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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: 11th Street NW Commercial Historic District
Other names/site number: DHR ID# 128-6663
Name of related multiple property listing**:** N/A
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing

2. Location

Street & number: 11th Street NW, Melrose Avenue NW, Moorman Avenue NW
City or town: Roanoke State: VA County: Independent City
Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide _X_ local
Applicable National Register Criteria:

_X_A ___B ___C ___D

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: **Date**

Title : **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper | Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:	X
Public – Local	
Public – State	
Public – Federal	

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)	
District	X
Site	
Structure	
Object	

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
20	2	buildings
0	0	sites
1	1	structures
0	0	objects
21	3	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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6. Function or Use
Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant
COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store
FUNERARY: mortuary
INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION: manufacturing facility
RELIGION: religious facility
RELIGION: church school
LANDSCAPE: parking lot

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store
FUNERARY: mortuary
SOCIAL: civic
LANDSCAPE: parking lot
VACANT: not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style
LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Classical Revival, Colonial Revival
MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK, CONCRETE, STUCCO, METAL (Aluminum), SYNTHETICS (Vinyl)

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The 11th Street NW Commercial Historic District, located in Northwest Roanoke, is a small neighborhood commercial center encompassing several blocks along 11th Street NW, Melrose Avenue NW, and Moorman Avenue NW. The approximately 9.8-acre district consists of twenty primary resources, mainly one-story commercial and light-industrial buildings constructed between 1911 and circa 1960. The district also includes the Classical Revival-style Melrose Baptist Church (128-6661) and its Sunday School building (128-0349), located at the corner of Melrose Avenue NW and 12th Street NW. Most of the buildings reflect vernacular commercial architectural forms and styles dating from the early to mid-20th century. Together, these resources form a small neighborhood commercial center that historically served the surrounding residential neighborhoods. The earliest existing building in the district, E. E. Wiggins Grocery (601 11th Street NW/128-6663-0010), dates to 1911 and marks the beginning of the period of significance, with subsequent construction in the district occurring gradually until around 1960. As it continues to serve as a neighborhood commercial center, the district retains integrity of location, setting and feeling. Except for one historic resource considered non-contributing due to extensive alterations, the buildings still convey their original appearance and function with only minor modifications and, therefore, the district retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship.

Narrative Description

Setting & Location

The 11th Street NW Commercial Historic District is in the northwest quadrant of Roanoke and is surrounded by the residential neighborhoods it historically served, including Melrose to the west and Harrison to the east. The district is generally bounded by 8th Street NW to the east, Fairfax Avenue NW to the south, 12th Street NW to the west, and Melrose/Madison Avenue NW to the north. Orange Avenue (Route 460), one of Roanoke's major east-west arteries, is located one block north of the district. 11th Street NW forms the primary north-south spine of the district, while Melrose and Moorman avenues serve as important east-west secondary routes. 10th Street NW, which crosses over the railroad tracks, extends through the district near its eastern boundary and is a heavily trafficked artery in Northwest Roanoke; however, no resources within the district have 10th Street addresses. The Norfolk Southern Railway tracks are located four blocks south of the district's southern boundary. The Gainsboro Historic District (NRHP 2005), which is the oldest Black neighborhood in Roanoke and includes the commercial area of the Henry Street Historic District (NRHP 2004), is located several blocks to the east with its western boundary along 5th Street NW.

The district's topography is relatively flat, and its streets generally follow a grid pattern, with the exception of Moorman Avenue NW, which slopes southeast as it extends east from 10th Street NW. Apart from the eastern end of Moorman Avenue NW, the streets are lined with sidewalks, curbs, and gutters. Commercial and institutional buildings have little to no setback from the public sidewalks, reinforcing the district's traditional commercial character. The Kroger (128-6663-0012), Hamlar-Curtis Funeral Home (128-0070), and Melrose Baptist Sunday School building (128-0349) stand amidst or adjacent to large, paved parking lots. The three former service stations, including Virginia Service Station at 622 11th Street NW (128-6404), Wiggins Brothers Service Station at 932 Moorman Avenue NW (128-0069), and Atlantic Service Station at 1105 Melrose Avenue NW (128-6663-0014) are also set within smaller paved lots, reflecting their historic automobile-oriented uses and the impact of the automobile on the district's 20th-century development.

Detailed Description

The area encompassing the 11th Street NW Commercial Historic District was initially developed with two-story single-family dwellings that housed families of employees of nearby industries. Based on the surviving residential buildings in the surrounding neighborhoods, these houses were likely American Foursquares or bungalows influenced by the Folk Victorian, Colonial Revival, and Craftsman styles. As the surrounding neighborhoods grew and 11th Street NW developed as a transportation and commercial corridor, the residential buildings were gradually replaced by commercial and institutional buildings. The presence of the streetcar line along 11th Street NW, and later the bus line, further encouraged commercial development and increased accessibility to businesses along 11th Street NW and the intersection of Melrose and Moorman avenues.

Most of the buildings in the district are one-story commercial and light industrial buildings of masonry construction built between the 1910s and the 1960s. The commercial buildings feature minimal ornamentation and flat roofs concealed behind parapets. Their primary elevations are characterized by storefronts with entrances and display windows. Early 20th century commercial brick buildings typically feature display windows resting on bulkheads and surmounted by multi-light transoms, such as the ca. 1911 E.E. Wiggins Grocery (601 11th Street NW/128-6663-0010), the ca. 1928 commercial building at 603-607 11th Street NW (128-6663-0011), and the ca. 1943 Kroger (604 11th Street NW/128-663-0012). The ca. 1915 William Furrow Grocery at 1112 Melrose Avenue NW (128-6663-0016) is unique within the district for its wood-frame construction and false parapet, characteristic of Crossroads Commercial stores constructed in rural areas during the period.

Mid-century commercial buildings, including the ca. 1946 Carter & Jones Dry Cleaning (502 11th Street NW/128-6663-0007) and ca. 1960 Mickey's Modern Shoe Service (506-508 11th Street NW/128-6663-0008), also feature display windows and entrances oriented to the sidewalk but are distinguished from early 20th century commercial buildings by their concrete-block construction and simpler storefronts without bulkheads or transoms. The district's light-industrial buildings are concentrated along Moorman Avenue NW and include the ca. 1937 Bireley's Bottling Co. (830 Moorman Avenue NW/128-6663-0017) and the ca. 1953 Brugh's Auto Paint & Body Shop (926 Moorman Avenue NW/128-6166), feature large garage bays on their primary elevations.

There are three service stations within the district. The ca. 1953 Atlantic Service Station at 1105 Melrose Avenue NW (128-6663-0014) and ca. 1950 Wiggins Brothers Service Station (128-0069) at 932 Moorman Avenue NW are typical of 1950s service stations with simple, rectilinear forms and smooth stuccoed facades, set amidst paved lots on prominent intersections. The ca. 1931 Virginia Service Station at 622 11th Street NW (128-6404) is a good example of the Revival-style stations designed to fit in with the surrounding residential neighborhoods that were built by companies between World War 1 and World War II. The station is small in scale with a steeply pitched, intersecting gable roof covered with clay tiles and a porte-cochere that has been enclosed but retains its original form. The raised concrete pump island with rounded corners also remains intact along with the decorative wall screen for the trash enclosure.

Melrose Baptist Church at 1130 Melrose Avenue NW (128-6661) was constructed in two phases, with the rear portion completed in 1917 and the front portion in 1925. Designed by architect H.L. Cain in the Classical Revival style, the two-story church is the most architecturally significant building in the district. The front elevation is dominated by a shallow portico with a Tuscan colonnade supporting an entablature and brick parapet. Decorative metal grills are set within the parapet, which is topped by three classical concrete urns adorned with festoons (the fourth urn is currently missing). The front and west side elevations feature a variety of vibrant stained-glass windows, including occuli above window and door openings, large arched windows, and arched transoms above the three front entrances.



