

JOINT COMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL

APPLICATION FORM
HISTORIC LANDMARK

APPLICATION TO:

- designate
- amend

summary of amendments _____

- rescind

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of Property Greyhound Bus Terminal

Address 1110 New York Avenue, NW

Square and Lot Number(s) Square 318 Lot 30

Present Owner Greyhound Lines Inc.

Address 1400 W. 3rd St. Cleveland, OH 44113

Original Use Bus station

Present Use Bus Station

Date of Construction 1939-40

Date of Major Alterations, if any 1976: Covering applied

Architect W. S. Arrasmith

Architectural style/period Streamlined Art Deco

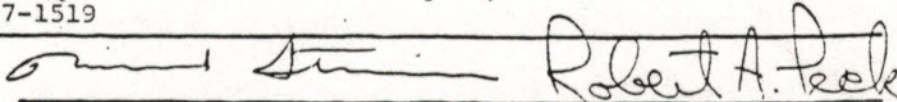
Name of Applicant Art Deco Society of Washington & Don't Tear It Down, Inc.

(If 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 of Applicant ADSW - P.O. Box 11090, Washington, DC 20008

DTID - 930 F St., NW Washington, DC 20004

Telephone 737-1519



Signature of Applicant or authorized representative
PRESIDENT,
ART DECO. SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT
DON'T TEAR IT DOWN

21 February 1984
Date

Title of authorized representative

310.21 A statement of the prehistoric, historic, architectural and/or cultural significance of the property proposed for designation.

The significance of the Greyhound Bus Terminal derives from its architectural quality, its historical importance as a transportation site, and the prominence of its architect in the specialized field of bus station design. Architecturally, the Greyhound Bus Terminal is a pre-eminent example of the streamlined Art Deco or Art Moderne style, a style that made this bus station notable nationwide. The station is of exceptional importance as an outstanding example of the streamlined style in Washington and as the best remaining example in the commercial context of downtown Washington where other classic examples, the Trans Lux Theatre and Neisner's, have been demolished. Sufficient time has elapsed to evaluate this style; scholarly evaluation of its importance has been performed (see bibliography); and enough survey has been completed in Washington to determine that the Greyhound Station was among the strongest examples built and remains among the best surviving. Historically, the Greyhound Terminal is located in one of the vital transportation corridors, where bus stations and inter-city railways have traditionally been located. The architect of the station, W. S. Arrasmith, is one of the most prominent architects of bus stations in the 1930s, designing scores of stations for Greyhound and authoring a treatise on bus station design.

Despite a new facade that completely covers the original building, the Greyhound Terminal remains one of the most significant examples of the streamlined style in Washington. The covering, which was applied in 1976, did not harm the original structure, as blueprints of the alteration and photographs taken at the time demonstrate. All of the significant aspects of the design, materials and workmanship of the station, including its curvilinear form, central tower, limestone wall finishes, metal and terra cotta trim, terrazzo floors and wood veneer, remain. Although the exterior is concealed from public view, the integrity of the structure is excellent. Underneath the covering remains an exquisite example of the streamlined style, evoking speed and motion, appropriate to a bus station and appropriate too to the 1930s, a decade in which the magic of new technology appealed to the public imagination.

Streamlining was one of the defining characteristics of 1930s design in the United States. Two recent scholarly works, The Streamlined Decade by Donald J. Bush (New York, 1975) and Twentieth-Century Limited by Jeffrey Meikle (Philadelphia, 1979) have expounded the symbolic importance of this style. Inspired by the pioneering visions of industrial designers like Raymond Loewy, Donald Deskey, Norman Bel Geddes, Walter Dorwin Teague and others, architects made the streamline America's pre-cminent design motif of the 1930s decade. The symbolic importance of the style was explicitly enunciated as early as 1930 by Frank Lloyd Wright in a series of lectures he delivered at Princeton, wherein he proclaimed:

Today, it seems to me, we hear this cry "Be Clean" from the depths of our own need. It is almost as though the Machine itself had, by force, issued edict similar to Shinto -- "Be Clean." Clean lines...clean purposes.1*

* Footnotes are found in Section 310.26.

