

Application for the Designation of the Bowles-Strachan House Site as a Broward County Historical Cultural Resource Site (and/or) Local Area of Particular Concern (LAPC)

I. General Information.

- A. Site Name(s): Bowles-Strachan House.
- B. Florida Master Site File Number(s): 8BD4546.
- C. C. General Location: Township 51S, Range 42E, Section 19.
- D. Street Address for Property, if Applicable: 4651 SW 19th Street, West Park, FL 33023
- E. Broward County Property Appraiser Identification Number: 514219014330
- F. Legal Description: Carver Ranches 19-2B Block 24 Lot 7
- G. Ownership: Public _____
 Private X
 Other (describe) _____

II. Criteria for Designation (County Code Section 5-533.)

To be designated, the site must meet at least one (1) of the criteria in A. below, at least one (1) of the criteria in B. or C. below (to be indicated by a check at the appropriate category), and it must meet D. below:

A. Age of Site:

- 1. X The site is more than fifty (50) years old and is a particularly significant reminder of the county’s origins and early history; or
- 2. _____ The site is less than fifty (50) years old, was a military facility, or is a site of overwhelming historical significance to the county, state or nation; or
- 3. _____ The site is a “pioneer” site representing the first building constructed in a community.

B. Architecture:

- 1. _____ The site is identified as the work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual work has influenced the development of the county, state or nation; or

2. ____ The site is recognized for the quality of its architecture or design which embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, period or method of construction; or
3. X The site exhibits distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period of history, the method of construction, or use of indigenous materials and may include sites with unique or unusual exterior or interior architectural appearance, design or feature or is an outstanding example of architecture typical to Broward County.

C. Importance of Site:

1. ____ The site has or had a significant community function, such of Site as a government, business, religious or educational building providing a notable reminder of the cultural, economic, or historical heritage of Broward County or South Florida; or
2. X The site is of an important event, movement or activity relating directly to the history of Broward County or South Florida; or
3. ____ The site is identified with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the history of the county, state or nation.

D. The site must also have been recommended and approved for designation as a Cultural Resource Category Local Area of Particular Concern (LAPC) by the Broward County Planning Council and have been designated as an LAPC by the Broward County Board of County Commissioners.

If yes, provide information and the date of listing: October 25, 2011

III. Statement of Significance and Other Data (Answer sections as appropriate):

Introduction:

The Bowles-Strachan House is the oldest remaining dwelling in the Carver Ranches neighborhood of the City of West Park. It was built as one of four demonstration or model homes in Carver Ranches, a subdivision that was developed in 1941 and was marketed exclusively to the black community from inner-city Miami. Carver Ranches provided home-ownership to a group that had previously been relegated to living in overpriced and undervalued rental units in depressed neighborhoods.

A Statement of Significance:

On January 6, 1855, approximately 10 years after the creation of the State of Florida, the Legislature granted title of an immense amount of land in the State to the Internal Improvement

Fund of the State of Florida. It was their responsibility to care for this land and manage its appropriate development. The 300 acres that is now known as Carver Ranches is a very small part of that land. Through several subsequent splits and transactions, the 300 acres of Carver Ranches was deeded to Orange State Development Company of Dade County Florida on August 11, 1924. The land was platted as Hollywood Beach Acres on January 25, 1925, after which, the property transferred ownership three times by November 6, 1925. The eastern portion of the property was re-platted as Hollywood Plaza on November 23, 1925. The Hollywood Plaza Corporation of Florida took ownership of the property shortly after. Approximately 3½ years lapsed between the time when the Hollywood Plaza Corporation took ownership of the property and when it was lost to foreclosure, likely a result of the real estate “bust.” On July 5, 1929, foreclosure was initiated by the mortgage holder, J. W. Moffitt, who held the property until November 27, 1940 when it was sold to Carver Ranches, Inc. The partial description of the chain of title to the 300 acres known as Carver Ranches was drawn from the Abstract of Title for Lots 22 and 23 in Block 38 of Carver Ranches¹.

