

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections**1. Name**

historic Sophian Plaza

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 4618 Warwick Blvd.

___ not for publication

city, town Kansas City

___ vicinity of

congressional district 5

state Missouri

code 29

county Jackson

code 095

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	N/A being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Sophian Plaza Association

street & number 4618 Warwick

city, town Kansas City

___ vicinity of

state Missouri

5. Location of Legal Descriptioncourthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of Recorder of Deeds
Jackson County Courthouse, K.C., Annex

street & number 415 East 12th Street

city, town Kansas City

state Missouri

6. Representation in Existing Surveystitle Historic Kansas City Foundation Survey has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes ☒ no

date September 1980

___ federal ___ state ___ county ☒ local

depository for survey records Historic Kansas City Foundation, 20 W. 9th St.

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Landmarks Commission Historic Inventory
Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, Mo. Local
City Hall - 26th Floor
412 E. 12th St.
Kansas City, Missouri

Item number	#11	Page	1
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2. James M. Denny, Chief, Survey and Registration
and State Contact Person
Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Division of Parks and Historic Preservation
Historic Preservation Program
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City

October 20, 1982
314/751-4096
Missouri 65102

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Sophian Plaza, begun in 1922 and located at 4618 Warwick Blvd., in Kansas City, Missouri, is a luxury high-rise apartment building. It is situated in a prominent place at the intersection of Brush Creek Blvd., a busy thoroughfare, and Warwick Blvd. The principal (east) facade faces Southmoreland Park. The site slopes away toward the west exposing a raised basement on the west facade. The scale, location and Beaux-Arts design make the Sophian Plaza an imposing example of the high-rise luxury apartments which line the north and south sides of the Country Club Plaza.

EXTERIOR:

The building is a modified H shape in plan with a deeply recessed bay on the principal (east) facade and a shallow recessed bay on the rear (west) facade. The frontage on Warwick Blvd. measures 116 feet 5 inches; frontage on 47th St. measures 96 feet. The apartment building stands nine stories tall including the raised basement. The steel frame construction has exterior walls of brick, laid in stretcher and flemish bond floors one through eight, and rock-faced limestone with terra cotta detailing about the openings. There are 13 bays on the east and west facade and 11 bays on the north and south sides of the building. A decorated parapet rises to conceal a flat composition roof.

The planning and massing of the structure is strictly symmetrical. The composition is divided into three parts with the climatic feature on the principal east facade being the two story central pavillion connecting the north and south wings. Characteristic of the Beaux-Arts style, the pavillion is composed of colossal columns, some grouped in pairs, crowned by an enriched entablature supporting a balustrade and free standing sculpture. Wrought iron light fixtures are suspended from the soffit of the entablature between each column. A wrought iron fence is placed directly behind the columns. The monumental flight of steps ascending to the front door are also typical of this style. A preference for advancing and receding planes is evident in the central recessed bay as well as in the shadows cast by the differentiated surface textures of rusticated, corbeled and patterned brick; rock-faced limestone, and molded terra cotta ornament.

The west facade resembles the east facade in the similarly recessed central bay and dramatic semi-circular colonnade. Again, colossal columns, sometimes coupled, support an enriched entablature, and encircle an open air patio raised on a rock-faced limestone base.

The building has a total of 686 symmetrically arranged windows, all four facades inclusive. Characteristically, both arched and linteled openings, sometimes set between colonettes and pilasters, appear in the same elevation. Semi-circular headed windows appear on the main floor while all other exterior windows are rectangularly shaped with either arched brick or terra cotta surrounds, or a flat arch vertical joint brick surround with keystone. Large six over six light double hung sash windows fenestrate the raised basement. Four windows fenestrate the raised limestone base of the semi-circular porch on the west facade.

The principal entrance on the east facade is enframed by a semi-circular opening flanked by enlarged pilasters and crowned by an enriched entablature. Shallow balconies with wrought iron balustrades are located to either side. The doorway is approached by a single flight of steps with a wrought iron handrail; the whole is crowned by a canvas canopy. A secondary entrance is located in the northern wing of the east facade in the raised basement level.

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Two secondary entrances are located on the south facade. One is centered at raised basement level; the other, approached by a flight of wrought iron steps, is centered on the first floor.

