

JOHN COOPER  
MAYOR



**METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY**

Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission  
Sunnyside in Sevier Park  
3000 Granny White Pike  
Nashville, Tennessee 37204  
Telephone: (615) 862-7970  
Fax: (615) 862-7974

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**701 S 6<sup>th</sup> St, James A. Cayce Administration Service Building  
June 17, 2020**

**Application:** Historic Landmark Recommendation for the James A. Cayce Administration Service Building

**Map and Parcel Numbers:** 09304007400

**Council Districts:** 06

**Applicant:** Metro Development and Housing Authority

**Project Lead:** Robin Zeigler, [robin.zeigler@nashville.gov](mailto:robin.zeigler@nashville.gov), 615-862-7970

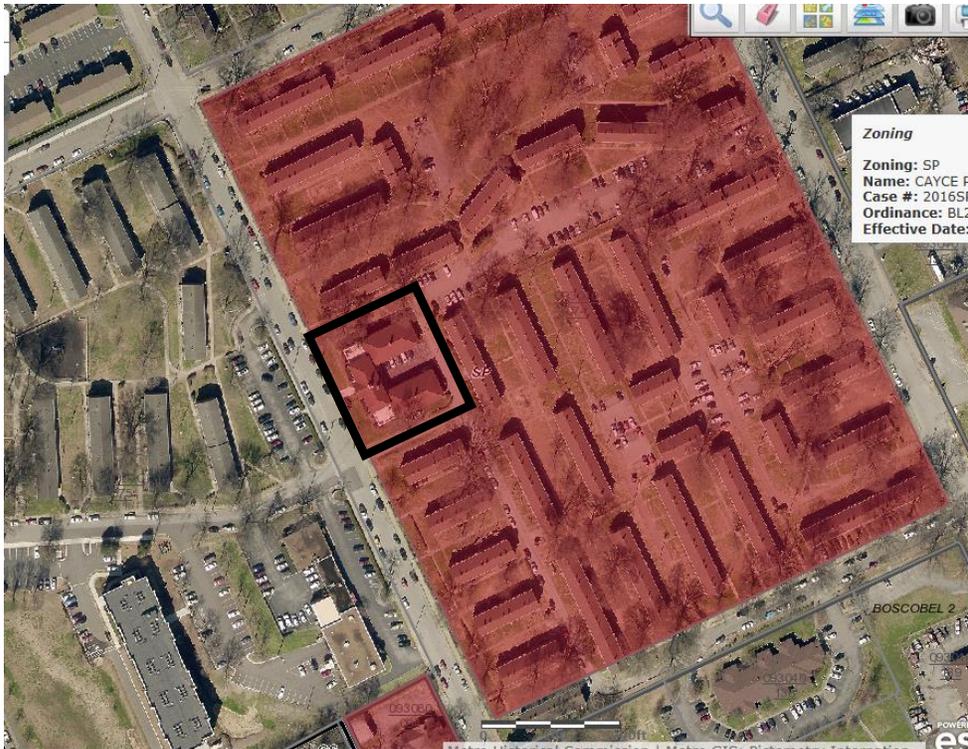
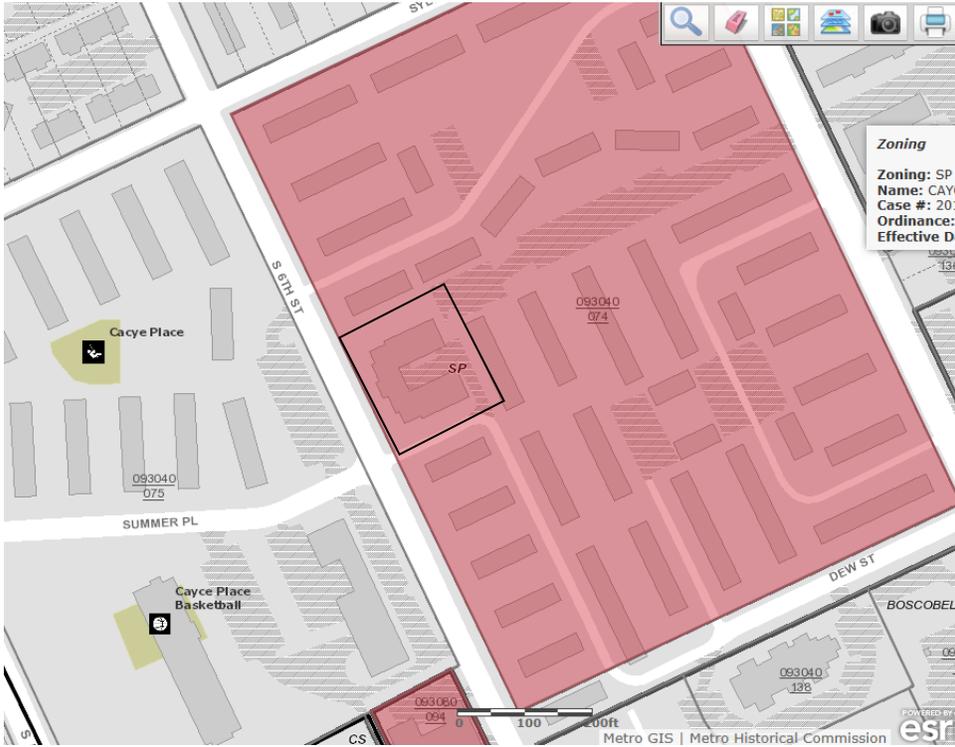
**Description of Project:** The applicant is requesting a Historic Landmark overlay for the James A. Cayce Administration Service Building, also known as the Gerald F. Nicely Building.

**Recommendation Summary:** Staff suggests that the Metro Historic Zoning Commission recommend approval of the historic landmark to the Planning Commission and Metro Council and the adoption of the existing Historic Landmark Design Guidelines to apply to exterior alterations. Staff finds that the building meets standard 5 of section 17.36.120.

**Attachments**

A: National Register Nomination

# Aerials



## **Applicable Ordinances:**

### **17.40.410 Powers and duties.**

A. Creation of Historic Overlay Districts. The historic zoning commission shall review applications calling for the designation of historic overlay districts according to the standards contained in Chapter 17.36, Article III, referring written recommendations to the metropolitan council. Establishment of an historic overlay district on the official zoning map shall be in accordance with Section 18.02 of the Metropolitan Charter and Article III of this chapter.

