

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

LISTED ON:	
VLR	06/16/2011
NRHP	08/18/2011

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Kent Road Village  
other names/site number DHR File No. 127-6514

## 2. Location

street & number 920-924 N. Hamilton Street and 905-935 Kent Road

N/A
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 not for publication  
city or town Richmond

N/A
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 vicinity  
state Virginia code VA county Independent City code 760 zip code 23221

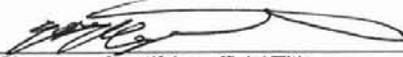
## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

 \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
11	2	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
0	0	buildings
11	2	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

Federal Housing Administration-Insured Garden  
Apartments in Richmond, Virginia, 1942-1950

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC / multiple dwelling = apartment building  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

DOMESTIC / multiple dwelling = apartment building  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> and EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

REVIVALS:

Colonial Revival  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

foundation: BRICK  
walls: BRICK  
roof: STONE: slate  
other: WOOD  
\_\_\_\_\_

Kent Road Village

Name of Property

Richmond, Virginia

County and State

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**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

**Summary Paragraph**

See continuation sheets

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**Narrative Description**

See continuation sheets

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

SOCIAL HISTORY (FEDERAL HOUSING ADMINISTRATION)

**Period of Significance**

1942-1943

**Significant Dates**

1942-1943 (Construction)

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

E. Tucker Carlton (architect)

Muhleman & Kayhoe, Inc. (builder)

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The property's period of significance is 1942-1943, encompassing the months during which the opposition campaign to the construction of the Kent Road Village apartment complex was mounted through the completion and initial occupation of the units.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

See continuation sheets

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

See continuation sheets

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

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Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 127-6514

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## 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property** 3.421  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>18</u>	<u>280553</u>	<u>4160389</u>	3	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	4	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (describe the boundaries of the property)

The property is defined as City of Richmond tax parcel W0001711016.

The northwestern boundary of the property is formed by the sidewalk directly in front of the complex along Kent Road. The northeastern boundary is an alley running between Kent Road and North Hamilton Street. The southeastern boundary is formed by the sidewalk directly in front of the complex along North Hamilton Street. The southwestern boundary runs along the edge of the parking lot of the adjoining commercial property at 900 North Hamilton Street.

**Boundary Justification** (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundaries of the Kent Road Village apartments are those historically associated with the complex.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Mary Harding Sadler and Llewellyn Hensley  
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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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## 7. Summary Description

### Summary

Kent Road Village is comprised of the original group of eleven two-story brick, Federal Housing Administration-financed garden apartment buildings built in 1942-1943 on a flat, wedge-shaped, 3.4-acre property in Richmond's near West End. Recently rehabilitated, the complex also includes two recently built town house buildings. These new townhouse buildings are of similar size, scale, and materials as the historic buildings, and are differentiated from the historic buildings through the simplification of architectural details. New town house buildings have a simpler fenestration pattern (all windows are double-hung, one-over-one windows of the same size), and different entry door designs. The eleven historic buildings exhibit a high degree of architectural integrity, and embody the dominance of the Colonial Revival style in Richmond. Similar to the Chamberlayne Gardens apartment complex designed in 1945-1946, the Kent Road Village Apartments are, "among the earliest of the FHA-sponsored housing constructed in Richmond and are an excellent example of the FHA's emphasis between the 1930s and the 1950s on the garden apartment design that would provide comfortable accommodations for middle-class residents in an urban setting within a carefully landscaped setting."<sup>1</sup> The Kent Road Village Apartments were designed by prominent Richmond architect E. Tucker Carlton for the owner, Kent Road Corporation, and constructed by local building and development firm, Muhleman & Kayhoe, Inc.

### Detailed Description

The Kent Road Village property is bounded on the northwest by Kent Road, on the northeast by an alley running between Kent Road and North Hamilton Street, on the southeast by North Hamilton Street, and on the southwest by the parking lot of the adjoining commercial property at 900 North Hamilton Street. The complex is distinguished by mature plantings of hardwoods and indigenous shrubs, high-quality materials applied to a Colonial Revival idiom, and a high degree of architectural integrity. The buildings are similarly sited with parallel north-south axes. Narrow concrete sidewalks traverse the property from Kent Road to North Hamilton Street. Bordering the property on the north and west are single family houses, most of which were built in the late 1930s and early 1940s. To the east is a continuous row of similarly scaled apartment buildings (Georgetown Apartments) dating to 1960, and on the south is a small-scale office development built in 1962.

All eleven of Kent Road Village's original two-story, red brick, Colonial Revival style apartment buildings have the same rectangular footprint, with an enclosed porch with brick stoop centered on the two long elevations (north-south), both of which are primary facades. All the buildings and their porches have continuous brick foundations and red brick walls laid up in six-course American bond. The roofs are Buckingham slate, and each building has two symmetrical interior brick (running bond) chimneys with corbelled caps. All eleven original apartment buildings are considered contributing resources to the property.

The complex of buildings includes three different exterior treatments—designated on the original drawings as "A," "B," and "C"—which are variations on the Colonial Revival theme. All share the same pattern of window

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and door openings, wood double-hung windows, and eight-paneled wood entry doors. Original windows and entries remain in place. Most windows have six-over-six sash, while the smaller kitchen and bathroom windows add variety and pattern to the elevations.

The four "A" and four "C" buildings are unpainted red brick with hipped roofs penetrated by triangular louvered vents. The enclosed porches of the "A" buildings have pedimented gable roofs. The three "B" buildings have gable roofs and whitewashed brick walls with quoins. Windows in the "B" buildings have jack arch lintels, and entries are topped with broken pediments. Masonry openings in the "C" buildings are distinguished by Colonial Revival hoods. A patterned circular window is centered over the "C" building entries, the enclosed porches of which originally were topped with wood balustrades. The loss of these balustrades is the only significant change to the buildings' exteriors.

While the buildings have different exterior architectural treatments, the original floor plans and interior finishes of the buildings were identical. Each of the buildings contained eight one-bedroom apartments (four per floor), their entries flanking a wide center stair. The centered entries opened into an identical vestibule on the north and south fronts of the building. The vestibules were lit by fixed six-light windows flanking the entry. Each apartment had a living room, a short corridor, kitchen, bedroom, and bath with identical two-panel wood doors, window and door casings, and baseboard moldings. Plaster walls and oak floors were the standard finishes for living and bedrooms. The bathroom walls were simple black and white ceramic tile.

