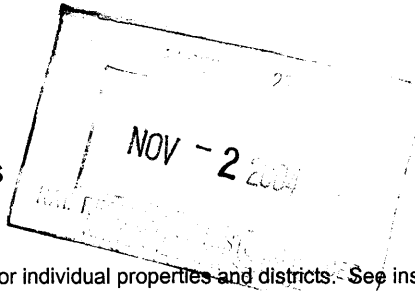


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Rock Creek Woods Historic District
other names M:31-37

2. Location

street & number 11504, 11506 Connecticut Ave., 3600-3702 Spruell Dr., 3908-4020 Rickover Rd., 4004-4019 Ingersol Dr. not for publication
city or town Silver Spring vicinity
state Maryland code MD county Montgomery code 031 zip code 20902

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments).

[Signature] 10-27-04
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that this property is:
- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
 - determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
 - Determined not eligible for the National Register.
 - removed from the National Register.
 - other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper Patrick Andrews Date of Action 12/15/2004

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
74	3	buildings
	1	sites
		structures
		objects
74	4	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Subdivisions and Architecture Planned and Designed by Charles M. Goodman Associates in Montgomery County, Maryland

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

LANDSCAPE/designed suburb

RELIGION/religious facility

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

LANDSCAPE/designed suburb

RELIGION/religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Contemporary

foundation CONCRETE, BRICK

walls WOOD, BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other GLASS

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

M:31-37
Rock Creek Woods Historic District
Name of Property

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Section 7 Page 1

Description Summary:

Rock Creek Woods, a suburban development located in Montgomery County, Maryland just outside Washington, D.C., consists of 74 Contemporary houses nestled in a wooded valley between two creeks. These houses, designed by Charles Goodman, were built between 1958 and 1961 by Herschel and Marvin Blumberg, merchant builders who headed up the Bancroft Construction Company. Located roughly one mile north of Kensington, Maryland, in Section 21 of Rock Creek Palisades, the Rock Creek Woods subdivision is bounded on the east by Connecticut Avenue and a town house development, on the west by a small stream called St. Joseph's Branch (a tributary of Rock Creek), on the north by the Connecticut Avenue Hills subdivision, and on the south by St. James Run, another small creek in the Rock Creek watershed. In the late 1960s, the U.S. Postal Service changed the neighborhood's mailing address from Kensington, Maryland, to Silver Spring.

The subdivision consists of three streets that form a large, self-contained and wooded cul-de-sac tucked away at the end of a Connecticut Avenue service road. The development's two curving dead-end streets (Spruell Drive and Rickover Road) hug the contours of the land and are linked by Ingersol Drive, which loops between them. In addition, two Goodman houses are located at the end of the service road, adjacent to the Rock Creek Woods entrance on Spruell Drive. The streets in Rock Creek Palisades were named after World War II admirals, including Byrd, Dewey, Rickover, and Spruell, a practice possibly related to North Kensington, where street names commemorate such earlier admirals as Perry and Farragut.

The subdivision contains three basic house models, each of two stories, with liberal use of glass walls. A fourth model, with three stories, was used for two houses on lower Rickover Road. All houses were built with a living and dining room, family or recreation room, three bedrooms, two baths, and with provision for a fourth or fifth bedroom and a third bath on the lower level. Lots in this hilly terrain vary from about 1/5 to 1/3 acre, and, on the south and west sides of the development, houses have outlying back lots abutting the creeks. Every house is individually sited according to the topography of the land and in relation to its neighbors. All houses have been carefully angled to the street, with some floor plans flipped, to preserve privacy and to maximize a southern exposure. The siting was supervised by Charles Goodman, who made every effort to preserve the trees indigenous to the area and blend the houses into the existing topography so they become a part of the natural surroundings.

In addition to the Goodman houses, a Protestant church built in 1961 sits at the intersection of Spruell and Ingersol Drives—a Church of the Brethren. The church was not designed by Charles Goodman and is not considered a contributing structure for the purposes of this nomination, but it has simple unadorned lines and blends in with the Contemporary houses. This church has been in active use since 1961. Now, in addition to the basic congregation, it is being sublet to other religious groups and to a Montessori school. The Rock Creek Woods neighborhood and the church have maintained a close relationship since its inception. Over the years, the neighbors have staffed the church's nursery school, which serves both the neighborhood and other children.

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In a reciprocal arrangement, Rock Creek Woods residents have often used the church as a meeting place, and they volunteer on clean-up crews to maintain the wooded and recreation areas around the church.

Narrative Description:

Characteristics of Rock Creek Woods houses

The Rock Creek Woods development typifies the characteristics of Goodman's Contemporary merchant-builder houses.¹ These houses are of spare geometric design, based on panel blocks of vertical wood siding, glass, and brick and with gently sloping roofs and wide eaves. The houses take advantage of natural grades and slopes to provide a lower level that is partially underground at the front, but fully above ground with a patio door and floor-to-ceiling windows at the side or back. Goodman's houses are individually sited on the rough, steep land to save the old trees and to preserve privacy while giving light through the floor-to-ceiling window walls. The liberal use of glass gives the feel of an unbroken flow from inside to the natural world outdoors.

