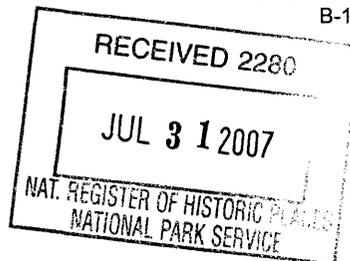


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



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 Highfield House
other names B-1382

2. Location

street & number 4000 North Charles Street not for publication
city or town Baltimore vicinity
state Maryland code MD county Baltimore City code 510 zip code 21218

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] 7-30-07
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

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 Patrick Andrews Date of Action 9/12/2007

Highfield House

Name of Property

Baltimore City, Maryland

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B-1382

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	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	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

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Multiple Dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Multiple Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Concrete, glass

roof Other: tar

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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Area of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Architecture
Landscape Architecture
Community Planning

Period of Significance

1962-1964

Significant Dates

1962 - design starts; 1963 - groundbreaking;
1964 - construction complete and building opens

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (architect)
Metropolitan Structures, Inc. (builder)

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: University of Maryland College Park, School of Architecture, Planning & Preservation

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.25 acres Baltimore East quad

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

UTM grid with Zone, Easting, and Northing columns for rows 1, 2, 3, and 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

Stephanie Ryberg, Graduate Program in Historic Preservation, edited by Anne E. Bruder, 7-2006
Dr. Isabelle Gournay, School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, University of Maryland
name/title Dr. Mary Corbin Sies, Department of American Studies, University of Maryland
Organization Preservation date 1-31-05
street & number School of Architecture, University of Maryland telephone 301.405.6284
city or town College Park state Maryland zip code 20742

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 owners, Highfield House Condominium, c/o President of Board and Property Manager
street & number 4000 North Charles Street telephone 410-889-4000
city or town Baltimore state MD zip code 21218

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.

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Continuation of Additional Documentation:

See attached list of individual owners from State Department of Assessments and Taxation.

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Description Summary:

The Highfield House is an outstanding example of International Style architecture totaling 265,800 square feet in fifteen stories. The building is a free-standing high rise slab set on a platform and the main façade faces east. Although the structure has a commanding presence, the siting and design also create a suburban-feeling environment for the residents. Architect Mies van der Rohe applied a unique structural solution by allowing the skin of the building to become an infill between the visible columns and floor beams. The building adopts a very simple outline design: a rectangular eleven bay by three bay block. The east (front) and west facades are the long (eleven bays) side of this rectangle, while the north and south facades are its short sides (three bays). Although Mies applied the principles of high-rise “skin and bone” design he was known for to the Highfield House, he also made minor departures from previous designs to integrate the structure better with its surroundings. Communal and private spaces are clearly and successfully defined. Mies utilized the existing site conditions, including the topography, to create sheltered courtyard-style recreation spaces for the residents and so that the parking garage could be concealed from Charles Street.

General Description:

Landscape and Setting

The Highfield House is located on North Charles Street, in the highest density residential area of Baltimore City. The property is surrounded on the east and west by large and well-landscaped single-family dwellings and large rowhouses, while on the north and south by two high-rise buildings. From Charles Street the entire site has a fifteen-foot slope to the rear property line. Highfield House is set back 80 feet from Charles Street, allowing for a large, well-landscaped front lawn and central planter surrounded by the driveway. Overall, the outdoor features of the Highfield House property provide a park-like setting for the building.

To the rear of the structure (west of the building) is a large terrace that overlooks a sunken swimming pool. When viewed in plan, the rear plaza and pool area is a Miesian formal garden.¹ The extension of the ground-level plaza space to the rear of the structure provides continuity to the design of the site and connects the platform of the building with nature. The ground floor terrace is walled in and encloses lawn areas and an open court on three sides. This plaza measures 80' by 100' and includes large planting beds and free-standing walls. In addition, it has a warm, buff color paving and benches that provides seating areas.² Both the plaza and the pool deck are constructed of exposed aggregate concrete.

The swimming pool is round with a forty-foot diameter and doubles as an illuminated fountain. The courtyard at the basement level, surrounding the swimming pool, is planted with trees and receives light and air from the

¹ John Dorsey and James D. Dilts, *A Guide to Baltimore Architecture* (Centreville, Maryland: Tidewater Publishers, 1977): 326-327.

² “Apartments,” *Architectural Record* 139 (January 1966): 155-172.

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large well above. The sunken area with the pool is surrounded on three sides with parking and on the fourth side by the interior recreation room. Brick walls hide the parking from the plaza and pool.³

Detailed Description

The Highfield House apartment building is a rectangular block composed of three bays by eleven bays, each measuring 23'6"x 23'6" or 23'6"x 18'4". The fifteen-story building has a frame of reinforced concrete, with a floor-to-floor height of 8' 9½", composed of forty-eight structural supports.⁴

Facades

East and West (front and rear) Facades

Facing Charles Street, the east, or front, façade is fifteen stories in height, with thirteen identical upper level residential floors and a two-story lobby/plaza area at the base. There are eleven bays across the front façade. Each bay is marked with a column that protrudes beyond the glass curtain wall, which Mies designed to demonstrate the plasticity of the concrete.⁵ These step back in width as they rise up the façade of the structure towards the roof.⁶ With columns on both corners of the façade, and separating all eleven bays, a total of twelve columns are visible on the eastern façade. The principal materials on the façade are the buff colored brick spandrels underneath each window, the white reinforced concrete piers and the dark gray tinted glass of the curtain walls set in anodized aluminum frames. The use of the brick panels, combined with the horizontality of the windows, were Mies' concession to better fit the building in with its surroundings. The windows lining the residential floors are made of a gray glass and are recessed behind the vertical supports. Each window has three lights: a single light that is 10'5" wide and 4'2" high and two rectangular hopper windows below the single pane. The hopper windows are all of identical size, although only one of each pair can be opened. The windows are encased in anodized aluminum frames. The gray tinting of the windows was intended to reduce the glare and heat entering interiors. It also neutralizes the color of individual tenants' curtains and other window treatments to provide a uniform appearance from the exterior.⁷ All of the windows are placed above brick spandrels.

The glass enclosed lobby is two-stories in height, three bays wide and recessed from the main pile above it. These exterior walls are comprised of the same gray tinted glass, encased in black anodized aluminum as the upper-level residential floors. The structural columns intrude into the lobby space, creating continuous lines of columns. Because they represent truth about the structural nature of the building, these columns are not enclosed or hidden in any manner. The three-part entryway is a revolving door and two side glass doors, also

³ Donald Canty, "Mies in Baltimore: Slender Frame of Concrete," *Architectural Forum* 123, no. 5 (December 1965): 36-39.

