
KENTLANDS WALKING TOUR GUIDE

Kentlands Community Foundation



*The Kentlands Mansion, view from Inspiration Lane.
Photo by Mike Watkins.*

The Kentlands Site and its History

The land is a former farm estate, consisting of deep red clay soil. It is edged on the west by a stone-outcrop hill, once the site of a quarry, and it is riddled everywhere with wooded streams and wetlands.

The original estate, called Wheatlands, was put together at the end of the Nineteenth Century by Frederick A. Tschiffely, owner of Washington's best known pharmacy and also the largest pharmaceutical wholesale distributor in the region. In 1900, he built "the Bricks," the mansion which was home to his family of eight children.

In 1942, the prominent Washington lawyer Otis Beall Kent purchased the estate and renamed it Kentlands. He greatly expanded the farm through the purchase of adjoining land, enlarged the mansion, and built magnificent brick outbuildings to house his farm manager and staff, the farm equipment, his many vehicles, and his collection of vintage fire engines. He also in 1944 dug the chain of lakes that borders his mansion site on three sides. These lakes were intended for irrigation, for flood control, and most importantly as habitat for the birds, fish, and wildlife that Mr. Kent, a pioneer conservationist, was determined to shelter and preserve. Towards the end of his life in the 1960s, Mr. Kent deeded parts of his estate to the Izaak Walton League and the National Geographic Society with the condition that the unbuilt portions of these properties remain as wildlife sanctuaries. He also laid plans for the future development of his estate as a uniquely beautiful natural neighborhood which he planned to name "Lakelands."
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The Tour

The tour consists of a main loop, starting and ending at the Clubhouse, that reaches into each of the five neighborhoods. This loop takes most people from 45 to 75 minutes to complete, depending on whether it is walked, strolled, or ambled. Groups with small children or chronic photographers will take longer. The main loop mounts only one hill, at the beginning, and includes wheelchair/stroller detours for the two places where the tour follows pedestrian walkways that have steps. In each of the five neighborhoods, there is a branch tour that gives a more comprehensive view of the features of that neighborhood. These branch tours take 10-25 minutes each, depending on the pace.

The tour begins at the front entrance to the clubhouse, the recreational and meeting facility maintained by the Kentlands Citizens Association for its members, including both tenants and homeowners. The clubhouse also serves as the public space anchor for two adjacent neighborhoods, the Hill District uphill to the west, and the Lakes District downhill to the east. The clubhouse area is ringed by townhouses. Note especially the long curved facade of townhouses facing the front entrance of the clubhouse. These are classic in their simplicity, and the ensemble is made especially handsome by the lack of any attempt by each house to "stand out" from its neighbors.

The Hill District

Start a tour of the main loop by walking up Thaxton Street, immediately across from the clubhouse drive. You are now entering the Hill District. (Note: the Hill District branch tour starts off in a different direction and joins the main loop later. Those who want to walk the Hill branch loop should see page 9 for directions.) This neighborhood is dominated by the stony north-south ridge along its center, and by the two views created, west towards Sugarloaf Mountain, east over the Kentlands roofs to Rockville and Potomac. This topography requires long streets parallel to the slope, connected vertically by a few cross-streets, more frequently by pedestrian ways.

Midway up the first block, pause to look left and right down the first alleys on the tour. The garages here are typical, attached on the downhill side of the alley serving the townhouses below, detached on the uphill side serving the single family houses above.

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History...

continued from page 1.

In 1988, Joseph Alfandre purchased Kentlands from Mr. Kent's heir, Helene Danger Kent, and began planning for the creation of Kentlands, a neo-traditional town based on planning principles of the Nineteenth Century. After the initial plans were laid down, ownership and management of the Kentlands development passed to the Great Seneca Development Corporation, an affiliate of the Chevy Chase Bank. Six years later, Natelli Communities purchased the National Geographic site and began the development of Lakelands, doubling the size of the neo-traditional community and greatly enlarging the combined commercial downtown area.

The Kentlands Planning Process: Goals and Context

In the mid-1980s, just as Mr. Alfandre was beginning to plan his new development, two crusading urban planners, Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, had attracted attention to their ideas about neo-traditional town planning. In contrast to the prevailing suburban planning of the time, they advocated a "new urbanism" of mixed residential and commercial uses, built densely on small lots served by a grid of narrow streets and alleys.

