

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

199

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.



1. Name of Property

Historic name: Metropolitan Apartments

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:
Apartment Buildings in Washington, D.C. 1880-1945

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

2. Location

Street & number: 200-210 Rhode Island Avenue, NE

City or town: Washington, D.C. State: DC County: _____

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___A ___B XC ___D

<u>David Maloney</u>	<u>DAVID MALONEY / DC SHPO</u>	<u>3/21/2014</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:		Date
<u>DC HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE</u>		
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government		

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain: _____)

 5.12.14
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Deco

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK, STONE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Built between 1936 and 1937, the Metropolitan Apartment building is located at 200-210 Rhode Island Avenue, NE in Square 3560 in Washington, D.C. The five-story west wing of the building, which was constructed in 1936, stands on Lot 810. The six-story east wing, built in 1936-1937, stands on Lot 811. Using the "Property Sub-Types" described in *Apartment Buildings in Washington, D.C.* (National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1992), the Metropolitan is a Conventional Mid-Rise Apartment Building. The U-shaped brick building with a flat, parapeted roof was designed by George T. Santmyers, one of the most prolific architects of apartment buildings in the District of Columbia. Built following a period of transition in which the Art Deco style begins to influence Santmyers' work, the Metropolitan is the first completely Art Deco-style mid-rise apartment building in his portfolio. The building retains a high degree of integrity. Few of the original exterior features have been altered, and the overall floor plan with its 164 apartments remains largely unchanged since the building's construction by the Kay Construction Company in 1936-1937. The original interior finishes in the main lobby, elevator lobbies, hallways, and apartments remain largely intact.

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Narrative Description

Setting

The Metropolitan Apartment building is located within an urban setting, along a major thoroughfare through Northeast D.C. The Metropolitan and the 1931 apartment building that stands to its east are the only mid-rise apartment buildings in the immediate vicinity. Most of the buildings in the surrounding area are two-story row houses and row-house-style apartment buildings. St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery, which faces northwest towards Lincoln Road, NE, lies to the west of the Metropolitan.

The apartment building stands on the north side of Rhode Island Avenue, NE, between 2nd and 3rd Streets, NE. It faces due south at an angle to Rhode Island Avenue, NE which runs northeast to southwest in front of the building. An alley off of 3rd Street, NE forms the northern boundary. A concrete retaining wall marks the property's western boundary, and a chain-link fence runs along the eastern boundary. The land slopes down to the northeast. Most of the building sits above street grade, and a stone retaining wall extends along the sidewalk in front of the building. Concrete steps lead up from Rhode Island Avenue, NE to a terrace that includes a circular sidewalk around a flagpole. The area surrounding the building on the south and east is primarily grassy with scattered mature trees and bushes. Asphalt driveways run along its rear and side elevations.

Exterior

The Metropolitan Apartments is a U-shaped, flat-roofed, brick building that was constructed in two sections. Work began on the five-story west wing in February 1936. In September 1936, construction of the six-story east wing commenced; the topography of the site allowed an additional lower story (A-level) in the east wing. The main entrance is centered in the front (south) elevation, where the two sections meet; the break between the two sections is clearly visible on the rear elevation. The five-part façade features a projecting center entrance tower flanked by receding sections that connect to the wings. The east wing's façade projects to the same depth as the entrance tower. The west wing's south elevation projects beyond the facade into the southwest corner of the property and creates a courtyard-like setting in front of the main entrance.

The building rests on a raised foundation constructed of concrete and brick. The exterior walls consist primarily of red brick laid in seven-course common bond. The primary elevations of the façade are distinguished by the presence of textured bricks, pilasters, patterned brick panels, and a stepped parapet. Pyramidal-shaped limestone coping caps the stepped parapet on the projecting sections of the front entrance and east and west wings. Limestone coping capped with metal sheeting extends across the top of the roof parapet on the remainder of the building. Treatment of the exterior brickwork differentiates the primary elevations (those that face Rhode Island Avenue, NE) from the secondary elevations (those that face the rear alley or adjacent properties).

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Primary Elevations

The main entrance is located within a projecting, six-bay, tower-like section at the center of the front elevation. The first story of the main entrance tower is clad in a limestone block that highlights the main entrance. Stone pilasters with torus molding frame the two door openings, each of which is flanked by narrow, nine-light, wood casement windows with metal grates. The original doors were replaced in the 1960s or 1970s with undivided, full-light, metal, storefront-style doors with a sidelight, and a fixed, plate-glass, metal transom. The door and window lintels are composed of limestone blocks with a zigzag design, and the word "METROPOLITAN" is carved in a rectangular stone panel above each door opening.

The upper stories above the main entrance are vertically divided into two symmetrical sections of three bays each. Projecting brick pilasters flank the center windows in each section. The patterned brick panels between the sills and the lintels of each set of center windows feature a diamond shape set within a square frame composed of darker bricks. In the uppermost story, the pilasters are composed of brick and limestone blocks set in a geometrical pattern. The limestone stringcourse is incised with a zigzag pattern and runs across the entire building's façade at the lintel level. The six-over-six, double-hung, wood casement windows include molded, wood trim and molded, limestone sills that feature a convex lip with a bead below.

The Metropolitan's receding connecting sections display less elaborate brickwork. In addition to the limestone stringcourse, they feature decorative, square limestone blocks with bas relief rosettes. The three-bay east section contains single, six-over-six, double-hung windows. The two-bay west section contains paired, six-over-six, double-hung windows. Both sections feature a single window that flanks the stone entrance and that has a six-light wood transom.

The two south-facing elevations on the wings feature projecting, four-bay center sections with brickwork that is similar to, but less elaborate than that on the entrance façade. On these elevations, a row of soldier bricks divides the center section into lower and upper sections. The three brick pilasters that frame the two center windows extend the height of the building. Patterned brick panels similar to those above the main entrance separate the windows on the upper four stories. The stepped parapet features stone quoins on the projecting center bay; a rectangular stone panel with a diamond figure flanked by square stone panels with bas-relief rosettes decorate the façade of the parapet. The parapet decorations wrap around one bay on the east and west elevations. Single windows pierce the four-bay center section which is flanked by single bays of paired windows; the windows and trim are similar to those on the entrance tower.

The east-facing elevation of the west wing at the front of the building displays less elaborate brickwork and stone work than the other primary elevations. The center section of this elevation projects slightly, but is flat, and the parapet is flat rather than stepped.

