

## Landscape Assessment

### *Description of the Riley House Landscape*

The Riley House (*Photo 1*) is located at 11420 Old Georgetown Road within the Luxmanor community near Montrose in Montgomery County, Maryland. The house occupies a rise near the center of the approximately one-acre parcel located near the intersection of Old Georgetown Road and Tilden Lane. Adjacent properties include a synagogue to the north and privately-owned residential lots to the west and south.

The house is approached by an asphalt entrance drive (*Photo 2*) leading northwest into the property in a diagonal alignment from Old Georgetown Road. The driveway passes the front entrance to the house (*Photo 3*) and terminates in a circular turn-around (*Photo 4*) edged by the log wing to the south (*Photo 5*) and a Colonial Revival style garage to the west (*Photo 6*). Ornamental plantings edge the side of the house and the garage. The center of the turn-around is planted with azaleas. Personal interviews with former residents suggest that there may once have been a water feature located within the area currently planted with azaleas.

The driveway follows a relatively level knoll and sits above a deeply etched swale located between the house and Old Georgetown Road (*Photo 7*). The driveway and Old Georgetown Road corridors are planted with numerous species of ornamental trees, shrubs, and groundcovers. A mix of deciduous and evergreen trees, shrubs, and groundcovers follow the driveway to either side (*Photo 8*). These plantings are garden-like, but also screen the property from the neighboring residence to the south and southwest. The plantings along Old Georgetown Road are primarily evergreen (*Photo 9*), providing a strong visual screen or buffer from this heavily traveled circulation corridor. The majority of these plantings appear to range from thirty to fifty years of age, although older trees also dot the property. There are four large trees located within this area. These include willow oaks (*Quercus phellos*) southwest of the driveway (*Photo 10*), along the property line edging the synagogue/day-care facility, and behind the garage (*Photo 11*), and a butternut or white walnut (*Juglans cinerea*) southwest of the house.

The house faces east toward Old Georgetown Road. The area immediately around the house is planted in turf grasses (*Photo 12*). A flagstone walk leads toward the front door from the driveway. Stone steps lead up to the lawn along the driveway and to a landing in front of the door (*Photo 3*). Local stone supports the walk and is used as an edging material along the driveway and the sides of the walk (*Photo 13*). A light fixture, black painted metal with a Colonial Revival style luminaire, illuminates the walk. A bell on a wooden post edges the landing near the front door. A black painted metal handrail edges the two-stair flight near the front door. There is an unpainted square wood post to the north of the walk near the driveway (*Photo 14*). Boxwood shrubs edge the driveway in the vicinity of the walk, and are used as foundation plantings along the front and sides of the house, as well as the log wing (*Photo 15*). Two Colorado blue spruce serve as foundation plantings along the southern façade of the main block of the house. Boxwoods also edge the driveway along the circular turn-around. Based on dendrochronology, or the counting of annual growth rings, the boxwood plantings were approximately thirty to thirty-five years of age when tested in spring 2007. A small garden feature sits to the south of the house within the lawn area. This circular planting of pachysandra (*Pachysandra terminalis*) groundcover appears to cover a former garden feature of unknown use (*Photo 16*).

A secondary walk providing access to the log wing arises from the edge of the circular turn-around. The walk is comprised of three gently rising steps that lead through the boxwood

plantings edging the driveway (*Photo 17*). Where this walk meets the driveway, there is a small landing of granite cobbles and a remnant of a concrete pad.

A third walkway arises from the driveway. This walk passes between the garage and the house and provides a pedestrian connection to the steps leading into the rear of the house. The walk is comprised of flagstone stepping stones edged primarily by granite cobbles. Local stone is also used as an edging material periodically along the walk (*Photo 18*). There is also a flagstone patio located behind the screen porch addition to the house (*Photo 19*).

The other notable circulation feature present on the property is a trace of a former road or driveway that curves between the existing driveway and the back yard of the property (*Photo 20*). It exists as a hard-packed earth two-track leading through the ornamental trees and shrubs south of the house. The swale east of the house also appears to have served previously as part of the property's entrance drive, but this is less discernible in the landscape today.

Behind the house are additional gardens and landscape features. These include linear and circular planting beds, a stone grill, a bird bath, concrete slab, clothesline, and bench.

Associated with the flagstone terrace behind the house is a metal table. Nearby is an unpainted wooden post that has been used as a clothes line. Next to the terrace is a circular planting bed edged with stone (*Photo 21*). Behind the terrace, there is also a circular planting of boxwoods with a cast stone birdbath in its center (*Photo 22*). Another circular planting area characterized by vines covers a metal plate (*Photo 23*). Behind this garden there are two notable trees, an American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) (*Photo 24*) and an open grown black walnut (*Juglans nigra*). The walnut is in poor condition.

