



**CITY OF ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
STAFF REPORT  
for  
February 17, 2011**

**APPLICATION:** HDC2011-00524

**ADDRESS:** 603 Edmonston Drive  
Glenview Mansion

**ACCEPTED:** January 10, 2011

**OWNER:** City of Rockville

**REQUEST:** Evaluation of Significance  
[Nomination submitted by  
Peerless Rockville]

**STAFF:** Robin D. Ziek



Glenview Mansion – Main façade (south elevation)

**PROJECT SUMMARY:**

The nomination of the Glenview Mansion property for local historic designation was submitted by Peerless Rockville Historic Preservation Ltd. (see Attachment A). The 65-acre property, with the Glenview Mansion at the center, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (2007). The City-owned Rockville Civic Center totals 153 acres, but only the 65-acre portion listed in the National Register is proposed for historic designation (See Attachment B). The nominated 65-acre property includes the mansion and an associated cottage, landscaped gardens and open meadows, the 446-seat F. Scott Fitzgerald Theater, the Croydon Creek Nature Center, office/storage buildings for the City, forested areas, and a portion of the Rock Creek stream valley (see Attachment C). Only the Glenview Mansion and the doll's house (cottage), are considered contributing resources; all the other buildings are considered non-contributing resources.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the 65-acre environmental setting of the Glenview Mansion property be designated as a local historic district, based on the following findings:

- That the property has historic significance for the City of Rockville under Criterion I-C (Pattern of Events), I-D (Development of the City), Criterion II-A (Architecture),

and Criterion, II-B (work of a master - Landscape Architecture), II-C (high artistic value), II-E (singular landscape character).

- That there is a moderate archaeological potential for prehistoric remains in the stream valley; for research on African-American resources along the Avery Road alignment, and for material culture associated with the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century occupations of the property.
- That the property and associated contributing resources retain features associated with the seven aspects of integrity (location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association). Contributing buildings are the mansion and the doll's house (cottage).
- That the Period of Significance for the property is 1917 – 1953 (encompassing the property ownership of Mrs. Lyon), and the environmental setting is the same 65-acre property identified in the National Register nomination.

Staff recommends that the noncontributing resources within the district receive Courtesy Review only, rather than Certificate of Approval review and formal action by the HDC. Alternatively, the HDC could recommend no review for noncontributing structures, or that the environmental setting be reduced to exclude them.



