National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

Historic name Park Plaza Apartments
Other names/site number KHRI #177-4847
Name of related Multiple Property Listing Mid-Century Modern Non, Single-Family Residential Architecture in Topeka: 1945-1975

2. Location

Street & number 1275 SW Fillmore Street n/a not for publication
City or town Topeka n/a vicinity
State Kansas Code KS County Shawnee Code SN Zip code 66604

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ local
Applicable National Register Criteria: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

Signature of certifying official/Title Patrick Zollner, Deputy SHPO Date
Kansas State Historical Society
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government
In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

_____ entered in the National Register
_____ determined eligible for the National Register
_____ determined not eligible for the National Register
_____ removed from the National Register
_____ other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

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Category of Property
(Check only one box.)

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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/International Style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: BRICK

roof: Built-Up Gravel

other: GLASS, WOOD
Park Plaza Apartments
Name of Property

Shawnee, Kansas
County and State

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources, if applicable. Begin with a summary paragraph that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary

Constructed in 1959 and designed by architects, Carl G. Ossmann & Associates of Topeka, the Park Plaza Apartment building is an excellent representation of a post-World War II garden apartment designed in the International Style. Located between two historic neighborhoods in Topeka (Central Park and Holliday Park), the two-story T-shaped building is situated at the northwest corner of the intersection of SW Fillmore and SW 13th Streets. The building contains 14 apartments with varying floorplans. The building's massing; flat roof; groupings of ribbon windows with rectangular panels and canopy; blond brick construction; and overall lack of ornamentation are characteristic of the International Style of post-World War II Modern Movement architecture. The exterior remains unaltered since its construction and continues to convey the building's original design. The overall interior configuration remains largely intact. Character-defining features include the primary entryway and lobby, stairways, hallways, original plaster walls, and oak wood doors and flooring. The stairways retain original light fixtures – round globes hanging from the ceiling. In some cases, individual apartments are remodeled with modern carpeting, cabinetry, and bathroom materials. However, several apartments retain their original arrangement of space, flooring, cabinetry, and pink-tiled bathrooms. The property includes a large, multi-car carport dating to the original apartment construction. The carport retains its original mid-20th century design, including a flat metal roof with wide overhanging eaves and decorative metal screen walls at each end.

Elaboration

Setting and Site:

The Park Plaza Apartment building is located at 1275 SW Fillmore Street in Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas. The site is located approximately ¾-mile southwest of downtown Topeka. It is sited within the historic Throop’s Addition, a portion of which comprises the Central Park Neighborhood and park to the south. The historic Holliday Park neighborhood is located to the north. The southern boundary of the property forms the northern side of Central Park. The park itself is located one block southwest of the Park Plaza Apartment. The apartment occupies the property at the northwest corner of the intersection of SW 13th Street and SW Fillmore Street within a predominantly single-family residential neighborhood. Surrounding this intersection are two additional contemporaneous garden apartment buildings, including the Central Park Apartments (KHRI #177-4846), which was designed in 1957 by Carl G. Ossmann & Associates, the same architect who later designed the Park Plaza Apartment. The two buildings are nearly identical in their design and materials. Additional multi-family apartment buildings dating to the mid-20th century are located one- and two-blocks east of Park Plaza.

The residential streets are arranged in a gridded street plan and are characterized by relatively wide rights-of-way with mature street trees separating the road and concrete sidewalks. The streets are paved with stone curbing. SW Fillmore Street features historic brick paving. An alley is west of the property and conforms to the gridded street layout.

The Park Plaza Apartment building is oriented east toward SW Fillmore Street and does not deviate from the setback of its neighbors. The massing of the building with a T-shaped form where the side wings are significantly setback from the central block, is compatible with the scale of the neighborhood although larger than the individual single-family dwellings. While the surrounding residential neighborhoods generally date from the late-19th to early-20th century, the rapid post-War population growth of Topeka and the operations of nearby Forbes Air Base influenced the neighborhoods’ built environment. A scattering of mid-20th century housing dots the neighborhood, including the collection of 1950s garden apartments surrounding the intersection and along nearby streets. The primary distinction of the Park Plaza Apartments when compared to the surrounding neighborhood, is its distinguishable Modernist design in form, fenestration, material, and overall lack of ornamentation. Its predecessor, the Central Park Apartments, shares this Modernist design.

The Park Plaza Apartment building is centrally located within a 0.57-acre grassed lot. A multi-car carport is located at the rear of the property, following along the rear alley. The detached carport (contributing resource) is separated from the apartment building by approximately 30 feet of grassed landscape with a few mature shade trees. A concrete sidewalk leads from the carport to a rear entry door of the apartment building. The building’s primary entryway is inset and oriented to the southeast toward the corner of the intersection. Concrete sidewalks at the corner form landscaping surrounding a
historic flagpole. At the northwest corner of the “square,” a concrete sidewalk extends in a northwesterly direction to the principal entryway.

Exterior:

Constructed in 1959, the Park Plaza Apartment is T-shaped with a large central block projecting east and set back wings projecting to the north and south. All three ends of the building are characterized by large brick masses; whereas the remaining structure is characterized by large spans of windows. The northern wing is slightly shorter in width than the southern wing. The two-story building is reinforced-concrete construction with exterior walls of brick laid in a common bond pattern. The exterior brick is contrasting buff-colored and reddish brown. The building has a flat roof of built-up gravel or asphalt with no overhangs at the brick masses. The building sits on a concrete basement foundation. The garden apartment is characterized by its groupings of window walls on the first and second floors. The window groupings are recessed and framed by wooden canopies extending slightly from the second floor line and roof. The canopy mimics cantilevered design elements characteristic of Modernist architecture and features a wide wood fascia.

