

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District

Other names/site number: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing:

The Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: Roughly bounded by West Davison Street, Dexter Avenue, Cortland Street, and Livernois Avenue

City or town: Detroit State: MI County: Wayne

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A B X C D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	

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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

**State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government**

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- 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:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>954</u>	<u>20</u>	buildings
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>956</u>	<u>20</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

COMMERCE/TRADE

RELIGION/religious facility

EDUCATION/school

RECREATION/outdoor recreation

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

COMMERCE/TRADE

RELIGION/religious facility

EDUCATION/school

RECREATION/outdoor recreation

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH and 20TH CENTURY REVIVAL:

Tudor Revival
French Eclectic
Colonial Revival
Italian Renaissance
Georgian Revival
Spanish Revival
Jacobethan Revival

LATE 19TH and 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENT:

Prairie School
Craftsman
Commercial Style

MODERN MOVEMENT:

Streamline Moderne
Art Deco, Ranch
Postmodern

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, Stone, Stucco, Wood

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District is a residential neighborhood in northwest Detroit, Michigan, generally bounded by West Davison Street (north), Dexter Avenue (east), the south side of Cortland Street (south), and Livernois Avenue (west). The neighborhood contains 976 resources, of which 956 are determined to be contributing and 20 are noncontributing. The district comprises of 931 residential buildings, predominantly dating to the 1920s through the 1940s with some later examples built in the 1950s and 1960s, including single-family homes as well as duplexes, quadplexes, and small-scale apartment buildings. The residential buildings are mainly clad in brick, with finishes such as stone trim, porte cocheres, leaded glass windows, and mature landscaping. Common architectural styles include Tudor Revival, French Eclectic, Colonial Revival, Prairie, and Streamline Moderne styles. Additionally, the neighborhood contains sixteen commercial buildings, five churches, two parks, and one school building. The district retains integrity in all seven areas including location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Narrative Description

Overview

The Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District is a residential neighborhood generally bounded by West Davison Street (north), Dexter Avenue (east), the south side of Cortland Street (south), and Livernois Avenue (west). The district is located in the near northwest side of Detroit, to the west and north of the central downtown area. The neighborhood abuts several adjacent neighborhoods including Nardin Park to the south, Dexter-Linwood to the east, and Oakman Boulevard to the north and west. The northwest of Detroit, an area roughly bounded by Interstate 96 to the south, M-10 to the north and extending out to the city limits at 8 Mile Rd and Telegraph Rd., sits primarily on flat terrain with few to no hills or grade changes and, similarly, the Russell Woods-Sullivan neighborhood is flat with no hills noted. The neighborhood is around 211 acres and largely composed of straight, rectilinear streets that bisect each other at right angles. Major north-south streets include Broadstreet Avenue, Petoskey Avenue, and Holmer Street, although they are skewed from the cardinal directions running northwest to southeast. Streets that run east-west include Waverly Street, Tyler Street, Buena Vista Street, Glendale Street, Leslie Street, Fullerton Street, Sturtevant Street, and Cortland Street. Broadstreet Avenue is a primarily single-family residential lined north-south street that is wider than the other streets in the district and includes several larger scale buildings including the Hope Academy, apartments, commercial buildings, and churches. Houses in the district are typically set close together on narrow lots that

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are thirty-five feet wide and one hundred feet deep, with slightly wider lots along Broadstreet Avenue. In Russell Woods-Sullivan there is moderate tree cover on some blocks—some blocks retain a full canopy of trees (for instance the sycamore trees along 4000 block of Glendale Avenue) while other blocks are missing street trees at regular intervals.

There are some nonresidential resources on Broadstreet Avenue including Hope Academy, two churches, three apartments, and two small storefronts at the southern end of the district. At the edges of the neighborhood, major commercial thoroughfares create a logical boundary to Russell Woods-Sullivan and include Livernois Avenue, West Davison Street, and Dexter Avenue. The neighborhood features a cohesive set of intact, well-maintained homes. Although there are some vacant houses and some instances of deferred maintenance throughout, these do not detract from the ability of the district to convey its cohesive significance, identity, and historic integrity. There are also vacant lots sprinkled throughout the neighborhood, but they tend to be more prevalent near the edges of the neighborhood like on Cortland Avenue, Waverly Street, and Dexter Avenue. Many vacant lots without a resource present have been adopted by neighboring properties and fenced in to create a side yard. Despite this, overall, the neighborhood is still remarkably intact with a dense urban neighborhood feel, setting it apart from adjacent neighborhoods such as Nardin Park where demolitions have greatly impacted density. Along the commercial corridors, economic decline has led to vacant storefronts as well as vacant parcels where demolitions have occurred. Some commercial buildings are Art Deco or Modern Movement in style, and others exemplify one- and two-part block Commercial Style. There are also several multifamily buildings in the neighborhood, including the mixed-use Spanish Revival style building located at 13139 Dexter Avenue.

In addition to the residential and commercial buildings there are also religious resources, institutional buildings, and parks. There are several churches (some of which are former synagogues) located along Dexter Avenue, West Davison Street, and Broadstreet Avenue including the First Glory Missionary Baptist Church at 12130 Broadstreet and the Greater New Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church at 12831 Dexter Avenue. There is one school, the Hope Academy, and two large parks, Russell Woods Park and Zussman Park. The Hope Academy is located in the former Winterhalter School (1922) building at 12121 Broadstreet and sits on a large parcel with a parking lot to the south of the building and a large open field to the west. Russell Woods Park was planned in the original plat for the neighborhood and is mostly an open green space with a pavilion, walking trail, and flower beds, while Zussman Park was dedicated in 1951 and has a modern playground, exercise equipment, two pavilions, and a basketball court.

Local efforts, led by community leaders like the Russell Woods-Sullivan Area Association and the City of Detroit have catalyzed revitalization in the neighborhood. Additional trees have been planted and street improvements are ongoing in the neighborhood. The 2019 Russell Woods-Nardin Park Framework plan resulted in many improvements to the neighborhood including murals, additional streetscaping, bike lanes, traffic calming curbs, and new Russell Woods-Sullivan local historic district gateway markers to mark the entrance into the neighborhood. A vacant lot along Dexter Avenue is being activated with a pop-up retail shipping container development.

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There are no buildings, sites, or structures within the proposed boundaries that have already been listed in the National Register, however, there are a few in close proximity: New Bethel Baptist Church (listed 2020); Shrine of the Black Madonna of the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church (listed 2021); Parks, Rose L. (McCauley) and Raymond, Flat (listed 2021); McGhee, Orsel and Minnie, House (listed 2022); Vaughn's Book Store (listed 2023).

Residential

The district includes 931 residential resources, predominately built between the 1920s and 1940s, with some constructed later in the 1950s and 1960s. Russell Woods-Sullivan's residential architecture is comprised of 652 detached single-family homes and 280 multi-family dwellings including small-scale duplexes, quadplexes, and a few small-scale apartment buildings.

Typologies for residential buildings in the neighborhood include rectangular, irregular, or square forms, that are one to two-stories, and built with Tudor Revival, French Eclectic, Colonial Revival, or Prairie styles, with typically a hipped or side gabled roof, faced in brick often with stone accents, and with full or partial-width porches. Approximately 65 percent of houses have a garage.

Many of the homes were custom built for their original homeowners. Some also were built with the housing boom in mind and were sold as investment properties or advertised as "income bungalows." These income bungalows were designed with separate rentable units or flats that would help offset the cost of building a home, making it more attainable for those with more modest salaries.¹ Many featured the latest innovations in home design at the time: exterior face brick and stucco, products such as Masonite or Celotex structural insulation, steam heat, breakfast rooms, recreation rooms, maid's rooms, and two-car garages were all common selling points found in classified advertisements.

Occasionally, twins are found, for example: 4336 and 4367 Buena Vista Street; 4227 and 4255 Cortland Street; 4901, 4835, and 4734 Cortland Street; 4241 and 4316 Leslie Street; 4220 Fullerton and 4236 Sturtevant Streets; 4333 and 4735 Sturtevant Street; 4203 Buena Vista and 4203 Tyler Streets, among others.

Tudor Revival is the most frequently found architectural style for residential buildings in the district, comprising around 50 percent of all buildings. At the time of construction, these were often advertised as "English cottage" architecture. Typical stylist elements found are prominent overlapping front gables with the occasional catslide, jerkinhead roofs and dormers, false half-timbering with stucco or brick infilling, decorative patterned brickwork, brick buttresses, large chimneys, arched doorways, gabled vestibules, and stone door surrounds. Occasionally vergeboards are present. Commonly, windows are casement or hung, often found in strings within the front gable, and many examples with leaded glass detailing. A small number of the Tudor Revival style homes are single-family bungalows (3838-4020 Tyler Street), but many single and multi-family dwellings are two-story square, irregular, and rectangular forms. There

¹ "The Home That Pays for Itself," *Detroit Free Press*, November 8, 1925.

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are striking examples of decorative brickwork including unique bond patterns², klinker brick, arches, corbelling, and infill for false half-timbering.

French Eclectic is the next most common style for residential buildings in Russell Woods-Sullivan. Typically, these display many similar details to the Tudor Revival homes with the exception that they lack dominant front gables. Additional stylistic elements found on French Eclectic homes in the neighborhood include stone veneer, stone door and window surrounds, quoins, single-story canted bays usually trimmed in stone, and the presence of turrets or engaged towers.

Prairie is also a popular style found in the neighborhood and is especially common for duplexes with occasional single-family dwellings also represented. The typical Prairie Box duplex in Russell Woods-Sullivan is rectangular with a hipped roof, two-stories, with two-story porches supported by brick piers. Single family types will often have smaller porches, or simply a stoop, with horizontal emphasis through details such as stringcourses and broadly overhanging eaves. Examples from the 1920s occasionally have windows with leaded glass detailing. An example from the 1950s is one of only a few split-level forms in the neighborhood, 3790 Leslie Street.

Colonial Revival homes are also common in Russell Woods-Sullivan. Some early representative examples of the popular Dutch Colonial Revival style in the 1920s can be seen in the "Dickens," "Clements," and "the Lewiston" models by Miller-Storm Company, easily distinguishable by their side gambrel roof.³ Many of the later examples have restrained detailing, and some display an overhanging second-story resembling the Garrison Colonial type (3735 Buena Vista Street).

The remainder of styles present in the district together comprise 13 percent of all buildings. Although they make up a smaller amount of the overall neighborhood, the presence of these additional stylistic elements helps to define the neighborhood's unique identity and add diversity to the streetscape.

Italian Renaissance stylistic elements are present on duplexes and some single-family residences. These examples commonly have hipped roofs and feature arched windows or arched surrounds above windows, two-story porches supported by brick piers that form an arched opening, with cast stone accents on the façade.

A handful of Streamline Moderne homes were built in the district in the 1940s and 1950s, the majority of which are concentrated on Leslie and Fullerton Streets. Common stylistic elements include courses of brick set proud to create horizontal bands across the facade, multi-light steel casement or fixed glass block windows, corner windows, and curved bays. Two of the best examples can be found at 4000 Fullerton Street, built in 1941, and 4045 Glendale Street, which

² Notable examples of unique bond patterns include alternating triple-stacked bond (12715 Broadstreet Avenue, 4236 Leslie, 4308 Leslie, 4309 Leslie) and wavy bond (4801 Sturtevant, 4268 Glendale).

³ "The Clements," *Detroit Free Press*, April 10, 1924; "A Miller -Storm 'Standard' Income Home," *Detroit Free Press*, January 30, 1927.

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was built in 1948 and was called one of the “most luxurious homes in Russell Woods” when it went up for sale in 1968.⁴

A smaller subset displays Modern Movement stylistic elements, which vary from single family, duplex, or quadplex. These share common features such as large expanses of brick, often with horizontal or vertical emphasis with contrasting materials, large windows, and cantilevered overhangs, as can be seen at 4098 Fullerton and 3791 Leslie Street.

Additionally, there are a select few Craftsman style bungalow dwellings built in the mid-1920s. These are one-and-a-half stories and recognizable by their large porches or porticos with square post supports, such as 4734 and 4766 Glendale Street.

A few multi-family apartment buildings are found in the district, and these usually display Tudor Revival or Spanish Eclectic styling. Along Broadstreet Avenue at the south border of the district are several three-story apartment buildings, with a few smaller two-story apartment buildings interspersed at intersections with Petoskey Avenue.

An exceptional building in the district is the El Morada Apartments at 13139 Dexter Avenue (3711 Tyler Street), one of few well-maintained Spanish/Moorish Eclectic apartment buildings in Detroit and the only large-scale apartment building in Russell Woods-Sullivan. Built in 1928, it has a U-shape plan with twenty-nine apartment units and four commercial storefronts on the ground floor. The building features orange-red face brick, corbeled rounded blind arches and lancet arches, projecting bays, Mission style gables and decorative tile and stone.

Comparatively small numbers of resources were constructed after 1950. In the 1950s, there were still homes built with Tudor Revival, French Eclectic and Prairie styling, but these cease by 1960 when construction was either in Ranch, Colonial Revival, Modern Movement or Contemporary styles.

There are several common alterations found on residences. Aluminum metal awnings have been added to many windows, balconies, and porches in the district. The awnings share a similar design and appear to have been added during the same time period from the same manufacturer, perhaps a single awning contractor doing business in the neighborhood. A 1924 advertisement for a model home at 4298 Fullerton Street shows a photograph of the home originally with fabric awnings present,⁵ so there may have been a transition to these more durable metal awnings especially after World War II as aluminum became more widely available.

Other common alterations include the use of vinyl cladding over original façade materials, replacement vinyl windows, added aluminum storm windows, screened-in or enclosed porches, garage demolition, and modern additions at the rear of buildings. Despite these alterations, the integrity of the neighborhood remains intact. The presence of a local historic district designation

⁴ S.R. Haynes & Company classified ad in the *Michigan Chronicle*, November 11, 1968.

⁵ “Miller Storm Company Invites Public to Visit this Model Home,” *Detroit Free Press*, September 14, 1924.

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supports the neighborhood's preservation by requiring any exterior changes in the neighborhood be subject to review and approval by the local commission, and homeowners are educated on appropriate treatments.

Commercial

There are sixteen contributing commercial resources in the district, and these range from one to three stories featuring popular stylistic elements from their era of construction found along Dexter Avenue, and two located on Broadstreet Avenue. There are occasional strips of attached commercial properties while others are freestanding, in some cases these would have previously been associated with strips.

Commercial buildings consist of some one-part and two-part commercial blocks, with detailing to fit popular styles of the time such as Italian Renaissance (12546 Dexter Avenue). Some Art Deco facades began to emerge in the 1930s (12512 Dexter Avenue). Later examples from midcentury onward include Streamline Moderne (12632 Dexter Avenue, 13107 Dexter Avenue) and Modern Movement (13201 Dexter Avenue). The commercial buildings all have flat roofs with the exception of 12626 Dexter Avenue, a former office building which has a front gabled roof, and 12632 Dexter Avenue which has a hipped roof surrounded by a flat roof with parapet.

Automotive-oriented businesses range from former or current mechanic shops, service stations, and dealerships utilizing Streamline Moderne (13244 Dexter Avenue) or Art Deco (13100 Dexter Avenue). The large Modern Movement building at 12603 Dexter Avenue was originally a car dealership (Wilshire Motor Sales), but has been significantly altered and today it is a Family Dollar.

Institutional

There are four contributing religious buildings in the district. Broadstreet Presbyterian Church (12065 Broadstreet) is the oldest church in the neighborhood and consists of two wings. The original wing with Tudor Revival styling and a steeply pitched, side gabled slate roof was constructed likely around 1927, and the later wing with a flat roof and polychromatic windows was built in the 1970s. First Glory Missionary Baptist Church (12130 Broadstreet) is a Modern Movement building that was constructed in 1926, and features a swept back eave, polychromatic glazing with vertical emphasis, and muntins in a geometric pattern.

On Dexter Avenue, there are two former synagogues that have been converted to churches. The Modern Movement style building at 12521 Dexter Avenue has a mostly unadorned façade faced in blonde brick veneer with a prominent central canted bay, with a gabled-on-hip roofed addition to the north that features a geometric-patterned stained glass window at the gable end. The Streamline Moderne building at 12837 Dexter Avenue is clad in blonde brick, with a prominent curved brick apse featuring a cast stone signage band with carved lettering, some of which has been infilled with concrete, but the portion that remains reads: "Thou Shalt Love Thy Neighbor As Thyself."

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There is one contributing educational building in the district, Winterhalter Elementary School (Hope Academy) at 12121 Broadstreet. The Jacobethan Revival building is composed of a two-story central block built in 1921, with a T-shaped addition built in 1924, each faced with red-brown brick with Indiana Limestone trim. A one- and two-story addition built in 1971 has an irregular plan and is located to the rear of the original structure along Cortland Street, also faced in red-brown brick with a mostly unadorned façade, with limestone sills, lintels, and coping.

Integrity

Overall, resources within the proposed boundary of the Russell Woods-Sullivan district retain the essential features to constitute an architecturally significant unified entity with integrity in all aspects of location, design, setting, materials/workmanship, feeling, and association.

Location: The district remains in its original location.

Design: The district retains the overall spatial forms and relationships in the streetscape, layout of roads, and landscaping, and detailing on contributing resources clearly reflect the design elements typical of their styles including Tudor Revival, French Eclectic, Colonial Revival, or Prairie styles, among others.

Setting: The setting remains largely unchanged from its period of significance in the residential portion of the district. Along the commercial peripheries, there has been a decline in density and overall activity, however, the relationship between the residential and commercial areas is still intact, connected by sidewalks and divided by alleys. The remaining commercial and mixed-use buildings do retain integrity that conveys the historic setting of the neighborhood.

Materials and Workmanship: The district possesses integrity of materials and workmanship with the vast majority of historic materials and detailing still intact, including but not limited to brick and stone veneer, wood and leaded glass windows, false half-timbering infilled with brick or stucco, buttresses, large chimneys, arched doorways, gabled vestibules, and stone door surrounds, among others.

Feeling and Association: The district's combined integrity of the above elements evokes the feeling of a dense, middle and upper-class, twentieth century neighborhood and conveys the historic associations presented in Section 8 of this nomination.

A total of 956 resources are classified as contributing and 20 are classified as noncontributing. These noncontributing resources lack integrity due to alterations, or date of construction outside the period of significance. The strong culture of homeownership in Russell Woods-Sullivan, as well as the presence of a local historic designation since 1999, has had remarkable impacts on the overall integrity of the neighborhood. Issues impacting integrity are most prevalent along the peripheries and commercial corridors, such as vacant buildings, vacant lots where demolition has occurred, and alteration of storefronts. This is also the reason for the proposed boundary's exclusion of buildings along Livernois Avenue, where the boundary instead runs along the alley

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behind Livernois. See the boundary justification discussion in Section 10 as well as the attached maps for more detail.

Archaeological Potential

The Russell Woods-Sullivan neighborhood is in an area of Detroit that has a rich early and mid-twentieth century history for White, Jewish, and Black residents. This neighborhood has not undergone any archaeological surveys to investigate the material traces of these changes in settlement and communities during the period of significance, 1922-1975.

