



## SHAKER HEIGHTS

### Shaker Square Historic District

*Approved April 22, 1980 Ordinance 80-38*

The Shaker Square Historic District consists of 106 buildings located in the cities of Cleveland and Shaker Heights, Ohio, the western gateway of a much larger area (Cleveland suburb of Shaker Heights) developed by O.P. and M.J. Van Sweringen in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the heart of the district is Shaker Square (1927-29; NR 1976), a tranquil village green setting consisting of an open space enclosed by buildings in an octagonal formation, with roadways entering at mid-side. Each of the four resulting quadrants contains a 2-story central building flanked by 1-story wings and square corner pavilions. Although the Georgian Revival motifs vary, the similarity of style and materials such as red brick, white trim, and slate roofs create a harmonious scheme.

Surrounding this planned commercial node the Van Sweringens developed a high-density residential district. This area was distinct from the Cleveland neighborhoods to the west, which were not part of the development; it was also separate in design from Shaker Heights to the east, which was planned for single-family houses. Construction began on this specific area surrounding Shaker Square in the early 1920s, peaked prior to the Great Depression, then continued sporadically into the 1950s. Of the 106 buildings, 72% date from 1920-32. Although taking several decades to reach completion, deed restrictions enforced by the Van Sweringen Company produced a unified district. The plan limited development in the Shaker Square area to apartment buildings, with the exception of single-family houses and some duplexes on Ludlow Road. Building heights were also distributed in a specific pattern. Height on Shaker Boulevard, the east-west thoroughfare through the Square, ranged from 6 to 12 stories; Moreland Boulevard structures were limited to 3 and 4 stories; and Ludlow Road contained all 2-story houses.

In addition to use and scale, the deed restrictions also created architectural cohesiveness. The Van Sweringens permitted only 3 broad categories of designs, identified as American Colonial, English, and French, styles all popular on a national basis in the 1920s when development of Shaker Heights began. The design quality of the district is uniformly high. The standard wall material, brick, has been combined with stone and wood detailing to create the ornamentation appropriate for each architectural style. Structures less than 50 years of age carry the same stylistic themes and careful workmanship, with generally less elaborate exteriors. They should not be considered intrusions. In addition to design consistency over time, architecturally harmonious streetscapes were achieved by several other methods: repeating very similar designs (North and South Moreland Boulevards), transforming a quarter-mile long apartment complex into a textbook case of English architectural history (Moreland Courts, 13301-13901 Shaker Boulevard, 1924-28, Alfred W. Harris), and emphasizing similar plans and common scale to make streets with buildings of different styles compatible (Ludlow Road – mostly English designs with a lesser number of Colonial style houses; Hampton Road, c. 1925, Alfred W. Harris – combinations of Norman and Tudor elements in the same structure).

Although principally located within the City of Cleveland, the commercial node Shaker Square and its surrounding residential neighborhood merits recognition as an integral element of the notable garden



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suburb of Shaker Heights and as an important link in the transportation system developed by real estate and railway magnates O.P. and M.J. Van Sweringen.

Early in life Oris P. (1879-1936) and Mantis J. (1881-1935) Van Sweringen entered the real estate business, becoming owners of large tracts of farmland east of Cleveland known as the Shaker country, where the Shaker sect had established a settlement in 1822. Under their direction the Village of Shaker Heights was created in 1911. Cleveland annexed the City of Newburgh in 1913, which included the land now occupied by Shaker Square and the residential district of this nomination. Thus, the present municipal boundary between Cleveland and Shaker Heights was formed. By 1918 an overall plan had been devised for the Shaker Heights development, with the Shaker Square area (then Moreland Circle) occupying the western end.

The vision of the Van Sweringens capitalized upon the combination of rail and automobile transportation, united with the national trend of the “landscaped suburb,” to offer an alternative to middle- and upper-class persons wishing to escape the growing congestion of existing residential districts as Cleveland became a leading manufacturing center. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Cleveland’s population expanded both east and west. To the east, Cleveland neighborhoods such as Wade Park, Buckeye and University Circle were developed, as well as the suburbs of Bratenahl, Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights just beyond the Cleveland border. The Shaker Heights development, laid out by the F.A. Pease Engineering Company, emphasized a scheme of main arteries and feeder roads in a variety of formal and informal designs following the topography. The plan specifically avoided a grid plan.