A pair of French doors and a modern single leaf single panel door, both with fan lights, lead onto the open air patio on the west facade. A third doorway, at basement level, is located in the northwestern corner of the west facade.

A service entrance is located at ground level on the north facade.

Additional wrought iron lamps illuminate entrances and exits.

In general, the Sophian Plaza is characterized by the Beaux-Arts preference for large, grandiose compositions and an abundance of ornamental detail and surface textures.

INTERIOR:

The interior space of the lobby is sizeable and dependent upon Classical Revival and neoclassical prototypes for both its floorplan and decoration. A high light blue and gilt coffered ceiling looks down upon marble floors and richly ornamented white plaster cornices, piers, and arched panels. A fireplace is centered along the west wall. Lighting fixtures include a large brass chandelier and brass wall sconces. Located to either side of the central lobby, marble steps ascend to hallways containing mail and service rooms to the north and elevators to the south. The Sophian Plaza homes 40 luxury condominium apartments.

OUTBUILDINGS:

A single story irregularly shaped brick service garage is located in the northwest corner of the building grounds. Rectangular six over six light double hung sash windows fenestrate the building, access to which is provided by the garage door and entrance door facing 46th Street. The structure has a flat composition roof; brick quoins accent corners.

ENVIRONS:

Stone retaining walls are located opposite the east facade of the Sophian Plaza along Warwick Boulevard bordering Southmoreland Park; and parallel to Brush Creek Blvd. along the southern facade. Two flights of stairs lead from Brush Creek Blvd. to the open air patio in the rear of the apartment building. Stairs ascent to the patio from the north as well. A modest lawn servicing the complex is located behind the patio to the west. A surface parking lot is located directly to the north of the apartment building.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1922-1923 **Builder/Architect** Charles E. Shepard & Alfred C. Wiser

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Sophian Plaza is significant as a fine example of the Beaux Arts Classical Style of architecture in Kansas City; as a representative work of the local architectural firm of Shepard and Wiser; and as an example of early 20c modern deluxe apartment construction in this area. It is notable too, that the Sophian Plaza has maintained a fashionable address since the time it was built.

Soon after his arrival in Kansas City from New York in 1916, Harry J. Sophian established his reputation as an innovator in modern apartment construction. The Georgian Court Apartments built in 1917, set the standard for luxurious highrise living and prompted the Kansas City Star to remark in April 9, 1922 that Sophian "gave Kansas City a new standard in deluxe apartment buildings."

In 1918, Sophian purchased an irregularly shaped lot of three and one-half acres on Warwick Blvd. This lot also had frontage on Brush Creek Blvd. and overlooked Southmoreland Park. Within a year, plans were announced for a one million dollar project to take place on this piece of land. Construction however was not begun until the spring of 1922. The firm of Shepard & Wiser, architects for the Georgian Court apartments, designed the nine story Sophian Plaza. A total of 46 apartments renting from \$125 to \$250 a month, were available in six or seven room units complete with bath, foyer, library and separate servants quarters. A single story red brick service garage to the northwest of the apartment house was available to tenants for the storage of their automobiles.

Sophian stated at a press conference in 1922, "I desire a structure that will measure up to its environment out there on the edge of the Rockhill district. To the north and to the east are restricted homes areas and I told my architects to instill into towering brick and stone the fine residential character of the neighborhood...When I was fortunate enough to obtain this site a few years ago, I appreciated the suburban atmosphere which scarcely suggests proximity to two main car lines or a relatively central location. The site is large enough to permit landscaping with a formal Italian garden as a feature."

The Sophia Plaza was completed in 1923 and has continually maintained 100 percent occupancy since that time. Over the years there have been many changes in ownership. After Harry Sophian died in 1945 the Sophian Plaza Building Company, which represented bond holders, sold the property to Barney Goodman in 1948. Charles A. Gambrill, a Kansas City Realtor, purchased the building in 1954. In 1955, five residents of the Sophian Plaza again formed a partnership to buy the building. They contracted with the L.J. Baer Company to manage the property. In 1977 the complex was sold to Avis Enterprises of Ann Arbor, Michigan and L.J. Baer Co. who is supervising the transition from rental units to condominium ownership.

