

BUCKINGHAM APARTMENT COMPLEX
Approximately 84 acres bounded by
George Mason Drive, Henderson, Glebe and
Pershing Roads
Arlington
Arlington County
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1339

HABS
VA
7-ARL
13-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

National Park Service
Northeast Region
Philadelphia Support Office
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, P.A. 19106

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

ADDENDUM TO:
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Roads
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HABS VA-1339
VA, 7-ARL, 13-

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

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BUCKINGHAM APARTMENT COMPLEX HABS No. VA-1339

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VA
7-ARL,
13-

Location: Approximately 84 acres bounded by George Mason Drive, Henderson, Glebe and Pershing Roads, Arlington, Arlington County, Virginia

USGS Washington West, DC, MD & VA
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates
18. 317500.4304098

Present Owner: Aetna Insurance Company
c/o Paradigm Management Company
3333 K Street, N.W. Suite 100
Washington, D.C. 20005

Hall Arlington Associates
One Metro Square
2655 Villa Creek Drive, Suite 170
Dallas, Texas 75234

Buckingham Jenco, LP (The Jenco Group)
313 North Glebe Road
Arlington, Virginia 22203

Present Use: Rental Garden Apartments

Significance: Buckingham, a garden apartment complex constructed between 1937 and 1953 in Arlington, Virginia, is a nationally significant example of the application of pioneering principles of garden city planning to a large-scale, planned residential community. These principles include low-density superblocks, curving streets, separation of automobiles and pedestrians, shallow building plans allowing improved light and ventilation, and landscaped common spaces designed around the apartments forming a continuous park. Buckingham was the last design of Henry Wright, the leader and pioneer of the garden city movement responsible for many of its seminal projects in the 1920s and 1930s.

Buckingham had a significant historical role in the development of affordable, well-planned garden communities, and through its success and acceptance subsequently effected housing policy in the United States. The developer, Allie Freed, chairman of the Committee for Economic Recovery, sought to promote economic recovery through the construction of large-scale privately financed housing developments, and attempted reform the building industry by employing production techniques of the automobile industry including pioneer uses of prefabrication. The location of Buckingham near the Nation's Capital, provided the development the exposure and political awareness necessary to influence housing developments nationwide.

PART I: HISTORY OF THE BUCKINGHAM APARTMENT COMPLEX

A. HISTORY OF BALLSTON

The Buckingham Apartment Complex is located in what today is known as Ballston, in Arlington County, Virginia. Ballston is one of Arlington's oldest and most historic communities. Ballston has been a crossroads of commerce and transportation since before the American Revolution. Known historically by a variety of names including Birch's Crossroads, Thompson's Crossroads, and Ball's Crossroads, the intersection of Wilson Boulevard and Glebe Road held the traditional tavern and a blacksmith shop that served as the link to social as well as commercial activities. Until the advent of the rail, the Crossroads was a major thoroughfare for trade between riverside towns and the plantations and agricultural villages of Virginia. Wilson Boulevard, named after President Wilson, was formerly Awbrey's Ferry Road and originated at the Ferry dock in what is now Rosslyn, while Glebe Road stretched between Alexandria and the Falls Bridge.

The earliest land grants for Crossroads parcels appears in 1716, granted to John Birch.¹ John Birch, for whom the Crossroads was originally named, owned 795 acres in the central and eastern portions of the Crossroads. The largest tract of the present Ballston area was originally granted 1,321 acres in 1739 to Col. John Colville of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in England. By 1775 he had become a resident of Fairfax County and drew his will in May of that year. He bequeathed all lands to "the present Earl of Tankerville." In 1756, Samuel Shreve purchased nearly 260 acres adjacent to the west boundary of the Birch tract, extending from Lubber Run to Four Mile Run, and between Wilson and Washington Boulevards.

By the late 1700s, the Ball family acquired parcels within the Crossroads area. John Ball acquired 166 acres in 1742 and Moses Ball acquired 91 acres in 1748. They were descended from Colonial William Ball, the great-grandfather of George Washington, who arrived in Tidewater Virginia about 1650. In 1774, one of the Ball decedents constructed a two-story log tavern on the southwest corner of the Crossroads. It was an excellent site as it lay on two main roads used by local farmers to travel to the markets. As Ball's Tavern became the center of the community, the Crossroads naturally became known as Ball's Crossroads. The tavern's use expanded over its years of existence to include a store, general gathering place, post office, and the voting precinct for Arlington County. The Acts of 1850-1851 site the tavern, then owned by Thompson, as the polling precinct.²

¹ Barron, James. "Then and Now: Parkington-Ball's Crossroads." Arlington Historical Magazine. Arlington, Virginia: Arlington Historical Society. Vol. 4, No. 3, p. 43.

² Templeman, Eleanor L. "Ballston's Beginnings." Arlington Historical Magazine. Arlington, Virginia: Arlington Historical Society, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 52.

On another corner at Ball's Crossroads stood Mortimer's Blacksmith Shop, which also figured largely in County activities during the Civil War and until after the turn of the Twentieth Century. One of the first Sunday schools and the first sessions of public schools in the County met in the room over Mortimer's Blacksmith Shop. By 1879, the Hopkin's Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington, details the presence of the Presbyterian Church and the Walker School, in addition to Mortimer's Black and Ball's Tavern at Ball's Crossroads.

At the beginning of the Civil War, Ball's Crossroads assumed possibly even more importance as the nearby level farmland around the Crossroads made excellent camp sites that were immediately taken advantage of by the Union troops. The camp at Ball's Crossroads was called Camp Union, Virginia. Ball's Tavern, as seen in Harper's Weekly Magazine, became the site of a "photographic saloon" where photographers would make portraits of soldiers to send to relatives. The Washington Evening Star gives account of a balloon ascension at the Crossroads on August 29, 1861. The Union troops sent a gas-filled balloon into the air for aerial reconnaissance purposes. The balloon was occupied by Professor Thaddeus Lowe, whom later became a distinguished astronomer and founded Lowe Observatory in California. The balloon was fired upon by Confederate troops established at Munson's Hill. Although the balloon was not hit, from a historical standpoint, it was the first combat use of aircraft by the United States Army and the first use of anti-aircraft artillery.³

By 1874, Balls Crossroads was established as a village in Arlington County. The name was later changed to Ballston in 1895. By the end of the 1900s, the Washington, Arlington and Falls Church Railroad carried commuters from Rosslyn to Ballston and Lacey Stations, traveling on to Falls Church and Fairfax Court House. Connections in Rosslyn took commuters to Georgetown and Alexandria. The railroad struggled throughout the economic battering of the great depression into the 1930s when copper from the overwire was sold to Japan for its munitions manufacturing.

