# Landmark Designation Report for the

# Dr. C. Warren and Vivian L. Williams House
# Charlotte, NC

Prepared by:
Susan V. Mayer, Principal
March 2025

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## General Information

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|---|---|
| **Historic Names of Property**: | Dr. C. Warren and Vivian L. Williams House |
| **Address of Property**: | 5906 Crestwood Drive, Charlotte, North Carolina 28216 |
| **PIN**: | 03712312 |
| **Deed Book & Page**: | Mecklenburg County Deed Book 21537, Page 626 |
| **Amount of Land/Acreage to be Designated**: | 1.036 Acres |
| **Ad Valorem Tax Value**: | The 2025 Real Estate Assessed Value of parcel 03712312 which includes Dr. C. W. and Vivian L. Williams House is $435,100. |
| **Recommendation for Designation**: | Exterior designation of the house and all the property within Mecklenburg County parcel 03712312. |
| **Name/Address of Current Property Owner**: | Charles L. Assenco and Linda W. Comer<br>5906 Crestwood Drive<br>Charlotte, NC 28216 |

## Chain of Title

| Grantor | Grantee | Date | Deed Book/Page | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hyde Park Estates, Inc. | Charles Warren Williams and wife, Vivian L. Williams | September 13, 1962 | 2364/297 | |
| Vivian L. Williams (divorced) | Charles Warren Williams (divorced) | August 29, 1969 | 3115/152 | Vivian Lewie Williams, first wife of Charles Warren Williams |
| Vivian L. Williams (by will) | LaVoyne R. Pettice | August 1, 2002 | 13886/109 | Vivian Lyons Williams, second wife of Charles Warren Williams; property willed to her, 82-E-874 |
| LaVoyne R. Pettice (widow) | Charles L. Assenco and Linda W. Comer (Tenants in Common) | December 20, 2006 | 21357/626 | |
| *Source: Register of Deeds Office, Mecklenburg County* | | | | |

# Abstract

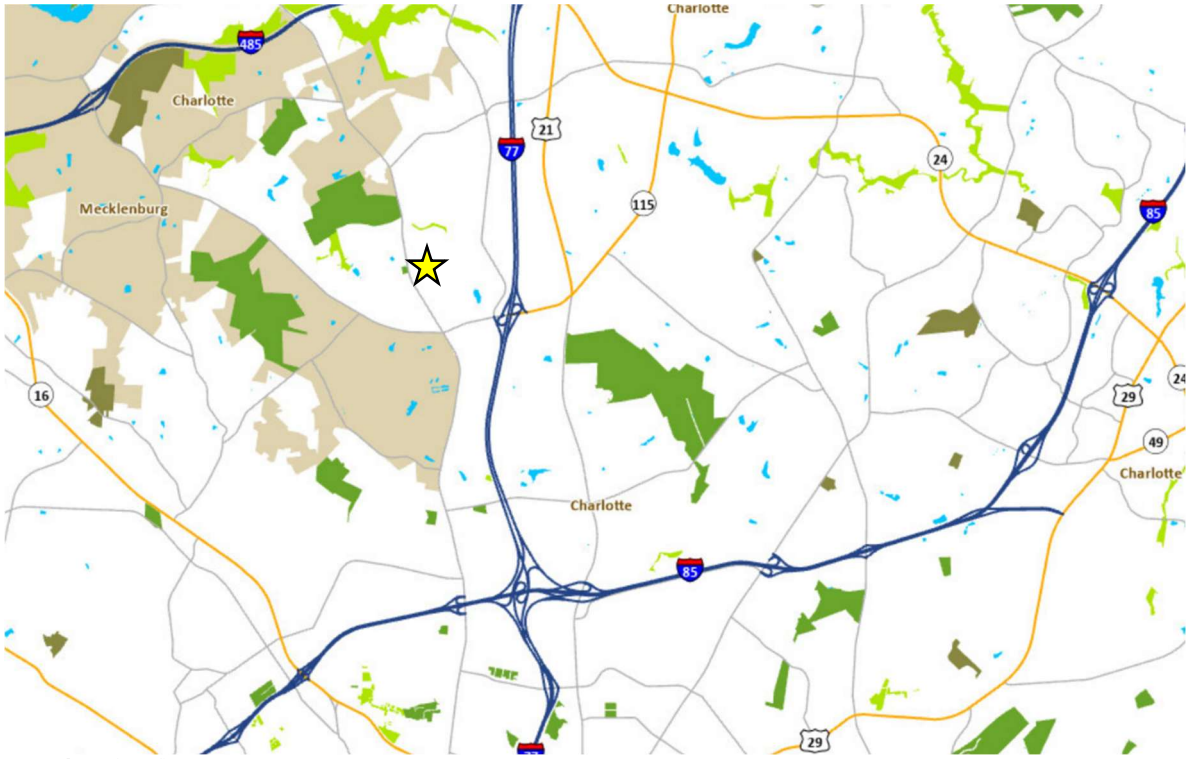
## Statement of Significance

The Dr. C. Warren and Vivian L. Williams House in Hyde Park Estates is significant for its association with surgeon Dr. Charles Warren Williams. Among his many accomplishments, Dr. Williams integrated Charlotte Memorial Hospital, helped establish the community health center which today bears his name, and partnered in Black-focused developments. He and his wife Vivian Lewie Williams, an educator in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, were instrumental in the design and development of Hyde Park Estates, a suburban upper-middle class neighborhood on the Beatties Ford Road corridor. Built ca. 1963, the Williams House is a well-preserved example of a large split-level ranch home with brick veneer, expansive windows, deep eaves, and contemporary details.

