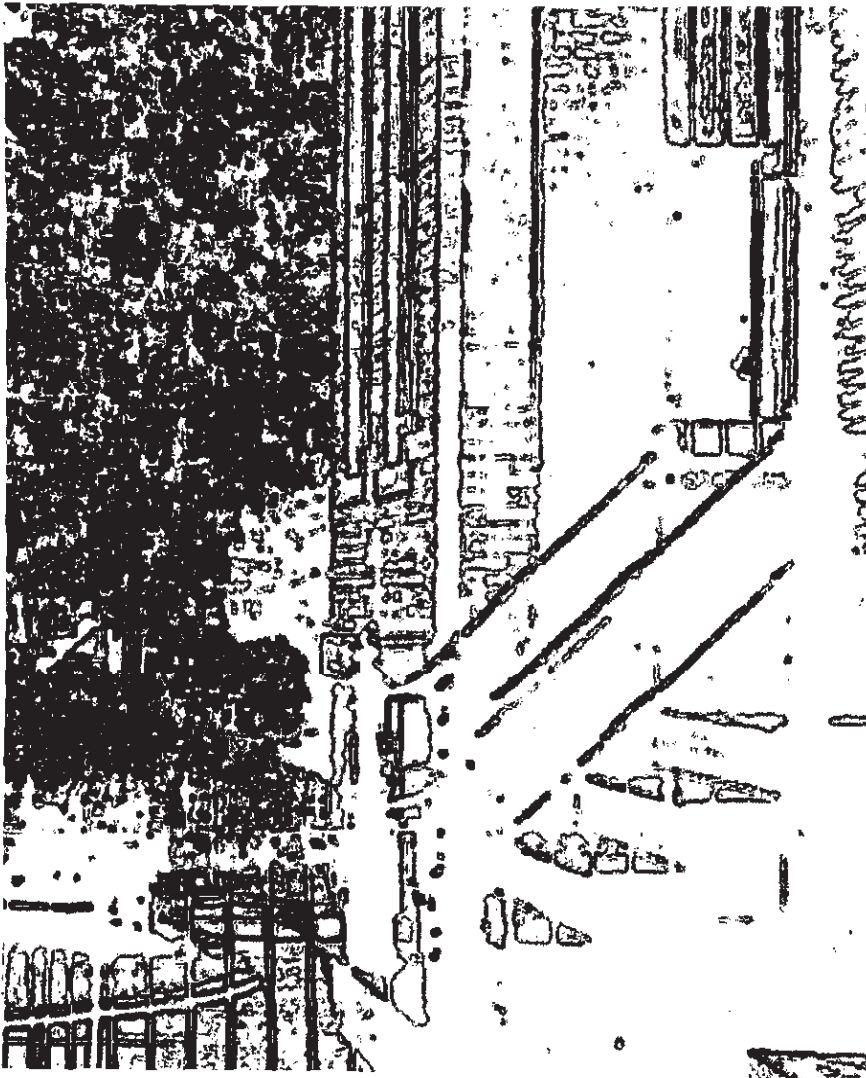


District of Columbia
Historic Preservation Guidelines

**INTRODUCTION
TO THE HISTORIC
PRESERVATION
GUIDELINES**



Introduction

The District of Columbia has an extremely rich and diverse architectural and historical heritage. The buildings that represent this heritage range from modest rowhouses to imposing government structures. They contribute to the character of streets and neighborhoods and to the character of the city as a whole. Protecting and enhancing this character should be the concern of all citizens, particularly those fortunate enough to live or work in historic buildings.

The *District of Columbia Historic Preservation Guidelines* are intended to assist owners and tenants of historic buildings to maintain, preserve and enhance the architectural character of their property. The guidelines are also intended to assist architects, contractors and others involved in maintaining and preserving historic buildings to plan and implement rehabilitation and restoration projects that meet acceptable standards of design and treatments of historic materials. The guidelines also address issues important to maintaining and preserving the character of neighborhoods and districts, such as designing additions to historic buildings, constructing new buildings in historic districts, accommodating the disabled and conserving energy. The *District of Columbia Historic Preservation Guidelines* pertain to historic buildings of all types, including residential, commercial, government and institutional. They also pertain to the design and preservation of residential landscaping, landscape features and secondary buildings.



