1. Recommendation to the Mayor and Council

   A. Sectional Map Amendment MAP2022-00124, to Rezone Property at 500 Great Falls Road from R-90 to R-90 (HD) to Place the Property in the Historic District Zone; Historic District Commission of Rockville, Applicant

2. Commission Items

   A. Staff Liaison Report

   B. Old Business

   C. New Business

   D. Minutes Approval
1. February 9, 2022

E. FYI/Correspondence

3. Adjourn
PLANNING COMMISSION ONLINE MEETING and PUBLIC HEARING PROCEDURES

I. Meeting Platform: WebEx
   A. Applicant Access: Provided by Planning and Development Services/IT
   B. Access for Oral Testimony and Comment: Provided by PDS/IT (see below)

II. Pre-Meeting Preparations/Requirements:
   A. Written Testimony and Exhibits –
      Written testimony and exhibits may be submitted by email to Jim Wasilak, Staff Liaison to the Planning Commission, at jwasilak@rockvillemd.gov, or by mail to:

      Suzan Pitman, Chair
      Rockville Planning Commission
      111 Maryland Avenue
      Rockville, MD 20850

      and must be received no later than nine (9) days in advance of the hearing in order to be distributed with the Planning Commission briefing materials.

      Written testimony and exhibits received after this date until 4:00 pm on the day before the hearing will be provided to the Planning Commission by e-mail.

   B. WebEx Orientation for Applicants
      Applicants must contact the planning case manager assigned to the Application no later than five (5) days in advance of the hearing in order to schedule WebEx orientation, which must be completed prior to the hearing.

   C. Oral Testimony by Applicants and the Public
      i. Applicants – Applicants must provide to the planning case manager a list of presenters and witnesses who will testify on behalf of the Application. The list must be provided to the PDS Staff project manager no later than five (5) days prior to the date of the hearing.

      ii. Public Testimony/Comment on an Application – Any member of the public who wishes to comment on an Application must submit their name and email address to the Staff Liaison to the Planning Commission Jim Wasilak (by email at jwasilak@rockvillemd.gov) no later than 9:00 am on the day of the hearing to be placed on the testimony list. Members of the public who seek technical assistance from City staff must submit their name and email address to Jim
Wasilak no later than two (2) days in advance of the hearing so that an orientation session may be scheduled.

If a member of the public is unable to meet the deadline to be placed on the testimony list, they can submit written testimony to the Staff Liaison to the Planning Commission by email to jwasilak@rockvillemd.gov.

I. **Conduct of Online Meeting and Public Hearing:**

A. **Rules of Procedure** –

   The Meeting and Public Hearing will be held in accord with the Planning Commission Rules of Procedure, including the order of testimony and applicable time limits on testimony. The Rules may be viewed here:


B. **Oral Testimony** –

   During the hearing, the Chair will sequentially recognize each person on the testimony list and ask the host to allow the speaker to speak. Each speaker must wait to be specifically recognized by the Chair before speaking.

   If during the hearing a party wishes to speak or a speaker wishes to request the opportunity to engage in cross-examination following specific testimony, the party must contact the Staff Liaison/Host by email at jwasilak@rockvillemd.gov or by text at (202) 839-0305 with the specific request. The Host/Staff Liaison will inform the Commission. The Chair will determine if the party may be heard.

C. **Continuance of Hearing** –

   The Planning Commission, at its discretion, reserves the right to continue the hearing until another date.
HELPFUL INFORMATION FOR STAKEHOLDERS AND APPLICANTS

I. GENERAL ORDER OF SESSION FOR DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS
   1. Staff presentation
   2. City Board or Commission comment
   3. Applicant presentation (10 min.)
   4. Public comment (3 min, or 5 min for the representative of an association)
   5. Planning Commission Discussion and Deliberation
   6. Decision or recommendation by vote

   The Commission may ask questions of any party at any time during the proceedings.

II. PLANNING COMMISSION BROADCAST
   • Watch LIVE on Comcast Cable Rockville Channel 11 and online at: [rockvillemd.gov]
   • Replay on Comcast Cable Channel 11:
     o Wednesdays at 7:00 pm (if no live meeting)
     o Sundays at 7:00 pm
     o Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 1:00 pm
     o Saturdays and Sundays at 12:00 am (midnight)
   • Video on Demand (within 48 hours of meeting) at: [rockvillemd.gov/VideoOnDemand]

III. NEW DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS
   • For a complete list of all applications on file, visit: [rockvillemd.gov/DevelopmentWatch]

VI. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RESOURCES
   • Additional resources are available to anyone who would like more information about the planning and development review process on the City's web site at: [rockvillemd.gov/cpds]

Maryland law and the Planning Commission's Rules of Procedure regarding ex parte (extra-record) communications require all discussion, review, and consideration of the Commission's business take place only during the Commission's consideration of the item at a scheduled meeting. Telephone calls and meetings with Commission members in advance of the meeting are not permitted. Written communications will be directed to appropriate staff members for response and included in briefing materials for all members of the Commission.
SUBJECT: Sectional Map Amendment MAP2022-00124, to Rezone Property at 500 Great Falls Road from R-90 to R-90 (HD) to Place the Property in the Historic District Zone; Historic District Commission of Rockville, Applicant

RECOMMENDATION

(Include change in law or Policy if appropriate in this section):

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission find that the proposed Sectional Map Amendment MAP2022-00124, which would change the zone for 500 Great Falls Road from R-90 to R-90 HD (Historic District), is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and in conformance with the purpose of the historic district zone.
Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission find that the proposed Sectional Map Amendment MAP2022-00124, which would change the zone for 500 Great Falls Road from R-90 to R-90 HD (Historic District), is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and in conformance with the purpose of the historic district zone.
Site Description

Comprehensive Plan Land Use: Residential Detached
Zoning District: R-90
Existing Use: Single-unit detached dwelling
Property Area: 28,069 square feet (.64 acres)
Subdivision: Rockville Heights subdivision, Parcel P685
Building Floor Area: 2,560 square feet
Dwelling Units: 1 (existing)

Surrounding Land Use and Zoning

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<td>PD-RH (Rose Hill)</td>
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Background

Historic District Commission

Evaluation of Significance

On June 8, 2021, Peerless Rockville submitted a Nomination of a Property for Local Historic Designation Application for the property at 500 Great Falls Road, which is owned by Hector Mora. The Zoning Ordinance permits a nomination by a party who is not the property owner. On February 17, 2022, in accordance with Section 25.14.04.d of the City of Rockville’s Zoning Ordinance, Rockville’s Historic District Commission (HDC) conducted an Evaluation of Significance to determine whether the HDC would recommend that the Mayor and Council designate the property as historic. The staff report for the HDC meeting is provided as Attachment A.

Peerless Rockville based the nomination on its belief that the property meets the following criteria for historic significance: a) Represents the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City, and c) Identified with a person or group of persons who influenced the City's history.
On February 17, 2022, after the staff presentation, the HDC heard statements from the applicant (Peerless Rockville), who spoke in favor of designation, and from the property owner, who spoke against designation. The HDC also received oral public testimony of support from one member of the public. Written testimony of support was submitted on behalf of the Clara Bliss Hinds Society for Women in Medicine and Science at the George Washington University School of Medicine & Health Sciences (GWSMHS). The society was named after Clara Bliss Finley (formerly Clara Bliss Hinds), who was the original owner of 500 Great Falls Road. Attachment B provides a statement submitted to the HDC from Peerless Rockville outlining its justification for recommending designation. Attachment C provides testimony submitted regarding Clara Bliss Hinds.

After deliberation, the HDC voted 3-0 in favor of recommending historic designation for this property. By virtue of that vote, HDC became the applicant for the filing of an application for a Sectional Map Amendment to recommend that the Mayor and Council place the property in the Historic District Zone. Sectional Map Amendment application MAP2022-00124 was submitted to the City Clerk on February 22, 2022, by staff representing the HDC.

