



## **MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Historic Preservation Commission

**From:** Serena Bolliger, Cultural Resource Planner II, Countywide Planning and Policy Division, Montgomery Planning

**Date:** October 8, 2024

**Re:** Timberlawn, 5700 Sugarbush Lane, Designation in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*

### **Staff Recommendation:**

That the HPC recommends that the Planning Board lists Timberlawn in the *Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites* and recommends that the County Council designates the property in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.

### **Background:**

In 1976, the Montgomery County Planning Board listed Timberlawn—then a large estate within a larger family landholding—to the *Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites* based on its association with John Joy Edson and Sargent Shriver.<sup>1</sup> Four years later, the U.S. Home Corporation subdivided the property for a single-family residential community and retained the subject house on its current 1.38-acre parcel.

In 1990, as part of the *North Bethesda/Garrett Park Sector Plan*, the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) evaluated the property for designation in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.<sup>2</sup> The property owners objected to the designation of Timberlawn in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.<sup>3</sup> The HPC voted unanimously to recommend that the house and its associated parcel be listed in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*, as it satisfied four designation criteria as outlined in §24A-3 of the Montgomery County Code. This recommendation was based on the property's association with development patterns along Rockville Pike, the lives of John Joy Edson and Sargent Shriver, and the architectural significance of the house (excluding its then unknown association with master architect Arthur B. Heaton). The Planning Board, however, disagreed with the HPC's recommendation and recommended that the plan remove the property from the *Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites*. The Council affirmed the Planning Board's recommendation in the Approved and Adopted *North Bethesda/Garrett Park Sector Plan (1992)*.

In 2021, the current owner requested that Montgomery Planning reevaluate the property for listing in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* based on its association with Eunice Shriver and the Special Olympics. In this instance, staff agreed to reassess the property as the previous evaluation failed to consider fully the significance of this context at the local, state, and national levels. During our research efforts, staff reexamined the architectural significance of the house after documenting it as the work of Arthur B. Heaton, a recognized master architect.

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland Historical Trust Inventory Form, #30-11, May 14, 1975.

<sup>2</sup> North Bethesda Garrett Park Sector Plan, 1992, p. 192 and 211. <https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/NorthBethesda-GarrettParkMasterPlan1992ocr300.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Historic Preservation Commission Minutes, June 26, 1990, Montgomery Planning.

## **Designation Criteria:**

As noted in Section I of the Designation Report, staff finds that the subject property satisfies four designation criteria (1.B, 1.C, 2.A, and 2.B) listed in §24A-3 of the Montgomery County Code.

### **1.B Historical and cultural significance. The historic resource is the site of a significant historic event.**

The Timberlawn home and surrounding parcel are the only extant portion of the approximately 280-acre estate where Eunice Kennedy Shriver developed Camp Shriver in 1962. This summer camp for children with intellectual disabilities inspired and catalyzed the Special Olympics. As vice-president of the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation, and appointee to President Kennedy's Panel on Mental Retardation, Eunice Shriver propelled social and legislative change on a national level. In response to a local parent's frustration, she organized a week-long summer day camp for children with intellectual disabilities at Timberlawn from 1962-1967. She used this opportunity to craft a thoughtful program which provided opportunities for children of all abilities and could be replicated nationwide. She treated her home as an extension of her office and worked tirelessly to drive research and innovation, and introduce people of influence to her vision. Camp Shriver's success and visibility, paired with the research and funding that resulted from Shriver's unyielding advocacy and political intellect, germinated the idea that physical fitness was beneficial for the health of those with intellectual disability, and that athletic competition could provide structure, focus, and self-esteem. Timberlawn saw a seventeen-year arc of Eunice Shriver's advocacy. She hosted work meetings for disability experts as the Presidential Panel's consultant in the early 1960s, invited international dignitaries and celebrity athletes to explore the inspirational promise of Camp Shriver from 1962-1967, and from 1968 she hosted home fundraisers for the newly founded Special Olympics. In collaboration with Anne McGlone and the Chicago Park District, Shriver was able to springboard the idea of the camp into the first Special Olympics event in 1968. Special Olympics has been credited with improving the lives of people with intellectual disabilities on a global scale. The day camp was also replicated nationally under the Camp Shriver name, providing local opportunities for children across America. Developed at a time when intellectual disabilities were highly stigmatized and the subject of very little funding or research, Camp Shriver, and later the Special Olympics, normalized disabilities in the United States and in countries across the world. The rapid expansion of Special Olympics revolutionized treatment and caregiving behaviors in the disability community and created previously unseen opportunities for children and adults.

