

**NATIONAL SAND & GRAVEL ASSOCIATION AND NATIONAL  
READY MIXED CONCRETE ASSOCIATION HEADQUARTERS  
900 SPRING STREET  
SILVER SPRING, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD 20910**

**LOCATIONAL ATLAS DESIGNATION FORM  
SEPTEMBER 2019**

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Maryland – National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
Montgomery County Department of Planning  
Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites Designation Form

**1. NAME OF PROPERTY**

Historic Name: Headquarters for the National Sand & Gravel Association and National Ready Mixed Concrete Association  
Current Name: National Ready Mixed Concrete Association Headquarters  
Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties #: M:36-96

**2. LOCATION OF PROPERTY**

Address Number and Street: 900 Spring Street, Silver Spring  
County, State, Zip: Montgomery County, Maryland, 20910

**3. TYPE OF PROPERTY**

A. Ownership of Property

☒ Private  
☐ Public  
☐ Local  
☐ State  
☐ Federal

B. Category of Property

☒ Private  
☐ Public  
☐ Local  
☐ State  
☐ Federal

C. Number of Resources within the Property

Contributing		Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Buildings	<input type="checkbox"/>	Buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> Structures	<input type="checkbox"/>	Structures
<input type="checkbox"/> Objects	<input type="checkbox"/>	Objects
<input type="checkbox"/> Archaeological Sites	<input type="checkbox"/>	Archaeological Sites
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Total	<input type="checkbox"/>	Total

D. Listing in the National Register of Historic Places: The property has not been evaluated for the National Register of Historic Places.



#### 4. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic Function(s): COMMERCE/TRADE: Organizational

Current Function(s): VACANT/NOT IN USE

#### 5. DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY

**Site Description:** The National Sand & Gravel Association (NSGA) and National Ready Mixed Concrete Association (NRMCA) Headquarters is located at 900 Spring Street at the southwestern corner of the intersection of Spring Street and Ellsworth Drive in Silver Spring, Montgomery County, Maryland. The property consists of four lots comprising .41 acres (17,683 square feet) with a topography that slopes downwards from the southwest to the northeast. The property is bound by: Spring Street to the north; a three-story office building at 719-721 Ellsworth Drive to the south; Ellsworth Drive to the east; and a six-story office building at 700 Roeder Drive to the west (App. 1, Fig. 1 and App. 2, Fig. 3). A concrete sidewalk abuts Spring Street and Ellsworth Drive and wraps the northern and eastern extents of the property.

The building is set on a raised concrete platform and terrace defined by a retaining wall composed of alternating smooth and exposed aggregate concrete retaining walls on the three primary elevations (north, south, and east). On the west elevation, the retaining wall consists of a poured concrete wall with no exposed aggregate panels. The simplicity of the western retaining wall is likely due to the reduced visibility of this portion of the building in relation to the property line and present six-story office building 700 Roeder Road. The width of the terrace is approximately 10' on the primary elevations and 5' on the west elevation.

The façade (north elevation) of the headquarters addresses Spring Street. The raised platform is setback approximately 28' from the public right-of-way; a manicured lawn with two trees and shrubbery separates the façade from the public sidewalk. The centrally located wide concrete walkway and stair pierces the lawn and retaining wall to access the terrace and front entrance of the building.

The east elevation of the building fronts Ellsworth Drive. The raised platform is setback approximately 11' from the public rights-of-way; a narrow-manicured lawn and shrubbery separates the elevation from the public sidewalk. There is no direct access to the building on the eastern edge of the property.

The south elevation of the headquarters abuts a 20-car concrete parking lot. The parking lot is primarily delineated by the following: 1) a chain link fence on the east; 2) a poured concrete retaining wall topped with a metal fence (eastern extent) and a narrow lawn (western extent) to the south; and 3) a decorative retaining wall of smooth and exposed aggregate panels matching the design of the raised platform and a manicured lawn to the west. The chain link fence along Ellsworth Drive is setback approximately 10' from the sidewalk. The landscaped area consists of a manicured lawn, trees, and shrubbery.

The west elevation of the headquarters faces a six-story office building. Landscape elements on this side of the property are limited to a six-foot tall wood privacy fence abutting the concrete retaining wall on the northern half of the building. A chain link fence attached to the southern end of the building prohibits access from the parking lot to this side of the property.

**Architectural Description (App. 3, Fig. 1-11):** The NSGA and the NRMCA constructed the Brutalist-influenced headquarters in 1964. The associations hired local architect John H. (Jack) Sullivan to design a building that reflected their mission and corporate image. His expressive two-

story, reinforced concrete building with a flat roof showcases the various forms, textures, and geometric potential for the products heralded by the associations.

The square building rests on a raised concrete platform that creates a sense of monumentality with a temple-like affect. The design features a lighter first story with larger windows connecting interior and exterior spaces and a heavier cantilevered second story providing a sense of weight and massiveness. Sullivan further augments the building with a repetitive visual pattern of solid and voided spaces, smooth and exposed aggregate concrete surfaces, projected and recessed elements, and differentiation of color from the concrete. From a distance, the building's overall form and color serve as the primary design features, but the various textures of the concrete come to the forefront upon closer examination. All the smooth concrete surfaces are a raw gray concrete, while the exposed Lilesville white quartz aggregate concrete panels (produced by Earley Studios) infuse a lighter color. Sullivan's juxtaposition of colors and textures transmit a sense of individuality and he deftly adapts the vocabulary of commercial architecture to this neighborhood-scaled office building.

On the first story, each elevation consists of six repetitious and evenly-spaced bays. The bays, consisting of full-height windows or double-leaf doors, are framed by smooth concrete pilasters.<sup>1</sup> Separating the bays are narrower exposed aggregate concrete panels that provide a textural juxtaposition. The cantilevered second story inverts the solid and void pattern established on the first story. Seven narrower bays consist of deeply recessed metal-framed windows set within projecting rectangular smooth concrete frames. The concrete frames extend beyond the plane of the cantilever overhang and roof forming a crenellated effect. Separating the bays are wider exposed aggregate concrete panels that correspond to the height of the windows.

Entry to the building is limited to the façade (north elevation) on Spring Street and the south (rear) elevation accessing the parking lot. On the façade, the entry doors consist of double-leaf, metal-framed glass doors with single-light transom in the center two bays. On the south elevation, there is a non-historic, single-leaf, steel door with full-height side-lights and transom on the third bay from the western extent of the building.

The manipulation of solid to void, alternation of smooth concrete to exposed aggregate, and the use of projecting elements is continued on the retaining walls of the raised platform. The smooth concrete sections project beyond the face of the exposed aggregate sections of the wall matching the repetitious pattern established by the building.

### Interior

Historic Preservation staff did not access the interior of the headquarters.

## **6. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **A. Applicable Designation Criteria as described in Chapter 24: Historic Resources Preservation, Section 24A-3, Montgomery County Ordinance:**

The NSGA and NRMCA Headquarters meets two of the nine designation criteria as described in Section 24A-3 of the Montgomery County Ordinance. See Section J of this report for a detailed description.

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<sup>1</sup> Staff will verify the design and type of the windows pending future investigations, but the first and second story windows appear to be operable from the public rights-of-way.

**B. Statement of Significance:**

The NSGA and NRMCA Headquarters represents the confluence of Brutalist-influenced design principles and corporate architecture. John H. Sullivan, the architect of the building, captured the main tenets of Brutalism to create a sculptural form that expressed monumentality by emphasizing the headquarters' mass and form. These qualities are augmented with the building's cantilevered second story, repetitious pattern of solid and voided spaces, and siting on a raised concrete platform imbuing a temple-like affect. Sullivan deviated from modernist design with the inclusion of applied exposed aggregate panels adhered to the raw concrete massing, which function as ornament. The panels, however, seamlessly represented the corporate mission of the building's occupants as it leveraged concrete and gravel to project a visual identity and branding. Furthermore, Sullivan's use of exposed aggregate panels embraced variation and individual expression to achieve a unique blend of textures and colors that produced a look of warmth and elegance often lacking from contemporaneous modernist buildings. All the design elements allowed for a relatively small neighborhood office building to achieve successfully the monumentality associated with Brutalism and corporate architecture. The NSGA and NRMCA Headquarters is one of the premier examples of mid-twentieth century modernist architecture in Silver Spring and Montgomery County.

**C. Period of Significance:** 1964

**D. Significant Dates:** 1964 (completion of the building); ca. 1999 (departure of NSGA); and 2019 (departure of NRMCA)

**E. Significant Persons:** John H. (Jack) Sullivan

**F. Areas of Significance:** Architecture

**G. Architect/Builder:** John H. (Jack) Sullivan/Victor Beauchamp

**H. Narrative:**

***Historic Context: Silver Spring as a Commercial and Office Center***

Following the Great Depression, Silver Spring experienced fast-paced growth anchored by the construction of the Silver Spring Shopping Center (1938), a planned neighborhood shopping center that focused on the needs of an automobile-orientated middle-class. The area benefited from a strategic location between two urban centers, Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, and a commercial zoning and public parking plan established by M-NCPPC. The county owned and operated parking lots for an estimated 2,000 cars. By the 1940s, planners touted Silver Spring as the second largest community in the state with a population of 70,000. Silver Spring transformed from a bedroom community to a major commercial location with proposals for office buildings and hotel.<sup>2</sup>

While retail development stalled due to the construction of nearby suburban shopping centers and changing consumer habits in the late-1950s, Silver Spring's businesses district experienced substantial growth the following decade. Multistory office buildings, hotels, and apartments

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<sup>2</sup> For more information regarding the history of Silver Spring see the following resources: Richard Longstreth, "Silver Spring: Georgia Avenue, Colesville Road, and the Creation of an Alternative "Downtown" for Metropolitan Washington, D.C.," in *Streets: Critical Perspectives on Public Space* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 247-258; Clare Lise Kelly, *Montgomery Modern* (Silver Spring, Maryland: M-NCPPC, 2015), 32-35.

complexes were constructed on the fringes of the original district transforming the area into a regional employment center.<sup>3</sup> Between 1963 and 1966, the following office buildings included: 1) 8701 Georgia Avenue; 2) 1400 Spring Street; 3) The World Building, 8121 Georgia Avenue; 4) 8555 16<sup>th</sup> Street; and 5) 8720-8730 Georgia Avenue.<sup>4</sup> The planning and construction of the NSGA and NRMCA Headquarters between 1962 and 1964 corresponds to the burgeoning office and business district.

