

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
Historic Landmark Case No. 17-15

Texas Gardens Apartments
1741 28th Street SE
Square 5635, Lot 803

Meeting Date: December 21, 2017
Applicant: Texas Gardens Partners LLC/MED Developers
Affected ANC: 7B

The Historic Preservation Office recommends that the Board designate the Texas Gardens Apartments at 1741 28th Street SE a historic landmark in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites, and that the nomination be forwarded to the National Register of Historic Places for listing as a site of local significance, with a period of significance of 1944, the building's completion date.

Texas Gardens is nominated under the District's Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPD) *Apartment Buildings in Washington, D.C., 1880-1945*, which identifies how apartment buildings are significant for their role in changing domestic life in Washington, D.C. According to the MPD:

“Although early conversions of single-family or other building types to multiple dwellings introduced the idea of the apartment building, it was the purpose-built apartment building that made a significant impact on residential patterns as well as the physical heritage of the District of Columbia. The purpose-built apartment building established the concept of multiple dwellings as a fundamental type of housing, slowly affecting attitudes and lifestyles to fit its form. These purpose-built apartment buildings institutionalized new residential organization and dictated new approaches to day-to-day living. Specifically, within the general context of. ‘The Apartment Building in the District of Columbia, 1880-1945,’ the property type holds the key role as the very building type which defines the apartment building in its seminal period in the District of Columbia.

“The apartment building provided housing solutions for a rapidly expanding population in the District. This new building type supplied many needed ‘dwellings’ quickly with optimum use of available architectural and financial resources. Further, it permitted maximum use of land in locations already served by public transportation and utilities, directly affecting patterns of population growth. The advent of the purpose-built apartment building changed the course of social and domestic trends, affecting patterns in location, building type, social interaction, and public services.”

Texas Gardens is an example of the “conventional low-rise apartment building,” as identified in the MPD. This building type was designed and built specifically to function as a multifamily residence of at least two and no more than four stories high with no elevator and a single main entrance.

Texas Gardens is located in the Randle Highlands subdivision, which was served by streetcar beginning in 1905. However, Texas Avenue wasn't laid out until 1919 and the lots on which Texas Gardens was built remained undeveloped through several owners. After a new Pennsylvania Avenue bridge was completed in 1939, the intersection of Pennsylvania and Minnesota Avenues, S.E., known as L'Enfant Square, emerged as a commercial district serving the growing population in the Randle Highlands, Hillcrest, and Fairlawn neighborhoods.

The growth in population was hastened in large part by the advent of World War II, which prompted workers to flood to the nation's capital in support of the war effort. Housing shortages became critical as single family homes were divided into apartments and families crowded together into single units. Apartment building construction boomed to meet the demand and the Texas Gardens Apartments, constructed in 1943-44, is a representative example of the multi-unit buildings erected to house the working-class and middle-class residents of wartime Washington.

Texas Gardens was designed by Charles E. Marzadro for owner Abe Feinstein, the latter's only known project in D.C. It is constructed of yellow brick in the Art Deco style, featuring a curved corner with banks of windows on each floor, glass block flanking the entrance, and decorative vertical brick banding. Its irregular form gives the façade a great deal of surface articulation and allows for both a planted court on the south and a parking lot on the north.

The Texas Gardens Apartments merits designation under National Register Criterion C and District of Columbia Criterion D ("Architecture and Urbanism") for embodying the distinguishing characteristics of the "conventional low-rise apartment building," as classified in the MPD and for its elegant - if restrained - Art Deco style. It also meets National Register Criterion A and D.C. Criterion B ("History") for its association with World War II apartment building construction and as a representative example of development in the District of Columbia and in the Randle Highlands area specifically.

The Texas Gardens Apartments qualifies for designation under the MPD's specific registration criteria:

- A-3 - Buildings that are part of clusters, corridors or districts that illustrate the patterns of development of the city.
- A-4 - Buildings that reflect economic forces, both external and internal, that altered the development of the city.
- C-7 - Buildings that illustrate the apartment buildings' role in the various plans and aesthetic movements characteristic to Washington, D.C.

The property retains a high degree of integrity, with few alterations inside or out other than window and door replacements and the reversible installation of arched fabric canopies over the front and side entrances.