

Brentwood (68-012)

Brentwood was established in the late nineteenth century as a railroad suburb of Washington, D.C., evolving into a cohesive residential community of northwestern Prince George's County. Located to the west of the Baltimore and Ohio (B&O) Railroad tracks, the community is bounded by the residential neighborhoods of North Brentwood, Mount Rainier, and Cottage City.

The development of Brentwood followed closely behind that of nearby Mount Rainier, Hyattsville, Riverdale, and College Park. The affordable prices, healthiness of the area, and the convenient location near the B&O Railroad made all of these communities popular choices for prospective buyers at the turn of the twentieth century.¹

The community of Brentwood was planned and platted by Captain Wallace A. Bartlett, a white commander of the U.S. Colored Troops during the Civil War (1861-1865). Born in New York in 1844, Bartlett worked as a patent lawyer, real estate investor, and director of the First National Bank of Southern Maryland.² In 1887, Bartlett moved his family from Washington, D.C. to the 206-acre Holladay farm located northeast of the city adjoining The Highlands (now known as Cottage City). Bartlett, along with J. Lee Adams and Samuel J. Mills, formed the Holladay Land and Improvement Company in 1891 and had the property surveyed and divided into lots.³ In 1896, Bartlett and the others enrolled their plat of the Holladay Company's Addition to Highland.⁴ The northern part of the Addition to Highland, now known as North Brentwood (PG: 68-061), was often subject to flooding from the nearby Northwest Branch of the Anacostia River and these less desirable lots were sold at lower prices and were marketed towards African Americans.

Already located near the Highlands railroad station, the extension of the streetcar line in 1898 made the Holladay Company's Addition even more desirable to prospective buyers. Nearby communities such as Mount Rainier, Hyattsville, and Cottage City were all experiencing tremendous growth because of the ease of public transportation into the District of Columbia. Opting to take advantage of this, Bartlett joined with Ira J. Baker and Sigmund A. Czarra and formed the Brentwood Company. The group platted Clempson Place, which was more commonly referred to as Brentwood.⁵ The Brentwood name was taken from the nearby Brent family property, which was located approximately one mile inside the boundary of Washington, D.C. The Brentwood plantation was established by Robert Brent, the first mayor (1802-1812) of the District of Columbia.⁶

As the population of the subdivisions grew, so did the needs of the residents. In 1902, Bartlett, Baker, and Czarra deeded two lots at the corner of Campbell and Wells (now Tilden and 37th) Streets to the Board of Education for the purpose of erecting a school, which opened in 1903. The small two-room building quickly became overcrowded and by 1909, a second school was constructed on Baker (now Taylor) Street.⁷ Early residents of the community worshipped at a nearby barn located close to the intersection of Dewey and Wells Streets. In 1904, under the leadership of Reverend A.L. Hughes, the congregation purchased a lot on the corner of Wells and Campbell Streets and a small, front-gable church was soon

¹ Susan G. Pearl, *Historical Survey Brentwood, Maryland* (Upper Marlboro: M-NCPPC, 1992), 2.

² "Capt. W.A. Bartlett Dead," *The Washington Post*, May 26, 1908.

³ Susan G. Pearl, "North Brentwood Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (February 2003), 8:3-4.

⁴ Prince George's County Land Records, Circuit Court, JWB 5:646, Plat Book LIB A:8, and Equity D-2972.

⁵ Prince George's County Land Records, Circuit Court, JB 5:606.

⁶ James Goode, *Capital Losses* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1979), 9.

⁷ Susan G. Pearl, "Brentwood Elementary School," Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form (June 1992), 8:1.

constructed.⁸ That same year, Bartlett and his associates replatted the Holladay Company's Addition to Highland, expanding the boundaries of the subdivision and resubdividing some blocks.⁹ Bartlett expended considerable effort to have the swampy areas of his landholdings drained, allowing for the further expansion of his original subdivision. At the same time, Sigmund Czarra began operating independently and platted Czarra's Addition to Brentwood.¹⁰ By end of the first decade of the twentieth century, there were 15 dwellings standing in the Holladay Company's subdivision and 36 in Brentwood.¹¹

