

Abstract

Title of Document: California Living in Maryland: Determining Significance and Integrity of Ranch Houses in the Washington, DC Suburbs

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This final project examines the varieties of ranch houses in the Washington, DC suburban area to create a context for determining significance and integrity for National Register and Maryland Inventory of Historic Places eligibility. Though ranch houses and suburban neighborhoods have been included in the Maryland historic inventory, a Washington, DC suburban area context report specifically focused on ranch houses is absent. Individual neighborhoods together make up a significant portion of Maryland's suburban housing stock, making it particularly important to develop such a document. As many hundreds of these mid-century resources become eligible for the National Register, questions about their treatment are particularly relevant.

The Georgia State Historic Preservation Office produced a theme study of ranch houses in 2010 that serves as a model for developing the survey methodology to study a sample of ranch houses located in Maryland's Prince George's and Montgomery Counties. The completeness of the Georgia study, the thoroughness of their suggested survey methodology, and the quality of their findings, make it an appropriate model to apply to Maryland. This study focuses on the two counties with the highest concentration of ranch houses and mid-century suburban development located "inside" the Washington beltway. Survey questions address construction material, stylistic attributes, context, and proximity to other listed resources and districts. These questions led to

the identification of local patterns, which are then placed in the national context of ranch house development to better understand their significance. A review of the national history of ranch houses gives appropriate context for the survey results, and for their introduction and construction in Maryland, and provides a timeline for the growth of suburban ranch tract neighborhoods in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties.

California Living in Maryland: Determining Significance and Integrity of Ranch Houses in the
Washington, DC Suburbs

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	I
LIST OF FIGURES.....	VI
CHAPTER 1. SIGNIFICANCE AND INTEGRITY: THE CHALLENGE OF APPLYING HISTORIC ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA TO RANCH HOUSES	5
SIGNIFICANCE	5
INTEGRITY.....	8
SIGNIFICANCE AND VALUES	9
PRESERVATION CHALLENGES	11
CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGY.....	14
GEORGIA SURVEY	14
APPLICATION OF GEORGIA REPORT	16
RANCH HOUSE REPORTS ELSEWHERE.....	18
METHOD	19
CHAPTER 3. RANCH HOUSES, NATIONAL AND MARYLAND CONTEXT.....	29
SMALL SUBURBAN DWELLINGS	31
A BRIEF HISTORY OF RANCH HOUSES	33
CHAPTER 4. LOCAL TYPOLOGY	35
FIRST RANCH HOUSE IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY.....	36
CALIFORNIA STYLE, RAMBLER, RANCHER	44
POST-WAR TRENDS	45
CHARLES M. GOODMAN.....	49
CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES, NATIONALLY AND LOCALLY	53
FINDINGS	58
TYPOLOGY IDENTIFICATION VISUAL GUIDE	64
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	74
DECISION TREE.....	74
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	78
CONCLUSION	82
APPENDIX. SURVEY FORM	84
BIBLIOGRAPHY	85

List of Figures

Figure 1. Rachel Carson's House	6
Figure 2. 1970s photo of 1933 Cliff May Beardsley House in San Diego.	7
Figure 3. GIS Graduated Color Map	21
Figure 4. GIS Graduated Color Map	22
Figure 5. Stearling 1945 Bungalow	32
Figure 6. Cliff May Homes Brochure, circa 1955.....	33
Figure 7. The first California-type home in the Washington, DC suburban area, June 25, 1939.	37
Figure 8. The first California-type home in the Washington, DC suburban area, 2012	38
Figure 9. The house at 1105 60th Ave.....	39
Figure 10. "California Styled Bungalow," <i>Washington Post</i> , August 17, 1947	40
Figure 11. "California Styled Bungalow" in Carole Heights. <i>Washington Post</i> , August 17, 1947	41
Figure 12. <i>Washington Post</i> advertisement for Freeman's "California Cottage," July 3, 1949. ...	42
Figure 13. The Revere Model Home built in Alta Vista Terrace near Bethesda.....	43
Figure 14. Map of Alta Vista Terrace 1949.....	44
Figure 15. The Rancher in Bel Air, Maryland.....	47
Figure 16. The Rancher in Bel Air by Levitt and Sons.	48
Figure 17. Washington, DC modernist architect, Charles M. Goodman.....	49
Figure 18. Hammond Woods rambler with prominent chimney. Photo by Paul Seder, 2003.....	51
Figure 19. Interior of 1951 Hammond Woods home. Photo by John Cole.	52
Figure 20. Plat of Rock Creek Woods, 1956	53
Figure 21. The house at 7201 Giddings Road.....	55
Figure 22. Brick Rambler in College Knolls, <i>Washington Post</i> , September 16 1916.....	56
Figure 23. The house at 6206 Stardust Lane.....	57
Figure 24. The house at 6310 Redwing Rd.....	57
Figure 25. The house at 4716 Nicholson St.....	64
Figure 26. The house at 5203 Lackawanna Street	65
Figure 27. The house at 9607 52nd Ave	65
Figure 28. The house at 7003 Independence Street. A "split-foyer" ranch.	66
Figure 29. The house at 8420 Rambler Drive.....	67
Figure 30. The house at 5104 Wapakoneta Rd	68
Figure 31. The house at 5006 Wapakoneta Rd.....	68
Figure 32. The house at 5923 Cable Ave.....	69
Figure 33. The house at 1506 Fenwood Ave	69
Figure 34. The house at 6206 Stardust Lane.....	70
Figure 35. The house at 7323 Radcliffe Drive.....	71
Figure 36. The house at 5229 Westpath Rd.....	71
Figure 37. The house at 8511 Longfellow Place	72
Figure 38. The house at 6306 Haviland Drive.....	72
Figure 39. The house at 7304 Radcliffe Drive.....	73
Figure 40. The house at 7302 Radcliffe Drive.....	73

Introduction

“More people than you can shake a stick at would like to move into a new-ranch-type home with three bedrooms, 1 ½ baths, picture windows and privacy—and buy the house for around \$10,000,” according to *The Washington Post* in 1950.ⁱ The Joiner family, Fred and Mildred, searched for several years from the end of the 1940s to 1950 before settling down in Montgomery County, near Ednor, Maryland, ten miles north of the Washington, DC boundary. With three young boys, they looked for a house that could accommodate an active family, at a price Fred could afford. Like many families in 1949, Fred and Mildred found a plan for their ranch house in a magazine, and hired a contractor to build the house. “We think, [Fred said in an interview with the Washington Post] that it was the only way to get the type of house we wanted that was within our means.”ⁱⁱ The Joiners’ story is typical of families in the Washington, DC suburban area in the middle of the 20th century. Fred worked as a managing editor at the Bureau of National Affairs, a job in the city to which he commuted daily. His job afforded him the choice to build the style of house he wanted, within a neighborhood of mixed housing types.

Ranch houses built before 1967 are now eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, as they have crossed the 50-year threshold. The ubiquitous suburban housing type was popular across the nation from the 1940s to the 1970s, with their long and low forms coming in many stylistic variations. The state of Maryland contains a large number of ranch houses, but a typological study of the regional variations in the state has not been completed, and their commonplace nature may exclude them from consideration for the National Register and the Maryland Inventory. Developing a local typology and historic context will also aid future Section 106 projects by providing a baseline from which to evaluate integrity and significance. This work

will begin with a discussion of significance and integrity as they apply to ranch houses, and more broadly the built environment of the recent past.

Alan Hess, a California-based architect and architectural historian, and author of *The Ranch House*, claims that traditional academics and scholars of planning have avoided suburbia as a topic to the detriment of the field.ⁱⁱⁱ Now because of the 50-year threshold for eligibility on the National Register of Historic Places, preservationists and planners are forced to consider the significance and integrity of suburban resources such as the ranch house. Currently, no ranch houses in Maryland are individually listed under criterion C of the National Register, defined as the embodiment of “distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.”^{iv} However, this omission does not mean that ranch houses are ineligible from listing under criterion C. Historic districts across the country, and in Maryland, have set the precedent that ranch houses are eligible for consideration under this criterion, and the absence of individually significant ranch houses under criteria A and C is suspect. This report will identify several candidates for consideration within its contextual study.

The Georgia State Historic Preservation Office published a report in 2010 which studies ranch houses in the state, and considered the national, state, and local contexts for the houses.^v The document functions as a field guide to the different types of ranch houses that exist in the state. Inspired by the Georgia report’s context for the Atlanta suburban area, this project aims to apply this report methodology to the Washington, DC suburbs. Maryland has scattered resource reports, general mid-century studies, suburban development contexts, and neighborhood nominations, but no complete study focused specifically on ranch houses.

As the Georgia study identified ranch houses through windshield survey, and aimed at creating a starting point for further research, their approach and scope easily translated into the timeline of this final project. The Georgia report focuses its contextual study on the suburban development after WWII, with Atlanta at the epicenter of this development.^{vi} Both Washington, DC and Baltimore have experienced similarly impactful development in this period, but the Maryland suburban area outside of Washington, DC was selected due to proximity and abundance of resources, both built and textual. The subdivisions, models, architects and builders discussed in this work are by no means an exhaustive list of every ranch house, neighborhood, and associated person in Maryland. It is meant to serve as a field guide to this resource and its context within the Washington, DC suburban built environment.

In following the model set out by the Georgia SHPO, I conducted a windshield study of neighborhoods within the boundary marked by I-495, the Beltway that surrounds Washington, DC. I used a survey form (Appendix) to identify the character defining features of the ranches. Through the literature review component of the project, sources integral to ranch house history were identified and reviewed for their applicability to this survey area. *The Washington Post* was especially helpful as a primary source.

Great diversity exists in Washington, DC area ranch houses. Ranch houses were built in Maryland either as individual units in a mixed-housing type neighborhood by individual homeowners, or they were built as tract housing by developers. The developer purchased multiple lots, built one or several different house designs on that land, and sold the homebuyer both the house and lot as a unit.

Finally, this work concludes with recommendations to treat ranch houses in the same manner as other historic buildings. Planners should apply the Secretary of the Interior Standards

for Rehabilitation to ranch houses that possess high integrity. Because of the diversity of ranch houses within the Washington, DC suburban area alone, Maryland should develop a context report for determining significance and integrity of ranch houses statewide. Additionally, because of the difficulties in collecting data related to ranch houses, I recommend that the Maryland Historical Trust and National Park Service update their inventory and register digital search features to facilitate better research on under-studied mid-century properties.

Chapter 1. Significance and Integrity: The Challenge of Applying Historic Eligibility Criteria to Ranch Houses

Significance and integrity are the two most defining criteria for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, the federal list of historically important buildings, sites, and structures, and the Maryland Inventory, a more inclusive state register. Though significance and integrity matter for technical eligibility, they really come down to the capacity of a building to convey why it matters. Significance relates to the very human reasons for caring about a property, such as nostalgia, community history, beauty, or superlative qualities. Integrity relates to how much historic material remains. As this section will explore, there are degrees of integrity, and there are many possible reasons for why a building is valued and considered historically significant.^{vii} Preservation challenges arise from conflicts of value and integrity, and will also be discussed.

Significance

In order to be determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, a building or district must be considered significant, under one or more of four criteria, and have sufficient integrity to convey that significance. Criteria A, B, C, and D are codes for the type of significance a property has. Properties significant under criterion A are important for their association with events that shaped American history; under B for their association with a historically significant person; under C for exemplifying a historical type or architectural importance or influence; and under D for their archaeological potential. At the state level, to be listed on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP), a property must be significant “to broader patterns of

American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, or culture following the National Register standards.^{viii}

Under criterion B, the Rachael Carson house, at 11701 Berwick Road, in Colesville, Maryland near Silver Spring, was listed on the National Register, and designated a national landmark, in 1991 (Figure 1). The house is significant as the location where Carson wrote the groundbreaking environmental book, *Silent Spring*, in 1962. Carson lived at this address from 1957 to 1964, and she was the home's first owner, having it built to her specifications.^{ix} Today, the ranch house is home to the Rachel Carson Landmark Alliance.



Figure 1. The Rachel Carson house, in Colesville, Maryland.

The Rachel Carson house is an exceptional example of a designated ranch house. To date, few ranch houses have been listed under criterion B, though as greater temporal distance is gained from the events of the mid-to late-20th century, more are likely to become eligible for

their associations with significant persons and events. Likewise, few ranch houses on the East Coast are listed under criterion A, association with significant historical events.



Figure 2. 1970s photo of 1933 Cliff May Beardsley House in San Diego.

Criterion C is of most interest in this study, as it relates to the significance of ranch houses as examples of an architectural type. Ranch houses have been listed under criterion C, as architecturally influential or for their contributions to a significant type. This is defined as buildings, sites, or structures “that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.”^x According to the 50-year threshold for determination of eligibility, the number of ranch

houses that are eligible for consideration increases every year. Ranch houses designed by architecture giants like Cliff May have been listed on the National Register as nationally significant under criterion C. May's Beardsley House, a hacienda-style ranch house built in 1933 in San Diego, is listed under criterion C (Figure 2).^{xi} Following this logic, the first ranch house in Montgomery County, built in 1939, could be determined eligible for the National Register under criterion C, yet it is not currently listed.

Integrity

The National Park Service lists seven criteria for integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Integrity of location considers whether a building has been moved from its original site. Design is "the composition of elements that constitute the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property," while allowing for changes over time.^{xii} Different from location, setting considers the physical environment around the historic resource. How has a neighborhood changed over time? Material integrity determines how much is left from the past. It "determines whether or not an authentic historic resource still exists."^{xiii} Integrity of workmanship requires evaluation of the construction method and materials and asks how much physical evidence is left of the people and their methods of making.

Determinations of integrity can be subjective, such as integrity of feeling. Feeling can be intangible, "dependent on the aid's significant physical characteristic that convey its historic qualities."^{xiv} An example of integrity of feeling is whether sounds of traffic are still heard at a house built originally on a busy street. The question of association is also multilayered. The aforementioned qualities can be combined to "convey integrity of association." Additionally, properties remaining in the same family for generations can also fall into the association category for integrity.^{xv}

Buildings and districts must also demonstrate integrity of character defining features relating to their period of significance. Loss of integrity can be related to degradation in the quality of a structure's character defining features. In the case of ranch houses, the number of stories and fenestration are the two priority features. But unlike other housing types, ranch houses were initially marketed to homebuyers as a model they could expand and alter as their family grew or needs changed. Ranch house plans are typically designed for expansion as a family needs more space or has more funds available.^{xvi} This means that many additions are in keeping with the spirit of the buildings and could be appropriate on a situational basis.