With this change to condominiums the Sophian Plaza has undergone a major renovation in its interior spaces as well as exterior.

The local prominent architectural firm of Charles E. Shepard and Alfred C. Wiser were actively engaged in designing many hotels, churches, and residences in the Country Club District and Mission Hills area.

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Addendum

The siting of the Sophian Plaza contributes to its significance within that area of Westport known as the Southmoreland Neighborhood. The immediate boundaries of this neighborhood are 44th St. on the north, Brush Creek Blvd. on the south, Rockhill Rd. on the east and Main St. on the west. The largely residential neighborhood has a truly cosmopolitan flavor owing to the many fine arts institutions within its borders. Former mansions now house cultural institutions including Vauderslice Hall of the Kansas City Art Institute located in the August R. Meyer Residence; The University of Missouri at Kansas City Conservatory of Music found in the S.B. Armour home and The Nelson Gallery of Art-Atkins Museum built in 1930 on the site of the William Rockhill Nelson estate, Oak Hall.

The neighborhood west of the Art Institute campus and Conservatory was platted in 1899 by W.B. Clarke, who named the area Southmoreland. The curving tree lined streets, small parks and vistas within the area reflect the influence of the "City Beautiful Movement" at that time advocated by W.R. Nelson publisher of the Kansas City Star and Times and developer of the adjacent Rockhill Neighborhood to the east. In both the Southmoreland and Rockhill districts, thoroughfares correspond to the national topography providing a relief from the usual grid pattern. The prolific use of limestone for walls and foundations, appearing in both neighborhoods, is also Nelson inspired and owed much to the quarry situated near these holdings.

The Sophian Plaza, with its majestic appearance, provides a strong visual anchor to the southern boundary of the Southmoreland Neighborhood. In keeping with the precepts of the "City Beautiful Movement," the building fronts on Southmoreland Park to the east, overlooking what were originally the gracious lawns of Oak Hall. Set far back from the curb on a gently rising slope, the Sophian is approached from the east by Warwick Blvd. and set at a 45 degree angle from Brush Creek Blvd., a principal thoroughfare and southern terminus to the neighborhood.

As a multi-unit highrise building, the Sophian Plaza was designed to harmonize with the large number of single family residences in the Southmoreland neighborhood by utilizing similar classical design elements, materials and proportions. In keeping with these mansions, the Sophian also shares a gracious classical entryway and attractive landscaping in the English countryside manner. The Sophian is an integral part of homogeneous and sophisticated 20th century streetscape in the Kansas City urban environment.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Kansas City Star/Times

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1.2

Quadrangle name "Kansas City"

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	5	3	6	2	9	4	0	4	3	2	2	4	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The Sophian Plaza is situated on an irregularly shaped lot measuring approximately 51,640 sq. ft. It is bounded to north by 46th St., to the south by Brush Creek Blvd. and to the east by Warwick Blvd.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

1. name/title Patricia Brown Glenn, Director of Research & Education / Dir. of Research & Education Emily F. Woodward, Asst.
organization Historic Kansas City Foundation date _____
street & number 20 W. 9th St. Suite 450 telephone 816/471-3391
city or town Kansas City state Missouri

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Director, Department of Natural Resources and
title State Historic Preservation Officer

date _____

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date _____

Keeper of the National Register

Attent.

