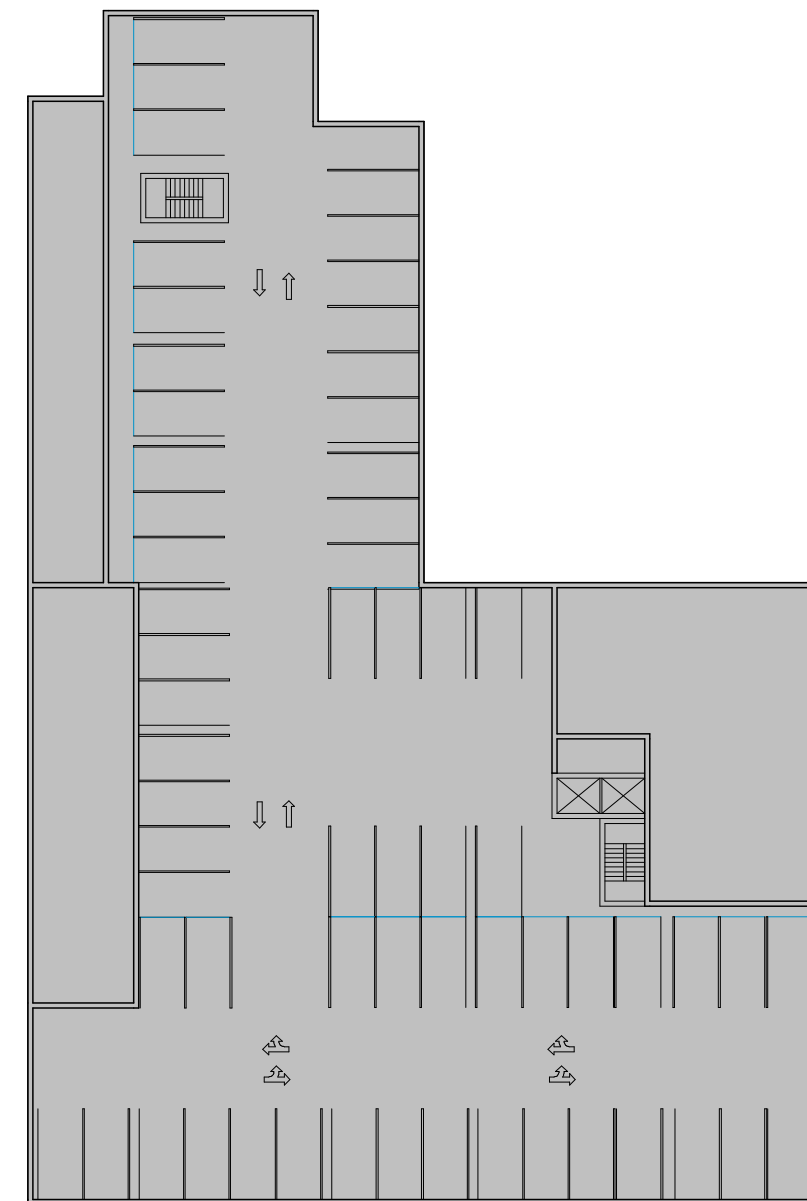
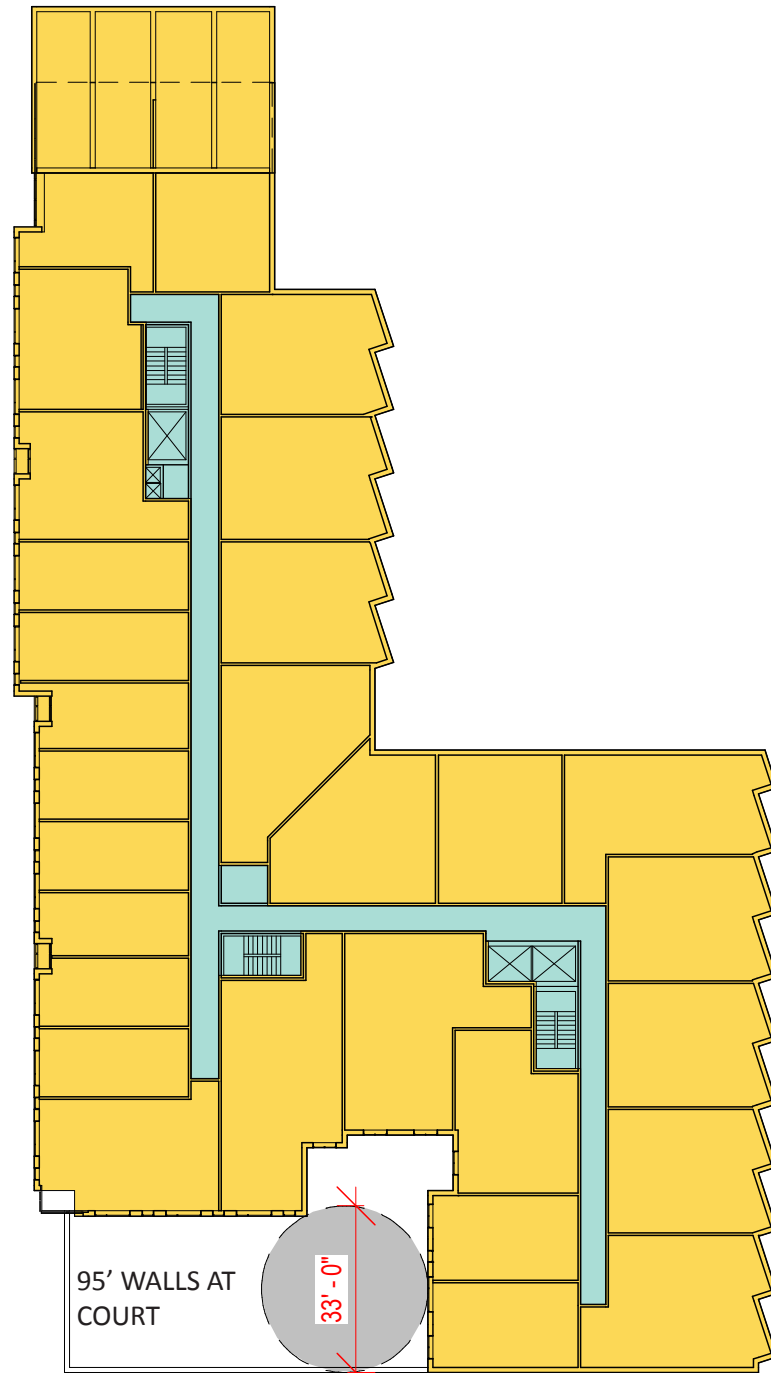


