PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) _127-7673_______________________

Purpose of Evaluation
Please use the following space to explain briefly why you are seeking an evaluation of this property.

Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority seeks to recognize the history of Fay Towers, and to benefit from potential use of historic preservation tax credits on planned rehabilitation project.

Are you interested in applying for State and/or Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes _X_ No _____

Are you interested in receiving more information about DHR’s easement program? Yes _____ No _X___

1. General Property Information
   Property name: _Frederic A. Fay Towers_____________________________________________
   Property address: 1200 N 1st Street____________________________________________
   City or Town: _Richmond_______________
   Zip code: _23219__________________
   Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: _Richmond______________

   Category of Property (choose only one of the following):
   Building _X___  Site _____  Structure _____  Object _____

2. Physical Aspects
   Acreage: _1.37________________________________

   Setting (choose only one of the following):
   Urban _X___  Suburban _____  Town _____  Village _____  Hamlet _____  Rural_____

   Briefly describe the property’s overall setting, including any notable landscape features:

   Fay Towers is located on an urban lot and encompasses approximately two-thirds of the block bound by N 1st Street, E Federal Street, St. James Street, and E Hill Street. On the primary (east) elevation of the building is a paved walk with mature vegetation and a landscaped patio. A large stamped concrete patio and grass lawn is located on the north side of the property. The property line along the north side of the property is lined with a brick wall. The west elevation is partially composed of a parking lot and a grass lawn. A concrete path winds around the landscaped portions of the building. To the south of the building is a large parking lot. Large mature trees are located on the property.
The Fay Towers, constructed ca. 1971, is an 11-story International style apartment building located in Richmond, Virginia and is surrounded by smaller scale multi-family housing buildings. It is part of a larger complex known as Gilpin Court owned and operated by the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority. Fay Towers has a concrete foundation with a reinforced concrete block structure, and is faced with multi-toned running bond brick veneer. The building has an irregular footprint with opposite facing wings connected by a central core. The building has single-hung aluminum windows vertically separated by aggregate concrete panels that emphasize the height of the building. Concrete piers support an inset porch and create a weightless wing on the north side of the building. Concrete panels wrap the building creating a false watertable and cornice.

The primary façade, or east elevation, has a central entrance with a flat concrete canopy with lettering “Frederic A. Fay Towers” over an aluminum storefront. Aluminum storefront entrances are also located near the garden on the south end of the east elevation, and along inset porch. The south elevation also consists of a secondary storefront entrance and overhead garage doors leading to the building’s workshop. The west elevation has a central covered entrance, with a modern aluminum storefront and ADA access ramp, as well as large openings to the mechanical areas located on the rear of the building.

The first floor is dedicated to community spaces, offices, and mechanical rooms. The front entrance opens into a small vestibule before continuing into the main lobby. The focal point of the lobby is a brick and stone fountain and planter with an engraving of Frederic A. Fay, for whom the building is named. The lobby also consists of the mailroom. The elevator lobby is located to the south of the main lobby and is also the location of the rear entrance. The south end of the first floor is largely composed of mechanical equipment, a laundry area, staff offices, and a workshop. The north end of the first floor includes a large open dining space and lounge, as well as the kitchen. The main lobby floors are finished with square terrazzo; the remainder of the first floor is surfaced with a mix of linoleum vinyl tile or unfinished concrete. In primary spaces, walls are finished with gypsum board, while secondary spaces retained painted exposed concrete block walls. A dropped ceiling grid and acoustical ceiling tiles are located throughout the first floor; secondary spaces, mechanical rooms, and the workshop have exposed ceiling structure, plumbing, and electrical conduit.

The floor plan remains consistent from the second to the eleventh floor with a central elevator and stair lobby, and central corridors that run the lengths of each wing of the building. Tile wainscotting covers the lower half of the
the walls in each elevator lobby. All floors have square vinyl tile floor coverings. In the lobbies and corridors, the floor coloring alternates between orange and white on the even floors and green and white on the odd floors. Individual units have neutral vinyl tile. Walls are primarily covered in painted gypsum board. The corridors feature dropped acoustical tile ceiling grids, while the units have finished, textured ceilings. Each of the units has a wooden door with simple bronze-colored hardware and matching door-knockers. Over each door is a triangular-shaped light that served a key purpose for the residents of the building—to alert neighbors and staff in the event of an emergency. Each of the units consists of a simple layout including one bedroom (or efficiency), living area, bathroom, and kitchen.

Fay Towers retains a high degree of architectural integrity associated with its period of significance. It retains its location on N 1st Street in Gilpin Court. The designs by both E. Tucker Carlton and landscape architect Kenneth Higgins remain remarkably intact. The landscaped areas and mature vegetation planned by Higgins also preserves integrity of setting. Very few material changes have been made over time, and are primarily limited to those that caused later safety or hazard concerns such as asbestos. Other material changes were due to wear and tear or necessary upgrades over time such as appliances, cabinetry, and fixtures. Notable materials that have been preserved include the exterior brick and concrete, aluminum storefront and windows, main entry lobby and corridor flooring, wooden doors, and in many units the metal accordion closet doors. The building retains integrity of workmanship as well, due to the high integrity of its design and materials. The building retains its feeling as a high-rise apartment building for seniors, and its association with its areas and period of significance.

Briefly describe any outbuildings or secondary resources (such as barns, sheds, dam and mill pond, storage tanks, scales, railroad spurs, etc.), including their condition and their estimated construction dates.

There are no secondary resources on the property.
4. Property’s History and Significance

In the space below, briefly describe the history of the property, such as significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property. Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.)

If the property is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

Fay Towers apartment building is locally significant under Criterion A and Criterion C in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Architecture/Landscape Architecture, and has a period of significance of 1971, the year the building was completed. The building is representative of the local implications of the Housing Act of 1959, which authorized Federal loans for the development of housing for the elderly. The Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) used the increased funding to construct the eleven-story building specifically to serve the city’s aging population reliant on the support of public housing. Fay Towers was RRHA’s first purpose-built high-rise apartment building, and was designed specifically with the needs of elderly residents in mind. Prior to its construction, RRHA operated large multi-building complexes with one-to-three-story buildings, and senior residents mostly resided in ground-floor, single-story units or in the smaller, three-story, 24-unit apartment building. With accessibility and safety as high priorities, the building was equipped with elevators and an emergency alert system for each unit. Fay Towers is also representative of the work of prominent Virginia architect, E. Tucker Carlton, and landscape architect, Kenneth R. Higgins.

Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority and Frederic A. Fay

On October 3, 1940, Richmond’s City Council established the Housing Authority of the City of Richmond as a “political sub-division of the Commonwealth” upon the recommendation and approval of the mayor.¹ The Richmond Housing Authority was provided with the powers granted to local authorities under the provisions of the 1938 Virginia Housing Authority Law.² On October 4, 1940, Mayor Ambler appointed members to the Board of Commissioners of the Richmond Housing Authority. Chairman of the board, William Shands Meacham, had previously served as the associate director of the Richmond Times Dispatch, a former editor of the Danville Register, and for many years was “active in promoting sociological reforms in Virginia,” and “considered an authority on social trends.”³

The first Executive Director of the Richmond Housing Authority was Thomas L. Cockrell of Richmond. Previously an engineer and Chief of the City Bureau of Sewers and Structures, Cockrell was appointed Executive Director of the Housing Authority effective December 1, 1940, earning a salary of $4,500 a year.⁴ Aligned with the Housing Authority’s mission, Cockrell’s duties centered on taking “direct charge” of the slum-clearance projects in Richmond.⁵ During his tenure, Cockrell oversaw the construction of Gilpin Court, the city’s first public housing project. Cockrell continued as Executive Director until September 1, 1944 when he resigned from the position.⁶

¹ Richmond Housing Authority, 1940-1941 Annual Report, 9.
² Richmond Housing Authority, 1940-1941 Annual Report, 9.
³ “Housing Reforms in Richmond Led by W.S. Meacham.” Danville Bee (October 5, 1940), pg 10.
⁵ “T.L. Cockrell Named Head of Housing,” Northern Neck News (November 22, 1940).
Thomas L. Cockrell was succeeded as executive director by Frederic A. Fay in 1950. Fay previously served as the technical advisor and assistant director of the Portsmouth Redevelopment and Housing Authority in Virginia. Fay served RRHA for thirty years, retiring in 1980. He remains the longest serving executive director in the history of RRHA. During his time as executive director, Fay was responsible for most of the post-Gilpin Court public housing, slum clearance, and redevelopment in Richmond, and oversaw the construction and operation all of the “Big 6” complexes consisting of more than 3,000 housing units. Fay also served as President of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials on October 26, 1965.

Early Public Housing in Richmond

On October 30, 1940, only weeks after the Richmond Housing Authority’s establishment, the United States Housing Authority (USHA) allotted $1,977,000.00 for two slum clearance projects in Richmond. The amount provided by USHA covered ninety-percent of the costs for the two slum clearance projects, one intended for white residents only, while the other was designated for African-American residents. This USHA program had a dual focus to construct “decent, safe and sanitary dwellings,” and to eliminate “a substantially equivalent number of unsafe or insanitary dwelling units.” It was determined that the first of the two projects to be undertaken would be for African-American residents.

For its first project, the Richmond Housing Authority selected a section of Jackson Ward. The project was bounded “on the east by the west of St. Paul’s Street, on the north by the south lines of Coutts and Calhoun Streets, on the west by the east side of Chamberlayne Parkway, and on the south by the north lines of Charity Street and a line connecting same between Hickory and St. Peter’s Streets.” The project was named “Gilpin Court,” after Charles Sidney Gilpin, a Richmond native and former resident of Jackson Ward.

Prior to clearance, this area was composed primarily of residential buildings. Interspersed within the homes and flats were a handful of business and religious buildings, including two churches and the Hickory Hill Mission operated by the Women’s American Baptist Home Missions Society. The 150 buildings located within the area housed approximately 220 families, 70% of which were renters. Of the parcels acquired by RRHA in the selected area, 92 were acquired through direct purchase and 94 through condemnation. Efforts to relocate the 220 families that had resided in the Gilpin Court area began April 1, 1941 and by October 15th the site was cleared. Gilpin Court, Phase 1 was completed in 1942, and until 1946 was home to African American workers residing in Richmond to support World War II home front efforts. Gilpin later became home to low-income residents. However, due to war-time restrictions, very few residents who had been relocated from Jackson Ward moved back into Gilpin Court.

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9 Richmond Housing Authority, 1940-1941 Annual Report, 10.
10 Richmond Housing Authority, 1940-1941 Annual Report, 11.
11 Richmond Housing Authority, 1940-1941 Annual Report; Department of Historic Resources
12 Richmond Housing Authority, 1940-1941 Annual Report, 18.
14 Richmond Housing Authority, 1940-1941 Annual Report, 18.
15 Richmond Housing Authority, 1940-1941 Annual Report, 19.
During the first two decades following World War II, RRHA constructed five additional public housing complexes, as well as an expansion of Gilpin Court. By 1962, the housing authority operated Gilpin Court, Creighton Court (1952), Hillside Court (1952), Fairfield Court (1958), Whitcomb Court (1958), and Mosby Court (1962). All of these developments, with the exception of Hillside Court (constructed specifically for white occupants), had a high percentage of African American residents due to urban renewal and transportation planning initiatives that concentrated on and largely displaced the city’s Black neighborhoods.

President Eisenhower’s 1954 State of the Union address notably acknowledged that African Americans continued to lack access to decent housing in good neighborhoods, and more significantly he expressed a desire to end direct federal support to projects that purposefully excluded minorities. Between 1957 and 1968, Congress worked to adopt laws that prohibited second-class citizenship for African Americans in many areas, including public transportation, voting, and employment, but not in housing. It wasn’t until the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 that the government addressed long-standing inequities in public housing by officially banning housing discrimination. In the same year, the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) of 1968 was passed as the first federal measure to ensure accessibility to buildings for people with disabilities, requiring buildings designed, built, or altered with federal money or leased by federal agencies be accessible.

Accessible Housing for the Elderly and the Development of Fay Towers

Housing for the nation’s aging population was first included in Federal legislation in 1954. The Housing Act of 1959 later authorized direct Federal loans for private nonprofits to develop and provide rental housing for the elderly. The 1959 Act also authorized a new FHA mortgage insurance program for privately owned nursing homes. Unlike many public housing development projects, which were often topics of public controversy due to required zoning exemptions and racial and social prejudice among neighboring communities, housing for the elderly generally received less opposition. In addition to this general community support, Federal funding and legislation for elderly housing coupled with the 1968 ABA and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 paved the way for increased attention to the development of senior housing.

Aligned with a nationwide focus to provide low-income elderly housing, RRHA constructed its first high rise apartment building, an eleven-story, 200-unit tower specifically for senior citizens in 1971. Although located within Gilpin Court, the high-rise became known as Fay Towers, after RRHA’s former executive director Frederick A. Fay. Fay Towers was not only the housing authority’s first high-rise, but it was also the first purpose-built structure for senior residents. Prior to the construction of Fay Towers, RRHA operated large complexes with one-to-three-story buildings. Senior residents, or those requiring additional accessibility considerations, lived in ground-floor, single-story units within these large complexes. Prior to the opening of Fay Towers, RRHA also operated a small 24-apartment building located at 2700 Idlewood Avenue, which had been repurposed for senior housing. Also, in 1971, a small, two-story 24-unit apartment building was completed and

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18 Pub. L. 90–480 (42 U.S.C. §§4151 et seq.)

7/5/2022
also served as additional senior housing. In total, RRHA operated 248 units of senior housing by 1971, and had plans to expand. Later senior housing included a mixture of high- and low-rise buildings, as well as scattered site units.

Fay Tower is notable as RRHA’s first high rise, and as the authority’s first purpose-built senior residence. Equipped with an elevator, ground-floor mailroom, laundry area, trash shoot on each floor, and a ground-floor mailroom, lounge, and cafeteria, Fay Towers offered senior residents increased accessibility and activities that increased overall quality of life. The building included a mixture of unit sizes including 120 efficiency and 80 one-bedroom apartments and each unit was equipped with an emergency alert system that could be triggered from inside the apartment. The system would trigger an audio alarm, and a light over the door would turn on indicating the location of the resident in need of assistance. Residents also formed a “buddy system” to check in on each other periodically. RRHA also offered services to residents such as transportation to nearby markets so that residents could purchase essential goods, and hosted group activities in the common areas.


22 Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, 1971 Annual Report, 8.
23 "Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority High Rise for the Elderly," Virginia Record, August 1972.
**Eugene Tucker Carlton (1900-1975)**

Eugene (E.) Tucker Carlton was born in 1900 in Roanoke, Virginia. He studied electrical engineering at Virginia Military Institute and formed an independent architectural practice in 1939. Carlton was a prolific designer of residential apartments and FHA-funded housing developments in Richmond during the mid-twentieth century. In 1968, Carlton joined the firm of Carlton, Taylor & Clark. Carlton also had a prominent career in the Virginia Legislature as a member of the House of Delegates from 1956 to 1962.  

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**Kenneth R. Higgins, Landscape Architect**

Kenneth R. Higgins was born in Holyoke, Massachusetts in 1915, and studied horticulture and landscape architecture at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. There he trained under Frank Waugh, and graduated with a BS in 1937 and a BLA in 1938. During World War II he was stationed in Virginia, where he met his wife Mary Douthat Smith and settled in Richmond, Virginia. From 1946 to 1948, Higgins worked for Charles F. Gillette on various projects including the University of Richmond campus. Higgins then went to work for the Public Housing Administration’s Richmond Field office from 1948 to 1951, where he gained additional experience working on landscapes and site development for public housing. In 1952, Higgins established a private firm. Higgins was active in several organizations including the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, the Monument Avenue Commission, and the Potomac Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects.
5. Property Ownership  (Check as many categories as apply):
Private: _____ Public\Local X Public\State _____ Public\Federal _____

Current Legal Owner(s) of the Property (If the property has more than one owner, please list each below or on an additional sheet.)
name/title: Sheila Hill-Christian, Interim Chief Executive Officer
organization: Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority
street & number: 901 Chamberlayne Parkway
city or town: Richmond state: VA zip code: 23220
e-mail: sheila.hill-christian@rrha.com telephone: 804-780-4200

Legal Owner’s Signature: __________________________ Date: 05-11-22

** Signature required for processing all applications. **

In the event of corporate ownership you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.
Contact person: Desi L. Wynter, Deputy Director of Real Estate
Daytime Telephone: 804-780-4171

Applicant Information (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)
name/title: Kayla Halberg, Preservation Project Manager
organization: Commonwealth Preservation Group
street & number: 536 W 35th Street
city or town: Norfolk state: VA zip code: 23508
e-mail: admin@commonwealthpreservationgroup.com telephone: 757-923-1900

6. Notification
In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator, City Manager, and/or Town Manager
name/title: Mayor Levar Stoney
locality: City of Richmond
street & number: 900 E Broad Street, Suite 201
city or town: Richmond state: VA zip code: 23219
telephone: 804-646-7970
Ex-RRHA head to be honored

The Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority will honor Frederic A. Fay, its executive director from 1950 to 1980, by naming its building for the elderly at 1202 N. First St. after him in a ceremony at 11:45 a.m. Friday.

Fay is to be honored for his commitment to the elderly. The building, to be called Frederic A. Fay Towers, was the first of seven apartment buildings for elderly people on fixed incomes or who are handicapped constructed while Fay was director. The 200-unit high-rise was built in 1971.

It will be the only such RRHA structure to have a name other than its street address. Gov. Charles S. Robb has declared Friday Frederic A. Fay Day.

The ceremony will be preceded by a symposium on the elderly and followed by a festival, with health screenings and arts and crafts booths, on the grounds. U.S. Rep. Thomas J. Biley Jr., Mayor Roy A. West and present and past city and RRHA officials will take part in the ceremony.

Fay headed the housing authority during the period the city's public housing program grew from 297 units in Gilpin Court to about 5,000 units with about 16,000 residents.
Title: Frederick A. Fay Towers (127-7673)

DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided “as-is”. More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR’s Richmond office.

Notice if AE sites: Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Virginia §2.2-3705.7 (10). Release of precise locations may threaten archaeological sites and historic resources.
Title: Frederick A. Fay Towers (127-7673)  
Date: 5/24/2022

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