NPS Form 10-900-b
(Jan. 1987)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

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

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Suburban Developments in Des Moines Between the World Wars, 1918-41

B. Associated Historic Contexts

Development of Residential Suburbs in Des Moines Between the World Wars

C. Geographical Data

City limits of Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa, as of 1940

☐ See continuation sheet

D. Certification

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

David Cram — 9/18/89
Signature of certifying official — Date

Bureau of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Patrick Andrus — 11/6/89
for Signature of the Keeper of the National Register — Date

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

The context statement for this multiple property nomination is organized as follows:

Introduction
City Planning and Residential Development
Lure of Suburban Life
Suburban Development in Des Moines
"New Homes for All"

Introduction

In the years between the world wars, Des Moines experienced a housing boom of notable proportions, despite relatively low population growth. Residential development in numerous suburban tracts characterized the physical development of the Capital City during this period. With the ascendancy of the automobile as the preferred form of transportation, new housing developments were no longer strongly linked to streetcar and interurban routes. Proximity to the central business district became less important, even less desirable, for workers could conveniently commute in their automobiles.

Des Moines home dwellers sought out pleasingly designed suburban tracts and populated them with housing exhibiting a variety of period revival stylistic influences, especially the Tudor Revival. Part pride, part an effort to grapple with the many technological and social changes of the twentieth century, strong home owner identification with their new suburban neighborhoods was an important feature of the development of the automobile suburbs in Des Moines.

New housing developments proliferated across the city with considerable development fanning along the west, northwest, and northeast, some thoughtfully designed, some not. Nonetheless, the mature face of the Capital City formed in the early twentieth century. As city planner Harland Bartholomew stated in 1940, most of the city had by then been subdivided, with development in all areas projected to have construction in the future. He concluded in his revision of the city's comprehensive city plan, "The future development of these areas will be largely a matter of consolidation, stabilization, and protection."

City Planning and Residential Development

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, proponents of the City Beautiful Movement stressed beautification as a means to improve urban life. The emphasis was on providing an attractive and safe environment to ease stress and foster appropriate behavior. A growing body of city planners and concerned progressive citizens worked to mitigate such

urban problems as congestion, ugliness, and inappropriate land use.

In Des Moines early efforts centered on beautifying or improving open space, especially parks and the riverfront. Beginning in 1900 with planner and landscape architect Warren H. Manning, who had worked for Frederick Law Olmsted, a series of planners were hired to study open space beautification in Des Moines and make recommendations. In 1910 Charles Mulford Robinson, a leading proponent of planning in America, provided a plan for Des Moines that dealt with streets, railroads, and industries, in addition to a main emphasis on the riverfront Civic Center of public buildings, parks and playgrounds, and boulevards and parkways.

As city planning evolved, concern with beautification was increasingly combined with, then superseded by, interest in useful, utilitarian, efficient planning proposals. By the 1920s two areas--zoning and streets--emerged as primary concerns of city planners. Both topics were associated with and fostered the development of neighborhoods in the automobile suburbs. By limiting where certain types of land use (factories, stores) could occur, zoning laws protected the purity of residential areas. Such protection preserved property values and wellbeing in the suburbs. Improved street systems helped automobile commuters drive from home to work, making life in the automobile suburbs even more attractive.[1]

Like other progressive cities in the 1920s, Des Moines hired a nationally known city planner (Harland Bartholomew) to provide its first comprehensive city plan. The St. Louis firm of Bartholomew & Associates worked on the plan between 1924 and 1927. Adopted in 1929, the plan devoted considerable space to the development of suitable transportation networks and called for adoption of a zoning ordinance.

Lure of Suburban Life

The emphasis on zoning and streets worked hand-in-glove with contemporary perceptions about neighborhoods, their function, and value, and assisted in residential development of the automobile suburbs. The early twentieth century was a time of considerable change in America. By 1920, census reports revealed that more Americans lived in urban or suburban areas than in the countryside, a first. Such a shift was unsettling to a nation that traditionally espoused the rural ideal--or the village if need be--as the source of decency, order, and happiness. Congested urban living, on the other hand, was filled with evil and

[1]See Early Twentieth-Century Suburbs in North Carolina.

considered especially harmful to children. The lure of the new automobile suburbs fulfilled the American urge for owning a single-family detached home in as bucolic and safe a setting as was possible in modern life.

New technology, especially the automobile and the availability of an increasing number of electrical appliances in the home, transformed how Americans lived. Living in an era where seemingly all that was new and modern was desirable and preferable, Americans feared being out of date. In her social history of housing, Gwendolyn Wright described four-color advertisements that told of teenagers meeting friends at a speak-easy because their home had the "wrong" (presumably old-fashioned) furniture. Existing housing--even if only twenty years old--was portrayed as undesirable in the literature. Old houses were not wired or designed for electricity, and they looked cluttered--not modern--with their gingerbread and bric-a-brac. "Out with the old, in with the new" was the clarion call, one that hit a responsive chord in a society built on individual freedom and attainment rather than inherited privilege. To some, modernization became an end in and of itself. Life in the automobile suburbs combined and fulfilled two basic American ideals: rural life and modernity.

One of the responses to concerns about life in the twentieth century that Des Moines residents had was an increasing identification with their immediate surroundings and the related creation of neighborhood associations. Citizens felt that an "intelligent cooperative effort" was necessary to counteract the increasing unfamiliarity associated with urban living: it was impossible to know personally all the new faces moving to Des Moines. Out of rapidly growing cities of strangers came the need for suburbs of neighbors. By taking charge and working together, neighbors could "exert a very great influence in making [their] neighborhood the kind of place it should be," averred a 1924 article in Better Homes and Gardens.

In the 1920s Des Moines suburbanites organized neighborhood associations. Beginning in 1923, residents of the "Center-Soll" area[2] worked together in a "common purpose" to make their neighborhood more friendly, as reported in a long article in Better Homes and Gardens. Homeowners in the Thompson Avenue neighborhood held annual picnics and even elected a "mayor" and "council" during this period. Beaverdale area boosters boasted that "residence in Beaverdale will bring you in

[2]Between Center Street and Ingersoll Avenue, from 35th to 38th Streets.

contact with cultured, well-to-do people, interested in the welfare of themselves and their neighbors." And the Chautauqua Park Improvement League elected officers and worked on such projects as improvements in a proposed nearby parkway.

