

NOMINATION REPORT

**The Social Services Building
60 South Fullerton Avenue**

**BLOCK 2206
LOT 6**



**Prepared By:
Graham Petto, AICP, Assistant Planner
The Township of Montclair Planning Department
205 Claremont Avenue
Montclair, NJ 07042**

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This report has been prepared in accordance with **Montclair Code Section 347-135B(1)**.

347-135B(1): Nomination Proposals. The party proposing for designation under this section shall prepare and submit to the Commission a nomination report for each proposed property, site or district. For individual landmark designations, the report shall include one or more photographs, the tax lot and block number of the property as designated on the Official Tax Map of the township and a physical description and statement of significance and proposed utilization of the site.

I. Executive Summary

The Township of Montclair Historic Preservation Commission was created by ordinance in June of 1994. The Historic Preservation Commission is charged with accomplishing the protection, enhancement and perpetuation of especially noteworthy examples or elements of the township's environment in order to:

- (1) Safeguard the heritage of Montclair by preserving resources which reflect elements of its cultural, social, and architectural history
- (2) Encourage the continued use of historic and/or noteworthy buildings or structures
- (3) Foster civic pride in the history and architecture of the Township
- (4) Promote the economic welfare of the township through the preservation of historic sites and landscapes
- (5) Enhance the visual and aesthetic character, diversity continuity and interest in the township and its neighborhoods
- (6) Discourage the unnecessary demolition or other destruction of historic resources
- (7) Encourage beautification and private investment in the township
- (8) Promote the economic welfare of the township through the preservation of its historic sites and landscapes

As per **Montclair Code Section 347-135A**, criteria for designation, "the Commission shall consider as worthy of designation those buildings, structures, objects, sites and districts that have integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- (1) Are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- (2) Are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- (3) Embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; that represent the work of a master; that possess high artistic values; or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
- (4) Have yielded or may be likely to yield information important to prehistory or history.
- (5) Are otherwise of particular historic significance to the Township of Montclair by reflecting or exemplifying the broad cultural, political, economic or social history of the nation, state, region or community."

II. Property Fact Sheet

Zoning Description

Address:	60 South Fullerton Street
Block:	2806
Lot:	1
Zone:	44% OR-4: Three-Story Apartment and Office Building Zone 56% R-1: One-Family Zone
Property Size:	Approx. 640 feet x 250 feet
Acres:	2.16 Acres

Physical Description

Year Built:	Main Building: 1950 Gardens: 1952
Designer/Architect:	William Orrin Bartlett
Stories:	2 stories with basement
Exterior Finish:	Brick