Behind the main block of the house there is a stone grill edged by stone wing walls (*Photo 25*). The grill is constructed of local stone and capped with flagstone. It includes the metal grill. The rustic appearance of the grill suggests that it was constructed in the 1930s or 1940s.

Nearby is a concrete slab that may sit above a water box, cistern, or septic system (*Photo 26*). The slab is cracked and broken.

Along the southwestern property boundary, which is edged by woven wire fencing, there is a wooden slat and metal frame bench (*Photo 27*). White pine trees (*Pinus strobus*) edge the fenceline in places. To the northwest, the wire fence is replaced by a vertical board privacy fence. A double trunk tulip poplar tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) of some size edges the fence. This tree may be located on an adjacent property (*Photo 28*).

Land that was subdivided from the Riley House property edges the back yard to its west. Rows of white pine and Kentucky coffeetrees (*Gymnocladus dioica*) follow the subdivision property lines (*Photo 29*). These trees appear to be at least fifty years of age. They may be components of former agricultural hedgerows. A metal shed sits along a property line behind the Riley House. It likely is associated with a neighboring property.

Species noted during field investigations conducted in June 2007 on the property include:

**Trees**

Red maple (*Acer rubrum*)

Tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)

Hercules-club (*Aralia spinosa*)

Blue atlas cedar (*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca')

Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)  
Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*)  
Common Chinafir (*Cunninghamia lanceolata*)  
American beech (*Fagus grandifolia* or *F. sylvatica*)  
Kentucky coffeetree (*Gymnocladus dioica*)  
American holly (*Ilex opaca*)  
Butternut (*Juglans cinerea*)  
Black walnut (*Juglans nigra*)  
Eastern redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)  
Golden rain tree (*Koelreuteria paniculata*)  
American sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*)  
Tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)  
Southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*)  
Norway spruce (*Picea abies*)  
Colorado spruce (*Picea pungens* an unknown variegated variety)  
Variegated purple-leaf plum (*Prunus cerasifera* var. not known)  
White pine (*Pinus strobus*)  
Black cherry (*Prunus serotina*)  
Willow oak (*Quercus phellos*)  
Canadian hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*)

#### **Shrubs**

Glossy abelia (*Abelia x grandiflora*)  
Japanese aucuba (*Aucuba japonica*)  
Wintergreen barberry (*Berberis julianae*)  
Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*)  
Common boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens* variety unknown)  
Spreading euonymus (*Euonymus kiautschovicus* or *E. japonicus*)  
English holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)  
Chinese holly (*Ilex cornuta*)  
Leatherleaf mahonia (*Mahonia bealei*)  
Sweet mockorange (*Philadelphus coronarius*)  
Azalea (*Rhododendron* spp.)  
Himalayan sarcococca (*Sarcococca hookeriana* var. *humilis*)  
Yew (*Taxus* spp.)

#### **Groundcovers and perennials**

Poison ivy (*Rhus radicans*)  
Ferns  
English ivy (*Hedera helix*)  
Privet (*Ligustrum* spp.)  
Liriope (*Liriope*)  
Japanese Pachysandra (*Pachysandra terminalis*)  
Lamb's ears (*Stachys* sp.)  
Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*)

#### ***Inventory of Landscape Features***

##### **Buildings and Structures**

- Main house with side porch
- Log wing addition

- Garage

### **Circulation**

- Asphalt and gravel entrance drive
- Flagstone walk to front door
- Flagstone steps to landing at front door
- Two-track lane/woodland path
- Cobble landing and concrete steps at side entrance to front yard
- Stone and cobble edging along entrance drive
- Flagstone and stone patio behind screen porch
- Wood stair leading to rear yard from back porch with single handrail
- Flagstone stepping stones along rear of house
- Iron rail behind back porch

### **Vegetation**

- Boxwood in front of house
- Boxwood in rear of house
- Rows of pines
- Evergreen trees and shrubs along road
- Large willow oak along driveway
- Large willow oak behind garage
- Large beech
- Large butternut

### **Small-scale Features**

- Post at driveway entrance with street number (brass numbers nailed to wood post)
- Light pole with Colonial Revival luminaire along front walk
- Metal bell on wood post at front door
- Boulders in swale alongside entrance drive
- Unidentified wood post at front walk
- Concrete slab in rear yard (broken)
- Stone grill edged by wing walls
- Woven wire fencing with metal posts along property boundary
- Wood board privacy fencing along property boundary
- Wood slat and metal frame bench with back
- Low metal plate
- Cast stone bird bath
- Stone-edging associated with planting beds in rear yard
- Wood clothes line post
- Unidentified wood post along rear façade of main block of house
- Wooden barrel beneath downspout along rear of the log wing
- Metal pipe noting presence of underground oil tank

### ***Issues of Concern and Recommendations***

Based on field investigations and consideration of the landscape conditions documented as part of this study, the following issues of concern are noted for consideration by current and future site managers: