

Columbia Heights Cultural Assets Inventory

A report by Cultural Tourism DC

With the support of
The Community Foundation's
Anonymous Donor-Advised Fund



Introduction

“Without culture there is no quality of life,” said Briton Richard Rogers, the 2007 recipient of the architecture profession’s Pritzker Award.

And indeed, an impressive body of research shows that the preservation of heritage and culture is essential to successful urban revitalization. A community’s unique sense of place—its cultural authenticity—can be an anchor and driver of economic development. Currently, Columbia Heights is undergoing unprecedented transformation, and though this economic revitalization has obvious benefits, it has the potential to dilute the cultural heritage of one of the city’s most ethnically diverse neighborhoods.

With the support of the Community Foundation’s Anonymous Donor-Advised Fund, Cultural Tourism DC and the Columbia Heights Roundtable set out to research and map the vast array of cultural and historical assets this neighborhood has to offer. Preparations for this inventory included conversations with a diverse group of Columbia Heights residents, community leaders, business owners, historians, and planning and economic development officials.

The resulting Columbia Heights Cultural Assets Inventory highlights historic sites, notable architecture, cultural venues, and social services institutions that have infused this neighborhood with its singular character. It is a powerful tool for promoting those historic and contemporary assets that contribute to the authentic character of Columbia Heights as it undergoes the stresses and excitement of a 21st-century renaissance.



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Acknowledgments

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Columbia Heights History

Columbia Heights, an early Washington suburb, today is an ethnically, racially, and economically diverse neighborhood, with a rich heritage and an abundance of social and cultural assets. Situated about two miles from the White House, this in-town neighborhood sits high on a ridge just north of lively Shaw and sophisticated LeDroit Park, east of eclectic Mount Pleasant and trendy Adams Morgan. Parts of Columbia Heights were badly damaged during the civil disturbances following the 1968 assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It struggled to rebuild for years, then attracted new economic energy when the Columbia Heights Metro station opened in 1999. The resulting building boom and demographic shifts have imposed on the community the tensions that are common during rapid change. Residents, in an effort to retain the authenticity of their neighborhood while enjoying the expanded amenities, find themselves forging a new identity.

Farmhouses, orchards, and gentlemen's estates once dotted this rural landscape situated just north of Florida Avenue, the planned Federal City's original boundary. Names familiar in Columbia Heights today—Holmead, Pleasant Plains, and Mount Pleasant—once were the names of landowners and large tracts of land. From 1821 to 1867, Columbian College, now George Washington University, sat on "College Hill" between 14th and 15th Streets north of Florida Avenue. During the Civil War, four hospitals occupied these airy heights, away from the heat of the central city.

The early 1880s brought a building boom, when the electric streetcar made development atop the bluff feasible. Sen. John Sherman of Ohio was first to create a "Columbia Heights" subdivision. In requiring that buildings on lots "shall not be within thirty feet of the street line," he laid the foundation for the neighborhood's broad streetscapes and suburban feel. Mary Foote Henderson, wife of Missouri Sen. John Henderson, was another early developer. She built numerous

grand mansions, envisioning the area as a premier residential address and a center for diplomatic Washington. Her buildings soon housed embassies of Brazil, Hungary, Spain, Ecuador, and Mexico, which seeded an international community. On 60 acres of Meridian Hill, she built her own red-stone Romanesque castle. The tenacious Henderson led the drive for the government's development of the spectacular Meridian Hill Park, a pioneering performing arts park, on land where an African American community had assembled during the Civil War.

By 1900, 14th Street, an early artery through Columbia Heights, was the city's first apartment-house corridor. The expanding electric streetcar system brought residents home to four buildings that featured the latest in apartment design. One, the Olympia Flats, built in 1898, still stands at 14th and Euclid Streets. These six-story apartment houses immediately appealed to the city's middle class. In 1897 Washington's *Evening Star* reported that people were "flocking to live in flats." Nearby at 13th and Clifton Streets, Amzi Barber, a Howard University trustee and asphalt entrepreneur, gazed down at the city from Belmont, his mansion on a 10-acre, park-like estate. In 1915 Harry Wardman acquired the property and built the Wardman Courts apartments, later known as Clifton Terrace, and then once again called Wardman Courts. At the time of their construction, Wardman Courts were said to be the city's largest and most luxurious apartments. By World War I, more than 150 apartment houses were situated directly on 14th Street or within one block east and west.

From 1902 to 1913, Wardman also built 650 rowhouses in Columbia Heights, providing much-needed housing opportunities for the middle class. Designed in the Colonial Revival style, these rowhouses with their uniform front porches created a cohesive design that gives Columbia Heights' side streets their character. They are highly prized in today's housing market.

Other early 20th-century developers followed, buying land west of 13th Street.

White residents involved in community affairs during this early period formed the Columbia Heights Citizens' Association, promoting the advantages of living in the "Heights" and advocating for public improvements. In 1921 African Americans living in Columbia Heights, many of whom were distinguished scholars affiliated with Howard University, established their own Pleasant Plains Civic Association. They worked for new playgrounds, recreation centers, and municipal services while also pressing to keep out unwanted businesses. Still active in Columbia Heights today and long-since integrated, the PPCA was once the city's largest civic association.

The 1940s brought a shift in Columbia Heights' racial composition. The housing shortage of World War II led to the conversion of large single-family houses into boarding houses. After the war, pent-up demand caused a boom in housing development, aimed mostly at white families who migrated to newer housing in upper Northwest and in the suburbs. After the Supreme Court in 1948 declared restrictive covenants unenforceable, more and more black families took advantage of the neighborhood's stock of affordable, solid housing, while others kept the boarding houses filled. In 1950 the all-white Central High School at 13th and Clifton Streets, which had been built in 1916, officially reopened as Cardozo High School for a black student body moving from the overcrowded Cardozo High School building nearby at Rhode Island Avenue, NW, between Eighth and Ninth Streets. The change mirrored the community's shift to majority African American.

Columbia Heights has long been home to an international community. As early as 1923, Central High School boasted a student body of 17 nationalities. By the late 1950s and early '60s, a relatively small number of mostly Caribbean immigrants made Columbia Heights their home, working as chauffeurs, nannies, and domestics for international families. In the early 1980s, Columbia Heights' Latino population swelled as political turmoil in Central America spurred mass migrations to the area's affordable old housing. While area churches were the first to offer support and social services for poorer immigrants, a vibrant nonprofit sector, often seeded by the churches, began setting up every imaginable service to meet the special needs of this expanding Latino community. The Latin American Youth Center opened in 1974 to offer

a multicultural, community-based program. The Calvary Bilingual Multicultural Learning Center served 15 children in 1986, and today, as CentroNia, serves about 400 children. CentroNia and the Latin American Youth Center act as a bridge between the African American and Latino communities. According to 2000 U.S. Census figures, 58 percent of Columbia Heights residents were African American, 34 percent Hispanic, 5.4 percent white, and 3.1 percent "other."

