

# Mt. Calvary / Shara Tfilo Campus

## BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION STUDY REPORT



Petition # 274.21  
Boston Landmarks Commission  
City of Boston

Report on the Potential Designation of

**Mt. Calvary / Shara Tfilo Campus**  
**9-19 Otisfield Street, Boston, Massachusetts**

As a Landmark under Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, as amended

Approved by:

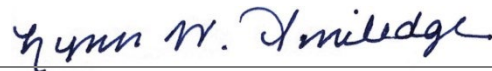


8/2/2022

Rosanne Foley, Executive Director

Date

Approved by:



8/2/2022

Lynn Smiledge, Chair

Date

Draft report posted on August 2, 2022

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## INTRODUCTION

The designation of the Mt. Calvary Holy Church /Congregation Shara Tfilo Synagogue Campus was initiated in 2021 after a petition was submitted by registered voters to the Boston Landmarks Commission asking that the Commission designate the property under the provisions of Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, as amended. The purpose of such a designation is to recognize and protect a physical feature or improvement which in whole or part has historical, cultural, social, architectural, or aesthetic significance.

### Summary

The Mt. Calvary Holy Church /Congregation Shara Tfilo Synagogue Campus (hereinafter commonly referred to as the Mt. Calvary / Shara Tfilo Campus) at 9 – 19 Otisfield Street (per assessor's identification) is significant on the local, state, regional, and national levels for its extraordinary role in the history of immigration, the development of working-class communities and institutions, and the succession of ethnic groups throughout time and space. The two occupants of this property-- Congregation Shara Tfilo and Mt. Calvary Holy Church--exemplify the vibrant Jewish and Black communities that developed successively in Roxbury in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The structures built here in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, although modest in their architectural design, evoke a powerful sense of the cultural priorities of the Jewish and Black communities for nearly 125 years. The original synagogue building and Hebrew school are largely intact and are prominently located at the interface of a residential district with the commercial and institutional spine of Blue Hill Avenue.

Unoccupied since 2013, the Mt. Calvary / Shara Tfilo property is threatened by deferred maintenance and potential redevelopment. The purpose of this designation is to honor and preserve the history of spiritual, educational, and social services at the properties, as home to an Eastern European immigrant community for 50 years and to the Black community for the last half-century. The Mt. Calvary Holy Church congregation and other community members are working to develop plans for both immediate repairs and long-term renovations of the entire complex. It is hoped that landmark designation will increase funding opportunities for restoration and renovation of the buildings, courtyard, and adjacent garden space, to perpetuate their traditional uses of community-building, education, and public service.

This study report contains Standards and Criteria which have been prepared to guide future physical changes to the property in order to protect its integrity and character.

The Mt. Calvary / Shara Tfilo campus has a complicated array of addresses and names. The petition encompasses three parcels:

<b><u>Address</u></b>	<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Program</u></b>
9-13 Otisfield Street	Roxbury Hebrew School	school
15 Otisfield Street	Mt. Calvary Holy Church / Congregation Shara Tfilo	church/synagogue
17-19 Otisfield Street	n/a (empty lot)	outdoor gathering space

Historically, the corner lot at 17-19 Otisfield Street has sometimes also used the address of 347 Blue Hill Avenue. The petition lists the historic names of the buildings as Congregation Sharei Tfila/Otisfield Street Synagogue and Roxbury Hebrew School. Multiple spellings of the congregation's name have been used, some concurrently. The most consistently and authoritatively accepted name appears to be Shara Tfilo, which is used in this report.

### **Boston Landmarks Commission**

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Felicia Jacques  
Lindsey Mac-Jones  
Justine Orlando  
Diana Parcon  
Anne Renehan  
Brad Walker

### **Staff**

Rosanne Foley, Executive Director  
Joe Bagley, City Archaeologist  
Jennifer Gaugler, Architectural Historian

### **Consultant for preparation of initial report**

Wendy Frontiero

The activity that is the subject of this Study Report has been financed in part with Federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, through the Massachusetts Historical Commission, Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin, Chairman. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior, or the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

This program receives Federal financial assistance for identification and protection of historic properties. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability or age in its federally assisted programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or if you desire further information, please write to: Office for Equal Opportunity, National Park Service, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20240.

## **1.0 LOCATION**

### **1.1 Address**

According to the City of Boston's Assessing Department, the Mt. Calvary Holy Church / Congregation Shara Tfilo Campus is located at 9-13 Otisfield Street (the school building), 15 Otisfield Street (the synagogue/church), and 17-19 Otisfield Street (an empty lot), Boston, Mass. 02121.

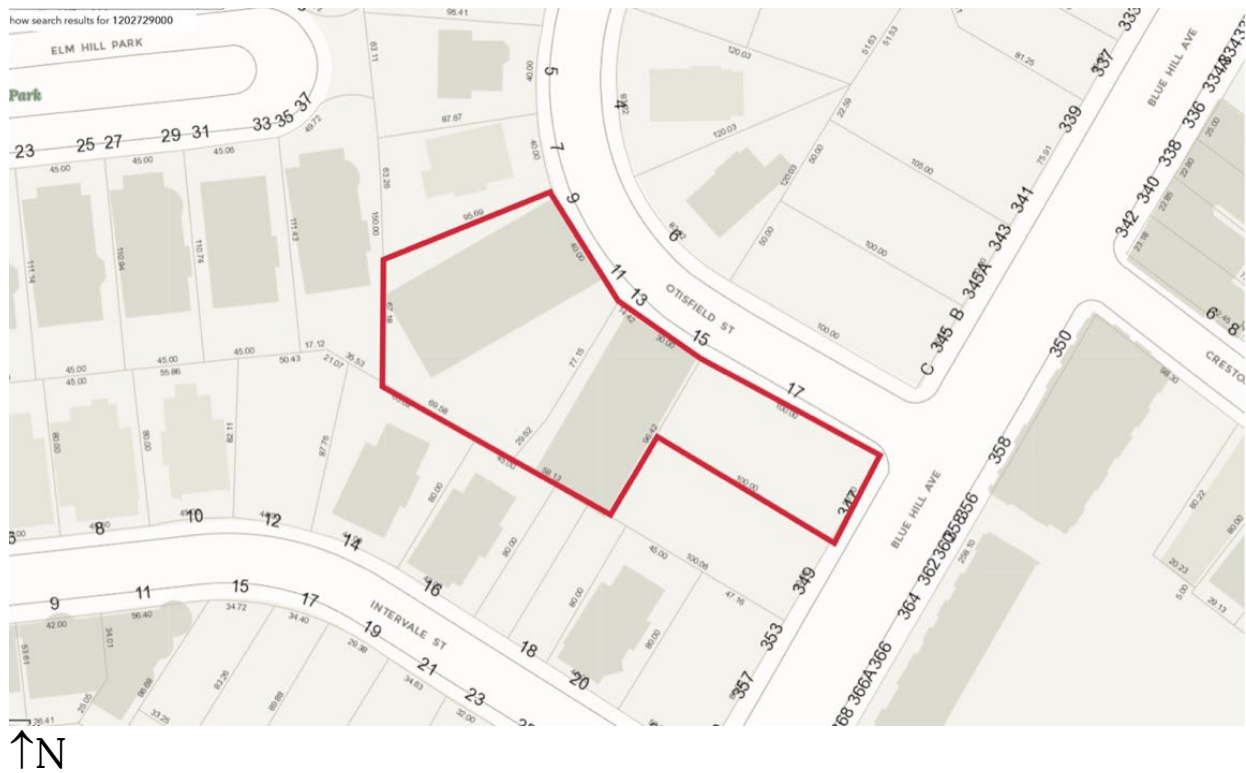
### **1.2 Assessor's Parcel Number**

The Assessor's Parcel Numbers are 1202727000 (9-13 Otisfield Street), 1202728000 (15 Otisfield Street), and 1202729000 (17-19 Otisfield Street), respectively.

### **1.3 Area in which Property is Located**

The Mt. Calvary / Shara Tfilo Campus is located in the Grove Hall neighborhood in the southern part of Roxbury (a.k.a. Upper Roxbury), at the intersection of Otisfield Street and Blue Hill Avenue. Extending approximately three miles through Roxbury and Dorchester, Blue Hill Avenue is a major north-south thoroughfare, serving as a focus of commercial and institutional development and a magnet for adjacent residential development. The immediately surrounding area is a densely developed network of streets characterized by three-story masonry blocks along Blue Hill Avenue and two-and-a-half story wood-frame dwellings on the residential side streets. Development in this area occurred primarily in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The property boundaries are the assessor's bounds for the three above-referenced parcels, which together contain 22,151 square feet (approximately half an acre) of land. The property is not located in a designated historic district. It has, however, been recommended as eligible for the National Register by preservation consultants and staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission. (See National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form for BOS.11322 and BOS.18024.)

## 1.4 Map Showing Location



**Figure 1.** Map showing the boundaries of parcel #s 1202727000, 1202728000, and 1202729000.

## **2.0 DESCRIPTION**

### **2.1 Type and Use**

The property at 9-13 and 15 Otisfield Street was in continuous use as a religious institution for approximately 100 years, from the early 20<sup>th</sup> through early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The building occupying 9-13 Otisfield Street was initially used as a religious school, and later housed offices and social service activities. The building at 15 Otisfield Street has historically been used for religious worship. The buildings on these two parcels have been vacant since 2013. The property at 17-19 Otisfield Street is an undeveloped lot maintained chiefly in lawn; it is protected by an open space restriction held by the City of Boston. A brick commercial building occupied the parcel for most of the first three-quarters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; it was demolished in 1971.

All three parcels are located in the Roxbury Neighborhood Zoning District. The parcel at 9-13 Otisfield Street is located in a 3F-4000 Zoning Subdistrict; its Subdistrict Type is categorized as Three-Family Residential. There is no zoning overlay on this parcel. The parcels at 15 and 17-19 Otisfield Street are located in an MFR Zoning Subdistrict, and their Subdistrict Type is categorized as Multi-Family Residential. 15 Otisfield Street has no zoning overlay, while 17-19 Otisfield Street is subject to a Boulevard Planning District zoning overlay.

### **2.2 Physical Description of the Resource**

Bordered by Otisfield Street and Blue Hill Avenue, the Mt. Cavalry / Shara Tfilo Campus is located on a large, generally flat site. The irregularly-shaped parcel includes two large rectangular buildings facing Otisfield Street – the Mt. Calvary Holy Church / Congregation Shara Tfilo Synagogue (1915-1916) and the Roxbury Hebrew School (1921-1923) – and an open parcel at the corner of Otisfield Street and Blue Hill Avenue. The two free-standing brick buildings are set directly on the sidewalk edge, at a bend in Otisfield Street. They are linked by a one-story wall (1921-1923) that contains entry vestibules to the flanking buildings and a gateway to the wedge-shaped courtyard between the buildings. The courtyard is paved with asphalt and concrete and contains a simple cast-stone monument situated towards the rear. A one-story high, poured-concrete retaining wall defines the rear property line behind the buildings and supports the back yards of adjacent houses on Intervale Street. The open parcel at the corner of Otisfield Street and Blue Hill Avenue is maintained in lawn. It is bordered on its street edges by a chain link fence and regularly-spaced deciduous trees.

#### Mt. Calvary Holy Church / Congregation Shara Tfilo Synagogue (1915-1916)

The church/synagogue building is a long rectangular structure divided into three architectural bays across the front and eight window bays along the side elevations. Its design is an eclectic mix of modest Romanesque and Colonial Revival styles. Measuring approximately 43 feet wide by 95 feet deep, the building rises above a concrete block foundation and raised basement to a very shallow-pitched gable roof, which is evident at the rear of the building but is concealed by a minimal parapet at the façade. The interior of the building has a basement level, main floor, and balcony level.



Walls are typically constructed of a hard, red brick at the façade; a coarser and darker red brick on the side and rear elevations; ornamental bands of ivory brick on the façade; and cast stone trim throughout. A small, utilitarian brick chimney rises above the roof towards the front of the southeast elevation. The façade (northeast elevation) is articulated as three stories above a blank raised basement, while the side elevations are fenestrated at the raised basement and two upper levels. The two primary entrances of the building are contained in small, flat-roofed vestibules appended to the front corners of the main block. All observations were made from public ways, limiting the amount of details observable on the side and rear elevations.

The symmetrical façade of the main building is divided into three horizontal and three vertical parts. The horizontal layers consist of a concrete block foundation with a shaped, cast-stone water table, a one-story base with a minimal cast-stone entablature, and a two-story top section. Areas of rough brick at the top of the outer bays and the very abrupt top edge of the façade suggest that the building originally had a parapet here, but no photographic evidence has yet been located. There is no decorative trim at the roofline.

Window bays on the façade are grouped 1/3/1. Two slightly projecting outer bays contain a single window at each floor, and a wide center section has a trio of windows at each level. The center section contains a slightly projecting frontispiece on the first story, punctuated by three square 2/2 windows with textured, colored glass and cast stone sills and corner blocks. The center section's second and third stories are ornamented with a two-story high, round-arch frame of ivory-colored stretcher bricks; the outer band of bricks projects slightly around the arched top. Within this arched frame are three two-story high, round-arched window bays, defined by slender red brick piers. The second story windows have rectangular, double-hung, Queen Anne sash (having a square center pane and smaller, textured glass panes along the perimeter) trimmed with cast stone sills and lintels. A molded cast stone panel below the second-story windows displays a Star of David at each end. Spandrel panels above the second story windows are ornamented with tapestry brick borders, cast stone corner blocks at the base, and a cast stone cornice molding above. The third story of the center section contains three round-arched windows: a tall, 1/1 double-hung window in the center flanked by a shorter, one-light sash on each side. The round-arched windows have cast stone sills, spring blocks, and keystones, and brick lintels constructed of two courses of red header bricks.

The façade's narrow end bays feature round-arched window openings at the first story, which are trimmed with cast-stone spring blocks and brick lintels formed by two courses of red header bricks. The first-story windows contain double-hung Queen Anne sash (having a large center pane and smaller textured glass panes along the perimeter) and a glazed transom. The upper portions of the end bays are outlined by two-story high, tapestry brick borders (ivory-colored brick at the sides and red brick at the top and bottom) and cast stone corner blocks. The second and third stories of the end bays each contain a rectangular 1/1 window with textured glass in their upper sash, cast stone sills, and ivory-colored, soldier brick lintels. A similar tapestry brick panel ornaments the forward-most bay of each side elevation, although the panels on those elevations are blank.

The church/synagogue building has two primary entrances, both contained in small one-story, flat-roofed vestibules attached to the front corners of the main block. Each vestibule is framed with cast stone pilasters and a simple cast-stone entablature; their side and rear exterior walls are brick. The entrances feature cast concrete steps at the southeast corner and brick steps at the northwest

corner; recessed, historic 6-paneled double-leaf doors with wood trim and a glazed rectangular transom; and a signboard panel above. On each entrance, one of the recessed sides is trimmed with wood paneling, the other has exposed hard red brick. The signboard above the entrance at the southeast corner presents information about services and identifies the Mt. Calvary Church pastors. (The signboard appears to be re-used from the synagogue-era of the property.) The vestibule at the northwest corner of the building is part of the connector wall between the church/synagogue and school buildings.

More utilitarian than the façade, the side and rear elevations of the church/synagogue building are constructed of a coarser, darker red brick (which is painted on the southeast elevation) and display segmentally-arched window openings. Relatively evenly-spaced and loosely grouped in pairs, these openings have cast stone sills, brick lintels with two courses of header bricks, and rectangular sash. Both side elevations feature two rows of full-height windows, taller on the upper level. The raised basement level of the northwest elevation is not clearly visible from the public way. Although a remarkable amount of original or later contributing 2/2 window sash survives, a variety of replacement wood, vinyl, and metal sash is scattered throughout the building. The staggered heights of windows in the forward-most bay of each side elevation suggest interior stairways beyond.

The side elevations feature several secondary entrances containing steel doors within segmentally-arched openings. Both sides have steel fire escapes at the rear. The southeast elevation has multiple short, irregularly-spaced doorways at ground level, most of which appear to have plywood infill. Positioned between the two southernmost window bays, two vertically-aligned doorways at the rear of this elevation are accessed by steel fire escapes, are staggered at half-levels below the windows, and contain double-leaf steel doors. A structural investigation of the building (Silman 2021) identifies a basement level doorway accessed by concrete retaining walls at the rear of the building, likely under the fire-escape entries; this was not visible from the public way, however. At the rear of the northwest elevation, one doorway at the balcony level of the building is discernible from the public way. The rear elevation of the building has limited visibility from Intervale Street; it appears to have no fenestration.

#### Roxbury Hebrew School (1921-1923)

The school building is a long rectangular structure divided into five architectural bays across the front and twelve window bays along its side elevations. Measuring approximately 48 feet wide by 102 feet deep, the building rises three stories above a raised basement to a flat roof and displays a modest Colonial Revival style design.

Walls are typically constructed of a hard, red brick at the façade; a coarser and darker red brick on the side and rear elevations; and brick and cast stone trim throughout. A small, utilitarian brick chimney rises above the roof towards the front of the southeast elevation. The interior of the building has a partially-exposed, brick basement level and three upper stories. Windows typically have rectangular openings on the façade and segmentally arched openings on the side and rear elevations. Sash are typically one-over-one replacement windows on the façade, with significant wood infilling, and double-hung sash with narrow transoms on the side elevations. The side elevations retain a significant amount of original or later contributing 2/2 wood sash.

Like the synagogue, the façade of the school building is divided into three parts both horizontally and vertically. The horizontal layers include a brick basement level articulated by a concrete foundation, shaped cast stone water table above, and three small square windows, symmetrically placed, with plain, cast stone lintels and concrete block infill. The first floor of the facade is surmounted by a continuous, cast stone entablature that is divided into decorative panels and crowned by a pronounced rectangular cornice. The panels of this entablature contain several decorative features, including the raised numerals 5682 (indicating the date of the building in the Jewish calendar) and two Stars of David. Rough concrete rectangles positioned in the entablature above the four westernmost windows appear to cover other ornamental motifs.

The façade windows are grouped in a 1-3-1 pattern; all façade windows have been infilled with smaller modern replacement sash. The taller window openings at the first floor are trimmed with cast stone sills, with an entablature above serving as a continuous lintel. Shorter windows at the second and third stories have cast stone sills and individual lintels with pronounced cornice molding. The spandrel panel between the center trios of windows on the second and third stories contains a blank panel of cast stone or parging, which may originally have displayed a religious motif or building name. On the first story, a painted wood sign is mounted below the easternmost window on the first story; it identifies the building as “Dr. Brumfield Johnson / CHRISTIAN / ACADEMY / & / NCY BIBLE / INSTITUTE”. A photo from the 1970s shows original or later contributing window sash on the façade, consisting primarily of 2/2 sash typically occupying the entire window openings on all three floors. On the first story, all five windows had glazed rectangular transoms, and the center three windows appear to have contained pairs of 1/1 casements. The upper two stories may also have had very narrow glazed transoms; further research is merited.

The side elevations of the school building feature relatively regularly-spaced windows, loosely grouped in pairs. Their segmentally-arched openings are trimmed with cast concrete sills and three courses of header bricks at the brick lintels. Rectangular, glazed transoms appear to be characteristic on all floors, although some on the upper stories have been infilled with wood.

The principal entrance to the school building is contained in a one-story, flat-roofed, brick vestibule. Part of the connector wall between the church/synagogue and school buildings, this vestibule is attached to the eastern corner of the main block. Like the vestibule on the church/synagogue building, the school's entry vestibule is framed with cast stone pilasters and a simple cast-stone entablature; its side and rear exterior walls are brick. The school's recessed entrance has brick steps; a modern, single-leaf paneled wood door with wood infill, wood trim, and a glazed rectangular transom; and a signboard panel above. One of the recessed sides of the entrance is trimmed with wood paneling, the other has exposed hard red brick.

A secondary school entrance is located on the school's southeast elevation, on the first story of the rear-most bay. This entrance appears to have concrete steps and a tall, rectangular opening with recessed doors. The doors and any trim or ornament are not visible from the public way.

### Connector Wall and Courtyard (ca. 1921-1923)

The church/synagogue and school buildings are linked by a one-story high, three-bay wide connector wall. The end bays of the connector contain the entrance vestibules to the adjacent buildings; the center bay provides entrance to the courtyard between the two buildings.

Constructed of cast concrete, the Classical Revival-style connector wall features a paneled entablature and pilasters. The entry vestibules have been described in detail above with their adjacent buildings; they each feature three brick steps with modern wrought-iron railings and concrete cheek walls, slightly recessed entrances, and a rectangular glazed transom over the doorway. The church/synagogue building retains historic, double-leafed wood doors; the school building has a modern single-leaf wood door and wood infill. The center bay of the connector wall contains a double-leaf, decorative ironwork gate with a plain ironwork spandrel above. A narrow, painted wood sign above the ironwork corresponds with the glazed transom over the flanking doorways. Solid signboard panels are positioned between the tops of the pilasters on all three bays of the connector wall. Text painted on these panels relate to the Mt. Calvary Holy Church. Finials of as-yet undetermined design originally crowned the inner two pilasters. The western finial is missing and only the base may remain on the eastern finial. Modern light fixtures are mounted in circular moldings at the mid-point of all four pilasters.

Trapezoidal in shape, the courtyard defined by the church/synagogue and school buildings measures approximately 100 feet deep, 40 feet across the front (street) edge, and 100 feet along the back edge. It is surfaced with both asphalt and concrete; shrubs and young trees appear to grow randomly along the back and sides. There is no indication of formal plantings from the public way. A modest obelisk is positioned approximately at the center point at the rear of the courtyard. Constructed of cast stone, this three-stage object has a plain base, paneled mid-section with molded trim, a top section with a recessed circular panel, and a pyramidal cap with a ball finial. An areaway along the basement wall of the school has been reported in a recent structural report (Silman 2021), but could not be confirmed from the public way for this study.

The church/synagogue building, school building, and connector wall are all in fair to poor condition. On the church/synagogue building, structural failure has occurred at the base of the façade, including collapse of a section of face brick in the center of the wall. Temporary wood shoring presently stabilizes this section of wall; extending onto the sidewalk, it is enclosed by plywood panels.

### 2.3 Contemporary Images



**Figure 2.** Facades (northeast elevations) of Mt. Calvary Holy Church/Congregation Shara Tfilo Synagogue (L) and Roxbury Hebrew School (R), looking west. May 2022.



**Figure 3.** Facades (northeast elevations) of Mt. Calvary Holy Church/Congregation Shara Tfilo Synagogue (L) and Roxbury Hebrew School (R), looking southeast. May 2022.





**Figure 4.** View of open space at intersection of Blue Hill Ave. (L) and Otisfield Street (R), looking southwest. 17-19 Otisfield Street at right center. May 2022.



**Figure 5.** Blue Hill Avenue, looking southwest from Otisfield Street. Open space at 17-19 Otisfield Street at right; Temple Adath Jeshurun at far left. May 2022.



**Figure 6.** Facade (northeast) and southeast elevation of Mt. Calvary Holy Church/Congregation Shara Tfilo Synagogue. May 2022.