Central wing: The front façade (east) of the central block is four bays (W, 2W, 2W, W) on each floor. Windows are one-over-one, double-hung, horizontal wood sash with simple brick sills. The north and south elevations of the central block contain two windows with a recessed window wall where each floor has a projecting canopy above. The window walls are set at the juncture of each projecting wing and contain five window units comprised of a large square fixed light with a rectangular awning window below. Above and below each window is a rectangular wood panel. The windows are wood-framed. Where the south elevation of the central wing meets the east elevation of the south wing, is an angled and cornered canopy above a recessed entryway, and a grouping of windows.

The primary entryway on the façade is slightly recessed. It features an original entry door with three horizontal lights. The door is flanked on either side by sidelights containing three larges windows with heavy wood surrounds. Above the entry door and each sidelight is a rectangular wood panel. Above the entryway on the second floor, the fenestration is similar save but the entry door. Here, the central window is a glass louver. The cornered entry canopy is partially open with vertical wooden boards span the opening. This design feature allows for a degree of natural lighting at the entrance.

North & South Wings: At the connection of the central and south wings, the five window walls on each floor match those on the central wing. South of the window walls on the east elevation’s brick mass are two individual windows. Here, the north windows are square two-light awnings. With the exception of the recessed entryway, the north wing features a similar fenestration on its east elevation to that of the south wing.

The north and south elevations of the wings contain four single windows at each floor. The rear is characterized by a two-bay (W, W) slightly projecting brick bay flanked on either side by two sets of window walls (5 windows each with picture windows over awnings) separated by a brick wall. Directly north of the center projecting bay on the first floor is an exterior, glazed entry door that opens towards the carport.

Interior:

Shared interior spaces include the main entry lobby with original built-in mailboxes, two stairways, hallways, and a laundry room on the first floor. A sitting room occupies the public space above the entry lobby on the second floor. The finishes in the shared spaces are simple with little to no ornamentation. Floors are carpeted and walls and ceilings plastered. The stairway railings are plastered balustrade walls topped by oak railings. Original light fixtures hang from the lobby and sitting room ceilings and feature a simple round shade suspended by a thin metal rods. Hanging light fixtures in the stair halls are round globes also suspended by thin metal rods. The entry lobby features original built-in mailboxes and the oak doors leading to each apartment contain the original attached metal apartment number. The small laundry room features original ceramic tile floors and glazed tile base.

Park Plaza contains a total of 14 apartments, seven on each floor. Some of the individual apartments have undergone remodeling. Original layout and materials of the remodeled apartments may be altered. Apartments vary in size and configuration. Historically, each apartment was one or two bedrooms with a single bathroom, kitchen, and storage cabinets. The larger living rooms occupy the interior space opposite the sections of ribbon windows. The large windows provide ample natural lighting into the living room. Interior apartment doors are oak with oak frames. Similarly, kitchen cabinetry and full-height closet doors are stained oak. Flooring in the apartments is historically oak floorboards. In some instances, an individual apartment is carpeted. A unique feature of the apartments is the bathroom with pink, glazed
ceramic tiling along the sink area and within the shower, as well as a pink ceramic sink. The overall interior design and configuration of the Park Plaza Apartments remains relatively unaltered, particularly within the shared spaces.

The basement of the building is accessed from the north wing. The stairs leading to the basement are concrete with a quarter-turn landing. The basement has concrete flooring and is used for storage units and electrical equipment. Historically, the building was heated by coal. The original coal bin door is located within the basement. Its small metal door reads "The Donley Brothers Co. Cleveland, Ohio."

Carport:

The existing rectangular carport is original to the 1957 construction of the Park Plaza Apartment building and is considered a contributing resource to the property. It was built to accommodate one car per apartment, for a total of 14 spaces. The one-story metal structure has a flat metal roof with wide overhanging eaves supported by metal posts. The carport is open on the long east and west sides. The short north and south ends of the carport feature metal screen walls.

Integrity:

Remarkably, the Park Plaza Apartment retains a high degree of historic integrity on both the interior and exterior. There are no known alterations to the exterior of the building or its historic site plan and arrangement of buildings. The exterior retains its character-defining features with the use of brick, long horizontal design and form, window walls, canopies, and flat roof. Original features in the interior are largely intact in common areas and many of the apartments. The interior shared space, such as the lobby, stairs and hallways, are slightly modified with the installation of carpeting atop the original hardwood floors. This modification is considered reversible where the removal of the carpeting likely reveals the original flooring beneath.

Although permission to access the interior apartments is limited, much of the original materials and arrangement of space are intact. Several of the apartments have likely undergone remodeling that altered the interior space of the apartment, materials, and design. However, access to the interior of Apartment #23 reveals the original footprint and design features of the individual apartments. The building is in good condition. It retains a good degree of its historic integrity of location, setting, feeling, materials, design, and workmanship. It continues to serve as a multi-family garden apartment and, therefore, maintains its historic association.

