

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

Historic name Sunset Tower

Other names/site number Sunset Apartments, Sunset Tower Apartments

Name of related Multiple Property Listing Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri

2. Location

Street & number 4821 Roanoke Parkway N/A not for publication

City or town Kansas City N/A vicinity

State Missouri Code MO County Jackson Code 095 Zip code 64112

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

B. K. D. O. Deputy SHPO 11-16-21
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
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

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

Sunset Tower
Name of Property

Jackson County, Missouri
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: International

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Concrete Block (structure)

Brick (veneer)

roof: Asphalt

other: N/A

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION ON CONTINUATION PAGES

Sunset Tower
Name of Property

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Areas of Significance

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1962

Significant Dates

1962

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 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.

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Gordon Hamilton Contracting Company, Inc.

Herbert E. Duncan Associates, Architects

Lee Metcalfe Construction Company

Weldon B. Royse Masonry Company, Inc.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE ON CONTINUATION PAGES

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

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10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Less than one acre

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 39.039857 -94.597137 3 _____
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

2 _____ 4 _____
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

_____ NAD 1927 or _____ NAD 1983

1 _____ 3 _____
Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

2 _____ 4 _____
Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (On continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (On continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mason Martel, Historic Preservation Specialist

organization Rosin Preservation, LLC date June 2021; rev. August 2021

street & number 1712 Holmes telephone 816-472-4950

city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64108

e-mail mason@rosinpreservation.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Photographs**
- **Owner Name and Contact Information**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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 18 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.

Sunset Tower

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log:

Name of Property: Sunset Tower

City or Vicinity: Kansas City

County: Jackson

State: Missouri

Photographer: Brad Finch, f-stop Photography

Date

Photographed: May 25, 2021

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

- 1 of 18: South and west elevations, view NE.
- 2 of 18: South and east elevations, view NW.
- 3 of 18: First floor windows and sunshade, view SE.
- 4 of 18: Wraparound window (typical), view NE.
- 5 of 18: Window treatments (typical), view SW.
- 6 of 18: Front entrance, view E.
- 7 of 18: North and east elevations, view SW.
- 8 of 18: Main lobby, view NE.
- 9 of 18: First floor fitness center, view NW.
- 10 of 18: West stair (typical), view NE.
- 11 of 18: First floor leasing office, view NW.
- 12 of 18: Ninth floor, typical corridor, view N.
- 13 of 18: Living room/kitchen (typical), view NW.
- 14 of 18: Bedroom (typical), view SW.
- 15 of 18: Bedroom (typical), view NE.
- 16 of 18: Bathroom (typical), view W.
- 17 of 18: Basement, view S.
- 18 of 18: Parking garage, view NW.

Figure Log:

Include figures on continuation pages at the end of the nomination.

1. Location Map. (Google Maps, 2021.)
2. Site, Boundary Map, and Photo Key. Bold line indicates legal and nomination boundary. (Base map from Jackson County, Missouri, MO Online Parcel Viewer, 2021, <https://jcgis.jackson.gov/apps/parcelviewer/WebMap1.aspx>.) Contextual Map with Comparison Properties. (Google Maps, 2021.)

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3. Contextual Map with Comparison Properties. The core of the Country Club Plaza is indicated with a dark line. (Google Maps, 2021.)
4. Sunset Tower parking lot (Photo by Brad Finch, f-Stop Photography, May 2021.)
5. South and West Elevations from 1962 Sunset Tower Plan. (Herbert E. Duncan Associates, Architects, *Sunset Tower*, arch. drawings (February 2, 1961), A-8.) Plans on file with owner.
6. Entrance Comparison: 1961 and 2021. (Excerpt from Herbert E. Duncan Associates, Architects, *Sunset Tower*, arch. drawings (February 2, 1961), A-11.) Plans on file with owner; Current photo by Brad Finch, f-stop Photography, May 2021.)
7. 2019 Image of Sunset Tower, Showing Tan Brick. (Google Streetview, 2019.)
8. North and East Elevations from 1962 Sunset Tower Plan. (Herbert E. Duncan Associates, Architects, *Sunset Tower*, arch. drawings (February 2, 1961), A-9.) Plans on file with owner.
9. 1984 Image of Damage to the Northeast Corner of Sunset Tower. (Helliker, Kevin. "Brick Fall from Walls of Apartment Building; No Injuries Reported." *The Kansas City Times*. May 14, 1984, 13.)
10. First Floor Plan and Photo Key. (Source: Herbert E. Duncan Associates, Architects, *Sunset Tower*, arch. drawings (February 2, 1961), A-4.) Plans on file with owner. Note: Current plans are not available. The arrangement of spaces within individual apartments on the first floor has been altered from this plan.
11. Typical Upper Floor Plan and Photo Key. (Source: Herbert E. Duncan Associates, Architects, *Sunset Tower*, arch. drawings (February 2, 1961), A-5.) Plans on file with owner. Note: The arrangement of the upper floors has not changed since the building was completed.
12. Basement Floor Plan and Photo Key. Note: Current plans are not available. (Source: Herbert E. Duncan Associates, Architects, *Sunset Tower*, arch. drawings (February 2, 1961), A-3.)
13. Plaza house Apartments. (Google Maps, 2019.)
14. 1960 Rendering of Parkway Towers (view W) and Modern View (view NE). (Luxury Units to Rise on A Site Near Plaza," *The Kansas City Star*, July 3, 1960, 56. Newspapers.com; Google Maps, 2021.)
15. 1961 Rendering of Winston Churchill Apartments and Modern View. ("The Winston Churchill, A \$1,450,000 Apartment Structure," *The Kansas City Star*, March 17, 1960, 3. Newspapers.com; Google Maps, 2021.)
16. 1962 Sunset Tower Advertisement in *The Kansas City Star*. (Advertisement appears in *The Kansas City Star*, March 17, 1962. 11.)
17. 1963 Rendering of Sunset Tower. ("Mid-Winter Quality Tour of Kansas City's New High-Rise Apartments." *The Kansas City Star*, February 17, 1963, 24.)
18. 1984 Image of Repairs to Sunset Tower. (Blocher, Fred. "A New Face." *The Kansas City Times*. October 25, 1984, 25.)
19. Park Manor Historic District (1925-1927): 910 Ward Parkway, 920 Ward Parkway, and 4826 Roanoke Parkway. (Google Streetview, 2021.)

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Sunset Tower
Name of Property
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County and State
Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

SUMMARY

Constructed in 1962, Sunset Tower, at 4821 Roanoke Parkway in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, is a ten-story apartment building with light-colored brick walls, a flat roof, and a concrete structural system. The International Style building has an oblique L-shaped footprint, with the direction of the two wings conforming to the rough alignment of the bordering streets. The building is located at the northeast corner of Ward Parkway and Roanoke Parkway at the west edge of the Country Club Plaza. The south wing primarily fronts Ward Parkway and extends north for a few feet along Roanoke Parkway; the north wing only fronts Roanoke Parkway. The nominated property contains the apartment tower and its parking lot, both contributing resources.

Sunset Tower exemplifies many character-defining features of the International Style. Those features include a flat roof with minimal coping, an asymmetrical façade that has little ornamentation, and linear expanses of metal-clad windows. A concrete canopy with aluminum flashing wraps around most of the south and west elevations at the top of the first floor, and concrete sunshades cover the ribbon windows on the south and west elevations. All window openings have narrow brick sills and historic sliding aluminum windows fill the openings.

The interior contains a modest lobby with elevators and letter boxes. Corridors on the south and north sides of the lobby lead to a fitness center and an office. The upper floors have an identical arrangement with four individual apartment units arranged around a wide T-shaped corridor. The basement level contains a concrete parking garage, along with laundry facilities, and storage and mechanical space.

Sunset Tower has seen few major alterations, inside and out. Exterior alterations include a new front entrance treatment and ramp, painting the upper floors of the entrance bay and sunshades, as well as the addition of signage at the entrance and along the south elevation. In the mid-1980s, a portion of the brick veneer on the northeast corner failed. The damaged wall was rebuilt using brick of a similar color. Interior alterations include renovations to the first-floor apartments, as well as minor changes to upper floor apartment finishes and appliances. Those changes did not impact the historic arrangement of public corridors. As discussed below, none of those changes have altered the character-defining features of the Sunset Tower, and the building retains integrity.

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ELABORATION

SETTING AND SITE

Sunset Tower is located less than one-half mile southwest of the commercial shops of the Country Club Plaza (*Figures 1 & 2*). It is located just north of Brush Creek, which runs east-west through Kansas City and feeds into the Blue River to the east. The immediate vicinity of the nominated tower contains other apartment buildings of similar size from the early- to mid-twentieth century. Early- and mid-twentieth century residential neighborhoods stretch to the west and south of the building. St. Luke's Hospital of Kansas City is located one mile to the north, and the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art is one-and-a-half miles to the northeast. The shops and restaurants that make up the Country Club Plaza occupy several blocks east of Sunset Tower. The National Register-listed Plaza House Apartments are located two blocks north, on Roanoke Parkway (*Figure 3*). The Park Manor Historic District is located to the west, just across Roanoke Parkway.¹

Sunset Tower occupies a flat, mostly rectangular lot at the northeast corner of the busy intersection of Roanoke Parkway and Ward Parkway (*Figure 2*). Roanoke Parkway contains four lanes of one-way northbound traffic while Ward Parkway has two lanes of traffic in each direction. The lot sits back about twenty feet from each of the streets. A wide concrete sidewalk lines the south and west sides of the building within the public right-of-way and outside the nominated boundary (*Photos 1 & 2*). A grassy verge separates the sidewalk from the streets, and a grassy lawn (within the nominated boundary) separates the sidewalk from the building.

PARKING LOT (FIGURE 4)

The associated historic parking lot is located on the northeast side of Sunset Tower. Due to its size, the parking lot is counted as a separate, contributing structure in this nomination. It is a flat, concrete and asphalt-paved lot that is accessed from Roanoke Parkway (*Photo 3*). A buff brick and concrete retaining wall border the north and east sides of the L-shaped parking lot (*Photo 7*). The remainder of the lot is defined by the adjacent walls of Sunset Tower.² The parking lot contains sixteen marked spots. Four of those spots are covered spaces that are located underneath the northeast corner of Sunset Tower. Three circular reinforced concrete piers support the upper stories in that location. The parking lot has not seen any significant alterations since it was completed.

SUNSET TOWER

¹ Plaza House Apartments, NRIS #13000837, listed October 16, 2013; Park Manor Historic District, NRIS #63819074, listed February 1, 2006.

² Historic plans show a wood fence instead of a brick wall in that location, the age of the current configuration is not known. The parking lot associated with the building to the east of Sunset Tower is at a lower grade. The retaining wall is not counted separately in this document since it is a structural part of the parking lot.