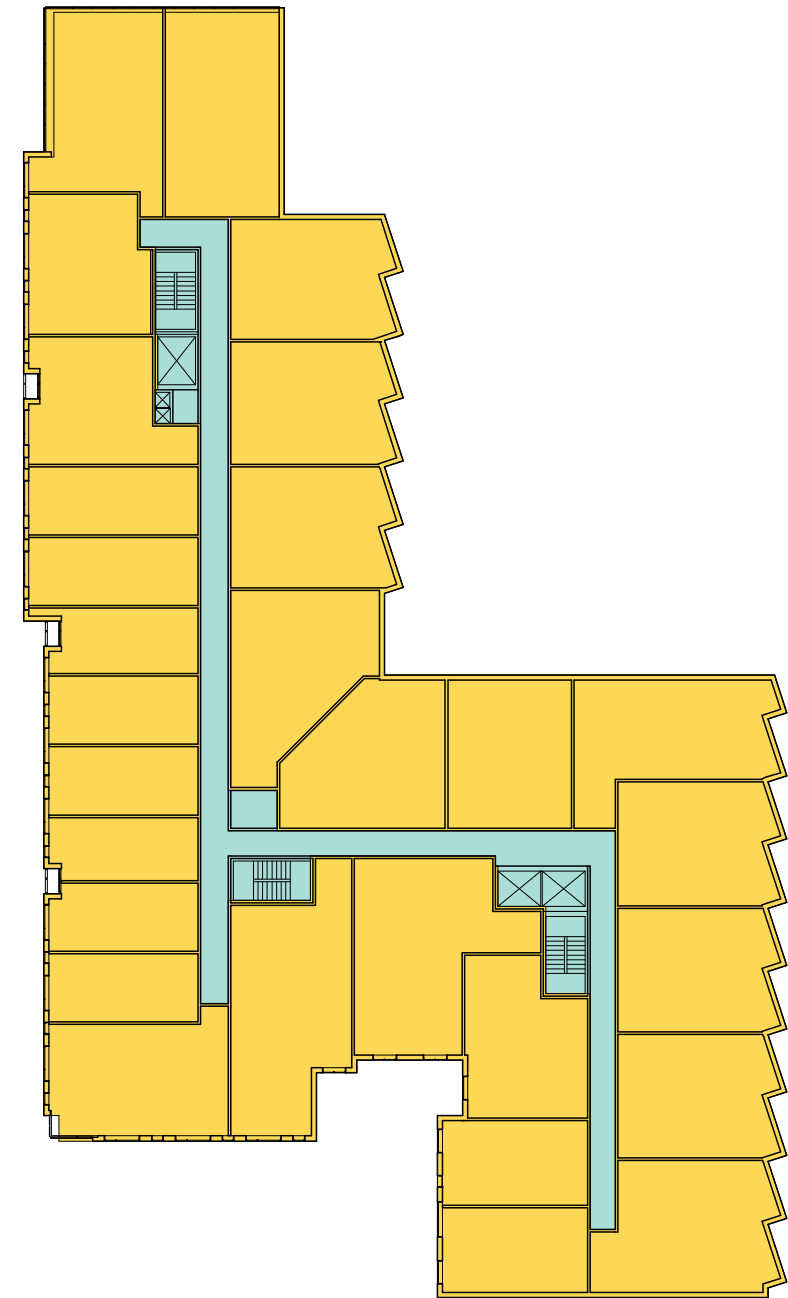
LEVEL 01



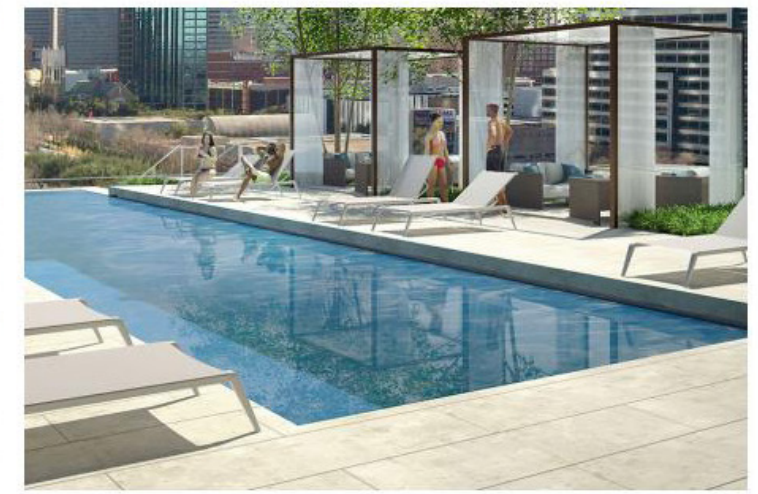
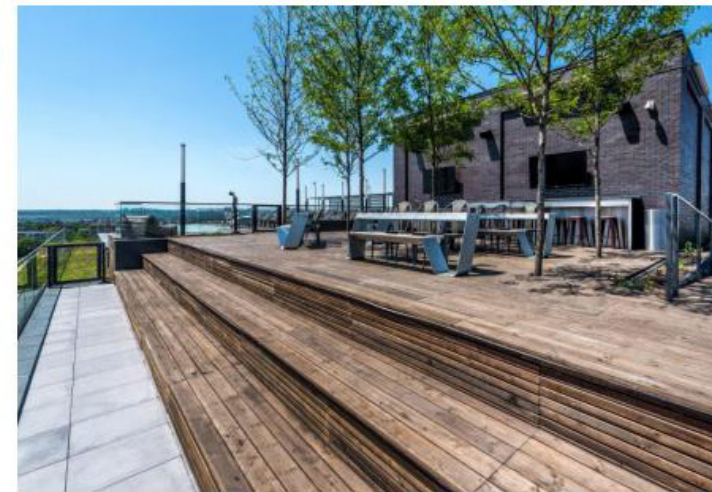
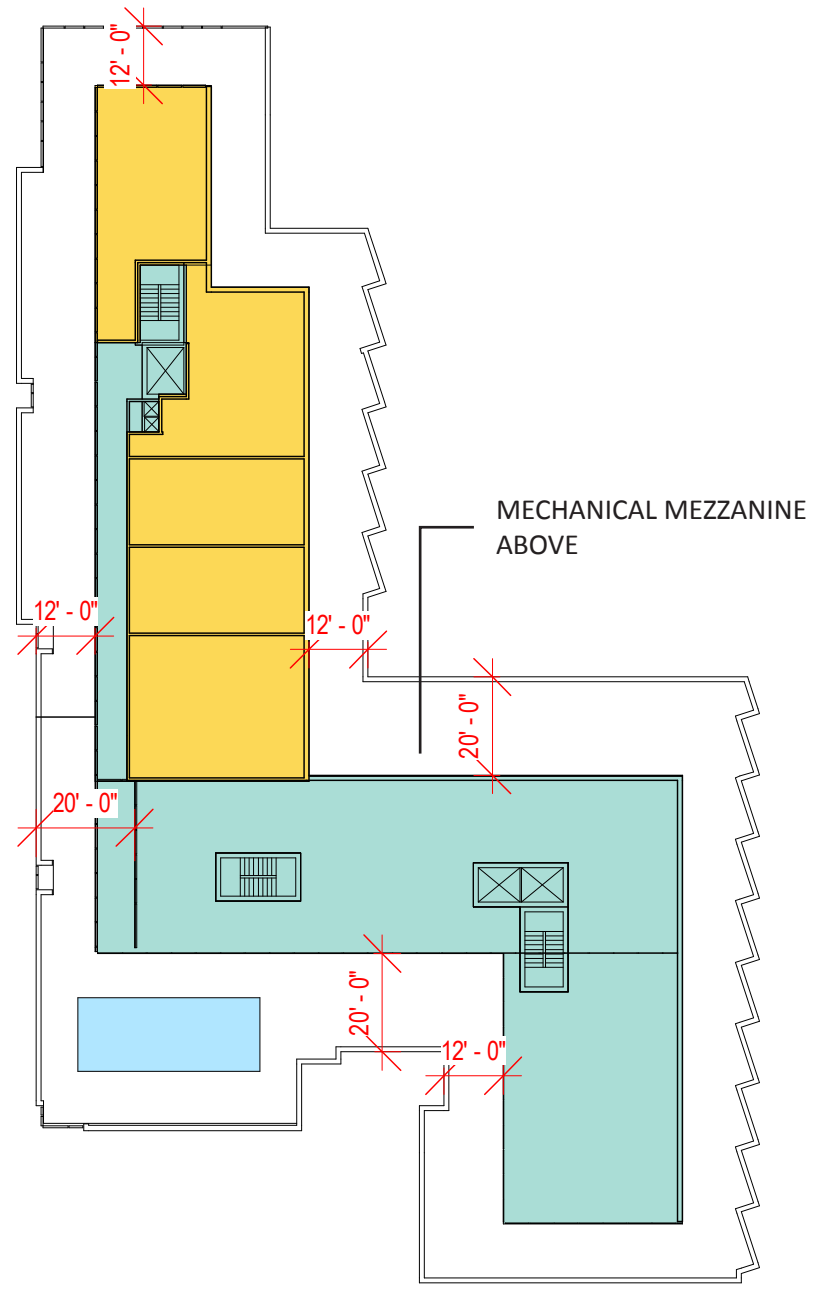
GARAGE LEVEL

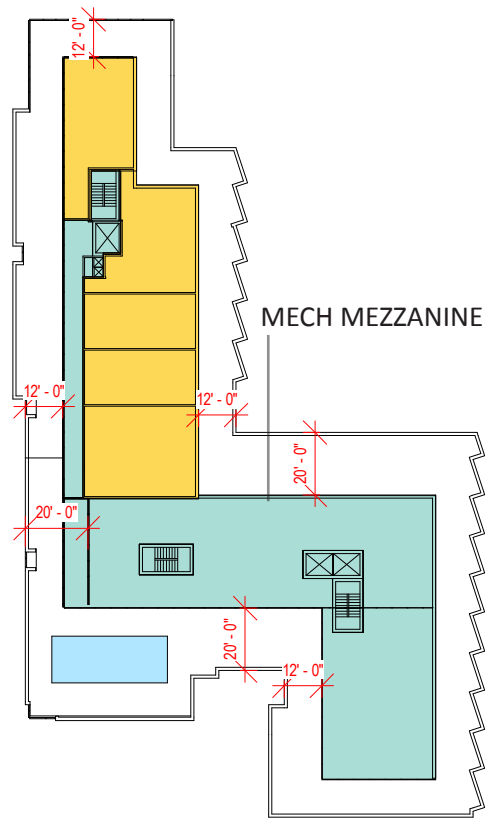
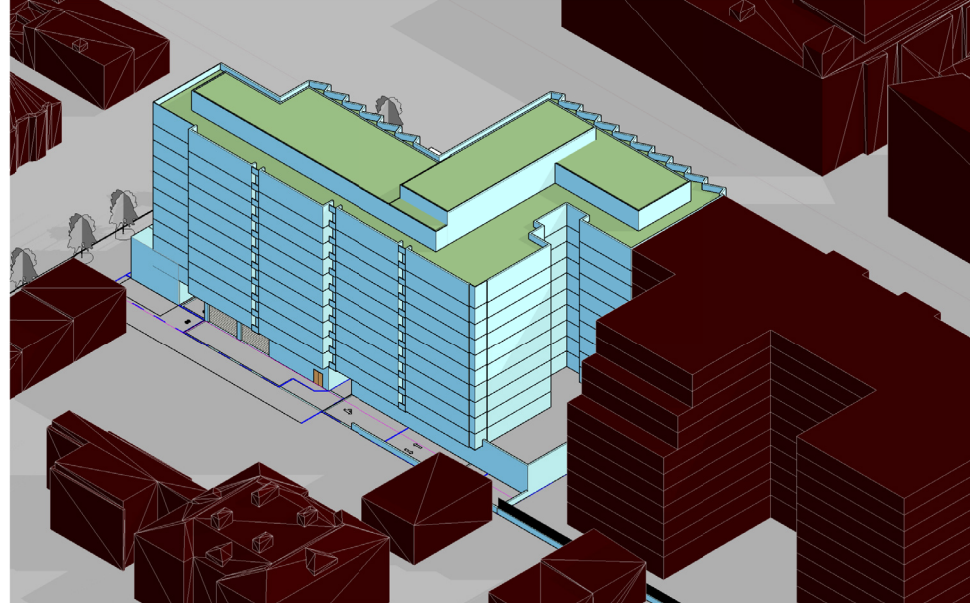
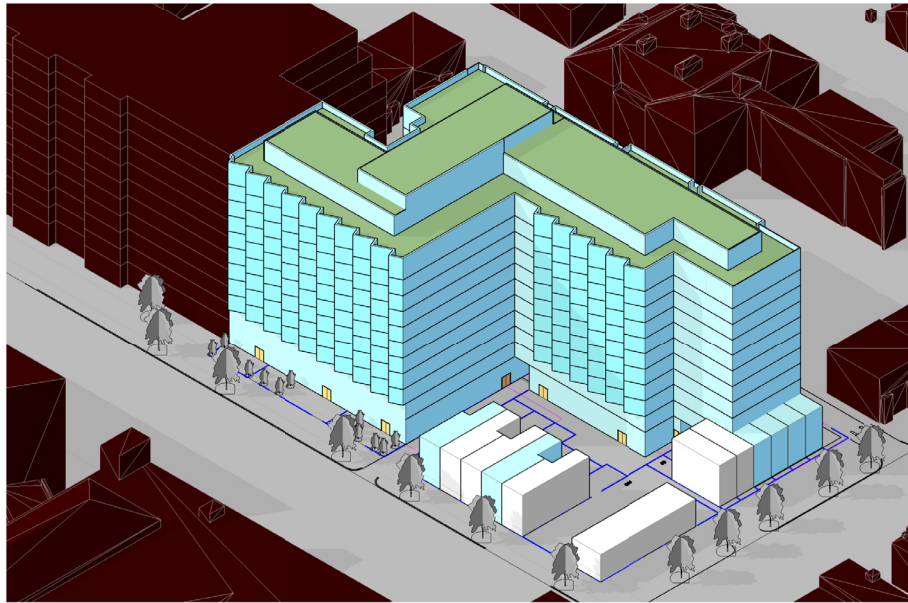


