

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

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.

<u>1. Name of</u> historic nar other name			
2. Location	l		
street & nui	·····	n Road to the south, a	th, Lee Street to the east, Campbellton and Cascade Avenue, Westmont Road,
city, town	Atlanta	101	() vicinity of
county state	Fulton code GA Georgia code GA		
() not for p	oublication		
3. Classific	ation	·····	
Ownership	of Property:	C	Category of Property:
 (X) private (X) public-I () public-s () public-fe 	state		X) building(s)) district) site) structure) object
Number of I	Resources within Prop	erty: <u>Contributir</u>	ng <u>Noncontributing</u>
	buildings	1435	551
	sites	1	1
	structures	1	0
	objects	0	0
	total	1437	552
Name of pre	g resources previously evious listing: N/A ated multiple property		I Register: N/A

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 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 the National Register criteria. () See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying officia

W. Ray Luce Historic Preservation Division Director Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

In my opinion, the property () meets () does not meet the National Register criteria. () See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

State or Federal agency or bureau

5.	National	Park	Service	Certification
)			

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- (V entered in the National Register
- () determined eligible for the National Register
- () determined not eligible for the National Register
- () removed from the National Register
- () other, explain:
- () see continuation sheet

Eden H Boall 4.11.03

Date



Date

OAKLAND CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT ALTANTA, FULTON COUNTY, GEORGIA

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

DOMESTIC/SINGLE DWELLING DOMESTIC/MULTIPLE DWELLING/DUPLEX DOMESTIC/MULTIPLE DWELLING/APARTMENT BUILDING COMMERCE/TRADE/BUSINESS GOVERNMENT/FIRE STATION EDUCATION/SCHOOL RELIGION/RELIGIOUS FACILITY/CHURCH LANDSCAPE/PARK/CITY PARK

Current Functions:

DOMESTIC/SINGLE DWELLING DOMESTIC/MULTIPLE DWELLING/DUPLEX DOMESTIC/MULTIPLE DWELLING/APARTMENT BUILDING COMMERCE/TRADE/BUSINESS EDUCATION/SCHOOL RELIGION/RELIGIOUS FACILITY/CHURCH LANDSCAPE/PARK/CITY PARK

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

LATE VICTORIAN/ITALIANATE LATE VICTORIAN/QUEEN ANNE LATE VICTORIAN/SHINGLE STYLE LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/COLONIAL REVIVAL LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/MISSION/SPANISH COLONIAL REVIVAL LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY MOVEMENTS/COMMERCIAL STYLE LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY MOVEMENTS/BUNGALOW/CRAFTSMAN MODERN MOVEMENT/RANCH STYLE **OTHER/FOLK VICTORIAN** OTHER/ENGLISH VENRACULAR REVIVAL OTHER/SHOTGUN **OTHER/DOULBE SHOTGUN OTHER/GABLED ELL COTTAGE OTHER/QUEEN ANNE COTTAGE OTHER/PYRAMID COTTAGE OTHER/I-HOUSE OTHER/QUEEN ANNE HOUSE**

Section 7--Description

Materials:

foundation	Brick; Stone/Granite; Concrete
walls	Wood/Weatherboard, Shingle; Brick; Stone/Granite; Concrete; Synthetics/Vinyl
roof	Metal/Tin; Asphalt
other	Granite

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

Oakland City Historic District is located in Fulton County southwest of downtown Atlanta and north of Fort McPherson. The neighborhood was primarily developed to attract working-class white families from Atlanta. The district encompasses the intact and contiguous historic residential, commercial, and community landmark resources of the Oakland City neighborhood that developed from the 1890s to the mid-1950s.

Development of Oakland City as a suburb of Atlanta began with the completion of a trolley line to the area in the 1890s. The topography in the area ranges from steep pitches to flat areas, many of which were graded and developed. The street pattern varies within the district. In the western section of the district streets run north-south and east-west whereas in the eastern section the streets run parallel and perpendicular to the railroad placing them at an angle to the streets in the western section of the neighborhood. The inconsistent street patterns of the Oakland City Historic District reflect the development of the neighborhood along trolley lines.

The district has remained primarily residential since the early twentieth century, and has since that time continuously supported a neighborhood school, churches representing several denominations, and a cluster of commercial and retail structures concentrated on Lee Street and Cascade Avenue. The fact that the business district is relatively small can be attributed to the trolley lines, which were first in operation in the area in the 1890s. The trolley served to connect the neighborhood to Atlanta and other suburbs, thus allowing people to live in Oakland City and easily access shopping in nearby Atlanta.

The residences constructed within the neighborhood are one-and two-story, frame buildings constructed of wood and brick. The residences are located close together and share uniform setbacks. Architectural styles popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries represented within the district include Queen Anne (photograph 60), Shingle (photograph 78), Folk Victorian (photograph 61), Colonial Revival (photograph 3, foreground), English Vernacular Revival (photographs 8, 9, 14, 15, and 18), and Craftsman (photographs 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 14, 19, 20, 21, 29, 34, 35, 36, 37, 62, and 63). The majority of the houses in Oakland City were constructed between the 1890s and the 1930s, and all of these styles are important in the development of Georgia according to *Georgia's Living Places: Historic Houses in their Landscaped Settings*, a statewide context study. Additionally, this time period is the most important in Oakland City in regards to mass settlement and population increases. The "bungalow belt," of which Oakland City is a part, is due in part to the trolley lines that connected the different parts of the Atlanta area, and the residential development that paralleled their

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construction. The neighborhood is largely intact, with some examples of infill construction, which have for the most part respected the setback, massing, and scale of the surrounding houses. The bungalow (photographs 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 14, 19, 20, 21, 29, 34, 35, 36, 37, 62, and 63) is the most numerous house type represented in the district. Other house types represented in the district include shotgun (photograph 54), double shotgun, gabled ell cottage (photograph 61), Queen Anne cottage, pyramid cottage (photographs 22 and 50), minimal traditional (photographs 9, 10, 16, 17, 21, 23, 25, 32, 45, 46, 47, 59, 66, and 70), ranch (photographs 65, background, and 71), I-house (photograph 77) and Queen Anne house (photographs 28, 60, 64, 79).

The predominant architectural house type found throughout Oakland City is the bungalow. The Craftsman-style bungalow was the most popular early 20th-century house in Georgia and was built across the state in rural, small town, and urban settings from the 1910s to the 1930s. Characteristics of this style are the large gables with decorative brackets, widely overhanging eaves, porches with short square columns over heavy masonry piers extending to the ground, and windows with multipaned sashes over one large sash. The bungalow house type found in Georgia can be subdivided into four types based on roof forms and roof orientation: front gable, side gable, hipped, and cross gable. All of these types and styles are represented in the Oakland City Historic District and have been identified as important in the architecture of Georgia in *Georgia's Living Places: Historic Houses in their Landscaped Settings.* Also present in the district are several English Vernacular Revival style houses, which followed and filled in vacant lots after the bungalow era.

The oldest documented extant resource in the district is located at 1214 Avon Avenue (photograph 61). Constructed in 1867, the gabled ell cottage has minimal Folk Victorian detailing. Other houses constructed during the late 1800s are located at 1197 Avon Avenue (photograph 60), a Queen Anne house, and 1352 Avon Avenue (photograph 77), an I-house. These house types were popular in Georgia during the mid- to late 1800s according to *Georgia's Living Places: Historic Houses in Their Landscaped Settings*.

The residential areas of Oakland City have small to moderate front yard setbacks. Porches are prominent features of a majority of houses in Oakland City, though some have been altered from their original appearance by the addition of lattice, enclosure by screening or glass, removal or replacement of columns or other architectural elements. The front entrances of the residences are connected via front walks to the sidewalk, if one exists, or to the driveway. Front yards are often demarcated by fencing, picket or chain link, or poured concrete edges standing approximately six inches in height and width. Due to the steep slopes of some yards, retaining walls have been erected from stone, concrete, masonry, and the nonhistoric replacement material of cinder block.

Oakland City Historic District contains several multiple dwelling resources. There are two historic apartment buildings in the district (photographs 12 and 42), one exhibiting characteristics of the Italianate style (photograph 12) with wide overhanging eaves and supporting brackets and tile roof. Also located in the district are several duplexes (photographs 83, 84, and 85).

The commercial buildings in the Oakland City Historic District are located on Cascade Avenue and

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Lee Street along the trolley lines that came to the area from Atlanta. The buildings are one-story brick buildings and represent the Commercial style with decorative brickwork (photographs 86, 87, 89, and 90). There is one two-story wood commercial building (photograph 89) on Lee Street. There are remnants of older, historic commercial and retail structures in the business district. Modern commercial development now occupies much of the original commercial areas.