B. Establishment of Design Review Guidelines. The historic zoning commission shall adopt design guidelines for each historic overlay district and apply those guidelines when considering preservation permit applications. Design guidelines relating to the construction, alteration, addition and repair to, and relocation and demolition of structures and other improvements shall be consistent with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. A public hearing following the applicable public notice requirements of Article XV of this chapter shall precede the adoption of all design review guidelines by the historic zoning commission. Testimony and evidence material to the type of historic overlay under consideration may be considered by the commission in its deliberations.

### **17.36.110 Historic overlay districts established.**

The following classifications of historic overlay districts are made a part of this title, each classification having separate and unique regulations and guidelines established according to the provisions of Chapter 17.40, Article IX.

C. Historic Landmark (HL) District. The boundaries shall be shown on the zoning map or on special overlays thereto that are made a part of this zoning code and noted by name on such maps, in which no structure shall be constructed, altered, repaired, relocated or demolished in whole or in part unless the action complies with the requirements set forth in this title.

### **17.36.120 Historic districts defined.**

B. Historic Landmark. An historic landmark is defined as a building, structure, site or object, its appurtenances and the property it is located on, of high historical, cultural, architectural or archaeological importance; whose demolition or destruction would constitute an irreplaceable loss to the quality and character of Nashville and Davidson County; and that meets one or more of the following criteria:

1. The historic landmark is associated with an event that has made a significant contribution to local, state or national history;
2. It is associated with the lives of persons significant in local, state or national history;
3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic value;
4. It has yielded or may be likely to yield archaeological information important in history or prehistory;
- or
5. It is listed or is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

## Background:

The James A. Cayce Administration Service Building, also known as the Gerald F. Nicely Building, is significant under National Register criteria A and C for its role in the development of Nashville's public housing and for its architectural design. The building was completed in 1943 after being approved by the United States Housing Authority (USHA) in 1941. The building was constructed to serve as the offices of the Nashville Housing Authority (NHA) which was the city agency responsible for administering the local and federal public housing programs. The NHA oversaw the completion of the adjacent Cayce Place public housing project as well as the city's other major public and elderly housing projects in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The agency was renamed the Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency (MDHA) in 1972 and the building continues to be occupied by MDHA. The building was designed in the Neo-Classical Revival style by the Nashville architectural firm of Marr and Holman. It features a two-story main block with a Doric portico and flanking one-story wings. The building

underwent a limited expansion in 1989 and in 2005 the windows and doors were replaced and the portico rebuilt. Although using different materials, this renovation was designed to match the original as closely as possible and the building retains integrity of its overall plan, site, setting, location, workmanship, feeling and association.

*More information is available in the National Register nomination.*

## Analysis and Findings:

The property was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 13, 201, and therefore meets standard 5 of section 17.36.120.



Figure 1: Exterior of building in 1950. *Courtesy of Metro Archives.*



Figure 2: Cayce Admin Building today.

**Recommendation:**

Staff suggests that the Metro Historic Zoning Commission recommend approval of the historic landmark to the Planning Commission and Metro Council and the adoption of the existing Historic Landmark Design Guidelines to apply to exterior alterations. Staff finds that the building meets standard 5 of section 17.36.120.

# 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 James A. Cayce Administration Service Building  
Other names/site number Gerald F. Nicely Building  
Name of related multiple property listing \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Location

Street & Number: 701 South Sixth Street  
City or town: Nashville State: TN County: Davidson  
Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  N/A Zip: 37206

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:  A  B  C  D

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of certifying official/Title:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission

**State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Commenting Official:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Title:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

James A. Cayce Administration Service Building  
 Name of Property

Davidson County, TN  
 County and State

**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**

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

**Category of Property**

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

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register** N/A

James A. Cayce Administration Service Building  
Name of Property

Davidson County, TN  
County and State

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/Municipal Building

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/Municipal Building

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY

REVIVALS – Neo-Classical Revival

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Concrete, Brick, Copper

**Narrative Description**

The James A. Cayce Administration Service Building is located at 701 South Sixth Street in Nashville, Tennessee. Completed in 1943, the building was designed by the Nashville architectural firm of Marr and Holman in the Neo-Classical Revival style. The building is a two-story concrete and brick veneer, U-shaped building with a two-story central block flanked by one-story flat and hipped roof wings. The main (west) façade features a two-story portico with Doric motif columns and eight-over-eight double hung windows. At the roofline is an octagonal cupola with louvered vents, a metal roof and finial. The building was constructed to serve as the administrative offices of the Nashville Housing Authority (NHA) which had oversight over the city’s public housing projects. The building was named in honor of James A. Cayce who served as Chairman of the NHA from

James A. Cayce Administration Service Building  
Name of Property

Davidson County, TN  
County and State

January of 1939 until his death in May of 1941 when the building was in the planning stage. The NHA was renamed the Metropolitan Nashville Housing Agency in 1972 and this agency continues to occupy the building and serve as the city's public housing administrator. Gerald F. Nicely was the MDHA Executive Director for twenty-three years and the building was renamed in his honor following his retirement in 2002.

**Narrative Description**

The James A. Cayce Administration Service Building was completed in 1943 and designed in the Neo-Classical Revival style by the Nashville architectural firm of Marr and Holman. Their original design was a U-shaped, two-story central block with a prominent gable roof portico flanked by two hipped roof, one-story wings. The building was constructed of reinforced concrete with an exterior of stretcher bond brick. The foundation is of poured concrete. The two-story main block section has a gable roof of metal shingles and the lateral one-story wings have hipped roofs of the same metal shingles. The building is sited on a slight rise facing South Sixth Street and in front of the building are landscaped grounds and a concrete staircase. Within the rear courtyard is an asphalt parking area.

The building was originally designed with a two-story wood portico and full-height Doric motif columns. By 2005 this portico had deteriorated and was replaced by the existing aluminum columns which were designed to match the profile and features of the original columns. The portico's gable field is original and has wood siding and an octagonal attic window flanked by garlands. The portico rests on a concrete porch which has a metal handrail. The main entrance was rebuilt in 2005 of aluminum and glass based on the original design. The entrance has a four-light glass and aluminum door flanked by four-light sidelights. Above the door is a six-light transom. The door surround is of aluminum and has a cornice and dentils. Windows were originally six-over-six, eight-over-eight, and twelve-over-twelve, rectangular wood sash resting on brick sills. These windows were replaced in 2005 with the existing aluminum clad wood windows which were designed to match the original.

