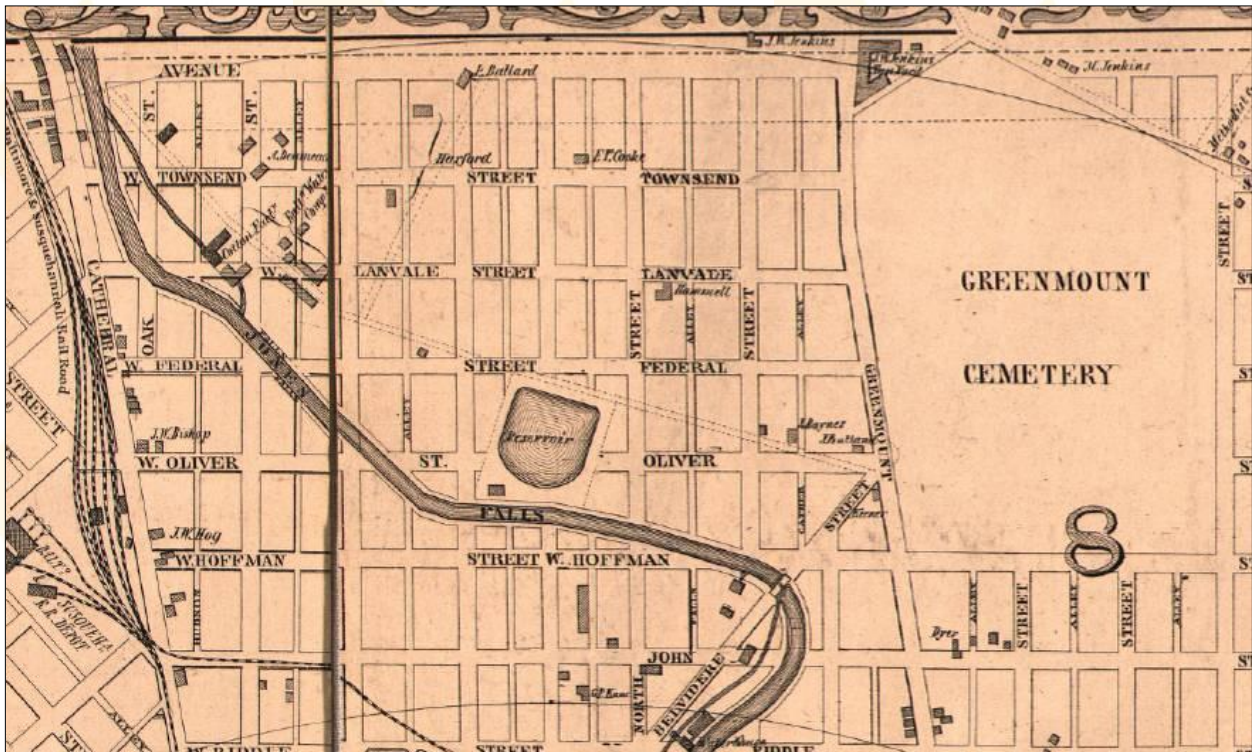


## 2 BACKGROUND

### 2.1 History

In 1876, the land that would become Greenmount West was relatively isolated, with a covered bridge over the Jones Falls Valley providing the only connection to the growing City of Baltimore. At that time, only a hospital, several commercial establishments and scattered homes occupied this area. However, in the slightly more than 10 years between 1876 and 1886, phenomenal growth took place in Greenmount West.

The name Greenmount is a remnant from Robert Oliver's estate located at the north east boundary of Baltimore City named "Green Mount." With Oliver's death in the early 1800's, his heirs broke up the large estate and sold it off. Prior to 1876, the land that would become Greenmount West was split into two parcels which abutted each other where Guilford Avenue exists today.



The western parcel was owned under the name Crook and the eastern parcel was owned by Mr. Christian Keener. In 1880, the City built bridges over the Jones Falls at Calvert Street and Guilford Avenue, which opened the area to development. By 1887, the community grew to comprise more than 500 homes which define the character of the neighborhood today.

