

November 14, 2005

MEMORANDUM

TO: Historic Preservation Commission

FROM: Judy Christensen, Preservation Planner

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SUBJECT: 50 Monroe, IBM Building, DEM2006-00064  
Description: 50 Monroe Place  
Area: 19,528 square feet  
Construction Date: 1958-59  
Owner: Lawrence Guss et al, Ronald Cohen Management Co.

**EXHIBITS ENTERED INTO THE HEARING RECORD:**

1. By reference, the City of Rockville's adopted Design Guidelines, amendments, policies on demolition, and technical briefs for historic preservation as provided to the public on the City of Rockville web site under "Historic Rockville."
2. By reference, Rockville Environmental Guidelines For the Protection and Enhancement of the City's Natural Resources, adopted July 1999.
3. By reference, The Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for historic preservation.
4. By reference, National Register Bulletin: Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties That Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service
5. By reference, resumes of the Commissioners, as filed with the city clerk, and resumes of the Historic Preservation staff.
6. Agenda for HDC meeting on September 15, 2005.
7. Mailing list for notification postcards for agenda item 50 Monroe for HDC meeting of September 21, 2005.
8. Minutes of the September 15, 2005 hearing on significance of 50 Monroe Place HDC.
9. Staff report dated September 9, 2005 on significance of 50 Monroe, including a recommendations and attachments (MHT Form on 50 Monroe by Dr. Teresa Lachin and criteria checklist.)
10. Staff Memorandum dated September 13, 2005 from planner Christensen to the HDC with subject: "Criteria for designation of recent past resources."
11. Submission by Peerless Rockville on October 13, 2005, "Rockville in the 1950's" and a table entitled Rockville Commercial Buildings 1950-1970."
12. Revision #1 MHT form on 50 Monroe from Teresa Lachin, October 13, 2005.
13. Submission by EHT Traceries, Inc. "Context Study for The Barkley Building- 50 Monroe Place Rockville, Maryland" submitted October 13, 2005.
14. Staff Memorandum dated October 17, 2005 from planner Christensen to the HDC with subject: "Urban Renewal Conservation Buildings."
15. Resume of Eileen McGuckian, Executive Director of Peerless Rockville.
16. Resume of Dr. Teresa Lachin, Program Director of Peerless Rockville.

17. Agenda for HDC meeting October 20, 2005.
18. Mailing list for notification postcards for agenda item 50 Monroe for HDC meeting of October 20, 2005.
19. Revision #2 MHT form for 50 Monroe from Teresa Lachin.
20. E-mail to Mayor and Council via email dated October 28, 2005 from Wayne Goldstein concerning window removal and interior demolition at 50 Monroe Street.
21. Agenda for HDC meeting November 17, 2005
22. Mailing list for notification postcards for agenda item 50 Monroe for HDC meeting of November 17, 2005.
23. Staff Memorandum on 50 Monroe Place dated November 9, 2005.

### **Correspondence or Testimony from Citizens on 50 Monroe Place**

24. Two calls from citizens inquiring about sign in park. Concern about changes to park. Staff informed them of proposed demolition of 50 Monroe Place.
25. Call from Yum Yu Cheng, attorney for prospective developer, asking about decision and stating that the building was a public nuisance and not maintained in a safe manner for surrounding citizens and residents.
26. Email from Barbara Piczac with photos.
27. Written public testimony from Mary Caroline Colletti dated September 29, 2005.

### **STAFF ANALYSIS**

**Staff Recommendation:** Staff is NOT RECOMMENDING that the HDC find 50 Monroe Place eligible for designation as a single site historic district, finding that it does not meet the test for exceptional significance.

### **Analysis of non-procedural exhibits submitted to the hearing record (not including by reference exhibits pertaining to Rockville policy or procedure such as agendas, minutes, hearing notifications and staff resume references:**

- Staff Memorandum dated September 13, 2005 from planner Christensen to the HDC with subject: "Criteria for designation of recent past resources."

This information was compiled by Preservation Planner Christensen in response to the HDC's request for guidance on evaluating sites less than 50 years of age. It is derived from the Exhibit #4, Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties That Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service.

- Staff report dated September 9, 2005 on significance of 50 Monroe, including a recommendations and attachments (MHT Form on 50 Monroe and criteria checklist.)

The MHT form was prepared by Dr. Teresa Lachin, project manager of the Peerless Rockville survey program "Rockville's Recent Past." Dr. Lachin's resume has been submitted to the record as exhibit # 16. The form is researched using primary sources including the architect's portfolio and city records and maps and includes a statement of significance, which is documented or based upon facts. Peerless Rockville is a non-profit educational organization that has historic preservation of Rockville as one of its goals. However, designation of 50 Monroe Place is not supported or advocated by the Peerless Rockville Board. Staff finds this document to be reliable.

