

**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 or districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: **Petworth Gardens**

Other names/site number: **Webster Gardens**

2. Location

Street & Number: **124,126,128, and 130 Webster Street, N.W.** Not for Publication

City or town: **Washington** Vicinity

State: **D.C.** Code: **001** County: _____ Code: _____ Zip Code: **20011**

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 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: <input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> see continuation sheet <input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> see continuation sheet <input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:) _____ _____ _____ _____	Signature of the Keeper _____ _____ _____ _____	Date of Action _____ _____ _____ _____
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PETWORTH GARDENS APARTMENTS

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building(s)	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Public-Local	<input type="checkbox"/> District	___	___
<input type="checkbox"/> Public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> Site	___	___
<input type="checkbox"/> Public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> Structure	___	___
	<input type="checkbox"/> Object	___	___
		<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>
			Total

Name of related multiple property listing

Apartment Buildings in Washington, DC 1880-1945

Number of contributing Resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

MULTIPLE DWELLING: Apartment

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

MULTIPLE DWELLING: Apartment

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)

CRAFTSMAN

MEDITERRANEAN REVIVAL

TUDOR REVIVAL

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: BRICK

roof: ASPHALT SHINGLE

other: _____

Narrative Description

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

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

PETWORTH GARDENS

Washington, DC

Name of Property

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.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
COMMUNITY PLANNING
& DEVELOPMENT

Period of Significance

1921-1922

Significant Dates

1921-1922

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Robert F. Beresford

(architect)

Allan E. Walker Investment

Company (developer)

PETWORTH GARDENS

Washington, DC

Name of Property

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9. Major Bibliographic References

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)

previously listed in the NR

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of add. data:

State SHPO office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property ~1 acre _____

UTM References

1 1/8/ 3/2/5/4/6/5/ 4/3/1/2/2/9/1/
Zone Easting Northing

2 1/8/ 3/2/5/5/5/8/ 4/3/1/2/2/9/1/
Zone Easting Northing

3 1/8/ 3/2/5/5/5/8/ 4/3/1/2/2/5/1/
Zone Easting Northing

4 1/8/ 3/2/5/4/6/5/ 4/3/1/2/2/5/1/
Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of Petworth Gardens are contiguous with the property lines associates with Square 3321, Lots 65-68.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

Petworth Gardens has been historically associated with Lots 65-68 since the original construction of the complex in 1921-1922.

See continuation sheet

PETWORTH GARDENS

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Carrie Barton, Laura Hughes, Architectural Historians

Organization EHT Traceries, Inc. Date June 2008

Street & Number 1121 5th Street, NW Telephone (202) 393-1199

City or Town Washington State DC Zip code 20001

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

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

Photographs

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

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name Webster Gardens, LP

street & number 4115 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Suite 210 telephone (202) 363-2090

city or town Washington state District of Columbia zip code 20016

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of the Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**PETWORTH GARDENS
Washington, D.C.**

**Apartment Buildings in Washington, D.C.
1880-1945, Multiple Property Document**

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ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Site

Petworth Gardens is a two-story garden apartment complex consisting of four buildings located in the Petworth neighborhood of Northwest Washington, D.C. The one-acre rectangular site is set mid-block on the south side of Webster Street, N.W. between 2nd Street, N.W., to the west and Rock Creek Church Road, N.W., to the east. The site is in close proximity to the Rock Creek Church Cemetery to the northeast and the Armed Forces Retirement Home to the east. The complex is surrounded by other low-rise residential structures from the first and second quarter of the twentieth century. The boundaries of the site are contiguous with the property lines of lots 65-68 of Square 3321. An alley accessed from Webster Street, N.W., defines the western and southern boundaries of the site. The northern line created by the four buildings continues the setback established by the row houses to the east and west.

The four red-brick buildings were constructed in sets of two between 1921 and 1922. Each set is sited perpendicular to the street, and the buildings in each set face east or west on either side of a narrow landscaped green space. Concrete stairs with simple painted metal tube handrails lead from the public sidewalk along Webster Street, N.W., and connect to a system of concrete paths that define the landscaped green space between the buildings. The paths lead to two primary entrances at each building. The site is slightly elevated above the alley to the south, and the south sides of the green spaces are separated from the alley by a concrete retaining wall and sets of concrete stairs. A secondary door on the south elevation of each of the four buildings provides basement-level access from the alley.

Exterior

Each building has a rectangular footprint with four projecting bays on the front elevation and two projecting bays on the rear elevation. The individual buildings measure approximately 44-ft wide and 130-ft deep. All of the buildings are set on a solid concrete foundation and capped with hipped roofs sheathed in composite shingles. The exterior walls are constructed of red

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brick laid in seven-course American bond. Each building has an undulating façade created by the rhythm of the projecting bays, which provides stylistic interest to the complex, while engaging the common green space between the buildings and maximizing natural light into the units. The complex rooflines of the façade, created by projecting hipped bays, stepped parapets, dormers and flush chimneys centered above entrances, were intended to reference the Tudor Revival architectural style of the Pomander Walk development in New York City (1921). The exposed rafter ends under the wide, overhanging eaves have been enclosed by modern vinyl soffits. The roofs are penetrated by several dormer windows: a single hipped dormer centered on each corner bay; a single hipped dormer on the rear roof slope of Buildings 124 and 130; and one arched dormer and flanking hipped dormer in the center rear roof of Buildings 126 and 128. Each building has two main entrances marked by arched brick surrounds that have been fitted with modern aluminum and glass door systems. The fenestration of the complex is comprised of a combination of original and replacement 8/8, 6/6, and 4/4 wood windows found as single windows or in sets of two or three. The non-original wood sash windows replaced original multi-light casement windows that were found at the corners of the buildings and within the projecting bays. Two four-light casement windows remain in the front projecting bays of each building. The windows at Buildings 124 and 126 have wood window sills, while the windows at Buildings 128 and 130 have brick rowlock sills, showing the slight difference in the construction dates of the two sets of buildings.

