

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE



June 30, 2007

Re: Historic Landmark Application #07-37  
The Waffle Shop, interior and exterior  
522 10<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
Square 347, Lot 820

Dear Applicant:

The Historic Preservation Office has determined that your application to designate the property referenced above as a historic landmark in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites is complete and sufficient for consideration by the Historic Preservation Review Board. The application is officially on file with the Board as of June 20, 2007.

As soon as the Board's calendar permits, it will consider your application in accordance with its authority under the Historic Landmark and Historic District Protection Act of 1978. As the applicant for this designation, you will be afforded at least 30 days notice when the Board schedules a public hearing on the application, and you will be advised of the applicant's responsibilities under the Board's Rules of Procedure (Title 10, *D.C. Municipal Regulations*, Chapter 26).

Should you have questions, you may call me at 202-442-8847.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Timothy Dennee', with a long, sweeping underline.

Timothy Dennee  
Landmarks Coordinator

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE



**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD**  
**APPLICATION FOR HISTORIC LANDMARK OR HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION**

New Designation   X    
Amendment of a previous designation         
Please summarize any amendment(s)       

Property name   Waffle Shop (Exterior and Interior)    
*If any part of the interior is being nominated, it must be specifically identified and described in the narrative statements.*

Address   522 10th Street NW, Washington, DC 20004  

Square and lot number(s)   Square 347, Lot 820  

Affected Advisory Neighborhood Commission   ANC 2c  

Date of construction   1950   Date of major alteration(s)       

Architect(s)   Bernard Lyon Frishman   Architectural style(s)   Art Moderne  

Original use   Restaurant  

Property owner   Jemal's Up Against the Wall LLC  

Legal address of property owner   702 H Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001  

NAME OF APPLICANT(S)   Art Deco Society of Washington, D.C./ Committee of 100 on the Federal City/ Downtown Artists Coalition/ Recent Past Preservation Network  

*If the applicant is an organization, it must submit evidence that among its purposes is the promotion of historic preservation in the District of Columbia. A copy of its charter, articles of incorporation, or by-laws, setting forth such purpose, will satisfy this requirement.*

Address/Telephone of applicant(s)  
  ADSW, PO Box 42722, Washington, DC 20015, 202.298.1100 (or 301.654.3924)/ C100, 1317 G Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005, 202.783.7546/ DAC, PO Box 14118, Washington, DC 20044, 202.543.3307/ RPPN, P.O. Box 100505, Arlington, VA 22210  

Name and title of authorized representative   Linda B. Lyons, Director, Art Deco Soc. of Wash.    
Signature of representative   Linda B. Lyons   Date   May 22, 2007  

Name and title of authorized representative   Sally L. Berk, Trustee, Committee of 100 on Federal City    
Signature of representative   Sally L. Berk   Date   22 MAY 2007  

Name and title of authorized representative   MICHAEL BERMAN, President, Downtown Artists Coalition    
Signature of representative   Michael Berman   Date   May 22, 2007  

Name and title of authorized representative   James A. Jacobs, Recent Past Preservation Network Board member    
Signature of representative   James A. Jacobs   Date   MAY 25, 2007  

Name & telephone of author of application   Peter Sefton, 703-836-2015 & Linda Lyons, 301-654-3924  

Date received   pl    
H.P.O. staff   TJ     07-37

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name The Waffle Shop

other names Blue Bell Waffle Shop

### 2. Location

street & number 522 Tenth Street NW  not for publication

city or town Washington, DC  vicinity

state District of Columbia code DC County \_\_\_\_\_ code 001 zip code 20004

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

Determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Name of Property The Waffle Shop

County and State Washington, D.C.

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- Private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
--------------	-----------------	--

		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
		Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Restaurant

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Restaurant

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Art Moderne

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick exterior, plaster interior

roof Slag

other Aluminum, plate glass, mosaic tile and

Earley Stone, terrazzo, Formica,

stainless steel, and chrome stools

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

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The Waffle Shop

Name of Property

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## Description Summary:

The Waffle Shop is downtown Washington's sole intact Art Moderne restaurant exterior, utilizing elements of streamline design and featuring such characteristic materials as large plate glass panels, polished aluminum, and mosaic tile. Its interior includes design elements associated with both Art Moderne and "California Coffee Shop" restaurants of the late 1940s through early 1960s. Illustration 1a shows a color illustration of the Waffle Shop's front façade and Illustration 1b shows the original permit sketch for its iconic sign.

The building is situated within the boundaries of the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site. It would be considered a contributory building with the extension of its period of significance to 1962, as has been agreed to by the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer (DCSHPO) and proposed as an amendment to the National Register listing by the National Park Service. If the Waffle Shop were within the boundaries of the immediately adjacent Downtown Historic District, it would most certainly be considered a contributing building to that historic district.

## General Description:

### Architectural Description

#### 1. Exterior

The Waffle Shop is built within the first floor walls of an early twentieth century brick commercial building and virtually fills its twenty-five by fifty foot lot. The façade of the building is measured as twenty-four and one-half feet wide on the plat drawing. The building roof is pitched, sloping rearward from a height of about eighteen feet above the front sidewalk

The south wall of the building has an extension which serves as the side wall of a projecting bay which extends about three feet beyond the building line. The extension which forms the side of the bay is offset about one foot north from the wall which separates the Waffle Shop from its neighbor to the south. The one foot wide offset section which faces the street at the building line, the three foot wide extension which forms the side of the bay, and first eighteen inches of the bay that faces the street are clad with red and gold mosaic tile in a wavy pattern. The mosaic-tiled wall extension rises about eighteen inches above the marquise and bears an aluminum cap. On the north side of the south wall, it continues uninterrupted into the interior of the restaurant.