Mid-Century Modern, Non, Single-Family Residential Architecture in Topeka: 1945-1975:

The Park Plaza Apartment building is classified as a “Multi-Family Apartment Building” associated property type as defined in the Mid-Century Modern, Non, Single-Family Residential Architecture in Topeka: 1945-1975 MPS and clearly conveys the defining characteristics of post-World War II Modern apartment buildings. The Park Plaza Apartment meets the general requirements defined in the MPS. The two-story building was constructed in 1957 as a multiple dwelling having 14 apartments with the T-shaped garden apartment building. The building retains its exterior massing, unique configuration, and design elements characteristic of the International Style. The Park Plaza Apartment is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under the Mid-Century Modern, Non, Single-Family Residential Architecture in Topeka: 1945-1975 Multiple Property Documentation Form as a representative example of the Multi-Family Apartment Building Property Type and is an intact and well-preserved illustration of post-World War II Modernist multi-family architecture.
8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

☐ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ B removed from its original location.

☐ C a birthplace or grave.

☐ D a cemetery.

☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ F a commemorative property.

☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance
1959

Significant Dates

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder
Architect, Carl G. Ossman & Associates

Period of Significance (justification)
The period of significance for the Park Plaza Apartments is 1957 – the building’s date of construction.

Criteria Considerations (justification)
None
Park Plaza Apartments
Shawnee, Kansas

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Summary

Constructed in 1959, the Park Plaza Apartments at 1275 SW Fillmore Street in Topeka is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development as an intact illustration of garden apartments constructed to accommodate an record population growth during the post-World War II era. While several mid-20th century suburban neighborhoods developed throughout the City as the corporate limits expanded westward and southward, a handful of apartment buildings were erected within the earlier neighborhoods. Among those neighborhoods is the Throop’s Addition in central Topeka, just southwest of downtown, which began development in the late-19th century. Park Plaza Apartments is also a rare example of a private residential cooperative to be formed by a small group of wealthy Topekans in the 1950s. The three known cooperatives (Park Plaza, Central Park (KHRI #177-4846), and Lakeside Apartments) partnered with architectural firm Osmann & Associates for the design of the luxury apartments.

Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an excellent representation of the International Style that dominated post-World War II design across the United States. The two-story garden apartment is characterized by its brick exterior, flat roof and sprawling, T-shaped form. Its rows of ribbon windows framed by cantilevered canopies and the overall lack of ornamentation further reflect the International Style principles of the Modern Movement in architecture. The apartment building is recognized as an excellent representation of garden apartments designed by established Topeka architects Ossman & Associates.

The Park Plaza Apartments is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under the Mid-Century Modern, Non, Single-Family Residential Architecture in Topeka: 1945-1975 Multiple Property Documentation Form (Destefano, 2020) as a representation of a Multi-Family Apartment Building Property Type. It is significant under Criteria A and C as a low-rise apartment building in the Throop’s Addition that is indicative of the City’s impressive post-War population growth and expansion; and is a well-preserved illustration of a garden apartment incorporating Modernist design elements, specifically the International Style. It is further significant as a rare surviving example of a private apartment cooperative in Topeka.

Elaboration

Neighborhood History

The City of Topeka was first settled in the winter of 1854 when Cyrus K. Holliday and Charles Robinson traveled along the Kansas River in search of a new site for a second Kansas colony. An ideal location for the future colony was discovered on a low bluff, on the south side of the Kansas River. The settlement was named Topeka, which was incorporated as a city on February 14, 1857, with a population of 450 residents. The following year, the county seat was moved from Tecumseh to Topeka, and in 1861, the city became the permanent location of the state capital.¹

Throughout the late-19th and early-20th centuries, the city limits expanded outward as small villages, neighborhoods, and undeveloped areas were annexed into the city. By 1890, the city’s population exceeded 35,000 residents, with new streetcar suburbs emerging across the city. Among the early additions to the city was Throop’s Addition, a residential suburb that first occurs on Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps by 1889. The Throop’s Addition is located one block southwest of the Holliday Park neighborhood (NR-Listed 2002), which began development in the 1880s. Throop’s Addition extended west and southwest to include the impressive 15-acre Central Park. Plans for the park began in 1899 when the property was sold to the City by Dr. John McClintock. Throop’s Addition quickly experienced significant development as a streetcar suburb of Topeka. It extended the gridiron street layout of the earlier surrounding neighborhoods. Streets were

Park Plaza Apartments

Name of Property: Park Plaza Apartments

County and State: Shawnee, Kansas

characterized by brick paving and stone curbing lined by sidewalks with planted trees. Trolleys once ran along the residential streets, connecting the neighborhood to downtown Topeka. Throop’s Addition developed primarily by single-family, middle- to -upper-middle class dwellings enjoying spacious lots. Among the most notable dwellings within the neighborhood is the Chester B. Woodward House (KHRI 177-5400-0561, NRHP-listed 1992), completed in 1924 at 1272 SW Fillmore Street. The impressive Tudor Revival houses is across the street from Park Plaza Apartments. The Throop’s Addition continued to develop throughout the early-20th century and was nearly fully built out by World War II.

Following World War II, Topeka experienced an unprecedented period of population growth and expansion. A number of factors contributed to this dramatic increase. Nationwide, the period from 1945 to 1975 was considered a “boom for single-family residential construction, suburbanization, and the realization of the American dream of home ownership.” Among those, 80% were built in the suburbs of metropolitan areas and only 20% within cities. This housing boom was stimulated in part by affordable mortgages for returning veterans. At the same time, the jump in post-war births, known as the “baby boom,” catapulted the national population. Such is the case in Topeka where its adjacent suburbs continued to strengthen and were absorbed into the City’s corporate limits.