There are multiple accounts from early residents of Carver Ranches which indicate that there was prior development of the land that became Carver Ranches. During oral interviews, several early residents spoke about the presence of sections of sidewalks and pieces of building foundations. Within these interviews there are varying theories as to who occupied this land and why the development disappeared. Early Murray, who grew up in Carver Ranches beginning in 1942, stated that “You know, when we came out here there were sidewalks. That divider on 48th Avenue was always there—you know, where K & K Grocery Store is. . . . The 1929 or the 1935 storm wiped all those houses out.”² Ruben M. Bell, whose family moved to Carver Ranches in 1945, observed “You see, Carver Ranches at one time was farmland where people had horses. From what I understood, the 1926 storm demolished everything. There were some pieces of old sidewalks out here, too.”³ Theodore Strachan, who grew up in the Bowles-Strachan House recalled “they said Indians use to live out here because there was pieces of sidewalks and pieces of foundation scattered out here.”⁴ It is very likely that these amenities were remnants of the defunct Hollywood Plaza development. A comparison of plat maps for Hollywood Plaza (Exhibit 1) and Carver Ranches (Exhibit 2), both recorded for the same site, indicates that amenities and street layouts, including street names, are identical.

The process for developing the Carver Ranches subdivision was initiated by H.E. Foster, Donald F. Anderson, and Carl T. Hoffman who filed the papers to create Carver Ranches Incorporated on September 6, 1940.⁵ After Carver Ranches, Inc. purchased the property in November 1940, the Carver Ranches subdivision became a reality. Though a plat for the development was not recorded until July 31, 1941, construction began on four display houses shortly after the land was secured (See Exhibit 2, Carver Ranches Plat map). In her book, entitled *Promises from the Palmetto Bush: the Genesis of Carver Ranches, Fl 1940-1949*, author Cynthia Strachan described the birth of Carver Ranches as follows: “They purchased 300 acres of undeveloped

¹ Strachan, Cynthia, *Promises from the Palmetto Bush: the genesis of Carver Ranches, Fl 1940-1949*. Jussent Publishing Co, West Park, FL, 2006, p.29.

² Ibid, p.41.

³ Ibid, p.63.

⁴ Ibid, p.31.

⁵ Broward County Records, Clerks file 364194, Corporate Record #13, Page 339.

land full of Palmetto bushes and full of promises. The few display houses they built and the remaining empty lots were sold to Negroes only; so you see, Carver Ranches was a planned Black community from the start.”⁶ The principals in the corporation participated directly in marketing the development by going door to door in depressed neighborhoods in Miami. They offered a way out of slum rentals with their exorbitant rents and into a home that they owned. Buyers could purchase a new home on their own lot for \$50 down and \$12 per month.⁷ The first owners to move into Carver Ranches’, Harrison and Katherine Lumpkin Strachan (no relation to the applicant) moved into their brand new house, located at 4815 Orlando Street (18th Street) on February 14, 1941.⁸

It is difficult to know what if any the motives of the developers were other than to make money but some of the original residents believed them to be altruistic. Katherine Lumpkin Strachan, the first resident noted that “they wouldn’t sell to whites... Foster explained it to me, but I can’t remember his exact words. From past experience, he knew whites were imposing on blacks. They would buy up a lot of property and put it on rent, then over charge the blacks for it. He was a nice person.”⁹

The houses were very small and basic with no services such as electricity, potable water or sanitary sewers nor any police or fire protection, but they did provide the opportunity for their owner occupants to control the lives and to build a future. Carver Ranches remains a very cohesive community with a large number of descendents of original owners still living in the neighborhood.

In July of 1941, Ethelyn Bowles moved into one of the four demonstration homes, located at 4651 SW 19th Street, with her 14 year old son, Theodore ‘Lucky’ Strachan. Referred to as the Bowles-Strachan House, it is the subject property of this report. They were the fifth family to move to Carver Ranches. In 1953, Theodore married Eloise Moss and together they continued to live with Theodore’s mother in her home. Theodore and Eloise had three children, Billy, Cynthia and Veronica. They remained in the house until sometime before 1959 when Theodore and Eloise separated and were divorced. At that point, Eloise and the three children moved out of the Bowles-Strachan House though Theodore continued in residence.

In 1971, Theodore’s second child, Cynthia, at that time a high school senior, returned to the Bowles-Strachan house to help care for her grandmother, Ethelyn Bowles. Ethelyn, who purchased the home in 1941, resided there until her death on July 21, 1972. Cynthia continued to reside in the house until 1979. She again returned to her family home in 2001 and continues to reside there as the current owner. Theodore remained in the house until his death in 2006. Ownership and occupancy of the Bowles-Strachan House has continued, since it was first built until today, by three generations of the same family.

⁶ Strachan, Cynthia, *Promises from the Palmetto Bush: the genesis of Carver Ranches, Fl 1940-1949*. Jussent Publishing Co, West Park, Fl, 2006, pp.19-20

⁷ Ibid, p.2.

⁸ Ibid, p.2.

⁹ Ibid, p. 19.

