

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE



**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD**  
**APPLICATION FOR HISTORIC LANDMARK OR HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION**

New Designation   X    
Amendment of a previous designation \_\_\_\_\_  
Please summarize any amendment(s)

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Property Name: Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) Building  
*If any part of the interior is being nominated, it must be specifically identified and described in the narrative statements.*

Address: 3045 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Washington, DC 20009

Square and lot number(s): Square 2672, Lot 734  
Affected Advisory Neighborhood Commission: ANC 1A

Date of Construction: 1915 Date of major alteration(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
Architect(s): Appleton P. Clark, Jr. Architectural style(s): LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Neo-Classical Revival  
Original use: DOMESTIC: Single dwelling: rowhouse, RELIGION: Church-related residence: parsonage, SOCIAL: Civic Present use: SOCIAL: Civic

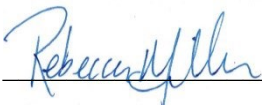
Property owner(s): Latin American Youth Center  
Legal address of property owner: 1419 Columbia Road NW, Washington, DC 20009

NAME OF APPLICANT(S): DC Preservation League

*If the applicant is an organization, it must submit evidence that among its purposes is the promotion of historic preservation in the District of Columbia. A copy of its charter, articles of incorporation, or by-laws, setting forth such purpose, will satisfy this requirement.*

Address/Telephone of applicant(s): DC Preservation League, 1328 Florida Avenue NW, 2nd Floor Washington, DC 20009, (202) 783-5144

Name and title of authorized representative: Rebecca Miller, Executive Director, DC Preservation League

Signature of applicant representative:  Date: March 31, 2025

Name and telephone of author of application: DC Preservation League, (202) 783-5144

Date received \_\_\_\_\_  
H.P.O. staff \_\_\_\_\_

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**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) Building

Other names/site number: Central Presbyterian Church Manse

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 3045 15<sup>th</sup> Street, NW

City or town: Washington State: DC County: \_\_\_\_\_

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D

<p>_____  <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p> <p>_____  <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p>_____  <b>Date</b></p>
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In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

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**Signature of commenting official:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Title :** \_\_\_\_\_ **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government** \_\_\_\_\_

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- \_\_\_ entered in the National Register
- \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ removed from the National Register
- \_\_\_ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site

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Structure

Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Single dwelling: rowhouse

RELIGION: Church-related residence: parsonage

SOCIAL: Civic

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL: Civic

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS: Neo-Classical Revival

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: brick, concrete, wood, cast iron

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### **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

### **Summary Paragraph**

The semi-attached rowhouse at 3045 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW is a three-story brick dwelling built in 1915 for the minister of the adjacent Central Presbyterian Church. Both the church and the manse were designed in a Neo-classical style by well-known DC architect, Appleton P. Clark, Jr. In 1971, the dwelling along with the church and its rear annex were relinquished by the Central Presbyterian Church to the Reverend Antonio Welty, who had been ministering the Good Shepherd United Presbyterian Church from the premises since 1968. Welty converted the three-building complex into the Wilson Center, a community center in which several non-profit organizations and an early education daycare school leased spaces. By 1974, the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC)—established in 1968 as one of the earliest organizations created to serve the growing Latino community in the District of Columbia—moved into the former parsonage. In 1998, after operating out of 3045 15<sup>th</sup> Street exclusively, the LAYC moved its offices to 1419 Columbia Road; however, LAYC retains ownership of this building and operates it as its Drop-in Center. The LAYC building survives with a fair degree of integrity.

### **Narrative Description**

#### Site

The LAYC building is located in an urban setting within the neighborhood of Columbia Heights, in northwest Washington, DC. Historically, the church and manse occupied a single trapezoidal-shaped lot (Square 2672, Lot 805) on the southeastern corner of 15<sup>th</sup> and Irving Streets NW. The large lot was later subdivided, and the LAYC building now occupies its own, smaller lot (Lot 734) south of the church. The terrain is flat and gently sloping from north to south. When the church and manse were built, the vicinity was characterized by single-family detached, semi-attached, and attached homes built of wood frame or brick as well as large, luxury apartment buildings, such as the Kenesaw Apartment House on 16<sup>th</sup> Street, the Earlington farther south on 15<sup>th</sup> Street, and the Beverly and the Suffolk on Irving Street. However, the parcels to the east and rear of the church buildings were largely vacant.<sup>1</sup>

The LAYC building has a rectangular footprint and abuts a brick rowhouse to the south that predates it (3043 15<sup>th</sup> Street was built in 1897). An alley on the north side of the building separates the LAYC building from the church. The west end of this alley is closed off by an eight-foot-tall,

<sup>1</sup> George W. Baist, William E Baist, and Harry V. Baist. *Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, District of Columbia: Complete in Four Volumes*. Volume 3, Plate 10 [Map] (Philadelphia: G.W. Baist, 1909). Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/item/87675120/>.

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decorative, cast-iron fence and gate that prohibits access. A small greenspace lies directly east (at the rear of) the LAYC building, but larger, institutional buildings abut the rear property line. On the west, the LAYC building faces 15<sup>th</sup> Street, on the opposite side of which is a large apartment building with a small, triangular park at the convergence of 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> streets.

### Exterior

The rectangular building measures 34 feet deep by 25 feet wide and encompasses approximately 2,624 square feet.<sup>2</sup> The façade (west elevation) is three bays wide, and the building rises three stories atop a raised basement. The building's flat roof is obscured by a cornice and parapet. It is comprised of red brick laid in a Flemish bond, and the façade is slightly stepped at the corners, to provide depth and relief to the wall plane. On the façade, the raised basement is demarcated by a row of soldier bricks that signify a water table; however, this band has been largely obscured by a full-width, one-story entry porch. A flight of concrete stairs (with seven risers) atop a brick foundation abuts and runs parallel to the elevated porch, which has a concrete slab floor atop a brick base. The stairs, lined with a cast-iron handrail that continues on the porch, reach a turned landing flush with the porch floor. Four squared posts support the flat porch roof with a box cornice. The porch and stairs were re-configured and rebuilt around 2007 as part of a larger renovation of the building. Historically, the porch was full-width (three bays) and one-story—as it is today—but it had four Tuscan, wood columns that supported a wide frieze and projecting cornice decorated with dentils, and the original set of concrete steps were straight-flight, leading from the sidewalk to the porch's central bay. To the north of and abutting the present porch is a modern (dating to circa 2021) metal-and-glass enclosure with a pedestrian door on the street. The enclosure is a handicapped-accessible elevator that rises from the street level to the porch level.

At the first-floor level, the porch shades a single-leaf entry door with a transom in the southernmost bay. The northernmost and central bays are occupied by single, large, rectangular, double-hung replacement windows, to which decorative cast-iron bars have been affixed externally. Each window rests atop a concrete sill. The second story is more ornate. In the central bay, French doors are set into a half-round, blind arch with a concrete, modillion-shaped keystone and concrete imposts that frame the patterned brick in the blind arch. A cast-iron, Juliette balcony covers the lower half of the French doors. Two smaller, single replacement windows with one-over-one wood sashes flank the central door. Both windows have concrete sills and brick jack arches with concrete keystones. The second story is separated from the third by a concrete belt course that serves as a continuous sill for a set of four evenly-spaced, single, one-over-one replacement windows. Rather than individual lintels, the group of four windows are topped by a continuous band of soldier course bricks, which serves as a base for the projecting, molded cornice decorated with dentils and modillions. Like the façade, the cornice is slightly stepped or recessed at the corners of the building. Above the cornice is a short, stepped brick parapet with coping.

The south side elevation abuts the dwelling at 3043 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW, but the north side elevation is exposed, lining an alleyway. The elevation is five bays deep, where the central bay is blind and the second bay from the façade holds a projecting, squared, brick, chimney stack. The basement

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<sup>2</sup> Building Permit #2815, issued 1/12/1915; data accessed via DC Historic Preservation Office, *HistoryQuest DC* [website] <https://dcdgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=2ab24bc3b6da4314b9f2c74b69190333>.

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level is blind, although three rectangular apertures east of the chimney stack have been closed. Their sills rest at ground level, and they are topped by a course of soldier bricks that wrap around the chimney stack to the façade, acting as a water table. The northwest corner has a single window at the first, second, and third floors. Each are rectangular, one-over-one sashes. Each rests atop a concrete sill, while those on the first and second floors have brick jack-arched lintels. The two easternmost bays on the first floor hold a large, triple window under a segmental brick arch with a concrete keystone. The second floor has two single windows in the two easternmost bays, while only one window is present on the third floor east of the chimney stack.

The east (rear) elevation of the building, facing a small backyard, has a two-story addition extending from the main block of the three-story dwelling. This addition replaced an older two-story ell at the rear of the dwelling while incorporating a detached 1915 garage that stood near the back of the lot. This two-story frame addition with a shed roof, visible via the alley, is lower than the original rear ell as indicated by exposed ceiling/roof joist holes visible above the present addition. The addition's north elevation, accessible from the alley off of 15<sup>th</sup> Street, holds a full-width, roll-up garage door on the ground level and a single, rectangular, sash window centered in the elevation at the second floor level.