Significance and Values

Unlike integrity, significance is not based on the physical condition of a building. Significance instead is the attachment of values to the meaning of why a property is important. Individuals may have different ideas about what makes something significant, based on their own values and experiences. Randal Mason, author of "Theoretical and Practical Arguments for Values Centered Preservation" argues that " 'significance' is drawn from the values of which we speak," and that values refer to the multiplicity of reasons a building, structure, or site may be important to someone.^{xvii}

A variety of research questions stem from contemplation of these values. When builders had choice of design, why was the ranch house favored? In neighborhoods where developers sold lots to individual families, each family had a choice of whatever housing type to build on their lot. When stylistically unrestricted, why did so many families choose ranch-style houses? Which attributes mattered to the architect, to the builder, and to the homeowner? How are these attributes valued today? As this study will elaborate, ranch style homes were designed to be built quickly and inexpensively, and allowed homeowners to attain a certain lifestyle. To the military

veteran, ranch houses were an affordable option thanks to federal housing programs. To the young family, a ranch floor plan allowed for pre-designed expansion. Today, ranch houses in some zip codes, like in Prince George's County near southeast Washington, DC, still function in a similar way, as an affordable family home. In other areas, such as Montgomery County near North West DC, the land on which a ranch house sits may be valued more highly than the building. Stylistic, social and cultural, and economic values all may be considered valid reasons for significance.^{xviii}

Listing on the National Register is one way that the significance of a property is formally confirmed. However, the criteria do not recognize all potential values. In many nominated suburban residential districts, the ranch houses in the neighborhood are listed as non-contributing. Largely this is because the nominations placed the period of significance as an earlier period. This is not always the case, however, as a 2012 National Register nomination update for the town of University Park resulted in several ranch houses changing from non-contributing to contributing, based on a boundary increase and updated period of significance. Of note is Jim Henson's house in University Park, a ranch house where the puppeteer and film maker lived for 10 years while attending high school and the University of Maryland between 1949-1959, which is listed as contributing to the historic district as a modern-movement/ranch style house.^{xix} Unlike the Carson house, the Henson home is only recognized under criterion C. Several other ranch-style properties in University Park are listed as non-contributing "no style/rectangular," while others with minor differences are listed as "modern movement/rectangular" or "modern movement/ranch."^{xx} These examples suggest that there is inconsistency in how historic districts determine whether ranch houses are contributing or non-contributing features.

Preservation Challenges

Ranch houses are a special circumstance for preservation. They ushered in a new convention for modern building, and preservationists will be obliged to address the repercussions as more and more tract homes become eligible based on age. Their preservation faces several specific challenges; their small size limits potential non-residential uses, there are large numbers of them, and they face significant bias in the preservation community.

If ranch houses become unsuitable for housing, what is to be done? In most cases, they would be considered too small to be a museum, and in a residential neighborhood high-traffic visitation would be unwelcome. But that is something to consider for ranch houses significant under criterion B, relating to an important person. Rachael Carson's house, for example, is not open to the public year-round. Instead, it is used as office and research space and is open on occasion, eliminating concern for public parking in a residential setting. Maintaining ranch houses as private residences is still their best hope for sustainable use.

Scarcity is often a reason to argue for the preservation of a certain type of structure. However, due to the large number of ranch houses, there is little justification for this argument at the present time. The MHT rejected the Ballard historic district, in Clinton, Prince George's County, contending that the neighborhood is ineligible under criterion A because it was not a "superlative" example; not the earliest, most innovative, or the most inspirational to other builders. It is ineligible under criterion B for lacking association with significant historical persons or events. It is also ineligible under criterion C because, as they argue, the neighborhood lacks integrity of design, character, setting, and association.^{xxi} MHT concluded that the houses found in Ballard are abundant elsewhere. This issue is one that many post-war neighborhoods face in seeking historic designation according to National Register standards.

Indeed, the abundance of ranch houses challenges the federal review mechanism for historic preservation. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires that a study must be done on the effects of a project on historic structures when federal money is spent or permits are issued.^{xxii} The study must determine if historic resources are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic places based on four criteria. If the undertaking is to have an adverse effect on the property, a mitigation strategy could be implemented by the agency working in tandem with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Georgia's Environmental Policy Act of 1991 and the State Agency Historic Property Stewardship Program together function like a Section 106 review, applying to state agencies, funding, and permits.^{xxiii} Acts that function like Section 106 review at the state level are called "little 106" laws. Maryland also has similar legislation, The Maryland Historical Trust Act of 1985, which requires that state entities consult with the MHT on projects potentially affecting properties eligible for the National Register. These laws are important as ranch houses continue to cross the 50-year threshold and because they are so abundant in both states, and consultation with the SHPOs for undertakings that could impact them are required by either federal and/or state law. Because of their abundance, contextual studies undertaken in advance would save a great amount of research time when a Section 106 review is triggered. If fieldworkers can quickly and thoroughly assess the significance and integrity of ranch houses facing development pressure, a more informed recommendation could be made through the 106 processes.^{xxiv}

The concept of the cultural landscape might also help allow for contextual studies of ranch houses. The National Park Service defines a cultural landscape as "a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values."^{xxv} Different

from a historic district, cultural landscapes may or may not include buildings or structures. However, the language of cultural landscapes may be useful in framing the concept of suburban neighborhoods as designed landscapes where the buildings and street are not accidental in their pairing. Picture windows most clearly demonstrate the crucial relationship ranch houses have to their contextual settings, as they were designed for connecting units together by view sheds and literally and figuratively framing domestic life. *Historic Residential Suburbs* recognizes their relationship between suburban neighborhoods and developments and their landscaping and advocates preserving them as a unit.^{xxvi}

Because the process of subdividing rural land, and the resulting proliferation of ranch houses, was what early preservationists were largely reacting against, there is still a bias against tract housing forms that exists today. “Most people perceive representative buildings from the recent past as a part of the current world,” writes Richard Longstreth, a staunch defender of mid-century architecture.^{xxvii} In his article, “Significance of the Recent Past,” Longstreth shapes parameters for the study and preservation of the mid-century built environment. In doing so, he emphasizes the need to apply preservation principles consistently without being blinded by the pitfalls of age. Age bias, he argues, is especially detrimental to preserving the recent past, because buildings are being torn down before their significance is addressed.^{xxviii}

Chapter 2. Methodology

Georgia Survey

The National Register of Historic Places criteria are difficult to apply to ranch houses, because significance of such a ubiquitous housing type is rarely considered, and with such variation integrity can be difficult to assess. This is not universally true, but outside of California the Georgia SHPO is rare in the creation of a guide for assessing the significance and integrity of ranch houses to apply the National Register standards. In response to the need for a Section 106 compliance guide for ranch houses, Georgia surveyors and preservationists developed a context report to better understand their mid-century building stock. Their final report begins by identifying the national context for ranch houses, when they were first built, their spread from California to the East Coast, and their initial construction in Georgia. It documents the history of the ranch house and its development in Georgia, identifies character defining features and stylistic variations to form a typology, and puts the chronology of ranch houses in Georgia into a national social and cultural context.^{xxix}

The Georgia SHPO website hosts many statewide contexts which are specific and reflect some of the nuances of the Georgia built environment. Three studies, *Modern Apartment Complexes in Georgia, 1936-1954*; *Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in Georgia, 1868-1971*; and *Single-Family Residential Development in Dekalb County, Georgia 1945-1970*, are specific, resource-based, context reports that provide relatively detailed knowledge about a historical period for researchers.^{xxx} These publications developed by the SHPO show careful attention to the necessity of contexts reports for resources that may be ignored by the traditional preservation and architectural historical canon. After a five-year research project, The Georgia

team concluded that ranch houses “are old enough, they are important enough, and they have been studied enough” to be considered historic. ^{xxxix}

The report is laid out as a functioning guide, beginning with the historic context of the ranch house as written by the Historic Preservation Department, followed by a heavily illustrated visual guide designed to help researchers conducting fieldwork. Following the visual guide is a chapter on the geography of Georgia ranch houses, a chapter with suggested “guidelines for survey and evaluation,” and concluding with the identification of “historic contexts for future research.”^{xxxix} The work in Georgia was shepherded by deputy SHPO, Dr. Richard Cloues, who devoted particular attention to the ranch-style house.

The history of the ranch house in Georgia replicates the national story of the ranch house. As identified in the Georgia report, historically the ranch house form comes from 19th century cattle ranch house precedents from the western states. Cliff May, the California architect most often associated with the popularization of the ranch house form in the mid-1930s, promoted a new casual style of living integrated with the outdoors through single-story houses. The housing form spread rapidly from West to East through national magazines like *Sunset*, *Home and Garden*, and *Architectural Digest*. ^{xxxix}

After WWII, the FHA, GI Bill, and population growth exponentially increased housing demand. Georgia’s regional distinctions stem from the collapse of the cotton market shortly before this time. Atlanta and its suburbs grew dramatically, and the earliest examples of ranch houses in Georgia come from Atlanta area suburbs. “Between 1940 and 1960, over 175,000 Ranch Houses were built in Georgia, housing approximately two-thirds of the state’s new residents.”^{xxxix} The development of the I-85 and I-75, statewide transportation corridors, increased mobility and improved traffic flow around Atlanta. A growing military presence at Forts Gordon,

Stewart, and Benning, Moody Air Force Base, and Robbins Air Force Base that occurred throughout the 1940s also contributed to increased housing demands in those areas. The earliest ranch houses in Georgia were built just before the war. Georgia Tech architecture graduates W. Montgomery Anderson and James Wilkinson built some of the earliest ranch houses in Georgia. Anderson's designs focused on a red brick "trim house with simple lines," while Wilkinson favored a butterfly-roofed contemporary open-plan house. As the report concluded, red brick is a characteristic material of Georgia ranch houses. The typology discusses styles, including no style, and studied materials, layouts, massing, roof types, windows, other applied decoration, and porch supports as character defining features of different ranch house types.^{xxxv}

Application of Georgia Report

The authors set up the report with several conclusions and assumptions that correlate with Maryland. Ranch houses "dominate" Georgia's mid-century residential built environment, with "as many as 175,000 built between 1940 and 1960."^{xxxvi} Maryland too has a substantial stock of ranch houses, which is evident through windshield and satellite survey, and by tracking development trends.

Because of the quantity, age, and integrity of the state's ranch houses, the Georgia report concludes that a vast number are eligible for Section 106 compliance review, and their response was to create a contextual report and guide to assist in the process. Likewise, Maryland is facing the same Section 106 compliance challenges, and also has a vast number of eligible resources. Therefore a context guide, like the Georgia report, is an appropriate response to this need.

The Georgia authors addressed the problem of study methodology in relation to ranch houses. Ranch houses, they argue, do not require new survey tools, but an "expansion of existing survey tools."^{xxxvii} This raises the question, what tools are they referring to, and does Maryland

have more and better tools, or fewer tools? What is the state of mid-century survey resources in Maryland? This project seeks to explore that question, identify existing tools, and consider where there is room for improvement.

The authors of the Georgia study conclude that there are regional aesthetic and functional variations in ranch house design, but pattern books, newspapers, and magazines are responsible for a national aesthetic. Their identification of typical traits in Georgia ranch houses is a feature of the report and typical traits of Maryland ranch houses may be compared to test the national aesthetic theory.

As Georgia did not have a statewide survey of mid-century resources, their report relied heavily on windshield surveys, fieldwork, and “reconnaissance surveys of targeted areas.”^{xxxviii} The authors also relied on Section 106 reports and National Register nominations to determine survey target areas. They are quick to call out their report as a “working document,” but it is the most thorough resource report of any eastern state.

Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties are similar to the Atlanta suburbs in their rapid post-war growth. The Georgia report is usable, designed for testing and application, and this region of Maryland makes an appropriate case study. The history of how ranch houses were built in the states is similar, as they were among the first developments built by a single entity with standardized house designs.

Geographically, neither Georgia nor Maryland naturally fits into the mythology of the “old west” that captured the national imagination in the middle of the 20th century. Therefore, they also make an interesting pair to compare with western states. Maryland’s climate is more moderate than Georgia’s, but neither has the climate of California, where indoor-outdoor living

was popularized. Ranches in both states are adapted from the California model to suit their topography and climatic differences.

Ranch House Reports Elsewhere

In addition to Georgia, other states have prepared reports for ranch houses. California is more aware of its ranch houses, naturally, since they have a longer history with the housing type. The City of Los Angeles has a citywide context report for ranch houses with subthemes divided chronologically, stylistically, and socially.^{xxxix} Designed to help field surveyors assess significance and integrity, the report is similar to the Georgia SHPO report in its content and stylistic guide. These reports contribute to a growing national literature and contextualization of ranch houses, and trends show increasing attention paid to mid-century housing resources. As such, this project contributes to that growing knowledge base.

Resources for mid-century architecture styles as well as for the suburbanization theme have been developed for Maryland. In November 1999, the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway administration released the report, “Suburbanization Historic Context and Survey Methodology: 1-495/I-95 Capital Beltway Corridor Transportation Study, Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties, Maryland.”^{xl} Covering residential building types from row homes to Victorian styles to split-levels, commercial property styles, and maps beginning in 1794, the report provides context for how this region of Maryland fits into larger national trends of suburbanization and focuses on resources within high-construction areas. The downside to this report is that, by necessity, it covers each type of resource only briefly, and there is still need for more detailed context and typological reports for ranch houses.

Method

The survey area was determined by reasonable proximity to Washington DC. Informally, the area inside I-495, the beltway, is considered the metropolitan suburbs. Highway construction began in 1961, and creates a barrier that divides “inside” from “outside” and is a logical separating point based on the development of neighborhoods on either side of the road. Housing advertisements in the 1960s referenced convenient location to the “proposed” Capital Beltway, indicating desirability of housing within proximity to the road.^{xli} Prince George’s and Montgomery Counties share the area of land located inside the beltway but outside the Washington, DC boundary. However, the suburban region was more fluid before the construction of the beltway, and builders before and after 1961 worked on both sides of the road. Therefore, while the artificial boundary was defined for ease of survey, this paper is not limited to selecting from examples exclusively from this location.

To get a sense of where there is greater density of mid-century housing in the survey area, I created a basic map in ARC GIS 10.3 to study clusters and trends of mid-century housing. The trends show a higher concentration around the northwest and southeast corners of Washington DC (Figures 3 and 4). From the 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates (ACS) published by the Census Bureau via American Fact Finder, in 2015 there were 2,166,389 occupied housing units in Maryland. Of these, 53.2% are single detached units. A total of 955,377 units, or 44% of all occupied housing units in the state were built between 1940 and 1979. In Montgomery County, the number of occupied housing units built between 1940 and 1979 is higher than the state average, at 176,408 units, or 48.3% of the total. Prince George’s county has an even higher percentage, with 54.9% of the county’s units built between 1940-1979.^{xlii}

The ACS data lists the number of single detached units per county, but it does not specify the construction date ranges by type of unit. Therefore, it is not possible to determine from this data how many single detached units were built in each county between 1940-1979. However, when further broken down by voting district, the data shows which districts have a higher percent of the total number of housing units built between 1950-1959 and 1960-1969. Using this data, I created a choropleth thematic map, to show where the highest number of housing out of the total was built between 1950-1959 and 1960-1969. The darkest color blue in the choropleth maps (Figures 3 and 4) indicate the highest concentration of construction between the given dates, and as the colors descend to light blue, robin's egg blue, green, and dark green, the concentration decreases accordingly. The legend represents percentage of housing in the county built in the given year. Figure 3 shows that the dark blue districts contain between 10.8- 24.3% of the county's total housing built from 1950-1959. This means the darkest blue areas have the highest concentrations of mid-century housing, and therefore are likely to have the most variation within the smallest area. Because the land area of Prince George's County is about twice the size of the area of Montgomery County within the survey boundary, one-third of houses in the survey came from Montgomery County, and two-thirds of the houses came from Prince George's County.