Map of Property

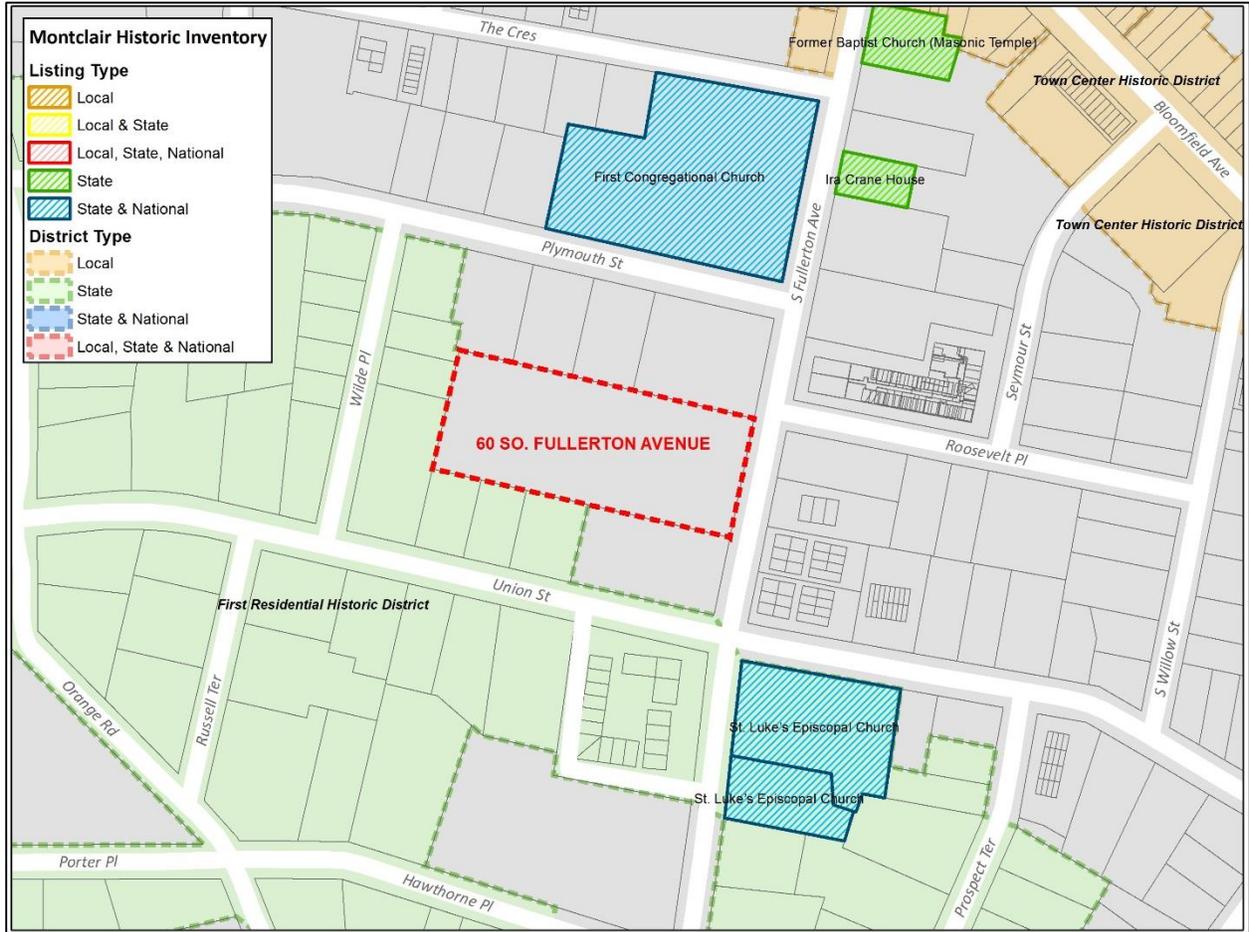


Figure 1 - A map of the subject property and adjacent historic properties

III. History of the Site & Architectural Description

Historical Background

The Social Services Building was constructed in 1952 by the Davella Mills Foundation. The Foundation was formed by David and Ella Mills, who according to historic building records in the Department of Planning & Community Development, resided in Montclair at 154 Upper Mountain Avenue.



*Figure 2 - Mr. David Mills. Image from
Legendary Locals by Elizabeth Shepherd
and Mike Farrelly*

Mr. David Mills was a businessman and founded the Rajah Company in 1905¹. The company, which was located in Bloomfield, manufactured spark plugs and other automobile parts and supplies. Mr. Mills struck a deal with David Buick to supply his company with auto parts. He also invested heavily in Buick's company, which grew under the proceeding automotive boom². In 1932, the Rajah Auto Supply Company, received U.S. Patent #US1509224 for the technology of their spark plugs³. The connector technology of the Rajah spark plugs is still used in spark plugs today⁴.

Mr. Mills' success as a businessman bolstered his philanthropic efforts. Following the passing of his wife in 1931, Mr. Mills formed the Davella (David + Ella) Mills Foundation in 1935 to continue efforts to benefit those in need and other charitable organizations. The Foundation continued its philanthropic efforts after Mr. Mills death in 1944. When the Foundation finally concluded operations in 1955, it had donated more than \$10.5 million in 24 states and twelve countries.

In Essex County, the Davella Mills Foundation donated 119 acres of land to the County's Park Commission in 1954. This land would come to be known as the Mills Reservation with portions of the property located in Cedar Grove and Montclair⁵. Today, at 157 acres in size, the Foundation's gift still accounts for more than 75% of the Reservation.

In Montclair, the Davella Mills Foundation funded the construction of the Social Services building, located at 58-60 South Fullerton Street. Initially, the Foundation intended to convert the existing home on the property to veteran housing. However, the heirs of the property would not grant permission for such a use⁶.