### Interior

Only a portion of the interior could be accessed upon a site visit made March 4, 2025. The dwelling has a side-passage plan in which the stairs to the second floor are immediately accessible from the vestibule. The parlor occupies the two window bays north of the entrance. A narrow hallway extends past the stairwell into posterior rooms. The condition of the interior is fair, although survey was not permitted to gauge how much original trim and fixtures remain in situ.

### Integrity

Photographs provided by Google Streetview from 2007 to 2009 show that the building underwent extensive remodeling in those years. All of the windows on the façade and north (side) elevation were replaced. Brick infill that does not match the color of the original brick suggests that the second-story aperture in the fourth bay from the façade was reduced in size; the replacement window is shorter than its mate in the easternmost bay. The present porch and steps are new construction. Flanking the original straight-flight stairs, there were two arched openings with iron grilles in the brick foundation of the porch that have since been closed or obscured by the new stairs and the handicapped-accessible elevator enclosure. Nonetheless, the LAYC building retains a fair degree of integrity. The building still occupies its original site and parcel. It retains its original design with its Neo-Classical style of architecture, including an ornate cornice. The windows have all been replaced, but they are wood windows that have historically-appropriate light configurations. The replacement porch, however, is not a replica of the Greek Revival-style original. The building is still in use as civic organization, and so it retains a strong and palpable feeling and association.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years



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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL HISTORY

ETHNIC HERITAGE: Hispanic

**Period of Significance**

1915-1974

**Significant Dates**

1915

1974

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Appleton P. Clark, Jr. (architect)

James T. Kenyon (builder)

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The former dwelling at 3045 15<sup>th</sup> Street was erected in 1915 as a home for the minister of the adjacent Central Presbyterian Church. It served as a dwelling until circa 1971, when it became a part of the Wilson Center, a community center and non-profit incubator geared towards serving the needs to DC's growing, Spanish-speaking immigrant population. Since 1974, this building has been occupied by the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC), one of the earliest organizations created to serve the growing Latino population in the District of Columbia. The LAYC was formed in 1968 as a response to rising youth violence, especially between the city's Latino immigrants and African Americans. Over the decades, the LAYC has offered educational and vocational training, counseling and support programs, summer youth employment, and classes in the fine arts as well as a safe space for members of the DC Latino community. It is one of the most revered institutions of its kind in DC.

The LAYC building is significant at the local level under Criterion A for its association with the growth of Latino immigration in the United States (and particularly Washington, DC) in the second half of the twentieth century. Its areas of significance are Social History and Ethnic Heritage: Hispanic. The building's social history begins with its purpose-built construction in 1915 as a manse for the neighboring Central Presbyterian Church. During its tenure on 15<sup>th</sup> Street, the church served the spiritual community and was the preferred church of President Woodrow Wilson from 1913 to 1924. Starting in the mid-1960s, the church's educational annex became the spiritual home of a Spanish-speaking Presbyterian congregation, the Good Shepherd United Presbyterian Church. At that point, the church transformed into a community center called the Wilson Center, which hosted a variety of agencies tailored to help integrate Spanish-speaking arrivals into life in the United States. The most notable of these is the Latin American Youth Center, which moved into the former parsonage in 1974. From this latter association, the LAYC building is significant under Ethnic Heritage: Hispanic. The period of significance extends from 1915 to 1974.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

**CRITERION A: SOCIAL HISTORY**

The LAYC building has been a notable institutional presence on its site since its construction in 1915. As a manse for the Central Presbyterian Church, first organized in 1868, it was the dwelling for several notable ministers, including James Henry Taylor, who provided spiritual guidance to President Woodrow Wilson during the latter's residency in Washington. In the mid-1960s, as the neighborhood of Columbia Heights transitioned, the mission of the church shifted to respond to the needs of the growing Spanish-speaking immigrant community in DC. It ultimately pivoted to become a community center named for President Wilson, offering spaces to non-profit organizations and educational programs that catered to the growing Latino community in Ward 1. One such agency, the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC), founded in 1968, moved into the

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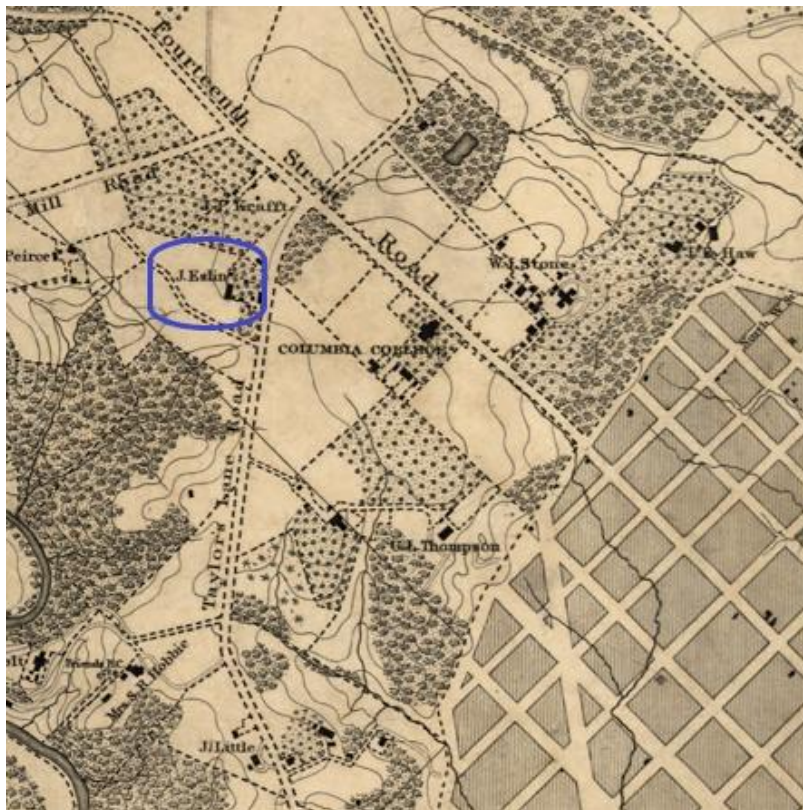
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building in 1974. The LAYC has been a mainstay for the Latino immigrant community in Columbia Heights since its establishment in 1968.

### History of the Site Prior to 1913

In the nineteenth century, the area in which the LAYC building was constructed lay outside of the original City of Washington, in what was known as Washington County after the District of Columbia was formed in 1790. This rural area north of Boundary Street was a patchwork of farms and estates. The land that lay north of Taylor's Lane (today's Columbia Road) had been patented by James Holmead as early as 1727 and named Pleasant Plains. To the south of Taylor's Lane lay a thousand-acre plantation called Mount Pleasant. As late as 1861, when Albert Boschke created his *Topographical Map of the District of Columbia*, only two residences—the home of W.J. Stone and Meridian Hill, the seat of G.L. Thomson—flanked 14<sup>th</sup> Street north of Boundary Street. Slightly farther north was Columbian College, founded in 1821 and sited between 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> streets. The presence of the college gave the area its moniker, “College Hill.”<sup>3</sup> The estate of James Eslin, which contained a tavern, lay north of Taylor's Lane, between what would become 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> streets (Figure 1).



*Figure 1: Excerpt of A. Boschke's Topographical Map of the District of Columbia, showing Columbia College at Center. The estate of J. Eslin (and the property vicinity) is immediately northwest, circled in blue.*

The population of DC exploded during and immediately following the Civil War, resulting in a housing crisis. By that time, the built environment had reached the limits of the original City of

<sup>3</sup> Brian Kraft, “Columbia Heights: Passageway for Urban Change,” in *Washington at Home: An Illustrated History of the Neighborhoods in the Nation's Capital*, Second Edition. Ed. Kathryn Schneider Smith (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010) 240-242. Albert Boschke, *Topographical Map of the District of Columbia* [Map] (Washington: D. McClelland, Blanchard & Mohun, 1861). Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/item/88694013/>.