Interior

As defined by the garden apartment archetype, the buildings at Petworth Gardens are organized around exterior landscaped common spaces rather than grand interior lobbies. As such, each building has two simple interior stairwells that provide access from the exterior common space directly to the first- and second-story apartment units without the use of long corridors. According to the D.C. Permit to Build application, the estimated cost for the construction of the complex was set to be \$150,000, and each building was planned to have twelve one- and two-bedroom units.¹ A single one-bedroom basement unit has been added to each of the four buildings since the original construction, bringing the total number of units to fifty-two. Each first- and second-story unit is equipped with an individual bathroom and kitchen with breakfast

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alcove. All units excluding the corner units have a sleeping porch that occupies projecting bays on the front and rear elevations. Each spacious unit features stained wood floors, flat plaster walls and ceilings, painted wood trim, and a combination of double-paneled wood doors and fifteen-light wood French doors. Many of the units retain the original wood cabinetry within the kitchen spaces.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Petworth Gardens is significant as the first garden apartment building complex constructed in Washington, D.C., and is a seminal example of the influence of England's Garden City Movement on city planning and architecture in the United States. Constructed in 1921, Petworth Gardens was on the front line of the garden apartment trend in the United States, which emerged from the early-twentieth-century-Garden City Movement and was popular through the mid-1950s. Planned as an integral part of the middle-class neighborhood of Petworth in Northwest Washington, D.C, Petworth Gardens illustrates the acceptance of middle-class apartment living in the city during the 1920s and 1930s. Petworth Gardens was also one of the first projects undertaken by the local architect and developer team of Robert F. Beresford (architect) and Allan E. Walker Investment Company (builder and developer), who went on to design and build numerous projects including the renowned Mayflower Hotel (1924) and the Tower Building (1929), both of which are individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Petworth Gardens apartments, located at 124, 126, 128, and 130 Webster Street, N.W. in Washington, D.C., meets National Register of Historic Places Criteria: **(A) Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; and (C) Distinctive physical characteristics of design or construction.** Additionally, the building meets D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites criteria **201.1 (a) History, (d) Architecture and Urbanism, and (f) Creative Masters.**

The areas of significance are **Architecture** as an early example of garden apartment architecture that exhibits aspects of Craftsman, Tudor Revival, and Mediterranean Revival architectural styles; and **Community Planning and Development** for its role as the first garden apartment building complex in Washington, D.C., and as a representative example of the initial development of the Garden City Movement in the United States. The period of significance is **1921-1922**, which represents the construction period of the complex.

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Petworth Gardens is nominated under the **Multiple Property Documentation Form, *Apartment Buildings in Washington, D.C. 1880-1945*** (Traceries, 1993). Petworth Gardens meets criteria specifically developed to evaluate apartment buildings pursuant to the D.C. Apartment Building Survey and adopted by the Historic Preservation Review Board in December 1989 as identified by the *Apartment Buildings in Washington, D.C. 1880-1945* Multiple Property Document. These criteria include:

- A-1. Buildings associated with specific events that have made a contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- A-2. Buildings that illustrate the development of the apartment movement as it relates to the need for housing, including the introduction of the building type and its early formation throughout the city.
- A-4. Buildings that reflect economic forces, both external and internal, that have significantly altered the development of the city.
- A-6. Buildings that reflect changes in the development of social attitudes towards multi-unit living as expressed through their interior architectural organization.

These four criteria reference Petworth Gardens' role as the first garden apartment building complex constructed in Washington, D.C., and its representation of the emergence of the Garden City Movement in the United States during the early twentieth century. Apartment design and planning in Washington, D.C., underwent substantial innovations in the late 1910s and 1920s in response to a housing shortage created by the city's rapidly expanding population and the influx of federal workers during and after World War I. Constructed in 1921, Petworth Gardens is representative of early efforts to incorporate the principles of the Garden City Movement in the expanding urban landscape and to create an appealing multi-family living option for the middle

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class. Since the late nineteenth century, multi-family residences in the United States had historically been associated with slum tenement housing or the upper class. To appeal to the middle class, architects began to use a strong relationship between buildings and the surrounding landscape to create a healthy yet modest form of apartment living. The exterior landscaped gardens and courtyards of the garden apartments functionally replaced the grand interior lobby of upper-class apartment buildings, and well-lit interiors, low-scale buildings, and easily accessible green space were employed to break the association of multi-family buildings with the undesirable conditions of tenements. The scale, siting, configuration, and interior plans of Petworth Gardens represent the initial stages of development of the garden apartment type, which was constructed throughout the city and surrounding region during the second quarter of the twentieth century.

Additionally, Petworth Gardens meets Apartment Building Criteria:

- C-5. Buildings that illustrate types of multi-unit buildings.
- C-6. Buildings that illustrate expressions of architectural styles, either rare, notable, or influential to the aesthetic development of the apartment building or architecture in general.
- C-9. Buildings that introduced or made contributions to the expression and appreciation of amenities affecting the architectural form of the building type.
- C-10. Buildings that are the work of skilled architects, landscape architects, urban planners, engineers, builders or developers.
- C-11. Buildings that illustrate the work of skilled architect/developer teams.

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These five criteria reference Petworth Gardens' role as an early garden apartment complex that employed a mix of architectural styles including Craftsman, Tudor Revival, and Mediterranean Revival. The architect of Petworth Gardens, Robert F. Beresford, made an explicit effort to use architectural style and scale to reference the "Londonese" type of apartment building located in the quaint suburbs of England's capital city. Architects of early garden apartments, like Beresford, sought to create a distinctive image for the middle-class apartment type that would differentiate it from the Classical and Beaux Arts vocabularies of the upper-class apartment building. These early garden apartments employed Romantic and eclectic architectural styles to evoke the sentiment of charming European villages and the picturesque European countryside in an effort to create an intimate setting that would appeal to middle-class residents. These romantic styles would later be replaced by the Colonial Revival architectural style in garden apartments of the late 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, and the use of eclectic styles at Petworth Gardens reflects its place in the initial stages of garden apartment design in the United States. With Petworth Gardens' role as the first garden apartments constructed in Washington, D.C., these criteria also represent the impact that early garden apartment design had on multi-family developments in the city and the surrounding region. The complex shows primitive yet influential techniques of using style, scale, and siting to create a strong relationship between building and landscape. These criteria also reference the property's role as one of the first projects undertaken by the architect and developer team of prominent D.C. architect Robert F. Beresford and developer Allan E. Walker Investment Company, who went on to jointly design and construct several notable developments in the city including the Mayflower Hotel (1924) and the Tower Building (1929). Both Beresford and Walker were also closely involved in the promotion, study, design, and development of multi-family housing for the middle class in the 1920s and 1930s, and Petworth Gardens is representative of their early efforts to bring desirable options for multi-family living and the principles of the Garden City Movement to Washington, D.C.

Petworth Gardens has been identified as a **Garden Apartment Building Sub-Type**, as defined by the Multiple Property Documentation Form, *Apartment Buildings in Washington, D.C. 1880-*

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1945. As described in the Multiple Property Documentation form, the Garden Apartment Building Sub-type is “Composed of individual buildings forming a group of at least two buildings designed and constructed specifically to function as a multiple dwelling. These small buildings were designed to contain at least four self-sufficient (with private kitchen and bath facilities) dwelling units. Each building is at least two and no more than four stories high and has a single main public entrance. The buildings do not have an elevator. The group is designed and sited to relate to surrounding landscape.”² Examples of this sub-type must date from between 1921 and 1945. Petworth Gardens consists of four two-story buildings that were designed and constructed to specifically function as multiple dwellings. The buildings are oriented perpendicular to the street, with each pair facing inward toward a landscaped communal space. The buildings do not have elevators, and the units are accessed by interior stairs that exit directly to the garden.

As stated in the Registration Requirements of the Multiple Property Documentation form, examples of garden apartment buildings must retain sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, workmanship, materials, association, and feeling to convey their associative, artistic, or informational value. Petworth Gardens has undergone minimal alterations since its original construction between 1921 and 1922, and the exterior and interior of Petworth Gardens remain largely intact. The only notable exterior alteration is a partial window replacement and a replacement of the buildings’ main entrance doors. The building was originally constructed with a combination of multi-light sash and casement windows. In the 1980s, a majority of the buildings’ multi-light casement windows were replaced with wood sash windows matching the profile of the existing wood sash windows, leaving approximately half of the original windows intact. The locations of window and door openings has not changed, and the partial window and door replacement is viewed as reversible. On the interiors, original trim, plaster walls and ceilings, interior doors, wood floors, and built-in cabinetry are found in a majority of the fifty-two apartment units, and the original staircases are present in each of the four buildings. Petworth Gardens also retains its original siting, setting, and feeling as a low-scale garden apartment building complex in a 1920s middle-class neighborhood. Petworth Gardens retains a high degree of integrity and continues to convey its artistic value as the earliest garden apartment building

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complex in Washington, D.C.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PETWORTH GARDENS

Petworth Gardens was designed and constructed between 1921 and 1922 by architect Robert F. Beresford and developer Allan E. Walker Investment Company. An application for permit to build for 128 and 130 Webster Street, N.W., was filed on October 3, 1921.³ The application specified the construction of two brick buildings with concrete foundations, each measuring 44-ft wide, 130-ft deep, and 22-ft high. The two buildings would accommodate 24 families and was estimated to cost \$80,000. A *Washington Post* article from that same month described the new development:

*A series of quaint, twelve-family apartment houses built along the lines of the famous Londonese apartments in the suburbs of the British capital...will be known as Petworth Gardens, and are being constructed in Webster street, between Rock Creek Church road and Second street. The apartments will be built in units of two, with spacious gardens between each building. The entrances will be so placed that they will face the gardens.*⁴

The apartments were planned to have individual kitchens and bathrooms and would feature amenities such as glassed-in sleeping porches and breakfast alcoves. Every unit was to face the garden, and the abundance of windows would provide well-lit and well-ventilated interiors. The location of the building was advertised as being close to the Soldiers' Home Park, which satisfied the Garden City principal of locating housing in close proximity to opportunities for recreational activity. This new type of housing was said to have created considerable interest throughout the city, as it was a promising model for relieving Washington's pressing housing shortage by meeting "the demand for small apartments in good locality at a moderate rental."⁵ One advertisement reported that over a hundred people were on the waiting list for the first twenty-four units before ground was broken on the development.⁶ The application for permit for 124, and 126 Webster Street, N.W., was filed on June 23, 1922.⁷ This second group of buildings was

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estimated to cost \$10,000 less than the Buildings at 128 and 130 Webster Street, which is evidenced by the use of wood window sills and simpler interior trim. The four buildings are identical in every other respect.

A 1921 article from *The Evening Star* states that the Petworth Gardens project was intended to resemble London's famous "Pomander Walk" community, about which a play was written by Louis N. Park in 1910. The article also reports that a "faithful copy" of the Pomander Walk community was being constructed by Thomas Healy, a restraunteur, between 94th and 95th streets in New York City.⁸ The original and replica Pomander Walk communities are comprised of single-family, Tudor-Revival-style row houses with individual gardens. Although Petworth Gardens is an apartment building complex, it does share similarities with Pomander Walk in its perpendicular orientation of the buildings to the street, as well as its configuration of rows of buildings along either side of a narrow landscaped garden. Other similar rowhouse configurations are found in Philadelphia and New York.

