

## The Trial of the Ghost Library

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The bronze plaque in the lobby reads 1968. And for 19 years the Kensington Park Library has been right there on the north side of Knowles Avenue between Beach Drive and Summit.

Avid reader and insatiable photocopies are familiar with the location of the library...but do you know where the Kensington Park Library MIGHT have been?

Here follows a tour of the seven library sites that were proposed and discussed 23 years ago. The sites were described in a 1964 staff report to the Montgomery County Planning Board.

You may drive by one of the sites every day. Or you may LIVE ON one of them.

As you take this "What If" tour, you may also discover some historical perspective on the working of local government. The choice made nearly a generation ago shows some of the competing factors involved in decision-making.

If the planning staff's top choice had been accepted you would now be patronizing the library further west on Knowles between Beach Drive and Howard Avenue. That site is now the location of the Kensington Masonic Temple. This site was smaller than either of the other two top choices. However, George Moreland, then the Director of Libraries, "assured the staff that the proposed site would be adequate to contain the proposed community library facilities."

The planning staff thought it was the best site for several reasons. It was the midpoint between the towns of Garret Park and Kensington the two communities it was intended to serve (hence the name of the future library). It was accessible from Howard, Knowles, and the "future park road" that we now know as Beach Drive. It also would act as a buffer.

This last reason must have been a very strong factor in its top selection for the planners emphasized, "This site is adjacent to park property and a library here would provide an excellent land use transition between a stable single-family neighborhood and a difficult industrial area. It would also serve an ideal buffer for the park and protect it against industrial encroachment."

You need only drive through the parking lot behind the Kensington Park Library at 4201 Knowles to note that the library works as a buffer at this site too. This location was second in line of the top three choices. It is not much further away from the Garrett Park community than the Masonic Temple.

You can see the third choice when you drive out the library parking lot down Knowles. Look to the right and diagonally across the street. This site was slightly larger than the one chosen. At the time it contained a "single-family home and several small buildings."

The planning staff was not quite so keen on this site because it was already in the process of being subdivided into house lots. It was also completely surrounded by single-family residences and a "library at this location would produce some undesirable effects on adjacent single-family areas."

Now, drive down Warner from Ewell towards Summit. After you pass the second house lot you can pretend that you are in the midst of the "Best Sellers' and Librarians choice" territory. You can tell just where to start pretending because the houses are more recent vintage and style in that "might-have-been-a-library" section.

The first part of our tour is now complete. We'll continue with the second part in the next issue of the Real Estate Report. We'll be going further a field as we continue the hunt for the Ghost Library.

—Martha Lawrenz