Until the rehabilitation of the Kent Road Village apartments in 2010, the only significant changes to the apartment interiors included the replacement of kitchen fixtures and cabinets, and the addition of mechanical closets. The recent rehabilitation has allowed for the continued use of the buildings as residential apartments without loss of historic character or significant features. An original, non-contributing brick shed, located near the far north end of the site near the alley, was removed. In addition, two new town house buildings were built on the site. These new town house buildings are of similar size, scale, and materials as the historic buildings, while differentiation was achieved through the simplification of architectural details. The two new town house buildings, constructed in 2010, are considered noncontributing, because they were constructed outside the period of significance. A new parking area was also added off the alley at the north end of the complex.

The plans for seven of the eleven existing buildings have remained virtually unchanged, the most significant alterations consisting of modifications to closets and the creation of new openings in the partitions between kitchens and living rooms. Four of the historic buildings were converted to two-bedroom apartment units during the recent tax credit rehabilitation of the complex. This conversion involved simple alterations to closets and apartment entries, and was achieved through one of two methods. In the first method, a small section of the wall near the HVAC closet was removed, creating an opening to a second bedroom (which was previously in another apartment). A second approach involved the conversion of a living room to a bedroom, and connection to the adjacent apartment through closet walls. This second method also required that one of the two apartment entry doors be fixed in place (one apartment entry on each floor was fixed in place). The four historic buildings that were modified each contain six apartments (four, two-bedroom apartments and two, one-bedroom

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apartments). The remaining seven historic buildings retain their exact original configuration and contain eight, one-bedroom apartments. All the building's original exterior doors were preserved. All interior apartment entry doors were also retained in place, but a total of eight apartment entry doors were fixed in a closed position.

Throughout the complex, significant fabric of all eleven original buildings has been preserved, including the masonry walls historic facades, roofs, historic casings, and details, while existing wood stairs, doors, and windows have been retained in place. Astoundingly, with the exception of the installation of new ceramic tile floors in kitchens and bathrooms, all the buildings' historic interior finishes remain unchanged. New mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems have been installed to comply with code requirements. HVAC equipment was installed in existing closets and the attic, where it has a minimal physical impact on historic spaces.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Summary

A surviving, intact example of a World War II-era garden apartment complex, the Kent Road Village Apartments are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion C (architecture) as a well-preserved example of a garden apartment complex in Richmond that embodies the principles espoused by the Federal Housing Administration. Until the 1920s, most multi-family housing in American cities consisted of narrow and deep buildings on confined urban lots, with little access to light or adjoining yards. By contrast, garden apartment developments were characterized by groups of two- or three-story buildings harmoniously arranged in a landscaped, suburban setting. The design of the buildings themselves, with central entrances and no lobbies or elevators, provided for ample light, ventilation, and pleasant views, while allowing ready access to the surrounding outdoor space.<sup>2</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt's Housing Act of 1934 established the Federal Housing Authority (FHA), which would play a major role in encouraging the proliferation of the garden apartment developments throughout the country. Kent Road Village is also locally significant under Criterion A (Social History and Community Planning and Development) as one of the earliest examples of a Federal Housing Administration-financed multi-family housing project in Richmond, a property type detailed in Bryan C. Green's National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form: "Federal Housing Administration-Insured Garden Apartments in Richmond, Virginia, 1942-1950" (2006). Dr. Green notes: "The FHA promoted the use of the garden apartment design from the 1930s through the 1950s as a model for housing the rapidly-expanding numbers of middle- and lower-middle class Americans who were moving to cities for jobs, but were not able to purchase their own homes there."<sup>3</sup> In Richmond, Kent Road Village is an intact example of a garden apartment complex built with FHA financing during World War II. The initial planning and construction of Kent Road Village was extraordinarily well documented as the result of a vigorous and well-publicized effort by a citizens' group to block its construction in their upper-middle-class, near West End neighborhood.

Recognizing the pressing need for affordable rental housing, the FHA financed construction loans to developers who built multi-family housing units. The agency took an active role in overseeing these projects, controlling the density of new apartments and their integration into the surrounding neighborhood, ensuring that rents were in line with existing local rates, and even specifying floor plans and room sizes. This unprecedented government intervention in the design and construction of multi-family housing happened to coincide with the growing popularity of the garden apartment model, which sought to balance the need for reasonably priced housing with the desire to improve living conditions for renters. The result was a surge in garden apartment developments across the country. Kent Road Village is a well-preserved example of the garden apartment type. Constructed in 1942-1943, the complex fits into this planning trend that impacted communities across the nation. When completed in the spring of 1943, the 88 apartment units provided urgently needed accommodations for Richmond residents facing an acute wartime housing shortage. Having recently undergone a careful rehabilitation, the historic apartments and the associated landscape retain a high degree of architectural integrity. The property's period of significance is 1942-1943, encompassing the months during which the opposition campaign was mounted through the completion and initial occupation of the apartments.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance**

**Eugene Tucker Carlton (1900-1974)**

Kent Road Village was designed by E. Tucker Carlton, a prolific Richmond-based architect and four-term member of the Virginia House of Delegates (1956-1964) whose practice flourished from the 1940s through the 1960s. A native of Roanoke, he graduated from the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) in 1924 with a degree in electrical engineering. Early in his career he worked as an architectural draftsman and as a general contractor and building estimator. Registered as an architect in 1939, he practiced in Richmond until his retirement in 1968.<sup>4</sup>

Carlton's architectural work focused on institutional projects, but he also designed a wide variety of other building types, including residential, commercial, religious, educational, and recreational facilities. A veteran himself, having served in the U.S. Navy in both world wars, he designed the 618 units of "River Village," the Capehart program military family housing built at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, in the late 1950s.<sup>5</sup>

The Kent Road Village project was one of Carlton's early commissions. He would go on to design a number of other Richmond apartment complexes, including:

- ♦ Willa Apartments: 4 buildings, 1946, 3300-3304 W. Grace St.
- ♦ Hammond Court Apartments: 11 buildings, 1947, 2900 Chamberlayne Ave.
- ♦ Kensington Place: 19 buildings, 1948, Kensington Ave. and Thompson St.
- ♦ Keswick Gardens: 18 buildings, 1948, Monument Ave. and Wythe Ave.
- ♦ Westminster Apartments: 4 buildings, 1948, 4300 Block of Chamberlayne Ave
- ♦ Old Colony Apartments: 1948, 3313-3327 Cutshaw Ave.
- ♦ Whitcomb Court: 1957, 2300 Block of Carmine St.<sup>6</sup>

Of these, the Willa Apartments, Hammond Court Apartments, Kensington Place, Keswick Gardens, and Westminster Apartments (5 of the 7 complexes) received FHA financing.