Goodman's houses in Rock Creek Woods are full of innovative ideas and carefully thought out details. The houses reflect the simplicity and clean geometry fostered by the modern Bauhaus movement. The beauty of this geometric design is perhaps most evident outside at night, when the Goodman houses glow from inside with great oblong blocks of light. The split-foyer houses are lit from one side to the other by huge triangles of light across their glass gables. The glass window walls make the person inside feel at one with the natural world outside. The baths constitute a central core of the houses, so the periphery on all four sides is free for living zones and windows. Kitchens are open to the living/dining spaces, rather than being closed off. Houses are angled in relation to the street, so the living room of each house has a private view, often across land actually owned by a neighbor. Each house has a three-foot roof overhang on four sides of the house with a specially made aluminum soffit vent strip completely surrounding the house. This overhang makes the houses more energy efficient, because it allows sun to shine in during winter, while shielding the interior from the summer sun. Goodman paid attention not only to space and light and connections to the natural world outdoors, but also to the texture and quality of the building materials. Inside, houses have cypress or redwood paneled accent walls and some have stairs with airy open treads.

Rock Creek Woods houses can be identified by their extremely large chimneys made of Cushwa brick, a brick made locally in Rockville, Maryland that comes in warm tones of rose and pinkish brown. These large brick expanses often pierce the eave line of the house and their white-painted wood skeleton walls, which are infilled alternately with glass or wood panels. Many windows in the Rock Creek Woods houses are situated at corners.

¹ For a detailed exegesis of the term "Contemporary" as applied to Charles Goodman's architecture, as well as a discussion of Goodman's merchant-builder phase, see the associated Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Subdivisions and Architecture Planned and Designed by Charles M. Goodman Associates in Montgomery County, Maryland" (Lamp 2003).

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Rock Creek Woods houses are larger than other merchant-built Goodman houses in the Washington, D.C. area. This more generous size house resulted from Hershel Blumberg's desire to build houses for the middle-income market and his insistence that the size of the kitchen be enlarged slightly from Goodman's original plan. Most of the houses are sited with two on-grade exits.

Models at Rock Creek Woods

There are four models in the neighborhood, although the siting makes it appear that there are many more models than that. The three major house types at Rock Creek Woods each contain two floors, while a pair of houses with three floors makes up the fourth type. All the houses are framed in wood but feature a substantial amount of brick, including chimney walls. Homeowners could opt to install one or two fireplaces in these walls; the fireplaces came with raised hearths and wood box openings. In some cases, brick patio walls were strategically placed to create private courtyards.

The "Starview" model (Goodman's plan BC-1D) is designed for ground that falls off in the back. This is a 38'-wide by 36'-deep house with three bedrooms and two baths on the upper level and a 24' or 36' recreation room on the lower level, along with an optional bath and one or two future bedrooms. One accesses the lower level by a transverse stair located off the entry. The kitchen is open to the entry on one side and is separated by a counter from the dining/living room on the other side.

The "Brookview" model houses, which sit on knolls, are accessed via a large ground-level entry/stairhall. On the ground floor are rooms dedicated to recreation, storage, and a future bedroom and bath. On the upper floor are the living room/dining room, kitchen, two bedrooms, and two baths. Goodman designated this plan type BC-2U.

The "Woodview" model (Goodman's type BC-3U) houses feature split foyers. The entry is at the midpoint between stairs that go two ways: up to the living room, kitchen/dining room, three bedrooms, and two baths, and down to a recreation room and storage, with future bedroom and bath. These houses have cathedral ceilings and glass gables on the upper level. The kitchen is separated from the dining room/living room by a serving counter. This combined kitchen and family living space reveals that Goodman envisioned the "great room" as early as 1958.

Finally, the pair of three-story houses, sited on lots that descend steeply down a hillside, are set near St. Joseph's Branch and the section of Rock Creek Park situated behind lower Rickover Road. These feature the living/dining area and kitchen on the middle level, the bedrooms on the floor above, and recreation and utility rooms on the lowest level. This plan type was designated BC-4U by Goodman.

Setting and landscape design

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At the time of its construction, Rock Creek Woods was reached by a circuitous route, which started from Newport Mill Road, meandered through several side streets, and entered the community via a narrow gravel road. An important transportation change came in 1964, when Connecticut Avenue was extended from Kensington north to Georgia Avenue in Aspen Hill.

The naturally wooded, sloping land contains many large indigenous trees, including pines, oaks, tulip poplars, American beech, hickory, and dogwood. Except for the trees preserved by the builder, there were few new plantings immediately following the development's completion. In 1959, when the county began to plant trees on the strip between the sidewalks and the road, two of the original owners—Calvin Foltz and John Volk—made a special request for cherry trees instead of shade trees. Homeowners paid \$10 per tree and the county agreed to plant cherry trees. The original trees were the Yoshino variety with a life span of 40 to 50 years.

Blumberg, the builder, did not hire a landscape architect to provide landscape plans for Rock Creek Woods house owners. Instead, he relied on Goodman's firm to do the overall site planning and a small degree of landscaping. Rock Creek Woods and its site should be considered a "historic designed landscape," however, because of Goodman's placement of roads, creation of house types to conform to varying topography, his siting of the houses within the particular valley-like setting of the community, and his preservation of mature trees. Blumberg reports that, although it was difficult, his firm went to great lengths to prevent changing the land configuration around trees and to save as many as possible. Goodman planned the siting of each house. Later, a few homeowners independently hired landscape architects to develop designs for their individual lots. Thurman Donovan, who also designed landscape plans for other Contemporary houses in the Washington area, was the most frequently used landscape architect in the neighborhood.