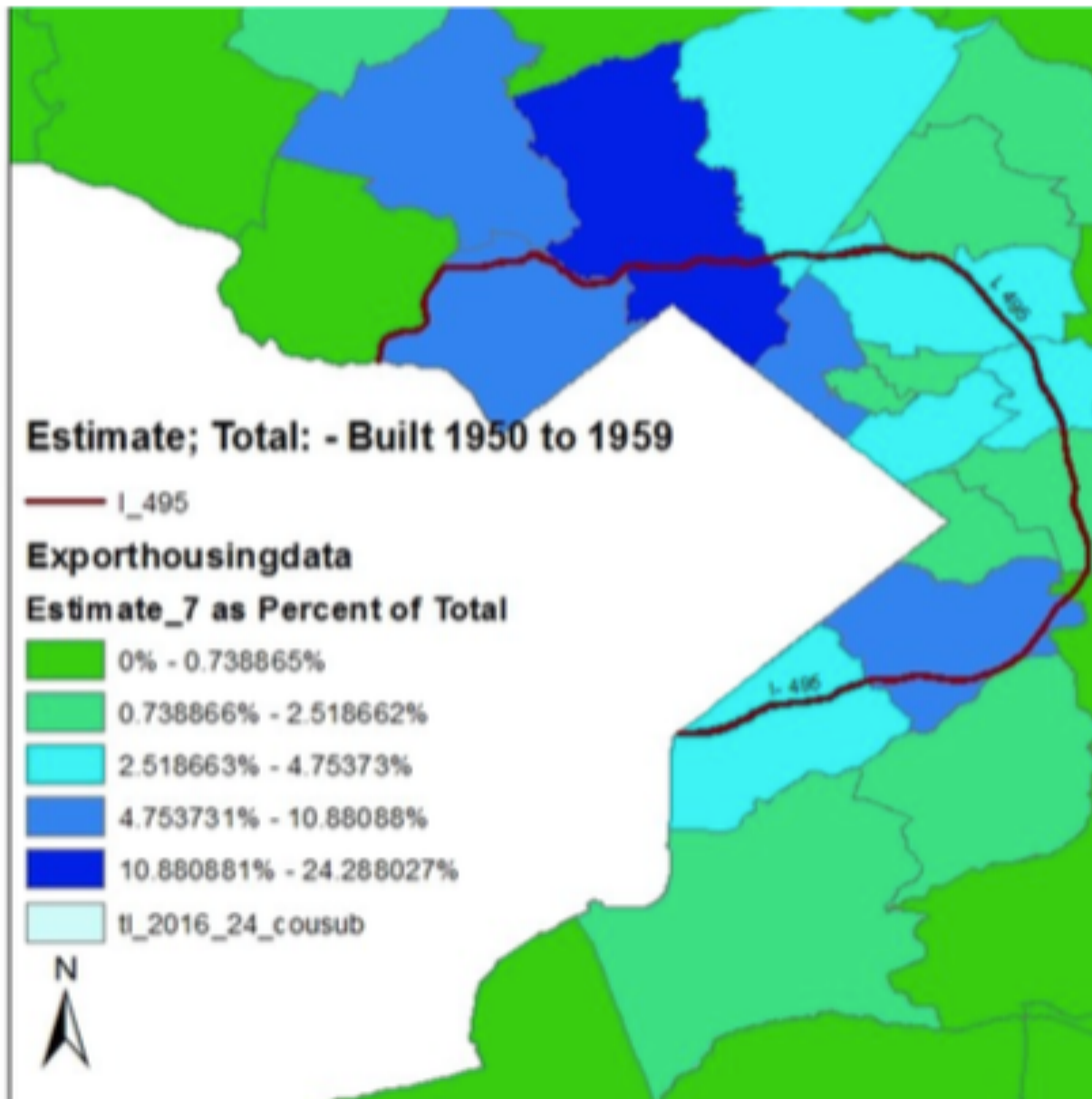


Figure 3. GIS Graduated Color Map. The darkest blue shows the highest concentration of new house construction between 1950-1959 based on US Census datasets.

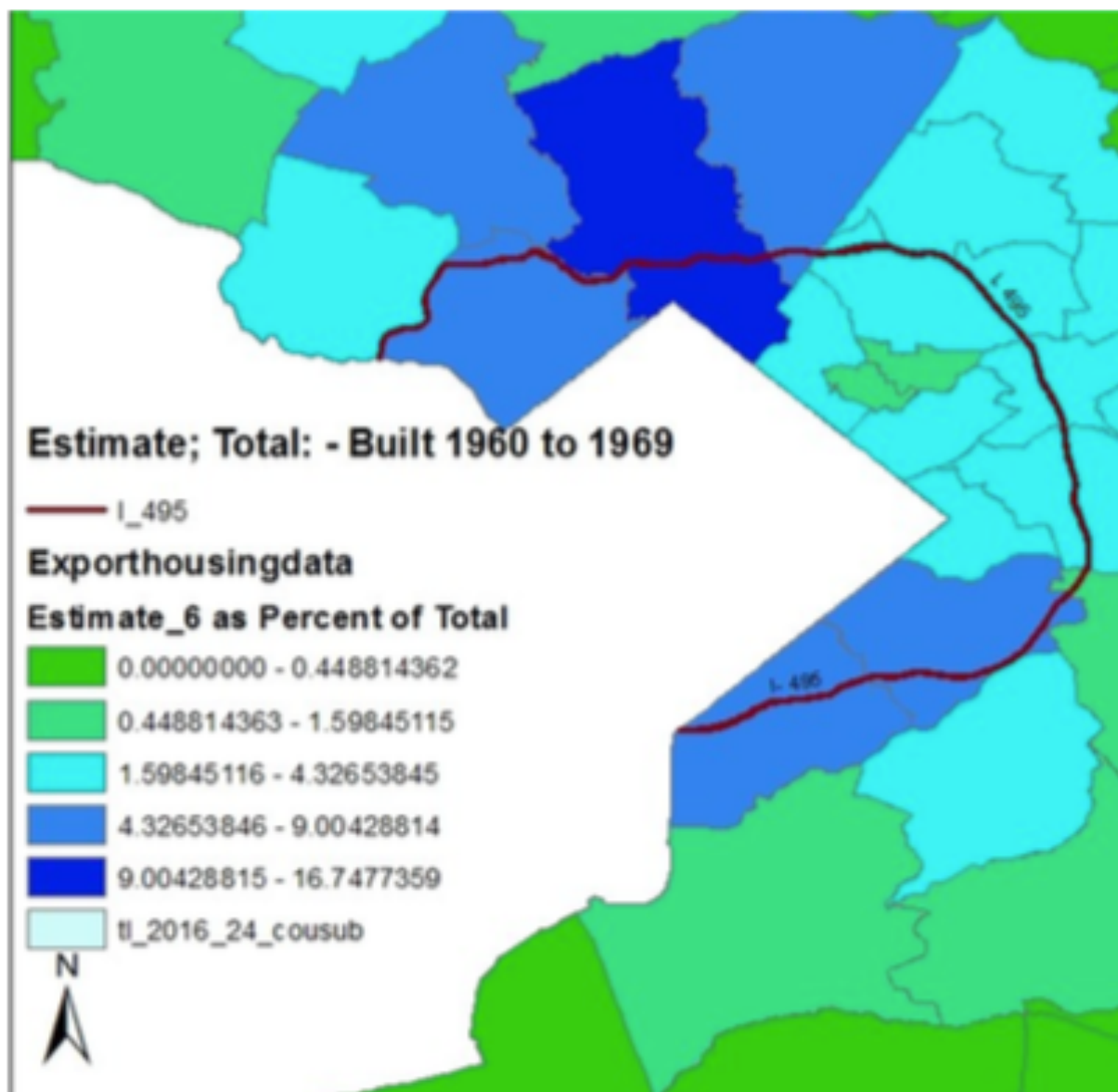


Figure 4. GIS Graduated color map showing new housing construction between 1960 and 1969. The darkest blue shows highest density of housing.

In order to determine which ranch houses to study, I examined a satellite map of the survey area to discern clusters of roof-types. Ranch houses are identifiable for their long and low profiles, and often rectangular roofs with the long sides facing the road. This preliminary determination was followed by a windshield survey, both by driving around physically and “driving” down the road by using Street View in Google Maps. Photographs were taken of 190 ranch houses,

with careful attention paid to represent examples of every type. A 190-sample survey size was selected as a number sufficient to capture most variations of ranch houses in the region, in a short time frame, and was enough of a sample to allow for detailed analysis.

Neighborhoods were selected based on the GIS density map, from a roofline search on Google maps, newspaper accounts, and from driving assessments. The locations represented in the survey area are: Glen Echo (chartered 1904), Woodburn, Bannockburn (1946),^{xliii} Alta Vista (late 19th century), Chevy Chase (1890s), Woodside, Woodside Park (1920s), Forest Glen, Silver Spring (1840), Daleview (census designated), Aspen Hill (1926/1950s),^{xliv} Capitol Heights (1905/1909) which includes Coral Hills (unincorporated), Peppermill Village (unincorporated), and Walker Mill (incorporated), Fairmount Heights (1900-1923), Woodlawn, Greater Landover (census designated 2000), Queens Chapel Manor (1940s), Avondale (late 1930s),^{xlv} Edmonston (1742), Hyattsville (1886), Berwyn Heights (1896), University Park (1935), College Park (1945), including Adelphi; Takoma Park (1890), Franklin Knolls (1940s), New Carrollton (1953), District Heights (1936), Forestville (census designated 2000), Suitland (census designated), Morningside (1949), and Woodscorner and Hillcrest Heights (census designated). Census designation refers to places not formally incorporated, but identified by population density and assigned an artificial boundary based on census data, and therefore does not have an associated starting date.

Suburban planning and development is a significant part of the evolution of ranch houses and how they are treated, and so planning literature was consulted in conjunction with the survey area selection in the aforementioned areas. Celeste J Sakowicz's study, "Urban Sprawl: Florida's and Maryland's Approaches," in *Journal of Land Use & Environmental Law*, predominantly concerns post-1990 smart growth strategies in Maryland and Florida, but there is a brief history of the necessity of such strategies which references the ranch house era of popularity. This con-

sideration of two different approaches to problems created by suburbanization helps contextualize the post-ranch house era and addresses some of the complications in how suburban sprawl is understood today. Subdivision survey reports from the Maryland National Capitol Parks and Planning Commission, (MNCPPC) in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties were undertaken between 2000 and 2010, and address the history and demographics of the subdivisions. The reports include the results of windshield surveys detailing the housing types and their distribution, historic districts boundaries, and lists of identified historic resources, and includes photographs of typical examples. Many subdivision reports include ranch houses as a recognized housing type.^{xlvi}

The areas listed represent a mix of community types, individual neighborhoods, and conglomerations of several developments. They also represent several different phases of suburbanization. Glen Echo and Alta Vista were early streetcar suburbs, in which ranch houses were built as mid-century in-fill. Bannockburn, on the other hand, was chartered in 1946 and is known for its "mid-mod" ramblers.^{xlvii} Some communities, like University Park, have dwellings built individually by the first homeowners, while others, like Takoma Avenue in Takoma Park, are single-developer communities. They were selected specifically to study variations of ranch house styles between models selected by homeowners versus those favored by developers. While there are ranch houses in communities within the survey area that are not on this list, the sample locations reflect the appropriate variety within the area based on the windshield survey.

One of the primary tasks in determining the constraints of this survey was deciding what iteration of the ranch house to be surveyed. The earliest ranch houses in Maryland were referred to as "California style cottages," and subsequent versions had different influences. For this assessment, primary sources are especially useful. Newspaper accounts from the 1950s and 1960s fre-

quently included photographs of what they called ranches, ranchers, ramblers, and the like. The *Washington Post* was consulted frequently during the writing and research process, as it was a leading transmitter of the ranch house idea in the Washington area. Featured in articles, columns, and advertisements, the *Washington Post* shows ranch houses in contexts of other regional developments. This visual guide was informed by descriptions in the *Washington Post* and helps articulate what was considered a ranch house when they were built. Further confounding the definition is the distinction between developments, and communities made from individually sold lots. Both types have ranch houses, but in single-origin developer communities, there are several models repeated around a planned design, different from the infinite possible variety of house styles and types when lots are sold to homeowners to design themselves.^{xlviii}

The windshield identification component of my study was informed by primary sources. Magazines helped popularize the ranch style in the national imagination. *Architectural Forum*, *House Beautiful*, and especially *Sunset*, brought the ranch out of the neighborhood and into the living room of families across the country. Advertisements in popular magazines such as *Life*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and *Better Homes and Gardens*, depicted women thrilled to have the advantages and modern luxuries afforded by neat and tidy compact floor plans, and the latest time-saving appliances. *Sunset* magazine, a popular monthly guide to western living, published *Sunset: Western Ranch Houses*, a guide to building your own ranch-style house in 1946. It uses an interesting definition of a ranch house that places emphasis on the difference between appearance and function. That a family is able to use their house to maximize living time outdoors is more important than the house stylistically looking like a ranch house, according to the editors of *Sunset*.^{xlix}

The period of significance also constrained the survey to ranch houses falling within certain dates. As the first ranch house in Montgomery County was constructed in 1939, that date begins the period of significance. Finding the end date is more challenging, as the decline of ranch houses was slow. Generally, the period between 1945 and 1965 is referenced as the national period of significance for ranch houses, but in the Washington, DC area, 1939 is the earliest date of construction and therefore the beginning of the period of significance.¹ In local historic districts, 1939 is not recognized as the beginning of the ranch house period, as the post-war period is the accepted start of significance. In the late 1960s, vernacular copies of ranch house designs become more prevalent, and by the 1970s their rate of construction slowed. This holds true in the survey area, and no buildings surveyed were built after 1963.

Ranch houses are abundant in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties, designed for the homebuyer who had "dreamed of the house with everything, and something to spare."^{li} The neighborhoods specifically surveyed represent two main types: mixed developments and tract developments. In mixed developments, individual property owners chose which house style to build based on popular styles at the time of construction, cost, lot size, and family needs. In tract developments, a single developer or architectural firm built the homes and sold both house and lot to their buyers. In this instance, the developer selected either one or several house models and dispersed them throughout the neighborhood. The result is homogenous, as opposed to the mixed developments. *Suburbanization Historic Context and Survey Methodology* defines these two types through the terms "neighborhood" and "development." Neighborhood, as they use the term, refers to a "community of associated structures" not limited to residential dwellings, which is coordinated by some level of planning. Unplanned suburban neighborhoods, conversely, are defined by random growth.^{lii} Developments are "a completed real estate improvement project."^{liii}

For broader context, research was gathered on ranch houses listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Maryland Inventory of Historic Places. The search engines associated with these registers are incomplete, however, and at this time it is not possible to filter individual listings by building type, eligibility criteria, or construction date. Updating both of these search mechanisms would be of great assistance to researchers in the future. As expanding research and survey tools was suggested in the Georgia SHPO report, the digital search mechanism is an example of one tool that could be updated to better serve the research needs, especially for mid-century material with a limited body of literature.