LEVEL 02

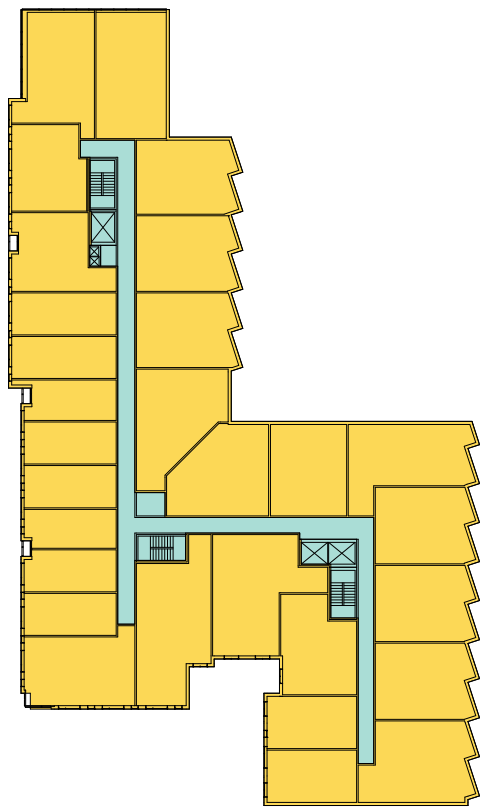


TYP LEVELS 03-11

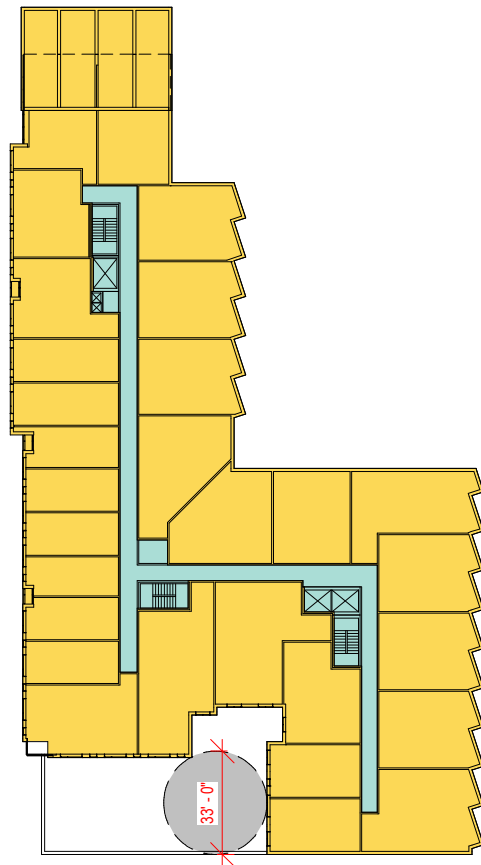




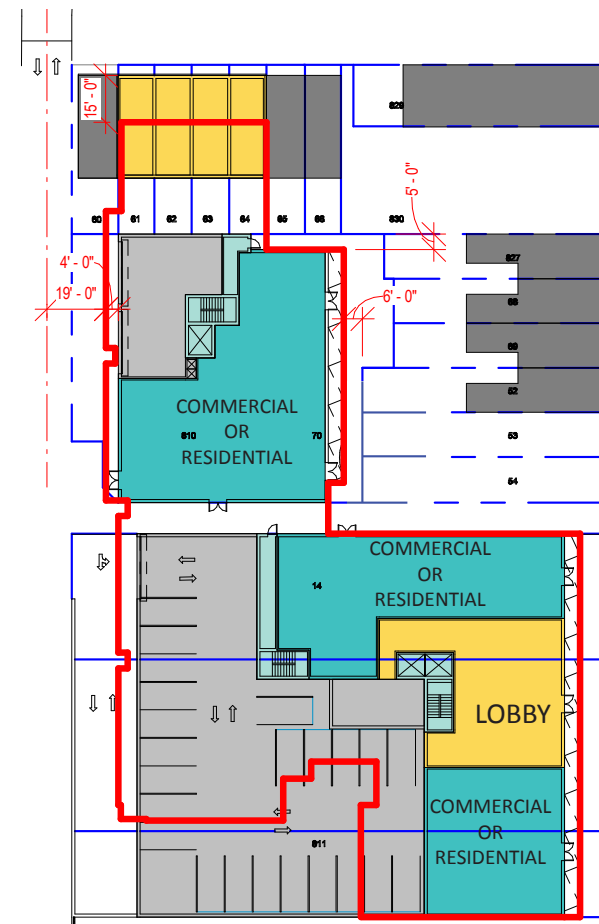
PH LEVEL



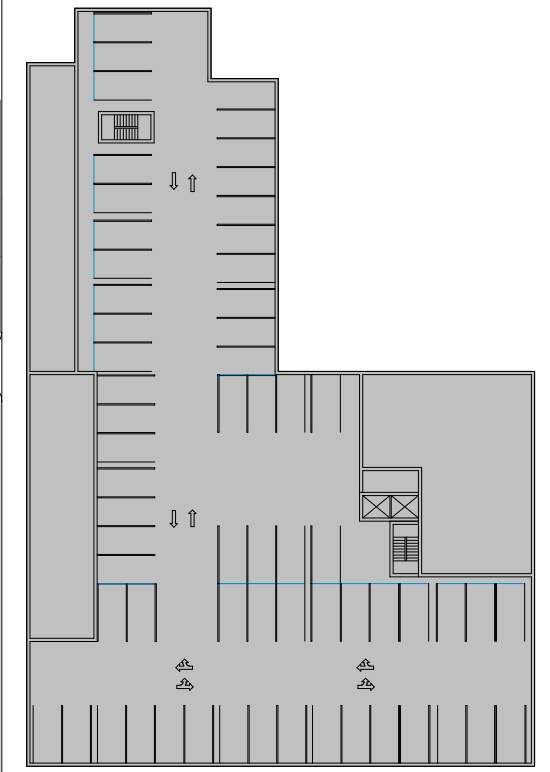
TYP LEVELS 03-11



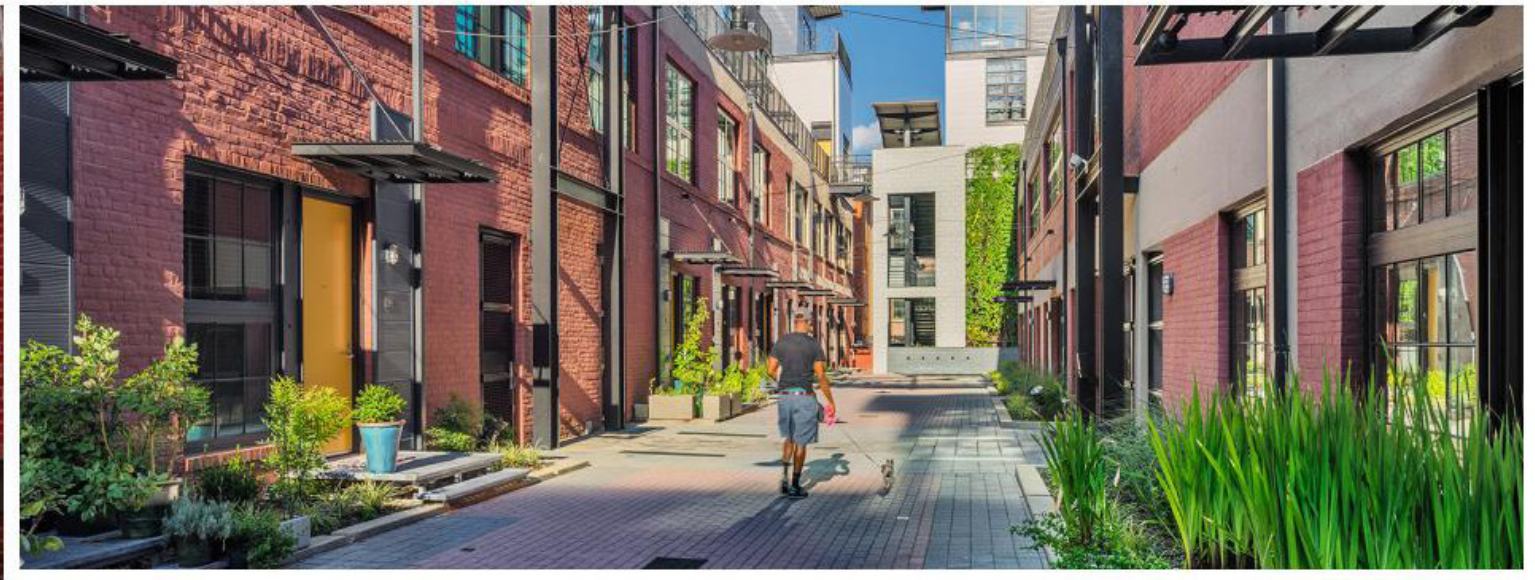
LEVEL 02

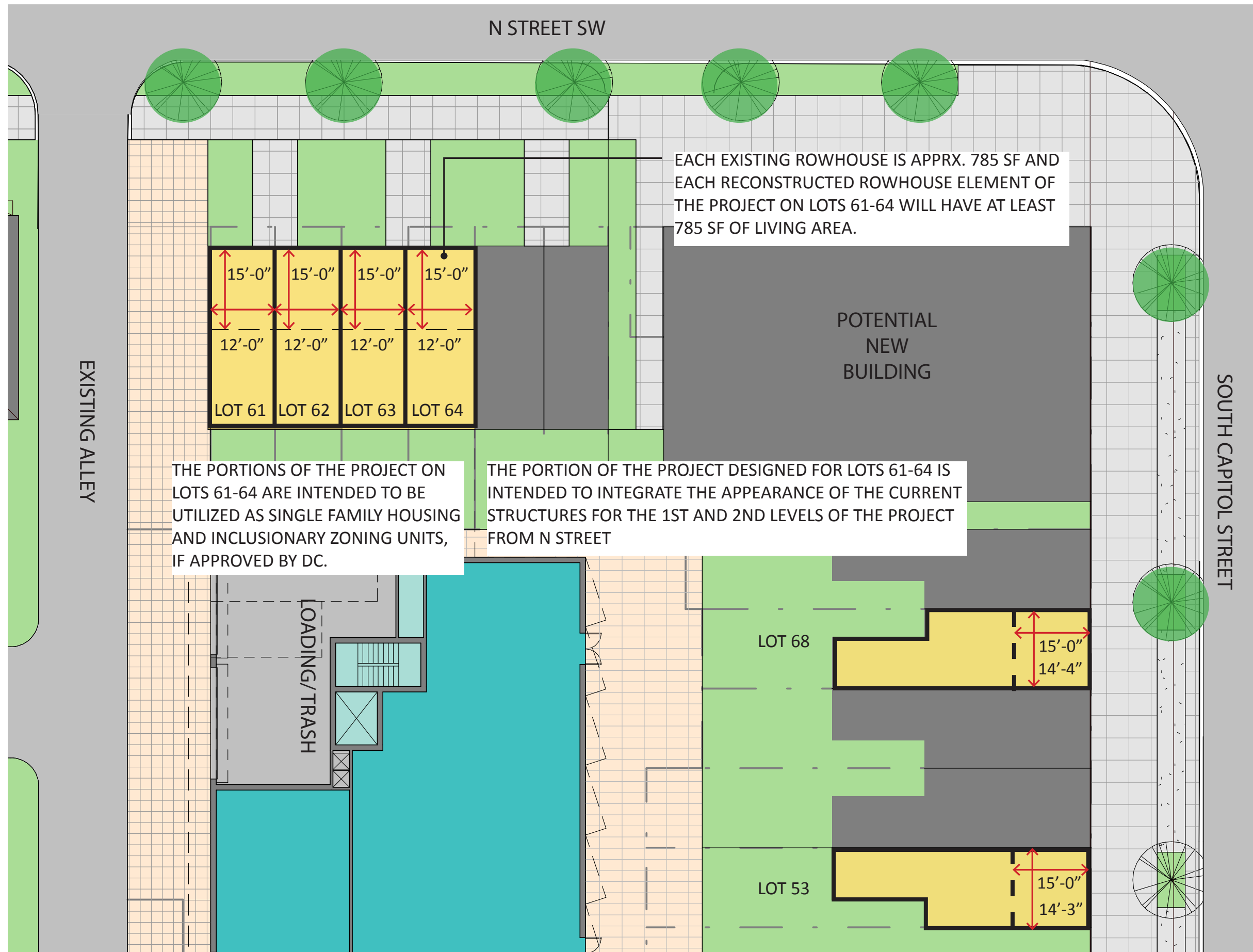


LEVEL 01



GARAGE LEVEL





RED LINES INDICATE THE APPROXIMATE DIMENSIONS OF THE BUILDINGS TO BE RETAINED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE AGREEMENT. ROOF AND FLOORS WITHIN SUCH AREA MAY BE REPLACED AS NECESSARY DURING THE CONSTRUCTION.