- Submission by Peerless Rockville on October 13, 2005, "Rockville in the 1950's" and a table entitled "Rockville Commercial Buildings 1950-1970."

The document by Eileen McGuckian of Peerless Rockville was submitted in response to the HDC's request for more information on 1950-1960 Rockville context. Although this is a summary, staff finds it to be reliable. Ms. McGuckian's resume has been submitted to the record as Exhibit #16. Ms. McGuckian is the author of Rockville: Portrait of a City.

- Revision #1 MHT form on 50 Monroe from Teresa Lachin, October 13, 2005.

The MHT form #1 for 50 Monroe Place was revised in response to the HDC's request for more information on the architect of 50 Monroe and on the building itself if it could be located.

- Submission by EHT Traceries, Inc., a consulting firm specializing in architectural history and historic preservation, "Context Study for The Barkley Building- 50 Monroe Place Rockville, Maryland" submitted October 13, 2005.

This document was commissioned by the owners of 50 Monroe Place in response of the HDC's request for more information on the precedence of architectural design of the building at 50 Monroe Place, and the extent to which it was an unusual structure in this region in its time. EHT Traceries has provided an overview of the building style, architect, the builder/ contractor and building materials, most of which is based on primary resources, namely colleagues and associates of the architect Stanley Arthur. It also provides an overview of Bauhaus-derived office buildings from 1950-1960 in the metropolitan Washington DC area that are both discussed and presented in a chart. The property owners have filed an application for demolition of 50 Monroe and do not support preserving the building. However, this report is a survey of buildings stylistically similar to 50 Monroe Place in the 1950s based on newspaper accounts and other records as well as observation. While it does buttress the owner's case, it also provides information that was sought by the HDC. Staff finds this document to be reliable.

- Staff Memorandum dated October 17, 2005 from planner Christensen to the HDC with subject: "Urban Renewal Conservation Buildings."

Preservation Planner Christensen prepared this memo in response to an HDC request for more information on the Mid-City Urban Renewal "Conservation Buildings." Ms.

Christensen interviewed Ed Duffy, a City employee who was assigned to the Mid-City Urban Renewal project in the areas of compensation and relocation, among others. The memo recounts Mr. Duffy's explanation of "conservation buildings," lists the buildings and their status in 2005 and provides a locator map. Mr. Duffy read the memo and noted that the courthouses were not located in the Urban Renewal area and that the County and private owners demolished some of the buildings after Urban Renewal. This correction does not affect the information pertaining to the preservation of 50 Monroe.

- Revision #2 MHT form for 50 Monroe from Teresa Lachin.

Revision #2 of the MHT form added some more information on Stanley Arthur and replaced the term "master of the modern idiom" on page 8.1 with "a prolific and versatile architect", as the word "master" has a specific meaning in the eligibility criteria that was not intended by the author.

- Complaint to Mayor and Council via email dated October 28, 2005 from Wayne Goldstein concerning window removal and interior demolition at 50 Monroe Street.

Peerless Rockville called on Friday, November 4 to report that the windows were being removed from 50 Monroe Street. Staff checked with the Inspection Services Division, which stated that a permit was not required in Rockville to remove windows if the window openings were not being altered. If the building was eventually designated, the owner would have to replace the windows with ones of like material and design. Staff relayed this response to Peerless Rockville.

Mr. Goldstein came to City Hall on November 4 in the late afternoon to report that the windows were being removed. Staff relayed the information from ISD. Mr. Goldstein said this action was prejudicial to the perception of the building as a reusable structure and submitted his complaint to the Mayor and Council via email on November 5. The response to Mr. Goldstein was that an inspector would visit the site and take action if unpermitted work was being performed. The inspector halted any further work and issued a fine. He said that he had previously verbally instructed the demolition company to only remove asbestos materials. As the company had exceeded its instructions to remove only asbestos material, work was halted and a fine was imposed. The company said that the windows were taken out to remove caulk that contained asbestos and the original windows are being retained in storage.

- Any correspondence received by the Commission on this case.

The correspondence received by the Commission and staff on the evaluation of significance of this property has addressed the condition and maintenance of the building. Ms. Colletti stated that she did not find the building had historic significance. None of the correspondents supported designation of the building.

**Site and Building Integrity: *Changed* Building-High, Site- low.**

The building has had all the windows removed and put in storage. It is assumed that they can be replaced. Much of the interior has been removed, but the HDC would not normally have jurisdiction over or consider the interior of the building. The site remains severely compromised, offering only the view of the unappealing and vernacular north (rear) façade to the public. The visible façade does not possess the strings of window courses and colored panels that formerly made this building of stylistic interest.

**Architectural Significance: *Changed* from low significance to Not Exceptional**

Staff has changed its opinion on architectural significance to Not Exceptional, as the site must be exceptional to qualify when it is less than 50 years of age. Staff's opinion is that if this building was 50 years of age, that staff could recommend it as eligible for local designation as a locally significant site. The work done by EHT Traceries shows that the building is not precedence in the metropolitan Washington DC region, it also shows no building of its type in Rockville before it was constructed in 1959. The IBM Building, also known as 50 Monroe, is a late 1950s interpretation of the style in Rockville and a departure in its use of colored exterior panels and window strings on the facade from the concrete block and brick office buildings in downtown Rockville in that era. It also would have met the criteria as a stylistic forerunner of mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century architecture in Rockville if over 50 years old. While Stanley Arthur was a respected architect with many contributions to the modern landscape in Rockville and Montgomery County, he could not be considered a 20<sup>th</sup> century master as is Gropius and other modern masters that changed stylistic trends in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, he was a respected and versatile architect who could be found locally significant as a designer of schools, institutions, and offices that create the built environment from 1950 to 1970.

**Historical, cultural and social significance: *Changed* from low significance to Not Exceptional**

Staff has changed its opinion of the historical significance to Not Exceptional, as the criteria for buildings less than 50 years old requires. The IBM building, although not yet 50 years old, was reviewed by staff due to the fact that it was spared demolition during Rockville's Mid-City Urban Renewal Project in the 1960s. According to Ed Duffy, several newer buildings (50 Monroe, Woolworth, Brown) were not within the footprint of the new mall and did not require demolition to build the mall. They were new, not deteriorated, and did not meet the standards for compensation. The building at 50 Monroe is the last building that preserves frontage on the former E. Montgomery Avenue. Both of these facts are compromised by the fact that the public viewpoint has been removed and the most distinctive features of the building are not visible.

**Archeological resources: Low potential**

The property has had soil disturbance in the past for the construction of this office building and parking lot.

**CITY OF ROCKVILLE  
HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION CRITERIA**

**50 Monroe Place**

Standing structures and sites, including archeological sites, must be determined to be significant in one or more of the following criteria to be found eligible for designation:

**I. Historical and cultural significance:**

A. Is the site of a significant historic event.

*No, this is not the site of a significant event.*

B. Is identified with a person or a group of persons who influenced society.

*No, this is not identified with a person or group who influenced society.*

C. Exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political or historic heritage of the County and its communities. (Refer to Rockville Context in Management Plan)

*This property belongs in Theme 3, Economics, of Historic Context 7, County Seat to Satellite City of the Nation's Capital 1931-Present. As a Post-WWII property and about 30 years old, it was not addressed in the 1986 Management Plan. It was also not mentioned in the Historic Context #7, Theme 4, Government/Law as part of the discussion of the impact of the Mid-City Urban Renewal Project. In 1962, when the first Urban Renewal Project began, this building was only three years old and saved as several other new buildings were preserved.*

D. Has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, County, State, or Nation.

*No, although the property does convey Post-WWII architectural style, its significance is compromised due to the loss of site integrity and public view.*

**II. Architectural and design significance:**

A. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction.

*No, while this may be an example of Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century commercial style derived from the Bauhaus Movement, it is not a prototype.*

B. Represents the work of a master. *No.*

C. Possesses high artistic values. *No.*

- D. Represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

*This applies to multi-site historic districts, and is not applicable in this case.*

- E. Represents an established or familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or county due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape.

*No.*

**III. Structural Integrity: The structural integrity of the building exterior is high. The environmental setting has been compromised. The streetscape presentation and site have been severely altered and compromised to the extent that the façade with the least architectural interest and distinction is presented to the public.**

"Substantially Altered" (basic shape, original façade plan, windows and doors have been obscured or changed.) **The windows were removed in the first week of November but have been stored and are replaceable.**

Minor alterations (porch removal or enclosure, roof material replacement, siding added over old siding, basic mass and fenestration intact.

Original or near original condition (all changes reversible.)

Outbuildings present and recognizable.

Original site and setting largely preserved. (Lot size, environmental character, trees, setbacks, streetscape)

If the site is found to meet one or more criteria and possesses sufficient integrity, it is eligible to be recommended to the Mayor and Council as a potential historic district or landmark site. Determine the level of site significance and list the applicable criteria for the recommendation.

**IV. Level of site significance:** (Check those that apply)

*Not applicable*

Local:

State

National: