

Cottage City (68-096)

Cottage City is one of the smallest incorporated towns in Maryland and was established as a late-nineteenth-century railroad suburb. The community is located between the Town of Mount Rainier and the Town of Bladensburg near the Route 1 corridor.¹ Incorporated in 1924, Cottage City is bounded by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad on the northwest, the Anacostia River on the northeast, Bladensburg Road on the southeast, and 37th Avenue on the southwest.²

Located near the Eastern Branch of the Anacostia River, much of the area now comprising Cottage City was originally swamp land. In 1608, explorer John Smith noted that the area was inhabited by Native Americans from the Anacostank tribe, who lived on what is now called the Anacostia River.³ The first settlement in “Yarrow,” as the area around Cottage City was originally known, was established by 1697.⁴ During the early eighteenth century, a water-powered grist mill was constructed in the vicinity. Moyer’s Mill (later known as Carleton’s Mill), located on property that is now bounded by Bunker Hill Road and 43rd Avenue, was the first mill constructed in this part of Maryland.⁵ The mill operated until the late nineteenth century and stood until its demolition in the 1950s as part of the Anacostia flood control project. Two of the millstones still remain as part of the sidewalk on the 3700 block of 42nd Avenue.⁶

Cottage City was the site of military activity during two wars. In August 1814, the Battle of Bladensburg during the War of 1812 (1812-1815) was fought in part at the site. Almost five decades later, during the Civil War (1861-1865), Camp Casey was established on farmland outside of Bladensburg in present-day Cottage City.⁷ Martenet’s Map of 1861 depicts little development in the area. The rural landscape contained a few dwellings, Carleton’s grist mill, and a tollgate at the intersection of Bladensburg Road and Georgetown Pike.⁸

Cottage City was originally platted in 1870 as a railroad suburb known as the “City of the Highlands” by a group of Washington, D.C. developers. The community was advertised as “Overlooking Bladensburg and Hyattsville on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad...the future of suburban places about Washington!” Developers planned to build “cottages, villas, and dwellings,” using designs that were reminiscent of Andrew Jackson Downing’s *Cottage Residences* (1842).⁹ Despite the attractiveness of the well-planned community, the subdivision failed because there was inadequate public transportation. In 1878, the Hopkins map documents limited growth in Cottage City. The most notable change is the addition of the Highland train station. A few new dwellings constructed between 1861 and 1878 appear on the map.¹⁰

¹ Town of Cottage City, “Town of Cottage City Maryland: Information Handbook” (no date), unpublished, located in the files at M-NCPPC, Prince George’s County Historic Preservation & Public Facilities, Planning Section, 1.

² “Cottage City: Don’t Make Little of This Town,” *Prince George’s Extra*, 23 June 1999

³ Christian F. Feest, “Nanticoke and Neighboring Tribes,” in *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. Bruce G. Trigger (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 241.

⁴ George Denny, Jr., *Proud Past, Promising Future: Cities and Towns in Prince George’s County, Maryland* (Brentwood, MD: George D. Denny, Jr., 1997), 135.

⁵ Town of Cottage City, “Town of Cottage City Maryland: Information Handbook,” 1.

⁶ Bicentennial Committee, “A History of the Town of Cottage City, Maryland” (Cottage City, MD: Bicentennial Committee, May 1976), 3.

⁷ Alan Virta, *Prince George’s County: A Pictorial History* (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Company, 1991), 124.

⁸ Simon J. Martenet, “Atlas of Prince George’s County, Maryland, 1861, Adapted from Martenet’s Map of Prince George’s County, Maryland” (Baltimore: Simon J. Martenet C.E., 1861).

⁹ “City of the Highlands, Prince George [*sic*] County, Maryland” (Washington, D.C.: 1870), located at Prince George’s County Planning Department, Historic Preservation Section, Cottage City at The Highlands File.

¹⁰ G.M. Hopkins, “Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington, Including the County of Prince George Maryland” (Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, C.E., 1878).