¹ Canadian Register of Historic Places, Devalla Mills Carillon, Heritage Value
<http://www.lieuxpatrimoniaux.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=13494>

² "United Way Building Celebrates 50 Years, Half Century of Service." New Jersey Hills. New Jersey Hills Media Group, 19 Dec. 2002. Web. 22 May 2015.
http://www.newjerseyhills.com/united-way-building-celebrates-years-half-century-of-service/article_35c8a716-ace3-5258-a71d-02a2bb8af91b.html

³ United State Patent and Trademark Office

⁴ *Legendary Locals of Montclair*, by Elizabeth Shepherd and Mike Farrelly, Arcadia Publishing, July 1, 2013

⁵ About Mills Reservation, Essex County Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs
<http://www.essexcountyparks.org/parks/mills-reservation/about>

⁶ Minutes of the Town of Montclair Board of Adjustment, May 11, 1950

The Foundation then proposed to construct a two-story with basement brick, stone and concrete building with 136 feet of frontage and 145 feet of depth. The building would house the social agencies of Montclair. It would be constructed by the Foundation and turned over to the Community Chest of Montclair by deed. In addition, the proposal included a 12-car garage and parking area measuring 190 feet by 300 feet.

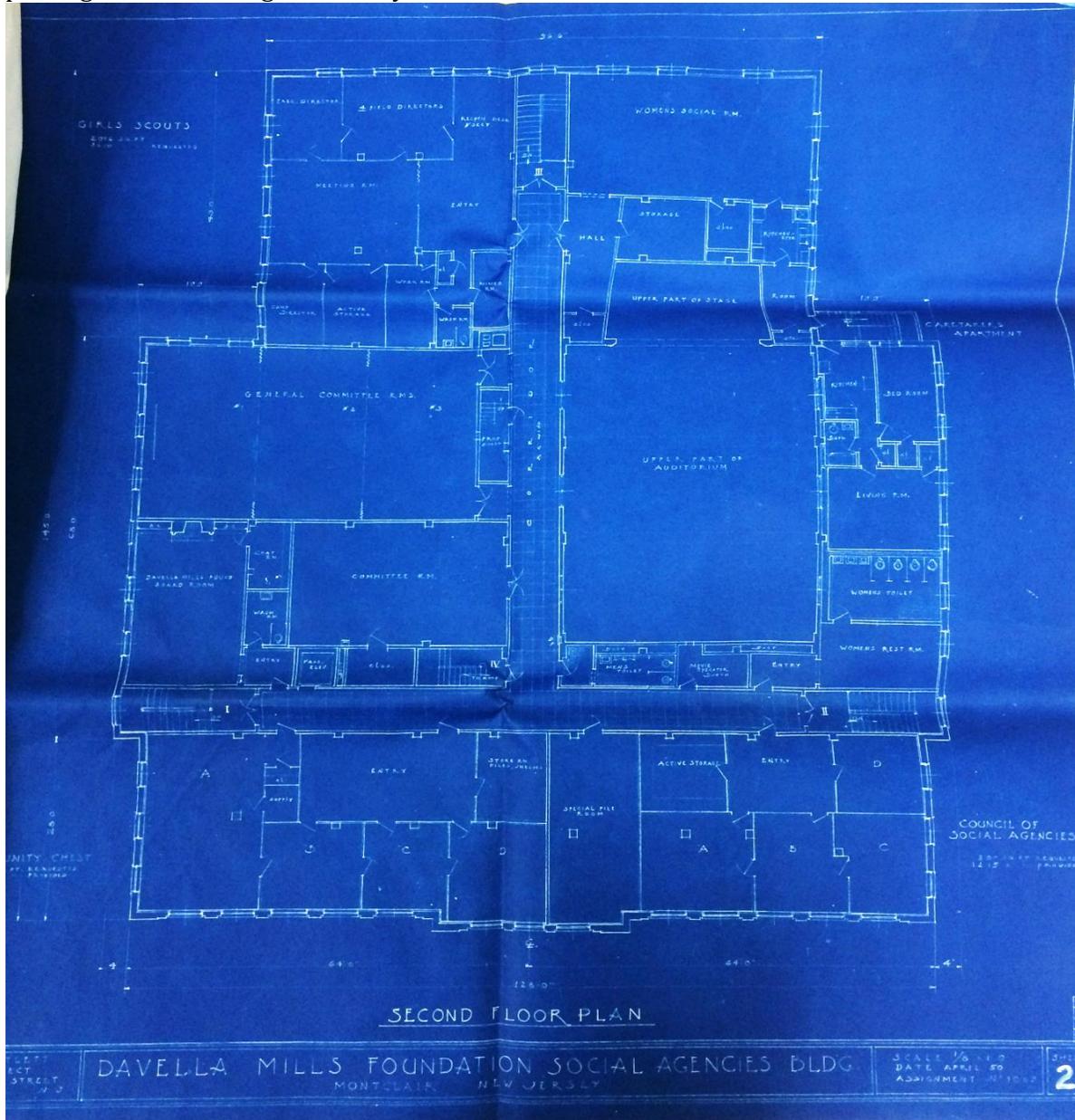


Figure 3 - An image of the building plans from the April 1950 Board of Adjustment application

The plans for the building was designed by architect William Orrin Bartlett. Mr. Bartlett was also a native of Montclair, born September 10, 1886. He attended school in Newark and subsequently began his career with the architectural firm of Hugh Roberts⁷. Mr. Roberts is known for his design

⁷ A History of the City of Newark, New Jersey: Embracing Practically Two and a Half Centuries, 1666-1913, Volume 3 by Frank John Urquhart

of the Hudson County Court House. In 1908, Mr. Bartlett passed the State Board of Examiners on Architecture and proceeded to open his own firm in Newark. He later relocated his office to 2 Broad Street in Bloomfield⁸. Below is a list of notable local buildings that Mr. Bartlett designed in Bloomfield and Glen Ridge, in addition to the Social Services Building in Montclair:

- Bloomfield Municipal Building
- Bloomfield Post Office
- Glen Ridge Municipal Building
- Bloomfield High School (addition)
- Brookdale Baptist Church
- Oakview School (Bloomfield)
- Bloomfield Public Library (addition and alterations)

In addition, Mr. Bartlett designed other notable works throughout the state of New Jersey including the following:

- Essex Youth House (Newark)