## Integrity Statement

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Location** | High | The Dr. C. Warren and Vivian L. Williams House is located at its original site of construction. |
| **Design** | Medium | The Dr. C. Warren and Vivian L. Williams House possesses a medium degree of integrity of design. Changes which have altered the original appearance of the house are limited to replacement of picture windows on the façade, replacement of doors, and expansion of the screen porch on the east elevation. |
| **Setting** | High | The Dr. C. Warren and Vivian L. Williams House retains a high degree of setting. It is located within Hyde Park Estates, a residential development of large 1960s and 1970s homes that typify the architectural trends of that period. |
| **Materials** | Medium | The Dr. C. Warren and Vivian L. Williams House retains a medium degree of materials that are original to the home's ca. 1963 date of construction. |
| **Workmanship** | High | The Dr. C. Warren and Vivian L. Williams House displays a high degree of workmanship of 1960s high-end home construction. |
| **Feeling** | High | The Dr. C. Warren and Vivian L. Williams House has a high sense of feeling as a mid-century split-level ranch in a quiet suburban neighborhood with spacious lots. |
| **Association** | High | The Dr. C. Warren and Vivian L. Williams House is historically significant for its association with Dr. Charles Warren Williams, the first Black doctor to practice at Charlotte Memorial Hospital and a co-developer with Vivian of Hyde Park Estates. |

# Maps




*Source: Polaris (2025)*

*Source: Polaris (2025)*

## Historical Background

The Dr. C. Warren and Vivian L. Williams House in Hyde Park Estates is significant for its association with surgeon Dr. Charles Warren Williams. Among his many accomplishments, Dr. Williams integrated Charlotte Memorial Hospital, helped establish the community health center which today bears his name, and partnered in Black-focused developments. He and his wife Vivian Lewie Williams, an educator in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, were instrumental in the design and development of Hyde Park Estates, a suburban upper-middle class neighborhood on the Beatties Ford Road corridor.

Charles Warren Williams, Sr., was born in 1925 in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. He was the son of Warren Cicero Williams, the Farm Bureau agent for Black farmers in Christian County, and schoolteacher Corrye Lee Newell Williams. He had one sister, Luella Eudora Williams (1928-2021), who would later become a psychology professor and president of the State University of New York at Old Westbury, the first African American to hold the position in the SUNY system. Dr. Williams attended Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree, and continued to Meharry Medical College. He graduated in 1947, then began a three-year surgical internship at Kate Bitting Reynolds Memorial Hospital, one of seven Black hospitals approved by the American Medical Association for training of resident physician and surgeons, in Winston-Salem.[1]

While in Nashville, Dr. Williams met Ophelia Vivian Lewie, an assistant professor at Tennessee State A&T University. Born in 1923 in Columbia, South Carolina, Vivian was the daughter of Dr. Lemuel Arthur Lewie and Ophelia Vivian McDaniel Lewie. Dr. Lewie was a graduate of Howard University Dental School and the first Black dentist to have an office on Main Street in Columbia. She attended college locally, graduating from Allen University in 1942. Vivian then enrolled in graduate school at the University of Michigan, where she earned a Master of Arts degree in psychology. They married in April 1947, and Vivian taught at Winston-Salem State Teachers College while Dr. Williams completed his residency. He was drafted during the Korean War, serving for 19 months including service as acting chief of surgery at the 21st Evacuation Hospital at Busan, South Korea. Returning to the United States, the Williamses moved to Kansas City, Missouri, where Dr. Williams completed a second residency in general surgery at General Hospital No. 2. During this time, they had two children, Pamela Ann Williams in 1952 and Charles Warren Williams, Jr., in 1954.[2]

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[1] "Dr. Luella "Eudora" (Williams) Pettigrew," Spicer-Mullikan Funeral Homes & Crematory, https://spicermullikin.com/dr-luella-eudora-williams-pettigrew/, accessed March 19, 2025; L. Eudora Pettigrew papers, University of Delaware Library Special Collections, https://findingaids.lib.udel.edu/repositories/2/resources/1485, accessed March 21, 2025; Jennie Rankin, "A Force to Be Reckoned With," Archives @ MSU, blog, https://msuarchives.wordpress.com/2023/03/21/a-force-to-be-reckoned-with/, accessed March 21, 2025; "Hospital Here Is Rated High in Training," *Winston-Salem Journal*, July 20, 1947.

[2] "In Memoriam: Lemuel Arthur Lewie, Jr." AFRO News, August 19, 2019, https://afro.com/in-memoriam-lemuel-arthur-lewie-jr/, accessed March 21, 2025; "Doctor Opens Local Office," *Charlotte Observer*, September 18, 1954; Ophelia Vivian Lewie Williams, https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/legacyremembers/ophelia-williams-obituary?id=28299713.

Dr. Williams completed his residency in June 1954, and the family moved to Charlotte. He opened his first practice at 404½ E. First Street in the Brooklyn neighborhood and joined the staff at Good Samaritan Hospital, which served Charlotte's Black patients. The Williamses purchased a new construction home at 1418 Russell Avenue in Oaklawn Park, developed by Ervin Construction Company specifically for Black homebuyers along the Beatties Ford Road corridor, in September 1955. Dr. Williams partnered with general practitioner Dr. Emery L. Rann and dentist Dr. Reginald A. Hawkins, both residents of nearby McCrorey Heights, to open the Northwest Clinic at 1218 Beatties Ford Road in 1957.[3]

## Civil Rights in Charlotte Health Care

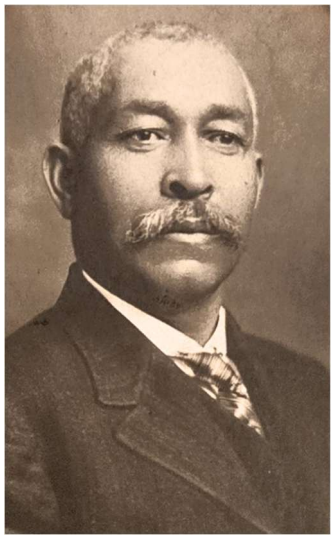

**Figure 1** Dr. M. T. Pope was the first licensed doctor in North Carolina. From NC History Center on the Civil War, Emancipation & Reconstruction, https://nccivilwarcenter.org/dr-manassa-thomas-pope-and-family/, accessed March 20, 2025.