The community landmark buildings within the district include the Fairfield Baptist Church, constructed in 1950, and I.N. Ragsdale Elementary School, constructed in 1922 as Oakland City School. I.N. Ragsdale Elementary School (originally Oakland City School) (photograph 91) was designed by G. Lloyd Preacher. The Colonial Revival-style building is a two-and-one-half-story brick structure with one-over-one double-hung-sash windows set in groups of three. The brick pattern is American bond. A single belt course is located between the ground (half floor) and the first floor. The roof is flat with a sloping, shaped detail on the roofline. A cornice line with contrasting blue paint stands out above the second story windows. Fairfield Baptist Church (photograph 92), located on Oakland Avenue, is a rectangular brick building painted white with a front gabled roof. The building is similar to the Mission style with little to no eave overhang and a circular window. The building is a simple structure with only a few window openings with one-over-four double-hung-sash windows.

Also located within the district boundaries is Oakland City Park, established shortly after Oakland City incorporated in 1894, a large recreational space consisting of rolling hills and mature trees. Oakland City Park possesses historic and non-historic features and houses basketball courts, playgrounds, pool, picnic areas, sandboxes, and tennis courts. Oakland City Park retains its large, granite entrance markers (photograph 93) constructed in 1931, and some other granite utilitarian structures throughout the park.

The west central portion of the district boasts a recreational area known as the Outdoor Activities Center (indicated on the attached map by a dotted line boundary. It encompasses 26 acres of preserved woodlands. The Outdoor Activities Center has been maintained as a wooded, natural environment with residential development encircling the recreation area since the 1970s.

Landscaping in the district includes mature hardwood trees, foundation plantings, sidewalks, and retaining walls. Some historic granite curbing is visible. Mature specimens such as Oak, Magnolia, Pecan, Dogwood, and other hardwood trees form dense tree canopies over several of the streets in the Oakland City Historic District. Vacant lots are overgrown, many having never been cleared for development.

The areas surrounding the Oakland City Historic District consist of post-World War II and late-1950s era developments, nonhistoric apartment complexes, some subsidized housing, and Habitat for Humanity infill houses that share the same setback, scale, and massing as the historic residences. Also bordering the district is Fort McPherson to the south, the original rail line that runs parallel to Lee Street on the east, and the elevated tracks for the heavy rail Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), constructed in the 1970s and 1980s, also to the east.

8. Statement of Significance

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

() nationally () statewide (X) locally

Applicable National Register Criteria:

(X) A () B (X) C () D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): (X) N/A

	() A	() B	() C	() D	() E	() F	() G
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Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):

Architecture Community Planning and Development

Period of Significance:

1867-1955

Significant Dates:

1867-Construction date of oldest extant resource
c.1890-Trolley lines extended into Oakland City area
1894-Oakland City incorporated
1899-Atlanta Railway & Power Company trolley line extended on Lee Street from Atlanta to Fort
McPherson with a stop at Oakland City
1909-Oakland City School constructed
1911-Annexation of Oakland City into Atlanta
1923-Annexation of additional portion of Oakland City area into Atlanta

Significant Person(s):

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect(s)/Builder(s):

G. Lloyd Preacher-Oakland City School (now Ragsdale Elementary School)

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Statement of significance (areas of significance)

Oakland City Historic District is a large residential district with accompanying commercial buildings, churches, and a school, located in the City of Atlanta. The Oakland City neighborhood developed south of the center of Atlanta as a working-class white suburb. Development of the neighborhood can be tied directly to the extension of the trolley lines to outlying areas of the city.

Oakland City Historic District is significant in the area of <u>architecture</u> for its good and intact collection of late-19th and early-20th century houses, commercial buildings, and community landmark buildings. Residential architectural styles represented in the district include Queen Anne, Shingle, Folk Victorian, Colonial Revival, English Vernacular Revival, and Craftsman. House types include bungalow, gabled ell cottage, Queen Anne cottage, New South cottage, pyramid cottage, and shotgun. All of these types and styles have been identified as important in the architecture of Georgia in *Georgia's Living Places: Historical Houses in their Landscaped Settings.* The oldest documented extant resource in the district is a gabled ell cottage with minimal Folk Victorian detailing, constructed in 1867. Commercial and community landmark buildings are represented by the Commercial style with decorative brickwork, Colonial Revival style, Mission style, and Craftsman. Oakland City Historic District is also significant in architecture for the design of the I.N. Ragsdale Elementary School (originally Oakland City School), built in 1909. The school was designed by G. Lloyd Preacher. Oakland City Park, located in the middle of the district, was established early in the history of Oakland City and is still used as a public park.

The bungalow house type is the most numerous in the district and reflects Oakland City's biggest period of development. Built in Georgia between 1900 and 1930, the Bungalow is divided into four subtypes: front gable, side gable, hipped, and cross gable. All of the subtypes are represented in Oakland City with front and side gable examples being the most numerous, which reflects the overall distribution of this house type in Georgia according to *Georgia's Living Places: Historic Houses in the Landscaped Settings*, a statewide context study.

The district is also significant in the area of <u>community planning and development</u> as a large workingclass white neighborhood that developed due to its close proximity to surrounding industrial areas during the period between 1890 and 1935. The first areas of development were along trolley lines constructed to transport workers into Atlanta. When the trolley line came into the neighborhood in the 1890s, the land began to develop as a new suburb of Atlanta. The first areas of development, including residential and commercial structures, in Oakland City were along the trolley lines.

The neighborhood also developed around a small business area on Cascade Avenue Lee Street. Some of the businesses in this area included groceries, drug stores, and gas stations. Characteristic features of this neighborhood included rectangular shaped lots and mature trees.

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National Register Criteria

Oakland City Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of community planning and development for its development as a streetcar suburb of the City of Atlanta in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The district is also eligible for listing under Criterion C in the area of architecture for its good and intact collection of historic residential, commercial, and community landmark resources constructed from the 1890s to the 1950s.

Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

N/A

Period of significance (justification)

The period of significance for Oakland City Historic District begins in 1867 with the date of the oldest documented extant resource in the district. The end of the period of significance is 1955, the end of major development in the area.

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

Contributing resources in the historic district are those constructed during the historic period that are significant in the areas of architecture and community planning and development. These resources include residential, commercial, and community landmark buildings such as the I.N. Ragsdale Elementary School and Fairfield Baptist Church. A contributing site within the district is Oakland City Park, which was established in 1922. Contributing structures within the district include the original granite entrance gates to Oakland City Park and a granite retaining wall within the park. Noncontributing resources in the district are those constructed after 1955 (photographs 25, foreground; 27; 46, left; 49; 51, background; 60, background; 65, right background; 70, right; 71; 79, background; 87, background; and 88) and those that have lost their historic integrity due to significant alterations, primarily front-façade alterations to commercial buildings that obscure their historic character and appearance, and also large additions to small houses (photographs 58, background; 59; and 89, background).

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Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

**NOTE: The following history was compiled by Marla Bexley-Lovell, Linda Cooks, Charlotte Hankins, Bill Hover, Wade House, Debbie McCoy, and Courtney Vandiford, Georgia State University Heritage Preservation Program, May, 2000. On file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia.

Beginning of Settlement to the Civil War: 1821-1860

The area that later became Oakland City was acquired from the Creek Indians in 1821 and originally was part of Henry County when the land was distributed under Georgia's land lottery system. The lands later included in Oakland City were lots 118, 119, 120, 137, 138, and 139 in the 14th District of Henry County. Each land lot was the standard 202 1/2 acres in size. Late in 1821 the 14th District of Henry County became part of Fayette County. In 1822 DeKalb County was created from portions of Henry, Fayette, and Gwinnett Counties and the 14th District of Fayette County fell within this newly created county. In 1853 Fulton County was created from DeKalb County and the Oakland City area again fell within the boundaries of a new county. One of the earliest places of note in the area was an Indian village named Sandtown located to the west on the Chattahoochee River. The old Sandtown Road (part of the western boundary of the district) is now Cascade Road. With the creation of Campbell County in 1828 a road, Campbellton Road (a portion of the southern boundary of the district), was soon laid out to Campbellton, the new county's seat of government. This road came from the southwest into land lot 120 where it joined the Newnan Road (now Lee Street, the eastern boundary of the district) (Garrett, vol. 1, 20-37).

