

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

FILE COPY

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Crispus Attucks High School
other names/site number Crispus Attucks Junior High School

2. Location

street & number 1140 North Martin Luther King, Jr. Street N/A not for publication
city, town Indianapolis N/A vicinity
state IN code IN county Marion code 097 zip code 46202

3. Classification

Ownership of Property		Category of Property		Number of Resources within Property	
				Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> private		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local		<input type="checkbox"/> district		<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State		<input type="checkbox"/> site		<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal		<input type="checkbox"/> structure		<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<input type="checkbox"/> object		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: _____
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Paul A. Hunt for M. Reber 11-15-88
Signature of certifying official Date
Indiana Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: school

Current Function (enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: school

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Collegiate Gothic

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation TERRA COTTA

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other STONE: limestone

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Crispus Attucks High School is located in a mainly residential near northwest portion of Indianapolis, which was occupied by many of the city's black residents. The three story, flat-roofed, brick structure dominates its surroundings, covering over two square blocks. Crispus Attucks High school was built in three phases, each addition extending westward from the original building.

The architectural style of both the 1927 building and the 1938 addition reflect the influence of the Tudor Revival or Collegiate Gothic styles popular in Indiana during the late 1920s and 1930s. The use of label moldings over the window groupings, four-point or tudor arches, window bays with molded mullions, and long and short work are specific examples of the Collegiate Gothic architecture of Crispus Attucks High School.

The main facade of the school dates from 1927 and exhibits these Collegiate Gothic elements along with several Classical Revival features. The principle wall material of the school is red brick, with a foundation of granitex-type terra-cotta and other detailing in buff glazed terra-cotta. The east facade is "E" shaped in plan, with projecting pavilions at the ends and center. The center pavilion houses a one story foyer projection with a round arched arcade in terra-cotta. Two terra columns are flanked by engaged columns. The columns have capitals with crocket-like ornamentation. This arcade also features molded archivolt and open book motifs in the spandrels. Three pairs of fanlights, moldings and pilasters which echo the details of the main arcade. The school now has modern steel doors with single lights. A deeply molded terra-cotta belt-course divides the arcade from a terra-cotta balustrade.

The upper two-stories of the central pavilion have a large central panel with terra-cotta detailing framing the window groupings. Two molded vertical mullions divide the three windows on the second and third stories. Three panels divide the second and third story windows. Cast of terra-cotta, they depict a lyre with laurel leaves (center) and violins (flanking) in bas-relief. A horizontal mullion separates the third floor windows from three terra-cotta panels in which the words, "Attucks High School" has been cast in Old English typeface.

See continuation sheet

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Two identical wings flank the central pavilion. The windows are grouped in threes, with a double window in the center of each group and smaller windows on each side. The first floor windows have soldier course brick lintels. A deeply molded terra-cotta belt course runs across the entire facade just above the first story lintels. The upper two stories have identical window groupings to the first story, but these bays feature a label molding and plain sills, both of terra-cotta. A simple limestone coping terminates the wall.

Two flanking end pavilions complete the north and south ends of the main facade. The foundation, belt course and coping are continued, but these sections have no structural openings.

The north facade of Crispus Attucks High School can be divided into three distinct parts based on separate building programs of 1927, 1938 and 1966. The eastern portion of the elevation was built in 1927 and consists of two wings with one entry in each and a slightly taller, projecting central pavilion. The central pavilion has nine windows on each floor. The usual foundation, belt course and coping are used for the 1927 portion of this section. The upper two stories of the central pavilion are dominated by three terra-cotta and window panels. Vertical and horizontal mullions divide the windows. Each panel area is surrounded by long and short work in terra-cotta. Between the second and third story windows are bas-relief panels depicting oil lamps surrounded by curvilinear decorations. The central pavilion is about one-half story taller than its flanking wings, and there is a row of square windows above the third floor windows. A short length of terra-cotta belt coursing runs along the sides of the central pavilion connecting to the wings at the coping level of the wings.