The first Black medical doctor in North Carolina is recognized as Dr. James Francis Shober (1853-1889) of Wilmington, born enslaved who attended medical school at Howard University. He was not the first to be licensed, with that distinction held by Dr. Manessa Thomas Pope (1858-1934). Born to free Black parents in Northampton County, he attended Shaw University in Raleigh. He then continued to the newly established Leonard Medical School, the first Black medical school in the state, graduating in its inaugural class in 1886. As he and other Black physicians were excluded from the North Carolina Medical Society, they founded the Old North State Medical Society. In 1892 Dr. Pope moved to Charlotte, where he practiced medicine and co-founded the Queen City Drug Store, the first Black-owned pharmacy in the city, with Dr. J. T. Williams. After military service during the Spanish American War, he returned to Raleigh where he practiced until retiring in 1919.[4]

[3] "Doctor Opens Local Office," *Charlotte Observer*, September 18, 1954; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 1804, Page 130; *Charlotte Observer*, March 10, 1957.

[4] William S. Powell, "James Francis Shober," NCPedia, Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press, https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/shober-james-francis, accessed March 19, 2025; Jaymie Baxley, "N. C. Doctor Who Broke Racial Barriers Left a Lasting Legacy," *Charlotte Post*, March 3, 2024; "A New Colored Physician," *Charlotte Observer*, April 27, 1892.

**Figure 2** Postcard of Good Samaritan Hospital. "Good Samaritan Hospital: From the Mary Boyer Postcard Collection, J. Murray Atkins Library Special Collections, UNC Charlotte. From Paving the Way for Progress," Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, blog entry, May 26, 2020, https://www.cmlibrary.org/blog/good-samaritan-hospital-paving-way-progress, accessed March 19, 2025.

Due to the work of white philanthropist Jane Renwick Smedberg Wilkes (1827-1913), the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina opened Good Samaritan Hospital, the first privately owned Black hospital in the state, in 1891. Dr. J. T. Williams and Dr. D. E. Caldwell were the first doctors on staff, and Dr. James A. Pethel practiced at the facility from 1904 to 1950.[5] When Dr. Williams came to Charlotte in 1954, Good Samaritan was his only option for hospital privileges. Soon after his arrival, however, changes were underway in the Charlotte medical community. While private grants funded the renovation of Good Samaritan, voters had approved bonds to enlarge Charlotte Memorial Hospital to include segregated facilities for Black patients. By the late 1950s, the Diocese could no longer fund the facility. In 1961 the City of Charlotte purchased the hospital for $1.00 and brought under the umbrella of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Hospital Authority with the new name Charlotte Community Hospital.[6]

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[5] "Good Samaritan Hospital: Paving the Way for Progress," Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, blog entry, May 26, 2020, https://www.cmlibrary.org/blog/good-samaritan-hospital-paving-way-progress, accessed March 19, 2025.

[6] Emery L. Rann, "The Good Samaritan Hospital of Charlotte, North Carolina," *Journal of the National Medical Association* 56, no. 3 (May 1964), 223-226; William H. Huffman and Thomas W. Hanchett, "Old Good Samaritan Hospital," Historical Overview, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission (March 6, 1985), http://landmarkscommission.org/2016/11/09/old-good-samaritan-hospital/, accessed March 19, 2025.

For years, the medical providers and staff at Good Samaritan Hospital had made do with what they had. According to a November 2002 interview with alumni of the Good Samaritan nursing school,

> In the '40s and '50s, they said, the hospital's doctors and nurses dealt with chronic shortages of money, linen and modern equipment by improvising, chipping in their own money and taking on extra chores. Nurses bought curtains, painted rooms, mopped floors, cleaned bathrooms and washed windows.[7]

The level of care at Good Samaritan Hospital, and by proxy Charlotte's Black healthcare providers, was called into question by the Charlotte *Observer* editorial board in the October 15, 1959, issue. The board pointed to a repeat strike of nurses and nursing students as evidence of inept leadership. They also voiced support for the takeover of the hospital by the Hospital Authority, though they offered no solution to inequity of care in Charlotte's hospitals. Most egregiously, the editorial board insulted the work of Dr. Williams and other staff:

> And finally, most fundamental of all, is the shameful fact that medical care and treatment at Good Samaritan is substandard. The Negro doctors and the Negro nurses, because of inadequate training supervision, are simply not the equals of their counterparts at the three other hospitals in the community. The patients suffer accordingly.[8]

On October 20, a letter written by Dr. Williams was published in the *Observer*. His response was graceful yet pointed. He noted the hypocrisy of the editorial board in their prejudiced view of the treatment patients received at Good Samaritan Hospital. Dr. Williams noted the state board of medical examiners was not segregated, and both Black and white doctors "had to pass and present the same qualifications." Similarly, he wrote, "A large percentage of the white physicians treat Negro patients at Good Samaritan Hospital. Does it follow that these men are lesser physicians because they have to treat their patients at this hospital facility?" His closing statement essentially called the board on their racism, couching his criticism in chiding tones:

> This is the type of statement which has promoted the idea for the past ninety-five years that 'white is right' when all thinking men must realize that there are excellent, average and poor physicians despite the men's race or national origin.[9]

Kelly Alexander, state president of the NAACP, commented later in the day to the *News* that the general plea that Memorial was too crowded to take Black patients was "merely an evasive tactic to deny Negroes their right to proper medical care."[10]

This injustice published for all to see fueled what the *Charlotte Post* later called "controlled self-directed anger" for Dr. Williams.[11] To access better treatment facilities for Charlotte's Black

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[7] "Site of Good Sam Marked," *Charlotte Observer*, November 13, 2002.
[8] "Here's a Way to Provide for Negro Medical Needs," *Charlotte Observer*, October 15, 1959.
[9] "A Doctor Defends Negro Physicians," *Charlotte Observer*, October 20, 1959.
[10] Ed Yoder, "Question of Hospital Authority Is Raised," *Charlotte News*, October 20, 1959.
[11] "Dr. Charles W. Williams: The Angry Young Man!" *Charlotte Post*, May 13, 1982.

community, he would have to draw the ire of his peers by accepting what they saw as second-class treatment. In 1961 Dr. Williams was one of four Black doctors accepted as scientific members of the North Carolina Medical Society. This membership limited Black doctors to purely business matters in the society; they were not permitted to participate in social activities at the county or state level. The Mecklenburg County Medical Society had chosen to forgo any social activities rather than allow Black doctors to take part. The Charlotte Medical Society, comprised of Black physicians, censured Dr. Williams for accepting the membership.[12]

Becoming a member of the state medical society was necessary for the next step: In July 1961 Dr. Williams applied for membership at Charlotte Memorial Hospital. The hospital's bylaws required medical staff to belong to the Mecklenburg County Medical Society (which had allowed Black membership since 1955), the state medical society, and the American Medical Association. Once Dr. Williams accepted the lesser state membership, he was eligible to apply. The hospital board required Dr. Williams to complete senior surgical residency training and pass a specialty board examination before his admission.[13]

**Figure 3** Dr. Williams shortly after joining the staff at Charlotte Memorial Hospital. Demont Roseman, "The Operation Was Unique," *Charlotte News*, November 12, 1962.

On November 5, 1962, Dr. Williams became the first Black doctor granted medical privileges at Charlotte Memorial Hospital. He was appointed associate classification, active staff, department of general surgery. The door had been opened by Dr. Williams, and the following year the medical advisory council of the hospital voted unanimously to remove all impediments for Black doctors to join the hospital staff. In September 1963 Dr. Emery L. Rann, a partner with Dr. Williams at the Northwest Clinic, was the second Black doctor to join the staff. By December 1964, three additional Black doctors had been granted medical privileges at Memorial.[14]

## Hyde Park Estates

While working to desegregate Charlotte Memorial Hospital, Dr. Williams and Vivian were planning to develop a new neighborhood for Black professionals like themselves. According to historian John Howard, Hyde Park Estates was "the last neighborhood developed by, and for, African Americans during the modern day civil rights movement in Charlotte."[15] Hyde Park Estates is a continuation of Black-focused suburban

[12] "Negro Doctors Still Denied Full Membership," *Charlotte News*, May 8, 1961; "Negro Doctor Joins Staff at Memorial," *Charlotte News*, November 5, 1962.

[13] "Negro Doctor Joins Staff at Memorial," *Charlotte News*, November 5, 1962; "Hospital Men OK Negro," *Charlotte Observer*, September 24, 1963.

[14] "Negro Doctor Joins Staff at Memorial," *Charlotte News*, November 5, 1962; "Hospital Group Votes to Allow Negro Doctors," *Charlotte Observer*, July 2, 1963; "Hospital Men OK Negro," *Charlotte Observer*, September 24, 1963; "Memorial Admits 3 Negro Doctors," *Charlotte Observer*, December 12, 1964.

[15] John Howard, *The Friendly Village of Hyde Park Estates: A Mid-20th Century African American Suburb in Charlotte, NC*, unpublished manuscript (2014), 14.

development along Beatties Ford Road in northwest Charlotte. In 1910 Washington Heights, a streetcar suburb for Black working- and middle-class buyers, was developed by white-owned Freehold Realty Company, who contracted for marketing Black businessman C. H. Watson. Like white contemporary developments Elizabeth and Wilmore, Washington Heights was filled with single-family bungalows along the tree-lined streets.[16]

Next, Watson began marketing Douglassville, named after famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass, across Beatties Ford Road. However, development faltered, and JCSU president Dr. Henry L. McCrorey took over the property. He replatted it in the late 1940s as McCrorey Heights and sold lots until his death in 1951. His children continued its development, with daughter Novella McCrorey Flannagan and traveling between Harlem and a house she constructed in the neighborhood to oversee sales. Many notable Black Charlotteans moved into the neighborhood from Brooklyn, which was increasingly facing white scrutiny for redevelopment. Both Dr. Reginald A. Hawkins and Dr. Emery L. Rann, partners of Dr. Williams at Northwest Clinic, constructed homes in McCrorey Heights along with other local civic, business, and educational leaders.[17]

The post-World War II housing boom may have primarily targeted white homebuyers, but Charlotte companies recognized a similar market among Black middle-class families. In 1955 Ervin Construction Company, a Charlotte-based homebuilder that grew to become one of the largest builders in the southeast, purchased property north of privately-owned Oaklawn Cemetery across Oaklawn Avenue from McCrorey Heights. They platted the neighborhood, named Oaklawn Park, and sold houses like those in their other contemporary developments around Charlotte. Concurrently, rival company C. D. Spangler Construction Company worked in conjunction with civil rights activist Fred Alexander to create the University Park neighborhood farther out on Beatties Ford Road. These two new developments offered new, modern homes to Black families, while fulfilling federal requirements that homebuilders prevent Black buyers in white subdivisions in the southern and eastern areas of Charlotte.[18]

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[16] Howard, *Hyde Park Estates*, 4.