Currently, there are no archaeological sites identified within the Russell Woods-Sullivan neighborhood. However, recent archaeological investigations in neighborhoods in the nearby Corktown and Midtown neighborhoods have revealed archaeological deposits from historic settlement, which has proven to be extremely useful in telling the stories of the working class and underrepresented communities, particularly Jewish and Black residents. Additionally, recent excavations at the Malcolm X house in nearby Inkster, has demonstrated that even relatively contemporary mid-twentieth century sites are likely to have archaeological signatures. Archaeological investigations at households, schools, and businesses may provide insight into the lives of those living and working in the Russell Woods-Sullivan neighborhood, and may support significance under Criterion A.

It should also be noted that Detroit has an extensive pre-contact, Native American archaeological record with an extremely high density of archaeological sites. Over a dozen pre-contact archaeological sites are documented in previously surveyed areas within a mile of the Russell Woods-Sullivan neighborhood. While pre-contact sites are less visible in the urban landscape of Detroit, recent geoarchaeological investigations suggest that there is a high probability for intact buried pre-contact archaeological deposits in the Russell Woods-Sullivan neighborhood.

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Inventory

Evaluation Methodology

A reconnaissance level and an intensive level historic resource survey was conducted in 2025 during which all resources forty years of age or older within the district boundary were photographed, inventoried, and evaluated for eligibility for the NRHP using the National Park Service's *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. Date of construction, architectural characteristics, historic associations, and relationship to the district as a whole were evaluated for each resource based on the National Register Criteria and Areas of Significance for the district. Specifically, by applying National Register Criteria A and C in the areas of architecture and ethnic heritage, the integrity and overall character of the district were assessed on the property's ability to convey a middle- and upper-class, builder-designed, early twentieth century neighborhood that transitioned from being populated by the Anglo and Jewish community to an upwardly mobile Black neighborhood. Contributing resources were built during the period of significance (1922-1975), retain integrity, and convey these historic associations of the district. Noncontributing resources are those which have been substantially altered so as to not convey the historic associations of the district or were built outside the period of significance. Within the residential area of the district, many vacant parcels with no building have been either legally incorporated into neighboring parcels or been purchased by the adjacent owner, giving those homes an extended side yard. There is one instance of a more recent demolition in the residential area of the district and this parcel is listed as noncontributing.

A full inventory of resources is provided in Appendix A. The inventory provides a list of all 976 resources within the district boundaries, both contributing and non-contributing, and is organized alphabetically by street name and number. Due to the size of this district, the inventory has been arranged in a table format for ease of use. Each resource within the district has been assigned an identification number which is keyed to the map provided with this nomination. Headings for the inventory table include the resource ID, address, historic and common name of the resource (if any), date of construction, architectural style, outbuildings number and type (if any), contributing status, architect and builder (if known), and a narrative architectural description of each resource.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: Black

ARCHITECTURE

ETHNIC HERITAGE: Jewish

Period of Significance

1922-1975

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Miller-Storm Company

C.E. Richle Company

Brownwell Corporation

L.F. Crane Company

Redstone, Louis G.

Nathan Johnson & Associates

Kohner, Henry

Mason, Edward J.

Miller, John Lawson

St. John, John

Cullum, Dean L.

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District is significant under National Register Criteria A and C at the local level of significance. Under Criterion A the district has gained significance in the areas of Ethnic Heritage as an important place in the experience of Jewish and African American Detroiters in the twentieth century. The district is unified under Criterion A through its historical role as a neighborhood that embodied upward mobility and the attainment of the “American Dream” for Jewish Detroiters in the 1920s through the 1940s and Black Detroiters from the 1950s onward. The neighborhood also expresses middle-class and upper-middle-class neighborhood transition in Detroit in the twentieth century through its resources and illustrates important aspects of the evolution of the city. Under Criterion C the district is significant under the theme of Architecture as an important collection of resources distinguishable by its highly intact and diverse collection early and mid-twentieth-century houses that includes important examples of residential types and forms and residential, commercial, ecclesiastical, and educational architecture. Together, the Russell Woods-Sullivan neighborhood is an important collection of resources in Detroit. The period of significance for the district begins in 1922 with the initial development of the neighborhood during a period of tremendous growth in the city and ends in 1976 per guidance from National Register Bulletin 16A which dictates fifty-years ago as the appropriate closing date where activities of historic importance continued with no specific end date.

The related Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF), “The Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit,” contains historic context relevant to the significance of Russell Woods-Sullivan under Criterion A as a Residential District subtype within the contexts “Birth of the Civil Rights Movement: 1941-1954” on page E-8, “Modern Civil Rights Movement: 1954–1964” on page E-11, and “The Second Revolution: 1964-1976” on page E-18. Additional contextual information related to Detroit’s Civil Rights Movement that is relevant to understanding the significance of Russell Woods-Sullivan can be found in National Register of Historic Places nominations for the Parks, Rose L. (McCauley) and Raymond, Flat (listed 2021), the Orsel and Minnie McGhee House (listed 2022), and Vaughn’s Bookstore (listed 2023), New Bethel Baptist Church (listed 2020), Shrine of the Black Madonna of the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church (listed 2021).

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Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Development of Russell Woods-Sullivan

Before development occurred, the future site of the Russell Woods-Sullivan neighborhood was located within the “10,000 Acre Tract,” which was a large parcel of land donated to the fledgling Michigan Territory by the United States Congress in 1806.⁶ The intent of the donation was to provide land for those affected by the fire in Detroit in 1805 or those displaced by the platting of Detroit. After accommodating those two groups the Territory could sell the remaining land to fund the construction of a jail and courthouse in Detroit.⁷

The 10,000-acre tract was located northwest of the downtown core and set just above the northernmost terminus of the city’s ribbon farms. When land in the tract was finally put up for sale in 1818 the initial interest was low, and a series of advertisements were published to drum up interest.⁸ Land that was sold was likely initially left fallow, used for farming, or was bought speculatively for future gains as this area would remain largely uninhabited or rural for the next seventy-five years.

The Russell Woods subdivision was laid out in a grid pattern with the overall plan slightly skewed from true north-south likely because of the 10,000-acre tract.⁹ To make the streets radiate perpendicular from the bounds of the 10,000-acre tract, the north-south streets actually run northwest to southeast. Outside the bounds of the 10,000-acre tract the streets are oriented closer to true north-south. The Russell Woods neighborhood is located in sections 11, 12, 29, and 30 in the northwestern corner of the 10,000-acre tract and these sections were all owned by Thomas Palmer (father of Thomas W. Palmer after whom Palmer Park, an historic district about 3 miles north of Russell Woods-Sullivan, is named) according to an 1855 map. Thomas Palmer acquired these parcels as payment for the construction of the state capitol building in Detroit, before the capital was moved to Lansing, about eighty miles northwest of Detroit.¹⁰

An 1860 map of Wayne County shows G.B. Russell became the owner of sections 11, 12, 29, and 30, as well as portions of sections 8, 13, and 32.¹¹ This is likely a misspelling of Dr. George

⁶ Authority, *Laws of the Territory of Michigan*, Ninth Congress, Session I, Chapter 43 (1806), (Detroit, MI: Sheldon M’Knight, 1833).

⁷ Authority, *Laws of the Territory of Michigan*, Ninth Congress, Session I, Chapter 43 (1806), (Detroit, MI: Sheldon M’Knight, 1833).

⁸ Paul Sewick, “10,000 Acre Tract,” *Detroit Urbanism*, accessed January 15, 2025, accessed at <https://detroiturbanism.blogspot.com/2017/01/10000-acre-tract.html#:~:text=One%20noticeable%20feature%20on%20some,%2C%20Hamtramck%2C%20and%20Highland%20Park.>

⁹ “Russel Woods Subn,” subdivision plat, 1916, Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs.

¹⁰ *American Biographical History of Eminent and Self-Made Men, Michigan Volume*, (Cincinnati, OH: Western Biographical Publishing Co., 1878) 111-112.

¹¹ Geil, Harley and Siverd, “Map of Wayne Co Michigan,” 1860.

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B. Russel's surname. Russel (1816-1903) was a prominent Detroit doctor and entrepreneur, who participated in an array of business ventures including establishing the Michigan Railway Foundry (1856) and the Detroit Car Works (1856) which manufactured railway cars.¹²

For many years after the land in the 10,000-acre tract was sold, the area remained rural. Greenfield Township, established in 1833, contained the land that would eventually become Russell Woods-Sullivan up until its annexation by the City of Detroit in 1916. By 1876 a map of Greenfield Township shows that Thomas Palmer had largely disposed of the land with new landowners including C.P. Austin, J. Galvian, and G.H. Brown holding larger pieces of acreage.¹³ Both the 1876 map and a map from 1893 shows a subdivision of land in section 30 branching off of Livernois Avenue including 13 lots along an unlabeled street that was eventually named Elmhurst Street (located just south of the district). By 1915 Homer Warren, a prolific real estate developer, owned a large portion of sections 11 and 12 while sections 29 and 30 were subdivided into smaller parcels. Daniel Sullivan owned a portion of section 12 as well at this time.

Early development in what became the Russell Woods-Sullivan neighborhood began in the 1910s. Explosive population growth of Detroit in the early twentieth century prompted expansion of the city limits, platting of new subdivisions, and new construction as newly arrived Detroiters struggled to find places to live.¹⁴ Early settlements nearby may have enticed early settlers to the area. These settlements included Ravenswood (located today near where Livernois and W. Chicago meet, about 1 mile south of Russell Woods-Sullivan) which is shown on the 1910 Sanborn map. Ravenswood was described by Silas Farmer as being excellent agricultural land, and the "nucleus of quite a thriving settlement."¹⁵ The Ravenswood moniker was short lived and this area became known as Howlett, likely named after the school located there. Howlett had a post office that was absorbed into the city of Detroit's postal system in 1916 when this area was annexed—in 1924 maps still indicated this area was known as Howlett and no trace of the Ravenswood name is shown.¹⁶

The area containing Russell Woods-Sullivan was annexed to the city in 1916 along with large swaths of land along the Detroit Terminal Railroad located just north of Russell Woods.¹⁷ The Russell Woods-Sullivan neighborhood is composed of two subdivision plats—Russell Woods and Sullivan's Dexter Boulevard Subdivision No. 1. Russell Woods was platted the same year this area was annexed to the city (1916) and was platted by the Russel Woods Company headed

¹² *Cyclopedia of Michigan: historical and biographical*, (New York & Detroit, Western pub. & engraving co., 1900).

¹³ H. Belden and Co., "Map of Greenfield Township," Wayne County Atlas, 1876.

¹⁴ National Lithograph Company, *Authentic Map of Detroit and Environs* (Detroit, MI: National Lithograph Company, [1931?]), Michiganology.

¹⁵ Silas Farmer, *History of Detroit and Wayne County and Early Michigan*, 1297.

¹⁶ "Postmaster William J. Nagel," *Detroit Free Press*, September 30, 1916.

¹⁷ *City of Detroit Indicating Growth by Annexation 1806 to 1926* (Detroit, MI: National Lithographic Co., 1926), in Board of County Auditors, *Manual: County of Wayne Michigan 1926* (1926), Archive.org.

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by Henry Russel, president, and Charles H. L'Hommedieu as secretary.¹⁸ Henry Russel, the son of Dr. George B. Russel, was highly involved in railroad activities to support Detroit's industrial growth, resulting in the construction of the Detroit Terminal Railroad in the early twentieth century.¹⁹ The plat was spelled Russel Woods but this spelling was presumably changed over time from Russel to Russell and, throughout this report, the modern spelling (Russell) is used.

As shown in the 1916 plat map, Russell Woods was originally platted with a park—called Russel Woods Park—which had a small lake near the western side of the park. It is unclear if this lake was an existing natural feature or, if it was intended to be manmade, whether it was ever constructed. The lots in the plat varied in size, with the lots on Broadstreet wider (varying from forty-eight to seventy feet) than lots found on the east-west streets like Leslie, Sturtevant and Buena Vista. Lots on these east-west streets were forty feet wide and 115 to 130 feet deep. Lots in the plat also have access to a public alley at the rear of each lot.

Sullivan's Dexter Boulevard Subdivision No. 1 was platted by brothers Daniel and Jeremiah Sullivan in 1925. This platting created a subdivision roughly bounded by Waverly Avenue to the north, Dexter Avenue to the east, Cortland Avenue to the south and Petosky Avenue to the west, appended to the east side of the existing Russell Woods platting. The Sullivan brothers had also previously platted land on the east side of Dexter Avenue, in 1923 with that subdivision called the Sullivan's Dexter Boulevard Subdivision. This land may have been part of a family farm as Daniel Sullivan was recorded as the owner of a large parcel of land in section 12 in 1915.²⁰ The lots in Sullivan's Dexter Boulevard Subdivision No. 1 are also primarily forty feet wide with some end lots and corner lots slightly deviating to thirty-six and fifty-four feet in width. The lots are typically between 92 to 131 feet deep depending on their location in the subdivision with lots on the south side of Cortland being the shallowest. Much like in Russell Woods, the lots in the Sullivan plat also have public alleys behind each lot to accommodate access to garages. No parks or public space were platted in the Sullivan plan.

The early development of the major thoroughfares adjacent to Russell Woods-Sullivan contributed to the steady growth of the area. Russell Woods-Sullivan is surrounded on three sides by major Detroit thoroughfares, namely Livernois Avenue, Davison Street, and Dexter Avenue. Additionally, located just south of the neighborhood is Grand River Avenue. Grand River Avenue was first surveyed in 1832 by a team led by General Joseph White Brown with a goal of connecting Detroit to the area where the Grand River emptied into Lake Michigan on the

¹⁸ "Proposed Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District: Final Report," Historic Designation Advisory Board, City of Detroit (1998), 3.

¹⁹ FamilySearch Family Tree, accessed at <https://records.myheritagelibraryedition.com/research/record-40001-129321103/dr-george-black-russel-in-familysearch-family-tree>; "Proposed Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District," 3; National Lithographic Company, *Authentic Map of Detroit and Environs* (Detroit, MI: National Lithographic Company, [1931?]), Michiganology.

²⁰ Sauer Bros., "Greenfield Township, Detroit, Woodward Heights, Highland Park," 1915.

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west side of the state.²¹ The presence of the Grand River Road provided access to small communities along its path like Ravenswood/Howlett, and facilitating its earliest development when Russell Woods was platted in 1916.

Davison Street (Davison Freeway) was named after early Detroit resident Jared Davison, and it was initially a narrow road that provided the ability to commute from Detroit's near west side across Woodward Avenue to Highland Park, an independent city within the boundaries of Detroit, located about five miles north of downtown.²² By 1940, Davison Street carried more than fifteen thousand vehicles through Highland Park, 90 percent of which was non-local traffic, causing widespread congestion. Support for the conversion of the former residential Davison Street into a below-grade freeway was revived and in 1941 Highland Park began the removal of 132 structures and excavation of 320,000 cubic yards of earth began.²³ This 1.3 mile stretch of freeway, which lies to the east of the Russell Woods-Sullivan neighborhood reduced the commute time across Highland Park from thirty to just 3 minutes. Davison remains at-grade along the northern border of Russell Woods-Sullivan.

As with many of Detroit's major streets, Livernois Avenue is named for a French landowner, Francis Livernois, who owned large tracts of land at the street's point of origin in what was then the township of Springwells (in today's southwest Detroit). In 1893 Livernois Avenue served as Detroit's western border between Springwells and extended northward into Greenfield Township and beyond. In the 1920s the widening and paving of Livernois Avenue was lauded as a tempting new draw to spur development a few blocks north of Grand River Avenue.²⁴ As part of a \$2 million street paving program, Livernois Avenue was paved from Tireman Avenue to Davison Street, which includes the portion that borders Russell Woods, creating what the *Detroit Free Press* called a "new westside thoroughfare," further fueling the development of Russell Woods-Sullivan.²⁵

Dexter Mason Ferry owned a large tract of land in what is roughly bounded by Grand River Avenue, Joy Road, and Dexter Avenue. Ferry was born in New York state in 1933 and moved to Detroit in 1852, where he established D.M. Ferry & Co..²⁶ Silas Farmer's description of Greenfield Township includes mention of D.M. Ferry's "extensive seed farms" in this area.²⁷

²¹ Paul Sewick, "Radial Avenues Part V: Grand River," *Detroit Urbanism* (December 6, 2016), accessed January 21, 2025, accessed at <https://detroiturbanism.blogspot.com/2016/12/radial-avenues-part-v-grand-river.html>.

²² "Davison Freeway," *Encyclopedia of Detroit*, Detroit Historical Society, accessed January 21, 2025, accessed at <https://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/davison-freeway>.

²³ Paul Sewick, "Highland Park IV: The Davison, Detroit's First Freeway," *Detroit Urbanism* entry posted January 21, 2023, <https://detroiturbanism.blogspot.com/2023/01/highland-park-iv-davison-detroits-first.html> (Accessed March 2025).

²⁴ "Detroit To Have New Traffic Way," *Detroit Free Press*, June 8, 1924.

²⁵ "A \$2,000,000 Street Paving Program," *Detroit Free Press*, September 28, 1924.

²⁶ Silas Farmer, *History of Detroit and Wayne County and Early Michigan*, 1143.

²⁷ Silas Farmer, *History of Detroit and Wayne County and Early Michigan*, 1296.

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Known as the Greenfield Seed Farm, these fields occupied several hundred acres on Grand River Avenue just south of Russell Woods-Sullivan.²⁸ Dexter Avenue gets its name from the land's association with D.M. Ferry, who's surname already was given to another street in Detroit (Ferry Avenue) therefore it's likely the street was given his first name, Dexter. This seed farm began to be divided and sold around 1913, which kicked off development in the northwest section of Detroit including further street improvements.²⁹

In addition to the major streets that aided in the development of Russell Woods, the neighborhood also benefited from a streetcar line that ran down Grand River Avenue just south of the neighborhood. The streetcar line on Grand River was founded by the Grand River Street Railway in 1868.³⁰ By 1928, when development of Russell Woods-Sullivan was well underway, the Detroit Department of Street Railway (DSR) had extended the Grand River line to Farmington, a suburb located northwest of Detroit.³¹

The majority of houses in Russell Woods-Sullivan were constructed in the 1920s and 1930s. Many parcels in Sullivan's plat remained vacant during the 1920s and primarily developed in the 1930s and 1940s after the worst of the Great Depression had ended.³² The 1926 Sanborn map shows lots east of Petoskey were still vacant at this time. Vacant lots in Russell Woods-Sullivan were advertised as "beautiful" and "in the trees," some with paving, sewer, and water already paid for by the builder, selling from \$2,100 to \$5,000 per lot in 1924.³³ That same year, the Miller-Storm Company opened their "Complete Home" model house in the neighborhood, calling it a "highly restricted section" of Detroit.³⁴ In 1927 lots fronting Dexter Avenue were priced at \$300 per foot, however two gas station sites were among the priciest at reportedly \$500 per foot.³⁵ The houses built in the 1930s and 1940s tend to be more restrained in style and detail, but materials like brick and stone veneer still abound. From the time of the neighborhood's establishment, it has been viewed as a desirable part of the city and decidedly middle class.³⁶

Russell Woods Park, located between Livernois and Broadstreet Avenues, has been a significant space for recreation in the neighborhood since it was originally platted by the Russell Woods Company in 1916. Early on, the Park was unmaintained, but after ownership was transferred to the City around 1928, sidewalks were laid and landscaping was improved to create a beautiful

²⁸ David Poremba, *Detroit: City of Industry*, 26-28.