⁴ *Mies van der Rohe* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1970), 126.

⁵ Phyllis Lambert. *Mies in America*, "Space and Structure." (Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal, 2001): 354.

⁶ Franz Schulze and George Danforth. *Mies van der Rohe Archive: Part II*. Museum of Modern Art, New York: 199, no page.

⁷ "Fact Sheet: Highfield House." Enoch Pratt Free Library, Maryland Department, 27 October 1964, no page.

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composed of the same glass and anodized aluminum frames.

The west, or rear, façade of the structure is identical to the front façade. It is again composed of eleven bays, separated by the same white, concrete piers with the stepped-back columns extending to the top of the facade.

North and South Facades

The north façade is the narrow side of the rectangular block, comprised of only three bays. As on the east façade, four white, concrete piers extend above the lobby to become stepped back columns that separate the bays. In addition, the north façade is of identical height and composition as the front elevation. There are double doors in the center of the façade for egress into the south lobby.

The south façade is identical to the north elevation, with three bays.

Interior Spaces

Ground Floor

The ground floor of the Highfield House is composed of a large paved plaza. Only one-third of the ground level is enclosed; the rest is open with evenly spaced columns and two symmetrical brick stair enclosures to either side of the enclosed lobby.⁸ The columns raise the building twenty feet (two-stories) above the base platform. The enclosed lobby is recessed and centered under the main block of the structure, with equal amounts of covered terrace to both the north and the south. The lobby floor is terrazzo made up of an aggregate similar to the exterior plaza. The lobby space includes the passenger elevators, lounges and reception areas for the residents. The walls surrounding the elevator core, secretarial desk, manager's office and mail room are clad in marble.

In addition, the lobby houses a mailroom and management offices behind the elevator space (to the rear of the lobby area).⁹ The elevators serve all of the residential floors as well as the lower-level. There is also a separate service elevator that is large enough to carry furniture and other oversize items to the residential spaces.¹⁰ Due to the openness of the ground floor, residents have views of the entire property from the lobby.

Residential Floors

The Highfield House is composed of thirteen residential floors and 165 individual apartments. Floors 3-10 have a studio or efficiency apartment added on the west side of the building for a total of thirteen apartments on each floor. Floors 11-16 have twelve apartments on each floor. On each floor, the units in the northeast "stack" have

⁸ John Dorsey and James D. Dilts, *A Guide to Baltimore Architecture* (Centreville, Maryland: Tidewater Publishers, 1977), 326-327.

⁹ "Apartments," *Architectural Record* 139 (January 1966): 155-172.

¹⁰ "Fact Sheet: Highfield House." Enoch Pratt Free Library, Maryland Department, 27 October 1964, n.p.

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three-bedrooms, while the northwest, southwest and southeast “stacks” are each two-bedroom apartments. The other apartments on each floor are two-bedrooms or one-bedroom and den, while four apartments are one-bedroom, and there are eight studio units. Each floor of the building is symmetrical with the elevator core centrally located on each floor. The building is constructed with a double loaded organization (although the apartments are single loaded); with a well-organized service area along the corridor that includes the communal elevator core, fire stairs, trash chutes, and the individual kitchens and bathrooms.¹¹ Living spaces are placed on the exterior areas of the units along the building facades. Five-inch thick masonry walls separate the units from each other. The public corridors run north-to-south through the center of each floor. These corridors are outfitted with wall-to-wall carpeting and wooden paneling with lights above the paneling. Along the public corridors, each entryway to the individual units contains recessed double wooden entrance doors. The studio apartments have a single wooden entrance door. These entrances have overhead, recessed lighting fixtures, designed to illuminate each individual entrance.¹²

Individual Units

The units within Highfield House include studio efficiencies, one-, two-, and three-bedrooms. The apartments are oriented to take maximum advantage of outside views. Concrete walls with a skim coat of plaster are used throughout the interior of the units to provide for internal noise control. Each apartment, except for the efficiencies, includes a separate dining room and an abundance of closet/storage space. The dining rooms are located between the kitchens and the living rooms in a flowing L-shaped layout. The living rooms differ in size, some as large as 23' by 17', and these are oriented with the kitchen wall. For the two and three bedroom units, this means that the living room is parallel to the exterior wall, while in the one bedroom units, the living room is perpendicular to the exterior wall. Depending on the unit, other rooms also vary in size: master bedrooms are as large as 19' by 12', and dining rooms are up to 12½' by 11'. The living room and dining room form a large open space that is characteristic of the Modern style. Some one-bedroom units included dens adjacent to the living rooms. The two- and three-bedroom apartments have two full baths, whereas all other units have just one bath.¹³ Each unit has wall-to-wall curtain wall windows. These windows allow for both outstanding views as well as an integration of the apartments with the surrounding community and natural landscape setting. Each room in an apartment along the east and west façades has operable windows outfitted with screens. The windows on the north and south sides do not open and the brick spandrels fill the area where the hopper windows are located. Although the windows are tinted gray, the perception of color from the interior, when looking out, is not affected.

The kitchens are galley style, with teakwood-patterned formica cabinets and aluminum drawer pulls. The integral butcher block chopping block and the pull-down countertop bar are also characteristic of the 1960s

¹¹ Carter, Peter, *Mies van der Rohe at Work* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1974), 44.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

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Miesien kitchen. The original kitchens included dishwashers and double ovens, which were replaced with a microwave and a conventional range in the 1980 condominium conversion.

The floors in each apartment were covered with parquet wood blocks. As a result of some poor maintenance, some apartments were flooded and the floors were damaged. Some residents chose to continue using the parquet flooring while others have changed to other flooring materials, including the bare concrete and wall-to-wall carpeting.

The bathrooms are clad in beige tile on the floors and lower walls and the shower surround. There are also marble surrounding the bathroom vanity.

Basement

The Highfield House's site has a fifteen-foot slope that allows for lower-level space (sunken below street level) that is open to the rear of the structure. The lower-level space includes a parking garage and a glass-walled recreation room, called the Guilford Room.¹⁴ The Guilford Room is adjacent to the outdoor pool and includes a complete kitchen and wood-burning fireplace. This room is separated from the pool with a broad wall of glass sliding doors that can be opened to the outdoors in good weather. The glass doors of the recreation room are encased with anodized aluminum framing.¹⁵

Other service spaces in the basement include four bathrooms with showers, a staff lounge, a laundry room, tenant storage areas, and the maintenance office.