Core ideas of the new urbanism include: neighborhoods sized to a 5-minute walking radius of their commercial or public-use core; a mix of housing sizes and types in each neighborhood; public spaces that are as privileged, important, and well designed as private spaces; and traffic calmed naturally with narrow streets, alleys, and street grids to disperse the cars instead of collector roads to concentrate them. All of these design features are intended to attract people out into the public spaces, to foster the kind of neighborly social life that builds a community.

Alfandre engaged the firm of Duany Plater-Zyberk (DPZ) to design the Kentlands, the largest new urbanist project in the country at that time. Alfandre, DPZ, and the City of Gaithersburg held a design charrette — basically a 5-day planning marathon attended by all the stakeholders — in June 1988. The result was the basic design for the Kentlands and a new zoning concept for the City of Gaithersburg, an MXD zone allowing for mixed commercial and residential uses, governed by the design code developed in the charrette.

The Kentlands Design Code and Town Plan

The actual plan and design code for the Kentlands is based on the best traditional architecture in the region, such

as that of Annapolis, Georgetown, and Old Town Alexandria. Four neighborhoods were laid out around three central nodes: the clubhouse, the original farm buildings now put to civic and cultural use, and the church-school-store center. A fifth, much more urban neighborhood was planned for the midtown area between the shopping center and the civic buildings of the old farm. In general, the design code calls for the use whenever practical of natural materials, building facades 8-12 feet from the sidewalks with stoops and porches in that space, steeply pitched gable or hip roofs, amply trimmed vertical divided-glass windows, and fences or hedges along the sidewalks. The layout of the street plan followed the topography of the site, but was affected by three external constraints: the width and layout of the two major through streets, Kentlands Boulevard and Tschiffely Square Road; the location of a major regional commercial center on Great Seneca Highway; and the federal government's change of its wetlands regulations after the initial plan was already complete.

The Architecture of Kentlands

Unlike some previous DPZ projects such as Seaside in Florida, Kentlands is not and was never intended to be a community of expensively designed custom houses. Twelve builders, some national and some local, offered stock designs for attached and detached houses. Most of these designs were created especially for the Kentlands, as the narrow lot sizes and rear-alley garage access called for traditional housing types not found in other new suburban developments in the area. Buyers could purchase lots directly from the developer and have architects and builders create a home custom-designed for that site, but most were satisfied with the variety of homes offered by the large number of builders. In the end, custom houses are not necessarily larger and more opulent than their neighbors; some are smaller homes designed for tiny or difficult lots by young architects for their own personal use.

Housing in the Kentlands has been built in the form of rental apartments, condominiums (\$115,000-165,000 original sales price), attached townhouses (\$170,000-300,000), smaller detached "urban cottages" with square footage comparable to a townhouse (\$180,000-300,000), and single family houses (\$250,000-500,000+). All neighborhoods contain a mix of housing types, often on the same block or along the same street.

Many of the individual private houses and gardens in the Kentlands are beautifully designed and attractively maintained. But it is important that first-time visitors to the Kentlands realize that the pleasure and attraction that many visitors experience is more the result of the streetscapes and public spaces created by the town plan and design code than it is of the excellence or uniqueness of any individual buildings.

Tour...

continued from page 1.

At the first intersection, with Little Quarry Road, there are several things to see. Look right down the row of facing townhouses to the typical 12-unit condominium building on the next block. To the left, note also the pocket green and tree-save area on the corner.

Turn left down Little Quarry. It is all downhill from here! This part of Kentlands is notable for its large number of victorian-style houses, mixed in with the colonial and federal styles more typical of Kentlands. The design code is not intended to mandate any particular architectural style, only to create public spaces along the streets and sidewalks that are attractive and harmonious.



Cottage way pedestrian steps on the Hill. Photo from Newsweek article on Kentlands and Neo-Traditional neighborhoods.

Pause at the corner of Otis Place to look uphill at the cottage row lined up along a stepped pedestrian walkway. Half a block further along Little Quarry, the tour will be turning left to descend a similar cottage way. So tour groups with wheelchairs or strollers should turn left here on Otis, then turn right on Tschiffely Square Road to join the tour at the bottom of the cottage way.

