

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MADISON PARK MEDICAL CENTER (Reservoir Hill Historic District)

HABS No. MD-1447

Location: 920 West North Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland

The Madison Park Medical Center at 920 West North Avenue is located at latitude: 39.310592, longitude: -76.633838. The coordinate represents the approximate location of the exterior entry stairway in the southwest corner of the site and was obtained in 2022 using Google Earth (WGS84). There is no restriction on its release to the public.

Significance: Constructed ca. 1970, the Madison Park Medical Center is associated with the Civil Rights Movement in Baltimore. It is significant for its effective utilization of an urban renewal area to fulfill a long-felt community need by establishing a facility that provided a wide range of medical and health services to the previously underserved African American and low-income residents of Baltimore. Designed by the Baltimore architectural firm of Tatar & Kelly, Inc., the moderately sized, brown brick-faced building is representative of the Brutalist architectural style.¹

Description: The commercial building located at 920 West North Avenue is a one-story, irregularly shaped masonry commercial building comprised of eleven vacant medical suites and a vacant pharmacy, a central concrete paved sunken pedestrian plaza incorporating cut-out planters for trees, and a rubber-sheathed rooftop parking lot. The plaza opens onto the West North Avenue sidewalk and the rooftop parking lot is accessible from Eutaw Place via a short ramped vehicular driveway and an exterior pedestrian stairway from the plaza. The exterior walls are brown brick laid in a running bond pattern with matching brick coping and feature curvilinear inside and outside corners at junctions where straight walls change direction. The exterior walls also curve inward at the corners flanking the indented glazed single-door suite entrances that open onto the plaza. Exceptions to the indented suite entrances are two flush metal roll-up gated suite entrances located on the northeast elevation within the plaza and one flush glazed suite entrance opening directly onto the West North Avenue sidewalk. There are no entry doors or windows on the southwestern Eutaw Place elevation. The northeastern Jordan Street elevation has two flush

¹ Nicole Diehlmann, Meghan White and Laura van Opstal, "Madison Park Medical Center," Maryland Historical Trust Determination of Eligibility Form (Crownsville, MD: Maryland Historical Trust, 2022), 8.

steel doors protected by steel security gates located on the southern end of the wall. Approximately two-thirds of the northwestern wall adjoins the adjacent residential building at 2205 Eutaw Place. The remaining non-adjoining portion of the northwestern wall is partially below grade and is topped by a chain-link fence.

The interior of the building is divided into eleven medical suites and one pharmacy; all interior spaces have been vacant since ca. 2020. There are drywall partitions within the suites and masonry construction on the outer perimeter walls, the rear egress corridor walls, and the walls dividing one suite from another. Interior ceilings are either painted concrete (the underside of the structural roof deck planking) or suspended acoustical ceiling tiles. Flooring material varies by area and is either carpet, stone tile, ceramic tile, vinyl tile, or exposed concrete.

History: The Madison Park Medical Center, located within an area designated in 1963 as the Madison-Park North Urban Renewal Area, was constructed in 1970 in coordination with the Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Agency (BURHA).² As part of a 1967 agreement between BURHA and Madison Park Medical Center, Inc., the Madison Park Medical Center, Inc. purchased the property from the city for \$41,500. In the agreement, the city committed to demolish the site's late-nineteenth-century buildings, pave and resurface the streets, and provide utilities to the site. Madison Park Medical Center, Inc. agreed that the use of the site would be in compliance with the Madison-Park North Urban Renewal Plan; that the use or occupancy of the site would not involve discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, or nationality; and that the new construction would be designed in accordance with BURHA design requirements.³

The mandatory design criteria limited the maximum building height to 60' and the maximum gross floor area square footage to one-and-one-half times the square footage of the site, and it required that a minimum of 25 percent of the site not covered by structures be landscaped. There were also requirements for paved, off-street parking and signage.⁴ The architectural expression of these

² "Group Fights for Renewal: Redevelopment of Madison-Park North Sought," *The Sun* [Baltimore], 3 March 1963, 34, cited in Nicole Diehlmann, Meghan White and Laura van Opstal, "Madison Park Medical Center," 4.

³ Maryland State Archives (MSA), Baltimore City Land Records (BCLR), <https://www.mdlandrec.net>, accessed September 13, 2021, cited in Nicole Diehlmann, Meghan White and Laura van Opstal, "Madison Park Medical Center," 4.

⁴ Ibid.

requirements was evident in the built design that included rooftop parking, a landscaped courtyard, and individual signage above each suite.

