A FIELD GUIDE TO WASHINGTON REAL ESTATE

WHAT’S SELLING AND WHERE TO FIND IT—ARCHITECTURE FOR EVERY TASTE

More of these sell here than any other style.

Prominent in suburbs such as Takoma Park and Arlington.

Also called Wardman rowhouses, after the famous developer.

Find them in Kalorama and Mass. Ave. Heights—but they’ll cost you!
Can you tell a Wardman from a Federal? Wondering which neighborhoods are full of Craftsman or Colonials or midcentury moderns? Here’s a tour of the region’s housing stock—whether you’re shopping for real estate or just curious about the city around you.

By Marisa M. Kashino & Amanda Kolson Hurley
WASHINGTONIAN APRIL 2020 PAGE 75
**BEAUX ARTS**

**WHERE YOU’VE SEEN ONE ONSCREEN:** The mansion in the 1960s sitcom The Beverly Hillbillies. (Lashley Murdoch bought the house in real life in 2010.)

**WHERE THEY’RE COMMON AROUND TOWN:** Kalorama, Dupont Circle, Massachusetts Avenue Heights.

**WHEN MANSIONS WERE BUZZT:** 1880s–1920s.

There’s a good reason many of the District’s most expensive mansions might remind you of the marble monuments lining the Mall. Paris’s École des Beaux-Arts had a major influence on both. Its alumni informed the City Beautiful urban-planning movement, which fueled the development of the monumental core in the early 20th century. Meanwhile, Washington’s super-rich were incorporating the same formal-looking neoclassical design ideas into their homes. Railroad tycoon Richard Townsend, for instance, commissioned the over-neoclassical design ideas into their homes. Railroad tycoon Richard Townsend, for instance, commissioned the over-neoclassical design ideas into their homes. Modern-day one-percenters Rex Tillerson and Wilbur Ross bought 1920s Beaux Arts mansions in Kalorama and Massachusetts Avenue Heights when they joined the Trump administration.

The houses are often made of light-colored stone, with decorative flourishes such as columns, arched windows, and carved embellishments. Inside, they were designed for Gatsby-grade parties, with dramatic staircases and ballrooms. Those of us on more limited budgets aren’t totally out of options—several apartment buildings, such as the Wyoming in Kalorama, were also built in the Beaux Arts style.

WHERE YOU’VE SEEN ONE ONSCREEN: The house where Bill Murray stayed (and stayed and stayed) in Groundhog Day.

WHERE THEY’RE COMMON AROUND TOWN: Takoma Park, Kensington, Garrett Park, Anacostia.

WHEN MANSIONS WERE BUZZT: 1880s–1900s.

When it came to the whimsical architecture so popular among the turn of the century’s upper middle class, more was more: A single house might have turrets and towers, ornamented gables, and gingerbread detailing. Around Washington, Victorian neighborhoods are great examples of early transit-oriented development. You’ll find more modest Victorians in historic Anacostia, where a late-1800s building boom coincided with the arrival of streetcars. Grander versions dominate in the once-bucolic areas of Takoma Park, Kensington, and Garrett Park, all developed as the B&O commuter railroad turned them into viable bedroom communities.

Builders marketed those new suburbs as healthier alternatives to swampy downtown. In Takoma Park, nature was built around homes, which advanced the idea of “art for art’s sake.” Its symbol, the sunflower, is still carved into some of the neighborhood’s Victorian-era mantels.

**RECENTLY SOLD**

- A two-bedroom unit in a 1916 Beaux Arts co-op in Dupont’s historic district for $600,000
- A 6,500-square-foot Kalorama mansion with a view of Rock Creek Park for $8,000,000
- A three-bedroom 1909 Beaux Arts rowhouse in Kalorama for $9,450,000

**RECENTLY SOLD**

- A three-bedroom 1,000-square-foot 1905 Victorian in Anacostia for $575,000
- A four-bedroom 1933 Victorian in Takoma Park with a wrap-around porch for $635,000
- A five-bedroom 1888 Victorian with a tower and a carriage house in Gar rett Park for $2,406,000

**VICTORIAN**

**WHERE THEY’RE COMMON AROUND TOWN:** Takoma Park, Anacostia, Maryland; Rock Creek Park, Washington, D.C.; Rock Creek Park, all developed as the B&O commuter railroad turned them into viable bedroom communities.

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*Illustrations by Brown Bird Design*
Colonial Revival

When many were built: 1930s–1950s.