The editors of the Des Moines-based Better Homes and Gardens were so taken with the concept of neighborhood associations that they offered Center-Soll booklets to help readers "get more neighborliness into your neighborhood." Included were suggested by-laws, how to plan and finance neighborhood events, and suggested neighborhood projects and activities, all in an effort to "tear down your Chinese wall! [and] Come out of your shell!"

Suburban Development

The period between the two world wars saw the ascendancy of the automobile as the preferred mode of transportation in Des Moines. This collective decision affected urban development, and suburban residential development proliferated throughout the Capital City. Des Moines lived up to its moniker of a "City of Magnificent Distances."

By 1939 all but 24 per cent of available land in the city was subdivided. Development occurred through the individual efforts of speculators, not through a comprehensive plan. As Bartholomew noted in a 1939 report, "promoters have created speculative subdivisions throughout the area and there is one vacant lot for every two occupied lots in the city." The degree of infill--houses dating from decades rather years of one another--in Des Moines suburbs thus is not surprising. In addition, when developers intent on the profit motive are the primary force behind urban development, distinctively planned subdivisions are at a premium.

Residential construction was a fundamental feature of Des Moines' development between the world wars. Between 1920 and 1940 the city's population increased by 26.37 per cent (from 126,468 to 159,819). While this did not match the 103.52 per cent increase of the preceding two decades, the growth occurred during a financial depression in Iowa in the 1920s and through a period of unprecedented nationwide financial depression in the 1930s. And the population increase was without the substantial annexation to the city of 1890.

The not insignificant economic engines of state government and numerous insurance company home offices helped insulate the Capital City from the agricultural depression that stilled economic development in the Iowa countryside after World War I. Despite materials shortages and a nationwide business depression in 1921, Des Moines posted a fivefold

increase in the valuation of building activity (all types) between June 1921 and June 1922. (High cost for scarce materials undoubtedly contributed to the increase.) Other sources besides valuation confirmed the housing boom underway in Des Moines suburbs. Citing "authoritative records," the Chamber of Commerce announced that 1,565 new families moved to Des Moines in 1922.

The boosters had reason for optimism in the 1920s. The number of building permits was high, totaling 265 and 224 just for May and June of 1922, respectively. In May 1923 the city recorded the largest number of building permits, 289, to date, surpassing 265 for April of that year. Most of the permits issued in May were for dwellings or private garages to store the homeowner's automobile. Many, if not most, were to be found in the developing automobile suburbs. In 1923 1,255 dwellings were built in Des Moines at a cost of nearly $5 million.

Des Moines was truly a "City of Homes," one of the many slogans boosters tied to the city. In 1923 Des Moines was first in the nation in the percentage of home owners, with 51.1 per cent. According to the 1920 census, only 46 per cent of American families owned their homes. In that most urban of places, New York City, the figure was a paltry 12 per cent.

The building boom extended citywide, but topographical and physical factors affected and directed the residential distribution of the city's population. The Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers separate the city into distinct sectors, the west, south, and east sides. Considerable low land associated with the river bottoms discouraged development along some of these river-defined corridors, and railroad lines running north slowed development on the east side. (See map.)

At the turn of the century, residential development in Des Moines was concentrated about the central business district, like most American cities of medium size. The highest population densities occurred near downtown, although nascent suburban development spread in virtually all directions. The trend continued to the 1920s, and new development was noticeable along streetcar lines. Despite increased settlement, the south side remained of relatively low density.

From 1920 to 1930 the bulk of new construction fanned across the city's west, northwest, north central, and northeast sectors, the most desirable and least occupied areas for new development. The older, central section of town lost population. Bartholomew's city plan noted that the northwest and west sections enjoyed the highest percentages of new growth, with 28.01 and 23.37 per cent of the population residing

there, respectively. The increases continued patterns established in the early 1900s. The distribution of building permits for new homes between 1919 and 1924 and also 1927 to 1937 graphically reflected this shift to suburban living in Des Moines' automobile suburbs. (See map.)

By the period between the world wars, the automobile had emerged as the permanent and common mode of transportation. The location of new residential developments demonstrated the freedom from established streetcar and interurban lines the automobile engendered (although access to the streetcar was not ignored completely). Harland Bartholomew pointed out that "between 1920 and 1930 the automobile came into general use and the population scattered throughout the city." Growth was not concentrated in a single sector or along certain streetcar routes, but was spread over a large area of the city.

Thoroughfares offering good access to downtown attracted residential development, not just along them, but jumping to their terminal points. The opening of Keosauqua Way, which connected with Beaver Avenue via Forest Avenue, offered just such convenient access between an attractive housing area, Beaverdale, and work and shopping downtown. Forestdale, located in the west sector, took advantage of the good street connections that Forest Avenue offered with Keosauqua Way. Improvements to Beaver Avenue occurred during World War I to connect Des Moines with the federal cantonment at Camp Dodge, and this paving project likely encouraged subsequent suburban residential developments along it in Beaverdale.

Developers sought out and platted distinctive tracts to attract the new homeowner. Many of the more successful areas offered curving streets that followed rather than ignored the lovely rolling topography that characterizes much of Des Moines. These distinctive developments typically teamed an appealing locale with an attractive wooded house site. In contrast, most of the city was laid out in typical grid fashion. Bartholomew's 1940 comprehensive plan noted that Des Moines "has been laid out in gridiron platting with small regard for topography." Bartholomew also pointed out that land subdividers and promoters were responsible for much of the westward suburban development of the city between 1920 and 1940.

Several distinctively designed automobile suburbs were the product of local designers. Former State Landscape Architect L. Earl Foglesong was responsible for Chautauqua Park. In a promotional brochure, Foglesong stressed the "convenience of access," "cozy domestic streets, safe for children," and "driveways...carried on the contours of the land" of the Chautauqua Park plan. Civil engineer Warren Dickinson

designed Waterbury Circle. And the locally well-known landscape architectural firm of Pearse-Robinson was responsible for the design of County Club Knolls on the grounds of a former country club.

