

NR 6/1/15  
NRHP 6/17/15

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 How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Norfolk Azalea Garden  
Other Names/site number: Norfolk Municipal Garden, Norfolk Garden, and Norfolk Botanical Gardens (Preferred)  
DHR File # 122-1007

2. Location

street & number: 6700 Azalea Garden Road not for publication: \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town: Norfolk vicinity: \_\_\_\_\_  
state: Virginia code: VA county: Independent City code: 710 Zip 23518

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 X meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_\_\_ statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

M. Catherine Proser June 28, 2005  
Signature of certifying official Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:  
\_\_\_\_ entered in the National Register  
\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
\_\_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register Signature of Keeper \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
\_\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
\_\_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

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**5. Classification**

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**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**

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	structures
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>7</u>	<u>4</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

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**6. Function or Use**

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**Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Landscape Sub: Garden

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**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Landscape Sub: Garden

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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Naturalistic Landscape  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A  
roof N/A  
walls N/A  
other Earth, plant material, water

**Narrative Description** (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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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)

- X A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- X B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- X 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 a grave.
- \_\_\_ D a cemetery.
- \_\_\_ E a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- \_\_\_ F a commemorative property.
- \_\_\_ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

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**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)

Landscape Architecture  
Ethnic Heritage: African-American  
Social History

**Period of Significance** 1938-1954

**Significant Dates** 1938-1941  
April 1954

**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
Fred Huette

**Cultural Affiliation** N/A

**Architect/Builder** City of Norfolk, VA

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** approximately 30 acres

**UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
1	<u>18 392815E 4084666N</u>	2	<u>18 392398E 4084882N</u>
3	<u>18 392700E 4084506N</u>	4	<u>18 392431E 4084172N</u>

See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title: Cheryl S. White – Graduate Student

Organization: Old Dominion University date: 12/04/04

street & number: 4911 Newport Avenue Apt# 11 telephone: (757) 739-7898

city or town: Norfolk state: VA zip code: 23508

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

- Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name: City of Norfolk

street & number: 800 Union Street telephone: (757) 664-4000

city or town: Norfolk state: VA zip code: 23510

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications 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. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**Summary Description**

The Norfolk Botanical Gardens is currently a 158-acre garden located in Norfolk, Virginia. The nominated area historically known as the Norfolk Azalea Garden is comprised of the approximately 30 acres surrounding Mirror Lake, just north of the Norfolk International Airport, which made up the original garden. In 1938, during the Great Depression, Norfolk City Manager Thomas Thompson proposed the development of an azalea garden. Thompson had heard of the success of the Charleston Azalea Gardens in South Carolina, which were still making a profit during the hard fiscal times. Thompson thought that Norfolk could create an azalea garden to rival those to the south. Under the advisement of Fred Huette, Supervisor of Norfolk's Parks and Recreation, and with consultation from Charles Gillette, landscape architect, Norfolk sought federal funds under the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to begin the project. Gillette's involvement with the development of the Garden is documented in correspondence between Thompson and Gillette. The correspondence includes Gillette's original recommendations following a site visit to Norfolk and taking into account Virginia's climate. Gillette specifically advocated the planting of azaleas, rhododendrons, and hollies on the planned site.

Between 1938 and 1941, using WPA funds, 200 African American women workers undertook the task of clearing the land, removing trees, and planting azaleas and other plants. There were five other WPA projects in Virginia during the same time period that used African American women as laborers. Lee Memorial Park in Petersburg, Virginia is a larger example of this type of WPA project, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The WPA ceased funding the Norfolk Azalea Garden in October of 1941 and the garden remained under the control of the City of Norfolk.

In April 1954, Norfolk began its annual International Azalea Festival. This festival honors the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). NATO is an alliance of 26 countries from North America and Europe that was formed on April 4, 1949 when the participating countries signed the North Atlantic Treaty. As outlined by the treaty, "the fundamental role of NATO is to safeguard the freedom and security of its member countries by political and military means." The North American NATO Headquarters are located in Norfolk, Virginia. The International Azalea Festival still occurs every April bringing in visitors from all over the world.

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In 1968, an airport expansion resulted in the replanting of over 6,000 azaleas to areas north of the garden's original acreage. The expansion set the stage for the development into what is now considered the Norfolk Botanical Gardens; none of the original WPA acres were drastically affected. Following the airport expansion the garden continued to grow and currently it includes manmade canals, administration buildings and educational facilities, as well as 20 themed gardens all located to the north and outside of the nominated area.

**Detailed Description:**

The property is located on the east side of Azalea Garden Road between Norview Avenue and Little Creek Road. It is accessed by an asphalt-paved entrance road that crosses over Lake Wright via a manmade causeway. The nominated acreage is located to the south of the entrance road and surrounds Mirror Lake. The boundary of the nominated acreage is defined by the entrance road on the north and a chain-link fence on both the south and the east. The south side of the property is located directly adjacent to the Norfolk International Airport. There is an entrance on this side that can be accessed by pedestrians. The west boundary is formed by a manmade causeway, which separates Mirror Lake from Lake Wright.