- South Orange Savings and Loan Building
- Prospect Presbyterian Church, alterations and renovations (Maplewood)
- Pals Cabin, alterations and additions (West Orange)
- Mayfair Farms, alterations and additions (West Orange)
- Fountain Gardens, Inc. Garden Apartments (Long Branch)

On April 26, 1950, following the denial of a construction permit application by the Inspector of Buildings for the Town of Montclair, The Davella Mills Foundation applied to the Board of Adjustment. The Foundation sought approval from the Board to construct the philanthropic use in the R-3 zone district.

The Department of Planning & Community Development has located in its archives the minutes from the May 11, 1950 meeting of the Board of Adjustment at which the variance application for the Social Services building was presented. In addition, the plans submitted as part of the application are included in the files.

⁸ Information on Mr. Barlett's Bloomfield office and listing of buildings was obtained from an article highlighting his 50 years of business in the April 30, 1959 edition of The Independent Press, Bloomfield, NJ. Retrieved July 2015 from the following link:

<http://fultonhistory.com/Newspapers%2023/Bloomfield%20NJ%20Independent%20Press/Bloomfield%20NJ%20Independent%20Press%201959/Bloomfield%20NJ%20Independent%20Press%201959%20ns%20-%2000381.pdf>

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT OF THE
TOWN OF MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY

Thursday, May 11, 1950.

Appeal of :

The Davella Mills Foundation on April 26, 1950, :
having applied to the Board of Adjustment of :
the Town of Montclair for an exception to the :
decision of the Inspector of Buildings in :
denying application for a permit to construct :
a two-story and basement brick, stone and :
concrete building 136 feet frontage by 145 :
feet in depth. :

The denial is due to the following: :

(1) Such philanthropic or eleemosynary use or :
institution requires permission by the Board of :
Adjustment. :

Figure 4 - An image of the minutes of the Board of Adjustment, May 11, 1950

Contained within the minutes are testimony by Mr. Howard Dodd, then Vice President of the Davella Mills Foundation. Mr. Dodd testified that the building would “house social agencies of Montclair (and) constituent members of the Community Chest.” He noted at the meeting that a formal deed agreement had been arranged where “we (the Foundation) have agreed to build, construct and turn over, and they (the Community Chest) have agree to accept and maintain it (the building).”