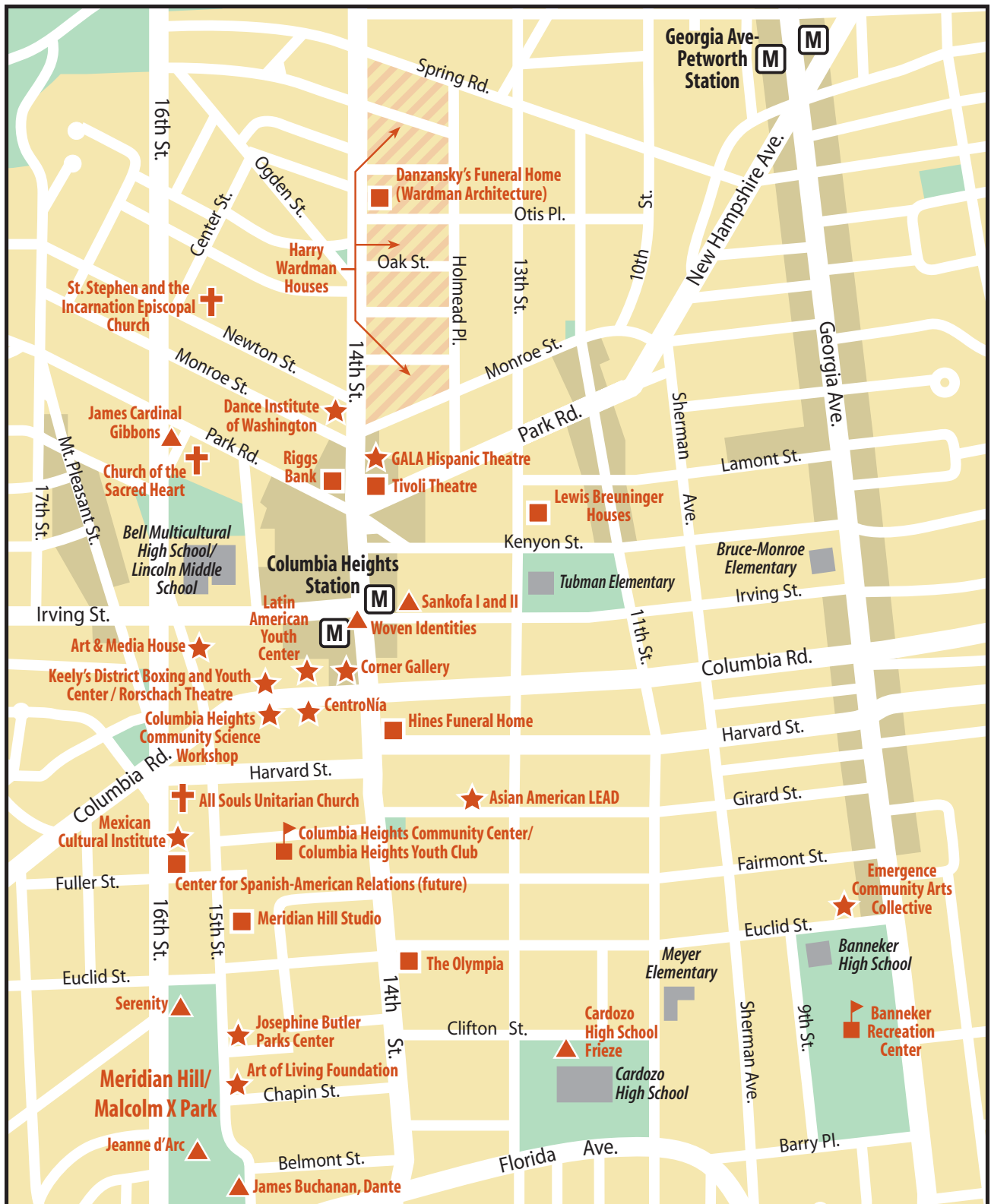
In the early 20th century, Columbia Heights developed a first-class commercial area along 14th Street, centering on the Park Road crossroads, where the earliest business was a post-Civil War general store. A car barn that stood at the end of the 14th Street streetcar line was replaced in 1920 by the Arcade, a combination market and amusement hall, which advertised itself as "Washington's Madison Square Garden." Next door, entrepreneurs J. Willard and Alice Marriott opened a nine-seat root-beer stand in 1927, serving hot tamales and chili con carne, which grew into the city's popular Hot Shoppes chain (now defunct) as well as the thriving international Marriott Hotels empire.

In 1924 the Tivoli Theater was completed on the northeast corner of Park Road, and was followed on the northwest by one of the first branches of Riggs Bank. S.H. Hines Co. Funeral Home moved to 14th Street in 1917 and by 1928 occupied four rowhouses at Harvard Street. In 1923 Danzansky's Funeral Home opened in one of Wardman's houses at 14th and Otis Streets to serve the Jewish community. As the commercial area expanded north and south along 14th Street, goods and services met all the needs of a thriving community and included five movie theaters, rivaling nearby U Street, NW. By 1967 the 14th Street corridor was known by many shoppers as "Uptown," and it boasted about 200 shops. In 1968, following the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the civil disturbances along 14th Street caused extensive destruction and the immediate decline of this shopping corridor. Some businesses moved to other neighborhoods, and others closed forever.

By 1980 only 35 shops could be found there. The city's Redevelopment Land Agency took over much of the land and bulldozed some 70 acres in order to attract private developers. When the developers failed to respond, nonprofits stepped in and began bringing the street back to life. In 1996 the Nehemiah Shopping Center opened, built by a consortium of eight local nonprofits.

In 1999 the Columbia Heights Metro station rose from rubble at 14th and Irving Streets, a historic community crossroads. What has followed is the story of a renaissance, with businesses stepping up to meet the needs of longtime and new residents. Fourteenth Street today is returning to its former status as a major commercial artery. GALA Theatre, presenting Spanish-language productions, occupies the restored theater in Tivoli Square with new neighbors that include Mayorga, a coffee shop and lounge; Giant Supermarket; Rumbero's for Latin American cuisine; Rita's ice cream parlor; and others. Across the street is the new home of Fabian Barnes's highly praised Dance Institute of Washington. DC USA, a large shopping complex on 14th Street's west side at the former site of the Arcade, features the region's largest Target, a Bed Bath and Beyond, and Best Buy. Adding to the changing streetscape are condominiums, rapidly appearing in converted older houses as well as in towering new structures.