This careful physical development, along with land use regulation and design controls, created one of the best examples in the nation of a garden suburb. Leland M. Roth, a member of the board of Directors of the Society of Architectural Historians, has noted the success of the Van Sweringens in utilizing “the wooded landscape and a series of lakes,<sup>1</sup> while Alan Gowans has specifically cited Shaker Heights as an example of the design trends occurring nationally.<sup>2</sup> Architecturally, the Van Sweringens permitted only three broad categories of designs: American Colonial, English, and French. These were three of the historical styles popular nationally in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, borrowing stylistic details, proportions, and materials to draw a relationship to their predecessors. Therefore, structures in the Shaker Square Historic District became easily identifiable as a particular style: towers and crenellation (Norman); half-timbering, ogee and pointed arches, buttresses, and tracery (Tudor and Gothic); or pediments, pilasters, and cornices (Colonial).

Land use regulation and design controls were also integral to the success of the Shaker Heights development. Specific locations and acreages were reserved for various uses, including commercial centers such as Shaker Square, as well as single-family houses, duplexes, and apartments. In addition, stringent deed restrictions governed points such as lot size, building size, setback, plans, materials, cost, architectural style, and color schemes. This comprehensive planning enabled the Van Sweringens to execute their vision of Shaker Heights as a garden suburb emblematic of the 1920s.

The success of Shaker Heights depended however, upon a transportation link with downtown Cleveland, which the Van Sweringens created. Construction of the line was initially delayed due to the unwillingness



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of the Nickel Plate Railroad to grant a right-of-way along five miles of their line. To solve the dilemma, the Van Sweringens purchased the entire 513 mile railroad. This acquisition was combined with new track, such as along Shaker Boulevard, and the line opened in 1920. To satisfy the need for a downtown terminal, the Van Sweringens developed the Union Terminal Group (NR 1976, Graham, Anderson, Probst, and White) on Public Square during the 1920's. The mixed-use complex included a hotel, department store, office buildings, railroad station, and Cleveland's most familiar building, Terminal Tower. The project was accompanied by the redevelopment of Shaker Square (NR 1976, Phillip L. Small and Carl Bacon Rowley) in 1927-29 as one of the first planned suburban shopping centers in the United States and the first in Ohio. Most importantly, the Square became a gateway to the garden suburb beyond, while also providing a tranquil setting for the surrounding high-density residential district. Its design may have been inspired by the City Beautiful movement, an architecturally unified group of buildings enclosing a formal open space and intersected by broad tree-lined boulevards.

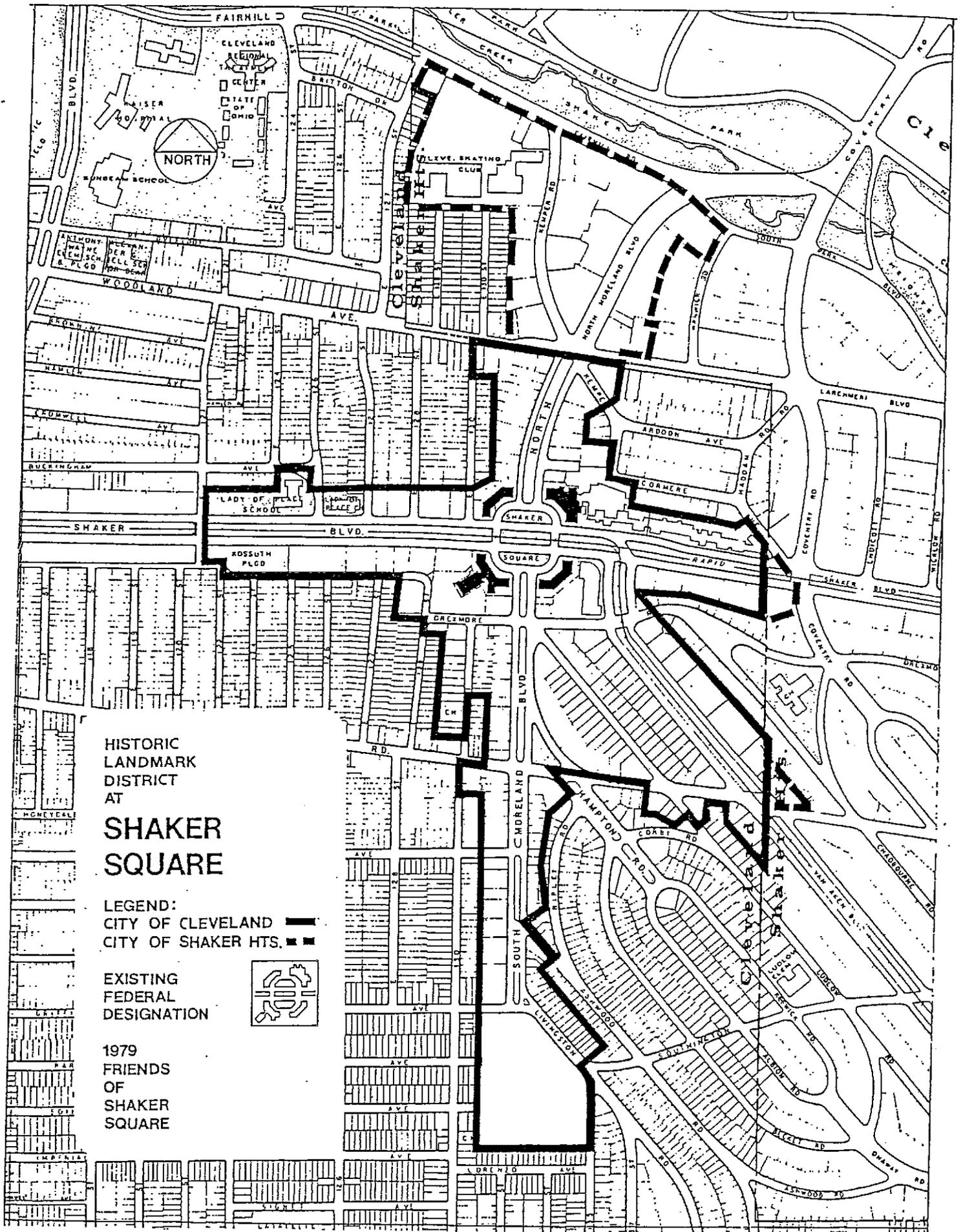
Today, the Shaker Square Historic District retains its original appearance and functions, a fitting tribute to the Van Sweringen brothers, "masters of business, builders of great enterprises, eager participants in every movement for a better Cleveland."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Leland M. Roth, *A Concise History of American Architecture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979). p. 236

