

Virginia Commonwealth University West Hospital Proposed Demolition, City of Richmond

Virginia Commonwealth University's (VCU) West Hospital (DHR ID # 27-0252-0001) is historically significant for its role in the development of the Medical College of Virginia (MCV), as an excellent example of large-scale Art Deco architecture and because it reflects the federal government's New Deal efforts to fund hospital construction in the Depression Era. The cornerstone was laid in 1939, construction completed in 1940 and the building was opened to the public in 1941.

In 1984 West Hospital was converted into offices. In 1993 there were a series of capital renovations done and in 1999 building code upgrades were completed. A university master plan in 2004 called for its demolition, but there was outcry from preservationists and the plans did not move forward. In 2017, it was put on the demolition list again, but it got a reprieve with a 2019 feasibility study done by VCU. The study was completed in order to provide VCU an informed, financially viable project that would have significant private sector interest and minimize impacts on institutional debt capacity. The study's conclusive recommendation was to renovate the building via a public-private partnership (P3) with access to tax credits to offset project costs and allow for acceptable leasing terms. In May 2024, the Richmond Times Dispatch ran an article wherein VCU's vice president for administration and interim chief financial officer, Meredith Weiss, made public that the demolition planning will be moving forward due to West Hospital needing \$150 million in deferred maintenance. There will be a period of public comment this summer and a final decision will be made in the fall.

The MCV Historic District was determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR) in 1991. In 2017, a new survey of the MCV Historic District (HD) was completed. The survey expanded the boundaries and reaffirmed the status of the HD as eligible for listing on the VLR/NRHP. The district has already lost important buildings including the A.D. Williams Building and the Nursing Education Building.

It is overall in fair condition and the building envelope retains a high level of historic integrity. The interior lobby also retains historic custom-designed terrazzo flooring, marble wall cladding and some historic signage. It is DHR staff opinion that this building is individually eligible for the VLR/NRHP on the Statewide level under Criterion C and that it remains contributing to the VLR/NRHP-eligible Medical College of Virginia Historic District.

Property Information

Property Names

Name Explanation	Name
Function/Location	Hospital, 1200 East Broad Street
Historic	Medical College of Virginia Hospital
Current	West Hospital

Property Evaluation Status

DHR Staff: Potentially Eligible
DHR Staff: HistDist, Contributing

Property Addresses

Current - 1200 Broad Street East Route 250

County/Independent City(s): Richmond (Ind. City)

Incorporated Town(s): *No Data*

Zip Code(s): 23219

Magisterial District(s): *No Data*

Tax Parcel(s): *No Data*

USGS Quad(s): RICHMOND

Additional Property Information

Architecture Setting: Urban

Acreage: 1

Site Description:

Building is situated on a corner lot on the north side of Broad Street at 12th Street. A semicircular drive at the southwestern corner of the building is the approach to the main entrance, a small garden separates the drive and the sidewalk. The garden originally featured a stone sculpture of three frolicking bears, but this has been removed and placed inside the Gateway Building. A stone wall rises along the south elevation to the east and at its terminus has two gate posts topped with canister-shaped lamps.

March 2010: West Hospital sits at the northeast corner of East Broad Street and North 12th Street. It is located in a dense, historic, urban commercial and civic corridor. At its rear, to the north, it is joined to the A.D. Williams Clinic, currently being demolished. To the east is an alley. The building is cruciform in shape, with the south and west arms abutting the sidewalks of Broad and 12th Streets, respectively. Within the southwest and southeast angles are entrances to the building, and in the northwest and northeast angles are additions.

May 2024: Redevelopment of the A.D. Williams Clinic (DHR ID 127-0252-0010) site has altered the setting since the previous survey; the twelve-story McGlothlin Medical Education Center, completed in 2013 in the Brutalist style, now sits directly northeast, fronting East Marshall Street. An enclosed, elevated, steel-and-glass hyphen connects the second story of the new building to the north wing of West Hospital, creating a covered walkway beneath. The nine-story, Postmodern-style Molecular Medicine Research Building to the southeast was completed in 2009, replacing the ca. 1927 Nursing Education Building (DHR ID 127-0252-0007).

