

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: Fred W. Parris Towers

Other names/site number: _____

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: 1800 S. Broadway Street

City or town: Little Rock State: AR County: Pulaski

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ 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

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

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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:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

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

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT – International style

Materials: (enter categories from instructions)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Walls: Brick, Glass
Roof: Asphalt

Narrative Description

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

Summary Paragraph

The Fred W. Parris Tower is a 14-story International Style residential tower located on a three-acre site approximately one mile south of downtown Little Rock, Arkansas. Built in 1972 as public senior housing, the property is “a tower in the park,” which consists of high-rise domestic buildings set in large landscaped sites. The surrounding neighborhood is predominately single-family houses. The balance of the site is a parking lot and lawn. The reinforced concrete masonry frame tower is roughly 260 feet in length and 60 feet across. The exterior has tan masonry walls with horizontal bands of windows on the north and south elevations. The interior ground floor contains a lobby, offices, library and community room. Floors 2 through 14 are similar in plan with a double-loaded corridor. Finishes include brick walls, acoustic tile and gypsum board ceilings, wall-to-wall carpet, tile, and concrete floors. In total, the building has 250 units of which 140 are studios, 100 are one-bedrooms and 10 are two-bedrooms. The building is in good condition with a high degree of integrity.

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Narrative Description

Setting: Parris Tower is located approximately one mile south of downtown Little Rock in a predominately single-family residential neighborhood. Broadway Street (US Highway 70B) is a north-south arterial with two lanes of traffic in each direction. Broadway runs north into downtown Little Rock, across the Broadway Bridge and into North Little Rock; to the south, it terminates at Roosevelt Boulevard, six blocks from the subject site. East-west cross streets (18th and 19th Streets) are residential service streets.

The surrounding neighborhood is marked by single-family residences, which generally date to circa 1910-30 and are typically two-story homes mostly on rectangular 50 by 100 foot lots. The exception is along Broadway, which is characterized by homes that have been adapted for professional use and small strip-style commercial buildings. One block south is a modern church complex. Six blocks to the north is the Mount Holly Cemetery. Two blocks to the east is the Arkansas Governor's Mansion and the surrounding National Register Historic District. Continuing north, Broadway crosses I-630 and becomes intensely commercial.

Site: The property is rectilinear and "L" shaped. With the exception of two parcels at the northwest on Arch Street, the property occupies the entirety of the block bounded by Broadway Street, Arch Street, 18th Street and 19th Street. The site is approximately 3 acres, 500 feet north and south and 300 feet along 19th. The northwest quadrant excised from the block measures roughly 150 feet on the east-west axis and 170 feet on the north-south.

The building is located on a southwest-northeast diagonal approximately at the center of the parcel. The area to the southeast is largely paved with asphalt and dedicated to parking with a landscaped island in front of the main entry and a landscaped band at the perimeter. The area to the northeast is a landscaped park-like setting. Services are accessed from the west to the northwest side of the building and the rear entry.

Structure: The site contains a single building, a masonry clad steel frame rectilinear 14-floor tower with a one-story ell at the northeast corner. The building is built on grade. The tower measures roughly 260 feet in length and 60 feet in width.

Exterior: Parris Tower is rectilinear in form and best understood as an example of the International Style of architecture. Materials are consistent on all four elevations with a tan-colored masonry skin. The southeast and northwest elevations are similar, as are the northeast and southwest. The building faces southeast; while the northeast elevation is nearly identical, it also is the service entry.

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Southeast Elevation: The rectilinear southeast elevation is rhythmically defined by its flat plane of tan-colored brick with primary flush pilasters breaking the massing into six bays, four of which are identical with two half as wide to create an A:A:A:B:A:B pattern. The first floor is topped with an angled shed roof clad in copper panels. Recessed window bays at the second and third floor are separated by narrow, deep columns that align with the pilasters on the floors above. The upper floors contain slightly recessed spandrels which create a strong horizontal line complemented by recessed horizontal aluminum slider and fixed frame windows. Minor brick pilasters separate each unit to express function. The top floor expresses a capital of the building with additional pilasters, creating narrower bays of windows.

The primary entrance is off-center, located in the third easternmost bay . The entrance consists of a projecting aluminum sliding door system with window surrounds and transoms. The entrance is distinguished by a projecting cantilevered roof clad in copper panels.

Northwest Elevation: The northwest elevation is similar to the southeast but more utilitarian in design. It does not contain the expressed base on the first three floors. Rather, the upper floors are uniformly arranged. The bay structure is consistently four recessed windows across, with the exception of the third bay from the northeast corner which is two windows across with flush windows. At the 14th floor, the elevation is predominately a blank wall, with the exception of three bays of windows at the east end, due to the location of mechanical equipment on the interior. At the first floor, there is a one-story ell located at the northeast corner of the elevation, which houses the community room. The ell is clad in brick and fenestrated by large aluminum-framed plate-glass windows on its east and west elevations.

Northeast Elevation: This secondary elevation is approximately 60 feet across with a single fixed window at the center dividing the otherwise blank wall into halves. Facing the elevation, the left half extends forward roughly ten feet.

Southwest Elevation: The southwest elevation is similar to the northeast with a central bay of windows flanked by blank walls, the right half extending forward. However in this elevation, the window bay is flush with and incorporated into the forward wall so that the two planes are asymmetrical.

Interior: Interior finishes are consistent throughout with walls of brick that matches the exterior brick in addition to painted gypsum board. Ceilings are painted gypsum board and suspended acoustical tile. Flooring is asbestos tile, wood laminate, and carpet.

Each floor is defined by a central double-loaded corridor. At the first floor, the building contains the primary entrance and two lobbies at the center southeast. To the east is the post office and community room, along with a kitchen and various smaller rooms functioning as offices. To the west are additional offices along with a computer room

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and apartments. Finishes in the lobby consist of modern tile and wood laminate floors, brick walls, and suspended acoustical tile ceilings. The elevators are located directly north of the entrance. Elevators contain metal surrounds and are set within concrete walls. Behind the elevators is the secondary entrance, which consists of modern aluminum sliding doors, similar to that of the primary entrance. Flanking the lobby to the east and west is a double-loaded corridor, which leads to a community room, library and offices to the east, and leads to mechanical rooms, computer room, storage, and living units to the west.

Floors 2 through 13 are more or less identical with paired elevators at the center on the north side opening directly to the corridor. The corridor has brick walls, either acoustical dropped tile ceiling or gypsum board, and tile flooring. Fire stairs are located at each end of the corridor. Stairs have concrete treads and risers with painted steel railings with brick walls. A small community laundry room is located behind the elevators. The remainder of the floor is dedicated to apartments.

In total, the building has 250 units of which 140 are studios, 100 are one-bedrooms and 10 are two-bedrooms. Finishes within the units are similar to the remainder of the building and include asbestos tile, brick and gypsum board walls, and gypsum board ceilings. Generally, kitchens and bathrooms, which are located along the corridor walls in each unit, have been updated. Living rooms and bedrooms are located against the exterior walls, accessing windows. In the one-bedroom units and studios is a free-standing partition/wardrobe with built-in storage that separates the living area and sleeping areas. The 14th floor is similar to other residential floors except that it has mechanical rooms in lieu of apartments at the northwest portion of the floor.

Alterations: The building is in good condition with a high degree of integrity.

There have been no substantial alterations to the site, nor the exterior or interior of the building. Changes have been limited to three areas. First, some ground floor spaces have been repurposed but without physical change. For example, the room at the northeast was designed for a game room but now functions as office space. Similarly, the medical office is currently an office, and the ground floor management apartment is used for storage. Second, some bathrooms and kitchens have been upgraded as necessary depending on condition. Third, there have been some cosmetic updates, such as installing wood vinyl flooring or vinyl flooring in some areas on the first floor and in the corridors on the upper floors.

Overall, the property is in good condition though systems and materials are nearing the end of their functional life.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1971-1972

Significant Dates

1971-1972

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Wittenberg, Delony & Davidson

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

Fred W. Parris Towers was constructed in 1971-1972 as public housing built specifically for the elderly by the Little Rock Housing Authority (LRHA). The property is locally significant under Criterion A for POLITICS/ GOVERNMENT. Specifically, Parris Tower, along with Cumberland and Powell Towers, was developed directly in response to a shift in federal policy for public housing to targeting senior citizens. This policy shift dates to the Housing Act of 1956, which gave funding priority to senior housing in public housing construction and resulted in the first federally-funded senior housing projects in the country. Prototypical design adhered to Corbusier's "Tower in the Park" concept with efficiencies and one-bedroom units stacked in a single high-rise building surrounded by a larger green space. These projects were typically located in residential areas at the perimeter of downtowns. Integral to the concepts were associated social programs and services. Despite best efforts, progress in the Eisenhower Administration was slow. Upon election, the Kennedy Administration redoubled efforts; the passage of the Housing Act of 1961 resulted in a significant boost in federal funding for affordable senior housing. The policy then blossomed with the largess of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, though the allocation of federal funding often resulted in a protracted development process. The overall trend resulted in several hundred senior housing projects around the country. The trend ended in 1973 when the Nixon Administration placed a moratorium on new construction and shifted federal policy to public housing vouchers. Parris, along with Cumberland and Powell, are the only examples of this historic context in Little Rock.