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EXTERIOR

Sunset Tower is a ten-story brick building with a flat roof and a concrete and steel structural system. The roof is capped with metal coping. Historic aluminum sliding windows fill all masonry openings (*Photo 4*). The street-facing elevations have long expanses of historic aluminum windows with historic concrete sunshades above (*Photo 3*). Through-wall air conditioner units pierce the exterior under windows; this is a historic condition though the units have been upgraded over the years (*Photo 5*).

A historic one-story brick elevator penthouse is located at the northeast corner of the roof. There is a non-historic addition that extends to the east from the elevator penthouse (*Figure 2*). That addition presently contains AT&T equipment and was built with metal that has been painted a similar color to the historic brick. Non-historic communication equipment is attached to both the penthouse and the addition (both visible in *Photo 7*). It is not known when that work was done.

Primary (West) Elevation (Figure 5)

The asymmetrical primary elevation of Sunset Tower faces west, towards Roanoke Parkway. Three visually separated wall sections organize this elevation, and a continuous concrete awning separates the first story from the upper façade (*Photo 1*). The narrow, center recessed section of this elevation contains the main entrance; a non-historic sign panel spelling out “SUNSET APARTMENTS” rises from the historic first story canopy over the entrance.

Historic plans indicate that the main entrance has been altered. Those plans show a three-part arrangement with a central doorway flanked by two panels of ceramic tiles set in a mosaic pattern. The doorway was flanked by concrete pilasters and filled with a pair of glazed aluminum doors. The three-part arrangement was retained when the front entrance was altered to its current configuration in circa 2012 (*Figure 6*).³

Black granite panels (likely dating to circa 2002) surround the pair of glazed aluminum doors; installed in circa 2012, these doors complement the historic design (*Photo 6*).⁴ Historically, darker tan brick accentuated the upper stories of this section of the elevation (*Figure 7*); black paint, applied in circa 2020, currently covers the tan brick. Concrete pilasters separate this wall into three bays on the second through tenth stories; these also are currently painted black. A

³ This work was mentioned during a site visit with the current building owner in May 2021. There are no available plans for the front entrance work.

⁴ Keith Muller Architecture. *Sunset Tower*, arch. drawings. July 23, 2002, A2. Plans on file with owner.

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window pierces the center bay of the upper stories; brick panels fill the flanking bays. A non-historic aluminum medallion (circa 2002) accents the center of each panel at each story.

Access to the main entrance from Roanoke Parkway changed in 2002 to meet ADA requirements. The historic entrance contained a concrete entrance terrace with a set of concrete steps and aluminum railing. Today, a wide concrete ramp leads from the sidewalk and narrows before terminating at the main entrance; an aluminum railing set into granite footings flanks the ramp (*Photo 1*).

The north wall of the west elevation corresponds to the north wing of the building (*Photos 1 & 3*). A ribbon window, comprised of seven pairs of sliding units, pierces the center of the wall at each story, and corner window units accent the south corner of the wall at each story. Concrete sunshades span the ribbon windows of the upper stories; the continuous canopy covers the ribbon and corner windows of the first story.

The south wall of the west elevation corresponds to the south wing of the building. Two window bays organize this façade. A small, single window pierces the north end of the wall at each upper story; at the first story, a non-historic aluminum sign panel occupies this bay. A corner window unit accents the southwest corner of the building at each story.

South Elevation (Figure 5)

The public south elevation faces Ward Parkway. The fenestration of this elevation is almost a mirror image of the west elevation of the north wing (*Photo 2*). The corner windows at the southwest corner of the building continue onto the south elevation at each story, and a ribbon window with a concrete sunshade pierces the center of the wall at each story, except the first floor and basement level. The continuous canopy from the west elevation continues onto the south elevation, shading the first story windows. There is an identical sign panel spelling out "SUNSET APARTMENTS" centered on the first story ribbon window. Access into the basement parking garage is through a double-wide garage door at the east end of the elevation. This four-panel overhead garage door is painted to match the surrounding brick; this is a historic masonry opening, but the age of the garage door is unknown.

North Elevation (Figure 8)

Three bays organize the north elevation of the north wing (*Photo 7*). At the first story, the east two bays correspond to the covered parking area while a window pierces the west bay. The fenestration pattern is the same at each upper story: a narrow center window flanked by two wider windows. Most of the brick on the east two-thirds of the wall dates to 1984 after a section of the original brick veneer failed (*Figure 9*). The damage also extended to the entire east side of the north wing. An unknown number of window units had to be removed to make repairs to

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the wall. The impacted sections of wall were rebuilt with brick of similar color and texture; fenestration patterns match the historic configuration, and the historic window units were reinstalled following that work.

Two bays organize the north elevation of the south wing, which sets back from the north elevation of the north wing and projects to the east (*Photo 7*). A small ribbon window pierces the west bay at all but the first story. At this location, a historic pair of aluminum glazed doors leads into the first floor of the building. A single window unit pierces each story at the east bay.

East Elevation (Figure 8)

Similar to the west elevation, three wall sections organize the east elevation. A central projecting wall divides the elevation (*Photo 7*). The south wall and the projecting center wall correspond to the south wing of the building (*Photo 2*). Three bays organize the south wall at each story; the north bay contains a smaller window than the other two. A ribbon window containing two paired units pierces the center of the projecting center wall of the elevation. Three bays organize the east elevation of the north wing, which sets back from the east elevation of the south wing. The south bay contains no openings. Two uneven bays organize the second through tenth stories of the center and north bays. A small window fills the south bay at each floor; a ribbon window containing two paired units fills the north bay at each floor. The covered parking area fills the first story at the center and north bays.

INTERIOR

The ten-story building sits over a full-size concrete basement that contains an underground parking area. The first floor contains the main lobby with two centrally located elevators, a fitness center, and leasing office. Two enclosed concrete stairs also provide access between floors. The north stair, adjacent to the north elevator, accesses the first floor to roof; the southwest stair connects the basement through tenth floors. The upper floors are identical; each contains four apartment units arranged around a double-loaded T-shaped corridor. The northwest and southwest units have one bedroom, while the west and southeast units have two bedrooms. Finishes have been updated in the units and include carpet in living rooms and bedrooms and tile in the bathrooms and kitchen; trim in the units is historic. The corridors and other public spaces retain their original configuration. Non-historic carpet covers the corridor floors.

First Floor (Figure 10)

The west entrance opens into a vestibule that leads to a small lobby area with two elevators and the historic mailboxes (*Photo 8*). Small sets of steps flank the elevators. The north set of steps leads up to the north enclosed stair and a former apartment. This apartment was recently adapted into a fitness center that occupies the living room and kitchen of the historic apartment

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unit (*Photo 9*). Construction of the fitness center had a small impact on the arrangement of that unit, as only one of the kitchen walls appears to have been removed in the process. The arrangement of the rest of the unit is intact.

The stair to the south of the elevators leads up to a corridor. Two apartments historically occupied the south and east sides of this corridor; an enclosed stair occupies the west end of the corridor (*Photo 10*), and a door at the east end of the north corridor wall leads into the rear entrance vestibule. The configuration of the corridor is intact; however, the two apartments were recently converted into a leasing office for the building (*Photo 11*). That work reconfigured the interior to house three offices, a reception area, and a breakroom. Most historic finishes have been removed from this space. The bathroom of the southwest apartment remains.

The rear entrance opens into a medium-sized space that was historically utilized as a receiving room for shipments and other deliveries. This space has seen few changes. It has a tile floor with wood trim around the walls. One of the building's two elevators also has a door to this area.

Upper Floors (Figure 11)

The upper floors have an identical arrangement that has seen little alteration since the building was completed. Each floor has a double-loaded T-shaped corridor (*Photo 12*). With a few exceptions, each corridor has a mirrored wall across from the elevators; the date of these mirrors is unknown, as they are not specified on plans. However, the historic baseboard steps to accommodate the mirror, indicating they may date to 1962. Each of the four apartment doors retain wood trim around each opening; apartment numbers are not historic. Non-historic carpet covers the floor. Apartment units on the upper floors retain their original layouts. All the units open into a living room with a small dining room alcove (*Photo 13*). The kitchen is located next to the dining room area. All apartments have one bathroom with a full-size tub (historic), which is located off a short corridor from the living room (*Photo 16*). The bedrooms also are located off the corridor (*Photo 14*). Each bedroom contains between one and two closets depending on the layout of the unit (*Photo 15*). The closets have original built-in shelving and shoe racks. All areas of the apartments are carpeted, except for the bathroom and kitchen, which have a tile floor. Small updates and upgrades of finishes and appliances have occurred over the years, but the general form of the individual rooms and some of the original millwork on the walls and doors has been retained.

Basement (Figure 12)

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The basement contains a small corridor that leads to a small laundry room, tenant storage area, and the underground parking garage (*Photo 17*). Historically, the east wall of the corridor contained direct access into the parking garage, which is today infilled (unknown date). A former trash room now provides access from the corridor into the garage. The garage is an open area with painted concrete walls and exposed pipes and structural piers (*Photo 18*). The north end of the garage has individual parking stalls that are partitioned off with concrete walls.

INTEGRITY

To meet the registration requirements for a High-Rise Apartment Building Property Type as described in the MPDF, a property must “retain sufficient architectural integrity and historic characteristics to enable identification with the property type, including the façade appearance and the basic configuration of the original floor plan outlining the public halls, apartment entrances, and stairways in public spaces.”⁵ Sunset Tower retains historic integrity and is easily recognizable as a High-Rise Apartment Building constructed in Kansas City during the late-1950s and early 1960s.

Sunset Tower retains integrity of Location and Setting. The building has not been moved from its location at the corner of Roanoke Parkway and Ward Parkway. The surrounding area retains its mixed-use character of large apartment buildings and nearby retail shops associated with the Country Club Plaza.

The exterior of Sunset Tower retains integrity of Design, Materials and Workmanship. Significant character-defining features such as the linear expanse of windows and the arrangement of the façade have been retained. The non-historic metal signs found on the front and south sides mimic the horizontal arrangement of windows on those walls.

The registration requirements in the MPDF state that for a building to be eligible for listing under Criterion C, “the exterior brick masonry should remain intact and exposed,” and “changes over a period of time in color and materials should be sympathetic and compatible to the original design.”⁶ Recent exterior painting on the primary west elevation is reversable and has not significantly impacted the building’s integrity. The central recessed entrance section historically had colored brick and the non-historic metal medallions are relatively small. That work, including

⁵ Schwenk, “Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri,” F.19. When new, Sunset Tower contained thirty-nine apartments, including three on the first floor. The units on the first floor have been remodeled to serve other functions.

⁶ Schwenk, “Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri,” F.6.

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the paint on the sunshades is reversible and does not significantly detract from the design of the building.

Repairs done on the secondary north wall in the mid-1980s used brick that resembled the damaged historic brick. That work is compatible to the original design of the building since the replacement brick was of a similar color and size to the historic brick. Since only a portion of the brick on that wall was replaced, Sunset Tower also meets the registration requirement which states that “the building should retain significant portions of the original masonry walls, in particular on the primary elevations and secondary side elevations visible from the public right-of-way.”⁷ The secondary north-facing elevation is partially visible from the public right-of-way, however much of the view is obscured by the neighboring building to the north.

