

Research Design

East Rockville
 Planning Area 2 + portions of Planning Areas 1, 7, 18
 City of Rockville
 Montgomery County, MD

Robin D. Ziek
 Historic Preservation Planner

City of Rockville
 111 Maryland Avenue
 Rockville, MD 20850

November 2003

Introduction

This inventory of East Rockville was initiated by the Mayor and Council in 2002, as a follow-up to recommendations presented in the *Rockville Historic Districts Preliminary Preservation Plan* (1977), the *Historic Resources Management Plan* (1986), and the *City of Rockville Comprehensive Master Plan* (2002). Concurrently, the City is undertaking the redevelopment of the Town Center, with anticipated effects on the adjacent communities of East Rockville and Lincoln Park. In recognition of this, there has been a coordinating effort to update the applicable neighborhood plans. As part of the update of the 1986 Croydon Park Neighborhood Plan, the 1986 planning area was expanded under the heading of East Rockville. The new neighborhood includes the Stonestreet industrial corridor along its west edge (part of Planning Area 1), and Burgundy Knolls and Maryvale Elementary School at the north end of the neighborhood. In addition, this inventory will also include that part of the original Janeta subdivision on the east side of First Street (part of Planning Area #7).

In the 1977 *Preservation Plan* (pp. 121-122), the Baltimore Road Preservation Study Area, with approximately 35 buildings along Baltimore Road on both sides of the Railroad tracks, was identified and surveyed. An historic district here was recommended, as “a remnant of the residential neighborhood that developed following the opening of the Metropolitan Branch of the B & O Railroad in the 1870s.” (p. 121)

In the *Historic Resources Management Plan*, additional recommendations concerning historic resources in the East Rockville area include the primary directive to conduct a survey of the entire planning area and identify areas for further research, including intensive research of houses and resources that are not part of the HDC’s Inventory¹ and were built in the 1873-1931 period. This Plan also discusses Conservation

¹ The HDC Inventory consists of 183 properties, identified in 1989 that have been research and catalogued by the City of Rockville with Peerless Rockville, MNCPPC and Sugarloaf Trails. Properties listed here are protected against demolition and substantial alteration.

Districts as a preservation and community stabilization tool, possibly when an area has 50% or more historic resources.

In the 2002 *City of Rockville Comprehensive Master Plan*, there is a general discussion on the potential designation of new historic districts throughout the City, including the Baltimore Road area. The *Plan's* recommendations are to evaluate neighborhoods, structures and sites for possible designation, with particular emphasis on structures built prior to 1945; to designate National Register sites as local historic districts; to work with neighborhood associations and nonprofit groups to generate historic district nominations; and, to work within the neighborhood planning process when appropriate. This *Master Plan* also addresses the value of unimproved land, often in the form of side lots, as an important element within historic districts.

Goals and Objectives

The Goal of the inventory is to preserve East Rockville's history through data collection, public presentations, and Historic District designation(s). It is expected that there will be substantial links with the general history of Rockville, including numerous individuals of local note, as well as links with national trends of suburban development.

The Objectives for the inventory are

1. Create context statement that characterizes the range of properties and their significance through the identification of significant individuals (building associations, developers, builders, landlords/rentors), significant events (typhoid outbreak led to new sanitation; bus accident led to removal of at-grade crossings, etc.), and significant structures and their environmental setting; and identifies the evaluation criteria;
2. Identify buildings that meet evaluation criteria;
3. Propose NR Historic Districts with boundaries; and,
4. Identify educational outreach projects, such as public meetings, brochures, walking tour, children's coloring book, lectures, and plaques.