The nominated area exhibits the naturalistic and wilderness trends in landscape design. The naturalistic and wilderness trends are expressed through informal, picturesque views that emphasize passive recreation and pride in local flora. The area is comprised of flat, grass-covered land encircling Mirror Lake. Mature pines shade the original WPA-era azalea bushes that line the walking trail. Many of these bushes are over six feet in height. The asphalt-paved, walking trail allows visitors the opportunity for passive recreation while experiencing the picturesque views around the lake and Norfolk's collection of azaleas. Water lilies cover portions of Mirror Lake. There is also a short peninsula that juts into Mirror Lake in the southeast corner of the nominated area. The peninsula can be accessed by pedestrians but does not feature a defined or paved trail. The peninsula is an example of how the garden's design has left natural features in an untouched, wilderness state, yet open for exploration by visitors. The nominated area also features significant camellia plantings to the north of Mirror Lake, as well as rhododendrons and hollies along the walking trail. There is a small freshwater spring located to the south of the entrance road northeast of Mirror Lake.

The choice of azaleas as the focus of the garden is directly related to their popularity and ability

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to be grown in the South. It was the popularity of azaleas that kept the Charleston Azalea Garden in South Carolina open and profitable during the Great Depression. Bryan Park, a 285-acre public park in Richmond, Virginia, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, also features azalea gardens planted in beds and arranged in designs. The collection of azalea bushes at the Norfolk Botanical Gardens has created so much local pride that their peak blooming period sets the stage for Norfolk's annual International Azalea Festival. The azaleas are an example of local flora creating local pride, and such planting choices are advocated in naturalistic and wilderness landscape designs.

The naturalistic and wilderness trends in landscape designs were often implemented by the National Park Service and were used in federal programs including the Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps that established parks and recreation areas. Lee Memorial Park in Petersburg, Virginia is another garden that uses the naturalistic and wilderness style. While the Norfolk Botanical Gardens began as a smaller project than a national park, it retains the integrity of the naturalistic and wilderness designs that were most often associated with national parks during the time of the garden's creation.

Secondary Resources

Causeways:

The nominated acreage includes two manmade causeways that were present before the development of the garden. The entrance causeway is accessed from Azalea Garden Road. It has two lanes and is asphalt-paved. The second causeway defines the west perimeter of the historic property. This causeway separates Mirror Lake from Lake Wright. It is a single lane wide and is asphalt-paved. Both of these causeways are contributing resources to the Norfolk Botanical Gardens.

Entrance Gate and Attendant's Booth:

There is an entrance gate constructed in 1973 that is located on the entrance road. The entrance gate, measuring 13'-6" in height, covers the two-lane entrance road and includes an attendant's booth and metal gates. The gate is freestanding with a concrete slab foundation and double wood piers that support the asphalt-shingled, hipped roof. The attendant's booth is one-story with a concrete slab foundation and a wood frame structural system. The booth is clad in vertical board siding and features decorative stone veneer on the base. It has an asphalt-shingled, hipped roof.



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There is a single-leaf wood door on the north elevation and a metal sliding window on the south elevation. The entrance gate and attendant's booth are non-contributing resources to the Norfolk Botanical Gardens.

Walking Trail:

The garden features a walking trail that encircles the entire perimeter of Mirror Lake. The original garden trail has been paved with asphalt but still remains in its original location, following its original path. Photos from 1938-1954 show the evolution of the walking trail. The walking trail is a contributing resource to the Norfolk Botanical Gardens.

Water fountain:

There is a stone-clad water fountain located on the walking trail to the north of the causeway between Mirror Lake and Lake Wright. The water fountain was constructed circa 1945 and is a contributing object to the Norfolk Botanical Gardens.

Spring and Mirror Lake:

There is a small, freshwater spring located to the northeast of the lake, just south of the main entrance road. Mirror Lake is encircled by the garden's original 30 acres. The spring and the lake are contributing sites to the Botanical Gardens.

Pier:

There is a wood pier located on the entrance road causeway. The pier juts to the north into Lake Wright. The pier is a non-contributing structure.

Fence:

There is a chain-link fence that defines the south and east perimeters of the garden. The fence is a non-contributing structure to the Norfolk Botanical Gardens.

Utility building:

There is a one-story utility building designed in the Modern Movement style and constructed circa 1980. It incorporates a concrete slab foundation and concrete block structural system clad

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in brick veneer. The utility building is located on the south side of the entrance road causeway before the gate. This utility building is a non-contributing structure.