The main tour continues along Little Quarry, then left down the steps towards Tschiffely Square. This is one of three cottage ways in the Hill District. They are built on slopes too steep for public streets, yet acceptable for the private alleys that provide automobile access to these lots from the rear. The houses on either side are typical Kentlands “urban cottages.” With at least three bedrooms, 2.5 baths, and 1500



Condominiums on the Hill, with courtyard-front townhouses to left. Photo by Mike Watkins.

square feet, these “cottages” are not small houses by any historical pre-1980 standard. Because of their small lots and their absence of street infrastructure, houses on these cottage ways were originally among the least expensive detached houses in the Kentlands. They were always the first to sell out, and are still today among the most popular and most easily re-sold houses in town.

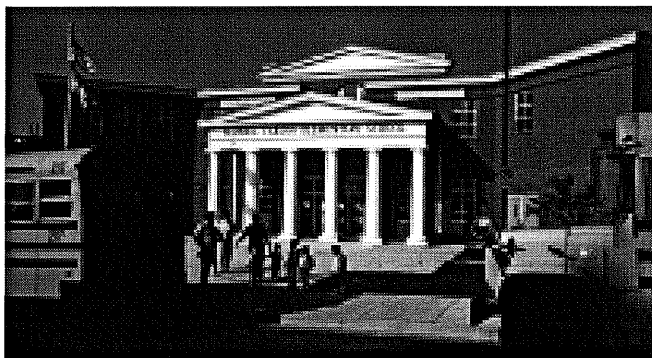
Across the foot bridge at the bottom of the steps, turn right on the sidewalk along Tschiffely Square Road. (The edge of the Lake District is across Tschiffely Square Road, and the Lake District branch loop begins at the intersection of Tschiffely Square Road and Leeke’s Lot Way.) Note the wetlands preservation areas, to your right and across the street just before the intersection with Massbury. These break up the steady progression of house facades that are characteristic of more urban streetscapes. The overall width of Tschiffely Square Road, much too wide in proportion to the heights of the two-story houses along it, is not a new urbanist element. It was fixed by regional highway planners prior to the beginning of the development of Kentlands. One result has been that this street suffers more from speeding traffic than any other street in the town, a problem that has been partially addressed by the installation of multiple stop-signs along its length.

The Gatehouse District

The Gatehouse District begins at Massbury Street. Note the brick sidewalk underfoot. These were originally planned for all Kentlands sidewalks, but plans were scaled back so that brick sidewalks can be found only along Kentland’s earliest streets, in the Old Farm neighborhood, and along main streets in the Gatehouse District, the neighborhood that the tour is now entering. This district is centered on the circle up ahead, the location of the elementary school, the church, the daycare center and a store site. Originally designed as a complete Washington-type circle, the intersecting roads were cut

through the circle on the insistence of the highway engineers, a decision which added to the speed problem on Tschiffely Square Road. The Church of the Latter Day Saints (Mormon) on the right is modeled after historic churches in the tidewater area. It is built on land donated by Mr. Alfandre, a Mormon, to his church at the start of the development. Across Kent Oaks Way from the church is the Kentlands day care center, and behind it the Rachel Carson Elementary School. Much to the town planners dismay, the county insisted on siting this school “backwards,” with its loading dock towards Tschiffely Square Road. To compensate, DPZ designed, and Mr. Alfandre paid for, the neo-classic entrance facade that draws proper attention to the school’s front door and the landscaping that obscures the loading dock.

The lot in the circle next to the daycare center was



Rachel Carson Elementary School, with traditional front portico addition. Photo by Peter Katz.

originally designated for a neighborhood store. The first buyer’s plans fell through, and the lot has been for sale for some time, with a resale asking price too high to make a normal small store commercially feasible. Behind the lot and the daycare center play area, across the drive from the school’s front door, is a plaque placed by the City of Gaithersburg honoring the memory of Otis Beall Kent.

Turning east now to the other side of the circle, note the symmetry of the townhouses and the end houses with their side conservatories flanking Kent Oaks Road. All the way down Kent Oaks stands a saved lone oak, a planned example of a terminated vista. The street was carefully designed to curve around that oak. In the quadrants of the circle itself are other examples of saved trees that fit perfectly into the design of the street. These carefully plotted saved trees were easier to accomplish in the Gatehouse District than elsewhere, because this was a former field where Mr. Kent had previously saved just a few trees among the fields. In other wooded areas, trees stood in forests; with the surrounding forests removed, individually saved trees are unable to withstand the winds to which they are now suddenly exposed. These trees must be saved in clumps, as the “tree-save” parks and wet-

lands pieces are designed to do.

