

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Listed 10/17/2007
REF # 07001090

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Cole Avenue Housing Project Historic District
Other names/site number Park Lane Manor

2. Location

street & number 744 Colette Drive n/a not for publication
city or town Akron vicinity
state Ohio code OH county Summit code 153 zip code 44306

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Department Head, Inventory & Registration

Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____

Ohio Historic Preservation Office, Ohio Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the
National Register
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the
National Register
 removed from the National Register
 other (explain): N/A

Signature of 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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
61		buildings
1		sites
3		structures
0		objects
65	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/ multiple dwelling _____
 SOCIAL/ meeting hall _____
 RECREATION/ outdoor recreation _____

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/ multiple dwelling _____
 SOCIAL/ meeting hall _____
 RECREATION/ outdoor recreation _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 20th CENTURY REVIVAL _____
 Colonial Revival _____

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation	Concrete
roof	Asphalt Shingle
walls	Asbestos Siding
other	Metal entry canopy
	Clapboard Siding

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheets

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- X 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.
X C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or a grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Social History
Architecture
Community Planning and Development

Period of Significance

1941-52

Significant Dates

1941, 1946, 1952

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Suppes, John F., Architect

Paolano, J.L., Landscape Architect

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on 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 # N/A
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # N/A

Primary location of additional data

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

Name of repository: N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 24.3 acres**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
1	<u>17 457732</u>	<u>4544398</u>	3	<u>17 457961 4543971</u>
2	<u>17 457974</u>	<u>4544391</u>	4	<u>17 457725 4543975</u>

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

See attached

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

See attached

11. Form Prepared By

name/title organization Michael Englebert Griffin/ Architect Shaw Hofstra + Associates, Inc.date 8/1/06 (revised 7/11/07)street & number 1717 Oak St.telephone 816-421-0505city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64108

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white** photographs of the property.**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Park Land Manor of Akron Inc.street & number 744 Colette Drivetelephone 614-622-4855city or town Akron state OH zip code 44306

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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY

The Cole Avenue Housing Project is comprised of sixty-one buildings containing a total of three hundred one- two- and three-bedroom apartment units built in a park-like setting within a twenty-four acre site in the city of Akron, Ohio. This housing project was designed and built in 1941 by the United States Government as defense worker housing and opened in 1943. The U.S. government finally agreed to sell the project to the predominantly war veteran tenants in 1952 and it became known as Park Lane Manor. Other general conditions of the sale were that certain improvements be made to the buildings which mark the only major renovation of the facilities and also stipulates that the ownership entity becomes a “mutual ownership” or “cooperative organization.”²

Similar housing complexes occur around Akron, each exhibiting stylistic and character-defining elements that include hipped roofs, double hung windows, clapboard siding and concrete foundations. The Cole Avenue Housing Project units are also defined by more open and community focused first floor plans. Based on Federal Housing Administration (FHA) guidelines stemming from the Garden City Movement, the overall design incorporates the idea of super blocks and large common green spaces, access to administration and community amenities, and separation between automobile traffic and pedestrian circulation.³ The idea of a communal first floor plan suggests that the entire complex was collectively used with the first floor layouts complementing this function by opening up to the shared and connected, surrounding green spaces. The jagged grid of buildings is outlined by “paths” running North and South and “walks” running East/West. “Avenues” mark the North and South Boundaries while “streets” define the east and west traffic routes. Collette Drive crosses the site East/West and provides access to the formal administration building. Another tenant of the FHA guidelines promoted an arrangement of buildings so that service elements were adjacent to neighbors and that living space face the living space of the neighbor to reduce conflicts.⁴ The paths mostly connect the rows of buildings (except on Coley Path and Hammel and Inman St.) and the walks represent circulation between the front elevation entry conditions. Visitors approach the homes

¹ Akron Beacon Journal, May 29, 1952

² Letter 2/14/1952

³ U.S. Federal Housing Administration. The FHA Story in Summary: 1934-1959. 1959. [FHA Library]

⁴ Ibid.

and are introduced to the kitchen/dining area that opens up to the living space; the rear entry access connects adjacent living room spaces to the common green spaces. Many photographs show laundry

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clotheslines extending from the rear entry across to the next building's rear entry. The site is distinguished by this park-like feature between the buildings planted with various trees and other landscaping which mostly survives intact. The way the kitchens buffer pedestrian path access and the orientation of living rooms on the rear directed towards neighboring living rooms reflects these standards and lend to the idea of well thought out environmental and social concerns. Within this intricate site there is a community/ administration building with a playground that serves as a physical and symbolic center of the project. The Cole Avenue Housing Project is remarkable because its original, built configuration remains largely un-altered and a wealth of information about daily life during the project's period of significance has been preserved in newspaper clippings, photographs and some original tenants.

INTEGRITY

The Cole Avenue Housing Project development was built to house defense workers and was constructed in 1941 prior to official U.S. involvement in World War II. It continually fulfilled this function throughout the war; beyond the war the project successfully functioned as housing for returning veterans and their families. Subsequently, the property ownership transitioned to the tenants through a purchase from the federal government creating one of the first cooperative living situations in the United States. Park Lane was the biggest corporation of its kind in Ohio and one of only thirty-three cooperative housing communities in the nation.⁵ The property was altered during this sale in 1952 using more modern materials indicative of the industrial transformation from wartime to the post war economy, the most dramatic changes being the application of asbestos siding and the introduction of aluminum storm doors and windows. Since the early fifties, the property has remained mostly unaltered with ongoing maintenance and very limited work done to the buildings. Today, many of the units are in disrepair and the majorities are ready for comprehensive renovations. The entire property is currently owned by a single entity and no longer owned by the tenant group, although some original occupants remain from the early 1940s. Interior floor plans are generally in their original condition and are well maintained. Additionally, the community/ administration building has been modified slightly for accessible access; however, the building's historic fabric is very intact. Most of the original trees throughout this large site have continued to grow unimpeded and lend a mature and organic feel to the symmetrical layout of the sixty-one buildings that blend with the landscape's lush

⁵ The Buckeye American. 1954. p. 5.

appearance. The character-defining green open spaces and the communal grassy courtyards maintain their original luster (photo 1). A small number of the original playground structures remain

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behind the administration building – remaining playground equipment includes a jungle gym, swing-set framework and a metal slide. This proposal seeks historic district designation for the buildings and for the grounds comprising the Cole Avenue Housing Project.

LOCATION AND SETTING

The property is located in central Summit County in the City of Akron. Akron is the major city and county seat of Summit County. The subject property is located at 744 Colette Drive (community/administration building). The site covers approximately a city block bounded by the following streets: Hammel Street to the West, Cole Avenue to the North, Inman Street to the East, and to approximately 95' North of Clifford Avenue as the Southern boundary. Clifford Avenue is a privately maintained thoroughfare near the southern property line.

METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION, SIZE AND SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

Pedestrian “paths” and “ways” criss-cross the site and help define the overall layout distinguishing front access from rear elevation green space connections. Parking occurs around the perimeter of the twenty-four acre site and in a centralized parking lot located near the playground approached from Clifford Avenue. There is also a small parking lot on Colette Drive for the administration building accessed from parking lanes off of Cole Avenue along Lark Path and Grayling Path. The hipped roof buildings are very similar in design, which adds to the overall impression and monumentality of the site. There are three building prototypes (4,992 s.f., 2,344 s.f., 1,536 s.f.) and the administration building (3,160 s.f.); in total there are sixty-one buildings which make up the Cole Avenue Housing Project. There are forty-eight one bedroom, single bath units, each approximately 586 s.f., totalling 28,128 s.f.; one hundred seventy-four two bedroom, single bath units, each approximately 750 s.f., totalling 130,500 s.f.; and seventy-eight three bedroom, single bath units, each approximately 1,000 s.f., totalling 78,000 s.f.

The administration building at 744 Collette is distinct from the other buildings in its footprint, detailing and function. The building represents a modified Colonial Revival with a front gabled entry to the south and side gables to the east and west. This building is also different from the typical housing structures in that it has a full basement with cinder block foundation. The concrete is exposed along the base and there is a ramp access from the southwest corner for maintenance purposes (photo 4).

