

## Avondale (68-000)

Avondale is an automobile suburb located near Eastern Avenue, just east of the boundary between Washington, D.C. and Prince George's County. The community is bounded by Queen's Chapel Road on the south, Russell Avenue on the east, Ingraham Street on the northeast, Chillum Road on the north, and LaSalle Road on the west.

The community consists of several subdivisions including Avondale Grove (1937-1946), Avondale Terrace (1945-1946), and North Avondale (1950). Taking advantage of a prime location near the District of Columbia and established communities such as Hyattsville and Brentwood, Section One of Avondale Grove was platted in 1937 by the D.C. Developing Company, Inc.<sup>1</sup> Harry Wardman, president of D.C. Developing Company, was Washington D.C.'s most prolific residential real estate developer in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Best known for rowhouse developments, luxury hotels, and apartment buildings, Wardman's D.C. Developing Company also completed a few single-family developments, including a 900-house subdivision in the Fort Stevens area of northeast Washington, D.C.<sup>2</sup>

Avondale Grove was advertised in *The Washington Post* as "Priced Within Your Means \$6,950-\$7,450-\$7,550 and \$7,750." In the ad, Wardman remarked, "From our experience in building thousands of houses we know these detached homes to be the best value we have ever offered the public."<sup>3</sup> The development was planned to include 200 houses and "one of the most complete parking and shopping centers in the neighborhood."<sup>4</sup> An article on the development noted that "All homes in this development will be the most modern in floor arrangement and equipment and nothing but the best materials and the most skilled craftsmanship will be employed in their construction."<sup>5</sup> Avondale Grove was one of the last projects developed by Harry Wardman. Soon after construction began in Avondale, in December 1937 Wardman was hospitalized and died in March 1938.<sup>6</sup> After Wardman's death, the D.C. Developing Company platted Sections Two and Three of Avondale Grove in 1939, Section Four in 1940, and resubdivided lots in Section Three and Four in 1946. The shopping center originally planned by Wardman never materialized.

Avondale Terrace, located directly north of Avondale Grove, was platted in 1945 by Avondale Park, Inc.<sup>7</sup> Nathaniel J. Taube, president of Avondale Park and the Colonial Mortgage Company, was the developer of several other projects in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Prior to coming to Washington, D.C., Taube was well-known for his work in Philadelphia, where he was involved in the construction of the Fox Theater Building and the Warwick Hotel. His partner, Nathan Levin, was a Washington attorney and businessman. Levin served as president of the Colonial Investment Company, established in 1925, which specialized in large-scale housing sales and rentals. The two worked together on several large developments in the area including Viers Mill Village in Montgomery County, Maryland, and Warwick Village in Alexandria, Virginia.<sup>8</sup> Avondale Terrace was one of the first projects where the two collaborated.

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<sup>1</sup> Prince George's County Land Records, Circuit Court, Plat Book SDH 4:83.

<sup>2</sup> William Hogan, "The First Tycoon," *Regardie's* (May/June 1981), 60-65.

<sup>3</sup> "Wardman's New Offering in 'Avondale Grove,'" *The Washington Post*, 11 July 1937.

<sup>4</sup> "200 Dwellings to be Erected in Maryland," *The Washington Post*, 11 July 1937.

<sup>5</sup> "200 Dwellings to be Erected in Maryland," *The Washington Post*, 11 July 1937.

<sup>6</sup> Hogan, "The First Tycoon," 65.

<sup>7</sup> Prince George's County Land Records, Circuit Court, Plat Book BB 10:15.

<sup>8</sup> "Mortgage, Investment Firm Announces New Location," *The Washington Post*, 6 December 1953.

North Avondale, platted in 1950 by Harry Kessler and Ralph Ochsman, is located north of Chillum Road and northwest of the larger Avondale community.<sup>9</sup> Ralph Ochsman was a local developer, most notably of Harmony Hills in Silver Spring.<sup>10</sup> North Avondale was platted four years later than the last sections of Avondale Grove and Avondale Terrace. North Avondale consists exclusively of two-story twin dwellings of brick construction that were designed by architect Harry Kessler and constructed by O'Hara Corporation.<sup>11</sup>

There are currently no designated Historic Sites or Historic Resources within the Avondale community.