¹⁴ Roberto De Los Rios. "Highfield House Apartment Building" (Student paper, University of Maryland College Park, 2002), n.p.

¹⁵ "Apartments," *Architectural Record* 139 (January 1966): 155-172.

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Summary Statement of Significance:

The Highfield House apartment building was designed by Architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and was constructed by the Chicago-based development company, Metropolitan Structures, Inc. between 1962 and 1964. The property meets National Register Criterion A for its association with the residential development of Baltimore in the early 1960s. It is a significant product of a longstanding collaboration between the architect and Herbert Realty and Metropolitan Structures, Inc. Mies' association with the development company began in 1948. It allowed him to fully explore the design possibilities of tall buildings, both commercial and residential, while the real estate developers undertook the risks associated with obtaining funding for land acquisitions and property development. This pattern of speculative development characterizes the twentieth century housing market in the United States. Highfield House provided Modern residential space within Baltimore at a time when many city dwellers were moving to new suburban developments beyond the city limits. The design of the space illustrates how Mies integrated the structure into the surrounding community and at the same time provided amenities that emphasized the suburban qualities, such as the garage and the swimming pool, which the contemporary residential market desired. The continued residential use of the building demonstrates the importance of high-rise, large-scale apartment design for the city. Highfield House was constructed as an ideal metropolitan, upper middle class environment that was cosmopolitan, refined, sophisticated, and uncluttered.

Highfield House is also eligible under Criterion C as an outstanding example of International Style residential architecture in Baltimore City and as the work of a master. Highfield House is one of only two buildings in Baltimore (and Maryland) designed by Mies, one of the masters of Modern Architecture, and his only residential building in the State.

Highfield House achieves exceptional significance (Criterion Consideration G) as one of only two buildings in Maryland designed by master architect Mies van der Rohe in association with Metropolitan Structures, Inc. Mies' design innovations symbolized a new urban residential lifestyle in early-1960s Baltimore, and the building's construction was supported by the Mayor and the Greater Baltimore Committee. The building's period of significance begins in 1962 when its development began and ends in 1964, when construction was completed.

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Resource History and Historic Context:

The Highfield House apartment building is located between the neighborhoods of Guilford and Tuscany-Canterbury along North Charles Street in Baltimore. The development of Highfield House reflected the success of these neighborhoods in attracting and retaining residents when many others were buying houses in new suburban developments outside the city limits.

Baltimore's Charles Street

Charles Street is Baltimore's primary north-south artery, as well as its longest street. Many of Baltimore's architecturally significant structures stand on or near Charles Street, including the Baltimore Museum of Art, University Baptist Church, and Scottish Rite Temple by John Russell Pope; the Church of the Redeemer by Pietro Belluschi; and the Highfield House.¹⁶ The street originates downtown at the Charles Center, one of Baltimore's most prominent urban renewal projects, the centerpiece of which is One Charles Center, designed by Mies Van der Rohe and built in 1962. *A Guide to Baltimore Architecture* describes Charles Street as the "ceremonial residential and institutional avenue; it displayed, in chronological order, the variety of styles that were popular as it developed."¹⁷

The Guilford and Tuscany-Canterbury Neighborhoods

In 1903 University Parkway was constructed to improve the connection between downtown and Roland Park.¹⁸ A major development boom began after the Johns Hopkins University moved from downtown Baltimore to its new Homewood Campus in 1904 on the south side of University Parkway. Combined, these two factors greatly contributed to the physical growth of Baltimore and an increasing architectural diversity within the city.

Prior to World War I, the demand for housing in this new development corridor began to grow. The Roland Park Company proceeded to develop land on either side of University Parkway north of 40th Street. In 1912, the Roland Park Company began construction of the Guilford and Homeland single-family residential neighborhoods on the east side of Charles Street. They departed from the standard architectural designs of rowhouses in Baltimore. The Guilford development included Queen Anne, Neo-Georgian, Arts and Crafts, and Art Deco style single family dwellings on large lots. As the housing boom continued the real estate developers began to look for methods of gaining higher profits. As a result, high-rise apartment buildings began to appear. In the years between the two world wars, the area along East and West University Parkway and Charles Street

¹⁶ John Dorsey and James D. Dilts, *A Guide to Baltimore Architecture* (Centreville, Maryland: Tidewater Publishers, 1977), 306-307.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Roberto De Los Rios. "Highfield House Apartment Building" (Student paper, University of Maryland College Park, 2002), n.p.

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began to change from large estates to upscale high rise apartment buildings such as 100 West University Parkway (1926), The Warrington (1927), The Ambassador (1929), and The Northway (1932).¹⁹ The single family residential development continued in Guilford. In Tuscany-Canterbury, the development included large rowhouses and garden apartments.

The Tuscany-Canterbury neighborhood lies between North Charles, West University, Linkwood and Warrenton roads west of Charles Street. Development of the neighborhood began in earnest after World War I with the construction of two blocks of large, red brick, row houses between 39th Street and Highfield Road along Canterbury and Cloverhill roads. Originally known as University Homes, the realtor and builder, George Morris constructed these speculative houses, which may have been designed by E. H. Glidden, Sr.²⁰ Thomas Mullan, Sr. was another builder involved in the residential developments. He constructed many buildings, including the Ridgemeade Apartments and the rowhouses on Tuscany Court. Because Tuscany-Canterbury was the most densely populated neighborhood in the city, Eileen Higham has observed that Morris and other developers constructed houses and apartment buildings that made “maximum use and profit of limited space.”²¹

After World War II, six more apartment buildings were constructed along University Parkway and Charles Street, including the Highfield House. During this period, because of the expense large mansions were not being constructed on Charles Street. Some houses, such as H. S. Dulaney’s house, Everbright, were demolished to make room for high-rise apartment complexes, including Highfield House. The Highfield House was constructed directly across from Guilford, at the time Baltimore’s most expensive suburban neighborhood. The area surrounding the Highfield House was soon transformed into the area of the city with the highest residential density (this still holds true today).²²

The Roland Park Company, George Morris and Thomas Mullan are variously described as builders, realtors, or developers, depending on their self-described titles. But the roles were the same – each company or individual was in business to purchase land, arrange for successful residential designs by an architect and oversee construction and sales. While it was speculative in nature, these men successfully provided housing for the Baltimore’s growing upper middle class. Moreover, they paved the way for national developers to come to Baltimore in the mid-twentieth century.

