9301302

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY/DISTRICT
MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
INTERNAL NR-ELIGIBILITY REVIEW FORM

Property/District Name: Oxon Run Strip Park,D.C & MD Survey Number: PG : 76A-40

Project: Metrorail Green Line construction Agency: UMTA/WMATA

Site visit by MHT Staff: X no ___ yes Name _____ Date _____

Eligibility recommended X Eligibility not recommended ___

Criteria: X A ___B X C ___D Considerations: ___A ___B ___C ___D ___E ___F ___G ___None

Justification for decision: (Use continuation sheet if necessary and attach map)

Based on information provided by WMATA and NPS, the Oxon Run Strip Park is eligible for the National Register as a part of the Parkways of the National Capital Region (1913-1965) multiple property nomination. The park encompasses a greenway of public open space along approximately 3.8 miles of Oxon Run in the District of Columbia and Prince Georges County. It is comprised of four separate parks: Oxon Run Stream Valley Park, Oxon Run Parkway, Oxon Run Park and Freindship Education Center. Oxon Run Stream Valley Park is the only portion of the strip park located in Maryland. It is located in the upper reaches of the greenway, is set aside for active and passive recreation and is owned by Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Oxon Run Strip Park is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A as a contributing element in the National Capital Park and Parkway System developed during the first half of the 20th century. It was first proposed for park use in a new generation of park plans prepared by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission from 1927-1931. Planning for the park system in the Capital in the late twenties reflected broader concerns of land use planning, from which evolved a new focus on the need to provide for the open space and recreation needs of city residents. The park system laid out by NCPPC during this period was the first extension of the L'Enfant Plan for the central city reaching out into the outlying areas of the city and into Maryland and Virginia, much broader in geographic scope than The McMillan Plan of 1902. Also unique at the time was the provision

Documentation on the property/district is presented in: Project file, Section 106 Coordination-- Identification of Historic Properties and Assessment of Effects on Historic Properties, Outer Branch Avenue Segment, Washington Regional Metrorail System (WMATA, June 1993

Prepared by: WMATA (Elizabeth Clarke, Consultant for WMATA with assistance from Sara Leach, NPS

Elizabeth Hannold — May 12, 1993
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services — Date

NR program concurrence: X yes ___ no ___ not applicable

E. Andrews — 9.17.93
Reviewer, NR program — Date

Survey No. PG:76A-40 ~~SA~~

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA - HISTORIC CONTEXT

I. Geographic Region:

____	Eastern Shore	(all Eastern Shore counties, and Cecil)
__X__	Western Shore	(Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's and St. Mary's)
____	Piedmont	(Baltimore City, Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery)
_____	Western Maryland	(Allegany, Garrett and Washington)

II. Chronological/Developmental Periods:

____	Paleo-Indian	10000-7500 B.C.
____	Early Archaic	7500-6000 B.C.
____	Middle Archaic	6000-4000 B.C.
____	Late Archaic	4000-2000 B.C.
____	Early Woodland	2000-500 B.C.
____	Middle Woodland	500 B.C. - A.D. 900
____	Late Woodland/Archaic	A.D. 900-1600
____	Contact and Settlement	A.D. 1570-1750
____	Rural Agrarian Intensification	A.D. 1680-1815
____	Agricultural-Industrial Transition	A.D. 1815-1870
__X__	Industrial/Urban Dominance	A.D. 1870-1930
__X__	Modern Period	A.D. 1930-Present
____	Unknown Period (___ prehistoric	___ historic)

III. Prehistoric Period Themes:

____	Subsistence
____	Settlement
____	Political
____	Demographic
____	Religion
____	Technology
____	Environmental Adaption

IV. Historic Period Themes:

____	Agriculture
__X__	Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Community Planning
____	Economic (Commercial and Industrial)
____	Government/Law
____	Military
____	Religion
____	Social/Educational/Cultural
____	Transportation

V. Resource Type:

Category: _____

Historic Environment: Urban/Suburban

Historic Function(s) and Use(s): Recreation

_____

_____

Known Design Source: NCPPC

of funding through the Capper-Crampton Act (May 29, 1930), authorizing $16 million to purchase land "as was necessary and desirable for the suitable development of the National Capital park, parkway and playground system. Through the funds provided by the original Capper-Crampton Act and subsequent additional appropriations, much of the land area designated for the park system in the Nation's Capital and environs was largely purchased by the early 1950s. Today the greenways throughout the City, including Oxon Run Strip Park accomplish the goals for the Capital envisioned by the early NCPPC planners. The protected wooded stream valleys soften the urban landscape, offer recreation and open space opportunities, and provide valuable natural functions related to water quality protection, flood control and wildlife habitat preservation.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

PG: 76A-40

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

PARKWAYS OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION, 1913 - 1965

B. Associated Historic Contexts

EVOLUTION OF THE URBAN PARKWAY
DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKWAY SYSTEM

C. Geographical Data

The estimated 75-100 miles of parkways located in the National Park Service's National Capital Region are found in Washington D.C.; Montgomery, Prince Georges, and Anne Arundel counties in suburban Maryland; and Arlington and Fairfax counties, and the City of Alexandria, in Northern Virginia. The boundaries of the contributing arterial thoroughfares are coterminus with their rights-of-way, and include the Baltimore-Washington Parkway and Suitland Parkway, extending from the eastern boundary of the District of Columbia; the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway/George Washington Memorial Parkway along the Potomac River shoreline between Mount Vernon and Great Falls; Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway between the East and West Potomac Parks and Rock Creek Park; and numerous strip parks located throughout the greater Washington area, including the Sligo Branch Parkway.

☐ See continuation sheet

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

Signature of certifying official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper of the National Register — Date

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

EVOLUTION OF THE URBAN PARKWAY

The parkways constructed in the Greater Washington area range stylistically from nationally significant schemes modeled on the precedent-setting, picturesque suburban New York system, to include simple tributary byways and the straightforward Baltimore-Washington Parkway completed shortly after mid-century. Contributing cultural influences include the increased use of the automobile, the City Beautiful movement, and popularity of outdoor recreation.

A parkways' foremost task is to separate traffic into two distinct groups: pleasure motorists and heavy commercial users. During the early decades of automobile use, the greatest proportion of use was devoted to recreation. But in the late 1930s when the emphasis shifted from the pastime of "getting there" to simply "arriving"--so, too, changed road design. The newly formed National Capital Park & Planning Commission (NCP&PC) in 1927 indicated:

> There are and should be in the development of plans. . . a number of things which may be called parkways, to serve as lines of pleasure traffic; but in another sense part of the thoroughfare system of the District. There is overlapping there of the two types of functions. We need to be careful. . .that it does not extend too far.[1]

NCP&PC landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., cites only two criteria that serve as a design guide--"controlling purposes" and local physical conditions--from which four types of parkways emerge: an elongated park, a glorified and ornamental street, and:

> A thoroughfare, boulevard, or parkway, the prime purpose of which is to enable the public to travel from one part of its course to another under conditions which are made more enjoyable by almost any means, than those of an ordinary city street.[2]

Within this last category are three subtypes: a single road with planted and ornamental flanks, which "may be really verdant and justify the name 'parkway'"; dual roadways with a central planted strip and some flanking ornamentation, much like a boulevard; and a central road flanked by any type of formal or informal landscaping, with or without pedestrian amenities.

The fourth parkway model is "somewhat intermediate and transitional between the first and the third" type, a border treatment that does not attempt to buffer surrounding buildings, and often places the roadway to one side of the green space and a waterway. This "border parkway" was later cited in a Washington-Baltimore regional study that called for "eventual acquisition [of]

---

[1] Minutes of the NCP&PC (16-18 September, 1927).

[2] Frederick Law Olmsted, "Memorandum as to 'Border Roads' for Parkways and Parks" (25 September, 1925), pp. 1-3. RG 66, Box 156.