Reports conducted within Maryland and within the survey area provided the most specific local information. In response to highway development along I-95 and 495, Maryland DOT was required under Section 4-F of the Department of Transportation Act (1966) to produce a study of resources potentially affected by project proposals. It resulted in the publication of *Suburbanization Historic Context and Survey Methodology: I95/495 Corridor*, in November 1999.^{liv} This report is the historic context for suburbanization in the area. Beginning with an initial survey of resources, the report outlines the history of suburbanization in the affected Maryland region, proposes a survey methodology, and develops a framework to evaluate the significance of suburban resources. The historic context includes suburban trends on a national level, provides greater state detail, and finally focuses on the Washington capitol region and Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. Crucially, their survey stops at 1953, but they included resources with construction dates through 1960 so that their report would remain valuable until 2009.

Preservationists have been working on ranch houses for the past two decades. But they are treated unsystematically, and comprehensive data is difficult to acquire. Ranch houses and mid-century suburban neighborhoods have, up until recently, been considered on an as-needed basis,

studied when development posed an imminent threat, such as along the I-495 corridor. The following discussion about Maryland context, typology, and decision tree endeavors to treat ranch houses in a more systematic manner.

Chapter 3. Ranch Houses, National and Maryland Context

Different from its earlier precedents, which actually were cattle ranches in the west, ranch houses are defined by their use and the lifestyle that accompanied them. However, the physical characteristics of the buildings have several overlapping definitions that pick up on the character defining features of ranch houses. The first is that they are “long and low.” Typically oriented on a lot so that the long-side faces the street, ranch houses are commonly identified by their low rectangular profiles.

Alan Hess, in his book *The Ranch House*, asserts, “The ranch house is not a simple thing to define,” however, in the 19th century, the word “Ranch” referred to an economic operation and defined the business conducted on the property.^{lv} But the 20th-century use of the term referred to “a real-estate commodity” that “assessors, developers, architects, and critics all used to apply to a range of different sizes, structures, and types.”^{lvi} Hugh L. Morris expressed confusion about the name in a 1957 article in the *Washington Post*: “like many a potential homebuyer, the *Correllator* magazine is unable to figure out what is meant by an ‘Early American Modern,’ a ‘Colonial Ranch,’ a ‘Contemporary Bungalow,’ or a ‘Vertical Rambler.’”^{lvii} At the rate the houses were being built, Morris continues, builders and buyers were unable to keep up with the changes in nomenclature from one town and building incarnation to the next. To abet the confusion, Morris suggests three types to help define what it is that the builders and buyers are demanding. He uses “Traditional,” “Modern,” and “Contemporary” to differentiate between the styles of ranch houses on the market. Traditional ranches are defined “as imitative of styles used in the early period of this country;” modern could have a variety of features such as flat roofs, steel framing, or glass walls; and contemporary houses mixed both past historicist design with “a little from the future.”^{lviii}

Futuristic living meant daily convenience and little luxuries, saved steps, and easy maintenance.^{lix} An article in the *Washington Post* boasts to readers that one ranch house model of the week has heated driveways to melt ice in cold weather, and marble chip on the roof for cool comfort in the summer.^{lx} But that's not all:

Other features include built-in desk nooks, a serve-through window from the kitchen to a rear covered porch, two separate surface cooking units in the kitchen, liquid soap dispensers in all bathrooms and the kitchen, glass fireplace screens which slide open and shut, telephone jacks in all main rooms, a residential fire alarm system, electric garbage disposal, continuous electric outlet strips, and an all purpose unit in the hall bath which includes heater, fan, light, and hair dryer.^{lxi}

These amenities belong to a life of comfort and ease, a part of the new style of living purportedly afforded by ranch house design. Articles with titles such as “Pushbutton Ranch is Wives’ Delight,” and “This split-level ranch has everything,” appeared in the *Washington Post* between 1949 and 1969, describing “tomorrow’s home—today!”^{lxii}

Ranch houses function in two different contexts—rural and suburban. Rural ranch houses have typically larger lot sizes and can be “ramblers,” one-story dwellings with wings that can stretch in any direction from the entry point of the house. These are perhaps closer to 19th-century cattle ranch precedents and have a greater opportunity for integration with the landscape. Suburban ranch houses are the focus of this study, however, as they represent a new style of living in the middle of the 20th century.^{lxiii}

It is a misconception that suburban living was a brand new concept in the post-war years.^{lxiv} From the 19th century, rail-car and trolley-car suburban areas, like Fairmount Heights in Prince Georges' County, were developed with single-family detached homes as the prominent dwelling type. The type of planning and uniformity of suburbia, however, was new and significant in the history of community planning. This matters because preservationists have dealt with other types of suburban housing, and because ranch houses, though new and innovative when they appeared, simultaneously fit into a larger pattern of suburbanization as well as disrupted it with their speed of construction, uniformity, and ubiquity.^{lxv}

Small Suburban Dwellings

Ranch houses were not the only small-footprint houses to appear on the suburban landscape in the 20th century; they fit into the pattern of small and often single-story dwellings constructed in the Washington, DC suburban area, many of which are recognized on the National Register individually or as contributing to Historic Districts under criterion C. The Cape Cod cottage was another form of small house that was built as single units and in tracts. Looking at the development of Cape Cod style suburban houses, bungalows, and other mid-century design types further helped contextualize the ranch house. "Bungalow and Ranch House: The Architectural Backwash of California" by John Mack Faragher, explores the development of both the bungalow and ranch as "humble" responses to post-WWII housing needs.^{lxvi} Specifically, Faragher relates the two separate but related housing types to regional variations and a "changing current" of 20th century development from west to east. His plentiful photographic examples clearly illustrate his typology and definitions.

A development that was built near Rockville in 1947 demonstrates the process: "A 328-acre tract of Rockville farmland was transformed in one year into Veirs Mill Village, a collection of

1,105 identical Cape Cod houses, with four rooms and a basement, selling for an affordable \$8,700.^{lxvii} Cape Cod houses captured a romantic sentiment of the American origin story of the East Coast, as the type of housing of the pilgrims rather than the pioneers, and took the name of the housing style from the New England type house.

Post WWI bungalows, including those manufactured as kit homes by Aladdin, Sterling, and Sears mail order companies, also function similarly to ranch houses (Figure 5). These bungalows typically have their entry on the short side of their rectangular form, which is oriented towards the street, opposite of the ranch house arrangement. One- or two-stories tall, the post-war bungalow could also be built quickly and relatively inexpensively either by a developer or an individual owner.^{lxviii}



Figure 5. This Sterling 1945 Bungalow design shows craftsman influences in a single-story form.

A Brief History of Ranch Houses

Ranch houses were popularized in California when the romantic notion of western life caught the national imagination. California architect Cliff May is famously known to be the father of the modern ranch house, and he popularized the “California lifestyle” way of living; filled with ease, comfort, and casual interactions. A San Diego native, May grew up visiting his family’s 19th-century ranches, Casa de Estudillo and Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores. His early exposure made a lasting impression, and by 1931 he designed his first contemporary rancher inspired by his childhood affection. This language of “Californio” architecture remained in May’s designed ranch houses and the visuals he selected to advertise the properties (Figure 6).^{lxix}



Figure 6. Cliff May Homes brochure, circa 1955.

Allen Hess argues that May had tapped into a deep vein of nostalgia and nativism as, “its imagery linked Americans to one of the nation’s primal myths.”^{lxx} May was not the only architect to draw inspiration from the 19th-century western ranches. William Wurster, Hamilton Harris, and Fred Langhorst, among many other California architects blending the historical ranch style with modern materials, were also supporters of outdoor living emphasized by single-story dwellings.^{lxxi}

Chapter 4. Local Typology

The Washington, DC suburban area has great variety in ranch house forms and styles. There is also variety in the names and terminology associated with them. Since 1939, what today we call ranch houses have had several different names. The earliest names referred to the long and low house's West Coast origin: California house, California styled bungalow, California-style, or California cottage. California, as a descriptive term associated with the ranch house form, doesn't refer to any specific stylistic attribute. Instead, the term describes the idealized lifestyle of the home's occupants. In the mid 1940s, this western identity was solidified through the terms rambler and rancher. In Maryland, rambler and rancher remained in popular use to describe ranch houses through the 1970s. Nationally, the term ranch house grew in popularity through the early 1950s and has remained the most common name for a single-story, rectangular house.

The Georgia report identified 15 different types of ranch houses in the state; compact, linear, linear with clusters, courtyard, half-courtyard, bungalow ranch, rambling ranch, alphabet ranch, contemporary, Wright-influenced, Eichleresque, colonial revival, plain (no style), rustic (western), and Spanish colonial. However, these types can be condensed based on size and level of stylistic detail, into three groups – rectangular, high-style, and asymmetrical– which form the typology presented later in this chapter. Each classification has defining characteristics that group them together, and there are ranges of quality and styles under each type umbrella. The categories are designed to be broad to minimize the differences in terminology. Categorization of ranch houses within Maryland historic districts is unsystematic, and using three categories to describe them could minimize confusion. Currently, ranch houses in Maryland historic districts are described as: rancher, ranch, rambler, modern, vernacular, no style, or plain, leading to confusion

between districts as to why similar houses may be called a vernacular house in one district, and modern in another.

First Ranch House in Montgomery County

Northwood Park, a suburban neighborhood north of Silver Spring, boasts the earliest ranch house in the metropolitan area, built in 1939 (Figures 7-8). The house on 200 Maplewood Avenue in Northwood Park, now 10206 Sutherland Rd in Silver Spring is a classic example of early ranch house design. Exterior changes to the street-facing elevation are few; a new garage door has been installed, shutters removed, window lintels added, and a driveway light was added.

Though not currently listed on the National Register, the house at 10206 Sutherland Road is likely eligible under criteria A and C. Criterion A is for historical significance, and as the first ranch house in Montgomery County it is locally significant. The property has high integrity, keeping in mind the seven principles outlined by the National Park Service. And under criterion C it embodies the distinctive characteristics of early California-style suburban ranch houses, and has the integrity to support it.

The house is on its original site, therefore has integrity of location. It has integrity of design, workmanship, and materials, because all character-defining features are intact and the exterior envelope has not been significantly altered. Finally, it has integrity of feeling and association, because the residential character of the neighborhood has not changed, and the scale of its surroundings is the same as it was through the 1940s. Therefore, the house at 10206 Sutherland Road is a strong candidate for National Register eligibility.

California Type Home in Northwood Park, Md.



Post Staff Photo.

In line with its presentation of nationally famous homes, Garden Homes, Inc., recently completed this charming California traditional-type house from Life Magazine for Mr. and Mrs. William M. Wright, formerly of Silver Spring, at 200 Maplewood avenue, Northwood Park, Md. The all-gas equipment in this house is similar to that being installed in the New York World's Fair home now under construction in this development

Figure 7. The first reference to a single-story California-type home in the Washington, DC suburban area was in the June 25, 1939 issue of the *Washington Post*.



Figure 8. The first California-type home in the Washington, DC suburban area has changed minimally since construction, as seen in 2012.

What has been referred to as the first ranch house in Prince George’s County is misleading. Fairmount Heights is a historically African American suburb with mostly early 20th-century buildings contributing to the historic district. Today Prince George’s County is predominantly African-American, comprising 65% of the population in 2010.^{lxxii} In 1970, however, the county population was about 14% African American, and Fairmount Heights was significantly one of few places in the county that welcomed African American families in the 1940s and 1950s. Many houses from the 1940s-1950s are listed as “one-story gable-front” buildings, with their “short” sides facing the street. The Fairmount Heights nomination also lists a 1931 ranch house, which was deemed non-contributing because of alterations (Figure 9).^{lxxiii} If this date were correct, it would be the first ranch house in Prince George’s County, the Washington, DC suburban

area, and possibly the entire state. The state tax assessment records indicate a 1931 construction date for the primary structure, but closer inspection of the building reveals an unusual ranch-style addition to the front of a front-gable original structure. Alas, what looks on paper to be the first ranch house in Prince George's County is a hybrid.



Figure 9. The house at 1105 60th Ave, Fairmount Heights is composed of a street-facing elevation in ranch-house style, added to a 1931 shotgun house.

Ranch house development occurred simultaneously in the two counties. Wartime housing shortages created a national crisis; but the effects were felt most severely in Washington, DC and the surrounding area. Slow residential construction during the Great Depression, combined with even lower production during WWII, resulted in inadequate housing for veterans when they returned home and prepared to start their own families. Government incentives for returning soldiers, such as the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, encouraged and enabled millions of Americans to own homes for the first time. The 1944 law, known as the GI. Bill, helped veterans

secure low-cost mortgages, among many other benefits. As the population increased, and the home economy stabilized, infrastructure developed as rapidly as possible to keep pace with the population growth. President Eisenhower signed the Federal Highways Act in 1956, which triggered the largest federal road construction initiative to date. The Capital Beltway resulted from this act several years later.^{lxxiv}



Figure 10. Architect Carl Freeman debuts the "California Styled Bungalow" in the August 17, 1947 issue of the *Washington Post*.

