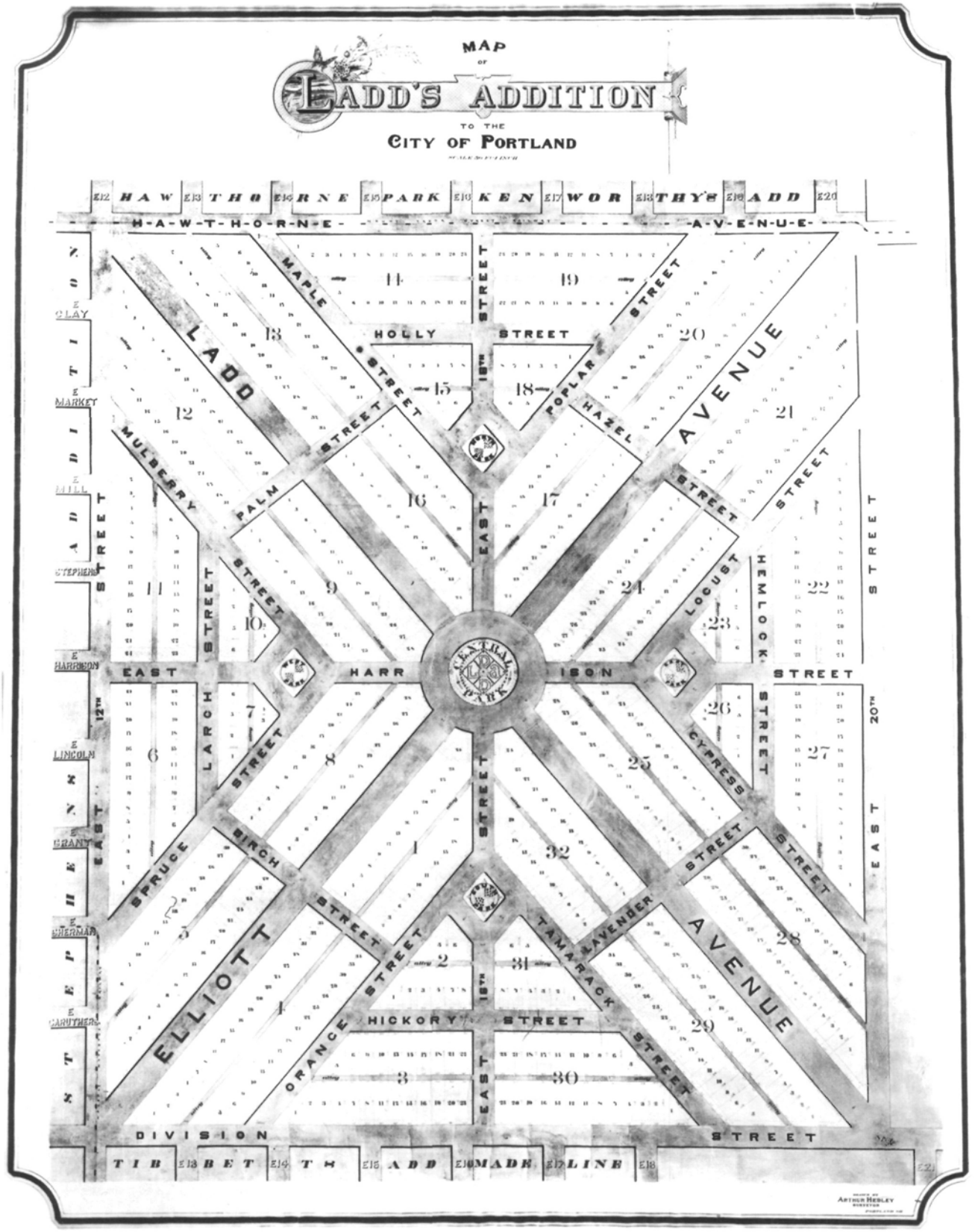
NATIONAL REGISTER BULLETIN

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

HISTORIC RESIDENTIAL SUBURBS

GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATION AND DOCUMENTATION FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES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SHERMAN
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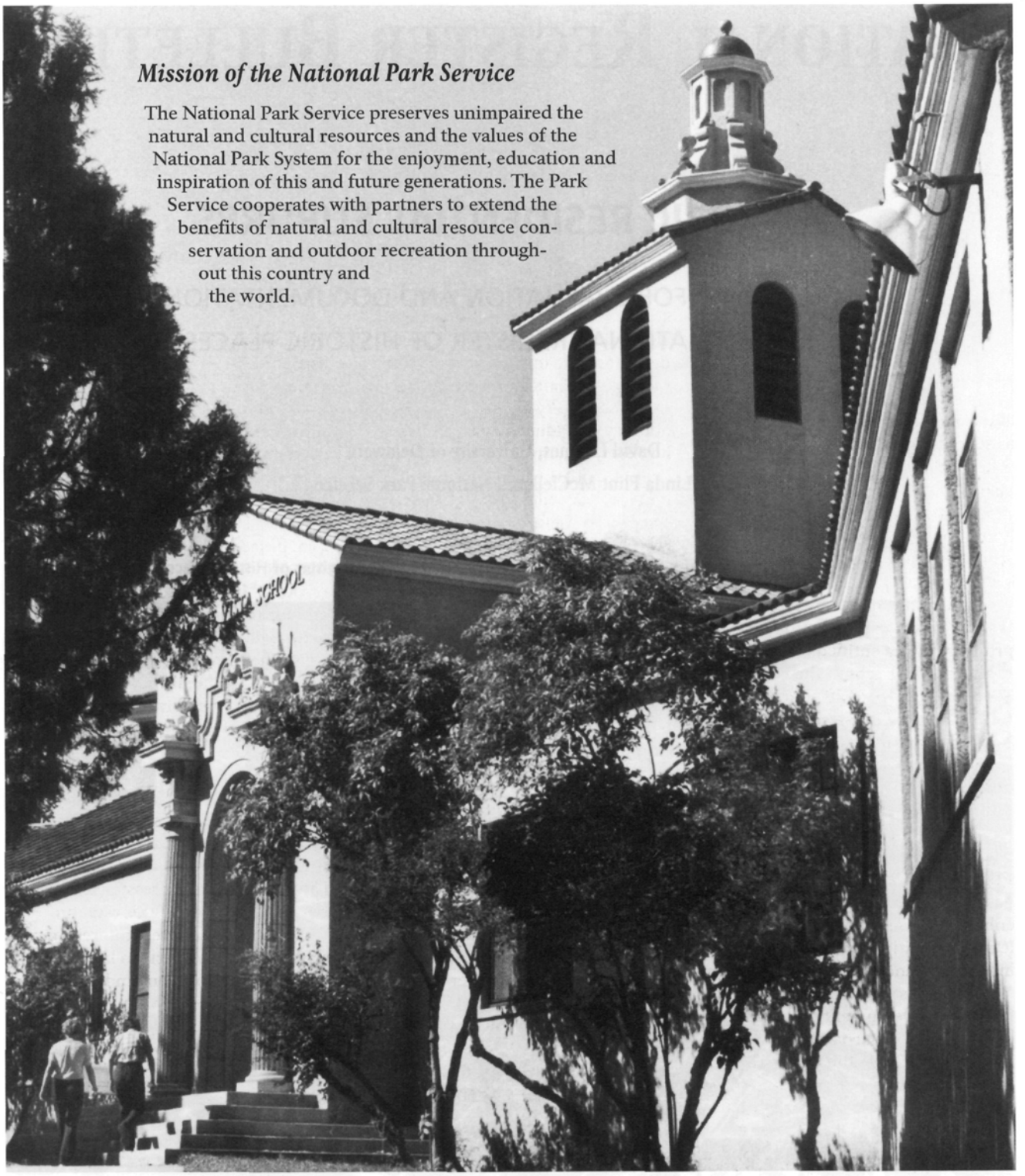
HISTORIC RESIDENTIAL SUBURBS

GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATION AND DOCUMENTATION FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

David L. Ames, University of Delaware
Linda Flint McClelland, National Park Service

September 2002
U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places



Mission of the National Park Service

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and the values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

Above: Monte Vista School (1931), Albuquerque, New Mexico. In keeping with formal Beaux Arts principles of planning, the Spanish Colonial Revival school was designed as an architectural landmark marking the entrance to the Monte Vista and College View neighborhoods. (Photo by Kathleen Brooker, courtesy New Mexico Office of Cultural Affairs)

Inside front cover and title page: Plat (c. 1892) and Aerial View (1920), Ladd's Addition, Portland, Oregon. Platted as a streetcar suburb at the beginning of the City Beautiful movement, Ladd's Addition represents one of the earliest documented cases of a garden suburb with a complex, radial plan. (Plat and photograph courtesy Oregon Historical Society, negs. 80838 and 39917)

FOREWORD

The body of literature on America's suburbanization is vast and growing, covering many disciplines and reflecting diverse opinions. This bulletin attempts to bring together information about current scholarship and preservation practice relating to the history of suburban neighborhoods in the United States. The focus of this bulletin is the identification, evaluation, and registration of residential historic districts and associated suburban resources, such as schools and shopping centers. The information and methodology should also be useful in understanding the significance of other resources that have shaped the metropolitan landscape, such as parkways and public water systems.

The bulletin has been developed in tandem with a national multiple property listing entitled "Historic Residential Suburbs in the United States, 1830–1960, MPS" under which related properties may be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Because the context for suburbanization, which forms Section E of the Multiple Property Documentation Form, brings together diverse information nowhere else available in a single source, a condensed version has been included in this bulletin to enhance its usefulness. Both the bulletin and multiple property form are intended to encourage the expansion of existing historic resources surveys, foster the development of local and metropolitan suburbanization contexts, and facilitate the nomination of residential historic districts and other suburban resources to the National Register.

The National Park Service is greatly indebted to Professor David L. Ames of the Center for Historic Architecture and Design, University of Delaware, for drawing our attention to the rich history of America's suburbs, and for producing "A Context and Guidelines for Evaluating America's Historic Suburbs for the National Register of Historic Places," which was circulated for review and comment in fall of 1998. In response to the many comments received, we broadened our literature search to additional related areas and expanded the project beyond its original scope. The conceptual framework of chronological periods based on developments in transportation technology and subdivision planning and the contextually-based survey methodology introduced by Dr. Ames, however, remain at the core of the current bulletin and multiple property form. We believe they represent a sound and useful approach for evaluating the nation's rich legacy of suburban properties.

We greatly appreciate the comments and recommendations offered by the bulletin's many reviewers and the contributions of many other scholars and practitioners involved in the study of suburban neighborhoods across the nation. Comments came from people representing different professional disciplines and various points of view, indicating a wide range of opinion on how the topic should be approached for National Register purposes. We carefully considered all recommendations in determining the final format of the bulletin and in deciding what subjects to include in the final text.

The impressive number of residential historic districts listed in the National Register of Historic Places since 1966 attests to the wealth of professional expertise in State historic preservation programs and elsewhere in the preservation field, and the increasing popular interest in recognizing and preserving historic neighborhoods. We have relied heavily on National Register documentation as a source of information about American suburbs and as verification of the broad national patterns documented by current literary sources. We acknowledge the contributions made by many nomination preparers to the understanding of suburbanization in the United States.

Considerable discussion has surrounded the selection of an inclusive set of dates covering the historic period of America's suburbanization. The dates 1830–1960 should be used as a general guide and adjusted to accommodate local historical events and associations. In keeping with advances in transportation technology, the organizing framework for the suburbanization context, we have used 1830, the date of the introduction of the steam-powered locomotive, for the purposes of this bulletin. 1960 was selected as a logical closing date based on the current literature that provides a historical assessment of twentieth-century suburbanization and for the practical purposes of contextual development and field surveys. The history of specific local and metropolitan areas may support other dates that better reflect local patterns and trends. While we recognize the potential exceptional significance of planned new towns such as Columbia, Maryland, and Reston, Virginia, and model planned unit developments (called "PUDs"), and their roots in the American Garden City movement, addressing them is beyond the scope of this bulletin.

Suburbs are of great interest to scholars of the American landscape and built environment and have design significance in several areas, including community planning and development, architecture, and landscape architecture. Suburban neighborhoods were generally platted, subdivided, and developed according to a plan and often laid out according to professional principles of design practiced by planners and landscape architects. For these reasons, this bulletin puts forth a landscape approach, consistent with that presented in earlier National Register bulletins on designed and rural historic districts, but adapted to the special character-

istics of suburban neighborhoods. The landscape approach presented here is based on an understanding that suburban neighborhoods possess important landscape characteristics and typically took form in a three-layered process: selection of location; platting and layout; and design of the house and yard. Surveying and evaluating residential historic districts as cultural landscapes will better equip preservationists to recognize these important places as having multiple aspects of social and design history, identify significant values and characteristics, and assist in planning their preservation.

We have profiled the roles of real estate developers, town planners, architects, and landscape architects, so that the contributions of each profession to the design of suburban America will be recognized and in hopes that future nominations will document similar contributions and recognize important collaborative efforts. The landscape approach also offers a suitable framework for integrating information about the social history and physical design of America's suburban places because they 1) were shaped by economic and demographic factors, 2) resulted from broadbased decisions about how land could be best used to serve human needs, and 3) were designed according to established principles of landscape architecture, civil engineering, and community planning.

Several topics have been introduced here that did not appear in the earlier draft. These include the Better Homes movement of the 1920s, the rise of small house architects and merchant builders, the highly influential Federal Housing Administration principles of housing and subdivision design of the 1930s, trends in African American suburbanization, prefabricated methods of house construction, and the landscape design of home grounds and suburban yards. The sources for researching local suburban history and historic neighborhoods and the list of sources for recommended reading have been substantially expanded.

New technologies are rapidly changing the ways we gather data about historic neighborhoods and the ways in which we carry out surveys. The increasing availability of computerized databases offering a wealth of detailed tax assessment and planning information, coupled with advances in Geographical Information Systems (GIS), are making it possible to assemble information about large numbers of residential subdivisions and to plot this information in the form of detailed property lists and survey maps. We encourage the use of these new tools and recognize their value in managing information about suburban development, organizing surveys, and providing a comparative basis for evaluation. These advances are particularly welcome at a time when many communities are just beginning to examine their extensive legacy of post-World War II suburbs. The lack of experience using these sources and methods to document suburbs, however, makes providing more detailed guidance impractical at this time. We hope that future revisions of this bulletin will highlight the success and results of many of the pioneering projects currently underway.

Several reviewers requested our discussion of planning be expanded to include company towns, philanthropic projects, and government-sponsored communities. Providing a comprehensive history of such developments was beyond the scope of the present context, which is primarily concerned with the development of privately-financed and constructed neighborhoods. We have included references to specific cases where the planning, design, or history of a company town or philanthropic project provided an important model or exerted substantial influence on the design of privately developed suburbs. Greenbelt communities, public housing, and defense housing projects are discussed only to the extent that they influenced the development of private residential communities or illustrate prevailing trends in housing or subdivision design, leaving their social history and the administrative histories of the programs that created them to be told elsewhere. Selected bibliographical entries for these kinds of communities are included in the list of recommended reading materials.

Every effort has been made to provide the most up-to-date list of sources of information. These include materials currently in print or likely available in a strong central or university library or through a library loan program. With the upsurge of interest among scholars in suburbanization in recent years, the body of literature is expanding rapidly. We apologize for any omissions and continue to welcome your recommendations for new bibliographical sources that can be included in future revisions.

Carol. D. Shull
Keeper of the
National Register of Historic Places
September 2002

Credits and Acknowledgments

This bulletin was developed under the supervision of Carol D. Shull, Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places. Many individuals representing a variety of preservation organizations contributed to its development. The authors recognize the expert survey and registration activities carried out by State historic preservation programs and the wealth of information about America's suburbs contained in countless nominations to the National Register since its beginnings in 1966. Appreciation is extended to Beth L. Savage and Sarah Dillard Pope of the National Register staff who contributed substantially to the production of this bulletin through their comments and editorial assistance. Thanks is also extended to other members of the National Register for their comments and support: Patrick Andrus, Shannon Bell, Beth Boland, John Byrne, Marilyn Harper, Paul Lusignan, Octavia Pearson, Erika Seibert, and Daniel Vivian.

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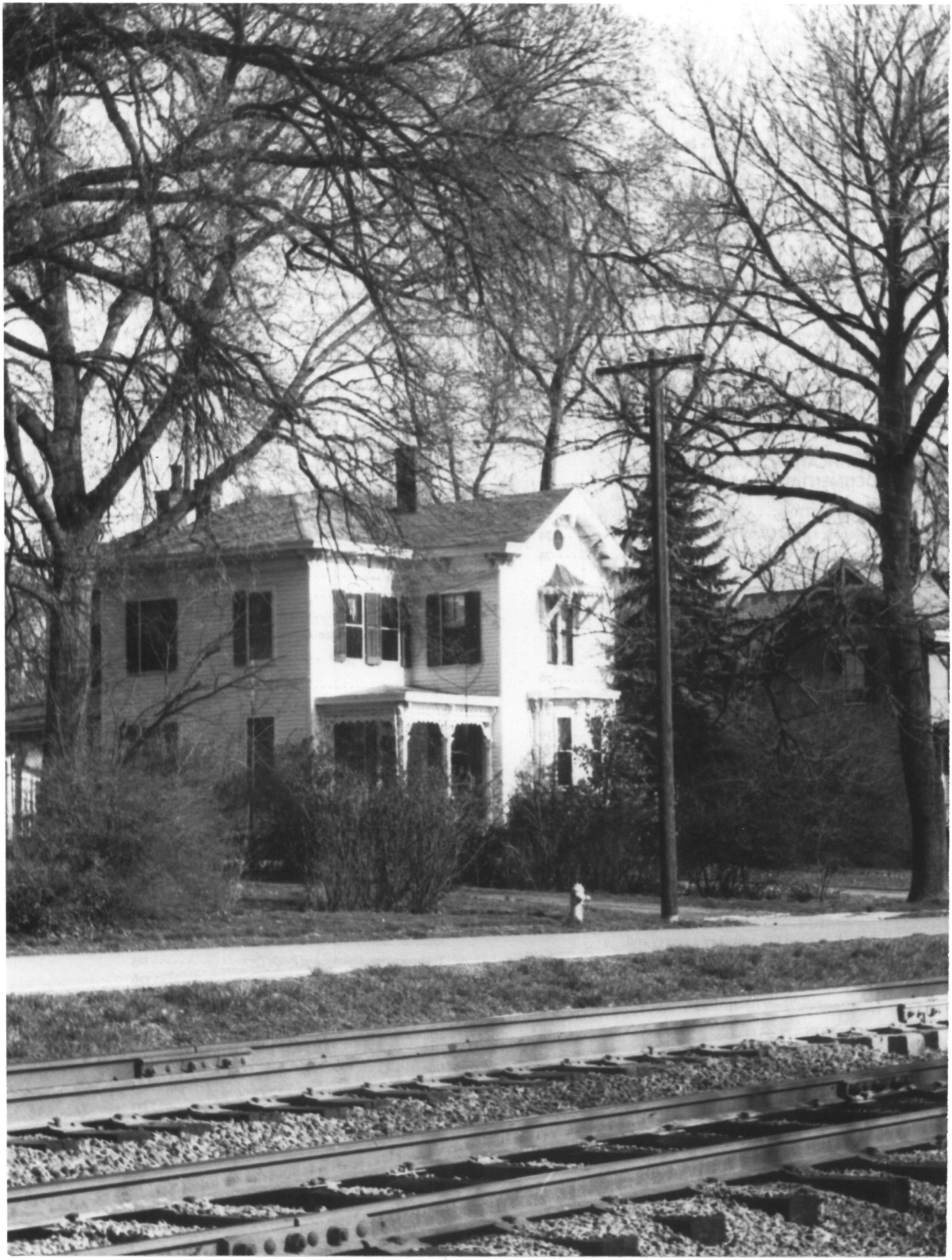

INTRODUCTION

Modeled after a Tuscan villa, the Parker House *(c. 1870) in the 392-acre Glendale Historic District, Hamilton County, Ohio, shows the widespread influence of mid-nineteenth-century pattern books which offered local builders plans for romantic house types and decorative features, such as roof brackets, hood molds, and porch rails. Platted in 1851 with lots from one to 20 acres by civil engineer Robert C. Phillips for the Cincinnati, Hamilton and Dayton Railroad, Glendale is considered the earliest Picturesque suburb in the United States and the first to feature a naturalistic plan of curvilinear streets closely following the site's undulating topography. (Photo by Glendale Heritage Preservation, courtesy National Historic Landmarks Survey)*

Many of America's residential neighborhoods are significant historic places. Even though many preservationists think of suburbs as relatively recent developments and a new type of cultural landscape, most having been built since the end of World War II, Americans have been extending their cities outward by building suburban neighborhoods since the mid-nineteenth century. Transportation to and from earlier suburbs was provided successively by the horse-drawn carriage, steam-driven train, horse-drawn omnibus, electric streetcar and, finally, the mass-produced, gasoline-powered automobile and motorbus.

This bulletin and the corresponding multiple property listing, "Historic Residential Suburbs in the United States," recognize the important role that transportation played in fostering America's suburbanization and in shaping the physical character of American suburbs. For this reason, contextual information has been organized in a chronological format with each time period corresponding to the introduction and rise of a particular method of transportation. Each successive generation of suburb has been named for the predominant mode of transportation that spawned it—"railroad suburb," "streetcar suburb," "automobile suburb," and "freeway suburb." Each of these types produced a distinctive suburban landscape, contributing to the growth of American cities and coinciding with a major event in American history—the emergence of the metropolis.

Demographically, suburbanization spurred the growth of population on the edge of cities. In the second half of the nineteenth century, American cities grew rapidly as they industrialized. The degraded conditions of the city, coupled with a growing demand for housing in an environment that melded nature with community, created pressures for suburbanization. Advances in transportation, most notably the introduction of the electric streetcar in 1887 and the mass production of gasoline-powered automobiles after 1908, allowed an increasingly broad spectrum of households to suburbanize.

