

V. DEVELOPMENT OF A LONG-RANGE PRESERVATION PLAN

INTERESTS AND CONCERNS

Identification of Issues, Challenges and Community Ideas

The framework for developing a long range plan for the historic district of Kensington was established around the specific preservation issues and concerns of the community. An initial workshop was held with residents of the district to identify and assign priority to the issues, concerns, and problems which citizens face in the preservation of the districts. Following this session, the historic district was analyzed from an historical and planning perspective to identify its character defining features, historical land use patterns, and relationship to the Master Plan. Based on the issues identified in the workshop and the analysis of the characteristics of each district, statements were developed summarizing the preservation challenges to be addressed in long-range preservation planning. A follow-up meeting was conducted with citizens to review these statements and discuss potential ideas for dealing with the preservation challenges. The citizen contribution through this series of meetings helped to establish a framework for developing a preservation plan for the district which is relevant to the interests and concerns of Kensington's residents.

Workshops on Preservation Issues

The initial workshop for those concerned about preservation in the Historic District of Kensington was held the evening of June 3, 1992. The Kensington workshop involved fifteen citizens. The session provided a forum for residents and property owners to identify the concerns and issues relating to the preservation of the district. Each group identified a list of issues and concerns by working individually and collectively. At the conclusion of this exercise, the lists were posted and everyone was given an opportunity to identify the higher priority issues. These responses were used to assign priorities to the issues from each group. The issues are listed in order of descending priority for each of the workshop groups as given in the table titled Kensington Issues and Concerns (Figure 35).

Many of the issues identified in the workshops represent conditions or problems which are impeding preservation in the community and require attention and improvement. Some issues are specific in nature and can be addressed by singular actions. Other issues require activity over a long period of time to correct and improve the underlying conditions. Many of the issues relate to the policies and authority of the County government and the Historic Preservation Commission in administering the historic preservation in the districts.

Following the workshops, these issues were studied to identify the primary areas of concern in each community and to translate the issues into "Challenge Statements" which express the broader preservation objectives to be reached. The issues raised in each workshop were analyzed and grouped according to common themes or topics in order to identify the primary areas of concern in the district. Based on these areas of concern and the specific issues raised, a statement of the general objective, goal, or challenge was formulated which attempts to

encompass the range of related concerns and issues. These statements are meant to more clearly define the core issue and as such are general in nature. A second meeting was held for the purpose of reviewing the “Challenge Statements” and discussing ideas and strategies for dealing with specific issues or meeting the broader challenges. Citizen participation in this event was intensive and very productive in producing ideas and strategies relevant to the issues which they had identified previously.

Workshop Results for the Kensington Historic District

The table titled Framework for the Historic District of Kensington (Figure 36) presents the framework for placing issues into broader planning objectives or challenges, and the ideas and strategies which the community identified. As explained, the issues have been regrouped into thematically related areas of concern. The challenge statements have been developed to address the general long range objective or challenge facing the district. The idea or strategies listed have been stated in somewhat general terms. Specific strategies which are based on these general statements appear in the discussion of long-range plans for each community later.

The Kensington Historic District is an unusually cohesive historic suburban community with three distinct periods of development. Originally platted in 1890, the lot configurations of the original subdivision are largely unchanged, except for the interruptions of the commercial district and Connecticut Avenue. The primary concerns of Kensington residents were on the preservation of the “open space” which occurs regularly between the older residences, control of the potential for infill development in this open space, mitigating the divisive effects of Connecticut Avenue, and achieving greater compatibility of the areas adjacent to the historic district. These are presented in detail as follows:

- *Preserving the open space and garden setting of Kensington.*
- *The presumption that all platted lots may be considered buildable.*
- *Notification of owners, historical society and other Interested parties of activities, actions, and surveys affecting the community. (also town government)*
- *The negative impact of the commercial district on the historic district - especially the area west of Connecticut Avenue and east at the 7-11 site.*
- *Find incentives and disincentives to preserve the open space and environmental setting of Kensington.*
- *Concern over long-term preservation of nursing home property.*
- *Relationship of the building code to historic preservation.*
- *Upgrade substandard non-contributing structures.*
- *Review the historic district boundaries in terms of significance, criteria, etc. Consider expanding the district based on historical and cultural characteristics.*
- *Find solutions to inappropriate development and infill such as through establishing land trusts and other applicable means.*
- *The dilution of historic district by infill of new construction to the degree that the historic nature district is lost.*
- *Apparent inconsistencies in applying HPC policies. RE: Permits for work in Historic District.*
- *The need to correct deteriorating conditions of historic structures and property.*
- *Lack of information on the Historic District and its regulation.*
- *Deal with commuter and cut-through traffic in the historic districts.*
- *Zoning incentives for adaptive re-use of significant historic properties.*
- *Lack of means to enforce HPC regulations.*
- *Increase awareness of historic preservation in the community.*
- *Use of overlay zoning to deal with issues of grandfathered provisions.*
- *Instability of HPC.*
- *The division of the community by Connecticut Avenue and the railroad tracks.*
- *Incentives to upgrade and maintain historic structures.*
- *The impact of outer development on the historic district.*
- *Inadequate communication and coordination with HPC and LAP.*
- *Can properties be down-zoned to accomplish preservation of significant structures?*
- *The authority to access county and state vitalization funds for Kensington.*
- *Enforce demolition by neglect clause.*
- *The negative effect of capital improvements such as highway projects, sidewalks, utilities, etc., on the historic district.*
- *Apparent lack of interest of town government in complying with historic district regulation.*
- *Lack of support staff for HPC, independent of other agencies.*
- *Incentives and disincentives to upgrade, improve, and harmonize with the historic district.*

Figure 35: Kensington Interests and Concerns

Framework for the Historic District of Kensington

Issues	Challenges	Strategies
1. Preservation of the ‘open space’ and ‘garden setting’ of the Kensington Historic District.	A. Preservation of the overall setting of the Kensington Historic District as well as the historic architecture of the district as detailed below:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designation of the open space which contributes to the historic setting of the district as a primary resource.
2. The dilution of the historic district by new infill construction which compromises the historic character of the district.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of siting design guidelines which are based on historical relationships for determining what type of development is appropriate for a specific site in the historic district.
3. Concern over the long term preservation of the nursing home property.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of architectural design guidelines which are based on the historic architectural styles appropriate and compatible in the Kensington Historic District. • Coordination of the Zoning provisions of minimum lot area, lot coverage, and setbacks with the objectives of historic preservation in Kensington. This could be performed in one of the following ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Creation of a new residential zone for the historic district of Kensington. + Use of an overlay zone to adjust site requirements. + Further development of TDR Zoning to transfer additional density to outside of the historic district.
4. Apparent lack of interest of town government.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of historic and open space easements for the protection of important and significant properties and important open space with development potential.
5. Apparent inconsistencies in applying HPC policies.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-assembly of multiple lots related to a single historic setting to remove smaller vacant lots.
6. Rehabilitation of deteriorating condition of historic structures.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with Town and County officials for government cooperation in meeting the Historic Preservation Ordinance.

