

BUS TOUR

Docomomo Tour Day
Sunday, October 8, 2017



Montgomery
MODERN

Presented by the Historic Preservation Office of the Montgomery County Planning Department



Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

In partnership with AIA Potomac Valley, Docomomo-DC, Bender JCC of Greater Washington and Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington



Montgomery Modern is an initiative of the Montgomery County Planning Department Historic Preservation Office



Thanks to our hosts for making this event possible.

Information presented in this guidebook is based on the book *Montgomery Modern: Modern Architecture in Montgomery County, Maryland, 1930-1979*, written by Clare Lise Kelly (M-NCPPC, 2015).

INTRODUCTION

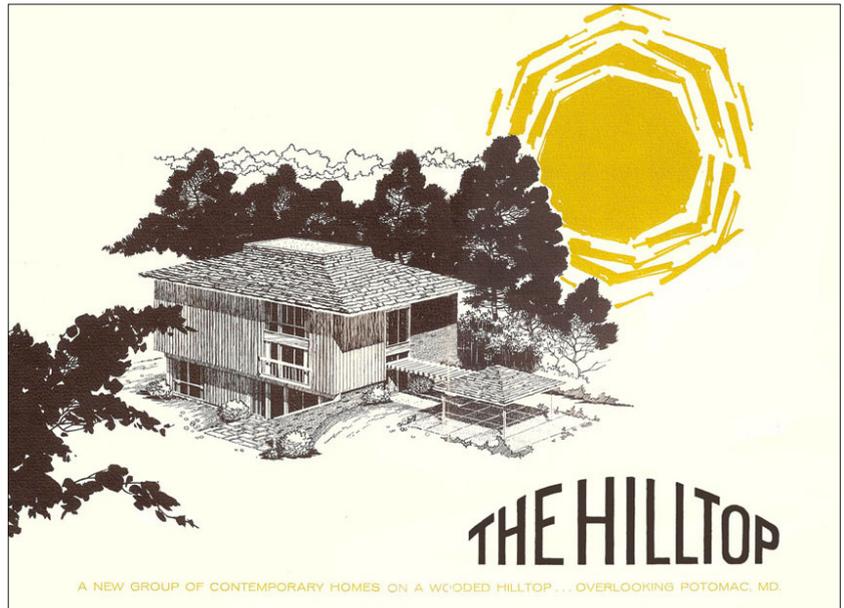
By Clare Lise Kelly, Historic Preservation Office of the Montgomery County Planning Department

Mid-20th-century modern architecture was a revolutionary, progressive approach to design that changed Montgomery County's landscape. For the first time, architects were not looking backward to a colonial past or classical antiquity, but seeking inspiration from new sources—American industry and the natural landscape.

Modern architecture represents an optimistic outlook of the hopes and dreams of a forward-looking citizenry coming out of the Great Depression and World War II. During this era, Montgomery County experienced tremendous change as one of the fastest growing regions in the nation.

Montgomery Modern is an initiative of the Montgomery County Planning Department, dedicated to exploring the recent past so that the public can understand the significant role of modern architecture in our cultural heritage.

This year's tour explores the work of Cohen, Haft & Associates. We will visit two single-family residential communities and an institutional life campus complex. The tour starts on page 4.



COHEN, HAFT & ASSOCIATES

was the most prolific architecture firm in suburban Maryland during the mid-20th century. The Silver Spring firm, founded in 1953, was known for clearly articulated, contemporary designs that were well integrated into a natural setting. Partner Jack Cohen was credited for having influenced more builders to try mid-century modern design than any other architect in the region. Award-winning projects include custom houses, garden apartments, residential subdivisions, synagogues and high-rise apartments in Montgomery County, Southwest Washington, DC, Reston, VA, Columbia, MD, and points in between.

By 1960, Cohen, Haft & Associates had built 1,000 tract houses, estimated to be nearly 10 percent of the total such dwellings for the Washington metropolitan region. Three years later, the firm was recognized among the top 50 firms in the nation for gross volume, producing 11,000 houses, 10,000 apartment units and numerous larger projects, including office buildings, schools, churches and synagogues. Within an 18-year period, the firm had designed more than 200,000 residential units.

Natural materials and a rustic color palette were characteristic of the projects designed by Cohen, Haft & Associates. The firm frequently used locally quarried Stoneyhurst stone for both residential and institutional projects. This mica schist has a polychromatic range of colors, including rust, blue and gray. Earth tones of browns and grays were carefully chosen for roofing, window frames, bricks and wood stains so the buildings would harmonize with their natural settings.



Courtesy AIA Potomac Valley

Leonard Haft and Jack Cohen

Potomac Valley Architect, Sept 1959.