Most of the front façade's projecting bay is surmounted by an aluminum marquise about thirteen and one-half inches tall and nine inches deep which spans most of the building façade. The end of the marquise which adjoins the south wall is squared off, while its northern end sweeps in a streamline curve to the façade above the entrance door. A single circular light fixture is inset in the underside of the marquise above the door.

The Waffle Shop's front facade was dominated originally by three vertically continuous plate glass panes, which rose approximately thirteen feet from an aluminum sill to the marquise. The original panes were separated by narrow aluminum vertical dividers. The large original glass sheets have been replaced by smaller panes separated vertically and horizontally by aluminum bands, which may be attached to original dividers. Just below the marquise and in front of the plate glass windows is a red sheet metal sign with white neon tubes reading "WAFFLE SHOP" in stylized san serif lettering typical of the 1950s. The "W" and "S" project above the canopy to complete the sophisticated design

The doorway to the Waffle Shop is inset three feet back from the window line. The transition between the front window and door opening is accomplished by four angled vertical metal pylons sloping outward, with a one foot vertical offset between top and bottom, with the door opening between the two on the right. There is a horizontal metal beam across the entire doorway just above the door

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opening. The original Waffle Shop door is described on the blueprints as simply "glass". It appears to have been replaced by an aluminum-framed glass door. The paving of the recessed doorway is continuous with the flooring of the restaurant.

Below the seven-banded aluminum sill beneath the façade is a thin strip of coarse-textured rose-tinted Earley Stone, a pigmented pre-cast concrete product manufactured by the J.J. Earley Company of Roslyn, Virginia. This strip fills the gap between the sill and the sidewalk. A wider band of what appears to be more finely-finished Earley Stone separates the door from the north wall of the building. It is divided into two panels, the lower of which is rose and the upper red. Blueprints state that the uppermost two and one-half feet of the façade below the roof coping is clad in red Earley Stone.

Illustrations 2 and 3 show the Waffle Shop façade as it appeared in the 1950s and in 2007.

## 2. Interior

The Waffle Shop maintains its original interior layout: a main level consisting of a large front room with customer and staging areas for service and a smaller back room to the west fitted out and used as the kitchen, and an unfinished basement extending into a vault under the sidewalk on the west side of Tenth Street NW. Concrete steps at the rear of the building descend from the kitchen to the basement, which contains storage areas, the mechanical systems, and restrooms for patrons and staff.

The front dining area and rear kitchen contain significant original features. The kitchen area contains stoves, additional refrigerators, and dishwashing equipment. The walls are faced in square, seafoam green tiles with a black border—likely original to the space.

The dining area's significant features are intact and closely correspond to what is shown on the blueprints. At the southeast corner of the building, a wall segment is embellished and encased on its visible exterior sides by a wavy mosaic mural of alternating bands of gold and red tesserae. The mosaic mural continues for about four feet along the northern face of the wall segment, which, except for uppermost reaches which project above the roof, is entirely inside the Waffle Shop. The ceiling of the dining area slopes from the front window to seven feet three inches at the rear wall of the kitchen. It is sheathed with a system of dropped acoustical tile and is pierced by flush-mounted square and round fixtures and air registers, a number of which appear to date from the original construction.

A cantilevered soffit (further supported by thin cable stays attached to the ceiling) sweeps along north wall beginning about four feet inside the door before continuing more-or-less unimpeded along the north and west walls. The soffit, which is about three feet wide, has a varnished oak face about 8 inches tall. Cylindrical light fixtures of gold-colored metal with glass inserts bearing a concentric circle design are mounted on the underside of the soffit; these historic fixtures were later augmented by interspersed florescent light units. After making a right-angle turn onto the south wall, beyond the built-in refrigerator, the soffit steps up to make room for the service area equipment and storage units. It continues along the south wall before curving into that wall just short of the mosaic mural at the southeast corner of the dining room.

Food preparation stations, shelves, display cases, and storage equipment line the south wall under the soffit, whose underside bears additional fluorescent light fixtures. Mounted to the soffit is a series of five oak frames which were apparently intended to display menu signage. The end frames are four feet wide; the inner pair is three and one-half feet wide. A smaller center frame is roughly two feet wide. Oak molding separates these elements from the expanses of wall, which are plastered, in some places with a heavy parging or brush strokes.

The serpentine counter separates the diners from the staging and service area. Beginning approximately six feet from the front wall, it is made up of three U-shaped sections oriented north-south perpendicular to the street and linked by straight sections that parallel the lateral (north and south) party walls. The straight sections of counter are presently service areas containing the cash registers and a glass-fronted, aluminum framed display case for a carryout area. The first U-shaped section is slightly truncated, allowing for

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additional space just inside the front door for arrivals and exits. No loss in seating occurs with this truncation because the lunch counter and stools extend across and enclose the east end of the service area.

The top and front edges of the counters are sheathed in light beige Formica. Located just under the outside lip of the countertop, the storage rack for customer belongings consists of three aluminum tubes supported by metal brackets affixed to metal backing. This smooth metal backing is repeated with a foot guard at the point where the counter facing meets the continuous rose-colored terrazzo footrest raised approximately eight inches up from the floor. The beige facing between the upper and lower bands of metal is enlivened by a bright red speed-line.

The rose-colored terrazzo footrest links the rounded counter ensemble and the rectilinear pattern of the terrazzo floor. In this pattern, a rose-colored band parallels the outline of the counter and the sidewalls, which are connected by rose-colored stripes radiating across the dining area. These darker rays divide the yellow-tinted two by three foot terrazzo squares into wide stripes. The floor grid is set at a diagonal to the walls and, like the sloping ceiling and the serpentine lunch counter, conveys a strong sense of dynamism and motion.

Approximately nine fixed stools are arrayed around each of the three U-shaped sections of the lunch counter. The stools consist of a red octagonal iron base, similar in color to the speed-line, which supports a swiveling seat composed of a wood bottom (what appears to varnished oak) and tubular chrome back. A majority of the stools survive fully intact; in most places where the original seat has disappeared, moveable stools have been located over the extant octagonal bases.

The rear and north walls of the dining area are clad in large mirrors, which are bisected by varnished oak strips about four inches wide to which coat hooks are attached. These mirrors are trimmed with additional strips of varnished oak. Coat hooks line the upper expanse of the oak molding and both the upper and the lower strips are further embellished by a pattern of screws fastening the oaken strips to the wall. The section of mirror just inside the door on the north wall is slightly set-back, forming a niche. Below the chair rail, the wall is clad in what appears to be bright yellow.

Significant architectural features of the interior include the inclined ceiling, footrest and terrazzo floor, soffits, wall covering materials, counter, stools, package rack, display cases, stools, mirrors, moldings, frames, light fixtures, and other incidental fixtures, as well as their arrangement into an organic whole. Illustrations 4 and 5 show the interior of the Waffle Shop as it appeared in the early 1950s and in 2007.

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Name of Property The Waffle Shop

County and State Washington, DC

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our History.
- B** Property associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A** Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

### Area of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture: Art Moderne  
Commerce  
Social History

Period of Significance 1950-1962

### Significant Dates

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

### Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder Frishman, Bernard Lyon

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

#### Previous documentation on files (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
# \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record  
# \_\_\_\_\_

#### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

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## Summary Statement of Significance:

### Significance

The Waffle Shop is significant under National Register criteria A and B. It is associated with the evolution of the commercial character of downtown Washington, embodies the distinctive characteristics of the chain restaurant type in the period following World War II, and possesses high artistic values as an outstanding example of Art Moderne commercial architecture. Specifically, the Waffle Shop is:

Emblematic of a significant stage in the development of Washington's restaurants and downtown commercial district.

Downtown Washington's sole surviving chain restaurant from the immediate postwar era. It has functioned in its current incarnation since 1950, an unparalleled record.

The last surviving unit from what was once a significant local restaurant chain with six units in the District of Columbia;

A premier gathering place for downtown artists and mid-level government workers, as well as a Washington landmark for a half century.

A superb, intact example of Art Moderne commercial design and the most outstanding and intact Art Moderne restaurant in downtown Washington;

## Resource History and Historic Context:

### 1. The Building of the Waffle Shop

Blue Bell Systems, a Washington, DC restaurant chain, constructed The Waffle Shop in 1950. This original Waffle Shop became the prototype for a chain of Waffle Shops, six of which were within the District of Columbia.

In October, 1948, the Washington Post reported that Blue Bell Systems planned to build a "waffle restaurant" at 522 10<sup>th</sup> Street NW by modifying an existing building.<sup>1</sup> 522 10<sup>th</sup> Street NW was a three story commercial building constructed in the early twentieth century. Although the Post reported that the Waffle Shop would be ready by the following spring, construction drawings by Bernard Lyon Frishman Associates were not finalized until December 5, 1949. Both Frishman Associates and the Stockwood Investment Company, nominal owner of the building, shared an address used by Blue Bell Systems for office space and a restaurant which later became a Waffle Shop.<sup>2</sup>

On January 4, 1950, Blue Bell Systems applied for permits for water and sewer hookups and to erect a marquee to project beyond the building line as well as the distinctive Waffle Shop sign, to be fabricated by the Jack Stone Sign Company.<sup>3</sup> On January 5, 1950, Stockwood Investment Company received a permit to demolish the upper floors of the existing building.<sup>4</sup> Although barricades were

<sup>1</sup> Washington Post, October 17, 1948.

<sup>2</sup> Blueprint for "Waffle Shops"; Bernard Lyon Frishman Associates, Washington, DC. December 5, 1949.

<sup>3</sup> District of Columbia Permit A-12426, January 4, 1950.

<sup>4</sup> DC Permit A-3306, January 5, 1950.