Farther east, along 11th Street, the Columbia Heights Coffee and Franklin's Coffee serve as gathering spots for neighbors who post information about association meetings, local classes, and events. Red Brick Pizza is located at Park Road, and Arthur's Grocery, known for its neighborhood outreach and for collecting donations for free school supplies, has been a mainstay at Lamont Street for 30 years. Some of these older establishments blend successfully with the new wave. Having been through the hard times, these businesses hope to participate in the multiplying opportunities in Columbia Heights. Organizations from the Development Corporation of Columbia Heights to the Latino Economic Development Corporation and others are poised to assist these existing shop owners. As the old seeks to co-exist with the new, Columbia Heights neighbors confront the challenge of honoring the past while embracing the future.



- ★ Cultural Institutions
- ▲ Outdoor Art
- ✝ Churches

- ▢ Community Centers
- ▢ Historic Architecture

- Commercial Zones
- Public Schools

Columbia Heights Cultural Assets Inventory

In exploring Columbia Heights, breathing in the landscape, and talking to local leaders, Carole Kolker found that artistic expression enjoys a high priority. The variety of art, social, and community institutions that created the cultural heritage of Columbia Heights—and the different roles they play in the everyday life of its residents—make it difficult to place them in one absolute category. For easy reference, we have divided the cultural assets of Columbia Heights into the following categories: Cultural Institutions; Outdoor Art; Parks, Playgrounds, and Community Centers; Religious and Nonprofit Institutions; Builders, Architects, and Architecture; Commerce; and More to Discover. The companion map indicates the location of each asset.

Cultural Institutions

Art of Living Foundation

2401 15th Street, NW



Recently opened in Columbia Heights across from Meridian Hill/Malcolm X Park, the Art of Living Foundation currently offers wellness sessions based on Sudarshan Kriya®, a breathing technique traditionally understood to use specific rhythms of the breath to eliminate stress, support the various organs and systems within the body, transform overpowering emotions, and restore peace of mind. Nationally, the foundation supports two youth programs: Art Excel (All Round Training in Excellence) and YES (Youth Empowerment Senses). Working with schools and neighborhood communities, these programs are now reaching young people in the Washington area.

The Art & Media House

3035 15th Street, NW



The colorful, eye-catching Art & Media House, occupying two renovated houses on 15th Street, is the base for the Latin American Youth Center's arts and humanities programs. With its mission to provide a multicultural space for creative expression, Art & Media House offers hands-on training in photography, radio, video production, and music production, creative writing, and fine art (drawing, painting, mixed media, and murals). This center includes a gallery, fine arts stu-

dio, digital media lab, sound room, audio engineering room, darkroom, and classroom space. Students are exposed to the experiences of working artists through field trips that take them behind the scenes to museums and artists' studios, maintaining artists' books as well as portfolio development and exhibitions at the conclusion of each class session.

The House Gallery, located on the first floor of the Art & Media House, showcases the work of young artists through work-in-progress shows at the conclusion of each class session and an end-of-year exhibition each June. The gallery is also available for rent by community artists.

The Corner Gallery, located in the windows on the northwest corner of 14th Street and Columbia Road, highlights the creative work of all the programs at the Latin American Youth Center. The exhibit is in partnership with Target and changes bimonthly.

In 2007 Art & Media House was selected as "one of the top arts and humanities-based programs in the country serving youth beyond the school hours" by the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities.

Columbia Heights Community Science Workshop

1479-B Columbia Road, NW

The Columbia Heights Community Science Workshop, located in the Latin American Youth Center's Youth Build Education Facility, is a partnership between the Smithsonian National Zoological Park, Latin American Youth Center, and San Francisco State University. The Community Science Workshop makes science and technology education and career opportunities available to area youth. Staffed by Smithsonian Institution scientists and educators, the workshop offers hands-on activities that link participants to scientists who can serve as role models and mentors. This program aims to create a sense of excitement in stu-

dents and parents about science and technology, the world around them, and the Smithsonian Institution, including the nearby National Zoo.

The Dance Institute of Washington

3400 14th Street, NW

The Dance Institute of Washington (DIW) was founded in 1987 by Fabian Barnes, who by age 18 was dancing with the world-renowned Dance Theatre of Harlem. His vision was to offer inner-city children the opportunity to get off the streets through dance. In 2006 the DIW settled into its new home on 14th Street, a modern two-story structure with 3,500 square feet of dance studio space, a dance supply boutique, and a child development center. In its new home, DIW plans to broaden its outreach to Latino and Asian American communities and become, according to Barnes, “the dance destination in Columbia Heights.” Through dance training and performing arts education and opportunities, the DIW will continue to make arts education available and affordable in underserved communities, providing young people with life skills: discipline, resilience, and the ability to incorporate constructive criticism. Says Barnes, “I’ve just experienced life in a way that would have never happened for me had I not danced. Now, as a result of that, I have a responsibility to give something back.” As the DIW establishes itself in Columbia Heights, Barnes is enjoying new working relationships with GALA Theatre, PNC, Cinnabon, WMATA, UPS, the Columbia Heights Development Corporation, and other local groups.

DC Caribbean Carnival

Along Georgia Avenue from Missouri Avenue to Barry Place, NW

This colorful, costumed parade down Georgia Avenue has been held each June since 1993 and now attracts more than 300,000 spectators from around the city and beyond. More than 25 troupes of colorful masqueraders and participants representing every Caribbean country combine to make this one of the fastest-growing carnivals in North America. The parade route begins in Brightwood at Missouri Avenue, NW, and ends in Columbia Heights at Banneker Recreation Center, across from Howard University. Each year, new bands join perennial favorites, and good food and fun abound.

DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities

1371 Harvard Street, NW

Since 1968, the District of Columbia Commission on the Arts and Humanities (DCCA) has developed and promoted local artists, organizations, and activities. As the official arts agency of the District of Columbia, the Arts Commission nurtures and promotes the poets, filmmakers, photographers, dancers, painters, musicians, and many others who contribute to the cultural vitality of arts in the city.

The DCCA provides grants, programs, and education activities that encourage diverse artistic expressions and learning opportunities so that all District of Columbia residents and visitors can experience the rich culture of our city. The agency recently moved to the former Hines Funeral Home, contributing to Columbia Heights lively scene.

The Emergence Community Arts Collective

733 Euclid Street, NW



The Emergence Community Arts Collective (ECAC), a nonprofit organization, works to foster a spirit of community in what is known to many as the Pleasant

Plains section of Columbia Heights. ECAC presents social activities, traditional arts classes, support groups, and educational seminars, many of which open doors to learning about other cultures. ECAC-supported concerts, art exhibits, and a Memorial Day cookout are popular community events.

