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## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD**

Historic Landmark Case No. 20-03

### **Kingman Park Historic District (Amendment)**

19th Street on west; Benning Road on north; C Street on south; 21<sup>st</sup> Street on east

Meeting Date: July 30, 2020  
Applicant: Kingman Park Civic Association  
Affected ANC: 7D

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The Board designated the Kingman Park Historic District in May 2018. A National Register nomination form for the Kingman Park Historic District detailing the physical and cultural history of the district was listed in the National Register in November 2018. In January 2020, an amendment to the Kingman Park Historic District was filed by the Kingman Park Civic Association proposing a boundary increase and expanded period of significance. As evaluated below, HPO does not recommend approval of the proposed amendment.

### **Application Amendment**

The application proposes two revisions to the historic district: 1) an increase in the designated historic district boundaries; and 2) an expanded period of significance. The amended application proposes to expand the boundaries west of its existing boundary to 19<sup>th</sup> Street from C Street on the south to Benning Road on the north, and to extend the current southern boundary line to C Street. The proposed amendment would leave the existing eastern boundary at Oklahoma Avenue and the boundaries north of Benning Road unchanged. The application proposes to expand the Period of Significance from 1928-1960 to 1928-1968.

### **Background**

In 2016, the Kingman Park Civic Association made an application to the Review Board for the historic designation of Kingman Park. In May 2018, after holding three public hearings and giving great consideration to the application, HPRB designated the Kingman Park Historic District under DC Designation Criteria A and B for its association with historical periods, social movements, groups, institutions, achievements and patterns of growth and change that contributed significantly to the heritage, culture and development of the city, particularly as Kingman Park is a neighborhood that was developed for and nourished by African Americans during a period of entrenched racial segregation. With its houses, schools, recreational facilities, businesses, and religious institutions, Kingman Park residents lived together in this area of the city that was deliberately separated from white Washington, and in an area that would become the scene of important events in the fight to end legally sanctioned racial segregation.

The Kingman Park Historic District was designated with a Period of Significance and boundaries that differed from those proposed in the 2016 application. The HPRB-approved boundaries for the historic district encompass a smaller area than was proposed by the application, but a more expansive area than that recommended by the Historic Preservation Office. Similarly, the HPRB-

approved Period of Significance adopted an end-date of 1960 versus the 2016 application end-date of 1968.

The current amendment by the Kingman Park Civic Association proposes the expansion of the designated boundaries and a period of significance with an end-date of 1968. The case for these changes is presented in a nomination that essentially repeats the material presented in the 2016 application with the addition of an introduction that responds to a 2019 letter from HPO requesting additional and clarifying information.

### **Designated Period of Significance**

The period of significance for Kingman Park extends from 1928 to 1960. To summarize the 2018 Decision Document on the case, the beginning date corresponds with the construction of the first rows of houses sold to African Americans at a time when quality housing for persons of color was limited due to legally sanctioned racial restrictions. The end date encompasses the subsequent wholesale development of the area including housing, businesses, schools, and recreational facilities built for and nurtured by African Americans. It also corresponds with the end date of the period of significance for the National Register-listed Young, Browne, Phelps and Spingarn Educational Campus.

### **Proposed Period of Significance**

The amended application proposes the period of significance to be 1928-1968. The application argues that the later 1968 end-date includes several seminal events in the city's and Kingman Park's history including the 1963 March on Washington; the brutal 1964 murder by the Ku Klux Klan in Georgia of Lt. Col. Lemuel Penn, assistant superintendent in charge of five vocational high schools in Washington and a former teacher at Phelps Vocational High School; the 1967 election of Walter Washington, as "Mayor-Commissioner" and the first African American mayor of a major U.S. city; the 1967 court decision in *Hobson v. Hansen* that found that D.C. Public School system deprived African American students the right to equal educational opportunities required by *Brown v. Board of Education*; and finally, the 1968 civil unrest that followed the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King and that destroyed and weakened many of the Kingman Park neighborhood businesses.

### **Designated Boundaries**

The historic district includes the sections of today's Kingman Park neighborhood that are critically linked to its establishment and growth as an African American community. The boundaries contain the nucleus of the residential neighborhood, east of 21<sup>st</sup> Street, that gave the neighborhood its name, and that, from the outset, was open to African American buyers and renters at a time when many other areas of the city were not. The boundaries also envelop some earlier and contemporaneous dwellings adjacent to this core, west of 21<sup>st</sup> Street, that became an integral part of the African American community between the late 1920s and early 1940s (1900 and 2000 blocks of Gales and Rosedale Streets, NE). The boundaries further include the architecturally and historically significant Langston Terrace Dwellings, Langston Golf Course, and the educational campus of Young, Browne, Phelps and Spingarn schools, all built for African Americans. Finally, the boundaries include the commercial blocks along the south side of Benning Road from 21<sup>st</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> Streets, NE; these blocks correspond with the residential blocks south of the street, are visually and physically intact, and represent many of the

historically Black-owned and operated businesses in Kingman Park. There are 536 contributing buildings within the historic district.

### **Proposed Boundaries**

The proposed boundaries extend from C Street on the south to Maryland Avenue on the north, and from Oklahoma Avenue on the east to 19<sup>th</sup> Street on the west. The current application bases its argument for expansion primarily on the premise that the entire Kingman Park neighborhood was defined by a “cohesive political and civic environment.” The application notes that extended development of Kingman Park as an African American neighborhood was partly based on the 1948 *Hurd v. Hodge* Supreme Court decision that allowed Blacks to move into houses from which they were previously barred, as well as upon the determination of African Americans to establish a strong community. The application argues that the expanded boundaries are consistent with political boundaries and would better reflect the social, economic, and physical development of the neighborhood.

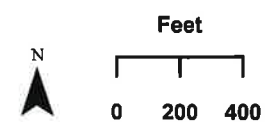
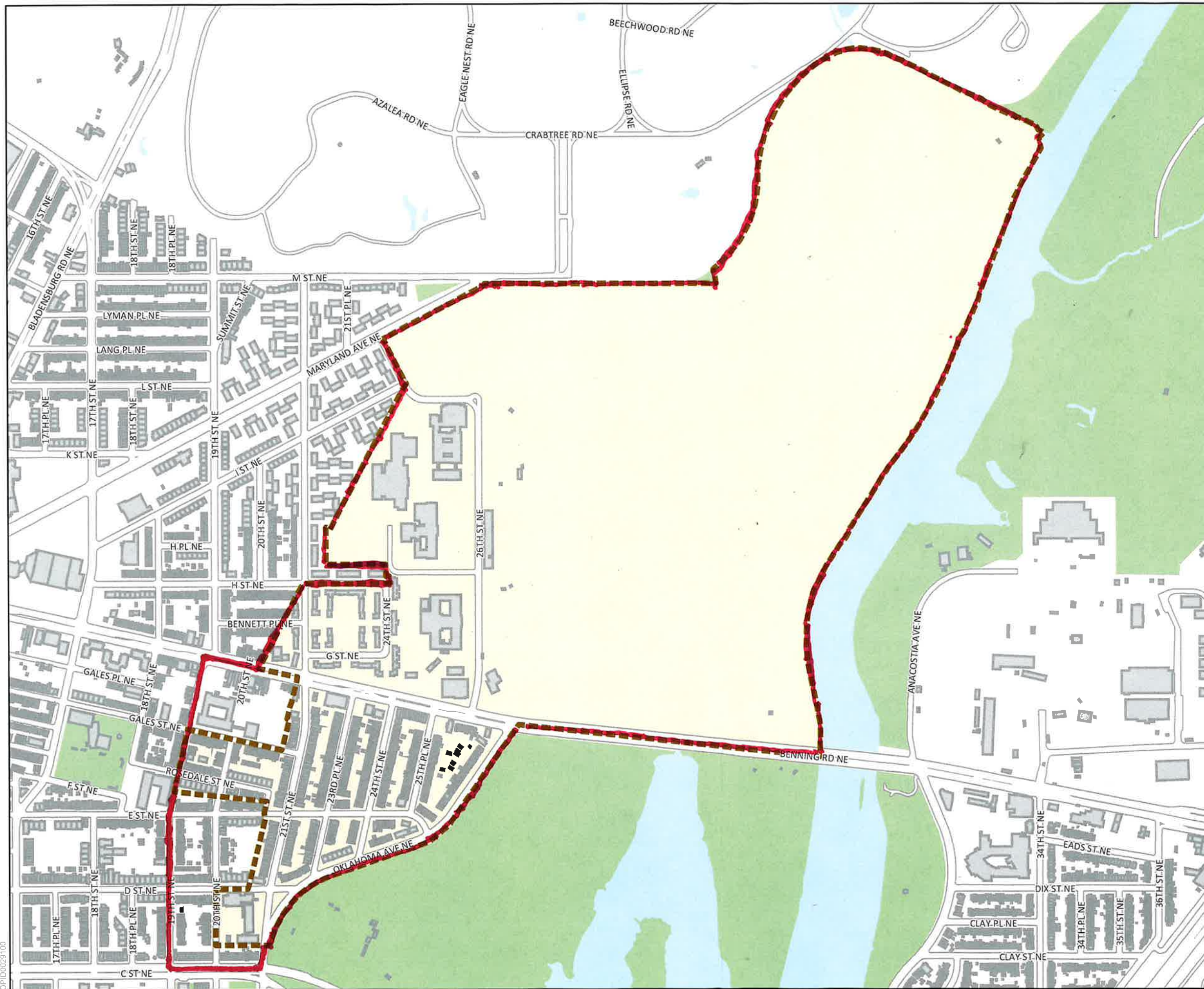
### **Recommendation**

HPO recommends that the existing boundaries be retained. The amendment does not provide enough additional or compelling information on the boundary expansion to merit reconsideration. As the Board determined previously, the primary significance of Kingman Park is that of an African American community that developed and grew during Jim Crow. The adopted boundaries best represent that community as it flourished and fought the injustices of that system at that time.

HPO recommends that the period of significance be retained as 1928-1960. The years between 1960 and 1968 were clearly critical to the city’s civil rights movement, and 1968 was a seminal year in the city’s history. The civil disturbances of 1968 did reach into the Kingman Park community, and so could provide an end date for the historic district. However, the terminal date of 1960 is more appropriate to the specific events of Kingman Park’s history and development. The end-date includes, most notably, the 1952 opening of Spingarn High School, the city’s last high school constructed during segregation, and extends beyond the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954 to capture the period of desegregation and integration of public facilities, and the consolidation and reorganization of the city’s segregated dual systems, including the Young, Phelps, Browne and Spingarn Educational campus in Kingman Park. As noted above, the 1960 end date also corresponds to the period of significance for the educational campus.



# Kingman Park Historic District



**Office of Planning ~ July 17, 2018**  
**Government of the District of Columbia**

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