley House, 1206 Julian Street (GF9138)

Milton H. Barnes House, 2219 Lakeland Drive

Located at the northwest corner of Lakeland Drive and Carlton Avenue, the c.1966 Milton H. Barnes House (GF6066) may be eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for Architecture. The one-story, side-gabled, Modernist-style house, is set apart from the repetitive, speculatively built Ranches and split-level houses that make up the majority of the Benbow Park neighborhood. The core of the house is five bays wide and double-pile with a brick veneer and one-over-one wood-sash windows with paneled aprons on the façade. The center three bays of the façade are inset. Paired doors, each with two lights, are centered on the façade and accessed by brick steps. Paired windows on each side of the entrance are screened from the street by decorative, pierced concrete-block walls. Integrated planters are located between the building



Figure 100: Milton H. Barnes House, 2219 Lakeland Drive (GF6066)

façade and concrete screen wall. A one-story, side-gabled, carport wing on the left (west) elevation is supported by metal posts on a brick knee wall. The right (east) side of the two-bay carport is enclosed with paired casement windows with shared one-light transoms on a knee wall with vertical wood siding. There is vertical wood sheathing in the left gables of the carport and main houses. The right gable end features paired slider windows near the top of the wall and narrow wood siding in the gable. A shed-roofed wing at the rear (north) has an exterior brick chimney on its right elevation.

The house may also be eligible for the National Register under Criterion B for its association with Milton H. Barnes, a plaintiff with Dr. Blount in the case of *Simkins v. Moses Cone Hospital* (1963), the landmark Supreme Court decision that desegregated hospitals throughout the South.

Windsor Community Center, 1601 East Gate City Boulevard

The 1968 Windsor Community Center (GF9134) may be eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for African American Ethnic Heritage in the area of Recreation. Prominently sited at the northeast corner of East Gate City Boulevard and South Bennett Road, the building replaced an older community center on the site, which opened in 1937 and included a bathhouse, swimming pool, tennis courts, and playground.⁹² Both the earlier and the current community centers were named for William Blackstone Windsor, a prominent African American educator in Greensboro who was involved in the establishment of Greensboro's Carnegie Negro Library, edited an African American newspaper called the *Greensboro Herald*, and was also an early activist in efforts to fight racial segregation in Greensboro's neighborhoods.⁹³



Figures 101 and 102: Windsor Community Center, 1601 East Gate city Boulevard (GF9134)

The building may also be eligible under Criterion C for Architecture. The one-story, flat-roofed, Modernist-style building was designed by Charles M. Graves Organization in Atlanta. It has an exposed steel structure with white brick panels between the iron posts. There are no windows on the twenty-one-bay façade. However, a distinctive round entrance, faced with white brick, is centered on the façade. Within the round brick opening is an aluminum-framed glass wall with paired aluminum-framed glass doors. There is a hollow-core metal door west of the main entrance and additional hollow-core metal doors on the side elevations. Northeast of the main building is a large, two-story, flat-roofed gymnasium building of the same steel-framed construction with white brick panels. A 2019 mural on the rear (north) elevation of this wing depicts the “Greensboro Four.” Beyond the gymnasium are paved basketball courts.

⁹² “The Secrets of Nocho Park, Clinton Hills, and Benbow Park.” Preservation Greensboro. <https://preservationgreensboro.org/the-secrets-of-nocho-park-clinton-hills-and-benbow-park/>) Accessed July 1, 2020.

⁹³ “Profiles of Prominent African-Americans in Greensboro.”

Northwest of the main building is an in-ground swimming pool. It is surrounded by a concrete deck and is accessed by doors on the rear of the main building.

St. Matthews United Methodist Church, 600 East Florida Street

Constructed in 1970, St. Matthews United Methodist Church (GF9131) may be eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for Architecture. Designed by local African American architect W. Edward Jenkins, the building was completed in 1970 with the first services held in January 1971. The impressive, Modernist-style church has a one-story, flat-roofed, roughly square base. The sanctuary is located in the center of the building with an octagonal form rising from the center of the base and topped by a combination hipped and gabled roof and a bell tower rises from its center. The northeast, northwest, southeast, and southwest elevations of the octagonal structure have gabled roofs with stained glass filling the entire gable.