COHEN, HAFT & ASSOCIATES OFFICES

1110 Spring Street, Silver Spring (1960)



Potomac Valley Architect, September 1960, AIA-PV

The firm's organic designs comprised orchestrated components that broke up the residential massing and blended the houses into the landscape. Cohen, Haft & Associates collaborated with conservation-minded builders, including Croyder-Irvin of Maryland, Inc. David S. Croyder and Milton C. Irvin were protégés of influential developer Edmund Bennett, a leading builder of contemporary housing projects in natural settings, notably Potomac Overlook

(1959) and Carderock Springs (1962). Cohen, Haft & Associates had a long-term partnership with Gaithersburg, MD landscape architect Thurman Donovan, known for his naturalistic designs.

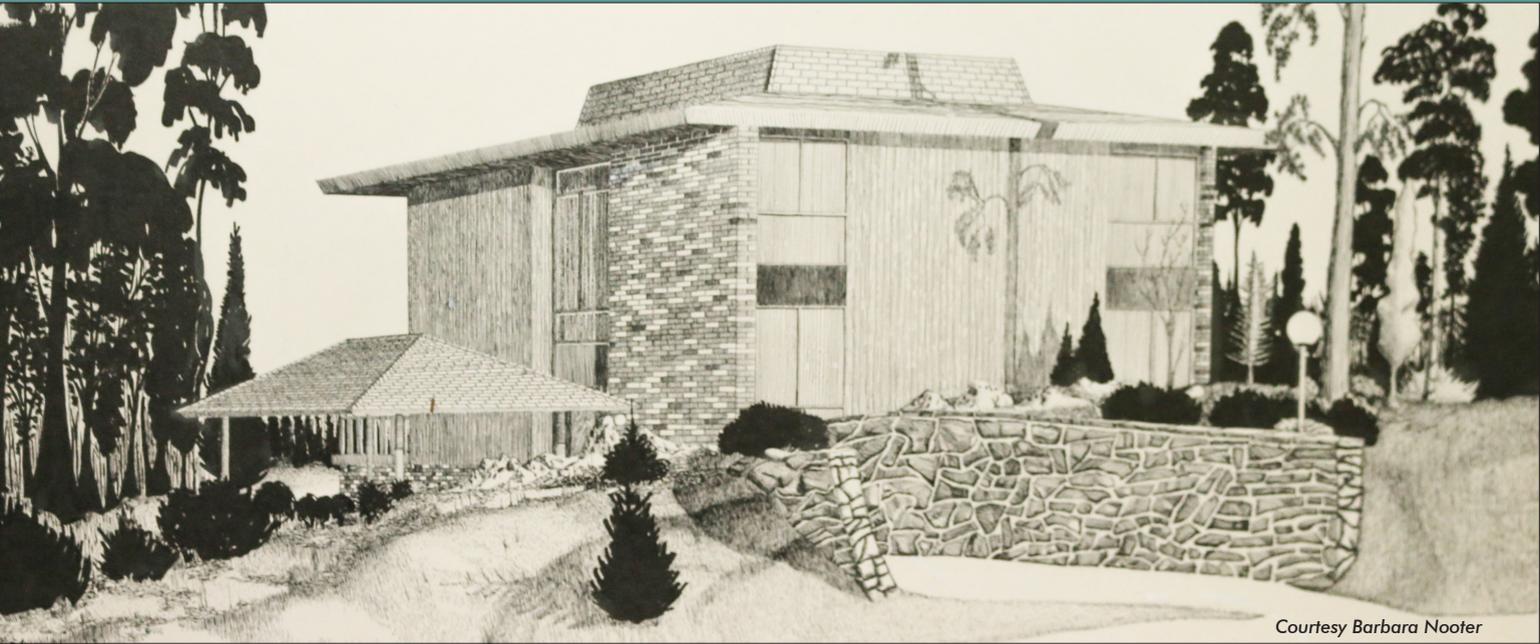
The evolution of Cohen-Haft's contemporary residential projects was reflective of the post-World War II era. Tusculum Woods (1960) represents the earliest phase of affordable, one-story houses with carports designed to appeal to emergent professionals and young families. The Hilltop project, designed in 1967, offered larger, two-story houses with carports as well as more modest split-level houses. By this time, Montgomery County had a large population of residents with established careers and older children, who were looking for bigger houses. Potowmack Preserve (1970) met this need with five models of houses that were uniformly spacious and had attached garages.