From 1866 to 1932, the National Association for the Relief of Destitute Colored Women and Children, established by women who cared for thousands of children left destitute in the city following the Civil War, was located on Euclid Street. It moved into this home at 733 Euclid after working out of a house across the street. In 1932 the organization evolved into the Meriwether Home and later the Key Day Care Center, operating until it closed in 1998. Sylvia Robinson, ECAC’s founder, executive director, historian, and the driving force behind this community project, is leading the community in continuing this tradition of community service.

GALA Hispanic Theatre

At Tivoli Square, 14th Street and Park Road, NW

Founded in 1976 as a Spanish-language theater, GALA moved into its new home at the magnificently restored Tivoli in 2005. GALA provides a diverse program of theater, classical, and contemporary poetry, music, and dance for a wide audience. In their state-of-the-art theater, founders Rebecca and Hugo Medrano plan to create a National Center for Latino Performing Arts, to expand their programs to include film, concerts, dance, presentations by other arts groups, and opportunities for outstanding Hispanic artists from across the nation and abroad. GALA offers subtitles in English for their Spanish-language performances.

GALA, an acronym for *Grupo de Artistas Latino Americanos*, works in the Columbia Heights community by inviting at-risk children from Bell Multicultural High School to twice-weekly, after-school, and Sunday workshops in creative writing, developing theatrical works, and sound and make-up. GALA also sponsors “Three Kings Day,” a Christmas event in partnership with Target featuring a procession with a live donkey and Magi, and gifts for all. It also offers a free New Year’s Eve event and Senior Day at GALA. Rotating art exhibits are displayed in the lobby and Kreeger Art Walk. Another new neighbor, the Dance Institute of Washington, uses GALA’s performance facilities.

Josephine Butler Parks Center

2437 15th Street, NW



Appropriately overlooking Meridian Hill Park, the Josephine Butler Parks Center was established by Washington Parks & People to honor their late co-chair, who led the drive to restore and complete Meridian

Hill/Malcolm X Park to what the *Washington Post* calls “the jewel of Washington’s parks.” Josephine Butler (1920-1997) devoted her entire life to championing Washington’s forgotten citizens. In keeping with the philosophy Butler lived by, the center operates as a dynamic community “greenhouse” for advancing Washington’s parks and public spaces.

Well-known for providing space for community meetings, the center also offers a multipurpose performance and special event facility, gallery space, a visitor center, a multimedia lab, an after-school arts and education center tied into Meridian Hill Park, a tutoring program for children in transitional housing, a neighborhood revitalization center, a job-training and referral service, a teaching kitchen, training space for grass-roots leaders restoring Washington’s forgotten public spaces, and a nonprofit incubator loft. In 1994, the center was lauded by President Clinton as the nation’s top parks/community partnership and “a shining example for the nation.”

Currently, the following 12 community-based nonprofit organizations operate from the center as partners:

- Community Harvest, advocating healthy food grown by and for inner-city residents
- Council of Latino Agencies/Consejo de Agencias Latinas (CLA), supporting the work of 40 Latino community service organizations
- DC Writers Corps, training inner-city youth to communicate using the written word
- Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), empowering immigrants through job training and resettlement programs
- Friends of Meridian Hill, advancing park partnerships in the Columbia Heights, Shaw, and Reed-Cooke neighborhoods
- GALA Hispanic Theater/GALA Teatro Hispano, presenting theater inspired by the rainbow of Latin cultures
- Leadership Initiatives, galvanizing youth to help sustainable development from DC to around the world
- Multicultural Community Service, building diverse new neighborhood alliances
- Project Northstar, tutoring children living in transitional and inner-city housing
- Society for Arts in Healthcare, galvanizing artists for a broader approach to healing
- The Vegetarian Society of DC, promoting healthy living across DC through vegetarian food

- Vietnamese American Community Service Center, DC's fastest-growing immigrant group
- Young Playwrights Theater, using theater to give voice to the stories of DC's children

Keely's District Boxing and Youth Center

1459 Columbia Road, NW



Former boxing champion and community organizer Keely Thompson heads Keely's District Boxing and Youth Center, combining rigorous boxing training

with literacy and nutrition programs to encourage good sportsmanship and combat gang membership and violence. Through the "Literacy Champs Program," students are trained in boxing techniques and routines to prepare them for future amateur sparring matches. Field trips to amateur and professional boxing matches are considered part of the learning experience. Mandatory literacy classes reinforce basic practical comprehension skills. In addition, participants are taught proper nutrition and diet. Open to young people of ages eight to 18, the center serves about 450 annually.

Mexican Cultural Institute

2829 16th Street, NW

The stately mansion that today serves as the Mexican Cultural Institute originally was the private residence of Franklin MacVeagh, secretary of the Treasury in the Taft Administration. From 1921 to 1989, the Mexican Embassy made its home in this imposing Italianate structure. Since 1990 the building has served as an institute promoting Mexican art and culture. Murals depicting Mexican life and the history of Mexico adorn the staircase walls leading to magnificent gallery rooms exhibiting the works of contemporary Mexican artists and important masters. An elegant music room provides a venue for regular classical and performing arts programs. Dedicated to enhancing the understanding of Mexican culture among American and international people, the center also sponsors film and food festivals, and other special events.

Rorschach Theatre

The Sanctuary Theatre

Casa del Pueblo Methodist Church

1459 Columbia Road, NW

Rorschach at Sanctuary Theatre performs in a 75-seat chapel at Casa del Pueblo Methodist Church. Under the leadership of Randy Baker, this small troupe is known for its fierce performance style, its bold use of theatrical space, and its dedication to challenging works that are at once relevant and timeless. Rorschach stages four shows a year at the Sanctuary Theatre and in 2007 Rorschach presented "Rough Magic" as part of the Shakespeare in Washington Festival.

The Sanctuary is the original chapel of Calvary Baptist Church, a church that began in the open fields of the neighborhood in 1862. Calvary, long involved with its neighborhood, is remembered in music circles for hosting 1970s and '80s punk rock performances. Most notable was Fugazi, which represented the Straight-Edge Movement that promotes a philosophy of no drugs, drink, or tobacco. The church is now home to Casa del Pueblo, but the Calvary name remains etched above the doorway and in the memory of its neighbors.

Coming soon to the neighborhood...

- **Columbia Heights Heritage Trail**, a self-guided walking tour of the neighborhood's history. This award-winning, citywide project will add another cultural element to the community, while offering a sense of history and place to be shared by longtime residents and newcomers alike. The Washington, DC Neighborhood Heritage Trails Programs is a collaboration of Cultural Tourism DC, the District Department of Transportation, and the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development.
- **Center for Spanish-American Relations**—The government of Spain recently unveiled plans to establish a Center for Spanish-American Relations. After remodeling its former embassy at 2801 16th Street, the center will open with an ambitious program that includes a venue for classical and contemporary Spanish art, music, film, dance, and literature.