Kent Road Village demonstrated Carlton's sure grasp of the Colonial Revival style, the popularity of which was grounded in Richmonders' fascination with the city's early history and John D. Rockefeller's extensively publicized "restoration" of Colonial Williamsburg which began in the late 1920s. In contrast, Carlton's later projects were increasingly spare in ornament and articulation.

**Muhleman & Kayhoe, Inc.**

Kent Road Village was built by Muhleman & Kayhoe, Inc., a well-known Richmond firm that developed neighborhoods in the western suburbs of the city from 1914 through the late 1940s. The company was founded by A. Kenton Muhleman and Matthias E. Kayhoe, real estate developers, architects, and contractors who often provided all these services on the same project. Although they concentrated primarily on residential

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construction, later in their careers they also designed and erected commercial buildings in a modern idiom. The many homes they built encompassed a variety of popular styles, including Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, Craftsman, and Mediterranean. They were among the prominent firms that helped to develop the West of the Boulevard Historic District, Laburnum Park Historic District, and Stonewall Court in Richmond. They also built in Petersburg's Westover Park, and the Chandler Court and Pollard Park Historic District in Williamsburg.<sup>7</sup>

While it was not their specialty, Muhleman & Kayhoe built a number of apartment buildings in Richmond between 1917 and 1948, most of which were typical two- and three-story flats in the West of the Boulevard Historic District. Kent Road Village appears to have been their first experience with the relatively new garden apartment form. The only other similar project Muhleman & Kayhoe undertook was the Hanover Arms Apartments at 3513-3585 Hanover Avenue, also designed by E. Tucker Carlton, which received FHA financing and was completed in 1948.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Garden Apartments and the Federal Housing Authority**

Influenced by the writings of English social theorist Sir Ebenezer Howard, the "Garden City movement" began to shape the ideas of architects and urban planners around the turn of the twentieth century. Howard championed the idea that the pervasive ills of modern life, including poverty, overcrowding, and disease, could be addressed by encouraging city residents to move out of congested urban areas into outlying "garden cities," which offered better housing and access to clean and healthful open spaces. By the time of the First World War, the Garden City ideal had taken practical form in England and Germany; and soon it had spread to the United States, as well.<sup>9</sup>

Until the 1920s, most multi-family housing in American cities consisted of narrow and deep buildings on confined urban lots, with little access to light or adjoining yards. One of the chief contributions of the Garden City movement in this country was to encourage the development of a completely new form of rental housing: the garden apartment. Garden apartment developments were characterized by groups of two- or three-story buildings harmoniously arranged in a landscaped, suburban setting. The design of the buildings themselves, with central entrances and no lobbies or elevators, provided for ample light, ventilation, and pleasant views, while allowing ready access to the surrounding outdoor space.<sup>10</sup>

A number of factors influenced the growth of American garden apartment housing in the 1930s. During this era, the majority of Americans still rented rather than owned their own homes, making multi-family housing an attractive option for builders. Increasing suburban development surrounding major cities allowed access to the more spacious building lots required for garden apartments. Most important, however, was Franklin D. Roosevelt's Housing Act of 1934. This sweeping New Deal legislation established the Federal Housing Authority (FHA), which would play a major role in encouraging the proliferation of the garden apartment developments throughout the country. After the stock market crash of 1929, the resulting flood of home foreclosures virtually crippled the U.S. housing market. Through the FHA, the Federal government became the guarantor for mortgages issued by banks and savings-and-loan institutions. By extending the length of

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mortgage loans, and reducing the size of down payments and monthly mortgage payments, the FHA had a tremendous influence in making homeownership more widely accessible than ever before to American families.<sup>11</sup>

Recognizing the pressing need for affordable rental housing, the FHA also financed construction loans to developers who built multi-family housing units. The agency took an active role in overseeing these projects, controlling the density of new apartments and their integration into the surrounding neighborhood, ensuring that rents were in line with existing local rates, and even specifying floor plans and room sizes. This unprecedented government intervention in the design and construction of multi-family housing happened to coincide with the growing popularity of the garden apartment model, which sought to balance the need for reasonably priced housing with the desire to improve living conditions for renters. The result was a surge in garden apartment developments across the country. Of the 240 FHA-financed apartment complexes built in the United States between 1934 and 1940, 200 were garden apartments.<sup>12</sup>

The earliest garden apartment complexes in Virginia were concentrated in the suburban Washington, D.C. area, the best known example being the massive Colonial Village complex in Arlington, begun in 1935. As described by Bryan Clark Green in the National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Federal Housing Administration-Insured Garden Apartments in Richmond, Virginia, 1942-1950," the garden apartment model was never adopted on a large scale in Richmond. Similarly, Green has documented only six apartment buildings or complexes built with FHA funding in Richmond prior to 1950. These included the Brookfield Gardens Apartments (1945; since demolished), Wicker Apartments (1945), Chamberlayne Gardens Apartments (1946), Willa Apartments (1947), Hanover Arms Apartments (1948), and Old-Colony Apartments (1948). Notably, two of these (Hanover Arms and Old-Colony) were designed by architect E. Tucker Carlton. And of the six, only three (Chamberlayne Gardens, Wicker, and Hanover Arms) could be classified as garden apartments. Green notes that "The universe of potentially-eligible FHA-funded post-WWII apartments is a very small one."<sup>13</sup> Previous owners of the Kent Road Village had planned to demolish the complex. Despite the fact that Kent Road Village meets the criteria for inclusion in Green's MPD for Federal Housing Administration-Insured Garden Apartments in Richmond, Virginia, the complex was omitted because demolition seemed imminent. Research completed during the National Register process revealed information that could be used to update the MPD document and include the Kent Road Village as part of Richmond's community planning history.

### **The "Troubled Career" of Kent Road Village**

What began as a seemingly routine plan by a Richmond developer to build a modest garden apartment complex in the city's near West End sparked a surprisingly vehement protest by the neighborhood's well-heeled residents, grabbing local headlines in the summer of 1942.