Two nearly identical wings stand on either side of the central pavilion of the north 1927 facade of Attucks High School. A Tudor arch of granitex-type terra-cotta is centered in each wing. The arches have molded archivolts and buff-colored terra-cotta spandrel panels of an open book in bas-relief. Behind the arches, one finds modern metal doors with wood framed multi-light transoms in a Tudor arch shape. The window, configuration and detailing of these wings correspond to the same details as the main facade.

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The western wing differs from the eastern portion by having three windows on each floor above the entry rather than two windows.

Abutting to the west of the symmetrical 1927 portion of the north facade of Attucks High School, one encounters a section with a high, blank parapet wall. This marks the 1938 addition to the school. The 1938 addition uses much of the same architectural vocabulary as the 1927 block, but the details are done in limestone, probably because of the lack of availability of terracotta during the late 1930s. This red brick and limestone addition has four groups of four windows on each story. There are no entries on this section. A dressed limestone foundation reaches to the sill level of the first story. The belt course of the 1927 section is continued across this section in limestone. Second and third story window groups are framed by a stone label molding. At the level of the 1927 parapet coping, a molded belt course runs along this 1938 addition. A tall, plain brick parapet completes this section. Several ground floor windows have been bricked up on this three story section.

A two story gymnasium abuts to the west of the three story addition. The gym was also erected as part of the 1938 building program (photo 3). The gym consists of five bays with a one story entry projection. The entry foyer pavilion is the most noteworthy detail of the 1938 additions. The entry is framed by a limestone Tudor arch with molded archivolt and paneled spandrels. Modern metal doors have replaced the original doors. A molded limestone belt course is carried around the projecting entry bay above the arch. A brick parapet with crocketed finials at the southeast and northwest corners finishes the entry bay. The finials extend below the coping as engaged colonnettes. Above the arch, a stone tablet is engraved with the word "Gymnasium" in Old English typeface. Small square steel sash windows with stone label moldings and sills are located on the flanks of the entry projection. A triple window group with a stone label molding is located above the entry.

Two bays are located on either side of the gym entrance. The bays are articulated by simple pilasters. Each bay has two windows on each story, the floors are divided by an infill panel. There are label moldings above the second floor windows. A belt course runs

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above the label moldings on the walls of the bays flanking the entry. A simple parapet terminates the wall.

A modern style gymnasium was added to the west of the old gym in 1966 (photo 5). This addition is severely contemporary in design. It is two stories tall with several irregularly placed one and one-half story projections on the north facade. The 1966 gym has walls of red brick divided by concrete vertical and horizontal bands. There is a recessed entry on the north facade, and classroom windows are placed in the vertical concrete strips of this facade. All other elevations of the 1966 gym are devoid of windows, and there is a side entry on the south elevation. The 1966 addition has a flat roof and a projecting "cornice."

The south facade of Attucks High School has two basic sections. To the east stands the south elevation of the three story symmetrical 1927 portion of the building. This section is virtually identical to its counterpart on the north facade, except that a small one story greenhouse is located immediately west of the central pavilion. (The greenhouse is original to the building.)

To the west of the 1927 block on the south facade, the building is a complicated maze of utilitarian additions, service areas and loading docks. The entire area is interconnected. West of the symmetrical block is a two story portion and then a three story portion. A one story room extends south to the line of the symmetrical block. A five story brick smokestack rises from the northeast corner of the one story room. This area appears to date from 1927.

Connected to the rear of the 1938 addition, an irregular two story addition extends south, beyond the line of the 1927 block of the school. An open area separates this addition from the smokestack room. The date of this addition is uncertain, portions of it seem to date from 1938, while other blocks have been added at a later date. A blank wall portion of the 1966 gym is visible on the south elevation of the building.

The interior of Crispus Attucks High School is also a complex grouping of various inter-connected additions. The 1927 block of

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the school consists of double loaded corridors arranged in a square around a central auditorium. The interior of the 1927 block is well detailed. The main entry foyer is the most significant space in the school (photo 6). The foyer area has terrazzo floors and baseboards. A triple arched arcade with terra-cotta columns and moldings divides the foyer from the hallway. The octagonal columns have Attic style bases of granitex and crocketed capitals. The arcade has molded archivolts. Walls and ceilings are of plaster. The ceiling of the foyer and hall area in front of the auditorium entrance have exposed beams with floral corbels and large coffered panels, all of plaster.

