



## PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM

### HISTORIC DISTRICT

A historic district is defined as a significant concentration of buildings, structures, or sites that are united historically and aesthetically by plan or physical development. The Preliminary Information Form (PIF) constitutes an application for preliminary consideration of a historic district for eligibility for the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. The PIF is **not** the same as a nomination to the Registers, but is a means for evaluating the **eligibility** of a historic district for listing. The PIF is evaluated by Department of Historic Resources (DHR) staff and the State Review Board and their recommendations regarding the property's eligibility will be provided to the applicant in writing.

#### **Before Preparing a PIF**

Contact DHR's Archivist for assistance in obtaining any information DHR may have on file about your property, such as a previous architectural survey record or eligibility evaluation. You are welcome to use this information in preparing your PIF. Contact DHR's Archivist by phone at (804) 482-6102, or by email at [Quatro.Hubbard@dhr.virginia.gov](mailto:Quatro.Hubbard@dhr.virginia.gov).

Staff at one of DHR's three Regional offices are available to answer questions you may have as you begin preparing your PIF. Locations and contact information for each office is at [http://dhr.virginia.gov/regional\\_offices/regional\\_offices.htm](http://dhr.virginia.gov/regional_offices/regional_offices.htm). (You also are welcome to ask DHR's Archivist for the contact information.)

#### **Preparing a PIF**

A PIF consists of three equally important parts:

1. **Form:** Complete the attached form to the best of your ability, using your own research about the proposed historic district as well as any information that DHR has provided. Remember that DHR's Regional staff also are available to assist you. The form may be completed using Microsoft Word software, typed, or hand-written. If using MS Word, the PIF can be submitted via CD, email, ftp, or other file sharing means.

#### **Your PIF will not be evaluated if it is missing any of the following information:**

- Applicant/Sponsor's signature
  - Contact information for the person submitting the form (if different from the applicant/sponsor)
  - Contact information for the City Manager or County Administrator where the property is located
2. **Photos:** Provide color photographs of the proposed historic district's general streetscape and a sample of individual buildings, sites, and/or structures that are representative of the district's character. Submit photo prints on 4" x 6" glossy photo paper and digital images on CD or other file sharing means approved by DHR's Regional staff.
  3. **Maps:** A minimum of two maps must accompany your PIF:
    - **Location map:** This map shows the exact location of the proposed historic district. The map can be created using Google Maps, Google Earth, Bing, or other mapping websites. A copy of a road map also may be used as long as the district's exact location and proposed boundaries are shown on the map. DHR's Archivist can assist in providing an acceptable location map with boundaries.
    - **Sketch map:** This map shows the proposed boundaries and locations of all resources within the proposed historic district as well as major landscape features such as a stream, formal gardens, roads, and parking areas. The sketch map can be drawn by hand; or an annotated aerial view, tax parcel map or survey map may be used. For large historic districts, the local government may be able to provide a base map that includes roads, tax parcel boundaries, and other information. Contact staff at the local government's planning and permitting office for assistance.

**Note:** All submitted materials become the property of DHR and will be retained in our permanent Archive. In addition, the materials will be posted on DHR's public website for a period of time during the evaluation process.

*Thank you for taking the time to submit this Preliminary Information Form. Your interest in Virginia's historic resources is helping to provide better stewardship of our cultural past.*



PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Purpose of Evaluation

Please use the following space to explain briefly why you are seeking an evaluation of this property.

The Woodhurst neighborhood is a little-known mid-century modern gem in Virginia Beach. It stands out for 100% of its homes being of Contemporary design based upon four architect developed models. After recent publicity about other historic district nomination projects currently underway, neighborhood residents contacted City staff to inquire about the potential for Woodhurst to be considered for National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) listing. Upon closer examination, Woodhurst truly appears to be perhaps the best and most complete example of recent past residential development in a city, Virginia Beach, that had an explosion of development in the 1950s and 1960s. Initial research and the preparation of a VCRIS form by a professional architectural historian has reinforced this view. The evaluation is being sought to formalize the determination of eligibility for listing in the NRHP with the expectation that the City of Virginia Beach will subsequently commit to pursuing the NRHP nomination if Woodhurst is determined eligible.