## Windshield Survey

A windshield survey of Avondale was conducted in November 2007. The survey area includes approximately 287 primary resources. The community contains a variety of modest buildings constructed between 1937 and 1950. There are a number of popular twentieth-century styles represented in Avondale including the Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, Dutch Colonial Revival, and illustrations from the Modern Movement. Common building forms include Cape Cods, ranch houses, and minimal traditional houses. Houses are constructed almost exclusively of brick, although other materials appear as cladding, including weatherboard siding, vinyl siding, and stone veneer. Stone veneer appears frequently on the facades of the dwellings, typically covering the first story of the building, or used decoratively as quoining. Almost all of the houses in Avondale Grove and Avondale Terrace feature one-car garages, typically attached to the dwelling. The garages reflect the importance of the automobile in this commuter suburb. The houses in the earlier subdivisions tend to be smaller and more modest in design, typically one-and-a-half stories in height. Dwellings in the northern portion of Avondale Grove and in Avondale Terrace tend to be slightly larger two-story houses, often with side and rear porches and additions. The curvilinear streets of Avondale were designed to take advantage of the hilly topography of the community. In North Avondale, the subdivision is constructed completely of two-story, Modern Movement twin dwellings of masonry construction with flat roofs. These buildings were all constructed in 1950. Avondale is exclusively residential, although some non-residential development surrounds the larger neighborhood. The Redemptoris Mater Seminary of Washington is located west of the community, Washington Gas and Light Company is located to the north, the Hyattsville Metrorail station is located to the northeast, and large apartment complexes are located southeast and northwest of the community. One commercial building, a bank, is located southwest of the neighborhood on Queen's Chapel Road.

## Historic District Evaluation

Avondale meets several Prince George's County Heritage Themes including suburban growth and residential architectural styles. Even though the subdivisions of Avondale Grove and Avondale Terrace were developed by two different developers, together they present as a cohesive automobile suburb dating from the second quarter of the twentieth century. Although North Avondale is a part of the larger Avondale community, it was developed in 1950 by a different developer and displays a different building form (twin dwellings) and architectural styles from the Modern Movement. North Avondale should not be considered as part of a historic district in Avondale. Avondale Grove and Avondale Terrace meet the following criteria for designation as a Prince George's County historic district:

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<sup>9</sup> Prince George's County Land Records, Circuit Court, Plat Book WWW 18:15.

<sup>10</sup> "Bewitched Home Buyers Smash All Sales Records on Cinderella Homes," *The Washington Post*, 15 September 1956.

<sup>11</sup> Robert P. Jordan, "Seventeen 'Homes of 1950' Being Readied for Sept. Exhibition," *The Washington Post*, 20 August 1950.

- (1)(A)(i) and (iv) – Avondale is representative of a planned automobile suburb developed in the second quarter of the twentieth century. It is indicative of the number of modest and affordable commuter suburbs established in Prince George’s County and the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area in the first half of the twentieth century.
- (1)(A)(iii) and (2)(A)(ii) – Avondale is significant for its connection with Harry Wardman, whose D.C. Developing Company planned and developed Avondale Grove from 1937 to 1946. Wardman was one of the most prolific residential developers in Washington, D.C. in the first part of the twentieth century. He is best known for his rowhouse developments, luxury apartments, and hotels. Avondale Grove represents one of Wardman’s few suburban developments of single-family detached houses and his only development in Prince George’s County.
- (2)(A)(i) – Houses in Avondale embody the distinctive characteristics of architecture in the second quarter of the twentieth century. The neighborhood has a variety of popular domestic architectural styles including the Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, Dutch Colonial Revival, and the Modern Movement.
- (2)(A)(iv) – Avondale Grove and Avondale Terrace present a cohesive and unified residential automobile suburb in Prince George’s County. The subdivisions reflect the evolution of suburbs in the larger Washington, D.C. metropolitan area and the variety of domestic architectural styles and housing forms demonstrates the evolution of suburban architecture in Prince George’s County.

