

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-934 (Rev. 12-2015)

OMB Control No. 1024-0276 (Exp. 01/31/2019)

RIVERSIDE HISTORIC DISTRICT

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1. NAME AND LOCATION OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Riverside Historic District (update)

Other Name/Site Number: Riverside Landscape Architectural District

Street and Number (if applicable):

City/Town: Riverside

County: Cook

State: IL

2. SIGNIFICANCE DATA

NHL Criteria: 4 and 5

NHL Criteria Exceptions:

NHL Theme(s): I. Peopling Places
4. Community and Neighborhood
III. Expressing Cultural Values
5. Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Urban Design

Period(s) of Significance: 1870-1959

Significant Person(s) (only Criterion 2):

Cultural Affiliation (only Criterion 6):

Designer/Creator/Architect/Builder: Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., Landscape Architect, Olmsted, Vaux and Company Calvert Bowyer Vaux, Landscape Architect, Architect, Olmsted, Vaux and Company Emery E. Childs, Developer, Riverside Improvement Company

Historic Contexts: XVI. Architecture
V. Historic District (multiple styles and dates)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement. We are collecting this information under the authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935 (16 U.S.C. 461-467) and 36 CFR part 65. Your response is required to obtain or retain a benefit. We will use the information you provide to evaluate properties nominated as National Historic Landmarks. We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. OMB has approved this collection of information and assigned Control No. 1024-0276.

Estimated Burden Statement. Public reporting burden is 2 hours for an initial inquiry letter and 344 hours for NPS Form 10-934 (per response), including the time it takes to read, gather and maintain data, review instructions and complete the letter/form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate, or any aspects of this form, to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, Mail Stop 242, Reston, VA 20192. Please do not send your form to this address.

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3. WITHHOLDING SENSITIVE INFORMATION

Does this nomination contain sensitive information that should be withheld under Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act?

Yes

No



4. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. Acreage of Property:

- Acreage of current Riverside NHL district: 1130
Acreage of area of west proposed addition: 46
Acreage of proposed Riverside NHL district: 1176 Acres

2. Use either Latitude/Longitude Coordinates or the UTM system:

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (enter coordinates to 6 decimal places):

Datum if other than WGS84:

Latitude: Longitude:

OR

UTM References: U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute series, 1998

Table with 3 columns: Zone, Easting, Northing. Rows A through J for Zone 16.

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K: 16	430912	4629954
L: 16	431257	4629734
M: 16	431957	4630715
N: 16	432699	4630230

3. Verbal Boundary Description:

The following boundary description is recorded from the National Register Form:

Beginning at the northwest corner of the intersection of Ogden and Harlem Avenues, thence north along Harlem Avenue to the intersection with the southerly line of the Illinois Central Railroad tracks, thence northwest along said tracks to the intersection of 26th Street, thence west along 26th Street to the intersection with Des Plaines Avenue, thence south along Des Plaines Avenue to the intersection with 31st Street, thence west along 31st Street to the intersection with 1st Avenue, thence southerly along 1st Avenue to the intersection with Ridgewood Road thence west Ridgewood Road the northernmost corner of the intersection of Ridgewood Road and Golf Road, thence south along Golf Road and maintaining the same southward alignment through the existing alley (extension of Golf Road), continuing due south to the intersection with 1st Avenue, following 1st Avenue southerly to the intersection with Salt Creek, thence easterly along Salt Creek to the intersection with the Des Plaines River, thence easterly along the Des Plaines River to the intersection with Ogden Avenue, thence northeasterly along Ogden Avenue to its intersection with Harlem Avenue, the point of beginning.

4. Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the majority of acreage covered by the Olmsted, Vaux and Company Riverside General Plan. It includes all property within the Village limits of Riverside, executed in accordance with the original plan. It also includes two areas that were not owned by the Riverside Improvement Company, therefore not included in the Olmsted plan and developed by other individuals. Most of the area to the west of 1st Avenue was not executed according to the plan. In fact, a majority of that acreage was incorporated into the Village of Brookfield. One area west of 1st Avenue, bounded on the north by Ridgewood Road and the west by Golf Road, although excluded from the original NHL boundary, is within the current boundary.

Boundary Increase:

The area west of 1st Avenue is incorporated into the Village of Riverside and was initially developed following the Olmsted plan. While the construction of 1st Avenue through this portion of the village has altered the original landscape, the characteristics necessary for inclusion within the district remain intact. The concept for harmoniously fitting the street plan with the railroad running through the community was as clearly realized in this western part of the village as it was in the larger eastern section. The layout and character of these western lots correspond with the road system to the east of 1st Avenue and the Des Plaines River. The roadways and their rights-of-way feature the characteristic streetlights, tree-shaded lawns, and pedestrian sidewalks found throughout the balance of the village. Housing types within this western portion of the Village of Riverside is similar to that found on comparable streets within the original NHL boundary.

Despite the presence of heavy traffic on 1st avenue, which runs between the neighborhood streets on the west and the riverside preserve, the western portion of the Village of Riverside conveys the park-like character,

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tree-shaded lots, curvilinear roadways (Ridgewood, Parkview, and Wabaunsee), housing density, relationship of houses to streets (setbacks), and the hierarchy of roads with spacious intersections, characteristic of Olmsted and Vaux's 1869 plan. 1st Avenue cuts through the undeveloped parkland west of the river; here it assumes the character of a parkway. All of which enables the western portion of the village to convey the park-like character for which Riverside is recognized as nationally significant.

The original documentation for Riverside did not provide the analytical assessment of Olmsted & Vaux's 1869 plan and the interdependent relationship of parkland and residential land use blocks. It appears highly plausible that without this kind of analysis, the preparers of the original landmark nomination may have easily overlooked the small area conforming to the Olmsted and Vaux plan west of the river. However, physical characteristics and historic maps clearly indicate that the west side streets were consciously laid out in keeping with the Olmsted and Vaux plan and this area maintains the significant characteristics necessary to be included within the NHL district.

The Riverside Historic District NHL boundary has therefore been modified to encompass the entire area executed under the Olmsted and Vaux 1869 General Plan of Riverside. The result is a more thorough understanding of the extent to which the plan was carried out and a clearer idea of how the community as a whole was shaped and evolved.

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5. SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT AND DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION: SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

“Because of its comprehensive design and national influence the most important suburb developed in the immediate postbellum years was the community at Riverside, Illinois.”¹

Riverside is noted on the 1970 National Historic Landmark nomination as significant in the areas of landscape architecture, urban planning and architecture. There are two principal elements for the significance of Riverside. First, the importance of the designers, Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. and Calvert Bowyer Vaux as recognized masters of the landscape architecture profession. Second, the importance of the Riverside suburban community as a representative example of its type, the railway suburb in the romantic landscape style, and as a prototype, model and reference for the subsequent development of American suburbs, suburban communities and residential developments at a variety of scales and types. The revised nomination includes a boundary expansion to include a small residential area west of First Avenue and the Des Plaines River that was part of the Olmsted and Vaux plan. This addition excludes a small section that, although within the original plan, is no longer residential in character.

Riverside was listed as the Riverside Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places on September 15, 1969. It was designated as a National Historic Landmark district on August 29, 1970. The original nomination was incomplete by current standards in failing to enumerate and clearly describe the contributing features of the landscape architectural district. It did not include acreage addressed in this revision to now accurately include all land incorporated in the suburb. The Riverside Historic District is significant under NHL Criterion 4 as an outstanding representative Picturesque suburb designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. Under NHL Criterion 5, the intact character of the designed landscape in conjunction with the wide range of architectural styles found in the district’s residences form a distinctive community that represents the late nineteenth century prototypical ideal of suburban life—combing the best of the city and country. The district falls under National Landmark Theme I, Peopling Places as it reflects the national change in communities toward designed suburban neighborhoods. National Landmark Theme III, Expressing Cultural Values also applies, as Riverside is an excellent synthesis of landscape architecture, architecture, and urban design. The applicable categories under Areas of Significance include Social History, Landscape Architecture, Architecture, and Community Planning & Development.

The design of Riverside is recognized as a model for many Picturesque curvilinear subdivisions developed before and after World War II. The influence extended to subdivisions such as Hyde Park in Kansas City, Myers Park in Charlotte, Shaker Village near Cleveland, and many others. It extended to the designers of these subdivisions including George Kessler, John Nolen, Ernest Bowditch, and Herbert and Sidney Hare. The Federal Housing Administration, established in 1934, issued a set of “desirable standards,” which was influenced by the design of Riverside and the following Olmsted concepts;

- * Careful adaptation of subdivision layout to topography and to natural features;
- * Adjustment of street plan and street widths and grades to best meet the traffic needs;
- * Elimination of sharp corners and dangerous intersections;

¹ David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America* (London and Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 162.

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- * Long blocks that eliminated unnecessary streets;
- * Carefully studied lot plan with generous and well-shaped house sites;
- * Parks and playgrounds;
- * Establishment of community organizations of property owners;
- * Incorporation of features that add to the privacy and attractiveness of the community.

The face of the American landscape changed in the mid-nineteenth century as people who were financially and socially able sought to leave cities and live in cleaner, healthier suburban areas. Riverside, as the prototypical Picturesque suburb, reflects that change, and as it evolved and merged with other movements of the early twentieth century, continued to have an impact for decades.

PROVIDE RELEVANT PROPERTY-SPECIFIC HISTORY, HISTORICAL CONTEXT, AND THEMES. JUSTIFY CRITERIA, EXCEPTIONS, AND PERIODS OF SIGNIFICANCE LISTED IN SECTION 2.

Moving to the country

Chicago was a growing city in the mid-1800s. Incorporated in 1833 with only 350 people, in seven years the town grew to over 4,000. The completion of the Illinois and Michigan Canal in 1848 had immediate impacts and made Chicago one of the most important transportation hubs in the country. In 1870, less than 40 years after its founding, the city had grown to almost 300,000 people. By the turn of the century, the census showed nearly 1.7 million residents in what had become the second-largest city in the United States.

This expansive and rapid growth, coupled with a location in a low-lying area next to Lake Michigan, caused massive problems with water and sewer. The reversal of the flow of the Chicago River and construction of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal in 1900 eased these problems, but in 1868 when the plan for Riverside was being developed, Chicago was considered one of the dirtiest cities in America.

Despite this, there were also great advancements in the city, particularly regarding the railroad industry. After the first train ran on the Chicago and Galena Union track in 1848, the railroading industry in the city expanded, eventually making it one of the largest railroading centers in the world. Begun as the Aurora Branch Railroad, the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad (CB&Q) had over 400 miles of track by 1864. While adding to the wealth of the city, this booming industry tended to make daily living more unpleasant. Using the growing transportation system, many city dwellers, especially the middle and upper class, sought to escape the arduous life in the city and seek the tranquility and harmony of rural life as espoused by Andrew Jackson Downing and others. It was along the CB&Q line (now BNSF), eleven miles from downtown, that the Riverside Improvement Company envisioned a new community to meet this need.

Developer Emery E. Childs formed the Riverside Improvement Company to take advantage of the railroad access and attractive location on the Des Plaines River. Commissioned by the company in 1868, Olmsted, Vaux and Company initiated the design that made Riverside an exceptional place in American history. The period of significance for Riverside begins in 1870 with the implementation of the Olmsted and Vaux *Preliminary Report Upon the Proposed Suburban Village at Riverside, near Chicago*, 1868 and their *General Plan of Riverside*, 1869 (fig. 1). Immediately after the acceptance of the General Plan, the Riverside Improvement Company began laying out and constructing the infrastructure of drainage systems, roads, and

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public open spaces.² By 1871 nearly ten miles of roads, seven of asphalt walks, and sixteen of storm drains and sewers had been built. Thousands of shrubs and trees were planted in the early years.³

Township records indicate that L. Y. Schermerhorn, of Jenney, Schermerhorn and Bogart was Superintendent for the early construction following the General Plan of Riverside. Construction continued throughout the 1870s with the community infrastructure of roads, curbs, gutters, water mains, parklands and private dwellings, of which there were a significant number by 1898.⁴ The project would prove to be a fiscally poor venture for the design firm, because they were to be paid in house lots, and several financial setbacks lengthened the period of development of the village.⁵ Due to these and other problems with Childs, Olmsted and Vaux ended their connection to Riverside in 1870.

Shortly after construction began in 1870, the Great Chicago Fire (1871) drastically affected the local market of would-be investors, as attention focused on rebuilding within the city of Chicago. The financial Panic of 1873 also slowed development activity and prolonged the building of Riverside. The Riverside Improvement Company was overextended early in the implementation of the project and declared bankruptcy in 1873, but the General Plan continued to be carried out in the original designed style and detail. By the 1890s, the basic framework of the community was in place.⁶

The integrity of the plan throughout the lengthy period of development is demonstrated in the early-established system of curvilinear roads and open spaces that were constructed before the development of the individual lots. As documented by the 1939 aerial photograph (fig. 23), the Olmsted and Vaux community plan for the area east of the Des Plaines River and a small portion west of the river was mostly in place by that time. The lands west of the river were only partially developed. The Cook County Forest Preserve conserved acreage along the river, and the Brookfield Zoo and a local school developed an area to the west of the preserve. These chronological images bear witness to the high degree of adherence to the Olmsted and Vaux plan throughout its long implementation. The period of significance for Riverside, defined as the span of time within which the property attained the qualities that make it historically important, begins with the implementation of the 1868 Preliminary Report and 1869 General Plan and continues through nine decades of development. The full pattern of streets, public right-of-way, parks, commons, triangles, peninsulas and other contributing features of Riverside were complete by 1939. The construction and build-out of the residential properties was finished by 1959, which marks the end of the period of significance. The end of the period of significance is further punctuated by new development and alteration of the General Plan on the location of the former Babson Estate.

2 Riverside Improvement Company "Riverside; Progress Prospectus," quoted in introduction by Theodora Kimball Hubbard to "Riverside, Illinois: A Residential Neighborhood Designed Over Sixty Years Ago," *Landscape Architecture: A Quarterly Magazine*, 21 (July 1931): 286.

3 Charles W. Snell, "Riverside Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1970), Section 7. These details of early construction are not footnoted with the original source.

4 By 1875 Village records enumerate the construction and location of community infrastructure and parks. The 1898 state of the village report by Village Manager Frank Fredericks documented that considerable infrastructure of roads, curbs, gutters, water mains, etc., was in place and that a significant number of private dwellings were in use. Suzanne Bartholomew, Riverside Historical Commission. Nineteenth century Village of Riverside records are the sources for dating the early development of Riverside.

5 William Alex and George B. Tatum, *Calvert Vaux Architect & Planner* (New York: William Alex Ink Inc., 1994), 162.

6 Ibid.

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THE DESIGNERS: OLMSTED AND VAUX

Landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. (1822-1903) and architect and landscape architect Calvert Vaux (1824-1895) were among the first designers in the nation to adopt the title of "landscape architect," and in so doing, they gave the name of landscape architecture to a new profession in the United States. Their collaborative and individual works of landscape architecture are widely respected and studied.⁷ Olmsted and Vaux, between 1858 and 1872, produced such outstanding examples of landscape design as Central Park in Manhattan, Prospect Park in Brooklyn, the South Park of Chicago, the original park system of Buffalo, NY, and in a brief resumption of their partnership in 1887, Morningside Park in Manhattan and the Niagara Reservation.

Vaux and Olmsted's initial collaboration was their winning entry to the 1857 Central Park competition, the 'Greensward' plan, that was awarded in April 1858. Their second major project together was Prospect Park, where Olmsted was encouraged to join Vaux in the undertaking that he had framed in 1865. To this early work, Vaux brought professional training and experience that Olmsted was lacking. As Olmsted wrote of their work on Central Park, "I hope you will not fail to do justice to Vaux, and to consider that he and I were one. I should have been nowhere but for his professional training."⁸ Olmsted, Vaux and Company actively performed commissioned works from 1861 through 1872, including the 1868 *Preliminary Report upon the Proposed Suburban Village at Riverside, Near Chicago* and the 1869 *General Plan of Riverside*.⁹ Other works included the preliminary design for South Park in Chicago (later known as Washington and Jackson Parks and the Midway Plaisance) in 1872, and the original elements of the Buffalo parks and parkway system 1868.

Calvert Vaux is best known in the landscape architecture profession for his Central Park and Prospect Park and Riverside commissions in collaboration with Olmsted. He trained and practiced in England as an architect, apprenticing with a firm that restored Gothic cathedrals and designed country estates.¹⁰ Introduced to Andrew Jackson Downing in 1850, he came to the United States that same year to work on Downing's popular books and periodicals about the development of tasteful country properties and on related professional commissions. After Downing's tragic death in a Hudson River steamboat accident in 1852, Vaux carried on Downing's work with Frederick Withers until Vaux moved to New York City in 1856.¹¹

Vaux ended his partnership with Olmsted in 1872 to pursue architectural commissions with other colleagues including Frederick Withers, and Jacob Wrey Mould. His career included an active architectural practice and some landscape architectural commissions. Vaux was also responsible for a few residential buildings at Riverside. The circa-1871 Dore Cottage, at 100 Fairbank Road, is a Riverside landmark designed by Vaux that is intact today.¹²

Frederick Law Olmsted, widely recognized as the father of American landscape architecture, is most famous for his planning, writing, and implemented works addressing public parks and park systems. Beginning with New York's Central Park with Calvert Vaux in 1857-58, he and his partners and associates designed over one hundred parks, recreation grounds, parkways, and scenic reservations during the following thirty-seven years of

7 Professional title cited on reports, plans and in correspondence including on the General Plan of Riverside, Olmsted, Vaux & Co, Landscape Architects, 1869.

8 Laura Wood Roper, *FLO: A Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 291.

9 Charles E. Beveridge et al., eds., *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992), vol.6, The Years of Olmsted, Vaux & Company, 289. Paper quoted originally published in New York, 1868.

10 Alex and Tatum, *Calvert Vaux*, ix.

11 Ibid., 9.

12 Ibid., 162-163.

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his practice. Olmsted and his partners designed such well-known public parks and park systems as Washington Park, Jackson Park and the connecting Midway Plaisance in Chicago, Illinois; Delaware, Humboldt, Front, South and Cazenovia Parks, several small parks and squares, and a system of parkways in Buffalo, New York; Prospect Park and Ocean and Eastern Parkways in Brooklyn, New York; Central Park, a National Historic Landmark, Morningside and Riverside Parks in Manhattan, New York; Franklin Park and the connecting “Emerald Necklace” parks in Boston, Massachusetts; and Cherokee, Iroquois and Shawnee parks and a system of parkways and smaller parks in Louisville, Kentucky. Olmsted Sr. and his partners and associates also designed residences, estates and subdivisions and suburban communities, several of which are discussed briefly herein as context for the Village of Riverside.

Olmsted’s intent and accomplishment in several cities, was to create systems of parks, pleasure grounds, playgrounds, and connecting parkways that would provide open green spaces as an antidote to the expansion and deleterious urban environment of late-nineteenth century cities. His vision for the future was of more openly-built cities created through “abandonment of the old-fashioned compact way of building towns, and the gradual adoption of a custom of laying them out with much larger spaces open to the sunlight and fresh air.”¹³ The second major element of his city planning program was the creation of residential suburbs that would represent a distinct improvement from the crowded tenements, close-packed row houses, and grid patterned streets that marked urban expansion before the Civil War. The commission in Chicago for Riverside provided an opportunity to express his community planning ideas.

In the two decades of practice following the end of his partnership with Vaux, Frederick Law Olmsted undertook numerous commissions for suburban residential community and subdivision design during his career. Today only three survive that demonstrate significant aspects of his vision of suburbia. They are Riverside, Illinois, outside Chicago; Sudbrook, Maryland, outside Baltimore; and Druid Hills, in Atlanta, Georgia. Of these three, Riverside represents the fullest demonstration of Olmsted’s suburban ideal.

A REPRESENTATIVE TYPE OF AMERICAN SUBURBAN DESIGN

The community at Riverside is the earliest fully realized existing example of suburban planning from the years directly following the Civil War. It is a particular and distinctive type of suburb, the nineteenth century railroad suburb. In the case of Riverside, the design is the naturalistic, informal landscape style with aspects of both Pastoral and Picturesque landscape design. By the mid-nineteenth century, the blighted, unhealthy and overcrowded conditions of cities sparked the migration of those with means to seek a more wholesome atmosphere for residence outside the city limits. Areas once thought of as out of reach to the daily commuter were becoming accessible due to the development of regional rail transportation and the improvement of roads. Riverside was a model community in this early trend toward suburban living. The suburban community is one theme within the NHL community planning and development topic.

The National Register Bulletin: *Historic Residential Suburbs* classifies Riverside in the category “Railroad and Horsecar Suburbs, 1830 to 1890” and in reference to Chicago: “The most famous was Riverside, a Picturesque planned suburb west of the city, developed by Emery E. Childs of the Riverside Improvement Company. Designed by Olmsted, Vaux and Company, Riverside would become a highly emulated model of suburban design well into the twentieth century.”¹⁴

13 “Report of Olmsted, Vaux & Co. to Brooklyn Park Commissioners, January 1, 1868,” in Charles E. Beveridge et al., eds., *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, Supplementary Series*, 1:126.

14 David L. Ames and Linda Flint McClelland, *National Register Bulletin: Historic Residential Suburbs: Guidelines for Evaluation and Documentation for the National Register of Historic Places* (U.S. Department of the Interior: National Park Service, 2002), 16.

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Today Riverside is an intact example of the railroad suburb true to the Olmsted, Vaux & Company design of 1869. From its origins, Riverside provided a model and was a source of inspiration for other design professionals. It was used as a teaching example in professional schools, particularly at Harvard University where the early teaching staff was drawn from the Olmsted firm, and the work of the firm, including the Riverside suburb, was used as examples. The American Society of Landscape Architects was founded in 1899 and its magazine *Landscape Architecture: A Quarterly Magazine* featured twenty-four pages on Riverside in the July 1931 issue. Theodora Kimball Hubbard wrote an introduction in this issue, for a series of documents and illustrations. These included the 1869 General Plan and excerpts from illuminating correspondence and reports from 1868 and 1869 as well as a prospectus on the progress of Riverside dated 1868. The publication of these documents attracted the attention of the landscape architectural community. The next generation of landscape architects and community planners relied on a comprehensive textbook by Norman Newton, which described Riverside in extensive detail. After discussion of the landscape design and engineering details, Newton writes: "Riverside remains an astounding monument to the enduring power of excellent design. And quite apart from its technical merit, Riverside is historically significant as the first, clearly recorded instance in the United States of the application of landscape architectural design to a real-estate land subdivision project."¹⁵

ARCHITECTURE OF RIVERSIDE

The most significant individuals involved in the design of Riverside are considered to be Olmsted and Vaux. Although the significance of this landscape architectural district is not dependent upon the architectural quality of individual buildings, the contributions of several other noteworthy design professionals are contributing factors. The firm of Jenney, Schermerhorn & Bogart, had a major role in the layout of the landscape in accordance with the Olmsted, Vaux General Plan. After Olmsted and Vaux severed their ties with the Riverside Development Company, Jenney, Schermerhorn and Bogart took on the day-to-day duties of tree plantings, path layout and architectural details.¹⁶ As noted in *Riverside in 1871*, "The methods of construction were entrusted to L. Y. Schermerhorn, Esq., C.E., under whose superintendency the roads, walks, drainage, sewerage, and planting were executed, together with the plans for gas and water works; and the firm of Jenney, Schermerhorn and Bogart are retained by the Company as their present Architects and Engineers." The firm was involved in many of the nineteenth century architectural commissions. Architect William Le Baron Jenney designed the visually important round water tower and support buildings (fig. 20).¹⁷ He also designed the Riverside Hotel (no longer extant) as well as 11 of the featured houses in *Riverside in 1871*.¹⁸

Frederick Withers designed the first commercial block building. Calvert Vaux also contributed to the early architecture. The Coonley property, an individually designated NHL, with its architecture by Frank Lloyd Wright and Jens Jensen landscape, remains intact today. The other individually listed NHL in Riverside, the Wright-designed Tomek residence also retains its historic character. Louis Sullivan's contribution at the Babson estate has been lost to demolition along with its accompanying landscape by Jens Jensen. These and other architects created the buildings to fill the landscape designed by Olmsted and Vaux.

The majority of buildings in this residential district are dwellings and support structures such as garages and carriage houses. The original plan for the community called for little to no commercial activity as it was

¹⁵ Norman Newton, *Design on the Land* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 465-468.

¹⁶ Theodore Turak, *William Le Baron Jenney: a Pioneer of Modern Architecture* (Ann Arbor, MI, UMI Research Press, 1986), 95.

¹⁷ The attribution of the Water Works structures is inconsistent. According to Susan Bartholomew, research by the Riverside Historical Commission indicates that George Ashby is the designer, although the local landmarks summary and most scholars credit Jenney, Schermerhorn & Bogart.

¹⁸ Turak, *William Le Baron Jenney*, 100.

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perceived that such activity would take place mainly in Chicago, and Riverside would remain a place to pursue domestic tranquility. Very early on, however, a commercial core was established near the railroad depot. This commercial area represents one cluster of development within the community. Others include a commercial zone along Harlem Avenue, groupings of apartment buildings and of multifamily homes. Schools, religious structures, recreational facilities and community buildings such as the Village Hall and library are also significant elements of the community.

Houses in Riverside reflect the majority of styles that were prevalent across the nation during the period of significance. Late Victorian architectural modes such as Queen Anne, Italianate, and Stick are extant as are nineteenth and early twentieth century revivals such as Colonial, Tudor, and Classical. Prairie and Craftsman Bungalow residences are well represented with the works of Chicago School masters Wright, Drummond, Tallmadge and Watson and others. Art Moderne and International Style buildings also exist, reflecting later periods. Groups of stylistically similar buildings demonstrate the eras of their popularity and shows periods of development within the village. However, changing tastes and availability of lots allow for some early and late style buildings to be found side by side.

All of these architectural approaches from the ornate to the simple are together in the community because Olmsted and Vaux did not portend to know what types of housing owners would desire and did not intend to dictate taste upon residents. What they did want and were able to control was the minimum construction cost and the location of the house upon the landscape. Design controls included setbacks and landscaping between private and public property. Olmsted determined that fences, shrubbery, and other landscaping around houses should not be so high as to block views and neighborly interaction, but some low plantings and fences were beneficial to maintaining a sense of privacy and forming, "private open-air apartments" for the home.¹⁹ He determined that each house should have one or two trees planted between the sidewalk and the road to serve as a transition between public and private lands.

While significant as a designed landscape, a suburb without houses would indeed be a pointless endeavor. The diverse architecture of Riverside reflects the realization of the plan envisioned by Olmsted and Vaux. The buildings and landscape coexist in the same way the residents were meant to coexist, with each other and their natural setting.

OTHER DESIGNED SUBURBAN COMMUNITIES OF THE PERIOD

The planning of a suburb, in the early days, was a creative process with few models for the designer to draw on. Two earlier examples of railway suburbs are Glendale, Ohio (1851) and Lake Forest, Illinois (1856). Glendale, designated as an NHL in 1977, features a clearly defined system of roads developed in response to the hilly topography.²⁰ The curvilinear road system and public parks indicate development in the naturalistic, informal landscape style. The plan of the larger suburban development of Lake Forest, Illinois demonstrates a transition from the linear railroad corridor via a commercial "market square" block to an extensive system of curvilinear road systems with large lots and opens spaces in the same style as Riverside.²¹ A majority of the curvilinear areas of Lake Park are included in the Lake Park Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.

19 Olmsted, Vaux & Company, *Preliminary Report Upon the Proposed Suburban Village at Riverside, Near Chicago* (New York: Sutton, Browne & Company, 1868), 24.

20 Philip Pregill & Nancy Volkman, *Landscapes in History, Design and Planning in the Western Tradition* (New York, Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1993), 476.

21 Christopher Tunnard, *The City of Man*, (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), 205.

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Another prototype plan was the 1857 design for Llewellyn Park at Orange, New Jersey. The plan by Llewellyn Haskell and Alexander Jackson Davis is considered to be a "...design prototype of the modern, self-contained subdivision, where single-family houses were located along curvilinear roads in a park-like setting... in a semi-rural environment, apart from the noise, pollution, and activity of the crowded city, but close enough to the city for commuting daily to work."²²

Haskell and Davis developed the idea of a shared forested park landscape, which they called "The Ramble," within a graciously laid-out neighborhood of large lots in Llewellyn Park. The Ramble became the focal acreage of the neighborhood, with forest enlivened by sunny openings, reflecting water features, and spacious meadows for gathering. This concept was an important aesthetic and a functional composition because the sylvan landscape contained a water system that also absorbed storm water flows.²³ The principal features of the Llewellyn Park design are the layout of curvilinear streets bounding the park and adhering to the rugged, steep terrain of the area, the incorporation of pedestrian routes along streets and through the parkland; the organization of large lots exclusively for wealthy, private residences without the interruption of commercial or institutional development; and restricted access for residents and their guests at the picturesque gated entry. The meandering, curvilinear road system (over ten miles in length) was intended to reveal the breadth of the property and scenic quality of the landscape. The Delaware Lackawanna and Western Railroad extended thirteen miles from Manhattan to provide a city connection for businessmen, who could afford to ride the train regularly.

The development of Llewellyn Park predates Riverside by about twelve years and differs from Riverside in several important ways. The "broad landscape effects" in place at Llewellyn Park, promoted by a mandate restricting the construction of fences, establish a series of residences within a park. In contrast, Olmsted's principles for Riverside asserted the fence or hedge (usually restricted to four feet in height) as an essential element of each individual lot. Other differences include the generous lot sizes and restrictive covenants of Llewellyn Park, which only relatively wealthy people could afford. The arrangement of parkland also differs from Llewellyn Park, which focused on The Ramble, in contrast to the many public open spaces arranged through the community at Riverside. Llewellyn Park did not possess as direct a connection with the railroad, or a commercial and institutional core; only residential structures are included.