Surveyor Assessment:

The West Hospital building is a contributing resource to the Medical College of Virginia Historic District (MCV). The Virginia Department of Historic Resources recommended the MCV Historic District eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), however the MCV Historic District is not officially listed on the NRHP. In the opinion of the surveyor, the West Hospital building is significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture, as an example of the varied and detailed architecture executed in Richmond under the Public Works Administration (PWA). It is an example of one of the more exotic designs financed by the New Deal agency so associated with Streamline Moderne. The West Hospital is also significant under Criterion A in the areas of education and health and medicine. MCV Hospital has become synonymous with Richmond's skyline because of its unique design and status as one of the few skyscrapers along the Broad Street corridor at the western edge of the Shockoe Valley. Additionally, the building retains considerable architectural integrity.

In 1838, Hampden-Sydney College established a medical department in Richmond which occupied the old Union Hotel at 19th and Main Streets. In 1854, it was chartered by the state as the Medical College of Virginia. Several institutions competed for the minds and tuition of the Commonwealth's medical students. After twenty years of dual medical colleges in Richmond, the University College of Medicine, founded in 1893, merged with MCV in 1913. The facilities of the two medical schools consisted of a number of private hospitals and converted buildings. While several buildings were erected by the institutions since the turn-of-the-century-McGuire Hall (1912), Cabaniss Hall (1927), and Tompkins-McCaw Library (1932)- the school's growth rapidly out-paced needed bricks and mortar. In addition, a poor evaluation by the Council on Medical Education and Hospitals of the American Medical Association (AMA) in 1919 raised serious concerns about the accreditation of the MCV program. However, the appointment of Dr. William T. Sanger as president of the college marked the start of new and dynamic programs, including an aggressive building program.

The nationwide depression of 1929 struck the MCV campus with considerable force given its vulnerable financial situation and a second poor evaluation from the AMA Council. However, the New Deal programs of the Roosevelt Administration helped to alleviate some of the difficulties for the institution. Contemporary accounts confirm that the PWA was "an important factor in connection with the development of the Medical College of Virginia" (MCV, p. 66). PWA money substantially impacted the college in the years prior to Pearl Harbor. Money from the agency funded the construction of A. D. Williams Clinic and Laboratory Cabaniss dormitory, and a new central power plant. The climax of this building boom came with the September 18, 1939, laying of the cornerstone for the new 18-story, 600-bed facility to be known as MCV Hospital.

With a state appropriation of \$250,000, \$969,000 in bank loans, and a \$ 1.14 million Public Works Administration grant, MCV engaged Richmond's Baskervill & Son to execute the design (MCV, p74). The firm elaborated on its previous design for the adjacent A. D. Williams Clinic. Ten additional floors and a larger plot allowed the firm to expand the step backs creating the building's now landmark ziggurat roofline. The spandrels, panels of zigzagging brickwork, and tall casement windows all draw the eye upward toward the crowning central octagonal copper roof.

East Broad Street between 11th and 13th Streets became very busy with New Deal-financed construction. A comparison of these adjacent properties is warranted given their difference in design. The Virginia Department of Highways building and Virginia State Library and Supreme Court of Appeals building are two studies in the "Stripped Classicism" or "WPA Moderne" that largely characterized the period 1930 to 1940. On the other hand, MCV Hospital and A.D. Williams Clinic exhibit a much different aesthetic. The aforementioned pyramidal roof line and ziggurat-like massing executed almost completely in brick make the buildings more exotic appearance and hearken less to the Greeks and Romans and more to the Syrians and Babylonians. The MCV Hospital building exemplifies the "better public buildings" that the PWA sought to provide the nation (Short and Brown, p. vii).

