

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM**

NR Eligible: yes    
no

Property Name: Carver Vocational-Technical High School Inventory Number: B-5294  
 Address: 2201 Presstman Street Historic district:  yes  no  
 City: Baltimore Zip Code: 21216 County: Baltimore City  
 USGS Quadrangle(s): Baltimore West  
 Property Owner: Baltimore Mayor and City Council Tax Account ID Number: 0315382328 001  
 Tax Map Parcel Number(s): N/A Tax Map Number: 15  
 Project: Baltimore & Potomac Tunnel Project Agency: Federal Railroad Administration  
 Agency Prepared By: RK&K  
 Preparer's Name: Christeen Taniguchi Date Prepared: 9/11/2015

Documentation is presented in: Baltimore City Archives, Enoch Pratt Library: African American Department, Maryland Room, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, ProQuest Sanborn Maps, other websites

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  no Listed:  yes  no

Site visit by MHT Staff  yes  no Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Architectural Description**

Carver Vocational-Technical High School is located at 2201 Presstman Street in West Baltimore. The property is bounded by Presstman Street to the north, N. Bentalou Street to the west, CSX Railroad to the south, and the P. Flanigan & Sons construction and infrastructure maintenance plant to the east. The 13-acre campus, containing the main high school building and an outdoor athletic complex, was built between 1953 and 1955. Low brick retaining walls and landscaping, that includes grass areas, concrete pedestrian walkways, trees, and bushes, border the sidewalks from the main school building, along its north-facing façade and west elevation. A metal mechanical flag pole is located at the corner of Presstman and N. Bentalou Streets. A dense row of trees line the southern and eastern boundary of the property, and the athletic field is bordered along Presstman Street by a tall chain-linked fence. A modern metal electric display sign, with the school's name and official seal, is located on the lawn west of the main school building. There are asphalt-paved parking areas at the rear and to the east of the school building.

The main school building was built in the International Style with elements of Stripped Classicism. Built into an east-southeast trending drainage slope, the building height varies from one to three stories. The façade is oriented on an east-west axis parallel to

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**MHT Comments:**

Jim J. Caruso ✓  
 Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services  
Blantz  
 Reviewer, National Register Program

9/22/2015  
 Date  
9/24/15  
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Presstman Street. Three wings extend south from the main building section, giving the building an E-shape. The building is made of concrete blocks clad with bricks at the exterior, and with cut limestone incorporated at the prominent entrances; the entire building is sheltered by a flat roof, mostly bordered by parapets with limestone caps. The school contains classrooms, workshops, laboratories, a library, music suites, cafeteria, auditorium, gymnasium, and natatorium.

The primary entrance is located within the two-story rotunda at the northwest corner. Two sets of concrete stairs descend from Presstman and N. Bentalou Street to the curved granite steps of the entryway. Concrete flower beds back into the brick retaining walls flanking the two sets of stairs. An Americans with Disability Act (ADA) compliant concrete ramp and metal handrails from Presstman Street is a recent addition to the entrance. Access into the rotunda is through a recessed opening with three sets of double metal and glass doors with multi-light transoms above. The entries are sheltered by a one-story flat, curving cantilevered porch roof, bordered with metal gravel stops, that extends around the exterior circumference of the rotunda; the porch is supported by four formed concrete posts. A limestone cornerstone dated "1953" is located to the right of the recessed entry. Two large, bricked-in limestone frames are located on either side of the recessed entrance. Large, triple openings with scored white modern panels extend above the entrance and underscore the aluminum-colored metal letters bearing the school's name. Two sets of three single metal double-sash, hopper/fixe d windows flank the triple windows. Each of the rotunda's second story windows is framed with cut limestone.

The rest of the façade faces north onto Presstman Street, as it extends east from the rotunda. The west portion of this elevation is three stories, and the east section is one story. The upper two stories of the three-story section are at the same level as the rotunda. The first floor of the three-story section consists of single metal double-sash, hopper/fixe d windows, while the second and third story windows contain double-sash, hopper/fixe d windows in sets of five. All first floor windows at the façade have metal security screens, and most windows throughout the building have limestone sills and no lintels. A secondary entrance is located within a slightly projecting bay near the center of the first floor of the façade; situated at a lower grade than the sidewalk, it is accessed via concrete steps and metal handrails. The door surround is made of limestone with a panel detail in the center; the double metal and glass doors have a fixe d transom above. Above the entrance is a tall and narrow opening, with scored white modern panels, which spans the second and third floor. A limestone belt course separates the first floor from the second floor, then continues east to become the parapet cap of the one-story section.

The one-story section of the façade has double-sash, hopper/fixe d windows in sets of six. The symmetrical entrance at the one-story east end of the façade is located within a slightly taller projecting bay, and connects to the natatorium, gymnasium, and auditorium. Concrete steps with metal handrails lead up to this entrance, with a concrete ramp to the west of the stairs providing ADA compliant entry. The entrance contains three sets of double metal and glass doors separated by four engaged limestone posts. Above the doors are multi-light transoms. The entrance is sheltered by a cantilevered flat porch roof bordered with metal gravel stops. Near the roofline above the entrance are two flag poles mounted on circular limestone panels flanking a plain limestone panel. The entrance is flanked by two shorter bays with parallel brick belt courses.

The two-story west elevation of the school faces west onto N. Bentalou Street as it extends south from the rotunda. This elevation, comprising the west elevation of the west wing, consists of single and double metal double-sash, hopper/fixe d windows, as well as those in sets of four, five, and six. The windows of each floor are sheltered by a continuous, shallow projecting visor roof with metal gravel stops; the first floor visor roof is a continuation of the porch roof at the rotunda. The first floor windows have metal security screens. Near the center of the elevation is a projecting entrance topped by a rectangular clock tower. A concrete walkway that steps down from the sidewalk then leads up to the granite steps of this entrance; an ADA compliant concrete ramp and rails have been added to the south end of the steps. The porch is sheltered by a one-story flat roof with metal gravel stops, supported by four rectangular limestone posts. There are two entrances within the porch. A double metal and glass door enters into the base of the clock tower and is marked as the "Early A.M. Student Entrance; Late Room Entrance." The second entry is a single metal and

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glass door located north of the tower entrance and is labelled as "Early AM Staff Entrance." The clock above has a modern design with 12 metal non-numeric indicator marks and two metal hands attached to the brick face of the tower. The southwest corner of the west wing has a recessed loading dock platform with a concrete-paved floor, facing onto an asphalt-paved area connected to N. Bentalou Street. It is sheltered by an extension of the shallow roof over the first story windows at the west elevation; the dock's roof is supported at the corner by a simple, slender metal post and with a metal handrail. A brick second story addition above the loading dock was added after 2008 when the original greenhouse was removed. There is also a small one-story addition at the south end of the west wing.