The story began in March of that year when the newly formed Kent Road Corporation applied to the Richmond office of the War Production Board for priority to build new apartments. The Board approved the request the following month, allowing the company to use rationed building materials under the prevailing rule that defense

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workers be given housing preference for 30 days after the apartments became available.<sup>14</sup> In the first week of August, Kent Road Corporation, represented by its president, realtor and developer Franklin A. Trice, and C.L. Massei (secretary and treasurer), finalized the purchase of two adjoining parcels of vacant land between North Franklin Street and Kent Road. The bulk of the proposed development site, including 2.905 acres, came from the estate of physician and tobacco magnate, Dr. Richard A. Patterson, while the northern portion (just over one half-acre), formerly had belonged to prominent Richmond businessman, W.S. Forbes.<sup>15</sup>

The ink was barely dry on the deeds before the City's Bureau of Building Inspection stamped "approved" on the building permit. According to the permit application, Kent Road Corporation proposed to have veteran local contracting firm Muhleman & Kayhoe, Inc., build eleven two-story brick apartment buildings on the property. The accompanying plans by Richmond architect E. Tucker Carlton indicated that they would be of "modern Colonial" design. Relatively few changes to the initial plans would be made as construction proceeded, although the originally specified asphalt roofs were upgraded to slate, an alteration duly noted on the permit and drawings. The total cost of the project was estimated at \$247,500.<sup>16</sup>

Yet, as the necessary elements of the new development appeared to be falling into place, a well-coordinated neighborhood protest erupted. The first hint of public hostility to Kent Road Village came on 3 August 1942, when the *Richmond News Leader* broke the story that: "West Enders Will Oppose FHA Project." According to the newspaper, several hundred neighborhood residents had signed petitions opposing the project, while at least three hundred more had packed meetings at three separate locations to voice their concerns. Initial reports indicated that they were convinced that this "low-cost, FHA financed housing project" would "damage nearby property values."<sup>17</sup>

The manner in which the early resistance was framed is significant in terms of the history of this property type in Richmond. Richmonders evidently were unfamiliar with the workings of this New Deal program, and it is clear from their characterization of the project that they assumed FHA involvement implied a shoddy development that would inevitably introduce less desirable (lower income) residents into their well-manicured, upper-middle-class, suburban neighborhood.

Days later, a defensive Trice fired back, claiming that the neighborhood group was "badly misinformed." There was nothing "low cost" about the nearly \$250,000 project, he asserted, and it would "certainly be no eye-sore." Rather, he stressed the aesthetic qualities of Carlton's design. The buildings would be sited at least 50 feet from one another, and the grounds "beautifully landscaped." "We are counting on Colonial architecture," he offered, "and each unit will have identical front and rear entrances so there won't be one ugly spot no matter where you look at them." Not only would they serve to "beautify the West End," but they would also provide "urgently needed housing accommodations" for 88 families at an affordable cost of \$45 per month.<sup>18</sup>

Carlton's colonial facades notwithstanding, the neighbors remained unconvinced. They ratcheted up their protests in the following weeks, making their case to city officials in one particularly animated public hearing punctuated by "partisan applause and boos." The group's appointed leader, local resident and attorney Norman

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L. Flippen (soon to be partner in the prestigious law firm of Hunton & Williams) introduced Morton G. Thalhimer as an “expert witness.” A seasoned veteran of the local real estate business, Thalhimer lent considerable weight to the opposition. To begin with, he explained, these were not apartments, but rather “flats.” In his opinion, construction of this complex “in a purely A-1 residential neighborhood would greatly depreciate the value of the residential property in that vicinity.” He concluded by adding that he was aware of no pressing housing shortage in Richmond. Another resident, Judge Lester Hooker of the State Corporation Commission, also objected to the “unsightly flats,” proposing that there were “plenty of other places” for the development. The tone of the meeting became increasingly shrill as a Mrs. D.D. Wells declared the apartments to be a “menace” to the neighborhood which would drive down property values by as much as half. Trice responded that the whole nature of the project had been misrepresented, and pointed out that there were already existing rental properties in the area. He also countered his opponents’ claim that the property should instead be used as a park. The land had already been zoned for apartments, he noted, and the City had never considered it for a recreational space. Besides, construction of a park would be costly and preclude the potential tax revenue to the City.<sup>19</sup>

The critics suffered a set-back when the City Council’s Finance Committee effectively killed their initial resolution to block the project. Yet, problems continued to mount for the Kent Road Village developers. With construction barely underway, the Richmond Building Trades Council picketed the job site in late August of 1942, claiming that Muhleman & Kayhoe was employing non-union labor.<sup>20</sup> And to make matters worse, the citizens group, now formally organized under the leadership of Dr. Sidney S. Negus, a well-known biochemist and Medical College of Virginia faculty member, continued to press their opposition in increasingly legalistic terms. Their latest tactic was to claim that the development violated the City’s “Hankins Plan” of 1916, adopted after the city’s 1914 annexation of this area, which had called for Franklin Street and Park Avenue to be extended east to the Beltline Railroad tracks. The location of Kent Road Village, they contended, would effectively prevent this 25-year-old street plan from being implemented. And in case they could not persuade City Hall, they took their argument all the way to Washington, informing FHA officials that they had reason to believe that the developers were planning to subdivide the property into separate mortgages for sale to the residents, a clear violation of the agency’s financing policy.<sup>21</sup>

By mid-September of 1942, the neighborhood association finally lost its bid to halt construction of the Kent Road Village apartments when their last-ditch effort to have the city deny gas, water, and sewer connections was overruled.<sup>22</sup> By now, the union pickets had also disappeared, and for the next three months construction work proceeded in earnest. By early December, all eleven apartment buildings were under roof. Trice reported that they would be completed by March 1943 at the latest. He anticipated no difficulty in leasing the units, as he was already receiving a “flood of inquiries,” and noted that priority was being given to defense workers, as required by the War Production Board. Despite the headaches the local protest had caused him, Trice refused to comment on the fight, except to say that he only hoped the neighbors could now see that the complex was “attractively designed, well-planned, and expensively constructed.” The final construction cost came in higher than expected at around \$300,000, no doubt due to inflated wartime labor and material costs.