Mr. Dodd also discussed future plans for the site beyond the construction of the Social Services building and the parking area, which were part of the application before the Board at the May 1950 meeting. When asked if the remainder of the site would be used for parking, Mr. Dodd noted that a portion of the site would be landscaped. He stated that “the thought is that this (are) will be a park as a memorial to Mr. Mills as well as the building...we expect to have a memorial park there. That has always been our plan.”

Mr. Allen Hastings, President of the Council of Social Agencies of Montclair, testified at the meeting that the project was viewed as important to the town. He stated the following:

the Davella Mills Foundation has brought up here. I would think it was pertinent to this record to tell you that this project is of great importance to the Social Agencies in the Town, enabling them to come together in one place and to operate more cooperatively through that arrangement of being together. And I think it is quite appropriate also for us to express our great appreciation, as we have and will, to the Davella Mills Foundation for this very fine project which we think will add greatly to Montclair and to the effectiveness of handling the social work in this Town.

Figure 5 - Excerpt of Mr. Hastings' testimony, Minutes of the Board of Adjustment, May 11, 1950

Mr. Hastings also noted the importance of the auditorium to be within the building, stating that "(activities and meetings of social agencies) are now held at various points throughout the Town wherever they can find a place to hold the meetings." He noted that a single location would be very convenient.

Mr. William Speers, Vice President of the Community Chest, also provided testimony to the Board of Adjustment during the May 11, 1950 meeting. Mr. Speers stated that the building would be "of great use to the agencies of the Town" and that "it isn't often in any community that as generous a gift as this is made."

The application by the Davella Mills Foundation was approved unanimously by the Montclair Board of Adjustment at the May 11, 1950 meeting.

The Foundation returned to the Board of Adjustment on October 4, 1951 to present modified parking area plans. The proposal was to reduce the number of garage stalls from twelve to eight and to relocate the garages to a more central location away from the property line.

