NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name: Park Circle Historic District

other names: B-5132

2. Location

street & number: Roughly bounded by Overview Ave., Shirley Ave., Cottage Ave., and Henry G. Parks, Jr. Circle ☐ not for publication

city or town: Baltimore ☐ vicinity

state: Maryland code: MD county: Baltimore City code: 510 zip code: 21215

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date: 10-15-08

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby, certify that this property is:
☑ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ Determined not eligible for the National Register.
☐ removed from the National Register.
☐ other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action: 12/4/2008

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ Private
- ☒ public-local
- ☐ public-State
- ☐ public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- ☐ building(s)
- ☒ district
- ☐ site
- ☐ structure
- ☐ object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
838	3	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
838	3	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:

1 (Louisa May Alcott School No. 59, B-4282)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC single dwelling
DOMESTIC multiple dwelling
RELIGION religious facility
EDUCATION school
EDUCATION library
COMMERCIAL specialty store

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC single dwelling
DOMESTIC multiple dwelling
RELIGION religious facility
EDUCATION library
COMMERCIAL specialty store

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH & EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS
Colonial Revival, Mission/Spanish

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK, STONE
walls BRICK , STONE
roof SLATE, TILE, ASPHALT
other

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Area of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
ETHNIC HERITAGE - EUROPEAN

Period of Significance

1900-1945

Significant Dates

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Multiple unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

Previous documentation on files (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #_____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 200 acres | Baltimore West, MD quad

UTM References see continuation sheet
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1				3			
2				4			

☒ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Fred B. Shoken

Organization Dept. of Planning – Historical and Architectural Preservation Division date July 14, 2006

street & number 417 E. Fayette Street, 8th Floor telephone (410) 396-9509

city or town Baltimore state Md. zip code 21213

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO)

name Multiple Ownership (more than 50) c/o Otis Rolley, III, Director, Department of Planning

street & number 417 E. Fayette Street, 8th Floor telephone (410) 396-4237

city or town Baltimore state Maryland zip code 21202

Paperwork Reduction Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et. seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

Description Summary:

Park Circle is a neighborhood primarily made up of early-twentieth century brick porch-front duplexes and rowhouses directly northwest of Druid Hill Park. The neighborhood is located at the convergence of two major arteries, Reisterstown Road and Park Heights Avenue. The district is hemmed in by railroad tracks and light industry on the west and the land slopes steeply to the east. Predominantly residential in character, the district includes a few historic religious and institutional buildings, as well as a few storefronts. Most of the houses front on small garden plots or terraced walkways, but a few are built directly on the sidewalk. The residential buildings are often characterized by front porches, projecting bays at the second level and distinctive roof lines featuring cornices, mansard roofs or gables. There is an unusual grouping of Pueblo Revival duplexes within the district and a single extant American Foursquare type individual frame house. Most of the houses are two stories in height. Although some sections of the neighborhood are in good condition, there are many vacant, dilapidated buildings and scattered vacant lots where buildings have been razed. Despite the condition of many buildings and intrusive vacant lots, the historic character of the area has been maintained due to the retention of significant streetscapes and the preponderance of surviving, religious and institutional buildings.

General Description:

Most of the streets in Park Circle follow a grid street pattern set on a northwestern access. This pattern follows the northwestern direction of the Baltimore and Reisterstown Road turnpike started in 1806 and the northwestern street grid established closer to downtown Baltimore in the Poppleton Plan printed in 1823. The street pattern is interrupted in the 3400 block of Park Heights Avenue as the roadway converges with Reisterstown Road at Druid Park Drive. Also the 3600 block of Cottage Avenue features a bend connecting directly to Ulman Avenue. Along Reisterstown Road and to the east, houses are generally oriented along the streets that travel to the northwest. West of Reisterstown Road, most of the houses front on the roughly east-west streets. Park Heights Avenue and Reisterstown Road are major traffic arteries designated as state roads 129 and 140. The remaining streets are quieter local roads. For most of the early twentieth century, Park Heights Avenue and Reisterstown Road converged on a large traffic circle at the southern edge of the district, known as Park Circle. The traffic circle was removed in 1948 and replaced with a series of traffic islands channeling vehicles through this complex intersection.

Park Circle is fairly densely built-up, but open space exists on several vacant lots, parks and playgrounds. The east side of the 3500 block of Park Heights Avenue, once a row of commercial storefronts has been demolished and replaced with a corner playground and a steeply sloped landscaped strip. Parks and recreation space has also replaced buildings in the inner block areas between Park Heights Avenue and Cottage Avenue north of Violet Avenue. Other vacant lots and automobile parking space can be found in the narrow strip of land behind the houses between Park Heights Avenue and Reisterstown Road. Landscaping and a neighborhood identification sign has been installed on the traffic islands that replaced the traffic circle.

The general topography of the neighborhood gently rises from the south to the north. East of cottage Avenue the land abruptly drops down towards Greenspring Avenue separating Park Circle from the Greenspring and Woodberry communities. Some of the steeply sloping land remains wooded. The western boundary also slopes down towards railroad tracks and industrial development. There is a wooded buffer strip between the row housing and this change in land use.

Residential Buildings

Most of the houses in Park Circle were built within a thirty years time span and maintain a homogeneous character with some variations among the predominate porch front brick rows and duplexes. Among the typical elements on these houses are first floor front porches a projecting bay windows on the second floor level and a distinctive roof elements, such as cornices or gables completing facades. Most houses are two stories high with tan brick building walls. Housing variations include: a few three-story houses, houses without projecting bay windows and houses with stuccoed walls. Some of the later rowhouses built west of Reisterstown Road feature mansard tiled roofs. A single individual four square style frame house survives.

Although early maps of the neighborhood show a few individual frame houses on large tracts of land, none of these houses survive. The earliest extant houses in the neighborhood are brick porch front duplexes built along Park Heights Avenue in the first decade of the twentieth century. Some were quite plain such as 3901-03 Park Heights Avenue with little ornamentation and bowed front brick walls. Other early duplexes were capped with projecting bay windows, examples of this simple house include the 3901-07 Towanda Avenue. The roofline fronts of these duplexes display a variety of decoration ranging from fairly simple cornices (3717-19 Reisterstown Road), bracketed cornices (3806-12 Park Heights Avenue) , arched cornice above projecting bays (3908-10 Reisterstown Road), stepped rooflines (3627-29 Reisterstown Road), pediments above projecting bays (3709-11 Park Heights Avenue), and elaborate curved roof tops

(3805-07) Park Heights Avenue. Other variations of this housing type include a variety of porch front designs including stone porch fronts and classical wood column supports (3627-29 Reisterstown Road). A few houses share a pediment at porches above stairs (3806-12 Park Heights Avenue).