The HDC’s support for historic designation was based on its finding that the following three of the adopted criteria for historic designation were met:

**Historic Significance**

a) Represents the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City.

500 Great Falls is historically significant for its association with persons making significant contributions in Rockville, Montgomery County, Maryland, or national history. The property was purchased and the building erected by Dr. Clara Bliss Finley. Dr. Finley and her daughter, a later owner and long-time resident of the home, were both early pioneering women in the local fight for women’s rights and advancements, and Bliss was active in the National Suffrage Movement and in Montgomery County.

**Architectural, Design, and Landscape Significance Criteria:**

a) Embodies distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.

The house at 500 Great Falls Road is listed in the Rockville Historic Buildings Catalogue as a good example of a Colonial Revival House. It embodies many of the distinctive characteristics found in the Colonial Revival style, which includes the tall side-facing gable roof with gable end chimneys, symmetrically balanced windows and a center door, an accentuated front door with a decorative crown, and adjacent pairs of multi-lite double-hung windows. High-style examples were usually of masonry construction. The building has vinyl windows which can be replaced with appropriate wood windows.
e) Represents an established visual feature of the neighborhood or City because of its physical characteristics or landscape components.

The house is an established visual feature of the neighborhood and the city because of its distinctive Colonial Revival styling and its siting on the massive lot. The environmental setting of the house is intact. As a result of the deep and expansive front yard, the property's prominent location is a familiar and distinctive visual feature at the corner of Great Falls Road and Monument Street. The property represents what were once estate-size lots in the town of Rockville. Two new additions, which were approved by the HDC in August 2021 using Secretary of Interior Standards, are currently under construction.

The next step in the process to determine whether the City will designate the property as historic is for the Planning Commission to review this proposed zoning change for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and provide a recommendation to the Mayor and Council in that regard. The Mayor and Council will then hold a public hearing and determine whether to apply the historic district zone to the property.

**Building Permits**

Before the June 8, 2021, nomination of the property for historic designation, the owner’s contractors began demolition of a previously-built south addition and excavation of the foundation, whose stability was compromised. This work was being conducted without either the owner or the contractor having secured permits. Upon being alerted about the ongoing work, the City issued an order to stop this work because of the lack of permits. The City then directed that the owner and contractor go through the correct permit processes, which they have since done.

**Certificate of Approval**

The property owner then submitted a proposal for rehabilitation of the building and to construct two additions. The City Zoning Ordinance requires that, once a property has been nominated for historic designation and is listed in the Historic Buildings Catalog (but before 210 days have elapsed), any exterior rehabilitation must be reviewed and approved by the HDC before any work can begin. The June 8th nomination was then followed by a first review, which was conducted on July 15, 2021, and then again on August 10th, when the HDC voted to support a Certificate of Approval with certain design requirements. The HDC approval includes excavation of a portion of the house to stabilize the shifting foundation, construction of two-story projecting additions on each side of the existing house to assist in stabilizing the entire structure, the construction of a one-story garage. The HDC did not approve the proposed design for the front porch. The owner plans to return to the HDC to seek a Certificate of Approval for a revised design. More detail is provided in Attachment A.
Board of Appeals

For the project as approved by the HDC to move forward, a setback variance was required. At its September 9, 2021, meeting, the Board of Appeals reviewed the proposal and voted to grant variances to carry out the renovations that the HDC had approved. The existing house had been built prior to the construction of Monument Street, with a 26-foot front setback. The current requirement is for a minimum front setback of 30 feet. Variances were granted for the encroachment into the setback along the Monument Street side of the original house of 4 feet 6 inches; and renovations to the existing footprint at the Monument Street side of the house to allow for the proposed conversion of the existing sunroom and kitchen into a new studio and bathroom on the first floor, and a roof terrace on the second floor.

With the HDC and Board of Appeals approvals, construction is currently in progress at 500 Great Falls Road in conformance with the approvals.

DISCUSSION

The proposed historic designation would be a change in zoning. Specifically, the proposed Sectional Map Amendment before the Planning Commission would change the zoning of 500 Great Falls Road from R-90 to R-90 HD by adding the Historic District Zone to the property. This designation would require that any alterations to the buildings or site be reviewed and approved by the HDC.

As with all proposed sectional map amendments, the application is referred to the Planning Commission per Zoning Ordinance Sec. 25.06.01.g, which states that “The Commission may submit a written recommendation [to the Mayor and Council] which will be placed in the application file by the Clerk and become a part of the record on the application.”

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission consider any recommendation that it may wish to make based on two areas of analysis: whether the proposed Sectional Map Amendment would 1) be consistent with the City’s Comprehensive Plan (https://www.rockvillemd.gov/200/Comprehensive-Plans); and 2) conform to the Purposes of Historic District Zone, which are outlined in the Zoning Ordinance in Section 25.14.01.a. (https://www.rockvillemd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/11186/Zoning-Ordinance---Article-14?bidId=). A discussion of each is provided below.

Attachment A, the staff report for the February 17, 2022 HDC meeting, provides a detailed discussion of the property’s history and architectural features. That discussion is not repeated here but is important background to the Planning Commission’s review.

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan

Two areas of the Comprehensive Plan (the Plan) are relevant to the analysis of consistency: the Historic Preservation Element and, because of the location of the property, the Planning Area 4 plan.
Historic Preservation Element

Like all Elements in the Plan, the Historic Preservation Element is organized by a Vision, Goals, Policies and Actions. This analysis will discuss consistency using those organizational categories.

The Vision (p. 213) of the Historic Preservation Element is: “Enhance the character of Rockville and contribute to its quality of life and local economy by proactively identifying and safeguarding its physical and cultural heritage to preserve the themes and periods of the city’s history and development, no matter the era.” This vision clearly sets the stage for the historic designation of properties.

Action 1.1 (p. 219) calls for Rockville to “Maintain the City’s Certified Local Government (CLG) status. Rockville’s historic preservation efforts and its HDC are recognized by the Maryland Historic Trust (MHT) as a Certified Local Government program. To remain in good standing as a CLG, the City must continue to meet certain agreed-upon requirements. The CLG agreement between the City of Rockville and the MHT states that the City will “continue to enforce state and local legislation for the designation and protection of historic properties.” Historic designation of 500 Great Falls Road would be consistent with Action 1.1 by contributing to maintaining the City’s CLG status.

Goal #2 (p. 219 of the Plan) calls for Rockville to “Preserve and recognize significant examples of architectural periods, historic themes and the diversity of Rockville’s history and historic resources through local historic designation.” As such, designating a property as historic is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The text discussion for Goal #2 includes, on p. 221, a full endorsement of all the criteria that the HDC uses in its evaluations of significance. Relevant to the case of 500 Great Falls Road, the Plan specifically mentions the two criteria on which the HDC made findings that were the basis for its recommendation for historic designation, which states:

“Rockville values buildings, structures, sites, landscapes, viewsheds, and objects that:”

- “Represent the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the city;”
- “Are identified with a person or group of persons who influenced the city’s history;”
- “Embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction;”
- “Represent an established visual feature of the neighborhood or city because of its physical characteristics or landscape components.”

Staff assessed, in its report to the HDC, that these criteria were met for 500 Great Falls Road; and the HDC found the same. Therefore, making a recommendation for historic designation based on these criteria is consistent with the Plan.

Policy #8 (p. 227) calls on Rockville to “Support the synergistic connection between historic preservation and environmental sustainability.” The text for that policy endorses “the retention of older buildings” because they preserve “the materials, energy, and human capital already expended in their construction. Rockville’s 19th and early 20th century buildings were designed to work with their environment through site orientation, landscaping, and building features
such as porches, operable shutters, and wide eaves.” Designating 500 Great Falls Road would be consistent with this Policy #8, especially with respect to retaining the older building, the site orientation and the landscaping.