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Washington, and speculative real-estate developers turned to the rural areas just north of Boundary Street. Landowners and developers subdivided farms for future residential development. In 1868, Samuel P. Brown subdivided a large tract north of Park Road and west of 14<sup>th</sup> Street which he called Mount Pleasant. In 1881, John Sherman, a Senator from Ohio, purchased and platted 121 acres between 11<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, Boundary streets and Park Road. He called his subdivision Columbia Heights, and this name would come to describe a larger area beyond his original subdivision's bounds. Although the LAYC property at 15<sup>th</sup> and Irving streets lay on land (the Eslin estate) subdivided by William O. Denison and Benjamin F. Leighton in 1884, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> streets were considered the western edge of Columbia Heights twenty years later.<sup>4</sup>

Sherman advertised Columbia Heights as a prestigious residential enclave, marketed to the white, middle- and upper-middle-class professionals and bureaucrats who had filled the ranks of the expanding civil service and military during the war and through the Reconstruction era. Infrastructural improvements in the 1890s—including the laying of water and sewer connections, the paving of major streets, and the establishment of a cable car on 14<sup>th</sup> Street in 1892 that was electrified by 1898—ensured the neighborhood's success. By the turn of the century, “Substantial brick row houses started to fill the large gaps between the smattering of detached houses,” and “Despite an economic depression in the mid-1890s, 254 houses rose in Columbia Heights between 1893 and 1897.”<sup>5</sup>

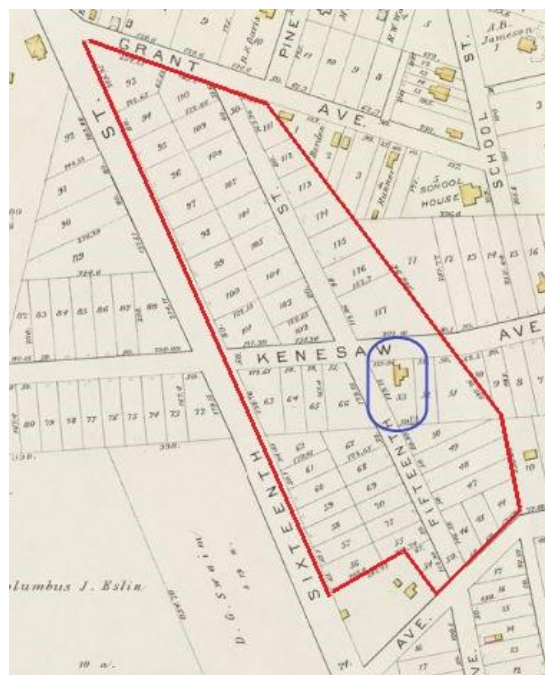


Figure 2: Excerpt of G.M. Hopkins' 1887 real-estate atlas, showing Denison and Leighton's subdivision outlined in red and a frame dwelling on the LAYC property circled in blue.

By contrast, Denison and Leighton's subdivision, containing lots 44-117 between 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> streets, Columbia Road, and Grant Avenue, was slow to develop. Despite advertisements in local newspapers attesting to “beautiful suburban Building Lots...in this beautiful locality, commanding a view of Rock Creek Valley,” sales appear to have been few.<sup>6</sup> In 1887, when Griffith M. Hopkins created a real-estate atlas for the City of Washington, only one frame, detached dwelling had been erected in the subdivision, on Lot 53 at the southeast corner of Kenesaw Avenue (renamed Irving Street) and 15<sup>th</sup> Street, which is the LAYC property (Figure 2).<sup>7</sup> The subdivision's

<sup>4</sup> Kraft 2010: 240-243. Matthew B. Gilmore and Michael R. Harrison, “A Catalog of Suburban Subdivisions of the District of Columbia, 1854-1902,” *Washington History* Vol. 14, No. 2 (Fall/Winter 2002/2003) 41.

<sup>5</sup> Kraft 2010: 244.

<sup>6</sup> “For Sale,” [Advertisement] *The Evening Star* (Washington, DC) 1 June 1886: 3.

<sup>7</sup> Lot 53 has been subsequently subdivided since 1884. First, the southernmost end of the large parcel (present-day Lot 733) was subdivided in 1895 and the house at 3043 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW was erected on this subdivided lot in 1897 (see next page). The LAYC building is on present-day Lot 734, which was presumably subdivided from the church lot (Lot 880) circa 2000, when the LAYC purchased the building.

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lag in development may be attributed to the fact that the area west of 15<sup>th</sup> Street and south of Irving Street was considered part of a working-class, African American neighborhood called Meridian Hill.<sup>8</sup>

One of the earliest recorded real-estate transactions in Denison and Leighton's subdivision announced in local newspapers was the conveyance of part of Lot 53 from Thomas W. Hunter and his wife to Charles H. Armes for \$1,000 in 1895.<sup>9</sup> Thomas W. Hunter was enumerated in the 1880 decennial census of Washington, at which time he was a 35-year-old, single Black man living as a boarder at 1628 M Street NW. Born in Ohio, Hunter reported that he was a teacher in drawing. Charles H. Armes, in that same census, was a 34-year-old, married white man from Massachusetts residing at 1443 Q Street NW at the time. He gave his occupation as lawyer. Armes commissioned the semi-attached rowhouse at 3043 15<sup>th</sup> Street, which was built by John C. Louthan on the southern edge of Lot 53 in 1897.<sup>10</sup> From this transaction alone, one might suppose that Denison and Leighton's subdivision acted as an integrated or transitional space between the predominantly white, middle-class Columbia Heights and predominantly Black, working-class Meridian Hill.

Denison and Leighton's subdivision was reported on frequently in 1895, as the investors sued the city for the eminent domain required to extend streets. An article in the *Evening Star* quoted a surveyor, Joseph Paul, who was asked to assess the value of the Denison and Leighton's lots for recompense. Paul noted that lots 51 and 52, fronting Kenesaw Avenue, were worth only 50-60 cents per square foot, but lot 53 was assessed at \$1 per square foot.<sup>11</sup> These were cheaper than lots in Columbia Heights, which were selling on average for 80-90 cents per square foot, and which one evaluator "considered far superior in every way to lots in Denison and Leighton's subdivision," elaborating that although "there have been some few buildings erected during the last two or three years in the [Denison and Leighton] subdivision, there have been more buildings, fine ones, too, erected in Columbia Heights during that time."<sup>12</sup>

By 1903, the intersection of Kenesaw Avenue with 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> streets remained sparsely developed, with more vacant lots than houses. Two short rows of attached dwellings occupied the northeast corner of the intersection, but the majority of the area was characterized by detached and semi-attached wooden dwellings. Lot 53 was still occupied by a two-story wood-frame dwelling with a one-story front porch and a one-story rear ell. Set back from its property lines on a generous lot, the only other structure was a one-and-a-half-story outbuilding in the rear (Figure 3). The parcel had changed little by the time George William Baist published his real-estate atlas in 1909, but the area around it had changed drastically in those six years. Large, masonry apartment buildings had been constructed to the west, north, and south, and the general area was no longer

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<sup>8</sup> Kraft 2010: 244-245.

<sup>9</sup> "Transfer of Real Estate," *The Evening Star* (Washington, DC) 31 July 1895: 10.

<sup>10</sup> Building Permit #297, issued 8/27/1897; data accessed via DC Historic Preservation Office, *HistoryQuest DC* [website] <https://dcgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=2ab24bc3b6da4314b9f2c74b69190333>

<sup>11</sup> "Discussing Values: Testimony Given in the Street Extension Cases," *The Evening Star* (Washington, DC) 10 December 1895: 9.

<sup>12</sup> "Columbia Heights Property: Testimony Taken Yesterday Before the Street Extension Jury," *The Evening Star* (Washington, DC) 11 December 1895: 10.

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under-developed. The ubiquitous wood-frame houses present in 1903 were slowly being supplanted by rows of attached brick dwellings and apartments (Figure 4).

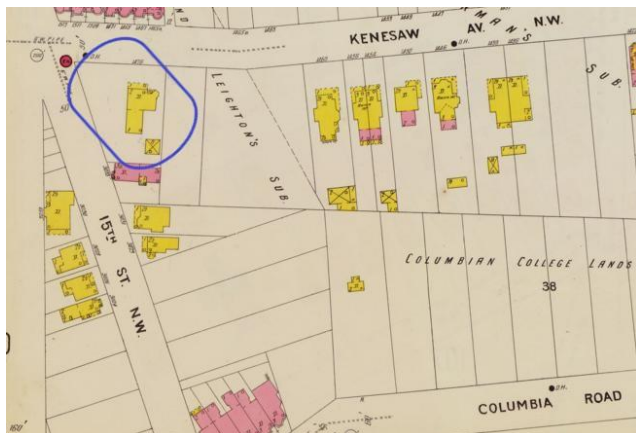


Figure 3: Excerpt of 1903 Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. Map of DC, with property circled in blue.



Figure 4: Excerpt of G.W. Baist's 1909 Real-Estate Atlas, showing the property circled in blue.

Following the residential growth came institutions and services. In 1908, the first section of the Neo-classical style Immanuel Baptist Church (now the National Baptist Memorial Church) was completed on the northeast corner of 16<sup>th</sup> Street and Columbia Road. Several other churches were in the vicinity, including the Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church at 713 Columbia Road (just east of 15<sup>th</sup> Street). Sixteenth Street, which would come to be called Embassy Row by the 1920s, was also becoming a thoroughfare characterized by stately churches. By 1913, these were joined by the Central Presbyterian Church.<sup>13</sup>

#### The Central Presbyterian Church and the Wilson Center 1913-1973

The Central Presbyterian Church was formed by the Reverend Alexander White Pitzer on January 19, 1868. The small congregation initially met in a rented room on the second floor of the Columbia Law Building, located on 5<sup>th</sup> Street NW between D and E streets. By December of 1871, however, the congregants purchased a lot on 3<sup>rd</sup> and I streets NW where they erected a chapel the following year, which was dedicated on the fifth anniversary of the church's founding, in 1873.