OTHER SUBURBAN COMMUNITIES BY FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED, SR.

The conception and planning of suburban residential enclaves and communities was of great interest to Olmsted, given his concern with the separation of place of work from place of residence in the "more openly built city" that he sought to develop in American urban centers. Olmsted confronted the complexities of shaping an enduring, healthful suburban landscape throughout his career. In all, Olmsted was involved in planning forty-five villages and subdivisions, a dozen of which were summer colonies located some distance from large cities. Virtually all the plans that he created demonstrate his manner of adjusting designs that were suitable to the site and topography combined with curvilinear street systems for residential areas. However, few reflect the brilliant conceptualization of these ideas with the integrated and varied system of public open spaces that he considered so important and that he elaborated on so thoroughly in the plan for Riverside. The Olmsted, Vaux and Company design for Riverside is more comprehensively fashioned and has endured with a higher degree of integrity than Olmsted's other suburban community commissions. For these reasons, Riverside is considered the

²² Ames and McClelland, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 2-3.

²³ This finding regarding the stormwater management function of The Ramble landscape was deduced by Heritage Landscapes from an analysis of the historic landscape development, the existing conditions, and the apparent degradation caused by stormwater as a result of the loss of all but one pond and the compromises to the stream course over time.

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most significant commission that was developed. The following discussion of Olmsted's additional residential community commissions is arranged in chronological order and spans the years from 1860 to the 1890s.

In 1860 Olmsted and Vaux were appointed landscape architects to a New York City commission charged with laying out the street system of the Washington Heights area of Manhattan. In a detailed report, Olmsted discussed the principles that should be employed in planning suburban streets and paid special attention to the routing of cross-city and commuter traffic. The project did not lead to the creation of plans, and the commission was disbanded. Five years later in 1865 Olmsted incorporated a residential neighborhood into his plan for the College of California at Berkeley. This plan showed the boundary streets adjacent to the ten areas to be developed for residences. His plan was not implemented, in part because the private college transferred ownership of its site to the newly authorized land grant University of California. Another promising commission, developed two years after the planning of Riverside, involved two railroad-commuter villages in the Tarrytown Heights region that overlooked the Hudson River north of Manhattan. Although much of the curving street system was constructed (fig. 24), the venture did not survive the Panic of 1873. In the same period, Olmsted created a plan for the city of Tacoma, Washington, which was being planned as the terminus of the Northern Pacific Railroad. The plan contained numerous lots on curvilinear streets on the steep bluffs overlooking Puget Sound. The plan for the streets allowed for easy ascent of the bluffs and provided many unobstructed vistas. The officials of the railroad, however, were not ready for such a radical departure from the gridiron system of city development and the plan was never carried out.

The decade of the 1870s was the period during which Olmsted had his principal opportunity to create permanent residential districts in the New York City region. In 1870 he wrote much of a report by the Staten Island Improvement Commission that set forth ways for the island to develop as a desirable residential suburb of New York. He did no detailed planning but produced a remarkably comprehensive regional plan based on an analysis of geological and climatological conditions that was strikingly similar to the regional plan developed a century later by the illustrious twentieth century landscape architect, Ian McHarg. No identifiable Olmsted suburban community resulted. A partially realized project began in 1874 when Olmsted collaborated with the engineer George Radford on a design for the Parkside subdivision for the Villa Land Company, a residential neighborhood north of Delaware Park in Buffalo. The plans they devised had the characteristic Olmsted curvilinear streets but were conceived as a neighbor to an existing park and featured little public space within the design. As carried out, the street system has limited evidence of the gracefulness of the Olmsted and Radford plan. In the 1880s, Olmsted created another plan for the Villa Land Company for the region north of Parkside. Again, there were few public spaces in the design and most of these were eliminated as the plan was developed. The results did not embody Olmsted's design concepts.

Several of Frederick Law Olmsted Sr.'s commissions that addressed city planning and parkway development also have a link to suburban community works. In the area of city planning Olmsted had already proposed creating a series of parkways in Brooklyn that would increase the attractiveness of that city. Two parkways designed by Olmsted and Calvert Vaux were constructed during the 1870s – Eastern Parkway and Ocean Parkway – and in their reports of 1866-68 the two men proposed a series of parkways throughout the city. The most ambitious project, with which Olmsted was involved, was planning the street and rapid transit systems of the newly annexed Bronx, known then as the 23rd and 24th wards. Working with the engineer J.J.R. Croes, he developed a street system that was officially adopted by the city of New York. To a certain extent Olmsted had to adapt his plan to existing streets, but in the Riverdale section on the hillside overlooking the Hudson River he planned a series of curvilinear streets with the intent of ensuring a permanent residential neighborhood in that region. The streets that were in fact laid out, however, often failed to follow Olmsted's plan and lack the grace of his designs.

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Once Olmsted moved to Brookline, Massachusetts in the early 1880s, the suburbs of Boston became a focus for his residential planning. He engaged in planning six subdivisions within Brookline, of which only one was carried out, the Brookline Hill development on Fisher's Hill. The subdivision had nearly 300 lots, in an area of nearly 200 acres. It was laid out according to the plan and is a good example of Olmsted's treatment of curving streets. However, the only public space to be found within the property consists of two small triangles in the streets near Boylston Street. The grounds of two small Brookline water system reservoirs - public land and not property of the developers - made up the only public open space in the subdivision. Olmsted may have been involved in a smaller subdivision of the Edward S. Philbrick property on "Pill Hill" in Brookline—and it contained no public open space except for a small park named for the developer.

Olmsted continued to pursue residential community projects from 1880 to his retirement in 1895. The lack of public open space remained a characteristic of the market driven subdivisions that he planned in the Boston region. These included the land of the Newton Boulevard Syndicate in Newton, of the Swampscott Land Trust in the community of Linwood, and of Planter's Hill and World's End, whose streets, still unoccupied today, traverse a headland on the South Shore. Other residential communities from this period, for the most part, share this lack of public parkland, and include the Oaklands in Providence, Rhode Island; Bryn Mawr subdivision in Yonkers, New York; Cadwalader Place in Trenton, New Jersey; Roland Park in Baltimore, Maryland; the developments of the Morrisville Land Company in New Jersey; and the Sherwood Land Company in Richmond, Virginia. These residential subdivisions are not fully developed communities according to Olmsted's standards. The same is true of Sudbrook, Maryland, which has a strong sense of community and contrasts strikingly with the incompletely formed suburban enclaves surrounding it in Baltimore County (fig. 25). The gently curving streets of Sudbrook are a good example of Olmstedian design, but even the eight-acre lot set aside on the plan as a public park in a village of two hundred acres became a house lot instead. Most of the subdivisions designed by Olmsted during this period demonstrate a fully developed skill in designing curvilinear street systems in his characteristic style but lack the more comprehensive use of integrated types of open space so distinctive to Riverside.

The last residential community commission in which Olmsted was involved that meets his design standards was Druid Hills in northern Atlanta. The foremost feature of that project, begun by Olmsted in the early 1890s and carried out by his successors in the period 1902-1908, was Ponce de Leon Avenue and the six linear parks along it. Running through the center of the community, the avenue provided easy city access to the parks. This example of a residential parkway and parks is the most impressive and successful in any of Olmsted's communities. The residential lots are also planned with generous setbacks and gracious architecture. Druid Hills is a wealthy residential enclave. As a model of his principles, however, it lacks the complexity of street system and hierarchy of public spaces that make Riverside such a striking example of what he hoped the American suburb of the future would be.

Olmsted's first attempt at creating a plan for a residential community at Riverside is also now considered to be the most complete example of his concepts to come to fruition in his thirty-five years of residential planning. Although he undertook many such commissions in the twenty-seven years of professional practice following his planning of Riverside, he never saw an equally realized version of his ideas come to fruition.

CONTINUING INFLUENCE

After Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. retired in 1895, the Olmsted firm was run by John Charles Olmsted and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. until 1950 (under the title "Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects). During that time, the Olmsted firm planned over two hundred residential communities and subdivisions in two-dozen states

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and Canada. Many of these perpetuated sensitivity to the natural landscape, careful engineering and planning of communal facilities, and the system of curvilinear streets and sidewalks that Olmsted Sr. had first developed at Riverside. Many of these had the same continuous communal streetscape that marked Riverside, and some secured significant larger areas for public open space. Among the largest and most noted of the separate communities were Lake Wales, Florida; Palos Verdes near Los Angeles; Saint John's Wood near San Francisco; the Highlands in Seattle; and Pinehurst, North Carolina. There were also concentrations of residential developments in cities where the firm did park and park system planning, such as Roland Park and Guilford in Baltimore, or Far Hills and Hills & Dales in Dayton. Sometimes the residential developments adjoined major parks, such as Cherokee Park in Louisville or Cadwalader Place next to Cadwalader Park in Trenton. Even the few communities whose plan did not perpetuate the curvilinear street pattern established by the Riverside plan, such as Forest Hills Gardens on Long Island, had a unified and coherent street pattern and a carefully considered arrangement of public space.

The Olmsted Brothers-designed communities, in turn, often had a direct influence on the style of subdivision design in the cities where they were situated. In Atlanta, for instance, two of the engineers, Ruff and Hoffman, who worked on the construction of Druid Hills, went on to design curvilinear subdivisions at Inman Park and elsewhere similar to the plan of Druid Hills. In this type of copying from the examples, the influence of Riverside, the original model and touchstone was further extended.

The Forest Hills Gardens, New York, example is interesting because it was a philanthropically supported model for providing lower cost housing for a broader citizenry. The landscape architectural design for Forest Hills Gardens was by the Olmsted Brothers and the architectural design by Grosvenor Atterbury for the newly established Russell Sage Foundation. The Russell Sage Foundation was established in 1907, under a New York State Charter dedicated "to the improvement of social and living conditions in the United States of America."²⁴ The trustees were determined to prove that the careful planning and design of a real estate subdivision could create for people of moderate means a community of high quality while making a reasonable financial return on the investment. "The specific aims were to provide healthful, attractive, and solidly built homes, and to demonstrate that convenient thoroughfares, quiet domestic streets, and ample public open spaces are economically practical as well as beneficial features of suburban development."²⁵ In 1909, the Foundation purchased 142 acres of farmland in the borough of Queens, located along the Long Island Railroad nine miles from Pennsylvania Railroad Station, via a tunnel under the East River. In 1910, planning proceeded under the supervision of Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., for Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, with Grosvenor Atterbury as the architect. According to a 1976 publication featuring photographic images of Forest Hills Gardens, "Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. was commissioned to plan the streets, lanes and parks. Atterbury designed the Inn, the houses along the Terraces, many other examples of fine attached and free-standing houses throughout the Gardens, as well as the streetlamps and unusual street signs. Until 1940 he supervised the architecture of all construction in the Gardens."²⁶ This suburban community would eventually include about 200 acres and by 1917 "the character of the suburb, both in its physical aspects and in its community life, was solidly established."²⁷

24 John Glenn et.al. *Russell Sage Foundation, 1907-1946* (New York, 1947), 11.

25 Ibid., 49.

26 Forest Hills Gardens, photographic appointment calendar with introduction, published by The Forest Hills Village Improvement Society, 1975.

27 Glenn et. al, *Russell Sage Foundation*, 51.

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The plan for Forest Hills Gardens shows two wide, straight streets running parallel through the community from the railroad as community collector roads. The other roads are smaller and generally curvilinear. Narrow turf strips planted with trees border the streets. The focus of the plan is on Station Square where the railroad station, the inn, a church, shops, and the Forest Hills Gardens' tennis grounds are located. A central green was set aside in this core area and two small parks were also included in the plan. The landscape architecture and architectural treatments were harmonized to shape a collective beauty of arrangements.

The parallel focus of this suburban housing demonstration was economic, to develop a range of freestanding and attached homes that varied in architectural treatment and cost. Oversight of the Safe Foundation Homes Company insured quality construction and an appearance of permanence. The arrangements for purchasers were favorable and under market rates. In the development of attached houses, all units had to be purchased before the attached block could be constructed. The objective was to construct in a pleasing arrangement that preserved more public landscape around the architecture than would be possible with smaller lot divisions with constrained private yards for each lot. As Atterbury described this approach:

. . . [I]nstead of having to insure against the worst possible use of the property by individual owners it was possible to assume that the buildings would all be intelligently planned as one group, the average width of the lot might be reduced twenty per cent and the conditions be really better for each individual.²⁸

Proper planning by means of mutual adjustment in each specific case, avoided the costly blanket restrictions, which could cause a considerable waste of land development of this type.²⁹ The development was characterized by a green, leafy environment with gracious buildings, sidewalk-lined streets, interesting, detailed architecture, intricate gates and streetlights, stone walls, and other pleasing details. Forest Hills Gardens was a well-funded attempt to demonstrate the value of professional planning and design in the provision of a modest, suburban residential community. It is a smaller development at 200 acres than Riverside's 1,500 acres. However, it compares to Riverside effectively in the provision of a range of lots and house types. Direct railroad access and the inclusion of public buildings and shops in the core area around Station Square are also comparable to Riverside. The development demonstrates the influence of Riverside in its curvilinear layout, the provision for open space and the inclusion of elements of community life rather than simply being a residential enclave.

The pioneering achievement of the Olmsted and Vaux landscape architecture office and the Riverside model influenced subsequent generations of design professionals. Riverside was widely studied after its creation, as it still is today. Already noted are the frequent contributions of Olmsted firm members to the teaching staff at Harvard in the early twentieth century and the article devoted to Riverside by Theodora Kimball Hubbard in the July 1931 issue of *Landscape Architecture*. Relevant examples of suburban developments that are inspired by and use the principals and design elements of Riverside are explored in the following descriptions.

Albemarle Park, Asheville, North Carolina (1899)

Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the 1890s development of Albemarle Park in Asheville, North Carolina presents a significant work by Samuel Parsons in suburban design. As an early student of Calvert Vaux, Parsons' development of a curvilinear street system was directly influenced by his time spent at the firm

²⁸ Grosvenor Atterbury, "Model Towns in America," *Scribner's Magazine* 52 (July 1929): 20-35.

²⁹ Ibid.

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of Vaux and Company.³⁰ The design of the plan incorporates a curvilinear road system, which adheres to the hillside terrain, generous lot sizes, upon which are built modest cottage style homes, and a common Manor building.

Although the percentage of open space is visible on the plan, there is no central form-giving open space on the hillside terrain. Albemarle Park presents the principles of a response to natural topography, curvilinear road system, and an informal planting style (fostered under the tutelage of Vaux), all of which were pre-eminent at Riverside.

Country Club District, Kansas City, Missouri (1907)

The development of the suburban Country Club District, Kansas City, Missouri, is another example of residential growth over a period of several decades. The initial ten acres of land on the outskirts of Kansas City was purchased in 1907. The district would eventually cover several thousand acres. Landscape architects Herbert Hare and Sidney Hare were first commissioned in 1913 and continued with the project for twenty years laying out the district in a series of subdivisions bounded by major streets as the parcels were acquired. Herbert Hare was the principal designer of the subdivisions, parks and public spaces, as well as private properties. During the formative period, the gridiron of streets gave way to a curvilinear arrangement that was influenced by the rolling topography of the valley and streambed. In particular the Indian Hills and Mission Hills areas reveal a curvilinear and landscape-based arrangement. Single-family homes predominate with some variation in lot sizes, a minimum lot frontage of fifty feet and, lots of ten acres as the maximum. The development eventually included the innovation of a ten-block plaza with off-street parking as the principal commercial zone.

An important aspect of the Country Club District is the filing of restrictions at the time of platting, a perpetuation of twenty-five years with renewal unless an agreed percentage of owners, measured by property frontage, seeks changes. These restrictions "...control...land use, minimum cost of dwellings, setback lines, building projections, free space, outbuildings, and billboards."³¹

The Country Club District, successfully developed within the real estate marketplace, is a good example of planning and development following a design concept consistently for a sustained period. In comparison to Riverside, this development begins over forty years later and covers a greater acreage. Selected subdivisions within the district, those with curvilinear streets conforming to the topography and public open space amenities, compare well to the Riverside design. The 1938 map of the district indicates that many other areas only modestly altered the street grid pattern. Therefore, only selected subdivisions within this district would have incorporated the design concepts and features that distinguish Riverside.

The design principles from Riverside that are identifiable in Kansas City's Country Club District include, the response to topography and natural features in the southwestern district, the presence of a curvilinear road system in certain locations, and the conservation and design of open spaces.

OTHER MOVEMENTS AND CONTINUING INFLUENCE

While a separate and distinct design movement, American Garden City planning can be seen as a blending of the formality of English Garden City planning and more informal, naturalistic designs like Riverside. Examples of American Garden City movement include the 1924 work of Clarence Stein and Henry Wright on Radburn,

30 Charles Birnbaum, *The Landscape of Albemarle Park: Samuel Parson's Vision* (Ashville: Albemarle Park Grounds Association, 1991), 42.

31 Newton, *Design on the Land*, 473.

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New Jersey; the 1929 work of Ralph Griswold on Chatham Village, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the 1938 work of Clarence Stein and Fred Barlow Jr. at Baldwin Hills Village, Los Angeles, California, and Mariemont, Ohio (1921), designed by John Nolen. Washington Highlands (1916) in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, designed by Werner Hegemann and Elbert Peets is an excellent example of the combination of Garden City design and Olmsted influence through its use of symmetrical formal plantings and evenly spaced trees and curvilinear streets and natural areas as parklands.

SUMMARY

All of the examples cited, those attempted and developed by Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., those of the Olmsted Brothers, and those of other design professionals provide a useful context for Riverside. Even though the Riverside plan dates to 1869 and was carried out over more than 90 years, the complexity and interrelationships of design concepts achieved at Riverside is unequaled. Riverside stands as an exceptional, enduring composition.

It is Olmsted and Vaux's attention to the establishment of the road and open space systems that preserved the integrity of the Riverside plan throughout its lengthy development. As noted by landscape architect, professor and author, Christopher Tunnard, "The unity of the scheme has been cited as a factor contributing to its success. Although architectural taste has changed, the original layout has been maintained...and successive attempts to use the park for building have been thwarted."³² Olmsted and Vaux acknowledged that they could not "control the houses that men shall build," so they turned to a comprehensive design of curvilinear road systems, lushly planted public rights-of-way, and generous building setbacks, which reduced the visual prominence of individual buildings and gave greater importance to the landscape setting.³³

The Riverside community is an enduring achievement that embodies the idealized American concept of suburbia. The 1869 date of its design places the creative vision for Riverside in the immediate post-Civil War years when the rapid industrialization of cities was recognized as unhealthy and people with means sought a more healthful environment beyond the urban core. The shaping of both natural and designed landscape in the Village of Riverside created scenic, healthful, residential surroundings for suburban living. Designed with an array of village amenities it was also planned with ready access to the City of Chicago. The history of Riverside is unique in that municipal leaders and residents have sustained the vision of this planned community from the earliest years to the present through a lengthy development period and more recent decades of preservation and stewardship. As stated in 1931, "The design of Riverside is of special interest because the project was substantially carried out and because the village is reported to be beloved by its inhabitants who . . . 'feel so grateful to Mr. Frederick Law Olmsted for having planned it that even the modern trend of the times can't change its formation.'"³⁴

Not only have the residents recognized the importance of Riverside. Scholars of landscape architecture, suburban history and planning almost never fail to reference Riverside in their works. Landscape architecture scholars, John Archer, Alexander Garvin, and Mary Corbin Sies, point to Riverside as a pivotal point in the development of the suburban landscape. In *Design on the Land*, a textbook in many architectural landscape courses, Norman Newton states:

³² Tunnard, *City of Man*, 192.

³³ Olmsted Vaux & Company, *Preliminary Report*, 24.

³⁴ Theodora Kimball Hubbard, "Riverside, Illinois: A Residential Neighborhood Designed Over Sixty Years Ago," *Landscape Architecture: A Quarterly Magazine*, 21(July 1931), 257.

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But in the plan of Riverside the greatest quality of all cannot be singled out: the totality, the wholeness of form and spirit captured by Olmsted and Vaux so completely that its own continuity was assured through popular acceptance and affectionate pride.³⁵

And in *A Clearing in the Distance*, Witold Rybczynski notes,

Riverside was the first fully realized rendering of this American ideal: a compromise between private and public, between domesticity and community, between the city and the country.³⁶

Today we acknowledge Riverside as a prototype and model for suburban development patterns. This planned community along the Des Plaines River successfully incorporated the place into the design of a singular suburban village. As a suburban development that worked with rather than against the qualities of the regional landscape, it provided a spacious, scenic setting for community life. Riverside embodies an approach that provided a vision for comparable undertakings throughout the United States.

³⁵ Newton, *Design on the Land*, 467.

³⁶ Witold Rybczynski, *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the 19th Century* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 293.

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6. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION AND STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

<u>Ownership of Property</u>	<u>Category of Property</u>
Private: X	Building(s):
Public-Local: X	District: X
Public-State:	Site:
Public-Federal:	Structure:
	Object:

Number of Resources within Boundary of Property:

<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>
Buildings: 3805	Buildings: 1052
Sites: 1	Sites: 0
Structures: 3	Structures: 1
Objects: 0	Objects: 0
Total: 3809	Total: 1053

PROVIDE PRESENT AND PAST PHYSICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF PROPERTY

SUMMARY

The Village of Riverside, Illinois is a National Historic Landmark designated for its innovative application of landscape architecture design principles with early conceptions of suburban planning ideals by recognized masters, Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. and Calvert Bowyer Vaux. Although not the first suburb in the United States, Riverside was a significant, early prototype that would be studied and emulated by future designers. Olmsted and Vaux designed Riverside to be a permanent residential community that would provide a tranquil and beautiful environment, where the concept of spacious suburban living was conceptualized and rendered.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places on September 15, 1969, Riverside, located on the outskirts of Chicago, is roughly bounded by Harlem and Ogden Avenues, the Des Plaines River, 1st Avenue, and 26th Street. From a visual perspective, the village is defined by the oxbow of the Des Plaines River to the south, and by a distinct change in character along the north, east, and west edges—from the curvilinear roads, lush vegetation and myriad open spaces of Riverside to the straight street grid and lack of open spaces of the adjoining suburbs (fig. 2).

Riverside was designated a National Historic Landmark on August 29, 1970. The current NHL District boundary encompasses 1,130 acres. This NHL revision proposes the inclusion of an additional 46 acres of land west of 1st Avenue, executed in accordance with the Olmsted, Vaux plan and within the incorporated limits of the Village of Riverside. This area is residential with house lots and streets arranged along the railroad corridor as originally planned. Excluded is the section north of Ridgewood Avenue that, although part of the original plan, is no longer residential in character. This document also provides a resource count and description previously lacking.

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A calculation of the relationship of private to public lands indicates that private lands account for about fifty-six percent of Riverside while about forty-four percent is public open space of various kinds. The unusually high proportion of public landscape is an important factor in shaping this scenic residential community. The high percentage of public land is generously distributed throughout the village adjacent to the system of curvilinear roads. Submitted by the firm of Olmsted, Vaux & Company, Landscape Architects, in 1869, the General Plan of Riverside (General Plan) specified an area that originally encompassed approximately 1,560 acres.

Employing a naturalistic design approach, Olmsted and Vaux utilized elements of both pastoral and picturesque scenery in their designs. Evolved from European landscape gardening of the eighteenth century, the Pastoral style evokes a sense of tranquility and restfulness, with green meadows punctuated by shade trees and peaceful bodies of water. The Picturesque style drew from the Romantic period of landscape painting, evoking the untamed characteristics of nature. Picturesque landscapes typically featured lush plantings of vines, shrubs, understory, evergreen, and canopy trees with contrasts of shade and dappled light and the display of rugged natural features like steep slopes and rock outcrops. Olmsted and Vaux captured aspects of both these styles in their landscape designs for both Central Park, designed from 1858 to 1860, and Prospect Park, designed from 1865 to 1871. In the General Plan (fig. 1), Olmsted and Vaux employed similar concepts and principles, integrating the essence of the native landscape with the requirements of a suburban community.

A crucially important element was the formation of a variety of public open spaces to include commons, parks, triangles and peninsulas, a spacious, irregular public right-of-way, and the conservation of the best areas of natural scenery, landforms, and vegetation. For instance, Olmsted and Vaux reserved the edges of the Des Plaines River, adjacent floodplain areas, and the more elevated ridgeline landform as the principal open spaces for the community. Integrated with the network of open spaces, Riverside's road system was predominantly curvilinear, discouraging non-resident passage through the community. These scenic, curving roads and paths created effects similar to those found in Olmsted and Vaux's previous work in public parks. Most of the Riverside house lots were generous in size and provided residents with a healthful outdoor setting for many domestic activities. The lots also served as places to develop aesthetic sensibilities and express individuality. Other Riverside landscape amenities included pedestrian sidewalks, gas streetlights, and a public water supply system. Yet this sylvan community, situated nine miles from the urban core of Chicago, was not isolated in rural obscurity. Instead, Riverside was closely tied to the city and its economic, cultural, and scientific institutions by a railroad corridor and roadways beyond the village boundary.

The General Plan provides a record of the unequalled design for this suburban community, comprised of house lots, tied together by flowing roads, and punctuated by substantial open space along the east and west sides of the Des Plaines River and the unique network of commons, triangles and peninsulas. This plan was carried out quite faithfully, but due to the financial failure of the Riverside Improvement Company and the impacts of regional and national financial hardships, Riverside's development required decades to complete. The historically significant period began in 1870 when work commenced on the 1868 Olmsted, Vaux and Company Preliminary Report on Riverside (Preliminary Report) and the subsequent General Plan. The period continued through 1959, when a majority of house lots were filled, and a new housing development altered the General Plan.

Today, Riverside remains a distinguished representation of the extraordinary meshing of landscape architecture design philosophy with suburban development. The character and details of the landscape pattern and organization planned from 1868 to 1869 and initially implemented from 1870 to 1898 remain clearly discernible and vibrant with a high degree of integrity. The same is true for the contributing commercial, residential, and secondary structures constructed through the district's build-out period ending in 1959.

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Riverside's historic character is evident in its varied open spaces that include commons, parks, triangles and peninsulas, system of roads, sidewalks, gas streetlights and variable setbacks. The rail corridor and rail station still connect the village to Chicago and the region. Residences reflect a range of social levels in the architecture because the community was purposefully designed to encompass multiple economic classes. These distinctive elements and features of the Riverside landscape have made it a model of suburban community development for landscape architects and planners from its inception to the present. Riverside is studied in varied professional degree programs today, as it has been over the decades since its original design and development. The community is highly valued by its current residents who recognize its historic significance and value it as a scenic, verdant and tranquil place to live. As landscape historian Norman Newton has noted, "(The design of Riverside) has been staunchly defended by the residents themselves—what could more eloquently testify to the inherent excellence of the original design?"³⁷

CONTRIBUTING AND NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

The Riverside district contains 3,809 contributing resources, with the entire landscape of the village counted as 1 contributing site; there are 3,805 contributing buildings, including two individual National Historic Landmark properties and three contributing structures -- a water tower, a railroad bridge and a pedestrian bridge. Key landscape architectural elements, described individually in this section, occur within the generous public right-of-way that is the framework of the original design. It incorporates commons, parks, triangular greenspaces, curvilinear roads, sidewalks, streetlights, and informally arranged vegetation to provide a system of variable-width, and spacious, green corridors. Olmsted and Vaux shaped the community streetscape as a permanent and shared resource that is both beautiful and wholesome. One distinctive aspect of Riverside is the placement of roads slightly below and subordinate to the adjacent lawn edges and sidewalks. This manner of grading de-emphasizes the roads and effectively emphasizes turf, trees, and associated plantings as the visually dominant elements so key to Olmsted's vision. These Riverside landscape resources within the public right-of-way have remained intact over the years.

There is a concentration of notable architecture in Riverside, including buildings designed by architects Frederick Withers, Calvert Bowyer Vaux, the firm of Jenney, Schermerhorn & Bogart, and George Ashby. Louis Sullivan designed the now demolished Babson estate, where noted landscape architect Jens Jensen was responsible for the grounds. Frank Lloyd Wright designed the F. F. Tomek House, and together with Jensen designed the buildings and landscape for the Avery Coonley property. The two Wright-designed Riverside architectural master works are individually listed National Historic Landmark properties: the Coonley House (listed December 30, 1970); and the Tomek House (listed January 20, 1999). These two landmarks and sixty-two local landmarks are itemized and described in the Village of Riverside's local Historic Preservation Ordinance, updated in July 2002. A 1982 Village of Riverside Local Landmark Map depicts most of these local landmark properties (fig. 3).

Non-contributing resources total 1,052 buildings, including secondary structures, and one bridge. These resources were constructed outside the period of significance or have been altered such that they no longer convey their historic character. The small size and location of most non-contributing secondary structures at the rear of lots lessens their visual impact on the district. Portions of village roadways have alignments and character that are unlike the planned system of roads. These straight, sharply curving or awkwardly arranged street segments do not reflect the Olmsted and Vaux plan or exhibit the intended grace and scenic beauty of planned roadways. These two sections were developed in areas noted on the General Plan as "Land Not

³⁷ Newton, *Design on the Land*, 467.

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Belonging To The Company” (Jimtown) or “Ground Not Owned By The RI Co.” (near Blythe Park). While interrupting the plan and curvilinear layout of Riverside streets, these two areas do not severely affect the integrity of the landscape. Buildings within these areas reflect similar styles and periods as the rest of Riverside and therefore contribute to the significance of the NHL.

The Village of Riverside is located in Cook County, Illinois in the northeast corner of the state. It lies nine miles west of downtown Chicago. Illinois Route 43 (Harlem Avenue) forms the eastern boundary of the village, while Illinois Route 171 (First Avenue) lies to the west and partially bisects the village. The Des Plaines River flows through the western portion of the village and forms the southern boundary as it turns to the east and creates an oxbow. The village is surrounded by dense suburban development on all sides, North Riverside to the north, Berwyn to the east, Lyons to the south and Brookfield to the west. The Cook County Forest Preserve is located along the Des Plaines River. This forest growth along with additional plantings along roads and on private properties provide for the natural setting of Riverside and a separation from surrounding communities. Parks and green space are found throughout the village adding to this pastoral setting.

Riverside is primarily residential in character featuring a majority of single-family homes that are located throughout the village. Conversely, multi-family homes tend to be clustered within the village. Such clusters exist along the roads bordering the railroad, in the extreme southeast corner of the village, in the west central portion of the village, and along Harlem Avenue. Commercial development is also concentrated. The town center features a commercial core as well as the Village Hall and library. Other commercial development occurs along Harlem Avenue.

LANDSCAPE

The primary significance of the Village of Riverside as a National Historic Landmark is as a designed landscape—one that fully captures the interplay of a holistic, forward-thinking design philosophy with the functional necessities of a residential community, “a compromise between private and public, between domesticity and community, between the city and the country”³⁸. While most suburban developers focused on the development of buildings with the landscape as backdrop, Olmsted and Vaux developed the plan for Riverside in the opposite manner. Since the landscape is the primary, organizational element, it is included in the resource count as a contributing site. The site includes many character-defining elements that are described below.

1. Land Use

The first landscape characteristic consists of character-defining features such as the commercial center, residential neighborhoods, and green spaces – including commons, parks, and triangular islands and peninsulas. Transportation, while also a function of land use, is discussed under a separate heading.

Commercial (Figures 1, 20; Photos 27, 28, 68)

The commercial center of Riverside grew up around the intersection of Longcommon Road and the railway, near the train depot. It is unclear from the General Plan, whether Olmsted envisioned commercial development in Riverside, or if he considered it to be wholly a residential suburb. The General Plan shows a continuity of lot sizes and setbacks along Burlington and Quincy roads reflecting the intent of continuous residential construction. The original charter for the Riverside Improvement Company as approved by the State of Illinois included provisions by the developer to create a city. One could surmise that a city would include commercial

³⁸ Rybczynski, *A Clearing in the Distance*, 293.

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as well as residential properties. While it may not have been part of the original intent, a commercial building was one of the first structures built near the train station and water tower (fig. 20). Along Burlington and Quincy streets and close to the town center is the area that later became the commercial center. A second commercial node developed along Harlem Avenue at the eastern edge of the district. As a major north-south thoroughfare Harlem Avenue was more conducive to commercial development, which occurred starting in the 1950s.

Residential (Figures 1, 16, 21; Photos 1, 36, 39)

The overarching idea behind Riverside was the development of an informal, tranquil, domestic subdivision accessible to Chicago but far enough away to retain a rural feel. Lots of varying sizes were developed and allowed for a mixture of economic classes to reside in the village. The preliminary report notes that wide roads and rights of way would be necessary and providing this would require the provision for easier access to individual homes. He therefore suggested private avenues to access lots. Olmsted saw two essential needs for a domestic life. First, that families be happy in their private life both indoors and out. Second, families could develop associations, inter-dependence, and close relationships with other families.³⁹ Olmsted acknowledged that the developers could do little to influence the first but that the latter could be readily achieved with an abundance of parks, open spaces and opportunities for public gatherings.

Green Spaces

Long Common (Figures 1, 4, 5; Photos 1, 2, 3, 4.)

Central precepts of Olmsted and Vaux design philosophy include provisions for public open space and conservation of the distinguishing natural features of a site. Riverside displays these precepts in a variety of different types of open spaces. One distinct type of open space, intended to evoke the traditional village green or public common, provides a lengthy green corridor within the heart of the community. Divided into two areas and appropriately named Long Common and Scottswood Common, these open spaces are situated along the topographic ridgeline in the approximate center of the village (fig.1). An undated late-nineteenth-century view of the Long Common's north end (fig. 5) shows a ball game underway on an open expanse of turf. Informally planted edges, dotted with clusters of trees and shrubs, partially screened these open spaces from surrounding streets and house lots while allowing views into the open spaces. The subtle landforms and the informal plantings of grand shade trees, smaller flowering trees and shrub masses provide landscape breadth and separation in a relatively confined area. The character of these spaces today remains naturalistic and pastoral. Although some recreation elements have been added to the Commons, notably playing fields and playgrounds, these are unobtrusive and blend with the broader landscape effectively.

Both historically and today, the Long Common is the largest open space north of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad. Surrounded by curvilinear streets, the Long Common is comprised of three road-edged spaces located along the northeast-oriented ridgeline of high ground. Due to the original topography and design manipulation, these spaces rise above the elevation of their surrounding roads (photo 1). From the north, the three spaces decrease in size. The first, bounded by North Delaplaine Road, is 670 feet by a maximum of 370 feet. This broad open space is planted with individual trees and tree and shrub clumps at the periphery while the open center displays level turf and a baseball field (photo 2). The second space is 680 feet long and varies from 80 to 180 feet wide with trees and shrubs at periphery and central locations (photo 3). It also contains the recent addition of a modest playground with associated walks that are somewhat depressed into the grade to reduce visual impact. Continuing southward, the third space of the Long Common (photo 4) is about 700 feet long and

³⁹ Olmsted, Vaux & Company, *Preliminary Report*, 27.

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varies from just under 100 feet to 20 feet wide at the rounded point.

Scottswood Common (*Figures 1, 4, 6, 7, 8; Photos 5, 6*)

Like the Long Common, Scottswood Common (fig. 6) is located on a ridgeline and exhibits a gently sloped landform. The lawns, trees, and slight grades are evident in early views of Scottswood Common. Historically, this common was a divided space (fig. 1) with two large areas, a triangle to the north and a butterfly intersection with two small triangles at the midpoint. In recent decades the crossing roads have been closed and filled with turf, unifying the areas as a single green space. Centered in the southwestern peninsula of the village, Scottswood Common today is a continuous expanse of tree-shaded turf encircled by adjacent residential roads. The elongated form of Scottswood Common, bounded by Bloomingbank Road, the railroad corridor and the Des Plaines River parklands on the north and Millbridge Road on the south is about 1,500 feet long and varies from 220 feet to about 30 feet in width.

The area's graceful topography and slightly curving form allows only partial views across the space. Thus, as a person moves from north to south the landscape continues to be revealed sequentially. This type of spatial sequence - a device for increasing the apparent size of a space - was used in both Central and Prospect Parks by Olmsted and Vaux and is characteristic of their style. Scottswood Common is an expanse of parkland with a subtle topography, turf, tree and shrub groupings, sidewalks, and gas streetlights (fig. 7, and fig. 8). In its unified form, Scottswood Common is a large vegetated green space that establishes a parkland interior for the southern portion of Riverside while the Des Plaines River parklands bound the outer perimeter of the peninsula.

Guthrie Park (*Photo 7*)

Guthrie Park is located along Burling Road. Shown on the 1869 plan (fig. 1) as turf and trees, this park today displays a relatively level expanse of turf broken by informally placed, mature shade trees (photo 7). A modest grouping of a stone monument, flagpole, and plantings, in the approximate center of the park, serves a memorial function. Positioned at the intersection of the railroad depot to the north, the central business district to the east, and civic buildings to the south, Guthrie Park provides a spacious, green character to the center of the village.

Harrington Park

Harrington Park is located along South Delaplaine and Robinson Roads. It is an open lawn with baseball fields at its center and mature shade trees informally grouped around its periphery. A comparison of early plan images for Harrington Park and its current configuration indicate that the park has been enlarged to include the former Harris Road land. The park gives an impression of a green, vegetated expanse, where current recreation is accommodated but does not dominate the contemplative nature of the park.

Blythe Park (*Figure 1*)

Blythe Park is located at the intersection of Blythe Road and East Grove Road. As seen on the 1869 plan (fig. 1), the Olmsted and Vaux concept for the park was a simple tree grove over lawn. This park is a relatively level area that is slightly raised above the surrounding streets. Today there is play equipment for an adjacent school as well as the grassy lawns and shade trees.

Patriots Park

The smallest public park, Patriots Park, is located in the northeast corner of Riverside. According to early village plans, the intent was to subdivide this area into house lots, but it was instead designated as open space. Adjacent to the railroad corridor to the east, Patriots Park is more open than the other parks in Riverside.

Village Park with Swan Pond and Indian Gardens (*Figures 9, 10, 11; Photos 8, 9, 10*)

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The scenic nature of the Des Plaines River, which forms an S-curve in its north-south alignment, contributes significantly to the character of the village. An early view of the river edge landscape (fig. 9) illustrates both the retention and shaping of native scenery as parkland. The vegetated banks of the Des Plaines provide a contrast to the created pond, rolling lawns and playfields of the Swan Pond and Indian Gardens areas of the park. A plan and section (fig. 10, and fig. 11) at a location along Fairbank Road shows a 170-foot expanse of public right-of-way that extends from residential property to the river edge. The variable width corridor of parkland along the river presents framed views of the Des Plaines along the intermittently vegetated Riverside Road with heavier vegetation along Fairbank and Bloomingbank Roads. The park lands along the river include the Swan Pond located south of the intersection of Burling Road and Fairbank Road (photo 8, and photo 9) and the open ball fields and wooded groves of the Indian Gardens (photo 10) located along the southern tip of Fairbank Road.

Olmsted and Vaux accomplished the objective of river conservation by reserving a portion of riverbanks and flood plain for park use and another part as forested riverbank. This conservation of land for public use was the first known instance in the Chicago area and the first instance in Olmsted's design career of such a reservation of river frontage. It also marked the first step in the reservation for the public of the hundreds of acres of land beyond Riverside along the Des Plaines River and its tributaries. Together the conservation of the riverbanks and the ridgeline lands where the Long Common and Scottswood Common are situated fulfilled the Olmsted and Vaux recommendation for "the appropriation of some of the best of your property for public grounds."⁴⁰

Cook County Forest Preserve (*Figure 1; Photo 11*)

The lands preserved by the Cook County Forest Preserve are generally located along the west side of the Des Plaines River. The 1869 plan (fig.1) shows this area as parkland accessed along curving drives, with lawn, shrubs and tree groves. Although not developed in this fashion, the land was preserved as natural space and contributes to the preservation of local native scenery. The Cook County Forest Preserve lands add forest to the Riverside landscape today. Heavily vegetated, the river-edge acres provide lush, green riverbanks (photo 11).

Triangular Green Spaces (*Figures 4, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18; Photos 12, 13, 14, 15*)

In addition to commons, parks and tracts of river scenery, Olmsted and Vaux incorporated a network of smaller-scaled, intimate green spaces in the design of Riverside. The General Plan provides a very clear illustration of the innovative manner in which Olmsted and Vaux embraced two of the major design facets they envisioned. The graceful curves and sweeping alignments of the road system, which generally followed the natural contours, created intersections quite unlike the more traditionally rigid right-angle configuration. Adhering to the Olmsted-Vaux plan, the road system as constructed resulted in an array of intersections that formed a series of unusual turf extensions or angles, both obtuse and acute.

Many of these triangular green spaces appear to be continuations of corner house lots within an acute angle, but many are separated, defined by streets on all three sides. Olmsted and Vaux originally proposed furnishing these spaces with modest croquet or ball grounds, sheltered seats and drinking fountains, which would be of interest or convenience to passers-by. Over time, the triangular areas developed into simple, planted green spaces without embellishments and today they function primarily to augment the overall aesthetic character of Riverside.

⁴⁰ Olmsted, Vaux & Company, *Preliminary Report*, 18.

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Photographs from the historic period show typical triangular green spaces comprised of gently sloping turf and the occasional tree or shrub (fig. 12). The topography of these triangular areas is especially apparent in a second image (fig. 13) where the turf grade is elevated considerably above street level. The mounded appearance of these triangular areas places the turf, shrubs and trees more prominently in view, thereby reducing the visual importance of the adjacent street, as Olmsted had envisioned. Current photographs show that many of the triangular areas exhibit a reduction in the mounded appearance more typical historically (photos 12 and 13). This is due to the gradual erosion and compaction of topsoil combined with the accretion of several layers of paving of adjacent streets. Plantings today are found mainly along the triangular area perimeters, but often in the center as well.

The 1934 Works Progress Administration (WPA) record drawing (fig. 14) for Riverside recorded a series of dimensions to include the tree lawn width between street and sidewalk, the distance from sidewalk to property line and the setback distance to the building on each lot. Each of these dimensions varied along the curvilinear layout of Riverside's streets. A section of this plan (fig. 15) shows a detached triangular area, right-of-way and setback to buildings at the intersection of North Delaplaine Road and Shenstone Road. The 250-foot distance between houses on opposing sides of the triangular area provides a wide, green streetscape. These opposite houses have front-yard setbacks of 30 feet and 32 feet from the right-of-way. The generous 190-foot expanse of public right-of-way contains pedestrian sidewalks, shade trees, and gas streetlights on both sides of the road. The triangular green space is planted with turf, shade trees and large shrubs and mounded above the street level.

A typical attached triangular green space at the intersection of Southcote Road and Downing Road is shown in plan and section (figs. 16, 17, and 18). The location of the green space within the acute angle of the intersection is clearly evident in figure 16. This space is within a 120-foot right-of-way that contains sidewalks, shade trees and gas streetlights, and creates a small park-like space. The house lot that adjoins this peninsula is also deeply setback, which provides about 250 feet of green space to the building wall.

As envisioned by Olmsted and Vaux, the principal purpose of these triangular green spaces was to provide additional expanses of turf at intersections and to enhance the overall landscape character by forming generous public road margins. This is particularly important in those areas of Riverside that are removed from commons, parks, or riverside lands. Most of Riverside's triangular green spaces remain in place today, although in a few cases the surrounding streets have been altered slightly in response to changing traffic demands and patterns. (Navigating many of these intersections in an automobile is very likely a more challenging experience than what was envisioned in the day of horse and buggy.) Although directly related to the road system, these triangular areas were not secondary spaces, that appeared by happenstance. They were forethought of Olmsted's and primary green spaces within his plan. The triangular green spaces arrayed throughout Riverside reflect Olmsted's genius at incorporating the existing topography into his design. They provide an enhanced sense of the open, pastoral character that Olmsted desired and are integral components that reinforce the district's high degree of integrity.

2. Circulation

The circulation and transportation layout is another key character-defining element in the landscape design. This includes the linear railroad corridor, network of curvilinear roads and pedestrian walkways.