date _____

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SOPHIAN PLAZA

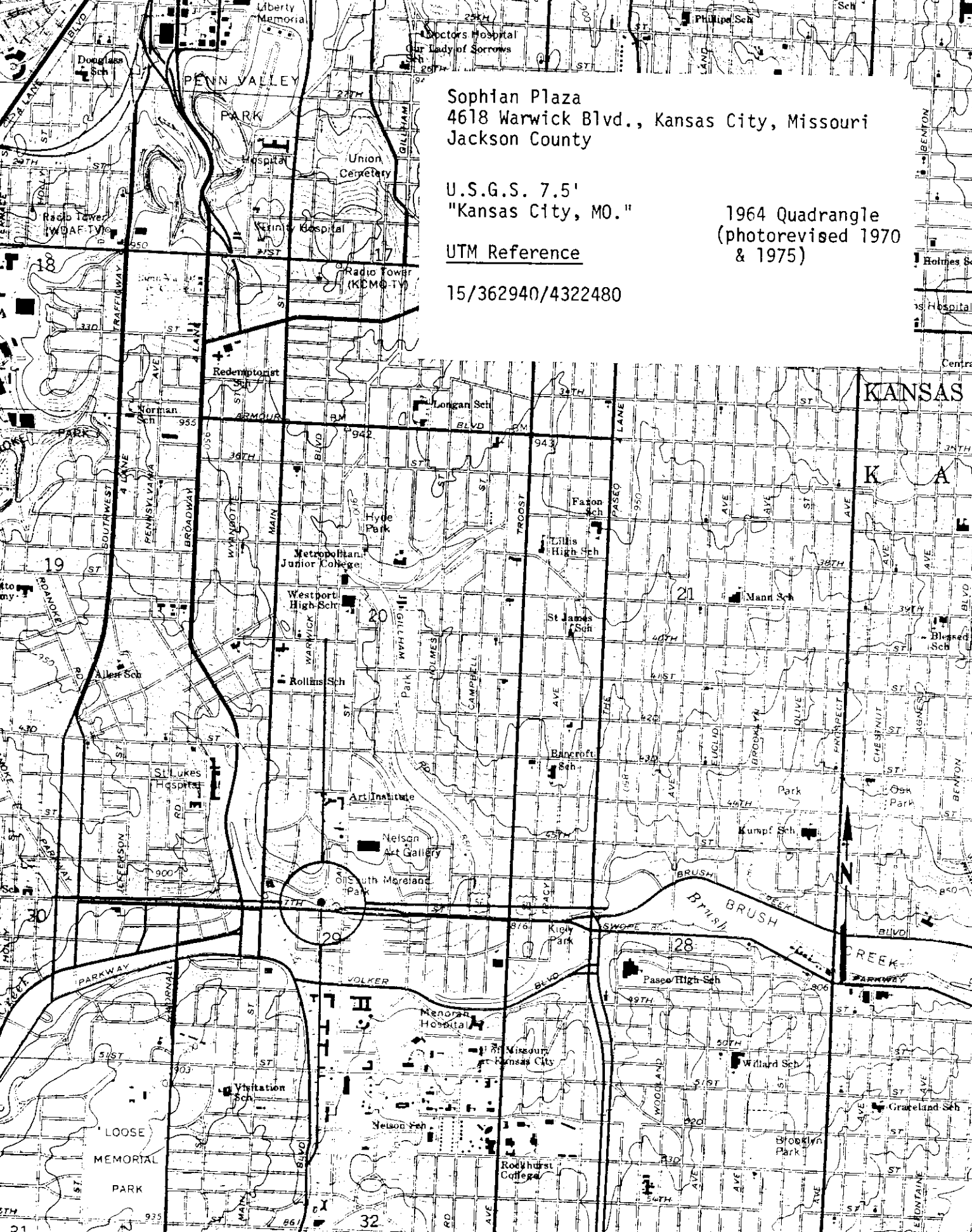
Item number

10

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1

The Sophian Plaza is situated on an irregularly shaped lot measuring approximately 51,540 square feet. It is bounded to north by 46th, to the south by Brush Creek Boulevard, to the east by Warwick Boulevard, and to west by a tall hedge separating the back lawn of the Sophian property from the neighboring apartment houses.



Sophian Plaza
4618 Warwick Blvd., Kansas City, Missouri
Jackson County

U.S.G.S. 7.5'
"Kansas City, MO."

UTM Reference

15/362940/4322480

1964 Quadrangle
(photorevised 1970
& 1975)

Photo Log:

Name of Property: **Sophian Plaza**

City or Vicinity: **Kansas City**

County: **Jackson County** State: **MO**

Photographer: **Joan L. Michalak**

Date

Photographed: **Sept. 1980**

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 12. E
- 2 of 12. SE
- 3 of 12. N
- 4 of 12. E
- 5 of 12. E
- 6 of 12. E
- 7 of 12. SW
- 8 of 12. N
- 9 of 12. Lobby
- 10 of 12. W Lobby.
- 11 of 12. Detail lobby.
- 12 of 12. Detail lobby.