Framework for the Historic District of Kensington

Issues	Challenges	Strategies
7. The negative impact of the commercial area north west of district and the 7-11 site on the character of the district.	B. To mitigate the negative impacts of incompatible commercial areas on the visual character and image of the historic district.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the historic district boundaries to include the adjacent commercial areas so that they fall under HPC design review. This would require developing a section of the guidelines which addressed the issues of siting, building design, signage, and streetscape elements in commercial context.
8. The negative impact of outer development on the district.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage redevelopment and rehabilitation of substandard or incompatible property.
9. The division of the historic district by Connecticut Avenue and the railroad tracks.	C. To mitigate the divisive effect of Connecticut Avenue and the railroad tracks on the historic district and to make them more compatible with the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connecticut Avenue could be made much more compatible with the historic district by adding elements which could create a pedestrian environment such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Brick paved pedestrian crosswalks + Period street lighting along Connecticut Avenue within the district. + Appropriate street furniture. + Addition of a planted center median and street trees throughout the district. + Use of other vegetation to distinguish the district.
10. The visual incompatibility of Connecticut Avenue with the historic district.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addition of a pedestrian grade crossing to access the northern section of the historic district.
11. The impact of higher speed and high volume traffic through the district.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addition of traffic signals along Connecticut Avenue to reduce traffic speeds and control crosswalks.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study ways to divert Connecticut Avenue traffic to by-pass the historic district.
12. Increase awareness of historic preservation in the community	D. To establish a better understanding among residents, property owners, and the public of the significance of the historic district and actions affecting it through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Establishing specific criteria of significance + Establishing an education/ awareness program for property owners and real estate. + Notification of property owners about activities and actions affecting the historic district. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document and identify the significant characteristics of the historic district.
13. Lack of information on the historic district and its regulation.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate the public on the significance of the individual historic resources in the district, the relationships which create the open character of the district, and the overall significance of the district.
14. Notification of property owners, historical society, and other interested parties of activities, actions, and surveys affecting the community.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notify and include local citizens in action affecting the district.

REACHING TOWARD LONG RANGE PRESERVATION OF KENSINGTON

The Kensington Historic District is an historically significant suburban community due to its “garden suburb” pattern of development, its rich variety of well-preserved turn-of-the-century architecture, and its historic relationship to the railroad. Sound preservation planning in Kensington will maintain the character of the community through continued preservation of its original patterns of development and through preservation of its unique architectural resources. Additionally, it is necessary to strengthen the identity of the historic district through physical improvements to areas which detract from the character of the district.

It is important to recognize that the significance of the Kensington Historic District derives from:

- Its unique plan of streets
- Its historical patterns of development
- Its rich collection of late 19th century and early 20th century architecture.

Similarly, it is important to acknowledge the problems that currently affect the district, as well as to be aware of those problems which are expected to have an impact on the area in the future:

- The potential for infill development of the critical open space threatens to disrupt the historical pattern of development and character of the residential neighborhood within the district.
- Commercial areas adjacent to the district are not compatible with the historic character of Kensington in terms of the scales of development, character of the architecture streetscape and signage.
- By dividing the historic district. Connecticut Avenue has a negative effect on the historic district by disturbing the historical pattern of development and by its lack of a pedestrian environment.

STRATEGIES FOR MAINTAINING HISTORIC CHARACTER

Five distinct areas comprise Kensington Historic District. Preservation strategies are put forward for each area in the following section.