EXHIBIT D
DC PRESERVATION LEAGUE'S (DCPL) PROJECT REVIEW COMMITTEE
COMMENTS

- The Committee recommends further study be undertaken to evaluate reducing the height of the plinth along South Capitol, perhaps dropping the sawtooth pattern one floor which we believe may improve the proportions of the building.
- The committee also recommends that the pattern of openings in the plinth be more uniformly sized and spaced, which is more in keeping with the rhythm of the rowhouse facades.
- Finally, the committee recommends simplifying the material palette on the plinth – specifically elimination of the precast trim.

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: South Capitol Row Houses

Other names/site number: Square 653 Row Houses

Name of related multiple property listing:

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

2. Location

Street & number: 1307-1315 South Capitol Street SW

City or town: Washington State: DC County: _____

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

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

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

___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	

<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ Signature of commenting official:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ Title : State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	

Square 653 Row Houses
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Square 653 Row Houses
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: brick, wood

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The five houses of the Coleman & Richards Row, at 1307-1315 South Capitol Street SW are outstanding and highly-intact examples of the working-class dwellings that characterized South West Washington before mass demolition of the quadrant during the urban renewal project of the 1950s and 1960s.

Narrative Description

The five contiguous brick houses of the Coleman & Richards row are modest dwellings that lack the embellishments common to more middle-class housing of the time, including such architectural features as rusticated stone lintels, sills, and water tables, turrets, bay windows, or cast iron stoops, or variations in façade patterns that differentiate the houses in a row. These two-story, two-bay houses have identical dimensions of fourteen by thirty-six feet. They have a level roofline that spans the full length of the row. Their fenestration patterns are identical, with a window on the right side of the first story and a door on the left. Each second story has a window placed symmetrically on either side of the façade's midline. The houses' only architecturally decorative feature lies in patterned brickwork. Raised belt cornices each consisting of a double course of brick span the row below the houses' first and second story windows with interruptions by the doorways and window sills. Window sills appear to be brick parched with concrete or clad in painted sheet metal. Window apertures have double arches traced by projecting and recessed stretchers beneath an eyebrow course. The corbelled cornice is formed by projecting and receding courses of brick stacked in protruding tiers. Cornices are punctuated by wood or metal brackets at the side of each house.

Square 653 Row Houses

Name of Property

Washington, DC

County and State

The north façade, which is the outer wall of 1307 South Capitol, is blank and parched with concrete. The southern wall of 1315 South Capitol is shared with 1317 South Capitol, a sixth house in the Coleman & Richards row on South Capitol Street which is not part of this nomination. The houses' rear, or west, façades are largely obscured by fences. However, each house has a single second-story window above a rear entrance on its left. The houses in the row are divided by open aisle-like air shafts between 1307-1309, 1313 and 1315, and 1315 South Capitol Street.

Most of the houses in the Coleman & Richards row appear to have replacement doors and window sashes. All have been painted except for 1315 South Capitol, which displays the row's original red brick. 1315 South Capitol also exhibits what may be an original set of wooden windows. These double-hung windows consist of two equally-sized sashes each divided into four equally-sized panes.

The Coleman & Richards row exhibits a generally high level of integrity. The most significant alterations involve the first floor of 1307 and 1313 South Capitol. 1307 South Capitol has had its window and door arches bricked in to form apertures with right angles. 1313 has had a large rectangular display window inset in place of the original single sash window. Although the upper arched section of the entrance remains, a new and slightly wider door is inset beneath it. A vertically-oriented display sign has been affixed with brackets to the upper story between the windows.

Square 653 Row Houses
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

- 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

Square 653 Row Houses
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Social history

Period of Significance

1892

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

African-American

Architect/Builder

Coleman & Richards, architect and builder (South Capitol Street row)

Square 653 Row Houses
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Square 653 Row Houses
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The South Capitol row houses are a group of five late nineteenth and working-class row houses at the intersection of South Capitol and N Streets SW. The Coleman & Richards row, which includes five contiguous houses at 1307 through 1315 South Capitol Street SW, was erected in 1892. The row is significant under National Criterion A for their embodiment of the developmental patterns of Southwest Washington and the city.

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

The South Capitol row houses are the outstanding surviving examples of the thousands of working-class single-family dwellings that once filled Southwest Washington. Rows of such plain, modestly-sized brick houses are the dwelling form that characterized “Old Southwest” until their essentially complete removal by the urban renewal program of the 1950s and 1960s. The houses of the Coleman & Richards row are the oldest dwellings in Southwest other than the upper-class residences constructed by the Greenleaf Syndicate and its associates. Both the Coleman & Richards row and the nearby Banes row, along N street SW, in Square 653 are mostly intact, with their original number of houses currently maintained with a high degree of integrity.

The Square 653 rows exemplify not just the working-class row houses of their era but of developmental factors unique to Southwest. Built in what the partners of the Greenleaf Syndicate had once envisioned as a prominent district between Capitol Hill and the James Creek Canal, their development was shaped by the canal’s legacy of unintended effects, as well as the freight yards, terminals, and sidings that made Southwest a center for railroad operations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Square 653 rows also embody development patterns representative of pre-urban renewal Southwest. Washington’s housing and many public accommodations were segregated. Yet whites and African-Americans nonetheless frequently lived in close proximity within the same square, especially in working-class neighborhoods like Southwest. The spatial arrangement of the Coleman & Richards houses, which were rented to whites until at least 1940, and the Banes houses, which had African-American residents from their construction, are an especial example of this pattern.

Square 653 Row Houses

Name of Property

Washington, DC

County and State

Southwest's working dwellings were the focal point of the Southwest Washington Redevelopment Project of the 1950s and 60s. This project is considered the largest such project of its time and served as a pilot for the national urban renewal program which was the key element of federal housing policy from the 1950s into the 1970s. This pocket of intact examples possesses especial significance for its relationship to this project.

The Square 653 dwellings also possess special significance for the illumination they cast on the history of housing in Southwest. Southwest long had an association in the public mind with dilapidated living conditions and attendant social ills. In the 1950s, the Redevelopment Land Agency and other government bodies disseminated images and descriptions of Southwest's most deteriorated areas such as the row houses of Dixon Court SW to symbolize Southwest's working-class neighborhoods and establish the case for redeveloping the quadrant as a whole. Even the Supreme Court, in the *Berman v. Parker* Decision, adopted this metaphor of "blight" as a sort of contagious social pathology that spread from such neighborhoods to "healthy" communities.¹ But, despite this stereotype of Southwest's working-class neighborhoods as "blighted" and impoverished, the Square 653 houses show that Southwest's working-class neighborhoods could also be places of stability, where home ownership was common and households formed strong economic units. These houses thus exemplify a too-often forgotten part of Southwest's working-class history.

The houses of the Coleman & Richards and nearby Banes rows represent distinct differences from the handful of other early single-family dwellings that survive in Southwest. The Wheat Row, Duncanson-Cranch, Lewis, and Thomas Law Houses incorporated into the Harbour Square and Tiber Island complexes, are grander residences constructed for the city's early elite. The landmarked James Dent House (1906) at 156 Q Street SW is a free-standing middle-class house. Built to include a residence for its owner's family as well as rental units, the three-house William Schorb Row at 1400-1404 First Street SW (1907) is architecturally embellished with such touches as rusticated stone sills and lintels. This short row is also less extensive than the Coleman & Richards. Although philanthropic housing companies erected several hundred units in Southwest between 1904 and 1931, these "sanitary duplexes" represent a different architectural form than the single-family house. Likewise, the row houses found constructed circa 1938-41 amid clusters of duplexes in the southern section of the quadrant represent more modern architectural styles such as International and stripped versions of the Colonial Revival. They do not directly reflect the developmental influences of the canal and railroad to the same degree.

¹ As Justice William O. Douglas noted, "The experts concluded that, if the community were to be healthy, if it were not to revert again to a blighted or slum area, as though possessed of a congenital disease, the area must be planned as a whole. "*Berman v. Parker*," 347- 348 U. S. 35.
<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/348/26/case.html>, accessed April 7, 2017.

Square 653 Row Houses
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

For these reasons, the Square 653 row houses meet National Register Criterion A and similar District of Columbia criteria.

Planning a Boomtown

When Pierre L'Enfant laid out his plan for the city of Washington in 1791, development in the new city's Southwest quadrant had been proceeding, however slowly, for seventy-five years. In 1726, Charles Collyer, its earliest European landholder, leased fifty acres for an annual rent of 500 pounds of tobacco and a promise to plant five apple trees.² By 1762, Notley Young's plantation, with its manor house and slave quarters, covered most of the quadrant south of the future route of C Street SW.³ By 1770, Daniel Carroll, who owned most of the remaining land in Southwest, had laid out the town of Carrollsburg on Buzzard Point. However, Carroll had succeeded in selling just a few lots and Southwest remained fields and thickets.⁴

L'Enfant's plan, however, inspired visions of this agricultural landscape becoming the new city's engine of economic growth.⁵ Buzzard Point's long coastline suddenly seemed a natural advantage to be exploited through human ingenuity, as L'Enfant and his allies envisioned a city canal which would bypass the tortuous Potomac Channel, linking new wharves on the Eastern Branch to the city of Georgetown while creating commercial districts in the empty tracts along its route.⁶ In June 1791, L'Enfant extolled the benefits of such a canal in his first official report to President Washington.⁷ It is thought that the draft map L'Enfant sent to Washington on August 19, 1791 depicted such a canal stretching from Buzzard Point to the confluence of Tiber Creek and the Potomac River, near the present site of the Washington Monument. Just ten days later, Washington wrote to Thomas Jefferson to recommend a canal "as one of the initial tasks necessary for the prosperous development of the city."⁸ Others in the circles of power dreamed on an event vaster scale. Washington's personal secretary Tobias Lear was an inveterate promoter and speculator who became a key advocate for the canal. He:

² Deborah Rubenstein and Stuart Speaker, with Joan C. Chase, "Historic Context," in *Archaeological Survey*, 87.

³ Don Alexander Hawkins, "The Landscape of the Federal City: A 1792 Walking Tour," *Washington History, Special Bicentennial Issue: Washington D.C., 1791-1991* (Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring/Summer, 1991), 25-26.

⁴ *Archaeological Survey*, 78-79.

⁵ Aaron Morton Sakolski. *The Great American Land Bubble*. (Ludwig von Mises Institute, 1966), 161.

⁶ *L'Enfant's Report Accompanying his First City Plan to the President. Georgetown, June 22, 1791*, quoted in Cornelius W. Heine. "The Washington City Canal" in *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, Vol. 53/56, (Washington, D.C., Columbia Historical Society, 1953/1956), 2.

