

Note on the preservation initiative to save the Richmond Community Hospital, at the Virginia Union University, VA, USA

ICADS works to support the preservation of Art Deco heritage across the world. Based on preservation request submissions from not just member societies but from interested individuals, the ICADS preservation committee carefully evaluates such requests and lends support appropriately. It has supported initiatives in Paris, New York and most recently in Virginia at the request of the Art Deco Society of Virginia (ADSVA).

Received in April 2024 the property in question is the Richmond Community Hospital which was going to be demolished to make way for a residential development. The Hospital was significant not just for its architectural form but also for its historic and cultural significance as it was founded by the first woman and first Black woman to pass the State Medical exam in 1893, Dr. Sarah Boyd Jones, and provided medical services to a marginalized community in the Jim Crow South.

The ADSVA submitted very detailed and rich documentation along with archival records to support their request for preservation. This information played a key role in assisting ICADS to quickly determine the significance of the property and draft a strong letter of support to concerned authorities of Virginia Union University (the building/land owners), local civic administration, and the potential developer.

In late October 2024 the University withdrew its original plans and decided to fully preserve the hospital building. The modified plans now include a restored Hospital building with plans to reuse it as a fitness and health education center, culminating in a major win for the building, the legacy of Dr. Jones, and the local community. The initiative was also aided by active local community participation, local press, and possibly a suit filed in the courts against the proposed demolition and redevelopment. The watchdog effort now shifts to making sure the University makes good on their updated plan.

This is a fine example of preservation activism with positive outcomes. You can make a submission to ICADS by visiting their [Preservation page](#) and completing the [preservation request form](#).

www.icadsartdeco.org
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