

Seat Pleasant (72-007)

Seat Pleasant was established as a late-nineteenth-century streetcar suburb that adjoins the eastern corner of the District of Columbia. The community is located south of Martin Luther King, Junior Highway and Seat Pleasant Drive and is bisected by Addison Road.

In 1873, Benjamin L. Jackson, William B. Jackson, and George J. Seufferle platted the large community of Seat Pleasant.¹ The community was named for the nineteenth-century estate of the Williams family that was destroyed by fire in the mid-nineteenth century.² The plat consisted of approximately 800 acres on both sides of the Prince George's County Central Turnpike (now Central Avenue). Seat Pleasant adjoined the property of the Weissner, Gregory, Berry, Klock, Lee, and Chew families. The early plat shows several buildings including houses, farms, outbuildings, cabins, and one store, reflecting the rural nature of the area.³

Although the community was platted in 1873, large-scale development did not begin in Seat Pleasant until after the extension of the rail lines and streetcar lines from Washington, D.C. Although the District of Columbia developed a streetcar line in the 1860s, it was not until the 1890s that service was extended to communities in Prince George's County. Seat Pleasant was located at the convergence of two railroad lines and the streetcar line, which made it a convenient location for commuters. In 1898, the East Washington Railroad, also known as the Chesapeake Beach Railway, was extended from the District line at Chesapeake Junction (as Seat Pleasant was originally known) through Prince George's County to Chesapeake Beach in Calvert County. Residents of Washington, D.C. could travel to Seat Pleasant by streetcar and transfer at the station to the train that would take them to the Chesapeake Bay.⁴ Just a few years later in 1901, the Washington, Baltimore and Annapolis Electric Line (WB&A) was established. By 1908, train service ran from Washington, D.C., through Seat Pleasant terminating in Annapolis.⁵ Seat Pleasant was one of the first communities to develop in the first decade of the twentieth century around these important transportation lines.

Taking advantage of the prime location near the rail lines, two new subdivisions were platted. In 1906, lots 14 and 15 of Seat Pleasant were resubdivided and platted as Oakmont. Oakmont was bordered by the WB&A tracks on the north, Addison Road on the east, Vine Street (now Eads Street) on the south, and the Chesapeake Beach Railroad tracks (now 67th Place) on the west. That same year, lots 12 and 13 were resubdivided and platted as Seat Pleasant Heights.⁶ Seat Pleasant Heights was bounded by Carmody Road (now Seat Pleasant Drive) on the north, 71st Street on the east, Capon Street on the south, and Addison Road on the west. Both subdivisions featured small, narrow lots, typically 25 feet by 150 feet, similar to those found in Washington, D.C. The station for both the Chesapeake Beach Railroad and the WB&A was located just northwest of Oakmont, making the two subdivisions ideally located for commuters.⁷ That same year in 1906, community members gathered to choose a new name for Chesapeake Junction, as Seat Pleasant was originally known. Several names were debated, but the community agreed on "Seat Pleasant" and requested that a Seat Pleasant post office be established in the community.⁸

¹ Prince George's County Land Records, Circuit Court, Plat Book LIB A:77-78.

² Marina King, "Seat Pleasant Historic Survey (PG: 72A-7)," Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form (December 1986), 8:1.

³ Prince George's County Land Records, Circuit Court, Plat Book LIB A:77-78.

⁴ King, "Seat Pleasant Historic Survey," 8:1.

⁵ George Denny, Jr., *Proud Past, Promising Future: Cities and Towns in Prince George's County, Maryland* (Brentwood, MD: George D. Denny, Jr., 1997), 307.

⁶ Prince George's County Land Records, Circuit Court, Plat Book BDS 1:16 and Plat Book BDA 1:27.

⁷ Prince George's County Land Records, Circuit Court, Plat Book BDS 1:16 and Plat Book BDA 1:27.

⁸ Denny, *Proud Past, Promising Future*, 308.

In 1908, a second line of the WB&A was constructed with a stop at Seat Pleasant. For approximately 20 years, the rail line and streetcar lines encouraged growth and development in the town. In an effort to improve services for residents, the Town of Seat Pleasant was incorporated in 1931, passing by a narrow vote of 129 to 126.⁹ In 1935, the WB&A ceased operations as the popularity and accessibility of the automobile increased. The WB&A tracks were dismantled and the right of way was paved to serve as a road.¹⁰

Beginning in the mid-twentieth century, Seat Pleasant continued to grow and many areas underwent redevelopment. In the 1950s, many buildings, particularly along Martin Luther King, Junior Highway and Seat Pleasant Drive, were demolished to make way for new commercial buildings and new housing. The opening of the Capitol Heights and Seat Pleasant Metrorail stations in the 1980s again spurred redevelopment and resulted in the construction of large commercial developments near the stations.

There is one Historic Site in Seat Pleasant:

- PG: 72-007-01, St. Margaret's Catholic Church (Old), 6020 Addison Road

There are currently no designated Historic Resources in Seat Pleasant.

Windshield Survey

A windshield survey of Seat Pleasant was conducted in November 2007. The survey area consists of approximately 326 primary resources. Seat Pleasant contains a wide variety of buildings constructed from the 1890s through the present. The largest period of development dates from the 1890s through the 1940s. Buildings in Seat Pleasant reflect a variety of popular architectural styles including Queen Anne, Italianate, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, and several illustrations of the Modern Movement. Several structures are vernacular interpretations of popular styles. Common building forms in Seat Pleasant include Foursquare, bungalow, Cape Cod, ranch houses, minimal traditional houses, and split-levels. A building form in Seat Pleasant is the detached rowhouse. These wood-frame houses are typically two stories in height with a full-width porch and have either a flat roof or a shed roof. Most display modest interpretations of the Queen Anne or Italianate styles, common in the late nineteenth century. Also common in Seat Pleasant is a number of two-story, front-gabled dwellings with a full-width porch. The community is predominately residential and composed of single-family dwellings, although a few religious buildings are scattered throughout the neighborhood. Non-historic commercial development is located along Martin Luther King, Junior Highway, Seat Pleasant Drive, and in limited areas along the boundaries of the neighborhood. The topography of Seat Pleasant is hilly and most houses are set on a flat or slightly-sloping lot. Mature trees are located throughout the community. Houses typically have an even setback along a streetscape, although lots are of varying sizes.

Historic District Evaluation

Seat Pleasant represents several Prince George's County Heritage Themes including transportation, suburban growth, and residential architectural styles. In 1992, the Maryland Historical Trust determined that a small portion of Seat Pleasant, mainly located on both sides of Addison Road and James Farmer

⁹ King, "Seat Pleasant Historic Survey," 8:2.

¹⁰ Susan G. Pearl, "Railroads in Prince George's County, 1835-1935," in *Historic Contexts in Prince George's County: Short Papers on Settlement Patterns, Transportation and Cultural History* (Upper Marlboro, MD: Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 1991), 41-49.

Way, was eligible for listing as a National Register Historic District. In 1993, the National Register concurred with this determination of eligibility (DOE). The district meets Criteria A and C, however the DOE recommends further study to review the development of the community and expand the boundaries.¹¹

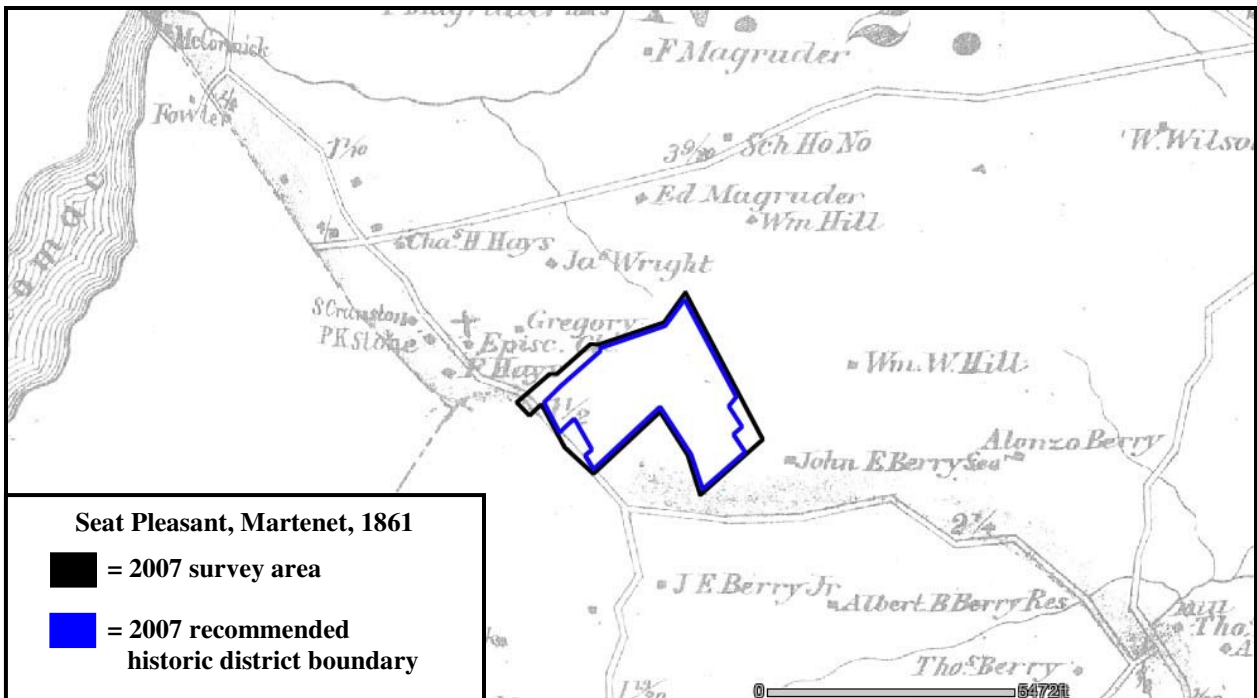
The 2007 windshield survey of Seat Pleasant surveyed the subdivisions of Oakmont (1906) and Seat Pleasant Heights (1906), which encompasses the smaller district determined eligible in 1993. This area includes approximately 300 primary resources. The expanded boundaries represent growth in the community from the 1890s to the present and reflect the evolution of suburban residential architecture in Prince George's County. The majority of buildings within the recommended boundaries date from the 1890s to the 1940s. Non-historic development on the borders of the community do not represent the historic development of Seat Pleasant and have been excluded from the recommended boundaries. Seat Pleasant has retained its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. A comprehensive reconnaissance-level survey should be completed in Seat Pleasant to determine the exact phases of development within the community.

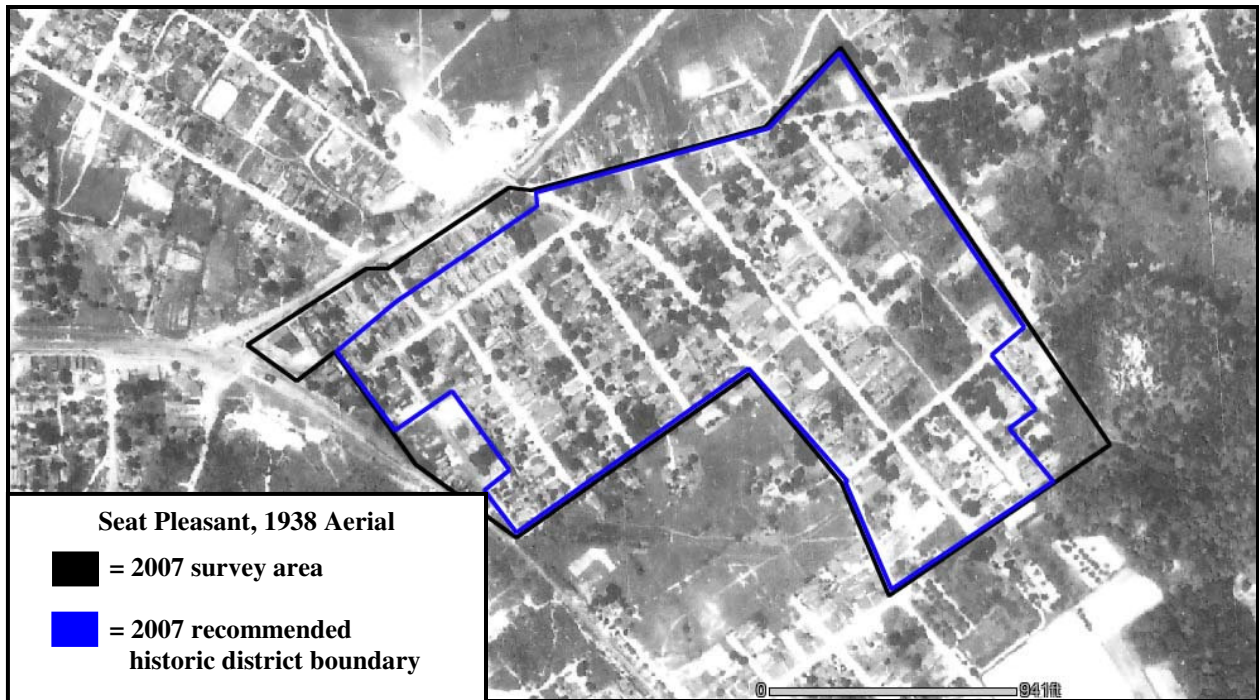
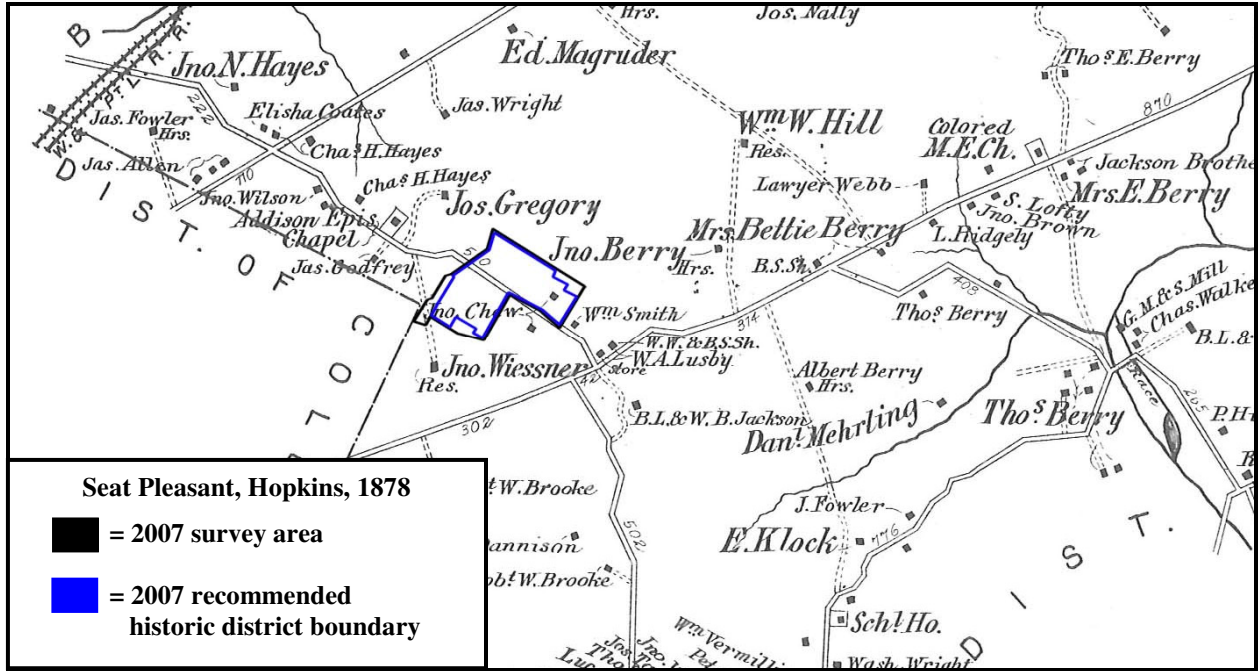
In addition to its eligibility as a National Register Historic District, Seat Pleasant meets the following criteria for designation as a local Prince George's County Historic District:

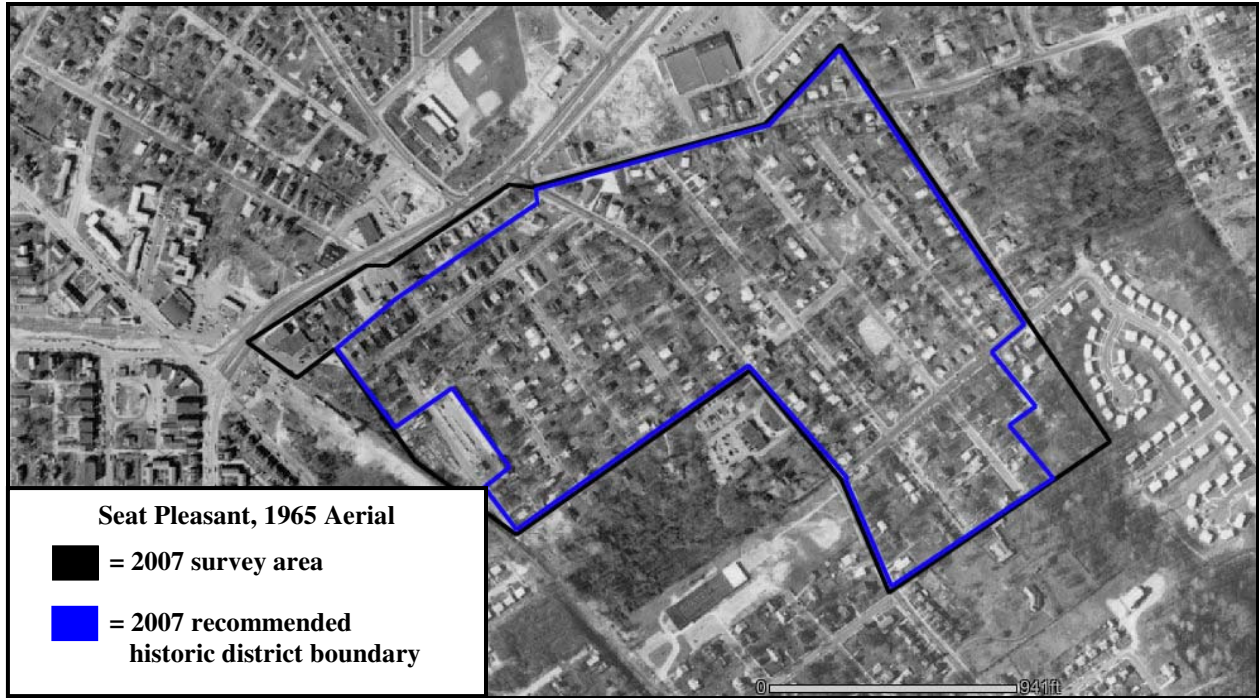
- (1)(A)(i) and (iv) – Seat Pleasant is an example of the railroad and streetcar subdivisions that emerged in the late-nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries in Prince George's County. The community is significant as one of the earliest commuter suburbs established in Prince George's County. Its location at the convergence of two railroad lines and the streetcar line made it an attractive and affordable location outside of the District of Columbia. As the automobile increased in popularity and became more accessible to the masses, suburban development adjusted to accommodate the automobile. Seat Pleasant typifies this evolution. After the WB&A ceased operations, the tracks were replaced with a paved road. Houses constructed in the 1930s and 1940s in Seat Pleasant often featured garages and/or a driveway and the neighborhood remained an affordable, attractive commuter suburb of Washington, D.C.
- (2)(A)(i) – Seat Pleasant embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type and period through its collection of domestic architectural styles and housing forms that demonstrate the evolution of popular styles and tastes from the late nineteenth century through the first-half of the twentieth century. Buildings in Seat Pleasant reflect a variety of popular architectural styles including Queen Anne, Italianate, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, and illustrations of the Modern Movement. Several structures are vernacular interpretations of popular styles. A building form commonly found in Seat Pleasant is the detached rowhouse, which is unusual in Prince George's County. These wood-frame houses are typically two stories in height with a full-width porch and have either a flat roof or a shed roof. Most display modest interpretations of the Queen Anne or Italianate styles, common in the late nineteenth century.
- (2)(A)(iv) – Seat Pleasant is a cohesive community that taken as a whole, represents a modest streetcar and railroad suburb that evolved into an automobile suburb in the twentieth century. The variety of domestic architectural styles and housing forms in Seat Pleasant illustrates the larger evolution of suburban architecture in Prince George's County.

Prepared by EHT Tracerics, Inc.
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¹¹ Linda Thompson, "Seat Pleasant Historic District (PG: 72-7)," Individual Property/District Maryland Historical Trust Internal NR-Eligibility Review Form (September 1992), 1.









Looking northeast, 6006 Seat Pleasant Drive (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking south, 6817 James Farmer Way (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking northwest, 402-404 70th Street (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking southeast, 518-516-514 67th Place (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking southeast, 525-523 68th Street (*EHT Traceries, 2007*)



Looking northwest, 505-507-509-511 68th Place (*EHT Traceries, 2007*)



Looking east, St. Margaret's Catholic Church (Old) (PG: 72-007-01), 6020 Addison Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)