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reported in place by January 15<sup>th</sup>, inspectors reported that the demolition work did not begin until the end of January. The upper floor was reported to be 20% razed by February 7<sup>th</sup> and the top two floors completely removed by February 28, 1950.<sup>5</sup>

During January, Stockwood Investment Company had applied for and received a building permit and approval of Frishman's construction plan.<sup>6</sup> By March 3, 1950, the Lee T. Turner Construction Company of 3616 Fourteenth Street NW had poured footings and by March 13 was working on the basement walls. On April 3, an inspector condemned the existing first floor, which had to be re-poured. On May 10<sup>th</sup>, the basement stairs were approved and concrete work completed.<sup>7</sup>

In July 17, 1950, Stockwood Investment Company received a permit to install a rooftop water tower for the air conditioning system, to be installed by the Arlington Air Conditioning Company.<sup>8</sup> Although barricades were reported removed by August 29<sup>th</sup>, the sign permit was apparently not approved until September<sup>9</sup>. The final inspector's report signed on October 29, 1950, indicating that the restaurant was not open for business until then. Since that time, the Waffle Shop has been at business at the same location with the same name and same menu theme, a chain restaurant record unparalleled in the city.

## 2. The Waffle Shop, Chain Restaurants, and Postwar Downtown Development in Washington, DC

### A. The Evolution of Chain Restaurants

During the period 1974-1995, chain restaurants became a dominant force within the restaurant industry.<sup>10</sup> By 1995, the top 100 chain restaurant firms accounted for about 48% of restaurant industry sales.<sup>11</sup>

Restaurant chains evolved through a series of identifiable stages. They first appeared in the nineteenth century in response to the railroad industry's need to feed large numbers of travelers during short station stops. The chain restaurant assured the traveler that the last meal of the trip would be of a comparable quality to the first and that it would be served in time to be eaten. Chains quickly achieved commercial advantages from economies of purchasing scale as well as from managerial expertise that could be gained and applied on a wider scale. They often referred to themselves as "systems" like the railroads whose customers they served. There are no surviving chain restaurants of this earliest type in Washington, DC.

The next evolutionary stage of chain restaurants occurred after they spread beyond railroad terminals to factory gates and such public gathering places as fairgrounds, and eventually to busy city streets and streetcar junctions. Most of these establishments were "lunchrooms". Basic lunchrooms were deep, narrow storefronts, often within existing multi-story commercial buildings. Customers

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<sup>5</sup> Building Inspectors' Notes January 15-February 28, 1950 from DC Archives Permit File

<sup>6</sup> DC Permit 4130 (January 10, 1950). Additional permits include miscellaneous functions (A-3487, January 13, 1950 and A-4761, March 7, 1950), plumbing (A-6976, February 28, 1950, A-12990, July 18, 1950, and A-14553, August 25, 1950), and refrigeration (A-11184, June 6, 1950, and A-14053, August 17, 1950).

<sup>7</sup> Building Inspectors' Notes from DC Archives Permit Files

<sup>8</sup> DC Permit A-10277, July 19, 1950

<sup>9</sup> District of Columbia Permit A-12426, approved September 13, 1950.

<sup>10</sup> Paul, Ronald. "Status and Outlook of the Chain-Restaurant Industry". Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, Vol. 35, No. 3, 23-26 (1994)

<sup>11</sup> Lombardi, Dennis "Trends and Directions in the Chain-Restaurant Industry". Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, Vol. 37, No. 3, 14-17 (1996)

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sat on stools or sometimes stood at a long-counter which faced a food serving area at right angles to the street. Large signs promoted the establishment to passers-by. None of these lunchrooms survive in today's Washington.

The third stage of chain restaurants came with the popularity of automobile travel in the late 1920s. As traffic flowed ever faster, chain restaurants began to rely on distinctive building shapes and other architectural elements to make them stand out from roadside clutter. Distinctive design elements became symbols which gave a chain's units a brand recognition advantage over diners, which were similar-looking structures regardless of owner. The larger chains pre-fabricated their restaurants as modular units and shipped them to the building site, from which they could later be relocated if necessary. Increasingly they focused on a simplified menu of grilled entrees like hamburgers, which could be quickly cooked to order. As automobile traffic increased after World War II, chains deployed their units to arterial streets to take advantage of traffic into and out of the city.

The fourth stage of chain restaurants was more diverse, and included such alternatives as drive-in and cafeteria-style service, and menus which extended beyond basic hamburgers and French fries. These restaurants occupied both heavily-traveled routes and downtown city streets. They were closely evolved to fill their particular niche, while retaining their collective identities. One characteristic of these chains is a common brand identity which takes advantage of mass market advertising in which all elements reinforce the brand identity.

## B. Washington's Postwar Chain Restaurants

Chain restaurants were well-established in Washington by the 1930s, and were found in most areas of the city by the postwar era. Although they still were greatly outnumbered by single-location restaurants, chain restaurants were starting their climb to industry dominance in the years following World War II. The 1948 District of Columbia Directory lists dozens of units representing major restaurant chains. Illustrations 6 and 7 show items that promoted the brand identity of some of Washington's chain restaurants.

The John R. Thompson Company chain of lunchrooms started at the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition, and by the 1920s included over 100 restaurants in major cities. Thompson lunchrooms, which tended to occupy storefronts in commercial buildings, were famous for their "one-arm chairs" which resembled elementary school desks and eliminated the need for dining tables.<sup>12</sup> In 1948, Washington had four Thompson Company restaurants, all in the downtown shopping district.<sup>13</sup> Nedick's was a New York-based chain of lunch counters which featured hot dogs and orange drink. In 1948, Washington had three Nedick's, all in the downtown district.<sup>14</sup> None of these lunch counter restaurants survive today.

White Tower Systems began in Milwaukee in 1926, and by 1948 had more than 250 restaurants nationally. White Tower restaurants were stand-alone porcelain enamel structures hallmarked by the eponymous tower. White Tower restaurants originally mimicked the castellated buildings of the better-established White Castle chain but their design became more stylized and art deco-influenced after a 1930 trademark infringement case. White Tower originally specialized in hamburgers but later moved to a full menu including ice cream.<sup>15</sup> Washington had six White Tower restaurants in 1948, four of which were in the downtown district.<sup>16</sup> No White Tower restaurants survive in Washington, DC.

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<sup>12</sup> Langdon, Philip. Orange Roofs, Golden Arches. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York, 1986. p.10.

<sup>13</sup> Boyd's District of Columbia Directory, 1936 Edition. Washington, DC. On February 28, 1950, the Thompson's restaurant at 725 14<sup>th</sup> Street NW refused to serve Mary Church Terrell and several companions, giving rise to the lawsuit known as District of Columbia v. John R. Thompson Co. which led to a Supreme Court ruling that segregated public places were illegal in the District of Columbia. In the later years of the chain, Thompson's Restaurants evolved into the cafeteria model.

<sup>14</sup> Polk's District of Columbia Directory, 1948 Edition. Washington, DC.

<sup>15</sup> Langdon. P.41-45.

<sup>16</sup> Polk's, 1948 Edition. Washington, DC.

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Little Tavern Restaurants was a Louisville chain which came to Washington in the late 1920s. Like White Tower, Little Tavern restaurants were distinctive stand-alone porcelain enamel buildings which resembled miniature rustic inns under faux thatched roofs of green metallic tile. Little Taverns specialized in hamburgers.<sup>17</sup> In 1948, there were sixteen Little Tavern Restaurants in Washington, five of which were in the downtown area.<sup>18</sup> Today there are no Little Taverns in business in Washington, DC and not one of the downtown Little Tavern buildings still stands. Only one former Little Tavern unit that was in business during 1948-1954 has a substantially intact exterior. Standing in the Georgetown Historic District, it is no longer a restaurant and appears to have a modified interior.<sup>19</sup>

Toddle House, which started in Houston in the 1920s, came to feature a steak and eggs menu. Toddle House aspired to a more upscale clientele than its competitors and built restaurants in cottage-style brick or clapboard buildings whose hallmark was an oversized chimney at each end.<sup>20</sup> In 1948, there were four Toddle Houses in Washington, three of which were in outlying areas of the city. Although the downtown Toddle House has been demolished, three former Toddle House structures survive. Stripped of most exterior detailing, the Calvert Street NW unit has been used for as a storage building for decades.<sup>21</sup> Two other buildings, which have been heavily altered, house an independent restaurant on Wisconsin Avenue NW and a carryout on Georgia Avenues NW. None of the surviving Toddle Houses retains the chain's trademark blue faux tile roof or maintains its brand identity.

Washington also had its own home-grown chains. The Hubbard House featured cafeteria-style service, an arrangement which required more floor space than a table or counter service restaurant. In 1948, there were four Hubbard House restaurants, three in outlying areas of the city, none of which survive.<sup>22</sup>

The first Hot Shoppes restaurant opened in a storefront at 1404 Park Road NW in 1927.<sup>23</sup> The original Hot Shoppes were free-standing drive-in restaurants, although the chain opened several cafeterias after World War II. In 1948, there were five Hot Shoppes in the District, all on arterial streets outside the downtown shopping area. None of these Hot Shoppes restaurants survive today.<sup>24</sup>

After Hot Shoppes, Washington's largest restaurant chain in 1948 was the Blue Bell System. Blue Bell Restaurants had begun operating in the District in the early 1930s. By 1936, the Blue Bell System had restaurants at 1500 Benning and 2335 Bladensburg Roads NE, arterial streets leading to Prince Georges County, at 4416 Connecticut Avenue NW, near the intersection of Yuma Street, and 502 Ninth Street NW, in the downtown shopping district.<sup>25</sup> Today only the Bladensburg Road building stands, shorn of all identifying architectural detail and providing no visual reminders of its former identity.

In September, 1948, when Washington Post reported that Blue Bell Systems planned to build a "waffle restaurant", there were five Blue Bell restaurants operating in the District, three of which were in the downtown area.<sup>26</sup> Today, none of these buildings survive

### C. The Significance of the Waffle Shop in the Commercial Development of Downtown Washington, DC

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<sup>17</sup> Langdon. P. 40.

<sup>18</sup> Polk's, 1948 Edition. Washington, DC

<sup>19</sup> Little Taverns were once a Washington icon. Our field survey did not reveal any other Little Tavern with an intact porcelain-enamel shell in the city. Roughly a half-dozen Little Taverns were located that continue in a variety of commercial uses with highly-modified exteriors and interiors.

<sup>20</sup> Langdon. P. 55-57.

<sup>21</sup> Polk's, 1948 Edition. Washington, DC

<sup>22</sup> Polk's, 1948 Edition. Washington, DC

<sup>23</sup> Langdon. P. 61

<sup>24</sup> Polk's, 1948 Edition. Washington, DC

<sup>25</sup> Boyd's, 1936 Edition

<sup>26</sup> Polk's, 1948 Edition. Washington, DC

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The Waffle Shop is emblematic of a significant stage in the development of Washington’s restaurants and downtown commercial district; the period immediately following World War II and preceding suburban flight.