Carole Highlands, a planned community near Takoma Park, Maryland, in Montgomery County, is among the first post-war planned developments in the suburban Washington, DC area. The *Washington Post* called the model "well off the beaten track of conventional design."^{lxxv} A native Californian, Freeman worked as a builder before moving to Washington, DC in 1941 (Figures 10-13). In the same year, Freeman bought the land on which he would build Carole Heights. WWII interrupted his building plans, however, and he did not start construction until 1946. In this first article about Freeman's importation of California style, the domestic implica-

tions are already apparent; as “Freeman knows the small touches which women like.”^{lxxvi} This trend in advertising would continue, and through the 1970s advertisements for ranch houses and split-levels play on the convenience of a small floor plan for domestic maintenance. *Practical Builder* called Freeman’s early models in Hillwood Manner, also near Takoma Park, “western bungalows” in a feature article that received national attention.^{lxxvii}

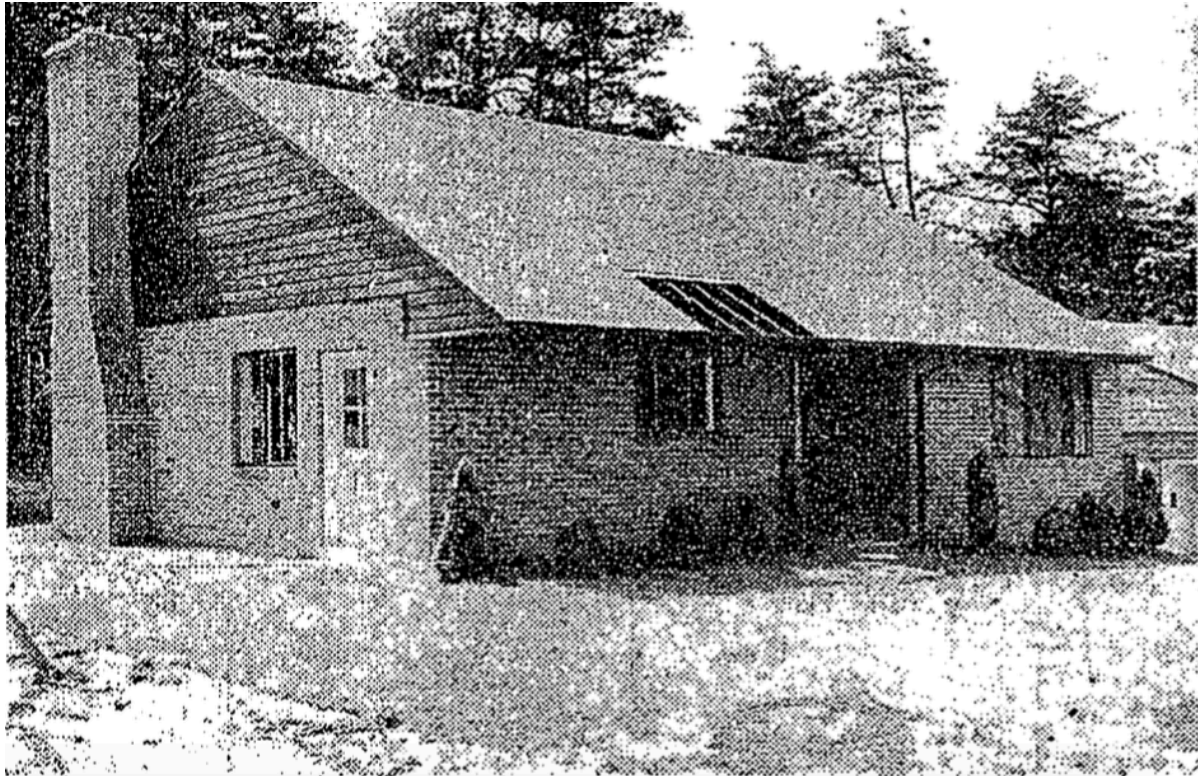
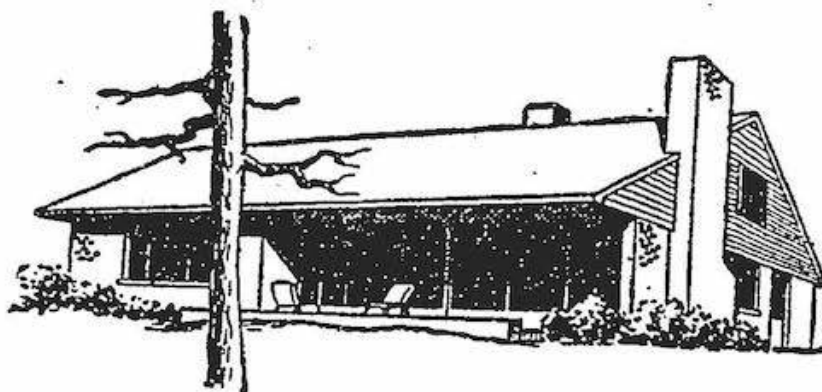


Figure 11. California Styled Bungalow in Carole Heights. *Washington Post*, August 17, 1947.



THE CALIFORNIA COTTAGE

*A Major Triumph in Modern
Comfortable Living, \$13,750*

G.I. and F.H.O. Financing

SAMPLE HOUSE: New Hampshire Avenue to University
Lane, left 2 blocks, right turn at sign to model home.

Carl M. Freeman INC.

1013 15th St. N.W.

EX. 4065

Figure 12. *Washington Post* advertisement for Freeman's "California Cottage," July 3, 1949.

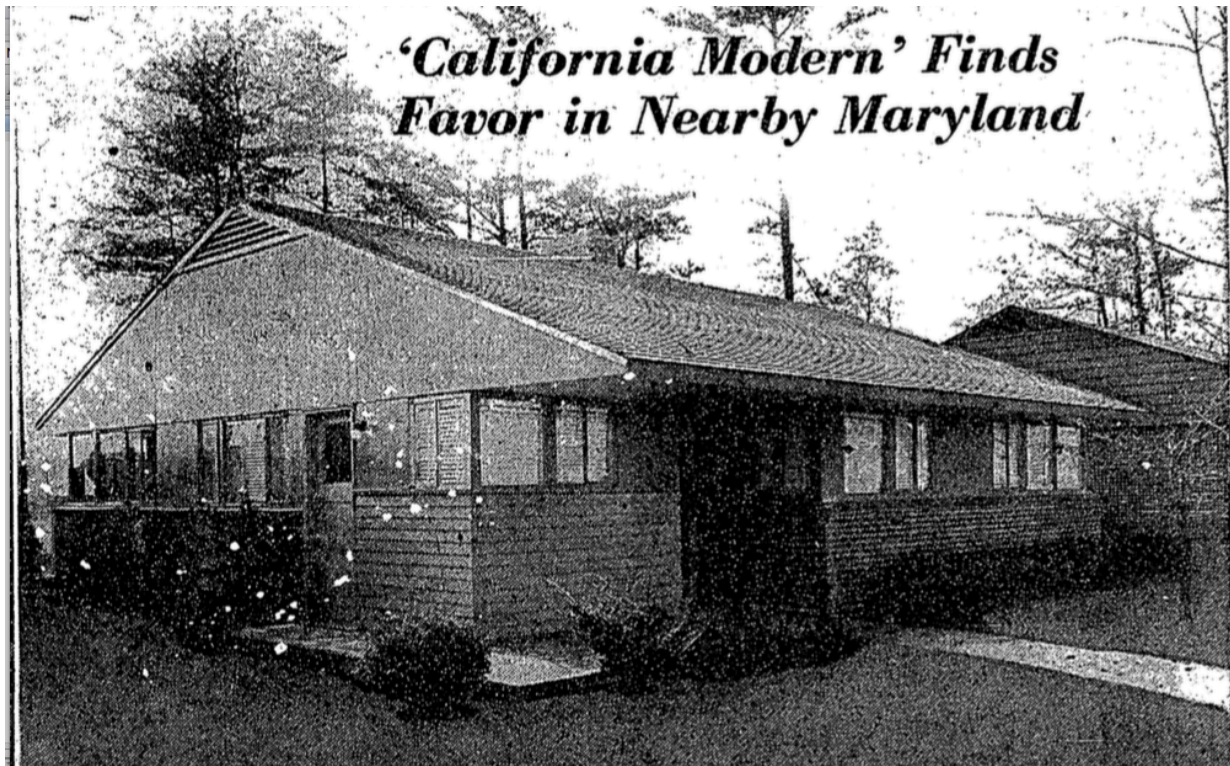


Figure 13. The Revere Model home, another Freeman design, built in Alta Vista Terrace near Bethesda.

Freeman's designs quickly gained popularity. Priced between \$12,000-15,000, they were affordable and met the Department of Veteran's Affairs standards for subsidized square footage.

He added Alta Vista Terrace to his developments in 1949 (Figure 14).^{lxxviii}

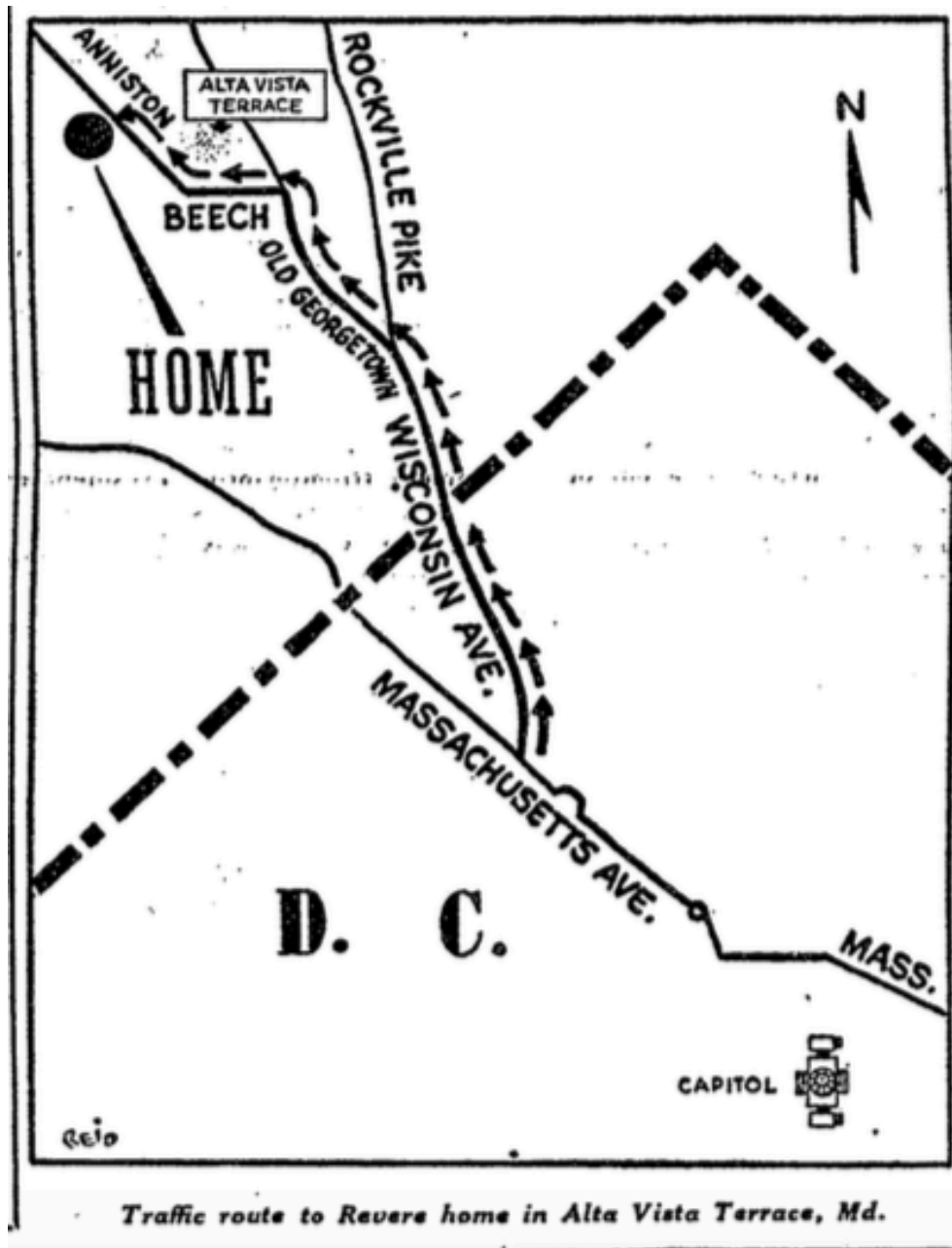


Figure 14. The above map shows how a resident of Alta Vista Terrace could commute directly into the city. *Washington Post*, November 13, 1949.

California Style, Rambler, Rancher

In the Washington, DC suburban area, the preferred name for ranch houses from 1939-1949 had California in it. Newspapers praised “California-style” cottages, and California living.

“Rambler” or “rambling house” followed and stayed common through the 1960s.^{lxxix} Freeman later used the term rambler to describe his houses.^{lxxx} In 1951, the Washington post advertised a Rambler open house.^{lxxxi} “Ranch” or “rancher” came into popular usage later in the 1950s, and at this point almost entirely replaced the label “Californian.” The names assigned to house models by their architects or builders also have significance. House models are named for easy reference, but interestingly many developers chose patriotic names for their ranch house subdivisions. Kay Construction Company’s ramblers, northeast of Wheaton, MD, has no Georgian, federal, or colonial revival characteristics, yet are called colonial ramblers.^{lxxxii} Ravenswood Grove, in Annandale, showcases four different “American heritage” ramblers.^{lxxxiii} Other names are more bucolic, emphasizing the former rural nature of the land or playing to homebuyer’s notions of country living.

Post-War Trends

The Washington, DC suburban area has been regularly impacted over the decades by national housing trends, especially as modes of transportation changed.^{lxxxiv} Railroads and trolley systems allowed people to live outside a city and reasonably commute. Prince George’s and Montgomery counties fit the national trend of population boom and large increase of housing demand in the years following WWII. Planning and zoning boards had control over land development, and figures such as Colonel Edward Brooke Lee, from Montgomery County, helped shape the post-war landscape. Describing the growth of Montgomery County in this era, Royce Hanson, former planning board chair observed, “The car made suburban living feasible. Sewers made it possible. Lee made it happen.”^{lxxxv}

The Levitt brothers, famous for their Levittown communities in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, built homes in mass in Maryland as well. Levitt’s developments full of “little boxes” were

built between the late 1930s and 1960s around urban and military centers, places of mass migration out of the cities.^{lxxxvi} On Long Island, the developments were designed to attract New York City commuters and veterans; in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, they were built for Delaware Valley workers. In Bowie, Maryland, their development was built for commuters heading to Washington, DC or Annapolis. Planning began in 1957, and “The Rancher” model completed in 1961 as the show house for Belair, in Bowie, Prince George’s County, was taken directly from Levittown, New Jersey, and has an “L” shape with sheltered entry (Figures 15-16).^{lxxxvii} The development included Cape Cods, three and four-bedroom Colonials, along with a one-and-a-half story variation on the ranch dubbed the “Country Clubber.”

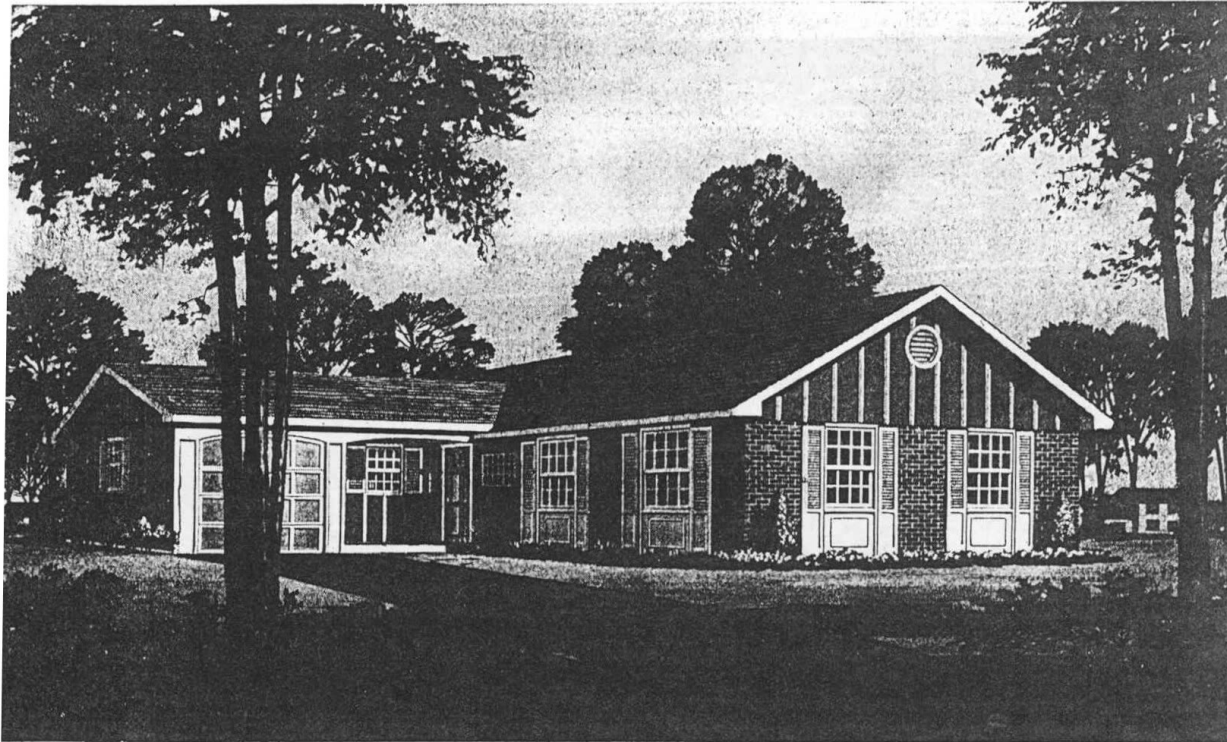


Figure 15. "The Rancher" in Bel Air, Maryland, is a variation on the standard model. (HABS 2006).