**Planning Area 4**

The plan for Planning Area 4 clearly embraces historic preservation and the historic character of the neighborhood. The Plan Goal/Vision (p. 286 of the Plan) is to “Preserve, protect and enhance the quality of life in, and the unique history and identity of, the Planning Area 4 neighborhoods by addressing their challenges, issues and opportunities.” A list of Planning Principles then follows on that same page, which includes the principles:

- “Maintain the historic character and identity of historic districts;”
- “Celebrate and display the rich history of the planning area.”

Pages 306-313 of the Plan provide a more-detailed discussion of the importance of historic preservation in Planning Area 4. When discussing historically designated sites, the Plan states (p. 308) that “This list will likely grow as more properties are designated over time. It is important to preserve the integrity and character of historic districts and properties within Planning Area 4 as they, to a large extent, define the character and appeal of Planning Area 4.” As such, while this section of the Plan does not specifically call out 500 Great Falls Road, it does anticipate that there will be additional designations that will contribute to the preservation of the community.

**Conformance with the Purpose of Historic District Zones**

Historic District (HD) zoning is an overlay zone that does not change the underlying zoning, and requirements for “Use” and “Development Standards” are not affected or changed. The purpose for the HD Zone is outlined below, with staff’s assessment of how the proposed Sectional Map Amendment conforms with the provisions of the purpose.

25.14.01 - Historic District Zones

a. **Purpose** - The Historic District Zone is an overlay zone. The purpose of the zone is to:

1. **Safeguard the heritage of the City by preserving sites, structures, or areas which reflect elements of cultural, social, economic, political, archaeological, or architectural history;**

   Historic District zoning would assure long-term preservation of the historic character of this property through requiring that the HDC review proposals for exterior alterations to the property to ensure compatibility with the historic designation. Additionally, it will preserve the rich cultural heritage of the home’s first owner.

2. **Stabilize and improve the property values of those sites and structures, and the adjacent Neighborhood;**
Historic District zoning would be expected to provide a measure of stability for this property and for those in the immediate vicinity, as the HDC works to assure that proposed alterations at the site continue to be compatible with the historic significance of the property. The house was vacant and structurally unsound. It was at risk of demolition by neglect which would have impacted the neighboring properties. The designation of the property would maintain the aesthetic quality of the existing home, which could have a beneficial impact on the property values of the adjacent neighborhood.

3. *Foster civic beauty;*

Historic designation inserts the HDC as a review board to ensure that the historic character of this property will be retained, even as ongoing renovations are carried out. Designation also provides an opportunity for public assistance in property maintenance through the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Tax Credit program. As such, designation of 500 Great Falls Road could foster civic beauty.

4. *Strengthen the local economy; and*

Heritage resources are an attraction to visitors who support the local economy (retail, restaurants). To the extent that Rockville takes advantage of its historic resources to market the City, designating this property on a prominent site into the center of the city can contribute to the local economy. Within the two additions that are stabilizing the house, are many of the typical features that would be found in a Colonial Revival style house. This can be incorporated into heritage programming to be developed in the future.

5. *Promote the preservation and the appreciation of those sites and structures for the education and welfare of the residents of the City.*

Historically designating this site provides an opportunity to enjoy the City’s heritage with an authentic resource that illustrates what was once estate size lots in the town of Rockville.

**Public Outreach**

The HDC held their Evaluation of Historic Significance on February 17, 2022. Noticing requirements of Section 25.05.03 of the Zoning Ordinance were met. The posting of the required sign on the property occurred two weeks prior to the HDC Meeting, and postcard notices were also sent out two weeks prior to the meeting. Staff also reached out directly to the President of the West End Citizens Association (WECA) to inform him of the upcoming HDC Evaluation of Significance for this property. Two emails, including a statement from the applicant, were received with comments on the future of the property. One member of the community gave public testimony via WebEx at the HDC meeting.
Noticing requirements of Section 25.05.03 of the Zoning Ordinance were met as required for the March 9, 2022 Planning Commission meeting.

**Recommendation**

1) Staff recommends that the Planning Commission find that approval of the Sectional Map Amendment MAP2022-00124, to change the zone from R-90 to R-90 HD (Historic District), would be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, based on the Historic Preservation Element and the plan for Planning Area 4.

Specifically, staff finds that consistency derives from the Historic Preservation Element’s Vision, Action 1.1, Goal 2, and Policy 8.

Staff also finds that historic designation of this property would be consistent with Planning Area 4’s Vision/Goal and Principles, as well as the language in the Historic Preservation Policies sub-section that expresses the anticipation that additional properties will be designated.

2) Staff also recommends that the Planning Commission finds that the proposed Sectional Map Amendment is in conformance with the provisions that constitute the Purpose of the Historic District Zone, per Section 25.14.01 of the Zoning Ordinance.

**Next Steps**

The Mayor and Council will hold a public hearing, at which time they will receive testimony from the public. The Mayor and Council will then make the final decision regarding the Sectional Map Amendment that, if approved, would designate the property as historic. It will do so based on public record, the recommendations of the HDC and the Planning Commission, and any other relevant information.

**Attachments**

Attachment 1.A.a: HDC Staff Report of 2-17-22 for 500 Great Falls Rd - Evaluation of Significance (PDF)
Attachment 1.A.b: Peerless Rockville Statement - 500 Great Falls Road (PDF)
Historic District Commission Staff Report:
Evaluation of Significance (for Designation)
HDC2021-01034, 500 Great Falls Road

MEETING DATE: 2/17/2022

REPORT DATE: 2/10/2022

FROM: Sheila Bashiri,
Preservation Planner
240.314.8236
sbashiri@rockvillemd.gov

APPLICATION DESCRIPTION:
Evaluation of Historic Significance
(Designation Proposed)

APPLICANT: Peerless Rockville Historic
Preservation, LTD.
P.O. Box 4262
Rockville, MD 20849

FILING DATE: 6/8/2021

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the HDC find that the property at 500 Great Falls Road meets the following three of the Historic District Commission’s (HDC’s) adopted criteria: Historic Significance criterion a), and Architectural, Design, and Landscape Significance Criteria a) and e).

Staff also recommends that the HDC forward a recommendation to the Mayor and Council to rezone the property to place it in the historic district zone.
### SITE DESCRIPTION

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<th><strong>Location:</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Applicant:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Owner:</strong></td>
<td>Hector G. Mora</td>
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<td><strong>Land Use Designation:</strong></td>
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*Parcel Map of 500 Great Falls Road*
INITIATION OF THE PROCESS
On June 8, 2021, Peerless Rockville submitted a Nomination of Property for a Local Historic Designation Application for 500 Great Falls Road (see Attachment A). The property is owned by Hector G. Mora. The zoning map for the property is Attachment B.

The nomination by Peerless Rockville is Attachment C. It includes their representative’s statement regarding historic significance and a copy of the certified letter sent to the owner, along with the receipt that provides evidence of Peerless Rockville having sent the certified letter.

The nomination by Peerless Rockville is permissible under 25.14.04.d. of the Rockville Zoning Ordinance, which states, under “Designation of Properties 1. Initiation of Process,” that the HDC will evaluate a property for historic significance upon the filing of an application (v) “by any other person.” (See page 15 of this report).

The Zoning Ordinance also states: “If the nomination application is filed by a person other than the property owner, the person making the nomination must provide notice of the nomination by first class mail to the property owner at the time of application.” A copy of the notice must also be provided to the Historic District Commission. Peerless Rockville sent notification via a certified letter, to the owner of the property, Hector G. Mora, on June 9, 2021.

