



Tiber Island Cooperative Homes, Inc.

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July 18, 2011

TESTIMONY OF TIBER ISLAND COOPERATIVE HOMES, INC. REGARDING ZONING CASE 11-03 (SOUTHWEST WATERFRONT)

Tiber Island Cooperative Homes, Inc., is a 389 unit housing cooperative on the south side of M Street, S.W. between 4th and 6th Streets. The Tiber Island complex (which includes both the Cooperative and the Tiber Island Condominium, a group of townhouses on the perimeter of the block) was built between 1964 and 1966. The buildings were designed by Keyes Lethbridge & Condon. When completed in 1966, Tiber Island was one of only three projects in the nation to receive a First Honor Award for Design Excellence from the American Institute of Architects; the other two AIA First Honor Award recipients that year were the Dulles Airport Terminal in northern Virginia and the CBS Headquarters building in Manhattan, both design by Eero Saarinen Associates. With the support of ANC 6-D, during the next few weeks Tiber Island will be nominated by the Southwest Neighborhood Assembly for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. A draft copy of the Registration Form is attached to our testimony.

Tiber Island is immediately across 6th Street, SW, from the Parcel 11 section of the Southwest Waterfront PUD, and immediately adjacent to the Waterfront Park component. The entire Southwest Waterfront development will have a significant impact on Tiber Island Cooperative and our neighbors.

We support generally the PUD application that has been submitted, and we want to acknowledge at the outset the exceptional efforts of Monty Hoffman, Elinor Bacon and the rest of the development team to reach out to the community throughout the design process. Their diligence has been impressive. This is a very large and complex project, with an exceptionally large number of stakeholders with varied interests. We have appreciated the good communication with the development team, and we also recognize that the developer has responded to some of our concerns by making very helpful improvements to the development plan.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

CASE NO. 11-03
EXHIBIT NO. 605

We have both *specific* comments relating to the portions of the “south end” of the PUD closest to the existing residential neighborhood south of M Street, as well as *general* concerns about the overall project. One of our overriding concerns, however, is that the Zoning Commission’s Order in this Stage 1 PUD proceeding be as detailed as possible. This project is going to be phased-in over the next ten years, and Phase 3 – which will affect Tiber Island and the residential communities south of M Street SW most directly – may be the last to be built. If at all possible, the Zoning Commission should not place the community in a position where it must appear repeatedly in each Zoning Commission proceeding to argue the same points that are being made during this Stage 1 proceeding. To the extent certain issues of concern to the community can be decided now and “put to rest,” the Zoning Commission’s Order should be specific and directive, giving the developer clear guidance, thereby avoiding additional work and confusion on everyone’s part.

I. Specific concerns relating to the southern portion of the PUD site.

A. *Parcel 11 (existing St. Augustine’s Church property)*

Under the original Southwest Plan, the site now referred to as Parcel 11 was reserved for a church. Under the proposed PUD, the site primarily will be used as an apartment building, with a small portion reserved for continued use by the St. Augustine’s congregation.

The proposed building will be substantially larger and more dense than the existing structure at the site. Tiber Island Cooperative does not oppose the proposed change in the use of the site, but we are concerned with (a) the overall height of the structure, (b) vehicular access to the building, (c) building setbacks along 6th Street S.W., and (d) the facade appearance.

Height: The developer is proposing R-5-B zoning for the site, with an overall height of 45' (plus penthouse structures). This is substantially higher than the existing townhouses on 6th Street at the Tiber Island complex, which are about 30' in height. We recommend that the maximum height of the Parcel 11 building be reduced to be more compatible with the existing low-rise development along 6th Street.

In addition to reducing the overall height of the Parcel 11 building, we are concerned with the possibility that large rooftop structures effectively may raise the overall height of the building

another 10 feet or more. We request that PUD approval include limitations on the scope of rooftop use of the Parcel 11 site.

Access to parking garage and/or utility and loading dock areas: If the main orientation of the Parcel 11 building faces toward the river and promenade between Arena Stage and the Commercial Pier, then the 6th Street portion effectively becomes the “back side” of the Parcel 11 building. However, this is the portion of the building that will be directly facing the Tiber Island property.

In our discussions with the developer, we have expressed concern that the 6th Street side of the building not be used for loading dock space or parking garage access, and the developer has assured us that the 6th Street frontage would respect the existing Tiber Island property and would not include driveways and loading docks. We believe such restrictions should be articulated clearly as conditions for any PUD approval at this stage.

Setback along Sixth Street SW: The existing Tiber Island townhouses along 6th Street are set back substantially from the street, allowing for large trees along the curb. In recent discussions, the developer has indicated to us that the Parcel 11 building would be set back as much as 27' from the street. We agree this kind of substantial setback would be desirable, so both sides of 6th Street “match,” and we urge that this substantial setback be mandated in any PUD approval.

Sixth Street facade: Although the Parcel 11 building *de facto* is going to be an apartment building, rather than individual townhouses, the developer has indicated the facade along 6th Street would be designed to mimic townhouses, with the ground-level dwelling units having individual entry doors on 6th Street itself. We support this approach, and urge that the PUD approval include an express condition that apartment units along 6th Street have doors onto the street.

B. Parcel 10

The developer is proposing W-1 zoning for the building on Parcel 10, with a maximum height of about 70 feet.

Like Parcel 11, Parcel 10 sits between the existing developments in southwest Washington (Tiber Island, Waterside Towers, the I.M. Pei-designed buildings now called “The View”) and the river. A 70' height effectively will block visual access to the waterfront for large numbers of residents in the existing buildings in the neighborhood.

We object to the proposed 70' height limit for the Parcel 10 building. In effect, the developer is proposing that approved building heights *increase* as the development approaches the water's edge. We recommend that the height of the Parcel 10 building be limited to the same height as the structure on the St. Augustine's Church site (Parcel 11).

Further, as discussed below, we recommend that a portion of any parking that exists in the Parcel 10 building be reserved for guest parking for the residents of any Pier 4 townhouses.

C. Waterfront Park

The future Waterfront Park is immediately adjacent to the large Tiber Island and Harbour Square properties. Most of the site currently is used as a parking lot for the cruise ships.

Because the Waterfront development will be built in phases over several years, we are very concerned that the Waterfront Park not become the “tail end” of the project. Additionally, we are opposed to the site being used as a staging area for construction on the rest of the project.

As a condition of any PUD approval, we urge the Zoning Commission to require the Waterfront Park to be constructed during an early phase of the project, and also urge that there be an express ban on using the site for construction staging or for other uses ancillary to the main Waterfront PUD development construction.

D. Pier 4 townhouses and vehicular use issues

Tiber Island does not oppose conversion of Pier 4 to residential use, but we note that such use is highly problematic in terms of vehicular access.

Height: In recent discussions, it is our understanding the developer now is proposing that townhouses on the pier be limited to 45' in height. Tiber Island does not oppose this approach.

Earlier versions of the proposal contemplated taller buildings at the “Channel end” of the pier, and we feel that any such increase in the elevations would be problematic.

Traffic management (vehicular access and parking): As the Commission knows, the area south of Parcel 10 and Parcel 11 is reserved for park use. However, because of the MPD Harbor Patrol facility located nearby, there is a limited need to preserve some vehicular access to the site. Additionally, if there are going to be townhouses on Pier 4, there will be a need for Pier 4 residents to have some vehicular access to their dwellings.

Earlier versions of the development proposal indicated there would be a standard “street” constructed from the Maine Avenue/6th Street area down to the Harbor Patrol facility, with parking spaces lining the street. In our discussions with the developer and DDOT, we have objected to this approach. As a practical matter, we know that construction of a dead-end street in this area will result in large numbers of cars circulating in-and-out of the zone looking for parking spaces, which will result in substantial congestion in the park area and also on 6th Street.

As an alternative, we have suggested to the developer and DDOT that vehicular access be restricted to “authorized vehicles only” – specifically, vehicles going to the Harbor Patrol and Pier 4 residences – and that any such roadways be designed in way that they do not appear to be standard city streets. Basically, we have suggested that such roadways be paved to resemble a pedestrian promenade, and that appropriate signage be installed.

In recent discussions with the developer, it is our understanding the developer is proposing to build land-side parking spaces near Pier 4 that would be reserved for guests of the Pier 4 residents. We strongly oppose converting public park land into such a private use. If there is a need for guest parking at the Pier 4 site, any such parking should be on Pier 4 itself, or there should be spaces reserved for Pier 4 guests in the parking facility at the Parcel 10 building.