Most of the basement-level windows are six-light, wood, awning windows. A few of the window openings at the basement level have been filled with plywood or vents. All basement-level windows have square-edged concrete sills.

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Secondary Elevations

The secondary elevations have a flat façade composed of smooth bricks. There is no adornment at the parapet, which is not as tall as it is on the primary elevations. There are two sizes of six-over-six windows present in the building. The smaller ones appear as single windows, while the larger ones appear in single, paired, and triple configurations. Molded-wood mullions separate the paired and triple windows on the secondary elevations, and the sills are square-edged concrete.

Cantilevered, concrete-slab balconies with metal railings are located on the elevations that face the rear courtyard. There are three columns of five balconies on the west elevation of the east wing, one column of five balconies on the north elevation of the center section, and four columns of four balconies on the east elevation of the west wing. A twelve-light, wood door set between six-over-six, wood windows opens onto each balcony. The balcony doors in the west wing are topped by three-light, wood transoms. A few of the original wood screen doors remain, but are in poor condition.

Automobile garages occupy portions of the basement levels of the east and west wings of the building. The east wing includes fourteen garages on its east elevation. In the west wing, there are ten garages on the east elevation, four on the north elevation, and fifteen on the west elevation. Each garage has a single wood door with twelve lights and six vertical wood panels; the arrangement of the lights and panels mimics the appearance of double wood doors. The garage doors operate on metal hardware that allows them to pivot to a flat position at the top of the garage opening, then slide onto metal racks suspended from the ceiling.

Roof

Several brick penthouse structures and skylights are located on the building's flat roof, which is covered in several layers of coating; the top layer is composed of modified bitumen. The elevator penthouse and the two stairwell penthouses are constructed of brick; they feature rolled steel windows and solid metal fire doors. Metal ladders or stairs provide access to the penthouse doors which are all above roof level. Metal coping covers the small parapets on these structures' flat or shed roofs. Gabled and pyramidal skylights provide illumination for the stairwells and for the light wells to the interior bathrooms.

Two exterior, corbel-capped, brick chimneys extend up the north elevation (rear) of the center section of the building. One brick chimney pierces the roof of the east wing.

Interior

Basement

The basement includes two apartments, a club room, garages, and utilitarian spaces that are mostly unfinished. The apartments are finished in a similar fashion as the other apartments in

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the building (see description below). The club room, which is located at the north end of the building's east wing, encompasses two large rooms, a coat closet with a wood Dutch door, a small kitchen, and a half-bath. These rooms have plaster walls and ceilings; the floors are finished with terrazzo or vinyl composition tile. The main room features wood baseboards, a molded wood chair rail, and flat wainscoting.

In the garages and utilitarian spaces such as the boiler room, laundry room, and hallways, the floors are poured concrete. The structural tile interior walls and the exterior brick walls are mostly unfinished though some are painted.

Main Lobby & Office

The two entrance doors open into the rectangular main lobby, which retains its original configuration and most of its interior finishes. The division between the east and west wings of the building is marked by rectangular blocks in the flooring, projecting pilasters, and a ceiling beam. There are two sets of marble stairs along the lobby's north wall. The west stairs go up one-half-story to the first-floor elevator lobby, while the east stairs go down one-half-story to the A-level elevator lobby. Each stairway is flanked by an alcove with an arched opening. Double metal gates, whose design incorporates the letter "M," enclose each of the four alcoves. A metal railing with a similar design occupies the space above the stairs leading down to A-level. An arched opening at the north end of the lobby's west wall leads to a mailbox alcove. At the north end of the east wall, there is an arched opening that leads to a room that is now used as an office. The arched opening has been in-filled and currently contains a non-historic door and two single-light windows.

The main lobby and all adjacent spaces have stone mosaic tile floors and square-edged marble baseboards. The four alcoves, the mailbox alcove, and the office have plaster walls, and the walls of the main lobby and the stairways are clad in venetian plaster. Fluted pilasters composed of scagliola frame the stairways and the arched openings to the mailbox alcove and the office. Engaged, square columns made of scagliola are situated at each end of the beam that marks the division between the east and west sections of the building. The pilasters on either side of the stairs that lead up to the first floor have marble bases.

The main lobby, mailbox alcove, and the office feature crown molding with a grapevine design, and wide cornice friezes that are adorned with bas-relief lions and rosettes. In the main lobby, the plaster ceilings are decorated with painted plaster molding that includes gold squares with a variety of bas-relief designs and multi-colored coats of arms, both of which are set within frames adorned with a floral motif. The ceilings in both the mailbox alcove and the office feature simple plaster molding along the outer edges of the ceiling and around the light fixture. Portions of the ceiling and cornice decorations have been repainted in a solid color, covering the historic color patterns.

Elevator Lobbies

Located a half-story above the main lobby and at the same level as the first-floor apartments, the first-floor elevator lobby has more elaborate finishes than the other elevator lobbies in the

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building. The stone mosaic tile floors and the marble baseboards match the main lobby; the walls are scored plaster; and the ceilings are smooth plaster with gridded beams and cove crown molding. Pilasters and a large column are clad in scagliola to match those in the main lobby. The upper-level and A-level elevator lobbies feature terrazzo floors and textured plaster walls and ceilings.

Elevators and Stairways

The three elevators retain their original cabs and exterior swing doors. Constructed of hollow paneled metal, the exterior doors have Art Deco-style metal handles and a single light that is oval-shaped on the first floor and square on the other floors. Two of the cabs have sliding metal interior doors, and one has a collapsing metal gate. The interior of the cabs feature metal paneled walls with oval-shaped vents, bas relief floral designs, wood crown molding above the metal walls, and a plaster ceiling.

There are four stairways in the building: one near the northeast corner, one near the southeast corner, and two at the west end of the center section. The stairways have plaster walls and painted concrete stairs with metal railings.

Apartments

The Metropolitan building currently contains 164 units, including efficiency, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom apartments. Two apartments are located on the basement level, and thirteen on A-level (located in the east wing of the building between the first floor and the basement level); the remainder is located on the first through fifth floors.

The apartments are laid out along central hallways that feature terrazzo floors, textured plaster walls and ceilings, and alcoves for fire extinguishers. Fire pulls (1936) and metal cable conduits (circa 1990) are attached to the walls, and the halls are lit by non-historic light fixtures. On the first floor and A-level, metal-and-plate-glass fire doors (circa 1960-1970) separate the apartments from the associated elevator lobbies.

