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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Woodlawn Commercial Historic District
other names/site number NA

2. Location

street & number Inclusive street numbers, see continuation sheet NA not for publication
city, town Birmingham NA vicinity
state Alabama code AL county Jefferson code 073 zip code 35205

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>12</u>	<u>3</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u>2</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>12</u>	<u>5</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: NA
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
[Signature] 12-12-90
Signature of certifying official Date
Alabama Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office)
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other, (explain:) _____
Mark Z. Baker Entered in the National Register 25 Jan. 1991
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: Specialty StoresCommerce/Trade: ProfessionalReligion: Religious StructureReligion: Church SchoolGovernment: City Hall

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: Specialty StoresReligion: Religious StructureReligion: Church School

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Commercial StyleBeaux ArtsGothic Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Unknownwalls BrickStoneroof Asphaltother Stucco

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Woodlawn Commercial Historic District is located approximately three and one-half miles northeast of Birmingham's central business district. The historic district is approximately six square acres and forms an irregular, L-shape. The district includes the major intersection of Woodlawn's commercial center. The main thoroughfare, 1st Avenue North, runs northeast to southwest and is intersected by 55th Place; forming the L-shaped district. The small district contains sixteen buildings and two empty lots.

The Woodlawn Commercial Historic District represents the main public and commercial buildings associated with the development of the Woodlawn community during the early twentieth century. The buildings located within the district were built between 1908 and 1935. The district contains a wide range of building types associated with a small, early twentieth-century suburban community; such as a church and church-related school (inventory #2, 1), a city hall (inventory #12), a fraternal lodge (inventory #3), and a variety of small commercial and professional buildings (inv. #9-11,13-18).

Most all of the buildings located within the district are constructed in brick with the exception of the Woodlawn Methodist Episcopal Church which is constructed in stone (inventory #2). One building has been covered in smooth stucco (inventory #11). Stone and terra cotta is used throughout the district as decorative elements (inventory #2, 3, 9, 10, 12, 13, 18). Many of the buildings are highlighted by decorative brick corbelled cornices (inventory #3, 9, 14, 15, 16, 17).

The buildings within the district range in height from one, two, and three stories. All of the commercial buildings have flat or parapet roofs. Because of the urban location of the district, all of the buildings are situated close to the street and are either attached to one another or are separated only by an alley. The buildings located on corner lots tend to be more ornate and elaborate than neighboring buildings located in the center of the block (inventory #2, 3, 9, 10, 12).

The architecture of the Woodlawn Commercial Historic District represents a variety of styles typical to commercial and civic development of the early twentieth century. The earliest buildings in the district constructed in the first decades of the twentieth century are simple one-story brick commercial structures with corbelled brick decorative details (inventory #16, 17). Other early examples with corbelled cornices are two stories in height (inventory #9). More decorative examples of this period are the public and semi-public buildings: the Woodlawn Methodist Episcopal Church with its Victorian Gothic characteristics (inventory #2), the Masonic Lodge with its Romanesque arching enclosing the two floors of window openings and its contrasting stone work (inventory #3), and the Woodlawn City Hall with its fine Beaux Arts-influenced detailing (inventory #12).

 See continuation sheet

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INCLUSIVE STREET NUMBERS FOR WOODLAWN COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT:

118 North 55th Street

Northwest corner of 1st Avenue North and 55th Street North

5502 - 5532 (even), 5519 - 5525 (odd) 1st Avenue North

1 - 7 North 55th Place

1 - 4 South 55th Place

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During the 1920s, after the annexation by the City of Birmingham, there was a resurgence of building in the Woodlawn Commercial Historic District. Most of the buildings erected during this period were simple two-story commercial buildings with stone and brick elements lending decoration to simple styled facades (inventory #13, 14, 15). In the 1930s there was very little construction in the district. However, several small buildings were erected that reflected the Art Moderne style of the decade (inventory #11).

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INTEGRITY OF THE WOODLAWN COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT:

The Woodlawn Commercial Historic District has retained its integrity as a small enclave of early twentieth-century civic, religious, and commercial buildings located in suburban Birmingham. All of the contributing buildings have retained their major architectural elements such as form, material, fenestration, and decorative details. Many of the first story storefronts have been altered with modern replacement materials, but the buildings still convey the architectural and historical significance of the district. There are twelve contributing buildings in the district and one contributing building previously listed in the National Register of Historic Places (inventory #12).