B. Setting and Evaluation of Historic Structure:

Location

The property is located at lot 7, Block 24, of Carver Ranches, Inc., a subdivision that is located in Section 19, Township 51, south, and Range 42, East, Broward County Florida¹⁰ (See Exhibit 3, U.S.G.S. map and Exhibit 4, Broward County Property Appraiser's Map). Carver Ranches borders Pembroke Road to its north and is approximately 1.5 miles west of I-95.

Historic Setting

The Carver Ranches development consisted of 300 acres on a ridge in a rural area of open land primarily covered with palmetto bush. The Bowles-Strachan House, located at 4651 SW 19th Street, was purchased by Ethelyn Bowles in June 1941 at which time she was among the first five families residing in the subdivision. In an October 2005 interview with Theodore 'Lucky' Strachan, Ethelyn Bowles' son, he indicated that at the time he moved there with his mother, at the age of 14, there were a total of eight houses constructed in the subdivision.¹¹

Description

The Bowles-Strachan House is a wood-frame vernacular residential building, constructed in 1941 as one of four model or demonstration homes for the Carver Ranches subdivision in unincorporated Broward County. This area was incorporated as a part of the City of West Park in 2005. The structure is the last remaining of the four demonstration homes and one of the few remaining original structures that retain their initial character in the Carver Ranches neighborhood. The home exists in its original location and north/south orientation and exhibits much of its original character and fabric with minimal alteration.

The structure is a small single family one-story residence of wood frame construction sitting on concrete piers. The original structure is rectangular with a gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. The gable end is oriented to the street. When first built, the original house had neither indoor plumbing nor electricity. The original novelty siding has been covered with rigid asbestos shingles. The house retains just one original wood double hung window. The remaining windows have been replaced with aluminum awning windows in a bronze tone finish installed in the original openings. A narrow porch with a hip shingle roof spans the entire front elevation. A decorative sidewalk connects the street to the front porch. It is bordered with red square terracotta tiles while the field inside the border is comprised of randomly placed broken terracotta tiles in red and tan to create a freeform mosaic effect. The sidewalk terminates at a stoop comprising two steps with the same terracotta design that leads to the front door porch.

The house was analyzed to ascertain the chronology of changes to the exterior. It appears that shortly after the house was built, the east side of the front porch was enclosed, effectively

¹⁰ Broward County Records, Plat Book 19, Page 2.

¹¹ Strachan, Cynthia, *Promises from the Palmetto Bush: the genesis of Carver Ranches, Fl 1940-1949*. Jussent Publishing Co, West Park, Fl, 2006, p.29.

expanding the front bedroom. By 1954 a full width extension was added to the rear of the original structure. This addition created a kitchen, bathroom and bedroom. Asbestos siding was added over the original novelty siding at some time after the east porch rear house additions were made, and subsequently the original wood double hung windows were replaced with aluminum framed awning windows. The final changes to the exterior include the enclosure of the west side of the porch and construction of a wing at the rear of the east wall to expand the rear bedroom. This addition has a gable roof. Both the rear addition and the western porch enclosure have a stucco wall finish.

C. Historical Structure(s) Summary:

(1) **Date Constructed:** 1941

(2) **Architect:** Unknown

(3) **Builder/Contractor:** Carver Ranches Inc.

(4) **Persons Associated with the Building:** Ethelyn Bowles, Cynthia Saunders Strachan

IV. Staff Findings and Recommendations (To Be Completed by Historical Commission Administrator):

A. Staff Findings of Whether Site Meets Criteria for Designation:

Staff finds that the site meets the following criteria for designation:

A.1. The building is more than 50 years old and helps to interpret the County's history.

B.3. The building displays the characteristics of the simple vernacular buildings that were built to provide basic affordable housing during the period in which it was built.

C.2. The building is an original element in a subdivision that assisted a minority group to advance during the period of segregation.

B. Boundaries of the Historical Site Designation:

The boundary of the historical site designation shall be the entire area included within lot 7, Block 24, of Carver Ranches, Inc., also known as 4651 SW 19th Street, West Park, Florida.

C. Areas of the Site Subject to Review:

The area of the site subject to review includes all areas sited in section IV.B. Boundaries of the Historic Site Designation and includes the land, buildings structures and objects.

D. Bibliographic Resources:

Clerks file 364194, Corporate Record #13, Page 339, Broward County Records, Broward County Florida

Plat Book 9, Page 11, Broward County Records, Broward County Florida, November 23, 1925

Plat Book 19, Page 2, Broward County Records, Broward County Florida, July 31, 1941

Historical Structure Form, Florida Master Site File 8BD4561, Florida Master Site File, Tallahassee, Florida, July 7, 2009

Strachan, Cynthia, Promises from the Palmetto Bush: the genesis of Carver Ranches, Fl 1940-1949, Jussent Publishing Co, West Park, Florida, 2006.

