

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM

NR Eligible: yes ___
no

Property Name: The Hecht Company Edmondson/Westside Skill Center Inventory Number: B-5230

Address: 4501 Edmondson Avenue Historic district: ___ yes no

City: Baltimore Zip Code: 21229 County: Baltimore County

USGS Quadrangle(s): Baltimore West

Property Owner: Mayor and City Council of Baltimore City Tax Account ID Number: 2550002

Tax Map Parcel Number(s): 0000 Tax Map Number: 28

Project: Red Line Project Agency: Maryland Transit Administration

Agency Prepared By: Parsons Brinckerhoff

Preparer's Name: Guy Blanchard Date Prepared: 5/9/2012

Documentation is presented in: Enoch Pratt Library--Maryland Room, ProQuest Historical Newspapers Database

Preparer's Eligibility Recommendation: ___ Eligibility recommended Eligibility not recommended

Criteria: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D Considerations: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G

Complete if the property is a contributing or non-contributing resource to a NR district/property:

Name of the District/Property: _____

Inventory Number: _____ Eligible: ___ yes Listed: ___ yes

Site visit by MHT Staff ___ yes no Name: _____ Date: _____

Description of Property and Justification: (Please attach map and photo)

Architectural Description

Westside Skill Center is a vocational school situated on approximately 11 acres along Edmondson Avenue, between Swann Avenue on the west and N. Athol Avenue on the east. The building is oriented on an east-west access along Edmondson Avenue. Constructed in 1956 as a department store, The Hecht Company Edmondson, the building exhibits simple mid-twentieth century design characteristics; it is largely devoid of both ornament and fenestration. Changes to the building include an expansion and a complete interior reconfiguration. Westside Skill Center is a largely-windowless two-story square building with one-story wings extending from its east and west elevations. It is finished with native Maryland fieldstone at the ground level; painted brick is located above the fieldstone base and slightly projects from its plane. Across the brick, subtle vertical pilasters of brick add texture to an otherwise flat upper surface. A flat roof extends across the entire building and its wings.

The building does not have an easily distinguished main façade. The building contains several points of entry, with its primary entrance extending from the building at the main building-west wing corner. Floor-to-ceiling fixed square windows surround two sets of entry doors. A large Expressionist metal sculpture surmounts this entrance as well as the east entrance. Individual silver-colored components comprise the geometric art composition.

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MHT Comments:

Jim Palumbo
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

6/19/12
Date

Blantz
Reviewer, National Register Program

6/19/12
Date

A similar entrance treatment is given to entrances on Edmondson Avenue and the building's east elevation. Corrugated metal surrounds a slight overhang at the building's main entrance. Continuous vertical mortar lines extending through the fieldstone indicate windows have been removed and infilled with fieldstone. Such lines can be found on the east, west, and north elevations. The wing projecting west from the building contains infilled windows of painted brick. Along Edmondson Avenue, a metal pole-supported canopy runs along the fieldstone-brick juncture.

The building's south elevation extends below grade. It contains the fieldstone and brick found on other elevations and is punctuated by a series of overhung and pedestrian doors. This elevation's ground level projects from the main building and contains a corrugated metal ribbon running between the fieldstone and roofline. Upper levels utilize the painted brick pilaster appearance found on the east, west, and north facades. This level also contains an entrance similar to those found at the other elevations and includes a cantilevered overhang above the doors.

An addition to the building is found at the east elevation. This brick projecting wing is not painted, contains a brick pattern mirroring the fieldstone, and a cornerstone with a "1981" date sits at its northeast corner. This date corresponds with the department store's conversion into a vocational educational facility.

The interior spaces of the Westside Skill Center have been completely renovated for use as a school and skills training facility. The original department store features are no longer extant.

Westside Skill Center is surrounded by parking on its west and east sides, with connection between the parking lots found at the building's rear. Shrubbery plantings are found in clusters along the east, north, and west elevations. A small lawn surrounds the building's east wing, separating the building from the parking lot, and extends along Edmondson Avenue. Another small lawn slopes down behind the west wing toward the below grade south elevation. Deciduous and evergreen trees are found dispersed within the available green space. Entrances into the parking area around the Westside Skill Center are found off of Swann Avenue, Edmondson Avenue, and N. Athol Avenue.

