



September 17, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

FROM: Clare Lise Kelly, Research & Designation Coordinator *CLK*
Historic Preservation, Urban Design and Preservation Division

VIA: Scott Whipple, Historic Preservation Supervisor *SN*
John Carter, Division Chief *JC*
Urban Design and Preservation Division

SUBJECT: Public Hearing Draft Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation:
Greenwich Forest; Animal Industry; Higgins Cemetery

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Recommend to the County Council designation of one historic district and two individual sites on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. Add all three resources to the Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites as an interim measure.

BACKGROUND

This Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation considers the designation of three resources:

- Greenwich Forest Historic District, Vicinity of Hampden Lane, Bethesda, Resource #35/165
- Bureau of Animal Industry Building, Norwood Rec Building, Norwood Local Park, #35/119
- Higgins Family Cemetery, Arundel Avenue, Rockville, #30/25

A copy of the Master Plan Amendment is attached. The Amendment can also be viewed online at www.MontgomeryPlanning.org/historic.

In order to evaluate and protect historic resources in Montgomery County, staff initiates amendments to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. Amendments are generated as part of an area master plan, as part of an ongoing evaluation of the Locational Atlas, or through nominations by the public. The resources in this current Amendment are in the latter category. The Greenwich Forest Historic District was nominated by a citizens association. The two individual resources were nominated by their owners. The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) held a public hearing and worksession on August 12, 2009, and voted in favor of designating all three resources.

The resources under review were not previously identified on the Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites. Placement on the Locational Atlas gives the resources interim protection until they are designated on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. That interim protection is the Moratorium on Alteration or Demolition provision of the Preservation Ordinance (Sec 24A-10). The Planning Board has the authority to add resources to the *Locational Atlas*.

Following the September 24th public hearing and worksession, the Board will transmit their recommendations to the County Council. The County Council makes the final decision on designation of historic sites.

This packet contains nomination materials for each resource: Maryland Historical Trust inventory forms ("research forms"), photographs, and maps. The Public Hearing Draft Amendment contains the HPC recommendations for criteria, historic district boundaries, and environmental settings. The discussion below summarizes planning issues and provides additional historic context.

GREENWICH FOREST HISTORIC DISTRICT

On July 8, 2009, the Greenwich Forest Citizen's Association (GFCA) submitted a nomination for a Greenwich Forest Historic District. The GFCA conducted a vote. Of the GFCA members who voted, over 70% of residents within the historic core support historic district designation. Research conducted by EHT Tracerics, an architectural history consulting firm, well documents this Depression-era residential neighborhood.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Early 20th century Montgomery County has not been comprehensively studied. A 1987 preliminary study by Andrea Rebeck hypothesizes that the suburbs of Washington likely contain the largest collection of Depression era communities to be found in the country.¹ Since Rebeck's study, certain communities have been studied including Chevy Chase (M-NCPPC staff 1996-2000; Lampl/Williams 1998), Woodside Park (Oshel 1998), and North Hills of Sligo Creek (Gagne, 2003). A thorough study of resources from this era is long overdue.

The Greenwich Forest Historic District research form, in conjunction with the studies cited above, reveal certain key characteristics of subdivisions dating from the post-Depression era. These features include natural topography, automobile orientation, and high-quality, revivalist architecture. Greenwich Forest is highly representative of these communities.

Natural topography

Suburban subdivisions of this era were increasingly planned with winding streets on natural terrain. A predecessor cited by Emily Eig is W.C. & A. N. Millers' Spring Valley, just over the DC boundary from Montgomery County. In Montgomery County, Woodside Park (1923) and Kenwood (1928) are early examples that followed these suburban ideals. Neither is listed on the Master Plan. Natural features, including hills, trees, and water features, were retained and promoted. Community names highlighted topography (Rollingwood, Hillandale), water features (Brookdale, Glen Cove), and trees (Greenwich Forest, Woodhaven). Winding streets were arranged in a loose grid pattern, in contrast to earlier subdivisions arranged on a grid plan regardless of topography.