[17] Thomas W. Hanchett, "McCrorey Heights: Making History in an African American Neighborhood," McCrorey Heights, August 2, 2018, https://mccrorey.historysouth.org/, accessed March 21, 2025.

[18] Thomas W. Hanchett, "Oaklawn Park, an African American Neighborhood in Charlotte," unpublished manuscript, September 15, 2019, https://www.historysouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Oaklawn-Park-Hanchett.pdf, accessed March 21, 2025; Brandon Lunsford, "University Park Historical Essay," Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, March 10, 2020, http://landmarkscommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/University-Park-Historical-Essay-EAS-edit-2.0.pdf, accessed March 21, 2025; Howard, *Hyde Park Estates*, 10.

**Figure 4** This house at 1418 Russell Avenue in Oaklawn Park was the first residence of the Williamses. Photo by Nick Linville.

The Williamses were original residents of Oaklawn Park. Daughter Pamela remembered the neighborhood as a tight-knit, diverse socio-economic community. However, even these contemporary Black neighborhoods lacked immunity from city and federal planning policy. Dr. Spurgeon Webber (4200 Hyde Park Drive), a dentist who moved from McCrorey Heights to Hyde Park Estates, explained why professionals like himself and Dr. Williams desired a suburban development outside of town:

> There was a great need at the time for a development such as Hyde Park Estates. There was Urban Renewal occurring in downtown Charlotte, uprooting many Black families, the Brookshire Expressway was being built, necessitating the removal of an entire street of lovely homes in McCrorey Heights where many of our Black professionals lived. It was a time during and shortly after the 1964 Civil Rights Act was passed and Charlotte's white residents still had not welcomed Blacks in their communities. Hyde Park Estates gave my wife and I the opportunity to build and invest in a community that gave us a sense of pride in being a part of a unique restricted Black owned development where we felt safe in living and raising our children around caring neighbors.[19]

[19] Dr. Spurgeon and Jean Webber, interview provided by Jean Webber, September 15, 2012, in Howard, *Hyde Park Estates*, 16.

Dr. Williams and fellow surgeon Dr. Walter Washington partnered to create what would be Hyde Park Estates. A graduate of Morehouse College and fellow alumnus Meharry Medical College, Dr. Washington had joined the Good Samaritan Hospital staff as a resident surgeon in 1957 and became chief of the medical staff in 1962.[20]

Julia Hoffman Saunders (4323 LaBrea Drive), who along with husband James would be longtime residents of Hyde Park Estates, witnessed the challenges of Black residential development. She noted in a 2013 interview that the intended location for the neighborhood, originally named The Moors, was near the intersection of Statesville Road and Lakeview Road. However, Dr. Williams and Dr. Washington chose to abandon that site due to their inability to acquire a key parcel. Racism also played its part. Julia remembered, "When the sign went up on the site to announce the development, someone erected a sign next to it saying 'Stay home n******'."[21] The doctors identified a suitable site nearby along Beatties Ford Road. While the white landowner refused to sell them the land, his children were more than happy to after his death.

Plats were filed in April 1962 for the renamed Hyde Park Estates. Rosalia Durante (6000 Sierra Drive) recalled that Vivian was inspired to name the streets after a trip to California. She and Dr. Williams visited upper-middle class Black neighborhoods with names like La Brea, Crestwood, Meridian, Sierra, and Hyde Park.[22] Vivian was also instrumental in crafting the neighborhood covenants and deed restrictions. Houses were to cost no less than $13,000.00 and be a minimum size of 1,300 square feet on the main level. For split-level homes like the Williams House, "the main level of the ground floor shall not be less than 1000 square feet heated area and the entire heated area shall not be less than 1500 square feet."[23] All driveways were to be paved. In October 1962, Hyde Park Estates, Inc. was incorporated by Dr. Williams as president and Dr. Washington as secretary. Rev. Daniel O. Hennigan, the first Black member of the Charlotte Board of Realtors, was contracted to sell lots through his Hennigan Realty Company.

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[20] "M. D. Opens New Offices," *Charlotte Observer*, August 2, 1959; Demont Roseman, "Good Sam Orders Own Investigation," *Charlotte News*, December 14, 1962.

[21] James and Julia Saunders, interview with John Howard, May 19, 2013, in Howard, *Hyde Park Estates*, 36.

[22] Rosalia Durante, interview with John Howard, February 2, 2013; in Howard, *Hyde Park Estates*, 15.

[23] Mecklenburg County Deed Book 2348, Page 539.

2

**Gracious Suburban Living**

in

**Beautiful Hyde Park Estates**

Highly restricted homesites of more than one-half acre.
Mecklenburg's only Negro Subdivision for Custom Building.
3.4 miles beyond Interstate Hwy. 85 on Beattie's Ford Road.
Paved streets, but no thru-traffic.

