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**DESIGNATION**  
of the District of Columbia

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD**  
In Historic Landmark Designation Case No. 14-06

**Hebrew Home for the Aged and Jewish Social Service Agency**  
1125-1131 Spring Road NW  
Square 2902, Lots 804, 805 and part of 807

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The Historic Preservation Review Board, having held a public hearing on May 22, 2014 on the application for historic designation of the Hebrew Home for the Aged and Jewish Social Service Agency at 1125-1131 Spring Road NW, approved the designation of the property as a historic landmark to be entered in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites. The staff further recommends that the nomination be forwarded to the National Register of Historic Places with a recommendation for listing at the local level of significance with the period of significance of 1925 to 1969, from construction of the Home until the last residents moved out.

**Architectural Description**

The landmark contains the contributing Hebrew Home for the Aged, built in 1925 and with a 1953 addition; the contributing Jewish Social Service Agency (JSSA) building, constructed in 1940; and a non-contributing utility building, built in the 1970s.

Noted architect Appleton P. Clark designed the Hebrew Home to be erected in phases that would include a residential facility, a hospital wing, and a central synagogue. The westernmost portion of Clark's design was realized when the Home opened in 1925 with 35 beds for residents. Upon completion, work was to commence immediately on the hospital wing, but financial difficulties postponed completion of Clark's original design for nearly 30 years. By the 1950s, a pressing need for more residential space forced the Home to abandon Clark's original plan in favor of a new layout by architect Edward William St. Cyr Barrington that would increase the building's capacity while also retaining the architectural vocabulary inherent in Clark's building.

Completed in 1953, Barrington's addition makes up the greater portion of the façade and seamlessly attaches to the 1925 building, giving the appearance that the entire edifice was built at one time. Constructed of tan brick with Moorish Revival influences, the façade is punctuated by single and paired sash windows. Decorative features include a distinctly Moorish terra cotta cornice of arches; multiple limestone belt courses, reminiscent of Moorish horizontally-oriented polychrome edifices; decorative projecting brickwork; and stucco cartouches between windows that feature brick diamonds and Stars of David. The two round windows that flank the addition's balcony doors each feature a Star of David.

In 1940, the Jewish Social Service Agency (JSSA), designed by architect Julius Wenig, was added to the west of the Hebrew Home. Although simplified in form and ornamentation, the building clearly takes its design cues from the Home. The building is constructed of tan brick with punched sash windows and features a cornice of progressively projecting brick arches. A

pair of arch-top windows is surmounted by a brickwork arched tympanum and limestone surrounds the central door, just as it does on the Hebrew Home.

The JSSA was incorporated in 1921 to assist with rent money, food, clothing and coal to needy families and new immigrants. Throughout its history, the Agency maintained had a long-term focus on providing Jewish children with needed services, initially assisting with foster care and adoptions, but in more recent years offering psychiatric treatment for emotionally disturbed children and adolescent counseling services.

When the mid-1930s brought a wave of European refugees, JSSA's clientele increased significantly. The opening of the new building in 1940 culminated a three-year plan to centralize Jewish welfare services in Washington and helped with the marked increase in the need for specialized services for Holocaust survivors.

The Spring Road site was sold to the District of Columbia in 1968 and the JSSA and Home relocated to Montgomery County. The District subsequently converted the property into a community health center, adding the Paul Robeson School and a utility building on the easternmost portion of lot 807 in the 1970s.

### **Evaluation**

The Hebrew Home is virtually intact, with the exception of window and door replacements. It retains a high level of integrity, conveying its original design, feeling, association, craftsmanship, location, setting, and materials for its period of significance of 1925-1969.

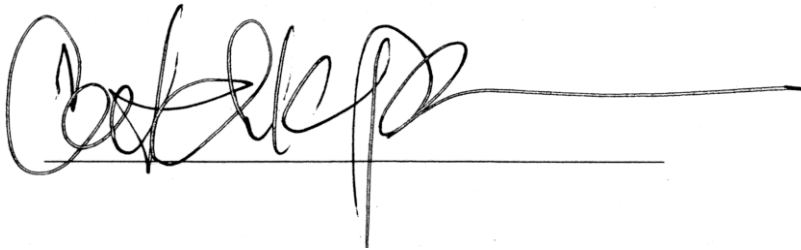
It is representative of Moorish Revival architecture in Washington DC, but clearly reflects centuries-old traditions in synagogue design. The building is also a rare example of an extant purpose-built residential institution. Historically, most of DC's orphanages, homes for the aged, indigent, or other welfare cases initially occupied buildings constructed for another purpose. Of those which had purpose-built facilities, only a handful survive, such as the Methodist Home on Connecticut Avenue, Masonic and Eastern Star Home on New Hampshire Avenue, and the Home for the Aged and Infirm near Blue Plains.

Most importantly, perhaps, is the significance of the buildings to Jewish history in the District of Columbia. The property a physical reminder of the expansion of the Jewish population beyond the downtown, Shaw, and Georgetown neighborhoods to the developing subdivisions in Columbia Heights, Petworth, Park View and Brightwood. The Hebrew Home and JSSA were centered in a burgeoning neighborhood with services and goods supporting the influx of Jewish residents.

The property also reflects the community's response to the needs of underserved Jewish residents of the Nation's Capital. Initially serving the elderly population with housing and health care, the property grew to include an array of social services available to young and old within a community that both understood and supported the specific religious, linguistic, and cultural needs of its clients.

The property merits designation for the following reasons:

- *District of Columbia Criteria A (Events) and B (History) and National Register Criterion A:* The property is closely associated with the provision of social services and housing to the growing number of Jewish residents in the District of Columbia, particularly those who had immigrated to the United States due to displacement, to escape persecution, or to seek a better life, and who did not speak English and therefore had difficulty seeking appropriate assistance.
- *District of Columbia Criterion D (Architecture and Urbanism) and National Register Criterion C:* The property is an important and singular representative of an institutional facility in the District. It is also a representative example of Moorish Revival architecture in the District, a historically popular style for synagogue architecture. In addition, the location of the Home and JSSA is indicative of the sizeable Jewish population in the Columbia Heights, Petworth, and Park View neighborhoods.
- *Criterion F (Creative Masters):* Notable architect Appleton P. Clark designed the building as his only known work in the Moorish Revival style. As the Home served as a residence, hospital, and place of worship, this commission challenged Clark, and his successor in the design, Edward William St. Cyr Barrington, to design a building that would contain several of the functions he had previously only addressed singularly in his buildings. When the JSSA moved to the site, architect Julius Wenig used a similar design aesthetic.
- The property has not been evaluated under Criterion G for archaeology.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gretchen Pfaehler', written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Gretchen Pfaehler  
Chair, District of Columbia Historic Preservation Review Board