Most of the west and central wings are three stories of classrooms and shops. The classrooms at the top two floors have bands of metal double-sash, hopper/fixe d windows. The lower level contains larger industrial windows and metal garage doors. The south wall of the auditorium is visible between the central and east wings. The east wing includes the gymnasium, natatorium, and power plant, each with varying roof heights to reflect their interior uses. The north end of the east elevation of this wing is a one- and two-story, four bay section with five bands of windows, each in a set of three; those on the second floor are taller than the ones below. There are also a single metal door with transom above, and a metal garage door. To the south is a slightly projecting two-story bay with an entrance sheltered by a one-story, shallow, flat roof bordered by gravel stops. Metal and glass double doors with a single fixed transom is flanked by engaged limestone posts. Continuing south along this east elevation, the gymnasium is two stories high (with a tall second floor), and five bays wide. The first floor has five small, paired metal-sash windows; the five large windows at the second floor have double-sash, metal windows with scored white modern panels above.

Between the gymnasium and natatorium is a recessed, two-story section with an entrance sheltered by a one-story, secondary flat roof bordered by gravel stops. This brick enclosed entrance has two sets of metal double doors framed by glass panels above and as side lights, and is supported by limestone posts. A single double-sash, hopper/fixe d window is located at the second floor level above this entry. The three-bay, tall one-story natatorium, located south, has three large openings with scored white modern panels. At the south end of this east wing is the one-story power plant; its three-bay east elevation has four double-sash, metal windows on either side of a metal garage door. Above the door is a single double-sash, hopper/fixe d window and two adjacent louvered vents. A single metal and glass door is also located on this elevation. The south elevation of the power plant has three louvered vents and a pair of double-sash, metal windows. In the southwest corner of the east wing is a tall brick chimney stack for original operations of the power plant. The chimney stack is bounded with iron straps near the top, which appear to be a remediation measure.

To the east of the school is the athletic fields, a large, mostly grassy area which occupies approximately half of the school campus. There is a small concession stand/equipment shed located at the northwest end of the fields. The building has a concrete block addition on the south side. Two entrances are located on the building's east elevation. The main section of the building has solid metal double doors with grated metal security doors. The entrance to the concrete block addition has only a grated metal security door. The south elevation of the addition has a service window with metal grates, and the west elevation of the block addition has bricks that spell out "CVT."

The field has a 400-meter macadam oval track with a football field in the center; two macadam strips north of the football field are used for long jumps and pole vaulting, and a triangular macadam pad south of the field can be used for high jumping as well as throwing events. A concrete and aluminum bleacher stand is separated from the track and field by a low, chain-link fence along the western edge of the track. A metal bulb light score board faces the bleachers from the northeast extent of the oval track, and a metal scaffold stand is on the interior of the track, beyond the southern end zone, and may serve as a public announcement platform for sporting events. In the far northeastern corner of the field area is a dirt and grass softball field with a chain-linked back stop.

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Historic Context

Early Decades of the Carver School

Carver Vocational-Technical High School (#454) was established in 1925 as the first vocational school for African American students in Baltimore. Originally unnamed, it was often called the "Colored Vocational School" and was first housed in an abandoned garage on the Frederick Douglass High School campus in West Baltimore, on the southwest side of N. Carey Street and east of Cumberland Street (Roy; "Spent \$350 on Each Vocational Grad" 1927: A11). The building has since been demolished. Only boys attended in the first school year. Once girls were admitted, boys occupied the original building where they were trained in carpentry, shoe repair, tailoring, auto mechanics, and trade cookery. Girls learned dressmaking and trade cookery nearby in a building commonly known as the "tin factory." Located at the north corner of N. Calhoun and Gold Streets, Sanborn fire insurance maps show the building served as a public school in 1901 before housing the Progress Shirt Factory in 1914. This two-story building still stands today, heavily modified and housing a church. With an original enrollment of 107 students, academic subjects, such as civics, drawing, English, mathematics, and science, were also taught (Roy). At these original locations, the school did not have a gymnasium or auditorium; therefore, the student body turned to Douglass High School for such needs as physical education and graduation ceremonies (Carver yearbook 1948: 4).

As enrollment, staff, and number of trades offered grew, the school moved in 1931 into a mid-1870s building, previously occupied by the Maryland State Normal School and located at the northwest corner of W. Lafayette and N. Carrollton Avenues (O'Brien 1986: IB; Sanborn Map Company 1914: 163). This Victorian Gothic Revival-style building no longer stands. For the next two decades, the school was also scattered in other parts of the city, occupying such properties as the school's original building on N. Carey Street; two army surplus Quonset huts on the Samuel Coleridge Taylor Public School campus (Preston Street near Pennsylvania Avenue); a former bowling alley at Pennsylvania Avenue and Retreat Street; a former convent and nursery at McCulloh and Biddle Streets (today Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard); and a building at 775 Waesche Street (the street no longer exists) (Roy; "Carver Classes to Vacate Waesche St. Building" 1947: 5; "NAACP's Strong Plea for Carver Site Published" 1950: 19).

Activism for Baltimore African American Schools

Adequate funding, equipment, facilities, and staffing was a constant struggle for African American schools, falling far short of the resources allotted to schools for their white counterparts (O'Brien 1986: IB). Efforts to improve education for black children in Baltimore began by at least the late nineteenth century. By the mid-1930s, this movement was led by Carl Murphy of The Baltimore Afro-American newspaper and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); Lillie M. Carroll Jackson, leader of the Baltimore branch of the NAACP for 35 years; and Jackson's daughter, Juanita Jackson Mitchell, director of the Citizens' Committee for Justice (Baum 2010: 33; "Lillie M. Carroll Jackson, NAACP and Early Civil Rights Leader" 2013). All three were leading civil rights activists, with significant interests in the cause of education equality. They spearheaded a city-wide effort to place a black member on the Baltimore School Board, with Murphy arguing that only a person of color would advocate for the needs of black children ("Colored Members Sought for Posts" 1937: 20; Baum 2010: 40). The activists worked closely with Thurgood Marshall, who was at the NAACP New York headquarters at the time. Marshall and Charles Hamilton Houston were in the process of creating a national campaign to end school segregation by forcing local school districts to equalize separate facilities, thereby making it expensive to maintain separate schools and hopefully forcing desegregation (Baum 2010: 33).

Advocacy for better standards for black vocational school students was also occurring at the national level. In 1937, a resolution for more equal distribution of school funds in vocational education and the wider application of research to the teaching of trades

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grew out of a special meeting of black delegates held at Carver to discuss problems affecting black schools. The results were to be presented at the 31st annual American Vocational Association (AVA) meeting held in Baltimore that year (“Seek Equitable Distribution of School Funds” 1937: 20). At a subsequent NAACP meeting, the organization pointed out that AVA exhibits showed a wide difference of quality in equipment, and variation in trades and vocations when comparing African American students to their white counterparts (“Colored Members Sought for Posts” 1937: 20).

In 1940, the Citizens’ Committee on Current Educational Problems of Negroes in Baltimore spoke before the school board to point out numerous instances of inequality, such as lack of proper school buildings for African American students, overcrowding in classrooms, inequalities in numbers of teachers, and vocational school limitations. The value of black school buildings at the time averaged 34 percent less than the average white school (Baum 2010: 36-37). Dr. Albert O. Reid, on the advisory committee of the vocational school, indicated there was not a well-planned program for developing vocational training in the black schools where there were no courses in plumbing, electricity, air conditioning, aeroplane construction, photography, or building construction (“Colored Schools Being Robbed, Board is Told” 1940: 9). These were courses available to white students at their vocational schools (“Negroes Seek Admittance” 1949: 24). In addition, white high school campuses were required to have a minimum of twelve acres to provide adequate space for outdoor physical education and recreation facilities; schools for African Americans did not have such a requirement, leading to greater instances of overcrowding as compared to their white counterparts (“Harlem Park Site Urged for School” 1947: 16; “Challenge Seen in Proposal on Carver School Erection” 1947: 7).

The school board responded to the Committee’s request in 1942, by which time the United States had entered World War II. It stated that buildings and other facilities for black children were not disproportionate and that there was no discrimination in Baltimore public schools (“School Board Answers Two Years of Protests 1942: 21). Carl Murphy spoke, on behalf of the Committee and under advisement by Howard University education professor Martin Jenkins, pointing to the board’s response as “a series of evasions and rationalizations of present inequities that are unworthy of those who pretend to accept the concept of democratic education (Baum 2010: 42).” However, some positive outcomes included the board agreeing to plan a new vocational school for black students as soon as wartime conditions allowed such plans, and to provide additional trade courses at this new school (“School Board Answers Two Years of Protests” 1942: 21).

Meanwhile, the school was renamed Carver Vocational School in 1944. Carver was designated a high school in the following year, alongside the other three white vocational schools in the city, namely Edison Vocational High School for boys, Clara Barton Vocational High School for girls, and the Mergenthaler Vocational High School of Printing (Roy and “4 Vocational High Schools Created Here” 1945: 18; “Baltimore Schools and the Plan for Vocational Education” 1946: 14). Change of status to a high school meant the schools could offer state-sanctioned diplomas to its graduates (O’Brien 1986: IB). This was a time when all Baltimore vocational schools were not well-funded as compared to regular public schools; Baltimore was one of the few cities in the country that apparently never built a school specifically designed for vocational training. Instead, vocational school students occupied hand-me-down buildings without purpose-built shops and other special facilities (“Raising Our Vocational Schools to High-School Rank” 1945: 10). Placing Carver School children in an old garage and “tin factory” when it was first founded, and later moving them to an older building, not large enough to completely house the entire school, are reflective of these disparities experienced by African American and vocational school students.

Activism continued, as The Baltimore Afro-American newspaper, a major advocate fighting Baltimore school racial inequalities, ran a series of illustrated articles during the mid-1940s, showing the poor conditions in black schools. They demonstrated that schools condemned in 1921 continued to be used for black students; over twenty years later, these schools still variously lacked sewerage, accessible fire escapes, safe heating, modern toilet facilities, adequate light, running water, classroom space, recreational space, office space, and maintenance (Baum 2010: 46). Meanwhile, J. E. T. Camper, president of the Carver School Parent-Teacher Association, presented in 1946 a petition for a new Carver School, listing some of the handicaps of its present facilities.

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While the school board had agreed to a new Carver School location four years earlier, it is likely this petition was responding to a lack of action from the board. He indicated the limitations of the gymnasium which only had a basketball court, and that the school had no shower facilities. Camper emphasized the importance of having an athletic field, stating none of the black high schools in Baltimore had one. In addition, Camper asked for a bus to transport the students to and from the current main school building to the satellite facilities, located eight to eleven blocks apart (“Negroes Will Attempt to Enroll in School” 1946: 7).

Strives towards vocational school desegregation included two attempts in 1946 and 1953 to enroll African American students into the Mergenthaler Vocational High School of Printing, citing the lack of comparable printing courses offered at black schools. While the students were rejected both times, the school board promised equal printing course facilities, which were ultimately planned at Carver (Baum 2010: 45; “Negroes Will Attempt to Enroll in School” 1946: 7; “Mergenthaler Bars Negroes” 1953: 7).

Planning for a New Carver School

A new Carver School campus started to become reality in the mid-1940s when various sites were considered (“Baltimore Schools and the Plan for Vocational Education” 1946: 14). New school facilities for the other white vocational schools were also being planned. Between 1947 and 1952, Baltimore City’s school system spent over 48 million dollars on its public school building program, creating facilities for 10,000 more students in the school system to accommodate a population growth in the city following the end of World War II, including an increase in the African American population (“Schools Add 333 New Rooms” 1952: 11; Williams 1952: C1). By this time, a 1951 Baltimore school facilities survey rated Carver’s main building, constructed in the 1870s, as “unsatisfactory” and “obsolete” (Baltimore School Board [1951]).