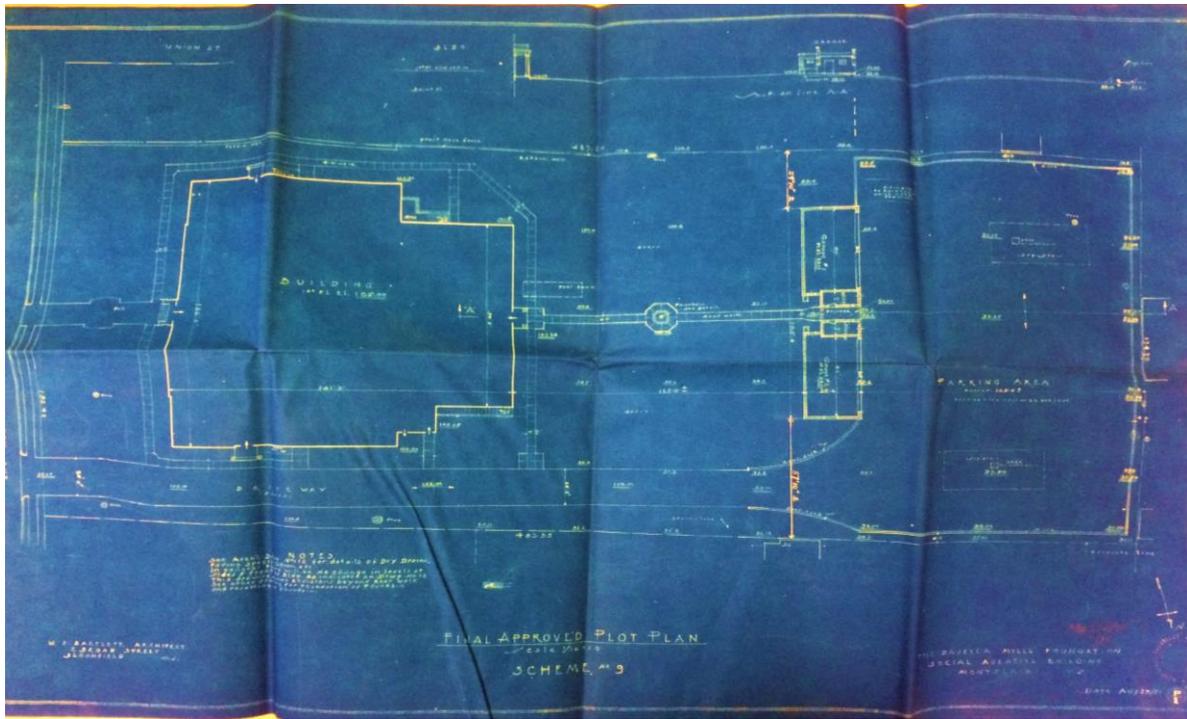


Figure 6 - Revised garage and parking area plan

To the rear of the Social Services Building is a small garden area. The gardens located here are today named for Ms. Avis Campbell (1926-1986), a landscape designer and Montclair resident. Originally, the gardens were developed as public display gardens and were known as the Garden Center Gardens when first constructed in 1952. The gardens were constructed to the rear of the Social Services Building.

The design of the gardens by Ms. Campbell, radiate out from the central fountain are based upon the “Wheel of Life.” The gardens were photographed by Molly Adams as part of the Maida Babson Adams American Garden collection, circa 1957-1994. The collection is part of the Smithsonian Institution Archives of American Gardens in Washington, DC⁹.

Ms. Campbell served as the steward of the gardens which were the recipient of Fisher Garden Center Medal of the National Council of Garden Clubs, the New Jersey "Garden Club of the Year" award, and the New Jersey Garden Club's Bronze Medal. The gardens were the renamed Avis Campbell Memorial Gardens in honor of Ms. Campbell in 1982. In 2011, The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society presented the gardens with a Community Greening Award.¹⁰



Figure 7 - An overhead photograph of the gardens by Molly Adams, 1960. Courtesy Smithsonian Institution Research Information Systems



Figure 8 - A view of the Avis Campbell Gardens, Montclair Township Dept. of Planning & Community Development

⁹ Avis Campbell Gardens ca. 1960-1965. Archives, Manuscripts, Photographs Catalog, Smithsonian Institution Research Information System

<http://sirius-archives.si.edu/ipac20/ipac.jsp?uri=full=3100001~!305194!0>

¹⁰“Celebrating 60 years of Avis Campbell Gardens in Montclair” by T. D. Shoudy, The Montclair Times 18 May 2012. 21 May 2015

<http://www.northjersey.com/community-news/celebrating-60-years-of-avis-campbell-gardens-1.370037?page=all>

Condition

A conditions survey was conducted of the Social Services Building at 60 South Fullerton Street in July 2015. Elizabeth Ceccio, a Commissioner on the Montclair Historic Preservation Commission and a specialist in Historic Preservation and Architectural Restoration, conducted an assessment of the condition of the Social Services Building and the garage building on the property at 60 South Fullerton. The following findings are based on Ms. Ceccio's review.

The main Social Services Building overall is in good condition, given its age. However, there are a few areas of concern that need to be addressed.

- The condition of the front portico of the building is unsafe. A portion of the portico has already collapsed on the upper right side. The lentils and railings on the portico also need to be addressed as well.
- The corners of the structure which were not quoined properly. Over time the corner joints have expanded and separated unevenly.
- The lentils above the windows appear to have some rust expansion and are damaging adjacent bricks.
- Some previous brick re-pointing should be remedied as it appears an inappropriate mortar was used. Overall the brick is in good condition.
- There are a number of caulked cracks in the façade that should be resealed appropriately with mortar.
- The cornice joints along the upper edge of the facades should be filled.
- The 1951 cornerstone at the north east corner of the building is cracking.
- All bushes and trees should be trimmed back from the façade to allow for appropriate ventilation.