Suburbanization spurred the rapid growth of metropolitan areas in the twentieth century. In 1910, the U.S. Census recognized 44 metropolitan districts—areas where the population of the central city and all jurisdictions within a 10-mile radius exceeded 100,000. By the 1920s, suburban areas were growing at a faster rate than central cities—33.2 percent compared to 24.2 percent in the previous decade. During the 1940s, the average population of core cities increased 14 percent while that of the suburbs increased 36 percent. For the first time, the absolute growth of the population residing in suburbs nationwide, estimated at nine million, surpassed that of central cities, estimated at six million. This trend continued, and in the 1950s, the population of suburban areas increased by 19 million compared to an increase of six million in the core cities. This growth signaled the post-World War II suburban boom. By 1960, a greater number of people in metropolitan areas lived in the suburbs than in the central city, and, by 1990, the majority of all Americans lived in suburban areas.[1]

Historically, the residential subdivision has been the building block of America's suburban landscape. Its origin can be traced to the eighteenth-century suburbs of London and, in the United States, to the Romantic landscape movement of the mid-nineteenth century. The two residential developments recognized as the design prototypes of the modern, self-contained subdivision, where single-family houses were located along curvilinear roads in

a parklike setting, were Llewellyn Park (1857), in Orange, New Jersey, just west of New York City, and Riverside (1869), Illinois, west of Chicago. The early residential suburbs fostered an emerging American aspiration for life in a semi-rural environment, apart from the noise, pollution, and activity of the crowded city, but close enough to the city for commuting daily to work.

The American ideal of suburban life in the parklike setting of a self-contained subdivision fueled the aspirations of rising middle- and lower-income families. These aspirations were increasingly met as advances in transportation opened fringe land for residential development and lowered the time and cost of commuting to work in the city. Even those having modest incomes would achieve the ideal in the form of small, detached houses on the narrow lots of strictly rectilinear plats or the spacious grounds of garden apartment villages. The passage of Federal legislation in the 1930s, establishing a system of home-loan banking and creating insurance for long-term, low-interest home mortgages, put home ownership within reach of many Americans and further encouraged widespread suburbanization. With more favorable mortgage guarantees and builders' credits by the end of the 1940s, this system, to a previously unprecedented degree, helped finance the great suburban boom of the postwar years. For many Americans, life in the postwar suburbs represented the fulfillment of the dream of home ownership and material well-being.

Postwar suburbs—the result of one of the largest building booms in American history—represented a new and distinctive stage in the succession of suburban neighborhood types. They, furthermore, created an almost seamless suburban landscape in the extensive territory they occupied, the manner in which large numbers of homes were rapidly mass-produced, and the dispersed pattern of settlement made possible by the construction of modern freeways.

As the postwar suburbs approach 50 years of age, they are being included in local surveys and are being evaluated according to the National Register criteria. Several having exceptional importance are already listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The number eligible for listing in the National Register is likely to increase dramatically in the next decade, presenting a major challenge to decision makers and preservation planners at the local, State, and Federal and tribal government levels.

This bulletin offers guidance to Federal agencies, State historic preservation offices, Indian tribes, Certified Local Governments, preservation professionals, and interested individuals in developing local and metropolitan contexts for suburban development and in preparing National Register nominations and determinations of eligibility for historic residential suburbs. An overview of the national context for suburbanization in the United States provides a chronological framework for understanding national trends that may have influenced local patterns of suburbanization. Guidelines for identification set forth a methodology for developing local contexts and conducting local surveys, while guidelines for evaluation examine the key issues of evaluating the significance, integrity, and boundaries of National Register eligible properties.[2]

Architect-designed Cape Cod homes *built between 1948 and 1955 in Mariemont (1922-1960), a model Garden City near Cincinnati, reflect the enduring popularity of Colonial Revival house types in twentieth-century domestic design. (Photo by Steve Gordon, courtesy Ohio Historic Preservation Office)*

Defining Historic Residential Suburbs

Suburbanization is the process of land development on or near the edge of an existing city, usually occurring at a lower density than the central city. In the United States, the development of residential neighborhoods has led this process and has influenced the physical character of the American landscape as cities have expanded outward. First appearing in the mid-nineteenth century, residential suburbs reflect important aspects of the decentralization of American cities and towns as well as important patterns of architecture, community planning and development, landscape design, social history, and other aspects of culture.

For the purposes of the National Register program, a historic residential suburb is classified as a historic district and is defined as:

> A geographic area, usually located outside the central city, that was historically connected to the city by one or more modes of transportation; subdivided and developed primarily for residential use according to a plan; and possessing a significant concentration, linkage, and continuity of dwellings on small parcels of land, roads and streets, utilities, and community facilities.

This definition applies to a broad range of residential neighborhoods which, by design or historic association, illustrate significant aspects of America's suburbanization. The following typically meet this definition and may be surveyed, evaluated, and documented for National Register listing using the guidelines found in this bulletin:

- planned residential communities;
- residential neighborhoods that through historic events and associations have achieved a cohesive identity;
- single residential subdivisions of various sizes;
- groups of contiguous residential subdivisions that are historically interrelated by design, planning, or historic association;
- residential clusters along streetcar lines or major thoroughfares;
- entire villages built along railroads, trolley lines, or parkways; and
- concentrations of multiple family units, such as duplexes, double and triple-deckers, and apartment houses.

Nonresidential resources located within or adjacent to a historic neighborhood may contribute to significance if they are integrally related to the neighborhood by design, plan, or association, and share a common period of historic significance. These include:

- shopping centers;
- parks and parkways;
- institutions and facilities that supported and enhanced suburban domestic life (e.g. schools, churches, stores, community buildings, libraries, parks, and playgrounds); and
- transportation facilities associated with daily commuting, including train stations, bus shelters, boulevards, and parkways.

This bulletin may also be useful in documenting several other property types which, although falling outside the context of suburbanization, share similar design characteristics and patterns of historic development. These include:

- vacation or resort developments;
- company towns;
- urban residential neighborhoods;
- resettlement communities; and
- public housing developments[3]

Historic residential suburbs exhibit diverse physical characteristics and reflect national trends in various ways. For example, a subdivision platted in the 1920s, but developed over a period of many years due to local economic conditions, availability of mortgage financing, or the relationship between developers and builders, may exhibit a broad range of architectural styles and housing types. The homogeneous physical character of other suburbs, on the other hand, may be the result of any of the following factors:

- a relatively short period of development;
- planning specifications for lot size, uniform setbacks, or the relationship of dwellings to the street and to each other;
- deed restrictions dictating dwelling cost, architectural style, or conditions of ownership;
- local zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations;
- housing of a similar size, scale, style, and period of construction, built by a single or small number of architects or builders;
- unifying landscape design, including features such as gateways, signs, common spaces, tree lined streets, walls and curbs, and street patterns; and
- adherence to FHA standards to qualify for mortgage insurance.

For the purposes of this bulletin, a historic suburb is defined by the historical events that shaped it and by its location in relation to the existing city, regardless of current transportation modes or the city's legal boundaries. It applies to the densely built streetcar suburbs of

(top left) ***Community park in the Avondale Estates Historic District*** *(1924-1941), a suburb of Atlanta, features a manmade lake, a club house, and shaded grounds. (Photo by James R. Lockhart, courtesy Georgia Department of Natural Resources)*

(top right) ***The American Beach Historic District*** *(1935-1965) on Florida's Amelia Island originated as a planned vacation community for prosperous African Americans during the era of segregation. (Photo by Joel McEachin, courtesy Florida Division of Historical Resources)*

(bottom) ***Baltimore City Fire Station*** *(c. 1905) in Jacobethan Revival style illustrates the English village setting and provision of city services at Roland Park, one of the nation's most influential planned streetcar suburbs. (Photo by Nancy Miller, courtesy of Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development)*


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Due to a local "Own Your Own Home" campaign, *Des Moines led other American cities in the 1920 Census in the percentage of homes occupied by their owners. Located near streetcar lines, many were bungalows bought on installment in small subdivisions such as the Woodland Place Plat, listed in the National Register under the Des Moines Residential Growth and Development, 1900-1942, MPS. (Photo by James E. Jacobsen, courtesy State Historical Society of Iowa)*

the 1890s even though the streetcars and trolley tracks that created them have disappeared and many have been incorporated into the legal limits of the city. Conversely, it applies to newer cities such as Los Angeles, called the "suburban metropolis," where the single-family home in a subdivision became the building block of the entire city as legal boundaries expanded outward in response to pressures for new development.[4]

As a dominant trend in American history, suburbanization has progressively cut across lines of social and economic class, extending from the wealthy to the working classes. Although the earliest suburbs, distinguished by stately houses set on large landscaped lots, were developed for the upper-middle classes, the aspiration for the freestanding house on a residential street was equally shared by middle-and even working-class families, many of whom by the turn of the century had settled in temple-fronted homes or modest bungalows on the small rectangular lots and rectilinear streets of the city's gridiron plan. Although suburban life has appealed to all socioeconomic groups, historically the middle class has been the largest group to establish homes in suburban neighborhoods. To many Americans, especially after World War II, home ownership became equated with the attainment of middle-class status.

Using Historic Context to Evaluate Eligibility

To qualify for the National Register, a property must represent a significant aspect of history, architecture, archeology, engineering, or culture of an area, and it must have the characteristics that make it a good representative of the properties associated with that aspect of the past. Historic residential suburbs are historic districts comprised of sites (including the overall plan, house lots, and community spaces), buildings (primarily houses), structures (including walls, fences, streets and roads both serving the suburb and connecting it to corridors leading to the larger metropolitan area), and objects (signs, fountains, statuary, etc.).

Eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places is evaluated according to the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. Eligible are historic residential suburbs and neighborhoods:

A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

B. that are associated with the lives of persons significant to our past; or

C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

D. that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

An eligible district must meet one of the above criteria and possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Criteria Consideration G, requiring exceptional importance, should be applied to neighborhoods that have not yet reached 50 years of age. Although many will be evaluated for significance at the local level, historic suburbs within major metropolitan areas should be evaluated for significance at the State level as well as local level. Those that introduced important trends or design principles later adopted nationally or regionally, represent outstanding artistic achievement, or were particularly influential as prototypes for subsequent design merit study for designation as National Historic Landmarks.

In considering National Register eligibility, several determinations must be made:

- how the district illustrates an important aspect of America's suburbanization, and reflects the growth and historic development of the locality or metropolitan area where it is located; and
- whether the district possesses 1) physical features characterizing it as a historic residential suburb, and 2) attributes of historic integrity conveying its association with important historic events or representing significant aspects of its historic design.

Decisions concerning significance and integrity are best made when based on factual information about the history of a neighborhood and a knowledge of local patterns of suburbanization. Such information may be organized into a historic context defined by theme, geographic area, and chronological period. One or more historic contexts can be developed for a metropolitan area or a locality within it to bring together information about important events in transportation, ethnic heritage, industry, architecture, and community development, which shaped its growth and development and influenced its suburbanization.

Several approaches may be followed for developing historic contexts:

- A **metropolitan-wide historic context** would 1) identify specific events which contributed to the region's historic growth and development; 2) establish where and when suburbanization took place, tracing the emergence of suburban communities outside the central city; and 3) define important aspects of community planning, architecture, or landscape architecture that materially contributed to the character of suburban development on a regional scale.
- A **local context,** developed for an individual community or jurisdiction within the metropolitan area, would 1) define local patterns of historic suburban development in themes such as transportation, community planning, and architecture; 2) relate local patterns to both broad national trends and the specific events that influenced the growth of the metropolitan area of which it is a part; and 3) identify specific neighborhoods illustrating significant patterns.
- A **thematically based context** would document a single significant pattern or trend of suburbanization, establishing its importance and identifying neighborhoods associated with it. Such a context could be based on a locally significant pattern, such as the numerous subdivisions of bungalows and foursquares which shaped the character of Des Moines in the early twentieth century, or an important regional trend, such as merchant-builder Joseph Eichler's modernistic subdivisions in California.

Understanding Residential Suburbs as Cultural Landscapes

Residential neighborhoods form one of America's most distinctive landscape types. For this reason, their significance is best evaluated using a landscape approach which recognizes the presence of historic landscape characteristics and seeks to understand the interrelationship of these characteristics spatially and chronologically. Subdivision development typically occurred in several clearly defined stages, which can be read as a series of layers imprinted on the land:

- The first layer resulted from the selection of a parcel of land dedicated for residential use and is defined by geographical location and

relationship to natural topography and cultural factors, such as proximity to places of employment and availability of transportation.

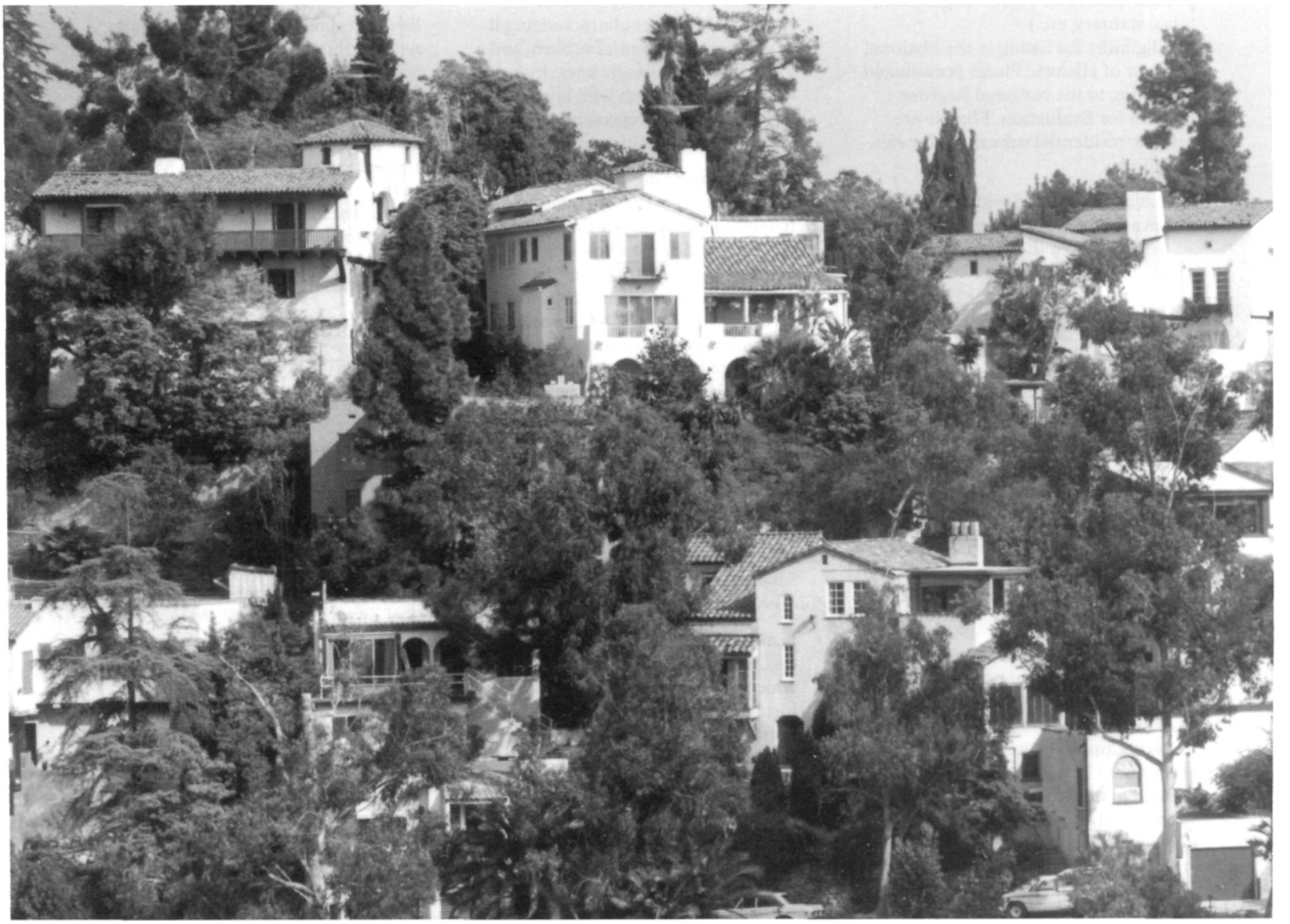
The second corresponds to the subdivision design, usually the result of a predetermined plan or plat with very precise boundaries. This layer is characterized by an internal circulation network, a system of utilities, blocks of buildable house lots, and, sometimes, community facilities.