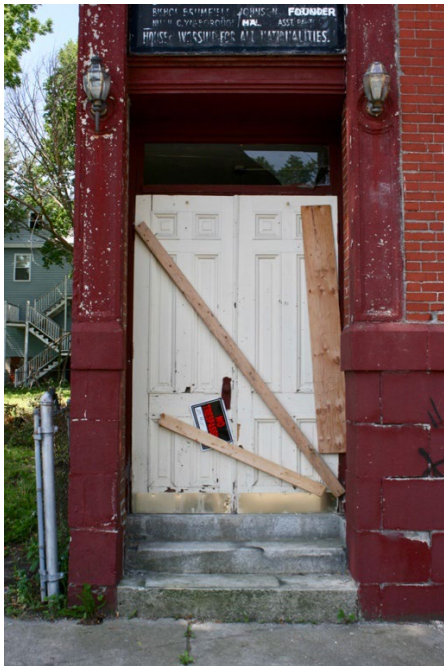


**Figure 7.** Façade detail of Mt. Calvary Holy Church/Congregation Shara Tfilo Synagogue. May 2022.





**Figure 8.** Facade detail of Mt. Calvary Holy Church/Congregation Shara Tfilo Synagogue. May 2022.



**Figure 9.** Façade detail (east entrance) of Mt. Calvary Holy Church/Congregation Shara Tfilo Synagogue. May 2022.





**Figure 10.** Southeast elevation of Mt. Calvary Holy Church/Congregation Shara Tfilo Synagogue, facing 17-19 Otisfield Street and Blue Hill Avenue. May 2022.



**Figure 11.** Facade (northeast elevation) of Roxbury Hebrew School. May 2022.



**Figure 12.** Northwest elevation of Roxbury Hebrew School. May 2022.



**Figure 13.** Southeast (courtyard) elevation of Roxbury Hebrew School. May 2022.





**Figure 14.** Façade detail of Roxbury Hebrew School. May 2022.



**Figure 15.** Courtyard elevations of Mt. Calvary Holy Church/Congregation Shara Tfilo Synagogue (R) and Roxbury Hebrew School (L). May 2022.



**Figure 16.** Façade (northeast elevation) of connector wall between Mt. Calvary Holy Church/Congregation Shara Tfilo Synagogue (L) and Roxbury Hebrew School (R). May 2022.



**Figure 17.** Detail of entrance gates at connector wall. May 2022.





**Figure 18.** Courtyard monument. May 2022.



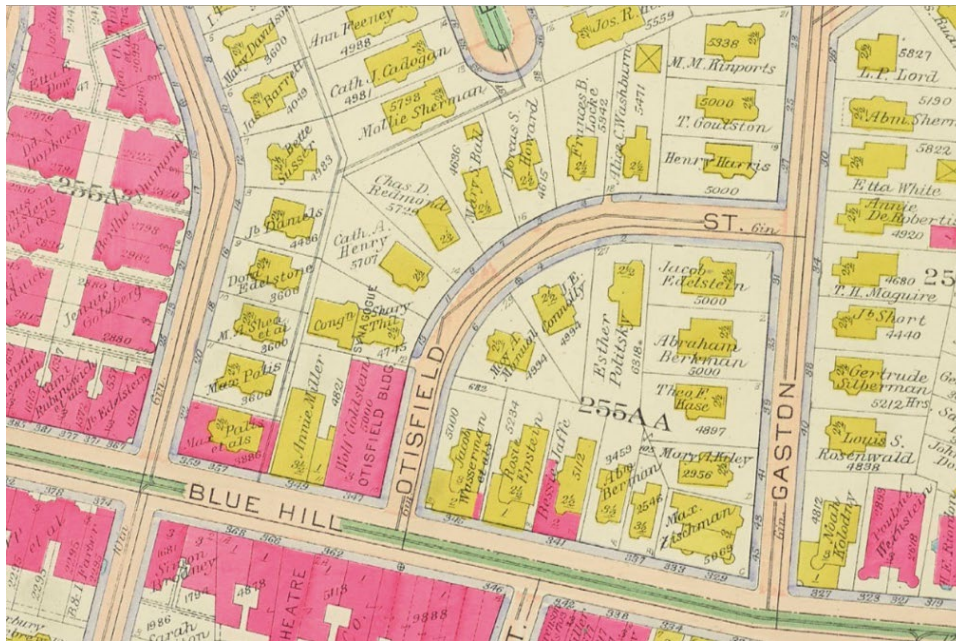
**Figure 19.** Open space at 17-19 Otisfield Street, looking northwest from Blue Hill Avenue. May 2022.



**Figure 20.** Open space at 17-19 Otisfield Street, looking southeast from Otisfield Street. Mt. Calvary Holy Church / Congregation Shara Tfilo Synagogue at far right. May 2022.

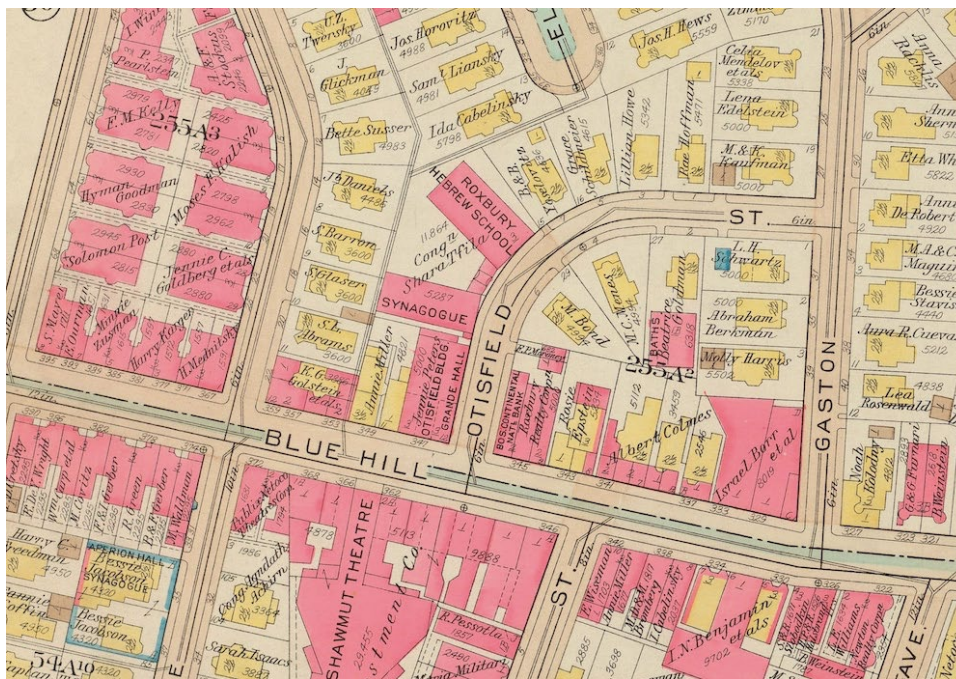


## 2.4 Historic Maps and Images



**Figure 21.** G.W. and W.S. Bromley, Atlas of the City of Boston; Roxbury. 1915.

**Source:** State Library of Massachusetts, Digital Repository.



**Figure 22.** G.W. and W.S. Bromley, Atlas of the City of Boston; Roxbury. 1931.

**Source:** Norman B. Leventhal Map and Education Center at the Boston Public Library.



**Figure 23.** View of Mt. Calvary Holy Church / Congregation Shara Tfilo Campus, ca. 1970s, looking southeast.

**Source:** American Jewish Historical Society, New England Archives, via BLC Landmark Petition Form for Mt. Calvary Holy Church / Congregation Shara Tfilo Campus, 2021.



## 3.0 SIGNIFICANCE

### 3.1 Historic Significance

#### Introduction

For at least 12,500 years, the Boston area has been home to the native Massachusetts people, whose presence in the area continues to this day. Roxbury, specifically, served as an important cultural and transportation node due to its location immediately preceding the narrow strip of land that led to the Shawmut Peninsula. Archaeological evidence of Native occupation has been found at several sites in Roxbury, including the Dillaway-Thomas House and the First Church in Roxbury.

The first European settlers of Roxbury arrived in 1630, a group of Puritan immigrants led by William Pynchon as part of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. They claimed an area just south of the Shawmut Peninsula that was characterized by hilly terrain, puddingstone outcroppings, fertile soil, streams, brooks, ponds, and woodland. Situated at the entrance to the narrow neck of the peninsula, Roxbury occupied the only land route into Boston for nearly two hundred years, which proved economically and, during the Revolutionary War, militarily advantageous. Roxbury was a quiet farming village for a century and half, although its proximity to Boston attracted genteel country estates (such as the 18th century Shirley-Eustis House) from an early date. From its earliest decades, Roxbury was also home to both free and enslaved Black residents. In the early 1800s, a formerly enslaved Black man named Tommy Hommagen operated a stagecoach stop along the route to Boston.

In the early 19th century, new industrial activity—tanneries, machine and chemical works, and cordage— took advantage of the area’s brooks to power manufactories and, distinctive to Roxbury, to produce beer. The 20 highways laid out in Roxbury in the early 17th century had grown to 40 streets in 1825, when all were given official names and street paving and sidewalks began to be installed. A host of transportation improvements followed during the 19th century, both propelling and responding to economic development. Horse-drawn omnibus service was established between Roxbury and Boston by 1826; the Boston & Providence Railroad opened in 1834, with a small station at Roxbury Crossing; and the Metropolitan Horse Railway was initiated between Roxbury and downtown Boston in 1856. Electric trolleys arrived in Roxbury in the 1890s, and elevated rapid transit service followed in 1901.

In Roxbury’s first wave of suburban development, during the early and mid-19th century, large parcels of farmland were purchased by Boston businessmen and subdivided into spacious, estate-size lots. These were acquired by wealthy and upper middle-class businessmen and professionals, who built comfortable, single-family, wood-frame homes and commuted into Boston.

In 1846, Roxbury was incorporated as a city. In 1868, it was annexed to the City of Boston, triggering a second wave of suburbanization that was propelled by industrial and civic prosperity. Handsomely designed single-family houses continued to be built in Roxbury, and stylish brick row housing for the middle and upper middle classes also became popular, developed on speculation. New commercial blocks and cultural institutions were built around the prominent squares.

By the turn of the 20th century, Boston was dramatically transformed by industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. The remaining large country estates were subdivided and redeveloped as the phenomenally-growing population was housed in new streetcar suburbs of multi-family housing, including two- and three-family free-standing buildings and countless rows of masonry rowhouses. Architectural quality varied, but was often modestly ambitious, reflecting the aspiring middle-class status of many of the new residents. Roxbury saw successive influxes of Irish, German, and Jewish immigrants. The wave of Jewish immigrants who arrived in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries originated primarily in Russia and eastern Europe and were mainly middle- and working class. After World War II, most of Boston's Jewish community moved out to even more distant, automobile-oriented suburbs such as Brookline, Newton, and Sharon. They were succeeded by the large-scale migration of African-Americans from southern states to northern cities in the 1940s and '50s, who established another vibrant, working-class community in Roxbury.

Economic disinvestment and urban renewal in the 1960s and 1970s prompted a steep decline in the Roxbury neighborhood: population and housing density receded, and many buildings were demolished or lost to arson. Community-based efforts over the last few decades, however, have begun to revitalize the area both physically and culturally. Many self-help and mutual aid initiatives were founded to help local residents obtain the services and support that they did not receive from the government or the financial sector. Many local religious organizations were also important sources of support for those in need.

Roxbury's population today is characterized by large Black and Latinx communities, including both residents whose families have been in the area for generations as well as more recent immigrants from Africa, Central America, the Caribbean, and other places. According to the City of Boston's Office of Language and Communications Access, the top four languages other than English spoken in Roxbury are Spanish, Haitian Creole, Portuguese/Cape Verdean Creole, and Chinese. There is also a significant Somali population in the area.