⁷ Heine, 2. See also L'Enfant's Report Accompanying his First City Plan to the President. Georgetown, June 2, 1791. Mss Div., Library of Congress.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Square 653 Row Houses
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Foresaw the time when the fur and peltry from the Great Lakes region would be brought to the Capital city, passing through the Washington Canal to the Eastern Branch, where it could be shipped to various ports.”⁹

Despite this high-level enthusiasm, the canal proposal became enmeshed in municipal politics even before a city could be built. While property owners elsewhere welcomed the project, Georgetown’s wharf owners, warehouse proprietors, and carters did not.¹⁰ As years passed and his administration drew to a close, Washington rued the canal project’s enduring potential to sow discord and inspire rivalry.¹¹

While the canal project stagnated, visions of a Southwest boomtown reemerged in another guise. L’ Enfant’s plan, which was refined and elaborated by his successors, had divided the city’s site into numbered squares, to be subdivided into individual lots. Most of this land was held by a few owners, with the largest tracts belonging to Young and Carroll. In 1791, President George Washington had advanced a plan to finance the development of the city which stipulated that each landowner would convey half his lots to convey to the federal government. The presidentially-appointed District of Columbia Commissioners would sell then sell the lots to finance the construction of government buildings and streets. Compensation would accrue to the land donors as these improvements increased the value of their remaining lots, and they would receive cash payments for land taken for such public purposes as rights-of-way.¹²

Although Washington persuaded the landholders, his plan faltered when several auctions and a lottery failed to sell a significant number of lots.¹³ However, in 1793, a trio of political insiders offered a proposal to break the stalemate. James Greenleaf (1765-1843) was a young merchant from New England whose family had served with distinction during the struggle for American independence.¹⁴ During the early 1790s, he had lived in Europe, where he amassed a fortune selling American bonds to Dutch investors and served briefly as United States Counsel at Amsterdam. After returning to the United States in the fall of 1793, he sought out politically-

⁹ Heine, 3

¹⁰ Heine, 3-4.

¹¹ Heine,4.

¹¹ Sakolski’s chapter “Washington, DC, America’s First Boomtown,”150-157, and Scott Berg. *Grand Avenue*, 81-85 offer detailed depictions of these development plans for the city.

¹³ Berg, 133-134.

¹⁴ Alan Culling Clark. *Greenleaf and Law in the Federal City* (Washington, DC: W.C. Roberts,1901), 9-14, and Scott W. Berg. *Grand Avenue* (New York; Random House, 2007), 206. Clark’s study incorporates an exhaustive review of primary documents as well as the opportunity to interview people who knew Greenleaf near the end of his long life. However, Clark’s narrative is that Greenleaf was an eager and ambitious naïf who was essentially betrayed by the older and less principled Morris. More modern scholarship depicts Greenleaf as a full-fledged schemer.

Square 653 Row Houses

Name of Property

Washington, DC

County and State

connected promoters like Tobias Lear and Philadelphia capitalist Robert Morris. Greenleaf soon began to speculate in land with Morris, a signer of the, Declaration of Independence, Articles of the Confederation, and United States Constitution who was called the “financier of the American Revolution,” and his partner, Pennsylvania Secretary of State John Nicholson.¹⁵

In late 1793 Greenleaf negotiated an agreement with the District Commissioners which led the three partners to form the Greenleaf Syndicate. The agreement obligated the syndicate to loan the Commissioners a substantial sum and build at least seven brick houses per year, but it was on balance a sweetheart deal. It entitled the syndicate to buy lots on credit at a deeply-discounted price and required them to make only an annual installment payment at zero percent interest. Ultimately the partners agreed to purchase approximately 6,000 publicly-owned lots, and Greenleaf bought more than a thousand additional lots from private landowners on his own account.¹⁶

The partner’s true interest lay more in financial speculation than real estate development. Although non-citizens could not own American lands, European capitalists like Amsterdam’s Holland Land Company, which purchased 3,000,000 acres in Western New York from Morris in 1792-93, were making large investments through American trustees. Greenleaf sought to repeat his earlier success by selling mortgages on the syndicate’s lots through agents in Holland. However, the results were disappointing.¹⁷

In 1795, Greenleaf, Morris, and Nicholson combined their holdings, which comprised millions of acres across the thirteen states, into a stock venture called the North American Land Company.¹⁸ Almost immediately, their empire tottered, as squatters expropriated their wilderness lands, the new states imposed heavy tax liabilities, a revolution in Holland destroyed any hopes of attracting Dutch capital and the United States’ economy entered a downturn.¹⁹ However the NALC’s core malady was reckless speculation and chaotic business practices, with the partners co-signing loans and settling accounts with increasingly worthless personal notes.²⁰

Although Greenleaf was the equivalent of a modern-day billionaire on paper, he quickly became cash-poor. Although he sold a thousand high-priced lots to Thomas Law, a British capitalist who later became “perhaps the foremost promoter of the canal scheme,” he and his partners diverted their resources to projects outside Washington and could not could not sell lots fast enough to

¹⁵ Clark, 27 and Berg, 129 and 206.

¹⁶ Clark, 67-75 and Berg, 206-207. The original agreement’s provisions were modified several times.

¹⁷ Clark, 82-87.

¹⁸ Shaw Livermore. *Early American Land Companies: Their Influence on Corporate Development*. (Reprint ed. Washington, D.C.: Beard Books, 1999), 165 and Clark, 17.

¹⁹ Sakolski, 165.

²⁰ Bruce H. Mann. *Republic of Debtors: Bankruptcy in the Age of American Independence*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 201.

Square 653 Row Houses

Name of Property

Washington, DC

County and State

meet their obligations to the District Commissioners.”²¹ Relationships frayed as the partners battled ruin through a rickety framework of trusts and buyout agreements secured by personal notes.²² By 1797, the syndicate had collapsed, and the feuding trio was incarcerated in Philadelphia’s Pryne Street debtor’s prison.²³

During its short lifespan, the syndicate and its individual principals built approximately seventy houses across the city.²⁴ A provision of the revised purchase agreement required the partners to buy several hundred lots owned by Notley Young and Daniel Carroll in Southwest.²⁵ Some of these lots became the site of the Wheat Row on Fourth Street SW, erected by Greenleaf in 1794 just a few blocks from the proposed canal route.

In 1796, Morris and Nicolson hurriedly erected Washington’s first full-scale real estate development to meet contractual requirements. Their “Twenty Houses,” which occupied in a promising location in the 1200 block of South Capitol and unit block of N Streets SW between the proposed canal route and the foot of Capitol Hill, were far larger and grander in plan than the frame shanties that housed most of Washington’s three thousand residents.²⁶ Like many present-day projects, the development opened with a grand reception; this one featured a bull roast and speeches that proclaimed it the foundation for a glorious metropolis.²⁷ However, most of the houses were shells without doors and windows. At the syndicate’s demise, they remained unfinished and were soon taken over by squatters. For decades, European travel writers cited them out as illustrations of republican corruption, inefficiency, and pretension. As late as 1815, the *New York Commercial Advertiser* described them as “an object of particular dreariness... a row of twenty brick buildings which, never having been inhabited, have fallen into dilapidation and ruin” looming against the backdrop of the Capitol.²⁸

A Water Highway

By the time a city canal company was finally chartered in 1802, George Washington was three years dead, and Nicholson had died in the debtors’ prison where Morris still languished. The canal, whose original backers included Thomas Law, progressed in fits and starts, with lengthy

²¹ Sakolski, 159, 165 and “Editors Prefatory Note,” to Thomas Law. “Observations on the Intended Canal in Washington City,” in: *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C., Vol. 8* (Historical Society of Washington, D.C, 1905, 158. See also Sakolski, 161 for an account of how Law paid Greenleaf over three times the price he had paid the commissioners for his lots.

²² Sakolski, 165 and Mann, 200.

²³ Clark, 173-177 and Sakolski, 165.

²⁴ Clark, 136-143.

²⁵ Clark, 124.

²⁶ Clark, 125-126. Clark maintains that there were actually thirty houses, with fifteen built by Nicholson and a like number by Morris.

²⁷ Clark, 123-134 discusses this project in detail.

²⁸ Clark, 133.

Square 653 Row Houses

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

hiatuses as successive companies failed and Washington was burned by the British in 1814.²⁹ When it finally opened in 1815, its channel ran east from the Potomac River, following Tiber Creek along the north side of the Mall to trace the present-day path of Constitution Avenue to Third Street, where it crossed the Mall and followed South Capitol Street for several blocks. Near the intersection of Virginia Avenue, the canal split into east and west channels. The east channel ran southeast to the approximate intersection of Second and I Streets SE, where it turned south to Eastern Branch near the Navy Yard. The west channel followed James Creek, which curved west across Southwest to the intersection of Third and R Streets, and then turned south to empty into the Eastern Branch between Greenleaf and Buzzard Points, east of the United States Arsenal and Washington Penitentiary.³⁰

While the Greenleaf Syndicate had disintegrated almost at its creation, the Washington City Canal took several decades to fail. Although its channel was badly engineered and required much expensive dredging, its fundamental problem was failure to attract traffic. By 1831, the canal company's finances were such that the commissioners took over its operation.³¹ Although the city canal was eventually incorporated into a regional network of waterways, what traffic it had was soon siphoned off by railroads. By 1860, it was largely supplanted by a Baltimore & Ohio Railroad line that ran along Maryland Avenue and at 14th Street SW crossed the Long Bridge to connect to the port of Alexandria.³²

The canal's effects on Southwest were particularly problematic. By the mid nineteenth century, Eastern Branch had begun to silt in, and the quadrant's commercial waterfront centered on the Potomac shoreline, considerably northwest of the canal's mouth. By the Civil War, Southwest was already nicknamed "The Island" because the Mall and the canal isolated it from the commercial center of the city.³³ However, the canal effectively split the quadrant into two islands. The smaller "island" portion of Southwest, which included the former site of the Twenty Houses, was separated from the quadrant's main body by the canal's western channel. It stretched southwest and southeast from the channels' junction near the intersection of Virginia Avenue and South Capitol Street to the Eastern Branch, spreading as far west and east as Third Streets SW and SE.

Southwest's isolation worsened after the Civil War. As the municipal government laid out its

²⁹ Heine, 5-8.

³⁰ Heine, 21. See also Hawkins, *A Walking Tour*, 31-32.

³¹ Heine, 9-11.

³² *Warehouse Study phase II*, 13-14.

³³ For example, the first Baptist congregation in Southwest, founded in 1857, was known as the "Island Baptist Church" because its first meeting place was at Island Hall on Virginia Avenue SW. Sefton, D.P. *Modernist Churches of Southwest Washington* (Washington, DC: Southwest Neighborhood Assembly, 2015),44.

Square 653 Row Houses

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

sewer system in the early 1870s, many lines from the densely-settled northwest quadrant were connected to the largely disused canal to drain into the Eastern Branch. However, after the raw effluent flowed through Southwest, it pooled in the river shallows and was pushed back up the canal by incoming tides. Development along the channel was constrained by a notorious stench, which was multiplied when such noxious and odiferous uses as an early municipal dump, slaughterhouses, and rendering plants were relegated to its environs.³⁴ At around this time, the municipal government began to cover over or fill in northwest sections of the canal.³⁵ By the early 1890s most of the canal, including the eastern channel that ran to the Navy Yard, had been filled, but much of the channel through Southwest remained open into the 1930s.