(To take the branch loop tour through the Gatehouse neighborhood, return along Tschiffely Square Road and take a right on Massbury Street. See page 10 for the continuation of the Gatehouse branch loop.)

Time now to walk east on Kent Oaks Way, through the center of the Gatehouse District. This district was the first to be developed. It contains the first houses to be built, still among the largest and most expensive Kentlands houses, built at the tail end of the 1980s real estate boom in the Washington area, as well as many more modest houses that were easier to sell in the subsequent recession of the early 1990s.

At the first intersection with Holmard Street, stop to look both right and left. To the right, at the end of the block is the original group of townhouses, larger than most of those built subsequently. To the left, note the pocket park down the block where Holmard bends to the left.

Walk ahead to the lone oak. It stands at the end of Kentland’s only “half block,” between Claggett Crossing Place and Kent Oaks Way after Kent Oaks makes a ninety-degree bend to the right. Houses on this block face one street and



Holmard Street view toward Beckwith. Photo by Mike Watkins.

have their rear yards on another.

At the turn in Kent Oaks Way, the tour turns left past the tot lot to head over the pedestrian causeway between the two largest of Mr. Kent’s lakes. The original back entrance to Mr Kent’s estate followed the path of Kent Oaks Way from Route 28, then continued over this causeway. Those with enough energy might want to make a round trip down the long block of Kent Oaks Way towards Route 28. They will see the replica of the original gatehouse that stands at that entrance to the Kentlands, and two of the original very large houses across the street, built as models by a builder who did not survive the lean times of the early 1990s.

To the left of the causeway is Lake Inspiration, maintained by the city of Gaithersburg as a public park. The lake to

the right was formerly National Geographic property; it will be part of the Lakelands development. At the end of the causeway the tour enters the Old Farm District neighborhood.



Beckwith Street pocket park. Photo by Faith Kusterer.

The Old Farm District

From the first house and the first street, visitors can tell that the Old Farm neighborhood is different. Centered on the town green and surrounded by lakes on one side and by Midtown's commercial Main Street on the other, Old Farm was designed to be more urban, with narrower streets, smaller lots, and houses set right up on the sidewalk.



Aerial View of Old Farm neighborhood. Photo by Mike Watkins.

Turn left at the end of the causeway and walk along Inspiration Lane to the first intersection with Selby Street. Facing the lake between Selby and Briscoe Streets is the original Tschiffely-Kent mansion. Refurbished and brought up to code by the developer, it is now owned by the City of Gaithersburg, which operates it as a cultural center and gallery. Available for rent when not occupied by city functions, it is

the setting of many weddings and social occasions. The two houses on Inspiration Lane that flank the mansion's front yard were specially designed as complements to the mansion's size and style.

Turn right on Selby and walk up past the mansion. The row of houses on the right might seem familiar; it has been featured in articles about the Kentlands that have appeared in many national publications. The block they stand on is famous among city planners for its harmonious combination of some of the most expensive houses in the Kentlands, several rental apartments in its alley, and every size of townhouse and cottage as well.

At the end of the first block of Selby, the town green



Oktoberfest on the town green in Old Farm. This City-wide festival is held each fall. Photo by Mike Watkins.

opens to the right. The green, flanked by two rows of fine town houses, is the site of festive city events. To the left is the Kent Barn, which the City is remodeling into a Cultural Arts Center, with studios and a performance space. Past the Barn to the left is the original Carriage House, which will become a meeting space for the Kentlands Citizen Association. (The Old Farm branch loop begins here. See page 11.) Walk past the Barn and take a left on Firehouse Lane.

On the right is Mr. Kent's Firehouse, where he kept his collection of antique fire engines. Ahead on the left is a small outbuilding now used as the Town Architect's office. Mike Watkins, the Town Architect from Kentlands' inception until now, designed the corner store building further ahead on the left. It is designed to house his residence above, and more DPZ architectural office space in the ground floor storefront.