March 2010: The resource at 1200 East Broad Street played a significant role in the development of the Medical College of Virginia and reflects the federal government's efforts to fund hospital construction in the Depression Era. Designed by the local firm of Baskervill and Son, the building is an outstanding example of large-scale Art Deco architecture and the "modern" hospital type (Wilson 2002:184). In fair condition, the resource retains a high level of historic integrity and therefore, it is recommended that it be considered Potentially Eligible for individual listing on the NRHP under Criterion C. As there are no known associations with an important event or individual, it is recommended Not Eligible under Criteria A or B. This resource has not been evaluated under Criterion D. This building has been associated with the NRHP-Eligible Medical College of Virginia Historic District, and it is recommended that it remains a Contributing resource.

May 2024: The West Hospital building at 1200 East Broad Street remains an architectural landmark along East Broad Street, with its prominence further highlighted by the recent disappearance of the contemporary A.D. Williams Clinic and Nursing Education Building amid redevelopment of the VCU Medical Center (formerly Medical College of Virginia) campus. Designed by Richmond firm Baskervill & Son, the building is unique in Virginia as an Art Deco high-rise hospital funded by the Public Works Administration and retains a high degree of historic integrity, particularly in its design, materials, and workmanship.

West Hospital and the ca. 1929 Central National Bank building at 219 East Broad Street (DHR ID 127-0309; VLR 1978, NRHP 1979) are the only two skyscrapers in Richmond constructed in the Art Deco style and utilizing the ziggurat-inspired setback. Only a few other examples exist across Virginia, most notably the ca. 1931 Allied Arts Building in Lynchburg (DHR ID 118-0110; VLR, NRHP 1985) and the Norfolk & Western Railway General Office Building North in Roanoke (DHR ID 128-5432; VLR 1998, NRHP 1999). West Hospital is recommended eligible at the statewide level under Criterion C (Architecture) as an excellent example of large-scale Art Deco architecture in Richmond and Virginia as a whole. The building also remains a contributing resource to the VLR/NRHP-eligible Medical College of Virginia Historic District (DHR ID 127-0252).

Surveyor Recommendation: Recommended Eligible

Ownership

Ownership Category	Ownership Entity
State Govt	Virginia Commonwealth University

Associate

Property Associate Name	Property Associate Role
Baskervill & Son	Architect
Gustave A. Peple, Jr.	Engineer

Primary Resource Information

Resource Category:	Health Care
Resource Type:	Hospital
NR Resource Type:	Building
Date of Construction:	1940
Date Source:	Written Data
Historic Time Period:	World War I to World War II (1917 - 1945)
Historic Context(s):	Architecture/Community Planning, Education, Health Care/Medicine
Other ID Number:	No Data
Architectural Style:	Art Deco
Form:	Skyscraper/Multi-story Office Building
Number of Stories:	17.0
Condition:	Fair
Threats to Resource:	Demolition
Cultural Affiliations:	Indeterminate
Cultural Affiliation Details:	No Data
Architectural Description:	

The MCV Hospital is an eighteen story brick building with seventeen symmetrical bays. The building is composed of a central shaft with radiating wings to the north, south, east, and west. The bricks are laid in five course-American bond, and zigzag brickwork is featured in the spandrel panels. The building's heavy massing and vertical emphasis rises to a series of graduated set backs from the wings toward the center

and culminates in an octagonal standing seam copper roof. The overall visual effect is that of a ziggurat, making the building a prominent downtown landmark. The metal casement windows are 6/6. The west and north wings are topped by one story copper-clad solaria, while the two other wings feature open terraces surrounded by Art Deco iron railing. The west and south elevations feature elaborate brass grille work at the entrances, with the most detailed being the latter. The entrance at the south elevation contains a design that illustrates the history of medicine from Ancient Greece through the early 20th century. The stone doorway surround on the south elevation exhibits geometric Art Deco carving. The main entry at the junction of the south and west wings is a projecting stone pavilion, with the center rising in a series of set backs mirroring the roofline. The northwest elevation features a two-story, flat roof wing that contains the George Ben Johnson Auditorium. The auditorium wing is in a very restrained style, but exhibits some of the same characteristics as the high-rise building. The north wing of the hospital connects to the adjacent A. D. Williams Clinic (1936). The design of the Williams Clinic was repeated in larger proportions in the MCV commission by Baskervill & Son.