For the first three decades of the congregation's existence, the Central Presbyterian Church was the only Presbytery in Washington associated with the Southern General Assembly. Pitzer, born and educated in Virginia, had enlisted in the Confederate Army at the outbreak of the Civil War, and when he arrived in DC in 1868 expressly to found a new church, "the ruptured ecclesiastical ties between the north and the south had not been reunited."<sup>14</sup> A dictum had been made by the

<sup>13</sup> Baist 1909. George W. Baist, William E Baist, and Harry V. Baist. *Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, District of Columbia: Complete in Four Volumes*. Volume 3, Plate 10 [Map] (Philadelphia: G.W. Baist, 1913). Library of Congress: <https://lccn.loc.gov/map66000662>.

<sup>14</sup> "In the Local Churches," *The Evening Star* (Washington, DC) 18 January 1902: 11. Library of Congress, Chronicling America: <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1902-01-18/ed-1/seq-11/>.

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northern synod of the Presbyterian Church that ministers from southern states should not be admitted into the council unless they openly repented rebellion. Pitzer's church was organized for Washingtonians with southern sympathies who felt alienated by Presbyterian churches associated with the Northern General Assembly, and in its early years the Central Presbyterian Church was known by DC residents as the "Rebel Church." Federal workers affiliated with the Reconstruction government gave the church wide berth as joining could be a cause for dismissal, while others published opinion pieces in the local press expressing their opinion that "Congress ought to suppress the nest of rebel sympathizers who had organized themselves into a church."<sup>15</sup>

Attitudes towards southern sympathizers had shifted by 1902, when a story was relayed that a federal employee, attempting to have a colleague fired for his association with the Central Presbyterian Church, was himself given 24 hours to either apologize or resign for his effrontery. By this time, the church had grown both in size and in reputation, attracting veterans from both armies, and in this way, the Central Presbyterian Church was considered by some a neutral ground on which the ecclesiastical break of 1865 was healed. In fact, Pitzer, at a congress of the Southern Presbyterian Church held in Atlanta in 1882, was foremost in introducing a resolution to reestablish ties with the Presbyterian Church North.<sup>16</sup>

Pitzer was succeeded by the Reverend James Henry Taylor in November 1906, and it was under Taylor's tenure that the church trustees decided to move from downtown to the near suburbs. Divesting its 1885 sanctuary to the African American congregation of the Mount Carmel Baptist Church, the Central Presbyterian Church trustees purchased a lot at 13<sup>th</sup> and Monroe streets NW in 1909 and erected a temporary structure. But within three years, the trustees assessed the Monroe Street site as too small for future expansion, and so it was sold while a new lot was purchased on the southeast corner of 15<sup>th</sup> and Irving streets NW. Preparations for the erection of a permanent brick-and-stone church—which included the demolition of the frame house on Lot 53, in which Taylor had been living—were underway by October 1913. The imposing edifice was designed in a Neo-classical style by local architect Appleton P. Clark, Jr. and built by the Davis Construction Co. for \$42,000. President Woodrow Wilson laid the cornerstone for the new Central



*Figure 3: Central Presbyterian Church ca. 1920. Photograph by Harris and Ewing.*

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

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Presbyterian Church on December 19<sup>th</sup> that year. Wilson had joined the church upon moving to Washington in January 1913, and as a staunch Presbyterian, he regularly attended services at the Central Presbyterian Church, which he called a “dear old-fashioned church such as I used to go to when I was a boy.”<sup>17</sup> The new sanctuary was completed and occupied by February 1914 and was dedicated three months later, on May 31 (Figure 5).<sup>18</sup>

The house at 3045 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW was also designed by Clark in a stylistically complementary manner. The dwelling was constructed by James. T. Kenyon for the estimated cost of \$7,750 in January 1915. An advertisement in an August 1915 edition of *The Washington Herald* announced that Shook & Holliday had been the bricklayers of the manse, subcontracted by Kenyon.<sup>19</sup> Rev. Taylor is presumed to have occupied the manse until his retirement in 1943. In fact, an announcement in the November 12, 1916 issue of the *Evening Star* lists Taylor’s address as 3045 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW, and the 1940 decennial census enumerated Taylor as a 68-year-old preacher residing alone at this address.<sup>20</sup> Taylor was succeeded by interim pastors until Rev. Graham Gordon Lacy was installed in June 1947. Lacy, who remained at Central Presbyterian Church through the early 1960s, lived at the dwelling with his large family, as enumerated in the 1950 decennial census. At that time, the manse was full, as Rev. Lacy and his wife, Julia, and their children Margaret and Graham, Jr., as well as Lacy’s father-in-law, an aunt, and a live-in cook named Anna Hewlitt all lived in the house together.<sup>21</sup>

In 1930, the Central Presbyterian Church purchased lots 51 and 52 to the immediate east of the sanctuary and erected a Sunday school, educational building at 1470 Irving Street NW. The cornerstone was laid by President Herbert Hoover. Designed by Herbert L. Caine, the annex was constructed by W. E. Mooney at the cost of \$90,000. On November 18, 1956, a memorial service was held to celebrate the centennial of President Wilson’s birth, at which time the educational building was renamed the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Building and Wilson’s widow unveiled a bronze plaque commemorating Wilson’s 1914 dedication speech for the church.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Cara Lea Burnidge, *A Peaceful Conquest: Woodrow Wilson, Religion, and the New World Order* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016) 44.

<sup>18</sup> Building Permit #1800, issued 10/19/1913; data accessed via DC Historic Preservation Office, *HistoryQuest DC* [website] <https://dcgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=2ab24bc3b6da4314b9f2c74b69190333> “History of a Defunct Church: Central Presbyterian Church of Washington, DC,” *Quondam Washington* [Website] 19 February 2010; accessed 8 March 2025: <https://quondamdc.wordpress.com/2010/02/19/history-of-a-defunct-church-central-presbyterian-church-of-washington-d-c/>. “President Wilson Lays Church Corner Stone,” *The Evening Star* (Washington, DC) 20 December 1913: 9. “Parsonage Being Razed for Church,” *The Washington Times* (Washington, DC) 4 October 1913: 4. John DeFerrari and Douglas Peter Sefton, *Sixteenth Street NW: Washington, DC’s Avenue of Ambitions* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2022) 151.

<sup>19</sup> “Expert Bricklayers Have High Standard,” [Advertisement] *The Washington Herald* (Washington, DC) 28 August 1915: 6.

<sup>20</sup> “Automobile Licenses,” *The Evening Star* (Washington, DC) 12 November 1916: 6.

<sup>21</sup> Building Permit #135941, issued 9/7/1930; data accessed via DC Historic Preservation Office, *HistoryQuest DC* [website] <https://dcgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=2ab24bc3b6da4314b9f2c74b69190333> “History of a Defunct Church: Central Presbyterian Church of Washington, D.” “New Houses of Worship Help Beautify Capital,” *The Evening Star* (Washington, DC) 6 December 1930: B-1.

<sup>22</sup> “History of a Defunct Church: Central Presbyterian Church of Washington, DC.” “Presbyterians Honor Wilson,” *The Evening Star* (Washington, DC) 19 November 1956: A-32.



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Starting in the mid-1950s, Columbia Heights transitioned from a middle-class, white enclave into an African American neighborhood. Several Columbia Heights' churches felt pressure to move with their white congregants, who were relocating to the suburbs in Maryland and Virginia. As an example, the white congregation of Gunton Temple Memorial Presbyterian—which had built a sanctuary at 16<sup>th</sup> and Newton streets NW in 1924—resisted pressures to move in the mid-1950s but succumbed in 1963, when they sold their building to the African American Canaan Baptist Church and relocated to Bethesda, Maryland. Similarly, the congregation of Central Presbyterian voted to remain in their location on June 10, 1958. The dwindling congregation continued to use this three-building complex at 15<sup>th</sup> and Irving streets until January 1, 1973, when the congregants held their last service in the sanctuary. In August that year, the trustees of the Central Presbyterian Church conveyed their property, containing Lot 52 and part of Lots 51 and 53 in Denison and Leighton's subdivision, to the National Capital Union Presbytery, Inc., and vacated the premises.<sup>23</sup>

### **CRITERION A: ETHNIC HISTORY: HISPANIC**

#### Latin American Youth Center 1974-present

The demographics of Columbia Heights continued to shift through the second half of the twentieth century. In 1960, census tract 28—comprising that part of Columbia Heights between 14<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, Harvard streets, and Spring Road NW—had the fifth highest concentration of residents with Spanish surnames, although they accounted for only 1% of the tract's total population. By 1980, census tract 28 was the top fourth neighborhood for residents with Spanish origins, or 12% of the area's total population. By 1990, census tract 28.2 (the southern half of the older tract, between Harvard Street and Park Road) had the highest concentration of Latino residents across the entire District, accounting for 47.3% of the reduced tract's total population.<sup>24</sup>

At some point in the mid-1960s, the Central Presbyterian Church began sharing space in the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Building with a group of Spanish-speaking supplicants overseen by a Puerto Rican pastor, Miguel Ángel Morales. By 1968, the Reverend Antonio R. Welty, a Colombian, replaced Morales as minister to the Spanish-speaking congregants, and under Welty's pastoral service, the congregation became larger and called itself the Good Shepherd United Presbyterian Church.<sup>25</sup> Welty was also an organizer who offered “eight o'clock breakfasts at the

<sup>23</sup> “History of a Defunct Church: Central Presbyterian Church of Washington, DC.” DeFerrari and Sefton 2022: 214. Marjorie Hyer, “Central Presbyterian Church Holds Last Worship Service,” *The Washington Post* 1 January 1973: B-1. Washington, DC Deed Book 3538153, 17 September 1973.