According to the MPDF, alterations to the front entrance must be evaluated to determine impact on integrity for buildings nominated under Criterion C. For buildings listed individually under this criterion, “the majority of the building’s openings on the primary façade should be unaltered or altered in a sensitive and appropriate manner, using similar materials, profiles, and sizes as the original...”⁸ Changes to the front entrance have not altered the size of that space or the position of the doorway. Original plans show that colored stone panels that were arranged in a mosaic pattern on both sides of the doorway (*Figure 6*); however, there is no visual or photographic evidence to confirm that this surround was installed as drawn. Simple black granite slabs are affixed to the wall in the location of the mosaic. The building was originally accessed by a concrete stair with a minimal metal handrail that led to a modest landing area. That space has been replaced with an ADA-compliant ramp that is paved with granite tiles and an aluminum handrail. The work on the ramp involved minimal alterations to the building itself and did not obscure or alter any character-defining features.

Interior alterations have had a minimal impact on the integrity of the Sunset Tower. All public spaces retain their historic configuration, and the corridors retain their historic arrangement of apartment entrances. First floor units have seen more alterations than those on the upper floors. Historically, that floor contained three apartment units that have been renovated to serve as a fitness center and office/leasing area for the apartment. The fitness center occupies the historic kitchen and living room area of one of the first-floor apartments. That conversion only impacted the kitchen wall; the rest of the unit retains its historic configuration. The remaining two historic units on the first floor were combined and converted for use as an office for the apartment building. That work reconfigured the arrangement of those two units and removed most of the

⁷ Schwenk, “Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri,” F.6.

⁸ Sally Schwenk, “Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri,” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (Kansas City, MO: November 7, 2007): F.6.

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historic finishes. The arrangement of the public corridor in that area was not altered, and the bathroom in the southwest apartment remains intact. Work on the first-floor apartment units has not impacted any public spaces on that floor. All historic doorways in public spaces are intact.

Upper floor units have not seen any significant changes to their configuration and retain much of their historic fabric, such as wood trim, built-in shelving and shoe racks in bedrooms, and historic tubs in bathrooms. Minimal changes to upper floor units include updates to fixtures, appliances, and routine maintenance. The basement has not seen any significant changes that have altered its integrity. Access to the underground parking garage from the corridor was infilled at an unknown date and walled over on the corridor side. A new connection to the garage from the corridor was created further to the east at an unknown date. The rest of the configuration of the basement corridor is intact. The parking garage was a historically unfinished space with exposed pipes, conduit, and other mechanical equipment. It has seen few alterations or changes, including routine maintenance and updates to equipment and painting.

Taken together, the alterations do not detract from the Feeling and Association of Sunset Tower. The character-defining features exhibit a strong sense of time and place and clearly convey Sunset Tower as an early 1960s International Style apartment building in Kansas City, Missouri.

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SUMMARY

Sunset Tower (1962) is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of ARCHITECTURE as a high-rise apartment building that was built near the Country Club Plaza in Kansas City, Missouri. At that time, most new multi-family development occurred in the surrounding suburbs, and took the form of low-rise, low-density apartments. Local firm Herbert E. Duncan Associates, Architects designed the ten-story International Style apartment building for local developers Carl Rechner and Howard Swan to provide additional housing options on Kansas City, Missouri's Country Club Plaza. Character-defining features of the design include a flat roof with minimal coping, concrete sunshades above window openings on street-facing elevations, an asymmetrical façade that has little ornamentation, and linear expanses of metal-clad windows. The building also meets the registration requirements for the High-Rise Apartment Building property sub-type, as defined in the "Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri" Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). It is an example of a high-rise apartment building that was built near the Country Club Plaza in the International Style in the early 1960s. The period of significance covers the year the building opened, 1962. Sunset Tower fits into the following historic contexts, as discussed in the MPDF: "Residential Development Patterns: 1830-1960," "The Evolution of the Working- and Middle-Class Multi-Family Purpose-Built Apartment Buildings in Kansas City: 1855-1960, and "Architecture of Working- and Middle-Class Apartment Buildings: 1855-1960."⁹ Those contexts will be discussed further below.

ELABORATION

SIGNIFICANCE & REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS: HIGH-RISE APARTMENT BUILDING SUB-TYPE

Constructed in 1962, Sunset Tower is an example of the High-Rise Apartment Building described in "Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri" (MPDF). The MPDF lists the common characteristics of the purpose-built High-Rise Apartment Building sub-type: a minimum of twenty-seven units with private kitchen and bathroom facilities, between eight and twelve stories tall, a single main entrance that contains a small- to medium-sized lobby with at least one elevator, organized on a double-loaded corridor, dates to between circa 1918 "through the early 1960s," and located within the boundaries of Kansas City in 1960.¹⁰

⁹ Schwenk, "Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri," H.2.

¹⁰ Schwenk, "Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri," F.19.

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As a High-Rise Apartment Building, Sunset Tower is a ten-story building constructed within the boundaries of Kansas City, Missouri in the early 1960s. The exterior contains a single main public entrance with an additional service entrance on the back. The interior contains a small lobby with two elevators and thirty-six individual apartment units arranged along a T-shaped double-loaded corridor with four units on each of the upper floors.¹¹

Sunset Tower fits into all three historic contexts described in the MPDF. As a High-Rise Apartment Building property sub-type, Sunset Tower is significant for its impact on residential development patterns in Kansas City, as described in the context, "Residential Development Patterns: 1830-1960."¹² According to the MPDF, construction of High-Rise Apartment Buildings such as Sunset Tower "changed the course of the City's residential patterns, affecting patterns in location, building type, social interaction, and public services."¹³ The building fits within the context of "The Evolution of the Working- and Middle-Class Multi-Family Purpose-Built Apartment Buildings in Kansas City: 1855-1960." High-rise apartment buildings maximized available rentable space, allowing for more units within a smaller footprint. As an International Style building, Sunset Tower also falls within the context of the "Architecture of Working- and Middle-Class Apartment Buildings: 1855-1960."¹⁴ The technological innovations employed in International Style apartment buildings, such as reinforced concrete and steel construction, allowed them to be taller and contain more units than previous apartments. Those contexts will be expanded and discussed further below.

As a High-Rise Apartment Building, Sunset Tower is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture; using the terminology in the MPDF for significance C-7, the International Style building "illustrates the apartment building's role in the various plans and aesthetic movements characteristic to Kansas City, Missouri."¹⁵ Sunset Tower is an example of an International Style High-Rise Apartment Building built near the Plaza in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The impact of Sunset Tower, and the International Style in Kansas City is discussed further below.

Sunset Tower meets all the registration requirements for High-Rise Apartment Buildings sub-type. The registration requirements include retaining architectural composition, ornamental

¹¹ When new, Sunset Tower contained thirty-nine apartments, including three on the first floor. The units on the first floor have been remodeled to serve other functions. Despite that work, all historic public-facing apartment entrances have been retained.

¹² Schwenk, "Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri," F.20-F.21.

¹³ Schwenk, "Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri," F.20.

¹⁴ Schwenk, "Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri," cover page.

¹⁵ Schwenk, "Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri," F.4.

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details, trim, and materials of the primary elevations. The requirements also state that “design elements intrinsic to the building’s style and plan should be intact.”¹⁶ The three-part arrangement of the façade, the prominent linear expanse of windows and the corresponding sunshades are intact and are an integral aspect of the International Style of the building.

Other registration requirements state that for a building to be listed under Criterion C, “the majority of the building’s openings on the primary façade should be unaltered or altered in a sensitive and appropriate manner,” and that “exterior brick and masonry should be intact and exposed.”¹⁷ Openings on the front walls have not been altered, and all the exterior brick is intact and exposed on the primary elevation. Brick on the secondary north wall was damaged and replaced with new brick of a similar color as the historic ones. The front entrance was altered in a sensitive manner that incorporated elements of the original three-part design and did not impact the size of any openings (*Figure 6*). Additionally, the black paint on the central recessed entrance is a sympathetic change that is compatible with the original design. That area was always distinguished by a darker color of brick than the rest of the building, and the current black paint can be easily removed.

As discussed in the “Integrity” section above, minimal interior changes seen at Sunset Tower do not significantly impact the Registration Requirements, as other features such as the “interior spatial arrangement of public spaces, and the elevator shaft[s] and related lobby areas remain intact.”¹⁸

APARTMENT DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY CLUB PLAZA

Sunset Tower is located within the Country Club Plaza (the Plaza) of Kansas City, Missouri. Kansas City developer J.C. Nichols envisioned the Plaza in the early 1900s as a “comprehensive neighborhood” complete with single-family housing, public transportation systems, shops, parks, and other public spaces.¹⁹ In 1922, the J.C. Nichols Company completed the Plaza master plan, and the first retail shops opened.²⁰ Edward Tanner, the principal designer for the J.C. Nichols Company, developed the plan, the impact which is still

¹⁶ Schwenk, “Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri,” F.6, F.20-21.

¹⁷ Schwenk, “Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri,” F.6.

¹⁸ Schwenk, “Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri,” F.4.

¹⁹ “Country Club Plaza: History and Significance,” Architectural Survey (Jefferson City, MO: Missouri State Historic Preservation Office, 2012), 1 <https://mostateparks.com/page/85671/sampling-architectural-surveys>.

²⁰ “Country Club Plaza: History and Significance,” Architectural Survey (Jefferson City, MO: Missouri State Historic Preservation Office, 2012), 1 <https://mostateparks.com/page/85671/sampling-architectural-surveys>.

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seen today with the Spanish Revival architectural theme of the Plaza; later development on the Plaza designed in different styles tended to defer to the architectural theme through colors (tans, clays, browns) if not in style.²¹ Today, the core of the Country Club Plaza can be defined generally as the commercial and residential area between West 46th Street, Baltimore Avenue, Ward Parkway, and Belleview Avenue (*Figure 3*).

As the popularity of the Country Club Plaza grew in the early 1920s, Nichols realized that the Plaza needed additional housing nearby to ensure the success of the businesses located there. To solve this problem, Nichols planned to build several apartments along Brush Creek. Other developers also saw the benefits of high-density housing close to the Plaza and built apartments along the periphery of the primary commercial district. Most of the apartment buildings that were built in the 1920s around the Country Club Plaza followed the Spanish Revival and Classical Revival theme of the rest of the Plaza (see *Figure 19* for an example of three 1920s apartment buildings at the edge of the Plaza).²²

Construction of apartment buildings close to the Country Club Plaza reflects larger trends of urban housing development in Kansas City in the post-World War I period. After the end of the war, the population of Kansas City increased, causing widespread housing shortages. To meet the surging demand for housing, new apartment buildings were built throughout the city.²³

Before World War I, many Kansas City apartment buildings were classified as “walk-ups” that were usually between two- and four-stories-tall and contained an average of six units.²⁴ Following the end of the war and the subsequent population boom in Kansas City, the average number of units in an apartment building increased to between eighteen and twenty-four.²⁵ In all, about 15,000 individual apartment units were built in Kansas City during the 1920s, with 1,000 of those being located in and around the Country Club Plaza.²⁶ Many of the walk-up apartments built near the Plaza during that time were located just blocks away from the commercial center of the shopping district. Those buildings were between two and three stories, and generally conformed to the architectural characteristics of the Plaza. Beginning in the mid-

²¹ “Country Club Plaza: History and Significance,” 2.