Are you interested in applying for State and/or Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No X

Are you interested in receiving more information about DHR's easement program? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No X

1. General Information

District name(s): Woodhurst Neighborhood Historic District

Main Streets and/or Routes: Mill Dam Road, Graham Road, Indian Run Road, Woodhurst Drive, Strawberry Lane

City or Town: City of Virginia Beach

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: City of Virginia Beach

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: 33.00

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban \_\_\_\_\_ Suburban X Town \_\_\_\_\_ Village \_\_\_\_\_ Hamlet \_\_\_\_\_ Rural \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe the district's overall setting, including any notable landscape features:

The Woodhurst neighborhood stands on the west side of Mill Dam Road about one mile north of the intersection with First Colonial Road and three miles north of Laskin Road. Indian Run Road extends west into the neighborhood from Mill Dam Road, then converges with Graham Road, which curves to the northeast and connects back to Mill Dam Road. Woodhurst Drive, the only connecting street within the neighborhood, extends between Graham and Indian Run roads. Strawberry Lane is a short cul-de-sac that runs north from Indian Run Road. The neighborhood is heavily wooded and edged by wooded buffers on the northwest and west sides. Mill Dam Creek is located west of the neighborhood.

### 3. Architectural/Physical Description

Architectural Style(s): Contemporary/Mid-Century Modern

If any individual properties within the district were designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: The development and its four building models were designed by Oliver & Smith, a Norfolk-based architectural firm

If any builders or developers are known, please list here: Frank P. Whitehurst & Son were the developers

Date(s) of construction (can be approximate): 1955 - 1960

Are there any known threats to this district? none

#### **Narrative Description:**

In the space below, briefly describe the general characteristics of the entire historic district, such as building patterns, types, features, and the general architectural quality of the proposed district. Include prominent materials and noteworthy building details within the district, as well as typical updates, additions, remodelings, or other alterations that characterize the district.

Woodhurst consists of 81 houses built from four designs executed in a Contemporary/Mid-century Modernist style. A windshield survey of the neighborhood suggests that all 81 houses are still extant and no infill construction has occurred. One lot at the corner of the district has been subdivided and a single-family house was built (1992) on the new parcel adjacent to the parcel containing the original house. The houses are of brick construction with some sections of the exterior walls clad with vertical siding or horizontal siding. Windows are two-pane slider types with transoms above or fixed panes at the clerestory level. The broad, front-facing gable roofs are the most character-defining feature of the designs and emphasize the horizontality of the dwelling. Typical alterations noted were the replacement of original windows and renovation of carports and garages into interior living space. Changes in exterior cladding were noted in only a few instances. Additions have been constructed to the back and sides of some houses; two-story additions are present, but are rare. The street grid also remains intact. The home models are evenly distributed with twenty-one (21) each of model 1, 2 and 3. There are eighteen (18) model 4 homes.

The four, one-story, contemporary-style house designs offered in Woodhurst ranged in size from 1,457 to 1,617 square feet with initial prices from \$13,575 to \$15,900. No like models were built side by side. Each house had three bedrooms and either an attached garage or a carport. Broad, front-facing gable roofs of chipped white marble covered the houses; deep eaves extended over the front elevations and were supported by exposed beams or square posts. Because of the low pitch of the broad gable roof, the side eaves were very low to the ground (about 7"), which emphasized the horizontal character of the houses. Windows were fixed clerestory types or aluminum-framed slider windows. The houses were of masonry construction faced with a combination of materials including red brick laid in a stretcher bond pattern, vertical board siding, and horizontal siding; the siding was offered in a variety of colors. Each house was equipped with an "ultra-modern" kitchen with stainless steel double sinks, birch wood cabinets, and Formica countertops. Other rooms had plastered walls or mahogany paneling, exposed beam ceilings, and fireplaces in the living room with stout, rectangular brick chimneys that project from the interior of the roof slopes. Some fireplaces and carport walls were constructed using 200-year old bricks that were salvaged from houses demolished during the construction of the Norfolk-Portsmouth Tunnel.

Model 1 (1,494 sf): This one-story, brick dwelling is covered by a front-facing gable roof with an overhanging eave at the front that is supported by exposed beams. Clerestory windows are located in the front gable end. A brick wall extends across the front elevation and the entrance is located on the side elevation, which also holds two window openings. The one-car garage faces the front and is recessed on the side of the dwelling. The garage is covered by a shed roof that extends from the main house roof. A large brick chimney projects from the interior roof slope.

