

# Preservation Arlington

*Protecting and Promoting Arlington's Unique Character*

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## ARLINGTON COUNTY'S MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC PLACES LIST 2013

### **National Register Neighborhoods**

The proximity of Arlington's historic neighborhoods to urban amenities has caused property values to skyrocket and consumers seeking larger homes for their purchasing dollar. Meanwhile, our aging and transient population is providing a continuous pipeline of properties to the market for demolition and redevelopment. The social and architectural fabric of these older neighborhoods is being threatened and could jeopardize the highly coveted National Register Designation of older residential neighborhoods such as Lyon Village, Cherrydale, Ashton Heights and Penrose. Loss of this designation would result in the loss of tax credits for remodeling and preservation of eligible homes thus further accelerating the potential for the loss of buildings. Recent statistics attest to the alarming rate of loss: In 2012 there were 168 demolition permits issued for structures in Arlington; 122 of them were for single family homes -- a house every three days.



Most of Arlington's historic neighborhoods also have commercial components which are being drastically changed by market pressures. Ongoing remodeling of the commercial properties in these neighborhoods, due to the more transient nature of these uses, has obscured much of the historic character of the properties that remain and weakened resistance to their demise. Arlington draws strength from its appealing scale, demographics and stylistic diversity rooted in early- to mid-20th Century planning and design. If limits aren't placed upon the development pressures behind each successive year's loss of historic fabric, neighborhoods will soon be bereft of their enduring distinction, diminishing the quality of life in Arlington.

Tax relief, financial incentives and increased community support could help keep these neighborhoods affordable to homeowners of modest means. Current zoning regulations could have stronger enforcement and citizens should actively participate in zoning variance reviews. Arlington's Maywood community has suffered virtually no teardowns since its' Local Historic District designation.

**Preservation Arlington challenges homeowners** in Arlington's National Register Neighborhoods to consider saving their neighborhoods by becoming a Local Historic District where new development and major additions to structures would come under review. Communities could establish their own set of guidelines on height, massing and detailing that are unique to their Arlington community, providing an opportunity to ensure new residential development fits into the character of the community but still allows reinvestment to occur.

## Arlington House Woods

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Millennium Project (MP) to expand the number of burial sites at Arlington National Cemetery, as currently proposed, would threaten both the historic and ecological significance of a site known as "The Arlington House Woods" located immediately adjacent to the Arlington House/Custis-Lee Mansion. This threatened site includes an ancient stream valley, and a significant mature forest. This forest is part of the Arlington House Woods, among Arlington's oldest forests, and one of a dwindling number of such forests remaining in the national capital region. Preservation of the Arlington House Woods is important due to the extensive historical and ecological context of being part of the original Arlington Estate, owned by the families and descendants of George Washington, the Custis Family, and Robert E. Lee. Arlington House Woods is within visual distance of the Fort Myer National Historic Landmark Historic District, the National Register of Historic Places listed Arlington House and the National Register of Historic Places eligible Arlington National Cemetery historic district.



The 12 acres are a part of both the Arlington House Woods' designation on the National Register for Historic Places, and designation as a registry site with the Virginia Native Plant Society. Language in the revised draft Environmental Assessment of the Millennium Project tends to skirt the reality, and contribute to actions and analyses that neglect the historic and ecological significance of the woods on the Millennium Project site, and the impact of the project on those resources.

**Preservation Arlington strongly encourages** the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to revise the Environmental Assessment and Plan to ensure that the portion of the site known as The Arlington Woods is protected from any encroachment, destruction, removal of trees, or fragmentation, and is preserved via alternate siting options for new burial locations.

## 1879 Seneca Quarry Red Sandstone Cemetery Boundary Wall

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Millennium Plan also proposes to demolish 1,357 feet of the historic 1870's Seneca Quarry red sandstone wall that once encircled the entire Cemetery in order to expand the Cemetery burial sites onto property currently located on Fort Myer grounds. This would constitute a significant and avoidable loss of particular historical context for Arlington Cemetery. The existing wall, constructed during the 1870's, is a major contributing element to the site and its' historic importance, and any impact to it must be avoided or minimized.

The ACE has proposed demolishing this long section of the wall, and then re-utilizing some of the original red sandstone to provide an encasement of cladding over a new concrete core wall. However, demolition and removal of the original wall and construction of a new wall will severely impact the historic value and site ecology of the original wall.

**Preservation Arlington urges the ACE to revise** the Millennium Plan to ensure the existing wall is preserved and maintained intact, using alternate burial site expansion options.