**Salesman Will Be On Premises From 2-5 P.M., Sunday, October 28th**

**Hennigan Realty Company**

**Call 399-9435**

**Figure 5** Advertisement for Hyde Park Estates. *Charlotte Observer*, October 28, 1962.

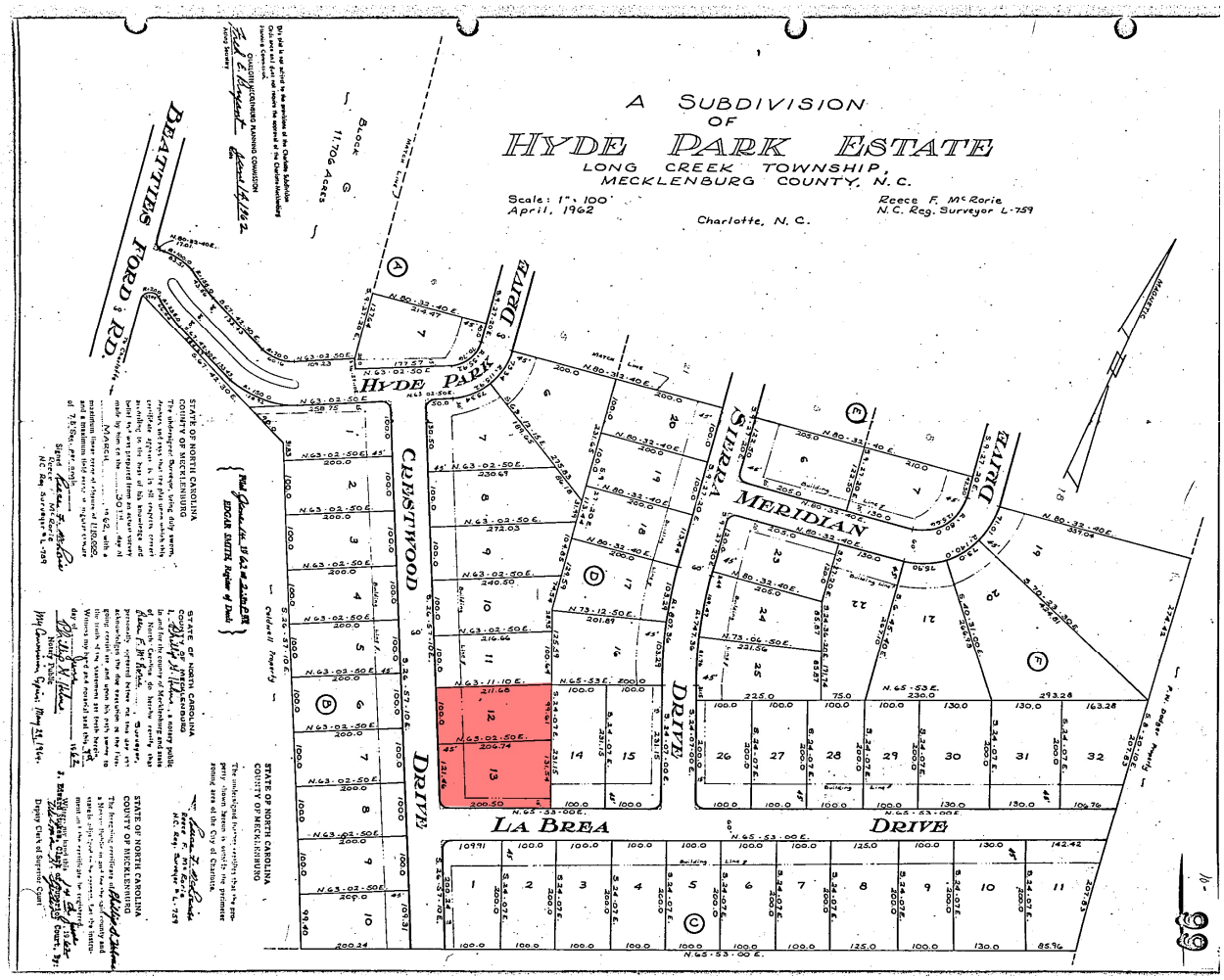


**Figure 6** The lots purchased by the Williamses are highlighted in red. Mecklenburg County Map Book 10, Page 99.

Dr. Williams and Vivian selected Lots 12 and 13 of Block D at the corner of Crestwood Drive and La Brea Drive. While daughter Pamela Williams Coote was sad to leave her community in Oaklawn Park, she later understood their vision: "My mother was the woman behind the King, and she helped guide some of his decisions. My father was brilliant, he was a visionary. Hyde Park Estates was a wonderful vision brought to fruition by my father and mother."[24]

[24] Pamela Williams-Coote, interview by John Howard, May 24, 2013, from Howard, *Hyde Park Estates*, 26.

## C. W. Williams Community Health Center

**Figure 7** Dr. Williams was among the investors in East Independence Plaza, the largest Black-developed building in the Southeast. *Charlotte Observer*, May 7, 1972.