²⁹ "Says Detroit Will Not Lag," *Detroit Free Press*, November 25, 1923.

³⁰ "Passage of Ordinance Chartering the Grand River Street Railway," *Detroit Free Press*, May 1, 1868.

³¹ Kenneth Schramm, *Detroit's Street Railways* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 98.

³² City of Detroit Office of the Assessor, "Parcels (Current)," City of Detroit Open Data Portal.

³³ "Sale-Vacant Lots," *Detroit Free Press*, May 5, 1924.

³⁴ "Miller-Storm Company Realizes Ideals in New Model Home," *Detroit Free Press*, September 14, 1924.

³⁵ "Magic Development of District is Traced," *Detroit Free Press*, June 26, 1927.

³⁶ "Proposed Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District," 4.

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spot for residents.³⁷ The roughly four-acre park has consistently been a gathering place for the community with events such as the annual Russell Woods Festival of Arts, established in 1960 by the Russell Woods-Sullivan Area Association.³⁸ The Park also is the home of a yearly jazz festival.

Raymond Zussman Park and Playground, between West Davison and Waverly Streets, was named for a local resident, Lieutenant Raymond Zussman, and was dedicated by the city in July 1951. Zussman was killed in action in France during World War II and was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions and leadership. The park historically served as a starting point for a parade route on Detroit's African Liberation Day that began at Zussman Park and continued down Dexter Avenue. African Liberation Day was organized by the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC), which formed at a conference in Detroit in 1972.³⁹ The annual African Liberation Day event grew to include demonstrations in thirty cities internationally, and in Detroit events were held from at least 1972 until 2006, but 1978 appears to have been the last year the parade was located at Zussman Park.⁴⁰ Beginning in the 1960s, Zussman Park became a popular spot for basketball tournaments frequented by college and professional players, who even stepped up to maintain the park by repainting the court or replacing backboards when the city lacked the funds to do so.⁴¹ In 2013, the city struggled with bankruptcy, and slated forty-eight parks to be closed, including both Russell Woods Park and Zussman Park. In order to help save the parks, ten-year-old local resident Joshua Smith raised \$3,600 in popcorn and lemonade sales, an achievement that led to Zussman Park receiving new playground equipment donated in Smith's honor.

Architecture

Under Criterion C, Russell Woods-Sullivan is significant as an intact example of a cohesive collection of early and mid-twentieth century resources. The neighborhood exemplifies characteristics of a late streetcar suburb and an early automobile suburb just outside of the city core, as described in the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) "Historic Residential Suburbs in the United States, 1830-1960." The period of significance of this district overlaps slightly with the later years of the streetcar suburb as described in the context "Streetcar Suburbs, 1888-1928" beginning on page E-4 of the MPDF. While not specifically mentioned in the MPDF, Russell Woods-Sullivan nonetheless displays the indicative characteristics of a commuter neighborhood that developed adjacent to a major radial streetcar line (Grand River

³⁷ Walter H. Blucher, "Play Spots Enhance Community Standard," *Detroit Free Press*, July 1, 1928.

³⁸ "To Accent Culture At Three-day Festival," *Michigan Chronicle*, August 3, 1963.

³⁹ "African Liberation Support Committee," African Activist Archive, accessed at <https://africanactivist.msu.edu/organization/210-813-780/>.

⁴⁰ "Parade To Kick Off Activities On African Liberation Day '78," *Michigan Chronicle*, May 27, 1978; Titilaya Akanke, "African Liberation Day in Detroit." *Michigan Chronicle*, June 06, 1981; "34th Annual African Liberation Day March and Rally." *Michigan Chronicle*, May 24, 2006.

⁴¹ Darrell Dawsey, "Jump Street [Zussman Playground]," *The Detroit Free Press*, 12 June 1993.

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Street Railway) extending outward from the central city along a major thoroughfare (Grand River Avenue). Like the typical streetcar line described in the MPDF, the Grand River line evolved from a horse driven railway to a longer electric streetcar line, and the majority of houses in Russell Woods-Sullivan were constructed during the 1920s and 1930s, roughly coinciding with the extension of the Grand River line out to Farmington, MI, then a rural community 19 miles NW of the city center, in 1928.⁴²

The neighborhood continued to develop as an early automobile suburb, with elements that align with the context “Early Automobile Suburbs: 1908 to 1945” beginning on page E-5 of the MPDF, such as the incorporation of automobile infrastructure (i.e. driveways, garages) and the hierarchy of roads within the neighborhood. The residences, which represent popular styles of the period, were built by some of Detroit’s well-established contractors and developers with quality materials, which has contributed to the retention of integrity that sets it apart from some of its contemporaries in Detroit. There is an observable retention of not only overall integrity, but density, as demolition has been minimal in Russell Woods-Sullivan compared to the surrounding area and its contemporaries elsewhere in the city. This persistent residential density and retention of historic character and integrity is in part due to a high level of community commitment, culture of homeownership, and strong social ties in the neighborhood, as well as the protection of a local historic district designation since 1999.

Architecturally, the Russell Woods-Sullivan district occupies a distinctive place on the spectrum of Detroit’s neighborhoods. There are many examples of neighborhoods that developed during the main growth period of Russell Woods-Sullivan, as it was one of tremendous growth in Detroit overall. While many of Detroit’s former middle-class residential neighborhoods from this time have become vacant due to disinvestment and deterioration of less durable wood framed construction, Russell Woods-Sullivan remains largely intact due to the high-quality masonry construction of its original housing stock and committed investment by a high percentage of owner-occupied homes. Other neighborhoods in Detroit that share a similar history to Russell Woods-Sullivan, and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, include Boston Edison (NRHP 1975), Arden Park (NRHP 1982), and Palmer Woods (NRHP 1983) on the northwest side of the city. However, these neighborhoods are characterized by larger, grander, and more bespoke architecture than that of Russell Woods-Sullivan. Two closer cousins of Russell Woods-Sullivan, in both character and integrity, include Rosedale Park and Sherwood Forest. Both were considered to be exclusive and sought after by those in the upper-middle class, but with a more modest architect like Russell Woods-Sullivan.

Rosedale Park (NRHP listed in 2006) is located in the far northwest corner of Detroit, about four miles west of Russell Woods-Sullivan along Grand River Avenue. It was, like Russell Woods-Sullivan, platted beginning in 1916 and developed mainly in the 1920s, 1930s, and early 1940s. Similar to Russell Woods-Sullivan, homes were generally modest but built with quality materials, and were built in Tudor Revival, Arts and Crafts, Bungalow, Colonial Revival, and Prairie styles, among others. One distinction between these two architecturally similar

⁴² Kenneth Schramm, *Detroit’s Street Railways* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 98.

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neighborhoods is that Rosedale Park, being located further from the city center, had a more semi-rural feeling at the time of its development. Increasing distance away from downtown also tended to increase exclusivity, and according to author Lawrence Otis Graham, Rosedale Park was considered even more upscale than Russell Woods-Sullivan.⁴³ Additionally, Rosedale Park appears to be entirely single-family residences, whereas Russell Woods-Sullivan has a more mixed balance between single-family, duplex, and some larger multi-family housing.⁴⁴

Sherwood Forest (designated a local historic district in 2001) is located about three miles north of Russell Woods-Sullivan off of Livernois Avenue.⁴⁵ Sherwood Forest was developed contemporaneously, mostly during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, and also features a high percentage of Tudor Revival residential buildings, along with Colonial Revival, Neoclassical, Mediterranean, Arts and Crafts, and Modernistic, however they tend to be larger than the homes in Russell Woods-Sullivan. The two neighborhoods differ in that Sherwood Forest was planned with curving streets, while Russell Woods-Sullivan adheres to the urban street grid. This demarcates a difference in exclusivity, as developing along the grid was the more inexpensive approach.

In comparing these two architecturally similar neighborhoods that developed around the same time in close proximity to another, Russell Woods-Sullivan stands out as being the more modest of the group. While sharing characteristics in tree-lined streets, popular architectural styles, and quality craftsmanship and materials, Russell Woods-Sullivan would have been more attainable to an aspiring middle and upper-middle class that sought quality housing within their means. Nonetheless, the character and integrity of these three neighborhoods are distinctively similar when compared to their surrounding urban context and Detroit as a whole.

Several architects and builders worked in the neighborhood, many with notable accomplishments that impacted the character not only of Russell Woods-Sullivan but shaped the built environment throughout Detroit as well as beyond the city's borders. Builders such as the Miller-Storm Company were involved in national campaigns to develop specifications for "the Standard" home. Their "Home Complete" model can be seen at 4298 Fullerton, and it was emblematic of everything that should be included in a modern home: an emphasis on high quality materials and fixtures, modern appliances, Stonetex waterproof painting and 100-gallon water heater in the basement, vapor heat system, Celotex⁴⁶ insulation for temperature and soundproofing, and Fenestra steel casement windows with John Johnson Company awnings.⁴⁷ The emphasis on

⁴³ Lawrence Otis Graham, *Our Kind of People: Inside America's Black Upper Class*, 2000, 311.

⁴⁴ "Proposed Rosedale Park Historic District," Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board, 2006.

⁴⁵ "Proposed Sherwood Forest Historic District," Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board, 2001.

⁴⁶ Celotex was a synthetic lumber made from sugar cane advertised to be used as sheathing or as a base for plaster, replacing the need for lathe. Celotex Company's Detroit office was located in the Penobscot Building with William H. Filson as manager in 1924.

⁴⁷ "Miller-Storm Company Realizes Ideals in New Model Home," *Detroit Free Press*, September 14, 1924.

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quality is also seen in builder Dean L. Cullum's model homes, called "Dura-Bilt Homes,"⁴⁸ such as 4255 and 4249 Cortland Street, likely others.⁴⁹ Cullum's model was an income producing property that was advertised as appearing like a single-family home from the outside. Many builders and contractors had a local presence with offices located in the direct vicinity. Some even lived in Russell Woods-Sullivan, such as John St. John, a realtor and builder with offices at 13545 Livernois Avenue. St. John built and resided at 4203-4205 Tyler Street, a five-unit building with a twin at 4203 Buena Vista Street. Another developer that had a major impact on the neighborhood was Leslie F. Crane with the L. F. Crane Company, which became the largest investor in the neighborhood with the purchase of sixty lots in the Sullivan subdivision.⁵⁰ There are noteworthy Modern architects whose work can be seen in Russell Woods-Sullivan, adding to the unique character of the district. Nathan Johnson (1925 – 2021), one of Detroit's most notable Black architects, was the designer of 12547 Broadstreet Avenue.⁵¹ Louis G. Redstone is the likely architect of 4045 Glendale Street and likely other Streamlined Moderne houses in the neighborhood, as well as religious buildings including Yeshiva Beth Yehudah at northwest corner of Dexter and Cortland,⁵² and the Young Israel Center at 12521 Dexter.⁵³

Please see Appendix 1 for additional information and background on architects, builders, and developers that were identified in the research for this nomination.

Ethnic Heritage

Detroit is a city of immigrants, both those from abroad and migrants who travelled from other sections of the country seeking greater opportunity and freedom from oppression. Russell Woods-Sullivan has a diverse ethnic history, one that evolved over the course of the neighborhood's history. While it was initially occupied by Protestants and Catholics of northwestern European ancestry, Russell Woods-Sullivan went on to have two major ethnic groups reside in the neighborhood: Jewish residents and Black residents. The following sections document these two ethnic groups that have called Russell Woods-Sullivan home, leading to the district's significance under National Register Criterion A reflecting an important pattern of housing change in Detroit.

Early History of Jewish Detroit

Detroit's earliest Jewish residents were individuals involved in the city and region's fur trade. The city's first Jewish resident likely arrived in 1762, but sources disagree as to who this was, with some claiming that a businessman named Chapman Abraham was the first to settle while others claim merchant Ezekiel Solomon was the first to settle in Detroit.⁵⁴ Regardless of who the

⁴⁸ "Dean L. Cullum's Dura-Bilt Homes," *Detroit Free Press*, December 11, 1927.

⁴⁹ "The Lindbergh," advertisement, *Detroit Free Press*, September 11, 1927.

⁵⁰ "Proposed Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District," 4.

⁵¹ University of Pennsylvania Fall 2018 Preservation Studio, "Russell Woods-Nardin Park: A Tactical Preservation Plan," 2019, 49.

⁵² "New School To Be Built On Dexter," *Detroit Free Press*, June 29, 1941.

⁵³ "Young Israel's Proposed New Center Here," *Jewish News*, June 1, 1945.

⁵⁴ "Virtual Jewish World: Detroit, Michigan," Jewish Virtual Library, accessed January 10, 2025, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/detroit-jewish->

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initial Jewish resident was, several more Jewish settlers and traders appeared in early Detroit records but there was no meaningful Jewish settlement until about 1850. Jewish people coming to Detroit at this time were typically single males from the Kingdom of Bavaria, an independent region in central Europe that eventually was incorporated into the unified German Empire in 1871 and whose borders roughly align with the modern-day Free State of Bavaria located in southern Germany. Like other immigrant groups before and after, these men sought to escape economic hardship, persecution, social unrest, and political upheaval. Detroit was viewed as a place of economic opportunity, and the city's existing German community, which also drew immigrants from east coast cities like New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, provided a familiar language and culture for these new immigrants. Thus, Detroit often became the second, third, or fourth stop on a Jewish immigrant's journey to the United States.⁵⁵

In the 1860s, Jewish migration to Detroit began to change slightly as increasing numbers of eastern European Jews started moving to Detroit. Largely coming indirectly from the modern nation of Poland, after spending time elsewhere in the United States, this second wave of Jewish migration differed in that these individuals were typically older, already married, and came with their families. Additional differences extended to religious beliefs, nationality, and political leanings; therefore, there was significant variation in and between Detroit's newest Jewish residents and the existing German Jewish residents. By 1881 the trickle of eastern European and Russian Jewish immigrants became a flood as people fled pogroms—massacres with the intention of purging an ethnic group from an area—in eastern Europe and Russia. Between 1881 and 1914, nearly two million Jews came to the United States and Detroit's Jewish population exploded. The number of Jewish residents increased from one thousand individuals in 1880 to ten thousand in 1900, to thirty-four thousand in 1914, with Russian Jews composing 75 percent of the new immigrants. As with other immigrant groups coming to Detroit, eastern European and Russian Jews were drawn to the promise of Detroit's economic opportunities and the presence of an existing Jewish community.⁵⁶

For many immigrant communities, Detroit's east side, at the northern end of the Black Bottom neighborhood, was the point of entry, including eastern European and Russian Jewish immigrants. The neighborhood's main thoroughfare, Hastings Street, served as the center of Jewish life in the city at that time. In his book, *Moving In and Moving Up: Early Twentieth-Century Detroit Jewry*, Robert Rockaway states, "Although Russian Jews predominated the eastern European immigrant community, others from a number of central and eastern European countries settled as well. And despite differing ethnic backgrounds, they all congregated on the city's east side in a rectangle formed by Monroe, Watson, Brush, and Orleans streets, with Hastings Street the major business thoroughfare." Rockaway then quotes the *Detroit Free Press*

history-tour#1760; Brian Wilson, "The Spirit of the Motor City: Three Hundred Years of Religious History in Detroit," *Michigan Historical Review* 27, no. 1 (2001), 47.

⁵⁵ Robert Rockaway, "Moving In and Moving Up: Early Twentieth-Century Detroit Jewry," *Michigan Historical Review* 41, no. 2 (2015), 59-60; "From Haven to Home: 350 Years of Jewish Life in America, A Century of Immigration, 1820-1924," Library of Congress, accessed January 22, 2025, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/haventohome/haven-century.html>.

⁵⁶ Rockaway, "Moving In and Moving Up," 65-67.

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regarding the Hastings area as having, "Hebrew stores of every description: butchers, bakers, clothiers... practically everything its Jewish residents needed for a self-contained existence. A Hebrew might live his lifetime in the quarter and never leave its confines."⁵⁷

Prior to migrating further north and west across Woodward Avenue to Russell Woods-Sullivan, Hastings Street and its neighboring area was the center of Jewish life in Detroit. However, this neighborhood, despite its vital ethnic communities, was not an economically prosperous place. Rockaway states, "Despite this somewhat romanticized view of the Jewish district, the east side of Detroit was one of the worst areas of the city. It had fewer water pipes and sewers than the west side, was more crowded, had higher rents, and higher disease and death rates than other parts of the city."⁵⁸ As Detroit's Jewish population established themselves socially and economically, they would eventually look to move elsewhere, and the city's west side, as described above, offered a more appealing location than their current homes at the turn of the twentieth century.

Anglo and Jewish Residents in Russell Woods-Sullivan

In the late 1920s the houses in the Russell Woods-Sullivan area were occupied by middle and upper middle class White residents, primarily Catholic residents of Polish, Greek, or Irish heritage, with the earliest Jewish residents moving into the neighborhood by 1926.^{59 60} The general migration trend for Jewish Detroiters was movement north and west of Woodward from the city center to an area south of the Dexter Avenue and Davison.⁶¹ In the 1930s and 1940s, this area included Russell Woods-Sullivan, establishing a heavy concentration of Jewish population centered on Dexter Avenue from Davison south towards West Grand Boulevard. Dexter Avenue became a bustling center of business with many Jewish owned stores and shops that catered to Jewish families, and during this time it was considered "the main street of Jewish life in the city," eventually replacing Hastings Street on the east side as the center of Jewish life.⁶²

By the 1940's, the Jewish presence in the Russell Woods neighborhood was firmly established, with notable institutions locating in the neighborhood. Synagogues were constructed as the number of Jewish residents increased.⁶³ In 1939, the Winterhalter School began to house the

⁵⁷ Rockaway, "Moving In and Moving Up," 67.

⁵⁸ Rockaway, "Moving In and Moving Up," 68-69.

⁵⁹ "Russell Woods and Nardin Park Neighborhood Framework," Planning and Development Department, City of Detroit, 2019, 26-27.

⁶⁰ The Detroit Jewish Chronicle. (1926, December 17) *Social and Personal - Mr. and Mrs. Emanuel Rice*. 8.

⁶¹ Robert Sinclair, "Detroit's Ethnic Communities in 1950," map from *Metropolitan Detroit*.

⁶² Albert J. Mayer, "Russell Woods: Change without Conflict, a Case Study of Neighborhood Racial Change in Detroit," *Studies in Housing and Minority Groups* ed. Nathan Glazer and Davis McEntire, (University of California Press: 1960).

⁶³ University of Pennsylvania Fall 2018 Preservation Studio, "Tactical Preservation Plan," 21.