The main entrances to the apartment units feature louvered, wood exterior doors, and single-panel, wood, inner doors. The majority of both the louvered and solid doors retain their original metal knocker panels that display the apartment number; many of the original, spring-loaded peep-hole mechanisms on the inner doors are extant and operable. Approximately eighty apartments in the west wing of the building have paneled wood servant doors that lead directly from the kitchen to the hallway; these doors do not have louvered outer doors.

The original floor plans of the apartments are unchanged. Most units have foyers that include coat closets. Their wide openings with uncased, pointed arches provide access from the foyers to the living rooms. The living rooms typically have paired or triple windows; most that face the rear courtyard have doors that lead to balconies. A few of the apartments have small sitting areas that are separated from the living room by wide, square-edged openings with two square posts. Twelve-light, wood doors connect the living rooms with small dining areas; in some units, these doors have been removed. Built-in, wood cabinets with eight-light doors divide the dining areas

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from the kitchens, which are located closest to the interior walls between the apartments and the hallways. The arrangement of the bathrooms and bedrooms varies among the Metropolitan's nineteen different floor plans. Two-panel wood doors occupy the door openings to the closets, bedrooms, and bathrooms. Most of the apartments' bathrooms have exterior windows, however, on each floor a few interior bathrooms have windows that open onto one of the building's seven light wells.

With the exception of the kitchens and bathrooms, most of the rooms have original tongue-and-groove wood flooring. In some units, the wood floors in the living room and bedrooms have been covered with wall-to-wall carpet. Though a few retain their original wood floors, most of the kitchen floors have been covered with linoleum or vinyl tile.

The existing vinyl bathroom floors were installed in the 1980s, after the previous flooring was partially removed to conduct plumbing repairs. In the bathrooms, original ceramic wall tiles cover the lower half of the walls and many of the original fixtures remain, however, many of the wall tiles and fixtures are cracked or damaged. Although the original sinks and built-in wood cabinets remain intact in some kitchens, many were remodeled in the late 20th century.

The apartments have plaster walls and ceilings throughout. Nearly all of the wood trim and most of the interior doors remain intact. The wood baseboards feature a recessed bead and concave base molding. The wood trim around the door openings consists of a flat base with molded back bands and an inner bead. The window casings are comprised of molded wood trim and round-edged wood sills; flat mullions separate the paired and triple windows.

The apartments are currently heated by steam radiators that are original to the building.

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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 patterns of our history.
- B. Property is 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.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1936-1937

Significant Dates

1936

1937

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

George T. Santmyers, Architect

Abraham S. Kay; Kay Construction Company, Builder

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Metropolitan Apartments is nominated under the National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF), *Apartment Buildings in Washington, D.C., 1880-1945* (1993). The building is significant at the local level under **Criterion C** as an outstanding example of the Conventional Mid-Rise Apartment Building property type as defined in the MPDF.

The period of significance extends from 1936, when the first section of the building was completed, to 1937, when construction was completed.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Area of Significance: Architecture

Constructed between 1936 and 1937, the Metropolitan exemplifies the mid-rise apartment buildings that were constructed in Washington, D.C. to relieve the housing shortage that developed as federal employment increased with expansion of New Deal programs. As noted in the MPDF, the conventional mid-rise apartment type “augmented the potential for solving the problems inherent to quickly housing a rapidly expanding population in the District” and “permitted a more efficient use of land in locations already served by public transportation.” Located at 200 Rhode Island Avenue, NE, the Metropolitan stood just two blocks from the streetcar line that ran along North Capitol Street and two blocks from the Mount Ranier line into downtown D.C. As automobile usage increased in the 1930s, Rhode Island Avenue, NE, developed into a major transportation corridor in northeast D.C., and the Metropolitan included garages where residents could park their cars.

The Metropolitan exhibits key architectural features of the conventional mid-rise apartment building and represents architect George T. Santmyers’ earliest mid-rise apartment building to fully embrace the Art Deco style. The building’s verticality, its limestone entrance façade decorated with torus moldings, the geometric patterns on the entrance and limestone stringcourse, and the stone panels in the parapet all reflect the influence of Art Deco-style architecture; these became characteristic features of his later mid-rise apartment buildings designed in the Art Deco style. Characteristic of the mid-rise apartment building, the Metropolitan features a spacious central lobby, passenger elevators, and a variety of types of units. The building’s “U” configuration, together with balconies on each apartment and a rear courtyard, provide light and ventilation to the units.

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Residents and Neighborhood Development

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Between 1930 and 1940, the District's population grew almost 40% from just under 487,000 to approximately 663,000. Much of this growth in population was due to the expansion of the federal government as a result of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal which, between 1933 and the beginning of World War II in 1941, established numerous federal programs and agencies to provide employment and assistance to those affected by the worldwide economic depression of the 1930s.

Designed to contain efficiency, one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartments, the Metropolitan housed middle-class individuals and families, many of whom worked for the federal government. Washington, D.C. City Directories and the 1940 U.S. population census show that the men and women who lived at the Metropolitan just after it was constructed worked as clerks, secretaries, stenographers, machinists, accountants, and a variety of other occupations for the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Treasury Department, the Department of Agriculture, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, the Public Works Administration, the Works Progress Administration, and the Government Printing Office, all of which were physically located in the District of Columbia.¹ Other Metropolitan apartment dwellers owned and worked in small private businesses and were nurses, doctors, and teachers.

The Metropolitan stands along the boundary between the Eckington and Edgewood neighborhoods of Washington, D.C. These neighborhoods began developing in the late 19th century following the construction of the Eckington & Soldiers Home Railway Company's streetcar line along North Capitol Street; the intersection of North Capitol Street and Rhode Island Avenue is just two blocks west from the site of the Metropolitan Apartments. The establishment of public transportation enabled residents of these neighborhoods to commute to work for the government and private industry in the city while living in formerly rural areas.

In 1888, the Eckington & Soldiers Home Railway Company line was used by D.C.'s first electric streetcar.² This railway line and others to follow opened up the areas northeast of the city to suburban development. In 1897, the Maryland and Washington Railway installed a streetcar line from downtown Washington to Mount Ranier, Maryland; the line joined Rhode Island Avenue, NE at 4th Street, NE and continued northeast along what would be the future road alignment of Rhode Island Avenue.³ In 1900, the City & Suburban Railway of Washington and the Washington & Hyattsville Electric constructed waiting rooms along Rhode Island Avenue, NE.⁴

In the 1910s, the presence of streetcar lines and related facilities encourage residential development of the first three blocks of Rhode Island Avenue, NE. Most of the homes constructed were row houses. The 1920s saw the construction of several apartment buildings, which provided a more efficient use of land and allowed land owners to create more profitable

¹ Washington, D.C. City Directories, 1937-1945.

