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### Our Mission

The mission of the Raleigh Historic Development Commission is to identify, preserve, protect, and promote Raleigh's historic resources.

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## Bloomsbury Historic District

Developed 1914 through mid-twentieth-century

*"No lot over three minutes walk from the car line," boasted ads for Bloomsbury*

Bloomsbury is one of five early-twentieth-century neighborhoods that surround the Five Points intersection of Glenwood Avenue, Fairview Road, and Whitaker Mill Road. Bloomsbury lies northwest of the intersection, north of Glenwood Avenue as it heads away from Five Points towards Crabtree.

Early on, Bloomsbury attracted a mix of middle- and upper-middle-class whites. The earliest houses in Bloomsbury display a transition from the Queen Anne style that had been popular since the 1880s to a simplified Craftsman style that would dominate into the 1920s. The house at 1819 White Oak Road is an example, featuring the older-style two-story gable-front house with double-tier porch combined with the wide eaves and shingled siding typical of Craftsman style. As construction got into full swing in the 1920s, the bungalow house type dominated. Most Bloomsbury bungalows sport simple Craftsman elements like deep bracketed eaves and sheltering front porches. There is great variety among the bungalows, however, and some are substantial versions with large half-stories under a gable roof and porte-cocheres extending to one side from the porch. Others houses feature a simplified version the Colonial Revival style that was popular in the large houses of nearby Hayes Barton. Where the Hayes Barton houses were commodious brick versions with Georgian fanlights over imposing front doors, Bloomsbury's Colonial Revivals tended to be modest frame two-story houses or even bungalows with Colonial Revival entry porches.

#### History

When local developer James Pou Jr. platted the Bloomsbury neighborhood in 1914, he highlighted Bloomsbury's connection to the street car. "No lot over three minutes walk from the car line," boasted advertisements. In the late 1910s and even more so in the 1920s, middle- and upper-middle-class residents bought houses on Bloomsbury Circle, Alexander Road, White Oak Road, Fairview Road, and Glenwood Avenue. Residents worked as life insurance agents, meat cutters, doctors, railroad flagmen, and roofers. As early as the 1920s, however, the automobile became more affordable and Bloomsbury residents and buyers used autos as well as the streetcar to get downtown from their suburban houses. Detached garages proliferated and the streetcar was gone by the mid-1930s.

Housing construction in Bloomsbury slowed to a trickle in the 1930s, thanks to the Great Depression, but much of the neighborhood had already been built out by then. In the several years following World War II, houses finally went up on the last empty stretches in the northeast corner of the development. The modest dwellings built in Bloomsbury after World War II reflect the country's emergence from a shortage of materials and a desperate need for housing: these houses are simply detailed versions of the elaborate period revivals of the 1920s.

Like many in-town neighborhoods, Bloomsbury was briefly unpopular in the 1970s, but before the turn of the twenty-first century, the neighborhood regained its vitality. Many houses have been updated and expanded.

#### Map



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## Five Points Historic Neighborhoods

Developed late 1910s through 1950s

*Raleigh's second wave of white suburban development produced a cluster of neighborhoods around the Five Points intersection*

On the heels of the first wave of white suburban development in Raleigh, five new suburban neighborhoods clustered around the Five Points intersection of Glenwood Avenue and Fairview and Whitaker Mill Roads. Developers platted Hayes Barton, Bloomsbury, Georgetown, Vanguard Park, and Roanoke Park in the 1910s through the early 1920s. Construction continued over the next few decades of the twentieth century, resulting in a transition from streetcar suburbs to automobile suburbs.

Each neighborhood has a distinct character, created by a combination of its particular location, deed restrictions, and period of development. Hayes Barton, one of the last of the group to be platted, actually developed first. The neighborhood was primary in several ways: the location was best, adjacent to the streetcar line but away from the railroad line to the east; deed restrictions resulted in large, prestigious houses; and landscape designer Earle Sumner Draper laid out the street plan. Bloomsbury and Roanoke Park developed in the 1920s, with construction in the latter continuing into the 1930s. Vanguard Park developed in the recovery years after the Great Depression, after 1935, while most construction in Georgetown occurred after World War II.

### History

As Raleigh's first group of white suburban developments filled, a second wave began on the prime real estate bordering the Glenwood Avenue streetcar line downtown out to Bloomsbury Park. Carolina Power and Light built the amusement park in 1918 to attract riders to the streetcar line and to tout the wonders of electricity. Spread out beneath eight thousand glowing light bulbs were a penny arcade, roller coaster, carousel, and other amusements. In the meantime, the land on either side of the streetcar line got plenty of exposure for the pleasure seekers riding it.

Parts of Bloomsbury and Georgetown were platted first, although development in those areas was largely delayed until the 1920s or later. Similarly, Vanguard Park was laid out in 1915 but twenty years passed before the bulk of construction filled the development with houses. Construction in Hayes Barton and Roanoke Park, however, platted in 1920 and 1922 respectively, took off immediately. Construction in Bloomsbury was brisk in the 1920s as well. Houses ranged from grand Colonial Revival, Georgian Revival, Tudor Revival, and other nationally popular eclectic designs in Hayes Barton to commodious Craftsman or Classical Revival Foursquares and modest bungalows with Craftsman detailing in Bloomsbury and Roanoke Park. In the post-Depression Recovery era of the later 1930s and the post-war period of the late 1940s, houses were more modest still, with simplified architectural embellishment and compact, efficient floor plans. Such houses are more common in Georgetown and Vanguard Park.

All five neighborhoods were nearly built out as the twentieth century reached its midpoint. A few 1950s examples of the Ranch house exist as slightly later infill, and the individually significant Rothstein House, designed by Raleigh architect G. Milton Small, went up on a large lot in the southern portion of Hayes Barton in 1959.

### Maps

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