

HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY - BUILDING AND STRUCTURES

Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism, One Constitution Plaza, 2nd Floor, Hartford, CT 06103

*** Note:** Please attach any additional or expanded information on a separate sheet.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Building Name (Common) William T. Rowe Tower
 Building Name (Historic) William T. Rowe Tower
 Street Address or Location 904-912 Howard Avenue
 Town/City New Haven Village Hill North County New Haven
 Owner(s) Housing Authority of New Haven (HANH) Public Private

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Vacant - planned demolition
 Historic Use: Residential - Senior Rental Housing / Commercial - Retail
 Accessibility to public: Exterior visible from public road? Yes No
 Interior accessible? Yes No If yes, explain _____
 Style of building Modernist - Brutalist - Post-modern Date of Construction 1975

Material(s) (Indicate use or location when appropriate):

- | | | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clapboard | <input type="checkbox"/> Asbestos Siding | <input type="checkbox"/> Brick | <input type="checkbox"/> Wood Shingle | <input type="checkbox"/> Asphalt Siding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fieldstone | <input type="checkbox"/> Board & Batten | <input type="checkbox"/> Stucco | <input type="checkbox"/> Cobblestone | <input type="checkbox"/> Aluminum Siding |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concrete (Type <u>Precast Panels</u>) | <input type="checkbox"/> Cut Stone (Type _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | | |

Structural System

- Wood Frame Post & Beam Balloon Load bearing masonry Structural iron or steel
 Other Precast Concrete Planks & Panels

Roof (Type)

- Gable Flat Mansard Monitor Sawtooth
 Gambrel Shed Hip Round Other _____

(Material)

- Wood Shingle Roll Asphalt Tin Slate Asphalt Shingle
 Built up Tile Other _____

Number of Stories: 12 - 16 Approximate Dimensions 147' x 56' x 168' height

Structural Condition: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated

Exterior Condition: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated

Location Integrity: On original site Moved When? _____

Alterations? Yes No If yes, explain: ADA renovations of 5 units, 1994.

FOR OFFICE USE: Town # _____ Site # _____ UTM _____
 District: S NR If NR, Specify: Actual Potential

• Other notable features of building or site (*Interior and/or Exterior*):

The building mass consists of 4 tower volumes or modules, each roughly 36' x 56,' oriented east-west and each offset from its neighbor so that the building steps back from south to north, meeting the angled street line of Howard Avenue along the east side of the site. The walls are sheer vertical planes the full height, which varies, stepping up one story each module from the southernmost to the 3rd, and back down one at the north end. Mechanical equipment is screened by projecting screen walls.

The building is constructed of brown-tinted precast concrete planks and full floor-height panels which are joined by connections at the floor level, utilizing reinforcing bars and concrete infill poured in-situ. Recessed balconies behind some openings and window glazing at the surface plane in others, provide subtle variety. The ground floor has retail spaces, and entries to the upper floors, where storefront openings alternate with large circular openings filled with dome-shaped plastic glazing (some replaced by flat glass), a Post-modern feature in an otherwise Brutalist style design. The second floor has smaller window openings for office space (for the Housing Authority). These two lower floors form a solid podium above which the residential floors, with their larger openings on the east and west elevations, show a greater openness. The north and south elevations have fewer openings, only a pair of unequal-sized windows near the center of the wall. Windows are metal-framed sliding units. Walls are a ribbed textured brown-tinted concrete with an inset reveal indicating the floor levels and a minimalist ornamental recessed panel at the corners. At the roof-level screen wall on both north and south elevations, a large circular opening echoes the ground-floor circular windows.

To the west of the building there is a parking garage with a landscaped garden level on its roof. This is connected to the apartment building by a 2nd-floor bridge. Further west on the site is an open parking area which is entered from Sylvan Avenue on the south through a gateway of 8" x 8" scored concrete block masonry, also brown-tinted, sloped up from the curb cut to form wide triangular piers framing the opening.

• Historical or Architectural importance:

The building was built for the Housing Authority of New Haven in 1975 as senior rental housing. It later came to include senior and disabled tenants. The building site has been traded to Yale University in return for an adjacent site on which new affordable rental housing is being constructed.

The use of the Bison precast panel system was innovative in 1975; the panels were fabricated at the local C.W. Blakeslee and Sons factory. Like the use of split-ribbed or scored concrete masonry a few years earlier in buildings such as Crawford Manor, Ruoppolo Manor, Columbus Mall, and the Robert T. Wolfe building (see Inventory forms for 90 Park Street, 480 Ferry Street, 158 Wooster Street, and 49 Union Avenue), designers were looking for ways to achieve the powerful hard-edged and abstract monumentality that was in vogue, using materials other than cast-in-place concrete as at the Yale Art and Architecture Building or New Haven Fire Headquarters (see Inventory form for 182 York Street). The precast panel and plank system permitted a high level of quality control as well as fire-resistance, and became the standard for much high-rise residential and hotel construction (see Inventory form for 400 Sargent Drive).

Here the detailing of wall texture, floor and window reveals, and the pattern of light and shade, are refined and subtle, making skillful use of the limitations of the precasting technology. However, the building appears slated for demolition; its layout apparently has been unsuitable for re-use or its reputation as a failed public housing high-rise has doomed it.