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When completed, the *Richmond News Leader* announced, Kent Road Village would be one of the “four largest apartment house groups” in the city.<sup>23</sup>

Curious neighbors peering over their fences to see who was moving into the Kent Road Village apartments in the spring of 1943 might have been pleasantly surprised that the new residents were hardly the undesirables predicted in the previous summer’s protest. A survey of the city directory listings between 1944 and 1950 indicates that, aside from a handful of students and widows, the occupants were gainfully employed, with many holding respectable white collar positions. Stephen Capelli, who rented Apartment 2 at 920 Hamilton Street in 1944, was an assistant examiner with the U.S. Patent Office. In the next building, Richard Smith worked as an automobile service manager, Denny C. White was a lawyer, and Kenneth M. Bass was employed by DuPont as a chemist. At 905 Kent Road, Apartment 1 was occupied by Frank Judish, Assistant Superintendent of Trade and Industrial Education for the State Board of Education; physician Dr. Spotswood Robins lived at 915 Kent Road; and Oscar Sobol at 927 Kent Road was an engineer with the State Health Department. The apartments were also clearly within reach of those with lower paying jobs. Over the next several years, tenants included Army and Navy personnel, insurance agents, motel operators, railroad brakemen, salesmen, utility workers, and a window trimmer.<sup>24</sup>

Throughout this period, most “heads of household” listed in the city directory were men; yet, there were a few single or widowed female renters, as well. Some, like Mrs. William W. Moss, had “no occupation,” and may have been older, non-working widows. But many others held jobs: Mrs. Ethel C. Riley was a patent examiner; Mrs. Louise Calder worked as a clerk; and Helen T. Green was employed by Reynolds Metals as a stenographer.<sup>25</sup>

By nature, apartment dwellers tend to be more transient than homeowners, and no doubt this was true of Kent Road Village, as well. Still, a number of residents appear to have remained for at least two or three years at a stretch. Overall, the picture that emerges of the varied group who lived in this new and attractive apartment complex in its early years is clearly at odds with that imagined by the project’s opponents. For a variety of reasons, they may not have been in a position to buy a home in the “purely A-1 residential neighborhood” one street over. Yet most were hardworking and respectable Richmonders who no doubt felt fortunate to have found a pleasant and affordable place to call home.<sup>26</sup>

### **The Richmond Housing Market in World War II**

Compared with the northern Virginia suburbs, which experienced a tremendous construction boom to accommodate the vast number of war workers arriving in the Washington, D.C. area during World War II, Richmond’s wartime growth was relatively modest. As noted by Francis Earle Lutz in his landmark 1951 study, *Richmond in World War II*, “Richmond’s skyline did not change materially in the five years of war except for gaps here and there where old buildings were razed.”<sup>27</sup> In general, the scarcity of building materials and high labor costs hampered commercial and industrial construction. The same was true of the housing market, as well, which experienced a slump in the early months of the war to rival the worst years of the Great Depression. The number of bank loans dropped sharply in 1942, while the amount of new work and repairs

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authorized by the Bureau of Building Inspection declined by more than 100 percent. This downturn only worsened in 1943, with the number of building permits issued reaching their lowest level in eight years. Only in 1944, with increasing numbers of servicemen returning to Richmond, did new house construction begin to rebound. And, by late 1945, local builders were scrambling to meet the demand. Realty transactions mirrored this radical change: in 1941, they totaled \$12.8 million; by 1946, their value had rocketed to \$53.4 million.<sup>28</sup>

Built in 1942-1943, Kent Road Village was unusual in that it was one of the few large residential projects undertaken during the early war period, when Richmond's building industry was at a virtual standstill. Evidently, its construction was a rare enough event that it warranted a mention in Lutz's postwar history. "At this time," he recorded, "West End residents used every means at their command to prevent the erection of eleven eight-family apartment houses in the Patterson-Monument-Hamilton Street-New Kent Road [sic.] area. A citizens group was organized. Building Trades Unions picketed the project, but it was carried out eventually."<sup>29</sup>

The developers of Kent Road Village had to contend with angry neighbors, inflated construction costs, and labor unrest. Yet, if they were hoping to capitalize on a wartime housing shortage, their timing could not have been better. In November 1942, while the builders were still hard at work, the *Richmond News Leader* reported that rentable property in the city was "almost nonexistent." "Times are tough," complained George Snead of Allan, Snead & Whittet, a 30-year veteran of the local real estate business. "I have never seen as little for rent in Richmond as there is right now," he said. "Anything we get, we rent in a day or two. Not even the high-priced apartments and houses are on hand any more. There is just nothing." An agent with the rival firm of Brooks & Richardson confirmed that the rental market was "tighter than it ever has been or ever will be," and that the rare listings in the \$40- to \$55-per month range were "snapped up instantly."<sup>30</sup> Offered at \$46, it was no wonder that the developers received a "flood of inquiries" for the 88 soon-to-be-completed units. At the height of that summer's protest, Morton G. Thalhimer may have disputed Trice's claim that the new apartments would provide "urgently needed housing accommodations." In retrospect, however, it is clear that Kent Road Village did exactly that.

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**Nomination Photograph List**

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Richmond, VA

Photographer - Llewellyn Hensley

Photographs taken 12/2010

Files located in DHR Archives

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|------|---|
| 0001 | Kent Road Village, context view           |
| 0002 | Typical Building Types A and B            |
| 0003 | Typical Apartment Building Type A         |
| 0004 | Typical Building Type A entry and details |
| 0005 | Building Types B and A in context         |
| 0006 | Typical Building Type B entry             |
| 0007 | Typical Building Type B                   |
| 0008 | Building Type A                           |
| 0009 | Building Types C and A                    |
| 0010 | Typical Building Type C                   |
| 0011 | Typical Entry Door and Foyer              |
| 0012 | Typical Stair                             |
| 0013 | Typical Apartment Entry Door              |
| 0014 | Typical Apartment Interior                |
| 0015 | Typical Living Room                       |
| 0016 | Typical Kitchen                           |
| 0017 | Typical Bathroom                          |
| 0018 | Typical Bedroom                           |
| 0019 | 2010 Townhouse Building in context        |
| 0020 | 2010 Townhouse, front elevation           |

**Figure 1.** Site Plan, 2011.

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<sup>2</sup> Green, "FHA-Insured Garden Apartments in Richmond," p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Green, "Chamberlayne Gardens," p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> "Architect Dies; 4-Term Delegate." *Richmond News Leader* (26 December 1974), p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> "River Village." *A History of Family Housing at U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Belvoir, Virginia*.