Today, the houses in Rock Creek Woods are nestled within a landscape of mature vegetation, with the original trees augmented by hundreds of additional ornamental trees as well as by azaleas, rhododendrons, forsythia, and many other shrubs and broadleaf evergreens. The subdivision has several houses with large Goodman-designed brick screening walls. About two-thirds of the houses now have some type of wood fencing. Goodman's houses still exhibit the characteristic of "borrowed views," wherein one neighbor's yard merges with another to form the sense of a communal park. Most homeowners have opted for natural and informal, rather than formal, landscaping. A walk through the current Rock Creek Woods neighborhood in spring offers a breathtaking view of the signature cherry trees. They now form a green canopy arching over the streets and, during the height of their blossoming, the cherry tree petals blanket the yards and streets in pink. Many original cherry trees are now showing signs of aging; a substantial number have had to be removed. In 1998, with the assistance of a pilot beautification grant from Montgomery County, the Rock Creek Woods Civic Association planted 44 new Yoshino cherry trees. In 2001, an additional 34 Yoshino trees were installed with the help of a second County beautification grant.

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In this natural woodland setting, Rock Creek Woods homeowners share their environs with such creatures as squirrels, raccoons, possums, chipmunks, box turtles, and numerous varieties of birds. Recently, the repertoire of natural creatures has expanded to include rabbits, deer, and red foxes. This haven for wildlife exists only about 15 miles from downtown Washington, D.C.

Current subdivision condition

The houses in Rock Creek Woods still look very much as they did when originally built. In terms of architectural integrity, the community has successfully maintained Goodman's original Contemporary idiom. Although there have never been any covenants in the deeds to protect the architectural character of the neighborhood, the houses themselves have undergone relatively few changes on the exterior. Fire has been the cause of change in two of these houses, which have a predominantly frame construction. During the 1970s, four houses on lower Rickover Road caught fire. In two cases, the roofs remained intact and the houses could be restored according to the original Goodman design. In the other two cases, extensive fire left only the lower level foundations intact. Both these houses were rebuilt in a Contemporary style as designed by Joseph A. Wilkes, AIA, of the firm Wilkes and Faulkner, who lived in the neighborhood and owned one of the houses that was destroyed.²

A recent survey of the Rock Creek Woods neighborhood showed there have been a total of 12 additions—some to provide additional space in dining rooms and kitchens. However, additions have also included two indoor swimming pools, sunrooms and screened porches, two outdoor pools, and one carport. Several of these additions were designed by Mr. Wilkes and remain very much in the Goodman style. More changes have been made to the interior than to the exterior of these Goodman houses. In a 1996 survey, 40 percent of the responding residents reported having had their kitchens and/or bathrooms remodeled. Most houses still have the original windows, although some of the fixed glass windows have been double-paned or reinforced to prevent energy loss. Originally stained, the tongue and groove siding is more likely to be painted now, frequently in a light color. Patios and storage sheds have been added; 40 percent of the houses now contain decks. Only one house has changed the soffit material by extending an interior wood-deck cathedral ceiling to the underside of the overhang. Goodman's original masonite panels and glass gables are still a feature of these houses.

² The reconstruction of Wilkes' own house—one of two three-story Goodman houses in the development—maintained the look and layout of the original Goodman design. The obvious change was in the redesign of the roof to accommodate clerestory windows at the back. For the other redesigned, rebuilt house, Mr. Wilkes used original blueprints provided by Herschel Blumberg. Wilkes' plan left the foundation level intact with patio doors and the original fixed/side-opening casement windows on the lower floor. The upper level has a Contemporary design that retains many of the original Goodman windows and the external appearance of vertical wood tongue-and-groove siding. The roof design was changed to a four-sided hip design, with asphalt shingles, that surrounds a flat central oblong roof. Although redesigned, the low-profile house blends with the look of Goodman's Contemporary houses.

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The Rock Creek Woods houses generally retain a good level of integrity. Where alterations have occurred, most of the changes are reversible, or utilize compatible substitute materials. These changes do not affect the properties' ability to meet the registration requirements specified in the associated Multiple Property Documentation Form.

The following table lists the properties within the Rock Creek Woods Historic District:

<u>Tax Account #</u>	<u>House #</u>	<u>Street</u>	<u>Date of Construction</u>	<u>Contributing/ Non-Contributing</u>	<u>House Type</u>
01262732	3600	Spruell Drive	1960	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01263986	3601	Spruell Drive	1959	C	WOODVIEW (BC-3U)
01260790	3606	Spruell Drive	1960	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01263884	3607	Spruell Drive	1959	C	WOODVIEW (BC-3U)
01258251	3609	Spruell Drive	1959	C	WOODVIEW (BC-3U)
01257291	3610	Spruell Drive	1960	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01258320	3611	Spruell Drive	1959	C	WOODVIEW (BC-3U)
01262231	3612	Spruell Drive	1960	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01258160	3614	Spruell Drive	1960	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01260642	3700	Spruell Drive	1960	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01257553	3701	Spruell Drive	1961	NC	CHURCH (not designed by Goodman)
01261828	3702	Spruell Drive	1960	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01262207	3908	Rickover Road	1960	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01259073	3909	Rickover Road	1960	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01263441	3910	Rickover Road	1960	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01263007	3912	Rickover Road	1960	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01262093	3913	Rickover Road	1960	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01260210	3914	Rickover Road	1960	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01261863	3915	Rickover Road	1960	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01262674	3916	Rickover Road	1960	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01256684	3917	Rickover Road	1960	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01263430	3918	Rickover Road	1960	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01256946	3919	Rickover Road	1960	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01263257	3920	Rickover Road	1960	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01260744	3921	Rickover Road	1960	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01257360	3922	Rickover Road	1959	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01256274	3923	Rickover Road	1960	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)