Outdoor Art

Colorful murals and other expressions of outdoor art delight the eye in Columbia Heights. One mural spans the side of CentroNia at 14th Street and Columbia Road. Another, a large production on Irving Street, between 14th and 15th Streets, was created by youthful artists at LAYC during the summer of 2001; it is losing a fight against the daily assault of construction debris. A donkey decorated as a school bus, part of the city's "Party Animal" art project, stands outside the Department of Recreation at 15th Street and Park Road. Colorful mosaic columns are part of the landscape at Lincoln-Bell Multicultural School on the Irving Street side. A wide array of artistic expression abounds in Meridian Hill. The Columbia Heights Metro station is enhanced with local artwork. And, there is always more to discover.

Woven Identities, 1999

Artist: Megan Walsh and young adults at the Casa Del Pueblo Community Center
Location: Columbia Heights Metro station



Young, multi-ethnic teens from the Casa Del Pueblo Community Center worked with Megan Walsh, a mentor and DC architect, to create

this multi-paneled mural. The students used portraits to capture the diverse population found in their Columbia Heights community. The mural showcases the art of graffiti, blending the personal expressions of each artist to create a single identity. Metro riders experience this mural as they pass by on the lower level of the Metro station.

Sankofa 1 and II, 2002

Artist: Akili Ron Anderson, Washington
Location: Columbia Heights Metro station, West entrance

As a part of Metro's Art in Transit Program, artist Akili Anderson created 20 panels of stained glass with an interpretation of Sankofa birds set on a background of Kente cloth-inspired designs. In the Akan culture of Ghana, the Sankofa bird, with its head turned over its shoulder, signifies looking to the past for guidance for the future. Akili Anderson, who grew up in Columbia Heights, worked with community members on the project to inspire residents to "look back at their past to build the future of Columbia Heights."

Sculpture at Meridian Hill/Malcolm X Park Jeanne d'Arc, 1922

Artist: Paul Dubois
Location: Overlooking the water cascade

Here is the only female equestrian statue in Washington. The bronze statue depicts a spirited Joan of Arc, leading her French troops into battle against the Burgundians. Dubois's statue was considered a masterpiece in the early 20th century. Henry Bacon, architect of the Lincoln Memorial and the Dupont Memorial

Fountain, wrote that “Dubois’s statue of Jeanne d’Arc is one of the fine things of the world and no setting is too good for it.” The park’s statue is a copy, a gift from the “Ladies of France in Exile in New York.” The original stands at the Rheims Cathedral in France.

James Buchanan, 1930

Artist: Hans Schuler

Location: Lower southeast end of the park

This memorial is dedicated to James Buchanan, lawyer, diplomat, and the 15th president of the United States. Buchanan is seated, flanked by a curved bench and allegorical figures Law and Diplomacy.

Dante, 1920

Artist: Ettore Ximenes

Location: East side of the park

One of the best-known figures of the Middle Ages, Dante Alighieri was a poet, scholar, and diplomat—one of the greatest of his era.

Serenity, 1925

Artist: Jose Clara

Location: West side of the park

This allegorical statue, carved from a single piece of white marble, is one of an identical pair. Its mate is in Luxembourg. This figure honors the memory of Lieutenant Commander William Henry Scheutze, a minor officer in the United States Navy. Unfortunately, the statue has been vandalized.

James Cardinal Gibbons, 1932

16th Street and Park Road, NW

Sculptor: Leo Lentelli; *architect:* George Kayl

Shaded by a large tree in a small triangle park across from the Church of the Sacred Heart, the six-foot-tall bronze and marble statue of James Cardinal Gibbons conveys the bishop’s importance and benevolence. In 1868 Gibbons, a Civil War chaplain at Fort McHenry in Baltimore, became the youngest priest to be named bishop of the Roman Catholic Church. After serving in Richmond, he returned to his native Bal-



timore in 1886 as head of the Baltimore archdiocese, which included Washington. He was an adviser to presidents, from Andrew Johnson to Harding, and was known for his patriotism and early sympathy with the American labor movement. On the side of the pedestal, a coat of arms shows a shield and a pontifical hat, symbolic of a “leader of the people in prayer”—a bridge maker between God and man. The statue of Cardinal Gibbons has been added to the DC Inventory of Historic Sites.

Cardozo High School Frieze, 1916

13th and Clifton Streets, NW

Sculptor: George J. Zolnay



Rumanian-American sculptor George J. Zolnay created the three stone-relief panels found above the third-floor windows of the school’s main entrance.

The carved images represent subjects taught in school. The left panels, labeled “Business Education,” are figures practicing the era’s practical careers: shipping, accounting, geography, commerce, and barter. The central panel, “Academic Education,” suggests careers in chemistry, mathematics, art, music, history, philosophy, and biology. The final panel, “Manual Education,” shows household arts and industrial pursuits: cooking, sewing, and surveying. Carved in the stone are the faces of William B. Ittner, the school’s architect, and Snowden Ashford, then architect of the District of Columbia, and Principal Emory M. Wilson, who led the school when it opened as Central High School in 1916. The name was changed in 1950 to Francis Cardozo High School. It honors Francis Cardozo, the first African American to hold an administrative office in the state of South Carolina, who went on to become principal of the Washington’s M Street School.

Parks, Playgrounds, And Community Centers

A number of parks and playgrounds serve Columbia Heights, and they attract residents of all ages and lifestyles.

Meridian Hill/Malcolm X Park

15th to 16th Streets and Euclid Street to Florida Avenue, NW

This park has long been the recreational and cultural centerpiece for Columbia Heights as well as nearby Adams Morgan, Mount Pleasant, and U Street. At 12 acres, it is a National Historic Landmark and a gem in the National Parks System, with magnificently landscaped grounds and spectacular views of the city, not to mention a front-row seat for the July Fourth fireworks on the National Mall. Completed in 1936 as the first national park for the performing arts, the park still draws enthusiastic crowds for cultural activities. On Sundays, from 3 pm to dark, the Malcolm X Drummers & Dancers create a traditional drum circle and inspired dancing, a popular local activity that began in the park in the 1950s.

Thomas Jefferson provided the name for this park when he promoted the fact that the Earth's prime meridian runs directly north of the White House. The route would have been today's 16th Street, the western boundary of the park. In 1804, an obelisk marking the last point on the meridian was placed on top of this hill—thus, the name, Meridian Hill. Today a plaque on the park's west wall notes the obelisk's original location. The Hill was once sacred Indian ground and later the location of Columbian College (now George Washington University), several Civil War hospitals, and Wayland Seminary (Virginia Union University), an African American theological school. Colonel Robert Gould Shaw of the 54th Massachusetts Regi-

ment, the black brigade featured in the movie *Glory*, camped here.