In 1944, the city’s economy was given another boost when the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company built an impressive plant in North Topeka. The presence of the Forbes Air Base south of downtown from the late-1940s through the 1960s further contributed to the population growth and renewed expansion and annexation of residential sectors of Topeka. By 1950, the corporate limits of Topeka encompassed 12.5 square miles with the population reaching 78,791. An “annexation fever” swept across Topeka during the 1950s, more than doubling the area of the City to 36.4 square miles in 1960.

In response to the ever-increasing population, low-rise apartment buildings were built throughout the city, particularly in the developing suburbs. In some instances, such as that of Park Plaza, apartment buildings were built in older neighborhoods characterized by late-19th and early-20th century single-family residences. These earlier neighborhoods generally lacked driveways, with rear alleyways providing access to secondary structures such as carriage houses and garages. It was not until the post-War years when automobile ownership skyrocketed that integral garages and driveways were introduced. Thus, in an effort to maintain the historic aesthetic of the neighborhood and avoid on-street parking, a large carport was sited alongside the rear alley.

A small collection of 1950s and 1960s low-rise apartment buildings are located within the vicinity of the Park Plaza Apartments. These include the Central Park Apartments (1957; KHRI #177-4846) at the southwest corner of the intersection of SW 13th and SW Fillmore Streets; the former Cowan Apartments (1963; KRHI #177-4845) at the southeast corner of the same intersection; and the Kevin Arms Apartments (1967; KHRI #177-3326) at 1221 SW Western Avenue. The siting of these apartment buildings suggests that this area of the Throop’s Addition was facing development pressures resulting from the rapid post-War population boom. They also suggest that the earlier dwellings which they replaced were in a declining condition. In siting these apartments here, the overall make-up of this area of the neighborhood changed from single-family to a combination of both single-family dwellings and multi-family apartments.

Private Cooperative Housing

Housing cooperatives are collectively owned and managed by their residents, who own shares in a nonprofit corporation. The corporation generally holds the title to the property and grants proprietary leases to residents. Prospective purchases of shares in the property must be approved by the co-op board. Oftentimes, the cooperative examines income-to-debt ratios of potential buyers and may conduct background checks. When a member of the co-op decides to sell their

shares, the board must approve the buyer prior to the sale. The board can reject applicants due to their finances or a refusal to abide by the association’s rules and regulations.\(^6\)

The first housing cooperatives started in New York City in the late-1800s. The early cooperative dwellings were marketed towards citizens in high income brackets who “wanted the advantages and economies of individual home ownership without all of the responsibilities.”\(^7\) By 1925, housing cooperatives had been constructed in sixteen cities in the United States, the majority of which were high-income. Prior to the days of “fair housing laws,” it was “not uncommon for cooperatives to reject membership to persons who were perceived not of the right racial, ethnic, or religious background.”\(^8\)

The Stock Market crash in 1929 brought about the near standstill of the cooperative movement in the United States. The luxury cooperatives were hit especially hard due to excessive mortgaging and promoter profits, as well as high vacancy rates. Generally, the more affordable lower income cooperatives survived the Depression. Following World War II, the economy was booming. One significant change that took place in the post-War years with the enactment of Section 216 of the IRS code in 1942, which allowed income tax deductions for mortgage interest and property taxes for cooperative members.\(^9\) A resurgence of upper/middle-income co-ops nationwide following World War II. The National Housing Act of 1950 insured blanket mortgages held on cooperatives and rental communities. That same year, Section 213 was added to include middle-income cooperatives. The legislation spurred the formation of approximately 45,000 cooperative units nationwide.\(^10\)

Topeka’s tremendous population growth during the post-War years and outward suburban expansion spurred the development of small middle-class cooperatives throughout the city. Three known cooperatives were formed during the 1950s including the Central Park Apartments in 1957, Lakeside Apartments in 1958, and the Park Plaza Apartments in 1959. A newspaper article in 1959 announces the construction of the Park Plaza Apartments:

“Construction of a $250,000 co-op apartment building at 1275 Fillmore is scheduled to begin in early October. Carl G. Ossman, Topeka architect, is designer and developer of the project. Ossman said the new building is being constructed in response to a demand for more cooperative housing in Topeka. The 14 units will be of the ‘own-your-own’ type. Under this cooperative plan, each tenant owns his apartment and contributes a fee monthly toward the up-keep of the building and grounds. Funds are handled by an elected board of directors.”
– Topeka State Journal July 18, 1959

Park Plaza Apartments, Inc. was incorporated on September 9, 1959 as a non-profit organization with the purpose to provide “housing on a non-profit basis, and, in pursuance thereof, to acquire, own, improve, develop, operate, manage, sell, convey, pledge, assign, mortgage, lease or rent any real estate and any personal property.”\(^11\) According to the articles of incorporation, the organization was incorporated by five individuals: Fred C. Noller, W. B. Case, Mary W. Strain, Mary L. Marsh, and Carl G. Ossmann. Ossmann was also recognized as the Registered Agent for the organization. An affidavit dated August 22, 1961 indicates that Carl Ossmann was sworn in as treasurer of Park Plaza. Carl G. Ossmann is not only a founder of the Park Plaza co-op but is recognized as the lead architect for the three known cooperative apartment buildings constructed in Topeka in the 1950s. It is presumed that Ossmann thus had shares in all three of the co-ops during their early years.

Following its incorporation, the Park Plaza Apartment building began construction on a site located directly across SW 13th Street from the Central Park Apartment cooperative. The site for the building is a tract of land once occupied by the

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\(^10\) Ibid.