View across gardens to house, looking west

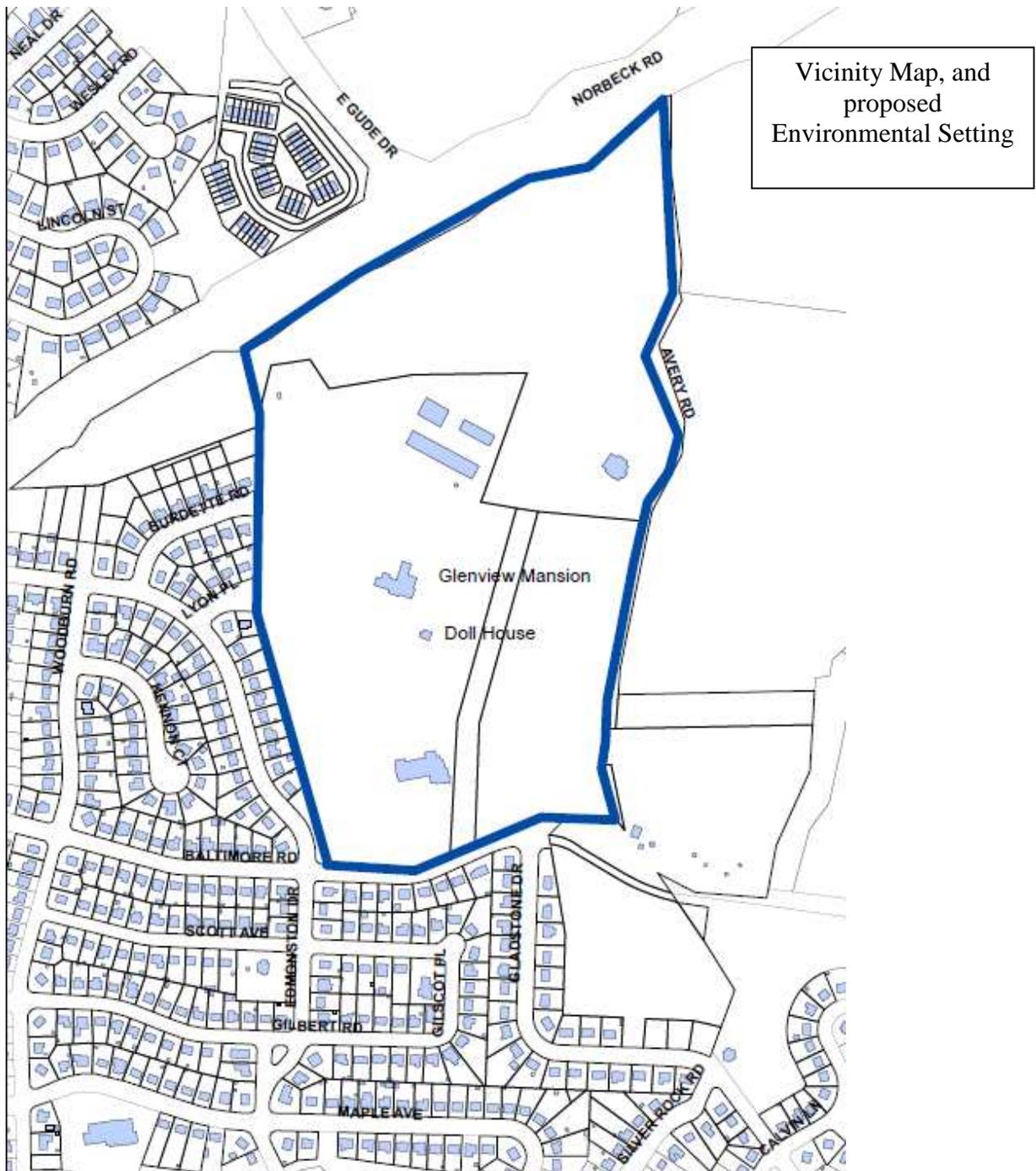


The Cottage, or “doll’s house”

#### DRAFT MOTION OF EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Finding HDC2011-00524, for Evaluation of Historic Significance, that the property at 603 Edmonston Drive, also known as “Glenview Mansion” or “Glenview Farm,” has historic significance for the City of Rockville with a Period of Significance for the standing structures of 1917 – 1953; and that the property meets Criteria I-C, I-D, II-A, II-B, II-C and II-E; and that it

retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance, I move to recommend historic designation of the 65-acre property. Contributing resources include the Glenview Mansion, the Cottage, the grounds and landscape features and structures. The additional buildings on the property are non-contributing. The HDC recommends that alterations proposed on non-contributing resources will be reviewed solely with a Courtesy Review. [Alternatively, the HDC could recommend no review for noncontributing structures, or that the environmental setting be reduced to exclude them.]



**Property Area / Environmental setting:** The Environmental Setting consists of the 65 acres identified in Mrs. Lyon's will as constituting the estate. The area is bounded by Baltimore Road (south), the western property line abutting the Burgundy Estates neighborhood, the property line along MD 28 (north), and by old Avery Road on the east, as depicted in the National Register nomination and indicated below, and also shown on the map at Attachment C.

**Zone:** Park (see Zoning Ordinance Sec. 25.14.06)

### **BACKGROUND:**

The nominated Glenview Farm consists of a 1926 Neo-Georgian style mansion on 65 acres of landscaped grounds. The existing mansion contains a central core fronted by a two-story portico, with hyphens and appendages forming a Palladian inspired stone façade, and additional wings and appendages located on the rear and side elevations. Contributing resources include the mansion, dollhouse cottage, formal terraced lawn, parterre gardens and bowling green, remnants of the deer park, and a dam on Croydon Creek, and the original entrance gate located in an oak grove south of the mansion along Baltimore Road. The house and gardens occupy a central plateau that is the highest elevation on the property. Fronting the mansion is an open formal lawn bordered by a non-historic cherry tree alley on the west, which lines the entrance drive. Trees grouped by species border the east side of the mall and lines of Spruce and White Pine indicates the west and east property boundaries, respectively. The 65-acre environmental setting was delineated because it includes the viewsheds from the Glenview Mansion across the surrounding landscape, as well as the viewsheds from the property perimeters provided at old Avery Road, Baltimore Road and Edmonston Drive toward the mansion.

Non-contributing elements surround this plateau but are on lower elevations, allowing the mansion and gardens to dominate the setting. Noncontributing elements include the F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre, tennis courts, Croydon Creek Nature Center, and three maintenance facility buildings.

The property has been owned by the City of Rockville since 1957. Mayor and Council Resolution No. 6-91, creating a (Civic Center) Glenview Mansion Subcommittee, included the following:

5. Changes to the exterior of the Civic Center Mansion and the immediate surrounding grounds, including the formal gardens, shall be referred to the Historic District Commission for their review and input to the Subcommittee.