The expansion of the railroad also brought about the development of planned community subdivision and real estate sales in Ballston. Ballston had the second volunteer fire department in the county, formed in 1908. The first pharmacy in Arlington County was opened by Dr. Williamson C. Welburn, who also thoughtfully had the county's first sidewalks poured at its front door. The community was also the site of a football stadium with a semi-pro team, the Ballston Skulls. The Skulls worked out with the newly formed Washington Redskins in Ballston Stadium in 1937.⁴

An increase in the county's population, which was 6,430 in 1900 and 16,040 in 1920, was reflected in the growth of subdivisions.⁵ The Buckingham Apartment Complex, constructed between 1937 and 1953, emerged in the 1930s as a national model of a successful rental housing project. Sited on

³ Rouse & Associates. "Ballston Times: A Rich Past Leads to a Vibrant Future." in Promotional Packet for the Farrgate at Ballston, January, 1988.

⁴ Dugan, Daniel. "A Look at Ballston Yesterday." The Northern Virginia Sun. November 30, 1987. p. 1.

⁵ Nan & Ross Netherton. Arlington County in Virginia: A Pictorial History. Norfolk, Virginia: The Donning Co., 1987, p. 106.

approximately 84 acres in Ballston, the six-phase development was originally planned with 183 apartment buildings, two commercial blocks, three free-standing commercial buildings, three detached dwellings, roads, pedestrian paths, playgrounds, and landscaped courtyards. The construction of the Buckingham Apartment Complex promoted economic recovery through the development of economically viable rental housing and by looking ahead to the growth of the automobile industry.

By 1949, Ballston began to expand further into commerce and trade with the construction of the Parkington Shopping Center and the Hecht Company Department Store on the southeastern corner of Glebe Road and Washington Boulevard. The Parkington, the area's first regional mall, was believed to be looking ahead to the age of the automobile with the construction of a 4 story parking building to the rear. The Parkington Shopping Center was demolished and the renovations of the Hecht Company building began in 1984. The new mall, called Ballston Common, included the renovation of two large department stores, and 135 new shops in an enclosed four-level shopping mall.

More than 200 years after Ball's Crossroads served travelers, most of the land bordering Glebe Road has been developed as residential or retail subdivisions. Glebe Road continues to carry traffic and commerce between Alexandria and Chain Bridge and now also crosses not only Wilson Boulevard, but I-66 at Ballston. Like the earlier Awbrey's Road and Ferry, I-66 links Georgetown and, indeed, all of downtown Washington to the emerging towns and cities west to the Blue Ridge.

Transportation at the Crossroads continued to develop with the construction of the Washington, Virginia, and Maryland Coach Company on Randolph Street sometime prior to 1956. The building was occupied by the Arlington Division of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority in 1974. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority opened Ballston further to residential and commercial traffic in 1979, with the expansion of the orange line of the Metro's subway system. Arlington County legislation designated the Metrorail station superblock as a "coordinated mixed-use development district," thus allowing for the expansion of commercial and residential buildings.

B. THE 1920s

GARDEN APARTMENTS and ADVANCES IN APARTMENT DESIGN

Apartment buildings were constructed with great speed and in great numbers during the 1920s and 1930s in the metropolitan area. The population in Washington and its suburbs increased tremendously in the years prior to the war, and the population remained much higher after the war had concluded. The federal work force tripled in numbers between 1916 and 1918.⁶ The 1920 census revealed that, for the first time, the majority of Americans lived in urban and suburban settings, and that the suburbs were growing at a much faster rate than the urban cores.⁷

⁶ Goode, James. Best Addresses. p. 173.

⁷ Wright, Gwendolyn. Building The Dream: A Social History of Housing in America. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1981. p. 195.

The two types of housing, single-family houses, and multi-family dwellings, accommodated the expanding urban and suburban population. Standard urban lots typically resulted in narrow, deep buildings with dark side lots. Suburban development often continued this pattern. Speculators subdivided land into rectangular lots that expanded the urban grids into the countryside with little concern for the existing landscape or the conservation of open space. One reason for increased popularity of rental housing was the cost of home ownership. Eighty-five percent of the houses built in 1936 were priced for those in the upper ten percent income bracket.⁸ Not only were houses difficult for the average American to purchase, they were in short supply. Studies determined that the United States had a housing shortage of as many as 10,000,000 units.⁹ The concepts of garden apartments and garden city planning provided developers the framework to build more attractive affordable apartment buildings, which were desperately needed in the 1920s and 1930s. The construction of garden apartments in the metropolitan area reached a peak in the mid-1930s and early 1940s. Hundreds of garden apartment complexes were constructed during these years throughout the area.

During the 1920s, "the advent of freestanding apartment houses with large amounts of open space an integral part of the scheme" was a new concept.¹⁰ Developers hoped that by providing open space and landscaped gardens around the apartments they could dispense with many of the stigmas attached to city apartment buildings particularly in Washington. These new "garden" apartments offered superior air circulation, more pleasing views, and enhanced light in each apartment.

The earliest garden apartments appeared in Washington in the 1920s. Noted apartment building historian, James Goode defines garden apartments as "a group of two-or-three-story buildings without lobbies or elevators arranged together in a landscaped setting."¹¹ The first garden apartment in the city was developed by Allen E. Walker, and constructed in 1921-22. Located adjacent to the Soldier's Home at 124-126-128-130 Webster Street, N.W., the buildings were modeled after the famous Pomander Walk community in London.¹² The complex, known as Petworth Gardens, was designed by Washington architect Robert Beresford, who used red brick, hipped roofs, decorative dormer windows, glazed sleeping porches, arched doors and eaves to create a residential, small-scale quality for the development. Beresford used the same design for each of the six buildings in the complex. The landscaping was limited to narrow, rectangular lawns which separate each building. James Goode further discusses the city's earliest garden apartments as unsuccessful architecturally because: "...their

⁸ New York Times, February 14, 1937. p. 4RE.

⁹ Washington Post, May 16, 1937. p. 1.

¹⁰ Goode, James. Best Addresses. p. 173.

¹¹ Goode, James. Best Addresses. p. 183.

¹² "Construction of First unit of Petworth Gardens Begun." The Evening Star. October 8, 1921.

elements were poorly related to one another. The idea works best when the buildings are grouped together harmoniously around a spacious landscaped courtyard."¹³

Colonial Village in Arlington County, Virginia was the vision of developer Gustave Ring. Ring had survived the Depression with careful management of his Westchester Apartment development in Washington. He saw the severe housing shortage of the 1930s as an opportunity to develop a large garden apartment complex. Ring purchased a tract of land, ideally located close to the city via the Key Bridge and Georgetown. Ring's architects Harvey H. Warwick, Sr., and Francis Koenig produced carefully conceived apartment building designs within park-like settings. Colonial Village was the area's first garden apartment complex designed as a planned community, with adjacent shopping developed by Ring and meticulous attention to amenities and the comforts of the renters. The success of Colonial Village was immediate, the first phase was completed in 1935 with 276 apartments, and a waiting list of 10,000 people

The Buckingham Apartment Complex also in Arlington, Virginia equalled these in both vision and practical application. The success of Buckingham Apartments was directly related to its appeal to the average government worker, and to the carefully integrated architecture and landscape plan, which made the apartments an affordable alternative to the usual city apartment building. Buckingham Apartments offered a unique residential enclave of domestically scaled apartment buildings that was closely associated with and enhanced by a courtyard, garden setting. Although built on farmland in an undeveloped part of Arlington County, the rental apartment venture was met with enthusiasm and the apartments rented quickly.

