

DCCA is a volunteer, nonprofit organization, founded in 1922 to promote and protect the Dupont Circle neighborhood.



9 Dupont Circle, NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
[www.dupont-circle.org](http://www.dupont-circle.org)

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**2019 – 2020  
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**Date:** May 16, 2019

**To:** Historic Preservation Review Board

**From:** Dupont Circle Citizens Association

**Re:** Historic Landmark Case No. 19-06

Please find attached comments from the Board of Directors of the Dupont Circle Citizens Association regarding the above-referenced matter, which is scheduled for consideration by the HPRB on May 23, 2019.



May 17, 2019

**BY ELECTRONIC MAIL ONLY**

Marnique Heath, Chair  
Historic Preservation Review Board  
1100 4th Street, SW, Suite E650  
Washington, DC 20024  
E-mail: historic.preservation@dc.gov

**Re: Historic Landmark Case No. 19-06  
Scottish Rite Temple Amendment (boundary increase)**

Dupont Circle Citizens Association (“DCCA”) submits these comments regarding the above-referenced proposed boundary increase of the historic landmark site of the Scottish Rite Temple, 1733 16th Street, NW. The proposed boundary increase would extend the eastern edge of the site’s boundary to 15th Street, NW.

DCCA strongly supports retaining and enhancing historic landmark protection for the temple. It is therefore dismayed that the Historic Preservation Office (“HPO”) has recommended in this case that the Board not only deny the proposed boundary increase but also essentially adopt a boundary decrease. HPO’s recommendations are fundamentally inconsistent with the declared purposes of the Historic Landmark and Historic District Protection Act of 1978, as amended (the “Act”), which include retaining and enhancing historic landmarks. *See* D.C. Code § 6-1101(b)(2)(A). DCCA therefore urges the Board to reject HPO’s recommendations and to approve the proposed boundary increase.

By way of background, HPO has issued two reports in this case; specifically, it issued a report with recommendation in April 2019 (the “Original Report”), and then a revised report with recommendation in May 2019 (the “Revised Report”). Both reports recommend against the proposed boundary increase, but they fundamentally differ with respect to what should be considered the existing boundary. The Original Report and the Revised Report are attached as Exhibits 1 and 2, respectively.

In the Original Report (pp. 1-2), HPO correctly delineated the existing boundary of the historic landmark site as including a very large area behind the temple. This area includes a substantial portion of the location of a proposed project involving new construction of a massive, five-story apartment building (four stories plus penthouse level), which is the subject of an ongoing conceptual design review (the “Proposed Project”). *See* HPA No. 18-668.

Relying on the Original Report, various members of the community pointed out to HPO that the public had not received prior notice that the Proposed Project would be built in part on the historic landmark site. They also communicated their expectation that the Mayor’s Agent for

Marnique Heath, Chair  
Historic Preservation Review Board  
May 17, 2019

Historic Preservation would comply with applicable law by holding a formal public hearing regarding the Proposed Project because, based on the boundary delineated in the Original Report, the Proposed Project would necessarily involve a subdivision that removes land from an historic landmark site. *See* D.C. Code § 6-1106(c); 10 DCMR C403.1(b).

Astonishingly, shortly after members of the community expressed these views, HPO issued its Revised Report recommending that the Board “clarify and confirm” the existing boundary in such a way that would not include the location of the Proposed Project. The Revised Report does not explain why HPO suddenly changed its position. DCCA is therefore rightly concerned that HPO may have changed its position not because of any factual misunderstanding about the existing boundary but rather because of a desire to avoid the need for additional public notice or a hearing by the Mayor’s Agent concerning the Proposed Project.

In any instance, the Board should reject HPO’s recommendation to adopt the boundary delineated in the Revised Report because the Original Report correctly identifies the existing boundary. The Original Report (p. 1) correctly states that, “[u]nder the D.C. Preservation Law [i.e., the Act] adopted in 1978, the new legal protections for a historic landmark extend to the building and its site, commonly interpreted as the lot where the building is situated.” The Original Report (pp. 1-2) further correctly identifies the lot and corresponding boundary by reference to a map taken from authoritative historical records.

Additionally, the existing eastern edge of the site unquestionably coincides with the eastern edge of the 16th Street Historic District. This conclusion was explicitly made in the Original Report (p. 2). And it is consistent with any reasonable interpretation of the boundaries of the 16th Street Historic District. The historic district’s nomination documents establish that only properties that front 16th Street, NW, were included in the nomination. As one of the properties fronting 16th Street, NW, the temple was included in the nomination, and its site was appropriately determined at that time as having the eastern boundary shown in the Original Report (p. 2). To be clear, if the rear of the temple had not been deemed part of the temple’s site, there would not have been any logical reason to include it in the historic district because, by design, the historic district only includes properties that front 16th Street, NW. And the Office of Planning’s map of the 16th Street Historic District, as well as its map of the 14th Street Historic District, clearly show this boundary. The maps are attached as Exhibit 3.

The Revised Report (p. 5) attempts to justify the boundary decrease by arguing that the site should be delineated by “considering the extent of the temple property at the time of its construction in 1915 and at the time of its identification as a historic landmark in 1964.” However, the issue is not presented to the Board on a clean slate. The site has for decades been delineated on its eastern edge by the boundary of the 16th Street Historic District. Furthermore, the relevant time period is not, as stated in the Revised Report (p. 1), when the temple was included “in the city’s first list of landmarks, issued by the Joint Committee of Landmarks in 1964,” but rather when it achieved historic landmark status under the Act, which was in 1978. By that time, as reflected in the map of the 16th Street Historic District, the site included a very substantial area located behind the temple.

Marnique Heath, Chair  
Historic Preservation Review Board  
May 17, 2019

It is important to emphasize that referring to the 1964 listing to determine the protected site boundary makes no sense. In 1964, no historic preservation protections came with a listing. A listed property merely received a bronze plaque for display. Many listed properties have been razed, including some of our finest historical churches. As *The Washington Post* wryly observed in 1973, a "little bronze plaque is as easily bulldozed as granite columns or marble entablatures." (A Brake on the Bulldozers, Wash. Post, Sep. 24, 1973, p. A26). Conversely, historic landmark designations resulting from the Act (adopted in 1978) came with legal protections for the designated landmark's site. And, as HPO itself stated in the Original Report (p. 1), a historic landmark's site is commonly understood to mean its lot.

It is therefore apparent that HPO is not actually requesting the Board to "clarify and confirm" the existing boundary; it is requesting the Board to substantially reduce the boundary. HPO's request is extraordinarily improper. The request has resulted in many in the community questioning the integrity, transparency, and adequacy of the historic preservation review process because the request appears to be motivated by the desire to avoid additional public notice and a hearing by the Mayor's Agent concerning the Proposed Project. HPO's recommendation is fundamentally inconsistent with the declared statutory purpose of retaining and enhancing historic landmarks. See D.C. Code § 6-1101(b)(2)(A). And acting on its recommendation would usurp the Mayor's Agent's statutory and regulatory role in reviewing any proposed subdivision that would remove land from an historic landmark site. See *id.* § 6-1106(c); 10 DCMR C403.1(b).

The Board should do more, however, than merely reject HPO's recommended boundary decrease. It should recognize that the existing boundary is correctly delineated in the Original Report. And it should also adopt the proposed boundary increase. The boundary increase would retain and enhance the temple's features as an historic landmark, including by helping to protect against inappropriate development that would spoil views of the rear of the temple. Insofar as the Board has any doubts about the proposed boundary increase, it should carefully study the proposal by conducting additional proceedings, fact gathering, and review, to ensure that the proposal is given full and proper consideration. The area subsumed by the proposed boundary increase currently consists of open space, including a large park, and it is the location of the Proposed Project. Once construction of the Proposed Project is underway, the opportunity to preserve and enhance the temple by increasing the boundary will be forever lost. It is therefore imperative that the Board proceed cautiously, and with due consideration of all of the relevant issues in full accord with the Act.

Respectfully submitted,



Glenn Engelmann, President  
Dupont Circle Citizens Association



– and – Lance Salonia, Regulatory Chair  
Dupont Circle Citizens Association

Marnique Heath, Chair  
Historic Preservation Review Board  
May 17, 2019

Attachments:

- Exhibit 1 – Original HPO Report
- Exhibit 2 – Revised HPO Report
- Exhibit 3 – Office of Planning Maps

# Exhibit 1

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**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD**  
Historic Landmark Case No. 19-06  
Scottish Rite Temple Amendment (boundary increase)  
1733 16<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Square 192 Lot 808

Meeting Date: May 23, 2019  
Applicant: Dupont East Civic Action Association  
Affected ANC: 2B

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**Preservation Background**

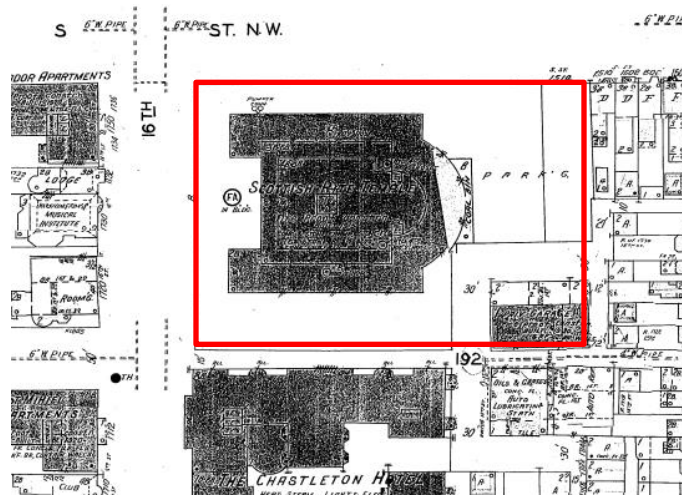
The Scottish Rite Temple is listed in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites as a Historic Landmark and is also a contributing resource in the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Historic District. The property was included in the city’s first list of landmarks, issued by the Joint Committee of Landmarks in 1964, and the predecessor to the current D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites created when the city enacted the D.C. Preservation Law in 1978. The Joint Committee’s list was organized into categories of significance, with the temple listed in Category III. In 1968, following the establishment of the National Preservation Act of 1966, the Joint Committee began preparing and forwarding nominations to the National Register of Historic Places for the properties in categories I and II only, and thus a nomination for the temple was not prepared.

The Sixteenth Street Historic District was identified on the Joint Committee’s 1964 list as a notable area in Category III. In 1977, acting on a proposed expansion of the Category III Dupont Circle area, the Joint Committee designated both Sixteenth Street and Dupont Circle as separate Category II historic districts, eligible for nomination to the National Register. Both were listed in the Register in 1978, and those nominations required clear boundaries for what had been sketchily defined “areas.” The Scottish Rite Temple is called out in that nomination as “one of the most unusual buildings in the Historic District” and is credited with having been voted “the fifth most beautiful building in the world by a group of members of the Association of American Architects.”

**Boundaries**

Under the D.C. Preservation Law adopted in 1978, the new legal protections for a historic landmark extend to the building and its site, commonly interpreted as the lot where the building is situated. At the time of its designation, the temple sat on the lot shown in red outline below. The landmark boundaries of the Scottish Rite Temple include approximately 2/3 of present-day Lot 108 in Square 192. Lot 108, which extends from 16<sup>th</sup> Street east to 15<sup>th</sup> Street on the northern half of the square, is the result of a 2013 subdivision by the Supreme Council combining a series of old lots in Square 192 into a single lot. Extending from 16<sup>th</sup> Street easterly to a point that is in

line with an alleyway that ran north-south through part of the northern half of the square, the landmark boundaries comprised the Scottish Rite Temple building itself; a carriage house/garage complex located at the southeast (rear) of the property (Old Lot 808); and open space to the east (in part historically occupied by rowhouses).



1959 Sanborn Map showing landmark boundary overlay

These boundaries included the original lots which the Scottish Rite purchased in 1910 to build its temple, as well as additional adjacent lots it purchased in the decades after completion of the temple (1915) until the time that boundaries were established for the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Historic District (1977).

The landmark boundary follows the eastern edge of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Historic District.

The amended application proposes to extend the landmark boundary eastward to encompass the entirety of Lot 108 bringing the eastern edge to 15<sup>th</sup> Street. The eastern 1/3 of Lot 108 is presently included within the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Historic District. While the application proposes this boundary increase, it does not address or specifically cite which D.C. and National Register designation criteria it might meet.

### **Proposed Boundary Increase Rationale**

The application proposes to amend the eastern edge of the landmark for the following reasons:

- 1) The Scottish Rite Temple was built on a site approximately one-mile north of the White House that was identified as open space on the L'Enfant Plan. The development of this open space, both historically and currently, conflicts with the L'Enfant Plan. Protecting this site as "open" would uphold the vision of the L'Enfant Plan and should be embraced. Further, the D.C. Parks and Recreation Master Plan suggests acquiring land for under-



parked neighborhoods. Retaining this open space would help to fulfill that Department of Recreation Master Plan recommendation.

- 2) John Russell Pope insisted on open sightlines for his projects. The amendment notes that Pope expressed this opinion in his design for the Lincoln Memorial, proposed for Meridian Hill Park, just north of the Scottish Rite Temple site, or the Old Soldiers' Home north of the city. Of these sites, Pope wrote that both "possess unhampered expression of purpose...by reason of their independence of surrounding important architectural dictates, consideration or comparisons."
- 3) In 1910, the Masons purchased a series of lots upon which they constructed the temple building, completed in 1915. Beginning in 1920, and continuing for many decades, they acquired numerous lots on S Street and 15<sup>th</sup> Street in the northern half of Square 192. After acquiring the properties, the Masons systematically demolished the rowhouses on those lots, many of which were home to African Americans. This act of demolition contributed to historic preservation efforts that ultimately resulted in the designation of the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Historic District.

## **Evaluation**

Based upon a review of the application, HPO has the following comments on the three assertions made in the application:

From the outset, the Plan of the City, as designed by Peter L'Enfant in incomplete concept form in 1791, was modified and adjusted in the process of laying out the city. The refinement of the plan completed by Andrew Ellicott in 1792 after L'Enfant's dismissal, already included many changes to the original printed version of the L'Enfant Plan. One such change, of note here, includes the elimination of the open space centered on 16<sup>th</sup> Street from S to T Streets, the block just north of 16<sup>th</sup> and S Streets, NW—the site of the Scottish Rite Temple. The temple site would be adjacent to the southeast corner of this contemplated square.

Later nineteenth and twentieth-century alterations to the 1791 and 1792 Plans involved the elimination of streets, the introduction of others, and the re-organization of reservations, circles and other open spaces. Some of these developments, such as the introduction of minor streets, and implementation of the McMillan Commission Plan (1901) which re-envisioned the city's monumental core and imposed new order on the historic plan, have great significance in the city's urban planning history and are considered contributing features of the plan. Much academic research and scholarship has been devoted to the L'Enfant Plan and subsequent plans, and as the city continues to develop, urban planning efforts consider an appropriate re-shaping of the city, in accordance with its historic plans. City circles and Reservations have been re-configured and L'Enfant Plan streets that had been closed are being re-opened.

The 1997 designation of the Plan of the City in the D.C. Inventory emphasizes that the historic landmark is the plan as it has evolved, during the National Register period of significance from 1790 to 1942. The D.C. designation states:

*“The designated plan is neither the archived historical map of the city (which exists in several versions including the original), nor an idealized diagram of the urban layout depicted on those maps. It is the layout of the city in its implemented form, including the streets, parks and other public spaces of the city as they evolved historically and exist in reality.”* [italics original]

Features such as the never-realized plaza on upper 16<sup>th</sup> Street are not part of the L’Enfant Plan historic landmark. There is no historic argument for or planning rationale for a deliberate re-creation of such conjectural elements in isolation of existing or historic conditions. The proposed amendment to the Scottish Rite Temple calls for “protecting” an open space that never existed on paper beyond the original 1791 Plan and was never created as part of the city plan. During the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, when the area was first developed, the site was divided into squares and lots in accordance with the 1792 Plan. It was developed during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with rowhouses and then, in 1910-1915, with the Scottish Rite Temple.

*Expanding the boundaries to include the open space behind the temple building will not contribute to the “restoration” of L’Enfant’s vision for open space on the site. The site was never officially set aside for public space and never developed as such. A “restoration” of open space as envisioned by L’Enfant would further engender the removal of the temple building and surrounding blocks and would be totally conjectural.*

John Russell Pope is a nationally known architect for his many residential, civic, religious, and institutional building designs, including, notably, the National Gallery of Art, the Jefferson Memorial, and the National City Christian Church in D.C. Pope’s work has been the focus of several books and articles, and many buildings designed by him are listed in the National Register.

The amended application notes that Pope wanted “unhampered” views and open sightlines for his designed buildings. This assessment appears to be based upon a single source--Pope’s written comments on a design proposal for a Lincoln Memorial on either Meridian Hill or the Old Soldiers’ Home. No additional background on Pope and his work is provided. Lacking any historical background on Pope and his buildings, it is not possible to conjecture about what Pope wanted for the Scottish Rite site. What is known is that Pope designed the building on its site hemmed in by both the street and rowhouses on lots at the rear of the temple. He presumably

designed the building within those constraints and not with the expectation that those buildings would be removed in the future to enhance views to the temple building.

*The argument to expand the boundaries to allow for an “unhampered expression” of the building according to Pope is purely conjectural. The open space was developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with rowhouses, the last of which remained in the 1980s, and cannot be classified as a significant historic, cultural or designed landscape.*

The application notes that the boundaries should be expanded to include the site of the rowhouses along both S and 15<sup>th</sup> Street which were demolished by the Supreme Council. The argument is that the demolition of these historic rowhouses galvanized the community and encouraged the rise of historic preservation in the neighborhood. That community effort culminated in the designation of the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Historic District.

*The site of the demolished rowhouses was included in the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Historic District so that the boundary would align with that of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Historic District, leaving no gap between them. The purchase and demolition of the rowhouses by the Supreme Council in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century is not relevant to the significance of the Scottish Rite site itself. The National Register notes that boundaries should “encompass an appropriate setting” but should exclude “peripheral areas that do not directly contribute to the property’s significance.” (National Register Bulletin, Defining Boundaries for National Register Properties, p.2).*

### **Designation Criteria**

This nomination was prepared as an amendment to a landmark that has no written nomination associated with it. Although the amended application does not address the designation criteria, it makes sense to look at them as they relate to the existing landmark, and in assessing the proposed amendment. Based on the site’s known history and documentation, it is reasonable to determine that the Scottish Rite Temple meets D.C. Designation Criteria B (History), D (Architecture and Urbanism), E (Artistry), and (F) Creative Masters and the equivalent National Register Criterion A and C, and that the Period of Significance should be established as 1915 when the temple was completed on its present site.

The Scottish Rite Temple meets Criterion B for its association with social movements, groups, institutions, patterns of growth and change in the District. The Scottish Rite Temple is associated with the establishment of the Scottish Rite and the formation of the headquarters of the Supreme Council in the District of Columbia. The land that makes up the expanded boundaries has not been shown to have played a significant role in the history or events tied to the temple. In addition, the land was acquired after 1915, and thus falls outside the likely Period of Significance for the temple.

The Scottish Rite Temple meets Criterion D, E, and F as it embodies the distinguishing characteristics of a building type and style; is an expression of architecture and urban planning; possess high artistic value; and is the work of a master architect. The proposed expanded boundaries do not contribute to the significance of the Scottish Rite Temple under these criteria. The open space is not notable as a designed or cultural landscape. In addition, acquisition of the land by the Supreme Council falls outside of the Period of Significance of 1915.

The property has not been evaluated under Criterion G (Archaeology), and it is possible that the site (existing and expanded) may yield information significant to an understanding of historic or prehistoric events of the District. In particular, the proposed expanded area—the site of demolished 19<sup>th</sup>-century rowhouses—may provide information on the lives of the African American, working-class residents who lived there. However, should the site provide such information, its significance would be related to the broader neighborhood history, and not associated with the Scottish Rite Temple and the significance for which it has been designated a historic landmark.

### **Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board deny this amendment to the Scottish Rite Temple designation. While a new submission for a well-researched, fully documented National Register nomination for the Temple would be welcome, existing information provides a sufficient understanding of the landmark to allow the Board to determine that the boundaries should not be expanded as proposed.*

# Exhibit 2

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**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD  
FINAL STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Historic Landmark Case No. 19-06

**Scottish Rite Temple amendment** (boundary increase)

1733 16<sup>th</sup> Street NW

Square 192 Lot 108

Meeting Date: May 23, 2019  
Applicant: Dupont East Civic Action Association  
Affected ANC: 2B

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The Scottish Rite Temple is listed in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites as a historic landmark and is also a resource contributing to the character of the Sixteenth Street Historic District. The property was included in the city's first list of landmarks, issued by the Joint Committee of Landmarks in 1964. The Sixteenth Street Historic District was also identified on the Joint Committee's 1964 list as a notable area, but it was not designated as a historic district until 1977 and listed in the National Register in 1978. The Scottish Rite Temple is called out in the Sixteenth Street nomination as "one of the most unusual buildings in the Historic District," and it is credited with having been voted "the fifth most beautiful building in the world by a group of members of the Association of American Architects." While there is no National Register nomination for the temple, the Commission of Fine Arts publication *Sixteenth Street Architecture Volume 1* includes a generously illustrated 33-page discussion of the temple, its construction history, and character-defining features.<sup>1</sup>

**Proposed Boundary Increase**

The amendment application proposes to extend the historic landmark boundary eastward to include the entirety of Lot 108, reaching to 15<sup>th</sup> Street, within the Fourteenth Street Historic District and including all the property that the Supreme Council currently owns, portions of which were acquired in the decades after completion of the temple.

The present application does not cite designation criteria under which the additional area may be evaluated. It proposes to extend the area for the following reasons:

- 1) The Scottish Rite Temple was built on a site approximately one-mile north of the White House that was identified as open space on the published 1791 L'Enfant Plan. Therefore, it is argued, the development of this open space, both historically and currently, conflicts with the L'Enfant Plan. Protecting this end of the site as open would uphold the vision of the L'Enfant Plan and should be embraced. The D.C. Parks and Recreation master plan recommends acquiring land for under-parked neighborhoods. Retaining this open space would help to fulfill that Department of Recreation Master Plan recommendation.

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<sup>1</sup> The temple is also described in standard reference works on Washington Architecture, including *Buildings of the District of Columbia* (Pamela Scott and Antoinette Lee, 1993), and many others.

- 2) John Russell Pope desired open sightlines to his projects. The amendment notes that Pope stressed this in his design for a Lincoln Memorial proposed for Meridian Hill Park or the Old Soldiers' Home, which both "possess[ed] unhampered expression of purpose... by reason of their independence of surrounding important architectural dictates, consideration or comparisons."
- 3) In 1910, the Masons purchased a series of lots upon which they constructed the temple building, completed in 1915. Beginning in 1920, and continuing for many decades, they acquired numerous lots on S Street and 15<sup>th</sup> Street in the northern half of Square 192. The Masons systematically demolished the rowhouses, many of which had become home to African Americans. This act of demolition contributed to historic preservation efforts that ultimately resulted in the designation of the Fourteenth Street Historic District.

### **Evaluation**

1) Pierre L'Enfant's concept plan of 1791 was modified and adjusted in the process of laying out the city. Andrew Ellicott's refinements of 1792 already included many changes to the original printed version of the L'Enfant Plan. One such change was the elimination of an open space centered on 16<sup>th</sup> Street from S to T Streets, the block north of the eventual temple (the temple would have been adjacent to the southeast corner of this contemplated square). Later alterations to the 1791 and 1792 Plans involved the elimination of streets, the introduction of others, and the re-organization of reservations, circles and other open spaces. Some of these developments, such as the introduction of minor streets and implementation of the McMillan Commission Plan have great significance in the city's urban planning history and are considered contributing realized features of the plan.

Much academic research and scholarship has been devoted to the L'Enfant Plan and subsequent planning, and as the city continues to develop, urban planning efforts consider an appropriate re-shaping of the city, in accordance with its historic plans. City circles and Reservations have been re-configured and L'Enfant Plan streets that had been closed are being re-opened. The 1997 designation of the Plan of the City in the D.C. Inventory emphasizes that the historic landmark is the plan as it was built and has evolved, during a period of significance from 1790 to 1942. The D.C. designation states:

*The designated plan is neither the archived historical map of the city (which exists in several versions including the original), nor an idealized diagram of the urban layout depicted on those maps. It is the layout of the city in its implemented form, including the streets, parks and other public spaces of the city as they evolved historically and exist in reality.*

Features such as the never-realized open space on upper 16<sup>th</sup> Street are not part of the L'Enfant Plan historic landmark. During the mid-nineteenth century, when the subject area was first developed, this site was divided into squares and lots in accordance with the 1792 Plan. It was partially developed during the late nineteenth century with rowhouses around the Scottish Rite site. There is no historical argument or planning rationale for re-creation of such conjectural elements in isolation of existing or historic conditions. The proposed landmark amendment calls

for “protecting” an open space that never existed except on the paper of the 1791 Plan, and for recreating it at a different location that is not on the 16<sup>th</sup> Street axis.

*Expanding the boundaries to include the open space behind the temple building will not contribute to a restoration of L’Enfant’s vision. The anticipated nearby square was never officially set aside for public space and never developed as such. The present open space is not in the same location. A “restoration” of that version of the plan is entirely conjectural and would require the demolition of numerous historic buildings.*

2) John Russell Pope is nationally known for his many residential, civic, religious, and institutional building designs, including Washington’s National Gallery of Art, the Jefferson Memorial, and the National City Christian Church. Pope’s work has been the focus of several books and articles, and many buildings designed by him are listed in the National Register.

The amended application notes that Pope wanted “unhampered” views and open sightlines for his designed buildings. This assessment appears to be based upon a single source—Pope’s comments on a design proposal for a Lincoln Memorial on either Meridian Hill or the Old Soldiers’ Home. The nomination offers no support for the idea’s application to the Scottish Rite Temple, and no background on Pope and his work is provided. Lacking direct evidence, it is impossible to conjecture about what Pope wished for the Scottish Rite site. What is known is that he designed the building on a site hemmed in by rowhouses and streets. Whatever his preferences, he presumably designed the building within those constraints and not with the expectation that those buildings would be removed in the future to enhance views.

*The argument to expand the boundaries to allow for an “unhampered expression” of the building according to Pope is purely conjectural. The present open space was densely developed in the late nineteenth century, was occupied by rowhouses and alley buildings when the temple building was constructed between 1910-1915, and remained at least partially occupied by rowhouses through the 1980s.*

3) The application notes that the boundaries should be expanded to include the site of the rowhouses along both S and 15<sup>th</sup> Street which were demolished by the Supreme Council. The argument is that the demolition of these historic rowhouses galvanized the community and encouraged the rise of historic preservation in the neighborhood and led to the community effort that culminated in the designation of the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Historic District. The nomination includes two articles about preservation protests following demolition in the 1980s, but this does not necessarily support a connection with the designation of the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Historic District in 1994. Half of the rowhouses along S Street were demolished by the Supreme Council by the mid-1950s, well before the rise of historic preservation in the neighborhood.

Also, the historic and visual qualities of the parking lot and green space on the east end of Lot 108 are not such that the area can be classified as a significant historic or cultural landscape. The lawn originated as a small patch at mid-century, expanding in the 1970s as more rowhouses were demolished, and completed in the early 1990s, after the last houses were razed. It is a flat, grassy area, with established hedges in the older, western section, a couple of ornamental trees, some shrubs, flower beds and foundation planting. Its notable, yet relatively recent feature is a bust of



George Washington. The southeastern section of the lot hosted a community garden from 1990 to 2011, before being graveled. A parking lot serving the temple had a similar history, begun immediately behind the apse in the 1950s and expanded some over the years, including replacing the community garden. Their recent vintage, changing extent, and lack of exemplary design or significant elements make the lawn and parking lot—although latterly associated with the temple—insufficiently important to reflect the values for which the 1915 temple is deemed significant. Instead, they are appropriately included within the existing historic districts.

*The purchase and demolition of the rowhouses by the Supreme Council in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century is not relevant to the significance of the Scottish Rite Temple itself. The National Register notes that boundaries should “encompass an appropriate setting” but should exclude “peripheral areas that do not directly contribute to the property’s significance.” (National Register Bulletin, Defining Boundaries for National Register Properties, page 2). The site of some demolished rowhouses was included within in the Sixteenth Street Historic District when it was created in 1977, following the boundary of what was then the Temple’s lot. When the Fourteenth Street Historic District was designated in 1994, its boundary was drawn to align with that of the Sixteenth Street Historic District, encompassing the remaining site of the rowhouses and leaving no gap between the districts.*

### **Designation Criteria**

This nomination was prepared as an amendment to a landmark that has no written nomination associated with it. Although the amended application does not address the designation criteria, it makes sense to look at them as they relate to the existing landmark, and in assessing the proposed amendment. Based on the site’s known history and documentation, including the information in the CFA 16<sup>th</sup> Street publication and other sources, it is reasonable to determine that the Scottish Rite Temple meets D.C. Designation Criteria B (History), D (Architecture and Urbanism), E (Artistry), and (F) Creative Masters and the equivalent National Register Criteria A and C, and that its period of significance should be established as 1915, the date construction was complete.

The Scottish Rite Temple meets Criterion B for its association with social movements, groups, institutions, patterns of growth and change in the District. The temple is associated with the establishment of the Scottish Rite and the formation of the headquarters of the Supreme Council in the District of Columbia. The land that makes up the expanded boundaries has not been shown to have played a significant role in the history or events tied to the temple. Acquisition of the land by the Supreme Council falls outside of the temple’s period of significance.

The Scottish Rite Temple meets Criteria D, E and F, as it embodies the distinguishing characteristics of a building type and style; is an expression of architecture and urban planning; possesses high artistic value; and is the work of a master architect. The landscape within the proposed extended boundary does not add to the significance or understanding of the Scottish Rite Temple under these criteria. The open space is not notable as a designed or cultural landscape.

The property has not been evaluated under Criterion G (Archaeology), and it is possible that its site (existing or expanded) may yield information significant to an understanding of historic or

prehistoric events of the District. The proposed expanded area—the site of demolished nineteenth-century rowhouses—may provide information on the lives of the African American, working-class residents who lived there. Should the site provide such information, its significance would be related to the Fourteenth Street or Sixteenth Street historic districts in which the properties are already located, and not associated with the Scottish Rite Temple and the significance for which it has been designated a historic landmark.

### **Boundary Confirmation**

Having established that the rowhouse sites do not contribute to the significance of the Scottish Rite Temple, the Board should take the opportunity provided by this application to clarify and confirm the boundary of the historic landmark. The Board should apply the standard historic preservation methodology for such determinations, considering the extent of the temple property at the time of its construction in 1915 and the time of its identification as a historic landmark in 1964.

The Scottish Rite Temple was included in *Landmarks of the National Capital: Preliminary List*, the city's first provisional list of landmarks, issued by the Joint Committee on Landmarks in 1964. This list was the predecessor of the current D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites created when the city enacted the D.C. Preservation Law in 1978; the Inventory incorporated the already designated landmarks and districts. The Joint Committee's list was organized into categories of significance, with the temple listed in Category III. The Sixteenth Street Historic District was also identified on the Joint Committee's 1964 list as a notable area of Category III significance.

The Joint Committee did not designate properties as we do now; it merely put them on a list by name and address. Site boundaries were of little importance because designation then conferred no protections. In 1968, two years after the establishment of the National Preservation Act, a D.C. State Historic Preservation Review Board was established, and through it, the Joint Committee, acting as state review board, began forwarding nominations to the National Register of Historic Places. Stated landmark lots or boundaries became necessary for this purpose. But the Joint Committee prioritized nominations for the properties in categories I and II only, so a nomination for the temple was never prepared. When the designation listing was incorporated into the DC Inventory, it remained with no boundary specified.

Logically, boundaries should reflect the extent of the property at the time of the Temple's completion in 1915, which was Assessment and Taxation Lot 800. Lots 40-42 (purchased 1920), 105 (1921), 106 (1952), 28 (1954) and 29 (1963) were acquired by the Scottish Rite in later years, as noted. As the 1965 Baist real estate atlas indicates, these eastern lots had not been formally consolidated with the temple by subdivision, or even informally, by the creation of an A&T lot.

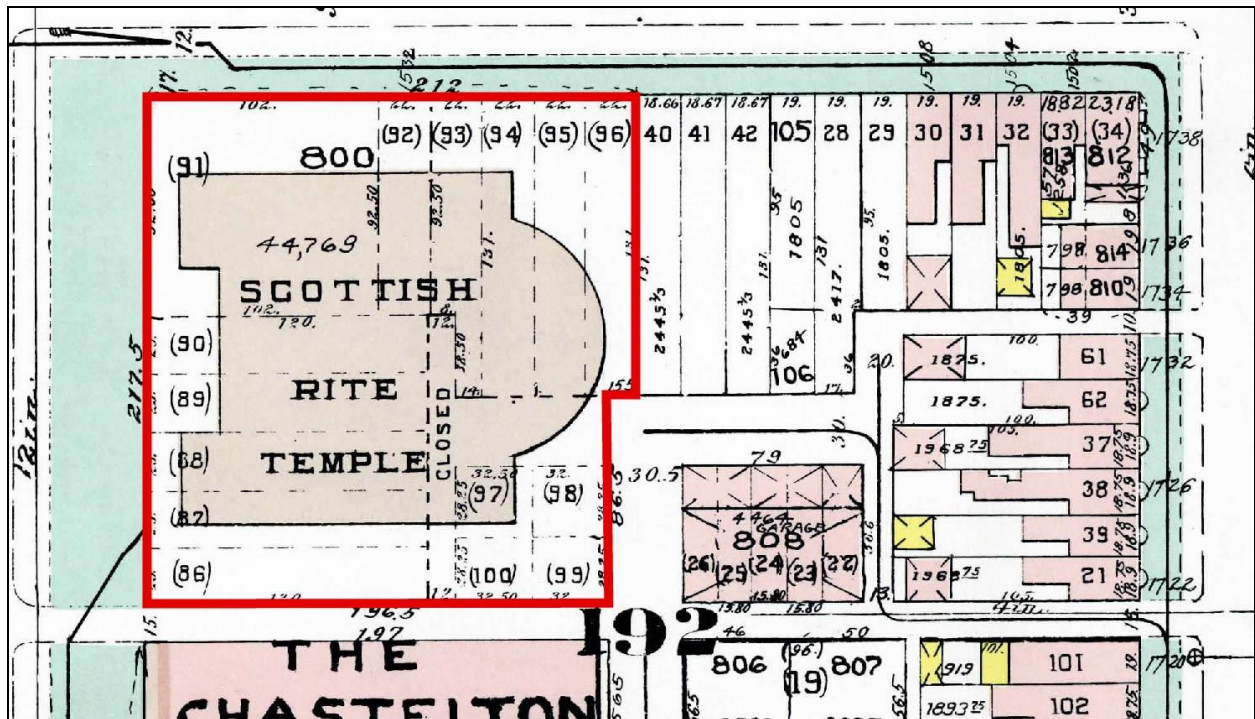
Sixteenth Street was designated in 1977 as a Category II historic district. The district was listed in the National Register in 1978, with clearly delineated boundaries for what had previously been a sketchily defined area. The Sixteenth Street boundary behind the temple was established along the line of an Assessment and Taxation (A&T) Lot 820 which, in 1976, was newly superimposed on the several lots the Masons had acquired by then, including the alley/stable garage complex on Lot 808, purchased in 1969.

Then or now, the rear yard and parking lot are not character-defining features of the landmark, nor are they reasons for which it was designated. The property's significance is in the design and construction of Pope's temple, completed in 1915 and situated then on Lot 800. Neither the ancillary uses nor the design qualities of the rear of the property define or augment the significance of the landmark. When the temple was first identified as a landmark in 1964, it was still situated on Lot 800. With the year 1915 considered the property's appropriate period of significance, it is consistent that Lot 800 be considered the extent of the site of the landmark.

**Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board deny this amendment to the Scottish Rite Temple designation as proposed. While a new submission for a well-researched, fully documented National Register nomination for the Temple is welcome, existing information provides a sufficient understanding of the landmark to allow the Board to determine that the boundaries should not be expanded as proposed.*

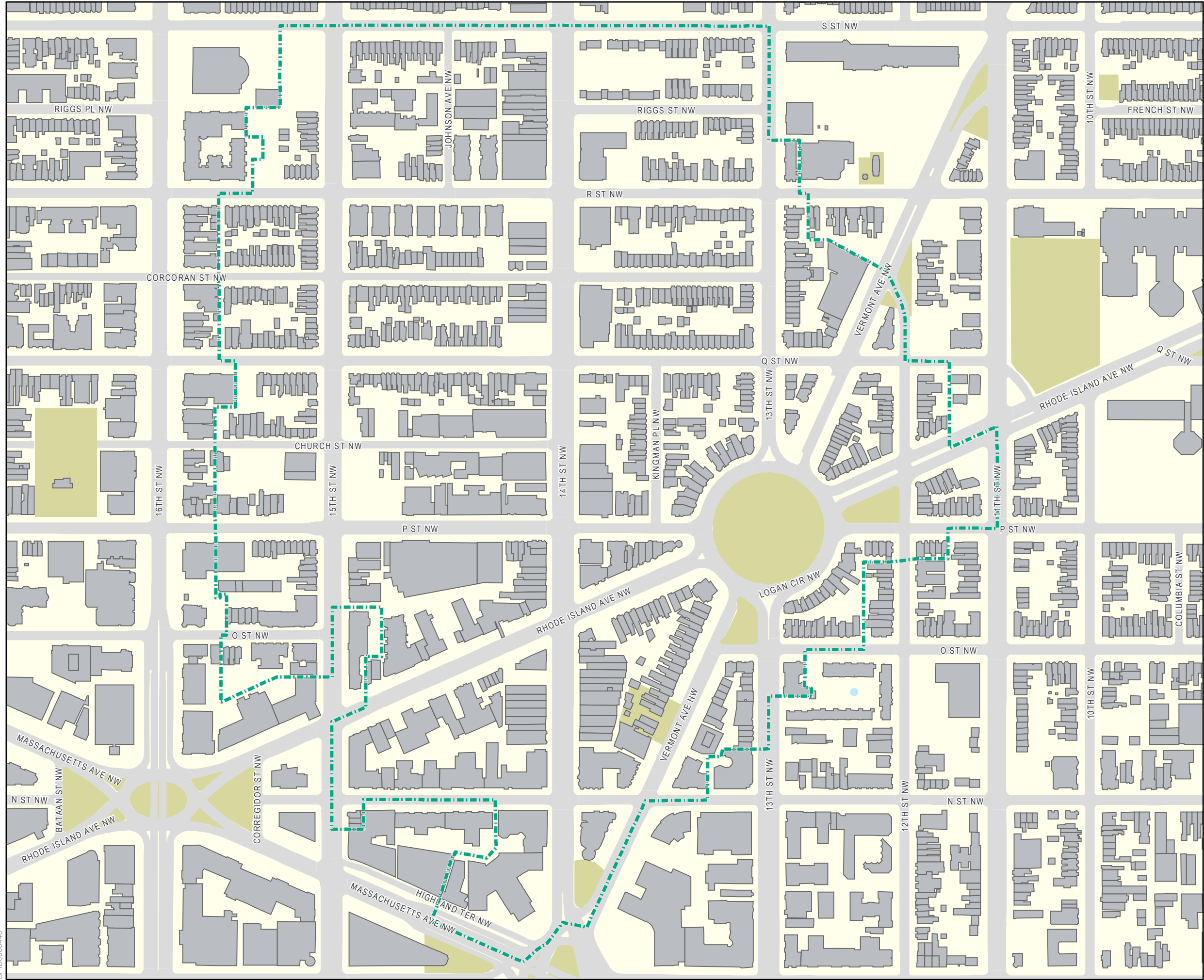
*Based upon additional research, HPO requests that the Board resolve the ambiguity of the landmark's present boundary by confirming it as the extent of former Assessment & Taxation Lot 800 upon which the temple stood when completed in 1915. This lot is outlined in red on the 1965 map below.*





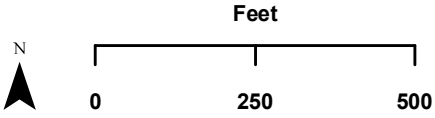
*Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, District of Columbia, Vol. 1, Plan 19, (1965), with lot 800 delineated in red.*

