

National Register of Historic Places -- Detail Report

Old West Baltimore Historic District

General Information

NR Name: Old West Baltimore Historic District

NR Alternate Name:

Address Information

Address: Roughly bounded by North Avenue, Madison Avenue, Dolphin Street, and Fulton Avenue

Town: Baltimore City

Zip Code: 21217

Counties: Baltimore City

USGS Quad(s): Baltimore West

Listing Information

NPS Ref Number: 04001374

Confidential Location: ☐

Category: District

National Historic Landmark: ☐

Date:

Date Listed: 12/23/2004

Delisted: ☐

Date:

Date Revised: 7/10/2023

Multiple Property Submission: ☒

Multiple Property Submission Name: Civil Rights in Baltimore, Maryland, 1831-1976 MPS

Construction Information

Architect/Builder:

Period/Date of Construction:

1838-1954; 1898-1968 (for properties associated with the Civil Rights Movement)

About This Resource

Capsule Summary Text:

Old West Baltimore is primarily a row house neighborhood of approximately 175 city blocks directly northwest of downtown Baltimore. Strict diagonal and north-south street grids converge within this district roughly bounded by North Avenue, Madison Avenue, Dolphin Street, Hoffman Street, Fremont Avenue, Franklin Street, and Fulton Avenue. Most of the properties are row houses, but the district includes other housing from grand mansions to alley houses, as well as churches, public buildings (primarily schools), commercial buildings, and landscaped squares. Older traditional brick houses with flat facades and refined detailing predominate, but eclectic designs with projecting bays, turrets and terra cotta decorations are well represented in the district. Massive stone churches, often located at street corners, feature towers and spires that rise above the surrounding row houses creating dynamic streetscapes. The majority of commercial buildings, with the exception of corner stores, are clustered along Pennsylvania Avenue, the main street of the community featuring a later 20th century municipal market house. Although some older buildings have been meticulously rehabilitated, many are vacant and in a dilapidated condition. Vacant lots can be found throughout the area. Newer houses, commercial buildings, and churches have replaced large sections of older structures, especially in the vicinity of Pennsylvania Avenue, Gilmore Homes and the Laurens Street-Winchester Street corridor. Despite these intrusions, the historic character of the area has been maintained due to the retention of significant streetscapes and the preponderance of surviving houses, churches, institutions, and civic monuments that relate to Baltimore's premier historic African-American community.

Old West Baltimore is historically significant as Baltimore's premier early African-American neighborhood. Beginning in the 1890s, African Americans began occupying houses on the main streets of this area, most notably Druid Hill Avenue. Prior to that time, African Americans were relegated to alley housing spread throughout the city. In this community, African Americans living in Baltimore gained political power, established social institutions, started businesses, and empowered churches to not only guide the spiritual life of the community, but to spearhead social progress. Such noteworthy figures as Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, Congressman Parren Mitchell, Baltimore City Councilman Harry S. Cummings, jazz artist Cab Calloway, civil rights leader Lillie Mae Carroll Jackson, and Carl Murphy, editor of the 'Afro-American' newspaper, lived and/or worked in the area. The area derives additional significance for its architecture as an example of a type of urban development that characterized the city from the second quarter of the 19th century through the first half of the 20th. Its streetscapes include numerous individual buildings representing the evolving character of the district from scattered country estates to an urban row house neighborhood. Although a certain degree of redevelopment has occurred within the area, the district retains the majority of its significant streetscapes, buildings, public spaces, and civic monuments.

Boundary Description:

None.

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Comments:

Included in district: Harlem Park, Upton, Sandtown, Druid Heights, Madison Park.

Related Records

B-1373 Old West Baltimore Historic District

Easement No Easement Records

DOE No DOE Records

GIS/Map Information

Digitized in GIS: Y

Number of Polygons: 1

Resource Information

NR Form Resource List: ☐

Resource List Type:

Entered in Database?: ☐