***Historic Context: National Sand & Gravel Association, National Ready Mixed Concrete Association, and Construction of the Headquarters***

The National Sand and Gravel Producers Association first organized in Chicago in 1911.<sup>5</sup> Renamed the National Sand and Gravel Producers in 1917, the association strived to promote the importance of the industry:

The National Association of Sand & Gravel Producers would show to your honorable body that the members of the industry which it represents are engaged in a business, the products of which enter the very foundation and existence of a large majority of the Nation's activities that make for the welfare, comfort, and happiness of the whole people.<sup>6</sup>

The National Secretary E. Guy Sutton sent out a membership recruitment letter stating that:

The success of any modern industry is measured by the effectiveness of its particular organization. The sand and gravel producers have been slow in establishing a national association representing their industry. As a consequence, they are not prepared to meet the unprecedented situations constantly arising.<sup>7</sup>

The organization quickly became a leading voice in the field, published a monthly bulletin, and changed its name to the National Sand and Gravel Association (NSGA) in 1923. The association located its headquarters at the Munsey Building, Washington, D.C.<sup>8</sup> The goals of the organization expanded to the following : 1) promote and extend the use of the products of the industry; 2) provide an organization for cooperation and coordination of members with those of other trade organizations and governmental agencies; 3) establish and maintain the highest standard of business practices, customs, and usages; and 4) protect the interests of the industry.<sup>9</sup>

In the late 1920s, the NSGA recognized the burgeoning ready mixed concrete industry. Ready mixed concrete refers to concrete (mixture of cement, water, and aggregates) that is batched for delivery from a central plant. The association discussed creating a separate organization to address the

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<sup>3</sup> Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission, *The Silver Spring CBD* (Silver Spring, Maryland: M-NCPPC, 1993), 5.

<sup>4</sup> The dates of construction are from the real property data information available from Montgomery County Atlas, <http://www.mcatlas.org>.

<sup>5</sup> "Sand and Gravel Men Organize," *Rock Products* 11 no. 6 (December 22, 1911): 26-30.

<sup>6</sup> National Research Council, *Handbook of Scientific and Technical Societies and Institutions of the United States and Canada* (Washington, D.C.: National Research Council, 1937), 165; E. Guy Sutton, "Sand and Gravel Producers Fight for Justice," *National Sand and Gravel Bulletin* 1, no. 7-8, May-June 1920, 7-9.

<sup>7</sup> "Sand and Gravel Association Plans," *Rock Products and Building Materials* 20 (August 15, 1917): 23.

<sup>8</sup> The Munsey Building, on E Street, N.W., between 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> streets, was built in 1905 and demolished in 1982.

<sup>9</sup> National Sand and Gravel Association, "The National's Constitution," *National Sand and Gravel Bulletin* 3 (1922): 44.

concerns of that industry at its annual convention in 1929. The following year, the NSGA voted to organize the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association (NRMCA) to “protect the welfare and best interest of those engaged in the production and sale of ready mixed concrete.”<sup>10</sup> The new association shared office space with the NSGA at the Munsey Building.

In addition to advocacy, the NRMCA dedicated time to concrete engineering and research. The organization jointly operated a laboratory with the NSGA, which moved from Washington, D.C. to the University of Maryland in 1938.<sup>11</sup> The Joint Research Laboratory conducted experiments pertinent to industry issues, particularly those dealing with standardization of specifications and test methods.<sup>12</sup>

The organizations remained in Washington, D.C., until the early 1960s when the NSGA and NRMCA decided to build a new headquarters at 900 Spring Street, Silver Spring, Maryland. The associations granted authority to purchase the property in February 1962 and approved the construction of a new headquarters at its joint board of directors meeting the following October. The board had hired local architect John H. Sullivan, Jr., and approved initial renderings of the subject building.<sup>13</sup> In 1963, the associations awarded Victor R. Beauchamp Associates, Washington, D.C., the \$282,119 contract to construct the office building.<sup>14</sup> The *Washington Post* and the *Evening Star* published renderings of the building and noted its “showcase” and “novel” design (App. 4, Fig. 1 and 3).<sup>15</sup>

The NSGA and NRMCA’s new headquarters opened in 1964. The associations also shared the office space with the Truck Mixers Manufacturers Bureau, the Concrete Plan Manufacturers Bureau, and the National Industrial Sand Association. The building was described as follows:

The two-story building contains slightly more than 14,000 sq. ft of floor space, and is located on about 17,000 sq. ft. of land. Practically all elements of the building were constructed of ready mixed concrete, including the exterior wall panels with exposed Lilesville white quartz gravel.<sup>16</sup>

The Potomac Valley Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (founded in 1955) bestowed First Award to the new headquarters building (App. 4, Fig. 4). The report of the jury stated the following:

The jury found the design consistent throughout, praising the careful detaining of the interior as well as exterior. They commented on the attractiveness of the lobby, its relationship to the exterior and found the interior spaces, in general, well handled. ...they

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<sup>10</sup> National Ready Mixed Concrete Association, “Decades of Dedication: The NRMCA Story,” <http://www.nrmca.org> (accessed June 28, 2019).

<sup>11</sup> National Ready Mixed Concrete Association, “Decades of Dedication: The NRMCA Story,” <http://www.nrmca.org> (accessed June 28, 2019).

<sup>12</sup> Sherman F. Booth, *Standardization Activities in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), 155.

<sup>13</sup> “NSGA-NRMCA will build new building,” *Rock Products: Devoted to the Production and Sale of Rock and Clay Products* 65 (1962): 78-79; Walter Trauffer, “NSGA Directors Meeting at Colorado Springs,” *Pit and Quarry* (December 1962): 86-88.

<sup>14</sup> “General Contract Awarded for NSGA-NRMCA Building in Silver Spring, MD,” *Pit & Quarry* (July 1963): 23.

<sup>15</sup> “New Silver Spring Associations Building,” *Washington Post*, June 6, 1963, Proquest; “Novel Design for Building,” *Evening Star*, June 7, 1963, NewsBank.

<sup>16</sup> “New National Headquarters of NSGA-NRMCA Shared by 3 Related Associations,” *Pit & Quarry* (October 1964): 287.

found it consistent in material and quality which dignified it in a simple manner and created a bold corporate expression. From a distance, the form is the expression and on approach more detail form comes to attention — total foresighted architecture.

In 1987, the NSGA voted to rename the organization to National Aggregates Association. Thirteen years later, the National Aggregates Association removed itself from 900 Spring Street after it merged with the National Stone Association to form the National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association.<sup>17</sup> The NRMCA remained at the 900 Spring Street for 55 years, but relocation of the association's headquarters to Alexandria, Virginia, is projected to occur in 2019.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Historic Context: Modernism and Brutalism***

Modern architecture is a movement classified by an emphasis on form, honesty in function and materials, the rational use of space, and simplicity of design in lieu of historical ornamentation. The movement incorporates several individual styles (International Style, Brutalism, Expressionism, and New Formalism) that express modern ideals by different means.

Brutalism is a broad label applied in the field of architecture referring either to: 1) “New Brutalism,” associated with post World War II British architecture; and 2) the global use of modernism rendered in raw concrete. The etymology of Brutalism is from the French word “*beton brute*” translated as raw concrete. Le Corbusier, a pioneer of Modern architecture, used the term “*beton brute*” to describe the material of the *Unite d'Habitation* (App. 5, Fig. 1), built in 1952, at Marseilles, France. Corbusier's designs inspired British architects Alison and Peter Smithson (who were married).<sup>19</sup>

The Smithsons, responding to the political and social climate associated with decimated post-war Britain, establishment of a welfare state, and challenges of reconstruction, focused on the simplest of ideas, human needs.<sup>20</sup> The architects strove to reveal the structure and materials of buildings, highlighting the characteristics of their unfinished state as exhibited in the Hunstanton School, Norfolk, England (finished in 1954).<sup>21</sup> In 1955, architecture critic Reyner Banham espoused the qualities of this approach in his article “The New Brutalism.” He described the style as: 1) formal legibility of the plan; 2) clear exhibition of structure; and 3) valuation of materials for their inherent qualities “as found.”<sup>22</sup> These ideas set the baseline for Brutalism, but other countries lacked the underlying ideological ideas and issues within Britain. As stated by architectural writer, historian, and curator Owen Hopkins:

Although the theoretical roots of the New Brutalism were decidedly British, even English, rough sculptural buildings of raw concrete rose all over the world during the 1960s and 1970s. ... raw concrete became a global language. Though emerging from different contexts and theoretical viewpoints, these various manifestations of Brutalism shared an

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<sup>17</sup> Mark S. Kuhar and Josephine Smith, “Rock through the Ages: 1896-2016,” <http://www.rockproducts.com> (accessed June 28, 2019).

<sup>18</sup> Lincoln Property Company, “Norther Virginia Quarterly Market Report, 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2019,” <http://www.lpcwashingtondc.com> (accessed June 28, 2019).

<sup>19</sup> Owen Hopkins, *Architectural Styles: A Visual Guide* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2014), 182-185.

<sup>20</sup> Stephen Sennott, *Encyclopedia of Twentieth Century Architecture* (New York: Taylor and Francis Group, 2004), 180-182.

<sup>21</sup> Owen Hopkins, *Architectural Styles: A Visual Guide* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2014), 182-185.