Dr. Williams continued developing properties in the 1970s. He was a limited partner in Westside Professional Associates, a group of Black professionals, which purchased property in the Brooklyn Urban Renewal area to develop an office tower. East Independence Plaza, designed by A. G. Odell Associates, opened in 1973. Among its early tenants were a group of Black doctors practicing as Independence Medical Center, the law firm headed by Julius Chambers, Motley Realty Company, Dalebrook Pharmacy, and architecture firm Gantt/Huberman Associates.[25]

Access to healthcare for Black Charlotteans remained an ongoing issue. When Charlotte Memorial Hospital fully integrated in 1963, Charlotte Community Hospital lost a majority of its patients. It was converted to a long-term care facility in 1965. By 1981 the number of patients had dwindled, and

[25] Allan Sloan, "Black-Planned Plaza Already a Landmark," *Charlotte Observer*, May 7, 1972.

reduced Medicare and Medicaid payments resulted in a $600,000 deficit. In May, the hospital authority closed Charlotte Community Hospital to patients as part of a deal to allow for the construction of a new hospital near UNC Charlotte on the site of the Green Acres rest home. The facility was repurposed into The Magnolias rest home until being demolished in 1990 for construction of a football stadium for an expansion NFL team, the Carolina Panthers.[26]

In 1978 a group including Dr. Williams, Dr. John Matthew Murphy, the Association for Sickle Cell Disease for Charlotte Metrolina, Inc., and the Charlotte Medical, Dental and Pharmaceutical Society applied for a six-month planning grant from the federal Department of Health and Human Services to provide health care services to medically underserved areas of Charlotte. The grant was awarded in November 1979, and in April 1980 project coordinator Thelma Council was hired to write the grant application for the operational funding.[27] Local and state approval of the project was required. On September 16 the Southern Piedmont Health Systems Agency (HSA), the regional health planning body for eight counties including Mecklenburg, deferred action on the proposed Metrolina Comprehensive Health Center (MCHC). They wanted board chair Dr. Williams and others to discuss their plans with other doctors and other health care officials in the area to discuss potential referral patterns.[28] MCHC officials addressed the concerns from the September 16 meeting—received advice and approval from the Mecklenburg County Medical Society, worked out formal referral agreements with Charlotte Memorial Hospital, and coordinated plans with the county Health Department. Mecklenburg County Commissioner Liz Hair, a member of HSA, said the September 23 meeting between the parties was "one of the most positive I have ever attended." At a special meeting two weeks later, HSA unanimously endorsed MCHC's application for a $353,682 federal grant to build the community health facility. Dr. Williams said that any remaining problems would present "no major obstacles" to resolve with health officials.[29]

Progress on the health center quickly moved forward. In January 1981 MCHC was awarded a $250,000 grant from the federal Department of Health and Human Services with the remaining request of just over $100,000 held for personnel and site renovation plan approval. The former American Cynamid Building at 3333 Wilkinson Boulevard was selected as the health center site with renovations designed by architects Gantt/Huberman Associates.[30]

MCHC opened on October 7, 1981. Thelma Council, who held a master's degree in health administration and had been hired to write the grants in 1980, served as executive director. Two physicians were contracted for service—Dr. Deborah Scott, a private practice pediatrician, and Dr. Earl Epps—in addition to an LPN and Deborah Williamson, family health worker. The clinic was

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[26] Robert Conn, "Hospital Getting New Name, Purpose," *Charlotte Observer,* May 6, 1983; Deborah Gates, "Closed Community Hospital Begins Rest-Home Conversion," *Charlotte News,* March 17, 1983; Valerie Reitman, "New Hospital Was Built Despite Health Agency's Veto," *Charlotte Observer*, December 7, 1986.
[27] "$250,000 Grant to Provide Health Care Services for 'The Underserved'," *Charlotte Post*, January 15, 1981.
[28] Barbara Barnett, "Action Put Off on Medical Clinic Plan," *Charlotte News*, September 17, 1980.
[29] Robert Conn, "Agency Backs Grant Bid for Southwest City Health Center," *Charlotte Observer*, October 1, 1980.
[30] "$250,000 Grant to Provide Health Care Services for 'The Underserved'," *Charlotte Post*, January 15, 1981; *Charlotte Observer*, May 11, 1981.

estimated to serve 2,000 patients in its first year. The target area for MCHC was twenty census tracts in southwest and northwest Charlotte. MCHC would provide services and referrals for preventative dentistry, social services, vision care, prenatal care, adolescent and adult care, family planning, and other services. Fees would be on a sliding scale. Dr. Williams served as the medical director, but his tenure would unfortunately be short.[31]

On April 23, 1982, Dr. Williams entered Charlotte Memorial Hospital for heart surgery. He died while undergoing a dissection of the thoracic aorta. Remembrances and laudations poured in from the Charlotte medical and civil rights community. Dr. Bryant Galusha, director of medical education at Charlotte Memorial Hospital, said Dr. Williams was "a fine gentleman and physician in every sense of the word." Dr. Harold Hamit, associate director of general surgery at Memorial, noted his history of Black activism in medicine. Julius Chambers, attorney and civil rights leader, echoed these sentiments: "He was one of the principal black physicians in the community pushing for equal opportunities for black medical and dental providers." Community leader L. C. Coleman noted, "They wouldn't have gotten the health clinic on Wilkinson Boulevard if it hadn't been for Dr. Williams."[32]

[31] Robert Conn, "Health Center Opens Doors Today to Southwestern Charlotte's Poor," *Charlotte Observer*, October 7, 1981; Teresa Burns, "Health Center Provides Needed Medical Services," *Charlotte Post*, October 15, 1981. It should be noted that the only major newspaper article I found celebrating its opening was tucked away on page 5C in the Observer.

[32] "Dr. C. W. Williams Dies at 58," *Charlotte News*, April 23, 1982.