The District of Columbia has a rich architecture heritage.

The Benefits of Historic Preservation

Historic preservation reflects the pride citizens have in the city's architecturally and historically significant buildings, landscapes and districts. Designating these buildings, landscapes and districts as historic reflects a strong desire on the part of the city and its residents to protect them from inappropriate changes. It also reflects the desire to protect the quality of the neighborhoods in which they are located. The preservation of historic buildings, landscapes and districts offers many tangible benefits as well, including:

Planning and neighborhood protection. Historic designation is an important planning tool for the city, a way to improve the quality of life, and a means to protect neighborhoods from unmanaged change.

Public participation. Because the review process involves public comment, citizens are given a voice in development affecting their neighborhoods.

Federal protection and tax incentives. Federal law protects historic properties from adverse federal government action. In addition, substantial rehabilitation of income producing property may qualify for significant tax benefits.



Rowhouses are found in many of the city's historic districts.

Historic Preservation Review Board

The Historic Preservation Review Board of the District of Columbia oversees and directs the preservation and management of the city's historic resources. The Board consists of eleven members appointed by the mayor. The Board is provided staff support by the Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs. Historic Preservation Division staff also provide advice to property owners, tenants and the public on appropriate and inappropriate changes to historic buildings, landscapes and districts.

Owners of buildings in Washington's historic districts must have certain exterior repairs, alterations and changes approved by the Historic Preservation Review Board prior to undertaking them. Similarly, the appearance of new additions and new buildings in the historic districts must also be approved by the Board prior to their construction. Typically, the Board reviews any exterior treatment that requires a building permit from the District of Columbia Permit Processing Office.

The process for reviewing changes to historic buildings and the preservation objectives of the city are specified in the District of Columbia Historic Landmark and Historic District Act of 1978 (DC Law 2-144) and DC Municipal Code 12. The law establishes the procedure for officially designating buildings, structures, districts and sites as historic properties and provides for their protection. The law also directs that all new construction and most exterior changes to individually designated historic landmarks, or to contributing buildings located within historic districts, obtain approval from the Historic Preservation Review Board prior to undertaking rehabilitation, restoration, addition or new construction.



Free-standing residential buildings are also found in historic districts in the city.

Objectives of the District of Columbia's Historic Preservation Process

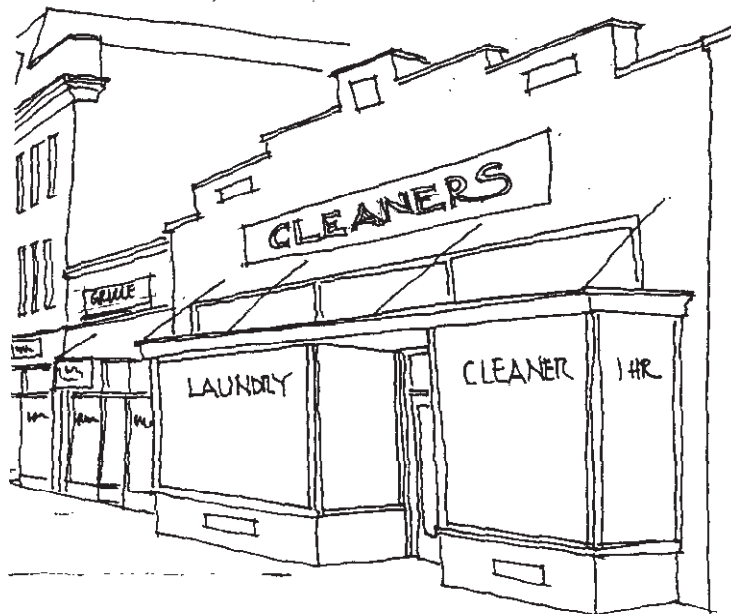
1. Effect and accomplish the protection, enhancement and perpetuation of improvements and landscape features of landmarks and districts which represent distinctive elements of the city's cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history;
2. Safeguard the city's historic, aesthetic and cultural heritage as reflected in such landmarks and districts;
3. Foster civic pride in the accomplishments of the past;
4. Protect and enhance the city's attraction to visitors and the support and stimulus to the economy thereby provided; and
5. Promote the use of landmarks and districts for the education, pleasure, and welfare of the people of the District of Columbia.

