



March 15, 2017

MEMORANDUM

TO: Historic Preservation Commission

FROM: Clare Lise Kelly
Architectural History Specialist
Historic Preservation Office

SUBJECT: National Register Evaluation:
Mihran Mesrobian House, 7410 Connecticut Avenue, #35-99-1

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission find the Mihran Mesrobian House merits inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, under Criterion C.

BACKGROUND

The Mihran Mesrobian House, 7410 Connecticut Avenue, in Chevy Chase, has been nominated for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places by Caroline Mesrobian Hickman, PhD. Ms Hickman is a DC-based art and architectural historian who is the granddaughter of the architect Mihran Mesrobian. The house is still owned and inhabited by the family, namely Ara Mesrobian, who has given permission for this nomination.

On February 14, 2017, the Governor's Consulting Committee evaluated this nomination and voted unanimously to recommend in favor of this nomination, enthusiastically finding that it meets the recommended criterion.

As a Certified Local Government agency, the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission is certified by the Maryland Historical Trust and the National Park Service to participate in the National Register nomination process. Following review of the nomination, the HPC will forward its recommendation to the County Executive.

The nomination form is available online at
<http://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/historic/montgomery-modern/>

The National Register criteria for evaluation is attached.

DISCUSSION

Located in the Town of Chevy Chase, the Mesrobian House is prominently situated on Connecticut Avenue--the spine of Chevy Chase--on a corner lot at Woodbine Street. The house is designed with a European Modernist sensibility, also known as Art Moderne. This style is characterized by asymmetrical cubical massing, flat roofs, sun decks, white walls, and glass block. Designed in 1941, the house is noteworthy for a skillful modernist design adapted to meet requirements of conservative design dictated by the Chevy Chase Land Company. Turkish-born architect Mihran Mesrobian designed the house in 1941 for his own residence. Mesrobian is known for such landmark projects as the Beaux Art-style Hay-Adams Hotel (1927) and modernist Sedgwick Gardens apartments (1932). It was the only house he designed for himself and served as his residence for nearly thirty-five years, until his death in 1975.

The Mesrobian House is located on a 10,800 sf lot in the Town of Chevy Chase (Section 4). A Colonial Revival brick wall, built in 1945, provides a transition from the traditional design of Chevy Chase houses to the modernist brick Mesrobian House. An attached garage opens to a driveway off Woodbine Street. The house has a high level of integrity, and the landscape design and plantings are little changed.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff commends Ms. Hickman for this outstanding nomination, drawing on her expertise in architectural history, and the papers of Mihran Mesrobian, and weaving in vital historical and architectural history from two publications of the Historic Preservation Office: *Chevy Chase, A Home Suburb for the Nation's Capital*, and *Montgomery Modern: Mid-Century Modern Architecture of Montgomery County, Maryland*. Historic and current views of the resource substantiate its high level of architectural integrity. Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission find the proposed Mihran Mesrobian House nomination is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C--embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.

Attachment:
National Register criteria

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

National Register of Historic Places Maryland Register of Historic Properties

The standards for evaluating the significance of properties were developed to recognize the accomplishments of all peoples who have made a contribution to our history and heritage. The criteria are designed to guide local governments, Federal and state agencies, and others in evaluating potential entries in these Registers.

Criteria for Evaluation

The quality of significance in American and Maryland history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association and:

- a. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- b. that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- c. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and individual distinction; or
- d. that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory of history.

Criteria considerations: Ordinarily, cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years shall not be considered eligible for the National Register or the Maryland Register. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts that do meet the criteria or if they fall within the following categories:

- a. a religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or
- b. a building or structure removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving historic person or event; or
- c. a birthplace or grave of an historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no other appropriate site or building directly associated with his productive life;
- d. or a cemetery that derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or
- e. a reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or
- f. a property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own historical significance; or
- g. a property achieving significance within the past 50 years of it is of exceptional importance.