

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 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: High-Rise for the Elderly  
Other names/site number: Frederic A. Fay Towers; Fay Towers; DHR #127-7673  
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 1202 N. 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
City or town: Richmond State: VA County: Independent City  
Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  N/A

### 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:

  X   A     B     C     D

 Signature of certifying official/Title:	<u>1/30/2024</u> Date
<u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u> State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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

High-Rise for the Elderly  
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia  
County and State

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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:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 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

High-Rise for the Elderly  
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia  
County and State

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/institutional housing (public housing)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/institutional housing (public housing)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

High-Rise for the Elderly  
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia  
County and State

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/International Style

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK, CONCRETE, GLASS

### 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.)

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### Summary Paragraph

Designed by architect E. Tucker Carlton, the High-Rise for the Elderly (also known as Frederic A. Fay Towers) is an 11-story International Style high-rise apartment building with a designed landscape by local landscape architect Kenneth Higgins. The property has two contributing resources: the high-rise (building) and the designed landscape (site). Located on an urban lot within the Gilpin Court Public Housing Complex in Richmond, Virginia, the historic property's boundary encompasses approximately two-thirds of the block bound by N. 1st Street, E. Federal Street, St. James Street, and E. Hill Street; smaller scale multi-family housing buildings occupy the remainder of the block. Although the High-Rise for the Elderly shares a tax parcel with the smaller scale multi-family housing to the south, the resource's historic boundary excludes these buildings. The historic boundary follows the property's west, north, and east parcel lines along St. James Street, E. Hill Street, and N. 1<sup>st</sup> Street, respectively, but the southern boundary runs from N. 1<sup>st</sup> Street and St. James Street along the southern edge of the building's southern parking lot. The 1971 building is situated within an associated designed landscape which includes a paved walk with mature vegetation and a patio with plantings on the building's east façade. A large, stamped concrete patio and grass lawn is located on the north side of the property. A brick wall lines the property along its north side. The west side of the property is partially composed of a parking lot and a grass lawn. A concrete path winds around the landscaped portions of the building. To the south of the building is a large parking lot. Large mature trees are located on the property. The High-Rise for the Elderly retains a high degree of the seven aspects of integrity due to continuity of its original design and appearance and minimal alterations over time.

High-Rise for the Elderly  
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia  
County and State

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## **Narrative Description**

### **Setting**

The High-Rise for the Elderly is located in Richmond, Virginia, and is part of a larger public housing complex known as Gilpin Court, which is owned and operated by the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority and located within the greater Jackson Ward community. The high-rise apartment building and its associated designed landscape are placed within a streetscape of smaller scale multi-family buildings in the east end of Gilpin Court. The nominated property shares a parcel with several multi-family housing buildings to the south, and is bounded on the west, north, and east by St. James Street, E. Hill Street, and N. 1<sup>st</sup> Street, respectively.

Surrounding the High-Rise for the Elderly is a historic landscape designed by prominent local landscape architect Kenneth R. Higgins. Designed in conjunction with the high-rise apartment building, the associated designed landscape, a contributing site, includes winding concrete walkways, iron benches with wood seating, concrete patios on the north and east elevations, circular concrete planter wells, a brick pier with concrete planter urn on the east patio, a square brick planter with wood seating on the east patio, a low stepped brick wall along the property's northeast corner, parking lots to the northwest and south of the building, and chain link fencing enclosing the area north of the southern parking lot. Lamps have been relocated and received replacement components through the years, and metal fencing encloses the south parking lot. Mature hedges, which are shown as part of the historic design on a 1970 rendering, obscure the chain link fencing, and mature trees and plantings are located throughout the site.

### **A. The High-Rise for the Elderly, 1971, Contributing Building**

The High-Rise for the Elderly, constructed in 1971, is an 11-story International Style apartment building with a concrete foundation and reinforced concrete block structure that is faced with multi-toned running bond brick veneer. The building has an irregular footprint with opposite facing wings connected by a central core. The building has single-hung aluminum window sash vertically separated by aggregate concrete panels that emphasize the height of the building. Concrete piers support an inset porch and create a weightless wing on the north side of the building. Concrete panels wrap the building, creating a false watertable and cornice.

The east façade has a central entrance with a flat concrete canopy with the lettering “Frederic A. Fay Towers” over an aluminum-framed, storefront-type entry. Aluminum-framed entries are also located near the garden on the south end of the east elevation and along the inset porch. The south elevation also consists of a secondary aluminum-framed entrance and overhead garage doors leading to the building's workshop. The west elevation has a central covered entrance with a modern aluminum-framed entry and ADA-compatible access ramp, as well as large openings to the mechanical areas located on the rear of the building. Although typical institutional heating and cooling units are present along the wall at floor level in each living unit, window air-conditioning units were installed as needed to maintain the livability of units and are visible on the exterior.

High-Rise for the Elderly  
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia  
County and State

The first floor is dedicated to community spaces, offices, and mechanical rooms. The front entrance opens into a small vestibule before continuing into the main lobby. The focal point of the lobby is a brick and stone fountain and planter with an engraving of Frederic A. Fay, for whom the building is named. The lobby also contains the mailroom. The elevator vestibule is located to the south of the main lobby and is also the location of the rear entrance. The south end of the first floor is largely composed of mechanical equipment, a laundry area, staff offices, and a workshop. The north end of the first floor includes a large open dining space and lounge as well as the kitchen. The main lobby floors are finished with square terrazzo; the remainder of the first floor is surfaced with a mix of linoleum vinyl tile or unfinished concrete. In primary spaces, walls are finished with gypsum board, while secondary spaces retain painted, exposed concrete-block walls. A dropped ceiling grid and acoustical ceiling tiles are located throughout the first floor; secondary spaces, mechanical rooms, and the workshop have exposed ceiling structure, plumbing, and electrical conduit.

The floor plan remains consistent from the second to the eleventh floor with a central elevator and stair lobby, and central corridors that run the lengths of each wing of the building. Tile wainscoting covers the lower half of the walls in each elevator lobby. All floors have square vinyl tile floor coverings. In the lobbies and corridors, the floor coloring alternates between orange and white on the even floors and green and white on the odd floors. Individual units have neutral vinyl tile. Walls are primarily covered in painted gypsum board. The corridors feature dropped acoustical tile ceiling grids, while the units have finished, textured ceilings. Each of the residential apartments has a wood door with simple bronze-colored hardware and matching doorknockers. Over each door is a triangular-shaped light that served a key purpose for the residents of the building—to alert neighbors and staff in the event of an emergency. Each of the units consists of a simple layout including one bedroom (or efficiency), living area, bathroom, and kitchen. Plumbing and electrical fixtures, appliances, and cabinets have been replaced as needed but layouts of the apartments are as originally constructed.