V. Check That Which Applies:

A. Historical Commission recommendation for approval by the Board of County

Commissioners (date): June 5, 2012

B. Historical Commission recommendation for denial by the Board of County

Commissioners (date): _____

VI. Copies of this report transmitted to the County Administrator for approval by the Board of

County Commissioners (date): _____



Chair, Broward County Historical Commission



Director, Libraries Division



Historic Preservation Coordinator

EXHIBIT 3
U.S.G.S. TOPOGRAPHIC MAP

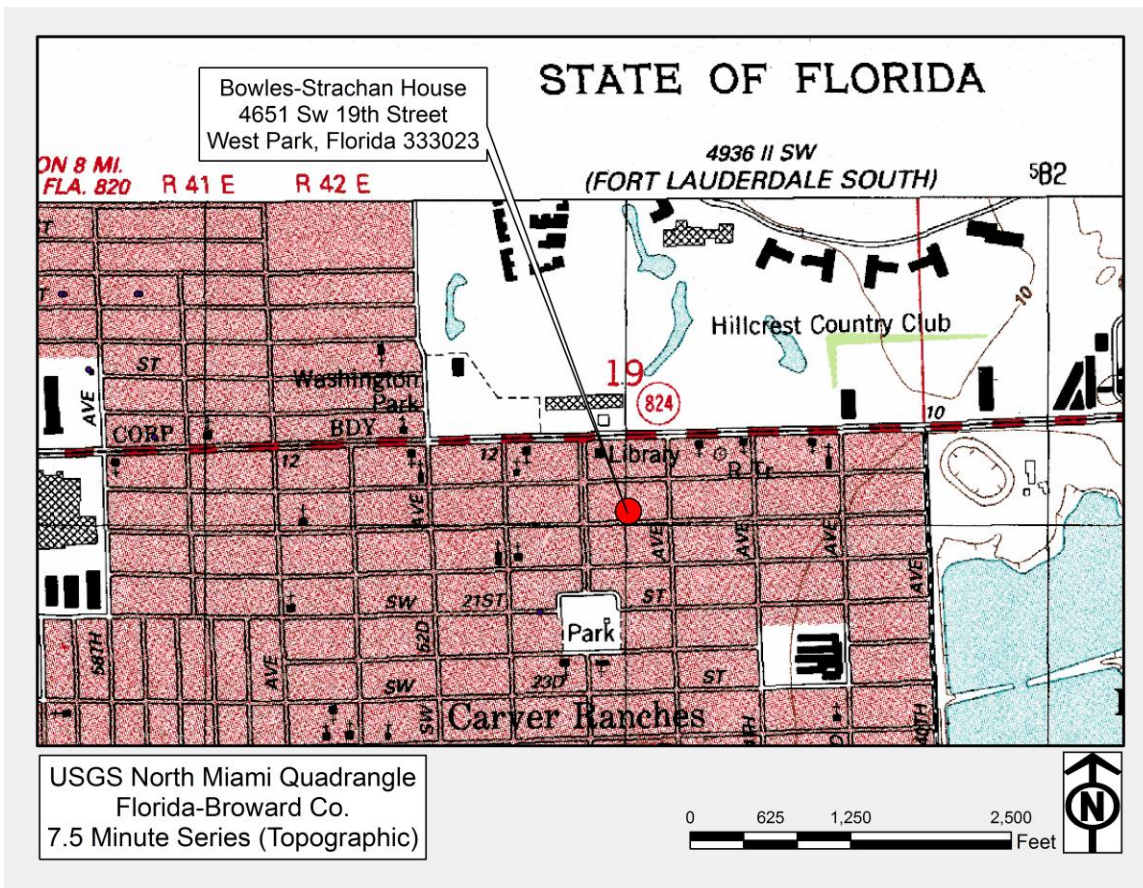


EXHIBIT 4

**BROWARD COUNTY
PROPERTY APPRAISER'S MAP**



**EXHIBIT 5-1
PHOTOGRAPHS OF 4651 SW 19TH Street**



View of southeast corner



View of south side

**EXHIBIT 5-2
PHOTOGRAPHS OF 4651 SW 19TH Street**



Southwest corner



North side

**EXHIBIT 5-3
PHOTOGRAPHS OF 4651 SW 19TH Street**



Northeast Corner



Close up of wing on side

EXHIBIT 5-4
PHOTOGRAPHS OF 4651 SW 19TH Street



Decorative front Stoop



Decorative sidewalk