

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Congregation Achduth Vesholom

Other names/site number: Achduth Vesholom

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 5200 Old Mill Road

City or town: Fort Wayne State: IN County: Allen-003

Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national X statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A B X C D

<hr style="border: 1px solid black;"/> <p>Signature of certifying official/Title:</p> <hr style="border: 1px solid black;"/> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p>Date</p>
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Congregation Achduth Vesholom
Name of Property _____

Allen, IN
County and State _____

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____	_____
Signature of commenting official:	Date
_____	_____
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:
___ entered in the National Register
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box.)

- Building(s)
- District
-

Congregation Achduth Vesholom
Name of Property
Site

Allen, IN
County and State

Structure

Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility

RELIGION/religious school

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility

EDUCATION/school

RELIGION/religious school

Congregation Achduth Vesholom
Name of Property

Allen, IN
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Mid-century Modern

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: 1. Main Facade of North and South Wings: BRICK, STONE/Limestone; 2. Structural CONCRETE for North and South Wings; 3. Exterior sculptural elements: 4. STONE/Granite, METAL/Bronze; Window Spandrels on North and South Wings: CERAMIC TILE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Congregation Achduth Vesholom (Unity and Peace, “CAV,” 1960) is a 28,159-square-foot, single-story synagogue complex constructed of steel-reinforced concrete and concrete block and clad in buff, yellow, and brown brick with limestone and ceramic veneers.¹ The modified L-Plan synagogue was built in the Mid-century modern style and has two primary wings. The north wing of the building features a sanctuary, social hall, and kitchen, while the south wing includes a small chapel and a series of educational rooms. An addition on the rear (west) of the building was added in 2015. CAV occupies a nine-acre parcel in the Woodhurst neighborhood in Fort Wayne, set between Old Mill Road and the St. Mary’s River, and maintains a high degree of historic integrity in location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

¹ Allen County Property Record Card for Parcel number: 02-12-22-430-001.000-074. <https://www.allencounty.in.gov/records> the synagogue as measuring 29,080 square feet. Calculations based on A. M. Strauss Architectural Records Collection: 32-1590. Andrew Seager Archives of the Built Environment, Ball State University Libraries show the synagogue was originally 28,159 square feet (this figure does not include the covered entrances). Finally, a newspaper article at the time includes the figures 30,500 square feet and 156,000 cubic feet and built and furnished for approximately \$750,000. “Unique and Outstanding Beauty of Edifice Described,” *The Indiana Jewish Chronicle*. May 19, 1961. p. 5.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom
Name of Property

Allen, IN
County and State

Narrative Description

Setting:

The synagogue is situated between Old Mill Road to the east and the St. Mary's River to the west and is set further back on its lot than the surrounding residential properties. An expansive lawn and landscaped garden define the front of the property, including a well-maintained garden to the right of the main entrance and several commissioned bronze, limestone, and granite sculptures integrated into the landscape of the primary façade. To the south and east are parking areas accommodating approximately 150 cars, while a half-circle driveway, added c. 2014, provides accessible access to the main entrance.² An access drive along the north side of the building leads to the rear (west side) of the property. In 2023, Fort Wayne City Utilities purchased a 140' x 100' section from CAV in the northwest corner of the parcel, along with an easement along the north property line, for construction of the South Foster Park Wet Weather Pump Station; this area, historically part of the CAV campus, is excluded from the nomination boundary.

The west (rear) portion of the property consists of a large open green space with mature trees and landscaped gardens that extend toward the St. Mary's River. A playground (non-contributing structure) is also located within this rear portion of the site. The property provides access to the St. Mary's Pathway, part of the Fort Wayne River Greenway. The property also borders the Fort Wayne Park and Boulevard System Historic District.³ Located within this rear landscape is the Sposeep Chapel, a non-contributing site. This outdoor circular chapel, composed of concrete pavers with two fixed benches and a concrete lectern, was dedicated in 1997 in honor of Doris and Sam Sposeep.⁴

Exterior:

On the east facade of South Wing, an alternating pattern of tile spandrels and buff brick can be seen atop the poured concrete footer. The buff brick rises to the aluminum soffit and breaks up the fenestration. Seven clusters of original three-lite aluminum windows include limestone sills small outward-opening awning windows, and tile spandrels can be found repeated on the tops of the windows before reaching the soffit. On the south end of the east facade is a cut limestone wall veneer arranged in a decorative pattern the architect called out as "Linkage." Affixed to this wall is a cast bronze *menorah* by Russel Oettel, former chairperson of the Fine Arts Department of Indiana-Purdue Fort Wayne (now Purdue Fort Wayne).⁵

The narrow south facade includes a limestone-clad west corner that rises through the aluminum soffit and fascia, mirroring the south end of the east facade. The south facade also includes buff brick which rises to the soffit and breaks up the fenestration which includes a glass double door

² This driveway appears between 2012 and 2015 in aerial photos.

³ Fort Wayne Park and Boulevard System Historic District, NRHP #10001099. Added to the National Register of Historic Places, December 2010.

⁴ Zweig, "Our Story," p. 18.

⁵ "Houses of Worship," *Fort Wayne News-Sentinel*.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom
Name of Property

Allen, IN
County and State

entry (to the former Religious School) and adjoining two-lite aluminum curtain wall system topped with tile spandrels. The facade also includes original three-lite cluster aluminum windows atop tile spandrels and limestone sills. These windows contain small outward-opening awning windows, and repeating tile spandrels on the top which reach the soffit and fascia.

On the west facade of South Wing, the same alternating pattern of tile spandrels and buff brick seen on the east facade can be seen atop the poured concrete footer. The buff brick rises to the aluminum soffit and breaks up the fenestration here as well. Four clusters of original three-lite aluminum windows include limestone sills, small outward-opening awning windows, and tile spandrels repeated on top before reaching the soffit.

Continuing the west facade of South Wing, is the MRRC addition to the original building clad in limestone. A rectangular opening in this cladding is filled with 14 aluminum picture windows topped with an open-air aluminum awning. The limestone cladding rises, uninterrupted, to the flat roof.

The west facade of the North Wing is composed of buff brick broken up by a double door maintenance entry and louvered aluminum vents.

The north facade includes buff brick rising from the concrete footer and 21 narrow aluminum windows with limestone sills and awning windows which open inward. The indentations of the windows rise from the footer to the roof and increase the facade's verticality, especially when compared with the horizontal nature of the South Wing. While the entirety of these indentations is not glazed, the 12 windows on the west side (social hall) contain clear glass and the nine windows on the east side (sanctuary) contain stained-glass. The north facade also includes two double door entries, one leading to the social hall and the other to the rear of the sanctuary.

The east facade of the North Wing includes buff brick and limestone cladding. A limestone planter is located at the base of a pair of 31-foot mahogany granite tablets representing the Ten Commandments attached to the limestone cladding. The first 10 letters of the Hebrew alphabet (representing numbers 1-10), measuring 2 ½ feet in height, were crafted from bronze by world-renowned artist Ludwig Yehuda Wolpert.⁶ While the limestone cladding stops at the flat rubber roof, the granite tablets rise above the roof line.

Entry:

The main entrance to the synagogue complex is on the east side facing Old Mill Road. A three-ton, 40-foot-tall limestone pylon with bent apex that stands at the left corner of the entry walk. The pylon is attached to the building and a bronze Star of David is mounted on top of the pylon.⁷

⁶ "ART of Achduth Vesholom," Fishman, p. 2-4; "Houses of Worship Tell Spirit of People," *Fort Wayne News-Sentinel*, August 20, 1983. In a June 2, 2022 email from Betty Fishman to Maureen Grinsfelder, Fishman stated that Ludwig Wolpert crafted the Star of David. On the architect's construction drawing set, however, the "metal Star of David" is called out in details and the letters of the congregation's name are specified as "not in contract."

⁷ "Builders New Achduth Vesholom," *The Indiana Jewish Chronicle*; "Unique and Outstanding Beauty," *Indiana Jewish Chronicle*.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom

Name of Property

Allen, IN

County and State

Wolpert used bronze to craft the letters spelling out the congregation's name and affixed to the buff brick.⁸ Initially these letters were affixed to the right of the entrance corridor (the exterior wall of the rabbi's office). The letters were subsequently removed and affixed to the left of the entrance corridor (exterior wall of the education wing), which is where they can be seen today.

Another focal point of the entry, installed at the base of the limestone pylon, is a 10' x 4' terra cotta clay sculpture dedicated to the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust. The memorial sculpture by Purdue Fort Wayne (then Indiana-Purdue Fort Wayne) ceramics professor Nancy McCroskey was completed and attached to the building in 1986. The form of the sculpture, two trapezoidal masses, alludes to the Western Wall in Jerusalem, a remnant of earlier destruction and reference to Jewish persecution throughout the ages. Demarcations on the sculpture signify the 12 Tribes of Israel. Hopelessness and despair in the concentration camps are symbolized by handprints behind barbed wire. The handprints on the sculpture were from members of the congregation, and McCroskey included the names of 85 victims who were related to members of the Fort Wayne Jewish community. Also inscribed is "Those who had the courage to care," along with the name of Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who saved thousands of Hungarian Jews.⁹ In addition to the large limestone pylon, two 10-foot limestone louvers support the corridor's flat roof on one side. Part of the 1986 sculpture includes the words "Zachor ('Remember' in Hebrew) REMEMBER LEST FROM THIS WE LEARNED NOTHING" engraved on one of the louvers.¹⁰ Across the entry walk, mounted to the brick, a bronze plaque describes the sculpture in detail that states it was dedicated on May 4, 1986.

Three sets of large 9-foot-tall imposing bronze doors, designed by the architect, form the main entrance to the synagogue.¹¹ Each door bears three bronze medallions depicting the Tablets of the Ten Commandments in relief.¹² The 18, five-inch octagon medallions depict the Tablets set on wavy horizontal lines with blue inlay that hint at the parting of the Sea of Reeds immediately following the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai as described in the Book of Exodus, the second book of the Torah. Using *gematria*, the practice of assigning a number to each Hebrew letter, the letters (chet, yod) spell out *chai* (life) and total 18. The number 18 is, therefore, highly symbolic in Judaism and Jewish life. The entry originally included bronze lettering: "Mine House Shall Be Called an House of Prayer for All Peoples" (a phrase also above the congregation's 1917 synagogue) above the bronze doors but at the time of writing this, these letters had been removed and are in storage.¹³ Five aluminum windows, to the rabbi's office and two to the administrative office overlook the synagogue's main entry walk. Ceramic tile spandrels ($\frac{3}{4}$ " in buff, yellow, white, and burgundy) are repeated here above and below each of the windows. This treatment is

⁸ Zweig, "Our Story," p. 13.

⁹ Beth Zweig, "Congregation Achduth Vesholom: Our Story, Revised September 2002," p. 12. American Jewish Archives, Fort Wayne CAV Nearprint Geography.

¹⁰ "The ART of Achduth Vesholom Temple," Betty Fishman. Undated booklet, p. 6, 11–12. Indiana Jewish Historical Society, Fort Wayne, CAV Temple #5, 1961. M743, Box 4, Folder 6; Zweig, "Our Story," p. 4.

¹¹ "Unique and Outstanding Beauty," *Indiana Jewish Chronicle*.

¹² "Houses of Worship," *Fort Wayne News-Sentinel*.

¹³ "ART of Achduth Vesholom," Fishman, p. 6, 11–12; The lettering is called out on the architect's construction drawing set as "Letters similar to Gothic Ribbon Style No. 102 as manufactured by Nelson Harkins Industries 5301 N. Kedzie, Chicago... to be in satin (polished) finish bronze." A. M. Strauss Architectural Records Collection: 32-1590. Andrew Seager Archives of the Built Environment, Ball State University Libraries.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom
Name of Property

Allen, IN
County and State

repeated with most of the windows in the education wing. At the bottom of each window is a limestone sill. The exterior walls of the entry walk are buff brick laid in six-course common bond. This brick pattern can be found throughout the building. The left wall includes a limestone cornerstone engraved with the words "Founded 1848," the Hebrew letters "tav, shin, final kaf" (meaning 720, in this case 5720 or the Hebrew year of 1960), and "Erected 1960."

Interior:

The complex is composed of two primary interconnected wings. The north sanctuary wing (approximately 88' 2" x 205' 10", about 16,870 square feet) and the extended entry corridor, together with the one-story educational wing (approximately 53' 4" x 213', about 11,289 square feet). Through the large bronze doors and vestibule, the main foyer can be reached. The foyer boasts three 10' x 10' skylights and original poured-in-place terrazzo floors, walls clad in brick and in tan Dolcetto Perlato marble from Italy and Roseal marble from Tennessee.¹⁴ The foyer formerly contained several *yahrzeit* plaques displaying the congregants' names and birth and death dates. These have been removed, and now a digital *yahrzeit* display can be found in the foyer. The foyer provides direct access to the sanctuary and social hall as well as four corridors providing access to the remaining parts of the synagogue complex: 1. the office passage; 2. the corridor to the kitchen; 3. the corridor to the 2015 MRRC addition; and 4. the corridor to the education (south) wing.

