

NOMINATION OF HISTORIC DISTRICT PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM ON CD (MS WORD FORMAT)

1. NAME OF HISTORIC DISTRICT

Parkside

2. LOCATION

Please attach a map of Philadelphia locating the historic district.

Councilmanic District(s): 3

3. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach a map of the district and a written description of the boundary.

4. DESCRIPTION

Please attach a description of built and natural environments in the district.

5. INVENTORY

Please attach an inventory of the district with an entry for every property. All street addresses must coincide with official Board of Revision of Taxes addresses.

Total number of properties in district: **110**

Count buildings with multiple units as one.

Number of properties already on Register/percentage of total: **0 / 0%**

Number of significant properties/percentage of total: **37 / 33.6%**

Number of contributing properties/percentage of total: **52 / 47.3%**

Number of non-contributing properties/percentage of total: **21 / 19.1%**

6. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from **1890** to **1900**

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

The historic district satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- ☒ (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- ☒ (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☒ (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- ☒ (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- ☒ (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☒ (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- ☒ (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- ☒ (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- ☐ (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- ☒ (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

7. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach a bibliography.

8. NOMINATOR

Name with Title Dominique M. Hawkins Email _____

Organization Preservation Design Partnership Date June 21, 2006

Street Address 2979 W. School House Lane Telephone 215.842.3388

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19144

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: _____

☐ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: _____

Date of Preliminary Eligibility: _____

Date of Notice Issuance: _____

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: _____

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: _____

Date of Final Action: _____

☐ Designated ☐ Rejected

2/1/07

3. VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the corner of Parkside Avenue at North 41st Street, the boundary moves northwest along Parkside Avenue; travels to 4262 Parkside Avenue, and then travels southwest to the rear property line; moves southeast to the northwest corner of the rear property line of 4281 Viola Street; travels southwest to Viola Street; continues to North 41st Street; and travels north to the point of origin.



4. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION FAIR

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Erected between 1890 and 1900, the Parkside Historic District is, located in West Philadelphia, bordering Fairmount Park, across from Memorial Hall. The area was privately developed by a small group of builders of German descent following the removal of the temporary buildings associated with the Centennial Exposition, and extension of the public transit system at the end of the nineteenth century. The expanse of available land allowed for a more suburban scale and large three-story houses and apartment buildings designed in a similar Flemish urban historicized architectural revival vocabulary that was atypical of other areas of West Philadelphia or the city. Much of the integrity of the Parkside Historic District is derived from the common architectural style and exuberance in the use of materials, forms and details.

The Parkside Philadelphia Historic District represents a small portion of the *Parkside National Register Historic District*, listed on 17 November 1983, which is comprised of approximately 97 acres and bound by the Penn-Central Railroad, North 38th Street, Girard, Parkside and Belmont Avenues.

The area of the Parkside Philadelphia Historic District is one block deep, focusing on the most intact group of the high-style buildings and is generally located within the area bound by North 41st Street, Parkside Avenue, and Viola Street, extending northwest towards Belmont Avenue. The buildings within the area vary dramatically from the plain-front red brick row houses constructed at the end of the nineteenth century in other parts of Philadelphia. Most of the buildings within the Historic District are two-and-one-half to three-stories in height and include tan brick primary façades; recessed front porches; varied materials with high ornamentation; assorted roof shapes with intersecting dormers and gables; and projecting bays. The largest and most ornate residences were constructed in groups of two (*Photograph 4*), four (*Photographs 5 & 6*) and eight (*Photograph 7*) along Parkside Avenue, separated by pedestrian ways with iron gates. Smaller residences in groups of eight were constructed along the secondary roadway of Viola Street (*Photographs 9 & 10*); and groups of six along Marlon (*Photographs 11 & 12*) and Memorial Avenues and the east side of North 42nd Street. In addition, very grand three-and-one-half-story apartment buildings were constructed along Parkside Avenue between North 41st and North 42nd Streets including the Lansdowne (*Photograph 1*) and the Brentwood (*Photographs 2 & 3*), which remain as anchors in the community.