X *See continuation sheet*

selected stream valley 'strip parks' [to] be protected by public purchase of scenic easements in all parks of the area." While these do not possess extraordinary scenic qualities, they protect the floodplain and "assure provision of open spaces to prevent uninterrupted built-up areas."[3]

During the 1930s, one application of the term "parkway" hinged on use and legal access. Of a parkway, highway and freeway, all involve public land; the parkway alone is devoted to recreation rather than movement; and only the highway allows adjacent land owners to retain rights of light, air or access.[4]

This is supported by the casually synonymous use of "freeway" and "parkway" within the context of landscape by itself, rather than the thoroughfare in its entirety. A freeway, for instance, was characterized by one planner as about 100 feet wide with a center pavement "flanked by 20-foot strips of parkway, planted with trees, ground covers, shrubs, and hedges. . .adequate for a landscape composition of varied interest."[5] Shared features include the pleasure derived from planted borders instead of billboards and business frontage, a reduced volume of traffic, improved travel time, and safety. This type of road was considered particularly effective in an area where residential and business subdivisions were slated, and was destined to reorient transportation patterns--a setting particularly relevant to development of the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan corridor.

Legally, a parkway was designed simply as "an attenuated park with a road through it," but the federal government did not address general parkway guidelines until the "Regulations and Procedure to Govern the Acquisition of Rights-of-way for Parkways" was approved by the Secretary of the Interior on 8 February 1935.[6] This was the foundation for a set of eight characteristics intended to differentiate parkways from ordinary highways, as identified by the NPS three years later. It represents the culmination of thirty years of modern parkway planning--designated, ironically--just as the highway needs of the nation were about to shift away from recreational motoring.

---

[3] MNCP&PC, "Regional Planning Report IV: Baltimore-Washington-Annapolis Area" (November 1937), p. 2, 34.

[4] Baltimore-Washington-Annapolis report, p. 60.

[5] George D. Hall, "The 'Freeway', A New Thought for Subdividers," Landscape Architecture, vol. 21, no. 2 (January 1931), p. 115-118.

[6] NCP&PC, "Comments on Report of Maryland State Planning Commission on State Recreational Areas," (unpublished, 1938?), cited in Jere Krakow, "Historic Resource Study, Baltimore-Washington Parkway" (1987), p. 28; this and resource studies on other NPS Washington-area parkways are collectively published in Jere L. Krakow, Historic Resource Study: Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, George Washington Memorial Parkway, Suitland Parkway, and Baltimore-Washington Parkway (NPS, January 1990). Memorandum for A.E. Demaray, Appendix A, Minutes of the NCP&PC (16-17 March, 1944), p. 2. RG 328.

X *See continuation sheet*

These specifications are: a limit to non-commercial, recreational traffic; the avoidance of unsightly roadside developments; a wider-than-average right-of-way to provide a buffer from abutting property; no frontage or access rights, to encourage the preservation of natural scenery; preference for a new site, to avoid already congested and built-up areas; to best access native scenery; the elimination of major grade crossings; well-distanced entrance and exit points to reduce traffic interruptions and increase safety.[7] Collectively, they ensured a self-contained, well-preserved, and safe thoroughfare.

Despite these in-house Park Service ideals, in 1944 the U.S. Department of Interior complained that, "To date, Congress has not defined parkways. Legislation pertaining to parkways is piecemeal and lacks uniformity."[8]

In Washington, at least, the definition of a parkway has historically differed according to the period of development, site, and transportation needs. And although its function as a road can never be divorced from its scenic role, parkways have been consistently patterned as formally or informally designed connectors within a system of predetermined destinations that include parks and monuments--and later, federal reservations. Credit for this belongs to the City Beautiful movement.

CITY BEAUTIFUL MOVEMENT

The City Beautiful movement that developed around the turn of the century is evidenced in particular in the urban park systems of Boston and New York--a vital element of which are parkways. Using these as models, planners and landscape architects assembled in Washington to develop a similar program for the nation's capital. The McMillan Plan of 1902 calls for numerous "parkways" linking the Great Falls, Mount Vernon, Potomac River bridges, and existing parks. Like New York City's Riverside Drive, Washington had its own token "riverside drive," a muddy carriage path built in 1904. It wound around the Tidal Basin and up 26th Street in northwest, serving as a literal and figurative prologue to the era of parkway construction.

The parkway was a byproduct of the suburbanization movement, born in the late nineteenth

---

[7] Harlan D. Unrau and G. Frank Williss, Administrative History: Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s (Washington D.C.: Denver Service Center, 1983), p. 146; ASLA fellow Laurie D. Cox identified the same standards in an article, "Appearance. Essential Element in Superhighway Plans," Landscape Architecture, vol. 32, no. 2 (January 1942), p. 56.

[8] Memo to Demaray, Appendix A, p. 1.

X See continuation sheet

century; however, its role accelerated with the increasing sense of city-to-city regionalism and the rise of motoring characteristic of the twentieth century,.

> The purpose served by parkways and boulevards is, roughly, to provide agreeable routes connecting parks with each other, the parks with the centers of population, and the suburbs and countryside with the congested districts. The first two purposes have long been established. The last is a recognition of the changed methods of travel introduced with the automobile.[9]

The car--which gave enormous impetus to the improvement of the American road system in general--had a significant impact on parkways and the development of recreational roadways. According to Charles W. Eliot II: "It is the informal landscape parks of all sizes, and in the parkways, that the automobile has notably changed the situation."[10]

As an added bonus, Eliot felt that if recreation-seekers took to scenic roads, it might alleviate the inevitable and increasing congestion of national and state parks, as well as "atone for the exclusion of automobiles from landscape parks except under rigorous conditions," which he advocated.[11] The speed of motorized vehicles, as compared to horse-drawn carriages, also lent itself to new design needs: convenient and unobtrusive parking areas, service facilities, and dramatic-but-simple landscaping enjoyable from afar at 75 mph, rather than in detail at a meandering pace.

Although the District of Columbia's Division of Trees and Parking (established in 1871 and later part of the city's Engineer Department) was "one of the first public bodies to regard street-tree planting as a public function," the city trailed behind others in the development of urban green space. Massachusetts, one of the forerunners in the City Beautiful movement, became the first state to enact legislation for the caring of shade trees on public highways in 1890. But it was not until 1933 and the National Industrial Recovery Act that "appropriate landscaping of parkways or roadside on a reasonably extensive mileage," was provided at the federal level.[12]

---

[9] Eliot, p. 36; for information on Eliot, see footnote 24.

[10] Charles W. Eliot, II, "The Influence of the Automobile on the Design of Park Roads," Landscape Architecture, vol. 13, no. 1 (October 1922), p. 27.

[11] Eliot, p. 36.

[12] Wilbur H. Simonson, "Roadside Planting," Landscape Architecture, vol. 26, no. 4 (July 1936), p. 167.

X *See continuation sheet*

comprehensive scheme of urban parks and parkways in Washington. "There has been candid admission in Congress," reported one newspaper, "that the park system of the National Capital is not what it should be"--for which the poor "economies of the past five years" were blamed.[13]

As the desirability for sophisticated roads grew, "the modification of highway design to conform to the principles and technique of landscape architecture" became a direct concern of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA). This remained true even as the engineering aspects of road construction improved, because "the fundamental purpose of roadside planting operations should be to make the highway strip a mere foreground, or screen against what lies beyond."[14] As late as 1940, however, an ASLA editorial reported:

> There is still a tendency to consider the work of the landscape architect as a last step after all the other important decisions of design are made and put into effect.[15]

Despite the growing acknowledgement that landscape architecture was a mandatory component to road design, certain parkway characteristics remained subordinate to one another: Traffic provisions, safety, and economical maintenance take precedent over landscape design; while landscape-design features including location, alignment, profile, and adaptation to natural topography, take precedent over horticultural embellishments. All, however proportioned, are crucial parkway elements.[16]

And last, the site design of a parkway should appear compositionally natural, with irregular groupings of plantings recommended: The purpose was to enhance native vegetation beyond. According to one landscape architect:

> In the open countryside it is a mistake to use exotic plants, or anything which is not indigenous to that general region and to the particular type of topography at hand. . . .Native materials should be

---

[13] Bill Price, "A Great National Park Along the Potomac," Washington Times (18 April, 1922).