### **Integrity Assessment**

The High-Rise for the Elderly retains a high degree of architectural integrity associated with its period of significance. It retains its integrity of **location** on N. 1<sup>st</sup> Street in Gilpin Court. The designs by both E. Tucker Carlton, architect, and Kenneth Higgins, landscape architect, remain remarkably intact. The landscaped areas and mature vegetation planned by Higgins also preserves integrity of **setting**. Very few material changes have been made over time and are primarily limited to those that caused later safety or hazard concerns, such as asbestos. Other material changes were due to wear and tear or necessary upgrades over time, such as appliances, cabinetry, and fixtures. Notable materials that have been preserved include the exterior brick and concrete, aluminum storefront and windows, main entry lobby and corridor flooring, wood doors, and, in many units, the metal accordion closet doors. Consequently, the building retains high integrity of **design, materials, and workmanship**. The cumulative integrity of the property allows it to retain integrity of **feeling** as an early example of a high-rise apartment building designed solely for elderly residents. The property's physical characteristics also convey its integrity of **association** with its areas and period of significance.

High-Rise for the Elderly  
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia  
County and State

High-Rise for the Elderly  
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia  
County and State

## 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



High-Rise for the Elderly  
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia  
County and State

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

SOCIAL HISTORY

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1971

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Carlton, E. Tucker, Architect

Higgins, Kenneth R., Landscape Architect

Basic Construction Company (Newport News), General Contractor

High-Rise for the Elderly  
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia  
County and State

**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 High-Rise for the Elderly apartment building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the local level of significance. The property is locally significant under **Criterion A** in the areas of **Community Planning and Development** and **Social History** as a representative physical manifestation of the requirements of the federal Housing Act of 1959, which authorized federal loans for the development of public housing for the elderly. The Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) used the increased funding to construct the 11-story building specifically to serve the city's aging population who were reliant on the support provided by public housing. The High-Rise for the Elderly was RRHA's first purpose-built high-rise apartment building and was designed specifically with the needs of elderly residents in mind. Prior to its construction, RRHA operated large multiple-building complexes with one-to-three-story buildings, and senior residents mostly resided in ground-floor, single-story units or in a smaller, three-story, 24-unit apartment building. With accessibility and safety as high priorities, the building was equipped with elevators and an emergency alert system for each unit. The building's architectural design is a restrained interpretation of the International Style, which was immensely popular from the 1940s-1970s, particularly for institutional buildings. Prominent Virginia architect E. Tucker Carlton included alternating vertical bands of brick veneer and window openings separated by aggregate concrete panels, a flat roof, a cantilevered awning finished with smooth concrete over the main entry (which itself is almost transparent and creates the effect of a floating canopy), and smooth bands of concrete along the top of the ground floor and just below the roofline. The building's irregular footprint maximizes natural light and ventilation for the residential units on the upper stories. Landscape architect Kenneth R. Higgins created the property's unobtrusive landscape design, which is characterized by flat topography, smooth-surface patios, and gently curving walkways that are suitable for residents who may use mobility devices, an important consideration for the property's overall purpose of providing housing for elderly residents. The simplicity of the design and plantings also may have been a product of the typically limited budgets available for construction of housing of this type. The period of significance for the High-Rise for the Elderly is 1971, the year the building and landscape design were completed.

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

**Criterion A: Community Planning and Development; Social History**

The High-Rise for the Elderly is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under **Criterion A** in the areas of **Community Planning and Development** and **Social History** due to its direct association with the federal Housing Act of 1959. The legislation authorized federal loans for the development of public housing for the elderly and the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority's (RRHA's) accessed this funding to build the city of Richmond's first purpose-built high-rise apartment building designed specifically with the needs of elderly residents in mind.

High-Rise for the Elderly  
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia  
County and State

### **Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) and Frederic A. Fay**

On October 3, 1940, Richmond's City Council established the Housing Authority of the City of Richmond as a "political sub-division of the Commonwealth" upon the recommendation and approval of the mayor.<sup>1</sup> The Richmond Housing Authority (today's RRHA) was provided with the powers granted to local authorities under the provisions of the 1938 Virginia Housing Authority Law.<sup>2</sup> On October 4, 1940, Mayor Gordon Barbour Ambler appointed members to the Board of Commissioners of the Richmond Housing Authority. The board's chair, William Shands Meacham, had previously served as the associate director of the *Richmond Times Dispatch*, a former editor of the *Danville Register*, and for many years was "active in promoting sociological reforms in Virginia," and "considered an authority on social trends."<sup>3</sup>

The first Executive Director of the Richmond Housing Authority was Thomas L. Cockrell of Richmond. Previously an engineer and Chief of the City Bureau of Sewers and Structures, Cockrell was appointed Executive Director of the Housing Authority effective December 1, 1940, earning a salary of \$4,500 a year.<sup>4</sup> Aligned with the Housing Authority's mission, Cockrell's duties centered on taking "direct charge" of "slum" clearance projects in Richmond.<sup>5</sup> During his tenure, Cockrell oversaw the construction of Gilpin Court, the city's first public housing project. Cockrell continued as Executive Director until September 1, 1944, when he resigned from the position.<sup>6</sup>

Thomas L. Cockrell was succeeded as executive director by Frederic A. Fay in 1950. Fay previously served as the technical advisor and assistant director of the Portsmouth Redevelopment and Housing Authority in Virginia. Fay served RRHA for thirty years, retiring in 1980. He remains the longest-serving executive director in the history of RRHA.<sup>7</sup> During his time as executive director, Fay was responsible for most of the post-Gilpin Court public housing construction, "slum" clearance efforts, and redevelopment in Richmond, and he oversaw the construction and operation of all of RRHA's "Big 6" complexes, which consisted of more than 3,000 housing units.<sup>8</sup> Fay also served as President of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials starting on October 26, 1965.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Richmond Housing Authority, *1940-1941 Annual Report*, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Richmond Housing Authority, *1940-1941 Annual Report*, 9.

<sup>3</sup> "Housing Reforms in Richmond Led by W.S. Meacham." *Danville Bee* (October 5, 1940), pg 10.

<sup>4</sup> "T.L. Cockrell Named Head of Housing," *Northern Neck News* (November 22, 1940).

<sup>5</sup> "T.L. Cockrell Named Head of Housing," *Northern Neck News* (November 22, 1940). The term "slum" was commonly used in the mid-twentieth century by officials who were referring to housing with inadequate weatherization and plumbing, electrical, and mechanical systems. In many cases, however, officials declared working- and middle-class neighborhoods with majority-minority populations to be "slums" and exercised eminent domain to condemn these neighborhoods and raze the buildings (often with minimal provisions for displaced residents and property owners), all with the objective of erecting all-new buildings with modern systems.