In 1824 William W. White arrived from Franklin County, Georgia as the owner of land lot number 119, 14th District, one of the six land lots to later become part of Oakland City. He came "riding a lank horse, with his plow gear on the animal and a side of meat and various utensils tied up in a sack behind him." As soon as possible after erecting a log cabin, White returned to Franklin County for his wife. At first, because of the large openings between the logs of their cabin home, Mrs. White "refused to occupy the side of the bed next to the wall for fear that ... wild animals would poke their noses through the openings and bite her." Also to be contended with were Indians. There was a large village at Sandtown on the Chattahoochee River to the west and Indians "were forever peeping around the smokehouse and slyly picking up any useful articles lying around" (Garrett, vol. 1, 43-44). William W. White was born in 1800 and died in 1895.

Warren Albert Belk was the owner of land lot 137. A pioneer farmer and brick manufacturer, Belk built two houses on what is now Avon Avenue. The first was at 1254 Avon Avenue (then Oakland Avenue) before the Civil War and the second was at 1214 Avon Avenue and was built about 1870. This second house has been pulled forward on the land and serves as the kitchen of the house currently at that address, although subsequent remodeling has made any vestiges of the original cottage almost indistinguishable. Oakland City Park would later come from the Belk estate and was the part of their land that they used for a brickyard (Oakland City 1894: The Neighborhood and the People. Bureau of Planning Document. 1999.).

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Just to the north of what is now Oakland City, Charner Humphries in 1835 erected a tavern which also served as a stage coach stop and store at the junction of the Sandtown and Newnan Roads, now the intersection of Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard and Lee Street (this intersection is north of the district boundaries). Humphries' tavern is said to have been the first whitewashed (or painted) house in the county and it became famous as White Hall. Before the advent of railroads, White Hall was an important location, even more important at that time than Atlanta, and a portion of the road from White Hall to Atlanta became known as Whitehall Street (Garrett, vol. 1, 129-130).

The coming of railroads in the 1840s quickly changed older land development patterns. No longer were road junctures or stagecoach stops primary determiners of areas of growth. Now it was the location of railroad terminuses that made or unmade towns and villages. Atlanta is an example of this change in development patterns. The location of the terminus of two railroads (and eventually more) at Atlanta caused it to blossom, while White Hall, just to the south, declined in importance.

Railroads also came to the Oakland City area. In September 1846 the Macon & Western Railroad completed the last 75 miles of its line from Macon and made a connection with the Central Railroad. The Macon & Western tracks entered land lot 120 near its southwestern corner and followed the Newnan Road (now Lee Street) to Atlanta. Round-trip service between Macon and Atlanta was soon a daily occurrence (Winn, Ghost Trains, 15). Because the railroad made no stops in the Oakland City area, this railroad had little immediate impact upon the area.

A second railroad impacted the Oakland City area not because its terminus was established there but because it was not. In 1849 the construction of a railroad toward Montgomery, Alabama began at a tiny village in Black Hall District six and one-half miles south of Atlanta at a point on the Macon & Western Railroad. This village, which was the eastern terminus of the new railroad, became known as East Point. The western terminus of the line was named West Point and this new railroad, the Atlanta & West Point Railroad, met the railroad from Montgomery (Winn, Ghost Trains, 30). The Atlanta & West Point Railroad utilized the track of the Macon & Western Railroad between East Point and Atlanta in order to complete service between Montgomery and Atlanta (Black, The Railroads of the Confederacy, 38). Thus it was that the location of railroad terminals decreed that Atlanta and East Point would become urbanized while the Oakland City area would remain rural farmland in between, punctuated at intervals by the smoke and noise of passing trains or by the sound of riders or conveyances on the Newnan, Sandtown, and Campbellton roads.

From the Civil War to the Incorporation of Oakland City: 1860-1894

The ravages of the Civil War largely bypassed the Oakland City area. Battles raged at Peachtree Creek north of Atlanta, near the current Grant Park area east of Atlanta, to the west at Ezra Church, and to the south at Jonesboro, but no fighting occurred in the area. The railroads were not as fortunate. The tracks of the Macon & Western Railroad and the Atlanta & West Point Railroad were severely damaged. Both were rebuilt, but the Atlanta & West Point Railroad, which had done very well financially before the war, was never again financially sound (Winn, Ghost Trains, 31).

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Atlanta came back from the devastation of the Civil War with renewed energy and soon growth was moving towards the Oakland City area from both the north and the south. The White Hall area, which had declined in importance when the stages no longer stopped there, experienced rapid growth in the decade following the Civil War, becoming "one of the fastest-growing suburbs" of Atlanta and adopting a new name, West End. With the establishment of commuter service to both the Atlanta & West Point and the Macon & Western Railroads in 1867, houses sprang up almost over night, along with an Academy and stores to accommodate the new residents. In 1868 West End incorporated, its southern boundary being White Street, named for the White family whose property lay just to the south (Garret, vol. 1, 751-752). Much of the development in West End (listed in the National Register of Historic Places on February 25, 1999) was stimulated by the Adair and Murphey real estate firms, both of which developed large subdivisions.

George W. Adair of Adair Real Estate and Richard Peters introduced Atlanta's first animal-powered street railway line in 1871. By no accident it ran to West End, terminating at the rear of Adair's house (later the entrance to Spelman College). In 1874 the line was extended to Camp Springs farther to the west in West End. In 1872-1873 Atlanta's second street railroad company, the West End & Atlanta Street Railroad Company, ran a line to West End Avenue and Ashby Street, extending its line to the main gate at West View Cemetery in 1884. These lines were directing growth westward and away from Oakland City. Despite this, growth was getting closer and would soon spill over into Oakland City from the north (Trolley Titans, 2, 3, 8).

Development was also closing in from the south. In 1888 Fort McPherson was completed between East Point and West End. The northern boundary of this military post was the south line of land lot 120 (Garrett, vol. 2, 112-113). The land between Fort McPherson and West End was now prime for development. Unfortunately, the first streetcar service to Fort McPherson was a circuitous Atlanta Traction Company (originally Atlanta, West End & McPherson Barracks Railway Company) route that largely bypassed Oakland City. This route ran down McDaniel Street to Dill Street, then down Ashby Street (Sylvan Road) to Kasherwood Drive to Evans Drive, ending at the east gate of Fort McPherson. It was not until 1899 that the Atlanta Railway & Power Company ran a line down Lee Street directly to Fort McPherson and later on to East Point. In the meantime, Oakland City had been incorporated (Trolley Titans, 9-96).

Oakland City: 1894-1910

The last decade of the 19th century was a period of rapid urban development in the Atlanta area. To the south and southwest of Atlanta, Oakland City, Cascade, and Lakewood emerged, forming cohesive neighborhoods. What had previously been farmland was subdivided into home sites primarily for white, middle-class laborers and tradesmen. These were modestly educated people who left the farm hoping to make a better life for themselves and their children in a thriving Atlanta (Oakland City 1894: The Neighborhood and The People. Bureau of Planning Document. 1999).

On December 12, 1894 Oakland City was incorporated. Its charter called for a municipal government consisting of a mayor and five aldermen. On the second Wednesday in January 1895 an election

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was held for the mayor and council (Acts and Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of Georgia. 1894. Atlanta: G.W. Harrison, 1895. 177-180). On November 27, 1901 Oakland City's charter was amended, changing the number of aldermen from five to six, changing the time of election from the second Wednesday in January to the second Wednesday in December, and changing the term of office of mayor and council from one year to two years, with three of the aldermen being elected one year and three the next (Acts and Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of Georgia. 1901. Atlanta: G.W. Harrison, 1902. 609-610).

The boundaries of Oakland City are given in its charter. Its original corporate limits were as follows: "Commencing at a point where the West End corporation line crosses the east line of the Murphey land; thence south along the east side of said land to the southeast corner of the same; thence west along the south line of said Murphey's land to a point one-half (1/2) of a mile west from the center of the Central Railroad track; thence south parallel with said railroad track to the west side of the gate on the north side of the United States Army Post, known as Fort McPherson; thence east along the north line of said Fort McPherson land to the northeast corner; thence south along the east side of said land to a point opposite the south line of H. L. Harralson's land; thence east across the Central Railroad tracks to a point one-quarter of a mile east of the same; thence north parallel with said Central Railroad tracks to the old West End corporation line; thence west along said corporation line to the point of beginning" (Acts and Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of Georgia. 1894. Atlanta: G. W. Harrison, 1895). To summarize the original boundaries of Oakland City included a wide band of land on both sides of Lee Street between West End and Fort McPherson, including land east of Fort McPherson and a great deal of land east of Lee Street which is not today generally regarded as Oakland City.