Despite the clear economic basis behind suburban development, certain planning principles did affect their physical development. A form of planning protection open to misuse, restrictive covenants, became a common practice after a 1917 U.S. Supreme Court decision struck down municipal residential segregation ordinances. Developers and property owners then employed the restrictive covenant as a means to ensure racial segregation. A restrictive covenant is an agreement between individuals (property buyer and seller) that placed restrictions upon the use of a piece of property. Typical features limited the size and type of building and its location on the site in an effort to preserve the intended quality and use of a neighborhood.

Another all too common feature of some restrictive covenants prevented future sale of the property to members of certain racial or ethnic groups. Ashby Manor and Chautauqua Park plats and a host of others in Des Moines contained such a provision. Racial and ethnic restrictions were a common feature of the period. During the 1910s and 1920s many Americans feared and distrusted the many new immigrant groups. Discrimination and hatred based on race or ethnic background were as much a feature of early twentieth century America as enlightened city planning, progressive politics, and beautification efforts. Restrictive covenants were common until 1948 when the Supreme Court banned the practice.

As the nation entered the 1930s, Des Moines retained its standing as a "City of Homes." In 1939 121,880 residents lived in 32,354 single-family houses, 79.65 percent of the total housing stock. The remainder lived in two-family residences (2.79%), apartments (9.11%), boarding houses (6.90%), and hotels and institutions (1.55%). Single-family residences were spread over 7,035 acres in all 46 census tracts, according to a 1939 Plan & Zoning Commission report. Land use for single-family housing accounted for 39.53 per cent of the total developed area. By comparison, the average percentage of single-family housing in developed areas in 22 similar cities was 36.10 per cent.

The housing construction industry slowed in the 1930s during the nationwide financial depression, but federal legislation in 1934 establishing the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) encouraged home improvements and new home construction. Mortgage bankers and the building industry strongly backed the program, hoping to revive the housing market without substantial financial risk to themselves. By

1935 some 4,000 financial institutions across the country had issued nearly 73,000 home improvement loans.

FHA loans were very attractive to prospective homeowners. Before FHA, the typical home loan came due in just three to five years at interest rates of between five and nine per cent. Under the FHA, loans were available for a larger percent of the home's value, did not mature for up to 20 years, and had lower interest rates. The FHA initially favored loans for home improvements over new construction but after 1938 opened the door for an increased number of home construction loans. Home construction increased accordingly in Des Moines suburbs. For example, at least 23 houses in Ashby Manor date from 1938-1940. Chautauqua Park enjoyed a similar increase in construction in the same two-year period with 44 new homes.

Significant, distinctively designed neighborhoods illustrate the physical development of modern Des Moines. They shine as fine examples of well planned residential development of enduring value. These special places reflect the prosperity in the Capital City between the wars that allowed the creation of distinctive neighborhoods across the city. Significant examples include Ashby Manor in Beaverdale, Forestdale, and Oak Lawn Place (all on the northwest side), Chautauqua Park (north), and Birchwood Place (northeast). All enjoy street lay-outs adapted to the topography, a mature and highly attractive tree canopy, and a palpable "sense of place" upon entering them. These plats are set apart visually from surrounding land use. Their sites were consciously and effectively designed to take advantage of the setting, which is generally rolling. All contain many Tudor Revival-influenced brick houses (then the prevalent style in Des Moines), except Birchwood Place which features Craftsman bungalows. Several of these neighborhoods were designed by notable local landscape architects. The areas carry local identification as neighborhoods and a number have or have had active neighborhood associations on the "Center-Sol" model.

"New Homes for All"

A 1929 article in Better Homes and Gardens, "New Homes for All," described the "making of a home" as "an intimate part of life itself." Indeed, one of the tenets of the early twentieth century was the desirability of a nation of home owners. Interest in homes for all was apparent at all levels. As noted above, Des Moines boosters bragged of the high percentage of home owners in the city and kept records on house construction. Herbert Hoover, who was Secretary of Commerce in the 1920s before he was elected President, was a leading national proponent of home ownership. In a 1923 report he maintained that home ownership was

both the foundation of a sound economic and social system and a guarantee that our society will continue to develop rationally as changing conditions demand.

Not only did such a goal foster economic stability in the construction trades, it also was believed to encourage social stability. The home owner had a stake--financial and emotional--in his "castle" and therefore favored a stable American society. In a time of concern about unfamiliar immigrant groups and communist and labor unrest, the concept of a stable, contented populace held no little allure.

Des Moines residents, developers, realtors, and boosters favored the single-family detached house in a new suburb for their collective dream home. With plenty of land available and a relatively small populace (compared to more congested cities in the East), planned new towns and rowhouses were not a feature of the period. Des Moines saw no counterpart to experiments in planned housing such as Sunnyside Gardens in New York City or Radburn in New Jersey.

Typically the Des Moines house from between the world wars was single-family, located in one of the many automobile suburbs, and exhibited period revival stylistic elements applied to a smaller, more modern plan. They were designed to be more efficient, comfortable, and economical than the then-spurned Victorian "monstrosities."

The new houses were suited for the automobile age, smaller, more compact, with rooms designed for specific uses. Houses built in the automobile suburbs often had a garage integrated into the house design or a separate, sometimes matching garage. But above all, the houses from between the wars were modern (this, despite the application of period revival details). They were fitted out with the newest in plumbing, electricity, and heating systems, which accounted for 25 per cent of the construction cost. Advertisements in the many "shelter magazines" extolled the benefits of everything from roofing, efficient furnaces, oak flooring, to house plans from the Aladdin Company and the Gordon Van Tine Company. They asked such fundamental questions as "What colors would you use with plumbing fixtures of Ming Green?" (Pink.)

Brick- and stone-faced housing took advantage of new technology in masonry veneering that made such coverings affordable to the growing middle class. A brick house conveyed the image of solidity and permanence, a worthy investment. Noting that brick was durable and safer from fire damage than wood, the American Face Brick Association stated in a 1924 advertisement that a brick house was "beauty that endures."