History

The rise of department stores began in the late-nineteenth century, as small downtown shops expanded to carry a greater selection of goods. Proprietors needed new buildings able to contain these products, and businesses began to construct new facilities in the vicinity of their established shops. In Baltimore, Hutzler Brothers and Hecht Company led this charge and opened large stores downtown. Hecht's also opened an additional store in downtown Washington, DC. Following World War II, department stores began to locate in suburban areas as populations there swelled.

Beginning with its Silver Spring store in 1947, Hecht's expanded into the suburbs as it realized the potential for growth beyond downtown. The Hecht Company's first suburban Baltimore store appeared in the Northwood Shopping Center, near Morgan State University, in 1954. The new store was constructed with rooftop dining, parking, and two floors of merchandise. The convenience provided by the Northwood location allowed many residents to avoid going into downtown Baltimore altogether and its success prompted Hecht's to begin looking for its next suburban location.

Hecht's next established a store west of downtown. The Edmondson Village area experienced brisk population growth in the decade leading up to the Hecht Company's move to the suburban neighborhood. Edmondson Village Shopping Center (B-4223) opened on the north side of Edmondson Avenue in 1947, establishing the suburban neighborhood as a shopping destination outside

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Date

Reviewer, National Register Program

Date

of downtown Baltimore. In 1955, Hecht's purchased 11 acres of land on Edmondson Avenue, constructing a stand-alone store on the south side of Edmondson Avenue in Edmondson Village nearly identical to its Northwood location.

Hecht's selected Abbott, Merkt & Company as architects for the Edmondson Village store; the company also chose New York retail architect Daniel Schwartzman, past president of the Architectural League of New York, as associate architect designing the interior spaces. Abbott, Merkt & Company largely designed commercial and utilitarian structures buildings such as warehouses, department stores, and various handling facilities for post offices and airports. The resulting Edmondson Village Hecht's store embodies a basic utilitarian design approach.

The Edmondson Village Hecht's opened to much fanfare in October 1956 and was billed by the Hecht Company. As a 150,000 square feet "complete" store providing everything "from furniture to fashions." Divided into two main floors, the lower level showcased furniture, home furnishings, and appliances, while the upper level sold clothing. Schwartzman designed each interior area to give the look of a "specialty shop," imparting to the women's department a "dream forest appearance" with chandeliers and columns, while the men's department utilized walnut and brass fixtures. The children's department included a circus motif. A restaurant called Hot Shoppes extended beyond the main shopping area on the new store's west elevation, and a beauty shop and other service features were located on-site as well.

In the later 1950s, Hecht Company began implementing changes in its corporation. In 1959, the May Company department stores and Hecht's merged, but retained the Hecht name for stores located in the Baltimore and Washington area. The downtown Baltimore May Company store became the Hecht-May Company and allowed Hecht's access to the prime shopping corner at Lexington and Howard Streets. Hecht's soon closed its 2 other downtown stores, and by 1961 was expanding the Edmondson Village store by 30,000 square feet to add a "Thrift Center."

Though the Edmondson Village Hecht's saw much success in its early years, rapidly-changing demographics in the neighborhood soon brought an end to its heyday as a shopping destination. Hochschild Kohn, the department store anchoring the Edmondson Village Shopping Center opposite Hecht's, announced in 1973 it would be closing its doors. Hecht's remained steadfast, however, and announced that same year it would be renovating its Edmondson Village store and pledged continuing confidence in the area. The confidence was short-lived, and in 1978 Hecht's announced it too would close the next year in order to facilitate its move to a new Hecht's undergoing construction at the beltway's Security Square Mall located nearby.

Almost immediately the city of Baltimore began exploring ways to use the soon-vacant Hecht's at Edmondson Village. Upon the store's closing, the city aimed to convert the building into a vocational skills facility. This Hecht's building was viewed as an advantageous facility to house the vocational school because its restaurant and auto shop could act as classrooms for training in those areas. Spending \$10.6 million, the city converted the Hecht's department store into a vocational school. Westside Skill Center opened in 1982 with a 2000 student capacity and 44 available programs. The department store's interior was altered to provide for student learning spaces with windows and doors removed or modified to complete conversion into a school.