The building originally had a clay tile roof but due to extensive deterioration, this roof was removed in 1994 and replaced with the existing metal roof which was designed to simulate the clay tile shingles. At the roofline of the main central block is an octagonal cupola with a metal roof and finial. The two hipped roof wings also have similar but smaller cupolas at their rooflines. On the north elevation of the north wing is an entrance with a multi-light metal and glass door and a six-light transom. Above the entrance is an original hipped roof copper and wood canopy. On the east (rear) elevation of the two-story main block are two entrances with four-light metal and glass doors with original hipped roof copper and wood canopies above. The north elevation of the south wing also has an entrance with a multi-light metal and glass door and a six-light transom. Above the entrance is an original hipped roof copper and wood canopy. All of the doors were added in 2005 to match the original wood door and transom at these locations. The main central block has an interior brick chimney and the south wing has a sunken concrete

James A. Cayce Administration Service Building  
Name of Property

Davidson County, TN  
County and State

basement along the south elevation. Adjacent to the south elevation are heating and cooling units.

The building was slightly enlarged in 1989 when the two hipped roof wings were extended to create an additional office on the north wing and a conference room on the south wing. Two flat roof sections were added to the west elevation of each wing and these additions were designed to match the original wings in window configuration, concrete foundation and stretcher bond brick.

The interior floor plan of the building is largely original and the main two-story section has a central hallway and staircase which connects both floors. The main section and one-story wings have central corridors with flanking offices. The main lobby and staircase have terrazzo floor surfaces and the staircase retains its original metal railing and wood hand rail. The offices have plaster walls and dropped acoustical tile ceilings and added fluorescent light fixtures. Many of the offices have carpeted floors and original wainscoting and chair rails. Most of the doors are original single-light glass and wood design. The most notable interior feature is the floor of the lobby which has a terrazzo panel depicting the site plan of the original Cayce Place development along with a compass and scale. This panel is multi-colored and remains in excellent condition.

The James A. Cayce Administration Service Building faces South Sixth Street and is surrounded on the north, east and south by apartment units of Cayce Place. Across the street are similar apartment units built in the 1954 expansion of the housing project. The overall site and setting of the building has not been altered since the early 1950s.

James A. Cayce Administration Service Building  
 Name of Property

Davidson County, TN  
 County and State

**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.)

Property is:

N/A

- 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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

SOCIAL HISTORY

**Period of Significance**

1943-1965

**Significant Dates**

1943

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Architects: Marr and Holman, Nashville, TN

Builder: V.L. Nicholson Company,

Nashville, TN

James A. Cayce Administration Service Building  
Name of Property

Davidson County, TN  
County and State

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph**

The James A. Cayce Administration Service Building is significant under National Register criteria A and C for its role in the development of Nashville's public housing and for its architectural design. The building was completed in 1943 after being approved by the United States Housing Authority (USHA) in 1941. The building was constructed to serve as the offices of the Nashville Housing Authority (NHA) which was the city agency responsible for administering the local and federal public housing programs. The NHA oversaw the completion of the adjacent Cayce Place public housing project as well as the city's other major public and elderly housing projects in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The agency was renamed the Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency (MDHA) in 1972 and the building continues to be occupied by MDHA. The building was designed in the Neo-Classical Revival style by the Nashville architectural firm of Marr and Holman. It features a two-story main block with a Doric portico and flanking one-story wings. The building underwent a limited expansion in 1989 and in 2005 the windows and doors were replaced and the portico rebuilt. Although using different materials, this renovation was designed to match the original as closely as possible and the building retains integrity of its overall plan, site, setting, location, workmanship, feeling and association.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

In 1920, Nashville was a small Southern city with a population of 118,342 residents. The city boasted a thriving downtown commercial area with middle-class suburbs extending southwest from the downtown core. Closer to downtown were working-class neighborhoods occupied by white and African American families. Many homes in these neighborhoods were built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and considered to be sub-standard by city officials. From 1920 to 1930, Nashville experienced rapid growth and its population increased by a third to 153,866 residents. As these new residents moved into the city, many new subdivisions were platted to accommodate the boom in housing construction. However, for the poor and working class white and African American families they often had little choice but to accept homes which lacked indoor plumbing, sewage disposal or electricity.<sup>1</sup> A number of charitable programs were developed by non-profit organizations and the city government to attempt to alleviate these poor housing conditions. However, with the stock market crash of 1929 and the onset of the Great Depression, these programs were overwhelmed as unemployment and poverty increased in the early 1930s.

The election of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932 resulted in a much larger role for the federal government for many Americans. Known as the "New Deal," Roosevelt and his cabinet began new programs to provide jobs and assist local and state governments. Agencies such as the

---

<sup>1</sup>Don H. Doyle, *Nashville Since the 1920s*. (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 44-46.

James A. Cayce Administration Service Building  
Name of Property

Davidson County, TN  
County and State

Public Works Administration (PWA) were established to finance new federal buildings, schools and public housing. New Deal public housing came to Tennessee in 1935 when the Tennessee General Assembly passed the Tennessee Housing Authorities Law. This law gave city governments power to establish local housing authorities and qualify for the PWA's demonstration projects.<sup>2</sup> The PWA provided grants to cities for the construction of public housing in 1934. Nashville was selected for a \$2 million project and in the summer of 1935, work began on the Andrew Jackson Courts in North Nashville. The Andrew Jackson Courts were built for African American families and in March of 1936, work began on the construction of Cheatham Place for white families adjacent to the Germantown neighborhood in the north section of the city.<sup>3</sup> Both of these projects were completed in 1938 and provided hundreds of new units of public housing for the city.