The Historic District Commission currently accomplishes this review per the Courtesy Review process, which is a nonbinding review for projects within or adjacent to historic resources, provided for in the Zoning Ordinance and the HDC's Rules of Procedure. As now conducted, the review pertains to exterior alterations at a limited part of the property, to landscape and buildings that are deemed directly part of the Mansion, such as the recent consultation on potential modifications to the approach drive to the Mansion. Consideration of impacts to the historic character, independent of the HDC, have been considered by property management, such as when a playground was relocated out of a viewshed.

**Historic Significance:**

A complete description of the property and the associated resources including buildings and landscape features can be found in the National Register nomination (see Attachment D).

The Glenview Farm (now part of Rockville Civic Center Park) is a 65-acre complex centered on a pillared Neo-Classical 1926 mansion that incorporates the remnants of the 1838 house called “Glenview”. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century this property was associated with the Hon. Richard Johns Bowie, whose illustrious career included service in the Maryland State Legislature and Judiciary and the U.S. Congress. His political career spanned four decades.

The stone house was expanded and rebuilt to its present five-part classical composition as the focus of the country estate owned by the socially prominent Irene and J. Alexander Lyon, of Washington D.C. The use of this extensive property as a country residence and gentleman’s farm is consistent with the lifestyle of elite Washingtonians in first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The remaking of an early (1838) plantation house into a grandly scaled estate home with American Colonial architecture reflects a significant 20<sup>th</sup> century trend in architecture and American society. With consideration for the extensive nature of these alterations, the property has a Period of Significance that encompasses the Lyon's renovations and life at Glenview (1917 – 1953).

**Archaeological potential:**

While the Period of Significance is in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there is moderate potential on the property for archaeological resources associated with prehistory (particularly in the stream valley area), and for 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century occupation including African-American resources such as the Smith family property and burial ground along Avery Road.

**Background development of current status:**

The idea of designating Glenview Mansion as a locally designated historic resource has its own lengthy history. This history is summarized in the *Long-range Plan for Glenview Mansion and Grounds* (“Plan”), prepared for the Mayor and Council by John Milner Associates and Oculus in July 2002, in Chapter One (pages 1-1 to 1-3; see Attachment E).

A timeline provided by Glenview staff summarizes the many steps that the City of Rockville has taken over time to preserve and celebrate the historic character of Glenview Mansion (see Attachment F). Key preservation elements include the dedication of a funding source for maintenance of the Mansion, stipulation that the HDC shall review all proposals for exterior alterations, and the establishment of an oversight committee composed of representatives from the Recreation and Park Advisory Board, the Cultural Arts Commission, the Historic District Commission and the Civic Center Mansion Docents (since disbanded).

When the idea of historic designation was proposed in the late 1980s, the City reacted and adopted the *1990 Rockville Civic Center Mansion Building Evaluation and Master Plan Report* (Kann &

Ammon, Inc.) with a stipulation that established the Mansion Subcommittee. Oversight of the property management has been provided by the Mansion Subcommittee for the past twenty years.

In 1991, the City said it would review the idea of historic designation in two years (1993). Whether or not this occurred, the historic significance of the property was reflected in the development of the *Historic Master Plan* (John Milner Associates, Inc.), adopted in 2000. This was followed in 2002 by the *Long-Range Plan for Glenview Mansion and Grounds* (John Milner). This *Plan* pulls together all aspects of management of this site, including a summary of historic significance, existing conditions for buildings and landscape, circulation and parking needs, and recommendations to guide project evaluations at the site with incorporation of the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation (Plan, Appendix A)*.

When the idea of historic designation was considered again in 2006, the City took steps to have the property listed in the National Register (2007).

### **Effects of Historic Designation**

The proposed historic designation will alter one aspect of the citizen-review process outlined in the Glenview management plan. The review by the Historic District Commission, which is currently mandated for any proposed exterior changes, will become one of “review and approval” rather than “review and comment.” The City would have to revise the operations of the Mansion Subcommittee to reflect this change in the HDC level of review from Courtesy Review to Decision.

While this is a change in process, it may not have much effect in fact: staff notes that the City has consistently maintained a high level of historic integrity at the Mansion property for over fifty years. All the decisions that have been made by the Mansion Subcommittee have preserved, supported and reinforced the historic character of the property.

No change to this commitment is envisioned with this proposed historic designation. The Historic District Commission does not review interior alterations or change of use, and the HDC is bound by city building codes and federal law, such as ADA. The HDC does try to assure that, when there are choices regarding exterior changes, the City will select the choice that will best support the historic character at the site.