Harlem Park, also located in West Baltimore, was being seriously considered in 1947 as a potential site for the Carver vocational school, although there were apprehensions about losing park land, a concern shared by the Baltimore Mayor and President of the City Council. The Urban League, Citizens’ Committee for Justice, and the local chapter of the NAACP also objected to this location. The available acreage at Harlem Park was only 7.6 acres, when the ideal size for a high school campus was a minimum of 12 acres (“Harlem Park Site Urged for School” 1947: 16; “Presstman St. Selection for New Carver Opposed by NAACP, Citizens’ Group” 1949: 1). Another site, near St. Mary’s Seminary in the Pennsylvania Avenue and Biddle Street areas, was rejected in 1950. Reasons included the heavy traffic in the area, in addition to the cost and time it would take to purchase the property. The city had already acquired the site on which the school currently stands (“Bentalou-Presstman Site Urged for Carver School” 1950: 23; “Carver School Site Approved” 1950: 28).

The current location of the school at Presstman and N. Bentalou Streets was selected in the late 1940s, taking a while to be approved due to controversy. Six acres at this site were originally being considered for the Carver School. Initially in 1949, the Baltimore Chapter of the NAACP and Citizens’ Committee for Justice opposed the site because it was near two railroad junctions and due to its original small size, calling it “unsuitable and inadequate.” The groups requested a minimum of 12.5 acres for the new school, pointing out that no white secondary school had less than 12.9 acres of ground, but that no black school had more than 4 acres (“Presstman St. Selection for New Carver Opposed by NAACP, Citizens’ Group” 1949: 1). There were also objections from some white residents in the area, although the neighborhood of the proposed school was quickly transitioning to being predominantly African American. This was one of the first incidents where anxiety about blockbusting and the breakdown of residential segregation found expression in the school arena.

The selected site was endorsed a year later in 1950 by such prominent civil rights groups as the NAACP and Urban League, as well as Democratic clubs, and the Progressive Party (“Carver School Site Approved” 1950: 28). The promise of an expansion of the site to be at least 12.5 acres and the urgency for the new school changed their views. In a strong plea for the Carver site published in The Baltimore Afro-American newspaper on March 25, 1950, the NAACP pointed to what was then the current Carver School

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locations in ill-equipped, inadequate buildings in various parts of the city. They stated, "The overcrowding is acute. The training facilities are grossly inadequate. Long-suffering colored vocational school pupils are in dire need of adequate vocational training and facilities at the earliest possible moment." The NAACP also liked the residential community in the area of the new site, which they noted was quickly transitioning to being majority African American, and the fact that Easterwood Park was located across the street ("NAACP's Strong Plea for Carver Site Published" 1950: 19). After much debate, the Presstman and N. Bentalou Street location was approved by Baltimore City Council on May 22, 1950 (Baum 2010: 48; "Carver Site Armory Bills are Advanced," 1950: 34.). School plans by architect William F. Stone were completed in January 1952 ("Schools Add 333 New Rooms" 1952: 11). The school's building construction engineer was R. E. L. Williams, and the Garden Construction Company was hired as the builder ("Mayor Breaks Ground for \$3,983,000 Carver School" 1953: 17; [Baltimore School Board] 1953: 132).

After delays resulting from materials shortages due to the Korean War, ground was broken on May 20, 1953. There were about 300 attendees, including students, teachers, school officials, parents, as well as representatives of the Urban League. At the ceremony, the assistant superintendent in charge of vocational education said, "The school has been the dream of a few of us for 30 years," and a member of the school board noted that along with the recently completed Mergenthaler Vocational-Technical High School, "We are moving Baltimore city into the front ranks of vocational education" ("Mayor Breaks Ground for \$3,983,000 Carver School" 1953: 17). The Mergenthaler School, which was the combination of the three white vocational schools, namely Edison, Cara Barton, and Mergenthaler, opened for its first school year in September 1953 ("Group Tours New School" 1953: 14). Carver was officially renamed Carver Vocational-Technical High School on September 1, 1953 ([Baltimore School Board] 1953: 195).

**Desegregation in Baltimore and at the Carver School**

While the new Carver School was being constructed, Baltimore voluntarily began the process of desegregation in September 1954, four months after the United States (U.S.) Supreme Court started hearings that ultimately reversed the doctrine of "separate but equal" with their history-making *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* ruling. The federal court found that children in segregated schools were deprived of equal protection under the law guaranteed by the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (that grants citizenship to everyone born in the U.S. with protected civil and political rights). Desegregation started in Baltimore, before the Supreme Court finalized its decision in 1955 (Fleming 1956: 273-274). The Baltimore City school system instituted an open door "free choice" policy, which meant children were not required to attend any particular school, but instead could choose where they wished to attend, except into districted schools (only children living within the limits around a school can attend when the "free choice" policy may lead to overcrowding) and some special programs (Parents Committee 1963: 3). School racial populations did not dramatically change, due to this loose approach. The movement of students and teachers was more often of black students to formerly white schools; there was almost no change in the opposite direction. In addition, new schools like Carver were often constructed within racially homogeneous areas, so by default they did not encourage desegregation. While black teachers could now teach at white schools, few chose to do so, and the reverse was true as well. In 1956, the Assistant Superintendent of Schools indicated there were 81 black instructors teaching in formerly all-white schools, with 4,000 black children attending predominantly white schools. Nevertheless, G. James Fleming, Associate Professor of Political Science at Morgan State College, wrote in 1956 that he was encouraged by the generally peaceful transition that was happenings, with the school board receiving praise for their desegregation efforts from such notable African American sources as Morgan State College and The Baltimore Afro-American. However, Fleming also pointed to continued racially restricted housing practices and discrimination towards African Americans at the city's stores, hotels, and major restaurants that limited school integration (Fleming 1956: 275-276).

Desegregation did not change ongoing plans for the Carver School except that an expensive print shop, which would have been installed at the school if segregation had continued, was not incorporated because black students could now enroll at the new

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Mergenthaler Vocational-Technical High School which already had such facilities (“Public School Building Plan is Unchanged”: 1954 40; “School Board Adopts Policy Erasing Racial Basis for Registration”: 1954 24).

