The key to the success to date of the BVS Project is CIVIC ENGAGEMENT -- the exceptional willingness of Bloomingdale residents, in service of neighborhood enhancement, to voluntarily share their time, knowledge and skills, and to collaborate with persons they may not have previously known. The Project promoted and nurtured such engagement through broad dissemination of a brief Project Vision statement, frequent Project communication and requests for assistance on neighborhood listservs and blogs, repeated presentations and updates at neighborhood meetings, tapping of personal networks, and modeling of inclusion.

Funds for the DC Community Heritage Project are provided by a partnership of HumanitiesDC and the DC Historic Preservation Office, which supports people who want to tell stories of their neighborhoods and communities by providing information, training and financial resources. This DC Community Heritage Project has been also funded in part by the US Department of the Interior, the National Park Service Historic Preservation Fund grant funds, administered by the DC Historic Preservation Office and by the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

This program was supported through a Historic Preservation Fund grant administered by the National Park Service, Department of Interior. Funds were used for the identification, protection, and/or rehabilitation of historic properties and cultural resources in the District of Columbia. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or disability in its federally assisted programs. If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or if you desire further information, please write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20240.
ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN ISSUES

Challenges. Geography, architecture, design and social-cultural factors all contribute to one’s visual and psychological sense of ‘place’. For example, historically in Bloomingdale, racial and geographical factors converged, with Rhode Island Avenue serving as a racial dividing line: ‘Whites only’ services, and integrated services south of the line. Bloomingdale’s current U.S. Census tracks (33.01 - north of RI and 33.02 - south or RI) are legacies of that era.

Architecture and design also serve to: (a) create boundaries (e.g., the North Capitol Street underpass and the former Truxton Circle), (b) identify centers of significant public activity, (c) convey the function/purpose/use of various elements of the physical environment (e.g., play, contemplation, relaxation, social interaction, pedestrianism), (d) suggest the need for certain types of behavior (e.g. caution), (e) convey a sense of safety and welcome (or the absence thereof), and (f) create a distinct neighborhood character and feel.

The BVS Architecture and Design Group was challenged to address not only all of these issues, but also the need to ensure that Bloomingdale’s physical environment – especially its public spaces – is responsive to inclusion of the multiple diversities of neighborhood residents (e.g., age/generational, racial/ethnic/cultural, social-economic, sexual orientation/preference, household type).

BVS Architecture and Design Group: Composition and Procedures. Members of this Group were recruited through announcements on the neighborhood listserv and blog, at neighborhood meetings, and through personal networking by the Group’s Chair. Recruited members are neighborhood professional architects and designers, as well as neighborhood residents. Residents primarily serve to identify areas in need of improvement, suggest needed improvements, and vet technical and aesthetic design ideas presented by professional members.

The Group initiated its efforts with multiple broad discussions related to its scope of effort, goals and procedures; the neighborhood’s physical environment problems and needs; and the contents and recommendations of DC’s Office of Planning and Department of Transportation Small Area and Livability plans, which guided the Group’s efforts.

The Group then conducted a thorough walk-through of the entire neighborhood (to which Bloomingdale residents were publically invited) to identify and photograph problem areas, and sites of needed improvements.

Later, identified needed improvements were classified into design categories similar to those used in the Small Area Plan. Individual architect and design members assumed responsibility for researching these improvement categories including identifying relevant precedent images and renderings, and determining how the improvement would promote design uniformity, improve functional use of public space, and respond to Bloomingdale’s multiple diversities. Subsequently these design research findings were thoroughly vetted and prioritized by the entire Group.

Recommendations. The Group has prepared a draft of a highly contextualized report that identifies specific improvements for specific locations. Needed improvements are prioritized into three implementation stages:

- **SHORT-TERM** - to be effected within 3 to 4 years in the targeted First and Rhode Island Avenue NW ‘Village Square’ and its major access routes (i.e., Rhode Island Avenue NW, North Capitol to 2nd Street NW; T Street, North Capitol to First Street; First Street NW, U Street to Seaton Place).

- **MID-TERM** - to be effected within 5 to 7 years throughout the remainder of Bloomingdale.

- **LONG-TERM** - High cost improvements to be effected within 10 years.

Identified improvement categories include streetscaping and landscaping of major streets and pocket parks; hardscaping; street and other lighting; public art including murals, light projections, sculpture; painted streets and crosswalks in the Village Square area; an alley walk from the Village Square to Crispus Attucks Park; distinctive signage at major neighborhood entry points and streets; a landmark Village Square clock; a digital community bulletin board; deck and park over North Capitol overpass. All of these will be vetted by residents at public meetings to ensure goals of uniformity, eclecticism, safety, connectivity, respect for residents, inclusion, and stronger sense of place are fully addressed.