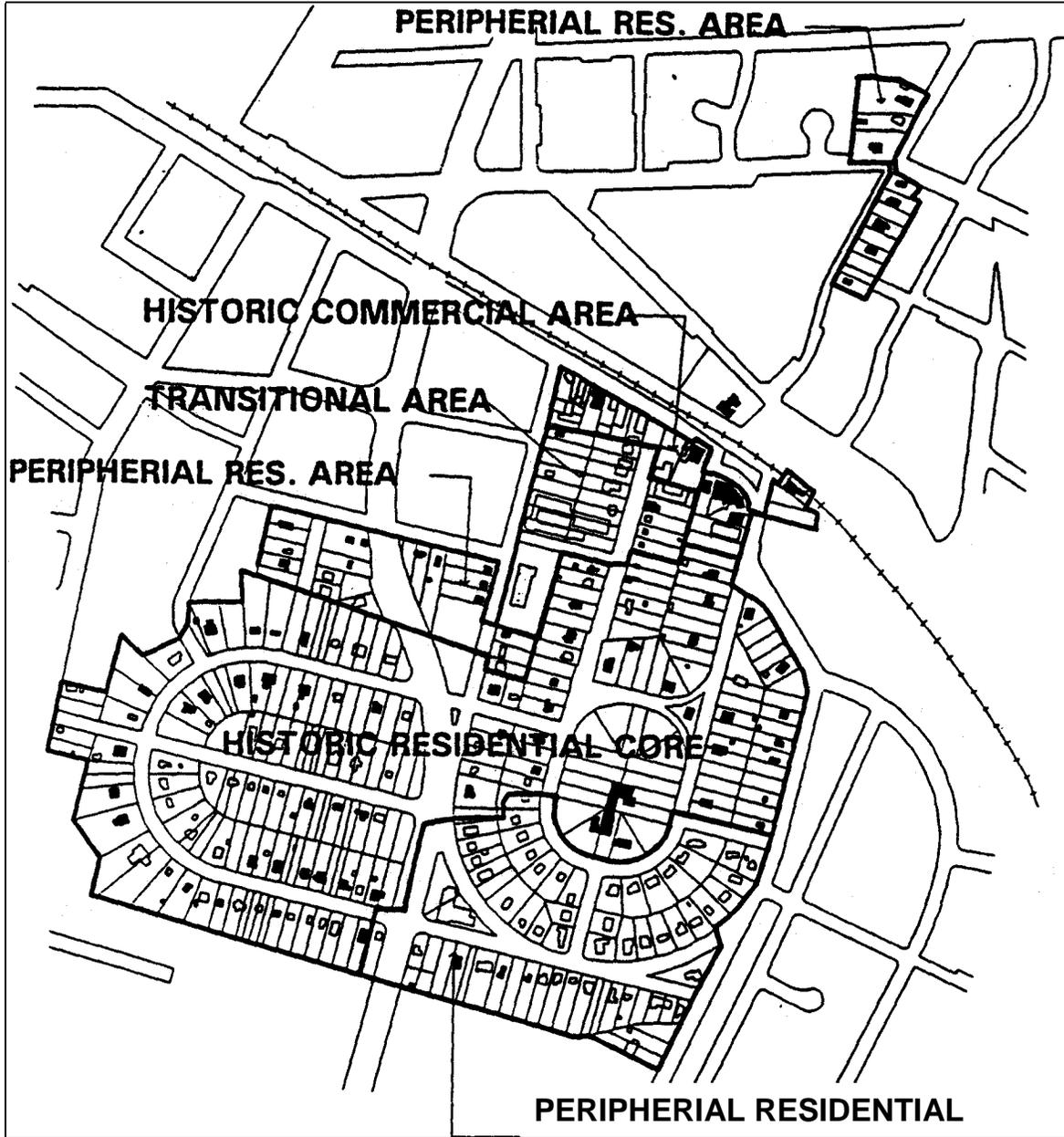


Figure 36: Preservation Planning Areas in Kensington

The Historic Residential Core

The Historic Residential Core consists of most of the primary historic resources in the residential neighborhood. This includes historic resources built from 1890 to 1930 which exemplify the historic pattern of development characterized by expansive open spaces between adjacent homes. In this area it is important to preserve these patterns of open space, front yard setbacks, building scale, architectural character, and the streetscape qualities. The following strategies are suggested in addition to existing protection provided by the Historic Preservation Ordinance to achieve this objective:

Strategy 1.1: Any additional residential development on vacant lots within this area should meet the characteristic pattern of historical development for the district. Based on the analysis of lot characteristics of primary resources in this area the following criteria are suggested for limiting new residential construction to the extent feasible:

- + *A minimum of two lots, or 15,000 sf of lot area for construction of a single family dwelling. (based on the historic development pattern and lot sizes within the district)*
- + *A maximum lot coverage of 10 percent. (based on the pattern of lot coverage for primary resources)*
- + *Minimum Front yard setbacks of 35 feet based on the average setbacks of primary resources, and side yard setbacks of 25 feet to maintain average building separation distances of approximately 50 feet.*

Strategy 1.2: Establish historic and open space easements for properties and open space which are critical to the historic character and pattern of development of Kensington.