Turn right past the Firehouse onto Hart Road. The attractive row of townhouses ahead on the right include some of the smallest units available in the Kentlands. The house on the left facing Golden Ash Way was based on the plan for a carriage house apartment, leaving out the garage to create four finished levels of living space overlooking the lake.

The Midtown District

Once past Golden Ash Way, the tour enters the Midtown District. Under construction as this is written, this end of Midtown will be substantially completed by the winter of 1998-99. Townhouses line the left side of this block of Hart Road, with commercial/residential “live/work” townhouses on the right. At the end of the block on the right, at the intersection of Hart Road, Main Street, and Midtown Road is the site of an urban market square, with a pavilion and space for gatherings, markets, or shows. The block at the end of Hart Road is a senior housing apartment complex, just across Main Street from small shops and steps away from the Kentlands Square and Market Square commercial centers, which are located just ahead and just to the right, respectively.

At Midtown Road, turn left and head towards the lakes and wetlands that separate Midtown from the Lakes District residential neighborhood. (The Midtown branch loop tour begins at the intersection of Hart Road and Midtown Road, See page 12.) Crossing the head of the upper lake, look to the left along Booth Street. This row of houses represents a rare opportunity for urban living, with front porches overlooking the lake and park, and shops, theaters, and restaurants located just a few hundred feet from the back yards. The houses further ahead are in Old Farm, and the houses to the right are in the Lake District. Continue on Midtown Road into the Lakes District.



Aerial view of the Lower Lake neighborhood, viewed from over Lake Helene. Photo by Mike Watkins.

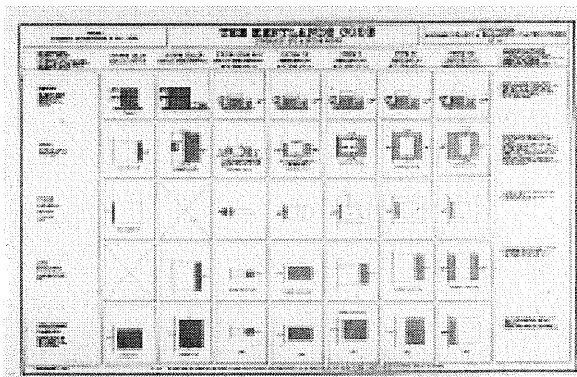
The Lakes District

The Lake District consists of three loops running from Tschiffely Square Road and the Clubhouse towards the lakes and Midtown. The loops are separated from each other by woods and streams, laced with foot paths and foot bridges that connect the neighborhood together. Entrances to these paths may be seen to both right and left in the first block of Midtown Road. Because of the topography, the Lake District

has few alleys. Note how garages are set back from the house facades so that their doors do not dominate the streetscape. Though mixed with townhouses, cottages, and carriage house rental units nearer the Clubhouse, this neighborhood contains the largest and most expensive lots in Kentlands, with a corresponding larger percentage of custom-built single family houses. An example is the house at 135 Thurgood Street, which terminates the vista up ahead at the end of Midtown Road.

Turn right on Thurgood Street. Walk past typical single family houses on the left, townhouses on the right. At the end of Thurgood, cross Tschiffely Square Road and continue straight ahead on the walkway into the Clubhouse recreation area. Wheelchair/stroller groups should turn left and follow Tschiffely Square Road around the circle to the Clubhouse entrance, because there is a flight of steps ahead on this path.. If you take the walkway, pass the community's largest tot lot on the left, and the picnic lawn area where summer concerts are held. On the right are basketball and volleyball courts and a horseshoe pitch. The walkway curves left around the pavilion that provides shade to the “baby pool” part of the swimming pool complex. Climb the steps alongside the Clubhouse to return to the Clubhouse entrance. The tour ends right where it began. Anyone up for another trip around the loop? Maybe this time walking backwards to get a different view?

The Kentlands Code



Kentlands Design Code, the first of two pages, as created by Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company. This document provides the Architectural and Urban Standards for the community.



Townhouses on Tschiffely Square Road opposite the clubhouse circle. Photo by Faith Kusterer.