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01257768	3924	Rickover	Road	1959	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01261236	3925	Rickover	Road	1960	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01261715	3926	Rickover	Road	1960	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01259415	3928	Rickover	Road	1960/71 rebuilt	NC	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01259940	3929	Rickover	Road	1960	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01260380	3930	Rickover	Road	1961	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01256401	3932	Rickover	Road	NA	NC	LAND ONLY
01261043	3933	Rickover	Road	1960	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01257611	3934	Rickover	Road	1960	C	BC-4U
01263758	3936	Rickover	Road	1960	NC	BC-4U
01256651	3937	Rickover	Road	1960	C	WOODVIEW (BC-3U)
01258056	3938	Rickover	Road	1959	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01256332	3940	Rickover	Road	1959	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01259448	3941	Rickover	Road	1959	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01258912	3942	Rickover	Road	1959	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01258158	3944	Rickover	Road	1959	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01259676	3945	Rickover	Road	1959	C	WOODVIEW (BC-3U)
01261453	3946	Rickover	Road	1959	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01259745	4000	Rickover	Road	1959	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01262242	4002	Rickover	Road	1959	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01258400	4004	Rickover	Road	1959	C	WOODVIEW (BC-3U)
01259107	4005	Rickover	Road	1959	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01260254	4006	Rickover	Road	1959	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01260766	4007	Rickover	Road	1959	C	WOODVIEW (BC-3U)
01262845	4008	Rickover	Road	1959	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01261255	4009	Rickover	Road	1959	C	WOODVIEW (BC-3U)
01255337	4010	Rickover	Road	1959	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01257405	4011	Rickover	Road	1959	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01263133	4012	Rickover	Road	1959	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01258284	4014	Rickover	Road	1959	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01258488	4015	Rickover	Road	1959	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01256718	4016	Rickover	Road	1959	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01262606	4018	Rickover	Road	1959	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01262116	4019	Rickover	Road	1959	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01261340	4020	Rickover	Road	1958	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01262537	4004	Ingersol	Drive	1959	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01262036	4005	Ingersol	Drive	1959	C	WOODVIEW (BC-3U)
01261704	4006	Ingersol	Drive	1959	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01263920	4007	Ingersol	Drive	1959	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01259621	4008	Ingersol	Drive	1959	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)

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01261407	4009	Ingersol	Drive	1959	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01260892	4010	Ingersol	Drive	1959	C	WOODVIEW (BC-3U)
01258422	4011	Ingersol	Drive	1959	C	WOODVIEW (BC-3U)
01258466	4012	Ingersol	Drive	1959	C	BROOKVIEW (BC-2U)
01256445	4014	Ingersol	Drive	1959	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01259381	4015	Ingersol	Drive	1959	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01259756	4016	Ingersol	Drive	1959	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01258728	4018	Ingersol	Drive	1959	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01263942	4019	Ingersol	Drive	1959	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01255315	11504	Connecticut	Avenue	1958	C	STARVIEW (BC-1D)
01262880	11506	Connecticut	Avenue	1958	C	WOODVIEW (BC-3U)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history.
- B** Property associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

Area of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Architecture
- Community Planning and Development
-
-
-
-

Period of Significance

1958-1961

Significant Dates

1958-1961

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Goodman, Charles M., architect
Bancroft Construction Co., builders

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

Previous documentation on files (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: _____

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Rock Creek Woods Historic District
Name of Property

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Significance Summary

The Rock Creek Woods Historic District is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C because it meets the registration requirements for Merchant Builder Subdivisions specified in the Multiple Property Documentation Form "Subdivisions and Architecture Planned and Designed by Charles M. Goodman Associates in Montgomery County, Maryland" (Section F, pp. 123-124). Rock Creek Woods retains integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association, and is a good representative example of its type.

Charles M. Goodman is increasingly recognized as a figure of national prominence in residential architecture of the post-World War II period; a man who, in addition to other accomplishments, brought affordable, Contemporary housing in naturalistic settings to middle-income people. The full extent of Goodman's legacy, particularly in Montgomery County, Maryland, is described in the accompanying Multiple Property Documentation Form titled "Subdivisions and Architecture Planned and Designed by Charles M. Goodman Associates in Montgomery County, Maryland".

Rock Creek Woods is a Contemporary housing development designed by Charles Goodman and built by the Bancroft Construction Company. It is the largest merchant builder subdivision designed by Goodman in Montgomery County, with of 74 houses reflecting variations on the same design ideal, built to high quality standards and sited individually on lots of under 10,000 square feet. Goodman carried out not only the architectural designs but the site planning as well. His vision entailed houses embedded within the natural environment and, in the Rock Creek Woods subdivision, he retained the existing topography, specimen trees, and woodlands surrounding the area. The original layout, including roads, lot configurations, and sidewalks, remains unaltered.