C. CONSTRUCTION AND PLANNING FOR THE BUCKINGHAM APARTMENT COMPLEX

The Buckingham Apartment Complex, constructed between 1937 and 1953, emerged in the 1930s as a national model of a successful, full-service rental housing project. Originally, sited on 100 acres in Arlington County, Virginia, the six-phase development was planned with 183 apartment buildings, two commercial blocks, three free-standing commercial buildings, three detached dwellings, roads, pedestrian paths, playgrounds and landscaped courtyards. The Buckingham Apartment Complex stands today as a nationally significant, multi-family, rental development advancing the innovative principles of garden city planning.

The severe housing shortage of the 1920s, and the overwhelming demand for affordable housing prompted President Franklin D. Roosevelt to formulate plans and organize the Committee for Economic and Social Progress. This committee, led by the country's leading businessmen, conceived methods for constructing privately financed planned communities throughout the United States. The Committee served as sponsors and advisors for projects. The Buckingham Apartment Complex was owned and developed by Allie Freed, chairman of the Committee for Economic Recovery. Freed's impassioned commitment to the construction of economically viable rental housing using only private sources of income dominated the planning and construction of Buckingham. By adopting pioneer

¹³ Goode, James. Best Addresses. page 183.

construction methods employing prefabricated materials and using the production techniques of the automobile industry, Freed led the way for the construction nationwide of well-built, cost efficient housing developments. Freed chose the site for his pioneer development close to the Nation's Capital where he believed it would receive maximum exposure in the press, and be within the purview of influential political and business leaders. Freed formed Paramount Communities, Inc. and purchased one hundred acres of farm land in Arlington County, Virginia.

Freed selected Henry Wright the country's leading garden city planner to design the Buckingham Complex. Wright was typically associated with Clarence Stein, his partner in the firm Wright and Stein in New York City for over seventeen years. It appears, however, that his work on the Buckingham Apartments was done without the collaboration of Stein. Together they had built a solid and notable reputation as architects and planners of acclaimed garden developments such as Radburn, New Jersey project and Chatham Village in Pittsburgh. Wright and Stein based their ideas of garden city planning on the concepts of efficiency, land conservation and beauty in the development of the new greenbelt communities. Wright was assisted initially on the planning and design of the project by long-time associates Allan Kamstra and Albert Leuders, both noted architects. Kamstra and Leuders were responsible for completing the design and scheme after Wright's death. Kamstra had worked with Wright and Stein on Radburn and Chatham Village, as well as other projects such as Greenbelt; Leuders worked with Wright and Stein for seventeen years.¹⁴ According to their press release, Paramount Communities "began its existence under the inspiration and guidance of the late Henry Wright, who years ago developed living patterns of community planning."¹⁵

Buckingham advertisements touted the planned community as "dedicated to yesterday's charm and tomorrow's convenience."¹⁶ Apartments offered beautifully landscaped gardens, architecturally pleasing and superior designs, using carefully selected materials and construction techniques, with well-planned and efficient interior arrangements incorporating the latest interior features. Ordinary apartments throughout the metropolitan area lacked the careful planning and architectural treatments, and offered few of the up-to-date interior finishes, hardware and products found at Buckingham Apartments. As Freed envisioned, life at Buckingham Apartments was a community affair. Residents were not transient, and tended to live at Buckingham Apartments for many years. Amenities such as a theater, post-office, drug-store assured that Buckingham Apartments became a friendly and caring community with a strong visual sense of place for Arlington County.

¹⁴ Fisher, Oscar. "Buckingham: Housing Laboratory." Architectural Record. January, 1938. pp. 69-82.

¹⁵ Washington Post, May 16, 1937. p. 1.

¹⁶ "Buckingham Community A City Within Itself." The Northern Virginia Sun. Friday, September 29, 1939.

The scheme for the Buckingham Apartment complex was the result of extensive planning and analysis. Allie Freed remarked on the attention to each component of the complex:

First, the market for shelter was analyzed, the requirements were surveyed and the types of dwelling accommodations determined. From that the plan was fitted to the topography. Then the architects harmonized the requirements with the plan. Materials and equipment were studied alone and in combination. Using the known needs as to the size of the family units, these were grouped in the rental sections to produce the most economical units.¹⁷

This intensive planning prior to and during construction produced economies of scale, construction and delivery. The manufacturers shipped materials to the site pre-packaged in the units needed for construction; for instance, the bathroom tiles arrived on the site packaged in the amount required for one room. Freed applied assembly line techniques of automobile production on the construction site at Buckingham, coupled with the use of prefabricated materials he managed to reduce construction costs and use his building labor to the most efficient means possible. A "Ford-unit" of three rooms and a bath evolved after experimentation, as it was the most popular apartment unit and could be easily reproduced in all of the buildings.¹⁸

This standardization did not lead to mindless repetitive design. Buckingham exhibited the best characteristics of the earlier Wright designs for planned residential communities. The land was divided into superblocks, with buildings occupying only twenty percent of the land. The remainder of the site is devoted to landscaped parks, play areas, and streets. Heavy traffic is shunted around the community, while angled streets, less expensive than curved streets, slow traffic. The buildings in Phase 1 and 2 are arranged at angles along the streets, and subsequent phases the buildings are arranged around U-shaped courtyards. Their wide frontage and narrow depth provide each apartment maximum exposure of light and air. Informal, paved walkways connect the courtyards in an internal system spanning the complex.

As former farm land, the site had little original landscaping. The landscaping plan, produced by H.E. Van Gelder provided hundreds of oaks and elms along the streets and within the interior of the superblocks. The placing of all utilities underground also contributes to the park-like setting. Recessed parking bays and off-street garages accommodated the automobiles.

¹⁷ "New Virginia Project Result of U.S. Housing Shortage." The Washington Post. May 16, 1937. p. 1.

¹⁸ Washington Post, January 9, 1938. p. R3.

Though the majority of the buildings have the same basic form and features, variety of massing and subtle differences in detailing provide each with its own character, while maintaining the overall unity of design. Combinations of buildings in units of two to four stairhalls, staggered building lines, and multiplicity of site layout contribute to the subtle variety of the design. The buildings exhibit a simplified Colonial Revival design. High-quality materials, such as brick walls, slate roofs, and cast stone detailing were used to insure permanence and to reduce maintenance costs.