Although postwar suburbanization would have a major impact by the mid-1950s, Washington, DC’s downtown commercial district still served as the region’s retail and entertainment center during the years following World War II. It was also an employment center. Although the wartime building of the Pentagon outside the city was a harbinger of things to come, the building of the Federal Triangle in the 1930s had concentrated federal employees in the 700 to 1400 blocks of Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues NW. In addition, many private firms had their offices downtown. At the same time, the tourist industry burgeoned with the end of wartime gasoline rationing and travel restrictions. The bus and streetcar hub at 12<sup>th</sup> and D Streets NW was both a major transfer point and entryway to the downtown core, and transit routes radiated outward from this hub throughout the commercial district. Nearby in the 400 block of 10<sup>th</sup> Street NW, the pioneering Star Parking Plaza paid testimony to the growing automobile traffic which linked the downtown commercial district to the developing outlying areas. This daily population influx created an increasing demand for conveniently-situated restaurants which served nourishing meals quickly.

In 1948, Blue Bell Systems’ proposed “waffle restaurant” was just around the corner from its successful “hamburger restaurant” at 1011 Pennsylvania Avenue. However, the intersection of 10<sup>th</sup> and F Streets had considerable pedestrian traffic from the city’s prime retail and entertainment blocks. The 900 block of F Street contained many of the city’s large flagship movie theatres as well as large office buildings such as the National Union and Atlantic Buildings. The Woodward and Lothrop Company department store occupied the north side of the 1000 block of F Street, and satellite clothing and accessory stores predominated on the rest of the block. The 500 block of 10<sup>th</sup> Street was dominated by the Potomac Electric Company offices at the corner of E Street, its service department and electric plant on the west, and several electrical supply businesses. 522 10<sup>th</sup> Street’s neighbor at the southwest corner of 10<sup>th</sup> and F Streets was a Peoples Drugstore, which promised considerable foot traffic. However, the 500 block of 10<sup>th</sup> Street was best known as the site of Ford’s Theatre and the Lincoln House Museum, leading attractions for the tourism industry. Thus, the new 10<sup>th</sup> Street location promised Blue Bell Systems patronage from shoppers, theatergoers, tourists, office employees, and electric plant workers, all key elements of the postwar downtown economy.<sup>27</sup>

By 1960, the Waffle Shop had become the prototype for a chain of units in Washington, DC. Illustrations 8a and 8b show two examples of these later Waffle Shops. Today 522 10<sup>th</sup> Street NW is the only intact survivor. Throughout its history and uninterrupted use as an inexpensive restaurant and coffee shop, the Waffle Shop has been a familiar landmark in downtown Washington. It has served a varied population—from office workers (both private and federal), shoppers, retail employees, theatergoers, and tourists to street people—and has been a mixing and meeting place for these disparate groups. This has continued regardless of the economic health of the city’s downtown. For example, when the area was relatively depopulated in the later decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it became a gathering place for artists who had found studio and living space in underutilized buildings. Even in current times, when office and retail space is at a premium, the Waffle Shop can be found in virtually every listing for tourists, recommended as an inexpensive and colorful place to get a quick meal.

### 3. The Architectural Significance of the Waffle Shop

The Waffle Shop is downtown Washington’s sole intact Art Moderne restaurant exterior, utilizing elements of streamline design and featuring such characteristic materials as large plate glass panels, polished aluminum, and mosaic tile. Its interior includes design elements associated with the “California Coffee Shop” restaurants of the late 1940s through early 1960s.

#### A. Architectural Influences

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<sup>27</sup> All information is from Polk’s, 1948 Edition. Washington, DC

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Despite the Depression, Blue Bell System's "hamburger restaurants" were successful enough that the firm turned to leading local architects to design new locations. Arthur B. Heaton had designed the Connecticut Avenue Park n' Shop as well as the more moderne Western Avenue Bus Garage when he drew a series of sketches for a Blue Bell Systems restaurant at 1011 Pennsylvania Avenue NW in 1936. As Capital Drawings: Architectural Designs for Washington, DC from the Library of Congress notes:

Of all of Heaton's projects, his versatility as a master of the commercial vernacular is perhaps best and most enjoyably displayed in the remarkably varied series of sketches for the local Blue Bell System Hamburger Restaurants of the mid-1930s. His search for a distinctive visual identity for Blue Bells was intended to result in an immediately recognizable iconic building.<sup>28</sup>

Heaton's sketches included "elegantly composed Moderne and Deco/Regency pavilions, which, except for their prominent "Hamburgers 5 cents" signage, might have passed for an upscale jewelers, perfumeries, or beauty salon as a fast food restaurant."<sup>29</sup> On often reproduced sketch from the series shows a one-story building with rather restrained classical accents surmounted by a cylindrical domed tower. A tall three panel plate glass window occupied the center of the façade, flanked by an entrance door on either side. As Vincent Virga wrote of Heaton's "elegant little pavilion" in Eyes on America, "Had this small chain been more successful, Blue Bells rather than Golden Arches might be seen today around the world."<sup>30</sup> Illustration 9 depicts several of Heaton's renderings for Blue Bell Systems.