The most unusual grouping of duplexes in the neighborhood are located at 3812-3842 Reisterstown Road. These houses feature Pueblo Revival design elements including stucco walls and exposed vigas or buttresses supporting the cornice and porch roofs. Only twelve of the original sixteen houses survive. Many are in poor condition with one covered by siding.

These early duplexes of Park Circle are representative of the relatively lower land values in the Park Circle area at the outset of development. Removed from other rowhouse communities by Druid Hill Park and located near the northwest boundary of Baltimore City, the first buildings constructed were duplexes providing less density and allowing residents side yards and more windows. Some of these houses feature side bay windows. As urbanization spread to this area, building lots were maximized with the construction of rowhouses. This became the predominate building type starting around 1910.

The early rowhouses of Park Circle are virtually identical to the duplexes with the exception of side yards. The porch fronts, bay windows and cornices of 3601 -11 Park Heights Avenue are identical to duplexes at 3717-19 Reisterstown Road. To provide some a feeling of separation between houses, a few of the rows featured porches that did not connect and added a traditional window between projecting bays (3407-09 Reisterstown Road and 3422-32 Park Heights Avenue). The row at 3645-57 Park Heights Avenue is unusual since it includes a full third story and is more characteristic of housing in Charles Village, Reservoir Hill and Auchentoroly Terrace than Park Circle. Another unusual row are the fairly simple three bay wide stuccoed fronts at 3435-43 Park Heights Avenue.

Rowhouses built around the 1920s west of Reisterstown Road and east of Park Heights Avenue can be distinguished from the earlier houses for their lack of projecting bay windows and massive masonry porch foundations. Most of these houses are built of red brick rather than the tan brick of the earlier houses. Instead of cornices or decorative gable ends they feature tile mansards on the front. While some of these houses feature a third floor level (2800-15 Suffolk Avenue), some of the mansards are purely a decorative element (3645-57 Cottage Avenue).

A single frame house built at the corner of Violet Avenue and Reisterstown Road is distinctive from the surrounding brick duplexes and rowhouses. The 2½-story Four Square house features a long front porch, substantial dormers and decorative cap at the top of the hipped

roof. This house is more characteristic of nearby suburban communities such as West Arlington. Two other frame houses from the early twentieth century were built on scattered sites on Park Heights Avenue and Reisterstown Road in the Park Circle area, but are no longer standing.

Institutional Buildings

While Park Circle is overwhelmingly residential in character, four major historic institutional buildings are located within the district boundaries. These buildings provided educational and religious services to area residents: the Louisa May Alcott School #54 at Reisterstown Road and Keyworth Avenue, Enoch Pratt Branch Library #16 at 2610 Keyworth Avenue, the Sharrei Zion Synagogue at 3459 Park Heights Avenue and the Talmudical Academy School at 3701 Cottage Avenue.

Completed in 1910, the Louisa May Alcott School No. 59 is a 3½ to 4-story stucco building with distinctive brick bands. Individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the school building the building differs from the mostly red brick public school buildings constructed in Baltimore in the early twentieth century. The building features large arched dormers and cupolas along a hipped roof and terra cotta decorations. No longer used as a school, the building now houses the elderly.

Enoch Pratt Free Library Branch No. 16 is a one-story brick building featuring a central pediment and hipped roof. The projecting entrance bay with limestone decorative door surround is flanked by three windows on either side separated by brick columns with stone bases and voluted capitals. Designed by architects, J. Appleton Wilson and Wilson L. Smith, the library opened in 1912.

The Shaarei Zion Synagogue is a stone neo-Greek style building walls featuring four Ionic Columns supporting a central pediment depicting a ten commandment motif. Designed by John Freund, the building opened in 1926 and was used as a synagogue until 1967 when the congregation relocated to 6602 Park Heights Avenue. The building now houses the Good Shepherd Baptist Church and displays a cut letter sign bearing that name at the central pediment.

The Talmudical Academy, a Jewish Day School, at 3701 Cottage Avenue was first built in 1937 with additions in 1945 and 1960. The yellow brick 2 story building with stone entrance bay features stone band courses, glass block at the entrance and Star of David decorations. The building is currently vacant and the entrance is blocked-up. The building had been used as Springhill Elementary School, after the Jewish Day School relocated to Old Court Road in the 1960s.

In addition to the institutional buildings, a few commercial storefronts are located on Park Heights Avenue and Reisterstown Road. These buildings are similar in design to the rowhouse and duplex structures and were often conversions of residential buildings.

New Construction and Vacant Lots

There are only three new buildings within the boundaries the Park Circle Historic District: the 1960s one-story addition to the Talmudical Academy, a 1980s addition to the Good Shepherd Baptist Church, and the adjacent 1990s St. Ambrose Outreach Center. Although built after 1950 and stylistically different to the older buildings of the district, these buildings are not major intrusive elements altering the character of the historic district.

The integrity of the district is diminished by scattered vacant lots where buildings have been demolished and vacant houses. There are approximately fifty vacant lots within the district, most are consolidated into larger lots often at street corners. There are only a few vacant lots that break up building rows mid-block creating a "gap-toothed" appearance. Despite the intrusive nature of the vacant lots, the majority of streetscapes are intact.

Vacant and boarded houses also affect the integrity of the district. Most blocks contain at least one vacant property. They range from houses in relatively good condition awaiting new occupancy to virtual shells. While many properties within the district are in need of rehabilitation and some buildings have been unsympathetically altered, a majority retain their basic historic appearance.