Avondale also meets the following National Register criteria for designation as a historic district:

Criterion A – Avondale is significant as an automobile suburb developed in the second quarter of the twentieth century in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Because of the increasing popularity of the automobile and subsequent rise in automobile ownership, developers in the 1930s no longer had to locate their communities close to public transportation. More and more Americans owned cars and began to use them to commute to work. The large number of garages and driveways reflect the importance of the automobile in the Avondale community. The increasing growth and development of Avondale is also due to the World War II-era (1941-1945) population boom in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Increasing numbers of employees were brought to the District of Columbia as defense workers, and large numbers of returning veterans chose to settle in the metropolitan area with their families. Avondale was the perfect location for these people, offering a convenient location close to the District with affordable, attractive housing. Harry Wardman designed Avondale Grove to appeal to a middle-class commuter, creating an affordable community that featured modern amenities such as gas appliances, “six big rooms, garage, full basement, insulation, furred walls, weather-stripped, [and] refrigeration.”<sup>12</sup>

Criterion C – Avondale contains a collection of residential architecture that reflects popular styles and forms from the second quarter of the twentieth century. Although developed by a different company, Avondale Terrace complements the styles and forms in Avondale Grove and presents as a large, cohesive community. Avondale Grove is directly associated with Harry Wardman, who was one of the most significant residential developers in Washington, D.C. Wardman was a master builder and developer and Avondale still conveys Wardman’s intention to build a modest commuter subdivision. Avondale was one of the last developments Wardman worked on before his death in 1938 and is one of the few suburban developments