<sup>22</sup> Reyner Banham, “New Brutalism,” *Architectural Review* (December 1955): 354-361; Architect's Journal, “Reyner Banham from “The New Brutalism” 1955,” <http://www.senactal.wordpress.com> (accessed June 26, 2019).



ambition to reinvent modernism, to create an architecture that was hard-edged – literally and conceptually – that was radical and often confrontational.<sup>23</sup>

American Architects focused on Brutalism’s innovation of technology and form and as a means of expressing monumentality that eluded the overused International Style.<sup>24</sup> Brutalism is defined by:

- Use of exposed concrete (often revealing the texture of the wooden forms used for the casting);
- Emphasis on sculptural qualities, mass, and solidity;
- A weight and massiveness that separates it from other flat-roof buildings;
- Recessed windows and doors that function as voids in solid walls rather than the “skin” of the building;
- Broad expansive surfaces; and
- Repetitive patterns.<sup>25</sup>

In the United States, prominent examples of Brutalist buildings include Paul Rudolph’s Art and Architecture Building at Yale University and Kallman, McKinnell, and Knowles’ Boston City Hall (App. 5, Fig. 2-3). The works of such architectural masters inspired local architects to adopt the form. As noted by architectural historian Clare Lise Kelly in *Montgomery Modern*, Montgomery County retains several Brutalist-influenced buildings including but not limited to: National Ready Mixed Concrete Association Headquarters, 900 Spring Street; Bushey Drive School, 4010 Randolph Road (App. 6, Fig. 1); 831 University Boulevard (App. 6, Fig. 2); and Wiscom Building, 7550 Wisconsin Avenue (App. 6, Fig. 3).<sup>26</sup>

### ***Historic Context: Corporate Architecture***

Corporations and organizations often leverage architectural design to project elements of their goals, vision, and products. As stated in *Understanding Architecture*, “...buildings not only have an existence in reality, they also have a metaphorical existence. They express meaning and give certain messages...”<sup>27</sup> Corporate architecture can visually communicate identity, supplement branding and marketing, express an organizational message, and create a presence in the built environment.<sup>28</sup> Brutalism allowed architects to create “carried, complex and bespoke forms” for corporate sites including office headquarters.<sup>29</sup>

At the subject property, John H. Sullivan approached the project for the National Sand & Gravel Association and National Ready Mixed Concrete Association with the intention of creating an iconic corporate headquarters. The design suggests that he applied the tenets of Brutalist architectural principles but augmented the building by highlighting the organizations’ mission in its visual

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<sup>23</sup> Owen Hopkins, “Dezeen Guide to Brutalist Architecture,” <http://www.dezeen.com> (accessed June 27, 2019).

<sup>24</sup> Joan Ockman, “The School of Brutalism: From Great Britain to Boston (and beyond),” in *Heroic Concrete Architecture and the New Boston* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2015), 33.

<sup>25</sup> Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture since 1780: A Guide to Styles* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1969), 275-279; Doug Gasek and Summer Rickman, “Alaska Architectural Style Guide,” <http://www.cityofsitka.com> (accessed June 27, 2019).

<sup>26</sup> Clare Lise Kelly, *Montgomery Modern* (Silver Spring, Maryland: M-NCPPC, 2015), 166-166; Clare Lise Kelly, “Heroic Architecture: A New Look at Brutalism,” <http://www.montgomeryplanning.org> (accessed June 27, 2019).

<sup>27</sup> Hazel Conway and Rowan Roenisch, *Understanding Architecture: An Introduction to Architecture and Architectural History* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 22.

<sup>28</sup> Angela Bargenda, “Corporate Architecture as a Branding Tool: A European Case Study in the Finance Sector,” in *Managing Corporate Communication: A Cross-Cultural Approach* (London: Springer Nature Limited, 2019), 339-340.

<sup>29</sup> John Grindrod, *How to Love Brutalism* (London: Batsford, 2018), 87.

expression. The building directly showcases the forward-thinking design potential and uses for ready mixed concrete, sand, and gravel championed by the organizations and reflects the overall corporate mission to the visitor. The two-story building consisted of ready mixed poured concrete and faced with exterior wall panels consisting of exposed Lilesville white quartz aggregate.

### ***Historic Context: John H. Sullivan, Architect***

Born on June 20, 1925, John Henry Sullivan, Jr., was the son of John Henry Sullivan, Sr., Esq., and Cosma Angela Domenica (nee Tangorra) Sullivan. Cosma Sullivan worked for the Social Security Administration.<sup>30</sup> The couple lived and raised their family at 4400 Stanford Street, Chevy Chase, Montgomery County, Maryland.<sup>31</sup> After completing high school, John H. Sullivan, Jr., enlisted in the army and served for the duration of World War II. According to David Almy (his later business partner), Sullivan served at the Battle of Hürtgen and suffered a severe case of trench foot.<sup>32</sup>

After the War, Sullivan graduated from Catholic University with a Bachelor of Architecture in 1950 and married Joan Marie Mattare.<sup>33</sup> In Washington, D.C. and its suburbs, Catholic University served as the local training ground for architects. While not considered one of the premier schools for modernism, the school trained numerous graduates who practiced modernist principles in the area including: Edwin F. Ball, Jack C. Cohen, James F. Hilleary, Donald Steele Johnson, Ronald Sensemen, and John Henry Sullivan, Jr.<sup>34</sup>

Between 1948 and 1955, Sullivan trained as a draftsman for Wilson & Denton. In 1955 and 1956, he served as a designer for Fon J. Montgomery and F. Leonard Slagel, respectively. The following year, he opened his own firm, Sullivan and Associates, in Rockville, Montgomery County. During this period, notable architectural works included the: 1) Elwood P. Smith Center, Montgomery County, MD (1959); 2) Church, Convent, and School for St. Matthias the Apostle, Prince George's County (1961); 3) John H. Sullivan House, 9210 Farnsworth Court, Montgomery County; 4) Aspen Hill Library, Montgomery County (1967); 5) City of Rockville Municipal Building, Montgomery County (1968); 6) Compress Inc. Headquarters, Montgomery County (1969); 7) St. Nicholas Church, Prince George's County (1969); 8) Humble Care Car Center, Rockville (1970) (App. 7, Fig.1-3).<sup>35</sup> Other Montgomery County projects included the Hewlett-Packard Company Eastern Sales Region Office, Covenant United Methodist Church, and a number of schools, banks, and offices. Sullivan would continue to work in the region until the 2000s.

In *Rockville's Recent Past*, Teresa B. Lachin stated the following regarding the architectural works of Sullivan:

In his architectural design, Mr. Sullivan demonstrates a mastery of modernism that is characterized by solid geometric forms, clearly delineated structural elements, and crisp

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<sup>30</sup> "John Henry Sullivan," 1920 United States Federal Census, Ancestry; "John Henry Sullivan," 1930 United States Federal Census, Ancestry; "John Henry Sullivan," 1940 United States Federal Census, Ancestry;

<sup>31</sup> U.S City Directories indicate that the family lived at 3001 Porter Street, NW, before moving to 4400 Stanford Street in 1930. *Washington, District of Columbia, City Directory, 1822-1955* (1929): 761, Ancestry.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with David Almy, June 6, 2019.

<sup>33</sup> Catholic University, *The Nineteen-Fifty Cardinal* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1950), Catholic University Digital Collections.

<sup>34</sup> Dr. Isabelle Gournay and Dr. Mary Corbin Sies, "The Modern Movement in Maryland," 2002, <http://www.mahdc.org> (accessed June 28, 2019).

<sup>35</sup> John F. Gane, *American Architects Directory* (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1970), 894.

linear planes. He excels in the use of brick materials to create surface texture and provide visual focus and articulation.<sup>36</sup>

David Almy, one of Sullivan's business partners, prepared the architectural drawings for the NSGA and NRMCA Headquarters (App. 4, Fig. 2). After serving in the United States Navy, Almy first attended the University of Maryland in 1961 and transferred to Howard University's School of Architecture in 1963. Sullivan employed Almy while he attended school.<sup>37</sup> The partners would establish the firm of Sullivan and Almy.

### ***Historic Context: Early Studio***

John Joseph Earley, the son of James Farrington and Mary Kelly Earley, was born in New York City on December 12, 1881, shortly after his parents emigrated from Ireland. James Earley, a stone-carver and artist, opened a stone and carving business in Washington, D.C., in 1890. John Early inherited his father's business in 1906 and patented a process for producing precast exposed aggregate ("mosaic") concrete panels created at the studio and assembled on site. The process stripped the concrete to expose the brilliantly colored aggregate particles, creating an effect similar to impressionist or pointillist painting. His panels and associated structural system led to the widespread use of pre-cast architectural concrete as a major exterior cladding material seen in curtain-wall buildings nationwide.<sup>38</sup>

Early worked on several prominent architectural resources including the: 1) Meridian Hill Park, Washington, D.C.; 2) Bahá'í House of Worship, Illinois; 3) Shrine of the Sacred Heart, Washington, D.C.; 4) Department of Justice (concrete mosaic ceilings), Washington, D.C., and 5) Polychrome Houses, Montgomery County, Maryland.<sup>39</sup> The American Concrete Institute and the American Institute of Architects recognized Early for his contributions to the advancement of concrete.<sup>40</sup>

Earley died in 1945, but his studio remained active until 1973. John H. Sullivan recognized that exposed aggregate concrete panels would best represent both the NSGA and NRMCA. Sullivan likely directed Victor Beauchamp, the project contractor, to hire Early Studios to produce the precast panels. According to David Almy, Sullivan and Associates and Early Studios collaborated on at least two other projects, but none were as successful as the Headquarters for the NSGA and NRMCA.<sup>41</sup> The subject building is another example of the successful use of Earley Studio's exposed aggregate concrete panels in Montgomery County.

**I. Areas Exempt from Designation:** The parking lot to the rear of the building is exempt from designation and not included within the environmental setting.

### **J. Designation Criteria:**

The NSGA and NRMCA Headquarters meets Designation Criteria 2.A and 2.E as listed in Section 24A-3 of the Montgomery County Ordinance.

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<sup>36</sup> Teresa B. Lachin, *Rockville's Recent Past* (Rockville, Maryland: Peerless Rockville Historic Preservation Ltd., 2012), 58-59.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with David Almy, June 6, 2019.

<sup>38</sup> National Register of Historic Places, "Polychrome Historic District," Silver Spring, Maryland, M:32-5.

<sup>39</sup> The Polychrome Houses are designated in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.

<sup>40</sup> Clare Lise Kelly, *Montgomery Modern* (Silver Spring, Maryland: M-NCPPC, 2015), 182.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with David Almy, June 6, 2019.

