Can you tell a Wardman from a Federal? Wondering which neighborhoods are full of Craftsmans or Colonials or midcentury moderns? Here’s a tour of the region’s housing stock—whether you’re shopping for real estate or just curious about the city around you.
**BEAUX ARTS**

The mansion in the 60s sitcom The Beverly Hillbillies. (Lashawn Murdoch bought the house in real life in 2019.)

**WHO THEY’RE COMMON AROUND TOWN:** Kalorama, Dupont Circle, Massachusetts Avenue Heights.

**WHERE THEY WERE BUILT:** 1880s–1920s.

There’s a good reason many of the District’s most expensive mansions might remind you of the marble monuments lining the Mall. Paris’s École des Beaux-Arts had a major influence on both. Its alumni informed the City Beautiful urban-planning movement, which fueled the development of the monumental core in the early 20th century. Meanwhile, Washington’s super-rich were incorporating the same formal-looking neoclassical design ideas into their homes. Railroad tycoon Richard Townsend, for instance, commissioned the over-the-top Beaux Arts estate at 2121 Mass. Ave. that’s now the Cosmos Club. Modern-day one-percenters Rex Tillerson and Wilbur Ross bought 1920s Beaux Arts mansions in the iconic estate at 2121 Mass. Ave. that’s now the

**WHO THEY’RE COMMON AROUND TOWN:** Takoma Park, Kensington, Garrett Park, Anacostia.

**WHERE THEY WERE BUILT:** 1880s–1900s.

When it came to the whimsical architecture so popular among the turn of the century’s upper middle class, more was more: A single house might have turrets and towers, ornamented gables, and gingerbread detailing. Around Washington, Victorian neighborhoods are great examples of early transit-oriented development. You’ll find more modest Victorians in historic Anacostia, where a late-1800s building boom coincided with the arrival of streetcars. Grander versions dominate in the once-bucolic areas of Takoma Park, Kensington, and Garrett Park, all developed as the B&O commuter railroad turned them into viable bedroom communities. Builders marketed those new suburbs as healthier alternatives to swampy downtown. In Takoma Park, nature was built into the branding; Streets were named after trees (Maple, Cedar, Holly), and advertisements billed the town as “the sylvan suburb.” Though its first residents were more likely to be doctors or lawyers than artists, they were cultured enough to be influenced by the then-in-very Aesthetic movement, which advanced the idea of “art for art’s sake.” Its symbol, the sunflower, is still carved into some of the neighborhood’s Victorian-era mansions.

**RECENTLY SOLD**

A two-bedroom unit in a 1916 Beaux Arts co-op in Du Pont’s historic district for $650,000.

A 6,000-square-foot Kalorama mansion with a view of Rock Creek Park for $4,000,000.

A three-bedroom 1909 Beaux Arts rowhouse in Kalorama for $3,450,000.

**RECENTLY SOLD**

A three-bedroom 1,400-square-foot 1905 Victorian in Anacostia for $537,000.

A four-bedroom 1913 Victorian in Takoma Park with a wrap-around porch for $935,000.

A five-bedroom 1888 Victorian with a tower and a carriage house in Garrett Park for $1,226,000.

**ILLUSTRATIONS BY BROWN BIRD DESIGN**
WHERE YOU’VE SEEN ONE ONSCREEN:
Kevin McCallister’s house in Home Alone.

WHERE THEY’RE COMMON AROUND TOWN:
Arlington, upper Northwest DC, Chevy Chase.

WHEN MANY WERE BUILT:
1930s–1950s.

Though Colonial Revivals can come in a variety of sizes, they usually share some fundamentals: a centered front door, symmetrically placed windows, and brick construction, adding up to a sturdy, conservative aesthetic that hasn’t just endured here for decades—it has dominated. More than 107,000 have sold in the Washington area over the past five years, according to Bright MLS, the listing service that all local real-estate agents use, making the style our most common by far. You’ll find them throughout the District and the suburbs, but they’re especially popular in Virginia, which, given its Colonial past, has an obvious affinity for them.

Plenty are still being built, but they really took root here in the 1930s and ‘40s as New Deal programs, followed by World War II, created thousands of government jobs and encouraged the rapid development of subdivisions. Arlington County, for example, saw its population explode by 138 percent throughout the ‘40s. Entire neighborhoods of Colonials arose, including Arlington Forest, which comprised about 800 two-stories. When they were new, you could have snagged one for about $8,000. Today? More like $800,000.

RECENTLY SOLD
A two-bedroom, two-bath 1961 Colonial Revival with nearly 1,600 square feet in North Arlington for $725,000

A Colonial-inspired 5,000-square-foot 2005 mansion in McLean for $3,550,000

A three-bedroom Colonial Revival in American University Park, built in 1854, for $1,025,000

WHERE YOU’VE SEEN ONE ONSCREEN:
In Donnie Darko, Patrick Swayze’s character lives in one.

WHERE THEY’RE COMMON AROUND TOWN:
Foxhall Village, upper Northwest DC, College Park, Alexandria.

WHEN MANY WERE BUILT:
1920s–1940s.

The characteristic combination of stucco, brick, half-timbering, and steeply sloped roofs make a Tudor look like something out of a fairytale. In Washington, developers Harry K. Ross and H. Glenn Phelps and their architect, James Cooper, were among the most influential in popularizing this style. Together, they designed and built most of the enclave near Georgetown now known as Foxhall Village entirely in the Tudor style. Boss was inspired by a trip he’d taken to England, where architects had for decades been reviving the medieval look. Starting in 1925, the trio constructed hundreds of Tudors. Their neighborhood attracted glowing publicity, no doubt influencing others to try the style. According to the DC Historic Preservation Office, the Washington Post raved that the homes weren’t “only intelligently planned, but . . . distinctive and unique as well. . . .” Into the ‘30s and ‘40s, the style continued to pop up throughout Northwest DC and the close-in suburbs.

RECENTLY SOLD
A 1,700-square-foot 1936 Tudor-style cottage in College Park for $375,000

A four-bedroom, 3,800-square-foot 1926 Tudor in Massachusetts Avenue Heights for $1,200,000

A six-bedroom 1926 Tudor rowhouse in Foxhall Village for $1,450,000

WHERE THEY’RE COMMON AROUND TOWN:
Foxhall Village, upper Northwest DC.

WHEN MANY WERE BUILT:
1920s–1940s.

The steeply pitched, front-facing gable and rounded window and door frames are telltale signs of a Tudor Revival. Most often found in suburban neighborhoods around Washington, they’re typically two stories with a basement and were popularized after World War II. Over a million homes were built in the 1940s, according to the U.S. Census Bureau’s Construction Data. The post-war population boom helped to spur the growth of the suburbs, and homes like these were designed specifically for families. In the 1950s and ‘60s, they were so common in Washington that critics called them the “ugly duckling” of architecture. However, today they’re a beloved part of the cityscape and a testament to our region’s love of history and tradition.

RECENTLY SOLD
A 1,700-square-foot 1936 Tudor style cottage in College Park for $375,000

A four-bedroom, 3,800-square-foot 1926 Tudor in Massachusetts Avenue Heights for $1,200,000

A six-bedroom 1926 Tudor rowhouse in Foxhall Village for $1,450,000

Symmetrically placed, multi-paned windows

Crown over small front porch

Centered front door

Decorative half-timbering

Steeply pitched, front-facing gable

Rounded windows and doors

Steeply pitched, front-facing gable

Crown over small front porch

Centered front door

Decorative half-timbering

Steeply pitched, front-facing gable

Rounded windows and doors
WHERE YOU’VE SEEN ONE ONSCREEN: The Conner family’s house on Roseanne.
WHEN MANY WERE BUILT: 1900–1920s.
The homespun-looking Craftsman style grew out of the Arts and Crafts movement in the early 20th century, a reaction against the ostentatious design of the Victorian era. Craftsman houses were built for—and sold as kits to—families moving to fledgling suburbs on the rail and streetcar lines, such as Takoma Park and Arlington. (Initially, some neighborhoods had no stores, so trolley operators would bring in groceries for residents—sort of an old-timey Amazon Prime.)
The hallmarks of a typical Craftsman are a low-pitched, gabled roof with deep overhanging eaves and exposed rafters and brackets. Many Craftsmans have a porch with sturdy posts; the posts may be “battered”—or sloped at the sides—and sometimes have chunky stone or concrete bases. Some houses in this style are two levels, but most are one- or one-and-a-half-story bungalows. Inside, Craftsmans have fluid floor plans, with the dining room often opening onto the living room. The interconnected spaces suited women of the nation’s then-expanding middle class, who didn’t have live-in servants and were juggling more cooking, housework, and child-minding themselves.

WHERE YOU’VE SEEN ONE ONSCREEN: Ray and Debra’s house on Everybody Loves Raymond.
WHERE THEY’RE COMMON AROUND TOWN: Silver Spring, Arlington, Bethesda.
WHEN MANY WERE BUILT: 1930s–1950s.
The Great Depression gave us the Minimal Traditional house—identifiable by its boxy, usually one-story shape and side-gable roof with shallow eaves. Despite the economic crash, the District and its suburbs were growing in the ’30s as people moved here to take federal jobs created under the New Deal, and these areas continued to grow during World War II. But the homebuilding industry was moribund, and family budgets were tight. Hence these pared-back dwellings, promoted by the Federal Housing Administration to try to solve a housing shortage.

THOUGH SPARSELY detailed, the homes may evoke the Colonial Revival style through simple decorations such as fixed shutters or a mini-porch around the front door. Occasionally, they hint at modernism, with, for example, strip windows tucked under the eaves. (Developer Carl M. Freeman built such modernism-tinged versions in Montgomery County in the late 1940s, advertising them as “California bungalows.”) Some Minimal Traditions are faced in brick, others with siding or a combination. Eliminating a full porch helped builders keep costs down but also reflected a cultural shift: People were relying more on cars and spending less time sitting outside chatting with neighbors.

RECENTLY SOLD

A 3,300-square-foot, two-story Craftsman in Hyattsville, with three rentable apartments, for $702,000

A four-bedroom bungalow in Takoma Park, built from a Sears “Havelock” kit in 1921, for $181,000

A three-bedroom 1921 bungalow in Alexandria’s Del Ray, with a 2012 addition, for $1,300,000

RECENTLY SOLD

A Bethesda three-bedroom built in 1962 and later expanded, for $465,000

A 985-square-foot 1942 one-bedroom in Arlington for $595,000

A circa-1936 three-bedroom in Silver Spring for $645,000
WHERE YOU’VE SEEN ONE ONSCREEN: Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper’s love nest in 2018’s A Star Is Born.
WHERE THEY’RE COMMON AROUND TOWN: Alexandria, Silver Spring, Southwest DC, Reston.
WHEN MANY WERE BUILT: 1950s–1960s.

As his peers constructed oceans of traditional houses throughout post–World War II suburbia, Charles Goodman wagered that there was an appetite for something other than architecture only referring to the outdoors, encouraging inhabitants to relate to nature. Turns out it was a very good bet—today Goodman is one of the most celebrated architects in Washington history, widely credited with bringing modernism to our area. In 1946, Goodman’s most famous subdivision, Alexandria’s Hollin Hills, got under way. It would grow to more than 450 houses, notable for their gradually sloping or butterfly-shaped roofs, walls of windows, and simple geometry. As buyers snapped them up before they were even done—and as Goodman garnered national attention—he was hired to design other modernist enclaves, including Silver Spring’s Rock Creek Woods and Hammond Wood, Southwest DC’s River Park co-op community, and Reston’s Hickory Cluster townhouses. Other midcentury neighborhoods, meanwhile, showed his influence. One of the architects behind Bethesda’s Carderock Springs, for instance, had spent years working for Goodman.

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WHERE THEY’RE COMMON AROUND TOWN: Coach Eric and Tami Taylor’s house in the NBC drama Friday Night Lights.
WHERE THEY’RE COMMON AROUND TOWN: North Springfield, Annandale, Clinton, Rockville.

The ranch house—also called a rambler—is distinctive for its spread-out form and orientation to the outdoors. Its popularity is credited to Cliff May, a California architect who drew on Spanish Colonial haciendas to design the first ranch homes in the 1930s. It owes something to the ground-hugging, domestic architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, too. Popularized in national magazines and well suited to tract subdivisions with larger lots, the style started appearing in DC’s expanding suburbs in the 1950s.

Ranch houses are one story with low-pitched roofs and may have an attached carport or garage. Some are simple rectangles, while others are U- or L-shaped. Inside, they have open plans and seek to bring in nature through features such as picture windows and sliding glass doors to a patio or deck. Two offspring of the standard ranch—the split-level and the raised ranch—also became common in Washington’s postwar suburbs. All three styles attest to a desire to get back to nature that was lost in the porchless Minimal Traditional home. The naturalist Rachel Carson wrote her classic work Silent Spring in a 1956 ranch in Silver Spring, now a National Historic Landmark.

RECENTLY SOLD
A four-bedroom Charles Goodman townhouse in Reston’s Hickory Cluster for $493,900
A renovated Goodman-designed four-bedroom in Alexandria’s Hollin Mills for $350,000
A barrel-roofed townhouse in Goodman’s River Park co-op community in Southwest DC for $352,000

RECENTLY SOLD
An L-shaped 1963 four-bedroom in North Springfield for $527,000
A four-bedroom 1964 split level in Rockville’s Bel Pre Woods for $439,000
A 1,300-square-foot, three-bedroom raised ranch with a carport in Clinton for $239,000
THE ROWHOUSES: FEDERAL

WHERE YOU’VE SEEN ONE ONSCREEN: The house in the movie *Heartburn* (based on Nora Ephron’s novel inspired by her marriage to Carl Bernstein).
WHERE THEY’RE COMMON: Georgetown, Capitol Hill, Old Town Alexandria.
WHEN MANY WERE BUILT: 1790s–1820s.
Walk around our most historic neighborhoods and you’ll come across a healthy supply of these. Boxty, mostly unadorned, and typically two or two-and-a-half stories, Federal rowhouses have a more formal vibe than their exuberant Victorian successors, in part because they were built during a pretty serious time. The oldest among them date to the late 1700s, when the nation’s founders were still trying to get a country up and running. Georgetown and Old Town were thriving ports for tobacco merchants, who, along with exporting the cash crop, imported design preferences from across the Atlantic.

Though the Federal style is derivative of Georgian architecture—named for England’s four King Georges—it’s distinct in ways that can be attributed to a trio of Scottish architects known as the Adam Brothers. They’re the ones who popularized the subtle details you’ll find on many Federal rowhouses, such as dentil molding along cornices and arched transoms over front doors. But despite those European influences, there’s no question that Federal architecture is one of the earliest American styles.

WHERE YOU’VE SEEN ONE ONSCREEN: Claire and Frank Underwood’s home in Netflix’s *House of Cards*.
WHERE THEY’RE COMMON: Dupont Circle, Shaw, Logan Circle, Capitol Hill.
WHEN MANY WERE BUILT: 1870s–1900s.
Folks were ready to have a little more fun toward the end of the 19th century. The economy was strong, DC’s population was growing, and newly invented machinery made it cheap and easy to mass-produce detailed, fanciful architecture. As a result, between the 1870s and early 1900s, builders erected Victorian rowhouses all over town on spec. They were catering to increasingly wealthy homebuyers—buoyed in part by the 1883 Civil Service Act, which guaranteed government workers a permanent job and salary.

Though several styles fall under the Victorian umbrella, one of the most common in DC is the Queen Anne, notable for turreted roofs, ornate iron railings, and the mixture of brick and stone. Another of its features—the bay window—came to characterize some DC blocks during the Victorian period, thanks to a city law that allowed them to extend beyond a rowhouse’s property line. In other words, the windows became an easy way for homeowners to add more square-footage and light inside.

THE ROWHOUSES: VICTORIAN

WHERE YOU’VE SEEN ONE ONSCREEN: 
WHERE THEY’RE COMMON: Dupont Circle, Shaw, Logan Circle, Capitol Hill.
WHEN MANY WERE BUILT: 1870s–1900s.

RECENTLY SOLD

A nearly 700-square-foot one-bedroom, one-bath 1830 rowhouse in Old Town for $570,000

An 1815 rowhouse with nearly 5,000 square feet and six bedrooms on Georgetown’s Smith’s Row for $4,390,000

A two-bedroom, one-and-a-half bath semidetached rowhouse in Capitol Hill’s historic district for $891,000

A nearly 700-square-foot two-bedroom, two-bath rowhouse near the H Street corridor for $785,000

A four-bedroom, three-bath 1890 Victorian in Dupont Circle for $1,467,500

A 2,700-square-foot, four-bedroom Victorian in Bloomingdale for $1,339,000

Delicate detailing on the facade

Commonly with dormer windows

Frequently with dormer windows

Arched transom over front door

Steady pitched and/or turreted roof

Mix of stone and brick

Often at least three stories

Steeply pitched and/or turreted roof

Arched transom over front door

Mix of stone and brick

Often at least three stories

Common with dormer windows
The Rowhouses:

But steady federal jobs had created the abundance of modest-paying jobs that allowed the working class to stop renting rooms and buy their first houses. Huge Victorians with servants' quarters might not have been in the cards, but something simpler was. Add to that the same appeal as they did when they were new: They’re more affordable and easier to maintain than their towering, turreted predecessors.

These days, the homes hold much of the same appeal as they did when they were new: They’re more affordable and easier to maintain than their towering, turreted predecessors. Which is why a lot of Washingtonians get credit for about 2,000 of them. Sometimes with a third-story dormer. Sometimes with a two-story rowhouse.
They started taking over the suburbs in the 1990s: upscale—but relatively accessible—mini-mansions built on spec. They typically share some features: at least two stories, a variety of window sizes and shapes, a mix of exterior surfaces (e.g., brick, vinyl, and stone), a combo of hipped and gabled roofs, and an attached garage. But it's not like real-estate listings actually call them McMansions. Instead, they're often categorized under one of the following labels. Here's what each typically indicates.

**COLONIAL**
Red brick, possibly with white columns and/or dormers. Very traditional. Find them in McLean and Vienna.

**CRAFTSMAN**
A big front porch, some kind of stonework mixed with vinyl or shingle siding. Think rugged-chic. Find them in Bethesda and Arlington.

**FARMHOUSE**
Somewhat minimal, with front-facing gables and often white siding and black-framed windows. Find them in Arlington and Loudoun County (but not on an actual farm).

**FRENCH COUNTRY**
(See also: villa.) Arched openings and/or windows, some wood details, and a light-colored stone or stucco exterior. Find them in McLean, Potomac, and Loudoun.

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### Zip Code Glossary

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Zip codes with fewer than 60 sales in 2019 were excluded. Data provided by Bright MLS.
OTHER WARDMANS

Harry Wardman may be Washington’s most famous and prolific residential developer, but he’s far from the only one who deserves credit for building many of our neighborhoods. Here are six other names you should know.

LEWIS E. BREUNINGER

WHAT HE BUILT: Both a builder and mortgage banker, Breuninger actually financed many of Wardman’s houses. But he constructed thousands of his own detached homes and rowhouses from the 1890s through the 1920s, too.
WHERE: In Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant. (One of his biggest developments was on Hobart near 16th Street, Northwest.) He also named Shepherd Park.

MORRIS CAFRITZ

WHAT HE BUILT: More than 5,000 single-family houses, dozens of apartment buildings, and later office buildings, from the 1920s to the ’60s.
WHERE: He developed much of Petworth, turning the Columbia Golf Course into thousands of rowhouses in the 1920s. He also built in Columbia Heights and Bethesda. His apartment buildings include the Porter on Connecticut Avenue and the Miramar near Thomas Circle.

CHARLES GESSFORD

WHAT HE BUILT: Hundreds of Victorian rowhouses and alley dwellings throughout the 1870s, ’80s, and ’90s.
WHERE: Gessford is likely responsible for more homes on Capitol Hill than any other single developer. Prime examples can be found around Lincoln and Stanton parks, and the alley named after him, Gessford Court, is unsurprisingly full of his work.

EDGAR KENNEDY

WHAT HE BUILT: Rowhouses, luxury apartments, and semidetached houses from the 1880s to the 1950s. (He worked into his nineties).
WHERE: Kennedy built rowhouses in Capitol Hill, Dupont, Woodley Park, and Mount Pleasant, followed by apartments such as the Kennedy-Warren near Cleveland Park. He also built in Southwest DC and developed Bethesda’s Kenwood neighborhood.

WILLIAM CAMMACK MILLER AND ALLISON NAILOR MILLER

WHAT THEY BUILT: Rowhouses and detached houses, including Colonial and Tudor Revivals.
WHERE: The brothers founded the W.C. & A.N. Miller Development Company in 1912 (it still exists), starting with rowhouses in places like Woodley Park and Petworth. By the ’20s, they were developing subdivisions of upscale homes, such as Wesley Heights and Spring Valley.

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