The historic district has only five noncontributing resources in the district. Three of the noncontributing buildings are historic buildings that have undergone unsympathetic modern alterations and have suffered a loss of integrity. There are no buildings in the district constructed after 1935. The district also has two noncontributing sites, a parking lot and small park. Both of these noncontributing sites are located on the site of early buildings.

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CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES WITHIN THE WOODLAWN COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT:

1. 118 North 55th Street
(Woodlawn M.E. Church School): 1924; Tudor Revival style, institutional building; three stories in height; constructed in red brick with stone accents; flat roof; main elevation features three bays with central projecting center bay with gabled parapet and arched recessed main entrance; decorative buttresses capped with stone; large sized 12-over-12 double sash windows; c. 1950 ell addition constructed in the same style.
2. Northwest corner of 1st Avenue North and 55th Street North
(Woodlawn Methodist Episcopal Church): 1909-1912; Victorian Gothic Revival style; constructed in cut stone; two stories in height, built on a raised basement; front gabled roof, with projecting side gables; three storied square tower located on northeast corner with low pitched hipped roof; first floor features arched shaped window openings, second floor features pointed Tudor arched windows; main entrance steps were added in the 1950s.
3. 5502 1st Avenue North
(Woodlawn Masonic Building): 1915; Early Twentieth-Century Commercial Style; located on corner lot; constructed in brown brick with stone details; three stories in height; flat roof; elaborate brick corbelled cornice; third story features a row of arched windows on all elevations and second floor features flat arched windows; main first floor elevation features a recessed storefront with transoms; decorative details include stone keystones and stone insets above the windows; modern replacement windows.
9. 5522 1st Avenue North
(Boogs Block-Burch Antiques): 1928; Early Twentieth-Century Commercial Style; located on corner lot; constructed in red brick with stone details; two stories in height; flat roof; elaborate corbelled cornice; slender windows on second floor with stone lintels and sill; original storefront features recessed entrances, transoms, and pressed tin;
10. 5528/5530/5532 1st Avenue North
(Office and Commercial Block): 1928; Early Twentieth-Century Commercial Style; located on a corner lot; constructed in brick with stone details; three stories in height; flat roof; flattened corner features main entrance; decorative stone work along cornice; slender single windows on second floor with stone sills, windows boarded up; storefronts on first floor, severely altered storefronts.

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11. 5519 1st Avenue North
(Office, originally White House Sandwich Shop): 1935; Art Moderne Streamline style commercial building; located on alley; constructed in brick covered in smooth stucco; one story in height; flat roof; main elevation features a curved corner; side elevation features glass block windows; main storefront has been altered.
12. 5525 1st Avenue North
(Woodlawn City Hall): 1908; Beaux Arts style; located on a corner lot; constructed in brick with stone, terra cotta, pressed tin details; two stories in height; flat roof with projecting pressed tin bracketed eaves; the main elevation features an elaborate terra cotta pedimented cornice door surround; the second story has a row of paired windows; first story features storefronts which have been modernized; (Individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places 6/30/88).
13. 6 North 55th Place
(Office and Commercial building/vacant): 1922; Early Twentieth-Century Commercial style; located on alley; constructed in brick with stone details; two stories in height; slender three-bay main elevation; flat roof; second story features c.1940 metal casement windows, decorative diamond-shaped stone insets above windows; first floor storefront has been substantially altered.
14. 4 North 55th Place
(T & E Painting): 1920; Early Twentieth-Century Commercial Style; constructed in brick; one story in height; flat roof; decorative brick corbelled cornice; unaltered storefront features recessed entrance.
15. 4 South 55th Place
(Recording Studio): 1928; Early Twentieth Century Commercial style; constructed in red brick; two stories in height; flat roof; decorative corbelled cornice; second floor features arched windows; storefront has been filled in with concrete.
16. 7 North 55th Place
(Office/Warehouse): 1910; Early Twentieth-Century Commercial style; constructed in brick; one story in height; flat roof with parapet front; building features decorative brick ornamentation on cornice; storefront has been modernized.
17. 1 - 5 North 55th Place
(Hood Building - Vacant): 1908; Early Twentieth-Century Commercial style; constructed in brick; one story in height; flat roof; decorative

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corbelling below cornice line and between bays to create pilasters;
intact storefront with large transoms.