One unique building was erected as an experimental model. Rather than the traditional Colonial Revival design, it employs a modern design vocabulary characteristic of modern German apartment blocks of the 1920s and 1930s, and the work of Walter Gropius. The flat-roofed brick building has glass brick stair halls and cantilevered balconies. Erected as a "feeler" for public opinion, it typifies the dynamic nature of the design process at Buckingham. The developer constantly tested the reactions from the public and altered the plan to meet the demands of the market. Though it proved popular with tenants, the design was not repeated in later phases of construction. Apparently, tenants preferred the more traditional designs of the other buildings.

A neighborhood shopping center was constructed at the heart of the Buckingham community. The design advances several ideals of planners Stein and Bauer, including a plan that "cares for and separates pedestrians, parking and delivery."¹⁹ The tenants included a barber shop, cleaners, drug store, grocery store, sporting goods store, and theater. The inclusion of a retail component as an integral part of the plan helped Buckingham to realize the ideal of the neighborhood self-sufficiency.

Construction began on the first phase of Buckingham in March 1937. By December, families occupied the 622 units of phases one and two. Construction was increased to meet the unexpectedly high demand; Freed called the instant favorable response "gratifying."²⁰ Freed intended Buckingham for the middle-income group earning from, \$1,500 to \$3,000 a year. Through the economies of construction, Buckingham met his goal; the median annual income of the first tenants was \$2,482.²¹ The average monthly rent was \$14.50 per room. The apartment sizes range from two to five room apartments to five to seven room duplexes. Apartments of varying sizes were scattered throughout the community; no effort was made to segregate the tenants by income. However, racial segregation was the norm. Buckingham did not accept applications from black tenants until the late 1960s.²²

¹⁹ Stein, Clarence and Bauer, Catherine. "Store Buildings and Neighborhood Shopping Centers." Architectural Record. February, 1934. p. 185.

²⁰ Washington Post, May 27, 1937, Section E, p.1.

²¹ Fisher, Oscar. "Buckingham: Housing Laboratory." Architectural Record. January, 1938. p. 76

²² The Arlington Heritage Alliance, Inc. "Draft National Register Nomination for the Buckingham Apartments." 1991.

As a leading advocate of affordable housing, and as Chairman of the Committee for Social and Economic Progress, Freed was invited to respond to criticism of the Committee, and to answer the question whether the Committee "...was indulging in theories and idealism or whether it knew what it was talking about."²³ Freed's work with the Committee and at Buckingham responded to the 1937 Housing Policy of the United States to promote the welfare of citizens and "to alleviate present and recurring unemployment and to remedy the unsafe and unsanitary housing conditions and the acute shortage of decent, safe and sanitary dwellings for families of low-income, in rural and urban communities, that are injurious to the health, safety, and morals of the citizens of the Nation."²⁴ Although government involvement in Buckingham was limited to mortgage insurance provided by the Federal Housing Authority, Freed planned the Buckingham development as a model community which addressed the provisions of the U.S. Housing Policy Acts of 1937 and 1949. Under the National Housing Act, the FHA insured privately-funded housing which met their design, financing, and rental rate requirements. The first FHA-insured project in the United States was Colonial Village, also in Arlington County, Virginia. Buckingham was the largest of the early FHA projects.²⁵ The FHA administrators were advocates of Stein and Wrights' landmark projects and thus favored projects incorporating the characteristics of those communities.

Freed spoke frequently to public forums and stated clearly that he considered large-scale planned rental communities to be good business. Unlike the Buhl Foundation of Chatham Village, Paramount Communities was "not a philanthropic organization. It is motivated by a desire for the legitimate profit which accrues to an efficient industrial operation."²⁶ Freed, fulfilling his Committee's recommendations, put up approximately one million dollars in 1937, with Prudential Life Insurance Company mortgaging the remaining \$1,670,000. The total cost of Phases one and two of the complex was \$2,596,720.

Immediate, widespread praise greeted Buckingham. The New York Times devoted the front page to Buckingham with the subheading "Model Home Community Nearing Completion Close to Nation's Capital."²⁷ Architectural Record devoted a feature entitled "Buckingham: Housing Laboratory" to the development.²⁸ Charles Lewis, the builder of Chatham Village, declared, "This skillfully planned

²³ "New Ideas Used For Model Housing." The New York Times. January 9, 1938.

²⁴ United States Housing Law of 1937, Public Law 412, September 1, 1937, *Statutes at Large* 50 (1937), followed by Housing Act of 1949, Public Law 171, July 14, 1949, *Statutes at Large* 63 (1949).

²⁵ Mott, Seward. "Land Planning in the Federal Housing Administration: 1934-44." Insured Mortgage Portfolio. 1944. Vol. 8, No. 4.

²⁶ Washington Post, May 16, 1937. P. 1.

²⁷ "New Ideas Used for Model Housing." The New York Times. January 9, 1938, Section 13, page 1.

²⁸ Fisher, Oscar. Architectural Record. January 1938. pp. 69-82.

project promises to be one of the most significant of all that have been constructed in America to date."²⁹ Eleanor Roosevelt toured Buckingham and wrote in her nationally syndicated "My Day" column:

At noon I spent a very interesting hour visiting a Housing project which has been done by private capital in conjunction with FHA. It is a delightful development...The houses are well-planned and I think it would be easy for a woman to live in them. These developments give one the feeling that there is a possibility of doing many things on a community basis that would make life easier for the individual family.³⁰

Buckingham continued to expand, eventually covering the original 84 acres with 1,850 apartment units. After Allie Freed's untimely death in 1938, his widow, Frances Freed, took over management of Paramount Communities, now called Buckingham Communities. Kamstra and Leuders remained the project architects and planners. In keeping with Freed's original market philosophy, new construction incorporated ideas based on the experiences with tenants and contractors. Based on tenant recommendations, the owner painted more of the buildings white, widened the streets, and eliminated the garages.³¹ The arrangement of the buildings around U-Shaped courtyards became the dominant scheme, altering the original conceptual plan for the development of the remainder of the site. The site within the complex proposed for a school was developed for apartments after Arlington County built a school nearby. Approximately 16 acres of land originally set aside for a community center was sold as an out-parcel. The last of the buildings, erected in 1953, reflect architectural design of the 1950s, although maintaining the unified architectural character of the first phases of Buckingham.