<sup>2</sup> Alan Gowans, *Images of American Living* (Philadelphia: Lippincott: 1964). p. 314

<sup>3</sup> Cleveland Medal of Public Service, awarded by the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce in 1926, cited by William Ganson Rose, *Cleveland: The Making of a City* (Cleveland World Publishing Company, 1950).



## Shaker Heights Addresses Shaker Square Historic District

Parcel Number	Address	Property
736-30-02	12700 Fairhill Road	Park Fairhill
736-30-05	12800-940 Fairhill Road	Fairhill Gardens
736-30-11	13200 Fairhill Road	Apartment Building
736-03-04 and 05	13650 Fairhill Road	Apartment Building
731-03-06	13660 Fairhill Road	Fairhill House
731-03-07	13700 Fairhill Road	Apartment Building
731-03-09	13800 Fairhill Road	Apartment Building
731-03-02	2500 Kemper Road	Cleveland Skating Club
731-03-01	2538 Kemper Road	Apartment Building
731-02-06	2550 Kemper Road	Bon Air
731-02-05	2566 Kemper Road	Shaker View
731-02-04	2572 Kemper Road	Kemper Courts
731-03-16	2501 Kemper Road	Apartment Building
731-03-13	2515 Kemper Road	Kemper North
731-03-03	2525 Kemper Road	Kemper South
731-02-10	2555 Kemper Road	Kemper House
731-02-14	2580 Kemper Road	Shaker Lakes Apartments
731-02-16	2560 N. Moreland Blvd.	Embassy House
731-03-10	2540 N. Moreland Blvd.	Park East
731-04-19	2555 N. Moreland Blvd.	North Moreland Courts
731-04-18	2571 N. Moreland Blvd.	North Moreland Courts
731-04-20	2539 N. Moreland Blvd.	North Moreland Courts

731-04-21	2523 N. Moreland Blvd.	North Moreland Courts
731-04-14	2583-95 N. Moreland Blvd.	Larchmere Square
731-02-02	13165-71 Larchmere Blvd.	BP Station
731-02-01	13051 Larchmere Blvd.	Larchmere Tavern
731-14-13	2941 & 49 Van Aken Blvd.	Apartment Building
731-24-01	14014 Shaker Boulevard	Empire House
731-07-14	14000 Shaker Boulevard	AA Auto Insurance
731-02-14	13201-11 Larchmere Blvd.	Apartment Building
731-04-01		Southwick Investors
731-04-02		Southwick Investors
731-04-03		Southwick Investors