The following text has been excerpted from the *Parkside National Register Nomination*; Prepared by George E. Thomas, Ph.D. in July 1983. The description remains generally accurate with regard to the Historic District. An update describing the changes and reflecting the current condition follows the text.

The Parkside district is a complex creation that resulted from three historical forces – the temporary nature of the Centennial Exposition and its attendant hotels; the redevelopment of the privately developed Centennial sites across the street from Fairmount Park after the extension of suburban transit in the 1890s, and the growing wealth and aspirations of the mercantile middle classes at the end of the 19th century. These events are in evidence in the property and the building histories [within the boundaries of the Parkside National Register District Nomination], with... later housing and apartments on the sites of Centennial hotels....

Because the [area within the boundaries of the Parkside National Register District Nomination] was developed by a limited group of builders for their social circle, there is a general architectural unity of expression of upwardly mobile social values that transcends the shifts in architectural taste from red brick, mid-Victorian to tan brick, turn-of-the-century eclectic fashion with its references to Flemish urban historicizing revivals. Though the styles change to reflect contemporary taste, the preference for strong ornamentation, concentrated on the street front, for porch fronts to emphasize the suburban quality, and for styles derived from florid Dutch and German rather than Ruskinian English sources contrasts with Rittenhouse, West Philadelphia, Germantown and Oak Lane, and suggests a specific social subgroup. As will be apparent, such is indeed the case, for the district was largely developed by the German community originally centered around 4th and Brown, who had then moved westward across the city first to 16th and Jefferson, and ultimately to 40th and Girard by the end of the century....

In form, the Parkside district responded to the geographically distinct nature of its site. Along the north edge, from 38th to Belmont Avenue, is Fairmount Park, with Memorial Hall and until the 1950s, Horticultural Hall recalling the Centennial, while maintaining cultural roles as the Art Museum (until 1926) and garden center (until 1952) respectively. Larger houses and apartment buildings, notably the Brentwood, the Lansdowne, and the Parkside, mark the social importance of the Park edge, and like Rittenhouse [Square], Logan Square and similar park sites, became a center of more intensive development. The west Belmont Avenue boundary was less prestigious despite the avenue's importance as an access to the Park. Across the street were the railyards of the Pennsylvania Railroad, making the zone quasi-industrial – a use which still persists....

In general, the development patterns that occurred could be graphically described as a series of peaks and valleys that link physical size and prestige, with the tallest buildings at Parkside and Girard across from the park, progressively smaller buildings south toward Girard; taller buildings at Girard and then a falling off towards the southern tracks. Similarly, the greatest concentration of important buildings rise toward the center, west of 41st Street, and then fall off, from 43rd to Belmont, indicating the organizing role of the buildings on the 4100 and 4200 blocks of Parkside... Avenue.

In the perverse economies of 20th century urbanism, it has been the largest and most architecturally interesting buildings that have suffered most radically as residential tastes have changed. This is primarily because the ability to pay for the privilege of aesthetic tastes is linked to an awareness of fashion, creating the situation where the wealthy who patronized the great apartments soon left for more fashionable locations, leaving the buildings to less well-paying tenants, and ultimately to abandonment. Conversely, the small scale houses beyond the great mansions and apartment houses have continued to approximate local housing customs, and have thus far been maintained and cared for. Only the changed economies of the Tax Act of 1981, and Federal subsidies have again made the large apartment buildings of economic value.

On the other hand, as already noted, [the building's] architectural interest is enormous, owing to the architectural exuberance of the designers and developers. These include many of the designers of North Broad Street, including the Widener's Willis Hale, Angus Wade, Frederick Poth's H.E. Flower, and Frederick Newman, as well as J.C. Worthington. It was Worthington who designed the four-story limestone "Lansdowne" at 41st and Parkside, in a minaretted and bayed grandly eclectic style that was paralleled by the exuberant architecture of Atlantic City's Boardwalk. Pressed tin cornices and bays, traceried windows, and a variety of textures recalled the picturesque Queen Anne.

Down the block at the corner is the first of a group of immense, gable-fronted double houses and rows, from Marlton to Memorial Streets and from Parkside to Viola, spanning 665 feet on Parkside. There, the principal development group, "The Blockwood Improvement Company," using Frederick Newman, designed fourteen four-story copper and terra cotta trimmed pompeian brick double buildings that look like mansions but were instead apartments. Elaborately molded terra cotta porch fronts effectively unify the entire block. In between, in the fashion of North Broad Street, the secondary streets show similarly elaborate but smaller houses that

continue the palette of materials the gabled and porch fronted forms, but in the scale of private residences of the [area within the boundaries of the Parkside National Register District Nomination]. Beyond 42nd Street, another row of 3-2-story porch fronted doubles stretch west, from the designs of H.E. Flower, a Powelton architect who had fully absorbed the copper trimmed, pompeian Flemish style. These are generally in excellent condition, with wainscoted and tiled entrances, and elaborate built-in furniture and ornamental screens. Despite the deterioration of some of the largest buildings, the Parkside front remains essentially intact.

By contrast, the intervening blocks along Viola are less grand, but share the same detail with the Parkside houses designed by H.E. Flower....

In the first quarter of this century, the German heritage of the neighborhood made it a likely candidate for residence of successful second generation East European immigrants.... In the past 30 years, the neighborhood has shifted toward middle class black residents who have preserved and maintained the two- and three-story rows. At the same time, the older institutions have been replaced to serve the new community, as, for example, the 173-year-old First African Presbyterian Church replaced the Emmanuel congregation, founded in 1893 as the "Elm Avenue Mission."

Despite changing residents, the geographic and architectural unity of the Parkside district survives, and with it a strong sense of community. For a generation its churches and social groups have sought to redevelop their community from within, with some measure of success evident in... renovated apartment houses, such as the Lansdowne.

The condition of Parkside Avenue has remained fairly stable since 1983. The larger apartment buildings such as the "Lansdowne" (*Photograph 1*) and "Brentwood" (*Photograph 2*) have been rehabilitated (1972 and 1996 respectively) and are well maintained. The "Brantwood I" 4150-52 Parkside Avenue, was rehabilitated in 1993, followed by the "Brantwood II" in 1999 (*Photograph 3*). Several buildings to the east of the "Lansdowne" have been demolished for the 2002 construction of Interim House West, a substance abuse facility at 4108-20 Parkside Avenue. Many of the remaining grand residences along Parkside Avenue have retained much of their integrity; some have been rehabilitated, although several suffer from a lack of maintenance. Several have been altered including the infilling of porches and subdivision of the individual residences into apartments. At the front elevations of the smaller two-story row houses approaching Belmont Avenue, synthetic siding has been installed (*Photograph 8*), and the building group is considered non-contributing and excluded from the Historic District.

The greatest loss of historic buildings has occurred along Viola Street, where groups of buildings approaching Belmont Avenue have been demolished, including two contiguous groups of four buildings. Many buildings on Viola Street remain single family residences, and in overall fair condition. Early twentieth century buildings at the northwest end of Viola Street are excluded from the Historic District.

The residences along the north-south streets range from poor to excellent condition. Along the east side of Belmont Avenue, the front porches of all of the early twentieth century residences have been enclosed and the façades covered with artificial siding and are excluded from the Historic District. Both sides of Memorial and the west side of Marlton (*Photograph 12*) are in poor condition, with some vacant and demolished houses. In contrast, the houses at the east side of Marlton Avenue (*Photograph 11*) were rehabilitated into apartments in 1999 and are in excellent condition. The condition of the west side of North 41st Street has essentially remained unchanged since the 1983 National Register nomination, with several buildings missing south of the "Lansdowne."

The boundary of the Parkside Historic District begins at the corner of Parkside Avenue at North 41st Street, extends to include 4262 Parkside Avenue; from the rear property line moves southeast to include 4281 Viola Street; continues along Viola Street to North 41st Street; and travels north to the point of origin. Within the boundaries of the Historic District are 110 separate parcels according to the Philadelphia parcel record system, some of which have been combined to erect new buildings. The boundary includes the greatest concentration of buildings, almost entirely residential, constructed between 1890 and 1900, with similar architectural style, scale, materials and details.

Parkside Streetscape Photographs



Photograph 1: The Lansdowne at 41st Street and Parkside Avenue.