Even as the canal was filled, a new barrier appeared. In 1867, a major line of the Baltimore and Potomac (later part of the Pennsylvania) Railroad had crossed the Anacostia River near Congressional Cemetery. By the 1890s, the tracks headed southwest into a sandstone block tunnel that opened near the intersection of Twelfth Street and Virginia Avenue SE. The tracks emerged from underground near Sixth Street SE, and ran west along K Street at grade level to Second Street SE, where they angled north across I Street and continued west to a large freight yard just southeast of the intersection of South Capitol Street and Virginia Avenue. No fewer than seven separate through track-lines and 22 sidings ran through the freight yard. Some of these connected to a large roundhouse whose curved wall backed up to the intersection of I and South Capitol Streets SE. Four parallel through-track lines crossed South Capitol Street and continued into the southwest quadrant on Virginia Avenue, which became “Railroad Avenue” on some turn-of-the-twentieth century maps.

As *Washington Post* columnist George Rothwell Brown reminisced in 1924, “While the railroads lay like monstrous iron giants across the southern stretches of the Capital, the development of that whole section was retarded.”³⁶ In addition to the trains’ soot and noise, Brown noted that spurs and subsidiary lines:

Spread out over a great part of the southeast and southwest sections of the city, where for years [the railroads] enjoyed an enormous monopoly of important thoroughfares, and virtually divided the city in halves by immense areas of tracks and sidings and switches.³⁷

As trains passed through the city streets, they blocked intersections and “vehicles would be in

³⁴ Examples include “Slaughtering Diseased Cattle,” *Washington Post*, Oct 6, 1879; 4, “An Offensive Sewer,” *Washington Post*; Jul 23, 1891; 8, “Dumps Breed Disease,” *Washington Post*, Nov 8, 1893;3,” Fight for A Pure City,” *Washington Post*; Jun 23, 1894; 8.

³⁵ QED Associates. *Historical Context Study: Southwest Washington, DC, 1791-1973*. (Southwest Neighborhood Assembly – unpublished, 2015,)10-11.

³⁶ Brown, George Rothwell. “Capital Silhouettes”. *Washington Post*. February 18, 1924,4.

³⁷ *Ibid*.

Square 653 Row Houses

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

interminable traffic jams, while long lines of freight and passenger cars were shifted back and forth with exasperating delays.”³⁸ Not surprisingly, accidents were common as pedestrians and vehicles sought to evade these rolling roadblocks.

Settling “The Island”

In the late nineteenth century, Southwest shared the high growth rate of the city. During the Civil War, its population nearly doubled, growing faster than that of the city overall, and, when the city’s population more than doubled between 1870 and 1900, its 84% growth rate was only slightly lower.³⁹ By 1890, quadrant included an active waterfront, impressive churches, and well-kept neighborhoods, but it nonetheless became known as a district of working-class housing. Although isolation and the bustle of the waterfront were likely factors, unpleasant neighbors like the open canal and railroad particularly discouraged middle class development. Anecdotes abound about the toll exacted by the noise, smoke, and soot of the trains. The Fifth Baptist Church, founded in the antebellum years as the Island Baptist Church, repeatedly sued the Pennsylvania Railroad over its continuing disruption of its services and eventually won victory before the Supreme Court.⁴⁰ When the new Jefferson Junior High School opened in 1940, newspaper articles recalled how lessons were interrupted and classroom windows slammed shut whenever a train roared past its trackside predecessor.⁴¹

The dwellings that housed Southwest’s working-class residents were small, simple in plan, and plain in detail, but they took a variety of forms. Most early houses were frame gable-or flat-roofed houses, the latter of which were sometimes built in rows. Although the city building code of 1873 restricted the construction of frame dwellings, these fire rules were suspended for the sparsely-settled areas south of I Street SW, after the chief inspector of buildings pronounced “shanty builders ... the pioneers of the city [who perform the] legitimate function of colonizing and preparing the way for more pretentious buildings.”⁴² After 1900, however, most houses built in Southwest were of brick construction.

Although most working-class housing in Southwest faced streets, alley houses began to appear in the quadrant in the 1850s.⁴³ By the Civil War, they existed in pockets along on both sides of

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Paul A. Groves. “The Development of a Black Residential Community in Southwest Washington: 1860-1897,” *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C.* Vol. 49, (1973/1974), (Washington, DC: Columbia Historical Society, 1974), 264.

⁴⁰ Sefton, *Modernist Churches*, 44.

⁴¹ “Jefferson Plans,” *Washington Post*; Aug 21, 1940;17.

⁴² “The Building of Houses: What Has Been Done during the Past Week – Improvements Contemplated,” *Washington Post*, June 22, 1884, 8.

⁴³ James Borchert, “The Rise and Fall of Washington’s Inhabited Alleys: 1852-1972,” *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C., Vol. 71/72*, (1971/1972), 268-270.

Square 653 Row Houses

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

Four-and-a-Half Street just north of F Street SW and south of M Street.⁴⁴ By 1871, clusters of alley dwellings had developed in every area of Southwest other than Buzzard's Point.⁴⁵ As in other areas, alley houses were often "back built" at the rear of a street front lot occupied by a larger house. Frequently they were built in rows which were interspersed with stables, warehouses, and workshops. Alley housing's heyday was brief. In 1892, Congress restricted the construction of dwellings on alleys less than thirty feet wide, lacking utilities, or without ready egress to city streets.⁴⁶ However, despite housing reformers' crusades and further legislation, thousands of alley houses stood across the city into the 1930s and beyond.

Whether they fronted on a street or an alley, Southwest's working-class houses tended to be simply constructed. Many were two-story dwellings with four small rooms and possibly a single room one-story kitchen attached to the rear. By the early twentieth century, most Southwest houses were hooked to water and sewer lines. However, a 1951 survey found that a significant number of dwellings in the quadrant's oldest and poorest area still lacked indoor plumbing.⁴⁷

Although many Southwest blocks were well-kept, some clusters of houses were of rudimentary construction, built at lowest cost to be rented to poor tenants at the highest rate of return, or allowed to decay through minimal investment in maintenance. While these conditions were not unique to Southwest, they were relatively common in the quadrant and made it a focal point for housing reform. In 1896, just two years after prominent citizens formed the pioneering City Center committee on public health and housing, representatives of the South Washington Citizens' Association petitioned the District Commissioners to improve conditions in an alley on the current site of Town Center Park. After the Commissioners failed to act, the association vowed to "make a fight for the betterment of the sanitary conditions of the place."⁴⁸ By the early twentieth century, activists from Southwest were leading housing reform in the city. The most prominent were Charles and Eugenia Weller, the founders of the Southwest Neighborhood House, a settlement house which opened Washington's first planned children's playground in the rear yard of the Lewis House in 1901.⁴⁹ Another of the Wellers' key accomplishments was the publication of *Neglected Neighbors* (1908). This book, which featured an introduction by President Theodore Roosevelt and photographs by Lewis Hine, presented statistical data and

⁴⁴ Borchert, 270.

⁴⁵ Borchert, 274.

⁴⁶ Borchert, 279.

⁴⁷ Francesca Russello Ammon. *Southwest Washington, D.C., Urban Renewal Area* (HABS No. DC-856) (Unpublished report of the Historic American Buildings Survey, National Parks Service), Viewed online at <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/master/pnp/habshaer/dc/dc1000/dc1017/data/dc1017data.pdf>, May 1, 2014.

⁴⁸ "Bring on Another Pie," *Washington Post*, April 7, 1896.

⁴⁹ Bernard Mergen, "Children's Playgrounds in the District of Columbia, 1902-1942," in *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, 50 (1980), 384.

Square 653 Row Houses

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

vivid case studies about the living conditions of impoverished families, some of whom lived near the “notorious, malodorous, deadly James Creek Canal.”⁵⁰ After serving on a coroner’s jury, Charles Weller became an advocate for covering the open sections canal, scene of ten drownings a year.⁵¹

The housing reformers won numerous victories, including the demolition of hundreds of “insanitary dwellings” and the redevelopment of notorious Willow Tree Alley SW as a playground in 1911.⁵² However, Charles Weller posed a difficult challenge when he exhorted reformers to “build two for each one demolished.” One remedy was the construction of “sanitary housing,” constructed by limited dividend companies to provide amenities like indoor toilets and running water at affordable rents for working-class tenants. Beginning in 1897, the Washington Sanitary Housing and Washington Sanitary Investment Companies built such duplex units across the city, including more than 200 houses for African-American renters in the 1300 and 1400 blocks of Carrollsburg Place, Half Street, and the unit block of M Street SW between 1904 and 1931.⁵³

Much of Southwest’s population growth during the late nineteenth century represented the migration of poor African-Americans from rural areas. While Southwest’s residents doubled during the Civil War, its percentage of African-American residents quadrupled, rising from 18.5% of the quadrant’s inhabitants in 1860 to 37.3% in 1870.⁵⁴ In-migration of African-Americans accounted for almost two-thirds of the quadrant’s growth between 1890 and 1897.⁵⁵ In an environment of intense economic discrimination, these new residents disproportionately occupied the quadrant’s least-expensive housing. In 1897, some 81% of alley-dwelling households city-wide were African-American.⁵⁶ At that time, African-Americans comprised almost half Southwest’s residents, compared to approximately one-third of the city’s.⁵⁷ Southwest’s African-American population was then centered in three major clusters east of Four-and-a Half-Street, the quadrant’s major commercial district. As historical geographer Robert

⁵⁰ Charles Frederick Weller and Eugenia Weller. *Neglected Neighbors: Stories of Life in the Alleys, Tenements and Shanties*. (Philadelphia: Winston and Company, 1909), 243.

⁵¹ Weller, 244.

⁵² Moore and McNett, 107.

⁵³ Elizabeth Hannold, “Comfort and Respectability: Washington’s Philanthropic Housing Movement,” *Washington History*, 4, 2 (Fall/Winter, 1992/1993) presents an in-depth history of Washington’s sanitary housing movement. Southwest’s earliest sanitary housing duplexes, which were built on Van Street, have been demolished, but the vast majority of those built during construction waves in 1907-1914 and 1931 appears to exist. The sanitary housing companies also built apartment complexes in the unit block of O and P Streets SW and the 200 block of P Street SW in 1937-39.

⁵² Groves, 264.

⁵³ Groves, 265 (table)

⁵⁶ Borchert, 275.

⁵⁷ Groves, 264.