Though Colonial Revivals can come in a variety of sizes, they usually share some fundamentals: a centered front door, symmetrically placed windows, and brick construction, adding up to a sturdy, conservative aesthetic that hasn’t just endured here for decades—it has dominated. More than 107,000 have sold in the Washington area over the past five years, according to Bright MLS, the listing service that all local real-estate agents use. You’ll find them throughout the District and the suburbs, but they’re especially popular in Virginia, which, given its Colonial past, has an obvious affinity for them. Plenty are still being built, but they really took root here during World War II, created thousands of government jobs and encouraged the rapid development of subdivisions.

Arlington County, for example, saw its population explode by 138 percent in the 1930s and ‘40s as New Deal programs, followed by government jobs and encouraged the rapid development of subdivisions. Entire neighborhoods of Colonials arose, including Arlington Forest, which comprised about 300 two-stories. When they were new, you could have snagged one for about $8,000. Today? More like $800,000.

In Washington, developers Harry K. Boss and H. Glenn Phelps and their architect, James Cooper, were among the most influential in popularizing this style. Together, they designed and built most of the enclave near Georgetown now known as Foxhall Village entirely in the Tudor style. Boss was inspired by a trip he’d taken to England, where architects had for decades been reviving the medieval look. Starting in 1925, the trio constructed hundreds of Tudors. Their neighborhood attracted glowing publicity, no doubt influencing others to try the style. According to the DC Historic Preservation Office, the Washington Post raved that the homes weren’t “only intelligently planned, but . . . distinctive and unique as well” into the ‘30s and ‘40s, the style continued to pop up throughout Northwest DC and the close-in suburbs.
CRAFTSMAN AND CRAFTSMAN BUNGALOW

WHERE YOU’VE SEEN ONE ONSCREEN:  
Ray and Debra’s house on Everybody Loves Raymond.

WHERE THEY’RE COMMON AROUND TOWN:  
Silver Spring, Arlington, Bethesda.

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MINIMAL TRADITIONAL

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WHERE YOU’VE SEEN ONE ONSCREEN:  
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**MIDCENTURY MODERN**

WHEN MANY WERE BUILT: DC, Reston, Alexandria, Silver Spring, Southwest DC. Where they’re common around town: Nest in 2018’s Goodman—a DC-based architecture firm run by one of the most celebrated architects in Washington history, widely credited with bringing modernism to our area. In 1946, Goodman’s most famous subdivision, Alexandria’s Hollin Hills, got under way. It would grow to more than 450 houses, notable for their gradually sloping or butterfly-shaped roofs, walls of windows, and simple geometry. As Goodman garnered national attention—he was hired to design other modernist enclaves, including Silver Spring’s Rock Creek Woods and Hammond Wood, Southwest DC’s River Park co-op community, and Reston’s Hickory Cluster townhouses. Other midcentury neighborhoods, meanwhile, showed his influence. One of the architects behind Bethesda’s Carderock Springs, for instance, had spent years working for Goodman.

**RANCH**

WHERE YOU’VE SEEN ONE ONSCREEN: Coach Eric and Tami Taylor’s house in the NBC drama Friday Night Lights. Where they’re common around town: North Springfield, Annandale, Clinton, Rockville. When they were built: 1950s–1970s. The ranch house—also called a rambler—is distinctive for its spread-out form, and orientation to the outdoors. Its popularity is credited to Cliff May, a California architect who drew on Spanish Colonial haciendas to design the first ranch homes in the 1930s. It owes something to the ground-hugging, domestic architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, too. Popularized in national magazines and well suited to tract subdivisions with larger lots, the style started appearing in DC’s expanding suburbs in the 1950s. Ranch houses are one story with low-pitched roofs and may have an attached carport or garage. Some are simple rectangles, while others are U- or L-shaped. Inside, they have open plans and seek to bring in nature through features such as picture windows and sliding glass doors to a patio or deck. Two offspring of the standard ranch—the split-level and the raised ranch—also became common in Washington’s postwar suburbs. All three styles attest to a desire to get back to nature that was lost in the porchless Minimal Traditional home. The naturalist Rachel Carson wrote her classic work Silent Spring in a 1956 ranch in Silver Spring, now a National Historic Landmark.

**RECENTLY SOLD**

A four-bedroom, three-bathroom home in Reston’s Hickory Cluster sold for $639,900. A renovated Goodman-designed four-bedroom in Alexandria’s Hollin Mills is for $560,000. A barrel-roofed townhouse in Goodman’s River Park co-op community in Southwest DC is for $592,000. An L-shaped 1963 four-bedroom in North Springfield sold for $597,000. A four-bedroom 1964 split-level in Rockville’s Bel Pre Woods is for $639,000. A 1,300-square-foot, three-bedroom raised ranch with a carport in Clinton is for $230,000.