E. Parcel 9 Building

Throughout our discussions with the developer and the District about this project, there has been a recognition that the most intense development on the Southwest Waterfront PUD should be concentrated on the northern end of the site between 7th Street and 10th Street, and that the use of the property should be less intense toward the southern end of the site near the

existing residential neighborhood. In this regard, the proposal to build a 130' tall tower at Parcel 9 is objectionable. The Parcel 9 building is very close to the existing residential developments in Southwest, and also is squarely in front of the new Arena Stage theater.

The overall size and height of the Parcel 9 building should be reduced to be more compatible with the rest of the properties on the existing Southwest neighborhood.

II. Other concerns about the scope and configuration of the overall project

Tiber Island does not oppose in principle the idea that the Southwest Waterfront project will be a large, high-density development with many relatively tall buildings. Nonetheless, we have serious reservations about the overall scale of the project.

Visual access to the river: Although the developer's proposal highlights the amount of public space that will exist within the project, the fact remains that the high-density portions of the project are quite large, and will result in long wall of large buildings looming over the Washington Channel – itself a relatively small body of water. It is a pattern of development somewhat at odds with the more common approach to modern urban waterfront use in this country, which typically preserves river views by featuring low-rise development close to the water's edge. If you have not already done so, we urge the members of the Zoning Commission to visit the site to get a first-hand feel for the scale of the site and its relationship to the areas to the north.

Traffic: If successful, this development will attract a large number of new visitors to the neighborhood on a daily basis. However, access to the site is highly problematic. Most of the large buildings planned for the site are not readily accessible to Metro or other public transportation, which suggests there may be significant additional automobile traffic to and from the Waterfront site. However, road access in and out of the neighborhood is very poor, creating genuine public safety concerns in the event of emergency situations. The neighborhood is “hemmed in” by two rivers and a wall of freeways. We recently added a stadium to the mix – fortunately, close to a Metro station.

Even the developer's traffic study projects "unacceptable" levels of traffic congestion at 9th Street and Maine Avenue, S.W., and we suggest comparable unacceptable levels of traffic congestion will spread to the surrounding neighborhoods along M Street, S.W. Traffic management is a crucial issue that needs to be studied and addressed before adding additional large-scale development to the neighborhood.

Architectural style: The neighborhood constructed through the Southwest Urban Renewal project is recognized as the nation's premier example of mid-20th century Modernist planning and a likely candidate for future historic district status. The "Southwest Plan" reflected a conscious effort to break with the development pattern of the rest of the city, which typically consists of streets lined with buildings. The neighborhood includes projects designed by many of the premier local, national and international architects of the era, including I.M. Pei, Chloethiel Woodard Smith, Harry Weese, Morris Lapidus, Charles Goodman, and Marcel Breuer.

As Modernism comes into renewed focus as an important architectural movement, a complete and coherent Modernist neighborhood in Southwest can become a significant destination, holding significant value for the District of Columbia. Architectural tours of the Southwest neighborhood already are common, and increasing numbers of young people have moved into the neighborhood primarily because of the renewed interest in Modernism and Modernist architecture. The State Historic Preservation Office has commented to community leaders that it anticipates the neighborhood will be designated a Historic District at some point in the not-too-distant future. Even without formal Historic District designation, the historic significance of the neighborhood – its history, its urban planning concepts, its building architecture and its landscape design – already has been documented comprehensively by the National Park Service through the 2004 publication of Historic American Building Survey (HABS) Report DC-856, "Southwest Washington, D.C., Urban Renewal Area." We would be happy to provide a copy of the HABS report if you would find it helpful. The new Arena Stage is a bold and welcome addition to the neighborhood.

In approving the PUD, we urge the Commission to require the developer to use architectural materials and designs compatible with the Modernist style of the existing Southwest neighborhood, subject to review and approval by an independent panel of architects designated by the Commission.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Tiber Island

other names Tiber Island Cooperative Homes and Tiber Island Condominiums

2. Location

street & number 429 N Street SW ☐ not for publication

city or town Washington, DC ☐ vicinity

state DC code DC County _____ code 001 zip code _____

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☐ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of certifying official/Title _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of certifying official/Title _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby, certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ Determined not eligible for the National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.

☐ other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ Private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ District
☐ Site
☐ Structure
☐ Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
91		buildings
1		sites
		structures
		objects
92		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Thomas Law House

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Multiple Dwelling

Plaza

Garden

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Multiple Dwelling

Plaza

Garden

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation Concrete

walls Brick, Concrete, Glass

roof Gravel and asphalt

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

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National Park Service

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Tiber Island
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Description Summary:

General Description:

Tiber Island is a residential complex in Washington, DC's Square 502. Constructed between 1963 and 1965, the complex includes 368 apartments divided among four nine-story towers, as well as 85 single family townhouses. It also incorporates the eighteenth century Thomas Law House, now adaptively re-used as a community center. Its buildings are linked by a network of landscaped courts, quadrangles, and walkways. At the center of the complex is a rectangular plaza paved with concrete blocks, which contains a rectangular pool with a fountain in its northwest quadrant. A "Great Lawn" occupies the west edge of the complex along its boundary with Waterside Park.

Illustrations 1A through 1L are photographic views of Tiber Island's buildings and landscape.

Boundaries:

Tiber Island's north boundary is the 400 block of M Street SW and its east the 1200 block of Fourth Street SW.¹ Its south boundary follows the 400 block of N Street SW to its terminus at a traffic circle, and continues along a driveway on the same east-west axis. At the end of the driveway, the boundary follows a post and chain fence that delineates the complex's Great Lawn from Waterside Park to its intersection with a similar fence that forms the west boundary. The west boundary fence, which also separates the Great Lawn from Waterside Park, extends from the southern boundary fence north to the Tiber Island West apartment building. North of the apartment building, the west boundary follows Sixth Street SW to the southeast corner of M Street SW.

Site Plan:

Tiber Island, which covers approximately 8.4 acres, occupies the entire area of Square 502. Square 502 is a "super-block" assembled from the individual blocks which composed the original Square 502 before the redevelopment of Southwest Washington. The Thomas Law House adjoins the western end of the driveway which continues the axis of N Street SW. Immediately to the east of the Law House is a walled enclosure for the Tiber Island swimming pool. The east boundary of this enclosure is the sidewall of a block of four townhouses. Immediately east of these townhouses is a walkway to the plaza which runs along the west side of the Tiber Island South apartment building. This building is sited just west of the complex's north-south midline. A driveway on the east side of the apartment building connects the N Street traffic circle with the garage beneath the central plaza. The remaining buildings on the site's south perimeter are a block of ten townhouses in two

¹There are no "500" number block addresses on either M or N Streets SW in the modern Square 502.

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National Park Service

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offset rows of five, whose easternmost sidewall faces the entrance courtyards of the block of townhouses on the site's east perimeter.

A block of ten townhouses in three offset rows occupies the southeast corner of the complex's east perimeter. Just north of these townhouses is the access road of the Tiber Island East apartment house, the apartment house, and a walkway accessing the central plaza. The apartment house is situated just south of the complex's east-west midline. The northernmost sidewall of a block of nine townhouses in two offset rows then faces the entrance courtyards of a group of townhouses on the complex's north perimeter.

The northern perimeter of the complex along M Street SW begins with a block of eleven townhouses in three offset rows. It continues west to the Tiber Island North apartment house, its walkway, and access driveway. The apartment house is sited just east of the north-south midline of the block. The westernmost sidewall of a block of ten townhouses in three offset rows faces the entrance courtyards of a block of ten townhouses on the complex's west perimeter.

The west perimeter of the complex along Sixth Street begins with a block of ten townhouses in three offset rows, whose northernmost sidewall faces M Street. Immediately south is an access driveway and the Tiber Island West apartment house, its access road, and walkway to the central plaza. The apartment house is sited just north of the complex's east-west midline. South of the apartment house, the west perimeter is the Great Lawn.

Groups of townhouses adjoin each face of the central plaza, as do the side facades of each apartment building. These groups consist of four townhouses on the north, south and west sides, and three townhouses on the east. Illustrations 2A and 2B are digital images of the original site plan.

The Tiber Island High-Rise Buildings

The Tiber Island apartment towers consist of four nine-story buildings which stand endwise to the street on each face of the plaza. Each pair of buildings is offset from the site's midline, a pattern frequently described as a "pinwheel".