²² “Country Club Plaza: History and Significance,” 2; Park Manor Historic District, NRIS #05001610, listed February 1, 2006.

²³ Schwenk, “Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri,” E.9.

²⁴ Schwenk, “Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri,” E.20.

²⁵ Schwenk, “Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri,” E.21.

²⁶ Schwenk, “Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri,” E.21; “Country Club Plaza: History and Significance,” 2.

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1920s, taller apartment buildings began to emerge around the hills that surround the edge of the Plaza, giving the area a prominent “bowl-shaped” appearance that is still intact today.²⁷

The construction boom of the 1920s slowed following the onset of the Great Depression and effectively ended with the United States’ entry into World War II. The general decrease in new apartment construction in Kansas City before World War II was exacerbated during that war by a lack of available materials due to rationing. This caused a massive housing shortage in the immediate post-World War II era as servicemembers returned home.

Following the end of World War II, housing construction in Kansas City proceeded quickly. By 1950, the city had annexed nearly twenty square miles of land located to the north of the Missouri River.²⁸ This annexation coincided with a city-wide urban renewal effort and racially restrictive FHA loan criteria, resulting in many White families moving away from the city and into the suburbs. As those families moved away from the city center, business and residential development followed.²⁹ Residential development in those areas favored low-density housing such as single-family homes or multi-family residential complexes.

Construction of postwar apartment buildings like Sunset Tower occurred during a shift in housing trends in Kansas City. Annexation of new land in the 1950s increased the size of the city and gave developers more land on which to build. This allowed new multi-family apartment buildings to be spread out over larger areas of land and include more living area than urban high-rise apartments. Many of the new developments also offered additional incentives such as off-street parking, clubhouses, and recreational facilities such as paved walkways and swimming pools.³⁰ Despite the popularity of low-density suburban apartments, a few high-rise apartment buildings, like Sunset Tower, continued to be built in urban areas of Kansas City in the 1950s and 1960s. The Country Club Plaza was one of the few areas in Kansas City that was not significantly impacted by the shift in development trends towards the suburbs and continued to grow.³¹ High-rise apartment buildings offered many benefits in densely built areas, such as the Country Club Plaza. According to the MPDF, the high-rise apartment “provide[d] the potential for large numbers of dwelling units using a small footprint permitting a more efficient and economical use of land...”³² Construction of high-rise apartments such as Sunset Tower

²⁷ “Country Club Plaza: History and Significance,” 2.

²⁸ George Ehrlich, *Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History, 1826-1900* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 117.

²⁹ Ehrlich, *Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History*, 123.

³⁰ Schwenk, “Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri,” E.43.

³¹ Ehrlich, *Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History*, 124.

³² Schwenk, “Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri,” F.20.

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altered the patterns of residential growth and development within Kansas City by providing the ability for people to live and work close to major centers of business and commerce, as well as established transportation networks. Units in those apartment buildings were generally smaller than ones located in suburban areas and were intended for public housing, small families, or retirees.³³

The Country Club Plaza was one of the few locations within Kansas City that was not significantly impacted by the shift of housing development towards the suburbs. Multi-family residential development continued with the construction of walk-ups near the Plaza core and high-rise apartment buildings like Sunset Tower around the perimeter. Many of these latter buildings followed the design principals of the International Style.

INTERNATIONAL STYLE

The International Style developed in Europe out of the post-World War I landscape. Following the war, many Europeans migrated from rural communities to urban centers to find work in the increasingly industrialized economy of postwar Europe. This influx of new residents combined with the destruction caused by the war created a housing crisis. To quickly produce buildings, architects focused on forms and designs that relied heavily on mass-produced materials arranged in repetitive geometric forms that largely ignored established architectural patterns and embellishments.³⁴

The International Style is characterized by the prioritization of the volume of a building over decoration and mass. Exterior ornamentation is kept to a minimum, with smooth wall surfaces, flat roofs, and minimal window reveals. Long bands of ribbon windows, windows that wrap around corners, and cantilever features help give International Style buildings a sense of horizontality and create volume for the interior. A steel skeleton or reinforced concrete construction creates additional interior space by reducing the need for interior walls.³⁵

Despite its popularity in Europe in the 1930s, the International Style was not widely adopted in the United States until the end of World War II. After the war, the United States faced a housing shortage that was caused by wartime rationing. FHA-backed loans were widely used during this time and were subject to strict design guidelines for new construction. FHA guidelines emphasized the use of modern materials and techniques such as steel, reinforced concrete,

³³ Schwenk, "Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri," E.44

³⁴ Schwenk, "Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri," E.40.

³⁵ Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 247.

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and prefabricated materials to quickly produce apartment buildings. Many apartments that were built using FHA-backed loans also sought to be more efficient in land use by including as many units as possible into a building. This was achieved by creating taller buildings that could house more units. Space within those units was also managed with a few rooms that could serve several functions, such as a combined living/dining room.³⁶

The International Style easily accommodated this era of apartment development and became a staple of the postwar apartment building landscape in America; Kansas City development followed this trend. One unique characteristic of postwar high-rise apartment buildings, as described in the MPDF, was a restrained approach to innovation. In Kansas City high-rise apartment buildings constructed after the end of World War II were characterized by a lack of ornament and “strict overall emphasis on geometric planes with sharply delineated openings and edges [which] created a formal balanced horizontality, verticality, or contrasting horizontal and vertical emphasis.”³⁷ Constructed in the early 1960s, Sunset Tower demonstrates the popularity of this trend in Kansas City with its long linear expanses of ribbon windows and sharp edges that contrast with the overall height of the building.

INTERNATIONAL STYLE APARTMENT BUILDINGS ON THE PLAZA

Sunset Tower is one of at least four high-rise apartment buildings constructed in the Plaza in late-1950s and early 1960s (*Figure 3*). Each of these postwar towers utilized the International Style. One of the earliest was the Plaza House Apartments (4712 Roanoke Parkway), which was completed in 1955.³⁸ The eleven-story building has a T-shaped plan with brick exterior walls, a large rooftop penthouse, and horizontal bands of windows (*Figure 13*).

Completed circa 1960, Parkway Towers (4545 Wornall Road) was designed by Herbert Duncan Associates, Architects. The twelve-story luxury apartment building contained 160 individual units, a large lobby, dining room, garage parking, and retail on the first floor. Parkway Towers has an L-shaped plan with brick piers and a uniform arrangement of windows. Some units have concrete balconies with glass and steel railings (*Figure 14*). Parkway Towers was intended to cater to wealthier residents than Sunset Tower, with some units originally priced as high as \$1,000 a month. Larger units also contained up to 3,500 square feet and had as many as three bedrooms and bathrooms.³⁹

³⁶ Schwenk, “Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri,” E.41.

³⁷ Schwenk, “Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri,” E.40.

³⁸ Plaza House Apartments, NRIS #13000837, listed October 16, 2013.

³⁹ “Luxury Units to Rise on A Site Near Plaza,” *The Kansas City Star*, July 3, 1960, 56. Newspapers.com (Accessed May 19, 2021). Equivalent to \$9,125.25 in 2021.

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Herbert Duncan Associates, Architects also designed the Winston Churchill apartments (803 West 48th Street) in 1961. It is twelve stories tall and historically contained sixty-six units, electronically controlled air conditioning, and a thirty-four-car underground garage.⁴⁰ One unique feature of the apartment building was a large glass penthouse on the roof.⁴¹ The apartment building has a recessed first floor that is supported by reinforced concrete piers. Upper floors contain wide bands of light-colored brick with a uniform arrangement of windows. That arrangement is broken by a few concrete piers that rise from the ground floor to the top of the building. The front entrance has a modest flat canopy with the name of the building, "WINSTON CHURCHILL," in aluminum letters above, though early renderings of the building do not show this entrance arrangement (*Figure 15*). The Winston Churchill Apartments were also planned by Carl Rechner, and that building often appeared with Sunset Tower in newspaper advertisements.

While all four buildings offered similar amenities such as private parking, on-site security, and air conditioning, Sunset Tower was intended to be a more practical apartment offering for the Plaza area. It did not include a large glass penthouse like the Winston Churchill, and it did not offer the large rooms of the Parkway Towers. Sunset Towers appealed to small families and individuals looking to downsize. As a result, the building became a popular destination especially for middle-income retirees for many years.

Construction of the postwar apartment buildings like Sunset Tower occurred during a shift in housing trends in Kansas City. Annexation of new land in the 1950s increased the size of the city and gave developers more land to build on. This allowed new multi-family apartment buildings to be spread out over larger areas of land and include more living area than urban high-rise apartments. Many of the new developments also offered additional incentives such as off-street parking, clubhouses, and recreational facilities such as paved walkways and swimming pools.⁴² Despite the popularity of low-density suburban apartments, high-rise apartment buildings, like Sunset Tower, continued to be built in urban areas of Kansas City in the 1950s and 1960s. Units in those apartment buildings were generally smaller than ones located in suburban areas and were intended for public housing, small families, or retirees.⁴³ Sunset Tower likely appealed to the last example, as many obituaries for former residents of the building appeared in newspapers in the 1960s through the 1980s.

⁴⁰ "The Winston Churchill, A \$1,450,000 Apartment Structure," *The Kansas City Star*, March 17, 1960, 3. Newspapers.com (Accessed May 19, 2021).

⁴¹ "Penthouse 'Playroom' Plan," *The Kansas City Star*, May 5, 1961, 77. Newspapers.com (Accessed May 19, 2021.)

⁴² Schwenk, "Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri," E.43.

⁴³ Schwenk, "Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri," E.44

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SUNSET TOWER

Development of the Sunset Tower was planned by Carl B. Rechner, a local real estate developer that owned several other apartments in Kansas City, and Howard D. Swan, a contractor.⁴⁴ Construction of the building was planned to start in the early 1950s to help meet the immediate need for housing in postwar Kansas City; however, Rechner ran into issues with a 1941 city ordinance that required apartment buildings to provide one off-street parking space for every two living units.⁴⁵ Original plans called for the building to be eleven stories tall and have between seventy and eighty units.⁴⁶ Due to the site's location close to other apartment buildings, the proposed project did not have enough off-street parking to fulfill the ordinance requirements. In 1960, after nearly ten years of failed rezoning applications, Rechner received permission to begin construction on a smaller version of the Sunset Tower.⁴⁷

In February 1961, Herbert E. Duncan Associates, Architects developed plans for the new apartment building.⁴⁸ The proposed ten-story building contained many characteristics of the International Style such as a flat roof and an irregular façade that emphasized horizontal lines with a long expanse of ribbon windows topped with concrete sunshades. The first floor contained a modest elevator lobby and three apartment units, with the upper floors each having an identical four-unit arrangement. The basement contained a large underground parking structure along with mechanical and storage areas. Sunset Tower was completed in February 1962 by the Lee Metcalfe Construction Company and the Gordon Hamilton Contracting Company, Inc. Masonry work on the building was done by the Weldon B. Royse Masonry Company, Inc.⁴⁹

When new, the Sunset Tower contained thirty-nine individual units that rented for \$175 to \$225 per month.⁵⁰ Advertisements for the Sunset Tower describe the building as an “exciting, new

⁴⁴ Rick Alm, “More Brick Veneer May Fall, Engineer Says,” *The Kansas City Star*, May 23, 1984, 3. Newspapers.com (Accessed May 12, 2021).