The front entry's original concrete stairs are still intact and provide a formal access to the front gabled north elevation. The welcoming, curved stair configuration is pronounced by curved metal handrails

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which flair out to meet the sidewalk running in a perpendicular East/West direction. Another, larger concrete stair was subsequently added to access the office area to the west of the centered portion of the building. This concrete stair is a straight-shot configuration with modern metal railing. The rear elevation also has access to the kitchen area from the southeast direction. A series of twelve-light foundation windows wrap around the perimeter of the building and shed light into the basement still used for utility and maintenance purposes. The original clapboard siding has been covered with asbestos siding typical throughout the complex. Originally wood clapboard siding has been discovered intact beneath the asbestos on several buildings; however, a comprehensive assessment has not revealed whether this is the case for all the buildings and whether the original siding is beyond repair. The general conditions letter approving the sale in 1952 stipulates that asbestos siding would be installed but does not give specific instruction on removal of the original siding.⁶ The use of asbestos increased dramatically during the war and afterwards on the home front. The administration building's protruding front entry has original quoin detailing to both sides of its most northerly face (photo 2). Smaller eight over eight windows flank each side of the double, wooden entry doors. This original entry is also characterized by a twelve light transom that has a unique criss-crossing muntin pattern. The entry is further highlighted by an elliptical louver detail above with rounded trim casing and decorative molding pieces installed on the top, bottom and both sides. The gabled roof is fully profiled and returns just above the decorative quoins. Rising to the highest point of this structure is a wooden cupola that has a shaped, metal top and eight-light fenestration that is present from each direction. A modern light fixture illuminates the entry area from just below the gabled apex. The majority of the windows around the main floor are intact, original, eight over eight, wooden windows. The concrete stairs to the east of the original entry provide access to a modern, eight light, metal door, created from cutting down the opening of an original window. A metal sconce is installed above this door. Signage and a U.S. flag designate this as the office entrance. The side elevations are similar to the front and also repeat the elliptical louver detail between the gable ends (photo 3).

The interior of the administration building has more formal detailing compared to the typical housing units' make-up. The office has many original fixtures, original flooring, doors and wooden trim. Overall, the baseboard, window and door trim in the administration building are more substantial and have received a rich wood stain, which has either been maintained over the years or has not

⁶ Letter 2/14/1952

failed. The original walk-in safe remains intact in the office. The lobby of the administration building is also from the period with bathrooms containing original Kohler brand fixtures. This lobby space feeds

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into the meeting rooms that retain much of their historic feel. The community stage, curtain and flag still reside in the larger meeting room (photo 7). The adjacent kitchen in the southeast corner of the building still services both areas. The other meeting room is auxiliary to the main and contains a large coat closet. A drop ceiling covers the majority of the original ceiling and in the main meeting room a vaulted shape possibly indicates a different, original finished look. The administration building sits at the end of Coley Path off of Cole Avenue. The building is in good condition and continues to function as the office and community center.

The bulk of the historic building stock consists of sixty hipped roofed housing structures, differing primarily in size with an overall character essentially the same. Simple wood frame skeletons outline the exterior envelopes and sit on concrete foundations. Wooden clapboard siding with a decent exposure originally covered the exterior walls and still exists covered over, although its condition has not been fully ascertained. Asbestos shingles were introduced when the war veteran tenants purchased the buildings. This new and infamous material was apparently installed over the existing, clapboard siding. A slight reveal of the cinderblock foundation is visible up to the start of the siding courses. Concrete pads denote the front and rear entries. Originally, wooden lattice columns supported the roof at the entry. These have been replaced with metal columns and a more modern metal awning roof, aluminum being another readily available post-war housing material (photo 15, 16). Originally the rear elevation's entry was marked with a very simple shed roof with brackets; the roof was also replaced at this time with a metal version (photo 19). Both front and rear doors are original wood, three light and two panel doors. The storm doors and many aluminum storm windows are intact and date from 1952 (photo 30). The aluminum storm windows are the precursors to windows in use today that would definitely not meet Secretary of the Interior's Standards for an older structure; but at Cole Avenue, a case can be made that they have gained significance and represent a part of the story of wartime material shortages and availability of certain materials and technological innovations of the more recent past. The majority of the original wooden windows remain throughout the property. This eight over eight window occurs on the first and second levels around the perimeter of the building envelopes (photo 17). A few of the original wood windows have recently been replaced with a vinyl window. These windows do not match the eight over eight muntin configuration and appear incongruous with the majority of original sashes. The roof has slight overhangs with gutters in their original locations. Round downspouts help shed water away from the buildings. The hipped roofs

were originally covered with asphalt shingles. It appears that a complete tear off and re-roofing was undertaken in 1952. Further investigation will determine whether this was carried out more than once.

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The general consensus is that all of the roofs need to be replaced. Due to the large number of original trees, a preponderance of squirrels has compromised the attic spaces of these buildings. An attempt will be made to patch as required, vent the roof's attic space properly and prevent animal penetration at these locations.

The interiors of these homes have many common finishes, hardware and layouts. All of the units have approximately the same sized living rooms, kitchen-dining and utility rooms; all units have a single bathroom mostly with original Kohler brand fixtures. Some tub areas have been converted to showers for convenience. The single bedroom unit building has first floor units with slightly smaller kitchens and living rooms. The upstairs single bedroom gains some area above the stairs in the kitchen, this area is used as a pantry. The two bedroom units are two levels with larger living rooms and all of the bedrooms and bath on the second floors. The three family units are two stories with two smaller bedrooms, a single bath and a larger master bedroom on the second floors. Interior window and door trim was modest. Baseboard depth was not substantial. The units originally had wood floors; some of the units still retain this feature in good condition in the living rooms and on some internal stairs. Window and door hardware was mostly brass. Interior doors were flat, solid core without panels and are in good condition.

Until recently, the buildings were owned by the tenants who purchased the Cole Avenue Housing Project in 1952 from the federal government. The exteriors throughout the project were altered at this time. Beyond the minor individual window replacement, there have not been any major exterior alterations. Several units' interiors show a degree of customizing which is mainly in finish choices and in the kitchen areas. Bathroom modifications seem to have been limited to shower installations. In several units the walls between the kitchens and living rooms were removed or altered to create pass-throughs with counters. The housing units reflect the ideas of the Garden City Movement and the emerging philosophies of Modernism through their logical and convenient layouts vis a vis open green space, their functionalism, standardization of construction and ability to facilitate efficient, pedestrian living with easy access to work and amenities. The period of significance from 1941 to 1952 encompasses Cole Avenue's construction, its wartime history and the conversion to a post-war economy while serving as home to many veterans, their families and friends.

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Significance

The Cole Avenue Housing Project is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A because it is a distinct example of efforts to promote the welfare of society through the malleability of local communities in response to the monumental challenges facing society throughout U.S. involvement in World War II and the critical housing complexities following the war. In an unprecedented action, the Lanham Act of 1940 was passed which provided \$150 million to the Federal Works Administration which, in conjunction with the local authorities nationwide built over 625,000 housing units – 580,000 were meant to be temporary construction.⁷ Cole Avenue Housing Project represents a mere 300 of these units; however, as one of several housing projects built in Akron before World War II it is one of the most unaltered and retains a tremendous amount of historic integrity. An amendment to the U.S. Housing Act of 1937 directed Federal slum clearance funds into housing programs for defense housing and another housing project built prior to Cole Avenue at the tail-end of the late 1930s was Elizabeth Park.⁸ This project's 180 units near downtown Akron were built with even more substantial and available pre-war materials - brick masonry. Later housing projects in Akron include Edgewood Homes on Akron's west side with 116 units, Norton Homes (1942) with 174 units and Wilbeth-Arlington Homes (1943) which added another 328 units to the defense housing community. These later structures all have clapboard siding and mimicked barracks in massing and regimented layout. Constructed in 1941, Cole Avenue Housing Project was

Akron's first public defense housing project under Federal jurisdiction and begins to reflect the standards of the Federal Housing Administration via clustered buildings around courtyards, separation of pedestrian and traffic areas and large open space situations.⁹ Edgewood Homes and Elizabeth Park Homes have both been recently demolished to make way for updated housing developments; the other projects have been substantially altered or demolished.¹⁰ Cole Avenue is one of only a few throughout the country that has not been removed or adversely renovated. This project also uniquely demonstrates a starting point for the variety of design after the war rationing began and its continued service demonstrates a change in the way we think of temporary housing.

⁷ "Public Housing in the U.S., 1933-1949" p. 37

⁸ Ibid, p. 37

⁹ "Plan Standards for Defense Housing." Architectural Record, 90 (November 1941): 71-96.

