
HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD

Historic Landmark Case No. 22-01

The Hampshire Apartments

5000 and 5040 New Hampshire Avenue NW
Square 3400, Lots 1 and 2

Meeting Date: December 16, 2021
Applicant: Wesley New Hampshire LLC (owner)

Affected ANC: 4D

The Historic Preservation Office recommends the Board designate the Hampshire Apartments a historic landmark to be entered in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites, and requests that the nomination be forwarded to the National Register of Historic Places for listing as of local significance, with a period of significance of 1936, the buildings' date of completion.

The Hampshire merits designation under National Register Criterion C and District of Columbia Criterion D ("Architecture and Urbanism") for embodying the distinguishing characteristics of a particular building type and a design significant to the District of Columbia, specifically, the "conventional low-rise apartment building" classified in the Multiple Property Documentation Form *Apartment Buildings in Washington, D.C., 1880-1945*.

Secondly, the apartments meet National Register Criterion A and D.C. Criterion B ("History") for being associated with the Depression-era development of the Brightwood Park neighborhood (bounded by Georgia, New Hampshire and Missouri Avenues and Emerson Street NW).

HPO does not agree that the property merits designation under D.C. Criterion F ("Creative Masters"), as it is not demonstrably a notable work of an architect whose works have influenced the evolution of his field, or that it is significant to the development of the District of Columbia or nation beyond the extent of significance described above. The building could not be considered a master work in itself. Yet, it is a good illustration of cost-conscious provision of rental housing for the masses in Brightwood Park during the Great Depression. Architect Louis T. Rouleau designed and built scores of buildings in the District but is not especially well known. The nomination cites a couple of fine buildings of his, but although he was accomplished, there is probably not enough information here to evaluate his contributions and influence.

The Hampshire Apartments were constructed in 1935-1936, one of many multi-unit buildings erected to house working-class and middle-class residents of Washington during the interwar period. Much of this development followed the streetcar lines radiating from downtown, seeking lower land costs to accommodate a burgeoning labor force upon which the Depression-era federal government depended. These buildings, totaling 143 units, were designed by local architect Rouleau for the Eastern Construction Company Inc.

The appeal of the two buildings is partly in their green setting on their own triangular “square,” an aspect that gives them a feeling of garden apartments. The primary architectural theme is Tudor Revival, a style that had been associated principally with upper-class single-family homes during the 1900s through 1920s. On red-brick buildings with little plane change, contrasting limestone Tudor-arched arched door surrounds, quoins, belt courses, plaques, sills and stepped parapets do the bulk of the decorative work. But a closer look reveals irregular clinker bricks added for texture, an Arts and Crafts flourish that recalls the handmade quality of late medieval construction.

The Hampshire Apartments are nominated under the context provided by the Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) Form *Apartment Buildings in Washington, D.C., 1880-1945*, adopted by the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board and the National Register of Historic Places in 1994. The document traces the physical development of the apartment building type and classifies subtypes according to their design and characteristics and how they represent the development of the city. The Hampshire falls within the “Conventional Low-Rise Apartment Building” subtype, purpose-built multi-unit buildings of at least three units each on two to four floors, having a single main entrance and no elevator.

The MPD is written to allow the designation of a broad class of buildings, to protect both the most interesting and the most characteristic examples. It was compiled with an eye toward qualifying historic apartments for rehabilitations using federal tax credits, often for the provision of low- and moderate-income housing. The present property is expected to be a tax-credit project.

Like other building types, apartments should be evaluated not only against examples of their building types and other building types citywide, but also within their neighborhood context, representing how that area evolved. Brightwood Park began to develop with rowhouses in the 1890s. Apartments did not follow until the mid-1920s (and through the 1960s) and were consequently relatively small and mostly located in the northern half of the neighborhood. The Hampshire Apartments are not in the highest tier of Brightwood Park apartments in terms of the qualities of its architecture—there are several buildings that are superior—but neither is it in the much larger, lowest tier. Being of better than average quality in localized terms, it is also interesting as one of the earlier examples, providing a certain style for an office-worker tenant at a time when financing and certain materials were constrained.

The MPD proposes that apartment buildings may be listed under National Register Criteria A, B and/or C, but that they must meet one or more specific sub-criteria. In the present case, the Hampshire Apartments meet the following registration criteria:

- A-3: Buildings that are part of clusters, corridors, or districts that illustrate the patterns of development of the city [for being part of extensive apartment construction in Brightwood and Brightwood Park following the extension of streetcar lines and the popularization of automobiles];
- A-4: Buildings that reflect economic forces, both external and internal, that altered the development of the city [for being constructed largely to house government workers during the Great Depression]; and
- C-3: Buildings that reflect changes in aesthetic philosophies [for being a cost-conscious response to a housing shortage that nonetheless mixed traditional and modern styles].

The property retains high integrity, despite the replacement of all windows and doors and the unfortunate covering of the limestone coping with deep cap flashing. These are all details that may be improved upon in a rehabilitation. The concrete walks and steps within a greensward are the character-defining features of the original landscape.