The new face brick technology fostered a wealth of Tudor Revival housing, probably the dominant house type built between the world wars in Des Moines.

A variation of the Tudor Revival-influenced house is well known in Des Moines as the "Beaverdale Brick." The typical Beaverdale Brick has at least one (and often more) front-facing gables applied to a gable-side house shape. It is usually 1 1/2-stories high, but can be 1-story. Wall surfaces are faced with brick, but stone and stucco (sometimes with simulated half-timbering) are often present. Contrasting materials are concentrated at the entrance, which might be carved stone in a pleasing round arch or perhaps a Tudor arch or other Tudor Revival shape. Many fine examples have a round arched brick door surround. A prominent fireplace chimney is typically integrated into the design and faces front, providing even more variety.

A smaller house type than nineteenth century housing, the Beaverdale Brick was ideally suited for the aspirations and finances of the middle class and admirably reflected changes in housing between the world wars. Excellent examples are found (as one would expect) throughout the extensive northwest suburban area of Beaverdale, such as along Ashby and Ovid Avenues. Examples in Forestdale, some of them quite distinctive, feature a considerable amount of stucco in addition to brick. Chautauqua Park also enjoys a substantial concentration of Beaverdale Bricks.

In addition to the Tudor Revival, the other well represented house type from the period in Des Moines reflects the Craftsman stylistic influence. Especially in moderate income developments, one can encounter block upon block of these low-pitched, generally multiple-gabled houses across the city. A variety of wall surfaces--stucco, brick, wood shingle, and clapboard--are represented. The style was influential in the 1910s but continued to be popular into the 1920s in Des Moines, as evidenced by the Craftsman houses that line the Thompson Avenue neighborhood (Birchwood Place).

While there are numerous relatively pure examples of the Tudor Revival and Craftsman stylistic influences, designers did not hesitate to combine features from various styles, especially the Colonial Revival with either the Tudor Revival or Craftsman Style. Features of the Colonial Revival (including the Dutch Colonial), were also popular, and examples are found throughout the automobile suburbs. The Colonial Revival style probably ranked third in popularity after the Tudor Revival

and Craftsman in Des Moines.[3]

Other stylistic elements and influences occur as well in Des Moines. A home in Forestdale has wonderful eyebrow dormers, perhaps a holdover from the Shingle Style. The effect is that of an English cottage. Isolated examples of the Streamline Modern dot the city. French Eclectic and also Prairie School houses are occasionally encountered. Windsor Heights, a separate community adjacent to Des Moines' west limits, hosts a number of small Spanish Eclectic houses of stucco with tile roofs.

Period revival styles offered a safe individuality for the home buyer--one located securely within well defined boundaries of acceptability. Designers and buyers of houses could express their individuality by selecting from a variety of details, materials, and shapes while feeling assured that the neighbors would "approve." Architects and other designers offered an array of features that recalled styles from the past. The Colby family of developers specialized in houses faced with brick, usually with some stone, in Beaverdale and Windsor Heights. In 1924 Burns Brothers, Des Moines investment bankers, were responsible for construction of 35 Beaverdale Brick homes just that year. Builder E.L. Beck typically included wood shutters with a cutout design--owls, urns, trees--on his houses.

Home improvement magazines offered articles extolling the various period revivals. Issues from Better Homes and Gardens in 1924 had articles on "How to Make your Cottage Unique," a Byzantine style house, and the popularity of the Dutch Colonial home. This Des Moines-based magazine clearly emphasized period revival styles. It also regularly offered articles by Des Moines architect Leland McBroom (including Tudor Revival and Cape Cod house plans) as well as local landscape architect F.A. Robinson on suggested house and landscaping plans. Such were the various factors contributing to the array of Tudor Revival and other period revival styles in Des Moines' automobile suburbs between the world wars.