Photograph 2: The Brentwood, between Marlton and Memorial on Parkside Avenue.



Photograph 3: The large apartment buildings along Parkside Avenue.



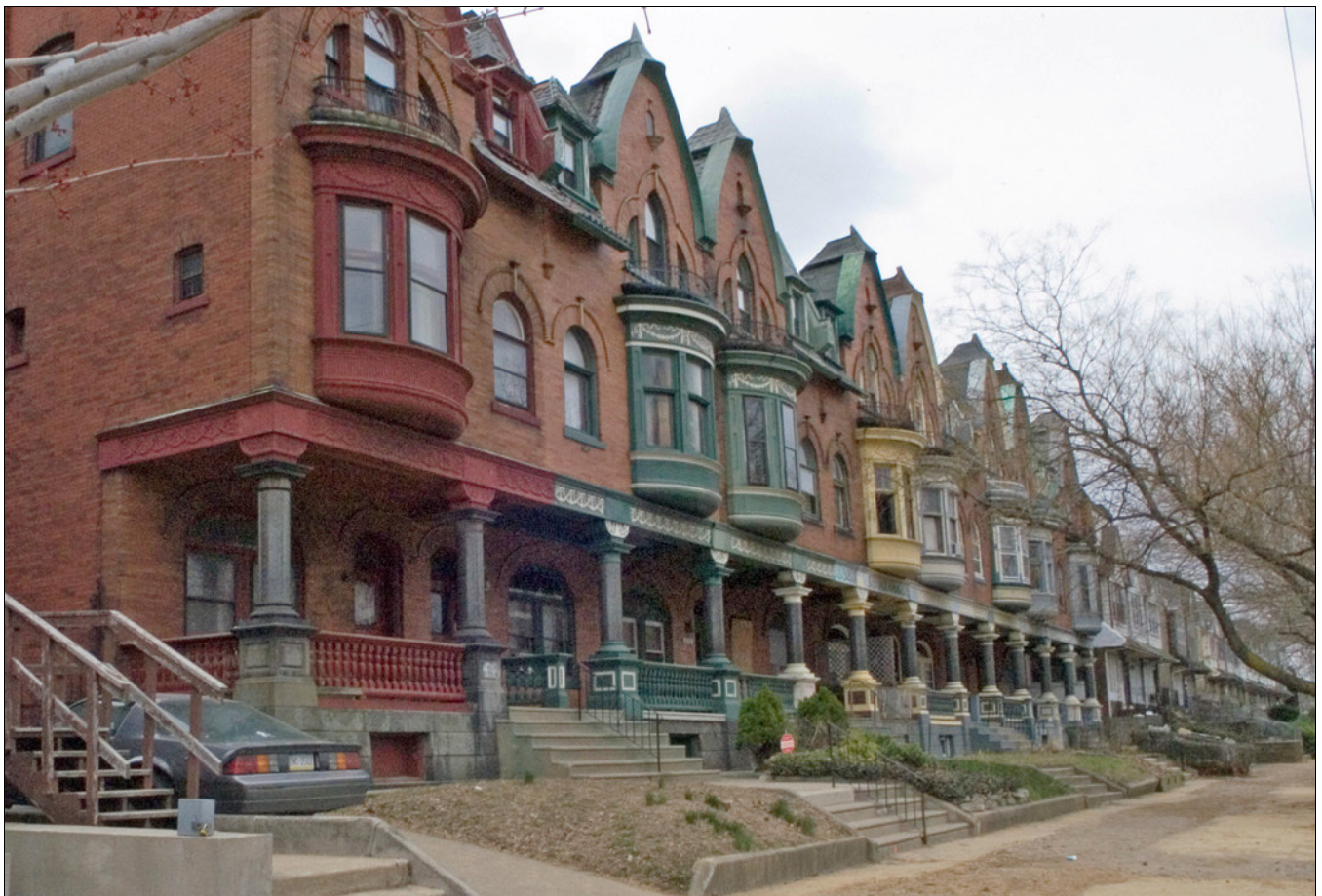
Photograph 4: Parkside Avenue double house. Similar houses from 4200 through 4230 Parkside Avenue.