The completion of the Andrew Jackson Courts and Cheatham Place projects led Nashville's civic leaders and government official to consider building their own housing projects with Federal assistance. The PWA program for public housing was eliminated in 1937 by Congress and replaced with the USHA, which oversaw local communities responsible for building housing of their own. The USHA provided federal subsidies for local agencies and continued the PWA's model of creating segregated housing projects. Nashville's municipal housing authority was established and approved by the City Council on October 31, 1938, and its first meeting was held just nine days later. In May of the following year, the Nashville Housing Authority applied to the USHA for public housing projects, which were to be the Boscobel Heights and J.C. Napier Homes, segregated for whites and African Americans respectively.<sup>4</sup>

When the Nashville Housing Authority was created, public housing in Nashville had fervent opponents and supporters. Real estate owners represented the most vocal opponents as they feared the impact slum clearance and public housing construction would have on their business. Dissenters went on to say that the creation of a housing authority would alter ward lines and possibly result in unfair power given to those appointed. Others doubted that new construction of low housing was even necessary. Ira T. Brown, an African American landlord, took the floor at a

---

<sup>2</sup>Carroll Van West, *Tennessee's New Deal Landscape: A Guidebook*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 129.

<sup>3</sup> Doyle, *Nashville Since the 1920s*, 96.

<sup>4</sup> Metro Development and Housing Authority website. "History," 2015. <http://www.nashville-mdha.org/history/> (accessed December 14, 2018).

James A. Cayce Administration Service Building  
Name of Property

Davidson County, TN  
County and State

Nashville Housing Authority meeting to state that those living in slums likely did not desire to get out – a view which was jeered by many in attendance.<sup>5</sup>

The supporting faction, represented by every branch of Nashville's organized labor, several women's groups, and civic groups, stressed the benefit of such a project for the city's neediest families<sup>6</sup> U.S. Senator Kenneth D. McKellar remarked in 1939 that Nashvillians supported the creation of a local housing authority as he discussed the acquisition funds for public housing with the USHA administrator.<sup>7</sup> In a letter to the *Nashville Tennessean*, one unnamed contributor wrote that parts of Nashville "have changed for the better in the past few years are now occupied by Cheatham Place and Andrew Jackson Courts," and continued to say that they hoped slum clearance would continue.<sup>8</sup> Many newspaper opinion articles supported housing for low-income families as part of Christian and civic duty. An article in the January 13, 1939 edition of the *Tennessean* called for a qualified body to resume Nashville's "civic vision, civic interest and humanitarian enterprise" of clearing slums and creating affordable housing for the city's struggling residents.<sup>9</sup>

The NHA moved forward with the USHA to fund two new housing projects in 1939. The Boscobel Heights project in East Nashville was for white families and Napier Place in South Nashville was for African American families. On May 11, 1940, the Nashville Housing Authority awarded a contract for the construction of 350 dwelling units for the Boscobel Heights project, located south of Shelby Avenue between South Sixth and South Seventh Streets. The complex was completed on August 15, 1941 and the units were at total occupancy at the time of their completion. An additional 36 units were authorized in 1940, and opened in 1942, bringing the total number of dwelling units to 386. James A. Cayce, board chairman of the NHA, died on May 20, 1941, prior to the completion of the Boscobel project. Cayce (1873-1941) was a prominent businessman, founder of the Nashville Rotary Club and a proponent of public housing. The project was renamed Cayce Place in his honor.

The Napier Place project for African Americans was initially designed with 332 units at a cost of

---

<sup>5</sup> "Council Hears Housing Funds Offer from U.S.," *Nashville Tennessean*, November 1, 1938, 1-2; Doyle, *Nashville Since the 1920s*, 97.

<sup>6</sup> "Housing Need to be Argued before 'Jury,'" *Nashville Tennessean*, October 30, 1938, 1, 11.

<sup>7</sup> B. N. Timmons, "McKellar Predicts City Can Get Money After Meeting with USHA Administrator," *Nashville Tennessean*, January 13, 1939, 1.

<sup>8</sup> "Now Boscobel," *Nashville Tennessean*, May 3, 1940, 14.

<sup>9</sup> "On With Rehousing," *Nashville Tennessean*, January 13, 1939, 4.

James A. Cayce Administration Service Building  
Name of Property

Davidson County, TN  
County and State

\$1,343,000. The complex's namesake was James Carroll Napier (1845-1940), a prominent African American lawyer who served on the Nashville City Council and the state Republican Executive Committee. Napier succeeded Booker T. Washington as president of the National Negro Business League upon Washington's death.<sup>10</sup> Construction of Napier Place began on March 1, 1940, and the first tenants moved in on June 1, 1941.<sup>11</sup> Ground was broken on an additional 148 units on February 1, 1941 and these were completed on January 1, 1942 at a cost of \$627,000.<sup>12</sup> Napier Place was located along Lafayette Street (U.S. Highway 41) south of the downtown area.

Cayce Place and Napier Place were designed by the Nashville architectural firm of Marr and Holman. Composed of Thomas Scott Marr and Joseph W. Hollman, Marr and Homan was one of Nashville's leading architectural firms in the early twentieth century. The firm grew to prominence in the 1920s for their Colonial Revival and Neo-Classical design work throughout the Southeast designing many courthouses, schools and other public buildings. The firm was able to work steadily through the Depression and designed significant PWA projects such as the Nashville U.S. Post Office (1934) and the Tennessee Supreme Court Building (1936).

The firm's designs for Cayce Place and Napier Place were restrained examples of the Colonial Revival style and make use of the PWA and USHA emphasis for "superblocks" and community amenities.<sup>13</sup> While the PWA focused on employing the largest number of people for the longest period of time—and thus building structures with more unique and complex design features—the USHA was cost conscious and wanted a more uniform look for all projects that could be replicated across the country with limited workforce and materials. Nationally, public housing projects of the 1930s and 1940s were similar in design. In addition to a kitchen, living room, and full bathroom, early public housing units were typically composed of one to four bedrooms, all modest and regular sizes. Painted concrete block or plaster partition walls were typical wall finishes, and floors were wood, asphalt tile or linoleum on concrete. Most apartments lacked cabinets and closet doors as well as hallways. Apartments were laid out to take advantage of natural sunlight and ventilation and to provide privacy

Originally located in a commercial building downtown, the NHA soon needed more space and an administration building was included in the plans for Cayce Place in 1941. Also designed by

---

<sup>10</sup> Jessica Reeves, Cayce Homes Eligibility Report, Metropolitan Historical Commission, (May 24, 2018), 4.

<sup>11</sup> Paul R. Lusignan, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Public Housing in the United States, 1933-1949," (December 1, 2004), Appendix IV, 17.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., Appendix III, 2.