Buckingham remains significant today as an intact example of garden apartment planned residential Communities. It exhibits the character-defining features of both garden apartments and planned Communities and was part of the influential movement to provide affordable, decent Housing for the majority of Americans. Buckingham has a unique position in the history of American housing: it brought together Henry Wright, the originator of the concepts found in group dwelling designs in planned communities, and the practical world of market-driven development. Wright's earlier projects received their primary exposure in architectural journals, while Buckingham received wide coverage in the popular press. The wide coverage and success of Buckingham contributed to the popular acceptance by residents and the real estate industry of the lessons of Wright's earlier projects -- elimination of lot lines, large-scale planning, and viability of high-quality, moderate-cost rental Housing. The incorporation of a neighborhood shopping center as an integral part of the development and the efficient economies of scale production that allowed low-cost yet flexible construction set

²⁹ Fisher, Oscar. January, 1938. p. 71.

³⁰ Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Freed File.

³¹ Cooper, Lee E. "Buckingham Housing Gets New Manager; Planning is Altered as New Units Rise." The New York Times. June 17, 1938. p. 39.

Buckingham apart from other early, privately-funded, FHA insured developments. Oscar Fishers summarizes the significance of Buckingham:

If we are not to be satisfied with building a few scattered Utopias which it is impracticable to reproduce in great numbers, it is to projects like Buckingham that we must turn: here are physical patterns of the future; here is the beginning of a new kind of business.³²

D. PLANNERS AND ARCHITECTS -- HENRY WRIGHT, ALLAN KAMSTRA, ALBERT LEUDERS

Henry Wright was the pre-eminent promoter of garden city principles in the United States. British garden cities, based on Ebenezer Howard's **Garden Cities of Tomorrow**, incorporated cost efficiency, land conservation, and beauty in the development of new "greenbelt" communities outside of older urban centers. Typically associated with his partner Clarence Stein, Wright and Stein applied the themes of British garden cities to the design of large-scale planned residential communities. A landscape architect and town planner, Wright devoted his career to solving the dual problem of providing well-designed housing that the average American could afford.

Wright believed that the group dwelling and the garden apartment offered the best opportunity to improve American housing.³³ He rejected the standard real estate practice of subdividing land into repetitive, narrow strips, advocating instead planning that "assembled buildings and land for effective openness without extravagance."³⁴ He rearranged the standard plan by rotating the buildings, turning them parallel to the street. This created broad frontage and shallow depth. His analysis demonstrated that this arrangement eliminated the useless side yards provided greater light, ventilation, and open recreation space without increasing cost.

Wright and Stein collaborated on three influential projects, Sunnyside Gardens (Long Island City, New York 1924), Radburn (Fairlawn, New Jersey 1929), and Chatham Village (Pittsburgh 1930). Each project contributed to the acceptance of planned communities using garden city principles. At Sunnyside Gardens, the planners were constrained by the existing gridiron street pattern, but did eliminate lot lines within the blocks. They arranged the buildings linearly along the perimeters of the site, creating ample central garden courts.

³² Fisher, Oscar. January, 1938. p. 70.

³³ Wright, Henry. "Housing - Why, When, and How?" Architecture. August, 1933. Vol. LXVIII, No. 2. p. 79.

³⁴ Wright, Henry. 1933. p. 80.

Radburn, with its two square-mile site, offered Stein and Wright the opportunity to apply their principles on a large-scale. The elements of the Radburn plan were: the superblock in place of the rectangular block; specialized roads; separation of pedestrians and automobiles; houses oriented towards gardens; and continuous parks running through the superblocks.³⁵ Though a financial failure due to the Great Depression, "Radburn demonstrated for America a new form of city and community that fits the needs of present day urban living in America, and it is influencing city building throughout the world."³⁶

The non-profit Buhl Foundation, had planned Chatham Village as a development of detached houses for sale. However, the high cost of construction would have pushed the houses out of reach of the market they sought to serve. They agreed to "build something (garden apartments) within the price range of those needing the houses, and if necessary to rent instead of attempting to sell."³⁷ Chatham Village pioneered thoughtfully-designed housing for those of limited income and demonstrated the security of investment in large-scale rental housing development.³⁸

E. ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL HISTORY

Committee for Economic Recovery

Concerned over the nation's bleak economy and social turmoil, automobile manufacturer and president of Paramount Motors Corporation Allie S. Freed assembled a group of businessmen to discuss ways that business interests could help lead the nation to economic recovery. To put their ideas into practice, they founded the Committee for Economic Recovery (Later called the Committee for Economic and Social Progress), incorporated in Albany, New York on November 5, 1934 with Allie Freed as president.³⁹ The Committee counted among its members some of the most prominent businessmen of the day: the presidents of Eastman Kodak Company, Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company, and the Glidden Company; the chairman of the board of Westinghouse; the dean of the Harvard Business School; and two dozen others. Their first report, "Recovery or Radicalism? -- A New Civilization in the Making," issued on March 23, 1935 and addressed to President Roosevelt, described the social and economic choices facing the nation in stark terms:

³⁵ Stein, Clarence. Towards New Towns for America. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1950. pp. 41-44.

³⁶ Stein, Clarence. 1950. p. 41.

³⁷ Wright, Henry. 1933. p. 101.

³⁸ Stein, Clarence. 1950. p. 75.

³⁹ "Goal: 750,000 Homes A Year." Architectural Forum, April 1936. p. 366.

This situation is rapidly becoming more serious than we realize. We seem to forget that men and women who suffer from economic maladjustments reach a frame of mind in which reason plays little part...The demagogue preaches a doctrine which, though destructive in the end, brings followers in the interim...There is, of course, but one real cure for this type of radicalism. It lies solely in economic recovery. When men are properly employed under the structure of Capitalism, their minds resist the impractical rantings of a Coughlin, Long, Sinclair or Townshend.

After his trip to inspect British housing developments, Freed convinced the Committee that housing held the greatest possibility for industrial recovery in the United States. The Committee's 1935 "Home Sweet Home" report outlined a four point program involving industry, labor, finance, and government to produce affordable housing for the majority of Americans. Raymond Cheseldine, the assistant Regional Director of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) served as consultant on the report.⁴⁰

The Committee advocated that highly capitalized home-building companies purchase large tracts and create planned communities of sufficient size to provide a higher grade of mortgage loan collateral.⁴¹ At that time, mortgages were generally five years long and difficult to obtain. They proposed the creation of forty building companies nationwide, each with a minimal capitalization of one million dollars.⁴² The Committee believed that government should have only a limited role:

Twenty-nine million families could not have been put on wheels in the United States had the automobile industry waited for companies, individuals, or government to supply them because they were sorry that people had to walk. It was only because the demand existed for production at prices that could be afforded by the mass buying population. Good roads, built by government, have aided private capital to develop the automobile industry. Government encouragement to private Housing should be of this type.⁴³

Freed reasoned that the main reason for the inability of the home building industry to meet the vast demand for housing in the middle price range was inefficiency. By unifying all aspects of housing operations he believed that the desires of the "unbuilt-for ninety percent of Americans" could be met.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ "Goal: 750,000 Homes A Year." Architectural Forum, April, 1936. p. 366.