Delineation of the Environmental Setting would include clarification of the different treatment for contributing and non-contributing buildings on the property. Article 66B of the State Code (8.08) addresses this with the following language:

“8.08 (a) A historic district commission ...shall strictly judge plans for sites or structures determined by research to be of historic, archeological, or architectural significance. (b) Unless the plans would seriously impair the historic, archeological, or architectural significance of the surrounding site or structure, a historic district commission ...may not strictly judge plans: (1) for a site or structure of little historic, archeological, or architectural significance; or (2) involving new construction.”

In other words, by state law, the Historic District Commission is required to treat contributing and non-contributing project reviews differently, recognizing that historic preservation efforts must be focused on preserving the authenticity of historic resources, and not on design review. Within a historic district with contributing and non-contributing resources, the review for proposed alterations at non-contributing resources will focus on the effects of the proposed work on the historic character of the district. Therefore, changes outside of a viewshed would be encouraged in order to preserve the historic viewshed and character of the landscape.

While state law requires that the HDC tailor their reviews to focus on historic significance of the property for which an exterior alteration is proposed, the City may decide that it would prefer that the HDC restrict their Certificate of Approval reviews to the contributing resources only. The landscape within the 65-acre area is considered an integral part of the historic significance of the property due to the significance of the formal gardens as well as the expansive viewsheds surrounding the mansion, and alterations to non-contributing resources may have an effect on the landscape. However, it would be reasonable to consider that the HDC would provide only a Courtesy Review for proposed exterior alterations to noncontributing structures. Potentially, the City could go further and agree that the HDC would not review proposed alterations at non-contributing resources at all, although this would be atypical for historic district reviews. For example, the West Montgomery Avenue Historic District includes contributing and non-contributing resources, and the HDC reviews exterior alterations proposed for resources under both categories, following the requirements of the state statute (Article 66B). As another alternative, the environmental setting could be reduced, thus reducing the area designated and subject to HDC review.

#### **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:**

The City's Criteria for Historic Significance are similar to the National Register Criteria, where distinct elements stated under the four National Register Criteria are set as individual Criteria. These are discussed below in more detail.

For local historic designation, the suggested Period of Significance is given to coincide with the years of ownership by Dr. and Mrs. Lyon. Mrs. Lyon purchased the property as a young woman in 1917 when she was married to Mr. Smith. After his death, she subsequently married Dr. Lyon in 1923, and together they undertook the renovation of the property in 1926. The earlier 1917 date provides some acknowledgement that the property had an earlier local history, with the centerable Victorian associated with the Bowie family. Mrs. Lyon died in 1950, and the 65-acre property was sold in pieces, with 28 acres and the House being sold in 1953 to the Montgomery County Historical Society. In 1957, the City of Rockville purchased the property from the Historical Society, and acquired additional acreage over time. Today, the City owns 153 acres at Glenview/the Rockville Civic Center, but only the 65 acres that provides the environmental setting of the mansion, with associated viewsheds, is proposed for historic designation.

**Criteria** (see pages 7-9 below for additional description of Criteria)

The property is eligible for local historic designation under Criteria I-C, I-D, II-A, II-B, II-C, II-E. It has a high level of integrity to convey its significance.

**I-C: Exemplifies the cultural heritage of the City,** as representative of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Country Estate era, when wealthy Washingtonians took advantage of the rural character and close proximity of Montgomery County to Washington to develop their country homes.

**I-D: Has value as part of the development of the City,** as representative of the City's valuing the open landscape and historic character of the property, and its preservation efforts to maintain the Country Estate character throughout the decades of city ownership.

**II-A: Embodies the distinctive design characteristics of a type,** as representative of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Colonial Revival style estate house, with associated buildings (Cottage) and landscape and landscape structures.

**II-B: Is the work of a master,** for landscape architecture, with Mr. Small's contributions to the field of landscape architecture, and his philosophy represented at Glenview Mansion.

**II-C: Represents high artistic values,** for its detailed architectural design by a well-known local Washington firm, and its presentation of a high-quality Neo-Classical estate property.