The Westside Skill Center struggled in its early years, but a 1985 consolidation with Edmondson High School and the center's transition into a city-wide vocational school allowed for future success. Westside Skill Center also increased its admissions standards to match those of other area vocational programs. Today, the Westside Skill Center continues to operate as the vocational arm of Edmondson-Westside High School.

Significance Evaluation

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 Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

 Date

 Reviewer, National Register Program

 Date

Westside Skill Center was evaluated under National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Criteria A, B, and C, using the guidelines set forth in the NRHP Bulletin "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation," and the Maryland "Suburbanization Context and Survey Methodology."

Westside Skill Center (former Hecht Company department store) is associated with the establishment of department stores in suburban Maryland following post-World War II population shifts. However, this example was neither an early example nor the first such move by the Hecht Company. Its establishment in the Edmondson Village area came nearly a decade after an earlier suburban shopping center—Edmondson Village Shopping Center—opened to the public. It is not associated with events that contributed to the broad patterns of history. Therefore, the property is not eligible under Criterion A.

Research has not shown the property to be associated with people important in history. Therefore, the property is not eligible under Criterion B.

As a mid-century former department store, Westside Skill Center is a modest example and lacks architectural distinction required for listing in the National Register under Criterion C. The former department store is an ordinary and substantially altered example, mimicking the look of its predecessor at the Northwood Shopping Center. Its particular design did not influence future department store design. It is not the work of master architects, and its original interior, designed by past president of the Architectural League of New York, Daniel Schwartzman, has been removed to accommodate the building's transition into a vocation school. Therefore, the property is not eligible under Criterion C.

The Westside Skill Center was not evaluated for eligibility under Criterion D as part of this assessment.

Based on the evaluated criteria, the Westside Skill Center is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Works Consulted

Baltimore. "Groundbreaking Marks Start of Hecht-Edmondson Store." November 1955.

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The Baltimore Sun. "Business Transfers." July 3, 1955: SA23.

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The Baltimore Sun. "School System Opens New Skill Center." September 1, 1982: D16.

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The Baltimore Sun. "Security Mall Expanding for Hecht's." July 30, 1978: F8.

The Baltimore Sun. "Stores to Close in Merger Plan." January 4, 1959: D77D.

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Lally, Kathy. "Westside Center has Modern Equipment." The Baltimore Sun, August 14, 1983: A12.