Figure 1: 1930 photo of Melrose Baptist Church (Roanoke Public Libraries: Virginia Room)

The Hamlar-Curtis Funeral Home (128-0070) is unique in the district in reflecting the Modern style, characterized by strong horizontal massing, large expanses of glass, the use of Permastone, and restrained ornamentation. The original section of the building was constructed around 1945 with a more traditional Commercial style; following a fire in 1959, it was completely remodeled with a Modern exterior. In 1972, an addition was constructed on the west side elevation to accommodate the business's expanding operations. The building consists of three rectangular blocks of varying heights, each with a flat roof and broad overhanging eaves. The exterior walls are clad in Permastone, and full-height masonry piers define the expansive window walls. Window openings throughout the building are recessed. A porte-cochere at the west end of the building features a flat roof supported by masonry piers.

Statement of Integrity

The 11th Street NW Commercial Historic District retains integrity to convey its significance as a small-scale commercial area that developed during the first three quarters of the 20th century and evolved to serve the surrounding residential neighborhood, with institutional and light-industrial uses also represented. The primary resources in the district retain integrity of location as the

buildings continue to occupy their historic parcels along 11th Street NW, Melrose Avenue NW, Moorman Avenue NW, and 12th Street NW. The district retains integrity of setting and feeling, reflecting a commercial neighborhood core that developed gradually from the 1910s through the third quarter of the 20th century. Of the twenty primary resources, nineteen are contributing to the significance of the district. These nineteen buildings retain integrity of design, workmanship, and materials to convey their historic functions, forms, and dates of construction. As with most evolved commercial districts over 100 years old, there are instances of minor alterations such as storefront window and door replacement and limited instances of modern siding. However, these alterations are not cumulative to a point that obscures the historic form, building type, or period of construction of the contributing resources. All primary resources in the district were constructed within the period of significance (1911 – 1976), and only one property (128-6663-0015) has been altered to such an extent that it no longer conveys its historic form, function, and date of construction. This resource, which was originally two separate commercial buildings, has been combined under one storefront and is therefore identified as one non-contributing building.

INVENTORY

The following inventory lists the resources within the 11th Street NW Commercial Historic District. It is organized alphabetically by street name and then numerically by street number. Each entry provides the address, building name (if applicable), date of construction, architectural style, current building use, VDHR File number, and the contributing status within the district. Whether a building is considered contributing or non-contributing was determined based on its physical integrity (intact historic materials) as it supports the historic district's significance under Criterion A (Commerce) during the Period of Significance (1911–1976). Resources are keyed to the Sketch Map/Photo Key by their numerical street address.

11th Street

NW 502 11th Street **128-6663-0007** *Other DHR Id#:*
Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, 1946**
Contributing *Total:* 1

NW 506-508 11th Street **128-6663-0008** *Other DHR Id#:*
Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1960**
Contributing *Total:* 1

NW 510 11th Street **128-6663-0009** *Other DHR Id#:*
Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1956**
Contributing *Total:* 1

NW 601 11th Street **128-6663-0010** *Other DHR Id#:*
Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, 1911**
Contributing *Total:* 1

NW 603-607 11th Street **128-6663-0011** *Other DHR Id#:*
Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1928**
Contributing *Total:* 1

NW 604 11th Street **128-6663-0012** *Other DHR Id#:*
Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, 1943**
Contributing *Total:* 1

NW 611 11th Street **128-6663-0013** *Other DHR Id#:*
Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, 1947**
Contributing *Total:* 1

NW 622 11th Street **128-6404** *Other DHR Id#: 128-6361, 128-6663-0005*
Primary Resource: **Service Station (Building), Stories 1, Style: No Discernable Style, Ca 1931**
Contributing *Total:* 1
Secondary Resource: **Workshop (Building)** **Contributing** *Total:* 1

12th Street

NW 609 12th Street **128-0349** *Other DHR Id#: 128-6663-0003*
Primary Resource: **Church School (Building), Stories 2, Style: Colonial Revival, 1939**
Contributing *Total:* 1
Secondary Resource: **Parking Lot (Structure)** **Contributing** *Total:* 1

Melrose Avenue

NW 1105 Melrose Avenue **128-6663-0014** *Other DHR Id#:*
Primary Resource: **Service Station (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1953**
Contributing *Total:* 1

NW 1106 Melrose Avenue **128-6663-0015** *Other DHR Id#:*
Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1925**
Non-contributing *Total:* 1

NW 1112 Melrose Avenue **128-6663-0016** *Other DHR Id#:*
Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1918**
Contributing *Total:* 1

NW 1130 Melrose Avenue **128-6661** *Other DHR Id#: 128-6663-0006*
Primary Resource: **Church/Chapel (Building), Stories 2, Style: Classical Revival, 1917**
Contributing *Total:* 1

Moorman Avenue

NW 830 Moorman Avenue **128-6663-0017** *Other DHR Id#:*
Primary Resource: **Processing Plant (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, 1937**
Contributing *Total:* 1

NW 902 Moorman Avenue **128-6663-0018** *Other DHR Id#:*
Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1960**
Contributing *Total:* 1

NW 926 Moorman Avenue **128-6166** *Other DHR Id#: 128-6663-0004*
Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1953**
Contributing *Total:* 1

NW 932 Moorman Avenue **128-0069** *Other DHR Id#: 128-6663-0001*
Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1950**
Contributing *Total:* 1

NW 1002 Moorman Avenue **128-0070** *Other DHR Id#: 128-6663-0002*
Primary Resource: **Funeral Home (Building), Stories 2, Style: Modernist, Ca 1945**
Contributing *Total:* 1
Secondary Resource: **Parking Lot (Structure)** **Non-contributing** *Total:* 1

NW 1015 Moorman Avenue **128-6663-0019** *Other DHR Id#:*
Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1950**
Contributing *Total:* 1

NW 1114 Moorman Avenue **128-6663-0020** *Other DHR Id#:*
Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1958**
Contributing *Total:* 1
Secondary Resource: **Shed (Building)** **Non-contributing** *Total:* 1

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.
- [ ] B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [ ] 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 grave
- [ ] D. A cemetery
- [ ] E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- [ ] F. A commemorative property
- [ ] G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)
COMMERCE

Period of Significance
1911 – 1976

Significant Dates
1917; 1925 (Melrose Baptist Church/Holiness Tabernacle Church)
1937; 1964 (Bireley Orangeade Corporation/Hunton Lifesaving Crew)
1943 (Kroger Supermarket)
1947 (Northwest Hardware Co)
1952 (Hamlar-Curtis Funeral Home)
1956 (Garland's Drug Store)

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
H.L. Cain

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The 11th Street NW Commercial Historic District is a small neighborhood commercial center that developed during the first three quarters of the 20th century along a streetcar line, and later bus line in the northwest quadrant of Roanoke City. In addition to the anchor stores of a Kroger Supermarket, Northwest Hardware, and Garland's Drug Store, the district consisted primarily of small-scale local businesses, including grocers, confectioners, barbers, a dry cleaner/laundromat, various repair shops, and service stations, as well as a bottling plant, church, and funeral home. Together, these businesses provided for the daily needs of residents of the surrounding neighborhoods and beyond. Historically situated near a racial boundary, with Black residents living east of 10th Street NW and White residents living to the west, the commercial district initially served a White clientele during the first half of the 20th century. Following urban renewal and the displacement of many Black residents in Northeast and Northwest Roanoke, the district transitioned in the 1960s into an important neighborhood center for Northwest Roanoke's Black community, with several new businesses as well as institutions such as the Hamlar-Curtis Funeral Home, Holiness Tabernacle Church, and the Hunton Lifesaving Crew. The district is eligible for National Register listing under Criterion A with significance at the local level in the area of Commerce. The period of significance begins in 1911 with the construction of Edward Wiggins's grocery store at 601 11th Street NW (128-6663-0010), the earliest extant building in the district. The period of significance ends in 1976 at the fifty-year cut off to encompass the construction of the most significant "anchor" businesses and institutions in the district – including the Melrose Baptist Church (1917; 1925 addition), the Bireley Orangeade bottling plant (1937), Kroger Supermarket (1943), Northwest Hardware (1947), Hamlar-Curtis Funeral Home (1952; 1972 addition), and Garland's Drug Store (1956). The period of significance also extends to 1976 to fully capture the district's shift to Black business ownership and customer base. This transition, prompted by urban renewal in Roanoke as Black residents living in the areas of Northeast and Gainsboro were displaced and began migrating west of 10th Street NW, remains a defining characteristic of the area today.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A Justification: Commerce