From 1886 to 1888, Colonel Gilbert Moyer began amassing land by purchasing farmland and tracts of land in the failed Highlands subdivision. In 1888, Moyer established The Highland Company and replatted the community. Moyer reconfigured the layout of the subdivision and divided many of the parcels into smaller-sized lots.¹¹

After the economic depression of the early 1890s, the streetcar system expanded, encouraging suburban development in the greater Washington, D.C. area. In 1897, the Maryland and Washington Railway opened a line that ended at Mount Rainier.¹² By 1912, the streetcar line was extended to Berwyn Heights.¹³ With the construction of the streetcar system in Prince George's County, small communities such as Cottage City, Brentwood, and Mount Rainier grew into active commuter suburbs.

By 1914, the Highlands was resubdivided a third time and platted as Cottage City.¹⁴ Beginning in World War I (1914-1918), Charles M. Lightbown began constructing one-story "cottages" in Cottage City. These bungalows were primarily located on Bladensburg Road and 41st Avenue.¹⁵ By 1938, the majority of lots in the neighborhood were improved, most with modest bungalows. Today, Cottage City remains a middle-class commuter suburb in Prince George's County.

There are no designated Historic Sites in Cottage City. There is one Historic Resource in the Cottage City area:

- PG: 68-020, The Rural Cottage at the Highlands, 4203 Bunker Hill Road

Windshield Survey

A windshield survey of Cottage City was conducted in November 2007. The survey area includes approximately 341 primary resources. The community contains a variety of buildings constructed from circa 1914 to the 1980s. Buildings in Cottage City reflect a variety of popular twentieth-century styles including Craftsman, Spanish Revival, and Modern Movement. The overwhelming majority of buildings (approximately 90 percent) are one-and-a-half-story bungalows with varying levels of Craftsman-style detailing. Another common building type in Cottage City is the one-story, flat-roofed Spanish Revival-style dwelling. These buildings are typically clad in stucco and have small porticos or entry porches topped by a shed roof covered with regularly-laid Spanish tiles. The dwellings often feature arched openings, typical of the Spanish Revival style. Other less frequent forms include examples of ranch houses and other small side-gabled dwellings. The topography of the neighborhood is flat and houses have only small setbacks from the street. A strip of commercial development is located along Bladensburg Road. Many of these buildings are dwellings that have been adapted for commercial use. The single public building in Cottage City houses municipal administrative offices and the police department and was constructed in 1987.

¹¹ "City of the Highlands, Prince George [*sic*] County, Maryland" (Washington, D.C.: 1870), located at Prince George's County Planning Department, Historic Preservation Section, Cottage City at The Highlands File; Prince George's County Land Records, Circuit Court, JWB 9:365.

¹² Virta, *Prince George's County: A Pictorial History*, 192.

¹³ Bicentennial Committee, "A History of the Town of Cottage City, Maryland," 28.

¹⁴ Prince George's County Land Records, Circuit Court, Plat Book BDS 1:10.

¹⁵ Town of Cottage City, "Town of Cottage City Maryland: Information Handbook," 31.

Historic District Evaluation

Cottage City represents several Prince George's County Heritage Themes including suburban growth and residential architectural styles. Cottage City meets the following criteria for designation as a Prince George's County historic district:

- (1)(A)(i) – Cottage City was initially platted in 1870 as a railroad suburb, but its success depended upon the expansion of the streetcar line into Prince George's County. The line was not extended until the 1890s, which resulted in the failure of the original subdivision. The eventual extension of the streetcar line and the community's prime location near the Route 1 corridor made Cottage City a successful middle-class commuter suburb. The community grew quickly beginning with its re-platting in 1914. The Town was incorporated in 1924 and by 1938 the majority of lots in Cottage City were improved with modest dwellings.
- (2)(A)(i) – Cottage City contains a collection of buildings that span from circa 1914 through the 1980s and reflect popular twentieth-century styles. Buildings in Cottage City present a variety of uses including residential, commercial, municipal, and religious. Residential architectural styles primarily represented in Cottage City include Craftsman and Spanish Revival as well as limited examples of the Colonial Revival style and the Modern Movement. The majority of dwellings in Cottage City are bungalows and the neighborhood is representative of the "bungalow suburbs" that were appearing across the United States in the early twentieth century. Cottage City is one of the few bungalow suburbs in Prince George's County.
- (2)(A)(iv) – Cottage City demonstrates the evolution of popular style and taste in domestic architecture in the first half of the twentieth century. Cottage City is a cohesive and unified community that still functions as a residential commuter suburb in Prince George's County.