[14] Simonson, p. 171, 173; ASLA committee reports of 1939-40 outline the procedure for the collaboration between landscape architects and engineers "in the design and construction of highways, "Landscape Design in Highway Development," Landscape Architecture, vol. 32, no. 2 (January 1942), p. 72.

[15] Harlean James, "Comment: Tendency to View Landscape Contribution as Final Step," Landscape Architecture, vol. 30, no. 3 (April 1940), p. 117.

[16] Arthur R. Nichols, "Landscape Design in Highway Development," Landscape Architecture, vol. 30, no. 3 (April 1940), p. 115.

X *See continuation sheet*

used not only because they are likely to be more permanent than others, . . .but most important of all, because the effect of regional individuality may be retained.[17]

Thus, during the first half of the twentieth century, a recognized set of design criteria evolved that were common to all parkways constructed. These were initiated with New York's Westchester County system of the early twentieth century, under the aesthetic direction Gilmore Clarke, the landscape architect who would greatly influence parkway development in Washington. Also, as technology improved and recreational goals changed, new motives altered the appearance and use of these roads up to World War II, when parkway development was--for all practical purposes--usurped by modern highway construction.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKWAY SYSTEM

In Washington, Maryland and Virginia, the national capital park system is composed of more than 8,761 acres and 74 miles of formal parkways. The major components are: Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, connecting Rock Creek Park in and north of Washington, to the East and West Potomac Parks along the river; more than 12,000 acres of neighborhood "stream valley," or "strip," parks that cushion and protect the crucial tributaries, many adjacent to Rock Creek Park; the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, connecting the estate and Washington via the Potomac shore and Memorial Bridge, and its extension into the George Washington Memorial Parkway, up to Great Falls in Maryland and Virginia[18]; Suitland Parkway, a defense-highway link to Andrews Air Force Base; the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, an intercity thoroughfare that serves as a primary commuter route and defense road among the two cities and several federal reservations.

Some elements of Washington's fully idealized parkway system did not come to fruition. The Fort Drive circuit, a proposed connection of forty or so Civil War fortifications, would have encircled the city. Two extensive links with the George Washington Memorial Parkway remain unbuilt: a parkway along the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal route between Great Falls and Cumberland, Maryland, which would have served as a ceremonial entry to the city, and a similar route in Maryland along the Potomac River south to Fort Washington. Only a few fragments of disjunct border parkways

---

[17] Malcolm Dill, "Planning in Streets, Parkways, Highways, and Byways," Landscape Architecture, vol. 22, no. 2 (January 1932), p. 129-31.

[18] In 1989, the 7.7-mile portion of this parkway in Maryland, from the MacArthur Boulevard in Montgomery County to Canal Road in the District of Columbia was redesignated the Clara Barton Parkway with the enactment of Public Law 101-177/101st Congress (Approved November 28, 1989).

X See continuation sheet

exist of the never-realized Archbold-Glover Parkway in northwest D.C. Despite their absence, a system of largely complete parkways does exist in the capital.

The vision of a National Capital laid out along wide avenues and ceremonial routes replete with parks and formal city entrances, is descended from the design scheme of engineer-turned-city planner Maj. Charles Pierre L'Enfant. His 1791 plan for the Federal City incorporates political, residential, and commercial centers, as well as waterways such as the Potomac and Anacostia (or Eastern Branch) rivers, two canals, and Rock Creek with its tributaries.

With the urban schemes of Paris and other world capitals in mind, L'Enfant surveyed the site of the future U.S. capital from all directions, including the north approach from Baltimore, "which offered travelers a synoptic view of the town and its natural setting from the hills above the Bladensburg Road."[19] Among the guidelines for his plan are thoroughfares "to not merely contrast with the general regularity, not to provide a greater variety of seats with pleasant prospects. . .but principally to connect each part of the city."[20] In addition to "outroads" identified on William T. Partridge's 1926 study of plans by L'Enfant and his successor, William Ellicott, a "city entrance" occupies a prominent position on the Potomac River in the approximate area where the Baltimore-Washington Parkway exits the city today.[21] Little of L'Enfant's vision was constructed during the eighteenth- or nineteenth centuries, however.

New and extended modes of transportation dominated the nineteenth century that--for service and speed--superseded those provided by water- and roadways. A rail line operated between the two cities in 1835, bettering the traditional stage coach travel time by half.[22] The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad opened a direct line to Washington City and encouraged regional development between the capital and not-insignificant Maryland port to the north. All the while, in Washington and environs a miscellany of crossroads towns and farms steadily grew up within the ten-mile city boundaries. One exception to such growth was the region along the east bank of the Anacostia River: "An area of commanding panoramic views and a hilly topography.[23]

---

[19] Gutheim, Frederick, Worthy of a Nation (D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1977), p. 20.

[20] Cited in Gutheim, p. 25..

[21] Gutheim, p. 32.

[22] Ibid. p. 49.

[23] Ibid., p. 108.

X See continuation sheet

The first attempt to cohesively develop L'Enfant's scheme beyond city limits came in the 1890s with successive--but equally ineffectual--legislation, the 1893 and 1898 Highway Acts. Authorization was introduced for a plan extending L'Enfant's street plans, taking into account already-established subdivisions, but it failed to address funding or offer a timetable for implementation. The "Permanent System of Highways Plan," however, became the foundation for the McMillan Commission's revival of the original urban scheme in the grand, baroque tradition.

Several nationwide movements contributed to Washington's urban development at this time: The unparalleled success of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago turned designers on to comprehensive and formally integrated city planning that included a generous landscape component, the essence of the City Beautiful movement; the increasing popularity and affordability of the automobile, which necessitated adequate roadways and service facilities; and the general decline of urban living conditions through overcrowding and poverty, which logically resulted in the out-of-doors as a popular recreation destination.

A trio of local events further drew the focus to Washington. "A small group of the country's best-known designers" assembled there to coordinate the centennial celebration of the "removal of government" to the city; the American Institute of Architects convened in 1900 to address issues of sculpture, landscape and public-building design; and, Senator James McMillan of Michigan orchestrated the creation of the Senate Park Commission. The McMillan Commission--as it is better known--was a highly influential group that advised the formation of a team of professionals "eminent in their professions, who shall consider the subject of the location and grouping of public buildings and monuments to be erected in the District of Columbia and the development of the entire park system of the District of Columbia."[24]

Commission members included: Charles Moore, assistant to McMillan (who later served on the Commission of Fine Arts for twenty-seven years); Charles Eliot II, whose father designed Boston's comprehensive park system and worked at the Olmsted brothers' firm; Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., a principal in that office and head of the nation's first landscape-architecture curriculum at Harvard University; pre-eminent architects Charles F. McKim and Daniel Burnham, both of whom worked on the Columbian Exposition; and sculptor August Saint-Gaudens who joined the team later. Moore, Olmsted and Eliot would remain key figures in the design of the national capital region during the next three decades.

---

[24] Ibid., p. 113, 116.