Square 653 Row Houses

Name of Property

Groves notes:

Washington, DC

County and State

The concentration east of 4 1/2 Street was composed of two major and one minor cluster which had a total area of some twenty-six blocks. The northernmost of these clusters was located north of Virginia Avenue and contained 1,605 blacks (75 percent of total population in the cluster). Immediately south of Virginia Avenue was a second concentration which contained 2,567 blacks (78 percent of total). Finally, there was a minor concentration straddling Delaware Avenue at M Street. This smaller concentration contained 477 blacks (84 percent of total). In total, these three clusters held 4,649 blacks or close to two-thirds of all black residents in the quadrant.⁵⁸

Thus, although many of early Southwest's African-Americana lived in neighborhoods with African-American majorities, these areas also included white residents. In time, as African-Americans came to compose a larger proportion of Southwest's residents, a variety of residential patterns emerged throughout the quadrant. Squares 500 and 501, on the current site of the Town Center Towers, illustrates the evolution of one relatively common pattern. In 1880, about one-third of these squares' households were African-American. Although they contained 25 alley houses, 24 of which were occupied by African-Americans, more than half their African-American households lived in street-front houses in the same blocks as whites. The houses occupied by African-American households tended to be in strips rather than sprinkled throughout these blocks. By 1940, only about one-third of the squares' households were white, as the demolition of all but two of the alley houses was off-set by the shift of much of the older street-front housing stock to African-American occupants.⁵⁹

Life on an Island 1890-1920

Located a block south of the site of the Greenleaf Syndicate's Twenty Houses, the row of houses at 1307-1317 South Capitol Street SW, was designed and built by its owners, the firm of Coleman & Richards, in 1892. Although the identity of the individual members of this partnership remains somewhat obscure, it seems to have involved members of an extended family. One partner was likely carpenter and contractor Joseph Monroe Coleman (b. 1855). In 1900, Coleman's household at 523 Florida Avenue NE included a cousin named Richards. The Richards family conducted a variety of businesses in the South Capitol Street corridor. In 1892, Alfred and William A. Richards operated a brickyard at South Capitol and O Streets. At that

⁵⁸ Groves, 270.

⁵⁹ Demographic data for the Town Center site is from Censuses for 1880 (District of Columbia ED 83) and 1940 (District of Columbia ED 148).

Square 653 Row Houses

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

time, William Richards resided at 21 N Street SE, only a block from the row.⁶⁰

When the Coleman & Richards houses were built, the neighborhood was isolated by the canal and railroads. The James Creek channel, located just a block to their east, lay open from the intersection of South Capitol and G Streets to the Eastern Branch and bridges at K, M, and N Streets SW were the link between the lower South Capitol Street corridor and the major part of the Southwest quadrant. South of the four through-tracks that ran through Southwest along the Virginia Avenue corridor, a gigantic railyard and round house filed the squares on the east side of South Capitol Street to I Street SE, effectively cutting the neighborhood off from Capitol Hill.

The railroad's presence was dominating. George Rockwell Brown later called the area around the yards as "one of the most unattractive and backward sections of the city," describing it as:

One vast network of tracks and switches, and long sidings where freight was handled under the most primitive conditions. Here was a region of mountainous coal dumps, warehouses, lumberyards, bleak stretches of commons and neighborhoods of frame shacks where colonies of the poorer people lived in an atmosphere of perpetual smoke and noise.⁶¹

Although a few of the blocks below I Street SE were lined with small frame or brick row houses, most squares in the South Capitol Street corridor were sparsely developed or remained vacant lots in 1892.⁶² Almost all squares in the Southwest quadrant east of the James Creek Canal were virtually undeveloped north of M Street. South of M Street, canal-side squares 598, 650 and 651 contained rows of frame houses that faced alleys as well the surrounding streets. Although much of Square 653 remained vacant land, the houses at 1307-1317 South Capitol represented a modest and varied wave of development in the 1890s. Square 653's earliest buildings, which probably predated the recording of building permits which began in 1877, included a brick building containing a grocery store and two brick dwellings at 1301-1305 South Capitol, several small brick houses on South Capitol near the corner of O Street, and adjoining brick houses on lots 21-22 in the unit block of N Street.⁶³ A small frame house at 1316 Half Street and a frame row for owner M.C. Mitchell at 19-25 O were added in 1891. In 1893, Benjamin Kidd built a large brick dwelling at 1349 South Capitol and the Washington Athletic Club built a brick club

⁶⁰ Information regarding the residents of Square 653 is drawn from the 1900 through 1940 censuses as well as city directories, other than as noted in the text.

⁶¹ Brown, *Washington Post*. February 18, 1924,4.

⁶² Information regarding the buildings and landscape of Southwest Washington is drawn from the 1893 Real Estate Plat Book of Washington, DC, as well as the 1903, 1921, and 1960 editions of *Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Washington, DC*.

⁶³ Building dates are based on information in the DC Historic Preservation Office's Building Permits Database (2007).

Square 653 Row Houses

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

house to its north. Several other small brick houses were added to the square in the later 1890s. Development remained sparse south of O Street, with no more than a few frame or occasional brick houses in most squares. Although the Coleman & Richards houses were modest, they nonetheless formed the most imposing row east of the canal in Southwest at the time they were built.

The Coleman & Richards row was built and operated as rental housing for semi-skilled workers. The 1900 Census presented the first comprehensive portrait of its tenants. Although 1317 South Capitol appears to have been vacant, the row housed 31 people, many of whom likely worked in the neighborhood. 1307 South Capitol was shared by the Suit and Watson families. George Suit was a day laborer who could neither read nor write, while his wife was a dressmaker. James Watson, who could neither read nor write, was a ship's carpenter who probably worked at the nearby Navy Yard. Robert Nally, a railroad conductor, lived with his four children and a housekeeper at 1309 South Capitol. 1311 South Capitol Street was the home of the family of Wagner, a furnace fireman. The large family of Ephraim Phillips, a horse cab driver, lived at 1313 South Capitol. His daughter Gertrude worked for the Bureau of Engraving. 1315 South Capitol was the home of the Connolly and the Bright families. Hugh Connolly, a native of Ireland, was the row's sole immigrant and its only skilled worker. He worked as a lithographer, while his wife Annie was a book folder; both may have worked at the Bureau of Engraving. William Bright was a railroad brakeman.

Through the 1940 Census, the houses of the Coleman & Richards row would be rented to white tenants. However, Square 653 also had many African-American residents. In 1900, the houses on Half Street and the northern stretch of South Capitol Street had white residents. The brick row at 1349-1351 South Capitol and frame row at 13-23 O in the square's southeast corner had African-American residents.

During the twenty-four years between the building of the Coleman & Richards and the Baner rows, the forces of reform began to reshape the cityscape. The McMillan Plan, adopted in 1902, institutionalized the precepts of the City Beautiful movement and eventually resulted in the removal of railroad operations from residential areas and streets. However, this policy's effects were mixed in Southwest. Rail operations were gradually removed from streets citywide, through-tracks were placed on viaducts, and many switching operations were transferred to Alexandria's Potomac Yards.⁶⁴ However, maps as late as 1921 show Canal Street and Virginia Avenue SW sheathed with sidings, freight terminals, and warehouses as far west as Fourth Street. Although the roundhouse on South Capitol between H and I Streets SE had disappeared

⁶⁴ DC National Railroad Historical Society, "Timeline of Washington, D.C. Railroad History," <http://www.dcnrhs.org/learn/washington-d-c-railroad-history/timeline-of-washington-d-c-railroad-history>, accessed April 6, 2017.

Square 653 Row Houses

Name of Property

Washington, DC

County and State

by World War I, its replacements were an oil depot and huge coal yard.

Gradually reform filtered down to affect aspects of life in the neighborhood around Square 653. By 1908, the efforts of reformers like Charles Weller had led to the James Creek Canal being covered as far south as N Street. In 1901, the now-landmarked William Syphax School for African-American pupils opened at 1360 Half Street SW on the east side of Square 653.⁶⁵ Beginning in 1907, sanitary housing companies began building duplexes for working-class African American renters, which eventually filled Square 650, to the north of the Coleman & Richards row.

Other than the Syphax School, little change came to Square 653 itself between 1900 and the eve of World War I. Several dwellings and stables were constructed, as well as a small frame factory building for the Monarch Toy Company at mid-block on South Capitol Street. In 1907, J.M. Coleman received a permit to build a warehouse at the rear of 1307 South Capitol Street to house the Vegetarian Food and Nut Company managed by his brother, William H. Coleman of Riggs Place NW.

In 1920, as in 1910, the Coleman & Richards row had only white residents, all of whom were renters. In 1900, George Suit had been an illiterate day laborer, but by 1910 he had learned to read and write and was selling ice from a wagon. The Suit household then included three brothers-in-law who were also in the ice business. By 1920, Suit had become a dealer in ice and coal. The Suits shared their new home at 1317 South Capitol with the Green family, occupations unknown, as well as a lodger who worked as a laborer. The tenants at 1309 South Capitol were also small proprietors. Charles Duke was in the house-painting business with two sons, while a third son worked as a government clerk and a daughter as a government typist. Isaac Lambert, who worked as a Navy Yard machinist lived at 1311 South Capitol Street. The family of August Orgel, a stationary fireman who could neither read nor write, lived at 1313 South Capitol, while 1315 housed the family of Ulysses Watson, a railroad freight conductor. All the residents of the Coleman & Richards row were native born in both 1900 and 1920. In 1910, the family of Samuel Pearson, a barrel dealer born in Russia, lived at 1311 South Capitol.

From the Great War to Urban Renewal

By the late 1920s, railroads had become a less intrusive presence in Southwest, although the viaduct of the Virginia Avenue line still divided the quadrant. However, residential development had proceeded slowly after World War I as Southwest's supply of buildable land diminished. With the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, building very nearly stopped citywide before

⁶⁵ Beauchamp, Tanya E. "National Register Nomination for the William Syphax School" (unpublished) (2003)

Square 653 Row Houses

Name of Property

Washington, DC

County and State

beginning to revive shortly before World War II. After the last sections of the James Creek Canal were covered in the later 1930s, several blocks of row houses, sanitary duplexes, and two sanitary housing company apartment projects were constructed in the area south of O Street SW. Although much of the land on Buzzard Point remained vacant, warehouses and terminals were erected in the southernmost blocks of the South Capitol Street corridor during the 1930s and 1940s.

At end of World War I, Square 653 had been predominantly residential. However, its subsequent development was largely commercial. In 1929, a concrete block pressing plant and storage building replaced the 1910 frame toy factory at 1343 South Capitol, and, in 1931-32, a concrete block welding shop and a commercial garage were added nearby. In 1944, an office and large open air storage shed were built for a dealer in used barrels and steel drums at 1319 South Capitol. In the northwest section of the square, the Syphax School gained extensive additions in 1941 and 1953.⁶⁶ No new dwellings were built in the square during this period, and these projects appear to have replaced most of the older houses.

The 1930 Census showed the typical household in both the Banes and Coleman & Richards rows was a blue-collar family who lived with either boarders or relatives. The African-American households in the seven N Street houses included a government messenger and laborer, as well as two employees of the Pullman Company and a construction company laborer. Four households had members who worked as servants or performed other services for private families. A fifth consisted of a dressmaker, cook, and laundress, and a sixth was a laundress who lived alone. Even with the onset of the Great Depression, five houses in the row were owned by their occupants.

The South Capitol Street houses' renters included a federal clerk, a chauffeur, a baker, and several households with District of Columbia Government laborers. 1307 South Capitol was the home of a federal government fireman, his daughter, a stenographer, and his brother-in-law, a brick yard laborer who had emigrated from Ireland. George Suit, who remained a retail coal dealer, still lived at 1317 South Capitol with his daughter, who worked in the peanut products factory in the same block. The 1940 Census presented a similar portrait of the residents of both rows.