The Depression, as a number of historians have shown, intensified the streamline's popularity. Symbolizing speed, it symbolized escape; symbolizing "smoothness," it symbolized freedom from historical snags and disruptions of all kinds. In 1936, Sheldon and Martha Cheney's important work Art and the Machine proclaimed that "when we see a functionally formed useful product, smoothly encased in some bright machine-age material...the machine-conscious mind begins to relate all such products...back to the most conspicuous symbol and inspiration of the age:"² namely the streamline.

Machine-aesthetics in streamlining, to which both Wright and the Cheneys alluded, were akin to the functionalistic aesthetics of the International Style: the style inspired by the teachings of Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus, in which decoration was stripped away in an effort to create "honest" lines. But the streamlining vogue was too expressive and exuberant a style to merit the term "functionalist," for streamlining -- though functionally justified in vehicles, to cut wind resistance -- was mostly decorative when applied to stationary objects and buildings.

The Streamlined Art Deco, or Art Moderne, style was thus highly appropriate for a bus station designed in 1938. The history of Greyhound in Washington helps explain why this site was chosen. The Greyhound Bus Company evolved, through a number of mergers and acquisitions, from the efforts of a Hibbing, Minnesota, entrepreneur, Carl Eric Wickman, who entered the bus transportation business in 1914. By 1929, the company was one of the largest in the United States.

No single date represents the exact beginning of intercity bus service. The use of buses spread rapidly in the early 1900s as routes were established in urban areas, in suburbs, and then beyond to provide intercity service. Wickman's efforts began with the modest conversion of a Hupmobile sedan to a ten-passenger jitney to carry miners from Hibbing, Minnesota, to the iron mines six miles away. By 1918, his fleet had expanded to eighteen buses on schedule throughout the iron range of Minnesota. In 1922, the second phase of Greyhound's development began, when Wickman began to acquire an interest in bus lines beyond Minnesota. From this expansion emerged the Greyhound system, originally christened the Motor Transit Corporation, in 1926. The Greyhound title was borrowed from the name of a smaller line that the firm acquired. By 1934, Fortune magazine would marvel that "the most striking thing about Greyhound is the speed of its evolution. The next thing is the agility with which President Carl Eric Wickman, beginning on the eve of the War as an operator whose single jitney ran from nowhere to nowhere, built up a national system...."³

By 1940, Greyhound operated 2,200 buses whose annual mileage exceeded 165,000,000 miles, maintained over 50,000 regular routes extending into virtually every major American city and town, and employed over 12,000 people. "No other transportation company," declared the Washington Post in 1940, "operates so many miles of lines, reaches so many points, serves so many people, or has as many trans-continental routes."⁴

Bus transportation in Washington began in 1909, when the Metropolitan Coach Company began experimenting with gasoline motor buses. The company went bankrupt in 1915 and buses virtually disappeared from Washington until the organization of the Washington Rapid Transit Company in 1921.⁵ By the early 1930s, a number of lines were operating in and out of the nation's capital, among them the Rapid Transit Company, the Washington-Luray and Washington-Marlboro companies, the Nevins Bus Line, and others.⁶ The Greyhound company was first listed in the city directory in 1930.

The first site for Greyhound's operations in Washington was 1336 New York Avenue, N.W. This site was unsatisfactory due to the limitations of size, which entailed an extensive parking of buses on congested streets. In 1932, Washington's Public Utilities Commission issued an order requiring off-street bus terminals on New York Avenue by August 1. Greyhound's appeal for an extension of the order was denied. Consequently, the firm was forced to relocate temporarily at 133 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., until the next year.⁹

The next Greyhound site -- and the immediate predecessor of today's Greyhound Terminal -- was built at 1407 New York Avenue, N.W. in 1932-33 at the cost of approximately \$85,000.⁸ George D. Brown of Charleston, West Virginia, was the architect, Baer & Scholz were the builders, and the Greyhound official responsible for overseeing the construction was L. C. Major, the firm's regional director. The building was lauded by the Washington Post in 1933 as being "imposing of design" and a "new addition to the city (that) will add to the beauty of the Nation's Capital."⁹