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offices of the United Hebrew Schools.⁶⁴ In 1941, land and funds were allocated for the construction of a new building located at 12305 Dexter Avenue for the Mogen Abraham Congregation and Yeshivah Beth Yehuda, as a combination synagogue, school and assembly hall.⁶⁵ Yeshivath Beth Yehudah, a school dedicated to biblical and Talmudic studies, was previously located nearby in a temporary facility, and had been growing in student population. A larger building was needed.⁶⁶ The Yeshiva later expanded in 1945 within the neighborhood, opening an Annex on the east side of Dexter Avenue, and still exists today as the largest Jewish school system in Michigan with its main campus located 8 miles north of Russell Woods Sullivan in Southfield, MI.⁶⁷ Plans for the Congregation Beth Shmuel (12837 Dexter Avenue) began in 1944 and was constructed in 1947. Under the leadership of Rabbi Joseph Rabinowitz, the building served as the Congregation's synagogue and house of study.⁶⁸ The Young Israel of Detroit building (12521 Dexter) began funding for construction in 1945.⁶⁹ It operated as a youth center with recreation facilities, club rooms, arts and crafts rooms, a library, and accommodations for social functions, and offered religious and educational programs including Hebrew school, geography, various courses in Judaism, and social and family problems. In 1944, the formation of the Russell Woods Hadassah, a Jewish women's volunteer organization, was also announced, further establishing a prominent Jewish presence in the neighborhood.⁷⁰

By 1950 the pattern of Jewish residential movement from the near east side to the northwest side was well established.⁷¹ The Jewish community in Russell Woods-Sullivan thrived until the middle decades of the twentieth century, at which time Jewish residents continued their migration, again to the northwest, into the area around Seven Mile Road, and eventually to suburbs in Oakland County including Oak Park, Southfield, and Farmington, which is indicative of the community's relative upward mobility. While Jewish residents had begun to move out from Russell Woods-Sullivan after only around two decades, in that period of time they had established a thriving community and left their mark on its built environment through such things as businesses and places of worship. Jewish residents established the War Veterans' Memorial at 4905 West Davison that was the location of the first meeting of the Russell Woods-Sullivan Area Association. Jewish resident Aaron Rosenberg was at the helm of this new neighborhood organization, and further discussion of the Association and its impact on making the

⁶⁴ "Register Pupils in Hebrew Schools; New Winterhalter Branch," *Detroit Jewish Chronicle*, October 13, 1939.

⁶⁵ "New School to Be Built on Dexter," *Detroit Free Press*, June 29, 1941; "To Lay Cornerstone for the New Yeshivah Beth Yehudah Building at Dexter and Cortland on Sunday," *Detroit Jewish Chronicle*, September 26, 1941.

⁶⁶ The *Detroit Jewish Chronicle*. (1941, January 17) *Synagogue Gives Fund for Yeshiva*. 1-9.

⁶⁷ The *Detroit Jewish Chronicle*. (1945, September 28) *Yeshiva to Open Annex Thursday*. 17.

⁶⁸ "Proposed Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District," 8; "New Synagogue Of Congregation Beth Schmuel, Dexter and Buena Vista," *Detroit Jewish Chronicle*, January 14, 1944.

⁶⁹ "Young Israel's Proposed New Center Here," *Jewish News*, June 1, 1945.

⁷⁰ The *Detroit Jewish Chronicle*. (1944, November 03) *3 Hadassah Units List Programs*. 15.

⁷¹ Robert Sinclair, "Detroit's Ethnic Communities in 1950," map from *Metropolitan Detroit*.

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neighborhood what it is today can be found in subsequent sections of this nomination. As the Jewish population moved out of the area during the late-1950's, the neighborhood then saw its first Black residents move in, creating the next, and largely current, generation of Russell Woods-Sullivan as described in more detail in the following sections.

African Americans in Detroit

The earliest known record of enslaved Black individuals in Detroit identified ninety-three slaves in 1773 (available historical records have not revealed how many non-enslaved Blacks lived in the city at that time).⁷² Many of the pioneering White families in early Detroit owned slaves, names which grace roads, schools, and governmental units across the region today. For example, Campau, Brush, Cass, Dequindre, Beaufait, Livernois, and Hamtramck were all slave-owning families.⁷³ By 1782 the number of enslaved Blacks in Detroit had grown to 179.⁷⁴ In 1783 the territory of Michigan became a part of the United States and the Northwest Ordinance (formally, *An Ordinance for the Government of the Territory of the United States North-West of the River Ohio*) was passed in 1787. Ostensibly the Northwest Ordinance outlawed slavery in the areas north and west of the Ohio River but it contained a provision (Article 6) that allowed for the return of fugitive slaves.⁷⁵ In practicality, the ordinance did little but outlaw overt slavery in the region.

In 1795 the Jay (or Jay's) Treaty was enacted—to forestall another war with Great Britain—which prohibited the sale of slaves in the city but, again, did not address the enslaved individuals already in Detroit.⁷⁶ In 1807 a decision was handed down by Detroit judge Augustus B. Woodward that mandated that no new enslaved individuals could be brought into the settlement but, again, failed to address those already enslaved.⁷⁷ On June 17, 1833, the Blackburn Riot took place as outcry erupted over two runaway slaves from Kentucky, Thornton and Lucie Blackburn, who were apprehended in Detroit and ordered to return to slavery under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793. With the help of local Black leaders and a few White allies, the Thorntons were able to escape and eventually settle in Toronto where Canadian officials refused to have them extradited. With the formation of the Michigan Anti-Slavery Society in 1840, Detroit became an attractive beacon for those fleeing slavery in the South. The passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850

⁷² Forrester B. Washington, "The Negro in Detroit: A Survey of the Conditions of a Negro Group in a Northern Industrial Center During the War Prosperity Period," (1920), 1.

⁷³ Bill McGraw, *Detroit 1967: Origins, Impacts, Legacies*, ed. Joel Stone, 16.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Miles, *The Dawn of Detroit*, 99.

⁷⁶ Neal Rubin, "Monuments to Detroit Area's Past Seen in New, Troubling Light: Slavery," *Detroit News*, September 18, 2020. Formally, the treaty was titled "Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation Between His Britannic Majesty and the United States of America, by their President, with the Advice and Consent of their Senate."

⁷⁷ Washington, "The Negro in Detroit," 1; Mapping Slavery in Detroit, "Map," <http://mappingdetroitsslavery.com/map.php> (accessed April 25, 2020).

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altered the relative safety of Detroit, however, and many former enslaved individuals fled Detroit for Canada, which had abolished slavery in 1834.⁷⁸

As early as 1805 there were at least six free Black men and seven free Black women in Detroit.⁷⁹ By 1830 about three-hundred free Black individuals lived in the Detroit area.⁸⁰ In 1870 the total population of Detroit was 79,577, although the African American population that same year was less than 3 percent of the population as a whole, with many being former enslaved individuals either heading to Canada or settling in Detroit after an interlude in that neighboring country.⁸¹ By 1890, Detroit's total population had skyrocketed to 205,876 (an increase of nearly 159 percent from 1870) making it the fifteenth largest city in the United States, although Black citizens in the city made up just 1.7 percent of the population at that time.⁸² The booming automobile industry further spurred the growth of the city's African American population in the ensuing decades, in what is known as the Great Migration.

The Great Migration is the term used for the internal migration of Black Americans moving from rural areas primarily in the south to urban areas primarily in the north which dramatically altered the demographic composition of the nation. The migration is often considered in two halves: the first migration bounded by 1910 to 1940 and the second migration bounded by 1940 to 1970. During the first wave of the Great Migration southern migrants moved to the Northeast and Midwest causing enormous growth in Black populations in cities such as Detroit as well as Chicago, New York and Philadelphia. Detroit's Black population was increasing by around 1,000 migrants per day in spring of 1920,⁸³ contributing to it becoming the fourth largest city in the United States. The pace of the migration picked up after the United States entered the Second World War and the accompanying wartime labor needs partially fueled the second wave of the Great Migration as Black southerners relocated hoping to fill the surplus of defense worker jobs. In June 1941, President Roosevelt ordered the integration of all war contracting businesses, and Detroit's defense industry added 75,000 Black workers while the city's Black population grew by 60,000 during the wartime years.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ Washington, "The Negro in Detroit," 1.

⁷⁹ Forrester B. Washington, "The Negro in Detroit: A Survey of the Conditions of a Negro Group in a Northern Industrial Center During the War Prosperity Period," (1920).

⁸⁰ Roy E. Finkenbine, *Detroit 1967: Origins, Impacts, Legacies*, ed. Joel Stone, 23.

⁸¹ "Industrial Detroit," Detroit Historical Society, accessed 1/11/22, <https://detroithistorical.org/learn/timeline-detroit/industrial-detroit-1860-1900>; Victoria W. Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability: African American Women in Interwar Detroit*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 40.

⁸² "Industrial Detroit," Detroit Historical Society, accessed 1/11/22, <https://detroithistorical.org/learn/timeline-detroit/industrial-detroit-1860-1900>; "Populations of Various Ethnic Group," HistoryDetroit.org, accessed 1/11/22, <http://historydetroit.com/statistics/>.

⁸³ Steve Babson, *Working Detroit: The Making of a Union Town*, 23.

⁸⁴ Steve Babson, *Working Detroit: The Making of a Union Town*, 115.

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Homeownership was already a difficult accomplishment for many Americans before and during the Great Depression. Now that northern cities were seeing tremendous population growth as people relocated to fill the surplus of defense worker jobs, the housing shortage was becoming even more pronounced. And while White southern migrants found it difficult to obtain housing in northern cities, Black migrants faced even more obstacles. Not only were Black families confined to less desirable neighborhoods, but they also faced a myriad of racially discriminatory housing policies. Without housing, one could not expect to find stable employment as a defense worker – which was the main impetus for many people migrating north and west at this time – so securing housing was of the utmost importance.

The huge increase in population during the 1940s prompted a housing crisis in Detroit as well. There were not enough houses to accommodate all the new arrivals, and Black Detroiters' options were even fewer than their white counterparts. During the 1940s, Detroit's Black population grew in great numbers more than doubling from 149,119 in 1940, to 300,506 in 1950.⁸⁵ In 1950, 16.25 percent of the total population of Detroit was Black, up from 9.19 percent in 1940.⁸⁶ The already dire housing situation became even more critical. The *Detroit Free Press* summarized it as “a three-fold problem, involving high rents, slum houses and prejudicial restriction.”⁸⁷ The U.S. Census Bureau found that 45.7 percent of houses in the United States were substandard, defined as being dilapidated or lacking plumbing facilities.⁸⁸ As one of the most segregated cities in the nation, the few predominantly Black neighborhoods in Detroit also tended to have the highest proportion of substandard housing. Only 47,000 of the 545,000 housing units in Detroit in 1947 were available to Blacks.⁸⁹ This meant that many Black families were living in older, poorly maintained nineteenth-century houses or in makeshift housing in garages, attics, or storefronts.

After racially restrictive municipal zoning regulations were ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in *Buchanan v. Warley* in 1917, landowners pivoted to an era of privately established, racially restrictive deed covenants to ensure White neighborhoods remained White. These covenants proliferated in sales between individual homeowners but were also seen in large-scale residential developments. One example can be found in a real estate advertisement for a home sale in Russell Woods in 1929 that read, “Russell Woods...highly restricted...must sell.”⁹⁰ Examples like this were common during this era, which extended well into the 1940's and represent the challenges that African Americans endured while trying to obtain housing across the country and Detroit, in particular. By 1948 it is estimated that over 50 percent of all residential deeds in the United States included racially restrictive covenants.⁹¹ Moreover, racially restrictive covenants were pervasive across Detroit with up to “80% of property in Detroit

⁸⁵ Ibid, 21.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 21.

⁸⁷ “The Negro Housing Problem,” *Detroit Free Press*, July 2, 1941.

⁸⁸ Van Dusen, *Detroit's Sojourner Truth Housing Riot of 1942*, 23.

⁸⁹ Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 43.

⁹⁰ “Russell Woods,” *Detroit Free Press*, August 14, 1929.

⁹¹ Gerald Van Dusen, *Detroit's Sojourner Truth Housing Riot of 1942: Prelude to the Race Riot of 1943*, (Cheltenham, UK: The History Press, 2020), 20.

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outside of the inner city...subject to racial covenants” by the 1940s.⁹² The practice was eventually ended in 1948 by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Shelley v. Kraemer*, which included the Detroit case *McGhee v. Sipes* and ruled that racially restrictive covenants were unenforceable. But the era of discriminatory zoning and deed covenants predating this ruling had a lasting impact on American cities, including Detroit, resulting in a legacy of racially segregated neighborhoods and prejudiced real estate practices that endured for many years.

In addition to racially restrictive covenants, the practice of restricting access to home mortgages also led to significant challenges for African Americans to obtain housing. Commonly known as “redlining”, a term coined in the late-1960’s that refers to the practice of labelling city maps with red markings to delineate neighborhoods where mortgages were considered “risky” and prohibited by lenders, the prejudiced restriction of mortgage lending to African Americans and other ethnic groups was an enduring practice in both private and institutional lending long before the term was invented. Two early examples of documented, racially prejudiced lending practice in the early decades of the Twentieth Century followed the early days of the Great Migration. In 1919, a study done by the Chicago Commission on Race Relations found that African Americans were being avoided for home mortgages, and the Mortgage Conference of New York actively shared maps in the early 1930’s outlining neighborhoods with large African American populations as places to avoid lending.⁹³ While these two examples are only a small sample representing larger trends in American real estate lending at the time, they nonetheless speak to the challenges for prospective Black homebuyers to secure a mortgage when up against the emerging practices of home mortgage lending risk evaluation being tied to race and ethnicity.

In the years following the Great Depression of 1929, fear of home foreclosures and new federal lending protections against such foreclosures led to a more institutionalized evaluation of lending risk. These new risk assessment programs aimed to stabilize the mortgage market from massive failures but did so by repeating and codifying the prevailing local lending practices of the day, which heavily relied on discriminatory evaluations. The first such program was the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC), established by President Roosevelt in 1933 as a part of the New Deal. It was initially created to assist homeowners with their existing mortgages. The HOLC would purchase mortgages of homeowners threatened by foreclosure and would reissue the mortgage with both lower interest rates and longer payment schedules. This process prevented many foreclosures after the onset of the Great Depression from 1933-1936.

In 1935, the HOLC staff was engaged by its parent organization, the Federal Home Loan Bank Board (FHLBB), to embark on the City Survey Program to assess risk levels for real estate investment in 239 cities to ensure they were not backing risky mortgages. HOLC agents collaborated with local real estate agents to create maps that graded neighborhoods one through four, with one designating the least risky areas to lend. Predominantly Black neighborhoods and those with substandard quality housing stock were often graded the lowest and colored red on the maps. The maps developed as part of the City Survey Program are now commonly seen as the

⁹² *Morningside Community Organization, et. al. v. Eric Sabree, et. al.*, (Mich. Cir. Ct. July 13, 2016).

⁹³ Hiller, Amy E., 2003, “Redlining and the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation”, *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 29 (No. 4), May 2003, 398.

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foundation of the practice of “redlining” as they are the earliest government sponsored example that has been found of such documents, although further research has determined that the FHLBB maps were just an expression of existing ad hoc local lending practices that predated the study and were not widely enough distributed at the time to be of any widespread influence or use.⁹⁴

Moreover, FHLBB wasn’t the only agency creating such risk assessments. The Federal Housing Authority (FHA), which was responsible for insuring new 30-year mortgages after the Great Depression, was tasked by Congress to create their own research and risk assessments. The FHA’s research began before the FHLBB maps were created and largely aligned with HOLC research, relying on similar prejudicial grading to assess the lending risk of neighborhoods with high Black and ethnic populations. However, contrary to the limited distribution of the HOLC findings, the FHA guidance on lending risk assessment was widely distributed to lenders across the country who were eager to comply with those guidelines to assure their mortgages would be insured. While these institutionalized lending practices did not completely prevent African Americans from obtaining home mortgages and home ownership, collectively they served to buoy a racially prejudiced home lending system throughout the country, particularly in Detroit, that served to limit Black homeownership and segregate cities in ways that persist today.⁹⁵

Plagued by the racist underpinnings of institutionalized lending and the popularization of racially restrictive covenants, Black migrants locating to cities like Detroit faced a grueling battle in securing fair housing. Many Black families lived in cramped, overcrowded, or dilapidated housing often lacking basic plumbing infrastructure. One *Michigan Chronicle* article explained that “there are literally no houses for Negro workers. Negro workers find themselves sleeping five and six in a room, for which they are paying eight and ten dollars a week. This is not an unusual situation among hundreds of in-migrant Negro workers.”⁹⁶ With housing conditions so restricted, Black families finally attaining steady wages from defense work sought new areas to settle to improve conditions for their families.

While subjected to these discriminatory practices, Black residents established cohesive Black neighborhoods like Black Bottom and Paradise Valley and developed tight knit commercial, entertainment, and social institutions where free from restrictive real estate practices.⁹⁷ There were six Black enclaves within Detroit at the start of World War II, the largest being Black Bottom and the associated commercial area of Paradise Valley. There was also the North End (three miles southeast of Russell Woods-Sullivan), the Old West Side (one mile south of Russell Woods-Sullivan), Eight Mile and Wyoming (four miles north of Russell Woods-Sullivan), and Conant Gardens (five miles northeast of Russell Woods-Sullivan). Housing conditions in these neighborhoods varied, each enclave being distinct. The housing stock in Black Bottom was old and in poor condition with landlords charging high rents for properties with failing electricity

⁹⁴ Hiller, “Redlining and the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation, 394-395.

⁹⁵ Hiller, “Redlining and the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation, 412-413.

⁹⁶ Horace A. White, “The Facts in Our News...: Absenteeism Among Negro Defense Workers,” *Michigan Chronicle*, March 13, 1943.

⁹⁷ Mills and Little, *Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience*.

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and lacking basic plumbing amenities.⁹⁸ The neighborhood was also severely overcrowded with many households taking in boarders. The Eight Mile and Wyoming neighborhood was initially settled in the 1910s when the newly founded Detroit Urban League purchased a large piece of land and offered it to prospective Black buyers. As the neighborhood grew, prospective homeowners, often unable to afford professional builders, took it upon themselves to build houses themselves, with the common result that the housing stock did not meet the City of Detroit Building Code requirements.⁹⁹ Houses in the area were made with whatever materials could be found and lacked running water or electricity. There were also counter examples of middle-class Black neighborhoods in Detroit, including Conant Gardens, which was considered the most exclusive Black enclave in the city during the mid-Twentieth Century where families built a collection of modest, framed and brick dwellings. Homes in Conant Gardens were largely owner-occupied, and the neighborhood formation was spurred by the initial lack of restrictive covenants at the time it formed. This allowed more ability for Black families to purchase land and build suitable new homes for themselves.¹⁰⁰

In limited cases, predominantly White, upscale neighborhoods like Boston Edison (located about one mile east of Russell Woods-Sullivan) were able to integrate without much unrest. While residents initially looked to maintain segregation and protested Black or Jewish residents moving into their exclusive neighborhood, those prejudices began to change after the 1948 United States Supreme Court decision in *Shelley v. Kraemer*, which prohibited discriminatory property covenants.¹⁰¹ In the wake of this ruling, residents reportedly decided to “accept what they decided was the inevitable triumph of social justice” even though the prospect of Jewish and Black residents moving into the neighborhood caused some fear.¹⁰² That fear was eased as Black and White residents met each other through their neighborhood association, and realizing their mutual interest in caring for their homes and a safe, prosperous neighborhood, found common ground and even friendship. A Boston Edison resident from the time related, “Goodwill on both sides did not take long to solve the problems. The minority races were persuaded to join the association and soon were as fierce in their protection of the neighborhood as the original residents. The original residents who had deep, dark fears found to their surprise that their new neighbors were just as nice to have around as anybody else.”¹⁰³ As a result, even traditionally White neighborhoods began to integrate over time, albeit with mixed results.