★ *WASHINGTONIAN APRIL 2020*
THE ROWHOUSES: FEDERAL

WHERE YOU’VE SEEN ONE ONSCREEN: Claire and Frank Underwood’s home in Netflix’s House of Cards.

WHERE THEY’RE COMMON: Georgetown, Shaw, Logan Circle, Capitol Hill.

WHERE THEY WERE BUILT: 1870s–1900s

Folks were ready to have a little more fun toward the end of the 19th century. The economy was strong, DC’s population was growing, and newly invented machinery made it cheap and easy to mass-produce detailed, fanciful architecture. As a result, between the 1870s and early 1900s, builders erected Victorian rowhouses all over town on spec. They were catering to increasingly wealthy homebuyers—buoyed in part by the 1883 Civil Service Act, which guaranteed government workers a permanent job and salary.

Though several styles fall under the Victorian umbrella, one of the most common in DC is the Queen Anne, notable for turreted roofs, ornate iron railings, and the mixture of brick and stone. Another of its features—the bay window—came to characterize some DC blocks during the Victorian period, thanks to a city law that allowed them to extend beyond a rowhouse’s property line. In other words, the windows became an easy way for homeowners to add more square-footage and light inside.

RECENTLY SOLD

A nearly 1,000 square-foot one-bedroom, one-bath 1830 rowhouse in Old Town for $570,000

An 1815 rowhouse with nearly 5,000 square feet and six bedrooms on Georgetown’s Smith’s Row for $4,900,000

A two-bedroom, one-and-a-half-bath semi-detached rowhouse in Capitol Hill’s historic district for $901,000

THE ROWHOUSES: VICTORIAN

WHERE YOU’VE SEEN ONE ONSCREEN: Detail on the facade of the house in the movie Heartburn (based on Nora Ephron’s novel inspired by her marriage to Carl Bernstein).

WHERE THEY’RE COMMON: Georgetown, Capitol Hill, Old Town Alexandria.

WHERE THEY WERE BUILT: 1790s–1820s

Walk around our most historic neighborhoods and you’ll come across a healthy supply of these. Boxy, mostly unadorned, and typically two or two-and-a-half stories, Federal rowhouses have a more formal vibe than their exuberant Victorian successors, in part because they were built during a pretty serious time. The oldest among them date to the late 1700s, when the nation’s founders were still trying to get a country up and running. Georgetown and Old Town were thriving ports for tobacco merchants, who, along with exporting the cash crop, imported design preferences from across the Atlantic.

Though the Federal style is derivative of Georgian architecture—named for England’s four King Georges—it’s distinct in ways that can be attributed to a trio of Scottish architects known as the Adam Brothers. They’re the ones who popularized the subtle details you’ll find on many Federal rowhouses, such as dentil molding along cornices and arched transoms over front doors. But despite those European influences, there’s no question that Federal architecture is one of the earliest American styles.

RECENTLY SOLD

A three-bedroom, two-bath rowhouse near the H Street corridor for $578,000

A four-bedroom, three-bath 1900 Victorian in Dupont Circle for $1,467,500

A 2,700-square-foot, four-bedroom Victorian in Bloomingdale for $1,139,000

Boxy, mostly unadorned, and typically two or two-and-a-half stories, Federal rowhouses have a more formal vibe than their exuberant Victorian successors, in part because they were built during a pretty serious time. The oldest among them date to the late 1700s, when the nation’s founders were still trying to get a country up and running. Georgetown and Old Town were thriving ports for tobacco merchants, who, along with exporting the cash crop, imported design preferences from across the Atlantic.

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WHEN MANY WERE BUILT: 1910s–1920s

By the dawn of the 20th century, the abundance of modest-paying but steady federal jobs had created a healthy working class, full of people who could afford to stop renting rooms and buy their first houses. Huge Victorians with servants’ quarters might not have been in the cards, but something simpler was. Add to that the fact that DC’s streetcar lines were branching into places beyond the old city limits, turning them into new real-estate hot spots. These were the conditions that Harry Wardman encountered when he began to forge his legacy as Washington’s most prolific residential developer. Though he wasn’t the only one constructing shorter, flatter rowhouses with wide front porches throughout the 1910s and ’20s—in fact, he wasn’t even the first—he does get credit for about 2,000 of them. Which is why a lot of Washingtonians just call them Wardman rowhouses, regardless of who actually built them. These days, the homes hold much of the same appeal as they did when they were new: They’re more affordable and easier to maintain than their towering, turn-of-the-century predecessors.