⁴⁵ “Oppose a Parking Plan,” *The Kansas City Times*, December 29, 1950, 12. Newspapers.com (Accessed May 20, 2021).

⁴⁶ “Loses on Zoning Plea,” *The Kansas City Times*, March 12, 1952, 11. Newspapers.com (Accessed May 20, 2021).

⁴⁷ Fred Fitzsimmons, “Ready to Begin A Plaza Unit,” *The Kansas City Star*, December 2, 1960, 1. Newspapers.com (Accessed May 20, 2021).

⁴⁸ Herbert E. Duncan Associates, Architects, *Sunset Tower*, arch. drawings, February 2, 1961. Plans on file with owner.

⁴⁹ “Sir Winston Hears of Namesake Units,” *The Kansas City Star*, October 8, 1961. Newspapers.com (Accessed May 12, 2021); Rick Alm, “More Brick Veneer May Fall, Engineer Says.”

⁵⁰ Equivalent to \$1547.50 and \$1989.64 in 2021.

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prestige [sic] apt. home,” and touted its many amenities and features, including views of the nearby Country Club Plaza, air conditioning, large windows, a “Westinghouse Safety Elevator,” and a private underground parking garage.⁵¹ The garage was included in nearly every advertisement that appeared for the building well into the 1990s (*Figure 16*). In 1963, Sunset Tower was included in a promotional tour of five new apartment buildings in Kansas City. The buildings were advertised as a “new modern way of high-rise apartment living” (*Figure 17*).⁵² Sunset Tower appears to have appealed most to retirees, as many obituaries for former residents of the building appeared in newspapers in the 1960s through the 1980s.

POST-1962 CHANGES

In 1980, developer William C. Haas purchased Sunset Tower along with the nearby Winston Churchill apartment (803 W. 48th Street).⁵³ A remodel occurred shortly after acquisition. That work likely consisted of minor updates to kitchens and bathrooms, as advertisements describing new kitchens and bathrooms began to appear near the end of 1980.

In May 1984, the brick veneer on the northeast corner of the building failed, leading to the evacuation of residents on that side. Several window casings also were damaged when they were pulled out of the wall as the bricks fell. No injuries were reported during the collapse, but several residents reported that their apartments were covered with broken glass and bricks.⁵⁴ It was later determined that the failure was caused by water damage to the support shelves that tied the veneer to the building’s structural system on each floor.⁵⁵ Repairs to the building were made in October 1984. That work was reported to have used nearly 42,000 bricks (*Figure 18*).⁵⁶

In 2002, a remodel occurred at the building. Much of the project involved altering the front entrance to create its current configuration with a wide concrete ramp and black granite veneer. That work also added narrow aluminum name signs above the front entrance and south

⁵¹ Sunset Tower advertisement in *The Kansas City Star*, March 17, 1962, 11. Newspapers.com (Accessed May 12, 2021).

⁵² “Mid-Winter Quality Living Tour of Kansas City’s New High-Rise Apartments,” *The Kansas City Star*, February 17, 1963, 24. Newspapers.com (Accessed May 12, 2021).

⁵³ Chris Lester, “Investors Buy Two Buildings,” *The Kansas City Star*, August 7, 1993, 61. Newspapers.com (Accessed May 12, 2021). The Winston Churchill apartment was also developed by Carl B. Rechner and built just before the Sunset Tower.

⁵⁴ Kevin Helliker, “Brick Fall from Walls of Apartment Building; No Injuries Reported,” *The Kansas City Times*, May 14, 1984, 13. Newspapers.com (Accessed May 12, 2021).

⁵⁵ Rick Alm, “More Brick Veneer May Fall, Engineer Says.” A similar brick veneer failure occurred at the Winston Churchill apartment in 1972.

⁵⁶ Fred Blocher, “A New Face,” *The Kansas City Times*, October 25, 1984, 25. Newspapers.com (Accessed May 12, 2021).

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elevation, as well as light fixtures and metal medallions on the floors above the front entrance.⁵⁷ That work did not involve changes to character-defining features of Sunset Tower such as the long expanse ribbon windows on the street-facing walls, the roofline, or the concrete sunshades.

HERBERT E. DUNCAN ASSOCIATES, ARCHITECTS.

The local firm Herbert E. Duncan Associates, Architects designed Sunset Tower. Herbert E. Duncan, Sr. was born in 1905 and studied architecture with the firm of Boillot & Lauck. He became a partner there in 1927.⁵⁸ In 1937 Duncan founded Herbert E. Duncan Associates, Architects, and designed residential homes in the Kansas City area. In 1957 Herbert Duncan, Jr. became a partner in the firm, which had, by that time, expanded into larger projects such as multi-family apartments and office buildings.⁵⁹ The firm is still in existence today and is known as Stark Wilson Duncan Architects.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Herbert E. Duncan Associates, Architects designed at least five apartment buildings or apartment complexes close to the Country Club Plaza, including Sunset Tower. Two of those projects, the Roanoke Apartments and a twelve-unit building at the corner of West 45th Street and Mercier Street are two- to three-story brick buildings (both circa 1960). The remaining projects are the ten-story Sunset Tower, the twelve-story Parkway Towers, and the twelve-story Winston Churchill Apartments.

CONCLUSION

The 1962 Sunset Tower is an example of the High-Rise Apartment Building property sub-type as defined in the "Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri" Multiple Property Documentation Form. It is locally significant under Criterion C as defined by Criteria C-7 of the MPDF, for "Buildings that illustrate the apartment building's role in the various plans and aesthetic movements characteristic to Kansas City, Missouri."⁶⁰ Sunset Tower was one of four high-rise apartment buildings that were built around the Plaza in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This development reflected a unique trend to the Plaza area as most

⁵⁷ Keith Mueller Architecture, *Sunset Tower*, arch. drawings, July 23, 2002. Plans on file with owner.

⁵⁸ Sarah Kroh, "At 44, He Finds Success in Two Careers," *The Kansas City Star*, January 15, 1950, 4C. Newspapers.com (Accessed May 19, 2021).

⁵⁹ "Architectural office in to Hancock Space," *The Kansas City Star*, March 8, 1964, 100. Newspapers.com (Accessed May 19, 2021).

⁶⁰ Schwenk, "Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri," F.4.

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new multi-family housing in Kansas City at that time tended to be low-density housing located away from the city in the surrounding suburbs.⁶¹

Designed by the local architectural firm Herbert E. Duncan Associates, Architects, the ten-story Sunset Tower exemplifies the principles of the International Style utilized in post-World War II apartment development in Kansas City. The building's repetitive pattern of the fenestration as well as the use of reinforced concrete and glass reflect the utility, efficiency, and rejection of previous architectural forms that define the style. Adjacent to the Country Club Plaza, Sunset Tower has been continuously occupied since its completion in 1962.

⁶¹ Schwenk, "Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri," E.43.

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"Mid-Winter Quality Tour of Kansas City's New High-Rise Apartments." *The Kansas City Star*, February 17, 1963, 24. Newspapers.com (Accessed May 12, 2021).

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property occupies Lot 6 of Phillip's Plaza Subdivision, platted with Jackson County, Missouri, under Ordinance 546 on March 25, 1929.

Boundary Justification

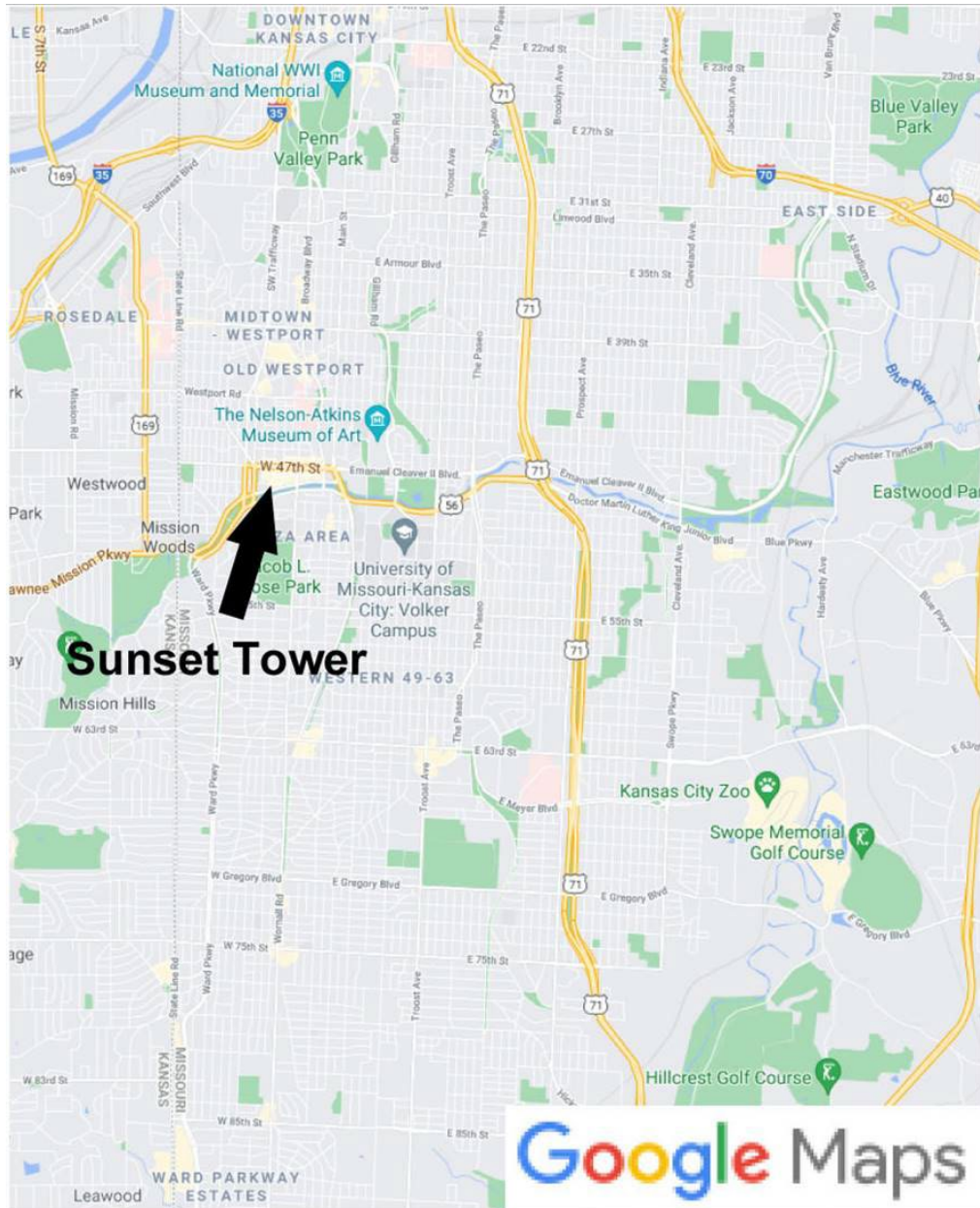
The boundaries of the nominated property include all lands historically associated with the Sunset Tower.