⁹⁸ Van Dusen, *Detroit's Sojourner Truth Housing Riot of 1942*, 38.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 53. The City of Detroit adopted its first comprehensive building code in 1911.

¹⁰⁰ Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 40-41.

¹⁰¹ James A. Crowe, “3 Decades of Harmony to Be Hailed,” *Detroit News*, May 13, 1956.

¹⁰² James A. Crowe, “3 Decades of Harmony to Be Hailed,” *Detroit News*, May 13, 1956.

¹⁰³ James A. Crowe, “3 Decades of Harmony to Be Hailed,” *Detroit News*, May 13, 1956.

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African Americans in Detroit, post Shelley v. Kraemer

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As Black neighborhoods coalesced, and at times prospered, by the middle of the Twentieth Century the economic opportunities and prosperity of the post-World War II boom afforded many White Americans with upward mobility. However, despite the seemingly healthy economy during this time, factors including deindustrialization, suburbanization, housing discrimination, and White flight meant that poverty and inequality continued to grow in American inner cities, especially in Detroit, disproportionately impacting Black residents. *Shelley v. Kraemer* did not end prejudice, and as American prosperity generally moved outward from cities into newly founded suburban communities (bolstered by the newly popular American automobile), the focus of city planning turned to a massive restructuring of American cities that looked to improve automotive infrastructure and to change the perception of cities being dangerous and dirty places. These changes disproportionately impacted Black neighborhoods.

Under the guise of “urban renewal”, cities looked to build highways for people to drive their automobiles from the city center, still the cultural and economic hubs of metropolitan regions, to their homes located in newly minted suburbs. In designing these highways, city planners targeted the most densely populated, and often lower income, Black neighborhoods for complete demolition, to be replaced with highways, including Black Bottom and Paradise Valley for the Oakland-Hastings (Chrysler) Freeway.¹⁰⁴ The John C. Lodge Freeway cut through the Lower West Side of Detroit, directly adjacent the Russell Woods-Sullivan neighborhood, changing the neighborhood forever. Urban renewal efforts also cleared substandard housing to remove the perception of “blight”, and replaced the housing with newly constructed housing that could be upwards of ten times higher in rent.¹⁰⁵ Detroit’s urban renewal projects of the mid-twentieth century displaced entire Black communities of, and forced Black residents to other areas of the city.¹⁰⁶ Examples of such urban renewal projects that were detrimental to Black communities are the Gratiot Redevelopment Project and the Lafayette Redevelopment Project, which both served to reduce the available housing stock for African Americans in an already congested situation.¹⁰⁷

Exacerbating this situation were the still prevalent, often violent tactics by White homeowners to prevent Black residents from moving into primarily White areas of the city. Acts of intimidation were practiced by residents of White neighborhoods for decades but became more desperate in the 1950s and 1960s as Supreme Court rulings eliminated previously allowed prejudicial city zoning practices, and later, race and ethnicity based prohibitive real estate covenants. Without any lawful and nonviolent means of restricting Black residency, White homeowners took to intimidation and violence. During the 1950’s and 1960’s in Detroit, the homes of over two hundred Black families who were the first to move into formerly all-White neighborhoods were vandalized at the hands of White residents.¹⁰⁸ To be a Black homeowner, “first you had to find a

¹⁰⁴ Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 46-47.

¹⁰⁵ Steve Babson, *Working Detroit: The Making of a Union Town*, 158.

¹⁰⁶ University of Pennsylvania Fall 2018 Preservation Studio, “Russell Woods-Nardin Park: A Tactical Preservation Plan,” 2019, 23.

¹⁰⁷ University of Pennsylvania Fall 2018 Preservation Studio, “Tactical Preservation Plan,” 23-24.

¹⁰⁸ Thomas Sugrue, *Detroit 1967: Origins, Impacts, Legacies*, 3.

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house that whites would let you buy, then you had to finance it without the help of white bankers. Then you'd have to figure out how to protect a house after you'd moved in," recalled Quintus Greene, a Black realtor.¹⁰⁹

Stories like these describe a relatively affluent Black community struggling to find safe and comfortable housing commensurate with their success. However, that was not the case for much of the Black community. In the 1960s, 19 percent of Detroit's Black population had incomes below the poverty line, schools and businesses were segregated, and police harassment and violence targeted Black communities as White cops "patrolled the neighborhood with the swagger of an occupying army."¹¹⁰ In 1967 unemployment among Black youth (ages eighteen to twenty-four) in Detroit has been estimated as high as 30 percent, while White unemployment in the Detroit area was at only 3.2 percent.¹¹¹ Despite general improvements in life, much of the Black community still struggled economically, and those that succeeded were still met with intimidation and violence from the White community.

These conditions paved the way for an event that grips Detroit's collective memory, which took place just south of Russell Woods-Sullivan. On July 23, 1967, just before dawn, Detroit Police Department's Vice Squad raided a "blind pig" at the corner of 12th and Clairmount Street, where a group of around eighty friends and family were gathered to celebrate the return of two Vietnam veterans. As arrests began, a large crowd grew, and by 8:30 a.m., a four-day uprising had begun that would bring in over ten thousand state and federal troops, claim the lives of forty-three people, and cause property damage – some still visible in 2025– of an estimated \$36 million including thousands of buildings spread over one hundred square miles of the city. Many of the deaths were at the hands of the police. One such event that illustrates the antagonism between law enforcement and Black Detroiters occurred on July 26, when three young Black men who were not participating in the uprising were executed by Detroit police and National Guardsmen at the Algiers Motel.¹¹² Across the United States, similar uprisings occurred in 163 other towns across the country that same summer, including in other Michigan cities such as Flint, Battle Creek, Kalamazoo, Benton Harbor, Pontiac, and Grand Rapids.¹¹³ Between 1964 and 1968 there were 236 violent uprisings reported by local law enforcement that required outside assistance, indicating a broad context that was the result of widespread unresolved racial inequality and illustrates the larger fight for political, social, and economic civil rights.¹¹⁴ One of the outcomes of this period of unrest was President Lyndon B. Johnson's establishment of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, chaired by Illinois Governor Otto Kerner. Known as the Kerner Commission, the group published the Kerner Commission Report in February of 1968

¹⁰⁹ Steve Babson, *Working Detroit: The Making of a Union Town*, 158.

¹¹⁰ Joel Stone, *Detroit 1967: Origins, Impacts, Legacies*. 36.

¹¹¹ Thomas A. Klug, *Detroit 1967: Origins, Impacts, Legacies*, 48.

¹¹² John Hersey, *Algiers Motel Incident*.

¹¹³ Matthew D. Lassiter and the Policing and Social Justice HistoryLab, *Detroit Under Fire: Police Violence, Crime Politics, and the Struggle for Racial Justice in the Civil Rights Era* (University of Michigan Carceral State Project, 2021).

¹¹⁴ James Jennings, *The Politics of Black Empowerment: The Transformation of Black Activism in Urban America* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 99.

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that documented the triggers to the uprisings including systemic discriminatory practices in policing, housing, employment, and more, and provided recommendations urging policy changes to address racial inequalities.¹¹⁵ One impact of the 1967 Uprising was that affluent members of the Black population began to move further northwest, “completely populating Russell Woods.”¹¹⁶

Despite these many barriers to economic mobility, Detroit was home to a burgeoning Black middle- and upper-class.¹¹⁷ According to an interview with one Black attorney in Detroit, “the black upper-class community is very small in this city. We’re not like Atlanta or Chicago, where there are lots of old families or new transplants.”¹¹⁸ Being a smaller community, networks of support formed across the city to advance the interests of affluent Black Detroiters. Groups such as the New Detroit Committee were formed by Black corporate leadership after the 1967 Uprising, which infused Black business interests with those of Black politics and helped those in the ascending middle class to continue to climb the ladder.¹¹⁹ In the 1950s and 1960s, moving to the Russell-Woods Sullivan neighborhood of northwest Detroit was considered “moving on up,” as one long-time resident recalled.¹²⁰ Other neighborhoods that were becoming largely Black as early as 1940 were the Old West Side, Conant Gardens, and Eight Mile Wyoming.¹²¹ The Old West Side, or simply the “West Side” as it is known contemporarily, with boundaries of Tireman Avenue and Grand River Avenue, was the first Black enclave outside of Black Bottom, containing about a third of the Black population by 1940.¹²² As early as 1952 the neighborhoods immediately surrounding Russell Woods-Sullivan were beginning to integrate. By this time, the Old West Side had become crowded, while not considered as substandard as Black Bottom, there were issues in sanitation, structural deficiency, and fire hazard.¹²³ Members of the Black middle-class had increased mobility in terms of housing compared to working-class Black families, thus, some people were able to relocate to neighborhoods like Russell Woods-Sullivan.¹²⁴

¹¹⁵ National Advisory Commission On Civil Disorders, “Kerner Commission Report On The Causes, Events, And Aftermaths Of The Civil Disorders Of 1967,” 1968.

¹¹⁶ Lawrence Otis Graham, *Our Kind of People: Inside America’s Black Upper Class*, 2000, 311.

¹¹⁷ Charles Wartman, “Detroit’s Wealthy Negroes Compare with Any in US,” *Michigan Chronicle*, March 19, 1949.

¹¹⁸ Lawrence Otis Graham, *Our Kind of People: Inside America’s Black Upper Class*, 2000, 296.

¹¹⁹ Herb Boyd, *Black Detroit: A People’s History of Self-Determination* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2017). 209-212.

¹²⁰ “Frank Watts,” by William Winkel, November 14th, 2016, Detroit Historical Society Oral History Archive, Detroit 67: Looking Back to Move Forward, accessed April 7, 2025, <https://detroit1967.detroithistorical.org/items/show/473>.

¹²¹ Michael F. Webb, Melanie A. Markowicz, and Timothy Boscarino, *Orsel and Minnie McGhee House*, National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 2022.

¹²² *Orsel and Minnie McGhee House*, 26

¹²³ *Orsel and Minnie McGhee House*, 28.

¹²⁴ Mills and Little, *Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience.*; University of Pennsylvania Fall 2018 Preservation Studio, “Russell Woods-Nardin Park: A Tactical Preservation Plan,” 2019, 23.

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During the period of its integration and transition to a Black neighborhood, Russell Woods-Sullivan was not considered to be as exclusive as neighborhoods like Boston Edison, Palmer Woods, or Sherwood Forest. However, it was higher status than the former Lower East Side, or contemporary integrating neighborhoods such as North End, Virginia Park, Old West Side, or Bagley neighborhoods.¹²⁵ Russell Woods-Sullivan was the choice neighborhood for midlevel, white-collar professionals and their families with aspirations to escape from the concentrated poverty found elsewhere in the city. To a degree there was the influence of "politics of respectability," and such residents who had the means wanted not only physical distance from "run down and rough" areas with "loud, vulgar people," but even sought to be located in a racially mixed neighborhood and had hopes that Russell Woods-Sullivan would remain that way.¹²⁶

African American Residents in Russell Woods-Sullivan

The trend of residential succession in neighborhoods from Jewish to Black is well documented in major United States cities.¹²⁷ In Russell Woods-Sullivan, the transition from predominantly White and Jewish residency to predominantly Black residency began in the mid-1950s.¹²⁸ As the area became more racially integrated, residents of Russell Woods-Sullivan organized the Russell Woods Area Association in response to realtor pressure directed at homeowners. The association sent a letter to all homes displaying "for-sale" signs, that began "Russell Woods has not changed." The letter continued "The families who live here continue to be the same kind...with a keen interest in good community standards, good schools and gracious living . . . these are the things which give our neighborhood character, rather than the racial, religious, or ethnic background from which we have come."¹²⁹ A 1959 article in the *Detroit Free Press* featured two Russell Woods mothers, one Black and one White, in a discussion on neighborhood change that indicates that many residents were more concerned about class than race.¹³⁰ However, within six years of the first Black family moving into the neighborhood, Russell Woods-Sullivan was 70 percent Black, and by 1970, it was about 90 percent Black.¹³¹ While

¹²⁵ Ruth E. Mills and Saundra Little, *The Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit*, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2021.

¹²⁶ Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 205.

¹²⁷ Timothy Kenny, "Detroit in the 1970s: A Preview of the Coming American Racial Crisis", Loyola University, 58-60.

¹²⁸ Jerome Aumente, "Russell Woods—Showcase of Achievement," *Detroit News*, November 7, 1966; Carter Van Lopik, "Good Neighbors Seek Good Neighborhood," *Detroit Free Press*, June 25, 1957; Ruth E. Mills and Saundra Little, *The Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit*, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2021.

¹²⁹ Evelyn S. Stewart, "Integrated Area Displays Pride," *Detroit Free Press*, August 8, 1957.

¹³⁰ "How to Live in a Changing Neighborhood," *Detroit Free Press*, July 16, 1959.

¹³¹ "NW Councils Act to Assist in Integration," *Detroit Free Press*, July 15, 1962; Timothy Kenny, "Detroit in the 1970s A Preview of the Coming American Racial Crisis", Loyola University, 53.

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many of the neighborhood's Jewish residents eventually relocated to newer Jewish neighborhoods in Detroit's suburbs, some remained.¹³² One former resident recalled how her uncle remained in his home on Glendale Street, after the majority of the Jewish community had relocated to the suburbs, saying, "he lived there until the day he died . . . he loved his neighbors."¹³³

Homeowners reported that any "panic selling" that occurred in Russell Woods-Sullivan as it integrated was due largely to pressure from real estate brokers, although it was experienced as a more natural progression than an all-out panic.¹³⁴ Additionally, residents at this time reported that White sellers were not selling at any price just to leave, neither were Black buyers paying any exorbitant price just to get in, resembling a more normalized market rather than the rapid panic selling that occurred elsewhere.¹³⁵ Even so, middle-class Black families with few other alternatives for escaping dense, urban, working-class neighborhoods would often pay above market value, leading to an increase in property values in integrating neighborhoods, which disproves the perceived decline in property values that Federal Housing Administration used to justify its redlining practices.¹³⁶

Remarkably, in 1955 one resident witnessed the first Black family moving into the neighborhood and documented the changes as they were taking place, publishing a study entitled, "Russell Woods: Change Without Conflict, A Case Study of Neighborhood Racial Transition in Detroit," in 1960. Interviews were conducted through a random sample of about one-third of the residents. The study describes details surrounding how the first home was sold to a Black family in 1955. The owner, an army officer, had been transferred and needed to sell quickly. The week before he had to leave town, in desperation he tried listing the home through a Black real estate dealer, and it sold quickly with a land contract. However, the president of the Russell Woods Civic Association at the time (an earlier version of the neighborhood association, comprised mostly of elderly individuals and earlier residents) used membership dues, without the consent of the membership, to purchase the house back from the Black family who agreed to sell it back for a small profit. However, only two weeks later, a Black lawyer purchased a house in a similar manner, from a seller who was out of town and desperate to sell.¹³⁷ While homeowners reported

¹³² "A Long Range Plan to Happiness," *Michigan Chronicle*, September 21, 1957.

¹³³ "Arlene Niskar," by William Winkel in Detroit, Michigan, August 4th, 2016, Detroit Historical Society Oral History Archive, Detroit 67: Looking Back to Move Forward, accessed April 7, 2025, <https://detroit1967.detroithistorical.org/items/show/458>.

¹³⁴ Evelyn S. Stewart, "Integrated Area Displays Pride," *Detroit Free Press*, August 8, 1957.

¹³⁵ Albert J. Mayer, "Russell Woods: Change without Conflict, a Case Study of Neighborhood Racial Change in Detroit," *Studies in Housing and Minority Groups* ed. Nathan Glazer and Davis McEntire, (University of California Press: 1960).

¹³⁶ Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How our Government Segregated America* (New York, NY: Liveright Publishing, 2017).

¹³⁷ Albert J. Mayer, "Russell Woods: Change without Conflict, a Case Study of Neighborhood Racial Change in Detroit," *Studies in Housing and Minority Groups* ed. Nathan Glazer and Davis McEntire, (University of California Press: 1960).

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that they did not experience the transition as “panic-selling,” as mentioned in the previous paragraph, the classified ads in the *Michigan Chronicle* during 1955 through 1957 for homes in Russell Woods-Sullivan include some mentions for urgent sales, due to owners moving or already out of town, and they easily found readily available Black buyers who often had limited options for decent housing elsewhere.¹³⁸

Another of the neighborhood’s early Black residents was reportedly a doctor who had to buy his home via “subterfuge” presumably meaning he had to use a White middleman (or some similar scenario) to purchase the property.¹³⁹ In 1954 the house at 4220 Glendale in Russell Woods was owned by the Jewish Mendelson family, however, by 1958, John Dancy of the Detroit Urban League had purchased it.¹⁴⁰ Another resident, Hudson B. Sullivan of 4012 Fullerton, bought his home in 1956 when just three other African American families resided in the neighborhood.¹⁴¹ Sullivan also reported that buying his home in 1956 was difficult due to discriminatory lending practices.¹⁴² In 1956 residents in this neighborhood included Hobart Taylor, Jr., the African American chief of the civil division of the Wayne County Prosecutor’s office, Rabbi Morris Adler of the Congregation Shaarey Zedek, and African American Board of Education member Dr. Remus Robinson, among others. One of the earliest Black families in the neighborhood was Clarice and Clifton Mobley, who lived at 4055 Leslie in 1957, when Russell Woods was 15 to 20 percent Black. That same year Clifton served as Vice President of the Russell Woods Area Association.¹⁴³

The presence of strong social ties has had profound impact on the character Russell Woods-Sullivan that the neighborhood retains today. In 1957 the Russell Woods Area Association held its first meeting at the Jewish War Veterans’ Memorial at 4905 West Davison with resident Aaron Rosenberg at the helm. This meeting outlined the Association’s goals: to become a leading example of an interracial community and to “prove how America’s democracy can work [in] its truest form.”¹⁴⁴ The residents’ organization of the Russell Woods Area Association was pivotal in carrying the neighborhood through a time when racial tensions were building elsewhere in the city. The association brought neighbors together to “foster a spirit of continued community pride in an integrating neighborhood.”¹⁴⁵ While achieving stability for a brief period of time, their efforts to remain integrated were largely thwarted by pressure from realtors as well

¹³⁸ Classified Ad “4012 Fullerton near Holmur,” *Michigan Chronicle*, November 5, 1955; Classified Ad “Sturtevant-Broadstreet,” *Michigan Chronicle*, July 28, 1956; Classified Ads, various, *Michigan Chronicle*, May 11, 1957; Classified Ads, various, *Michigan Chronicle*, June 15, 1957.

¹³⁹ Jerome Aumente, “Russell Woods—Showcase of Achievement,” *Detroit News*, November 7, 1966.

¹⁴⁰ “3-Car Crash Kills Aged Detroiter,” *Detroit Free Press*, March 21, 1954; 1958 Polk Directory.