The new Carver Vocational-Technical High School campus opened in Fall 1955, capable of accommodating 1,500 students (“Mayor Breaks Ground for \$3,983,000 Carver School” 1953: 17). The nearly four million dollar campus had an E-shaped building built into the existing topography of the site, which had included existing buildings, mostly rowhouses at the north and northwest section of the property (Sanborn Map Company 1951: 198); all were demolished for the school. The school included 25 classrooms, 22 shops, 3 science laboratories, a library, 2 music suites, a health suite, a gymnasium, a swimming pool, an all-purpose room, a cafeteria, and a pre-kindergarten facility (Roy). Morgan State College professor Fleming described the newly completed Carver School in 1956 as “one of the best housed and most completely equipped vocational schools anywhere (Fleming 1956: 275).”

While desegregation at the secondary school level worked out better than at elementary schools, it was still not a great success. In 1961, while white attendance of predominantly white secondary schools dropped to 54 percent, 75 percent of African Americans still attended predominantly black schools, which included Carver. In fact, due to the growing African American population in Baltimore, the number of those attending still segregated schools had actually increased by 4,500 since 1955 (Parents Committee 1963: 3). In addition, construction of modern school facilities did not necessarily mean equality for African American students. Graduates from the predominantly white Mergenthaler School went on to better positions and significantly higher salaries as compared to their African American counterparts at Carver, based on a study conducted by Johns Hopkins University covering 1957 through 1961 and looking at nine class years (Clarke 1964: 50 and 33).

A citizens’ committee and the NAACP, including its national leadership, charged the Baltimore School Board in 1963 of intentionally keeping Baltimore schools segregated; they noted white schools had vacant classrooms while black children were being assigned to portables because of overcrowding (Clymer 1963: 38). In addition, the Baltimore chapter of the civil rights group, Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), created a report in 1966 pointing to inequalities between the Carver and Mergenthaler Schools. For example, while Mergenthaler had six large automobile mechanics shops, Carver had one small one. Mergenthaler had four cosmetology shops, while Carver had one. According to the CORE study, the newer, heavier equipment was going to the white vocational school; the study also found that five additional classrooms and 17 more shops would have been the minimum to make the two schools equal (“Mergenthaler Seen Favored vs. Carver” 1966: D-7). Recognizing the differences between the schools, a 1968 Baltimore School Board report on a study of vocational education in the city schools included establishing a balance of curriculum offerings at Carver and Mergenthaler (Nissly 1968: 18). This helped lead to an idea to merge the two vocational schools, to offer a better balance in the course offerings and in racial composition (Oishi 1967: C24). This plan did not come to fruition.

Meanwhile, despite some less than ideal conditions, Carver School was being recognized for its educational excellence. It was evaluated by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools in May 1963 and received its accreditation the following year to become the only vocational school in Maryland to receive accreditation, and only one of a handful in the country. After being reevaluated in 1973, the evaluation committee called Carver “one of America’s outstanding vocational-technical high schools” (Roy; “High Marks for Carver on Evaluation Report” 1963: 5).

In 1974, another effort was made for desegregation in Baltimore City. The school board introduced a massive desegregation plan in a school system that was by then seventy percent African American. The plan resulted from a U.S. District Court-ordered desegregation mandate from the federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW). The court found the Baltimore City school system, in addition to schools in 84 other school districts in the country, was still substantially disproportionate in its racial composition. Noncompliance would have meant Baltimore losing \$23 million in federal funding. The court had defined a

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racially disproportionate school to be one in which a 20 percent disproportion exists between the percentage of local minority pupils in the schools, and the percentage in the entire school district. Carver was again proposed to be merged with the Mergenthaler Vocational-Technical High School. While Mergenthaler had the ideal racial balance of about a 50-50 ratio of white and black students, Carver had a 100 percent African American student body. Students from both schools, although mostly from Mergenthaler, protested the merging, with reasons that included loss of school identity (“800 at Mervo Protest Plan to Merge with Carver” 1974: B3). Under pressure from students and teachers at both schools, Carver and Mergenthaler ultimately did not merge (Bowler 1975: A22). Today, both the Carver and Mergenthaler student body populations are nearly 100 percent African American.

**Carver School Today**

In subsequent decades, Carver School continued to be recognized for its educational excellence. Redbook magazine called it one of the best high schools in 1996, and Baltimore magazine named it the best vocational-technical high schools in the city. Baltimore magazine called out the school for winning national recognition for its excellent vocational training, and for having one of the largest high school work-study programs in the country (Kane 1999: 5B). The school received the same honor from Baltimore magazine in 2010 (“Carver Vocational-Technical High School #454 Student/Parent Handbook” 2011: 3). Today, in addition to their academic curriculum, the school offers career and technology education, such as the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, cosmetology, carpentry, electrical construction, Computer Aided Drafting, CISCO Networking, and Child Care (“Carver Vocational-Technical High School #454 Student/Parent Handbook” 2011: 6).

**Carver School Architecture**

The Carver School was built in the International Style with elements of Stripped Classicism. Stripped Classicism was a style popular with government buildings during the years between the two world wars. “Extraneous” elements of the traditional classical styles such as columns, dentils, quoins, and cresting were eliminated or pared down. Increasingly modern and streamlined design tastes helped drive this style, along with the frugality driven by the Great Depression by the 1930s. This style was less common after World War II. The International Style began in Western Europe during the 1920s, with buildings designed by such iconic architects as Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van de Rohe, Richard Neutra, and Rudolf Schindler. The style was originally coined in a book by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson entitled The International Style that accompanied an exhibition held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City in 1932 (Robinson and Foell 2003: 12). The style did not become popular in the United States, however, until the decades after World War II when heavy building demands in both the public and private sectors helped make economy and functionality priorities over architectural and physical distinction (Robinson and Foell 2003: 9 and 31). Popular building materials included concrete, plastics and aluminum, which were extremely economical and well-suited to meet this era’s austere architectural trends (Robinson and Foell 2003: 31). The International Style is characterized by the absence of ornamentation, box-shaped buildings, expansive windows, smooth wall surfaces, and cantilevered building extensions (Robinson and Foell 2003: 14). Modern era public spaces like entrances and lobbies were less grand compared to their predecessors. Tradition was abandoned to create a pared down and less ornamental style that emphasized geometric shapes, and used new and modern materials and construction techniques (“International Style 1930-1950”).

Many American schools in the two decades after World War II were built in this style; these buildings were dramatically difference from their predecessors, which were generally monumental buildings, designed in more ornamental architectural styles such as Gothic Revival, Classical Revival, and Art Deco, and akin to temples of education. School use and functional design also changed. Desks and chairs traditionally nailed to the floors were now movable, thus allowing for greater flexibility in the learning environment. Schools were now low-lying and closer to the ground, honestly functional and less awe-inspiring, and therefore friendlier in the eyes of children as compared to the monumental efforts from decades past (Dobrasko 2008: 6). The importance of outdoor recreation activities could be seen with large areas for playgrounds, baseball fields, football fields, and vast lawn areas.

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Many schools were one-story, particularly in suburban neighborhoods, taking advantage of the greater availability of land. Urban areas, on the other hand were often designed with two- stories, to account for less available space. These mid-twentieth century schools had larger expanses of metal-sash (typically aluminum or steel) windows, providing better ventilation and lighting. Finger plan schools, where corridors of classrooms spread out across the building plan and form “fingers,” helped allow natural light and fresh air to come into the classrooms, and for there to be access to the outdoors from each classroom (Baker 2012: 11). Schools during the 1940s and 1950s also relied heavily on artificial light, becoming more common as inexpensive florescent lighting became popular, seemingly relying on a combination of both for a quality visual environment (Baker 2012: 14).

William F. Stone, Architect

William F. Stone (ca. 1890-1989) was a Baltimore architect who studied architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. His career began in 1920, first working for Baltimore architectural firms before starting his own in 1930. Stone’s Baltimore projects included the United States Appraisers Stores (alongside the firm of Taylor & Fisher), the Baltimore County Office Building, and the Park Lynn and General Lee apartments (“Architect William F. Stone Jr. Dies” 1989: 13B; “Appraiser’s Store Plans Completed” 1932: 7). He won citations from the Baltimore Association of Commerce for the two apartment building designs. His other schools included the Lyndhurst School, Violetville School, and School for Colored Handicapped Children; these campuses were designed in the 1920s and 1930s in Baltimore (“Architects Named for 2 New Schools” 1924: 6; “School Plans on View at Municipal Museum” 1932: S6). Stone was also a president of the Baltimore Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, acted as architectural supervisor for the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland, and was a member of the State Board of Architectural Review. He retired in 1976 from the firm he founded (“Architect William F. Stone Jr. Dies” 1989: 13B).

Significance Evaluation

Carver Vocational-Technical High School was evaluated for significance under National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Criteria A, B, and C, using the guidelines set forth in the National Register Bulletin “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.” The property was not evaluated for eligibility under Criterion D as part of this assessment.

In the decades leading up to the campus’ construction between 1953 and 1955, such groups as the NAACP, Urban League, and The Baltimore Afro-American newspaper advocated for better schools for African Americans, including specific efforts to house the Carver School in one large, quality facility located on sufficient acreage meeting standards that had already been set for white high schools. The current Carver School campus unified a school that, since its founding in 1925, was located in various locations throughout the city; the buildings were hand-me-downs, none built to specifically accommodate a vocational school. The culmination of efforts to provide equal and quality education to African American students during segregation, the school was one of the first to be finished following the start of desegregation efforts resulting from Brown vs. Board of Education. While Carver School continued to be a segregated school, despite several segregation efforts, and had problems with having the same quality of equipment and smaller class sizes seen with its predominantly white counterpart Mergenthaler vocational school, Carver was considered a success, and was recognized for its educational excellence. Its new building was designed and built in an up-to-date architectural style, had modern facilities, and included a large athletic field that together met the acreage needs required for a successful high school. Therefore, Carver Vocational-Technical High School is eligible under Criterion A because it is significant in the areas of education, ethnic heritage (Black), and social history for being the culmination of the work of Baltimore local civil rights organizations and others to bring equal vocational education to African American students in a racially segregated Baltimore City.

Prominent African American civil rights leaders such as Carl Murphy, Lillie M. Carroll Jackson, and Juanita Jackson Mitchell were involved in the work to bring equality in Baltimore City education to African American students, including those at the

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Carver School. However, while each of these individuals are significant, Carver School appears to only be the result of their collective efforts, and not directly associated with their individual productive lives. Therefore, Carver Vocational-Technical High School is not eligible under Criterion B.

Carver Vocational-Technical High School was constructed between 1953 and 1955 in the International Style with elements of Stripped Classicism. The building's rotunda, a modern and minimalist version of one, is a prominent centerpiece of the building design. While in classical designs, the rotunda entrance porch supports would be columns following one of the classical orders, those on this building are simple round posts; instead of being capped by a dome, the rotunda has a simple flat roof. The simple date stone at the rotunda and austere limestone door surround at the middle entrance of the north-facing façade, are pared down versions of traditional design elements. The symmetrical natatorium/gymnasium/auditorium entrance, including its simple limestone panels and flagpoles, is also reflective of Stripped Classicism. The functional and "mechanical" qualities of the International Style seems to have been an appropriate choice for a technical and vocational school. The flat roofs over the building, porches, and windows; bands of windows; and belt courses of limestone and brick are International Style character defining features that accentuate the streamlined and horizontal nature of the building. The geometric characteristics of the International Style are emphasized by the varying heights of the building sections, including a box-shaped clock tower above the entrance at the center of the west elevation; the clock itself is also modern and minimalist. While the building used traditional red bricks that continue to be popular in Baltimore even today, post-World War II construction techniques resulted in a school with concrete block construction clad with brick cladding on the exterior walls; the interior walls were left with exposed concrete blocks, adding to the building's austere design. The building's multi-story construction is a result of the school's urban surroundings where land was limited as compared to suburban areas. The school design also reflects an effective use of the existing irregular terrain, showcasing the building's prominent elevations, most notably the north-facing façade and rotunda, but keeping utilitarian functions, like the power plant chimney, at the rear and at lower grade. The Carver property has a sizeable athletic field, part of the post-World War II era standards for a large school yard and the result of civil rights efforts for racial school equality. Therefore, the evaluated school is eligible under Criterion C in the area of architecture for embodying the distinctive form, method of construction, and appearance of a mid-twentieth century vocational school building borrowing heavily from the International Style.