In later years, the firm increasingly turned to institutional projects, including schools. The Charles E. Smith Life Communities Campus (1969) was the new headquarters for three Jewish institutions gathered in a campus setting. Other projects included the Empire Building (1963), a \$3.5 million office building at 21st and M Streets, NW Washington, DC; Prince George's County Executive Building (1964) in College Park, MD; and Paint Branch Unitarian Church and School (1965; 1967) in Adelphi, MD. The firm designed the Montgomery College campus (1978) in Germantown, MD and the Parilla Performing Arts Center (1984) in Rockville, MD.

1

THE HILLTOP

Seven Hill Lane, Potomac (1967)



Courtesy Barbara Nooter

These houses are situated on a rugged, wooded hilltop overlooking Cabin John Regional Park and utility-line open space. A single curving street provides access to 32 houses arranged on more than 10 acres in a pattern including flag lots and shared drives.

The houses are designed to maximize the relationship with the landscape in their orientation. Patios, decks and balconies extend living space into the natural setting, designed by Gaithersburg landscape architect Thurman Donovan, a long-time collaborator with Cohen, Haft & Associates. Organic materials and rustic tones of brick, stone and wood complement the natural character of the neighborhood.

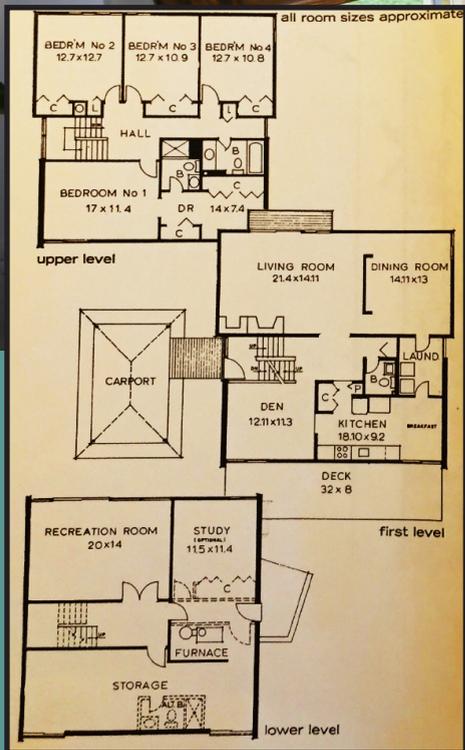
The house designs comprise three types: a boxy, two-story home topped by a pavilion roof—described at the time as a mansard roof (pictured); a two-story

dwelling with a dual-shed roof; and a split-level arrangement. The two-story models have identical floor plans of more than 3,000 square feet and the split-level model has 2,600 square feet. Houses originally sold for the low \$40,000s.

Architect Turget Karabekir, an associate with the Cohen-Haft firm, was a designer for this project and purchased the first house in the subdivision. Houses were constructed by Style-Right Builders, run by Albert Brodsky and Edith Matthews. Brodsky was a director of the Suburban Maryland Home Builders Association and chairman of the Construction and Real Estate Division of the United Jewish Appeal of Greater Washington. The project team also constructed a twin Hilltop subdivision in Silver Spring at Delford Avenue and Two Farm Drive.



Clare Lise Kelly, M-NCPPC



Courtesy Stephanie Begansky

11037 Seven Hill Lane

This house features the pavilion-roof type described at the time as a mansard roof, one of three models offered in The Hilltop. While the current owners have renovated the interior, they retained the original open stairwell with its glass window wall and floating stairs. Originally, the house had an open hall extending from the stairwell to the back wall. The owners reconfigured the floor plan to enlarge the kitchen and master bedroom. Skeleton frame construction of contemporary houses enables such flexibility in moving interior partition walls to suit changing needs.

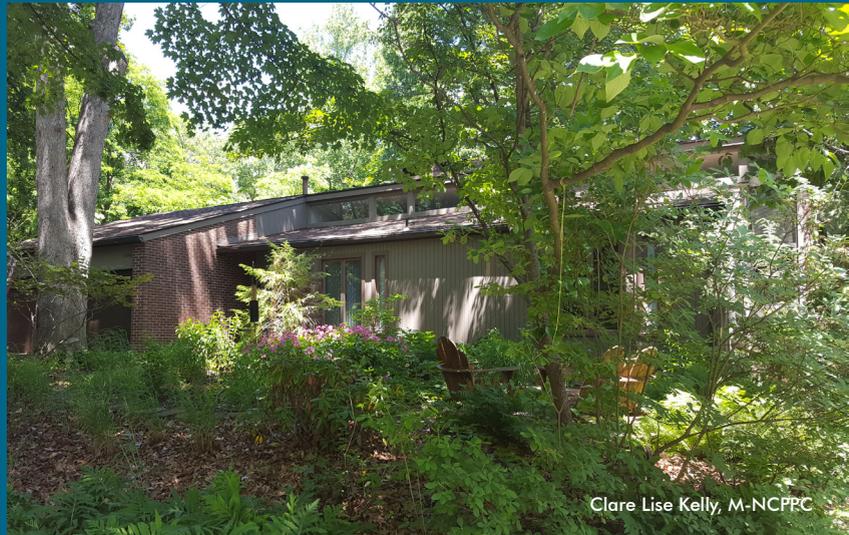


Clare Lise Kelly, M-NCPPC

2 POTOWMACK PRESERVE

Crossing Creek Road Vicinity, Potomac (1970)