X See continuation sheet

In addition to downtown development, the McMillan Commission recommended a series of drives and park connections around the city: in Virginia along the Potomac River down to Mount Vernon, in Maryland and D.C. up to Great Falls; a Fort Drive to connect forty or so historic Civil War sites; and to enlarge and embellish Rock Creek Park for intensified recreational use.[25] In keeping with L'Enfant's vision:

> The City Beautiful movement in Washington was. . . swept along to include city entrances, parkways, boulevards, monumental bridges, and entire streets.[26]

This was followed by the Commission of Fine Arts' (CFA, established in 1910) recommendation in 1918 for a "permanent system of highways [to] be revised to allow for the new park schemes." Crucial to a citywide network of local and "grand entrance" parkways was the Olmsted Brothers' urging for protection of the Rock Creek Park property. The idea followed up by a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' recommendation for the acquisition of 400-foot strips of land along Rock Creek and its tributaries in D.C. and neighboring Montgomery County, Maryland.[27]

ROCK CREEK & POTOMAC PARKWAY: 1913–1935

The Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway was legislated 1913 as a two and one-half-mile connector between the East and West Potomac Parks on the river, and Rock Creek Park and the zoo. Rock Creek Park was established in 1890 as a nature preserve, an "open valley" of streams and forest to which hiking and riding trails were later added. A winding two-lane road, Beach Drive, provides the primary access through the park, which occupies 1,754 acres in the District and Montgomery County, Maryland. Access to the park interior is limited to about twenty entry points from small neighborhood thoroughfares.

Distinguishing traffic use through the park was an issue during the 1920s, even as the parkway was being developed. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., believed there should be a distinction between the lower and upper portions of the Rock Creek Valley. The bulk of the valley--above the zoo--

---

[25] Ibid., p. 125.

[26] Ibid., p. 135.

[27] Ibid., p. 145; these neighborhood parkways, also called "strip parks" or "border roads," protected the creek's floodplain and provided welcome green space within the urban sprawl.

X See continuation sheet

remains a park, while the parkway to the zoo is the narrowest right-of-way and serves as a commuter route. "You must be careful not to ruin that valley if it is to be all one. The valley of Rock Creek should not be turned into that kind of thoroughfare and ruin the stream and park character," he warned.[28]

A parkway linking the zoo and the Potomac parks was first studied in 1900, when Congress allocated $4,000 to employ landscape architect Samuel Parsons, Jr. During the early years of the century--concurrent to the McMillan Commission's workings--two options evolved. The first was to fill the valley and enclose the creek in an underground brick culvert--the fate that earlier befell Tiber Creek. This was determined to be a long-term and costly undertaking, and the commission pursued the second option: to maintain the open-valley plan and bring a road through it, thus allowing east-west traffic to traverse the park on bridges at non-grade level.[29]

But it was not until President William Howard Taft signed the parkway's enabling legislation in March 1913 that any progress was made--for reasons of conservation and transportation:

> That for the purpose of preventing the pollution and obstruction of Rock Creek and of connecting Potomac Park with the Zoological Park and Rock Creek Park, a commission. . .is authorized and directed to acquire. . .such land and premises. . .lying on both sides of Rock Creek. . . .That [such] lands. . .are hereby appropriated to and made a part of the parkway herein authorized to be acquired.[30]

The bill--whose justification resembled the New York legislation of 1906 that resulted in the Westchester parkways--included a $1.3 million appropriation for land acquisition, the cost of which was to be shared equally by District and federal governments. The Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Commission, which included landscape architect James D. Langdon, sought to acquire slightly more than 4.1 million square feet of land, assessed at $1.42 million. By 1923, the commission had 82 percent of its goal, but funds ran out while twelve acres were still needed. This was mitigated through boundary adjustments and land condemnations. Segments of the road were under construction in the mid-20s, but title disputes and unacquired land prevented a continuous thoroughfare. The last leg of the parkway, between K and P streets, opened to traffic in October 1935.[31]

---

[28] NCP&PC minutes (16-18 September, 1927), p. 15.

[29] Barry Mackintosh, Rock Creek Park: An Administrative History (Washington, D.C.: NPS History Division, 1985), p. 49.

[30] Congressional Record, pp. 4693-94, 4816. Pub. 432, 62nd Congress, 37 Stat. 885.

[31] Mackintosh, p. 61, 63.

X See continuation sheet

BORDER, STRIP, AND STREAM VALLEY PARKS

Ancillary to Rock Creek, and the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers are a number of "strip" or "border" parks that occupy the floodplain of local tributaries or park-related topography. These have historically been identified for local importance.

> Stream valley parks form the backbone and major portion of the District of Columbia and Metropolitan Park System. Their value as routes for passenger car traffic augmenting the city and metropolitan street system cannot be overestimated. One of their primary values which is often overlooked is the conservation of small wild life, woodland and water.[32]

In the District, Maryland and Virginia, a total of 11,552 publicly owned acres were devoted to such stream valley parks by the late 1930s, with nearly 12,000 additional acres planned.[33]

Maryland's Sligo Branch Parkway, conceived in the 1920s, is the single-largest strip park in the region. It descends about ten miles (northwest to southeast) from the city of Wheaton in Montgomery County to Hyattsville in Prince George's County, to link up with parkway extensions of the northeast and northwest branches of the Anacostia River, the Baltimore-Washington Parkway and Anacostia Park. The two-lane, undivided roadway winds alongside Sligo Creek, where numerous picnic and recreational spots are provided in a wooded setting, although access to the parkway from adjacent neighborhoods is limited. Right-of-way width varies within relatively narrow boundaries, and offers a limited buffer between the road and community development. During the late 1930s, Maryland was accepting donations of stream valley lands of 80 to 100 feet wide, with a total of forty-six miles anticipated upon completion.

The Piney Branch Parkway (extending east at 16th Street and Arkansas Avenue) was to average 400 feet wide, as an extension of Rock Creek Park's Beach Drive in 1908, and again in the 1920s.[34] Similarly, Pinehurst Parkway (extending west from the park along Beech Street to the Montgomery County line) is a slim green space flanked by residential streets that "embraces an important feeder stream."[35] The function of flood control was one important reason to protect these small waterways.

---

[32] Max Wehrly, "Stream Valley Parks in the District of Columbia and Metropolitan Area" (12 October, 1939). RG 328, Box 18.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Mackintosh, p. 64.

[35] "Potomac Power Dam Report Due Today," Evening [Washington] Star (13 January, 1944). RG 66, Box 69.

X See continuation sheet

Linear parks created between roadways also include Beach Parkway (at the northernmost point of the District boundary) and the nearby North Portal Parkway at Blair Road. A "Northern Parkway" around Western Avenue and Oregon Avenue-extended (out to Old Bladensburg Road) was identified in 1945 as a priority project for the next five years by the Maryland National Capital Park & Planning Commission, as were improvements to the Western Avenue-Dalecarlia Reservoir area, and the George Washington Memorial Parkway from D.C. to Great Falls. Only the last of these three was constructed, and it was not completed until 1965.[36]

The western corner of the District contains the fragments of a minor park and parkway system that also failed to materialize in its entirety. Glover-Archbold Park in north Georgetown very nearly connects with the Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway. The NCP&PC had long planned for the nearby Whitehaven Parkway to extend from the Palisades Park to Massachusetts Avenue through this park, but today it exists as a road leading to it, then as a green extension of the park, and picking up again as a brief parkway that ends at Wisconsin Avenue. This was still a trouble spot in the 1950s when the NCP&PC sought to acquire the land between Wisconsin Avenue and Dumbarton Oaks Park to link the parkway with Whitehaven Street, only to discover that Dumbarton's dedication deed prohibits the incorporation of roadways.[37] In the 1920s, the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds sought to build the Klingle Valley Parkway to connect with the Normanstone Parkway, north of Dumbarton Oaks Park and the Naval Observatory, to serve as a western detour around the zoo; the development of each continued into the 1950s, but the connection between them never did.[40]

Nearby, the Arizona Parkway was slated for development between Canal Road and Van Ness Street: In a "portion of the valley of Foundry Branch along the general line of Arizona Avenue. . .of a parkway character that will provide facilities as a means of access to the park and to provide for a scenic highway for through traffic."[41] Had this been accomplished, it would have completed a link with the Dalecarlia Parkway, which occupies the right-of-way buffer along the Dalecarlia Reservoir grounds, situated at the D.C.-Montgomery County boundary abutting the Palisades Park.

Another slender park exists in the B&O railroad right of way that turns north at the Maryland

---

[36] Fred Tuemmler to John Nolen (22 March, 1945). RG 328.