Park Circle Address List:

Street Name	Even	Odd
Cottage Avenue		3445 - 3467
	3500 - 3532	-
	3600 - 3634	3601 - 3659
	3700 - 3736	3701
	3800 - 3838	
Henry G. Parks, Jr. Circle		3301 - 3307
Hilldale Avenue	2704	2703

	2800 - 2816	2805 - 2827
	2900 - 2914	
Keyworth Avenue	2610	
	2702	
	2804 - 2814	2805 - 2815
Norfolk Avenue	2800 - 2816	2801 - 2813
		2817
	2900 - 2922	2901 - 2927
Overview Road	3518 - 3536	
		3701 - 3709
Park Heights Avenue	3400 - 3446	3401 - 3459
	3456 - 3464	
	3504 - 3522	
	3528 - 3530	
	3600 - 3634	3601 - 3631
		3639 - 3659
	3700 - 3738	3701 - 3739
	3802 - 3818	3801 - 3807
	3824 - 3838	3813 - 3835
	3912 - 3940	3901 - 3917
		3921 - 3927
Reisterstown Road	3440 - 3456	3401 - 3451
	3500 - 3522	3501 - 3541
	3528 - 3532	
	3600 - 3630	3601 - 3643
	3700 - 3734	3701 - 3755
	3802 - 3824	3801 - 3819
	3834 - 3842	3831 - 3841
	3900 - 3942	
Rockrose Avenue	2800 - 2816	2801 - 2815
	2902 - 2926	2901 - 2927

Springhill Avenue	2600 - 2606	2601 - 2615
	2700 - 2706	2707
Suffolk Avenue	2800 - 2814	
Towanda Avenue		3901 - 3911
Ulman Avenue	2600 - 2606	2601 - 2603
		2701 - 2705
	2800 - 2816	2801 - 2817
	2900 - 2924	2901 - 2923
Violet Avenue	2600 - 2624	2617 - 2627
	2700 - 2702	2701 - 2703
	2800 - 2814	2801 - 2817
	2900 - 2926	2901 - 2927

Non-Contributing Buildings

3445 Park Heights Avenue
3455 Park Heights Avenue
3457 Park Heights Avenue

Summary Statement of Significance:

The Park Circle Historic District is architecturally significant under National Register Criterion "C" as a representative example of an early twentieth century Baltimore neighborhood located just outside the densely built-up urban core. Primarily comprised of brick porch-front duplexes and row housing, the district maintains a homogenous residential character with nearly all the houses built within a thirty year time period. The district is also historically significant under National Register Criterion "A" as an early suburban Jewish neighborhood developed when the sons and daughters of Eastern European immigrants moved from East Baltimore to the city's northwest outskirts, setting the pattern for further expansion of Baltimore's Jewish community to the northwest. Although many blocks in the neighborhood are severely deteriorated and demolition has resulted in many vacant lots and newer parks, the historic integrity of the district has been maintained due to the survival of a majority of streetscapes and significant buildings. The preservation and adaptive reuse of the Louisa May Alcott School #59 for senior apartments has set the standard for quality preservation in this community. A recently completed master plan for the Park Heights area calls for the rehabilitation of housing in the Park Circle neighborhood.

Period of Significance:

The period of significance is defined from 1900 to 1945. The beginning date is derived from the earliest construction of duplexes built along Park Heights Avenue. The ending date, 1945, marks the completion of construction in the area. By that date all of the housing was complete, as well as the Talmudical Academy School.

Resource History and Historic Context:

Development of the Built Environment

While nearly all the buildings in the Park Circle Historic District were built between 1900 and 1930, the developmental history of the area dates back to 1800s with the establishment of the Baltimore and Reisterstown Turnpike. The turnpike followed the route of the current Pennsylvania Avenue and Reisterstown Road from Franklin Street in Baltimore City to Reisterstown. It was largely used by farmers to bring goods such as grain and flour from Baltimore and Carroll Counties into Baltimore City.

A tollgate stood in the vicinity of the intersection of Park Heights Avenue and Reisterstown Road from 1875 to 1911. This was the last functioning toll gate in Baltimore City. It was discontinued on October 27, 1911 after the portion of the turnpike within city limits was purchased by the State Roads Commission for $70,000.

Prior to 1900, few houses stood within the Park Circle area. Small villages further northwest such as Arlington and Pimlico are actually older than the Park Circle community. It wasn't until the early 1900s, when large estates along Park Heights Avenue were subdivided into building lots and the first groups of duplexes were constructed. Since this area was far removed from the center of the city and Druid Hill Park separated it from other communities, duplexes were built instead of rowhouses retaining open space and providing more of a suburban character than the densely built up rowhouse neighborhoods to the southeast. As other rowhouse neighborhoods expanded to the southern boundaries of Park Circle, rowhouse construction became the norm in the Park Circle area starting around 1910.

Located approximately three miles from the center of Baltimore, transit access to downtown and other neighborhoods was vital. The Numbers 5 and 33 streetcar lines ran from Park Heights Avenue through Park Circle and downtown via Druid Hill Avenue. This connection allowed for the community to become a bedroom suburb for downtown employees as well as provide easy connection to other areas of Baltimore.

By the early 1910s, the neighborhood had grown sufficiently for the City of Baltimore to provide for both a public school and library. At the dedication of the library on September 28, 1912, a local resident Clarence Perkins stated, "We have progressed very much in this neighborhood in the past ten years. In 1900 one could only count about 40 houses from Fulton Avenue, while now there are some 500."

A 1915 photograph of Park Heights Avenue looking south from Ulman Street shows that development was still sporadic in the Park Circle neighborhood. Trolley tracks were located along the east side of the street and it would be another year until the State Roads Commission paved Park Heights Avenue from Park Circle to Keyworth Avenue.

Between 1910 and 1920, the population of the City of Baltimore increased from 558,485 to 733,826. Some of this increase was due to the annexation of 1918 which increased the land area of Baltimore to its present day boundaries. Yet, this 30% increase was comparable to the increase of the previous decade when boundaries did not change. The growth of the Park Circle community in this time period reflects the tremendous increase in population taking place in Baltimore City.

The Park Circle Historic District is architecturally significant for the quality of its residential buildings. It has one of the largest groupings of early twentieth century duplexes in Baltimore City. Eight of the twelve block faces along Park Heights Avenue from Park Circle to Shirley Avenue are comprised of exclusively of duplexes. Similar duplexes can also be found on four block faces on Reisterstown Road. The only other neighborhoods in Baltimore City with comparable numbers of early twentieth century duplexes are Rosemont and Pen Lucy, and these houses are not located on major thoroughfares.