Overlooking parkland, the contemporary houses of award-winning Potowmack Preserve were marketed as “21st-century living in a centuries-old forest preserve.” The project was a partnership with builder Croyder-Irvin of Maryland Inc. Cohen, Haft & Associates designed five models for the development. The 159 houses of the subdivision were listed between \$48,000 and \$65,000, and the project opened in May 1971.

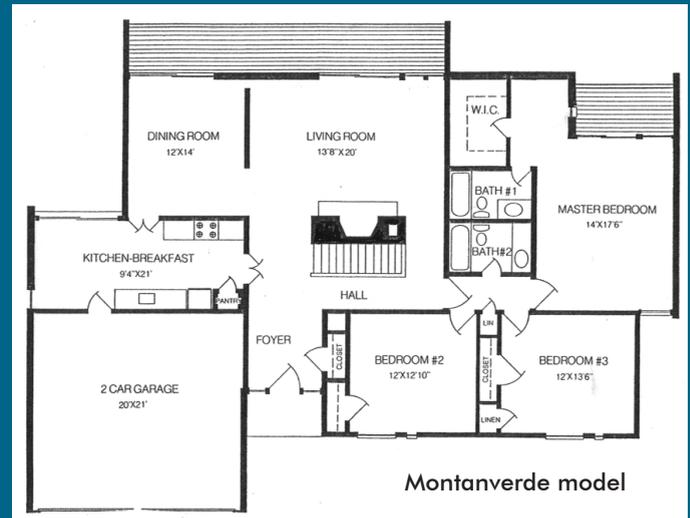


10505 Streamview Court

Clare Lise Kelly, M-NCPPC

Potowmack Preserve received an American Wood Council award in 1970 and a Home Builders of Metro Washington award in 1971. The community has a homeowner association and deed covenants that protect mature trees and preserve harmonious house designs.

The house at 10505 Streamview Court is the Montanverde model. With a private, one-story front facing the street, the house has a two-story rear opening with balconies and deck oriented to wooded parkland. Inside, clerestory windows light the front hallway, while a central, two-story stone chimney anchors floating stairs leading to the lower level.