<sup>6</sup> "A Loss to Public Housing," *Northern Neck News*, (August 25, 1944).

<sup>7</sup> Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, *1969-1970 Annual Report*, 27; Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, *1980 Annual Report*.

<sup>8</sup> RRHA has embarked on a multiple-year study of its mid-twentieth century public housing projects that has included documentation of each property prior to gradual demolition of outmoded buildings.

<sup>9</sup> Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, *1969-1970 Annual Report*, 29.

High-Rise for the Elderly  
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia  
County and State

## Early Public Housing in Richmond

By 1900, Richmond contained almost 16,000 persons per square mile, which made it among the most crowded cities in the southern U.S.<sup>10</sup> In addition to population density and the associated overcrowding, the city was experiencing mass amounts of physical deterioration throughout its residential areas. Early city planning, however, was less concerned with housing than regulating the city's physical development.<sup>11</sup> Before 1940, the majority of Richmond's planning focused on pushing urban settlement into the surrounding suburbs and utilizing the city core for economic development. Two primary factors contributed to the problems occurring within Richmond's city-center housing in the early twentieth century. The first was the continuous migration of the city's White middle class into the rapidly suburbanizing areas that surrounded Richmond's core. As Richmond continued to annex and consolidate land, those who were able to move to the city's suburbs in search of lower population density and easier access to fresh air and water. In addition to race, class segregation also was a factor, with middle- and upper-income White Richmonders leading the way to the suburbs. By 1940, most residents who remained in the core of the city were considered "too poor to get out."<sup>12</sup> A consequence of this "White flight" was that previously middle-class neighborhoods saw single-family dwellings converted into rental units for lower-income residents. Absentee landlords allowed their properties to fall into disrepair, which led to poor housing conditions and exacerbated the difficulties faced by lower-income people with limited access to employment and transportation. Richmond, like most American cities during the first half of the twentieth century, also embraced the creation of a housing market that was racially segregated and restrictive through use of zoning ordinances.<sup>13</sup> Such ordinances resulted in more deeply segregated neighborhoods and intensified the concentration of African American and ethnic minority residents to lower-income neighborhoods where poor housing conditions were prevalent.

Racial segregation in Richmond had been firmly established prior to 1900 as the Jim Crow era began. The city's largest concentration of African American residents lived in Jackson Ward, which long had been the center of Richmond's Black community life. Home to a diverse collection of businesses, churches, and social and educational institutions, Jackson Ward was described by some as "the most progressive Negro business center in the nation."<sup>14</sup> However, Jackson Ward also had a high concentration of poverty, inadequate public services and infrastructure, and many residences in poor physical condition. In 1900, most of the streets in Jackson Ward were unpaved, dwellings were often overcrowded due to high rental rates for modest income households, and much of the housing was deteriorated due largely to neglect by absentee property owners who focused on maximizing profitability while ignoring the needs of their tenants.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Christopher Silver, *Twentieth-Century Richmond: planning, politics, and race* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 63.

<sup>11</sup> Silver, *Twentieth-Century Richmond: planning, politics, and race*, 103.

<sup>12</sup> Silver, *Twentieth-Century Richmond: planning, politics, and race*, 29.

<sup>13</sup> Silver, *Twentieth-Century Richmond: planning, politics, and race*, 102.

<sup>14</sup> Christopher Silver, *Twentieth-Century Richmond: planning, politics, and race*, 32.

<sup>15</sup> Silver, *Twentieth-Century Richmond*, 31.

High-Rise for the Elderly  
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia  
County and State

In order to address the poor housing conditions in the city, on October 30, 1940, only weeks after the Richmond Housing Authority was established, the United States Housing Authority (USHA) allotted \$1,977,000.00 for two “slum clearance” projects in Richmond. The amount provided by USHA covered ninety percent of the costs for two redevelopment projects, one intended for White residents only while the other was designated for African American residents.<sup>16</sup> The USHA program had a dual focus to construct “decent, safe and sanitary dwellings,” and to eliminate “a substantially equivalent number of unsafe or insanitary dwelling units.”<sup>17</sup> It was determined that the first of the two projects to be undertaken would be for African-American residents.<sup>18</sup> The Richmond Housing Authority commenced its first redevelopment project in Jackson Ward. The decision to maintain racial segregation in public housing continued for decades to come.

The inaugural Richmond Housing Authority project in Jackson Ward was bounded “on the east by the west of St. Paul’s Street, on the north by the south lines of Coutts and Calhoun Streets, on the west by the east side of Chamberlayne Parkway, and on the south by the north lines of Charity Street and a line connecting same between Hickory and St. Peter’s Streets.”<sup>19</sup> The project was named “Gilpin Court” after Charles Sidney Gilpin, a Richmond native and former resident of Jackson Ward. Prior to the clearance effort, this area was composed primarily of residential buildings. Interspersed within the dwellings and flats were a handful of business and religious buildings, including two churches and the Hickory Hill Mission operated by the Women’s American Baptist Home Missions Society.<sup>20</sup> Approximately 220 families lived in the 150 buildings in the redevelopment area; 70 percent of the families rented their living space.<sup>21</sup> RRHA purchased approximately 92 parcels, and another 94 parcels were acquired through condemnation. Efforts to relocate the 220 families that had resided in the Gilpin Court area began April 1, 1941; by October 15, 1941, the site was cleared.<sup>22</sup> Gilpin Court’s Phase 1 was completed in 1942, and until 1946, was home to African American residents working in industries that supported American military efforts during World War II. Following the war, Gilpin Court was opened to all low-income African American residents in Richmond. However, due to wartime restrictions, very few residents who had been relocated from Jackson Ward in 1941 moved back into Gilpin Court after the war.

During the first two decades following World War II, RRHA constructed five additional public housing complexes, as well as an expansion of Gilpin Court. By 1962, the housing authority operated Gilpin Court, Creighton Court (1952), Hillside Court (1952), Fairfield Court (1958), Whitcomb Court (1958), and Mosby Court (1962). Each of these developments, with the exception of Hillside Court (constructed specifically for White occupants), had a high percentage

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<sup>16</sup> Richmond Housing Authority, *1940-1941 Annual Report*, 10.

<sup>17</sup> Richmond Housing Authority, *1940-1941 Annual Report*, 11.

<sup>18</sup> Richmond Housing Authority, *1940-1941 Annual Report*.

<sup>19</sup> Richmond Housing Authority, *1940-1941 Annual Report*, 18.

<sup>20</sup> Charles H. Fleet, “Property Line Map: Chamberlayne Parkway,” Housing Division, Public Works Administration, 1935; 1925 Sanborn Maps

<sup>21</sup> Richmond Housing Authority, *1940-1941 Annual Report*, 18.

<sup>22</sup> Richmond Housing Authority, *1940-1941 Annual Report*, 19.

