

## **Vienna Creates an Architectural Review Board**

MR: I kept nagging a little about an architectural review board. Our then-Town Attorney said 'No. You can only have it in a historic district. Like Alexandria had one. No where else. The state legislature does not permit it.' So, I got Charlie. And then we got a new town attorney. John G. Infredo. Wonderful guy. I said, 'John I've got this idea. Other places have it.' Charlie—you don't know what Merrifield looked like then—began to think about it. The two of them got together and started. I watched myself off to a law library near my husband's office in Washington and started reading up on other places around the country that had ARBs that were not associated with a historic district. Of course, they were states that—Wisconsin, for instance. Well, you couldn't find anything more different than Wisconsin to Virginia. But to make a long story short, my husband enlisted the help of a member of the Virginia Legislature who lived in McLean. He thought—he said, 'This is a great idea.' So he came over two or three nights to the house and we talked about what an ARB could do for a community. The long story is that the town wrote an ordinance. They had to go before Richmond to try to get permission to do this. They ran into some headwinds there but finally Vienna's proposal for an architectural review board that did not relate to a historic district passed. And I remember standing at the corner of the governor's office that morning when he signed the bill. I'm way back in the corner. Afterwards, my husband said—Mills Godwin was governor then, quite conservative—Charlie said, 'You know, I don't think he knows what he signed.' He was thinking, 'My god, Mills Godwin is going to sign this.' So this is an example of what citizens can do. This ordinance became the template for Fairfax City, town of Leesburg, Falls Church. One by one, they all said now it's legal. You can have an architectural review board permitted without a historic district. And one by one they all adopted practically the copy of Vienna's.