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

HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

In February, 1969, the *Arkansas Democrat* reported that the Little Rock Housing Authority (LRHA) has secured federal funding to plan the construction of 800-1,200 affordable apartments for the elderly and planned to develop three high rise towers.¹ As LRHA director Clifton Giles stated, "We think there is a great need for safe, decent housing for our senior citizens in Little Rock."² The first of the three projects was the Fred W. Parris Towers to be located just south of downtown on land owned by KATV Channel 7.³ The location was considered, "close enough to shopping and entertainment to be convenient and separate enough to be peaceful." LRHA bought it for \$384,700.⁴

¹ "Housing agency plans apartments for elderly." *Arkansas Democrat*. February 27, 1969. 6B.

² "HUD to Guarantee \$4 Million To Build Housing for Aged," *Arkansas Gazette*, June 2, 1970. 3A.

³ "Housing Units for the Elderly are Considered," *Arkansas Gazette*, February 10, 1970. 9B.

⁴ "Housing the Elderly in Little Rock," *Arkansas Gazette*, June 8, 1970. 4A.

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Plans for the building were published in June of 1970. The proposed building would provide 251 units in a modern tower that supported independent living for seniors. Units were similar in size, including 378 square foot efficiency studios and 462 square foot one-bedrooms. All units would have a living room/dining and a bedroom separated by a free-standing partition/wardrobe which also functioned as storage. The kitchen was open and adjacent to the living room/dining room. The bathroom was located off the bedroom. The building had a limited number of two-bedroom units. All units included air conditioning and sliding windows with window ledges that could support house plants. Units also included a number of senior specific amenities: waist-level electrical outlets, bedrooms with grab rails, and an emergency system in each room so residents can summon help with the push of a button.

The building also featured a number of specific spaces for the elderly population, including a large landscaped parcel that had garden/greenspace just off the game room at the northeast corner, a large community room with an adjacent kitchen for community meals, multiple game and craft rooms, including pottery kilns, and a library that could double as a chapel.⁵ The building also had an apartment for live-in management, as well as offices for LRHA. The complex had the added bonuses of the 24-hour security/assistance program as well as an onsite medical office. The project was financed by a loan from Housing and Urban Development of \$4,447,310. Funds not used for construction and land acquisition were used for administrative expenses and architectural fees. Unit rent was set at \$34 per month.⁶

The architect was the Little Rock firm of Wittenberg, Delony & Davidson. George Wittenberg founded the firm in 1919 and initially focused on residential projects. One of his early major projects was collaboration with architect John Parks Almand in the design and construction of Little Rock High School (site of the 1957 integration crisis) in 1927. At the time of construction, the \$1.5 million school was one of the largest and most expensive in the country. Through the 1930s and 1940s the firm focused on military, collegiate, and commercial work, including the PWA-funded Robinson Auditorium in Little Rock. In 1959, the firm incorporated to become known as Wittenberg Delony & Davidson, Inc. School commissions made up the majority of the firm's work, followed by residential, commercial, and collegiate. In the 1960s, in addition to work with the LRHA, the firm won design awards for the Empire Life Building, the State Health Department Building, and the Arkansas State Hospital.

Ground-breaking occurred in early 1971 and construction continued through the year. Its progress was heavily reported in major newspapers. In October of 1971, the *Arkansas Gazette* published a photograph of the project site and described the masonry-load method of construction of the tower, which was the first of its kind in Little

⁵ "Housing the Elderly in Little Rock," *Arkansas Gazette*, June 8, 1970. 4A.

⁶ "Housing the Elderly in Little Rock," *Arkansas Gazette*, June 8, 1970. 4A.

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Rock.⁷ The building was completed in September of 1972 and named for Fred W. Parris, a prominent Little Rock political leader, alderman, LRHA board member and temporary mayor from September to December 1954. Upon its completion, Parris Towers was featured in the *Journal of Housing*. Residents began moving into the apartments in February of 1973, and the building was fully occupied by 1974. It has functioned as public senior housing since its construction.

CRITERION A: POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Parris Towers is locally significant under Criterion A for POLITICS/ GOVERNMENT. Specifically, Parris - along with Cumberland and Powell Towers - was developed directly in response to a shift in federal policy for public housing to targeting senior citizens. The following discussion consists of three components: 1) establishment of federal policy to create public housing for the elderly; 2) design parameters of urban senior public housing; and 3) senior public housing in Arkansas and Little Rock.

Public Housing for Seniors: Federal Policies

Perhaps surprisingly today, public housing built specifically for the elderly was largely non-existent until the 1950s. For much of America's history, the societal expectation was for family members to care for the elderly. During the Industrial Era, seniors with limited mobility and financial means were relegated to almshouses along with the mentally ill, orphans, and the physically disabled. As the 19th century progressed, the rise of charitable organizations and religious groups drew other groups and the more privileged elderly out of the almshouses and into institutions, hospitals, and other care facilities. By the 1920s the almshouses were overrun with the impoverished elderly. The almshouses came to embody the "distresses of abandonment, disgrace, poverty, loneliness, humiliation, and degradation."⁸

According to a United States Social Security Board from the 1930s, "the predominance of the aged in the almshouse is a sign of their increasing dependency."⁹ Due to this rising concern over the fate of the elderly, and the rising poverty as a result of the Great Depression, the Federal government intervened for the first time in 1935 with the Social Security Act, as part of FDR's New Deal legislation. In order to eradicate the hated almshouses, the act stipulated that seniors living within almshouses could now receive federal pensions. However, by blocking almshouse residents from pensions, aged individuals in need of long-term care were forced to seek shelter in private institutions. While the almshouse was eradicated, this forced many seniors into unregulated sanitariums. The proliferation of the sanitariums made it clear to lawmakers that not all elderly individuals could be supported in their own homes with monthly federal

⁷ "Reinforced Brick Walls Let Apartment Building Omit Usual Steel Frame," *Arkansas Gazette*, October 31, 1971, 4A.

⁸ Adapted from: Foundation Aiding the Elderly, "The History of Nursing Homes." <http://www.4fate.org/history.pdf>

⁹ *Ibid.*

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pensions; many needy older adults required long-term care and additional financial assistance, including housing.

However, during this era, federal public housing policy targeted low-income families; the public sector was generally unresponsive to the needs of seniors for studio and one-bedroom units. Seniors were left to fend for themselves in the private marketplace, often occupying deteriorated downtown hotels.¹⁰ The first known public housing project specifically for the elderly was the Fort Greene Houses in Brooklyn, New York, built in 1942 and funded through state bond funds.¹¹ When the Truman Administration passed the Housing Act of 1949 which created urban renewal, one of the programmatic requirements was that urban renewal agencies replaced any lost housing units. However, across the board, early urban renewal programs failed to meet this goal and the loss of downtown hotels as single resident occupancy buildings exacerbated the plight of independent seniors. As described by Kevin Eckert in *The Unseen Elderly*, "the downtown elderly, among the most limited body in income and coping resources, find themselves with fewer housing options and supportive neighborhoods."¹²

Simultaneously, demand for senior housing was also rapidly growing, with a rapidly growing senior population. In 1900, the percentage of older Americans was only 4% of the general population. In 1950, seniors represented 8% of the overall population. By 1970, it was 10% and in 1980, 11.5%. The majority of seniors, 14.6 million or 73%, lived in urban areas with 6.8 million in highly urbanized central cities. As characterized by sociologist Margaret Clark, "inner city elderly are, both physically and psychologist sicker than their age peers in other groups. They have a harder time surviving . . . like the rats that are often their only company."¹³ The *Oregonian* described similar situations in Portland: "thousands of Portland's senior citizens, living in unhealthy, drafty buildings, with unsafe stairways; buildings with vermin, rodents, debris and filth, buildings with inadequate plumbing or situations where too many people share a dirty, poorly lighted toilet facility."¹⁴ In 1960, average social security income nationwide was \$99.33 per month with rent often taking up to 50% of that income.

The Eisenhower Administration became increasingly aware of the issue and formulated a federal response. In 1956, Eisenhower established the *Federal-State Council on Aging* to more effectively coordinate policy and to help determine the "resources of the States and of the Federal government that can be mobilized in an attack on the problems of the later years." A group gathered for a three-day conference in Washington, DC, to explore solutions for seniors that could benefit from coordination of Federal and State Resources. Two years later, in 1958, Eisenhower signed the White

¹⁰ J. Kevin Eckert, *The Unseen Elderly: A Study of Marginally Subsistent Hotel Dwellers*, San Diego, CA: The Campanile Press, San Diego State University, 1980, p. 15.

¹¹ "Public Housing For the Elderly," in *Progressive Architecture*, March 1961, p. 144-152.

¹² *The Unseen Elderly*, p. 18.

¹³ *The Unseen Elderly*, p. 17.

¹⁴ *The Oregonian*. January 17, 1960. 37.