By 1938, the firm announced it had outgrown the 1933 terminal, and decided to build a much larger facility. On December 15, 1938, Greyhound announced the purchase of land on the southern side of New York Avenue between 11th and 12th streets, N.W.¹⁰

It was only natural that Greyhound stay in the New York Avenue corridor where its previous terminals had been located. New York Avenue, which led out of the city to Bladensburg Road, thence to Baltimore or Annapolis, was a major route in and out of the city. In 1870, the Columbia Railway Company was chartered and the firm proceeded to establish a line which ran along New York Avenue from 15th Street to 9th Street, N.W. In the 1890s, cable cars ran along New York Avenue, soon to be replaced by electric cars.¹¹ In 1926 the important Capital Garage was constructed in the 1300 block of New York Avenue. This imposing structure, designed by Arthur Heaton and featuring bas-relief sculptures of automobiles bearing 1926 license plates, was among the largest automotive garages in the world. It was demolished in 1974. Diagonally across the 12th and New York intersection from the Greyhound Terminal, its rival in inter-city bus lines had built its terminal. Safeway Trails, Inc., which evolved into the modern-day Trailways, built its terminal in about 1937. Greyhound's appearance on the opposite corner made this an important intersection for bus travel.

The particular site of the present-day Greyhound Terminal had been previously occupied by Washington, Baltimore & Annapolis Electric Railway. This Railway had established a "first-class, high speed interurban" system between the named cities by 1910, when its terminal was located at 15th and New York, and as such was the first inter-city system to reach into the heart of downtown Washington. In 1921, it acquired a new off-street terminal at 12th and New York, where it stayed until 1935.¹²

The principal designer of the present Greyhound Terminal was architect William S. Arrasmith of the Louisville, Kentucky, firm of Wischmeyer, Arrasmith & Elswick. Arrasmith was born in 1898 in Hillsboro, North Carolina. He received a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Illinois and then practiced under McKim, Mead and White in New York City before becoming a partner in the Louisville firm in 1928.¹³ Under the firm's auspices, Arrasmith designed, or helped to design, streamlined bus terminals for Greyhound in scores of cities: Louisville, Kentucky (1935), Cincinnati, Ohio (1935), Fort Wayne, Indiana (1937), Binghamton, New York (1938), Evansville, Indiana (1938)*, Columbus, Ohio (1939), Washington, D.C. (1939-40), Atlanta, Georgia (1940), Dayton, Ohio (1940), Erie, Pennsylvania (1940), Baltimore, Maryland (1941), Detroit, Michigan, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, New Orleans, Louisiana, Jackson, Mississippi*, Buffalo, New York, and Syracuse, New York.¹⁴

After serving overseas in the U.S. Army during World War II, Arrasmith returned to civilian life and resumed his work for Greyhound. In 1945 he prepared an exhaustive study for two Greyhound affiliates, Central Greyhound and Pennsylvania Greyhound Lines, assessing the building and construction criteria for bus terminal efficiency. The results, as applied to the case study of the 1941 Baltimore Greyhound terminal, were published in the architectural journal Pencil Points in July, 1945. Stressing the "convenience and comfort for the traveler, maintenance of fast and accurate schedules, (and) facilities that assist operational efficiency," Arrasmith's standards had developed to the point of considerable expertise in a highly specialized realm of design.¹⁵

As plans for the Washington Greyhound Terminal were publicized in 1938, the Washington Star was quick to recognize the future terminal as "modern in every respect and with the latest system for dispatching and handling coaches...."¹⁶ Once again, the Greyhound official responsible for overseeing the design was L. C. Major.

Construction began in March, 1939, and the building was opened to the public a year later. The total cost of the building and the land was close to one million dollars. Twenty-five thousand people were given a preview of the building before its official dedication.¹⁷ Swing music and dancing were featured, and visitors were given gifts. The Washington Post ran a six-page special section, filled with congratulatory advertisements from the Washington business community, on March 25, 1940.

* Listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Washington Greyhound Terminal was lauded throughout the 1940s. The professional journal Bus Transportation declared in April, 1940, that the Washington Greyhound Terminal was "the last word in bus terminals, the 'Grand Central' of the motor bus world."¹⁸ The terminal was featured in Architectural Record in October, 1941. A promotional book that was published ca. 1945 by the American Locker Company, whose products were used in Greyhound terminals, proclaimed:

The value of the Washington Super Terminal to the nation must be measured in terms far greater than its aesthetic meaning....The high standard of service maintained by the Greyhound Line, and the construction of the Super Terminal to speed up and expand this service is of immeasurable value to the nation.¹⁹

In 1952, in a study prepared under the auspices of the School of Architecture at Columbia University, the Washington terminal was called "a brilliant solution of the city bus terminal."²⁰

The overall appearance of the building was strikingly modernistic -- and streamlined. As Hans Wirz and Richard Striner have said in their study of Art Deco in Washington, in the Washington Greyhound Terminal "'motor transport' beckoned to the passerby in almost every detail." Every attempt was made to round the corners "in an effort to convey the excitement of speed."²¹ James Goode has said that the "rounded corners, complex of flat roofs, smooth, unadorned wall finish, and horizontal bands of windows with metal trim, presented a streamlined look reflecting the arrival of a new industrial age....A four-story high triangular central tower surmounted by a speeding chrome greyhound not only emphasized the cantilevered marquee over the main entrance below but also evoked the skyscraper effect with its tiered silhouette."²² Within, the building was a study in the lustrous surfaces of Formica, photographic murals, and terrazzo flooring.

The terminal was built with adjacent shops and restaurants, the liveliness of which was reflected in a Washington Times-Herald article in 1943. The terminal, declared reporter Wilson L. Scott, was a "wartime mecca." "If you wish to find out what kind of people come in and out of Washington," he said, in the Greyhound Terminal existed a "Washington in miniature." It even boasted "the only bookstore in Washington to stay open as long as District bars and night clubs, from 8 a.m. until 2 a.m., and on Saturdays until 12 midnight. A good part of this time, book-manager Samuel Pevsner, historian, polyglot and former Russian journalist, is on hand...." According to Scott, the book store was a kind of "intellectual oasis:"

Here many a restless traveller peers, enters, browses, and usually buys. The manager, Samuel Pevsner by name, informed me that servicemen are his best customers, and that their tastes run to technical works on mathematics and science. He added that a surprising number of good books dealing with philosophy, government, world history, and poetry are sold there.

On Sunday nights, said Scott, "in addition to the regular buses, almost 2,000 service men are transported back to camp between the hours of 6 p.m. and 12 midnight. I have often seen a long line of soldiers, sailors and sweethearts on Sunday nights wrapped around almost three full sides of the block on which the terminal stands...."²³

The Greyhound Terminal of Washington has served the city since it opened in 1940 until the present time. For most of this period, its streamlined form was a familiar sight on New York Avenue, serving to remind historically conscious citizens of the age in which it was built: the age in which streamlining seemed to beckon to a promising future. But in 1976, the Greyhound company renovated the structure, in order to update its image, by encasing the building in a mansarded sheath. The renovation was carried out by the firm of Greer, Holmquist, & Chambers.

310.22 If property is proposed for designation principally for its architectural significance, a detailed architectural description of the property, including where possible its original and present appearance.

Original appearance

The original design of the Greyhound Terminal's exterior -- the design which still survives beneath the 1976 facade -- reflects streamlined Art Deco or Art Moderne in its lines and use of materials. The building is an "island unit" type which permitted the curved surfaces of the streamlined style to be fully expressed. Other bus stations are located on a corner lot attached to at least one adjacent building, which necessitates a flatter treatment. Here, the front facade, faced with Indiana limestone trimmed with black terra cotta, is symmetrical, consisting of a central tower flanked by two levels of graduated stories.²⁴

The structural system is reinforced concrete, since the only use of structural steel is in the round columns which support the concrete canopy roof at the rear loading platform. The slab used is 27' wide, around 200' long and 4" thick at the back and front.²⁵

A cantilevered marquee is over the main entrance to the terminal, edged with glass bricks, black stone, and aluminum molds. The focal point of the facade is a central clock tower rising 157'7". It is crowned with a chrome variation of the company's logo, a speeding greyhound dog. At the base of the tower are two parallel columns of glass brick and aluminum casement sashes with cast aluminum sills. The tower is flanked on each side by two second-story wings with aluminum window sashes, black stone sills, and black stone coping at the roofline.

The 11th Street side of the building has a base of black terra cotta, sections of dark brick, colored brick, and face brick. The rear walls are faced with gray glazed brick trimmed with black brick. The rear platform is saw-toothed in plan, with the cement floor of the concourse divided into 24" x 24" blocks.

Indiana limestone, the most significant material used in the Greyhound Terminal's exterior, was widely used in the 1930s period for a flat effect. Terra cotta was a popular decorative material available in many colors. Two of the typical trim materials found in Art Deco, aluminum and glass brick, are present in the Greyhound Terminal. Terrazzo floors, though still in use today, were also a typical and often flamboyant touch in Deco buildings. In the Greyhound Terminal, the terrazzo floor is laid in a checkerboard pattern. The terrazzo is allowed to bleed out onto the sidewalk where it serves as an invitation to come inside. Like the glazed brick employed in the rear loading platform, terrazzo was especially popular because of the ease of cleaning.

Rising above the interior waiting room, which occupies approximately 3,300 square feet, is a high dome-shaped ceiling. The ceiling is of acoustical plaster and the surrounding walls were finished in coral, buff, green and tan-colored plaster. The terrazzo floors contain several panels depicting the blue and white greyhound motif. The terrazzo floors were produced by the Standard Art Marble and Tile Company of Washington, D.C.²⁶

The walls of the waiting room were partially finished in walnut, trimmed with burnished copper. The wainscoting was brown Formica with metal trim, the interior columns were faced with dark red Formica, and the counter tops were surfaced with dark gray Formica.²⁷ At the base of the domed ceiling, the room was encircled by 24 huge "photo murals" depicting scenic America. These photo murals were supplied by the firm of Leet Brothers of Washington, D.C.²⁸ Glass bricks separated these mural panels, and direct lighting played upon the photographs at all times.

At the front of the building on the first-floor level, the waiting room opened out into stores. At the westernmost corner of the building was a restaurant occupying 2,200 square feet, along with its kitchen and office (now occupied by Burger King). At the other corner were three stores with both interior and exterior entrances. To the left of the vestibule and lobby were three additional stores, including a travel bureau and telegraph office. To the right of the lobby was a barber shop, a news stand, and a passageway to the restaurant.

The lower lobby contained a lounge and restrooms, the bus drivers' lounge and locker room, the porters' locker room, a baggage and freight room, two store rooms, and the heating equipment. The second floor of the building contained the executive offices and telephone switchboard. The executive offices housed the firm's regional office, including the office of L. C. Major. The building was equipped with duct-work for air-conditioning at the outset.

Present Appearance

In 1976, the exterior of the Greyhound Bus Terminal, with the exception of the rear loading platform, was enclosed with cement-asbestos panels. This superstructure is in no way integral with the original structure, as the renovation blueprints and photographs taken during the alteration confirm.²⁹ The panels of cement-asbestos were attached with minimal damage to the original building.

At the present time, the exterior lines of the building are roughly the same, except that most curvilinear planes have been squared by the blocky lines of the renovation superstructure. A mansard-style roof has been placed above the entranceway. The panels are either off-white or medium-gray in color.

The street-level facade cladding is composed of the medium-gray, vertically ribbed cement-asbestos panels. They are anchored to the original limestone facade with furring channels and light-gauge metal studs, which do minimal damage and need only minor patching when removed.

The fascia-panel band and soffit cladding is composed of the cement-asbestos panels in off-white and of a smooth texture. They are suspended from and anchored to the original facade with an angle-framing system, fastened with 1/2" expansion bolts.

The main entry canopy cladding (the mansard roof) consists of heavy metal panels suspended from and anchored to the original facade with a structural channel and angle-framing system, fastened with 5/8" expansion bolts.

The tower cladding consists of the cement-asbestos panels in off-white and of a smooth texture, built up from and anchored to the original facade with fire-retardant wood framing, fastened with 3/8" expansion bolts.