Inventory:

Contributing Resources (structures, sites, and objects):

Three contributing sites: The garden's original 30 acres, Mirror Lake, and the fresh spring

Three contributing structures: The walking trail and two manmade causeways

One Contributing object: Water fountain

Non-contributing resources (structures):

Four non-contributing structures: The pier, the entrance gate/attendant's booth, a utility building, and the chain-link fence.

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**Summary Statement of Significance**

The Norfolk Botanical Gardens, historically called the Norfolk Azalea Garden, began as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project in 1938. Utilizing national trends in landscape architecture advocated by the National Park Service, 200 African-American women workers turned root-infested, swampland into a 30-acre garden. The efforts of these workers can still be seen in the unaltered design of the nominated area. The garden represents the combined efforts of local, state, and national government bodies aligned under the WPA. The Garden also commemorates the international efforts of NATO, whose North American headquarters are located in Norfolk, every April at the International Azalea Festival. This festival, started in 1954, occurs during the peak blooming period for the original azaleas planted in the nominated area, thus exposing the efforts of the original workers to an international audience. The garden owes much of its creation and success to the involvement of Fred Huette (1899-1979), Supervisor of the WPA project and later Director of the Gardens. Huette's role in the urban and landscape design of the City of Norfolk is still apparent in both physical form, as well as in the Fred Huette Center, a local garden center emphasizing horticultural education to all levels of gardeners. Huette's vision for the azalea garden led to the garden's current status as a botanical garden.

**Criteria Statement**

The nominated acreage, known as the Norfolk Azalea Garden, at the Norfolk Botanical Gardens is eligible under Criterion C because it is representative of naturalistic and wilderness trends associated with landscape architecture during the period of the garden's creation and most successfully expressed by the National Park Service. The Gardens are also eligible under Criterion B because of their association with the productive life of Fred Huette (1899-1979), the supervisor for the WPA project and later director of the garden in its most formative years as a botanical garden. The Norfolk Azalea Garden is eligible under Criterion A because it represents the efforts of the 200 African-American women workers who cleared the land, cut down trees, and planted azaleas. The garden is the physical manifestation of the combined efforts of local, state, and national government bodies aligned under the WPA.

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**Historical Background:**

**Social/Historical Events Defining the Norfolk Botanical Gardens**

**The WPA Years 1938-1941**

The garden was first conceived by Norfolk City Manager Thomas Thompson. He envisioned an azalea garden that would rival those of Charleston, South Carolina. Thompson's concept addressed two important city needs. First, the gardens would become a tourist attraction and generate revenue for the city. Second, there were a large number of unemployed, African-American women in the area. The garden's creation would provide significant employment opportunities for these unskilled workers. Thompson proposed the project to Fred Huette, then Supervisor of Norfolk's Parks and Recreation. Huette thought the land next to the proposed Norfolk Municipal Airport would be a good location for the garden. The land was part of Norfolk's watershed property and with work could provide scenic, picturesque views. With its proximity to the proposed airport, the garden would potentially be seen by visitors all over the world. Thompson contacted Charles Gillette, a well-known landscape architect working in Richmond, Virginia, to get suggestions for the proposed site. Gillette responded favorably to the project, saying that he felt Norfolk would be the ideal climate for an azalea garden. Gillette also suggested adding footbridges, picnic areas, and a variety of other plants that would easily fare well in Norfolk's climate. Gillette's suggestions were eventually altered to accommodate the pending airport and necessary road construction. Gillette's involvement with the Garden is documented in a series of letters between Gillette and Thompson.

The project was funded with WPA funds allotted by the federal government. On June 30, 1938, the initial project was given a WPA grant of \$76,278 and was expected to last one year. The official WPA record of the project reads:

#665-31-3-8 - Develop a garden park to feature azaleas and other native plants on city owned property adjacent to lakes comprising the Norfolk City Water Supply. This project will operate in Princess Anne County, in and near the city of Norfolk. Not a normal activity of the sponsor and no regularly employed personnel will be displaced. In addition to projects specifically approved.

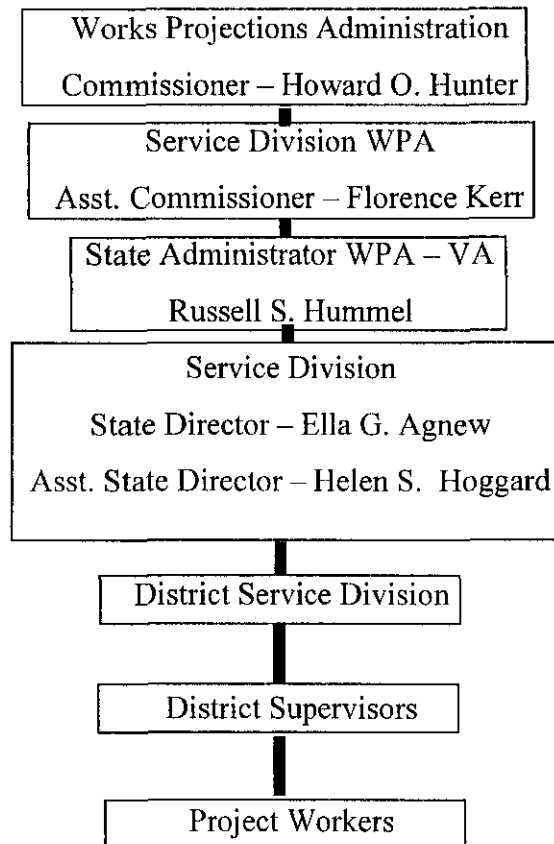
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The federal-state-local organization of this WPA project was as follows:



The project was a regional effort. The land on which the gardens were planned belonged to Princess Anne County. Norfolk did not officially annex this land until 1958. The Norfolk City Council was entrusted with the supervision of the project at the local level. Fred Huette, as Supervisor of Department of Parks and Recreation in Norfolk, oversaw the garden project throughout its WPA phase. The city's financial share of the project as outlined by the WPA was 10%; the city supplied Huette's salary and transportation of the workers to fulfill their obligation.

There were 200 African-American women and 20 African-American men employed as workers over the three years that the garden was a WPA-funded project. The number of workers

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fluctuated during these three years; the highest number of workers was 200 and the lowest number was less than 50. The worker-to-land ratio during the periods of lower employment was approximately one woman for each acre.

The work on the garden occurred in three phases. The first phase was clearing the land from a wild state. This involved uprooting plants, clearing trees, removing stumps, and moving earth by wheelbarrow to infill swamp-like areas of the property. The second phase of the garden's development included the laying of topsoil, planting of over 4,000 azaleas and 2,000 rhododendrons, as well as defining the walking path. The last phases included the observation and correction of any new plantings with regard to sunlight, water, and returning weeds. These final phases also included building up the shoreline surrounding Mirror Lake, and filling any depressed areas caused by settlement of soils where stumps and fills were originally incurred.

The garden project took place year-round; therefore garden workers were exposed to mosquitoes, poison ivy, and all weather conditions. An oral history project of the descendant's of the original garden workers revealed that one woman was known as "The Snake Lady". Her job was to go into the overgrown areas of the garden and kill any snakes before the other workers began uprooting plants. Edna Joyce, the last-known living WPA worker from the garden, was sixteen years old and one of the youngest workers employed on the project. She recounts that the women got down on their knees to pull scrub brush and weeds, some wearing gloves if they had any. Ms. Joyce swears, "That was a place with a lot of roots. I mean a lot of roots, so many you couldn't imagine. But we got them up." Matthew Austin, the son of WPA worker Sally Tucker Austin, recalls that during the winter his mother would layer in every article of clothing she could find before leaving for work. When she returned home he would help her unravel and she would sit by the fire for almost an hour "to thaw out." Austin remembers his mother's account of days when the snow was so heavy she could barely see her own hands.

The work began at 9 a.m., often following long walks to where the city-sponsored trucks would pick up the women. At this time, the gardens were almost ten miles outside the city. The workers were paid \$0.25 an hour, \$17.75 every two weeks. The workers ate lunches they brought from home and stopped work at 5 p.m. According to Joyce, "You did what you had to do, then you went home and looked for another day. You were happy doing it because you were getting money and you were not ashamed of it."

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Today, the efforts of the original garden workers are still visible in the nominated area of the garden. These women turned overgrown, swampy acres into a garden that stylistically expresses the national trend in naturalistic and wilderness landscape design. The walking trail that encircles Mirror Lake is in its original location; however it has been asphalt-paved. The walking trail is lined with many of the original azaleas planted by the WPA workers. Several of these bushes are over six feet tall and their clippings have been planted in other parts of the garden. Without the physical labor of the 200 African-American women, the development of the Norfolk Azalea Garden and later the Norfolk Botanical Gardens would never have occurred. The garden is the physical manifestation of the hundreds of hours they worked and the tons of soil they moved.

In the spring of 1939 the City of Norfolk requested an extension for the Azalea Garden Project and additional WPA funds for its completion. The project heralded itself as having, "gainfully provide[d] employment for colored women, relief labor, and to do so in the most efficient manner." In this 1939 proposal, the Azalea Gardens were included with several other WPA landscaping projects undertaken in Norfolk. The purpose of the project described on the WPA project proposal reads:

To provide employment for needy persons in planting nurseries, preparation of soils, culture of ground covers, shrubs, and trees in City landscaping. Development of City owned water shed properties located in Princess Anne County. Landscaping in Public parks for beautification & Prevention of soil erosion – and work appurtenant & incidental for its proper expedience. In addition to projects specifically approved.