<sup>24</sup> Open Data DC, “Census Tracts in 1960” [GIS Data Set] (Washington, DC: DC Office of the Chief Technology Officer, 2018); accessed 11/15/24: <https://opendata.dc.gov/datasets/DCGIS::census-tracts-in-1960/about>. Open Data DC, “Census Tracts in 1980” [GIS Data Set] (Washington, DC: DC Office of the Chief Technology Officer, 2018); accessed 11/15/24: <https://opendata.dc.gov/datasets/DCGIS::census-tracts-in-1980/about>. Open Data DC, “Census Tracts in 1990” [GIS Data Set] (Washington, DC: DC Office of the Chief Technology Officer, 2018); accessed 11/15/24: <https://opendata.dc.gov/datasets/DCGIS::census-tracts-in-1990/about>.

<sup>25</sup> Olivia Cadaval, *Creating a Latino Identity in the Nation's Capital: The Latino Festival* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1998) 221. Luis Gonzales interview, 10 March 1982. In “Latino Youth Community History Project” (Washington, DC: 1981-1982). Repository: Washington, DC: DC Public Library, The People's Archive; accessed: <https://digdc.dclibrary.org/islandora/object/dcplislandora%3A72684>. Patrick Scallen, “*The Bombs that Drop in El Salvador Explode in Mount Pleasant.*” *From Cold War Conflagration to Immigrant Struggles in Washington, DC, 1970-1995*. Ph.D. Dissertation (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2019) 128-129.

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church so that people could meet to discuss their problems and differences.”<sup>26</sup> With Carlos Rosario (a Puerto Rican who worked in the Department of Health), Welty created the Committee for Aid and Development of Latin America in the Nation’s Capital (CADOLANCA) in 1968. Welty and Rosario originally operated the agency from the church premises, and the 1970 *Directory of Spanish Speaking Organizations in the United States* described the organization’s objectives as “Assist[ing] the Spanish speaking in filling out tax forms, and with immigration problems. Referral through proper channels for such services as health, welfare, housing, education, employment, etc. Establish programs for English classes and skills.”<sup>27</sup> CADOLANCA was conceived as a means of building coalition support and bringing the issues of Latino residents to the attention of local government officials. Growing out of the Civil Rights movement, it was a grassroots, participatory, advocacy group intended to inspire Latinos/as living in the District to demand their civic and legal rights.<sup>28</sup>

By the end of the decade, the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Building “had become a hub of social activity for the growing immigrant population.”<sup>29</sup> Early leaders of DC’s Latino community met there in the autumn of 1970 to discuss what they perceived was an undercounting of Latinos in the 1970 decennial census; as a result, they conceived of an annual Latino Festival and parade as both a community organizing effort and a pressure group. Recognizing the educational building’s new use, in 1971, the Central Presbyterian Church allocated funding for and allowed Welty to use the annex as a community center, leasing spaces to non-profits and service agencies for the nominal rent of one dollar per year.<sup>30</sup> Colloquially called the Wilson Center (or Centro Wilson), organizations and schools catering to the Latino community—such as Rosario’s Program of English Instruction for Latin Americans (PEILA)—moved into the building on Irving Street. Through the remainder of the decade and the next, other agencies moved into the community center, including the Columbia Road Children’s Center, the Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP), El Centro de Arte, the Ecumenical Program for Inter-American Communication and Action (EPICA), the Rumba School, the Central American Resource Center (CARECEN), and La Clínica del Pueblo.<sup>31</sup> “The Wilson Center soon became known as the “lighthouse” of community organizing for Washington’s Latinos, acting as an early incubator for nonprofit agencies that would form the bedrock of the Latino social service sector in coming years.”<sup>32</sup>

At the same time, the former manse at 3045 15<sup>th</sup> Street was integrated into this new use as part of the larger Wilson Center complex. The Spanish Education Development (SED) Center was the

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<sup>26</sup> Olivia Cadaval, “Adams Morgan: Diversity with a Latin Beat,” in Washington At Home: An Illustrated History of the Neighborhoods in the Nation’s Capital, Second Edition, ed. Kathryn Schneider Smith (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2010) 445.

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Congress, Cabinet Committee on Opportunity for the Spanish Speaking, *Directory of Spanish Speaking Organizations in the United States* (July 1970) 113.

<sup>28</sup> Chris Myers Asch and George Derek Musgrove, Chocolate City: A History of Race and Democracy in the Nation’s Capital (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017) 373. Cadaval 2010: 444-445. Cadaval 1998: 217. Scallen 2019: 128-129.

<sup>29</sup> Asch and Musgrove 2017: 373.

<sup>30</sup> DeFerrari and Sefton 2022: 216.

<sup>31</sup> Cadaval 1998: 221-225.

<sup>32</sup> Scallen 2019: 128-129.

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first tenant in the house, from 1971 to 1974 and again in 1978 to 1980. The SED Center was created by Roberto Baquerizo, a Masters candidate at Catholic University, as one of the first bilingual, English as a Second Language (ESL) programs in DC geared for adult learners. It was funded through federal grants made available through the 1962 Manpower Development and Training Act. The SED Center catered to professionals arriving from Latin American countries and was affiliated with (and accredited by) U.S. institutions of higher learning, so that adults could take courses to attain teaching certification through City College. The SED Center also had a childcare element, and by 1975, the organization was running a preschool at 1459 Columbia Road. The Adelante Advocacy Center, founded in 1976 by Richard Gutierrez, also had its offices in the manse through 1981. It offered bilingual housing services until it closed in 1995. But the longest tenant was the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC), which moved into the building in 1974.<sup>33</sup>

Before the establishment of the LAYC in 1968, young Latinos and Latinas living in the neighborhood would informally hang out at the Spanish Catholic Center, located on the first floor of the Kenesaw Apartment House on 16<sup>th</sup> Street. Damage done to the Spanish Catholic Center's space resulting from a fight at a social dance led Father Rutilio del Riego to prohibit kids. With nowhere to congregate, Spanish-speaking youths gathered in the greenspace south of the Shrine of the Sacred Heart and in the streets, which unfortunately led to some becoming involved in drugs and petty crime. Then there were the riots in DC following Martin Luther King, Jr's assassination in April 1968, which were followed by smaller riots in the brand new Lincoln Junior High School at 16<sup>th</sup> and Irving streets NW that September. The school was only open for three days before Latino and African American students started fighting, resulting in extensive property damage. The school building was immediately closed and remained so while it was repaired, but when it reopened, several Latino parents were hesitant to let their children return. The Lincoln Junior High School riot got the attention of bureaucrats, and "the city was more open to help, to assist the youth that were sort of left out for many years...the riots led to a feeling that we need to deal with the young people. We need to build their capacity."<sup>34</sup>

Garry Garber, a Chicano boxer from California and a University of Maryland graduate, had been working with at-risk Latino youth at the Spanish Catholic Center as the first agent of the Roving Leader Program, administered through the DC Department of Parks and Recreation. Following the school riots, Garber hired Arturo Griffiths, a young Panamanian émigré, to help him go door-to-door and convince parents to send their kids back to Lincoln Junior High School when it reopened. Garber and Griffiths then created an after-school program called the Courtesy Patrol, which was funded by the Department of Parks and Recreation. In the summer of 1969, Garber and Griffiths held an open-air summer program in the yard fronting Lincoln Junior High School. By June 1971, the program had grown so popular that Garber and Griffiths decided they needed a physical space

<sup>33</sup> Marcela Dávila interview, 23 February 1982. In "Latino Youth Community History Project" (Washington, DC: 1981-1982). Repository: Washington, DC: DC Public Library, The People's Archive; accessed: <https://digdc.dclibrary.org/islandora/object/dcplislandora%3A86729>. Arturo Griffiths, "Griffiths memo for Maria project.2024," 29 March 2024. Beatriz Otero, interview with Heather McMahon (Washington, DC: 21 February 2024). Gustavo Sulvaga interview, 13 April 1982. In "Latino Youth Community History Project" (Washington, DC: 1981-1982). Repository: Washington, DC: DC Public Library, The People's Archive; accessed: <https://digdc.dclibrary.org/islandora/object/dcplislandora%3A86723>. Cadaval 1998: 221-225.