The third represents the arrangement of each home and yard with its dwelling, garage, lawn, driveway, gardens, walls, fences, and plantings. The length of time in which each layer took form depends on the particular history of the subdivision, local building and real estate practices, and factors such as economics, availability of financing, and the demand for housing in a particular location.

Many of America's residential suburbs resulted from the collaboration of developers, planners, architects, and landscape architects. The contributions of these professional groups, individually and collectively, give American suburbs their characteristic identity as historic neighborhoods, collections of residential architecture, and designed landscapes. In addition to the professionally designed plans and landscaped settings of many historic subdivisions, countless vernacular landscapes have been shaped in tandem by homebuilders, seeking conformity with local zoning regulations and national policy, and home owners, following popular trends in home design and gardening.

Landscape Characteristics

The following landscape characteristics can be used as a guide for examining these layers, describing the physical evolution of a suburb, understanding the varied forces that shaped its development, and determining aspects of significance. A knowledge of landscape



characteristics related to the suburban development of a particular metropolitan area is valuable in developing typologies for suburban planning, domestic architecture, and landscape design. Information about landscape characteristics should be gathered during field survey and included in National Register documentation. For additional guidance, consult National Register bulletin *How to Evaluate and Nominate Designed Historic Landscapes.*

Land Use and Activities

The selection of land for residential subdivision has historically resulted from a combinations of factors, including demographics, proximity to transportation, availability of water and other utilities, and opportunities for employment. Topographic features, such as floodplain, deeply-cut stream valleys, and escarpments, often influenced the choice of land considered suitable for residential development.

Predominantly residential in use, subdivisions typically contain single-family houses, multiple family housing, or a combination of the two. Facilities that support domestic life and provide recreational pleasure, such as schools, shops, community buildings, playgrounds, and parks may also be present. While the private yard is a distinguishing feature of American suburbs, many suburbs also include common areas that function as parks or playgrounds.

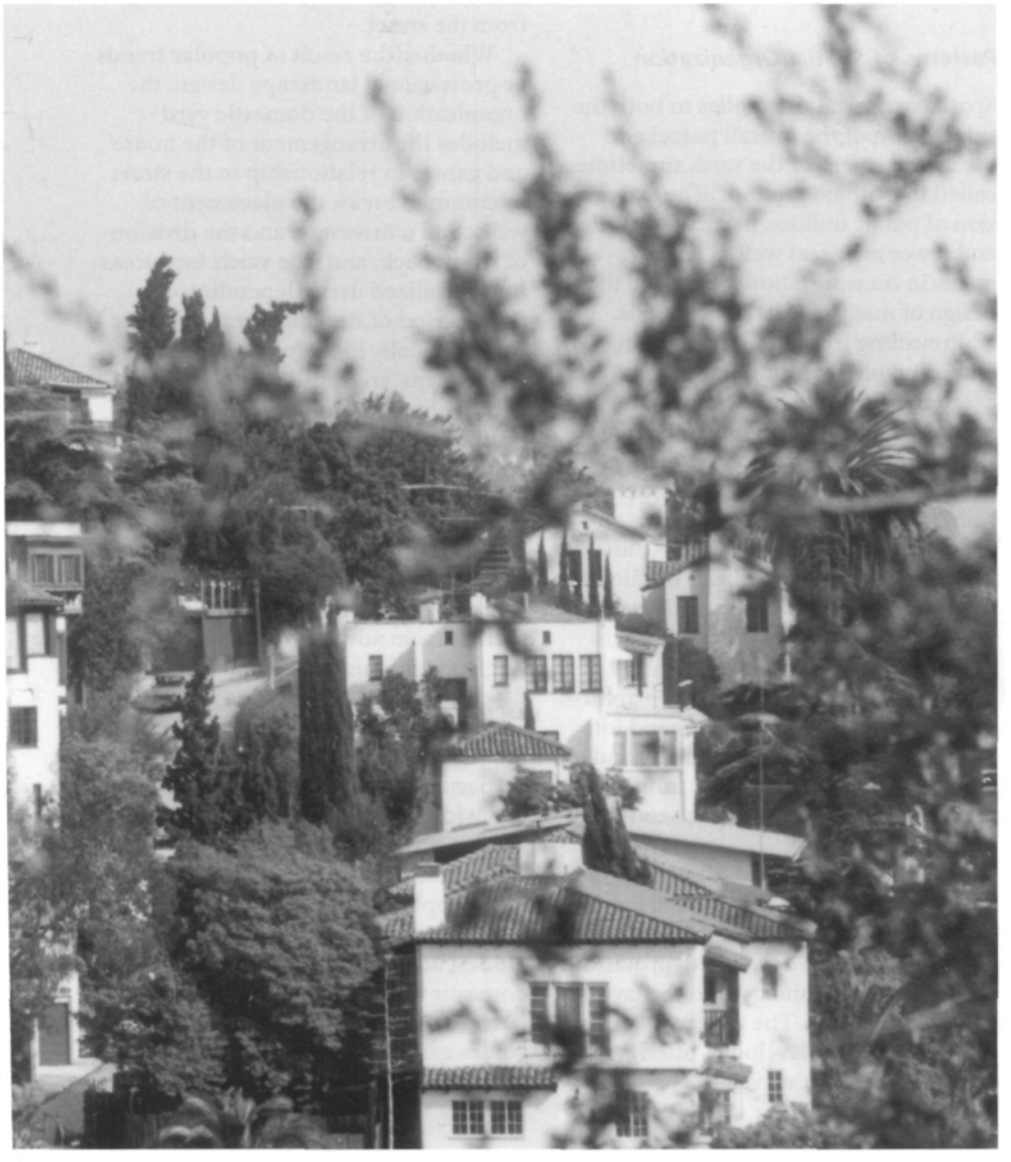
Subdivision development relies on the availability of public utilities, including water, sewer, electricity, natural gas, telephone, and road maintenance. Before the advent of water mains, the design of many subdivisions included reservoirs and water towers and, even in the twentieth century, apartment villages often included power generating and sewage treatment plants.