These early twentieth century duplexes feature design elements similar to row housing found in other Baltimore neighborhoods: tan brick facades, porch fronts, projecting bay windows and distinctive rooflines. However, their location far from the city center allowed for the extra amenity of a small side yard and windows on three sides. The Pueblo Revival duplex grouping in the 3800 block of Reisterstown Road is unique for Baltimore City. Also the duplex grouping in the 3800 block odd side of Park Heights Avenue featuring a curving roof line is unique in the city for a two story house and a duplex. This design characteristic is only found in some three story rowhouses in Charles Village, Reservoir Hill and Auchentoroly Terrace.

The four non-residential buildings within the district, a public school, library, synagogue and Jewish day school, are also architecturally distinctive and representative of excellent early twenty century styles. The Louisa May Alcott School No. 59, individually listed in the National Register, is the only public school building of its era with its unique facade of stucco and brick striping. The Pratt Library Branch No. 16 is one of approximately fifteen surviving branch library buildings built between 1900 and 1930. These buildings, all similar in size and function, vary in architectural expression, and are the work of notable local architects. They provide an insight on how these different architects tackled a similar design problem in the early twentieth century. The Shaarei Zion Synagogue is a noteworthy example of a Greek temple style building adapted for a synagogue design, except for the historic Lloyd Street Synagogue designed by Robert Carey Long in the Greek Revival style, other local synagogues built prior to World War II are Romanesque, Byzantine or Eclectic designs. The Talmudical Academy school is representative of moderne Art Deco styling with some streamlined features.

The historic architecture of Park Circle features a level of design and craftsmanship not found in contemporary housing. Significant building details include tiled roofs, classical columns supporting porches, flamboyant cornices and roof details, and large projecting bay windows. Unlike earlier row housing that was narrow and built directly on the street, these wide "day light" houses and duplexes featured front yards and porches providing a more suburban character than traditional Baltimore rowhouse neighborhoods. The semi-public front porches

enhanced outdoor activities in pre-air-conditioned Baltimore summers influencing the social dynamics of this neighborhood.

The Evolution of a Predominantly Jewish Neighborhood

From the early twentieth century to the 1960s, Park Circle was part of Baltimore's largest predominately Jewish neighborhood. Stretching from Eutaw Place to Druid Hill Park neighborhoods to Park Heights Avenue to Pikesville, Baltimore's Jewish community settled in Baltimore's northwest corridor. Park Heights Avenue became Baltimore's street of synagogues. Earl Pruce's Synagogues, Temples and Congregations of Maryland 1830-1990, identifies over twenty synagogues that have located on Park Heights Avenue since the early twentieth century. Park Circle's Shaarei Zion congregation, first organized in 1919 in a house in the 3400 block of Park Heights Avenue and grew into the neo-Greek Synagogue at 3459 Park Heights Avenue in 1926, began this trend.

Historically, Baltimore's Jewish community dates from the late eighteenth century, but was less than 1,500 strong prior to 1845. By the Civil War, an estimated 8,000 Jews lived in Baltimore, largely due to an influx of German Jews. Synagogues and Jewish communal organizations were established in the downtown area and in East Baltimore in the vicinity of the present day main U.S. Post Office. With the migration of eastern European Jews in the late nineteenth century, the Jewish population swelled to an estimated 25,000 by 1901.

There was a distinct split between Baltimore's more prosperous and assimilated German Jewish community and the more traditional and poorer eastern European Jewish immigrants in the 1890s. German Jews often owned the clothing factories where eastern European Jews labored. The rise of unions and socialist groups within the eastern European Jewish community was an anathema to the capitalist German Jews. The differences became geographic, as well as social, economic, and religious.

Between 1892 and 1905, the established German Jewish community moved uptown, relocating five major synagogues from downtown and East Baltimore. The center of this community was established in the vicinity of Eutaw Place. The newer eastern European Jewish community remained in East Baltimore, at times establishing new congregations in the synagogues built by the older German Jewish community.

By 1910, the estimated Jewish population was 45,000 and by 1920 it grew to 65,000. From the vicinity of Eutaw Place, Baltimore's upwardly mobile Jewish population has moved

out towards suburban neighborhoods in a northwesterly direction, first to communities surrounding Druid Hill Park, and later along the Park Heights and Liberty Road.

As the sons and daughters of Eastern European Jewish immigrants prospered, they followed their co-religionists to the northwest, first in Reservoir Hill and Auchentoroly Terrace and by 1920 to Park Circle and the greater Park Heights community.

As Jews moved into the area, synagogues were established. Kosher butcher shops and other businesses located in the commercial row that developed in the 3500 block of Park Heights Avenue (since demolished). Among the businesses on this block listed in the 1928 director were: Michael H. Goldstein, meats; Philip Holzman, baker; Isaac Lapidus, delicatessen, Bertha Friedman, dry goods; Isaac Davis, shoe repair; Meyer Lubman, meats; Abraham Carpman, confectionary; David Schwartz, produce; and Morris Brenner, butter and eggs. According to Gilbert Sandler, in his book, Jewish Baltimore: A Family Affair, "Almost no one in Baltimore who is Jewish grew up without either living on or near Park Heights Avenue or visiting the street for one reason or another."

Sandler described the appeal of this area to Eastern European Jews that grew up in East Baltimore, "The typical price for a rowhouse in the 1920s ranged from two thousand to seven thousand dollars – considered a good value in those days. The Jews who moved into these rowhouses were middle class: compared to the city as a whole, they were well educated, with most having at least an eighth-grade education. The move out for them was a move from crowded, over-the-store rooms on teeming streets of commerce to an airy house on a clean, hedge lined suburban vista."

He quotes an advertisement for the Cottage Hill development in the vicinity of Cottage Avenue and Springhill Avenue, "The neighborhood will withstand any economic change and will increase in value. The location is unique. Beautiful terraced fronts - Spacious rears with yard - large trees as background - an atmosphere of hills - within one block of transportation. Only 20 minutes to Howard and Lexington."