Opened in 1936, the park was designed in a European landscape style by George Burnap and later modified by Horace Peaslee. While French and Italian design elements dominate the landscape, Asian, Latin American, Egyptian, and American Art Deco styles are also present. The landscape includes a 300-foot, 13-level, cascading staircase fountain, the longest of its kind, which separates the upper grassy level from a lower level of formal gardens, pools, and statuary. The park's Concert Grove was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.

Until the early 1970s, the park was the venue for many performances and protests. In 1969 Congress rejected a bill renaming the park after Malcolm X, though today the park is unofficially known as Meridian Hill/Malcolm X Park. At this time the park fell victim to crime and vandalism. Today's revived park is the result of widespread effort led by Josephine Butler and Friends of Meridian Hill, now known as Washington Parks & People.

Banneker Recreation Center

2500 Georgia Avenue, NW

Occupying a large area along Georgia Avenue, between Euclid Street and Warder Place across from Howard University, this well-used recreation center is run by the DC Department of Recreation. The recently reopened Banneker Center has a swimming pool,

a weight room, basketball court, athletic field, tennis courts, and picnic area. It offers programs for teens and seniors and classes in martial arts, dance, tennis, and computers. The Community Computer Access Center is a popular destination, and meeting rooms are available to the community.

Columbia Heights Community Center and the Columbia Heights Youth Club

1480 Girard Street, NW

The Columbia Heights Community Center opened its new 47,000-square-foot facility in March 2007, offering activities for seniors and children. They have access to a one-acre playground for toddlers and teens, a full recording studio, a dance studio, a music studio, a multipurpose room, an indoor gymnasium, a performance stage, a game room, and a weight room.

The Columbia Heights Youth Club began in the basement of All Souls Church and now operates at the

new center. The Youth Club serves more than 220 area children with a rich menu of activities that includes life skills, academic enrichment, literacy, homework assistance, exposure outings, dance, culinary arts, martial arts, and health and fitness programs. Executive Director Gail Oliver says the center's main role is: "to provide services, opportunities, and a safe passage for young people from youth into adulthood."

Boys and Girls Club—Mary and Daniel Loughran Clubhouse #10

Metropolitan Police Clubhouses

2500 14th Street, NW

This center, traditionally strong in sports such as football, baseball, and basketball, also provides the area's youth with a state-of-the-art computer lab. Soon to be added to the club's program will be tutoring, educational games such as chess and Scrabble, music, and arts and crafts.

Religious and Nonprofit Institutions

Over the past 50 years, large historic churches have adapted to the area's demographic shifts, meeting the language needs of their growing and diverse congregations. They have also helped incubate nonprofit organizations and provided meeting spaces to local and national groups.

All Souls Church, Unitarian, 1924

16th and Harvard Streets, NW



All Souls was founded in 1821 in downtown Washington. John Quincy Adams and John C. Calhoun were among its founding members. The present-day church was built in 1924 and was based on the English Baroque style of James Gibbs, designer of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square, London. The church bell from the original church was cast by Joseph Re-

vere (son of Paul Revere) in 1822 and was used for public purposes such as announcing fires. When the church tolled the bell to mourn the execution of radical abolitionist John Brown in 1859, it was denounced as the “Abolition Bell” by the city’s southern sympathizers, and the city discontinued using it for public purposes.

In addition to its anti-slavery stance in the 19th century, All Souls’ long involvement in the fight for

social justice included a leadership role in the 1940s as the modern civil rights and women’s rights movements took hold. The church was one of the few places in Washington available for interracial meetings in the early 20th century. It worked to desegregate the city’s public facilities in the 1950s and 1960s; its assistant minister, Rev. James Reeb, was murdered in 1965 during the civil rights struggle in Selma, Alabama.

The church’s community projects included the Girard Street Playground Project, begun in 1962, and the All Souls Housing Corporation (1970), which rebuilt low- and moderate-income housing in the 14th Street corridor that was heavily impacted by the disturbances after assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In 1969, under the leadership of All Souls’ first African American senior minister, Rev. David H. Eaton, the church provided early support and space for such groups as the Antioch Law School, the DC Music Center, the DC Rape Crisis Center, and the Green Door, which serves the mentally ill. With help from the Unitarian Service Committee, All Souls organized the Columbia Heights Boys Club in 1954, challenging segregation with the first desegregated Youth Club in Washington. The organization became the Columbia Heights Youth Club, and today enjoys its new facility at 1480 Girard Street, NW.

The Jubilee Singers, founded with the support of Rev. David Eaton in 1977 by Dr. Ysaye Barnwell of the

group Sweet Honey in the Rock, can be heard every third Sunday at All Souls Unitarian Church singing African American spirituals, blues, jazz, gospel, and world music.

St. Stephen and the Incarnation Episcopal Church, 1925

1525 Newton Street, NW



St. Stephen and the Incarnation Episcopal Church was formed from the merger of the Incarnation parish (founded 1867) and St. Stephen's parish (founded 1892). Reflecting the surrounding population, its parish at first was white and middle-class. As the neighborhood

changed in the 1950s, St. Stephen's became the first integrated Episcopal church in Washington.

In the 1960s, with the Rev. William Wendt as rector, St. Stephen's became active in the civil rights, women's rights and anti-war movements, and local concerns. In the late 1960s, the *Washington Post* called it "one of the few viable political institutions in this politically emasculated Federal city—a militant, hit-the-street-and-demonstrate church." Outspoken radicals such as Gloria Steinem and H. Rap Brown spoke from the pulpit. In the early 1970s St. Stephen's supported the ordination of women before it was permitted by the Episcopal Church. The church continues to reflect its community with worship services in English and Spanish, hot meals, and cultural programs.

Church of the Sacred Heart, 1923

16th Street and Park Road, NW



Sacred Heart has always been on the forefront of responding to the changing needs of its Columbia Heights neighbors. Early on Sacred Heart served

the growing Latino immigrant population when it provided apartments for single-women immigrants

who came to perform domestic work for the Spanish-speaking embassies, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the World Bank. Today Sacred Heart serves congregants from 60 nations and offers Sunday Mass in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and French-Creole.

Latin American Youth Center

1419 Columbia Road, NW

An early offering among Columbia Road's community support services is the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC), established in 1974. The center is a multicultural, community-based organization that supports youth and their families in their determination to live, work, and study with dignity, hope, and joy. The center consciously builds bridges between the neighborhood's African American and Latino young people and families. Colorful LAYC buildings and logos along Columbia Road and on 15th Street add vitality to the neighborhood. Lori M. Kaplan has been the visionary executive director there since 1987.

