

## REVIEW OF PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Historic districts, generally, identify and recognize geographic areas where historic buildings, structures, patterns of development, and/or remains occur that are related to one another through their common history, significant events, or aesthetic qualities. Historic districts may also derive significance from a combination of the interplay of buildings and their relationship to streets, their rhythm of spacing, their plan of streets, and other aspects of the historic setting of the community. It is important to acknowledge that the significance of an historic district may encompass characteristics beyond specific architectural, cultural, or archaeological resources, and that the less visible relationships of land use, building siting, vegetation, and other elements are important contributors to the historic character.

The Kensington Historic District derives special significance from the cohesiveness of its many well-preserved late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings, its strong plan of streets, and its historic landscaped setting as a “suburban village” in the tradition of the “garden city”. The intent of this section is to examine the land use characteristics within the Kensington Historic District in order to identify the important patterns of historical development which contribute to the character of the district.

In Kensington, these patterns include relationships between lot sizes, lot coverage (lot occupancy), the distance between building fronts and the street (front yard setback), the open space between buildings and the variation of these characteristics from one building type to another to recognize a hierarchy of uses. The following analysis examines these relationships based on tax map records and building locations identified from topographic maps of the County. Dimensions for setbacks and area takeoffs were scaled at 1”= 200’ and are approximate.

### **Lot Area and Ownership**

Kensington was platted from the outset as a suburban-scaled community with a complete set of carefully ordered streets which remains the primary subdivision plan and lot structure today (Figure 33). Three periods of development can be identified within the historic district. The first period covers the initial development of the suburb from 1890 to 1910. The larger houses constructed of this period in the heart of district usually occupied more than one lot. The second period of development includes buildings constructed between 1910 and 1930. Houses constructed over this period were generally smaller and most were built on single lots. Buildings built over these two periods are considered primary historic resources. The third period of development covers post-1930 construction which typically consists of small residences and buildings on single lots.

The table titled Kensington Historic District Lot Characteristics presents the lot area, lot coverage, front yard setback, and typical building spacing characteristics for properties within the Historic District of Kensington. Ownership was determined by notations on the tax maps. These characteristics have been tabulated for (1) the entire district, (2) properties developed between 1890 and 1910; and (3) properties developed between 1910 and 1930.



**Figure 33:** Lot Structure of Kensington

## Lot Coverage Patterns

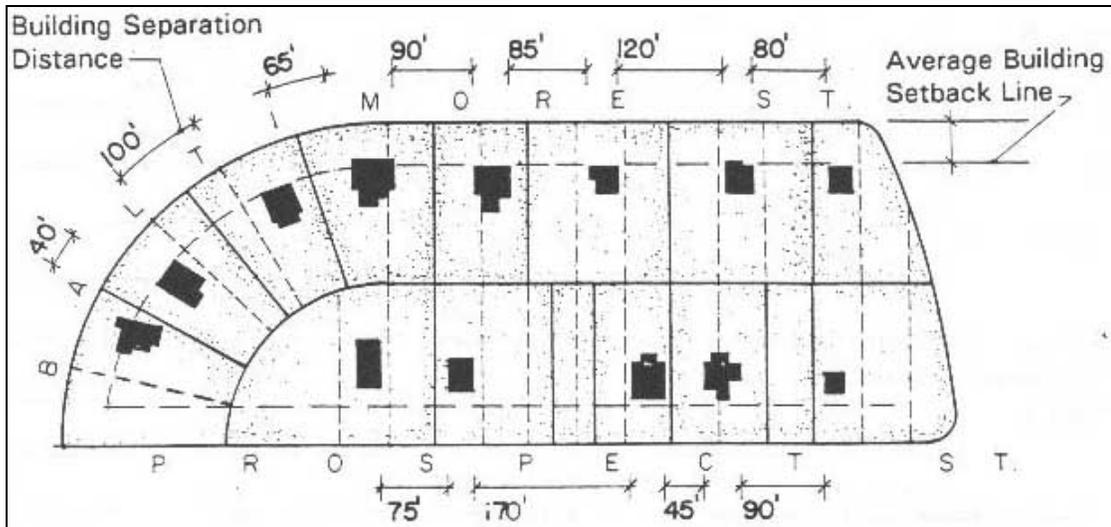
Lot coverage is the ratio of the building footprint area to the overall lot area, and it reflects the density of development on a given parcel of land. Lot coverage was identified using planimeter take-offs of the building footprint area from the County's topography maps and compared with lot areas to determine percent of coverage as given in the table Kensington Historic District Lot Analysis of lot coverage in Kensington reveals that the density of development is greater for the overall district than in the areas where the primary resources are located. This is related to the inclusion of the commercial district for the calculation, as well as the use of fewer lots per dwelling for post-1930s construction. The lower lot coverage figures for primary resources reflects the pattern of using multiple lots for the older primary resource dwellings.

Kensington Historic District Lot Characteristics

Category		Entire District	All Primary Resource Properties	1890-1910 Properties
Lot Area	Maximum	3.3 acres	3.3 acres	3.3 acres
	Average	0.40 acres	0.38 acres	0.42 acres
	Minimum	0.15 acres	0.15 acres	0.18 acres
Lot Coverage	Maximum	25%	25%	25%
	Average	15%	10%	9%
	Minimum	5%	5%	5%
Front Yard Setback	Maximum	65 ft	65 ft	65 ft
	Average	33ft	35ft	38ft
	Minimum	0 ft	20 ft	20 ft
Building Separation	Maximum	170 ft	170 ft	170 ft
	Average	40 ft	55ft	75ft
	Minimum	15ft	20ft	50ft

### Relationships of Front Yard Setback and Building Separation

The front yard “setback” is the distance a building is set away or back from the property line on the street or road which it fronts. The front yard setback determines how prominent a building is in the streetscape of a community. When many buildings are involved, a pattern can be established which helps to define the character of the streetscape through the width of sidewalks, the amount of green space (lawn or vegetation area) between street and building, the apparent scale of the buildings in relation to pedestrians, and other subtle qualities of the community. In combination with setbacks, building separation distances establish the openness or visual porosity of the streetscape. Buildings which are separated allow for view and landscape elements in the interstitial space. These relationships are illustrated in the map titled Kensington Historic District Vacant Land and Open Space (Figure 3.4).