⁴¹ New York Times, February 14, 1937. p. 4RE.

⁴² "Goal: 750,000 Homes A Year." Architectural Forum, April, 1936. p. 366.

⁴³ Fisher, Oscar. January, 1938. p. 69.

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL STATEMENT OF THE BUCKINGHAM APARTMENT COMPLEX

Buckingham Apartment Complex was planned as a large, unified aesthetic expression of apartment buildings in a park setting. Developed in six phases, from 1937 to 1953, Buckingham's two-and three-story apartment buildings are arranged along angled street and around U-shaped courtyards. The built environment of Buckingham occupies less than twenty percent of the land, leaving the remainder for landscaped parks, play areas, and streets. The exterior design and site planning for the Buckingham Apartment Complex was executed by architects Henry Wright, assisted by Allan F. Kamstra and Albert Leuders. The Buckingham Complex includes 183 apartment buildings, two commercial blocks, three free-standing commercial buildings, three detached dwellings, roads, pedestrian paths, and landscaped courtyards. An internal circulation system separating cars and pedestrians, a commercial core, consistent yet varied Colonial Revival architecture executed in brick, and a large percentage of open space characterize Buckingham.

Glebe Road is the main road running north to south through the complex. The decision to locate the complex near the Nation's Capital, made it nearly impossible to acquire a tract of land without some road systems already in place. Planners of garden communities strongly urged the direction of traffic around the community; however, Glebe Road, one of the oldest in Arlington County, was an unavoidable site constraint. The designers addressed this site feature by incorporating Glebe Road into the design with landscaping and locating the shopping facilities at its intersection with North Pershing Drive. The other major north-south road is George Mason Drive, which has a wide, landscaped median, giving it the effect of a boulevard. From north to south, the major east west streets are Henderson Road, North 4th Street, Pershing Drive, and North 2nd Street. Gentle, angled curves slow local traffic on the secondary streets.

The apartment buildings of the Buckingham Complex are designed in the Colonial Revival style. The buildings are two-story in height, constructed of common bond brick with slate hip and gable roofs. Brick quoins mark the corners of each building. The doorways, provides the decorative focus; eleven different types of cast stone doorways, including broken pediments, segmental arches, and stylized jack arches, mark the entrances. The sills, lintels, and belt courses are also cast stone.

The basic building unit consists of an eight-bay building with two stairwells, each leading to four apartments. Other combinations of building units provide variety and accommodate the different apartment sizes. Some had three stairwells, with a center reverse gable or gable roofed center block flanked by two wings (Building 12). The varying roof treatments on the larger structures helps to maintain their residential scale.

⁴⁴ Information in Section E from The Arlington Heritage Alliance, Inc. "Draft National Register Nomination for the Buckingham Apartments."

The floor plans are successful in providing maximum light and air for each apartment unit, while taking full-advantage of the pleasant views provided by the park-like setting. The buildings are sited around U-shaped courtyards, or angled along the secondary streets with landscaped gardens laid out by H.E. Van Gelder. The gardens provide a verdant setting, while the small-scale Colonial Revival buildings conjure up images of life in a rural village.

At the angled corner of North Fourth and North Piedmont Streets stands the one apartment house which breaks the pattern. Built in 1937, as an experimental "feeler" of public reaction to non-traditional design of the era. The three-story building has a flat roof deck and cantilevered balconies. Though popular, this design, reminiscent of German apartment buildings of the 1920s, was not repeated in the community. The brick, cast stone entrances, and placement parallel to the street unifies this building with the others of the complex.

An integral part of Buckingham is the landscaping and open green space. An interior system of paths links the buildings throughout the interior of the superblocks. Many of the buildings are arranged around courtyards facing the street; balustraded walls mark these formal courtyards, which contrast with the irregularly shaped informal spaces of the interior of the blocks. As farm land in the 1930s, Buckingham's site had no formal landscaping. Extensive plantings of oaks and elms have created a neighborhood filled with tree-lined streets and shaded interior courtyards. Many of these buildings have extensive foundation plantings.

Phases 1 and 2, completed in 1937, occupy the portion of the site east of Glebe Road. The building density is greater and the streets narrower in this section; it was built according to the conceptual plan published in 1938. In Third Buckingham, which was under construction in 1938, the designers began to alter the conceptual plan in response to tenant preferences. They eliminated the garages, which had been located within the blocks; tenants preferred on-street parking. Streets were made wider, also in response to recommendations from the tenants. After working on the first sections, the builders realized that larger buildings, covering less ground were more cost-efficient. Some of the buildings in subsequent sections of Buckingham have breezeways that function as balconies; this may be another example of the architects and owners testing to the reaction to innovations in design. The majority of Buckingham stood completed in 1941; a section of five buildings was added to the southwest portion of the tract in 1953.

The first block of stores, on the north corner of the intersection of Glebe Road and Pershing Drive, opened in 1937. Similar in design, scale and materials the retail stores compliment the surrounding apartment buildings. In 1939, the small shopping center and movie theater opened in the east corner of the commercial intersection. The theater is a two-story, brick building with a monumental portico consisting of four piers supporting a wide, plain entablature. The drug store and post office opened in 1945; they are both housed in one-story, concrete buildings with polished stone bases and simple art moderne detailing. The brick grocery store opened in 1940.

In addition to the apartment and commercial buildings, Buckingham has four other buildings. The superintendent's house, a one-story, brick, Cape Cod, stands on Glebe Road. Near the intersection of George Mason Drive and Route 50, are two free-standing structures. They serve as gateway buildings to Buckingham for the traveler turning from Route 50 to the landscaped boulevard-like George Mason Drive. Finally, a poolhouse and pool were constructed in 1966.

Buckingham retains a high degree of physical integrity. Some elements have been replaced, such as installation of metal windows in place of the original windows and replacement of roof shingles where necessary. The only significant change to Buckingham's plan, as built, was the demolition of nine apartment houses on the west side of the intersection of Glebe and Henderson Road in the early 1970s.

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) documentation for the Buckingham Apartment Complex is intended to provide the documentation necessary to comply with the Section 106 requirements related to the extension of North Quincy Street and the demolition of Building 12 and the Swimming Pool Complex within the Buckingham Apartment Complex, in Arlington County, Virginia. The designation of the Buckingham Apartment Complex as a Virginia Landmark in 1992, and the recognition of its architectural and historic significance, has triggered this review process. The HABS documentation was undertaken by the firm of Tracerics, under the direction of the firm's principal Emily Hotaling Eig.

The North Quincy Street extension project involves the construction of a four-lane roadway between Wilson Boulevard and North Glebe Road. This project has been in the County's transportation plan since 1960. The adopted Ballston sector plan supports the extension of North Quincy Street as a key element in the transportation network to alleviate traffic constraints and to serve the redeveloped Ballston area.