(Source: Chapter 10. Historic Landmark and Historic District Protection, District of Columbia Building Restrictions and Regulations Code)

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

The Historic Preservation Review Board and Historic Preservation Division staff generally adhere to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* when considering the appropriateness of proposed changes to historic buildings and new construction in historic districts. The *Standards for Rehabilitation* were initially developed in the mid-1970s to determine appropriate changes to income producing National Register properties seeking federal investment tax credits. Over the years, the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* have also been used as the basis for local historic preservation guidelines in cities and towns across the country.

Property owners, architects, contractors and others involved in rehabilitating historic buildings or new construction in historic districts in Washington are strongly encouraged to use the *Historic Preservation Guidelines* when designing the project. This will help to ensure that the project is compatible with the character of the historic building, landscape and neighborhood.



Some historic districts contain historic commercial buildings as well as residential ones.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

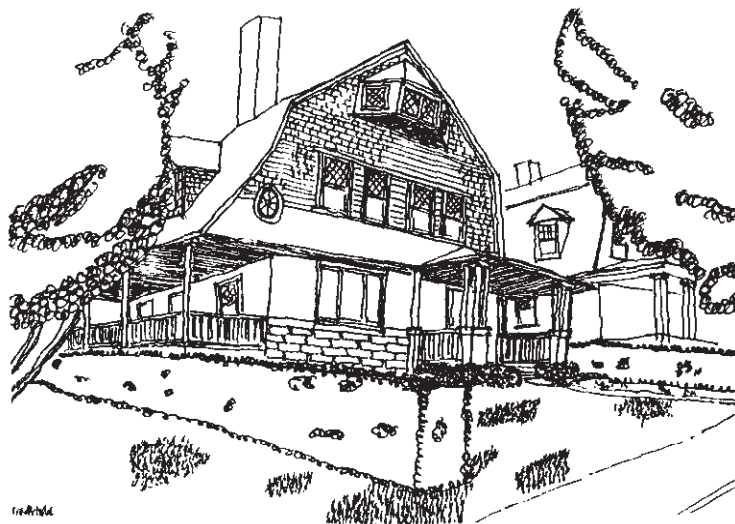
1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of distinctive features, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical and physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations or related new construction shall not destroy the historical materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Organization of the Historic Preservation Guidelines

The *District of Columbia Historic Preservation Guidelines* are organized as a series of twelve related publications addressing the exteriors of historic buildings, additions to historic buildings, new construction and landscapes in historic districts, as well as accommodating the disabled and energy conservation. Although primarily written for residential and small commercial structures, the guidelines are applicable to all types and sizes of historic buildings.

Each guideline contains a review of character-defining elements of buildings, landscapes or the district. A character-defining element is one that, if inappropriately altered or removed, would detract from the architectural significance of a building or its setting. For example, in the guideline that focuses on roofs on historic buildings, the major character-defining elements discussed are: the shape of the roof; roof components such as structure, membrane, eaves, flashing, gutters and downspouts; roof projections such as towers, dormers or chimneys; and roof materials. If the shape of a roof were to be altered or an existing tower removed, the character of the building would be significantly altered.

A section of each guideline is devoted to advice on how to maintain, repair or replace elements and materials without compromising the character of the building, landscape or district. Certain appropriate substitute materials are also discussed. The guidelines also address other design issues related to historic buildings, landscapes and districts, such as adding security systems to historic buildings, adding or removing secondary buildings, and constructing new buildings in historic districts.



The *District of Columbia Historic Preservation Guidelines* address the design of historic buildings, landscapes and districts.

Changes to Historic Buildings and Districts

The design of alterations and additions to historic buildings and new construction in historic districts is one of the most critical issues in retaining the architectural character of a building and its neighborhood. Changes that are compatible with the existing character will enhance a building and its neighborhood, while those that are incompatible will detract from a building and its surroundings. Good maintenance practices also help retain the appearance and character of historic buildings and their neighborhoods.

Alterations

Alterations are usually made to historic buildings to improve or change their use. Often the alterations extend the functional and economic, as well as the physical life, of the building. Alterations may be confined to the interior, such as upgrading the furnace, replacing electrical wiring or altering the shapes of non-character defining spaces. Alterations may also be made to the exterior of a building or to its site, such as adding storm windows to improve thermal efficiency or changing the grade of a sidewalk to accommodate the disabled. Any alterations that affect the appearance of a building or its landscape should be done in a manner that does not detract from the character-defining features of the building, its site or neighborhood.



Compatible alterations of historic buildings may be undertaken to extend their functional, physical or economic life.

Additions

Additions to historic buildings are sometimes necessary to extend their functional or economic life. It is important to consider the affect that the addition's location, size and exterior appearance will have on an existing building. When deciding where to locate an addition, its visibility from a public right-of-way, the importance of the elevation to which it is attached and the affect it will have on the overall form and character of a historic building should be carefully considered. The height, width, proportions, rhythm of windows and doors, roof shape, ornamentation, projections and materials of the addition all contribute to its appearance. They should be compatible with, but need not exactly copy, the character of the historic building.



Additions to a historic building should be compatible with its existing character.

New Construction

New construction in historic districts should follow the same general principles as additions to historic buildings. New buildings in historic districts should be compatible with the character of the district and neighboring buildings without exactly duplicating a historic style or architectural period. Attention should be paid to the new building's location, particularly its setback and how it aligns with the front facades of neighboring buildings.⁽¹⁾ In addition, attention should be paid to the new building's height, width, proportions, rhythm of doors and windows, roof shape, ornamentation, projections as well as the landscaping of the property.



1). The setback is the distance a property is located from the property lines.

A new building in a historic district should be compatible with the character of its neighbors.

Maintenance, Repair and Replacement

Maintaining existing materials, elements and systems is always the best method of preserving the character of a historic building. However, no matter how well maintained, most historic buildings will eventually require repair. If economically and technically feasible, repairs should be done so that the original materials and elements remain intact. If repair proves not to be technically or economically feasible, the building owner should evaluate the feasibility of replacing the deteriorated portion in-kind, that is using the same material as the original for replacement. This will help insure that the original character of the building is not altered. If, for technical or economic reasons, replacement in-kind also proves not to be feasible, the building owner may then consider replacing the deteriorated material or element in a compatible substitute material. However, the substitute material should have the same appearance, size, shape, texture, color and other defining characteristics as the original. The substitute material should also be physically and chemically compatible with adjacent materials so that it does not cause future maintenance problems.

District of Columbia Historic Districts

The District of Columbia's principal legislation protecting the city's architectural and cultural heritage, the Historic Landmark and Historic District Act of 1978, states in part:

“... as a matter of public policy, the protection, enhancement, and perpetuation of properties of historic, cultural, and aesthetic merit are in the interests of the health, prosperity, and welfare of the people of the District of Columbia.”

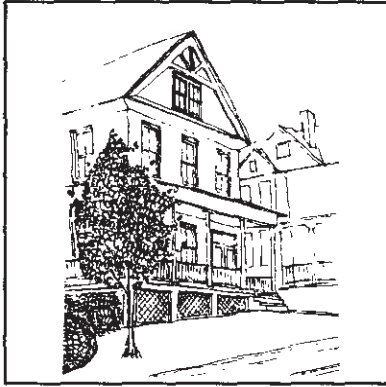
The Act provides for the designation of buildings and districts to the city's official list as well as to the National Register of Historic Places. Once designated, these districts, buildings and sites enjoy wide protection since any exterior changes or major maintenance work requires a building permit subject to review and approval by the Historic Preservation Review Board.

Washington's historic districts are made up of a diverse collection of building types and styles. In others, turn of the century residential buildings and modest commercial blocks or imposing mansions and embassies define the architectural character of the neighborhood. Still other historic districts primarily contain educational and federal government buildings or large commercial blocks.

It is better to maintain than repair, better to repair than replace, and better to replace in the same material than in a substitute material.

To be listed as historic, a building or district must be:

1. Structures and sites that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
2. Structures and sites that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
3. Structures and sites 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
4. Sites that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.



Anacostia



Blagden Alley



Capitol Hill

Anacostia

The Anacostia historic district is characterized primarily by single family frame residential buildings. The buildings are noted for their front porches and modest, though finely crafted, architectural details. Located in Southeast Washington across the Anacostia River from the Washington Navy Yard, the district is bounded generally by Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue on the west, Good Hope Road on the north, Fendall Place on the east, and Morris Road on the south. Built primarily between 1854 and 1890, Anacostia is considered Washington's first suburb with housing stock unique in the District. Its principal commercial areas are located along Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue and Good Hope Road.