**F R O N T  P O R C H**

**G O L D E N  Z I P  C O D E S**

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<td>104</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20011</td>
<td>16th Street Heights/Crestwood</td>
<td>$605,000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20042</td>
<td>Falls Church</td>
<td>$620,000</td>
<td>$580,000</td>
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<td>201</td>
<td>231</td>
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<tr>
<td>20065</td>
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<td>$612,900</td>
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<td>$620,000</td>
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<td>20060</td>
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<td>20871</td>
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<td>20017</td>
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<tr>
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<td>$514,760</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Dupont Circle/Adams Morgan</td>
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<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**WHEN THEY’RE COMMON: **Brightwood, Bloomingdale, Trinidad, Petworth.

**WHERE THEY’RE SCARCE: **Georgetown, Shaw, Columbia Heights/Mount Pleasant.
### THE McMANSION GLOSSARY

They started taking over the suburbs in the 1990s upscale—but relatively accessible—mini-mansions built on spec. They typically share some features: at least two stories, a variety of window sizes and shapes, a mix of exterior surfaces (e.g., brick, vinyl, and stone), and a combo of hipped and gabled roofs, and an attached garage. But it’s not like real-estate listings actually call them McMansions. Instead, they’re often categorized under one of the following labels. Here’s what each typically indicates.

### COLONIAL
Red brick, possibly with white columns and/or domers. Very traditional. Find them in McLean and Vienna.

### CRAFTSMAN
A big front porch, some kind of stonework mixed with vinyl or shingle siding. Think rugged-chic. Find them in Bethesda and Arlington.

### FARMHOUSE
Somewhat minimal, with front-facing gables and often white siding and black-framed windows. Find them in Arlington and Loudoun County (but not on an actual farm).

### FRENCH COUNTRY
(See also: villa) Arched openings and/or windows, some wood details, and a light-colored stone or stucco exterior. Find them in McLean, Potomac, and Loudoun.

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### Zip codes with fewer than 60 sales in 2019 were excluded. Data provided by Bright MLS.
Harry Wardman may be Washington’s most famous and prolific residential developer, but he’s far from the only one who deserves credit for building many of our neighborhoods. Here are six other names you should know.

**LEWIS E. BREUNINGER**

**WHAT HE BUILT:** Both a builder and mortgage banker, Breuninger actually financed many of Wardman’s houses. But he constructed thousands of his own detached homes and rowhouses from the 1890s through the 1920s, too.

**WHERE:** In Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant. (One of his biggest developments was on Hobart near 16th Street, Northwest.) He also named Shepherd Park.

**MORRIS CAFRITZ**

**WHAT HE BUILT:** More than 5,000 single-family houses, dozens of apartment buildings, and later office buildings, from the 1920s to the ’60s.

**WHERE:** He developed much of Petworth, turning the Columbia Golf Course into thousands of rowhouses in the 1920s. He also built in Columbia Heights and Bethesda. His apartment buildings include the Porter on Connecticut Avenue and the Miramar near Thomas Circle.

**CHARLES GESSFORD**

**WHAT HE BUILT:** Hundreds of Victorian rowhouses and alley dwellings throughout the 1870s, ‘80s, and ‘90s.

**WHERE:** Gessford is likely responsible for more homes on Capitol Hill than any other single developer. Prime examples can be found around Lincoln and Stanton parks, and the alley named after him, Gessford Court, is unsurprisingly full of his work.

**EDGAR KENNEDY**

**WHAT HE BUILT:** Rowhouses, luxury apartments, and semidetached houses from the 1880s to the 1950s. (He worked into his nineties).

**WHERE:** Kennedy built rowhouses in Capitol Hill, Dupont, Woodley Park, and Mount Pleasant, followed by apartments such as the Kennedy-Warren near Cleveland Park. He also built in Southwest DC and developed Bethesda’s Kenwood neighborhood.

**WILLIAM CAMMACK MILLER AND ALLISON NAILOR MILLER**

**WHAT THEY BUILT:** Rowhouses and detached houses, including Colonial and Tudor Revivals.

**WHERE:** The brothers founded the W.C. & A.N. Miller Development Company in 1912 (it still exists), starting with rowhouses in places like Woodley Park and Petworth. By the ’20s, they were developing subdivisions of upscale homes, such as Wesley Heights and Spring Valley.

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