Railroad Corridor (*Figures 1, 19, 22; Photos 24, 25*)

A primary focus of Olmsted and Vaux's intent in creating this residential suburban village was to have a strong connection with the city center for employment, shopping, and access to cultural and medical institutions. Easy, rapid, and pleasant access to that center was important for the success, in their terms, of any such enterprise.

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Olmsted and Vaux therefore welcomed the access to the downtown core of Chicago provided by the original Chicago Burlington and Quincy Railroad (fig. 19). As a result, the district is organized around the current Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad Corridor. This east-west line served as one impetus for the suburban residential development of Riverside in the environs of post-Civil War Chicago. There are four railroad crossings located at intersections in the eastern section of the Olmsted and Vaux plan, and it is evident that a linear arrangement of trees along both sides of the railroad corridor was envisioned (fig. 1). Although no record of implementing railroad corridor plantings has been located, trees are intermittently found along the corridor today.

Currently the rail corridor carries a significant volume of daily traffic. The Railroad Depot, a local historic landmark, is sited in the center of the village at a location adjacent to park lands and the downtown business district (photo 24). Together, the active rail line and depot perpetuate the historic goal of multi-modal transportation options in this suburban residential community. A current view shows the width of the right-of-way along the railroad corridor looking west at the crossing at North Cowley Street (photo 25). Vegetation is evident along the edges of the corridor in the form of sporadic informal stands of trees and large shrubs. As developed over time, Riverside also included commercial areas near the railroad station for business tenants. The original Olmsted, Vaux and Company plan did not include commercial properties, but these were developed early in the construction of the village center (fig. 20).

Curvilinear Roads (*Figures 1, 2; Photos 16, 17*)

The organizing framework for Riverside is its system of roads. The Olmsted and Vaux design for the roads was an integrated street circulation network of about thirty-five miles that wound through a relatively broad public right-of-way (fig. 1, and fig. 2). The residential streets in proximity of the railroad, from Golfview Road and alley on the west to Harlem Road on the east, follow the Olmsted and Vaux design but are relatively straight in alignment. The roads to the north and south of the railroad corridor assume a more curvilinear pattern that retains the graceful and informal scheme envisioned by the planners.

The predominantly curvilinear road system was deliberately intended to discourage industrial land uses and large private estates. Olmsted and Vaux expected that the maze of short, curving roads would discourage transient passage through the community and leave the village roads for local, primarily residential traffic. The curving roads would, Olmsted hoped, “suggest and imply leisure, contemplativeness and happy tranquility” for those driving through the suburb, in strong contrast to the rapidly moving traffic of urban gridiron streets.⁴¹ The curving roads direct vehicular movements through the scenic green spaces of Riverside, which flank them.

Pedestrian Walkways (*Figures 12, 16; Photos 9, 16, 18*)

Pleasant walking, riding, and driving, with access to scenery, sunlight, and fresh air were distinctive parts of the Olmsted and Vaux suburb and were the principal reasons for its creation (photo 9, photo 16 and photo 18). The design of a complete circulation system also became a characteristic of subsequent Olmsted-designed suburbs. Pedestrian walks were designed in curvilinear form that paralleled and diverged from adjacent road alignments. A portion of the 1934 WPA drawing demonstrates the curving, graceful alignments of the public sidewalks, located at varied distances from the face of the adjacent street curb (fig. 16). The existing Riverside public sidewalks generally conform to the historic alignment and the early as-built character of Riverside (photo 16 and photo 18). The composition of these pedestrian walks is predominantly concrete along roads within the public right-of-way. Within public open spaces, the sidewalks are paved in either concrete, bituminous asphalt or gravel. The complete system of public walkways, extending some fifty-two miles through Riverside, allows

⁴¹ Olmsted, Vaux & Company, *Preliminary Report*, 17.

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for easy pedestrian access and visual enjoyment of the public landscape throughout the village along well-graded, functionally surfaced routes.

3. Boundaries (Physical and Visual)

Key elements of property division include variable setbacks and width of right-of-way, large lot sizes, and a blending of public and private boundaries.

Variable setbacks and lot sizes (*Figures 16, 21; Photos 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23*)

Although no record was located to document early deed restrictions, the WPA record drawings of Riverside in 1934 are noted with each building lot setback dimension from the right-of-way. As an example, the WPA drawings used to assess right-of-way and setback dimensions show nine-foot, fifteen-foot, and sixteen-foot setbacks from the public right-of-way near the intersection of Southcote and Selborne and nineteen-foot, twenty-three-foot, and twenty-four-foot setbacks on Woodside at Long Common. Scattered throughout the village, setbacks are found in excess of fifty feet in a few locations. Overall, the setbacks are relatively uniform, varying to a slight degree, in many areas of the village. The current variations of setback dimensions are important to the naturalistic character of the Riverside landscape. These two elements, variable-depth setbacks and variable-width of right-of-way, determine the informal nature of residential yards and their orientation to the public road system, and contribute to the naturalistic green spaciousness of the village streetscape (photo 19). To a great extent, this relationship remains intact and visible.

The WPA survey drawings record the variable setbacks from the public right-of-way demarcation to the front setback of each building throughout Riverside. While the areas near the railroad have a narrower streetscape and the landscape character along East Burlington Road and others near the railroad are smaller in scale and more regular, house setbacks still vary to a degree. With a right-of-way at fifty-three feet wide, houses on opposing sides of the road are separated by a distance of about one hundred feet. House setbacks seen in the sample section (fig. 16) vary from roughly twenty-three feet to fifty-six feet. Even small front lawns have plantings or single or grouped trees, large shrubs and some small-scale garden plantings. In their 1868 report on Riverside, Olmsted and Vaux stated the critical role that setbacks and vegetation would play in the unification of the landscape:

...a tasteful disposition of shade trees and other planting along the roadsides and public places, will, in a few years, cause the whole locality, no matter how far the plan may be extended, ...to possess... the attraction of neatness and convenience, and the charm of refined sylvan beauty.⁴²

The current character of the broad, public right-of-way, irregular setbacks to building fronts and plantings is seen in several photographs (photo 18, photo 19, and photo 20). In both the public right-of-way and private house lots, trees are important to the design. The naturalistic landscape is intended to blend seamlessly from public to private lands. To aid in achieving this blending, the original report required tree plantings in front yards.⁴³ As a landscape of domesticity, Olmsted and Vaux desired the community features of the public landscape to collectively shape a scenic, beautiful setting.

We cannot judiciously attempt to control the form of houses which men shall build, we can at most, take care that if they build very ugly and inappropriate houses, they should not be allowed to force them disagreeably upon our attention when we desire to pass along the road upon which they stand. We can require that no house shall be built within a certain number of feet of the

⁴² Olmsted, Vaux & Co. *Preliminary Report*, 16.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

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highway, and we can insist that each house-holder shall maintain one or two living trees between his house and his highway line.⁴⁴

The informal massing of trees and shrubs on private property reinforces the community character of the landscape and supports the village landscape that is visible within the public right-of-way. Throughout Riverside the vegetation provides a lush, verdant setting. Tall hedgerows that create green walls are not in keeping with the Olmsted and Vaux concepts of a seamless blending of public and private green spaces. This type of linear, tall hedgerow diminishes the integrity of the landscape. The sporadic presence of visually dominant yellow-green and maroon foliage specimen trees and shrubs, principally on private house lots is disruptive to the overall scenery (photo 21). The Village has restricted planting of such visually dominant foliage plants for several years.

The right-of-way contains pedestrian sidewalks, shade trees and gas streetlights on both sides of the road. The illustrations show the continuity of landscape elements and their character on even the most modest of lots within the village (fig. 21). The more constricted character of these linear streets near the railroad is observed along East Quincy Street and Park View Street (photo 22, and photo 23). Present day views reflect the informal, scenic contributions made by the variable right-of-way and variable setback dimensions along even the narrowest streets within the village as originally conceived in the 1869 plan.

4. Vegetation

Trees, shrubs, and other planting introduced into the landscape as well as natural occurring forest areas are character-defining features of the district.

Trees and other plantings

The principal trees found on the Long Common are white oak (*Quercus alba*), elm (*Ulmus americana*), basswood (*Tilia americana*) and hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*) with some younger larch (*Larix laricina*), ash (*Fraxinus americana*) and white pine (*Pinus strobus*) as well as old lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*) shrubs. Olmsted described his intended planting design that favored individual stately shade trees over group masses for the Long Common, and other areas, as follows:

In planting the Long Common and adjoining borders, oaks and elms should frequently stand alone or a little detached from groups, more frequently alone than anywhere else on the place except perhaps Indian Garden where elms will be likely to grow particularly well and should accordingly be exhibited somewhat distinctively.⁴⁵

These same conditions are reflected today with grand shade trees arching over expanses of lawn. Several American elms, with their distinctive and graceful vase form, remain on the Long Common as a result of the conscientious village elm care program.

The mature trees on Scottswood Common are groups of elm, white oak and catalpa (*Catalpa speciosa*) with a few basswood, silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*) and sweet gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*). About fifty mature trees and several smaller trees and shrub masses are arrayed in an open, informal pattern on the sloping topography that creates characteristic sunlit and tree-shaded spaces (photo 5, and photo 6). Similar types of plantings as those found in the Long Common and Scottswood Common occur within the parks and other

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., "Notes on Tree Grouping," reprinted by Theodora Kimball Hubbard in "Riverside, Illinois: A Residential Neighborhood Designed Over Sixty Years Ago," *Landscape Architecture: A Quarterly Magazine* 21 (July 1931): 288.

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vegetative spaces of Riverside.

5. Small-Scale Features

Other character-defining elements in the landscape plan include streetlights and hidden utilities.

Gas Lantern Streetlights and Utilities (*Figures 6, 12, 13; Photos 16*)

In addition to a naturalistic setting, Olmsted and Vaux also proposed a comprehensive development of community infrastructure for Riverside as demonstrated by the railroad, road, and sidewalk systems. Another design element is the highly visible system of gas streetlights throughout Riverside. The early system of gas streetlights and gas supply lines was located throughout the village along the roadsides and the lines were extended to individual houses. Approximately 200 gas streetlights also had been installed by 1871 along village streets.⁴⁶ Although early poles were replaced over time, the current fixtures follow a historic design and the scale and style is appropriate. The replicas, although not historic, help to maintain the feeling and cohesiveness of the village and continue the tradition of unobtrusive, low-level lighting. These lights contrast markedly with the higher, brighter lighting of the adjacent areas beyond the village limits.

Notably absent from the Riverside landscape as compared to surrounding communities is the abundance of overhead utility lines. These power and telephone lines, like the gas lines, are buried within Riverside to limit the visual intrusion they would cause. The village's sewer and water lines were an original part of the layout of the community and integral to Olmsted's plan for Riverside to be rural in aesthetic character yet urban in function.

ARCHITECTURE

Riverside's development has unfolded over a lengthy period of time, with both residential and commercial construction occurring within the platted framework of Olmsted and Vaux's comprehensive landscape plan. Only a small percentage of extant buildings date to 1868-1870, the period of the plan's initial development and construction. In fact, the majority of Riverside's architectural development dates between the 1920s and 1950s, when the village finally built out the lots that had been laid out by Olmsted, Vaux & Co. over a half century earlier.

Due to the extended time frame in which Riverside developed, many different house styles and types are reflected. This is also true of secondary structures, primarily garages that were constructed. Early houses featured carriage houses, many reflecting the style of the house with which they were associated. Newer garages are simpler in design. The majority of garages are hipped roof, one to two car structures. Very few houses do not have a garage and even fewer no driveways.

A primary aspect of the significance of the Riverside NHL District relates to the foresight and comprehensive nature of the Olmsted and Vaux plan in establishing the character of a landscaped suburban community that has subsequently endured numerous stages of development. The holistic approach taken by Olmsted and Vaux lent itself to a community in which the landscape acts as the framework within which the buildings, whether ostentatious or reserved, classical or modern, high style or vernacular, fit into the overall design.

1855-68

In 1855, William Wesenraft established a farm and orchards—and built a farmhouse—on a 26.5-acre tract near

⁴⁶ Riverside Improvement Company, *Riverside in 1871, with a Description of its Improvements Together with some Engravings of Views and Buildings*, (Chicago, D. & C.H. Blakely Printers, 1871), 17.

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the north end of a large oxbow formed by the Des Plaines River. Located at 78 Pine Avenue, the house is Riverside's oldest contributing building, (the only remaining building constructed prior to the implementation of the plan) although it has been altered and was moved a few blocks from its original location when the development of Riverside began.

1868-1879

The first substantial buildings to be constructed following the plan were: a water tower, a railroad depot (replaced in 1901), a pavilion, refectory, gas works (all razed), a hotel (destroyed by fire in 1887), a church (rebuilt in 1879), and a commercial building. With the exception of the church, all were concentrated near the railroad station.

The community's residential component grew slowly. The Riverside Improvement Company was undercapitalized and it filed for bankruptcy in 1872. A national financial panic the following year caused further problems, including declining land values—reportedly from \$300 to \$40 a front foot. In 1875, at the time of the village's incorporation, only twenty-nine votes were cast in the village election.⁴⁷ By April 1877, according to a letter from the project engineer to Olmsted, forty-five residences had been built and occupied. Of the thirty-one structures mentioned in a promotional booklet in 1871, only thirteen remain (the rest were razed or burned down).⁴⁸ Based on village records and recent field surveys, twenty-four structures—most of them residential—survive from the period of 1871-79. Ten of the residences and a church are located in the General Plan's "First Division," which is bordered by the oxbow of the Des Plaines River (Map 4).

Most of the surviving early structures were designed by individuals who had been involved in the planning of Riverside, including Olmsted & Vaux, William Le Baron Jenney, Frederick Withers, and others. Their designs include Eastlake, Gothic Revival, and Italianate, architectural styles that had been promoted through the 1840s and 1850s for semi-rural environments by such writers as A.J. Downing in his 1850 publication, *The Architecture of Country Houses*.⁴⁹

While most architectural attention is given to the larger-scaled historic residences in Riverside, several more modest houses also survive from the period. While simple in style, these worker's cottages are important to the early development of Riverside. One of the earliest ones—dating from 1869-1875—is located east of the business district at 220 Lawton Road. The Riverside Improvement Company (RIC) built the residence on Gage for the workers constructing the village's roads and infrastructure, while one of the investors in the RIC built the house on Lawton. One surviving example is at 70 Lincoln Avenue, located in "Jimtown," a portion of the village that was not planned by Olmsted and Vaux; one of two areas not owned by the Riverside Improvement Company at the time the General Plan was developed. The area, bounded by Groveland Avenue, Park Place, Kimbark Road, and Pine Avenue, was later platted by James D. Reynolds; hence the nickname.

1880-1899

The last two decades of the nineteenth century witnessed increased development in Riverside, but still at a relatively modest pace. By 1900, the village population was 1,551 residents.