Blagden Alley/Naylor Court

Alleyways with residential and commercial buildings were once ubiquitous in Washington. In the mid-1800s more than five hundred existed, housing thousands of families and businesses. Blagden Alley and Naylor Court, located in Northwest Washington between O and M Streets and 9th and 10th Streets, are two of the handful of remaining residential alleyways. Their modest structures, built behind street-fronting housing for the middle class, are representative of the once cramped dwellings of the city's working class.

Capitol Hill

Since the founding of the Federal city, Capitol Hill has been primarily a residential community with commercial structures along Pennsylvania Avenue and 8th Street. The largest historic district in Washington, Capitol Hill stretches from F Street, N.E. to the Southeast Expressway, and from the Capitol on the west to 14th Street on the east. Capitol Hill's most common building type is the rowhouse. Their details, ornamentation, scale and materials reflect a variety of architectural styles from the Victorian era. Of particular note are the distinctive iron steps and fences that can be found throughout the district.

Cleveland Park

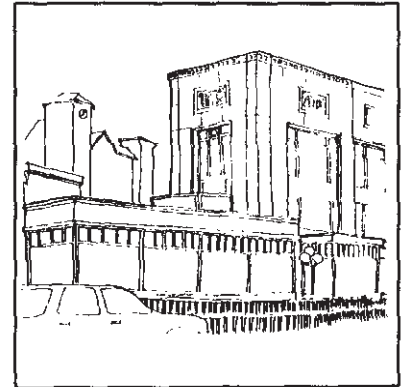
Settled at the turn of the twentieth century, Cleveland Park was one of Washington's first suburban residential subdivisions served by a trolley line. Large building lots allowed the construction of moderate to large single family detached houses on wooded lots along winding lanes. Building setbacks, materials, styles and ornamentation vary within the district. The Cleveland Park historic district is bounded roughly by Connecticut Avenue to the east, Wisconsin Avenue to west, Tilden Street to the north, and the Woodley Road to the south.



Cleveland Park

Dupont Circle

Dupont Circle is a key feature of L'Enfant's original plan for the Federal city. The area was developed between 1875 and 1910 with imposing mansions for foreign legations and wealthy families on the avenues, and with large rowhouses of three and four stories on the lettered and numbered streets. In addition, handsome commercial buildings line Connecticut Avenue. The Dupont Circle historic district is bounded roughly by Swann Street and Florida Avenue to the north, 22nd Street to the west, 16th Street to the east, and N Street to the south.



Dupont Circle

Foggy Bottom

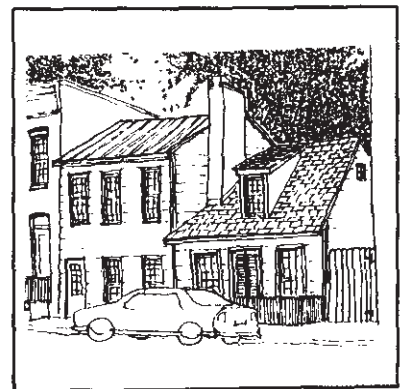
The Foggy Bottom historic district is located between The George Washington University and Rock Creek Park. The district consists of modest two and three story brick rowhouses primarily built for Washington's working class employed along the nearby waterfront. It is bounded by New Hampshire Avenue to the southeast, the Whitehurst Freeway to the southwest, and extends almost to K Street to the north.



Foggy Bottom

Georgetown

The Georgetown historic district contains many of the oldest buildings in the city, some dating from the mid-eighteenth century. The town of Georgetown was an important port prior to the founding of the federal city. The district lies north of the Potomac River and is bounded by Rock Creek Park to the east, Georgetown University to the west, and Whitehaven Parkway and Rock Creek Park to the north. The district contains diverse types of buildings including small residences, large estates, and commercial, institutional and industrial buildings built of stone, brick or wood.