¹⁴¹ Jerome Aumente, “Russell Woods—Showcase of Achievement,” *Detroit News*, November 7, 1966.

¹⁴² Jerome Aumente, “Russell Woods—Showcase of Achievement,” *Detroit News*, November 7, 1966.

¹⁴³ “Association Plans Rally,” *Michigan Chronicle*, November 30, 1957.

¹⁴⁴ “Democracy At Work: Russell Woods Forms Community Group,” *Michigan Chronicle*, August 24, 1957.

¹⁴⁵ “Association Plans Rally,” *Michigan Chronicle*, November 30, 1957.

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as the Detroit Board of Education's redistricting of the nearby high schools which created two segregated high schools (Central High and Mackenzie), furthering the exodus of White residents from the neighborhood.¹⁴⁶ The Association has been called one of the neighborhood's greatest strengths, as *Michigan Chronicle* columnist Elizabeth Hood once described, "citizen pride, is reflected in a strong determination to organize for safety, security and upholding a good and gracious living standard. The Russell Woods-Sullivan Area Association is the community's most important means of organizing."¹⁴⁷ Going beyond beautification and physical neighborhood improvements, the Russell Woods Area Association was a giant supporter of fostering the creative community in the neighborhood, hosting the annual Festival of the Arts and Jazz Festivals, which drew thousands of visitors and gave a platform for residents to showcase their talents. Events such as these served the Associations larger goals, "to promote and perpetuate stronger inter-community relations, and to broaden the intellectual and educational values of the community."¹⁴⁸

In 1956 residents of Russell Woods-Sullivan overwhelmingly described the neighborhood as mixed.¹⁴⁹ Many of the sales during this time were on land contract,¹⁵⁰ which required less money down and less time to close the sale, but has the potential to be a more exploitative type of lending, where the buyers make monthly payments to the seller until final payment is complete. For many lower income areas, the prevalence of this type of lending led to neighborhood decline and neglect, as buyers would usually not be able to keep up with payments. However, likely due to the higher economic status of Black buyers that could purchase in Russell Woods-Sullivan, this neighborhood decline was avoided, as the neighborhood retains its quality, density, and character to this day.

One former resident describes the experience of neighborhood transition in Russell Woods-Sullivan first hand:

In 1958, we moved into a clearly defined Jewish neighborhood of approximately 1,500 homes, identified as the Russell Woods Sullivan Area. We were the third black family to move onto the block. Our reception was warm and friendly. We lived next door to a rabbi and his family. They had five children, we had three and they socialized openly. By 1967, our block had undergone a rapid transition from predominantly White to more than 90 per cent Black. Interestingly, there was very

¹⁴⁶ Ofield Dukes, "Russell Woods Group Rips Redistricting Plan As 'Segregating,'" *Michigan Chronicle*, May 16, 1959.

¹⁴⁷ Elizabeth Hood, "Detroit Still Has Good Places to Live," *Michigan Chronicle*, March 28, 1990.

¹⁴⁸ "The Creative Expose," *Michigan Chronicle*, August 13, 1966.

¹⁴⁹ Albert J. Mayer, "Russel Woods: Change without Conflict, a Case Study of Neighborhood Racial Change in Detroit," *Studies in Housing and Minority Groups* ed. Nathan Glazer and Davis McEntire, University of California Press (1960).

¹⁵⁰ "Classified Ad 4 -- no Title." *Michigan Chronicle*, Jun 08, 1957;

"Classified Ad 16 -- no Title." *Michigan Chronicle*, March 25, 1961;

"Classified Ad 4 -- no Title." *Michigan Chronicle*, April 08, 1961.

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little fanfare when a White family would move out. We would wake up and notice a moving van on the block.¹⁵¹

In 1966 Russell Woods-Sullivan was noted for its concentration of highly educated, intellectual residents, as “street for street, it has one of Detroit’s highest concentrations of college and postgraduate degree holders—lawyers, doctors, dentists, many school teachers.”¹⁵² Today, about 36 percent of Russell Woods-Sullivan residents have a bachelor’s degree or higher, nearly double the city-wide 19 percent.¹⁵³ After the destruction of the Black Bottom and Paradise Valley neighborhoods due to urban renewal projects of the 1960s, northwest Detroit along Dexter Avenue extending at least from West Grand Boulevard to Oakman Boulevard became the new center for Black social and cultural life in the city.¹⁵⁴ The earliest Black families consisted of professionals with school age children, childless white-collar couples, and some working-class families with middle-class aspirations who were allured by the status of Russell Woods-Sullivan.¹⁵⁵

Black residents of the district during its period of significance, particularly from the late 1950s through 1975, include many individuals who were prominent in their professions, influential in politics, and making strides that contributed greatly to Black advancement. Many residents’ achievements include being the first Black person to accomplish a title or role, and as such their stories are relevant to this nomination’s associations with the Civil Rights Movement. The stories of these residents contribute to the ethnic and social history of the neighborhood, and are shared in this nomination not to establish significance under Criterion B but rather as a way to illustrate the type of community members that chose to reside in Russell Woods-Sullivan during the 1960s and 1970s. Together, their stories demonstrate that the district was, and remains today, home to an active, hardworking, and devoted community.

In 1958, Charles A. Hill Jr. purchased the house at 12617 Old Mill Place. Hill was born in 1921 and became a member of the Tuskegee Airmen. After retiring from the Army, Hill earned a master’s degree in Educational Administration and working for the Highland Park Board of Education, Pontiac public school system, and later taught political science and African American studies as an associate professor at Oakland Community College. In 2006, Mr. Hill received the Congressional Gold Medal.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ Don S. Vest, "The 1967 Civil Disturbance, Part 2," *Michigan Chronicle*, August 13, 2008.

¹⁵² Jerome Aumente, "Russell Woods—Showcase of Achievement," *Detroit News*, November 7, 1966.

¹⁵³ U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, "Educational Attainment," *American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1501*.

¹⁵⁴ Ruth Mills and Saundra Little, "The Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. 2021.

¹⁵⁵ Albert J. Mayer, "Russel Woods: Change without Conflict, a Case Study of Neighborhood Racial Change in Detroit," *Studies in Housing and Minority Groups* ed. Nathan Glazer and Davis McEntire, University of California Press (1960).

¹⁵⁶ "Charles A. Hill, Jr." *Michigan Chronicle*, Aug 29, 2007.

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James Bradley owned the house at 12746 Broadstreet Avenue beginning in 1964. Bradley worked for Ford Motor Company and the United States Postal Service before being elected as a State Representative in 1954, serving ten terms. In 1973, Bradley was elected as the first Black Detroit City Clerk, serving in this role until 1994.¹⁵⁷

Attorney Louis F. Simmons, Jr., resided at 4341 Glendale Street. Simmons served as a hearing referee for the Michigan Civil Rights Commission, was president of the Wolverine Bar Association, and was active in politics as a legal adviser for G. Mennen Williams' campaign for the Democratic nomination for the United States Senate. In 1977, Simmons was installed as president of the Detroit Bar Association, the first Black lawyer to hold the presidency in the organization's history.¹⁵⁸ Simmons' wife was one of many schoolteachers who resided in the neighborhood.¹⁵⁹

The house at 4098 Fullerton was occupied by numerous accomplished medical professionals. In 1964, Mrs. Juanita Clyde owned the home. Clyde was the first Black nurse to head the psychiatric department at Harper Hospital, and served as a clinic supervisor for Planned Parenthood in Wayne and Oakland counties in the early 1960s.¹⁶⁰ By the late 1960s, Dr. Waldo Cain, distinguished surgeon, educator, civic leader and advocate for equality, owned the home with his wife Dr. Natalia Tanner Cain, also very accomplished, as one of only 13 Black certified pediatricians in the country at the time and the first to be granted fellowship in the American Academy of Pediatricians.¹⁶¹

Herbert E. Hayden bought the home at 3824 Fullerton Street in the 1960s. Hayden grew up in the Brewster projects and went on to become the director at the Detroit Parks and Recreation Department. Hayden and his wife raised their children at the house on Fullerton. Hayden himself had an extensive jazz record collection, and his daughter Marion went on to become a renowned jazz musician and recipient of Detroit's highest arts honor, the Kresge Eminent Artist prize, in 2025.¹⁶²

Upper class Black women organized their own exclusive networks for self-improvement and charity across the city, such as the modern Matrons Social Club, the Casa Blanca Society, the Poinsettias, the Entre Nous Club, the New Era Study Club, and the Progressive Women's Civic

¹⁵⁷ "James H Bradley Sr.," *Michigan Chronicle*, October 15, 1997.

¹⁵⁸ "Simmons," *Detroit News*, June 2, 1977.

¹⁵⁹ "Joseph Hayden gets MEA Post," *Michigan Chronicle*, November 4, 1967.

¹⁶⁰ "She's Key Figure in Planned Parenthood Role," *Michigan Chronicle*, April 14, 1962.

¹⁶¹ "Thirty-eight years of progress for Dr. Natalia Tanner," *Michigan Chronicle*, September 26, 1990; "Salute to a Healer," *Michigan Chronicle*, August 25, 2010; "Waldo L. Cain, M.D., FACS," *Michigan Chronicle*, October 13, 2010.

¹⁶² "Eulogy to Herb Hayden: Fought the Good Fight," *Michigan Chronicle*, March 24, 1973; "Detroit jazz legend named 2025 Kresge Eminent Artist," *Detroit Free Press*, February 3, 2025.

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Association.¹⁶³ The Entre Nous Club and New Era Study Club were both involved in the Detroit Association of Women's Clubs (DAWC), according to a plaque in the meeting room of the DAWC building. Additionally, as columnist (and longtime Russell Woods-Sullivan resident) Elizabeth Hood at the *Michigan Chronicle* wrote in 1980, Russell Woods was among the "perennially thriving Black neighborhoods" in Detroit, as it is "carefully tended by block clubs, neighborhood associations, and mountains of pride... [it] survive[s] on a heavy investment of Black interest and pride."¹⁶⁴ This pride and meticulous care was noticed by Arietha Walker, who grew up just south of Russell Woods-Sullivan. Walker recalled, "one of the areas I remember my mom driving around . . . is Dexter Boulevard, and as a kid I remember thinking the houses are huge, the grasses are green, were just mowed. We were good with it, but they were just great. I remember thinking . . . how the grass was greener on the other side."¹⁶⁵ This memory illustrates just how desirable and coveted the district has remained over the years due to the care of its residents.

The investment of community care noted above is an important factor contributing to the preservation of the neighborhood's character from the past to the present. The tight knit and active community in Russell Woods-Sullivan cared deeply about maintaining the beauty of their homes and landscapes. One example of such activities from the period of significance occurs in the spring of 1959, when one resident, Malinda Jacobs, invited some of her neighbors on Sturtevant to organize the Sturtevant Garden Club to improve and beautify yards and gardens on their block. The club grew rapidly and by 1962 renamed itself the Russell Woods Garden Club, with Rebecca Reed as president. Continuing to gain popularity, it was renamed again as the Northwest Garden Club, and expanded its activities to field trips, plant education, and consultation.¹⁶⁶ Mrs. Clara Pass, who resided at 4244 Sturtevant, was an award-winning gardener and member of the Northwest Garden Club, serving as its president in 1979. Clara hosted parties in her extensive gardens, "known as one of the most beautiful [gardens] in the city."¹⁶⁷

Russell Woods-Sullivan residents, who were largely educated and held relatively strong economic positions, supported and propelled the twentieth century civil rights movement in myriad ways. The Russell Woods-Sullivan neighborhood was at the epicenter of an area of the city that "generated most of the religious leadership for the Black Power movement in Detroit,"

¹⁶³ Nick Salvatore, *Singing in a Strange Land: C. L. Franklin, the Black Church, and the Transformation of America* (Little, Brown and Company: 2007); Ruth E. Mills and Sandra Little, *The Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit*, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2021.

¹⁶⁴ Elizabeth Hood, "Point of My Pen," *Michigan Chronicle*, December 20, 1980.

¹⁶⁵ "Arietha Walker," by Jacob Russell in Detroit, Michigan, October 21, 2018, Detroit Historical Society Oral History Archive, Neighborhoods: Where Detroit Lives, accessed April 7, 2025, <https://detroit1967.detroithistorical.org/items/show/774>.

¹⁶⁶ Northwest Garden Club Celebrates 20th Anniversary," *Michigan Chronicle*, August 4, 1979.

¹⁶⁷ "Mrs. Clara Pass is Hostess," *Michigan Chronicle*, August 25, 1973; "Many guests Welcomed at Annual Garden Party," *Michigan Chronicle*, August 28, 1976

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according to Grace Lee Boggs.¹⁶⁸ The Nation of Islam (NOI) Temple No. 1 (later renamed Masjid Wali Muhammad) was located nearby at 11529 Linwood Avenue.¹⁶⁹ The historic Vaughn's Book Store (located only a few blocks from Russell Woods-Sullivan, NRHP listed in 2023) sold Black literature and left wing publishers, hosted weekly forums on Black history and current events, and was a civil rights cultural center in its own right.¹⁷⁰ Annette Rainwater, a well-known activist and organizer, was a former resident of Russell Woods-Sullivan.¹⁷¹ Dan Aldridge, who resided at 2736 Glendale a few blocks west of Russell-Woods Sullivan, was one of the organizers of the "People's Tribunal" after the events of the 1967 Uprising and the Algiers Motel incident, along with neighbor Lonnie Peek.¹⁷² Aldridge and Peek's goal with the tribunal was to "show the world what it means to be Black in America," and the mock trial involved jury members Rosa Parks, Edward Vaughn, John O. Killens, and Frank Joyce; with attorneys Kenneth Cockrel, Milton Henry, Andrew Perdue, Sol Plafkin, and Lee Mollet (who eventually faced charges of disbarment after their participation in the tribunal); and judge Justin Ravitz.¹⁷³

While some of the places and events noted above lie outside of the boundaries of the district, they were nevertheless in close enough proximity to be part of the atmosphere that its residents would have been aware of and perhaps actively participating in. Retail and ecclesial establishments often chose locations based on a geographic radius of residential market from which to draw customers or congregation members. In the cases of Temple No. 1 or Vaughn's Bookstore noted above, Russell Woods-Sullivan only blocks away would have been a direct source of that supportive market.

The district was a well-spring of Black thought, culture, and music, which made it an important center of the Black Arts Movement in Detroit. The Russell Woods Cultural Society, also called the Russell Woods Cultural Activities Society, was formed to "enhance the cultural growth and development" in the community by organizing scholarship funds, a three-day outdoor festival of arts, and supporting civic projects and the civil rights movement. Richard S. McGhee was its president in 1965. McGhee was a prominent educator and civil rights activist working in police-community relations, and he received the outstanding citizen award from the Russell Woods-

¹⁶⁸ Michael F. Webb and Melanie A. Markowicz, "Vaughn's Bookstore," National Register of Historic Places Nomination (2023).

¹⁶⁹ "Proposed Masjid Wali Muhammad/Temple No. 1 Historic District," Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board, 2013.

¹⁷⁰ Michael F. Webb and Melanie A. Markowicz, "Vaughn's Bookstore," National Register of Historic Places Nomination (2023).

¹⁷¹ "Detroit loses Civil Rights pioneer, Annette Rainwater," Michigan Chronicle, October 24, 2018.

¹⁷² "Reverend Dan Aldridge," by William Winkel on June 22nd, 2016, Detroit Historical Society Oral History Archive, Detroit 67: Looking Back to Move Forward, accessed April 7, 2025, <https://detroit1967.detroithistorical.org/items/show/357>; "Brenda Peek," by William Winkel on May 15th, 2017, Detroit Historical Society Oral History Archive, Detroit 67: Looking Back to Move Forward, accessed April 7, 2025, <https://detroit1967.detroithistorical.org/items/show/615>.

¹⁷³ Aretha Watkins, "Tribunal Stage Set," *Michigan Chronicle*, September 2, 1967; Aretha Watkins, "Tribunal Attorneys Face Disbarment," *Michigan Chronicle*, September 9, 1967

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Sullivan Area Association in 1966. The neighborhood held an annual Festival of the Arts in Russell Woods Park during the 1960s, showcasing around 400 artists during the 1965 festival, with an elite judging panel including Carl Owens as well as faculty from institutions such as the Detroit Institute of Arts, Cranbrook, and the University of Michigan.¹⁷⁴ The festival commonly featured exhibits on Black arts and history, and ran for at least eight consecutive years.¹⁷⁵ Below are some examples of individuals who illustrate the importance of Russell Woods-Sullivan as a hub in Detroit's creative community, and had impact on arts and culture well beyond the city's borders. These individuals are not being presented in order to establish significance under Criterion B. Rather, the inclusion of their individual stories is illustrative of the fact that Russell Woods-Sullivan as a whole was a magnet for creative and educated Black Detroiters, whose work was uplifting the Black Arts and Civil Rights movements during their tenure in the neighborhood during its period of significance.

Dudley Randall, Poet Laureate of Detroit, founded Broadside Press out of his home 12651 Old Mill Place in 1965.¹⁷⁶ Dudley established the Press as an autonomously developed, Black-controlled publisher of Black writers that was "unprecedented in the history of Afro-American literature."¹⁷⁷ In early 1976 after its tenth year in business, the Broadside Press catalog had eighty titles and distributed more than 500,000 books across the United States and around the world. The publisher did for Black writing what Motown Records did for Black music.¹⁷⁸

Brazeal Dennard, composer and founder of Brazeal Dennard Choral, lived at 4330 Fullerton, which also served as his home studio.¹⁷⁹ The Brazeal Dennard Choral was founded in 1972 and achieved national acclaim for its dedication to reviving the works of Black composers and African American spirituals, and also operated as a non-profit organization including three ensembles: performance choral, youth choral, and the community choir.¹⁸⁰

Arguably the neighborhood's most famous residents were all three members of the Supremes: Florence Ballard, Diana Ross, and Mary Wilson. The women grew up in the Brewster-Douglass Housing Projects on Detroit's east side and spoke of the pride their families had growing up,

¹⁷⁴ "Russell Woods Festival of Arts July 23-July25," *Michigan Chronicle*, July 17, 1965.

¹⁷⁵ "Russell Woods Sponsors Annual Arts Festival," *Michigan Chronicle*, July 18, 1964; "Festival of Arts a Success," *Michigan Chronicle*, August 7, 1965; "Russell Woods Festival Slated," *Michigan Chronicle*, August 10, 1968.

¹⁷⁶ "Proposed Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District," 4; Michael F. Webb and Melanie A. Markowicz, "Vaughn's Bookstore," National Register of Historic Places Nomination (2023), section 8 page 30.

¹⁷⁷ Julius Eric Thompson, *Dudley Randall, Broadside Press, and the Black arts movement in Detroit, 1960-1995*, 50.

¹⁷⁸ Julius Eric Thompson, *Dudley Randall, Broadside Press, and the Black arts movement in Detroit, 1960-1995*, 133, 229; Detroit City Poets Project Oral History Archive, Wayne State University, accessed at: <https://wayne.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/detroitpoets>

¹⁷⁹ Robert L. Nolan, "Musical Jottings," *Michigan Chronicle*, September 16, 1961.

¹⁸⁰ Ericka Alexander, "Music's Sweet Treat," *Michigan Chronicle*, June 16, 1999.

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always maintaining a well-kept home.¹⁸¹ This pride followed their early success under Berry Gordy's Motown label, and each purchased a house in Russell Woods for their family, all on the same street, Buena Vista, in 1965.¹⁸² That these world-famous singers, barely out of their teenage years, would use their first earnings to purchase homes in Russell Woods, while extolling the pride they grew up with in having a home, is testament to the prominence this neighborhood had for African Americans living in Detroit in the mid-1960s.

The three Supremes were not the only talented residents of Russell Woods-Sullivan, other prominent performance artists purchased homes in the neighborhood, including Motown producer Joanna Bratton (4039 Buena Vista), Dinah Washington (4002 Buena Vista), James and John (Chico) Edwards of The Spinners (Buena Vista), and Thelma Smith-Wright of the Dream Girls (Cortland).¹⁸³

Religious institutions also played a prominent role in Russell Woods-Sullivan, and were central to the spiritual, social, political, educational and economic life of the African American community. Several of those institutions exist today. The earlier Jewish religious institutions outlined in the section above would eventually be sold and converted to churches as the neighborhood demographics transitioned. Congregation Beth Shmuel (12837 Dexter Avenue) would become the Greater New Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church by the 1980's.¹⁸⁴ The Young Israel of Detroit building (12521 Dexter) became Diggs Northwest Chapel in 1961, as the House of Diggs celebrated its fortieth year in funerary services and expanded the Diggs's presence in the northwest area of the city around Russell Woods-Sullivan.¹⁸⁵ The chapel renovation was designed by architect Roderick E. Warren, with construction by Diggs Building and Housing Corporation, which had offices across the street at 12512 Dexter. Warren, a Black modernist architect, graduated from the University of Michigan and operated his own firm, under the name Roderick E. Warren, AIA, as well as Warren Associates. Warren's work is found across the Detroit metro area, and he was honored with an award from Black Artists Inc., in 1982, along with recipients Dudley Randall and LeRoy Foster. This building is now home to the Grace Temple Church of God in Christ.

Another significant ecclesiastical building in the neighborhood is the Broadstreet Presbyterian Church, located at 12065 Broadstreet Avenue. Broadstreet Presbyterian was established initially around 1927 but dissolved in 1959 and was reorganized around 1961 under the leadership of Reverend Lawrence T. Glenn as the pastor which marked a new era of growth for the church as a pillar of community in Russell-Woods Sullivan. Reverend Glenn would serve the church until his retirement in 1995. In 1973, work began on an addition to the building to house multipurpose

¹⁸¹ Jean Duran, "We Were Poor But Mom Kept A Nice House" *Detroit Free Press*, June 14, 1965.

¹⁸² Jeanne Duran, "What Fame Has Done to Supremes" *Detroit Free Press*, June 13, 1965.

¹⁸³ "Russell Woods and Nardin Park Framework," 22-23.

¹⁸⁴ "Proposed Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District," 8; "New Synagogue Of Congregation Beth Schmuel, Dexter and Buena Vista," *Detroit Jewish Chronicle*, January 14, 1944.

¹⁸⁵ "In New Diggs Chapel," *Michigan Chronicle*, February 25, 1961.

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activities such as classrooms, dining, offices and available space for community groups to host meetings.¹⁸⁶

The church grew to become a significant cultural institution in the neighborhood. The Broadstreet Presbyterian's Community Outreach program hosted community-wide events, such as the annual neighborhood parade which attracted thousands of attendees, featuring floats by block clubs and neighbors, and included programming from school marching bands, church groups, and neighborhood groups as well as art exhibits.¹⁸⁷ In 2003, the Broadstreet Presbyterian Church hosted the parade for the twenty-seventh year.¹⁸⁸ The Outreach Program also offered a music school, General Education Development tutorial courses, sewing classes with fashion shows, modern dance classes, karate, youth clubs, and a day care center.¹⁸⁹ The Russell Woods-Sullivan Area Association also held regular meetings at Broadstreet Presbyterian Church. One of the Community Outreach coordinators at Broadstreet Presbyterian, Reverend Wendell Anthony, went on to have a lengthy career of activism including organizing a boycott of the Detroit Free Press and meeting with Nelson Mandela, in South Africa in 1990 and subsequently organizing Mandela's visit to Detroit later that year.¹⁹⁰

Each of these religious facilities are also significant as excellent examples of their architectural styles and meet Criterion C for architectural significance.

Russell Woods-Sullivan Today

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Russell Woods-Sullivan residents were active in shaping the social and ethnic history of Detroit as it transitioned to a majority Black neighborhood and made a name for itself as a distinctly vibrant and tight knit community. During this time, the *Detroit Free Press* declared that "these few square blocks are very big in good living," and its residents "enjoy a rich civic and cultural life," in a profile of the neighborhood.¹⁹¹ The Russell Woods-Sullivan neighborhood and its surroundings were a hub of northwest Detroit where residents lived, worked, worshipped, and recreated, first as a Jewish enclave and then as a bustling home to a burgeoning Black middle class. Following the midcentury period, there was a notable decline in the commercial areas precipitated by lack of reasonably priced insurance and access to capital, disinvestment, and overall population decline following the 1967 Uprising. "Before the riots, Dexter Avenue had restaurants, a Jewish delicatessen, a Muslim-owned fish market, record stores, a tuxedo rental shop, the Dexter Theater, the Minor Key jazz club and Bowl-O-Drome, a

¹⁸⁶ "Breaking Ground at Broadstreet Presbyterian," *Michigan Chronicle*, March 3, 1973.

¹⁸⁷ Robbie McCoy, "Russell Woods Festival Attracts 2000-plus," *Michigan Chronicle*, August 2, 1980.

¹⁸⁸ Carmen Carpenter, "Parade is Alive and Well," *Michigan Chronicle*, May 7, 2003.

¹⁸⁹ Robbie McCoy, "2nd Annual Broadstreet Banquet at Cadillac," *Michigan Chronicle*, June 25, 1977.

¹⁹⁰ "Boycott puts pastor in media spotlight," *Detroit Free Press*, January 6, 1991.

¹⁹¹ "Mellow Living," *Detroit Free Press*, July 12, 1964.

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bowling alley and jazz club,”¹⁹² residents recall of the thriving commercial corridor.¹⁹³ As of 2016, approximately 96 percent of Russell Woods-Sullivan residents were Black and 97 percent as of 2020.¹⁹⁴ The neighborhood today continues to exemplify a strong community bond, as it has throughout its history, through cultural institutions, local business, notable architecture, and a dedicated population committed to its success.

The Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit, Michigan Multiple Property Documentation Form: Registration Requirements and Areas of Significance

Evaluating the significance of the Russell Woods-Sullivan district is aided by the framework established in *The Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit, Michigan Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF)*, included in the National Register of Historic Places in 2020. Under this MPDF, properties must “possess historic associations related to the theme of twentieth century African American civil rights” as described in the MPDF, while also being located in Detroit, dating from the time period 1900-1976, and retaining integrity.

The MPDF specifically mentions Russell Woods-Sullivan as associated with an important pattern of housing change in Detroit, and fits within the MPDF’s contexts including the “Birth of the Civil Rights Movement: 1941-1954” on page E-8, “Modern Civil Rights Movement: 1954–1964” on page E-11, and “The Second Revolution: 1964-1976” on page E-18. Furthermore, Russell Woods-Sullivan is significant within the “Subtype: Residential Districts” section as an example of a residential district that was “originally built for White residents and repopulated by African Americans in the early twentieth century when Black professionals and business owners were able to purchase homes in established White neighborhoods.”¹⁹⁵ A neighborhood’s historical unity is noted at a key consideration in determining significance of this type, and Russell Woods-Sullivan more than satisfies this requirement, while also being nominated for its unified architectural distinction.

¹⁹² Referring to the larger Dexter Avenue corridor, extending beyond but including Russell Woods-Sullivan.

¹⁹³ Chad Livengood, “Still Rebuilding,” *Crain’s Detroit Business*, June 26, 2017.

¹⁹⁴ *Morningside Community Organization, et. al. v. Eric Sabree, et. al.*, (Mich. Cir. Ct. July 13, 2016); US Census Bureau, 2020, accessed at <https://detroitmi.gov/webapp/census-data-map>.

¹⁹⁵ Ruth E. Mills and Sandra Little, *The Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit*, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2021.

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Detroit News

The Jewish News

Michigan Chronicle

Archives, Libraries, Databases

City of Detroit Open Data Portal

Detroit Public Library

Baist Atlas Collection

Burton Historical Collection

Detroit Historical Society

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General Land Records Office, Bureau of Land Management, United States Department of the Interior

HathiTrust

Library of Congress

Library of Michigan

Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, Corporations Online Filing System

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Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Land Surveys and
Remonumentation
Michiganology
University of Michigan
Bentley Historical Library
Michigan County Histories and Atlases
Wayne State University, Walter P. Reuther Library

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- 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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 211

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 42.386572 Longitude: -83.139016
2. Latitude: 42.389813 Longitude: -83.130259
3. Latitude: 42.382269 Longitude: -83.125091
4. Latitude: 42.377387 Longitude: -83.138094

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone: Easting: Northing:
2. Zone: Easting: Northing:
3. Zone: Easting: Northing:
4. Zone: Easting : Northing:

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Starting at the southeast corner of Broadstreet Avenue and West Davison Avenue the boundary begins running east along West Davison Avenue until crossing over Dexter Avenue and continuing east, past Dexter Avenue, until turning southeast to run along the east property lines of the buildings facing Dexter Avenue (beginning with 13300 Dexter Avenue) and continuing to run southeast down the east property lines until turning southwest at the southeast corner of 12226 Dexter Avenue and running southwest along the south property lines of the buildings facing Cortland Avenue, until turning south at the southwest corner of 4515 Cortland Avenue and running south along the alley until turning at the southeast corner of 12062 Broadstreet and running southwest along the property line of 12062 Broadstreet Avenue, crossing Broadstreet Avenue, and then running along the south property line of 12065 Broadstreet Avenue and then turning north to follow the property line of 12065 Broadstreet Avenue before turning west to follow the southern property line of Hope of Detroit Academy (12121 Broadstreet Avenue) and running west along that property line until turning north to continue following the Hope of Detroit property line before turning west to run along the southern boundaries of the houses that face Cortland Street before turning north at the alley behind Livernois Avenue and running north along the alley, before turning northeast at the northwest corner of 13233 Broadstreet Avenue and running along the north property line, until turning northwest at the intersection of Broadstreet Avenue and Waverly Avenue and running along the west property lines before terminating where the boundary began at the southeast corner of Broadstreet Avenue and West Davison Avenue.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The general boundaries proposed are West Davison Street on the north, Dexter Avenue to the east including properties on both sides of the street, Cortland Street to the south including properties on both sides of the street and extending south to include Winterhalter Elementary School and properties on both sides of Broadstreet Avenue, and the alley behind Livernois Avenue to the west. The proposed boundary excludes properties facing Livernois Avenue because they do not retain the high level of integrity found elsewhere in the neighborhood and do not read as a cohesive part of the overall unified entity.

The district's southern boundary, which follows the alley behind houses facing Cortland Street, mark the "original" boundaries as this was the extent to which both the Russell Woods and Sullivan subdivisions were initially platted. Additionally, the boundary demarcates a stark transition from the more substantial homes of Russell Woods-Sullivan to homes of a more non-descript character, smaller lot sizes, and lower socio-economic status, south of Cortland Street. Today, moving one block south of Russell Woods-Sullivan leads to a profound decrease in density, and a large increase in parcels owned by local government rather than private taxable land owners – both of which are connected to the targeted demolition that has occurred in recent years, leaving nearly one-third of lots in Nardin Park without buildings on them. The 1923 Baist's Real Estate Atlas shows the area south of

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Russell Woods-Sullivan, today's Nardin Park neighborhood, was initially a series of many small subdivisions owned by a number of different real estate developers, compared to the Russell and Sullivan tracts, that were each owned and developed by one entity. This provides some context to help account for the noticeable disparity between the two areas, and further rationalizes Cortland Street as a logical boundary for a cohesive Russell Woods-Sullivan district. It is also the boundary shared by the Russell Woods-Sullivan Local Historic District, which was established by Ordinance 33-99 of the Detroit City Council on November 4, 1999.

11. Form Prepared By

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city or town: Detroit state: MI zip code: 48226

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telephone: 313-965-3399

date: May XX 26, 2026

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District

City or Vicinity: Detroit

County: Wayne

State: Michigan

Photographer: Melissa Arrowsmith

Date Photographed: October 7 and October 8, 2025.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0001
Streetscape view of West Davison. Looking northeast.

2 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0002
Streetscape view of Broadstreet Avenue. Looking southeast.

3 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0003
Streetscape view of Broadstreet Avenue. Looking south.

4 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0004
12547 Broadstreet Avenue. Looking southwest.

5 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0005
12121 Broadstreet (Hope Academy/Winterhalter Elementary School). Looking south.

6 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0006
Streetscape view of Broadstreet Avenue. Looking northeast.

7 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0007
Streetscape view of Broadstreet Presbyterian Church. Looking southwest.

8 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0008
Streetscape view of Dexter Avenue. Looking northwest.

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9 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0009
El Morada Apartments/13139 Dexter Avenue. Looking southwest.

10 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0010
12305 Dexter Avenue. Looking southwest.

11 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0011
Streetscape view of Dexter Avenue. Looking southeast.

12 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0012
Streetscape view of Dexter Avenue. Looking southeast.

13 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0013
Streetscape view of Waverly Street. Looking northeast.

14 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0014
Streetscape view of Waverly Street. Looking northeast.

15 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0015
Zussman Park. Looking northwest.

16 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0016
Streetscape view of Tyler Street. Looking northeast.

17 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0017
Streetscape view of Tyler Street. Looking west.

18 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0018
Streetscape view of Buena Vista Street. Looking northeast.

19 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0019
Streetscape view of Buena Vista Street. Looking southwest.

20 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0020
Streetscape view of Buena Vista Street. Looking southwest.

21 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0021
Streetscape view of Buena Vista Street. Looking southwest.

22 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0022
Streetscape view of Glendale Street. Looking northeast.

23 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0023
Streetscape view of Glendale Street. Looking northeast.

24 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0024
Streetscape view of Glendale Street. Looking west.

25 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0025
Streetscape view of Glendale Street. Looking northeast.

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26 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0026
12651 Old Mill Place. Looking southwest.

27 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0027
Streetscape view of Leslie Street. Looking northeast.

28 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0028
Streetscape view of Leslie Street. Looking northeast.

29 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0029
Streetscape view of Leslie Street. Looking southwest.

30 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0030
Streetscape view of Leslie Street. Looking northeast.

31 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0031
View of Russell Woods Park. Looking northeast.

32 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0032
Streetscape view of Fullerton Street. Looking northeast.

33 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0033
Streetscape view of Fullerton Street. Looking west.

34 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0034
Streetscape view of Fullerton Street. Looking east.

35 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0035
Streetscape view of Sturtevant Street and alley behind Livernois. Looking north.

36 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0036
Streetscape view of Sturtevant Street. Looking west.

37 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0037
Streetscape view of Sturtevant Street. Looking northeast.

38 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0038
Streetscape view of Sturtevant Street. Looking northeast.

39 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0039
Streetscape view of Sturtevant Street. Looking northeast.

40 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0040
Streetscape view of Sturtevant Street. Looking southwest.

41 of 41. MI_Wayne County_Russell Woods-Sullivan_0041
Streetscape view of Cortland Street. Looking southwest.

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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Appendix 1: Architects, Builders, and Developers

The Miller-Storm Company, under the leadership of builders Arthur S. Storm and George W. Miller, were a part of a publicity campaign in 1926 with the Home Owners' Service Institute¹⁹⁶ and the Detroit Free Press to promote new specifications standards for "the Standard" home.¹⁹⁷ The effort was part of a national campaign to build model homes in Detroit, Buffalo, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Boston, and Houston, among other cities where builders partnered with their local newspaper for promotion of their designs. However, prior to the Free Press Standard Home campaign, Miller-Storm's first model homes had already established a reputation in Russell Woods-Sullivan. Throughout the 1920s, they continued to apply and expand on the standards they had developed, and continued to work with contractors from this initial campaign, such as Fenestra Casement Windows. The Miller-Storm Company was cornering the housing boom in the northwest Detroit market, with branch offices on Grand River, Livernois, and at the corner of 12th and Calvert in 1924, and offered to find buyers a lot as well as finance the construction of their house. In 1924, the company was in its fourth year of business (with over 260 homes built in Detroit) and advertised their model home at 4298 Fullerton Street on a giant billboard at the corner of West Davison and Livernois Avenue.¹⁹⁸ This was their "Home Complete" model, and was supposed to be emblematic of everything that should be included in a modern home: high quality materials and fixtures, modern appliances, Stonetex waterproof painting and 100-gallon water heater in the basement, vapor heat system, Celotex¹⁹⁹ insulation for temperature and soundproofing, and Fenestra steel casement windows with John Johnson Company awnings.²⁰⁰ The Miller-Storm Company was booming along with Detroit's housing market. The model home at 4298 Fullerton was reportedly visited by over 15,000 people during its first week open to the public.²⁰¹ The following year, in April of 1925, Miller-Storm did over \$60,000 in new sales in one twenty-four hour period.²⁰² The company ended the 1925 fiscal year with 251 homes built, which was reported as a record-breaking amount for Detroit home builders.²⁰³ By the time of the Detroit Free Press "Standard" campaign in 1926, the Miller-Storm Company had a library of over one thousand home plans for buyers to choose from designed by in-house architects,

¹⁹⁶ The Home Owners' Service Institute, Inc., were influential in setting standards for middle-class home design across the country, through their hosting of design competitions and publishing *The Books of a Thousand Homes* in 1921 and *A Manual of Home Building* in 1928.

¹⁹⁷ L. Porter Moore, "New Standards of Popularity and Approval," *American Builder*, 1926, 29.

¹⁹⁸ "Giant Billboard Features Miller-Storm Model Home," *Detroit Free Press*, July 20, 1924.

¹⁹⁹ Celotex was a synthetic lumber made from sugar cane advertised to be used as sheathing or as a base for plaster, replacing the need for lathe. Celotex Company's Detroit office was located in the Penobscot Building with William H. Filson as manager in 1924.

²⁰⁰ "Miller-Storm Company Realizes Ideals in New Model Home," *Detroit Free Press*, September 14, 1924.

²⁰¹ "Model Home Wins Approval from Thousands," *Detroit Free Press*, September 21, 1924.

²⁰² "First Baby Born in Miller-Storm Home This Year," *Detroit Free Press*, April 5, 1925.

²⁰³ "Winter Building Gains Favor," *Detroit Free Press*, December 13, 1925.

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including over twenty of the "income bungalow" variety.²⁰⁴ In Russell Woods-Sullivan, some examples of their work can be found at 4280 Cortland Street, 4283 Cortland Street,²⁰⁵ 4516 Cortland Street (the "Stratford" model)²⁰⁶, 4320 Cortland Street (the "Tuxedo" model)²⁰⁷, 4814 Sturtevant, 3757 Fullerton Street, 4060 Fullerton Street, 4298 Fullerton Street, 4276 Leslie Street, and 12746 Broadstreet Avenue. The company maintained a presence in the northwest Detroit area until mid-century, at which time it was known as Miller Homes, Inc., and was located nearby at 13535 Livernois according to the 1955 Polk Directory.

