



August 8, 2007

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission

**FROM:** Clare Lise Kelly, Historic Preservation Planner  
Countywide Planning Division

**SUBJECT:** Determination of Eligibility for Falkland Apartments, Locational Atlas Resource #36/12

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Recommend to the Planning Board the eligibility of Falklands Apartments (three parcels) for designation to the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.

**BACKGROUND**

The Falkland Apartments are located on three adjacent parcels located at the intersection of East-West Highway and 16<sup>th</sup> Street, in Silver Spring. The complex is listed on the *Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites* (Resource #36/12). One structure within the complex, the Cupola Building, at 8305 16<sup>th</sup> Street, has been individually designated on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* since 1985. The Falkland Apartments are in the process of formal evaluation for designation on the National Register of Historic Places. The Maryland Historical Trust has determined the resource is National Register eligible.

The three Falkland parcels are identified as North, South and West (see map). The North and South Parcels are within the Silver Spring CBD. The West is within the West Silver Spring planning area. The South and West are zoned residential, while the North is a commercial zone. The North Parcel is adjacent to the CSX/Metrorail line and lies along and partially within the proposed take line of the Purple Line.

The Purple Line is a proposed transitway (bus or light rail) that would extend from the Bethesda to New Carrollton Metro Stations via Silver Spring Metro Station and the University of Maryland. A summary of the project is attached. The Purple Line project has a potential impact on the Falkland Apartments. Parsons Brinckerhoff, consultant for Maryland Transit Administration, has conducted a historic preservation assessment as part of Section 106 review. The report (attached) finds that the project would affect one structure, 1519 East Falkland Lane. The potential alteration or removal of this building would not have a profoundly detrimental

impact on the entire complex but would require mitigation which could include documentation of the pertinent structure.

This review of the Falkland Apartments is being conducted under Chapter 24A-10, Moratorium on Demolition and Substantial Alteration. The property owner, Home Properties, a real estate investment trust company, has submitted a project plan application that proposes the demolition of all existing building on the North Parcel. This development application has triggered a review of the Atlas property to determine whether in all likelihood the property is eligible for designation.

## **HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURE OF THE FALKLAND APARTMENTS**

The Blair family, owners of the land historically, developed the Falkland Apartment complex. Members of the family organized Falkland Properties Inc, named for the Blair estate that stood nearby. Falklands was built in two phases, the first 178 units were built on a 10-acre parcel in 1936 and 1937, and 301 units were built on an additional 14 acres, from 1937 to 1938. The Falkland Apartments complex was designed by architect Louis Justement, a Washington D.C. area architect who was active in the Washington D.C. chapter of the AIA.

The Falklands are an early example of a building type: the garden apartment. Garden apartments are a planned suburban community consisting of moderately priced houses in a natural setting. In contrast to urban apartments, they were built in groups, low height (2-3 stories), integrated in a natural setting, often around a courtyard. The aim of garden apartments was to provide a healthy alternative to city living conditions for people of modest means. It is the first example of a garden apartment complex in Montgomery County, and one of the earliest of its type in the United States.

The garden apartment movement in this country was pioneered by planners Henry Wright and Clarence Stein. The earliest examples were in New York suburbs: Sunnyside Gardens, Queens, begun 1924, and Radburn, NJ, 1928. Chatham Village, near Pittsburgh, begun 1930, was a model garden apartment complex. The first in the Washington DC region was Colonial Village in Arlington, built 1935. Both Chatham and Colonial Village were models for Falkland Apartments.

The Falkland Apartments are significant in the history of community planning. The complex was the first garden apartment complex in Montgomery County. There have been over 300 garden apartments identified in the region, built 1930s-40s. It is highly representative of the New Deal era. It represents the explosion of population in lower Montgomery County following the New Deal programs. The flood of people coming into the region to work in the new federal government programs needed places to live. The county's population grew more than 70% in the 1930s. And it was the first large-scale rental housing project in Maryland whose mortgage was backed by the newly established Federal Housing Administration.

The complex is representative of construction and design standards set by the FHA for comfortable and attractive housing. The resource is highly representative of the formal and traditional Colonial Revival style architecture of its era. The success of the site plan design was noted in contemporary journals, including *Architectural Record* and *Architectural Forum*. Notable design elements of garden apartments include landscaped courtyards, staggered setbacks, tree-shaded winding pathways, ample green space, and preservation of natural features. A natural setting was a key feature of the Falkland plan. Architect Louis Justement described the goal of carefully preserving the Y-shaped stream valley and original flora. The north section includes specimen white pines, hawthorns and cedars.

In the history of Silver Spring development, the Falkland Apartments are contemporaneous with the first Silver Spring Post Office (1937) and the Silver Theatre and Shopping Center (1938). Both are Master Plan sites. The Falklands were built three years earlier than another Master Plan site, the Montgomery Arms Apartments, three Art Deco apartments arranged around a single courtyard.

The Falkland Apartments have had some alterations. A portion of the original block of apartments, consisting of six two-story buildings west of Draper Lane, was demolished and replaced in 1992 by the high-rise Lenox Park Apartments. The Falkland Apartments have suffered some material change, notably window replacement. Despite these changes, the Falkland Apartments retain a high level of integrity,

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on all of the information that has been presented on the history and significance of the Falkland Apartments complex, staff recommends the entire Falklands Apartments, including all three parcels, be determined eligible for inclusion on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. Staff feels that the Falkland Apartments complex would meet Criteria 24A-3(b)(1)a. and d., as well as 24A-3(b)(2)a.

### Attachments:

1. Map of Site
2. National Register nomination form with photographs, Silver Spring Historical Society, December 2003
3. Historic Preservation Assessment, Section 106 review, Parsons Brinckerhoff, May 2007
4. Summary of Purple Line project
5. Letters submitted for the record by Silver Spring Historical Society

## CRITERIA

- (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.

- (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. (Ord. No. 9-4, § 1.)

FALKLAND APARTMENTS, Locational Atlas Resource #36-12



Cupola Bldg, MP Site