

Rockville in the Nineteen Fifties

The 1950s was a heady decade in America, as energies turned towards the home front, a powerful national economy, and new-found prestige as an international superpower. The new Interstate Highway System, a vaccine for polio, and the United Nations offered the promise of a better life while tempering the pessimism of the Cold War era.

In the Washington area, expansion of the Federal government sparked unprecedented suburban growth. Veterans married and parented the Baby Boom, fueling the need for starter homes and new schools. Like other jurisdictions, Montgomery County government grew; a new County Council Office Building opened and Courthouses expanded for new departments and judgeships.

For Rockville, the 1950s was a critical decade. Its 1950 population of 6,934 jumped 238 percent to 26,090 by 1960s, and its land area nearly doubled. Newcomers were attracted to its convenient location in the Washington suburbs and its quality of residential life. The first concentration of new neighborhoods was along Veirs Mill Road and the Rockville Pike, in Rockcrest, Twinbrook, and Hungerford.

The 1950s also brought modernization to local government. A political revolution in 1954 led to progressive ideas, new faces, and much-needed enhancement of essential services. Local road improvements and plans for a circumferential highway around Washington spurred development away from the center of Rockville, and by the early 1960s, new residential development with local commercial areas was planned to the west (Woodley Gardens, New Mark Commons, Rockshire). Industry traditionally near the railroad moved to outlying areas and new R&D operations opened along the interstate to be close to federal agencies and facilities (Atomic Energy Commission, National Bureau of Standards).

Although in decline, Rockville's commercial center still functioned, sustained by car dealerships, small family-owned stores, legal services, and eateries. Late in the decade, new office buildings, such as the IBM Building, the Abby and Brown Buildings, and the Jefferson Building, enlivened the commercial streetscape with a variety of architectural styles – from the ultra-traditional to the ultra-modern. Ultimately, traffic snarls, parking problems, and the irresistible lure of modern shopping centers prompted the City to consider its options through the Federal Urban Renewal program.

By the end of the 1950s, Rockville emerged as a modern City, claiming two All-America City awards for energetic citizen participation. Rockville had a new attitude, a new government, new roadways and residents, a dozen new schools, and considerable new commercial, residential, and industrial construction ... with promise for more.

Property Name	Survey/ Photo #	Address/Area **	Year Built	# Stories	Sq Footage	Bldg Type	Cost	Architect	Builder/ Developer	Style	Status	Source of info	Comments:
Bowen & Company		1800 Chapman Ave.	early-mid 1950s?	1		factory/office				50s modern	vacant	MDAT, PR files	one of few remaining industrial sites of 1950s
Rockville Prof. Center	149-A	811 Veirs Mill Rd.	1954	2	18,326	med. office				50s modern	vacant	MDAT, PR files	scheduled for demolition, redevelopment
Garza Bldg.	115-A,B,C	17 W. Jefferson St.	1957; remodeled 1970s?	3	21,587	educ. bldg/office				50s modern	in use	MDAT, PR files	orig. Educ. Bldg. For First Baptist Church
History Associates Bldg.		300 N. Stonestreet Ave.	1958	1	c.12,000	lab/office		John H. Sullivan, Jr.		50s modern	updated for office use	Architect, drawings	Originally lab for U.S. Public Health Service
Brown Bldg.	107-A,B	260 E. Jefferson St.	1959	2	5,600	bank/office	\$100,000	Rinaudot & Cooper		50s modern	in use	MDAT, Sentinel, PR files	An Urban Renewal conservation property
Jefferson Bldg./Christ E.S.	94 A,B	22 W. Jefferson St.	1959	4	23,000	office/now school		John F. Stann	David Betts et al.	Georgian Revival	adapted for school use	MDAT, Sentinel, PR files	Proposed as model for City Hall in early 1960s
IBM Bldg.		50 Monroe Place	1959	4	28,000	office	\$500,000	Stanley H. Arthur	Otho Barkley	Bauhaus-inspired	vacant/deteriorated	PR files, Sentinel, Post	UR conservation prop; early Rvl modernist bldg
Abby Building		3 N. Perry St.	1959	3	20 offices	office	\$50,000		Wolfson Properties	50s mdrn	demolished	Sentinel, PR files	Replaced Vinson's Pharmacy; demo for UR
SubTrust/BankAmer	25	255 N. Washington St.	1962	5+	43,000	bank/office	\$1 mil	Arthur L. Anderson	Hill and Kimmel	60s modern	in use	MDAT, Sentinel, PR files	scheduled for demolition, redevelopment
County Federal/Schlosser	138	32 Courthouse Sq.	1962	4	20,400	office		John H. Sullivan, Jr.	John C.Walker, Glen Const	60s modern	in use	MDAT, Sentinel, PR files	
Tenley Bldg.		50 W. Edmonston Dr.	1963	6	56,000	med. office, retail	\$1.3 million	John H. Sullivan, Jr.	Tenley and Co.	60s modern	in use	MDAT, Sentinel, PR files	
Courthouse Plaza?	144	1010 Rockville Pike	1964?	6	58,000	office, retail				60s modern "slab"	in use	MDAT, Sentinel	
Bar Assoc. Bldg.	97	27 W. Jefferson St.	1963	3.5	9,000	office				Col. Revival	in use	MDAT, Sentinel	
M&T Bank	114	51 W. Edmonston Dr.	1964	1	5,000	bank/office				60s modern	in use	MDAT, Sentinel	
Metropolitan Bank Bldg.	96	230 N. Washington St.	1966	4	13,200	office, retail				60s modern	in use	MDAT, PR files	site of Rockville mural (1980 -
Gillette Bldg.		1413 Research Blvd.	1968										
121 Congressional Lane?	141	121 Congressional Lane	1970	6+	53,000	office, retail				late 60s modern	in use	MDAT	
		** Research needed on Chapman/Stonestreet/Research area bldgs											