### Architectural Style

The earliest houses built in Greenmount West were traditional Baltimore rowhouses with flat facades and little ornamentation except for a cornice. In the late 1880's, house builders began departing from the traditional house with projecting brick decorations and window arrangements that were no longer structural. Many of the houses built in the late 1880's and early 1890's began using stone on front facades instead of the traditional red brick. A bowed front façade was popular in during this time, in contrast to the traditional the flatness of the streetscape.



A group of rowhouses built on North Avenue in the 1880's are the most ornate in the area. These houses depart a great deal from the traditional rowhouse with the use of towers, terra cotta decorations, blank windows, unusual roof lines, and dormers at the roof line. Many noted architects from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century designed the rowhouses in the area, including J.A. and W.T. Williamson, William F. Weber, Charles E. Cassell.



Although the development of the three-story structures on streets such as Calvert Street and Guilford Avenue were predominately built for middle-class white residents, working class and African-American residents lived in smaller two-story houses on minor streets such as Pittman Street or Brentwood Street or on alley streets .



### Cultural Institutions

Greenmount West once featured two church buildings and two original school buildings, with one of each remaining to this day. Saint Agnes Hospital was founded in the Greenmount West Area in 1863, but by 1875 the hospital had relocated to the current location in southwest Baltimore and the building was subsequently demolished.

### **The Green Mount Cemetery**

The most substantial remaining institution of and monument to the Victorian era during which the Greenmount West community was originally developed is the Green Mount Cemetery, a National Register Landmark.

The concept for the cemetery was originally championed by tobacco merchant Samuel Walker after a visit to the Mount Auburn cemetery in 1834. The proposal was accepted and a section of the Robert Oliver estate chosen, with the rolling hills of the site making it an ideal location for the novel “rural” style cemetery. Green Mount Cemetery was officially established by an act of the General Assembly of Maryland on March 15, 1838, and officially dedicated on July 13, 1839.

The paths and grounds were designed by Benjamin Latrobe. The “garden style” or “rural” cemetery was intended to encourage passive recreational use, such as picnicking and walking. Affluent residents of Baltimore, looking to escape the congestion of the city, would stroll the winding paths and view the architectural monuments to the rich and significant. The cemetery features a small brown stone chapel designed by Niernsee & Nielson which is located at the center of the cemetery. The most well known feature of the cemetery is the gate house on Greenmount Avenue, which was designed by Robert Cary Long Jr. in the Tudor Gothic style.



The grounds of the Green Mount have become the final resting place for many of Baltimore’s noted residents, visitors and figures of national importance. The most notorious and well known is the unmarked grave of Lincoln’s assassin, John Wilkes Booth. One of the most notable residents of Greenmount West was Sidney Lanier, who lived in the 1800 block of North Calvert Street from 1879 until 1881. A famous poet and musician, Lanier wrote some of his last poems at the home and was laid to rest in the Green Mount Cemetery. He is also commemorated by a bronze statue on Charles Street at the Johns Hopkins University Homewood campus to the north of Greenmount West.

### **Industrial Development**

After 1896, industrial development transformed the area adjoining the railroad tracks in the southern portion of the neighborhood into an industrial center of activity. Greenmount West's largest industry was Crown, Cork and Seal. The manufacturing plant would eventually grow to comprise one and a half blocks. The Lebow Clothing plant at 310 Oliver Street was originally part of the Crown, Cork and Seal Plant. The buildings at 1501 and 1601 Guilford Avenue are magnificent examples of late 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial architecture. Designed by Jackson Gott, the structures have an abundance of terra cotta decoration and rival the large manufacturing plants built in the Loft District of downtown.