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House Conference on Aging Act create a national citizens' forum to focus attention on the problems of older Americans and to make consensus policy recommendations on how to enhance the economic security of this demographic group. This directly led to the 1961 White House Conference on Aging which called on Congress to expand public housing for seniors.¹⁵

Most importantly, Eisenhower signed the Housing Act of 1956 into law. This law gave priority to the development of public housing for seniors. It also modified eligibility requirements to allow one and two person households if the occupants were over 65 and increased construction allowances per room for units of one or two rooms intended to cover the higher costs of smaller rooms. Unfortunately, despite these initiatives, by March 1960, only 681 elderly public housing units had been built nationally. One of the first was a high rise in Somerville, Massachusetts.¹⁶

Beginning with the election of John F. Kennedy, public housing programs generally benefited from a shift in the political climate toward liberalism and gradual acceptance of the policy by the real estate and building industries. A keystone Kennedy initiative was the Housing Act of 1961 which provided \$4.88 billion in loans and grants to communities around the country for varied forms of public and subsidized housing. Robert Weaver, the administrator of the Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA), which was responsible for administering these funds, was deeply concerned with the future of America's seniors and prioritized elderly housing policy. The Housing Act of 1961 not only expanded federal funding for low-income senior public housing, but also liberalized financing for seniors to purchase their own homes. The 1961 Act also provided funds for seniors to rehabilitate their own homes, and funding for nursing homes. In addition, the federal program of direct loan to non-profit organizations for the construction of housing for elderly was expanded.¹⁷ A stimulus from the Public Housing Administration to local housing authorities granted an additional \$10 per month per unit for elderly housing units.¹⁸ As a result, senior housing increased exponentially across the U.S. For context, the HHFA financed as many projects in 1961 as the previous five years combined.¹⁹

President Lyndon Johnson was more aggressive in making urban issues one of the centerpieces of his administration. He elevated HHFA to a cabinet level position, forming the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and directed

¹⁵ United States Senate, Special Committee on Aging, "Basic Policy Statements and Recommendations." *The 1961 White House Conference on Aging*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961.

¹⁶ "Public Housing For the Elderly," in *Progressive Architecture*, March 1961, p. 144-152.

¹⁷ *Housing Act of 1959*, Section 202.

¹⁸ "Role of Government in Housing for Senior Citizens." Address by Sidney Spector, Assistant Administrator Housing for Senior Citizens, Housing and Home Finance Agency to the Western Gerontological Society. San Francisco, California. April 28, 1962. 7.

¹⁹ "Role of Government in Housing for Senior Citizens." Address by Sidney Spector, Assistant Administrator Housing for Senior Citizens, Housing and Home Finance Agency to the Western Gerontological Society. San Francisco, California. April 28, 1962. 2-3.

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Congress to expand government housing programs. Under Johnson's leadership, the Housing Act of 1965 was passed, which authorized 60,000 units of public housing over the next four years. This was followed by the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968 which set a goal of 26 million new dwellings, including 6 million new units for low and moderate income households over the next 10 years. Accordingly, average public housing starts rose to more than 35,000 in the 1960s and by 1970, the total number of public housing units built, under construction or planned had reached 1,155,300.²⁰

Design of Elderly Public Housing, 1956-1973

Unlike public housing for families and veterans, which the federal government had been subsidizing since World War II, elderly housing presented a new set of issues and design challenges including not only affordability, but also the special needs of elderly populations.

Under the aforementioned 1961 Housing Act, elderly housing aimed to avoid the feeling of an institution, while minimizing isolation among senior tenants. To avoid isolation, projects included community centers and social rooms within housing complexes.²¹ Organizations such as the AFL-CIO which advocated for the elderly, recommended, "sponsoring such housing that dwellings for the elderly should contain special features and equipment required by the elderly, including adequate community facilities and services, insofar as possible should be integrated into the community as a whole."²² In addition, elderly housing was viewed as a "new" problem, which would need a certain degree of flexibility in its implementation. There was also recognition that while there was a high demand for elderly housing in many US cities, elderly housing projects should be more accessible to amenities and neighborhoods.²³ This ideology stood in opposition to low-income public housing from the same period, which was often massive in scale (containing a higher density and larger number of units) and isolated in location.

The HHFA laid out guidelines for the design of new elderly housing in a 1962 internal memo prioritizing housing "designed and located to promote the dignity and maximum independence of the individual older person." The memo further stipulated that housing for seniors cannot be molded to a single pattern, but should offer a wide range of opportunities for the maximum exercise of free choice of living arrangement. Urban, rural, and suburban housing, therefore, would be designed to fit with the surrounding

²⁰ Von Hoffman, Alexander, "History Lessons for Today's Housing Policy: The political Processes of Making Low-Income Housing Policy." In *Housing Policy Debate*, New York: Taylor & Francis, 2012, p. 314-315.

²¹ "The 1961 White House Conference on Aging, Basic Policy Statements and Recommendations." May 15, 1961. U.S. Government Printing Office. Washington: 1961, 67. 72.

²² Statement of Boris Shishkin Secretary, Housing Committee, AFL-CIO before the Housing Subcommittee on Banking and Currency. July 11, 1962.

²³ "The 1961 White House Conference on Aging." 70.

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fabric.²⁴ The HHFA also stressed design with an emphasis on physical safety including such features as the avoidance of steps and thresholds; easy-to-reach kitchen equipment; sit-down sinks; non-skid floors; sit-down tubs and showers; wider doors and corridors; safety and grab bars in bathrooms; higher heat control; waist-level ovens and safety shut-offs on stoves; accessible wall plugs; and dwelling units whose size and design permit easy maintenance. HHFA “encourage[d] imaginative design, adequate size of units, and elements of beauty in architecture and furnishings...this will go toward boosting one’s evaluation of self and induce a sense of pride and belongingness.”²⁵

While HHFA accepted varying building forms, the architectural community was coalescing around the high-rise form in urban areas. As early as 1957, the industry, in the influential publication, *Progressive Architecture*, saw Modernist high-rise apartments generally as the solution to urban growth, particularly within the framework of urban renewal. Rather than the chaos of perimeter housing developments, the editors of *Progressive Architecture*, the high rise offered “controlled multiple housing,” emphasizing the livability of high rise providing natural light and air with panoramic views in response to limited land availability.²⁶

This focus on the high rise in the architecture community extended to senior public housing projects. In 1961, as HHFA was offering its design guidance on ideal housing for seniors, *Progressive Architecture* focused specifically on “Public Housing for the Elderly.” The article begins with a detailed survey of the senior housing problem - 16 million seniors 65 and older with 51% single. Most of the population faced physical, emotional, social and economic problems, and all were anticipating diminishing financial and physical health. The article then details the housing requirements, repeating much of the HHFA guidance and emphasizing improved heat, light and sound insulation. Largely focused on eliminating stairs, the authors conclude only two types of buildings are appropriate: one-story cottage-style and the high-rise building. The authors also note the importance of residents remaining within their current neighborhood, though they anticipated this would require zoning modifications.²⁷

That same issue of *Progressive Architecture* offered “One Solid Achievement” as the prototype for elderly housing. Conceived in 1956 and completed in 1959, Victoria Plaza in San Antonio, Texas, is a nine-story, T-shaped tower with 185 units located on a 2.7 acre site with fountained gardens and parking. Through interviews, architects determined that potential residents did not favor cottages on the edge of town, but rather wanted to live near the center of the city. The high-rise design also offered “the advantages of superior natural ventilation and separation from street sounds.”²⁸ The

²⁴ Memorandum: Housing for Seniors. From Sidney Spector to Robert C. Weaver, Administrator. Housing and Home Finance Agency. July 25, 1962.

²⁵ Memorandum.

²⁶ “Apartment houses their new significance,” in *Progressive Architecture*, April 1957, p. 107-125.

²⁷ “Public Housing For the Elderly,” in *Progressive Architecture*, March 1961, p. 144-152.

²⁸ “Public Housing For the Elderly,” in *Progressive Architecture*, March 1961, p. 144-152.

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first floor incorporated spaces for health, recreation, a library, and a senior counseling center. Access to the upper floors was via paired elevators to spacious yet flexible units.

The next year, the *Association of Schools of Public Health Journal* offered an article entitled "Housing for Senior Citizens" by E. Everett Ashley.²⁹ It too offered Victoria Plaza as "an outstanding example" of what senior housing should look like. In particular, it noted the presence of the social programming and recreational/social areas that included a community kitchen, library and counseling office.

Similar high-rise senior public housing appeared throughout the United States. The first such project in the Pacific Northwest was Northwest Towers. Conceived in 1960, the high rise was completed in 1964. The 150-unit, 13-story project was lauded by HHFA, HEW and PHA officials as exemplary and warranting replication. Similar examples can be found in cities throughout the country: Atlanta's 1966 17-story Palmer House, Seattle's 1967 17-story Jefferson Terrace, Chicago's 1968 nine-story Drexel Square, Baltimore's 14-story Lakeview Tower and Philadelphia's 1973 nine-story Germantown House, to name but five of hundreds. Of the initial projects constructed under the Housing Act of 1961, high-rise, elevator buildings prevailed.³⁰

For its part, the editors of *Progressive Architecture* revisited senior housing in 1967. This time, the 15-story George Crawford Manor in New Haven, Connecticut, was presented as "making architecture work for the elderly in an urban environment." One resident was quoted as saying "I went from Hell to Heaven when I moved from the boarding house to Crawford Manor." "The overwhelming opinion of the residents is that Crawford Manor is an exciting place in which to live. The garden to the rear will relieve some of the pressure for social space during the summer and the enclosure, with its handsome wall, provides a usable private green space in the middle of the city."³¹

In addressing this form of public housing, it is important to draw a distinction between the high-rise designs for families and those for seniors. High-rise designs for families from this era are epitomized by the infamous Pruitt-Igoe public housing project in St. Louis, designed by Minoru Yamasaki. Completed in 1955, Pruitt-Igoe consisted of 33 11-story apartment buildings on a 57-acre site. In total, the complex had 2,870 apartment units. While the architecture was hailed, crime and decay resulted in its demolition in 1971. In contrast, the high-rise paradigm for seniors was typically limited to a single building and typically set on a lawned site. In addition, seniors were viewed as more docile tenants, who tended to stay within their apartments and had fewer

²⁹ E. Everett Ashley, "Housing for Senior Citizens." In *Public Health Reports (1896-1970)*, Vol. 77, No. 5 (May, 1962), pp.398-400.