### Overview of the Jewish and Black Communities in Boston and Roxbury

Although Boston's first Jewish residents arrived in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, a permanent Jewish community was not established in the city until the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. Historically, Boston's Jewish congregations first began worshipping in private homes, then rented halls, occupied existing church buildings in existing neighborhoods, and finally built their own synagogues, both grand and modest, in newly settled or expanding neighborhoods. Jewish communities supported not only synagogues for worship but also unions and benevolent societies for social assistance, schools, social clubs, and financial institutions. Jewish history in Boston, as elsewhere in the United States, has also been marked by a tension between traditional and more liberal forms of worship, as congregations formed, changed, separated, and merged. Jewish history in Boston has also had an interesting connection with African-American history over the last two centuries, as the two communities frequently bought and sold each other's buildings and land, in neighborhoods from the West End to Roxbury.

Boston's first organized Jewish congregation, Congregation Ohabei Shalom, was formed in 1843, and represented approximately 125 families by 1851. Breakaway societies of Adath Israel and Mishkan

Israel followed in the mid-1850s. Boston's earliest Jewish residents were primarily Central European (German and Polish) immigrants, who were concentrated in the old ("lower") South End (today's theater district). By 1875, Boston was home to approximately 3,000 Jews, some relatively affluent but most still low-income. Beginning in the late 1870s, the more prosperous Jews, and their synagogues and schools, began moving outward to the new ("upper") South End, Roxbury, and Brookline. The three earliest congregations constructed or acquired new buildings in the upper South End in the 1880s; they also became increasingly more progressive in their spiritual observances.

Large waves of Eastern European Jews from the Russian empire began arriving in Boston in the 1880s, and between 1880 and 1910, the city's Jewish population grew from about 4,000 to 65,000. Mostly low income and more traditionally Orthodox, these immigrants concentrated in overcrowded tenements in the North End, West End, and Chelsea. Although a small community of middle-class Jews (100 to 200 families) lived in Roxbury and Dorchester in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Jewish community grew exponentially and flourished there in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, after the arrival of the street railway in the 1890s. By World War I, six congregations—large and small—had moved within a one-mile radius of each other in Roxbury. Congregation Adath Jeshurun was the first, established in Roxbury in 1891 and completing a grand new building on Blue Hill Avenue in 1906. The Boston Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA) moved from the South End to Roxbury in 1911. Over the course of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, a total of 32 synagogues were located in Roxbury; Dorchester and Mattapan had another 28.

By the late 1920s, the Roxbury and Dorchester neighborhoods housed half of the Jewish population of Greater Boston and formed the largest Jewish community in New England, numbering approximately 77,000. Although Adath Jeshurun and later Mishkan Tefila built impressive synagogues in Roxbury (in 1906 and 1925, respectively) and liberalized their worship practices, the Roxbury neighborhood was predominantly working class and lower-middle class and upheld Orthodox traditions. The Jewish religion's emphasis on education was highly evident in the 1920s, when "every major synagogue in Roxbury and Dorchester announced plans for a new school building."<sup>1</sup> In that decade, Jewish congregations of all sizes and denominations helped make Boston a national leader in the movement for comprehensive synagogue centers. These new facilities integrated worship, classes, libraries, meeting rooms, social clubs, and recreation. Boston's first and pre-eminent Hebrew day school, the Maimonides School, was founded in 1937 in Dorchester, and moved almost immediately to Roxbury. The similarly prominent Solomon Schechter Day School was founded in Brookline in 1961.

In the early 1920s, however, Roxbury's more solidly middle-class and upper-class Jews had already begun moving further outward, to Brookline, Newton, and Brighton. Although Roxbury and Dorchester's Jewish community remained vital into the 1940s and early 1950s, the Jewish population of these neighborhoods was reduced to 47,000 in 1960 and 25,000 by 1967. Synagogues and institutions of all sizes followed their congregants and closed or moved out of Roxbury, including the Boston YMHA, Mishkan Tefila, Adath Jeshuran, and the Maimonides School. Concurrently, however, a significant middle-class African-American community established itself in upper Roxbury in the 1920s and began expanding in the 1940s. In the 1950s, Roxbury became the center of Boston's

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<sup>1</sup> Gerald Gamm, *Urban Exodus* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 124.

Black community, encompassing African-Americans displaced by urban renewal from the South End and an exodus of African-Americans from Southern states. By 1967, African-American residents in Roxbury numbered about 60,000. Immigrants from the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico were also represented in significant numbers.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Roxbury was profoundly affected by institutional redlining and blockbusting. These policies denied federal mortgage insurance, mortgage and home improvement loans, and affordable insurance policies to property owners on the basis of race, leading to disinvestment and deteriorating building conditions throughout the neighborhood. In the late 1960s, political activists and community groups began to organize around improving housing, education, and employment. Neighborhood revitalization efforts were based on heightened social awareness, civic engagement, and community control. In the last 50 years, Roxbury has diversified and flourished, economically, culturally, and socially. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Roxbury's Black population represented 79 percent of the neighborhood, with 14 percent Latinx and 3 percent white. By 2020, Black residents comprised 53 percent of Roxbury's population; the Latinx population, 28 percent; and white residents, 12 percent.

#### Mt. Calvary Holy Church / Congregation Shara Tfilo Synagogue and Roxbury Hebrew School

Few definitive historical records have been found to document Congregation Shara Tfilo's history. Multiple sources (Gamm, et al) report that it was organized in Roxbury in 1906 as a home for working-class, traditional (Orthodox) Jewish families and that Simon Cabelinsky was the founder. It is thus the second oldest Jewish congregation in Roxbury, and the largest of the "little" Jewish synagogues in Roxbury. It was also one of the longest-lived in this neighborhood, closing in 1961.

Shara Tfilo first appears in the Boston directories, at 15 Otisfield Street, in 1911. The *American Jewish Year Book* for 1913-1914 (5674 in the Jewish calendar) listed "Shaari Tefila" as one of the "New Jewish Local Organizations" organized in the United States that year. David Smith was identified as the secretary of the group. The *Jewish Year Book's* recognition may be related to official chartering or incorporation of the congregation. (Incorporation records have not yet been located at the office of Massachusetts' Secretary of the Commonwealth; further research is merited.)

Between 1910 and 1923, Shara Tfilo acquired three parcels of land on Otisfield Street, on which three wood-frame dwellings already stood. Otisfield Street was laid out as Otisfield Avenue in 1891 and acquired its present name in 1895. It was quickly developed with two-and-a-half-story wood frame houses, both single- and multi-family, in the variety of architectural styles that were common in that period. 15 Otisfield Street (on which the synagogue was located) was purchased from Harry J. Estey of Somerville in 1910, and Shara Tfilo is listed as located at this address in the city directory of 1911. The center parcel, 11 Otisfield Street (site of the present courtyard), was acquired from David Foster of Boston in 1915. 9 Otisfield Street (on which the Hebrew school was built) was sold to the congregation by its founder, Simon Cabelinsky, in 1923.

In 1915, Shara Tfilo moved a large single-family, wood-frame house to the back of the existing dwelling at 15 Otisfield Street and apparently added new construction at the front of the lot. The Bromley atlas for that year identifies the building as a synagogue, although building permits suggest

that residential uses continued in part of the conjoined buildings. In December of 1915, the congregation applied for a building permit to construct the present brick synagogue, which was likely completed in 1916. The cost of the new synagogue building was \$40,000. Albert J. Carpenter Jr. was the architect; the contractor was Clarence H. Waldman.

Congregation Shara Tfilo employed three rabbis between 1911 and 1923: Isaac Baritz, Hyman S. Shoher, and Joseph M. Jacobson. Isaac Baritz (1856-1924) was born in Vilnius, Lithuania, immigrated to the United States in 1889, and became a citizen in 1894. In 1910, he rented a house in Dorchester with his wife and two daughters. By 1920, he was widowed and rented a house with his daughters a few blocks away from Shara Tfilo, on Intervale Street. Russian-born rabbi Hyman S. Shoher (1846-1918) immigrated to the U.S. in 1886, and became a naturalized citizen in 1891. He lived on Blue Hill Avenue with his wife and two children in the 1910s.

Before the Roxbury Hebrew School was built, the then-existing residential buildings at 9 and 11 Otisfield Street were rented out to Russian-Jewish families. In 1920, the house standing at #9 was occupied by Shara Tfilo's then-rabbi, Joseph Jacobson, and his family, which included his wife Pesel, their five young children, and Pesel's parents. Rabbi Jacobson (b. ca. 1882; d. after 1968) was born in Poland and immigrated to the United States in 1906. 11 Otisfield Street was occupied in 1920 by Morris and Dora Kolikof, their four young children, and a grown daughter with her husband and baby. Morris was a dry goods merchant.

The Roxbury Hebrew School was organized in 1918, but lack of funds delayed construction of a dedicated building for several years. In 1921, applications were made for permits to demolish the existing residential buildings at 9 and 11 Otisfield Street and to construct a brick building to be used as a school. Completed in 1923, the school building was reported to have cost \$150,000. Albert Carpenter was again the architect. The identity of the contractor has not yet been confirmed; further research is necessary.

Simon Cabelinsky was instrumental in creating and supporting the Roxbury Hebrew School as well as the synagogue. In 1924-25, officials of the school included Simon Cabelinsky, president; Barnet Kaplan, secretary; and superintendent/principal Nathan S. Feinberg. Feinberg was a native of Ukraine who had immigrated to the U.S. in 1912. The school was reported as having 1,500 members and an income of \$45,000. Able to accommodate 600 students, the building contained three libraries and a recreation room in the basement; three offices and a directors' meeting room on the first floor; and twenty classrooms on the upper two floors. Nineteen teachers were on the staff, including the principal. Simon and Ida Cabelinsky donated 10,000 textbooks and an equal number of copybooks and pencils to the new school. The size of the building was extraordinary, with *The Jewish Advocate* (a newspaper serving Greater Boston and New England) claiming that it was the largest school building in the country at its inception. (This statement has not yet been corroborated.) The article in the *Advocate* also noted that "A spacious yard at one side of the building is given the pupils for recreation[,] in the center of which has been erected a beautiful monument."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *The Jewish Advocate*, "Spectacular Demonstration Presented at Roxbury Dedication." 21 Sept 1923, 1.

At the dedication ceremony, in September 1923, speeches were made by a prominent Jewish lawyer and judge, David A. Lourie, and by a representative of Boston's Mayor Curley. The festivities were elaborate. As reported by *The Jewish Advocate*,

“Residents of Roxbury witnessed one of the greatest street parades of Jewish children in its history when the entire list of pupils trodded through the principal streets of that section. The exodus was led by the directors, teachers and a thirty-piece band from the Home for the Jewish Children and was followed by twenty-four attractively decorated automobiles.”<sup>3</sup>

According to historian Gerald Gamm, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Boston area had only four substantial Hebrew schools adjacent to a substantial synagogue: Mishkan Tefila in Roxbury; Temple Beth Hillel in Mattapan, Kehillath Jacob in Mattapan, and Shara Tfilo. The earliest of these was Shara Tfilo's Roxbury Hebrew School.

Shara Tfilo's founder and major sustainer, Simon Cabelinsky (1866-1938) was born in Lithuania, immigrated to the U.S. in 1890, and was married to Ida Strogowsky (1865-1957; a native of Poland), with whom he had six children. He is buried in West Roxbury in Shara Tfilo Cemetery, which he also helped found (in 1925). In city directories and U.S. censuses, Cabelinsky is usually described as being in the clothing business: first, as a tailor (1894); later as a manufacturer of shirts (1898 and 1900) and raincoats (1920s through 1930s). His occupation in 1910, however, is described as real estate. In 1900, the Cabelinsky family lived in an apartment house in the North End with eight other families that represented the full ethnic mix of the North End-- Jewish, Irish, and Italian. They moved to Roxbury by 1910, when they owned and occupied a two-family house at 336 Blue Hill Avenue, around the corner from Shara Tfilo. By 1920, the family had moved several blocks away to 44 Intervale Avenue, where Ida lived until her death.