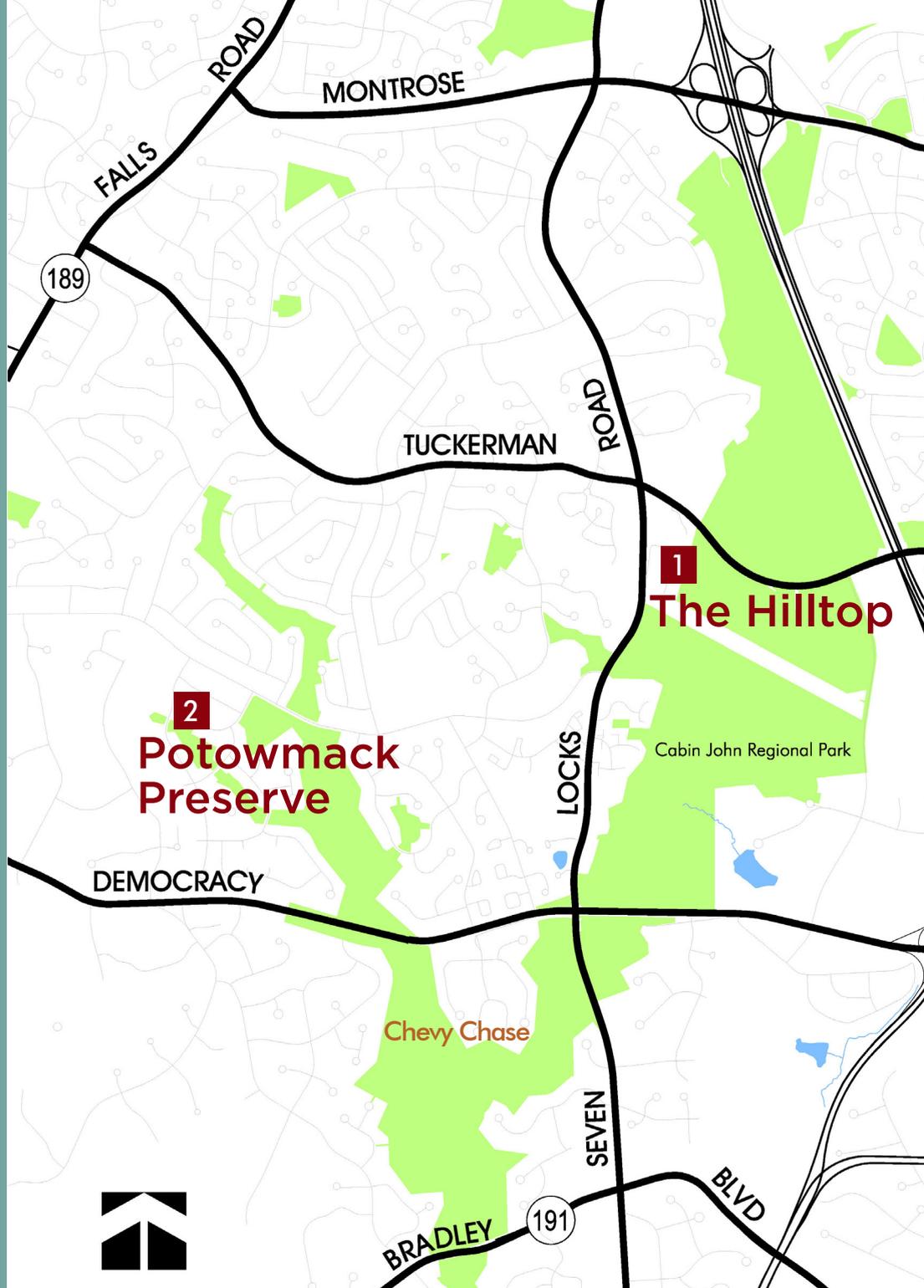


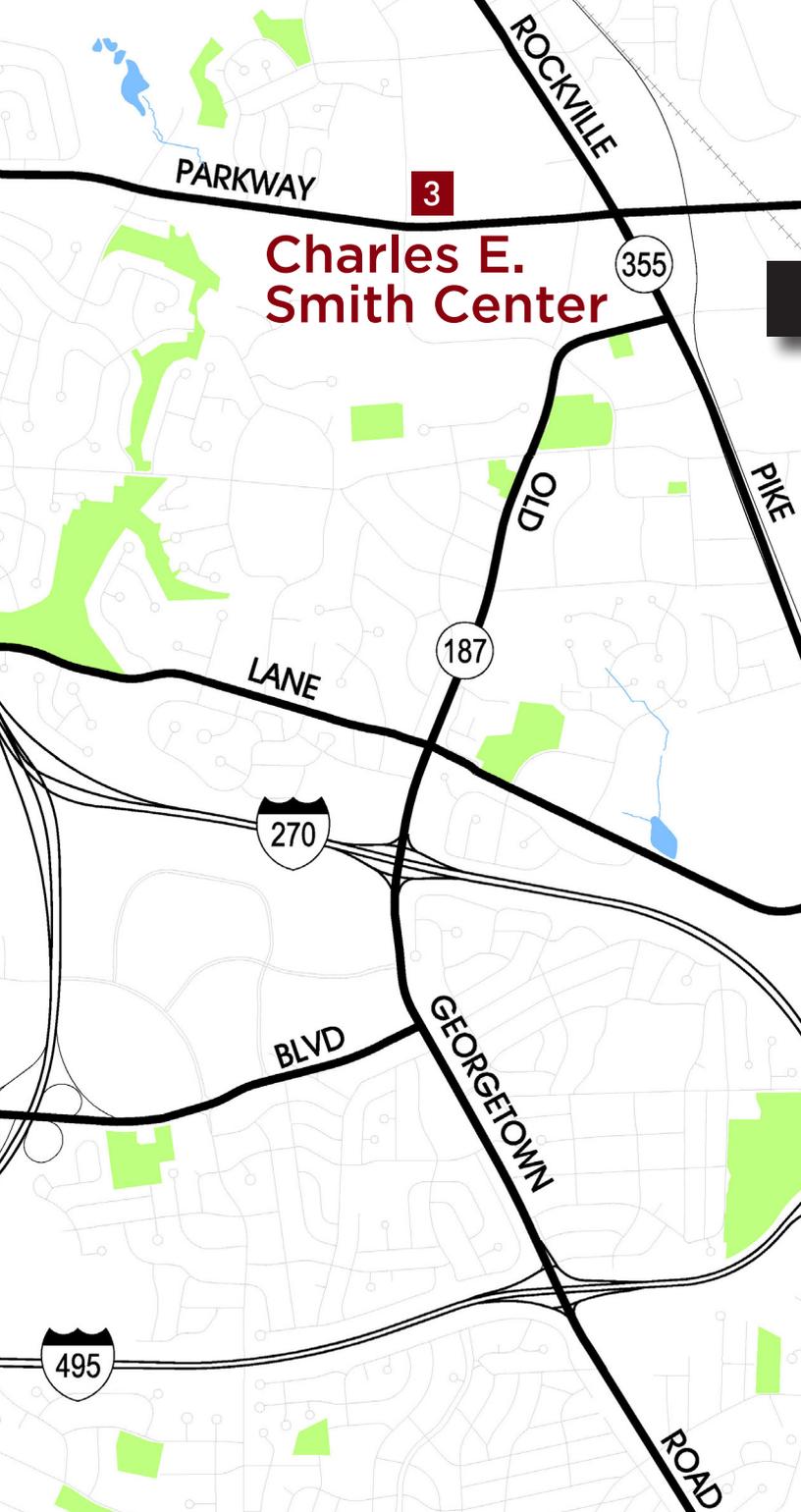
Courtesy Tricia Tice



Potowmack Preserve

TOUR MAP





Charles E. Smith Center

Montgomery Modern Bus Tour 2017

Cohen, Haft & Associates Projects

- 1** **THE HILLTOP**
Seven Hill Lane, Potomac
- 2** **POTOWMACK PRESERVE**
8800 Quiet Stream Court, Potomac
- 3** **Charles E. Smith Life Communities Campus**
Montrose Road and East Jefferson Street, Rockville
 - Bender JCC of Greater Washington (Jewish Community Center)
 - Jewish Social Services Agency
 - Hebrew Home for the Aged

The bus boards at the Bender JCC of Greater Washington (6125 Montrose Road, Rockville, MD). The tour concludes at the point of origin with a closing reception.

3 CHARLES E. SMITH CENTER

Montrose Road and E Jefferson Street, Rockville (1969)

- Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington (now Bender JCC)
- Jewish Social Services Agency
- Hebrew Home for the Aged



Jewish Community Center of