The Master Transportation Plan - Part I, 1986, states that "the extension of North Quincy Street would facilitate north-south traffic movements between the Quincy Street/Military Road Corridor and the Glebe Road/George Mason Drive Corridor. Access to the Virginia Square area from points south would be improved, reducing the demand for traffic on nearby north-south neighborhood street to the east. To the extent that it takes traffic destined for the Ballston area off North Glebe Road, it will free up North Glebe Road, a principle arterial, to perform its function of serving through traffic."⁴⁵

The need for the improvement relates to the intensive level of development under construction and programmed for the Ballston area. Numerous transportation studies have reaffirmed the need for the North Quincy Street extension, including two traffic engineering studies which have analyzed traffic in the Ballston area.⁴⁶

As proposed, North Quincy Street would be constructed as a four-lane facility with four-foot wide planting strips with street trees and grates and sidewalk widths varying from six to ten feet. It is not possible to provide a uniform ten-foot wide sidewalk because extensive additional demolition would be required. North Fifth Street will dead-end at the newly extended Quincy Street, although the exact terminus of the road has not been determined as of May, 1994.

Form Prepared by: Laura Harris Hughes
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Date: April, 1994

⁴⁵ Department of Public Works. "Environmental Assessment: North Quincy Street Extension Project." April 1991.

⁴⁶ Traffic Engineering Study of the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor and the Site Access and Area Road Net Analysis of the Parkington Regional Center.

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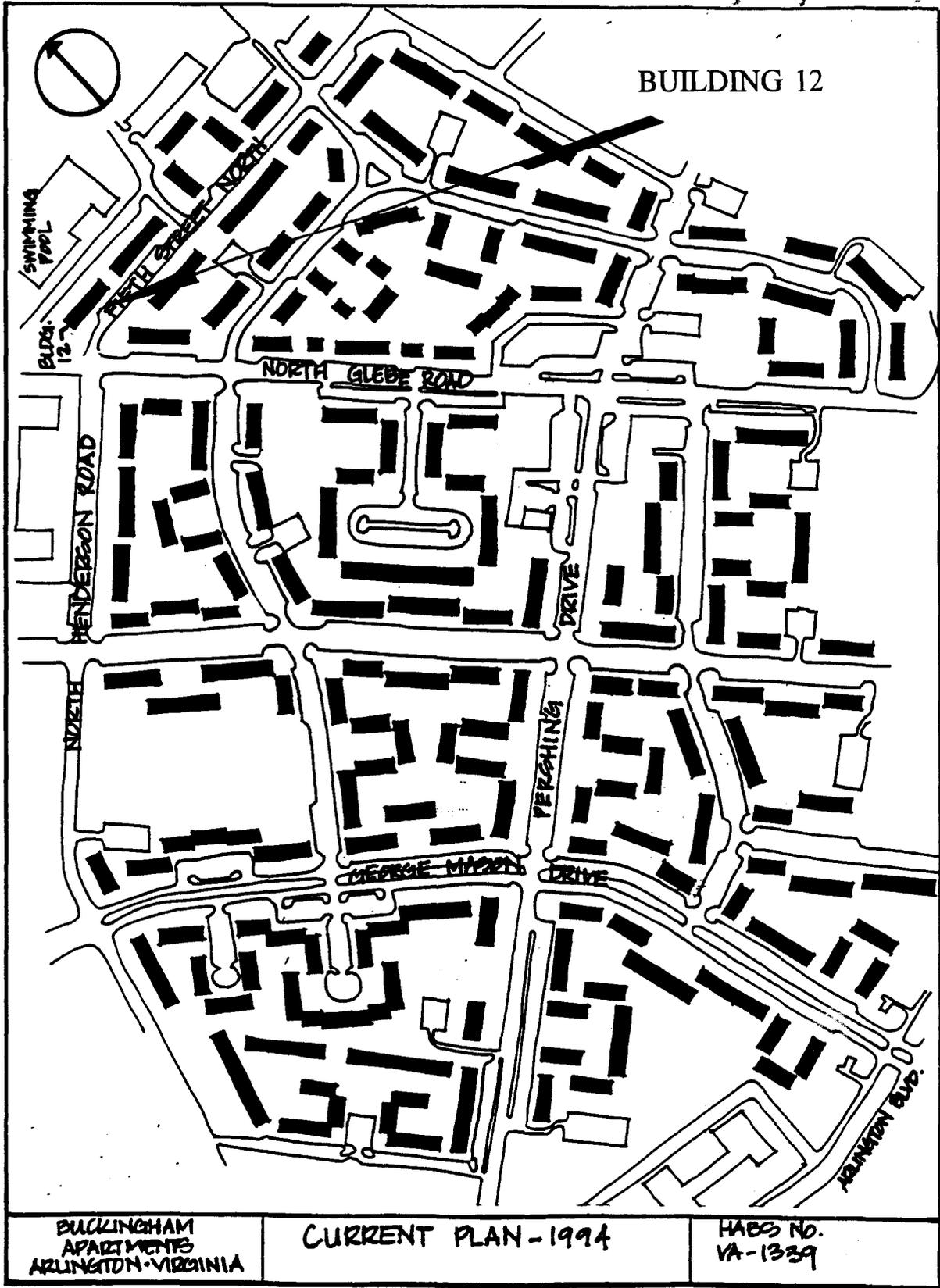
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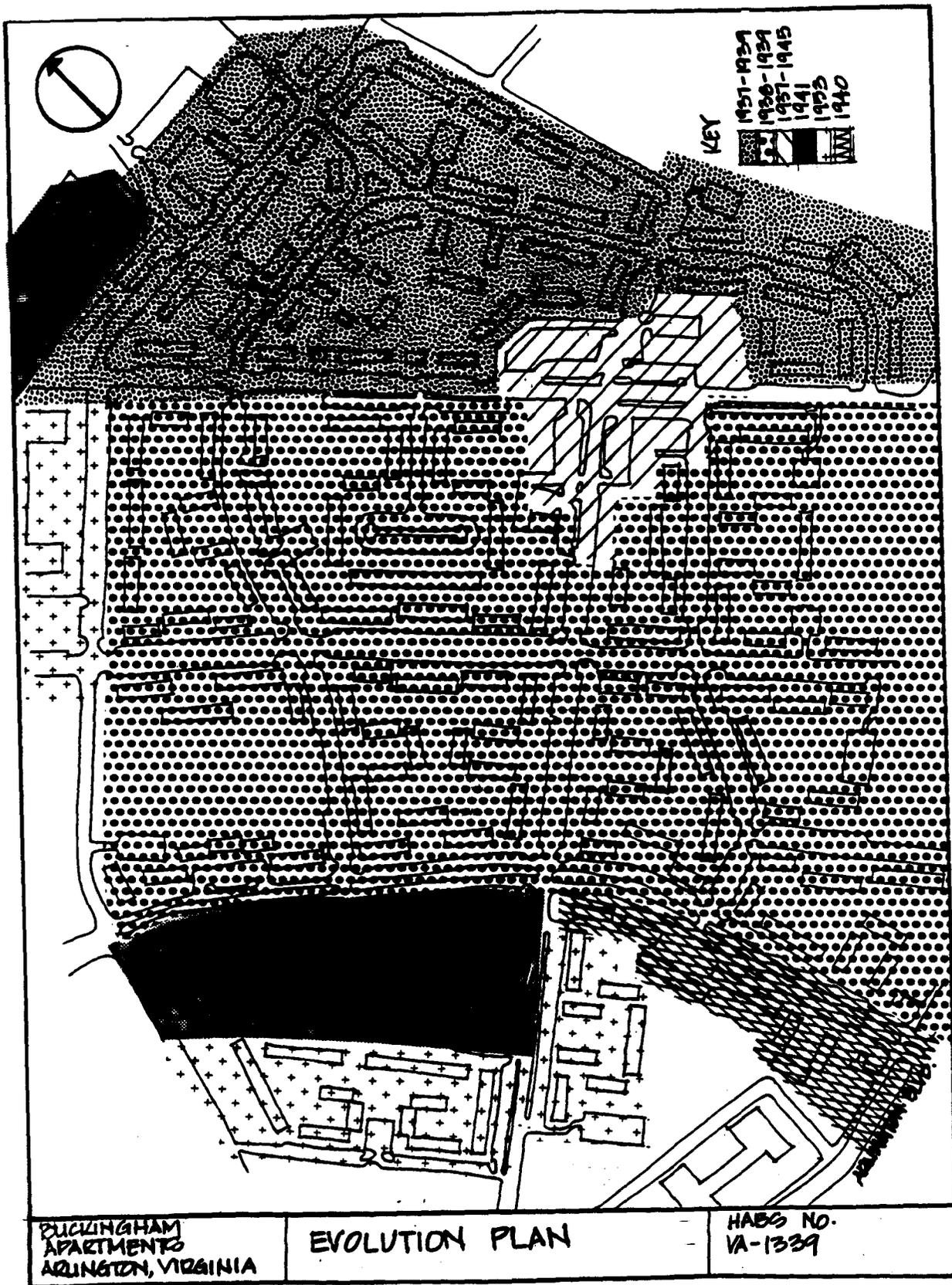
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BUCKINGHAM
APARTMENTS
ARLINGTON-VIRGINIA