James A. Cayce Administration Service Building  
Name of Property

Davidson County, TN  
County and State

Marr and Holman, the building's Neo-Classical Revival style featured a two-story central section with a full-height portico flanked by one-story wings. Constructed by the V.L. Nicholson Company, the building was completed in 1943 and occupied by the NHA in 1944. The building housed the office of the Executive Director as well as other staff positions. A notable feature of the building was the site plan of Cayce Place designed in terrazzo on the lobby floor.

During World War II, the NHA was responsible for overseeing federally funded housing for military defense workers. With the construction of the Vultee Aircraft plant in Nashville in 1940, defense housing became a necessity as available housing could not meet the demand of the influx of workers, many of them women. The Office of the Defense Housing Coordinator approved the allocation of Lanham Act funds to create 600 dwelling units for these workers. The Vine Hill Defense Housing Project began construction on April 16, 1941 with 300 dwelling units off Benton Avenue in South Nashville. Occupancy began on July 5, 1941, as half the project was completed. August 14, 1941 marked its completion. Plans were made for an additional 300 units, but due to cost, this was never realized. World War II stalled plans for more public housing, aside from defense housing if the need arose. This served as a blow to the at least 13,000 Nashville families in need of adequate housing but unable to afford it.<sup>14</sup> The Vine Hill defense housing became public housing after World War II and these units were razed in the 1990s.

The NHA was unable to commit sufficient funds for new housing projects until the early 1950s when it built the Edgehill and Sudekum Apartments. The Edgehill Apartments for African Americans contained 200 units and was completed in 1953. The housing project was built south of Edgehill Avenue and bounded on the east by 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, South and on the west by 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue, South. The Sudekum Apartments for white families finished construction and began occupation of its 500 units also in 1953.<sup>15</sup> In addition to the Edgehill and Sudekum Apartments, the NHA also constructed three other large projects in the early 1950s. On Charlotte Avenue in North Nashville was the John Henry Hale Homes which contained 500 housing units for African Americans. Also in North Nashville off 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue, N. was the Preston Taylor Homes also built for African American residents with 550 units. In East Nashville on Foster Avenue the Sam Levy Homes were built which had 480 units for white residents.

In addition to these housing projects there was a major expansion of Cayce Place with an additional 295 units authorized. These were completed by 1952, and an additional 100 units were approved in 1953 and completed by November 1954.<sup>16</sup> These additions provided Cayce Place

---

<sup>14</sup> Nashville Housing Authority, *Annual Reports*, Nashville: NHA, 1941.

<sup>15</sup> Nashville Housing Authority, *Annual Reports*, 1953.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 1953.

James A. Cayce Administration Service Building  
Name of Property

Davidson County, TN  
County and State

with a total of 781 units making it the largest housing project owned and operated by the NHA. For the rest of the decade the NHA focused on the operations and maintenance of its existing projects and no new developments were undertaken. In recent decades all of the buildings associated with the John Henry Hale, Sam Levy and Preston Taylor Homes were razed and replaced with new housing units.

In the 1960s, the NHA shifted its focus from low-rise units to high-rise housing for the elderly. Construction began on the Gernert Studio Apartments, initially called the I.W. Gernert Homes, in 1963 and the project was completed on January 4, 1965. Named for NHA Board of Commissioners member Rev. I. W. Gernert, the project was the first in Nashville specifically for the elderly. Edgefield Manor was Nashville's second low-rent development for the elderly. Construction began on September 8, 1964 and was completed in October of 1965.<sup>1717</sup> This development consisted of the nine-story Edgefield Manor apartment building and eighteen adjacent single-story buildings containing four and five units each.

The completion of the Gernert Studio Apartments and Edgefield Manor were the last major projects completed by the NHA in the 1960s although several other elderly high-rise buildings were in the planning and construction phase such as the Parthenon Towers completed in 1970. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the NHA continued to work on maintaining and administering its public housing projects. The NHA was renamed the Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency in 1972 and over the next several decades various projects were undertaken to upgrade or replace many of its buildings. The most ambitious programs were the HOPE-VI projects of the 1990s and early 2000s which resulted in the razing of the Vine Hill Apartments, and the Preston Taylor, Sam Levy and John Henry Hale Homes. These projects were replaced with single-family and multi-family units based on "New Urbanism" concepts including orientation to the street, front porches and front yards.

The James A. Cayce Administration Service Building is significant in Politics/Government for its role as the offices of the Nashville Housing Administration (NHA) during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The NHA is illustrative of the increased role accepted by Nashville and the federal government for slum clearance and to provide safe and affordable housing. Prior to the Depression there were limited programs on the local and federal level to improve housing for citizens. The Depression of the 1930s made the housing shortage even more acute and many families suffered economic decline. President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs represented a major change in the role of the federal government to alleviate housing conditions in the country. In order to improve housing conditions Nashville's City Council created the NHA in 1938. The James A. Cayce Administration Service Building was completed in 1943 and housed the offices of the NHA in 1944. Over the next several decades the NHA worked closely with federal agencies to clear blighted areas and build thousands of units of public and elderly

---

<sup>17</sup> Nashville Housing Authority, *Annual Reports*, 1964.

James A. Cayce Administration Service Building

Davidson County, TN

Name of Property

County and State

housing. As the roles and needs of Nashville's public housing adapted over the years, so too did the overseeing agency. The NHA became the Metropolitan Development and Housing Authority (MDHA) in 1972, and the James A. Cayce Administration and Service Building was renamed the Gerald F. Nicely Building in 2002.

The James A. Cayce Administration Service Building is also significant under Criterion A in Social History for its role in the development of Nashville's public housing and as a governmental agency which worked with federal programs to promote affordable housing in the city. Beginning in 1944, the building served as the offices of the NHA which had oversight over the slum clearance and public housing construction in the city. The NHA razed areas of sub-standard housing and constructed Cayce Place and Napier Place in 1941. During World War II, the Vine Hill Apartments were constructed to provide housing for workers in the city's many industrial plants which produced war materials. A renewed burst of public housing projects occurred in the early 1950s with the completion of the Sudekum Apartments, Edgehill Apartments, John Henry Hale Homes, Sam Levy Homes, Preston Taylor Homes and expansion of Cayce Place. These developments added thousands of low-income housing units and were also part of slum clearance projects undertaken by the city. A specific emphasis on providing housing for the elderly resulted in city and federal funds for the construction of Edgefield Manor and the Gernert Studio Apartments in 1965. All of these projects were integral to Nashville's intent to demolish sub-standard housing and improve the social conditions of its citizens from the 1930s to the 1960s. The actions of the NHA transformed many areas of Nashville and are a vital part of its 20<sup>th</sup> century social history.