[37] W.E. Finley to Mr. and Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss (12 March, 1959).

[40] Mackintosh, p. 64-65.

[41] "Memorandum of Agreement between the NPS and the Government of the District of Columbia Relative to the Development of the Arizona Parkway" (16 April, 1948) RG 66, Box 8.

X See continuation sheet

line, and continues along the west side of the reservoir. Between Massachusetts Avenue and Bradley Boulevard, the Little Falls Parkway serves as a limited-access thoroughfare that leads into Chevy Chase, Maryland, park areas. During the 1920s, it was proposed to use this and the Dalecarlia property as part of "a circuit drive around the District of Columbia beyond Rock Creek Park."[42] Between the District line and Great Falls lies the Cabin John Creek, whose valley "in many respects compares favorably in scenery with the famous valley of Rock Creek." The NCP&PC sought this parkway to connect the city of Rockville with the Potomac River.[43]

The two linear parks that contain the Anacostia River branches are served by minimal abutting roads, although they are not identified as parkways proper. A similar parkway is found in the Cabin Branch tributary (between Sheriff Road and Central Avenue), located in Maryland near the Eastern Avenue District boundary. In 1927 the National Capital Parks and Planning Commission recommended that land in the creek's floodplain "be acquired for park purposes to serve the growing communities of Capitol Heights and Seat Pleasant." Oxen Run, flanking the Southern Avenue D.C. boundary, was also slated to "be developed with a parkway and recreational facilities" in the 1920s. Today the upper valley portion contains a golf course and lands that connect with the Suitland Parkway, and the lower valley consists of a park; neither includes a designated parkway.[44]

Planning for these parkways had quickly become a regional concern, one taken up by the National Capital Parks and Planning Commission (NCP&P, founded 1926) and Maryland National Capital Park & Planning Commission (MNCP&PC, 1927). To protect Rock Creek's watershed to the north, an extension of the park was idealized, but "to inspire the District's neighbors to substantive action, the carrot of federal aid was deemed necessary."[45]

The vehicle for the expansion of Rock Creek Park into Maryland, the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway and other parkways was the Capper-Cramton Act, approved 29 May, 1930. This act provided $16 million "for the acquiring of such lands in the District of Columbia as are necessary and desirable for the suitable development of the National Capital park, parkway and playground

---

[42] Charles Eliot II and NCP&PC, "Preliminary Report: Park System for the National Capital Washington Region" (February 1927), p. 16. RG 328.

[43] Eliot and NCP&PC, "Park System. . . ," p. 16.

[44] Eliot and NCP&PC, "Park System. . . ," p. 16.

[45] Mackintosh, p. 67.

X See continuation sheet

system. . . ." It provided that the government would grant one-third, and advance two-thirds, of the cost of these constructions, with a $1.5 million ceiling for the federal contribution and $3 million more for the advance.[46]

MOUNT VERNON MEMORIAL HIGHWAY: 1928–1932
GEORGE WASHINGTON MEMORIAL PARKWAY: 1930–1965

The George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP) on the Virginia shore includes the parkway from Mount Vernon, about twelve miles south of Washington, to Great Falls, fifteen miles to the north. The oldest portion--from the estate to the site of Memorial Bridge--was built as the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway (MVMH) from 1928-32; and the northern parkway leg, as the GWMP, from the 1930s-65. Buffering the District shore, the parkway is composed of Palisades Park, the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal [National Historical Park], and the B&O railway right-of-way as far as the Montgomery County line.

The MVMH was legislated on 23 May, 1928, to commemorate the bicentennial of George Washington's birth--an idea dating to a citizen's group organized in 1886. In 1930 Congress concluded the parkway should extend even farther: north to Great Falls on both shores, and down to Fort Washington in Maryland. Two years later, all existing and future components were renamed the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

Gilmore Clarke, consulting landscape architect for the MVMH, attested that the Bronx River Parkway (1923), a thirteen-mile thoroughfare in New York designed exclusively for pleasure motoring, set the precedent for the Virginia parkway:

> I doubt whether the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway would have been built in the manner in which it was, had those in charge not seen and profited by the work of the Westchester County Park Commission. And so Washington has one example of the type of motorway that should. . .extend out from every portal of the city.[47]

Even before the MVMH/GWMP was begun, this New York parkway was cited as a model for a

---

[46] Mackintosh, p. 67-68.

[47] Gilmore Clarke, "D.C. Need of Modern Parkway Cited by Fine Arts Chairman," The Sunday [Washington] Star (5 June, 1938).

X See continuation sheet

similar thoroughfare leading north from the nation's capital. The proponent was "keenly interested in the subject of trying to work out a parkway between Washington and Baltimore on lines somewhat similar to the Bronx Parkway--a parkway which will average perhaps a thousand feet in width, but vary according to local conditions, topography, etc."[48]

Clarke was responsible for designing bridges and small architectural elements of the parkway, as well as heading the design team made up largely of Westchester County Parkway Commission alumni: besides himself, engineer Jay Downer, landscape architect Wilbur Simonson, and plantsman Henry Nye. Clarke's MVMH bridges are characteristically romantic and rustic, low-slung segmental-arched concrete with rough-faced stone cladding--nearly identical to those he designed for Westchester.

The fifteen and one-half-mile MVMH was built by the federal Bureau of Public Roads and was one of the first facilities planned using aerial photography, which afforded much greater detail of topography, drainage patterns, the existing road, and options for the new parkway. These novelties generated a more sinuous and irregular roadway than did traditional, tangential curves.[49]

From Mount Vernon to Alexandria, the four-lane, undivided road clings to the shoreline it protects, from thickly wooded sections to open, grassy embankments and marsh; occasional overlooks and park/parking areas provide points for picnicking and occasional views to Fort Washington across the river. In contrast, the route from Alexandria to the bridge is divided by a median, open and manicured. This portion also contains several formal monuments--the Columbia Island Circle at the junction of the bridge, the Navy-Marine Memorial, and the LBJ Memorial Grove --the backdrop to which is an ongoing vista of the magnificent Washington skyline. In recent years the parkway has been augmented by a bicycle/pedestrian path of complementary winding character.

Federal acquisition of land northward continued from the 1930s to 1966: The 9.7-mile north leg of the Virginia parkway from Memorial Bridge to the interstate Beltway was completed in 1965 at a cost of $30 million. The 7.7-mile Maryland section on the opposite shore (renamed the Clara Barton Parkway in 1989) cost $18 million. The entire parkway is composed of 7,146 acres, of which 44 percent are developed (road, pavement, lawn) and 42 percent are natural woodlands; about 300 acres of scenic easements offer additional protection.

---

[48] Letter to Joseph T. Shirley (17 November, 1927), RG 328.

[49] Department of Transportation, America's Highways, p. 329, 396.

X See continuation sheet

SUITLAND PARKWAY: 1943–1944

As the 1940s approached, highways, expressways, and turnpikes took on new and more exacting connotations--and were in great demand. The lagging economy and impending war demanded that speed, safety, and efficiency take precedent over aesthetic considerations. With these ideals gaining strength, parkways could no longer be developed strictly as pleasure roads.

> By the 1930s especially express highways [were promoted] with a view toward rescuing their cities. As urbanites moved to the suburbs of deteriorating and congested cities, planners insisted that an accelerated road program would hasten traffic flow and boost morale and economic development. . . . Highway building was a form of social and economic therapy.[50]

Post-Depression unemployment was great, and throughout the 1930s President Franklin D. Roosevelt thought "principally of highway building as part of a package aimed at relieving unemployment"; yet, by 1939 he still "simply could not make up his mind about the relationship between road building and economic recovery." Meanwhile, the Bureau of Public Roads began to press for a 30,000-mile national expressway system.[51]

A highway-needs study of the Baltimore-Washington region reported that parkways are intended "for passenger vehicle use only, and to accommodate high-speed vehicles without interference from other vehicles which may stop or start to load or unload passengers or enter or depart from such highways"; while freeways are "designed to accommodate passengers and commercial traffic."[52] And while the emphasis was clearly moving away from pleasure motoring, it remained an integral-if-diminishing component of general road construction, for the Federal Highway Act of 1938 (section 8) provides:

> For the construction and maintenance of parkways, to give access to national parks and national monuments, or to become connecting sections of a national parkway plan. . . .[53]

---

[50] Mark Rose, Interstate: Express Highway Politics 1941-S6 (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1979), p. S.