CURRENT PLAN-1994

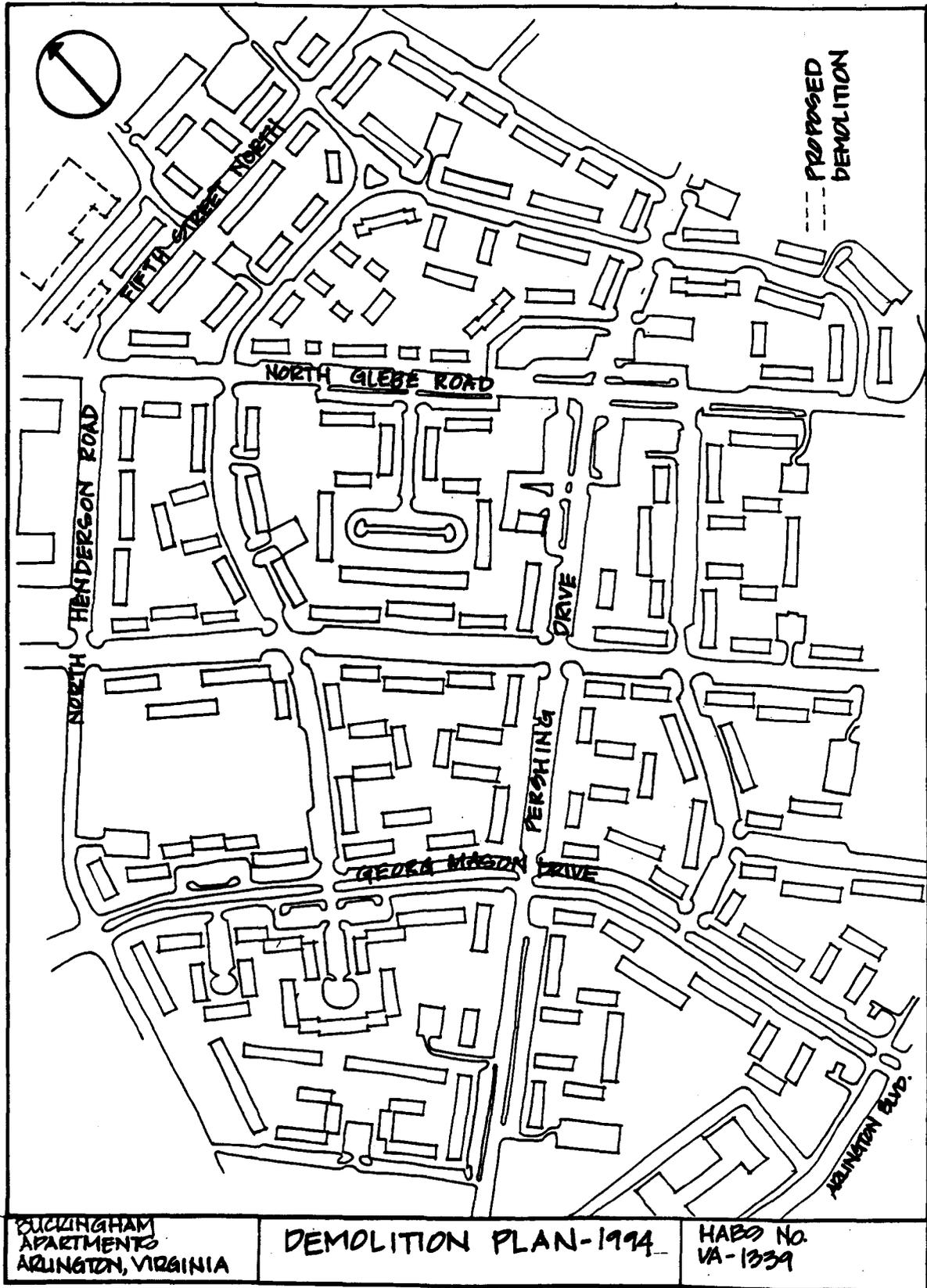
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VA-1339



BUCKINGHAM
APARTMENTS
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

EVOLUTION PLAN

HABS NO.
VA-1339



ADDENDUM TO:
BUCKINGHAM APARTMENT COMPLEX
Bounded by George Mason Drive, Henderson, Glebe, & Pershing
Roads
Arlington
Virginia

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PHOTOGRAPHS

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