The movement of the Talmudical Academy, Baltimore's independent Hebrew day school, from East Baltimore to 3701 Cottage Avenue in 1939 marked the shift of Baltimore's Jewish community from East Baltimore to Park Heights. The school grew from 225 students to approximately 1,000 at this location for nearly thirty years. A high school was added by 1946 and additional classrooms were built in a 1960 one-story addition.

Important People of Park Circle

Park Circle is also associated with some noteworthy Baltimoreans. Jack Pollack's Trenton Democratic Club, was located at 3701 Park Heights Avenue. Pollack, an important political boss of the early to mid-twentieth century, helped to elect Jewish politicians to high office including: Governor Marvin Mandel, Mayor Philip H. Goodman, City Councilman Solomon Liss and Allen Spector, and Judges Albert Sklar and Paul Dorf. A one-time prize fighter and bootlegger, Pollack was able to trade patronage jobs and political favors for votes in order to get his candidates elected. The Trenton Democratic Club also helped community residents to find jobs, assisted the needy with coal to heat homes and food baskets, fixed parking tickets, and sponsored recreational activities. Prior to his death in 1977, Pollack's political machine had lost power due to the movement of his constituent base to Baltimore's suburbs.

Local author and historian, Gilbert Sandler was born at 3608 Cottage Avenue in Park Circle. He has written columns for the Baltimore Sun, the Jewish Times, and Baltimore Magazine. He edited Generations, the journal of the Jewish Museum of Maryland. Among his books are: Jewish Baltimore: A Family Album, Small Town Baltimore and The Neighborhood: The Story of Baltimore's Little Italy.

Another notable resident of Park Circle is Arthur Ocean Waskow, born Arthur Irwin Waskow in 1933, an author, political activist, and rabbi associated with the Jewish Renewal movement. A graduate of Johns Hopkins University, Waskow has been involved in many political and social protest movements including civil rights, South African apartheid, the Vietnam War, the Soviet Union's oppression of Jews, and most recently the war in Iraq. Since the 1980s, he has taken a leadership role in the Jewish Renewal movement that mixes a progressive political, social and ecological agenda with Jewish mystical and prophetic traditions. He has written over twenty books, primarily on political and Jewish topics including Becoming Brothers, an autobiography with his brother, Howard, that discusses growing up in the Park Circle area in the 1930s and 40s.

Decline and Renewal

During the 1960s, there was a rapid population shift in the Park Heights area. According to census data, the community just north of Park Circle changed from over 90% white to over 90% black between 1960 and 1970. With the end of racially segregated housing practices, African-Americans were able to move out of the Old West Baltimore community into adjacent neighborhoods. While many Jewish residents left Park Circle for newer homes in suburban

settings of Upper Park Heights, Pikesville or Randallstown, block busting tactics by real estate speculators preyed upon racial and economic fears of residents.

Jewish institutions and businesses followed residents to more suburban locations. Both the Shaarei Zion congregation and Talmudical Academy moved from Park Circle in the mid-1960s. This trend took place not just in Park Circle but throughout the greater Park Heights area between Greenspring Avenue and Wabash Avenue from Northern Parkway to Park Circle.

Former single family houses were subdivided into apartments and rented out, reducing homeownership in the greater Park Heights area from 62% in 1960 to 30% in 1970. Housing deterioration, overcrowding and social ills due to an influx of poorer residents contributed to the overall decline of the neighborhood resulting in housing abandonment and boarded buildings.

In 1975, the Department of Housing and Community Development hired Moshe Safdie and Associates to develop a revitalization plan for Park Heights (including Park Circle). Safdie had developed the Coldspring Newtown plan just east of Park Heights. It was felt that Coldspring would not be successful unless improvements took place in the adjacent neighborhood. While both plans were ambitious, less than 10% of Coldspring or Park Heights were developed or re-developed according to 1970s plans.

Some clearance took place, most notably in the commercial 3500 block of Park Heights Avenue. A few playgrounds and recreational facilities were developed, but few houses were rehabilitated and no new housing was built within Park Circle. One notable exception has been the adaptive re-use of the Louisa May Alcott School No. 59 utilizing historic rehabilitation tax credits after the building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It is hoped that designation of the Park Circle Historic District will spur on similar efforts to revitalize the community.

Despite the demolition of some of the original houses in the area and the dilapidated condition of other buildings, Park Circle maintains its historic character. The area is primarily comprised of unbroken groups of duplexes and rows, as well as some individual historic structures. Many vacant lots are also grouped together, affording the opportunity for construction of compatible infill housing. A Master Plan for Park Heights approved in 2006 by the Baltimore City Planning Commission includes a historic preservation component to utilize historic preservation tax credits for revitalizing neighborhoods such as Park Circle.

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Hawyard, Mary Ellen. The Baltimore Rowhouse. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999.

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Scharf, J. Thomas. History of Baltimore City and County. Philadelphia. 1881.

Waskow, Howard and Arthur. Becoming Brothers. New York: The Free Press. 1993.

Geographical Data

UTM References:

Baltimore West, MD quad

A: 18-357162-4354195
B: 18-356708-4354341
C: 18-356652-4354694
D: 18-356489-4355035
E: 18-356623-4355189
F: 18-356918-4355091
G: 18-357067-4354933
H: 18-357201-4354511

Verbal Boundary Description:

(West boundary)

Beginning at the intersection of the west side of Park Heights Avenue and the east side of Reisterstown Road, thence crossing Reisterstown Road westerly to intersect the west side of Reisterstown Road; thence binding northwesterly upon the west side of Reisterstown Road to intersect the south side of Suffok Avenue; thence binding westerly on the south side of Suffolk Avenue to intersect a ten foot alley bordering the property known as Block 3257A Lot 17; thence binding northwesterly along said alley to the rear property lines of the properties known as 3518 to 3536 Overview Road; thence binding easterly on the side north property line of 3536 Overview Road and crossing Overview Road to the intersection of the east side of Overview Road and the south side of Ulman Avenue; thence binding northwesterly on the east side of Overview Road to intersect the northern side property line of the property known as 3709 Overview Road; thence binding easterly upon said property line to intersect a ten foot alley approximately 90 feet east of and parrellel to Overview Road; thence binding southerly on said alley to intersect another 10 foot alley approximately 90 feet north of and parallel to Violet Avenue; thence binding easterly on said alley and crossing Towanda Avenue to intersect a fifteen foot alley approximately 136 feet west of and parallel to Reisterstown Road; then binding northwesterly on said alley to intersect a ten foot alley approximately 114 feet south of and

parallel to Keyworth Avenue; thence binding on said ten foot alley westerly to intersect the east side of Towanda Avenue; and thence binding on Towanda Avenue northwesterly to intersect the northern side property line of the property known as 3911 Towanda Avenue; thence binding on said property line easterly to intersect a twenty foot alley approximately 130 feet west of and parallel to Reisterstown Road; thence binding on said alley northwesterly to intersect the south side of Shirley Avenue;

(North Boundary)

Thence binding on the south side of Shirley Avenue easterly to intersect the east side of Reisterstown Road; thence binding on the east side of Reisterstown Road southerly to intersect the northern rear property line of the property known as 2702 Keyworth Avenue; thence binding on said property line easterly to intersect a fifteen foot alley approximately 180 feet west of and parallel to Park Heights Avenue; thence binding on said alley northwesterly and continuing on said alley to the north and east to intersect the west side Park Heights Avenue and the south side of Shirley Avenue; thence binding on the south side of Shirley Avenue easterly to intersect a fifteen foot alley approximately 140 feet east of and parallel to Park Heights Avenue;

(East Boundary)

Thence binding on said alley southerly to intersect the northern rear property line of the property known as 2610 Keyworth Avenue; thence binding on said property line easterly to the eastern side property line of the property known as 2610 Keyworth Avenue; thence binding on said property line southerly to intersect the south side of Keyworth Avenue; thence binding on the south side of Keyworth Avenue westerly to intersect a thirty foot alley approximately 142 feet east of and parallel to Park Heights Avenue; thence binding on said alley southerly to intersect a ten foot alley approximately 100 feet south of and parallel to Keyworth Avenue; thence binding on said alley easterly to intersect the west side of Cottage Avenue; thence binding on the west side of Cottage Avenue southerly to intersect the south side of Springhill Avenue; thence binding on the south side of Springhill Avenue easterly to intersect the side eastern property line of the property known as 3701 Cottage Avenue; thence binding on said property line southerly and crossing Violet Avenue to intersect a 15 foot alley approximately 107 feet east of and parallel to Cottage Avenue; thence binding on said alley southerly and continuing on said alley westerly to intersect the east side of Cottage Avenue; thence binding on the east side of Cottage Avenue southwesterly to intersect a ten foot alley approximately 100 feet south of Cotwood Place; thence binding on said alley easterly to intersect a twenty foot alley

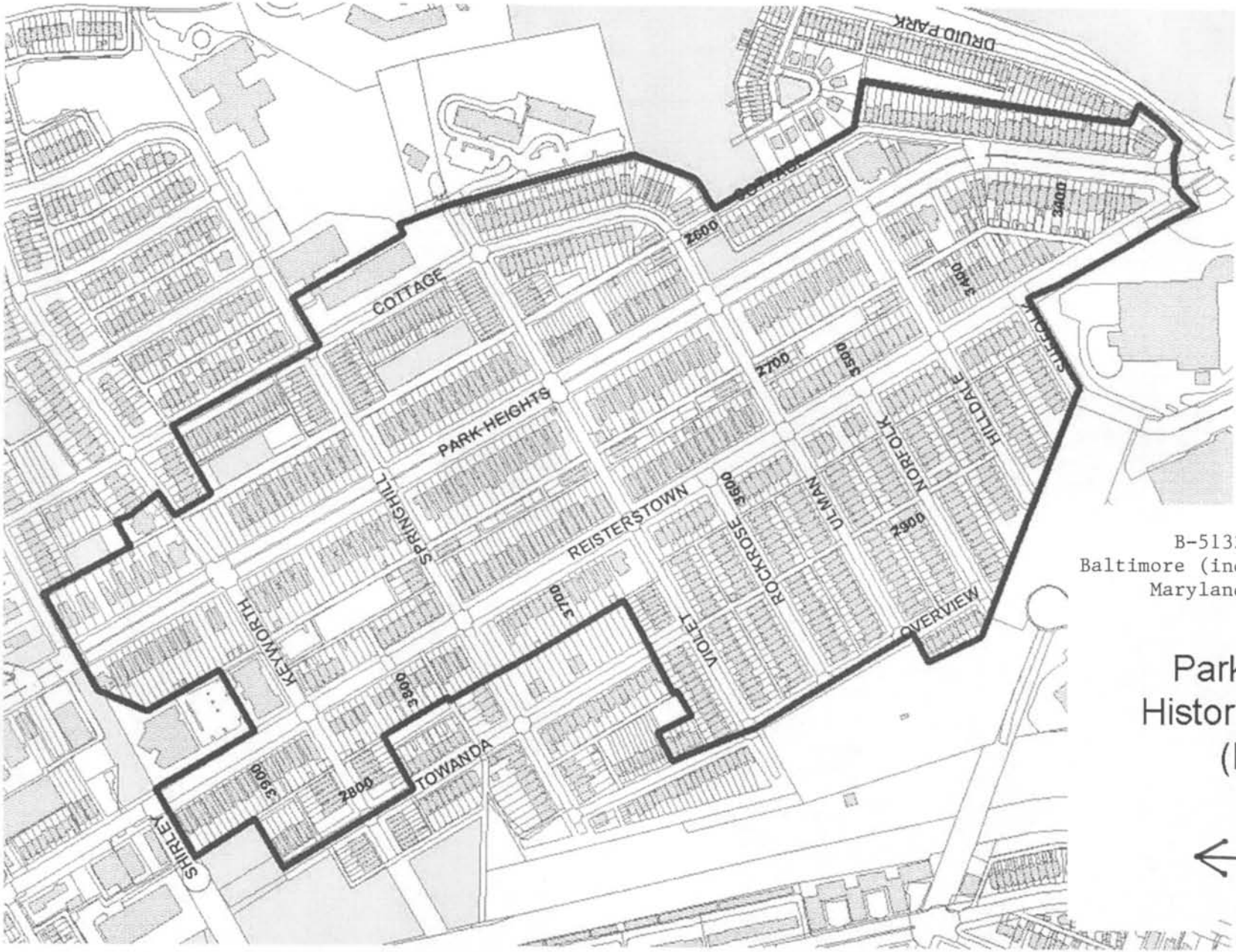
approximately 100 feet east of and parallel to Cottage Avenue; thence binding on said alley southerly to intersect a ten foot alley approximately 100 feet north of and parallel to Henry G. Parks, Jr. Circle; thence binding on said alley easterly to intersect the west side Druid Park Drive; thence binding on the west side of Druid Park Drive southerly to intersect the north side of Henry G. Parks, Jr. Circle; thence binding upon the north side of Henry G. Parks, Jr. Circle and crossing Park Heights Avenue to intersect the west side of Park Heights Avenue and the east side of Reisterstown Road, the place of the beginning.