In response to the increasing needs of the community, the Brentwood Citizens Association was formed in 1903. By 1912, a group of residents unsuccessfully petitioned to incorporate the community as a town. Just five years later, a second civic group, the West Brentwood Improvement Association, was formed. By 1920, the Improvement Association succeeded in installing three electric lights and having the streets graded and oiled. At that time, the population of the Brentwood community was over 1,000 residents and it became apparent that local fundraising was not sufficient to cover the cost of maintaining the neighborhood's streets and services. In the spring of 1922, the Maryland General Assembly ratified the charter of the community, officially establishing the Town of Brentwood.¹² Following the incorporation of the town, Czarra revised a portion of his earlier addition to Brentwood, expanded the subdivision, and replatted the area as Czarra's Revised Addition to Brentwood.¹³ A separate subdivision on the south side of Brentwood was platted in 1926 as Brunk's Addition. Consisting of just seven lots, these houses were quickly improved with modest bungalows.¹⁴

Like many of the railroad and streetcar suburbs in northwestern Prince George's County, the population of the young town steadily increased from the 1920s through the 1940s. By 1930, the population reached 1,842 residents and on the eve of World War II (1941-1945), the population had increased to 2,433. A number of improvements were made at the time, including street paving and the construction of new roads to meet the growing dependence on the automobile. At the same time, Brentwood adopted the Washington D.C. street-naming system, and subsequently renamed their streets.¹⁵

The explosive growth of Prince George's County after World War II also affected established communities like Brentwood. A garden-apartment complex was built during the war in an effort to create an affordable and attractive alternative to single-family residences. During the 1950s, several of the earliest dwellings in the subdivision were demolished and the lots were subsequently improved with new houses that offered modern amenities dressed in the most fashionable styles and forms. By 1965, the community was fully developed.¹⁶

Today, the small Town of Brentwood remains a viable, well-planned residential suburb with a racially diverse population of almost 3,000.¹⁷

Currently there are no designated Historic Sites or Resources in Brentwood.

⁸ Susan G. Pearl, "Brentwood Methodist Episcopal Church South (Hughes Chapel," Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form (June 1992), 8:1.

⁹ Prince George's County Land Records, Circuit Court, JWB 5:646, Plat Book LIB A:9.

¹⁰ Prince George's County Land Records, Circuit Court, BB 5:11.

¹¹ Pearl, *Historical Survey Brentwood, Maryland*, 21-22.

¹² Denny, *Proud Past, Promising Future*, 92.

¹³ Prince George's County Land Records, Circuit Court, SDH 3:6.

¹⁴ Prince George's County Land Records, Circuit Court, SDH 3:35.

¹⁵ Pearl, *Historical Survey of Brentwood, Maryland*, 58.

¹⁶ Pearl, *Historical Survey of Brentwood, Maryland*, 58.

¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, "Fact Sheet: Brentwood town, Maryland,"

http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFacts?_event=ChangeGeoContext&geo_id=16000US2409500&_geoContext=&_street=&_county=brentwood&_cityTown=brentwood&_state=04000US24&_zip=&_lang=en&_sse=on&ActiveGeoDiv=&_useEV=&pctxt=fph&pgsl=010&_submenuId=factsheet_1&ds_name=DEC_2000_SAFF&_ci_nbr=null&q_r_name=null®=null%3Anull&_keyword=&_industry=, accessed 29 January 2009.

Windshield Survey

A windshield survey of Brentwood was conducted in February 2008. This includes the subdivisions of Wilen Heights (1893), Holladay Company's Addition to Highland (1896/1904), Brentwood (1899), Dr. S.A. Czarra's Addition to Brentwood (1904), Cedar Croft (1922), Czarra's Revised Addition to Brentwood (1924), Brunk's Addition to Brentwood (1926), and Keenan Tract of Brentwood (1942). The survey area consists of approximately 700 primary resources. Brentwood includes buildings that represent a variety of uses including residential, commercial, industrial, and religious. Public buildings include a town hall, senior center, and fire station. Buildings are primarily single-family residential houses, but there are also some twin dwellings, an apartment building, scattered commercial buildings throughout the community, with commercial and industrial development along the edges of the town, particularly along Rhode Island Avenue. Buildings in Brentwood date from ca. 1900 to the present. The majority of buildings were constructed between 1900 and ca. 1945. Common building forms include I-houses, front-gabled dwellings, L-shaped plans, detached rowhouses, American Foursquares, bungalows, Cape Cods, and ranch houses. The architecture of Brentwood includes vernacular interpretations of popular late-nineteenth- and early twentieth-century architectural styles including Queen Anne and Colonial Revival. Other architectural styles include Craftsman, Dutch Colonial Revival, and illustrations from the Modern Movement. Houses in Brentwood are typically modest and have minimal ornamentation, indicative of their use for middle-class residents. The community is set on gently rolling hills and flat land. The rectilinear grid of the community is bisected by some angled and curving streets that resulted from later resubdivisions of lots and parcels. Houses are usually set rather close to the road with minimal setbacks.