The new garden apartment buildings at Petworth Gardens were integral to the development in the Petworth neighborhood that was being undertaken by the Beresford and Walker team. The development was meant to provide housing at the lowest price possible for sound construction and good materials, a goal directly associated with the desperate need for middle-class housing in the city after World War I. In November of 1921, only a month after the plans for the garden apartments were submitted, the construction of a row of nine brick row houses on the north side of Webster Street, N.W., was announced by the *Washington Post*. The buildings were to be designed and constructed by Beresford and Walker and were to face the new garden apartments planned for the south side of the street. The houses were to have large front and rear porches with glassed-in interior spaces, continuing Beresford's emphasis on well-ventilated and -lit interior spaces. Beresford and Walker were simultaneously undertaking middle-class, single-family homes in Brookland in northeast Washington, D.C., and Chevy Chase, Maryland.

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EARLY HOUSING REFORM IN THE UNITED STATES

At the turn of the twentieth century, attitudes regarding multi-family housing were beginning to change across the country as reformers voiced the need for serious improvements in American housing. As a result of industrialization and immigration, urban populations had grown at a tremendous rate after the Civil War (1861- 1865) and thus created a great need for affordable housing. Early attempts at affordable multi-family housing, however, were substandard and the unhealthy living conditions of tenement houses were heavily criticized by contemporary critics. In response, the Tenement House Act of 1901 was passed in New York. Subsequent laws were passed in Chicago, Philadelphia, and Boston to prohibit the construction of tenement housing and their unsanitary living conditions.⁹ These laws were instrumental in changing housing standards throughout the county as several large cities followed with similar tenement and alley-dwelling laws. Naturally, these changes resulted in new opportunities for developers, architects, and social reformers who sought to transform and to take advantage of the newly created middle-class housing market.¹⁰

THE GARDEN CITY MOVEMENT

Housing problems were not unique to American cities, and reformers in England had begun to look for solutions to housing and planning problems in the late nineteenth century. An innovative response came in 1898 with the publication of *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, which was republished as *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* in 1902. Written by British author Sir Ebenezer Howard, the book later became a catalyst for planning reform in the United States. Howard's writings emphasized the deterioration of the quality of life within the city boundaries and the need to "organize a migratory movement of population from our overcrowded centers to sparsely-settled rural districts."¹¹ He established the Garden City Association in 1900 to promote his ideals, which were quickly embraced throughout England.

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Early examples of “Garden City” development in England include Letchworth (1902) and Welwyn (1919-1920).¹² Each of these developments encompassed over 1,200 acres of land with additional acreage set aside for the establishment of an agricultural belt.

The philosophy of the Garden City was to create above-standard housing with single-family, low-density residences overlooking natural greens. The low-density development was combined with a road system that followed the natural grade and curves of the land, avoiding the restrictions of traditional grid patterns to promote a “country” feel. Open space was also a primary component of Garden Cities. Howard’s writing emphasized “ample recreation grounds within very easy access of all the people.”¹³ In response, extensive parks and planting areas were located throughout both Letchworth and Welwyn. The innovations of the Garden City concept did not apply simply to housing; the inclusion of educational facilities, shopping centers, and recreation areas were also imperative to the success of the Garden City as a self-sufficient community. With its unified approach to the planning problems that have historically plagued cities, the Garden City Movement was a significant advance in city planning theory.

EMERGENCE OF THE GARDEN CITY MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

Many architects and urban planners in Europe and the United States enthusiastically embraced the Garden City Movement, and its principles began to be applied to the housing needs of the expanding urban and suburban populations in the United States. During World War I (1914-1918), the short-lived United States Housing Corporation of the U.S. Labor Department and the Emergency Fleet Corporation of the U.S. Shipping Board encouraged town planners and designers of emergency housing communities for industrial workers to adopt Garden City models.¹⁴ A true “Garden City” with its permanent surrounding green agricultural belt was difficult to obtain in most suburban and metropolitan areas where street grids and small plots of land created prohibitive conditions. However, ideas from the movement were being adopted in smaller developments as early as the 1910s.

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When the Garden City Movement began to emerge in the United States, the incorporation of open space as an integral part of multi-family housing design was a new concept. Developers hoped that by providing open space and landscaped gardens around apartment buildings they would dispense with many of the stigmas attached to city apartment living. New designs began to integrate public and private space with landscaped courtyards located on the interiors of individual blocks and within apartment building clusters. Architecturally, the first garden apartment complexes were designed to carefully fit in with the scale, symmetry, and landscaping of the surrounding community. Rowhouses, typically two-and-a-half stories in height, and apartment buildings, four to six stories in height, were arranged in courts that varied in layout. The arrangement of the buildings allowed each unit to have as much light and air as possible.¹⁵ Early garden apartment design also sought to create a distinctive image of the middle-class apartment building by employing romantic and eclectic architectural styles, such as English Tudor Revival, Gothic Revival, and Jacobean Revival, along with the French Vernacular and Spanish architectural vocabularies. These styles evoked the feeling of charming and picturesque European villages to create intimate and quaint settings that departed from the grand Classically-inspired styles of the upper-class apartment buildings. These principles of open space and clusters of low-rise buildings that emerged from the Garden City Movement influenced the design of multi-family housing nationwide in the decades to come and forever changed the negative implications previously associated with multi-family housing.

GARDEN CITY INFLUENCE ON MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING

The first apartment buildings constructed in the United States to explicitly reference the principles of the Garden City Movement are located in the Jackson Heights community of Queens in New York, New York. The development was the idea of Edward Archibald MacDougall, president of a speculative development group called the Queensboro Corporation. McDougall, who had visited Europe in 1914, was inspired by Howard's Garden City Movement

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and purchased 325 acres of the newly forming Jackson Heights community of Queens for the purpose of creating an American version of the “garden community.”¹⁶ Completed in 1917, Queensboro’s initial Jackson Heights apartment development consisted of ten buildings located on either side of 23rd Street between Polk and Fillmore avenues.¹⁷ The first complex was given the name “Garden Apartments,” which was changed to the Greystone Apartments in 1925 once garden apartment had become a generic term.¹⁸ A *New York Times* article written during the construction of the development describes this new apartment building type:

The original project of the garden apartments to initiate this new idea in apartment house construction was to...construct apartment houses set back from the building line a sufficient distance to allow for planting and trees and general parking treatment. The buildings themselves are built very shallow in depth so as to leave a large garden in the rear, which is laid out for the recreation of the tenants and avoids the unsightly cement courts and fences so common in apartment house neighborhoods...This space [between the buildings] is laid out in walks, grass plots, flower beds, &c.¹⁹

These five-story structures were designed based on five principles deemed by MacDougall as essential to “good planning of multiple-family housing.”²⁰ The buildings were free-standing and shallow to provide an opportunity for many corner rooms and maximum corner ventilation. All of the buildings were setback substantially from the street to provide an opportunity for landscaped lawns and plantings. All units had direct exposure to the interior landscaped gardens that ran the full lengths of the blocks and the landscaped spaces created by the substantial setbacks along the street. The silhouettes of the buildings were enhanced by “a picturesque arrangement of roofs and dormers, towers, and other features” that were meant to provide “attractiveness to this new type of apartment building.”²¹ Furthermore, MacDougall believed in comprehensive development of entire or multiple blocks of apartments, which would create a more visually cohesive and unified community. When MacDougall’s plan was fully realized in the following decades, picturesque, single-family homes flanked fifteen blocks of this new type

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of garden apartment in Jackson Heights, and the principles of landscaped open space and well-lit and -ventilated interiors were employed throughout the neighborhood development. Jackson Heights was credited by many with creating a successful community life within the Garden Apartments, something not associated with previous apartment building complexes.

The apartments at Petworth Gardens, constructed in 1921, reflect many of the same principles applied to the Garden Apartments at Jackson Heights including free standing buildings, landscaped setbacks from the street, well-lit and -ventilated interior spaces, landscaped gardens, and complex rooflines. Petworth Gardens was also developed simultaneously with adjacent row houses by the same developer and architect, which resulted in a cohesive streetscape. Significantly, Petworth Gardens introduces elements not seen at Jackson Heights that evidence the evolution of the garden apartment type. Jackson Heights used elevators to provide vertical access to upper-floor units. Petworth Gardens, like the garden apartment types that follow it, is comprised of walk-up apartments that use stairs to directly connect units to the exterior common space rather than elevators. Jackson Heights was also built as a complex of five-story buildings. Petworth Gardens is a two-story complex; this low-scale construction creates a more intimate and house-like feel that appealed to middle-class residents and was in keeping with the scale of the surrounding neighborhood of single-family homes. Jackson Gardens, although set back from the street with landscaping, is oriented street-forward, and the rear elevations of the buildings face the common garden space; therefore, the buildings are accessed from the street rather than the garden. Conversely, the siting of Petworth Gardens shows evolution in the garden apartment type by orienting the buildings away from the street; therefore, the entrances front the garden rather than the street, which provides a sense of privacy and seclusion to the buildings' residents. Although Petworth Gardens has strong connections to its predecessor at Jackson Heights, it stands as a seminal example of the conventional garden apartment type; low-scale, walk-up apartments oriented toward a common green space rather than the street became the guiding characteristics in the design of middle-class multi-family housing for years to come.

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THE NATIONAL GARDEN CITY MOVEMENT AND THE EVOLUTION OF GARDEN APARTMENT DESIGN

Although isolated examples of the incorporation of Garden City ideals were seen in the late 1910s, the Garden City Movement emerged in the 1920s as a major force in city planning in the United States. In 1923, the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA) was established by a group of architects, planners, and developers who sought to promote Howard's Garden City ideals. The RPAA was the first "broad-based planning organization in the United States and was significant for popularizing the ideas of regional planning and development."²² Founding members of the RPAA included: Clarence Stein, an architect who was the chairman of the New York State's Commission for Housing; Henry Wright, a landscape architect who was a follower of Frederick Law Olmsted; Alexander Bing, a prominent real estate developer and philanthropist; and Lewis Mumford, the renown urban planner and historian. Under the direction of Stein, the City Housing Corporation (CHC) was formed between 1924 and 1928 for the purpose of building a new community following Garden City principles. The CHC integrated Howard's ideals of a self-sustained community and followed his essential philosophy of a socially and economically balanced community, which included the desirable elements of both urban and rural life.

In 1924, Stein and Wright designed Sunnyside Gardens in Queens, New York, as their first demonstration project. Although it is not a pure example of a Garden City as defined by Howard, Sunnyside Gardens exemplifies the Garden City principles with its "heterogeneous social and economic mix, affordable housing, mixture of public and private space, and careful management."²³ Radburn in Fairlawn, New Jersey and Chatham Village in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania soon followed in 1928 and 1930, respectively.²⁴ These developments incorporated both single-family and multi-family living and thus continued to develop the garden apartment type based on Garden City principles.

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As with the 1921 Petworth Gardens development, Garden apartment buildings in these new Garden City communities were low-scale, masonry, walk-up, rectangular structures that used exterior gardens as common space. However, through the succession of these Garden City examples, the form evolved into the garden apartment type that dominated multi-family housing development in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Most notably, the complex rooflines and eclectic architectural styles seen at Petworth Gardens and at Jackson Heights were replaced by simple and repetitive detailing in the Colonial Revival, Art Deco, and Moderne architectural styles, which were used on most of the buildings throughout these new developments.²⁵ The architects, developers, and planners responsible for these new garden apartments also paid close attention to the economic value of different elements of the buildings' designs in an attempt to create a model that could be used in multi-family housing in the years to come. Ideas about circulation, height, and room size were continuously analyzed to come up with the most cost-effective design while maintaining the principles of well-lit, well-ventilated apartment units with access to open space.

POST-WORLD WAR I APARTMENT CONSTRUCTION IN WASHINGTON

From the end of the First World War until 1929, 731 apartment buildings were constructed in Washington, D.C., twice the number built during the previous decade. This enormous increase in residential construction was stimulated by the rapid growth in the Washington, D.C., area's population as a burgeoning federal government faced new responsibilities as a world leader. As necessity overcame social qualms associated with apartment living, apartment buildings spread across the city. The city's 1920 Zoning Act established categories for residential building types and targeted certain areas for multi-family construction.