The period of significance for Rock Creek Woods is from 1958, when land for the development was obtained by Herschel and Marvin Blumberg, until 1961, when the subdivision was fully built-out.

History and Context

The houses in Rock Creek Woods represent the Contemporary idiom in architecture as practiced by Charles M. Goodman in the Washington, D. C. area in the post-World War II period.³ Goodman was one of a small group of American architects whose work propelled the Contemporary vocabulary onto the national scene. In addition, he played a primary role, nationally, in incorporating the trained architect into the merchant-builder housing process.

³ Refer to MPDF pp. 1-2 for discussion of the use of the term "Contemporary" by Goodman and his contemporaries, and its relationship to the larger Modern Movement.

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The Rock Creek Woods subdivision is the most intact, architecturally cohesive example of Charles Goodman's merchant-builder houses in Montgomery County, Maryland. No other grouping of Goodman houses has remained as architecturally intact. In addition, it is one of only three sizable developments in Montgomery County where Goodman houses were exclusively built, and where the full scope of his vision for a suburban community can be seen. Goodman worked with small merchant builders from 1948 (Hollin Hills, Virginia) to 1961, a crucial period during which he developed and refined many of the ideas, materials, and construction methods that would form the base for his later design of the mass-produced, prefabricated Contemporary houses available to thousands. Rock Creek Woods is also exceptionally significant because it was built between 1958 and 1961, at the end of Goodman's merchant-builder phase, and epitomizes the apex of that part of his career. Rock Creek Woods embodies all the architectural and land planning features that were emblematic of his design ideals. At the time Rock Creek Woods was built, the subdivision received regional architectural and land planning awards, as well as national commendations and attention.

In the post-World War II surge of suburban building across Montgomery County, the Rock Creek Woods development stands out for the innovation of its design and the uniqueness of its naturalistic siting. These houses far surpass the FHA minimum design standards that prevailed in houses being built in surrounding areas. Although nearby developments also were built with curving streets, none sited their houses with such great attention to topography or provided the privacy and window-wall connections with nature that characterize Goodman's houses. The Goodman houses also were early pioneers of the use of south-facing glass exposures with wide overhangs for passive solar energy, shade in summer, and sun in winter. Goodman's designs enabled merchant builders inexperienced in modern construction methods to construct creative and affordable housing in the difficult Contemporary idiom. Goodman's vision produced a subdivision that has always had a strong sense of community, where residents love their homes for the sense of harmony with the outdoors, glass walls, and natural light.

Rock Creek Woods' uncompromising Contemporary architecture, with grids of opaque and transparent modules, is distinctive in an area where these houses completely distinct from the small Colonial, Cape Cod, and ranch houses that characterized most post-World War II subdivisions in Montgomery County. The exteriors of the Rock Creek Woods houses exemplify all the features that make Goodman residences so distinctive: extensive use of glass, modular design, exposed window frames as structure, sculptural chimneys, expanses of warm-toned brick, and lack of decorative trim. Inside, the houses feature open and flexible floor plans, handled in a subtle way to expand the sense of space and volume.

Criteria Consideration G

Rock Creek Woods is exceptionally significant as an example of a merchant builder subdivision planned and designed by Charles Goodman, who is receiving increasing recognition for his contribution to residential architecture in the Washington, D. C. region during the 1950s and early 1960s. He was instrumental in making

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quality Contemporary design available to property owners of modest means, and his buildings and subdivisions stand out among the rectilinear tracts of traditional-styled houses that characterized the overwhelming majority of residential developments in the region during the period.

Although not quite 50 years old, the Rock Creek Woods houses today represent a highly significant period in the architectural history of the region. Charles Goodman was a pioneer in his architectural profession. Of all the Contemporary architects working on a large scale in the metropolitan Washington area, Goodman's work was not only the earliest, but the most urbane, the most pared-down, the most truly modern in its concept of the open floor plan and its extensive use of glass. With his merchant builder subdivisions, Goodman was the first architect to create affordable yet truly distinctive Contemporary houses and to individually angle these houses for privacy within "cultural naturalistic landscapes."

Rock Creek Woods has exceptional significance as the most intact example of Goodman's best merchant-builder work. These houses reflect the apex of the distinctive Contemporary style that Goodman developed for merchant builder houses in the Washington area, combining the use of window wall framing as structure, a sense of light and connection with the natural world outside, and open floor plans with a feeling of space. Nestled in a wooded, hilly site, the Rock Creek Woods subdivision also exemplifies Goodman's landscape planning ideals, where natural topography and trees are retained, curving roads are fit within existing grades, and multiple-type models create visual variety within a community. Despite the urbanity of his architectural expression, the Rock Creek Woods houses offer great comfort and livability.

Goodman's merchant-builder housing phase was a short-lived but defining moment in the history of local architecture. Contemporary residential design did not become the wave of the future in Washington, as Goodman had hoped. In the Washington area today, new Contemporary residences are rare and expensive, built by individual homeowners. The fact that the Rock Creek Woods houses have retained the basic elements of Goodman's design into the 21st century without significant alteration is a testament to the legitimacy of his vision and his ability to provide an environment in which that vision could be carried out. The people who live in these houses recognize their architectural and historic significance and live in them with an eye toward protecting the associations that made the houses so novel for their time.