The four towers have rectangular footprints and identical exteriors of predominantly beige brick with lighter structural concrete features. Their first stories consist of exposed repeating concrete pilotis and support beams, with a recessed glassed-in lobby level. Above the first story, each façade is divided into two vertically symmetrical sections by a full height recessed alcove. Each section is horizontally segmented by a band of concrete above its top and below its lowest story.

The narrower street and plaza-facing facades are windowless. Each of the other facades is divided into two asymmetrical bays, the wider of which has two banks of protruding precast concrete balconies, each

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flanked by a three pane window. The balcony railing faces consist of two concrete rectangles with recessed concrete latticework. The narrower bay has a single bank of identical balconies and windows. The apartment towers were advertised as having efficiencies, one, and two bedroom units with 23 different floor plans.

Townhouses

Tiber Island has multiple varieties of townhouses, with two, three, or four floors. The townhouses are in rows of three to five units of identical height which have a common setback. Two or more rows of townhouses with different heights may adjoin each other with different setbacks to create a block of offset rows.

Each townhouse has a private front and rear garden courtyard. These courtyards are enclosed by beige brick walls, although a few entrance courtyards have substitute wooden infill sections. Egress is through front and rear wooden gates painted red.

Each townhouse is one bay wide and built of beige brick. Above each story, a band of concrete runs horizontally across the full length of the row. The first level of the front or rear façade is largely concealed by the courtyard wall. It includes an entrance door and a three panel sliding glass door. Each upper story has a precast concrete balcony with an inset rectangle on its front panel. Behind each balcony is a two panel sliding glass door recessed in the façade. These balconies are vertically stacked above the first floor window.

Within each row, the architects avoid repeating identical facades by alternating units with mirror-imaged floor plans. Rear garden courtyards are oriented to the street, while entrance courtyards face interior courtyards and walkways. Rows of townhouses often face the sidewalls of blocks of townhouses on adjacent perimeters, or have offset front gates on either side of a walkway. No townhouse directly fronts a perimeter street.

The inner townhouse blocks that abut the plaza differ from those on the complex's perimeter. Because the plaza's paved surface is about four feet above ground level, these townhouses are "split level". The two-story townhouses on the east, north and south sides of the plaza have raised rear sections facing the plaza and lower front sections whose entrance courtyards face walkways.

The townhouses which abut the west side of the plaza are unique within the complex. These townhouses have two-story front sections whose entrance courtyards face the plaza, and three story rear sections whose rear garden courtyards face the "Great Lawn."

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The Thomas Law House

Built in the Federal style in 1794, the Law House is listed on the DC Inventory of Historic Sites and the National Register of Historic Places. Its form is rectangular, with a longer north-south axis, and it stands three stories tall above a raised basement. Its west façade has five bays and its south three. Its brick walls are divided horizontally by stone belt courses above and below the raised first story. Its main entrance, accessed by curving steps with iron railings, is on the west façade.

The Law House has horizontally symmetrical fenestration patterns within its south and west facades, while the pattern on its north façade is irregular. Except for the basement level, all windows have stone sills. Stone impost bands and arches outline the first floor window recesses, as well as the west façade entrance. The second and third story windows have stone lintels with keystones. The first floor windows are arched, the second story windows are rectangles, and the third story windows are smaller rectangles that are nearly square/.

Brick chimneys are the Law House's dominant roofline feature. At the northwest corner of the standing seam tin roof is a rectangular chimney, and at the east is a chimney whose double stacks are linked by a semicircular arch. The west end of the roof is hipped, while the east is a vertical slope.

The Law House has two additions. A six-bay, one- and one-half story, gable-roofed, brick addition connects to the house by a one story passageway to the north. A single-story brick wing with flat roof extends east from the north end of this addition. These additions are first visible on Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps from the first half of the twentieth century.

The interior of the Law House was presumably altered during its use as a hotel during the nineteenth century and a medical clinic during the early twentieth. It was further altered during its renovation as a community center during the 1960s, when its exterior was painted beige to harmonize with the complex's new structures. Changes to its historic exterior are documented on the National Register of Historic Places nomination form for the property dated August 14, 1973.

Plaza and Parking Garage

The center of the complex is a plaza paved with rectangular concrete blocks. Its northwest quadrant contains a reflecting pool with fountains. Its southwest quadrant originally included a gazebo, while its northeast and southeast quadrants had a symmetrical group of trees in concrete planters called the "Hornbeam Grove".

A garage with parking marked out for 286 cars under the original plan is located beneath the plaza. It is accessed by a driveway on the east side of the Tiber Island South building that connects to N Street SW.

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Landscape

Eric Paepcke prepared a complex landscaping design for Tiber Island’s multiple walkways, quadrangles, public courtyards, plaza, Great Lawn, and other green space areas. Plantings included 113 trees representing 10 species, 700 shrubs of assorted varieties, and more than 18,000 bedding plants. While it is not possible to match all present-day plantings to Paepcke’s plan, the present treatment of green spaces follows its outlines and many of the larger plantings may be original specimens. Illustrations 3A and 3B are digital images of Paepcke’s final plan.

Intactness

Based on review of plans, historic photographs, and observation of the complex as it currently exists, Tiber Island appears highly intact. The complex conveys its original appearance, distinctive characteristics, and associations today.

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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 pattern of our History.
- ☐ **B** Property 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.

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** within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

Area of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Community Planning and Development

Period of Significance

1964

Significant Dates

1964, 1966 (AIA Award)

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Keyes, Lethbridge, & Condon (Arthur H. Keyes, Jr.,
Francis D. Lethbridge, David H. Condon)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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National Park Service

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

Previous documentation on files (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- X previously listed in the National Register *
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- X recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
- # Referenced in DC-856, not recorded
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record
- #

The Thomas Law House was listed in
the National Register of Historic
Places in 1973.

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- X Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

National Parks Service – Thomas Law house only

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Summary Statement of Significance:

Tiber Island is significant under National Register Criterion A (similar to District of Columbia criteria A and B) because:

- Its construction was a significant step in the redevelopment of Southwest Washington in accordance with the principles of modern urban planning, including effective use of green space and mixed housing types. It was the first such redevelopment project to be created by an entirely local design and development team, and marks the beginning of Washington's recognition as an incubator of first-rate architectural talent in the face of previous disrespect and skepticism.
- It was the first condominium project built in the District of Columbia and the "proof of concept" for a type of ownership which has become common today.
- It was the focus of a pioneering effort to expand and enforce the concept of open housing prior to the passage of the 1965 Fair Housing bill

These are contributions to patterns of growth and change that contributed significantly to the heritage, culture and development of the District of Columbia and the nation.

Tiber Island is also significant under National Register Criterion C (similar to District of Columbia criteria D through F). Tiber Island:

- Provides an outstanding example of modernist architecture and urbanism. It represents a unique fusion of architecture, modern construction technology, landscape architecture, and community planning. It was an outstanding model for the appearance and development of the District of Columbia and the nation, and has been cited as such by architectural critics and commentators since it was built.
- Possesses high artistic or aesthetic values, as illustrated by the accolades and awards it has received. Of particular significance is the AIA "First Award" received in 1966, with such masterpieces as Eero Saarinen Associates' Dulles Airport Terminal and CBS Headquarters cited as peers.
- Is a notable work by Keyes, Lethbridge, and Condon, a firm with deep influence on the development of architecture in both the District of Columbia and the nation. The stature of Keyes, Lethbridge, and Condon as a firm of master architects is evidenced by its impressive roster of award-winning projects and notable buildings within the city.

The fall of 2011 will mark the 47th anniversary of Tiber Island's opening. The National Parks Service (NPS) requires that properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years be of "exceptional

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importance... to a community, a state, a region, or the nation" to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This 50 year threshold is not an arbitrary arithmetic standard. The NPS specifically states that:

It is not designed to prohibit the consideration of properties whose unusual contribution to the development of American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture can clearly be demonstrated.

Among the specific criteria for determining that a resource possesses extraordinary importance are that "it may reflect the extraordinary impact of a political or social event", or that its "developmental or design value is quickly recognized as historically significant by the architectural or engineering profession." Tiber Island meets the standard of possessing extraordinary importance under both these criteria.