North Wing:

a. Office passage:

Taking the passage to the right off the foyer provides access to two administrative offices (one a work room) and the rabbi's study with private restroom. The study has three walls paneled in red oak plywood and one wall of brick veneer.¹⁵ The passage is constructed of concrete block and composition tile and has eight-foot ceilings. This passage also provides side access to the *bima* and behind the Torah *ark*. Originally located behind the *bima* were a pipe organ and choir space. Today this space is used for audiovisual equipment and storage. On the exterior wall of this space (forming a connection to the Torah *ark* in the sanctuary and facing Old Mill Road) stands a large set of granite Ten Commandments by Wolpert described above in the Entry section.

Sanctuary:

The foyer provides direct access to the sanctuary through eight-foot-high double doors in walnut with square lights and aluminum knobs, each emblazoned with a Star of David. The 68' x 56' (3,808 square feet) sanctuary is a rectangular space boasting almost a 20' high ceiling with simple decorative elements, remains largely original and retains its historic spatial organization and finishes and is typical of the midcentury modern style.

Spanning almost the entire east wall, a wood screen forms the back of the *bima* and is lined with a fabric curtain. The focal point of the east wall is a simple wooden Torah *ark* and above it

¹⁴ "Unique and Outstanding Beauty," *Indiana Jewish Chronicle*.

¹⁵ "Unique and Outstanding Beauty," *Indiana Jewish Chronicle*.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom

Name of Property

Allen, IN

County and State

carved-wood tablets of the Ten Commandments. The *ark* has an electric-controlled wool and silk applique curtain designed by Samuel Weiner, Jr., an American Jewish artist from Columbia University, and fabricated by his mother-in-law.¹⁶ The curtain represents the 12 tribes of ancient Israel through different colored rectangles, flames of the burning bush, and the four-letter name of God in Hebrew: yod, hey, vav, hey.¹⁷ The *ark* is flanked by two, 5 ½ feet by 17 feet marble pylons. Over the left side hangs a *ner tamid* (eternal light). Crafted again in bronze by Wolpert, this *ner tamid* consists of seven tongues of flame depicting the seven days of creation.¹⁸ Wolpert also designed the free-standing bronze *menorah* (seven-branched candelabra) to the right of the Torah *ark*. This *menorah* is one of two of the same design by Wolpert. The other was exhibited at the International Festival of Art in New York as a tribute to the United Nations by the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies in October and November 1958 and was described by Frank Lloyd Wright as “a perfection of form, material and function, blended simply into a perfect whole.”¹⁹ The *bima* extends across the entire width of the sanctuary and holds two free-standing lecterns (one small and one large). Like the *ark*, these lecterns were designed and called out in the architect’s plans and crafted by Bruce Powell.²⁰ Originally, a pipe organ was in the space behind the *ark* but was later removed.²¹

The focal points of the north wall are nine stained-glass windows in brilliant colors and contain awning windows at the bottom which open inward into the room. The only windows in the sanctuary, they were envisioned by then-CAV rabbi Frederic Doppelt, designed by Samuel Weiner, Jr., and fabricated by City Glass in Fort Wayne. They depict the history of the Jewish people from Biblical days to the present. From right to left the windows loosely depict the following “periods” and events: “Biblical World,” “Diaspora World,” “Greco-Roman World,” “Spanish-Sephardic World,” “Western European World,” “Eastern European World,” “Memorial to the Six Million,” “State of Israel,” and “The American World.”²² To the left (west) of the stained-glass windows is a double-door egress providing access to the north driveway. The sanctuary has fixed wooden seating with theater-type cushioned seats to originally accommodate 270.²³ The wooden seat backs include racks for prayer books. The seating is arranged in auditorium style facing the east wall with one center aisle and two side aisles. The floor of the sanctuary slopes down toward the *bima*. The entire sanctuary is carpeted except for composition tile placed under the seats.²⁴ The south wall of the sanctuary is clad, wall-to-wall and

¹⁶ A photo caption states that the “electrically operated fold-door” separates the sanctuary and social hall and that the *ark* curtain is “electronically controlled from the pulpit. When the curtain is opened, concealed lights automatically illuminate the Torahs.” “Unique and Outstanding Beauty,” *Indiana Jewish Chronicle*.

¹⁷ Zweig, “Our Story,” p. 11–17; “ART of Achduth Vesholom,” Fishman, p. 7, 11–12.

¹⁸ Zweig, “Our Story,” p.12.

¹⁹ “ART of Achduth Vesholom,” Fishman, p. 2–4; Zweig, “Our Story,” p. 13.

²⁰ “ART of Achduth Vesholom,” Fishman, p. 7, 2–4.

²¹ “Unique and Outstanding Beauty,” *Indiana Jewish Chronicle*.

²² Zweig, “Our Story,” p. 11–17; “ART of Achduth Vesholom,” Fishman, p. 8–11 contains detailed descriptions of the nine windows by Weiner.

²³ “Unique and Outstanding Beauty,” *Indiana Jewish Chronicle*. Because of the addition of a choir platform in the 1990s, the sanctuary now seats 239. The seating in CAV today is original though the blue fabric seats have been reupholstered.

²⁴ “Unique and Outstanding Beauty,” *Indiana Jewish Chronicle*.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom
Name of Property

Allen, IN
County and State

floor-to-ceiling, in splayed walnut wood paneling.²⁵ This paneling is repeated, though not wall-to-wall, on the east, north, and west walls.

The west wall of the sanctuary is a four-inch-thick, 19' high and 56' long motorized articulating wall.²⁶ Movable/foldable walls were a signature feature of midcentury synagogues to afford congregations the opportunity to expand their sanctuary's seating for large life-cycle events and the high holidays. This foldable western wall consists of two wooden panels, three fabric panels, three center wooden panels which house a hinged eight-foot door, three more fabric panels, and two more wooden panels. With the foldable wall open, the square footage of the sanctuary and social hall totals almost 8,850 square feet.

Social Hall and Kitchen:

In addition to direct access to the sanctuary, the foyer also provides direct access to the social hall, through matching double wooden doors with square lights and aluminum knobs, each emblazoned with a Star of David, and another corridor. The left (south) side of this corridor leads to the kitchen, storage, and a secondary restroom (originally boys and girls locker/shower rooms). At the end of this corridor is an exterior exit. The right (north) side of this corridor provides two additional double-door entrances and one single door entrance to the social hall.

The 90' x 56' (5,040 square feet) social hall has almost 20' high ceilings like those in the sanctuary. The social hall can be regarded as a mirror image of the sanctuary in some respects. The south wall contains the corridor entrances described immediately above. The east wall of the social hall consists of the foldable/movable wall described above in the sanctuary section. The social hall can also be divided into three areas with two curtains hung from the ceiling. On the north wall is a series of 12 clear-paned aluminum windows with awning windows at the bottom which open inward into the room. The west wall was originally a performance stage, which has since been removed, and a doorway leading to an interior passage that provides access to two former dressing rooms that are currently used as offices.²⁷ The flooring in the social hall is original composition tile, and demarcations for the basketball court can be seen. Behind the west wall of the social hall can be found the two-story boiler, fan, and transformer rooms, which can only be accessed from exterior west double-door and single-door entrances. The building originally included air-conditioning equipment to cool the sanctuary, social hall, offices, museum-library, and youth lounge, and the entire campus is currently cooled by central air and heated by a central boiler.²⁸ Today, two "coal chute doors" are visible here which hint at evidence of a coal-fired boiler at one time. Access to the second story of this space can only be achieved by the "ship's ladder" called out on the construction drawing set.

Across the corridor from the social hall is the kitchen. The kitchen was designed to serve 300 meals and included the most up-to-date kitchen appliances for the time. A unique feature of the

²⁵ "Unique and Outstanding Beauty," *Indiana Jewish Chronicle*. This is called out as "plywood" paneling in the architect's construction drawing set. A. M. Strauss Architectural Records Collection: 32-1590. Andrew Seager Archives of the Built Environment, Ball State University Libraries.

²⁶ "Unique and Outstanding Beauty," *Indiana Jewish Chronicle*.

²⁷ "Unique and Outstanding Beauty," *Indiana Jewish Chronicle*.

²⁸ "Unique and Outstanding Beauty," *Indiana Jewish Chronicle*.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom
Name of Property

Allen, IN
County and State

kitchen, which was described in the newspaper at the time of the synagogue's opening, was the lack of cabinetry for dishes: "All dishes can be transferred from the dishwasher to the awaiting carts. The dishes are stored right in these carts and later transported into the social hall to individual tables."²⁹ While the dishes can still be found on the original carts, a later kitchen remodel included much-needed kitchen storage.

Down the hall from the kitchen were the boys' and girls' locker rooms, fully equipped with lockers and shower stalls for those who used the athletic facilities. These have been converted to storage and a workshop area. Remnants of the locker rooms can still be seen today.

Education Wing (South Wing):

Immediately to your left as you enter the foyer, a corridor connects the foyer and "North Wing" to the Education "South" Wing. This wing is built of concrete block and includes a large coat room and men's and women's restrooms.

In the early 1990s, as CAV's religious school experienced a decline in enrollment, Brightpoint Head Start (formerly known as Community Action of Northeast Indiana or "CANI"), a preschool program catering to families living at or below the Federal poverty level, began renting out most of the classrooms in the Education Wing.³³

After going through a security double door (added later for Brightpoint) one encounters several classrooms roughly 20' x 20' on the east side of the corridor (labels correspond to Site Plan with Photo numbers):

- Religious Classroom #1 with original cabinets and composition tile floor.
- Religious Classroom #2 with original cabinets and composition tile floor.
- Brightpoint Room #3 (two Religious Classrooms were combined by removing the wall between them). The room includes original cabinets and composition tile floor, though it is now partially carpeted. A sink was installed for Brightpoint.
- Brightpoint Room #2 (two Religious Classrooms were combined by removing the wall between them). The room includes original cabinets and composition tile floor. A sink was also installed for Brightpoint.
- Brightpoint Office (formerly a Religious Classroom) includes original cabinets and replacement vinyl composition tile.
- Brightpoint Office (formerly a Religious Classroom) with original cabinets and replacement vinyl composition tile.

At the end of the corridor is the former Religious School lobby with an exit (B) to the parking lot on the south side of the property. This space functions now as a lobby for Brightpoint and includes a storage room turned into an office (labeled BPO on Site Plan), replacement vinyl composition tile and now has a pass-through window cut through from the lobby to the Brightpoint Office located in the southeast corner of the Education Wing. Turning back down the corridor, one encounters the following on the west side of the Education Wing:

²⁹ "Unique and Outstanding Beauty," *Indiana Jewish Chronicle*.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom

Name of Property

Allen, IN

County and State

- Brightpoint Room #1 (two Religious Classrooms were combined by removing the wall between them). The room includes original cabinets and composition tile floor. A sink was also installed for Brightpoint.
- Where “telephone” is called out on the original floorplan, two B’nai Jacob cornerstones from their previous 1955 synagogue building have been installed (one with the Hebrew date and one with the English date).³⁴
- The Chapel: The former youth lounge originally had a built-in accordion room divider. When it was built, the youth lounge provided “non-denominational after school activities,” operated a sandwich bar and provided soft drinks and ice cream for young people in the neighborhood.³⁵ At some point between 1975 and 1985 the youth lounge was transformed into a southern-facing chapel. The chapel had movable seating and retained the youth lounge’s kitchenette. In 2019, Fort Wayne’s Conservative B’nai Jacob Congregation closed its doors, and members became part of CAV. At that time, the congregation remodeled the Goldstine Chapel and kitchenette to incorporate several items from the B’nai Jacob Congregation and renamed it the Goldstine-B’nai Jacob Chapel. First, the custom *ark* (from the 1993 synagogue) was installed on the east wall, and the art glass windows, from the 1955 synagogue via the 1993 building, were installed on the southern wall and backlighted.³⁶ These windows would join the stained-glass windows from the 1917 CAV building, which were already in the chapel and had been reworked by Tina Reidel.³⁷ When the chapel was rotated to face east, a new single door was cut into the space, the original double door was closed off, and three B’nai Jacob title stones were installed.³⁸ The single door to the kitchenette was expanded into a double door with stained glass side lights from the 1993 B’nai Jacob building that can be illuminated. The chapel has replacement vinyl plank flooring and carpet tiles.

Returning to the corridor, one encounters a double door that connects to another corridor. From this corridor, one can access a storage room (STR, slightly smaller than the original size due to the remodeled restrooms described below), the Madge Rothschild Resource Center (MRRC, described below), and a double-door exit (C) to the west (rear) side of the property. After passing this corridor, one encounters:

- The former religious school director’s office, which has been significantly remodeled into boys’ and girls’ restrooms. The original doorway for the office now contains a drinking fountain.
- The original kindergarten, with its private restroom, has been split into two spaces with a wall where an accordion divider once was. One side is now the religious school office (RSO) and the other side is now storage and a workspace (STR). Each room also has a door to the outside (now the courtyard created by the MRRC addition).
- As part of the 2015 renovations and the Madge Rothschild Resource Center addition, the library and museum in the Education Wing were transformed into offices for the Purdue Fort Wayne Institute for Holocaust and Genocide Studies (PFW) and the Jewish Federation of Fort Wayne (JFFW).

Once passing these offices in the corridor, one returns to the foyer or can reach another corridor with access to the courtyard (CTRD), the MRRC, and a west double-door, exit (D).