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Figure 1. Location Map. (Google Maps, 2021.)



Map data ©2021

1 mi

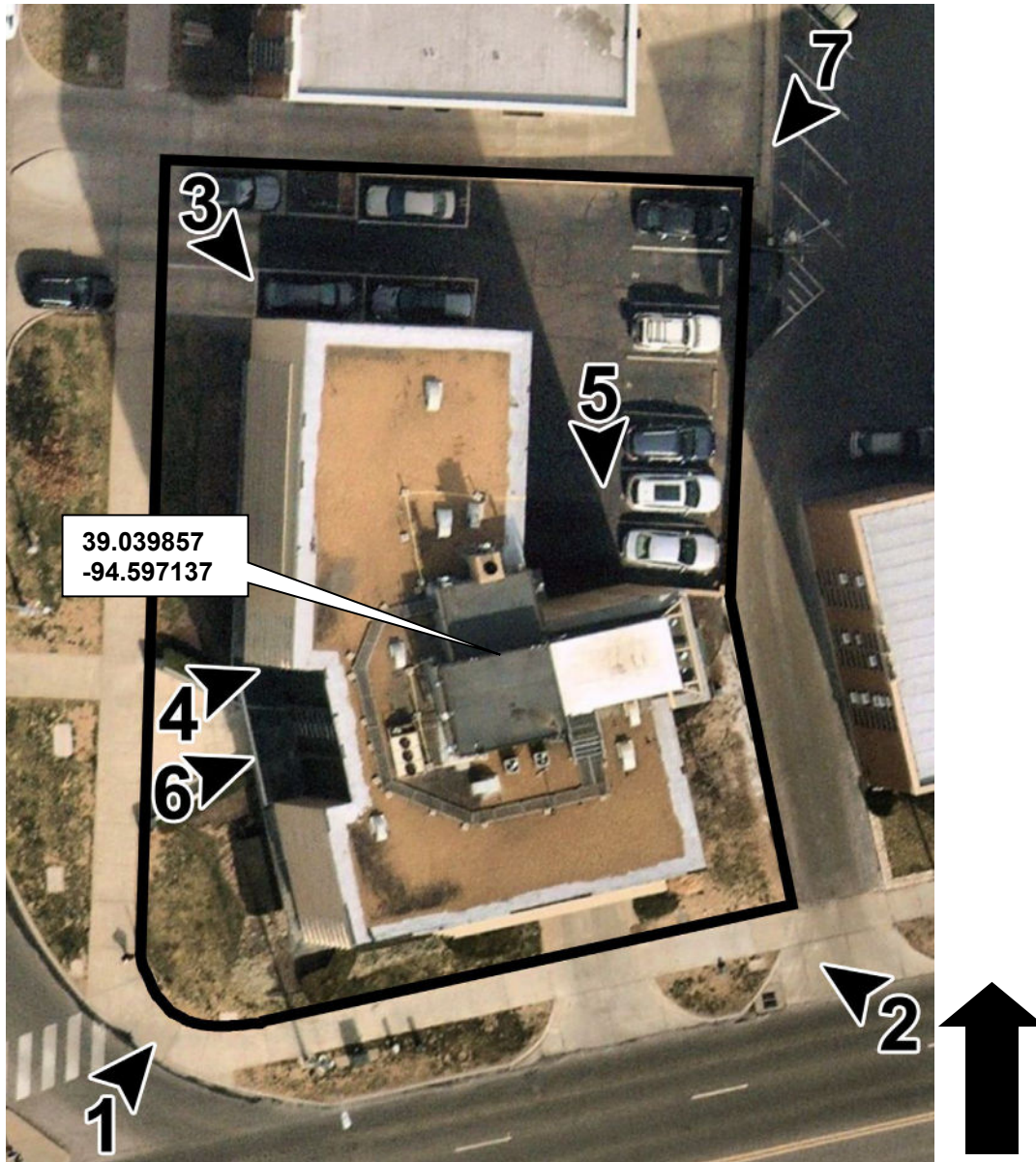


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Figure 2. Site, Boundary Map, and Photo Key. Bold line indicates legal and nomination boundary. (Base map from Jackson County, Missouri, MO Online Parcel Viewer, 2021, <https://jcgis.jacksongov.org/apps/parcelviewer/WebMap1.aspx>.)

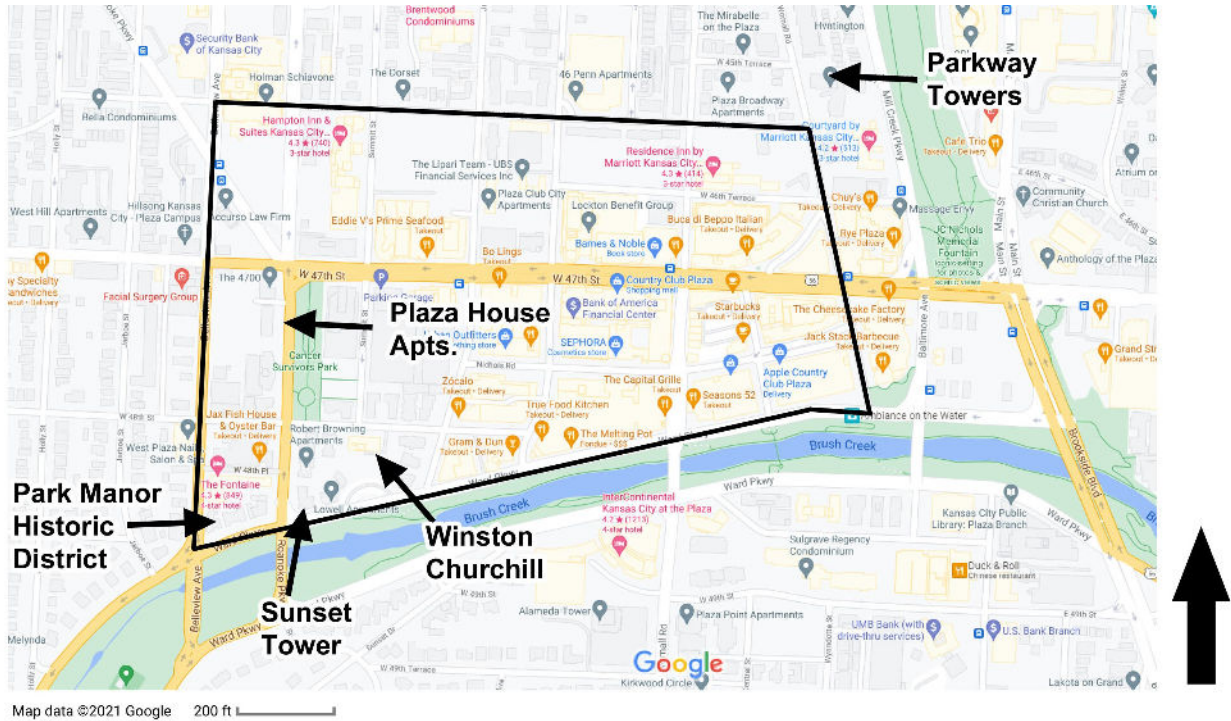


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Figure 3. Contextual Map with Comparison Properties. The core of the Country Club Plaza is indicated with a dark line. (Google Maps, 2021.)



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Figure 4. Sunset Tower parking lot (Photo by Brad Finch, f-Stop Photography, May 2021.)

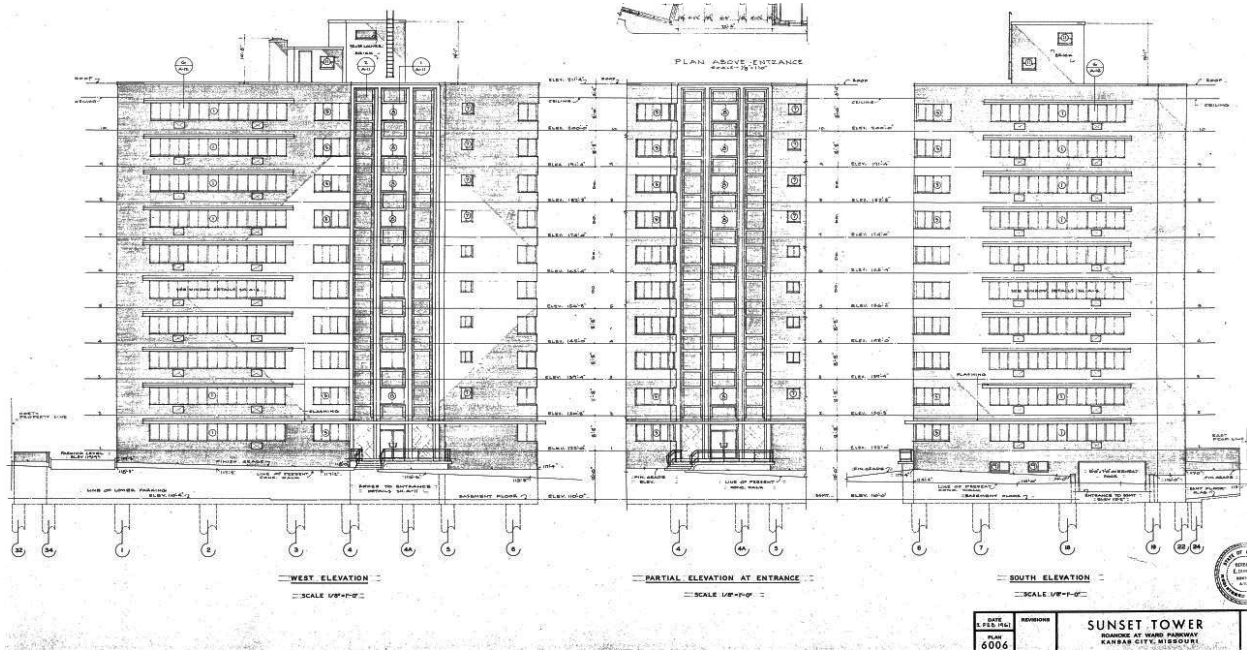


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Figure 5. South and West Elevations from 1962 Sunset Tower Plan. (Herbert E. Duncan Associates, Architects, *Sunset Tower*, arch. drawings (February 2, 1961), A-8.) Plans on file with owner.