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<sup>6</sup> *A Guide to the Richmond (Va.) Bureau of Permits and Inspections, Building permit architectural blueprints and specifications, 1907-1949* (Richmond: Library of Virginia).

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<sup>10</sup> Green, "FHA-Insured Garden Apartments in Richmond," p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Green, "FHA-Insured Garden Apartments in Richmond," p. 3-4.

<sup>12</sup> Green, "FHA-Insured Garden Apartments in Richmond," p. 4-5.

<sup>13</sup> Green, "FHA-Insured Garden Apartments in Richmond," p. 5-7.

<sup>14</sup> "Occupancy Expected in Jan. of Kent Road Village Unit," *Richmond News Leader* (9 December 1942), p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> City of Richmond Chancery Court Deed Book 434A, pp. 289, 292.

<sup>16</sup> City of Richmond, Bureau of Permits and Inspections, Permit No. 26756, Library of Virginia. For the description of the apartments as "modern Colonial," see *RNL* (9 December 1942), p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> "West Enders Will Oppose FHA Project," *Richmond News Leader* (3 August 1942), p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> "11 Apartment Houses Slated at \$250,000," *Richmond News Leader* (8 August 1942), p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> "Council Group Sidetracks Housing Project Resolution," *Richmond Times-Dispatch* (20 August 1942), p. 10; *Hunton & Williams Centennial Partner Directory* (Richmond, 2002), p. 89.

<sup>20</sup> "Building Trades Council Places Cordon of Pickets at Kent Road Housing Project," *Richmond News Leader* (26 August 1942), pp. 1-2.

<sup>21</sup> "Citizens Group Organizes to Fight Housing Project," *Richmond Times-Dispatch* (31 August 1942), pp. 1, 6; "Sidney S. Negus Dies, Renowned as Biochemist," *Washington Post* (19 May 1963), p. B9.

<sup>22</sup> "Citizens Lose Permit Fight on Kent Road," *Richmond News Leader* (15 September 1942), pp. 3, 15.

<sup>23</sup> "Occupancy Expected," *RNL* (9 December 1942), p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> Richmond, Virginia, City Directories, 1944, 1946, 1947, 1948-49, 1950. Richmond: Library of Virginia.

<sup>25</sup> *Hill's Richmond, Virginia, City Directory, 1944*, Vol. LXXX (Richmond: Hill Directory Co. Inc., 1944), pp. 77, 92; *Hill's Richmond, Virginia, City Directory, 1946*, Vol. LXXXI (Richmond: Hill Directory Co. Inc., 1946), pp. 77, 92.

<sup>26</sup> *Hills Directory 1944*, pp. 77, 92; *Hills Directory 1946*, pp. 77, 92; *Hill's Richmond, Virginia, City Directory, 1947*, Vol. LXXXII (Richmond: Hill Directory Co. Inc., 1947), pp. 80, 96; *Hill's Richmond, Virginia, City Directory, 1948-1949*, Vol. LXXXIII (Richmond: Hill Directory Co. Inc., 1948), pp. 62, 74; *Hill's Richmond, Virginia, City Directory, 1950*, Vol. LXXXIV (Richmond: Hill Directory Co. Inc., 1950), pp. 69, 82.

<sup>27</sup> Francis Earl Lutz, *Richmond in World War II* (Richmond: The Dietz Press, Inc., 1951), p. 59.

<sup>28</sup> Lutz, *Richmond in World War II*, pp. 61, 63.

<sup>29</sup> Lutz, *Richmond in World War II*, p. 124.

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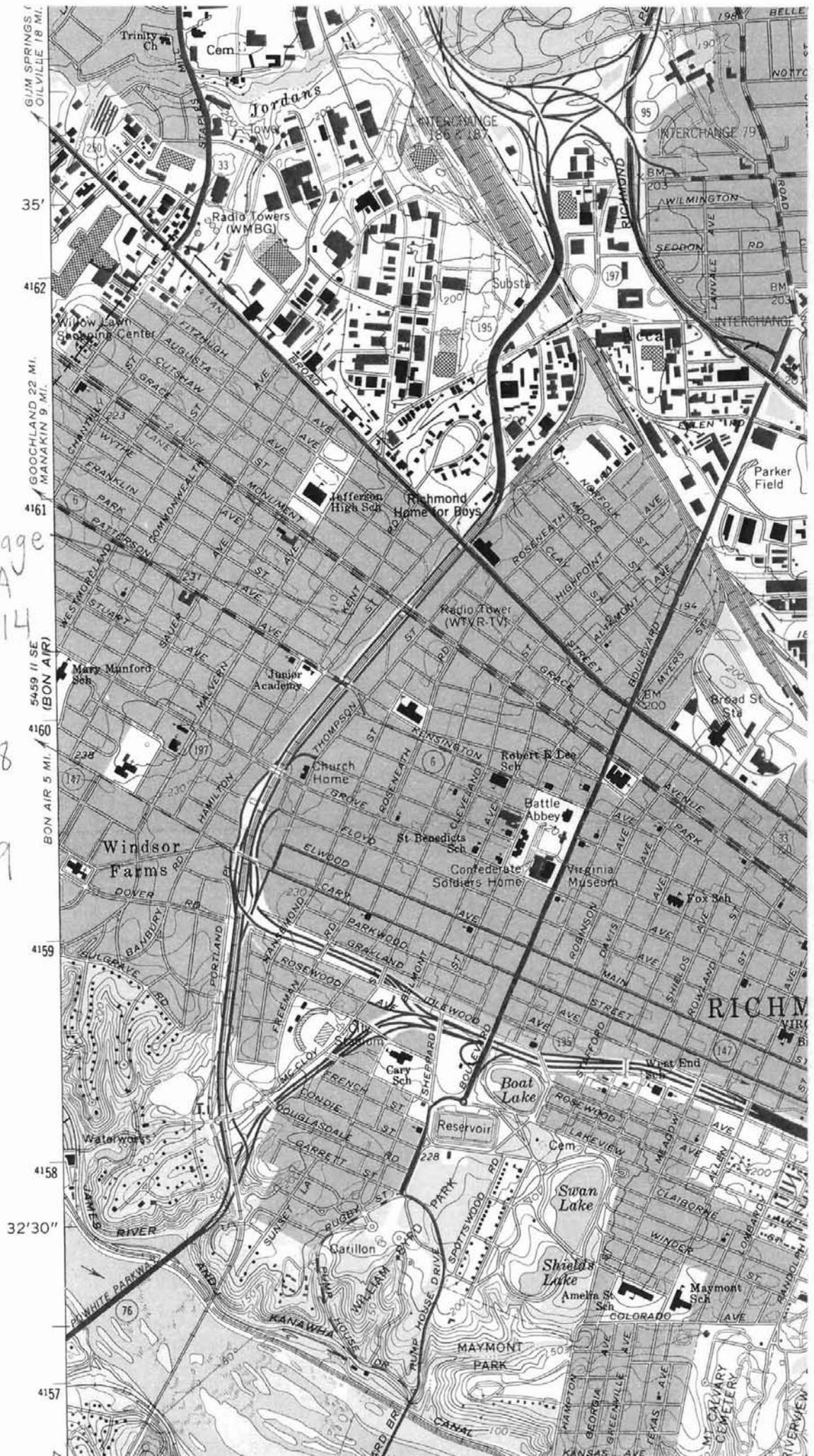
Richmond, Virginia

