

Listed in the National Register of Historic Places

The National Park Service has listed the L & J Gardens Neighborhood Historic District in Virginia Beach in the National Register of Historic Places.

This historically African American neighborhood was developed in the 1950s for African American middle class professionals to provide a suburban environment to raise their families. This was during an era when unfair housing practices and discrimination in real estate prevented Blacks from purchasing homes in many neighborhoods.

The L & J Gardens community was planned by Walter Riddick and built primarily by Black contractors and builders. Riddick, his sister Elizabeth, and other investors turned the approximately 76 acres located at Wesleyan Drive and Northampton Boulevard into a community of upwardly mobile and affluent African Americans. The neighborhood was named after the Riddicks' parents, Lizzie and John.

Originally platted in 1946, a section of this plat was redivided as L & J Gardens in 1954. The Riddicks engaged builder Herolin DeLoatch to construct homes on the newly subdivided lots. Additional subdivisions of the original plat followed. Although L & J Gardens was one of many neighborhoods platted in then Princess Anne County during a period of rapid residential expansion, it was the only one intended for affluent middle-class African Americans. A small number of original owners remain, and many residents are second and third generation members of the L & J Gardens community.

The National Register nomination states that L & J Gardens is significant at the statewide level in the areas of Ethnic Heritage (African American) and Social History (Civil Rights) as a residential subdivision owned, planned, developed, and built primarily by Black professionals and property owners and intended as a middle-class Black neighborhood during the Jim Crow era. Residents who played significant roles in local Civil Rights campaigns included Victor J. Ashe and J. Hugo Madison. Both attorneys played pivotal roles in the desegregation of Norfolk Public Schools, and improvements in Princess Anne County/Virginia Beach schools. L & J Gardens is also significant at the statewide level in the areas of Architecture and Community Planning and Development as a Black-owned neighborhood initiated by Black investors and constructed by Black builders.

The nomination was produced with assistance from the Underrepresented Communities grant program, administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. The grant program focuses on documenting the homes, lives, landscapes, and experiences of underrepresented peoples who played a significant role in national history. Additional funding was provided by the City of Virginia Beach through the Historic Preservation Commission.