- It was a critical component of the redevelopment of Southwest Washington, a key component of the city's identity which greatly influenced its architectural development. Because of its high political visibility, the Southwest redevelopment project also had an important influence on urban development nationwide.
- It was associated with a key episode in the development of anti-discrimination regulations and legislation at the local and national levels.
- Its architectural and design value has been acknowledged by the architectural community, as well as the popular press.
 - Tiber Island has won numerous awards, capped by the American Institute of Architects' highest national award in 1966.
 - It was designated an outstanding building by a national magazine and favorably reviewed in a number of articles in the architectural press.
 - Its excellence has been acknowledged by the eminent architectural historian Sir Nikolas Pevsner, in an often dismissive analysis of the city's twentieth century architecture.
 - During the past sixty years, the nationally-noted architecture and urban design critics associated with Washington's newspapers include Frederick Gutheim, Sarah Booth Conroy, Wolf von Eckardt, and Benjamin Forgey. Each has published an in-depth appreciation of either Tiber Island itself or the overall portfolio of Keyes, Lethbridge, & Condon, with Tiber Island listed as a key work.

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“To avoid use of the National Register listing to endorse the work or reputation of a living person,” the NPS discourages the nomination of properties whose designers are still alive. Although Keyes, Lethbridge, and Condon principal partners Francis D. Lethbridge and David H. Condon are deceased, Arthur Keyes, Jr. (born 1917) is still living. However, Mr. Keyes officially retired from the firm in 1992, and is unlikely to be producing further work which would lead to re-evaluation of the firm’s contributions. Tiber Island thus meets the National Register requirement that sufficient perspective exist for the objective evaluation of a resource.

Resource History and Historic Context:

Introduction

1. To a “New Southwest”

Although the Southwest redevelopment project of the 1950s and 1960s has been strongly criticized as destructive of communities, historians such as Richard Longstreth have noted its importance as a re-focusing on the urban life, with an emphasis on unique designs for new residential communities that employed modern architecture and planning principles. Southwest redevelopment was a nationally-visible test case for these principles, and the development of communities like Tiber Island had far more than local importance.²

During the early 1950s, political resolve to redevelop Washington’s Southwest quadrant reached critical mass. The drive to clear Southwest of “substandard” housing could be traced to the citywide alley housing movement of the 1930s, while mass rebuilding proposals began with an unrealized 1942 plan to create housing for war-workers.³ During the postwar years, pressures for redevelopment of “blighted areas” citywide spurred such legislation as the DC Redevelopment Act of 1945 and Housing Act of 1949, which created the Redevelopment Land Agency (RLA) and facilitated the partnerships between government and private firms to carry out “urban renewal” projects on the large scale deemed necessary.

Although early attention focused elsewhere, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (NCPC)’s December 1950 *Comprehensive Plan for Washington, DC* contained a “broad hint” that Southwest would be selected as Washington’s pilot urban renewal area, in part because the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks, the Fort McNair campus, and the waterfront provided pre-existing boundaries for the redevelopment zone.⁴ In the eyes of planners, civic leaders, and politicians, 1950 Census data, which showed the quadrant’s population declining even as the city’s population reached its historic peak, and surveys that showed a high proportion of dilapidated

² Richard Longstreth, “Brave New World: Southwest and the Promise of Urban Renewal,” in Richard Longstreth, ed. *Housing in Washington*. (Chicago: Center for American Places, 2010), 255-257.

³ National Park Service. *Southwest Washington, DC Urban Renewal Area* (Historic American Building Survey HABS-DC-856, 2004), 9-10.

⁴ “Southwest Slums May be First to be Cleared,” *Washington Post*, December 11, 1950, B1.

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housing with high residential densities mandated redeveloping Southwest, as did the area's close proximity and immediate visual tie to Capitol Hill.⁵

During the early 1950s, iterative redevelopment plans were formulated. The Peets Plan (1951) sought to preserve a substantial portion of Southwest's existing buildings, proposing that gradual waves of renovation mingled with new construction would maintain a high proportion of the area as low-income housing. The Justement-Smith Plan (1952) sought to maximize economic return, link Southwest to downtown, and build mixed income housing, with higher income development concentrated on the waterfront and the area closest to a proposed cultural center. The Justement-Smith Plan differed from the Peets Plan in that it placed a much higher percentage of housing units in high rise buildings and small apartment houses and a much lower percentage in row houses. It did not propose any low income housing and made no reference to preservation of existing structures.

In 1952, the NCPC issued a "final" plan which synthesized recommendations from the Peets and Justement-Smith Plans, as well as from a report by Bartholomew and Associates. Although each previous plan had proposed slightly different boundaries, the NCPC plan defined the redevelopment area's bounds as the planned Southwest Expressway on the north, Maine Avenue on the west, South Capitol Street and Delaware Avenue on the east, and P Street on the south. Low income housing, whether public or private, was to be concentrated east of Fourth Street, although the NCPC Plan did not set a target number for such units.

A follow-up to the NCPC plan defined two high-priority redevelopment areas within the urban renewal area. Area A, between Seventh and Eleventh Streets SW, was earmarked for office construction. Area B, bounded by the railroad tracks and E Street to the north, I Street to the south, Maine Avenue to the west, and South Capitol Street and Delaware Avenue to the east, contained the highest proportion of substandard housing in the quadrant. It was designated for new housing.⁶

In 1953, William Zeckendorf's New York-based Webb & Knapp real estate development firm submitted an unsuccessful proposal for Area B, but ended up with a contract to formulate a plan for the entire redevelopment effort.⁷ In September of that year, Zeckendorf successfully proposed that a re-delineated Area C include the entire redevelopment area other than the existing Area B. (In 1955, Area C-1, a 30 acre tract along South Capitol Street largely devoted to commercial and municipal uses that subsumed the original Area A, was subtracted from Area C and developed separately).

The Zeckendorf Plan, devised under the direction of future architectural icon I.M. Pei, who headed Webb & Knapp's in-house design team, was deeply influenced by the Justement-Smith Plan. In March 1954, the RLA

⁵HABS-856, 16-18.

⁶Ibid. See 29-40 for discussions of plans and boundary delineation.

⁷"Concern to Make Its First Bid to Land Agency Here Monday," *Washington Post*, March 15, 1953, M1.

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granted Webb & Knapp a one year exclusive agreement to develop Area C.⁸ Southwest redevelopment was a project of such stature that on July 9, 1954 Zeckendorf and Pei briefed President Dwight D. Eisenhower on their comprehensive plan.⁹ It treated New Southwest as an "Ideal City" that combined green space and cultural amenities with high-style row houses and low and high-rise apartment buildings arranged around landscaped courts.¹⁰

In 1956, the *Washington Post* published initial plans for Town Center, an I.M. Pei designed mixed use project which covered a newly-created "superblock" bounded by Third, Sixth, L, and M Streets SW. Besides consolidating the redevelopment area's retail businesses in a central pavilion, Pei's design provided 512 housing units in high-rise towers, with green courtyards and a fountain court linked by pedestrian walks and arcades. In essence, his design created a mall with multiple interior courtyards, which could be walked from end to end. Public response was favorable, with the *Washington Post* terming Town Center's retail centerpiece a "tree-shaded suburban style shopping center" with over 1,000 parking spaces.¹¹

But Pei's plan proved the victim of delays from wrangling between Zeckendorf, the RLA, and rival developers, higher than anticipated payments for ground leases,¹² the national recession of 1957-1958, and even a ban on department stores at Town Center engineered by Washington's major downtown retailers. By late 1957, Webb & Knapp, which had continued to take on enormous debt through land purchases and hotel investments, was having cash-flow problems that hampered covering its loan payments, let alone funding development projects.¹³ In 1959, the firm finally signed 99 year ground leases for Area C.¹⁴ However, in 1960, Zeckendorf decided to prioritize resources by foregoing the opportunity to develop the portion of Area C south of M Street.¹⁵

Instead of the planned shopping pavilion, Zeckendorf built a small strip of stores at the core of Town Center, which did not open until the fall of 1960. The first pair of Pei's apartment towers was completed in 1961, but the last pair was not completed until 1963. In 1964, Webb & Knapp sold its interest in Town Center to a local developer, and shortly afterwards liquidated the remainder of its Southwest holdings.¹⁶ Ultimately, the firm went bankrupt.

⁸"Zeckendorf Acts on Capital Slums," *New York Times*, March 15, 1954, 14.

⁹"Zeckendorf Tells President About Big SW Development," *Washington Post*, July 9, 1954, 2.

¹⁰"Zeckendorf 'Ideal City' Is Described to Officials," *Washington Post*, February 17, 1954, 19.

¹¹"RLA Favors Proposal for Shopping Center," *Washington Post*, December 5, 1956, B1, and "Shopping Center Set in SW," *Washington Post*, December 17, 1957, 1.

¹²"Cafritz Loses As Zeckendorf Gets SW Site," *Washington Post*, May 19, 1959, B1.