Oakland City over a span of sixteen years (1894-1910) created for its citizens a school and park and provided police protection and other services. The area was developed in regular sized lots and small subdivisions. In 1910, despite some protest, Oakland City was annexed by Atlanta. Oakland City came in with a clean financial sheet. Its school was valued at \$10,000 and its park at \$6,000. The city of Atlanta assumed a \$2500 indebtedness still owed on the park and \$900 in cash was turned over to Atlanta. On December 31, 1909 the schoolhouse bell tolled the end of Oakland City as an incorporated entity. Mayor Isaac N. Ragsdale of Oakland City became an Atlanta city alderman and Councilman W. J. Stoy became a councilman of the Tenth Ward of Atlanta, of which Oakland City was now a part (Garrett, vol. 2, 557-558).

From Annexation to the Great Depression: 1910-1929

With Oakland City's annexation into Atlanta, we for the first time get a good picture of how the area developed. The Oakland City area appears for the first time on the 1911 Sanborn Fire Insurance maps. The area covered runs from Lee Street on the east to Donnelly on the north to Peeples on the west to Oak on the south, then resuming with another area of settlement to the south running approximately from Avon to Dill along Lee Street on both sides of the railroad. Most of the homes appear to have been moderate sized wooden residences. Exceptions were a dance hall on the south side of Oak, Whitefield Baptist Church on Dimmock (Smith), the Triangle Machine Works at the

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corner of Lee and Donnelly, Oakland Public School and Oakland City Baptist Church on Avon, and ten stores, all on Lee Street. The area east of the railroad (not in the district boundaries) was still primarily residential except for the Spratt Chair Company and the Dowman-Dozier Manufacturing Company, manufacturers of sheet metal work (Sanborn, 1911). Dowman-Dozier Company was established in the early 1900s and was one of the first companies in the Oakland City area. Located at 1314 Murphy Ave, the company was a pioneer in the manufacture of non-flammable building materials. The company produced hollow steel doors and windows that were among the first tested and approved by the Underwriters Laboratories in Chicago. Products from this company were used as the doors and windows in the Fulton County Courthouse, the Ansley hotel and the U.S. Federal Building in Atlanta. Dowman-Dozier also produced conductor pipes, ridge rolls, conductor heads, ventilators, metal ceilings, skylights and ornamental cornices. The company provided metal cantonments for the war effort during WWI and continued to operate until the early 1930's (Atlanta Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, 1922).

As just noted there were two church buildings in the Oakland City area in 1911. Oakland City Baptist Church had recently been organized. On May 2, 1909, fifty-four individuals met at the Anna Dill Institute (later Ragsdale School, no longer extant) and made plans for a masonry church building with "stone base and trimmings." The building was dedicated September 11, 1910 on the northwest corner of Avon and Princess Avenue (no longer extant) (Meeting Place for Travelers, Vol. 2, 1949). Whitesville Baptist Church (original building no longer extant) was the place of worship for a black congregation, located on Dimmock (Smith) in the northeastern corner of Oakland City in 1916. The church cornerstone states that Whitesville Missionary Baptist Church was organized in1886. Oakland City Methodist Church (noncontributing) located on Arlington became the third church building in the area when it was built about 1917.

In 1912, a fire station was erected on the southwest corner of Avon and Lee Street. A colonial revival structure, it resembled a pyramidal cottage more than a typical firehouse. It was designed by the architectural firm of Morgan and Dillon, well known in the Southeast for its designs of fire stations, churches, and other commercial. A new fire station was recently constructed on this land.

Oakland City Park was purchased from the Belk estate and according to H. K. Gammon, a son of one of the Belk daughters, this portion of the Belk land was formerly used as a brickyard. In 1910 with the annexation of Oakland City this park became an Atlanta City park. In 1931 a stone gateway was erected at the entrance to the park with a bronze plaque renaming the grounds "J. O. Cochran Park." Cochran was the park commissioner of the City of Atlanta during this time period and also a resident of Oakland City. However, residents continued to call the park Oakland City Park as it is generally known today. According to residents, the park was re-landscaped during the 1940s and a number of trees were planted by the Oakland City Civic Club. Ditches and drains were covered, playground equipment added, and a concrete skating pavilion was constructed.

A stroll down Avon Avenue in 1916 would give an idea of the types of individuals who lived in Oakland City. There were five salesmen, six managers, superintendents or foremen, and five clerks identified as living on Avon. There were two police sergeants, two ministers, and two carpenters. Mr.

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Spratt, one of the co-owners of Spratt Chair Company, lived on Avon, as did both co-owners of the West Lumber Company on Peters Street, as well as the owner of a tire repair establishment on Marietta Street and the operator of a novelty hat manufacturing company. A collector, teamster, farmer, elevator operator, civil engineer, bookkeeper, photo engraver, and widow complete the resident profile (1916 Atlanta City Directory).

It is significant that the majority of the residents on Avon in 1916 worked outside of Oakland City. This was made possible by streetcar service that was initiated in 1899. By 1924 a line had reached Beecher Street when the Gordon Street line was continued down Cascade Avenue to Beecher. This provided access to the western portion of Oakland City, an area that was rapidly developing during the 1920s (Trolley Titans, 9-96).

Shortly after the annexation of Oakland City by Atlanta a small land boom began. Several plats are recorded during the early 1910s. These subdivisions were primarily within land lot 119, the heart of the old Oakland City. In June 1911 a small subdivision was platted south of Arlington and east of Princess, centering on La Rosa Terrace. In May 1912 the Whitaker Subdivision was laid out on the block bounded by Holderness (Oakland Drive), Wilmington, Selwyn, and Arlington, just to the west. In June 1913 Isaac N. Ragsdale and Henry S. Harper subdivided the block bounded by Selwyn, Arlington, Princess, and Wilmington as well as the entire north side of Arlington between Peeples and Lee Street. During this same time period the lands of Miss E. A. White along White Oak Avenue were subdivided, all of this development involving perhaps as much as 10% of the original area of Oakland City. This same time period witnessed growth throughout Atlanta.

Development was interrupted between 1915 and 1920 by a building slump that local Atlanta media described as a "famine." Following World War I, however, Atlantans found themselves unable to resume construction in the city at a pace fast enough to satisfy the demand for new housing. With automobile ownership increasing, a suburban lifestyle was becoming more and more attractive and affordable (Preston, 156). People were now moving out from the central city, the more affluent to the north, the working class to the south, and blacks to the west. "By the end of the 1920s Atlantans who owned automobiles were able to disregard distance as an age-old consideration for urban living" (Preston, 74). "The number of new residences erected in Atlanta by both blacks and whites in the 1920s was unequaled in the city's eighty-year history" (Preston, 90,91,92).

To the west of the old incorporated Oakland City lay the largely undeveloped land lots 137, 138, and 139. In 1923 this area was annexed into the Atlanta, it having not been part of the original Oakland City and therefore not included in the 1910 annexation of that incorporated area. During the 1920's this area was planned for development, one of the subdivisions being almost half of an entire land lot. In June 1922 the E. P. Ryan Subdivision in land lot 137 bounded by Ingram, Ryan, and Campbellton Road was laid out. In November 1929 the entire south half of land lot 138 was platted as Parkview Home sites No. 2, except for a small subdivision in the southeast corner, which had been developed by Isaac N. Ragsdale in 1909. Parkview Home sites No. 2 was bounded on the north by Bridges, west by Westmont, south by Avon, and east by Oakland Drive. Apparently the Parkview Home sites No. 2, developed by the Southern Land Auction Company, was a victim of the

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Depression, because following World War II this entire subdivision was replatted and renamed Westmont Estates. The area bounded by Westmont, Richland, Ingram, and Plaza was platted in November 1922 in the northwest corner of land lot 138 by its owner C. O. Pittman (Various plats and Oakland City 1894: The Neighborhood and the People. Bureau of Planning Document. 1999).

Continuing north toward West End the S. W. Allen Subdivision was platted for Brown-Beasley Company in July 1922. This property is bounded by Westmont, Beecher, Gaston, and Richland. In February 1922 the triangular piece of land at the north end of Oakland City and bounded by Cascade Avenue, Oglethorpe, and Donnelly was platted. In November 1923 Copelan(d) Park was recorded, bounded by Cascade, Oglethorpe, Rochelle, and Allegheny. To the east, an area bounded by Rochelle, Donnelly, and Allegheny was subdivided by Robert F. Cox and Sons in February 1924. Charles H. Cone's property in the block bounded by Allegheny, Pinehurst, Pickett, and Beecher was subdivided in November 1928. West End Heights was platted in May 1926 on the two blocks centering on Ewing, an area bounded by Donnelly, Oakland, Richland, and Hall. One month later a large tract just to the south bounded by Richland, Oakland, Donnelly, and Merrill was platted.