Little is known of the activities of Shara Tfilo and the Roxbury Hebrew School after the mid-1920s. By the early 1930s, the last-known rabbi, Joseph Jacobson, had taken a position at another congregation in Roxbury. Simon Cabelinsky died in 1938, and the loss of his personal support might have been substantial. Rooms at the Roxbury Hebrew School building were rented out, presumably for valuable income. An organization known as American Hall occupied the building in 1930, and United Kosher Butchers Association was located here in 1955 and 1960. The Maimonides School, a prominent Jewish day school founded in 1937, leased classrooms in the building from at least 1955 through 1960. With the large-scale emigration of Jewish residents from Roxbury after World War II, at least a dozen neighborhood synagogues merged, moved, or closed. Congregation Shara Tfilo sold its property to Mt. Calvary Holy Church of America, Inc., in 1961.

The property at 17 Otisfield Street (also known as 17-19 Otisfield Street and 347 Blue Hill Avenue) parallels the history of Shara Tfilo. In 1892, a two-and-a-half-story, wood-frame house was built on this corner lot. In 1911, it was replaced by a three-story masonry building that occupied virtually the entire parcel. A deed in 1912 identifies the new building's occupants as stores in the ground floor and basement, an office on the second floor, and halls used for religious worship. (It has not been determined if Congregation Shara Tfilo used the building for its services in its early days.)

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

The corner building was identified as the Otisfield Building in 1915 and the Otisfield Building and Grande (sic) Hall in 1931. In the early and mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was occupied by a large dance hall/auditorium as well as a number of small businesses and offices, including a dentist, barber, employment agency, labor union, credit union, and several dancing schools. In the 1960s, the Otisfield addresses were listed as vacant, although two furniture stores consecutively occupied 347 Blue Hill Avenue. The Blue Hill Avenue address, too, was vacant by 1968, however, and the building was demolished in 1971. The empty parcel was acquired by the City of Boston and sold, in 1983, to the Boston Natural Areas Fund. Mt. Calvary Holy Church purchased the property in 1988, subject to an open space restriction on the parcel. The site was used by the church for outdoor gatherings and events.

Mt. Calvary Holy Church has a long history as an early Black Pentecostal church in America, and its local church has been a vigorous religious, social, and cultural institution in Boston. Mt. Calvary Holy Church of America, Inc., was founded by Bishop Brumfield Johnson (ca. 1900 - 1972) in 1928. At the time, Johnson was a minister in the United Holy Church of America and resided in New Jersey. The United Holy Church was established in 1886 as an African-American denomination that subscribed to the Wesleyan doctrine of spiritual cleansing and salvation; it is distinctive for its early incorporation of race pride. In 1928, Bishop Johnson traveled to his home state of North Carolina to conduct a revival service, after which he and more than 200 followers decided to form their own spiritual congregation. Their new organization was incorporated in Winston-Salem, N. C., in 1929 as the Mt. Calvary Holy Church. During the next few years, congregations followed in New Jersey and in Long Island, New York. Also in 1929, Johnson and others travelled to Boston and chartered the Mt. Calvary Church in Massachusetts; the eight signatories to their charter included five men and three women.

In the early 1930s, the national church organization expanded across the country, in New York, North Carolina, and Ohio. Headquarters were first located in Baltimore, Maryland, and moved to Buffalo, New York, in 1942. Following a fire there, the headquarters were moved to Boston in 1960. The church purchased Shara Tfilo's Otisfield Street property in 1961. National convocations were held at Otisfield Street until 1991, when international headquarters were established in Washington, D.C. After Bishop Johnson's death in 1972, the Mt. Calvary Holy Church of America was led by Bishop Harold Williams from 1972 to 2008, followed by Bishop Alfred A. Owens, Jr. from 2008 to 2020. Bishop Herbert C. Crump, Jr., is presently the Presiding Bishop. Mt. Calvary Holy Church currently has 80 affiliated churches in 17 states (mostly along the East Coast and in the South, and also in Ohio, Minnesota, and California) and in 12 countries.

Mt. Calvary Holy Church in Boston was strongly identified with Bishop Nellie Yarborough (ca. 1925 - 2012) for 50 years. Born in North Carolina, she joined Bishop Johnson's evangelical team at the age of 17, helped him open churches in Durham, N.C., and Buffalo, N.Y., and traveled on evangelical missions internationally and in the American South. She subsequently became Johnson's administrative assistant and helped him establish the church's headquarters in Boston in 1960, as well as the congregation on Otisfield Street. Bishop Yarborough was appointed assistant pastor of the Otisfield Street church in 1962 and became its senior pastor in 1972. In 1994, she was the second woman to be ordained as a bishop in the national Mt. Calvary Holy Church, and was its only female bishop at the time of her death. Her ministry was known for its animated preaching and its direct support for the homeless, hungry, and mentally ill, which began with a food kitchen in 1962.

Yarborough also founded and served as principal of the Dr. Brumfield Johnson Christian Academy in Dorchester. Yarborough retired in 2012 and died later that year.

Among her accomplishments,

“Bishop Yarborough held multiple national and regional leadership roles for the Mt. Calvary Holy Church of America, including National missionary president, State secretary and treasurer, National youth president, and Executive Secretary. While serving as Bishop at the Otisfield site, she earned local, regional, and national accolades as a leader in the social services and business communities, including Woman of the Year by the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts in 1996, the Sojourner Truth Award by the Boston Professional League in 1993, [and] listing in Marquis’ ‘Who’s Who of American Women’ from 2002 through 2009.”<sup>4</sup>

In 2011, then-Boston Mayor Thomas Menino named the intersection of Otisfield Street and Blue Hill Avenue “Bishop Nellie Yarborough Square.” Upon Yarborough’s death in 2012, Menino observed that she “clothed the needy, fed the hungry, and uplifted neighborhoods. She improved everything she touched and was a leader in the community for many years.”<sup>5</sup> Then-Governor Deval Patrick declared a Bishop Nellie Constance Yarborough Day, “in recognition of her pioneering work ‘serving the hungry and caring for the homeless through the food pantry, clothing ministry, and community supper ministry.’”<sup>6</sup>

The national organization of the Mt. Calvary Holy Church closed the Otisfield Street church in 2013, when it had approximately 100 congregants. Although the property has been vacant since that time, members of the local congregation are presently working to preserve and repair the buildings and provide religious and community services on the property once again.

### **3.2 Architectural (or Other) Significance**

The Boston area has a small number of imposing, high-style synagogues, including Adath Israel near Kenmore Square (1903), Mishkan Tefilah in Roxbury (1925), Kehillath Israel in Brookline (1925), Temple Israel in the Longwood area (1928), and Ohabei Shalom in Brookline (1925-1927). These large, architecturally-outstanding buildings were constructed for some of Boston’s most prominent and affluent Jewish communities. In contrast, the Mt. Calvary Holy Church/Congregation Shara Tfilo Campus is significant for its representation of ecclesiastical architecture for the working-class, traditional Jewish congregations to which the vast majority of Boston’s early 20<sup>th</sup> century Jewish population belonged. Like Vilna Shul on Beacon Hill (1919; BOS.13014), Shara Tfilo’s synagogue building (1915-1916) is a modest design representing the aspirations of an immigrant-era congregation in New England. In contrast to Vilna Shul, however, Shara Tfilo was located in the

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<sup>4</sup> LeeAnn Suen, Bruner|Cott Architects, Landmark Petition Form #274.21 for 9-13, 15, and 17 Otisfield Street, Boston, Mass. Prepared for the Boston Landmarks Commission, February 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Sarah N. Mattero, “Nellie C. Yarborough, 87, pillar of her church, community.” *The Boston Globe*, 24 Dec 2012, B10.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



heart of the up-and-coming Jewish community of its time. The eclectic Romanesque Revival style of the Shara Tfilo synagogue was considered appropriate for synagogue architecture in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and was similar to contemporary synagogue buildings in Europe at the time.

The architect for the synagogue and school buildings was Albert John (A. J.) Carpenter (1883-1969), who maintained a solo architectural practice in Boston from 1907 until at least 1960. The son of an industrial machinery operator, Carpenter was born in Boston, graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and was a charter member of the Boston Society of Architects. He was also active as a Mason and a notable collector of butterflies and of Chinese figural sculpture. Carpenter is associated with 36 properties in the Massachusetts Historical Commission's MACRIS database, most of which were built between 1908 and 1926. As was common for the period, these buildings represent a variety of predominantly historical styles. Building types include single-family houses, apartment houses and blocks, schools, commercial buildings, a fire house, and a pair of armory buildings. Most are located in Boston; several are in Brookline. In addition to the Shara Tfilo synagogue and school, Carpenter's notable projects include the Collins Building, 727-729 Atlantic Avenue (1915, BOS.1520) in Boston's Leather District; additions to the William Lloyd Garrison School, 20 Hutchings Street (1910, BOS.12782), and Uriah Cotting Building, 120-130 Water Street (ca. 1812, BOS.2148), in Boston; and the Framingham National Guard Armory, 522 Concord Street (1959, FRM.1092).

Carpenter's clients included several prominent Jewish real estate developers, who also happened to be clients of the better-known Boston architect Frederick A. Norcross. Norcross was a highly prolific designer of apartment buildings in Boston during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; he also designed the synagogue for Congregation Adath Jeshurun, around the corner from Congregation Shara Tfilo at 397 Blue Hill Avenue (1906, BOS.11136). There may have been a professional connection between Carpenter and Norcross, as they both had offices in the same downtown Boston building, 46 Cornhill Street, in 1909; further research is merited.

The contractor for the synagogue, and likely the school building as well, was Clarence H. Waldman (1888-1965). Born in Russia, Waldman immigrated to the United States in 1905. His profession is listed as carpenter in 1910 and insurance agent in 1920. By 1931, he was employed as a rabbi. Waldman is buried in the Shara Tfilo Cemetery.

### **3.3 Archaeological Sensitivity**

Roxbury is archaeologically sensitive for ancient Native American and historical archaeological sites. The proximity of the neighborhood to natural resources including river, marine, and upland areas make it suitable for Massachusetts Native habitation and use and there are multiple intact ancient Native sites already documented in Roxbury. Open spaces that have not been developed, including yards and parks, may contain significant ancient Native archaeological sites. Historically, Roxbury was a significant part of Boston's 17th-19th century history, and contains intact archaeological sites related to Boston's colonial, Revolutionary, and early Republic history, especially yard spaces where features including cisterns and privies may remain intact and significant archaeological deposits. Unsurveyed areas within Roxbury's industrial core along the Stony Brook may contain significant industrial sites. These potential historical sites may represent the histories of Roxbury home-life, artisans, industries, enslaved people, immigrants, and Native peoples spanning multiple centuries.

### **3.4 Relationship to Criteria for Designation**

The property known as the Mt. Calvary Holy Church / Congregation Shara Tfilo Campus meets the following criteria for designation as a Boston Landmark as established in Section 4 of Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, as amended:

B. Structures, sites, objects, man-made or natural, at which events occurred that have made an outstanding contribution to, and are identified prominently with, or which best represent some important aspect of the cultural, political, economic, military, or social history of the city, the commonwealth, the New England region or the nation.

The Mt. Calvary / Shara Tfilo campus has significant associations with the development of the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston; with the evolution of Boston's Jewish and Black communities; and with the history of immigration and racial succession in Boston, Massachusetts, New England, and the nation.

C. Structures, sites, objects, man-made or natural, associated significantly with the lives of outstanding historical personages.

The Mt. Calvary / Shara Tfilo Campus is closely associated with the work of Nellie Yarborough, a female Black minister in the Mt. Calvary Holy Church, who is recognized as an exceptional religious leader on the local, state, and national levels.

D. Structures, sites, objects, man-made or natural, representative of elements of architectural or landscape design or craftsmanship which embody distinctive characteristics of a type inherently valuable for study of a period, style or method of construction or development, or a notable work of an architect, landscape architect, designer, or builder whose work influenced the development of the city, the commonwealth, the New England region, or the nation.

The Mt. Calvary / Shara Tfilo Campus is significant as a rare example of a modest yet thoughtfully designed religious buildings constructed for Boston's large immigrant Jewish community in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The survival, largely intact, of an early multi-purpose complex-- synagogue, school, and courtyard--is also extraordinary.

## **4.0 ECONOMIC STATUS**

### **4.1 Current Assessed Value**

According to the City of Boston's Assessor's Records, as of January 1, 2021, the property at 9-13 Otisfield Street (Parcel # 1202727000), where the Roxbury Hebrew School building is located has a total assessed value of \$1,735,600, with the land valued at \$503,200 and the building valued at \$1,232,400.

The property at 15 Otisfield Street (Parcel # 1202728000) where the Mt. Calvary Holy Church / Congregation Shara Tfilo Synagogue building is located has a total assessed value of \$1,727,300, with the land valued at \$491,400 and the building valued at \$1,235,900.

The property at 17-19 Otisfield Street (Parcel # 1202729000), which is an undeveloped lot, has a total assessed value of \$120,600, with the land accounting for the total value.

### **4.2 Current Ownership**

The property at 9-13 Otisfield Street, 15 Otisfield Street, and 17-19 Otisfield Street is owned by Mt. Calvary Holy Church of America, Inc.

## **5.0 PLANNING CONTEXT**

### **5.1 Background**

The Mt. Calvary Holy Church / Congregation Shara Tfilo Campus has had two major owners since its initial construction in 1915-1916. The two extant buildings were constructed by Congregation Shara Tfilo, one of Roxbury's earliest Jewish congregations with a purpose-built religious center. Shara Tfilo operated and occupied the property for religious worship and an extensive education program until 1961, when it was acquired by a robust African American Pentecostal church. Mt. Calvary Holy Church was particularly renowned for its commitment to social service programs. An undeveloped companion lot at the corner of Otisfield Street and Blue Hill Avenue provides important green space in the community, and was well integrated with the activities of Mt. Calvary Church until the Otisfield Street buildings closed in 2013. Landmark designation would honor and preserve the history of community building, education, and public service through faith that has characterized the property for more than a century. Landmark designation may also increase financial opportunities for immediate repairs and long-term renovations of the property.

### **5.2 Zoning**

All three parcels are located in the Roxbury Neighborhood Zoning District. The parcel at 9-13 Otisfield Street (Parcel # 1202727000) is located in a 3F-4000 Zoning Subdistrict; its Subdistrict Type is categorized as Three-Family Residential. There is no zoning overlay on this parcel. The parcels at 15 and 17-19 Otisfield Street (parcel #s 1202728000 and 1202729000, respectively) are located in an MFR Zoning Subdistrict, and their Subdistrict Type is categorized as Multi-Family Residential. 15 Otisfield Street has no zoning overlay, while 17-19 Otisfield Street is subject to a Boulevard Planning District zoning overlay.

### **5.3 Planning Issues**

An Article 85 application was submitted on May 13, 2021 for the demolition of 15 Otisfield Street. Boston Landmarks Commission staff found the property to be significant, which would require the applicant to appear at a public hearing at which the Landmarks Commission would have the option to impose a 90-day demolition delay. As of April 14, 2022, the application was withdrawn.

On March 17, 2021, a petition to Landmark the Mount Calvary Holy Church / Congregation Shara Tfilo campus was submitted. At a public hearing on April 13, 2021, the Boston Landmarks Commission voted to accept the Mount Calvary Holy Church / Congregation Shara Tfilo campus for further study.

## **6.0 ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES**

### **6.1 Alternatives available to the Boston Landmarks Commission**

#### **A. Designation**

The Commission retains the option of designating the Mt. Calvary Holy Church / Congregation Shara Tfilo Campus as a Landmark. Designation shall correspond to Assessor's parcel numbers 1202727000, 1202728000, and 1202729000 and shall address the following exterior elements hereinafter referred to as the "Specified Features":

- The exterior envelope of the buildings.
- Certain landscape elements including: The courtyard between 9-13 and 15 Otisfield Street and the open space at 17-19 Otisfield Street.

#### **B. Denial of Designation**

The Commission retains the option of not designating any or all of the Specified Features.

#### **C. National Register Listing**

The Commission could recommend that the property be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, if it is not already.

#### **D. Preservation Plan**

The Commission could recommend development and implementation of a preservation plan for the property.

#### **E. Site Interpretation**

The Commission could recommend that the owner develop and install historical interpretive materials at the site.

### **6.2 Impact of alternatives**

#### **A. Designation**

Designation under Chapter 772 would require review of physical changes to the Mt. Calvary Holy Church / Congregation Shara Tfilo Campus in accordance with the Standards and Criteria adopted as part of the designation.

#### **B. Denial of Designation**

Without designation, the City would be unable to offer protection to the Specified Features, or extend guidance to the owners under chapter 772.

#### **C. National Register Listing**

The Mt. Calvary / Shara Tfilo Campus could be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Listing on the National Register provides an honorary designation and limited protection from federal, federally-funded or federally assisted activities. It creates incentives for preservation, notably the federal investment tax credits and grants through the

Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF) from the Massachusetts Historical Commission. National Register listing provides listing on the State Register affording parallel protection for projects with state involvement and also the availability of state tax credits. National Register listing does not provide any design review for changes undertaken by private owners at their own expense.

**D. Preservation Plan**

A preservation plan allows an owner to work with interested parties to investigate various adaptive use scenarios, analyze investment costs and rates of return, and provide recommendations for subsequent development. It does not carry regulatory oversight.

**E. Site Interpretation**

A comprehensive interpretation of the history and significance of the Mt. Calvary / Shara Tfilo Campus could be introduced at the site.

## 7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission makes the following recommendations:

1. That the Mt. Calvary Holy Church / Congregation Shara Tfilo Campus be designated by the Boston Landmarks Commission as a Landmark, under Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, as amended (see Section 3.4 of this report for Relationship to Criteria for Designation);
2. That the boundaries corresponding to Assessor's parcel numbers 1202727000, 1202728000, and 1202729000 be adopted without modification;
3. And that the Standards and Criteria recommended by the staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission be accepted.

## 8.0 STANDARDS AND CRITERIA, WITH LIST OF CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

### 8.1 Introduction

Per sections 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the enabling statute (Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975 of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, as amended) Standards and Criteria must be adopted for each Designation which shall be applied by the Commission in evaluating proposed changes to the historic resource. The Standards and Criteria both identify and establish guidelines for those features which must be preserved and/or enhanced to maintain the viability of the Designation. The Standards and Criteria are based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.<sup>7</sup> Before a Certificate of Design Approval or Certificate of Exemption can be issued for such changes, the changes must be reviewed by the Commission with regard to their conformance to the purpose of the statute.

The intent of these guidelines is to help local officials, designers and individual property owners to identify the characteristics that have led to designation, and thus to identify the limitation to the changes that can be made to them. It should be emphasized that conformance to the Standards and Criteria alone does not necessarily ensure approval, nor are they absolute, but any request for variance from them must demonstrate the reason for, and advantages gained by, such variance. The Commission's Certificate of Design Approval is only granted after careful review of each application and public hearing, in accordance with the statute.

Proposed alterations related to zoning, building code, accessibility, safety, or other regulatory requirements do not supersede the Standards and Criteria or take precedence over Commission decisions.

In these standards and criteria, the verb **Should** indicates a recommended course of action; the verb **Shall** indicates those actions which are specifically required.

### 8.2 Levels of Review

The Commission has no desire to interfere with the normal maintenance procedures for the property. In order to provide some guidance for property owners, managers or developers, and the Commission, the activities which might be construed as causing an alteration to the physical character of the exterior have been categorized to indicate the level of review required, based on the potential impact of the proposed work. Note: the examples for each category are not intended to act as a comprehensive list; see Section 8.2.D.

- A. Routine activities which are not subject to review by the Commission:

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, et al. *THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR THE TREATMENT OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES WITH GUIDELINES FOR PRESERVING, REHABILITATING, RESTORING & RECONSTRUCTING HISTORIC BUILDINGS*, Secretary of the Interior, 2017, [www.nps.gov/tps/standards/treatment-guidelines-2017.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/treatment-guidelines-2017.pdf).



1. Activities associated with normal cleaning and routine maintenance.
    - a. For building maintenance, such activities might include the following: normal cleaning (no power washing above 700 PSI, no chemical or abrasive cleaning), non-invasive inspections, in-kind repair of caulking, in-kind repainting, staining or refinishing of wood or metal elements, lighting bulb replacements or in-kind glass repair/replacement, etc.
    - b. For landscape maintenance, such activities might include the following: normal cleaning of paths and sidewalks, etc. (no power washing above 700 PSI, no chemical or abrasive cleaning), non-invasive inspections, in-kind repair of caulking, in-kind spot replacement of cracked or broken paving materials, in-kind repainting or refinishing of site furnishings, site lighting bulb replacements or in-kind glass repair/replacement, normal plant material maintenance, such as pruning, fertilizing, mowing and mulching, and in-kind replacement of existing plant materials, etc.
  2. Routine activities associated with special events or seasonal decorations which do not disturb the ground surface, are to remain in place for less than six weeks, and do not result in any permanent alteration or attached fixtures.
- B. Activities which may be determined by the staff to be eligible for a Certificate of Exemption or Administrative Review, requiring an application to the Commission:
1. Maintenance and repairs involving no change in design, material, color, ground surface or outward appearance.
  2. In-kind replacement or repair.
  3. Phased restoration programs will require an application to the Commission and may require full Commission review of the entire project plan and specifications; subsequent detailed review of individual construction phases may be eligible for Administrative Review by BLC staff.
  4. Repair projects of a repetitive nature will require an application to the Commission and may require full Commission review; subsequent review of these projects may be eligible for Administrative Review by BLC staff, where design, details, and specifications do not vary from those previously approved.
  5. Temporary installations or alterations that are to remain in place for longer than six weeks.
  6. Emergency repairs that require temporary tarps, board-ups, etc. may be eligible for Certificate of Exemption or Administrative Review; permanent repairs will require review as outlined in Section 8.2. In the case of

emergencies, BLC staff should be notified as soon as possible to assist in evaluating the damage and to help expedite repair permits as necessary.

C. Activities requiring an application and full Commission review:

Reconstruction, restoration, replacement, demolition, or alteration involving change in design, material, color, location, or outward appearance, such as: New construction of any type, removal of existing features or elements, major planting or removal of trees or shrubs, or changes in landforms.

D. Activities not explicitly listed above:

In the case of any activity not explicitly covered in these Standards and Criteria, the Landmarks staff shall determine whether an application is required and if so, whether it shall be an application for a Certificate of Design Approval or Certificate of Exemption.

E. Concurrent Jurisdiction

In some cases, issues which fall under the jurisdiction of the Landmarks Commission may also fall under the jurisdiction of other city, state and federal boards and commissions such as the Boston Art Commission, the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the National Park Service and others. All efforts will be made to expedite the review process. Whenever possible and appropriate, a joint staff review or joint hearing will be arranged.

### 8.3 Standards and Criteria

The following Standards and Criteria are based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.<sup>8</sup> These Standards and Criteria apply to all exterior building alterations that are visible from any existing or proposed street or way that is open to public travel.