1. East view from Howard Avenue, camera facing southwest.



2. Southeast view from corner of Howard Avenue and Sylvan Avenue, camera facing northwest.



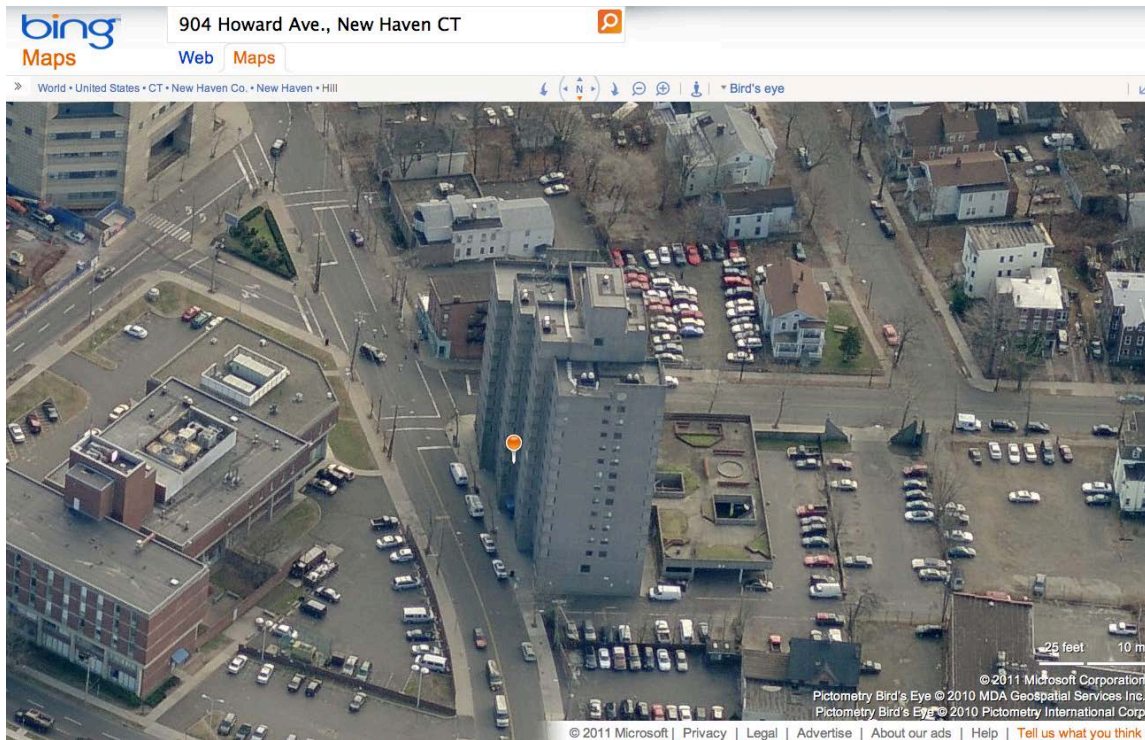
3. Northeast view from Howard Avenue, camera facing southwest.



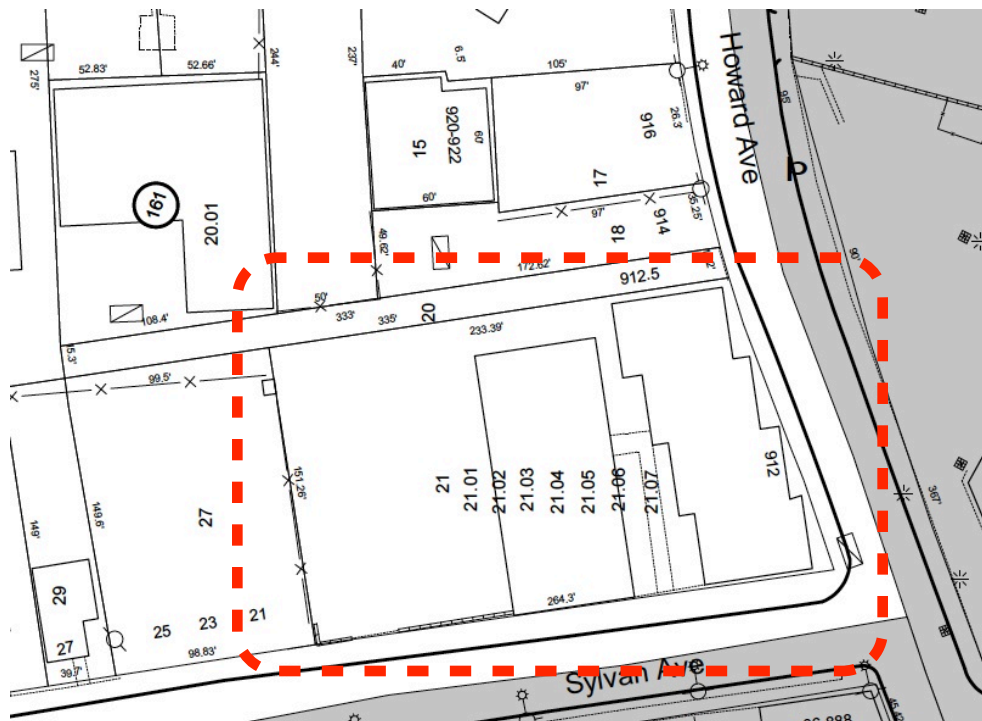
4. Southwest view from Sylvan Avenue showing parking entrance gateway, parking structure, and building; camera facing northeast.



5. Partial view of south elevation showing precast concrete details and dome window, camera facing northwest.



6. North aerial view from Bing Maps <http://www.bing.com/maps/> accessed 6/12/2011.



7. Site Plan – detail from City of New Haven Tax Map 298/161/021, not to scale, North ↑.