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

Criterion A – Cottage City meets Criterion A as a planned residential commuter suburb established in the first quarter of the twentieth century to meet the growing needs of the middle-class population of Washington, D.C. The community grew steadily from the construction of the first houses in 1914 and was largely improved by 1938. The community's development was directly related to the variety of transportation resources available nearby, including the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, Maryland Avenue Extended (now known as Bladensburg Road), and the electric streetcar line.

Criterion C – Cottage City meets Criterion C for its variety of domestic buildings that demonstrate popular twentieth-century architectural styles and convey the evolution of suburban architecture in Prince George's County. Common architectural styles presented in Cottage City include the Craftsman and Spanish Revival with limited examples of the Modern Movement and Colonial Revival styles. The cohesive community remains intact with limited modern infill. The smaller size and minimal ornamentation of the houses in Cottage City reflect their use for middle-class residents. Further, the majority of dwellings in Cottage City are bungalows and the neighborhood is representative of the "bungalow suburbs" that were appearing across the United States in the early twentieth century. Cottage City is one of the few bungalow suburbs in Prince George's County.

Although a larger portion of the Town of Cottage City was surveyed, the recommended historic district boundaries encompass only the 1914 plat of Cottage City. This area includes approximately 217 primary

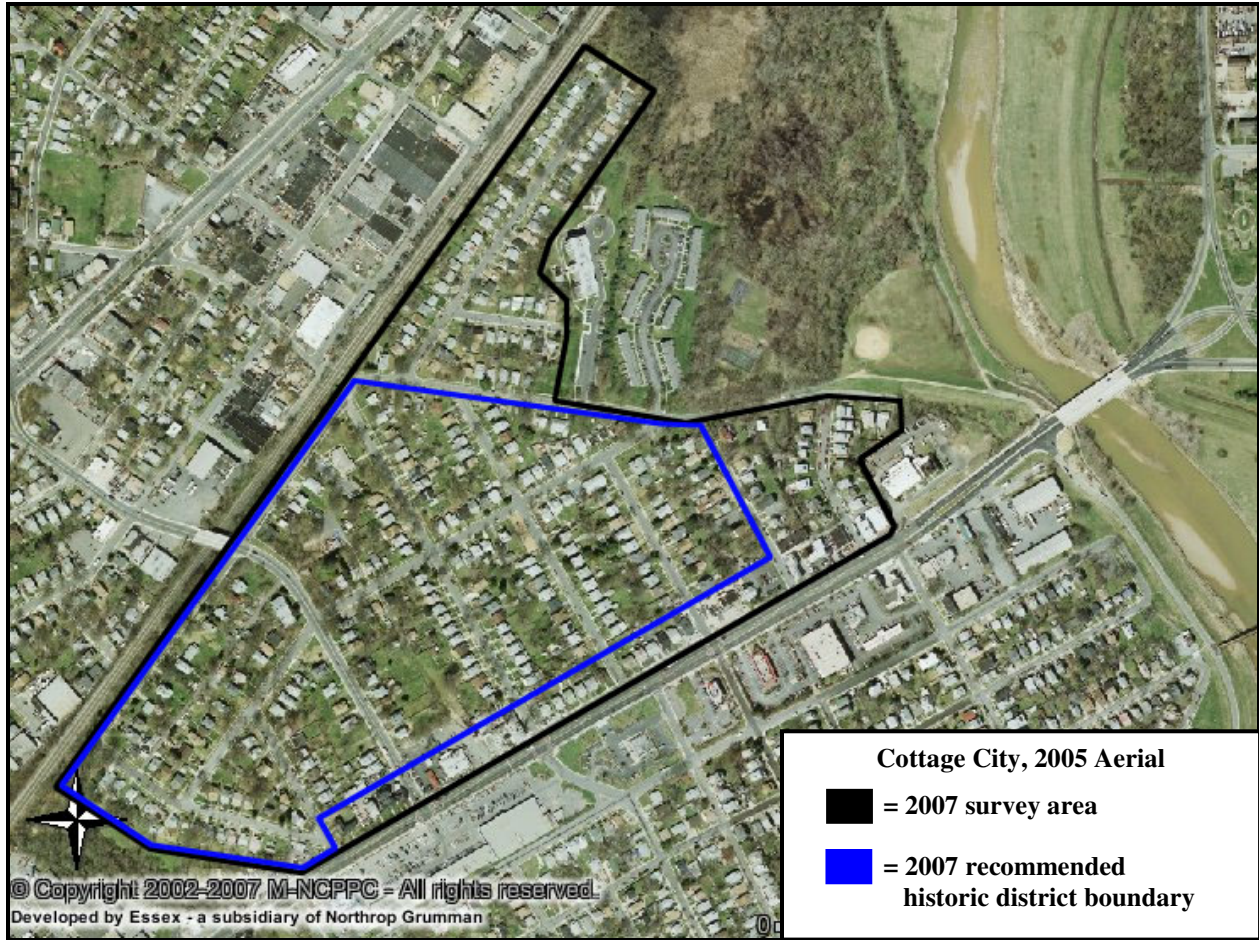
resources. Moyer's Park, platted in 1924, is located north of Bunker Hill Road, along Cottage Terrace and Shepherd Street. Unlike Cottage City, this adjoining subdivision had minimal improvements by 1938. The dwellings constructed in Moyer's Park illustrate different forms and styles and do not reflect the same period of development as Cottage City. Additionally, the residential buildings rehabilitated for commercial use along Bladensburg Road have been excluded from the district because alterations and a substantial loss of integrity would make them non-contributing resources in a historic district.

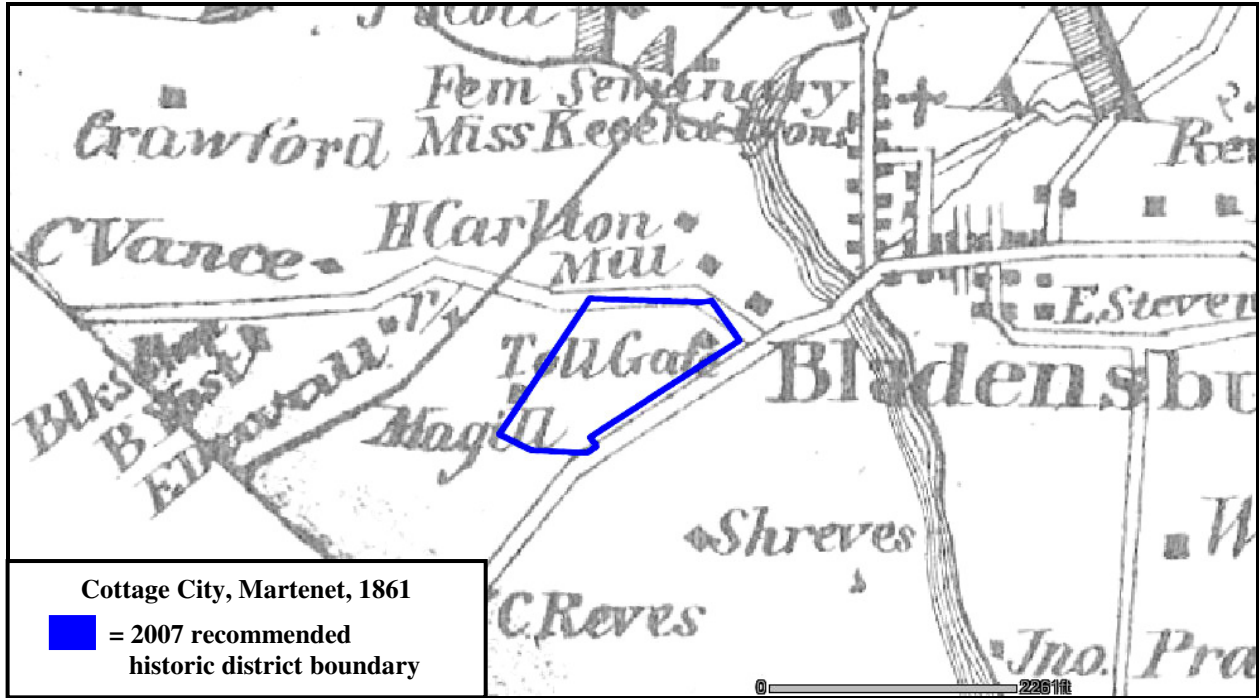
The area recommended for designation in Cottage City has retained its integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association. Some buildings have been altered, which has resulted in a minimal loss of workmanship and materials. However, collectively the district retains its integrity of workmanship and materials.

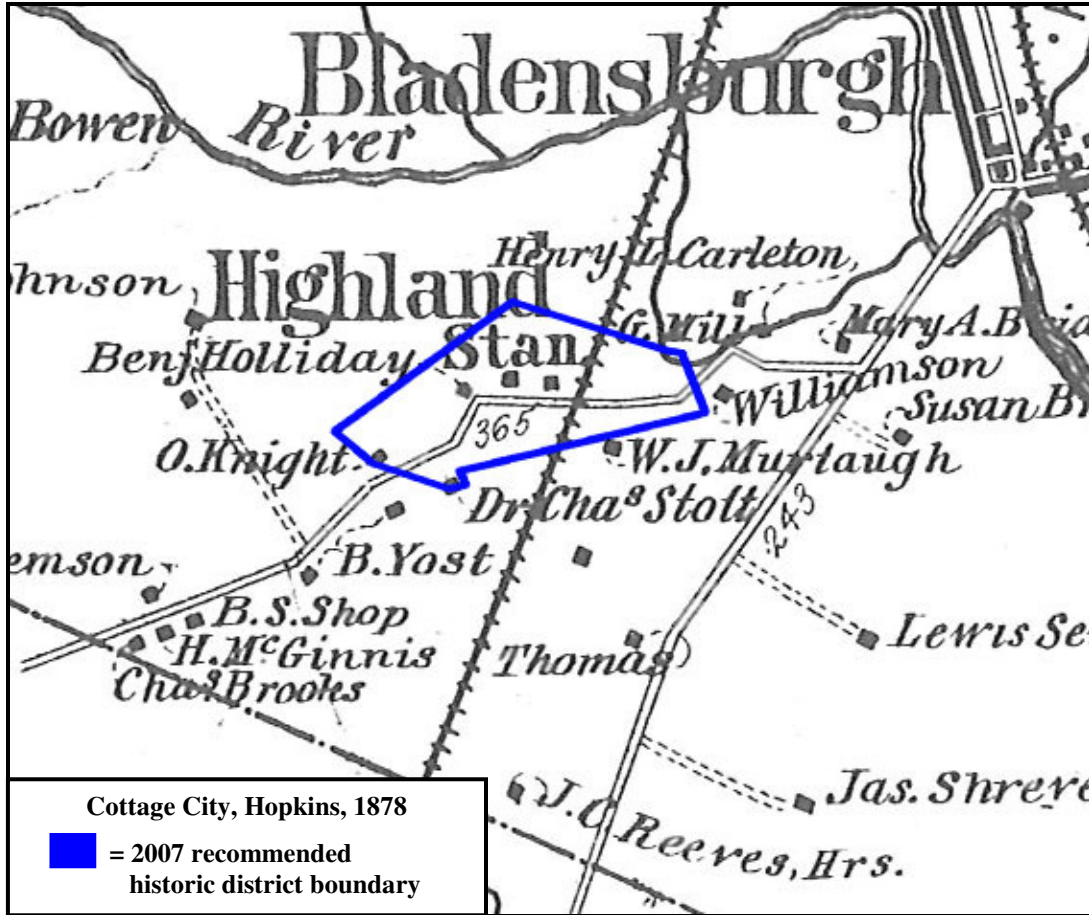
Individual Designation

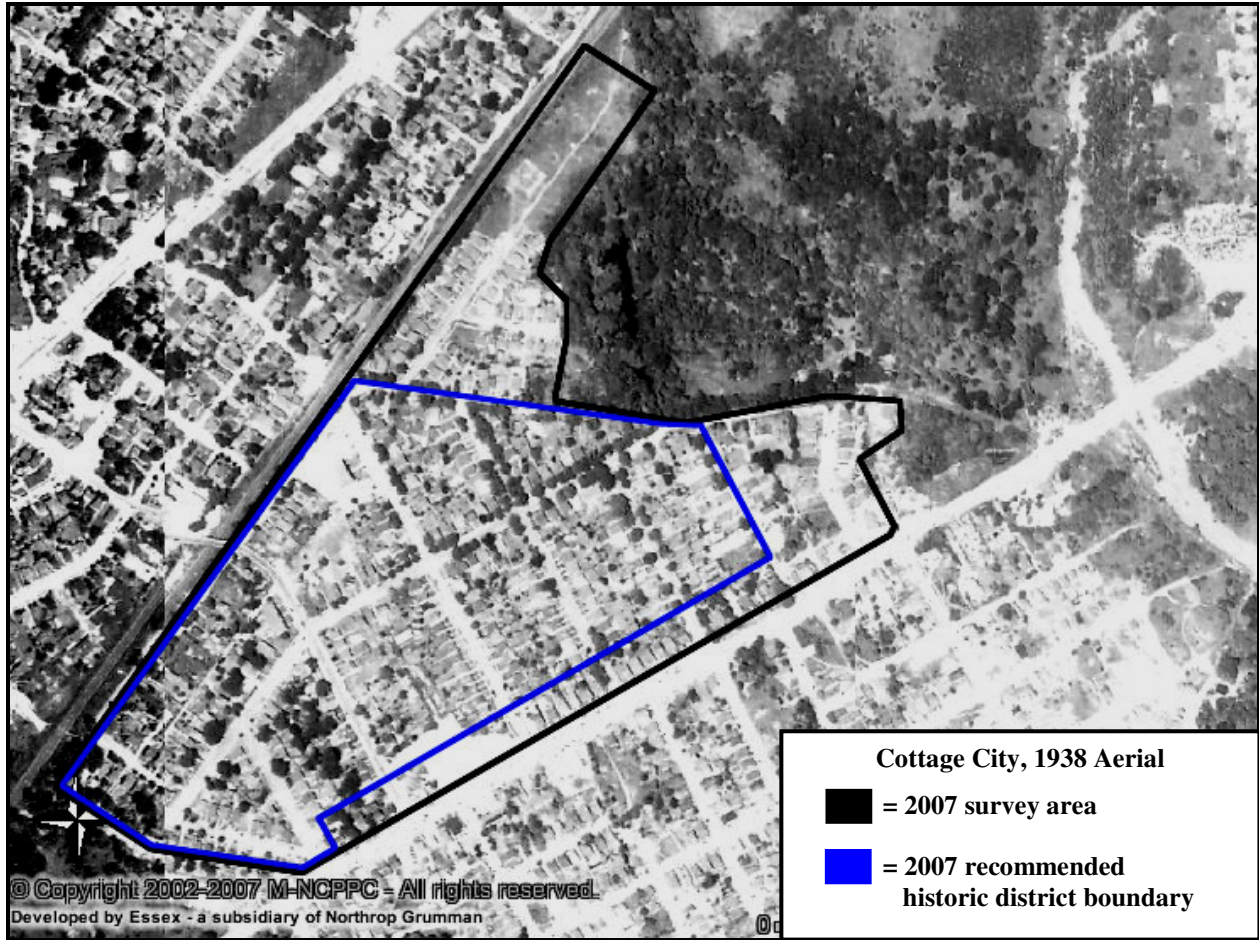
The Rural Cottage at the Highlands (PG: 68-096-020) is located at 4203 Bunker Hill Road and is currently designated as a Historic Resource. The house should be evaluated for designation as a Historic Site for its architectural style and its historic context. The house is a rare surviving example of Second Empire-style architecture in Prince George's County. The one-and-a-half-story, three-bay wood-frame dwelling features a mansard roof with dormer windows and an ogee-molded cornice, typical features of the Second Empire style. The Rural Cottage at the Highlands retains a high level of integrity, including its original form, wood windows, and patterned slate shingles. In addition, the dwelling has retained its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The house pre-dates the original platting of the Highlands (present-day Cottage City) and is the oldest extant building in the Town of Cottage City. The house is located outside of the recommended historic district boundary.

Prepared by EHT Tracerics, Inc.
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Looking west, 4022-4020-4016-4014-4012 Bladensburg Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking northwest, 3706-3708 41st Avenue (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking northeast, 4100 Parkwood Street (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking south, 3718 42nd Avenue (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking west, 3710 42nd Avenue (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking east, 3713 42nd Avenue, Overcoming Power Bible Way Church (*EHT Traceries, 2007*)



Looking southeast, 4819 40th Avenue (*EHT Traceries, 2007*)



Looking south, Rural Cottage at the Highlands (Cottage City House) (PG: 68-096-020), 4203 Bunker Hill Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)