\(^11\) Certificate of Articles of Incorporation, Park Plaza Apartment, Inc. 9 September 1959.
three-story home of Marcus A. Low, general attorney for the Union Pacific railway. The home was built in 1902. It was later purchased in 1937 by Topeka criminal lawyer, Edward Rooney where he lived until his death in 1956. The home was in a state of disrepair and was razed. Some of its building materials were salvaged prior to its removal (see Page 25).12

According to former co-op shareholder, Paul Prece, shareholders must meet an age requirement of at least 55 years; no pets of any kind are permitted in the building; and carpeting is required on the second floor to lessen unwanted noise on the first floor. Apartments were intended as “luxury apartments,” each containing two bedrooms, a living room, kitchen, and bathroom (see Figure H).13 As the building was a direct result of the formation of the co-op, residents/shareholders were able to choose added amenities to their apartments. Such upgrades might include a fireplace or specific hardware. For example, one resident requested that a fireplace salvaged from the former Rooney House be installed in their apartment.14

The Park Plaza Apartment has remained a private housing cooperative since its incorporation in 1959. While residents and shareholders have come and gone over the years, the cooperative maintains an executive board of five members, and all members are given equal say in approval of future shareholders. According to former resident and President Paul Prece, Park Plaza conveys a sense of a “big house” and “community.” Among the three known contemporaneous co-ops in Topeka, Central Park and Park Plaza are sited adjacent to one another in a central Topeka neighborhood that is generally characterized by its late-19th and early-20th century single-family housing. The Lakeside Apartment cooperative was erected in a west Topeka neighborhood that developed as a post-World War II suburb. Lakeside no longer operates as a co-op, having recently been used as a nursing home. All were designed by Topeka architect Car. G. Ossmann.

Architecture

Topeka boasts an impressive collection of Modernist architecture including a wide range of building types and distinct stylistic influences. The multitude of Mid-Century Modern buildings in Topeka is attributed not only to the “annexation fever” of the post-war period, but also the 1951 Flood, a F-5 tornado that destroyed much of the City in 1966, and Urban Renewal programs. Collectively, these four events greatly impacted the City’s built environment, with much of the new construction adopting the popular Modernist principles of the era. The Park Plaza Apartment survives as a well-preserved illustration of a Modernist low-rise apartment building constructed within an historic neighborhood amongst late-19th and early-20th century single-family houses. It is a superb example of the International Style applied to a multi-family apartment building.

Modern Architecture, or Mid-Century Modern, might be considered an umbrella term used for resources sharing characteristics commonly occurring in post-World War II American architecture, particularly in commercial and institutional buildings. Changes in construction methods, materials, and styles characterized post-World War II era architecture nationwide. Modernist architecture is based on the rational use of modern materials, functionalist planning, and the rejection of historical precedents. Among the common design elements characterizing Mid-Century Modern architecture is the general rejection of ornamentation and references to the past. Building materials and methods reflect technological advancements of the age and emphasize function over form, and “design based on expressing structure and use.”15

Modernist architecture would “convey meaning by the very lack of ornament.”16 It was an era marked by a transformation from classical symbolism and masonry massing towards steel and glass construction to “celebrate innovation, freedom, and flexibility.”17 Although references to the past were generally avoided, classical traditions often endured, or evolved.

Modernism has its roots in the International Style as it evolved in Europe during the 1920s. Modernism grew out of the art and architectural reform movements that came together in the Bauhaus School of Design in Weimer, Germany. The

12 Park Plaza Apartments, Inc. historical flyer.
14 Park Plaza Apartments, Inc. historical flyer; AND Interview with Jane Nichols, co-op shareholder. August 4, 2020.
16 Rifkind p.104
17 Rifkind p.104.
Bauhaus sought to steer artists and architects towards "building of the future." This philosophy carried strong associations with political reforms, socialism, and mandates to embrace the machine age. It was not until the Post-World War II era that American architects began embracing Modernism. According to Meghan Hogan's *The Future of Modern*, the Movement was a "salute to the postwar era itself, spearheaded by architectural giants such as Mies van der Rohe, Eero Saarinen, and Philip Johnson. At the height of its popularity, the sweeping curves, sheets of glass, and absence of ornament signaled change."

The International Style was popular nationwide from the 1940s through the 1970s, becoming the standard for American commercial and institutional design. The style emphasized technology and expression of construction methods, materials, exposed structural elements, and simplicity of form. It is from the International style that other Modernist styles, or sub-styles, are derived. The majority of Modernist buildings in Topeka reflect some degree of International Style design features. Identifying features of the International style include the following:

- Modern structural principles and materials: concrete, glass, and steel
- Occasional skeleton-frame construction, exposing its structure
- Rejected non-essential decoration
- Juxtaposition of materials
- Ribbon windows and corner windows
- Glass curtain walls and window walls
- Balance and regularity
- Flat roof, without overhangs
- Metal mullions and smooth spandrel panels separating large, single-pane windows between floors

Constructed in 1959, the Park Plaza Apartments is a classic example of the International Style. The two-story building is constructed of re-enforced concrete with a brick exterior. It features a flat roof and an overall emphasis on horizontal lines. While the building form is a traditional T-shape with a central block and flanking wings, the angled main entryway at the juncture of the central block and south wing reflects Modernist inspiration. The building lacks exterior ornamentation and is best characterized by its horizontal bands of windows framed by cantilevered canopies on each floor. The ribbon windows are nearly full height on each floor and feature spandrel panels and lower horizontal hopper windows – classic International Style design features. While the Modern Movement window framing systems were most often metal, the windows at Park Plaza Apartments feature wood sash and wood frames. According to an artist rendering of the building, the architect intended that the secondary windows (those not part of the ribbon windows) to be comprised of three horizontal lights. However, according to a photograph immediately following the 1966 tornado, which caused minimal damage to the building, the windows were the same as those occurring today and are historic.