March 2010: The resource at 1200 East Broad Street is a 1940 eighteen-story, Art Deco hospital building. During the current survey, it was found that the building retains the exterior massing, materials, and details described in previous survey work.

May 2024: West Hospital does not appear to have changed significantly since the 2010 survey, and the building retains the character-defining architectural features previously noted. The interior of the building has undergone some alterations befitting its continued use and evolution as a health care facility, including the installation of drop ceilings and other modern finishes, but also retains a number of original New Deal-era Art Deco features including marble wall tiles, terrazzo flooring, a mail chute system, and lettering and signage. The building's windows, which feature double-hung, six-over-six metal sash over three-light metal hoppers, are also original.

Exterior Components

Component	Component Type	Material	Material Treatment
Roof	Flat	Copper	Standing Seam
Structural System and Exterior Treatment	Not Visible	Brick	American/Common Bond
Windows	Hopper/Awning	Metal	No Data
Windows	Double-hung	Metal	No Data

Secondary Resource Information

Historic District Information

Historic District Name: Medical College of Virginia Historic District
Local Historic District Name: No Data
Historic District Significance: No Data

CRM Events

Event Type: DHR Evaluation Committee: Eligible

DHR ID: 127-0252-0001
Staff Name: DHR
Event Date: 6/6/2024
Staff Comment

West Hospital was evaluated at the Statewide level of significance under Criterion C (Architecture), with a period of significance of 1939-1941, encompassing the building's construction and opening to the public. The committee recommended that the property is individually eligible for the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places according to the level, areas, and period of significance above. The committee also noted the potential for additional significance under Criterion A (Medicine) pending further research.

Event Type: DHR Staff Site Visit

Project Review File Number: No Data
Investigator: Austin Walker
Organization/Company: DHR
Photographic Media: Digital
Survey Date: 5/30/2024
Dhr Library Report Number: No Data
Project Staff/Notes:

Adrienne Birge-Wilson, Project Review Architectural Historian & State Stewardship Coordinator

Austin Walker, National Register Program Manager

Surveyor's NR Criteria Recommendations:

C - Distinctive Characteristics of Architecture/Construction

Event Type: DHR Staff: Potentially Eligible

DHR ID: 127-0252-0001

Staff Name: Andrea Burke

Event Date: 7/30/2015

Staff Comment

DHR File No.: 2010-0219; Criteria C

Event Type: DHR Staff: HistDist, Contributing

DHR ID: 127-0252-0001

Staff Name: Andrea Burke

Event Date: 7/30/2015

Staff Comment

DHR File No.: 2010-0219; Contributing to eligible MCV Historic District

Event Type: DHR Staff: Potentially Eligible

DHR ID: 127-0252-0001

Staff Name: Andrea Kampinen

Event Date: 11/24/2010

Staff Comment

No Data

Event Type: DHR Staff: Potentially Eligible

DHR ID: 127-0252-0001

Staff Name: Andrea Kampinen

Event Date: 11/24/2010

Staff Comment

DHR File No: 2010-0219, Potentially Eligible under C

Event Type: Survey: Phase I/Reconnaissance

Project Review File Number: 2010-0219

Investigator: Dovetail CRG

Organization/Company: Dovetail CRG

Photographic Media: Film

Survey Date: 9/1/2010

Dhr Library Report Number: HE-279

Project Staff/Notes:

Peckler, Danae, Tom Roberts, and Kerri Barile.
Cultural Resource Survey of the Broad Street Bus Rapid Transit System Project (Volume IV: Areas G and H), City of Richmond and County of Henrico, Virginia.
Dovetail Cultural Resource Group I, Inc., Fredericksburg, Virginia.
2010.
HE-279

Project Bibliographic Information:

Name: Wilson, Richard G.
Record Type: Book
Bibliographic Notes: Wilson, Richard G. (editor)
2002 Buildings of Virginia: Tidewater and Piedmont, with contributions by Sara A. Butler, et al. Oxford University Press, New York, New York.