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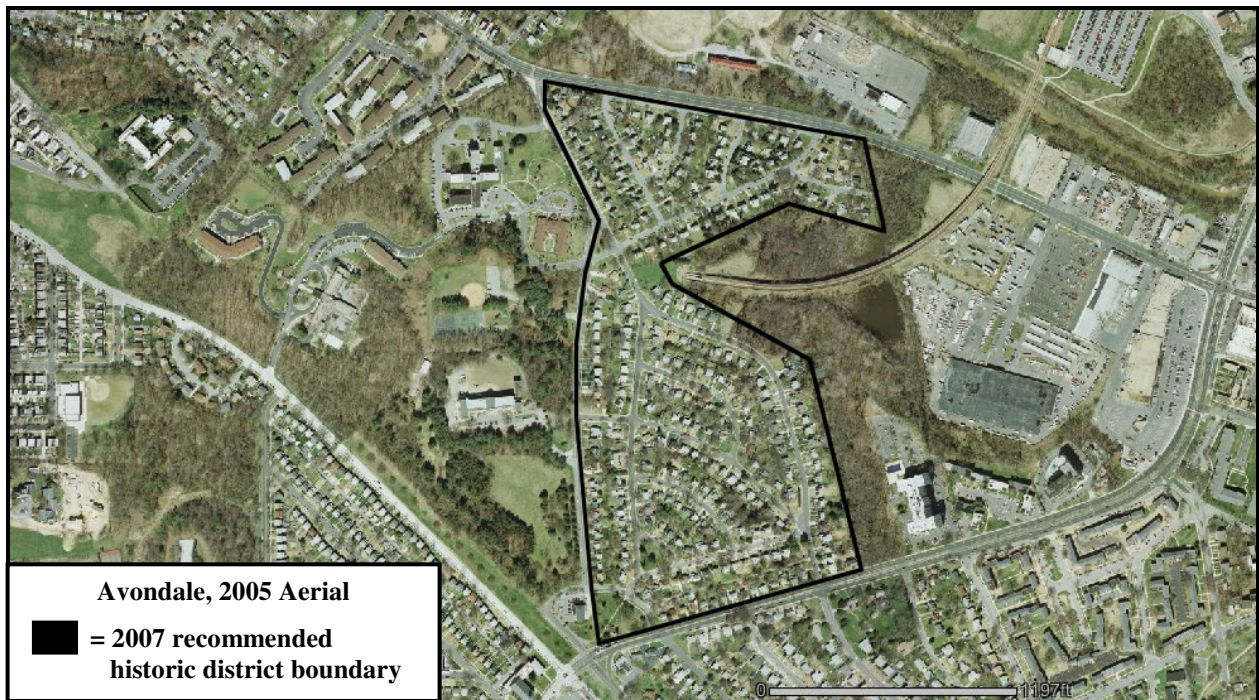
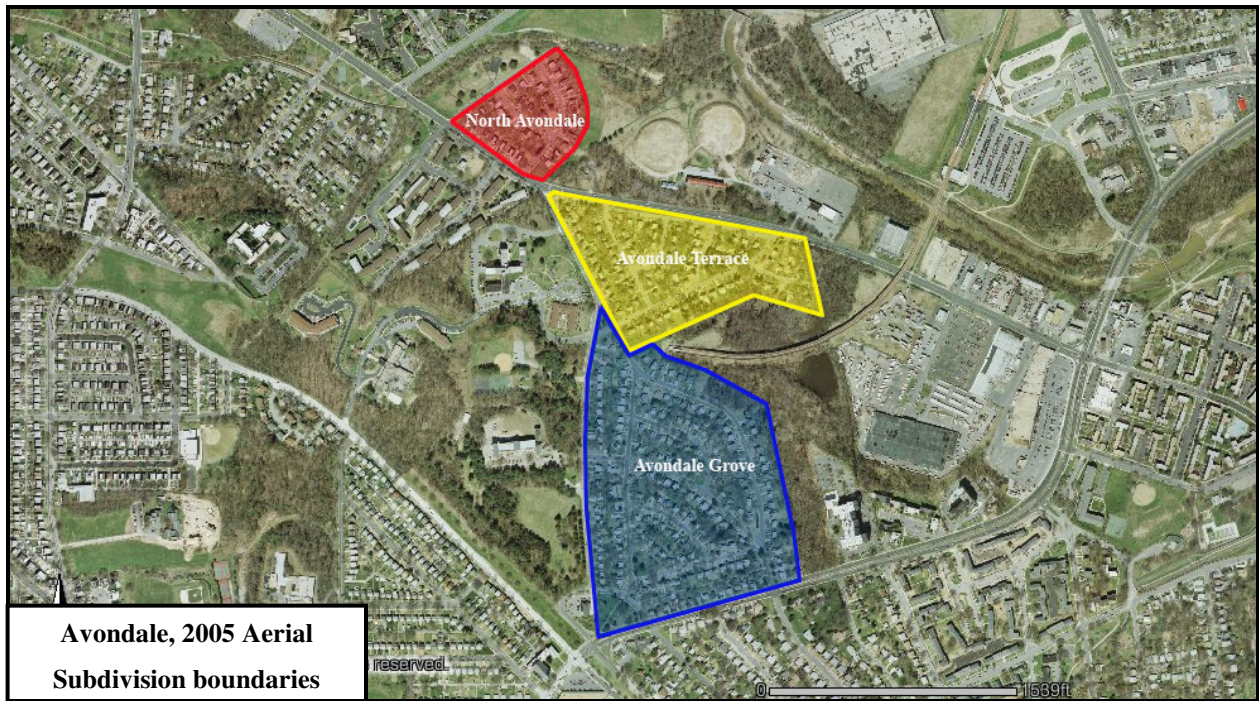
<sup>12</sup> “A New Development of Moderate Priced Homes,” *The Washington Post*, 3 October 1937.

designed by Wardman that includes single-family detached houses. Furthermore, Avondale Grove is Wardman's only known development in Prince George's County.