Staff reached out by emails on January 4, 2022, and February 9, 2022, to understand Mr. Mora’s position on the proposed historic designation of his home. To date, he has not provided his position.

BACKGROUND
This property has already been reviewed in multiple ways by the City of Rockville. Prior to the nomination of the property for historic designation, the property owner, Mr. Mora, planned to carry out renovations and additions to the existing house. Without first obtaining permits, his contractors began initial demolition of a previously built south addition and excavation of the foundation, whose stability was compromised. The City issued an order to stop this work, because of the lack of permits.

Peerless Rockville then nominated the property for historic designation. Once a property is nominated, it becomes subject to the following provision of Zoning Ordinance Article 14 – Special Zones (25.14.01.d.6):

“No exterior change may be made to any property identified in the Historic Building Catalog, as revised, that is the subject of an application for nomination, historic evaluation, or a demolition permit under this Section 25.14.01 until the designation process is complete, unless the property owner first obtains a Certificate of Approval from the Historic District Commission in accordance with the provision of Section 25.07.13., no exterior alteration can be made to the property until the evaluation of significance process is finalized or the owner receives the Historic District Commission’s (HDC) approval of the alterations.”

Therefore, any alterations to be conducted during the evaluation process would need the HDC to authorize the issuance of a Certificate of Approval for the proposed work. To be sure that the renovations would be approvable by the HDC, Mr. Mora requested a Certification of Approval in advance of moving forward with his proposed project.
July 15, 2021 HDC Review
The HDC conducted a review of the owner’s proposed exterior alterations at the July 15, 2021 HDC meeting. At the HDC meeting, Mr. Mora provided photographs showing that the house was in severe deterioration and that the foundation was structurally unstable, causing the house to shift and crack in many locations. The owner stated that the house was constructed of concrete block, and that the application method of the stucco caused the house to retain moisture, which was causing further deterioration. The owner explained that he had employed a structural engineer to inspect and make recommendations for stabilizing the house, and an architect to design the proposed renovations. The owner proposed substantial additions and renovations to update the two-story home, with the dual purposes of stabilizing the house and increasing the living space.

The project proposal included adding steel underpinnings to stabilize the shifting foundation, with projecting additions on each side to assist in stabilizing the entire structure. The additions were a projecting two-story octagonal turret with a conical roof on the north elevation, and a projecting two-story addition attached to a one-story garage on the south side elevation.

The HDC provided suggestions to the owner to be incorporated into a Certificate of Approval application review. Suggestions included making the octagonal addition more compatible with the house, moving the projecting additions back behind the plane of the original house, less decorative details on the additions, relocating the garage to the rear of the property, and making the additions less dominant visually.

August 10, 2021 HDC Certificate of Approval Review
The owner returned to the HDC on August 10, 2021 for a Certificate of Approval review. The applicant had incorporated some of the HDC’s suggestions from the July 15th meeting. The roof on both additions was changed to front-facing gable roofs. The octagonal north side addition was changed to rectangular. The front porch overhang was redesigned to match the pitch of the existing roof. The material of the additions was unspecified but changed to a different color in order to differentiate between the existing house and the new additions. He stated that some changes, such as moving the two additions back behind the plane of the original block, were not feasible. The owner pointed out that the house is already set back a great deal on the property, and the rear of the property is very shallow. A rear garage and additions would not allow room for a rear yard, and the space limitations would disconnect the garage from the house.

The HDC authorized issuance of Certificate of Approval HDC2021-00135, provided the following conditions are met:

1. Match the pitch of the existing roof for all additions
2. Redesign the dormer at the garage as a gable dormer
3. Simplify the decorative elements, especially at the garage
4. Replace the round windows with square windows at the east façade
5. The exterior finish for the additions can be a different color.

The HDC did not approve a design for the front porch and required that the owner return to the HDC with an application for a Certificate of Approval if he wanted to pursue an updated design. This application has not yet been submitted.
Board of Appeals Variances
The existing house was built prior to the construction of Monument Street with a 26-foot setback. The current requirement is for a minimum setback of 30 feet. As a result, any renovation work on the property that would be done within those 30 feet would need a variance from the Board of Appeals.

Mr. Mora applied for a variance to carry out the renovations that the HDC had approved. At its September 9, 2021 meeting, the Board of Appeals granted the following variances:

1. Encroachment along the Monument Street side of the original house of 4 feet 6 inches into the required setback of 30 feet for the purposes of constructing a new library at the ground floor and bedroom at the second floor, and

2. Renovations to the existing footprint at the Monument Street side of the house to allow for the proposed conversion of the existing sunroom and kitchen into a new studio and bathroom on the first floor, and roof terrace on the second floor.

With the HDC and Board of Appeals approvals, construction is underway at 500 Great Falls Road in conformance with the approvals.

What has still not yet occurred is the Evaluation of Significance, as nominated by Peerless Rockville, which is the subject of this agenda item.
Front (West) Elevation - HDC Approved Additions
Photo Take 2/9/22

South Side and Rear (East) Elevations – HDC Approved Additions
Photo taken 1/7/22
SITE ANALYSIS
Lot Description
The subject property is located at the northwest corner of Great Falls Road and Monument Street. The property is a 28,069-square-foot single lot that has zoning of R-90 (Single Family Dwelling, Residential), and is parcel 685 of the Rockville Heights Subdivision. A 2,560-square-foot single-family dwelling is located on the property. The house, which deeply set on the large corner lot, faces west toward Great Falls Road. A wood rail fence surrounds the spacious front and side yard. There are mature trees shading the house on all elevations, and intermittent trees in the open front and side yard. The lot features additional mature trees and shrubs and foundation plantings on all sides of the house. The circular driveway is accessed from Monument Street and loops around several trees in front of the house. A second driveway on Monument Street leads to the rear of the property.

Building Description
The symmetrical two-story Colonial Revival (1917) house features a central block, which until recently, was flanked by one-story additions. The south side addition has been removed. The house has many of the typical features that would be found in a Colonial Revival style house. The tall side-facing gable roof with gable-end chimneys, symmetrically balanced windows and a center door, an accentuated front door with a decorative crown, and adjacent pairs of multi-lite double-hung windows. High-style examples were usually of masonry construction.
Front (West) Elevation
The two-story pebble-dash stucco house sits on a poured concrete foundation. The side-facing gable roof is clad in slate, and exterior brick chimneys rise above the roof on the north and south gable ends. Paired six-over-six double-hung vinyl replacement windows with wood shutters on the first and second story mimic what would have been the original wood windows and reinforce the symmetry of the facade. Two smaller windows are evenly spaced above the front door. The windows are set in brick openings with lintels and brick sills. The concrete stoop and metal railing leading to the entrance has brick steps and a brick landing. The entrance on the main block is framed with two wood pilasters, and a bracketed Greek pediment. The wood paneled door has a four-lite transom above it.

South Side Elevation
The southside elevation addition was removed, revealing the existing elevation. The exterior brick chimney is flanked by original wood quarter-round attic windows. Six-over-six vinyl replacement windows flank the chimney on the first and second stories. A brick framed fireplace is located at the bottom of the chimney.
North Side Elevation

The central block of the north side elevation mirrors the design of the south elevation, and it has two additions. The east end of the one-story addition is an aluminum-sided back porch and storage area with a flat roof. Concrete steps lead to an aluminum side door. A solid storage area door with a small vinyl multi-lite window above it is adjacent to the concrete steps. A small six-over-six vinyl window is located in the center of the addition. The west end addition on the north side elevation is stucco with a gable roof. It has six-over-six double-hung vinyl replacement windows on the north and west elevations.