³⁰ "Housing for Senior Citizens: A Report to Senator John Sparkman, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Housing, Senate Committee on Banking and Currency." The Housing and Home Finance Agency, Office of Housing for Seniors. February 1962. 17-18.

³¹ "Houses and Housing The Elderly," in *Progressive Architecture*, May 1967, p. 124-134.

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visitors than families. The difference in population allowed for housing authorities to control and actively manage the site.

Public Housing for the Elderly in Little Rock

Similar to most other communities in the country, Little Rock did not have senior public housing until late into the 20th century. Powell Towers, along with Parris and Cumberland Towers were the first projects. However, the LRHA had developed public housing for families displaced by urban renewal. The first public housing projects built under the redevelopment plans were Tuxedo Courts in 1951, and the 400 units of Joseph A. Booker Homes at the far southeastern city limits in 1953.³² To this point, the last public Little Rock public housing project was Hollingsworth Grove, built in 1955 for African-Americans families in east Little Rock. All of these projects were low-rise garden style apartments. By 1968, LRHA owned and operated 1,173 apartments, generally located in isolated neighborhoods.

With new legislation and new funding available in 1969, LRHA director, Clifton Giles, recognized a need for senior public housing in Little Rock. One of his first steps was an education tour with board members of projects in Hot Springs, Arkansas, and North Little Rock, Arkansas.

Hot Springs, a town roughly one-third the size of Little Rock, was home to Mountain View, a public housing project completed in 1967 and designed by Little Rock architects, Wittenberg, Delony & Davidson. That project consisted of two sites combining for 29 acres that included both family and elderly housing. The first site, 17 acres, was adjacent to the National Park and included an 11-story 120-unit senior housing tower adjacent to low-rise family housing. The second site mixed senior townhouses with family residences. The high rise in particular was well received in the low-rise town. As quoted in a *Progressive Architecture* article, "high rise" is ordinarily a derogatory term in Arkansas, yet the authors noted a poem on the community bulletin board, "Ode to Our High-Rise." The building leased quickly and was well-regarded by the tenants. They particularly like the balconies, but also the mix of social spaces on the ground floor, including kitchen, club rooms and hobby area.

North Little Rock, located just cross the Arkansas River, is half the size of Little Rock. Here, three senior public high rise projects were constructed. The first was Campus Towers, completed in 1966 with seven stories and 71 units; it is located northeast of the town center in a predominately single-family residential area. The second was Heritage House, completed in 1967 with 11 stories and 171 units; it is located northwest and somewhat remote from the town center. At this time, Willow House was also under construction. Willow House was completed in 1969, with 12 stories and 215 units. All three units were similar in design and programming with high rise construction, double-

³² Nelson, Robert C. "Little Rock Slum Work Hailed." *The Christian Science Monitor*. November 5, 1958, pg. 20.

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loaded corridors, balconies with ground-floor public spaces that include kitchen, recreation spaces, hobby and club rooms.

Subsequently, Giles took board members to San Antonio to see the Victoria Plaza senior housing project. Since construction in 1959, this high-rise had been hailed as a model by government officials, architects, planners and social scientists.

Afterward, the board submitted an application to HUD for 1,200 units in November of 1969. The federal government approved 600 of the units, and LRHA soon after announced the construction of Parris Towers, quickly followed by Cumberland and Powell Towers.³³

In describing the proposed facility, Giles described a state-of-the-art facility, one that went far beyond mere sheltering and very similar to successful Victoria Plaza in San Antonio and the North Little Rock paradigms. The proposed building would provide 251 units in a modernistic tower that supported independent living: units were compact: 378 square foot efficiency and a 462 square foot one-bedroom. They were also considered eminently livable: an April of 1974 *Arkansas Gazette* article by Charles Allbright titled "How to Grow Old in High Rises," described daily life:

*These are the old persons who live in tall apartment buildings put up specifically for them. The buildings are efficient, safe, afford inexpensive space to the occupants, and almost without exception they rise in places earlier abandoned by the ongoing community- withal, a near perfect blending of judicious land use and applied demographics, held solidly together by the mortar of public monies. High rises for the elderly are prized by the early systems evaluators as one of society's truly enlightened gestures toward its own.*³⁴

Allbright went on to state that, "any argument that life-style in the high rose for the elderly might be reductive of personality, even of dignity, lacks relevance." The towers were a welcome solution to the increasing problem of inadequate housing for the low-income elderly population. The average rent of \$34 included a new lifestyle that "almost exceeds comprehension." For many residents, living in the towers was the first opportunity in their lives to have access to an indoor toilet and running water, as well as air conditioning and an electric stove.³⁵

Similarly, Bill Lewis of the *Arkansas Gazette* published an article titled "Elderly Will Find Apartment Building Designed for Them," which described the elderly-focused amenities included in the building, as well as the presence of "Senior Citizens Activities Today" SCAT program meetings onsite. "Although the apartments are small," Lewis stated, "they and the building in general provide all of the amenities the elderly could want."

³³ "Little Rock Opens First Elderly Public Housing," *Journal of Public Housing*, Vol. 29, No. 8, September 12, 1972.

³⁴ Charles Allbright, "How to Grow Old in High Rises," *Arkansas Gazette*, April 7, 1974. 4E.

³⁵ Charles Allbright, "How to Grow Old in High Rises," *Arkansas Gazette*, April 7, 1974. 4E.

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Lewis described in detail the ground floor amenities, including a “geriatric center” to be staffed by volunteer medical professionals, a library that would double as a study, chapel, and “quiet room,” and two crafts rooms- one for painting and another for ceramics, including kilns.³⁶

In September of 1972, the building was featured in the *Journal of Public Housing*, which described the building’s “variety of special features for the elderly” and a location that was “close enough to shopping and entertainment to be convenient and separate enough to be peaceful.” The article stated that Little Rock was placing “great emphasis” on recreational activities for seniors, through Senior Citizens Activities Today, Inc. (SCAT), an organization of local citizens funded by the United Fund, which planned cultural events, entertainment, and arts and crafts in a community room in Parris Towers. These activities were open to senior citizens throughout the city, in an effort to foster “fellowship with persons in the same age group.”³⁷

As discussed above, federal public housing policy shifted dramatically in 1973 from the construction and management of housing to a voucher system. Parris and Cumberland Towers were completed prior to this policy change; Powell was completed after. Regardless, these three properties represent the entirety of Little Rock’s response to the federal policy for elderly public housing, a policy that spanned from 1956 to 1973.

CRITERION CONSIDERATION G - PROPERTIES THAT HAVE ACHIEVED SIGNIFICANCE WITHIN THE LAST FIFTY YEARS

Parris Towers is significant as a local expression of federal policy to develop senior public housing between 1956 and 1973. While its date of construction is less than 50 years old, the property is associated with a historic trend that is and fully represents the historic values embodied in that trend.

In 1956, federal housing policy changed to accommodate and facilitate the construction of public housing for the elderly. Prior to that time, public housing focused on sheltering families; while federal programs did not specifically exclude seniors, eligibility requirements generally precluded them as tenants. Beginning with the Housing Act of 1956, complemented by the Housing Acts of 1961 and 1965, and by the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968, public housing for seniors not only became federal public policy, but received substantial funding that accelerated particularly after the 1968 HUD Act. Due to the application process to secure funding for planning, site acquisition, construction and occupancy, the pre-development period for most projects extended three or more years. This policy came to an end in 1973 when the Nixon Administration placed a moratorium on public housing construction.

³⁶ “Housing the Elderly in Little Rock,” *Arkansas Gazette*, June 8, 1970. 4A.

³⁷ “Little Rock Opens First Elderly Public Housing,” *Journal of Public Housing*, Vol. 29, No. 8, September 12, 1972.

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The policy resulted in hundreds of similarly constructed high-rise senior housing projects throughout the country, conceived and built between 1956 to the mid-1970s. In Little Rock, this policy resulted in the construction of the Parris, Cumberland and Powell Towers.

While the policy was not proscriptive in design, it tended toward significant uniformity. Almost immediately, political, professional and academic opinion leaders hailed Victoria Plaza in San Antonio, conceived in 1956 and completed in 1959, as the model project. This was followed by accolades for similar high-rise projects at dedication ceremonies around the country, including a planned celebration of Northwest Towers in Portland by President Kennedy. Thus, in pursuing funding, agencies tended to replicate the Victoria Plaza model. When the Little Rock Housing Authority embarked on housing for the elderly, leadership made a point to visit Victoria Plaza prior to its grant application.

As illustrated by Victoria Plaza, the model senior public housing project, particularly in urban areas, was high-rise construction of 9-17 stories. They were located proximate to downtown or urban commercial areas, in predominately residential areas with single-family houses. Conceptually, the designs embodied Le Corbusier's notion of a "tower in the park" with a central rectangular high-rise building with limited ornamentation other than repeating balconies set in a surrounding larger landscaped green space. The first floor featured a smallish lobby leading to paired elevators, but also included substantial community spaces such as meeting rooms, hobby/recreation rooms, library, and a larger dining room with kitchen. Social rooms often were located to open onto the green space. The first floor also had programmatic space for social services, including health, legal and counseling. And not infrequently, the first floor included offices for the associated housing authority. The elevators provided access to the upper floors which were defined by a simple double loaded corridor leading to efficiency and one-bedroom units; frequently, the efficiency units were stacked on one side of the building while one-bedroom units were stacked on the opposite. Buildings included a small number of two-bedroom units, and on-site housing for property maintenance or management. Often each floor had a laundry room. Units were compact, flexible and durable with large windows for light, ventilation and views; balconies were typical.