¹⁹ Ibid; see also Eileen Higham, *Tuscany-Canterbury, A Baltimore Neighborhood* (Baltimore, Maryland: Maryland Historical Society, 2004), 21, 51 and 56.

²⁰ Higham, 32.

²¹ Ibid, 34 and 41.

²² John Dorsey and James D. Dilts, *A Guide to Baltimore Architecture* (Centreville, Maryland: Tidewater Publishers, 1977), 38-39.

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Relation to Other Properties of its Type in the Region

By the late 1960s the area north of East and West University Parkway along North Charles Street was commonly referred to as the “Golden Triangle” due to the number of high-end residential properties (both high rise and single-family) in the area. The main single-family development, Guilford, was rated as one of the “highest class suburbs in the country.”²³

The area had grown, though, to be better known for its outstanding collection of high-rise apartment buildings. It contained eleven upper-income apartment buildings by the end of the 1960s. A 1967 newspaper article described the Golden Triangle as “one of the finest [areas] in the country for high rise apartment living.”²⁴ The complexes included 100 University West, the Warrington, the Ambassador, the Northway, the Broadview, the Marylander, the Carrollton, University One, the Cambridge, Highfield House and Hopkins House (in order of their construction). The price of land in the Guilford and Tuscany-Canterbury areas was extremely expensive. The mansions that had been constructed along Charles Street and University Parkway during the late nineteenth century had become too expensive to operate as single family dwellings.²⁵ In addition to the mansions, other buildings included barns and outbuildings supporting the small estates. When realtor George Morris purchased the land for residential development on Cloverhill and Canterbury roads, he had obtained it from the rear of the properties facing North Charles Street.²⁶ The reduced size of the lots and the expense of maintaining large buildings limited the economic use of the properties. The lots facing North Charles Street could not be subdivided to create houses on large lots like Guilford or the row houses on smaller lots like University Homes. In order to develop the high-rise properties, the existing mansions were demolished. Because apartment buildings could have a relatively narrow footprint but a large number of residents, the developers began to construct them, starting with 100 University West in 1926. Three other buildings including the Warrington at 3908 North Charles Street were built between 1927 and 1932.

After a hiatus during the Depression and World War II, apartment building construction resumed in 1950. The Broadview, by John K. Ruff, was constructed in 1950 at the corner of West University Parkway and West 39th Street. It originally had a commercial laundry and a beauty salon in the ground floor of the 14 story building. The Marylander, from 1954, on St. Paul Street contained 504 apartments, with rents ranging from \$54 for an efficiency unit to \$160 for a two-bedroom unit. The designer of this structure was Hal A. Miller, a local architect. The Marylander took up the entire block bounded by St. Paul Street, East University Parkway, Calvert Street, and 34th Street. Its one amenity was an underground garage. It did not have central air conditioning. The Carrollton at 3601 Greenway (the corner of Greenway and University Parkway) was

²³ “High Rise Apartment Houses Stand Out in View of Baltimore’s Golden Triangle,” *Baltimore News American*, 1967.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Evergreen, the house built for Steven Broadbent in 1857, is one of the few remaining examples of the estates that stood on Charles Street.

²⁶ Higham, 36.

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constructed in 1955 in brick and limestone using Joseph H. Foutz' design for the builder Thomas Mullan. The building is set back 150 feet from Greenway and contains 102 1- and 2-bedroom apartments and an underground parking garage. These three buildings illustrate how developers made use of the former estate lots. In order to be economically feasible, the Broadview and the Marylander took up almost their entire lots, and have very little green space surrounding them. On the other hand, the Carrollton had fewer apartments and a smaller footprint in order to provide a large lawn area to separate it from the street. However, at the street level, the building included commercial spaces for a beauty shop and two doctors' offices.²⁷

The development boom continued throughout the 1960s. The University One on 1 East University Parkway was built in 1961. Joseph Foutz may have been the architect because elements of the property resemble two other buildings he designed nearby, namely the Carrollton and the Cambridge at 3900 North Charles Street. The building's 15 stories included an underground garage, a rooftop pool and deck and commercial spaces for a beauty salon, and offices for an accountant and doctors. The Cambridge Apartments followed in 1963. It is another design by Foutz in association with Thomas Mullan with a large front lawn and an underground garage covered by a landscaped garden. The first floor offered commercial spaces for physical therapists, dentists, a beauty salon and a florist. Finally, the Wheeler Hopkins building was constructed between 1965 and 1968 at 110 West 39th Street. This building had 272 units on 17 floors, and cost \$6,500,000 to construct.²⁸ It, too, entirely fills its building lot.

Of the eleven apartment buildings constructed along East and West University Parkway and North Charles Street, only the Warrington and Highfield House were solely residential. All of the others had limited commercial spaces such as grocery stores or restaurants in addition to the establishments previously mentioned. The three most important features of all of the buildings used to attract residents were air conditioning, garages and pools. These items were most frequently advertised and used by the developers to compete with the suburban developments outside the city.

Background Information on Events and Development of the Property

The groundbreaking for the Highfield House took place on October 15, 1963 and the building opened for occupancy in the Fall of 1964. The developer and builder for the project was Metropolitan Structures, Inc., a Chicago-based firm that is also responsible for the development of One Charles Center, the first building in Baltimore designed by Mies. Consentini Associates was the consulting engineer, while Farkas and Barron was the structural engineer. The general contractor for the project was Metropolitan Buildings, Inc., a subsidiary of Metropolitan Structures.²⁹ The groundbreaking ceremony was attended by then Mayor of Baltimore Theodore R. McKeldin; Bernard Weissbourd, President of Metropolitan Structures; and William Boucher III, the

²⁷ *Baltimore City Directory*, (Baltimore, MD: Polk Publishing Company, 1964)

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Donald Canty, "Mies in Baltimore: Slender Frame of Concrete," *Architectural Forum* 123, no. 5 (December 1965): 36-39.

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Executive Director of the Greater Baltimore Committee.³⁰ The *Baltimore Evening Sun* covered the groundbreaking and an illustration of the building accompanied the story. The rendering showed a building similar in design to One Charles Center with floor-to-ceiling curtain walls and muntins attached to the facade between each window. A fountain in front of the building filled in the center of the horseshoe shaped driveway.³¹ Although Highfield House is not directly related to Baltimore's urban renewal efforts, construction of One Charles Center brought the city to the developer's attention as a site for one of Mies' tall residential buildings.

The plan for the Highfield House provided for 15 stories, 13 residential floors, and a two-story lobby/plaza space, set back 80 feet from North Charles Street. The property is surrounded on the east and west by large, upper-income, well-landscaped single-family properties. To the north and south it faces two high-rise apartment buildings. The rents for the spacious apartments were: \$137 for a studio, \$187 for a one-bedroom, \$310 for a two-bedroom, and \$485 for a three-bedroom unit. In comparison to other nearby buildings, the Highfield House was an expensive apartment building in which to live. In contrast, a two-bedroom unit at the 1954 Marylander building rented for a mere \$160. However the Highfield House has larger apartments and offered more residential amenities. The building totaled 265,800 square feet and cost nearly \$4,100,000 to complete (including fees and financing charges).³² The original scheme (shown in a drawing dated June 1963) included lawn areas that were intended for use as recreation space such as badminton, croquet, and lawn bowling. Although lawn areas are present in 2006, portions of this plan were abandoned by November of 1963, just after construction began. The final project included a common area that provided a swimming pool with a fountain, indoor recreation room, outdoor plaza, and the garage.³³ These features were comparable to those in more suburban developments. An undated presentation drawing owned by Highfield House shows the final scheme, including a change to the stepped back columns that matched the exterior columns supporting the building.

Transformation of the Property from Apartment Housing to Condominiums

In 1971, a new partnership, Metropolitan 4000, Ltd., purchased the Highfield House from its original developer, Metropolitan Structures, Inc. This ended the formal relationship between Mies, Metropolitan Structures, Inc. and Highfield House. Metropolitan 4000, Ltd. involved three owners, Ralph Lubow, Elinor Lubow, and Pacy Oletsky. Due to increasing costs of both fuel and maintenance, the owners decided in 1979 to convert the apartment building to a condominium complex. The conversion of Highfield House to owner-occupied

³⁰ "Ground Broken for Second Van Der Rohe Project Here," *Baltimore*, November 1963, 47.

³¹ *Baltimore Evening Sun*, "Apartment Job Underway," October 15, 1963, [n.p.], VF: Apartments: Highfield House, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Maryland Department.

³² Donald Canty, "Mies in Baltimore: Slender Frame of Concrete," *Architectural Forum* 123, no. 5 (December 1965): 36-39.

³³ Franz Schulze and George Danforth. *Mies van der Rohe Archive: Part II*. Museum of Modern Art, New York: 199, no page.

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condominiums was the third transformation of a major apartment building in the “Golden Triangle” within one year.³⁴

In June of 1979, the owners of the property served notice to the current renters of the decision to convert to condominiums.³⁵ In preparation for the conversion, the owners completed minor repairs and renovations to the building including a renovation of the swimming pool area, a “facelift” of the indoor recreation room, new carpeting in the hallways, and repairs to the air conditioning for the public areas. The first transfer took place in January 1980 and included 88 units. An additional 40 units were converted a month later. One-bedroom condominium units ranged from \$45,000 to \$55,000, while two-bedroom units ranged from \$60,000 to \$80,000. The condominium association would thenceforth manage parking spaces, upkeep of the garage, and other common areas. A fee of \$35 per month was charged for the rental of parking spaces.³⁶

Biographical Information on Persons Associated with the Property

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe is regarded as the architect who set the standard for twentieth century modern architecture. Along with Frank Lloyd Wright and LeCorbusier, Mies is among the twentieth century’s best known architects. Mies was born in Aachen, Germany in 1886 and attended the Cathedral School there from 1897-1900.³⁷ He worked in his family’s stone-carving business prior to joining the office of architect and furniture designer Bruno Paul in Berlin. Mies left Paul’s office in 1907 to work on his first independent commission, a residential design for Herr Riehl.³⁸ In 1908, Mies entered the office of Peter Behrens, where he remained until 1912. Mies worked as the editor of the magazine *G* starting in 1923. In addition, he was the artistic director of the Werkbund-sponsored Weissenhof project in Stuttgart, Germany throughout the 1920s and 1930s and was the director of the Bauhaus from 1930 to 1933. Previous directors of the Bauhaus were Walter Gropius from 1919 to 1928 and Hannes Meyer from 1929-1930. Mies’ 1929 German Pavilion at the International Exposition in Barcelona is one of the masterpieces of International Style architecture. Mies experimented with high-rise construction as early as 1922 with his Skyscraper Project for an unidentified site.³⁹

In 1937, Mies moved to the United States and settled in Chicago. Mies was attracted to Chicago as a city that was, and had always historically been, open to new and innovative architectural designs. He felt that eastern

³⁴ “Condominiums set for Highfield House,” *Baltimore Sun*, 1 July 1979.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ “Highfield House: 88 units at modernistic 16-story highrise turned over to the owners,” *Baltimore News American*, 12 January 1980.

³⁷ Speyer, A. James, *Mies van der Rohe* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1968), 119.

³⁸ *Mies van der Rohe*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 9.

³⁹ Roberto De Los Rios. “Highfield House Apartment Building” (Student paper, University of Maryland College Park, 2002), n.p.

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cities were still tied to the Beaux-Arts tradition. In addition, the proximity of numerous steel mills near Chicago provided readily available materials for his innovative designs. In Chicago, he took over the architecture program at the Armour Institute (now the Illinois Institute of Technology) in 1938. Over the next twenty years, Mies devoted his efforts to designing the campus plan and buildings for the Armour Institute campus. In addition to the Illinois Institute of Technology campus, Mies designed the 860-880 Lake Shore Drive Apartments (1951) in Chicago and the Farnsworth House (1950) in Plano, Illinois. However, his first apartment building was the 21-story concrete slab example, the Promontory Apartments in Chicago which he designed in 1948. It was also the first building he designed for Herbert Greenwald of Herbert Realty, the Chicago development company, which would be succeeded by Metropolitan Structures, Inc. Mies retired from academia in 1958 and began practicing architecture full time. During this period he designed a number of office and apartment buildings in Toronto, Chicago, and New Jersey.⁴⁰ The One Charles Center office building and the Highfield House, also designed after 1958, are the only buildings by Mies van der Rohe in Maryland.

Mies van der Rohe made a significant contribution to the development of International Style architecture throughout the United States. He practiced in America for over thirty years, designing a variety of office, institutional, and residential structures. During these thirty years of practice in America, Mies transformed his own architecture and eventually changed the landscape of the continent. He was a member of the Order Pour La Merite in 1957 and won the Gold Medal of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1959, the Gold Medal of the American Institute of Architects in 1960, and the Gold Medal Institute of German Architects BDA in 1966.⁴¹ In 1963, Mies was the first architect to receive the presidential Medal of Freedom from President Lyndon Baines Johnson.⁴² Mies van der Rohe died in Chicago, Illinois in 1969.