In addition, the new "Historic Residential Suburbs" National Register Bulletin suggests adding a 5-year allowance for the 50-year rule if the suburb was in the planning stages around 50 years ago. By this standard, Rock Creek Woods--planned in 1958--should qualify for Register listing.

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Site history

The hilly, wooded land around St. Joseph's Branch, where Rock Creek Woods is located, has been described by a Maryland-National Park and Planning Commission spokesman as "one of the most beautiful spots in Montgomery County" (Hiebert and MacMaster 1976). Before European settlers came, Algonquin Indians used this area, which extended from Chevy Chase northward, as their summer living encampment and hunting grounds. The land offered a rich supply of wildlife, natural springs and streams, and a cool environment.

Lord Baltimore, with his grant of Maryland lands from the King of England, was the first European owner of Rock Creek and its surroundings. By the late 17th century, land speculation in Maryland reached the Rock Creek Basin, which was still an uncleared frontier. Within a few years, the huge land grants had been broken up into settled farms, most growing tobacco. In 1689, Lord Baltimore granted a patent to William Joseph for a large tract called the Hermitage—a tract that included Rock Creek Woods. The Hermitage consisted of 3,860 acres on the east side of Rock Creek and adjoined Joseph's Park, which lies roughly southeast of the present boundary of the development.

The Bowie family—recognized in Maryland for their distinguished record in the judiciary, ministry, law, medicine, and armed services—was one of the early families associated with the Hermitage. In 1735, John Bowie, Jr. of Prince George's County purchased about 2,000 acres of Montgomery County land in the Hermitage tract from Thomas Harris for twenty-five cents per acre. One of the houses built by the Bowies, a brick Colonial manor house, became known as the Hermitage. It was located on the east side of the Silver Spring-Olney highway and half a mile north of Glenmont. This house was built in 1750 for John Bowie's son, Allen Bowie, who was then 16 years old.

During the Revolution, Allen Bowie, Jr. and his brother-in-law, Thomas Cramphin, Jr. were very active in the cause of the patriots. These men had great ability and financial resources, loaning money on mortgages and dealing in real estate. In June 1774, both men attended the famous protest meeting at Hungerford Tavern, Rockville, which denounced Great Britain and recommended breaking off all commerce with England. Allen Bowie, Jr. organized his own company of troops, which he commanded during the Revolution and paid for with his own funds. He died in 1803. Washington Bowie I, son of Allen, Jr., was born in the Hermitage house on August 12, 1776. According to family legend, Washington Bowie I was a godson of General Washington, for whom he was named.

After the death of the Bowies, the property was held in trust for their heirs for 40 years until 1865, when the house with 160 acres of land was sold to J.P. Dodge, a farmer. Between 1865 and the 1950s, much of the area in and surrounding Rock Creek Palisades subdivision was used as farmland. As large land tracts like the Hermitage were divided among heirs, they were sold to development corporations. Rock Creek Woods is actually composed of several plats within the larger development known as Rock Creek Palisades. In 1958,

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Standard Properties, Inc., owners of Rock Creek Palisades, sold the Goodman house plats to brothers Herschel and Marvin Blumberg. The Blumbergs originally intended the Rock Creek Woods development to contain 140 houses, but land on the south side of St. James Run required too much fill for satisfactory construction. Only two Goodman houses were built to the south of the creek before the Blumbergs sold that portion of the land. Rock Creek Woods, located on the north side of the creek, contains 74 Goodman houses.

Postwar development

Rock Creek Woods is part of the great suburban building boom that swept northward over Montgomery County in successive waves from the early 1900s to the present. In 1873, the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad cut through Montgomery County on its way to Point of Rocks. An early railroad settlement located close to Rock Creek, known as Knowles Station, catered to the neighboring farmers and became a planned community called Kensington. Incorporated in 1894, the Kensington Historic District is now a well-preserved, turn-of-the-century garden suburb with Victorian era residences, curvilinear streets, and a vital business district. By 1935, the town had expanded to include the area of North Kensington. No attempt was made to enlarge the town after that, and it remained a small community until after World War II, when the farms surrounding Kensington began to be developed.

The first wave of suburban growth north of Kensington occurred from 1946 to 1955, centering along Veirs Mill Road to the North and Georgia Avenue and Randolph Road to the east and west of Rock Creek Palisades. These houses tended to be quite small and inexpensive, averaging \$10,000 each. Rock Creek Woods was built during the second wave of new homebuilding, which occurred during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Houses built in this second wave of development reflected the emphasis of that time on larger families and traditional values; these houses tended to be larger and more expensive. Many builders at this time had relatively small operations and limited finances. After 1960, a number of major builders and developers became active in Montgomery County, and building emphasis shifted to very large operations and planned communities.

Beginnings of Rock Creek Woods

The first house in the Rock Creek Woods development, built in 1958 at 4020 Rickover, served as a model house. This was soon followed by a second model house at 3607 Spruell Drive. The first house to be occupied was on the service road, which is now 11506 Connecticut Avenue. By June 1959, six houses were occupied on Spruell and Ingersol. Construction continued down Rickover until the last house was built in 1961.