Parris Tower reflects all of the character-defining features of model senior housing. As noted, Little Rock public housing officials toured high-rise projects, including Victoria Plaza. Parris Tower reflects Le Corbusier's "tower in the park" with 250 units set on an approximately three-acre site. It is located proximate to downtown along a primary transit route but in a predominately residential neighborhood. The first floor is marked by community, social and hobby rooms plus spaces for social services. The upper floors are access by paired elevators which lead to a double loaded corridor. Units are stacked with efficiencies on the north and one-bedroom units on the south. Each floor has a laundry room. Units are compact and flexible. It supports affordable independent senior living with a safety net to guard against social isolation.

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The time frame for the historic context has hard temporal edges. It begins with the Housing Act of 1956 which authorized and prioritized senior public housing. The policy ends in 1973 with the shift in policy to a voucher system and a moratorium on construction, though projects which were funded and underway up to that point were completed. Relying on federal grant funding for project planning, site selection, design development, bidding and contracting, these projects universally had elongated pre-development periods of three plus years.

In Little Rock, only three buildings were constructed under this policy: Parris, Cumberland and Powell Towers. All are local and intact expression of that policy and building type, a model design with roots cemented in the mid-1950s. Conceptually, these properties are not indistinguishable from the models developed earlier in other parts of the country.

It should also be noted at least one building developed within this context has been determined to be significant and eligible for the National Register. That building was the Palmer House Apartments in Atlanta, which was completed in 1966, and designed as a 17-story, 250-unit public housing project for the elderly. In 2008, Georgia Historic Preservation Division determined the then 42-year old building to be eligible for the National Register. That determination was based primarily on architectural values, though the Palmer House was emblematic of the senior public housing prototype.

CONCLUSION

Fred W. Parris Towers was constructed in 1971-1972 as senior public housing by the Little Rock Housing Authority at a cost of \$3.6 Million. The property is locally significant under Criterion A for POLITICS/GOVERNMENT. Specifically, Parris Tower, along with Cumberland and Powell Towers, was developed directly in response to a shift in federal policy for public housing to initiate and create housing for senior citizens. This policy shift dates to the Housing Act of 1956, which gave funding priority to senior housing in public housing construction and resulted in the first federally funded senior housing projects in the country. Through the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, this policy resulted in the construction of hundreds of similarly conceived high rise senior housing projects around the country. In Little Rock, the policy resulted in three properties: Parris, Cumberland, and Powell Towers.

The designs were similar to the design that Victoria Plaza in San Antonio presented as a model. Prototypical design adhered to Corbusier's "Tower in the Park" concept with efficiencies and one-bedroom units stacked in a single high rise building surrounded by a larger green space. Locations were typically in residential areas at the perimeter of downtowns. Integral to the concepts were associated social programs and services. Parris Towers retained all character-defining features of this prototype.

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The trend ended in 1973 when the Nixon Administration placed a moratorium on new construction and shifted federal policy to public housing vouchers. Parris, along with Cumberland and Powell, are the only examples of this historic context in Little Rock.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository: University of Arkansas at Little Rock Center for Arkansas History and Culture (Arkansas Studies Institute)

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): PU1394

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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 2.987 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 34. 731415 | Longitude: -92. 279125 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

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: |

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

The subject is located on Lots 1 through 14 of Block 1 of Fulton's Addition to the City of Little Rock, and Lots 16 through 18 of Block 44, City of Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas. The Property Identification Numbers (PIN) as assigned by the Pulaski County Assessor's Office are 34L-207. 00-00. 1. 00 and 34L-020. 11-044. 00.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary is the historic and legally recorded boundary lines for the building for which National Register status is being requested.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: John M. Tess, President, edited by Ralph S. Wilcox, National Register & Survey Coordinator
organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
street & number: 1100 North Street
city or town: Little Rock state: AR zip code: 72201
e-mail: ralph.wilcox@arkansas.gov
telephone: (501) 324-9787
date: September 7, 2016

Additional Documentation

- Additional Document 1: Site Plan, 1970
- Additional Document 2: First Floor Plan, 1970
- Additional Document 3: Typical Floor Plan, 1970
- Additional Document 4: Typical One-Bedroom Apartment Layout
- Additional Document 5: Typical Efficiency Apartment Layout
- Additional Document 6: *Arkansas Gazette*, February 27, 1969
- Additional Document 7: *Arkansas Gazette*, February 11, 1970
- Additional Document 8: *Arkansas Democrat*, June 2, 1970

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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: Fred W. Parris Towers

City or Vicinity: Little Rock

County: Pulaski State: Arkansas

Photographer: Heritage Consulting Group

Date Photographed: June 2016

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

1 of 19 Exterior, South and West Elevations, Looking Northeast

2 of 19 Exterior, South Elevation, Looking Northwest

3 of 19 Exterior, South and East Elevations, Looking West

4 of 19 Exterior, North Elevation, Looking Southeast

5 of 19 Site, Looking Northwest

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- 6 of 19 Site and East Elevation of Community Room, Looking Northwest
- 7 of 19 Site, Looking Northeast
- 8 of 19 Exterior, Site and North Elevation, Looking Northeast
- 9 of 19 Exterior, South Elevation, Looking Northwest at Entrance
- 10 of 19 Interior, First Floor, Looking East at Lobby
- 11 of 19 Interior, First Floor, Looking South at Community Room
- 12 of 19 Interior, First Floor, Looking West at Corridor, Typical
- 13 of 19 Interior, First Floor, Looking South at Computer Room
- 14 of 19 Interior, Second Floor, Looking West at Elevators, Typical
- 15 of 19 Interior, Second Floor, Looking West at Laundry Room, Typical
- 16 of 19 Interior, Tenth Floor, Unit #1017, Looking South at Living Room, Typical
- 17 of 19 Interior, Tenth Floor, Unit #1017, Looking North at Kitchen, Typical
- 18 of 19 Interior, Tenth Floor, Unit #1017, Looking South at Bedroom, Typical
- 19 of 19 Interior, Fourteenth Floor, Looking South at Elevator Lobby

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U. S. C. 460 et seq.).

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

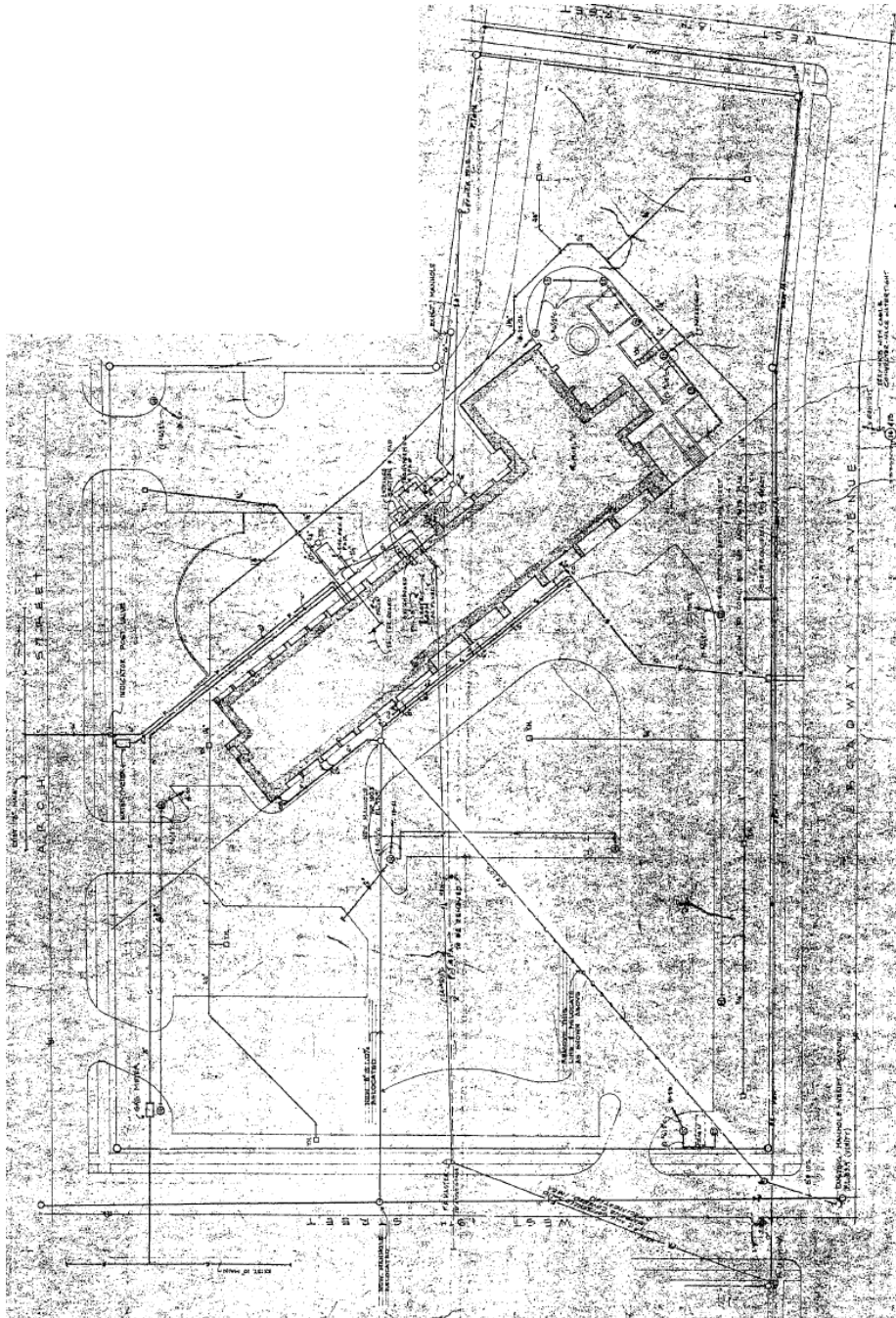
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