An acute housing shortage developed in the World War I years as the city's population grew and building slowed. The many new residents whose federal salaries could not keep up with housing

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prices, for whom single family residences were out of reach, created an increased need for apartments. Effectively inverting the percentage of new construction of houses versus apartment units, by 1940, apartment units outranked the number of houses by 70 percent. The District joined New York and Chicago as cities with highest percentage of apartment house residents.

Washington's apartment buildings from the 1920s and 1930s form the main body of the city's multi-family building stock. Never before or since have middle-class buildings been designed and constructed in the quantity and with the speed seen during the era between the World Wars. Changes to the apartment building type during the two decades between the World Wars were most notable not for the introduction of new forms, but rather for the loss of quality and services due to post-war inflation or, interestingly enough, the use of modern technology.

ARCHITECT: Robert F. Beresford (1879-1966)

Robert F. Beresford was a prominent Washington, D.C., architect who practiced locally for over fifty years. Beresford was born in Audenreid, Pennsylvania in 1879. He attended two years at Princeton University (1898-1900), after which he traveled in Europe before making his move to Washington D.C. In the beginning of his career as an architect, Beresford served in the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury from 1903 to 1905, as well as the Office of the Architect of the Capitol from 1905-1909. He worked in the offices of noted designer Jules Henri DeSibour from 1909-14 and as a draftsman for Appleton P. Clark from 1914-1919.

In 1920, Beresford opened his own practice and quickly formed a partnership with local developer Allan E. Walker Investment Company. Petworth Gardens (1921) was the first product of their partnership, which led to several other notable D.C. developments including the renowned Mayflower Hotel and the Art Deco Tower Building on K Street. Beresford also designed numerous privately-owned residences in Washington, D.C., and the surrounding suburbs, as well as the chapel at Forte George Meade in Maryland, in 1934. Beresford served as

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Secretary of the D.C. Board of Examiners and Registrars of Architects (1928-1948) and the president of the Washington-Metropolitan Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (1927-1928). He continued his private practice until 1961 and retired to Ransomville, New York.

Along with his many notable commissions, Beresford is also known for his efforts to influence residential design in Washington, D.C. In a 1926 *Washington Post Article*, entitled “Why I Believe in Washington,” Beresford expresses his belief in the beauty and potential of the city:

Belief in Washington, confidence in its future is really a localized expression of our confidence in the United States. The growth and prosperity of Washington is linked up with the growth and prosperity of our country. The interest of all sections of this nation is focused on Washington, not only because it is the seat of the national government, but also because of the growing sentiment that it should represent the nation's progress and prosperity...There is a pride that every American has in Washington that makes him wish to see it grow in a way that will represent the highest type of American achievement. Realizing this pride of all citizens in Washington, does it not impose an obligation on us who are helping to shape its growth and welfare? Does it not mean that in exchange for living in this beautiful and prosperous city, we have a special responsibility to the nation to guide its growth in the best way? I believe it is worthy of consideration that while we lose no opportunity to foster the growth of Washington, it is important that we aim at qualitative and not merely quantitative growth. We must see to it that long with the growth of the city must go the development of the social, educational, and cultural facilities that will promote the general welfare of the community. We must see to it that the city exists to enable people to live more complete and beautiful lives, and not that the people exist for the sake of increasing the financial values of the city.²⁶

This belief in the social responsibility of those shaping the city's growth is a theme seen in many

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of Beresford's efforts as an advocate of socially- and environmentally-conscious design throughout his career. Beresford's design of Petworth Gardens in 1921 and his use of Garden City principles evidences his early consciousness of the importance of multi-family housing design for the health of Washington's booming population. Beresford spoke publicly about trends in apartment house design in the 1920s and was also involved in revisions of the D.C. building code in an effort to create safer and healthier living environments in multi-family properties. In 1933, Beresford was part of the "Renovize Washington Campaign" that placed a ramshackle dwelling in the park triangle in front of the Department of Commerce Building and renovated it as an example of what can be accomplished with the slum housing throughout the city.²⁷

Beresford was also responsible for several private home designs that sought to create a strong relationship between the landscape and the structure. In 1927, Beresford was responsible for the design of a house in well-known "Rock Creek Park Estates," a subdivision that intersects with Rock Creek Park. The homes within the small neighborhood were designed to be "entirely in keeping with their environment" and to give "due consideration to the special conditions of topography and climate." Beresford's design was noted for its consideration of each room in relation to sunlight and prevailing winds, as well as the conformity of the design to the existing topography.²⁸

DEVELOPER AND BUILDER: Allan E. Walker Investment Company

Allan E. Walker (1879-1925) was a prominent real estate operator and developer in the Washington, D.C., area during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Walker's contributions to the housing market in D.C. have left a lasting impression on housing styles and rental options in the city. Early on in his career Walker focused on buying, renting, and selling real estate, and his vision and goals centered on bringing the latest theories in real estate to the D.C. area. Walker began his own investment business after working with his father, Redford W. Walker, in

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the same field during his teenage years. Coming from a family of real-estate-savvy Washingtonians, the Allan E. Walker Investment Company's prominence grew rapidly in the city. In 1920, Walker was responsible for the organization of the first cooperative conversion in Washington, D.C., one of Walker's most notable accomplishments. The method of cooperative ownership was referred to as "The Allan E. Walker Plan" and was recognized as a legitimate means of ownership by the District Rent Commission in 1921.²⁹ Additionally, Walker is recognized for developing the first garden apartment in Washington D.C., Petworth Gardens, in 1921 and 1922. Walker's investments greatly impacted the development boom in Washington's burgeoning middle-class, suburban-style neighborhoods in the upper regions of the Northwest and Northeast quadrants of the city. Although Walker's endeavors were predominantly residential, his largest venture was the construction of the Mayflower Hotel on Connecticut Avenue in 1924. By bringing modern ideas in development and real estate to D.C., Walker was one of the main catalysts for the city's rapid building growth in decade before his sudden death in 1925.

