



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

September 18, 2019

MEMORANDUM

To: Historic Preservation Commission
From: John Liebertz, Historic Preservation Specialist
Subject: National Sand & Gravel Association and National Ready Mixed Concrete Association Headquarters (M:36-96), 900 Spring Street, Listing in the *Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites*

Staff Recommendation: That the HPC recommend that the Planning Board list the National Sand & Gravel Association (NSGA) and National Ready Mixed Concrete Association (NRMCA) Headquarters, 900 Spring Street, in the *Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites*.

Background: The property owner applied for a demolition permit on June 17, 2019. The Silver Spring Historical Society submitted a draft Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP) form and requested evaluation of the NSGA & NRMCA Headquarters, 900 Spring Street, for potential listing and protection from the pending demolition.

Discussion: Historic Preservation staff reviewed existing documentation and conducted research on the history of the NSGA & NRMCA Headquarters. As noted in Section J of the Designation Report, staff finds that the subject property satisfies two criteria as listed in §24A-3 of the Montgomery County Ordinance:

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. John H. Sullivan's (the architect) two-story commercial building utilized raw concrete, a 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.

Conclusion: The NSGA and NRMCA Headquarters retains sufficient historic and physical integrity to convey its period of construction and historic significance. Therefore, the NSGA and NRMCA Headquarters meets the applicable designation criteria. The Historic Preservation staff recommends the property be listed in the *Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites*. If recommended for listing by the Historic Preservation Commission and approved by the Planning Board, next steps could be to conduct any additional research required, collaborate with the property owners on design guidelines, and bring the item through the multi-step public process to designate the property on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.