

## Dalebrook

Dalebrook was one of the first West Charlotte African-American neighborhoods to be developed in the 1960s. It proved to be a very popular neighborhood; by the end of 1961, less than one year after Dalebrook's debut, homes filled all available lots. It was created for Charlotte's broader African-American middle class and did not experience the post-WWII declines attributed to many of Charlotte's African-American neighborhoods. Based on its average property price range (from \$14,000 to \$25,000), Dalebrook was the premiere neighborhood in northwest Charlotte in the early 1960s.<sup>1</sup>

Like the adjacent Oaklawn Park neighborhood, Dalebrook was designed and built by Charles Ervin, a Charlotte-based developer who, by 1960, had built one of every three new homes in Charlotte. The new neighborhood represented part of a \$28 million development program launched by his Ervin Construction Company to build 2,000 homes within a twelve-month period. Due in part to that campaign, Ervin Construction Company became the nation's seventh largest homebuilder.<sup>2</sup> Ervin neighborhoods, much like many neighborhoods of that era, were generally segregated. But "unlike most [white] developers of the era, Charles Ervin built equal quality homes for both blacks and whites in Charlotte."<sup>3</sup> Dalebrook was described in 1960 as "an exclusive Negro development, where one home has been sold for \$45,000."<sup>4</sup> Debuting in a glitzy ad campaign touting its proximity to cultural centers, downtown Charlotte, churches,

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<sup>1</sup> North Carolina Department of Transportation, "Intensive-Level Historic Architectural Analysis for Conversion of High Occupancy Toll Lanes on I-77 Between I-277 and I-85, Charlotte, Mecklenburg County" (December 2012), 8-9, 12, 14-25 (hereinafter "NCDOT Report").

<sup>2</sup> Rolfe Neill, "His Passion? More Homes, Not Money," *Charlotte Observer*, May 1, 1960; Harry Snook, "2,000 Charlotte Houses to be Built Within Year in \$28 Million Program," *Charlotte Observer*, July 12, 1961, 1C.

<sup>3</sup> NCDOT Report, 14 (quoting Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, "Charles Conger Ervin, 1924-2006," 2012a).

<sup>4</sup> Snook, "2,000 Charlotte Houses to be Built Within Year in \$28 Million Program."

schools, and shopping, Dalebrook was described as “an exciting new neighborhood in one of nature’s most beautiful settings” “especially designed with mythical Charlotte families in mind” that also benefitted from “expert neighborhood planning.”<sup>5</sup>

According to historian Tom Hanchett, Dalebrook and other segregated northwest Charlotte neighborhoods resulted from a “concerted policy” by the city’s white leadership and the Federal Housing Administration. The provision of housing opportunities in one defined city sector enabled developers like Ervin “to protect their subdivisions elsewhere from the threat of ‘invasion’ by nonwhites” while also satisfying FHA requirements.<sup>6</sup> In 1968, however, Dalebrook residents signaled their willingness to overcome such divisive planning tactics by joining other Charlotte neighborhoods in a citywide petition campaign agreeing to welcome racial integration into their communities.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, many parts of Dalebrook were lost when highway planning by the City of Charlotte and North Carolina’s State Highway Commission ran the new loop of Interstate Highway 77 through the neighborhood and nearby Oaklawn Park.<sup>8</sup>

For many years, the most recognizable feature of the community was the Dalebrook Professional Center, a two-story office building located at 2504 Beatties Ford Road. Opened in 1963, the building provided office space for several African-American professionals, including doctors, dentists, pharmacists, and beauticians, many of whom had been displaced by the city’s

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<sup>5</sup> Ervin Construction Company advertisement, *Charlotte Observer*, October 2, 1960, 14C, available at “African American Neighborhoods in Charlotte: Lincoln Heights,” *Charlotte’s Historic West End*, <https://www.westendcharlotte.org/african-american-neighborhoods-in-charlotte>, accessed March 25, 2021 (hereinafter “*Charlotte’s Historic West End*”); Ervin Construction Company advertisement, *Charlotte Observer*, October 16, 1960, 9E.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas W. Hanchett, *Sorting out the New South City: Race, Class, and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1985*, 2d ed. (1998; Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 235.

<sup>7</sup> David Gelsanliter, “Petition Leads Way to Cordial Neighborhood Integration,” *Charlotte Observer*, October 25, 1968, 1B.

<sup>8</sup> “Highways and the West End,” *Charlotte’s Historic West End*, <https://www.westendcharlotte.org/highway>, accessed March 25, 2021.

urban renewal campaign that razed Fourth Ward's Brooklyn community. The Center's founder, Dr. Roy S. Wynn, was Charlotte's first African-American ophthalmologist and first Black citizen to serve on the board of the city's Housing Authority. Once described as "a beacon of light for the Beatties Ford Road corridor," the Dalebrook Professional Center was torn down in 2016.<sup>9</sup> Dalebrook was also the boyhood community for former Charlotte Mayor Anthony Foxx. He grew up in his grandparents' Dalebrook home and attended nearby West Charlotte High School, which by then had become a nationally renowned example of successful integration. In 2009, Foxx became the city's second African-American mayor and its youngest mayor (elected at age 38). Four years later, he was selected by President Barack Obama to be U.S. Secretary of Transportation.<sup>10</sup>

Today, the self-contained Dalebrook community consists of approximately seventy homes situated on six streets, including its southern (Crestdale Drive), eastern (Pinestream Drive), northern (Tanglewood Drive), and western (Newland Drive) boundaries, and is often considered a subdivision within the larger Lincoln Heights neighborhood. Nearly all of the

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<sup>9</sup> "African American Neighborhoods in Charlotte: Dalebrook," *Charlotte's Historic West End*, accessed March 25, 2021; "New Center Will Hold Open House," *Charlotte Observer*, October 5, 1963, 4B, available at *Charlotte's Historic West End*, accessed March 25, 2021; Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, "The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Story," <https://www.cmstory.org/exhibits/african-american-album/nellie-mckenzie-and-dr-roy-s-wynn>, accessed March 25, 2021; Eileen Hanson, "Charlotte Business League Chooses Five For Its 1979 Hall of Fame," *Charlotte Post*, October 18, 1979, 1; Tom Hanchett, "A Guided Tour of the Northwest Corridor," in *Let There Be Light: Exploring How Charlotte's Historic West End is Shaping a New South*, Ron Stodghill ed. (Charlotte: Johnson C. Smith, 2014), 22-23; Ashley Fahey, "New city of Charlotte program aims to fund projects in underinvested-in corridors," *Charlotte Business Journal*, September 9, 2020, <https://www.bizjournals.com/charlotte/news/2020/09/09/city-charlotte-corridors-opportunity-program.html>, accessed March 25, 2021.

<sup>10</sup> Pamela Grundy, "Black History of Charlotte Part 5: The Battle Over Desegregation in Charlotte," *Queen City Nerve*, September 25, 2020, <https://qcnerve.com/desegregation-in-charlotte/>, accessed March 18, 2021; Jen Pilla Taylor, "Man of the Past," *Charlotte Magazine*, October 1, 2009, <https://www.charlottemagazine.com/man-of-the-past/>, accessed March 25, 2021, available at *Charlotte's Historic West End*, accessed March 25, 2021.

original homes remain, and the neighborhood has experienced little change since its original construction. The majority of the homes are one-story, brick-veneered Ranch-type structures.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> NCDOT Report, 15; “African American Neighborhoods in Charlotte: Lincoln Heights,” *Charlotte’s Historic West End*, accessed March 21, 2021.