High-Rise for the Elderly  
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia  
County and State

of African American residents due to urban renewal and transportation planning initiatives that concentrated on and largely displaced the city's Black neighborhoods.

President Eisenhower's 1954 State of the Union address notably acknowledged that African Americans continued to lack access to decent housing in good neighborhoods, and he expressed a desire to end direct federal support to projects that purposefully excluded minorities.<sup>23</sup> Between 1957 and 1968, the U.S. Congress worked to adopt laws that prohibited second-class citizenship for African Americans in many areas, including public transportation, voting, and employment, but not in housing.<sup>24</sup> It was not until the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 that the government addressed long-standing inequities in public housing by officially banning housing discrimination. Title VIII of the legislation is commonly known as the Fair Housing Act of 1968. In the same year, the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) of 1968 was passed as the first federal measure to ensure accessibility to buildings for people with physical disabilities and required that buildings designed, built, or altered with federal money or leased by federal agencies be accessible.<sup>25</sup>

### **Accessible Housing for the Elderly and the Development of Fay Towers**

Housing for the nation's aging population was first included in federal legislation in 1954. The Housing Act of 1959 later authorized direct federal loans for private nonprofit organizations to develop and provide rental housing for the elderly. The 1959 Act also authorized a new FHA mortgage insurance program for privately-owned nursing homes.<sup>26</sup> Unlike many public housing development projects, which were often topics of public controversy due to required zoning exemptions and racial and social prejudice among neighboring communities, housing for the elderly generally faced less opposition.<sup>27</sup> In addition to this general community support, federal funding and legislation for elderly housing coupled with the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 paved the way for increased attention to the development of senior housing. Unlike RRHA's earlier housing projects, the High-Rise for the Elderly was also designed and constructed after the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968 (with the latter including Title VIII, aka the Fair Housing Act of 1968), and as such, was not designed to be racially segregated.

Aligned with a nationwide focus to provide low-income elderly housing, RRHA constructed its first high rise apartment building, an eleven-story, 200-unit tower specifically for senior citizens in 1971.<sup>28</sup> Although located within Gilpin Court, the high-rise was known as the High-Rise for

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<sup>23</sup> Arnold R. Hirsch, "Searching for a 'Sound Negro Policy': A Racial Agenda for the Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954," *Housing Policy Debate* (Volume 11, Issue 2), 2000. 420.

<sup>24</sup> Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How our Government Segregated America*. Liveright Publishing Corporation: New York (2017), 177.

<sup>25</sup> Pub. L. 90-480 (42 U.S.C. §§4151 et seq.)

<sup>26</sup> *A Chronology of Housing Legislation and Selected Executive Actions, 1892-1992*. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington (1994), 79-87. Universal access to all buildings in the U.S. continues to be elusive.

<sup>27</sup> Adam Bickford and Douglas S. Massey, "Segregation in the Second Ghetto: Racial and Ethnic Segregation in American Public Housing, 1977," *Social Forces*, June 1991, Vol. 69, No. 4 (June 1991), 1014.

<sup>28</sup> Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, *1970 Annual Report*, 12; Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, *1971 Annual Report*, 4.

High-Rise for the Elderly  
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia  
County and State

the Elderly (and was renamed Frederic A. Fay Towers in 1985 after RRHA's former executive director Frederick A. Fay).<sup>29</sup>

As with their other public housing developments, RRHA hired an accomplished team of local and regional experts to design the High-Rise for the Elderly, including, in addition to Carlton and Higgins, the engineering firms Austin Brockenbrough & Associates, Hankins, Anderson & Moncrief, and William T. St. Clair.<sup>30</sup> The Basic Construction Company in Newport News, Virginia, served as the general contractor for the project.<sup>31</sup> At its height during the post-World War II era, Basic Construction ranked among the largest construction companies in the United States and was particularly active in the eastern half of the country. The company also was one of the leading builders for the United States Army and Navy during World Wars I and II and the Cold War era. Moreover, Basic Construction completed hundreds of municipal, state, federal, and commercial projects valued at tens of millions of dollars every year.

In addition to commissions throughout the City of Richmond and the larger region, E. Tucker Carlton and Kenneth R. Higgins also worked together and separately on other commissions for RRHA; Carlton and Higgins both were involved in the 1968 Gilpin Court Extension project and Carlton designed Whitcomb Court in 1957. Eugene (E.) Tucker Carlton was born in 1900 in Roanoke, Virginia. He studied electrical engineering at Virginia Military Institute and formed an independent architectural practice in 1939. Carlton's works included a wide range of types, such as single-family dwellings, dormitories, military apartments, commercial buildings, and a few institutional buildings; however, he was possibly best known for his work as a prolific designer of residential apartments and Federal Housing Administration (FHA)-funded housing developments in Richmond during the mid-twentieth century, making him a likely choice for RRHA to design the High-Rise for the Elderly. Between 1945 and 1950, thirteen FHA-insured garden apartments were constructed in Richmond; of these thirteen developments, Carlton is credited with designing at least seven.<sup>32</sup> Carlton's first, and only other currently identified, high-rise was the Carlton Terrace Apartments, a ten-story, 150-unit International Style apartment building that opened in Roanoke, Virginia, in 1950.<sup>33</sup> In 1968, Carlton founded the architecture firm of Carlton, Taylor & Clark. Within the same year, RRHA commissioned his firm to design multiple low-income apartment buildings. Although the firm designed Gaskins Village, an apartment development in Henrico County, in 1969, the High-Rise for the Elderly may have been one of the last designs credited to Carlton during his career.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, Kenneth R. Higgins, born in Holyoke, Massachusetts, in 1915, had studied horticulture and landscape architecture at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. There he trained under Frank Waugh

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<sup>29</sup> "Ex-RRHA head to be honored," *Richmond Times Dispatch* (July 7, 1985).

<sup>30</sup> E. Tucker Carlton, et. al., Fay Tower, Richmond, VA: Project No. 7-9, 1968.

<sup>31</sup> The Basic Construction Company's headquarters in Newport News was listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register in 2018 and the National Register of Historic Places in 2019. The nomination is online at <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/121-5453/>.

<sup>32</sup> Holly Springs Apartments, National Register Nomination (2019): Section 8, page 13.

<sup>33</sup> "Carlton Terrace Building and Hall's Produce, Roanoke, Virginia," Photo Record, O. Winston Link Museum, History Museum of Western Virginia. Accessed January 26, 2023.

<https://hswv.pastperfectonline.com/Photo/3189F232-4B69-47FC-8A1B-572146302465>.

<sup>34</sup> Holly Springs Apartments, National Register Nomination (2019): Section 8 page 22.