Congregation Achduth Vesholom
Name of Property

Allen, IN
County and State

Addition of 2015 Madge Rothschild Resource Center:

Congregation Achduth Vesholom broke ground on October 1, 2015, to create the Madge Rothschild Resource Center (MRRC) and reorganized several Fort Wayne Jewish organizations under the name of “Rifkin Campus at 5200.” The addition was completed and celebrated on April 30, 2017.³⁰ The addition, which can be accessed from the north by a corridor off the main foyer, and the south by a corridor off the Education Wing’s corridor, added 3,623 square feet to the original 1960 building.³¹ In addition to creating a new conference room and coffee bar, the MRRC holds the 3000-volume Rabbi Richard B. Safran Library and the Jacob L. Goldman Memorial Museum, which tells the story of Judaism and the Jewish history of Northeast Indiana. Constructed of steel-reinforced concrete on a poured concrete slab, the floors are carpet tile on concrete, and the space has a 10’ drop ceiling with drywall walls.

The addition of the MRRC created an enclosed, open-air courtyard visible from both the original building and the MRRC.³² A *yahrzeit* sculpture, using the nearly 1,000 *yahrzeit* plaques formerly located in the foyer and those belonging to B’nai Jacob, is visible from the MRRC and offices in the Education Wing that offer views of the courtyard. Because it is freestanding, is listed as a non-contributing object above.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

³⁰ “Welcome to the Rifkin Campus at 5200,” Congregation Achduth Vesholom, Accessed March 1, 2024, <https://templecav.org/rifkin-campus>.

³¹ Allen County Property Record Card for Parcel number: 02-12-22-430-001.000-074. <https://www.allencounty.in.gov/>.

³² “Jewish Temple Plans to add \$1 million Resource Center,” Rosa Salter Rodriguez. *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*, Thursday, December 3, 2015.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom
Name of Property

Allen, IN
County and State

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

ETHNIC HERITAGE: JEWISH

RELIGION

Period of Significance

1960

Significant Dates

1960

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Alvin M. Strauss, Sigmund Braverman, Edwin A. Gibson (architects)

Hagerman Construction Corporation (builder)

Richard Wismer of MSKTD & Associates (architect 2015 addition)

Mosaic Building Solutions (builder 2015 addition)

Congregation Achduth Vesholom
Name of Property

Allen, IN
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The 1960 purpose-built synagogue at 5200 Old Mill Road in Fort Wayne is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A with statewide significance as it is the last remaining synagogue of Congregation Achduth Vesholom, the first Jewish congregation (established 1848) in the State of Indiana. The congregation worshiped in four other spaces in downtown Fort Wayne (one private home, one former church, and two other purpose-built synagogues). This 1960 synagogue acts as a monument to the demolished locations of the historic congregation, represents a momentous shift in the congregation's history of the move from downtown to the suburbs, and has been a hub for the Fort Wayne Jewish community's cultural history as surrounding organizations and congregations shutter their doors. The synagogue is also eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C with statewide significance as it is an excellent example of mid-century modern architecture (both in design and materials) and designed by some of Indiana's finest architects. The large, sprawling, midcentury modern structure with its attention to simple and elegant details in wood, metal, and stone was one of the final designs for two well-known Jewish architects and the first Black architect licensed in Indiana. Famous synagogue architect Sigmund Braverman worked on the project just before his death in 1960. Cleveland-based Braverman stepped in to consult on the project with the well-known architectural firm A. M. Strauss and Associates in Fort Wayne, after Alvin Strauss's death in 1958. Edwin A. Gibson, Indiana's first Black architect, also worked on the project while he was employed at A. M. Strauss and Associates from 1946 to 1963 before moving on to start his own successful practice.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Ethnic and Religious Significance

The history of Congregation Achduth Vesholom reflects the development of Jewish religious and ethnic life in Fort Wayne from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Founded in 1848 by German Jewish immigrants, the congregation emerged from the early Jewish settlement of the city and provided the institutional framework for Jewish religious practice, burial traditions, and communal support. Over time, the congregation's practices evolved alongside broader developments in American Judaism, transitioning from traditional forms of worship at the very beginning to Reform Judaism in the late nineteenth century. Through its successive synagogue buildings, Congregation Achduth Vesholom has served as a central religious, cultural, and communal institution for Jewish life in Fort Wayne for more than 175 years.

The first known Jewish resident of Fort Wayne was John Jacob Hays. Hays, of Dutch ancestry, was born in New York in 1770, and he and his family were members of Sephardic Congregation Shearith Israel in New York, the oldest Jewish congregation in the U.S. Hays moved to Cahokia in Illinois when he was 20 as a merchant and traded with native people there

Congregation Achduth Vesholom

Name of Property

Allen, IN

County and State

along the Mississippi. In 1820, four years after Indiana became a State, President James Monroe appointed Hays to serve as an Indian Agent in Indiana to assist in commercial trading supervision between white traders and primarily the Miami and Potawatomi, but also the Wyandot, Kickapoo, Ottawa, and Shawnee. His stay in the “Summit City” was short; three years later he headed back to Cahokia, where he would remain until his death in 1836.³³

Shortly after Hays’s departure, Jewish peddlers began arriving and establishing a long line of Jewish merchants and clothiers in Fort Wayne. Early German Jewish-owned stores were established by the Redelsheimer, Oppenheimer, Lauferty, and Nirdlinger families. Throughout much of the nineteenth century, additional German Jews settled in the city. This pattern of peddling and small-scale commerce was a common pathway for German Jewish immigrants establishing themselves in Midwestern communities.³⁴ As these merchants settled and built businesses, they formed the nucleus of Jewish communal life. Their presence created the need for organized religious and communal institutions to support Jewish practices such as prayer, holiday observance, lifecycle events, and burial.

On October 13, 1848, a small group of German Jews organized in Fort Wayne and purchased land for burials.³⁵ As part of the group’s constitution and bylaws, the founding members included the following paragraph:

We, who, like so many other immigrants from Europe, have come to these shores to find a refuge from European tyranny, We, who have left our homes, relatives, and everything in our youth that was dear and sacred to us, We feel abandoned by everyone when we face adversity, bereft of the ultimate consolation of our religion. We, the undersigned citizens of Indiana, have joined together to help each other in any adversity life may bring us and to provide the final honors of our members.³⁶

There are two elements within this excerpt that mark this ethnically and religiously significant moment. First, most scholars agree that the impetus for emigration from Europe was a combination of wars, revolutions, pogroms, and general problems associated with Jewishness in Christian Europe, which eroded economic opportunities for Jews.³⁷ This small group of German Jews had come to Fort Wayne under these same circumstances.

Second, the first organizations immigrant Jews created in America were mutual aid societies including *chevra kadisha* (burial societies), and Fort Wayne also mirrored this national trend.

³³ “John Jacob Hays, 1770-1836” historical marker. Erected in 2019 by The Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation, the St. Clair Historical Society, and the Illinois State Historical Society. Accessed March 1, 2024, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=140422>.

³⁴ Diner, Hasia. *The Jews of the United States*. University of California Press, 2004, p. 84–85.

³⁵ “Deed from Alexander McCulloch to the Hebrew Beneficial Society of Fort Wayne,” October 13, 1848. Allen County Recorder’s Office, Deed Book “I,” p. 465.

³⁶ *The Records of Congregation Achduth Vesholom, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 1848-1883*. Translated from the German and Edited by Frances Lowens, 1990. Indiana Jewish Historical Society Collection of the Indiana Historical Society, 1845-2002. M743, BV3326. “Constitution and Bylaws,” p. 2.

³⁷ Diner, *Jews of the United States*, p. 87.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom

Name of Property

Allen, IN

County and State

Burial and care for the sick were central religious obligations in Judaism, not merely social services. Few Jewish communities achieved a dedicated worship space before the Civil War, but this was not necessary to establish Jewish communal life. Small groups could gather for prayer in homes or storefronts, as Jewish tradition allows worship in any suitable space. Burial, however, required formal organization. Jewish law requires that the deceased be buried quickly, typically within twenty-four to forty-eight hours, and according to specific ritual practices performed by the *chevra kadisha*. Burial must also take place in a Jewish cemetery or designated Jewish section of a cemetery, often requiring cooperation with non-Jewish authorities.

On October 26, 1848, Traditional (denominational Judaism had not taken root yet in the U.S.) German Jews living in Fort Wayne formed the “Society for Visiting the Sick and Burying the Dead” which is the first Jewish congregation established in Indiana. In 1861, at the dawn of the Civil War when the country was divided in two, the group officially changed its name to “Congregation Achduth VeSholom,” meaning “Unity and Peace,” in Hebrew (hereon referred to as “CAV”).³⁸ Historian Jonathan Sarna has argued that this name choice promoted solidarity and harmony among the rifts and growing pains of Judaism in America. Similar names in Indiana like Ahavath Achim (“brotherly love”) in Lafayette, and Ahavath Sholom (“lovers of peace”) in Ligonier also reflect these national Jewish congregational and synagogue naming trends of the era.³⁹

Early American Jewish congregations initially rented or repurposed buildings such as former churches, storefronts, or private homes until they had enough members and resources to construct a synagogue of their own. Like the creation of burial societies, this is also a key moment of religious significance and is precisely what happened in Fort Wayne. In the beginning, traditional Jewish prayer services were held in the home of one of the founding members, Frederic Nirdlinger, at 226 West Main (at Harrison).⁴⁰ This small immigrant Jewish community was determined to maintain religious practice even before institutional resources existed.

By 1859, however, the congregation was able to purchase a former church for \$1,200 and dedicate it as a synagogue on Friday, September 23, with Rev. (Rabbi) Isaac Leeser from Philadelphia, who helped shape early American Jewish religious life by promoting traditional Judaism, giving the dedicatory address.⁴¹ The newspaper reported that the pulpit was located in the east end (in order to pray eastward toward Jerusalem), that the dedication service was delivered in Hebrew, and that all the men kept their hats on. These are all indicators of the congregation’s original traditional (called Orthodox today) Jewish religious practices.⁴²

³⁸ Ruth Zweig, *The First Hundred and Twenty-Five Years, Congregation Achduth VeSholom, Fort Wayne, Indiana*. Indiana Jewish Historical Society, 1973, p. 3 and 7.

³⁹ Sarna, Jonathan. *American Judaism*. Yale University Press, 2004, p. 103.

⁴⁰ Zweig, *First Hundred and Twenty-Five*, p. 3; “Historic Structures, No. 10,” Indiana Jewish Historical Society, M743, Box 4, Folder 2.

⁴¹ Zweig, *First Hundred and Twenty-Five*, p. 6; “Programme of the Dedication of the Synagogue of Unity and Peace, September 23, 1859,” Indiana Jewish Historical Society, M1023 Addition, Box 5, Folder 19.

⁴² “Dedication of the Jewish Synagogue,” *Dawson’s Fort Wayne Weekly Times*, September 28, 1859.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom

Name of Property

Allen, IN

County and State

But by August 1862, Reform Judaism began to be introduced at CAV under the growing influence of Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise of Cincinnati, a national leader of the emerging American Reform movement, whose reforms, including men, women, and children sitting together in the sanctuary, were not accepted by all members of the congregation. Due to these reforms, in 1866 a group of members withdrew and formed their own congregation for several years before eventually rejoining CAV. In May 1874, CAV formally became a Reform congregation and joined the newly established Union of American Hebrew Congregations.⁴³ This transition reflects a broader shift among German Jewish immigrants in the United States as congregations adapted their religious practices within the American context and connected to emerging national Jewish institutions.

Only a year later, in 1875, with the assistance of Civil War captain Arnold Sutermeister, who designed it “free of charge” and acted as the general contractor, CAV began designing and constructing a new Gothic Revival synagogue at 203 W. Wayne Street (the corner of Wayne and Harrison) at a cost of approximately \$24,000–\$25,000.⁴⁴ The synagogue, which had a seating capacity of 1,000, was first occupied in October 1875 and Rabbi Wise travelled from Cincinnati to formally dedicated it on Friday afternoon, January 7, 1876.⁴⁵

By the end of the 19th century and early 20th century, Jews from Eastern Europe began arriving in Fort Wayne. Following the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881, Jews were unjustly blamed, leading to violent attacks and the imposition of harsh laws in Russia. These laws forced Jews back into the Pale of Settlement and severely limited their economic opportunities.⁴⁶ Coupled with issues like overpopulation, conscription, and poverty, these conditions sparked pogroms against Jews in Russia and compelled many Jews to immigrate to the United States.⁴⁷ Between 1881 and 1914, approximately two million Jews from Eastern Europe sought refuge in America, with some settling in Fort Wayne.⁴⁸

Many of these immigrants arrived in need of financial assistance and social services. Congregation Achduth Vesholom congregant, Minette Baum, was there to help them. Born in Russia in 1879, Baum immigrated to the U.S. around 1882 and worked and trained with Jane Addams at Hull House in Chicago. Baum, arriving to the city around 1910 and one of Fort Wayne’s first social workers, helped to found the Jewish Federation of Fort Wayne, the Hadassah chapter, and League for the Blind.⁴⁹ But many of these new immigrants were not accustomed to the Reform ritual practices at CAV. On September 29, 1912, Orthodox Jews from

⁴³ Zweig, *First Hundred and Twenty-Five*, p. 9.