The flat-roofed base has a blonde brick veneer and a shingled pent roof on all four elevations. The main entrance is centered on the northwest elevation, facing East Florida Street. It is located in a projecting bay and has paired, solid wood doors within an aluminum-framed glass wall that fills the entire bay. There are six bays each to the right (southwest) and left (northeast) of the entrance. Each has a narrow, aluminum-framed window that extends nearly the full height of the wall and has an operable awning window at its bottom. Projecting brick pilasters are located midway through each group of windows and at the outer corners of the façade. The left (northeast) and right (southwest) elevations matches the façade, though with smaller, single-door entrance bays that are flush with the elevation. The rear (southeast) elevation has pilasters matching the façade with few windows.

The entrance on the right elevation is sheltered by a pent-roofed breezeway on full-height brick piers. The breezeway connects to a one-story, flat-roofed education wing with a pent roof matching the base of the church. The education wing has grouped windows with fixed sashes above operable awning windows, the windows filling the upper half of the façade between the brick pilasters. An entrance on the southwest elevation of the education wing, a solid wood door with narrow sidelights and a transom, is sheltered by a projecting pent roof on metal posts.



Figures 103, 104, and 105: St. Matthews United Methodist Church, 600 East Florida Street (GF9131)

The church may also be eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for African American Ethnic Heritage in the area of Social History. Organized in 1866 as the Warnersville Methodist Episcopal Church, it is the oldest African American church Greensboro and, according to the church website, is both the oldest and largest in the Western North Carolina Conference. The church also has close ties to Bennett College, which held inaugural classes at Warnersville Methodist Episcopal Church in 1873 due in part to the success of Rev. Matthew Alston in persuading the Freedman’s Aid Society to provide assistance to the school. The original church building was torn down about 1970 as part of Greensboro’s urban renewal efforts.⁹⁴

Metropolitan United Methodist Church, 1701 East Market Street

The 1976 Metropolitan United Methodist Church (GF9139) may be eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for Architecture. The front-gabled, Modernist-style church is located at the northeast corner of Market Street and North Benbow Road, set well back from the street with a grassy lawn on the west, south, and east elevations and parking at the rear and far east of the property. The sanctuary is located on the left (west) side of the building. The front-gabled form is five bays wide and eight bays deep with a brick veneer and steeply sloped roof with prowd eaves and deep overhangs. The five-bay façade is separated by brick pilasters with paired pilasters accentuating the middle bay. The center three bays have arched, stained-glass windows with projecting, arched brick surrounds. The windows extend nearly the full height of the gable. Inset exits on the right (east) and left ends of the façade are single hollow-core metal doors. Above the inset bays and extending up to the roofline are vertical wood fins. Matching fins are located at the top of the front gable. An integrated brick planter spans the center three bays of the façade. The left elevation features eight rectangular stained-glass windows with projecting brick pilasters between each pair of windows. The rear (north) elevation is relatively unadorned and features a blind brick wall divided by pilasters into five bays, and vertical wood in the gable.

The right elevation of the sanctuary is obscured by a full-depth, flat-roofed wing with vertical wood at the roof fascia and a projecting, semi-octagonal bay, adjacent to the sanctuary, but set back from the façade of this wing. The building cornerstone is located at the southeast corner of this wing. A



Figures 106, 107, and 108: Metropolitan United Methodist Church, 1701 East Market Street (GF9139)

⁹⁴ “Profiles of Prominent African-Americans in Greensboro.”

roughly square wing connects to the right rear of this wing, resulting in an L shape containing the entrance and administrative parts of the building and extending to the north beyond the rear elevation of the sanctuary. The formal entrance to the square-shaped portion of the building is located on the south elevation, facing East Market Street. The façade is three bays wide with the bays separated by brick pilasters. The center bay features paired wood doors flanked by rectangular stained-glass windows and the whole façade is sheltered by a front-gabled roof with deep eaves supported by square posts. The gable shelters only the entrance and does not extend to the building beyond. Instead, it is sheer with screens applied to a wood lattice. The right elevation is five bays deep with four pairs of one-light wood casement windows and paired hollow-core exit doors. The rear elevation is seven bays deep with paired casement windows and an accessible entrance. Mechanical equipment to the west of the flat-roofed wing and north of the sanctuary is screened by a brick wall.