



Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ERIK KULLESEID
Commissioner

RESOURCE EVALUATION

DATE: July 7, 2021

STAFF: Linda Mackey

PROPERTY: Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center

MCD: Brooklyn

ADDRESS: 585 Schenectady Ave.

COUNTY: Kings

PROJECT REF: 21PR04302

USN: 04701.024169

- I. ☐ Property is individually listed on SR/NR:
name of listing:
- ☐ Property is a contributing component of a SR/NR district:
name of district:
- II. ☒ Property meets eligibility criteria.
- ☐ Property contributes to a district which appears to meet eligibility criteria.

Criteria for Inclusion in the National Register:

- A. ☒ Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
- B. ☐ Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
- C. ☐ Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or represents the work of a master; or possess high artistic values; or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;
- D. ☐ Have yielded, or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Based on the information submitted and archival research, the Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center in the East Flatbush neighborhood of Brooklyn is significant under Criterion A in the areas of social and ethnic history and health and medicine for its association with public health care developed to meet the needs of the Jewish community in Brooklyn in the twentieth century. Founded in the mid-1920s as the Jewish Sanitarium for Incurables, the hospital complex is bounded by Rutland Road to the north, Winthrop Street to the south, East 49th Street to the east, and Schenectady Avenue to the west. The period of significance is 1926, when ground broke on the earliest building, the LeFrak Pavilion, to 1985 when the last major building, the Briger Pavilion, was constructed. The 1985 end date also represents the continued use and expansion of the hospital. The complex includes twelve buildings, all contributing, and many are connected by elevated covered walkways.

The grounds and buildings appear largely intact on the exterior. The buildings reflect architectural styles typical of institutional buildings in the early to mid-twentieth century including restrained Renaissance Revival and Classicism elements, simplified modern, and Brutalist aesthetics. The landscape plan in the northern portion of the property, including the pedestrian walkways and circulation pattern, appear intact to period of significance. Contributing landscape features include the pedestrian walkways and circulation pattern, modest metal fencing

along Rutland Road, Winthrop Street, and a portion of Schenectady Avenue, and brick gate posts on Rutland Road and Winthrop Street. Despite some alterations since the 1980s, the complex overall retains a relatively high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, feeling, and association.

History

The Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center can trace its origins to the mid-1920s, when The Daughters of Israel - Home for the Incurables, a relief organization, elected Max Blumberg, a prominent businessman, banker, and philanthropist, as their president in 1925. The organization was made up of a small group of women who were making regular visits to Jewish patients in chronic illness wards of local hospitals, providing food and arranging special holiday services. Blumberg and the organization recognized there was a considerable need in Brooklyn and proposed the development of a facility for ailing residents and long-term patients, who could not be cared for adequately in their homes, would receive the special care and attention they needed. In May 1926, Blumberg changed the organization's name to The Jewish Sanitarium For Incurables in preparation for the eventual development of the hospital.

Construction of the first building, the present-day Lefrak Pavilion, began at the corner of Rutland Road and East 49th Street in September 1926. Research indicates that on its opening day in 1928, fifty-two men and women were taken by automobile and wheelchair from the Kings County Hospital Center. The new hospital quickly filled to its capacity of 300 patients. Almost immediately after the Sanitarium's opening there was a demand to admit additional patients. This constant pressure made it necessary to consider plans to expand the facility. As reported in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Blumberg was quoted in a speech at a fundraising party, "Our wards are always filled to capacity, we are the only institution of this kind in Brooklyn and we must expand if we are to care for the needy who come to us for aid."

The construction of a second building, to be named the Blumberg Pavilion in honor of Max Blumberg, was planned in June 1932. The building was designed by architect Tobias Goldstone, who also designed the present-day Leviton Pavilion (former Nurse's Home). At its completion in 1933 the Blumberg Pavilion cost \$250,000 to build and depended largely on public and private donated money. In addition to the 300 beds, the building contained an X-ray unit, examination and sterilization rooms, an occupational therapy division, and dental and physiotherapy units. A third building, the present-day Leviton Pavilion, was under construction around the same time as the Blumberg Pavilion. Also known as the Ann J. Freeman Pavilion and former Nurse's Home, it was completed in 1933 and contained facilities for 150 nurses and orderlies and provided 100 additional beds to patients.

During the period of 1926 to 1936 the media outlet occasionally referred to the hospital as the Jewish Home for Incurables, and the Jewish Sanitarium for Chronics and Incurables. By the mid-1930s the hospital recognized there was no longer the need to emphasize the position as only harboring terminal and incurable patients, and therefore decided to officially change its name. In May 1936 the hospital changed its name to the Jewish Hospital and Sanitarium for Chronic Diseases. In a speech addressing the name change, Bernard Lebovitz, the Vice President at the time, stated "only a few years ago, hospitals and doctors were in the habit of giving up many patients and deciding that medical science could do nothing more for them, but no cases are given up as hopeless nowadays."

The facility continued to expand and between 1948 and 1949, the Shirley Joyce Katz Pavilion was constructed. Research indicates that by the fall of 1949, the building was ready for occupancy and its final design included research laboratories, clinics, lecture halls, a hydrotherapy suit, two wings devoted to the care of children suffering from poliomyelitis and rheumatic heart conditions, and a total of 350 beds. A synagogue was also construction between 1948 and 1950. According to a Brooklyn Daily Eagle article, the new synagogue was dedicated in 1950 and replaced an earlier synagogue that was housed in the Blumberg Pavilion.

In July 1954, Isaac Albert, president of the hospital between 1944 and 1966, announced that The Jewish Hospital and Sanitarium for Chronic Diseases had changed its name to the Jewish Chronic Disease Hospital. Albert was quoted stating that "this change is in keeping with the services which the institution renders. The

term 'Sanitarium' connotes a rest or convalescent home or institution." By the mid-1950s the Jewish Chronic Disease hospital was an 810-bed institution dedicated to the treatment and rehabilitation patients with chronic diseases such as cancer, arthritis, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, polio, and heart conditions. Research indicates that it became the nation's largest voluntary, non-sectarian hospital for chronically sick and had patients ranging in age from infants to aged men and women. It had facilities for occupational therapy, physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, inpatient and outpatient cerebral palsy clinics, a rheumatic fever division, cardiology division, medical research laboratories, tumor detection clinic, and other departments for the treatment and study of long-term ailments.

In 1958, the four-story Masin Pavilion was constructed in the northern portion of the property along Rutland Road. The building housed the Issac Albert Research Institute, which focused on the research of chronic medical diseases. Additional funding was raised from federal government grants, various research foundations, and pharmaceutical firms for the purchase of instruments and research equipment. The new medical research building also included administrative offices, offices for growing social service staff, a medical library, and meeting rooms for the more than thirty women's auxiliary groups which raise funds to support services to the patients. David Minkin, president of the hospital between 1971 and 1998, spearheaded the construction of the five-story Minkin Pavilion that opened in 1967, in memory of his parents. On May 1968 the hospital was renamed once again to the current name Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center at the annual anniversary dinner for the hospital.

The hospital continued to expand and in August 1973, the construction of the ten-story Rutland Nursing Home/David Minkin Rehabilitation Institute (DMRI/Rutland) was completed. The building housed 600 beds and provided additional room for long-term patients and their rehabilitation. To meet the increasing demands of the institution, a four-story building that would connect to the existing Minkin Pavilion was completed in 1985. Named after David Minkin's sister Mrs. Lillian Minkin Briger and her husband Dr. Sigmund S. Briger, the Briger Pavilion contained 120 general and medical beds, supplementing another twenty beds for intensive care and coronary care patients.

Today, the Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center serves a diverse population in Brooklyn. The medical center is part of an ongoing merger of Brooklyn hospitals under the banner of One Brooklyn Health System including Brookdale University Hospital and Medical Center and Interfaith Medical Center.

Buildings – All contributing

Lefrak Pavilion – built between 1926 and 1927
Blumberg Pavilion - built 1933
Leviton Pavilion (former Nurse's Home) – built 1933
Former Kitchen – built 1948
Former Laundry – built 1948
Synagogue – built between 1948 and 1950
S.J. Katz Pavilion – built between 1946 and 1948
Masin Building – built 1958
Guard station/Gate house – ca. 1960
Minkin Building – built 1967
DMRI / Rutland – built 1973
Briger Pavilion – built 1985

Sources

"25-Year-Old Hospital Employing New Name". *The Daily News*. July 8, 1954.

Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingsbrook_Jewish_Medical_Center.

"New Brooklyn Health system forms with 700M cash infusion". *Modern Healthcare*. January 25, 2018.

"No Incurables, Declares Chief of Sanitarium". *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. May 18, 1936.

"Sanitarium's New Synagogue Is Dedicated." *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. March 20, 1950, 4.

Sanborn Map Company. *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Brooklyn, Kings County, New York*. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1915-1933.

Sanborn Map Company. *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Brooklyn, Kings County, New York*. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1915-1951.

If you have any questions concerning this Determination of Eligibility, please contact Linda Mackey at (518) 268-2148 or linda.mackey@parks.ny.gov.