Identification of Survey Area

The survey area includes approximately 333 acres of land, with a population of approximately 3,300. Over 90% of the land is zoned for single-family detached homes, with 1,009 households. In addition, there are 56 townhouses. The western portion of the survey area includes the industrial corridor along Stonestreet Avenue and the Rockville Metro Station, with related parking. This corridor also includes significant parcels of land owned by the Montgomery County Board of Education, including land associated

with a designated historic site, Lincoln Park High School, in the adjacent Lincoln Park Neighborhood Planning Area. While the East Rockville neighborhood is surrounded by industrial and commercial properties, there are only three small commercial areas in the survey area. In addition, there is one church (Pleasant Grove Free Methodist Church) and one elementary school (Maryvale Elementary School). There are two large public parks (Maryvale Park, and Pumphouse/Croydon Park) and several smaller “pocket” parks (Mary Trumbo Park, Grandin Avenue [Water Tower] Park, and a portion of Joseph Street [abandoned]). The majority of the streets have sidewalks on both sides, although several streets have sidewalks on only one side, and a few have no sidewalks at all. Street trees are unevenly distributed throughout the Planning Area (the public ROW is often too small for them), but, overall, there is a mature and healthy tree canopy provided by a combination of public street trees and trees on private property.

The subdivisions in East Rockville may be easily divided between those built prior to WWII and those built after the war, due to certain recognizable features. For example, there is a notable use of alleys in the early developments in East Rockville, as well as a range of platted lot size. The earlier homes were built either individually or as part of a small group, while the post WWII homes were built en masse. East Rockville, therefore, includes a wide variety of housing stock ranging from Victorian cottages to bungalows to manufactured housing.

Discussion of Methodology

The development of the historic context will be based on the assemblage of prior research available through various planning documents cited in the Introduction, as well as new research on individual themes using City utility, tax, and permitting records, as well as information in state and local archives. The local themes, which have been identified, are:

- A City in transition: the development of local farmland into residential suburbs; transportation and industry
- City growth: public infrastructure (utilities, streets, services), and annexation
- Subdivisions: individual histories, individual developers, building associations
- Local notables: the players
- Architectural styles

A photographic survey will be undertaken of every property in the survey area developed prior to WWII, including vacant lots. This survey will be organized by subdivision, and within that, by streets. The photographs will focus on the view from the public ROW, although additional photographs may be taken as necessary. This could include back yard views, building details, and outbuildings.

Each property within the part of East Rockville developed prior to WWII will also be recorded on a survey form and entered into a database. Each form will include basic descriptive information, one photograph of the site, and a recommended level of

designation based on National Register criteria for eligibility. Approximately 20 buildings will be identified for in-depth research, and this will then be completed using the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties survey form.

That part of East Rockville developed after WWII will be surveyed on a broader subdivision level, with typical housing stock identified, photographed and described. Every individual house will not be photographed and surveyed, as this part of the survey area exemplifies the post WWII housing development pattern where a single developer undertook both the subdivision and build-out of the entire subdivision area using a restricted number of housing models in a repetitive manner.

The context will be revised at the end of the survey phase, to reflect additional information and synthesis. National Register eligible single- and multi-site historic districts will be identified with appropriate maps.

Historic Overview of the Project Area

The area known today as East Rockville was, in the early 19th century, farmland on the outskirts of the county seat. When the City of Rockville was incorporated as an independent municipality in 1860, farmers were still working to reclaim their overworked soil with new farming techniques and new crops. With the 1873 opening of the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad, the stop in Rockville provided a new opportunity for owners of Rockville's surrounding farmland. The railroad helped to make Rockville more accessible on a broader scale. The City was advertised as a resort town, with several hotels to take advantage of its healthy climate, and private seasonal homes as well. The railroad also made Rockville more attractive to federal workers. Several prominent families formed and participated in local building associations, designed to provide the financial support for the subdivision of farmland on the east side of the railroad tracks, initiating the development of East Rockville.

The formal shift from farmland to suburban residential in East Rockville began with the 1888 platting of Reading's 1st Addition to Rockville. The early subdivisions in East Rockville date between 1888 and 1946; and the later subdivisions date from 1951 – 1955. Prior to WWII, the person who pursued a large-scale subdivision was not the same person who built the homes. After WWII, the construction of subdivisions included the complete build-out of the lots so that completed homes were sold to new homeowners.