Boundary Justification:

The residential character of the Park Circle Historic District ends sharply along the west boundary where it borders industrial/business uses, vacant land bordering rail road tracks and park land. Some extant row housing in the vicinity of Towanda Avenue and Springhill Avenue were excluded since these houses lack many of the distinguishing characteristics of housing in the district (porch fronts, projecting bay windows and/or tiled rooflines), were built later than the buildings within the district, and lack historic integrity.

North of Shirley Avenue the character of the community changes with more commercial buildings and different building types including frame houses and later rowhouses.

Along the southern portion of the eastern boundary, the topography slopes sharply to the east. Newer high rise apartments and a 1970s school building bound the area on the east. Other houses in this vicinity were generally developed later than the Park Circle Historic District. The residential row housing to the north and east of Cottage Avenue and Springhill Avenue are also later rowhouses of a different character than those in the historic district.



B-5132
Baltimore (independent city),
Maryland

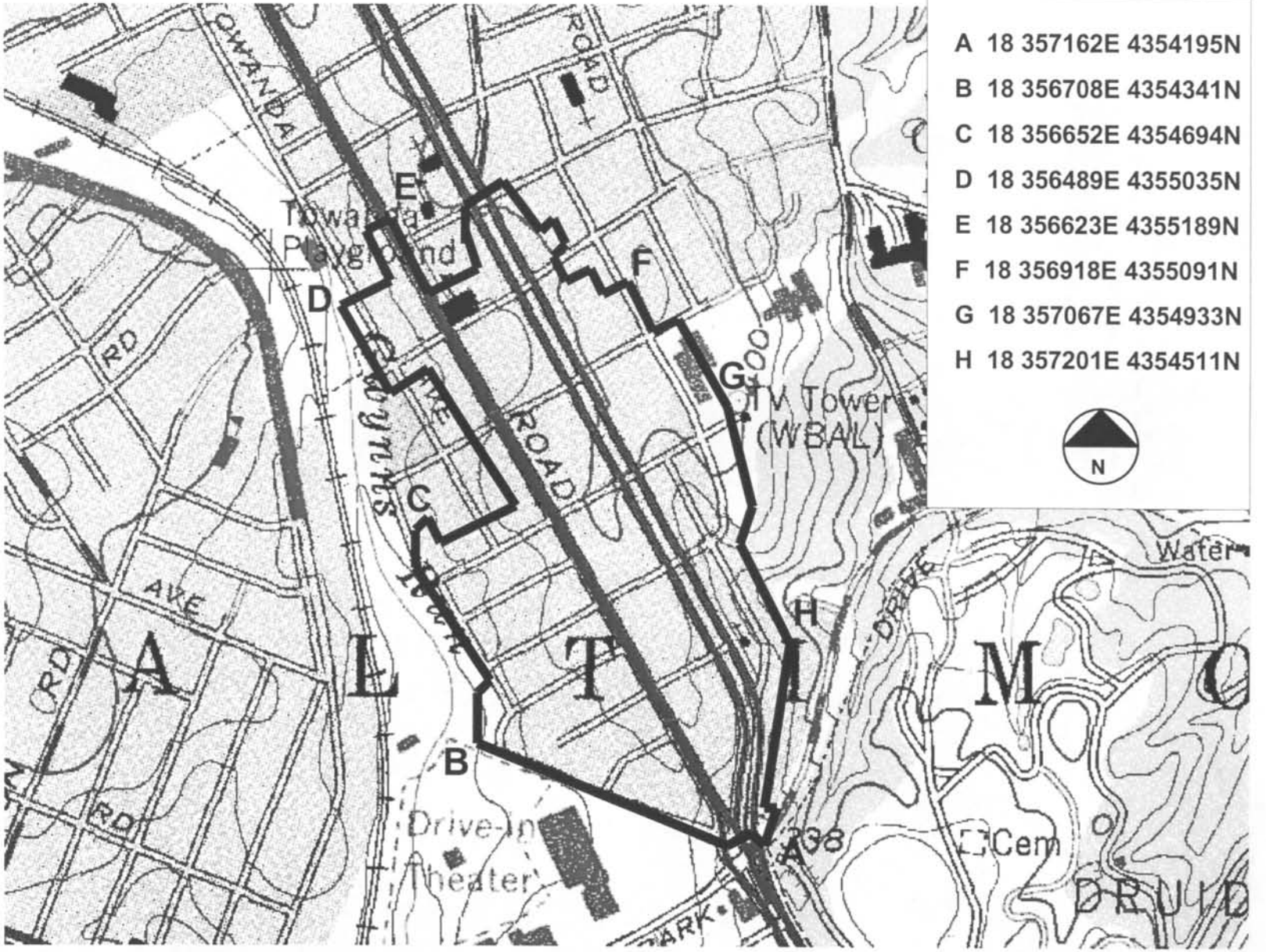
Park Circle Historic District (B -)

N

Baltimore (independent city), Maryland

Park Circle Historic District (B-)

Baltimore City West Quadrangle



B-5132
PARK CIRCLE H.D.
2900 - 2924 ROCK ROSE AVE
BALTIMORE, MD 21213
F. SHOKEN
4/14/06
NEG. LOC COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION, BALTIMORE, MD

EAST ELEVATION

#1/29

NO
STOPPING
7AM-9:30AM
NO
PARKING
9PM - 9AM

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE H.D.
3702-04 REISTERSTOWN RD.
BALTIMORE MD 21215
F. SHOKEN
4/14/06
NEG. LOC. COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION, BALTIMORE, MD