The Branch Loop through the Hill District

This branch tour passes the Quarry Park, several of the Hill's unique pockets of off-street houses, and the high-density cluster of condominiums and courtyard townhouses that overlooks Route 124 below and Sugarloaf Mountain in the distance. It showcases much of the urban plan that makes the Hill neighborhood special and unique. This branch loop has the steepest climbs of any of the tours, an inevitable consequence of the Hill District's topography.

From the Clubhouse entrance, turn right on Tschiffely Square Road. At the end of the block, turn uphill left onto Chestertown Street. On the right ahead is Quarry Park, a city park built around the small pond left in the original quarry. Take the footpath into the park if you want to see the pond (a five-minute addition to the Hill loop).

Follow Chestertown Street as it bends left. At the intersection with Little Quarry Road, look to the right and note how high this street is above the Route 124 Kentlands entrance down below. Crossing Little Quarry, the condominiums and townhouses to the right on this block are perched high

above Route 124 with views to forever. At midblock, Ridgepoint Place to the right serves as the entrance to the condominium parking and to the townhouse garage alleys that are visible from the Chestertown sidewalk up ahead. On a clear day, Sugarloaf Mountain is visible in the distance beyond



Cottages line one side of Dogwood Close on the Hill. Photo by Faith Kusterer.



*Victorian style houses on Little Quarry Road in the Hill District.
Photo by Faith Kusterer.*

Ridgepoint Place.

Continuing along Chestertown, note the unusual townhouses to the right, with front courtyards and rear alleys accessing garages below the units. As Chestertown bends to the left, note the row of cottages overlooking the small green on the left. The pattern of narrow lots facing green parks is one that can be seen throughout Kentlands.

At the intersection of Chestertown Street and Thaxton Street is the highest elevation in the Kentlands. Turn right along Chestertown a short distance, then turn left into Dogwood Close. Dogwood Close combines a tree-save park with narrow-lot housing, townhouses at the end and cottages along the side. Note the wide “sitting steps” on these townhouses. From the close, turn left through the arbor along the brick walk. Turn right onto the alley that crosses the walk. As the alley turns right, continue straight down the walkway steps to Kent Oaks Way. Cross Kent Oaks and turn left on the sidewalk. Look up the hill at the green and play space, then turn right down the steps through the cottage walkway to Little Quarry Road. Turn right on Little Quarry to rejoin the main loop tour.

The Branch Loop through the Gatehouse District

Starting at the corner of Massbury Street and Tschiffely Square Road, this tour covers some of the best known and most-pictured parts of the Kentlands, the first houses built in the new town, and Mr. Kent’s Gatehouse, which gives the neighborhood its name.

Head down Massbury Street, then take the first right onto Holmard Street. The houses ahead to the right along the

curve of the street have appeared in many photographs of Kentlands. The tree-save park across from them on the left is one of the prettiest of Kentland’s neighborhood pocket parks.

At the intersection of Holmard and Kent Oaks Way, this branch tour crosses the main tour loop. Turn left on Kent Oaks to rejoin the main tour; go straight along Holmard Street to finish the Gatehouse loop.

The townhouse cluster at the end of Holmard on the left was the first to be built in the Kentlands, and served as models for one of the original builders. Most townhouses built after this were smaller and less expensive than these originals, in response to the change in the Washington area real estate market after the end of the eighties.

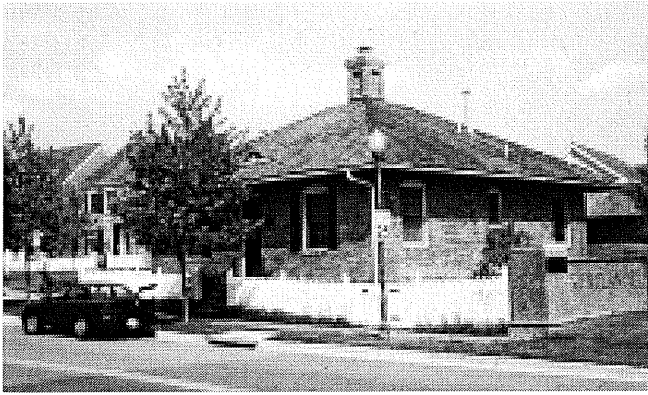
As Holmard ends at Beckwith Street, the tour will turn left. But stop first to look right up Beckwith Street towards the school. The first four houses to the right, with their two-story porches in front and their carriage-house studios over the garages in back, were Kentlands’ first four homes. They too served as models for a more expensive type of house that was never actually built elsewhere.