Based on the evaluated criteria, Carver Vocational-Technical High School is eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criteria A and C. The period of significance is 1955 when the school was completed.

**Integrity Assessment**

The Carver Vocational-Technical High School was evaluated against the seven aspects of integrity, namely location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, as outlined in Section VIII of National Register Bulletin 15, How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.

The property retains its integrity of location.

The Carver Vocational-Technical High School was built in the mid-1950s, within a community of residential brick two-story rowhouses, and Easterwood Park located to the west. These surroundings have not changed since the school was constructed. In addition, the campus composition and building design have not changed significantly, except for the construction of a small concession stand/equipment shed at the northwest corner of the athletic field built sometime between 1966 and 1971. The bleachers and baseball/softball field were constructed sometime between 1957 and 1966. These features, however, do not diminish the integrity of the school. Therefore, the property retains an excellent level of its setting, feeling, and association.

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The 1960 school building itself has not changed significantly, retaining its original architectural design and form, as well as material and features such as its lack of ornament; red brick-clad concrete block walls with limestone trim; and flat roofs, including those sheltering various entrances and windows. Other important characteristics like its clock tower; date stone; and two flag poles, mounted near the roof of the natatorium/gymnasium/auditorium entrance, are still intact. The interior floor plans of the E-shaped building also remains essentially the same, with its classrooms, shops, cafeteria, gymnasium, natatorium, and auditorium. The most significant change to the evaluated building are replacement windows and doors throughout. However, their historic openings are the same today. The doors are still surrounded by the same features, including simple limestone or concrete porch supports and door surrounds, generally sheltered by flat roofs. The rotunda, the central feature of the building, continues to be the primary entrance into the building. Two small additions were made at the south end of the west wing, including replacement of the original greenhouse. However, these additions are located at a lesser elevation, at the rear of the building. Horizontally oriented vented openings had been located throughout the building exterior elevations, primarily under the windows, but have been removed, likely due to an updated heating system. There are also ADA compliant concrete ramps at the entrances that have been added. The letters for the school appear to have been added in the circa late 1960s.

The property as a whole also remains intact. It retains its original 13 acre size, with the school building located at the west section, and the athletic field to the east. The brick and concrete steps, low walls, and planters, as well as flag pole, located at the front of the school, are original; the landscaping also seems to remain essentially the same. The track and football field remain in the same location. The bleachers and baseball/softball field and a small concession stand/equipment shed were added in the circa 1960s.

The property's alterations do not substantially diminish the school's integrity. Therefore, the property retains a good to excellent level of its design, materials, and workmanship.

**Boundary Description and Justification**

The eligible boundary for the Carver Vocational-Technical High School is the same as the property's current parcel lines and contains 13 acres. This is the same land on which the campus stood on when it was originally completed.

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**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW**

Eligibility recommended \_\_\_\_\_

Eligibility not recommended \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria: \_\_\_A\_\_\_ \_\_\_B\_\_\_ \_\_\_C\_\_\_ \_\_\_D\_\_\_ Considerations: \_\_\_A\_\_\_ \_\_\_B\_\_\_ \_\_\_C\_\_\_ \_\_\_D\_\_\_ \_\_\_E\_\_\_ \_\_\_F\_\_\_ \_\_\_G\_\_\_

MHT Comments:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer, National Register Program

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW</b>          |  |
| Eligibility recommended _____                    | Eligibility not recommended _____  |
| Criteria:    ___ A    ___ B    ___ C    ___ D    | Considerations:    ___ A    ___ B    ___ C    ___ D    ___ E    ___ F    ___ G |
| MHT Comments:                                    |  |
| _____  | _____  |
| <b>Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services</b> | <b>Date</b>  |
| _____  | _____  |
| <b>Reviewer, National Register Program</b>       | <b>Date</b>  |

# Carver Vocational-Technical High School (B-5294)

2201 Presstman Street  
Baltimore, Maryland



USGS Baltimore West  
Quadrangle 7.5 minute series



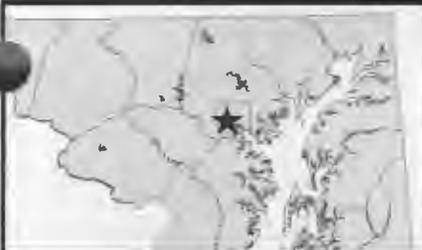
0 1,750 3,500 7,000 Feet

## Location Map

Date: September 2015

# Carver Vocational-Technical High School (B-5294)

2201 Presstman Street  
Baltimore, Maryland



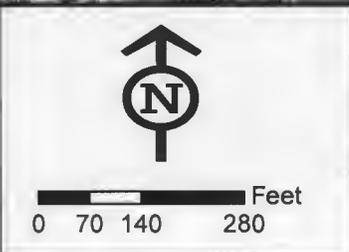
0 250 500 1,000 Feet

## Location Map

Date: September 2015

# Carver Vocational-Technical High School (B-5294)

2201 Presstman Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21216



## Location Map

Date: September 2015

**Carver Vocational-Technical High School (B-5294)**  
Baltimore, Maryland



**NEW \$3,983,000 CARVER SCHOOL** — This is the architect's design of the new Carver Vocational high school for which ground was broken Wednesday at Bentalou and Pressman sts.