The 11th Street NW Commercial Historic District is significant on the local level in the area of Commerce as a small neighborhood commercial district that developed during the first three quarters of the 20th century along a streetcar, (and later bus) line in the northwest quadrant of Roanoke City. Comprised primarily of small-scale local businesses – including grocers, confectioners, barbers, a hardware store, a dry cleaner/laundromat, various repair shops, and service stations – as well as a bottling plant, church, and Black-owned funeral home, the district represents an important component of the city's early streetcar suburbs. In addition to several

anchor stores and institutions – such as Melrose Baptist Church, the Kroger Supermarket, Northwest Hardware, Garland's Drug Store, and Hamlar-Curtis Funeral Home – which attracted people beyond Northwest Roanoke, these businesses provided goods and services to meet the daily needs of residents in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Despite changing patterns of commercial development as automobile ownership increased and suburban shopping malls emerged, the neighborhood commercial district continued to serve residents by adapting to changing consumer needs. Over time, businesses shifted from primarily selling goods to providing more services, with an increased number of beauty and barber shops, laundromats, and repair shops. The activity generated by these local businesses, together with the fellowship and community services fostered by the church and funeral home, established the commercial and institutional area along 11th Street and Melrose and Moorman avenues NW as the community hub for the surrounding neighborhoods. This critical role continues to be recognized today, as demonstrated by Elevate 11th, a nonprofit organization focused on revitalizing businesses in the district as part of broader efforts to improve the surrounding neighborhood.

Comparative Analysis

While there are a number of small residential commercial districts in Roanoke City that developed along the streetcar (and later bus) lines during the first half of the 20th century, the 11th Street NW Commercial Historic District served a wider customer base than the immediate neighborhood with several anchor stores such as the Kroger Supermarket, Northwest Hardware, Garland's Drug Store and the Hamlar-Curtis Funeral Home. The district is also unique for its location near the racial boundary in Northwest Roanoke. Other commercial districts, including the Grandin Road Commercial Historic District (NRHP 2002) Henry Street Historic District (NRHP 2004) and commercial areas within the historic Districts of Belmont (NRHP 2019), Wasena (NRHP 2012), and Norwich (NRHP 2024) as well as the commercial areas along Crystal Spring Avenue in South Roanoke developed in the middle of racially homogenous neighborhoods. However, with Black residents living east of 10th Street NW and White residents living to the west, the commercial area along 11th Street NW was located near the racial boundary. Initially serving only White customers, the district reflects the demographic transition of the larger area of Northwest Roanoke as the Black population migrated further west following urban renewal in the 1960s with 11th Street NW continuing to serve as the commercial center for the now predominantly Black neighborhood.

Historical Background

The Railroad and Early Development of Roanoke

Roanoke's early development was fueled by the expansion of the railroads in the 19th century. The Virginia and Tennessee Railroad arrived in the area in 1852, and a settlement, known as Big Lick, emerged around the depot. With tracks extending from Lynchburg to Bristol, the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad provided an important connection to the ports of Norfolk and Chesapeake

Bay through various regional rail lines.[1] During the Civil War, the Union army targeted this critical transportation and supply line, burning the Big Lick depot, and destroying the nearby railroad tracks.[2]

Big Lick recovered in the years after the Civil War, aided by the reconstruction and consolidation of the regional railroad network. By 1870, the Virginia and Tennessee, Norfolk and Petersburg, and Southside railroads consolidated into the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Ohio Railroad, extending from Norfolk to Bristol and helping to revive Virginia's post-war transportation system. The expansion of the railroad contributed to Big Lick's continued growth, and by 1874, the community had grown large enough to be chartered as a town.

In 1881, Enoch W. Clark & Company, a Philadelphia banking house, purchased the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Ohio Railroad out of insolvency and renamed it the Norfolk & Western Railroad (N&W). The same investors controlled the Shenandoah Valley Railroad (SVRR), which extended south from Hagerstown, Maryland, and announced in May 1881 that Big Lick would become the southern terminus of the line. The SVRR tracks were extended down the valley to connect with the N&W at Big Lick, establishing the town as an important railroad junction.[3]

With the new rail connection, Big Lick was selected as the headquarters of the N&W Railroad. In 1881, the Roanoke Land and Improvement Company, a railroad company subsidiary, was established to acquire land, lay out streets, build a hotel, and construct housing for the influx of railroad workers.[4] These efforts would shape the community's physical development, as the town's boundaries and population increased.

Railroad expansion spurred unprecedented growth and prosperity as the town became the primary commercial center for Southwest Virginia, as N&W expanded rail access into the Pocahontas coalfields, shipping regional coal east to Norfolk's ports.[5] Big Lick was renamed Roanoke in 1882 and was incorporated as the City of Roanoke in 1884. During this period of intense growth, the population increased from 669 residents in 1880 to over 5,000 by 1884.[6] Early commercial development centered on the Norfolk & Western facilities concentrated at Shenandoah Avenue and Jefferson Street. As the downtown commercial district expanded southward, and industrial operations spread east and west along the railroad corridor, residential neighborhoods emerged around the city's growing commercial and industrial core.

[1] Raymond Barnes, *A History of Roanoke,* (Roanoke, VA: Commonwealth Press, 1968), pp. 43-44.
[2] Clare White, *Roanoke: 1740-1982*, (Roanoke, VA: Roanoke Valley Historical Society, 1982), p. 57.
[3] Barnes, *A History of Roanoke,* pp. 67-68, 70.
[4] White, *Roanoke: 1740-1982*, p. 65.
[5] Geoffrey B. Henry, *Norfolk & Western Railway Freight Station*, (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, April 2012), pp. 9-10.
[6] U.S. Census, 1890; George S. Jack and E.B. Jacobs, *History of Roanoke County; History of Roanoke City; and History of the Norfolk and Western Railroad*, (Roanoke, Virginia: Stone Printing and Manufacturing Co., 1912), p. 95.

Development of Northwest Roanoke

As the railroad attracted increasing numbers of workers and residents, an immediate need for housing grew outside of the core. By 1890, Roanoke's population had surpassed 16,000. Nearly twenty land companies had formed by 1891 to subdivide the rural land surrounding the city into residential neighborhoods.[7]

The pastoral land northwest of the city limits was one area transformed by the rapid growth. In January 1889, Melrose Land Company acquired from the estate of Captain Robert B. Moorman much of his former farm, known as "Melrose," and began subdividing the property with streets and residential lots. The segment of 11th Street that would later become the 11th Street NW Commercial Historic District, is located at the eastern edge of the Melrose subdivision, where it met the parcel boundary of the former Moorman homestead on 10th Street NW known as "Melrose." The following year, in 1890, Roanoke City annexed the Melrose subdivision, incorporating the newly platted residential area into the expanding city limits. Around the same time that the Melrose Land Company was developing residential lots, N&W was extending its yards westward and constructing the ca. 1890 West End Round House, which increased housing demand nearby for running crews and railroad mechanics.[8] Further development of the Melrose area was driven by the construction of the Salem-Melrose streetcar line in 1890. This line connected downtown Roanoke to downtown Salem by way of 11th Street NW between Center and Orange avenues.