18. 1 South 55th Place
(Offices): 1913, remodeled in c. 1940; Mid-Twentieth-Century Commercial style; constructed in brick with stone trim; three stories in height; first and second floor features large industrial windows; main facade features three bays with the main entrance located in the left bay; stone decorative insets located between windows; cornice removed in c. 1940 and covered with sheet metal.

NONCONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES LOCATED WITHIN THE WOODLAWN COMMERCIAL DISTRICT:

4. (Parking Lot) located between 5502 and 5514 1st Avenue North.
5. 5514 1st Avenue North
(New Life Ministries): Altered in c. 1960; Late Twentieth-Century Commercial style alterations; covered in corrugated metal; one story in height; modern storefront.
6. 5516 1st Avenue North
(House of James): Altered in c. 1960; Late Twentieth-Century Commercial style alterations; constructed in brick and covered in corrugated metal; two stories in height; second story fenestration covered in metal; first story features modern storefront.
7. (Park) Located between 5516 and 5520 1st Avenue North.
Tree-lined pedestrian walkway which connects 1st Avenue North to alley in rear. Located in empty lot between two buildings. Constructed in late twentieth century.
8. 5520 1st Avenue North
(Office/Commercial): Altered c. 1960; Late Twentieth-Century Commercial style alterations; constructed in brick covered in perma-stone; one story in height; modernized storefront.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Community Development

Period of Significance

1908-1935

Significant Dates

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Significant Person

NA

Architect/Builder

NA

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Criterion C: Architecture

The Woodlawn Commercial Historic District is locally significant for its fine collection of commercial and civic architectural styles popular in small Alabama towns during the early twentieth century. Located only three miles from the center of Birmingham and annexed as early as 1910, Woodlawn has always maintained a visual independence from the larger metropolis. Serving as an eastern suburban node, Woodlawn displays the architectural styles found in many small Alabama towns during the 1910s through 1930s. The utilitarian brick commercial buildings of one, two, and three stories are simply embellished with brick corbelling and with contrasting stone. The district even has a modest example of the 1930s Art Moderne style. The district also exhibits fine representative examples of the various public architectural styles popular in Alabama in the early twentieth century; such as a Gothic Revival church, a Tudor Revival school, and a Classical Revival city hall building.

Criterion A: Community Development

The Woodlawn Commercial Historic District is locally significant as a manifestation of the development of the Woodlawn community as well as the rapid growth of the City of Birmingham in the early twentieth century. Although founded as early as 1871, Woodlawn did not grow or develop economically until the streetcar line opened the area up as suburban community for the rapidly growing City of Birmingham. The earliest buildings represented in the district illustrate the boom the suburban area experienced in the first decades of the twentieth century. The independent community erected a city hall in 1908, a church in 1909, and many fine commercial buildings. Like many of the other suburban communities that mushroomed around Birmingham, Woodlawn was annexed by the city in 1910, and experienced a second wave of development and growth. It was during these two periods, 1909 through the mid-1930s that Woodlawn developed into its present appearance. The Woodlawn Commercial District did not experience any new construction or growth after the popularization of the automobile and development of shopping centers in the mid-twentieth century.

9. Major Bibliographical References

"Early Events in the Life of Woodlawn," by Rosa Wood Burris, 1927, Tutwiller Collection, Birmingham Public Library

"Hill Ferguson Collection," Birmingham Public Library Archives

Oral interview, Mary Frances Cook, Woodlawn M.E. Church Historian, 7/22/89

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register (Woodlawn City Hall)
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property ±6 acres

UTM References

A | 16 | 523040 | 37111000 |
 Zone Easting Northing

C | 16 | 523060 | 37109300 |

E | 16 | 522820 | 37110200 |

B | 16 | 523160 | 37111040 |
 Zone Easting Northing

D | 16 | 522840 | 37109100 |

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See boundary delineated on the accompanying map.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This area consists of the greatest concentration of historic buildings associated with the Woodlawn Commercial area.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dlean D. Hairston/Development Coordinator; Steven M. Kay/AHC Reviewer

organization Operation New Birmingham date August 1990

street & number 2025 3rd Avenue North telephone 205 324-8797

city or town Birmingham state Alabama zip code 35203

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CRITERION EXCEPTION A

Two religious properties are located in the Woodlawn Commercial Historic District, Woodlawn M.E. Church School and Woodlawn Methodist Episcopal Church. The two buildings are included in the district because they contribute to the architectural significance of the district. The two buildings illustrate the early twentieth-century interpretation of the Tudor and Gothic Revival styles.

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HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF THE WOODLAWN COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT:

Woodlawn's history records it as the second oldest settlement in Jefferson County, being founded by the descendents of Obadiah Wood. First called Rockville, the town became known as Woods Station in 1871, a mail stop along the Alabama Great Southern rail line (1871 was the same year Birmingham was founded three miles to the west at the intersection of the A.G.S. and L & N rail lines).

In 1886 the unincorporated settlement changed its name to Woodlawn. Incorporation followed in 1891. By the turn-of-the-century Woodlawn was a thriving town with its own schools and several churches. Two streetcar lines crossed at 56th Street and 1st Avenue North, just one block from the center of the Woodlawn Commercial District. After 1900, commercial development began to create a town center. Although many descendents of the Wood family resided and owned large amounts of property in the Woodlawn area; the land in the commercial center was subdivided and developed by real estate entrepreneur J. T. Hood.

A streetcar suburb with a thriving commercial center and booming residential development surrounded Woodlawn's growth and prosperity at this time is represented by a good number of one- and two-story commercial buildings including J. T. Hood's worn real estate office and the Woodlawn City Hall. In 1910 Woodlawn was annexed into greater Birmingham along with several other streetcar suburbs. Still, building kept pace in the Woodlawn Commercial District up until the mid-teens. In 1913 a third streetcar line was laid just a block south of the commercial center. By the time America entered World War I, Woodlawn had become the commercial hub of eastern Birmingham. Its grocers, restaurants, doctors, lawyers, dentists, barbers, and druggist served the residential population of Woodlawn, East Lake, and Gate City.

With the boom of the 1920s, Woodlawn began to redevelop older structures and residential property. Erected in their place were one- and two-story commercial structures like the row of buildings along the west side of 55th Place. Although the Depression years saw empty stores and little construction, a few structures were erected in the Art Deco style of the 1930s, like the little stucco building adjacent to the Woodlawn City Hall which first housed a sandwich shop.

As Birmingham's boundaries grew and eastern suburbs flourished with automobiles and shopping centers, the Woodlawn commercial area saw a decline. Yet, it still retained a strong identity as a special place and many businesses continued to serve the community with services not found elsewhere in the eastern area. Beginning in the late 1970s the City of Birmingham recognized the need to bolster the Woodlawn Commercial district, and preserve its sense of place. It was recognized as a unique thread in the fabric of the city. Street plantings, small parks, parking lots and street fixtures gave the district a revitalized look. These efforts to save Woodlawn seem to be working. Service and speciality businesses have begun to locate here, and the buildings within the historic district are being preserved by the efforts of the businesses and owners.

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graphs Page 1

Information in items 2, 3, 4, and 5 is the same for all photos listed.

- 2) Birmingham, Jefferson County, Alabama
- 3) Stephen Stella
- 4) September 1989
- 5) Operation New Birmingham

No. 1

- 1) Woodlawn City Hall, 5525 1st Avenue North
Woodlawn Commercial Historic District
- 6) View from north looking south at intersection of First Avenue North and
55th Place

No. 2

- 1) Universal Land and Development, 1 South 55th Place
Woodlawn Commercial Historic District
- 6) View from south looking north on 55th Place

No. 3

- 1) Office/Commercial Building, 5528-5532 1st Avenue
Northhand Burch Antiques, 5522-5522 1/2 1st Avenue North
Woodlawn Commercial Historic District
- 6) View from east looking west on First Avenue North

No. 4

- 1) Woodlawn Masonic Building, 5502 1st Avenue North and Woodlawn M.E. Church,
118 North 55th Place
- 6) View from East looking west at intersection of First Avenue North and 55th
Place