Georgetown



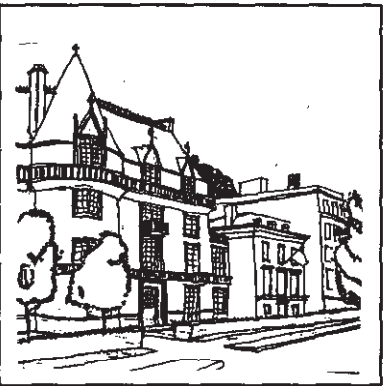
Kalorama Triangle



LeDroit Park



Logan Circle and Greater Fourteenth Street



Massachusetts Avenue

Kalorama Triangle

Kalorama Triangle is bounded by Connecticut Avenue, Calvert Street, and Columbia Road. The neighborhood first developed in the late 1890s with the opening of streetcar lines along Columbia Road and 18th Street, consists of spacious rowhouses and large apartment buildings from the early twentieth century. A rich variety of architectural styles of high craftsmanship typifies this neighborhood's buildings.

LeDroit Park

LeDroit Park, one of Washington's earliest planned residential subdivisions, is located between Howard University and Florida Avenue in northwest Washington. James H. McGill, a local architect, was responsible for planning the subdivision and designing many of its early buildings. The brick and frame rowhouses, as well as some detached buildings, exhibit abundant detail and intricate ornamentation. The district is particularly noted for its association with Washington's African American middle class which began settling in LeDroit Park at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Logan Circle and Fourteenth Street

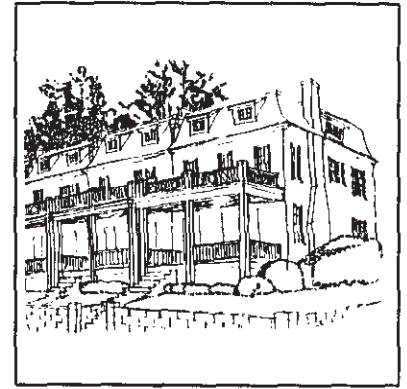
These two overlapping historic districts were developed after the Civil War when streetcar lines opened the area to real estate speculators. Logan Circle, the principal focal point at the convergence of Rhode Island Avenue, Vermont Avenue and 13th Street, became a fashionable residential area of three and four story ornate stone and brick rowhouses. Other streets in the area are lined with Victorian rowhouses for the middle and working classes. Fourteenth Street is lined with Victorian era commercial buildings and early twentieth century automobile showrooms. The districts are bounded roughly by S Street to the north, 16th Street to the west and N Street on the south.

Massachusetts Avenue

Massachusetts Avenue is one of the grand diagonal boulevards prominent in L'Enfant's plan for the city. Substantial buildings, built along the Avenue during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, include embassies, private institutions and large private homes. The district's free-standing buildings and large rowhouses, many the work of notable architects and builders, are made predominately of brick or stone.

Mount Pleasant

Mount Pleasant is bounded by Rock Creek Park to the west and north, 16th Street to the east, and Harvard Street to the south. The district grew rapidly during the early twentieth century primarily because of its location near the trolley lines. It contains a variety of architectural styles and many types of buildings including rowhouses, detached single family dwellings and institutional and commercial buildings. These buildings illustrate the rich social, economic and cultural diversity that has characterized the district from its beginnings. Mount Pleasant's street plan conforms to the hilly terrain of the area and offers exceptional views of neighboring parks and the surrounding city.



Mount Pleasant

Sheridan-Kalorama

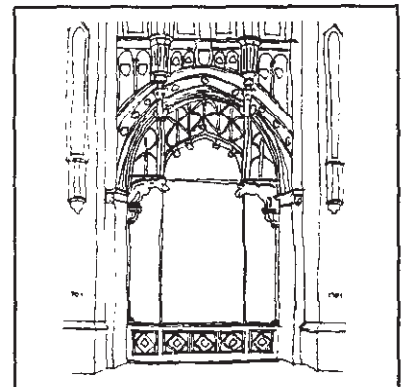
Located between the Massachusetts Avenue and Kalorama Triangle historic districts, Sheridan-Kalorama offers an excellent example of an affluent early twentieth century residential neighborhood. Its sophisticated residential designs and verdant setting illustrate both urban and suburban building types. Buildings in the district include the work of locally and nationally distinguished architects. The district is bounded by Massachusetts Avenue to the southwest, Rock Creek Park to the north, Connecticut Avenue to the east, and Florida Avenue to the southeast.