Another unique design feature of the building is its angled entryway flanked by wide multi-light transoms and a multi-light curtain wall above. Additionally, the entryway features a prominent cantilevered canopy that extends above a wide entry stoop. The International Style was often considered stark and unappealing to later generations, yet the Park Plaza Apartments features additional “touches” that contribute to its aesthetically pleasing design.

While Topeka boasts a large collection of International Style buildings, only a small number of low-rise apartment buildings employ the use of International Style design principles. Designed by the same architect, the neighboring Central Park Apartments shares a similar exterior design; however, it is believed to have undergone a substantial interior remodeling. The third co-op apartment building, Lakeside Apartments, is located in west Topeka in a mid-20th century neighborhood. The former co-op was dissolved, and the building recently used as a nursing home facility. While the three

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19 Megan Hogan, “the Future of Modern: Federal Architecture in an Era of Change,” in *Common Ground* (Spring 2009), p.28
buildings are remarkably similar in their exterior design, the Park Plaza Apartment retains a higher degree of integrity on the interior.

**Carl G. Ossmann & Associates (1911-2002)**

Carl Ossmann & Associates, of Topeka, designed a number of buildings statewide during the mid-20th century, including a handful of institutional buildings and garden apartments. In addition to the Park Plaza, Central Park, and Lakeside Apartments in Topeka, the firm also designed the Quinton Heights Elementary School (KHRI #177-2117) in 1953 in Topeka. The school was designed in the International Style and is a sprawling one-story brick building with rows of windows. Another known school designed by Ossmann & Associates is the Baileyville Highschool in Nemaha County (KHRI #131-218) in 1952. The school is yet another illustration of the firm's preference of the International Style during the 1950s. Carl Ossmann is also known to have designed the Flint Hills Rural Electric Cooperative headquarters in, Council Grove, Kansas (1959-1960). Ossman dabbled in the Googie Style in the entry of the otherwise International Style Boogarts Grocery in Abilene, Kansas (1966) and is known to have designed several stores for this chain in Kansas.21 Later in his career he designed the 79-bed nursing facility (1970) at the Topeka Veteran’s Administration hospital.22 Ossmann was a prolific architect throughout the state and he briefly assumed the temporary position of acting state architect in September 1977, a position he held until August of 1978.23

**Summary**

The Park Plaza Apartments is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development. Its construction in 1959 within a late-19th and early-20th century neighborhood speaks toward the need to accommodate a rapidly growing post-War population in Topeka. In response to a growing demand for more cooperative housing in Topeka, architect and developer, Carl G. Ossmann spearheaded the formation of the Park Plaza Apartment cooperative, along with two others in Topeka during the 1950s. Park Plaza Apartments is also significant under Criteria C for Architecture. The building remains in its original location and retains its historic integrity and character-defining features. Further, the building is a well-preserved illustration of a Mid-Century Modern, low-rise apartment in Topeka that draws upon the International Style. The building meets the eligibility requirements for multi-family apartment buildings as outlined in the *Mid-Century Modern, Non, Single-Family Residential Architecture in Topeka*.

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Park Plaza Apartments  
Name of Property:  
Shawnee, Kansas  
County and State:  

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Certificate of Articles of Incorporation, Park Plaza Apartment, Inc. 9 September 1959.


“Ossman is Architect for Flint Hills Reca,” Council Grove Republican (Council Grove, Kansas), 3 April 1959

Park Plaza Apartments, Inc, brief historical write-up by the cooperative.


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  
—recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey  

Primary location of additional data:

x State Historic Preservation Office
— Other State agency
— Federal agency
— Local government
— University
— Other

Name of repository:  

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):  KHRI 177-4847
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form
NPS Form 10-900

Par
k Plaza A
partments
Shawnee, Kansas
Name of Property
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property  Less than one_____

Provide latitude/longitude coordinates OR UTM coordinates.
(Place additional coordinates on a continuation page.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84: ____________
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

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OR

UTM References
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</tbody>
</table>

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)
Located in the Throop’s Addition in the central Topeka, Lot 511 at Fillmore Street, including lots 513, 5151, 517, 519, and 521 in Section 1, Township 12, Ranger 15. Beginning at the northeast corner of the property at SW Fillmore Street thence in a southerly direction 152 feet, thence westerly 160 feet. The boundary then continues in a northerly direction for approximately 152 feet. The boundary then travels 160 feet in an easterly direction along to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)
The nominated boundary includes the entire parcel which is historically associated with the Park Plaza Apartment.
11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Jaime L. Destefano, MSHP
organization: JLD Preservation Consulting LLC
date: August 5, 2020
street & number: PO Box 445
telephone: 404-694-2066
city or town: Fentress
state: TX
zip code: 78622
e-mail: JLD.PreservationConsulting@gmail.com

Property Owner: (complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name: Park Plaza Apartments, Inc.; Jane Nichols Representative
street & number: 701 SW Gage Blvd.
telephone: 785-608-2759
city or town: Topeka
state: Kansas
zip code: 66604

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Photographs
Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each digital image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to a sketch map or aerial map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn’t need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photograph Log
Name of Property: Park Plaza Apartments
City or Vicinity: Topeka
County: Shawnee
State: Kansas
Photographer: Jaime Destefano, MSHP
Date Photographed: November 11, 2019