Auto orientation

After the Depression, developers began building garages within the body of the house, often at the basement level, built into the hillside. The first three houses in Greenwich Forest, built c1926-29, had detached garages. Subsequent Greenwich Forest houses, built from 1933 on, had integral garages. While earlier suburban subdivisions featured sidewalks for pedestrians who walked

¹ Andrea Rebeck, *Montgomery County in the Early Twentieth Century: A Study of Historical and Architectural Themes*, December 1987. Additional research on Greenwich Forest may reveal further historical context and connections with other county communities. Harry Edwards for example is known to have designed houses in North Hills of Sligo Park (Gagne, 92), and Eugene Smith's Ardnave Development Corp. was also developing Silver Spring property (Eig, Greenwich Forest, 8-8).

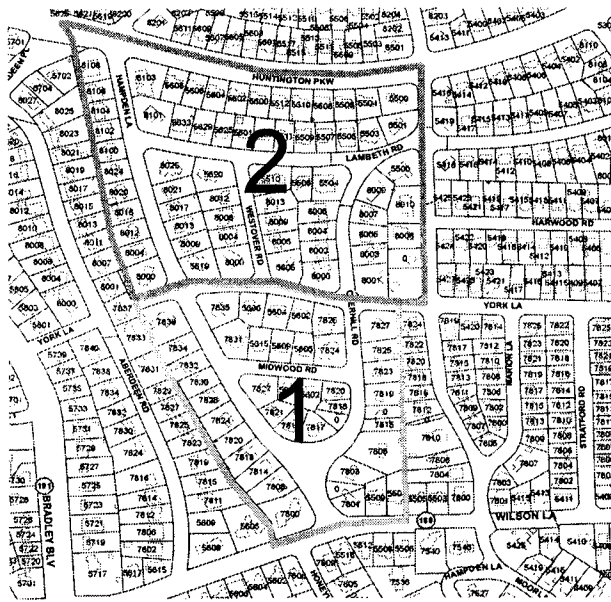
had detached garages. Subsequent Greenwich Forest houses, built from 1933 on, had integral garages. While earlier suburban subdivisions featured sidewalks for pedestrians who walked between their houses and railroad and trolley stations, subdivisions from this era had no sidewalks since residents got to and from their houses in their cars.

Architecture

Houses were well designed, using Tudor Revival and Colonial Revival styles, and high-quality natural materials of stone, brick and timber. The quality of Greenwich Forest design was insured through company architects and design review. The architecture has a cohesive whole yet is not cookie-cutter in execution. Each house is designed to be distinctive not formulaic.

Boundaries

Testimony before the HPC addressed concerns about the delineation of boundaries for the proposed historic district. The primary considerations for defining boundaries are described in the National Park Service’s National Register Bulletin, “Historic Residential Suburbs.” (See attachment) The elements to consider include the development plats, period of significance, architectural character, and integrity.



Greenwich Forest plats

For Greenwich Forest, there were two plats filed for the area under consideration. The period of significance for the proposed Greenwich Forest Historic District is 1926-1949. Resources in the northeast quadrant are not included in the district since they date from the late 20th century. Houses on Lambeth and Hampden date from the early 1950s. Not only are they outside the period of significance, they also belong to a modernist architectural vocabulary, being horizontal ranch houses or minimal traditional designs.

The HPC and staff are in agreement in supporting the boundaries in the Draft Amendment and in the revised nomination report. The boundaries contain 71 primary structures, which includes nine non-contributing resources. The boundaries include two houses facing Wilson Lane since they are part of the original plat and they retain sufficient integrity (5507) or are compatible in design and

material (5509).² The proposed Greenwich Forest Historic District meets several preservation ordinance criteria, having both historical and architectural significance: 1a, 1c, 1d, 2a, 2c, and 2d. The criteria are included on page 8 of this report. The Public Hearing Draft Amendment summarizes how the resource meets each cited criterion.