On August 5, 1939, following a letter from the President of the Norfolk Association of Commerce, A.B. Schwarzkopf, to Congressman Colgate W. Darden requesting approval of a portion of the WPA extension, additional funds of \$138,553 were released. Most of these funds still centered on the Azalea Gardens.

By 1941, the gardens had grown to include over 75 acres, 5 miles of trails and over 50,000 azaleas. On March 5, 1941, the gardens were approved for another project extension. WPA records describe this extension as:

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Landscape, beautify and develop the gardens of various city properties, and operate plant nurseries. Work includes landscaping the Azalea Gardens, developing and beautifying roadsides at the Municipal Airport, developing city watershed properties for use as recreational areas, beautifying and landscaping Barraud and Lafayette Parks including establishment of an additional recreational center, and operating plant nurseries, the products in which are to be used on this project. This project will operate in the city of Norfolk and in Norfolk and Princess Anne Counties outside of the city of Norfolk. Publicly owned property. Sponsor: Norfolk City Council.

On October 12, 1941, WPA issued a Project Termination Notice to the city of Norfolk. From this point on, the Azalea Gardens no longer received WPA grants as funding for its development.

**Post-WPA Years 1941-1954:**

On April 15, 1941, the Azalea Gardens became officially known as the Norfolk Gardens. During the following years, Norfolk concentrated on war efforts and the gardens were left in the hands of only five staff members. At one point in 1942, the gardens were slated to be demolished to build military barracks. This plan was quickly reversed and the Air Force, who had taken over the Norfolk Municipal Airport, was ordered to preserve the existing gardens and their operations as much as possible. Therefore they built barracks on an undeveloped, 50-acre tract of land south of Mirror Lake. After the war, the federal government returned these acres to the city, which then gave the land to the airport. Since the airport did not need the area, the garden was asked to maintain it.

During the five-week blooming period in April 1946, 14,975 cars visited the Norfolk Gardens. In May 1947, the Norfolk Gardens were featured in National Geographic Magazine. The city took actions to construct or improve roadways to the gardens, as well as install an adequate water system intended for fire prevention. In 1954, Norfolk held its first International Azalea Festival. The festival commemorates the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). NATO is an alliance of 26 countries from North America and Europe and was formed on April 4, 1949 when the participating countries signed the North Atlantic Treaty. As outlined by the treaty, "the



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fundamental role of NATO is to safeguard the freedom and security of its member countries by political and military means.” The North American NATO Headquarters is located in Norfolk, Virginia. The International Azalea Festival includes the coronation of an Azalea Queen and honors a different participating NATO country each year. The Festival is held the third week in April, during the garden’s peak blooming period.

The period of significance for the proposed section of the garden is from 1938 until 1954. This period begins with the development of the garden under the WPA and ends with its first-held International Azalea Festival.

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### The Gardens 1955 – Today

The gardens have been expanded since their period of significance (1938-1954). In 1955, the Gardens changed its name to Norfolk Municipal Gardens. However, in 1957, Mayor Duckworth of Norfolk sought to investigate the best location to develop a botanical garden in the area. The Norfolk Municipal Gardens were chosen based on their location and the possibility of expansion into the largely undeveloped land north of the nominated area. On February 18, 1958 Norfolk City Council approved the creation of the Norfolk Botanical Gardens. The cost of this venture was shared with the city giving \$12,000.00 and the Old Dominion Horticultural Society contributing \$5,000.00. The year 1958 also marked the construction of the amphitheater, picnic area, and parking all located to the north of the nominated acreage.

Through the period of 1958-1963 numerous projects were undertaken at the garden. The NATO Tower was constructed, canals were dug, an Administration Building, Tea House, and restroom facilities were constructed, numerous gardens were planned and implemented, and several pieces of statuary were donated to enhance the garden. These new gardens, buildings, and structures are located to the north of the nominated area.

In 1968, the Gardens and the Norfolk Port and Industrial Authority came to a land exchange agreement because of the proposed expansion of the Norfolk Municipal Airport. At this time, the gardens included over 275 acres, 125 acres of which were developed. The gardens agreed to give up about 50 acres. Fred Huette commented on this expansion by stating that he had assumed that the airport would eventually expand into this 50-acre tract because most of it was airport land maintained by garden officials. Furthermore, in anticipation of this expansion Huette had not done extensive planting in this area; rather he concentrated on the area north of Mirror Lake. The acreage that was taken was south of Mirror Lake. According to Huette, this was not part of the original WPA acreage. This 50-acre tract was the area used for Army barracks during World War II. After the war, the garden was asked to maintain this land for the airport. Thus, the 1968-1972 expansion of the airport did not drastically alter the original WPA acreage. The lost acreage, however, did result in the transplantation of over 6,000 azaleas, camellias, and rhododendrons to other areas of the garden.