Greater Washington (1969)
6125 Montrose Road

Clare Lise Kelly, M-NCPPC

This 22-acre campus was established for the new headquarters of the Hebrew Home, Jewish Social Service Agency and Jewish Community Center (now Bender JCC of Greater Washington), the three oldest Jewish welfare agencies in the Washington area. Cohen, Haft & Associates created the site plan and designed the buildings with large expanses of glass and skylights to take advantage of the wooded, natural campus setting. Bronze-toned metal roofs are a unifying feature of the complex. A covered, heated arcade provided connections between buildings.



Clare Lise Kelly, M-NCPPC

Jewish Social Service Agency (1969) 6123 Montrose Road

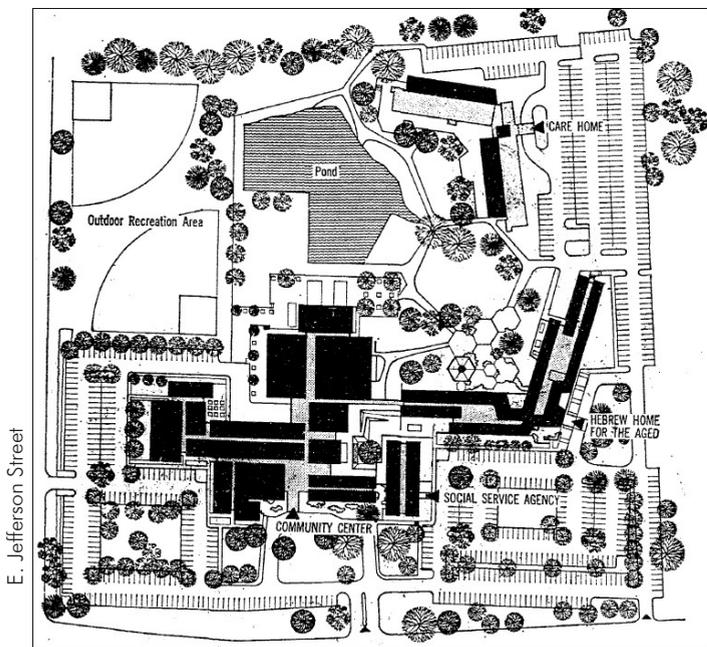
On the day residents moved to the Rockville site from the 1925 facility in Washington, DC's Petworth neighborhood, Hebrew Home President George Hurwitz remarked, "This is like coming from the Middle Ages to the Jet Age for these people."