¹³See "Zeckendorf's Saga," *Wall Street Journal*, February 9, 1959, 1, and "Webb & Knapp Calls Financing Problems the Toughest It's Faced Yet," *Wall Street Journal*, March 9, 1960, 23.

¹⁴HABS DC-856, 50.

¹⁵Ibid, 49.

¹⁶"Webb & Knapp to Drop Another Development Plan," *Wall Street Journal*, November 3, 1964, 3, and "Webb & Knapp Sells Last SW Parcel," *Washington Post*, November 3, 1964, A1.

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Although Zeckendorf promised far more than he delivered, his legacy in Southwest Washington far exceeds Pei's award-winning Town Center Towers. First, reaction to his 1956 plan was evidence that the public would accept a modern project which eschewed the traditional Washington model of rows of buildings fronting streets and featured high-style modernist residences and super-blocks with courtyard green spaces.

Second, controversy about the exclusivity of Zeckendorf's agreement shaped future development. A General Accounting Office report questioned whether a non-competitively awarded agreement with a single developer was likely to provide best value to the government.¹⁷ Under a plan devised by Chloethiel Woodard Smith, co-author of the Justement-Smith Plan, the portion of Area C south of M Street relinquished by Zeckendorf was re-divided into two superblocks. Each superblock was subdivided into three parcels for separate development. The central axis of this newly defined "south section" of Area C was Fourth Street SW, the central axis of the Town Center site and the location of its proposed retail core.¹⁸

Third, Zeckendorf's phased withdrawal from the Southwest project provided opportunities for some of Washington's finest modernist architects. Had development proceeded on the planned schedule, the buildings in Area C would presumably have been designed by Webb & Knapp's New York-based design team headed by I.M. Pei. However, by 1958, Pei had begun the design team's transition to a firm-within-a-firm, and by 1960, the fission into separate firms was complete.¹⁹ Although Pei's firm was retained to design two buildings by the purchasers of Zeckendorf's L'Enfant Plaza project, Area C developed according to the visions of many architects, most of them local, instead of having the imprint of a master designer from outside the city.

2. Early Projects as a Context for Tiber Island

The earliest Southwest redevelopment projects featured architecture and site planning which were not only unique for Washington, but provided each project with a distinct identity.

The first Southwest project to have a completed structure became its largest. Capitol Park, designed by Chloethiel Woodard Smith, initially as a partner in Satterlee & Smith. The project, which began in 1957-59 and was completed in 1963, mixed 1,500 apartments and 380 townhouses in a superblock within the northeast portion of Area B. Smith's plan was innovative, providing views of a park-like central courtyard from apartments, and grouping townhouses "in an unfolding series of inward-oriented walkways and courtyards, each distinct."²⁰ Smith also set a trend for Southwest by retaining landscape architect Daniel U. Kiley to plan Capitol Park's open spaces.

¹⁷Quoted in *HABS DC-856*, 49.

¹⁸*Ibid*, 49.

¹⁹Carter Wiseman. *I.M. Pei, A Profile in American Architecture*. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1990) 70

²⁰Longstreth, 266.

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Capitol Park and Town Center, whose first pair of towers opened in 1961, was followed by River Park (1960-1963), a Charles M. Goodman design, which counterpointed apartment houses on the eastern boundary of the site with clustered townhouses. Built as a cooperative, River Park was especially noted for its barrel-roofed houses, as well as exterior use of aluminum and glass panels. It is located in the central section of the eastern superblock of "south" Area C, with Third and Fourth Streets SW as its east and west boundary streets.

Harbor Square, begun in 1960 and fully completed in 1966, was an upper-income 450 unit complex designed by Chloethiel Woodard Smith, with landscape planning by Daniel Kiley. It incorporated six eighteenth century dwellings into a group of historically-referential attached houses and five apartment blocks. It was noted for its integration with a riverfront park, and innovative use of interior spaces for courtyards, two of which were situated atop an underground parking garage. It is located in the central section of the western superblock of "south" Area C.

3. Constructing Tiber Island

Tiber Island, constructed between 1961 and 1965, took elements present in these initial developments in new directions and to new heights of refinement and sophistication. Located in the north parcel of the west superblock in "south" Area C, the site was directly across M Street SW from Town Center, and was separated from the Potomac on its southwest border by the buildings of original Square 473, destined to be removed for parkland.

"Tiber Island" was originally a nickname for the Southwest quadrant, which lay between the now-encased Tiber Creek and the marshy banks of the Potomac. Original Square 502, the site on which the Tiber Island complex was built, had developed in the extremely mixed pattern characteristic of Section C. The original Square 502 consisted of two square blocks separated by Union (Fifth) Street SW, with Fourth, M, N, and Sixth Streets SW as its outer periphery. Both blocks that comprised the square were subdivided by linked alleys in the shape of a capital letter "T". The last edition of the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps before demolition show Square 502 packed with as many as 160 small brick dwellings, almost all built in the late nineteenth century. About one-quarter fronted on alleys.²¹ 1930 census results showed Square 502 as about 60% African-American and 40% white, with many African-American families living in alley houses or in units in the rear yards of houses occupied by whites.²²

Square 502's largest structures included a Potomac Electric substation on Union Street, as well as the Greenleaf School, which adjoined a small commercial strip with a half dozen small stores, a car wash, and an undertaking parlor, on Fourth Street. Starting in the 1930s, the eighteenth century Thomas Law House on the corner of Sixth

²¹ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, for Washington, DC, 1927-1960, Volume 2, Sheets 261 and 262.*

²² United States Census Bureau, *Fifteenth Decennial Census of the United States (1930)*, Enumeration District 102, multiple sheets.

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and N Streets SW was occupied by the Hadley Clinic, which served poor patients from the neighborhood. Illustration 4 shows a vintage streetscape photograph of the Square 502 area.

By 1961, the RLA had cleared all the buildings in Square 502, save the Thomas Law House and its annex, to prepare for redevelopment. To expand the pool of potential developers, the RLA awarded the right to develop Square 502, officially known as Parcel 110A, through its first design competition. The blue-ribbon jury which judged the anonymously-presented entries included Jacob L. Crane, Karl Koch, G. Holmes Perkins, Louis Justement, and Hideo Sasaki, each of whom had achieved national prominence in modernist design, community planning, or landscape architecture.²³

Jacob L. Crane (1892-1988) was a Chicago-based planner long associated with Clarence Stein, proponent of "garden cities" and co-designer of the Sunnyside, Queens and Radburn, New Jersey planned communities. Crane is noted for his plan for Chicago's River Park District, experience well-tailored to a site in close proximity to the Potomac.²⁴ Carl Koch (1912-1998), an innovative Bauhaus-influenced, Harvard-trained architect who developed the "Tech-Built" concrete pre-fabrication system, was an expert in concrete panel construction.²⁵ G. Holmes Perkins (1904-2004) was a regional planner, modernist architect, and educator instrumental in bringing Walter Gropius to Harvard in 1937. Perkins was both dean of the University of Pennsylvania School of Fine Arts and Chair of the Philadelphia Planning Commission at the time he served on the Tiber Island jury.²⁶

The jury members with the closest connections to Washington were Louis Justement and Hideo Sasaki. Justement (1891-1968), who had a long career as one of Washington's most prominent architects, was the author of several books on urban-planning, as well as co-creator of the Justement-Smith Plan of 1952. Sasaki (1919-1999) was perhaps the most prominent American landscape architect since Frederick Law Olmstead. At the time of the Tiber Island competition, he chaired the Harvard University Graduate School of Design's Department of Landscape Architecture and had recently been appointed to the Commission on Fine Arts by President John F. Kennedy. Subsequently, he would design Waterside Park, which lies between the Tiber Island and the Potomac River bank.²⁷

²³ "Winning Building Design in SW Unveiled by RLA," *Washington Post*, September 7, 1961, 1.

²⁴ See "Jacob L. Crane Archives" viewed online at <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=h-urban&month=9404&week=a&msg=BpMBE3Ciz7M8qdbhVBxzXA&user=&pw=>, accessed June 9, 2011.

²⁵ See "Modern Homes Survey: Karl Koch", viewed online at <http://www.preservationnation.org/travel-and-sites/sites/northeast-region/new-canaan-ct/architects/carl-koch.html>, accessed June 9, 2011.

²⁶ See *G. Holmes Perkins: A Finding Aid for Papers and Architectural Records In the Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania*, viewed online at <http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/faids/aaup/Perkins.pdf>, accessed June 9, 2011.