Historic District Evaluation

Brentwood represents several Prince George's County Heritage Themes including suburban growth and residential architectural styles. The community is bounded by several other National Register Historic Districts, including Hyattsville, North Brentwood, and Mount Rainier. Like its neighbors, Brentwood merits designation as both a National Register historic district and as a Prince George's County historic district.

Although Brentwood is composed of several different subdivisions, the development in the community was consistent from its platting in 1896 through the mid-twentieth century. Distinct patterns of development can be seen in the community, illustrating the evolution of vernacular architecture, popular architectural styles, and suburban development in Prince George's County from 1896 through ca. 1945. The community represents a cohesive and unified neighborhood with limited infill and easily identifiable boundaries. Brentwood meets the following criteria for designation as a National Register historic district:

Criterion A – Brentwood is significant as a late-nineteenth-century railroad suburb of Washington, D.C. It was one of many new suburbs designed to meet the needs of a growing population that sought affordable, attractive, and healthy communities in Prince George's County. Development in the community was steady from its platting in 1896 through World War II. Brentwood was conveniently located near the train and streetcar, but it was also adjacent to Rhode Island Avenue and near the Route 1 corridor, both important transportation routes between Washington, D.C. and Prince George's County. Although established as a railroad suburb, the community gradually evolved over time into a commuter suburb focused more on the automobile rather than train transportation.

Criterion C – The variety of architectural styles and building forms present in Brentwood is indicative of the evolution of residential architecture, design, and suburban planning from the late nineteenth