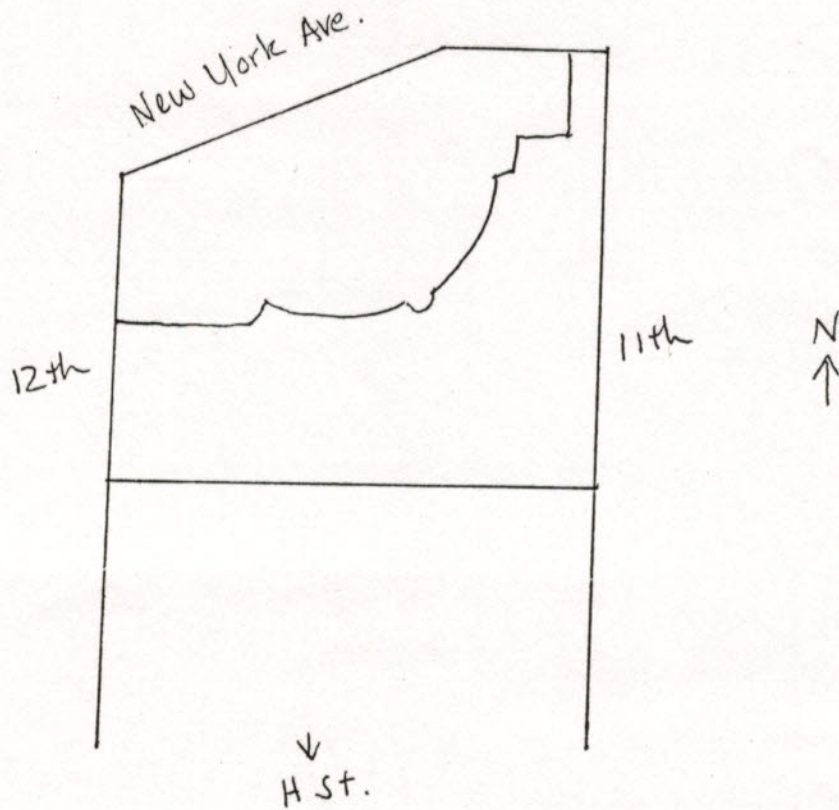
Within, the original wooden paneling and Formica has either been removed or covered by wallboard, and an acoustical drop ceiling has been added. The original terazzo floors remain intact, and the original wood veneer is visible, though painted over, on a number of surfaces, especially the structural columns.

The integrity of the Greyhound Bus Terminal remains unimpaired beneath the facade addition. Its architectural significance, which rests in its streamlined style employed for a transportation building, as well as the importance of its architect, is unaffected. In addition, its historical significance as an important transportation hub remains. The Greyhound Bus Terminal merits designation as a District of Columbia Landmark and nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