Name: City of Richmond
Record Type: Tax Records
Bibliographic Notes: City of Richmond Tax Records (Misc. Years), City of Richmond Real Estate Assessor's Office, GIS and Mapping Division, Richmond Parcel Mapper. Electronic resource: <http://map.richmondgov.com/parcel/> (Accessed February - June 2010).

Record Type: Book
Bibliographic Notes: Winthrop, Robert P. Architecture in Downtown Richmond. Richmond, Junior Board of Historic Richmond Foundation, 1982.

Name: Short, Charles
DHR CRM Report Number: Public Buildings: Architecture Under the Public Works Administration 1933-1939
Record Type: Book
Bibliographic Notes: New York, Da Capo Press, Inc., 1986

Record Type: Book
Bibliographic Notes: Medical College of Virginia. The First 125 years. Richmond, Medical College of Virginia, 1963.

Surveyor's NR Criteria Recommendations:

C - Distinctive Characteristics of Architecture/Construction

Event Type: Survey:Phase I/Reconnaissance

Project Review File Number: 2003-0075
Investigator: Brooks, Vince
Organization/Company: Unknown (DSS)
Photographic Media: *No Data*
Survey Date: 3/1/2005
Dhr Library Report Number: Public Buildings: Architecture Under the Public Works Administration 1933-1939

Project Staff/Notes:

Gray & Pape, Survey of Buildings on MCV Campus, MCV Memorandum of Understanding.

Project Bibliographic Information:

Name: Wilson, Richard G.
Record Type: Book
Bibliographic Notes: Wilson, Richard G. (editor)
2002 Buildings of Virginia: Tidewater and Piedmont, with contributions by Sara A. Butler, et al. Oxford University Press, New York, New York.

Name: City of Richmond
Record Type: Tax Records
Bibliographic Notes: City of Richmond Tax Records (Misc. Years), City of Richmond Real Estate Assessor's Office, GIS and Mapping Division, Richmond Parcel Mapper. Electronic resource: <http://map.richmondgov.com/parcel/> (Accessed February - June 2010).

Record Type: Book
Bibliographic Notes: Winthrop, Robert P. Architecture in Downtown Richmond. Richmond, Junior Board of Historic Richmond Foundation, 1982.

Name: Short, Charles
DHR CRM Report Number: Public Buildings: Architecture Under the Public Works Administration 1933-1939
Record Type: Book
Bibliographic Notes: New York, Da Capo Press, Inc., 1986

Record Type: Book
Bibliographic Notes: Medical College of Virginia. The First 125 years. Richmond, Medical College of Virginia, 1963.

Surveyor's NR Criteria Recommendations:

C - Distinctive Characteristics of Architecture/Construction

Event Type: Survey:Phase I/Reconnaissance

Project Review File Number: *No Data*
Investigator: Land & Community Associates
Organization/Company: Unknown (DSS)
Photographic Media: *No Data*
Survey Date: 9/1/1987
Dhr Library Report Number: Public Buildings: Architecture Under the Public Works Administration 1933-1939

Project Staff/Notes:

No Data

Project Bibliographic Information:

Name: Wilson, Richard G.
Record Type: Book
Bibliographic Notes: Wilson, Richard G. (editor)
2002 Buildings of Virginia: Tidewater and Piedmont, with contributions by Sara A. Butler, et al. Oxford University Press, New York, New York.

Name: City of Richmond

Record Type: Tax Records
Bibliographic Notes: City of Richmond Tax Records (Misc. Years), City of Richmond Real Estate Assessor's Office, GIS and Mapping Division, Richmond Parcel Mapper. Electronic resource: <http://map.richmondgov.com/parcel/> (Accessed February - June 2010).

Record Type: Book
Bibliographic Notes: Winthrop, Robert P. Architecture in Downtown Richmond. Richmond, Junior Board of Historic Richmond Foundation, 1982.

Name: Short, Charles
DHR CRM Report Number: Public Buildings: Architecture Under the Public Works Administration 1933-1939
Record Type: Book
Bibliographic Notes: New York, Da Capo Press, Inc., 1986

Record Type: Book
Bibliographic Notes: Medical College of Virginia. The First 125 years. Richmond, Medical College of Virginia, 1963.