High-Rise for the Elderly  
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia  
County and State

and graduated with a BS in 1937 and a BLA in 1938. During World War II he was stationed in Virginia, where he met his wife Mary Douthat Smith and they ultimately settled in Richmond. From 1946 to 1948, Higgins worked for Charles F. Gillette, a prominent landscape architect responsible for most of the landscape designs for RRHA's early public housing projects. Gillette and Higgins worked together on various commissions, including the University of Richmond campus. Higgins then went to work for the Public Housing Administration (PHA) Richmond Field office from 1948 to 1951, where he influenced landscape design and site development citywide while also carrying out the standards established by the PHA. In 1952, Higgins established a private firm. Among his best-known projects was assisting with master planning for Richmond's James River Park System.<sup>35</sup> Other Richmond projects included rehabilitating the grounds of the John Marshall House and the Monumental Church.<sup>36</sup> At the High-Rise for the Elderly, Higgins's landscape design included hedges and trees that required only regular pruning as their primary form of maintenance, a pragmatic choice given the limited resources available to RRHA for the city's public housing properties.

In conclusion, the High-Rise for the Elderly was not only the RRHA's first high-rise, but it was also the first purpose-built project solely for senior residents. Prior to the construction of the High-Rise for the Elderly, RRHA operated large complexes with one-to-three-story buildings. Senior residents, or those requiring additional accessibility considerations, lived in ground-floor, single-story units within these large complexes. Prior to the opening of the High-Rise for the Elderly, RRHA also operated a small 24-apartment building located at 2700 Idlewood Avenue, which had been repurposed for senior housing. Additionally, in 1971, a small, two-story 24-unit apartment building at Twelfth and Decatur streets was completed and served as senior housing. In total, RRHA operated 248 units of senior housing by 1971, and had plans to continue expanding.<sup>37</sup> Later senior housing included a mixture of high- and low-rise buildings, as well as scattered site units, and by 1979, RRHA operated nearly 600 housing units dedicated to low-income senior citizens without regard to race.<sup>38</sup>

The High-Rise for the Elderly is locally significant as RRHA's first high-rise project, and as the authority's first purpose-built senior residence. Equipped with an elevator, ground-floor mailroom, laundry area, trash chute on each floor, and a ground-floor mailroom, lounge, and cafeteria, the High-Rise for the Elderly offered senior residents increased accessibility and activities that improved overall quality of life. The building featured a mixture of unit sizes, including 120 efficiency and 80 one-bedroom apartments, and each unit was equipped with an emergency alert system that could be triggered from inside the apartment. The system would trigger an audio alarm, and a light over the door would turn on, indicating the location of the resident in need of assistance. Residents also formed a "buddy system" to check in on each other periodically.<sup>39</sup> RRHA also offered services to residents such as transportation to nearby markets

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<sup>35</sup> "Kenneth R. Higgins," The Cultural Landscape Foundation, <https://tclf.org/pioneer/kenneth-r-higgins> (accessed 26 Oct 2020).

<sup>36</sup> "Kenneth R. Higgins," The Cultural Landscape Foundation.

<sup>37</sup> Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, *1971 Annual Report*, 8.

<sup>38</sup> Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, *1979 Annual Report*.

<sup>39</sup> "Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority High Rise for the Elderly," *Virginia Record*, August 1972.



High-Rise for the Elderly  
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia  
County and State

so that residents could purchase essential goods, and hosted group activities in the common areas. Such programming was in keeping with efforts to improve quality of life for the city's senior citizens at a time that increasing lifespans, improved health outcomes, and social needs were receiving far more attention than in earlier times. Finally, the property's open landscape design, characterized by flat topography, smooth concrete patios, and gently curving walkways, was conducive to allowing residents who used mobility devices to enjoy the outdoors. As a result, the High-Rise for the Elderly is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Social History.



HIGH-RISE BUILDING FOR THE ELDERLY • 1202 NORTH FIRST STREET • CARLTON, TAYLOR AND CLARK, AIA ARCHITECTS

Figure 1: The rendering of *The High-Rise for the Elderly*, drawn by architect E. Tucker Carlton, was published in RRHA's 1970 Annual Report. Courtesy of RRHA.

High-Rise for the Elderly  
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia  
County and State

---

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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

### Architectural Drawings

E. Tucker Carlton, et. al., Fay Tower, Richmond, VA: Project No. 7-9, 1968.

### Maps

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*Northern Neck News*

*Richmond Times Dispatch*

### Legislation

*Architectural Barriers Act of 1968*. Pub. L. 90-480 (42 U.S.C. §§4151 et seq.).

### Other Primary Sources

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Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, *1971 Annual Report*

Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, *1979 Annual Report*

Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, *1980 Annual Report*

High-Rise for the Elderly  
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia  
County and State

**Secondary Sources**

Bickford, Adam and Douglas S. Massey. "Segregation in the Second Ghetto: Racial and Ethnic Segregation in American Public Housing, 1977." *Social Forces*, Vol. 69, No. 4. June 1991.

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Silver, Christopher Silver. *Twentieth-Century Richmond: planning, politics, and race*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press. 1984.

---

**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: Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority; Library of Virginia; Virginia Department of Historic Resources

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** DHR #127-7673

High-Rise for the Elderly  
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia  
County and State

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreege of Property** 2.14

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: 37.553189                      Longitude: -77.433961

**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 boundary of the High-Rise for the Elderly includes 2.14 acres within the City of Richmond, Virginia. The rectangular boundary encompasses the north half of the block bounded on the west by Saint James Street, on the north by E. Hill Street, on the east by N 1<sup>st</sup> Street, and on the south by E Federal Street. The boundary follows the parcel lines on the north, east, and west; the southern boundary stretches from N. 1<sup>st</sup> Street to Saint James Street along the southern side of the property's south parking lot. The historic boundary does not include the multi-family residential buildings located in the southern half of the tax parcel. The true and correct historic boundaries are shown on the attached Sketch Map, which has a bar scale of 1"=94'.

### Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The High-Rise for the Elderly boundary follows the historic boundary of the apartment building and its associated designed landscape. The boundary includes The High-Rise for the Elderly building and surrounding site but intersects the current tax parcel to exclude multi-family housing buildings that are associated with the Gilpin Court Public Housing Development but are not historically associated with the construction of The High-Rise for

High-Rise for the Elderly  
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia  
County and State

the Elderly. The property's historic setting and all known associated resources have been included within the historic boundary.

---

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kayla Halberg and Ashlen Stump  
organization: Commonwealth Preservation Group  
street & number: 536 W 35<sup>th</sup> Street  
city or town: Norfolk state: VA zip code: 23508  
e-mail: admin@commonwealthpreservationgroup.com  
telephone: 757-923-1900  
date: February 2, 2023

---

### 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 High-Rise for the Elderly

City or Vicinity: Richmond

County: n/a

State: VA

Photographer: Kayla Halberg

High-Rise for the Elderly  
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia  
County and State

Date Photographed: April 2022

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 30.