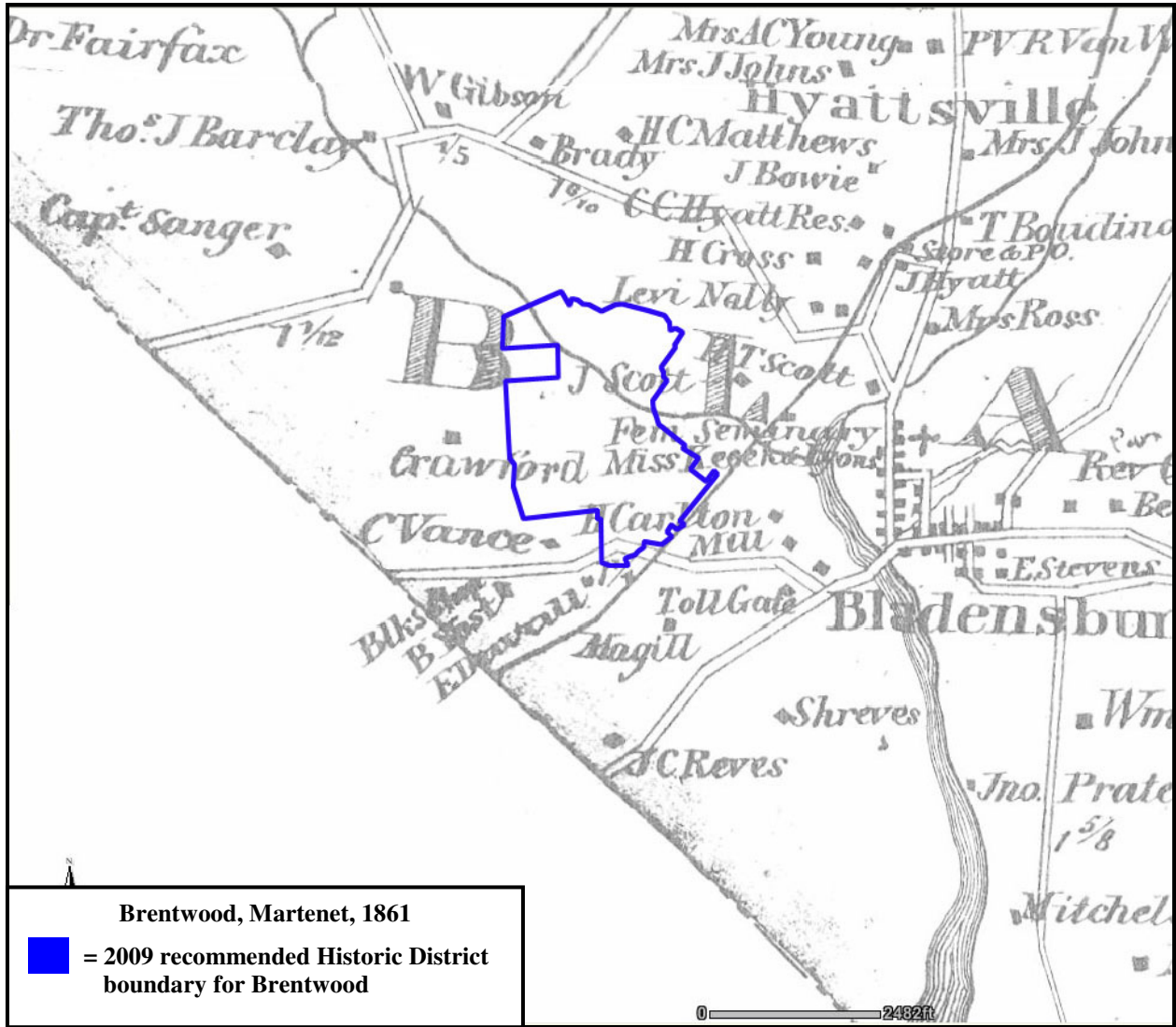
century through the second quarter of the twentieth century in Prince George's County. The architecture of Brentwood includes vernacular interpretations of popular late-nineteenth- and early twentieth-century architectural styles including Queen Anne and Colonial Revival. Other architectural styles include Craftsman, Dutch Colonial Revival, and illustrations from the Modern Movement. Common building forms include I-houses, front-gabled dwellings, L-shaped