All the late 19th century and early 20th century architectural styles are found in the survey area. These houses range in size, including large and small Queen Anne style homes, although the majority of the homes tend to be modest in size, scale and design. Post WWII buildings include builder adaptations of the Modern style home, as well as revival styles, and manufactured housing.

Expected Results

Within the survey area, there are 15 Rockville Inventory properties² and four locally designated sites³, none of which have been listed in the National Register. [include photographs of each] The survey information should help identify additional individually notable properties, as well as help define features and elements that contribute to the special character of East Rockville, something that is presently only intuitively understood. This will also help with the assessment for potential multi-site historic districts.

This information will additionally be useful to the City with ready information that can be used in the current review process that is undertaken when a demolition request for a building at least 50 years old is submitted. Due to development pressures that are beginning to appear, and which will intensify once the Town Center re-construction starts up, it is anticipated that the smaller homes in East Rockville will become targets for demolition and redevelopment due to the great location and hometown ambiance in the neighborhood. City staff will be able to use this survey information to make rapid and informed decisions about historical significance of individual properties.

The information will also be widely available to the local community, and will provide information about the most significant homes. There may be local support for historic designation for multi-site or single-site historic districts, as the historic resources are threatened and neighbors are faced with demolition of adjacent properties and mansionization. Various educational and public outreach tools will be outlined that can incorporate the survey information, such as a walking tour brochure through the neighborhood.

A Plan for Evaluating and Registering Resources

Within that part of the survey area that includes the pre-WWII subdivisions, each property will be assessed for architectural style, condition and integrity. Those buildings that are identified as potentially single-site historic districts (or would be classified as Outstanding resources in a multi-site historic district) will be further researched for construction date, builder, early residents, and early alterations through deed research, use of Sanborn maps, and other primary material.

Post WWII subdivisions will be analyzed on a broad basis, and typical residential elements will be described. A few individual properties will be research in depth to

² Janeta Houses (808, 812, 814, 816, 818, 822 Veirs Mill Road); Kingdon Sisters House (206 Reading Avenue); Rockville Park Cottage (212 Reading Avenue); Warfield House (207 Baltimore Road); Bogley-Harper House (304 Baltimore Road); Welliver-Hickerson House (307 Baltimore Road); Reading/Typhoid House (308 Baltimore Road); Riggs House (401 Baltimore Road); Pump House (401 S. Horners Lane); Chestnut Grove (1 Lawrence Court).

³ Hattie-Kingdon House (300 Reading Avenue); Hipsley-Thompson House (701 Grandin Avenue); Homewood (550 Reading Avenue); Corrick-Robertson House (709 Grandin Avenue).

provide a history of the overall subdivision and an example of the type of home being built as a group.

Historic significance will be assessed in terms of the themes developed in the context. Historic integrity will be determined through building analysis and documentation, such as early city maps and insurance maps.

Preliminary Plan for Protection and Treatment

The greater Rockville community has provided great support through the years for the protection and interpretation of their history. Past planning efforts, and survey work has been coordinated with both the local historic preservation society, Peerless Rockville, and with the Montgomery County Historical Society, both of which are located in buildings on locally designated historic sites.

The survey of East Rockville has been coordinated with the development of the updated neighborhood plan for this part of the City, through the attendance of staff to meetings. Other informational meetings are planned in the upcoming months, to provide a greater understanding of the history of this part of the city, and an appreciation of the architectural resources that exemplify this history.

It is hoped that individual preservation efforts will be supported by the survey information, and that proposed walking tour brochures will be widely used. In addition, it is hoped that the education efforts will lead to local support of historic designation of individual and multi-site historic districts in this area as recognition of the historic neighborhoods and preservation of the qualities that local residents cherish.