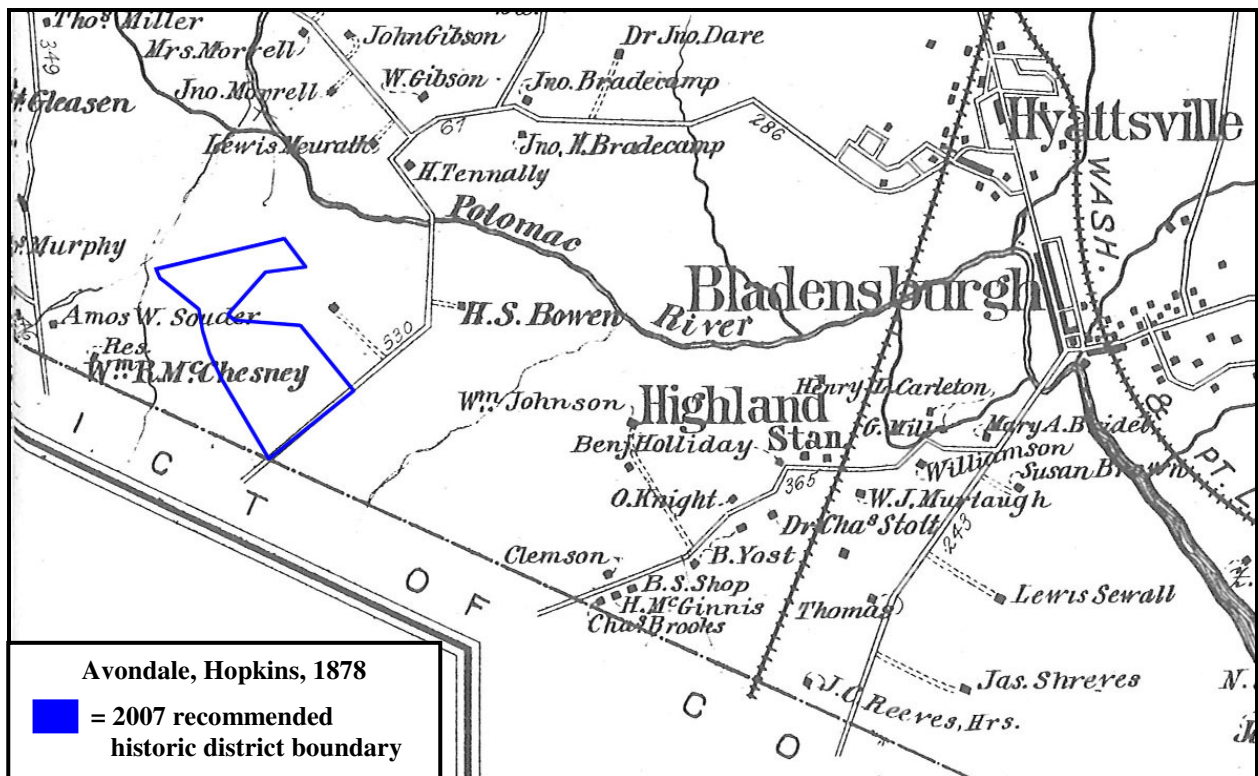
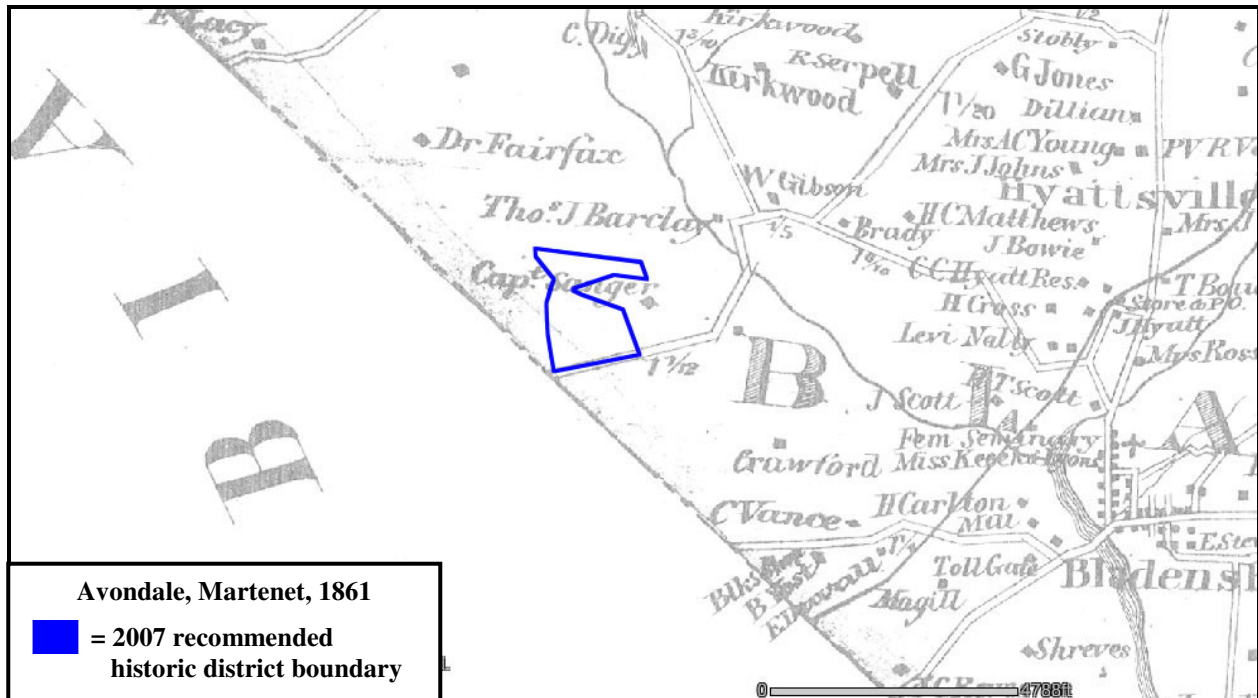
In addition to its significance, Avondale remains a very cohesive community with virtually no infill. The majority of houses retain their original form and have had few alterations or additions. Avondale has retained its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

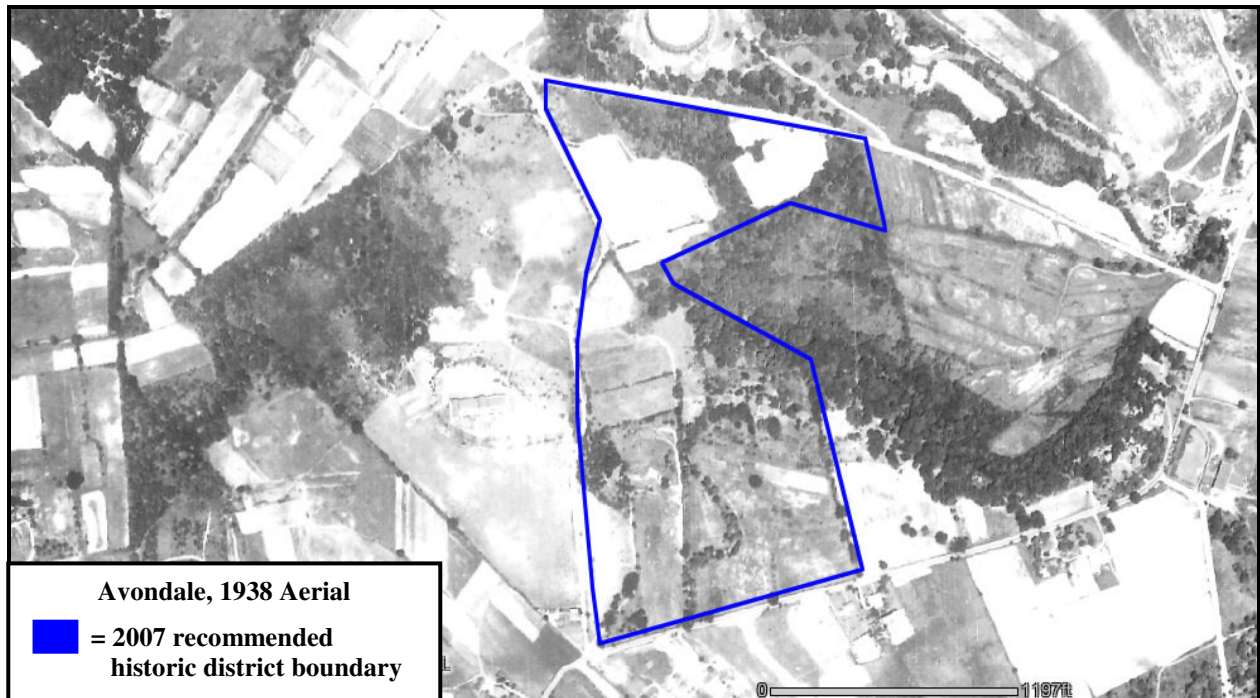
Prepared by EHT Tracerics, Inc.  
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Looking north, 4801-4803 LaSalle Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking east, 2002-2004 Woodreeve Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)





Looking north, 2024-2022-2020 Hayden Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking southeast, 4910-4908-4906 Russell Avenue (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)





Looking east, 4833 Russell Avenue (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)





Looking south, 4800 block of Russell Avenue (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking north, 4806-4808 Avondale Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)





Looking south, 2101 Brighton Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking northwest, 5402-5404 20th Avenue (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)