⁴⁴ Congregation Achduth Vesholom Meeting Minutes. American Jewish Archives, MS 333, Box 4, Folder 1, p. 141; *Valley of the Upper Maumee River, Vol. 2*. (Madison, WI: Brant & Fuller, 1889), p. 314 states that the synagogue was built in the gothic style, was “exquisite in finish and design,” and was “one of the finest in the west.” And continues by stating that there was seating for 800 plus a gallery for the choir, sabbath school rooms, lecture rooms, and vestry rooms. But seating for 1,000, or even 800, seems very high.

⁴⁵ “The Hebrew Synagogue,” *Fort Wayne Daily News*, April 12, 1875, p. 2; Zweig, *First Hundred and Twenty-Five*, p. 9–10.

⁴⁶ Sarna, *American Judaism*, 152.

⁴⁷ Sarna, *American Judaism*, 133–34.

⁴⁸ Sarna, *American Judaism*, 151–52.

⁴⁹ Miller, Harriet. “Biography of Minnette Baum,” *Indiana Jewish History*, 5 (1975).

Congregation Achduth Vesholom

Name of Property

Allen, IN

County and State

Poland and Lithuania founded Congregation B'nai Jacob (Children of Jacob) and quickly started to build.⁵⁰ Reflecting both the congregation's limited financial resources and its religious emphasis on modesty, their synagogue was small and unadorned compared to the 1875 CAV. Working with Fort Wayne architect John F. Wing and contractor John Hagerman, B'nai Jacob members spent around \$15,000 on construction and about \$2,000 on furnishings before dedicating their synagogue on the southeast corner of East Wayne and Monroe on February 15, 1914.⁵¹

By 1915, CAV had decided to move again because of "ever-increasing membership" and several "substantial offers" to purchase the temple.⁵² The congregation sold the 1875 synagogue on October 4, 1915, and less than a year later, in the summer of 1916, the building was demolished to make way for the Freiburger Building, later renamed the Central Building, which still stands on the site today.⁵³ Coincidentally, as the old synagogue was being demolished, CAV member Leopold Freiburger helped lay the cornerstone for the new synagogue on August 6, 1916, and CAV member Helen Freiburger lit the *ner tamid* (eternal light) when it was dedicated in 1917.⁵⁴

One week after the sale of their 1875 synagogue at Wayne and Harrison on October 4, 1915, CAV purchased a lot at 820 Fairfield Avenue (500 W. Wayne Street) for the sum of \$14,000. The synagogue board told the building committee that they had a budget of \$72,500 for the new synagogue.⁵⁵ The new synagogue was designed by Charles R. Weatherhogg.⁵⁶ But the *Fort Wayne Daily News* reported on December 27, 1917, that the total cost of the new synagogue was \$90,000.⁵⁷ It was dedicated over a three-day period beginning Friday evening December 28, 1917.⁵⁸ The newspaper described it in meticulous detail. Constructed of "Bedford brick and trimmed with white stone," the synagogue had wide steps leading to double doors flanked by massive Ionic columns at the main entrance on Wayne Street. The two columns held up the words: "MINE HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED AN HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL

⁵⁰ Tourkow, Leah Schwartz. *Congregation B'nai Jacob: 100 Year Diary, September 29, 1912 to September 29, 2012*. Congregation B'nai Jacob, Fort Wayne, 2012, 1.

⁵¹ "Corner Stone of Jewish Synagogue is Laid Yesterday," *Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette*, October 20, 1913, p. 8; Tourkow, *Congregation B'nai Jacob*, 1; "Jewish Synagogue to be Dedicated on February 15," *Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette*, January 26, 1914, p. 2. "New Synagogue of the B'nai Jacob Congregation Erected at a Cost of over \$15,000," *Fort Wayne Sentinel*, February 14, 1914, p. 5 lists "John F. King" as architect but this was likely a typo.

⁵² "Centennial Souvenir Edition, 1848-1948," Indiana Jewish Historical Society, M743, Box 3, Folder 6. *Indiana Jewish Chronicle*, 27, no. 2 (April 23, 1948).

⁵³ "Sale Contract," Indiana Jewish Historical Society, M743, Box 4, Folder 4; Zweig, *First Hundred and Twenty-Five*, p. 12; "Old Papers: Workmen Find Newspapers of Early Date in Synagogue Cornerstone," *The Fort Wayne News*, July 19, 1916, p. 5; The 1918 Sanborn Fire Insurance map shows construction of this building at that site and the building was finished in 1920.

⁵⁴ "Old Papers," *Fort Wayne News*, July 19, 1916, p. 5; "Freiburger Building," *Fort Wayne Sentinel*, September 16, 1916, p. 11; "Lay Temple Corner Stone," *Fort Wayne Daily News*, August 7, 1916, p. 15. "Achduth VeSholom Temple Dedicated" *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*, December 26, 1917, p. 11.

⁵⁵ "Centennial Souvenir Edition, 1848-1948."

⁵⁶ Photograph of 1917 synagogue signed "Chas. R. Weatherhogg" American Jewish Archives, MS333, Box 2, Folder 3, 4. This photograph has been relocated to PC 1264.

⁵⁷ "Dedicate New Temple of Achduth Vesholem [sic] Parish," *Fort Wayne Daily News*, December 27, 1917, p. 1.

⁵⁸ "Dedication invitation for 'The New Temple,'" Indiana Jewish Historical Society. M743, Fort Wayne CAV Temple #4, 1915-1961, Box 4, Folder 5.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom

Name of Property

Allen, IN

County and State

PEOPLES” emblazoned in stone as well as a pointed pediment with a Star of David at the center, two iconic Jewish features that would be repeated later in the 1960 synagogue.

The sanctuary included eight large stained-glass windows, four on the east wall and four on the west wall. Each window included one of the following words in Hebrew and English: “unity,” “peace,” “righteousness,” “justice,” “truth,” “wisdom,” “the Ten Commandments,” and “The Law.” There were other, smaller, stained-glass windows throughout the synagogue as well.⁵⁹ The use of Hebrew and the Star of David, expressed Jewish religious identity publicly within Fort Wayne and made the synagogue a visible marker of Jewish presence downtown. Many of these windows would also make their way to the 1960 synagogue.

During this time, many CAV members were highly visible in Fort Wayne’s commercial and civic life, particularly in the clothing and retail industries centered along Calhoun Street, roughly four blocks from the 1917 synagogue. For example, Sam Wolf and Myron Eisman Dessauer founded the Wolf & Dessauer Department Store in 1896, one of the city’s most prominent retail establishments. Robert M. Pollak served as president of Pollak Brothers, Inc., a manufacturer of housedresses, smocks, and brunch coats that were advertised nationally.⁶⁰ Robert W. Hutner founded Hutner’s Paris clothing store and was active in numerous civic organizations, ultimately receiving the Sagamore of the Wabash, Indiana’s highest civilian honor, in recognition of his contributions. Marvin Fishman worked with his brother Stan Fishman for more than forty years to expand Fishman’s Apparel Store from its downtown Calhoun Street location to branches in Glenbrook Mall and Georgetown Shopping Center before the business closed in 1986. Together, these individuals and others illustrate the prominent role CAV members played in the economic and civic development of Fort Wayne during the twentieth century.

By 1954, the congregation decided they needed yet a larger synagogue. The planning and building committee determined that the 1917 building was deteriorating to the point of needing costly repairs, and that there was simply not enough room for the religious school. For example, In 1915, the religious school enrolled 40 students and by 1961, the enrollment was 136.⁶¹ The last Jewish service held in the 1917 synagogue was Friday, April 7, 1961.⁶² The synagogue remained vacant until February 1964 when it was sold to the Church of Living God of Fort Wayne.⁶³ Then in 1973, Christ Cathedral purchased the synagogue and in 1979 the building was sold to Trinity English Lutheran Church.⁶⁴ Only one year after purchasing the 1917 synagogue, which completed their ownership of the Wayne Street half of the block, Trinity English Lutheran Church planned to demolish it for a parking lot citing that they had discovered the cost of heating

⁵⁹ Perhaps the author of the article meant “Bedford limestone and brick” but it is unclear. “Dedicate New Temple,” *Fort Wayne Daily News*.

⁶⁰ “Robert M. Pollak.” *New York Times*, June 13, 1952, p. 23.

⁶¹ “1961 Dedication booklet,” Indiana Jewish Historical Society, M743, Box 4, Folder 14.

⁶² “Sacred Scrolls Leave Temple,” *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*, April 8, 1961, p. 1; “Final Sabbath Evening Services, April 7, 1961,” Indiana Jewish Historical Society, M743, Fort Wayne, CAV, Temple #4, 1915–1961, Box 4, Folder 5.

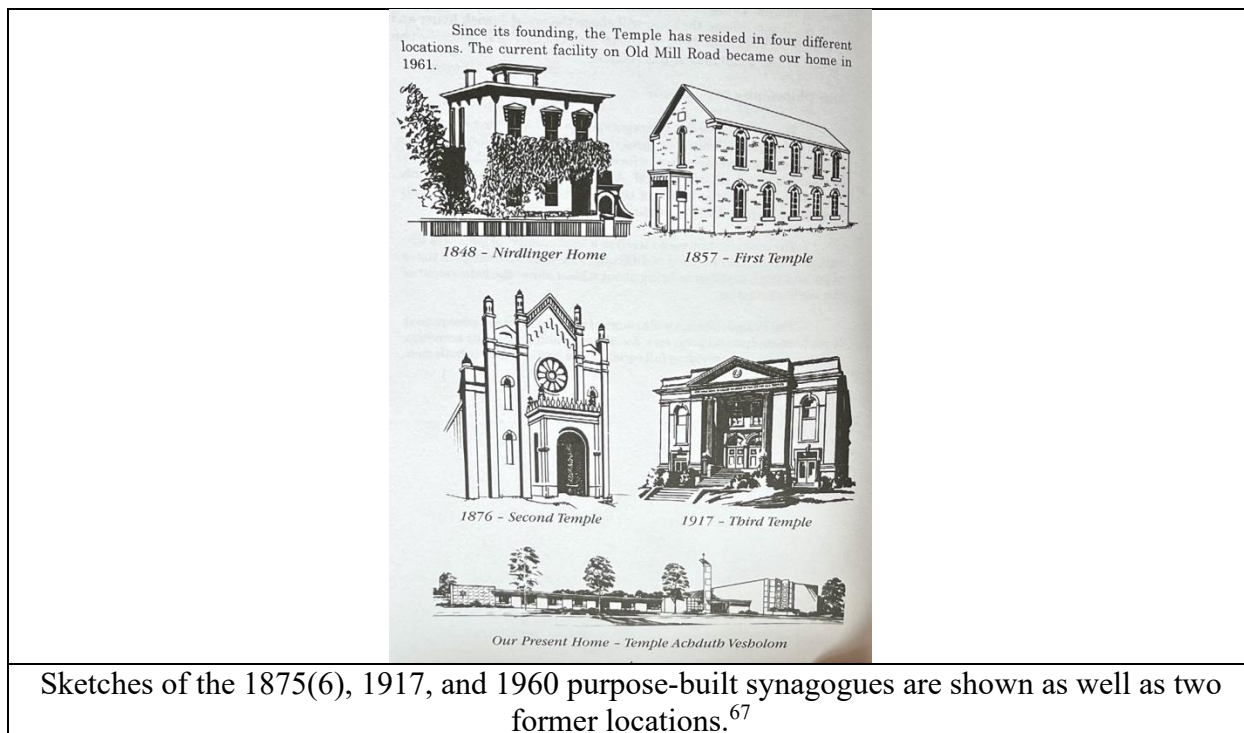
⁶³ “Former Jewish Temple Sold to Religious Group,” *Fort Wayne News Sentinel*, February 12, 1964.

⁶⁴ “Church Parking Lot to Replace Historic Temple,” Michael Behr, *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*, May 18, 1980; Zweig, *First Hundred and Twenty-Five*, p. 12.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom
Name of Property

Allen, IN
County and State

and maintaining the building to be “exorbitant.”⁶⁵ But before demolition in 1980, CAV removed the stained-glass windows, a memento of this synagogue and the congregation’s last presence in downtown Fort Wayne.⁶⁶



In 1961, Indiana’s oldest Jewish congregation relocated for a fifth time. By the 1940s, many synagogues built in earlier periods in the U.S. were considered inadequate as American Jewish life changed rapidly after World War II. Older downtown synagogues, often designed primarily around a large sanctuary with limited educational or social space, were increasingly described as cramped and outdated. At the same time, Jewish families moved to the suburbs at high rates, drawn by new housing opportunities, government-backed mortgages, rising affluence, and changing urban neighborhoods. As Jonathan Sarna notes, suburbanization drastically reshaped American Jewish life during the mid-twentieth century. Synagogue affiliation also increased significantly during this period, rising from about 40 percent of American Jews in the 1930s to roughly 60 percent by the late 1950s.⁶⁸

These changes transformed synagogue architecture too. Congregations increasingly built “synagogue centers” that combined religious, educational, and recreational functions, incorporating classrooms, meeting rooms, social halls, and gymnasiums. This model reflected both the suburban setting and the needs of growing families during the postwar baby boom. Between 1940 and 1969, more than one thousand synagogues were constructed across the U.S.,

⁶⁵ “Church Parking Lot,” *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*.

⁶⁶ Fort Wayne, CAV, Temple #4 1915–1961, Indiana Jewish Historical Society, M743, Box 4, Folder 5.