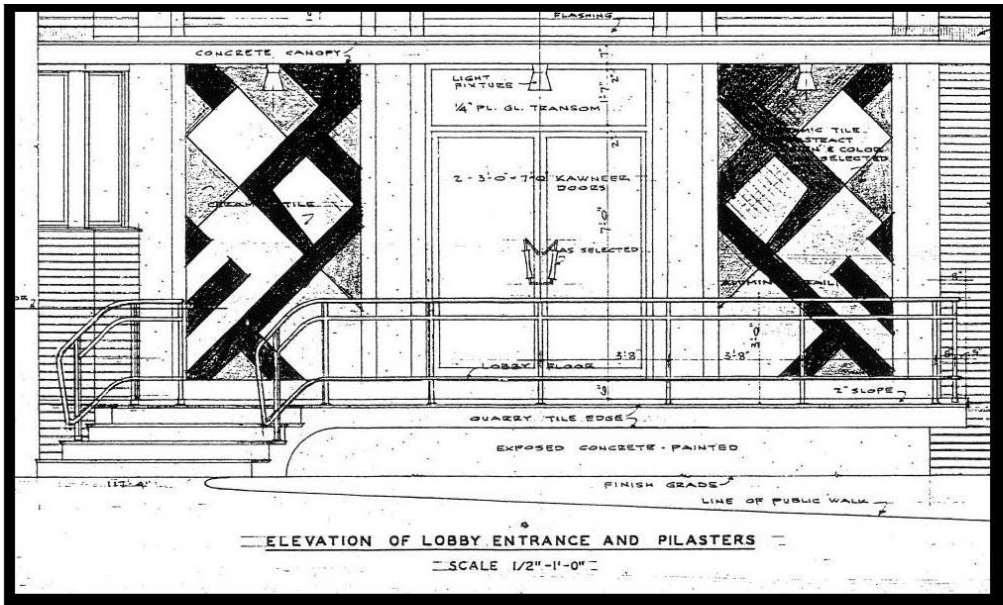


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Figure 6. Entrance Comparison: 1961 and 2021. (Excerpt from Herbert E. Duncan Associates, Architects, *Sunset Tower*, arch. drawings (February 2, 1961), A-11.) Plans on file with owner; Current photo by Brad Finch, f-Stop Photography, 2021.)



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Figure 7. 2019 Image of Sunset Tower, Showing Tan Brick. (Google Streetview, 2019.)



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Figure 9. 1984 Image of Damage to the Northeast Corner of Sunset Tower. (Helliker, Kevin. "Brick Fall from Walls of Apartment Building; No Injuries reported." *The Kansas City Times*. May 14, 1984, 13. Newspapers.com.)



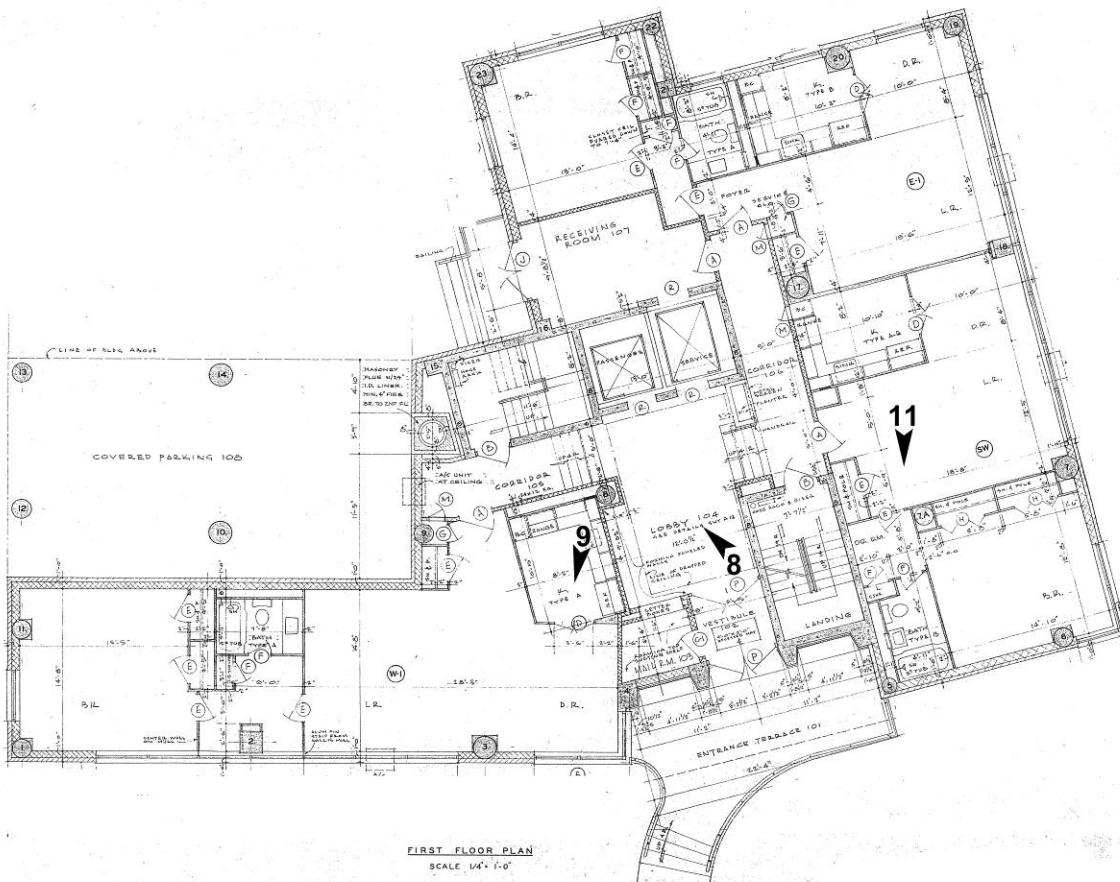
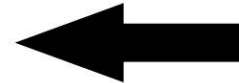
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Figure 10. First Floor Plan and Photo Key. (Source: Herbert E. Duncan Associates, Architects, *Sunset Tower*, arch. drawings (February 2, 1961), A-4.) Plans on file with owner. Note: Current plans are not available. The arrangement of spaces within individual apartments on the first floor has been altered from this plan. Historic entrances to the apartments are intact.

Sunset Tower
4821 Roanoke Parkway
Kansas City, MO
National Register Photo Map
First Floor
May 2021
Not to Scale



Source 1961 Sunset Tower plans, page A-4.
Note: Wall locations have changed within individual units.
The corridors retain their original configurations.

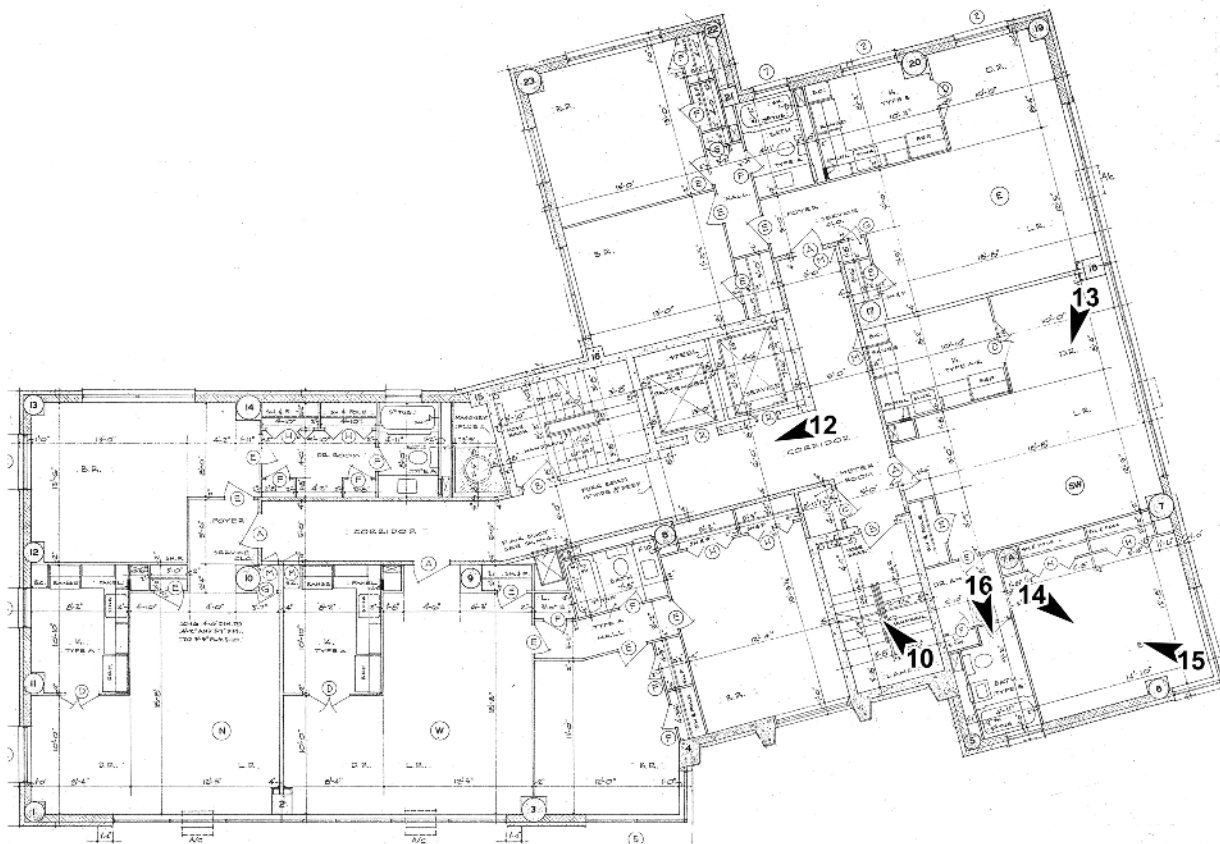
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Figure 11. Typical Upper Floor Plan and Photo Key. (Source: Herbert E. Duncan Associates, Architects, *Sunset Tower*, arch. drawings (February 2, 1961), A-5.) Plans on file with owner. Note: The arrangement of the upper floors has not changed since the building was completed.

Sunset Tower
4821 Roanoke Parkway
Kansas City, MO
National Register Photo Map
Upper Floors-general conditions
May 2021
Not to Scale



Source 1961 Sunset Tower plans, page A-5. Note: Upper floors retain the same configuration of corridors and apartment units. Photos are representative of conditions on those floors.