The Waffle Shop contains these and other Art Moderne elements in its façade, including aluminum elements, the stylized Waffle Shop logo, the three glass-panel front wall, and the glass tile mosaic wave on its southern wall. Professor Richard Guy Wilson, Chair of the Department of Architectural History at the University of Virginia has noted the influence of Art Moderne's streamlined curves on the Waffle Shop.

Streamlined style was an idiom developed in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. The creators of the style were a group of industrial designers (which was a relatively new profession), architects, and also building supply companies. In a sense it was a native American modernism derived from industrial components and had a number of elements. In one sense it represented speed and efficiency but also it reflected the coming of age of American industry and the new mass produced components available.<sup>31</sup>

Streamlined design elements of course appeared across the full range of such manufactured products as automobiles and appliances. Professor Wilson sees diners, the ultimate machine-made restaurant, exerting a stylistic influence on the Waffle Shop:

The Waffle Shop in a sense owes a debt to the Streamlined diners produced by Mountain View, Kullman, Jerry O'Mahony, Foderio, and other companies. Diners of course appeared along roads in the area of the nascent strip and seldom in the heart of large cities. But a few enterprising individuals such as the owners of the Waffle Shop saw the applicability and used elements of the facade in dense urban situations such as on 10<sup>th</sup> Street and in several other places (now gone) in Washington, DC.<sup>32</sup>

What separates the Waffle Shop from earlier Art Moderne restaurant storefronts is the relationship between its exterior and interior. As Stephen Heller has written about the mid-century retail storefront:

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<sup>28</sup> Peatross, Ford C., editor, with the assistance of Pamela Scott, Diane Tepfer, and Leslie Freudenheim. Capital Drawings: Architectural Designs for Washington, DC from the Library of Congress. Johns Hopkins University Press. Baltimore, MD, 2005.

p. 41.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.41.

<sup>30</sup> Virga, Vincent. Eyes on America. Bunker Hill Books. P. 301

<sup>31</sup> Richard Guy Wilson. Letter of January 3, 2007.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

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The quintessential storefront was not designed merely as a showroom where merchandise was mechanically arranged and formulaically displayed. Instead, this brilliantly lit transformative space was conceived as a majestic platform, like a proscenium stage, where products would enthrall through all manner of arresting performances. Product displays veritably beckoned the audience to come onstage or backstage, and instead of ovations, the audience was encouraged to consume. As the storefront evolved over time, from simple window dressing to grand fourth wall, elaborate tableaux framed by lush architectural details heightened the viewer's anticipation – and desire.<sup>33</sup>

This mediation between customers and passers-by was facilitated by increasing the proportion of plate glass in the storefront façade. The 1945 Libbey-Owens-Ford catalog quoted by Heller refers to this concept as “the visual front...a front which one can see through because large areas of clear glass put the entire store on display. There is no barrier between the merchandise inside and potential customers outside”.<sup>34</sup> This plate glass front wall allowed the interior lighting to make as a second illuminated sign at night, which, as Philip Langdon wrote in *Orange Roofs, Golden Arches*, made the building “became a three dimensional billboard that customers could walk into”.<sup>35</sup>

The plate glass façade of the Waffle Shop presents two-way live theatre, with the diners within inviting the participation of passers-by and the street scene outside entertaining the patrons within. As another catalog quoted by Heller states, this “vision [that] begins at the bulkhead and continues up to the ceiling”, engages the passer-by even when the storefront has “narrow frontage or a middle-of-the-block location”<sup>36</sup> like the Waffle Shop. Theodor Horydczak's nighttime photographs (Illustration 10) show the success of the design as a nighttime beacon on a dark city street. However, because they are in black and white, Horydczak's photographs cannot fully capture the dramatic properties of the colorful glass tile mosaic mural which wraps around the south wall extension. The mosaic mural's bright reflective surface attracts passer-by's attention, but its penetration of the restaurant's “fourth wall” also draws the eye from the sidewalk into the dining area.

While the Waffle Shop exterior looks back to the Art Moderne era, its interior features the more modernist motifs common to the “California-style Coffee Shops” which had begun appearing in the Los Angeles just after the war. Like the California-style coffee shops, the Waffle Shop served breakfast entries all day. Most California coffee shops were free-standing buildings along arterial roads. Their jutting rooflines often formed dramatic geometrical shapes that advertised them at a distance and effectively distinguished them from other types of business establishments. Although the Waffle Shop was in a structure built adjacent to its neighbors, its aluminum canopy served as a pseudo-roofline by projecting beyond the building line and attracting attention through its shiny reflective surface.

The Waffle Shop's large plate glass panels are also characteristic of the California coffee shop style, which was the inspiration Langdon's observation about interior illumination creating a nocturnal three dimensional billboard. As Heller notes, the finishing touch for postwar storefront designs was “exuberant populist graphics...invitations to take part in the consumer dream... [a] sunny materialistic dreamscape...”.<sup>37</sup> California coffee shop chains like Denny's or Sambo's frequently incorporated their names into their rooflines. The Waffle Shop presented its name in outsize illuminated script mounted on the aluminum canopy.