The impetus to redevelop "blighted" portions of Southwest through government action dated at least to the start of World War II. In 1942, the James Creek Dwellings, which housed African-American war workers replaced several squares of nineteenth century housing to the along the former route of the James Creek Canal just north and west of Square 653. In the same year, the Goodwillie Plan proposed demolishing all the frame buildings in a nine-square area of Southwest

⁶⁶ Beauchamp, Syphax School National Register nomination.

Square 653 Row Houses

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

adjoining Capitol Hill and incorporating “all sound brick walls” that remained into new housing for war workers.⁶⁷ After the war, Southwest became one of several areas under consideration for redevelopment through the government-private partnership program that came to be called “urban renewal.” In 1950, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission issued its *Comprehensive Plan for Washington, DC*, which proposed that Southwest become Washington’s pilot urban renewal location because as it had a high ratio of “obsolete dwellings” characterized by “overcrowding and other potential threats to public health.”⁶⁸ The debate about redevelopment strategies and plans continued for several years, but eventually a redevelopment area was delineated whose eastern boundary ran south on South Capitol Street to M Street, west on M Street to Canal Street and southwest on Canal Street to P Street, the redevelopment area’s southern boundary.⁶⁹

Urban renewal demolished thousands of buildings, many dating back to the nineteenth century, within the redevelopment area. The few dozen survivors included a few commercial buildings, mostly in the area east of Delaware Avenue or north of the proposed Southwest Expressway, some public schools and other government buildings, several churches, some waterfront structures, and the Sternberg-Korber Courts sanitary housing apartment complex, as well as the houses constructed by the Greenleaf Syndicate and its associates. Every other dwelling in the redevelopment area was demolished during the ensuing decade-and-a-half.

The Square 653 rows are representative of the layer of early housing that was virtually erased by the redevelopment of Southwest. Although there is no specific documentation for why they survived, it is likely because of the nature of urban renewal itself. As the Supreme Court affirmed in its 1954 ruling in *Berman v. Parker*, a case bought by a Southwest business owner, government-sponsored efforts to eliminate the deleterious and disease-like social effects of “blight” were not limited to the replacement of “obsolete” or “insanitary” housing. As Justice William O. Douglas wrote:

It was not enough, they believed, to remove existing buildings that were insanitary or unsightly. It was important to redesign the whole area so as to eliminate the conditions that cause slums.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Merlo Pusey. “Wartime Washington: Mr. Goodwillie's Captivating Plan,” *Washington Post*, Mar 10, 1942; 11

⁶⁸ National Capital Planning Commission. *Worthy of the Nation: The History of Planning for the National Capital* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1977), 314.

⁶⁹ Longstreth, Richard. “Brave New World,” in Richard Longstreth, ed., *Housing Washington* (Chicago: Columbia College, 2010), 256.

⁷⁰ “*Berman v. Parker*,” 347- 348 U. S. 35. <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/348/26/case.html>, accessed April 7, 2017.

Square 653 Row Houses

Name of Property

Washington, DC

County and State

Thus, urban renewal projects could be large-scale, holistic attempts to create “modern” and healthful communities that could require the demolition of buildings that were neither blighted nor residential.

Southwest Washington urban renewal was a project of such wide scale. However, the squares in the compact area bounded by M Street, P Street, Canal Street, and South Capitol Streets SW contained housing that was either relatively new or substantially in good repair. When the redevelopment area boundaries were drawn, most of the row houses and duplexes to Square 653’s south and the James Creek Dwellings to its west were approximately fifteen to twenty years old. Although the sanitary housing duplexes to its north dated to the early twentieth century, the Washington Sanitary housing companies had long remained financially viable, paying dividends even during the Great Depression.⁷¹ The sanitary duplexes were never presented as being in bad repair, and demolishing them as part of a larger project would simply have required relocating additional lower-income residents.

Finally, urban renewal prided itself on rational and functional urban planning. Since the opening of the bridge across the Anacostia in 1950, South Capitol Street had become a traffic artery more suited to commercial purposes than housing. Indeed, Area C-1, the redevelopment zone immediately north of M Street and east of Delaware Avenue was redeveloped for municipal functions, a few office buildings, and such automobile-oriented businesses as a service plaza and the Skyline Motor Inn rather than housing.

Thus, the Square 653 row houses were among a small number of early working-class single-family houses that survived the redevelopment of Southwest. Over the years this small number of examples has diminished greatly. The early twentieth century dwellings at 1542 First Street and 69 Q Street SW were demolished within the past 18 months. Today, Southwest’s only identified examples of working-class dwellings from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century comprise the row of three houses at 1400-1404 First Street SW. These houses were the residences of the family of William Schorb, a butcher and proprietor of a stall at the Center Market, as well as a rental property. They are somewhat larger than the Square 653 row houses and contain such additional architectural detail as rusticated stone lintels and sills. The landmarked James Dent residence at 106 Q Street SW is a larger, free-standing brick house built in 1906 that is associated with the development of community organizations in Southwest.

9. Major Bibliographical References

⁷¹ D.P. Sefton, National Register Nomination for St. James Mutual Homes (Unpublished) (2014).

Square 653 Row Houses

Name of Property

Washington, DC

County and State

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Ammon, Francesca. Southwest Washington, D.C., Urban Renewal Area, Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS No. DC-856) (Washington, DC: Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2004).

Berg, Scott W. *Grand Avenue* (New York; Random House, 2007).

Borchert, James. "The Rise and Fall of Washington's Inhabited Alleys: 1852-1972," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, Washington, D.C., 71/72 (1971/1972), 268-270.

Boyd's District of Columbia Directory for 1920,

Groves, Paul A. "The Development of a Black Residential Community in Southwest Washington: 1860-1897," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society* 49 (1973-74), 260-75

Hannold, Elizabeth. "Comfort and Respectability: Washington's Philanthropic Housing Movement," *Washington History*, 4, 2 (Fall/Winter, 1992/1993).

Livermore, Shaw. *Early American Land Companies: Their Influence on Corporate Development*. Reprint ed. Washington, D.C.: Beard Books, 1999.

Longstreth, Richard. "Brave New World," in Richard Longstreth, ed., *Housing Washington* (Chicago: Columbia College, 2010).

Mann, Bruce H. *Republic of Debtors: Bankruptcy in the Age of American Independence*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Moore, Elizabeth A., and Charles W. McNett, eds. *Archaeological Survey of the Southwest Quadrant of the District of Columbia* (SHPO Archeological Report 440, unpublished, 1992).

Moore, Elizabeth A., and Joan Chase. "Prehistory," in Elizabeth A. Moore and Charles W. McNett, eds., *Archaeological Survey of the Southwest Quadrant of the District of Columbia* (SHPO Archeological Report 440, unpublished, 1992).

National Capital Planning Commission. *Worthy of the Nation: The History of Planning for the National Capital* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1977)

QED Associates. *Historical Context Study: Southwest Washington, DC, 1791-1973*. (Southwest Neighborhood Assembly – unpublished, 2015).

Rubenstein, Deborah, and Stuart Speaker, with Joan C. Chase. "Historic Context," in *Archaeological Survey of the Southwest Quadrant of the District of Columbia* (SHPO Archeological Report 440, unpublished, 1992).

Square 653 Row Houses
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Sakolski, Aaron Morton. The Great American Land Bubble (Ludwig von Mises Institute, 1966).

Sefton, Peter for QED Associates. *Midcentury Modern Churches of Southwest Washington*. (Washington, DC: Southwest Neighborhood Association, 2015)

Unpublished National Register Nominations

Beauchamp, Tanya E. "National Register Nomination for the William Syphax School" (2003).

Chen, Cecille. "National Register of Historic Places Nomination for Capitol Park Towers" (2014).

Sefton, Peter. "National Register Nomination for Harbour Square" (2013).

Sefton, Peter. "National Register Nomination for Tiber Island" (2012).

Sefton, Peter. "National Register Nomination for Town Center East" (2013).

Sefton, Peter. "National Register Nomination for St. James Mutual Homes" (2014).

Westbrook, Richard B. "National Register Nomination for Capitol Park Apartments" (2003).

Wetzel, Hayden. "National Register of Historic Places Nomination for Buzzard Point Power Plant" (2014).

Wetzel, Hayden. "National Register of Historic Places Nomination for the District Pound and Stable" (2013).

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Square 653 Row Houses
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property _____

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1307 South Capitol Street SW

LAT = 38° 52' 27.63" N (38.874341) | LONG = 77° 0' 33.74" W (-77.009372)

1309 South Capitol Street SW

LAT = 38° 52' 27.49" N (38.874302) | LONG = 77° 0' 33.74" W (-77.009373)

1311 South Capitol Street SW

LAT = 38° 52' 27.35" N (38.874263) | LONG = 77° 0' 33.74" W (-77.009373)

1313 South Capitol Street SW

LAT = 38° 52' 27.21" N (38.874225) | LONG = 77° 0' 33.74" W (-77.009373)

1315 South Capitol Street SW

LAT = 38° 52' 27.07" N (38.874187) | LONG = 77° 0' 33.74" W (-77.009373)

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone:

Easting:

Northing:

Square 653 Row Houses
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

2. Zone: Easting: Northing:
3. Zone: Easting: Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Square 653 row houses occupy the following lots:

1307 South Capitol Street SW 0653 0067 and 0827

1309 South Capitol Street SW 0653 0068

1311 South Capitol Street SW 0653 0069

1313 South Capitol Street SW 0653 0052

1315 South Capitol Street SW 0653 0053

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The DC Master Address Registry lists these current lot and square numbers for these properties.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Ryan Pierce and additional volunteers for:
organization: Southwest Neighborhood Assembly (SWNA)
street & number: 1101 Fourth Street SW w 110
city or town: Washington state: DC zip 20024
e-mail _____
telephone: (202)-437-1700
date: _____

Square 653 Row Houses
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)¹

Photo Log

Name of Property: Square 653 Row Houses

City or Vicinity: Washington, DC

Photographer: D.P. Sefton

Date Photographed: April 3, 2017

- 01 of 09 Coleman & Richards Row (1307-1317 South Capitol Street SW) with Capitol dome in background. Camera Facing NW.
- 02 of 09 Coleman & Richards Row, with 1317 South Capitol in foreground. Camera facing NW.
- 03 of 09 Coleman & Richards Row, with 1307 South Capitol in foreground. Camera facing SW.
- 04 of 09 Coleman & Richards Row, rear, looking toward South Capitol Street, Camera facing NE.
- 05 of 09 1317-1315 South Capitol Street SW. Camera facing W.
- 06 of 09 1315 South Capitol Street SW. Camera facing W.
- 07 of 09 1315 South Capitol Street SW, upper façade detail. Camera facing W
- 08 of 09 1313-1311 South Capitol Street SW. Camera facing W.

Square 653 Row Houses
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

09 of 09 1311, 1309, 1307 South Capitol Street SW. Camera facing W.

Eleven Illustrations and Map Follow

Square 653 Row Houses
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Image 1: Coleman & Richards Row, 1317-1307 South Capitol Street SW



Square 653 Row Houses
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Image 2: Banes Row, 4 through 10 N Street SW



Square 653 Row Houses
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



Image 3: Now-demolished working-class row houses in vicinity of Fifth and N Streets SW, seen in 1943. (Rosskam, Library of Congress)