The first four houses built in Kentlands, located along Beckwith Street between Tschiffely Square Road and Holmard Street. Photo by Peter Katz.

Turn around and walk down Beckwith past the triangular park toward the gatehouse. Almost the whole range of Kentlands house types and sizes can be seen around this park. At the end of Beckwith, the rebuilt version of the original Kent Farm gatehouse stands across Kent Oaks Way to the right. Across the street from it are two more of the first model houses in the Kentlands, from a builder that did not survive the 1990-91 real estate recession.

Turn left on Kent Oaks Way. This part of the street follows the original service entrance road into the Kent Farm estate from the gatehouse on Route 28. Note the unusual house/driveway pattern on the left side of this street, made necessary by the shallow “half-block” that they are built on, which has no space for an alley down the middle.



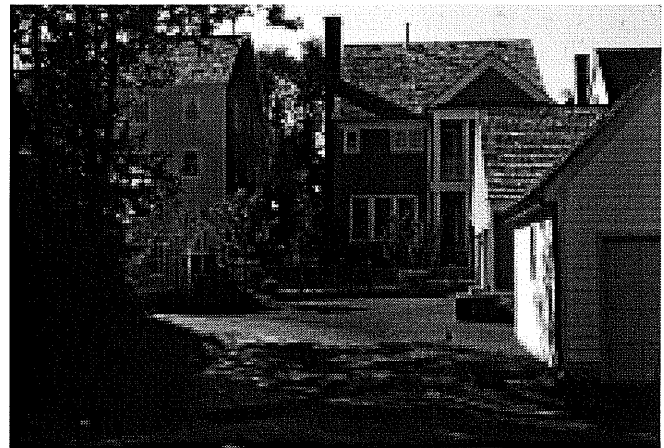
Alfandre's reconstruction of the original Kent farm gatehouse, the structure that gave the neighborhood its name. Photo by Faith Kusterer.

As the street circles the saved Kent Oak and turns left, turn right onto the causeway path to Old Farm. At this point, the Gatehouse loop rejoins the main Kentlands tour route.

The Branch Loop through the Old Farm District

At the corner of Selby Street and Kent Square Road, start walking down Kent Square past the town green. Turn right on the footpath that runs between the carriage house and the block of townhouses. This path emerges onto Inspiration Mews, one of Kentlands' more scenic alleys. Proceed down the alley, with the tree-save park area on the left and the carriage house apartments on the right.

At the alley's end, turn right onto Inspiration Lane. Follow Inspiration Lane, past Selby and Briscoe Streets, around the lakefront. In the yard of the house just past Briscoe are the preserved remains of a greenhouse and a never-used underground crypt. Note where the street narrows to save the large tree, the only place where this was done in the Kentlands. Every house on the block on the right has a carriage house apartment (except for the center-block cottage), the largest concentration of these in the Kentlands. At the corner of Kent Square Road and Inspiration Lane stands the farm manager's house from the old Kent Farm. This is the only one of the preserved Old Farm buildings that is used as a private residence. Turn right on Kent Square Road to pass along the side of this house. Cross Briscoe Street and pass the rear of the mansion, with the saved boxwoods between the two lanes of this street. Turn left into the alley between the original Carriage House and the Arts Barn. Pass the architect's office on the left to rejoin the main loop tour at Firehouse Lane.



The mews (alley) between Firehouse Lane and Golden Ash Way, in Old Farm. Photo by Mike Watkins.

The Branch Loop through the Lake District

The Lake District consists of three distinct areas — the Lower, Middle, and Upper Lake neighborhoods — separated from each other by streams and wetlands. Only the Lower Lake neighborhood is finished. The Middle Lake neighborhood still contains more lots for sale than houses, which means that the neighborhood's sidewalks and footpaths exist only in unconnected pieces. This branch tour is therefore not yet suitable for strollers or wheelchairs, as it will be when the neighborhood is complete.

Start at the entrance to Leeke's Lot Way off of Tschiffely Square Road. Walk down Leeke's Lot. At Firehouse Lane, turn right and begin to circle the large treed park in the center of the Lower Lake neighborhood. This park is planted with huge drifts of daffodils that are spectacular in the early spring. The houses on the right of Firehouse Lane back onto one of the smaller of Mr. Kent's lakes. Note that none of the houses on this park have alley access to their garages, a condition typical in the Lake District because of the lakes and wetlands. To de-emphasize the garage doors, detached or attached garages are pulled back from the street, and some are turned sideways.