The expansion influenced the future development of the garden and its relationship to the adjacent airport and the city of Norfolk. In exchange for the lost acreage, the gardens received funding for replacement development. The majority of this new development occurred on the

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northern arm of Lake Wright and created what was then considered the Gardens proper. In addition, the redevelopment plans included a visual blurring of property lines through planting, making no distinction between the gardens and the newly expanded terminal of the Norfolk International Airport. The need for open, natural space and the need of modern air travel are thus married. Both needs are required in modern urban planning, and in Norfolk they co-exist equally on a visual level. This expansion increases the significance of the garden to the city, because it is now the first experience that visitors from around the world have of Norfolk.

**Fred Huette:**

Fred Huette was born in Paris in 1899, and immigrated to the United States. His formal education ended at grammar school; however he continued to study via special courses and correspondence. Fred Huette became Supervisor of Norfolk's Department of Parks and Recreation in 1937. He held this position, later called the Director of Parks and Forestry, until 1964. During his career Huette was responsible for numerous landscape projects throughout the city. He supervised various Norfolk Works Progress Administration projects including: Lafayette and Barraud Parks, Forest Lawn and Calvary Cemeteries, Ocean View, and the Norfolk Azalea Gardens. Huette is often best remembered for his incorporation of crape myrtle trees along the roads of Norfolk. These trees are a defining characteristic of Norfolk and are still planted by the city today.

Fred Huette oversaw the creation and development of the garden from its WPA roots and was a driving force behind its dedication as the Norfolk Botanical Gardens on February 18, 1958. Huette worked closely with the Old Dominion Horticultural Society as the director of the garden from 1958 until his retirement in 1966. In 1977 he wrote a book, Gardening in the Temperate Zone. Huette died in 1979.

During his lifetime Huette received over 130 awards including: Garden Club of America's "Medal of Honor" and the prestigious French, "*Chevalier du Merite Agricole*." In 1975, the Cosmopolitan Club of Norfolk named him First Citizen and gave him the citation:

"Learned societies have already proclaimed his supreme worth as a landscape architect and as a horticulturalist, but the citizens of Norfolk...proclaim him their great friend and patient teacher, who set their hearts afire with a love of nature and all that is beautiful in God's Creation."

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Without Huette's involvement in the urban design of Norfolk and his supervision of pivotal WPA projects, the city of Norfolk would not appear as it does today. In honor of his accomplishments the city owns the Fred Huette Center, a small public garden and educational facility for gardeners and landscapers located in the Ghent section of Norfolk. Huette's vision of, and devotion to the Norfolk Botanical Gardens are intrinsic factors to their development and ultimately to the landscape of Norfolk as a whole. Fred Huette is a significant local figure for Norfolk and the Norfolk Botanical Gardens property is the property most closely associated with his productive career.

**Landscape Architecture:**

The Norfolk Botanical Gardens is firmly based in the naturalistic trend in landscape architecture of early twentieth century America. The naturalistic trend is best expressed through the picturesque quality of the environment. This picturesque quality evolved in the 1930s into a trend toward wilderness landscapes. The wilderness concept was most successfully implemented by the National Park Service. The National Park Service was established in 1917 and influenced designs for parks and recreation areas accomplished under federal programs including the Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps. The landscape architecture present in the Norfolk Botanical Gardens is a local example of these naturalistic and wilderness trends of design in national parks.

The wilderness design trend expresses larger social and urban design considerations. These can be seen in several of the defining physical features of the garden. First, is the garden's location around the city's watershed property. At the outset of public water supply systems, many cities protected the areas surrounding their water sources under the rule of public domain. This led to large land holdings and the use of such properties for municipal gardens or parks. While this was in part to justify the city's land holdings, it was also an early example of landscape preservation.

Secondly, the azalea-lined walking trail encircling Mirror Lake is an example of passive recreation and use of local plants in public garden design. The emphasis on both passive recreation and local flora is characteristic of landscapes designed in the naturalistic and wilderness trends. Passive recreation allows visitors to experience the landscape at their own pace. The trail provides scenic views and the opportunity for exercise or exploration. The azaleas exhibit local flora in local landscapes. The local pride over these azaleas is best illustrated in the annual International Azalea Festival. The Festival, held in April, occurs during

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the peak blooming period of Norfolk's azalea bushes. The Festival commemorates the NATO alliance of countries while simultaneously highlighting Norfolk's local flora. The azaleas, in this case, have extended from an expression of local pride to international acclaim.

The elements of local pride, passive recreation, and location on a watershed property allow the gardens to maintain a naturalistic, wilderness setting while preserving the landscape. There is no excessive pruning or built structures to inhibit the quality of the environment. Meanwhile, the adjacent airport property allows this conservationist approach to landscaping to be seen by all those arriving and departing Norfolk, thus reinforcing local pride and accomplishments.