² Kathryn S. Smith, *Washington At Home*, (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), p. 275.

³ "History of Mount Ranier," City of Mount Ranier web site <http://www.mountraniermd.org/history.html> accessed 8/15/13.

⁴Brian D. Kraft, *District of Columbia Building Permits Database*, Version 2009.2.

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residential development by building multi-unit housing. Constructed along transportation corridors, apartment prices were affordable for those who could not afford to purchase or rent individual homes. In the mid-1920s, two mid-rise apartment buildings were constructed at 329 and 330 Rhode Island Avenue, NE; the four-story buildings contained 32 and 36 apartments respectively.

The use of automobiles as a preferred method of transportation for those who could afford them changed the urban landscape.⁵ In the 1920s, the growing use of automobiles caused city officials to enact zoning regulations that mandated that larger buildings in Washington had to be designed to include garages.⁶

In the 1920s, the land where the Metropolitan stands (Square 3560) was owned and occupied by the St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery and by the Spanish Discalced Carmelite Fathers, who constructed a monastery there in 1921. In the early 1930s, the Carmelite Fathers divided and sold part of their lands in Square 3560. In 1931, the development company Warren, Monroe & Hugh received a permit to build a five-story apartment building, Rhode Island Gardens, at 230 Rhode Island Avenue, NE, immediately to the east of the Metropolitan. Designed by architect Harvey P. Baxter, the building contained 78 units. In 1936-1937, Kay Construction Company built the Metropolitan on the two parcels to the west of Rhode Island Gardens, adjacent to the Carmelite Fathers' remaining land.

Form and Style

Designed by George T. Santmyers and built by the owner, Abraham S. Kay of Kay Construction Company, the Metropolitan was constructed in two sections in order to manage the company's finances during the height of the Great Depression.⁷ The permit for the five-story western section of the modified U-shaped plan was recorded in February 1936; the section was constructed that year with 79 apartments. The six-story eastern section was permitted in September 1936. It was completed in 1937 and contained 82 apartments. The road frontage was terraced both down to Rhode Island Avenue, NE on its south border and down toward its east border. In accordance with city zoning ordinances and as a featured amenity, the Metropolitan included garages on the ground floor of the west and east wings.

George T. Santmyers (1889-1960) designed over 440 apartment buildings between 1916 and 1960. His work encompasses a wide variety of stylistic influences, including Colonial Revival,

⁵ In the 1920s and 1930s, the growth of automobile traffic along Rhode Island Avenue, NE resulted in a nine permits to build gasoline stations in the 400 through 700 blocks. [Brian D. Kraft, *District of Columbia Building Permits Database*, Version 2009.2.]

⁶ Emily Hotaling Eig and Laura Harris Hughes, *Apartment Buildings in Washington, D.C. 1880-1945*, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, Revised March 1992, Section E, p. 41.

⁷ Although designed as a whole, the building was divided into two parts for the permitting and construction process with the thought that the Kays might not have enough funding to construct the entire building at once. It soon became apparent that the apartments would rent quickly, and available funding allowed the Kays to get a permit for the eastern section while the western section was still under construction. Claypool telephone interview with Jack Kay, Oct 10, 2012.

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Classical Revival, Art Deco, Art Moderne, and International. In the 1910s and 1920s, Santmyers favored classically influenced styles, one example of which is 4701 Connecticut Avenue, NW (1927). For it, Santmyers applied classical details such as “balustrades on the corner sleeping porches, finials on fourth-floor balconies and roof, and carved swags over the entrance.”⁸ Interior classical details included the decorative strapwork plaster ceiling in the lobby.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Santmyers designed a few mid-rise apartment buildings that show his transition from utilizing the Classical Revival style to the Art Deco style. For 644 Massachusetts Avenue, NE (1929), he combined a more vertical massing and shaped parapets with a Classical Revival-style entrance. Santmyers’ design for the mid-rise apartment building at 3206 Wisconsin Avenue, NW (1931) fully realizes the verticality of the Art Deco style with what would become his trademark projecting piers; however, the stone entrance façade is distinctly Gothic Revival in style. In 1931, Santmyers designed the mid-rise apartment building at 5521 Colorado Avenue, NW which also transitioned between the Classical Revival and Art Deco styles. In 1935, Santmyers’ designed what appears to be his first Art Deco-style, low-rise apartment building—1301 Longfellow Street, NW. The U-shaped, brick building with its center courtyard in the front of the building features the Art Deco-style elements of a vertical design highlighted by short stone parapet walls. The building features zigzag decorative stonework in the third floor window lintels, decorative stone plaques above these windows, and geometric patterned brick panels between floors.

According to Eig and Hughes, “Santmyers is most celebrated for his Art Deco, Art Moderne, and International Style apartment buildings from the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s.”⁹ Santmyers’ 1936 design for the Metropolitan was his first fully realized, Art Deco-style mid-rise apartment building. It successfully creates a façade that is fully vertical and minimizes ornamentation; the design presaged much of his later Art Deco mid-rise apartment buildings. The projecting portions of the west, center, and east sections of the south elevation are carried by brick piers up to the stepped parapets, where stone quoins highlight the central and highest element. Art Deco-style stone panels decorate the façade of the parapet on the primary elevations, and a zigzag pattern highlights the stone stringcourse. Patterned brick panels decorate the area below the windows in the projecting sections. Art Deco embellishments include the limestone block entrance façade that features pilasters with torus moldings framing the two entrance doors, and window and door lintels composed of limestone blocks with a zigzag pattern.

The main lobby and elevator lobby, characteristic features of conventional mid-rise apartment buildings, reflect Santmyers’ transition to the Art Deco style. The lobby’s venetian plaster walls, divided by scagliola, reeded pilasters, are similar to the lobby of the Art Deco-style Woodley Park Towers (2737 Devonshire Place, NW) designed by Louis T. Rouleau, Sr. in 1929. Other interior Art Deco elements are provided by the gilded, openwork iron gates with the “M” monogram and matching baluster railing for the elevator lobby (one-half-story up from the lobby), and the elevator door handles and call button plates. The only decorative elements that retain Santmyers’ former classical style are the decorative plaster in the wide frieze and the

⁸ James M. Goode, *Best Addresses* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 1988), p. 249.

