



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION

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**SUBURBAN HAVEN IN EAST PROVIDENCE:
ROSE LAND PARK AND ELM TREE PLATS LISTED ON NATIONAL REGISTER**

Two residential plats in the Riverside neighborhood have received federal recognition for their contributions to the history of architecture and community planning of East Providence. Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission, announced that the National Park Service has added the Rose Land Park Plat and the Elm Tree Plat Historic Districts to the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is the Federal Government's official list of properties throughout the United States whose historical and architectural significance makes them worthy of preservation. The Rose Land Park Plat and Elm Tree Plat Historic Districts represent the rapid suburbanization of Riverside in the early to mid-20th century.

The Elm Tree Plat contains 53 single-family, 1- and 2-family houses and one commercial building on Charlotte Street, Elinora Street, and Harvey Avenue between Willett Avenue and Fenner Avenue. Just to the southeast, the Rose Land Park Plat contains 39 single-family, 1- and 2-family houses, arrayed in three blocks on Dartmouth Avenue, Florence Street, Princeton Avenue, and the west side of Willett Avenue. Both plats followed the model of a streetcar suburb with 4500-5300 square-foot rectangular house lots. The majority of the houses in both plats are wood frame, often with brick, stone, or stucco accents. While the predominant housing type in the Elm Tree Plat is the Bungalow, the Rose Land Park Plat features an eclectic variety of architectural styles, including English Cottage, Cape Cod, and Colonial Revival.

In the first half of the 19th century, the area called Wannamoisett was a sparsely settled agricultural and fishing community and a destination for waterfront recreation. Soon after the Providence, Warren, and Bristol Railroad line opened its depot on Bullock's Point Avenue in 1860, the area was renamed Riverside and became a popular summer resort. Electric streetcars replaced the trains in the 1890s, making the area more viable for year-round living, especially for middle-class and working-class people who could now afford the cost of a daily commute to their urban workplaces. Developers bought inland farmsteads and built out residential subdivisions, including the Elm Tree and Rose Land Park Plats.

Swedish immigrants Severin Carlson and Carl E. Anderson purchased the land to develop the Elm Tree Plat in 1924. The two men built about half of the houses—largely Bunaglows—between 1925 and 1935, sometimes together, sometimes separately, and sometimes in partnership with their wives Hulda E. Carlson and Inga M. Anderson. They sold most of the remaining lots to other developers who built houses on speculation.

For his next real estate project, Severin Carlson worked with a new business partner, Carl E. Johnson (also a Swedish immigrant). Anderson and Johnson purchased a seven-acre property adjacent to Elm Tree Plat and recorded the Rose Land Park Plat in 1928. Carlson and Johnson built about 75% of the houses in the plat between 1929 and 1939—often in partnership with their wives, Hulda E. Carlson and Hulda O. Johnson. The Johnsons purchased a small lot to the north and erected three houses on Rose Land Court in 1937-38. Additional houses were built on speculation by other developers.

The two plats, Elm Tree and Rose Land Park, evoked the suburban ideal. The Bungalows and English Cottage, Cape Cod, and Colonial Revival style houses combined a nostalgia for the past with a flair for the picturesque. Severin Carlson, Carl E. Anderson, and Carl E. Johnson, and their fellow developers would have had access to numerous sources to inspire them, from popular magazines to mail-order catalogs. For those seeking a suburban haven in Riverside, these plats had charm to spare.

The National Register nominations for the Elm Tree and Rose Land Park Plats were prepared by preservation consultant Kathryn J. Cavanaugh. RIHPHC's Executive Director Edward Sanderson commented, "Attractive 20th-century neighborhoods like these provided an alternative to city living and contributed to the creation of a ring of residential suburbs surrounding Providence."

According to Dean Martineau, Chairman of the City's Historic District Commission, "East Providence has a variety of historic resources that range from early 17th century structures to Post World War II housing that are located in every section of the City from Rumford to Riverside. The recognition and documentation of our historic resources is the first step that we must take in order to protect these unique structures."

In addition to honoring a property for its contribution to local, state, or national history, listing on the National Register provides additional benefits. It results in special consideration during the planning of Federal or federally assisted projects and makes properties eligible for Federal and Rhode Island tax benefits for historic rehabilitation projects. Owners of private property listed on the National Register are free to maintain, manage, or dispose of their property as they choose. As the state office for historic preservation, the Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission is responsible for reviewing and submitting Rhode Island nominations to the National Register.

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