The development of all of these subdivisions shows the westward trend that was taking place in Oakland City. Several factors were responsible for this. First, most of the undeveloped land lay to the north and west of Lee Street. Second, the trolley stop established at Beecher and Cascade in 1923 made the western portions of the area accessible and certainly helped spur development there. Third, the industrial development along Murphey (outside the district boundaries) east of the railroad boomed in the 1920s. At the same time that the industries provided jobs they also clearly defined this area as nonresidential. This industrial growth and the development of Sylvan Hills behind it separated this portion of the old incorporated Oakland City from the part west of Lee Street and in time it generally ceased to be thought of as part of Oakland City. Thus from about 1923 on, Oakland City as a neighborhood was growing north toward West End and west toward Cascade Road.

In land lot 138 black families were also trying to establish residences for themselves. West of Oakland Drive, along Bush Mountain Avenue (Plaza), Ladd Street, Bridges, and Ingram a rectangular strip of land became a center for the black community. In August 1927 a subdivision called Lincoln Heights was platted by the Crescent Realty and Holding Company adjoining this rectangle to the north. It was not developed, however, due to unknown causes and was redeveloped as Richland Hills in 1951 for whites only. Several of the 1920s plats for Oakland City subdivisions, in fact, clearly specified that the property was for Caucasians only. Oakland City had grown up as primarily a white working class neighborhood, although it had always had a black population. With the movement of blacks westward out of Atlanta, West End and Oakland City lay in the path of this black migration. The Oakland City restrictions were not exceptional. These restrictions were part of a larger Atlanta struggle to control black settlement. As early as 1913 Mayor Woodward signed a statute that established colored and white blocks and "forbade the movement of whites and blacks into each other's blocks" (Preston, 96). In 1922 Atlanta's aldermen passed a zoning ordinance that defined white only and black only areas. This was enacted in the face of a U.S. Supreme Court decision that in 1917 stated that racial zoning violated the Fourteenth Amendment (Preston, 96-97). Beyond zoning ordinances and subdivision restrictions lay a nationwide resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan.

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According to one Atlanta politician, during the 1920s in particular, Klansmen and Klan sympathizers were everywhere in Atlanta city government (Kuhn, 314). There was an active Ku Klux Klan chapter in Oakland City (Kuhn, 313).

As late as 1940 most of Oakland City remained largely white. The black residents were primarily clustered in two areas. The first area was bounded by Donnelly, Peeples, Sparks, and Lee and included the Whitesville Baptist Church. A second area lay to the west in the Ladd Street, Bush Mountain, Violet Street, Bridges Street neighborhood and included the Ladd Street Methodist Church and West Oakland Baptist Church (1940 Atlanta City Directory).

The suburbanization of Atlanta into black and white neighborhoods favored racist municipal policies that promoted greater public expenditures in white neighborhoods. Also, since many whites were now moving out to suburbs outside the city limits, they could now "effectively eschew the responsibility of paying to maintain adequate social services for those Atlantans who were less rich and less white" (Preston, 111-112). In Oakland City, as in other parts of Atlanta, the public schools in particular became a battleground. Eventually the school question would be responsible for uniting the black community more than any other single issue.

Education

The history of the Atlanta Public School system is reflected in the history of the schools in Oakland City. Public education has been available in Atlanta since 1876 to both black and white children. Between 1880 and 1940 industrialization caused changes in the population and economies of cities across the U.S. The migration of Americans from rural areas to cities provided cheap labor for cities expanding their industrial bases. The explosive growth of Atlanta between 1910 and 1930 placed tremendous pressure on the resources available to the public schools. The segregation of children into black and white schools further strained the facilities and financial resources of the schools. Oakland City when incorporated into Atlanta in 1910 had one school worth \$10,000 (Garrett). By 1922 there were two schools, the original Oakland City School for the white students and Dimmock (no longer extant) for the black students.

Oakland City School was built in 1909 and was part of the transfer of assets from Oakland City to Atlanta City. Dimmock School, located on Dimmock Street, provided educational opportunity to the black elementary school children. In 1921 an educational bond was passed in the city of Atlanta allowing \$4 million from the improvement of schools. A study of the existing school facilities targeted Dimmock for expansion and improvement. Oakland City School in the same survey was described as recently built but in need of additions to accommodate the needs of a growing school age population (Strayer and Engelhardt Report). Money was authorized to expand the Oakland City School, but no improvements were made at Dimmock. By 1927 the school board was lobbied by the white community in Oakland City to close Dimmock School to limit additional black presence in the neighborhood. Dimmock School was demolished in 1927 leaving Oakland City without a school for black children (Ecke).

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The school bonds of 1921 and 1926 were won with the support of black voters in Atlanta. These voters were promised a portion of the bond would be used to support the black schools in the system. The demolition of Dimmock without replacement underlined the unwillingness of the political structure to keep this promise. The next several attempts at passage of a bond issue for education failed because the black vote could not be delivered (Racine).

The black community of Oakland City, lead by Reverend William Franklin Hartnett, opened a private school in 1935 in the Ladd Street Methodist Church. The teacher salary was paid by a weekly charge to the parents. Reverend Hartnett worked to have Bush Mountain School incorporated into the Atlanta Public School System and it was included in stages between 1936 and 1942. The teacher salaries were paid by the city after 1936 and the school system paid rent to the Baptist church to enlarge the classroom area for the children. The Atlanta City Board of Education did not make provisions for a school building until land for a building was donated in 1942. The school continued to operate first in the West Oakland Baptist Church and then in a private residence until 1942. At that time one of the first portable school buildings was erected on Bridges Street as Bush Mountain Elementary School. In 1955 Bush Mountain School continued to function until the 1970s. The name of the school was changed to Hardnett Elementary in the mid-1950s and corrected to Hartnett Elementary in the mid-1970s. The school was closed in the mid-1970s with the population of that school combined with Ragsdale Elementary School (Atlanta Board of Education Minutes and Interviews).

Repairs and additions were made to Oakland City School and the school was opened in 1929 as Ragsdale Elementary School. I.N. Ragsdale, Oakland City resident and mayor of Atlanta in the late 1920s, served the community for 50 years and presided over a number of public improvements. These included a system of viaducts in the central portion of the city, Mitchell Street viaduct in the western portion, a new and modern City Hall of 14 stories, construction of 11 new school buildings and additions to 21 previously constructed buildings. One of the twenty-one school additions included the expansion of Oakland City School designed and built by G. Lloyd Preacher, the architect responsible for the old City Hall building as well as the Wayne-Claughton Building, the Atlanta Transitional Center and the Briarcliff Summit Apartments. The school located at 1145 Avon Avenue has been in continuous operations as an elementary school since 1909 and was last renovated in the early 1990s.

Industrial Development

The late 1920s saw a deliberate attempt on the part of the business community to attract new business to Atlanta. The population of Atlanta during this period swelled from 200,000 to 270,000. Many of the new arrivals were moving to an urban area to escape the poverty caused by falling cotton prices and problems with the boll weevil. A land boom in Florida was also making the Atlanta business community nervous about investment capital disappearing into Florida. In 1926 the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce launched the first Forward Atlanta Campaign in an attempt to attract new industry into the city. The Chamber advertised the city in national publications and spent time with

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prospective leads. The four-year campaign attracted a total of 762 firms (Garrett).

The manufacturing enclave in Oakland City developed during this period of growth. By the 1920's Oakland City took advantage of its location on the railroad and attracted several manufacturing establishments. Only a decade before there were just two major manufacturing or distribution establishments in the area. The confluence of rail lines in the Oakland City area in addition to large undeveloped tracts of land to the east of the railroad tracks (outside the district boundaries) provided the space necessary for development of manufacturing businesses with distribution points all over the nation. The Atlanta & West Point Railroad employed a manager of commercial development who worked closely with the Chamber of Commerce to locate industry along the A&WP tracks (The City Builder, Sept. 1924). The Hanson Motor Company, although a short-lived enterprise (1917-1926), is one of the most significant companies to have been located in Oakland City. Hanson was home of the "Hanson Six," the first motorcar manufactured in Atlanta.

A company of national importance, John A. Roebling & Sons, maintained their wire warehouse at 934 Avon Avenue. Roebling & Sons produced the suspension wire for the Brooklyn Bridge, the cable wire for the elevators in the Empire State Building and most of the telegraph wire used in the United States. The warehouse was maintained from the 1920s until 1970.