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:
Park Plaza Apartments
Name of Property

1 of 20. Front Façade (South Elevation), photographer facing north
2 of 20. Front Façade (South Elevation), photographer facing north
3 of 20. Southeast Oblique, photographer facing northwest
4 of 20. Southwest Oblique, photographer facing northeast
5 of 20. Northwest Oblique, photographer facing southeast
6 of 20. North Elevation, photographer facing south
7 of 20. East Oblique, photographer facing northwest
8 of 20. Raised Plant Beds along Front Façade (south elevation), photographer facing west
9 of 20. Rear patio, stone retaining wall, and stone bridge, photographer facing northeast
10 of 20. Interior reception, photographer facing northeast
11 of 20. Interior reception and waiting lobby, photographer facing southeast
12 of 20. Conference Room, photographer facing southeast
13 of 20. Front Office, photographer facing southeast
14 of 20. Drafting Room, photographer facing northwest
15 of 20. Drafting Room, photographer facing east
16 of 20. Drafting Room, photographer facing southwest
17 of 20. Work Room Cabinetry, photographer facing southwest
18 of 20. Hall and Kitchenette, photographer facing northeast
19 of 20. Basement, photographer facing northwest
20 of 20. Basement – Modern Kitchen and Small Room Additions, photographer facing south

Figures

Include GIS maps, figures, scanned images below.

a. Architect Rendering
b. Topographic Map
c. Enlarged Topographic Map
d. Aerial Map
e. Enlarged Aerial Map with Building Coordinates
f. Site Plan showing Exterior Photograph Locations
g. Interior Floor Plan with Photograph Locations
h. Floor Plan of Typical Apartment
i. Park Plaza Apartments, Inc Information and Articles of Incorporation
Figure 1. Architect Rending of Park Plaza Apartments, 1959
B. Topographic Map – Overview
Park Plaza Apartments
Shawnee, Kansas

C. Enlarged Topographic Map Showing Building Location
D. Google Earth Aerial Photograph – Overview
E. Parcel Bounding with Building Coordinates and Aerial Underlay
F. Site Plan with Exterior Photograph Locations
G. Original Interior Floor Plan (1966) with Photographs
H. Architect Drawing of Typical Apartment Layout, 1959
Source: Park Plaza Apartment, Inc. Historic Information (see Figure I.)

I. The following documents include the Park Plaza Apartments, Inc. Historical Information and Articles of Incorporation, as well as an Affidavit naming Carl Ossmann as Treasurer
Park Plaza Apartments, Inc.

1275 SW Fillmore Street
Topeka, Kansas

"Construction of a $250,000 co-op apartment building at 1275 Fillmore is scheduled to begin in early October.

Carl G. Ossman, Topeka architect, is designer and developer of the project. Ossman said the new building is being constructed in response to a demand for more cooperative housing in Topeka.

The 14 units will be of the 'own-your-own' type. Under this cooperative plan, each tenant owns his apartment and contributes a fee monthly toward the up-keep of the building and grounds. Funds are handled by an elected board of directors."

Top of the State Journal July 16, 1959

Park Plaza Apartments sits on the tract of land that once was the three story home of Marcus A Low, general attorney for the Union Pacific railway. The home was built in 1902 at a cost of $100,000. The Low home was bought in 1937 by Topeka criminal lawyer Edward Rooney where he lived until his death in 1956. The home was in a state of disrepair and was salvaged then removed.

Fireplace salvaged from Rooney house for Apt. 15.  Aftermath of Topeka tornado, June 8, 1966.
As directed by the Board of Directors of Park Plaza Apartments, Inc., copies of the Charter, By-Laws, and certain corporate papers are bound and made available to each stockholder for reference and use.

September 2, 1959: First meeting of Incorporators
September 9, 1959: First meeting of Incorporation

Articles of Incorporation
(filed September 9, 1959)
CERTIFICATE

or

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

(The Certificate or Articles of Incorporation should be attached here, or copied in full.)

PARK PLAZA APARTMENTS, INC.

We, the undersigned, incorporators, hereby associate ourselves together to form and establish a corporation NOT for profit under the laws of the State of Kansas.

FIRST: The Name of the Corporation is Park Plaza Apartments, Inc.

SECOND: The Location of its Principal Place of Business in this state is 1275 Fillmore Street, Topeka, Shawnee.

THIRD: The Location of its Registered Office in this State is 921 Topeka Avenue, Topeka, Shawnee.

FOURTH: The Name and Address of its Resident Agent in this State is Carl G. Ossmann, 921 Topeka Avenue, Topeka, Shawnee.

FIFTH: This Corporation is organized NOT for profit and the objects and purposes to be transacted and carried on are:
To provide housing on a non-profit basis, and, in pursuance thereof, to acquire, own, improve, develop, operate, manage, sell, convey, pledge, assign, mortgage, lease or rent any real estate and any personal property.
To borrow money and issue evidence of indebtedness therefore in furtherance of the above objects and purposes; and to secure the same by mortgage, deed of trust, pledge, or other lien.
Park Plaza Apartments
Name of Property

Shawnee, Kansas
County and State

To enter into, perform and carry out contracts of any kind necessary to, or in connection with, or incidental to the accomplishment of any one or more of the above purposes, and to do all things incident thereto.

To have and to exercise all other rights, powers and privileges granted by law to such corporations in this state.

The corporation shall have authority to issue capital stock.