<b>Photo Number of 30</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Camera Direction</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Photographer</b>
1	Exterior main entrance, east elevation	W	04/2022	KH
2	East elevation	N	04/2022	KH
3	South elevation	N	04/2022	KH
4	Southwest oblique	NE	04/2022	KH
5	Northwest oblique	S	04/2022	KH
6	North patio and site	W	04/2022	KH
7	Exterior porch along south elevation	W	04/2022	KH
8	East garden patio	S	04/2022	KH
9	Interior first floor; Main lobby	W	04/2022	KH
10	Interior first floor; Main lobby	NE	04/2022	KH
11	Interior first floor; Mail area	W	04/2022	KH
12	Interior first floor; Community room	NE	04/2022	KH
13	Interior first floor; Community room	S	04/2022	KH
14	Interior first floor; Prep kitchen window	W	04/2022	KH
15	Interior first floor; Prep kitchen	W	04/2022	KH
16	Interior first floor; Office	N	04/2022	KH
17	Interior first floor; Office	W	04/2022	KH
18	Interior first floor; Workshop	SW	04/2022	KH
19	Interior first floor; Workshop	NE	04/2022	KH
20	Typical floor finish	N/A	04/2022	KH
21	Typical elevator lobby on even numbered floors.	W	04/2022	KH
22	Typical upper floor corridor	N	04/2022	KH
23	Typical unit entry and kitchen	E	04/2022	KH

High-Rise for the Elderly  
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia  
County and State

24	Typical efficiency unit	W	04/2022	KH
25	Typical efficiency unit	S	04/2022	KH
26	Typical efficiency unit	W	04/2022	KH
27	Typical galley kitchen	W	04/2022	KH
28	Typical one-bedroom unit	N	04/2022	KH
29	Typical elevator lobby on odd numbered upper floors	W	04/2022	KH
30	Typical central stair access.	W	04/2022	KH

### Historic Images Log

Figure Number	Caption
1	The rendering of The High-Rise for the Elderly, drawn by architect E. Tucker Carlton, was published in RRHA's 1970 Annual Report. Courtesy of RRHA.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations 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.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

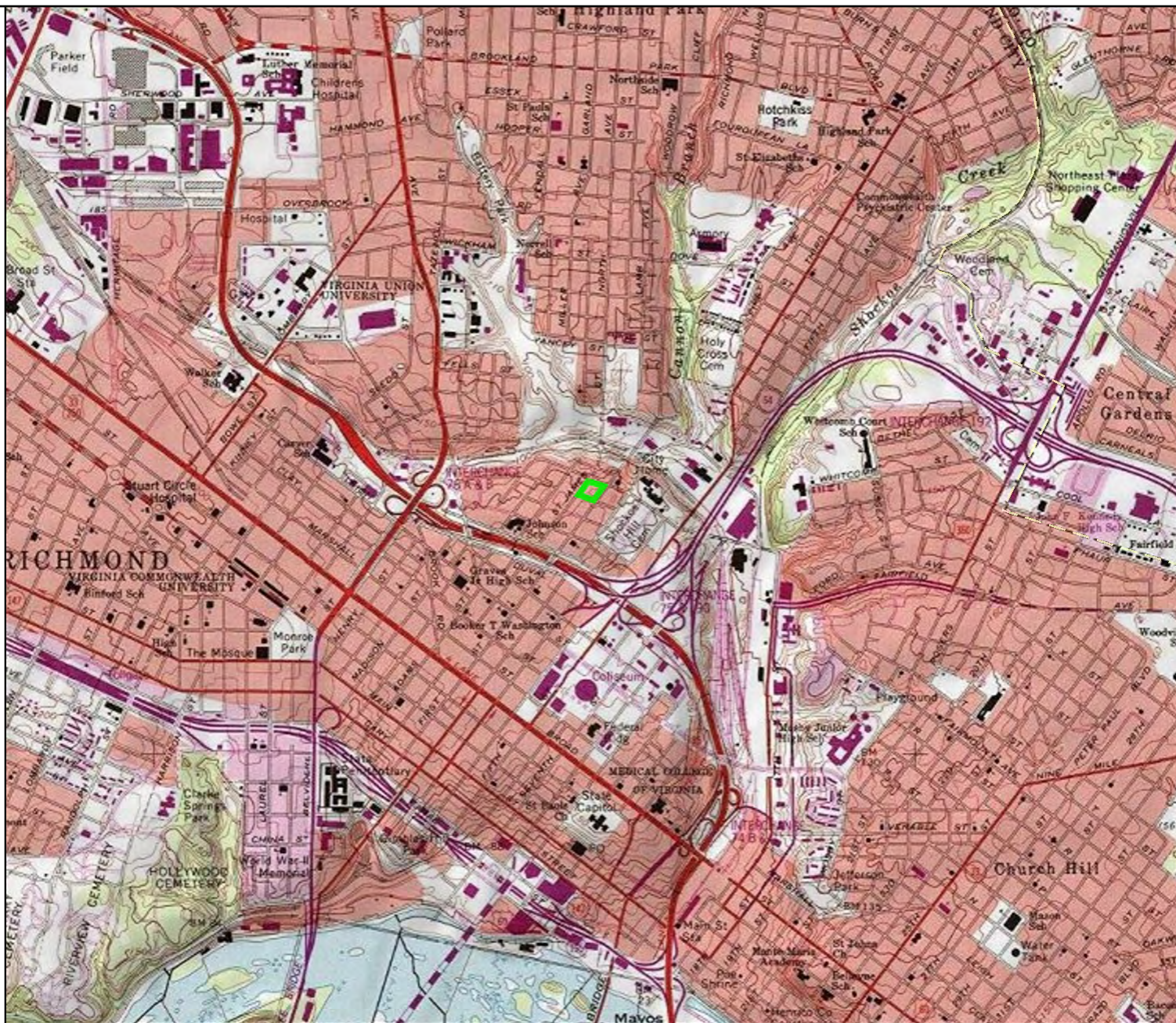




**Legend**

County Boundaries

**TOPOGRAPHIC MAP**  
**High-Rise for the Elderly**  
**City of Richmond, VA**  
**DHR No. 127-7673**



Historic Boundary



Feet

0 600 1200 1800 2400

1:36,112 / 1"=3,009 Feet

**Title:**

**Date: 5/17/2023**

*DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.*

*Notice if AE sites: Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Virginia §2.2-3705.7 (10). Release of precise locations may threaten archaeological sites and historic resources.*