There were many other manufacturers and distributors in Oakland City by 1924: Lyons Brothers manufactured soft drinks and vinegar; Cox Foundry Company cast iron parts for cotton mills and agricultural machinery; Sash Weight Foundry was also located in Oakland City; F. E. Golian Company produced structural steel and ornamental iron; A. A. DeLoach Manufacturing Company manufactured sawmill machinery; Bailey-Burruss Manufacturing Company manufactured transmission and conveying machinery; Sherman Concrete Pipe Factory building covered an acre of ground. Many distributors also called Oakland City home, among them three oil companies: National; Wofford; and Galena Signal. The southeastern distributing branch of the Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company (A&P) was located at Oakland City. Knight-Luttrell Company (Knight Iron Company), was located at 974 Avon Avenue from the 1920s until the late 1980s when it became a recycling operation (The City Builder, Sept. 1924). From the early 1940s until the 1960s the State Farmers Market was located at 1050 Murphey Avenue. Over time the bulk of the structures were converted to warehouse space or abandoned (City Directories, Reynolds Interview).

From the Great Depression through World War Two: 1929-1945

The Great Depression brought any significant land development in Oakland City to a halt for almost a decade. Subdivisions almost disappeared from the Fulton County plat books for almost a decade. Life, however, did continue if not at exactly the same pace. Throughout Atlanta during the 1930s motorbuses largely replaced the old streetcars (Trolley Titans, 9-96). Streetcars continued to run down Lee Street through Oakland City until June 1937 when the streetcars were replaced by trackless trolleys powered by overhead lines. This change was made as part of an agreement between the transit company and the Georgia State Highway Department, which was now able to remove the old streetcar tracks and widen Lee Street from East Point to Atlanta (Trolley Titans, 100-161). The trackless trolleys ran until replaced by MARTA buses in the 1960s.

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By the late 1930s land development was beginning again in the western portions of Oakland City. In 1938 and 1939 the Buildmore Finance Company developed the area between Gaston, Westboro, Pinehurst, and Richland with covenants restricting the subdivisions to Caucasians only. A plat for the A. P. Jones Subdivision on the block bounded by Beecher, Atwood, Westboro, and Oakland Drive was recorded in July 1939. This activity was in land lot 139. In July 1943 Brown's Incorporated platted some lots on the north side of Plaza (Bush Mountain Avenue) and in November 1943 and north side of Ladd Street was platted.

Development was also occurring in the southern part of Oakland City just north of Fort McPherson. In July 1936 the F. L. Tanner Subdivision was platted in land lot 137 east of Lorenzo Drive. In October of 1940 Oakland Park Subdivision north of Campbellton Road. In May 1944 McPherson Homes was recorded east of Connally and south of Campbellton Road, adjoining Fort McPherson on the south. In November 1945 a second section of McPherson Homes was laid off west of Oakland Drive and north of Van Buren. These last two subdivisions may have been partially the result of wartime housing needs.

Growth of the Black Community

The exact origin of the black community in Oakland City is yet to be established. The 1855 Tax Digest for Fulton County shows that William W. White, who owned land lot 119, Jacob White, who owned land lot 120, Warren Belk, who owned land lot 137, or Wiley Marchman, who owned land lots 139 and 140, did not own any slaves. James Russell Rosser, who owned land lot 138, owned only two slaves. Yet by 1911 blacks had established a community in northeast Oakland City and by the mid-1910s a second black community was flourishing in the Bush Mountain area. By the 1920s a number of black residents occupied houses along Bridges and Bush Mountain Avenue (later named Plaza Avenue). The family surnames of families living in the community became street names, among them Bridges, and later, in the 1950s, Ingram. According to descendants of some of the older families of Bush Mountain, black families purchased lots and built their own homes (Rev. R. L. Henderson, 4-12-00). Many of the black men in the community worked as ministers, janitorial staff, yardmen, railroad workers, and farmers. The women took on jobs as domestic workers.

Most of the streets in the Bush Mountain community remained unpaved until the late 1940s. Rain made these dirt roads muddy and difficult to travel. One former resident recalls walking on wooden boards placed along streets during the rain, to keep from walking through mud or waiting for the water to go down on the flooded streets before traveling through. The Bush Mountain community also lacked street and traffic lights until the late 1940s. Older residents of Bush Mountain remember using a path that was cut through the wooded area to the west in order to travel from the Bush Mountain community to the northwest section of Oakland City (this wooded area is now encompassed in the land preserved by the Outdoor Activity Center). A number of black domestic workers would use this route to travel to the homes of white Oakland City residents to the north. For others this was a short cut to the stores located on Cascade Avenue near Beecher Street on Oakland City's northwest border. A trolley stop was established at Cascade and Beecher in 1923 and provided ready access to Atlanta. This northwest area remained wooded for many years. "Mac's

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Pond" was at one time located within this wooded area. It was a country club of sorts for whites and featured a pond, which is no longer in existence. According to one resident, the pond and creek in the forested area were diverted by the City of Atlanta for public water usage.

South of Bridges Avenue lay half of land lot 138. This area had been platted for homes in 1929 but not developed. Geraldine Hartnett, a resident of Bush Mountain since 1937, remembers when the land south of Bridges was a wooded area and growing wild within this area were peaches, apples, pears, plums, muscadines, walnuts, strawberries, blackberries, and blueberries.

Bush Mountain residents in 1917 organized a Baptist church, worshipping at times in homes and in a tent pitched in an open field. On the second Sunday in September in 1931 the West Oakland (Missionary) Baptist Church worshipped for the first time in a church building. The new frame structure at 1025 Violet Street (no longer extant) was a great step forward for the congregation. As one of the first congregations in the Bush Mountain area West Oakland Baptist became a cornerstone in this community. A number of residents have served as ministers and deacons since its establishment and were seen as strong leaders in the community. The church facilities also served as a school before Bush Mountain Elementary was established on Bridges Avenue and as the meeting place for the Bush Mountain Civic Club (Church History, West Oakland Missionary Baptist Church, Inc.).

Ladd Street Methodist Episcopal Church, another black congregation in the Bush Mountain area, first appears in the 1932 Atlanta City directory. Located at the southwest corner of Ladd Street and Oakland Avenue, its cornerstone reads that the church was established in 1899 and rebuilt in 1950. This church is currently Fairfield Baptist Church.

Postwar Developments: 1946-1965

With the conclusion of World War II, land development continued. In August 1946 Roy D. Warren Company platted Pinehurst Subdivision between Pinehurst, Atwood, Richland, and Westboro in land lot 139. The south half of land lot 138 which had been platted as Parkview Homesites No. 2 in 1929 was replatted as Westmont Estates in 1946. In March 1950 subdivision was made of the Johnson land west of Oakland Drive and bounded by Westboro on the north and Richland on the south. This subdivision adjoined Pinehurst Subdivision on the west. In April 1951 Richland Hills along Montreat and Pinehurst Terrace was recorded. In September 1951 a small subdivision at the corner of Richland and Oakland Drive was recorded for Arthur McDaniel. In May 1953 Bush Mountain Manor was platted and in August 1954 the Alfred Ingram Property along Ingram Drive was recorded. The last two properties were in black residential areas. By this time few, if any, large tracts remained undeveloped.

After World War II, the need for housing, especially for blacks, increased. Many relocated to the Atlanta area to seek employment during the war. Atlanta's black population increased by approximately 17,000 residents (Beneath the Image of the Civil Rights Movement and Race Relations, Atlanta, Georgia, 1946-1981. Harmon. 1996). In 1946 blacks were over 66% of Atlanta's

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population, but were restricted to about 10% of the city's residential land (Harris, This Is Our Home: It Is Not For Sale. 3). Little was done to ameliorate the situation until the tremendous achievements of the Civil Rights movement brought an end to legalized discrimination in housing, recreation and other areas of life.

Though Oakland City Park had been established in the early 1900s, it was not available to blacks due to segregation. Several vacant sites were used as park space by residents of the Bush Mountain community. Older residents of Bush Mountain recall that the property located on Oakland Avenue behind Plaza Avenue was called Orr's Park. Land located behind the Hartnett School was also used as park space. It was here that the local sandlot baseball team, the Atlanta Cubs of the Bush Mountain community played ball during the 1940's and 1950's (Joann Reynolds Interview and Rev. Henderson Interview).

Bush Mountain grew into a tightly knit community. As one resident put it: "Bush Mountain took care of Bush Mountain." Not always welcomed at shops along Lee Street, the residents of Bush Mountain provided for many of their own needs within the boundaries of their community. Older residents remember a store owned by a Mr. Orr that was located on Bush Mountain Avenue (now Plaza Ave) near Oakland Ave. He sold canned goods and other non-perishable items. Miss Fine, known as the "Candy Lady," sold cookies and candy from her home on Bridges Avenue. The "Two Story House" on Bush Mountain Avenue (now Plaza Avenue), featured a store, barbershop, and a cafe that sold sandwiches. Also located on Plaza, at the southeast corner of Violet, was another frequently visited barbershop.