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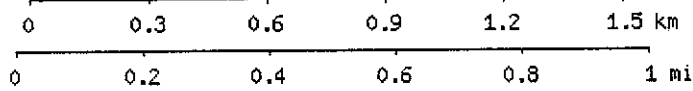
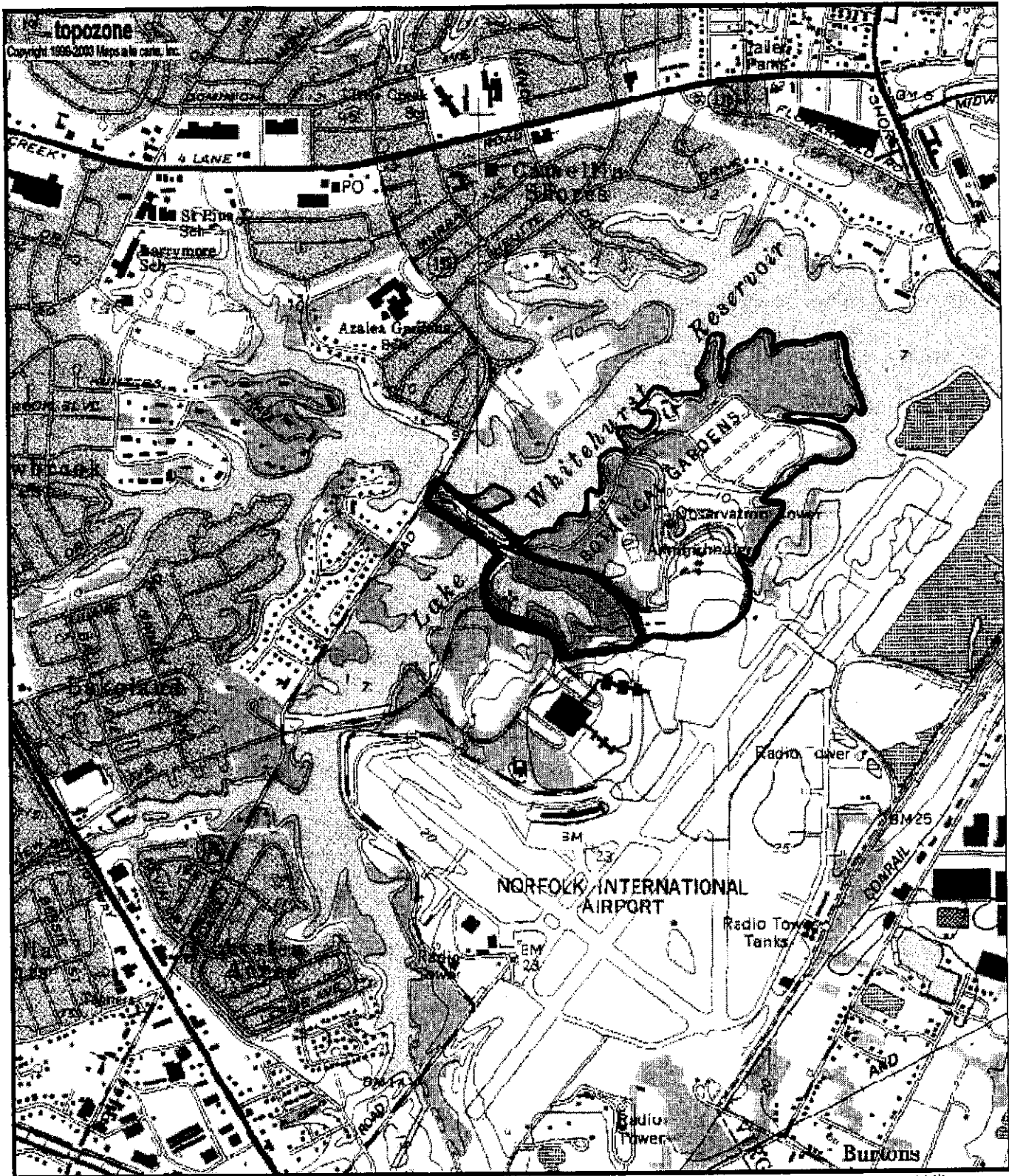
**Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description:**

The nominated area begins at the entrance road to the Norfolk Botanical Gardens located on the east side of Azalea Garden Road. The entrance road travels over the manmade causeway that crosses over Lake Mirror. This causeway and the entrance road define the north boundary of the proposed acres. The asphalt-paved walking trail turns to the south off the entrance road creating the eastern boundary of the proposed acres. The south and east boundaries for the nominated area are defined by the property line between The Norfolk International Airport and The Norfolk Botanical Gardens. There is a chain-link fence that designates the southern boundary and continues to define the garden's boundary to the east and portions of the west. The west boundary of the nominated area is defined by the Mirror Lake causeway that separates Lake Wright from Mirror Lake. The total area encompasses approximately 30 acres.