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⁸ "Novel Apartment House Project Started in Petworth," *The Evening Star*, October 9, 1921.

⁹ Ruth Limmer and Andrew S. Dolkart, *The Tenement as History and Housing*, (downloaded

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¹⁰ Clifford Edward Clark, Jr., *The American Family Home, 1800-1960* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 73.

¹¹ Sir Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*. (London, England: S. Sonnenschein & Co., 1902 Edition), 112.

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¹⁹ "Garden Apartments. Four More of New Type Being Erected at Jackson Heights," *New York Times*, September 2, 1917.

²⁰ Daniel Karatzas, "History of Jackson Heights," Jackson Heights Beautification Group, www.jhbg.org/history/history.html.

²¹ Daniel Karatzas, "History of Jackson Heights," Jackson Heights Beautification Group, www.jhbg.org/history/history.html.

²² National Register of Historic Places Nomination for Sunnyside Gardens Historic District, Queens Co., N.Y. (1984).

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²³ National Register of Historic Places Nomination for Sunnyside Gardens Historic District, Queens Co., N.Y. (1984).

²⁴ National Register of Historic Places Nomination for Sunnyside Gardens Historic District, Queens Co., N.Y. (1984).

²⁵ National Historic Landmark Nominations for Chatham Village (1998), Sunnyside Gardens (1984), and Radburn (1975).

²⁶ Robert F. Beresford, "Why I Believe in Washington," *Washington Post*, November 28, 1926.

²⁷ "Renovize Campaign Backed by Ad Club," *Washington Post*, February 25, 1933.

²⁸ "Rock Creek Park Estates Protects Natural Beauties," *Washington Post*, May 8, 1927.

²⁹ "Apartment Plan Sale Held Legal," *Washington Post*, July 1, 1921.

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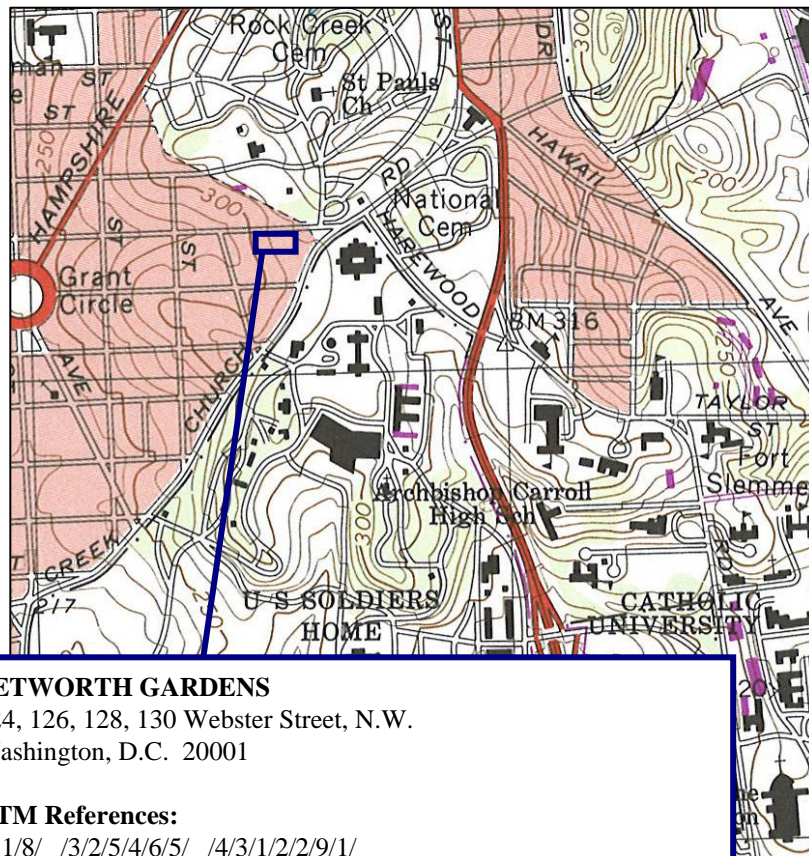
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**USGS Quad Map (Washington West), 2007
Map courtesy of topozone.com**



PETWORTH GARDENS
124, 126, 128, 130 Webster Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001

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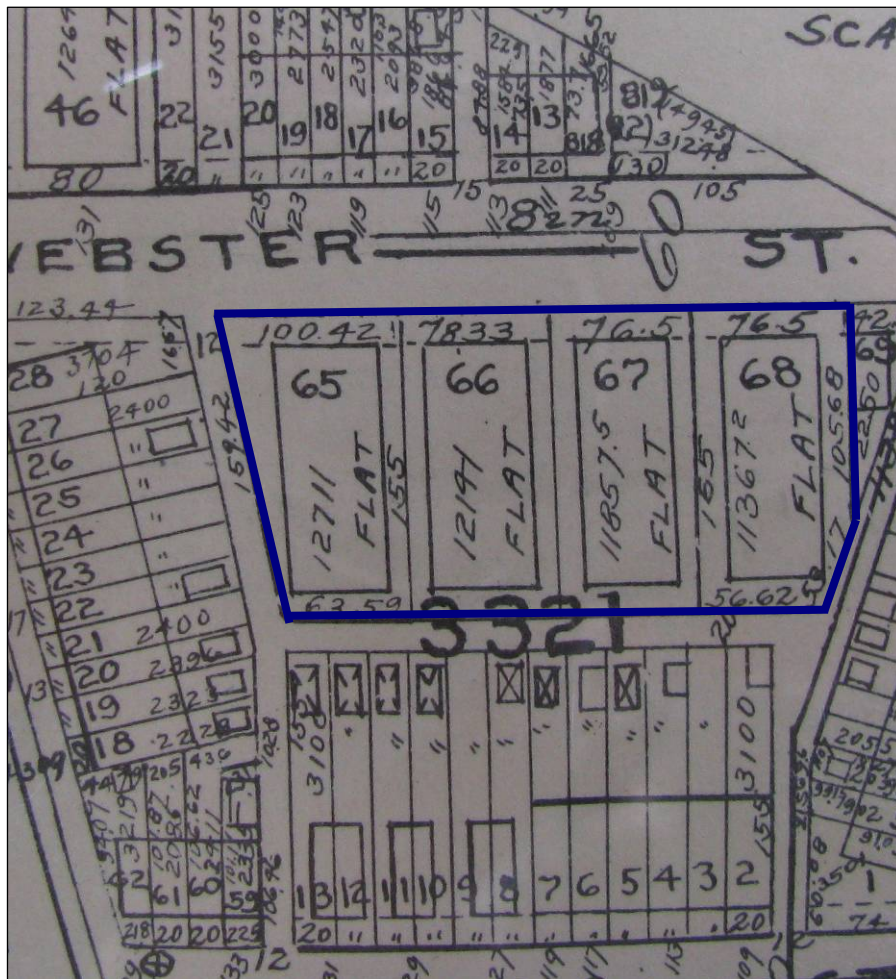
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The Evening Star.

WASHINGTON, D. C., SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1921

NOVEL APARTMENT HOUSE PROJECT STARTED IN PETWORTH.



Architect's drawing of the new apartment houses being erected on Webster street, near Rock Creek Church road, by the Allan E. Walker Investment Company. The first unit of a series planned is shown. R. F. Beresford is the architect and work is being done by the construction department of the company.

PLAN SIX HOUSES IN WOODLEY PARK

Real Estate Firm to Start \$100,000 Building Project. Other Permits Granted.

Permit for a \$100,000 home-building operation in Woodley Park, adjoining Massachusetts Avenue Park, was issued this week to Middagh & Shanley by the District building inspector. Six houses, numbering 2900 to 2914 32d street, will be erected.

The Thrift Building Company was granted permission to proceed with the construction of seven dwellings, 1761 to 1713 Quincey street, northwest. The cost was given as \$20,000.

Dr. H. E. Coblenz will build a \$20,000 home at 1422 U street northwest.

Other Permits Issued.

Other permits issued this week fol-

CONSTRUCTION OF FIRST UNIT OF PETWORTH GARDENS BEGUN

Apartment Project, Resembling London's Famous "Pomander Walk" Community. Plan of Walker Investment Company.

Construction of the first unit of Petworth Gardens, an apartment project resembling in many respects London's famous "Pomander Walk" community, was begun this week by the Allan E. Walker Investment Company.

The apartments will be built in groups of two, with wide gardens between. The entrances of the apartments face the gardens. Each building will contain twelve apartments, consisting of a large living room, bedroom, kitchen with breakfast alcove, glassed-in sleeping porch, and bathroom. The corner apartments will have an extra bedroom instead of the sleeping-porch feature.

Located on Webster Street.

BUILDING PROJECT TO HELP JOBLESS

Immediate Launching of Public Improvement Program Is Advocated.

Immediate launching of public improvement projects as a remedy for the unemployment problem and as a solution of the annual seasonal slump in the construction industry is advocated by the editor of the American Contractor in a statement in behalf of construction interests.

"There is a way to absorb all the labor available in the construction industry, and to use it almost continuously during the entire winter," the Contractor asserts. "The practical way to do this is for municipalities, counties, states and the federal government now to come into the field with such public work as is contem-

MOVE TO HOME

House, Buil Wood Fr

As part of campaign, b ton, Ohio, h lumber, im- ported. The facts sug- ports to be direction of sive resistiv In appear story affair bodies the English an (ered windo dation enh- ance.

All joists, this home a and nails a- nced metal into place, measuring frame work, studs and o- or buckle as- structure. The interior co prevent crating. "No metal" or inside, that it will warmer in- mer. The c- proximately struction.

sume of bas- nity prosp- Highway can be mad- able labor- try add m- rans, even 4- get them. "We may conferences there are d- least analy- will be sol- lers are a- initiative, d- and count- may clearl- recommend- tion of the

The Evening Star, article about construction of Petworth Gardens, October 8, 1921

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Petworth Gardens, 1986 (photograph by Tracerics)

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**All photographs are of:
PETWORTH GARDENS, 124, 126, 128, 130 Webster Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.
EHT Tracerics, Inc., photographer**

All negatives are in the possession of EHT Tracerics, Inc.

- 1) **DATE: June 2008**
VIEW OF: Site, looking southwest
PHOTO: 1 of 7
- 2) **DATE: June 2008**
VIEW OF: 124 and 126 Webster Street, N.W., looking south
PHOTO: 2 of 7
- 3) **DATE: June 2008**
VIEW OF: 126 Webster Street, N.W., looking southwest
PHOTO: 3 of 7
- 4) **DATE: June 2008**
VIEW OF: 126 Webster Street, N.W., looking northwest
PHOTO: 4 of 7
- 5) **DATE: June 2008**
VIEW OF: 126 Webster Street, N.W., looking northwest
PHOTO: 5 of 7
- 6) **DATE: June 2008**
VIEW OF: 130 Webster Street, N.W., looking southeast
PHOTO: 6 of 7

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- 7) DATE: **June 2008**
VIEW OF: **126 and 128 Webster Street, N.W., looking south**
PHOTO: **7 of 7**

- 8) DATE: **June 2008**
VIEW OF: **Typical entryway and stairs from garden to apartment units**
PHOTO: **8 of 10**

- 9) DATE: **June 2008**
VIEW OF: **Typical stairwell from garden to apartment units**
PHOTO: **9 of 10**

- 10) DATE: **June 2008**
VIEW OF: **Typical corner unit layout**
PHOTO: **10 of 10**

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