Fieldwork conducted in these areas has determined that most of the resources associated with this community have been lost. The areas associated with African-American residents, Bush Mountain in western Oakland City and the area centered on Dimmock Street in northeastern Oakland City, are now occupied by historic residences that have lost their integrity due to alterations, post-1955 development, vacant lots, and a 26-acre outdoor recreation center. The history of this community is well documented with information on where African-American residents lived and conducted business, and the existence of several churches, a school, and some commercial buildings associated with the community. These resources were lost or altered during redevelopment of some areas of Oakland City after the historic period.

A Community in Transition: 1966-2000

By 1966 Oakland City was experiencing the classic pattern of neighborhood decline. Many of the subdivisions had been in place for forty or fifty years. The original residents, mostly blue collar workers, were at or close to their retirement years, their children were raised and gone, their incomes were becoming fixed and often inadequate, and all the various problems of old age were coming to the residents of Oakland City. The local economy was such that it was difficult for people to find work. Many homes were simply abandoned. Dozens of left when foreclosures forced them out. As had happened in other cities, the federal government, which had underwritten mortgages through the Veterans Administration and the Federal Home Administration, became a landlord to vacant buildings

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(Hank Ezell, "Oakland City: '\$1 Neighborhood' Is Looking Like A Million Bucks," The Atlanta Constitution, Jan. 7, 1983). These houses no longer stand in the neighborhood.

For many black families this was a tremendous opportunity. With the end of segregation and housing discrimination, blacks with some means found homes in Oakland City that met their budget. For those who did not have sufficient incomes to become homeowners, Congressman Andrew Young helped come up with a solution called urban homesteading. The idea was to sell the derelict houses for \$1. The buyers were required to repair the houses and to live in them in order to keep down speculation. The first drawing was held in April 1976. There were fifteen winners in the first drawing. For many of these individuals it was their first opportunity to own a home (Ibid.).

As white residents left the Oakland City area, churches with white congregations began to sell church buildings to the black community. Oakland City Baptist Church became the Cathedral of Faith Church of God in Christ in the 1970s. The Oakland City Methodist Church remained an active white congregation until its purchase between 1969-1970 by a group that split from Ladd Street Methodist Church, a black church. The new congregation changed the name of the church to the Oakland City United Methodist Church. The remaining congregation on Ladd Street became the Ladd Street Baptist Church. Since 1976, this church has been known as Fairfield Baptist Church.

During the 1970s there was excitement about MARTA's proposed Oakland City rapid rail station. On November 9, 1971 voters in Fulton and DeKalb Counties and the City of Atlanta approved a \$1.4 billion mass transit system having 64 miles of rail and bus way lines with 41 stations and park-and-ride facilities for over 29,500 vehicles. One of the rapid rail stations on the line to Hartsfield International Airport was to be located in Oakland City and it was hoped that this would lead to revitalization of the area. There was much citizen participation in the planning of what was initially called the Oakland-Sylvan Station. The South Line from downtown Atlanta to the airport was planned to run parallel to the existing railroad tracks in order to help minimize the intrusion into the area. The travel time from Oakland City to Atlanta's central business district would be only six minutes with the new rapid rail system. Preliminary projections called for the Oakland City Station to be completed by mid-1977. By December 1981, however, the bulldozers were still slowly inching south from West End ("Rapid Rail Line Moves Slowly South," The Atlanta Constitution, Dec. 14, 1981). Unfortunately the rapid rail did not bring an immediate economic turnaround as many had expected.

In 1975 The Oakland Activity Center, located at 1442 Richland Avenue, was established as a woodland preserve. The Center encompasses 26 acres of forested area within the Oakland City community and is one of the oldest ecosystems in the state of Georgia. This old growth forest preserve has hardwood trees and beeches, signifying the final stages of development for a forest. Many of the trees are over a century old, the oldest known tree being 140 years old. Within the preserve is the crest of Bush Mountain that rises to 1054 feet above sea level. There are three and a half miles of hiking trails. The center contains a natural science museum and library. This center was originally located at Hartnett Elementary School before it burned in 1985. It moved into the current building on site in 1986. Though owned by the City of Atlanta, the Center is operated by a

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non-profit corporation. The facility runs a number of environmentally focused programs for children, encouraging conservation and ecological responsibility for the natural environment.

Oakland City in 2000 is predominantly a black community. The character of the neighborhood, and its most prestigious street, Avon Avenue, has stayed very much the same. The area is attracting upper middle-class black families who, like their white predecessors, are intent on creating a better life for themselves and their families (Oakland City 1894: The Neighborhood and The People. Bureau of Planning Document, 1999).

Prominent Residents

Isaac N. Ragsdale is the most prominent Atlantan to come from Oakland City. He was born in Paulding County on July 25, 1859, the son of Sanders Walker and Sarah Haygood Ragsdale. He first came to Atlanta as a clerk in his brother's store. When his brother, Elijah K. Ragsdale, died in 1882, Isaac purchased the grocery store on Peters Street. Eventually he sold out and organized the Ragsdale Mule and Horse Company. Soon he was doing \$2,000,000 per year in business and helping Atlanta claim to be "the second largest mule market in the world." According to one source, Ragsdale's company operated "the largest stockyard in the southeast" (June Hart Wester, Elijah Ragsdale. Canton, Ga.: Privately Printed, no date. 104-105 and The Book of Georgia: A Work for Press Reference. Atlanta: Ga. Biographical Assn., 1920, 143 and 252).

Ragsdale was quite active politically. He was a councilman of Oakland City for four years and Mayor for two years, being the last mayor of Oakland City. He was the first alderman from the newly created Tenth Ward of Atlanta. In 1926 he was elected Mayor of Atlanta and in 1928 reelected without opposition. Among his many accomplishments in office are the purchase of Candler Field as a municipal airport, the construction of several new viaducts, construction of eleven new schools and enlargement of 19 others. A highlight of his term as mayor was welcoming Charles Lindbergh to Atlanta. It is perhaps ironic that a mule trader should give Atlanta its airport. Ragsdale died in 1937. (Ibid.)

Several local residents went on to play baseball with the Negro American League and the Negro Southern League teams, including the hometown team, the Atlanta Black Crackers. This team was owned by businessman, John Harden, owner of filling stations on Auburn Avenue and on Hunter Street (now Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive). The Atlanta Black Crackers played in the Negro American League in 1938 and thereafter with the Negro Southern League until 1947 when Jackie Robinson broke the color line of the major leagues. The Black Crackers played at the old Ponce de Leon Park when the white Atlanta Crackers were out of town. League games would draw crowds of up to 2,000 or 3,000 people including both black and white fans. Some Bush Mountain residents played for the Atlanta Black Crackers. First Baseman, James "Red" Moore played for the National American League between 1935 and 1940 with such teams as the Chattanooga Choo Choos (1935), Mohawk Giants (1936), Atlanta Black Crackers (1935, 1938), and the Baltimore Elite Giants (1939-1940). In 1938 his team, the Atlanta Black Crackers, won the second half championship of the National American League. By July 1938 Moore's batting average was .331 and he was honored by fans on

Section 8--Statement of Significance

a special day for him at Ponce de Leon Park for his contributions to the success of the team (Riley. The Biographical Encyclopedia of the Negro Baseball Leagues. 564). Bush Mountain resident Alfred Ingram, whose family purchased property in Bush Mountain in August 1920, also played in the Negro American League. He pitched for the Jacksonville Redcaps during their 1942 season. After World War II, Alfred Ingram moved back home to play with the Atlanta Black Crackers in the Negro Southern League between 1947 and 1951 (Ibid., 564). Alfred's older brother, Preston Ingram, played catcher for the Atlanta Black Crackers for two seasons beginning in 1946 (Reunion; Portraits of Players From the Old Negro Leagues, The Atlanta Journal/ Atlanta Constitution, August 11, 1991).

Harrison E. Smith, one of the early black voices in Atlanta radio was raised in the Bush Mountain community. His radio career started about 1953 at WAOK-AM on a show called the "Glory Road" which aired weekdays and "Healing Water" which aired on Saturday nights. Later he moved to WYZE-AM and continued his radio career until 1989. Called "The Deacon" by his fans, Smith was well known and respected in the black community of Atlanta. He was a great supporter of gospel music and owned Harrison E. Smith Record Shop from 1947-1998, specializing in gospel music. Smith also ventured into the recording business, owning the record label, Ziontone Records. He recorded and managed the group, "Echoes of Zion" a gospel quartet from the West Oakland Missionary Baptist Church. Quartet members were all Bush Mountain residents. One of the singers was Smith's younger brother, Alfred Ingram, Atlanta Black Cracker baseball player.