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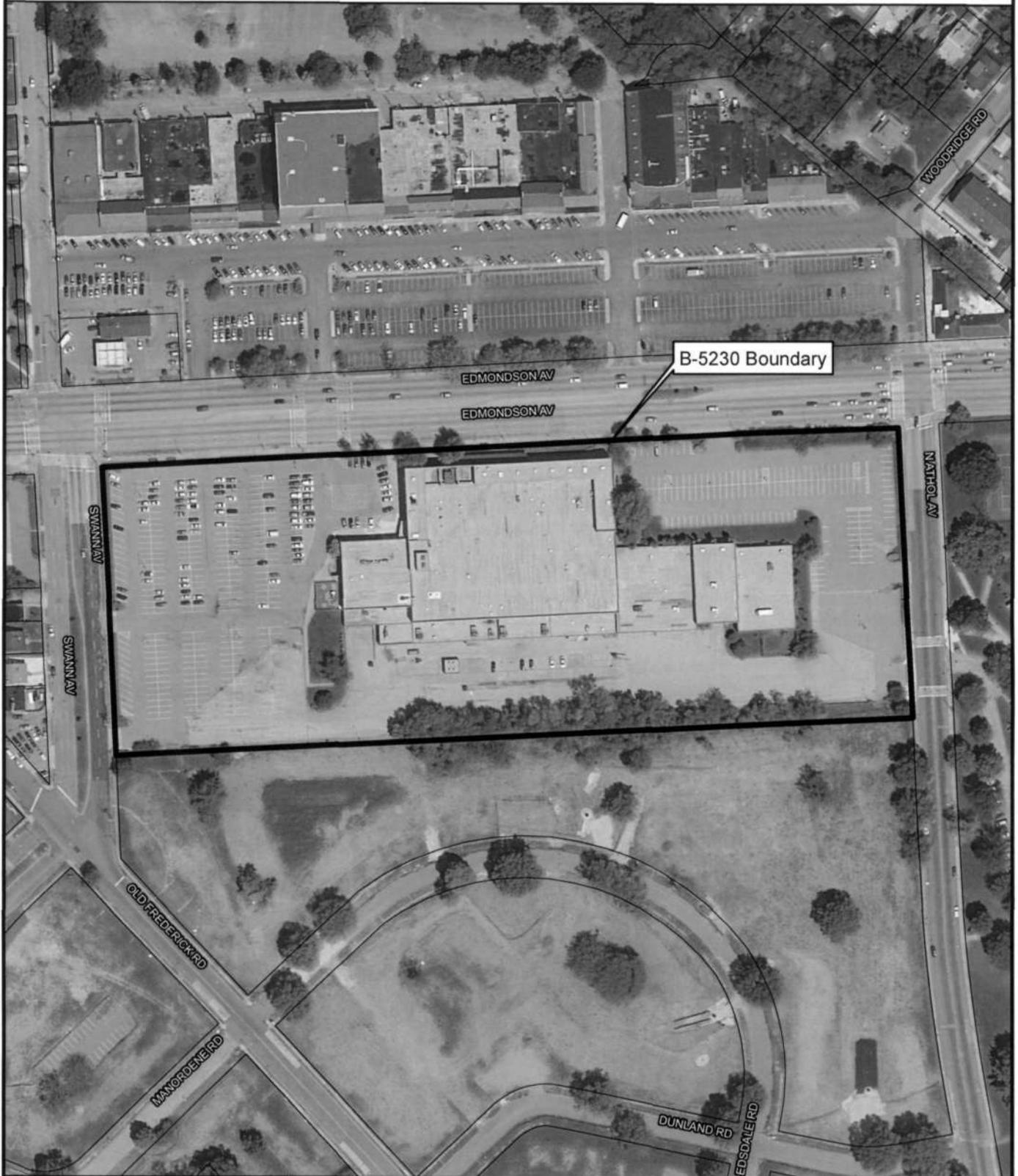
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

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The Hecht Company Edmondson/Westside Skill Center (B-5230)
4501 Edmondson Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland

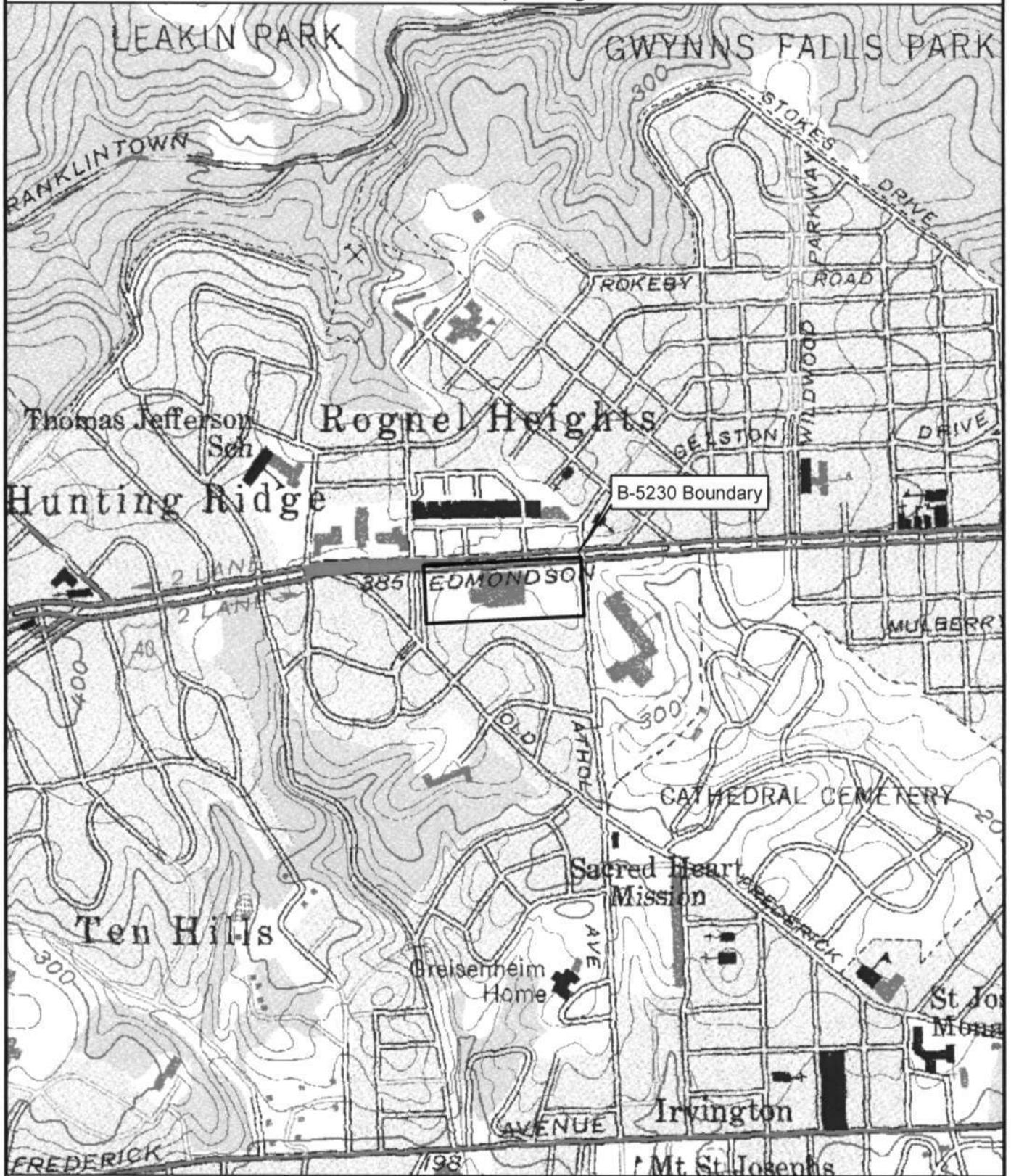


Site Plan



May 2012

The Hecht Company Edmondson/Westside Skill Center (B-5230)
4501 Edmondson Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland



Location Map



May 2012

PHOTO LOG

B-5230, The Hecht Company Edmonson/Westside Skill Center

B-5230_2012-04-13_01

-Façade, west wall, looking southeast

B-5230_2012-04-13_02

-Façade, north wall, looking south

B-5230_2012-04-13_03

-North elevation, looking southwest

B-5230_2012-04-13_04

-South elevation, looking northeast

B-5230_2012-04-13_05

-South elevation, looking northwest

B-5230_2012-04-13_06

-South elevation, looking northeast

B-5230_2012-04-13_07

-East elevation, looking northwest

B-5230_2012-04-13_08

-North elevation, east end, looking southeast

HP 100 Gray Photo ink on HP glossy premium plus photo paper. CD-R Gold.



B-5230

The Hecht Company of Edgewood /
Westside Skill Center

Baltimore City, MD

B. Roberts

4/13/12

file sale, west wall, looking southwest

1/8

WESTSIDE SKILL CENTER

GREAT KIDS
GREAT SCHOOLS



B-5230

The electric Company Education /
Westside Skill Center

Baltimore City, MD

B. Roberts

4/13/12

Face side, north wall, looking south

2/8



B-5230

The Hech + Company Education /
Westside Skill Center

Baltimore City, MD

B. Roberts

4/13/12

North elevation, looking southwest

3/8



B-5230
The Hoch + Company Education/
Westside Skill Center

Baltimore City, MD

B. Roberts

4/13/12

South elevation, looking northeast

4/8



B-5230

The Reck + Company Edmanson /
Westside Skill Center

Baltimore City, MD

B. Roberts

4/13/12

South elevation, looking northwest

5/8



B-5230
The Hecht Company Edgarsons
Westside Skill Center

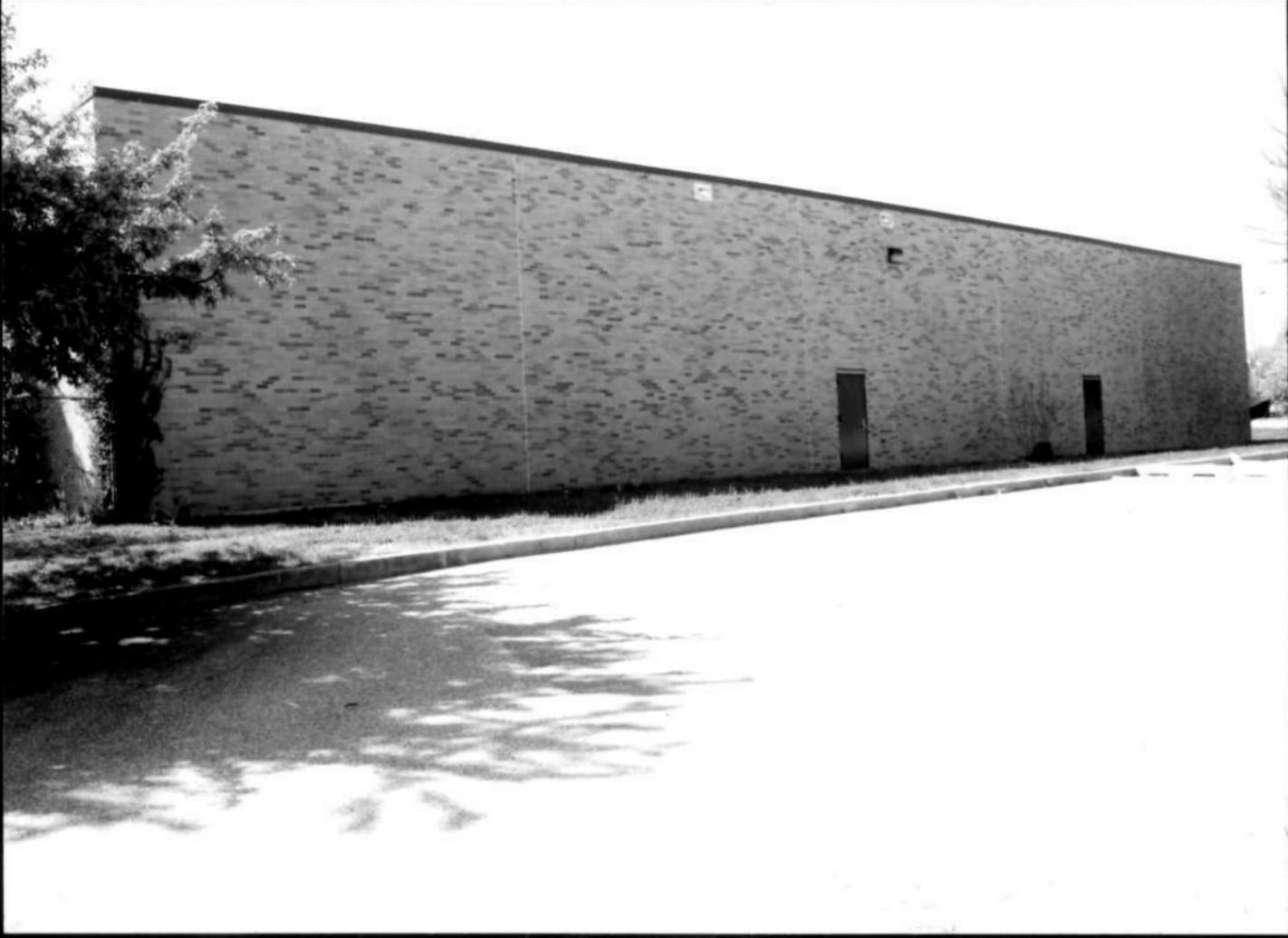
Baltimore City, MD

B. Roberts

4/13/12

South elevation, looking northeast

6/8



B-5230

The Hecht Company Edwanson /
Westside Skills Center

Baltimore City, MD

B. Roberts

4/13/12

East elevation, looking northwest

7/8

A black and white photograph of a long, single-story brick building. The words "OUTSIDE SKILL CENTER" are printed in large, bold, black capital letters on the left side of the building's facade. The building is made of light-colored bricks. In the foreground, there is a concrete curb, a grassy area with several dark, rounded bushes, and a paved road. To the left, there are bare trees and a utility pole. The sky is bright and clear.

OUTSIDE SKILL CENTER

B-5230
The Hecht Company Edmonson /
Westside Skills Center

Baltimore City, MD

B. Roberts

4/13/2

North elevation, east end, looking Southeast

8/8