Photograph 5: Group of four houses from 4232 to 4238 Parkside Avenue.



Photograph 6: Group of four houses from 4240 to 4246 Parkside Avenue.



Photograph 7: Row houses from 4248 looking west along Parkside Avenue.



Photograph 8: Transition from late 19th century to early 20th century row houses along Parkside Avenue.



Photograph 9: Viola Street looking west from 42nd Street.



Photograph 10: Viola Street looking east from 4221 Viola.



Photograph 11: East Side of Marilton Avenue, rehabilitated in 1999.



Photograph 12: West Side of Marilton Avenue at Viola Street with abandoned or underutilized buildings.

5. HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY

Street Number	Street Direction	Street Name	Street Type	Historic Name	Year Built	Resource Type	District Classification
North 41st Street - 1200 Block							
1224-28	N	41st	St.		1921	Building	Non-Contributing
1230	N	41st	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
1232	N	41st	St.			Site	Non-Contributing
1234	N	41st	St.			Site	Non-Contributing
1236	N	41st	St.			Site	Non-Contributing
North 42nd Street - 1700 Block							
1721	N	42nd	St.		1890	Building	Contributing
1723	N	42nd	St.		1890	Building	Contributing
1725	N	42nd	St.		1890	Building	Contributing
1727	N	42nd	St.		1890	Building	Contributing
1729	N	42nd	St.		1890	Building	Contributing
1731	N	42nd	St.		1890	Building	Contributing
Marlton Avenue - 1700 Block							
1720		Marlton	Ave.		1890	Building	Contributing
1721-31		Marlton	Ave.		1890	Building	Contributing
1722		Marlton	Ave.		1890	Building	Contributing
1724		Marlton	Ave.		1890	Building	Contributing
1726		Marlton	Ave.		1890	Building	Contributing
1728		Marlton	Ave.			Site	Non-Contributing
1730		Marlton	Ave.		1890	Building	Contributing
Memorial Avenue - 1700 Block							
1720		Memorial	Ave.		1890	Building	Contributing
1721		Memorial	Ave.		1890	Building	Contributing
1722		Memorial	Ave.		1890	Building	Contributing
1723		Memorial	Ave.			Site	Non-Contributing
1724		Memorial	Ave.		1890	Building	Contributing
1725		Memorial	Ave.		1890	Building	Contributing
1726		Memorial	Ave.		1890	Building	Contributing
1727		Memorial	Ave.		1890	Building	Contributing
1728		Memorial	Ave.			Site	Non-Contributing
1729		Memorial	Ave.			Site	Non-Contributing
1730		Memorial	Ave.		1890	Building	Contributing
1731		Memorial	Ave.		1890	Building	Contributing
Parkside Avenue - 4100 Block							
4100-02		Parkside	Ave.	The Lansdowne	1890	Building	Significant

Street Number	Street Direction	Street Name	Street Type	Historic Name	Year Built	Resource Type	District Classification
4104		Parkside	Ave.		1890	Building	Contributing
4106		Parkside	Ave.		1890	Building	Contributing
4108-20		Parkside	Ave.	Interim House West	2002	Building	Non-Contributing
4124-28		Parkside	Ave.		1894	Building	Significant
4130-40		Parkside	Ave.	The Brentwood	1897	Building	Significant
4142-44		Parkside	Ave.		1894	Building	Significant
4146-48		Parkside	Ave.			Site	Non-Contributing
4150-52		Parkside	Ave.		1894	Building	Significant
Parkside Avenue - 4200 Block							
4200		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4202		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4204		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4206		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4208		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4210		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4212		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4214		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4216		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4218		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4220		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4222		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4224		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4226		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4228		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4230		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4232		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4234		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4236		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4238		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4240		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4242		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4244		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4246		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4248		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4250		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4252		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4254		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4256		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4258		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4260		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant
4262		Parkside	Ave.		1895	Building	Significant