**II-E: Represents a familiar visual feature due to its singular physical characteristics and landscape,** for the integration of the topography into the site design, with the placement of the buildings and landscape features on a plateau apart and above the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

## CITY OF ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION CRITERIA

### 603 Edmonston Drive: Glenview Mansion

Standing structures and sites, including archeological sites, must be determined to be significant in one or more of the following criteria to be found eligible for designation:

#### **I. Historical and cultural significance:**

A. Is the site of a significant historic event.

*No, this is not the site of a significant event.*

B. Is identified with a person or a group of persons who influenced society.

*No, this is not identified with a person or group who influenced society. While Dr. and Mrs. Lyon contributed to life in Rockville and opened their property at such times as the dedication of the Rockville Post office in 1939, they did not hold public office or influence changes in the City during their years here. They were considered Washington "society" and notices appeared regularly in the Washington Post announcing their "at home" days at*

*Glenview, as well as posted reports on parties held there. The Historic Resources Management Plan does not refer to Glenview Mansion during its ownership years by the Lyons.*

- C. Exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political or historic heritage of the County and its communities. (Refer to Rockville Context in Historic Resources Management Plan)

*Yes, the property exemplifies the development of early 20<sup>th</sup> century country estates for wealthy residents of Washington, D.C., and represents the fact that Rockville's proximity to Washington D.C. made it an attractive location for country retreats for wealthy Washingtonians, such as Dr. and Mrs. Lyon. The Lyons entertained extensively at Glenview Farm, as noted frequently in the Washington Post. They considered this "home" and may not have consistently maintained a property in Washington DC, as a 1940 notice says they will rent a house in the Kalorama area for the winter of 1940. The property is noted in Context #: 1931-present, under Theme #4 – Government/Law, noting the purchase of the property by the City in 1957. The City, however, maintains the historic character of the Lyon's period of ownership.*

- D. Has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, County, State, or Nation.

*Yes, the property represents a significant investment by the City to maintain this aspect of local history, when Montgomery County retained sufficient rural character to attract wealthy Washingtonians to develop early 20<sup>th</sup> century country estates. Today, the City maintains Glenview Mansion for the benefit of all Rockville residents, who can enjoy its early 20<sup>th</sup> century country estate historic character.*

## **II. Architectural and design significance:**

- A. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction.

*Yes. The Mansion and Cottage, in their extensive landscape setting, together present a significant example of Neo-Classical Revival architecture. The popularity of this style represents an interest in American cultural identity as reflected in colonial era architecture, but tempered by the standards of gracious living and expression of status for an American elite during a period of tremendous economic growth.*

- B. Represents the work of a master.

*Yes, for the work of the landscape architect, well known in Washington D.C circles. Mr. John H. Small III had a master's degree in landscape architecture from Cornell University. His family was associated with Small's Nursery on Norbeck Road; and with the Small Florist Shop at Dupont Circle (1926). His philosophy for landscape design focused on the juxtaposition of the rustic landscape with formal gardens, which is illustrated at Glenview Mansion. Mr. Small's emphasis on designing with existing topographic features was noted in published articles. This is consistent with the terracing and placement of the formal parterre gardens at Glenview, which incorporate changes in the elevation away from the house. The plantings frame the house and*

*never compete with the architecture while the natural features on the grounds, the wooded areas and creek enhance the overall setting for the country estate.*

C. Possesses high artistic values.

*Yes. This high-quality rendition of the Neo-Classical Revival style is part of a general effort to reinterpret Colonial buildings for an American elite, which looked to the rebuilding of Williamsburg for a new sense of cultural identity. Glenview was designed by the architecture firm of Irwin S. Porter and Joseph A. Lockie. Their work lies in the mainstream of early 20<sup>th</sup> century country estate architecture, as architects and patrons alike looked for an American style rather than depending on European prototypes. Mr. Porter worked as office manager for Waddy Wood, a prominent Washington architect, whose revival style homes are seen in Chevy Chase Village, amongst other places.*

D. Represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

N/A

E. Represents an established or familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or county due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape.

*Yes. The topography of the site is a significant feature of Glenview Mansion park, providing a singular emphasis to the property that distinguishes it from the surrounding neighborhoods. When the surrounding land was developed in the 1960s-1970s with suburban residential development, a substantial amount of open landscape was preserved at Glenview Mansion. The associated Cottage building and the designed landscape are sited at the high point of the property, and overlook the adjacent neighborhoods from a distance. The stone landscape walls, the restored entrance gates, the mature trees, and the open meadows all contribute to the distinctive character of this property.*

**III. Structural Integrity:** High level of Integrity

*Original or near original condition (all changes reversible)*

*Outbuildings present and recognizable*

*Original site and setting largely preserved.*

**IV. Level of site significance:** (Check those that apply)

Local: *Yes*

State

National:

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- A. Historic District nomination
- B. Vicinity / Location Map
- C. Environmental Setting
- D. National Register nomination
- E. Long-Range Plan, pp 1-3.<sup>1</sup>
- F. Glenview staff summary of city steps for Management of Glenview

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<sup>1</sup> Plan provided to HDC in its entirety and available upon request at 240-314-8230.