⁶⁷ Zweig, “Our Story,” p. 4.

⁶⁸ Sarna, *American Judaism*, 291; 277.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom

Name of Property

Allen, IN

County and State

many by existing congregations relocating from downtown neighborhoods to suburban sites. Fort Wayne followed this national pattern to build new synagogues that reflected the changing character of American Jewish religious and communal life as did other Jewish communities in Indiana such as Evansville, Indianapolis, Gary, and South Bend.

Several years prior, CAV had purchased a 9-acre tract of land on Old Mill Road. Backing up to Foster Park and near the St. Mary's River, the site assured that no longer would the congregation hear the hustle and bustle of downtown. Instead, they would enjoy immense green space in the quiet, newly-platted Woodhurst neighborhood and inside, educate many baby-boomer children in the religious school's ample classroom space.

In 1957 the congregation employed A. M. Strauss and Associates, the same firm that B'nai Jacob had recently employed to design their 1955 synagogue at 2340 Fairfield Avenue. Alvin M. Strauss, a CAV member, had also designed numerous major buildings across Fort Wayne and Indiana. The firm designed the sprawling L-shaped complex with the entrance, the sanctuary, rabbi's office, kitchen, and social hall/gymnasium with stage and dressing rooms all located in the "north wing," and the narrow "south wing" including a long string of classrooms and a library, among other spaces. This design would demonstrate that to be Jewish encompasses both a religious identity, rooted in shared beliefs in one God and religious practices, but also an ethnic heritage that reflected cultural celebrations and traditions such as an emphasis on education and community.

The south wing was named the "Isaac and Etta Oppenheim Education Center," due to the \$350,000 provided by the Isaac and Etta Oppenheim Foundation to start a congregation-wide fundraising campaign.⁶⁹ The Oppenheim family traces its roots to Oppenheim, Germany, as early as 1241 and later established dry goods stores across the Midwest. In 1875, Isaac Oppenheim's father, Jacob, opened "Oppenheim's New York Cheap Store" in North Manchester, Indiana. After Jacob's death in 1883, Isaac began working in the store at age fourteen while his brother Ben served as manager. The brothers later operated both retail and wholesale businesses, and in 1922 Isaac, a CAV member, became the sole owner of the wholesale operation. The store, later known simply as Oppenheim's, remained in operation until 2000.⁷⁰

The congregation set out to match the amount provided by the Oppenheim Foundation. Just before the High Holy Days on September 22, 1957, the rabbi, Frederic A. Doppelt who served the congregation from 1939 to 1969, wrote a fundraising letter to the congregation linking its long past to its future goals:

Dear Friends and Members,

⁶⁹ "Imposing Rites Mark Dedication of Ft. Wayne Temple," *The Indiana Jewish Chronicle*. May 19, 1961. p. 1; "We Build Now for Generations to Come," 1957 Fundraising booklet, p. 4. American Jewish Archives, Fort Wayne CAV Nearprint Geography.

⁷⁰ "Historical/Biographical Sketch," Finding Guide for Oppenheim's Dry Goods Store Records, 1874-2000. Collection M0802. Indiana Jewish Historical Society.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom

Name of Property

Allen, IN

County and State

... Let us remember the days of old—the days of 1848 when in the face of many hardships our early pioneers established our Congregation as the first Jewish House of God in the State of Indiana. It was their stake in the future of Judaism in America.

Let us remember the days of 1917—when our present Temple was entrusted to us of this generation as the spiritual legacy of our fathers. It was an expression of their responsibility for the futures...

But in the spirit of our Sacred Lore... Let us now consider what we must bequeathe [sic] to the generations to come in order to perpetuate the faith of our fathers in our midst...

Ours is now the glorious task of building a new and greater Achduth Vesholom that will keep pace with the expanding spiritual life of our growing membership.

Ours is the challenging task to provide adequate facilities for the education of our children and the guidance of our youth today and in the days to come.

Ours is now the holy task to rear a more beautiful sanctuary unto the glory of God to testify that we of the House of Israel are a spiritual household, dedicated to God's kingdom of freedom, justice and peace...

If we so remember our past and so consider our future, our dream of a New Temple will come to life, and God will establish the work of our hands.⁷¹

In this letter Rabbi Doppelt was appealing to the congregation to fund a new synagogue building with the promise that the congregation would continue to grow and tying their donations to the building fund to the work of God. Because the 1917 synagogue had been built only 40 years earlier, he was also asking for donations from some members of the congregation who had overseen, and already given to, that earlier synagogue building project. Donations or "Memorial Units" could be purchased at set prices factored on desirability, not cost of construction. For example, to sponsor the Torah ark, the required donation was \$25,000; but to sponsor the general office, it was only \$3,500. Thirty-five such "Memorial Units" making up the synagogue building were outlined in the fundraising documents. Sponsoring the Ten Commandments on the façade of the building and several "ceremonial objects," such as three Torah scrolls, two menorahs, and a *ner tamid* (eternal light) were also up for grabs.

On April 7, 1961, the congregation removed the Torah scrolls from the 1917 synagogue at Wayne and Fairfield and transported them to the new synagogue.⁷² The new synagogue was dedicated over the course of two weekends, with the first services held on April 14, 1961. Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations was the guest

⁷¹ "We Build Now," p. 1.

⁷² "Imposing Rites," *The Indiana Jewish Chronicle*.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom

Allen, IN

Name of Property

County and State

speaker.⁷³ During the week, on April 20, Fort Wayne Mayor Paul M. Burns spoke to the group and stated that he “join[ed] with all of Fort Wayne to extend congratulations for this beautiful house of worship... You are certainly looking to the future as we all are trying to do in the city of Fort Wayne.”⁷⁴ The following weekend, the congregation held a community dedication on April 21, 1961, where Dr. Jacob Rader Marcus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and founder of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati gave the dedicatory message.⁷⁵ On Saturday, April 22, the events concluded with a ball: dinner, dancing, and entertainment.⁷⁶

The ball was held in the synagogue’s large social hall/gymnasium. This aspect of the design was key to the congregation to accommodate both the physical and social aspects of Jewish life. Youth could play basketball or act in the Purim play on stage one day, and the next day the congregation could host a formal reception for a wedding or festive high-holiday meal. Even though their last synagogue included a large open social hall/gymnasium (the first of its kind in Indiana), it was located in the basement and lacked the natural light and open airiness that the 1960 CAV boasted.

Religious schools in Reform congregations were the primary mechanism for transmitting Judaism, Jewish identity, traditions, and Hebrew literacy to American-born generations. The 1960 CAV included a long hallway of classrooms designed to accommodate 125–150 students, as well as a library. While these children were certainly part of the national baby boom, the congregation’s investment in this space also reflected the longstanding Jewish emphasis on education as a core communal value. Since moving into the building, and with the exception of a few years when classes met on Saturday mornings, CAV consistently held its school on Sundays, while Hebrew instruction for bar and bat mitzvah candidates took place during the week. Depending on the rabbi, the program was referred to as either “Sunday School” or “Religious School.” Although the school, which served students from kindergarten through eighth grade along with a confirmation class, never reached the 150 mark, congregants recall that by the late 1970s the school still enrolled roughly 130 students before declining to an enrollment of between 75 and 100 students in the 1980s.⁷⁷ Due to declining enrollment, beginning in the 1990s CAV has rented much of the classroom space to Brightpoint Head Start, a preschool for children in families at or below the Federal poverty level.

Because they had built big enough, CAV would not need to build again for over 50 years. On October 1, 2015, CAV broke ground on the Madge Rothschild Resource Center (MRRC), an addition to the 1960 synagogue building. Madelon Julia (Madge) Rothschild was a major philanthropist and arts patron who supported not only Jewish communal organizations but also hospice, museums, and charitable organizations. With financial support from Rothschild’s estate,

⁷³ “Imposing Rites,” *The Indiana Jewish Chronicle*.

⁷⁴ “Imposing Rites,” *The Indiana Jewish Chronicle*.

⁷⁵ “Dedication Events: The New Temple, 5200 Old Mill Road, April 7–April 22, 1961” Indiana Jewish Historical Society, M743, Box 4, Folder 6; “First Sabbath Evening Services Dedicating our New Temple,” Indiana Jewish Historical Society, M743, Box 4, Folder 14; “Community Dedication Sabbath, Friday, April 21, 1961,” American Jewish Archives, Fort Wayne, Indiana-Congregation Achduth Vesholom, Nearprint Geography.

⁷⁶ “Imposing Rites,” *The Indiana Jewish Chronicle*.

⁷⁷ Email correspondence and phone conversations with congregants John Stein, Daniel Zweig, and Cindi Wismer, March 4, 2026.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom

Allen, IN

Name of Property

County and State

the congregation hired architect and CAV member Richard Wismer of MSKTD & Associates and Mosaic Building Solutions to design and build the addition.⁷⁸ The MRRC addition added 3,150 square feet to the synagogue and cost \$1.07 million. The addition and renovations were completed and celebrated on April 30, 2017.⁷⁹

The construction of the MRRC and renovation of part of the 1960 education wing brought several Fort Wayne Jewish organizations together under the name “Rifkin Campus at 5200,” which encompasses the 1960 synagogue building and its approximately nine-acre property. The name recognizes a donation from the Rifkin Family Foundation while also commemorating the important role Jewish-owned scrap and steel businesses played in the success of the region’s industrial development. Irving Rifkin, a CAV member, founded a scrap metal business in Lima, Ohio, in 1941 and built it into a major scrap and recycling operation with lasting regional economic impact. Other area Jewish families (including the Adelman, Bosell, Kleiman, Leven, Lewis, O’Neil, Pownall, Ruchman, Smith, and Sposeep families) have also been active in the scrap and steel industries and most are CAV members.⁸⁰

Furthermore, the addition and consolidation of Jewish organizations under one roof allows the 1960 synagogue to function as a regional center for Jewish culture, community life, history and memory. First, the campus brings visibility to the Jewish Federation of Fort Wayne, the Fort Wayne Jewish Cemetery Association, and Purdue Fort Wayne’s Institute for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, all of which have offices on the Rifkin campus.⁸¹ Second, the MRRC showcases the 3000-volume library dedicated to Rabbi Richard B. Safran, who served the congregation as rabbi from 1969 to 1995.

Third, in 2019, traditional Congregation B’nai Jacob, which began being affiliated with the Conservative movement in the 1990s, closed, moved out of its 1993 purpose-built synagogue on Bittersweet Moors Drive, and sold it to Emmanuel Community Church.⁸² In July 2019, CAV welcomed members of the former B’nai Jacob, and created “one congregation with two traditions,” thus preserving both Reform and Conservative traditions in Fort Wayne.⁸³

Fourth, in addition to preserving both Reform and Conservative religious traditions in the 1960 CAV synagogue, the building also brings ritual and architectural objects from earlier synagogues to reflect the Jewish practice of carrying sacred heritage forward as well as highlight the Jewish community’s long history in Fort Wayne. Part of the MRRC, the Jacob L. Goldman Memorial Museum, is the only space in the U.S. preserving and telling the story of the Jewish communities

⁷⁸ Rothschild’s estate contributed \$500,000.

⁷⁹ “Welcome to the Rifkin Campus at 5200,” Congregation Achduth Vesholom, Accessed March 1, 2024, <https://templecav.org/rifkin-campus>.

⁸⁰ “Meyer Ruchman, 93, was Fort Wayne’s Mr. Bonds.” *Jewish Post and Opinion*. October 21, 1992, p. 4; “Bonds as Strong as Steel: A history of Indiana Scrap Metal Dealers and their Families.” *Indiana Jewish History*, 39 (2011), p. 25–66.

⁸¹ The Rifkin Family Foundation contributed \$1 million of the \$2.5 million raised for the campus renovation project.

⁸² “Home Page,” Bnai Jacob Congregation, Fort Wayne, Accessed May 13, 2022, <https://bnaijacobfw.com>.

⁸³ “Two Traditions,” Congregation Achduth Vesholom, Accessed March 1, 2024, <https://templecav.org/two-traditions>; “City’s Jewish Temples to Merge, Cite Retirements, Attendance Drop,” Rosa Salter Rodriguez *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*, June 18, 2019.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom

Name of Property

Allen, IN

County and State

of Northeast Indiana.⁸⁴ Preserving the history of the Jewish community has always been a priority to CAV, the oldest Jewish congregation in Indiana. Joseph Levine, a CAV member, was the first Executive Director of the Indiana Jewish Historical Society, founded in 1972. The collections were initially held in Fort Wayne until 1999 when they were transferred to the Indiana Historical Society in Indianapolis.

Having moved several times, B'nai Jacob had a tradition of bringing with them elements of their former synagogues to their new locations. The 2019 move was no different. B'nai Jacob brought a Torah ark, mural, and stained glass with them, joining the stained-glass windows from the 1917 CAV synagogue that had been removed before its demolition and were already in the existing chapel at CAV. As it had been the focal point of the 1993 synagogue, the focal point of the renovated chapel at CAV is a sculpted four-door Torah ark crafted by artist Lee Bleifeld. Bleifeld made the ark of Indiana cherry wood and with 400 pounds of clay stained to match the color of the cherry wood. The ark was commissioned by the sons of Hannah and Simon Crell, Melvin Krel and Marvin Crell, all of whom were Holocaust survivors.⁸⁵ The entire ark is mounted on a large seven-branched menorah and is dramatized by another piece by Bleifeld behind it: a painted, 12-foot-high and 16-foot-wide, colorful mural of Jerusalem. Here he used three panes of layered plastic to create a sense of depth. They also brought with them the stained-glass windows from the 1955 synagogue's chapel/board room (via the 1993 synagogue sanctuary) depicting the seven days of creation. The windows, made by Anne Fenyes Droegmyer, were installed, for a third time, on the south wall of the renovated chapel at CAV and backlighted.⁸⁶

Finally, the addition created a 1100-square-foot enclosed, but open-air, memorial garden visible from the original building and the addition. Artist George Morrison designed a *yahrzeit* sculpture using the nearly 1,000 *yahrzeit* plaques formerly located in the foyer and those belonging to B'nai Jacob. Dedicated on September 30, 2022, this non-contributing object is visible from the MRRC and offices in the Education Wing that offer views of the courtyard. Morrison described his work as creating "a place of contemplation and a testimony to the unity of two congregations whose separate histories have become one." The sculpture is approximately 24 feet long and 12 feet high. Morrison described the names of loved ones as being "seen in cloud-like arrays of bronze plaques that appear to float along the curvature of the courtyard pathway."

⁸⁴ "Jewish Temple Plans to add \$1 million Resource Center," Rosa Salter Rodriguez. *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*, Thursday, December 3, 2015.

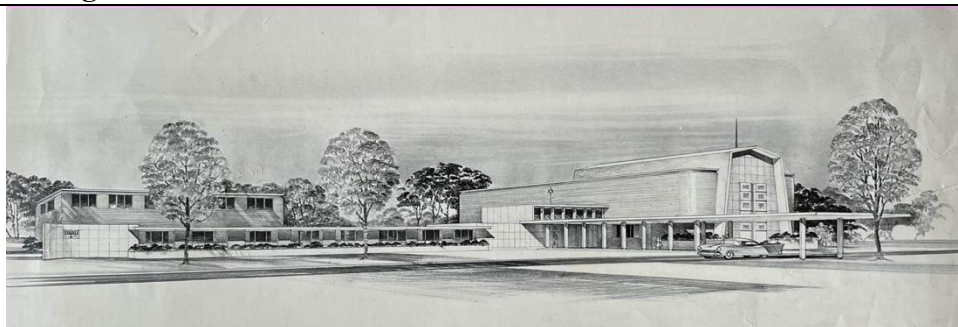
⁸⁵ A full description of the ark's details can be found in Leah Schwartz Tourkow, *Congregation B'nai Jacob: 100 Year Diary* (September 29, 1912 to September 29, 2012). Fort Wayne: Congregation B'nai Jacob, 2012, p. 36–38.

⁸⁶ Tourkow, *Congregation B'nai Jacob*, p. 39.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom
Name of Property

Allen, IN
County and State

Architectural Significance



Initial concept used for fundraising purposes, 1957.⁸⁷



Executed concept, 1961.⁸⁸

A. M. Strauss and Associates, in consultation with Sigmund Braverman, designed the 1960 CAV. It is likely that Alvin Strauss himself, a well-known architect in the region and member of CAV, designed the original concept drawings used in 1957 when fundraising for the new synagogue began. Perhaps the death of Strauss on July 6, 1958,⁸⁹ or a change in budget and priorities, resulted in the final construction documents differing significantly from this initial vision. It's not clear exactly what led the congregation and the firm to deviate from the initial concept so much. What is known is that Sigmund Braverman was brought in as a consulting architect at this time, perhaps to fill the void left by Strauss and/or perhaps because of Braverman's knowledge and experience in synagogue design. Braverman did not work on the project for long, however, as he too died on March 27, 1960.⁹⁰ After Braverman's passing, many of the drawings were still being revised in the summer and fall of 1960 by A. M. Strauss and

⁸⁷ PC-1264 Fort Wayne, Ind- Temple Achduth Veshalom [sic]. American Jewish Archives, Fort Wayne, Indiana-Congregation Achduth Veshalom, Nearprint Geography.

⁸⁸ "Dedication events," Indiana Jewish Historical Society. This image was also showcased on the front page of *The Indiana Jewish Chronicle*, Friday, May 19, 1961.

⁸⁹ The same article that states that he died on July 6, 1958, also says he was sick for several years and died in Billings Hospital in Chicago. "Mr. Strauss Dies; Company Designed Indianapolis JCC," *Jewish Post and Opinion*, Indianapolis, July 11, 1958.

⁹⁰ This same article that states that he died on March 27, 1960, also states that Braverman was engaged in designing the Cleveland Jewish Community Center and the Baltimore Beth El Synagogue at the time of his death. "Sig Braverman Dies," *The Detroit Jewish News*. Friday, April 1, 1960.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom
Name of Property

Allen, IN
County and State

Associates. One of the architects to conduct these revisions was Edwin Gibson, Indiana's first Black architect.

This mid-century modern synagogue epitomizes the architectural ethos of the post-World War II boom, reflecting an era brimming with optimism and innovation. The complex is Modern in style and on trend for 1960: the rectangular pavilion containing the sanctuary, the extended entry corridor with flat, rectilinear roof, and the one-story educational wing with flat roof, brick veneer and ribbon windows all bespeak of the characteristics of the Modern movement in architecture. Large open spaces equipped with versatile dividers adapt effortlessly to the congregation's various needs, from worship gatherings to social events. Constructed using materials like concrete, steel, cut limestone, and buff brick and adorned with bronze as well as wood paneling, the synagogue exudes both durability and elegance. Expansive windows frame views of meticulously manicured green spaces, inviting the outdoors in. Within its walls, built-in storage spaces cater to every need, from coats to dishes to books. This space stands as a testament to mid-century modernism's timeless appeal, embodying both the spirit of its era and the practicality demanded by modern life.

The only other historic synagogue still standing today in Fort Wayne is the 1955 B'nai Jacob located at 2340 Fairfield Avenue (at Pierce Avenue) and also designed by A. M. Strauss.⁹¹ Like the 1960 CAV, the 1955 synagogue is also distinctly mid-century modern in design though it is influenced by the "International Style" of architecture and Frank Lloyd Wright's designs.



View of 1955 B'nai Jacob from Fairfield, camera facing northwest. Photograph: Wendy Soltz, May 15, 2019.⁹²



Camera facing southwest. The 1960 B'nai Jacob expansion (social hall/gymnasium) can be seen to the rear of the sanctuary. Photograph: Wendy Soltz, May 15, 2019.

Here, Strauss' design also utilizes long clean flat roof lines, cut stone in a random ashlar pattern, buff and brown brick, and large glazing elements. These elements are repeated in his 1960 CAV

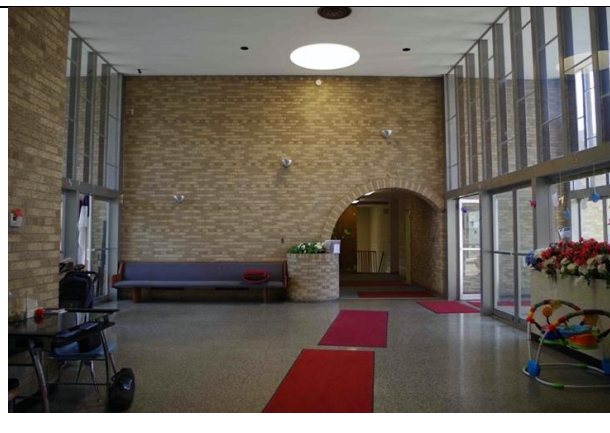
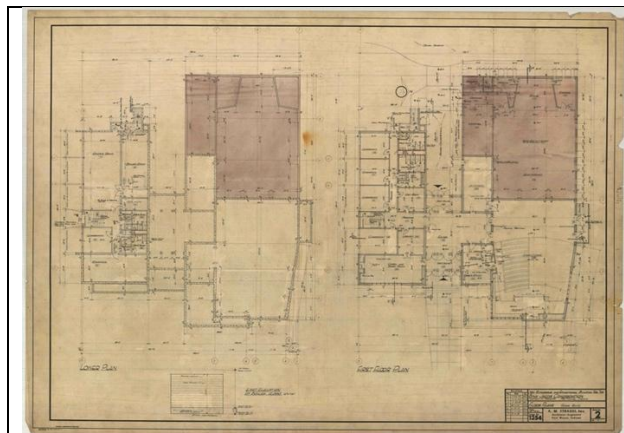
⁹¹ The 1955 B'nai Jacob, built by Irmscher & Sons, is part of the Beechwood Historic District listed in 2021. B'nai Jacob's newer synagogue, built in 1993, still stands on Bittersweet Moors Drive.

⁹² In 1982, Anne Fenyes Droegmyer made and installed seven stained glass windows depicting the seven days of creation in the Chapel/Board room (just to the right of the tree in this photo). These windows were removed, installed and backlit on the west wall of the sanctuary at the 1993 B'nai Jacob, and are now installed in the 1960 CAV. Tourkow, *Congregation B'nai Jacob*, p. 10.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom
Name of Property

Allen, IN
County and State

design. The main entrance, which sits along Fairfield Avenue is slightly off-center and is signified by a large curtain wall. The 1955 B'nai Jacob synagogue was designed not only to be more spacious, but to be a definite departure from their 1914 synagogue. "The architectural concept of B'nai Jacob exemplifies the architecture of the American synagogue. Today, the twentieth century pattern of life and modern materials of construction must be combined with the historic tradition of the age-old religion. The simple, straight forward design is intended to provide a sort of inviting, almost home effect, rather than the stiff, formidable designs that have characterized synagogues of the past."⁹³



1954 floor plan of B'nai Jacob showing the future (1960) addition in pink. A. M. Strauss Architectural Records Collection: 32-1354. Andrew Seager Archives of the Built Environment, Ball State University Libraries, Muncie, IN.⁹⁴

Camera facing south, the central foyer of B'nai Jacob boasts glazed curtain walls with east (left, Fairfield Avenue) and west (right, parking area) vestibules. Two large circular skylights provide additional light onto terrazzo floors. Photograph: Wendy Soltz, May 15, 2019

The architect's design was directed to provide "an open, inviting effect" and immediate access to the sanctuary, chapel, social halls, offices, and educational wing from a central glazed foyer which opened both to Fairfield Avenue and the parking area.⁹⁵ While Strauss also designed a vestibule and skylights for the 1960 CAV foyer, the ceiling is lower and the solid bronze doors do not have lights.

Like the 1960 CAV, Strauss designed the 1955 sanctuary to face east (toward Jerusalem). The sanctuary, which incorporates the same buff and brown brick used on the exterior, is well lit by many large curtain wall systems, the highlight being a large corner window. Many lights in the curtain walls incorporated purple tinted glass. Strauss makes a major departure from this light

⁹³ B'nai Jacob Synagogue, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Dedication booklet, December 2, 1956, "Architect's Concept," p. 9. Indiana Jewish Historical Society, M743, Box 2, Folder 6.

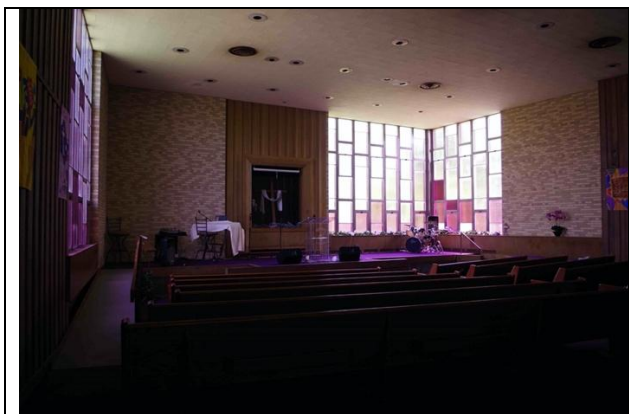
⁹⁴ Based on this plan and tax records, the 1955 building was between 12,000 and 14,000 square feet and the basement added another 3,000 square feet for a total of 15,000 to 17,000 square feet. Allen County Property Record Card for Parcel number: 02-12-11-376-017.000-074. <https://www.allencounty.in.gov/>.

⁹⁵ B'nai Jacob "Architect's Concept," Indiana Jewish Historical Society, p. 9.

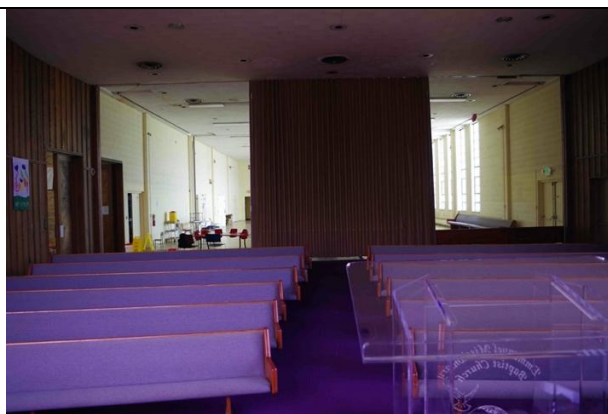
Congregation Achduth Vesholom
Name of Property

Allen, IN
County and State

and airy feel with his 1960 CAV design by creating a dark sanctuary: the only exterior light comes through narrow stained-glass windows. On the eastern wall of the 1955 B'nai Jacob, the slightly off-center Torah Ark is recessed into a chamber and framed in naturally-stained, vertically-paneled, wood. This paneled wood treatment is repeated in the rear of the sanctuary. The 1960 CAV design uses wood paneling throughout the sanctuary, though the panels are wider and darker in color.



Camera facing southeast. A large curtain wall system in the 1955 B'nai Jacob sanctuary. Photograph: Wendy Soltz, May 15, 2019.



Camera facing west. The electric folding rear wall of the sanctuary opens to the social hall, a feature repeated in the 1960 CAV. Photograph: Wendy Soltz, May 15, 2019.

Also considered carefully in Strauss's initial design was the later expansion of the synagogue. Edwin Gibson designed the 1960 expansion while revising the plans for the 1960 CAV, including a similar social hall. The first floor of the expansion included a social hall/gymnasium complete with a stage, dressing rooms and showers, restrooms, storage, and a lounge. The basement of the expansion included space for additional restrooms, a kitchenette, storage, and a large recreation room that could be used as classrooms.⁹⁶

Alvin M. Strauss

Born in 1895 in Kendallville, Indiana, Alvin Max Strauss grew up in a German-Jewish household. After apprenticeships with Charles R. Weatherhogg (the architect who designed the 1917 CAV), J. M. E. Riedel, and J. F. Wing, Strauss opened his own architectural firm "A. M. Strauss, Architect" in 1918 in Fort Wayne. Strauss served in World War I, in the U.S. Motor Transport Corps. Strauss was a member of CAV and was active in the Fort Wayne Jewish community.⁹⁷

Among the most notable of Strauss's designs are the Lincoln Tower, the Embassy Theater, and the War Memorial Coliseum, all in Fort Wayne. But he also designed several buildings on Indiana University's campus in Bloomington, and as noted above, his firm designed the 1955 B'nai Jacob synagogue. In 1948, shortly after Edwin Gibson joined the firm, it was incorporated

⁹⁶ B'nai Jacob "Architect's Concept," Indiana Jewish Historical Society, p. 9.

⁹⁷ "Long Illness is Fatal to A. M. Strauss," *The Journal Gazette*. July 7, 1958, p. 1-2.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom

Allen, IN

Name of Property

County and State

as “A. M. Strauss.” Then in 1958, just before his death, the firm was reorganized as “A. M. Strauss and Associates, Inc.” Strauss was a director of the Indiana Society of Architects, president of the Fort Wayne Society of Architects, member of the State Architects Registration Board, and active in other civic and fraternal organizations, Jewish and non-Jewish.⁹⁸ The 1960 CAV was one of the last buildings designed while Strauss was still alive.

Sigmund Braverman

Born in the Austro-Hungarian empire in 1894, Sigmund Braverman settled with his family in Pennsylvania at the age of 10. Braverman received a B.S. from Carnegie Mellon Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh in 1917; and after his service in World War I, he moved to Cleveland, where he opened his architectural firm in 1920. From 1932 to 1935, he was assistant and acting City Architect for Cleveland. In addition to the 1960 CAV, Braverman designed more than 40 synagogues in the U.S. and Canada, including the Fairmount Temple in Beachwood, OH outside of Cleveland designed in association with renowned synagogue architect Percival Goodman.⁹⁹ Braverman also designed a wide array of structures, Jewish and non-Jewish, with architect Marcus Halperin, in Cleveland. The 1960 CAV was one of the last buildings Braverman designed or consulted on before his death on March 27, 1960.¹⁰⁰

Edwin A. Gibson

Born in Maryland in 1925, Edwin A. Gibson grew up in Indianapolis and received his BA and MA in architectural engineering from the University of Illinois. In 1946, Gibson arrived in Fort Wayne to work for Alvin M. Strauss and later became a partner in the A. M. Strauss architectural firm. This same year, Gibson became the first Black architect registered in the State of Indiana. In addition to the 1960 CAV, Gibson worked on many other Fort Wayne projects with the firm, including the 1955 B’nai Jacob on Fairfield and its 1960 addition.¹⁰¹ Gibson’s architectural brilliance can be seen in many Fort Wayne structures. He drew from Frank Lloyd Wright and his buildings featured elongated, low rectangles that harmonized with the surrounding terrain. He employed recurring motifs, such as rows of windows, entrance screens, and masonry patterns. Inside, his spaces captivated with their expansive feel.¹⁰² In 1963, Gibson returned to Indianapolis to become the first Black architect to hold the position of Indiana State Architect

⁹⁸ “Alvin M. Strauss, 1895–1958,” ARCH, Inc., Accessed March 1, 2024, <https://archfw.org/2023/01/04/a-m-strauss-architect/>; “A.M. Strauss Architectural Records Collection,” Andrew Seager Archives of the Built Environment, Ball State University, Accessed March 1, 2024, <https://archivessearch.bsu.edu/repositories/3/resources/5110>.

⁹⁹ Braverman’s name as “consulting architect” is located in the title block on the following drawings in the construction set: Site Plan and Details, Floorplan of South Wing, Interior Elevation and Details-South Wing, and Sanctuary and Ark Details. A. M. Strauss Architectural Records Collection, Item 32-1590. Andrew Seager Archives of the Built Environment. Ball State University.

¹⁰⁰ “Braverman, Sigmund,” Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University, Accessed March 1, 2024, <https://case.edu/ech/articles/b/braverman-sigmund>; “Biography of Sigmund Braverman,” OhioLINK Finding Aid Repository, OhioLINK, Accessed March 1, 2024, http://ead.ohiolink.edu/xtf-ead/view?docId=ead/OCLWHi2434.xml;chunk.id=bioghist_1;brand=default.

¹⁰¹ Several sheets in the construction drawing set were revised in 1960 by “E. G.,” presumably “Edwin Gibson” of A. M. Strauss and Associates. A. M. Strauss Architectural Records Collection, Item 32-1590. Andrew Seager Archives of the Built Environment. Ball State University.

¹⁰² “Edwin A. Gibson (1925–2011),” ARCH. Accessed May 5, 2024. <https://archfw.org/2023/01/08/edwin-a-gibson-architect/>.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom
Name of Property

Allen, IN
County and State

before opening his own firm, the first Black-owned architectural firm in Indiana, in the late 1960s where he would continue to work until 1985 when he dissolved the firm.¹⁰³ Until his death on November 20, 2011, Gibson worked for Methodist Hospital and as a consulting architect on many other projects in the region.

Ludwig Yehuda Wolpert, (1900–1981) born in Germany, studied sculpture and later metalwork in Frankfurt-am-Main's Kunstgewerbeschule, School for Arts and Crafts under silversmith Leo Horowitz. Horowitz had previously taught at the renowned Bauhaus in Weimar, Germany. Wolpert began using Hebrew lettering in his work in 1930. In 1933, due to the rise of Nazism, he immigrated to Palestine and two years later, became a professor at the New Bezalel Academy for Arts and Crafts in Jerusalem. Almost 20 years later, he was invited to the Jewish Museum in New York, where he established a workshop dedicated to modern Jewish ceremonial art. In addition to his commissions for CAV (bronze exterior lettering, sanctuary *ner tamid*, and menorah) and other synagogues, he is also known for creating “a gold Hanukkah menorah for David Ben Gurion; the silver Torah case presented in 1948 to President Harry S. Truman by the first Israeli president, Chaim Weizmann (now in the Truman Library in Independence, Missouri); the Jewish section of the United States Air Force Academy chapel in Colorado Springs; and the entrance to the Jewish Chapel at John F. Kennedy Airport.”¹⁰⁴

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County and State

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“Braverman, Sigmund,” Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University, Accessed March 1, 2024, <https://case.edu/ech/articles/b/braverman-sigmund>.

“Biography of Sigmund Braverman,” OhioLINK Finding Aid Repository, OhioLINK, Accessed March 1, 2024, http://ead.ohiolink.edu/xtf-ead/view?docId=ead/OCLWHi2434.xml;chunk.id=bioghist_1;brand=default.

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“Home Page,” Bnai Jacob Congregation, Fort Wayne, Accessed May 13, 2022, <https://bnaijacobfw.com>.

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“Papers of Ludwig Yehuda Wolpert, Biographical note,” Yeshiva University Museum, Center for Jewish History, Accessed March 28, 2024, <https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/6/resources/61>.

“Two Traditions,” Congregation Achduth Vesholom, Accessed March 1, 2024, <https://templecav.org/two-traditions>.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom
Name of Property

Allen, IN
County and State

“Welcome to the Rifkin Campus at 5200,” Congregation Achduth Vesholom, Accessed March 1, 2024, <https://templecav.org/rifkin-campus>.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 003-215-41237

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 9.08

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- 1. Zone: 16T Easting: 655372 Northing: 4544430
- 2. Zone: Easting: Northing:

Congregation Achduth Vesholom

Name of Property

Allen, IN

County and State

3. Zone: Easting: Northing:

4. Zone: Easting : Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

S20a R1 Brit Est Lot 6 & 1/2 Vac St Ex E10.8a Woodhurst Plat Ex Trac.

Starting at the northeast corner of the property (marked by a fire hydrant) follow a line directly south along Old Mill Road for 670 feet. Then turn west and follow a line directly west for 629 feet toward the river. Next turn north and follow the river in a direct line north for 545 feet. Then turn east and follow a direct line east 144 feet to the service drive. Turn north and follow a direct line to the north 105 feet. Turn east and follow a direct line east beside the service drive for 225 feet. Turn north and follow a direct line north for 30 feet. Finally, turn east and follow a line directly east for 260 feet, returning to Old Mill Road.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This is the parcel historically associated with the 1960 CAV building and it remains the primary parcel today, with the exception of 140' x 160' piece of land in the northwest corner of the parcel sold to Fort Wayne City Utilities to build the South Foster Park Wet Weather Pump Station, part of the city's water and sewer improvements.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Dr. Wendy Soltz/Associate Professor of History and Director of the Public History Program

organization: Ball State University

street & number: Burkhardt Building #212

city or town: Muncie state: IN zip code: 47306

e-mail: wfsoltz@bsu.edu

telephone: 617-459-3940

date: March 7, 2026

Additional Documentation

Congregation Achduth Vesholom
Name of Property

Allen, IN
County and State

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered, and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Congregation Achduth Vesholom

City or Vicinity: Fort Wayne

County: Allen

State: IN

Photographer: Dr. Wendy Soltz

Date Photographed: May 15, 2019 (# 1-7; #9-18; #35); April 2, 2024 (#8, #19-34); March 8, 2026 (#36-37).

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

EXTERIOR PHOTOS

- 1 Camera facing southwest. View of the Temple's main façade from driveway.
- 2 Camera facing southwest. View of the Temple's main entrance, iconic pylon, and education (south) wing.
- 3 Camera facing northwest. View of the Temple's main façade and entrance from driveway.
- 4 Camera facing northwest. Foreground: view of the education (south) wing and its entrance. Background: view of the north wing (sanctuary, social hall, and offices).
- 5 Camera facing northeast. View of the back of the Temple: part of the education (south) wing and the 2015 MRRC addition.
- 6 Camera facing east. View of the back of the Temple: part of the 2015 MRRC addition.

Congregation Achduth Vesholom

Allen, IN

Name of Property

County and State

- 7 Camera facing southeast. View of the north side of the temple (the outer wall of the sanctuary and social hall) from driveway.
- 8 Camera facing northwest: Enclosed, open-air courtyard and *yahrzeit* sculpture (non-contributing object) visible from both the original building and the MRRC.
- 9 DETAIL PHOTO: Ten Commandments sculpture.
- 10 DETAIL PHOTO: Limestone pylon with Star of David.
- 11 DETAIL PHOTO: Main entrance with bronze doors and 1960 cornerstone.
- 12 DETAIL PHOTO: Bronze Ten Commandment door medallions.
- 13 DETAIL PHOTO: Education (south) wing with ribbon windows and ceramic tile.
- 14 DETAIL PHOTO: Education (south) wing entrance with cut limestone and original 1960 menorah sculpture.

INTERIOR PHOTOS

- 15 Camera facing east: view of the front of the sanctuary.
- 16 Camera facing southeast: view of the south wall of the sanctuary.
- 17 Camera facing northeast: view of the north wall of the sanctuary.
- 18 Camera facing west: view of the back wall of the sanctuary (movable wall provides access to social hall.)
- 19 Camera facing southwest: view of typical classroom in education wing.
- 20 Camera facing east: south entrance to education wing with pass through window (alteration) visible.
- 21 Camera facing north: view of doors (alterations) in education wing main corridor.
- 22 Camera facing south: view of B'nai Jacob cornerstones installation (alterations) in education wing main corridor.
- 23 Camera facing north: view of B'nai Jacob title stones installation (alterations) in education wing main corridor.
- 24 Camera facing west: main entrance to chapel (alteration)
- 25 Camera facing south: view of chapel (alteration) including the 1955 B'nai Jacob art glass windows (middle), 1993 Torah ark (left), and six 1917 CAV stained-glass windows (right).
- 26 Camera facing north: view of chapel (alteration) and kitchenette.
- 27 Camera facing north: south entrance to MRRC (addition).
- 28 Camera facing north: MRRC (addition).
- 29 Camera facing south: MRRC (addition).
- 30 Camera facing north: north entrance to MRRC (addition).
- 31 DETAIL PHOTO: Sanctuary window example.
- 32 DETAIL PHOTO: Social Hall window example.
- 33 DETAIL PHOTO: Education wing window example.
- 34 DETAIL PHOTO: Education wing built-in cabinet example.
- 35 DETAIL PHOTO: Sanctuary doorknobs (also on Social Hall doors)
- 36 Camera facing northwest: Social Hall
- 37 Camera facing southeast: Social Hall

Congregation Achduth Vesholom
Name of Property

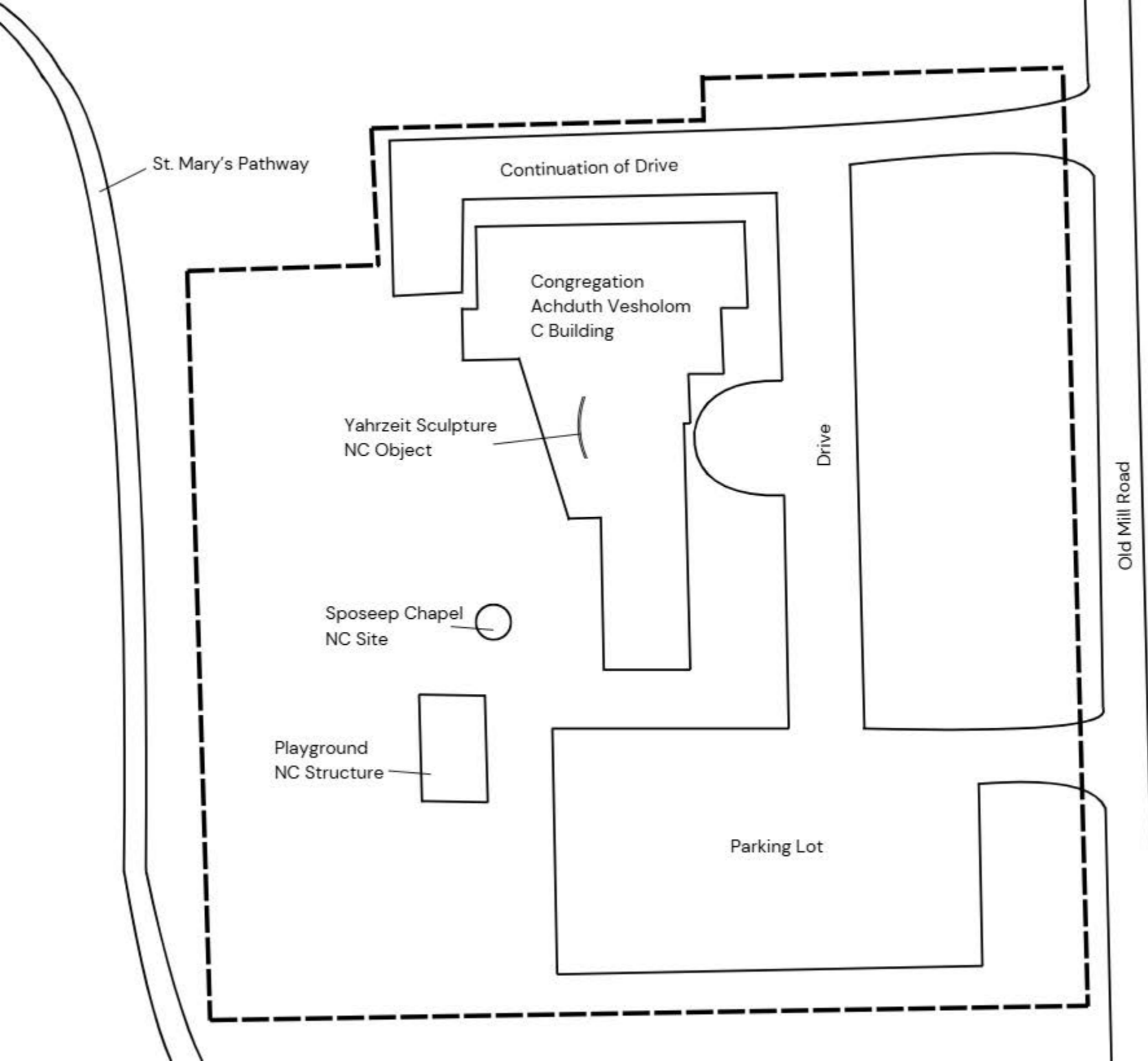
Allen, IN
County and State

required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.



Congregation Achduth Vesholom
National Register of Historic Places Nomination
5200 Old Mill Road, Fort Wayne,
Allen County, Indiana

- 1 C Building - Congregation Achduth Vesholom
- 1 NC Object - Yahrzeit Sculpture
- 1 NC Site - Sposeep Chapel
- 1 NC Structure - Playground

KEY

MRRC - Madge Rothschild Reasorse Center

BPO - Brightpoint Office

RSO - Religious School Office

PFW - Perdue Univ. Institute for Holocaust & Genocide Studies

JFFW - Jewish Federation of Fort Wayne

MTN - Maintenance

EDO - Executive Director Office

KIT - Kitchen

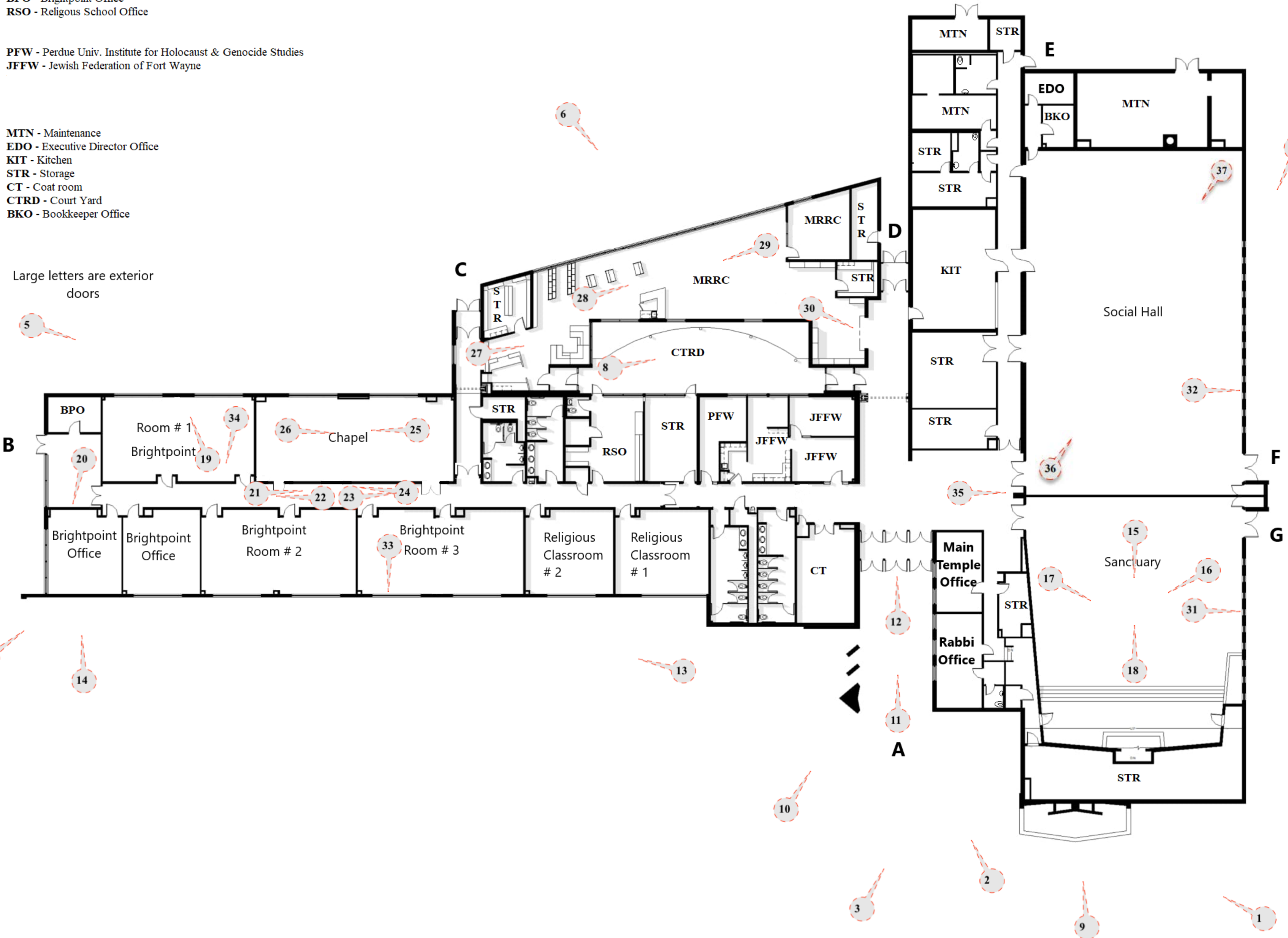
STR - Storage

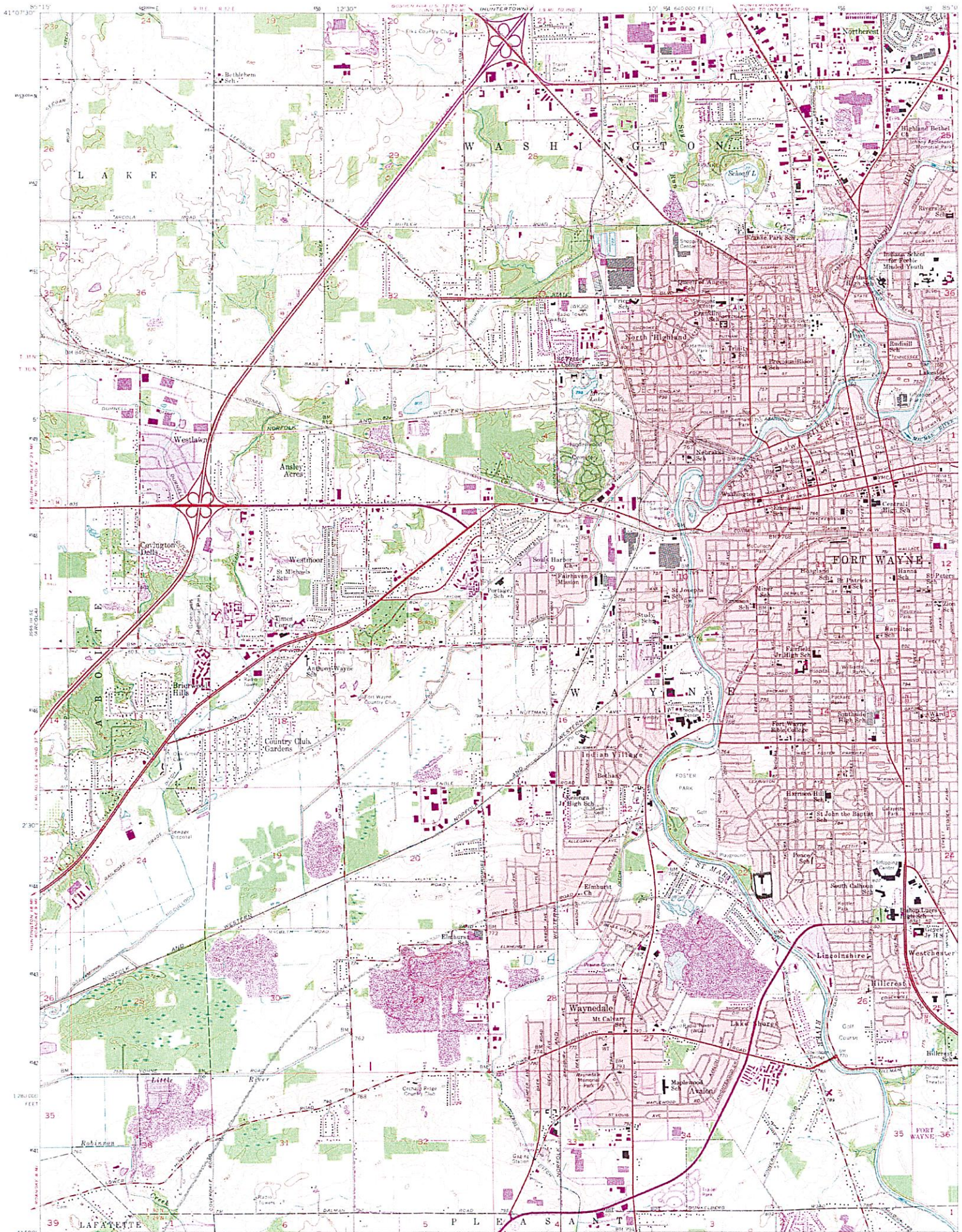
CT - Coat room

CTRD - Court Yard

BKO - Bookkeeper Office

Large letters are exterior doors





Convention Address Worksheet



IN_AllenCounty_CongregationAchduthVesholom0002



IN_AllenCounty_CongregationAchduthVesholom0003



IN_AllenCounty_CongregationAchduthVesholom0005



IN_AllenCounty_CongregationAchduthVesholom0008



IN_AllenCounty_CongregationAchduthVesholom0015



IN_AllenCounty_CongregationAchduthVesholom0017



IN_AllenCounty_CongregationAchduthVesholom0021



IN_AllenCounty_CongregationAchduthVesholom0025



IN_AllenCounty_CongregationAchduthVesholom0036