The Completely Air Conditioned

Rancher

EN
TODAY!



Price ***15,990** Cash required ***690** Monthly payment ***121**

Check all the features shown on the first page of this 6-page advertisement. Every one is included in this house!

You'll never find
a hidden charge in Belair...

**The price we say
is the price you pay!**

★ ★ ★

BELAIR

by Levitt and Sons

Route 50, Bowie, Maryland. Phone CEder 6-8131

See first page of this 6-page advertisement for map and directions

MORE
Turn the
page →

- ★ This Rancher is built for the relaxed comfort of the all-on-one-floor home, with a colonial flavor that stamps it as a native son.
- ★ The moment you step up to the sheltered entrance, you feel the spaciousness that's built into its L-shaped plan. The entrance hall, so often lacking in one-story houses, provides easy access to the charming living room and the big, open dining area.
- ★ The kitchen's a living dream, and the family room with its glass wall that rolls open to the lawn has a dual personality... brings the outside in, and the inside out!
- ★ To complete this delightful picture, there are three bedrooms, *two* tile baths!
- ★ And there's a separate laundry room, a full size garage, and a storage room. Want to know more? Browse through the Air Conditioned Rancher to your heart's content... but watch out... this house will steal your heart!

Figure 16. This advertisement for the "Rancher" at Bel Air by Levitt and Sons showcases the value, open floor plan, and two baths.

The *Washington Post* reported in 1950 that the “ranch-type home brings changes in urban planning,” identifying that the new popular choice of housing would increase town size quickly “fanwise” as they spread. The same article also briefly notes, with interest in the novelty, that these new ranch houses have temperature control, or air conditioning, “to provide different temperatures in the sleeping quarters, living rooms, and recreation rooms.”^{xxxviii}

Charles M. Goodman



Figure 17. Washington, DC modernist architect, Charles M. Goodman.

Architect Charles M. Goodman's several mid-century neighborhoods in Montgomery County--Hammond Woods (1950), Takoma Avenue (1951), and Rock Creek Woods (1958))--are listed on the National Register (Figure 17).^{lxxxix} This is validation and support for the eligibility of ranch houses for listing under criterion C, demonstrating that they have been already approved by the Keeper of the National Register for their contribution to American architecture. Goodman's neighborhoods are an excellent case study in significance and integrity, as all three demonstrate both. Goodman is known nationally for his post-war suburban housing near the capitol city, and particularly his affordable scale residential models, making his buildings locally and nationally significant. He built 275 individual units in Montgomery County, some in Virginia, and a few elsewhere in the country. The residences on Takoma Avenue aren't conventional ranch houses, but they are split levels that demonstrate Goodman's innovative design aesthetic. A larger, gable-front, second story is perched atop a rectangular brick first-story, appearing like a row of birdhouses. Hammond Woods and Rock Creek Woods are quality examples of significance and integrity.



Figure 18. Hammond Woods rambler with prominent chimney. Photo by Paul Seder, 2003.

Hammond Woods Historic District is listed on the National Register under criteria A and C, and considered a special circumstance criterion G, having reached significance within the past 50 years (Figures 18-19).^{xc} Considered a “designed historic landscape,” the historic district retains many of the original 1949 plantings.^{xcⁱ} Characteristic prominent brick wall-like chimneys are featured on the street-facing façade of many of the 58 one-and two-story contributing houses in the district, all designed by Charles Goodman. Creatively, the exterior brick in Hammond Woods was salvaged from razed industrial buildings. Cypress wood siding is also used.^{xcⁱⁱ} Goodman designed the neighborhood plan to take advantage of the hilly topography; the homes appear to be one or two stories depending on which side they are approached, nestling into the banks to create walk-out basements. Split-level ranchers were designed in California to maxim-

ize spaces on hilly, uneven lots.^{xciii} They were adapted especially in Montgomery County for the same reason and appear frequently. Many are planned to take advantage of natural light and surrounding woods, to emphasize their connection to nature and indoor-outdoor living.



Figure 19. Interior of 1951 Hammond Woods home. Note how the brick fireplace is flush with the front glass wall. Photo by John Cole.

Rock Creek Woods, the most recent of the three neighborhoods, has 74 houses and was built between 1958-1961 (Figure 20). The district boundaries conform to the initial plat of the development from 1956. Houses are arranged on their lots to maximize southern sun exposure as well as privacy. Goodman also made an effort to blend the houses into their surroundings, and tried to keep as many trees as possible in the neighborhood. The ranch houses in Rock Creek Woods are of Goodman's exemplary modern "merchant-builder" residential design.^{xciv} The dis-

trict has high integrity, though there is variation of integrity among individual units, as it maintains all original houses, street layout, roads, and lots.

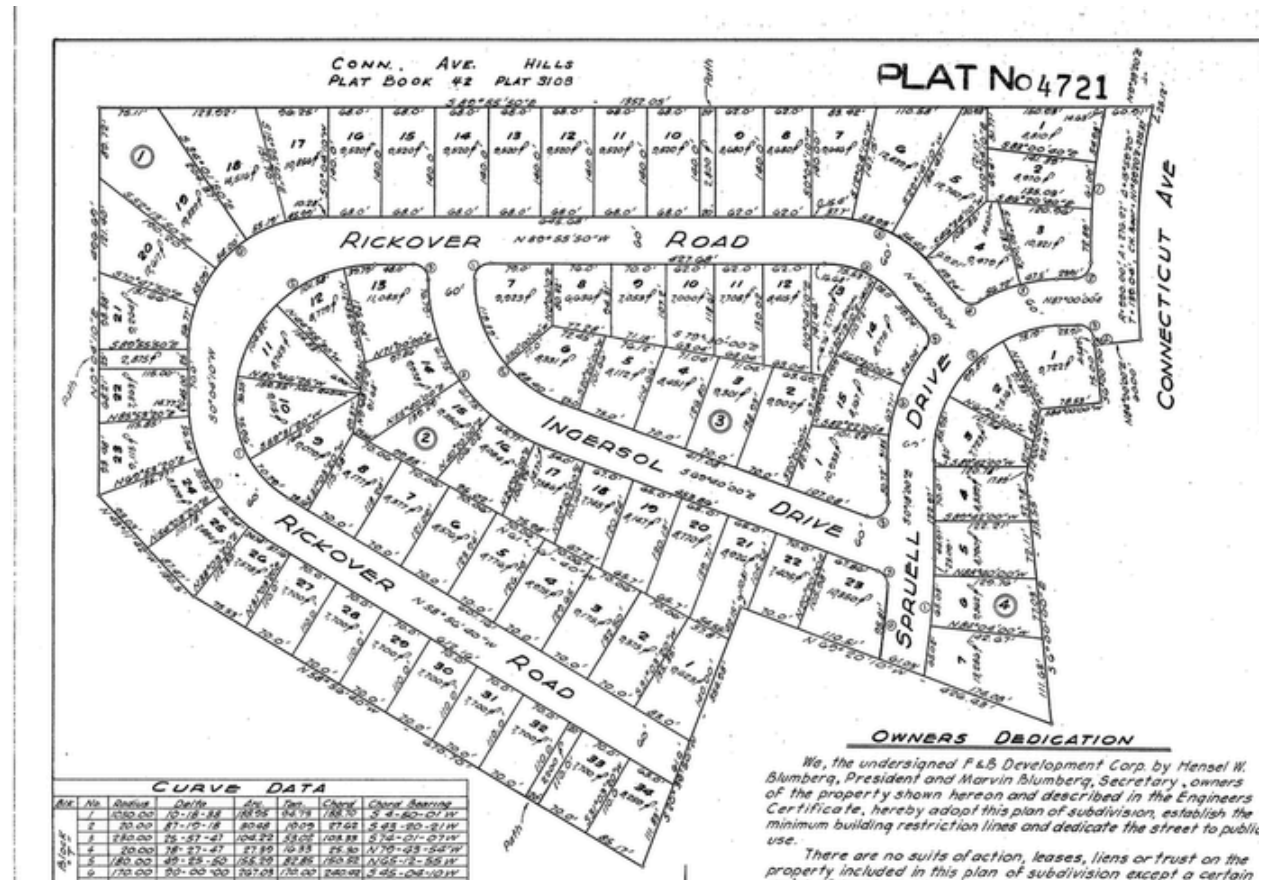


Figure 20. The plat of Rock Creek Woods from 1956, shows how the lots fit into the subdivision topography, following the curves of the land.

Character Defining Features, Nationally and Locally

As the name suggests, the character defining features of ranch houses are defined in part by their relationship to their setting. As a part of the California lifestyle idea connected to the ranch house, occupants sought a casual indoor-outdoor manner of living that was enhanced by the single-story house. A single story meant that living spaces could open up directly to the yard, and in return placed more emphasis on the outside. Therefore, the single-story nature of ranch houses is

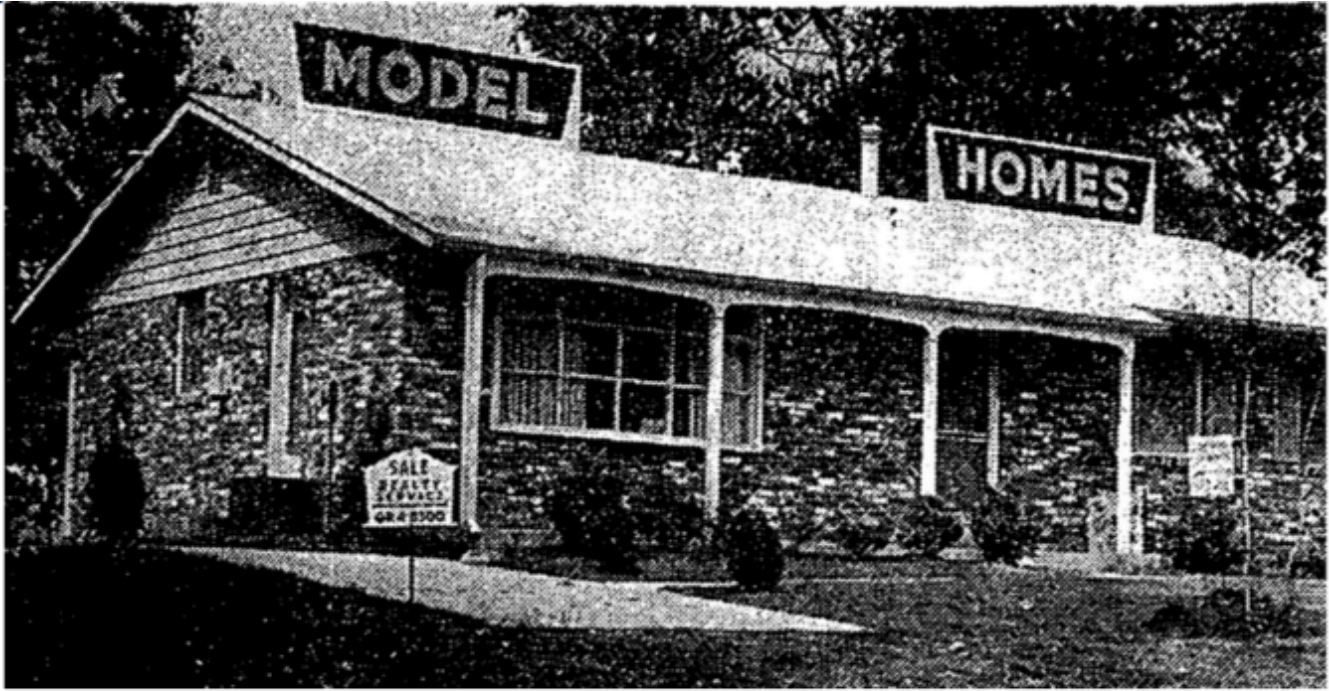
a key defining characteristic. A low-pitched roof exaggerates the squatness of the home, while front-gable dormers in some instances add vertical interest. Critics of ranch houses, no matter their stylistic treatment, ask why do ranch houses in certain neighborhoods look like they are identical? In the late 1930s, developers and builder collaborations on neighborhood subdivisions rose quickly in popularity as “70% of the houses built in 1949 were built by 10% of the builders,” and created the familiar uniform appearance.^{xcv}

Fenestration is second in importance to the number of stories. Ranch houses in the survey area are typically oriented so that the “long” side of the house faces the street. In these houses, the front door is placed on the street side, in most cases accompanied by a picture window. Wider than it is tall, the picture window is a part of the relationship between indoors and outdoors. Frequently, larger windows in the front of the house as well as the rear allowed yard space to be used like an “outdoor living room.”^{xcvi} A *Washington Post* article from 1950 marking the “arrival” of ranch houses in the east explains, “exteriors are low and dominated by huge framed window areas. But you don’t stand outside and look at these homes, you go inside and look out.”^{xcvii} Narrow ribbon windows are also used to achieve a similar effect.



Figure 21. The house at 7201 Giddings road is a rectangular house with picture window to the left of front door and brick tapestry veneer.

In the case of ranch houses, stylistic attributes are commonly applied to a basic form (see Figure 21). Therefore, the form is more important than the style for immediate identification. There is a great range of styles within the survey area, however, with the greatest variation occurring in mixed developments, like those at Glen Echo. Asymmetry is not always used, but some builders employed it to great effect. Door and window placement is often irregular, especially in the latter half of the 1950s and 1960s. Materials and surface decoration vary, but a majority of suburban Washington, DC ranch houses are frame structures clad with brick veneer, almost always laid in common bond. Today the “brick tapestry” siding appears dated, but was advertised in 1961 as an attractive feature of a brick rambler near College Park (Figure 22).^{xcviii}



Brick Rambler in College Knolls

Figure 22. Brick Rambler in College Knolls, September 16 1916, *Washington Post*.