Private deed restrictions have been used since the nineteenth century to limit development within suburban subdivisions to residential use and exclude nonconforming activities such as industry or commerce. Since the 1920s, local zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations have been adopted in many jurisdictions to control the use and character of residential neighborhoods. In addition, master plans, comprehensive plans, and regional plans have been adopted in many localities to specify both the location and the density of residential construction.

Response to the Natural Environment

Climate, topography, soil, and the availability of water historically determined the suitability of sites for residential construction. Water has always been a critical factor for residential development, and many early suburbs incorporated provisions for reservoirs and water towers. The advent of public systems of water, especially in metropolitan areas, facilitated residential subdivision on a large scale.

Historically natural topography was a strong determinant of design, influencing street patterns, site drainage, the size and shape of building lots, and provision of community parks.



The subdivision of areas having a varied or dramatic topography, *such as the Whitley Heights Historic District (1918-1928) in Los Angeles, required the expertise of master site planners and architects who were able to create efficient systems for traffic circulation and water drainage, make use of natural features for scenic and picturesque effects, and design houses to fit irregular, steeply sloping sites. (Photo by Brian Moore, courtesy California Office of Historic Preservation)*

Residential suburbs were designed to follow the natural topography of the land. In areas of relatively flat topography, the most common solution was to extend the existing rectilinear grid of city streets. The subdivision of areas having varied topography—in the form of steep hillsides, rocky bluffs and outcroppings, or wooded ravines—often required the design expertise of master landscape architects and engineers, who were able to utilize natural features for scenic and picturesque effects, as well as create efficient systems for traffic circulation and water drainage. Stream valleys, ravines, flood plains, and canyons were often left undeveloped to allow for site drainage and provide for outdoor recreation. In some places, such sites were avoided because of the high cost of construction. In others, particularly where there was a market for more expensive housing, they were considered desirable for the privacy, variety, and picturesque qualities such a setting afforded.

Climate, soil, and availability of water, as well as decorative value and taste, often influenced the retention of existing trees and the planting of new trees and shrubs, whether native or exotic. In arid regions, public water and irrigation made possible the planting of lawns and non-native vegetation. While nineteenth-century yards and neighborhoods reflected the increasing variety of exotic species becoming available in the United States, those of the early twentieth century exhibited more planting of trees and shrubs that were native or better-suited to regional conditions.

Natural topography, climate, wind direction, orientation to the sun, and views may have influenced the placement of houses on individual lots as well as the arrangement of rooms, placement of windows, and provisions for outdoor living (e.g. porches, patios, and gardens.) Twentieth-century concerns for domestic reform led designers such as Henry Wright and the Federal housing agencies to encourage the design of dwellings, in reference to sun and wind direction, to maximize natural lighting conditions and air circulation.

Early neighborhoods are more likely to reflect indigenous or regional building materials, including stone, brick, adobe, tile, and wood. With the introduction of pre-cut mail order housing in the early twentieth century and the expanded use of prefabricated components, such as plywood, asbestos board, and steel panels, during and after World War II, home building materials became more a function of cost and taste, rather than geographical availability. In the 1930s, a national market began to emerge for materials, such as California redwood, Northwest red cedar, and Arkansas soft pine, which could be shipped anywhere in the country. The diffusion of regional prototypes nationwide in the twentieth century further severed the relationship between house design and local sources of building materials.

Patterns of Spatial Organization

Spatial organization applies to both the subdivision of the overall parcel and the arrangement of the yard, sometimes called the "home ground." The expansion of public utilities, particularly water and sewer mains, as well as improvements in transportation influenced the design of many new neighborhoods.

Prevailing trends of city planning and principles of landscape design exerted substantial influence on the spatial organization of new subdivisions. In some places, the gridiron plan of the city was simply extended outward, providing rectilinear streets and new blocks of evenly sized house lots. In others, a larger parcel was developed to form a more private, or nucleated, enclave separate from busy thoroughfares; such subdivisions frequently reflected principles of landscape architecture in the layout of streets and lots to follow the existing topography and create a parklike setting that fulfilled the ideal of domestic life in a semi-rural environment.

A general plan or plat, drawn up in advance and often filed with the local government, indicated the boundaries of the parcel to be developed, provision of utilities and drainage, and the layout of streets and lots. The general plan was drawn up by the developer, often with the assistance of a surveyor, engineer or site planner.

Written specifications accompanying a general plan sometimes prescribed design requirements such as the distance to which buildings must be set back from the street; the size, style, or cost of houses to be built; and any restrictions on the use of land or the design of individual housing lots. Private deed restrictions were commonly used to specify the size, scale, style, and cost of dwellings and in other ways controlled the setback and placement of a house on its lot. In addition, local zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations influenced the character of suburban neighborhoods by placing limits on the density, number of dwellings per acre, height of dwellings, distance between dwellings, and the distance, or setback of each dwelling from the street.

Whether the result of popular trends or professional landscape design, the organization of the domestic yard includes the arrangement of the house and garage in relationship to the street or common areas; the placement of walks and a driveway; and the division of front, back, and side yards into areas for specialized uses. Depending on their period of development, domestic yards typically included walks, driveways, lawns, trees and shrubbery, foundation plantings, and a variety of specialized areas, including gardens, patios, swimming pools, play areas, storage sheds, and service areas.

Cultural Traditions

The design of American suburbs springs from advances made in England and the United States in the development of picturesque and Garden City models for suburban living. With the rise of suburbs, regional vernacular forms of housing gave way to a wide variety of house types and styles popularized by pattern books, periodicals, mail order catalogs, stock plan suppliers, and small house architects. Popular housing forms were often modest adaptations of high-style domestic architecture. Similarly, popular garden magazines and landscape guides exerted influence on the design of domestic yards and gardens.

The romantic allusions to historic European prototypes that characterized mid-nineteenth-century housing styles, promoted by landscape designer Andrew Jackson Downing and others, gave way to an eclecticism of style by the end of the century that derived from the mainstream architectural styles and achievements of the Nation's emerging architectural profession. Regionalism, native materials, and local building traditions persisted in homes of the Arts and Crafts movement before World War I; their widespread publication as modest bungalows by editors, such as Gustav Stickley and Henry Wilson, resulted in the diffusion of examples nationwide. Similarly, following World War I, great interest in America's rich and diverse cultural heritage resulted in the popularity of revival house styles and types, typically drawn from English, Dutch, Spanish, and other Colonial traditions and associated with a particular geographical region. Deed restrictions in the exclusive planned communities sometimes dictated a homogeneous style of housing adapted to local climate, regional building traditions, or prevailing cultural tastes. In the case of Palos Verdes, California, this meant the Spanish Colonial Revival style, and in communities like Shaker Village, Ohio, preference persisted for the English Colonial and Tudor Revival styles.

The majority of residential neighborhoods of the period, however, were distinguished by a variety of styles drawn from many stylistic traditions, many of which had little association with the cultural identity or traditions of the region where they are located. Such nationalization of housing styles based on historical prototypes, such as the Cape Cod or Monterey Revival, as small house architects, designers of stock plans, and manufacturers of precut, mail order houses adapted colonial forms for modern living and marketed them to a national audience.