Goodman designed many of the houses for "future" bedrooms and storage in the lower level in order to lower the initial purchase price. That price, however, did include a Hotpoint range, wall oven, dishwasher, disposal, refrigerator, washer, and dryer. The Rock Creek Woods houses sold in the moderate price range. Prices varied from \$21,950 to \$25,000, depending on the model and the extras chosen. Early brochures (April 1960) showed

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the cost of a fireplace at \$950, a recreation room and bedroom at \$1,100, and an extra bath at \$550. To put this in perspective, the average family in Montgomery County in 1959 had a \$9,345 income and lived in an \$18,000 home. At the time, the average cost of new houses was in the \$15,000 range in the Rockville area, \$27,000 in the Bethesda area, and \$46,500 in Potomac (Heibert and MacMaster 1976, p. 358). Copper plumbing was standard when the Rock Creek Woods houses were built as were aluminum sliding glass doors. Every house was sited for a future patio. The roofs had a gable shape with self-sealing asphalt shingles. The original windows were fixed glass above with awning casements below.

Although cheaper houses were available in more traditional styles, the space that came with the Rock Creek Woods Contemporary houses had great appeal to young professionals starting families. Since several of the interior walls were not load-bearing, they could be moved for different space arrangements as family needs changed.

For Rock Creek Woods, Goodman's office developed a color chart to guide the exterior painting of the houses and trim, including the colors of the hardboard, or "Masonite," panels. Using "color developers" intended for the photographic industry, Goodman offered color options for the vertical wall panels, flush wood doors, and Masonite end-gable panels. Crayon-on-trace drawings at the Library of Congress indicate that Goodman suggested a distinct color palette for each individual house. The drawings show yellow, dark blue, white, green, and sky blue, among other colors, for the Masonite gables. One house was shown with Calvert rose walls, black gables, and grey for the front. The adjacent house was to have purple walls, sky blue gables, and star white trim. The next house was to have white walls, yellow gables, and black onyx roof trim.

Architecture and planning awards

At the time of construction, Rock Creek Woods garnered national and regional praise and attention, as well as winning a number of architectural awards. In December 1959, the Suburban Maryland Builders Association gave Bancroft Construction Company an award in the large subdivision class (more than 35 houses). The judges declared the Rock Creek Woods houses as the best in siting, variety, and excellence of design, preservation of natural land features, construction workmanship, and value to the purchaser. In November 1961, a special committee appointed by the Montgomery County Council cited Rock Creek Woods as a first award winner in a county-wide competition as an example of what well-planned subdivisions should be in the category of lots averaging less than 10,000 square feet.

Rock Creek Woods also received attention in the national press. In 1958, *McCall's* magazine cited Rock Creek Woods as a prize-winning example of houses containing features recommended by the Women's Congress on Better Living, which had been sponsored by the magazine. In November 1959, *House and Home* magazine selected the Charles Goodman and Bancroft Construction Company houses as an example of quality houses that

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were versatile because of their flexibility for difficult sites. The magazine mentioned that the square-shaped house was easy to position on narrow and irregularly sloped lots.

Rock Creek Woods and Washington, D.C.'s suburban development

The exceptional significance of the Rock Creek Woods houses becomes apparent when compared to other Montgomery County housing constructed after World War II. Following the war, a huge influx of government and military personnel who needed housing flooded into the Washington, D.C. area. These newcomers could not afford the expensive, individually built houses in Chevy Chase, Maryland, which characterized suburban growth before World War II. Instead, large-scale development of small, inexpensive houses began along the major transportation corridors, such as Veirs Mill Road. From 1950 to 1956, the Rockville District grew by 149 percent; the County population as a whole grew by 66 percent. These new suburban developments tended to be uniform and monotonous, with traditional architecture. The developments surrounding Rock Creek Woods feature primarily ranch houses, Cape Cods, and bungalows. In the southern portion of Rock Creek Palisades, across from Rock Creek Woods, some modified modern-looking houses were built in the late 1950s that combined a ranch with modern style. All near-by developments sited the houses parallel with the streets, losing any natural relationship to the land.

Veirs Mill Village, a development of 1,400 houses located on the west side of St. Joseph's Branch directly across from Rock Creek Woods, is perhaps the most obvious example of the type of housing being built in Montgomery County after World War II. Starting in 1947, the Harris Construction Company built the four-room Cape Cod houses with bath and basement for veterans at the rate of 10 per day. Located in beautiful rolling, wooded surroundings, bulldozers cleared off the sites for building. The houses, being bought with FHA and Veterans Administration loans, had serious construction flaws. When Congress investigated, it was noted with dismay that the houses cost \$5,600 to build but sold to veterans for \$8,700.

Most suburban construction of the time lacked innovation and aesthetic appeal. In contrast, the Rock Creek Woods houses, even today, seem forward-looking and innovative. The development reflects Goodman's driving interest and concern with creating living environments that would be open, informal, and in communion with the natural setting.

Rock Creek Woods and social history

As in other Goodman developments in the Washington, D.C. area, these Contemporary houses attracted people who were educated professionals, often with an artistic bent. Some from California or the Midwest had already been introduced to—and loved—the modern look of simplicity and openness to the outside. Residents strongly tended toward liberalism in their political views. Many people in the neighborhood were politically active, particularly in the peace movement. In the 1960s, most of the women did not work; their husbands worked in

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fields such as journalism, science, psychiatry and medicine, or as researchers for the Library of Congress. Many worked as professionals in the Federal Government. For example, in the early days, five residents shared a car pool to the State Department.