<sup>34</sup> Arturo Griffiths, interview with Maria Sanchez-Carlo (Washington, DC: 27 February 2024).

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for an all-season youth center. With the assistance of Baquerizo, they prepared a proposal for the DC Office of Youth Opportunity Services. It was approved, and the LAYC was born.<sup>35</sup>

Although the LAYC was founded “to address the needs of disenfranchised youth in an emerging Latino community...Over the decades [it] has developed numerous, successful programs and achieved a wide range of goals related to helping Latino youth and the community.”<sup>36</sup> The founders of the LAYC identified a need—an absence of services for Latino youth—and offered, in LAYC’s embryonic stage, educational and vocational activities as after-school and summer programming. The LAYC originally opened its doors at 2325 18<sup>th</sup> Street NW, with Erasmo Lara as its first director (1972-1973). By 1974, José Sueiro became the organization’s second director (1974-1976) and oversaw its temporary move to rented space at 2700 Ontario Street NW, where it shared the second floor with the SED Center. Later that same year, the LAYC received 501(c)(3) status as a non-profit organization and found a permanent home in the former manse of the Central Presbyterian Church. In 1978, the LAYC received funding from the DC Department of Employment Services, which enabled the organization to offer vocational training programs in automotive mechanics, catering, and clerical skills. This young-adult educational programming expanded to ESL and General Education Development (GED) classes as well as after-school and summer employment programs.

Starting in the early 1980s, the fine arts—including mural painting, street theater, monthly newspaper publishing, and music lessons—became a focus of LAYC programming as the organization worked closely with El Centro de Arte, also located in the Wilson Center. In 1982, the *Unity Mural* was painted on the side elevation of the Potomac Electric Power Company (PEPCO) substation building on Champlain Street in Adams Morgan by nearly one dozen youth attending an LAYC summer program, which was funded by the DC Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). Norris Vassel (from Jamaica) and Quique Avilés (from El Salvador) were among the students working on the mural designed by local artists Allen “Big Al” Carter and Ligia Williams (originally from Colombia). The mural is a pastiche of Latin American cultural symbols, from the Caribbean origins of the woman carrying a fruit basket atop her head to the Aztec serpent in the center of the panel.<sup>37</sup> Over the course of three consecutive summers between 1988 and 1990, three murals were painted on an elongated, graffiti-ridden concrete retaining wall fronting Klinge Road NW: “A Tribute to Life,” “Youth of the World,” and “A Chant for Hope.” The three murals, commonly referred to together as *Canto a la Esperanza*, was painted by LAYC youth under the direction of artist Jorge Somarriba. The mural “windows,” or vignettes, range from abstract geometric shapes to figural scenes depicting ancient and folk cultures on several continents.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Maria Sprehn-Malagón, Jorge Hernandez-Fujigaki, and Linda Robinson, *Latinos in the Washington Metro Area* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2014) 45.

<sup>37</sup> Delia Beristain Noriega, “The legacy of the Unity Mural,” *Hola Cultura Más* [website] 2018; accessed: [https://holaculturamas.wordpress.com/d-c-latino-history-project-2018/the-legacy-of-the-unity-mural/?frame\\_nonce=e432290184b](https://holaculturamas.wordpress.com/d-c-latino-history-project-2018/the-legacy-of-the-unity-mural/?frame_nonce=e432290184b).

<sup>38</sup> Griffiths memorandum 2024. Mara Cherkasky and Jane Freundel Levey, *Village in the City: Mount Pleasant Heritage Trail* [Brochure] (Washington, DC: Cultural Tourism DC, 2006). Lynn Prowitt, “Latino Youths Cover Graffiti with Portrait of Hope,” *The Washington Post* 3 August 1988.

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By the mid-1980s, Lori Kaplan started her three-decade tenure as the organization's CEO. In that decade, working with at-risk teenagers and young adults was the core mission of the LAYC. In 1985, "in response to the influx of Salvadorans to the DC area, LAYC created a counseling and mental health center...for youth who had been traumatized by war and related incidents" under the direction of Suann Hecht.<sup>39</sup> As DC became further embroiled in gang violence associated with the crack-cocaine epidemic, Hecht recognized the need to open a safe space for young Latinos and Latinas. In 1988, the LAYC opened the Drop-In Center—affectionately called La Peña by those who used it—in the basement of the adjacent Wilson Center's sanctuary. La Peña was a meeting hall as well as a recreational space that featured a juice bar, a pool table, and a ping-pong table. It was also an important music venue, considered a "launching pad for a number of prominent local artists, performers, and musicians, in a number of genres, Nueva Canción, go-go, rock en español, punk, salsa and others."<sup>40</sup>

The Drop-in Center also acted as a refuge during the Mount Pleasant uprising and riots of May 5-8 1991. From the night of May 6, the LAYC kept the Drop-in Center open for people to escape the tear gas and chaos. By the early 1990s, the LAYC was creating programs in response to rising problems with gang violence, teen pregnancy and homelessness, and drug abuse. In 1996, it fostered The Next Step, a teen parenting program that eventually developed into a charter school. LAYC leadership also designed a course to promote youth leadership and advocacy in this period. In 1998, the LAYC moved its main operations into its current home at 1419 Columbia Road NW, turning the old manse into the Drop-in Center. Today, with satellite campuses in Maryland, the LAYC services the evolving needs of the area's Black, Latino, and immigrant families, children, and young adults.<sup>41</sup>

In 1973, the Central Presbyterian Church sold their property—including the church, its annex, and the former manse—to the National Capital Union Presbytery (NCUP), which became the de facto landlord to these various non-profit agencies housed throughout the Wilson Center complex. In 1979, the NCUP announced to the tenants that they wished to sell the property, and in response, the various lessees formed the Tenants Association to Save the Wilson Center. Fighting for the Wilson Center, program coordinator Maria Estella Squella said that, "Words cannot describe what goes on here and how important it is to the community."<sup>42</sup> Following negotiations, the NCUP agreed not to sell the building, but spent the next five years exploring alternative redevelopment ideas for the property, including converting the buildings into Section 8 or elderly housing. By the late 1990s, the property was leased to the Unity Community Center, a 501(c)(3) comprised of El Centro de Arte, the Barbara Chambers Children's Center (formerly the Columbia Road Children's Center, which had first occupied the building in 1973), La Clínica del Pueblo, and EPICA. The Wilson Center was ultimately closed in 2001 when the NCUP divested the property piecemeal, selling the sanctuary to the Capital City Charter School; the annex to the Barbara Chambers

<sup>39</sup> Scallen 2019: 218.

<sup>40</sup> Elissa Silverman, "End Hits: With the impending sale of the Wilson Center, local musicians can look forwards to a steady diet of nothing in Mount Pleasant," *Washington City Paper*, 6 July 2001; accessed 4/24/24: <https://washingtoncitypaper.com/article/262866/end-hits/>.

<sup>41</sup> Lori Kaplan, interview with Heather McMahon (Washington, DC: 20 February 2024). Scallen 2019: 217-218.Griffiths 2024. "About Us," *Latin American Youth Center* [Website]; accessed: <https://www.layc-dc.org/history>.

<sup>42</sup> DeFerrari and Sefton 2022: 216.

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Children's Center; and the manse to the LAYC. The sanctuary was remodeled for a school in 2004 and has been occupied by The Next Step Public Charter School, an outgrowth of the LAYC, since 2012.<sup>43</sup>

The former manse at 3045 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW has only had two uses in the course of its 120-year life span. From 1915 to circa 1970, it served as the dwelling for the minister of the Central Presbyterian Church, after which it became part of the larger Wilson Center complex. From 1974 through today, the building has been occupied by the LAYC, one of the earliest and most significant social service agencies catering to DC's Latino community since its organization in 1968. As such, the LAYC has not only been the longest-termed, Latino-based entity *in* this building but is indelibly associated with this site. Today, the LAYC uses the space as its Drop-in Center, which its website describes as "a safe haven for ALL youth 24 and under of any race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity to connect to safe housing resources," and in which LAYC's "friendly, bilingual staff provide ongoing assessments and case management to connect youth to needed services including education and employment support, mental health, and accessing public benefits."<sup>44</sup> Here, children, teenagers, and young adults can get access to hot meals, clothes, diapers and hygiene products, showers, laundry facilities, and even sleeping accommodations. In many ways, the Drop-In Center acts as a homeless shelter, and staff's biggest priority is helping youth gain access to DC's housing programs. The LAYC provides counseling services, referral services, and mail repository services at the Drop-in Center, and Drop-in Center staff offer resources to young parents as well as assist teens who want to return to school. In many ways, the LAYC continues to be a critical social service agency for DC's Latino (as well as greater) community from its premises on 15<sup>th</sup> Street.