Surveyor's NR Criteria Recommendations:

C - Distinctive Characteristics of Architecture/Construction

Event Type: Survey:Phase I/Reconnaissance

Project Review File Number: *No Data*

Investigator: Winthrop, Bob

Organization/Company: Unknown (DSS)

Photographic Media: *No Data*

Survey Date: 6/10/1980

Dhr Library Report Number: Public Buildings: Architecture Under the Public Works Administration 1933-1939

Project Staff/Notes:

No Data

Project Bibliographic Information:

Name: Wilson, Richard G.
Record Type: Book
Bibliographic Notes: Wilson, Richard G. (editor)
2002 Buildings of Virginia: Tidewater and Piedmont, with contributions by Sara A. Butler, et al. Oxford University Press, New York, New York.

Name: City of Richmond
Record Type: Tax Records
Bibliographic Notes: City of Richmond Tax Records (Misc. Years), City of Richmond Real Estate Assessor's Office, GIS and Mapping Division, Richmond Parcel Mapper. Electronic resource: <http://map.richmondgov.com/parcel/> (Accessed February - June 2010).

Record Type: Book
Bibliographic Notes: Winthrop, Robert P. Architecture in Downtown Richmond. Richmond, Junior Board of Historic Richmond Foundation, 1982.

Name: Short, Charles
DHR CRM Report Number: Public Buildings: Architecture Under the Public Works Administration 1933-1939
Record Type: Book
Bibliographic Notes: New York, Da Capo Press, Inc., 1986

Record Type: Book
Bibliographic Notes: Medical College of Virginia. The First 125 years. Richmond, Medical College of Virginia, 1963.

Surveyor's NR Criteria Recommendations:

C - Distinctive Characteristics of Architecture/Construction

Bibliographic Information

Bibliography:

No Data

Property Notes:

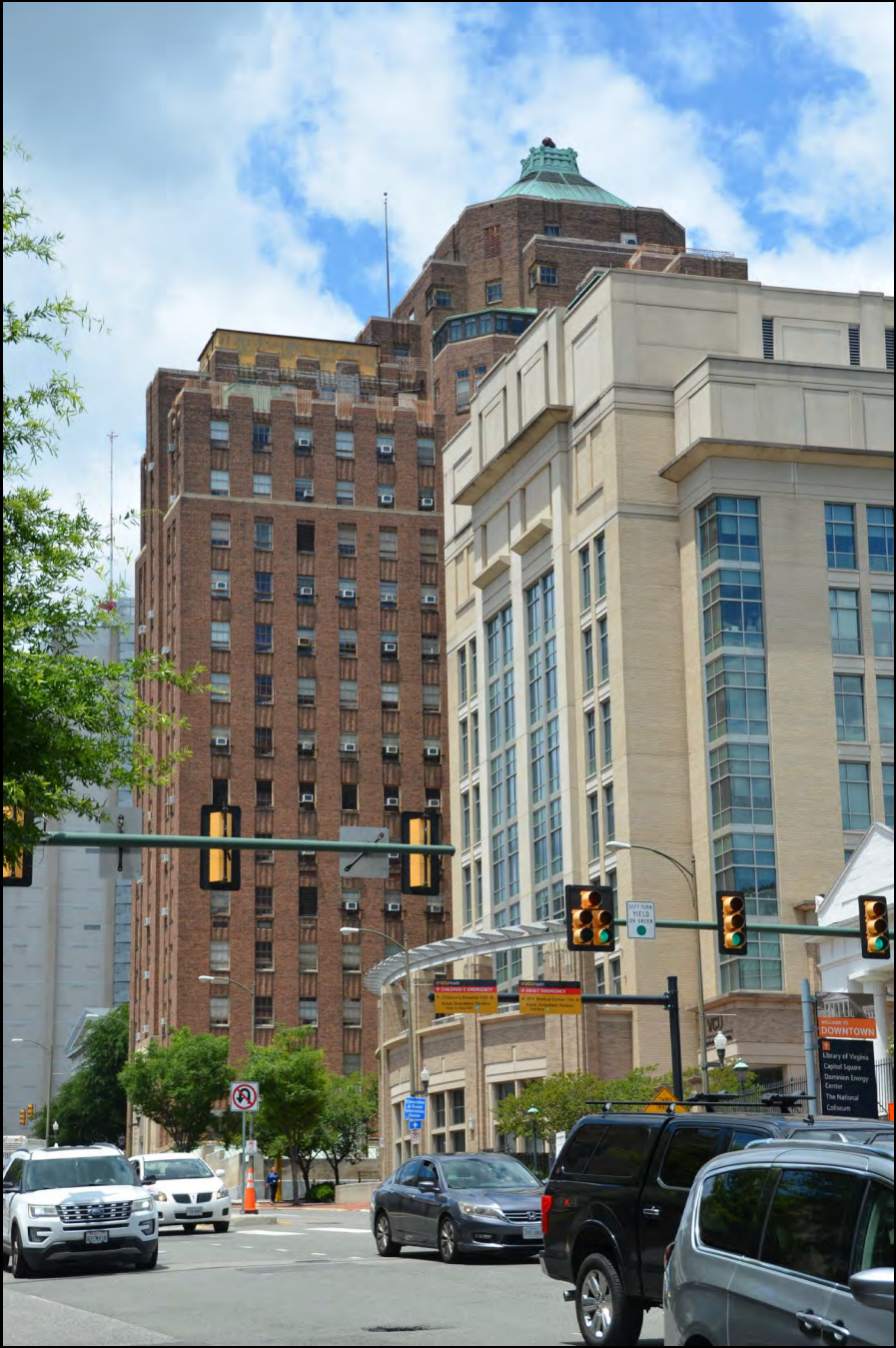
Company 1: VCU
Surveyor Notes: Property owned by Virginia Commonwealth University
Owner Relationship: Owner of property