The building is also significant in Architecture for its Neo-Classical design. The building was designed to complement the Colonial Revival style apartment units being built in the early 1940s for the Cayce Place public housing project. The building was designed by the Nashville architectural firm of Marr and Holman which was one of the city's most prominent firms from the 1920s to the 1950s. The firm designed the apartment units of Cayce Place in addition to the James A. Cayce Administration Service Building. The building was designed with a central, two-story block with a Doric portico and flanking, one-story wings. It was designed to put as many men to work as possible with solid masonry construction and interior terrazzo floors. The interior of the building retains much of its original layout and floor plan and the lobby is notable for its Cayce Place site plan outlined in the terrazzo floor. The building retains sufficient integrity of its overall form and plan to meet significance under criterion C. Overall the building retains integrity of its overall design, location, workmanship, feeling and association and is an important Neo-Classical example of the work produced by the Works Progress Administration.

James A. Cayce Administration Service Building  
 Name of Property

Davidson County, TN  
 County and State

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

**Bibliography**

Doyle, Don H. *Nashville Since the 1920s*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1985.

Lusignan, Paul R. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. "Public Housing in the United States, 1933-1949." December 1, 2004.

Metro Development and Housing Authority website. "History," 2015. Accessed December 14, 2018. <http://www.nashville-mdha.org/history/>

Nashville Housing Authority. *Annual Reports*. Nashville: NHA, 1941, 1953, 1964.

*Nashville Tennessean* 1938-1940

Reeves, Jessica. "Cayce Homes Eligibility Report," Metropolitan Historical Commission. May 24, 2018.

West, Carroll Van. *Tennessee's New Deal Landscape: A Guidebook*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):		Primary location of additional data:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)	<input type="checkbox"/>	State Historic Preservation Office
<input type="checkbox"/>	previously listed in the National Register	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other State agency
<input type="checkbox"/>	previously determined eligible by the National Register	<input type="checkbox"/>	Federal agency
<input type="checkbox"/>	designated a National Historic Landmark	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Local government
<input type="checkbox"/>	recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #	<input type="checkbox"/>	University
<input type="checkbox"/>	recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #	Name of repository: Metropolitan Nashville Historical Commission	
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): DV-25419			

James A. Cayce Administration Service Building  
Name of Property

Davidson County, TN  
County and State

---

**10. Geographical Data**

---

**Acreage of Property**    Less than one acre    **USGS Quadrangle**    Nashville East

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84:  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- 1. Latitude: 36.166222    Longitude: -86.758991
- 2. Latitude: 36.166389    Longitude: -86.758538
- 3. Latitude: 36.166024    Longitude: -86.758324
- 4. Latitude: 36.165846    Longitude: -86.758761

**Verbal Boundary Description**

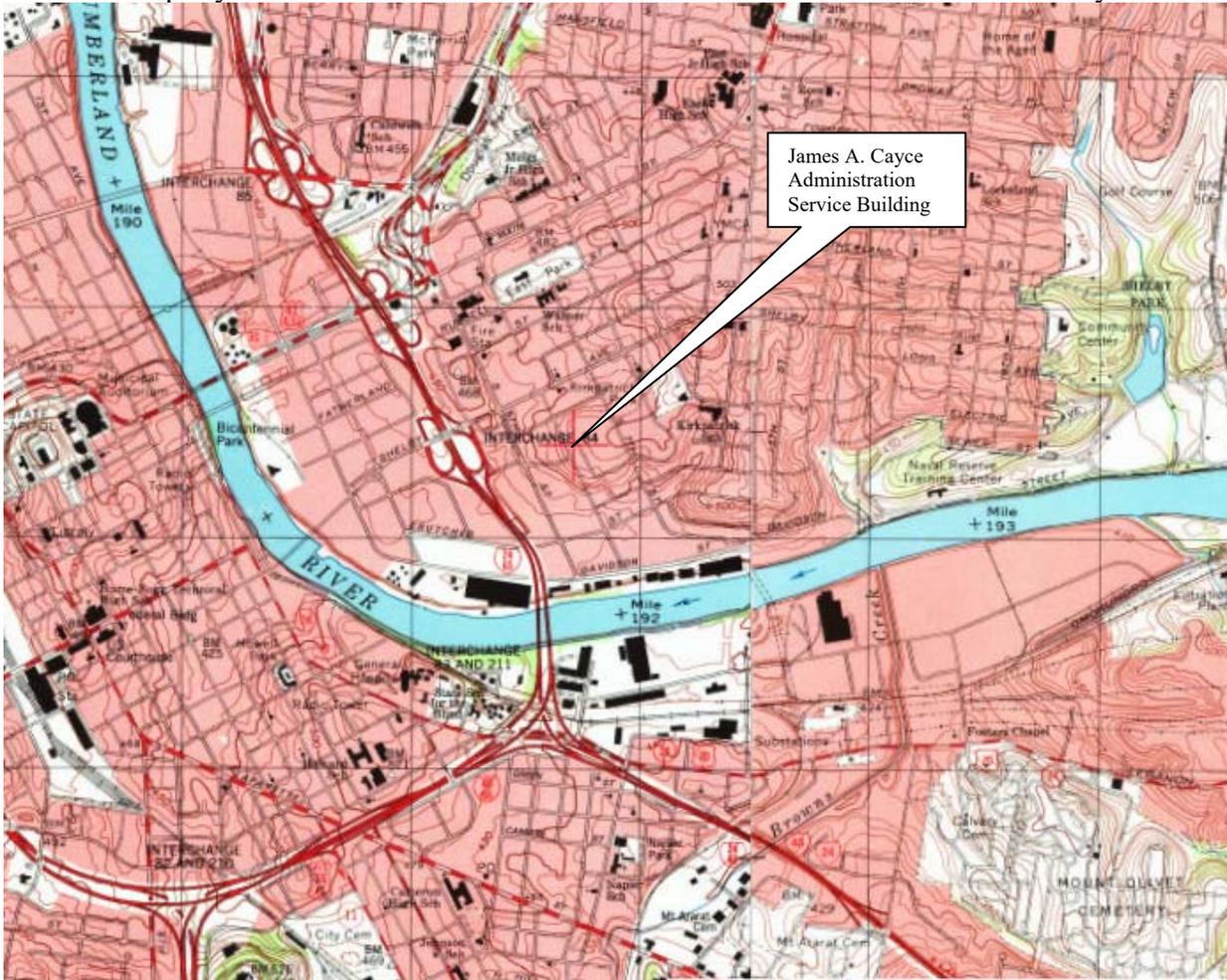
The James A. Cayce Administration Building is part of a 12.5-acre parcel within the city limits of Nashville in Davidson County listed as parcel ID number 09304007400. Beginning at the northeastern corner of the intersection of Summer Place and South Sixth Street, the western boundary extends northwest approximately 170' along South Sixth Street; then it extends northeast approximately 146' along the sidewalk until it reaches the sidewalk adjacent to the rear parking lot, forming the northern boundary. At this point the eastern boundary extends southeast for approximately 163' to South Sixth Street. The southern boundary moves southwest for approximately 143' to the sidewalk adjacent to South Sixth Street, the point of the beginning.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary for the James A. Cayce Administration Service Building includes the 0.55-acre lot that the building is sited on within the larger 12.5-acre parcel 09304007400. The boundary is drawn to only include this building and excludes other property associated with the Cayce Place Homes. The boundary includes all property historically associated with the James A. Cayce Administration Service Building.