MANSIONIZATION

Greenwich Forest characterizes the best that post-Depression suburbs had to offer, yet the community is now becoming a rarity. In 2006, historic preservation staff conducted a study of the phenomenon of mansionization and teardowns. The study included a survey of early 20th century neighborhoods and resulted in intensive study of one area (Brookdale), and the publication of the Teardown/Mansionization Bulletin. A map of teardown locations in 2006 shows the concentration of this phenomenon in the Bethesda/North Bethesda area. The survey revealed that the historic character of many neighborhoods has been irretrievably lost.³

In 2007, Councilmember Roger Berliner convened an Infill Housing Task force. The taskforce's recommendations were included in the proposed zoning text amendment (ZTA) 08-11 bill. On December 9, 2008 ZTA 08-11 was adopted by County Council. It reduces the established lot coverage for two story homes in the R60, R90, and R200 zones and it reduces height in the R200 zone.

What sets Greenwich Forest apart from many of the other early subdivisions is its high level of integrity of its streetscape and its architecture. Previously, tear downs in the proposed district have been minimal, but have been an increasing threat in recent years. Two houses were torn down in the historic core, in 2005 and 2009.⁴

1990 BETHESDA-CHEVY CHASE MASTER PLAN

Greenwich Forest is located west of the Bethesda CBD in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Planning Area. Designation of this historic district is generally consistent with the goals of the 1990 Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan.

- **Community Identity** The plan supports local initiative to create a sense of community and reinforce community cohesion. The Historic District nomination by the civic association exemplifies the kind of local initiative supported by the plan.
- **Local Green Space** The entrance of the historic district from Wilson Lane includes a pocket park on Hampden Lane. The Greenwich Forest Citizens Association maintains the park, mowing and watering the grass, trimming the trees, and planting bulbs and flowers, and holds community events including annual picnics.
- **Zoning** The area is zoned R-90. Parcels east of this area, across Moorland Lane are R-60. Minimum lot size is 9,000 sq ft. Maximum density is 2.9 du/acre and maximum building height is 2.5 stories or 35 feet.

TRANSPORTATION

- **Master Plan ROW** Wilson Lane (MD 188) is a master-planned arterial (A-83). While the minimum ROW varies, the ultimate pavement is not to exceed two lanes. The master planned right of way is shown on the environmental setting map in the Draft Amendment.

² These figures include construction of one house in the planning stage for 5505 York Lane (site associated with the historic demolished house, former address at 8001 Overhill Road).

³The bulletin is found at www.MontgomeryPlanning.org/historic.

⁴ 7820 Hampden Road (2005) and 8001 Overhill Road (2009).

- **Bicycle and Pedestrian Access** The 1990 Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan called for improvements to Wilson Lane following a pedestrian safety and circulation study. Improvements recommended for Wilson Lane include a bicycle path, waiting areas and other transit facilities. The Master Plan of Bikeways identifies proposed bike lanes, BL-2, between MacArthur Blvd and Elmore Lane. Improvements on Wilson Lane would need to be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission to ensure compatibility with the historic district.
- **Secondary Roads** Hampden Lane was previously identified as a corridor for cut-through traffic traveling from Wilson Lane to Huntington Parkway. A traffic calming circle was installed at Hampden and York after 1994.

ENVIRONMENT

- **Environmental Guidelines** A goal of the January 2000 Montgomery County Planning Board Environmental Guidelines is to protect wetlands, steep slopes, and forested areas. Historic designation helps meet these goals by providing an extra level of review to minimize impacts to mature trees, wetlands, waterways, or sensitive areas.
- **Topography** Slopes greater than 15% are typical in the Greenwich Forest community, with some areas greater than 25%. The varying topography enhances the character of the neighborhood allowing houses to be nestled into the hillsides.
- **Trees** Greenwich Forest is characterized by its mature trees which enclose the sky providing cooling shade in the summer and wind protection in the winter. The street trees and understory flows from the lawn to the streets fully integrating the landscape as one. Species include: *Quercus alba*, white oak; *Liriodendron tulipifera*, tulip tree; *Fagus grandifolia*, American beech; *Kalmia latifolia*, mountain laurel; and a variety of Rhododendrons.