Developer Charles E. Smith is credited with initiating the campus project. The property's planted setting is designed by landscape architect Thurman Donovan and built by Frederick Construction Co. The buildings comprise 300,000 square feet, which doubled the facilities of each of the three agencies from their former locations. Work began in September 1967, with dedication in June 1969.



Clare Lise Kelly, M-NCPPC

Hebrew Home for the Aged (1969) 6121 Montrose Road



Montrose Road

The campus expanded across East Jefferson Street with the award-winning B'nai Israel facility, also designed by Cohen, Haft & Associates. Next door, the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School opened in 1977. In later years, the United Jewish Appeal and the Jewish Community Council followed the Rockville migration, creating a centralized campus of Jewish institutional life.

Partner Jack Cary Cohen, FAIA (1924–2011) of Cohen, Haft & Associates was an AIA Fellow recognized for his contributions to the advancement of the profession of architecture. He was a leader in convincing developers of the value in hiring architects. A charter member of the AIA Potomac Valley chapter, Cohen earned an architectural engineering degree from Catholic University (1949) and trained with Maryland architects Paul Kea and Ronald Senseman.

Jack attributed his practical skill in working with builders to his background in the construction business. His family was involved in real estate development. His father Harry Cohen, a former tailor, founded the Wood Manor Company, partnering with Jack's brother-in-law Harold Kramer. Jack Cohen was a builder briefly, before he started his architecture practice in 1953. Cohen operated his practice out of his home before forming a partnership with former classmate Leonard Haft in 1958.

About Jack Cohen and Leonard Haft

Leonard A. Haft (1926–1984), a native of Baltimore, earned his architecture degree from Catholic University (1949). After serving in the US Army (1950–52), he worked for the DC architecture firm Chatelain, Gauger and Nolan, before joining Cohen to form their own practice, which subsequently became CHK with the addition of partner Jack Kerxton.

Rooted in Silver Spring, the firm designed its own offices at 1110 Spring Street (1961, demolished). In 1963, Cohen and Haft employed 15 registered architects. In 1971, the firm moved north to its Montgomery Hills office at 9300 Georgia Avenue (1971)—now Iglesias Del Dios. In later years, the firm was Cohen and Haft, Holtz, Kerxton, Karabekir & Associates (CHHKK), eventually engaging 165 employees. Successor firm Torti Gallas and Partners maintains the firm's tradition of a Silver Spring location, with offices at 1300 Spring Street (1988).

Projects Designed by Cohen, Haft & Associates

These properties are privately owned and not open to the public. All projects were designed by Cohen, Haft & Associates, and successor firm Cohen and Haft, Holtz, Kerxton, Karabekir & Associates (CHHKK).



Carol M. Highsmith, in Montgomery Modern (M-NCPPC, 2015)

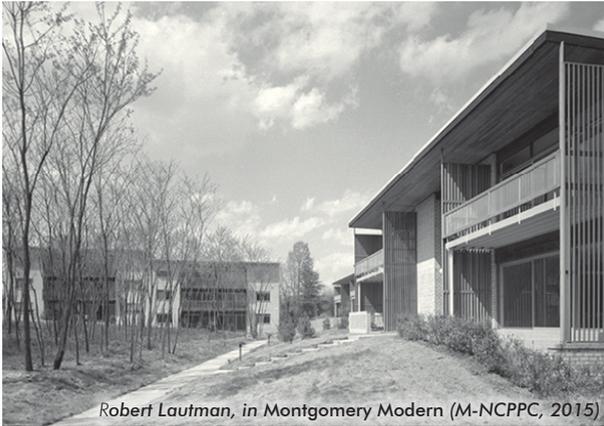


Jack Cohen House (1961) Crail Drive, Bethesda

The 4,650-square-foot house, designed by architect Jack Cohen for his family, is composed of glass curtain walled structures topped by shed roofs and connected by an atrium. The larger block contains the main living areas and master bedroom, while the subsidiary block houses three children's rooms and a two-story recreation room. To accommodate his growing family, Cohen later floated a removable floor above the recreation room to create a fourth bedroom. Division of the house into components facilitated preservation of mature oak trees, while balconies and decks open the living space to the wooded site.

Eden House (1960) Crail Drive, Bethesda

The Eden House in Bannockburn received an AIA Potomac Valley award of merit in 1960 and a Washington Board of Trade design award in 1962. The boomerang-shaped house provides maximum views into the heavily forested site. Large expanses of windows bring the natural setting into the house, while an angular balcony extends the living area into the wooded site, designed by landscape architect Thurman Donovan.