James A. Cayce Administration Service Building  
Name of Property

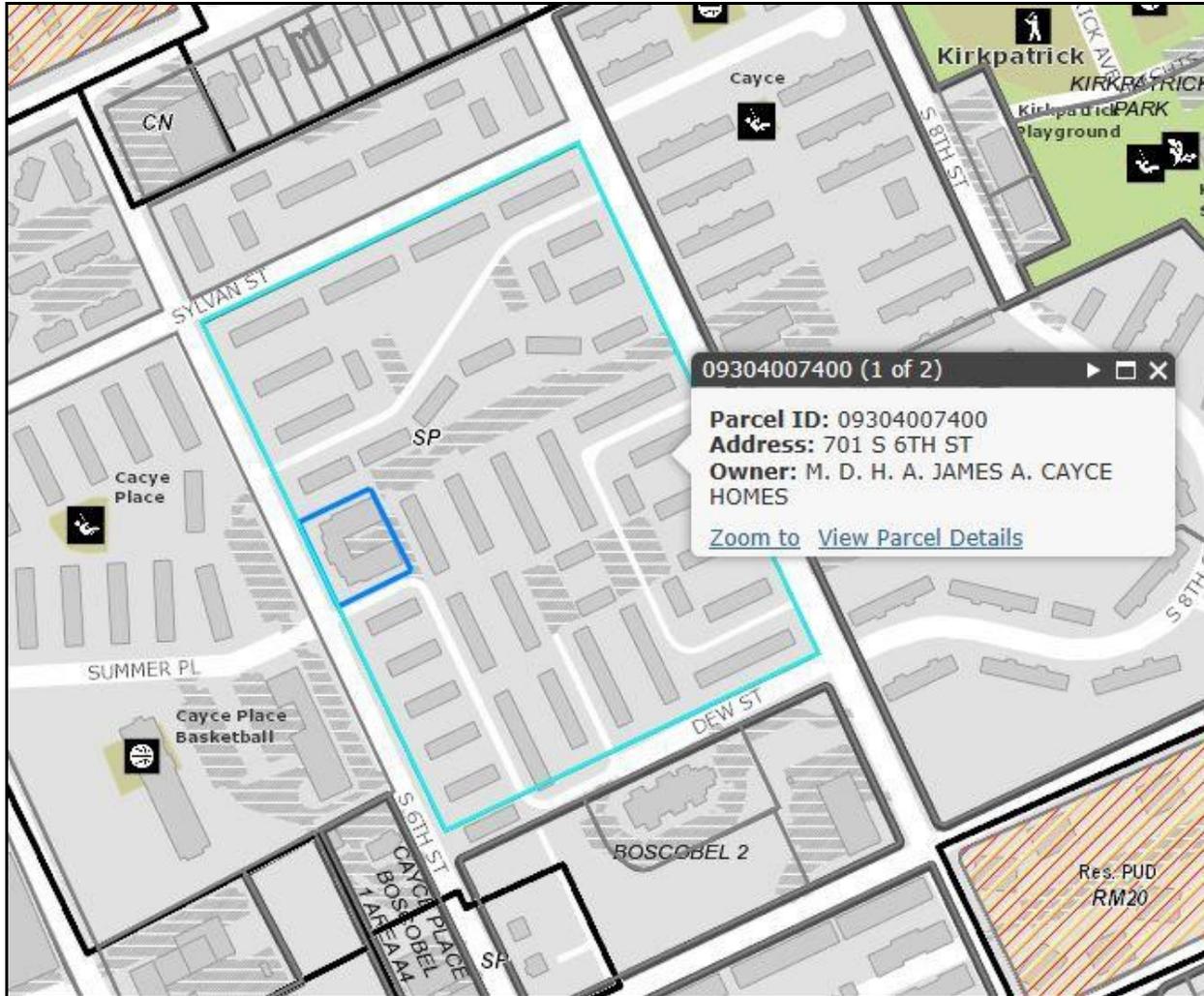
Davidson County, TN  
County and State



**Location Map, USGS Topo Map, Nashville East**

James A. Cayce Administration Service Building  
Name of Property

Davidson County, TN  
County and State



**Davidson County tax assessor's map illustrating property boundary and parcel.**  
(maps.nashville.gov)

James A. Cayce Administration Service Building  
Name of Property

Davidson County, TN  
County and State

**Photo Log**

Name of Property: James A. Cayce Administration Service Building City  
or Vicinity: Nashville

County: Davidson State: Tennessee

Photographer: Phil Thomason, Thomason and Associates

Date Photographed: January 10, 2018

Facade of building, west elevation, facing northeast  
1 of 25

Facade of building, west elevation, facing southeast  
2 of 25

Facade of building, north elevation, facing southwest  
3 of 25

North wing, south elevation, facing northwest  
4 of 25

Facade of courtyard parking area, east elevation, facing west  
5 of 25

View of copper canopies on central block, east elevation, facing west  
6 of 25

View of rear copper canopy on south wing, north elevation, facing southeast  
7 of 25