Suburban development relied heavily on the automobile. Carports, garages, and driveways are physical evidence of this dependence. Carports and driveways are not always incorporated into ranch house design, but when they appear, they are a defining characteristic (Figures 23-24). Low-style variations on the ranch form may or may not have an attached garage, and many houses within the survey area don't have a garage, carport, or driveway, and rely solely on street parking. The southeast corner of Washington, DC, in Prince Georges County, has more of the latter group than the higher-style properties in Montgomery County. Stardust Drive, in Montgomery County, is a fine example of developer-built, higher-style ranch houses with attached carports. Because of the rolling landscape in both counties, ranch houses in the area sometimes have a partly exposed basement on one side of the building. Not visible from all elevations, this can produce a lopsided effect. In some cases, split-levels take advantage of the uneven lots, or driveways are added and the basement is used as a garage.



Figure 23. The house at 6206 Stardust Lane, Montgomery County has a character-defining attached carport.



Figure 24. The house at 6310 Redwing Rd, Montgomery County, has a more rectangular form, but also has an attached carport.

While setting is not always a defining characteristic, it is worth noting that within the survey area, ranch houses are more typically found in neighborhood groupings rather than built as isolated units with great distance between neighbors. This is partly due to the heavy development that has occurred over the past century and higher demand for commuter housing near Washington DC, but also because of high land values.^{xcix} The market is such that if someone can afford to buy a large parcel of land in Montgomery County, they are much more likely to develop it or build a large house.

Another type of modern long and low building was also constructed in the same period. On the National Register nomination form for University Park, in Prince George's County, there are separate distinctions between "Modern Movement/Ranch," "Modern Movement/Rectangular," and "No style/Rectangular." A rectangular shape is a defining characteristic of a ranch house, but a rectangular house may be something other than a ranch. Builder Raleigh Daniels built yet another variation, referred to as a "baby Rambler," at a fraction of the cost and the size of a typical rancher at 678 square feet.^c Yet another example are the Lustron houses, which, though considered a separate pre-fabricated type of modern house, were designed to "emulate the ranch form."^{ci} Three Lustron houses were built in Hillcrest Heights, Prince George's County around 1949.^{cii}

Findings

This research found that not all ranch houses are the same, and that there is a great deal of variety within the Washington, DC area. The notion that all ranch houses are the same is a mis-

conception which permeates the preservation arena, with detrimental effects. The following typology is divided into three categories, rectangular, asymmetrical, and high style.

Table 1- Typology and Wall Treatment

Type	Brick	Stucco	Siding	Stone	Total	PG	% of total	Mont	% of total	Total
High Style	54	2	1	0	57	20	34.5%	37	65.5%	57
Rectangular	92	0	33	1	126	108	85.7%	18	14.3%	126
Asymmetrical	6	0	1	0	7	3	42.9	4	57.1%	7
Total	153	2	34	1	190	131		59		190

Table 2- Character Defining Features by County

Feature	PG	% of total examples	Mont	% of total examples	% of feature out of total survey	Total number of feature
Porches	15	62.5%	9	37.5%	12.6%	24
Carports	14	56%	11	44%	13.2%	25
Picture Windows	111	68.1%	52	31.9%	85.8%	163
Garages	2	10%	18	90%	10.5%	20
Driveways	89	68.5%	41	31.5%	68.4%	130

Table 1 and 2 show the trends identified in this survey. There are differences between individual ranch houses, and differences between houses and trends in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties. Prince George's County has twice the number of ranch houses than Montgomery County represented in the survey due to the larger land mass of Prince George's County within the survey area. Table 1 breaks down the dominant wall coverings by type and then by county. Brick veneer is overwhelmingly the most common wall covering, occurring in 80.5% of the 190 buildings surveyed, regardless of the type. Wood and vinyl siding occurs most frequently on rectangular buildings, but, it also occurs in combination with brick veneer on high style build-

ings. Stucco and stone siding occur occasionally, and are also used in combination with brick veneer.

The typological break down of type by county reveals several differences between them. Rectangular buildings are most frequent in Prince George's County, and in the survey overall. As defined for this study, that means their floor plan is condensed into just a few rooms in a linear arrangement. From the exterior, they are no more than two or three bays wide. As they are smaller and less stylistically detailed, they were also less expensive to construct, showing a disparity between the counties. Though the Georgia study does not detail exactly how many of each example they found, houses that they call compact seem to appear less frequently than their other examples. Georgia's typology focuses on 12 types that could be called high style, two that are asymmetrical, and only one, compact, that shares characteristics like what this Maryland typology calls rectangular. Georgia ranch houses bear more resemblance to Montgomery County, where high style buildings appear twice as frequently despite Montgomery County houses representing one-third of the sample population. Asymmetrical houses appear in both counties almost equally, though higher-quality examples are found in Montgomery County.

This disparity in quality and size between the counties reflects social and economic differences that go beyond housing types. Montgomery County houses were advertised to white-collar workers, like Mr. Fred Joiner and his family, or commuters who worked downtown near the capitol (Figure 14). Prince George's County housing was more accessible to blue-collar workers, who could commute to Washington, DC's industrial zone, and military personnel commuting to Joint Base Andrews, established in 1943 as Camp Springs Army Airfield.

Table 2 compares character-defining features by county. The features were selected based on characteristics studied in the Georgia report. There isn't a strong correlation between features,

but higher quality ranch houses are more likely to have a car covering structure, picture window, and a driveway. Unlike houses in Georgia, carports are relatively rare in the survey area. While carports are a character-defining feature when present, they are not typical of the majority of Washington, DC suburban area ranch houses, as only 13.2% of homes surveyed have one. Garages are likewise uncommon, with only 10.5%, but 90% of all examples were found in Montgomery County. High style ranch houses are more likely to have a garage than rectangular or asymmetrical houses. Driveways, however, appear frequently, as 64.8% of all properties surveyed have a driveway, even without a car covering structure. Picture windows appear in almost all instances, 85.8% of homes surveyed have one, and combined with their praise in the *Washington Post*, picture windows are a character-defining feature that also indicates quality of design. A ranch house that lacks a picture window is likely a lower quality imitation, and is less representative of the type.

With so many examples of ranch houses in Maryland, preservationists can afford to be selective in their consideration of eligibility for the National Register, and show preference to high quality design. The following typology is intended to show the character defining features of each type, and indicate high and low quality examples. Though historic districts that include ranch houses list differing periods of significance, this study found a beginning date of 1939 when the first ranch house was built in Montgomery County, and an ending date of 1963, the latest date of construction for houses surveyed.

There are numerous examples of historic districts that include ranch houses as contributing and noncontributing resources. Preservationists are already making decisions about ranch house significance on a sliding scale. But the standards they are applying aren't uniform across historic districts in general. Decisions about significance are based on age of the ranch house,

period of significance of the district, and quality of material and design. In the University Park historic district, ranch houses are considered both contributing and non-contributing. The nomination makes a distinction between high and low-quality iterations of ranch house design, calling out the “rectangular/no style” houses as non-contributing. Specifically, the period of significance identified for the neighborhood relates to its history as an automobile suburb, justifying the inclusion of ranch houses.

Hammond Woods Historic District also makes a similar argument for significance, though it is bolstered by the additional layer of significance of having a regionally important architect as the developer. Charles M. Goodman’s three historic districts in Montgomery County, Hammond Woods, Takoma Avenue, and Rock Creek Woods, are listed for Goodman’s contributions to modern planning, integration of modern homes and natural settings, innovative uses of materials and floor plans, and association with the American Contemporary movement^{ciii}. All three include ranch houses designed by Goodman that contribute to the district, and are listed under criterion C and fit into a single period of significance. Identification of ranch houses as significant within this context is relatively straight forward, as they originated to fit into a single scheme by a distinguished architect.

On the other hand, Old Town College Park Historic District has a great variety of buildings and styles, and are dealt with in two periods of significance, 1889-1935 and 1935-1965. Old Town College Park includes ranch houses that are contributing and non-contributing. The difference between contributing and non-contributing status comes down to the years of construction. For example, a 1940s ranch house is listed as contributing, but ranch houses built in 1970 or later are non-contributing to the district. Calvert Hills Historic District takes a similar approach, as another example of a 20th-century automobile suburb. The period of significance is given as 1890

to the-“late 1940s,” allowing some ranch houses to be eligible and others ineligible according to date of construction. Problematically, ranch houses are not identified for their form, referred to instead as “vernacular” houses on the register form.

The treatment of ranch houses within existing districts sets precedent for their future treatment, which is problematic in the case of Old Town College Park and Calvert Hills. In these instances, date of construction is the determinant for eligibility, which changes through the course of time. Viewing the whole period of mid-century development and basing eligibility decisions on the ranch form thematically as an indicator of an automobile suburb, thereby extending the period of significance, may be a better approach. The National Register districts also focus on higher-quality examples of ranch houses, particularly in University Park, where there are examples of both high style and “copycat” ranch houses. Contribution status based on quality is a valid approach for ranch houses when there are so many locally and nationally.

Typology Identification Visual Guide

Rectangular:

Character defining features of rectangular ranch houses are the rectangular form, single-story profile, and 2-4 bay width. Rectangular houses, called compact houses in the Georgia report, have minimal square footage, sometimes under 1,000 square feet, and in many cases in Prince George's County do not have garages, carports, or driveways. Generally, the plainest of these are listed as non-contributing to local historic districts, like in University Park. Ranch houses in this category are vernacular copies. Common materials include brick veneer, asphalt roof tiles, frame construction, concrete foundations or cinderblock foundations. In the survey area, rectangular houses are most common in Prince George's County. In order to determine significance for rectangular ranch houses, context must be considered more than style.



Figure 25. The house at 4716 Nicholson St. has scallop detailing on the front gable, which adds visual interest to an otherwise plain dwelling built in 1959.



Figure 26. Lacking the characteristic picture window, there is little feeling of the integration of the house at 5203 Lackawanna Street, built in 1950, and its environment.



Figure 27. The picture window and carport distinguish this ranch house at 9607 52nd Ave, built in 1952.

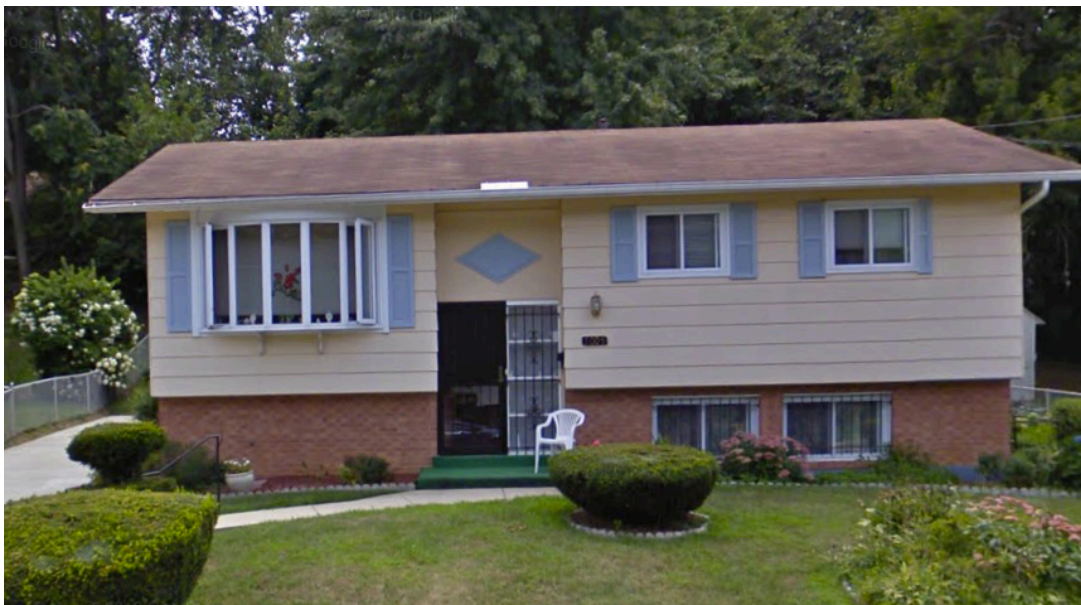


Figure 28. Several houses like number 7003 exist on Independence Street. Referred to as a “split-foyer” ranch, it has 1.5 stories and was built in 1960.

Asymmetrical:

Built after 1950, asymmetrical ranch houses have triangular features, visually interesting higher pitched roofs or porches, and geometric windows or angular details. When carports are present, they are integrated into the roof overhang. Though the materials for asymmetrical ranch houses are often the same as for rectangular style ranch houses, they are typically better integrated into the design. Born from the modern movement's interest in shapes and geometry, many asymmetrical ranch houses have architecturally interesting features. Assessing significance for this type of ranch house requires research on the individual architect or builder, to place the house in the context of their overall work.



Figure 29. The house at 8420 Rambler Drive, built in 1957, features an unusual vertical window to the right of double front doors, and has a centered gable above the entry.



Figure 30. The right side of the house at 5104 Wapakoneta Rd, built in 1956, has a basement garage built into the slope of the lot.



Figure 31. Few windows on the street-facing elevation allow for privacy inside the house at 5006 Wapakoneta Rd, built in 1959, and distinguishes this unit from its neighbors.



Figure 32. A picture window adjacent to the carport gives a very “Mod” impression to the house at 5923 Cable Ave, built in 1962.



Figure 33. The house at 1506 Fenwood Ave, built in 1959 is a vernacular replication of a design like that above and below.



Figure 34. A good example of a high-style, asymmetrical ranch house, the house at 6206 Stardust Lane, built in 1958, exhibits quality workmanship, materials, and design aesthetic.

High-Style:

This type has the most variation, but high style ranch houses are typically built with higher quality materials, and more attention is paid to the connecting joints of the building and trims. In the survey area, they occur more frequently in Montgomery County. Decoration is in harmony with the building proportion and does not give an appearance of being “stuck on.” Generally larger than rectangular ranches, high-style ranch houses have several rooms and carefully arranged floor plans. They may have rectangular, L-shaped, or butterfly-shaped plans. Includes features like picture windows, porches with sleek trim, shutters, textured surfaces, carports or integrated garages. Surface texture variation is used as a stylistic tool. Like asymmetrical ranch houses, assessing integrity of high-style ranch houses requires research into the building’s design. Many ranch house designs of this type originated in catalogs or builder’s magazines, and as a result there are high and low quality iterations of similar designs.



Figure 35. The house at 7323 Radcliffe Drive, built in 1961, features a large gridded picture window to the right of the door, enclosed with delicate porch columns.



Figure 36. A high-quality example, the house at 5229 Westpath Rd, built in 1960, is integrated into the lot topography through a split-level garage and driveway. The large picture window is well placed in the overall façade.



Figure 37. A slightly lesser-quality example, the house at 8511 Longfellow Place has additions at the right and left, and features a picture window that is out of scale with the overall proportions of the façade.



Figure 38. The front-gabled-carport is an unusual high-quality feature, and balances the gable-front of the façade, on the right of the house at 6306 Haviland Drive, built in 1954.



Figure 39. This high-style ranch house at 7304 Radcliffe Drive was built in 1961 and lacks a picture window. The house has symmetrical fenestration and gable windows that give a colonial revival appearance to the brick structure.



Figure 40. With its distinctive red roof, double front door, and L-shaped plan, the house at 7302 Radcliffe Drive, built in 1958, most closely resembles the 19th-century ranches for which the housing style is named.