## Low-rise commercial architecture of the 1930's - 1950's

Low-rise commercial buildings characteristic of federal New Deal architecture are rapidly disappearing in Arlington, as they are across the United States. In the early to mid-twentieth century, the two-part commercial building form appeared on town main streets and throughout commercial districts across the country. Designs catered to pedestrians and retail space at the street level while housing offices and more private uses above. As suburban areas grew and made use of more available land, the small-scale detached commercial building type was also popularized. Highly stylized signage often marked these businesses, as well as decorative cladding and expansive glazing to differentiate these structures.



Among the great examples of urban low-rise commercial buildings remaining in Arlington is the endangered **First Federal Savings and Loan Association of Arlington (now Cosi)** on Clarendon Boulevard in Courthouse. The original inlaid terrazzo floor with the bank's seal and the state of Virginia survives in what was the bank lobby; if you have bought lunch or a cup of coffee at Cosi, you were standing on that perfectly intact green and white seal.

The **Robert Shreve Fuel Co.** on Lee Highway near East Falls Church is an excellent example of the small-scale detached commercial style from early to mid-twentieth century. It exemplifies the kind of eye-catching signage and multiple ornamental cladding materials that characterize the building type and period.

The one-, two-, and three-story commercial buildings that once were the mainstay of the bustling retail corridors of Arlington are being replaced. And both the Cosi Building and the Shreve Fuel Co. buildings stand on major historic thoroughfares through Arlington, thoroughfares that are becoming unrecognizable with rapid dense development of multi-use high rises.



**Preservation Arlington challenges** our communities, commissions, county officials, and developers alike to think more creatively about redevelopment efforts to retain these mid-century commercial neighborhood establishments and incorporate them into development plans. Buildings which have (or have not) been placed on the Historical Resource Inventory should all be specially considered for preservation when redevelopment plans are proposed.

## Washington & Old Dominion Last Railroad Siding Standing

One of the last remnants of the W&OD Railroad line is a railroad siding in the East Falls Church Section of Arlington. This siding is an elevated trestle that served the site now occupied by Petro Oil (formerly Shreve Oil). It is partially on this private property and partially on Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority property. This particular elevated siding contains thirteen concrete piers that supported railroad tracks as part of the W&OD Railroad. In addition, this W&OD elevated siding contains the only tracks and ties in their original location in Arlington County. W&OD service ended service in 1968. It is a great reminder of our industrial and commercial past.

The site is under contract to a developer who has proposed five-story 180-unit residential building for the site. The proposed project includes reference to "historical attraction" but the current proposal has no details on how this will be treated. Preservation of the siding was called out in the East Falls Church Plan (adopted in 2011). The Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board is considering the site for local historic designation and County staff is currently researching the siding.

**Preservation Arlington would like to see the site designated a Local Historic District** prior to any further action on redevelopment of the site. As a local historic district, HALRB will be allowed to review the project to ensure that it is properly respectful and that this important commercial historic resource is properly preserved.



### **Wilson School and Wilson School playgrounds, Rosslyn**

The future of the Fort Meyer Heights School (aka the **Woodrow Wilson School**), an early Arlington school originally built in 1910 and located at 1601 Wilson Boulevard in the Fort Myers/Rosslyn neighborhood, continues to hang in the balance. The Wilson School, designed by prominent Richmond architect Charles Morrison Robinson, survives as the oldest extant school building in Arlington County that is still owned and maintained by Arlington Public Schools and is the last remaining example of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century institutional architecture in the Rosslyn and Fort Meyer Heights neighborhood. In 2009, the Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB), recommended designation of the Wilson School building a Local Historic District with a determination that the building meets four of the criteria for Local Historic Designation. Its character, interest, and value are an important part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of Arlington; it is suitable for preservation or restoration; it has educational value; and it has historic significance. Although the Arlington County School Board declined to designate the school as an Arlington Historic Landmark, they did acknowledge the building's documented history and architecture. Several plans have been analyzed including the preservation of the core 1910 section of the Wilson School. Subsequent substantial additions to the school were made in 1925 and 1957. Despite the changes, the simplicity of the massing, materials, and ornamentation of the original 1910 building are still apparent and continue to dominate the school's frontage along Wilson Boulevard and the overall character of the building today.

Compared to other historic schools in the County, Wilson School, in use continuously since 1910, is a testament to how community and educational facilities can be altered over time as needs and priorities change, while continuing to remain viable resources.

**Preservation Arlington encourages the county** to continue its evaluation of this historic school building and its associated open space. The future utilization of the Wilson School as a community gathering place could once again provide recreational, educational, and fitness programs, activities, and services essential to preserving not only an important neighborhood landmark, but also will help to maintain a quality of life that is so essential to Arlington. We would like to see this handsome and solid building reused in a contributing manner to the community.