At a time when many communities were red-lined, Rock Creek Woods residents included a number of Jewish families. A newcomer to Rock Creek Woods in 1967 remembers being told how disappointed the community was that no African-American families had become residents. Over time, as economic opportunities have improved for minority groups in the United States, the community has welcomed new neighbors from various racial and ethnic groups.

In the early years, there were many children in the neighborhood. One of the first “settlers” on Ingersol Drive estimated that there were 36 children in 1960 and 1961 in that part of the neighborhood. At the time, four adjacent houses on lower Rickover Road contained four families with a total of 17 young children. An attractive feature to parents was the accessibility of four levels of schooling—nursery, elementary, junior high, and high school—within walking distance. Many parents were active in the PTAs, where they were known as “the people in the glass houses.”

Several early owners had moved to Rock Creek Woods from smaller Goodman houses in Hammond Wood and Hammond Hills—other Goodman-designed subdivisions located nearby. One of these was Lane Kirkland, Director of the AFL-CIO from 1979 to 1995, who moved from Hammond Wood to Rock Creek Woods and lived at 4005 Rickover Road. People not only moved into the neighborhood but they tended to stay there as well. As of August 2003, fourteen original owners still lived in the subdivision.

Sense of community

Perhaps because the Goodman houses attracted people of a similar bent, Rock Creek Woods has shared a real sense of community from its earliest days. The community’s Labor Day picnic has more than a 20-year tradition. In the early years, there were many informal get-togethers and parties for the entire community. As an example, early residents remember the backyard summer garden parties for the whole neighborhood hosted by a resident and his Japanese-born bride, with tables laden with exotic oriental foods and guests from the Japanese embassy. Their home, full of Japanese furnishings and artwork, demonstrated how well the Japanese decor fit with Goodman’s Contemporary idiom.

Over time, Rock Creek Woods has shared many communal projects. In the late 1960s, the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) announced plans to install a huge underground pipeline across the rear lots of houses on lower Rickover, next to St. James’ Run. The community rallied behind their Rickover neighbors to prevent the loss of many large trees. Although the pipeline could not be stopped, the WSSC was persuaded to remove the fewest trees possible. It also emerged that the WSSC was strongly considering putting

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the creek underground as part of the project. The WSSC respected the neighborhood’s desire to retain the creek in its natural state. In the 1990s, the community built a memorial bench and “Nancy’s Garden” on a vacant wooded lot, honoring a deceased local resident.

Highly unusual in the transient Washington, D.C. area, the Rock Creek Woods community has been extremely stable over time. Most of the young professional families who were first owners in the development remained in place rather than moving on to more expensive, larger houses. Many couples have stayed as they entered their retirement years. A survey done in the 1990s of Rock Creek Woods and the smaller number of close-by Goodman people in Hammond Hills and Hammond Wood (Ventre and Ventre 1996) found almost no children, with the largest number of residents being in the post-age 60 category. This represented a shift from the subdivision’s early years, when large numbers of families with young children lived in the houses. The residents’ family income covered a very wide range (one-fifth of households fell into each of the following categories: \$20,000-40,000; \$40,000-60,000; \$60,000-80,000; \$80,000-120,000; and over \$120,000).

The Rock Creek Woods community has always perceived itself to be a self-contained entity. As the area matured, the residents saw a need for more organized, structured action by the community. Residents set up a civic association which was revitalized in 1997 and is now a strong, active force for cohesion and community improvement. The Rock Creek Woods Civic Association, operating according to by-laws developed and approved by the residents, holds regular meetings and has an elected slate of officers who serve and direct the association. Among its activities, the Civic Association has erected a sign at the entrance to Rock Creek Woods designating Rock Creek Woods as a Charles Goodman development, established a regular neighborhood newsletter, and set up an e-mail system to notify residents of neighborhood-related news (such as how best to repair the houses’ bi-fold closet doors). The Association has undertaken a number of beautification efforts within the boundaries of the development and has won awards and grants from Montgomery County.

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Additional Materials:

Map: Kensington, Maryland and its environs, 1935. *Property Atlas of Volume One: Montgomery County Maryland*, by Klinge, F.H.M. Available at: Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Silver Spring, MD.

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 28 acres Kensington, MD quad

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

A	1	8	3	2	0	3	0	7	4	3	2	3	8	5	2
	Zone		Easting			Northing									

C	1	8	3	1	9	8	2	1	4	3	2	3	6	9	6
	Zone		Easting			Northing									

B	1	8	3	2	0	3	0	9	4	3	2	3	4	7	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

D	1	8	3	1	9	8	6	0	4	3	2	3	8	5	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dolores Battle, Patricia Kassebaum, Annabel Kaufman, Kathy Kennedy, Julie Marcis, Mariann Seriff, Valerie Tate, and Elizabeth Jo Lampl

Organization Rock Creek Woods Civic Association date November 2003

street & number c/o Roseanne Clausen, 4014 Rickover Rd. telephone 301-946-0837

city or town Silver Spring state MD zip code 20902

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et. seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Verbal Boundary Description

Boundaries are depicted on the subdivision plat entitled *Plat 4721, Rock Creek Palisades, Section 21, Blocks 1-4; F. and B. Development Corporation*, dated October 29, 1956 and filed among the land records of Montgomery County, Maryland.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the historic district correspond to the original boundaries of the subdivision as platted in 1956.

For reference, a reduced copy of the subdivision plat appears on the following page (source: Plats.Net, an *Archives of Maryland* electronic publication, Maryland State Archives).