Wheaton House (1962) 10829 Georgia Avenue Cohen, Haft & Associates collaborated with landscape architect Thurman Donovan for this apartment complex, which clusters staggered units around a sloping grove of locust trees. The wooded character of the site was echoed in the design of wooden screens and stairwells. The central greenway is the focal point for balconies and window walls of each apartment unit. A perimeter drive separates vehicular traffic from a central common area with pedestrian walkways. Grouped exterior entrances are arranged to avoid long institutional corridors, while staggered façades enhance privacy for residents.

The Wheaton House apartment project received a national design award in the Homes for Better Living contest sponsored by the American Institute of Architects in partnership with *House and Home*, and *Life* magazines. It also received a local design award from AIA Potomac Valley, with noted architect Pietro Belluschi on the jury.



Suburban Towers (1960) 8600 16th Street, Silver Spring Suburban Towers was one of the earliest suburban high-rise apartment buildings constructed in the Washington region. It was built along the newly opened 16th Street corridor in Silver Spring. Cohen, Haft & Associates designed vertical, tower-like wall elements that visually balance the horizontality of window bands.



Whitehall Apartments (1962)

4977 Battery Lane, Bethesda

Earning design accolades from *The Washington Post* and Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce, Whitehall Apartments hailed a new era of luxury apartment buildings with wood parquet floors, deluxe kitchens, landscaped pool and grounds, and townhouse and high-rise units.

Parkside Plaza (1965)

9039 Sligo Creek Parkway, Silver Spring

Overlooking Sligo Creek Park, Parkside Plaza is an 18-story high-rise designed to maximize vistas through curved walls, stacked balconies and window walls. The site plan is organized according to a principle of radiating circles. Inside the crescent-shaped forecourt was a fountain composed of concentric circles and numerous water jets—replaced in 2009 with a parterre garden. Parking areas are arranged along circular lots that radiate out from the apartment structure. Now a condominium, the complex has 251 units.

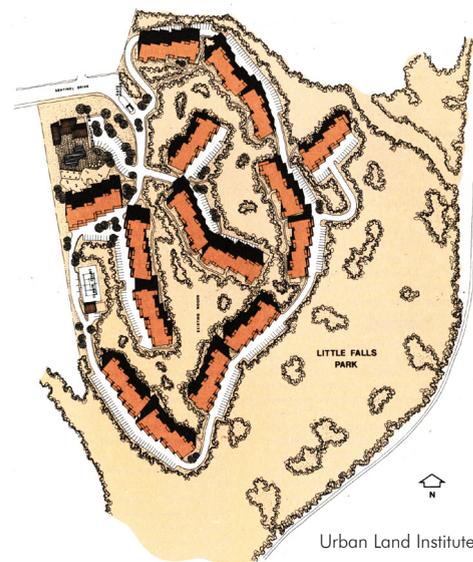


Carol M. Highsmith, in *Montgomery Modern* (M-NCPPC, 2015)

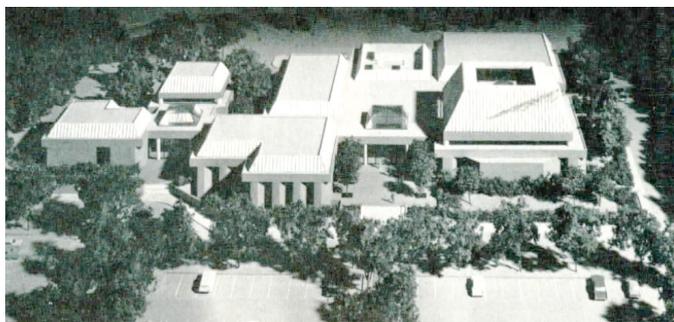
Sumner Village (1975)

4910 Sentinel Drive, Bethesda

Sumner Village earned a design award from AIA Potomac Valley and was identified by the Urban Land Institute as a prime example of cluster development in its 1975 Residential Development Handbook. The site plan for the 27-acre tract carefully arranges 16 mid-rise condominium buildings to preserve mature trees and hilly land, including slopes of more than 20 percent. CHHKK designed apartment buildings highly representative of late modernism, with inset balconies and oversized glass windows that create a solid-void composition. Thurman Donovan was the landscape architect.



Urban Land Institute



Progressive Architecture, Dec 1975

B'nai Israel (1975)

6301 Montrose Avenue, Rockville

The B'nai Israel congregation moved to Montgomery County from Washington, DC in 1975. The innovative design by CHHKK features a vaulted-roof sanctuary with a stained-glass clerestory and flexible interior space, skylit atriums and a social hall wing. The project was featured in national architectural journals and earned an AIA Merit Award.

Resources:

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Montgomery Modern website of the Montgomery County Planning Department:

www.montgomeryplanning.org/montgomerymodern

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Notes:

BUS TOUR

DOCOMOMO TOUR DAY

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2017