Street Number	Street Direction	Street Name	Street Type	Historic Name	Year Built	Resource Type	District Classification
Viola Street - 4200 Block							
4201		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4203		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4205		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4207		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4209		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4211		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4213		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4215		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4217		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4219		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4221		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4223		Viola	St.			Site	Non-Contributing
4225		Viola	St.			Site	Non-Contributing
4227		Viola	St.			Site	Non-Contributing
4229		Viola	St.			Site	Non-Contributing
4231		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4233		Viola	St.			Site	Non-Contributing
4235		Viola	St.			Site	Non-Contributing
4237		Viola	St.			Site	Non-Contributing
4239		Viola	St.			Site	Non-Contributing
4241		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4243		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4245		Viola	St.			Site	Non-Contributing
4247		Viola	St.			Site	Non-Contributing
4249		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4251		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4253		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4255		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4257		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4259		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4261		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4263		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4269		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4271		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4273		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4275		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4277		Viola	St.			Site	Non-Contributing
4279		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing
4281		Viola	St.		1895	Building	Contributing

6. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	1851-1900	ARCHITECTURE	COMMUNITY PLANNING
SPECIFIC DATES	1890-1900	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	VARIOUS

The Parkside Historic District represents a unique German community in Philadelphia, built between 1890 and 1900, bordering Fairmount Park, across from Memorial Hall, on land once part of the Centennial Exposition. The original development of the Historic District was possible with the suburbanization of the area with the extension of the suburban transit system in the 1890s. Within the Historic District boundaries, elaborate row houses and apartment buildings were constructed primarily by Philadelphia's brewers and merchants of German descent, and developers associated with the German community. The resulting buildings are of an architectural style reminiscent of their German heritage, with recessed front porches, providing an urban response to suburbanization, and deviated greatly from the usual brick row house development in other parts of Philadelphia.

The Parkside Historic District meets nine criteria outlined in the Philadelphia Code, Section 14-2007(5) (a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i). Parkside has significant character, interest and value as part of the development and heritage of the city; is associated with the suburbanization of the area following the Centennial Exposition; reflects the environment in an era characterized by distinctive architectural styles; and embodies distinguishing characteristics of those styles. It is the work of several notable architects of the period including Willis G. Hale, (active 1870-1907), Frederick Newman (active 1880-1910), Angus Wade (active 1875-1910) and H.E. Flower (active 1890-1902) whose work significantly influenced the historical and architectural development of the city. The Historic District contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation in the Flemish interpretation of the row house; is related to Memorial Hall and Fairmount Park, a distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; owing to its unique location and singular physical characteristics, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community and city; and exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of Philadelphia's German community.

The Period of Significance of 1890 to 1900 coincides with the construction date of the majority of the buildings within the Historic District. Within the Historic District boundary all of the buildings were constructed as and are currently used as residences or apartment buildings with the exception of the Christ Community Baptist Church at North 41st and Viola Streets, originally constructed as a synagogue in 1921; the 2002 Interim House West, a drug treatment facility; and a garage of unknown construction date at 4265 Viola Street. Some of the residences on Marlton and Memorial Avenues and one residence on Parkside Avenue are currently vacant, but the remainder appear to be occupied.

The 110 parcels within the Parkside Historic District include 37 Significant properties, all fronting on Parkside Avenue; 52 Contributing properties; and 21 Non-Contributing parcels including some vacant lots resulting from prior demolitions. The following criteria were utilized in the determination of significance:

- *Significant* was utilized for those buildings that have outstanding architectural or historical importance, which have special merit, and could easily be designated as an individual historic resource.
- *Contributing* was utilized for those resources that could not be designated as individual landmarks, but which make up the basic historical architectural fabric of the district.
- *Non-Contributing* was utilized to describe those resources, which differ substantially from the fabric of the district as described in the nomination in terms of history, materials and scale.

The following text has been excerpted from the *Parkside National Register Nomination*; Prepared by George E. Thomas, Ph.D.; July 1983. An update describing the changes and reflecting the current condition follows the text.