¹⁰ City of Akron, 2006. History of Akron. 7/16/06

Cole Avenue Housing Project also qualifies for listing in the National Register under Criterion C, as a good example of a war-time, government built, multi-family rental housing property type

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before the extreme alterations of the form developed due to material shortages which triggered changing styles and more innovative approaches to housing construction during the war effort. The use of minimal ornamentation and style are indicative of wartime housing barracks and reflective of the rapid industrial expansion in the United States leading up to its active involvement in World War II. Cole Avenue contrasts both pre-war and post-war approaches in its history of alterations, a contrast between originally used building materials and the selection of materials used during its only comprehensive renovation after the war. The 1952 renovation displays the renewed availability of materials like aluminum (storm doors and windows), asphalt (new roofs) and asbestos (new siding). However, similar to Elizabeth Park's use of masonry, Cole Avenue initially benefited from the most substantial materials and latest fixtures available at the time it was built. This particular style of architecture and planning was shaped by both housing design and community site planning in the 20th Century. The success of this early defense housing prototype represents a starting point in the development of modern housing in the United States and its design is an extension of the Garden City community planning effort and also begins the transformation of home building into a modern industry.¹¹ Whereas material shortages did not begin to dramatically alter the more traditional look of Cole Avenue's exteriors; the stage was set for a new approach to construction on subsequent housing projects predicated on modified design due to war-time material shortages. Built to higher standards, the arrangement of this project revolves around efficiency of construction, open green spaces in a park-like setting and upholding "communally sanctioned" qualities as opposed to individual expressions.¹² Atchison Village in Richmond, California (listed on the National Register of Historic Places on May 30, 2003) is a slightly larger project which is very similar to Cole Avenue in many ways. The buildings are also similar and the adherence to Garden City tenants are carried out with pedestrian paths, open green spaces, an administration/ community building with playground areas and even the look of the buildings almost matches. In 1956, in a move very close to what Park Lane Manor accomplished, the tenants of Atchison Village purchased the homes and it became one of the first housing cooperatives in California.¹³

¹¹ "Making New Connections in Vernacular Architecture" Paul Groth, University of California, Berkeley.

¹² Ibid, p. 444

¹³ <<http://www.rosietheriveter.org/atchison.htm>>

A shortage of housing for people who worked at home to support the troops overseas occurred during the beginning of the war. The government started planning before the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Throughout this period the U.S. government spent over \$23 billion dollars in

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defense housing related construction.¹⁴ The city of Akron was a major industrial city that benefited the war effort through rubber production, aircraft and dirigible innovation. When the natural rubber supply from Southeast Asia was cut off at the beginning of World War II, the United States and its allies faced the loss of a strategic material.¹⁵ With U.S. Government sponsorship, a consortium of companies involved in rubber research and production united in a unique spirit of technical cooperation and dedication to produce a general purpose synthetic rubber, GR-S (Government Rubber-Styrene), on a commercial scale. In Akron and other U.S. locations, these companies, in collaboration with a network of researchers in government, academic, and industrial laboratories, developed and manufactured in record time enough synthetic rubber to meet the needs of the U.S. and its allies during World War II. In April of 1942 the first U.S. Government synthetic rubber plant went into production in Akron, OH.¹⁶ The wartime economy produced much diversification of the rubber industry in Akron and extended into the manufacture of metal products, steel stampings and aircraft.¹⁷ An enormous upsurge in plastics arose in Akron after World War II fueling the post war economic climate and increased industrial production. At Cole Avenue men and women defense workers lived next door to aviation pioneers, test pilots, heads of industry and their families.

By 1940, 244,791 people lived in Akron, making it the 32nd largest city in the country.¹⁸ The city was still lacking sufficient infrastructure and housing needed to support the defense industries. The local government sought needed financial relief through Federal government initiatives. The Lanham Act of 1940 benefited cities involved with specific wartime programs and allocated 150 million dollars to local authorities to help with the transition process. According to the Lanham Act, temporary war housing was to be removed within two years after the war.¹⁹ An exception was made for housing necessary for post war efforts. Early in 1941 the Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority hired local architect John F. Suppes to be the project architect, P.B. Fleming to be the mechanical engineer, C.H. Loughridge to be the electrical engineer and J.L. Paolano to be the landscape

¹⁴ City of Akron, 2006. History of Akron. 7/16/06, <<http://www.ci.akron.oh.us/history/index.htm>>

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ City of Akron, 2006. History of Akron. 7/16/06, <<http://www.ci.akron.oh.us/history/index.htm>>

¹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸ *ibid*

¹⁹ *World War II and the American Dream*, p. viii.

architect. These housing structures were typical of the period leading up to WW II and complied with the strict USHA defense housing standards that involved simple ornamentation, close proximity to industrial centers and community orientation. Efficiency of construction was another important tenant,

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however, this project predates the country's later turn to pre-fabrication which was another result of wartime industrialization. Cole Avenue Housing Project and Elizabeth Park in Akron are also unique because they were some of the very first developments before severe material shortage drastically altered the approach to housing construction. Characteristics of this at Cole Ave. included domestic innovations in the kitchen appliances, the placement of buildings and the relationship between internal functions to the external environment, as well as green space and pedestrian emphasis. The Lanham Act of 1940 capped production to \$3,000 per dwelling unit; this was raised to \$3,750 in 1942.²⁰ The use of local architects also caught on nationally and the government issued \$300 million more dollars to construct 125,000 additional units after 1941.²¹ Originally built as temporary housing, Cole Avenue served the housing shortage before, during and after the war.

The Cole Avenue Housing Project is significant because of the international conditions (World War II) that necessitated the construction of the project. This development is also significant in a much more organic and personal way. Through the individual histories of the tenants, the war veterans, their families and the city during war-time, we can begin to understand the intense and unfailing contributions these citizens made to their immediate home, their state and ultimately the greater good of the nation. In order to understand a common, personalized example of the weight of emotions inherent in the overall war-time experience, we share the story of Ethel and Wayne. Wayne was sent overseas in 1942 and was stationed out of England flying missions on a B-12 bomber. As in the movie *Memphis Belle*, this soldier struggled to carry out his tenth mission that offered him salvation from the rest of the war through his ticket home. He described getting orders for a mission as getting a virtual "death certificate". His wife, Ethel, lived with her sister in the Cole Avenue Housing Project from its opening until her husband finally returned home safely from the war. In 1946 they moved into their own apartment where they still reside together. To describe the emotions felt in this seemingly impossible transition home with words is futile; that it occurred for many in this housing complex is indisputable. The fact that the couple remains to this day at Cole Avenue Housing Project (Park Lane Manor) is testament to the success of the initial program and design in providing an

²⁰ *ibid*, p. viii.

²¹ Time Magazine, 1941.

exceptional housing community. Ethel and Wayne raised two children here and describe their home as a great place to raise a family.²²

Cole Avenue Housing Project Historic District

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(Rev. 10-90)

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Among many local examples of housing success stories from this period, Edgewood Homes was home to Joyce Jackson George, b. 1936. She grew up here and later went on to become the first woman judge elected in Summit County. Other Akron defense housing projects were racially mixed and offered housing to the African American work force; Mary Peavy Eagle, 1909-2003 founded the Akron Council of Negro Women in 1932 and was instrumental in drawing attention to Roosevelt's WPA project which replaced the North St. slums with the brick homes of Elizabeth Park. She was involved in establishing the Elizabeth Park Well Baby Clinic in 1942.²³ The Lanham Act provided a new child care component which was successful at Elizabeth Park; it did not catch on at Cole Avenue because tenants preferred more traditional forms of individual care.

The state of the "everyday" and its connections to the international situation at the time provide an extended context for the significance of this housing complex. The stories from the war period and shortly after are varied and multiple. Accounts of fathers never seeing their wives for years and then reuniting for a victory celebration in the administration/ community building are commonplace. The joy of soldiers who never had seen their children returning from war sent messages of hope for those who experienced loss and detachment to family members lost. Several newspaper articles (attached) address the defense workers' conditions and a few directly discuss Cole Avenue as a place where "the lights never go out".²⁴ The realities of a 24-hour shift schedule clearly warranted justification for our successes in the field abroad. Some articles deal with issues of loss and the idea that, as a Nation, we cannot give up. In this regard, the war effort was something unique that directly affected the Nation as a whole. Those implications were intensified in this housing situation and their documentation lives on in stories, photographs, articles, and especially in the remaining buildings. Post-war daily life was intimately connected to the war-time experience. A 1947 clipping describes an "unusual summertime movie program" at Cole Avenue where residents and young people of all ages view movies on an outdoor screen near the administration building. The article goes on to state "like other places, Cole Avenue finds current films too high priced and residents necessarily content

²² Interview with Ethel and Wayne, 2/6/06.