²⁷ "Hideo Sasaki, 80, Influential Landscape Architect, Dies," *New York Times*, September 25, 2000 and "The Cultural Landscape Foundation: Hideo Sasaki," viewed online at <http://tclf.org/content/hideo-sasaki>, accessed June 9, 2011.

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The Tiber Island competition drew eleven entries, with results announced on September 7, 1961 after final approval by the RLA and other agencies.²⁸ News articles noted that Tiber Island was the first Southwest Washington project which involved an entirely local development team. The overall developer, Tiber Island Corporation, was a partnership between the W.C. and A. N. Miller Company and the Frederick W. Berens Companies.²⁹

The involvement of the Miller firm generated immediate controversy because it had a history of employing covenants which forbade sale to African-Americans or "any person of the Semitic race, blood, or origin." The Miller Company had affirmed that it would follow RLA requirements that forbade discrimination on grounds of race, color, or creed at Tiber Island. However, anti-discrimination organizations contended that the winning proposal still did not conform to competition rules because the firm utilized restrictive covenants elsewhere.³⁰ After twenty groups testified against the award at an October 25th RLA hearing, the Miller Company withdrew from the Tiber Island development team.³¹ On December 8, 1961, the Department of Justice closed an RLA-requested investigation that had been into whether restrictive covenants violated anti-trust laws, and the development contract was signed.³² The Berens firms took on the Charles H. Tompkins Company as their new partner. The RLA reexamined the adequacy of its anti-discrimination regulations.

This episode was an important chapter in the struggle for open housing both in the District and nationwide. The Southwest project had high visibility, and the dispute was extensively reported in the newspapers. Concerns appear to have resonated within the Kennedy Administration even beyond the Department of Justice investigation of covenants. Historian Richard Longstreth has bluntly stated that:

This episode led to a Civil Rights Commission hearing, which, in turn, influenced President Kennedy's executive order banning such discrimination in federally-assisted housing, signed in November 1962.³³

Despite widespread dissatisfaction with the RLA, there was near-complete unanimity about the jury's selection. The jury's report stated that the winning design by the architectural firm of Keyes, Lethbridge, and Condon

²⁸"Winning Building Design in SW Unveiled by RLA," *Washington Post*, September 7, 1961, 1.

²⁹"Local Blood Flows into SW," *Washington Post*, September 23, 1961, B1 and "Southwest Design Wins on Merit – And Then Comes Big Question," *Washington Post*, October 22, 1961, E2.

³⁰See Ibid, and also "Winning Building Design," *Washington Post*, September 7, 1961, 1, "Setting Land Prices Too High Called RLA's Biggest Mistake," *Washington Post*, October 1, 1961, B1, "Hearing Set on Tiber Island Project," *Washington Post*, October 12, 1961, B3.

³¹"Miller Firm Withdraws From SW Project," *Washington Post*, November 3, 1961, A1

³²"Discrimination Safeguards Urged in Renewal Project," *Washington Post*, November 16, 1961, B8, and "Restrictive Covenants Probe Ending," *Washington Post*, December 9, 1961, B10.

³³Longstreth, *Housing in Washington*, 276. Although Longstreth mentions Harbor Square in connection with this episode, the connection with Tiber Island is well-documented.

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(KLC) “was the only one of the submissions that would be wholeheartedly accepted by a majority of the panel.”³⁴ Its specific strengths were its relationships to the new developments to the east, Town Center to the north, and the riverfront to the west. Soon afterwards, the Commission on Fine Arts approved the design, pronouncing it “excellent.”³⁵ Models of the winning design and all the other entries were placed on exhibit at the National Housing Center.³⁶

The Tiber Island design won such favor that in December 1961 a very similar KLC entry won the second RLA design contest. Carrollsburg Square, which is located on the opposite side of Fourth Street SW from Tiber Island, was completed in 1966.

KLC had deep roots in the Southwest redevelopment effort. The firm had grown out of a partnership between architects Nicolas Satterlee (1915-1974) and Francis Donald Lethbridge (1920-2007), which had begun in 1950. In 1951, Satterlee and Lethbridge formed Keyes, Smith, Satterlee, & Lethbridge with fellow Navy veteran and Berla and Abel alumnus Arthur H. Keyes, Jr., as well as Chloethiel Woodard Smith. Among other projects, Keyes, Smith, Satterlee, & Lethbridge was involved in redevelopment planning. In 1955, Satterlee and Smith left to form a partnership, which designed the first phases of Capitol Park. Keyes and Lethbridge also established a partnership, joining with David H. Condon (1916-1996) in 1957 to become Keyes, Lethbridge, and Condon.³⁷

KLC’s early projects included suburban subdivisions of modernist homes that eschewed both Colonial revival clichés and the manufactured look considered “high tech” in the 1950s. In planning these subdivisions, the architects considered the terrain of their sites and other environmental factors in a manner uncommon for the day.³⁸ After the success of the firm’s first subdivisions, Pine Springs and Holmes Run in Virginia, other modernist subdivisions followed in Montgomery County, Maryland.

KLC was noted for recognizing the talents of young associates, as well as its collective approach to design, reflected in Francis Lethbridge’s admission that “I have a horror of being quoted individually.”³⁹ However, the KLC partner generally credited as the key designer of Tiber Island is David Condon.⁴⁰ A University of California graduate, Condon came to Washington after World War II naval service and worked in the office of Charles M. Goodman. Before becoming Keyes’ and Lethbridge’s partner, he had collaborated with modernist master Pietro Belluschi on the Cedar Lane Unitarian Church in Maryland (1956). His notable works at the time

³⁴“Winning Building Design in SW Unveiled by RLA,” *Washington Post*, September 7, 1961, 1.

³⁵ “Council Asks DC to Insure Against SW Housing Bias,” *Washington Post*, September 21, 1961, B3.

³⁶“11 Development Models to Go on Display,” *Washington Post*, September 17, 1961, B3.

³⁷ “The State of Real Estate,” *Washington Post*, March 25, 1956, G3 and “From the Folks Who Bought Us Contemporary Architecture,” *Washington Post*, December 8, 1974, H1.

³⁸ “From the Folks Who Bought Us Contemporary Architecture,” *Washington Post*, December 8, 1974, H1.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰“Tiber Island Adds Newest Chapter to SW Saga,” *Washington Post*, June 13, 1964, E1.

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of the Tiber Island competition included the office building for the Lethbridge-designed U.S. Embassy in Lima, Peru, (1959), as well as such prize-winning KLC projects as the National Institute of Health Administration Building in Bethesda (1960-61, with Collins and Associates), and the Forest Industries Building in Washington, DC (1960-61).

The final member of the Tiber Island design team was landscape architect Eric Paepcke (1906-81). A student of estate management at the University of Gottingen, Paepcke immigrated to the United States in 1929 and worked on farms in the Charlotte, Vermont area. By 1934, he had relocated to New York City, and moved to Washington in the mid-1950s. Like Daniel Kiley, he worked with Charles M. Goodman, David Condon's first Washington employer, on landscape plans for residences in the Hollin Hills subdivision. He also designed gardens for the U.S. Naval Academy and a number of embassies, including the Lima, Peru complex for which Condon and Lethbridge designed buildings. He later collaborated with Condon on a number of residential projects.⁴¹ The Landscape Cultural Heritage Foundation recognizes Eric Paepcke as a noteworthy pioneer landscape architect, and the DC Historic Preservation Office's lists him as a significant contributor to Washington's modernist architecture.⁴²

Although the RLA forecast completion of Tiber Island by February 1963, virtually every Southwest redevelopment project encountered delays. Ground was not broken until May 17, 1963.⁴³ In October 1963, as construction continued, the Behrens firm obtained authorization to sell some Tiber Island townhouses as condominiums.⁴⁴ Ultimately the 64 perimeter town houses became the District's first condominium units, while the 21 inner town houses and apartment buildings remained rental.

By June 1964, newspaper articles began to proclaim that the complex was almost ready, accompanied by an advertising campaign which called Tiber Island "Washington's first true waterfront community" and featured sketches of smiling couples enjoying river views. Illustration 5 depicts advertisements from this campaign. The complex's official opening during the week of September 26, 1964 was marked by a reception attended by more than 300 local leaders.⁴⁵

The ultimate number of units was slightly smaller than the varying totals reported in advance newspaper publicity. The final tally of 368 apartments included 160 efficiency, 128 one bedroom, and 80 two bedroom units. These units were not evenly divided among the four apartment towers. Tiber Island North and South each

⁴¹ "Eric Paepcke, 75, Dies," *Washington Post*, February 17, 1981, C5 and "Eric Paepcke Dies in Washington," *New York Times*, February 17, 1981, 16. Also, personal communications with Paepcke's family, June 2011.