In 1892, William Painter patented the modern day bottle cap and began producing the equipment that allowed bottling plants around the country to use this technology at his factory, known as the Crown, Cork and Seal. The widespread use of carbonated beverages was becoming popular in the United States, but a reliable way to keep the cap sealed had not yet been discovered. An additional plant was built in Highlandtown in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



Other large industrial buildings were built in the early 1900's. The original Department of Social Services Building at Greenmount and Oliver (now demolished) was housed in the former Lord Baltimore Press building, which was built in 1906. Other commercial uses that once existed in Greenmount West were the York Road Railway Depot, a marble works, a nursery, a bakery and a hotel. At one point, the Noxima Corporation was also based in Greenmount West. Despite Greenmount West's rich industrial past, very little evidence of these uses exists today.

### **Industrial Decline**

Beginning in the mid twentieth century, multiple factors lead to the decline of the industrial users that had historically employed many of the area residents of the nearby two-story rowhomes and alley houses. The historic factory buildings were now outmoded, their multi-story design created inefficiencies that were not present in the sprawling single-story factories now being developed. Improvements in vehicular transport no longer made locating factory facilities along railroads the necessity it had been at the turn of the century, permitting outlying areas to be opened up for industrial development. Similarly, improvements in transatlantic shipping allowed blue collar jobs to move abroad through increased international trade.

At the same time that the industrial users who had served as the economic backbone to the surrounding community began to close their doors, similar forces were at work that caused residential disinvestment as well. The advent of the automobile and its popularization with the middle class through the new financing technique of purchasing on credit allowed for increased flexibility in the location of residential communities. Many middle class families moved to the suburbs where large palatial lots and new, modern housing types were available without the perceived grime of city living.

This disinvestment in the Greenmount West Community left behind a neighborhood that was spiraling downwards, marked by increased numbers of vacant buildings over time. Some of the rowhomes were divided up into more affordable multi-family residences, while others remained vacant or were demolished during the blight clearance programs of the 1980s.



### **Arts Community**

The large industrial buildings languished, further depressing the surrounding residential community. The cost-effective space and open floor plans attracted artists, some of whom were associated with the nearby Maryland Institute College of Art. The arts community has contributed to the stabilization of the neighborhood in more recent years, adding an eccentric element to the Greenmount West community.

### North Central National Register Historic District

The Greenmount West neighborhood is included in the North Central National Register Historic District, which was designated because of its collection of late-19<sup>th</sup> to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century structures and mixed-use layout, a dynamic often missing in later planned communities. Landmark eligible buildings include two industrial buildings that were part of the Crown, Cork and Seal complex and the historic portion of the Montessori School, known as School 32.

### Map 1: Historic Resources



## 2.2 Area Profile and Demographics

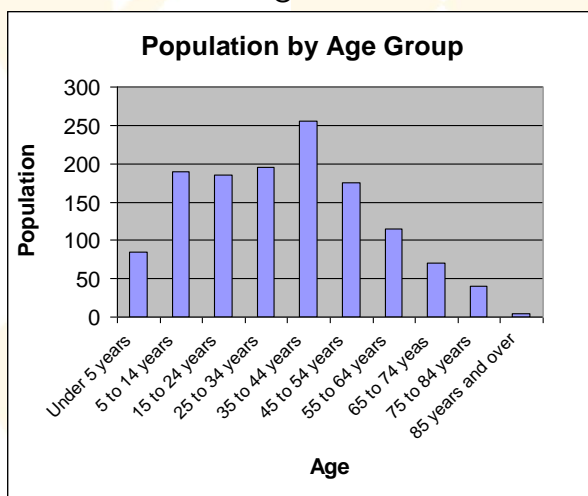
Demographic information can help create a snapshot of the conditions that currently exist within the Greenmount West community. The demographic information included in this study is taken from the 2000 Census, and, at almost 10 years old, much of it is substantially out of date and may not accurately represent the current demographics of Greenmount West.