Model 2 (1,563 sf): This one-story, brick dwelling is covered by a front-facing gable roof that projects over the front elevation and is supported by four plain posts, creating a narrow, four-bay porch across the front. The off-center entrance is flanked by slider-type windows located high on the elevation. Most of the elevation is clad with siding, but the garage bay is clad with brick. A brick privacy wall extends along the other side of the house. A brick interior chimney projects through the roof slope.

Model 3 (1,617 sf): This one-story, brick dwelling is covered by a front gable roof. Most of the front elevation is clad with brick, but the two-bay recessed entry is clad with siding. The porch has plain posts that support the overhanging roof; exposed beams also are present. Windows are two-pane sliders with a transom above. The garage entrance, which faces the front, is recessed from the main wall of the front elevation. A brick chimney projects through the interior slope of the roof.

Model 4 (1,457 sf): This one-story, brick dwelling is covered by a front-facing gable roof. Like Model 1, the entrance is on the side elevation of this model. The front elevation holds two window openings set high on the wall. A brick wall encloses the sides of the carport, which is covered by a shed roof. A brick chimney projects from the interior slope of the main roof.

Discuss the district's general setting and/or streetscapes, including current property uses (and historic uses if different), such as industrial, residential, commercial, religious, etc. For rural historic districts, please include a description of land uses.

The residential neighborhood is heavily wooded and edged by wooded buffers on the northwest and west sides. The building lots are of varying sizes that generally range from 90' x 150' to 90' x 225'; corner lots are larger and irregularly shaped. The houses sit back from the street and are accessed by concrete and ribbon driveways. Lawns are generally landscaped with mature trees and planting beds near the houses. Only a couple of front yard fences were noted during a recent windshield survey.

Most notable in the arrangement of houses is the orientation of the buildings on the lots. Some houses face directly onto the street, while others are placed on the lot at an angle. Houses appear to maintain a standard setback, but avoid what the designers called the "rank-and-file" appearance of other residential developments where houses maintain a standard setback and face directly onto the street. The designers stated that the houses were "arranged with an eye to maximum privacy and pleasing appearance."

#### 4. District's History and Significance

In the space below, briefly describe the history of the district, such as when it was established, how it developed over time, and significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property. Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.) Normally, only information contained on this form is forwarded to the State Review Board.

If the district is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

The Woodhurst Neighborhood, located in the Great Neck area of the City of Virginia Beach, is an example of a mid-twentieth-century suburban development comprised entirely of architect-designed houses. In 1955, partners Frank P. Whitehurst and James F. Doyle platted and developed the neighborhood, building 81 houses on approximately 33 acres. All 81 houses are extant and only one new house has been built on a subdivided lot at the edge of the neighborhood. Woodhurst was advertised as offering "country living with city conveniences," and was located opposite the road to the recently platted Alanton development.

In some advertisements, Frank P. Whitehurst & Son were listed as "contractors and developers." In an August 1955 advertisement, the Tynes Whitehurst Company was listed as exclusive real agents for the new development, although by October 1955, James F. Doyle, who operated his own real estate firm, was listed as the agent. In 1957, C.M. Tynes became an agent for Woodhurst and in 1962, the Whitehurst Realty Co. (at Hilltop) was the agent. Some advertisements implied that the development may have been segregated stating that Woodhurst was "highly restricted to protect your investment."

The Norfolk-based architectural firm of Oliver & Smith designed the development and the four model homes that were offered for sale. Louis A. Oliver and Herbert L. Smith III formed their firm in 1950. A North Carolina native, Oliver trained at several universities including the University of Virginia and worked for the Norfolk District of the Army Corps of Engineers during World War II. He was elected president of the Virginia Chapter, the American Institute of Architects in 1964. Smith (d. 1982) attended the University of Virginia, served in the Navy during World War II, and served as a member and chair of the Virginia Beach Historical Review Board.

The firm designed numerous schools, governmental and institutional buildings in the Tidewater area, including the geodesic dome of the Virginia Beach Civic Center. Much of the firm's work was executed in the Modernist style. Notable buildings designed by Oliver and Smith included the Thunderbird Motor Lodge, the Americana Motor Lodge, Linkhorn Park Elementary School, and Frank W. Cox High School in Virginia Beach; City Hall and Robert Morton Hughes Memorial Library (with Edward Durell Stone and Kilham and O'Connor consulting) in Norfolk; Federal Building in Portsmouth; and Great Bridge Elementary School in present day Chesapeake. A February 1959 article about a "classic" design by Oliver and Smith for the Ocean View Baptist Church stated that the firm, "has been heralded for the most advanced contemporary building designs" and is "noted for their prize winning Princess Ann(e) High School, the new Kaiser-aluminum-domed Convention Center at Virginia Beach, and a number of other advanced designs."

The only other residential development that is known to have been designed by Oliver and Smith is Meadowbrook Terrace in Norfolk. Their 1960 designs for Meadowbrook Terrace Homes in Norfolk, however, included six house models executed in various examples of the Colonial Revival-style. Oscar B. Ferebee, Jr., Vice President of Goodman-Segar-Hogan Residential Sales Corporation of Norfolk, was the agent and Jacob Brody, was the land developer. An article about the 70-acre/154-house Meadowbrook Terrace development proclaimed that it was "one of the first on the East Coast to be completely planned even to include underground electrical and telephone distribution."

At the time of construction, the Woodhurst neighborhood was in a still-rural area of Princess Anne County. The houses are executed in a Contemporary style reflecting Modernist influences and include attached garages and carports. Some of the houses are set at an angle on the building lots, which provided a measure of privacy and also avoided the rigid pattern of a fixed setback typical of other neighborhoods. Although alterations have been made to some of the houses over the years, the majority retain their historical appearance and architectural character.

The neighborhood is recommended potentially eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criteria A and C as an early example of Princess Anne County's mid-century suburban development and as a collection of architect-designed houses that reflect Modernist tenets. Although some of the 1960s suburban developments in the county offered model home designs, this is the first development identified that is associated with a local architectural firm and that is comprised entirely of Contemporary style houses.

The Woodhurst Neighborhood is an excellent example of a mid-century residential development comprised of a collection of architect-designed Contemporary style houses. The houses were described as “Virginia Contemporary,” as well as Ranch houses in local newspapers; nationwide such houses were known as Contemporary, Mid-century Modern, and Post and Beam. Such houses had their origins in the Usonian designs of Frank Lloyd Wright (1930s-1950s), and also reflected influence of developments occurring in California and other western states. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, large-scale developments of Modernist houses were produced by California architects Joseph Eichler (Eichler Homes), William Krisel (known for his “Alexander Homes”), and Edward Fickett (from Los Angeles). Such “tract housing” was aimed at providing Modernist homes to owners of modest to average means. Some Modernist developments, however, such as those built in Palm Springs, California, became luxury homes for wealthy clients.

The Woodhurst designs reflect the character defining features of the Contemporary style in the use of a single story covered by gable roofs with overhanging eaves, exposed construction, geometric massing, minimal decorative detailing, de-emphasized entries, and integrated garages/carports. Due to a difference in climate, the Woodhurst designs did not utilize curtain wall elevations seen in California examples, but did include the use of clerestory lighting and modern metal-frame slider windows and sliding doors (Model 1).

An example of a merchant-builder development, Woodhurst was subdivided by a corporation with several real estate agents responsible for selling the lots. In addition to securing the land and laying out the sub-division plat, Frank P. Whitehurst, Sr., also constructed the houses. Although some houses may have been built on speculation, owners may also have purchased a lot and then selected one of the four model designs for construction. Whitehurst also was involved in the development of the nearby North Alanton neighborhood.

Woodhurst differs from many of the residential areas that were developed in Princess Anne County in the 1950s in its relatively small size and its lack of any commercial amenities, schools, or churches. Most notably, however, is the use of Contemporary, or Modernist, designs for the houses rather than traditional styles, such as the Colonial Revival, or more common forms such as the Minimal Traditional, Ranch, Cape Cod or Split-Level, which are most often seen in Princess Anne/Virginia Beach housing developments of the period. A 2018 architectural survey update for the northern half of Virginia Beach focused on neighborhoods and included about two dozen residential developments that were initiated between 1940 and 1960. Very few of these neighborhoods included Contemporary design homes and in those that did they tended to be more of the exception. Speaking about one of these neighborhoods, the authors of the survey update said, “Thalia Shores is unique in the Thalia area for the inclusion of a few modern-style homes, which appear to have been rare throughout Princess Anne County/Virginia Beach.”

Woodhurst is an example of the Modernist designs produced by the firm of Oliver & Smith; current research has located only one additional housing development completed by the firm, Meadowbrook Terrace in Norfolk, which featured Colonial Revival-style model houses. In addition to its architectural style, Woodhurst also is notable for its nontraditional, non-orthogonal placement and arrangement of buildings on the individual parcels.

Betsy DiJulio, "A Mid Century Modern Home Reimagined in Virginia Beach," Coastal Virginia Magazine, October 25, 2019.

"Centuries-Old Brick Feature of New Homes, Woodhurst Development Offers Escape from Rank-and-File Look," The Virginian-Pilot, November 9, 1955:29.

“Great Bridge Elementary School,” Virginia Record, Vol. LXXXIII, Number Five (May) 1961:11, 40.

Laura R. Purvis and Debra A. McClane, "Historic Architectural Resource Survey Update, City of Virginia Beach, Virginia, Northern Half." Prepared for the Department of Planning and Community Development, City of Virginia Beach. December 2018 (Parts 1 and 2). (VDHR CRM Report VB-185)

"Linkhorn Park Elementary School," Virginia Record, Vol. LXXX, Number Five (May) 1958:24-25.

"New Frank W. Cox High School in Princess Anne County," Virginia Record, Vol. LXXXIII, Number Nine (September) 1961:36, 38.

"Norfolk Civic Center," Virginia Record, Vol. LXXXVII, Number Eleven (November) 1965:22-23.

"Ocean View Baptist Church," Virginia Record, Vol. LXXXII, Number Five (May) 1962:26

"Portsmouth Federal Office Building," Virginia Record, Vol. LXXXIV, Number Two (February) 1959:26

"Robert Morton Hughes Memorial Library Finished at a Cost of One Million Dollars," Virginia Record, Vol. LXXXII, Number Three (March) 1960:3, 49-50.

"Thunderbird Motor Lodge," Virginia Record, Vol. LXXXI, Number Eight (August) 1959:34-35.

"Unique Residential Development Planned for Norfolk," Virginia Record, Vol. LXXXII, No. Five (May) 1960:24-25.

"Virginia Beach Hotel Expansion," Virginia Record, Vol. LXXXV, Number Eleven (November) 1963:18-19.

Virginia Cultural Resource Information Record (VCRIS), Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR), DHR ID #134-5874.

Woodhurst Development Advertisements, The Virginian-Pilot, August 10, 1955; September 25, 1955; October 9, 1955; November 9, 1955; July 22, 1956; June 30, 1957; January 21, 1958.

"Woodhurst Homes, Princess Anne County, Virginia," Oliver & Smith, AIA, Norfolk, Virginia. Architectural elevations and floor plans for four house designs

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**5. Property Ownership** (Check as many categories as apply):

Private:  X  Public\Local   Public\State   Public\Federal

**6. Applicant/Sponsor** (Individual and/or organization sponsoring preparation of the PIF, with contact information. For more than one sponsor, please list each below or on an additional sheet.)

name/title:  Mark A. Reed / Historic Preservation Planner   
organization:  City of Virginia Beach, Virginia, Department of Planning and Community Development   
street & number:  2875 Sabre Street, Suite 500   
city or town:  Virginia Beach  state:  VA  zip code:  23452-7385   
e-mail:  mreed@vbgov.com  telephone:  757-385-8573

Applicant's Signature:     
Date:  5/26/2021

**•• Signature required for processing all applications. ••**

In the event of organization sponsorship, you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person:  Same as above   
Daytime Telephone:

**Applicant Information** (Individual completing form if other than applicant/sponsor listed above)

name/title:    
organization:    
street & number:    
city or town:   state:   zip code:    
e-mail:   telephone:

**7. Notification**

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator, City Manager, and/or Town Manager.

name/title:  Patrick A. Duhaney / City Manager   
locality:  City of Virginia Beach   
street & number:  2401 Courthouse Drive, Room 234   
city or town:  Virginia Beach  state:  VA  zip code:  23456   
telephone:  757-385-4242