The LAYC offers services and programs in leadership, academics, and social skills. It provides cultural and creative experiences for youth in the community, including the Scoop Shops at Eastern Market and Chevy Chase. These businesses, owned and operated by LAYC through a PartnerShop program with Ben and Jerry's, provide youth with real-world work experience and funding for LAYC programs.

CentroNía

1420 Columbia Road, NW



In 1986 Beatriz "BB" Otero accepted the challenge to restructure the child care program of Columbia Road's Calvary Methodist Church. She established Calvary Bilingual Multicultural Learning Center with a mission to provide affordable early childhood education. Initially working with 15 children, the center now serves

about 400 infants, toddlers, preschoolers, youth, and families, with 250 employees. In 2004 the DC Bilingual Public Charter School opened here.

In 1995, the center moved across the street, restoring a boarded-up Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company building donated by Verizon. Students learn in a state-of-the-art facility that feels more like a village with curved walls and a thatched-roof-style ceiling. Children's artwork covers walls and tables. With an art room, a photography lab, a dance studio, a computer lab, and a recreation room, CentroNia, as BB Otero makes clear, "is at the core of everything."

The center also provides computer use, meeting space, and a modern commercial kitchen. A student-maintained garden delights passers-by.

The name CentroNia is derived from Spanish, Swahili, and Esperanto, a universal language created in the late 19th century to help bridge cultures. This name reflects CentroNia's role in bridging the African American and Latino communities.

Asian American LEAD

1323 Girard Street, NW

Since 1997, Asian American LEAD (AAL) has connected Asian and American cultures for Asian American youth. Under the leadership of Sandy Dang, AAL helps students develop the skills and confidence necessary to succeed in life and contribute to their families and communities. Serving primarily Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant, AAL offers educational programs, leadership training, tutoring, and mentoring. After-school activities include an arts program sponsored by the Corcoran Gallery, in which local students' works are exhibited at the Mt. Pleasant Library.

Builders, Architects, and Architecture

Large tracts of land once dominated by the estates of Mt. Pleasant, Belmont and Henderson's Castle gave way to a rush of building in the early 20th century. Much of today's Columbia Heights—its solid brick housing and front porches, apartment buildings with spectacular scenic views, and elegant mansions built to serve as embassies—date from this period. While many residences went through a period of use as boarding houses, most have been restored to their original uses, though some of the larger houses have been adapted for use as condominiums and community centers. The 21st century is ushering in a new wave of building in Columbia Heights, altering the streetscape with mostly modern architecture.

The Olympia, 1898

1368 Euclid Street, NW



The Olympia is the only survivor of what were four classical luxury apartment houses built in the 1890s. When they were constructed, they signaled the emergence

of 14th Street as the city's first apartment house corridor, followed soon after by apartments on Columbia Road and Connecticut Avenue. The six-story Olympia exhibits a transitional style with Romanesque and classical elements. Constructed during the Spanish-American War, the builder named his apartment house for Admiral Dewey's flagship, the USS *Olympia*, to commemorate the U.S. victory at Manila Bay in the Spanish-American War. Journalist and satirist Ambrose Bierce was an Olympia tenant during his time in Washington (1899–1913).

Hines Funeral Home, 1917

2901–2907 14th Street, NW



In 1917 Stephen Hines moved his family and funeral home business from 14th and R Streets to the corner of 14th and Harvard. By 1928 the S. H. Hines Funeral Home

had expanded into four 1905 rowhouses from 2901 to 2907 14th Street. A former resident recalls that by the 1920s, the “entire row, which sweeps around the corner into the 1300 block of Harvard, housed members of the Hines family and employees, including a husband and wife embalming team.” Hines moved to suburban Maryland in the 1970s. The Greater Washington Urban League has established its new headquarters in the restored Hines Funeral Home, having moved from 3501 14th Street, the former address of Danzansky's Funeral Home, another business that

moved to suburban Maryland from Columbia Heights in the 1970s.

Danzansky's Funeral Home, 1910

3501–3503 14th Street

Washington's first Jewish funeral home once occupied these two houses. In 2007 the buildings received a Historic Landmark designation as well as a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Bernard Danzansky, a tailor and shop owner, responded to the need for funeral services for a growing Jewish community by establishing Danzansky's Funeral Home at Ninth and N Streets, NW, in 1920. Three years later, he moved his family and business to 14th and Otis Streets, NW, well located to serve the city's Jewish population as it migrated northward from Southwest and old downtown Washington. Danzansky's Funeral Home remained here for 50 years. In 1975 Danzansky's merged with Goldberg's Funeral Home and, several years later, relocated to Rockville, Maryland. The building was purchased by the Washington Urban League. The two rowhouses were built by Harry Wardman, locally appreciated for the approximately 650 row houses he built in Columbia Heights alone.

Center for Spanish-American Relations, 1921–1923

2801 16th Street, NW

Real estate speculator and wife of Missouri Senator John Henderson, Mary Foote Henderson developed this Meridian Hill property in 1921 with the idea of giving it to the U.S. government as a gift for use as a vice presidential residence. Her offer was rejected, and the structure was purchased by the Spanish government for its embassy in 1926. It is one of the many mansions that Henderson built with architect George Oakley Totten, Jr. The handsome, stuccoed brick Beaux-Arts structure with its Spanish Renaissance exterior elements has undergone numerous alterations. The government of Spain, working with the nonprofit Spain-USA, plans to renovate the building for a Center for Spanish-American Relations. The cultural center will include a multi-use exhibition space, lecture halls, and auditorium to showcase classical and contemporary Spanish art, music, film, dance, and literature; conference rooms; café and tapas bar; offices, library classrooms and space for

the world's largest Spanish teaching organization, the Cervantes Institute.

Josephine Butler Parks Center, 1927

2437 15th Street, NW

Overlooking Meridian Hill Park, this Renaissance Revival style mansion, designed by George Oakley Totten, Jr., has housed the embassies of Hungary and Brazil. Restored to its earlier grandeur, the 18,000-sq.-ft., 40-room structure is home to the Josephine Butler Parks Center, a "greenhouse" for advancing Washington's parks and public spaces, operated by Washington Parks & People. When built, the estate was one of the many mansions abutting Meridian Hill Park developed by Mary Foote Henderson, a woman with great social aspirations hoping to build an exclusive residential enclave here.

Meridian Hill Studio, 1922

2633 15th Street, NW

Another of the houses designed by George Oakley Totten, Jr., for Mary Foote Henderson, this charming E-shaped building with gabled wings was intended to be a small apartment complex. The design shows the influence of both French vernacular and English Arts and Crafts styles, contrasting sharply with the more formal high-rise apartments developed in Columbia Heights at the same time.