**2.A Architectural and design significance. The historic resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction.**

The NSGA and NRMCA Headquarters embodies the distinctive qualities of Brutalism and corporate architecture. Sullivan's (the architect) two-story concrete building utilized raw concrete, cantilevered second story, connection of interior and exterior space, and exposed aggregate panels to emphasize sculptural qualities, mass, and solidity. The interplay between the solid-to-void relationship on the retaining wall, first story, and second story establish a repetitive visual pattern typical of Brutalism. The headquarters' form and color serve as the primary design features from a distance as the poured raw concrete is softened by the tan hues of the exposed aggregate panels. Upon approaching the building, however, the composition and richness of the exposed aggregate panels comes to focus. The panels consisting of Lilesville white quartz aggregate has a natural diversity of textures that adds visual interest.

The iconic headquarters reflects the vocabulary of corporate architecture. Sullivan utilized the building products associated with the organizations in the design of the building. The building showcased the forward-thinking design potential and uses for ready mixed concrete, sand, and gravel championed by the organizations. The ready mixed poured concrete and the exposed Lilesville white quartz aggregate in the panels aptly represented the interests of both associations. Overall, the Brutalist-influenced style presented a forward-thinking/future orientated corporate identity augmented by utilizing materials reflecting the overall corporate mission.

**2.E Architectural and design significance. The historic resource represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or county due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape.**

NSGA and NRMCA Headquarters is one of the premier examples of Brutalist and corporate-influenced architecture in Montgomery County. The building fully utilizes its site at the corner of Spring Street and Ellsworth Drive and has become a community landmark due to its impressive monumental design applied to a small-scaled office building. In addition, the building's sculptural qualities and use of color and texture have garnered greater appreciation from the populace in comparison to contemporaneous Brutalist architecture.

**K. Conclusion:**

The NSGA and NRMCA Headquarters retains integrity to express its period of significance. The building has integrity of location and setting. The headquarters remains in its original location in Silver Spring, Maryland. While surrounding parking areas or office building have been infilled or redeveloped, the building continues to be sited on the periphery of a commercial and office district. The headquarters has integrity of design, workmanship, and materials. Minimal alterations have occurred to the building as it continues to represent Brutalist and corporate architecture. All elements of the style, form, plan, space, and materials remain intact. In addition, the exposed aggregate panels continue to express the technological practices and aesthetic workmanship associated with Early Studios. The headquarters has integrity of association and feeling. The building evokes its period of construction with its rendering of modernist design principles in raw concrete. While the NRMCA has moved its headquarters to a different location within the past year, the building and its materials continues to express the occupation of the resource by associations with concrete and gravel. Therefore, the NSGA and NRMCA Headquarters meets the applicable designation criteria.

## 7. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING/GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

**Property Land Area:** 7,483 square feet  
**Account Number:** 00973734, 00973745  
**District:** 13

**Environmental Setting Description:** The NRMCA Headquarters is located at 900 Spring Street, Silver Spring, Montgomery County, Maryland. The proposed site to be listed in the *Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites* consists of the entirety of the building and 7,482 square-foot property identified as Account Number 00973734 and 00973745, District 13, and as shown on the accompanying map (App. 1, Fig. 1). The property is in Block 3, Lots 7 (part of) and 8, Spring Village.

**Environmental Setting Justification:** The proposed environmental setting consists of the lots with the subject building.

## 8. PROPERTY OWNERS

Name: National Ready Mixed Concrete Association  
Address: 900 Spring Street, Silver Spring, Maryland 2091

## 9. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: John Liebertz, Montgomery County Planning Department, Historic Preservation Specialist  
Date: September 2019

## 10. MAJOR SOURCES CONSULTED

Ancestry.com [numerous].

Banham, Reyner. "New Brutalism." *Architectural Review* (December 1955): 354-361.

Bargenda, Angela. "Corporate Architecture as a Branding Tool: A European Case Study in the Finance Sector," in *Managing Corporate Communication: A Cross-Cultural Approach*. London: Springer Nature Limited, 2019.

*Evening Star* [numerous].

Hopkins, Owen. *Architectural Styles: A Visual Guide*. London: Laurence King Publishing, 2014.

Hopkins, Owen. "Dezeen Guide to Brutalist Architecture," <http://www.dezeen.com>.

Grindrod, John. *How to Love Brutalism*. London: Batsford, 2018.

Interview with David Almy, June 2019.

Jane C. Sween Research Library and Special Collections, Montgomery History.

Kelly, Clare Lise. *Montgomery Modern*. Silver Spring, Maryland: M-NCPPC, 2015.

Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission. *The Silver Spring CBD*. Silver Spring, Maryland: M-NCPPC, 1993.

Montgomery County Land Records, <http://www.mdlandrec.net>.

National Ready Mixed Concrete Association. "Decades of Dedication: The NRMCA Story."  
<http://www.nrmca.org>.

Pasnik, Mark, et al. *Heroic Concrete Architecture and the New Boston*. New York: Monacelli Press, 2015.

*Pit and Quarry* [numerous].

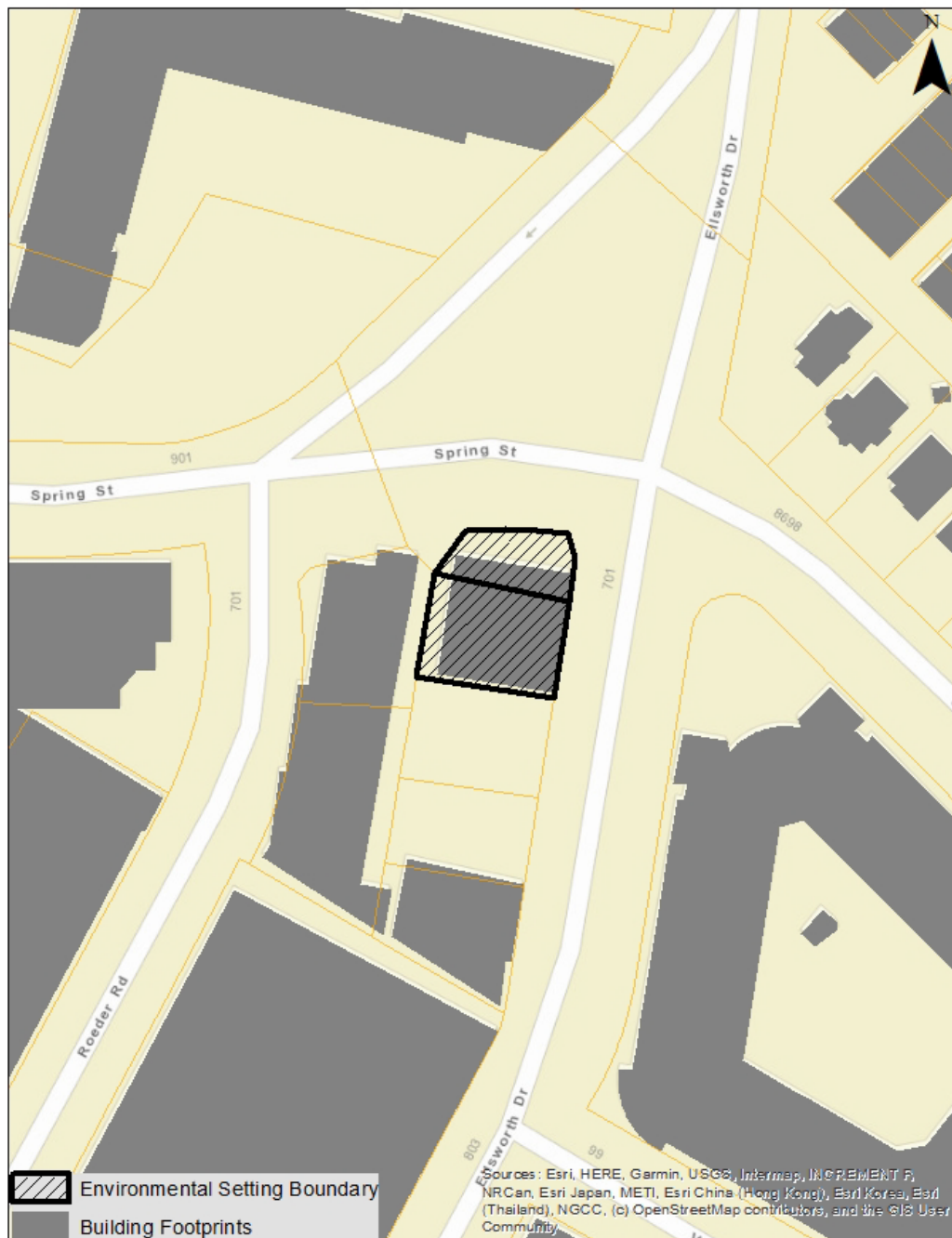
*Rock Products* [numerous].

*Washington Post* [numerous].



**APPENDIX ONE:**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING/GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Figure 1: Environmental Setting, 900 Spring Street



**APPENDIX TWO:**  
**AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS**

Figure 1: 1951 Aerial Photograph



Figure 1: The aerial photograph shows the residential character of this area of Silver Spring in the 1950s and the section of Spring Street between Roeder Road and Ellsworth Drive prior to construction. Maps indicate the road is built contemporaneous with the NSGA and NRMCA Headquarters. In addition, one of the large parking lots operated by the County is located to the southeast of the building.

Figure 2: 1979 Aerial Photograph

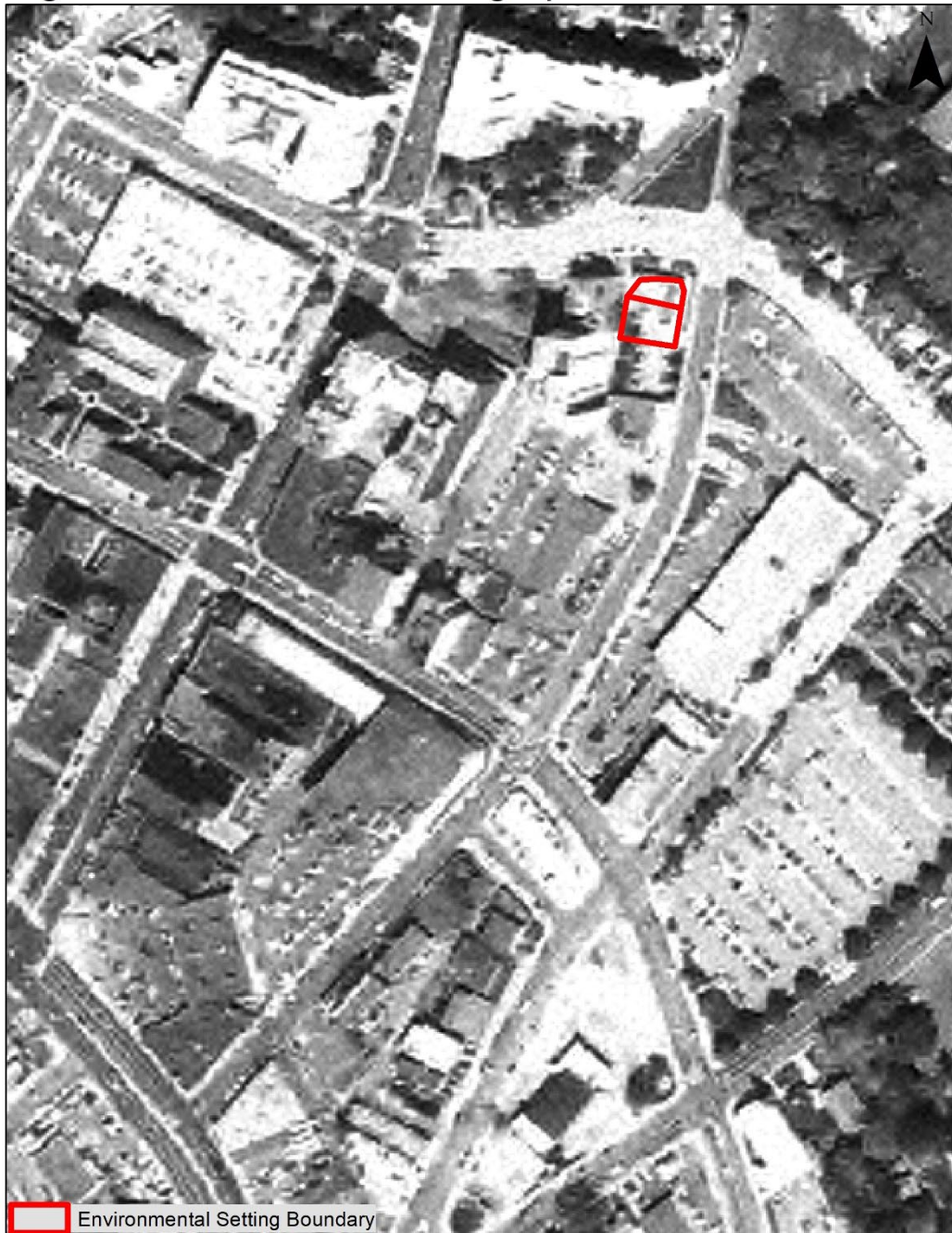


Figure 2: The aerial photograph shows the construction of Spring Street and general development of the Silver Spring area.



Figure 3: 2017 Aerial Photograph



Figure 3: The aerial photograph shows the present day setting of the subject property.



**APPENDIX THREE:**  
**EXTERIOR PHOTOGRAPHS OF 900 SPRING STREET**

**\*Photographs taken by Jerry McCoy, Silver Spring Historical Society, Spring 2019**



Figure 1: View of the façade (north elevation) looking south from Spring Street.



Figure 2: View of the north (façade) and east elevations looking southwest from the northeastern corner of the intersection of Ellsworth Drive and Cedar Street.



Figure 3: View of the south (rear) and east elevations looking northwest from Ellsworth Drive.



Figure 4: View of the south (rear) elevation looking north from the parking lot.





Figure 5: View of the north (façade) and west elevations looking southeast from Spring Street.



Figure 6: Detailed view of the second-story windows and exposed aggregate panels.



Figure 7: Detailed view of the terrace on the east elevation.



Figure 8: Detailed view of the northeast corner of the headquarters.



Figure 9: Detailed view of second-story windows and exposed aggregate panel.



Figure 10: Detailed view of the front entrance (north elevation).





Figure 11: Detailed view of the monument sign.

**APPENDIX FOUR:**  
**HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS OF 900 SPRING STREET**

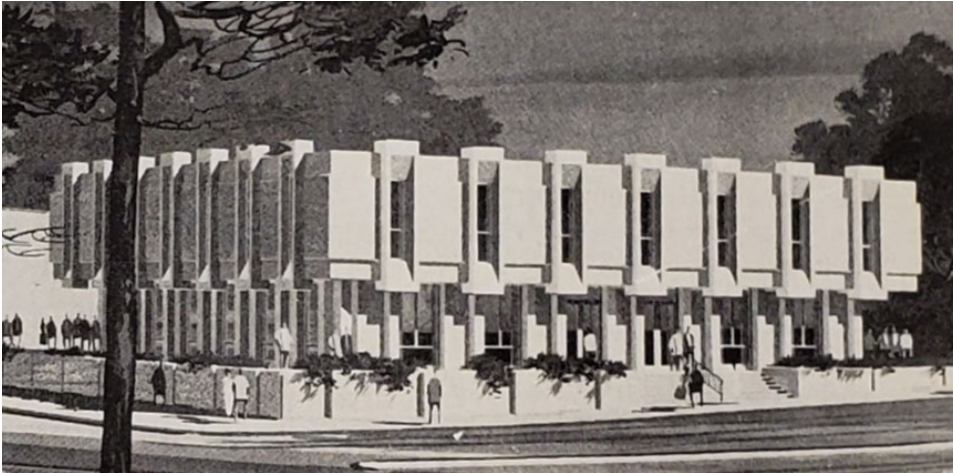


Figure 1: Architectural rendering of 900 Spring Street, 1963.  
Source: *Pit and Quarry*, July 1963.



Figure 2: Architectural rendering of 900 Spring Street, 1963.  
Source: David Almy.

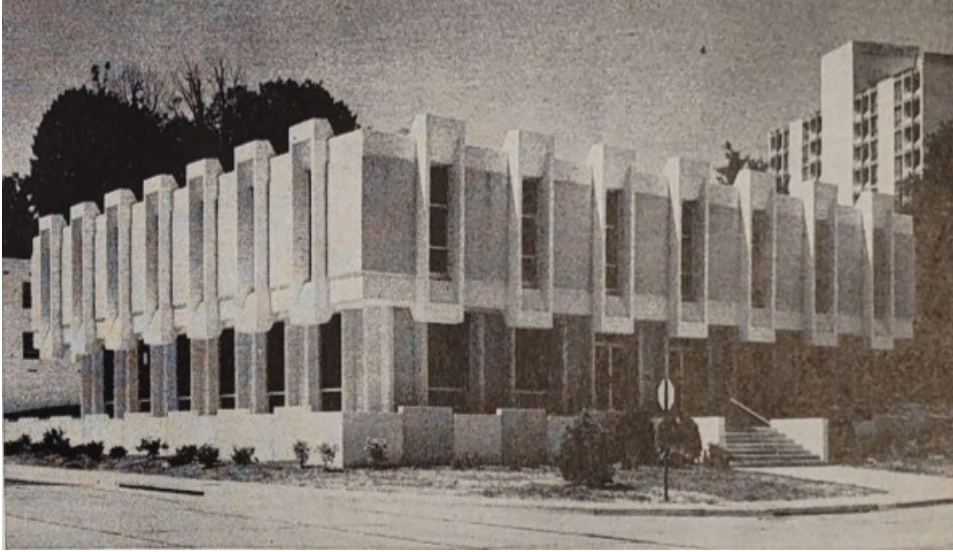


Figure 3: View of the north and east elevations, 900 Spring Street, 1964.  
Source: *Pit and Quarry*, October 1964.



Figure 4: View of the east elevation, 900 Spring Street, 1964.  
Source: *Potomac Valley Architect*, October 1964.

**APPENDIX FIVE:**  
**EXAMPLES OF BRUTALISM**





Figure 1: Unite d'Habitation (Marseille, France) designed by Le Corbusier, 1952.



Figure 2: The Yale Art and Architecture Building (New Haven, Connecticut) designed by Paul Rudolph, 1963.



Figure 3: The Boston City Hall designed by McKinnell & Knowles (architects) and constructed between 1963 and 1968.



Figure 4: Part of Federal Office Building 5, Washington, D.C., constructed between 1965 and 1969.

**APPENDIX SIX:**  
**EXAMPLES OF BRUTALISM IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY**





Figure 1: Bushey Drive School, 4010 Randolph Road, designed by Deigert and Yerkes (architect) in 1961.



Figure 2: University Boulevard Medical Plaza, 831 University Boulevard East, built in 1965.



Figure 3: Before and after of Wiscom Building, 7550 Wisconsin Avenue, built in 1964.

**APPENDIX SEVEN:**  
**ARCHITECTURAL WORKS OF JOHN H. SULLIVAN**





Figure 1: Church, Convent, and School for St. Matthias the Apostle, Prince George's County, built in 1961.



Figure 2: Aspen Hill Library, 4407 Aspen Hill Road, built in 1967.



Figure 3: Hewlett-Packard Company Eastern Sales Region Office built in 1974.

**APPENDIX EIGHT:**  
**MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES FORM**

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic	National Ready Mixed Concrete Association Headquarters
other	NRCMA Headquarters/National Sand & Gravel Association Headquarters

### 2. Location

street and number	900 Spring St.	___	not for publication
city, town	Silver Spring, Md. 20910	___	vicinity
county	Montgomery County		

### 3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name	NRMCA		
street and number	900 Spring St.	telephone	
city, town	Silver Spring	state	MD
		zip code	20910

### 4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.	liber	16645	folio	359
city, town	Silver Spring, Md.	tax map	tax parcel	tax ID number

### 5. Primary Location of Additional Data

\_\_\_\_ Contributing Resource in National Register District  
\_\_\_\_ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District  
\_\_\_\_ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
\_\_\_\_ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
\_\_\_\_ Recorded by HABS/HAER  
\_\_\_\_ Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT  
\_\_\_\_ Other: Designation Nomination Research

### 6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count
____ district	____ public	____ agriculture	Contributing
<u>X</u> building(s)	<u>X</u> private	____ landscape	Noncontributing
____ structure	____ both	<u>X</u> commerce/trade	____ 1
____ site		____ defense	____ buildings
____ object		____ domestic	____ sites
		____ education	____ structures
		____ funerary	____ objects
		____ government	____ Total
		____ health care	
		<u>X</u> industry	
		____ other:	

**Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory**  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

Inventory No.

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### Condition

☒ excellent      ☐ deteriorated  
☐ good            ☐ ruins  
☐ fair              ☐ altered

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Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

See attached.



# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No.

Name National Ready Mixed Concrete Association Headquarters  
**Continuation Sheet**

Number 7 Page 1

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The NRMCA Headquarter Building, 900 Spring Street, in Silver Spring, Montgomery County, Maryland, has a prominent location on the edge of the downtown business district, at the corner of Spring Street and Ellsworth Drive. The main entrance is on the north façade, opening on Spring Street. A secondary façade and vehicular access to parking lot is on the east façade at Ellsworth Drive.

The building is a two-story reinforced concrete structure clad with concrete panels. Cantilevered over the first story, the upper level has recessed windows framed in oversize vertical concrete rectangles that visually serve as wall dormers. Wall surface between windows are enlivened by concrete aggregate panels. The overall effect gives the appearance of an exaggerated mansard roof with wall dormers.

Upper and lower levels have symmetrical placement of windows regulated with vertical recessed elements. The design alternates windows with solid panels, establishing a visual pattern that characterizes the building.

Smooth concrete walls exhibit the natural state of raw concrete, while aggregate panels add texture with a pebbled finish. The panels are attributed to Earley Studios, founded by John J. Earley, pioneer in exposed aggregate panels. A Washington area craftsman and designer, Earley perfected the technique of concrete aggregate panels in the 1930s. This type of concrete construction technique, using densely packed aggregate with a minimal amount of cement, was later known as the MoSai process.

A concrete wall with alternating recessed panels defines the perimeter of the deck which wraps around north and east facades. Architect's rendering depicts plantings atop the perimeter wall. Early photographs indicated plantings were instead placed in the ground at the base of the wall.

The NRMCA Headquarters Building has a high level of architectural integrity. Typical of concrete buildings from the mid-century era, the building exhibits streaking and staining characteristic of the material as it ages. This natural weathering is a patina that contributes to the building's character.

## 8. Significance

Inventory No.

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social history	
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____	

**Specific dates** 1964

**Architect/Builder** Architect John Henry Sullivan Jr/  
Craftsman John Joseph Earley/Victor R. Beauchamp, Builder

**Construction dates** 1964

Evaluation for:

☒ National Register

☒ Maryland Register

☐ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

See attached.

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No.

Name National Ready Mixed Concrete Association Headquarters  
**Continuation Sheet**

Number 7 Page 1

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### Historical Significance – Summary Statement

The Headquarters Building for the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association, at 900 Spring Street, has architectural and design significance, meeting Criteria 2A of the Preservation Ordinance, Chap 21A: Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction. This award-winning building, built in 1964, was designed to highlight the natural character of concrete, thus serving as a promotion for the company and its material. The Headquarters Building has architectural significance as a well-preserved, late example of concrete aggregate panel construction of the Earley Studio and is an outstanding example of mid-century modern Brutalist design of the 1960s. The design was hailed by the architecture community as an exciting showplace with dramatic beauty. John Joseph Earley, renowned pioneer in concrete technology, established the studio which operated until 1973. The building at 900 Spring Street has served as the headquarters of the National Ready Mixed Concrete Associations for 55 years. The design of NRMCA building was recognized with a first-place award from the American Institute of Architects (Potomac Valley chapter).<sup>1</sup>

### Narrative History and Context

Montgomery County was an ideal location for a headquarters building in the postwar era. Bordering on the Washington, DC, line, the area had an abundance of available land, and a strategic location between Washington and Baltimore. Federal agencies, trade organizations and commercial enterprises established major facilities in Montgomery County in the postwar era.

Silver Spring was a major commercial center by the early 1960s. M-NCPPC had established a major commercial zoning and public parking plan for the community. Historian Richard Longstreth found that the scale of the parking program, which comprised a network of county owned and operated parking lots for 2,000 cars, was the most ambitious plan implemented in a suburban area before the mid-1950s. The parking plan was likely “the linchpin that triggered Silver Spring’s meteoric rise as a major commercial center” in the postwar years.<sup>2</sup>

The Hecht Company of Washington, DC, founded in 1895, built its first branch store in Silver Spring in 1947. One of the first postwar branch department stores in the nation, the Silver Spring Hecht Company store became the largest East Coast department store outside a central shopping district. The Hecht’s Store represents the decentralization of downtown department stores to the suburban market in the postwar era and the beginning of Silver Spring as a destination and regional business center.

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<sup>1</sup>The property is owned by National Ready Mixed Concrete Association, Deed 16645:359.

<sup>2</sup> Clare Lise Kelly, *Montgomery Modern: Modern Architecture in Montgomery County, Maryland, 1930-1979* (Silver Spring, MD: M-NCPPC, 2015) p34.

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No.

Name National Ready Mixed Concrete Association Headquarters  
**Continuation Sheet**

Number 7 Page 2

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When constructed, 900 Spring Street housed headquarters for both the National Sand and Gravel Association, and the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association. The National Ready Mixed Concrete Association was founded in 1930 in Pittsburgh, by members of the National Sand and Gravel Association. While ready Mixed concrete had been in use in the 1910s, a demand built in the 1920s, leading to need for an organization to address the industry and challenges of the material. The two agencies shared space at 1411 K Street NW before the headquarters building was constructed.<sup>3</sup>

With its proximity to the nation's capital and abundance of land, Montgomery County was a prime location for corporate and organizational headquarters in the postwar era of expansion. From Choice Hotels International (originally Quality Courts, Inc.) to Martin Marietta, companies chose down-county communities of Bethesda and Silver Spring to locate their headquarters facilities.

The NRMCA Headquarters Building was designed by architect John H. Sullivan, Jr with concrete panels fabricated in the Earley Studio. A Washington area craftsman and designer, John Joseph Earley perfected the technique of concrete aggregate panels in the 1930s. This type of concrete construction technique, using densely packed aggregate with a minimal amount of cement, was called the Mo-Sai process.<sup>4</sup>

The Headquarters Building was hailed by the architecture community as an exciting showplace with "dramatic beauty."<sup>5</sup> The project received a first-place design award from the American Institute of Architects Potomac Valley chapter. The national concrete organization chose a show-stopping design of concrete finishing for the headquarters building. Located at 900 Spring Street in downtown Silver Spring, the building has retained its original use, as home of National Ready Mixed Concrete Association.

The design of the NRMCA Headquarters Building comes from a modernist movement known as Brutalism, intended to celebrate the raw nature of concrete. The term Brutalism comes from the work of pioneering modernist Le Corbusier and his use of *béton brut*, or raw concrete. The name was anglicized as Brutalism, a term which has acquired negative connotations. More recently, the style has been dubbed Heroic architecture, a term which recognizes the honest expression and monumental nature of the buildings.<sup>6</sup>

A mission of the National Ready Mixed Concrete Associations at its new headquarters was to establish a concrete plant certification system to assure high standards in concrete production facilities. According to a corporate history:

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<sup>3</sup>"Celebrating NRMCA's Decades of Dedication: The NRMCA Story," in *Concrete in Focus*, Spring 2005.

<sup>4</sup>List of Works, John J. Earley and the Earley Studio, Society of Architectural Historians, Latrobe Chapter, 2001 Symposium. Source cited: Earley Studio, Inc. brochure, "Pre-cast Architectural Concrete", undated.

<sup>5</sup>*Potomac Valley Architect*, Dec 1964. *Washington Post*, June 6, 1963.

<sup>6</sup>Montgomeryplanning.org, *The Third Place*, "Heroic Architecture: a new look at Brutalism." Clare Lise Kelly, November 18, 2016. <http://montgomeryplanning.org/blog-design/2016/11/heroic-architecture-a-new-look-at-brutalism/>

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No.

Name National Ready Mixed Concrete Association Headquarters  
**Continuation Sheet**

Number 7 Page 3

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The NRMCA Checklist for Ready Mixed Concrete Production Facilities was approved at the annual Board of Directors meeting in 1965 and the program began in 1966. It was initially only open to NRMCA members, although in later years it was expanded to include nonmembers as well. The certification program has evolved over time and gained respect from industry producers and inspectors alike and continues to be offered by NRMCA. The association also began giving exams during the Short Course and developed a personnel certification plan.<sup>7</sup>

The National Sand and Gravel Association founded a research laboratory in Washington DC in 1926. With support of the NRMCA, the lab moved to the University of Maryland in 1938, where it remains today. The lab has been recognized as a leader in the field of concrete technology. The ready Mixed concrete industry expanded dramatically during World War II, contributing enormously to the war effort.

John Joseph Earley (1881-1945) was a pioneering craftsman who innovated durable concrete construction and created polychrome techniques. His studio continued to operate until 1973.

The Earley Studio was first established by James Farrington Earley, a fourth-generation Irish stone carver. The elder Earley immigrated to New York City with his wife Mary Kelly, in 1881, the same year as the birth of their son, John Joseph. The family moved to Washington, DC in 1890. While a student at St. John's College (1894-1899), John apprenticed as a stone carver at his father's studio in Rosslyn, Virginia. After the death of his father in 1906, Earley took over operation of the Earley Studio, with partner Basil Gordon Taylor, longtime associate and mentor.<sup>8</sup>

Under direction of John Joseph Earley and Basil Taylor, the Earley studio took a new direction, moving from stone carving to focus on plaster and stucco craftsmanship. An early project was the remodeling of the White House interior, for President Theodore Roosevelt. Earley's first well known commission was Meridian Hill Park, starting in 1915, where the studio developed a method for producing exposed aggregate concrete.<sup>9</sup>

The partners studied issues of deficiencies in Portland cement stuccos in this era, which were leading to corrosion and cracking. The Earley Studio worked with the National Bureau of Standards and Commerce (now National Institute of Standards and Technology) to test stuccoed panels for durability. This work was the underpinning for Earley's later innovations in durable concrete.

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<sup>7</sup>"Celebrating NRMCA's Decades of Dedication: The NRMCA Story," in *Concrete in Focus*, Summer 2005.

<sup>8</sup>Frederick W. Cron, *The Man Who Made Concrete Beautiful: A Biography of John Joseph Earley*, Ft. Collins, CO: Centennial Publications, 1977.

<sup>9</sup>Jenna Cellini, "The Development of Precast Exposed Aggregate Concrete Cladding: The Legacy of John J. Earley and the Implications for Preservation Philosophy" Historic Preservation thesis. University of Pennsylvania, 2008.

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No.

Name National Ready Mixed Concrete Association Headquarters  
**Continuation Sheet**

Number 7 Page 4

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John Joseph Earley pioneered the concept of prefabricated concrete panel construction. Earley is credited as the individual responsible for “developing exposed concrete as both a decorative architectural feature and a technically refined manufactured building material.”<sup>10</sup>

The American Institute of Architects recognized Earley for his original work for color and decoration in concrete construction. The American Concrete Institute awarded him the Henry C. Turner Gold Medal for innovations in concrete as an architectural medium.

Earley later served as President of the American Concrete Institute. The ACI is an international trade association, founded in 1905 as the National Association of Cement Users.

Earley’s nascent projects in prefabricated concrete panel construction were located in Montgomery County: Polychrome Houses (1934-35), Navy Model Basin at Carderock, and the Naval Medical Center (1942), in Bethesda. Meridian Hill Park, in Washington, DC, had been the first project to test Earley’s concrete design.

Polychrome Houses (1934-35), a collection of five modernist houses with brilliant exterior polychrome walls. a polychrome mosaic technique which infused color and pattern into concrete panels. Responding to the need for affordable housing in the Depression era, he and Taylor created a simple structural system for precast housing so an average builder could erect dwellings with an A-frame and a chain joist. Given the success of this project, Earley patented this construction technique in 1936.

In 1940, Earley patented the process of producing precast exposed aggregate concrete paneling. The Navy Model Basin at Carderock, which uses decorative mosaic panels. The Naval Medical Center (1942) tested the durability and permanence of Earley’s architectural concrete. The design of the Naval Medical Center was pivotal in the development of cast-in-place concrete walls. This type of concrete construction technique, using densely packed aggregate with a minimal amount of cement, today known as the MoSai process, and was later used on modern landmarks throughout the country including the 1963 Pan Am Building in New York.<sup>11</sup>

The NRMCA Headquarters Building thus represents the development of Earley’s product from a hand-crafted material in the 1910s, to a mass-produced building component iconic of the 1960s and 1970s. The NRMCA Headquarters Building is significant as a well-preserved, late example of aggregated concrete construction by the Earley Studio. As stated by historian Jenna Cellini:

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<sup>10</sup>Cellini.

<sup>11</sup>Clare Lise Kelly, *Montgomery Modern: Modern Architecture in Montgomery County, Maryland, 1930-1979* (Silver Spring, MD: M-NCPPC, 2015) p25.

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No.

Name National Ready Mixed Concrete Association Headquarters  
**Continuation Sheet**

Number 7 Page 5

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The increasing interest of Earley's plastic mosaics led the company to relocate to a larger facility in Manassas, VA, in 1962. The operations continued to expand, and the Studio grew in both reputation and physical footprint. The company was the leader of precast concrete paneling until the Studio went out of business in 1973.

Assessing the impact of the Earley Studio, Cellini states, "Although the concrete community refined their techniques in terms of standardization, the precast exposed aggregate panels were and still are made in an almost identical manner to the original Earley Process."<sup>12</sup>

The Headquarters Building was designed by John H. Sullivan, Jr. Victor R. Beauchamp was the builder, and Horatio Allison Associates was construction engineer. Beauchamp's construction projects include the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial (1954) in Arlington, Virginia.

Architect John H. Sullivan Jr., AIA (1925–2014) was a prominent Washington area architect. A native of Washington, DC he established his firm, Sullivan and Associates in 1957. Earning a BArch from Catholic University in 1950, Sullivan trained as draftsman for A. Hamilton Wilson and Wilson & Denton before becoming a designer with Fon J. Montgomery and then F. Leonard Slagle. In addition to the headquarters building for the National Sand & Gravel and Ready Mixed Concrete Associations (1964), Sullivan's work included the Aspen Hill Library (1967), the City of Rockville Municipal Building (1968), and the Compress Inc. headquarters building in Rockville (1968). Sullivan also designed branch banks in Rockville, including the M&T Bank at 51 W. Edmonston Drive (1964).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Cellini, pp92 and 97.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, p194.

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## 10. Geographical Data

Quadrangle scale:

### 11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Marcie Stickle, George French, Clare Lise Kelly		
organization	Silver Spring Historical Society	date	May 2, 2019
street & number		telephone	301-585-3817
city or town	Silver Spring	state	MD 20912

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
Maryland Department of Planning  
100 Community Place  
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023  
410-697-9591



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Number 9 Page 1

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The Evening Star, Archives.

The Washington Post, Archives.

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FIGURE 1: North façade, from Spring Street, NRMCA Headquarters Building, 900 Spring Street, Silver Spring, Maryland. Carol Highsmith, photographer, 2014.



FIGURE 2: East façade, from Ellsworth Drive. NRMCA Headquarters Building, 900 Spring Street, Silver Spring, Maryland. Carol Highsmith, photographer, 2014.

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FIGURE 3: Northeast Corner. NRMCA Headquarters Building, 900 Spring Street, Silver Spring, Maryland. Clare Lise Kelly, photographer, 2013.

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FIGURE 5: Tax map showing 900 Spring Street (red dot).



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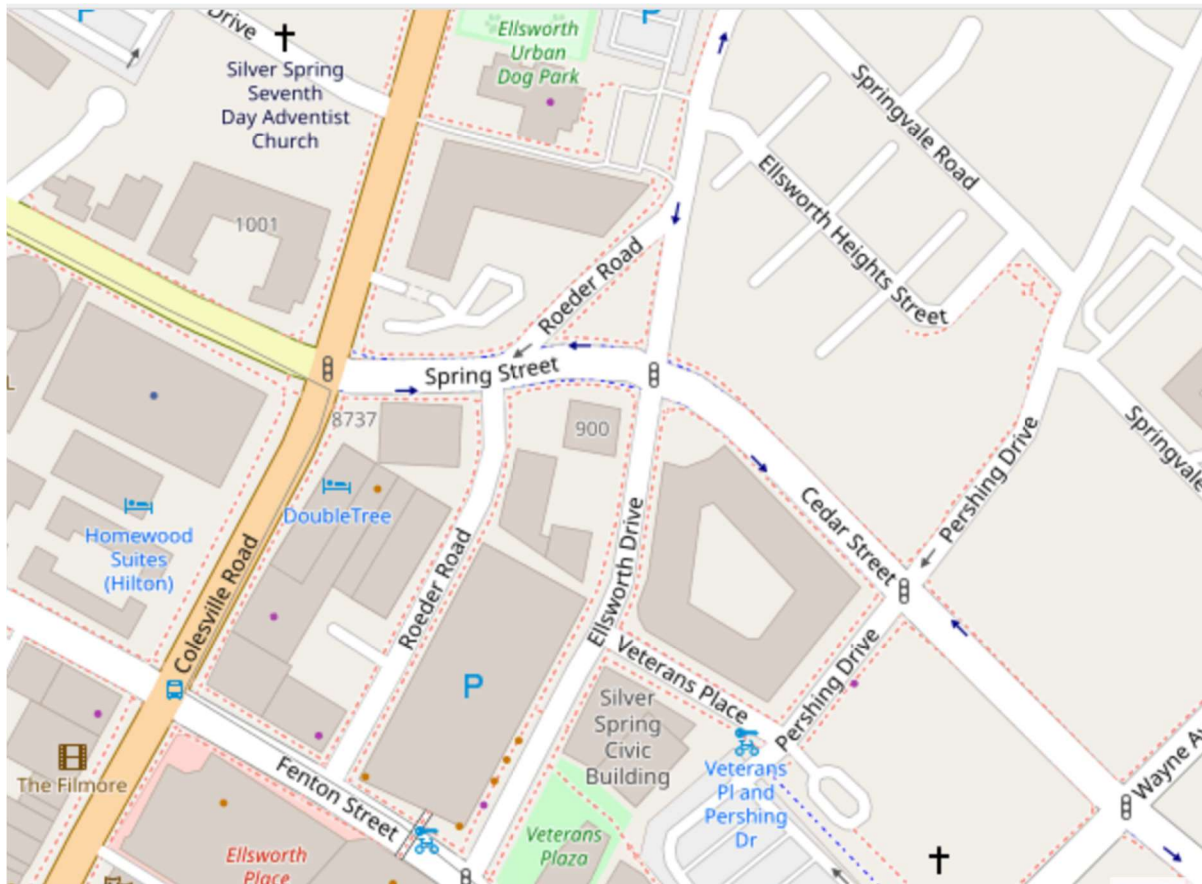


FIGURE 6: Map showing building outlines, vicinity of 900 Spring Street, Silver Spring, Maryland.

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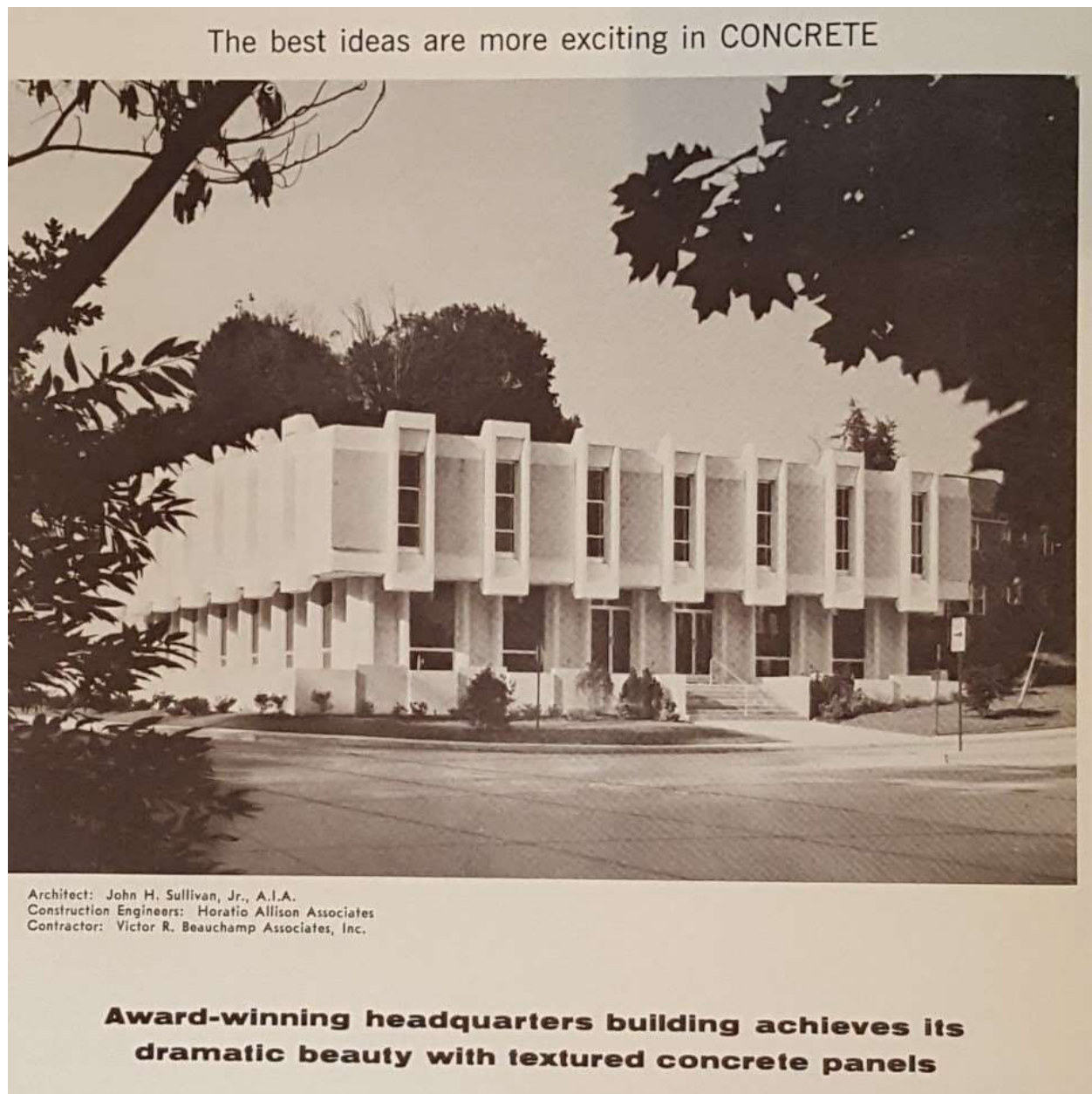


FIGURE 7: NRMCA Headquarters Building, 900 Spring Street, Silver Spring, Maryland. *Potomac Valley Architect*, Dec 1964. Collection of American Institute of Architects, Potomac Valley Chapter.



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FIGURE 8: Architect's rendering, NRMCA Headquarters Building, 900 Spring Street, Silver Spring, Maryland. *Washington Post*, June 6, 1963.

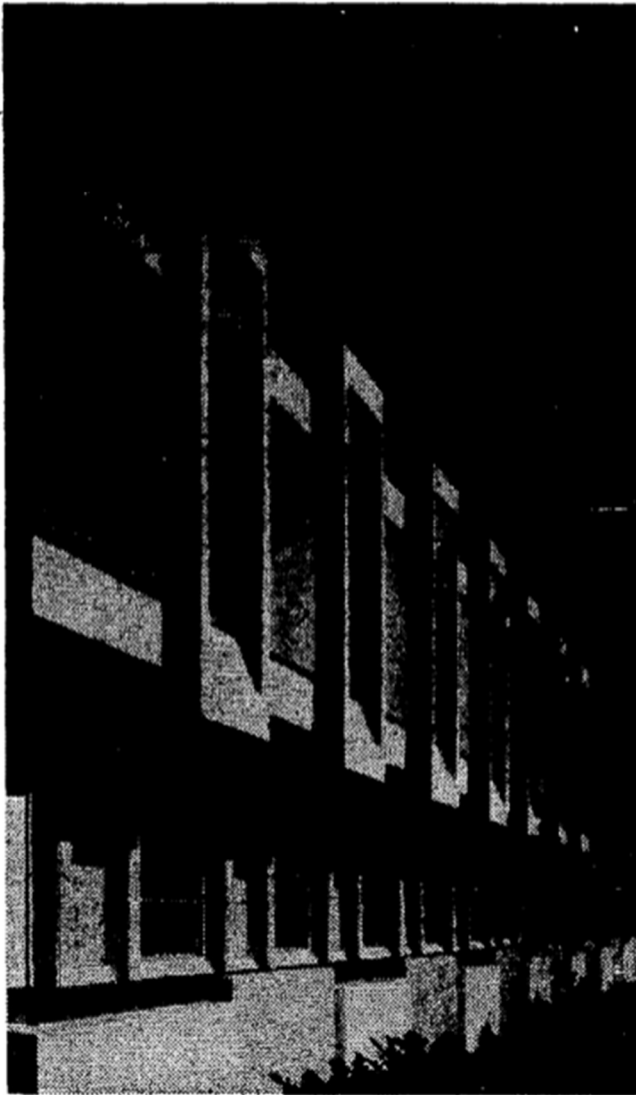
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## Top Design Awards



**A Silver Spring headquarters building won a first place award for John Henry Sullivan.**

A contemporary style summer home in Riva, Md., near Annapolis has won the top award in the fifth biennial competition of the Potomac Valley Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

Hugh Newell Jacobsen, whose design was judged best in the competition, received the award along with three other first place winners and five award of merit winners at a banquet Wednesday night.

Architects winning other first place awards were Harold Lionel Esten for a home in Brookeville, Md.; John Henry Sullivan for a headquarters building in Silver Spring, and Cooper & Auerbach for an office building in Washington.

Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon won two awards of merit—one for the Wheaton Youth Center, and the other for homes at the Carderock Springs community.

Other awards of merit winners were Faulkner, Kingsbury & Stenhouse for the Holy Cross Hospital of Silver Spring; Cohen, Haft & Associates for the Munson Hill Towers apartments in Fairfax County, and Deigert and Yerkes & Associates for the National Arboretum Headquarters Building.

Judges for the competition were Karel Yasko, assistant commissioner of design and construction for the General Services Administration; Frank Taliaferro, a Baltimore

See AWARDS, Page F-7

FIGURE 9: Star, December 4, 1964, pages F-1, F-7.

Sullivan's award was for the headquarters building of the National Sand and Gravel Association and the National Ready Mix Concrete Association at 900 Spring St., Silver Spring. Victor R. Beauchamp Associates, Inc., erected the building.

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FIGURE 10: Image of NRMCA Headquarters Building, 2005. Source: "Celebrating NRMCA's Decades of Dedication: The NRMCA Story," in *Concrete in Focus*, Summer 2005.

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FIGURE 11: Polychrome Historic District (1934-35), Colesville Road, Silver Spring, Maryland.  
Photographer: Constance Terry.

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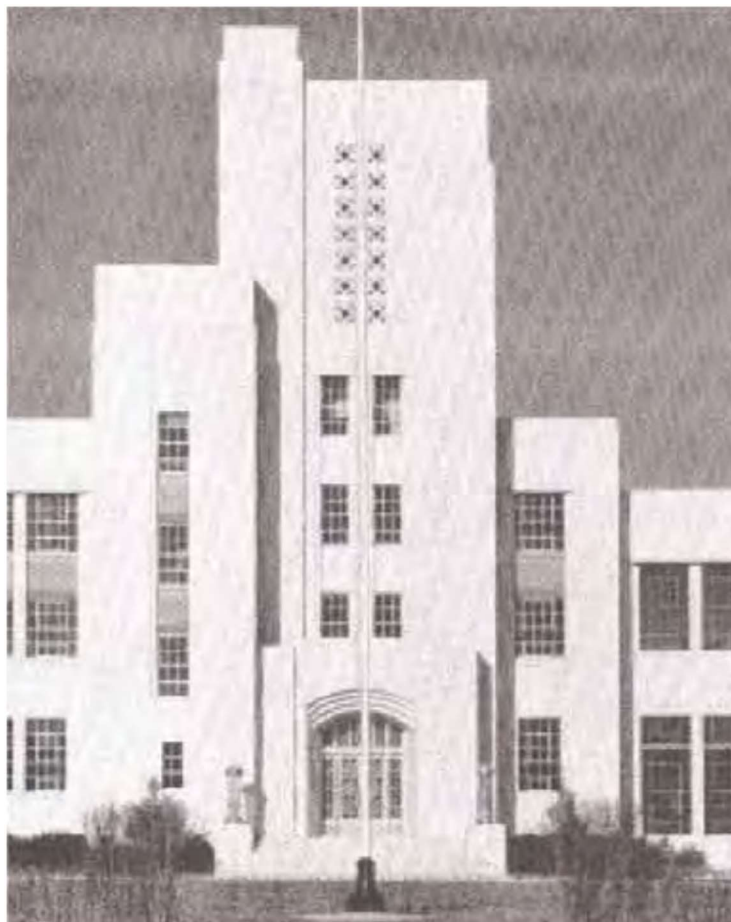


FIGURE 12: Administration Building for Naval Model Basin, Carderock, Bethesda, MD (1938).

Source: Jenna Cellini, "The Development of Precast Exposed Aggregate Concrete Cladding: The Legacy of John J. Earley and the Implications for Preservation Philosophy" 2008. From original at PCI Archives in S. Freedman's "History of Exposed Aggregate (MoSai) Architectural Precast Concrete."



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FIGURE 13: Naval Hospital Tower Building, 1942. Precast exposed aggregate concrete panels designed by John J. Earley. Paul Philippe Cret, architect. Carol Highsmith, photographer, 2014.



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Members of the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association in the year of its founding, 1930.  
Source: Celebrating NRMCA's Decades of Dedication: The NRMCA Story," in *Concrete in Focus*,  
Spring 2005.