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N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Add. Documents

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Additional Document 1: Site Plan, 1970



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

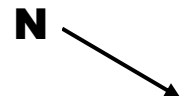
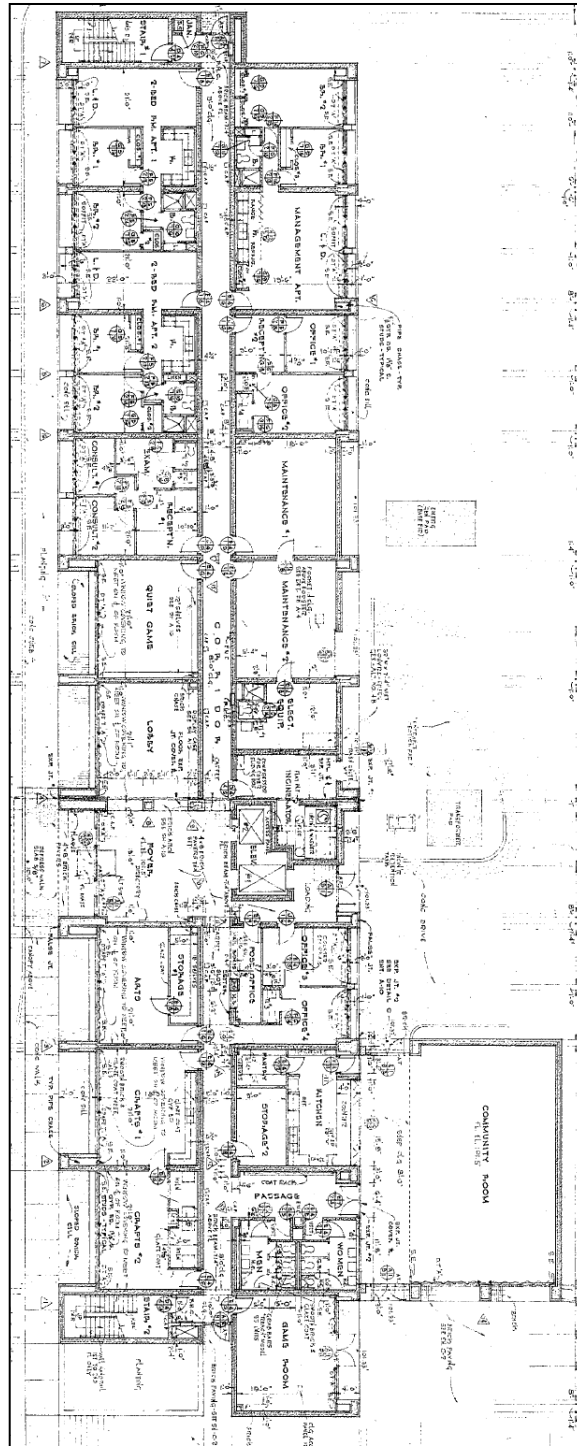
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

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Section number Add. Documents

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Additional Document 2: First Floor Plan, 1970



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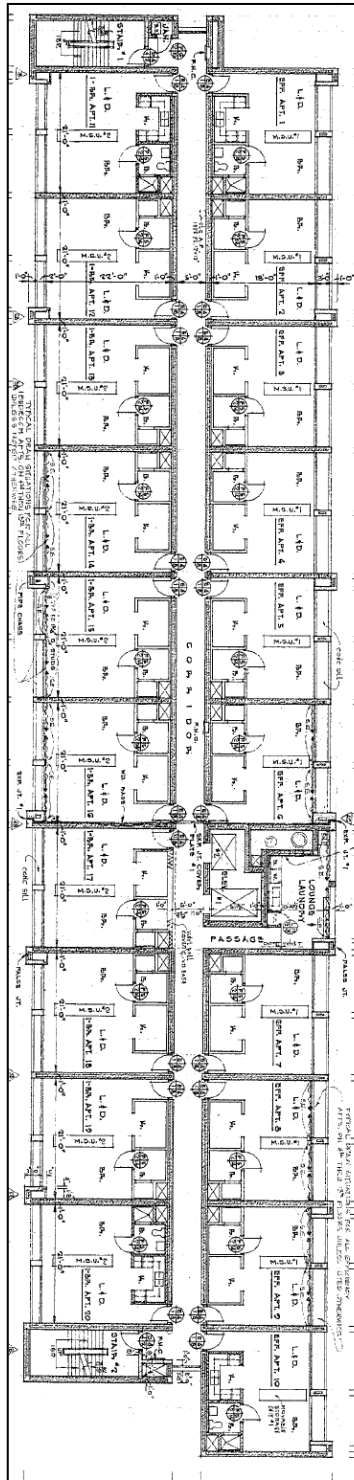
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Additional Document 3: Typical Floor Plan, 1970



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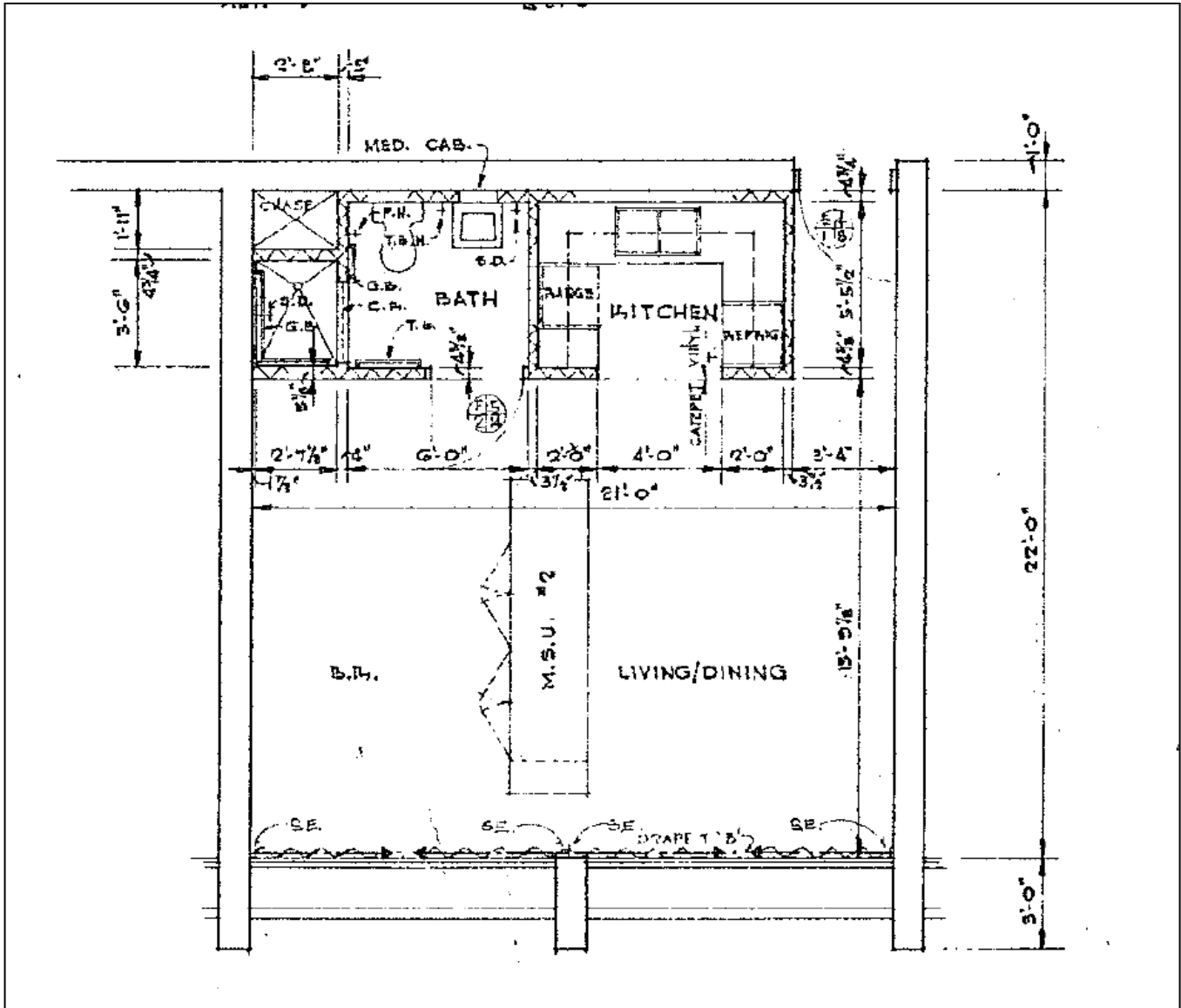
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Additional Document 4: Typical One-Bedroom Apartment Layout