Rear (East) Elevation

The symmetry of the rear elevation is similar to the front elevation. Evenly spaced paired second-story vinyl replacement windows flank a smaller, lower single window. On the first story, directly below the second-story windows, a matching pair of windows are on the north end, and a set of French doors are on the south end. A flagstone walkway and steps lead to the centrally positioned back door. Decorative iron handrails lead to the door. A shed roof awning is supported on the wall by decorative iron brackets, and at the top of the steps by decorative iron posts. Small rounded roof dormers flank a larger shed roof dormer on the steep-side-facing roof. All the dormer windows are vinyl replacements. The aluminum sided north-end rear porch addition has one-over-one double-hung aluminum windows.
Site History

The subject property at 500 Great Falls Road is located in the Rockville Heights subdivision, which was platted in 1890. As with both the West End Park Subdivision (1890) and Reading’s First Addition to Rockville (1888), and to garden suburbs being built nationwide, Rockville Heights was platted with large lots, parks and picturesque roads. Building in these subdivisions progressed slowly, with many of the platted lots remaining vacant until well into the twentieth century. Development in this area picked up again in the 1930s and was annexed into the City of Rockville in 1937, with subsequent annexations of the remaining portions of Rockville Heights in 1939 and 1941. The subject house was constructed on multiple lots within Rockville Heights, contributing to the low-density “estate” character of the properties and the neighborhood. There were not many other houses in the immediate vicinity that pre-dated the house at 500 Great Falls Road. Portions of Rockville Heights were later re-subdivided, and cul-de-sacs were added off Monument Street and the adjacent Dale Drive. The surrounding neighborhood currently features housing development that spans many decades.

Although located within the boundaries of the Rockville Heights subdivision, parcel 685 is a modification of the five lots originally platted in 1890. The metes and bounds and acreage references in these deeds correspond to lots 3-7, Block 10 in Rockville Heights Subdivision. Although the Rockville Heights lots platted in 1890 are still there, the parcels that have been created do not relate to these lots.

The five lots were purchased by Malcolm S. McConihe (1871-1961). McConihe married Eleanor Berger (1875-1951) in 1903. The U.S. Census has them living in New York in 1900, and in Washington, D.C. in 1920. McConihe’s occupation in both the 1900 and 1920 Census has him listed as the owner of a bank. It is likely that the property was an investment owned by him or the bank.

In 1916, Mr. and Mrs. McConihe sold the property to Dr. Clara Bliss Finley. The house was constructed in 1917, but the builder or architect is not known. Peerless Rockville provided biographical information on Dr. Clara Bliss Findley:

“Info on Dr. Clara Bliss Finley (1852-1940)
Dr. Clara Bliss Hinds Finley was a pioneering female physician who advocated remarkable changes towards gender equality for her time and was a nationally known speaker on women’s and children’s health. She co-founded numerous organizations for the advancement of women and improvement of women’s lives in Washington DC, including the Woman’s Clinic, the Woman’s Gymnasium, and the Washington DC Women’s Business Club. She was a charter member of the Women’s Anthropological Society, The national Congress of Mothers (now the National PTA), The Georgetown Industrial Center, and the Montgomery County Social Services League. She was the first woman to receive a degree as well as the first woman to receive a medical degree from Columbian College (now George Washington University Medical School) in 1887. She regularly summered in Rockville since around the turn of the century, purchasing the 500 Great Falls property in 1916. A home she owned in Rockville prior on what is now W. Montgomery Avenue no longer stands. 500 Great Falls remained her summer home for the rest of her life and she became involved in Montgomery County organizations as an advocate and physician. She died in Rockville in 1940 and is buried in Rockville Cemetery.”

The property is listed as being sold in 1941 by Bliss Hinds Finley (1881-1970), who inherited it from her mother Clara Bliss Finley. Peerless Rockville provided biographical information on Bliss Finley:

“Info on Bliss Finley (1881-1970)
Bliss Finley was a prominent suffragist who participated in the fight for women’s voting rights. Finley became deeply involved in organizing suffrage gatherings and helped raise money for the cause. She participated in one notable march that took place in Washington, DC on March 3, 1913, the day before Woodrow Wilson’s inauguration. Eight thousand women from all over the country marched with half a million spectators in attendance. During the 1913 march, Bliss led the section representing “wage earners.” Finley later testified before congress about an incident where men attacked women from the Maryland Delegation during the parade and that police failed to protect them. This was a matter of national outrage and made it on to the pages of newspapers across the country. She continued to work actively for women’s suffrage, including communicating with Alice Paul, as an organizer until the passage of the amendment.

Finley inherited 500 Great Falls, where she had summered with her family well into adulthood, upon her mother’s death in 1940. Bliss Finley is buried in Rockville Cemetery.”
In 1941 Bliss Finley sold the property to Van F. and Florence F. Lippard (1893-1970). Frank Lippard (1890-1972) is listed as a self-employed auto mechanic in the 1940 U.S. Census. No other information about the Lippards was found.

In 1965, the property was sold by Ferris Construction Co., Inc. to Leigh F. and Lucille M. Wheeler. It is unclear how the property fell into the hands of the Ferris Construction Co. Leigh Franklin Wheeler (1917-1992) was an Army Colonel, having served in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. He is buried in Arlington Cemetery. Lucille M. Wheeler (1914-1992) is buried in Rockville Cemetery.

The Wheelers sold the house to Edward W. Koch (1927-2013) and Lorraine B. Koch (1929-2019) in 1974. Little information was found about Edward and Lorraine. The 1959 Baltimore City Directory lists Edward’s occupation as Artist. In 1996, the Kochs transferred the property into the Lorraine B. Koch Trust, with Edward and Lorraine as the trustees. They are both buried in California Central Coast Veterans Cemetery.

The current owner, Hector G. Mora, purchased the house from the Trust in August 2020, with the intent of enlarging it for their family home.

Deed Research

500 Great Falls Road
Rockville Heights Subdivision
Parcel 629

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liber/Folio</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Grantor</th>
<th>Grantee</th>
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<tr>
<td>60309/270</td>
<td>8/18/2020 Parcel 685</td>
<td>Lorraine B. Koch Trust</td>
<td>Hector G. Mora</td>
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<td>823/390</td>
<td>4/21/1941 Lots 3-7, Block 10</td>
<td>Bliss Hinds (aka Bliss Hinds Finley)</td>
<td>Van F. and Florence F. Lippard</td>
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<td>258/395</td>
<td>8/5/1916 Lots 3-7, Block 10</td>
<td>Malcom S. and Eleanor M. McConihe</td>
<td>Clara Bliss Finley</td>
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<td>242/259</td>
<td>5/27/1914 Lots 3-7, Block 10</td>
<td>John Maury Dove and Nannie C. Dove</td>
<td>Malcom S. McConihe</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2 Deed information is from www.mdlandrec.net.
STAFF ANALYSIS

The evaluation of historic significance is based on the adopted HDC Criteria per Appendix A, of the Historic Resources Management Plan.

Historic Designation Criteria

The following criteria is used to assist in evaluating the significance of nominated properties. Standing structures and sites, including archaeological sites, must be determined to be significant in one or more of the following criteria to be found eligible for historic designation:
Historic Significance

a) Represents the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City.
   Yes. **500 Great Falls is historically significant for its association with persons making significant contributions in Rockville, Montgomery County, Maryland, or national history.** Purchased and erected by Dr. Clara Bliss Finley, Dr. Clara Finley and her daughter, a later owner and long-time resident of the home, were both early pioneering women in the local fight for women’s rights and advancements and Bliss was active in the National Suffrage Movement and in Montgomery County.

b) Site of an important event in Rockville’s history.
   No significant event was found to have taken place in this house or on this property.

c) Identified with a person or group of persons who influenced the City’s history.
   No. Although Dr. Clara Bliss Finley and her daughter Bliss Finley owned the property for over twenty-five years, no evidence was found to indicate they made significant contributions or influenced society in the City of Rockville.

d) Exemplified the cultural, economic, industrial, social, political, archeological, or historical heritage of the City.
   No. The subject property does not exemplify the cultural, economic, industrial, social, political, archeological, or historical heritage of the City.