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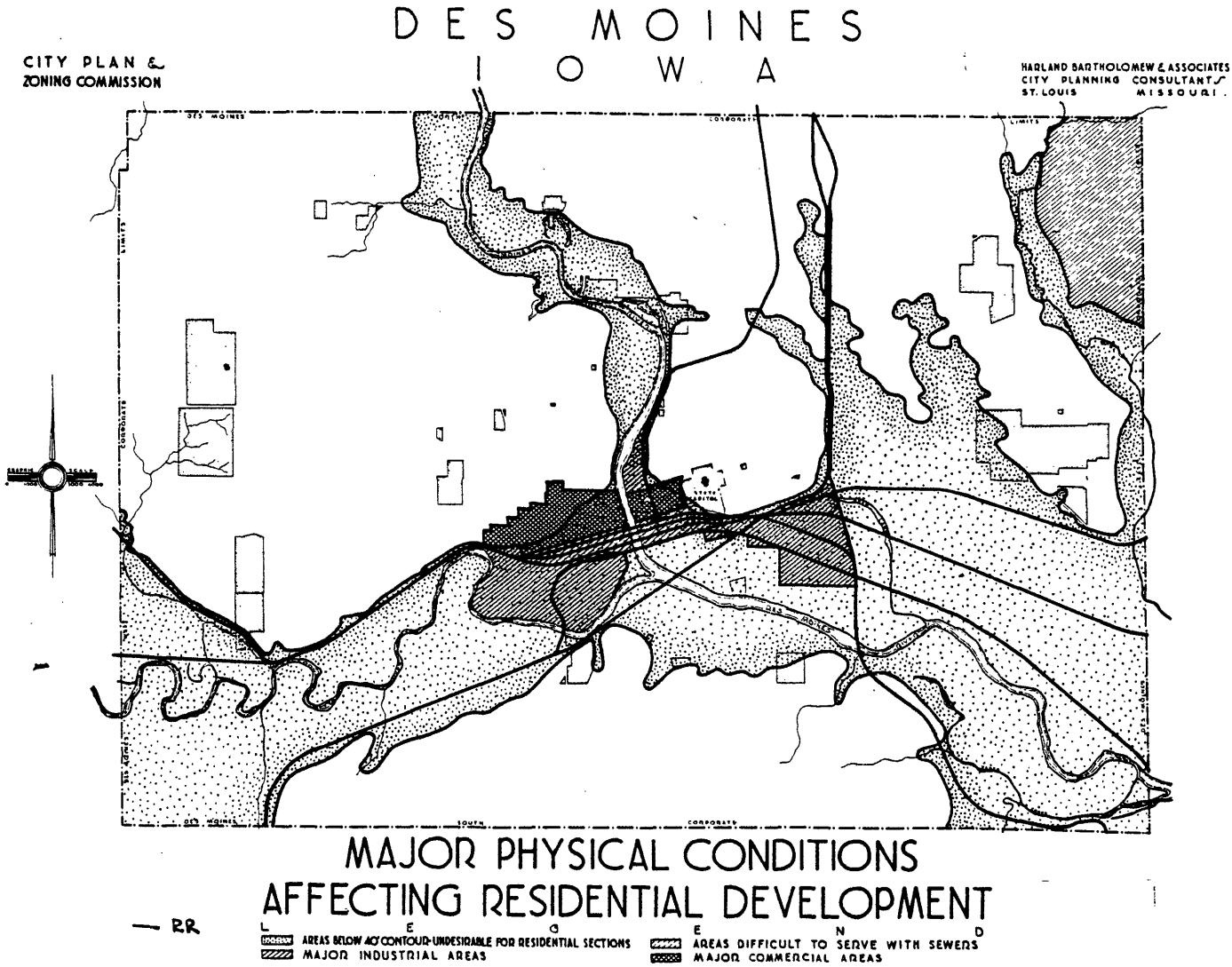
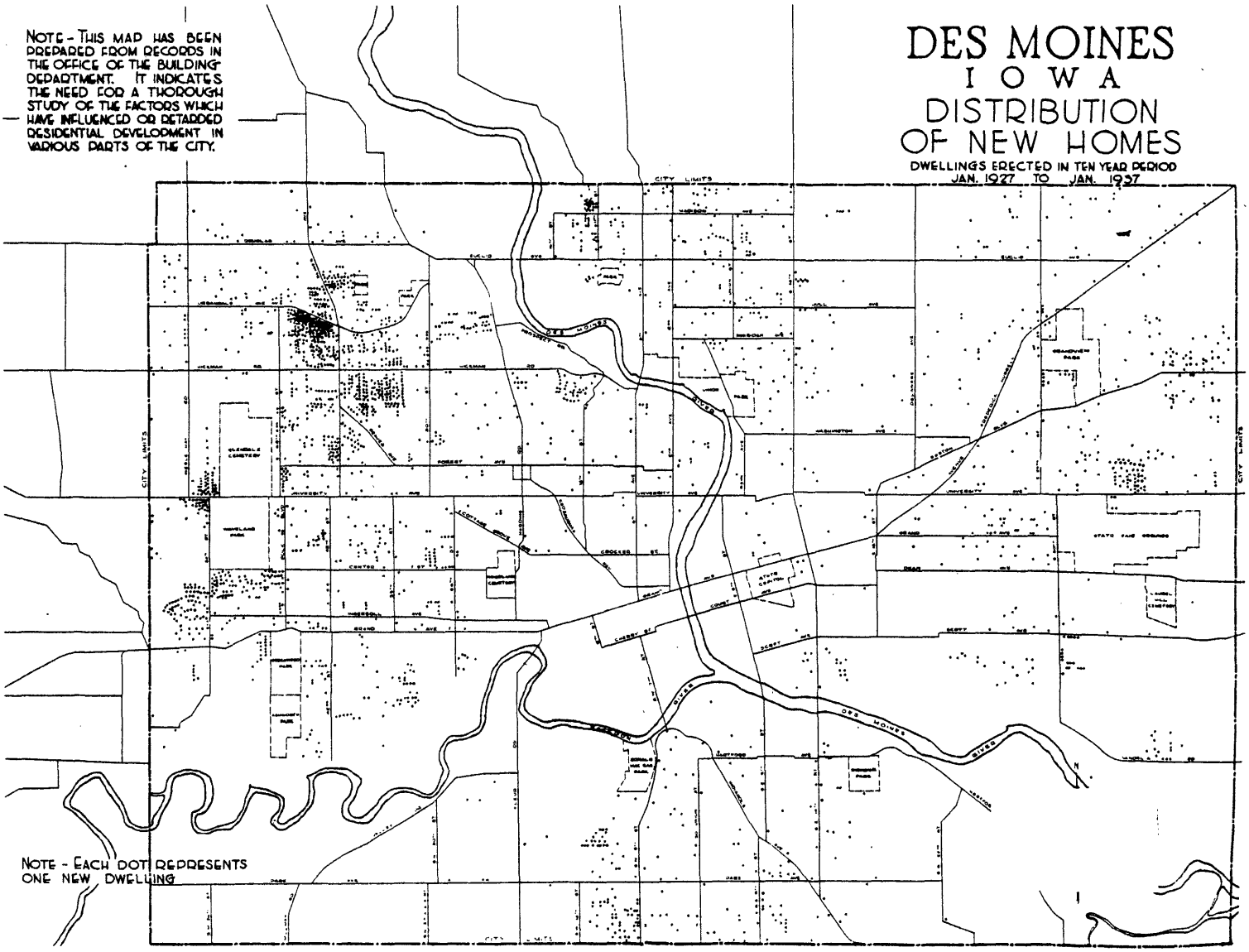
[3]For features of these and other styles, see the McAlesters' Field Guide to American Houses.


