

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: TO PRESERVE OUR RECENT PAST:  
PROTECTING THE BELLEVUE FOREST  
SUBDIVISION IN ARLINGTON COUNTY,  
VIRGINIA

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This thesis examines issues surrounding preservation of the recent past, particularly subdivisions developed around World War II. It identifies the urgency of finding solutions for preserving the recently built environment and reasons few preservationists have tackled the challenge. It applies perspectives drawn from scholarly discussion concerning preservation of the recent past to a case study, the Bellevue Forest subdivision in Arlington County, Virginia. The historic significance of Bellevue Forest is examined and recommendations are made concerning how preservationists, planners, and residents might collaborate to protect such recent neighborhoods while allowing for inevitable change.

Chapter I identifies challenges and barriers to preserving the recent past. Chapter II examines scholarly thought on the topic and suggests areas for further research and discussion. Chapters III and IV trace suburbanization nationwide and in Arlington County and Bellevue Forest. Chapter V assesses Bellevue Forest's historic significance, examines threats to its historic integrity, and suggests options for preserving its historic character. Chapter VI offers several conclusions. One is that the recent past is historically significant for its role in the continuum of suburbanization. A conservation area is deemed a viable tool for stabilizing a recently-built neighborhood until it is judged ready for historic designation. Furthermore, while preservation of the recent past presents special challenges, preservationists possess skills and techniques to preserve that past. They need not wait to begin. They must, however, refine their methodology, engage in significant scholarship, and collaborate with others to be effective – a process that might well invigorate the preservation movement.