By 1900, Roanoke was the third largest city in Virginia with over 21,000 residents.[9] The Melrose neighborhood also continued to grow, drawing investment from the city. In December 1905, Roanoke's council issued a bond for $34,000 to Melrose as part of a larger bond for city-wide improvements. The 1907 completion of a bridge over the railroad tracks at 10th Street NW improved connections between Southwest and Northwest Roanoke, further incorporating the neighborhood with the rest of the city. Keeping pace with housing demand, it was reported that eighty-five new houses were built in Melrose in 1913.[10] As residential construction continued in the early 20th century, Melrose became one of the city's established Northwest neighborhoods for white residents.

From Reconstruction in the late 19th century through the Civil Rights Movement during the second half of the 20th century, many factors served to create and uphold segregated settlement patterns in towns and cities throughout the country. In some cases, this segregation was based on deep-rooted local traditions; however, these practices became legally sanctioned in the early 20th century with municipalities approving segregation maps and many early land companies using deed restrictions to control the racial and ethnic makeup of their neighborhoods. In the initial

[7] George William Baist, "Map of Roanoke, Virginia: showing the location of the Roanoke Development Co.'s property," (Philadelphia, PA: G. Wm. Baist, 1890).
[8] Barnes, *A History of Roanoke,* 179.
[9] Richard L. Forstall, *Population of States and Counties of the United States: 1790 – 1990*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996). Accessed September 24, 2026.
[10] Barnes, *A History of Roanoke,* pp. 419, 439, 499.

development of Roanoke during the late 19th century, the Roanoke Land and Improvement Company, a subsidiary of the railroad, designated which dwellings were to be occupied by White or Black railroad employees. In 1911, the Roanoke Common Council passed an ordinance legalizing residential racial segregation by city blocks. A year later, Virginia's General Assembly passed an act to allow segregation districts around the state.[11] Although the U.S. Supreme Court declared residential segregation ordinances unconstitutional in 1917, segregated settlement patterns in Roanoke persisted into the mid-20th century.

Melrose developed primarily as a White neighborhood during the early 20th century, most likely due to local traditions and City approved segregation maps rather than deed restrictions as a cursory review of early deeds in the area do not include such restrictions. At the same time, the historically Black neighborhoods of Northeast and Gainsboro began to expand west and the area east of 10th Street NW developed as an African American community, known as the Harrison neighborhood. The Harrison School (NRHP 1982) was constructed in 1916 at 523 Harrison Avenue NW. This three-story, brick public school was the first secondary school for Black students in Roanoke. A small commercial area also developed at Moorman and Fairfax avenues, approximately four blocks east of the 11th Street NW commercial district, during the early 20th century to serve neighborhood residents.[12] The proximity of these distinct communities placed the area that would become the historic district along a significant racial and social boundary line within Northwest Roanoke.

Emergence of the 11th Street NW Commercial District

As Roanoke's population expanded, neighborhood commercial centers emerged to serve the daily retail and social needs of residents. While major retailers, like department stores, were concentrated in Roanoke's central business district, smaller stores, such as grocers and confectionaries, were established in neighborhoods to provide everyday necessities within walking distance. These neighborhood businesses often clustered along transportation routes, such as streetcar lines.

The Roanoke Street Railway Company began establishing streetcar lines in the late 19th century to provide connections between residential neighborhoods and the downtown commercial center. In 1889, the first streetcar line was completed, connecting Roanoke to Vinton. In 1890, a second line was completed, connecting Roanoke to Salem. The Salem line ran along 11th Street NW between Centre Avenue and Orange Avenue, through what would become the historic district. The presence of the streetcar line on 11th Street NW established an important transportation connection to the area and laid the early foundation for its later development as a commercial corridor. However, commercial growth along 11th Street NW occurred gradually, with development relatively sparse in the early 20th century.

[11] Naomi A, Mattos, "Segregation by Custom vs. Segregation by Law: Residential Segregation Ordinances and Their Effect on the City of Roanoke 1910-1917," (*Journal of the Historical Society of Western Virginia*. Volume 17, Issue 2), p., 6.
[12] City of Roanoke Planning Building & Development, *Harrison & Washington Park Neighborhood Plan,* (Roanoke, VA, 2003), p. 3.

Small grocery stores were the earliest businesses within the commercial district along 11th Street NW and Melrose Avenue NW. These neighborhood stores were essentially urban adaptations of the crossroads stores common in rural areas. Edward Wiggins opened the earliest known neighborhood grocery store in the district at 601 11th Street NW (128-6663-0010). Constructed in 1911, the two-story building originally housed a grocery store and meat market operated by Wiggins, who was identified as "Syrian" in the 1900 census. Although the occupants of 601 11th Street NW changed over the following decades, the building continued to operate as a grocery store until the construction in 1943 of the Kroger Grocery building across the street at 604 11th Street NW (128-6663-0012). In 1918, William Furrow opened a grocery store at 1112 Melrose Avenue NW (128-6663-0016). The appearance of this small one-story building reflects the design of a rural crossroads store with its wood-frame construction and false parapet.

In addition to commercial services, institutions also appeared in the district to meet social and spiritual needs of neighborhood residents. One of the earliest institutions established in the district was Melrose Baptist Church (128-6661). The congregation was organized in 1907 and acquired property along Melrose Avenue in 1910. The church completed a new building at the corner of Melrose Avenue and 12th Street NW by 1917. Designed by Charlottesville architect N.T. Wingfield, brother of the church's pastor, Rev. W. Tupper Wingfield, the modest, brick Colonial Revival building featured twenty-two classrooms, an auditorium, and other facilities to serve the growing congregation.[13] Together, Melrose Baptist and the groceries at 601 11th Street NW (128-6663-0010) and 1112 Melrose Avenue NW (128-6663-0016) represent the beginnings of 11th Street NW as a neighborhood center in the early 20th century.

1920s and 1930s Development

The continuous growth of the railroad and its associated industries generated a substantial workforce. Census records show that residents of the blocks in and around 11th Street NW were largely working- and middle-class, employed in railroad and industrial occupations, as well as skilled trades and retail. Many residents worked at operations along the western tracks, such as the Central Manufacturing Co. Planing Mill and Lumber Yard, Consolidated Ice Co. Plant, and the J. T. Bandy Coal Yard. The concentration of workers has likely helped build a customer base for the stores and services that would cluster in the district along 11th Street NW, Melrose Avenue NW, and Moorman Avenue NW.

Roanoke's population continued to grow, reaching 50,842 residents by 1920. Reflecting the city's expansion, the residential area around the 11th Street NW commercial district also continued to develop. In 1923, city records listed 13,454 households in Roanoke, with the second-largest concentration residing in the Melrose Ward.[14] As the neighborhood continued to flourish, new commercial buildings were constructed along the 600 block of 11th Street NW and the 1100 block

[13] "Melrose Baptists Open Handsome and Commodious Church Tomorrow; Among Largest In State of Virginia," (*The Roanoke World-News,* February 24, 1917) p. 1; JoAnne Poindexter, "Melrose Baptist looks back on a century," (*The Roanoke Times,* September 7, 2007*),* p. 140.
[14] Barnes, *A History of Roanoke,* p. 626.

of Melrose Avenue NW, establishing these blocks as a convenient commercial center along the streetcar line for the surrounding neighborhood. Around 1925, two commercial buildings were constructed at 1104 and 1106 Melrose Avenue NW (128-6663-0015). Several years later, around 1928, a three-storefront commercial building was erected at 603-607 11th Street NW (128-6663-0011). Together with the two earlier grocery stores, the businesses in these buildings provided neighborhood residents with a range of goods and services including confectioneries at 1104 Melrose Avenue NW and 605 11th Street NW, Stiff's Pharmacy at 607 11th Street NW, and a barber and beauty shop at 603 11th Street. The storefront at 1106 Melrose Avenue NW housed a succession of businesses that adapted to the changing needs and demands of nearby residents. The parcels occupied by these commercial buildings were previously occupied by single-family residences, reflecting the transition of these blocks from a predominantly residential area to one that incorporated an increasingly diverse mix of commercial uses to serve its growing population.

