


<b>FROM</b>	NAME & TITLE	THOMAS J. STOSUR, DIRECTOR <i>Whole for T.J.S.</i>	CITY of BALTIMORE <b>MEMO</b>	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING 417 EAST FAYETTE STREET, 8 <sup>TH</sup> FLOOR		
	SUBJECT	CITY COUNCIL BILL #11-0773 / Ashburton Historic District		

**TO**

DATE:

The Honorable President and  
Members of the City Council  
City Hall, Room 400  
100 North Holliday Street

October 7, 2011

At its regular meeting of October 6, 2011, the Planning Commission considered City Council Bill #11-0773, for the purpose of designating the area located within certain boundaries as the Ashburton Historic District.

In its consideration of this Bill, the Planning Commission reviewed the attached agenda, summary and previous staff report which recommended approval of City Council Bill #11-0773; nine members being present (nine in favor).

**RESOLVED**, That the Planning Commission concurs with the recommendation of its departmental staff, and recommends that City Council Bill #11-0773 be passed by the City Council.

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Wolde Ararsa, Division Chief, Land Use and Urban Design Division at 410-396-4488.

TJS/WA

Attachment

cc: Ms. Kaliopé Parthemos, Deputy Mayor  
Mr. Peter O'Malley, Chief of Staff  
Ms. Angela Gibson, Mayor's Office  
The Honorable Bill Henry, Council Rep. to Planning Commission  
Mr. David Tanner, BMZA  
Mr. Geoffrey Veale, Zoning Administration  
Ms. Nikol Nabors-Jackson, DHCD  
Ms. Elena DiPietro, Law Dept.  
Ms. Karen Randle, Council Services  
Ms. Kathleen Kotarba, CHAP Executive Director  
Mr. Donald Kann, CHAP Chairperson



*Stephanie Rawlings-Blake*  
Mayor

## PLANNING COMMISSION

*Wilbur E. "Bill" Cunningham, Chairman*

### STAFF REPORT



*Thomas J. Stosur*  
Director

**March 3, 2011**

**REQUEST:** Local Historic District Designation/ Ashburton Community

**RECOMMENDATION:** Approval

**STAFF:** Robert Quilter

**PETITIONER:** Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation (CHAP)

**OWNER:** Multiple Property Owners

#### **SITE/GENERAL AREA**

**Site Conditions:** The potential local historic district is bounded by Liberty Heights Avenue on the south, Callaway Avenue on the west, Belle/Dolfield and Sequoia Avenues on the north and the Western Maryland Railway ROW on the east (please see map). The zoning is primarily R-1 and R-3 with some areas of R-4, 5 and 6 along the edges of the community. There is a small area of B-1 zoning at the southeastern tip of the district.

#### **General Area:**

The proposed Ashburton Local Historic District sits in the northwestern section of Baltimore City. It is separated from the grounds of the Ashburton Reservoir by Liberty Heights Avenue, one of the early turnpike roads from Baltimore to the northwest farming areas of Central Maryland. The district comprises some 970 properties, most of which are single family detached houses built after World War I. There are rowhouses located on the south side of Sequoia Avenue and the east side of Wabash Avenue. Duplex housing is located along the south side of Dolfield Avenue. Additionally, there is an early garden apartment complex, four churches and a small commercial strip along Liberty Heights Avenue and the railway. Regular setbacks, building heights and rear parking with detached and attached garages present a uniform rhythm to the community. Similar development exists to the north, west and south but to the east, across the railway is generally commercial and industrial.

#### **HISTORY**

- On April 21, 2005 the Planning Commission adopted the Greater Northwest Community Coalition Small Area Plan

- On January 11, 2011 the Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation (CHAP) voted to approve Ashburton as a Baltimore City Local Historic District.

### **CONFORMITY TO PLANS**

The historic district designation conforms to the Baltimore City Comprehensive Master Plan's Live Section/Goal 2/Objective 4 - Protect and Enhance the Preservation of Baltimore's Historic Buildings and Neighborhoods. The designation is also in conformance with the Greater Northwest Community Coalition Small Area Plan.

### **ANALYSIS**

The local historic district designation is a three-step process. The first step is CHAP approval. The Planning Commission hearing on historic district designation for Ashburton is the second step in the historic district designation process. After the Planning Commission renders a decision on the designation, its recommendation will then go to the City Council for introduction by the Administration. The third and final step is passage of legislation by the Mayor and City Council designating Ashburton as a Baltimore City Local Historic District.

The Ashburton community is an early 20<sup>th</sup> century subdivision that was built on land formerly part of the John Gittings estate. In 1908, the City bought a large tract of that estate to construct the Ashburton Reservoir and Park (which later was renamed Hanlon Park in 1918). This tract was located south of Liberty Heights Avenue. Soon thereafter, in 1916, developer George R. Morris purchased the 120 acre portion of the Gittings estate that was to become Ashburton. He began to develop the community in 1920. In 1924 the Baltimore Sun reported that "Since 1921, 275 lots have been purchased and 160 homes have been erected. In 1926 the Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church South hired Alfred Leach to design and construct a church and school building at the northwest corner of Liberty Heights and Wabash Avenues. By the 1930's about two thirds of Ashburton had been built and by the 1950's fewer than ten unimproved lots remained.

During this time, the community's demographics were changing. By post World War II influential Jews lived in the neighborhood. In 1956, an African American high school principal moved into the community, becoming the first resident of his race. By 1959 Ashburton gained national attention for its efforts to create an integrated neighborhood, when the Saturday Evening Post published an article entitled *When A Negro Moves Next Door*. Written by resident Ellsworth E. Rosen, the article chronicled Ashburton's efforts to prevent blockbusting and welcome African Americans to the neighborhood. The residents started the Ashburton Area Association, which was considered the first association open to both races.

By 1969 Ashburton had become 90% African American and was becoming a community of many prominent politicians, physicians, educators, lawyers and judges. Although the earlier goals of the interracial Ashburton Area Association did not materialize into a longstanding interracial mixed neighborhood, the effect of this effort helped to contribute to the stable, proudly maintained community that it is today.

In the center of the neighborhood, *Ashburton*, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century country estate of the Gittings family, sits on an acre of land, lending its name and giving 120 acres of its original estate to build the neighborhood. Ashburton (the neighborhood) captures the architectural styles and suburban house types of the 1920s. English Tudor, Colonial Revival, Italian Renaissance Revival, French Revival and other stylistic details decorate these houses. The house types range from bungalows, four squares, cottages, ranchers, and Cape Cods. Character defining elements of the neighborhood range from Tudor-style trim details, stained-glass, highly ornament doors, several typical roof shapes, porch fronts and a variety of clapboard siding, brick, stucco, and cedar shake shingles. Regular set-backs, building heights, and rear parking with detached and attached garages create a uniform rhythm to the neighborhood. Ashburton represents a well cared for early 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban neighborhood.

The historic district designation grew out of a long history of historic preservation efforts in Ashburton that began in 1996. Since 2003, CHAP staff has engaged the neighborhood numerous times. The CHAP at its January 11, 2011 hearing recommended approval of Ashburton as a Baltimore City Local Historic District.

Ashburton meets CHAP criterion #1 for its association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Baltimore history. It also meets CHAP criterion #3 for historic district designation as a neighborhood that embodies the distinctive characteristics of an early twentieth century suburb.

The Ashburton Area Association was notified of this meeting.



**Thomas J. Stosur,  
Director**