²³ City of Akron, 2006. History of Akron. 7/16/06, <<http://www.ci.akron.oh.us/history/index.htm>>

²⁴ *ibid*

themselves with older, less popular movies”.²⁵ The idea of sacrifice remains on a daily level beyond the return to normalcy at the end of the war; the way of life for many was changed for ever.

Cole Avenue Housing Project Historic District

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The administration or community building represented the social center of the housing project. Numerous events took place here: Christmas plays, Boy Scout and Girl Scout dinners, community meetings, wakes, religious services, dances, reunions and parties. The building served to welcome new tenants and introduced them to the surrounding social scene; the building said farewell to departing soldiers and then welcomed them home from the war reuniting families. The cupola on top of the building has been an enduring landmark for countless residents and guests for many years. Children met behind the building in the playground area for recreational activities. Originally, this area did not have playground equipment. In 1946 the children living at Cole Avenue Housing Project held a parade to convince the adults to build some playground structures. The adults responded favorably and built facilities for their children.²⁶ A basketball court, volleyball net and a fountain for swimming (currently filled in that had a water connection to the administration building) occupied the area behind the administration building. Two coordinators were hired to supervise some 400 children living at Cole Ave. The administration building set the stage for life in the entire project on many levels. Similarly, Elizabeth Park Homes had a two-story park shelter house that was used to entertain many residents; the old shelter house was destroyed in 1993 by “a fire of suspicious origin” and the rest of the buildings were recently demolished.²⁷ The layout of the administration building in relation to the rest of the units and its use of more intricate architectural detail help to define the center of this community and the idea of an individual “home” within the overarching structure of multiple dwellings.

Many articles and photographs deal with the “typical” and everyday life scenarios that also made up a significant part of the history of Cole Avenue Housing Project. In addition to the dramatic and sometimes tragic stories of the war heroes, the concept of everyday war heroes was very present in the daily lives of the Cole Avenue Housing Project tenants. Those living at the project working for Goodyear as test pilots repeatedly made the newspaper for their contributions to aviation.²⁸ These role-models helped to fill a void left by fathers overseas and by mothers working in factories. Children experienced an environment conducive to invention and positive living that dispels many of the

²⁵ Akron Beacon Journal, 1947.

²⁶ Ibid, 1946

²⁷ City of Akron, 2006. History of Akron. 7/16/06, <<http://www.ci.akron.oh.us/history/index.htm>>

²⁸ Akron Beacon Journal, 1942-46

preconceptions about housing project quality of life standards conventionally thought of today. After the war, the lights continued to burn. An article from 1948 draws connections between the recent war atmosphere and the “lights burning late” at Cole Avenue where adults and children stay up late to complete their cars for the Akron Soap Box Derby. Slightly less interesting are the mundane

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everyday life stories which only serve to further ground society in this idea that life does go on despite the separation, the alienation and detachment most families dealt with living in the United States during World War II.

The idea of the “typical” was also upheld as honorable and distinct amidst the stark realities of factory work in addition to being separated from loved ones. World War II and Americans stationed abroad created a detachment from home that has been analyzed, presented and discussed in multiple media forms. In this housing project, the buzz from abroad was a daily commonplace. That the very idea of something so extraordinary happening only once before and never again, could seem relatively commonplace, is a concept that posits the “everyday” and “life must go on” sentiments to extreme emotional realizations. News from the war was not always good, but the spirit of commitment from a small housing project dedicated to the effort on a minor level had massive benefits to the national effort. The Cole Avenue Housing project accomplished many goals of its creators and would be genuinely classified as a complete success. That it still functions and provides homes for tenants and has increasing value is a monument to all the stories created here and to the foresight of the United State Government’s plans to take care of its own and to provide life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

The Cole Avenue Housing Project demonstrates an exemplary example of a successful World War II home front defense housing project. Beyond the initial estimates of the Lanham Act which assumed the majority of these buildings would be demolished, the ongoing renovation of this project further emphasizes the serious commitment and dedication of initial planners, architects and city personnel to the residents and their families working together to create a home and a community. Due to the loss of many of the original housing complex owners who purchased Cole Avenue in 1952, the housing project was sold to a single, private entity in 2003. The creation and documentation of the history of life in this important era in this very important place is worthy of immeasurable significance. An appropriate resolution to the story of the complex would be the honor of listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

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Cole Avenue Housing Project Historic District

Summit County, Ohio

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The subject property is located in central Summit County in the City of Akron. Akron is the major city and county seat of Summit County. More specifically, the subject property is located at 744 Colette Drive. The subject site covers approximately a city block bounded by the following streets: Hammel Street to the west (eastern curb line), Cole Avenue to the north (southern curb line), Inman Street the east (western curb line), and to approximately 95' north of Clifford Avenue as the southern boundary (northern curb line). Clifford Avenue is a privately maintained thoroughfare near the northern property line.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The proposed historic district boundary matches the original and existing boundaries of the Cole Avenue Housing Project (Park Lane Manor). It encompasses all of the buildings and the entire, original site.

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8744 Colett, Akron, OH
NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS 1942-1961

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LEO ROBERT JACK
.....Derby puts them on "night shift"

Boys Work Nights To Complete Racers

By HELEN WATERHOUSE

LIGHTS BURN LATE in a garage in the Cole av. district these nights.

Three future Derby drivers are toiling until 11 and beyond to complete their racers for the Akron Soap Box Derby. The trio of brothers, Leo, Bob and Jack "Butch" Galvin, scarcely take time out for meals, their parents, Mr. and Mrs. James D. Galvin, report.

Two of the boys, Leo, 15, and Bob, 14, have been in Akron Derbies before. Leo cracked up on his first race, won one heat on his second. Bob has never won a heat. But all three with their identical racers, say they are going to win this year.

IF THAT NEW home made device for breaking in the wheels on their racer has anything to do with it, the Galvin brothers should make a good showing. The device is for wearing in the bearings on the wheels so that they will run more easily.

The boys made the machine out of some of their father's gadgets he uses in the electrical business. Bob wants to follow in his father's footsteps and become an electrician anyway, while Leo hopes to have a career as an athletic coach. Butch, at just 11, isn't quite sure of his future beyond the exciting race on Aug. 8.

There is one more little future Derbyist in the Galvin family—a baby boy 1½ years old. And the boy's sister, 9, and their mother are two of their most ardent rooters.

"MOM JUST goes right along with us on plans," said Leo. "And dad supervises all our work this

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There is one more little future Derbyist in the Galvin family—a baby boy 1½ years old. And the boy's sister, 9, and their mother are two of their most ardent rooters.

* * *

"MOM JUST goes right along with us on plans," said Leo. "And dad supervises all our work this year."

"The boys can read the specifications better than I can" commented Dad at this point. They are really too deep for me."

The brother trio started working on their cars the latter part of June. Leo's is to be painted maroon and gray.

Norman Keeling of the B. F. Goodrich Co. is sponsoring Bob's car. So far Butch's car is unsponsored.

The brothers live in the Cole av. housing project at 770 Colette dr.

Leo goes to Garfield high school and the two younger boys attend St. John the Baptist school.