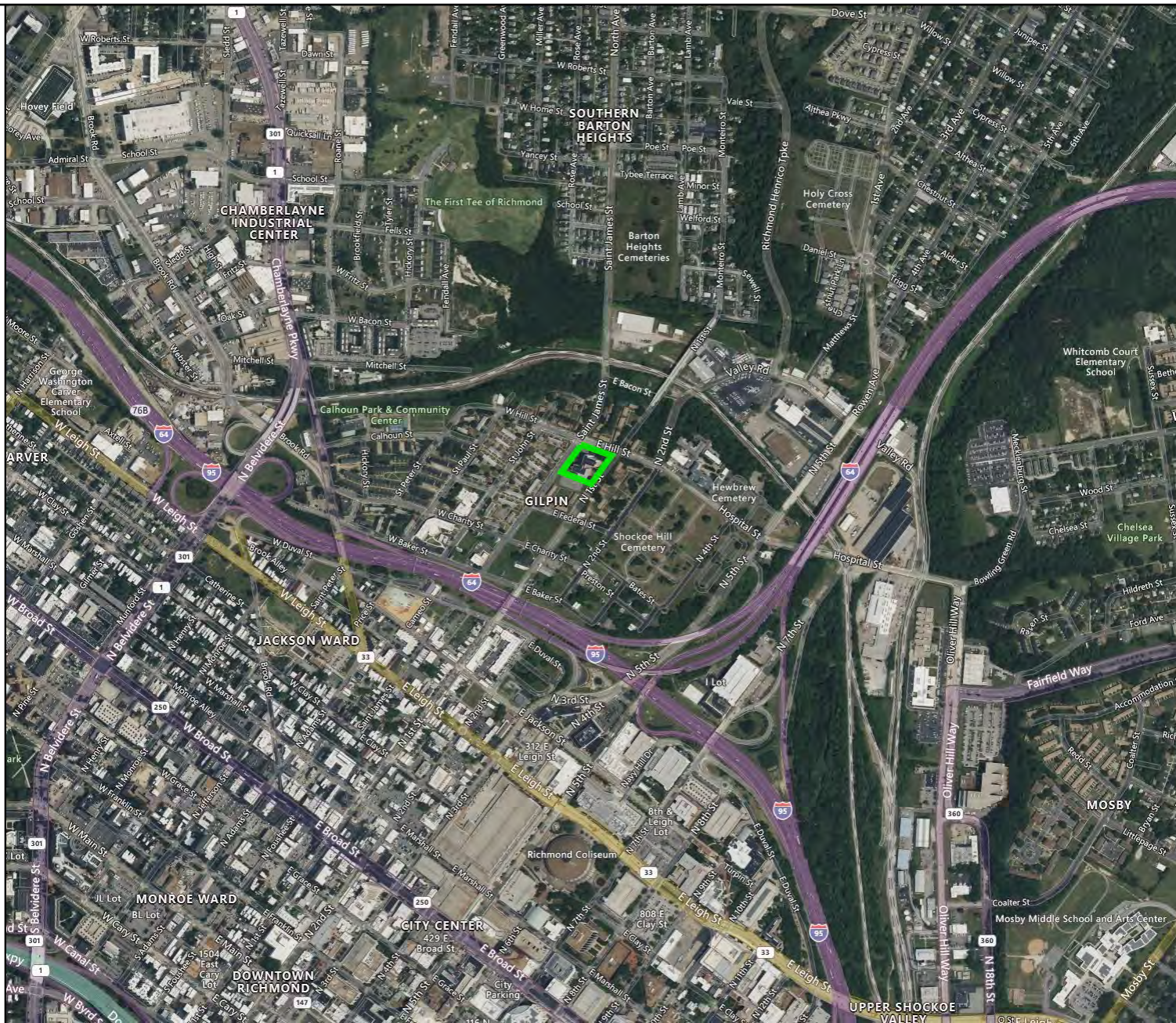




Legend

County Boundaries

AERIAL VIEW - VICINITY
High-Rise for the Elderly
City of Richmond, VA
DHR No. 127-7673



Historic Boundary



Feet

0 500 1000 1500 2000

1:18,056 / 1"=1,505 Feet

Title:

Date: 5/17/2023

DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.