The interior of the Waffle Shop also includes some California coffee shop motifs. As Philip Langdon wrote, “By definition, coffee shops offered service at a counter, but [in] California-style coffee shops...the customer got a padded seat with upholstered back...and

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<sup>33</sup> Heller, Steven in Heimann, Jim, editor. *Shop America*. Taschen Press. Los Angeles, 2007. p. 8.

<sup>34</sup> Heller. p. 12.

<sup>35</sup> Langdon. p. 125.

<sup>36</sup> Heller. p. 12.

<sup>37</sup> Heller. p. 13.

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their were booths and tables for people who didn't like to sit at counters.<sup>38</sup> The Waffle Shop's dramatic vaulted ceiling likewise echoes those of the California coffee shops. As Langdon notes about the restaurants designed by the famed California firm of Armet and Davis, "Walking into their coffee shops meant entering under a low canopy and then finding the space exploding upward to a high-sloped ceiling and then back down to a lower scale at the counter area."<sup>39</sup> The Waffle Shop also incorporates another stylistic hallmark of the California-style, a serpentine counter which contributed to its sense of drama, an exposed cooking area, along with the brightly-colored terrazzo floor and counter surfaces.

### B. Aesthetic Significance

The Waffle Shop is a superb, intact example of postwar commercial design in the transitional period between the streamlined curves of Art Moderne and modernism.

The design for the Waffle Shop ably transcends the spatial limitations of its narrow urban lot, typical of downtown Washington up through the mid-twentieth century. The eatery's principal and character-defining space is the dramatic and airy dining room. The ceiling in this space sweeps downward from the facade's (east-facing) windows to the rear wall separating the front from a kitchen and storage area behind. Within this main volume, significant architectural elements and decorative features remain extant and correspond to its 1949 blueprints. Various interior finishes also survive overwhelmingly intact, if a bit grimy after a half-century of use. The serpentine lunch counter is both a key design element and a functional necessity, providing for patron accommodation as well as vital division between the public and service areas.

The top and front edges of the counters are sheathed in light beige Formica. The horizontality established by the countertop is reinforced by the metal storage rack, red "speed-line," and metal foot guard on the counter's beige facing. The beige facing between the upper and lower bands of metal is enlivened by a bright red speed-line. The essentially functional footrest echoes the undulation of the lunch counters and its rose-colored terrazzo "spills" over the floor, furthering the kinetic character of the lunch counter ensemble.

In addition to providing a pedestal for the lunch counter assemblage and a useful location for patrons to rest their feet, the rose-colored terrazzo footrest is also the visual link between the rounded counter ensemble and the rectilinear floor pattern, which alternates narrow bands of rose-colored terrazzo with larger sections of yellow. The floor grid is set at a diagonal to the walls and, like the sloping ceiling and the serpentine lunch counter, conveys a strong sense of dynamism and motion. Illustrations 11A and 11b depict details of the counter and terrazzo design.

The comprehensiveness of the total design of the Waffle Shop extends to the wall finishes. On the facade, the south wall overshoots the plane of the adjacent storefront. This wall segment is embellished and encased on its visible sides by a wavy mosaic mural composed of alternating bands of gold and red tesserae. Except for the uppermost reaches, the north face of this mural is entirely inside of the Waffle Shop, reinforcing the links between interior and exterior. The red in the mural is a similar hue to that used for the speed-line and the stool bases.

A cantilevered soffit faced in varnished oak extends from the top of the front door and sweeps along the north and west walls. After a right-angle turn onto the south wall, beyond the built-in refrigerator, the soffit steps up to make room for service area equipment and storage units. It runs along the south wall before curving into that wall just short of the mosaic mural at the windows. On the north, west, and the part of the south wall between the mural and the service area is a broad expanse of mirrors framed at the top and bottom (at chair-rail height) by strips of varnished oak; a thin mirrored band also exists between top part of the frame and the soffit. As with

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<sup>38</sup> Langdon, p. 116.

<sup>39</sup> Langdon, p. 121.

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the lunch counter, unity and a sense of movement along the walls is conveyed by the soffit and reinforced by the additional horizontal banding and line of mirrors beneath it.

This interplay of the formal, functional, decorative elements in the Waffle Shop interior shows a thoughtful sophistication and compositional cohesion that, while once more common in Washington's commercial buildings, is now quite rare. The interior fittings and finishes of the Waffle Shop utilize visual dichotomies in the making of a total design, a dynamic whole. These dualities center mainly on the active interplay between rounded versus rectilinear forms and diagonal versus orthogonal lines, all of which creates a sense of movement that is further reinforced by a series of strong horizontals.

As Professor Wilson wrote of the Waffle Shop, "It is a unique design for Washington, D.C. and indeed nationally, I can not think of a better example in a dense urban setting.... It is unique and should be preserved."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Wilson. Letter of January 3, 2007.

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### 10. Geographical Data

#### Acreage of Property \_\_\_\_\_

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
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See continuation sheet

#### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

#### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title D.P. Sefton, Linda Lyons, Sally Berk, Jamie Jacobs

Organization See attached for sponsoring organizations

date 6/13/2007

street & number 19 EAST Chapman ST.

telephone 703-836-2015

city or town ALEXANDRIA

state DC VA

zip code 22501

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

#### Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

### Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_

telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_

state \_\_\_\_\_

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**Verbal Boundary Description:**

Occupies Lot 820 in Square 0347, Washington, DC

**Boundary Justification:**