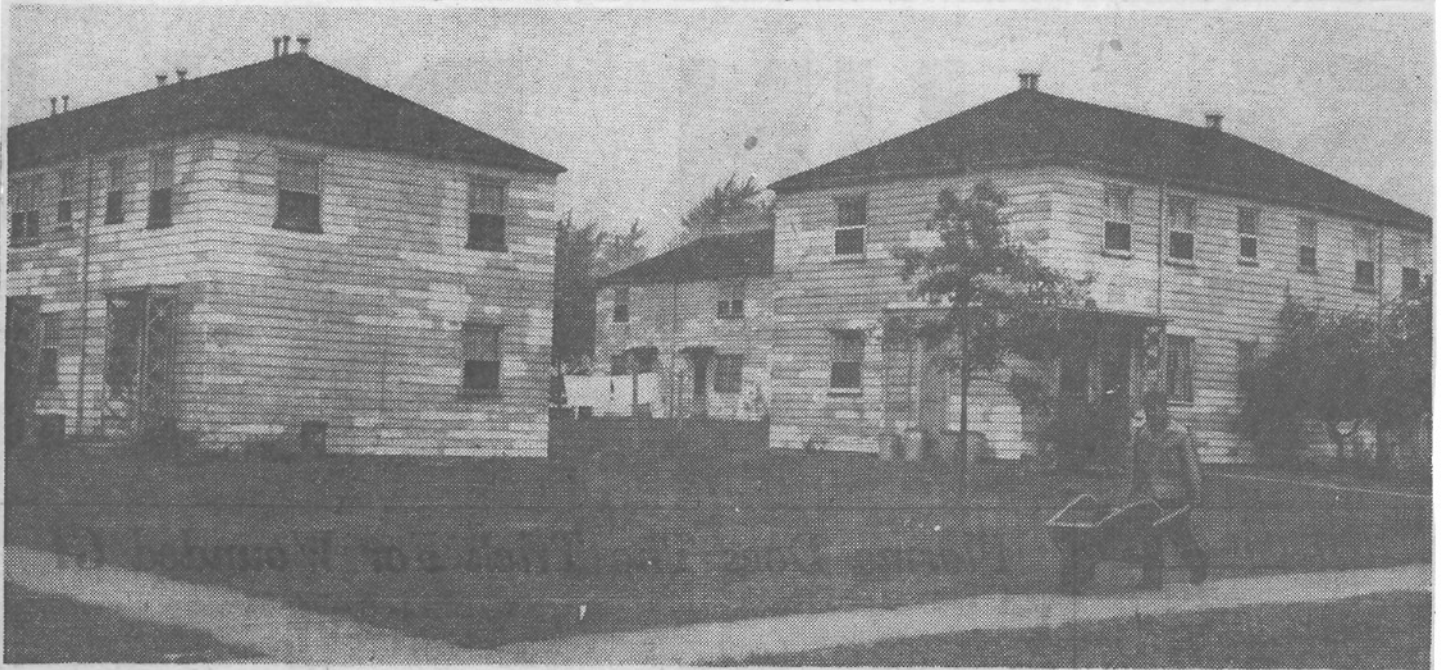
United States Department of the Interior
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Cole Avenue Housing Project Historic District
8744 Colett, Akron, OH
NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS 1942-1961

Section number 8 Page 46

Cole Av. Housing Grows Shabby As Government Dallies ¹⁰⁻¹³⁻⁵¹



Bare wood and scaling paint shows up lack of maintenance at the Cole av. federal housing project. Public housing officials say nothing will be done to maintain the place until the government decides whether it will be sold to tenants.

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8744 Colett, Akron, OH
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**Family Makes Home In
Defense House**

MRS. EDDIE CHAMBERLAIN, —"Mrs. America" to the world at large—is a typical defense worker's wife now.

Her husband, diver in the New York World Fair Billy Rose show, is a defense worker, and her baby, Eddie jr., is nearing 3.

They live in a project house at 760 Cole av., a snug little four-room affair with the furnace nudging the ice box and the front yard knee deep in mud.

Cooks, Scrubs And Cleans

The glamorous blond who went to New York and carried off top honors and the "Mrs. America" title in 1938, is cooking and scrubbing and cleaning and sewing, just like every other defense worker's wife—and liking it.

The former Margaret Meck, who couldn't boil an egg when she won the Mrs. America title, is living down all the slurs of the critics who scoffed at the time she was named "Mrs. America" and who said she was anything but a typical housewife type.

True, it's rather tough having Eddie, sr., working 12-hour shift a day, inspecting parts for Uncle Sam's bombers out at the Good-year Aircraft plant. He's an army air corps inspector. In fact, Eddie, jr., scarcely knows he has a dad any more, she says.

Gone are the lazy days of last summer when Margaret and the little boy went to the Catskills to stay at a fashionable hotel where Eddie was swimming and diving instructor. Eddie, jr., almost became as famous as his parents during that vacation as a two-year-old baby who could actually swim and dive.

Joshed By Columnists

But Margaret Chamberlain isn't complaining about her lot. "Those New York columnists used to josh me after I won the title because I had no children," she said. "They can't say anything about that any more."

"They razzed, too, because I wasn't born in America. I came from Hungary when I was a baby. But I've got a brother in the army air corps in Trinidad and I guess we can't be any more patriotic than to have a husband in defense and a brother in the army, can we?" she added.

Then the former model whose blond loveliness won the New York judges' eyes and who previous to that had been queen of the Great Lakes exposition went back to her spotless kitchen to stir up a cake for big Eddie's and little Eddie's supper.

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NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS 1942-1961

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HOUSING PROJECT YOUNGSTERS PARADE TO PROMOTE PLAYGROUND 6-23-46

The sign at the head of this parade of children from the Cole av. housing project tells the story. They paraded Saturday to let their parents know there is a drive on, among project families, to raise money for a supervisor of the project's playground. Under President Robert Bowman, the recreation club

of the project is raising \$300 to pay the supervisor for a nine-week period this summer. Chairman of the playground committee, which has already raised \$200 for equipment, is Mrs. N. E. Robinson. To date, uniforms and equipment have been purchased to equip four baseball teams of the project's league. There are more than 400 children living in the Cole av. project.

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Continuation Sheet

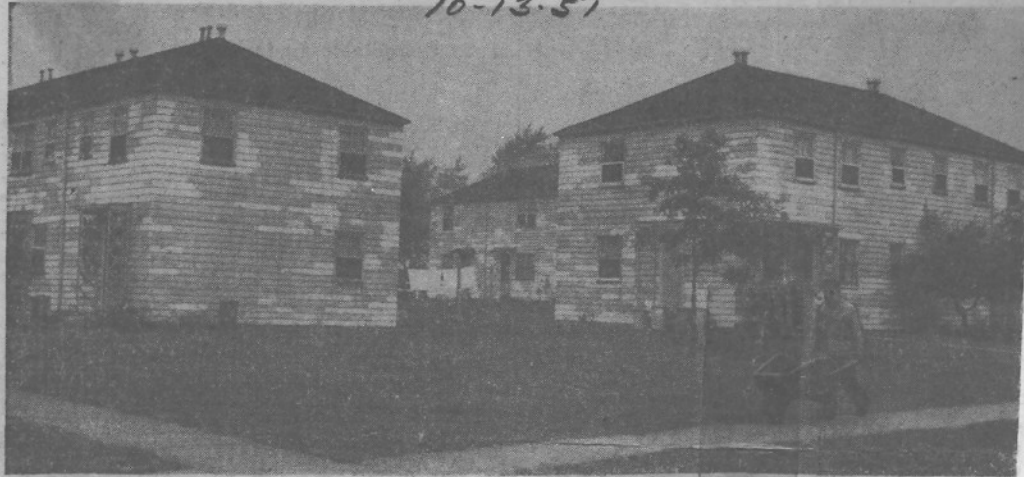
Cole Avenue Housing Project Historic District
8744 Colett, Akron, OH
NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS 1942-1961

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Article - Reverse Side

Cole Av. Housing Grows Shabby As Government Dallies

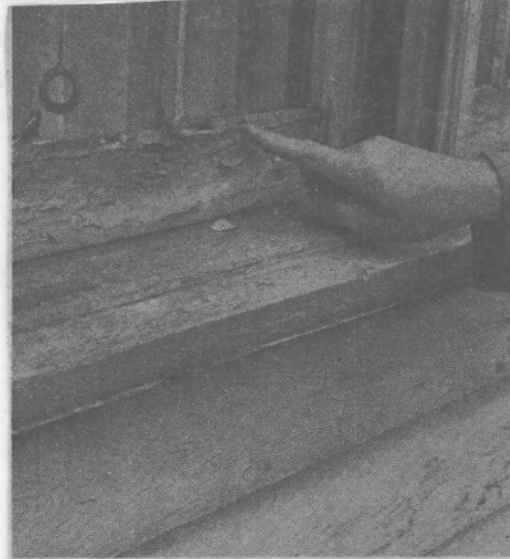
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Bare wood and scaling paint shows up lack of maintenance at the Cole av. federal housing project. Public housing officials say nothing will be done to maintain the place until the government decides whether it will be sold to tenants.



Rot is beginning to set in in some of the project's siding.

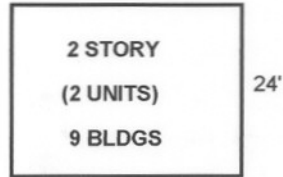


Without a paint job for several years, window sills are getting weather-beaten.

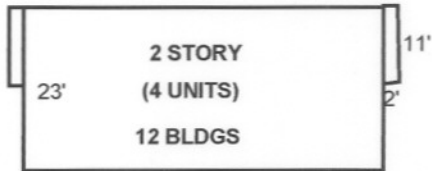
B—Akron Beacon Journal
Sunday, November 4, 1951
COLE AV. HOMES—The Housing and Home Financing Agency in Washington has ordered the Cole Av. Homes restored to good condition. After seeing Beacon Journal pictures showing the deterioration of the government-owned units, HHFA officials in Washington directed the Chicago office to take immediate steps to bring the property up to the "PHA maintenance level." Presumably this means painting and considerable repairing. This action, we are informed, has no bearing one way or the other on the question whether the government is going to sell the property.

