

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received APR 4 1984

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic El Falansterio de Puerta de Tierra

and/or common El Falansterio

2. LocationBounded by RR Right-of-Way,
Fernández Juncos Avenue Corner of Matías Ledesma
street & number and San Juan Bautista Streets. not for publication

city, town San Juan

vicinity of

state Puerto Rico

code 72

county San Juan

code 0930

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
☒ district	☐ public	☒ occupied	☐ agriculture ☐ museum
☐ building(s)	☒ private	☐ unoccupied	☐ commercial ☐ park
☐ structure	☐ both	☐ work in progress	☐ educational ☒ private residence
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment ☐ religious
☐ object	☐ in process	☐ yes: restricted	☐ government ☐ scientific
	☐ being considered	☒ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial ☐ transportation
	N/A	☐ no	☐ military ☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Condominio del Falansterio, Inc.

street & number Fernández Juncos Avenue, Stop 7, Puerta de Tierra

city, town San Juan

vicinity of

state Puerto Rico 00901

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds

street & number San Juan Judicial Center

city, town Hato Rey

state Puerto Rico

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ nodate ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town

state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
☐ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☐ unaltered	☒ original site
☐ good	☐ ruins	☒ altered	☐ moved
☒ fair	☐ unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The "Falansterio de Puerta de Tierra" development is a group of nine (9) buildings, divided into eighteen (18) sections, three stories in height, that consists of twelve (12) apartments per section with a total of two hundred and sixteen (216) apartments. A two storied Community Center building is located at the center of the development. The "Falansterio" is located on an entire urban block with an area of 11,788 square meters, bounded to the Southwest by Fernández Juncos Avenue, to the Northwest by Matías Ledesma Street, to the Southeast by San Juan Bautista Street and to the Northeast by a right-of-way owned by the Puerto Rico Railroad Company(not operational as of today). It is located at the outskirts of Old San Juan about two miles from the Old City walls. All eighteen sections are typical and consists of a living-dining room, two bedrooms, kitchen, bathroom and a patio area at the center of each section. The structural system consists of reinforced concrete walls with concrete floor slabs and flat reinforced concrete roof slabs. All walls (exterior and interior) are smoothly cement plastered. The original wooden movable louvered and glass double windows were replaced for its deteriorated conditions and substituted by aluminum jalousie windows. The flooring material used throughout the development are colored cement tiles in different patterns at the apartments and steel troweled cement flooring at its vestibules and stairways.

The structures are grouped together forming a quadrangle around a central courtyard. An administration and community center is located at the center of the development. The general plan or layout is simmetrical, simple with a well achieved relationship of each building to the other, its open areas and controlled patios. The project is divided into two long rectangular buildings (referred to as Bldgs. #1 & #2) that consists of six typical sections each (48'-9" per section), located at the Southwest side of the property (Bldg. #1) on Fernández Juncos Avenue and at the Northeast side of the property (Bldg. #2) bounded by the Puerto Rico Railroad Company right-of-way. The remainder of the sections are divided into single detached buildings (referred to as Bldgs. #3 through #8), each 48'-9" in dimension. Two units are located at the Northwest side of the property (Bldgs. #3-#5) bounded by Matías Ledesma Street and two units are located at the Southeast side of the property (Bldgs. #6-#8) bounded by San Juan Bautista Street. Located at the center of the development on a symmetrical axis to the project is the community center (Bldg. #9) with one detached unit at its Southeast side (Bldg. #7) and its Northwest side (Bldg. #4).

The design of the project followed the traditional concept and details of the Art Deco style (Refer to Item #8 for description of said style) in Puerto Rico. The long rectangular facades at its Northeast and Southwest sides are broken up by six entrance ways or vestibules strongly expressed by its projected stepped entries, rounded corners and vertical grooves. Each vestibule is clearly defined by the use of two strong rectangular projected balconies at its top. Each balcony has rounded corners, tubular railings with geometric ornamentations and are flanked by streamlining details. The stong vertical grooves are also continued up throughout both sides of the

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
— prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion
— 1400–1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science
— 1500–1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture
— 1600–1699	X architecture	education	military	X social/
— 1700–1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
— 1800–1899	commerce	exploration/settlement	philosophy	theater
X 1900–	communications	industry	politics/government	transportation
		invention		other (specify)

Specific dates 1937

Builder/Architect Arch. J. Ramírez de Arellano

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

A "Falansterio" is by definition a building or development based in the French system of Charles Fourier (1722-1837), who proposed the re-organization of society in small communities; thus, the name of this development the "Falansterio de Puerta de Tierra".

The "Falansterio de Puerta de Tierra" was the first public development begun by the Federal Administration that started a program of elimination of slums in Puerto Rico. This social program encompassed the idea of eliminating certain slum sectors in the metropolitan area (in this case, the Miranda slum sector) where families of low annual income resided and to move them into these developments. Most of these projects were designed as single family detached houses because Puerto Ricans were accustomed to them; so when the "Falansterio" proposal was presented to the Federal Government, it thought that this type of housing development (apartment units) promoted violence and that Puerto Ricans would not know how to behave in this type of environment. The group of architects that worked at the agency convinced the authorities of the advantages of this project, thus, in 1937, the "Falansterio" became the first public apartment housing development in Puerto Rico. In 1952 the apartment residents organized the Falansterio Housing Cooperative in order to buy the project from the Federal Government and to sell the apartments to its residents; thus becoming the first housing cooperative in Puerto Rico and a pilot project in housing cooperatives on the Island. In 1972 the project was finally paid and the cooperative became the owner. In 1975 the members of the cooperative determined to dissolve it and declared the property as condominium in order to comply with the Horizontal Property Act 104. A Board of Directors was voted by its members and registered at the State Department. The Matrix Title Deed was divided into individual titles and transferred to its residents.

Architecturally, the Falansterio is significant because of its Art Deco style. This style is distinguished by its rich geometrical ornamentation that could be applied to every type of object. Cubism and Expressionism influenced said style. Every extravagant or exotic feature was utilized as an inspired element in the style. Its fluid lines on simple flat surfaces, its rectangular and symmetrical projections, the extensive use of streamlining (decorative element represented by grooves or moldings that are formed on moulds as a result of mass production), the use of new materials and concepts in technology, typifies the Art Deco movement.

The impact over the years of American culture in Puerto Rico brought about the Art Deco style. It was developed in Puerto Rico with the intention

9. Major Bibliographical References

1. Fernández, Mildred; "Metodología para el Art Deco en Puerto Rico"; a thesis submitted for the Master's degree in Architecture, University of Puerto Rico, 1982.
2. Cruz, Antonio; El Falansterio; September 1937, El Mundo newspaper

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 11,788sq.mts. = 2.91 acres

Quadrangle name San Juan

Quadrangle scale 1:20,000

UTM References

Latitude 18°-27'-57" North, Longitude 66°-05'-46" West

A

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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification The property is bounded to the Northeast by a right-of-way owned by the Puerto Rico Railroad Co., to the Southwest by Fernández Juncos Ave., to the Northwest by Matías Ledesma Street, to the Southeast by San Juan Bautista Street. See enclosed Location Plan.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Armando Morales Parés- State Architect

organization State Historic Preservation Office date March 26, 1984.

street & number Box 82, La Fortaleza telephone (809)-721-3012, 721-4389

city or town San Juan state Puerto Rico, 00901

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☒ state ☐ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date March 27, 1984

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

date

Attest:

Chief of Registration

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balconies, thus stressing a vertical movement at these areas of the building. It is also worth mentioning the patterned ornamentation of rectangular and square openings casted-in-place at the areas of the vestibules and balconies that were used for ventilation purposes (originally opened, now sealed on the interior for privacy). Both facades (front and rear) of these buildings (Bldg. #1 & #2) are exactly the same and are treated equally using the same details of continuous fluid streamlining running throughout all sides of the structures, its rounded corners, rectangular projections and stepped entrance vestibules. The remainder six detached units are also treated with the same details (streamlining at the top, rounded corners, projected balconies, geometrical tubular railings, stepped vestibule), therefore emphasizing a homogeneous and harmonious layout. These buildings were originally painted blue, beige and pink, so typical of the Art Deco style. The paint has washed down throughout the years and it is in a state of discoloration as of today.

The focal point or center of the development is the Community Center building (Bldg. #9). This two-storied structure consists of a multipurpose area and nursery room on its first floor, and administrative offices on its second floor. Two exterior stairs that leads to the roof were added by its residents on a later date. The facade of this building is treated with the same details as that of the residential units except on its entrance which is located on its Southeast side. The main entrance opening is a geometrical pointed arch with geometrical pylons with ornamentation at its top at both sides of the arch.

The "Falansterio de Puerta de Tierra", although being a project built in 1937, have succeeded in its architectural distribution. The well planned symmetrical layout have succesfully created a sense of belonging and security to its owners. Its harmoneous and homogeneous design with the simplicity of its layout and structures, the relationship of each building to the other, its controlled patios and open spaces have achieved what no other public housing development have in Puerto Rico, pride in their owners. Another unique feature that stands out in this project lies in being the only district in Puerto Rico where the Art Deco style is fully expressed at its best. The strong simplicity of its facade lines with its geometrical ornamentation and projections, the use of new materials (reinforced concrete) coupled with the perfect planned distribution have made the Falansterio the best example of a succesful public apartment housing development in Puerto Rico.

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of creating an agreeable and pleasant atmosphere. At the same time, it brought new concepts in technology and construction materials. The style offered the flexibility of adapting itself to every social level in accordance with the material and money available. In consequence, the Art Deco style was used in public housing developments giving the opportunity to the less privileged classes to participate in the new concepts or trends.

The Art Deco style was a revolutionary style in Puerto Rico for its vocabulary was quite different. This new trend or movement expressed the change of the Island over the years of North American culture. Its vocabulary of masses and solids, the flat walls with rounded corners in concrete and the decorative details were an innovative feature that attracted the attention of everybody.

The "Falansterio de Puerta de Tierra" is the only district in Puerto Rico where the Art Deco Style is fully expressed to its best. This district conveys a sense of cohesiveness throughout because of its unique design, use of material and workmanship. It is the only Art Deco style district that has remained almost unaltered throughout the years, thus conveying a feeling of time and place.