**Boundary Justification:**

The boundary for the Norfolk Botanical Gardens nomination includes the garden's original 30 acres. It was these approximately 30 acres that were cultivated as part of the Works Progress Administration. Historic photographs illustrate the integrity of this portion of the garden both in form and in style. The remaining approximately 125 acres of the current Norfolk Botanical Gardens were developed after the 1938-1954 period of significance and are not included in this nomination.



Map center is UTM 18 392482E 4084676N (WGS84/NAD83)  
**Little Creek** quadrangle  
Projection is UTM Zone 18 NAD83 Datum

M\*  
G  
M=-10.785  
G=-0.725

Users - Little Creek  
Quadrangle

Has reference to  
New York

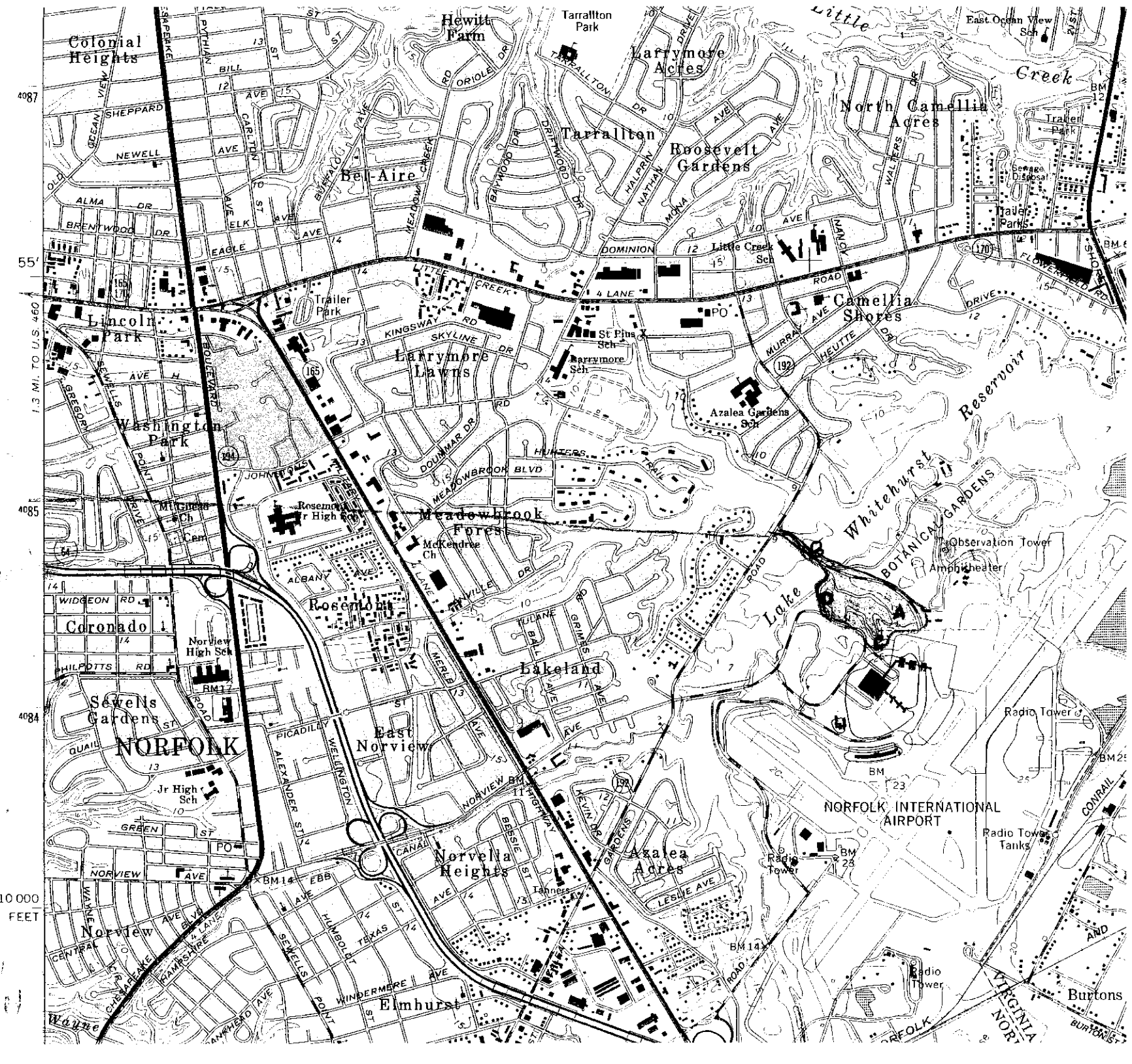
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