Figure 9 - A view of the front portico of the Social Services Building. July 2015

An assessment was also conducted of the garage building located to the rear of the Social Services Building, behind the Avis Campbell Memorial Gardens. Overall the garage has a few concerns.

- The archways in the center of the garage have some large cracks. The structural integrity of these arches presents a safety hazard and should be addressed.
- Some plantings along the garage wall should be moved away to ensure proper ventilation of the façade.
- There appears to be some rusting of lentils above the doorways in the garage.

Utilization

The Social Services Building is home to a number of social service organizations that provide assistance to Montclair residents in addition to citizens from Essex County and across Northern New Jersey. The continued occupancy of these organizations in the building represents the

continued importance of the Davella Mills Foundation's vision for the facility to provide space for these organizations to operate and serve members of the community.

Below is a listing of the current tenants of the Social Services Building:

COPE Center, Inc., is a nonprofit agency dedicated to providing quality behavioral health-care services that are affordable, accessible, and responsive to individual, family, and community needs. The letters of COPE's name stand for Counseling, Outreach, Prevention, and Education, all areas in which the agency's professional staff is actively engaged in programs throughout Essex County and surrounding areas, including the center in Montclair. Its counselors work in the areas of drug and alcohol abuse, family crises, problems in daily living, and AIDS. COPE was started over 40 years ago by the Junior League of Montclair and the United Way of North Essex and incorporated in 1971.

Source: <http://www.copecenter.net/>

The Mental Health Association of Essex County: The mission of the Mental Health Association of Essex County, Inc. is to promote mental health including the integration of physical healthcare, to improve the care and treatment of individuals with mental illness and to remove the stigma associated with emotional and mental disorders. We, as a community organization, accomplish our mission through advocacy, education, prevention, early intervention, treatment and service.

Source: <http://www.mhaessex.org/>

American Association of Retired Persons – West Essex 131

Source: <http://aarpwestessex.org/>

Partners for Woman and Justice: The organization empowers low-income and abused women to build safe and secure futures for themselves and their children by providing equal access to justice. We offer quality legal assistance in domestic violence and family law matters.

Source: <http://www.pfwj.org/>

Essex Community Land Trust: The ECLT provides permanently affordable housing for people in Montclair and surrounding areas. The trust also stewards affordable homes in Montclair Township and assists the creation of new affordable units in partnership with HOME Corp.

Source: <http://www.essexclt.org/about-us.html>

Family Service League: The Family Service League was an original tenant of the Social Services Building. The mission of the Family Service League is to support and strengthen families in need in Essex County through counseling, education and social services. The agency's success stems from the dedication of an experienced, highly trained staff of professionals who care deeply about families. Our programs are focused on low-income families and individuals who cannot afford counseling or other services. Nearly 95% of clients receive counseling at reduced rates -- often at a small fraction of our fee, including survivors of sexual assault who are offered free services and limited free counseling.

Source: <http://www.familyserviceleague.org/home/about-fsl>

The Montclair Garden Club: The Garden Club has been a part of the Social Services Building since its opening in 1951. The Garden Club of Montclair stimulates and educates members and the public in their knowledge and practice of conservation, horticulture, and the artistic use of plant material. It beautifies the township of Montclair and the state of New Jersey. The club sponsors and supports projects of an educational character, specifically allied to these purposes.

Source: http://njclubs.esiteasp.com/garden_club_of_montclair/home.nxg

United Way of Northern New Jersey: The United Way of Northern New Jersey's mission is to improve people's lives and strengthen communities across the region by ensuring all citizens have access to the basic building blocks of a good life, education, income and health.

Source: <http://www.unitedwaynnj.org/aboutus/mission.php>

In addition to the organizations housed at the Social Services Building, the following additional activities occur at the property:

- Free tax preparation assistance is provided to low-income residents through a partnership of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), the Internal Revenue Service, and the United Way of Northern New Jersey.
- The building serves as one of eighteen polling locations used during elections in the Township.
- Numerous other community meetings and events are held in the building.

III. **Statement of Significance**

The Social Services Building at 60 South Fullerton Street is a significant historic property in the Township of Montclair. In reviewing the criteria for the designation of historic landmarks under **Montclair Code Section 347-135A**, the property meets three of the key criteria elements:

Are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

Three prominent figures in the Township's history are linked to the building. First, David Mills was a prominent businessman whose company contributed immensely to the advancement of automotive technology. Mr. Mills parlayed his business success into philanthropic efforts through the establishment of the Davella Mills Foundation. Through the foundation, funding for the Social Services Building was provided.

Second, the architect of the project William Orrin Bartlett is a native of Montclair and a renowned regional architect. Examples of his work still exist today here in Montclair, and also in neighboring Bloomfield, Glen Ridge and West Orange.

Finally, Avis Campbell, a native of Montclair and landscape architect, designed and stewarded the public display gardens behind the Social Services Building. Today, the award-winning gardens are named in her honor.

Are otherwise of particular historic significance to the Township of Montclair by reflecting or exemplifying the broad cultural, political, economic or social history of the nation, state, region or community.

The construction and deed restriction of the Social Services Building represents a unique philanthropic arrangement in Montclair. The construction of the building to provide space for social service organizations and grounds dedicated to support the Garden Club in the Township, funded by the Davella Mills Foundation and deeded to the Community Chest was a progressive strategy to support the needs of the community.

The continued occupation of social service organizations in the building represent a true preservation of history in the Township. The use of the building for civic engagement as a polling

location and community meeting space further exemplifies the continued importance of the building to the Township.

The award winning Avis Campbell Memorial Gardens, which have been featured as part of the Maida Babson Adams American Garden housed in the Smithsonian Institution Archives of American Gardens in Washington, DC is a significant historic and environmental resource to the residents of Montclair.

The designation of the Social Services Building and its grounds as an historic landmark along with the continued use of the building for social service organizations by deed restriction will preserve the legacy crafted by the Davella Mills Foundation for the Township of Montclair.

Appendix A: Tax Assessment

<input type="button" value="New Search"/>		Block: 2202		Prop Loc: 60 SO. FULLERTON AVENUE	Owner: UNITED WAY OF NORTH ESSEX	Square Ft: 0
Lot: 6		District: 0713 MONTCLAIR		Street: 60 SOUTH FULLERTON AVENUE	Year Built: 1951	
Qual:		Class: 15D		City State: MONTCLAIR, NJ 07042	Style:	
Additional Information						
Prior Block:	Acct Num:	Addl Lots:		EPL Code: 20 10 613		
Prior Lot:	Mtg Acct:	Land Desc: 2.16ACRE		Statute: 54:4-3.6		
Prior Qual:	Bank Code: 0	Bldg Desc:		Initial: 110169 Further: 110114		
Updated: 11/04/14	Tax Codes:	Class4Cd: 0		Desc: COMMUNITY CHEST		
Zone: OR4	Map Page:	Acreage: 2.16		Taxes: 0.00 / 0.00		
Sale Information						
Sale Date: 00/00/00	Book:	Page:	Price: 0 NU#: 0			
Sr1a	Date	Book	Page	Price	NU#	Grantee
TAX-LIST-HISTORY						
Year	Owner Information	Land/Imp/Tot	Exemption	Assessed	Property Class	
2015	UNITED WAY OF NORTH ESSEX 60 SOUTH FULLERTON AVENUE MONTCLAIR, NJ 07042	1093600 8044500 9138100	0	9138100	15D	
2014	UNITED WAY OF NORTH ESSEX 60 SOUTH FULLERTON AVENUE MONTCLAIR, NJ 07042	1093600 8044500 9138100	0	9138100	15D	
2013	UNITED WAY OF NORTH ESSEX 60 SOUTH FULLERTON AVENUE MONTCLAIR, NJ 07042	1093600 8044500 9138100	0	9138100	15D	
2012	UNITED WAY OF NORTH ESSEX 60 SOUTH FULLERTON AVENUE MONTCLAIR, NJ 07042	1093600 8044500 9138100	0	9138100	15D	

**Appendix B:
Photos of the Subject Property**



A view of the front facade of the building along South Fullerton Avenue



A view of the southern facade of the building



A view of the northern facade of the building



A view of the Avis Campbell Memorial Gardens to the rear of the Social Services Building