



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

Contact: Brian McNiff
Telephone: 617-727-9180

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**WASHINGTON PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT, NEWTON, APPROVED FOR
NOMINATION TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin is pleased to announce that the Massachusetts Historical Commission approved the Washington Park Historic District in Newton for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places at its December 12, 2007 meeting. The nomination will be submitted to the National Register of Historic Places at the National Park Service in Washington, DC, for final consideration and designation.

“The Massachusetts Historical Commission is dedicated to preserving the Commonwealth’s rich architectural, cultural, archaeological, and historic resources,” Secretary Galvin said. “Inclusion of this property on the National Register will help to protect our heritage for generations to come.”

Washington Park is a historic residential neighborhood in the city of Newton. It is a notable example of a mid-to-late 19th century planned subdivision with design elements influenced by the Urban Parks Movement. Washington Park extends the length of one city block, bordered on the west by Walnut Street and the east by Harvard Avenue, and the north and south by Madison and Cabot Streets. The Washington Park National Register Historic District encompasses approximately two-thirds of the block, and is comprised of 27 single- and multi-family houses situated along both sides of a narrow, oblong park. The neighborhood is representative of early development patterns in Newtonville, which saw a transition from its predominately agricultural roots to a more residential-based community in the 1840s and 1850s. It holds a variety of well-preserved, highly crafted architectural resources.

The land for the Washington Park subdivision was owned and laid out in 1865 by real estate entrepreneur (and Newtonville resident) Dustin Lancey. The District features over two dozen historic buildings situated on both sides of an oblong, tree-lined park, which serves as a picturesque street median. Lancey’s plan was successful in creating a scenic residential setting in the vein of the Parks Movement, popular locally and internationally around this time. The visual appeal of Washington Park is enhanced by the relationship of its historic architecture to the park-like design of its greenspace. Houses are set back far enough from the road to allow for small front yards, landscaped vegetation, and pedestrian right-of-ways. There is sufficient spacing between houses to incorporate small driveways, mature trees, and picket fences. The oblong, public greenspace area is the central connecting point to the historic homes, creating a tree-lined arborway for passive recreational use. This relationship between Washington Park’s built environment and planned landscaping remains true to Lancey’s original vision. There are several examples of high style, late Victorian-era architecture (mid-to-late-19th century), including Queen Anne, Italianate, Gothic Revival, Stick, and Second Empire. Other architectural styles in the district include early-20th century Colonial Revival and Craftsman, along with some significant buildings from the mid-19th century.

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These buildings are mostly large, two-to-three story single and multi-family houses, with one exception being the Universalist Church, currently the home of Newton's New Art Center. All of the buildings in the National Register district exemplify a high quality of workmanship, and principal exterior facades have been spared from modern alterations or loss of historic integrity. Several small, historic garages remain in the district as well. Overall, Washington Park's architectural resources remain in excellent condition.

The Washington Park Historic District is one of 6 historic resources around the Commonwealth approved for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places by the Massachusetts Historical Commission at this meeting.

Secretary Galvin serves as Chairman of the 17-member board, which meets regularly and considers historic resources eligible for the National Register four times a year.

The National Register is the nation's official listing of significant historic resources. In Massachusetts, there are over 65,000 properties listed in the National Register. The Massachusetts Historical Commission has been administering the National Register of Historic Places program in Massachusetts since 1966.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission is the office of the State Historic Preservation Officer and the State Archaeologist. It was established in 1963 to identify, evaluate, and protect important historical and archaeological assets of the Commonwealth. Visit our website to learn more about the Commission's programs (www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc).

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