#### 8.3.1 General Standards

1. Items under Commission review include but are not limited to the following: exterior walls (masonry, wood, and architectural metals); windows; entrances/doors; porches/stoops; lighting; storefronts; curtain walls; roofs; roof projections; additions; accessibility; site work and landscaping; demolition; and archaeology. Items not anticipated in the Standards and Criteria may be subject to review, refer to Section 8.2 and Section 9.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alterations of features, spaces and spatial relationships that

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<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, et al. *THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR THE TREATMENT OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES WITH GUIDELINES FOR PRESERVING, REHABILITATING, RESTORING & RECONSTRUCTING HISTORIC BUILDINGS*, Secretary of the Interior, 2017, [www.nps.gov/tps/standards/treatment-guidelines-2017.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/treatment-guidelines-2017.pdf).

characterize a property shall be avoided. See Section 8.4, List of Character-defining Features.

3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, shall not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved. (The term “later contributing features” will be used to convey this concept.)
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new material shall match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used.
8. Staff archaeologists shall review proposed changes to a property that may impact known and potential archaeological sites. Archaeological surveys may be required to determine if significant archaeological deposits are present within the area of proposed work. Significant archaeological resources shall be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be required before the proposed work can commence. See section 9.0 Archaeology.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize a property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of a property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.
11. Original or later contributing signs, marquees, and canopies integral to the building ornamentation or architectural detailing shall be preserved.
12. New signs, banners, marquees, canopies, and awnings shall be compatible in size, design, material, location, and number with the character of the building, allowing for contemporary expression. New signs shall not detract from the essential form of the building nor obscure its architectural features.
13. Property owners shall take necessary precautions to prevent demolition by neglect of maintenance and repairs. Demolition of protected buildings in violation of Chapter 772 of

the Acts of 1975, as amended, is subject to penalty as cited in Section 10 of Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, as amended.

**8.3.2 Masonry at exterior walls (including but not limited to stone, brick, terra cotta, concrete, adobe, stucco, and mortar)**

1. All original or later contributing masonry materials shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing masonry materials, features, details, surfaces and ornamentation shall be repaired, if necessary, by patching, splicing, consolidating, or otherwise reinforcing the masonry using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing masonry materials, features, details, surfaces, and ornamentation shall be replaced with materials and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, and detail of installation.
4. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Sound original mortar shall be retained.
7. Deteriorated mortar shall be carefully removed by hand raking the joints.
8. Use of mechanical hammers shall not be allowed. Use of mechanical saws may be allowed on a case-by-case basis.
9. Repointing mortar shall duplicate the original mortar in strength, composition, color, texture, joint size, joint profile, and method of application.
10. Sample panels of raking the joints and repointing shall be reviewed and approved by the staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission.
11. Cleaning of masonry is discouraged and should only be performed when necessary to halt deterioration.
12. If the building is to be cleaned, the masonry shall be cleaned with the gentlest method possible.
13. A test patch of the cleaning method(s) shall be reviewed and approved on site by staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission to ensure that no damage has resulted. Test patches shall be carried out well in advance. Ideally, the test patch should be monitored over a sufficient period of time to allow long-range effects to be predicted (including exposure to all seasons if possible).
14. Sandblasting (wet or dry), wire brushing, or other similar abrasive cleaning methods shall not be permitted. Doing so can change the visual quality of the material and damage the surface of the masonry and mortar joints.

15. Waterproofing or water repellents are strongly discouraged. These treatments are generally not effective in preserving masonry and can cause permanent damage. The Commission does recognize that in extraordinary circumstances their use may be required to solve a specific problem. Samples of any proposed treatment shall be reviewed by the Commission before application.
16. In general, painting masonry surfaces shall not be allowed. Painting masonry surfaces will be considered only when there is documentary evidence that this treatment was used at some significant point in the history of the property.
17. New penetrations for attachments through masonry are strongly discouraged. When necessary, attachment details shall be located in mortar joints, rather than through masonry material; stainless steel hardware is recommended to prevent rust jacking. New attachments to cast concrete are discouraged and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
18. Deteriorated stucco shall be repaired by removing the damaged material and patching with new stucco that duplicates the old in strength, composition, color, and texture.
19. Deteriorated concrete shall be repaired by cutting damaged concrete back to remove the source of deterioration, such as corrosion on metal reinforcement bars. The new patch shall be applied carefully so that it will bond satisfactorily with and match the historic concrete.
20. Joints in concrete shall be sealed with appropriate flexible sealants and backer rods, when necessary.

### **8.3.3 Wood at exterior walls**

1. All original or later contributing wood materials shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing wood surfaces, features, details, and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, piecing-in, consolidating, or reinforcing the wood using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing wood surfaces, features, details, and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, and detail or installation.
4. When replacement of materials is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Cleaning of wood elements shall use the gentlest method possible.
7. Paint removal should be considered only where there is paint surface deterioration or excessive layers of paint have coarsened profile details and as part of an overall

maintenance program which involves repainting or applying other appropriate protective coatings. Coatings such as paint help protect the wood from moisture and ultraviolet light; stripping the wood bare will expose the surface to the effects of weathering.

8. Damaged or deteriorated paint should be removed to the next sound layer using the mildest method possible.
9. Propane or butane torches, sandblasting, water blasting, or other abrasive cleaning and/or paint removal methods shall not be permitted. Doing so changes the visual quality of the wood and accelerates deterioration.
10. Repainting should be based on paint seriation studies. If an adequate record does not exist, repainting shall be done with colors that are appropriate to the style and period of the building.

#### **8.3.4 Architectural metals at exterior walls (including but not limited to wrought and cast iron, steel, pressed metal, terneplate, copper, aluminum, and zinc)**

1. All original or later contributing architectural metals shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing metal materials, features, details, and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, splicing, or reinforcing the metal using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing metal materials, features, details, and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, and detail or installation.
4. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Cleaning of metal elements either to remove corrosion or deteriorated paint shall use the gentlest method possible.
7. The type of metal shall be identified prior to any cleaning procedure because each metal has its own properties and may require a different treatment.
8. Non-corrosive chemical methods shall be used to clean soft metals (such as lead, tinplate, terneplate, copper, and zinc) whose finishes can be easily damaged by abrasive methods.
9. If gentler methods have proven ineffective, then abrasive cleaning methods, such as low pressure dry grit blasting, may be allowed for hard metals (such as cast iron, wrought iron, and steel) as long as it does not abrade or damage the surface.

10. A test patch of the cleaning method(s) shall be reviewed and approved on site by staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission to ensure that no damage has resulted. Test patches shall be carried out well in advance. Ideally, the test patch should be monitored over a sufficient period of time to allow long-range effects to be predicted (including exposure to all seasons if possible).
11. Cleaning to remove corrosion and paint removal should be considered only where there is deterioration and as part of an overall maintenance program which involves repainting or applying other appropriate protective coatings. Paint or other coatings help retard the corrosion rate of the metal. Leaving the metal bare will expose the surface to accelerated corrosion.
12. Repainting should be based on paint seriation studies. If an adequate record does not exist, repainting shall be done with colors that are appropriate to the style and period of the building.

#### **8.3.5 Windows (also refer to Masonry, Wood, and Architectural Metals)**

1. The original or later contributing arrangement of window openings shall be retained.
2. Enlarging or reducing window openings for the purpose of fitting stock (larger or smaller) window sash or air conditioners shall not be allowed.
3. Removal of window sash and the installation of permanent fixed panels to accommodate air conditioners shall not be allowed.
4. Original or later contributing window elements, features (functional and decorative), details, and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, splicing, consolidating, or otherwise reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
5. Deteriorated or missing window elements, features (functional and decorative), details, and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration, and detail of installation.
6. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
7. Replacement sash for divided-light windows should have through-glass muntins or simulated divided lights with dark anodized spacer bars the same width as the muntins.
8. Tinted or reflective-coated glass shall not be allowed.
9. Metal or vinyl panning of the wood frame and molding shall not be allowed.
10. Exterior combination storm windows shall have a narrow perimeter framing that does not obscure the glazing of the primary window. In addition, the meeting rail of the combination storm window shall align with that of the primary window.

11. Storm window sashes and frames shall have a painted finish that matches the primary window sash and frame color.
12. Clear or mill finished aluminum frames shall not be allowed.
13. Window frames, sashes, and, if appropriate, shutters, should be of a color based on paint seriation studies. If an adequate record does not exist, repainting shall be done with colors that are appropriate to the style and period of the building.

#### **8.3.6 Entrances/Doors (also refer to Masonry, Wood, Architectural Metals, and Porches/Stoops)**

1. All original or later contributing entrance elements shall be preserved.
2. The original or later contributing entrance design and arrangement of the door openings shall be retained.
3. Enlarging or reducing entrance/door openings for the purpose of fitting stock (larger or smaller) doors shall not be allowed.
4. Original or later contributing entrance materials, elements, details and features (functional and decorative) shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
5. Deteriorated or missing entrance elements, materials, features (function and decorative) and details shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
6. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
7. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
8. Original or later contributing entrance materials, elements, features (functional and decorative) and details shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.
9. Storm doors (aluminum or wood-framed) shall not be allowed on the primary entrance unless evidence shows that they had been used. They may be allowed on secondary entrances. Where allowed, storm doors shall be painted to match the color of the primary door.
10. Unfinished aluminum storm doors shall not be allowed.
11. Replacement door hardware should replicate the original or be appropriate to the style and period of the building.
12. Buzzers, alarms and intercom panels, where allowed, shall be flush mounted and appropriately located.



13. Entrance elements should be of a color based on paint seriation studies. If an adequate record does not exist, repainting shall be done with colors that are appropriate to the style and period of the building/entrance.

#### **8.3.7 Porches/Stoops (also refer to Masonry, Wood, Architectural Metals, Entrances/Doors, Roofs, and Accessibility)**

1. All original or later contributing porch elements shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing porch and stoop materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be retained if possible and, if necessary, repaired using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing porch and stoop materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
4. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute material may be considered.
6. Original or later contributing porch and stoop materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.
7. Porch and stoop elements should be of a color based on paint seriation studies. If an adequate record does not exist repainting shall be done with colors that are appropriate to the style and period of the building/porch and stoop.

#### **8.3.8 Lighting**

1. There are several aspects of lighting related to the exterior of the building and landscape:
  - a. Lighting fixtures as appurtenances to the building or elements of architectural ornamentation.
  - b. Quality of illumination on building exterior.
  - c. Security lighting.
2. Wherever integral to the building, original or later contributing lighting fixtures shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, piercing in or reinforcing the lighting fixture using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing lighting fixtures materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details, and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements

- which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration, and detail of installation.
4. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
  5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
  6. Original or later contributing lighting fixture materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details, and ornamentation shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.
  7. Supplementary illumination may be added where appropriate to the current use of the building.
  8. New lighting shall conform to any of the following approaches as appropriate to the building and to the current or projected use:
    - a. Reproductions of original or later contributing fixtures, based on physical or documentary evidence.
    - b. Accurate representation of the original period, based on physical or documentary evidence.
    - c. Retention or restoration of fixtures which date from an interim installation and which are considered to be appropriate to the building and use.
    - d. New lighting fixtures which are differentiated from the original or later contributing fixture in design and which illuminate the exterior of the building in a way which renders it visible at night and compatible with its environment.
  9. The location of new exterior lighting shall fulfill the functional intent of the current use without obscuring the building form or architectural detailing.
  10. No exposed conduit shall be allowed on the building.
  11. Architectural night lighting is encouraged, provided the lighting installations minimize night sky light pollution. High efficiency fixtures, lamps and automatic timers are recommended.
  12. On-site mock-ups of proposed architectural night lighting may be required.