Riggs Bank, 1924

3300 14th Street, NW

This stately structure designed by George N. Ray was one of the earliest branches of Riggs Bank. The decision to locate a branch bank at the crossroads of 14th Street and Park Road was evidence of the neighborhood's commercial viability and the highly desirable social and economic status of its residents. Modeled after Riggs's 1898 Pennsylvania Avenue headquarters, the design resembled the Beaux-Arts style favored for government buildings being constructed in the Federal Triangle at the time. The use of classical elements carved in the limestone symbolized institutional integrity. The bank building featured shops on the street level and commercial office space on the upper levels. One longtime tenant was WRC, Washington's oldest remaining radio station. Twin transmitters on the

roof sent the station's programs out to listeners. The building is now occupied by PNC Bank, which purchased Riggs Bank in 2006.

The Tivoli Theatre, 1924

14th Street and Park Road, NW

Theater mogul Harry Crandall added the luxurious Tivoli Theatre to the existing fashionable commercial district of Columbia Heights in 1924. The theater was designed in a Mediterranean Revival style by Thomas W. Lamb, one of the leading theater architects of his day. When it opened as the city's largest, the 2,000-seat theater was dubbed the "Temple of the Arts," offering both live and screen entertainment. Ten two-story, French-style shops occupied the ground level along 14th Street while above the theater were office suites, studio apartments, dressing rooms, and an exercise room. In addition to establishing the first theater in Washington to offer talking movies, Crandall also created the Tivoli Symphony Orchestra and the Tivoli Ballet Company.

Although spared during the 1968 violence that followed the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., the Tivoli Theatre closed in 1976. In 1980, activists organized Save the Tivoli, and in 1985 the theater was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Maintaining its historic presence at the Columbia Heights' crossroads, a magnificently restored Tivoli reopened in 2005 as Tivoli Square, encompassing the GALA Hispanic Theatre and a variety of businesses.

Lewis E. Breuninger (1859–1942)

Lewis Breuninger, a prominent developer active in Columbia Heights in the early 20th century, gave a start to another developer, Harry Wardman, who would be widely recognized for his Columbia Heights rowhouses. Before Wardman pursued an independent career, he and Breuninger built solid brick and carved

stone rowhouses with classically ornamented cornices at 3209-3213 13th Street. Breuninger later developed Shepherd Park, north of Columbia Heights, and, with his sons, Landon Woods in Montgomery County, Maryland.

Harry Wardman (1872–1938)



From 1902 to 1913 Harry Wardman built 650 rowhouses in Columbia Heights, providing much needed housing opportunities for middle-class homebuyers. Almost half of Wardman's houses were built in the Holmead Manor area bounded by Monroe, 14th, and Spring Streets, and Holmead Place. Designed in the Colonial Revival style by Albert Beers, the Wardman rows presented a unifying pattern of front porches that created a look that characterizes Columbia Heights today.

Following his Holmead Manor project, Wardman turned to building houses in the working-class, mixed-race neighborhood bounded by Sherman Avenue, Columbia Road, Georgia Avenue, and Harvard Street. These rowhouses, similar in design but smaller than Holmead Manor houses, were designed by Frank Russell White.

As upper 14th Street grew increasingly commercial, the ground levels of many Wardman's rowhouses were converted to business purposes, housing funeral homes, liquor stores, restaurants, and delicatessens, often with owner families living in the upper floors. These homes suffered further decline during the 1968 disturbances that followed the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Today, many of the houses are being restored, though sometimes without their iconic front porches.

Commerce

For more than 100 years, businesses have staked their success along Columbia Heights's 14th Street, the area's commercial corridor anchored by the historic crossroad at Park Road. As the 20th century wound down, earlier neighborhood institutions such as Lerner's, Peoples Drugs, and Murphy's, to name a few, were replaced by smaller, independent businesses serving an ethnically and economically diverse community. With dramatic change spurred by the opening of the Columbia Heights Metro station, these small businesses are confronting the arrival of large chain stores. The number of small shops is beginning to diminish along 14th Street, despite resident support.

Many of the neighborhood's existing businesses are staying the course, while others are finding new ways to attract customers. The shops at the restored Tivoli and the new Giant Supermarket have been joined by DC USA, which brings the area's largest Target to Columbia Heights, in addition to Best Buy, Staples, Bed Bath and Beyond, and other well-known chains.

Along the modest commercial strip of 11th Street, between Monroe and Kenyon Streets, the shopping, dining, and entertainment area options are expanding. The Wonderland Ballroom has replaced Nob Hill, one of the city's oldest gay bars, and Red Rocks Pizzeria and 11th Street Deli have joined Arthur's Grocery and Columbia Heights Coffee and other established merchants.

More to Discover...

The cultural richness of Columbia Heights cannot be totally captured in a few pages. Much goes on quietly, sometimes invisibly, in church groups and block associations, through community foundations, and on neighborhood list serves. The streets of this neighborhood nurture many artists, sculptors, poets, and musicians who have yet to find a place to bring their talents to a broader audience. Several neighborhood associations actively promote the interests of their members. Cleanup projects, small festivals, parades, block closings for neighborhood parties, and art shows offer local activities and an opportunity for involvement. Historically, on the Fourth of July, neighbors gather early at Cardozo High School and Meridian Hill Park to enjoy their unique vantage point of the National Fireworks—and the unofficial local show. The hilly terrain and beautiful vistas, broad streets, porches and sidewalks, and the adaptive reuse of historic architectural assets also contribute pieces to the cultural vitality of Columbia Heights today.

Methodology

The Columbia Heights neighborhood includes the area bounded by Spring Road on the north, Florida Avenue on the South, Georgia Avenue to the east, and 16th Street to the west.

This project began with research into the history of Columbia Heights as found in sources ranging from local repositories to the Internet, from Paul Williams' "Scenes from the Past" posted on innercity.com to Councilmember Jim Graham's website of current happenings.

Washington, DC historian Carole Kolker took on the enjoyable task of identifying the neighborhood's historic architecture, parks and gardens, cultural venues and other assets. Ms. Kolker began a walking survey of the neighborhood and soon discovered that by talking to local residents; observing seniors gathered in small groups; hearing the multi-lingual sounds of school children walking home at the end of the day; watching and avoiding bikers of all ages; and taking in the diversity of shoppers, shopkeepers, pedestrians, and Metro riders, she could discern a good picture of the community. Much was gained from her conversations with neighborhood leaders who shared information about their organization's participation in the community and discussed the changes taking place around them.

The variety of entries that comprise this inventory demonstrates that art, culture, and community pride contribute broadly to the quality of life in Columbia Heights.

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