

## M--WOODLAWN PLANTATION/POPE-LEIGHEY HOUSE HISTORIC OVERLAY DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Woodlawn Historic District was established in 1971 to preserve the setting of Woodlawn Plantation, the Pope-Leighey House, and the George Washington Grist Mill and to ensure that commercial development did not detract from the historic and visual character of the area.

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

- o Woodlawn dominates a dramatic hill (125') which rises sharply and has a magnificent vista of the Potomac River to the southeast. Though without direct access to the river, the house was sited like a river plantation with its main facade toward the water.
- o The center of the district is open space, composed of the hillside below the Woodlawn mansion and the fields across from it.
- o Much of the perimeter of the district is wooded, which helps to maintain the semi-pastoral vista from Woodlawn.
- o The major roads of the district meet at the Woodlawn entrance where the the offset Mt. Vernon Memorial Highway/Mill Road intersection crosses Route 1. This intersection is dominated by a jumble of roadside commercial structures in the eastern corner.
- o The historic structures are dispersed within the district and have no visual relationship to each other.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A study commissioned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Woodlawn Pope-Leighey House Comprehensive Development Plan (Wehnere, Nowysz, Pattschull and Pfiffner Architects: 1986) states that:

The history of Woodlawn is a composite story dating back to the middle of the 18th century, and is by no means restricted to the 126-acre area in the current National Trust historic site. The five historical periods are: 1) 1754-1799, Dogue Run Farm; 2) 1800-1846 Lewis Period; 3) 1847-1900, Quakers and Mason Period; 4) 1901-1948, Country House Period; and 5) 1948-1980, Public Ownership.

Woodlawn was built between 1800 and 1805 for Lawrence Lewis and Nelly Custis Lewis on land given to them by George Washington, which had been part of his Dogue Run Farm. Washington selected the house site because of the tremendous view. William Thornton, the first architect of the U.S. Capitol, is believed to have designed the Federal-style brick house. The National Trust for Historic Preservation purchased the house and surrounding acres in 1951. It was placed on the National Register in 1968.

The Lewises sold the property in 1846 to the Troth-Gillingham Company, a group of New Jersey and Pennsylvania Quakers, which purchased the land for its fine

timber. The mansion served as their business headquarters and temporary residence while houses were built. Two buildings survive from that period-- the Woodlawn Friends Meeting House (c. 1853) and Grandview (1859). In 1850 the mansion and its remaining acreage was sold to John Mason. His family built the Woodlawn Baptist Church (1872) and the Otis Mason House (date unknown). The congregation of the Baptist church first met in the Woodlawn parlor, as did an early integrated school. These buildings are part of the historical development of the land.

The last two buildings within the district core provide examples of developing strategies of historic preservation. In 1932, to commemorate the bicentennial of Washington's birth, the George Washington Grist Mill was reconstructed at or near the original mill site on the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, which connects Woodlawn and Mount Vernon. The Pope-Leighey House was moved from its original site in Falls Church in 1964 and rebuilt on the National Trust's Woodlawn property to protect it from demolition. It is the only fully documented Frank Lloyd Wright Usonian house in the country.

#### CONTRIBUTING FEATURES OF THE DISTRICT

- o ARCHITECTURE: This district has a complex variety of architecture without unifying elements of design or function. The focal point is Woodlawn, a high-style five-part plan Federal house with elaborate brickwork and moulding. It is unique in this area; the other structures do not relate to it architecturally or spatially, except that all are subordinate to its imposing site.

Except for the grist mill, the other historic structures are not easily visible from a public right-of-way. The grist mill is a three-story, gable-roofed, rectangular stone structure. The four buildings from the 19th century associated with Woodlawn are clapboard-covered, frame, gable-roofed, simple, white, rural structures. The Woodlawn Baptist Church has been altered the most; in the 1930s it was covered with stucco and enlarged. Nearly invisible on a heavily wooded hillside, the Pope-Leighey House is flat roofed and built of cypress and red brick.