Public transportation provided convenient access to these specialized shops and services for residents throughout Northwest Roanoke. Streetcar service peaked in the late 1920s, when fifty-five cars operated on more than thirty-three miles of tracks throughout Roanoke, Salem, and Vinton.[15] At the same time, buses began to gain popularity as an alternative to streetcars. In 1925, the city council helped fuel this transition by granting a franchise to the Safety Motor Transit Company, which operated forty buses on around nine routes. The bus lines generally followed existing streetcar lines, providing another means of transportation between the 11th Street NW commercial district and the surrounding residential neighborhoods.[16]

The 1920s and 1930s were also a period of growth for Melrose Baptist Church (128-6661). In September 1924, the congregation began an expansion of their 1917 church building, signaling the church's continued growth and presence within the neighborhood. Designed in the Classical Revival style by Richmond architect, H.L. Cain, and built under the supervision of P.B. Witt, a church member, the $150,000 edifice opened in 1925. The new facility featured a full-height sanctuary with a pipe organ, elevated baptistry, and large balcony, together with a basement equipped with classrooms, a kitchen, and a vault for storing records.[17] The congregation expanded the church again in 1939 when it opened a new two-story brick Sunday School annex on 12th Street NW (128-0349), behind the church building. The $17,000 facility contained twenty-two classrooms in addition to a large assembly space, providing additional space to accommodate the growing Sunday School department.[18]

Roanoke, like other communities across the nation, experienced a period of stagnation in the 1930s in conjunction with the Great Depression. Streetcar service began to decline in the late 1920s and early 1930s, with buses first replacing streetcars along the Highland-Jamison line in 1929. The Salem line, which extended through the 11th Street NW commercial area, was discontinued

[15] James E. Dalmas, *The Street Railways of Roanoke, Virginia,* (Roanoke, VA: Historical Society of Western Virginia, 2006), p. 134.
[16] *Ibid,* 111.
[17] "Melrose Baptists Will Open New Church With Services Tonight," (*The Roanoke Times*, September 9, 1925), p. 10.
[18] "Melrose Baptists Occupy Building," (*The Roanoke Times,* November 19, 1939), p. 39.

between Washington Heights (a neighborhood approximately 2.75 miles northwest of the 11th Street NW commercial area) and Salem in 1931, after which only buses provided public transportation between Roanoke and Salem. Streetcar and bus service continued along 11th Street NW until 1940, when the line from Vinton to Melrose was fully discontinued.[19] In 1941 – 1942, three orders of Mack buses were purchased to replace the streetcars along the Vinton-Melrose line, demonstrating the prominence of bus travel throughout Roanoke, including the 11th Street NW commercial district.[20]

Located at the prominent corner of 11th Street NW and Melrose Avenue NW, the Virginia Service Station (128-6404) was the only building constructed in the historic district during the early to mid-1930s. This building replaced a single-family residence and reflected the growing popularity of the automobile and its increasing influence on neighborhood commercial development. A second service station was located directly across 11th Street from the Virginia Service Station but has since been demolished. Together the two service stations illustrate the district's continued adaption to the changing transportation patterns and needs of area residents, as automobile-oriented businesses began to replace residential uses at prominent locations within the neighborhood.

Construction in the district picked back up in the waning years of the 1930s, albeit along the margins. In 1937, the Bireley Orangeade Corporation opened a new soft drink bottling and distribution plant at the intersection of 9th Street NW and Moorman Avenue NW (128-6663-0017), expanding industrial development in Northwest Roanoke beyond the railroad corridor. Located just a block south of the east-west corridor of Orange Avenue, the bottling plant relied on trucks for their local distribution. When it opened, the plant employed eight men and operated four trucks that distributed Bireley's products to local dairies for retail sale. The company proved successful, and in 1942, the Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company acquired the Bireley Orangeade Corporation.[21] Perhaps more significantly, the construction of the bottling plant at the intersection of Moorman Avenue NW and 9th Street NW spurred the establishment of small businesses – typically automobile-related services - in the following decades that would extend the commercial activity of 11th Street NW into the historically Black neighborhood to the east.

Post World War II Development

Construction in the commercial district increased after World War II. In 1943, the Kroger Grocery and Baking Company opened a new supermarket at 604 11th Street NW (128-6663-0012), across the street from its former store at 601 11th Street NW (128-6663-0015). Approximately three times the size of the earlier store with a surrounding parking lot, the new Kroger featured modern refrigeration facilities and forty-four departments offering 3,500 items. According to a newspaper

[19] Barnes, *A History of Roanoke,* pp. 709, 804
[20] Dalmas, *The Street Railways of Roanoke, Virginia,* p. 112.
[21] "Bireley Orangeade Co. Will Open Tomorrow," (*The Roanoke World-News,* August 17, 1937), p. 12; "Bireley's Bottling Co is Granted Charter," (*The Roanoke Times,* January 8, 1943), p. 4.

advertisement, the new store – the eighteenth Kroger location in Roanoke – served residents of the surrounding neighborhoods of Northwest Roanoke, Villa Heights, Rugby, and Salem.[22]



Figure 2: 1946 photo of Kroger (Roanoke Public Libraries: Virginia Room)

In 1946, a new commercial building was constructed at 502 11th Street NW (128-6663-0007), extending commercial development south along 11th Street into a previously residential block. The building was occupied by Carter & Jones Dry Cleaning & Dyeing Inc., established by Robert Carter and Pitzer Kyle "P.K." Jones. The business also featured coin-operated laundry. Carter & Jones Dry Cleaning proved successful, later expanding to locations in Salem and Hollins in the late 1950s and early 1960s.[23] The dry-cleaning business continued to operate at 502 11th Street NW until the late 1960s. The following year, W.E. Cundiff and F.W. Overstreet established the Northwest Hardware Co. and constructed a new building in 1947 at 611 11th Street NW (128-6663-0013). The hardware business not only expanded the range of retail goods provided to the

[22] "Super Market Opening Today," (*The Roanoke Times*; June 24, 1943), p. 5; Kroger, "Advertisement," (The Roanoke World-News, June 18, 1943), p. 3.
[23] Sarah Cox, "Neighborhood changes, but dry cleaners keep offering personal service," (*The Roanoke Times*, April 7, 1994), p. 105.

neighborhood residents but also served a much larger customer base that extended beyond Northwest Roanoke.[24] Cundiff also owned Vinton Hardware, a successful business in downtown Vinton. Together, these developments expanded both the range of goods and services available in the district and the geographical extent of commercial development along 11th Street NW and its customer base.

Growth along 11th Street NW and Moorman Avenue NW continued in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In 1948, streetcar service completely ended in Roanoke, and buses became the primary form of public transportation, with thirty-four bus lines serving Roanoke, Salem, and Vinton.[25] At the same time, automobile ownership and automobile-oriented commerce continued to grow. Two new service stations were constructed within the district: a ca. 1953 Atlantic Service Station at the northwestern corner of the intersection of 11th Street NW and Melrose Avenue NW (128-6663-0014) and the ca. 1950 Wiggins Brothers Service Station and Auto Repair at the southeastern corner of 10th Street NW and Moorman Avenue NW (128-0069). The Wiggins brothers were also of Syrian descent and likely related to Edward Wiggins who constructed the first commercial building in the district at 601 11th Street NW (128-6663-0015). In 1951, the Kroger at 604 11th Street NW (128-6663-0012) was remodeled and reopened with updated air-conditioning and refrigeration equipment, five checkout counters equipped with conveyor belts, and automatic "magic carpet" doors. The parking lot was also expanded to accommodate up to eighty vehicles.[26] Around 1953, Metts Auto Paint & Body Shop opened at 926 Moorman Avenue NW (128-6166). Although on the eastern side of 10th Street NW, it was a White-owned business. The construction of new service stations, auto repair and paint shops, and the expansion of Kroger's parking lot reflected the growing importance of automobile-oriented commerce in the district.

Around 1956, Garland's Drug Store, a local chain started by Walter B. Garland, built a new pharmacy at the corner of 11th Street NW and Moorman Avenue NW (128-6663-0009). Garland's ten pharmacies were primarily located in Roanoke neighborhoods and served as community gathering places, often featuring soda fountains.[27] Around 1958, Whitehead Plumbing Heating & Gas opened at 1114 Moorman Avenue NW (128-6663-0020) and Mickey's Modern Shoe Service opened at 506-508 11th Street NW (128-6663-0008), further expanding the range of services available to the surrounding neighborhood.

[24] John Garland, telephone interview, September 30, 2026.
[25] Dalmas, *The Street Railways of Roanoke, Virginia,* p. 119.
[26] "Kroger Reopens 11th St. Store After Remodeling," (*The Roanoke World-News*, July 25, 1951), p. 8.
[27] Robert A. Garland, "Growing up at the Family Drug Store," (*The Roanoke Times,* July 26, 1992), p. 149.



Figure 3: Circa 1955 photo of Whitehead Plumbing and portion of Garland's Drug Store at left (Roanoke Public Libraries: Virginia Room)

Moorman Avenue NW and Black-Owned Businesses

Although 11th Street NW was situated near the boundary between the White Melrose neighborhood and the Black Harrison neighborhood, its commercial resources were primarily owned and operated by White businessmen from the 1910s through the 1940s and Black customers were not allowed to shop there.[28] According to Garland Sheets, a local real estate expert, in the first half of the 20th century, "real estate agents would not allow blacks to buy or rent houses west of 10th Street NW."[29] In the late 1940s, the district's first known Black-owned business opened at 1002 Moorman Avenue NW (128-0070), where Cecil Curtis operated Roanoke's only Black drive-in from the first floor, while he and his wife, Marilyn Curtis, resided above. On February 3, 1952, Curtis and Lawrence Hamlar opened Hamlar-Curtis Funeral Home in the building and operated as one of five Black-owned funeral homes in Roanoke at the time. Hamlar, a Virginia State College

[28] Mike Hamlar, telephone interview, September 23, 2026.
[29] Mary Bishop, "Street by Street, Block by Block: How Urban Renewal Uprooted Black Roanoke," (*The Roanoke Times & The Roanoke World-News*, January 29, 1995), p. 2

and mortuary college graduate who had previously worked at another Roanoke funeral home, recalled that although several funeral homes already served the city's Black community, "we decided to open anyway, because we thought we could give better service at a cheaper price."[30] The partners began with a hearse, basic funeral equipment, and had only $25 in the bank. The hearse also served as an ambulance for the Black community during this time when other emergency transport services were not available to them.[31] Cecil and Marilyn Curtis apprenticed under Hamlar and earned their funeral directors' licenses in 1955, and Marilyn later became the first female president of the Virginia Morticians Association.[32]

In 1959, a fire nearly destroyed the building, prompting the partners to rebuild and expand the funeral home. Because local White bankers were unwilling to provide a substantial loan to a Black-owned business, the partners secured $25,000 in financing through a Black insurance company in Richmond and a Black bank of Danville. The business continued to grow in the 1960s, and in 1972, an addition was constructed to accommodate its expansion. Hamlar and the Curtises were also active in the community, donating time and resources to local chapters of the NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Hamlar served on the Roanoke School Board during the period of school desegregation and participated on a committee of Black and White business leaders that worked to end racial segregation at Roanoke restaurants, lunch counters, and theaters. Marilyn Curtis served as the PTA president at William Fleming High School and also served on the school board from 1988 to 1997.[33] Hamlar-Curtis continued to thrive in the following decades and remains an important part of the 11th Street NW commercial district. Of the five Black-owned funeral homes in operation when it was founded in 1952, Hamlar-Curtis is the only one to still operate under the same ownership in Roanoke today.

Changing Trends in Commerce

Although two new businesses opened in the district around 1960 – a Black-owned barber shop at 902 Moorman Avenue NW (128-6663-0018) and a shoe repair business and self-service laundry at 506-508 11th Street NW (128-6663-0008) – commercial enterprises began to leave the neighborhood during the 1960s for larger properties beyond the city center. As automobile ownership increased and transportation infrastructure expanded, retailers sought larger buildings and parcels with ample parking, contributing to a gradual shift away from the established neighborhood commercial districts throughout the city. In 1961, Crossroads Mall opened approximately three miles north of downtown Roanoke as the first fully enclosed and air-conditioned shopping center in Virginia. The twenty-eight stores offered a variety of goods and services under one roof with convenient parking and stayed open until 9:00pm.[34] This was followed by the construction of Towers Mall (1961) and Roanoke-Salem Plaza (1962); although these were commercial strip shopping centers and not fully enclosed.

[30] Almena Hughes, "Ready for the next 40 years," (*The Roanoke Times*, April 2, 1992), p. 41.
[31] Hamlar, telephone interview.
[32] Mike Hudson, "More than just a business," (*The Roanoke Times,* February 3, 2002), p. 74.
[33] *Ibid.*
[34] "Crossroads Mall," (*Mall Hall of Fame,* April 2010), https://mall-hall-of-fame.blogspot.com/2010/04/contemporary-shot-of-southeast-corner.html.

In the 11th Street NW commercial district, several of the larger businesses moved during this period. In 1962, Bireley's Beverage Corporation moved from its facility at 830 Moorman Avenue NW (128-6663-0017) to a larger plant in southwest Roanoke, which had a capacity of 500,000 cases annually and was equipped with new and reconditioned machinery.[35] Two years later, in 1964, Kroger relocated to a new supermarket several blocks away at 19th Street NW between Orange and Melrose avenues. The larger store featured an expansive parking lot with access from Orange Avenue, Melrose Avenue, 19th Street, and 20th Street. A new Super-X drugstore, also owned by Kroger, was constructed on the site as well.[36]

In 1966, Carter & Jones Dry Cleaning moved to a new plant on Melrose Avenue, approximately five miles away from its former location on 11th Street NW. According to the owner, the move was prompted in part by a change in the neighborhood's demographics, noting "that the 11th Street clientele had changed from working, middle-income level to senior citizens with less spending power."[37] Several years later, in 1970, Northwest Hardware relocated from 604 11th Street NW (128-6663-0012) to a new property at 2301 Williamson Road. The business cited the larger building, with two levels of sales floor and more than 8,000 square feet, as well as a separate shop building, warehouse, and ample parking as advantages of the new location.[38] As business relocated to larger, more automobile-oriented properties, other commercial storefronts in the district increasingly became vacant. Together, these relocations and vacancies illustrate the changing nature of commercial development in Roanoke during the 1960s and early 1970s, as established neighborhood businesses increasingly moved from the compact neighborhood district to properties that could accommodate expanded operations and parking needs.

Urban Renewal and Shifting Demographics in the Neighborhood

The migration of the businesses within the 11th Street NW commercial district to larger properties farther from the city center reflected the growing dependence on automobiles and demand for larger facilities and coincided with the movement of White residents out of the Melrose neighborhood. These changes were part of broader shifts in Roanoke, where changing neighborhood demographics, declining commercial activity, and growing pressure for redevelopment converged with major infrastructure projects.