**Figure 1:** Circa 1952 drawing by William F. Stone of the proposed Carver School (*The Baltimore Afro-American* May 23, 1953, p. 1)



**Figure 2:** Circa 1959 view of the Carver School rotunda and west elevation showing the original windows and doors (Carver Vocational-Technical High School Yearbook, 1959)

**Photo Log**  
**MIHP# B-5294**  
 Carver Vocational-Technical High School  
 2201 Presstman Street  
 Baltimore, MD 21216  
 Photographer: Christeen Taniguchi  
 Date: June 30, 2015

| #  | Digital Image File Name  | Description of View   |
|----|--------------------------|---|
| 1  | B-5294_2015-06-30_01.tif | <i>Main school building</i> – overall view southeast  |
| 2  | B-5294_2015-06-30_02.tif | <i>Main school building</i> – view southeast at the rotunda   |
| 3  | B-5294_2015-06-30_03.tif | <i>Main school building</i> – detailed view southeast at the rotunda entrance   |
| 4  | B-5294_2015-06-30_04.tif | <i>Main school building</i> – view southwest at the west end of the north-facing façade   |
| 5  | B-5294_2015-06-30_05.tif | <i>Main school building</i> – view southwest near the west end of the north-facing façade   |
| 6  | B-5294_2015-06-30_06.tif | <i>Main school building</i> – view south at the middle entrance at the north-facing façade  |
| 7  | B-5294_2015-06-30_07.tif | <i>Main school building</i> – view southeast at the natatorium/gymnasium/auditorium entrance at the east end of the north-facing façade |
| 8  | B-5294_2015-06-30_08.tif | <i>Main school building</i> – view southwest at the north-facing façade   |
| 9  | B-5294_2015-06-30_09.tif | <i>Main school building</i> – view northeast at the north section of the west elevation of the west wing                                |
| 10 | B-5294_2015-06-30_10.tif | <i>Main school building</i> – view southeast at the middle entrance at the west elevation of the west wing                              |
| 11 | B-5294_2015-06-30_11.tif | <i>Main school building</i> – view east at the south section of the west elevation at the west wing                                     |
| 12 | B-5294_2015-06-30_12.tif | <i>Main school building</i> – view northwest at the middle and east wings   |
| 13 | B-5294_2015-06-30_13.tif | <i>Main school building</i> – view southwest at the east elevation of the east wing   |
| 14 | B-5294_2015-06-30_14.tif | <i>Stairs to rotunda entrance</i> – view southwest  |
| 15 | B-5294_2015-06-30_15.tif | <i>Concession stand/equipment shed</i> – view southwest   |
| 16 | B-5294_2015-06-30_16.tif | <i>Concession stand/equipment shed</i> – view northeast   |
| 17 | B-5294_2015-06-30_17.tif | <i>Bleachers for football field and track</i> – view southwest  |
| 18 | B-5294_2015-06-30_18.tif | <i>Football field and track</i> – view southeast  |
| 19 | B-5294_2015-06-30_19.tif | <i>Football field and track with baseball/softball field in background</i> – view east  |

**Prints:**

Processing – RA-4

Paper – Fujicolor Crystal Archive Professional Paper (Super Type CN)

**DVD-R Gold:**

Verbatim, UltraLife Gold, Metal Azo dye



B-5294

Carver Vocational-Technical High School

Baltimore, MD

Christeen Taniguchi

June 30, 2015

MD SHPO

Main school building - overall view southeast

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CARVER VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL

B-5294

Carver Vocational-Technical High School

Baltimore, MD

Christeen Taniguchi

June 30, 2015

MD SHPO

Main school building - view southeast at the rotunda

2 of 19



ACCESSIBLE  
POLL  
ENTRANCE  
→

1953

B-5294

Carver Vocational-Technical High School

Baltimore, MD

Christeen Taniguchi

June 30, 2015

MD SHPO

Main school building - detailed view southeast at the  
rotunda entrance

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B-5294

Carver Vocational - Technical High School

Baltimore, MD

Christeen Taniguchi

June 30, 2015

MD SHPO

Main school building - view southwest at the west end of  
the north-facing facade

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B-5294

Carver Vocational-Technical High School

Baltimore, MD

Christeen Taniguchi

June 30, 2015

MDSTPO

Main school building - view southwest near the west end of  
the north-facing facade

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NO  
HOOP  
ACCESS

B-5294

Carver Vocational-Technical High School

Baltimore, MD

Christeen Tanigudi

June 30, 2015

MD SHPO

Main school building - view south at the middle entrance  
at the north-facing facade

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B-5294

Carver Vocational - Technical High School

Baltimore, MD

Christeen Taniguchi

June 30, 2015

MD SHPO

Main school building - view southeast at the  
natatorium/gymnasium/auditorium  
entrance at the east end of the  
north-facing facade

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B-5294

Carver Vocational-Technical High School

Baltimore, MD

Christeen Taniguchi

June 30, 2015

MD SHPO

Main school building - view southwest at the north-facing facade

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B-5294

Carver Vocational-Technical High School

Baltimore, MD

Christeen Taniguchi

June 30, 2015

MD SHPO

Main school building - view northeast at the north section of the  
west elevation of the west wing

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SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND ARTS  
LATE ROOM



B-5214

Carver Vocational-Technical High School

Baltimore, MD

Christeen Taniguchi

June 30, 2015

MD SHPO

Main school building - view southeast at the middle entrance  
at the west elevation of the west wing

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B-5294

Carver vocational-Technical High School

Baltimore, MD

Christeen Taniguchi

June 30, 2015

MD SHPO

Main school building - view east at the south section of the  
west elevation at the west wing

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B-5294

Carver Vocational-Technical High School

Baltimore, MD

Christeen Taniguchi

June 30, 2015

MD SHPO

Main school building - view northeast at the middle and  
east wings

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B-5294

Carver Vocational-Technical High School

Baltimore, MD

Christeen Taniguchi

June 30, 2015

MD SHPO

Main school building - view southwest at the east elevation of  
the east wing

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B-5294

Carver Vocational-Technical High School

Baltimore, MD

Christeen Taniguchi

June 30, 2015

MD SHPO

Stairs to rotunda entrance - view southwest

14 of 19



B-5294

carver Vocational - Technical High School

Baltimore, MD

Christeen Taniguchi

June 30, 2015

MD SHPO

concession stand/equipment shed - view southwest

15 of 19



B-5294

Carver Vocational-Technical High School

Baltimore, MD

Christeen Taniguchi

June 30, 2015

MD SHPO

Concession stand/equipment shed - view northeast

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Carver Vocational-Technical High School

Baltimore, MD

Christeen Taniguchi

June 30, 2015

MD SHPO

Bleachers for football field and track - view southwest

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B-5294

Carver Vocational-Technical High School

Baltimore, MD

Christeen Taniguchi

June 30, 2015

MD SHPO

Football field and track - view southeast

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B-5294

Carver Vocational - Technical High School

Baltimore, MD

Christeen Taniguchi

June 30, 2015

MD SHPO

Football field and track with baseball/softball field in  
background - view east

19 of 19