Strategy 1.3: Establish special protection for important landmarks within the district, such as the old Warner home, the Noyes Library, and the train station.

Strategy 1.4: Establish tree preservation and vegetation guidelines for preservation to include the following improvements and amenities;

- + *Addition of paved pedestrian crosswalks at Baltimore and Washington Streets*
- + *Addition of a planted median strip throughout the district.*
- + *Addition of street trees and other vegetation between the sidewalk and curbs, period street lighting, and appropriate signage*

Strategy 1.6: Study ways to reduce traffic speed and volume on Connecticut Avenue, and ways to divert traffic around the historic district such as the long term feasibility of an alternate route for Connecticut Avenue traffic.

The Peripheral Residential Area

The Peripheral Residential Area consists of residential properties outside of the core area which exhibit a slightly denser pattern of development than primary resource properties. Within this periphery, it will be important to recognize that the later period of architectural styles and post-1930 pattern of development in preservation activity. The following strategies are suggested in addition to existing protection provided by the Historic Preservation Ordinance:

Strategy 2.1: Recognize the slightly denser patterns of development within this area and require new development to be compatible with the typical pattern. Based on the analysis of lots within this area the following criteria are suggested to achieve compatibility with properties in the periphery

- + *A minimum of one lot for construction of a single family dwelling (based on the historic pattern of later development in this portion of the district)*
- + *A maximum lot coverage of 15 percent. (based on the average lot coverage for all resources)*
- + *Minimum front yard setbacks of 35 feet based on the average setbacks of resources in the district.*

Strategy 2.2: Emphasize compatibility of new construction, alterations and additions within the framework of later architectural styles, and smaller scale of construction which is characteristic for this area.

The Transitional Area

Defined by areas bordering the residential neighborhood and the historic district boundary or commercial areas within the district, this area is characteristically more intensely developed with a mix of commercial, multi-family housing, and institutional uses.

Strategy 3.1 - Additional development in this area should be compatible with the character of the residential neighborhood while allowing for a slightly higher lot density. Side yard set back relationships should be examined on a case-by-case basis to ensure that density and closure of the streetscape is compatible with the scales of development at each end of the transition area.

The Historic Commercial Area

The Historic Commercial Area consists of commercial uses along Howard Avenue which consist of antique shops, the railroad station, and other commercial uses in historic or contributing buildings. The following strategies suggest ways to strengthen the identity of this area, and make it more compatible with the character of the Historic Residential Core.

Strategy 4.1 - Develop specific architectural guidelines for the commercial area to deal with the different building types, siting relationships, and scales of development characteristic of commercial uses.

Strategy 4.2 - Institute model signage guidelines for business identification and advertising signage to enhance the appearance of the district

Strategy 4.3 - Develop a visual improvement program for facade and streetscape improvements to enhance the quality of the pedestrian environment and appearance of the district.

Strategy 4.4 - Add a railroad grade crossing at Paul Street to reestablish a connection to the north section of the historic district. This would join these two elements of the district allowing automobile and pedestrian traffic.

The Outlying Buffer Areas

The Outlying Buffer Areas consist of areas adjacent to the historic district which are part of the view-shed and physical environment affecting the appearance of the district. Incompatible development or deteriorating conditions within this area have weakened the identity of the historic district. The objective of the plan is to mitigate these conditions in these buffer areas and enhance the identity of the district. The following strategies are suggested:

Strategy 5.1 - Extend site design controls into the buffer zone by expanding the district to ensure Historic Preservation Commission review of new construction, alterations and additions.

Strategy 5.2 - Establish a revitalization plan for deteriorated or incompatible development which could be redeveloped to enhance the district.

Strategy 5.3 - Extend pedestrian street improvements suggested in Strategy 1.5 into this area as feasible to strengthen the identity of the district and its edges.