SIXTH: The total amount of capital of this corporation is Two Hundred Thirty Eight-Thousand and no/100 Dollars; and the total number of shares into which it is divided is as follows: 2380 shares of common stock, class---par value One Hundred Dollars each.

Statement of all or any of the designations and the powers, preferences and rights and the qualifications, limitations or restrictions thereof, in respect to any class.

All shares shall have the privileges and restrictions accorded to them by the by-laws, and by the laws of the State of Kansas.

The private property of the stockholders shall never be subject to the payment of any debts, liabilities or obligations of this corporation.

Statement of Grant of Authority, as may be desired to be given to the Board of Directors, if given.
The Directors shall have all general powers and duties given to them by the laws of the State of Kansas, including the power to manage the business affairs of the corporation, and shall have such other special powers and duties as are prescribed from time to time by the bylaws.

The power to adopt the original by-laws shall be vested in the stockholders; and the power to amend, alter or repeal the by-laws shall be vested in the Board of Directors, subject to the power of the stockholders to amend, alter or repeal the by-laws, as provided by law.

The conditions of membership shall be fixed by the by-laws.

The corporation and its existing shareholders shall have the right to purchase and acquire the stock of a selling stockholder before the sale thereof to a non-stockholder.

SEVENTH: The Amount of Capital with which this Corporation will commence business is Two Thousand Eight Hundred and no/100 Dollars.

EIGHTH: The Names and Places of Residence (P.O. Address) of each of the Incorporators:

Fred C. Noller 1301 Fillmore Street Topeka, Kansas
W. B. Case 601 Merriam Court Topeka, Kansas
Mary W. Strain 1251 Topeka Avenue Topeka, Kansas
Mary L. Marsh 1023 Buchanan Street Topeka, Kansas
Carl G. Ossmann 1260 Randolph Street Topeka, Kansas.
NINTH: The Term for which this Corporation is to exist is ONE HUNDRED YEARS.

TENTH: The Number of Directors or Trustees or Governors shall be not less than three (3) nor more than five (5) as fixed from time to time by the by-laws.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, we have hereunto subscribed our names this 8th day of September, 1959.

Fred C. Noller
W. B. Case
Mary W. Strain
Mary L. Marsh
Carl G. Ossmann

STATE OF KANSAS, SS.
COUNTY OF SHAWNEE,

Personally appeared before me, a Notary Public in and for Shawnee County, Kansas, the above-named Fred C. Noller, W. B. Case, Mary W. Strain, Mary L. Marsh and Carl G. Ossmann who are personally known to me to be the same persons who executed the foregoing instrument of writing, and duly acknowledged the execution of the same.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed my name and affixed my official seal, this 8th day of September, 1959.

(SEAL)

Audrey B. McCaig
Notary Public

AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF KANSAS, SS.
COUNTY OF SHAWNEE,

CARL G. OSSMANN, of lawful age, being first duly sworn, upon his oath states:

He resides in Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas.

He is the treasurer of Park Plaza Apartments, Inc., a Kansas corporation, with its registered office located at 921 Topeka Avenue, Topeka, Kansas.

The amount of capital which the Articles of Incorporation state will be paid in before the corporation commences business, being the sum of $2,800.00, has been fully paid to him as such treasurer.

[Signature]

Carl G. Ossmann

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 10th day of September, 1959.

[Signature]

Notary Public

My Comm. Expires: August 22, 1961
## NRO KANSAS SECRETARY OF STATE
Change of Registered Office or Agent by a Not-For-Profit Corporation

| CONTACT: Kansas Office of the Secretary of State |
| Memorial Hall, 1st Floor |
| 120 S.W.-10th Avenue |
| Topeka, KS 66612-1594 |
| (785) 296-4564 |
| kssos@sos.ks.gov |
| www.sos.ks.gov |

### INSTRUCTIONS: All information must be completed or this document will not be accepted for filing. Please read instructions sheet before completing.

| 1. Business entity ID number: |
| This is not the Federal Employer ID Number (FEN) |
| 0298513 |

| 2. Name of corporation: |
| Name must match the name on file with the Secretary of State |
| Park Plaza Apartments, Inc. |

| 3. State/Country of organization: |
| KS |

| 4. The new name of the resident agent and address of the registered office in Kansas: |
| Name |
| Capital City Bank |
| 1701 SW Gage Blvd |
| Kansas |
| City |
| Topeka |
| State |
| KS |
| Zip |
| 66604 |

5. I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the state of Kansas that the foregoing is true and correct and that I have remitted the required fee.

Signature of authorized officer: [Mark L. Borenheide]

Name of signer (printed or typed): [Mark L. Borenheide]

Date (month, day, year): 8/19/2013

FILE#: 0298513

FIED BY KS SOS
08-22-2013
11:07:21 AM

FILE #: 0298513

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Page 1 of 1
Park Plaza Apartments
Name of Property

Shawnee, Kansas
County and State

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.
Park Plaza Apartments
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State
Park Plaza Apartments
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

Photo 3

Photo 4
Park Plaza Apartments
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State
Park Plaza Apartments
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

Photo 7

Photo 8
Park Plaza Apartments
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

Photo 9

Photo 10
Park Plaza Apartments
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State
Park Plaza Apartments
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State
Park Plaza Apartments
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

Photo 15

Photo 16
Park Plaza Apartments
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

Photo 17

Photo 18
Park Plaza Apartments
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

Photo 19

Photo 20
Park Plaza Apartments
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

Photo 21

Photo 22