#### **8.3.9 Storefronts (also refer to Masonry, Wood, Architectural Metals, Windows, Entrances/Doors, Porches/Stoops, Lighting, and Accessibility)**

1. Refer to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings (Storefront section).

### **8.3.11 Roofs (also refer to Masonry, Wood, Architectural Metals, and Roof Projections)**

1. The roof shapes and original or later contributing roof material of the existing building shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing roofing materials such as slate, wood trim, elements, features (decorative and functional), details and ornamentation, such as cresting, shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching or reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing roofing materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
4. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute material may be considered.
6. Original or later contributing roofing materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.
7. Unpainted mill-finished aluminum shall not be allowed for flashing, gutters and downspouts. All replacement flashing and gutters should be copper or match the original material and design (integral gutters shall not be replaced with surface-mounted).
8. External gutters and downspouts should not be allowed unless it is based on physical or documentary evidence.

### **8.3.12 Roof Projections (includes satellite dishes, antennas and other communication devices, louvers, vents, chimneys, and chimney caps; also refer to Masonry, Wood, Architectural Metals, and Roofs)**

1. New roof projections shall not be visible from the public way.
2. New mechanical equipment should be reviewed to confirm that it is no more visible than the existing.

### **8.3.13 Additions**

1. Additions can significantly alter the historic appearance of the buildings. An exterior addition should only be considered after it has been determined that the existing building cannot meet the new space requirements.

2. New additions shall be designed so that the character-defining features of the building are not radically changed, obscured, damaged or destroyed.
3. New additions should be designed so that they are compatible with the existing building, although they should not necessarily be imitative of an earlier style or period.
4. New additions shall not obscure the front of the building.
5. New additions shall be of a size, scale, and materials that are in harmony with the existing building.

#### **8.3.14 Accessibility**

1. Alterations to existing buildings for the purposes of providing accessibility shall provide persons with disabilities the level of physical access to historic properties that is required under applicable law, consistent with the preservation of each property's significant historical features, with the goal of providing the highest level of access with the lowest level of impact. Access modifications for persons with disabilities shall be designed and installed to least affect the character-defining features of the property. Modifications to some features may be allowed in providing access, once a review of options for the highest level of access has been completed.
2. A three-step approach is recommended to identify and implement accessibility modifications that will protect the integrity and historic character of the property:
  - a. Review the historical significance of the property and identify character-defining features;
  - b. Assess the property's existing and proposed level of accessibility;
  - c. Evaluate accessibility options within a preservation context.
3. Because of the complex nature of accessibility, the Commission will review proposals on a case-by-case basis. The Commission recommends consulting with the following document which is available from the Commission office: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, Preservation Assistance Division; Preservation Brief 32 "Making Historic Properties Accessible" by Thomas C. Jester and Sharon C. Park, AIA.

#### **8.3.15 Renewable Energy Sources**

1. Renewable energy sources, including but not limited to solar energy, are encouraged for the site.
2. Before proposing renewable energy sources, the building's performance shall be assessed and measures to correct any deficiencies shall be taken. The emphasis shall be on improvements that do not result in a loss of historic fabric. A report on this work shall be included in any proposal for renewable energy sources.
3. Proposals for new renewable energy sources shall be reviewed by the Commission on a case-by-case basis for potential physical and visual impacts on the building and site.

4. Refer to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Illustrated Guidelines on Sustainability for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings for general guidelines.

### **8.3.16 Building Site**

1. The general intent is to preserve the existing or later contributing site and landscape features that enhance the property.
2. It is recognized that often the environment surrounding the property has character, scale and street pattern quite different from what existed when the building was constructed. Thus, changes must frequently be made to accommodate the new condition, and the landscape treatment can be seen as a transition between the historic property and its newer surroundings.
3. All original or later contributing features of the building site that are important in defining its overall historic character shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired using recognized preservation methods. This may include but is not limited to walls, fences, steps, walkways, paths, roads, vegetation, landforms, furnishings and fixtures, decorative elements, and water features. (See section 9.0 for subsurface features such as archaeological resources or burial grounds.)
4. Deteriorated or missing site features shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
5. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
6. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute material may be considered.
7. The existing landforms of the site shall not be altered unless shown to be necessary for maintenance of the designated property's structure or site.
8. If there are areas where the terrain is to be altered, these areas shall be surveyed and documented to determine the potential impact to important landscape features.
9. The historic relationship between buildings and the landscape shall be retained. Grade levels should not be changed if it would alter the historic appearance of the building and its relation to the site.
10. Buildings should not be relocated if it would diminish the historic character of the site.
11. When they are required by a new use, new site features (such as parking areas, driveways, or access ramps) should be as unobtrusive as possible, retain the historic relationship between the building or buildings and the landscape, and be compatible with the historic character of the property. Historic rock outcroppings like puddingstone should not be disturbed by the construction of new site features.

12. Original or later contributing layout and materials of the walks, steps, and paved areas shall be maintained. Consideration will be given to alterations if it can be shown that better site circulation is necessary and that the alterations will improve this without altering the integrity of the designated property.
13. When they are necessary for security, protective fencing, bollards, and stanchions should be as unobtrusive as possible.
14. Existing healthy plant materials which are in keeping with the historic character of the property shall be maintained. New plant materials should be appropriate to the character of the site.
15. Maintenance of, removal of, and additions to plant materials should consider restoration of views of the designated property.
16. The Boston Landmarks Commission encourages removal of non-historic fencing as documentary evidence indicates.
17. The Boston Landmarks Commission recognizes that the designated property must continue to meet city, state, and federal goals and requirements for resiliency and safety within an ever-changing coastal flood zone and environment.

#### **8.3.18 Guidelines**

The following are additional Guidelines for the treatment of the historic property:

1. Should any major restoration or construction activity be considered for a property, the Boston Landmarks Commission recommends that the proponents prepare a historic building conservation study and/or consult a materials conservator early in the planning process.
  - a. The Boston Landmarks Commission specifically recommends that any work on masonry, wood, metals, or windows be executed with the guidance of a professional building materials conservator.
2. Should any major restoration or construction activity be considered for a property's landscape, the Boston Landmarks Commission recommends that the proponents prepare a historic landscape report and/or consult a landscape historian early in the planning process.
3. The Commission will consider whether later addition(s) and/or alteration(s) can, or should, be removed. Since it is not possible to provide one general guideline, the following factors will be considered in determining whether a later addition(s) and/or alteration(s) can, or should, be removed include:
  - a. Compatibility with the original property's integrity in scale, materials and character.
  - b. Historic association with the property.
  - c. Quality in the design and execution of the addition/alteration.

- d. Functional usefulness.

## 8.4 List of Character-defining Features

Character-defining features are the significant observable and experiential aspects of a historic resource, whether a single building, landscape, or multi-property historic district, that define its architectural power and personality. These are the features that should be identified, retained, and preserved in any restoration or rehabilitation scheme in order to protect the resource's integrity.

Character-defining elements include, for example, the overall shape of a building and its materials, craftsmanship, decorative details and features, as well as the various aspects of its site and environment. They are critically important considerations whenever preservation work is contemplated. Inappropriate changes to historic features can undermine the historical and architectural significance of the resource, sometimes irreparably.

Below is a list that identifies the physical elements that contribute to the unique character of the historic resource. The items listed in this section should be considered important aspects of the historic resource and changes to them should be approved by commissioners only after careful consideration.

The character-defining features for this historic resource include:

1. Architectural style  
The Mt. Calvary Holy Church/Shara Tfilo Synagogue is designed with an eclectic mix of Romanesque Revival and Colonial Revival elements and is constructed of brick with cast stone and brick trim. The Roxbury Hebrew School is designed in the Colonial Revival style and is also constructed of brick with cast stone and brick trim. The Classical Revival-style connector wall is built of cast stone.
2. Ornamentation  
Ornamentation on the church/synagogue building is applied primarily to the façade. It includes a cast stone water table above the basement level; a cast stone entablature embellished with Stars of David above the first story; a round-arched decorative panel on the top two stories of the façade that is formed of bands of ivory brick; and tapestry brick panels on the façade and the forwardmost bays of the side elevations. Ornamentation on the Roxbury Hebrew School Building is confined to the façade and consists of a cast stone water table above the basement level; a cast stone entablature above the first story that is decorated with Stars of David and the year of the building's construction; and concrete spandrel panels between the windows on the second and third stories. The connector wall is ornamented with a paneled entablature and pilasters; a portion of one finial survives atop the entablature.
3. Building materials and finishes  
The buildings are constructed of a hard red brick on the facades and a coarser and darker red brick on the side and rear elevations. The connector wall is built of cast stone on the façade and red brick on the side walls of the entry vestibules.
4. Doors and windows  
The church/synagogue building has two principal entrances on the façade. Each entrance has double-leaf doors with six molded panels and a glazed, rectangular transom, and is framed by a cast stone surround with paneled pilasters and entablature. Windows on the façade are both

rectangular and round-arched; they are trimmed with a variety of cast stone and brick trim at the sills and lintels. Façade windows are embellished with colored and textured glass and Queen Anne-style configuration of panes and types of glass. Segmentally-arched window openings on the side elevations are trimmed with cast stone sills and arched brick lintels. The school building has rectangular windows on the façade that are trimmed with cast stone sills and entablatures/cornices. The side and rear elevations feature segmentally-arched window openings with cast stone sills and arched brick lintels.

5. Railings and gates

Entrances at the connector wall have modern decorative metal railings surmounting their concrete cheek walls. The gateway in the center of the connector wall appears to be original or a later contributing feature; it has decorative ironwork at the double-leaf gates and the spandrel railing across the top of the opening.

6. Massing of buildings

The church/synagogue and school buildings are large, simple cubical masses, their clarity disrupted only by small entry vestibules at three of the buildings' four front corners. The connector wall forms a significant visual and architectural link between the two buildings and provides critical definition to the interior courtyard. The three-dimensional volume of the courtyard is similar to the volume of the buildings and contributes an important balance of built and open space within the complex.

7. Relationship of building to lot lines, sidewalks, and streets

The buildings are located directly on the sidewalk edge and occupy nearly all of their respective parcels. The transition to more private interior spaces is accomplished by the modest elevation of the building entrances above the sidewalk level.

8. Vegetation and landscaping

The courtyard between the two major buildings is a significant feature of the site. Its urban, functional hardscaping includes asphalt and concrete pavement and a classical, cast-stone obelisk at the rear of the space. Existing vegetation appears to be volunteer growth; further research is recommended to determine historic landscaping design.

9. Views

The scale, materials, and massing of the building facades form a prominent visual landmark from both directions along Otisfield Street, as seen from the nearby commercial thoroughfare of Blue Hill Avenue and from the vantage point of the contrasting residential development that characterizes the rest of Otisfield Street. The view into the courtyard from Intervale Street offers an incidental but enticing glimpse of the interior of the property. The simple concrete retaining wall at the back property line is a significant site feature, defining the courtyard from its residential neighbors.



## **9.0 ARCHAEOLOGY**

All below-ground work within the property shall be reviewed by the Boston Landmarks Commission and City Archaeologist to determine if work may impact known or potential archaeological resources. An archaeological survey shall be conducted if archaeological sensitivity exists and if impacts to known or potential archaeological resources cannot be mitigated after consultation with the City Archaeologist. All archaeological mitigation (monitoring, survey, excavation, etc.) shall be conducted by a professional archaeologist. The professional archaeologist should meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards for Archaeology.

Refer to Section 8.3 for any additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.

## **10.0 SEVERABILITY**

The provisions of these Standards and Criteria (Design Guidelines) are severable and if any of their provisions shall be held invalid in any circumstances, such invalidity shall not affect any other provisions or circumstances.

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