The Parkside district is a uniquely isolated community, framed by the Centennial and the end of the century in time, and by the railyards and the Park in space, whose German ethnic developers expressed their aesthetic tastes and urban values in a group of elaborately decorated row blocks, and handsome apartment houses. Those buildings were designed for the German mercantile and brewing meritocracy, by architects who had already found favor with the German community in North Philadelphia, including Willis G. Hale, (active 1870-1907), Frederick Newman (active 1880-1910), Angus Wade (active 1875-1910) and H.E. Flower (active 1890-1902). These men established the taste of nouveau riche Philadelphia in the generation before Horace Trumbauer, creating an architectural style which looked to the continent rather than to the English Ruskinian architecture which attracted the old line English stock in Philadelphia. Thus, their architecture established Philadelphia as a pluralist society, mirroring the real changes occurring in population at the end of the century. Moreover, the Parkside neighborhood presents in its diversity of scale, but unified style, the range of 19th-century social groupings and aspirations which are made concrete in the span from the houses of Leidy to the houses of Parkside. What is remarkable now, is the state of survival of that late 19th-century neighborhood, for despite changes in residents and economic standing, the streetscapes are essentially intact, and the essential unity of the [Historic District] is readily perceived.

The unity of the Parkside region is not restricted to place and time, but also to agent and response. Unlike most sections of the city which are the creation of a multiplicity of private acts by a broad variety of actors, the limited range in Parkside is unique. Beginning with the acquisition of land by John Baltz for a brewery at 38th and Girard, almost the entire region was acquired by German brewers and their associates, including Joseph Schmidt and Frederick Poth. Moreover, many of their cohorts in a variety of development organizations, including the Blockwood Improvement Company, the Algonquin Improvement Company, and later the Clay Improvement Company, were connected to the old German neighborhood near 4th and Brown either through residence or business. Moreover, listings in the Blue Book make it clear that most of those who were residents in the various apartments and mansions along Parkside and Girard were of German background: Trautwine, Gustav Brisler, Philip Steinmetz, John Pullinger, S.S. Wengell, Frederick Poth, W.S. Albrecht, A.W. Fleischer, I. Guggenheimer and many others make the point evident. It is presumably that common ethnic background that found its appropriate architectural expression in buildings by architects with similar background, who explored the more florid architectural styles from the Continent.

The Germanic architectural styling of the buildings on the major streets departed from the “high style” English taste generally taught in architectural histories, but it was indeed a national middle-class architectural style much in evidence at the end of the century. It is thus of considerable interest, particularly in a city with an historically important German community. In the Quaker City, the florid styling is of special note for its contrast with the plain, red brick buildings of Rittenhouse [Square area], and more than rivals the spectacular building of Philadelphia’s North Broad Street.

Moreover, because of the hierarchical nature of its development, Parkside still displays the full range of its residential options, from the 2-story rows to the immense apartment houses that characterized its age. And, Parkside provides a clear description of the transformation of its community from nouveau riche Germans to middle class East European, and now to middle class black. The resulting overlay of population groups on the hierarchical array of buildings was common enough in every American city, as well as in other areas of Philadelphia: North Broad Street, 16th and Jefferson, and along the east edge of the Park, above Girard Avenue. Unlike those areas, however, which have been devastated by urban renewal and absentee landlords, this district survives so completely that every streetscape can be understood. Moreover, with the Lansdowne, the Marlton, the Brentwood and the other apartments, the richest array of nouveau riche opulent design in Philadelphia remains to describe the total range of turn-of-the-century housing.

Finally, the Parkside district has immense importance because of the social values and intentions of its residents. Led by their church and community leaders, they have created mechanisms for the renovation and restoration of the buildings of their neighborhood. In doing so they have forged a unique alliance between business, commerce, social institutions and the community that augers well for the future of Parkside, even as it preserves its major architectural landmarks.

Much of the rehabilitation work along the 4100 and 4200 blocks of Parkside Avenue and the east side of Marlton Street has been the result of the efforts of the Parkside Historic Preservation Corporation (PHPC.) Founded in 1983 James L. Brown IV and his wife Charlotte Brown, the PHPC completed the National Register Nomination for Parkside in 1983, which allowed the properties to be eligible for historic preservation tax credits. In addition, the PHPC utilized funding from low-income tax credits, partnerships, grants and loans in cooperation with developers to fund the rehabilitation of twenty historic buildings providing approximately 200 apartments.

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