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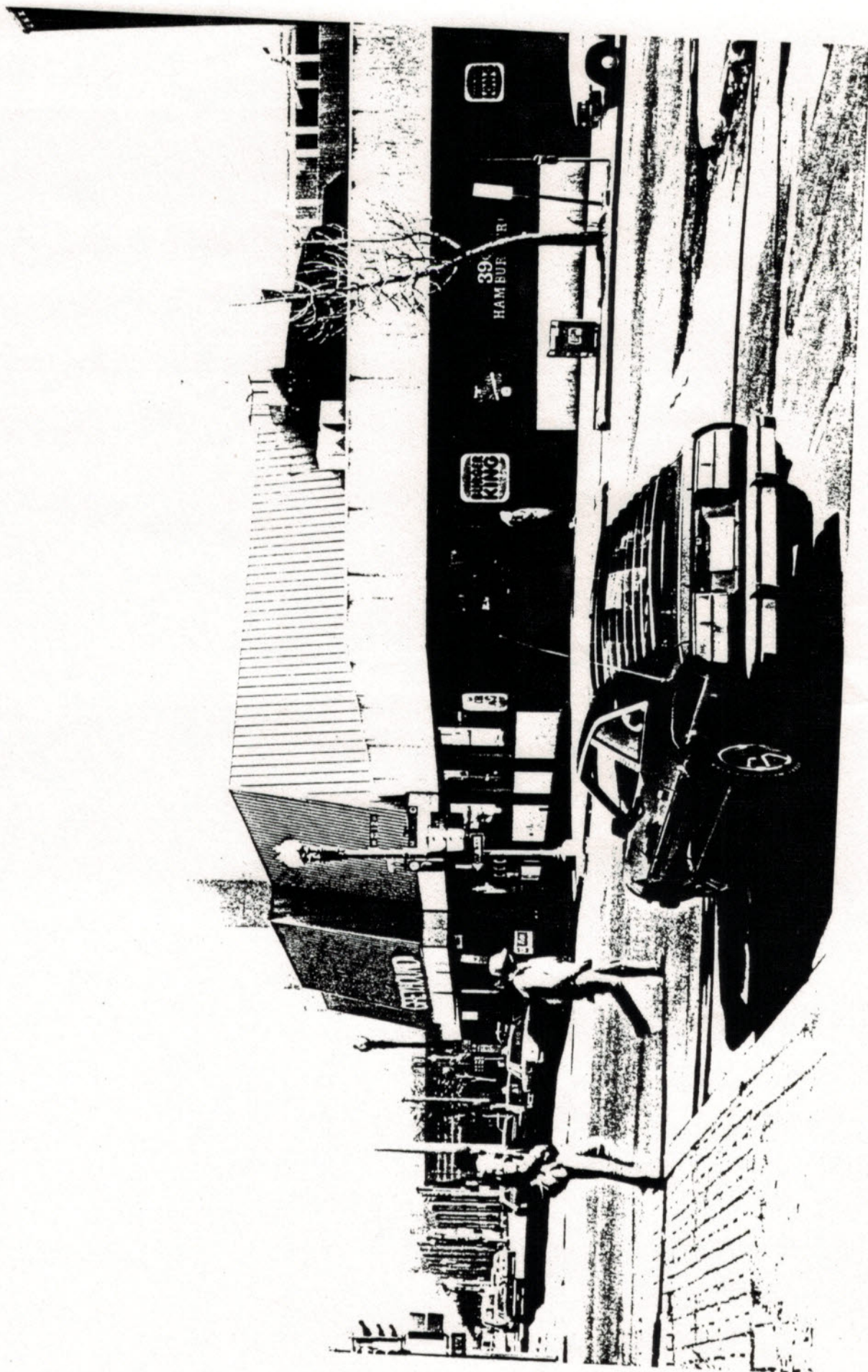
See Section 310.21.

310.24 A map showing the exact boundaries of the property proposed for designation; the square and lot number(s) or parcel number; square footage of property proposed for designation; north arrow; and contiguous streets, if any.



Square 318
Lot 30
32,788 sq.ft.





310.25 Contemporary good quality photograph(s) of the property proposed for designation which provide a clear and accurate visual representation of the property and its setting; specify view, date of photograph and list credits, if any. 8" x 10" glossy photographs are preferred. In addition, applicant may supply slides (Applicant shall submit two copies of each photograph or slide).

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1. Frank Lloyd Wright, Modern Architecture, Being the Kahn Lectures for 1930 (Princeton, 1931), 35.
2. Sheldon and Martha Cheney, Art and the Machine: An Account of Industrial Design in 20th-Century America (New York, 1936), 102.
3. "Jitney into Giant," Fortune August, 1934: 42-3, 113, passim.
4. "Rise of Bus Transportation Reads Like Horatio Alger Story," Washington Post, March 25, 1940, 19.
5. Roger W. Allen, "A Summary of Twentieth-Century Economic Development of the District of Columbia and the Washington Metropolitan Area," Records of the Columbia Historical Society 1973-74: 548.
6. Washington Herald July 19, 1932.
7. "Streets as Bus Terminals," Washington Star February 7, 1932; "Bus Terminal Postponement is Denied Line," Washington Herald July 19, 1932; "New Site Selected for Bus Terminal After Lost Fight," Washington Herald August 8, 1932.
8. Washington Star December 15, 1938.
9. Washington Post April 30, 1933.
10. Washington Star December 15, 1938.
11. LeRoy O. King, 100 Years of Capital Traction (Taylor Pub. Co., 1972), 23.
12. Ibid., 58, 88, 107.
13. American Institute of Architects, Baldwin Memorial Archive of American Architects.
14. Baldwin Memorial Archive; Manfred Burleigh and Charles M. Adams, eds., Modern Bus Terminals and Post Houses (Ypsilanti, Michigan, 1941), passim.
15. "Baltimore Greyhound Terminal" Pencil Points July, 1945: 64.
16. Washington Star December 30, 1938.
17. "Super Terminal," Bus Transportation April, 1940: 167; "New Greyhound Bus Terminal Preview Draws Thousands," Washington Star March 26, 1940.
18. "Super Terminal," Bus Transportation April, 1940: 166.