Sheridan-Kalorama

Sixteenth Street

Due to its proximity to Lafayette Square and the White House, Sixteenth Street emerged after the Civil War as a prestigious residential avenue for the prominent and wealthy. Institutions, embassies and churches soon followed, establishing national headquarters along the street. The district has an impressive collection of Victorian mansions and classically styled apartment and institutional buildings dating from the 1870s to the 1930s. This linear historic district is located along 16th Street from Scott Circle to Florida Avenue.



Sixteenth Street

Striver's Section

Striver's Section offers a compelling contrast of modest rowhouses and apartments for the middle and working classes to the larger, high style residences in the adjacent Dupont Circle historic district. Striver's Section is located between Swann Street and Florida Avenue, between 16th and 19th Streets, NW. Originally home to many of the city's prominent African Americans, it survives as a nearly intact late nineteenth and early twentieth century residential enclave.



Striver's Section



Takoma Park



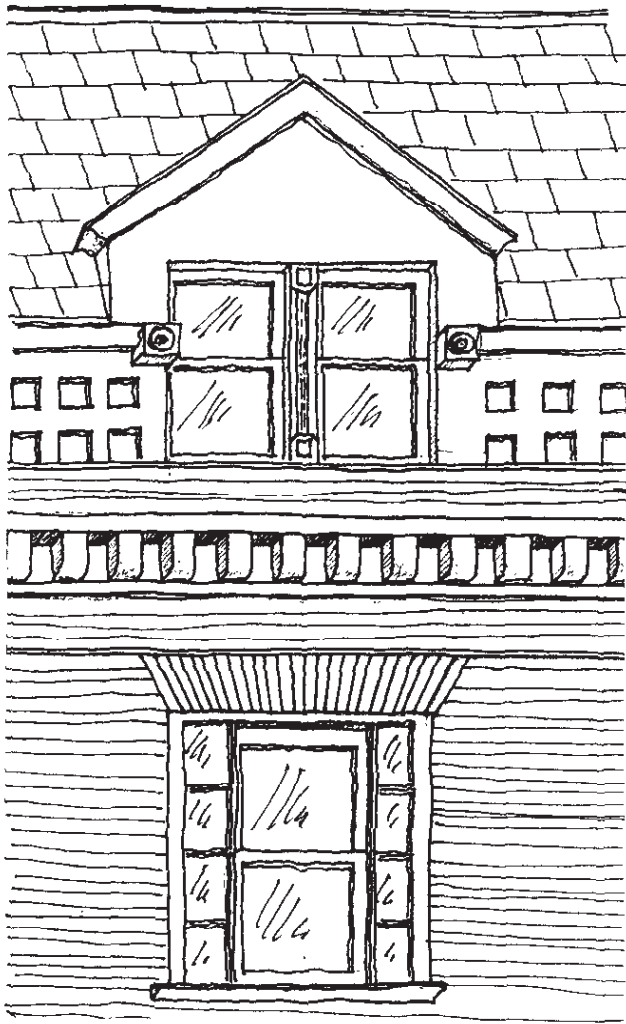
Woodley Park

Takoma Park

The residential community of Takoma Park, which straddles the District and Maryland line, was developed in the late 1880s when the B & O Railroad opened a commuter line to downtown Washington. Takoma Park offered early residents a bucolic, semi-rural setting far from the congestion of the central city. Large lots with spacious, well-designed frame homes make up the earliest buildings in the community. Later, brick and frame bungalows became popular. The Takoma Park historic district is bounded by Eastern Avenue to the northeast, Geranium Street to the north, Aspen Street to the south and Piney Branch Avenue and 7th Street to the west.

Woodley Park

The Woodley Park historic district is situated between Rock Creek Park to the south and east, Cathedral Avenue to the north and 29th Street to the west. Originally made up of large estates, Woodley Park began to develop as an attractive residential and commercial neighborhood at the beginning of the twentieth century with eclectic, revival style rowhouses. The district also includes apartment buildings and low-scale commercial buildings along Connecticut Avenue.



"... the protection, enhancement and preservation of properties of historic, cultural and aesthetic merit are in the interest of the health, prosperity and welfare of the people of the District of Columbia."

- HISTORIC LANDMARK AND HISTORIC DISTRICT ACT OF 1978

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