plans, detached rowhouses, American Foursquares, bungalows, Cape Cods, and ranch houses. Distinct patterns of development are evident throughout the recommended historic district boundaries; however the community still manages to convey a cohesive feel. The unified community of Brentwood remains intact with limited non-historic infill.

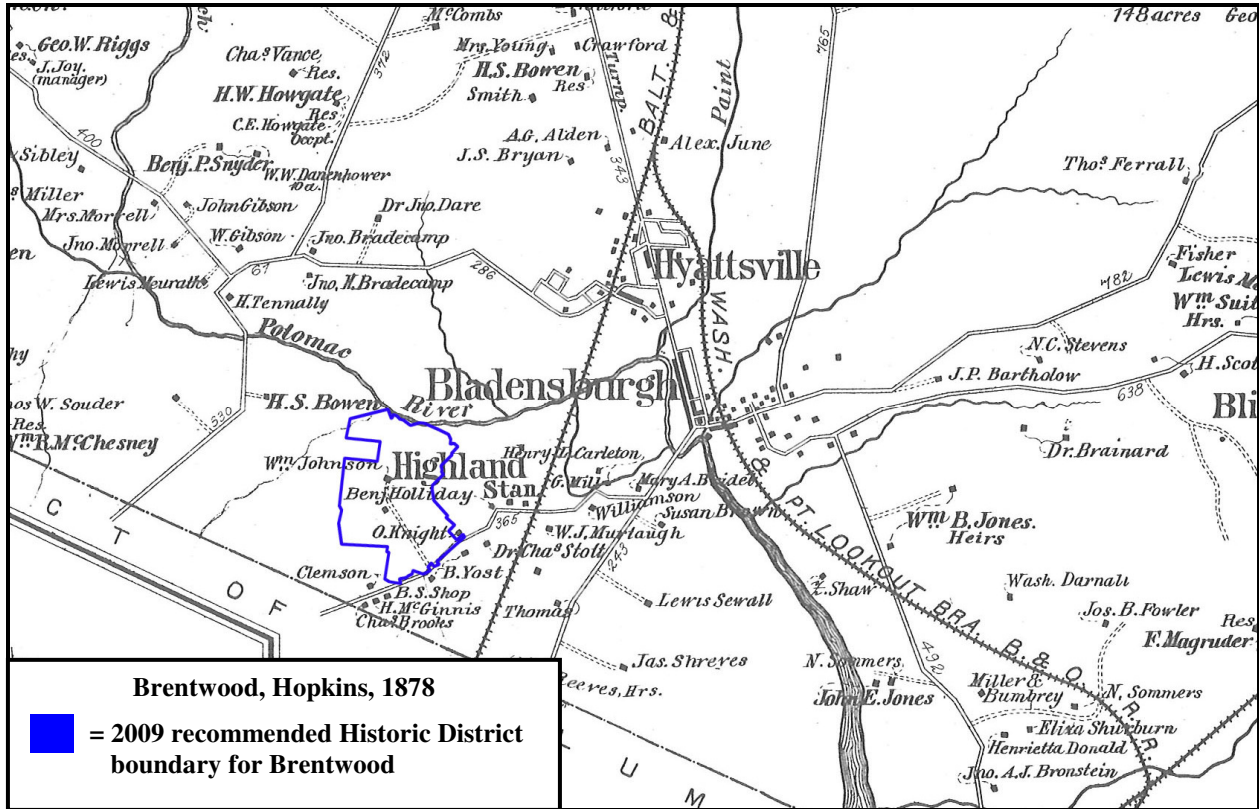
Brentwood also meets the following criteria for designation as a Prince George's County Historic District:

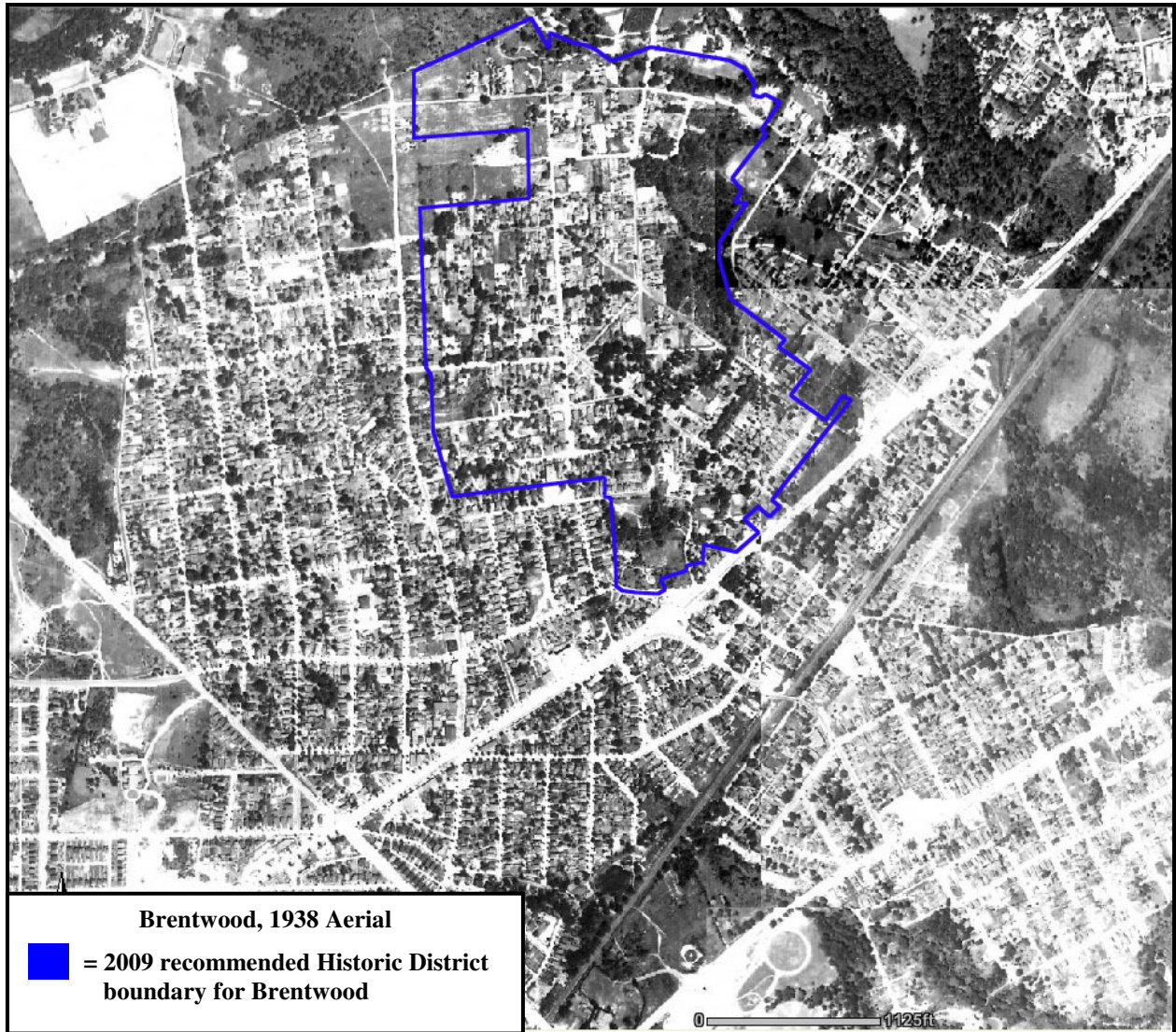
- (1)(A)(i) – Brentwood is an example of a suburban residential neighborhood that developed in the late nineteenth century as a result of the convenience to the nearby railroad and because of the early success of neighboring subdivisions such as Hyattsville and Mount Rainier. Initially established as a railroad suburb, the neighborhood continued to grow and develop through the first half of the twentieth century into a commuter suburb more focused on the automobile than train transportation. The location of the suburb off of the B&O Railroad and its proximity to major roads ensured that commuters in Brentwood would have a quick and easy commute into Washington, D.C., whether by train or car. As the community evolved over time, new subdividers and developers each made their individual impact on the architecture, design, and planning of Brentwood.
- (2)(A)(i) and (iv) – Brentwood represents the evolution of suburban architecture and residential planning in Prince George's County from ca. 1896 through ca. 1945. Brentwood is architecturally significant as a residential neighborhood exhibiting late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century architectural styles that include Queen Anne and Colonial Revival, Craftsman, Dutch Colonial Revival, and various illustrations from the Modern Movement. The collection of vernacular buildings in Brentwood represents several periods of development within the community. Because Brentwood developed in the 1890s as a result of the convenience of transportation between Washington, D.C. and Prince George's County, the community shows the evolution of suburban development from the late nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth century.