WEST ELEVATION

#2/29

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE H.D.
PRATT LIBRARY BRANCH #16
BALTIMORE MD 21215
F. SHOREN
4/14/06
NEL LOC. COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

WEST ELEVATION

#3/29

CATHERINE
PUGH

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE H.D.
3840 REISTERSTOWN RD.
BALTIMORE, MD 21215
F. SHOKEN
4/14/06
NEG. LOC COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION
EAST ELEVATION

#4/29

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE H.D.
3901-03 PARK HEIGHTS AVE
BALTIMORE MD 21215
F. SHOKEN
4/14/06
NEG. LOC COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

WEST ELEVATION

#5/29

NO STOPPING
ANY TIME

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE H.D.
3908-10 REISTERSTOWN RD
BALTIMORE, MD 21215

F. STOKEN
4/4/06
NEG. LOC. COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

EAST ELEVATION

#6/29

P.R.C.C
EARLES R. MITCHELL CENTER
3901-03 Park Heights Avenue
PARK REIST CORRIDOR COALITION
"Lifting our youth as we climb"
"Revitalizing Park Heights Community
one block at a time"

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE HD.
3901-03 PARK HEIGHTS AVE
BALTIMORE, MD 21215

F. SHOKER
4/14/06
NEG. LOC COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

WEST ELEVATION

#7/29

Kimji
SCOTT
State Delegate
O'Malley
Brown

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE HD
2804-14 KEYWORTH AVE.
BALTIMORE, MD 21215
P. SHOKEN
4/14/06
DEC. LOC. COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION
SOUTH ELEVATION

#8/29

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE H.D.
3808-10 PARK HEIGHTS AVE
BALTIMORE MD 21215
PSHOREN
4/14/06
NEG. LOC. COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION
EAST ELEVATION

#9/29

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE H.D
3901 -07 TOWANDA AVE.
BALTIMORE MD 21215
F. SHOKEN
4/14/06
REC. LOC. COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION
NORTH ELEVATION

#10/29

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE H.D.
SCHOOL #54
BALTIMORE MD 21215
P. SHOLEN
4/14/06
NEG. LOC COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

SOUTH ELEVATION

#11/29

HOUSE OF JACOB

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE H.D.
3805-07 PARK HEIGHTS AVE
BALTIMORE MD 21215
F. SHOLKEN
4/14/06
NEG. LOC. COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION
WEST ELEVATION

#12/29

GOOD SHEPHERD BAPTIST CHURCH

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE H.D.

SHARREI ZION SYNAGOGUE
BALTIMORE MD 21215

P. SHOKEN
4/14/86
NEG. LOC. COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

WEST ELEVATION

#13/29

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE H.D.
3725-27 PARK HEIGHTS AVE
BALTIMORE MD 21215
P. STOKEN
4/14/06
NEG. LOC COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION
WEST ELEVATION

#14/29

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE HO
3645-57 PARK HEIGHTS AVE
BALTIMORE MD 21215
F. SHOKEN
4/14/06
NEG. LOC. COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION
WEST ELEVATION

#15/29

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE H.D.
3422-32 PARK HEIGHTS AVE
BALTIMORE MD 21215
F. SHOKEN
4/14/06
NEG. LOC COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

EAST ELEVATION

#16/29

WELCOME TO
PARK HEIGHTS
COMMUNITY

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE HD.
PARKCIRCLE
BALTIMORE MD 2215
F. SHOKEN
4/14/06
NEL LIC. COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

SOUTH ELEVATION

#17/29

720

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE H.D
3716 - 20 PARK HEIGHTS AVE.
BALTIMORE MD 21215
F. SHOLEN
4/14/06
NEG LOC COMMISSION FOR HISTORICIAL AND
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION
EAST ELEVATION

#18/29

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE H.D.
TALMUDICAL ~~ACADEMY~~
BALTIMORE, MD 21215
F. SHOKEN
4/14/06
NEG. LOC. COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION
WEST ELEVATION

#19/29

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE H.D.
TALMUDICAL ACADEMY
BALTIMORE, MD 21215
F. SHOKEN
4/11/06
NEG. LOC COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION
WEST ELEVATION

#20/29

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE H-D.
3718-2L COTTAGE AVE.
BALTIMORE, MD 21215
F. SHOKEN
4/14/06
DES. LOC. COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION
EAST ELEVATION

#21/29

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE HD.
3505-11 PARK HEIGHTS AVE
BALTIMORE MD 21215
F. SHOLZEN
4/14/06
NEG. LOC. COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

WEST ELEVATION

#22/29

B-5132

PARK CIRCLE H.D.

3645-57 COTTAGE AVE

BALTIMORE MD 21215

F. STOKEN

4/14/06

NEG LOC. COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

EAST ELEVATION

#23/29

3700

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE H.D.
3700 REISTERSTOWN RD.
BALTIMORE, MD 21215
F. SHOKEN
4/14/06
NEG. LOC. COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

WEST ELEVATION

#24/29

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE H.D
3700 BLOCK REISTERSTOWN RD
BALTIMORE MD 21215
F. SHOKEN
4/14/06
NEG. LOC. COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

WEST ELEVATION

#25/29

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE H.D
2900 BLOCK NORFOLK AVE
BALTIMORE MD 21215
F. SHOLEN
4/14/06
NEG. LOC. COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION
SOUTH ELEVATION

26/29

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE H.D
2600 BLOCK ULMAN ST.
BALTIMORE MD 21215
F. SHOKEN
4/14/06
NEG LOC. COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

WEST ELEVATIONS

#27/29

SLOW

B-5132
PARK CIRCLE H.D.
2800 OOP BLACK ULMAN ST
BALTIMORE MD 21215
F. SHOKEN
4/14/06
NEG LOC COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

EAST ELEVATION

#28/29

B-5137
PARK CIRCLE H.D.
3612-14 COTTAGE AVE
BALTIMORE MD 21215

F. STOKEN
4/14/06
NEG. LOC. COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

WEST ELEVATION

#29/29