Metrolina Comprehensive Health Care Center
Now Operating Under New Name.....
In honor of our deceased Board Chairman.....
C.W. WILLIAMS
HEALTH CENTER
The Center provides primary health care for the Entire Family regardless of race, creed, income or place of residence. (Financial assistance available only to Mecklenburg County residents.)
Services Include
Immunizations, Physicals (sports, marriage, employment & camp). Preventive Dentistry, Management of Chronic Diseases, Pediatrics & Adolescent Care, Treatment for Communicable Diseases.
Dr. Howard E. Wilson, Full-Time Family Physician
Mon.-Wed.-Fri. 9-5:30 Tues. & Thurs. 11:30-8:00
3333 Wilkinson Blvd.
Corner of Wilkinson & Donald Ross

**Figure 8** Advertisement in the *Charlotte Post*, October 21, 1982.

Dr. Williams and Vivian divorced in 1968, and she moved to California where she completed a Master of Science in education at the University of Southern California. A licensed Marriage Family Child Counselor, she taught psychology and worked as a counselor at Compton Community College until retiring in 2003. Dr. Williams remarried in 1972 to educator Vivian Lyons. A native of St. Louis, Missouri, she was a graduate of Harris Stowe Teachers College in St. Louis and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.[33] They had two sons, Christopher who died in infancy, and Warren. After Dr. Williams' death, his second wife Vivian owned the house until 2002.

[33] "Vivian Lyons Williams," *Charlotte Observer*, September 13, 2022.

## Architectural Description

The parcel considered for local landmark designation as the Dr. C. Warren and Vivian L. Williams House contains one contributing resource, the ca. 1963 Williams House; and two noncontributing resources, the ca. 1983 concrete pool and deck and ca. 1983 pool house.

The Dr. C. Warren and Vivian L. Williams House is a long split-level ranch with gabled asphalt shingle roofs and primarily sheathed in brick veneer. The house is located on a one-acre parcel at the corner of Crestwood Drive and La Brea Drive in the Hyde Park Estates neighborhood of northwest Charlotte. The property is relatively flat with mature trees in the front yard and along Crestwood Drive. The Williams House faces south with the façade fronting La Brea Drive. A concrete driveway and parking area are located on the west side of the house with access from Crestwood Drive.

The Williams House has medium integrity of materials. Current owners Charles Assenco and Linda Comer purchased the home in 2006, which was in a moderate state of disrepair. Replacements and changes have been minimal. These include replacement windows, removal of a skylight in the two-story section due to water damage, replacement and expansion of the screen porch on the east elevation, and new exterior doors. Common materials and design elements of the Williams House include deep eaves with plywood soffits, wide board-and-batten wood siding, and expansive windows in the one-story section.[34]

[34] Linda Comer and Chuck Assenco, interview with author, February 26, 2025.

The façade of the Williams House is three bays wide and is comprised of a front-gabled two-story section with lower level partially below grade, a stepped side-gabled one-story main level, and side-gabled garage bay stepped forward from the primary façade. A concrete sidewalk leads from the west parking area to the front entrance. Both the parking area and sidewalk have scattered original brick retaining walls. The boxwood shrubs at the façade are believed to be original landscaping.

The front-gabled two-story section has brick veneer with a centered wood board-and-batten section. Pairs of replacement 2-lite horizontal sliding windows are at each level separated by a trimmed plywood panel.

The side-gabled one-story section includes the entry stoop and a trio of new picture windows, which replaced six original windows. Wide brick steps and bluestone stoop lead to the recessed entry, which has narrow wood board-and-batten siding and a replacement front door with sidelight. A wide rectangular brick chimney rises at the ridge of the highest stepped roof section.

The garage bay has a quad of fixed windows with wide wood board-and-batten siding below. Its west elevation has brick veneer flanking the two-car garage door with wide wood board-and-batten siding above.

Flush with the west garage elevation is an uncovered brick and concrete porch extending back along the garage north elevation to a recessed entry to the primary one-story section of the house. A concrete sidewalk leads from the parking area to the inset brick steps. The recessed entry is enclosed with a brick wingwall and has a replacement door with storm door and fixed window. New brick with darker mortar infills between the wingwall and window. A solid wood door on the north elevation of the garage bay is near the recessed entry. The recessed entry has a wood soffit.

The rear elevation of the Williams House faces north. The backyard is accessed by a concrete sidewalk and is enclosed with a new aluminum fence. The rear elevation is similar in massing to the façade with a front-gabled two-story section and a stepped side-gabled one-story section. The higher stepped gable section extends its north roof plane to create a den stepped down from the entry level of the house.

The north elevation of the one-story section has a pair of 2-lite horizontal sliding windows with wood board-and-batten siding above. The west window has a trimmed wood panel below.

The den has a vertical bay with wide wood board-and-batten siding below with a picture window in the gable.

The north elevation of the den has five floor-to-ceiling picture windows overhanging the recessed foundation. The east elevation features the rear entry with an uncovered porch and replacement sliding glass doors with a full-width sidelight and transom in gable. The porch has wood deck on brick foundation. Wrought iron railing with decorative geometric detail is at the porch and wood steps.

The rear elevation of the front-gabled two-story section is similar to its front elevation, with wide wood board-and-batten siding in the center section. Windows at the upper level are a tripartite picture window and narrow fixed window with wide trim between. The lower level has a pair of replacement 2-lite horizontal sliding windows with trimmed wood panel between.

A hipped porch bay is centered on the east elevation. It has a screen porch at the upper level which covers entrances at the lower level. The porch is supported by square section wood posts on brick piers. The east elevation in the porch bay has wood board-and-batten siding. The screen porch has square section wood posts with wrought iron railing inside the screen.

A brick and concrete patio with brick planters and retaining walls is original to the house. According to Linda, the Williamses loved to entertain.[35]

[35] Linda Comer and Chuck Assenco, interview with author, February 26, 2025.

Ca. 1983 Pool and Pool House

According to Linda and Chuck, the pool was full of vegetation when they purchased the property in 2006. They had the pool restored and a new concrete deck poured. The slide was extant.

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