



## HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

**Marc Elrich**  
*County Executive*

**Robert K. Sutton**  
*Chair*

**September 12, 2023**

Montgomery County Planning Board  
2425 Reddie Drive, 14th Floor  
Wheaton, Maryland 20902

Dear Chair Harris and Members of the Planning Board,

On May 10, 2023, the Historic Preservation Commission received a briefing from Planning Department's Historic Preservation Office staff on the *Takoma Park Minor Master Plan Amendment*. The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) regularly provides comments to the Planning Board on master plan updates which impact historic resources, recommend resources for designation, or include significant historical elements. This plan proposes the historic designation of several important resources through a concurrent amendment to the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. As part of the HPC's role and responsibilities under Chapter 24A of the Montgomery County Code, I am pleased to offer the Commission's recommendations to the Planning Board.

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that the Planning Board list three individual properties in the Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites, and recommends the Planning Board support the recommendation to the County Council to designate these properties in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. These properties and their relevant designation criteria are as follows:

- **Heffner Park Community Center (42 Oswego Avenue)**: The City of Takoma Park built the one-story cinderblock Heffner Park Community Center in 1959 as a segregated recreation facility for the city's Black residents. The building and park are the results of decades of advocacy by the city's African American residents to demand recreational outlets for Black children in the years preceding the county's public accommodation law, which prohibited discrimination in public facilities in 1963. The Heffner Park Community Center satisfies three designation criteria (**1A, 1C, and 1D**) listed in §24A-3 of the Montgomery County Code.

1A. The historic resource has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the county, state, or nation.

The Heffner Park Community Center is associated with the development of the historically Black neighborhood of "the Hill" within the City of Takoma Park and the community-building efforts of its residents.

As the neighborhood coalesced in the 1920s, segregation limited residents' access to social support systems and public spaces. Residents of "the Hill" built local social and community institutions to mitigate the effects of racial discrimination. The first two of

these institutions, the Parker Memorial Baptist Church (est. 1922) and the Takoma Park Rosenwald School (est. 1928), provided community services that extended beyond their basic functions. Neighborhood leaders organized events at the church and school, including regular movie nights, dances, and trips to nearby leisure destinations that welcomed Black patronage.

In addition to organizing a church and school, residents of “the Hill” worked for decades to meet the community’s need for recreational outlets and outdoor gathering spaces. Like these two institutions, Heffner Park served social and community needs that were unmet due to racial segregation. As the product of dedicated community advocacy, the park is a reflection of local Black leaders’ commitment to providing resources and connections in a challenging, discriminatory environment. Taken together, these three institutions provided a critical support network brought about through local self-help. The former Takoma Park Rosenwald School and the original Parker Memorial Baptist Church are no longer extant, but the Heffner Park Community Center survives as a representation of these critical institutions and the development of the Black community in the mid-twentieth century.

1C. The historic resource is identified with a person or group of persons who influenced society.

The Heffner Park Community Center is associated with the leadership and advocacy of Lee Jordan, who is recognized by the City of Takoma Park as one of the most influential residents in the community’s history. He is celebrated for supporting generations of Takoma Park children as a coach and mentor who bridged a stark racial divide to work for the integration of local youth sports. In addition to his advocacy for youth and sport, Jordan was a prominent leader of Takoma Park’s African American communities in a challenging time of racial segregation. As President of the Colored Citizens Association in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Jordan spearheaded the CCA’s work and advocacy for the provision of public services to Black communities, including the construction of Heffner Park.

The Heffner Park Community Center provides a direct link to Jordan’s broad community leadership as well as his particular emphasis on the importance of recreation. While the baseball field at the nearby Takoma Park Middle School was named in his honor in 1981, there are currently no designated historic sites that reflect his significant legacy. The site provides the opportunity to recognize Jordan’s life and influence on the community in a place created through his leadership and persistence.

1D. The historic resource exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political or historic heritage of the county and its communities.

The Heffner Park Community Center stands as a reminder of racial segregation and discriminatory public policy in twentieth century Montgomery County. The center was one element in a landscape of segregated recreational facilities within the City of Takoma Park and the county at large. It was built as a separate facility for the city’s Black residents, who were unable to use the Takoma Park Recreation Center built by M-NCPPC in the mid-twentieth century. Recreation programs in Montgomery County did not begin to desegregate until the Department of Recreation, established in 1953, began to desegregate the department’s activities with the opening of the 1955 playground season. In contrast to



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the well-appointed Takoma Park Recreation Center, the Heffner Park Community Center was planned as a small, simple building with limited amenities. Its minimalist appearance and lack of ornamentation reflect the disparity in public resources dedicated to African American communities.

Heffner Park reflects the legacy of environmental racism which impacted Montgomery County's African American communities in the twentieth century. Environmental racism is characterized by policies or practices which disproportionately burden communities of color with noxious facilities and air, water, and waste problems. The park exists in its current location due to the decision to move the city's Public Works facility, which had been identified by its neighbors as a nuisance, into a predominantly African American community in order to clear the way for lucrative new development along Maple Avenue. The City sited this facility within "the Hill" despite residents' protest of this decision and the associated hazards. Compounding this injustice, the public works facility was constructed at the site of Black residents' only playground and park, which they had tirelessly sought and finally attained. Heffner Park reopened at its current location in 1959, and remains in close proximity to its former site and the contemporaneous Public Works facility.

- **Krestview (7625 Carroll Avenue):** Krestview is a two-story Craftsman-style bungalow constructed in 1909. The home reflects the local growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and is strongly associated with Drs. Daniel and Lauretta Kress, who acquired the property in 1918. The Kresses were prominent Adventist medical missionaries and physicians who promoted faith-based healthcare. The home is also a significant site of women's history for its association with Dr. Lauretta Kress, one of the earliest female licensed physicians and surgeons in Montgomery County and a leader of obstetric care in the early twentieth century. The subject property satisfies two designation criteria (**1A and 1C**) listed in §24A-3 of the Montgomery County Code.

1A. The historic resource has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the county, state, or nation.

The Kress House is associated with the growth of Seventh-day Adventist institutions in Takoma Park and their influence on the development of the local community.

The relocation of the General Conference headquarters and publishing house and the establishment of the Washington Sanitarium and the Washington Training College resulted in an in-migration of Seventh-day Adventist members to Takoma Park over the next several decades. Adventist sources estimate that upwards of 2,000 church members moved to Takoma Park in the early part of the twentieth century. Church leaders purchased and subdivided land in Takoma Park to facilitate the growth of the local Adventist community. Arthur G. Daniells and Edwin R. Palmer subdivided the lot on which the Kress House was built within six years of the Adventists' initial purchase of land in Takoma Park. It was an

attractive location for members of the church community due to its proximity to the new sanitarium and college, and the block attracted prominent church members to buy and rent homes in the first third of the twentieth century.

The house at 7625 Carroll Avenue was an early residential property built specifically by Adventist leaders on land that had been purchased for that purpose. The home was occupied continuously by members of the Adventist church from its construction in 1909 through at least 1986, when it was sold by Donald B. and Edna Jones. These owners and residents included leading figures of the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference, Washington Sanitarium, and the Review and Herald Publishing House, significant institutions within the local faith community and the church as a whole. The property is a strong reflection of the Adventists' influence on the development of Takoma Park and the expansion of their work to the nation's capital.

1C. The historic resource is identified with a person or group of persons who influenced society.

The Kress House reflects the work and influence of Drs. Laretta and Daniel Kress, significant Adventist leaders, doctors, and public health advocates. The Kresses were notable medical missionaries who established Seventh-day Adventist sanitariums around the world before settling in Takoma Park to lead the opening and growth of the Washington Sanitarium. As the sanitarium's first medical superintendent and first surgeon on staff, respectively, Drs. Daniel and Laretta Kress were influential figures in the success of the new institution, which remained in this location until relocating in 2019.

The Kresses were residents at 7625 Carroll Avenue from 1918-1939, a significant stretch in their careers in which Dr. Daniel Kress gained prominence for his anti-smoking advocacy and Dr. Laretta Kress significantly raised the profile of the sanitarium's maternity care program. Dr. Laretta Kress has special distinction as one of the earliest women to be licensed and practice as a physician in Montgomery County. Her leadership shaped the evolution of the sanitarium's program of care and its physical development, by establishing dedicated space in the acute-care hospital building (c. 1918) and a separate maternity ward (c. 1922) for the care of expectant mothers and babies.

The Drs. Kress modified their home to suit their professional needs and their role within the community: the renovation of the basement to serve as a home medical office and their dedicated improvements to the grounds made the house a gathering place for both friends and patients. Their life in the home is clearly evident and declared prominently by the name "Krestview" emblazoned above the front door.

- **The Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church (7700 Carroll Avenue):** The Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church is a three-story, wedge-shaped Streamline Moderne building of steel frame construction built between 1942 and 1944. The church is significant as the home of a progressive congregation within the global Seventh-day Adventist Church and as an excellent representation of the Streamline Moderne style. The subject property satisfies three designation criteria (**1A, 2A, and 2E**) listed in §24A-3 of the Montgomery County Code.



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1A. The historic resource has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the county, state, or nation.

The Sligo Church reflects the growth of the Adventist community in Takoma Park. The Sligo Church, first organized in 1907, was founded concurrently with the nearby Washington Sanitarium (1904) and Washington Training College (1907). Its first name, the Seminary and Sanitarium Church, reflects its origins as an institution which brought the growing Adventist medical and educational communities in Takoma Park together into one congregation. The subject building, constructed between 1942 and 1944, represents Sligo Church's first standalone Church, which it has occupied continuously for nearly 80 years. The congregation's growth and endurance over time were a direct result of the success of its sister institutions.

The Sligo Church also holds significance as the site of pioneering advances towards racial integration and gender equity that are distinctive within the Adventist faith. Through the mid-to-late twentieth century, the Sligo Church acquired prominence for desegregating church membership before national church leadership was prepared to do so, and for ordaining women as ministers in direct response to a globally adopted Adventist policy against this practice.

2A. The historic resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.

The Sligo Church is an excellent and distinctive example of Streamline Moderne architecture. Architect J. Raymond Mims' design employs defining features of the style: smooth surfaces, curved corners, and an emphasis on horizontality. The church's exterior is predominantly composed of smooth panels of Indiana limestone with limited ornamentation, and embellishment is found only in low-relief decorative stonework at window and door openings, a common characteristic of the Streamline Moderne style. The symmetrical wedge-shaped plan captures the style's aerodynamic aesthetic, while the projecting rectangular bays on the church's façade reflect its common use of joined rectangular and curved blocks to add visual interest and dimension to the typically blocky buildings. The church's shallow roof reinforces the horizontality of the overall form. Mims' c. 1941 design captures the brief but intense popularity of this style in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

The building is also a successful example of ecclesiastical architecture that is clearly legible as a house of worship. Mims' design brings many elements of traditional religious architecture into a modern form. The church's Indiana limestone exterior and horizontal lines convey permanence and groundedness corresponding to the sincerity of religious practice, while the building's curved lines, harmonious colors and shapes, and visual symmetry lend a sense of gracefulness. The restrained ornamentation is in keeping with the

Streamline Moderne style and also befitting of Seventh-day Adventist values and design precepts, which promote simplicity, limited ornamentation, and avoidance of vanity. The limited number of windows and their stone screens reflect the idea that a sanctuary should be a space for focused worship, not distraction by the outside world. These elements combine in a thoughtful design that cascades towards the street and welcomes the community inside to worship.

2E. The historic resource represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or county due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape.

The Sligo Church has occupied its prominent location at the corner of Carroll and Flower Avenues for over eighty years. The building takes advantage of its corner lot with a distinctive wedge-shaped plan that distinguishes it from more conservative buildings on the nearby academic and medical campuses. The Washington Adventist University campus and former Washington Adventist Hospital site are characterized primarily by Georgian Revival buildings interspersed with a few restrained modernist styles dating to the later mid-century.

As a large building serving nearly 3,000 parishioners, the Sligo Church stands out in the landscape. When built, it was the largest church in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. Its scale is reflective of the importance and size of the Adventist community in Takoma Park. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has built a limited number of “megachurches,” defined as those seating over 2,000 worshippers, around the country in places where Adventist institutions are concentrated, including Takoma Park. Historically, this included the c. 1879 Dime Tabernacle in the Adventist hub of Battle Creek, Michigan, which sat 4,000 worshippers using a semi-circular seating and balcony plan like that employed at Sligo (App. 5, Fig. 19). The Sligo Church predated a national pattern of megachurch-building that emerged among evangelical faiths in the latter twentieth century.

The Sligo Church is also unusual among Montgomery County’s religious buildings for its Streamline Moderne design. The county’s extant houses of worship built in the 1940s predominantly reflect the revival styles popular throughout the country in that period; only the Sligo Church was built in the Streamline Moderne style. Most modernist churches in the county were built in the post-war era of suburban expansion and therefore reflect later design trends. The Sligo Church is also distinctive among local Adventist congregations, even those dating to the mid-twentieth century. The nearby Takoma Park Seventh-day Adventist Church, an outstanding resource within the Takoma Park Master Plan Historic District located at 6951 Carroll Avenue, was built a decade later and returned to a traditional Gothic Revival style. The choice of a Streamline Moderne building accommodated this congregation’s unusually large size and established a church where the large numbers of Adventists working at the nearby college and hospital could worship together.



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The HPC supports the draft recommendation that significant themes and resources within the Plan Area be studied in future Departmental efforts, including:

- Takoma Park's historic African American neighborhoods for potential future listing in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation and/or the National Register of Historic Places.
- Mid-century housing developments along Maple Avenue and their role in immigration, changing demographics and increased diversity;
- Small-scale multi-family housing in the vicinity of Erie and Maplewood Avenues;
- Local LGBTQ+ pioneers and advocates; and,
- Social activism and the development of community political identity.

Additionally, the HPC supports the draft recommendations regarding interpretive signage throughout the plan area, and the support of the Washington Adventist Campus should they seek to pursue a National Register nomination for the University and its associated buildings and landscape.

Finally, the HPC recommends the attached Community History narrative be added to the Plan as part of the Planning Board DRAFT transmitted to the County Council. It is typical that all Master Plans include an updated community history and narrative; this text as drafted by staff and reviewed by the HPC would provide the framework for a new and inclusive history of the plan area. We look forward to working with you as this Plan progresses and are available for any questions during the public hearing and worksessions.

Sincerely,

Karen Burditt, Vice Chair  
Historic Preservation Commission

Cc: Members, Historic Preservation Commission