DES MOINES
IOWA
CITY PLAN & ZONING COMMISSION
HARLAND BARTHOLOMEW & ASSOCIATES
CITY PLANNING CONSULTANTS
ST. LOUIS MISSOURI
MAJOR PHYSICAL CONDITIONS
AFFECTING RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
RR
LEGEND
AREAS BELOW 40' CONTOUR-UNDESIRABLE FOR RESIDENTIAL SECTIONS
MAJOR INDUSTRIAL AREAS
AREAS DIFFICULT TO SERVE WITH SEWERS
MAJOR COMMERCIAL AREAS


NOTE - THIS MAP HAS BEEN PREPARED FROM RECORDS IN THE OFFICE OF THE BUILDING DEPARTMENT. IT INDICATES THE NEED FOR A THOROUGH STUDY OF THE FACTORS WHICH HAVE INFLUENCED OR RETARDED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE CITY.
DES MOINES
IOWA
DISTRIBUTION
OF NEW HOMES
DWELLINGS ERECTED IN TEN YEAR PERIOD
JAN. 1927 TO JAN. 1937
NOTE - EACH DOT REPRESENTS ONE NEW DWELLING

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 14

CFN-259-1116

A Beaverdale
B Chautauqua Park
C Clifton Heights
D Forestdale
E Scenic Heights
F Lincoln Place
G Thompson Avenue
H Waterbury

DES MOINES NEIGHBORHOODS SURVEYED

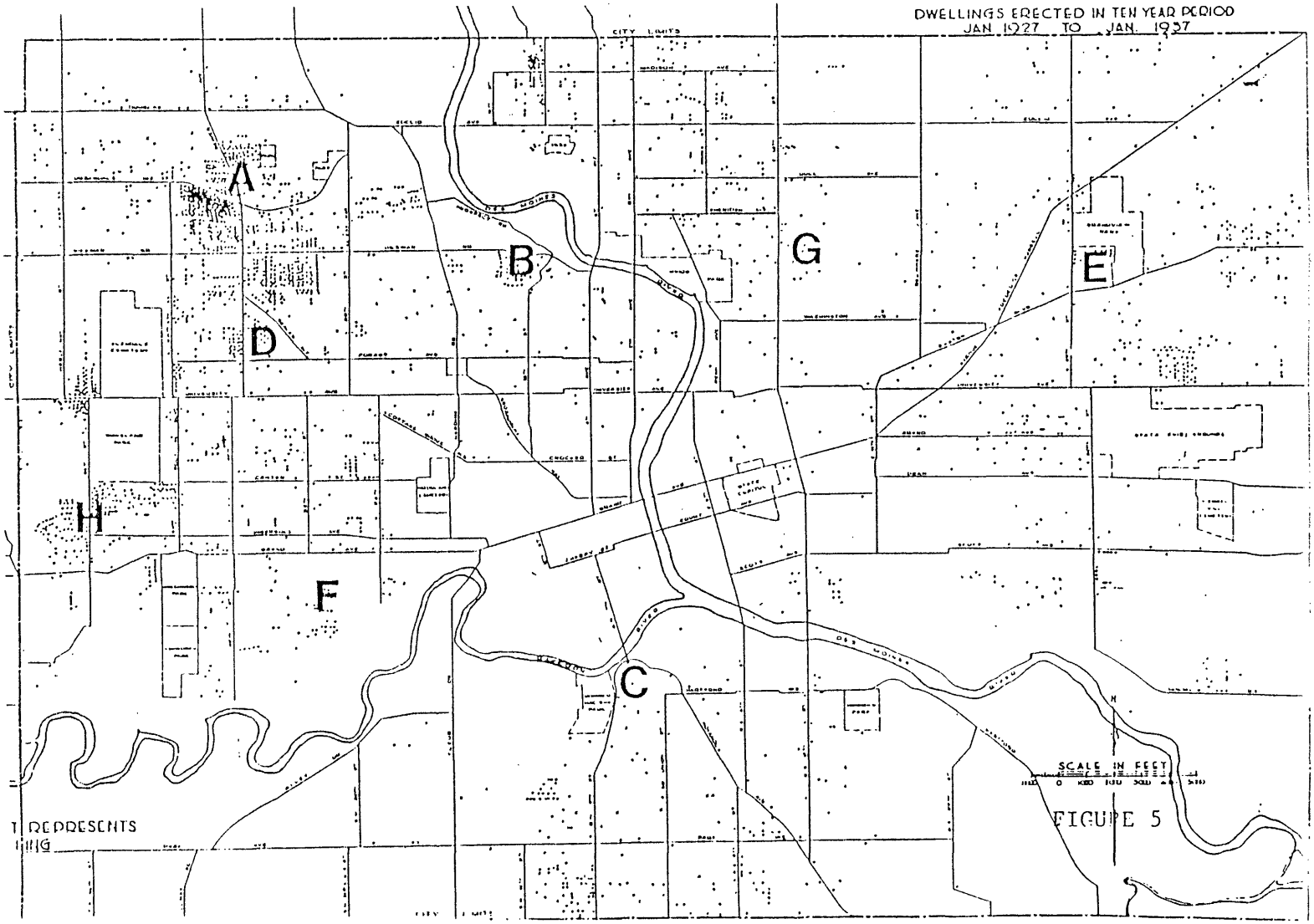


FIGURE 5

F. Associated Property Types

I. Name of Property Type
Suburban Residential Developments and Related Residences

II. Description
Significant examples of the Property Type, Suburban Residential Developments and Related Residences, are significant under Criteria A (community planning and development) and C (landscape architecture and architecture).

Significant neighborhoods illustrate the practical art of designing natural elements to provide a distinctive suburban development. In addition, they reveal the circumstances behind designing and changing the physical structure of Des Moines to enhance the quality of life. Significant neighborhoods and the houses within them also express distinctive characteristics of the period between the world wars and collectively represent a distinguishable and significant entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

Associative Characteristics
Suburban residential development illustrates the physical development of modern Des Moines. They show the ascendancy of the automobile in American life, as residents (and car owners) were freed from streetcar routes and able to seek new, affordable housing in preferred suburban sites. The strong popularity of suburban, or automobile, suburbs, reflect sometimes contradictory but fundamental American beliefs in the importance of rural life and also in modernity. They reflect responses to changing technology and increasing middle class prosperity. In some instances, the creation of suburban tracts and the popularity of neighborhood improvement groups reveal attitudes to a number of fears or concerns, including a rapidly changing society. Finally, the better examples of automobile suburbs show the positive effects of skillfully designed plats in providing distinctive neighborhoods.