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<sup>43</sup> Cadaval 1998: 221. Cherkasky and Levey 2006. DeFerrari and Sefton 2022: 216. Silverman 2001. "About the Next Step," *The Next Step Public Charter School* [Website]; accessed: <https://www.nextsteppcs.org/our-school>.

<sup>44</sup> "Drop-In Center," *Latin American Youth Center* [Website]; accessed 13 March 2025: <https://www.layc-dc.org/dropin-center>.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

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**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** \_\_\_ 0.06023875 (2624 square feet) \_\_\_\_\_

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 38.92829                      Longitude: -77.03572
2. Latitude:                                      Longitude:
3. Latitude:                                      Longitude:
4. Latitude:                                      Longitude:

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary conforms to the property lines of Square 2672, Lot 734: Approximately 27.3 feet frontage on 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW (east property line); approximately 104.38 feet on an unnamed alley (north property line); approximately 26.1 feet on rear (west) property line; and approximately 95.5 feet on the south property line.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary conforms to the property lines of Square 2672, Lot 734.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Heather N. McMahan  
organization: Heather McMahan, Architectural Historian (HMAH)  
street & number: 3062 W. Old U.S. Highway 64, Unit B

Latin American Youth Center  
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city or town: Lexington state: N.C. zip code: 27295  
e-mail: heathermcmahon.archhistory@gmail.com  
telephone: (434) 249-3454  
date: March 9, 2025

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### **Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### **Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### **Photo Log**

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Photo 1: DC\_LAYC\_0001.tif: View facing southeast of northwest elevation

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Photo 2: DC\_LAYC\_0002.tif: View facing southeast of northwest elevation from 15<sup>th</sup> St. NW



Photo 3: DC\_LAYC\_0003.tif: View facing northeast of west elevation from 15<sup>th</sup> St. NW

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Photo 4: DC\_LAYC\_0004.tif: View facing southeast of north elevation

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Photo 5: DC\_LAYC\_0005.tif: View facing southeast of attached garage north elevation



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Photo 6: DC\_LAYC\_0006.tif: View facing west of rear elevation

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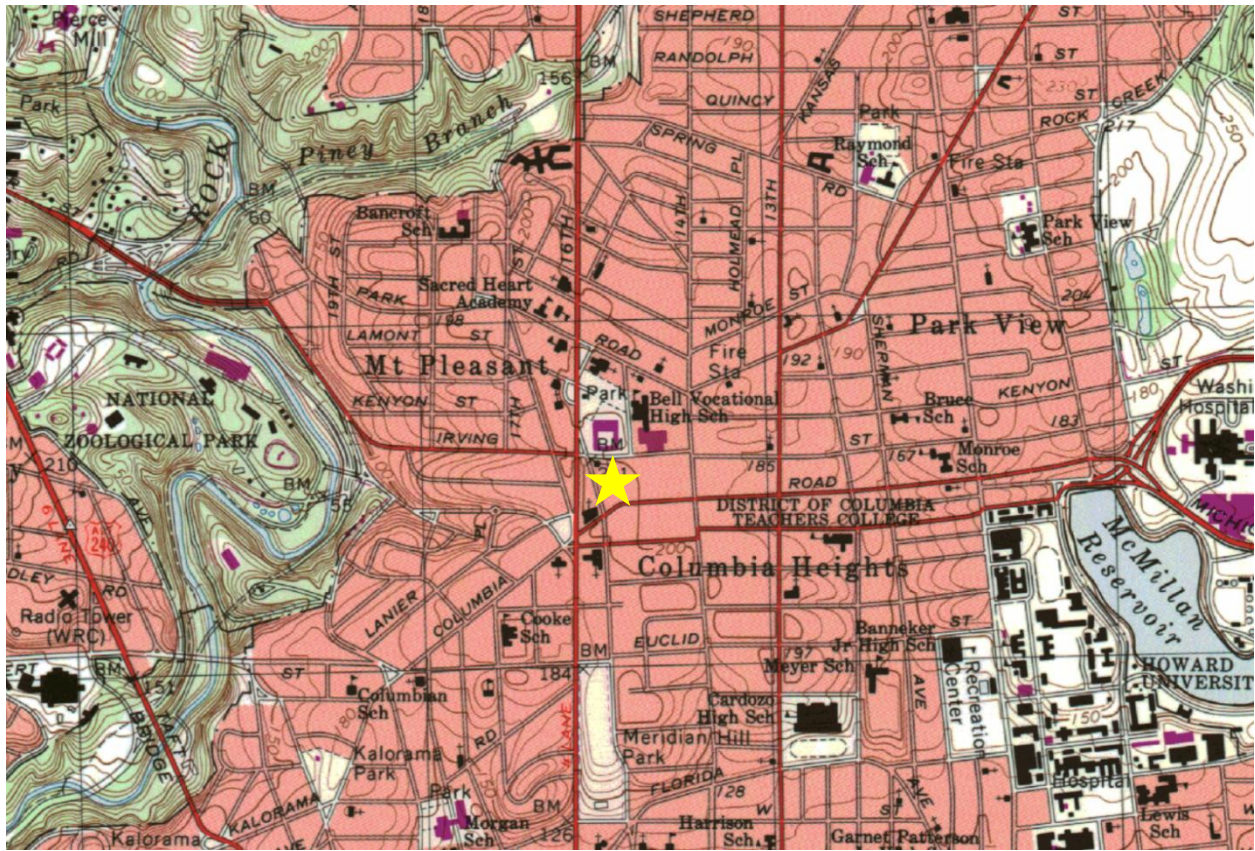
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Photo 7: DC\_LAYC\_0007.tif: View facing west of rear elevation

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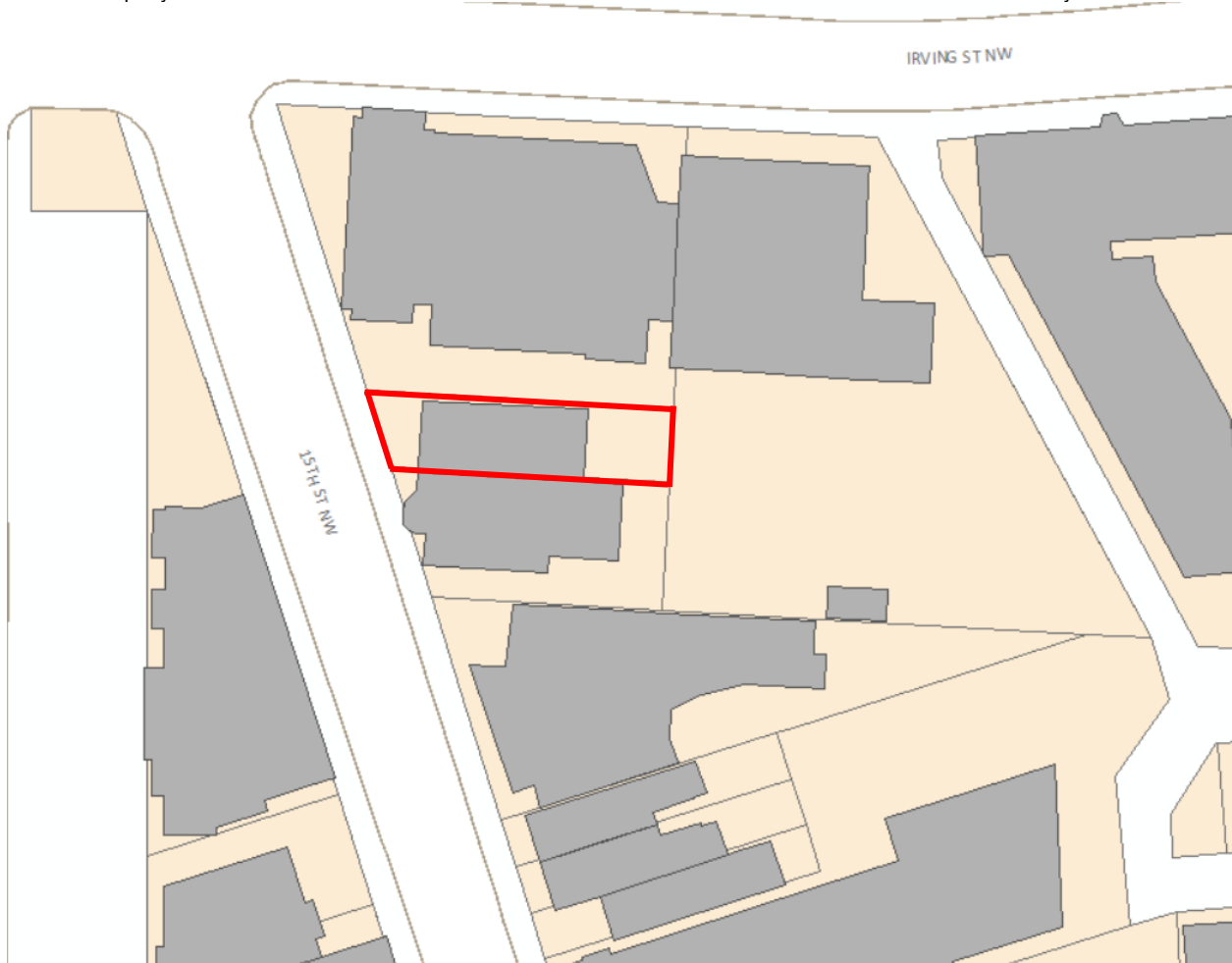
Washington, DC  
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Locational Map showing LAYC at 3045 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Latitude: 38.92829 Longitude: -77.03572