### **1000 Glebe Road, Marymount University Ballston Campus, aka Blue Goose**

The Blue Goose was designed by John M. Walton, who was a leading architect of the time, having designed a full range of buildings from single family homes for Broyhill Builders, to institutional structures such as a major addition to Arlington Hospital and the architect for a redesign of the staff dining room in the White House during the Eisenhower administration. He was a leading architect in the DC Metro area in his time.

Built in 1963, 1000 Glebe Road is affectionately known as "The Blue Goose." This 115,000 sf office building sits on a prime location in Arlington and plans have been submitted by Marymount to demolish the building and replace it with two towers; one a multi-family residential; and one 160,000 sf office building which they would occupy about 2/3s of the space. Originally built for CIA offices it also housed a variety of federal agencies before being sold by its original owner to Marymount University in 1992. At the time, Marymount's President remarked that they bought the building because the tiles were the school color.



It represents an excellent example of mid-century polychrome style with the large plates, window treatments and entry way. This is an exciting example of mid-century modern and is a building represents an era of architecture, design and civic pride which is only beginning to be fully studied and appreciated. The building continues to maintain a high visibility presence in the core of the Ballston Business District in Arlington. It is a major entryway to Arlington County from travelers arriving via I-66/Custis Memorial Parkway. Built as one of the early high rises in Ballston it is now surrounded by even higher buildings of arguably less interesting color and design. This building is a representation of a period when buildings were built with an aggressive flair and innovation. The Arlington Historic Affairs and Landmark Review Board has had discussions about the site and has notified the property owner of the potential historic resource and the financial and density benefits of preservation.

**Preservation Arlington asks that Marymount University** further consider their stewardship of this building and instead of demolishing a building of such recent construction, barely meeting the 50-year requirement to be historic, and instead consider a tax-credit renovation and historic preservation bonus density credit and incorporation of the building into the future development of this site. This building is a vanishing style and treasure from an architecture period just beginning to be understood.

### **Garden Apartments: Fillmore Gardens and Other affordable buildings on Columbia Pike; plus Queens Court and Key Boulevard Apartments in Rosslyn**

Since 2003 when Arlington's outstanding collection of historic garden apartment complexes was recognized by the National Register of Historic Places, the county has lost a significant number of these distinctive housing complexes. Historically and today, these apartments have provided affordable, quality homes for Arlingtonians. Mainly built during the 1930s through the 1950s, garden apartments were an innovative housing type that was perfected here in Arlington.

A number of smaller complexes are also imminently threatened with redevelopment. The *Key Boulevard Apartments* at 1555 Key Boulevard in Rosslyn and the nearby *Queens Court Apartments* -- both of which are owned by organizations dedicated to providing affordable housing in Arlington. The *Key Boulevard Apartments* is a charming three-building complex centered on a central courtyard as is slated to be replaced with a larger, mixed-income development. Built in 1942, the complex is a rare example of an Art Deco-style garden apartment complex in Arlington and it is considered eligible for National Register listing and tax credits. *Queens Court Apartments* are also threatened with redevelopment where the owner has agreed to partner with the Arlington County to incorporate the 39-unit, circa-1930 brick apartment complex (and its' density) in the future redevelopment plan for the adjacent Wilson School property.

Plan for Columbia Pike redevelopment could be putting portions of several affordable garden style projects in jeopardy. Fillmore Gardens and Barcroft Apartments are most imminently threatened as both sites could accommodate much higher density than what is currently built. Historic preservation was reluctantly included as one of the goals for Columbia Pike redevelopment. These and other significant historic garden apartments that remain along the corridor, provide for the preservation of

significant open space and the distinct architectural character that can positively contribute to the quality of a revitalized Columbia Pike corridor.

*There are a number of successful garden apartment preservation models spread throughout the county.* Portions of Colonial Village, Buckingham, Woodbury Park/Sheffield Court, Wakefield Manor, Westover, and Calvert Manor garden apartment complexes have been rehabilitated and revitalized by their owners using the federal and state historic preservation tax credits. These examples show how targeted incentives can result in the retention of these important landmarks of Arlington's distinctive history and affordable housing at the same time.



**Preservation Arlington supports the rehabilitation and revitalization** of existing garden apartment buildings by the use of federal and state historic preservation tax credits. Preservation Arlington also challenges the County to develop and implement targeted local economic incentives that would encourage owners and developers of Arlington's historic garden apartments to preserve these historic properties and to maintain their affordability. Garden apartments are historically, environmentally, and socially important resources in the county and can be easily saved and serve as important landmarks of Arlington's distinctive history and provide affordable housing at the same time.

#### **Continue to Watch List**

**Reevesland.** The Torreyson-Reeves farm was the last dairy farm to operate in Arlington and the centerpiece of the Reevesland Historic District in Bluemont Park. Reevesland was purchased by the County in 2001 and attained its historic designation in 2004. A 2012 RFP for re-use of the site failed to result in any acceptable options for the property. Preservation Arlington is greatly concerned that this property will continue to deteriorate due to neglect and thus continue to increase in cost to restore.