At the second intersection of Firehouse and Leeke's Lot, pause to look down Firehouse Lane across the causeway, lined with rugosa roses, that leads across lakes to the Old Farm District. The small building on the corner is a carriage house apartment with a spectacular view. Turn left onto Leeke's Lot and continue around the circle. Turn right onto the footpath between 109 and 111 Firehouse Lane. Go through the woods and across the footbridge over the stream to the Middle Lake

neighborhood.

Turn right on Treehaven Street. Follow this street around the curve, or take the footpath shortcut and pause for a minute on the park bench. Treehaven ends on Thurgood Street. Directly across Thurgood, between 149 and 145, is a footpath that leads to a splendid large tot-lot in the woods. Check it out if you like; if not, turn right on Thurgood and proceed to the intersection with Midtown Road. Here the branch loop ends, as the main tour loop continues along Thurgood Street in the Upper Lake neighborhood.

The Branch Loop **through the Midtown Neighborhood**

At this writing, the most urban section of the Midtown, the Market Square shops and the live-work units along Main Street, are still in an early stage of construction. This loop tour therefore concentrates on the finished parts of the Midtown neighborhood, the Kentlands Square shopping area and the nearby condo and rental apartments.

At the end of Hart Road, turn right on Midtown Road. Turn left immediately onto Main Street. This block of Main Street will have senior citizen apartments to the left, live-work units (store-front townhouses) to the right. Most of the urban center of Kentlands and Lakelands will be located in the blocks immediately to the right of this street. Main Street ends at the traffic circle.

Cross Kentlands Boulevard (remembering that Kentlands Boulevard was a "given" in the regional transportation plan and not part of the neo-urban design, so that it is harder than it should be for pedestrians to cross) and enter the Kentlands Square shopping area. Kentlands Square, at present, looks like a "normal" suburban shopping center. But the parking areas in the middle are laid out in city blocks, with underground utilities confined to the street areas. If future commercial volume warrants, the parking lots can be turned into urban shopping blocks with storefronts on the streets and parking structures behind. Turn left after the restaurant and continue along the shopping center past the bagel shop. The bagel place, or the chicken restaurant ahead, or the coffee shop ahead to the right, would be good places to break your tour for a snack or a drink and a chance to sit.

Exit the shopping center past the chicken place's outdoor tables onto Booth Street. Across Booth Street is one of Kentlands' three condominium apartment complexes. Turn right on Booth Street past the condominiums. At Beacon Square Court the tour turns left. On Booth Street ahead are a gas station, a department store, and two more restaurants (past the department store in the parking area to the right). Beacon Square Court runs through the center of Beacon Place,

Kentlands' popular rental apartment complex, with its own clubhouse and pool, at the midpoint of Beacon Square Court on the right. As Montgomery County requires of all new apartment complexes in the county, a portion of the Beacon Place apartments are available at subsidized rents depending on income. These units and the carriage house apartments scattered through the neighborhoods are the most affordable housing options available in Kentlands. The garages in this complex that here and there shield parking from the street are available for any apartment tenant to rent.

At the end of Beacon Square Court, cross Kentlands Boulevard once again, and enter Tschiffely Square Road. On the right is Kentland's largest condominium complex. The treed space on the left was originally planned for development, but protests from the early residents of this condominium complex over their loss of green space blocked these plans, at least for now. Up ahead at the end of this block is a sculptural gazebo that terminates this vista and also serves as a backdrop for the pool area on its other side.

Cross Chestertown Street and turn right, then left around the corner of the tennis courts onto the continuation of Tschiffely Square Road. The Midtown Branch tour ends up ahead at the clubhouse, where the main tour also starts and ends.

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The Kentlands Community Foundation is a non-profit volunteer organization, dedicated to the development of a vibrant cultural life for the greater Gaithersburg area and to the dissemination of the ideals and principles of neo-traditional town planning. To participate in Foundation activities, or to become a contributing Friend of the Foundation, call Eileen Schlichting, President, at (301) 990-6371.