⁹ Eig and Hughes, Section E, p. 34.

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strapwork plaster ceiling, which is similar to the lobby ceiling in his 1927 mid-rise apartment design for 4701 Connecticut Avenue, NW.

Typical of many other of his conventional mid-rise apartment buildings, Santmyers designed the building to provide natural light and ventilation to the all of the apartments. For example, he extended the southern part of the building's west section toward Rhode Island Avenue, NE and arranged the rear units of both sections around a center courtyard. Cantilevered, concrete slab balconies with iron railings extend from the apartment back doors into the rear courtyard for increased ventilation at every story, a feature that may have been inspired by garden-style apartment buildings.

The construction of the Metropolitan represented the first in a resurgence of commissions for mid-rise apartment buildings to house the growing number of federal employees. Between 1930 and 1935, Santmyers designed only two mid-rise apartment buildings. In contrast, between 1936 and 1939, Santmyers designed seven mid-rise apartment buildings (including the Metropolitan). Many of these late 1930s buildings echoed the design of the Metropolitan. For instance, in 1937, Santmyers and Kay teamed another time to produce the Art Deco-style, five-story apartment building at 2325 15th Street, NW. The verticality of the design is once again carried by projecting sections of the façade, and the building features a single entrance with a stone surround. Art Deco-style stone elements highlight the areas between the windows in the projecting towers and a narrow, zigzag band that runs along the parapet. In 1938, Santmyers repeated these elements in the Normandie, a five-story apartment building located at 6817 Georgia Avenue, NW.

Developer and Builder Abraham S. Kay

Born Abram Shimon Kaminkovitz in 1899 in Vilna, Russia, Abraham S. Kay (1899-1963) moved to America with his family in 1909. After serving in World War I, Kay married Minnie Berman and opened a grocery store. This first store quickly expanded into a cooperative of grocery stores called the District Grocery Stores that he ran with his brother Goodman in the 1920s.¹⁰

In 1930, while still operating the District Grocery Stores, Kay began building houses and small apartment buildings in Washington, D.C. In 1936, he sold his grocery business, formed Kay Construction Co., and embarked on what was probably his largest construction project to date and first mid-rise apartment building—the Metropolitan.

Kay's collaboration with George T. Santmyers began in 1935, when Santmyers designed a block of two-story, Colonial Revival-style, brick apartment buildings on Randolph and 9th Streets, NW for Kay. In 1937, after completing the Metropolitan, Kay Construction Co. and George T.

¹⁰ "Kay and Kay Construction," Vertical file, Jewish Historical Society, Washington, D.C.

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Santmyers teamed to construct the five-story, brick apartment building that is located at 2325 15th Street, NW. Also in 1937, Santmyers designed a house for Abraham and Minnie Kay at 4800 17th Street, NW. Their house is a two-story, brick, Colonial Revival-style dwelling.

In the late 1930s, Abraham Kay's attention turned toward the development of Maryland suburbs. He purchased the Indian Spring Country Club in Silver Spring, Maryland and developed it as a premier golf club complete with dozens of homes. Formerly undeveloped land on the site became the 50-acre Kaywood Gardens apartment complex with a nearby shopping center. One of his final projects, the Connecticut Avenue Estates in Maryland, was a 2000-home, 570-acre subdivision that typifies the Washington area's post World War II suburbanization.¹¹ Completed in 1956, this subdivision joined Kay's Wheaton Hills subdivision to put Wheaton, Maryland on the map.

In 1950, Kay formed the A.S. Kay Foundation, Inc. and increasingly left the operation of the Kay Construction Co. to his son, Jack. As president of the Kay Foundation, Abraham Kay was active in numerous philanthropic and civic projects including building a disabled veterans' convalescent and rehabilitation center in Israel. He was president of the Brandeis Zionist Organization in Washington, D.C. and vice-president of the Zionist Organization of America. In addition, he chaired or was a member of the board of the State of Israel Bond Organization and the United Jewish Appeal among other organizations and was a trustee of American University.¹² Kay died in 1963.

¹¹"Kay Company Builds 2000 Homes in Maryland," ProQuest Historical Newspapers: *The Washington Post* (1877-1995), 8 April 1956, p. G2.

¹²"Abraham Simon Kay," *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, Vol 50, 1968. NY: James T. White & Company, p. 217.

Metropolitan Apartments
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Baist, G.W. *Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Washington, District of Columbia*. Philadelphia: Baist, 1903, 1907, 1913-15, 1919-21, 1924-28, 1931.

Callcott, Stephen. *3901 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.*, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 1997.

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U.S. Federal Population Census, 1940.

Washington, D.C. City Directories, 1937-1945.

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Previous documentation on file (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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: History Matters, LLC, Washington, DC

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.42 Acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 38.919415° Longitude: -77.003230°
2. Latitude: Longitude:
3. Latitude: Longitude:
4. Latitude: Longitude:

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Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Metropolitan Apartment building is located in Square 3560 on Lots 810 and 811 in the City of Washington, D.C.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The Metropolitan Apartment building occupies the majority of the property in Lots 810 and 811 in Square 3560.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Evelyn D. Causey, Senior Architectural Historian; Julia B. Claypool, Historian and Cultural Resources Planner; Edna Johnston, Principal and Senior Historian; Jess Neubelt, Research Assistant.

Organization: History Matters, LLC

Street & number: 1502 21st Street, NW, 2nd Floor

City or town: Washington state: DC zip code: 20036

E-mail johnston@historymatters.net

Telephone: 202-223-8845

Date: August 22, 2013

Metropolitan Apartments
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: The Metropolitan Apartments
City or Vicinity: Washington, D.C.
County: Washington **State:** District of Columbia
Photographer: History Matters, LLC
Date Photographed: February 2012
Description of Photograph and Number: View of south elevation, looking north across Rhode Island Avenue, NE.
1 of 12

Name of Property: The Metropolitan Apartments
City or Vicinity: Washington, D.C.
County: Washington **State:** District of Columbia
Photographer: History Matters, LLC
Date Photographed: February 2012
Description of Photograph and Number: View of south elevation, looking northwest across Rhode Island Avenue, NE.
2 of 12

Name of Property: The Metropolitan Apartments
City or Vicinity: Washington, D.C.
County: Washington **State:** District of Columbia
Photographer: History Matters, LLC
Date Photographed: February 2012
Description of Photograph and Number: View of front entrance on south elevation, looking northwest.
3 of 12