FOUNDATION SKETCH

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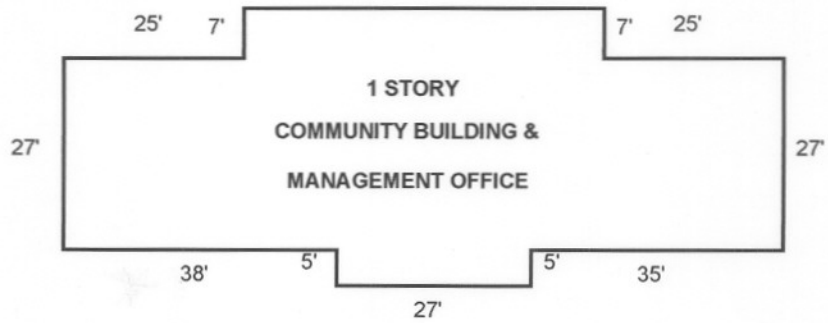
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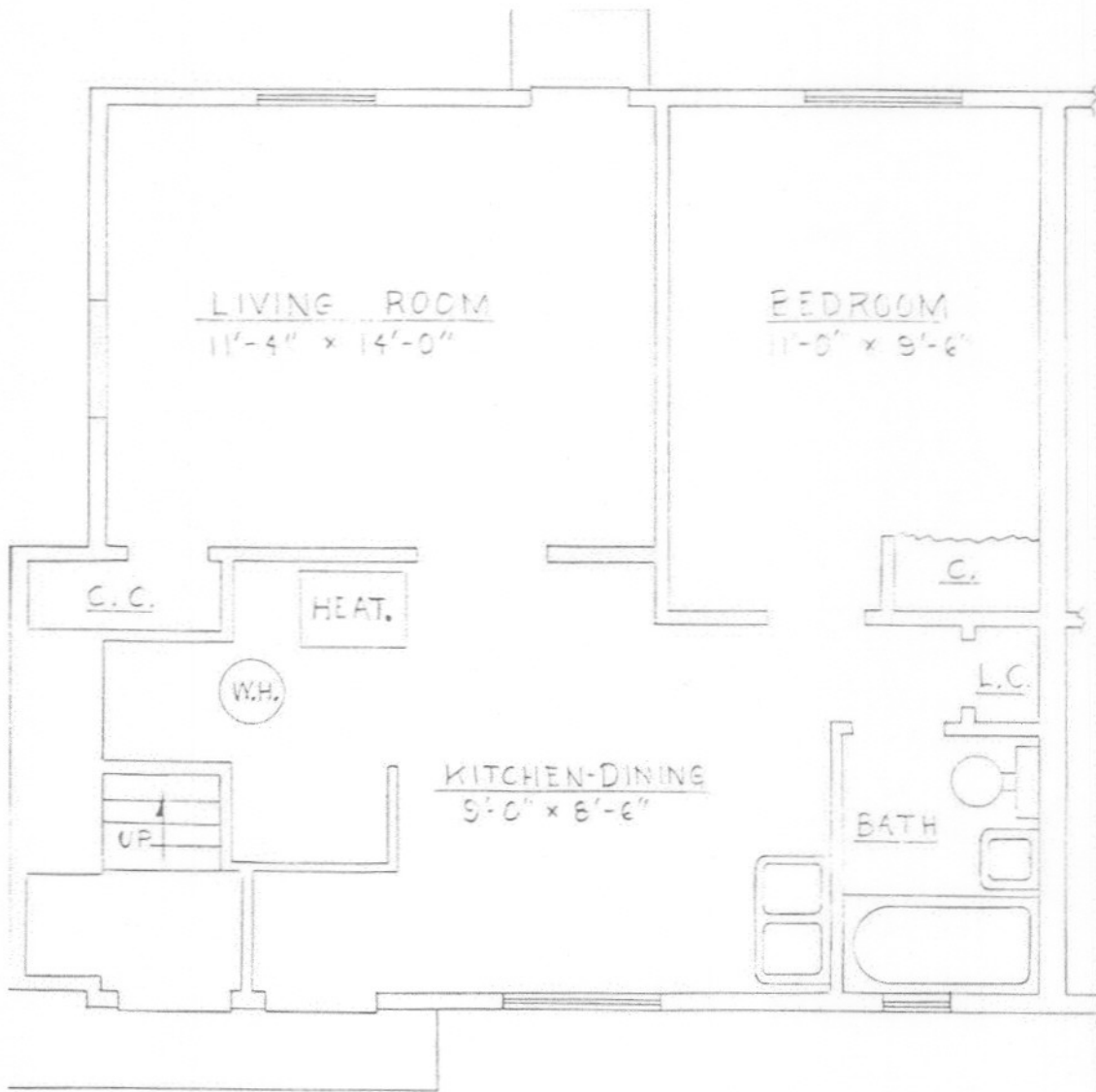
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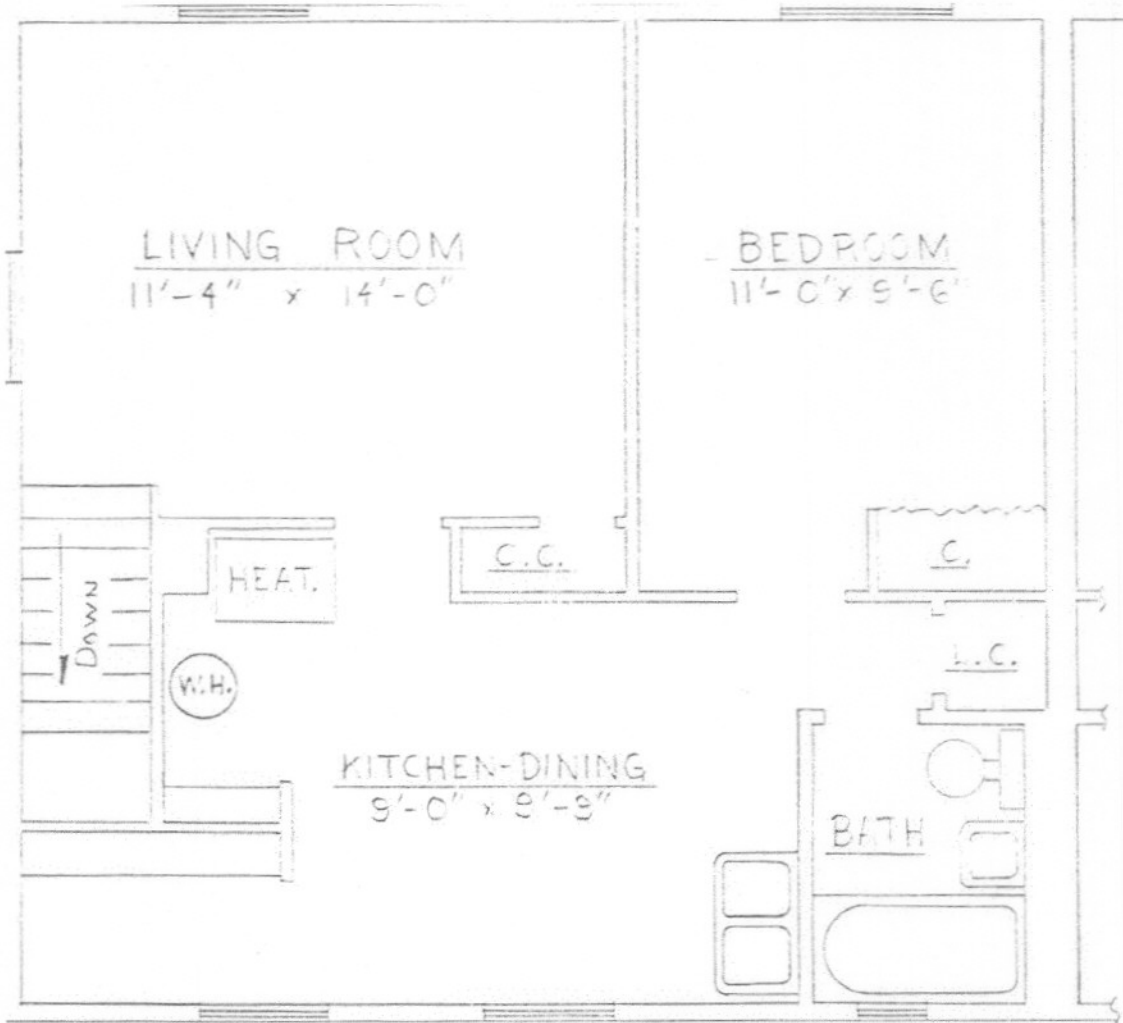