⁴² "The Cultural Landscape Foundation: Pioneers of American Landscape Design," viewed online at <http://tclf.org/pioneer/eric-paepcke>, accessed June 12, 2011 and DC Historic Preservation Office, *Modernism in Washington*, (2009).

⁴³ "Ground Broken for Tiber Island," *Washington Post*, May 18, 1963, C6.

⁴⁴ "Berens First Again," *Washington Post*, October 3, 1964, E1.

⁴⁵ "Tiber Island Open in SW," *Washington Post*, September 26, 1964, C11.

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had 48 efficiencies and 40 two-bedroom units, while Tiber Island East and West each had 32 efficiencies and 64 one bedroom apartments. There were also 61 two bedroom and 24 four bedroom townhouses.⁴⁶

The initial publicity campaign for Tiber Island stressed its luxurious features and many amenities, including an in-ground swimming pool. Residents received a gold key embossed with the Tiber Island insignia.⁴⁷ The complex featured such advanced 1960s technology as air-conditioning that could be adjusted for each room, closed-circuit television monitors for security purposes, and the "Interphone", an intercom system that connected residents with the front entrance as well as the front desk.⁴⁸

Early Life at Tiber Island

The early residents of Tiber Island inhabited a neighborhood very much in transition. To the east, Carrollsburg Square was still under construction, while to the west, a few warehouses and waterfront restaurants just outside the redevelopment area screened ground-level view of the river. Rather than the planned shopping complex, Town Center was a short strip of stores selling staple items. Residents seeking more than basic necessities often crossed the Fourteenth Street Bridge to shop in Virginia.⁴⁹ The Tiber Island Company sought to dispel any resulting sense of isolation by a program of activities and cultural events. During the late 1960s, the central plaza was the stage for evening concerts by groups ranging from a fife and drum corps in Revolutionary War dress to a woodwind quintet.⁵⁰ The complex was also the scene of fashion shows and dance exhibitions "including a Go-Go girl."⁵¹

Tiber Island utilized one of the few Old Southwest buildings to escape the bulldozer as a gathering place. The 1794 Thomas Law House at the west end of the reconstructed N Street SW had been the home of an eccentric speculator associated with the Greenleaf Syndicate, which controlled approximately 7,000 building lots and developed the nearby wharves on the Potomac River. After Thomas Law died in 1826, his house was owned by members of the Lee Family, then became a hotel, and later was the site of a Seventh Day Adventist "mission hospital." Joined to a neighboring twentieth century house, it became both the clinic of Doctor Henry Hadley and home of the Hadley family from the 1930s until the RLA took possession by eminent domain in the 1960s. The Tiber Island developers repaired the house's exterior and modified its interior to serve as a sales office, with a plaza of salvaged alley cobblestones at its front door.⁵² Beginning in the 1960s, it was also used as a community center, with a professionally-organized bridge league and exhibits of art by residents.

⁴⁶ See Plan Sheet S-3, Tiber Island, on file at Tiber Island Cooperative Homes Office.

⁴⁷ "Gold Keys Given to Tenants at Tiber," *Washington Post*, February 6, 1965, E2.

⁴⁸ "Tiber Island Adds Newest Chapter to SW Saga," *Washington Post*, June 13, 1964, E1. And "Answering the Doorbell the Easy Way," *Washington Post*, April 3, 1965, E8.

⁴⁹ Personal conversations with long-term residents, June 2011.

⁵⁰ Examples include "Concerts Given at Tiber Island," *Washington Post*, October 24, 1964, C8, and "Today's Events," *Washington Post*, February 14, 1965, G8.

⁵¹ "Go-Go Fashions Set for SW," *Washington Post*, May 21, 1966, F3.

⁵² See National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for the Thomas Law House, listed August 1973.

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Although the decision to save the Law House had been made by the RLA before the clearing of Square 502, the building undoubtedly found a champion in Francis Lethbridge. Despite his modernist leanings, Lethbridge was a pioneering historic preservationist and the first chair of the city's Joint Committee on Historic Preservation. The committee's list of essential Washington Landmarks, issued on November 8, 1964, listed the Thomas Law House as a culturally significant landmark on a par with many Georgetown buildings.⁵³ In 1973, it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.⁵⁴

Tiber Island was an immediate success. By October 1965, it was more than 90% rented.⁵⁵ In February, 1966, it was reported that 55 of the 64 condominium townhouses had been sold, while 19 of the 21 rental town houses and 95% of the apartments had tenants.⁵⁶ While no definitive statistics exist to chart the effectiveness of the RLA's open housing initiative, the owners reported in 1965 that about 12% of its tenants were non-white.⁵⁷

The complex escaped the 1968 riots without damage, although some residents recall the unnerving sight of tanks parked at Town Center, apparently to safeguard Vice President Hubert Humphrey's residence at Harbor Square.⁵⁸ The promised retail development at Town Center, designed by Smith rather than Pei, finally opened in 1973 and substantially failed with two years, leaving the area without convenient shopping for more than three decades. However, despite this setback, Tiber Island has remained a prestigious address and a premier example of Washington's best modernist architecture. In 1981, the rental apartments and townhouses converted to cooperative ownership, while the perimeter townhouses retained their condominium status.

Awards and Accolades

At the time of the Tiber Island competition, the design talents of KLC were first beginning to achieve recognition. The National Lumber Manufacturer's Association offices in the KLC-designed Forest Products Industry Building received a 1961 "Office of the Year" award from *Administrative Management Magazine*.⁵⁹ That fall, Francis Lethbridge received a "Building Better Communities" award from the National Association of Home Builders.⁶⁰

In June 1962, a jury which included Pietro Belluschi and Brunner Memorial Prize winner Ulrich Franzen presented KLC with the Potomac Valley Chapter of the American Institute of Architects' annual "First Awards" for the custom cottage, public building, and commercial building categories. The firm also received "Awards of Merit" in the development house and commercial building categories.

⁵³ "Group Asks Saving of Landmarks," *Washington Post*, November 8, 1964, A1.

⁵⁴ See National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for the Thomas Law House, entered August 17, 1973.

⁵⁵ "Carrollsbury Adjacent to Tiber Island," *Washington Post*, October 24, 1965, K11.

⁵⁶ "Well Received in SW," *Washington Post*, February 20, 1966, L3.

⁵⁷ "New SW Gently Appraised," *Washington Post*, December 11, 1965, B1.

⁵⁸ Personal conversation, June 2011.

⁵⁹ "Lumber Offices Win Award," *Washington Post*, March 24 11, 1962, D5.

⁶⁰ "Lethbridge, Bennett Honored," *Washington Post*, February 4, 1961, B12.

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While construction was underway in 1963, *The Architectural Record*'s "Building Case Studies" featured an article by Arthur Keyes which summarized the architectural goals for Tiber Island. Curiously, he wrote that "the design centers on an underground garage – the roof of which forms a pedestrian plaza and creates thus a clean horizontal separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic." The principal spaces, delineated by the apartment towers, were "subdivided into smaller courts" by the low-rise townhouses and courtyard walls, so that the "interrelated high and low rise elements create interesting and useable outdoor space." The garden courtyards and balconies "extend... interior spaces outward," while "detailing and landscaping is varied from one court to another so that each exterior space will have its own special character."⁶¹ Keyes noted that the ultimate goal was that each area "have a sense of 'place,' a quality of being set apart yet joined – and a scale both residential and urban."⁶²

Keyes traced the theoretical lineage of the Tiber Island design to Camillo Sitte and Eero Saarinen. He noted that Sitte's seemingly paradoxical espousal of "the intimate and irregular enclosure of limited space" as the key to the city plan had been endorsed by Saarinen as greatly preferable to the "pseudo-classic concept of axial and symmetrical arrangements." He observed:

It is interesting to note that, in considering the great outdoor spaces in history, that the shape of the space itself – its urban quality, scale, and means of entrance and exit – all assume greater importance in setting character than the style of the surrounding architecture.⁶³

The immediate reaction to these principles, even prior to their realization in concrete was accolades. Writing only a week after the competition winner had been announced, prominent urbanist and architecture critic Frederick Gutheim called the KLC plan "a long step toward the goal of combining urban in-town living with many amenities that families have hitherto only sought in the suburbs." KLC's design avoided "elongated slab-like buildings" with excessively long corridors and took advantage of the site's vistas by including functional balconies. Gutheim also commended Tiber Island's intimacy and integration of elements. The clearest superiority of the KLC plan was how it made the waterfront park accessible to all areas within the complex, while the common weakness of the ten competing designs had been that they clustered apartment blocks at the waterfront end of the site. Gutheim hailed KLC for the environment its design created; a "walk-to-work neighborhood looking out over the unequaled open spaces of the Channel...but still close to the conveniences of Town Center and to the commercial and cultural heart of the National Capitol itself."⁶⁴

A few days after Gutheim's article appeared, a *Washington Post* editorial called Tiber Island "a glimpse of what may be the city of tomorrow" and the "kind of ingenious planning" that creates an alternative to "suburban

⁶¹ Arthur Keyes, Jr., "An Architect Talks about the Spaces between Buildings" in *The Architectural Record*, (September 1963), 196.

