



NEWS

William Francis Galvin
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ROXBURY'S WALNUT PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT APPROVED FOR NOMINATION TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Secretary of the Commonwealth William F. Galvin has announced that the Massachusetts Historical Commission approved the Walnut Park Historic District in the Boston neighborhood of Roxbury for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places at a recent meeting. The nomination will now be submitted to the National Register of Historic Places at the National Park Service for final consideration and designation.

“The Massachusetts Historical Commission is dedicated to preserving the Commonwealth’s rich historic, architectural, archaeological, and cultural resources,” Secretary Galvin said. “Walnut Park Historic District tells the story of the suburbanization of Roxbury as transportation advances made the area increasingly accessible to downtown Boston.”

The district is one of four nominations for resources around the Commonwealth approved for nomination to the National Register by the Massachusetts Historical Commission at this meeting. Secretary Galvin serves as Chair of the 17-member board, which meets regularly and considers historic resources eligible for the National Register four times a year.

Walnut Park Historic District’s buildings span the 1850s to the 1920s and in its range of styles and building types illustrate the changing nature of suburban development in this area, which began with small estates. By the turn of the 20th century, with the electrification of streetcars and proximity to Egleston Square, the area saw the introduction of masonry apartment buildings catering largely to a Jewish population. Later, the district became a predominantly African-American neighborhood.

As part of this transition from the 1950s to the 1970s, many formerly Jewish institutional buildings in Roxbury were sold to Black churches and cultural organizations, and continued to serve as community anchors for the new residents of the neighborhood.



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Among them was the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts founded by arts educator and activist Elma Lewis in 1950, and located just outside the district in a former synagogue.

Two apartment buildings in the district, at 81 and 358–360 Walnut Park, the Hermann and Dinner Apartments, have recently been extensively renovated using state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credits for continued use as low-income housing.

The National Register is the nation's official listing of significant historic resources. In Massachusetts, there are more than 75,000 properties listed in the National Register. The Massachusetts Historical Commission has been administering the National Register of Historic Places program in Massachusetts since 1966.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission is the office of the State Historic Preservation Officer and the State Archaeologist. It was established in 1963 to identify, evaluate, and protect important historical and archaeological assets of the Commonwealth. Additional information about the Commission's programs is available at www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc.

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