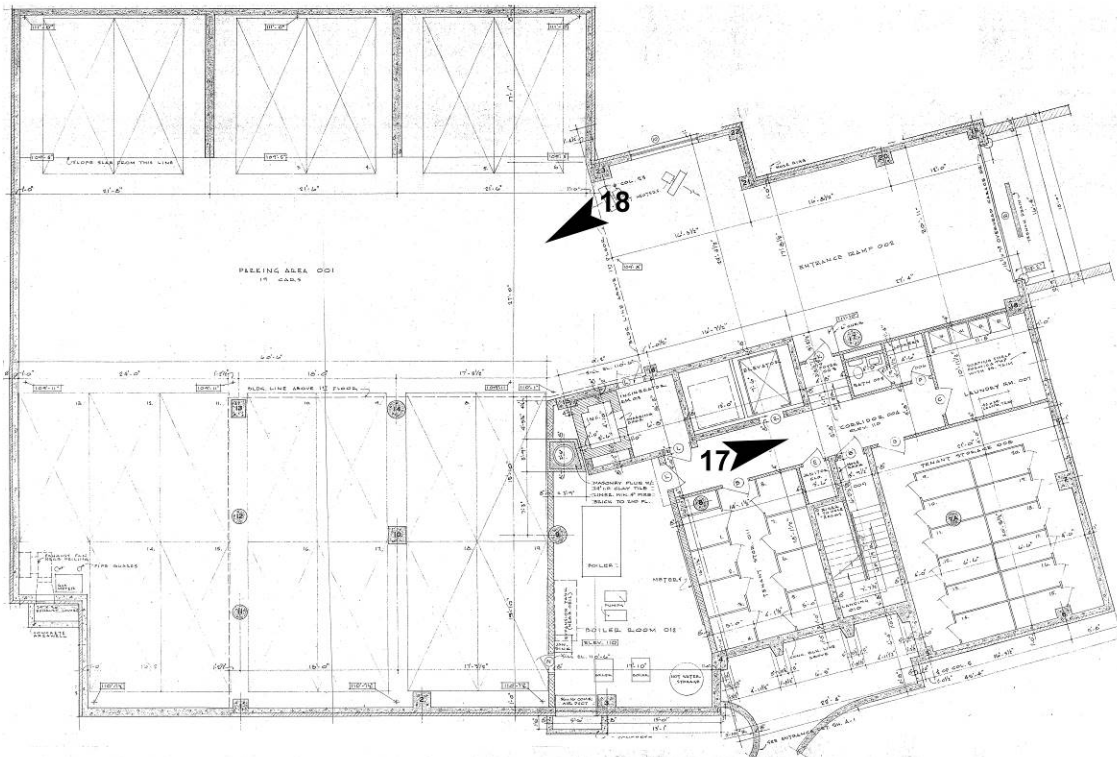
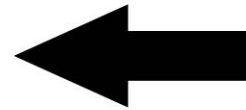
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Figure 12. Basement Floor Plan and Photo Key. (Source: Herbert E. Duncan Associates, Architects, *Sunset Tower*, arch. drawings (February 2, 1961), A-3.) Plans on file with owner. Note: Current plans are not available. The arrangement of the basement has changed little since the building was completed.

Sunset Tower
4821 Roanoke Parkway
Kansas City, MO
National Register Photo Map
Basement
May 2021
Not to Scale



Source 1961 Sunset Tower plans, page A-3.
Note: Minimal changes to walls ave occurred
on this floor. The basic layout has not
changed.

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Figure 13. Plaza House Apartments. (Google Maps, 2019.)

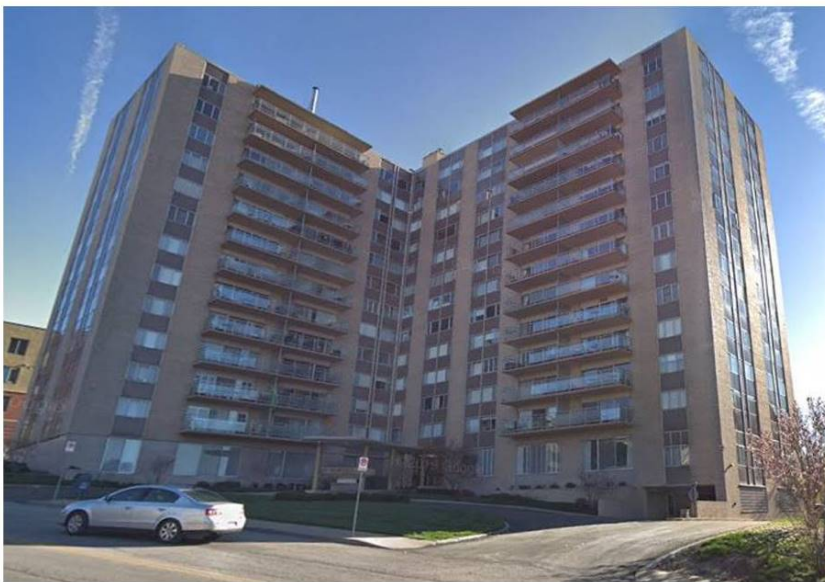
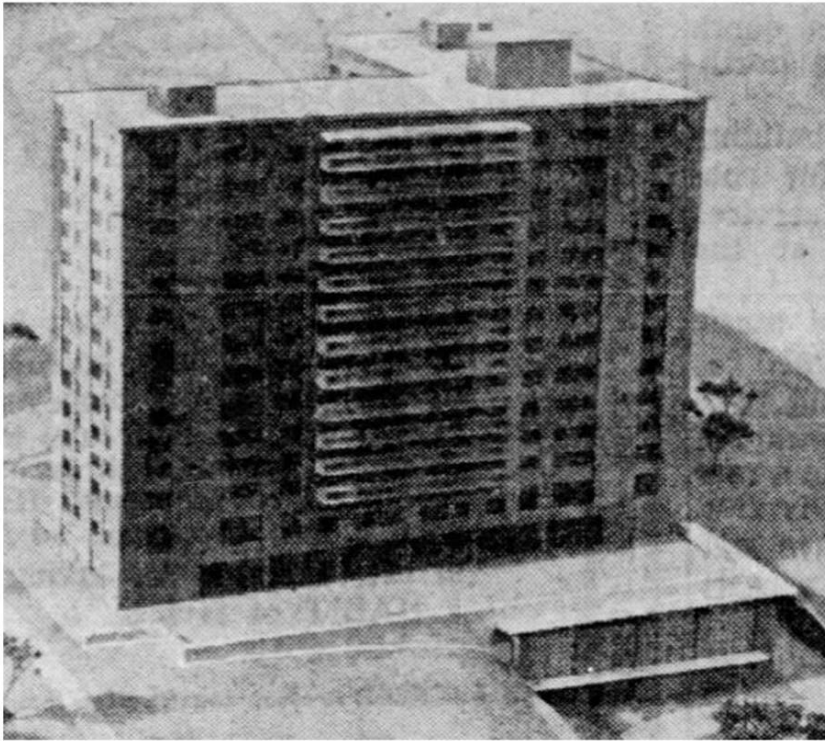


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Figure 14. 1960 Rendering of Parkway Towers (view W) and Modern View (view NE). ("Luxury Units to Rise on A Site Near Plaza," *The Kansas City Star*, July 3, 1960, 56. Newspapers.com; Google Maps, 2021.)

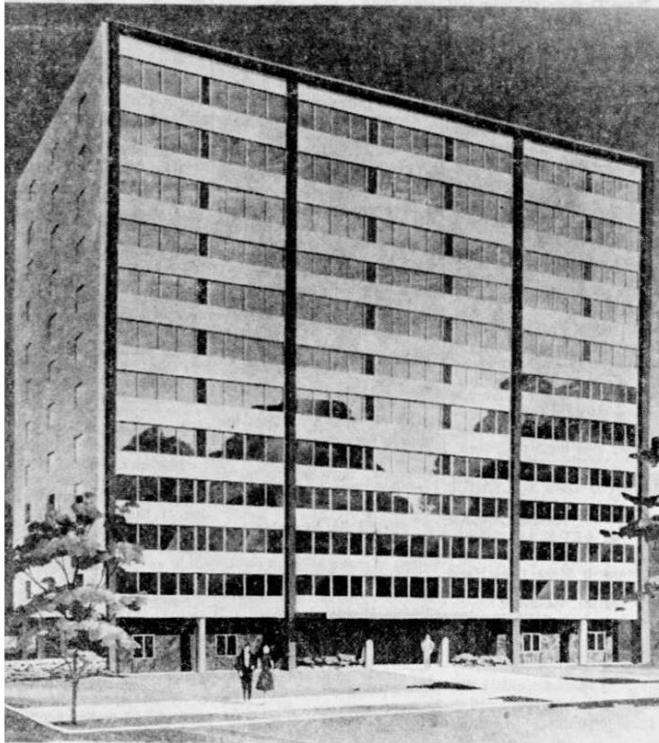


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Figure 15. 1961 Rendering of Winston Churchill Apartments and Modern View. (“The Winston Churchill, A \$1,450,000 Apartment Structure,” *The Kansas City Star*, March 17, 1960, 3. Newspapers.com; Google Maps, 2021.)



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Figure 16. 1962 Sunset Tower Advertisement in *The Kansas City Star*. (Advertisement appears in *The Kansas City Star*, March 17, 1962. 11. Newspapers.com)

YOU ARE INVITED TODAY
FIRST OFFERING!
Exciting, New Presige Apt. Home.
SUNSET TOWER
4821 Roanoke Pky.-In Plaza

- EVERY APT. WITH A VIEW.
- CUSTOM DECORATED TO SUIT.
- OUTSIDE KITCHENS AND BATHS.
- LARGE DOUBLE GLASS WINDOWS.
- THERMOST. HOT WATER HEAT.
- GEN. ELEC. AIR CONDITIONERS.
- OVERSIZED CLOSETS.
- WESTINGHOUSE SAFETY ELEV.
- BEAUTIFUL LOBBY.
- UNIFORMED WATCHMAN SERV.
- PRIVATE PARKING FREE.
- FIREPROOF CONNECTED GAR.
- BUS-SHOPPING STEPS AWAY.

SPACIOUS 4 AND 5-RM. APTS.
OPEN—SEE DISPLAY APTS.!
FROM \$175 TO \$225 MO.
MRS. LANE, RES. MGR., WE. 1-7425.
SEE THEM ALL—THEN
COMPARE!
WE HAVE NO EQUAL!

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Figure 17. 1963 Rendering of Sunset Tower. ("Mid-Winter Quality Tour of Kansas City's New High-Rise Apartments." *The Kansas City Star*, February 17, 1963, 24. Newspapers.com)



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Figure 18. 1984 Image of Repairs to Sunset Tower. (Blocher, Fred. "A New Face." *The Kansas City Times*. October 25, 1984, 25. Newspapers.com)



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Figure 19. Park Manor Historic District (1925-1927): 910 Ward Parkway, 920 Ward Parkway, and 4826 Roanoke Parkway. (Google Streetview, 2021.)



Image capture: Apr 2019 © 2021 Google







PUBLIC ENTRY PROHIBITED
No entry permitted without proper authorization. All visitors must be accompanied by a staff member. Violations will result in ejection and possible legal action.

15

15





SUNSET APARTMENTS



4821 ROAN
931-

FOR RENT



























17
18

15
16