⁶² Ibid, 194.

⁶³ Ibid. 195.

⁶⁴ "Looking at Architecture: Big Step Toward In-Town Urban Living," *Washington Post*, September 7, 1961, D1.

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sprawl.” Like modernist developments in European cities, the Area C development was felt to “gratify the yearning of city dwellers for breathing space, for flowers and touches of natural beauty, with protection from the pounding of traffic.” By prompting “encouragement of walk to work movements and development of better rapid transit systems” the Post suggested that it would have “a profound effect on the future of Washington.”⁶⁵

In 1963, *Washington Post* architectural critic Wolf von Eckardt approvingly quoted Arthur Keyes’ statement that “a systematically arranged superblock of apartments becomes an exceedingly boring place to live.” He noted that Tiber Island avoided this fate by its complex composition. The four apartment buildings slightly offset from the east-west and north-south axes divided into unique spaces, which were then further subdivided with townhouses and garden walls, and linked by covered walkways and greenways that created varied paths through the site.⁶⁶ Von Eckardt remained an admirer in later years. In a 1970 analysis of Washington architecture, which dismissed such icons of modernism as the Watergate, Madison Hotel, and National Geographic Building as overrated, he commented that Tiber Island remained “a pleasant urban living environment, inspired and ennobled by good, restrained architectural design.”⁶⁷

Praise for the actual complex was at least as vocal as that for its plan. In the summer of 1965, James Bailey reviewed the complex for *Architectural Forum*. Bailey commented that the opposed masses of apartment towers and townhouses “work with comfortable ease” and have a “tranquil, unruffled, yet powerful quality.”⁶⁸ He concluded, after describing what he considered regulatory and zoning constraints on the architects;

KLC’s commanding design and their determination to keep it from being whittled away has paid off handsomely. They have created not only the best addition yet to Washington’s Southwest, but a new standard of architectural quality for U.S. urban renewal.⁶⁹

Admiration for Tiber Island’s design extended to academic architectural historians. In 1966, author and University of London professor Sir Nikolas Pevsner, one of the most influential art historians of the twentieth century, dismissively commented that “Washington’s architecture has been desperately reactionary since 1900”, particularly when designed by local architects. One exception was:

Of the indigenous work, first and foremost, F.D. Lethbridge’s Tiber Island apartments, to the best of my knowledge, the only such estate in the United States which has the great value of intricacy, an English architectural tradition, seen at its best in the Oxford and Cambridge colleges and taken

⁶⁵ “City of Tomorrow,” *Washington Post*, September 8, 1961, A12.

⁶⁶ “Space Age Affecting Apartment Planning,” *Washington Post*, October 13, 1963, G8.

⁶⁷ “Rating Washington’s Architecture” *Washington Post*, January 6, 1974, 220.

⁶⁸ James Bailey, “In Washington, the Power of Persuasion Helps Overcome a Maze of Controls” in *Architectural Forum*, Vol. 123, no. 1 (July-August, 1965), 49.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 51.

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up by Saarinen in his Yale colleges... Wide and narrow and high and low are beautifully interwoven.⁷⁰

1966 proved a year of triumph for Keyes, Lethbridge, and Condon.

In 1966, the Honor Awards jury of the American Institute of Architects distilled 380 nominees down to three equal "First Honor Awards" and nine equal "Awards of Merit." Eero Saarinen Associates received "First Honor Awards" for the Columbia Broadcasting System Headquarters in Manhattan and Dulles Airport Terminal in Reston, Virginia. These buildings are internationally-famous as masterpieces of modernism.

The third "First Honor Award" went to Tiber Island. In the words of jury chair David N. Yerkes and jurors Robert G. Cerny, O'Neil Ford, George T. Rockrise, and Benjamin Thompson:

Tiber Island represents a solution to a problem of increasing importance: the creation of a handsome and livable complex of varied urban dwelling units. The challenge has seldom been met with better understanding or greater success. The relationship of high and low buildings and of large and small spaces is eminently satisfactory. From every angle, the parts of the whole composition fall into place with unostentatious rightness. Without ever having to work at it, the architects have created freshness and variety. They have achieved monumentality and warmth by honest structure and knowledgeable use of materials.

The jury concluded that "Tiber Island must be considered an outstanding example of a successful urban renewal project and one which should inspire other architects and developers."⁷¹

In December 1966, *Fortune Magazine* included Tiber Island as one of the ten best buildings of the year, putting KLC in the company of Philip Johnson and I.M. Pei. Douglas Haskell, longtime editor of the *Architectural Forum*, noted that KLC "carried a unity of shapes and details through a whole redevelopment block in Washington [with buildings] charmingly placed around ever varying and privacy-protecting courtyards."⁷²

Keyes, Lethbridge, and Condon's other significant commissions during the next twenty-five years include the Columbia Plaza complex in Foggy Bottom, the Washington Metropolitan Transportation Authority Headquarters, and many of the city's premier office buildings. The firm and its partners went on to receive many professional honors and awards. Among them was a Federal Public Housing Administration award for the design of the Park Morton Public Housing complex.

Francis Lethbridge was the lead designer of the River Road Unitarian Church in Bethesda, which received one of the nine 1966 "Awards of Merit." He became president of the American Architectural Foundation, an AIA

⁷⁰"Cityscape: Only East Germany Rivals in Paralysis of Architecture," *Washington Post*, January 16, 1966, G9.

⁷¹"The 1966 A.I.A. Honor Awards" in *The American Institute of Architecture Journal*, Vol. 46, no. 1 (July 1966), 25-31.

⁷²Douglas Haskell, "Ten Buildings That Climax an Era" in *Fortune*, v. 74, no. 7 (December 1966) 162

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fellow, president of the local AIA chapter, and national vice president, as well as the first recipient of the Columbia Historical Society's Renchard Prize for contributions to historic preservation.

David Condon likewise became an AIA fellow, the highest honor the AIA bestowed other than its gold medal. He designed numerous campus buildings as well as adapting a southwest refrigeration plant to become the Washington Center, and was the architect of well-regarded modernist residences including his own house.

By 1974, the year before Francis Lethbridge departed for solo practice, KLC had received fully one-quarter of the honor and merit awards given by the Potomac Valley AIA chapter.⁷³ Over the next eighteen years it took in several new partners. Keyes and Condon retired in 1992 and the firm later merged into the Smith Group.

Today, Keyes, Lethbridge, and Condon ranks as one of the most influential, honored, and important Washington architectural firms of the latter half of the twentieth century. One testimonial to this ranking is provided by the nationally-noted architecture and urban design critics associated with Washington's newspapers over the past sixty years; Frederick Gutheim, Sarah Booth Conroy, Wolf von Eckardt, and Benjamin Forgey. Each has published an in-depth appreciation of either Tiber Island itself or the overall portfolio of Keyes, Lethbridge, & Condon, with Tiber Island listed among the firm's key works. The most recent of these, Benjamin Forgey's "The Men Who Made Theirs Modern", was a retrospective that appeared on the occasion of Keyes' and Condon's retirements in 1992.⁷⁴

The Tiber Island complex itself remains perhaps Washington's most acclaimed modernist work of architecture, with the exception of a building with a very different purpose, I.M. Pei's National Gallery East building.

⁷³"From the Folks Who Bought Us Contemporary Architecture," *Washington Post*, December 8, 1974, H1.

⁷⁴"The Men Who Made Theirs Modern," *Washington Post*, June 6, 1992, C1.

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10. Geographical Data

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UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

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☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title D.P. Sefton
Organization _____ date _____
street & number 19 East Chapman Street Telephone _____
city or town Alexandria state VA zip code 22301

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO)

Name _____
street & number _____ Telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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Verbal Boundary Description:

Tiber Island is located in Square 502 in Washington, DC.

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