FLOOR PLAN



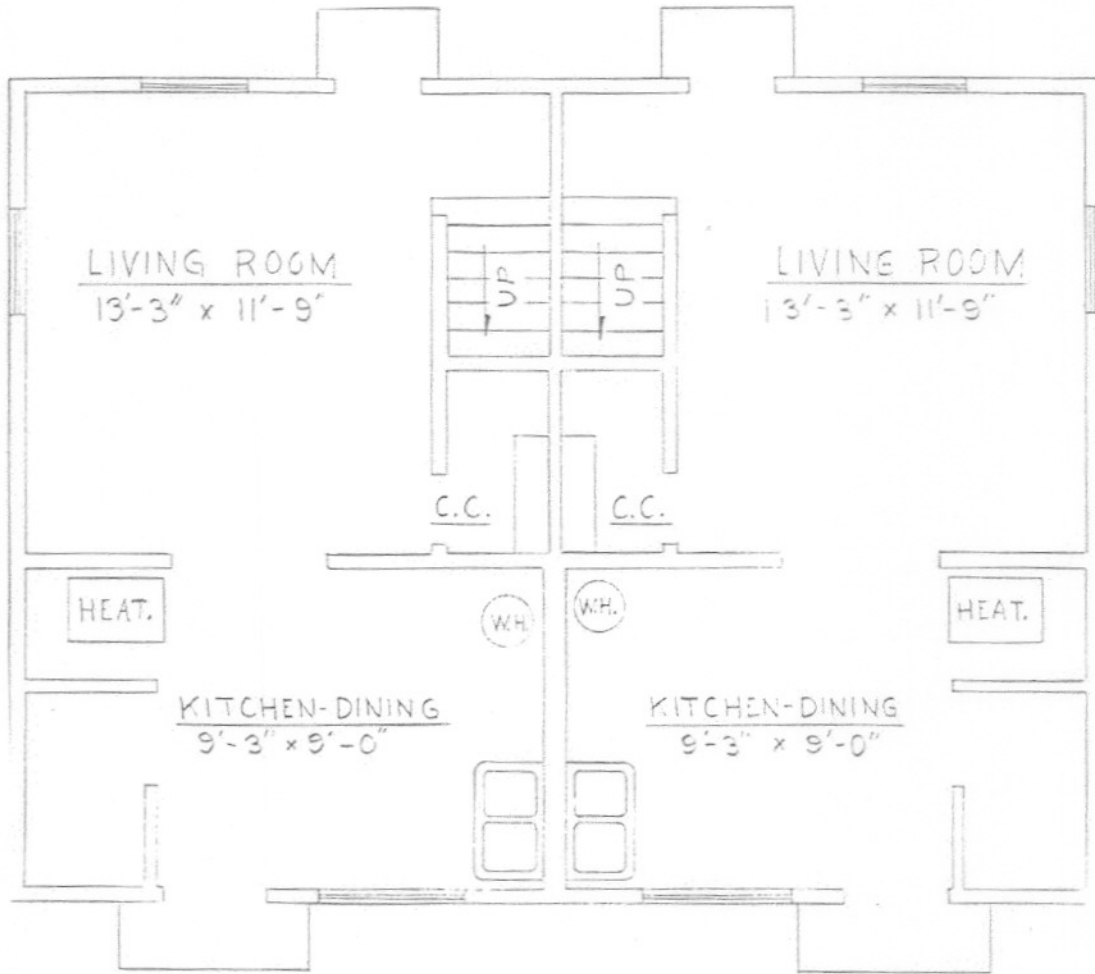
1 BEDROOM DOWN

FLOOR PLAN



1 BEDROOM UP

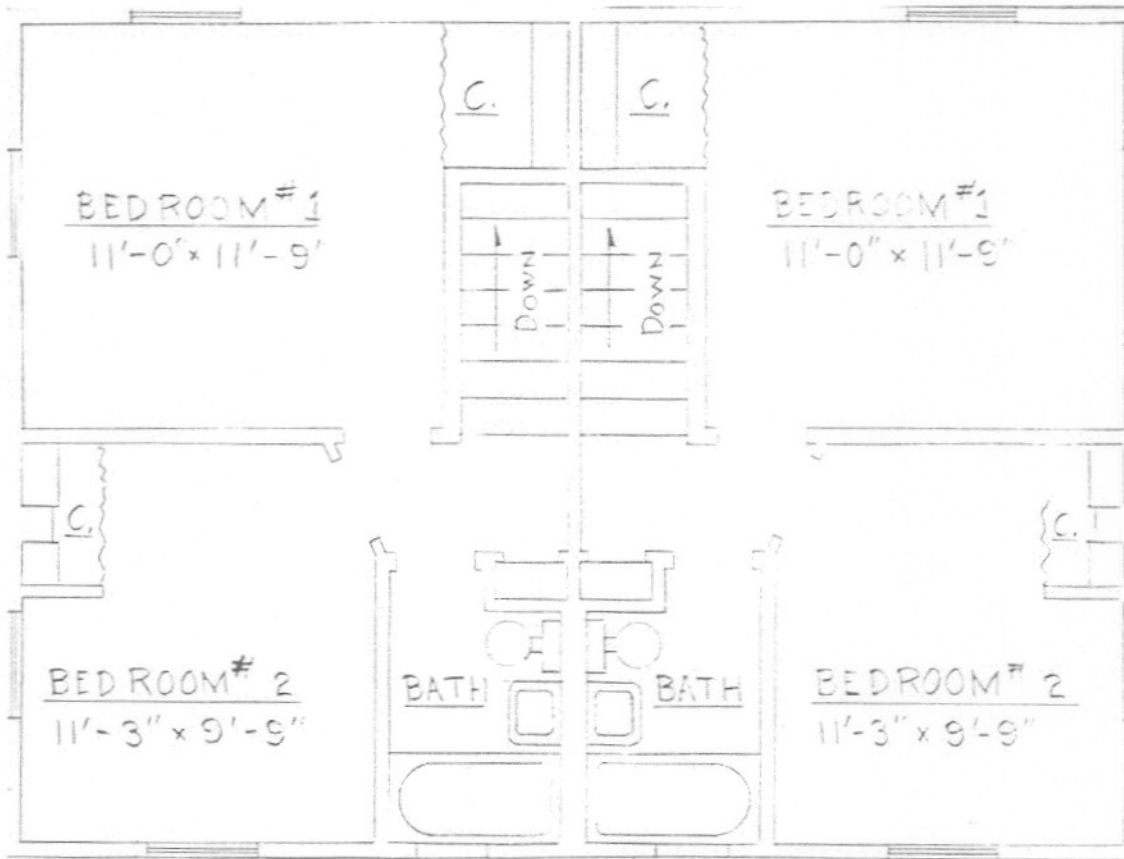
FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR

2 BEDROOM

FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR

2 BEDROOM

FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR

3 BED ROOM

FLOOR PLAN

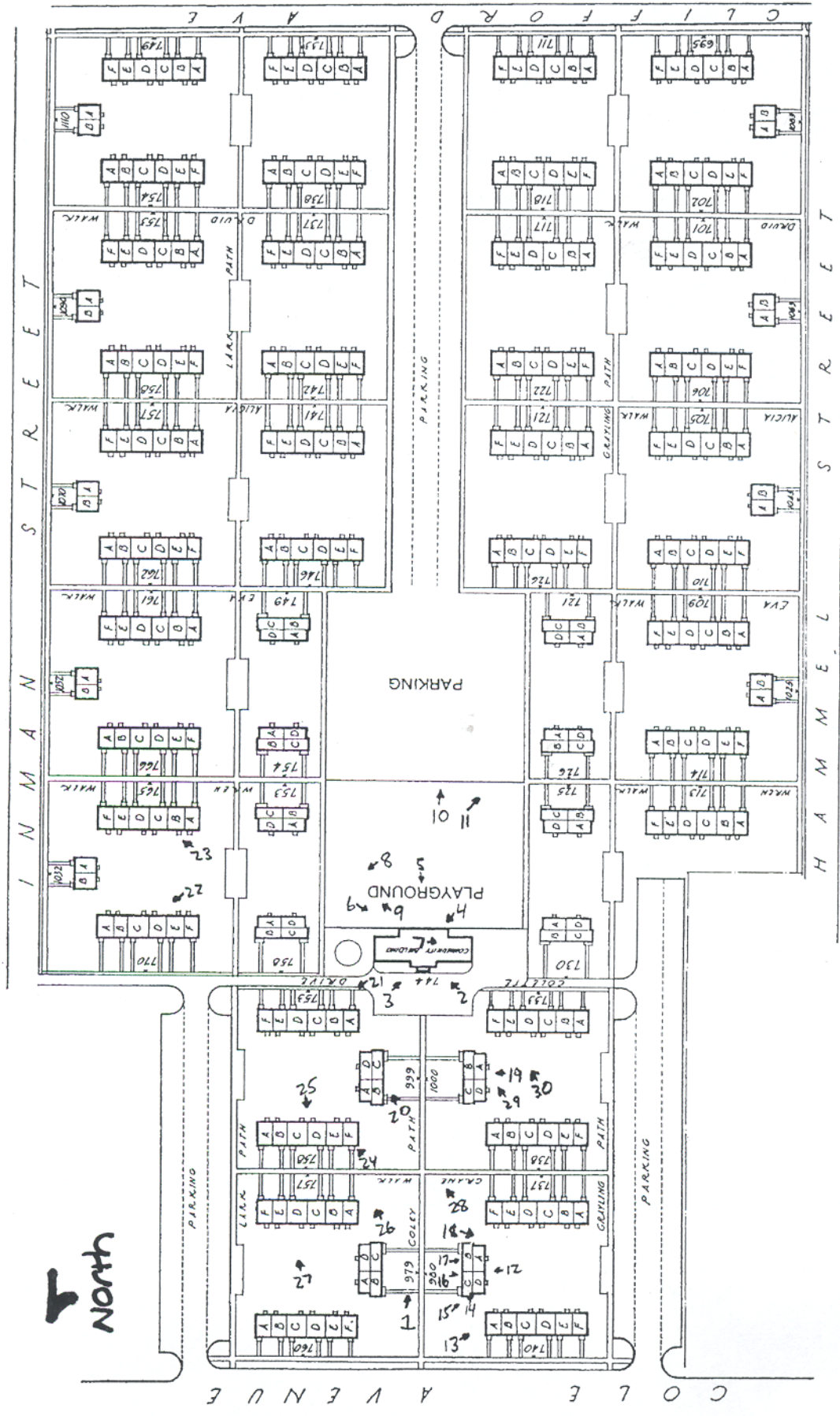


SECOND FLOOR

3 BEDROOM

Cole Avenue Housing Project Historic District, Summit Co., OH

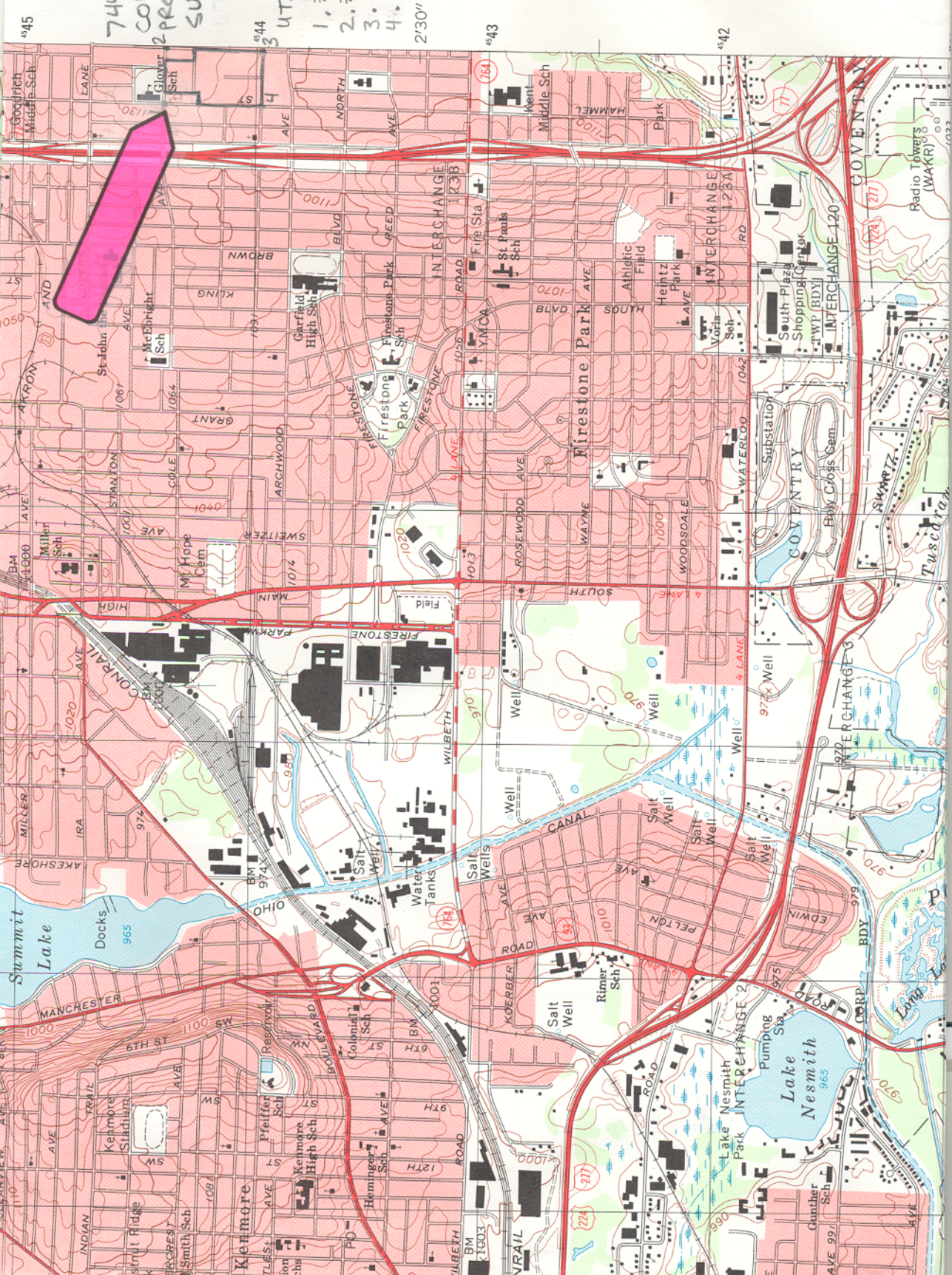
PARK LANE MANOR OF AKRON, INC.
 744 COLETTE DRIVE
 AKRON OHIO 44306



744 COLLETTE DR.
 COLE AVENUE HOUSING
 PROJECT HISTORIC DISTRICT
 SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO

UTMS

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- 3. 217 E 457961 N 4543971
- 4. 217 E 457725 N 4543975



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November 1, 2007

Jorge Newbery
744 Colette Dr.
Akron, Ohio 44306

Dear Mr. Newbery:

Congratulations on the recent listing of your property into the National Register of Historic Places!

The National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior listed the **Cole Avenue Housing Project** at 744 Colette Drive in Akron, Ohio on October 17, 2007. The nomination was made in connection with a state plan to identify and document prehistoric and historic places in Ohio that qualify for National Register status under provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended.

The Ohio Historic Preservation Office (OHPO) is available to advise you in maintaining the historic character of your property. As you know from previous mailings received from this office, there are no restrictions placed on your property following the National Register listing. However, the OHPO strongly encourages owners of historic properties to consider all options before completing work that could damage the structure or impair its historic integrity. Careful planning can facilitate the sensitive incorporation of contemporary alterations with the historic fabric. The OHPO provides free information on how to sensitively rehabilitate and repair historic properties, upon request.

Thank you for your interest in historic preservation and the National Register of Historic Places.

Sincerely,

SIGNED

Barbara A. Powers
Department Head
Inventory and Registration

Cc: Michael Englebert Griffin, Form Preparer
Mayor Donald L. Plusquellic, City of Akron
Senator Kevin Coughlin, District #27
Representative Robert J. Otterman, District #45
Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study
Paul Graham, Ohio Department of Transportation

OHIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Ohio Historic Preservation Office

567 East Hudson St Columbus, Ohio 43211-1030 ph: 614.298.2000 fx: 614.298.2037
www.ohiohistory.org