Metropolitan Apartments

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

Name of Property: The Metropolitan Apartments
City or Vicinity: Washington, D.C.
County: Washington **State:** District of Columbia
Photographer: History Matters, LLC
Date Photographed: February 2012
Description of Photograph and Number: View of east elevation, looking northwest across Rhode Island Avenue, NE.
4 of 12

Name of Property: The Metropolitan Apartments
City or Vicinity: Washington, D.C.
County: Washington **State:** District of Columbia
Photographer: History Matters, LLC
Date Photographed: February 2012
Description of Photograph and Number: View of north (rear) elevation of the center section and east elevation of the west wing, looking south across the rear courtyard.
5 of 12

Name of Property: The Metropolitan Apartments
City or Vicinity: Washington, D.C.
County: Washington **State:** District of Columbia
Photographer: History Matters, LLC
Date Photographed: February 2012
Description of Photograph and Number: View of west elevation, looking southeast.
6 of 12

Name of Property: The Metropolitan Apartments
City or Vicinity: Washington, D.C.
County: Washington **State:** District of Columbia
Photographer: History Matters, LLC
Date Photographed: February 2012
Description of Photograph and Number: View of north wall of main lobby, looking northwest.
7 of 12

Name of Property: The Metropolitan Apartments
City or Vicinity: Washington, D.C.
County: Washington **State:** District of Columbia
Photographer: History Matters, LLC
Date Photographed: March 2012
Description of Photograph and Number: View of main lobby, looking northwest, showing arched opening to mailbox alcove in west wall and stairs leading up to the 1st-floor elevator lobby.
8 of 12

Name of Property: The Metropolitan Apartments
City or Vicinity: Washington, D.C.
County: Washington **State:** District of Columbia
Photographer: History Matters, LLC
Date Photographed: February 2012
Description of Photograph and Number: View of main lobby, looking southeast, showing entrance to office on east wall.
9 of 12

Metropolitan Apartments

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County and State

Name of Property

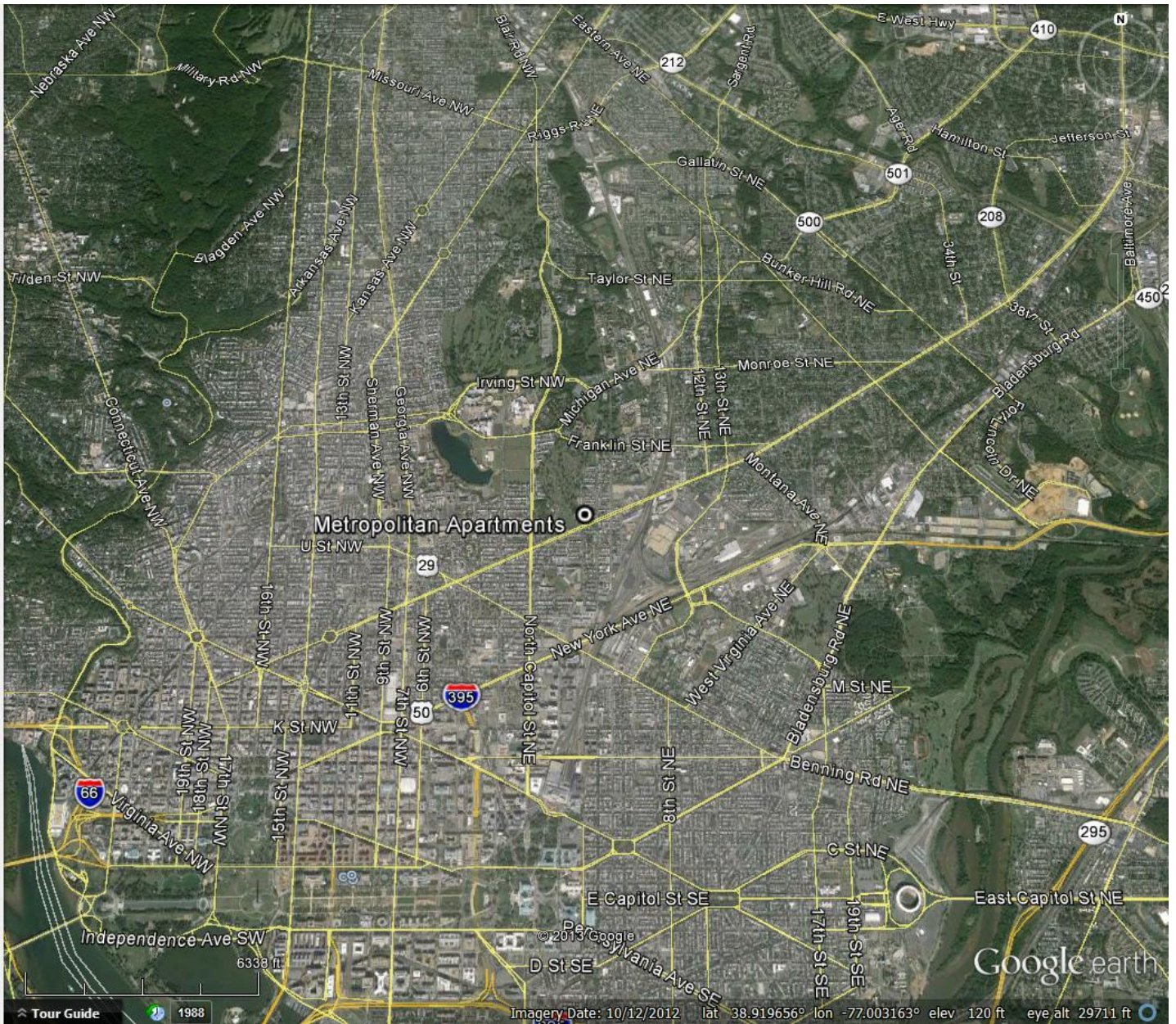
Name of Property: The Metropolitan Apartments
City or Vicinity: Washington, D.C.
County: Washington **State:** District of Columbia
Photographer: History Matters, LLC
Date Photographed: February 2012
Description of Photograph and Number: View of 1st-floor elevator lobby, looking northeast.
10 of 12

Name of Property: The Metropolitan Apartments
City or Vicinity: Washington, D.C.
County: Washington **State:** District of Columbia
Photographer: History Matters, LLC
Date Photographed: February 2012
Description of Photograph and Number: View of typical inner door between apartment and hallway.
11 of 12