Halls in the 1927 block are simple in character (photo 7). The floors are covered in linoleum, with terrazzo borders and baseboards. Sections of hallways are defined by broad Tudor arches with molded archivolts cast in terra-cotta. Modern lockers line the halls. A molded "picture rail" runs along the top of the lockers. Recessed entries lead to classrooms. Plaster hall ceilings have beveled coves.

Classrooms in the 1927 portion of the school have also retained most of their historic character (photo 8). Most classrooms have linoleum floors, wood baseboards and plaster walls. The multi-panel wood doors have simple wood surrounds. The terra-cotta window sills of exterior are also exposed on the classroom interiors. Original chalkboards can be found in many classrooms.

Steel staircases provide vertical circulation in the building (photo 10). The stairs have square, paneled newels, railings with fleur-de-lis ornaments and wood handrails. Matching railings divide the stairs in half to separate ascending and descending traffic.

While many areas of the interior have remained relatively unaltered, other rooms have been completely remodeled. The library (photo 11) is an example.

Both the exterior and interior have retained a good degree of integrity. Several projects have affected the entire building. The original multi-light steel sash windows were replaced during the 1960s with simple brushed aluminum frame windows. However,

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the dimensions of all the openings have been maintained. Air handling equipment has been added to the south facade, again without disrupting the design of the building.

The school consists of one inter-connected building and has been counted as such. An 1880s brick elementary school once stood at the southeast corner of the property, but was razed and completely removed in about 1980. Due to the thorough removal of the old school, it is believed to have no archaeological value, and is not counted as a site. The boundary also includes a football/athletic field which has been part of the school for over fifty years. Since the field is not known to have any particular significance, it is not included in the resource count.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: BLACK

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1927-1949

Significant Dates

1927

1938

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Harrison, Merritt and Turnock,

Llewellyn/Brown and Mick

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Crispus Attucks High School is clearly significant as the first and only public high school in Indianapolis built specifically for black students. As such, it plays an integral part in the social and educational history of Indianapolis. The building was one of the most important commissions for a well-known local architect. The school is significant for its use of interior terra-cotta detailing.

Segregation had been practiced in the Indianapolis Public Schools since the system's beginning with a number of elementary schools designated as "colored". Until 1884, there was only one public high school in the city, then only two for nearly 30 years, which black students could attend, though proportionately few did. Nevertheless, by 27 October 1908, Superintendent of Schools Calvin Kendall identified the integration of the high schools as a problem, and noted the board must begin to think in terms of a separate black high school. "This building," suggested Kendall, "should be west of the canal...It is possible we could make use of School 17, or an addition might be built to the McCoy School (P.S. #24, at North and Agenes Streets). Sooner or later it will be necessary to remove the colored children from the present high schools." Kendall's statement set the stage for the eventual construction of Crispus Attucks High School and pinpointed its location to be near the largest concentration of blacks in the city, the area of Indiana Avenue.

Nothing further was heard on the subject until after World War I, which coincided with the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana. Delegations from outlying schools where segregation was not always effected demanded that the school board reassign black children to a "colored" school, no matter how great the distance might be. In September of 1922, a delegation from the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce petitioned for a separate high school for Negro children, and that it be modern and completely equipped - the much touted notion of "separate but equal."

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In the months that followed, the board discussed the question of a "colored high school" thoroughly, seeking legal advice from Baker and Daniels, attorneys to the board. A survey was undertaken for a suitable site. In November, however, a protest against such a high school was brought forth by the Better Indianapolis League, a civic organization of progressive black citizens, who noted (Minutes 21 November 1922) that the public school was "the melting pot of the nation." Therefore, "no one section of the population can be isolated and segregated without taking from it the advantages of the common culture. No one element of the population can be deprived from the opportunity to participate freely in the advantages of the highest culture without retardation to the whole group."