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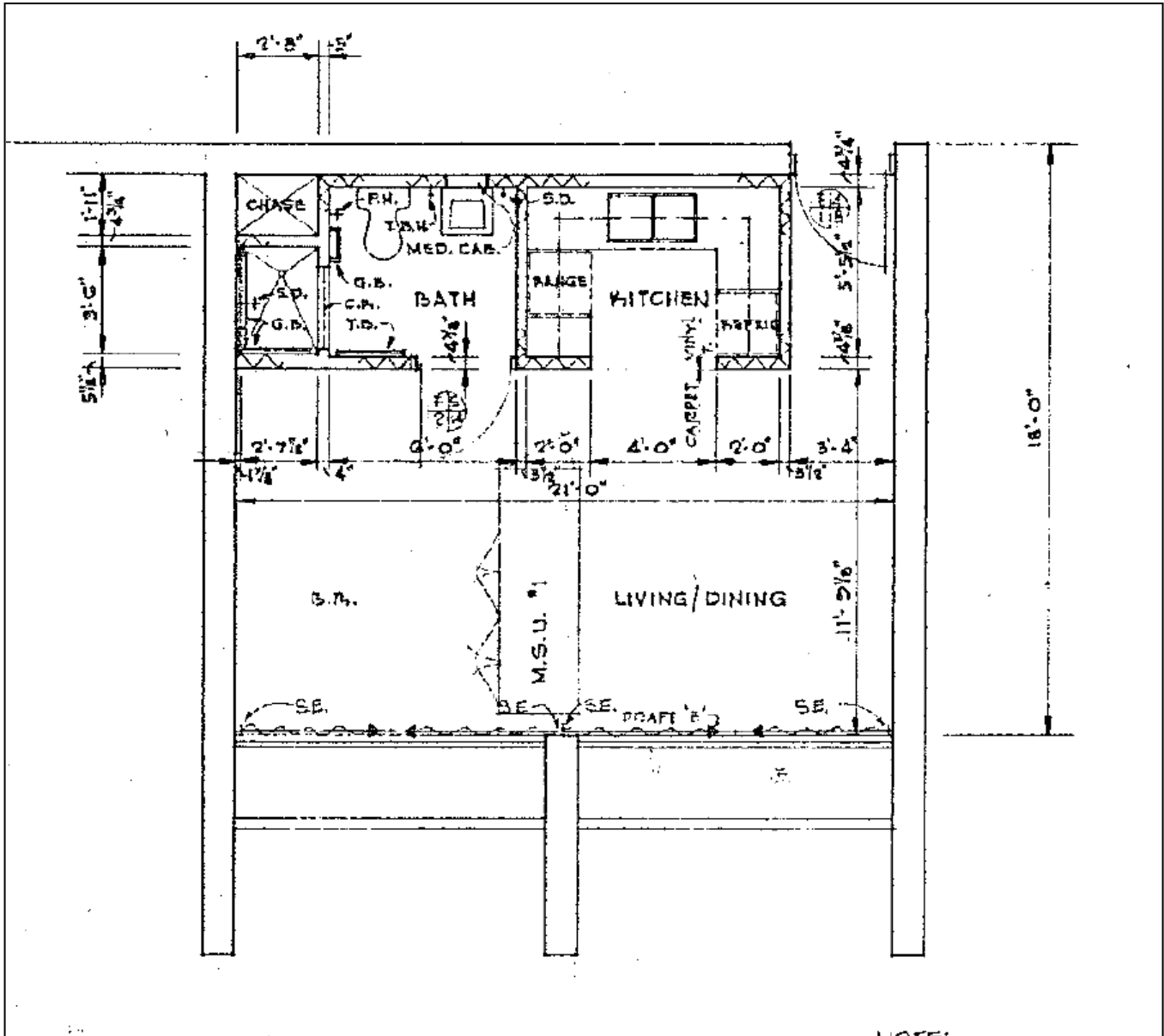
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Additional Document 5: Typical Efficiency Apartment Layout



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Additional Document 6: *Arkansas Gazette*, February 27, 1969



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Additional Document 7: Arkansas Gazette, February 11, 1970

Elderly Will Find Apartment Building Designed for Them

By BILL LEWIS
Of the Gazette Staff

The elderly people who will begin moving into the Fred W. Parris Tower on Broadway probably sometime this month will find that the entire building was designed with them alone in mind.

Although the apartments are small, they and the building in general provide all of the amenities the elderly would want, including a full-fledged program that will be conducted by Senior Citizens Activities Today in rooms designed and equipped for specific activities.

The building named for a long-time chairman of the Little Rock Housing Authority, which built, owns and will operate the facility, contains 251 apartments in 14 stories. One of the apartments will house the resident building maintenance man.

The top floor houses 11 two-bedroom apartments while the remaining floors, except the first, are filled with efficiency and one-bedroom units. All are centrally heated and air-conditioned with systems using circulating water. All have entrance and a 3-foot 6-inch door wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs, and switches and electrical outlets at hand height, for those who may find reaching difficult.

All curtains are furnished, and are designed to be hand-drawn. Pull cords might be hard for an arthritic hand to grasp.

A slipping ramp from the front working area (which has space for half of the tenants, about double the number found nationally) to still operate cars from retirement apartments) facilitates the wheelchair again, and automatic sliding doors operate from pressure switches in the floor near the front doors.

The building is served by two elevators, one a conventional passenger elevator and the other designed to accommodate stretchers and bulky items like furniture. (The units are not furnished, although all utilities, except telephone, are included in the rent.)

All inter-building telephone is installed at the entrance, just inside the door, and is linked to

others within the building, including one in the maintenance man's apartment. In each bathroom, an emergency switch that lights a red light — one per apartment — in the building manager's office. The same switches signal the maintenance man, who then can check the manual board in the manager's office when no one is on duty there. The manager will not be a resident of the building. The same system includes alarms for malfunctioning of boilers and a fire alarm bell in the maintenance apartment.

The kitchens have electric ranges with red warning lights that shine when surface units are up; a refrigerator and cabinets, with a built-in cutting board. Storage is provided in the efficiency and one-bedroom units in free-standing cabinets

that double as room dividers. The two-bedroom units have closets and somewhat larger kitchens.

None of the doors in the building has doornobs, which would be hard for arthritics in general. Instead, are equipped with lever-type handles. Handrails are provided around all showers and toilets of the apartments to facilitate their use by wheelchair-bound residents. The building has a built-in cable TV antenna system.

On each floor, behind the elevator bank, are coin-operated washers and dryers and a garbage chute that sends combustible material to ground-floor burners. These areas will be furnished as lounges to encourage informal visiting by the tenants, while they do their laundry chores. Half of the revenues from

set. A geriatric center, to be staffed by volunteer medical personnel, contains three private consultation rooms, a bath and a treatment room. Another room houses a library and will double as a study, reading and "quiet room."

Apartment keys will be turned to the mailboxes just off the entrance hall, to be served by the Postoffice Department from a locked room behind the mailboxes. The room contains a letter drop, and will be the sole provider of the Postoffice Department.

Other rooms on the ground floor will provide space for quilting (two quilts at a time, suspended from the ceiling); a general-purpose craft room, mainly for painting; a exercise room with two bikes, each in their own built-in bay; and a generous game room for cards, looking out onto a pleasant landscaped patio that will be outfitted with umbrella tables. Adjoining on the rear will be the largest general-purpose room, called a community room, with a kitchen adequate to serve full meals to as many as can be served in the community room. SCAT will continue its program of monthly pancake, potluck and chili suppers in this room, which also contains a piano and organ and a large sign that proclaims, "Gray Is Beautiful."

The restaurant-scale range, dishwasher and other equipment of the adjoining kitchen, as well as the community room organ, all are amenities acquired through memorial gifts, since federal regulations do not provide for such items.

SCAT participated in every step of the design of the ground floor, over which it will have full supervision. It will manage the one-time fire station at Mace Arthur Park that long has served as SCAT headquarters, and all SCAT members, whether residents of Parris Tower or not, will have access to the facilities SCAT operates there.

SCAT also will help to bring new tenants to the building. Charles E. Giles, executive director of the Housing Authority, has said that "90 per cent of the success of the building will be due to SCAT and the services they provide."

The \$5 million Parris Tower is of an unusual construction in that it lacks either concrete or structural steel framework. It is of masonry — lots of it — in a design called "masonry load," which utilizes two walls of brick tied with great, inside floor-to-rear walls are of brick masonry, and have been left exposed to add texture to the space. The technique is said to result in a building far stronger than those of conventional design, and has the added advantage of providing a finished wall when the building has been topped out.

A mansard over the front entrance is sheathed in decorative copper, and sloping window casements of the second-floor level also are copper-clad. A plan to utilize aluminum-anodized window framing throughout the building had to be deleted because of cost.

Parris Tower already is over-subscribed for tenants, Giles said, and the Housing Authority will have no difficulty filling two other high-rise apartment buildings on which it will take bids within the next two months. Occupancy and rents are based on income, the rent not exceeding one-fourth of adjusted annual income.

Units are rented on a first-come, first-served basis. At least 63 units at Parris Tower already are committed to blacks.

Rooms Can Look Like This

One model apartment at the new Fred W. Parris Tower for the elderly has been furnished to show how it might look to prospective tenants, who will furnish their own units. This is the living room of a one-bedroom unit.