Physical Characteristics
Distinctively designed suburban developments convey the best residential design principles of the period between the world wars but are at a premium in Des Moines. The more attractive plats continue characteristics dating from upper class suburban plans of the late nineteenth century. Key attributes include:

--enjoy a picturesque setting
--exhibit a diversity of stylistic influences and plans
--frequently maintain social and economic homogeneity

--are located some distance from the work place.

The significant automobile suburbs of Ashby Manor in Beaverdale, Chautauqua Park, Forestdale, Birchwood Place, and Oak Lawn Place express many of these characteristics in Des Moines. Attractive settings and a feeling of neighborhood instilled by thoughtful design were no longer exclusively the domain of the wealthy in the period between the wars.

All these plats enjoy street lay-outs adapted to the topography, a mature and highly attractive tree canopy, and a palpable "sense of place" upon entering them. They are set apart visually from surrounding land use. Their sites were consciously and effectively designed to take advantage of the setting, which is generally rolling. All contain many Tudor Revival-influenced brick houses, except Birchwood Place which features Craftsman bungalows. Several were designed by notable local landscape architects. These significant automobile suburbs in Des Moines carry local identification as neighborhoods and a number have or have had active neighborhood associations.

Time Period

Most distinctive plats that were developed in the period between the two world wars were laid out and recorded in the 1910s and 1920s. The nationwide financial depression beginning in 1929 effectively halted the speculative rush to develop additional automobile suburbs, and the 1930s saw a slowed continuation of earlier patterns. Federal programs, especially after 1938, likely stimulated new construction in these suburban residential developments.

Locational Patterns

Automobile suburbs occur throughout the City of Des Moines. However, significant concentrations are found in the west, northwest, and northeast sectors, areas of demonstrated considerable residential construction between the world wars. Distinctively designed suburbs tend to be located on hilly plats, but are also found on flat sites.

Boundaries

Plat boundaries at the time of initial substantial development of an automobile suburb are good candidates for delineating the boundaries of historical and architectural significance. Replats dating from the time of substantial development may also be a part of a significant suburban development.

Condition

With the prevalence of brick-faced housing in the automobile

suburbs, a high degree of original materials is expected to be found on brick-faced housing. Examples with clapboard wall coverings may have seen replacement metal siding. Street lay-outs are expected to remain relatively unaltered, although minor adjustments to street patterns, replacement streetlights, and changes in rustic landscape features such as rail fences are expected. Certain trees and shrubs, including elm and birch, are prey to disease and may have been removed or replaced. Des Moines enjoys a large number of lofty oak trees and these are expected to remain in neighborhoods developed between the world wars.

"Related Residences"

In all cases known to date, "related residences" as mentioned in the Property Type title are found within suburban residential developments meeting the requirements outlined below. Should a significant building located outside a significant suburban development be found, it would have characteristics similar to housing found within significant suburbs: single-family, and exhibit period revival stylistic elements and a smaller, more "modern" plan. In addition, a significant isolated "related residence" would have to be strongly and directly associated with persons or events relating to the context outlined in this document.

III. Significance

In the years between the world wars, Des Moines experienced a housing boom of notable proportions, despite relatively low population growth. This residential development occurred in new suburban tracts and characterized the physical development of the Capital City. With the ascendancy of the automobile as the preferred form of transportation, new housing developments were no longer strongly linked to streetcar and interurban routes. Proximity to the central business district became less important, even less desirable, for workers could conveniently commute in their automobiles.

Home dwellers sought out pleasingly designed suburban tracts and populated them with a variety of period revival housing styles. The smaller, technologically advanced houses reflected American preferences for being up-to-date and modern. Part pride, part an effort to grapple with the many technological and social changes of the twentieth century, strong home owner identification with these new suburban neighborhoods was a feature of the development of the automobile suburbs in Des Moines. The lure of the new automobile suburbs fulfilled the American urge for owning a single-family detached home in as bucolic and safe a setting as was possible, given the realities of modern urban life.

New housing developments proliferated during this period, some thoughtfully designed, some not. Nonetheless, the mature face of the

Capital City formed during this period. Patterns begun in the early twentieth century continued and matured through the 1930s and American entry in World War II. As city planner Harland Bartholomew stated in 1940, most of the city had by then been subdivided, with development in all areas projected to have construction in the future. He concluded, "The future development of these areas will be largely a matter of consolidation, stabilization, and protection."

Significant neighborhoods illustrate the physical development of modern Des Moines and the preferences of thousands of new home owners. They shine as fine examples of well planned residential development of enduring value. These special places reflect the prosperity in the Capital City between the wars that allowed the creation of distinctive neighborhoods across the city.

IV. Registration Requirements.

Dozens of residential subdivisions dated from the period between the world wars, making it imperative to establish criteria for what makes a particular residential area significant. The following criteria can be applied.

Significant examples of Suburban Residential Developments (automobile suburbs) must have most of the following elements:

I. Site plan unusual and adapted to the site.
II. Area consciously designed or developed to create a distinct sense of place as a residential suburb.
III. Area carries identification as a Des Moines neighborhood.
IV. Neighborhood retains notable elements from original development period, such as landscaping and street layout.
V. Housing displays architectural unity from period between the two world wars and in relatively unaltered form.
VI. Plat filed between 1900 and 1940.

Significant examples of Suburban Residences (either within a significant Suburban Residential Development or as isolated examples) from between the world wars must display most of the following characteristics:

1. Single-family
2. Located in "automobile suburb" described above (unless an isolated "related residence")
3. Small, more "modern" plan with adaptations to new technology
4. Period revival stylistic elements (especially the Tudor Revival) or new stylistic influences (Streamline Moderne, Craftsman, Prairie School)

Craftsman, Prairie School)
5. Brick- and stone-facing commonly used but clapboard and stucco also present
6. High degree of integrity, since examples of recent construction (1918-1941, between the world wars) and many faced in brick and/or stone
7. Garage, either detached or integrated with house, present
8. Built between the world wars, 1918-1941

Integrity Requirements.

Neighborhoods:
1. Retains notable defining elements from original development period, such as tree canopy and street lay-out.
2. Original streetlights are not required, for cities often require replacement of originals.
3. Certain ephemeral or rustic landscape elements (rail fencing, ponds, pedestrian bridges) need not be present since their flimsy construction makes preservation a serendipitous event.
4. It is the nature of trees and shrubs to grow and to die. Certain varieties, notably elm and birch, are prey to disease. However, landscape elements must retain the feeling and sense of place dating from the original developmental period.

Buildings, objects, structures:
1. For buildings and structures, a high degree of integrity is required, since examples are of relatively recent construction (1918-1941) and many are faced in brick and/or stone
2. Houses faced with brick, stone, or stucco should retain this original covering. Brick should ordinarily not be painted, although examples in appropriate colors may be acceptable.
3. Houses sided with wood clapboarding should generally retain this original covering. Predominantly brick, stone, or stucco examples designed with limited use of wood (in gables ends for example) may have replacement siding and retain significance if the amount of replacement siding is not intrusive. Replacement siding that is the same width as the original covering may be acceptable, if substantial other original elements remain.
4. If alterations are made to objects, such as stone retaining walls, and brick and stone entry posts, they should be carefully undertaken; replacement mortar and other incidental repairs are acceptable.
5. Detached (and attached) garages are an important part of automobile suburbs. Modest utilitarian design and replacement

doors are expected. However, examples of intrusive size, location, or appearance constitute an intrusive alteration to the house site.

G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

See continuation sheets.

[x] See continuation sheet

H. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

[x] See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

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

Specify repository: Bureau of Historic Preservation, State Historical Society of Iowa

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G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Major objectives of this project were to determine what factors contributed to the creation of significant neighborhoods in post-World War I Des Moines, to establish criteria for what made them significant, and to survey them and apply the criteria. The focus was on neighborhoods, rather than such related topics as the Model Homes movement or changes in building technology and its effect on house design.

Suburban residential development between the world wars resulted in the creation of what is essentially present day Des Moines. Dozens of subdivisions dated from the period of study, making it imperative to establish criteria for what made a particular residential area significant. The factors, events, and results of this development of the automobile suburbs were the basis for development of the context. The typology employed for residential suburbs was based on the physical and associative characteristics outlined in the Registration Requirements above.

To determine what constituted a significant neighborhood in terms of National Register eligibility, an intensive level survey was undertaken. Areas that fulfilled at least some of the Requirements were field surveyed. Representative properties were photographed, mapped, and recorded on inventory forms.

A relatively high degree of integrity for both the suburb and its residences was applied, since the areas are of relatively recent construction. The presence of numerous Tudor Revival-influenced brick-faced dwellings translated to less alteration than to clapboard housing.

As part of the survey, an extensive report (upon which this multiple property nomination draws heavily) covered the overall context and also identified the types and distribution of historic properties (residential suburbs and related housing), described their historical development, and evaluated them using the Registration Requirements for Residential Suburbs. Areas to study were not limited to wealthy enclaves. Residential plats intended for working-, middle-, and upper-middle-class housing were surveyed. Research did not unearth instances of innovative worker housing developments.

The geographic area for the project encompassed the city limits of Des Moines, Iowa as they were in 1940. All sectors of the city were included in the study, but it was expected (and found to be the case) that more areas meeting the criteria would be found in the west and north sections, the areas of greatest construction during the period.

Eight residential areas fulfilled at least some of the stated requirements for significance sufficiently to merit field surveying. Subsequent study and survey eliminated three of these areas and parts of two other areas from National Register eligibility. The possibility of significant individual sites was considered but none came to light that were located outside the neighborhoods. The following areas were found to be eligible for listing in the National Register:

Ashby Manor (includes Ashby Woods and Beaver Park Replat)
Chautauqua Park
Forestdale
Birchwood Place (Thompson Avenue)
Oak Lawn Place (Waterbury Road between 49th and 56th Streets)

A variety of sources were useful. A check of maps from the period revealed a number of residential enclaves enjoying curving, hill-hugging streets, in sharp contrast with nearby grid-pattern residential developments. These distinctively designed areas were deemed worthy of additional study and surveying. Site plans on file at the Polk County Auditor's and Recorder's Offices revealed the dates, owners, and subdivision names of distinctively designed areas. Advertisements from the period, historic photographs, and newspaper articles promoting specific neighborhoods were also consulted. And articles in the Des Moines-based Better Homes & Gardens were helpful in revealing topics of interest to new home owners in the 1920s and 1930s. Local architects and landscape architects regularly contributed to the magazine, especially in its early years, the 1920s, perhaps increasing its impact on Des Moines readers.

The 1940 comprehensive city plan by Harland Bartholomew & Associates covered, among other things, the location of new housing in Des Moines between 1919 and 1924 and 1927 and 1937. (Building permits for the years 1924 and 1925 were unfortunately unavailable for that study.) By combining data from the Bartholomew report with street indexes from city directories for 1920, 1925, 1930, 1935, and 1940, the picture of neighborhood development came into focus. Past interviews with developers such as the Colby family and the late amateur historian Paul Ashby provided additional insights.

Little information came to light regarding design sources for housing. Architects lived in several of the significant neighborhoods, and it is possible they received commissions from neighbors. It appears likely that most housing was the product of builder and contractor catalogs. Home owners found a builder, studied his catalogs, and made selections for their homes. Scattered instances of speculative housing

also occurred in the significant neighborhoods.

Previous research complemented the survey. The multiple properties nomination of the Drake neighborhood was helpful in eliminating that area from consideration and in focusing on how to establish criteria for significance. Previous Des Moines Plan & Zoning work on Thompson Avenue and also that agency's survey of historic sites were also useful. A Beaverdale resident's detailed local history of that area proved valuable in identifying builders and developers in Ashby Manor. The multiple properties nomination of the City Beautiful Movement in Des Moines provided insights into city planning in Des Moines. A survey of Davenport, Iowa included discussion of 1920s neighborhoods in that river city and was consulted.

The identified significant neighborhoods merit further study and recognition, especially listing as National Register historic districts. National Register listing represents a positive step in preservation planning and protection of Des Moines neighborhoods.

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