The group contended that not only was a separate black high school "unjust, un-American and against the spirit of democratic ideals", but also "un-Christian, anti-social, divisive....it would [stir] up discontent, unrest and friction...." Also, they pointed out, it would create considerable extra expense to maintain a separate building for blacks only. The articulate remonstrance was signed by 20 of the most prominent members of the black community. Several more protests followed, many forwarded by the black churches, all to no avail; clearly, the board had decided already and would not be moved. On 12 December 1922, the Committee on Instruction reported its findings after studying the question, noting "that large number of colored pupils (nearly 800) in our high schools shows laudable desire on their part," and that the "fullest opportunity should be given." They recommended a "high school be provided for the colored pupils of the city, modern in construction and appointments." The board unanimously approved.

In October of 1923, Harrison and Turnock were chosen as architects to design the school on the site chosen just north of P.S. #17 on West Street. Several frame dwellings were presently on the land. Shortly after this, black community leader Archie Greathouse began a series of court battles protesting the erection of a separate colored high school, which effectively held up construction for a time. The school board's attorneys argued that "the judicial history of the United States generally [upholds] the right of school authorities to require white children and colored children to attend different schools." Basically this was upheld, and in

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June 1925 the board unanimously agreed to name the new colored high school "Thomas Jefferson High School." In September the working plans were approved, and the contract was awarded in October to Brown and Mick for \$405,251.

In February 1926 came the first of numerous petitions to the board to change the name of the school to "Crispus Attucks High School." Weeks of controversy followed, with other notable black personages offered as potential honorees more suitable than Attucks, who, as one petitioner put it, "was only an inquisitive barber" (Minutes, 9 March 1926). Crispus Attucks, a black or mulatto former slave, is generally considered to have been the first to fall in the Boston Massacre in 1770, and, in a sense, the first to die for the cause of the American revolution. Many felt that Attucks, a victim of circumstance, was not a particularly notable figure, and a black person of accomplishment would be a more suitable choice. The name of Paul Laurence Dunbar, a black poet, was a popular alternative offered by petitioners. The PTAs of the black elementary schools were polled, and their preference was Attucks, and so Crispus Attucks High School it became on 30 March 1926. From its completion in 1927 until 1949, the school provided the only opportunity for Indianapolis blacks to receive a free secondary education. It was a focal point in the black community.

Crispus Attucks High School is also architecturally significant. As noted earlier, the building was designed by Harrison and Turnock. Merritt Harrison (1887-1973) was a prominent local architect who formed several partnerships during his long career. Harrison was born in Richmond, Indiana, and moved to Irvington (in Indianapolis) with his family in 1900. He graduated from Manual High School in 1906, and from the Cornell University College of Architecture in 1911. Harrison returned to Indianapolis in 1912, working with H. L. Bass as a draftsman. In 1916, he started private practice. Harrison received commissions for large homes on Meridian Street and in Johnson's Woods from 1916 to about 1925. In 1922, he formed a partnership with Llewellyn A. Turnock which lasted until 1934.

A private commission for a local country club (Hillcrest) apparently brought the firm its first large job in the mid 1920s. Crispus Attucks High School, awarded in 1923, was the first of

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many public commissions for Harrison.

The interior of the school represents an unusual application of a typical 1920s building material. Only one other building in Indianapolis, the State Blind School, has a comparable amount and quality of interior terra-cotta. The Indiana School for the Blind was constructed in 1930 with Harrison and Turnock as architects. Both buildings are Collegiate Gothic in style and feature interiors with terra-cotta arcades. The similarity of the interiors suggests that the Crispus Attucks building was the prototype for the Blind School.

Crispus Attucks High School was an important work for Harrison and Turnock. It served as a precursor for larger commissions and seems to have oriented Harrison towards large public works later in his career. The State Boy's School, Lockfield Gardens, 1935 (listed on the NRHP), and the State Fairground Coliseum, 1939, are examples of Harrison's later designs. Harrison formed a partnership with William Russ in 1934 which lasted until 1950. Merritt Harrison practiced architecture in Indianapolis until 1971.

Soon after the construction of Crispus Attucks High School in 1927, additional space was needed. Starting with an enrollment of 1,345, it had increased to over 2,000 by 1934. As early as April 1931, the Building Committee reported that Attucks High School needed a new building or addition at once, but the Depression had taken full effect and new construction was impossible. Portables were erected.

