



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 19, 2008

TO: Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission

FROM: Clare Lise Kelly, Research and Designation Coordinator
Historic Preservation Section, Countywide Planning Division

SUBJECT: Evaluation for designation on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*,
of Falkland Apartments, Resource #36/12

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

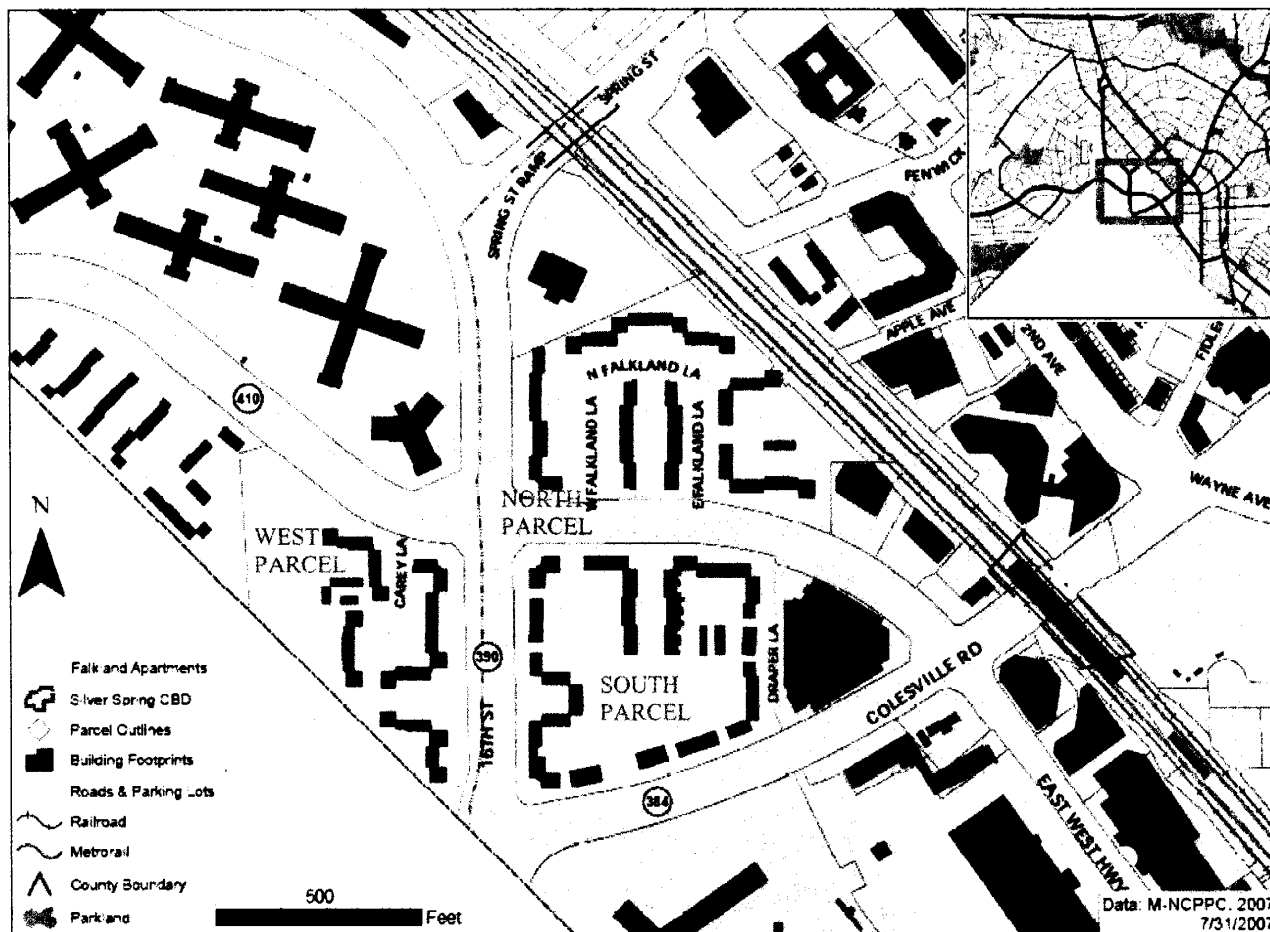
Recommend that the Falklands Apartment complex be designated on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.

BACKGROUND

The Falkland Apartments are located on three adjacent parcels located at the intersection of East-West Highway and 16th 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 16th Street, has been individually designated on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* since 1985.

On August 15, 2007, the Historic Preservation Commission evaluated the Falkland Apartments to determine if in all likelihood the resource is eligible for designation on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. This review was conducted under Chapter 24 A-10, the Moratorium on Demolition and Substantial Alteration. The property owner submitted a project plan application that proposes the demolition of all existing buildings on the North Parcel. The HPC voted unanimously to recommend the resource be found eligible for designation, and the Planning Board concurred by a 4-1 vote on December 6, 2007.

At the direction of the Planning Board, the Falkland Apartments are now the subject of an Amendment to the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. Following the HPC evaluation, the review will follow the usual Master Plan Amendment process, with review by the Planning Board, County Executive and County Council, with the County Council making the final decision about whether the Falkland Apartments is designated on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.



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. 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. Falklands was built in two phases, the first 178 units were built on the South Parcel in 1936 and 1937, and 301 units were built on the West and North Parcels, from 1937 to 1938. The entire complex of three parcels is of a coherent and cohesive design constructed within the 1936-38 period.

The Falklands are an early example of a building type: the garden apartment. Garden apartments are a planned suburban community consisting of moderately-priced residences in a natural setting. In contrast to urban apartments, they were built in groups, integrated in a natural setting, often around a courtyard, and typically 2-3 stories tall. The aim of garden apartments was to provide a healthy alternative to city living conditions for people of modest means. Falkland Apartments 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.

The Falkland Apartments are highly representative of the New Deal era. Eleanor Roosevelt herself inaugurated the Falkland Apartments in a ribbon-cutting ceremony in 1937, when the first phase was complete and the second phase was underway. The complex 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. Falkland Apartments was the first large-scale rental housing project in Maryland whose mortgage was backed by the newly established Federal Housing Administration (FHA).

The complex is representative of construction and design standards set by the FHA for comfortable, functional, 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 Apartment structures have suffered some material change, notably window replacement. Despite these changes, the Falkland Apartments retain a high level of integrity. The Maryland Historical Trust has determined Falkland Apartments eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

CONCLUSION

Staff recommends the entire Falklands Apartments, including all three parcels, be designated on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. The Falkland Apartments complex meets Criteria 24A-3(b)(1)a. and d., as well as 24A-3(b)(2)a. The recommended environmental setting includes parcels P393, P532, and P555.

Attachments:

1. Montgomery County Code, Chapter 24A-3: Historic Preservation Ordinance, Criteria for Designation
2. Amendment to the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Falkland Apartments*
3. National Register of Historic Places nomination form, Silver Spring Historical Society, December 2003
4. Correspondence Received

Criteria for Designation on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation

Montgomery County Code, Chapter 24A-3:
of the Historic Preservation Ordinance

The following criteria 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.