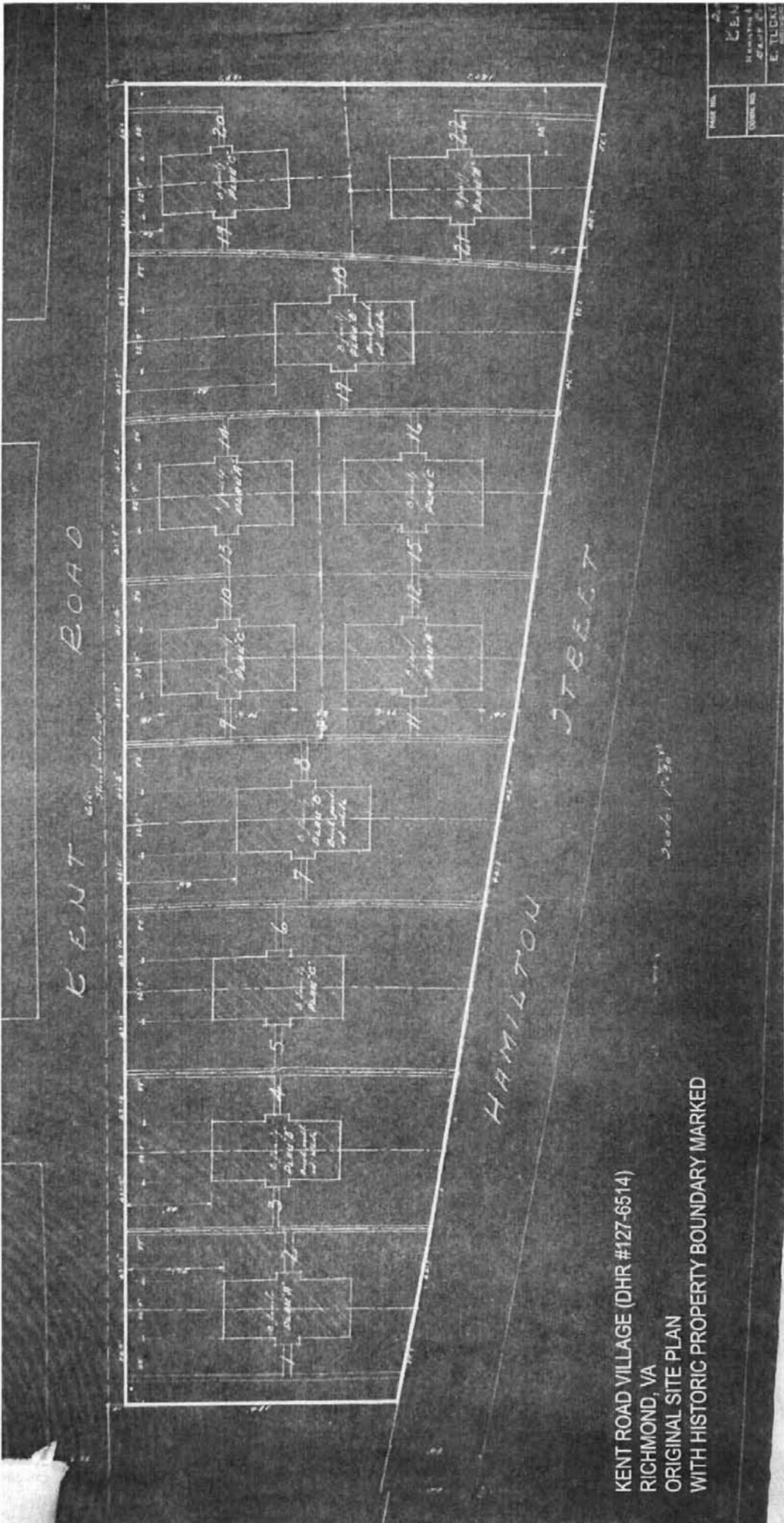
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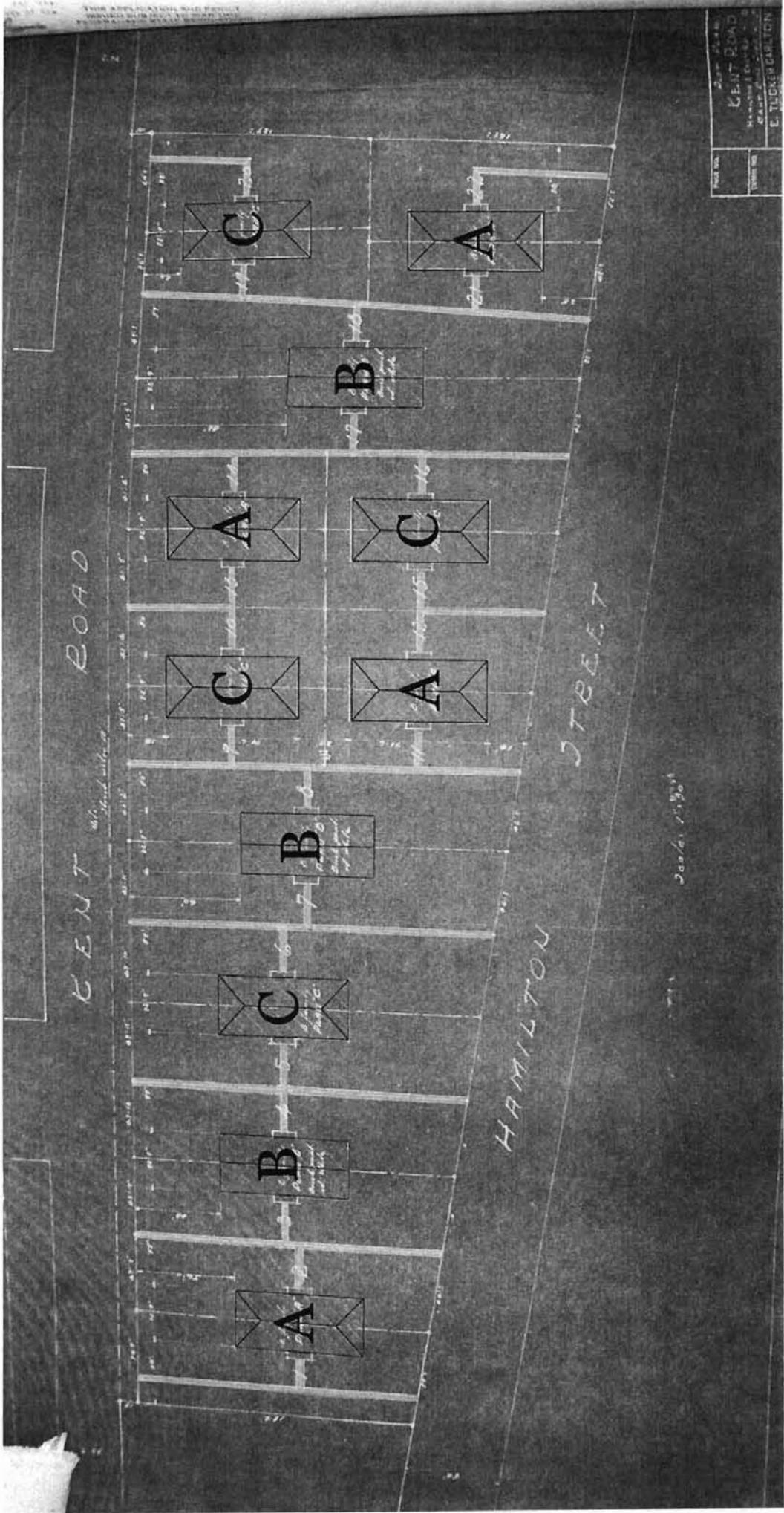
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Richmond, VA  
Quad.  
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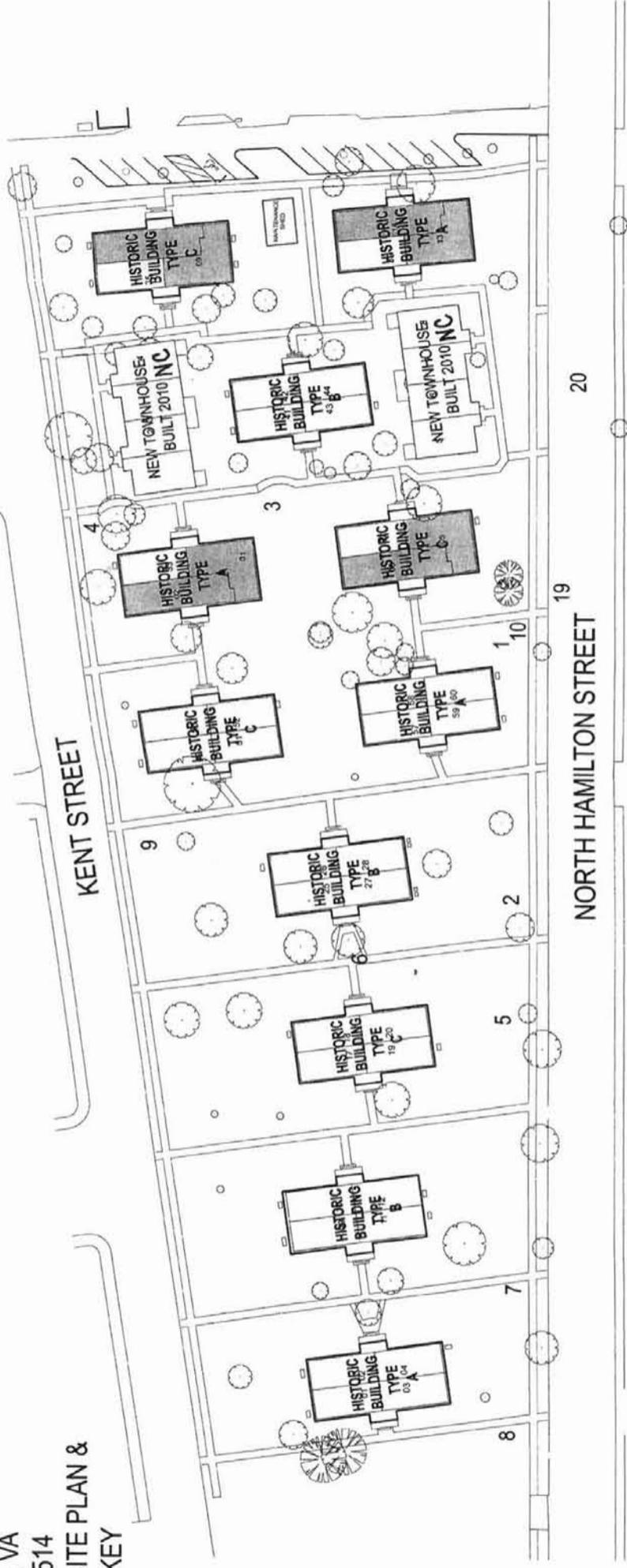
KENT ROAD VILLAGE (DHR #127-6514)  
 RICHMOND, VA  
 ORIGINAL SITE PLAN  
 WITH HISTORIC PROPERTY BOUNDARY MARKED

Additional Documentation



Kent Rd. Village  
 Richmond, VA  
 DTR #127-6514  
 Additional Documentation

KENT ROAD VILLAGE  
 RICHMOND, VA  
 DHR #127-6514  
 CURRENT SITE PLAN &  
 NR PHOTO KEY



**SITE PLAN**

KENT ROAD APARTMENTS  
 RICHMOND, VA

Project #: 09-46  
 Date: 2/15/11

**PROPOSED SITE PLAN**  
 CURRENT

333 N. Arthur Street  
 Richmond, VA 23202  
 1-804-644-4700

walterPARKS  
 ARCHITECT