West Hospital

City of Richmond, DHR ID #127-0252-0001























1200

NO ENTRY

NO ENTRY



HERBERT BATES 1871-1941
WILLIAM HARVEY 1578-1633
ROBERT KOCH 1843-1935
LOUIS PASTEUR 1822-1895
JOSEPH LISTER 1827-1912
ANTHONY VESICARIO 1871-1941
EDWARD JENNER 1753-1820
ROBERT BROWN 1821-1892

MEDICAL COLLEGE OF VIRGINIA
HOSPITAL

1200



MEDICAL COLLEGE OF VIRGINIA
HOSPITAL

GENERAL SERVICE



HOSPITAL
MEDICAL COLLEGE
OF
VIRGINIA
1940

BASKERVILL & SON
ARCHITECTS

GUSTAVE A PEPLER JR
MECHANICAL ENGINEER



 **VCU Health**
West Hospital

THIS IS A
SMOKE-FREE
FACILITY.
VIOLATION
MAY BE
SUBJECT TO
FINES.

4HX-2792







MEDICAL COLLEGE OF VIRGINIA
OFFICE OF THE TREASURER

18

GEORGE BEN JOHNSTON
AUDITORIUM





GEORGE BEN JOHNSTON
AUDITORIUM









W West Wing

N North Wing





th Wing

East Wing

South

3

1

2

Caution
Watch Your Step
on This Floor
and Every Floor



Research and
Gastrointestinal
Surgery

WASTEBIN

WASTEBIN

uth Wing

W We

EXIT

16

IN SERVICE OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF
MICHIGAN
PROPERTY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

5

1

EMERGENCY EXIT
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
PROPERTY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



4

3



EXIT

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN





EXIT

BROAD STREET

OFFICE

ELEVATORS

3075
Elevator
Maintenance
Program
3075

EXIT

North Wing

3075 Training



OFFICE

G 309



**FEDERAL WORKS AGENCY
PUBLIC WORKS ADMINISTRATION**

**JOHN M. CARMODY
FEDERAL WORKS ADMINISTRATOR**

**FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES**

**MEDICAL COLLEGE OF VIRGINIA
HOSPITAL
1940**



S South Wing

W West Wing