Approximately 160 of the buildings constructed between 1880 and 1899 remain in Riverside. These structures are evenly distributed throughout the southern half of the community. Virtually all of them are within walking

⁴⁷ Spencer Fuller, et al, *Riverside Then and Now: A History of Riverside, Illinois*, (Riverside, Riverside News, 1936, reprinted by Herbert Bassman, 1958; Riverside Historical Commission, 1996).

⁴⁸ Riverside Improvement Company, *Riverside in 1871*, 17.

⁴⁹ Ames and McClelland, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 52.

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distance (just over a half a mile) from the train station. Half of the buildings from this period are concentrated south of the railroad tracks; forty-two are in the southwest where many of the village's 1870s structures are also clustered. Another thirty-eight buildings are located southeast of the village center.

The buildings north of the tracks are split evenly between the small areas platted by Reynolds and Wesencraft, 1889 Homestead Addition of Forest, Pine, and West Avenues, and the east central, and west central areas of the village. A significant grouping of buildings from this period is located between 133 and 230 Herrick Road. The predominant "high styles" of this period in Riverside were Queen Anne (39 buildings) and Shingle (24 buildings). The Queen Anne houses feature irregular building massing and a variety of materials and textures. Articles in the nation's first architectural magazines contributed to its popularity, which dates to the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876. The Shingle Style is somewhat simpler with fewer architectural embellishments, except that its exterior is generally entirely clad in shingles.⁵⁰

Second Empire, Stick, and Tudor Revival structures from this period are also present in Riverside. The Stick Style has tall proportions, broad verandas, and exposes its underlying structure with "stickwork," decorative half-timbering, exposed rafters, and decorative braces. Unlike Queen Anne, the style featured flat decorative elements focusing on patterns and lines.⁵¹ Not as prevalent as the Queen Anne or Stick, the distinguishing feature of Second Empire architecture is the high mansard roof with other elements similar to Italianate architecture, including tall narrow windows, brackets, and square towers. The later Tudor Revival residences feature such elements as half timbering, steeply pitched roofs, and ornate stonework. Wall treatments for the style are brick, stone or stucco finishes.

Among the architects represented during this period are George Ashby, Boswell & Hunt, John Cochrane, William LeBaron Jenney, Dwight Perkins, Joseph Silsbee, and Charles Whittlesey. Architectural pattern books also were very influential during this period and may have played a role in the design of some of the buildings where an architect is not identified. Possible examples include various Queen Anne residences and the Stick/Eastlake-style house at 144 Scottswood Road.

Several commercial and institutional buildings were constructed during this period. The notable and monumental Central School, which was designed in the Richardsonian Romanesque mode, popularized by Boston architect H. H. Richardson. Other buildings include the French Chateausque style Riverside Town Hall, Saint Paul's Episcopal Church, and the Driver Block at 15 Riverside Road

The most common architectural type of this period in Riverside employs modest vernacular architectural treatments (50 buildings), such as the vernacular worker's cottages found throughout the village. Most of these residential buildings employ only a small amount of decoration, often in decorative wood brackets and window hoods. A rare example of an isolated commercial vernacular building from this period is at 169 Barrypoint Road. A character-defining feature is that it lacks a front yard setback, unlike the village's residential structures.

1900-1919

At least 356 buildings were constructed in Riverside during the first two decades of the twentieth century, almost twice the number built during the previous 30 years. The new residential development was widely distributed throughout the village geographically, although development remained limited to only 20 residences by 1919 in the northern third of the village, north of Delaplaine Road.

⁵⁰ Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977), 115-120, 127-128.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 109-112.

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Two factors in Riverside's growth during this period were the opening in 1901 of the Suburban Electric Railway Line and the burgeoning number of automobiles owned by middle-class residents. Part of the demand for new housing may also have been linked to the opening in 1905 of two major industrial plants nearby: the Sears, Roebuck & Company mail order plant in Chicago's North Lawndale neighborhood and the Western Electric Hawthorne Works plant in Berwyn, the suburb immediately east of Riverside.

One of the largest concentrations of new residences was in the east central area, along Addison, Herrick, and Shenstone roads, where nearly 70 houses were constructed during this era. Among the most prominent individuals drawn to this neighborhood were *Chicago Tribune* cartoonist Clare Briggs—who helped originate the modern comic strip—and *Tribune* sports columnist Ring Lardner, who was one of the most acclaimed writers of the early twentieth century. The Lardner family occupied a Colonial Revival residence at 150 Herrick Road.

A predominant architectural approach was Craftsman/Bungalow, which accounts for nearly half of the residences built in the village during this period. This residential style was very popular throughout the nation from 1905 until the early 1920s. Designs were inspired by the work of the California architects Greene & Greene, as well as numerous periodicals, catalogs, and pattern books from the period, such as *The Craftsman*, published 1901-16.⁵² Common elements include low-pitched rooflines, deeply overhanging eaves, exposed rafters or decorative brackets under the eaves, a front porch beneath an extension of the main roof, and tapered, square columns supporting the roof. A representative example of Craftsman/Bungalow designs in Riverside is the stucco house and garage at 302 Lionel Road. Other clusters can be found along Blackhawk, Lawton, Lincoln, and Olmsted roads; all in the southeast part of the village, as well as along Parkview Road west of First Avenue (Map 4).

Construction began to occur during this period along Burlington and Quincy streets, which parallel the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy (CB&Q) railroad tracks. The small lots fronting these streets made them more affordable for lower-income residences and they are predominantly Craftsman/Bungalow. Another cluster of modest-scaled residences was in Jimtown, predominantly along Forest, Kimbark, and Pine Avenues (Map 2). Here, however, the architecture were more mixed, with Colonial Revival, and Queen Anne exceeding the number of Craftsman/Bungalow residences. Features of the Colonial Revival are; a symmetrical façade, gable roof, pillars and columns, double-hung windows with shutters, dormers, entrances featuring porticos topped by pediments, and paneled doors with sidelights and fanlights.

North of Jimtown, another neighborhood developed during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Identified in the Olmsted plan as "Des Plaines Park," this riverside property was lost by the Riverside Improvement Company to forfeiture in the early 1870s. It was acquired by Edith Rockefeller McCormick in the 1890s and was platted as the Maplewood Subdivision in 1910. Most development took place along Maplewood Road, the subdivision's main street, although seven new residences were built on Woodside Road, the plat's eastern edge. One of the earliest houses in Maplewood is the residence at 273 Maplewood Road.

The Prairie style also was prevalent in Maplewood and throughout the village. Although nationally known, it originated in the Chicago area through the works of Frank Lloyd Wright and his contemporaries. Among the style's distinguishing features are shallow hipped roofs, wide eaves, ribbon windows, and horizontal massing. Wright's first design in Riverside, which dates to 1904-06, is at 150 Nuttall Road. Following that, between 1907

⁵² Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 567-68.

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and 1912, Wright designed a complex of buildings on the Coonley Estate, at 281 Bloomingbank Road, 336 Coonley Road, 350 Fairbank Road, and 290 and 300 Scottswood Road.

Nearly 50 Prairie-style buildings date to this period, including works by such architects as William Bennett, William Drummond (308 Fairbank Road), Purcell & Elmslie (277 and 281 Gatesby Road), E. E. Roberts, Louis Sullivan with George Elmslie (razed), and Tallmadge & Watson (183 Addison Road and 50 Cowley Road). There are also works by less well-known designers Howard Cheney (135 Longcommon Road), John Klinke (229 Millbridge Road), and the engineering office of the CB&Q Railroad (Riverside Train Station, 90 Bloomingbank Road).

A derivation of the Prairie style was the American Four Square, which features wide eaves and large windows set into a block-shaped symmetrical massing. Many examples can be found in the "South East" section of the village (Map 5), which experienced substantial development during this period. Some of the largest concentrations are along Gage and Lawton Roads, where many of the residences include Classical Revival style elements. Several examples also occur west of the Des Plaines River, at 180, 211, and 212 Parkview Road (Map 4). The American Four Square carried over into the 1920s, when two thirds of the village's eighty examples of this style were constructed.

The first two decades of the twentieth century also saw construction activity expand into previously undeveloped areas of the village. As late as 1910, according to one oral account, "The town ended on the north at Delaplaine Road. No houses beyond. A subdivision had been laid out there and streets had been dug for pavement, but it was open land up to the Illinois Central tracks."⁵³

The earliest development in this area (Map 1), referred to by many residents as "the prairie," occurred along its northern border, near Des Plaines Avenue. Two early Craftsman style residences, at 46 and 62 Northgate Road, date to 1906-07. By 1920, however, only 20 buildings stood north of Delaplaine Road, with several isolated structures at 407 Selborne Road and 334 and 346 Downing Road.

Another area of the village newly developed during this period was the neighborhood west of the Des Plaines River, south of the 1910 Riverside-Brookfield High School (Map 4). Although the Olmsted plan included a large number of acres west of the river, only this small area was platted in conformity with the plan. After 1910, more than a dozen residences were built along Burlington, Parkview, Quincy, Ridgewood, and Waubensee roads. The majority of these residences were American Four Square or Craftsman style designs.

Also during this period, residential construction began near Harlem Avenue, which attests to the growing importance of the automobile and of streetcar lines. The village's population had risen slightly during the first decade of the twentieth century, from 1,551 in 1900 to 1,702 in 1910. It climbed more substantially during the next decade—jumping to 2,532 in 1920.

1920-1939

In 1920, many vacant lots (known locally as "prairies") remained in Riverside. "Our closest neighbors were a block away," one resident remembers.⁵⁴ "[And] a farm was down the street." While streets such as Selborne, Southcote, and Uvedale (Map 1) were paved, there were "few houses anywhere in sight," the resident recalls. Yet over the next two decades—particularly during the 1920s—the village witnessed the greatest amount of development in its history. The swelling work force at nearby factories, including Berwyn's Hawthorne Works,

⁵³ Riverside Historical Commission, *Tell Me a Story: Memories of Riverside*, (Riverside, Riverside Historical Commission, 1995), 2.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 14, 28.

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reached 34,000 employees in 1929 and contributed to the growth of Riverside.

Riverside's population grew from 2,532 in 1920 to 6,300 in 1930—largely due to “the many modest houses [being] constructed on small parcels.”⁵⁵ As one example, according to the April 1, 1921, issue of *Riverside News*, “200 residences [are] planned for this season”—roughly the same total as during the *entire* period of 1870-1900. The village's population continued to rise during the 1930s—to 7,935 by 1940.

The village's earliest apartment buildings, which date to 1923-29, were largely confined to two locations. Most were in the Jimtown area, including Tudor Revival “garden court” blocks at 43-69, and 51-57 Forest Avenue, and a Colonial Revival group at 50-58 Forest Avenue. At 50 Lincoln Avenue is a modest Prairie style-derived block. 98-106 and 108-114 Lincoln Avenue are Georgian Revival, while across the street at 109-113 is another Tudor Revival garden court block. Another large set of Tudor Revival apartment buildings rose at 28-40 Riverside Drive, across from the Village Hall.

Construction of public buildings also dramatically increased during this time period. The Ames School (82-86 Southcote Road) was built in 1923 to serve the community's growing northern section. It received an addition in 1928. The following year, an Intermediate School (65 Woodside Road) was added next to the old Central School. In 1930, a new Tudor Revival public library was built next to the Village Hall.

Commercial development also increased in order to serve the village's booming residential population. A Tudor Revival commercial block, the Tower Building, was constructed in 1928 at 22-42 East Avenue. Other commercial structures on Burlington (23-51 and 115) and Quincy roads (26-40 and 33-43) helped expand the business district eastward, along the railroad tracks. Several commercial structures constructed between 1926 and 1931 directly related to the increased need for automobile service and repair, including a Colonial Revival garage built by the Pure Oil Company at 18 East Avenue and several structures at the east end of Burlington Road, near Harlem Avenue.

This period is best known for its various “revival” styles—particularly during the 1920s. Following World War I, earlier period styles were revived for residential designs. “The resulting burst of period fashions drew on the complete historical spectrum of European and Colonial American housing styles,” notes *A Field Guide to American Houses*.⁵⁶ Among the most common types in Riverside are: Colonial Revival; Dutch Colonial (a two-story sub-type of the Colonial Revival that was clapboard or shingle sided with a gambrel roof, flared eaves, and a side-entry floor plan); Spanish Eclectic (with a low-pitched roof, usually with little or no overhang, red tile roof covering, stucco wall covering and an asymmetrical façade); Mission (featuring a mission-shaped dormer or roof parapet, wide overhanging eaves, porches supported by large square columns, stucco wall covering and often red tile roofs); and Tudor. By far, the greatest number of revival-style residences in Riverside—at least 250 from this period alone—can be classified as Tudor. This style is modeled on a variety of early English building traditions, ranging from simple vernacular houses to late-Medieval palaces.⁵⁷ Most examples include steep gabled roofs, large chimneys, decorative half-timbering, tall narrow windows, and a mix of materials, including stone, brick, wood, and stucco.

A tradition of picturesque architecture can be seen in the grand Swiss chalet design at 273 Maplewood Road built in 1916-1918, while the small house at 86 Northgate Road from 1939 represents a last idiosyncratic expression of picturesque pre-war residential design.

55 James R. Grossman et al., ed. *The Encyclopedia of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 712.

56 McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 407.

57 *Ibid.*, 454-55.

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Some of the buildings from this period are attributed to architects. A few of the more significant or frequent names found are: Howard Cheney (e.g., 135 Longcommon Road); Joseph J. Novy (304 Olmsted Road); William Presto (252 Maplewood Road); Robert Seyfarth (156 Addison Road); and A. J. Zelinka (321 Olmsted Road; 140 Riverside Road; 721 Selborne Road; 173 and 237 Southcote Road). One notable architect, R. Harold Zook, designed several buildings in Riverside including 294 Lionel Road and 371 Kent Road. A resident of nearby Hinsdale, Zook designed numerous residences in that suburb, along with several iconic buildings in the Chicago region, including the Pickwick Theater in Park Ridge and the Saint Charles City Hall.

Most of the building designs from this period may have derived from plan books, building catalogs and architectural periodicals. As one resident recounted of his parents' decision to move to Riverside in 1925; "they purchased a lot on Northwood Road, bought a set of architectural drawings from a book, hired a contractor, and had a house built."⁵⁸ Some of these buildings can be directly attributed to catalog plans by Sears Roebuck & Co. (e.g., 70 Lawton Road and 36 Woodside Road) or Montgomery Ward (e.g., 550 Byrd Road). Others were the result of owner collaborations with such architect-builders as Joseph Benes, A. E. Farndell, Rudolph J. Hejhal, John G. Klinke, A. W. Komarek, Arnold P. Skow, K. L. Supplitt & Bros., and Alexander W. Wendell.