The C.E. Reichle Company, a real estate company owned by Charles E. Reichle, is responsible for building the house at 4300 Glendale Avenue.²⁰⁸ The C.E. Reichle company was contracted as a builder for the Free Press Standard Homes as part of the same campaign that Miller-Storm was involved with in 1926.²⁰⁹ The company had offices on Grand River Avenue and worked in neighborhoods across the city of Detroit, as well as in suburbs such as Grosse Pointe, Southfield, and Bloomfield Hills, and reportedly built over one thousand homes in Greater Detroit in their first twenty years of business. Reichle was an alumni of Central High School, Detroit City College, and Wayne State University, and he passed away in 1936 at 46 years old.

Walter O. Briggs, Sr.,²¹⁰ (1877 – 1952) was an entrepreneur, manufacturer, and owner of the Detroit Tigers baseball team. He also organized the Briggs Bond and Investment Company and the Briggs Commercial and Development Company, that provided financing for builders through the purchase of land contracts and then provided mortgages on those homes. The Briggs companies focused on middle-class, medium-priced homes. The companies had a particular interest in homes with brick veneer and income bungalows, and did business in the Russell Woods-Sullivan area. One known example is the house at 4203-05 Tyler Street.

Brownwell Corporation was the builder of 4310 Waverly Avenue in 1924.²¹¹ This Neo-Dutch Colonial was built for Walter L. McCoy, a manager at Capper & Capper men's clothing store. Brownwell Corporation also built the house at 12515 Broadstreet for Samuel Levin, a professor

²⁰⁴ "The Detroit Free Press 'Standard' Home," *Detroit Free Press*, November 14, 1926.

²⁰⁵ "Proposed Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District," 7.

²⁰⁶ "Visit the 'Stratford' Today," advertisement, *Detroit Free Press*, January 30, 1927; "Miller-Storm's Model Income Home for 1927 in English Architecture: The Stratford," *Detroit News*, October 24, 1926;

"Thousands are Visiting 'The Stratford'," *Detroit Free Press*, February 13, 1927;

"The Stratford," *Detroit Free Press*, January 23, 1927;

"Visit the 'Stratford' Today," advertisement, *Detroit Free Press*, January 30, 1927;

"Have you visited this new 1927 model home?," *Detroit News*, February 6, 1927.

²⁰⁷ "Three 'Standard' Model Homes Open Today Only," *Detroit Free Press*, April 24, 1927.

²⁰⁸ "Proposed Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District," 9.

²⁰⁹ "Duplicates of Model Home at Special Low Price," *Detroit Free Press*, July 17, 1927.

²¹⁰ "Proposed Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District," 4.

²¹¹ "Proposed Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District," 13.

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and head of the Social Sciences Department at the College of the City of Detroit.²¹² The Brownwell Corporation, organized in 1923, was originally the Brownwell Homebuilding Company, which had been organized in 1919. The company had offices at the First National Bank Building, and had built and sold over seven hundred homes in Detroit as of 1923.²¹³

The Canvasser Brothers Building company built 4071 Fullerton Street²¹⁴ and also likely 4012, 4020, and 4030 Fullerton Street based on their similarities in form and detail. Similar models were located elsewhere in city, such as 16110 Sussex Street.²¹⁵ Many of the contractors working with Canvasser Bros were local to northwest Detroit, having offices in the direct vicinity of Russell Woods-Sullivan.²¹⁶

Edward M. Burke was a Black builder, a member of the Builder's Association of Metropolitan Detroit, and an approved HOLC sales broker who operated beginning in 1954 under the name Edward M. Burke Homes Inc. Burke partnered with Bel Aire Real Estate, at one point serving as its president, along with Carl Green (secretary) and Ernest Massey (vice president and general manager). Bel Aire Real Estate's office was located nearby at 9835 Dexter Avenue, which received a renovation from architect Nathan Johnson in 1958.²¹⁷ Burke's specialty was in designing Ranch, Colonial, Contemporary, and Cape Cod style homes, and also offered modernization services. His custom designed homes were built across Detroit as well as Belleville, Mt. Clemens, Inkster, and Pontiac. The Ranch style home at 13233 Broadstreet Avenue was likely designed by Burke, due to its similarities with the Marion Park development he designed in southwest Detroit.

Leslie F. Crane began the L. F. Crane Company as early as 1927, and became the largest investor in the neighborhood when he purchased sixty lots in the Sullivan subdivision.²¹⁸ The L.F. Crane offices were at 12632 Woodrow Wilson in 1927, 12632 Woodrow Wilson near Glendale in 1929, and later at 12186 Petoskey Avenue. The home at 3783 Tyler, and those between 4052 and 4089 Tyler Street are all likely built by L.F. Crane. Those houses closely resemble a 1931 advertisement that offered a deal for trading in a property rather than put cash down for a new income bungalow.²¹⁹

²¹² "Practices What He Preaches," *Detroit News*, January 17, 1932.

²¹³ "Detroit's Greatest Need Offers You a Wonderful Opportunity," *Detroit Free Press*, August 13, 1923.

²¹⁴ "Open Models Listed," *Detroit Free Press*, May 10, 1953.

²¹⁵ "How New Building Shapes Up in City," *Detroit Free Press*, August 9, 1953.

²¹⁶ The Belden Stark Brick Company, Borin Lumber and Supply Company, Cygan Manufacturing Iron Works, Center Electric Company, Friendship Builders Supply, Tilecraft Tile Company, Glass Sales and Service (windows), Sam Gold (decorator), D. Morrelli and Sons (excavating), Kemp Gardner (electric), Modern Glide Sliding Door Company, Emil Rymer (metal), Rocwall Company (concrete basements), W.M. F. Back Lumber Company, Morris Kaufman and Sons (plumbing and heating), Nine Mile Woodcraft Lumber Company, and Julius Berman (woodcraft).

²¹⁷ "Other People's Business," *Michigan Chronicle*, May 24, 1958.

²¹⁸ "Proposed Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District," 4.

²¹⁹ Wanted Ad, *Detroit News*, October 14, 1927; Classified Ad, *Detroit Free Press*, March 1, 1931.

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Nathan Johnson (1925 – 2021) was one of Detroit’s most notable Black architects, who opened his own firm, Nathan Johnson Associates, out of his basement in 1956. Johnson was a graduate of Kansas State University and worked on many large commissions throughout the city, including work as the Detroit Board of Education’s first appointed Black architect, designing several of the People Mover’s stations, and winning contracts with the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), formed in 1966, and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) projects. He is well known for his contributions to Modern architecture in and around Detroit, and in Russell Woods-Sullivan he designed 12547 Broadstreet Avenue.²²⁰ It is likely that Johnson designed some of the other Modern homes in Russell Woods-Sullivan including 12651 Old Mill Place and 4098 Fullerton Avenue,²²¹ the latter of which narrowly avoided demolition in 1989.

Henry (Henrik) Kohner was born in Hungary in 1884 and immigrated to Detroit in 1903. He began his architecture practice in Detroit in 1914, working with architects Harry T. Smith, Alfred Seeler, and Hector A. Payne over the years before eventually partnering with his son, Alexander, in 1938. Henry at the firm Kohner & Payne designed the Koppin Theater (no longer extant) on the east side of Detroit, as well as synagogues in the Russell Woods-Sullivan neighborhood including B’Nai Moshe Temple in 1928 and Yeshiva Beth Yehuda 12305 Dexter Avenue.²²² Alexander Kohner continued to work as an architect for the Jewish community as it expanded into Greater Detroit, designing the Shaarey Zedek School on Seven Mile Road, a campus for the Yeshivath Chachmey Lublin at 10 ½ Road and Greenfield in 1961 and a new Beth Yehudah School in Southfield in 1964.

Benjamin Koloff, an immigrant from Russia, was a carpenter and builder who began working around 1928, and is attributed with constructing the French Eclectic Louis LaMed House at 12804 Broadstreet Avenue in 1935.²²³ LaMed was a Jewish philanthropist and businessman, listed in the 1937 City Directory as working for the Michigan Furniture Company. In 1940, LaMed founded the Louis LaMed Foundation to stimulate creativity in Hebrew and Yiddish, and in 1954, he established a professorship in Jewish Studies at Wayne State University. Koloff Builders continued to build in the Greater Detroit area until at least the early 1960s, when the firm designed Sunnyside Estates in Livonia.

Builder Edward J. Mason is responsible for building 3832 Cortland, 3761 Sturtevant Street, and 3765 Fullerton Avenue.²²⁴ In 1929 his offices were at the corner of Dexter and Cortland. He later became president of the Mason Veneer Company, and the 1940 Census lists Mason’s employment as a brick salesman. Mason was the inventor of a patented type of veneering

²²⁰ University of Pennsylvania Fall 2018 Preservation Studio, “Russell Woods-Nardin Park: A Tactical Preservation Plan,” 2019, 49.

²²¹ Rebecca Smith-Hoffman and Jennifer Metz, “Historic Context Narrative Report,” City of Detroit Strategic Neighborhood Initiative: Russell Woods and Nardin Park, 2018.

²²² “Proposed Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District,” 8.

²²³ “Proposed Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District,” 6.

²²⁴ “Proposed Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District,” 11.

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construction.²²⁵ Mason was also the original owner and builder of the El Morada Apartments at 13139 Dexter Boulevard, which may have been designed by Detroit firm Wiedmaier and Gay, who built apartment buildings of similar style, form, and detail, such as the Laredo Apartment building nearby at 2749 Elmhurst Street.²²⁶

Louis G. Redstone is the likely architect of 4045 Glendale Street and likely other Streamlined Moderne houses in the neighborhood, as well as religious buildings including Yeshiva Beth Yehudah at northwest corner of Dexter and Cortland,²²⁷ and the Young Israel Center at 12521 Dexter.²²⁸ Redstone's architectural contributions along Dexter Avenue are palpable, as an article in the *Detroit Jewish Chronicle* called it "Redstone Boulevard" in 1949.²²⁹ Wilshire Motor Sales (12603 Dexter Avenue) was also designed by Redstone, currently home to a Family Dollar. The former Wilshire Motor Sales building has been significantly altered with the removal of its prominent curved window and former main entrance. Redstone's architectural significance in Detroit was established, in part, in the 2012 National Register of Historic Places nomination for three adjacent houses on Appoline Street, northwest of Russell Woods-Sullivan, in Detroit that he designed for himself, his brother Solomon Redstone, and his partner architect Henry J. Abrams.²³⁰ Redstone was born Louis Gordon Routenstein in 1903 in what was then Grodno, Poland (now Belarus). He graduated from University of Michigan in 1929 and eventually was employed by Albert Kahn Associates, Ford Motor Company, and worked in Tel Aviv before returning to Detroit to open his own architectural office. In 1948 he studied under Eliel Saarinen and received a Master of Arts in Architecture and Urban Planning at Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. He passed in 2002 at the age of 99. Redstone's career was extensive, and he was the recipient of numerous awards for his contributions to the field.

Charles A. Owen was a real estate entrepreneur operating in Detroit in the 1920s and 1930s.²³¹ He was also an investor and major bond holder in the Lee Plaza Hotel on West Grand Boulevard during its bankruptcy in the late 1930s. He owned and was president of the Owen Mortgage and Service Company, which had offices at the General Motors Building and was president at the Michigan Real Estate Service Company. The Owen Mortgage Company was financing and building homes, and working in Russell Woods-Sullivan as early as 1927 when 4830 Sturtevant Street was listed by the company. Owen's father, Charles A. Owen, Sr., lived at 3765 Cortland Street in 1927, but passed away in 1929.²³²

²²⁵ Edward J. Mason and Henry W. Mason, "Veneering Construction," United States patent 2074483, filed May 25, 1935, issued March 23, 1937.

²²⁶ "Proposed Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District," 12.

²²⁷ "New School To Be Built On Dexter," *Detroit Free Press*, June 29, 1941.

²²⁸ "Young Israel's Proposed New Center Here," *Jewish News*, June 1, 1945.

²²⁹ "Redstone Boulevard," *Detroit Jewish Chronicle*, January 28, 1949.

²³⁰ "Modern Type Home Completed In Palmer Woods," *Detroit Free Press*, October 29, 1939; Rob Yallop, Louis G. Redstone Residential Historic District, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2012.

²³¹ "Ill Health Causes Woman's Suicide," *Detroit Free Press*, January 23, 1931.

²³² "Deaths," *Detroit News*, January 21, 1929.

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Robert W. Tempest was the architect at 4332 Glendale Street, which was featured in a 1928 advertisement for Masonite structural insulation.²³³ Tempest worked on factory buildings and garages as well as single-family houses and apartment buildings. Tempest was employed as an in-house architect by developers including the Sheldon Construction Company, and Birmingham Realty Company for their Crestview neighborhood in Birmingham, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit.²³⁴ Tempest also served as an officer for Detroit's Thumb Tack Club, alongside noted architects such as Wirt C. Roland. Tempest may have also been the architect for some homes along Broadstreet, as he designed 12525 Broadstreet Avenue for Harry Ebel in 1928.²³⁵

Max Schwartz was the builder of 4020 Sturtevant Street.²³⁶ Schwartz had offices on nearby Webb Street in 1940 and was an active builder in Detroit. He was a member of the Metropolitan Builders Association of Detroit, the National Association of Builders, and a member of the Peshah Lodge, B'nai B'rith.²³⁷

Ginn Building Company was the builder of 4044 Sturtevant.²³⁸ Headed by Marcus Ginn, the company had built 1,500 homes across Detroit beginning in the 1910s.²³⁹ The company was active in both northwest and east side Detroit in the late 1930s, with offices at both 13450 Puritan, Detroit's west side, and 10211 Berkshire, Detroit's east side, in 1938.²⁴⁰ Advertisements indicate the Ginn Building Company remained active into at least the mid-1940s. Marcus Ginn eventually worked as the secretary and treasurer for Acme Cut Stone Company in 1941, a company founded by his brother John J. Ginn, Sr., in 1909.

John Lawson Miller was the architect for 4325 Fullerton, as well as 4825 and 4357 Sturtevant Street.²⁴¹ Miller had offices in the Goebel Building in Cadillac Square, and built around three hundred buildings in Detroit, according to Clarence M. Burton, noted Detroit historian, who described Miller's work as a combination of "utility and beauty with every modern convenience."²⁴² His practice consisted mainly of single-family homes, multi-family flats, small to mid-sized apartment buildings, in addition to commercial and industrial buildings. Miller was born in Lake Orion, Michigan, in 1878. He worked for various Detroit firms before becoming a partner at the office of S.C. Falkinburg, and carrying it as his own practice after Falkinburg passed in 1905.

²³³ Classified ad, *Detroit Free Press*, January 22, 1928.

²³⁴ Classified ad, *Detroit News*, June 27, 1926; Classified ad, *Detroit News*, July 11, 1926.

²³⁵ "New Home Design," *Detroit Free Press*, March 18, 1928.

²³⁶ "Proposed Russell Woods-Sullivan Historic District," 11.

²³⁷ Max Schwartz Obituary, *Detroit Free Press*, October 22, 1952.

²³⁸ "4044 Sturtevant," *Detroit Jewish Chronicle*, January 29, 1937.

²³⁹ "Cape Code Model by Ginn," *Detroit Free Press*, August 14, 1938.

²⁴⁰ "Ginn Building Co.," *Detroit Free Press*, May 8, 1938.

²⁴¹ J. Lawson Miller Collection at the Detroit Historical Society, accessed at: <https://www.detroithistorical.org/learn/online-research/collection/by-collection/miller-j-lawson>

²⁴² Clarence Monroe Burton, *City of Detroit, Michigan, 1701-1922* (Detroit, MI: S.J. Clarke Pub. Co., 1922) 4:503.

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John St. John was a realtor and builder with offices at 13545 Livernois Avenue. St. John built and resided at 4203-4205 Tyler Street, a five-unit building with a twin at 4203 Buena Vista Street. He was an early and prolific developer in northwest Detroit, buying and selling tracts in the recently subdivided Joy Farms area, just southeast of Russell Woods-Sullivan, in 1921. His advertisements in 1925 urged folks to “build now before the rush,” and St. John offered to build, finance, and decorate the home for buyers, specializing in brick veneer two-family flats. St. John’s model home at 16250 Lawton, constructed in 1928, resembles many homes in Russell Woods-Sullivan.²⁴³

Builder Dean L. Cullum’s “Dura-Bilt Homes”²⁴⁴ can be found at 4255 and 4249 Cortland Street, likely others.²⁴⁵ The “Lindbergh” model was an income producing property that was advertised as appearing like a single-family home from the outside. Cullum’s model homes were also found in the Grandmont-Rosedale neighborhood further northwest, which featured the “Warwick Castle” at 16842 Warwick Road.

The Spoon Brothers building company was founded by Russian immigrants and brothers Max and George Spoon in the 1920s, and eventually included George’s sons Julius and Harry, as well as Max’s sons Ira and Lionel. They built the house at 4077 Sturtevant, featured in the *Detroit Free Press* in 1936 when it was built. The Spoon Brothers had offices at 3269 Webb in 1936 and at 19771 James Couzens Highway in 1952, and the firm specialized in both residential and commercial across the metro-Detroit area, including many palatial homes in the Sherwood Forest, Palmer Woods, the University District, as well as suburban subdivisions including Oak Park, and a forty-home Ranch-style development on Marlowe and Lauder between Schaefer and Greenfield south of 8 Mile Road. Later, the firm was known as Spoon Realty & Construction Company. The younger Spoon Brothers, Ira and Lionel, were one of the builders of Shoreline East condominium tower, a nineteen-story building at 8200 East Jefferson, Detroit, in 1964.²⁴⁶ Julius and Harry Spoon were builders of the Sharon Meadows subdivision in Southfield, a suburb northwest of Detroit.

Claude A. Dock was the designer and builder for 4770 Leslie. Dock was part of organizing the Russell Woods Civic Association, the original resident organization in the neighborhood, and served as its first president. The home at 4770 Leslie was called the “Parkway” model, and featured a large 50x130 lot facing Russell Woods Park, four bed rooms, two baths with colored tile, three extra lavatories, two fireplaces, and a recreation room.²⁴⁷

²⁴³ Classified Ad, *Detroit News*, April 22, 1928.

²⁴⁴ “Dean L. Cullum’s Dura-Bilt Homes,” *Detroit Free Press*, December 11, 1927.

²⁴⁵ “The Lindbergh,” advertisement, *Detroit Free Press*, September 11, 1927.

²⁴⁶ “New Offices Open in Northwest Area,” *Detroit News*, February 15, 1952; “Start Shoreline Tower,” *Detroit Free Press*, July 11, 1964; “Spoon Brothers Building Apartments Along Detroit River’s Shoreline,” *Detroit Jewish News*, July 17, 1964; “A Builder’s Builder,” *Detroit Jewish News*, February 18, 2000.

²⁴⁷ “The Parkway at 4770 Leslie,” *Detroit Free Press*, May 13, 1928.