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Pauline Lee, Walter Reynolds and Joann Reynolds, Oakland City and Bush Mountain residents, interview by Linda M. Cooks, tape recording, Atlanta, Ga., 29 March 2000. Cassette tape at the State Historic Preservation Office.

Preston Ingram, Bush Mountain resident, interview by Linda M. Cooks, tape recording, Atlanta, Ga., 13 April 2000. Cassette tape at the State Historic Preservation Office.

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William Felton and Geraldine Hartnett, Bush Mountain residents, interview by Linda M. Cooks, tape recording, Atlanta, Ga. 7 April 2000. Cassette tape at the State Historic Preservation Office.

Section 9—Major Bibliographic References

Previous documentation on file (NPS): (X) N/A

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

Primary location of additional data:

- (X) State historic preservation office
- () Other State Agency
- () Federal agency
- () Local government
- () University
- () Other, Specify Repository:

Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 649 acres

UTM References

A)	Zone 16	Easting 739267	Northing 3736110
B)	Zone 16	Easting 739311	Northing 3733482
C)	Zone 16	Easting 737410	Northing 3733448
D)	Zone 16	Easting 737388	Northing 3736105

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Oakland City Historic District is indicated on the attached map by a heavy black line.

Boundary Justification

The Oakland City Historic District encompasses the contiguous historic residential, commercial, and community landmark resources historically associated with the Oakland City neighborhood. It is bordered by Donnelly Street to the north, Lee Street to the east, Campbellton Road and Ingram Road to the south, and Cascade Avenue, Westmont Road, and Epworth Road to the west. The areas outside the district boundaries include nonhistoric development and historic development that has lost its integrity. Development to the north of Donnelly Street includes commercial and industrial buildings constructed after the period of significance. To the east of Lee Street, the industrial development that occurred during the growth of Oakland City has been cut off from the district by the widening of Lee Street by the Department of Transportation and the construction of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority heavy rail line connecting the City of Atlanta to Hartsfield International Airport. Fort McPherson, a portion of which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on November 5, 1974, lies to the south of the district. There are historic neighborhoods to the west of the district, however, these neighborhoods were developed independently of Oakland City.

11. Form Prepared By

State Historic Preservation Office

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Consulting Services/Technical Assistance (if applicable) () not applicable

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- () property owner
- () consultant
- () regional development center preservation planner
- (X) other: Graduate students

Property Owner or Contact Information

name (property owner or contact person) Jamila Johnson, President organization (if applicable) Oakland City Neighborhood Association mailing address 1148 Avon Avenue city or town Atlanta state Georgia zip code 30310 e-mail (optional)

Photographs

Name of Property:
City or Vicinity:
County:
State:
Photographer:
Negative Filed:
Date Photographed:

Oakland City Historic District Atlanta Fulton Georgia James R. Lockhart Georgia Department of Natural Resources April, 2002

Description of Photograph(s):

Number of photographs: 94

- 1. Allegheny Street; photographer facing northwest.
- 2. Cascade Avenue; photographer facing northeast.
- 3. Donnelly Avenue; photographer facing southeast.
- 4. Cascade Avenue; photographer facing northeast.
- 5. Oglethorpe Avenue; photographer facing northwest.
- 6. Oglethorpe Avenue; photographer facing west.
- 7. Donnelly Avenue; photographer facing southwest.
- 8. Bernice Street; photographer facing northwest.
- 9. Allegheny Street; photographer facing northwest.
- 10. Allegheny Street; photographer facing southwest.
- 11. Copeland Avenue; photographer facing northwest.
- 12. Cascade Place; photographer facing northeast.
- 13. Beecher Street; photographer facing southwest.
- 14. Beecher Street; photographer facing southwest.
- 15. Beecher Street; photographer facing northwest.

Photographs

- 16. Oakland Drive; photographer facing northwest.
- 17. Beecher Street; photographer facing southwest.
- 18. Oakland Drive; photographer facing northeast.
- 19. Donnelly Avenue; photographer facing west.
- 20. Ewing Place; photographer facing west.
- 21. Lawton Street; photographer facing southwest.
- 22. Peeples Street; photographer facing west.
- 23. Intersection of Hall Street and Richland Road; photographer facing southwest.
- 24. Donnelly Avenue; photographer facing northwest.
- 25. Lawton Street; photographer facing north.
- 26. Merrill Avenue; photographer facing northwest.
- 27. Lawton Street; photographer facing northeast.
- 28. Lawton Street; photographer facing southwest.
- 29. Lawton Street; photographer facing west.
- 30. White Oak Avenue; photographer facing west.
- 31. White Oak Avenue; photographer facing north.
- 32. Donnelly Avenue: photographer facing west.
- 33. Avon Avenue; photographer facing northeast.
- 34. Selwin Avenue; photographer facing north.
- 35. Arlington Avenue; photographer facing west.
- 36. Princess Avenue; photographer facing northwest.
- 37. Selwin Avenue; photographer facing southwest.

Photographs

- 38. Princess Avenue; photographer facing northwest.
- 39. Avon Avenue; photographer facing northwest.
- 40. Westmont Road; photographer facing northeast.
- 41. Intersection of Gaston Street and Richland Road; photographer facing southwest.
- 42. Gaston Street; photographer facing northeast.
- 43. Richland Road; photographer facing northwest.
- 44. Richland Road; photographer facing southwest.
- 45. Richland Road; photographer facing southeast.
- 46. Pinehurst Terrace; photographer facing northwest.
- 47. Richland Road; photographer facing north.
- 48. Pinehurst Terrace; photographer facing northwest.
- 49. Richland Road; photographer facing northwest.
- 50. Intersection of Richland Road and Oakland Drive; photographer facing southwest.
- 51. Westboro Drive; photographer facing northwest.
- 52. Intersection of Westboro Drive and Pinehurst Terrace; photographer facing northwest.
- 53. Rochelle Drive; photographer facing northwest.
- 54. Plaza Avenue; photographer facing southwest.
- 55. Westmont Road; photographer facing northeast.
- 56. Bridges Avenue; photographer facing north.
- 57. Gaston Street; photographer facing northwest.
- 58. Gaston Street; photographer facing east.
- 59. Westmont Road; photographer facing northeast.

Photographs

60. Avon Avenue; photographer facing northwest.

- 61. Avon Avenue; photographer facing southwest.
- 62. Oakland Drive; photographer facing northwest.
- 63. Avon Avenue; photographer facing northwest.
- 64. Avon Avenue; photographer facing southwest.
- 65. Indale Place; photographer facing northwest.
- 66. Edgefield Drive; photographer facing northwest.
- 67. Edgefield Drive; photographer facing southwest.
- 68. Indale Place; photographer facing southwest.
- 69. Edgefield Drive; photographer facing north.
- 70. Almont Drive; photographer facing northwest.
- 71. Indale Place; photographer facing northwest.
- 72. Bluefield Drive; photographer facing west.
- 73. Avon Avenue; photographer facing northwest.
- 74. Lynford Drive; photographer facing northwest.
- 75. Westmont Road; photographer facing north.
- 76. Avon Avenue; photographer facing northwest.
- 77. Avon Avenue; photographer facing southwest.
- 78. Intersection of Wyland Drive and Avon Avenue; photographer facing southwest.
- 79. Oakland Drive; photographer facing southwest.
- 80. Ryan Street; photographer facing north.
- 81. Campbellton Road; photographer facing west.

Photographs

- 82. Epworth Street; photographer facing southwest.
- 83. Byewood Lane; photographer facing west.
- 84. Byewood Lane; photographer facing west.
- 85. Bryere Terrace; photographer facing northwest.
- 86. Cascade Avenue; photographer facing northeast.
- 87. Lee Street; photographer facing southwest.
- 88. Lee Street; photographer facing southwest.
- 89. Lee Street; photographer facing southwest.
- 90. Lee Street; photographer facing southwest.
- 91. I.N. Ragsdale School, Avon Avenue; photographer facing southeast,
- 92. Fairfield Baptist Church, Oakland Drive; photographer facing northwest.
- 93. Oakland City Park, Oakland Drive; photographer facing west.
- 94. Hall Street; photographer facing southwest.

(HPD WORD form version 11-03-01)