From 1955 through the 1970s, city leaders undertook a series of urban renewal projects that resulted in the demolition of the historic Black neighborhoods of Northeast Roanoke and Gainsboro. City officials characterized these neighborhoods as "blighted" and targeted them for clearance to accommodate projects including the construction of Interstate 581, the Roanoke Civic Center, Roanoke Gas Company offices, and the city's main post office, as well as the widening of Williamson Road, new parking lots and other commercial development. In total, approximately 1,600 homes, 200 small businesses, several schools, and twenty-four churches in the Black

[35] "Bireley's to Move to New Location," (*The Roanoke Times,* July 14, 1962), p. 17.
[36] "Kroger Opening New Store This Morning," (*The Roanoke Times,* June 16, 1964), p. 19.
[37] Cox, "Neighborhood changes," p. 105.
[38] "City Firm Will Move To New Site," (*The Roanoke World-News,* August 20, 1970), p. 30.

neighborhoods of Northeast Roanoke and Gainsboro were demolished as part of these redevelopment efforts.[39]

The tight-knit Black communities were destroyed as families were displaced and scattered throughout the city. Many Black homeowners from the razed neighborhoods moved into the historically White neighborhoods nearby, particularly in Northwest Roanoke, where Black residents began purchasing houses west of the former 10th Street NW boundary between the Melrose and Harrison neighborhoods. The high cost of these houses, however, placed many Black residents into debt and contributed to further displacement. At the same time, many White families left the neighborhood for newly developing suburbs surrounding Roanoke City.[40]

The 11th Street Commercial Historic District transitioned during this period from a commercial and institutional center that served predominantly White customers and residents during the era of segregation to one that served the growing Black population of the neighborhood. In 1970, the White congregation of Melrose Baptist Church (128-6661) opted to move to a new property in Roanoke County. According to a contemporary newspaper article, the congregation had considered relocating for some time, citing the fact that "the neighborhood has changed racially in the past decade" as well as the need for more "space for its people to move about freely in a rapidly growing neighborhood where suburban needs can be met." The new Melrose Baptist Church on Peters Creek Road was Roanoke's first campus-style church, with six separate buildings on a nineteen-acre parcel.[41]

The same year, the congregation sold the church to Holiness Tabernacle Church of God in Christ, a Black congregation, for $55,000. Organized in 1909, Holiness Tabernacle is one of the denomination's oldest churches in western Virginia. In addition to worship services, the church offered musical programs, Sunday School classes, and weekly Bible studies.[42] Holiness Tabernacle continued to use the building for many years and retains ownership of the property today, although the congregation now worships at a different location. The church, however, continues to have ties to the neighborhood with plans currently underway to renovate the former church building on Melrose Avenue NW for housing and outreach programs.

As the demographics of the surrounding neighborhood changed, the former commercial center along 11th Street NW and Melrose and Moorman avenues, increasingly served as a Black community and institutional center. In addition to the presence of Holiness Tabernacle (128-6661), Hamlar-Curtis Funeral Home (128-0070) continued to grow as a business by improving and expanding its facility at the corner of Moorman Avenue NW and 11th Street NW with another addition in 1972. Today, the Hamlar-Curtis Funeral Home and Crematory is the only Black-owned

[39] "Mary Bishop, "Urban Renewal in Roanoke," (*Encyclopedia Virginia*, Virginia Humanities, last modified September 24, 2024), https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/urban-renewal-in-roanoke/.
[40] Bishop, *Street by Street, Block by Block,* pp. 3-5.
[41] "Melrose Baptist Plans To Relocate in County," (*The Roanoke World News,* November 19, 1966), p. 3; Frances Stebbins, "Baptist Church To Move," (*The Roanoke World-News*, April 4, 1970), p. 3.
[42] Stebbins, "Baptist Church To Move"; "Church of the Week: Holiness Tabernacle Church Of God In Christ," (*The Roanoke Times,* February 27, 1982), p. 26.

funeral home in Roanoke and remains an important institutional and commercial anchor for the area.

Meanwhile, other Black-owned businesses and organizations established a presence in the district. In 1964, the Hunton Life Saving Crew moved into the former Bireley Bottling plant at 830 Moorman Avenue NW (128-6663-0017). Founded in 1941 under the leadership of Alexander A. Terrell, a Norfolk & Western Railway ambulance driver, the all-Black volunteer rescue squad was established to provide first aid and emergency services to Roanoke's Black communities during the Jim Crow era of segregation. Terrell described the organization as both a contribution to the war effort and a response to the community's need for first-aid training and emergency services. Initially headquartered at the Hunton branch of the YMCA, the crew undertook a successful fundraising campaign to purchase and renovate the former Bireley plant in 1964. The renovated building included a dormitory, day room, and kitchen with awards and photographs documenting the crew's accomplishments. The Hunton Life Saving Crew earned dozens of awards over the years and was featured in the nationally published *Hue* magazine. It continued to serve the community until 1987, when it disbanded due to a lack of volunteers.[43]

Despite changing trends in commercial development and the shifting demographics of the neighborhood, many long-standing businesses in the district continued to operate into the 1970s and 1980s according to city directories. The building at 605 11th Street NW housed a confectionary as early as 1930 with Atkin's Confectionary operating there from the 1950s through the early 1970s. Carter & Jones Dry Cleaning & Dyeing is listed at 502 11th Street NW between 1950 and 1975 and expanded in the mid-1960s with the Carter & Jones Wishie Wash No. 1 Self Service Laundry next door at 506 11th Street NW. The building at 1015 Moorman Avenue NW is listed as People's Radio Service Guaranteed in 1950 and the business continued to be listed at this location in 1985, although the name changes to People's Radio & Television Supply Co. in 1955 and, eventually, to People's Electronics Supply Co. in 1985 as a reflection of the evolving technologies. Northwest Hardware Co. operated at 611 11th Street NW from the 1950s to ca. 1970 when it is listed at 604 11th Street NW before moving to Williamson Road. Rent-Alls of Roanoke, Inc. moved into this building by 1975 where it operated for several decades. Garland's Drug Store No. 2, which opened in 1956 at 510 11th Street NW, continued to be listed at this location in 1985. As the area along 11th Street NW and Melrose and Moorman avenues continued as a commercial district, new businesses moved into existing buildings between 1960 and 1985, including hair salons, barber shops, a wig store, a record store, several restaurants, a fish market/grocery store, a welding shop, a taxi service, and numerous automobile repair shops (often located in the former service stations).

Recognizing the history and character of 11th Street NW as a commercial center for the neighborhood, the City of Roanoke is currently partnering with the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to utilize the Main Street Virginia program to revitalize 11th Street NW. This initiative builds on the momentum started with the renovation of 601 11th Street NW (128-6663-0015) in 2018 by Garland Properties to provide a location for non-

[43] Ron Nixon, "The Pride of the Community," (*The Roanoke Times,* September 22, 1997), pp. 35, 37.

profit organizations, small businesses, and a community resource and gathering space. Since then, local residents and business owners have founded Elevate 11th Street as a community non-profit organization to work with the City and DHCD to renovate buildings in the district for new businesses, create gathering spaces, and sponsor special events to restore the area as a commercial and community hub for the surrounding Northwest Roanoke neighborhoods.

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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 # _____
____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

_X__ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
____ Other
Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): DHR File No. 128-6663

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 9.8 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

A. Latitude: 37.282722 Longitude: -79.956265

B. Latitude: 37.282634 Longitude: -79.955835

C. Latitude: 37.279863 Longitude: -79.952800

D. Latitude: 37.279561 Longitude: -79.952967

E. Latitude: 37.280509 Longitude: -79.956350

F. Latitude: 37.280827 Longitude: -79.957322

G. Latitude: 37.281491 Longitude: -79.957554

H. Latitude: 37.282438 Longitude: -79.957275

Or
UTM References
Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

1. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
2. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
3. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
4. Zone:	Easting :	Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The historic boundary includes all tax parcels as shown on the attached 11th Street NW Commercial Historic District Sketch Map/Photo Key, which shows the district's true and correct historic boundaries.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries of the 11th Street NW Commercial Historic District encompass the historic resources associated with the neighborhood's commercial development through the period of significance, as identified through archival research and field survey. The district is generally bounded by 8th Street NW to the east, Fairfax Avenue NW to the south, 12th Street NW to the west, and Melrose/Madison Avenue NW to the north. Within the district, buildings display consistent setbacks from the roadway and share similar scale, massing, and building materials, reflecting the cohesive development of this neighborhood commercial district.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kate Kronau, Katie Gutshall & Alison Blanton
organization: Hill Studio
street & number: 120 Campbell Avenue SW
city or town: Roanoke state: VA zip code: 24011
e-mail: kkronau@hillstudio.com/kgutshall@hillstudio.com
telephone: (540) 342-5263
date: September 2026