Pattern of Building Setbacks and Separation Distances for Block # 11

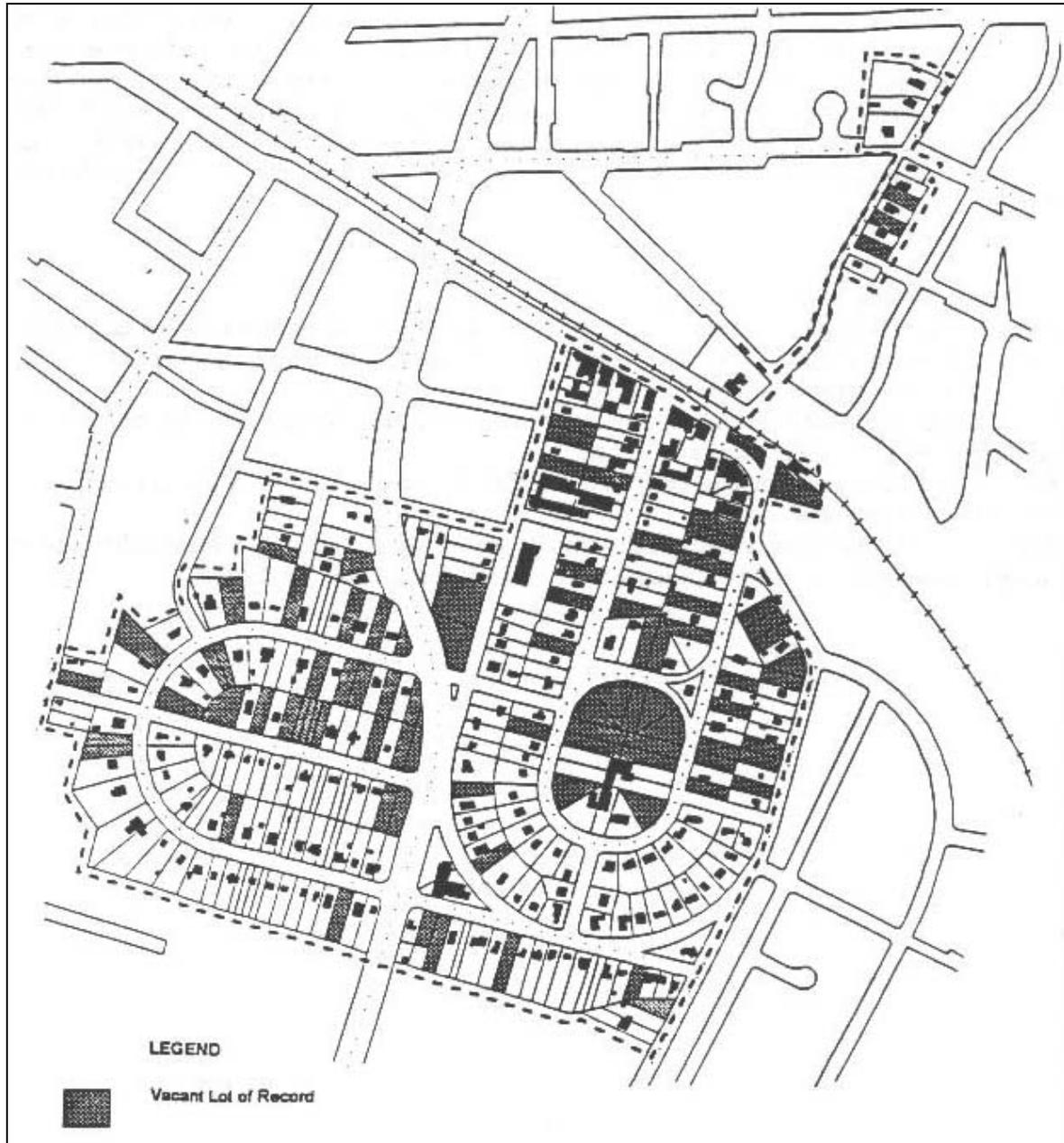
### **Characteristics of Streets and Vegetation**

The streetscape is an important element of the Kensington Historic District. These important characteristics include relatively narrow street widths, sidewalks, the relationship of the building setbacks to street width, the relationship of building scale and massing, as well as the presence of trees, and vegetation. The residential section of the district is characterized by prominent homes, typically surrounded by expansive lawn areas which are planted with large mature trees and low level landscaping vegetation. The commercial area along antique row has a distinctly different pedestrian feeling which is characterized by buildings with shallow setbacks from the street, wider sidewalks, and a garden wall used on the north side to screen the railroad tracks from view.

### **Identification of Open Space and Vacant Land**

The district was examined to identify existing vacant parcels and open space which contribute to the character of the district. Several criteria were used to identify where open space contributed to the historic character as follow:

- Open space which distinguished landmarks or important historic resources which would be compromised if the land were not vacant.
- Open space between buildings which reflected the historic relationships and patterns identified in the district.
- Open space at important areas of each district which is instrumental in maintaining historical design relationships which contribute to the historic identity of the district.



**Figure 34:** Kensington Historic District Vacant Land and Open Space