



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY PLANNING, HOUSING & DEVELOPMENT  
Historic Preservation Program, Neighborhood Services Division  
2100 Clarendon Boulevard Suite 700 Arlington, VA 22201  
TEL 703.228.3830 www.arlingtonva.us

# MEMORANDUM

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To: Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB)  
From: Historic Preservation Program Staff  
Subject: Westover Local Historic District Designation Request  
Date: November 23, 2016

## **Background**

On June 23, 2016, the HALRB received a request to study the Westover National Register Historic District for consideration as a local historic district. Two community meetings have been held to date; the County hosted an informational meeting for property owners in July and the Westover Civic Association hosted its own community meeting in September. The public hearing that the HALRB will hold on November 30 is the first official step in the designation process. At this hearing, the HALRB will hear public testimony about the request, make a preliminary determination as to whether Westover meets at least two designation criteria, and decide whether to send the designation request forward for further study.

Two separate petitions regarding the designation request have been submitted to the County -- one in support of the request and the other in opposition. The petition of support was received on September 14 and contains a total of 160 signatures (most of the supporters are tenants in Westover or Arlington residents who live outside of the neighborhood). The petition opposing the request was received on October 12 and contains a total of 322 signatures (the majority of whom are affected property owners in Westover).

## **Westover Study Area**

The proposed Westover Study Area reflects the boundaries accepted by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the National Park Service with the approval of the Westover National Register Historic District in 2006. The nomination listed 383 contributing and 85 non-contributing buildings; the district contains single- and multiple-family dwellings, schools, stores, and a church.

The study area is primarily a residential neighborhood with a prominent commercial corridor. While the topography consists of rolling hills and clusters of woodland, the residential streets are lined with Colonial Revival-styled single-family dwellings, duplexes, and garden apartments. Commercial and public buildings such as the Westover Shopping Center, Claude A. Swanson Junior High School, and Westover Baptist Church are sited along Washington Boulevard and Patrick Henry Drive. Westover Park is located in the southern section of the neighborhood. The National Register boundaries encompass areas within two civic associations – Westover Village and a small portion of Bluemont.

Westover is one of 17 single-family neighborhoods in Arlington that has been listed as historic districts in the National Register of Historic Places. The garden apartments in Westover also have been included in the National Register Multiple Resource Listing for *Garden Apartments, Apartment Houses, and Apartment Complexes in Arlington County, VA: 1934-1954*, which was approved by the National Park Service in 2003 and amended in 2012. Additionally, the garden apartments in Westover and the Westover Shopping Center



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(5841-5885 and 5900-5912 Washington Boulevard) have been identified in Phase 1 of the County's Historic Resources Inventory (HRI); the garden apartment complexes were ranked in the Important and Notable categories and the shopping center ranked Important.

### **Statement of Significance**

The Westover neighborhood is a planned community influenced by the dramatic increase of the federal workforce in Washington, D.C. and the need for affordable, quality housing. Merwin A. Mace of Mace Properties, Inc., and other developers constructed Westover in five phases: Westover Apartments (1939), Westover Hills (1940-1941), Keene's Addition to Westover (1941), Westover Park (1942, 1943, 1947, and 1948), and Mason's Addition to Westover (1955-1957). The architecture and planning of Westover reflects the influence of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) on both residential neighborhood planning and its promotion of garden apartments. The FHA stimulated the building industry, improved housing conditions, and reestablished confidence in the nation's lending institutions by providing mortgage insurance for privately-financed mortgages. The agency capitalized on its project approval authority by advocating for small, quality, low-cost single-family dwellings and garden apartments in self-sustained communities. The planned communities often featured commercial, religious, and institutional buildings, were respectful of the existing topography and natural setting, and conveniently were located in proximity to arterial transportation networks.

The developers of Westover capitalized on the availability of FHA-backed mortgages. The neighborhood reflects new construction methods developed for large-scale suburban housing in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Mace and subsequent developers utilized materials such as steel and concrete and assembly-line construction to minimize building costs. Westover's Colonial Revival-styled single-family dwellings were modeled from the FHA's house designs published in *Principles of Planning Small Houses*. The five- and six-room houses vary by their orientation to the street as well as by their door surrounds and roof forms.

Similar in design and ideals to the single-family housing, the garden apartments in Westover utilized many of the popular and innovative building techniques and practices of the period. These include: concrete block construction veneered in brick; shallow pitched gabled or hipped roofs; flat roofs; main entrances with public corridors or lobbies as well as individual doors to private units; and double-hung or casement windows that unite the interior spaces with the landscaped courtyards of the setting.

### **Arlington County Local Historic District Designation Criteria**

The Westover Study Area potentially meets seven of the eleven designation criteria as outlined in Section 11.3.4 of the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance. This preliminary assessment of criteria is based solely on information provided in the approved Westover National Register Historic District Nomination. Staff has not yet conducted additional research or architectural survey work.

(A) The property is listed or is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.



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- (B) The property has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the county, state, or nation.
- (D) The property is associated with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the county, state, or nation.
- (E) The property embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, type, or method of construction.
- (F) The property is identified as the work of a master builder, architect, or landscape architect.
- (G) The property embodies elements of design, detailing, materials, or craftsmanship that render it structurally or architecturally significant.
- (K) The property is suitable for preservation or restoration.