Facade of south wing, north elevation, facing southeast  
8 of 25

Facade of south wing, south elevation, facing northwest  
9 of 25

View of mechanical equipment on south wing, south elevation, facing northwest  
10 of 25

Portico entrance, west elevation, facing east  
11 of 25

James A. Cayce Administration Service Building

Davidson County, TN  
County and State

Name of Property

View of cupola, facing northeast

12 of 25

View of James A. Cayce plaque, interior lobby

13 of 25

View of inset property map, interior lobby floor

14 of 25

View of inset compass, interior lobby floor

15 of 25

View of architectural drawing of James A. Cayce Place Homes, central block hallway, first floor

16 of 25

Interior view of representative office, central block, first floor

17 of 25

View of interior staircase, central block, first floor

18 of 25

Interior view of hallway in north wing, view east

19 of 25

Interior view of representative office, north wing, view northeast

20 of 25

View of original office door, north wing, view northeast

21 of 25

Interior view of hallway in south wing, view east

22 of 25

Interior view of meeting room, south wing, view northwest

23 of 25

Interior view of hallway in central wing, second floor, view south

24 of 25

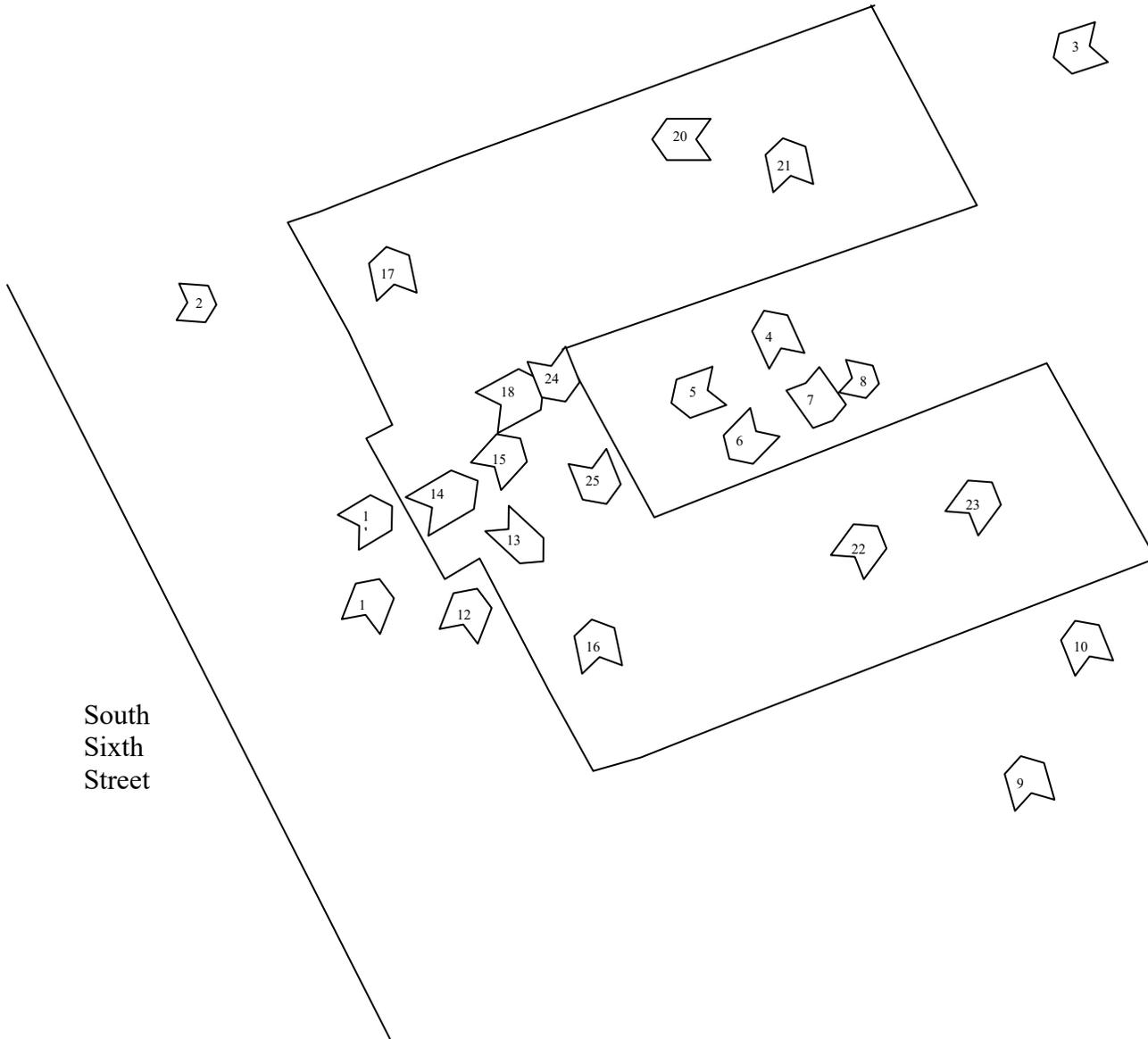
View of interior staircase, central block, second floor

25 of 25

James A. Cayce Administration Service Building  
Name of Property

Davidson County, TN  
County and State

**Site Plan and Photo Key**



James A. Cayce Administration Service Building  
Name of Property

Davidson County, TN  
County and State



**Figure 1. Construction of the James A. Cayce Administration Service Building in 1942.  
(Metro Nashville Archives)**

James A. Cayce Administration Service Building  
Name of Property

Davidson County, TN  
County and State



**Figure 2. NHA Chairman Gerald Gimre and a construction worker during the sealing of the cornerstone of the James A. Cayce Administration Service Building in 1942. (Metro Nashville Archives)**

James A. Cayce Administration Service Building  
Name of Property

Davidson County, TN  
County and State



**Figure 3. The James A. Cayce Administration Service Building in 1950. (Metro Nashville Archives)**

---

**11. Form Prepared By**

---

Name Kelsey LamkinOrganization Thomason and AssociatesStreet & Number 118 Kenner AveDate July 12, 2019City or Town NashvilleTelephone (615)385-4960E-mail info@thomasonandassociates.comState TN Zip Code 37205

**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.