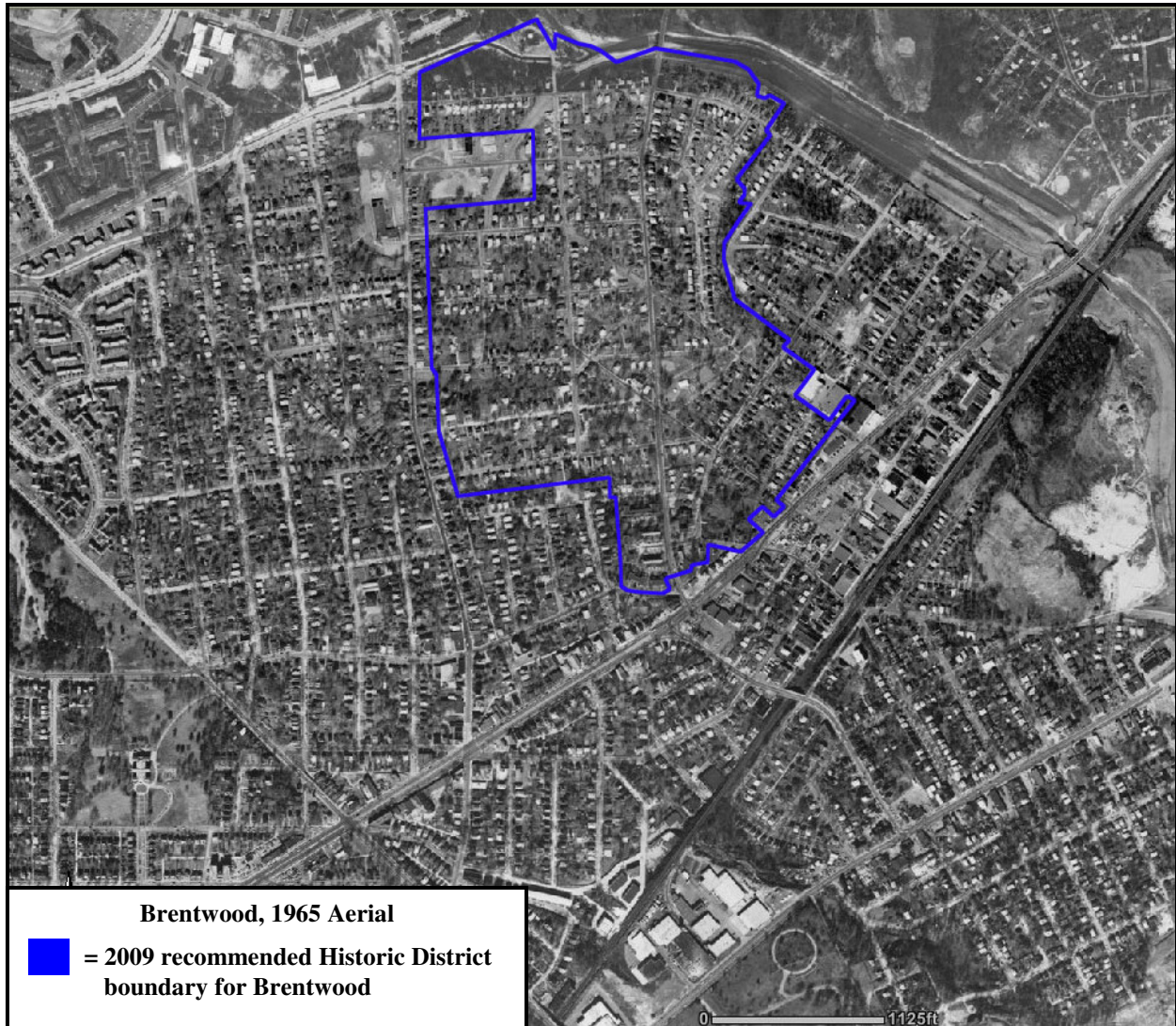
Brentwood contains approximately 546 primary resources constructed between ca. 1896 and the present. The recommended historic district boundaries encompass the original plat of Holladay Company's Addition to Highland (1896/1904) and the subsequent subdivisions of Brentwood (1899), Dr. S.A. Czarra's Addition to Brentwood (1904), Czarra's Revised Addition to Brentwood (1924), Brunk's Addition to Brentwood (1926), and the Keenan Tract of Brentwood (1942). The boundaries of the recommended historic district abut the boundaries of both the North Brentwood Historic District (PG: 68-061) and the Mount Rainier Historic District (PG: 68-013). Boundaries were drawn to exclude non-historic commercial development in the northwest corner of the district, as well as the development along Rhode Island Avenue that no longer retains sufficient integrity. Many of the commercial buildings have been so altered over time that their integrity has been compromised and would result in these buildings being non-contributing resources in the historic district. Overall, the neighborhood has retained its integrity of location, design, setting, workmanship, feeling, and association. Several houses have been reclad with modern replacement materials or modest additions, resulting in a minimal loss of materials.













Looking northeast, 4401 40th Street (*EHT Traceries, 2008*)



Looking south, 4313-4311-4309 40th Street (*EHT Traceries*, 2008)



Looking southwest, 4316-4314-4312 40th Street (*EHT Traceries*, 2008)



Looking east, 4303 40th Street (*EHT Traceries, 2008*)



Looking southeast, 4001-4003-4005 Utah Avenue (*EHT Traceries*, 2008)



Looking northeast, 3700 block (even) of Shepherd Street (*EHT Traceries*, 2008)



Looking northwest, 4204 37th Street (*EHT Traceries*, 2008)



Looking southwest, 3507-3505 Taylor Street (*EHT Traceries, 2008*)



Looking northwest, 4208-4210 34th Street (*EHT Traceries*, 2008)



Looking southeast, 3413-3503 Webster Street (*EHT Traceries, 2008*)



Looking southeast, 4400 block (odd) of 37th Place (*EHT Traceries, 2008*)



Looking southeast, 4411-4409 39th Place (*EHT Traceries, 2008*)



Looking northwest, 3822-3820-3818 Allison Street (*EHT Traceries*, 2008)



Looking northeast, 4603 38th Avenue (*EHT Traceries, 2008*)