19. "Greyhound Terminal of Washington," Railroad and Bus Terminal and Station Layout (Boston: American Locker Company, ca. 1945), 89.
20. J. Gordon Carr "Bus Stations" in Talbot Hamlin, ed., Forms and Functions of Twentieth-Century Architecture (New York, 1952), 597.
21. Hans Wirz and Richard Striner, Washington Deco (manuscript, 1983), 63.
22. James Goode, Capital Losses: A Cultural History of Washington's Destroyed Buildings (Washington: Smithsonian, 1979), 425-6.
23. Wilson L. Scott, "Bus Terminal is Busy Wartime Mecca," Washington Times-Herald May 2, 1943, D-3.
24. Burleigh and Adams, 141; Harry S. Pack, "Bus Terminal Design and Construction," Architectural Record (October, 1941): 85.
25. Burleigh and Adams, 141.
26. Advertisement, Washington Post March 25, 1940, 19.
27. "A Modern Bus Terminal with Formica" advertisement for Formica Insulation Company in The Federal Architect (January-March 1942): 3.
28. Advertisement, Washington Post March 25, 1940, 18.
29. "Alterations to the Greyhound Terminal, Washington, D.C.," blueprints of Greer, Holmquist and Chambers, Birmingham, Alabama, January 12, 1976.

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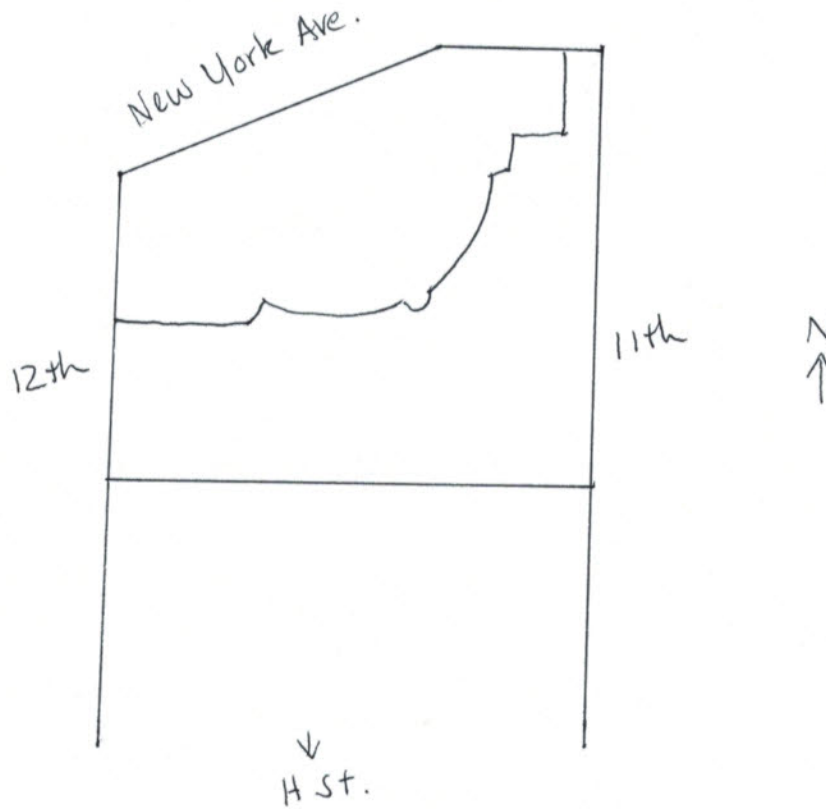
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5. Roger W. Allen, "A Summary of Twentieth-Century Economic Development of the District of Columbia and the Washington Metropolitan Area," Records of the Columbia Historical Society 1973-74: 548.
6. Washington Herald July 19, 1932.
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