Architectural, Design, and Landscape Significance

a) Embodies distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.
   Yes. **The house at 500 Great Falls Road is listed in the Rockville Historic Buildings Catalogue as a good example of a Colonial Revival House.** It embodies many of the distinctive characteristics found in the Colonial Revival style, which includes the tall side-facing gable roof with gable end chimneys, symmetrically balanced windows and a center door, an accentuated front door with a decorative crown, and adjacent pairs of multi-lite double-hung windows. High-style examples were usually of masonry construction. The building has vinyl windows which can be replaced with appropriate wood windows.

b) Represents the work of a master architect, craftsman, or builder.
   No. It does not represent the work of a master architect, craftsman, or builder.

c) Possesses a style or elements distinctive to the region or City.
   No. The Colonial Revival style is common throughout the area and the U.S.

d) Represents a significant architectural, design, or landscape entity in the City
   No. While the house is one of many examples of its type existing in the City, it doesn’t represent a significant architectural, design, or landscape entity.
e) Represents an established visual feature of the neighborhood or City because of its physical characteristics or landscape components.

Yes. The house is an established visual feature of the neighborhood and the City because of its distinctive Colonial Revival styling and its siting on the massive lot. The house massing and its footprint are intact, as is the environmental setting. As a result of the deep expansive front yard, the property’s prominent location is a familiar and distinctive visual feature at the corner of Great Falls Road and Monument Road. The property represents what was once estate size lots in the town of Rockville. While the property will remain a visual feature of the neighborhood, the two new large additions will change the character of the house, particularly as viewed from Monument Road.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the HDC find that the property at 500 Great Falls Road meets the following three of the Historic District Commission’s (HDC’s) adopted criteria: Historic Significance criterion a), and Architectural, Design, and Landscape Significance Criteria a) and e).

Staff also recommends that the HDC forward a recommendation to the Mayor and Council to rezone the property to place it in the historic district zone.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The posting of the required sign on the property occurred two weeks prior to the HDC Meeting, and postcard notices were also sent out to the required distribution area two weeks prior to the meeting. Staff also reached out to Peerless Rockville, Montgomery County Historical Society, and Montgomery County Historic Preservation staff to request additional information on the property. The President of West End Citizens Association (WECA) has been informed of the upcoming HDC Evaluation of Significance for this property.
APPENDIX A

DEFINITION AND CRITERIA FOR HISTORIC RESOURCES IN THE CITY OF ROCKVILLE

DEFINITION

Historic Resource: Includes architectural, historic, cultural, archaeological, and landscape resources significant to Rockville’s development. Intangible resources such as folklore and oral histories are important, but for this purpose are to be considered supportive resources. Physical resources must retain their integrity, as defined by the Federal Register, September 29, 1983, Department of Interior Archeology and Historic Preservation; Secretary of the Interior’s Standards- and Guidelines."

Integrity- the authenticity of a property’s historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property's historic or prehistoric period.

CRITERIA

Historic Significance

a) Represents the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City; or
b) Is the site of an important event in Rockville’s history; or
c) Is identified with a person or group of persons who influenced the City's history; or
d) Exemplified the cultural, economic, industrial, social, political, archeological, or historical heritage of the City.

Architectural, Design, and Landscape Significance

a) Embodies distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; or
b) Represents the work of a master architect, craftsman, or builder; or
r) Possesses a style or elements distinctive to the region or City; or
d) Represents a significant architectural, design, or landscape entity in the City; or
e) Represents an established visual feature of the neighborhood or City because of its physical characteristics or landscape components.
City of Rockville, Maryland Zoning Ordinance

Article 14 – Special Zones

25.14.01 – Historic District Zones

a. Purpose – The Historic District Zone is an overlay zone. The purpose of the zone is to:

1. Safeguard the heritage of the City by preserving sites, structures, or areas which reflect elements of cultural, social, economic, political, archaeological, or architectural history;

2. Stabilize and improve the property values of those sites and structures, and the adjacent neighborhood;

3. Foster civic beauty;

4. Strengthen the local economy; and

5. Promote the preservation and the appreciation of those sites and structures for the education and welfare of the residents of the City.

b. Location

1. Underlying Zoning - The regulations of the Historic District Zones are in addition to the underlying residential or nonresidential zoning regulations.

2. Established Location – The Historic District Zones are depicted on the Zoning Map incorporated into these regulations in Article 2.

3. Future Location – The Mayor and Council may establish, change, layout, and define future Historic District Zones which are of local, state, or national or historical, archaeological, or architectural significance.

c. Historic District Commission – The Historic District Commission is subject to the provisions of Section 25.04.04.

d. Designation of Properties

1. Initiation of Process – The process of evaluating a property for possible historic designation due to its historic, archaeological, or architectural significance begins upon the occurrence of any of the following items in subsection (a) below. If the nomination application is filed by a person other than the property owner, the person making the nomination must provide notice of the nomination by first class mail to the property owner at the time of application. A copy of the notice must also be provided to the Historic District Commission.

   (a) The filing of an application nominating the property for historic designation by one (1) or more of the following:
(i) The property owner;
(ii) The Historic District Commission;
(iii) The Mayor and Council;
(iv) The Planning Commission; or
(v) Any other person;

(b) The filing of an application by the property owner requesting the evaluation of the property for eligibility for historic designation; or

(c) The filing of an application for a demolition permit for the property; or

(d) The filing of a Natural Resources Inventory identifying a potentially significant historic resource on the property.

2. Application Review – Upon the filing of an application for nomination, evaluation, or demolition, the Chief of Planning must evaluate the subject property for compliance with the City's criteria for historic designation, and make a recommendation to the Historic District Commission.

3. Historic District Commission Review and Decision – The Historic District Commission will consider the application at a meeting of the Commission following notice given in accordance with the notice provisions of Section 25.05.03, to determine if the property meets the adopted City of Rockville Historic District Designation Criteria. If the Historic District Commission finds that a site meets the criteria to be eligible for historic designation, it will make a written recommendation that the Mayor and Council rezone the property to the Historic District Zone.

4. Mayor and Council Authorization – Upon receipt of the Historic District Commission’s recommendation, the Mayor and Council may authorize the filing of a sectional map amendment (Section 25.06.01.b.2) to place the property in the Historic District Zone.

5. Completion of Designation Process – The designation process shall be complete upon the occurrence of any of the following:

   (a) The determination of the Historic District Commission, that the property does not meet the criteria for historic designation; or

   (b) The determination of the Mayor and Council not to authorize the filing of a sectional map amendment for historic rezoning;

   (c) The determination of the Mayor and Council to take final action to grant or deny a map amendment for historic rezoning.

6. Restrictions on Property During Interim Historic Review Period – No exterior change may be made to any property identified in the Historic Building Catalog, as revised, that is the subject of an application for nomination, historic evaluation, or a demolition permit under this Section 25.14.01 until the designation process is complete, unless the property owner first obtains a Certificate of Approval from the Historic District Commission in accordance with the provision of
Section 25.07.13. The restriction of this subsection will not apply for more than 210 days from the date of the filing of the application that initiated the historic designation review period.

25.07.13 – Certificate of Approval in Historic Districts

a. **Requirement** – A Certificate of Approval issued by the Historic District Commission is required prior to any actions affecting a site or exterior of a building or structure in a Historic District Zone consistent with the provisions of Article 66B of the Maryland Code for Historic Area Zoning.

b. **Exceptions** – A Certificate of Approval is not required for exterior paint colors, routine maintenance, normal gardening and landscaping, or driveway repairs. Routine maintenance is defined as repair or replacement of building and site features with features of the same design and same material.