BUREAU OF ANIMAL INDUSTRY BUILDING

Located in the Norwood Local Park, the Bureau of Animal Industry Building, known locally as the Norwood Recreation Building, is owned by M-NCPPC Department of Parks. The Park Planning and Stewardship Division completed the MIHP research form and nominated the resource for historic designation.

Federal agencies established facilities in Montgomery County beginning in the late 1800s. From the research that has been done to date, the Bureau of Animal Industry building is one of the earliest extant resources of this type, beginning with the 1897 lease of the site with the building constructed in 1909. To date, the Bethesda Naval Hospital Tower (1939) is the only Federal facility to be designated on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. The David Taylor Model Basin (1937) is listed on the National Register. More research is needed to evaluate additional potentially significant Federal facilities.⁵

The period of significance for the resource is 1906-1936. The nomination documents the national significance and architecture of the Bureau of Animal Industry building. The nomination does not address the history of the site after 1936 when it became a park resource. There are two park-related buildings on site that were apparently built by 1951. Staff recommends the park buildings in the Norwood Local Park be evaluated in the future as part of a comprehensive review of park buildings in the context of the history of the Parks Department.

⁵The Gaithersburg Observatory was constructed in 1899 by the agency that is now NOAA. It is within the municipal boundaries of the City of Gaithersburg. The George Freeland Peter estate on the campus of NIH is a designated historic site, but it is for its connection with the Peter family, and not as a federal facility.

The resource is recommended for designation under the criteria 1a, 1d, and 2e. The proposed environmental setting is included in the Amendment and contains approximately 1.65 acres. The setting includes a historic drive which is now a walkway. The walkway runs east-west and lies north of the historic building (shown on 1931 map, page 8-8 of research form). The setting includes frontage on Stratford Street and contains mature trees around the historic structure. The setting does not include such park facilities as playgrounds located both north of the historic drive and west of the historic building.

1990 BETHESDA-CHEVY CHASE MASTER PLAN

Historic designation of this resource is generally consistent with the 1990 Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan. The resource is located in Norwood Local Park, with the structure serving as the Norwood Recreation Building. The Norwood Local Park is adjacent to R-60 zoning to the south and east; and to Bethesda CBD to the north. To the west is a multi-family low density zone, R-30.

PARKS

Norwood Local Park is one of 16 existing and developed local parks in the planning area, according to the 1990 plan. It is one of eight parks in the planning area that include a recreation building. The rec building has been identified by at least 1990 as a high priority. Rehabilitation of this facility has been given priority in the adopted CIP for FYs 09-10 and funds have been allocated. The Parks Department plans for the resource include a two-part study for best usage determination and rehabilitation strategy. A goal of the Parks Department is to make more programmable space available to the public.

TRANSPORTATION

The proposed environmental setting abuts the right of way for Ruffin Road and Stratford Road. That portion of Stratford Road which lies north of Norwood Drive is a paper road only.

HIGGINS FAMILY CEMETERY

The research and nomination of the Higgins Cemetery has been a community effort. Twinbrook resident Mary Ann Barnes was instrumental in initial research and public outreach. In 1997, the nonprofit preservation organization Peerless Rockville organized the documentation of the cemetery, and Higgins Cemetery Historic Preservation, Inc (HCHPA) was incorporated. In 1998, the HCHPA engaged the services of archeologist James Sorensen to investigate the cemetery. The HPC, in 2001, awarded a grant to the HCHPA to develop a master plan for the cemetery.

The cemetery has historical significance for its association with Revolutionary War soldier James Higgins, and for its Higgins-Knowles family connection with the early history of the Town of Kensington. The resource has historic significance, meeting criteria 1b, 1c, and 1d. The recommended environmental setting is the entire Lot Part 7, in Block 6, being 14,400 square feet.

TWINBROOK SECTOR PLAN

- **Historic Designation** The designation of the Higgins Family Cemetery is supported by the Twinbrook Sector Plan which identifies this resource as a potential historic resource.
- **Community Identity** A goal of the 2009 sector plan is to create Twinbrook as a distinct place. The cemetery is a recognizable place that is clearly valued by the community as evidenced by local activism in restoration and historic designation of the resource.
- **Zoning** Higgins Cemetery is located in a light industrial zone. Where office and industrial uses are concentrated along a rail line, sites have been paved for storage and parking as

needed. The Twinbrook Plan identifies the Arundel Avenue area as suitable for mixed-use technology employment area, with a maximum density of 2.0 FAR, and a maximum commercial density of 1.5 FAR. The area is close to Rock Creek Regional Park and Twinbrook Metro. Redevelopment can help regenerate the natural environment, increase need for park facilities, and make connections between parks and trails.

TRANSPORTATION

- **Pedestrian Routes** The Twinbrook Sector Plan recommends the historic cemetery be incorporated into the area's system of pedestrian routes. Major pedestrian connections are envisioned for Washington Avenue and along the CSX corridor at Frederick Avenue and Twinbrook Parkway (p14). The addition of streetscaped sidewalks with street trees will facilitate pedestrian use and encourage the appreciation of the Higgins Cemetery cultural resource.
- **Proposed CIP Projects** Twinbrook Parkway outlot landscaping would support incorporation of cemetery into urban design and park plans.

ENVIRONMENT

- **Open Space** The Twinbrook Sector Plan identifies the Higgins Cemetery as a significant open space in this largely undeveloped area. Any redevelopment of sites and paths adjacent to the cemetery should complement and respect the cemetery's boundaries. The plan identifies the need for a new urban park in this immediate vicinity, and also recommends the historic cemetery be incorporated into the area's open space system.
- **Trees** The vegetation is dominated by grassy lawn with a few trees including: *Morus alba*, white mulberry; *Acer rubrum*, red maple; *Robinia pseudoacacia*, black locust; and *Acer negundo*, red maple.

CLERICAL CORRECTIONS TO PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT AMENDMENT

- List of master plans to be amended—delete North Bethesda-Garrett Park Master Plan, add 1990 Bethesda/Chevy Chase Master Plan and 2005 Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan
- List of resources in Greenwich Forest—add 5505 York Lane, delete 8001 Overhill Road
- Map changes—make parcel boundaries and building outlines darker, clarify Norwood Park boundaries, Greenwich Forest map—Moorland Lane not Land

CONCLUSION

Staff recommends one historic district and two individual sites for designation on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. Staff also recommends that the Planning Board place these three resources on the *Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites* as an interim measure until they are evaluated by the County Council for Master Plan designation.

Attachments:

- Criteria for Designation
- Correspondence received
- Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation
- Greenwich Forest HD MIHP form
- Animal Industry MIHP form
- Higgins Cemetery MIHP form
- National Register Bulletin, Historic Residential Suburbs: Guidelines for Evaluation

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

The following criteria, as stated in Section 24A-3 of the *Historic Preservation Ordinance*, shall apply when historic resources are evaluated for designation in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.

(1) Historical and cultural significance:

The historic resource:

- a. has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the County, State, or Nation;
- b. is the site of a significant historic event;
- c. is identified with a person or a group of persons who influenced society; or
- d. exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political or historic heritage of the County and its communities; or

(2) Architectural and design significance:

The historic resource:

- a. embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction;
- b. represents the work of a master;
- c. possesses high artistic values;
- d. represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- e. represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or County due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape.