



## BVS ARCHITECTURE AND AND DESIGN GROUP

*Zach Sherif, Chair*

René M. Albacete, RLA, ASLA  
Landscape Architect

Cynthia Banuls

Ricardo Byrd  
National Association of Neighborhoods

Paul Cerruti

Rosangela DiManto

Tynesia Hand-Smith, Designer

M. Jennifer Harty, AIA, LEED AP

Bertha Holliday

Albert F. Hopper, AIA, LEED AP

Ali Iacovone

Mike Iacovone

Ahmet Kilic

Bryan Moll

Melinda Nettlebeck, NCIDQ 28936, LEED  
AP

Peter Nettlebeck, NCARB

Tom Noll, Landscaper

Eric Schultz

Molly Scott, Landscape Architect

Paul Selker

Jose Alberto Ucles

*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 promotes and nurtures such engagement through broad dissemination of this brochure and a brief Project Vision statement, frequent Project communication and repeated presentations and updates at neighborhood meetings, periodic Saturday 2- to 3-hour topical BVS Community Forums, tapping of personal networks, and modeling of inclusion.*

This 2020 revision of the BVS Architecture & Design brochure (originally published in 2015) is one of the products of the Taking Village History to Our Youth Project, which is conceived and operated by the Bloomingdale Village Square (BVS) Initiative of the Bloomingdale Civic Association. The project received major funding from the Humanities Vision Partnership grant program, which is supported by the DC Commission on the Arts and the Humanities -- an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Humanities Vision Partnership grants are administered by HumanitiesDC - an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of HumanitiesDC or the DC Commission on the Arts and the Humanities, NEH or NEA.

Bloomingdale  
CIVIC ASSOCIATION



Bloomingdale  
CIVIC ASSOCIATION



Bloomingdale  
Village Square  
Initiative

Architecture  
& Design Issues

Revised May 2020 ©



# ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN ISSUES

**Challenges.** Geography, architecture, design and social-cultural factors all contribute to one's visual and psychological sense of 'place'. For example, high and low income neighborhoods look differently as do urban and suburban neighborhoods, and each of these evokes varying psychological responses and behavior in individuals – in part depending on their prior experiences. Historically in Bloomingdale, racial and geographical factors converged, with Rhode Island Avenue serving as a racial dividing line: 'Whites only' services north of the line and integrated services south of the line. Bloomingdale's current U.S. Census tracks (33.01 – north of RI and 33.02 – south of RI) are geographical/demographic 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 welcomeness (or the absence thereof), and
- (f) create a distinct neighborhood character and 'feel'.

The BVS Architecture and Design Group is challenged to address not only all of these issues, but also must attempt to ensure that Bloomingdale's physical environment – especially its public spaces – is responsive to inclusion of, and use by, the multiple diversities of neighborhood residents (e.g., age and generational; race, ethnicity, and culture; social-economic, sexual orientation and preference, and household type).

**BVS Architecture and Design Group: Composition and Procedures.** Members of this Group are recruited through announcements on the neighborhood listserv and blog, at neighborhood meetings, and through personal networking by the Group's Chair. Recruited residents possess either specialized training in architecture, design, or urban planning – or interest in such neighborhood issues. The latter group primarily serves to identify areas in need of improvement, suggest needed improvements, and vet technical and aesthetic design ideas presented by members with specialized training.

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 the *Mid-City East Small Area Plan* and the *Livability Plan* authored by DC's Office of Planning (OP) and Department of Transportation (DDOT). These plans guided the Group's efforts.

The Group then conducted a thorough walk-through of the entire neighborhood (to which all 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.

As implementation action is initiated on a given recommendation, members of the Group are asked to again examine the proposed implementation site(s) and provide continual advisement to residents and architect/design professionals engaged in the implementation effort.

**Recommendations.** The Group prepared a draft of a highly contextualized report (finalized and updated in 2020) 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 art 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; a park on a decked-over North Capitol overpass. All of these will be vetted by residents at public meetings to ensure goals of increased sense of 'place', uniformity/eclectism/diversity in design, safety, connectivity with abutting neighborhoods, and inclusion are adequately addressed.

**Recommendations Status as of January 2020.** Representatives of the Group have formally and successfully met with staff of DC's Office of Planning (OP) and Department of Transportation (DDOT) to present the *BVS A&D Recommendations Report*, and solicit their approval and support.

Consequently, Bloomingdale has initiated implementation actions related to:

- (a) streetscaping, landscaping, and hardscaping (in collaboration with DC Department of Transportation (DDOT), Casey Trees, and Advisory Neighborhood Commission 5E);
- (b) public art (in collaboration with DC Water);
- (c) street and crosswalk paintings to promote traffic calming and neighborhood identity (in collaboration with DDOT);
- (d) Obtained Historic District Designation for Bloomingdale with all but 8 of its 1704 buildings deemed 'contributing historic resources'; and
- (e) preliminary engineering and architectural design of a 3 to 5 block long park decked over North Capital Street (in collaboration with ZGF Architects), for which our Councilman Kenyon McDuffie placed \$40 million in his Ward 5 FY20 and FY21 budget and recommendations.

Unfortunately the Mayor failed to include this recommendation in her FY 20 and FY21 budget recommendations for Council approval. A formal neighborhood advocacy effort is planned to increase political support for future funding of the park deck-over. All of the above implementation efforts involved active input and participation by neighborhood residents.