The Madison Park Medical Center was designed by the firm of Tatar & Kelly, Inc., a Baltimore architectural firm that operated from 1961 to 1974. Their residential work was described as “minimalist” and “emphasizing lightness and transparency,” some of which “had the appearance of a flat-roofed glass box.”⁵ Their institutional designs were described as “often more Brutalist in style.”⁵ Other buildings they designed include the Maryland State Pavilion at the 1964 New York World’s Fair, for which they received an honorable mention award from the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects; the Towson Branch of the Baltimore County Library System; the Waxter Center at 1000 Cathedral Street in downtown Baltimore; the Twin Ridge Apartments in Bare Hills, Baltimore County; the United States Post Office on East Fayette Street in Baltimore; and the Steuart Hill Elementary School in southwest Baltimore at Lombard and Mount Streets.⁶

The doctors who organized the Madison Park Medical Center were members of the African American Community Health Council of Maryland and were working to address one of the Council’s primary concerns, i.e., low-income African Americans’ access to healthcare.⁷ By the time the medical center was developed, areas surrounding the facility, including parts of Old West Baltimore and Reservoir Hill, were primarily African American residential areas.⁸ On April 18, 1970, eleven physicians, including some of the most distinguished African American members of the city’s medical community, secured ten- to twenty-year leases for suites in the medical center, and the property opened soon thereafter.⁹ Aerial photographs show that the building had been constructed by 1971.¹⁰

Mercy Medical Center acquired a 40 percent interest in the property in 1999

⁵ Nicole Diehlmann, Meghan White and Laura van Opstal, “Madison Park Medical Center,” 7.

⁶ “William Boulton ‘Bo’ Kelly Jr., Architect and Preservationist,” *The Sun*, 6 August 2012, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/obituaries/bs-md-ob-william-kelly-20120806-story.html>, accessed 12 September 2021, cited in Nicole Diehlmann, Meghan White and Laura van Opstal, “Madison Park Medical Center,” 5-6.

⁷ “Doctors Organize to Assist Deprived,” *Afro-American*, 13 September 1969, 19, cited in Nicole Diehlmann, Meghan White and Laura van Opstal, “Madison Park Medical Center,” 7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹ MSA BCLR 2630/490, 2630/508, 2630/526, 2630/544, 2630/562, 2630/580, 2630/58, 2630/616, 2631/1, 2631/19, cited in Nicole Diehlmann, Meghan White and Laura van Opstal, “Madison Park Medical Center,” 5.

¹⁰ NETROnline, Historic Aerials, 1971, National Environmental Title Research, LLC, <https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer>, accessed 20 October 2022, cited in Nicole Diehlmann, Meghan White and Laura van Opstal, “Madison Park Medical Center,” 5.

and the remaining 60 percent in 2012 and they operated the facility until at least 2020.¹¹

- Sources: Diehlmann, Nicole, Meghan White, and Laura van Opstal. "Madison Park Medical Center." Maryland Historical Trust Determination of Eligibility Form. Maryland Historical Trust, Crownsville, MD, 2022.
- "Doctors Organize to Assist Deprived." *Afro-American*, 13 September 1969, 19. Cited in Nicole Diehlmann, Meghan White and Laura van Opstal, "Madison Park Medical Center," 7.
- "Group Fights for Renewal: Redevelopment of Madison-Park North Sought." *The Sun* [Baltimore], 3 March 1963, 34. Cited in Nicole Diehlmann, Meghan White and Laura van Opstal, "Madison Park Medical Center," 4.
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¹¹ MSA BCLR 5569/229; MSA BCLR 9097/262; and MSA BCLR 14839/385; cited in Nicole Diehlmann, Meghan White and Laura van Opstal, "Madison Park Medical Center," 7.

“William Boulton ‘Bo’ Kelly Jr. Architect and Preservationist.” *The Sun*, 6 August 2012. <https://www.baltimoresun.com/obituaries/bs-md-ob-william-kelly-20120806-story.html>, accessed 12 September 2021. Cited in Nicole Diehlmann, Meghan White and Laura van Opstal, “Madison Park Medical Center,” 5-6.

Historians: Nancy L. Zerbe, Steven Patrick, ARCH², Inc., 2022

Project

Information: The documentation of 920 West North Avenue was undertaken in 2021-2022 as mitigation in accordance with the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement for the Frederick Douglass Tunnel Program, formerly the B&P Tunnel Replacement Program. 920 West North Avenue will be demolished to make way for construction of the Intermediate Ventilation Facility and the realignment of the Northeast Corridor associated with a new 1.9-mile-long tunnel north of the existing tunnel alignment. The documentation project was sponsored by the United States Department of Transportation Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak), in coordination with the Maryland Historical Trust. It was prepared by Nancy L. Zerbe, Principal Investigator, and Steven Patrick, Historian. Renee Bieretz prepared large-format photography. Christopher H. Marston, HAER Architect, advised the project.

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Renee Bieretz, photographer, January 2022

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