Chapter 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Richard Longstreth poignantly concludes his article, “Significance of the Recent Past,” by discussing Levittown’s irreplaceability: “We can learn many things from such places, and we must come to view them as non-renewable resources. If we continue to disregard so much that is all around us, we may waste far more than we preserve and bestow upon future generations the difficult task of deciphering the carcass.”^{civ} To prevent handing down a “carcass” of mid-century suburbia, this type of thematic and historical survey complements larger goals of preservation planning and community development by making data accessible. Ideally, planners would have full historical context information available for every component of the built environment, especially for misunderstood resources, and this survey fills a small portion of that need. Ranch houses are just one type of 20th-century structure that preservationists and planners must start to recognize and figure out how to approach. As the 21st century charges ahead, there will be even more housing types impacted by the kind of treatment ranch houses receive. Having discussions about problematic resources now can, with care, inform future conversations.

Max Page’s book, *Why Preservation Matters*, asserts his belief that preservationists must demand that more old buildings are used.^{cv} Removing aesthetic and historic values from the equation, consider the existing embodied energy in the hundreds of thousands of ranch houses nationally. The creation of a sustainable future demands the continual use of these residences, and therefore their appropriate treatment in the historical record.

Decision Tree

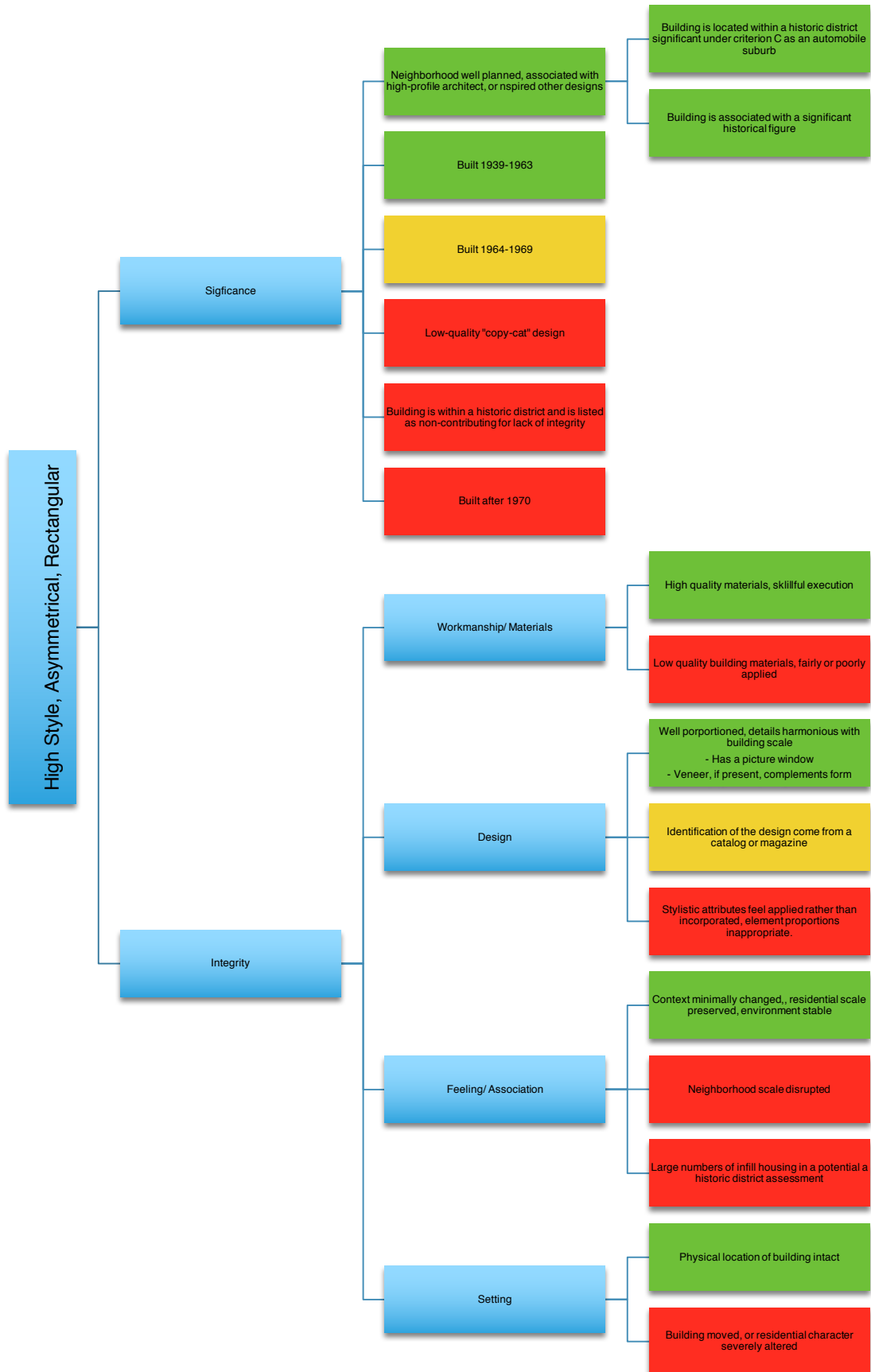
With so many ranch houses, preservationists can be picky and chose higher quality examples as candidates for preservation. But how to differentiate between high and low quality

ranch houses? Since there is great diversity of ranch houses in Maryland, they must be assessed individually on a sliding scale of significance and integrity. In historic district nominations, reviewers are already using the idea of a sliding scale, indicated by the contributing status of some ranch houses, and noncontributing status of others. Local context is an important distinguishing factor, and therefore preservationists must be familiar with both the history of a given area and the stylistic attributes of the buildings.

Stylistic attributes of Washington, DC area suburban ranch houses vary immensely, but there are divisions in style between ranch houses that are built in mixed-development neighborhoods, and ranch houses that are built by a single builder in a planned community. For doing fieldwork on these properties as a part of Section 106 compliance, historical context will be more important than visual assessment, and preliminary research prior to fieldwork investigation is necessary. Context will be important because some of the historically significant ranch houses are significant for their contributions to rapid post-war housing, and not for their high style. Therefore while ranches in Montgomery County mixed development neighborhoods are arguably higher-style, they may be less historically significant.

This decision tree starts from the developed typology. Once this is assessed, the leaves of the tree guide decision making about significance and integrity. Beginning with the three types outlined in this study, preservationists can use this tool to consider the historic eligibility of a given ranch house or district. The significance side of the tree considers local context, dates of construction, and eligibility based on inclusion in an existing district. The integrity criteria condense the National Park Service's seven criteria of eligibility into four categories, setting, feeling/association, design, and workmanship/materials. A building need not have high quality indicated in all attributes of integrity, shown in the green, but there must be sufficient integrity to

express significance. Similarly, a copycat ranch house that is built in a neighborhood with significance for regional planning might not be automatically disqualified. For example, this tool could be applied to an asymmetrical ranch house currently listed as non-contributing within a historic district, and it may meet these new criteria of significance and integrity. Yellow squares on the tree indicate factors that could help inform significance, but require further consideration. The period of significance for ranch houses in the Washington, DC suburban area determined by this study is 1939 to 1963, but individual historic districts may either extend or contract this period based on local context. The outcomes of the decision tree must be weighed against research, local context, and common sense, but ultimately, it can be used as a field tool to help assess historic eligibility.



Recommendations

1. Maryland should develop a state context report for ranch houses, and identify potential National Register candidates based on integrity of character defining features, and development context.
2. Planners should follow Secretary of the Interior standards when dealing with high-integrity ranch houses and neighborhoods, and adopt strategies to preserve integrity of mid-century neighborhoods while meeting the needs of changing populations.^{cvi}
3. CRSurveyor, a GIS-based web application, should be used to document mid-century neighborhoods.
4. Online search tools for the Maryland Inventory and National Register should be updated and expanded to include search by specific building attributes, period of significance, date of construction, applicable NR criteria, and NR themes.

Projects using federal funds, land, and permits should follow Section 106 procedures and consider ranch houses as eligible for consideration based on the 50-year threshold for eligibility, and that appropriate contextual information is researched. The Secretary of the Interior's standards are practical guidelines that can be applied to properties of any age or type, and help prevent loss of integrity when repairs are required. Following the SOI standards for rehabilitation, as much as possible, is a good preventative measure for residences within high-integrity districts, whether or not they have been recognized as National Register eligible. The rehabilitation standard, unlike the preservation, restoration, or reconstruction standard, is flexible, and allows "com-

patible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.”^{cvii} Individual homeowners can use the principles to guide repairs and historically sensitive additions. Local governments could apply them to ordinances governing new construction.^{cviii} The standards are published online and are written in accessible language, and are designed with flexibility in mind.

Contextual guides for tract homes in Maryland should be developed, beginning mid-century and extending up until the recent era, so that there is a literature foundation upon which future reports may build. Thinking and talking about ranch houses as a part of the historic record can help shift the general public perception of these buildings. The literature on ranch houses suggests interest in them is growing. Affection for buildings is not a flippant consideration. As Max Page writes, “buildings that are cherished are more likely to be preserved, and we need to preserve not only buildings from the past but from the future past: the buildings we are constructing now and need to have around, embodying their energy, a hundred years from now.”^{ciix} Paige cites architect Stephen Mouzon’s observation that, “buildings cannot be sustainable if they are not loveable.”^{cx} Through this exercise, the house at 10206 Sutherland Rd in Silver Spring, MD was identified as the first California-styled ranch house in the DC area. It has exemplary integrity in all of the seven criteria discussed, and is likely eligible for listing on the National Register. This is just one example of under-studied resources in the state, which could be lost without a more thorough study of mid-century housing. Furthermore, this research identified three distinct types of ranch houses within the Washington, DC suburban area, and found a great deal of stylistic diversity. Compared with the Georgia SHPO report, there are differences in ranch house types between the states. Butterfly floor plans, and alphabet ranch houses, for example, appear in the

Georgia typology, and none were identified within the survey area of this report.^{cxii} This report also found significant differences between ranch houses in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties, raising the question of differences between these two counties and the rest of the state.

To further public awareness and accessibility, the web-based software CRSurveyor should be used in future surveys of mid-century resources. CRSurveyor, developed for use in Alexandria, Virginia, and now used by the National Park Service in several states, is a web-based application designed to sync field data with a desktop. The app allows an infinite number of participants to contribute to fieldwork, and is monitored at the local level by experienced moderators. It can be taught to interested volunteer groups, benefiting local governments and architectural review boards with instant access to detailed property records and attribute characteristics. With minimal instruction, people can use it to survey their own homes. It is an increasingly useful tool and I recommend that future surveys of mid-century housing use this technology to record their survey photographs and windshield survey data so it may be publically accessible.

Finally, and of most general applicability, I urge the National Park Service and Maryland Historical Trust to update their register and inventory database to allow users to search for properties based on stylistic attributes, dates of construction, periods of significance, eligibility criteria, number of stories, and massing size and shape. One of the first questions asked in preparation for this research was simply, how many ranch houses are listed on the National Register? But it remains unanswered for lack of an effective search mechanism. These attributes would allow users to identify ranch houses listed on the register and inventory easily; the current web search mechanism for the National Register requires users to know the name of a specific resource, or search by state or county. Likewise, the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties search tool, MEDUSA (Maryland's Cultural Resource Information System), requires an invento-

ry number, or property name, or address. This is useful for determining if a known property is listed, but not useful to quickly identify how many buildings of a certain type are listed. The expansion of web search tools would greatly aid mid-century preservation by allowing researchers to learn about other eligible resources that share characteristics, especially in cases that have a shallow literature.

Conclusion

“The ranch home is by far the most popular of all home styles, according to a United Savings and Loan League report.”^{cxii} The United Savings and Loan League collected housing statistics, and, in 1969, when the *Washington Post* published these statistics, 71% of new constructed homes were ranch houses. The USLL report continued, “today’s home buying family wants a much bigger house than families did ten years ago. Last year (1968) 62 percent of new homes sold had 3 bedrooms and 25 percent had 4 or more.”^{cxiii} Nationally, by 1969 the ranch house was the most popular model in the country. But this article from the *Washington Post* outlines a trend that continued. Single-family suburban homes continued to grow larger to meet consumer demand, and 50 years later, few ranch-style houses are being built, as “luxury” characteristics are featured in new construction.

Yet ranch houses in Maryland are significant to local, state, and national history as they fit into the post-war housing boom experienced across the nation. This research concluded that there is significant diversity of ranch house designs within the Washington, DC suburban area. There is local variety between Prince George’s and Montgomery Counties as well, with more high style units in Montgomery County, and a predominant amount of rectangular ranch houses in Prince George’s County. Because of the diversity and regional variation, local context is an important factor in determining significance and integrity of ranch houses. A surprising majority demonstrates sufficient external integrity to convey that significance, as suburban development in pockets of Prince Georges and Montgomery Counties has not, in most cases, destroyed mid-century ranch house neighborhoods. Development pressures threaten mixed development neighborhoods in high-demand locations, such as Glen Echo, and houses with the least amount of square footage are subject to higher pressure.

Georgia's ranch house report applies nicely to the Washington, DC suburban area. Their windshield survey model, assisted by satellite photographs and GIS technology, provided a sound basis for identifying the locations and types of ranch houses that exist within the survey area. However, the Georgia report does not discuss in detail their non-field research methods. Notable architects, builders, and properties were identified after the fieldwork portion of this study through National Register nominations, local citizen association blogs, real estate notices, and newspaper advertisements.

The typology produced through this research yielded three major types of ranch houses in the Washington, DC area. The first is the rectangular/no style ranch. Though the descriptor "no style" appears to be a critique of the design, it refers to the minimal application of exterior decorative features and is the term used on the University Park National Register Historic District form. The second is the asymmetrical ranch house, characterized by triangular forms, geometric windows, and lack of historicism in design. They are thoroughly modern. The last regional style is the high-style designed ranch house. These were built by architects for clients, or commissioned by homeowners from builders. But what they have in common is an attention to stylistic details, proportion, and careful layouts. Asymmetrical and high style designed ranch houses are eligible for the National Register consideration under criterion C, as demonstrated by Goodman's three designated mid-century historic districts.

Though ranch houses have been studied over the last decade and listed on the National Register, there is still a bias in the preservation community about them. But as demonstrated through this project, many are significant and have integrity, and now meet the 50-year age threshold. While not every ranch house could, or should, be preserved, they certainly deserve consideration as historical buildings.

Appendix. Survey Form

Date:

Photo Number:

Address:

In a historic district: Yes No

In neighborhood with a historic district: Yes No

Context:

Aprox. size of neighborhood (acres/house #/density):

House to left:

House to right:

Size of lot:

House placement on lot:

Materials:

Roof:

Siding:

Structure (if known)

Other:

Color and design/style elements:

#of floors: Single-story

Bi-level

#of windows on street-facing elevation:

Dormers: Yes No

Attached Garage: Yes No

Carport: Yes No

Covered Carport: Yes No

Driveway: Yes No

Style:

Porch: Yes No

Shape of house:

Occupancy information:

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