# Exhibit 3

# Greater 14th Street Historic District



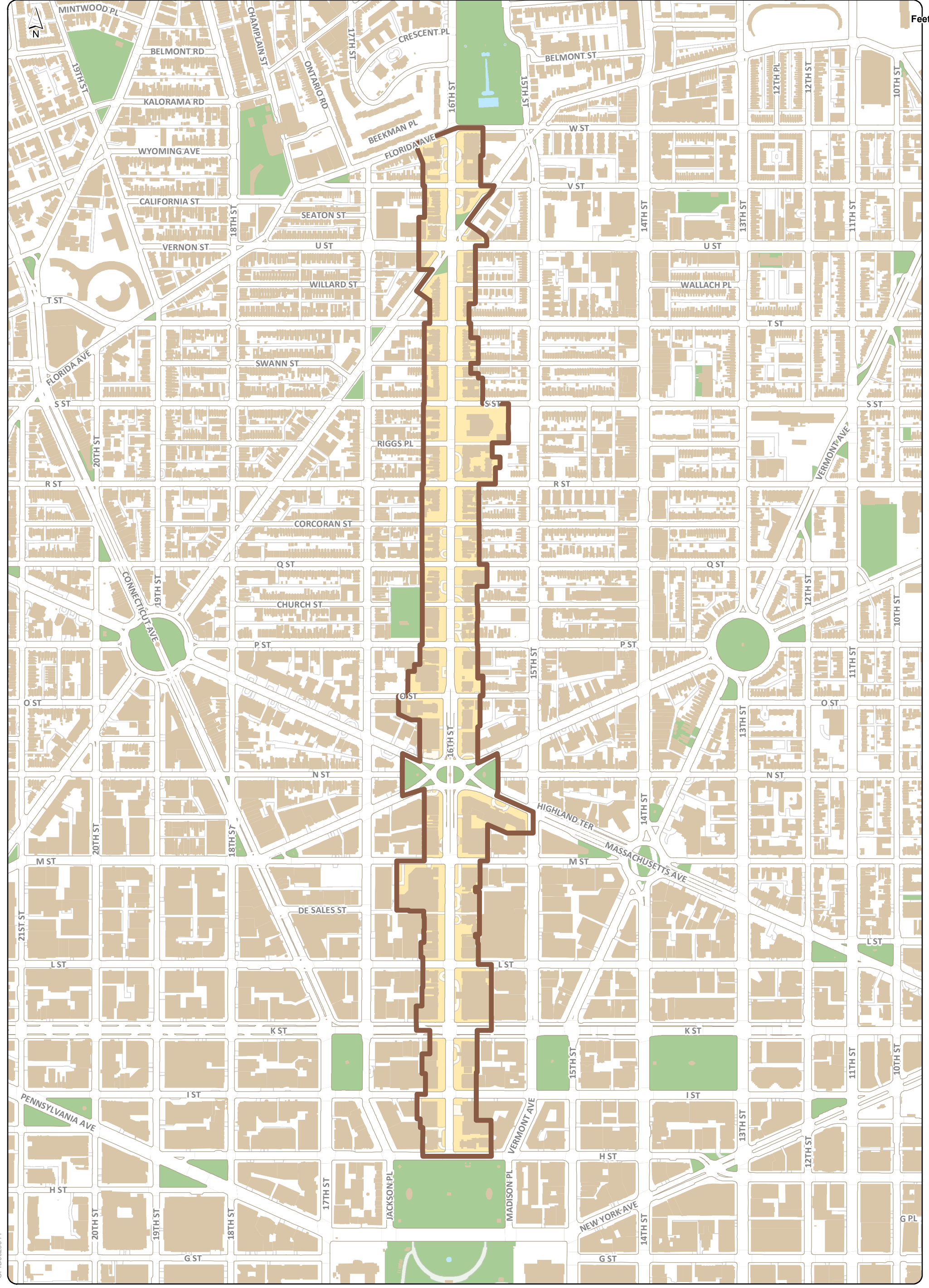
-  Historic District
-  Buildings



\*\*\* Government of the District of Columbia  
**Adrian M. Fenty, Mayor**

Office of Planning ~ February 13, 2008

This map was created for planning purposes from a variety of sources. It is neither a survey nor a legal document. Information provided by other agencies should be verified with them where appropriate.



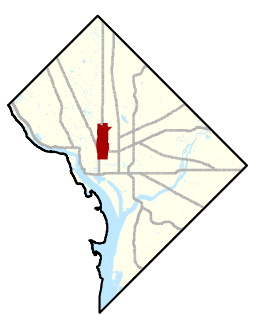
OPI0029044

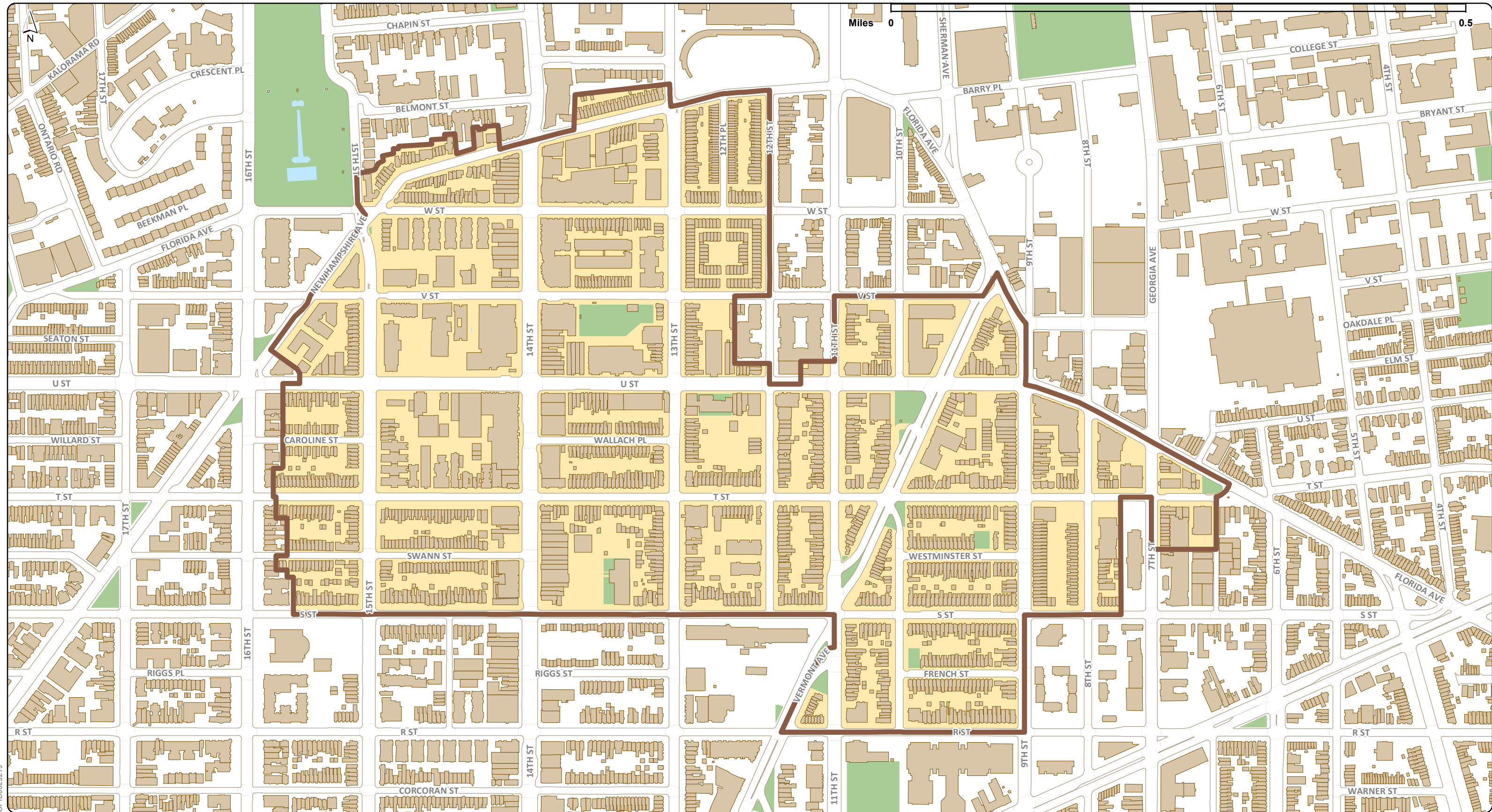


**Office of Planning ~ June 8, 2018**  
**Government of the District of Columbia**

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## Sixteenth Street Historic District





OPI0029219



**Office of Planning ~ June 8, 2018**  
**Government of the District of Columbia**

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## Greater U Street Historic District