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: 11th Street NW Commercial Historic District
City or Vicinity: Roanoke City
County: NA State: Virginia
Photographer: Jonah Collins
Date Photographed: July 30, 2026

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 11: VA_RoanokeCity_11thStreetNWCommercialHistoricDistrict_0001
11th Street NW, view south

2 of 11: VA_RoanokeCity_11thStreetNWCommercialHistoricDistrict_0002
10th Street NW and Moorman Avenue NW Intersection, view southeast

3 of 11: VA_RoanokeCity_11thStreetNWCommercialHistoricDistrict_0003
Melrose Baptist Church, view south

4 of 11: VA_RoanokeCity_11thStreetNWCommercialHistoricDistrict_0004
1000 Block of Moorman Avenue NW, view west

5 of 11: VA_RoanokeCity_11thStreetNWCommercialHistoricDistrict_0005
11th Street NW and Moorman Avenue NW Intersection, view northwest

6 of 11: VA_RoanokeCity_11thStreetNWCommercialHistoricDistrict_0006
800 & 900 Blocks of Moorman Avenue NW, view northwest

7 of 11: VA_RoanokeCity_11thStreetNWCommercialHistoricDistrict_0007
600 Block of 11th Street NW, view northeast

8 of 11: VA_RoanokeCity_11thStreetNWCommercialHistoricDistrict_0008
Hamlar-Curtis Funeral Home, view south

9 of 11: VA_RoanokeCity_11thStreetNWCommercialHistoricDistrict_0009
11th Street NW, view southwest

10 of 11: VA_RoanokeCity_11thStreetNWCommercialHistoricDistrict_0010
Melrose Baptist Sunday School Building, view northeast

11 of 11: VA_RoanokeCity_11thStreetNWCommercialHistoricDistrict_0011
500 Block of 11th Street NW, view northwest

Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources

V-CRIS

Virginia Cultural Resource Information System

Digital Location Map

11th Street NW Commercial Historic District
Roanoke City, VA
VDHR ID# 128-6663

A. Latitude: 37.282722 Longitude: -79.956265

B. Latitude: 37.282634 Longitude: -79.955835

C. Latitude: 37.279863 Longitude: -79.952800

D. Latitude: 37.279561 Longitude: -79.952967

E. Latitude: 37.280509 Longitude: -79.956350

F. Latitude: 37.280827 Longitude: -79.957322

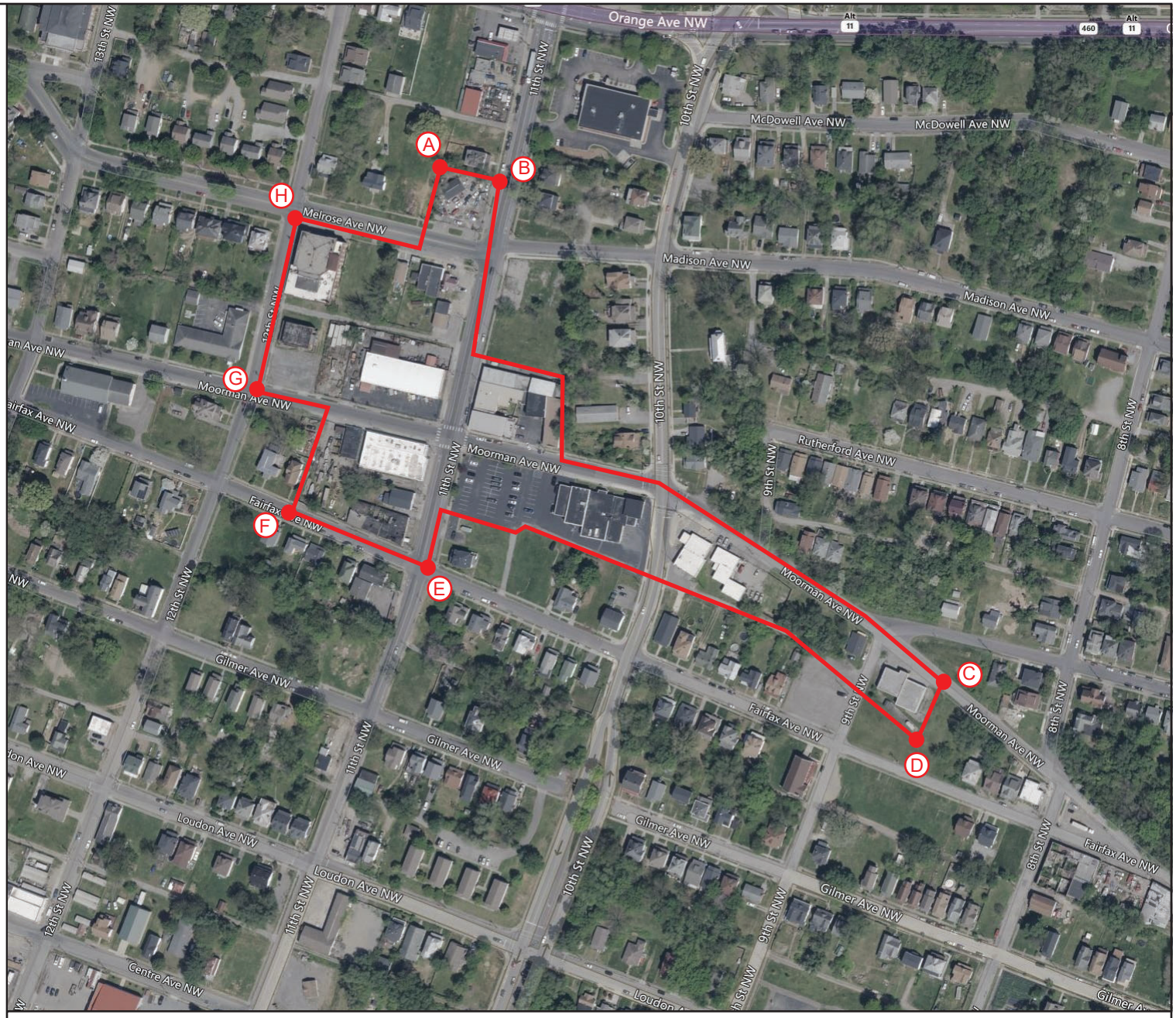
G. Latitude: 37.281491 Longitude: -79.957554

H. Latitude: 37.282438 Longitude: -79.957275

WGS84
Map Source: VCRIS

N

Feet
0 100 200 300 400
1:4,514 / 1"=376 Feet



Title: 11th Street NW Commercial Historic District

Date: 9/14/2026

DISCLAIMER:Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions.The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available at the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.

Notice if AE sites:Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Virginia §2.2-3705.7 (10). Release of precise locations may threaten archaeological sites and historic resources.


Melrose Ave NW
Madison Ave NW
Moorman Ave NW
Rutherford Ave NW
Gilmer Ave NW
Fairfax Ave NW
11th St NW
10th St NW
9th St NW
8th St NW
12th St NW
0001
0002
0003
0004
0005
0006
0007
0008
0009
0010
0011
0012
0013
0014
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0016
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0018
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0020
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9
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11
11th Street NW Commercial
Historic District
Roanoke, VA
DHR ID# 128-6663
0 50 100 200
Feet
Historic District Boundary
Contributing Building
Contributing Structure
Non-Contributing Building
Non-Contrubuting Structure
Parcels




10th Street
Moorman Ave
OPEN








OF SERVICE TO THE


GROCERY • BEER | WINE • TOBACCO
OPEN
STREET FOOD MART
UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT
Mile Street Village Center
THE COLLECTIVE.
11TH ST


HAMLAR &
CURTIS
FUNERAL HOME


Hot Dog
& Soda
PEACE
LOVE
UNITY


FOR SALE
WALKER


ONE