Data regarding indicator trends (2000 - 2003) are from the latest Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance Community Statistical Area Profile for the greater Midtown area. This data is generated from a statistical area which extends beyond Greenmount West and includes the communities of Charles North, Bolton Hill, Mid-town and Mount Vernon. Since the demographic profiles of each of these communities is unique, this data will differ from that provided by the 2000 Census because the Census was able to isolate data specifically from Greenmount West. Generally, the indicators of community vitality are stronger in the other communities included in the greater Midtown statistical area than they are for Greenmount West, but many of the trends suggest that indicators have improved in Greenmount West between 2000 and 2004.

Sales data is provided both from the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance Community Statistical Area Profile (2000 - 2003) and from more recent Multiple Listing Service data collected in September 2008. All sources are provided in their entirety in Appendix B.

### Population

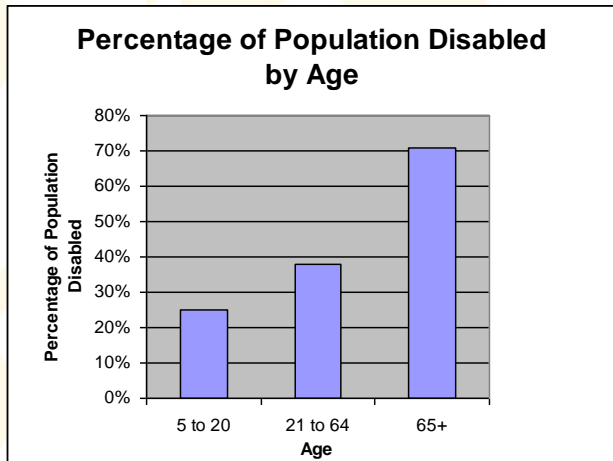
The population of Greenmount West is 1,310 individuals which comprise 535 households, with the population evenly split between family households and householders living alone.



With approximately half of households in Greenmount West are family households, female headed-households with children representing 24% of households and married-couple households with children represent only 4% of households. Sixty grandparents live with grandchildren under the age of 18, with 50% of these grandparents serving as the primary care-giver for their grandchildren.

There are 305 individuals over the age of three years that are currently students, with the largest population of students enrolled in elementary school (44% of students).

Approximately 40% of the total Greenmount West population qualifies for disability status, a rate twice the national average. The percentage of the population that is disabled increases by age group. Among the 21 to 64 age group, the percentage of the population that is currently unemployed is approximately 10% greater for disabled individuals compared to non-disabled individuals within Greenmount West.



As of 2000, the median income for Greenmount West is \$14,091 per year, with 50% of the population under the poverty line, although more recent data on home sales indicates that the median income has increased significantly in the past 10 years.

### **Real Estate Market**

The percentage of properties with rehabilitation investments in excess of \$5,000 in the greater Midtown area during the previous year increased by 66% between 2000 and 2003, while the median sale price for residential properties increased from \$135,625 to \$235,000 and the median number of days on the market decreased from 37 to 10. According to the Multiple Listing Service data from September 2008, the median list price for properties in Greenmount West was \$120,000. The average list price is significantly higher at \$169,361, indicating that a few unusually expensive properties are skewing this measure higher. This is significantly higher than the property values recorded in the 2000 Census, where all properties were recorded as being worth less than \$100,000, with 65% being valued at under \$50,000. The current list price is 95% of the original list price, indicated that prices are not deteriorating in Greenmount West as they are in other markets.

Anecdotally, many vacant structures in the vicinity of Penn Station were privately acquired by speculators or developers intending to build on the strengths to the west but who were unable to complete renovations before the deterioration of the housing market in 2007. Additionally, the completion of the Station North Townhomes was met with declining real estate values, resulting in the later units selling at significantly reduced prices.



### Crime

Encouraging trends include the significant reduction of a variety of crime rates, including the overall crime rate, the violent crime rate, the juvenile arrest rate, and the juvenile arrest rate for drug related offenses (findings from the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance Community Statistical Area Profile for the greater Midtown area).