Overview of Mies van der Rohe's Architectural Style

Mies' famous motto "less is more" is emblematic of his belief in material honesty and structural integrity. His architecture is widely known for its monumentality and "skin and bone" style. His ultimate vision for this architecture was achieved during the last twenty years of his life. Mies demonstrated a high level of minimalism in his glass and steel facades. These glass and metal compositions were the architectural style that became typical for post World War II multi-national corporate office buildings. Mies' later works provide a fitting denouement to a life dedicated to the idea of a universal, simplified architecture. He thought of construction itself as being the truest guardian of the spirit of the times.

⁴⁰ U.S. Department of the Interior. National Park Service. *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: One Charles Center* (May 2000), by Betty Bird. Washington, D.C., 2000.

⁴¹ Speyer, A. James, *Mies van der Rohe* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1968), 119.

⁴² "Apartment Job Under Way," *Baltimore Evening Sun*, 15 October 1963. Although Mies was recognized by President John F. Kennedy, the President was assassinated before the awards were presented in December 1963. (Information taken from www.jfklibrary.org 6/30/06.)

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Much of Mies' approach to architecture is based on advanced structural techniques and influenced by Prussian Classicism. Mies' work can be divided into two major periods: (1) the inter-war period of the mid-1920s and 1930s, where he worked in Europe; and (2) the post-war period in the 1940s and going through the late 1960s. Many scholars believe that the first period was his most fertile in terms of projects. All of Mies' American work falls into the second period, and includes the time that he developed theories about materials and construction. It was during this period that Mies was able to play a definitive role in the creation of a modern urban form. Mies believed that one building element should relate to another through an organic progression ranging from the smallest to the largest.⁴³ This theory was best demonstrated in his designs for high-rise structures, including Highfield House.

For high-rise apartment building designs, Mies generally used a 21' square bay and a floor to ceiling height of 8' to satisfy the program requirements within the efficiencies of both planning and economy. In order to maximize the use of the rectangular form of his high-rise apartment buildings, Mies planned the residential floors with a central access corridor that was surrounded by a compact ring of service-related spaces including elevators, fire stairs, service shafts, and apartments' kitchens, closets, and bathrooms. This allowed for the living spaces to be unimpeded and to have full exposure to the windows and daylight. Ground floor spaces were kept as unimpeded as possible. The "solid" elements were generally limited to the elevator core. The entrance lobby, lounge, and usually some form of commissary and/or service space had an open plan. The ground floor was also usually tall, around 16', with the enclosed lobby space set back from the building's main facade. This was to develop an inviting entrance for the building's residents.⁴⁴ Mies' most famous high-rise residential designs include the Promontory Apartments and the 860/880 Lake Shore Drive Apartments from 1948-1951) in Chicago. The architect provided the designs for developer Herbert Greenwald of Herbert Realty. Their association during the apartment building's design and construction was the beginning of a twenty-year relationship between the two men and Greenwald's successor firm, Metropolitan Structures, Inc. The Promontory Apartment building is a twenty-one story structure of exposed reinforced concrete with brick panels and projecting vertical columns that step back every five stories.⁴⁵ At ground level, there is a recessed, glass enclosed lobby and a community room on the roof. In the design of the Promontory Apartments, Mies created a simplified solution to apartment building requirements.⁴⁶ The Lake Shore Drive apartments were twin rectangular towers composed of an internal concrete main structure with outer steel casing. The development included two levels of underground parking.⁴⁷

General patterns are also found in Mies' treatment of plaza spaces and landscaping elements. When creating entrance plazas and other formal gathering spaces, Mies would not arbitrarily alter the grading of a site. He

⁴³ Roberto De Los Rios. "Highfield House Apartment Building" (Student paper, University of Maryland College Park, 2002), n.p.

⁴⁴ Carter, Peter, *Mies van der Rohe at Work*, (London: Pall Mall Press, 1974), 44.

⁴⁵ *Mies van der Rohe*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 124.

⁴⁶ Speyer, A. James, *Mies van der Rohe* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1968), 24.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 26.

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preferred to use a single, horizontal plane that ran from the street, across a plaza, to the entrance of the building (and often through the building to the rear). Mies used extreme care in selecting furniture, paving, and other detailing for exterior spaces in an attempt to create "total architectural unity for a project."⁴⁸ He expressed a desire to keep exterior plaza spaces free from clutter and develop a place that was of human scale and fully integrated into the surrounding urban fabric.⁴⁹ Mies' landscaping designs generally included native trees, shrubs, and other plants. The landscaping was used to create both open and sheltered spaces and as a screening material. Landscape patterns were generally free-flowing and used to further the goal of creating a livable, human-scale exterior environment.⁵⁰

Herbert Realty Company and Metropolitan Structures, Inc.

During his career in the United States, Mies had several patrons who provided him with ongoing design opportunities. One of these was the Chicago-based Herbert Realty Company, founded by Herbert S. Greenwald in the mid-1940s. The association between the architect and the developer started with the design of the Promontory Apartments. Greenwald's association with Mies came about at the height of Mies' acclaim for the design of the Farnsworth House. Following the successful completion of the Promontory and 860/880 Lake Shore buildings, Herbert Greenwald began to plan to expand his projects to other cities in the United States and Canada.⁵¹ In his discussion of Mies and Greenwald's relationship in *Mies van der Rohe*, David Spaeth states, "During the 1950's nearly two-thirds of the work produced by Mies's office was under Greenwald's aegis."⁵² Jointly the developer and architect proposed designs for urban renewal projects such as Lafayette Square in Detroit, Michigan and the Colonnade and Pavilion Apartments in Newark, New Jersey. Following Greenwald's death in an airplane crash in 1959, Metropolitan Structures, Inc. continued the professional relationship with Mies.

Bernard Weissbourd, a Chicago native, attended the University of Chicago Law School and started his career as a partner in the Antonow and Weissbourd law firm (1948-1959). In 1959, Weissbourd took over Herbert Realty following Greenwald's death. Weissbourd renamed the company Metropolitan Structures, Inc. Metropolitan Structures, Inc. conducted the majority of its work in the Chicago area, with additional significant projects in both Baltimore and Montreal. The firm commissioned Mies to design several highrise apartment buildings similar to Highfield House, an apartment building and a gas station for Nuns Island in Montreal, 111 E. Wacker Drive in Chicago, and the Highfield House and One Charles Center in Baltimore. Metropolitan Structures,

⁴⁸ Ibid, 152.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 154.

⁵¹ Phyllis Lambert, "Mies and His Colleagues," *Mies in America*, edited by Phyllis Lambert (Montreal, Canada: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2001), 571.

⁵² David Spaeth, *Mies van der Rohe*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), 134.

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Inc.'s other major developments included One Illinois Center, the Essex Inn, the Hyatt Regency Chicago, the Mercantile Exchange Center, and Buckingham Plaza (all in Chicago).

The twenty year association between the architect and the developers was very successful, as demonstrated by the number of highrise building private and urban renewal projects the two firms completed together. Despite the high construction costs for tall buildings, other cities welcomed the opportunity to have buildings designed by Mies. Baltimore's business and government leaders supported the construction of One Charles Center and Highfield House because the new highrise buildings demonstrated Baltimore's importance as Maryland's largest city.

Mayor Theodore R. McKeldin

Mayor Theodore R. McKeldin, the Mayor of Baltimore during the design, construction, and opening of Highfield House, was born in south Baltimore in November 1900. He graduated from the University of Maryland Law School and became one of the most prominent politicians in Maryland. He served two non-consecutive terms as the Mayor of Baltimore (1943-1947 and 1963-1967). McKeldin also served two consecutive terms as the Governor of Maryland, from 1951 to 1959. Throughout his political career, McKeldin served as Maryland's delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1944, 1948, 1952, and 1960. During his second term as mayor, McKeldin initiated a program of widespread urban renewal in Baltimore. The goals of this program included the redevelopment of the Inner Harbor, the construction of a new municipal building and the elimination of the city's slums. During this term major redevelopment projects took place, as well as the construction of additional housing within the city. The Highfield House falls into the latter category. McKeldin is also commonly associated with numerous transportation projects including the Baltimore Beltway, the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, US 50, and Baltimore's Harbor Tunnel. McKeldin retired from political life in 1968 and died in August 1974.

William Boucher III, Executive Director of the Greater Baltimore Committee

William Boucher III (1919-1995) was a co-founder of the Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC). The prominent developer James W. Rouse, the president of Hecht's department store Robert H. Levi, and William Boucher III collaborated to launch the GBC in the mid-1950s. The GBC was involved with a variety of major redevelopment projects in Baltimore City. In particular, the group was a prominent force in the redevelopment of the Inner Harbor and the construction of the Charles Center. The group is also affiliated with the building of the Jones Falls Expressway, the Baltimore Arena, and two downtown sports stadia. The organization is still in operation, and may soon merge with the Greater Baltimore Alliance.

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The Importance of the Property in Architectural History

The Highfield House is significant both as an exemplary model of modern architecture in Maryland as well as the work of a master architect. In the National Register of Historic Places nomination for One Charles Center, the justification for the early inclusion of the property states “Mies’ recognized stature and the building’s pioneering role in introducing International Style modernism to Baltimore.”⁵³ Although the Highfield House is the second building in Baltimore designed by Mies, it set the standard for contemporary, high-rise residential design in the State. The building is prototypical of Mies’ residential architecture and exhibits unique elements that demonstrate Mies’ ability to integrate his architecture into the surrounding community.

The Highfield House exquisitely displays the ideas of the Bauhaus and the International Style of architecture. The building is most commonly recognized as a Modern structure because of its lack of ornament and the sincerity of its structural expression. While this notion is visible in a number of ways at Highfield House, one of the most prominent is the subdivision of the structural bay into a specific module that directly relates to the size of the largest interior rooms of each apartment. The horizontal windows help to identify the bay width. Mies used a unique structural solution in the design of the Highfield House, by creating a structure where the skin becomes an infill between the columns and floor beams. The building was one of five structures to win the 1963-1965 combined Award of Merit from the Metropolitan Baltimore Chamber of Commerce and the Baltimore Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

Mies used the Promontory Apartments in Chicago as a model for the design of Highfield House. The exterior façade of the Promontory consists of brick masonry panels and aluminum window frames set into an exposed concrete frame. The building has twenty-one residential floors, in addition to a lobby and plaza that is similar in design to Highfield House’s lobby and plaza. The Promontory Apartments was the initial collaboration between Mies van der Rohe and Herbert Realty Company (Metropolitan Structures, Inc.) and was the first high-rise project by Mies in Chicago. Highfield House differs from the Promontory Apartments because it is shorter (15 stories vs. 21 stories), and has a larger window bay (23’ vs. 21’) with four hopper windows rather than three. The Promontory Apartments was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996.⁵⁴

The Highfield House was built from a design Mies completed near the end of his life. It is generally considered a smaller project in the context of Mies’ full career portfolio.⁵⁵ While the building is not discussed in every text on Mies, it does receive considerable attention in a few major works. The text *Mies van der Rohe* with photographs by Yukio Futagawa, published just five years after the building’s completion, includes five plates

⁵³ Betty Bird, *One Charles Center*, (Washington, DC: National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 1999), Section 8, Page 1.

⁵⁴ Ludwig Mies Van Der Rohe/Metropolitan Structures Collection, Ryerson and Burnham Archives. The Art Institute of Chicago.

⁵⁵ Spaeth, David, *Mies van der Rohe* (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), 195.

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of the Highfield House featuring images of the sunken swimming pool, the project's site plan, an image of the main façade and entrance, and two images of the glass enclosed entrance lobby. The Highfield House is also highlighted in Peter Carter's work as an exemplary high-rise apartment building alongside the Lafayette Towers in Detroit, Promontory Apartments, 860/880 Lake Shore Drive, Commonwealth Promenade Apartments also in Chicago, and Colonnade Apartments in Newark. In this context, the typical floor plan, ground floor entrance lobby, and facades are showcased. In addition, the Highfield House is used to illustrate one of three skin solutions used by Mies. Along with the Promontory Apartments, the skin of the Highfield House "becomes an infill between the columns and the floor beams...consist[ing] of a panel of fixed and openable windows set above a brick spandrel."⁵⁶

Highfield House was used as a prototype for the three apartment buildings designed by Mies for Nun's Island in Montreal, Canada (1963-1969). The high-rise apartment buildings at Nun's Island were structures of reinforced concrete. The Nun's Island development came as a direct result of Mies' work on the Seagram Building in New York City. The Seagram Company was headquartered in Canada and due to the success of the Seagram Building, a number of commissions for work in Canada ensued. Construction began on Nun's Island in 1968. The high-rise structures designed by Mies were part of Phase I of the project and are nearly identical to the Highfield House. Mies designed the three high-rise apartment buildings as well as a gas station for the project.⁵⁷

The Building's Siting and Landscape Features

The siting and design of Highfield House work to create a very private environment for the residents. The organization of the site is notable for its careful planning, integration with the community, and the consideration of residents' needs. The site design for Highfield House included creating a park-like setting for the property. When viewed in plan, the rear plaza and pool area are typical of a Miesian formal garden.⁵⁸

The Building

The Highfield House was designed with innovative features that provided for resident privacy and comfort. The building itself is an outstanding model of International Style high-rise residential design, with unique façade details that are sensitive to the neighborhood setting. The communal spaces allowed for both resident privacy and security. Individual units included the most modern features and designs, while still being adaptable to individual needs and changing tastes.