By the mid-twentieth century, the emergence of prefabricated building components further contributed to the nationalization of small house types and styles that, while American in derivation, bore little or no association to the history of the region where they were located. By the 1950s, types such as the Cape Cod and western Ranch house were adopted by large-scale builders and appeared in large numbers and multiple variations across the country.

The values and traditions that shaped life in American suburbs are typically viewed as stemming from a mainstream of American culture, one often interpreted as quintessentially middle-class. Such neighborhoods often possess strong cultural associations derived from the social values and experiences shared by past generations. Having evolved and changed over the course of many years, many neighbor-

Dwelling in the romantic Germanic Cottage style *(1928) by Milwaukee architect William F. Thalman is one of the many fine homes built for Milwaukee's rising professional class in the 133-acre Washington Highlands Historic District (1916-1940), in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. The winding tree lined roads (at the left) and meandering streambed of Schoonmaker Creek (in the foreground), incorporated in the subdivision's 1916 plan by landscape architects Hegemann & Peets, reflect the persistence of a naturalistic tradition drawn from Olmsted's nineteenth-century suburbs. (Photo by Cynthia Lynch, courtesy Wisconsin State Historical Society)*

hoods have also become identified with a succession of home owners and residents representing different economic, immigrant, or racial groups that contributed to the prosperity and vitality of the growing metropolis.

Circulation Networks

Roads and walkways provide circulation for automobiles and pedestrians within a suburban neighborhood. The circulation network is a key organizing component of the subdivision site plan and often illustrates important aspects of design. Distinctive street patterns may reflect a designer's response to natural topography, adherence to established principles of design, adoption of popular trends, or imitation of successful prototypes.

Typically a hierarchy of roads exists, whereby major roads provide entry into and circulation through a subdivision (e.g. loop or perimeter road, central boulevard or parkway, and collector roads), while others form tiers, spur roads, cul-de-sacs, or traffic circles. Entry roads provide important links to the surrounding community, metropolitan area, and local and regional systems of transportation, including highways, parkways, train lines, subways, and streetcar lines. Sidewalks, paths, and recreational trails form a circulation network for pedestrians, which may follow or be separate from the network of streets.

Circulation networks contain specific features such as embankments, planted islands or medians, traffic circles, sidewalks, parking areas, driveway cuts, curbing, culverts, bridges, and gutters, that contribute to aesthetic as well as functional aspects of design. Streets and roads were typically recessed below the grade of adjoining house lots in subdivisions laid out according to principles of landscape architecture. Grade separations, in the form of tunnels (underpasses) and bridges (overpasses), may be present in communities having separate circulation systems for pedestrians and motorists.

Boundary Demarcations

Fences, walls, and planted screens of trees and shrubs may separate a suburban neighborhood from surrounding development and provide privacy between adjoining homes. Gates, gate houses, pylons, signs, and planted gardens typically signified the entrance to many early planned subdivisions and may be important aspects of design. The sense of enclosure created by siting houses on curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs was considered a desirable feature of subdivision design by the FHA in the 1930s. It was derived from the pioneering work of landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, American Garden City designers, Clarence Stein and Henry Wright, and neighborhood theorist Clarence Perry.

Boundaries between housing lots may be unmarked to allow for spacious, free-flowing lawns between dwellings or they may be marked by fences, walls, hedges, gardens, or walkways. In some places, deed restrictions limited or prohibited the construction of fences. Retaining walls between house lots or along streets are common in areas having steeply sloping topography. In multiple family housing developments, a sense of enclosure and privacy may be provided by the arrangement of dwellings to create recessed entry courts, private gardens, patios, and playgrounds.

Vegetation

Trees, shrubs, and other plantings in the form of lawns, shade trees, hedges, foundation plantings, and gardens often contribute to the historic setting and significance of historic neighborhoods. Plantings were often the result of conscious efforts to create an attractive neighborhood as well as a cohesive, semi-rural setting. Preexisting trees—often native to the area—may have been

Circulation networks *contain features that contribute to aesthetic as well as functional aspects of design. (left) Historic street lighting and brick pavement in the Oak Circle Historic District in Wilmette, a suburb of Chicago, add considerably to the neighborhood's historic setting. (right) Cul-de-sacs at Green Hills, Ohio, were designed with circular islands to accommodate turning automobiles, reduce the cost of paving, and enhance the community's parklike setting. (Photo by Truckenmiller, courtesy Illinois Historic Preservation Agency; photo by Paul Richardson, courtesy Ohio Historic Preservation Office)*

retained. Street trees planted for shade or ornamental purposes may reflect a conscious program of civic improvements by the subdivider, a municipal or local government, village improvement society, or community association. Parks, playgrounds, and public buildings such as schools and community buildings may have specially designed plantings. In addition, the grounds of individual residences may be notable examples of domestic landscape design or the work of master landscape designers. By the 1930s neighborhood planting was considered important for maintaining long-term real estate value.

While the plantings of individual yards typically reflect the tastes and interests of homeowners, they may also reflect once popular trends in domestic landscape design or include vegetation left from previous land uses. Neighborhood plantings are frequently dominated by grassy lawns, occasional specimen trees, shade trees, and shrubbery. Regional horticultural practices, as well as historic trends, may be reflected in the choice of native species or exotic species well adapted to the local conditions and climate. Plants may have a strong thematic appeal for their seasonal display (for example, flowering apple trees, magnolias, azaleas and rhododendrons, oleanders and crape myrtles, sugar maples, palm trees, and golden rain trees). In the 1950s neighborhood associations in some areas engaged landscape architects to develop landscape plans for home owners at a modest cost.

Buildings, Structures, and Objects

Dwellings and buildings associated with domestic use, including garages, carriage houses, and sheds, make up most of the built resources in a residential neighborhood. Some neighborhoods will include schools, churches, shopping centers, community halls, and even a train station or bus shelter.

Dwellings may conform to a typology of models, styles, or methods of construction specified in the plans or initial architectural designs for the suburb, or they may reflect prevailing trends and styles related to the period in which the suburb was developed. Depending on the subdivision's pattern of development, one or more architects may be associated with the design of the dwellings.

Bridges, culverts, and retaining walls may be present on roads and paths, especially where the topography is rugged and cut by streams, ravines, or arroyos. Evidence of utility systems may include water towers, reservoirs, and street lighting. Large apartment villages frequently contained facilities such as a power-generating plant, sewage treatment plant, or maintenance garage.

Clusters

Although a historic residential suburb generally reflects an even distribution of dwellings, some also contain clusters of buildings in the form of apartment villages, shopping centers, educational campuses, and recreational facilities. Such clusters are often integral aspects of neighborhood planning and contribute to design and social history.

Archeological Sites

Historic residential suburbs may contain pre- and post-contact sites, such as quarries, mounds, and mill sites, which have been left undisturbed in a park or on the undeveloped land of a flood plain, ravine, or outcropping. Existing homes and domestic yards that yield information related to data sets and research questions important in understanding patterns of suburbanization and domestic life may also be contributing archeological sites.

Small-scale Elements

Small-scale elements dating from the historic period contribute collectively to the significance and integrity of a historic neighborhood. Such elements include lamp posts, curbs and gutters, stairs and stairways, benches, signs, and sewer covers. Outdoor fireplaces, pergolas, gazebos, fountains, monuments, and statuary may be present in common areas or individual yards.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