[51] Rose, p. 2, 4, 10.

[52] E.D. Merrill to Thomas MacDonald (19 March, 1945), RG 328.

[53] Memo for A.E. Demaray, Appendix A, p. 1.

X *See continuation sheet*

With World War II came a modern and new justification for a road type that combines parkway principals with freeway efficiency; its model was the sleek, direct, and high-speed oriented German autobahen. Beginning in 1941, FDR called for a priority on "roads important to national defense," and later that year he restricted the Federal Works Administration to approving only those road projects "essential to national defense as certified by the appropriate Federal defense agencies."[54] This included access roads to military installations, defense plants, airports, and ports. The Defense Highway Act of 1941 appropriated $10 million in federal monies to this end, to be matched with state funds.

Suitland Parkway (1943-44) exemplifies such a defense highway, although its origin lays with the McMillan Commission's plans. The nine and one-half-mile dual-road parkway connects South Capital Street in the District to Route 4 in Maryland, and Bolling Field with Andrews Air Force Base (formerly Camp Springs Army Air Base). The $6 million construction cost was part of the Camp Springs development, pushed through Congress as a War Department expenditure. Plans to extend it eastward to the Chesapeake Bay were never fulfilled.

The parkway remained unfinished in 1945 when it became the responsibility of the National Park Service, and so it remains today. Yet, "it was so designed and construction so executed that the roadway system could be ultimately developed into a fully landscaped parkway."[55] About four miles of the "B roadway" in Maryland is unpaved, so traffic shares a single, undivided 24-foot lane. Five major bridges traverse the parkway, whose right-of-way is composed of nearly eighty-eight acres. Other characteristics include some at-grade crossings, semi-maintained buffer plantings, and a variable-width median 6 to 200 feet wide. The parkway's unfinished and uncharacteristic state must have been perceived as an invitation for improvement, for in 1958 it was proposed to bring it up to "freeway standards at several points."[56]

One function of a defense highway was to be impervious to air attack. Thus, a typical parkway site--fitted to the natural contours of the landscape--would provide a detour and scatter area, while plantings would provide camouflage for vehicles seeking concealment. While the efficient autobahen formula did enhance the safety and the speed factors, it failed as a defensible avenue because, noted one Bureau of Public Roads representative: "I recall how effectively these direct and highly conspicuous arteries, passing from one important center to another, can be used to guide

---

[54] Rose, p. 12.

[55] D.G. White to T.S. Settle (22 April, 1948), RG 328.

[56] Washington Star ??

X See continuation sheet

hostile air attack to its important objectives."[57] The limited access of parkways and military highways also permitted easy closure to non-military traffic in times of emergency.[58] This application was later confirmed when justifying the Baltimore-Washington Parkway.

While construction of non-military projects was stalled until "September 6, 1945, when Harry S Truman dropped wartime controls [and] normal state and federal road construction got underway," the planning process continued all the while.[59] Congress had approved a national system of interstate highways and a system of secondary and feeder roads in rural areas with passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act 1944. In the meantime, FDR also created the Interregional Highway Committee, which included Frederic Delano of the NCP&PC (and FDR's uncle), and Rexford Tugwell, who worked on the planned city of Greenbelt. Road construction was a high priority:

> This deferment of normal construction programs has resulted in a huge backlog of needed highway facilities which is most serious in and near cities where traffic congestion is our country's No. 1 post-war highway problem.[60]

It is not surprising, then, that "the years after 1945 were especially prosperous for members of the road transport and highway construction industries." And between 1946-50, state, local, and federal officials spent $8.4 billion--more than any previous five-year period in history.[61]

In this hurried context, landscape architects continued to assert that even the most efficient and streamlined road could be improved at no extra cost through preliminary incorporation of landscape features like grade differentials and plantings. Characteristics essential to parkway aesthetics also benefitted highway design, though they were considered unnecessary. "Most of these practices have been dictated. . .by the criterion of beauty," asserted one critic. "Yet time has proved not only their

---

[57] H.S. Fairbank, "Military Highways," Proceedings of the 27th Annual Highway Conference, vol. 43 (July 24, 1941), p. 37.

[58] Carl W. Wild, "Designing Highways for Peace and Defense," Landscape Architecture, vol. 32, no. 4 (July 1942), p. 137-39.

[59] Rose, p. 12.

[60] Wilbur Simonson, "Advanced Designs for Post-War Highway Needs," Landscape Architecture, vol. 33 (July 1943), p. 130.

[61] Rose, p. 29, 31.

X See continuation sheet

popularity, but also their promotion of safety, comfort, and speed with respect to traffic, and efficiency with respect to maintenance and operation.[62]

These not unfamiliar factors include the elimination of grade crossings, the aesthetic treatment of bridges with material such as rough-faced stone, elimination of access to abutting properties, and separation of directional traffic by a central, planted strip. With the maturation of parkway use and design from pleasure motorway to a thoroughfare aimed at speed, safety, and national defense, the elements were in place for development of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway.

BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON PARKWAY: 1942–1954

The Baltimore-Washington Parkway (BWP) stretches twenty-nine miles northeastward from the capital to Baltimore: the northern ten miles were built and are maintained by the state of Maryland; the southern nineteen miles (to Jessup Road) were built by the Bureau of Public Roads and are maintained by the National Park Service. Although completed after mid-century, a Baltimore-to Washington route was studied and promoted from the 1920s as a proper entry to the capital, and a safer option to the near-parallel U.S. Route 1, unanimously proclaimed one of the deadliest stretches of road in the nation.

Here, era and function are reflected in a design that blends parkway principles with post-war austerity. The route accesses Fort Meade, the Agricultural Research Center, and the then-experimental Greenbelt community, as well as other reservations that abut more than half its course. By extending the road to Baltimore, Maryland grabbed the opportunity to develop an important route at relatively small expense.

The forested flanks and modest natural topography are much-suited to high-speed appreciation. This is speculatively the simple background envisioned by landscape architect T.C. Jeffers, for the parkway was never technically completed with a comprehensive planting plan. The bridge designs also indicate a concession to economy. The crossings over and visible from the parkway are clad in the rough-faced stone associated with structures of the 1920-30s, while the bridges underneath are unadorned concrete arches.

---

[62] Laurie D. Cox, "Appearance: Essential Element in Superhighway Plans," Landscape Architecture, vol. 32, no. 2 (January 1942), p. SS-S6.

X *See continuation sheet*

A $2 million appropriation in 1942 took the BWP as far as land acquisition and piecemeal grading, which was followed by eight years of continued design and discussion over funding and purpose. Although the war threat had passed, the thoroughfare was justified like Suitland Parkway. "This is, in reality, a national-defense road," one congressman testified in 1950 hearings. "If this is not a national-defense road from here to Fort Meade and the other Federal reservations, it would be difficult to point one out."[63] The federal portion of the parkway today retains its scenic qualities and characteristics, and serves as a primary intercity and regional route. Stylistically it reflects the final gasp of parkway development, as the aesthetics originally intended as park connectors merged with high-speed expressway design.

Thus, as the parkways of the national capital were systematically conceived during the first half of the twentieth century, in the wake of the precedent-setting parkway network of suburban New York, their design and implementation reflect a transportation priority. Recreation, conservation, commemoration, and military defense are diminishing--and often overlapping--secondary justifications. After World War II, creative parkway development was--for all practical purposes--eclipsed by modern highway construction.