Montgomery County Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program

The City of Rockville participates in Montgomery County’s Property Tax Credit program for historic resources designated by the City. Work related to maintenance that has been approved by the HDC, or ordinary maintenance work that does not require HDC review are eligible expenses.

**Local (County) 25% Property Tax Credit**

Montgomery County provides a property tax credit equal to 25% of qualified costs expended on exterior maintenance of properties designated historic by the Mayor and Council of Rockville. Owners of qualifying properties must spend a minimum of $1,000 in a calendar year. The tax credit is then applied against the following year’s property taxes. Properties listed only in the National Register are not eligible for this County tax credit, but would be eligible for the State or Federal tax credit programs described below.

**State 20% Income Tax Credit**

Maryland’s Sustainable Communities Tax Credit Program provides Maryland income tax credits equal to 20% of qualified costs expended in the interior and exterior rehabilitation of certified historic structures. Commercial (income-producing) properties may receive an additional 5% tax credit if the rehabilitation results in LEED (environmental) Gold certification. Income-producing structures that are neither designated nor eligible for designation, may qualify for a 10% state income tax credit if certain requirements are met. Please note that State tax credit projects must be pre-approved by the Maryland Historic Trust to be eligible. Costs for projects that are considered to be primarily remodeling (i.e., replacement of kitchens and bathrooms that are in good repair and that are replaced only for aesthetic reasons) do not qualify. Qualifying properties include those listed in the National Register of Historic Places, or those locally designated properties that the Maryland Historical Trust deems eligible for listing in the National Register. This program is administered by the Maryland Historical Trust. Applications are available at http://mht.maryland.gov/taxcredits.html, and on the City’s Web site.

**Federal 20% Income Tax Credit**

The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program offers Federal income tax credits for 20% of approved costs, for the rehabilitation of income-producing properties that are listed in the National Register. The applications are reviewed by the Maryland Historical Trust and by the National Park Service.
Attachment B
Nomination of Property for Local Historic Designation

Property Address: 500 Great Falls Road

Your Name: Peerless Rockville Historic Preservation, Ltd.

Are you the property owner? Yes _________ No __________

If you are not the owner, please list the name and mailing address of the owner(s):
_____________________________________________________________________________

If you are not the owner, please explain your relationship to the property: Peerless Rockville Historic Preservation
is a non-profit historic preservation organization founded in 1974 to protect buildings important to Rockville’s Heritage

Your mailing address if different from above:
PO Box 4262 Rockville, MD 20849

Daytime telephone number: 301-762-0096 Home telephone: 443-538-5805

Property Type: Single-family residence X _________ Commercial Building _________
Other ___________________________________________________________

Year Built (if known): c.1917

Architect/Builder (if known): _____________________________________________________

Do you have information on the history of the property that you would be willing to share with the City’s Historic Preservation staff for research purposes?

Yes X _________ No __________

If you are the property owner, do you authorize City staff to inspect and photograph the exterior of the property? Yes ____________ No ____________

I hereby nominate the property at 500 Great Falls Road to be evaluated for local historic designation based on the City of Rockville’s criteria of historical, cultural, architectural and/or design significance. I have been provided with information on the responsibilities and benefits of owning historically designated property.

Signature ___________________________ Date 05/27/2021

Please return this completed form to: Historic Preservation Office, Department of Community Planning and Development Services, 111 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, Maryland 20850-2364, or Fax to: 240-314-8210. Questions? Call 240-314-8230.

Office use only: Date received _______________ Assigned to ___________________________
June 7, 2021

Hector Mora
500 Great Falls Rd
Rockville Md 20850

Dear Mr. Mora,

You are receiving this letter because your property, 500 Great Falls Road, has been nominated for evaluation of historic significance for historic designation in the City of Rockville by Peerless Rockville Historic Preservation, a nonprofit, community-based organization founded in 1974 to preserve buildings, objects, and information important to Rockville’s heritage.

Historic designation is a recognition of the importance of a property’s structure or landscape to the Rockville community and can provide financial benefits to the owner. Designation also places a higher standard on the maintenance, alteration, or removal of structures.

There are many different aspects of historical significance, including association with significant historical people or events, or architectural style. Your property is listed in the City of Rockville’s Historic Building Catalogue for Colonial Revival architecture.

You will be contacted by the City of Rockville as the Historic Designation review process begins. For more information about Historic Designation, please visit the City of Rockville website: https://www.rockvillemd.gov/624/Historic-Designation

Sincerely,

Nancy Pickard
Executive Director
February 14, 2022

Dear Chairperson Neal Powell and HDC Commissioners,

Peerless Rockville submitted the request for evaluation for 500 Great Falls Road that you will hear tonight and we thank you for your thoughtful evaluation. We nominated this property for review based on its architectural significance, period of construction, and association with significant individuals.

We assert that this property meets the City of Rockville’s Historic Significance and Architectural, Design, and Landscape Significance Criteria of the adopted HDC criteria for historic designation.

500 Great Falls meets Historic Significance criteria A) and C)

A) Represents the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City.

C) Identified with a person or group of persons who influenced the City's history.

This property was bought by Dr. Clara Bliss Hinds Finley in 1916, shortly after which the current home was built for her. Notably, the property remained in Dr. Finley’s name rather than her husband’s. Clara Bliss Hinds Finley and her daughter Bliss Finley are significant individuals associated with this property.

Dr. Clara Bliss Hinds Finley (1852-1940) was a pioneering female physician who advocated remarkable changes towards gender equality for her time and was a nationally known speaker on women’s and children’s health, recognized as the local, state and national level for her dedication to the health and welfare of society, especially the indigent.

She co-founded numerous organizations for the advancement of women and improvement of women’s lives in Washington DC, including the Woman’s Clinic, the Woman’s Gymnasium, and the Washington DC Women’s Business Club. She was a charter member of the Women’s Anthropological Society, The national Congress of Mothers (now the National PTA), The Georgetown Industrial Center, and the Montgomery County Social Service League. She was the first woman to receive a graduate degree and a medical degree from Columbian College (now George Washington University Medical School) in 1887.

The Finley family spent time in Rockville from the early 1900s, purchasing a no longer extant home on West Montgomery Avenue in 1906. They sold that home in 1913, and Dr. Finley purchased the 500 Great Falls property in 1916. This remained her property for the rest of her life, and she became involved in Montgomery County organizations as an advocate and physician. Her activities in Rockville can be tracked through newspaper articles that document this remarkable woman’s commitment to improving the health and quality of life of Rockville and Montgomery County residents, especially the impoverished and children.
Dr. Finley was a founding member of the Social Service League in 1908. This charitable organization was Maryland’s first private welfare agency and addressed social and health needs of Montgomery County community, particularly focusing on tuberculosis, homelessness, impoverished families, and the well-being of residents of the Montgomery County Poor Farm on Seven Locks Road. She played a prominent role in the organization in its early years, serving as Vice President from 1910 to 1915, including a term acting as president following the leadership’s death. Towards the end of her life, she was repeatedly elected the honorary president, as she remained involved until her final years.

In fact, this organization still exists and operates to protect Montgomery County’s vulnerable families. Now under the name of Family Services, Inc. It is part of the Sheppard Pratt Health System School-Based Mental Health Program.

The health, safety, and quality of life for the residents of Rockville’s Poor Farm were of special interest to Dr. Finley. In 1907, a minister with whom Dr. Finley would later found the Social Service League brought her to see an inmate there, likely in her capacity as a doctor. Dr. Finley was extremely alarmed at the conditions of the residents and the building.

She shared this information with her fellow members of the Rockville Union Bible Class, a multi-denominational social organization and urged them to take action. The Rockville Union Bible Class immediately formed a committee first called the Missionary at the Alms House. Dr. Finley would advocate for improvements at the Poor Farm (which was called the Alms House and later the County Home during her time) through this committee for many years.