⁵⁶ Carter, Peter, *Mies van der Rohe at Work*, (London: Pall Mall Press, 1974), 44.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 182.

⁵⁸ John Dorsey and James D. Dilts, *A Guide to Baltimore Architecture* (Centreville, Maryland: Tidewater Publishers, 1977), 326-327.

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The Highfield House was designed to provide the maximum amount of privacy for its residents, while also exemplifying Modern architectural design. Contributing to this sense of privacy are the setback of the building from Charles Street and the inclusion of a large open ground floor. The height of the ground floor, two stories, provides not only a definite entrance, but also further separates the individual units from the surrounding streets and properties.

The façade of the building includes exposed structural columns that project beyond the curtain wall. These columns step back as the load decreases (as the columns rise up the building), although the full size column continues through the interior of the building.⁵⁹ This detailing of the columns is exemplary of Mies' determination to reach structural honesty in his structures.⁶⁰

The apartments within the Highfield House are oriented to take maximum advantage of the views offered from the building. Each apartment has wall-to-wall windows that allow both for the maximum amount of views, as well as for the integration of the apartments with the surrounding natural features of the property.

The entire building was also constructed with central air conditioning and heating. David Spaeth states that "(w)ith each new apartment building, Mies advanced the state-of-the-art for glass curtain walls. The same was also true of the spatial planning for various apartment types and for the inclusion, integration and refinement of air conditioning systems."⁶¹ The inclusion of air conditioning in Highfield House was a significant design element given Baltimore's hot and humid summers. Because of the building's orientation, a sunny day in the winter helps the apartments gain heat. The same is true in the summer, when the sun is more intense.

Although Mies had a formal model for his designs, he made two concessions in the design of the Highfield House. In an attempt to integrate the structure better with the surrounding neighborhood, he removed the muntins that were on the original model, which made the windows appear wider and included brick spandrels to give a greater horizontal feeling to the building. This helped to minimize the appearance of its height to make it compatible with the surrounding apartment buildings and to not overpower structures in the nearby residential neighborhood.

On the lower level of the building (below the lobby and ground-floor plaza) is a recreation room that looks out onto the outdoor pool. The space includes a complete kitchen and natural wood-burning fireplace. Other services incorporated into the design and management of the building included an underground parking garage,

⁵⁹ "Apartments," *Architectural Record* 139 (January 1966): 155-172.

⁶⁰ "Fact Sheet: Highfield House." Enoch Pratt Free Library, Maryland Department, 27 October 1964, no page.

⁶¹ Spaeth, 134.

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secretarial telephone answering service, coin-operated laundry equipment, tenant storage lockers, wash rooms with showers for pool users, and a bicycle storage room.⁶²

The layout of the individual apartments was intended to be adaptable to individual tastes and decorating needs. Each unit was centrally air conditioned and heated by special Carrier units that were controlled by individual tenants in their apartments. Kitchens were designed with up-to-date appliances including garbage disposal, automatic dishwashers and double-oven gas ranges. The cabinets were made of wood and clad with teakwood formica, the countertops of finished formica – all with stainless steel highlights that were custom designed for the Highfield House. The lighting in the kitchens included fixtures placed both over and under the kitchen cabinets. In the *Fact Sheet* that was released upon the opening of Highfield House, one of the unique features of the apartments that was highlighted as a Highfield House “first” included innovative lighting that was “custom created to provide utmost flattery to skin tones by means of a series of incandescent lights behind frosted glass panels.” In addition, each bathroom included built-in lighting fixtures that were recessed into the ceiling. The apartments also included a large amount of closet and storage space.⁶³

The groundbreaking for Highfield House was held on October 14, 1963. The newspaper article also mentions Mies was to receive the Medal of Freedom from President John F. Kennedy at the White House. The medal recognized Mies’ contributions to American architecture. The Presidential recognition as well as the presence of Mayor McKeldin (the former Governor of Maryland) at Highfield House’s groundbreaking demonstrate the importance local, state and national figures placed on the work Mies had accomplished in the preceding twenty-five years, as well as the work that had just started.⁶⁴

Mies also trained a new generation of architects to continue the work he had begun. When Mies became Dean of the Armor Institute of Technology’s School of Architecture, he laid out the goals he had for his students:

The goal of an Architecture School is to train men who can create organic architecture.

Such men must be able to design structures constructed of modern technical means to serve the specific requirements of existing society. They must also be able to bring these structures

⁶² “Fact Sheet: Highfield House.” Enoch Pratt Free Library, Maryland Department, 27 October 1964, no page.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ “Apartment Job Under Way.” *Baltimore Evening Sun*, 15 October 1963.

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within the sphere of art by ordering and proportioning them in relation to their functions, and forming them to express the means employed, the purposes served and the spirit of the times.”⁶⁵

Each of these goals was an important part of Mies’ architectural ideals, and each is embodied in Highfield House. When the building was completed in 1964, the most modern technical means had been employed in its construction. Highfield House is ordered and proportioned in a way that allows it to fit into the neighborhood and for its residents to live comfortably. It clearly expresses the means employed, the purposes served as a highrise residential building and the spirit of the times for those seeking a new urban residential lifestyle in the City of Baltimore.

⁶⁵ Detlef Mertins, “Living in a Jungle: Mies, Organic Architecture, and the Art of City Building,” *Mies in America*, edited by Phyllis Lambert, (Montréal, Canada: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2001): 597

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Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description:

The nominated property is identified as Ward 12, Section 1, Block 3965B, Lot 200, as identified in the Tax Records of the City of Baltimore, Maryland..

Boundary Justification:

The nominated property, 1.25 acres, comprises the entire parcel historically associated with the resource.