### **1.C Historical and cultural significance. The historic resource is identified with a person or a group of persons who influenced society.**

Eunice and Sargent Shriver lived in this home from 1961-1978 while working on causes that had national and international impacts. Eunice Kennedy has been called "one of the great architects of a major civil rights movement in the United States in the second half of the 20th century, the fight for disability rights."<sup>4</sup> She was vice-president of the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation and pushed the organization to the vanguard of intellectual disability research and programming. A political appointee to President Kennedy's Taskforce on Mental Retardation, she unrelentingly championed funding and legislation supporting those with intellectual disabilities. Eunice Shriver developed and launched Camp Shriver in this home, and subsequently co-founded the Special Olympics, in which millions of children and adults have participated. While living in Timberlawn, Eunice Shriver drove the creation of pioneering legislation

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<sup>4</sup> John F. Kennedy Library Podcast, "The Kennedy That Changed the World: Interview with Eileen McNamara", Season 6, July 8, 2021. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/about-us/social-media-podcasts-and-apps/jfk35-podcast/season-6/the-kennedy-that-changed-the-world/the-kennedy-that-changed-the-world-transcript>

enshrining rights for adults and children with intellectual disabilities including the Maternal and Child Health and Mental Retardation Planning Amendments of 1963, the Mental Retardation Facilities and Community Mental Health Centers Construction Act of 1963, the Developmental Disabilities Services and Facilities Construction Amendments of 1970 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1975. Sargent Shriver spearheaded the development and dissemination of the Peace Corps, was Special Advisor to President Lyndon B. Johnson, and appointee to Johnson's Office of Special Economic Opportunities. He championed social programs including Head Start, Legal Services Corporation, Upward Bound, Job Corps, Community Action, and Foster Grandparents. He served as Ambassador to France in 1970, president of Special Olympics in 1984, and chairman of the Special Olympics board from 1990.

**2A. Architectural and design significance. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction.**

Timberlawn embodies the distinctive characteristics of a Georgian Revival-influenced country estate with Shingle Style elements built at the turn on the twentieth century. During this period, architects utilized the basic tenets of Colonial-era Georgian architecture to foster a sense of nostalgia and prestige while introducing new design elements and building forms. Arthur B. Heaton, the architect of Timberlawn, recognized that the greatest attribute of the property rested in its picturesque landscape of farmland, rolling hills, streams, and woods. His location of the house near the apex of the property created a panoramic viewshed suitable for the property owners' social events. Heaton designed a restrained façade (north elevation)—largely obscured from Edson Lane—with elements of Georgian Revival architecture, but created a more elaborate, higher-styled, rear (south) elevation to showcase the coveted landscape. This elevation showcases the symmetrically balanced, side-gable house with flanking gable projections. The stucco siding on the first story and wood shingle siding on the second story separated by a belt course, dentilated wood cornice with modillions, decorative soffits with diamond patterns, multi-light and nine-over-one windows with operable shutters, gable dormers, and prominent brick chimneys all reflect the ideals of Georgian Revival architecture as manipulated by a master architect. The house continues to reflect the design envisioned by Heaton and showcased in media (political propaganda, news reports, etc.) throughout the residency of the Shriver family.

**2.B Architectural and design significance. The historic resource represents the work of a master.**

This dwelling is a remarkably intact example of the early and mid-career work of master architect Arthur Berthrong Heaton. In 1900, philanthropists John Joy Edson and Elizabeth Bethrong Edson hired their nephew Arthur Heaton to design the Georgian Revival-styled country home on their newly purchased estate. Heaton was a master architect who designed thousands of homes, commercial buildings, and civic institutions in and around Washington, D.C. from 1898-1951. This home was one of the first thirty projects in his career and is one of his earliest single-family homes. The success of this design is evident in the repeated details in some of his later commissions, such as the Charles Ogilby house in Chevy Chase (1911), with its shingled siding, bay windows, roof dormers, and deep, covered porch at the rear of the property. Heaton's 1930 renovation of the 1901 Edson home for new owner Karl Corby, almost 30 years after his initial design, demonstrates how Heaton's style evolved, featuring more ornate interior and exterior finishes, such as the wood paneling in the living room and the date stone in the gable end, but remained complementary to his original style.

**Conclusion:**

The subject property satisfies the designation criteria listed in §24A-3 of the County Code and the HPC should recommend that the Planning Board lists Timberlawn in the *Locational Atlas & Index of Historic*

*Sites* and recommends that the County Council designates the property in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.