Modest sized dwellings of the 1920s were typically built from mass-produced plans that were drawn up by professional architects and made available through publishers, AIA-sponsored architectural bureaus, and other organizations participating in the nationwide Better Homes Movement. Many of these were published in the pages of the *Ladies Home Journal*, *Small House Architect* magazine, and catalogs, such as the *Home Owners Service Institute's Books of a Thousand Homes* (1923) and the *Small House architect's Small Homes of Architectural Distinction* (1929). To encourage the use of professional architects, the Small House Architect's Bureau advised purchasers of plans to work with a local architect to supervise the construction. The adaptability of floor plans, exterior style, materials, and multitude of architectural details to suit both homeowner and architect resulted in new methods of production, an immense variety of house designs, and changing relationships between clients and builders. In addition, factory-cut homes, including Sears "Honor-Bilt" series, could be ordered and shipped from the factory.

Riverside streetscapes began to fill out during this period, as development impacted nearly every neighborhood. A small, isolated area west of First Avenue (Map 4) saw the construction of two dozen residences. Nearly half of the houses on Olmsted Road, in the "South East" part of Riverside (Map 5), were built during the 1920s and 1930s. Despite the dramatic growth that took place during the 1920s, the character of the original Olmsted & Vaux plan remained intact, with consistent building setbacks along the village's residential streets.

Development slowed following the stock market crash of 1929, with the subsequent widespread loss of family fortunes. During the ensuing Great Depression, the biggest impact at Riverside may have been the number of pre-1900 houses that were lost. Many of these older residences had been converted to rental units, under the supervision of local real estate agents, and this often led to the neglect and deterioration of these buildings. Some of these agents played a significant role in urging the teardown of these buildings during the 1930s and 1940s, as well as the subsequent new development on their large lots. In addition, many were destroyed by fire, either through arson or due to neglect.

The 1930s also brought a renewed interest in Riverside on a national level, largely due to an article in *Landscape Architecture* magazine (July 1931) that reprinted the Olmsted, Vaux & Co. plan and report. The

⁵⁸ Riverside Historical Commission, *Tell Me a Story*, 10.

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magazine noted, "...the plan has been carried out in astonishing detail.... How many of our present-day developments...are so planned that they can maintain their original character and identity for sixty years?"⁵⁹ As the country recovered from the Depression, another building boom occurred in the village in the late-1930s. Residential designs were influenced by numerous homebuilding books, magazines and catalogs previously mentioned. However, during this period traditional revival style houses lacked much of the decorative detailing of earlier periods.⁶⁰

Many homes of this period shared similar styles, floor plans, materials and workmanship as the so-called "small house" designs of the 1920s. Many of these reflected the portfolios of the Federal Home Building Service, which was co-sponsored by the AIA, Federal Home Loan Bank Board, member savings and loan associations, and the Producers Council of the National Association of the Real Estate Boards and, from 1938 to the late 1940s began. By the late 1930s, Small House Service Bureaus existed in various geographical regions of the United States and AIA's original definition of the "small" house--as a dwelling having no more than six rooms--expanded to encompass a large variety of house types (predominantly Colonial Revival in stylistic influence) that were classified by the number of rooms (four to eight) and to accommodate the growing emphasis on expandability and versatility to suit a homeowner's needs or preferences.

One of the last areas of Riverside to be developed was the northeast corner of the village near Blythe Park. Roughly bounded by Harlem and 26th avenues and Leesley and York roads, this area had been left out of the Olmsted plan because the Riverside Improvement Company did not own it. As late as the 1920s, residents still remember there being "nothing to the north of 468 Shenstone [except] sand and gravel pits and small ponds."⁶¹

Kent and Longcommon roads were the earliest streets to be developed as part of this newly platted area (1925-30). Both generally follow the curving form of the Olmsted street plan, although the streets south of Kent Road (i.e., Arlington, Leesley, and Selborne) follow a more regular gridiron plan. Houses began to be built in 1935. North of Longcommon Road are two streets—Berkeley and Byrd roads—that boast some of the village's most distinctive architecture of the period. Platted as a simple Y-shaped street plan, these three blocks were subdivided by H. Hruby, who reportedly sold many of the lots to younger buyers. In turn, several of them selected contemporary styles for the new houses.⁶² At least six of the residences are classified as International or Art Moderne architecture, all dating to 1936-41. Half of all the Art Moderne residences in Riverside are located in this area. The International style features a flat roof, windows set flush to the outer wall, smooth wall surfaces, and an asymmetrical façade, while the Art Moderne was similar but often featured horizontal grooves or lines, curved wall corners and windows that wrapped around corners.

1940-1959

The boom of the late 1930s continued into the early 1940s, prior to the involvement of the United States in World War II. An increasing number of residences were Cape Cod or other Colonial Revival approaches. An elegant example of a public works project from this era is the pedestrian bridge across the Des Plaines River east of the Town Hall.

Little development took place during World War II. From 1945 to 1959, the village witnessed another boom in residential construction, which helped to fulfill the demand for post-war housing. By 1960, few vacant lots

59 Howard K. Menhinick, "Riverside Sixty Years Later," *Landscape Architecture*, July 1931, 113-117.

60 McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 588-89.

61 Riverside Historical Commission, *Tell Me a Story*, 23.

62 Riverside Historical Commission, *Tell Me a Story*, 48.

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remained within the village limits.⁶³

Although Cape Cod houses had begun to appear in the mid-1930s, half of the village's 50 examples were built after World War II—some with minimal Tudor details. The Cape Cod was a one-story version of the Colonial Revival that was based on early wood folk houses of eastern Massachusetts.⁶⁴ Although it originated in the early eighteenth century, the Cape Cod was popularized by building plan books of the 1940s and 1950s, largely through the work of architect Royal Barry Wills.⁶⁵

By the late-1940s and early 1950s, architectural trends nationwide had begun changing. Two of the most common house forms were Ranch and Split Level. Ranch houses are one story in height, with low-pitched roofs and broad facades, while Split Levels are a multi-story modification of the Ranch, with half-story wings and built-in garages on the lower level.⁶⁶

Ranch houses begin to appear in Riverside as early as 1946, but they dominated from 1949 through the end of the NHL district's period of significance (1959). The largest concentrations are in the northern third of the village (Map 1). Another grouping can be found in "South East" Riverside (Map 5), between 183 and 393 Olmsted Road. The Split-Level, which extended into the 1960s, was more widely distributed throughout the village. Three early examples are at 171 Michaux Road (1941), 363 Longcommon Road (1950), and 305 Scottswood Road (1947).

Many of the houses from this period were designed by architect-builders, apparently based on plans from building catalogs and periodicals. Among the most common names found in the village's records were: Harry Langlois, B. T. Moravec, Norman J. Novy, Arnold P. Skow, and Robert A. Viren (all architects) and Baltis Built Homes, Sebek Builders and Viren Builders. Research conducted by the Riverside Historical Commission shows that Skow had accounted for at least 65 building permits during this period; some permits allowed him to build eight to ten residences at a time along a particular street.

One of the most important—and distinctive—designs from the period is the fieldstone residence at 371 Kent Road, which was designed by R. Harold Zook in a Tudor or "Cotswald" derivative style in 1948. By way of contrast, a good example of a Contemporary residential design is at 191 Ridgewood Road, west of First Avenue and within the boundary expansion.

63 Grossman, *Encyclopedia of Chicago*, 712.

64 McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 410, 412.

65 Ames and McClelland, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 66.

66 McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 613-14.

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Commercial development also increased during this period. The greatest concentration of commercial buildings occurred near the perimeter of the village, along East Burlington Street and Harlem Avenue, in order to take advantage of increased automobile traffic. Two examples of Contemporary style commercial buildings are: a glass-fronted drive-in dry cleaner at 2710 S. Harlem Avenue and a more domestic styled office buildings at 360-362 and 366 Burlington East. Across the street is a 1926 Jacobethan Revival style commercial block. Most of the commercial development along Harlem Avenue, took place after 1955.

Several public and religious buildings from this period also are significant, including the Blythe Park School, 735 Leesley Road, which was designed by Perkins & Will, a nationally important architectural firm.

Over 1,900 of the almost 5,000 buildings in the historic district are secondary structures. While a few are carriage houses constructed prior to 1900, the vast majority are garages. In the 1920s, house styles such as the Tudor began to incorporate an attached garage into the design. This trend became more prevalent in the 1950s and a majority of modern styles feature an attached garage. Approximately 700 of the houses feature attached garages and less than 300 have no garage at all. While many of the garages were constructed at the same time as the house and reflect stylistic characteristics of the associated house, most garages were constructed subsequent to the house in a simple single stall, hipped roof plan. Most were constructed behind the house, at the end of a narrow driveway. The simple design, little changed since the 1930s, makes it hard to place construction dates. Coupled with a comparable placement, this similarity of design adds to the cohesiveness of the district.

INTEGRITY

The implementation of Olmsted and Vaux's Riverside plan was one of the first applications of the principles of park and landscape design to a real estate land subdivision. It created a successful suburban community demonstrated by its durability and intactness of design. The General Plan was implemented as planned despite a long period of development. As described, the village landscape remains fully apparent today, and is representative of its historic character. Thus, Riverside landscape retains integrity of:

- Location:* The boundaries of the Village of Riverside today represent the complete construction of the village reflected by the General Plan (fig. 1) to the extent that it was fully carried out (fig. 23). These figures show the NHL boundary and indicate the extent to which the plan was implemented for the lands east and, to a lesser degree west, of the Des Plaines River. Initially conceived as a railroad suburb, the village retains its close association with the railroad, in terms of its distinct spatial pattern through the heart of the community as well as the historic location of the depot, where residents continue to board and de-train daily.
- Design:* The character-defining features, as espoused and designed by Olmsted and Vaux, are also intact today. The curvilinear system of roads continues to reinforce the intended separation of local and regional vehicular traffic. The extensive open space systems on which the roads are built have been well preserved and deter intrusions along their boundaries. The open space of the right-of-way continues to provide the lush green landscape scenery and the perceived depth of space intended by Olmsted and Vaux. Although lot sizes have decreased in some areas of the village, the generous setbacks specified by Olmsted and Vaux clearly serve their purpose in ameliorating the effects of greater density. Olmsted and Vaux acknowledged that they could not "control the form of the houses that men shall build," so the many different styles that currently exist are a reflection of the design intent over time and a majority retain their distinct design qualities.

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3. *Setting:* The cityscape surrounding the Village of Riverside contrasts sharply with this unique community. The grid of urban streets abutting Riverside to the north, and east have an urban character identified with straight streets, small setbacks, limited right-of-way, and little landscape amenity. Within Riverside, the thoroughly executed plan clearly differentiates the community in spatial organization, open spaces and scenery, and continues to impart the “sylvan beauty” envisioned by its creators. When Riverside was initially planned and developed, the surrounding area was relatively open. Over time, an urban pattern of adjacent rectangular blocks took form. The gridiron development of the surrounding cityscape lies in stark contrast to Riverside’s curvilinear road systems and subtle, green landscape. Immediately to the west of Golfview Road, the attempt at curved roads in what is now Brookfield is poorly designed, hard to navigate, and distracts from, rather than complements, the landscape. Within Riverside, Long Common, Scottswood Common, small parks, triangles and peninsulas are pastoral open spaces that provide a breadth of naturalistic landscape for the community today as in the past. The Des Plaines River and adjacent parklands offer space, scenery, sunlight and fresh air to the village. The interior curvilinear road system, graced along its right-of-way with stately shade trees and mature shrubs, conveys the intended expanse of common landscape. The extensive systems of pedestrian sidewalks and their associated gas streetlights facilitate the intended layering of circulation throughout the village landscape.
4. *Materials:* The materials that comprise the landscape include variable-graded turf surfaces, paved surfaces, plantings and assorted built elements. The pervasive, lush vegetation throughout the district is true to Olmsted’s naturalistic style of design. Riverside has a number of mature American elms within the public right-of-way. These grand, arching trees and other mature specimens are important elements of scale and scenery in Riverside. Other important, extant species include various oaks, hickory, hackberry, silver maple, Norway maple, catalpa, horse chestnut, sycamore, and Osage orange. Large, deciduous shrubs, planted singly and in masses, are also important within the Riverside landscape. Together, individual trees, tree groups and mixed vegetation clusters contribute to the integrity of the village landscape. The presence of a few colored-foliage trees and some individual attempts at highly defined or visually privatized spaces, particularly on house lots or in the adjacent right-of-way, are minor detractions from the intended open, seamless character of the public and private landscape. Retention of historic material is evident throughout Riverside, both architecturally as well as the district’s broad palette of landscape architecture. Building materials in particular are as diverse as the styles within the district.
5. *Workmanship:* Workmanship, which can be seen in the crafts and labor of landscape construction, is perhaps more often focused on architectural details and fine art objects. Quality, enduring workmanship is exhibited throughout the district in both the sophisticated high style architectural gems and the simpler vernacular worker residences. In a broad sense, workmanship is evidenced in the faithful adherence to the landscape principles espoused by Olmsted and Vaux, most notably in the extant network of roads and open spaces.
6. *Feeling:* The feeling of Riverside is distinctive and evokes its original qualities today. Upon entering Riverside, the naturalistic landscape character, tangibly embodied in the open spaces of commons, parks, triangles, peninsulas and forest preserve lands and the systems of roads, walks, variable setbacks and streetlights, is readily apparent. The Riverside landscape makes the village feel like a green oasis in contrast to the grid-formed urban surroundings. At the detail level, the sidewalks, gas streetlights, and plantings continue to convey the design intent and feeling of the Olmsted and Vaux plan to a high degree.

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7. *Association:* Riverside is experienced as a unique area, sharply contrasting with the surrounding gridiron cityscape. The village embodies its intended scenic, residential character today to a high degree by maintaining the intended form and structure of the Olmsted and Vaux design with community open space and circulation systems, and through a high degree of adherence to the design principles of irregular setbacks and plantings of individual residential lots. Riverside became the embodiment and example of the curvilinear, picturesque, commuter suburb throughout North America.

In summary, the integrity of the Riverside Landscape Architectural District is high in that it successfully portrays the character and qualities of its historic identity as designed by Olmsted, Vaux and Company, Landscape Architects, and as constructed over time.

For an inventory of contributing and non-contributing resources, see Appendix A.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

Previously listed in the National Register (fill in 1 through 6 below)

Not previously listed in the National Register (fill in only 4, 5, and 6 below)

- 1. NR #: 69000055
- 2. Date of listing: 9/15/69
- 3. Level of significance: National
- 4. Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D
- 5. Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A B C D E F G
- 6. Areas of Significance: Community Planning and Development, Landscape Architecture, Architecture, and Social History

Previously Determined Eligible for the National Register:

Date of determination:

Designated a National Historic Landmark:

Date of designation: 8/29/70

Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey:

HABS No.

Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record:

HAER No.

Recorded by Historic American Landscapes Survey:

HALS No.

Location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office: X

Other State Agency:

Federal Agency:

Local Government:

University:

Other (Specify Repository): Riverside Historical Commission, Riverside Museum, Riverside, IL
Village of Riverside, Municipal Office
Riverside Public Library, Local History Files

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