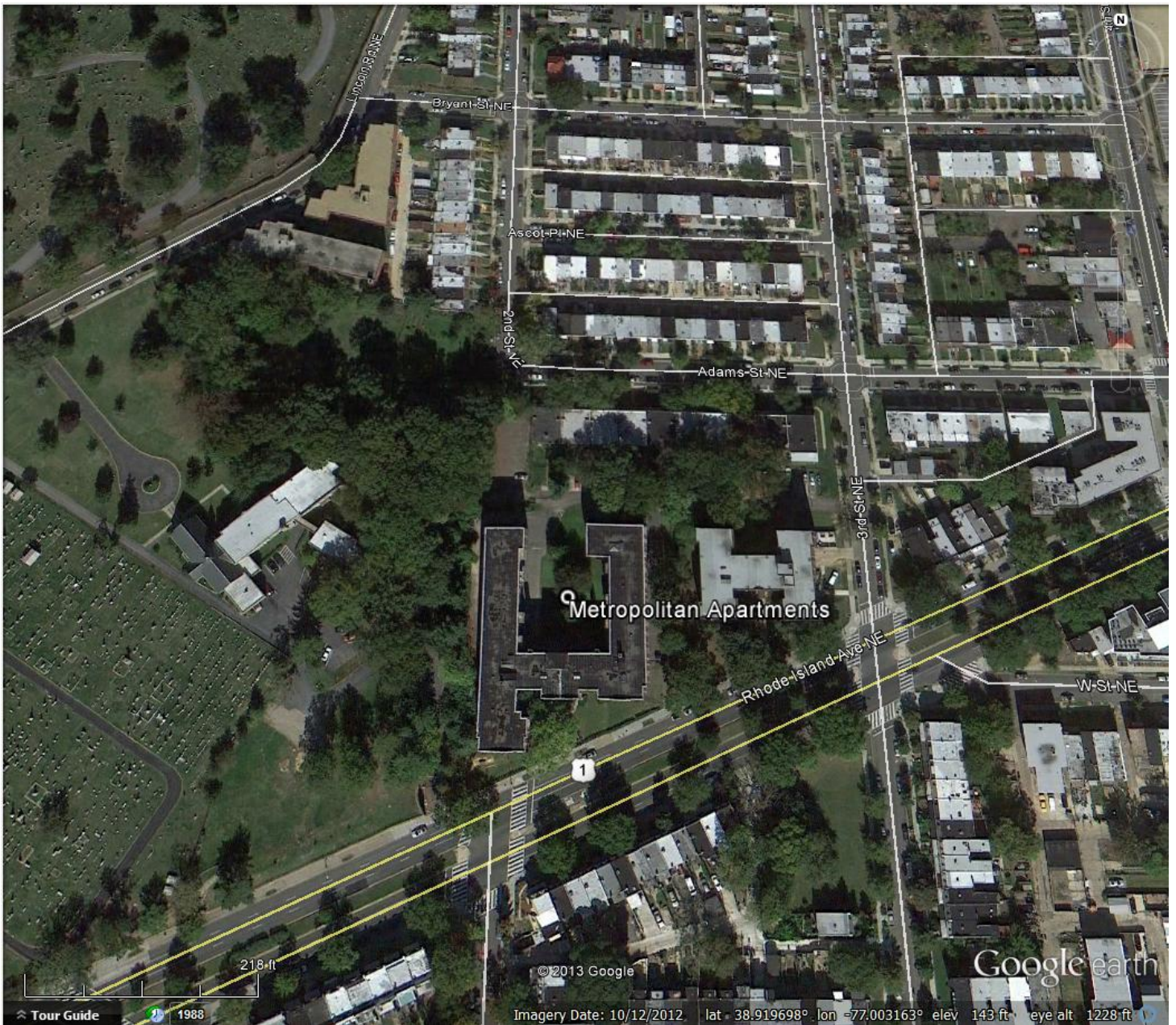
Name of Property: The Metropolitan Apartments
City or Vicinity: Washington, D.C.
County: Washington **State:** District of Columbia
Photographer: History Matters, LLC
Date Photographed: March 2012
Description of Photograph and Number: Example of a kitchen that retains original cabinets.
12 of 12

Paperwork Reduction Act 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.460 et seq.).

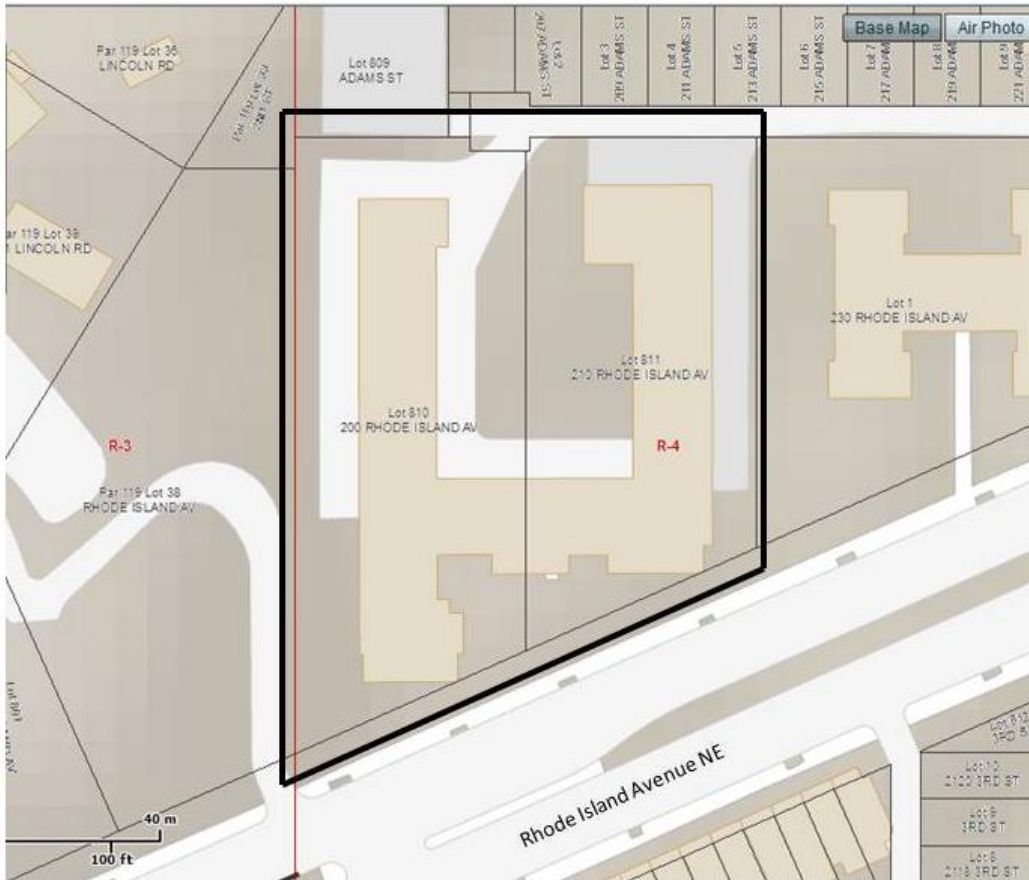
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