The Rockville Union Bible Class fundraised to provide a person who would lead bible study at the Poor Farm, as well as teach inmates necessary skills such as reading and sewing. Dr. Finley and the committee would later make strongly worded suggestions to County officials to make building repairs as well as improve the sanitation conditions. She advocated for a separate ward for female inmates to prevent pregnancy, the installation of hospital facilities, teachers to impart skills such as sewing, and sending blind inmates to schools for the blind to learn trades. She also protested the neglected condition of the Poor Farm cemetery. While not all of Dr. Finley’s and the Rockville Union Bible Class Committee’s demands were addressed by the county, it publicized that various improvements had been made due to their pressure and fundraising. She continued to advocate for the Poor Farm’s residents throughout her life.

Aside from Dr. Finley’s devotion to the Poor Farm, she was involved in many other aspects of public health and community events in Rockville and Montgomery County. In 1915, she accompanied Montgomery County and State Health Officials touring sites for Tuberculosis hospitals, represented Montgomery County at the Maryland Tuberculosis Committee Meeting, and was appointed to represent Maryland by the Governor at the National Conference of Charities and Correction, a role she held repeatedly.

As part of her activities with the Montgomery County Social Service League, Dr. Finley was on a committee that advocated for a Red Cross Station at the Montgomery County Fair in Rockville. It eventually placed a rest facility at the fair for several years. The “rest room” where county visitors could sit and relax was staffed by a nurse who could attend injuries, accidents, or discover unaddressed health conditions.
In 1914, she was elected Chairperson of the Rockville Library Committee, which had the mission to create a free public library in Rockville. Dr. Finley’s other pursuits in Rockville included consistent involvement in the Montgomery County Confederation of Women’s Clubs, organizing to bring American Medical Society lecturers to Montgomery County, as well as speaking herself to various groups about her passions of public health and the Poor Farm. She was fervent about improving the charitable services available to County residents, including advocating that war work organizations that formed during World War I continue to exist for the benefit of the public.

Dr. Finley was an affluent woman who often donated financially to support her various causes, including the Poor Farm and Rockville library. However, her activism extended beyond her wallet, as she personally sought to improve the quality of life for Rockville residents, with special focus on the health and well-being of children and the impoverished. She gained attention at the county, state, and national level for her expertise and dedication.

A pioneering female doctor, Dr. Finley used the tools of her time to achieve her public health goals. Women’s organizations and social organizations were spaces in which she could act to pressure male-dominated municipal governments to address social issues. She was, however, extremely conscious of the limitations placed on women due to gender. In 1918, she appealed to the Montgomery County Confederation of Women’s Club to create a resolution addressed to the Maryland governor objecting to the failure to appoint a woman to Montgomery County’s School Board.

Dr. Finley died in Rockville in 1940 and is buried in Rockville Cemetery. In 2018, The Clara Bliss Hinds Society at the George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences Group on Women in Medicine and Science was named after her for forging the way for women physicians.

While Dr. Clara Bliss Hinds Finley operated her medical practice at various rented locations in DC, we believe that the property at 500 Great Falls is the only remaining dwelling that she owned. Prior to the construction of this home in Rockville, she owned a home on West Montgomery Avenue that no longer exists. Peerless Rockville would like to see her surviving house designated in recognition of its association with this remarkable Rockville woman.

The other notable individual associated with this property is Dr. Clara Hinds Finley’s only child, her daughter Bliss Finley.

Bliss Finley (1881-1970) was a prominent suffragist who participated in the fight for women’s voting rights. Finley became deeply involved in organizing suffrage gatherings and helped raise money for the cause. She participated in one notable march that took place in Washington, DC on March 3, 1913 the day before Woodrow Wilson’s inauguration.

Eight thousand women from all over the country marched with half a million spectators in attendance. During the 1913 march, Bliss led the section representing “wage earners.” Finley later testified before the US Congress about an incident where men attacked the Maryland women’s delegation during the parade and that police failed to protect them. This was a matter of national outrage and made it on to the pages of newspapers across the country.

Bliss Finley’s national and state suffrage activities were accompanied by involvement in Montgomery County and Rockville’s social organizations. Along with her mother and stepfather, Finley was heavily involved in the Montgomery County Country Club’s social activities. She also lent financial support and
involvement in some of her mother’s public health initiatives, including designing the banner advertising the “Rest Room” at the Montgomery County Agricultural Fair one year.

She continued to work actively for women’s suffrage, including communicating with Alice Paul, as an organizer until the passage of the amendment. Finley inherited 500 Great Falls, where she had stayed with her family throughout her adult life, upon her mother’s death in 1940. Bliss Finley is buried with her mother and stepfather in Rockville Cemetery.

It is especially important to note that at the time of the production of Rockville’s Historic Resources Management Plan in the 1980s, Women’s History was a nascent field. It is an ongoing challenge to correctly associate sites with significant women, simply because it took until the late 20th century for historians, preservationists, and researchers to value these stories and experiences, and many otherwise well-researched sites simply never focused on women. Rockville is extremely lucky to have this property, and to have the research about these two tremendously impressive women who resided there.

**500 Great Falls also meets criteria a) and e) of Architectural, Design, and Landscape Significance as it embodies distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction and is an established visual feature in the neighborhood.**

It possesses distinctive Colonial Revival architectural style. This property is listed in the City of Rockville’s Historic Building Catalogue as an example of Colonial Revival architecture. The symmetrical two-story Colonial Revival (1917) house features a central block, originally flanked by one-story additions.

The house has many of Colonial Revival style house features: tall side-facing gable roof with gable-end chimneys, symmetrically balanced windows and a center door, an accentuated front door with a decorative crown, and adjacent pairs of multi-lit double-hung windows. The house is an established visual feature of the neighborhood and the City with its distinctive Colonial Revival styling, and siting on the expansive lot.

We appreciate the HDC’s ongoing guidance to the property owner in respecting the property’s distinctive Colonial Revival Architecture and permitting appropriate renovations.

Peerless Rockville strongly urges you to give women’s contributions to the history and heritage of Rockville their due recognition and hopes that you will recommend designation of this special property tonight.

Sincerely,

Nancy Pickard
Executive Director

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Historic District Commission  
Attn: Anita Neal Powell  
111 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, MD 20850

January 6, 2022

I am writing on behalf of the Clara Bliss Hinds Society for Women in Medicine and Science at the George Washington University School of Medicine & Health Sciences (GWSMHS). The Clara Bliss Hinds Society was formally established in 2018 with the aim of addressing the needs of women faculty at GWSMHS. The society is one of the larger associations of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Group on Women in Medicine and Sciences. The society was named after Clara Bliss Finley (formerly Clara Bliss Hinds), the original owner of 500 Great Falls Road.

We are writing to ask the commission to maintain the integrity of 500 Great Falls Road at the official hearing on January 20, 2022, due to its association with a significant individual, Dr. Clara Bliss Finley.

In 1887, Clara Bliss Hinds became the first female graduate of George Washington University (then known as Columbian College). She was one of four women admitted to the medical school in 1884 and earned her degree as a doctor of medicine 3 years later. Due to her gender, Dr. Clara was not provided with the professional opportunities afforded to her male counterparts. Nevertheless, Dr. Clara went on to have a successful career as a medical practitioner and helped to establish the Washington Women’s Clinic in 1891. She made contributions to the area of both medical practice and scholarship as the author of pamphlets including entitled “Child Growth” and “Is discrimination against women by life insurance wise?” which are now included as part of the special collections archive at Gelman Library at the George Washington University.

Preservation of the structure at 500 Great Falls Road will give Rockville residents, as well as visitors, tourists, and inspired doctors an opportunity to learn about the great achievements of this remarkable woman and physician.

We have been following the developments of this process and are pleased to see that an official hearing will take place.

[Signature]