#### **Recent Successes/Saves**

**Green Valley Pharmacy, 2415 Shirlington Road** -- designated a local historic landmark in 2013

**Fraber House, 1612 North Quincy Street** -- property being subdivided such that Arlington County retains the majority of the land and the house will come under a preservation easement and be sold in mid-2013.

**Broadview, aka "The Old Lacey House", 5151 14th Street, North** being designated a local historic district by new owners

**David Brown Planetarium, 1426 North Quincy Street**, saved from demolition by Arlington Public Schools after a grassroots fundraising campaign that brought in enough money to meet the fundraising challenge proposed by the APS

**Wakefield Manor and Courthouse Manor, 1201 and 1215 North Courthouse Road**, put under historic preservation easement as part of siteplan and density transfer with adjacent site

## **Lost Forever**

**Febrey-Kincheloe House, aka Overlee Pool House, 6030 Lee Highway**, 100+ year old house with a remarkable history first as a home for a wealthy family and later as an residential institution and somehow still retaining much of its original siting, despite being located on the grounds of a private swimming club

**Washington-Lee Shopping Center, 2207, 2209-2233 North Pershing Drive**, art-deco style neighborhood shopping center redeveloped by siteplan into mixed-used residential building

**3610 South Four Mile Run Drive**, low rise industrial buildings owned by Arlington County

**Certigrade House**, 5411, 11th Road, North, a unique house covered with a specialized cedar siding called Certigrade it was one of a few ever constructed. It was the very first FHA mortgage financed by the FHA and that First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt signed the papers on the front porch.

## **Update on Past Endangered Lists**

### **2010**

Lubber Run Amphitheater; SAVED County has committed funds to renovate, upgrade and maintain facility Old Schools and Community Centers; continue to be at risk due to poor oversight and management by APS. It is difficult to bring many up to modern building code, such as ADA

David Brown Planetarium; SAVED by substantial community outreach effort, fueled by social media

Garden Apartments; Continue to be threatened by private developers turning sites into high end condominiums and townhouses and by Arlington's affordable housing providers who are providing newer and more expensive units in mixed-income buildings

Neighborhood Shopping Centers; lost or continued to be threatened

### Watch List

Tomb of the Unknown; Saved but issues have arisen with quality of repairs

Gulf Branch Nature Center; Preserved but with reduced support from County

Reevesland; Preserved but continues to not be properly maintained by owner, Arlington County

Veitch-Thomas House;

Branch Libraries; programs are safe but several iconic neighborhood buildings have been lost

Vintage Signs; In great Danger from 2012 Sign Ordinance which has put virtually all non-conforming signs on notice that they cannot be maintained or repaired by owners

### **2009**

Gulf Branch Nature Center; see 2010

Neighborhood Branch Libraries; see 2010

The MOMA Lustron House; sold to Ohio Preservation Organization and while preserved, no longer in Arlington.

Neighborhood Shopping Centers; see 2010

Early Arlington Houses;

### Watch

Tomb of the Unknown; see 2010

Wilson School; see 2013

Columbia Pike; see 2013

Civil War earthworks; still under threat from lack of study, maintenance, and, protection

### **2008**

Lee Gardens Shopping Center; GONE.

The Veitch Thomas House;

Clarendon Commercial District; multiple buildings have been saved by historic designation and use of transfer of development rights, but others have been lost.

Civil War Earthworks; see 2009

Small Arlington Houses;

Watch List

The Krowne Lustron;  
Neighborhood Branch Libraries; see 2010  
Tomb of the Unknown; see 2010  
Wilson School; see 2013  
Crystal City Industrial; GONE  
Weenie Beenie; still successfully operating

**2007**

Parkland Gardens; Gone  
Apartment Bungalows Homes; continue to be threatened  
Branch Libraries; see 2010  
Historic Residential Neighborhoods; see 2013 as threat has increased  
Historic Commercial Districts;

Watch

Buckingham; substantial parts have been lost to redevelopment  
Lustron Homes; two more GONE.  
Fort Ethan Allen; new report expected in Summer 2013 outlining preservation goals and siting  
Bob Peck Chevrolet; GONE

*Preservation Arlington is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and improving the quality of Arlington's distinct architectural heritage. Through education and advocacy, Preservation Arlington brings together people and organizations to influence the future of Arlington's historic buildings, landscapes and communities. Preservation Arlington was originally founded in 1989 as the Arlington Heritage Alliance.*

*[www.preservationarlington.org](http://www.preservationarlington.org)*

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