[63] Congressional Record, vol. 96, no. 103, 1950, p. 7131.

F Associated Property Types

PG 76A-40

I. Name of Property Type parkway

II. Description

The National Capital parkway system is composed of more than 8,761 acres of protected arterial byways in Washington, D.C., suburban Maryland, and Northern Virginia, totaling more than 74 miles. The contributing parkways include the Rock Creek and Potomac, Mount Vernon Memorial Highway George Washington Memorial, Suitland, Baltimore-Washington, and numerous neighborhood strip parks (although this last category is not included in the acreage/miles figures given). All are related to provide a "garden system" within a densely developed urban scheme, in keeping with a scale and layout that dates to the eighteenth century. The parkways serve as a link among the parks, monuments, and suburbs of the national capital region, with features that include scenic overlooks, hiking/biking trails, picnic/parking areas, native and ornamental plantings, and formal monuments--each situated to provide advantageous vistas and accessible day-use recreation

III. Significance

The various parkways of the national capital reflect the culmination of several national trends after the turn of the century: the City Beautiful movements' emphasis on integrated urban green space; automobility and the rapid development of road systems; and the decline in the quality of city living and resulting popularity of outdoor recreation. In Washington, D.C., the McMillan Commission's recommendation for a series of parks and parkways was coupled with the American Institute of Architects's assessment of a cityscape badly in need of formal planning and direction--in keeping with the original eighteenth-century urban scheme by Pierre L'Enfant. The four primary parkways and numerous small, regional strip parks--developed from 1913 to 1965 through the cooperative efforts of Maryland, Virginia, and District authorities--collectively represent all major justifications

IV. Registration Requirements

A. Landscape architecture
1. natural terrain and topography
2. existing and enhanced native vegetation
3. variable-width median and buffer articulation
4. vistas

B. Architecture/structures
1. dual-lane roadway
2. culverts and guard rails
3. bridges
4. monuments and statuary

C. Site
1. limited and well-distanced access
2. vertical and horizontal curves
3. enhancement of natural scenic features
4. roadside overlooks, parks, parking areas

[X] See continuation sheet

[ ] See continuation sheet for additional property types

II. Description continued

by local and visiting citizenry. All associated architectural and landscape architectural characteristics typify the period of parkway development--from the early twentieth century to World War II. For each, traffic is limited to non-commercial motoring; single- and dual-lane roads fit the natural topographic contours, and variable-width medians separate lanes when possible; indigenous vegetation has been preserved, maintained, and encouraged, especially as right-of-way buffer from adjacent property owners; limited access and few, if any, at-grade crossings enhance factors of speed and safety; and private access and commercial frontage is banned, as is unsightly signage. Bridges, culverts, walls, and similar structures are designed as harmonious complements to the natural environment. Materials such as rustic rough-cut stone masonry and concrete are used in eclectic and romantic compositions of horizontal, arched designs. All properties remain largely unchanged from their period of development, and are used today for their original purpose of transportation in and around Washington, D.C.

III. Significance continued

for a parkway type of thoroughfare. Consistently intended as a transportation route, the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway and strip parks also represent natural-resource conservation efforts; the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway/George Washington Memorial Parkway, a ceremonial and recreational route; Suitland, a defense highway; and the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, a defense and intercity highway. After the precedent-setting network of suburban New York parkways--after which it was idealized--Washington's system is the most comprehensive and monumental extant in the nation. Aesthetically unaltered, the parkways remain vital components of the regional transportation arteries and they continue to contribute to the historic symbolism and design of the nation's capital.

G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Numerous resources were used to evaluate the significance of Washington, D.C.'s parkway system. The general history of the period of significance--approximately the first half of the twentieth century--is historically linked to regional cultural organizations and the comprehensive plans they issued: the McMillan Commission, National Capital Park and Planning Commission, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and the Commission of Fine Arts. Each has been concerned with the same historic and physical boundaries of the national capital and neighboring suburbs in Maryland and Virginia. The integrity of the contributing landscape-architectural features and structures has remained high because of ongoing ownership and maintenance by the National Park Service; the arbiter of the guiding Secretary of the Interiors' Standards for Historic Preservation. Federal records exist for each parkway in the collection of the National Archives, as well Historic Resource Study: Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, George Washington Memorial Parkway, Suitland Parkway, Baltimore-Washington Parkway, by Historian Jere Krakow (NPS, 1990). Also, a Rock Creek Park administrative history documents the development of that parkway. The original section of the George Washington Memorial Parkway--the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway--is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is the subject of a historic-resource study being produced by EDAW Inc. of Alexandria. The Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record Division, NPS, completed a selective survey of historic bridges in the National Capital Region, NPS, including many associated with the parkways discussed here. This material provided information on the contexts and themes related to the parkways: conservation, history and development of the park and parkway system of the national capital, and the influence of automobiles and the development of commuter arteries.

H. Major Bibliographical References

GENERAL

National Archives:
RG 66, Commission of Fine Arts
RG 351, Records of the District of Columbia
RG 328, National Capital Park & Planning Commission
RG 79, National Park Service
RG 30, Bureau of Public Roads

[X] See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- [ ] State historic preservation office
- [ ] Other State agency
- [XX] Federal agency
- [ ] Local government
- [ ] University
- [ ] Other

Specify repository: National Capital Region, NPS; National Capital Planning Commission

I. Form Prepared By

name/title Sara Amy Leach, Historian
organization National Park Service date 15 September, 1990
street & number P.O. Box 37127 telephone 202-343-9607
city or town Washington, D.C. state zip code 20013-7127

Bibliographic references continued:

Newspapers and Magazine Articles

"A Parkway to Baltimore." Washington Daily News. 12 November, 1941.

Child, Stephen. "Report of the American Society of Landscape Architects on National Forest and Regional Plan, Washington, D.C." February 1921.

Clarke, Gilmore. "D.C. Need of Modern Parkway Cited by Fine Arts Chairman." The Sunday [Washington] Star. 5 June, 1938.

Cox, Laurie. "Appearance: Essential Element in Superhighway Plans." Landscape Architecture. Vol. 32, No. 2. January 1942.

Dill, Malcolm. "Planting in Streets, Parkways, Highways and Byways." Landscape Architecture. Vol. 22, No. 2. January 1932.

Ellicott, William M. "A National Forest." American Forestry. June 1910. Reprint.

Eliot, Charles W., II. "The Influence of the Automobile on the Design of Park Roads." Landscape Architecture. Vol. 13, No. 1. October 1922.

"For Washington-Baltimore Parkway Boulevard, Washington Wants It (editorial)." Washington Times. 17 October, 1925.

Hall, George D. "The 'Freeway,' A New Thought for Subdividers." Landscape Architecture. Vol. 21, No. 2. January 1931.

James, Harlean. "Comment: Tendency to View Landscape Contribution as Final Step." Landscape Architecture. Vol. 30, No. 3. April 1940.

"New Washington Road Predicted." Baltimore Sun. June 1928.

Nichols, Arthur R. "Landscape Design in Highway Development." Landscape Architecture. Vol. 30, No. 3. April 1940.

X *See continuation sheet*

Price, Bill. "A Great National Park Along the Potomac." Washington Times. 18 April, 1922.

"Potomac Power Dam Report Due Today." The Evening [Washington] Star. 13 January 1944.

Simonson, Wilbur H. "Advanced Designs for Post-War Highway Needs." Landscape Architecture. Vol. 33, No. 4. July 1943.

Simonson, Wilbur H. "Roadside Planting." Landscape Architecture. Vol. 26, No. 4. July 1936.

Wild, Carl W. "Designing Highways for Peace and Defense." Landscape Architecture. Vol. 32, No. 4. July 1942.

Secondary Sources

Greene, Jerome A. "A Brief History of Parkway Design in the United States." May 1988. Copy.

Gutheim. Frederick. Worthy of a Nation: The History of Planning the National Capital. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1977.

Newton, Norman T. Design on the Land. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1971.

Nolen, John, and Hubbard, Henry V. Parkways and Land Values, Harvard City Planning Studies XI. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937.

Rose, Mark H. Interstate: Express Highway Politics, 1941-1956. Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1979.

Tunnard, Christopher, and Pushkarev, Boris. Man-made America: Chaos or Control? New York: Harmony Books, 1963.

Williamson, Mary Lou, editor. Greenbelt: History of a Town, 1937-1987. Norfolk, Va.: Donning Co., 1987.

X *See continuation sheet*

Government Reports, Publications, Studies

"Baltimore-Washington Parkway": Hearings before the Committee on Public Works on HR-5990/81st Congress. February 1-2, 1950.

Capper Cramton Act. (Public-No. 284/71st Congress). May 29, 1930.

D.C. Department of Highways Planning Survey. "Sectional Maps of the District of Columbia Showing Flow of Vehicular Traffic, Average Weekday, 1941 (pre-war)." 1941. (LC)

Eliot, Charles W., II. "Preliminary Report: Park System for the National Capital Washington Region." February 1927.

"Estimates on the Development of Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway: Revised 1928 Estimates and Designs for the Development of the Parkway." 1 July, 1929.

Federal Highway Administration, Eastern District Federal Division. "Engineering Study Report for the Rehabilitation of Baltimore-Washington Parkway." April 1984. (NCR)

Federal Highway Administration, Eastern District Federal Division. "Bridge Safety Inspection Reports (Supplemental Report)." April 1986. (One per structure, NCR)

"Improvement of the Park System of the District of Columbia," Senate Report No. 166 (57th Congress, 1st Session) Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1906.

Krakow, Jere L. Historic Resource Study: Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, George Washington Memorial Parkway, Suitland Parkway, Baltimore-Washington Parkway. National Park Service, Denver Service Center, 1990.

Mackintosh, Barry. Rock Creek Park: An Administrative History. Washington, D.C.: NPS, History Division, 1985.

Maryland National Capital Planning Commission. "Maryland-Washington Regional Report." May 1954.

Maryland National Capital Planning Commission. Regional Planning Report IV--Baltimore-Washington-Annapolis Area. November 1937.

X *See continuation sheet*

National Capital Park & Planning Commission and Charles Eliot. "Park System for National Capital Washington Region, Project C, Baltimore--Camp Meade Parkway." February 1927.

System Design Concepts Inc., Clarke & Rapuano & Bolt Inc., Beranek & Newman Inc. "Baltimore-Washington Parkway Study Report." April 1981. (NCR)

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Public Roads, Division of Eastern National Forests and Parks. "Final Construction Report, Vol. 2 (Roadway), Baltimore-Washington Parkway of National Capital Parks." 1955. (FHWA files, Arlington, VA)

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Public Roads, Division of Eastern National Forests and Parks. "Final Construction Report, Vol. 1 (Bridges), Baltimore-Washington Parkway of National Capital Parks." 1955. (FHWA files, Arlington, VA)

U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. America's Highways: 1776-1976. Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1976.

U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. Scenic Byways '88. April 1988. Conference Handbook.

Unrau, Harlan, and Willis, G. Frank. Administrative History: Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s. Washington, D.C.: Denver Service Center, 1983.

Maps and Atlases

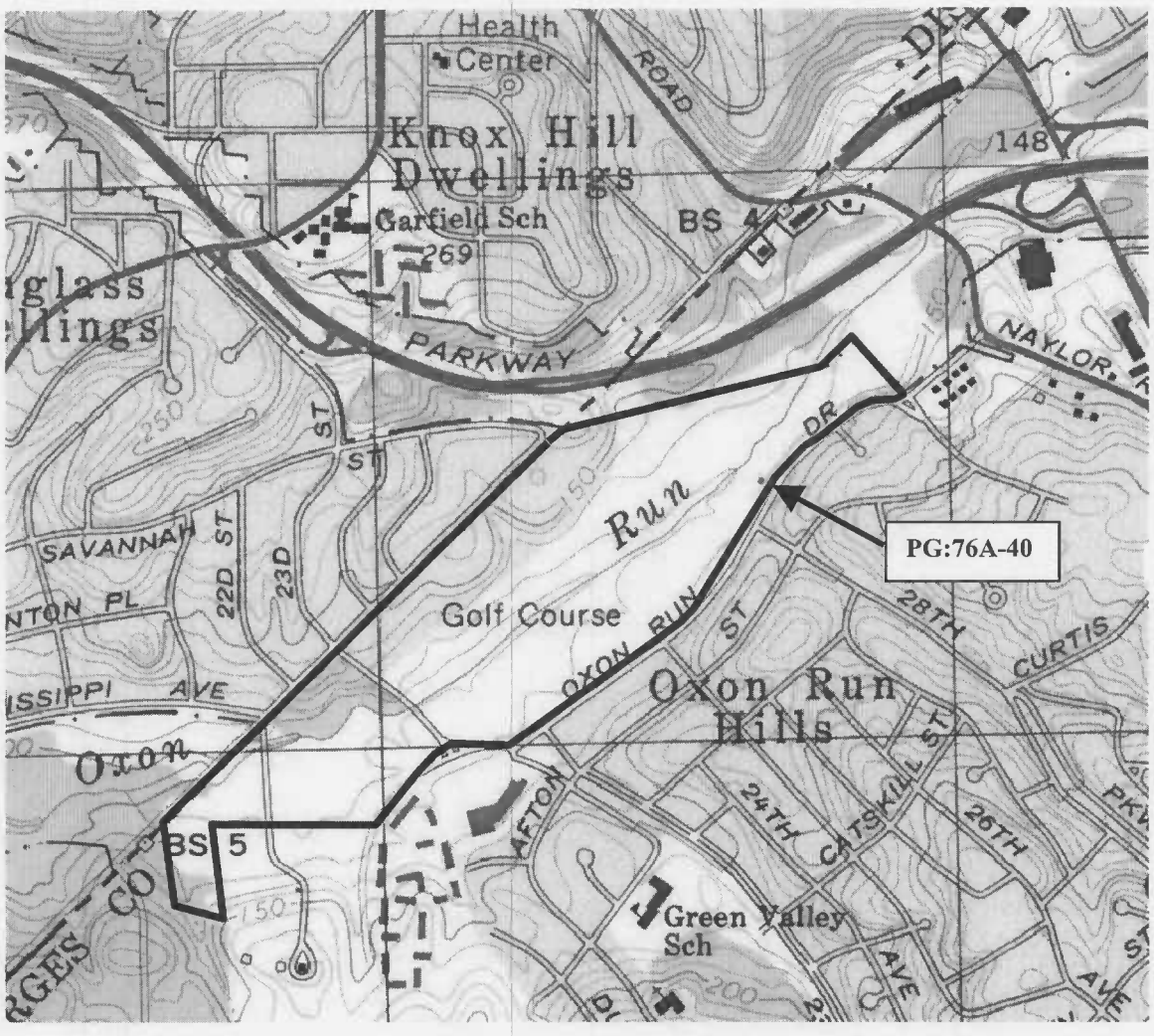
"Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington Including Prince George's County." Philadelphia: Griffith Morgan Hopkins, 1878. (Library of Congress)

F.W. Beseley. "Map of Anne Arundel County Showing Forest Areas by Commercial Type." Maryland Board of Forestry, 1913. (LC)

F.W. Beseley. "Map of Prince George's County Showing Forest Areas by Commercial Type." Maryland Board of Forestry, 1912. (LC)

Plat Book of Prince George's County, Maryland. Vol. 1. Philadelphia: Franklin Survey Co., 1940.

Joins Map 23

77°00'00" MD GRID 800,000 FT 1 SE 2 SE 3 SE 810,000 FT 76°57'30" 3 SE

PG:76A-40
Oxon Run Strip Park
Maryland section
Anacostia quadrangle