The school served the black population of the whole city. A substantial black settlement existed on the east side, and the PTA asked that the board provide those pupils car fare. A delegation from the Southside Colored Civic Club, in January 1932, asked for transportation for colored students from the far south and southeast (Norwood) sides, otherwise they must withdraw. Ultimately this led to a law passed in 1935 that required the board to transport all colored children who live more than a mile from their own school, provided they live a half mile nearer to a white school. At the time of the law's taking effect, 783 high school students came under its provisions.

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As the depression lifted somewhat in 1935-36, and WPA funds became available, petitions and delegations regularly assaulted the board for additional facilities at Attucks. Working plans and specifications for the addition by D. A. Bohlen & Son were approved in February 1938, and the contract awarded in March to Service Construction Company for an addition to include ten classrooms, eight shop rooms, facilities for sewing, millinery, home economics, general science and mechanical drawing, and a boy's gym with showers and ROTC classrooms. The work was completed that year.

In 1949, school segregation was outlawed in Indiana, but Crispus Attucks remained almost exclusively black until busing to achieve racial integration was begun in the 1970's. Following a reorganization of public high schools in the early 1980s, Crispus Attucks High School is currently in use as a junior high school facility.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Architects Files, Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission, Room 1821, City-County Building, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Blueprint Files, Indianapolis Public Schools, Division of Buildings and Grounds, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Construction Projects, Remodeling, Site Purchases, Proposed Projects, 1946-1982; Indianapolis Public Schools - Board of School Commissioners of the City of Indianapolis.

Directory of Public Schools of the City of Indianapolis, Indianapolis: Board of School Commissioners of the City of Indianapolis, 1873-1895, inclusive.

Dunn, Jacob Piatt, Greater Indianapolis, Volume 1, Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1910.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 7.02

UTM References

A

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4	4	0	3	7	8	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description An irregular tract of land including parts of Field's Subdivision, Mayhew's Heirs Addition, J. M. Myer's Addition, and Drake and Mayhew's 1st and 2nd Additions in Indianapolis, Indiana, as follows: Starting from the intersection of the south curb line of West 12th Street and the west curb line of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Street, follow the south curb line of West 12th Street, west to

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the school building and an athletic field which has been part of the school for over fifty years.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Blanche Stewart/Glory June Greiff
organization Crispus Attucks High School Alumni date 10/15/87
street & number Post Office Box 1470 telephone 317/236-1400 Ex. 1206
city or town Indianapolis state IN zip code 46206

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Fire Protection Engineering Report on the School City of Indianapolis,
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Gale, Frederick, A Biographical Study of Persons for Whom Indianapolis
Schools are Named. Indianapolis Public Relations Department,
Indianapolis Public Schools, 1965.

Greiff, Glory June, List of Pre-World War II Public School Buildings
Still Extant in Indianapolis (pre-Unigov Boundaries), November
1983.

Historical Sketches of Schools 1-97, Crispus Attucks High School,
Arsenal Technical High School, Shortridge High School, George
Washington High School, Thomas Carr Howe High School, and Harry
E. Wood High School. Indianapolis: The Board of School Commissioners
of the City of Indianapolis, 1953.

Indianapolis City Directories, Indianapolis: R. L. Polk & Co.,
1878-1970, inclusive.

Manual of the Public Schools of the City of Indianapolis. Indianapolis:
Board of School Commissioners of the City of Indianapolis,
1873-1895, inclusive.

"Merritt Harrison, Noted Architect, Dies," Indianapolis Star,
July 26, 1973, p. 39

Minutes, Board of School Commissioners of the City of Indianapolis

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the east curb line of Brooks Street, then south along the east curb line of Brooks Street for 467.10', then due east along the south edge of former 11th Street (now vacated) for 228.02', then southeast for 366.41' to a point on the north curb line of 11th Street which is 962.11' from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Street, then follow the north curb line of West 11th Street which curves to the northeast, to the west curb line of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Street, then north along the west curb line of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Street to point of origin.