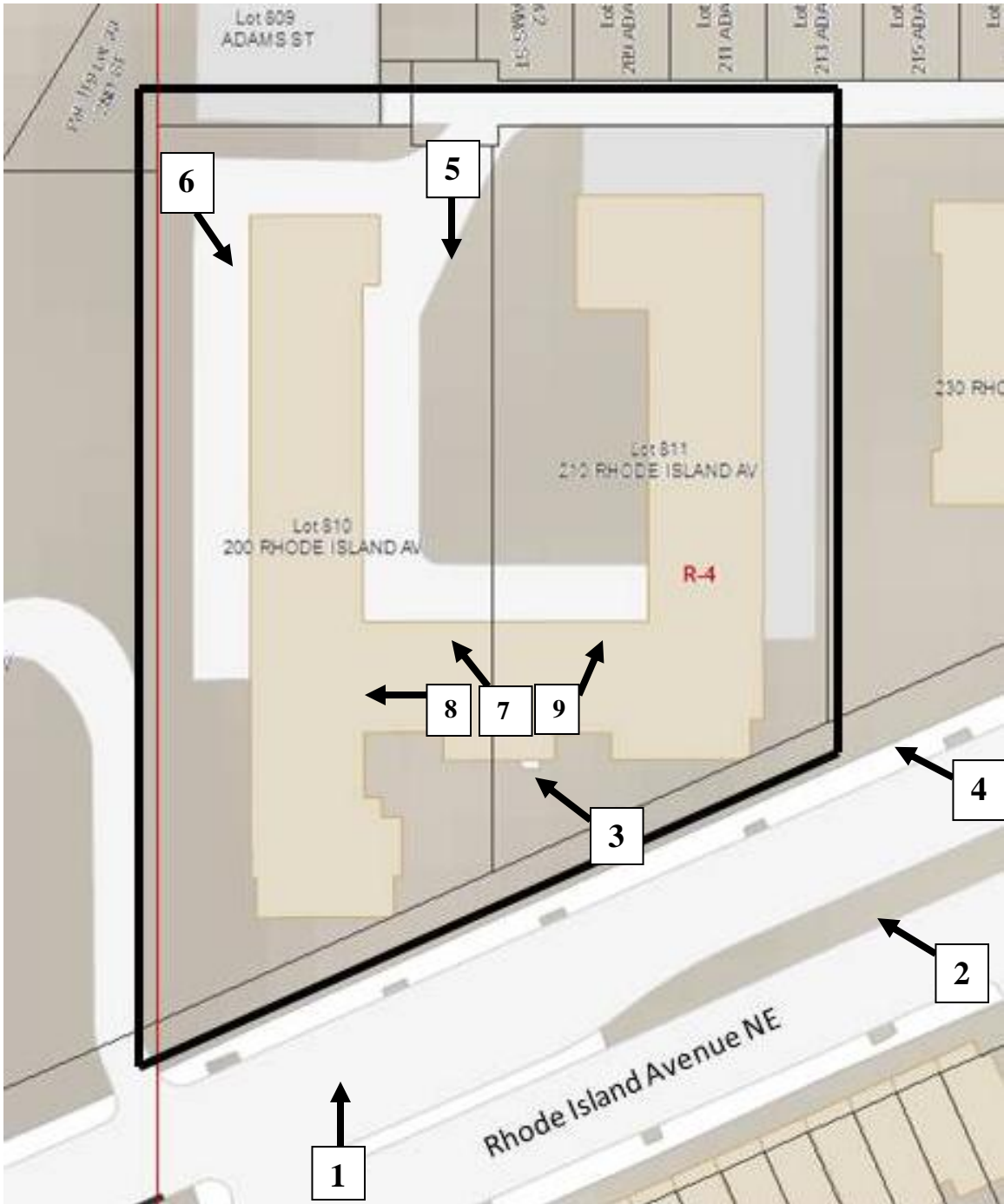
Context Map: Metropolitan Apartments
200-210 Rhode Island Avenue, NE
Washington, DC



Location Map: Metropolitan Apartments
200-210 Rhode Island Avenue, NE
Washington, D.C.



Sketch Map: Metropolitan Apartments, 200-210 Rhode Island Avenue, NE,
Washington, DC
Square 3560, Lots 810 and 811



Photographic Key

**Metropolitan Apartments, 200-210 Rhode Island Avenue, NE, Washington, DC
Square 3560, Lots 810 and 811**

**Note: Photos 10-12 are interior photos taken on three floors other than the main floor
and so are not indicated.**



W 10th St

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◀ 102-117
110-130 ▶





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Metropolitan Apartments

MULTIPLE NAME: Apartment Buildings in Washington, DC, MPS

STATE & COUNTY: DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, District of Columbia

DATE RECEIVED: 3/24/14 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/17/14
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 5/02/14 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/10/14
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14000199

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 5.12.14 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER



MEMORANDUM

TO: Patrick Andrus, National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Kim Williams, D.C. Historic Preservation Office *KW*

DATE: March 21, 2014

RE: Metropolitan Apartments NR Electronic Submission
Spingarn Senior High School Paper Submission

I am pleased to submit the following nominations for consideration for listing in the National Register of Historic Places:

Metropolitan Apartments

- The enclosed disk, Disk 1 of 2 contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the Metropolitan Apartments to the National Register of Historic Places
- The enclosed Disk 2 of 2 contains digital photographs of the Metropolitan Apartments
- Original Cover Sheet signed by David Maloney, D.C. Historic Preservation Officer

Spingarn Senior High School

- Paper nomination
- Print photographs
- Disk containing digital photographs of Spingarn Senior High School