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**Legend**

 County Boundaries

**STREET MAP**

**High-Rise for the Elderly  
City of Richmond, VA  
DHR No. 127-7673**

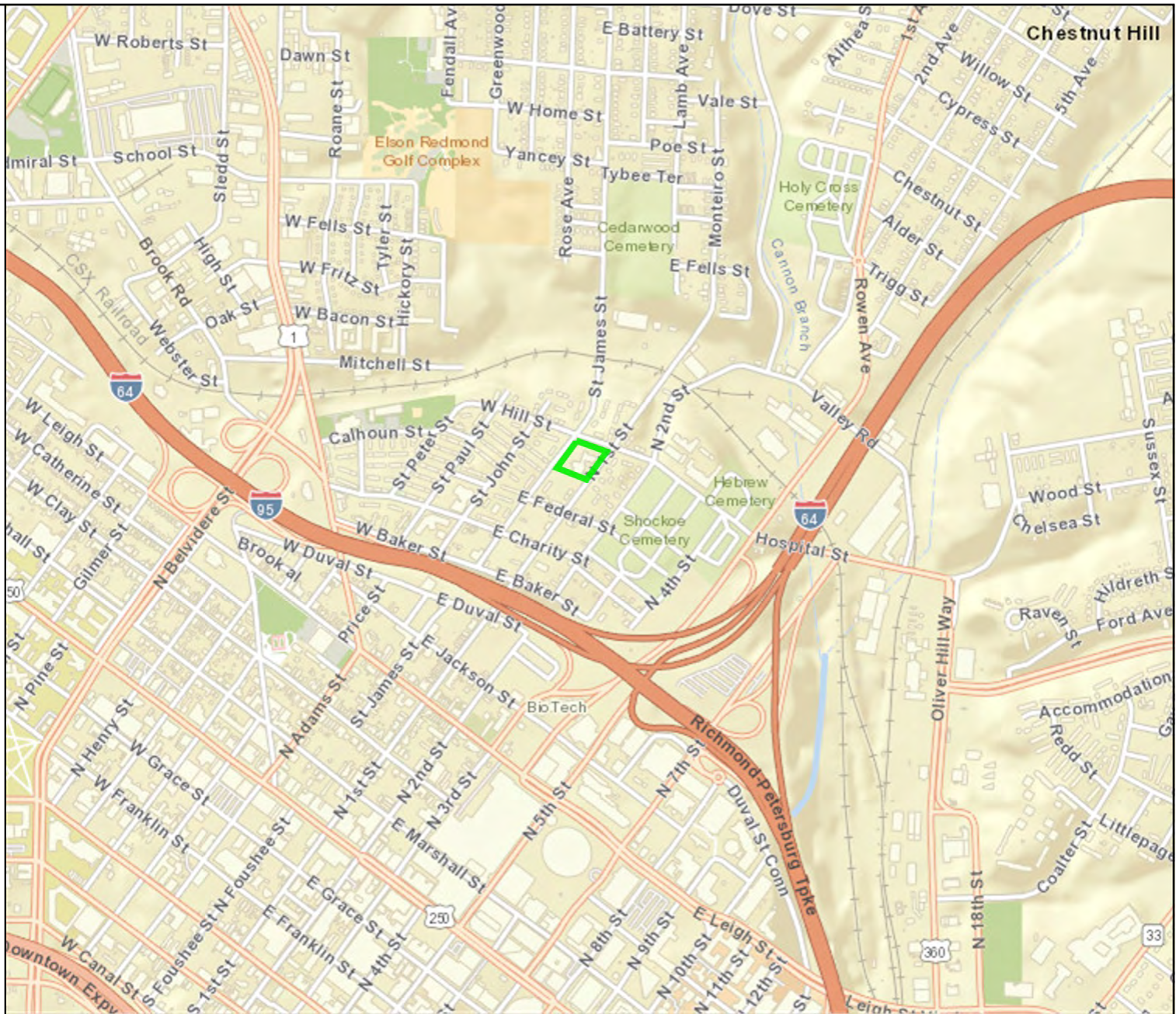
 **Historic Boundary**



Feet

0 500 1000 1500 2000

1:18,056 / 1"=1,505 Feet



**Title:**

**Date: 5/17/2023**

*DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.*

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**Legend**

Location Map:

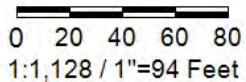
High-Rise for the Elderly  
1202 N 1st Street  
City of Richmond, VA  
DHR #127-7673

Lat: 37.553189  
Lon: -77.433961

 Historic Boundary  
(white line on map)



Feet



**Title: High-Rise for the Elderly (127-7673)**

**Date: 5/24/2022**

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**Legend**

Sketch Map/ Photo Key

High-Rise for the Elderly  
1202 N 1st Street  
City of Richmond, VA  
DHR #127-7673

 Photo Number & Direction

 Historic Boundary  
(white line on map)

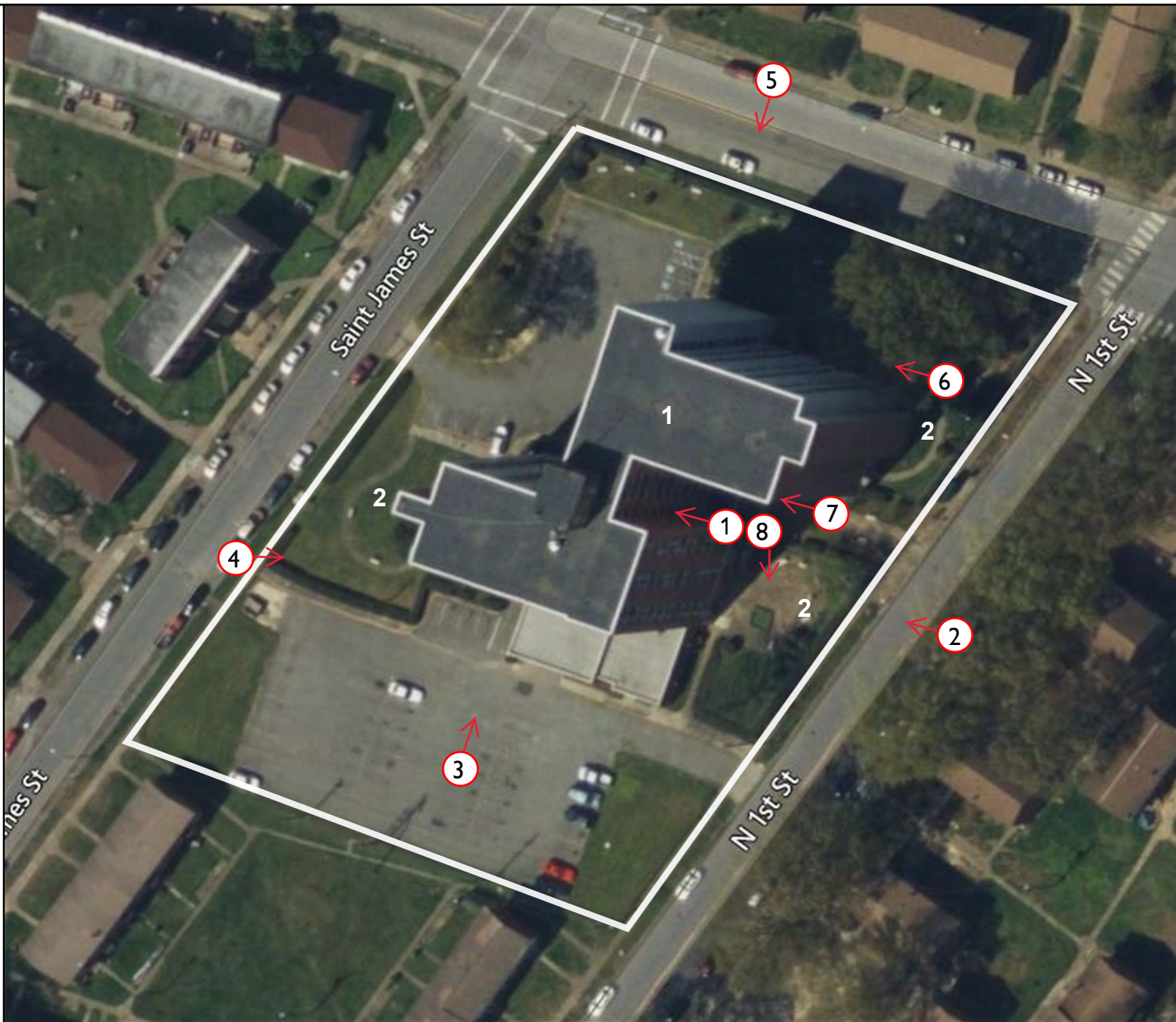
Contributing resources:  
1 - building  
2 - site



Feet



1:1,128 / 1"=94 Feet



**Title: High-Rise for the Elderly (127-7673)**

**Date: 5/24/2022**

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# TAX PARCEL MAP

## High-Rise for the Elderly

### City of Richmond, VA

Historic Boundary

DHR #127-7673

Property Detail x Richmond Parcel Mapper x +

cor.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c3ed34c0fb38441fb95cd2d2d6a22d48

**RVA** Richmond Parcel Mapper provided by the Office of the Assessor of Real Estate

6 e federal street, richmond, va

Show search results for 6 e federal str...

Richmond Parcel Mapper

Community Maps Contributors, City of Richmond, County of Henrico, VGIN, © OpenStreetMap, Microsoft, Esri

3:13 PM 5/17/2023