Latin American Youth Center  
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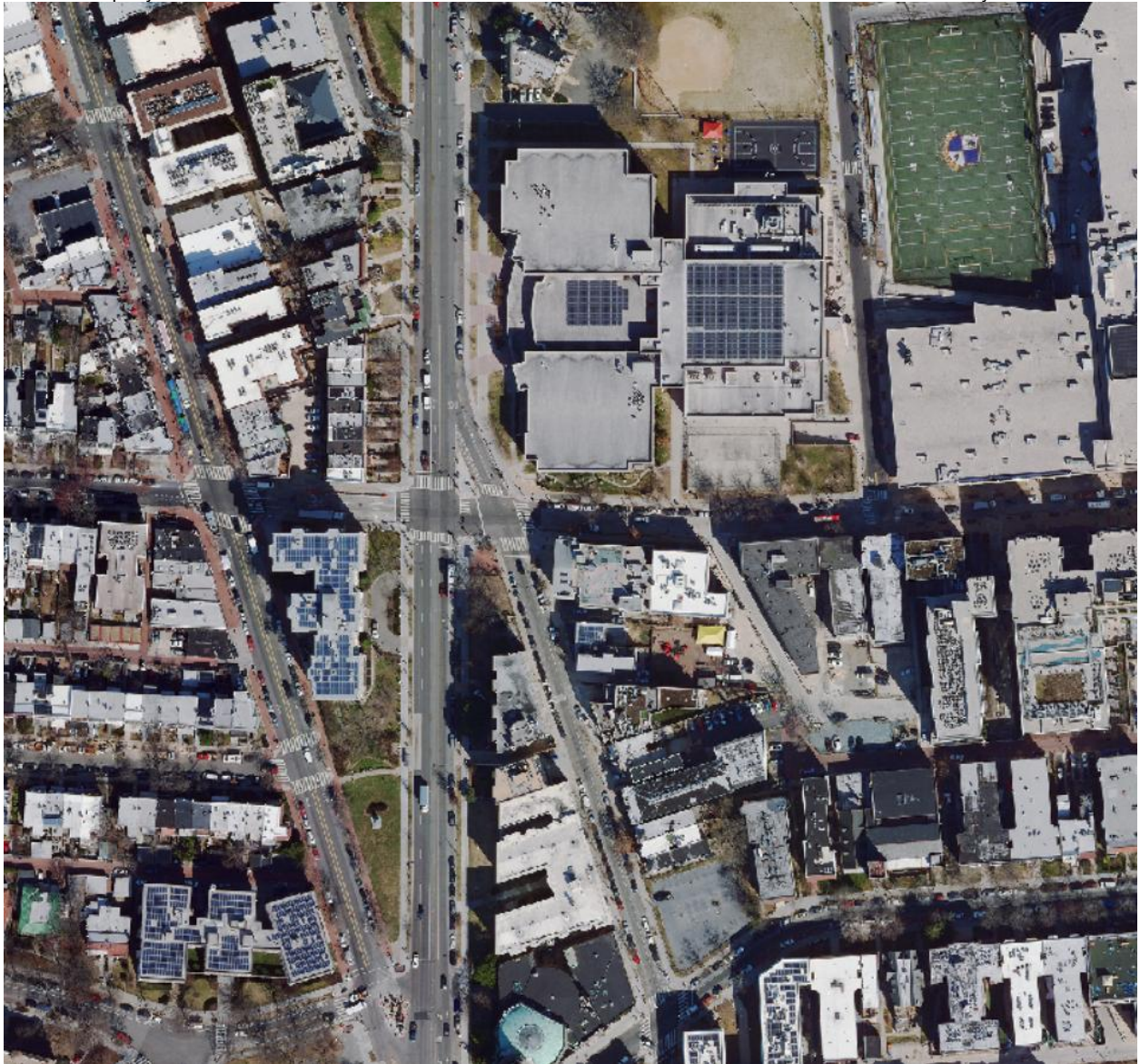
Washington, DC  
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Site Map showing National Register Boundaries of LAYC

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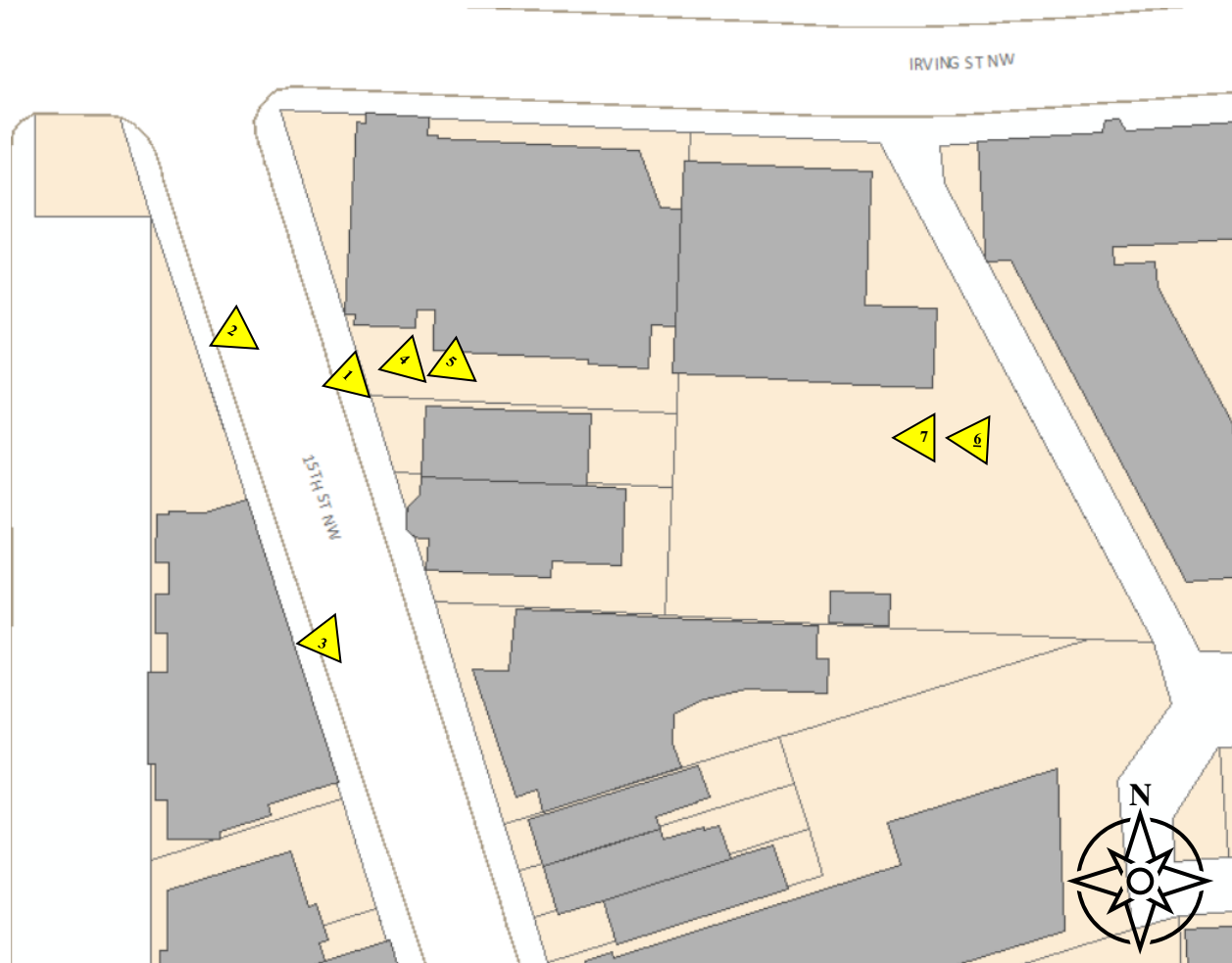
Aerial Map showing LAYC

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### Photo Key for LAYC photographs

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.