Apartment Opens This Month

The 14-floor, 251-unit Fred W. Parris Tower, apartments for the elderly, will be opened this month by the Little Rock Housing Authority. The masonry building cost \$3 million and also will house the city's Senior Citizens Activities today program.

PHOTO BY BILL LEWIS FOR THE GAZETTE



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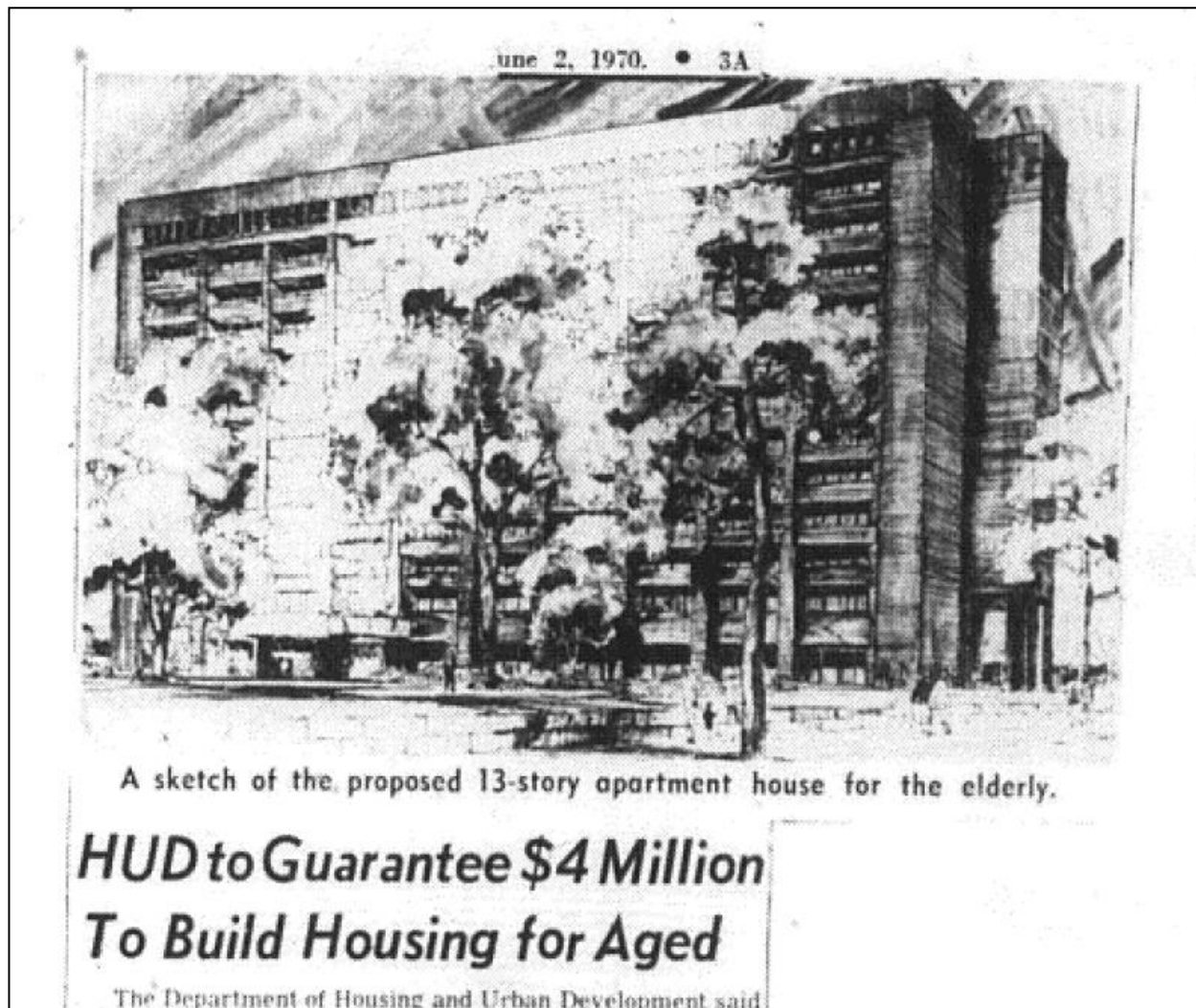
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Additional Document 8: *Arkansas Democrat*, June 2, 1970



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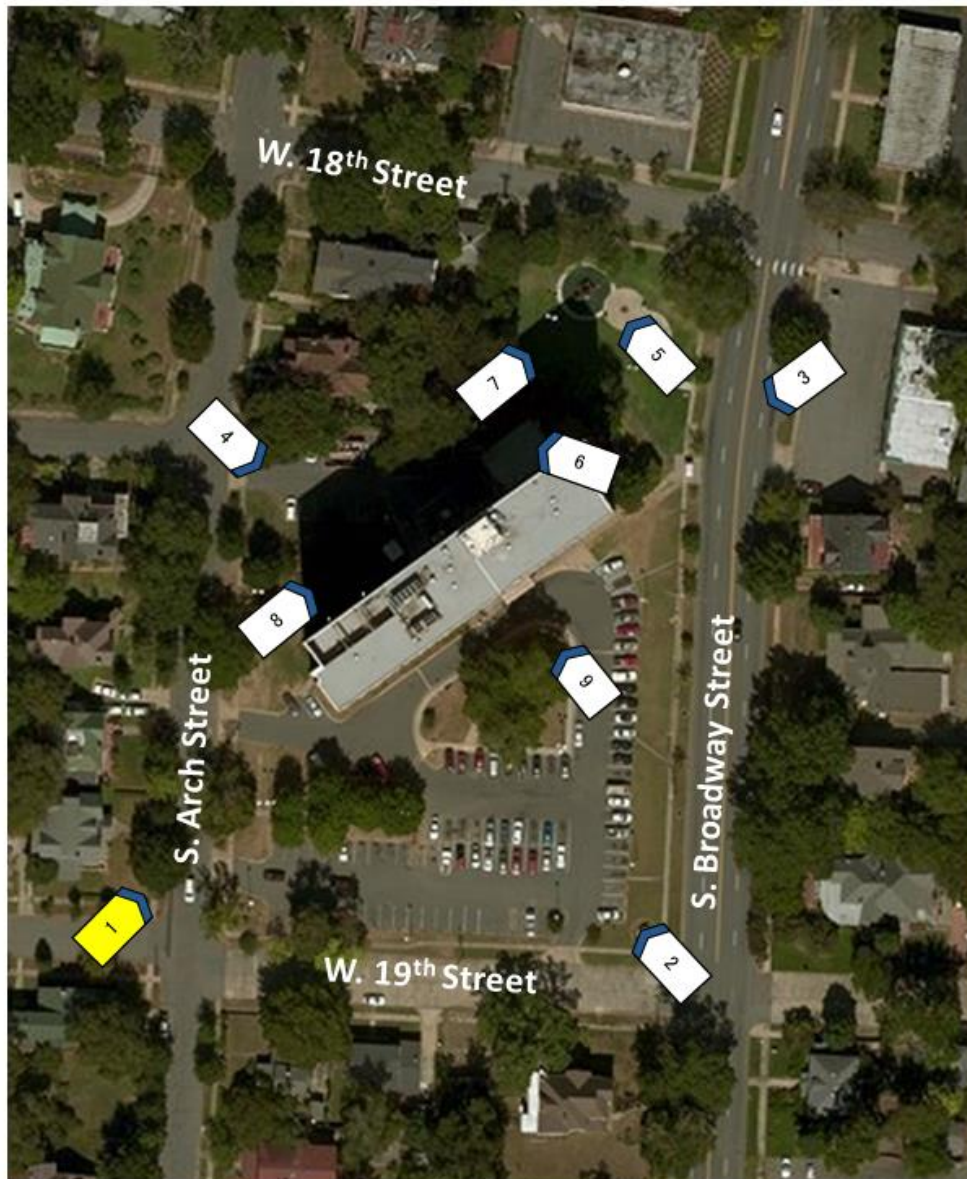
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Exterior photo Key



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Photo 1. Exterior, South and West Elevations, Looking Northeast



Photo 2. Exterior, South Elevation, Looking Northwest



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Photo 3. Exterior, South and East Elevations, Looking West



Photo 4. Exterior, North Elevation, Looking Southeast



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Photo 5. Site, Looking Northwest



Photo 6. Site and East Elevation of Community Room, Looking Northwest



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Photo 7. Site, Looking Northeast



Photo 8. Exterior, Site and North Elevation, Looking Northeast



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Photo 9. Exterior, South Elevation, Looking Northwest at Entrance



Photo 10. Interior, First Floor, Looking East at Lobby



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Photo 11. Interior, First Floor, Looking South at Community Room



Photo 12. Interior, First Floor, Looking West at Corridor, Typical



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Photo 13. Interior, First Floor, Looking South at Computer Room



Photo 14. Interior, Second Floor, Looking West at Elevators, Typical



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Photo 15. Interior, Second Floor, Looking West at Laundry Room, Typical



Photo 16. Interior, Tenth Floor, Unit #1017, Looking South at Living Room, Typical



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Photo 17. Interior, Tenth Floor, Unit #1017, Looking North at Kitchen, Typical



Photo 18. Interior, Tenth Floor, Unit #1017, Looking South at Bedroom, Typical



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Photo 19. Interior, Fourteenth Floor, Looking South at Elevator Lobby