The other buildings in the district all date from the mid-20th century or later. At the intersection of Route 1 and Mount Vernon Memorial Highway (Rt. 235) is a cluster of highway commercial structures and one office building. South of the intersection, single family houses line the east side of Rt. 285; north of the intersection, apartments line Old Mill Road. These residential structures vary, but all have traditional domestic elements, such as gable roofs and regularly spaced openings.

- o HISTORIC AND CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES: In the report substantiating the zoning amendment that established the Woodlawn Plantation/ Pope-Leighey House Historic Overlay District, five structures are listed as historic. They include Woodlawn (8900 Richmond Highway, parcel number 109-2-001-3, 4), the Pope-Leighey House (same), George Washington's Grist Mill (5514 Mount Vernon Memorial Parkway, 109-2-001-28), the Woodlawn

Friends Meeting House (Woodlawn Road at Richmond Highway, 109-2-001-38), and the Woodlawn Baptist Church (9001 Richmond Highway, 109-2-001-1). Contributing properties include Grandview (9000 Richmond Highway, 109-2-001-3, 4) and the Otis T. Mason House (8907 Richmond Highway, 109-2-00102).

- o LANDSCAPE AND SITE FEATURES: The topography and vegetation are crucial features of the district. The site, a steep hill which was once a "lawn of woods", is integral to the house. The view toward the river has been maintained by the careful planting of trees on the Trust property, in addition to the wooded areas on Fort Belvoir, the grist mill park, and other parcels south of Woodlawn. Trees help screen Route 1 and the commercial strip from Woodlawn.

Across Route 1 from Woodlawn are fields which are part of the National Trust property. Beyond the commercial intersection, trees line Route 235 and Old Mill Road. Dogue Creek flows along the eastern edge of the district.

- o ARCHAEOLOGY: The area has never been surveyed comprehensively for archaeological resources. Two limited surveys tested areas planned for construction activity on the Woodlawn Plantation property; no significant sites were found (44FX 1146). The location of the plantation structures, such as barns and slave quarters, is unknown. One historic-period domestic site has been found on Pole Road (44FX 669). The Woodlawn Friends Meeting House and the Woodlawn Baptist Church have large cemeteries (44FX 1211 and 44FX 1212 respectively).

#### DISTRICT GOALS

The goals of the historic district are to preserve and enhance the aesthetic environment surrounding Woodlawn, the Pope-Leighey House, and the Grist Mill; to assure that the adjacent properties develop compatibly; and to strengthen the area's identity as a historic area.

#### STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

The following section presents standards which should be maintained and promoted in order to achieve the goal of the district. Specific guidelines then suggest ways in which those standards may be maintained.

##### STANDARD 1--Preserve natural features.

##### GUIDELINES

- 1.1 Retain natural land contours.
- 1.2 Retain Dogue Creek in its natural state.

##### STANDARD 2--Preserve existing vegetation and tree cover.

## GUIDELINES

- 2.1 Particular attention should be paid to retaining trees on and adjacent to the Woodlawn site, along Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Old Mill Road, and Pole Road, and within the Woodlawn viewshed.
- 2.2 Replace diseased or damaged trees with like material which will contribute to the canopy of trees visible from Woodlawn.
- 2.3 Retain the parcel across from Woodlawn as primarily open fields, as it is now, or woods.
- 2.4 Maintain dense woods between Woodlawn and Lewis Heights housing.

**STANDARD 3--Protect the integrity of the historic structures and their sites.**

## GUIDELINES

- 3.1 Follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for all preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of the Woodlawn mansion, Grist Mill, Pope-Leighey House, and the Woodlawn Friends Meeting House.
- 3.2 While the Woodlawn Baptist Church, Grandview, and the Otis Mason House are part of the historical development of the area, they have been altered more than the other historic structures of the district. Work on these structures may exercise more flexibility than what is allowed under the Secretary's Standards, but still should not obscure the buildings' remaining original character as displayed in their mass, form, and relationship to their sites.
- 3.3 Consider the potential for archaeological resources early in all construction plans and mitigate adverse effects.

**STANDARD 4--The roads within the historic district should be attractive routes of access to the historic sites.**

## GUIDELINES

- 4.1 Retain Mount Vernon Memorial Highway and Old Mill Road as two-lane roads.
- 4.2 Consolidate the numerous traffic signs and poles at the Route 1 intersection.

**STANDARD 5--Site design should contribute to maintaining an attractive approach to and view from the historic site.**

## GUIDELINES

- 5.1 Consolidate site access with shared, well-defined entries.
- 5.2 \*Minimize the width of entrances and driveways.
- 5.3 Define the edges between roadways and development with plantings, low walls, low open fences or buildings.

- 5.4 Avoid large, unbroken expanses of parking lots by locating parking in smaller units, using the side and rear of the site instead of only the front, and landscaping.
- 5.5 Storage and service areas should be located away from or screened from public view.

**STANDARD 6**--The architecture of commercial and office buildings should not detract from either the view from or the approach to Woodlawn. (The following guidelines apply to additions as well as to new construction.)

#### **GUIDELINES**

##### **ARCHITECTURAL MASS AND SCALE**

- 6.1 Create a hierarchy of massing by placing lower buildings closer to the road and taller buildings to the rear of the lot.
- 6.2 Compositions of smaller buildings instead of one large building are preferred.
- 6.3 A "human scale," which is produced by the use of individual elements whose size is easily understood in relationship to a person, is preferred.
- 6.4 Building heights may not exceed 35 feet.

##### **ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AND STYLE**

- 6.5 Avoid designs associated with national franchises or chains and which are intended to serve as a sign or trademark.
- 6.6 Do not use design themes unrelated to the local context (such as Southwestern missions, Tudor cottages, Alpine cabins, etc.).
- 6.7 Buildings should face the road. Side and rear elevations visible from a roadway should receive as much attention as the primary facade.
- 6.8 Avoid large expanses of blank wall.
- 6.9 Keep roof design simple and mechanical equipment on the roofs to a minimum.
- 6.10 Awnings, display windows, porticos, and all building elements should be integral parts of the design and not appear pasted on the building.

##### **MATERIALS AND COLOR**

- 6.11 Roofs should be dark or neutral colored.
- 6.12 Keep color schemes simple. Do not use color to transform the building itself into a "sign."
- 6.13 Use medium to low intensity colors.
- 6.14 Avoid the use of more than one primary siding material.

**STANDARD 7--Signage should not overwhelm the approaches to the historic sites or detract from the view from Woodlawn.**

**GUIDELINES**

- 7.1 Incorporate signage into the landscape plan for the site.
- 7.2 Freestanding signs may not exceed ten feet in height.
- 7.3 Keep the information on the sign to the minimum necessary to identify the business.
- 7.4 In commercial structures with several businesses, use no more than one freestanding sign. Signage on the building identifying the various businesses should be compatible, though not necessarily identical.
- 7.5 Externally lighted signs are preferred. Light should not spill beyond the sign.

**STANDARD 8--New residential structures should contribute to the wooded, low density character of Pole Road, Old Mill Road, and Mount Vernon Memorial Highway and should not be visible from the Woodlawn mansion site.**

**GUIDELINES**

- 8.1 Single-family houses on Mount Vernon Memorial Highway should be set back at least 100 feet from the roadway and face the road.
- 8.2 Houses should be in scale with their lot and not overwhelm the road or adjacent houses.
- 8.3 Apartment buildings may have their rear facade to the road, but it must be carefully articulated.
- 8.4 Do not place decks or privacy fences where they are easily visible from the roadway.
- 8.5 Fences should be open and horizontal.